

World Religions

*Introduction to
World Religions*



Introduction to World Religions

Thematic Icons



Economics



Geography



Historical concepts



Government

Icons



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page

For more instructions, see the *User Guide*.



This presentation will introduce some of the major world religions and philosophical schools of thought.

Abrahamic religions:

- Judaism
- Christianity
- Islam

Indian, East Asian and African religions:

- Jainism
- Shintoism
- Animism
- Hinduism
- Buddhism

Philosophies:

- Daoism
- Legalism
- Confucianism

What do you already know about these religions and ideas?





Judaism originated 3,500 years ago in the Middle East when God made a **covenant** (agreement) with Abraham.

God would make Abraham the father of a great nation if he left his home and followed Him to the promised land in modern-day **Israel**.

Long after the death of Abraham, the Israelites were living as slaves in Ancient Egypt. Jews believe that God freed them from slavery and gave them laws to live by.



These laws were received and written down by **Moses**, which resulted in the **Torah**.

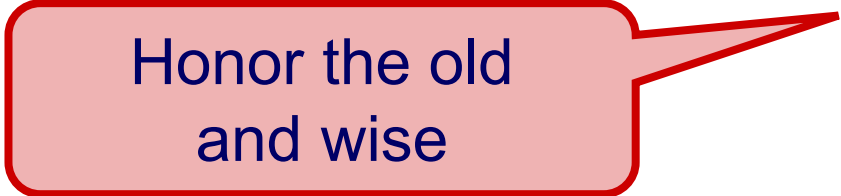


Jews have a covenant relationship with God, meaning that they keep God's laws in exchange for all the good things God does for them. They believe they are the chosen people appointed by God to set an example to the world.

Jews follow **mitzvot** (commandments) in order to live a fulfilled life. There are 613 mitzvot in total. Some are **biblical** (d'oraita) and others are **rabbinic** (d'rabbanan).



You shall not kill



Honor the old
and wise

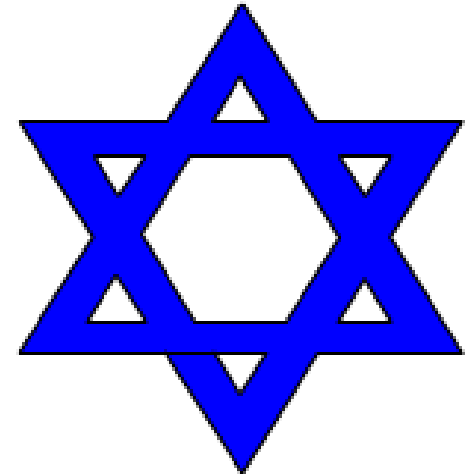


The age of responsibility to follow mitzvot is 13 for boys and 12 for girls. This rite of passage is celebrated by a ceremony called a **bar mitzvah** for boys and **bat mitzvah** for girls.



Judaism is a **monotheistic** religion. Jews believe God is omnipresent, all-knowing and has no physical body. They believe Jews have the love of God (**chesed**) and they are expected to show chesed to each other.

Boys must be **circumcised** at eight days old to begin the covenant relationship with God. The procedure permanently marks the body as a reminder of the covenant.

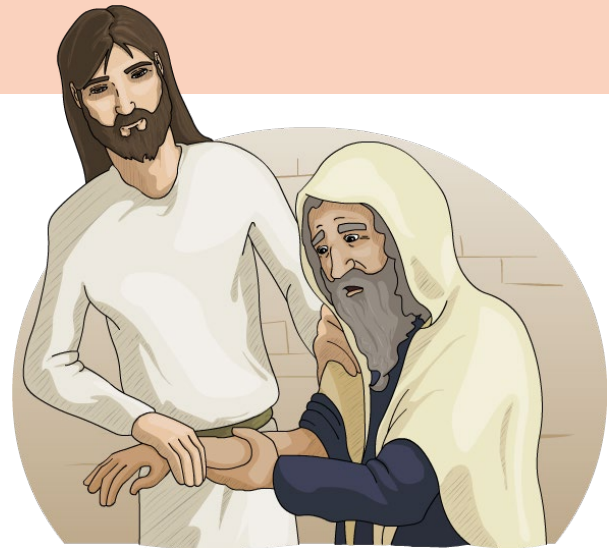


Judaism is a community-based faith. It is believed that Judaism passes through a Jewish mother and that her children are Jewish whether or not they practice the religion.



Christianity originated in 0 BC with the birth of **Jesus of Nazareth**.

Christians believe he was the **messiah** prophesized in the Old Testament to liberate Jews. **Jerusalem**, the Jewish holy land, had been conquered by the Roman Empire.



