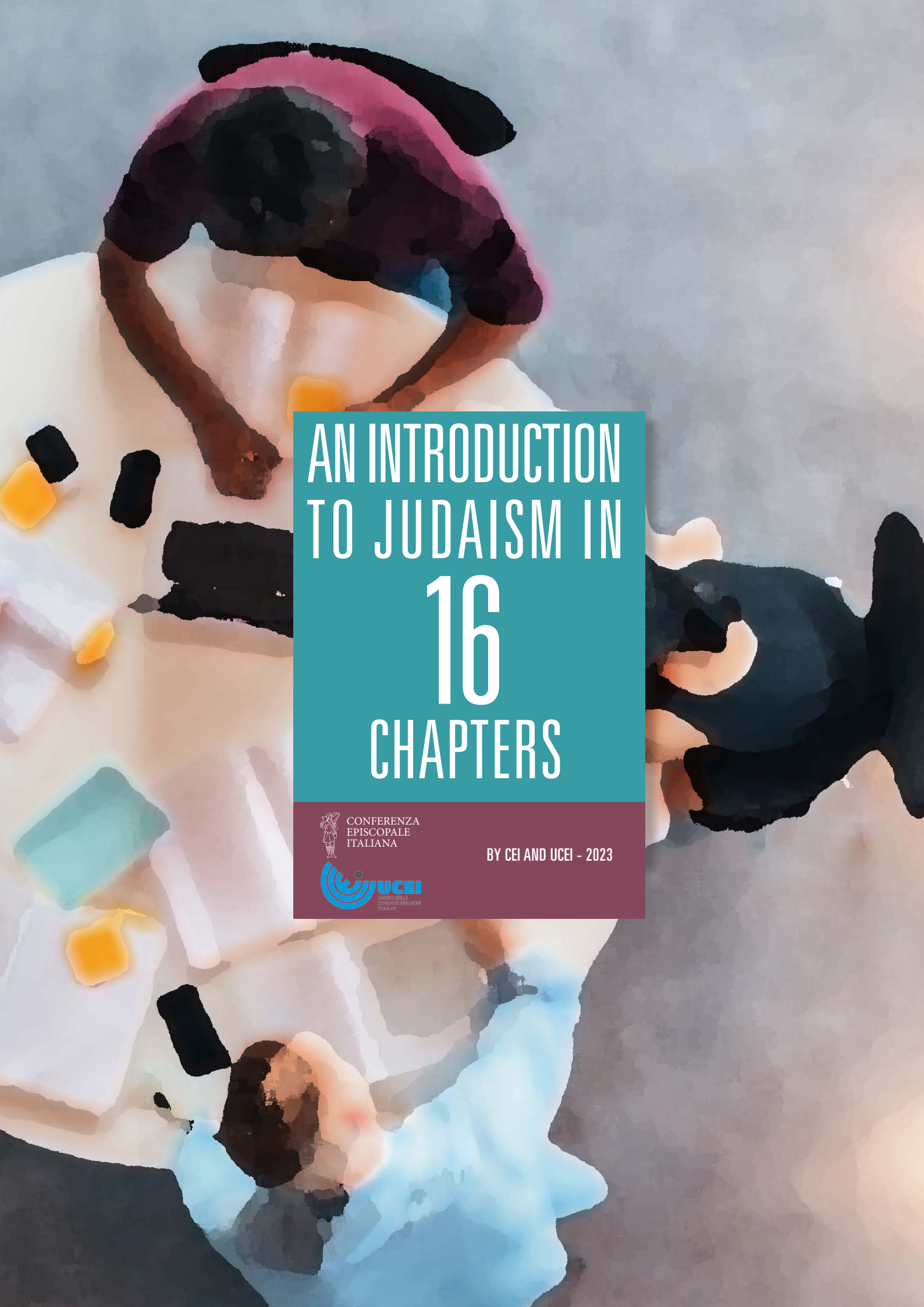

AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM IN 16 CHAPTERS

CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE ITALIANA

UCEI

BY CEI AND UCEI - 2023

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INTRODUCTION

The sixteen chapters, or factsheets, contained in this publication are the result of several years of work between the offices of the General Secretariat of the Italian Episcopal Conference – CEI - (National Office for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue; National Office for Education, Schools and Universities; National Service for the Teaching of the Catholic Religion) and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities - UCEI. All this is a concrete expression of mutual esteem and fruitful collaboration based on open and honest dialogue, respect for differences and a deep knowledge of traditions.

Underlying this project is a shared concern for the proper knowledge and transmission of Judaism. For this reason, experts from the Christian and Jewish traditions have identified some of the most relevant topics.

These factsheets testify that the process initiated by the conciliar breakthrough in Nostra Aetate n. 4 is alive and effective, with the aim of providing Italian schools with quality IRC texts, promoting culture and knowledge as a true antidote to all forms of anti-Semitism. This publication is proof that what can be done must be done, and done well, competently, for the growth of our communities and society as a whole. We hope that the collaboration that has begun will continue and grow with the writing of new papers.

Noemi Di Segni
President of UCEI

Giuseppe Baturi
General Secretary of CEI

1. THE HEBREW BIBLE

CHAPTER 1

The Jewish scriptural canon

The Hebrew Bible is called the *Tanakh*. This term, which came into use in the Middle Ages, is an acronym for the three parts that comprise it: the *Torah* (the Pentateuch), the *Nevi'im* (the prophetic books), and the *Ketuvim* (the Hagiographa). Other Hebrew names for the Bible are derived from the root *k-t-v* (to write) and *q-r-'* (to read) to emphasize the centrality of the written nature of the biblical text and to underscore the oral element that is absolutely constitutive in the study of the Jewish tradition.
The *Tanakh* contains divinely inspired texts that guide the religious practices and beliefs of the Jewish people.
The three sections of the *Tanakh* are:
a) The *Torah* (Pentateuch) is comprised of five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy;
b) the *Nevi'im* (Prophets), which include the *Nevi'im rishonim* (the Former Prophets: Gioshua, Judges, Samuel I and II, Kings I e II) and the *Nevi'im Acharonim* (the Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets);
c) the *Ketuvim* (Hagiographa), which include books of wisdom known by the acronym *emet* - truth: Job (*'Yiov*), Proverbs (*Mishlè*), Psalms (*Tehillim*), the five scrolls, which are still read on certain occasions during the year (see below): the Song of Songs on *Pesach*, Ruth on *Shavu'ot*, Lamentations on the fast of the 9th of Av, Ecclesiastes on *Sukkot*, Esther on *Purim*; historical books (Daniel, Ezra and Nechemià, Chronicles I and II). The canonisation of some of the books of the *Ketuvim* (Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Esther) were the subject of discussion among the rabbis of the *Mishna* and *Midrash*. It must be pointed out, however, that the term canon derives from New Testament studies; in rabbinic tradition, the expression used to indicate the sacredness of a text is "to make the hands unclean" (see, e.g., the *Mishnah* in *Yadayim* 3:5).
One issue that required great effort on the part of the rabbis was the accuracy of the biblical text. The settling of the text took place between the end of the Byzantine period and the beginning of the Islamic period, thanks to the work of the Masoretes, who were active in Israel and Babylonia. The model that prevailed in the Middle Ages and is still used today was that of the Tiberias School.

The relationship of the Jews with the Bible

The Jewish people's relationship with their sacred texts is so deep and essential that mystics say that Israel and the Torah are one. The *Torah*, the Pentateuch, the first part

of the Bible, is kept in the synagogues, handwritten in the original text on parchment scrolls and richly decorated according to the various traditions. From the cabinet in which it is kept, it is solemnly taken out to be read publicly during liturgies, especially on Saturday mornings and holidays. The contents of the *Torah* are divided into weekly portions so that it is read in full and in order throughout the year. After the reading of the *Torah*, a passage from the Prophets is read whose theme is related to that of the *Torah* just read, or to a special day in the calendar.

The *Torah* is being studied, taught, and interpreted continuously. The study of *Torah* is one of the essential religious obligations of every Jew, from the time one is able to understand it until the last day of one's life. The *Torah* is studied in its original text with all the commentaries that have overlapped over the centuries and are printed in common editions around the original text. Typically, on each Sabbath, the rabbi will explain and comment on a passage from the *Torah* that has just been read, but this is only part of the study of the text.

Above all, the *Torah* is the source of conduct, the first text in which the precepts to be observed are set forth. Some precepts may be set forth in great detail in the *Torah*, others may be barely alluded to, and it is the role of the oral tradition to illustrate and answer any questions that may arise.

The prophetic books contain stories, moral guides, admonitions, hopes, and represent the soul and constant guidance of the people of Israel throughout its history. The Hagiographa contain texts of wisdom, but also texts of great spirituality, such as the Psalms, many of which are used in the daily liturgy.

Jews do not like the definition of the Bible as the Old Testament because, with all due respect, it seems to distance something that is instead experienced as always alive and relevant. The entire Torah is sacred, and all of its rules must be observed; many of the rules are related to purity and sacrificial norms associated with the existence of a Temple, and since the Temple was destroyed, the rules do not apply, but not because they have been abrogated, only suspended. Otherwise, no distinctions are made and everything is to be observed, the idea of selection being inconceivable. Obviously, Jews reject interpretations that make the Bible a proclamation of an event whose holiness they do not share.

The Hebrew Writings and the Christian Bible

The Holy Scriptures of the Jewish people are a fundamental part of the Christian Bible. In fact, all the books that make up the *Tanakh* are also part of the Christian Bible, of which they form the Old Testament. The latter also includes seven books written before Christ, but which are not part of the Hebrew Bible: Judith, Tobiah, the two books of Maccabees, Sirach, Wisdom, Baruch. These texts are called "deuterocanonical" and belonged to the Bible of the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek-language version compiled in Alexandria between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC. It should also be mentioned that the contents of the Book of Esther and the Book of Daniel differ to some extent in the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Bible.

The relationship between the Old and New Testaments is of great importance to the

Catholic Church, so much so that throughout its history it has not hesitated to define as gravely heretical a doctrine such as that of the Greek theologian Marcion (2nd century AD), who, by affirming a clear dualism between the God of the Old Testament and the Father revealed by Jesus in the New Testament, ended up excluding the Hebrew Scriptures from the Christian Bible.

From the very beginning, Christianity has held these books in high esteem, as St. Paul expresses in the Letter to the Romans: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." (Rom 15:4). Furthermore, Jesus Himself says that "the Scriptures cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

In recent times, the Second Vatican Council also addressed the issue, stating that "The plan of salvation foretold by the sacred authors, recounted and explained by them, is found as the true word of God in the books of the Old Testament: these books, therefore, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable. (…) These same books, then, give expression to a lively sense of God, contain a store of sublime teachings about God, sound wisdom about human life, and a wonderful treasury of prayers, and in them the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way. Christians should receive them with reverence." (*Dei Verbum*, 14-15) For the Catholic Church, therefore, there is an inseparable unity between the two parts of the Bible. We are often reminded of the thought of Saint Augustine of Hippo, according to which "the New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old is revealed in the New"[1]. The irreplaceable importance of the Old Testament is in fact accompanied, on the Christian side, by a Christological reading of it. This means that Christians read the Old Testament in the light of the dead and risen Christ and affirm that the Scriptures find their full fulfilment in him. It should be noted, however, that the concept of the fulfilment of Scripture is complex because it involves a threefold dimension: the fundamental dimension of continuity with the Old Testament revelation, the dimension of rupture, and the dimension of fulfilment. It is precisely for these reasons that Benedict XVI points out that "the Jewish understanding of the Bible can help Christians to understand and study the Scriptures"[2].

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1 a) *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, 2, 73: PL 34, 623.

2 Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 30 September 2010, n. 41.

2. THE WRITTEN TORAH AND THE ORAL TORAH

CHAPTER

Introduction

The Oral *Torah* (*Torah shebe'al peh*) is a fundamental reality of Judaism, for which God's revelation at Sinai includes not only the written *Torah* (*Torah she- bikhtav*) recorded in the Bible, but also an equivalent set of traditions that, until the 2nd century AD, were transmitted only orally: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and passed it on to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the men of the great assembly. They said three things: be careful in your judgement, make many disciples, and make a hedge around the *Torah*"[3].
What is the content of the Oral *Torah* to which this famous passage of the *Mishnah* alludes, and how does it differ from the Written *Torah*? How did this oral *Torah* come to be written? How does it still guarantee the correct observance of Judaism today?

The relationship between the Oral Torah and the Written Torah

The word *Torah* (from the root *yarah*: "to teach") is commonly used to refer to the Pentateuch, which is distinguished from the other two bodies of writings that make up the Hebrew Bible, the Prophets and the Writings. On closer inspection, however, the term is already used in the Pentateuch to designate a specific body of laws and also the entire legislation received from Moses on Mount Sinai, which Jewish tradition distinguishes into the written *Torah* and the oral *Torah*[4]. The term *Torah* is also used to refer to the Bible as a whole; and finally, it encompasses the entire body of Jewish legislation, from the Bible to the most recent development of *Halakhah* ("law of righteous behaviour")[5], i.e. the complete legal system that governs every aspect of Jewish life.
As already noted, the *Mishnah* states that "Moses received the Torah from Sinai"[6], and Midrash *Genesis Rabbah* teaches that the *Torah* already existed, in heaven, before God revealed it to Moses, or rather before the world was created, being one of the six things created before the creation of the world[7]. Moreover, Rabbi Eleazar ben

3 *Pirqè Avot* 1,1.

4 The term "Oral *Torah*" first appears in a story (*Haggadah*) related to Shammai (1st century BCE - 1st century CE). When asked by an aspiring convert how many *Torot* there were, Shammai replied: "The written *Torah* and the oral *Torah*". *bShabbat* 31a.

5 Literally: 'the way to walk', from the verb *halakh* 'to walk'.

6 *Pirqè Avot* 1,1.

7 *Genesis Rabbah* 1:4: "Six realities preceded the creation of the universe, some of them were created, others were foretold: the *Torah* and the Throne of Glory were created. The *Torah*, how do we

Sadoq (early 2nd century AD) and Rabbi Aqivà speak of the *Torah* as "the instrument with which the world was created"[8]. The allusion to Proverbs 8:22-31, where "wisdom" (*hokhmah*) plays the same role, is obvious. For this reason, some Kabbalists identified the original *Torah* specifically with wisdom.

The Oral *Torah* and the Written *Torah* form an indivisible unity, the former being the authoritative interpretation of the latter. According to tradition, both *Torahs* were given to Moses at the same time on Sinai[9], and neither can exist without the other: the Oral *Torah* has its basis and derives its validity from the explicit verses of the Written *Torah*, but at the same time the Written *Torah* itself derives its full validity and authority for practical *halakhah* from the Oral *Torah*. There is a clear example of how the Written Torah establishes the authority of the Oral *Torah* in Deut 17:8-11: "If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge, [...] take them to the place the Lord your God will choose. Go to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict. You must act according to the decisions they give you at the place the Lord will choose. Act according to whatever they teach you and the decisions they give you. Do not turn aside from what they tell you, to the right or to the left". (Deut 17:8-11). The interpretive authority of the Levitical priests and the judge referred to in this text derives precisely from the oral Torah, of which they are the custodians, which determines what the *Halakhah* contained in the written text consists of in practice. For this reason, the Sages maintain that the Oral *Torah* is the largest and most important part (in quantity and quality) of the *Torah*: "The Holy One - Blessed be He - made a covenant with Israel only because of what was orally transmitted"[10].

It is also said of the Oral *Torah* that it contains the mysteries of the Holy One. The fact, then, that it was transmitted orally determines its vitality: it is not immutable, but alive and constantly evolving.[11]

The main function of the oral *Torah* is to clarify and make explicit what is contained in the written text, to convey the meaning of words and specific expressions: some

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know this? It is said: *The Lord has possessed me from the beginning of his ways, even before his works* (Prov. 8:22). The throne of glory, how do we know this? *Your throne is established ab antico, from eternity you are* (Ps 93:2). Creation was foretold of the patriarchs, of Israel, of the sanctuary and of the name of the Messiah." A. Ravenna - T. Federici, *Commentary on Genesis (Berešit Rabba)*, Turin 1978, 31.

8 *Sifrè Deuteronomy* 48; cf *Avot* 3,14.

9 Rabbì Aqivà considered the oral *Torah* implicit in the written *Torah*, in its words and letters; in fact, he is said to have given the following explanation: "These are the laws, the regulations and the *torot*" (Lev 26:46) - from this we learn that two *torot* were given to Israel, one written and one oral [...] "on Mount Sinai, through Moses" [ibid.] - from this we learn that the Torah was given complete, with all its laws, details of interpretation and explanations through Moses on Sinai'. *Sifrà, Be-Ḥuqqotai* 8.

10 *bGittin* 60b. And the text continues: "And Rabbì Yoḥanan says: The majority of the *Torah* was transmitted orally (*'al peh*), while the minority was transmitted in writing, as it is stated regarding the giving of the *Torah* to Moses on Mount Sinai: "For on the basis of (*'al pi*) these words I made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Ex 34:27), which indicates that the majority of the Sinaitic covenant was taught orally".

11 "The Oral *Torah* contains the mysteries of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and He reveals His mysteries only to the righteous, as it is said: *The counsel of the Lord is with those who fear Him* (Ps 25:14)". *Tanḥumà Vayerà* 5.

are perfectly understandable, but others are not so clear and unambiguous and it is necessary to pass on their interpretation. For example, when the *Torah* speaks of a "tree with thick leaves" (in Hebrew, *'avot*) among the four varieties to be used during the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) (Lev 23:40), the text uses a generic term that can refer to different types of trees. It is therefore up to the oral tradition to explain that it refers specifically to a branch of myrtle.
Another example is what the Decalogue says about Sabbatical rest: "The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God: you shall do no work" (Ex 20:10), without specifying what is to be included in the category of "work". Elsewhere in the written *Torah*, certain activities are specifically mentioned as certainly constituting work that is forbidden on the Sabbath: ploughing and reaping, lighting a fire, baking, and more. But there is no definition of what constitutes work that is incompatible with Sabbath rest (and other festivals that require the same rest). The Oral *Torah* therefore fills this gap by specifying thirty-nine categories of work prohibited by this commandment, and by including dozens of other types of work under these thirty-nine headings.
Another function of the Oral *Torah* is to build a "hedge" - understood as an extension - around the biblical precepts (cf. *Pirqè Avot* 1:1), to protect and ensure their observance. In the oral tradition, for example, there is a prohibition against talking about business on the Sabbath, thus violating the prescribed rest. Or, in another area, the injunction not to swear an oath, lest it become a vain oath.

Oral *Torah* in the post-exilic period

After the exile, from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the role of certain sages (*hakhamim*), who devoted themselves specifically to the study and interpretation of the Torah, was affirmed in order to respond to the new challenges facing the Jewish people in a changed state of individual and community life. Of Ezra the biblical text says: "He was a scribe expert in the law of Moses, given by the Lord, the God of Israel. [...] For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel." (Ezra 7:6, 10). Ezra thus symbolises the beginning of an era known in the history of Israel as the period of the "Great Assembly", consisting of the so-called "scribes" (*soferim*). Their main task was to collect the sacred writings in order to clearly define the scriptural *corpus*. They also began to reorganise and study the oral tradition, including interpretations, customs and legal precedents, in order to relate them to the expressions contained in the written *Torah*.
The scribes also established a large number of 'religious decrees' (*taqqanot*) according to the needs of the time, and reorganised the vast amount of oral material into new forms to enable it to be transmitted and systematically studied.

Towards the written redaction of the Oral *Torah*: the *Mishnah*

By the end of the Second Temple *period*, the oral Torah had become so voluminous that it could no l*onger b*e memorised by study and repetition alone. However, there

was still the great *Sanhed*rin, based in the Temple in Jerusalem, which ruled unequivocally and incontrovertibly on all matters requiring clarification.
But with the destruction of the Sanctuary and the consequent loss of reference to a central authority, it became necessary to intensify a process that had already begun before the destruction of the Sanctuary, namely the systematisation of the various subjects of the Oral *Torah* and the precise classification of the 'normative traditions' (*halakhot*), which were expressed in the form of short sayings that were easy to remember.
This was done by the so-called 'Tannaites' (*tannaim*), whose name comes from the Aramaic *t-n-y*, meaning 'to repeat' and, by extension, 'to learn' or 'to teach'. They were the sages who were active immediately before and during the century and a half following the destruction of the Temple (70 AD). The texts recording the traditions of these sages are called "tannaitic" and found their way into various texts to be discussed below, the *Mishnah*, the *Tosefta*, the halakhic *midrashim*[12], and a wide variety of traditions preserved in the Jerusalem (or Palestinian) and Babylonian *Talmud*, which are called *baraitot* (from the Aramaic bar, "*external*"), i.e. those "traditions outside or excluded from the *Mishnah*".
A decisive contribution was made by Rabbi Aqivà (d. 135 AD) and later by his disciples, among whom Rabbi Meir stood out: they organised the entire *Halakhah* in a systematic way, according to a defined order, and placed each of the many topics in its own framework. This compilation of the Oral *Torah* became the basis on which Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasì (c. 135-217 AD) later compiled the *Mishnah* ("repetition", from the Hebrew root *sh-n-h*, "to repeat"[13]), classifying most of the topics of the *Halakhah* into six categories, corresponding to the six orders of the *Mishnah*. The orders were then divided into treatises and each treatise into chapters and sections, resulting in a total of 63 treatises divided into 531 chapters.
The six orders of the Mishnah deal mainly with different areas: agriculture, festivals, marriage law, civil and criminal law, worship in the sanctuary and ritual purity. Each sentence of the Mishnah, and each of its expressions, summarises the conclusion reached at the end of a discussion in the rabbinical school (yeshivah) of Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasì.
To complete the writing of the *Mishnah*, the disciples of Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasì later compiled the *Toseftà* ("Addition"), which contains rabbinic material that was not included in the *Mishnah*, but whose structure it retains.

The Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud

The generations that followed Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasì and his disciples no longer had to study the Torah orally from a collection of numerous unrelated *halakhot* from different sources. They had before them a definitive work which became the source

12 The *Midrashim*, the rabbinic commentaries on the Scriptures and also bearers of the Oral *Torah*, are divided into halakhic and haggadic (from the verbal root *n-g-d* "to tell"). The former mostly dictate rules of conduct, while the latter, the Haggadic, deal with the non-legal interpretation of Scripture through edifying narratives.

13 This is the Hebrew equivalent of the Aramaic root *t-n-y*, from which the term 'tannaites' is derived.

of all further study.
The scholars of the *Mishnah*, while retaining the text, took on the responsibility of interpreting it. In this way, over time, a vast commentary on the *Mishnah* came to be known as the *Gemara* ("study")[14].
The rabbis of the period immediately following the writing of the *Mishnah* are called *amoraim* (from the Aramaic *amar*, "to say, to discuss") because their characteristic contribution to the development of the tradition was to discuss the *Mishnah* itself at length.
In a process that cannot be traced with certainty, the text of the *Gemar*a underwent periodic revision until the two Talmudic texts that we know today emerged: the Jerusalem *Talmud* and the Babylonian *Talmud*.
The Jerusalem *Talmud* is the work of the rabbinical academies of Galilee and was substantially completed by the middle of the fifth century A.D. It is generally of a rigorous style, characterised by brevity and the absence of exposition. Discussions often take the form of simple notes attributed to one or other of the *Amora*. Sometimes, however, such commentaries are constructed in a more elaborate dialectical form, with answers to objections, contradictions cited and resolved, and evidence drawn from the biblical text. The Babylonian *Talmud* was first edited by the Amorites Rav Ashì and Ravinà around the beginning of the 6th century BC. However, historians claim that what makes this Talmud different from the others is the work of several generations of rabbis who followed these two authorities and who are known under the collective name of "savoraim" (from the Aramaic root *s-b-r* "to hold, to have an opinion"), i.e. those who reworked the Talmudic text and established its final form. Thanks in part to the work of these later editors, the Babylonian *Talmud* is far more elaborate than the Jerusalem *Talmud* and is characterised by greater logical clarity.
The term *Talmud* ('study')[15] can be understood as the short form of the expression *talmud torah*, 'study of the Torah'. Studying the *Talmud* therefore means listening to the Word of God and reliving the events of Sinai. In Judaism, even today, the culmination of a boy's education is the moment when he is finally ready to study the *Gemara*.

