

Judaism is a religion developed among the ancient Hebrews and characterized by belief in one transcendent God who has revealed himself to Abraham, Moses, and the Hebrew prophets and by a religious life in accordance with Scriptures and rabbinic traditions.¹ “Second Temple Judaism” is a common designation for the Jewish traditions that flourished between the return of exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple under Persian patronage from 538 to 515 BCE, and the destruction of the Temple by Roman forces in 70 CE. In practice, research on the period often focuses on the 4th century BCE and following, and stretches into the 2nd century CE. Sometimes referred to erroneously as “intertestamental,” Second Temple Judaism has attracted sustained attention since the late 19th century as a transitional age between the ancient Israelite religion reflected in the early strata of the Hebrew Bible and the emergence of Christianity and classical rabbinic Judaism in their characteristically post-sacrificial forms in late Antiquity. In relation to the former, it has been called “postexilic,” “post-biblical,” or “late Judaism,” and, in relation to the latter, “prerabbinic” or “early Judaism.” Particularly since the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it has been studied increasingly for its own sake and on its own terms.²

The Jews of Palestine in our period faced the questions common to societies: foreign and domestic relations. In terms of foreign affairs, the quest was how to relate to the great empires of the Mediterranean: when to fight, when to yield; when to be content with partial independence, when to seek more. In terms of internal affairs, the primary issue was who would control the national institutions: the temple, the sacrifices, the tithes and other offerings, and the administration of the law. Inevitably the people who controlled foreign policy also controlled—or at least had the power to control—domestic policy. This was a constant source of tension.³

By the 1970s, a nascent subfield was taking form, energized by a new emphasis on the diversity of the Judaism from within which Christianity arose. In the late 20th century, studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed new insights into the significance of this period for the

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Judaism>

² <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0087.xml>

³ E.P. Sanders, “*Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63BCE-66CE*”, pg.28 (online book)

development of Judaism as well. Long deemed critical for Jewish engagement with Greek language and literature and for the spread of Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world, the Second Temple period has also become a new locus for research on halacha, purity, and biblical interpretation. In addition, its study continues to create a space for discussion and collaboration among specialists in the Hebrew Bible, Classics, New Testament, Jewish studies, and rabbinics.

In some way or form, we as people have found a way to create or add to a religion that was established way before our arrival here. We have found a way to not believe in Jesus the Christ or Christianity but yet have created something to worship. We will worship everything in the earth but will not worship the creator of it all. Judaism is one religion that takes a stance in what they believe and they themselves respect and believe. They also stick together and I can understand why they are God chosen people.

Not saying that their ways are perfect, but there is a display of uniformity which we as Christians lack. We are too busy disputing over denominations and race (African American vs Caucasian evangelicals). In this the real purpose and mission of the cross is being missed. Many souls are still wandering because of the ongoing dispute amongst so called Christians. Ideally, we must unlearn what we have believed for so many years to be true and really seek God for our next steps concerning our own personal relationship.

As Judaism continues to stand behind their belief of one transcendent God, it will be revealed to us that He is the God of all nations. That Jesus the Christ did come so that everyone would have an opportunity for eternal life. It's easy to reverence traditions instead of our Savior. Many things are misinterpreted in our application of scripture, but we must be willing to do research and to stand on the word of God. In the end we all must account for our actions in this earth. Just as sure we were all born we all must surely die, and how we lived our lives will determine where we spend our eternity. Demonstrating the Love of God isn't a cure all, but its surly a great place to begin. Love plus our works points we His people to the cross.

Farming was a popular profession because adequate food and crop production were one of the foundations of the Roman economy. The food produced on farms fed both its citizens and militia. Agriculture was highly esteemed in ancient Rome and the majority of citizens who produced consumable goods were farmers. Peasant farms in ancient Rome were particularly abundant around the Mediterranean, where there was a long growing season, temperate weather, and good sunlight. Farming in ancient Rome can be separated into three major components: crops, tools, and farmers.⁴

The occupations of Palestinian Jews were the same, on average, as those in other Mediterranean countries. In discussing rules for the sabbath, the Mishnah very helpfully enumerates the thirty-nine main classes of work. The first seven have to do with agricultural work outside (down to cleansing the crops); the next four with preparation of food inside (from grinding to baking); the next thirteen with producing textiles; the next seven with hunting slaughtering and butchering; two with writing; three with construction; two with fires; and one is general; carrying. Most people made their living by agriculture. The most fertile parts of the country are Galilee and Jericho, and had the pious travelers gone that far, they would have remarked even more on the prosperity of the farms there.⁵

