The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East (10)

([Japanese Version](#))
([Arabic Version](#))

Chapter 1 Wave of nationalism and socialism (1945-1956)

4. Israel independence (2): Who is a Jew?

No one will object to define that Israel is a Jewish country. But it is not easy to define that who is a Jew. According to the Old Testament, the roots of the Jewish was Abraham's clan who settled in Canaan (Promised Land) of Palestine around the 20th century BC. They belong ethnically to the Sem family same as Arab peoples. The Jews would not like to be equated with Arabs, but they are the same strain in terms of biology or folklore.

The ancient Israelis believed in monotheistic Judaism, and lived together honoring religious leaders as prophets. Prophet Moses came back with his clan to Canaan in the 13th century BC from Egypt where they had been detained. In the 10th century BC, King David and his son Solomon built a temple in Jerusalem and prospered as the kingdom of Israel, and then the kingdom of Judah. However, after the 6th century BC the kingdom was often invaded by the neighboring Babylonian Empire. The Kingdom of Judah was conquered, and the Jews were forcibly relocated from Jerusalem to Babylonia (Babylon captivity). Later, they were released by Cyrus II, the founder of Achaemehid Empire of Persia who destroyed Neo-Babylonian Empire. Jews returned to Jerusalem and reconstructed the temple of Jerusalem under the control of the Egyptian dynasty. Then Kingdom of Judah had been under the reign of the Roman Empire from the BC to the AD.

Frequent resistance movement against the Roman Empire in around AD 100s resulted in prohibition Jews from living in Jerusalem. Roman Emperor Hadrian repressed them thoroughly in 135 AD. Last long Diaspora (Jews' discrete) had started. They had to settle in various places in Europe.

Semian Jews who kept their own religion were despised and persecuted in Europe where Christianity was widely prevailing. The stigma of Judas who betrayed Christ was burdened on the Jews. Christians constrained the Jews to "ghetto" (residential district) and imposed them the dirty jobs.

The moneylending business was one of such job. In the medieval Christian society moneylender was regarded as a filthy occupation because the financial business made human beings greedy. Greed for money was incompatible with the purity of religion. Moneylending business was not recommended both by Christianity and Islam. Islam was more strictly interpreted and even now Islamic ethic teaches that the interest on money is "Al-Haram (prohibitive)". When famous playwright William Shakespeare wrote "Merchant of Venice", the moneylending business was monopolized by Jewish people. In Europe, even highly educated Shakespeare hated Jews. Such a stereotypical view of Jewish remained until 20th

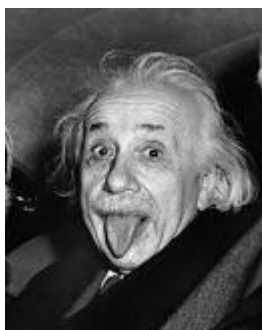century. Holocaust by Nazis in Germany was one of the biggest tragedy in the history.

Judging from Jewish history shown above, it is extremely difficult to answer the question "Who is a Jew?".

First, Jews cannot be described as independent ethnic group in biological meaning. It is true that their origin was Semites. But the current Jews who have survived Diaspora for nearly 2,000 years do not share the same DNA.

Second, is it possible to define the Jews in religion called Judaism? The answer is 'No'. Those who converted from Judaism to Christianity also refer to themselves as Jews. Most Jews in the United States are Christians. Jews are ambiguous in terms of religion.

Eventually, Jews are the people whom other people say that he is a Jew or who declares himself as a Jew. This is a synonym repetition and is not definition of Judaism.

Until the early modern era the Europeans tried to look down Jews and confine them in the ghetto. The Jews who didn't want to live as Christian but as Judaism lived quietly in a corner of society concealing of Jews.

However, when Jewish bankers like Lord Rothschild got the ability to play an outstanding role in warfare, or one genius in natural science such as Albert Einstein appeared in the history, Jews became eager to share identity of themselves. All those who self-termed Jews was regarded as Jews. After the Holocaust during World War II, all of Jews were assured safety and prosperity. They, therefore, declared themselves as Jews in public. In that sense, among the Jews immigrating to Israel from Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it might be doubtful that some of them are nothing to do with the genuine Jews.

Israel was established by genuine and non-genuine Jews who self-proclaimed as Jews. Israel is still growing and expanding.

(To be continued ----)

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