Topicality of the oral Torah

The *Torah* governs all spheres of life, so a Jew who wishes to live according to God's precepts derives his conduct from the *Halakhah*, that is, from all that has been handed down by the sages and transmitted to us mainly through the *Talmud*. It is, as has already been said, a reality that is considered to be incessantly current and therefore capable of responding to the ever-changing demands of today's world. It is the starting point for discernment on very sensitive specific issues such as abortion, the defence of life and creation, the dignity of the human person and, in general, the right

14 The term is actually derived from the verb *g-m-r*, which means 'to complete'. So *ghemarà* could be translated as 'completion'.

15 From the verbal root *l-m-d* 'to study'.

relationship with God, oneself, one's neighbour and things.

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3. THE NAME OF GOD

CHAPTER 3

For many centuries in the history of Western Christianity, the liturgical and cultural language par excellence was Latin, so neither the reconstruction of the correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton nor its exact translation was a priority.
For Judaism, on the other hand, the question is not only lexical but also has important theological consequences.
It is therefore necessary to adopt a more appropriate attitude in order to give the issue the importance it deserves in the dialogue between religions.
It is often wrongly assumed that the different names of God in the Hebrew Bible can be considered synonymous. We will examine some of them, as well as the Y-H-W-H tetragram, in order to understand their meaning and specificity.

Y-H-W-H

According to Exodus 3:14, Moses asks God how he should respond to the children of Israel who ask Him what His name is, and God replies: *Ehyeh asher ehyeh*, which St Jerome translated as *Ego sum qui sum* and which most have translated into English as *I am that I am*. It is a present tense already found in the Septuagint version, but the original Hebrew has a future tense: *I will be what I will be*, as can be read in Zech 14:9: "In that day the Lord will be Eḥad/One, and His name will be one". The Tetragrammaton comes from a declination to the third person of what is said in Exodus. Y-H-W-H is He who was, is and will be. The Jews do not pronounce the Tetragrammaton. There are no vowels in the Hebrew Bible, so the biblical Tetragrammaton is all consonants and its correct pronunciation is uncertain. Already in pre-Christian times, during the reading of the *Scriptures* and in the liturgy of the Temple in Jerusalem, the name was pronounced *A-donay*, in scrupulous observance of the commandment "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" (Ex 20:7; Dt 5:11). Only on special occasions, such as the Day of *Kippur*, was it pronounced by the High Priest.
The Masoretes, who worked on the text of the Hebrew Scriptures from the 6th to the 10th century, did not know the original pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton and pronounced it with the vowel signs of the Hebrew words *A-donay* or *Eloqim* (see below). Today, in various contexts, Jews use the expression *Ha-Shem* (the Name) to refer to God, in order to avoid pronouncing the divine names.
The Tetragrammaton occurs 5372 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, missing only in the *Song of Songs*, *Esther* and *Qohelet*.
In 1996, a group of eminent biblical scholars and prominent figures from the Jewish and Christian cultural worlds signed an *Appeal for the Name of God*, addressed to

publishers, newspaper and magazine editors, urging them not to vocalise Y-H-W-H.[16] The Magisterium of the Catholic Church has also addressed this issue in a document entitled 'Letter to Episcopal Conferences on the Name of God', published in 2008 by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, which states that 'in liturgical celebrations, hymns and prayers, the name of God should not be used or pronounced in the form of the tetragrammaton Y-H-W-H'.

A-donay
It means 'My Lord' and is often associated with *Ṣewaot: Lord of hosts*, or rather *Lord of the (heavenly) hosts*. It occurs 131 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. As mentioned above, this Name is often substituted for the Tetragrammaton in the reading of the Hebrew text.

Elohim, El
El is the semantic particle for the divine and alone means 'powerful'. Linguistically, *Elohim* is a *maiestatis* plural form of El and occurs 2523 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is missing only in *Obadiah*, the *Song of Songs*, *Esther* and *Lamentations*.

Shadday
This is a Divine Name used mainly in the biblical text in the patriarchal era. *Shadday*, when related to the Hebrew word *El*, means "the mighty one who feeds, satisfies and provides". However, its etymology is questionable. It occurs 48 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Divine Name in Jewish mysticism

In Judaism, every single letter corresponds to a number and the Masters teach that God dwells in each of the letters of the *Torah*. The act of creation is thus explained in the sequence of letters that make up the Teaching (*Torah*) given to Israel, while the words represent only the first and outermost level of reading.
Even before the esotericists' began to speculate on language, the Name of God occupied a central place in their conceptions.
From the 2nd century AD onwards, the Tetragrammaton, which had become unpronounceable, is sometimes referred to as *Shem ha-meforash*: the term is ambiguous and has contradictory meanings. On the one hand, *meforash* means 'communicated', 'manifested', 'explained', but in this context it can also mean 'separated' and 'hidden'. From the 2nd and 3rd centuries, purely mystical names of God, constructed from sequences of letters taken from certain verses of the Hebrew Scriptures, were also called *Shem ha-meforash*. This use is also attested in Midrashic and Talmudic literature. Thus, divine names of 12, 42 or 72 letters are spoken of.
In the *Qabalah*, the *Torah* is conceived not only as an orderly collection of ritual prescriptions and historical narratives, but also as an uninterrupted series of divine

16 The appeal has been republished in the new edition of *Vademecum per il lettore della Bibbia*, Morcelliana, Bologna 2017, 242-243.

Names, almost like a single Name of unimaginable power: in the mysterious sound of this Name, the letters transcend the temporary limit of words, and show all their creative power intact. For the *Qabalah*, the four letters that make up the Tetragrammaton contain the representation of all worlds and all levels of reality.

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4. THE ELECTION OF ISRAEL

CHAPTER

4

The divine election of Israel is a theme that is often presented as contradicting the universality of divine love and the principle of universal human equality, one of the main achievements of modernity.

The fact that Israel is "chosen" does not mean that it is better than others, or that it thinks it is: God chose a small people to carry out his plan for the benefit of all humanity. From the call of Abraham - the first person in the Bible to be called a Jew (*'ivrì*) - the universal purpose of this individual choice is clear: "In you all the families of the earth shall be called blessed" (Gen 12:3b).

But in the Bible, the focus on universality begins with Noah, long before Abraham. In fact, it is with him - that is, with the new humanity that emerged from the Flood - that the first covenant is made.

In Judaism, therefore, there is a dual structure of covenant and election, articulated in Noachism (the covenant with Noah and his descendants) and Mosaicism (the covenant of Moses). While the one who enters into the covenant of Moses is bound to obey 613 commandments (*mitzvot*), the *noachide* (the descendant of Noah and thus every human being) is bound to obey seven commandments:1) establishment of courts (every human society needs justice) 2) prohibition of blasphemy; 3) prohibition of idolatry; 4) prohibition of adultery; 5) prohibition of murder; 6) prohibition of theft; 7) prohibition of eating any part of a living animal (prohibition of cruelty to animals). By keeping these commandments, the Noachide will enter the world to come, i.e. he will have a share in eternal life.

Some authors consider the Noahic Covenant to be compatible with all cultures and all different ways of being human: in this sense, it can indeed be called universal. Indeed, the fundamental message of the Hebrew Bible is that universality, the covenant with Noah, is only the context and prelude to the irreducible plurality of cultures.

If one examines the relationship between Jacob and Esau on the one hand, as well as that between Isaac and Ishmael on the other, one can see how a more correct attention to the texts can lead one to see possibilities for reconciliation between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, even where there are apparently irreconcilable conflicts. The election of the one is not at odds with the election of the other. This idea was amply developed by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in *Not in God's Name*: "Unity in the heavens creates diversity on earth. The same is true of civilisations. The fundamental message of the Hebrew Bible is that universality - the covenant with Noah - is only the context and prelude to the irreducible plurality of cultures, those systems of meaning through which human beings have sought to understand the relationship between themselves, the world and the Source of Being. The Platonic assertion of the universality of truth

is valid when applied to science and the description of what is. It is not when applied to ethics, spirituality and our sense of what ought to be. There is a difference between *physis* and *nomos*, between description and prescription, between nature and culture. Cultures are like languages. The world they describe is the same, but the ways in which they do so are almost infinitely variable"[17].

In Christian theology, one's own election does not replace Israel's, but complements it, in the sense that it realises the openness to the nations that is promised to Israel. The Second Vatican Council states: "Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ - Abraham's sons according to faith - are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles." (*Nostra Aetate*, 4). This is the foundation that enables Jews and Christians to work together to repair the world (*tikkun olam*), which all humanity so desperately needs.

Recent examples of such active collaboration in the field of study are the two texts mentioned in the bibliography, *La Bibbia dell'Amicizia* and *Not in God's name*. In the former, Jews and Christians present their readings of the sacred texts in a common discovery of the riches of the Word; in the latter, they discuss difficult passages of Scripture which, when misinterpreted, have caused serious damage in past centuries and risk continuing to do so unless they are addressed in a new way.

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5. JUSTICE AND MERCY

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Starting from the profound realisation that the Bible reveals only one God, a God who is both just and merciful, it is understood that even difficult issues (such as the correct interpretation of opposites like love and hate, war and peace, violence and non-violence, revenge and forgiveness) must not become a pretext for opposing Judaism and Christianity.
The simplistic view of a God who wants justice and revenge in the Old Testament and a God who calls for love and forgiveness in the New Testament, although declared a heresy by the Church with the condemnation of Marcionism, is still wrongly stereotyped today.

"Justice, justice shall you pursue"

A particularly sensitive issue in this context is that of *neqamah* (often interpreted as revenge), which is explicitly forbidden to the children of Israel and at the same time is an expression of the great divine love of justice. He cannot tolerate that the evil done should go unpunished, that the cry of the oppressed and the wronged should go unheard: injustice will not have the last word, and He will intervene directly to make wrongs right.
"Justice, justice shall you pursue" (Deut. 16:20) are the words that Moses addresses to the children of Israel before they enter the land of Canaan. He knows that he will not be able to participate in this new phase of Jewish history because the end of his days is approaching, and with thoughtful solicitude he imparts his last teachings, including: "You shall set up judges and law enforcement officials for yourself in all your cities that the Lord, your God, is giving you, for your tribes, and they shall judge the people [with] righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show favouritism, and you shall not take a bribe, for bribery blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts just words. Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may live and possess the land the Lord, your God, is giving you" (Deut. 16:18-20). Why is the word "justice" repeated twice? Since no word in the Torah is useless, there must be a reason for a word to appear twice. The reason may be that we need time to reflect, to ask ourselves whether what we are really after is justice, and not something else that only appears to be justice.
The Lord stresses the importance of righteousness so that His people may remain on the right path and receive His blessing. But it is good to remember that justice (*ṣedaqah*), before being a political and social ideal, is a divine attribute, along with

that of mercy (raḥamim). Psalm 145 defines God as a king who is patient (*ḥanun*), merciful (*raḥum*) and righteous (*tzaddiq*): "The Lord is just in all His ways and good in all His works" (v. 17). If there were only justice, the world would not last, because no one, not even the most righteous, could withstand the severity of divine judgement; nor if there were only mercy, because wrongdoers would systematically go unpunished: it is in the dialectic between the two that the history of civilisations lies. Justice, then, is not an outward conformity to the Torah, but an intimate and trusting relationship with God, of which the observance of the precepts is the outward expression. It is the inwardness that gives value to the outwardness, and that makes the outwardness visible.

Mercy, forgiveness and its limitations

There are numerous biblical passages in which mercy (*raḥamim*) appears, a word derived from *reḥem*/womb, indicating God's visceral, maternal love, e.g., "And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed: Lord, Lord, benevolent God, Who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness and truth, preserving loving kindness for thousands'" (Ex. 34:6-7); "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Ps. 85:10); "Hear my voice in accordance with your love" (Ps. 119:149); "The earth is filled with your love, Lord" (Ps. 119:64).

Every night before going to sleep, a Jew recites the *Shema*, which is preceded by these words: "Lord of the world! I forgive all those who have angered me, who have vexed me, and who have sinned against me... make us lie down, our Father, in peace, and make us rise up, our King, in serene life and in peace, spread over us the hut (*sukkah*) of your shalom (*peace*)."

On the holiest day of the Jewish year, *Yom Kippur*, a day entirely devoted to fasting and prayer, the Lord forgives sins committed against Him, but even He cannot forgive sins committed against other people: in the days of penance preceding this great day, each person must go to the one he has offended and ask him directly for forgiveness.

A significant example of this can be found in the following story: during the Second World War, Simon Wiesenthal (1908 - 2005) was a prisoner in a camp near Lviv (Ukraine), and a dying SS soldier wanted to be forgiven by a Jew, but he felt he could not. Afterwards, the question of justice and forgiveness continued to haunt Wiesenthal, who wrote a book, *The Sunflower*[18], in which he recounts the whole affair and asks the reader what he should have done under the circumstances. The latest Italian edition contains 47 answers, including those of Abraham Heschel, Primo Levi, Gabriel Marcel, Herbert Marcuse and Jacques Maritain, which provide interesting food for thought and insight.

Wiesenthal could and perhaps should have forgiven the soldier if he had asked for forgiveness for the sins committed against him, but how could he forgive the sins

18 S. Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, Schocken 1998.

committed against others? Put more simply, if A slaps B, can C forgive him?

Violence in the Bible

The violence in these books confuses all readers, Jews and Christians alike: "The experience of reading the Bible involves an element of pain because of the huge gulf between certain biblical verses and our conscience. How can we bridge the gap between the moral world of the reader and that of the Bible?"[19].
M. Goodman identifies three types of reading: the *fundamentalist* reading, based on a belief in the total sanctity of the text and the subordination of the reader to it; the *anarchist* reading, which bridges the gap between the text and his or her moral conscience through a creative and ingenious interpretation of the text; and the *perplexed* reading: "The perplexed reader is the one who does not alienate himself from the text, but also refuses to compromise his moral values in order to agree with the text"[20].
When asked how a person can compare his values with the sacred text, Goodman's answer is that the source from which the individual draws inspiration for this "primacy of conscience" is precisely the Torah. Indeed, it is the Torah itself which shows that the human conscience is a place of revelation[21].

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21 For further details see *op. cit*., 170-174.

6. PRECEPTS AND VALUES

CHAPTER

Judaism is so different from other religions that it can hardly be defined as a religion in the usual sense of the word, especially because of its character, which is succinctly expressed in the Fathers' Maxims (*Pirqè Avot*) in five Hebrew words: "*Lo hamidrash 'iqqar ellà ha-ma'asè*", which can be explained as follows: "What counts is not theoretical research, not philosophical or scholarly treatises, but action, the translation into concrete deeds of the principles to which one is supposed to adhere".
Although Judaism is based on assumptions of faith - such as the existence and omnipotence of God and the divine origin of the Torah - none of its classical texts (Bible, *Mishnah*, *Talmud*, ancient ritualists) impose them as dogmas to be accepted uncritically, but rather as elements to which the individual must be led through education based above all on the practice of the commandments (*mitzvot*).
The Jew's actions are focused on this world, and although it is an accepted idea in Jewish tradition that there is a hereafter in which individuals will be rewarded according to their actions, the Jew must not see the ultimate goal of his actions as enjoyment in the hereafter, but *living a righteous life* on this earth, enjoying life as a divine gift.

Jews are required to observe 613 commandments (miṣwot): 365 prohibitions and 248 obligations. These numbers refer to the human condition: 365 as many as the days of the year, and 248 as many as the parts of the human body. Every moment and every part of the body is therefore directed towards observing the commandments.
But why observe the commandments? Perhaps for social or hygienic reasons, or to submit to an authority and thus avoid the burden of responsibility for one's actions? To follow the commandments solely for practical reasons (the social usefulness of the Sabbath, the hygienic value of the food rules, etc.) would be to reduce the rules commanded by God to merely human rules and to glorify godless autonomous behaviour, to the point of adapting them to petty convenience. But neither is it necessary to follow the rules of tradition in response to the command of a superior power to obey blindly, silencing our instincts, needs and desires. Rather, acceptance of the commandments is the consequence of a covenant with the Lord in which one has accepted an original principle, a higher order, that of *qedushah* (holiness as *distinction*), based on God's command (see for example Lev. 11,44-45: "*For I am the Lord your God, and you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, because I am holy, and you shall not defile yourselves through any creeping creature that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord Who has brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God. Thus, you shall be holy, because I am holy*" and Lev. 19,1-2: "*And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, and say to*

them, You shall be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy."
This is what the imitation of God consists in: the free acceptance of the commandments and their observance for the express and sole purpose of being distinct and consecrating every act of our day. It follows that for the Jew, studying, interacting with teachers, working for the good of the community are all ways of renewing the relationship with God every day.
In this sense, study is the primary tool of Jewish education, which has the dual purpose of acquiring knowledge of the *Torah* and its commandments, and at the same time of disseminating what has been learned, so that knowledge is not the privilege of a few, and so that through general education one grows in respect. The imperative contained in the *Shema* (Deut. 6:7 and 11:19) to repeat and teach all the commandments is followed in both passages by the expression "and you shall talk to them about it" (*vedibarta bam*), which emphasizes mnemonic teaching (repeating to remember), characterized by dialogue, in order to provide children with instruction that is open to questioning.
Thus, what is transmitted is not only information and notions, but also tools for understanding that are provided through dialogue, stimulating the autonomous elaboration of what is transmitted. Jewish education is thus based on discourse, a starting point and a stimulus to the search for new meanings.

Judaism also places great emphasis on social justice and solidarity, values that play an extremely important role. Like most commandments, those of solidarity are not reduced to mere moral advice, but are actualized into norms that prescribe with great precision the behaviours to be followed.
Judaism teaches how to behave in this world: many themes have developed in the tradition, such as respect for the elderly, sensitivity to suffering, love of nature, hospitality, advocacy for social justice, protection of the helpless, aversion to discrimination and racism, support for bereaved families, and care for the sick, elderly, and needy.
When the *Torah* attempts to teach the duty of solidarity with those who are oppressed in society, it recalls the similar situation experienced by the Jews during slavery in Egypt. The most vulnerable individuals in Jewish society mentioned in the Bible are foreigners, orphans, and widows because they lack family support or those who will intercede on their behalf.
Helping those in need is not an act of pity, but rather a legal obligation, an act of justice (*tzedaqah*), regardless of how much love or sympathy we feel for the people who are the recipients of our help. The *Torah* states our obligation to be charitable and to help even our enemies.
The set of commandments (*miṣwot*) is thus intended to make Israel the chosen people, not in the sense of having special privileges, but on the contrary, a people with much heavier duties and responsibilities than others, to constitute a model society in which the ideas of equality and brotherhood of all people, justice and love are translated into concrete acts of everyday life.

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7. THE JEWISH CALENDAR AND THE CYCLE OF HOLIDAYS

CHAPTER

7

The Hebrew dimension of time oscillates between linearity and circularity, between return and perspective, between memory and hope. This profound and simultaneous duality is well expressed in the words with which the Hebrew language designates two basic "timepieces": the month and the year, those units of measurement with which man constructs the progression of time. *Shanah* (year) and *Ḥodesh* (month) express the repetition of the circular - indeed, the root *sh-n-h* means to repeat, to duplicate - and the unpredictable succession - the root *ḥ-d- sh* means to renew.
Of the laws given to the Hebrew people, the first, revealed by the Lord to Moses in the land of Egypt, concerns the reckoning of time: "The Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, this month shall be to you the head of the months; to you it shall be the first of the months of the year." (Ex 12:1-2). The disposition and attitude to control and manage time is the first sign of freedom: a slave cannot control his own time, there is always someone else who controls it for him. Moreover, the importance of this commandment seems to point to the possibility of achieving, through the unity of the calendar, the unity of the people, wherever they may be.
Two principles can be deduced from this verse: the first is that the month of Nisan is the first month of the year, and the second is that the task of establishing the calendar rests with the people of Israel by celebrating the *Rosh Hodesh* (Head of the Month) at the beginning of each month, which is a minor holiday mainly because of the variations contained in the daily prayers.
Three aspects of the division of time determine the holidays and recurrences in the Hebrew calendar: the relationship to the seasons, the weekly occurrence of the Sabbath, and the beginning of the holiday at sunset rather than sunrise. In the Jewish (lunisolar) calendar, days are calculated from sunset to sunset, months from the moon, and years from the sun.

Years and months

Since the lunar year consists of about 354 days and the solar year of about 365 days, the lunar cycle must be adjusted annually to the solar calendar so that holidays, such as Pesach, do not lose their reference to the seasons to which they are assigned. Without this adjustment, these holidays would fall eleven days earlier each year. The adjustment is made by introducing an embolismic year seven times in a cycle of nineteen years (3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years) by adding an extra month to the calendar, called Adar II (*Adar Sheni*).
In the *Torah*, the months have no names and are simply called "First month' (as in Ex 12:2 for Nisan), 'Second month', 'Third month'. The actual names of the months are

of Babylonian origin and first appear in biblical sources dating from the Babylonian exile and post-exile. Today, the counting of the years begins with Rosh Ha-Shanah (New Year's Eve, see below), which falls in the month of Tishrei.
The months are as follows: Tishrei (September-October), Heshvan (October-November), Kislev (November-December), Tevet (December-January), Shevat (January-February), Adar (February-March), Nisan (March-April), Iyyar (April-May), Sivan (May-June), Tammuz (June-July), Av (July-August), Elul (August-September). In the past, the sighting of the new moon in the land of Israel was used to determine the beginning of the month (*Rosh Hodesh*). And from there the announcement of the new moon was transmitted to the Diaspora. From this practice derives the custom, still in force today, according to which the holidays in the Diaspora (and therefore also in Italy) last one day longer than in the Land of Israel: by adding another day as a holiday, one was protected from the risk of an imperfect transmission of the date.
Jewish years are calculated by referring to the biblical chronology on the date of creation, which rabbinic tradition places at 3760 BC. Thus, to obtain the Jewish year, 3760 is added to the year. For example, 2022/2023 corresponds to the year 5783 in the Jewish calendar.

The holidays in the Jewish calendar can be divided into two main categories, each of which can be further subdivided: (1) those commanded by the Torah, and (2) those that have come later.
The festivals prescribed by the Torah are: (a) *Sabbath*, (b) the three pilgrimage festivals, namely Passover (*Pesach*), Pentecost (*Shavu'ot*) and the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*)[22], (c) New Year's Day (*Rosh ha-Shanah*) and the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), (d) the first day of the lunar month (*Rosh Ḥodesh*).
The three pilgrimage festivals during which people flocked to Jerusalem have an underlying agricultural reference: spring (*Pesach*), the first harvest (*Shavu'ot*) and the grape harvest (*Sukkot*). To these are added other historical and religious meanings; *Pesach* is in fact the day commemorating the Jews' departure from Egyptian slavery, *Shavu'ot* is the day of the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and *Sukkot* is the commemoration of the divine protection of the Jews in the desert on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land, when they lived in tents.
Other recurrences, which are sometimes mentioned in the biblical text, are of rabbinic origin. The main ones are: *Purim*, *Ḥanukkah*, *Lag ba-Omer*, *Tishah Be-Av*, *Tu bi-Shvat*.
The complete list of the recurrences according to the calendar is as follows:
Rosh ha-Shanah (1st of *Tishrei*), *Ghedaliah* fast (3rd of *Tishrei*), *Yom Kippur* (10th of *Tishrei*), *Sukkot* (15th of *Tishrei*), *Sheminì 'Atzeret* (22nd of *Tishrei*), *Simhat Torah* (23rd of *Tishrei*), *Hanukkah* (25th of *Kislev*), *Asarah be-Tevet* (10th of *Tevet*), *Tu bi-Shvat* (15th of *Shevat*), *Esther fast* (13th of *Adar*), *Purim* (14th of *Adar*), *Pesach* (15th of *Nisan*), *Lag ba-Omer* (18th of *Iyyar*), *Shavu'ot* (6th of *Sivan*), *17th of Tammuz fast* and *Tishah be-Av* (9th of *Av*).

