



# Judaism and Adventism:

## Similarities and Differences

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The objective description of similarities and differences appearing here will provide a clear and immediate overview of the nature of the Jewish-Adventist connection and will draw lessons not only for a better understanding of each other, but also of a better understanding of one's own religious identity, whether Jewish or Adventist. It will also implicitly suggest places where Jews and Adventists can in fact learn from each other and, beyond the human encounter, discover a hidden face of the Lord.

### Similarities

1. Same **Day of Sabbath** keeping from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday, including the admonition to rest from work and engage in religious and worshipful activities.
2. Same emphasis on **Creation**, with what it implies of valorization of matter, nature, and the flesh, versus the traditional Christian *comtemptus mundi*, which despises Creation and the flesh.
3. Same accent on the **Wholeness of Human Nature** and the rejection of Christian (Platonistic) dualism. Importance of enjoyment of life: a sex life and food, for instance, are not evil, but

beautiful gifts from God. Taking care of the human body is, therefore, a religious duty.

4. Same **Holy Scriptures**: Adventism embraces the same Hebrew Scriptures (*Tanach*) which are highly regarded and not replaced by any other Holy Scripture or given a lower status of inspiration.

5. Same attention to the **Torah**: Adventism does not claim that the law of Moses (Torah) has been replaced by New Testament grace. God's requirements at Sinai are still normative to them.

6. Same respect of the Levitical **Dietary Laws** (no pork, etc.).

7. Same ideal of **Righteousness**: The importance of ethics in the daily life (sanctification) as they are illuminated in the pages of the Bible.

8. Same belief in the **Day of Judgement** at the end of human history when every person will be evaluated and forgiven on the basis of his/her response and life.



9. Same hope in the **Redemption** of humankind at the time of the end, with the raising of the dead and the establishment of the Kingdom of God as historical and real events rather than just an abstract spiritual experience.

10. Same hope in the coming of the **Messiah**, the son of David as predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish tradition, who will come at the time of the end to redeem the world.

## Differences

1. Different **Practices of Sabbath**: in Adventism, Sabbath is full of “missionary” activity. The average Adventist is more concerned with Sabbath as the right “seventh” day (in polemic with other Christians) than in the sacred content of that day (its meaning and rest). The average Adventist has not understood the “celebrating” character of the Sabbath; Adventists sometimes fast on Sabbath.

2. Different ideas of the **Afterlife**; Jews believe in the immortality of the soul (Platonistic influence as recognized by the *Jewish Encyclopedia*), which suggests that the soul will go to paradise or hell. Some Jews (more on the popular level and in mystic currents) even believe in the idea of reincarnation (transmigration). Adventists hold the biblical view of the unconscious state of the dead in the dust of the earth, waiting for the Day of Resurrection.

3. Different **Components of Torah**: Adventists are concerned with the biblical laws and more specifically with the written Torah given on Mount Sinai (especially the Ten Commandments), whereas the Jews also submit themselves to the so-called oral 613 laws (*Torah be al pe*).

4. Different **Way of Kosher**: Jews do not mix dairy products and meat (which implies a differ-

ent vessel), do not eat the hip socket of an animal (cf. Gen 32), and do not eat meat with its blood (Gen 9:4), which requires a special way of slaughtering the animals. Adventists promote vegetarianism.

5. Different **Traditional Scriptures**: Jews have only the Hebrew Scriptures or *Tanach* as prophetic/inspired Writings; yet they also read traditional texts (Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, and rabbinic commentaries) as a guide to their understanding of the Torah (written and oral). Adventists include in their canon the so-called New Testament (“Apostolic Writings”). They also revere the writings of Ellen G. White, who is heard as a prophetic voice—not one which replaces the light of the Holy Scriptures but rather emphasizes the value of those Scriptures and provides guidance for living according to those directions.

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6. Different **Feast Days and Liturgy**: Jews celebrate numerous festivals following the instructions of the Bible (*Pessah, Shavuoth, Rosh Ha-shanah, Kippur, Sukkot*, etc.) and of Jewish tradition (*Purim, Hanukkah*, etc.). The Jewish life cycle is marked by two important ceremonies: 1) the circumcision (*Brith milah*) that signifies in the human flesh the covenant between God and Israel; and 2) the *Bar mitzvah*, for thirteen-year-old males, that signifies the commitment of the adult man to devote himself to the obedience of God’s commandments. The Adventist life cycle is marked by the baptism (immersion in water), a significant act reminiscent of the Jewish *miqveh* (ceremonial for converts) that recalls the event of Creation and signifies the commitment to become a new creature and live a life with God. Jews follow the liturgy transmitted through the ages and pray in Hebrew traditional prayers. Adventists keep only the seventh-day



Sabbath and celebrate the Lord's Supper, reminiscent of the Jewish feast of Passover, signifying the memory of the sacrifice of the Messiah until He comes. Adventist liturgy follows the pattern of Protestant churches with personal and spontaneous prayers.

**7. Different Culture and History:** Jews identify themselves with Jewish history, the suffering of anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and the State of Israel. Jews hold a high view of learning. They are the people of the book. Adventists are generally indifferent to that history and that suffering and also to the state of Israel, sometimes being anti-Semitic. Adventists situated in the "evangelical" current do not hold a high view of learning and may even sanctify ignorance as a spiritual quality; their priority is in mission (soul gaining).

**8. Different Messianic Applications:** Adventists believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah predicted by the Hebrew Scriptures—the exact time of His coming, His suffering and death, His life of miracles, His resurrection, and His return at the time of the end to respond to the hope of His people from all the nations of the world. Jews believe in only one coming of the Messiah at the time of the end associated with the establishment of peace and happiness under the total rule of God. For Jews, Jesus cannot be the Jewish Messiah since He has traditionally been associated with the Christian oppression and the Christian contempt of the Torah of Moses.

**9. Different Time of Judgement:** Adventists believe, according to the indications of biblical prophecy (Dan 7), that the day of Judgement is cosmic and appears during the last moment of human history in the form of a heavenly *Kippur* (starting in 1844). Jews believe in judgement at death, an idea that is in discrepancy with their other belief of final judgement and resurrection.

Although the date of 1844 has also struck a segment of the Jewish community (Lubavitch) as a possible messianic moment, it is not central in Judaism. Adventists, therefore, focus on the time of the end (eschatological emphasis); their mission is to reach out to all the nations of the earth (universal outlook) and proclaim that the Judgement has come—urging humans to worship the Creator (Rev 14:7). Jews, on the other hand, focus on this life (existential and ethical emphasis); their mission is to survive as a witnessing people (particular outlook) and to live as an obedient people who "hear" God (*shema Israel*, Deut 6:4).

**10. Different understanding of the Mechanism of Redemption:** Adventists believe that Redemption comes through the sacrifice of God who offered Himself through the Messiah (Isa 53) in order to redeem humankind. Jews believe that they achieve redemption for themselves through the act of *mitzvot* and prayers. Adventists, like other Christians, tend to view their religion as a set of theological beliefs on which they will base their actions (see, for instance, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*). Jews understand their religion as a set of deeds from which they derive their theological beliefs (see, for instance, the principle of Exod 24:7)—*naasseh wanishma*, "We shall do, then we shall understand").

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