

Jewish Religious Traditions Teaching Module I

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World Religion: Judaism

Teaching Module Title: Understanding the Concept of “Chosen People” in Judaism

Teaching Module Goals:

The goal of this module is to discuss various views of what it means to be “God’s Chosen People” and to illuminate debates about this issue in the making of Jewish American life.

Assigned Readings and/or Websites:

1. **The Holy Bible** Genesis Chapter 11, 12:3, Deuteronomy 6:4-7:6, 7:8, 14:2, I Chronicles 16:3, Isaiah 41: 8-9, 43:10, 20, 44:1 (These scriptures do not exhaust references in the Old Testament that speak to the Hebrews and Israelites as God’s chosen people.)
2. <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/modern-orthodoxy-the-chosen-people/#> **Modern Orthodoxy & the Chosen People: The requirements and transcendent possibilities of Jewish law are the bases of Jewish distinctness** By Dr. Arnold M. Eisen
3. <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/01/13/nyregion/jews-role-as-chosen-people-debated-by-scholars.html>
4. *The Old Testament Interpretation of History: Fernley-Hartley Lecture*, Christopher R. North London: Epworth Press 1946
5. Reform Judaism: The Tenets of Reform Judaism
https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/reform_practices.html
6. *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza, vol 1 (Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus, Tractatus Politicus)* [1670] Chapter 3 Translated by Robert Harvey Monro Elwes
7. Gurkan, Leyla S. *The Jews as a Chosen People: Tradition and Transformation* (c. 2009 Routledge.)
8. http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/332555/jewish/Maimonides-13-Principles-of-Faith.htm
9. <http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/unbroken-jewish-tradition.htm> *The Mystery of the Jews* (Video found at bottom of the bottom of the page.)
10. <http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/HistoryJewishPersecution/>
11. Bowker, John *World Religions: The great faiths explored & explained* (c. 1997 DK Publishing) pp. 122-146

Recommended Reading:

Study Questions and/or Discussions Prompts for Students:

1. Is there a case to be made that one must be able to trace his/her lineage back to the Ancient Hebrews in order to actually claim to be one of God's Chosen People?
2. Considering that the "Tribes of Israel" were scattered among many nations, do you think the Jews ought to be considered God's "chosen few"?
3. Does being set apart as the Chosen People mean that the Jews are superior to any other group of people?
4. Can someone be Jewish if they do not practice Judaism?
5. Is it possible to be Jewish and not know it?
6. What are the requirements of Jewishness?
7. Is or can the practice of Judaism and the status of the Chosen Few be two different things?

Written Assignments and/or other Assessment Instruments:

1. Students will be divided into three different groups and a team leader will be appointed. Each team leader will then draw straws to determine which group will discuss/make the case for various views of "God's Chosen Few" from the perspective of:

1. Orthodox Judaism
2. Conservative Judaism
3. Reform/Revisionist Judaism

[*Note that there are other groups and we will discuss those briefly]

2. Each student will write a 5-7 page essay based on the results of the group discussions. Students will not be required to write about the view their particular group presented; they will be able to choose whichever view they want to support or refute.