

The Concept of Apostasy in Judaism and Christianity: A Theological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to analyze the concept of apostasy and its various aspects in Judaism and Christianity from the theological point of view. As a term in the context of religion, apostasy refers to a general falling away from religion or denying the faith by those who once held it. In Judaism, if a man renounces one of the thirteen fundamental principles of Judaism, he is no longer a Jew and is considered an apostate. On the other hand, who makes a statement of disbelief, publicly or privately, in the existence of God, the divinity of Jesus Christ, or the authority of the bible, is considered an apostate in Christianity. Drawing upon various historical and contemporary sources along with the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT), the study highlights how theologians and religious scholars of Judaism and Christianity have interpreted and understood apostasy. It discusses the provisions regarding apostasy and apostates, the role of repentance and forgiveness in both religions and how these concepts relate to the treatment of apostasy in a theological approach. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of understanding the theological underpinnings of apostasy to foster greater understanding and dialogue between adherents of different faiths.

KEYWORDS-Apostasy, Christianity, Judaism, the New Testament, the Old Testament.

1. INTRODUCTION

Apostasy refers to renouncing or abandoning one's religious, political, or ideological beliefs, principles, or faith. It is a term often used in religion, where apostasy involves abandoning one's belief in a particular religion or leaving a religious community. In the most general sense, "apostasy is a general falling away from religion or denying the faith by those who once held it".[1] Apostasy is considered a severe offence by those who adhere to certain beliefs or ideologies, and it may have significant social or legal consequences in some contexts.

In Judaism, it is used to signify "abandonment of belief or infidelity to Yahweh (God)".[2] According to the "Encyclopedia Judaica", apostasy is "a term used by members of the deserted religion to describe switching from one faith, set of loyalties, and mode of worship to another".[3] In Christianity, apostasy is "the intentional rejection of a formerly held belief, and a person who does this and leaves Christianity is an apostate".[4] In the NT, the word "apostasy" is used only twice in the literal sense. One is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles 21:21, and the other is in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians 2:3. In a practical sense, it is utter abandonment, rebellion, giving up, leaving, or turning away of a believer from his faith through words or actions. It does not necessitate the adoption of another faith and doctrine or religious ideology and philosophy, though this may occur and enhance the process of apostatic transition.

Barclay, J.M.G. (1998), in his study titled "Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity: Who was considered an apostate in the Jewish Diaspora?", analyses the boundaries that Jewish communities in the Diaspora established and maintained to preserve their social and religious identity. The study examines Jews who became apostates and left Judaism, shedding information on Jewish identity in the Diaspora and the early Christianity-Judaism conflict. The author also examines similarities in apostate sources. Cureteu, O. (1987), in his study "Apostasy: A Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Approach", explores apostasy as a religious crisis. This study aims to understand the dynamics of apostasy and approaches the topic from biblical, theological, and practical perspectives. Owen, J. (1676), explores the nature of apostasy from the gospel in "Apostasy from the Gospel", which includes partial apostasy, apostasy from the gospel's doctrine, causes and occasions of apostasy,

and apostasy into the profaneness and sensuality of life. The author concludes with directions to avoid the power of a prevailing apostasy. Oropeza, B. J. (2000), in "Paul and Apostasy: Eschatology, Perseverance, and Falling Away in the Corinthian Congregation", discusses the issue of apostasy in Church history and the Corinthian congregation and how it relates to the eschatology and perseverance of the believers. The study focuses on the teachings of Paul and his understanding of the concept of falling away from the faith.

The rules and provisions regarding apostasy and apostates are mentioned in the scriptures of Judaism. On the contrary, the scriptures of Christianity (especially the New Testament) do not contain any explicit rules regarding apostates but provide some relevant teachings. However, the objective of this study is to explore the concept of "apostasy" in the context of Judaism and Christianity. This article will attempt to figure out what apostasy is, its provisions, and how theologians of these faiths have known and dealt with it in earlier times. Overall, the study would try to focus on the theological aspects of apostasy rather than its sociological or political implications.

