



JEWISH AND PROUD OF IT!

One of the greatest barriers to a serious consideration of Biblical Christianity by Jewish men and women is the misconception that a Jew ceases to be Jewish the moment he or she chooses to believe in Jesus. This viewpoint is reinforced by regular reference on the part of Jewish religious leaders to Jews who have become Christians and therefore "renounce their Jewish identity," usually to the hurt and dismay of family and friends. The extreme attitude toward such "converts" is to consider them traitors (*meshumedim*) to their culture and heritage. It is readily understandable that one would be reluctant to consider any religious system so contrary to his own ethnicity.

In view of this it is vitally important for Christians to stress to their Jewish friends that a Jew who chooses to believe in Jesus as Messiah is still a Jew just as a believing Korean, German, or Native American who is a follower of Jesus maintains his or her ethnic identity. In making this point it is often helpful to emphasize the "Jewishness" of Christianity by presenting that which Gentile believers take for granted, but

which may be a dramatic realization to a Jewish person, including the following facts:

- Jesus is a Jew who was raised in a Jewish home and who faithfully observed and participated in the Jewish culture of His day.
- The New Testament was written by Jewish authors, with the possible exception of the Gospel of Luke and Acts.
- The early Christian church was predominantly Jewish in composition, necessitating an ecclesiastical council to determine if **Gentiles** would be allowed admission (Acts 15).

BRANCHES OF JUDAISM

In the United States there are three main groups into which synagogues and those Jewish people affiliated with a particular congregation may be placed:

ORTHODOX JUDAISM is the most conservative and traditional group.

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM is the largest group and presents a basically main line, or moderate, religious practice.

REFORM JUDAISM is the most liberal of the three groups. Reform synagogues generally include the word, "Temple," in their name.

ON FAMILIAR TERMS

A glossary of terms commonly occurring in conversation with, or reading about, Jewish people, but not widely understood by non-Jews, presented on an installment basis:

KADDISH

(pronounced cod-dèesh)

A liturgical prayer in the Aramaic language which is recited for one who has died. It includes quotations from the book of Job.

MEZUZAH

(pronounced muh-zòo-zah)

A small, but often very ornate, box which is attached to the doorpost of a Jewish home in response to Deut. 6:9. Inside the box is a piece of parchment on which is written the summary of Israel's monotheistic faith from Deut. 6:4-5, known as the **SHEMA** (pronounced shuh-màh). It is customary for those entering or leaving the home to kiss the mezuzah as a sign of respect and devotion to the precepts of the Jewish faith.

TALLIT

(pronounced tàhl-lit)

The prayer shawl worn by Jewish men as they recite the daily morning prayers. It is surrounded by a fringe of 613 knots, representing the 613 laws of the

Mosaic Code, gathered into four tassels on the corners of the garment, based on Numbers 15:37-39.

TALMUD

(pronounced tàhl-mud)

The sixty-three books containing the record of rabbinical interpretation of Scripture and opinions on religious, legal, and ethical issues. The Talmud was compiled and edited in Babylonia in 499 A.D.

NOTABLE QUOTES

"It is no mean joy and ignoble pride in us of the House of Israel to recognize, to honor, and to cherish among our brothers—Jesus the Jew."

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874-1949), in *The Outlook*, June 7, 1913.

"In fact, I rather think that one of the biggest mistakes we ever made was not keeping Jesus for ourselves. He lived as a Jew; he thought as a Jew; he spoke as a Jew; he was crucified by the Romans as a Jew..."

Hillel Halkin, in *The Jerusalem Report*, December 31, 1992.

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