

The Answering Service

FROM AMERICA'S PROMISE

Answers to questions from Radio and Tape Listeners

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Question No. 1:

What is the difference between a Semite, Hebrew, an Israelite, and a Jew?

Answer:

A Semite (or, "Shemite") is someone descended from Shem, one of the sons of Noah. A Hebrew is someone descended from Heber (or, "Eber"), one of the great-grandsons of Shem. So all Hebrews are Semites, but not all Semites are Hebrews.

Six generations after Heber, Abraham was born to his line, so Abraham was both a Hebrew and a Semite, born of the line of Heber and Shem.

Isaac was born of Abraham; then Jacob of Isaac. Jacob's name was changed to "Israel," and he fathered 12 sons. His sons and their descendants are called Israelites, and they would be both Semitic and Hebrew. However, this would not make either Abraham or Isaac "Israelites." Some, who interchange the words Jew and Israelite, call Abraham a Jew, even though Abraham was not even an Israelite, and the word "Jew" is not used in the Bible until 1,000 years after Abraham.

One of Jacob-Israel's children was Judah (Heb., Yehudah). His descendants were called Yehudim ("Judahites"). In Greek this reads *Ioudaioi* ("Judeans").

The confusing factor is that almost all Bible translations employ the word "Jew,"

which is a modern, shortened form of the word "Judahite." Every time you come to the word "Jew" in the Old Scriptures, you should read "Judahite;" and every time you come to the word "Jew" in the New Scriptures, you should read it as "Judean."

Once you have those proper translations in mind, then we have to interpret those words further, because they can have more than one meaning, depending on the context. In the Old Testament, the word "Judahite" has three distinct usages: **(1)** one who is of the tribe of Judah in a racial sense; **(2)** one who is a citizen of the southern "House of Judah," including the tribes of Benjamin and Levi. Thus, this word can be used either tribally (racially) or geographically (nationally). **(3)** This is, also, used in a religious sense of those who followed the religion of Judah. At the time of Esther, many non-Israelites "became Jews" (that is, Judahites) as the result of the Judahite victory (**Esther 8:17**).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *Ioudeos* should be translated "Judean." Again, this term was used in the same manner: **(1)** one who is of the tribe of Judah in the racial sense; **(2)** one who is a citizen of the province of Judea (as opposed to Galilee and Samaria), as is shown in **John 7:1**. This usage is geographical, and is applied, also, to the non-Israelite citizens of Judah, who had been incorporated into the nation in 135 B.C. (See our "Origins of the Jews"); and **(3)** a

follower of the religion of Judah, as given by Moses and the prophets. This usage is found in **Romans 2:28 and 29**.

Most churches today make no distinction between these terms. One of their arguments is that the Apostle Paul said in **Romans 11:1** that he was an "Israelite," and then in **Philippians 3:5** he called himself "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." Therefore, they say, the terms are identical, and by implication they include the word "Jew" as well. However, Paul was also a Benjamite (**Rom. 11:1**), but the fact that he descended from Benjamin, Israel, and Heber did not mean that all of these men were the same person.

Therefore, we can say:

1. All Israelites are Hebrews and Semites.
2. Only a few of the Israelites were called Jews (or, Judahites, Judeans).
3. Many non-Israelites were called Jews (Judahites, simply because they lived in Judah or claimed to follow the religion of the Judeans).

Question No. 2:

Was Jesus a Jew? What about the Apostles?

Answer:

Jesus is really "the Son of God." However, He could be called "Judahite," since He was born in David's line of the tribe of Judah (**Heb. 7:14**), or a "Judean" or "Galilean" from the geographic areas with which He was associated. , Jesus' earthly parents were Judahites (of the tribe of Judah) living in Nazareth of Galilee. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea (**Matt. 2:1**), and spent some time in Egypt (**Matt. 2:13-15**), but His childhood

and earthly ministry were in Galilee except when He went to Jerusalem for the feasts and to be put to death by "Mine enemies."

Jesus is called a "Jew" only once in the NT (**John 4:9**) and "King of the Jews" several times. The Greek word is "*ioudaios*" and Strong's Concordance says, "in the sense of belonging to a country, Judea." It is a geographical term like Alabaman or Iowan. Wherever "Jews" appears in the NT, it would be more correct to read it "Judean."

As to the Apostles, in **Matt. 26:69-73**, Peter was accused of being with "Jesus of Galilee" and told "thy speech betrayeth thee," indicating Galileans even spoke a different dialect! According to **Nehemiah 11**, Galilee was settled by Benjamites after the return from Babylon centuries before. All the Apostles were Benjamites except Judas, the only one who might be called "a Jew" today. Later, Paul identified himself as from Benjamin (**Romans 11:1; Phil. 3:5**).