As an adult, Jesus traveled around the country and spread the word of God. His many followers concerned the Romans, who felt he was a threat to their authority. Jesus was arrested soon after the **Last Supper** and was **crucified**.

Christians believe that Jesus was resurrected by God and spent the next forty days performing miracles before ascending to Heaven.





A key part of the early spread of Christianity was the enlightenment of **Paul the Apostle**.

He initially persecuted Jesus's followers for their beliefs. However, when traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus, he was struck by a vision of Jesus. This filled him with the holy spirit and he converted to Christianity.



Paul preached the Christian gospel during long **missionary** journeys around the Mediterranean.

His assertion that non-Jews could be part of the faith aided the spread of Christianity.

Why is Paul the Apostle regarded as such a key figure in the spread of Christianity?





Christians were persecuted in the Roman Empire until the rule of Constantine I, who converted to Christianity. He believed that God had aided his military victories and enabled his rise to power.

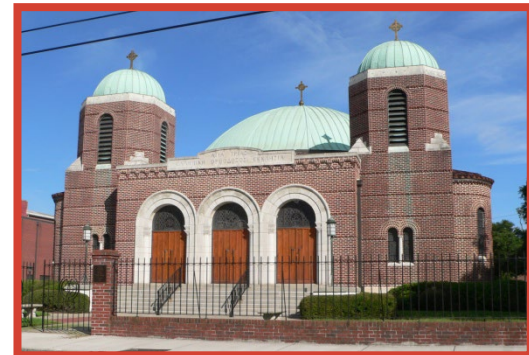
In 313 AD, Constantine signed the **Edict of Milan**, which ordered religious tolerance for Christians throughout the empire. In 380 AD, Christianity became its main religion.

After the fall of the Rome, there was no force to unify the different interpretations of Christianity. This led to the **Great Schism** in 1054 between the Greek east and the Latin west. Christianity separated into two denominations (**Orthodox** and **Roman Catholic**) because their interpretations of the faith were irreconcilable.



Throughout history, the number of Christian denominations have increased. The six main denominations are:

- Catholicism
- Protestantism
- Eastern Orthodox
- Oriental Orthodox
- Anglicism
- Restoratonism and Non-Trinitarianism



What do you know about these denominations?



All Christian denominations follow the same central beliefs.
They include:

There is only one God. He is all-powerful and omnipresent.

Jesus is the son of God who was sent to save mankind.

The soul is immortal and lives on after death.

The **Bible** is sacred.

God is the Father, Son and **Holy Ghost** (the Holy Trinity).



Islam was revealed to the prophet **Muhammad** in 600 AD.

The angel Jibril delivered messages to Muhammad from Allah. These messages became the **Qur'an**.



Muslims believe that the words of a prophet come directly from Allah. As a record of Muhammad's words, the Qur'an is the true message of Allah.

The Qur'an states that the prophets **Abraham**, **Moses** and **Jesus** appeared prior to Muhammad. However, Muslims believe that Muhammad was given Allah's final revelation, and so the Qur'an is the only accurate version of his words.





Muhammad began to teach about Islam in and around Mecca. He taught publicly in markets and at resting places for pilgrims, as well as privately in people's homes. A small number of people accepted his teachings, but they were considered a despised minority among most Arabian tribes.

In 62 AD, Muhammad moved to Medina, where some tribes did accept him. He began to rule and formed an army.

After a Meccan tribe attacked some of his forces in a holy sanctuary, Muhammad conquered the tribes in Mecca. His victory increased the popularity of Islam. He led conquests into Arabia and united Arabian tribes in the Islamic faith. At the time of his death, Islam had spread throughout the Arabian peninsula.





Muhammad's death left a vacuum of leadership. The dispute over the who should be the next **caliph** (chief Muslim leader) split Muslims into two denominations: **Sunnis** and **Shia**.

Muslims were successful in conquering areas of the Middle East such as the Byzantine and Sassanid empires. By 750 AD, Islam had spread to cover territory from modern-day Pakistan to Spain.

The Qur'an states that people should not be forced to convert to Islam. Muslims generally practiced religious tolerance and conversion primarily resulted from trade and Arab migration to conquered countries.



There are **six articles of faith** in Islam. They are:

Belief in **Allah** (God): Allah is the one and only God and can be reached through prayer or by reciting the Qur'an.

Belief in angels: angels bring Allah's messages to humans.

Belief in **prophets**: humans chosen to fulfill the will of Allah on Earth.

Belief in the holy book (Qur'an): contains the literal word of Allah and gives Muslims moral guidance.