22 Linked to Sukkot are the holidays of *Sheminì 'Atzeret* and *Simḥat Torah*.

Finally, some holidays have been added in modern times to celebrate historical events of special significance to the Jewish people throughout the world, both in Israel and in the Diaspora:
The day dedicated to the uprising and persecution in the ghettos was later shortened to *Yom ha Shoah weha-ghevurà* 'The Day of the Shoah and Heroism' (27 of *Nisan*), Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terrorism (*Yom ha-zikka- ron*, 4 of *Iyyar*), Israel Independence Day (*Yom ha-atzma'ut*, 5 of *Iyyar*), Jerusalem Day (*Yom Yerushalayim*, 28 of *Iyyar*).
The solemn holidays, called *mo'adim* or 'appointed times', are special days that differ from the others in several ways: (1) rejoicing, expressed mainly in the prohibition of work and ceremonial meals (with the exception of the Day of Atonement and other fasts); (2) prayer in the synagogue and in the family; and (3) special commandments and traditions associated with individual festivals, such as eating *maṣṣot* on *Pesach* (biblical commandment), lighting *Chanukah* candles (Talmudic precept), and planting trees on *Tu bi-Shvat* (custom/*minhag*).

Saturday (*Sabbath*)

The Sabbath (*Sabbath*), the seventh day of the week, is the weekly rest prescribed by the *Torah*, marked by the cessation of various kinds of activity. The term *Sabbath* is derived from the verb *sh-b-t* "to cease", used in Genesis 2:2-3: "God [...] ceased (*vayyishbot*) on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it he had ceased (*sabbath*) from all the work he had done in creating".
Sabbath begins just before sundown on Friday night and ends on Saturday night with the appearance of the third star in the sky.
Saturday in the Bible and in rabbinic literature
Scripture gives two different reasons for the Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue: "For [in] six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it" (Ex. 20:11) and "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God took you out from there with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm; therefore, the Lord, your God, commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5:15). Two fundamental principles follow from this: the recognition of God as Creator and therefore the acceptance of His authority, and the remembrance of slavery in Egypt, from which derives a moral responsibility towards all social groups, including the weakest: "you shall perform no labour, neither you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your ox, your donkey, any of your livestock, nor the stranger who is within your cities, in order that your manservant and your maidservant may rest like you" (Deut. 5:14 cf. Ex 20:10). On this day, everyone is entitled to rest, no one is excluded.
An important interpretation of the Sabbath commandment is found immediately after the instructions for building the tabernacle: "'Only keep My Sabbaths! For it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I, the Lord, make you holy.

Therefore, keep the Sabbath, for it is a sacred thing for you" (Ex. 31:13-14). Here, the Sabbath is referred to as a visible sign of the covenant between God and Israel from which the sanctification of Israel and the Sabbath flows. There are many passages of Scripture in which the Sabbath precept is taken up, both in the *Torah*, the Prophets, and the Writings.

In the legislation concerning the offerings and sacrifices of the sanctuary, an additional sacrifice is prescribed for the Sabbath[23]: "And on the Sabbath day, two unblemished lambs in the first year, and two tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a meal offering, mixed with oil, and its libation. [This is] the burnt offering of each Sabbath on its Sabbath, in addition to the continual burnt offering and its libation" (Numbers 28:9-10).

There are numerous traditions on *Sabbath* observance in rabbinic literature, most notably in the *Sabbath* treatise of the *Mishnah* (and its *Ghemarah*), which is devoted entirely to the *Sabbath* commandment. The Oral *Torah* is fundamental to understanding the complex legislation of *Sabbath*.

The great importance attached to the commandment of Sabbath rest by the entire tradition of the sages can be summed up in a saying from *Midrash Exodus Rabbah* (25:12): "If all Israel were to observe the Sabbath properly even for one day, the son of David would come. Why? Because it (the Sabbath) is equivalent to the totality of the commandments".

A well-known Babylonian Talmud *Baraity* (Sabbath 119b) says: "on the eve of *Sabbath* two service angels accompany the person from the synagogue to his home. If, when he arrives home, he finds the lamp lit, the table set, and his bed well made, the good angel declares: 'May it be [God's] will that it be so for another Sabbath. And the evil angel, against his will, replies: 'Amen'". Inspired by this tradition in the 16th century, the Kabbalists of Safed composed a song called *Shalom alekhem* "Peace be with you", which many Jews recite before sitting down to eat on Friday evening.

In Ex 20:10 and Deut 5:14, the constitutive dimension of abstaining from work on the Sabbath emerges. The Hebrew term used here is *melakhah*, which is not exactly the same as the word 'work'. Instead, it would be better to identify *melakhah* with any form of 'creative activity'. Therefore, it is not the amount of physical labour that is relevant in determining whether an activity is forbidden or not, but it must be something that alters the normal balance of nature. Thus, for example, it is forbidden to light a fire (and in today's world, to use a machine), which would disrupt the natural course of nature.

The observance of the Sabbath, with its abstention from creative activity, seeks to limit man's power over nature in order to exalt God as the source of all power. Every Sabbath, Jews return the world to God, proclaiming that man enjoys only the authority granted to him by the Creator.

The only types of *melakhah* explicitly forbidden in the written *Torah* are "baking and boiling" (Ex. 16:23), "lighting fire" (Ex. 35:3), and "gathering wood" (Num. 15:32-

23 In the post-Templar synagogue liturgy, this additional sacrifice prescribed for the Sabbath and holidays is replaced by the so-called *musaf*, which is actually an additional prayer to the normal weekday services.

36), while the Oral *Torah* provides the precise interpretation of the commandment, identifying the categories of work that fall under the "creative activities" forbidden on the Sabbath[24]. The *Mishnah* (Sabbath 7:1) gives the list of the thirty-nine main categories of work forbidden on the Sabbath. These activities are called in Hebrew *avot melakhot* - 'prototypical creative activities' - to which are added *toladot* 'derivative creative activities', which are those activities that are similar to the prototypical ones and thus fall into the same category of prohibition. For example, the act of milking a cow (or any other animal) is forbidden because it is considered a corollary of threshing, which is one of the thirty-nine prototypes. Both activities are acts of separation: threshing separates the grain from the chaff, milking separates the milk from the cow.

In order to maintain and improve the observance of Sabbath rest, and to protect the individual from possible transgressions, which were considered very serious in the tradition, the Sages introduced other prohibitions that act as "hedges around the Torah" (*ghezerot*), extending the boundaries of the individual commandments[25]. These include *mukzeh*, the prohibition against handling objects useful for creative activities on the Sabbath, lest this inadvertently lead to the performance of a *melakhah*: it is forbidden, for example, to handle pens and pencils, or to handle money or objects normally used in business.

In the contemporary world, with the invention of new tools and the introduction of new human activities, the rabbis evaluate activities incompatible with Sabbatical rest according to the criterion of analogy. Many everyday gestures characteristic of the modern world are thus included in the main categories of prohibited creative activities, thus excluding, for example, the use of electronic devices and means of transport.

Sabbath observance includes not only prohibitions but also positive commandments, including the *Kiddush* 'sanctification' over the wine cup[26], the three prescribed meals and *Torah* study. Indeed, it is customary to gather in the synagogue on Friday evening before dinner and again on Saturday afternoon to hear sermons and lectures on the *Torah* and the central texts of Judaism.

The life of an observant Jew revolves around the Sabbath, the preparations for which begin on Thursday evening and take all day on Friday. Some make no commitments after noon on Friday, except those related to *Sabbath* preparation. They also do not

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24 In a saying quoted in the *Mekhilta* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (35:1), a halakhic *midrash* of the Tannaitic period, and later in the treatise *Sabbath* (49b) of the Babylonian Talmud, it is stated that on the Sabbath all kinds of work required for the construction of the Tabernacle are forbidden, since in Ex. 31: 13-14 recalls the observance and importance of the Sabbath in connection with the instructions for building the Tabernacle. Therefore, according to the Sages, the building of the tabernacle serves as a paradigm for creative activity.

25 These rabbinic prohibitions are also known as *shevut* - 'rest' (*Beṣah* 5:2).

26 Text of the *Kiddush*: " (…) Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, Creator of the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who finding favor with us, sanctified us with mitzvot. In love and favor, You made the holy Sabbath our heritage as a reminder of the work of Creation. As first among our sacred days, it recalls the Exodus from Egypt. You chose us and set us apart from the peoples. In love and favor You have given us Your holy Sabbath as an inheritance. Blessed are You, Adonai, who sanctifies Sabbath".

travel unless they are sure they have the right accommodation for the *Sabbath*.
Sabbath is honoured with special clothing, different from that of the weekdays (see *bShabbat* 114a). The preparation for *Sabbath* is very meticulous: the house is well lit, worldly worries and anxieties are put aside, the bath is taken, all the food for the meal is prepared, especially the wine and the two Sabbath breads, the candles are arranged, and the house is thoroughly cleaned. The table is set with the finest tableware.

The Sabbath liturgy

On Friday evening before the Sabbath, the mistress of the house lights at least two candles, according to the double Sabbath commandment: "Remember (*zakhor*) the Sabbath day to sanctify it" (Ex 20:8) and "Observe (*shamor*) the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Deut. 5:12), the first being the commandment concerning the ritual obligations proper to the day and the other the prohibition of work.
At two of the three ritual meals prescribed for *Sabbath*, dinner and lunch, two loaves of bread, called *ḥallot*, covered with a napkin, are placed on the table. They are a reminder of the double portion of manna gathered on the sixth day of the week in preparation for the Sabbatical rest: "When the sixth day came, they gathered a double portion of bread (*leḥem mishneh*), two '*omer* each" (Ex 16:22).
Synagogue prayer begins on Friday evening with a service known as *Qabbalat Sabbath* "Sabbath Reception", which consists of various rites to six psalms (Ps 95-99; 29), corresponding to the six days of the week, followed by the song *Lekhah Dodi* "Come, my beloved", a liturgical poem composed in the 16th century by Rav Shlomo Alkabetz, a Kabbalist from Safed[27]. It is followed by a seventh psalm (Ps 92), entitled "Psalm. Hymn. For the Sabbath" (v. 1).
The service continues with the Evening Prayer (*'arvit*), which undergoes some changes on the Sabbath, and the cantillation of Genesis 2:1-3, which recalls God's rest on the seventh day of creation. Immediately after an additional blessing, called *Me'en Sheva* (a summary of the seven blessings of the *Amidah*[28]), greetings are offered with the typical *Sabbath Shalom* expression 'Saturday of Peace'.
At home, a special prayer called *Kiddush* (sanctification) is recited over a goblet of wine, and children are blessed according to various rituals. All three Sabbath meals are then celebrated with songs (*zemirot*) that express the joyful nature of the celebration. It is customary to invite guests to the Sabbath meals, especially the poor and the lonely people.
On Saturday morning, at the end of the morning prayer (*Shacharit*), enriched with

27 The chorus of this poem goes like this: "Come, my Beloved, to meet the Bride; let us welcome the Sabbath". It is God speaking to Israel, inviting them to go out to meet the Bride, who is the *Sabbath*. The mystics of Safed, even before this song was composed, used to go out into the fields on the *Sabbath* to greet the coming bride. They based this custom on an account in the Talmud of Rav Ḥanina who, late on Friday afternoon, wrapped himself in his tallit and proclaimed: "Let us go out and meet the *Sabbath* Queen" (*bShabbat* 119a). In the liturgy of *Qabbalat Sabbath*, the worshippers still turn towards the entrance of the synagogue when the last verse of *Lekha Dodi* is sung: "Come in peace, O crown of her Husband, both with songs and gladness; among the faithful, the beloved people, come, O Bride, come, O Bride".

28 The *Amidah* is the fundamental part of the prayer. Today it consists of nineteen blessings on weekdays and seven blessings on Saturdays and festivals. The first and last three blessings are the same in different circumstances.

additional psalms, the weekly portion of the Torah (*parashah*) is read after the *Sefer Torah* (Torah Scroll), adorned with precious embroidery and other ornaments, is taken from the holy ark and brought in procession to the synagogue. Before the reading, the scroll is shown to the audience while the congregation sings in Hebrew praising the great gift of *Torah* received from God by the children of Israel through Moses. This is followed by the prophetic reading (*haftarah*), which is thematically related to the *Torah* portion just read. The morning service concludes with the additional prayer for the *Sabbath* and other festivals, called *Musaf*.
In the afternoon prayer (*minhah*), specific parts are added for the *Sabbath*, and the first part of the following week's *parashah* is read. In the Saturday evening prayer (*'arvit*), a paragraph is added about the distinction between the sanctity of the *Sabbath* and the secularity of the weekdays. This prayer paves the way for what is known as the 'Exit of the *Sabbath'* (*Moṣaè Sabbath*), when the three stars appear in the sky: a rite called *Havdalah* 'distinction' is then performed, recited over a goblet of wine and a lighted candle. In this rite, God is blessed for distinguishing the sacred from the profane, the light from the dark, and the *Sabbath* from the other six days. Aromas are also smelled to symbolise the fragrance of the *Sabbath* and to comfort the soul saddened by separation from the holy day.

Fasting

"So said the Lord of Hosts: The fast of the fourth [month], the fast of the fifth [month], the fast of the seventh [month], and the fast of the tenth [month] shall be for the house of Judah for joy and happiness and for happy holidays (…)" (Zech. 8:19). The fasts commemorating the tragic events that led to the destruction of the Sanctuary are as follows:
Tishah be-Av - '9 of Av' (July/August)
It is a day of fasting and mourning. On this date, which has come to symbolise tragic moments in the history of the Jewish people, we remember the destruction of the first and second Temple in Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.
Fasting begins the evening before and the penitential acts of the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) are prescribed. The synagogues are decorated in mourning, people sit on the floor and only passages on sad subjects and the Book of *Ekhah* (Lamentations), which collects five poems expressing the lament of those who escaped the catastrophe and describing the devastation and ruin of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, are studied.
10 *of Tevet* (December/January)
It commemorates the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, but it is also the day that the rabbinate has dedicated to the recitation of the *Kaddish* ('sanctification') in memory of the deportees murdered in the Nazi death camps whose date of death is unknown. The rabbis wanted to link these tragedies, since the siege of Jerusalem was the first tragedy and the Shoah will hopefully be the last. The fast is observed from dawn to dusk.
17 *of Tammuz* (June/July)

It commemorates the entry of the Babylonians (9 Tammuz 586 BC) and the Romans (17 Tammuz 70 AD) into Jerusalem. Other tragedies are associated with this date, such as the sin of the Golden Calf, the final destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar and the suspension of sacrifices in the Sanctuary during the Roman siege. The fast is observed from dawn to dusk.

Other fasts:

Taanit Esther - "*Fasting of Esther*", on the 13th of Adar, the day before *Purim* (see below), the Festival of Rites. This fast commemorates the fast that Queen Esther and the people made to obtain God's help against the decree that Haman wanted.

Fasting of Gadaliah on the 3rd of Tishri: commemorates the assassination of the governor of Jerusalem, Godolia, whose death marked the end of the autonomy left to the Jews after the destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

Fasting of the Firstborn on the 14th of Nisan (March/April): commemorates the death of the firstborn of Egypt - the last of the ten plagues. The fast of the first-born commemorates the miracle of the rescue of the Hebrew first-born from the tenth plague that struck the Egyptians. However, the joy of salvation must also take into account the suffering of others; hence this fast, reserved for the first-born, was instituted.

THE CYCLE OF HOLIDAYS

Feast of the Dedication (Ḥanukkah)

Hanukkah[29], also known as the 'Feast of the Dedication', falls on the 25th of Kislev (November/December) and lasts eight days. It is one of the post-Biblical holidays: it celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over Antiochus IV Epiphanes (164 BC), in a war to defend the religious independence of Judaism against the forced imposition of Hellenism, which led to the establishment of a Jewish monarchy of priestly lineage. Another reason for the festival is to commemorate the rededication of the Temple, which had been desecrated by the Hellenistic invaders, who had erected an altar dedicated to the Olympian Zeus. The events are recorded in the two books of Maccabees[30]. 2Mac 10:5-8 says that on the 25th of Kislev the altar was rededicated and a feast was held for eight days, since it had not been possible to celebrate *Sukkot*[31] during the war. 1Mac 4:56, on the other hand, refers to the perpetual institution of the feast: "Moreover Judas and his brethren with the whole congregation of Israel ordained, that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year by the space of eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month Casleu, with mirth and gladness".

Hanukkah is also known as the 'Festival of Lights', as recorded by Flavius Jose-

29 From the root *ḥanakh* 'to consecrate', 'to dedicate' a temple.

30 The books of Maccabees, deuterocanonical for the Catholic canon, are not part of the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jewish tradition therefore considers them 'external' (*ḥiṣonim*).

31 The Temple of Solomon was dedicated during the festival of *Sukkot* (1 Kings 8:2, 65-66). It is probably for this reason that *Hanukkah* at the time of the Temple retained some liturgical affinities with *Sukkot*.

phus[32]. The reference to the symbol of light, which later became the main symbol of the festival, is also found in an account in the Babylonian Talmud (*Sabbath* 21b), according to which the Maccabees, when they rededicated the Temple and rekindled the candelabrum (*menorah*), found only a small jar of oil still bearing the seal of the High Priest. It should have lasted only one night, but miraculously it lasted eight days. This is why the rabbinical law states that the lights should be lit for all eight days of the festival.

The main commandment is to light candles each night of the festival in honour of the miracle recounted in the Talmud[33]. One candle is lit on the first night, and another is added on each of the following days, until all eight are lit on the last night. This gradual lighting corresponds, according to the school of Hillel, to a movement of spiritual ascent: "One ascends to a higher level in matters of holiness and there is no retreat. Therefore, if the aim is to adapt the number of lights to the number of days, there is no alternative but to increase the number with each passing day"[34].

The special candelabrum of the festival, called the *ḥanukkiah*, must be placed at the entrance or on the windowsill of the house or synagogue, so that the lamps can be seen from outside and the miracle they perform can be witnessed. There are nine lamps in all, as there is an additional lamp, called the *shamash* ('servant'), which is used to light the eight festival lamps and is not allowed to be used for profane purposes, including lighting the other lamps.

After the lighting of the lamps, many communities sing the hymn *Maoz Tzur* - 'Rocky Fortress' - which celebrates in verse the mighty intervention of God in delivering His people from four of their historic enemies: Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman and Antiochus.

It is customary to abstain from all forms of work during the time the lamps are lit.

In the past, the lighting of candles was essentially a domestic and synagogue affair; more recently, the ancient custom of lighting candles in public has been revived, and large candelabras are placed in public spaces for this purpose.

During the festival, a number of other prayers are added to the ordinary rite, including the prayer A*l ha-Nissim* - "We give thanks for miracles" - and the *Hallel* (Psalm 113-118), after the morning *Amidah*. There is a public *Torah* reading from Numbers 7:1-89, which tells of the gifts offered by the princes of Israel for the dedication of the tabernacle in the desert, and Numbers 8:1-7, which prescribes the lighting of the *menorah*. The prophetic reading (*haftarah*) for the *Hanukkah Sabbath* is Zech 2:14 - 4:7, which contains a vision of the Temple *menorah*.

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32 "Nay they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when, after a long time of intermission, they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival on account of the restoration of their temple worship for eight days. And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival". Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* XII, 7:7

33 A *baraity* recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (*Sabbath* 21b) says: "The commandment (*mitzvah*) of kindling the *Hanukkah* lights is from sunset until traffic in the marketplace ceases."

34 Hillel's is a response to the school of Shammai, which began by lighting all eight lamps on the first night and then lit one less on each following night. Cf. *Sabbath* 21b.

It is also customary today to give gifts to children who play on the days of *Hanukkah* with a special spinning top - called a *sevivon* in Hebrew and a *dreidel* in Yiddish - with the four initials of the phrase 'A great miracle happened here' inscribed on its face.
To commemorate the miracle of the oil cruet, many people eat fried foods (e.g. *sufganiòt*, doughnut-like sweets) or oil-based foods.

The Feast of the Dedication in the Gospel of John
In the Gospel of John there is the only mention of the Festival of the Dedication in the entire New Testament: "Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade" (John 10: 22-23). It is in this context that Jesus delivers the famous discourse on the relationship between shepherd and flock, calling himself the "good shepherd" (John 10: 11-18).

Lag Ba-Omer
The festival of *Lag Ba-Omer* coincides with the thirty-third day of the 'Counting of the Omer'[35], as indicated by the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew letters *lamed* (30) and *ghimel* (3), hence the word '*lag*'. The holiday falls on the 18th of the month of *Iyyar* (April/May) and was established in the post-Talmudic period as a semi-holiday to commemorate the cessation of the plague which, according to Talmudic and Midrashic sources[36], killed 24,000 disciples of Rabbi Aqivà during the Bar Kokhbà revolt (132-135 AD).
During *Lag ba-Omer*, the abstentions that characterise the first part of the seven-week period of the 'counting of the *Omer*' are suspended: hair cutting[37] and shaving, wedding celebrations and other forms of entertainment such as music and dancing are permitted.
The liturgy of this day offers nothing special compared to the regular weekday service, except for the omission of the part of the morning and afternoon prayers called *Taḥanun* ('supplication').
According to the Kabbalists, *Lag ba-Omer* also coincides with the anniversary of the death of Shimon Bar Yochai, the author of the *Zohar*, the Book of Splendour, the most important mystical text in Jewish tradition. It is therefore customary in Israel to light bonfires in front of his tomb and that of his son Eliezer in Meron, as well as at the tomb of Shimon ha-Ṣaddiq (Simeon the Just) in Jerusalem, on the occasion of the holiday. Thousands of people gather at these sites to sing and dance.
A hymn in honour of Shimon Bar Yochai, consisting of ten verses recalling the ten

35 The counting begins on the second day of Easter and ends on Pentecost. The *Omer* was a sacrifice of barley offered in the sanctuary. After the sacrifice, it is permitted to eat the produce of the new harvest.

36 A Babylonian Talmudic *baraita* concerning the 24,000 disciples of Aqiba states: 'It is taught that they died in the period from Passover to Pentecost'. *Yevamot* 62b. Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 61:3; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 11:6.

37 In some communities, three-year-olds are given their first haircut, while their parents distribute wine and sweets.

sefirot of the *Kabbalah*, is the typical song of the holiday. Italian Jews also sing it on various other festive occasions.
In Israel, as well as in the Diaspora, bonfires are lit in open spaces and children play with bows and arrows. In Israel, the day is celebrated as 'Student Day' on the campuses of various universities.
The dozens of weddings held at *Lag ba-Omer* add a special festive character to this occasion.