I have a 1-1/2 hour tape, #7912, titled "Jesus Christ, the Galilean," which proves Jesus can be called a Judahite, a Nazarene or a Galilean, but should never be called "a Jew" today, as it means "follower of Judaism," an anti-Christ religion which Jesus condemned in the harshest terms.

Question No. 3:

Why did Jesus say that salvation was of the Jews?

Answer:

The verse in question here is **John 4:22**, which is better translated, "The Salvation is from the Judeans." In **Luke 2**, we read the story of how God had revealed to an old man named Simeon

that he would see the Christ before he died. When Jesus was brought to him for dedication, he immediately recognized that this was the Christ, and he said in verse 30, "For mine eyes have seen thy Salvation." Jesus Himself is our Salvation, and He came from the tribe of Judah. Thus, **John 4:22** is actually a reference to Christ Himself, not to the "Jews" of today, as so many modern preachers imply.

This is verified by many other passages, which show plainly that our salvation does not depend on any man or group of men, but only on the Christ born of the line of Judah.

Question No. 4:

I hear preachers and Bible teachers all say, "We owe the Jews so much." What do we owe the Jews?

Answer:

At last count we owe the Jewish Bankers about 6 trillion dollars (until we proclaim God's Jubilee year and cancel all debts). That does not include the debts of our Israel brethren in the rest of the world.

Question No 5:

In the book of Esther, were Esther and Mordecai Jews [Babylonian style] or were they Israelites?

Answer:

In **Esther 2:5** Mordecai is identified as a Benjamite. He is called a "Jew" from the Hebrew word for Judahite, so he must have been a citizen of the southern "House of Judah," which was taken captive by the Babylonians. In verse 7, we find that Esther (or "Hadassah") was "his uncle's daughter," which, also, would make her a Benjamite.

The term "Jew" in the Book of Esther should read "Judahite" as in other Old Testament books. This is not a book about the ancestors of the modern Jews, but of Israelites of the "House of Judah." Although modern Jews may claim the book, that does not make it theirs.

Question No. 6.

I have heard that the Book of Esther should not have been included in our Bibles. What do you think?

Answer:

Other than the argument that Esther is a Jewish book (which it is not), the first and foremost argument is that nowhere in this book does the Sacred Name YHWH appear. However, this is not exactly true. The letters of the Name appear 4 times, but they are hidden in Acrostics (where the first or last letters in a phrase, when taken together in order, form a word; this was a Hebrew literary device).

God had told Israel in **Deut. 31:16-18** that if they forsook Him, He would hide His face from them. This is fulfilled in Esther, for God hid His Name from those who did not search for it. In at least 3 ancient manuscripts (says Bullinger) the Acrostic letters YHWH are written in prominent letters, showing that the ancient Hebrews noted this literary feature, as well.

The four Hebrew phrases where YHWH appears acrostic ally are: **Esther 1:20; 5:4; 5:13; and 7:7**. The first and third were spoken by non-Israelites, and in these the Name is spelled backwards. The second and fourth verses were spoken by Israelites, and in these the letters are spelled forward.

In addition the name EHYEH is found in 7:5 in the phrase, "Who is he and where

is he. . . ." This verse is especially interesting, because this is the climax of the Judean deliverance from Haman, the Agagite. It closely parallels **Exodus 2 and 3**, when EHYEH ("I am that I am") revealed this Name to Moses just before the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

Esther is, also, attacked by some on the grounds that the first verse mentions 127 provinces, which supposedly never existed. **Esther 1:14** mentions 7 sections of the country, which coincides with Plato's remark that "when Darius came to the throne. . . he divided the country into 7 portions." After Darius took Babylon, he set up "120 princes" to rule over the Kingdom (**Dan. 6:1**) shortly before the time of Esther. This number fluctuated according to the needs of the empire, and in the latter days of Darius, he had reduced the number to just 23. So, there could easily have been 127 provinces during Esther's time.

Esther is also criticized because of the 'pagan names" in the book. Esther, for instance, is the same as "Easter" or "Astarte," a pagan goddess. However, from **Esther 2:7**, we discover that her Hebrew name was Hadassah. "Esther" was probably the name given to her by the Babylonian monarch after she became the queen. This was a common custom. **Daniel 1:7** tells us that Daniel and his three Hebrew friends were, also, named after pagan deities. Daniel, himself, was named "Beltshazzar" (**1:7**) after "Beltis." We should not condemn Esther for her Babylonian name any more than we would condemn Daniel for his.

Panin's Bible numerics (tape #7910) show us that Esther should be included in our Scriptures. The Old Testament was written by Israelites and Judahites not by "Jews" in the modern sense of the word.