2. METHOD

Relying on primary and secondary data that include the scriptures of the religions, books, and research works regarding the title, the study has been carried out following the descriptive and comparative approach of the qualitative method. The comparative approach has been used to compare how Judaism and Christianity view and approach the concept of "apostasy". With the descriptive approach, each faith has been handled objectively by maintaining the same distance, in addition to the comparative approach.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1. Apostasy in Judaism

Apostasy has historically been considered a grave offence in Judaism, as it breaches the covenant between God and the Jewish people. In Judaism, apostasy is forsaking or rejecting one's Jewish faith or identity. This can involve rejecting the Fundamental Principles of Beliefs (FPB) and practices of Judaism or announcing publicly that one is no longer Jewish. According to Halakhah, the code of Jewish law, a Jew born to a Jewish mother or who legally turned to Judaism cannot change his religion. Even if a Jew goes through the steps to join another religion and officially gives up his Jewish faith, the Halakhah says he is still a Jew, even if he is a sinner.[5]

Apostasy is not possible according to the strict sense of Halakhic law, as mentioned in Yoreh Deah 268:12 of Shulchan Arukh, but the following terms are often used in rabbinic writing very loosely for an apostate: (1) Mumar; it is often used in the context of Halakhah to refer to someone who has willfully and intentionally violated a specific halakhic requirement or prohibition.[6] (2) Meshumad; refers to the Jewish person who has converted to another religion.[7] (3) Apikoros; means "a person who denies one or more of the fundamental beliefs of Judaism".[8] (4) Kofer; means "a person who denies God's existence or the Torah's divine origin". [9] (5) Pesha; is "a person who rebels against God and His commands".[10] (6) Poshe'a Yisrael; is a term that refers to "someone opposing the Jewish state".[11] (7) Madduhim; is "a person who shows laxity in the religious life and transgresses".[12] (8) Maranim (Maranno); means "a Jew who converted to another religion to get away from persecution or was forced to convert but kept practicing Judaism in secret".[13]

3.1.1. Forms of Apostasy

In Jewish tradition, apostasy can happen by refusing to embrace the FPB. The FPB was compiled for the first time by the great codifier of Torah law and Jewish Philosophy, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides). The number of the FPB is thirteen. These are recorded in "*Maimonides Introduction to Perek Helek*" and named by "*Shloshah Asar Ikkarim*" (the "Thirteen Fundamental Principles" of the Jewish faith). Maimonides mentioned the FPB as "the fundamental truths of our religion and its very foundations".[14]

However, the FPB is a combination of the beliefs mentioned in the scriptures of Judaism. The thirteen FPBs are as follows: (1) "Belief in the existence of God, who is perfect in every respect and the primary cause of everything that exists." (Exodus 20:2). (2) "The belief in absolute and unparalleled unity of God." (Deuteronomy 6:4). (3) "The belief in God's non-corporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, rest, or dwelling." (Babylonian Talmud (BT) Chagigah 15a). (4) "The belief in God's eternity." (Deuteronomy 33:27). (5) "The imperative to worship only God and not any other false gods." (Maimonides, Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1:6). (6) "The belief that God communicates with man through prophecy." (Numbers 12:8; Habakkuk 2:3). (7) "The belief in the primacy of the prophecy of Moses, our teacher." (Job 33:15). (8) "The belief in the divine origin of the Torah." (Numbers 15:31, 16:28; Psalms 119:18). (9) "The belief in the immutability and authenticity of the Torah." (Deuteronomy 13:1). (10) "The belief that God is omniscient and provident." (Ezekiel 8:12, 9:9; Jeremiah 32:19; Genesis 6:5, 18:20). (11) "The belief that God

rewards those who perform the commandments of the Torah and punishes those who transgress its admonitions.” (Exodus 32:32-34). (12) “The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era.” (Habakkuk 2:3). (13) “The belief in the resurrection of the dead.” (Deuteronomy 29:9; BT Sanhedrin 97b).

Maimonides says that when a man accepts all these fundamental truths and clarifies his faith, he becomes a member of “Israel”, whom we are to love, pity, and treat as God commanded with love and fellowship. But if a man renounces even one of these critical principles, he is no longer considered a member of the Jewish people. He is an atheist, an apostate, and an unbeliever. We are ordered to hate him and destroy him. [15] It is said of him: in Psalms 139:21, “Shall I not hate those who hate You, O Lord?”; in Leviticus 24:15-16, “And to the Israelite people speak thus: Anyone who blasphemes God shall bear the guilt, and one who also pronounces the name “Yahweh” (God) shall be put to death. The community leadership shall stone that person; stranger or citizen-having thus pronounced the Name-shall be put to death.”