Pesach (Passover)
"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the Lord, and on the fifteenth day of that month the Lord's Feast of Unleavened Bread. You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days" (Lev 23: 5-6).
Pesach falls in the Jewish month of Nisan (March/April), the first full moon of spring. It commemorates the liberation from slavery in Egypt and is the first of the three agricultural festivals. In fact, it is also called *Hag ha-Aviv*, 'Spring Festival', because this is the time when the first grain ripens in the Land of Israel, which was brought as an offering during the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The festival lasts seven days in Israel and eight days in the Diaspora, with the first and last two days being solemn festivals and the others being half festivals.
The word *Pesach* comes from the verb *pasaḥ* (to pass over) and recalls the biblical episode in which the angel of the Lord, sent to smite the firstborn of the Egyptians in the final plague, 'passed over' the houses of the Hebrews, marked with the blood of a sacrificed lamb to be eaten before leaving.
In the *Haggadah*, the text that tells the story of slavery and the Exodus, it is written: "In every generation everyone will remember that he himself came out of Egypt, as it is said on that day, you shall say to your son, 'This is what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt", thus celebrating the joyful event that took place, but also the personal and present freedom of each Jew. The Exodus narrative also teaches that there is no room for full political and social freedom in the community if basic human rights are not respected within it.
From a ritual point of view, during *Pesach* it is absolutely forbidden to eat or even possess leavened food. For this reason it is also known as *Ḥag ha-Maṣṣot*, the feast of unleavened bread. Preparation for Passover requires thorough cleaning of rooms to eliminate even the slightest presence of leavened foods or traces of them. The teachers of the Mishnah stipulate that *ḥametz* (leaven) is to be understood as any mixture of water and flour from five specific grains (wheat, barley, oats, spelt and rye) that has been handled for more than eighteen minutes. If *maṣṣah* is a symbol of freedom, and *ḥametz* represents the Egyptian negativity from which the Jews must free themselves, then this minimal difference - represented by the eighteen minutes of inactivity of the dough that allows it to pass from *maṣṣah* to *ḥametz* - is the infinitesimal gap that separates one from the other.
On the first night of *Pesach*, the S*eder* (order) is celebrated, a dinner during which a precise sequence of ritual gestures and food consumption, as set out in the *Haggadah*, is followed in order to recall, discuss and elaborate on the different stages of the

Exodus. The children also take part in the meal by asking four questions at the beginning to understand "what makes this evening different from all the others". Before the meal itself, they eat unleavened bread, symbolising the hasty flight, and bitter herbs, to remember the suffering of slavery in Egypt. Today, in the absence of the Temple, the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb is no longer performed, but its institution is commemorated at the *Seder*.

Purim (Feast of Lots)

Purim, a minor holiday of rabbinic origin38 [38], falls on the 14th of Adar[39] and celebrates the liberation of the Jewish people from the extermination planned by Haman, a minister of the Persian king Ahasuerus. The story is told in the Book of Esther, known in Hebrew as Meghillat Esther, 'Scroll of Esther'.

The word Purim, which means 'lot', refers to the lot drawn by Haman to determine the date on which the massacre would begin. The lot fell on the 13th of Adar, but another royal decree, issued through the intercession of Queen Esther, cancelled the order and instead allowed the Jews to annihilate their enemies in the Persian Empire on the same day (13th of Adar). On the 14th they rested and celebrated their victory, which had come about thanks to the "reversal of fortune"[40].

Since the Jews of the city of Susa (*Shushan*), the capital of Persia, were granted an extra day to destroy their enemies (Est 9:12-15), they rested on the 15th of Adar (Est 9:18b). In commemoration of this event, the sages decreed that *Purim* should be celebrated on the 14th of Adar in the other cities, and on the 15th of Adar in Susa and all those cities that, like Susa, were surrounded by walls. And out of respect for Jerusalem and other cities in the Land of Israel, all of which were without walls at the time of the events, it was decreed that Purim of Susa (Hebrew *Purim Shushan*) should be celebrated only in those Israeli cities that were surrounded by walls at the time of Joshua's conquest. Today, *Purim Shushan* is only celebrated in Jerusalem, but there are a number of other ancient cities in Israel, such as Jaffa, where it is celebrated on both the 14th and 15th of Adar, as it is doubtful that they were walled in at the time of the conquest.

In the Hasmonean period (2nd-1st century BC), the festival was called 'Mordecai's Day' (2 Mac 15:36), in honour of Mordecai, Esther's relative and close adviser to the king, who played a key role in turning the tide in favour of his people.

Work is permitted on *Purim*, and every Jewish community celebrates this holiday

38 Although it has its roots in the biblical book of Esther, it is considered a minor holiday.

39 In embolismic years, the main feast is celebrated in Adar II, while Adar I is called *Purim Qatan* (little *Purim*), which has none of the ritual or liturgical characteristics of *Purim.*

40 Esther 9:20-22,26: "Now Mordechai recorded these events and sent letters to all the Jews living throughout the provinces of King Achashverosh, near and far 21 [instructing them] to obligate themselves to celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, 22 like the days upon which the Jews were relieved of their enemies, and the month which had been transformed for them from one of sorrow to joy, from mourning to festivity to make them days of feasting, rejoicing, sending food portions one to another and giving gifts to the poor. (…) For this did they call these days '*Purim*,' after the *pur*, because of all of the events of this epistle, [which explains] what happened to them and why they saw fit to [establish the holiday]".

with great joy, in honour and remembrance of God's protection of his people.
An entire treatise of the *Mishnah* is devoted to the details of its observance, particularly the rules for reading the Scroll of Esther. This is why it is called the *Megillah*.
The commandments to be observed on *Purim* are essentially four:
1) The reading of *Megillat Esther* "Scroll of Esther" from a handwritten text on parchment is required, to be performed with special chanting, twice during the festival: on the evening of the eve and during the morning synagogue service. The four verses describing the glory of Mordechai (Esther 2:5; 8:15-16; 10:3) are read louder than the other verses, while whenever the reader mentions the name of Haman, it is customary for the children and all those present to make a noise, even using very loud instruments called frogs. The motive is to hide the name of the evil persecutor.
2) Everyone is obliged to send a gift of at least two kinds of food to a friend or neighbour[41].
3) It is obligatory to give at least one alms to two poor people, equivalent to the minimum price of one meal[42].
4) It is obligatory to have a sumptuous feast[43] during which one eats and drinks wine in abundance.
There is also the custom of dressing up and performing plays in which one dresses up as the characters mentioned in the *Megillah* of Esther. Masked processions are also held in Israel.

***Rosh ha-Shanah* (Jewish New Year)**
Rosh ha-Shanah is the holiday that marks the beginning of the New Year. It falls on the first day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei (September-October), when, according to rabbinic tradition, man was created.
Since Temple times, Rosh Hashanah has been celebrated for two days, both in the Diaspora and in the Land of Israel, as it falls on the first day of the month and it is therefore uncertain whether the witnesses saw the new moon. Consequently, the second day has never been considered the "second day of Diaspora Jews", and both days are considered one long day.
The biblical name for *Rosh ha-Shanah* is *Yom Teru'ah*, the Feast of [Acclamation with] Trumpets, since this holiday is characterised by the blowing of trumpets: "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded. (Yom Teruah)" (Numbers 29:1). Rabbinic interpretation has identified this sound with the sound of the horn (*shofar*)[44], which is primarily an invitation to spiritual rebirth. That is why it is sounded several times on this feast day, except when the feast falls on the Sabbath.

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41 Cf Esther 9:22; *bMeghillah* 7b.

42 Cf *Ibidem*.

43 Traditional Purim pastries include the so-called "Haman's ears", called *hamantashen* ("Haman's pockets") in Yiddish.

44 It is a ram's horn, which reminds us of the ram that Abraham offered as a sacrifice in place of his son Isaac. (Gen 22).

Rosh ha-Shanah is also known as the Day of Judgement (*Yom ha-Din*), for, according to the *Talmud*[45], on this day man is judged by God for all of his actions[46]. According to tradition, three books are opened on *Rosh HaShana*: one for completely wicked people, one for completely righteous people, and one for those in the middle. The completely righteous people are inscribed and sealed for life; the completely wicked people are inscribed and sealed for death. Those in the middle have their judgment suspended until *Yom Kippur*. Since no one can consider themselves as completely righteous nor as wicked because this would lead to renouncing salvation, it is necessary to consider oneself as being a 'person in the middle' and to behave accordingly, repenting for wrongdoing and aiming to be a person with merits in the future. The decision is made on *Rosh Hashanah*, but the judgement is sealed ten days later, i.e. at the end of the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*, see below). That is why days between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are *Aseret Yemei Teshuva*, the "Ten Days of Penance" also referred to as the "Days of Awe" (*yamim noraim)*. During these days, each person has the opportunity to alter God's decree. The actions that change the decree are repentance, prayer, and *tzedakah* (lit. "righteousness"), i.e., the precept to provide for the needs of the poor with money, food, clothing, and whatever else is needed for subsistence. In the Jewish view, it is not considered charity, but an act of justice).

A common custom is to dip a slice of apple in honey during the first evening meal and eat it while reciting the following words: "May it be Your will, Lord our God and God of our fathers, to grant us a good and sweet year." Traditions vary as to the symbolic foods to be eaten during the *Rosh Hashanah* meals and the prayers for a good year.

The Torah reading for the morning of the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* is Genesis 21, which tells the story of the birth of Isaac. Genesis 22 is read on the second day, about the story of the "binding of Isaac."

A special custom known as *Tashlikh* consists of symbolically casting one's sins into a body of water - a river or the sea - while reciting Bible verses and prayers (hence the name *Tashlikh,* derived from the verb *sh-l-kh* - 'to cast away'). This tradition derives from the biblical passage (Micah 7:18-20) recited at the ceremony, in which the prophet, addressing God, says: "You will cast *(tashlikh)* all our sins into the depths of the sea."

Shavuot (Pentecost)

The Feast of Pentecost, in Hebrew *Ḥag Shavuot* ("Festival of the Weeks", Ex 34:22; Deut. 16:10), is the second of the so-called Pilgrimage Festivals (*regalim*). It falls on the 6th (and, in the Diaspora, also on the 7th) of the month of *Sivan* (May/June).

Shavuot is celebrated as a "Harvest Festival" (*'Ḥag ha-Qaṣir:* Ex 23:16) and as "The

45 The *Rosh Hashanah* tractate in the *Mishnah* deals with the sanctification of the new moon (*Kiddush Ha-Chodesh*), the messengers sent to announce the sanctification of the new moon and the instructions for the blowing of the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*. The tractate has four chapters which are elaborated in the *Ghemarah* in both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud.

46 According to Talmudic teachings, on that day, all of humanity – not only Jews – stands in judgment before God.

Day of First Fruits (*Yom ha-Bikkurim*: Nm 28:26). In rabbinic literature (*Ḥagigah* 2:4) the Festival of Shavuot is called '*Atzeret',* which literally means "gathering" or "congregating". This seems to indicate that the rabbis understood Pentecost as an addition to Passover, just as there is an additional day of the Feast of Tabernacles[47]. First century AD Greek-speaking Jews named it 'Pentecost' (*Pentekosté*)[48], as recorded in Tobit 2:1 and 2Mac 12:32, in Philo of Alexandria, in the New Testament and in the writings of Josephus Flavius.

In the Book of Leviticus, guidance is given for the so-called 'Counting of the Sheaf ' *(Sefirat HaOmer*): "And you shall count for yourselves, from the morrow of the day of rest, from the day you bring the *omer* as a wave offering, seven weeks; they shall be complete. You shall count until the day after the seventh week, [namely] the fiftieth day, [on which] you shall bring a new meal offering to the Lord" (Lev 23:15-16). The *Torah* prescribes a period of seven weeks between the first sheaf, offered in the Temple on the day following Passover, and the second, offered on Pentecost, which is the fiftieth day.

The interpretation of the term "*Sabbath*" in Lev 23:15 was the subject of controversy at the time of the Second Temple, particularly between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees (and later the Karaites) held that the term "*Sabbath*" referred to the *Sabbath* after Passover; therefore, in their calendar, Pentecost always fell on the first day of the week (Sunday). The Pharisees, on the other hand, relying on the oral *Torah*, claimed that the text referred to the first day of Passover, and understood the word "Sabbath" in its broader sense of a day of rest. The Pharisaic interpretation is the accepted one, and thus the "counting of the sheaf" coincides with the evening of the second day of Passover.

Leviticus 23:17 specifically says that two loaves of bread were to be offered at Pentecost as an "elevation offering", along with the "first fruits" of the earth *(bikkurim*): "The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God" (Ex 23:19)[49].

Pentecost in post-Biblical times

Whereas the other two pilgrimage festivals (Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles) in the Old Testament were associated with Exodus events, in the case of Pentecost

47 The eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, i.e. the additional day of the feast, is *Shemini Atzeret* - (Hebrew:"Eighth Day of the Solemn Assembly")

48 The term *pentekosté* means "fiftieth" and implies the word *hēméra*, "day." Therefore, it is the "fiftieth day."

49 In the *Bikkurim* tractate of the *Mishnah*, the third chapter provides a detailed description of the ceremonial followed by the people when they brought the first fruits to the Temple on the Feast of Pentecost: "Those who lived near [Jerusalem] brought fresh figs and grapes, but those from a distance brought dried figs and raisins [...]The flute would play before them until they would draw close to Jerusalem. When they drew close to Jerusalem they would send messengers in advance, and they would adorn their *bikkurim*. [...] The governors and chiefs and treasurers [of the Temple] would go out to greet them [...] All the skilled artisans of Jerusalem would stand up before them and greet them saying, 'Our brothers, men of such and such a place, we welcome you in peace.' The flute would play before them, until they reached the Temple Mount. When they reached the Temple Mount, [...] the Levites would sing the song: "I will extol You, O Lord, for You have raised me up, and You have not let my enemies rejoice over me" (Psalms 30:2)." *Bikkurim* 3:3-4

this connection was made in Rabbinic Judaism, when the festival celebrated the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, as well as the grain harvest. The key text for this new interpretation is found in Exodus 19:1: "In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai." Rabbinical exegesis understood the "third month" to be the month of Sivan, assuming that the theophany at Sinai took place on the day of Pentecost. Thus, the Sages established a further link between Passover and Pentecost. In fact, while exhodus from Egypt (Passover) is the first step of the Betrothal, the gift of the *Torah* at Sinai marks the Betrothal between God and His people. Thus, the process of deliverance that began with Exodus is fulfilled with the gift of *Torah*, celebrated at Pentecost.

The first explicit reference to the new meaning of the feast is found in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Pesahim:* "Rabbi Elazar said: 'Everyone agrees regarding Atzeret [the feast of *Shavuot*], meaning that it is a *mitzvah* to eat, drink and rejoice on that day. What is the reason? It is the day on which the *Torah* was given, and one must celebrate the fact that the *Torah* was given to the Jewish people." (*Pesaḥim* 68b).

Unlike Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Pentecost has very few ritual aspects. And those few appear at a later stage. The aspects related to harvest, the agricultural aspect of the feast, lost their significance with the destruction of the Temple, and neither are there any rituals related to the worship of the sanctuary in connection with the gift of the *Torah*, since, as already noted, this aspect appears in post-biblical times.

The evening prayer on the eve of Pentecost begins after sundown to ensure that the feast begins immediately after the seven full weeks required by the biblical precept (cf. Lev 23:15-16). The *Hallel* (Ps 113-118) is recited during the morning prayers. The Book [scroll] of Ruth (*Megillat Ruth*) is read during the feast, since the events it recounts take place at the time of the "barley and wheat harvests" (Ruth 2:23). Moreover, the account of Ruth's conversion to the Israelite faith is in keeping with the feast celebrating the gift of the *Torah*. Finally, Ruth's faithfulness exemplifies the faithfulness Israel is expected to exercise towards the *Torah*.

The portion of the *Torah* read in synagogue on the first day is the account of the Sinai theophany (Ex 19-20), which includes the Decalogue.

The prophetic reading (*haftarah*) for the first day is the vision of Ezekiel (chapters 1-2), which ideally refers to the theophany on Mount Sinai. On the second day of the feast, which is exclusive to Diaspora Jews, the prophetic passage is read from the Book of Habakkuk (chap. 3), which again describes a theophany.

A 16th century kabbalistic custom emanating from the mystics in Safed is to stay up the whole night of Shavuot studying *Torah*[50]. The meaning of this vigil is simple. Indeed, on the feast dedicated to the gift of the *Torah*, every Jew is nourished by the

50 The kabbalistic Jews drew up a veritable lectionary called *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* ("Reparation on the Night of Pentecost"). The reading is divided into 13 parts. It brings together in an anthological form excerpts from all the biblical books and the 63 tractates of the *Mishnah*, the first chapter of the *Sefer Yetzirah* ("Book of Formation"), the 613 precepts and portions of the *Sefer ha-Zohar* ("Book of Splendour").

totality of tradition, which includes the written and oral *Torah*.
It is also customary to decorate the synagogue with plants and flowers because, according to tradition, Mount Sinai was lush and green. This too evokes the ancient rural setting of the festival.
A very ancient custom is to eat milk-based dishes (and dairy products) and honey on the day of Pentecost. "The orders of the Lord are upright, causing the heart to rejoice [...]" - we read in Psalm 19 - "[...] sweeter than honey and the dripping of honeycombs" (Ps 19:9, 11). Tradition also compares the *Torah* to the milk and honey that sweeten the bride's mouth in the Song of Songs: "Your lips drip flowing honey, O bride; Honey and milk are under your tongue" (Song of Songs 4:11a). Moreover, milk is the symbol of the "spiritual nourishment" that the *Torah* offers to the human soul, just as mother's milk nourishes and sustains the infant. Finally, the numerical value of the Hebrew word for milk (*ḥalav*) is forty. This is the number of days that Moses spent on Mount Sinai receiving instructions on all the *Torah*.
Biblical Pentecost in the New Testament
According to Luke, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles took place on the Jewish feast of Pentecost: "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." (Acts 2:1). One could speculate that in placing the event in the context of Pentecost, Luke was influenced by the new meaning of the feast, which was emerging as a celebration of the giving of the *Torah*. Just as the crossing of the Red Sea is followed by the giving of the covenant at Sinai and the giving of the *Torah*, so "the passing of Christ from death to life is followed by the gift of the Spirit, the gift of the new covenant."[51] While the children of Israel become a people through the gift of the Torah, the disciples of Jesus become Church through the gift of the Spirit.
There are two other mentions of Pentecost in the New Testament: Acts 20:16; 1 Cor. 16:8, both in connection with the ministry of the apostle Paul. In Acts 20:16 it is stated that he "had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." This confirms that Paul continued to celebrate Pentecost and all the other Jewish festivals regularly, as did all Christians of Jewish descent.

Sukkot (Feast of the Tabernacles)

Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, is one of the three festivals referred to in the Bible as 'pilgrimage festivals' (*regalim*)[52]. It begins on the 15th of *Tishri* (5 days after *Yom Kippur*) and lasts seven days. The name recalls the Israelites' dwellings in the desert[53]. But it is also known as 'the Festival of Harvest' (Ex 23:16; 34:22), because it falls in the autumn season, when all the harvests have been completed and the grape

51 G. Rossé, *Atti degli Apostoli. Commento esegetico e teologico*, Città Nuova, Roma 1998, 129.
52 "Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles." (Deut 16:16).
53 "Live in temporary shelters for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in such shelters so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.'" (Lev. 23:42-43)

harvest is over; hence it is the most joyous of all the festivals.[54]Another name given to it in Scripture is "The Festival of the Lord" (Lev 23:39; Judges 21:19) and finally also simply "The Feast" - *he-Ḥag* (1 Kings 8:2; Ez 45:25; etc.)[55], i.e. the festival par excellence. It is probably for this reason that the prophet Zechariah, in a Messianic oracle, extends the joy of Sukkot to all nations and states: "Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles." (Zech. 14:16). In the Book of Leviticus (23:39-43), among the details of the festival, two special observances are mentioned: the people are to dwell in booths *(sukkot*) for seven days and, on the first day, "take the fruit of goodly trees, the branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook", and "rejoice before the Lord [...] for seven days." The oral tradition recorded in the tractate *Sukkah*[56] of the *Mishnah* determines with greater precision the species of plants mentioned in Lev 23:40, identifying the "fruits of goodly trees" with the *etrog* and the "boughs of thick trees" with the myrtle. The so-called "four species" (*arbaah minîm*) of Sukkot are thus: cedar (*etrog*), palm (*lulav*), myrtle (*ḥadasim*), willow (*aravot*)[57]. The four species are held in the hands (the etrog is held in the left hand and the other three species, bound together, are held in the right hand) and shaken in the direction of the four cardinal points, above and below, to drive out evil and acknowledge God as the ruler of the whole world. The shaking of the four species is performed in the synagogue service during the singing of the *Hallel* (Ps 113-118). At the end of the congregational prayer, a Torah scroll is taken from the Holy Ark and a procession is made around the *bimah*[58] in remembrance of the processions that once took place on *Sukkot* around the altar of the Temple. The prayer called *Hoshanah* ("Save us, please!") is chanted during the procession[59] and a good harvest for the following year. On the seventh day of *Sukkot*, known as *Hoshana Rabbah* – "The Great Hosanna", the *bimah* is circled seven times and the willow branches are beaten on the floor. It is customary to remain awake and spend the entire night of *Hoshana Rabbah* reading and studying, especially the Book of Deuteronomy.

Each household and congregation constructs its own temporary hut (*sukkah*)[60].

It must have at least three walls (of any material), with leaves or straw as the roof covering, not too thick to prevent heavy rain from penetrating. The commandment re-

54 Deut. 16:14-15: "You shall rejoice in your festival [...] in the place which the Lord has chosen, the Lord your God will bless all your crops and all your undertakings, and you shall have nothing but joy." In the liturgy it became known as the "season of our joy" (*zeman simḥatenu*)

55 Even John the Evangelist, when mentioning the Feast of Tabernacles in his Gospel, refers to it several times simply as "the Feast". (John 7,8.10.11.14.37).

56 Of the tractate, whose five chapters detail the feast, there is also the *ghemarà* in the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud and a reiteration in the *Tosefta*.

57 *Lulav* is aslo the name of the three species bound together.

58 The raised platform from which the Bible readings are proclaimed and common prayers are said.

59 This is the same invocation found in the Sanctus in the Christian Eucharistic prayer, which is translated as "Hosanna!".

60 It is customary to build *a sukkah* in a space adjacent to the synagogue for all those who do not have their own *sukkah*

quires that the *sukkah* be built under the open sky, not under a tree or inside a house. During the seven days of the festival, meals are eaten in the *sukkah* and, except in the case of adverse weather conditions, one must also spend time in the *sukkah*. This serves as a reminder of the transitory nature of material possessions and the need to place one's unconditional trust in God.

According to a tradition originating in the 16th century Kabbalistic school of Luria, the mystical seven "guests" - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David - visit the *sukkah* on each of the seven days. It is therefore a common tradition to recite a welcoming formula to these "guests" (in Aramaic, *Ushpizin*) as if they were actually visiting the *Sukkah*.

The *Mishnah* (*Sukkah* 4:9) mentions a special "water libation" ritual that was performed before the destruction of the Temple during the seven days of *Sukkot:* water was drawn from the Pool of Siloe and carried in a procession to the altar of the Temple. The ritual was accompanied by the sound of the trumpet. On that occasion, four huge golden candelabra were raised in the "Women's Courtyard." The light emanating from the four candelabras was so bright that "there was no courtyard in Jerusalem that was not lit up with the light of the *Beit Hashoevah*[61]" (*Sukkah* 5:3). The joyousness of the festival was reflected also in the dance and singing that accompanied the ritual: "Men of piety and good deeds used to dance […] with lighted torches in their hands, and they would sing songs and praises. And Levites with innumerable harps, lyres, cymbals and trumpets and other musical instruments stood upon the fifteen steps leading down from the Court of the Israelites to the Court of the Women, corresponding to the fifteen songs of ascents in the Psalms,[62]" (*Sukkah* 5:4). The joy was such, we read in *Mishnah*, that "One who has not witnessed the celebration of the *Bet ha-sho'evah*[63] has never seen real joy." (*Sukkah* 5:1). Today, although the ritual of water libation is no longer practised, the event is commemorated in gatherings called *Simḥat Bet ha-Shoevah*, with music, dancing and sumptuous meals eaten in the *sukkah*. The joyful atmosphere of the festival is thereby maintained.

