

Philo of Alexandria also considered the concept of happiness, casting his discussion through the lens of Greek philosophy, most notably Stoic and Platonic ideas. The exhibition of virtue could generate happiness (εὐδαιμονία), and Philo maintained that happiness always depends on knowledge of God, despite the abiding mysteries of the deity (*Det.* 86).

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B. Rabbinic Judaism

The lexicon for “happy, happiness” in rabbinic literature is relatively narrow, with forms of *ashrei* and less frequently *š-m-ḥ* representing the most common terms. Rabbinic reflections on happiness often emerge from interpretations of biblical texts that use these words to denote happiness (*bAZ* 18b). The rabbis construe some such passages as illustrating abstract principles about happiness (*TanB*, *Mi-gets*, 16) and others as referring to biblical personalities, such as Noah and Abraham, who led happy lives (*BerR* 26, 61). The rabbinic view of happiness thus acquires its authority through the familiar medium of biblical interpretation.

The rabbis speak of the religious lifestyle as a source of happiness. They associate happiness with an ascetic and humble life (*mAv* 6:4) devoted to Torah study (*BerR* 13). Even a life of suffering can be a happy one if a person nonetheless manages to study Torah (*bBer* 5a). One dies happily by prioritizing religious devotion over life (*tHul* 2:23). The convert in particular leads a happy life (*BemR*, *Našo*, 8). Enjoying a happy life in this world results in eternal reward in the next (*mAv* 6:4). Through their discourse on happiness, the rabbis identify the types of virtuous activity that facilitate human flourishing, a conception of happiness often attributed by philosophers to Aristotle (see Tirosh-Samuelsan).

The rabbis recognized that even committed Jews might not subjectively experience the rabbinic lifestyle as a happy one. Rabbinic sources thus speak of the experience of joy in Torah study (*BerR* 13) or in the performance of the commandments (*bYom* 72b) as something that one has to merit rather than accomplish unilaterally (see Urbach: 392).

The rabbis condemned competing perspectives on happiness. The ever-present “evil inclination” encourages a hedonistic view of happiness that subverts the genuine happiness promoted by the “inclination to do good” (*bShab* 63b). One “neglects” the Torah by abstaining from study, the true source of happiness, and instead attending the proceedings at the arena (*bAZ* 18b). The psalmist (Ps 1:1) proscribed the happy person from participating in those and other activities which qualify as the “seat of the scoffers” (Ps 1:1; *ARN* 21).

Rabbinic literature does not always describe religious observance as the paramount source of happiness. Satisfaction with one’s lot, and not material

wealth, yields happiness in the present and eternal reward in the world to come (*mAv* 4:1). Likewise, a person who is self-sufficient enjoys a happier life than one who fears God but depends upon others for support (*bBer* 8a).

Bibliography: ■ Anderson, G., “The Expression of Joy as a Halakhic Problem in Rabbinic Sources,” *JQR* 80 (1990) 221–52. ■ Kadushin, M., *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York 1952). [Esp. chs. 4, 6] ■ Tirosh-Samuelsan, H., *Happiness in Pre-modern Judaism: Virtue, Knowledge, and Well-Being* (Cincinnati, Ohio 2003). [Esp. ch. 3] ■ Urbach, E. E., *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Cambridge, Mass. 1987). [Esp. 390–93]; trans. of id., *Ḥazal: pirqei emunot ve-de’ot* (Jerusalem 1971).

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IV. Christianity

Contrary to popular belief that Christianity has little to say about human happiness, the church fathers developed an interesting theory on the subject. Their profound knowledge of Platonic and Aristotelian discussions on happiness motivated them to seek a Christian answer. Gregory of Nyssa provided a theory of happiness which took the beatitudes of Jesus in Matt 5:3–10 as its basic text. Referring to God as the only author of human happiness they used the word μακάριος instead of the classic expression εὐδαιμονία (cf. Lauster: 26–31). After Augustine, who offered first an optimistic and later a rather more pessimistic perspective in his writings, Thomas Aquinas became one of the greatest Christian teachers on happiness (cf. Leonhardt). In his *opus magnum Summa theologiae* he combined the theory of his favorite philosopher Aristotle with Christian motifs. Alongside Aristotle he shares the main presupposition that all humans desire to be happy (cf. Aquinas: I–II, 1). But he proceeds with the distinction of an imperfect happiness (*beatitudo imperfecta*), which the individual can attain through his own moral powers in this life, and the perfect happiness (*beatitudo perfecta*) which lies in the future vision of God (*ibid.*: I–II, 4, 5). But this is not a kind of a consolation, which places all human fulfillments in the hereafter. Aquinas speaks of a participation (*participatio*) between the imperfect and perfect happiness (*ibid.*: I–II, 5, 3); the imperfect is an anticipation of the perfect. The fulfillment of human happiness has already begun in this life, but it is also yet to come. So Aquinas avoided the concept of opposition between human forces and divine bestowal, i.e., between nature and grace. Nature is a form of grace, the human forces which allow us to seek happiness are the result of divine activity in the soul which leads us to our ultimate aim. In the Catholic tradition this theory plays an important role in the theology of happiness even today.

The fathers of the Reformation did not present their own theory of Christian happiness. Martin Luther identified happiness mostly with Epicurean thoughts and was therefore skeptical, so Philipp Melancthon’s attempts to renew the Aristotelian