Belief in the day of judgement: when humans will be judged by Allah on whether they go to **paradise** or hell.

Belief in divine will: Allah knows the decisions people will make but gives them the power to choose.

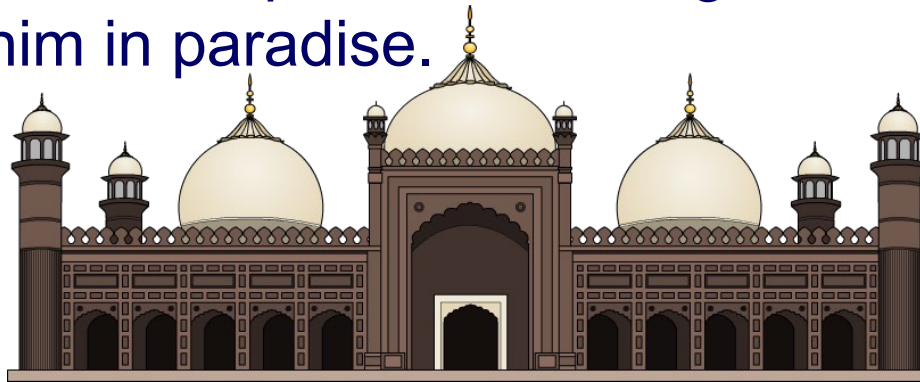


Five pillars of Islam



Muslims believe that there is one god: Allah. He is the creator of the universe, omnipresent and all-knowing. He is the judge of humankind.

After death, the soul waits for the pre-determined day of judgement. Muslims hope Allah will forgive their sins so that they can join him in paradise.



Allah is worshiped in a **mosque**. Most mosques have a minaret (narrow tower), a dome and a place to wash before prayer. All mosques have an arrow pointing towards Mecca.

**Mosques do not include images of Allah.
Why might this be?**



Jainism was founded in India around 8000 BC. It developed into its present form through the teachings of **Mahavira**, an Indian monk. The central Jain beliefs are:

There is no god and liberation of the soul results from human actions alone.

Humans should protect the souls of animals and plants through **ahimsā** (non-violence to any life forms).

Souls are liberated into eternal bliss by leaving the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Monks and nuns should swear the five **mahavratas** (great vows) that instruct them how to live according to Jainism.

What similarities does Jainism share with other religions?

Jains are split into two sects: the **Digambara** and the **Svetambara**. While both sects take the five vows, they disagree on a number of principles.

Digambara monks live fully naked to signify their indifference to shame. However, they believe that women should wear clothes and can only achieve liberation of the soul after being reborn as a male.

Svetambaras are allowed possessions such as a begging bowl, simple white clothes, writing tools and books. Digambaras have no possessions.



This image shows female Svetambaras meditating.

Hinduism is often referred to as a set of religious beliefs rather than one all-encompassing religion. It has no single founder, religious authority or holy text.

Hinduism began in India around 5,000 years ago and is considered one of the earliest belief systems in the world.

Most Hindus believe in one supreme divine power (**Brahman**), which has unlimited forms and qualities. These forms are represented through multiple deities (gods and goddesses).



Hinduism has several sacred philosophical texts that act as guides and truths for human life. These include the **Vedas** and the epics **Mahabharata** and **Ramayana**.

What do you think this symbol means?

Hindus believe that three gods (the **Trimurti**) are responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of the world. There are three main Hindu denominations:

Vaishnavism considers Vishnu to be the supreme lord. Its followers are called Vaishnavas.

Shaivism considers Shiva to be the supreme lord. Its followers are called Shaivists.

Shaktism considers Shakti to be the supreme goddess. Its followers are called Shaktists.

Each god is worshiped in multiple forms, or **avatars**. For example, Vishnu has nine avatars, the most popular of which are **Krishna** and **Rama**. Their stories are written in the Mahabharata and Ramayana.



An important concept in Hinduism is **dharma**. Dharma has no single translation in English. It can mean duty, morality, virtue, righteousness or law.

Hindus believe dharma refers to moral principles, such as non-violence and honesty, which must be followed in order to create a harmonious and structured society. However, Dharma is achieved differently based on age and status.

The concept of dharma is also found in Buddhism and Jainism. Its importance to many Indians is symbolised by the **Ashoka Chakra** on the Indian flag, which represents the wheel of dharma.