There was a variety of food-producing trees and vines, and especially the long growing season. Wheat, millet, and barley were the predominant grain crops grown on farms in ancient Rome, comprising up to 80% of citizens' daily caloric intake. Other important food crops included olives, legumes, beans, peas, and various fruits and vegetables. Among their many crops, olives, wheat, and grapes were considered vital to society in Roman farming. Wheat, particularly the species *Triticum aestivum*, was a staple food crop because it was turned into bread. Olives were pressed into olive oil, and grapes were fermented to become wine or vinegar.⁶

In addition to agriculture, the festivals were a great part of society. There were three pilgrim festivals: Passover, Weeks and Booths. The Bible requires all Israelite males to attend

⁴ <https://study.com/academy/lesson/ancient-roman-agriculture-crops-tools-farmers.html>

⁵ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63BCE-66 CE*, pg 257-258 (online book)

⁶ <https://study.com/academy/lesson/ancient-roman-agriculture-crops-tools-farmers.html>

each of these festivals (Ex. 23:17; 34:23; Deut. 16:16). Josephus put it this way: Let them assemble in that city in which they shall establish the temple, three times in the year, from the ends of the land which the Hebrews shall conquer, in order to render thanks to God for benefits received, to intercede for future mercies, and to promote by thus meeting and feasting together feelings of mutual affection. Josephus' summary of the Mosaic legislation reveals the obvious interpretation that Jews who resided abroad were exempt from the biblical requirement to attend three festivals each year (pilgrimage was required only from the land that the Hebrews conquered).⁷

What really amazed me about chapter 8, is that no matter how much historical reading you do, women always tend to have the same roles. Expected to do the majority of the work while the men are out in the field. It was also stated that if the women would be able to find a maid-servant that she would not be responsible for the house work. As stated "On the whole, men worked in the fields and women did the rest, as has usually been the case in agricultural communities; their combined efforts produced food and clothing". According to the Mishnah, 'these are works which the wife must perform for her husband': grinding flour and baking bread and washing clothes and cooking food and giving suck to her child and making ready his bed and working in wool. ⁸ How does the work of man equivalent to that of the woman? Maybe you can explain that to me.

Jerusalem, which was prosperous and bustling. The range of occupations went greatly beyond providing the necessities of life. Jerusalem was 'the home of many crafts', where there was 'no lack of goods imported from overseas' according to Aristeas. The temple and how it functioned kept Jerusalem in demand for the goods being produced in addition to its festivals. The temple was the visible, functioning symbol of God's presence with his people, and it was also the basic rallying point of Jewish loyalties. To it came the temple tax and other offerings from Jew throughout the world, as well as thousands of pilgrims.⁹

⁷ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 275-276 (online book)

⁸ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 262 (online book)

⁹ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 299 (online book)

I also observed that in the reading that the book spoke to something I previously stated in one of my summaries. That the Jews are very loyal and they are a unified front, and their dedication was unto death. Even though the population was great in Jerusalem, there were many casualties in war but by far it didn't hurt the population in regards to its census. We observe that Greco Roman world, Galilee and Jerusalem had a specific method in which they operated in their society and it worked for them. Different times calls for different measures.

One thing that I admire about Judaism is their ability to stand boldly for their beliefs which I've previously mentioned. When it comes to observing the Law of God and their Sabbath, it must be respected. There is little or no room for compromise, the act of historical understanding must be implied to embrace a full comprehension. I believe that should be basis when studying any religion. Paganism deals with man made idols and regulations its actually hard for me to understand that I can create something to worship, instead of worshiping the one that created me. Things that make you go Hmmm 🤔

Judaism, by comparison, was simple and straight-forward. Jewish sacrificial and temple rituals was not especially difficult, and in any case the principal responsibility for doing it right fell on the shoulders of the hereditary priests, who had been educated for the job since childhood. In comparison with other regions, Jewish cultic ritual did not stand out as being excessive, burdensome and anxiety-producing. Judaism's most distinctive point, however, was the extension of divine law to all the areas of life. As Josephus put it, in Judaism virtue was a sub-category under piety, rather than piety a sub-category under virtue. Religion-piety, devotion to God-was the all-embracing category, within which everything else came.¹⁰

Judaism hones in on teaching their people the laws, because even though the tabernacle is not present that still implement the laws of God. Since they don't believe in the resurrected Savior, their culture is groomed upon these principles. They will honor all the feast and observe all the holidays as if we are still in the Old Testament times. The Jewish Sabbath is the seventh and last day of the week, like all other days in the calendar, begins at sundown, not sunrise. The general requirement to keep it as a day of rest is one of the Ten

¹⁰ E.P. Sanders, Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 398 (online book)

Commandments.¹¹ I remember when there was a time when stores was not open on Sunday's and then everything changed.