***Shemini Atzeret* (Eighth [day of] Assembly) and *Simcḥat Torah* (The Joy of Torah)**

After the seven days of the festival of *Sukko*t, the 22nd day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei marks the celebration of *Shemini Atzeret* – "The Eighth (Day of) Assembly", which Talmudic literature regards as a separate festival, is a day of rest and holy assembly, as commanded in Numbers 29:35:

"On the eighth day you shall hold a solemn gathering; you shall not work at your occupations." On this day, a special prayer for rain (*Tefillat ha-gheshem*) is offered to God, along with other prayers. If there has not been a Sabbath day in the middle of the festival, the Book of Qohelet is read on this eighth day.In the Land of Israel, the day of *Shemini Atzeret* coincides with the festival of Simḥat Torah

61 "House of drawing (water)"

62 The Psalms 120-134.

63 "The Rejoicing of the House of the Drawing (water)".

– "The joy of Torah"[64], which is celebrated in the Diaspora on the second day of *Shemini Atzeret*, the 23rd of the Hebrew month of Tishrei. This festival marks the end of the annual cycle of Torah readings in the synagogue and the beginning of a new cycle. The person who has the honour of being called to read the last portion of the Torah is known as the "Bridegroom of the Torah" (*Ḥatan Torah*), while the reader of the first portion of the new cycle is called the "Bridegroom of Genesis" (*Ḥatan Bereshit*). During this festival, the Torah scrolls are taken from the Ark and carried in procession around the synagogue while hymns of praise are sung. In many communities it is customary to dance with the scrolls.

The Feast of Tabernacles in the Gospel of John

As noted earlier, the reference to the Festival is found in the Fourth Gospel. The exegetes believe that John adopted two of the symbols of the Festival, water and light, and interpreted them from a Christological angle.

In the image of the water with which the altar was sprinkled, there is an obvious reference to the Messianic vision of Ezekiel 47:1-12, where water flows out of the temple to fertilise the desert and the entire land as it flows through it.[65] Jesus revives the image of life-giving water: "On the last and greatest day of the festival [...] he stood and said with a loud voice, 'Let all who are thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.'" (John 7: 37-38a). Soon after, the evangelist identifies this living water with the Spirit: "Now he was referring here to the Spirit whom those who believed in him were to receive" (v. 38b).

Jesus declared the following day: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12). By proclaiming himself the "light of the world", Jesus identifies himself with the promised light for Israel on the day of the coming of the Messiah, symbolised by the light of the great *Sukkot* lamps and the procession with the torches.[66]

***Tu Bi-Shvat* (Fifteeth of *Shevat*)**

The festival of *Tu Bi-Shvat* takes its name from the date on which it occurs. In fact, "Tu" stands for the Hebrew letters *Tet* and *Vav*, which together have the numerical value of 9 and 6, adding up to 15. Thus, *Tu Bi-Shvat* means the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat (January/February). It is a minor Jewish holiday, established in rabbinical writings to celebrate the "New Year of the Trees", in Hebrew, *Rosh ha-Shanah lailanot*[67]. This date was chosen because the majority of the annual rain-

64 This festival originated in the post-Talmudic period.

65 "It implies the common notion that Jerusalem, with its holy mount, is the centre (navel) of the world and the source of blessing for all peoples". R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*. New York, 1952.

66 Cf Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Evangile selon Jean*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1996.

67 Tractate *Mishnah Rosh ha-Shanah* 1:1 reads: "The four new years are: On the first of Nisan, the new year for the kings and for the festivals; On the first of Elul, the new year for the tithing of animals [...]. On the first of Tishrei, the new year for years, for the Sabbatical years and for the Jubilee years and for the planting and for the vegetables. On the first of Shevat, the new year for the trees, these are the words of the House of Shammai; The House of Hillel says, on the fifteenth the-

fall in the Land of Israel has already fallen by this date and, thereafter, the fruit of a tree is considered, for tithing, to belong to a new year (Deut. 14:22-29) and to the so-called "uncircumcised" trees (*'orlah)*: "When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden *('arelim*); it must not be eaten. In the fourth year all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the Lord. and only in the fifth year may you use its fruit—that its yield to you may be increased: I am the Lord, your God" (Lev. 19:23-25). Consequently, a date is needed to mark the beginning of the New Year of Trees in order to define their age and thus apply the established rules.

In the Diaspora, *Tu bi-Shevat* has lost its halakhic and agricultural significance, yet it is still regarded as a festive day during which no penitential prayers are recited.

It is customary to eat 15 kinds of fruit on this holiday, with a preference for the so-called "seven kinds" with which the land of Israel was blessed: wheat, barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates, olives and dates (Deut 8:8).

The influence of the 16th-century Safed kabbalists expanded the liturgy and the various Sephardic customs for this feast: special sung poems (*piyyutim*) were composed and a *seder*, inspired by the *Pesach* seder (see above), was introduced, involving the eating of fruit and the drinking of four glasses of wine.

With the founding of the first agricultural settlements in the Land of Israel in the last decades of the 19th century, the "New Year of the Trees" regained its original agricultural significance. Nowadays, on *Tu bi-Shevat*, school children in Israel celebrate this festival with songs and hold ceremonies that include the planting of trees. The act of planting is so highly regarded that, according to a rabbinical saying, if you hold a sapling in your hand and see the Messiah coming, you should first finish planting the tree and then go to greet the Messiah.

***Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement)**

Yom Kippur – "Day of Atonement" - is the holiest day of the Jewish year and concludes the period of repentance that began on *Rosh Hashanah* ('New Year'). At the conclusion of *Yom Kippur*, God's judgement pronounced on Rosh Hashanah is sealed. It is prescribed in the Torah for the 10th of *Tishrei*[68]: "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. [...] It shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for you[69] and you shall practice self-denial; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your Sabbath." (Lev 23:27.32). Therefore, on the Sabbath one abstains from all prohibited activities. Special rites of atonement and purification, described in Leviticus 16 and in the Yoma tractate of the *Mishnah,* were performed during the First and Second Temple periods. The High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple, where no other person could enter on pain of death, to perform the rite of atonement for the sins of Israel.

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reof." Again, the halakhah has adopted Hillel's position.

68 The Day of Atonement is the only one of the appointed seasons which has no second day in the Diaspora. This is because of the extreme difficulty of fasting for two consecutive days.

69 The expression translated "Sabbath of complete rest" is in Hebrew *Sabbath shabbaton*, expressing the superlative which could be translated "Sabbath of the Sabbath."

The meaning and reasons for this solemn day are explained in Leviticus 16:30: "For on that day shall be made an atonement for you, to cleanse you from all your sins; and you shall be clean before the Lord."
With the Temple's destruction in 70 A.D., the aspect of Yom Kippur focused on Atonement, came to predominate.
The *Mishnah*, whose *Tractate Yoma* is entirely devoted to *Yom Kippur*, lays out a series of prohibitions prescribed for this holy day. It is prohibited to engage in eating and drinking, in washing oneself, in anointing [one's body with oil], wearing leather shoes, and in marital relations.[70]
Therefore, fasting is observed by total abstention from food and drink from sunset of the ninth day of Tishrei until the evening of the tenth day of Tishrei. This is in accordance with the commandment of Lev 16:29, which, however, is a general reference to humiliation/affliction of the soul: "In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial (lit. 'you shall humble your soul')". From this command, the oral tradition derives that eating and drinking are forbidden on *Yom Kippur*, in addition to the above-mentioned prohibitions.[71]
Unlike all other fasts, *Yom Kippur* is the only day when fasting is permitted on Sabbath.
According to Talmudic teaching, *Yom Kippur* provides atonement only for 'sins committed against God', while sins against other people do not bring atonement unless the offender has been forgiven. For this reason, it is customary to seek each other's forgiveness on the day before fasting.
The distinctive colour of *Yom Kippur* is white, the colour of purity and mercy. It can be seen in the covers of the Torah scrolls and the Holy Ark, (ornate cabinet that enshrines the Torah) as well as in the clothing worn by men in certain congregations.
The prayers for the Day of Atonement begin in the evening with the *Kol Nidrè*[72] ("all vows"), a prayer in which worshipers proclaim that all personal vows, oaths, etc., that they made unwittingly, rashly, or unknowingly during the year should be considered null and void[73].
The defining feature of this day is the *viddui*, which means "confession of sins", recited ten times during the holiday and on the afternoon of the eve of *Yom Kippur*. On this solemn day, the additional service (*musaf*) recounts in detail the *Yom Kippur* Temple service which was once performed in the Temple in Jerusalem. At the moment when it is recounted that the High Priest uttered the ineffable name of God (Y-H-W-H) on this holiday, the members of the congregation kneel and bow.[74]
Liturgical poems (*piyyutim*) composed over the centuries, as well as penitential prayers (*seliḥot*), are recited throughout the day.

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70 Cf. *Yoma* 8,1.

71 Other passages of Scripture explicitly mention the affliction of the soul through fasting. For example, in Ps 35:13: "But as for me [...], my clothing was sackcloth: *I humbled my soul with fasting*; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom."

72 In the Italian ritual *Kol nedarim*.

73 This proclamation was introduced to discourage taking such vows and to avoid betraying a promise made to God.

74 It is the only time Jews kneel down in synagogue.

Chapter 16 of Leviticus, which deals with the Day of Atonement, and Chapter 29 of the Book of Numbers, which deals with the additional sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, are read in the morning service. Is 57:15 - 58:14 is the *haftarah* for *Yom Kippur*, wherein the Isaiah describes the ideal fast.
During the afternoon service, three men are called to read Leviticus 18, which deals with the prohibitions of incest (a continuation of the morning Torah portion according to an ancient custom that still exists in Italy). The *haftarah* comprises the Book of Jonah and Micah 7:18-20. The theme of the *haftarah* is the ideal repentance and its effects: God has mercy on even the greatest sinner if he sincerely repents. The day ends with *Neilah* ('closing of the gate'), a special service that serves as a reminder that the gates of heaven, which have remained open all day to receive the prayer of repentance, are about to close. At this point, the shofar is sounded, marking the end of the fast.

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8. THE CYCLE OF LIFE

CHAPTER

Circumcision (*Brit milah*)

Circumcision, in Hebrew *brit milah* ("covenant of circumcision") or also simply *milah*, is the ritual where the foreskin of the penis is removed. The rite of circumcision is a sign of the convenant established by God with Abraham:
"You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you." (Gen 17:11). Jewish identity does not depend on circumcision, as every child born of a Jewish mother is Jewish.
The ritual is prescribed for the eighth day after birth[75]: "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations" (Genesis 17:12a). Circumcision is not postponed if the eighth day falls on a *Sabbath* or a Jewish holiday. Postponement of the circumcision is only permitted in the case of health problems of the child.
Although it is the father's responsibility to circumcise his son - as Abraham circumcised Ishmael and then Isaac - in practice it is rare for a father to perform the circumcision himself. He usually relies on a *mohel*, a trained expert in the ritual of circumcision.
The *brit mila* is traditionally performed in the morning, a sign of the parents' solicitude for the observance of the commandment. The ritual usually takes place in the synagogue or at home.
It is performed as follows: the newborn baby is welcomed by those present, who greet the newborn with the verses from Psalm 118: *Barukh ha-ba* – "Blessed be he that come." The infant is then entrusted to the *mohel*, who places the baby for a moment on what is known as "Elijah's chair", after which the baby is placed on a cushion on the lap of the *sandak* – "the man who holds." It is in this position that the circumcision is performed.
When the procedure is complete, the father recites the blessing: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments, and hast commanded us to make our sons enter the covenant of Abraham our father."
All present respond: "Even as this child has entered into the covenant, so may he enter into the *Torah*, the nuptial canopy *(ḥuppah)*, and into good deeds." The *mohel* then takes a cup of wine and recites over it a prayer for the infant in which the *mohel*

75 Should a child for any reason have been circumcised before the eighth day or have been born already circumcised (i.e., without a foreskin), the ceremony of "shedding the blood of the covenant" (*hattafat dam berit*) must be performed on the eighth day, provided it is a weekday, and the child is fit.

gives the infant his Hebrew name.[76]
A festive kosher meal concludes the ritual as a sign of joy and celebration. The *milah* is also one of the requirements for conversion to Judaism.
The ceremony of the naming of girls is not regulated by a precept, but it has been practised with much joy and in various forms for many centuries. The naming of the child takes place in the synagogue on a day when the Torah is being read - Monday, Thursday and *Sabbath* - so that the father, who goes up for the reading, can announce the name of the child. There are also those who alternatively perform a small ceremony at home called *zeved ha-bat* (gift of the daughter). There is no set time, but it is usually done as soon as possible.

The redemption of the first-born son *(pidyon ha-ben)*

When a Jewish woman gives birth to a first-born male child, he must be redeemed thirty-one days after his birth, according to a specific biblical requirement linked to the fact that the Lord caused the first-born sons of Egypt to die, while sparing the first-born sons of Israel, who therefore belong to the Lord: "Every first issue of the womb of any creature, which they present to the Lord, whether of man or beast, shall be yours. However, you shall redeem the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. Its redemption [shall be performed] from the age of a month, according to the valuation, five shekels of silver, according to the holy shekel, which is twenty gerahs." (Nm 18:15-16; cf. Ex 13:15).
The ritual of the redemption of the first-born son, in Hebrew *pidyon ha-ben* – "redemption of the son", stipulates that the father must appear before a *Kohen* – "priest" - with five silver coins in his hand, declaring that neither he nor his wife are of priestly rank, that his wife has given birth to his first-born son, and that he is there to deliver the child to the *Kohen* in accordance with the prescriptions. The *Kohen* then asks him if he wishes to redeem his son; the father replies in the affirmative, and it is agreed that the price of the redemption is the five silver coins. The *Kohen* recites the priestly blessing: "May the Lord bless you and watch over you. May the Lord cause His countenance to shine to you and favour you. May the Lord raise His countenance toward you and grant you peace." (Nm 6:24-26).
After the ritual, the *Kohen* returns the money, which is usually donated to charity.

Coming of age *(Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah*)

A boy reaches religious adulthood and becomes *bar mitzvah* – "son of the commandment"- on his 13th birthday. A girl, on the other hand, becomes *bat mitzvah* – "daughter of the commandment" - on her 12th birthday. The years are counted according to the Jewish calendar. From this point on, a Jew assumes responsibility for the observance of all the commandments and is obliged to fulfil them all.

76 The practice of naming the child during the rite of circumcision is an ancient custom, as attested for example in Lk 1:59: "When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father."

The *Mishnah* identifies five stages of maturity for men and the 13th year as the year in which the precepts - the *mitzvo*t - are to be fulfilled (*Avot* 5:21).
Midrashic literature gives many references to 13 as a turning point in the life of a young person. In fact, Abraham rejected his father's idols at this age (*Pirqè de Rabbi Eliezer,* 26).

<u>*Bar mitzvah*</u>

The calling up to the reading of the *Torah* is a symbol of a boy's attaining maturity. He is called to read on the first occasion of public Torah reading, usually on the Saturday immediately after his 13th birthday. This is the first public demonstration of his new role as a full member of the community and, for the past centuries[77], it is to this occasion that the term *bar mitzvah* has traditionally referred to. When, on the same day, the boy's father is called to read a portion of the Torah, he recites the benediction, "Blessed is He who has now freed me from the responsibility of this one"[78].
Traditionally, the rabbi gives a special sermon emphasising the boy's new responsibilities and privileges. In many synagogues, the rabbi ends his sermon by invoking the Priestly Blessing or other blessing, and the *bar mitzvah* boy is given a gift from the congregation. Depending on his preparation and skills, as well as local customs, the boy may be invited to officiate a part or all of the service. After the service, refreshments are often served, during which it is customary for the boy to deliver a *derashah*, a "sermon" based on written and oral Torah texts. The *derashah* is also an opportunity for the boy to thank his parents for their love and care, and to thank the guests for their participation in the celebration.
The major ritual innovation for a boy reaching *bar mitzvah* is that henceforth he will be required to put on the *tefillin* - phylacteries - for the morning prayer along with the *tallit*, the prayer shawl[79]. In addition, he will be counted in a *minyan*, the minimum number of ten men required for community prayer.

<u>*Bat mitzvah*</u>

The term *bat mitzvah* – "daughter of commandment" is found only once in the Talmud (*Bava Kamma* 15a), in reference to the time when a girl becomes subject to the obligations of Jewish law incumbent on adults. The *Mishnah*, in *Niddah* 5:6, rules that the vows of a girl who is 12 and one-day-old are deemed valid, as are the vows of a boy who is thirteen years and one-day-old.
Prior to the modern era this change in a female's *status* was rarely celebrated in a communal context. It was not until the 19th century that we find indications of a ceremony or public recognition, including a private blessing, the father's *aliyah* – "ascent or going up" of the father for the reading of the Torah, a rabbi's sermon.

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77 The first mention of a *bar mitzvah* ceremony similar to the one celebrated today dates back to the 16th century. The great Lithuanian teacher and rabbi, Solomon Luria, wrote in his treatise Yam Shel-Shelomo: "There is a *Bar Mitzvah* rituals of the Germans, in which they celebrate and praise God for the fact that a boy has reached this age and that his father has lived long enough to see his son fulfil the commandments of the *Torah*."

78 This blessing is taken from *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah*: "Said R. Elazar b. R. Shimon: `A man must take care of his son for thirteen years, from then on he should say Blessed is the one who has exempted me from the sins of this"(62:10)

79 In a number of communities, children start wearing the *tallit* even before their *bar mitzvah*.

The *bat mitzvah* understood as a female ceremony equivalent or identical to the male *bar mitzvah* does not occur until the middle of the 20th century. The true nature of this function varies greatly between synagogues and congregations.

Marriage

Marriage is a part of God's plan for humankind. In fact, in Genesis, man and woman, created to be opposite each other (Gen 2:18), are called to be "one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Although Scripture does not give specific instructions regarding the procedures of a wedding ceremony, it is clear from many of its passages that marriage, a union of profound spiritual significance, is also understood as a contractual agreement that can be dissolved by divorce. The Torah also offers some practical reflections on marriage, such as that on newlyweds attested in Deut. 24:5: "When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out in the army, nor shall he be subjected to anything associated with it. He shall remain free for his home for one year and delight his wife, whom he has taken." Since the Talmudic period, marriage is recorded as consisting of three stages: mutual promise (*shiddukhin)*, betrothal (called *erusin* or *qiddushin*) and the full-fledged marriage (*nissuin*). The promise of marriage, which is still practised by various groups today, consists of a formal commitment to marry, coupled with a document called a *tenaim* ('terms'), which sets out matters such as the date and place of the wedding and the amount of dowry and alimony.

The second stage, the betrothal (*erusin* or *qiddushin*), consists of an agreement between the future husband and wife. On this occasion, the groom gives the bride an object of value, usually a ring, and says: "With this ring you are consecrated to me, according to the Law of Moses and Israel." The moment the bride accepts the ring, she is rightfully considered to be his wife and is forbidden to marry any other man. In ancient times, the bride would return to her parents' house for twelve months, at the end of which the third stage - *nissuin* - would take place. Since the 12th century, betrothal and marriage have been combined into a single wedding ceremony, although they are two distinct moments in the ritual.

In Ashkenazi tradition, immediately before the formal wedding ceremony, the bride is veiled by the groom in the presence of his family and the bride's family in a ceremony known in Yiddish as *Bedeken di Kale* (veiling the bride). The officiating rabbi then says: "Our sister, may you become thousands of myriads" (Genesis 24:60a) and concludes with the words: "May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel." The bridegroom is escorted by his father and the bride's father to the *chuppah*, a wedding canopy that symbolically represents the home of the newlyweds, consisting of a precious square cloth (or *tallit*) supported by four staves and ordinarily held by four attendants at the ceremony. The bride then joins him, led by her mother and the groom's mother. This ceremony is accompanied by words of blessing sung by the officiant or cantor. Two blessings are then said over the chalice of wine.

At this point, in the presence of two witnesses, the groom gives the ring to the bride, saying "With this ring you are consecrated to me according to the law of Moses and Israel." The marriage contract, called a *ketubbah* in Hebrew, is then read, having

been previously signed by the groom (in some groups also by the bride) and two witnesses[80]. A blessing is given to the bride and groom by the officiating rabbi. The wedding ritual continues with the recitation of the *sheva berakhot* (seven wedding blessings) over a second cup of wine.
At the end of the benediction, the groom smashes a wine glass under his foot with a powerful ritual gesture. According to Talmudic tradition (*bBerakhot* 31a), this gesture is intended to dampen the exuberance of the occasion and restore appropriate behaviour. According to another interpretation, the breaking of a glass symbolises the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, and reminds all present that the world is not yet perfect and that rejoicing can suddenly come to an end.
The ceremony can be held anywhere. In many communities it is held in the synagogue, although there are halachic views to the contrary. Often the ceremony is held in the hall where the celebrations take place, while in some communities it is preferred to be held outdoors. The latter custom may be motivated by the fact that celebrating the ritual after sunset, when the stars are already high in the sky, is a reminder of God's promise to Abraham: "I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven" (Genesis 22:17), a good omen for the new couple. In Western countries, Sunday is the most popular day for weddings; in Orthodox circles, Tuesday is auspicious because "And God saw that it was good" occurs twice in the Creation narrative for the third day (Tuesday) (Gen 1:10, 12). However, marriages may be celebrated on any other day of the week, except on Sabbath and other holidays, as well as in the three weeks between the 17th of *Tammuz* and the 9th of *Av*, and in the period between *Pesach* and *Lag ba-'omer*.

Divorce

Judaism recognises the institution of divorce (*ghet*). While in ancient times it was initiated directly by the husband by serving the wife with the so-called 'libel of rejection', starting in the Middle Ages it was preceded by a decision from the rabbinical court aimed at protecting the woman's position. The rabbinical court prohibits the granting of a divorce against the woman's consent. The relationship between Jewish law and the various civil laws governing marriage varies between countries.

Death, burial and mourning

Death
Jewish tradition gives special significance to the rituals associated with death, burial and mourning, as evidenced by a number of biblical accounts (e.g. Genesis 47:29-30; 2 Samuel 21:12-14). The *Mishnah* states that "this world is like a corridor before the World to Come" (Avot 4:16), while the Talmud describes death as the crossing of the portal that separates the two worlds, giving access to a "world that is entirely good"

80 The text of the *ketubbah* outlines obligations undertaken by the groom, such as providing his wife with food, clothin and conjugal rights, which are inseparable from marriage. It includes the husband's guarantees to pay a certain sum in the event of divorce.

(*bKiddushin* 39b).

There is great respect for the dying and the dead. The last wishes of a dying person are given great consideration: the last wishes and instructions of Jacob (Gen 49:29), Joseph (Gen 50:25) and David (1 Kings 2:1-9) were all faithfully heeded and observed. The Talmud states that a person's instructions on his deathbed have the same force as a written document formally handed over (*bGittin 13a)*.

The dying person should never be left alone, and it is a great mitzvah to be present at the departure of the soul (*yeṣiat neshamah*). A candle is usually lit at the bedside of a dying person, symbolising the fragility of the human soul. A sick person nearing death is encouraged to confess his sins to God. Such confession must not be made in the presence of women and children, as it would cause them distress and thus upset the sick person. One confession formula reads: I confess before you, O Lord, my God and the God of my fathers, that my healing and my death are in your hand. May it be Your will to heal me completely, and if I die, may my death be an atonement for all the sins, wrongs and rebellious acts that I have committed sinfully, wrongfully and rebelliously before You, and grant me a share in *Gan Eden* (Paradise), and favour me with the world to come, which is reserved for the righteous. (*Shulcḥan Arukh, Yoreh Deah 338.2*).

In the last moments of life, the dying person will also pray with the first words of the *Shema'*: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut 6:4); if he is in a state of unconsciousness, someone else recites it for him.