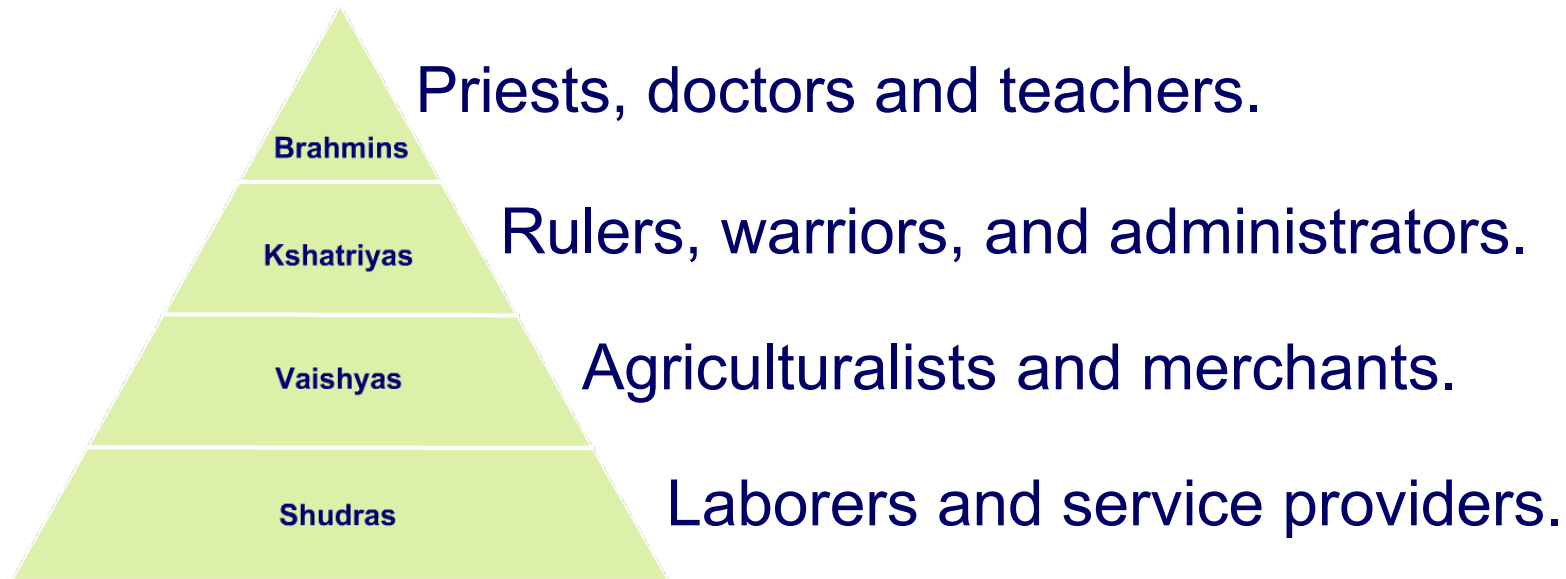


This table shows the key aims of life in Hinduism:

Aim	Definition
Artha	Pursuit of wealth and security for one's family through honest means.
Karma	The belief that human actions have consequences. People who commit good deeds and follow their dharma will receive good fortune in their next life.
Kama	Enjoyment of the world's beauty and desire to seek pleasure.
Moksha	Liberation of the soul by release from Samsara (the cycle of life, death and re-birth).



In Hinduism, society is split into four **castes** (classes).



Those who do not fall into a category in the social hierarchy are called **dalits** or 'untouchables', and are often believed to have committed grievous sins in a previous life.

Do you think the caste system is fair?

Shintoism is the **ethnic religion** of Japan that has existed throughout its history. Shintoists worship spiritual essences called **kami**.

Kami are not omnipotent and exist only in the physical world. They can respond to prayers and influence natural forces but are not considered perfect. Shintoists believe that kami can manifest themselves into powerful forces of nature such as storms and earthquakes.

Shintoism has no founder, scriptures or concept of an afterlife. The main principle of Shintoism is to promote harmony and moral purity.

Shintoism can be practiced alongside other religions such as Buddhism.





Buddhism originated in 500 BC, when **Siddhartha Gotama** achieved enlightenment and became known as the Buddha.

He traveled across India spreading his ideas. A growing number of people began to follow his teachings.

In the 200s BC, King **Ashoka** of the **Maurya Empire** endorsed Buddhism in India and areas such as modern-day Pakistan, Afghanistan and Greece. He placed pillar edicts inscribed with Buddhist teachings throughout his empire.

Buddhism was brought to China through the **Silk Road** when Buddhist monks accompanied traders to preach the religion. After rising to prominence in China, Buddhism spread to Korea and Japan in the 600s AD. It spread willingly rather than through conquest.