In Judaism as they uphold their laws you will find these areas to be their focus: **Circumcision, Purity, Purity of Food, Means of Purification, and Charity and Love.** The observance of circumcision is attributed to the Jewish culture. Male circumcision is the oldest known human surgical procedure, with historical records and archeological evidence dating the practice back to ancient Egyptians in the 23rd century BCE. In Israel, neonatal male circumcision is routine practice. According to Jewish law, circumcision is the physical representation of the covenant between God and Abraham described in the Old Testament and is required for the inclusion of males in the Jewish faith. Newborn boys are circumcised in a traditional ceremony called a *brit milah*, where the foreskin of the penis is removed by a religious figure, known as a *mohel*, on the 8th day after birth. Most *mohelim* are not medically trained, although training and certification is available through the Israel Ministry of Health. The procedure is performed as a celebratory event, in clean but not sterile conditions, and often in the presence of family and friends.¹² This still occurs even if you are Jewish or serve a pagan god.

The concept of purity represents one of the cornerstones of Jewish religiosity from its earliest articulation in biblical literature. Indeed, the ideal of attaining purity by purification from the various kinds of impurities enumerated in the Book of Leviticus forms an integral part of the notion of holiness in that book, as well as in later Jewish sources. At the same time, purity is not a uniform concept. On the contrary, the idea of purity is mobilized in numerous thematic, literary, and chronological contexts, ranging from ritual to purely metaphysical or spiritual. It plays a fundamental role in constructions of gender identity in Jewish culture, just as gender is a structural element of the various manifestations of the conceptualization of purity. Not so much a linear development of a uniform idea, from ritual to spiritual, purity is rather a concept which acquires different layers of meanings and can be variously drawn on.¹³

¹¹ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 428 (online book)

¹² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3638798/#:~:text=According%20to%20Jewish%20law%2C%20circumcision,males%20in%20the%20Jewish%20faith.>

¹³ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/purification-purification-judaism>

Food is different from the purity laws of Leviticus 12, 15; Numbers 19. Law regulates what Jews can eat, and some possible foods are completely prohibited, being labelled not only 'impure' but also 'abominable' (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14). Intentional transgression of the prohibitions constitutes a serious offence. The Bible makes two major restrictions: it allows Jews to eat only a few living creatures; it forbids them to consume the main fatty parts of an animal and its blood. These rules, together with a few others, constitute what are now called the laws of 'kashrut'. Only certain food is 'kosher', suitable for Jews to eat.¹⁴

There are several ways in which you are considered unclean in Judaism and had to be kept away from the realm of the sacred: impurities that arise from death, childbirth, menstruation, semen, and other discharges from the vagina or penis. With death or corpse impurity which is the subject of Numbers 19, describes the ritual in which the tainted individual becomes purified. A priest will slaughter a red heifer outside the temple, burn it and take the ashes and mixed with water and sprinkled on the impure people on the third day and the seventh; they then washed their clothes and bathed, and the impurity was removed. Not only people who had been near the corpse, but also the room where it had lain and the contents of the room had to be sprinkled.¹⁵ The Israelites had a lot of laws to uphold, makes me think that they folded under pressure, hence their repetitive behavior/disobedience before God.

If each impurity was assigned a ritual cleansing, was there anyone that may have skipped a few? Something that came to mind was the patriarchy in the cleansing system, in regards to being purified from childbirth if the sex was a boy the women was considered impure for one week, if the sex was a girl it was two weeks of impurity why? I believe that birth is considered the same regardless of the sex, but if this was the instruction of God then how can I argue with the creator of all things? Does the male sex tend to get away or is held at a higher standard than men? But my conclusion will still remain the same that women are not unsafe in the patriarchy.