3.1.2. Provisions Regarding Apostate

3.1.2.1. Marriage

According to Jewish law, an apostate is no longer considered Jewish. The provisions regarding marriage with an apostate are available in the Code of Jewish Law (Shulchan Arukh). In Judaism, a marriage between two apostates or between an apostate and a Jew is legal, and the parties are regarded as husband and wife. Therefore, until the existing marriage is dissolved by death or divorce, neither can enter a second marriage with a Jew. If their marriage is performed according to the rules of another religion, they are not considered a married couple under Jewish law and therefore do not need a divorce. Maimonides says, “When a man consecrates a gentile woman or a Canaanite maidservant, the kiddushin (engagement ceremony) is of no consequence, and the woman’s status is the same after receiving the kiddushin. Similarly, when a gentile or a Canaanite servant consecrates a Jewish woman, the kiddushin is of no consequence.” [16]

Additionally, if a Jew were to marry an apostate, it would be considered a violation of the commandment to marry within the faith, which states that one must only marry someone who practices the same religion as one’s spouse. This restriction is based on the concern that interfaith marriage may pave the way for assimilation, resulting in the loss of Jewish identity and traditions. [17]

3.1.2.2. Divorce

In Judaism, divorce is disregarded when one of the spouses becomes an apostate because, generally, divorce is seen as being to the detriment of a woman. An apostate wife becomes prohibited from her husband and as a married woman from any other male because she is accused of breaking all the laws of the Torah, especially the prohibition against adultery. Therefore, being freed from the obligations of conjugal relation can only be to her advantage. In addition, if the man becomes an apostate, the wife would prefer a divorce than continue living with him. [18]

Even though, according to the halakhic principle mentioned in Yevamot 118b that “one cannot act to someone’s detriment without his or her consent and knowledge”, a divorce cannot be finalized until the “Get” (divorce document) has been given to the wife in person or to a representative, she has designated for this regard. However, in this case, the Get takes instant effect once it reaches the hands of the representative, who was chosen not by the wife but rather by the court or her husband, based on the opposing principle that “one can bestow a benefit upon someone else without his knowledge or consent”. [19]

3.1.2.3. Status

A child born to an apostate mother is a Jew regardless of the stage of her apostasy, and his marriage to an apostate Jewess is valid. Maimonides says, “When an apostate Jew consecrates a woman, his kiddushin is valid, even though he willingly worships a false deity. The woman must receive a Get from him.” [20] Rav David Cohen added, “The intent is that we are obligated to force the apostate to divorce his wife, lest he causes her to violate Torah law”. [21]

3.1.2.4. Inheritance

According to Numbers 27:8, the son can inherit from the father because they are blood-related. Based on this, the son gets all the rights his father left behind, even if he becomes an apostate. In the same way, his father also becomes heir to him. However, the court, which has the power to seize away the apostate’s property as a punishment (*Hefker bet din hefker*), can use this power to share his father’s estate among his non-apostate children and leave him out of it. The reason is said to be to stop apostasy and not encourage it. [22] After the

state of Israel was established, some Jewish jurists considered the apostate a dead person and said that his estates should be split like the estate of a person who had died. [23]

3.1.2.5. Acceptance as a Witness

Jewish law considers an apostate as a witness untrustworthy because he negates the entirety of the Torah. However, according to the Halakhah, an apostate's testimony can be applied if he states the relevant statement in an informal way and not as formal testimony to make things easier for an "agunah" (a deserted wife), who needs to prove that her husband is dead before she can remarry. [24]

3.1.2.6. Rituals of Mourning

In general, most Jewish jurists think that mourning rituals should not be performed at the death of an apostate. But according to some experts, it could be performed if he died suddenly, in which case it is presumed that he repented. However, in specific communities, it was tradition to observe mourning rituals upon the apostasy of a child. [25]

3.1.3. Punishment of an Apostate

According to the Torah, apostasy means going against God and His Law and following any deity other than Yahweh, the Jewish god. In the book of Deuteronomy 13:6-11, it is mentioned that the punishment for leaving the faith is death. However, the book of Leviticus 24:15-16 added that God ordered the Israelites that anyone who leaves God and goes to worship another idol should be stoned to death.