When death is certain, the eyes and mouth are gently closed by the eldest son or the closest relative.[81]

The body is placed on the floor[82] with its feet towards the door and covered with a sheet, so that the person is remembered as he or she was in life and not in death. In the Jewish faith, the memory of the deceased is very important. In fact, from the moment of death, the name of the deceased is always followed by the expression *zikhronò livrakhah* ("may his memory be a blessing"). A lighted candle is placed near the head of the deceased.

Burial

The body is to be buried only in the ground, in a cemetery that has been properly consecrated. Reference is made to the passage in the Bible, when God says to Adam: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Gen 3:19). Cremation and embalming are therefore not permitted.

Traditionally, it is recommended to bury the deceased as early as possible, preferably on the day of death. Today, however, this is often not possible because family members of the deceased may not live nearby. Therefore, the funeral may be postponed to allow relatives to attend the funeral service. Nevertheless, timely burial is still the rule. The Torah commands that even the body of an executed criminal be buried without delay (Deut 21:23).

Burial rituals vary between communities. Generally, when a person dies, the de-

81 Jacob was assured by God that Joseph would perform this final filial duty (Gen 46:4)

82 This practice favours the transfer of heat from the corpse.

ceased is placed on the floor of the funeral parlour or cemetery purification room, covered with a shroud. The body is watched over by mourners who recite psalms until the funeral. Shortly before the funeral, the body cleansing ritual is performed by members of the *cḥevrah kadisha* - "holy society" - who recite special prayers and passages from the Bible. The body is then wrapped in pure linen shrouds, called *takhrikhim* in Hebrew. The man is usually buried with his *tallit*, or prayer shawl. It is the general custom in Israel for the body to be buried directly in the ground, whereas in the Diaspora it is buried in a coffin.

Funerals today frequently take place in special funeral shrines or at the graveside. The funeral ritual usually consists of the recitation of several psalms and poems, as well as a eulogy.

After the service, the body is carried to the grave by members of the *cḥevrah kadisha* - "holy society". In some groups, as the casket bearers approach the grave, they stop seven times along the way and recite Psalm 91. The actual burial is accompanied by the recitation of the *Tziduk Hadin* - "Justification of (Divine) Judgement", a prayer of remembrance, and the *Kaddish*, a doxology in Aramaic in which the mourners affirm their faith in God as they face the reality of death.

For the halachic reason that one who is engaged in performing a *mitzvah* is exempt from other *mitzvot*, those directly involved in the funeral arrangements are exempt from observing other *mitzvot* that might interfere with the burial (cf. b*Berakhot* 11a; 17b).

Frequent visits to graves are not Jewish custom. Instead, it is customary to visit the cemetery not only on the seventh and thirtieth days after burial, but also on anniversaries and certain holidays, especially the eve of *Yom Kippur*. The grave is kept bare, only a stone may be placed on it. As the mourners leave, it is customary to extend the left hand over the grave and say: "Rest in peace until the Comforter, the herald of peace, comes."

Mourning

Mourning (Hebrew:*avelut)* in Judaism is a combination of customs and commandments derived from the Torah and classical rabbinic texts. There are specific prescriptions for the death of four categories of relatives: parent, sibling, spouse and child. There are four periods of mourning, of increasing intensity: 1) *aninut*, the day of death, generally the period from death to burial; 2) *shivah*, the seven days beginning with the day of burial; 3) *sheloshim*, thirty days after burial (including the first seven days); 4) an additional mourning period of twelve months for a deceased parent.

Normally, the close relatives of the deceased wait until the end of the year to place the gravestone on the grave. The custom is to dedicate the headstone to the deceased with a short ceremony, commonly known as 'unveiling', because the ceremony requires family members to remove the cloth or veil covering the inscription on the headstone.

9. PRIESTS, RABBIS AND … KOHANIM PRIESTS

CHAPTER 9

The Jewish priests (*kohanim*)

In Exodus 29:7-9 the Lord says to Moses: "You shall take the anointing oil and pour it upon his head and anoint him. And you shall bring his sons and put tunics upon them. And you shall gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and bind headbands on them; and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute; and you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons."
The blessing of Levi in Deut 33:8-11 entrusts the Levites, descendants of Aaron, with the instruction of the people: "They shall teach Your judgments to Jacob, and to Israel Your law" and rituals: "They shall put incense before you, and a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar."
During the monarchic period, the priests of Jerusalem were reorganised and all the Levitical priests were joined by the descendants of Zadok. The priestly function was not limited to the practice of worship in the Temple. Indeed, they were also responsible for studying and teaching Torah. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies on the holiest day of the year, *Yom Kippur*, and utter the Ineffable Name of God.
In the days of Jesus, the Sadducee priests were closely associated with the power of the Romans who occupied the land, while the task of teaching was gradually handed over to the Pharisees.
Even after the destruction of the Temple (70 AD) and up to the present day, the *Kohanim* have retained some of their prerogatives: the first call during the synagogal reading of the Torah is reserved for them, and it is they who, according to the daily rituals or on feast days, give the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24-26: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

The Rabbis (*rabbanim)*

The term "*Rabbi*" comes from the Hebrew word "*rav*" meaning "teacher" (plural *rabbanim*; my teacher: *rabbi*). In order to carry out his duties, a rabbi must have received rabbinic ordination, *semikhah*. The term *'rabbi'* does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but it appears for the first time in the New Testament and in the *Mishnah* (2nd century CE). Jesus himself is often referred to in the Gospels with the title rabbi "my teacher" or, in most cases, with its Greek equivalent *didáskalos*.
Ordination requires the successful completion of a rigorous programme of study of the written and oral Torah, followed by the *Mishnah* and *Talmud,* their commentaries

and *halakhic* decisions. This training is often done in a *yeshivah,* an academy dedicated to studying Hebrew, Aramaic, liturgy, law and philosophy, especially ethics. Some institutions, such as Yeshivah University in New York, also require a university degree for access to higher education.
In Italy, cities with a Jewish community have a chief rabbi. It is up to the community to choose its own rabbi. Italian rabbis are members of the Italian Rabbinical Assembly (*Assemblea Rabbinica Italiana*).

What is the role of the rabbi today?

A rabbi's duties vary according to the type of Community and Country where he serves. His role is primarily one of teaching; he also issues decisions on halakhic matters, especially marriage, divorce and conversion.
Rabbis may lead congregational prayers (although any other adult Jew may do so), and on the Sabbath and holidays they give a sermon (*derashah* – "interpretation") on the portion of Scripture read during the service. In some congregations they also act as spiritual leaders. In Italy, in certain circumstances, rabbis can perform civil duties (e.g. legally marry couples).
Together with the presidents of the Communities, they have a representative role vis-à-vis public institutions and civil society.
Rabbis and priests (or presbyters) share some common characteristics in terms of teaching and community leadership, but there are also some significant differences. In fact, in the Catholic Church, priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, are endowed with a special characteristic which closely links them to the mission of the bishops and identifies them with the priesthood of Christ, so that they may act in His name and cooperate with the bishops in the mission received from Jesus to develop, sanctify and govern His Body, which is the Church. This is done above all through the proclamation of the Gospel, the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments. Indeed, "by Baptism men are truly brought into the People of God; by the sacrament of Penance sinners are reconciled to God and his Church; by the Anointing of the Sick, the ill are given solace; and especially by the celebration of Mass they offer sacramentally the Sacrifice of Christ."[83]

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83 Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n.5.

10. WOMEN IN JUDAISM

CHAPTER 10

Women occupy a fundamental and certainly not a secondary role in Jewish life. In fact, women are at the heart of Jewish life. They take care of the family – in the traditional model - and ensure that Judaism is practised in the daily lives of the younger generations, so that it will be passed on to future generations. In Jewish belief, women are not victims, nor are they denigrated or discriminated against. To understand the role of women in Judaism, it is necessary to start from the traditional sources, the text of the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, and from the most important rabbinical literature. It is a long and fascinating history that saw the transformation of women's condition over the centuries.

In the *Tanakh*, woman is first and foremost a mother and a wife, but we also find her as queen, prophetess, judge, prostitute and stranger. The first woman in the Bible is, of course, Eve, who appears in the account of the creation of man and woman in Genesis: 1:27; 2:7; 2:18-24. At first, God created man and woman together, joined at the side, and later separated them. The Hebrew word *tsela*, which is traditionally translated as the rib from which God created Eve, actually refers not only to the rib, but to the whole of the side. The name Eve, (*Chava*), comes from the Hebrew word *chay*, the word for "life", because the woman is life-giver. Seven prophetesses are mentioned in the biblical text, including a judge, Deborah. Women play a fundamental role in the Exodus narrative. There are several protagonists of these events: Miriam, the sister of Moses, the midwives, Moses' own mother, and *Bithiah,* the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt, who, contravening her father's law, saved a young Hebrew boy, Moses, from certain death in the Nile River. Two biblical books are dedicated to two women: Queen Esther, who exercised great influence in the political and governmental affairs of Persia under King Ahasuerus and successfully saved the Jewish people from annihilation at the hands of the perfidious minister Haman, and Ruth, celebrated for her admirable qualities.

In the rabbinic tradition, the sages paid considerable attention to the female world. One of the six orders of the Mishnah is entitled *Nashim* (Women). It is devoted to the study of the fulfilment of the marriage bond, the mutual obligations between spouses, including the laws of divorce, levirate, vows and their consequences, and alleged adultery. The difference between men and women with regard to the precepts to be observed is set out in the order. It should be noted that the legal status of women is different from that of men: some rules and principles are derived directly from the biblical text, while other aspects, dealt with by the rabbis over the centuries, have led to a substantial improvement in women's conditions. The most significant difference between men and women in Judaism lies in the fact that women are not required to follow the precepts linked to a specific time schedule, such as putting on phylacteries

(*tefillin*) every day by the prescribed time. These exemptions have often been interpreted as an affirmation of women's inferiority. But this is an interpretation that is limited at the superficial level of the problem. In fact, women are not required to fulfil the time-bound precepts because women, with their pregnancies, their children, their maternal instincts, do not need to be bound to the Lord any further. Conversely, man needs rules that plan his schedule and do not leave him at the mercy of his instincts. There are various exceptions to the general principle, some of which concern the core precepts, which, however, transcend the household domain in which a woman's role is carried out, and involve the public sphere reserved to men. One such exception is the study/teaching of the Torah, a precept not time-bound and yet 'spared' to women.

One of the most pressing requests in the Jewish world concerns allowing women to study the Torah and other traditional texts. The main issues in this debate were well expressed by Rabbi Gianfranco Di Segni: "Do they have an obligation to study as men do according to Jewish law? If not, do they have the right to do so? And if so, is it appropriate and recommended that they study, or is it discouraged? Although the answers to these questions may seem obvious in a society where women (theoretically) have the same rights as men, this has not always been the case in the past. However, it is interesting to note that at the time of the Mishnah and Talmud, there was a comparatively greater openness to women's studies than in later epochs."

Women who have chosen to devote themselves not only to family life, but also to studying the sacred texts, in order to express their religious faith more deeply and fully, are not unique to our own time. Two such cases from the 16th century can be found in Italy: Leona, daughter of Avraham Yehoshua Da Fano, and an almost unknown, probably fictional, Dina. The former exchanged letters with members of her own Fano family. It is in this correspondence that the female figure of the young woman emerges. Although she was certainly special, she was not alone in the Jewish landscape of her time: Leona studies the Torah with her brothers, she is an expert in ritual slaughter, and during the cleaning of the house before *Pesach* she complains that she does not have time to study like her brothers, who tease her about this. Leona enriches her letters with Talmudic and Halakhic quotations that testify to her extensive knowledge. She is also active in raising funds for her Torah teacher. Dina's letters became a rhetorical paradigm when they were included in a text edited by the famous rabbi and teacher Shemuel Archivolti (Cesena c. 1515- Padua 1611)[84]. It is

84 Archivolti was an Italian writer, grammarian and poet who studied under Meir Katzenellenbogen (Prague 1475 - Padua 1565). He served as rabbi in the Jewish communities of Bologna, Venice and Padua, where he settled in 1568. He was highly regarded by his contemporaries, and his students included Leon Modena and Cardinal Marco Marini. His most celebrated writings were printed in Venice in the second half of the 16th century. These include the aforementioned Mayan Gannim and the Hebrew grammar text *Arugat Habosem* (The Scented Flower Bed), printed in 1602. For a bibliography on Archivolti, see R. Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy*, (translated from the original Hebrew, Magnes Press, Yerushalayim 1979) The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization Oxford 1990, pp. 92-94, 124-133; ibid. *Riflessioni su una prospettiva femminista nell'epistolario di Samuele Archivolti in La cultura ebraica a Bologna tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, cit., 117-128; D. Di Segni, *Le donne e lo studio della Torà: una scambio epistolare fra Dina e Rabbi Samuele Archivolti nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, "Rassegna Mensile d'Israel" 67 (2001), 151- 173.

the book entitled *Mayan gannim* (Fountain of gardens)[85]. It was first printed in Venice in 1553 with the intention of composing an ideal epistle, consisting of five letters written in rhyme. It was intended to be a "template" for Archivolti's students and for those who were to teach the art of writing after him. In response to a woman named Dina - probably inspired by someone he knew but who never really existed - who wished to devote herself to Jewish studies, traditionally the prerogative of men, Rabbi Archivolti granted her permission to study these subjects. He justified his decision on the grounds that Dina's character and attitudes were different from those of the average woman of her time. Archivolti's pamphlet was probably not widely circulated in contemporary Jewish circles, while quotations from the same letter became rather widespread in the 20th century.[86] Social and cultural transformations have recently sparked a debate in the Jewish world on women's Torah study. Several female scholars, such as Nechama Leibowitz and Tamar Ross, have taken their teachings to the general public. In general, the number of women who devote themselves to the study of traditional Jewish texts in various capacities is steadily increasing.

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85 The title is drawn from the Song of Songs 4:15.

86 However, the publication was "rediscovered" thanks to a citation of Dinah's letter by Rabbi Barukh Ha-Levi Epstein (Babruyisk 1860- Pinsk 1941) in the *Torah Temimah* ("The Complete Torah") in 1902. This citation led to the circulation of Dinah's epistle in numerous modern texts on the subject, making it one of the few sources on which influential contemporary rabbinical authorities relied to endorse and promote women's Torah study, and to encourage them to play a greater role in traditional studies. Thus, after almost five hundred years, a short letter contained in a volume by an Italian rabbi not particularly well known in the international Jewish community found its way down to us. And perhaps it is no coincidence that a rabbi from the Italian Jewish tradition contributed to the debate on equality between men and women in the scholarly realm.

11. THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

CHAPTER 11

Erez Yisrael, the Land of Israel, has been at the centre of the dreams and aspirations of the Jewish people since biblical times. The Lord said to Abraham: "Go forth from your land, and from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). And it was there that Abraham wandered, digging wells, tending his flocks and behaving with justice towards all. It is also the land that God promised to Abraham's descendants, who returned there after a long period of exile and slavery. The Torah refers to the Land of Israel as the Land of Canaan, specifically the territory west of the Jordan River. In contrast, the area east of the Jordan River is usually referred to in the Torah as the land of Gilead.

The land of Canaan is the object of the promise made by the Lord to the patriarchs: "I assign the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God." (Genesis 17:8). In other passages of the Torah, the land of Israel is referred to as "the land" without further attribution, to be understood as a special land.

In the prophetic books, in addition to the land of Canaan, we often find the term "Land of Israel", which is to become prevalent in conjunction with the term 'Land' adopted by the sages of the rabbinic tradition, as opposed to the other lands referred to as *Huṣ La-Haaretz* (outside the land) or *Eretz Ha'ammim* (land of the peoples). Sometimes the Divine Voice calls it "My Land".

Another traditional term for Israel is *Eretz Hemdah* (land of desire), indicating that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob longed for this land, to the extent that Abraham purchased the Cave of Machpelah as a burial place for his wife Sarah, the Lord prevented Isaac from leaving Israel, and Jacob asked not to be buried in Egypt but in the Land of Israel.

Rarely does the Bible use the term "Holy Land." Nonetheless, the Land is seen as a gift of God to Israel. God watches over this land and what happens in it in a special way (Deut 11:12). In fact, the Land belongs exclusively to the Lord, and its enjoyment is subject to obedience to His laws. The gift given to Israel is not gratuitous: three good gifts were bestowed on Israel by God and all three were given after suffering. The three are Torah, the Land of Israel and the life to come. (*Berakhot 5a*).

The centrality of *Eretz Yisrael* has traditionally been the most important element of Jewish worship and consciousness. When praying, Jews turn towards Land of Israel, and in particular towards Jerusalem and toward the site of the ancient Temple. This connection is cultivated through the observance of religious festivals, almost all of which are linked to the agricultural seasons of the Land of Israel, and through the study of the laws governing the sacred use of the land.

This strong spiritual and physical bond forms part of an ideal collective identity. The hope of returning to the Land is the theme of daily prayers, along with an immense

liturgical and mystical literature, as well as various precepts not exclusively related to agricultural life. The application of criminal law, for example, cannot be practised outside Israel, and even in Israel some precepts require a number of preconditions, such as the sovereignty of the entire Jewish people in their own land.
The relationship between land, people and Torah has played a crucial role in all Jewish communities throughout history, and the longing for the lost homeland has driven Jews on the path of Return. In the days when the first waves of immigration arrived in Palestine as a result of political Zionism, Jewish communities already existed in the ancient holy cities of Jerusalem, Tiberias, Safed and Chevron.
The ancient *Yishuv*, i.e. the community that existed before the more recent influxes, was extremely poor. It was an orthodox community that lived off the charity of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. It testifies to the continuity of the Jewish presence in Palestine and is an expression of religious zeal, of the hope of the Return of the Jewish people to Israel, the waves of messianic enthusiasm that saw their aspirations transformed into a political reality with the Jewish national movement called Zionism.
Zionism is the movement for the political self-determination of the Jewish people, which led to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Criticising the Israeli government for a decision it has taken does not amount to being anti-Zionist, but refusing to recognise the right of the Jewish people to their own nationhood certainly does.
Before the birth of the State of Israel, there were Zionist Jews and anti-Zionist Jews; there was a legitimate choice. To be anti-Zionist today is to support the destruction of a state, albeit not a perfect one, but a democratic one, with nine million citizens.
Church authorities were largely against Zionism and opposed the creation of the State of Israel, initially for religious reasons linked to the non-recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. Since 1994, however, regular diplomatic relations have been established between Israel and the Holy See, with the opening of a nunciature in Israel and an Israeli embassy in Rome.

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12. JESUS/YESHUA

CHAPTER 12

Jesus (Yeshua ben Yosef in Hebrew) was born in Bethlehem around the year 6 BC. He conducted his public activities primarily in Galilee. He died in Jerusalem on a Roman cross around the time of the Jewish Passover in the year 30 AD. His short life defined the history of the world into a before and an after.

With both his friends and enemies he spoke Aramaic and Hebrew. These were the languages in which he prayed and taught. He read the *Torah* in Hebrew. But with the exception of a few Hebrew and Aramaic phrases recorded in the Gospels, the original language of his preaching was lost in the span of a few decades. As his movement became more widely known to the people, his words were proclaimed in the Greek language, and in fact the New Testament texts known to us today are in Greek. Professor Emanuela Prinzivalli from Rome's *La Sapienza* University, wrote: "The Gospel message was thus first transmitted in Greek, being the predominant language, which had in fact become the first language spoken by Diaspora Jews. The subsequent development of a corpus of Christian scriptures merely reproduces what had been the history of the Hebrew scriptures in the Diaspora, with the Greek translation, known as the Septuagint, produced specifically for the Greek-speaking Jews themselves, but with a number of adaptations to the Greek mindset and the composition of the *Letter of Aristeas,* which views Jewish wisdom as the loftiest expression of Hellenistic wisdom. In fact, the history of Christianity is more complex and radical, since, on the basis of what has been handed down to us, there are no traces of early Christian writings in Aramaic, and only in a few cases do we have clear evidence of the possible composition of the Gospels in Hebrew.[87]

The term *euangélion* is a translation of the original biblical Hebrew words *besorah tovah,* meaning 'good news'. It eventually came to denote some clearly defined texts that inaugurated a new literary genre. *Euangélion* first appears in what is considered to be the oldest of the New Testament writings, dating from the middle of the first century: The First Letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians. At the beginning of the letter, the apostle, speaking of the spread of the Gospel, explains its meaning: the good news consists in the conversion to *Eloqim*: "you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath" (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Clearly, in full accordance with the Jewish faith, this is a proclamation of salvation extended to the Gentiles, who, in view of the imminent end, are also invited through Jesus the Messiah (*Yeshua ha-Mashiach*) to share in the salvation that *Eloqim* has already offered to Israel, with whom he has made a permanent covenant.

87 E. Prinzivalli, *Cristianesimo e cultura classica. Modalità retoriche in alcuni testi cristiani (I ex.-II in.),* Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones 2013, XXIV, 21-34: 24.

The rediscovery of Jesus' Jewishness has been a major development in the Jewish-Christian dialogue of the last decades. "Jesus was and always remained a Jew," read the *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism*, published in 1985 by the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. For centuries, Jesus has been de-Judaised, alienated, Greekised, Latinised, Europeanised and de-Christianised. It is therefore necessary to restore him to his true origin. A more authentic knowledge of Jesus thus requires a better understanding of Judaism.

Over the last century, the Jewish Jesus has been an important focus of Jewish scholarship. These include, most notably, the works of Joseph Klausner (1874-1958), Jules Isaac (1877-1963), Martin Buber (1878-1965), Schalom Ben Chorin (1913-1999), David Flusser (1917-2000), and many more.[88]

Martin Buber has even argued that the community of Israel will recognise Jesus not only as a great figure of its religious history, but also in the context of a millennia-long development whose ultimate goal is the redemption of Israel and the world. It has been said that Jesus is like a bracket that connects Jews and Christians, leading them to pursue with mutual respect their common objective of achieving brotherhood among the whole of humanity, in a world of security and peace, through their faith in God and the coming of His Kingdom.

"Before asking who rejected and killed Jesus, we should ask who welcomed him. [...] The Jews are the ones who welcomed Jesus. Mary and Joseph, John the Baptist, Peter and Andrew, James and John, the other apostles, all the first disciples, Ananias and Paul, and the thousands of members of the first Judeo-Christian community. They did not follow Jesus with the intention of abandoning the faith of their fathers. On the contrary, they followed him in full fidelity to the covenant and the promises made to Israel",[89] writes Father Etienne Emmanuel Vetö, director of the Cardinal Bea Centre for Jewish Studies at Rome's Gregorian University in Rome. The Church has no desire to replace Israel, but is rather the eschatological people born of the grafting of the Gentiles onto the Chosen People, the wild branch grafted onto the holy root, and since the roots of a tree are not its past but its present, "it is necessary to recognise the enormous debt of the Church and of Christianity to the Jewish people and its faith."[90]

The Second Vatican Council states: "Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues."[91]

There will be no 'final conversion of Israel', but the recognition of the Messiah will take place when the anti-Messianic witness of the nations has come to an end.

This recognition will be of such importance that, according to Shaul, it will ultimately culminate in the *eschaton* and the resurrection of the dead: "For if the casting away

88 J. Sievers, *Gesù di Nazareth visto da scrittori ebrei del XX secolo*, which can be found at https://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01111997_p-48_it.html (visited on 11.07.2021).

89 Preface to J.M. Sweeney (ed.), *Gesù non fu ucciso dagli ebrei. Le radici cristiane dell'antisemitismo*, tr. by A. Montanari, Edizioni Terra Santa, Milano 2020, 20-21.

90 *Ivi*, 22.

91 Nostra Aetate, 4.

of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rm 11:15).

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13. PAUL/SHAUL THE JEW

CHAPTER 13

While the first chapters of Acts of the Apostles focus on the figure of Paul, from chapter 9 onwards the central character becomes Shaul/Paul. This central role was to become firmly established in history. Paul left a significant mark on Christianity through the letters written by him or attributed to him.