¹⁴ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 444-445 (online book)

¹⁵ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 451 (online book)

Water was essential to purification. Most impurities required bathing, and some necessitated washing the clothes and other objects.¹⁶ In the courts of the tabernacle this cleansing was done at the laver. The Brazen Laver was about the physical and external washing by the priests of their hands and feet, but it typifies infinite spiritual cleansing and transformation of the believer. The cleansing was necessary because of sins done in the flesh, which the dirt of the ground represents; but transformation deals with the internal nature of a life transformed.¹⁷

Charity and Love towards your neighbor is highly uplifted in Judaism. If they are obligated to uphold the laws of God you can't leave out love. Being a believer without demonstrating neighborly love, is being impure before the Lord. Any impurity before our God must be cleansed. The commandments governing relations among Jews are then summarized: by Leviticus 19:18 KJV *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.* Its hard for me to know that God is Love but yet his people regardless of religion have a hard time demonstrating it, hence it being the number 1 commandment (it all serves a purpose, because He knew his people would struggle in this area).

Thus, transitioning us talking about our neighbors The Essenes. The Essenes were a Jewish "sect" or school of philosophy with two branches: some were celibate, disdained marriage and adopted children; others believed that marriage and procreation were needed if the group was to continue and not disappear. Their community was hierarchical, structured, and disciplined. They cared for the elderly and the ill, and they shared their belongings with each other. They studied the holy books of Judaism, notably prophecy, and were punctilious in their observance of Jewish law, especially as regards purity and sabbath laws.

They wore white linen, renounced pleasure, and regarded continence as a virtue. The Jewish historian Josephus compared them to the Greek Pythagoreans. The Essenes practiced a form of prophecy that involved the prediction of the fate of political figures. Judas the Essene

¹⁶ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 458-459 (online book)

¹⁷ <https://truthsfromthetabernacle.wordpress.com/sacrifice-redemption-and-cleansing/the-brazen-laver/>

foretold the death of Mattathias Antigonus at an underground place called “Strato’s Tower.” Manaemus prophesied that the boy Herod would one day become king of the Jews, and as a result the Essenes were spared the requirement to take an oath of loyalty to the monarch.¹⁸

It is thought that this consequent favour was the reason why there was an “Essene Gate” in the first wall of Herodian Jerusalem. And Simon the Essene divined the demise of Archelaus as ethnarch of Judaea, and his banishment to Gaul. Most of the Essenes lived life within Judaeen society. Philo described them with the triple definition of piety: love of God, love of virtue, and love of men. Like other Jews, they relied on God and venerated the lawgiver. But they also held beliefs that distinguished them from other Jews: they believed in providence and fate, the resurrection of the flesh, and immortality of the soul.

Distinct to all others in the ancient world, they were against slavery, condemning slave-ownership as both unjust and ungodly, and against the law of nature that made all men equal at birth. The Essenes were a group that we know little about. The first-century Jewish writers Josephus and Philo mention them. They lived somewhere alongside the Dead Sea. The New Testament does not have anything to say about them directly but there may be a couple of passages that allude to them. This would include the man carrying the jug that Jesus told his disciples to follow in preparation for the Passover. It seems that he was a member of a community that did not include slaves or women. There is also a reference in the Book of Acts to a number of priests that believed. Some have interpreted this to refer to the Essenes.¹⁹

The Pharisees on the other hand is documented throughout the New Testament with their opinions. We will discuss the historicity of the Pharisees and what they stood for or against. The Pharisees were a Jewish group mentioned, either collectively or as individuals, ninety-eight times in the New Testament, mainly in the Gospels.

¹⁸ <https://blog.oup.com/2021/01/essenenes-in-judaeen-society-the-sectarians-of-the-dead-sea-scrolls/>

¹⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_1320.cfm

The root meaning of the word "Pharisee" is uncertain. It is probably related to the Hebrew root meaning "separate" or "detach."

From whom did the Pharisees separate? From those, especially priests or clerics, who interpreted the Law differently than they? From the common people of the land? From Gentiles or Jews who embraced the Hellenistic culture? From certain political groups? All these groups of people the Pharisees would have been determined to avoid in their resolution to separate themselves from any type of impurity proscribed by the Levitical law — or, more specifically, their strict interpretation of it.²⁰

The person who reads most scholarly accounts of the Judaism of our period finds lurking everywhere two ghostly figures, not only omnipresent but also all-controlling; the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin. In Josephus the reader discovers 'Mosaic' commandments that are not in fact in the Bible; the usual scholarly reconstruction is that they got them from the Pharisees, who single-handedly created all extra-biblical laws. The priests had all sorts of rules governing sacrifice and temple procedure: at each step, they followed the Pharisees. There were synagogues in every community: they were run by the Pharisees.²¹