There are several instances in the Torah where harsh punishment (the death penalty, not stoning) was given to the people who caused the Israelites to break their faith in Yahweh alone. For example, Exodus 32:26-28 states the death penalty for those who worshipped the calf of gold at Mount Sinai, and Numbers 25:1-9 states the death penalty for those who worshipped Baal at Peor, etc. Some examples of strict punishment for apostasy were also mentioned in the Prophets. Such as: in 1 Kings 18:20-40, the killing of the prophets of Baal by Elijah and in 2 Kings 10:18-28, the killing of the worshippers of Baal by King Jehu. Apart from when Moses was alive, this order was rarely followed. Since the day the Israelites moved into the land of promise, apostasy has been a common sin. However, the Bible doesn't say that anyone was stoned to death for the worship of idols, so it's unlikely that anyone was. If this order from Deuteronomy were followed, Micah and his family, all of Israel's kings, and some of Judah's kings would have been stoned to death for keeping God's worship alive in Israel.[26]

In addition to the restrictions and penalties mentioned previously, any departure from Judaism results in the loss of certain personal rights, economic independence, and the prohibition of particular societal recognitions and emblems. However, in the following periods, to prevent separations from religion, to avoid easy conversions at every chance, and to ensure societal unity and cooperation, those who left religion were recognized as "dead", and judgments were made accordingly. [27]

3.1.4. Repentance of an Apostate

In Jewish texts, "Teshuvah" is used for "repentance". It means "return" and is viewed as a blessing from God because it permits one to return to the right path. Even though "teshuvah" can be performed at any time, "Yom Kippur" is considered the holiday for Jews for doing "teshuvah". In Judaism, Yahweh (God) can forgive sins independently, without special conditions. He can also forgive sins if the person feels remorse for what they did.[28]

According to Halakhah, a person who left Judaism but then changed their mind and returned does not need a special ritual. However, some authorities say that there should be some symbolic acts. These symbolic acts happen when they admit and ask forgiveness for their sins before a three-person Rabbi. After that, he must always promise to follow the Jewish rules and never leave them. Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak (1040-1105), best known by the acronym "Rashi", set the standard for how Rabbis discussed this problem in the Middle Ages. Rashi was alive during the first Crusade, a terrible and destructive time. However, his ideas about returning Jews who had left the Jewish faith showed a lot of kindness and patience. Rashi's Talmudic reasoning was that being Jewish could not be stopped or given up. Therefore, apostates returning to the community should be accepted as if they had not left.[29]

Rabbinic sages who came after Rashi, particularly in Germany and Northern France, looked at this problem differently. In answer to Rashi, Rabbi Eliezer ben Yoel Halevi, known as "Ra'avyah", said that a sinner who wants to return to Judaism must shave his head, reaccept Judaism in front of a jury of three, and immerse

himself (by ritual bath), just like a new Jew would. Rabbi Elazar ben Yehuda Ashkenazi of the twelfth century said that people who want to be converted should wear hair shirts, cry and suffer, wash as little as possible, stop eating meat and drinking wine, avoid social events, and tolerate insults.[30]

3.2. Apostasy in Christianity:

Apostasy is abandoning or renouncing one's faith or religious beliefs. In Christianity, apostasy refers to renouncing or abandoning one's Christian faith. The concept of apostasy is mentioned in the Bible, specifically in the NT. In 1 Timothy 1:19, apostasy refers to "a making shipwreck of the faith". In Hebrews 3:13, the term is used for "the heart's departure from the living God". 2 Peter 2:20 defines apostasy as "returning to the world after knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."

According to the NT, Christianity has several steps before apostasy. (1) Luke 9:62 states that the first step is "there is a 'looking back', like Lot's wife, who thought she had outwardly left Sodom, yet her heart was still there". (2) Hebrews 10:38 says that the second step is "there is a 'drawing back': Christ's requirements are too strict to appeal to the heart any longer." (3) John 6:66 narrates the third step as "there is a 'turning back': the path of godliness is too narrow to suit the lustings of the flesh". (4) In Isaiah 28:13, the fourth and last step is mentioned as "there is a 'falling back': that they might go and fall backward and be broken."