Although for almost two millennia Paul was seen as an opponent of Judaism and a denigrator of the *Torah*, recent findings have profoundly changed the interpretation of his character and role, showing that he was deeply attached to his roots. Indeed, many biblical studies, including those by Christian scholars, point to the 'Jewishness' of his life and thought. This development form part of a broader movement - in both Christian and Jewish circles – for the rediscovery of the Jewish roots of Christianity.

Some of his autobiographical statements are an important starting point for establishing Paul's Jewishness. Of particular interest is Phil 3:4-6, in which we read that Paul is proud of his Jewish heritage and faith (*see also* 2 Corinthians 11:22 and Gal. 1:14). Acts 22:3 tells us that he "studied with Gamaliel", the son or grandson of the celebrated Hillel, who gave systematic validity to certain exegetical methods (*middot)* found in Paul's own exegetical works (see, for example, Rom 9:6-26) and which were to become tradition in the so-called *midrashim*, the rabbinical commentaries on Scripture.

This means that the Apostle to the Gentiles should be placed in the diverse historical and religious context of first-century Judaism. In the process, discontinuities between Paul and the theological traditions of the past that developed in his environment clearly emerge.

In recent years, a new stream of scholarship called "Paul within Judaism" developed in the wake of the "New Perspective on Paul." Mark D. Nanos describes it as follows: "My working hypothesis is that Paul's letters were written by a Jew who remained Torah-observant after he came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah and was called to spread that message to the nations. "[92].

Paul shared with other Jewish groups of his time an apocalyptic understanding of human history, according to which the world was coming to an end and a completely new reality was dawning, one in which the Divine power would be fully revealed. The prophets announced that the inclination to evil would disappear and everyone would spontaneously follow the path of good: the *Torah*, written on tablets of stone, would be written on human hearts.

92 www.marknanos.com. See M.D. Nanos – M. Zetterholm (eds), *Paul within Judaism. Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2015 e G. Boccaccini, *Paul's Three Paths to Salvation*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2020.

The resurrection of the dead was an integral part of the apocalyptic hope and worldview. Moreover, apocalypticism had developed the relevant categories and vocabulary to express faith in the resurrection. And in fact, the salvific death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was at the centre of the preaching of the Apostle to the Gentiles (cf. 1Cor 15), together with the consequent fate of the dead in Christ at the end of time: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. 4:16; cf. 1 Cor. 15:23, where Christ is called "the firstfruits" (*aparché*) because he prefigures the resurrection of all).

The encounter with the Messiah Jesus on the road to Damascus - which he never refers to as a "conversion" - transformed Shaul's existence. From then on, like an ancient prophet, he felt the urgency of the mission to the nations, to ensure that the salvation given by God through his crucified Messiah reached the furthermost corners of the world. A true son of Abraham, Paul believed that all the nations of the world should be blessed in Abraham. But it is not openness to the Gentiles that distinguishes Paul's vision from that of the "pillars" of the Jerusalem community. In fact, James, Peter and John all shared this same vision.

Paul is not a convert. He is a redeemer. He is called to be a prophet to the nations: he desires to reach out to the peoples of the remotest areas of the world and to bring them together before the *parousia*, which he considers to be imminent, and in fact he includes himself among those who "are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15).

Having assumed the role of a new Jeremiah, Paul carries out his mission to bring the Gentiles into the history of salvation. His mission is the messianic conversion of the Gentiles in the short time remaining. He seeks to establish a new people *in addition to,* not as *a substitute* for, Israel. Furthermore, Paul maintained that non-Jews were not obliged to observe all the precepts of the Torah.

Shaul's apocalyptic and mystical messianism played a major role in the history of Christianity. He understood that the religious life of the followers of the Messiah Jesus, once Gentiles, could not be limited to the observance of a few precepts. To live according to the Spirit means to renounce the things of the flesh, i.e. sins; the "new man" is "clothed" in the garments of Messiah-Jesus; faith, hope and charity are deeply rooted in the conscience (*synéidesis*) and are concretely communicated in the service of others. Piety (*eusébeia*) is to become a key concept that characterises this new life (cf. 1 Tim 4:8; 6:3; etc.).

Significantly, in the aftermath of the Shoah, when it became clear that anti-Judaism was a grave sin that had contributed to the tragic historical events, the Council's declaration *Nostra Aetate* drew on Pauline texts (Romans 9-11) for a different understanding of Jewish-Christian relations.

Indeed, it is this reconciliation that gives hope to the encounter between Jews and Christians: "For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Rom 11:15).

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14. A BRIEF HISTORY OF ITALIAN JEWS

CHAPTER 14

Jewish communities in Italy today

There are approximately 25,000 Jews in Italy today, registered in the country's 21 Jewish communities. The Jewish communities throughout Italy are collectively represented at national and international level by the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI), pursuant to Law 101/89 ("Rules governing relations between the State and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities") and subsequent amendments, and the "Agreement between the Italian Republic and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities" of 27 February 1987. The communities serve as a reference point for their members to whom they provide religious services, Jewish education and social support services. To this end, some communities have their own institutions, such as officially recognised schools, religious education centres for children, retirement homes, cultural and social centres. Each community is governed by an elected council, which appoints a president, who serves for four years, and a chief rabbi, who heads all religious educational activities.

The age of Roman paganism (2nd century BC - 313 AD)

The Jewish diaspora migrated to Rome after crossing other Mediterranean countries (Egypt, Syria, Cyrenaica and Greece). The first official contacts between Judaea and Rome were established on the initiative of Judas Maccabaeus of the Hasmonean family, who sparked the revolt against the Seleucid Empire in 168 BC. Subsequently, in the years 168-139 BC, many emissaries left Jerusalem for Rome, bringing with them merchants, craftsmen, scholars and travellers. They were joined, after 63 BC, by prisoners of war captured by the Roman general Pompey during the military campaign that culminated in the conquest of Jerusalem. Mirroring events in their homeland of Judea, the status of the Jews on the peninsula changed when the Roman legions under Titus razed Jerusalem, including the Second Temple, to the ground in 70 AD. Tens of thousands of Jewish captives were taken to Rome as slaves.
Diocletian gradually revoked the special privileges granted to the Jewish community by Julius Caesar. Nevertheless, the Jews living in the Italic peninsula were recognised as citizens of the Empire. They were one of the many groups that made up the Italic reality of the time. The Jews lived in a territory undergoing a process of Christian inculturation, which was then in its early stages. Finally, while polytheistic and pagan Rome tolerated all faiths, monotheistic and Christian Rome, after Constantine's Edict of 313, did not want any competition. The emperor forbade conversion to Judaism and mixed marriages. In 313, the Jews were thus distributed mostly in Rome and the south

of the peninsula. By the time of the Edict of Thessalonica (380), which made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Jewish presence in Italy had been a reality for several centuries.

The Barbarian invasions

The Barbarian invasions of the Visigoths, Vandals and Huns brought suffering to both the Jewish and non-Jewish populations. It was not until the conquest of Italy by the Goths that some semblance of order was restored to the country, whose king, Theodoric (489-526), managed to maintain a certain balance between his victorious minority and the defeated Italic minority. These were also decades of relative tranquillity for the Jews, as Theodoric restored to them the privileges they had enjoyed under Roman law. After his death, the Italic territory returned to be a battlefield. In the year 600, the Jews fled the Frankish-Lombard kingdom in the north, where the rigid unitary structures did not favour the integration of its various components, and moved towards the realms of power in the south, where the plethora of principalities, duchies and free cities provided a safer environment for the formation of Jewish communities. The south of Italy borders the Mediterranean, and there were frequent exchanges with the coastal countries, both commercial and cultural. A flourishing Jewish presence developed there over the course of four centuries. The Muslim-Arab rule on the island of Sicily was very liberal for the time, and the only restrictive measure imposed on the Jews was a yellow mark on their garments. Under the Norman dominion, the Jews were allowed to lead a relatively normal life and integrate themselves socially and culturally into the environment in which they lived. Wherever Norman rule extended, Jews were allowed to have their own schools, synagogues and craft workshops. Their art of weaving and painting textiles and silk was exported abroad. The Hebrew language facilitated communication with co-religionists from other countries and thus maritime trade. The entrepreneurial spirit of the Jews was the driving force behind the economic development of the Norman dominions. On this subject, historian G. Todeschini writes: "Writing the history of Jews in medieval Italy means writing a part of Italian history. And precisely because the medieval history of the territories that make up the Italic Peninsula constitutes the foundation of modern Italy, referring to the Jews in Italy as a structural component of Italian history means challenging the widely held assumption that this history is culturally and religiously homogeneous, and thus the very idea of Italy as a unified, unchanging, Latin and Christian reality."[93]

93 "Fare la storia degli ebrei presenti nell'Italia del Medioevo significa scrivere un pezzo di storia italiana. D'altra parte, proprio perché la storia medievale dei territori che formavano la penisola italica è il punto di partenza della futura complessi- tà italiana, parlare degli ebrei in Italia come di una componente strutturale della storia italiana significa rimettere in discussione l'idea molto diffusa dell'omogeneità cultura- le e religiosa di questa storia, rimettere in gioco, dunque, l'immagine di un'Italia come realtà compattamente latina e cristiana da sempre." G. Todeschini, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia medievale*, Carocci, 2018, p. 11.

From the barbarian invasions to the Empire

In the space of just a few years, Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) re-established the authority of the Church in the whole of the western Roman-Barbarian world. His authority extended to the Jews: he defended them against the violence of the clergy and upheld their freedom of worship.[94]
At the beginning of the 7th century, the Italian peninsula was divided into two parts: the Lombards in the north and the Byzantines in the centre and south. The latter controlled Apulia, Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia. They also extended their influence to the exarchates of Ravenna, Venice, Rome and Naples. Between these two powers stood the Papacy. This division of the peninsula was reflected in the history of the Jews, who from then on became more and more anchored to the territory and to the local areas. Rome's Jewish presence, which had served as a point of attraction, remained significant, although it was during these years that the first migrations of Jews to the south began. In the same years, Apulian Judaism was born and was to produce many men of letters and scholars. The saying "the law comes from Bari and the word of God from Otranto", which is said to have been popular in 12th century France, testifies to the importance of this area and of southern Italy in general in the early Middle Ages. The Hebrew language underwent a veritable revival: some fine Hebrew poetry was written in Apulia between the 9th and 12th centuries. Hebrew literature spread from Apulia to Germany and France, partly as a result of the aforementioned migrations.[95] In addition, numerous Talmudic academies were established in the cities of Venosa, Oria, Bari and Otranto.

The Age of Expansion: 1100-1300

From 1100 to 1200 the Church concentrated her efforts on preserving her supremacy over the great European powers and combating the heresies that had begun to spread. It is in the light of this latter objective that a number of subsequent measures should be read. These are: the 'bull' of Callixtus II (1119-1124), *Constitutio pro Judaeis* (1120), which forbade the construction of new synagogues or the embellishment of existing ones and forbade the Jews to have Christian servants or nursemaids; the decisions of the Third Lateran Council (1179), which confirmed the bull of 1120; and finally the provisions of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), which, under the authority of Innocent III, reinforced what had already been established and imposed on the Jews the need to distinguish themselves from the Christians. A round cloth to be worn on their garments and a hat of a certain shape were the most common marks.
In the south, however, Frederick II, Duke of Swabia, excommunicated several times, promulgated the *Liber Augustalis* in Melfi in 1231, a new legal code granting Jews the same treatment as other citizens This was a challenge to the papacy. In 1267, Pope

94 E. Savino, *Gli ebrei in Italia meridionale nell'epistolario di Gregorio Magno in "Sefer Yuḥasin"* 7, pp. 15-33.
95 A. Milano, *Storia degli ebrei di Italia*, Einaudi, 1963, pp. 60- 66. G. TAMANI, *La letteratura ebraica medievale (secoli X-XVIII)*, Morcelliana, 2004, pp. 155-185.

Clement IV, in his bull *Turbato corde*, called on the Dominicans and Franciscans to adopt a more severe attitude towards the Jews. Manfred's death marked the end of the Norman saga. The Inquisition was established in southern Italy in 1268: it marked the beginning of a long series of attempts to convert the Jews.

Towards the age of the ghetto: 1300 to 1500

A broader approach should be reserved for the question of usury. The binomial "Jew-usurer" was to become one of the most entrenched anti-Semitic stereotypes. The issue of interest-bearing loans was central to the Jewish presence in the Christian world. Usury was first defined in 806 as any monetary transaction in which "more is asked than is given."

It should be noted, however, that the Jews were certainly not the only ones to practise usury. In fact, they were the only ones to do so openly and with the protection of the civil authorities. It is important to understand that the meaning of the term has changed over time. Today, a distinction is made between usury and other legitimate forms of financial and banking activity, which was not the case then. Any activity in this sector was considered usurious. In fact, the excessive strictness of the canonical laws meant that, unlike Jewish usury, usury practised by Christians was a clandestine and shameful form of trade. Under their Law, Jews could not lend money to their co-religionists, while lending at interest to non-Jews was permitted. The Church, for its part, considered the activity of lending impure, but with the 4th Lateran Council, by forbidding Jews to lend money at unreasonable rates, it in fact permitted them to lend money at an ordinary interest rate.

This period also saw the emergence of two other phenomena that came to characterise relations between the Jewish minority and the Christian majority for a long time to come. These were: forced conversionary sermons and expulsions. Forced conversion sermons, which Jews had to undergo periodically with the purpose of their conversion to the truth of Christianity, began in several places starting in the 12th century and became a permanent institution in the age of the Counter-Reformation (in the Papal States this custom continued until 1846). Faced with conversion to Catholicism or expulsion, in 1290 the entire Jewish population of England was expelled from the country. They were expelled from French territories four times between 1182 and 1322, and finally in 1394 (from Provence only in 1508). Expulsions from Spain and Sicily (1492), Portugal (1496-97) and throughout southern Italy (1510-1541) were particularly dramatic.

The widespread revival of the unfounded accusation of poisoning wells and springs, which had already been made against the Jews (and lepers) in the past, was a common practice in that period. Although Pope Clement VI issued two bulls in 1348 declaring these accusations to be groundless, the belief in the existence of a Jewish conspiracy against Christianity continued to spread. It was a time of great migratory movements. The sequence of violence and persecution against the Jews explains why, from the late Middle Ages, a growing number of Jews fled to Eastern Europe. Many left Italy to seek temporary refuge on the other side of the Alps. For the same

reasons, other groups of Jews took the opposite route.
It is estimated that a total of 100,000 Jews were slaughtered by the Crusaders on their way through the towns of the German Rhineland. By the early 14th century, about 40,000 Jews lived in the Italian peninsula out of a population of 8 million. Northern Italy remained relatively unaffected by that wave of insanity, and over time it became a safe haven for thousands of Jews who settled in what are now the regions of Lombardy, Trentino, Piedmont, Veneto and Emilia. In these areas they had to pay a "residence fee", wear a distinctive badge and endure other restrictions, but they were also able to flourish and distinguish themselves through their cultural achievements.
Before discussing the period of the ghettos, it is worth mentioning the relations between Jews and Christians during the Renaissance, and particularly in the Florence of Cosimo (1389-1464) and Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492)[96]. Suffice it to mention the importance attached to Jewish culture by an intellectual of the calibre of Marsilio Ficino (1433 - 1499), who contributed to the spread of the idea of a universal theology (*prisca theologia*), as evidenced in his book *De Christiana religione*. Moreover, Ficino's relationship with the Jewish tradition did not develop into a passionate study of the Jewish *Kabbalah*, as was later the case with the more famous Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). Rather, it can be seen as a scholarly interest that sought to confirm the importance of Platonism for the Jewish tradition. However, his search for new sources of human wisdom brought Ficino into contact with Jewish intellectuals such as Flavius Mithridates (c. 1445-c. 1489) and Yochanan Alemanno (c. 1435-c. 1504), who introduced him to the foundations of the Jewish mystical tradition. Although he can hardly be considered an exponent of the Christian *Kabbalah*, Ficino was the first to introduce the term *Kabbalah* (sic) in the Italian tongue in Florence between the years 1479 and 1480. His theological and philosophical reflections undoubtedly contributed to the spread of the Jewish tradition in European culture for centuries to come. Whilst Ficino, as we have seen, was primarily involved in the rediscovery of Plato and Plotinus, other scholars, such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463 - 1494), Johannes Reuchlin (1455 - 1522) and Francesco Zorzi (1466 - 1540), took a closer interest in Jewish culture, especially the *Kabbalah*. All three were credited with founding the Christian *Kabbalah*. But it was Giovanni Pico della Mirandola who marked the most significant encounter between Christian and Jewish culture in Renaissance Florence. Pico had three Jewish mentors: Elia del Medigo (1458 - 1493) and the aforementioned Flavius Mithridates and Yochanan Alemanno. It was probably in Florence that Pico first became acquainted with the Jewish convert William Raymond Moncada, alias Flavius Mithridates, alias Shemu'el Nissim Abulfarag, who was to initiate him into the Jewish *Kabbalah*. Having discovered the Jewish *Kabbalah*, Pico commissioned Flavius Mithridates (c. 1444 - c. 1489) to translate many Kabbalistic works from Hebrew into Latin.[97]

96 *Il Rinascimento parla ebraico*, a cura di G. Busi e S. Greco, Silvana Editoriale, Milano 2019, 218.
97 See the following studies on these figures, which also contain an extensive bibliography: Francesco Zorzi, *L'armonia del mondo*, a cura di S. Campanini, series. "Il Pensiero Occidentale", Bompiani, Milano 2010. G. BUSI, R. EBGI, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Mito, magia, Qabbalah*, Einaudi, Torino 2014. G. BARTOLUCCI, *Vera religio. Marsilio Ficino e la tradizione ebraica*, Paideia, Torino 2017.

The Age of the Ghetto

By the middle of the 15th century, the Italian territory was divided into many small states, with the Papal States forming a separate realm. The Duchy of Savoy, with Turin as its capital, had three other feudal principalities within its borders: Saluzzo, Asti and Monferrato. All three saw a progressive influx of Jews, forming many other communities. Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Levantine Jews settled in Venice, creating a cosmopolitan Jewish community that were to play an important role in the development of the Republic. Other centres rich in Jewish history and culture are Mantua, Modena and Ferrara. In Florence, under its *Signoria*, Jewish life flourished, especially in the banking sector. However, even in Italy this favourable climate was to be short-lived: as mentioned above, with the expulsion from Spain in 1492, the Jews were expelled from the Spanish territories of Sardinia and Sicily, and subsequently, with the Spaniards' rule of the Kingdom of Naples, the Jews were gradually expelled from this region between 1510 and 1541. By 1492, at least 200,000 Jews had been expelled from Spain and 40,000 from Sicily, ending a presence that had lasted fifteen centuries. Meanwhile, in 1516, the Republic of Venice created the world's first ghetto: an urban area surrounded by high walls with gates that shut in the evening, where Jews were compelled to live. The situation worsened with a series of anti-Jewish papal bulls at the beginning of the Counter-Reformation. The first bull, *Cum nimis absurdum,* was issued by Pope Paul IV in 1555. It established the Ghetto within the Papal State and urged Catholic authorities to adopt similar segregationist measures. From then on, apart from opening pawnshops, the only business permitted to Jews was the sale of second-hand clothes and worn-out articles (*strazzaria*). More restrictive measures followed, culminating in Pius IV's bull of 1569, providing for the expulsion of the Jews from all papal territories except the Ghetto of Rome and Ancona. The Ghettos were gradually extended to other areas until the French Revolution - followed by the Revolutions of 1848 - effectively abolished them (the last remaining Ghetto was in Rome, abolished not until 1870 after the Porta Pia breach). With the introduction of the principles of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* of the French Revolution, Italian Jews, who numbered about 30,000 out of a population of 17 million at the time, gained a foothold in the public life of the country. The French military occupation of the Papal States resulted in the declaration of a Republic in Rome, ruled by liberal Italian patriots. The publication of a Roman constitution in March 1798, based on the French constitution, granted equal treatment by the State to all citizens and faiths. The Jews enthusiastically welcomed the arrival of the French troops in Italy, but they remained cautious, as if foreseeing the Restoration that followed the Revolution and Napoleon, and with it the restoration of most of the previous restrictions.

From the Enlightenment to emancipation

Between 1650 and 1815, Jews were allowed to settle in the Kingdom of Savoy (with the exception of Sardinia), the Republic of Venice, the Duchy of Mantua, the Duchy of Parma (outside the capital), the Duchy of Modena, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany

and in certain areas of the Papal States. There were no Jewish settlements in the Kingdom of Naples, apart from an unsuccessful attempt between 1740 and 1747. Only a few wealthy Jewish merchants were tolerated in Genoa. Each state applied different policies to its local Jewish community. The living conditions, legal status and opportunities of Jews living in Tuscany were therefore very different from those of Jews living in Piedmont or Rome during the same period. Nor, as in the past, did the Jews of early modern Italy share a unified, homogeneous culture. Because of a long history of migration stemming from the country's strategic position on the Mediterranean, Italian Jews maintained close ties with a much wider Jewish world than the relative small Italian context might suggest.

In the 16th century, Jews from the Ottoman Empire and Eastern Europe, as well as *conversos* from the Iberian Peninsula, began to settle in Italy alongside local communities dating back to the early Middle Ages. By 1650, Italy was home to a number of Jewish traditions, including those of the Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, in addition to the Italian Jews. Those Jews spoke, read and wrote a variety of languages, including Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, French, Yiddish and, of course, Hebrew. They lived in close proximity to each other. They practised different customs and rituals and had different educational systems and social aspirations. By 1650, all Italian Jewish communities had developed oligarchic systems of self-governance, solidly controlled by families of merchants and bankers. Most communities retained autonomous jurisdiction over Jewish civil disputes, with the exception of Rome, Ancona and Venice.

The Church's attitude towards the Jews remained repressive throughout the 18th century. Several attempts at conversion were made by Pope Benedict XIV (1740-58) and Pope Pius VI (1775-99). By 1797, *Houses of Catechumens* had been established in various areas. Pope Pius VI, who continued the policy of conversion established by his predecessors, directly confronted what he saw as the threat posed by the rising forces of secularism and Enlightenment culture, and in 1775 issued an anti-Jewish edict on the Jews of Rome (*'Editto sopra gli ebrei'*). It forbade, inter alia, the study of the *Talmud* and any relation between Jews and Christians, and required Jews to wear a distinctive sign even in the Ghetto.