Our observations about rabbinic rules do not prove that the leading priests never accepted Pharisaic ideas. Probably at various periods different preferences that had popular support, or were sponsored by a special group, were incorporated by this or that high priest, especially at the large festivals. Thus, on some occasion or other it might be possible to say that the Pharisees 'forced' the Sadducees to follow their rules of ritual. But consideration of the general character of the high priesthood will show that the high priests and their close associates did not work according to Pharisaic dictation. In other aspect of worship, the Pharisees may have been more influential.²²

After reading the text it made me ponder on the idea of how much influence did the Pharisees have at that time? We know for a fact that they were opposers of Jesus the Christ, I

²⁰ <https://www.christianity.com/jesus/birth-of-jesus/genealogy-and-jewish-heritage/how-were-the-pharisees-legalistic.html>

²¹ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 748-749 (online book)

²² E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 763-764 (online book)

believe just serving their purpose at the time like Judas the Iscariot did. I do know that everything in the word of God serves a purpose. The Pharisees mission was to destroy anything that came against their belief system. I believe that as they began to ask questions to Jesus that the answers they received made them ponder at their own ideology, but they were unable to let that be known to the public because that would jeopardize their sphere of influence. Even though they felt that they were successful with plans to kill Jesus, it didn't work.

My thought correlates with that of E.P. Sanders when he states: "The insertion of Pharisaic determination of what people did at every single point produces a coherent picture. It is, of course, based on a circular argument. This view of the Pharisees is very much like Josephus' belief in 'providence': if it happened, God planned it, since he plans everything. The extreme view of Pharisaic control is equally consistent and equally rests on a dogmatic conviction: only the Pharisees cared about the law and only they decided on how it should be observed; whatever rules people observed attest to the Pharisees' influence, since they made all the rules."²³

Further, if one asks which of the three parties had the most popular support, the answer will be the Pharisees. The Essenes were too exclusivist and the Sadducees were too aristocratic. But the notion that the population had to line up behind one of these parties is wrong. Most aspects of religious practice were common. Within common practice, the Pharisees made numerous, usually minor adjustments. There is no reason for us to suppose that at every step of each festival the ordinary person was conscious of complying with or opposing the views of the Pharisees.²⁴

Some of the Pharisees were eminent in social and economic terms, but for the most part they were not an aristocratic group. Many people respected their piety, learning and scrupulousness with regard to the law, and many applauded them for their relative political independence and their hope for full independence. They did not, however, control any aspect of Judaism before 70, except during the reign of Salome Alexandra. During the revolt they

²³ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63BCE-66 CE*, pg. 766 (online book)

²⁴ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63BCE-66 CE*, pg. 771-772 (online book)

achieved a position of leadership, having been called in by the chief priests in order to broaden their base of support. After the destruction of Jerusalem, they led the reconstruction of Judaism, giving up their party name, becoming more catholic, and taking the title 'rabbis', 'teachers'.²⁵

We may conclude that the pharisees did not see their meticulous definition and observance of the law as being hypocritical and that they were not consciously seeking self-glorification; they were motivated by true religious devotion and the desire to serve God.²⁶ After reading the book it provides clarity on the actions of the Pharisees at that time. In their own eye they thought that they were upholding the law unto God. But was blinded by their own ambition that they missed the fact that God's son was in their presence. I believe at all times we must make sure that the very things we are trying to uphold is the true will of God concerning us.

We as people can be so critical of individuals or what they stand for at first sight. Never doing ample amount of research to arrive at our own conclusion. Upon completion of the book I see Judaism in a new light and can understand the reason in which they uphold their monotheistic view. At times it is hard to break from traditional views, when you have been taught something your entire life. I understand more in my pilgrimage in Christianity that it is beneficial for me to unlearn what I have been taught and as you encourage us to not be afraid to ask questions.

Questions are here to help us grow and assist us to arrive at an impartial conclusion. After through research it is safe to say that we may now have sufficient information fully understand the position of the Essenes, Sadducees, and Pharisees at that time. I personally no longer see them as bullies attempting to keep their place in society. They were actually walking out their purpose and their understanding of their position. Like being on any team everyone has their respective positions to play and the party listed above have their position in history.

²⁵ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 787-788 (online book)

²⁶ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63BCE-66 CE, pg. 855 (online book)