Christianity, like Judaism, also has some terms related to apostasy. For example: (1) "Heresy", in Christianity, is a belief or theory that goes against or differs from ecclesiastical teachings. It is considered a serious offence because it undermines the church's authority and the core tenets of the Christian faith. Historically, Christianity has had many different heresies, some more prominent than others. Examples include "Arianism", denying the divinity of Jesus Christ; "Gnosticism", emphasizing secret knowledge over faith; and "Pelagianism", denying the doctrine of original sin. During the Protestant Reformation, Catholics and Protestants regarded each other as heretics. The Christian church has dealt with heresy in various ways, including condemnation, anathematization, etc. In extreme instances, people thought to be heretics were often persecuted and punished in terrible ways, like being burned at the stake. In modern times, some Christian denominations take a more tolerant approach to heresy and encourage dialogue and understanding rather than condemnation. However, the concept of heresy remains vital in Christianity, as it upholds the integrity and orthodoxy of the faith.[31]

(2) "Schism" is another term related to apostasy that refers to the separation of the Church, usually caused by a disagreement about faith or authority. According to the Encyclopedia of Religion, "Schism, is both a technical term and a general term in ecclesiastical contexts, refers to a split or division between different branches of Christianity, as well as within individual denominations." Schism can happen in Christian groups for many reasons, such as differences in faith, prayer methods, and political or social problems. Some differences can be fixed through discussion and finding a middle ground. In other cases, they may lead to permanent separation. Therefore, schisms in Christianity are considered a threat to the integrity of the Church and may cause significant religious, social, and political effects on the faithful.[32]

(3) "Heterodoxy", a term related to apostasy in Christianity, refers to a belief or practice that goes against what is generally accepted or practiced in any religion. In Christianity, heterodox beliefs have been present since the early days of the church. Heterodox in Christianity refers to beliefs or practices that deviate from the accepted or traditional doctrines of a particular Christian denomination or tradition. Heterodox is "the religious movement outside of orthodoxy or the central understanding of religion". Like the concept of "heresy", this means being outside of the central understanding of religion and deviance. However, "heterodox", unlike the concept of "heresy", refers to an extreme adherence to religious beliefs and rules and an advanced level of conservatism. These beliefs and practices may be considered unorthodox, heretical, or outside of the mainstream. Heterodoxy can arise from various factors such as cultural influences, philosophical or theological differences, or personal interpretations of scripture.[33]

3.2.1. Forms of Apostasy

Apostasy in Christianity refers to renouncing or abandoning one's Christian faith or beliefs. It can take many forms, including a complete rejection of Christianity, a rejection of particular beliefs or practices within Christianity, or a failure to live according to the teachings of Christianity. Some Christians believe that apostasy is a sin that can result in eternal damnation, while others believe it is possible to return to the faith and be forgiven. The specific form or method of apostasy in Christianity can vary depending on the individual and the circumstances.

In some cases, apostasy may involve a public declaration or renunciation of one's Christian faith, often in the presence of other Christians or religious leaders. This might involve making a statement of disbelief in vital Christian doctrines, such as the existence of God, the divinity of Jesus Christ, or the authority of the Bible. [34] In other cases, apostasy may be more personal and private, with individuals losing faith or belief in their religion over time. This might involve gradually withdrawing from church activities, worship, and rituals, or simply ceasing to identify as a Christian without explicitly declaring it. [35] The NT identifies several causes of Christian apostasy; some of these are "persecution", "false teachers", "temptation", "worldliness", "defective knowledge of Christ", "moral lapse", "forsaking worship and spiritual living", "unbelief" etc. [36]

3.2.2. Provisions Regarding Apostate

The NT does not contain explicit provisions regarding apostates, but it provides some teachings that may be relevant to the issue. From the relevant passages to the issue, Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-31 suggest that if someone has received the knowledge of the truth and has experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and then rejects it, they face the prospect of severe judgment. This implies that apostasy is a serious matter and can have severe consequences. Another relevant passage is 1 John 2:19, which states, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us." This passage suggests that those who leave the faith were never truly part of the community of believers in the first place. It does not provide specific instructions on treating apostates, but it implies that they should be viewed as having voluntarily separated themselves from the community.

