Are you JEWISH?

According to ancient Hebrew tradition, JUDAISM began when God chose Moses possibly in the 1200s BCE to liberate his chosen people from slavery in Egypt. But according to modern historians, Judaism began circa 900 BCE when a tribal federation became a nation to end oppression by Assyria and Egypt, the great Middle East imperial templestates. The Hebrew religion began as polytheistic belief system, like those of their adversaries, and similarly, ancient Israel and Judah began as imperial temple states emulating the authoritarian cultures of their time and place.

As the Jewish states struggled for survival they were unable to defend their independence and became vassals to the Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman empires, adopting parts of their culture, along with some humanistic ideas. And when the Jews were exiled from their homeland and dispersed throughout the Roman Empire after the unsuccessful rebellion, another transition occurred. The priestly class was replaced with rabbinical leadership and education, helping Judaism continue to evolve.

Rabbis invented new religious traditions in widely dispersed communities that could only be sustained with the people’s consent. They settled disputes, taught customs, and handled inquiry. Later, about 750 to 1500 rabbis produced a legacy of philosophical works grounded on humanist values. And early 19th-century Reform Judaism was strongly influenced by the Enlightenment that swept Europe. In the modern era, many Jews rejected religion altogether and became secular, even prominent figures like Felix Adler, who founded the humanist Ethical Culture Movement in 1876, and Sherwin T. Wine, who founded the Society for Humanistic Judaism in 1969.
Jews, like non-theists, are diverse, ranging from Orthodox, to Reform, to Reconstructionist, to Humanistic. According to a 2008 survey from the Pew Foundation, a majority of Jews either don’t believe in a god, or believe that God is an impersonal force.

As Felix Adler said, we must put deed before creed, so let’s strive to do good for ourselves and for others. Doing good, that’s why you’re a humanist!

HUMANISTS | JEWS value reason and education as the best way to make conclusions about the world.

HUMANISM | JUDAISM holds that we create a better society through service for the welfare of humanity.

“There are two visions of America. One is very suspicious of freedom, uncomfortable with diversity, hostile to science, unfriendly to reason, contemptuous of personal autonomy. It appeals to millions of Americans and threatens our freedom. The other vision loves freedom, encourages diversity, embraces science and affirms the dignity and rights of every individual. It defends all citizens against all unjust coercion and irrational conformity. This second vision is our vision.”

—Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine, Founder of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, 2003 Humanist of the Year

But how can I be a JEWSH and a HUMANIST?

See more at www.americanhumanist.org/paths