

World Religions

Judaism

Overview

Along with Christianity and Islam, Judaism is one of the three major monotheistic religions of the world. It shares with them the belief in one God who is the creator and ruler of the universe and the lord of human history. Of the three, Judaism is much the oldest. According to biblical tradition, the origins of the faith can be traced back at least 3,000 years to Abraham, the patriarch who is considered the father of the Jewish faith (*see* Abraham), and his descendants who formed the nation of Israel. Ancient Israel dwelled in the land of Palestine in the Middle East, and the modern state of Israel, founded in 1948, represents a return of the people to a homeland that had been controlled by other powers for more than 20 centuries.

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Judaism

Major Beliefs

- ▶ Belief in one God
- ▶ Abraham was a great prophet
- ▶ Follow the 10 Commandments
- ▶ Covenant between Abraham and Yahweh
- ▶ Religious book = Torah & Tanakh

Judaism

Holidays/Ceremonies

- ▶ Rosh Hashanah
- ▶ New Year celebration
- ▶ Passover
- ▶ Celebrates freedom of Israelites from the Egyptians
- ▶ Hanukkah
- ▶ 8-day festival to celebrate rededication of Holy Temple
- ▶ Bar/Bat Mizvah

Christianity

Overview

The beliefs and practices of Christianity are based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Christianity is divided into three main denominations: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant. There are more Christians in the world (some 2 billion at the beginning of the 21st century) than followers of any other single religion.

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Christianity

Major Beliefs

- ▶ Belief in one God
- ▶ God in the form of the Trinity (Father, Spirit, Son)
- ▶ Jesus Christ claimed to be the son of God and the Messiah
- ▶ Abraham was a great prophet
- ▶ Follow the 10 Commandments
- ▶ Communion is taken as a way to remember death of Jesus

Christianity

Holidays/Ceremonies

- ▶ Christmas
- ▶ Birth of Jesus
- ▶ Easter
- ▶ Death of Jesus
- ▶ Baptism
- ▶ First Communion

Islam

Overview

The word Islam means “surrender” or “submission,” submission to the will of the one God (in Arabic, Allah). Muslims are those who have submitted themselves. The basic creed of Islam is brief: There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God.

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Islam

Major Beliefs

- ▶ There is one God (Allah)
- ▶ Muhammad is the prophet of Allah
- ▶ Abraham is a great prophet
- ▶ Follow the Five Pillars
 - ▶ basic creed (*shahadatain*), prayer (*salat*), pilgrimage (or *hajj*), fasting (*saum*), and the *zakat* (or charitable contribution)
- ▶ Holy Book = Koran or Qur'an
- ▶ Pray five times per day facing the city of Mecca

Islam

Holidays/Ceremonies

- ▶ Ramadan
- ▶ Month long fast to remember the month in which the Koran was revealed to Muhammad

Hinduism

Overview

- ▶ Hinduism features a diverse pantheon of divine beings; however, there is also a widely held belief that there is one creative principle in the universe, the *brahman*, which many Hindus conceive of as a personal God. Another distinctive feature of Hinduism is belief in the transmigration of souls, or reincarnation. Associated with this belief is the conviction that all living things are part of the same essence. Individuals pass through cycles of birth and death. This means that an individual soul may return many times in human, animal, or even vegetable form. What a person does in the present life will affect the next life. This is the doctrine of *karma*, the law of cause and effect. The goal of the individual is to escape this cycle, or wheel of birth and rebirth, so that the individual soul, *atman*, may eventually become part of the absolute soul, or *brahman*.

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Hinduism

Major Beliefs

- ▶ Vedas—belief that this book is composed of teachings directly from different gods
- ▶ Reincarnation—belief in rebirth
- ▶ Karma—actions in this life will impact next life
- ▶ Cows are sacred animals
- ▶ Polytheistic—belief in many gods

Hinduism

Holidays/Ceremonies

- ▶ Diwali—New Year celebration
- ▶ Various ceremonies to celebrate different gods
 - ▶ No specific ceremonies are specifically mentioned the reassessment

Buddhism

Overview

Buddhism is the name for a complex system of beliefs developed around the teachings of the Buddha. Though used by many religious groups in ancient India, the title Buddha (meaning “the Enlightened One”) became associated with the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, who lived between the 6th and the 4th centuries BC. There are now dozens of different schools of Buddhist philosophy throughout Asia, and many of these schools have spread to Europe and the United States. These schools have different writings and languages and have grown up in different cultures. There is no one single “Bible” of Buddhism, but all Buddhists share some basic beliefs.

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Buddhism

Major Beliefs

- ▶ Practices based on the life of Siddhartha Gautama
 - ▶ Known as Buddhad
 - ▶ Hindu prince
- ▶ Ultimate goal of life is to reach nirvana
 - ▶ Escape cycle of rebirth
- ▶ Karma
 - ▶ Force created by actions will determine or influence the next life
- ▶ Follows the Eightfold Path

Buddhism

Ceremonies

- ▶ Birth, Enlightenment, and Death (final Nirvana) of Buddha are celebrated
 - ▶ Dates vary for different Buddhist traditions

Original Locations Major Religions

Below you will find the original location of each major religion.

Judaism	Canaan; Isreal
Christianity	Judea; Jerusalem; Roman Empire
Islam	Mecca, Arabian Peninsula
Hinduism	India
Buddhism	India

Spread of Religion



Please Note: Many countries have religious diversity. This map only shows the major religion for a particular region.