Some provisions regarding the social status and civil and social rights of apostates in Christianity are as follows: a) In Christianity, believers are not permitted to marry apostates. Apostasy by one of the spouses after marriage is a legal cause for the divorce or annulment of the marriage; b) An apostate cannot inherit. This right is on suspension until (s) he returns to religion; c) People who have renounced their faith are barred from participating in religious rituals such as festivals, anniversaries, and funerals. They are saved from this punishment if they show regret or repentance before death.

However, the two documents published by the Catholic Church in the eighteenth century for apostates are significant. The earliest one, issued in France in 1724, includes the following provisions: "(1) People who are found to be members of an illegal community (Protestants) shall be deported; (2) Protestant priests will be executed; iii) Those who leave the Catholic faith will be deported; and iv) Protestants will be forced to have their children baptized by a Catholic priest." The second document, published in 1757, contains more severe provisions than the first. It states: "Those who write or publish articles that are disrespectful to religion, disorienting, oppose our authority, or disrupt the order will be sentenced to death." Due to these types of works, people like Rousseau, Holbach, Diderot, and Voltaire are given different punishments. The most horrifying was when the knight La Barre was accused of not greeting a ritual procession and reading offensive books like *The Philosophical Dictionary* of Voltaire. His tongue was cut off, his head was separated from his body, and his body was burned. [37]

3.2.3. Repentance of an Apostate

According to the "Encyclopedia of Religion", the word "Repentance" means "to be sorry, to grieve, to regret". As a theological term, "repentance denotes a change in a person's attitude, will, and behavior, sometimes accompanied by feelings of sorrow and regret for past transgressions and perhaps accompanied by some restitution". [38] In Christianity, the concept of repentance is central to the Christian faith, and it is also essential for an apostate who wishes to return to the faith. According to Matthew 5:43-44, repentance involves turning away from one's sins and returning to God. This includes acknowledging wrongdoing, feeling genuine remorse, and following God's ways.

The book of Acts 9:1-20 tells the story of a man named "Saul" before he had a transformative encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. After his encounter, Saul became a devoted follower of Jesus and changed his name to "Paul". This story illustrates the power of repentance and the possibility of forgiveness and redemption for even the most hardened opponents of the faith.

In his letters, Paul also emphasized the importance of repentance for believers who had strayed from the faith. He stated in 2 Corinthians 7:10, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death". This verse suggests that a sense of godly sorrow accompanies true repentance and leads to eternal salvation. In the book of James, the importance of repentance is also emphasized. The importance of repentance is also mentioned in James 5:19-20; it states, "My brothers and

sisters! If anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and cover many sins.”

However, the NT teaches that repentance is necessary for anyone who wishes to return to the Christian faith, including an apostate. 2 Timothy 2:22-26 states that one can find forgiveness, redemption, and a restored relationship with God through genuine repentance.

4. CONCLUSION

Apostasy refers to the act of renouncing and abandoning a religion. Judaism and Christianity, as religions, are familiar with this term. Although literally, the term apostasy is used with the same meaning in both religions, practically, there are subtle differences between these two religions. In Judaism, an apostate is someone who denies one of the fundamental principles of beliefs. In Christianity, an apostate is the one who rejects the theory of the Trinity. In Christianity, the one who leaves one of the denominations and joins the other is also called an “apostate”; in this case, the term “hearsay” is used for those. In both religions, apostasy is a sinful process involving a conflict between the will of man and God. It is caused by man's free will, which makes sin possible, and constant sin leads to apostasy, which is the last step of falling away from God. There are rules and provisions regarding apostasy and apostates in both religions. However, the provisions of Judaism regarding apostasy are more explicit than Christianity. Although the NT does not mention the provisions regarding the punishment of an apostate, some guidelines are given regarding the issue. According to both religions, apostasy is not a hopeless, unsolvable event in one's life; practical suggestions to prevent and cope with apostasy are also provided. If an apostate realizes his mistake and wants to return to his former religion or belief, both religions have specific repentance methods.

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