The key beliefs of Buddhism are the **Four Noble Truths**:

1. Life involves suffering (**dukkha**) such as pain, anger, aging, and disappointment.

2. The cause of suffering (**samudaya**) is want and desire, such as longing for fame or fortune.

3. Suffering can be prevented by giving up worldly desires and focusing on the present. This will encourage contentment (**nirodha**).

4. Following the **Noble Eightfold Path** will end suffering. This involves making moral choices that show compassion for and awareness of others.



Another key belief of Buddhism is **karma**.

In Buddhism, karma refers to every action having consequences. People are answerable for their past and their present actions will affect their future incarnations.

Buddhists believe following the **Five Precepts** of Buddhism will achieve good karma. They are:

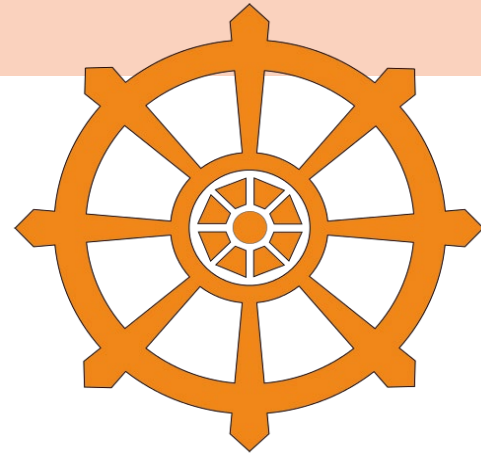
- abstinence from sensual overindulgence
- not taking the life of anything living
- not lying
- not losing mindfulness by drinking alcohol
- not stealing.

What other religions believe in karma?

In Buddhism, dharma refers to the teachings of the Buddha.

Dharma is part of the **three jewels** that provide lasting happiness. The other jewels are:

- Buddha, to achieve enlightenment
- Sangha (the religious community) to aid Buddhists.



A common symbol of Buddhism is the **dharmachakra**. The wheel represents dharma and its eight spokes represent the Noble Eightfold Path to follow dharma.

The ultimate goal of Buddhists is to achieve **Nirvana**: freedom from the cycle of life, death and rebirth into salvation.



Animism is the belief that water, animals, plants and other natural objects are conscious and spiritual. It originated in early African societies but has independently developed in many parts of the world.

Animism is present in religions such as Buddhism and Shintoism. This has led some to regard it as a practice or belief rather than a religion.

Animism is not an **organized religion**. It has no sacred text, institution or prophet. It is based on cultural rituals and oral tradition.

Belief in animism is still prevalent in traditional communities. It is practiced in much of North, West and Central Africa.



Daoism (“the way”) is the ethnic religion of China. Philosopher **Laozi** is traditionally credited with developing the religion and is said to have written Daoism’s most important text, **Tao Te Ching**.

Daoism accepts worship of gods but believes that life and the universe began with **Dao** rather than a specific god. Dao cannot be clearly defined as it exists in many forms but generally means the basis of heaven, earth and humanity.

Daoists practice **wu-wei** (non-action) which means living in a natural and effortless way. Daoist practices also include meditation, feng shui and reading scriptures.

The **three basic treasures** of Daoism are compassion, frugality and humility.



Legalism is a Chinese classical school of thought in philosophy. It became prominent in the **Warring States** era of 475–221 BC and was first used in government by the Qin imperial dynasty from 221 BC.

The central belief of legalism is that humans are inherently selfish and are predisposed to act badly. Consequently, legalists believe that successful governing requires strict laws and harsh punishments to force people to behave.

Legalism suggests that effective government needs:

- **Fa** (law or principle)
- **Shu** (a method or tactic to enforce law)
- **Shi** (legitimacy and power).





Confucianism is a Chinese philosophical school of thought.

In the 500s BC, the philosopher **Confucius** revived many older ideas from the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC) and organized them into coherent instructional texts.

Confucianism gained prominence after being adopted as the philosophy of the Han dynasty by Emperor Wu in the 100s BC. It was used in education and court politics.

This led to its diffusion across neighboring countries such as Japan and Korea. Confucianism spread through means such as Chinese cultural influence rather than through conquest.

How might Chinese influence have aided the spread of Confucianism?



The key belief of Confucianism is that humans are essentially good and can be improved and perfected by self-cultivation of virtues and ethics.

The **Five Constants** of Confucianism are:

Ren: humaneness

Yi: righteousness or justice

Li: ritual

Zhi: knowledge

Xin: integrity

Confucians believe an effective government should emphasize rituals and order (**li**) rather than harsh punishment.

There are no specific practices that must be observed in Confucianism, so other religions can be followed alongside it.



Keywords

