

Was Jesus Really a Jew?

Rabbi Joseph A. Edelheit wrote an article called, "Why Are We Called Jews?" It provides some very important information for understanding the original Jesus movement.

*"We were once called **Hebrews** during the time of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca. After Jacob got his name changed to Israel and moved to Egypt, the people were called **Israelites**. This continued for the entire biblical period until Rome ruled over an area it called Judea when we were called **Judeans**."*¹

The English term "**Jew**" originates in the Biblical Hebrew word "**Yehudi**," meaning "**from the Kingdom of Judah**." It passed into Greek as "**Ioudaios**" and Latin as "**Iudaeus**," which evolved into the Old French "**giu**" after the letter "**d**" was dropped. In modern English and other contemporary languages, the term "**Israelite**" was used to refer to **contemporary Jews** as well as to **Jews of antiquity until the mid-20th-century**.

Since the foundation of the **State of Israel**, it has become less common to use "**Israelite of Jews in general**." Instead, citizens of the state of Israel, **whether Jewish or not**, are called "**Israeli**", while "**Jew**" is used as an **ethno-religious designation**.²

For me this means that I need to remember to refer to Jesus as the "**Judean Jesus from Galilee**" instead of the "**Jewish Jesus**." That is very important for *Exploring Biblical Heritages*.

This is where the subject of the **Torah and Jesus** comes into the discussion. The "*Jewish Jesus*" is a **religious** leader, but the "*Judean Jesus*" is "**political** leader" – *when you understand what the Torah was while the Second Temple existed*.

In the first century, Judeans regarded **the Torah** as "**the national constitution of Israel**." Though the temple was a central element within a Torah worldview, it was only one of many components. *Torah defined the character of Judean life and the understanding of their God*. Torah was both the privilege of the members of Kingdom of Judea and their most significant responsibility. Any idea or ritual, whether cultural or theological that attacked the validity and eternity of Torah was, from the Judean perspective, to be rejected. Consequently, since Torah was synonymous with Judean identity.³

Today the **Torah** is the first section of the **Tanakh**, which is an acronym (**T+N+K**) derived from the names of the three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures: **T**orah (Instruction, or Law, also called the Pentateuch), **N**evi'im (Prophets), and **K**etuvim (Writings). The Torah contains five books: *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*.⁴

¹ [Why Are We Called Jews? | Parashat Vayigash | World Union for Progressive Judaism \(wupj.org\)](#)

² [Jew \(word\) - Wikipedia](#)

³ *The Judaisms of Jesus' Followers: An Introduction to Early Christianity in its Jewish Context* by Juan Marcos Bejarano Gutierrez © 2018; Yaron Publishing, Grand Prairie, TX; p. 27.

⁴ [Tanakh | Jewish sacred writings | Britannica](#)

Let's Talk About "The Bible" Series

The **Torah** was viewed as the "***national constitution***" by the three most powerful groups in Judea – ***Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes***. However, *each of those sects had their own interpretations* of the words of the Torah – *and their interpretations did not always agree*. And then, the **Judean Jesus from Galilee** showed up and began teaching his interpretations in synagogues, the Temple, and at marketplaces.

In my previous email ([CLICK HERE](#)) I pointed out that, when the Bible is read through the eyes of historians, these original texts **yield meanings often lost to both church and synagogue**. That is what we discovered in our research, but with one major difference -- *the meanings weren't completely lost*.

They are being rediscovered through science-based linguistic models, archaeological discoveries, and the latest computer technologies.

It is clear that we must revise our understandings of the positions of the sects of the *Judean Jesus from Galilee, Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes*. Viewing those ancient sects through the lenses of *post-Nicaean Christianity* or *Rabbinic Judaism* will not work.

Shalom,
Jim Myers (jim@biblicalheritage.org)

[Subscribe](#) • [BHC Facebook Page](#) • [TOV Facebook Page](#)
• [Real Yeshua Facebook Page](#) • [Donate and Help BHC](#)