From the Restoration to the Second World War

With the Restoration and the widespread re-institution of the Ghettos, the situation of the Jews had largely returned to that of the *'ancien regime'*. It was especially with the revolutions of 1848, to which Jews contributed significantly, that the issue of the Jews' emancipation returned to the fore. The only exception was the city of Leghorn, where the Grand Duke of Tuscany encouraged the influx of Jews and guaranteed their safety with a decree known as the "*Livornina*". Ghettos were also re-established in Piedmont, but the Jewish economic expansion during the years of freedom had created enduring circumstances that were difficult to undo. In Lombardy-Venetia there were 7,000 Jews who were allowed to attend university and pursue their studies. The situation was similar in Tuscany, Parma, Modena and Mantua. In the latter

city, Jews were allowed to go out of the Ghetto during the day and even to have "granaries and storerooms there, provided they kept the necessary distance from the churches."
Starting in the mid-19th century, the history of Italian Jews became increasingly intertwined with that of Italy, and it is not surprising that the Jews took part in the Risorgimento uprisings. Italian patriots such as Mazzini and Cattaneo advocated the overthrow of a closed, reactionary, anti-Semitic world. Two hundred Jews took part in Garibaldi's campaigns of 1848 and 1849, and when Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, was entrusted with governmental responsibilities, he surrounded himself with Jewish advisers and friends. Suffice it to mention that his private secretary was Jewish Italian diplomat and politician Isaac Artom (1829-1900).
The fall of Rome in 1870 marked the end of the last Jewish ghetto in Europe.
In 1871 there were eleven Jews in the Chamber of Deputies. Ernesto Nathan (1845-1921), mayor of Rome from 1907 to 1913, was Jewish. The Jews of Trieste played an important role in the irredentist movement and in Italian culture, the symbol of which was Italo Svevo from Trieste. A large number of Italian Jewish soldiers fought in the First World War of 1914-1918 (Italy entered the war in 1915). In 1922, the Fascists came to power and the attitude of the Jews was no different from that of other Italians: some were for it, some were against it, some were resigned to it. In 1938, however, a violent anti-Semitic campaign began. The first anti-Jewish laws, passed on 2 and 3 September 1938, banned all foreign Jews from living in Italy and deprived Jews who had arrived after 1918 of their citizenship. Jews were banned from working and studying in Italian public and private schools, and the measure applied to all levels of education. The second, harsher decree, issued on 17 November 1938, excluded Jews from military service and public office and restricted their activities in real estate, private business and the professions. Trade and craft licences were subsequently withdrawn, and the liberal professions - lawyers, engineers, architects and doctors - were prohibited. A certain number of Italian Jews (perhaps 4/5,000 people) emigrated, but many chose to remain. The Catholic Church protested against the non-recognition of conversions and the prohibition of mixed marriages, even if the Jewish spouse had embraced Catholicism.
Italy entered the war on the German side on 10 June 1940, but its disastrous fate was such that it finally surrendered in September 1943. Germany reacted to the news that Italy had surrendered by occupying the entire peninsula. In the early hours of 16 October, the Germans surrounded the Ghetto of Rome, broke into private homes and rounded up the Jews - men, women and children. They were forced out of their homes, loaded onto trucks and, after a few days, deported in sealed wagons to Fossoli and from there to Auschwitz, where most of them were killed immediately. In the weeks and months that followed, the roundups continued throughout Rome. A total of 2091 Jews were deported from Rome. The Germans deported more than 8500 Jews from all over Italy (including the Aegean islands) between 1943 and 1945. Only a few hundred returned. Of the 200,000 Italians who actively resisted the invaders, 2000 were Jews. Of the 70,000 Italian partisans killed in action, 700 were Jews. Rome was liberated on 4 June 1944 and Italy on 25 April 1945.

Reconstruction

From that moment on, Italian Jewry, like the rest of the country, began to rebuild. The Italian Jews thus started to count how many of them were left. A decade after the end of the war, there were approximately 30.000 Jews in Italy, the largest centres being Rome with about 11.000 and Milan with 6.000. The few remaining Jews were left with the task of rebuilding Italian Judaism after the catastrophe.

Decrees passed by the Italian government on 20 January 1944 restored full civil and political rights to Jews. On 10 August they were readmitted to public office, and on 5 October their property rights were recognised.

A UN Resolution of November 1947 called for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, and on 14 May 1948 the State of Israel was born. But immediately after its creation, the State of Israel was attacked by the armies of five Arab countries.

Nevertheless, many Jewish refugees arrived in Palestine via Italy, which immediately recognised the existence of Israel. With some help from abroad, Italian Jewry rebuilt its structures: synagogues and schools resumed their activities, also thanks to the contribution of some prominent personalities such as Dante Lattes (1876-1965) and Elio Toaff (1915-2015).

The Jews and the Catholic Church

Pope John XXIII initiated a radical change in the Church's long history of anti-Judaism after his meeting with Jewish-French historian Jules Isaac in 1960. In preparation for that change, John XXIII took a series of steps such as the drafting of the document *De Judaeis,* culminating in the Second Vatican Council's declaration *Nostra Aetate*. Since then, the Catholic Church has changed its attitude towards Judaism and the Jews with the promulgation of numerous other documents, including many important meetings and landmark visits that have contributed to the development of a new and fraternal relationship. Another historic event was the visit of John Paul II to the Great Synagogue of Rome on 1 April 1986, where he was received by Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff, marking the first visit by a Pope to a synagogue. John Paul II went on to visit the Western Wall (*Kotel*) and the Holocaust Museum (*Yad Vashem*) in Jerusalem (2000). Visits to the Temple in Rome and pilgrimages to Jerusalem were again made by Benedict XVI (2009 and 2010) and Pope Francis (2014 and 2016)[98].

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15. JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE SINCE THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

CHAPTER 15

The meeting between Jules Isaac and John XXIII on 13 June 1960 marked a turning point in Jewish-Christian relations. The Pope took the study materials given to him by Isaac and gave them to Cardinal Augustin Bea. He asked Bea`s secretariat to use the materials to prepare working papers that formed the basis of the Council declaration *Nostra Aetate*(1965). The Second Vatican Council has shown the way forward for the promotion of a close bond of fraternity between Christians and Jews. But there is still a long way to go. In the conclusion of the first document published in 1974, the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews reads: "The problem of Jewish-Christian relations concerns the Church as such, since it is when 'pondering her own mystery' that she encounters the mystery of Israel. Therefore, even in areas where no Jewish communities exist, this remains an important problem. There is also an ecumenical aspect to the question: the very return of Christians to the sources and origins of their faith, grafted on to the earlier Covenant, helps the search for unity in Christ, the cornerstone. In this field, the bishops will know what best to do on the pastoral level, within the general disciplinary framework of the Church and in line with the common teaching of her magisterium. For example, they will create some suitable commissions or secretariats on a national or regional level, or appoint some competent person to promote the implementation of the conciliar directives and the suggestions made above. On 22 October 1974, the Holy Father instituted for the universal Church this Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, joined to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. This special Commission, created to encourage and foster religious relations between Jews and Catholics - and to do so eventually in collaboration with other Christians - will be, within the limits of its competence, at the service of all interested organizations, providing information for them, and helping them to pursue their task in conformity with the instructions of the Holy See. The Commission wishes to develop this collaboration in order to implement, correctly and effectively, the express intentions of the Council."

In 1964, Pope Paul VI made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was the first time in history that a pontiff visited the biblical Holy Places. From then on, the Catholic world changed its attitude and vision.

A large number of documents have been drafted and published for the advancement of Jewish-Christian dialogue. On the Catholic side, the most important are the following:

- Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate* (No. 4) (1974);
- Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman*

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- Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *We Remember. A Reflection on the Shoah* (1998);
- International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation. The Church and the Faults of the Past* (2000);
- Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2001);
- Christian Scholars Group on Jewish-Christian Relations, *A Sacred Obligation: Rethinking the Christian faith in relation to Judaism and the Jewish people* (2002);
- Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable* (2015).

On the Jewish side, mention should be made of:

- *'Dabru Emet': A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity* (2000), signed by Jewish scholars and leaders from all branches of Judaism.
- *Doing the Will of Our Father in Heaven* (2015), signed by 28 prominent Orthodox Rabbis;
- *Between Jerusalem and Rome. Reflections on 50 years of Nostra Aetate,* signed by the Conference of European Rabbis (CER), the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) and the Rabbinate of Israel (2017)

Numerous documents were published by the Churches of the Reformation. These include:

- *Willowbank Declaration on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People* (1989), by the World Evangelical Fellowship;
- *The Gospel and the Jewish People, An Evangelical Statement* (2008), written by the World Evangelical Alliance;
- *Martin Luther and the Jews. A necessary reminder on the occasion of the Reformation anniversary* (2015), written by the Evangelical Church in Germany;
- *God's Unfailing Word. Theological and Practical Perspectives on Christian– Jewish Relations* (2019), by the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England.

There have also been a number of Declarations issued by the Orthodox Churches, most notably those written by His Holiness Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Metropolitan Patriarch of Constantinople: *Greetings of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Third Academic Meeting between Orthodoxy and Judaism* (1993), *Religion and Peace in Light of Abraham* (2004), *The Necessity and Goals of Interreligious Dialogue* (2007), *Address to the Jewish Community of Park East Synagogue, New York* (2009).

Beyond the official documents - whose dissemination and knowledge outside the narrow circles of experts and scholars is debatable - Pope John Paul II's historic visit to the Rome Synagogue in 1986, where he was welcomed by Rav Elio Toaff, along with his visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories in the year 2000, were extremely meaningful events. His prayer at the Kotel, where he left a handwritten note, stirred up deep emotions. The note said: "God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations: we are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to

suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant."
Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have continued along this path, with regular visits to the Great Synagogue in Rome and pilgrimages to Israel and the territories of the Palestinian Authority.
The International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ), founded in 1947 after the Seelisberg meeting, convenes every year. The International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ILC) was set up in 1970 and holds meetings on a regular basis. Its five Jewish representatives are appointed by the five founding bodies of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), also established in 1970, while the Catholic members are appointed by the Holy See.
Following the diplomatic relations established between the State of Israel and the Holy See in 2002, a dialogue was established between the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. The two delegations met in Jerusalem and since then regular meetings have taken place on an annual basis.
The activities of the Jewish-Christian Friendship Association (AEC) in Italy (Florence, Ancona, Rome, Naples, Turin, Livorno, Romagna, Upper Garda, Liguria, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Palermo), united in a Federation which is a member of the ICCJ, are carried out on a regular basis. For 40 years now, the most important national event has been held at the beginning of December in the monastery of Camaldoli. Other dialogue initiatives, such as those promoted by the Sisters of Sion (SAE) in Milan, the *Sefer Group*, the *Qol Group*, the *Cardinal Bea Centre* of the Pontifical Gregorian University and others, are promoted alongside the meetings organised by the AEC.
However, in spite of these numerous initiatives, it sometimes seems as if the momentum of those first decades of Jewish-Christian dialogue has waned, along with the persistent and painful feeling that various forms of anti-Semitism/anti-Judaism continue to spread and that for most Christians and Jews dialogue plays only a minor role.
All the documents of the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council, from Nostra Aetate to the Pontiffs' declarations in the Synagogue of Rome, from John Paul II to Francis, point to the uniqueness of the Jewish-Christian relationship. Throughout these many years, much emphasis has been placed on highlighting their common roots. This is clearly underlined in *The Jews and their Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, which reaffirms the permanent value of the Hebrew Scriptures for catechesis and theological reflection. In fact, the pronouncements of the Church's Magisterium have not always been incorporated into Catholic catechesis and pastoral care. The First Covenant has never been revoked, as Pope John Paul II said in Mainz in 1980: Since Ha-Shem is faithful to His covenants, let us also be faithful, helping to prepare for the day when He will convert the nations to a clear language, "so that all may call on the name of the Lord and serve Him shoulder to shoulder" (Zeph 3:9), different but united.
On the Jewish side, see the document *Dabru Emet* or the recent *Between Jerusalem*

and Rome. Jewish reflection on Christianity can be found in the scholarship of the forerunners of dialogue, such as Elijah Benamozegh and Franz Rosenzweig, or more recently, Eugene Korn. Just as apparently irreconcilable divisions have been bridged on the Christian side, so too, on the Jewish side, the earlier assessment of Christianity as *avodah zarah*, i.e. "foreign worship" with "idolatrous connotations", seems to have been overcome, at least by a section of Judaism.
More recently, the publication of the three volumes of the Friendship Bible (*la Bibbia dell'Amicizia*), which contains pericopes with annotated commentaries by Jews and Christians, has encouraged a re-reading of the shared Scriptures from different perspectives.

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The documents are available for consultation and download on a number of institutional websites: http://www. christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/it/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religio-si-con-l-ebraismo.html, www.ccjr.us.
F. Capretti, *La chiesa italiana e gli ebrei. La recezione di Nostra Aetate 4 dal Vaticano II a oggi*, Emi, Bologna 2010.

16. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCURATE MEANING OF CERTAIN TERMS

CHAPTER 16

The richness of the Italian language is amply demonstrated in its attempts to define Jewish complexity. In order to avoid misunderstandings, the use of words and definitions – such as ebreo-ebraico (Jewish-Hebrew), giudeo-giudaico (Jewish-Judaic), israelita-israeliano (Israelite-Israeli), ebraismo-giudaismo (Judaism-Judaism)[99] - must therefore be accompanied by a conceptual clarity capable of highlighting both the appropriate distinctions and the equally necessary similarities between the various expressions.

The first fundamental difference in Italian is not primarily one of meaning but of grammar: the adjectives *ebraico* or *giudaico* refers to things, whereas *ebreo* and *giudeo*, being both adjectives and nouns, refer to persons. Unfortunately, these distinctions are not understood at all in the mainstream media.

Ebreo/Ebraismo (Jewish person/Judaism)

The biblical word *ebreo* is derived from the name Eber, descendant of Shem and legendary ancestor of the Jewish people (cf. Gen 10:21-25). Biblically, the Hebrew word from which the Italian *ebreo* is derived meant 'region beyond', since the Jews (*ebrei*) came from a region beyond the Euphrates. In this sense, the patriarch Abraham is referred to in the Bible as a "Jew" (Gen 14:13). He is the first Hebrew, ivri, in the literal sense of the word – i.e. he who goes is "on the other side" – and not just in the geographical sense. Rabbinic literature explains that the world was on one side and he was on the other. With Abraham, then, Judaism becomes a culture of diversity and otherness.

Thus, from Abraham to the present day, the terms *ebreo* and *ebraismo* can refer to all members of the people of Israel from the patriarchal era to the present day.

Giudeo/Giudaismo (Jewish person/Judaism)

To be precise, these terms mean 'of the tribe of Judah', i.e. the definition used to refer to the Jews who remained in Palestine after the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel (722 BC), when the entire Jewish people was reduced to the tribe of Judah. The term Judaism refers to the religion of the Jewish people and its culture as a whole, as it has been defined since that time or, according to others, since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD. Specifically, this term refers to rabbinic Judaism, a form of

99 The italian language contains several synonims for the words 'Jewish' (as in a Jewish person) and 'Judaism' (as in the Jewish religion) which the english language does not. Common usage is *ebreo* for Jewish and *ebraismo* for Judaism, whereas the terms *giudeo* (as in a Jewish person) and *giudaismo* (as in the Jewish religion) can often be either archaic or derogatory depending on context [Translator's Note].

Judaism that developed largely in the post-biblical era, beginning in the 1st century AD. In this sense, all Jews who lived after the biblical era are religiously Jewish. This culturally precise meaning must be distinguished from local linguistic usage, e.g. the roman dialect *Romanesco*, in which the word *giudeo* is used as the equivalent of *ebreo* without any differentiating nuance. This is also the case in various foreign languages and especially for English term 'Jew'.
In this context, it is also important to clarify the distorted use of the word *giudeo*, which is still used today as an insulting epithet to stigmatise qualities that the anti-Jewish and later anti-Semitic tradition attributed to Jews, such as their attachment to money and their propensity to usury, as well as treachery in juxtaposition with Jesus' apostle *Judas*, symbol of deceit and disloyalty.

Israelita (Israelite)
The term *israelita* requires a number of definitions. First of all, the word conveys, albeit in an unsatisfactory way, the biblical expression 'children of Israel', i.e. the name of the descendants of Jacob or Israel (hence, in biblical language, the children of Israel).
Secondly, 'Israelite' refers to an inhabitant of the Kingdom of Israel, which was formed with the break-up of the united kingdom after the death of Solomon (c. 922 BC), where ten of the twelve tribes, excluding Judah and Benjamin, resided. With the conquest of the Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 BC, its inhabitants were deported or assimilated.
Since the emancipation period (19th century), the term 'Israelite' has been used as a substitute for 'Jew'. Today the term has fallen into disuse. Article 19 of the agreement between the Italian Republic and the *Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche* (1987) states that "The *Unione delle Communità Israelitiche Italiane* shall retain the legal personality with which it is currently endowed and *shall take the name of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities*. The Union is the representative body of the Jewish denomination in relations with the State and in matters of general Jewish interest".

Israeliano (Israeli)
The term refers exclusively to a citizen of the State of Israel, which was established in 1948. Not all Jews are therefore Israelis, nor are all Israelis Jews. There are indeed Israelis (citizens of the State of Israel, to be precise) who are Muslims and, to a much lesser extent, Israelis who belong to various Christian denominations and other religions.
According to data collected by the Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel (as of 12 April 2021), there are 9,327,000 citizens living in the Jewish state. The document estimates that there are 6.9 million Jewish citizens, representing 73.9 per cent of the population, and 1.96 million Arabs, representing one fifth of the population. Finally, 467,000 people belong to other groups, making up 5% of Israel's population.

Antigiudaismo, antisemitismo, antisionismo (anti-Judaism, anti-semitism, anti-Zionism)

Anti-Judaism thrives when Judaism is seen from the outside as essentially a set of religious principles and behaviour now superseded by a further and final revelation not accepted, however, by the Jews, defined as a people of "hard cervix'. Anti-Judaism is therefore a predominantly Christian phenomenon, which found its apogee during the Middle Ages and the early part of the modern era.

Anna Foa writes: "Hostility towards the Jews, already present in ancient times, was consolidated in a different form in the Middle Ages, when Jews lived scattered across European soil, as small minority communities in an all-Christian majority context. It is significant, however, that the use of a specific term to denote anti-Jewish hostility did not emerge until such hostility was no longer a natural element of society and Jews were integrated into the external society, indistinguishable from others, citizens in their own right. In fact, even in the earlier period, when more or less visible barriers separated the Jewish minority from the outside world, *it is difficult to distinguish clearly between anti-Judaism, i.e. hostility of a purely religious nature*, which sees in the Jew a deicide and a stubborn denier of the Messiah, and *anthropological hostility*, which sees in the Jew a naturally perverse being to whom one can ascribe real or imagined faults of all kinds, from the killing of Christian children at Easter to the poisoning of wells and the spreading of the plague".

Anti-Semitism, on the other hand, comes into play when the scene is dominated by social or, worse, racist pseudo-definitions of what it means to be Jewish. The Observatory on Anti-Semitism defines it as follows: "It is a feeling, theory or behaviour of aversion, contempt, discrimination or persecution against Jews. In some cases it is violent, as in the Shoah. Anti-Semitism is always based on stereotypes and prejudices, i.e. the attribution of the same characteristics to all Jews".

Strictly speaking, therefore, we can only speak of anti-Semitism since the second half of the eighteenth century. The anti-Semitism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, then, focused on the 'people'; at first denying that the Jews could collectively define themselves as such without posing a threat to the cohesion of the nation-states in which they lived; later, in its darkest hour, considering them to be a race that had even been deprived of the right to exist.

To quote Anna Foa again: "From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the old anti-Jewish stereotype of a religious nature was extended with new elements, all of which had the aim of defining the Jew as different in so far as he was a physical person and not as a member of another religious faith: The idea of the existence of a Jewish 'race', inferior to the so-called 'Aryan' race; the idea of a Jewish conspiracy for world domination, or, in a complementary way, that of a natural propensity of Jews to revolution and subversion; the idea of a physical diversity of the Jew, distinguished either by his nose, or by his unrestrained sexuality, or by his feminine nature, or even by his cunning and intelligence. The myth of the intelligent Jew is also part of the anti-Semitic paraphernalia, as is the idea of the special attractiveness of Jewish women, admirably portrayed in all its ambiguity in Gregor von Rezzori's novel *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite*.

In the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, anti-Semitic agitation conquered a considerable part of public opinion in Western Europe and flared up in violence and pogroms in Eastern Europe, where Jews were still deprived of any political and civil emancipation. In the years leading up to the First World War, however, the anti-Semitic impulse seemed to fade away, until it appeared as a residual phenomenon destined to disappear with the progress of civilisation and science. It was the material and moral devastation of the First World War and totalitarianism that brought anti-Semitism back to the fore, right up to the Second World War and the Shoah: an attempt at the physical annihilation of all Jews that had never been imagined before Hitler, albeit in the long centuries of anti-Jewish hostility.
After the Shoah, anti-Semitism seemed to be a phenomenon destined never to return, so strong was the awareness of its disastrous consequences. At the same time, however, it took on an increasingly paradigmatic value, expanding to encompass all forms of rejection of that which is different. Fighting anti-Semitism became a way of fighting racism, hostility to foreigners, to blacks, to immigrants. Having been a symbol of error, the Jew becomes a symbol of persecution. In this transformation, however, if on the one hand anti-Semitism expands and universalises its meaning, as an interpretative framework of hatred towards the other, on the other hand it loses substance and reality.
There is therefore a risk of failing to recognise the new phenomena of anti-Semitism, its new political use in the propaganda of Islamic fundamentalism, the new forms it inevitably takes in the end in what the French historian Jean-Michel Chaumont has called "the competition of victims", that is to say the tendency of each victim to exalt the primacy of his or her suffering. But how can we avoid, despite the risks, drawing universal meanings from the memory of the Shoah and comparing its mechanisms with the modalities and forms of every genocide, past and present? Becoming a symbol has always entailed serious risks, as the Jews well know, who throughout history have aroused far more hostility when they were absent or imaginary than when they were real, flesh-and-blood people".

On the other hand, anti-Zionism focuses on the issue of land, arguing that there is no basis for legitimising the political transcription of the bond between the Jewish people and the land of Israel.
The Contemporary Jewish Documentation Centre (CDEC) in Milan writes: "Anti-Zionism does not necessarily evoke anti-Semitism. But Zionism goes beyond the policies of Israeli governments, it is the root of the State of Israel. If anti (Zionism) means free and fair criticism of the political actions of the governments of that state, one cannot accuse those who express it of anti-Semitism. If, on the other hand, the prefix means a denial of any legitimacy to Zionism, it means a desire not to recognise the right of the Jewish people to self-determination. Anti-Zionism, when it acts to erase the state of Israel (created by the United Nations in 1947), or when it denies the historical course of Zionism and considers Israel to be the state built by the mythologised and demonised Jewish capitalism, or the state created to compensate the Jews after the extermination, or the class enemy allied and protected by American imperi-

alism, or when it claims that Zionism is at the centre of a worldwide conspiracy to destabilise and subjugate the whole world to the Jews, then it no longer belongs to a normal form of political struggle: it enters the sphere of anti-Semitic politics".
For a detailed study, please refer to the website of the Observatory on Anti-Semitism of the Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea CDEC in Milan (www.cdec.it).

Currents of Judaism

Variety and diversity of opinion have always been a feature of the Jewish tradition, which recognises the importance of pluralism and invites debate. Dialectic is inherent in Jewish thought and study, where discussion is encouraged in order to stimulate insight and dialogue.
Over time, through contact with other cultures, this has also led to the development of religious currents that differ from the so-called orthodox one.
The phenomenon is rather complex, but in general the Orthodox model is centred on the observance of rules. Within the Orthodox world itself, other currents can be distinguished, such as the Hasidic and *Modern Orthodox* currents, which aim positively to reconcile *Halakhah* – the body of norms of Jewish tradition – with the surrounding world, and in particular with non-Jewish culture and science. There are also *Reform* and *Conservative* movements in the Jewish world. In Italy, Orthodox Judaism is the most widespread.

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HEBREW TRANSLITERATION

א		*alef*
ב	b/v	*bet*
ג	g (as in gap, hard)	*gimel*
ד	d	*dalet*
ה	h	*he*
ו	v (as in vase)	*waw*
ז	s (as in scient)	*zayin*
ח	ḥ (like the Spanish j)	*ḥet*
ט	ṭ	*tet*
י	y	*yod*
כ/ך	k/kh	*kaf*
ל	l	*lamed*
מ/ם	m	*mem*
נ/ן	n	*nun*
ס	s	*samekh*
ע		*ayin*
פ /ף	p/f	*peh*
צ/ץ	ṣ (silent z, as in *tzatziki*)	*ṣade*
ק	q	*qof*
ר	r	*resh*
שׁ	s/sh (as in *shoe*)	*sin/shin*
ת	t	*taw*

BY
CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE ITALIANA
UNIONE DELLE COMUNITÀ EBRAICHE ITALIANE
2023

GRAPHICS BY: OTTAVIOSOSIO.IT