

# Frequently Asked Questions:

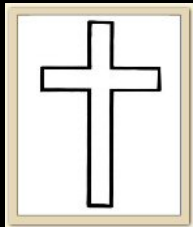
*How much do YOU know  
about the three  
Abrahamic Religions?*

# How were the religions started, and by whom?



According to the Hebrew scriptures, Abraham formed the first covenant with God, and Moses received and presented to all the Jewish people the binding covenant of Torah or Jewish law making God's law their own.

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Christianity is founded on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, a Jew. The religion is based on Jesus' teachings, sayings, healings, death, and resurrection.

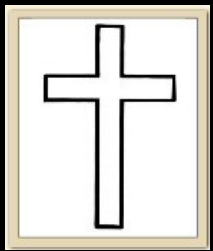


Islam started with Adam and was transmitted by God through Prophets such as Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus; He finally preserved His message in the Qur'an through Muhammad, the last of the messengers. The word "Islam" means "submission" (to God's will) and "peace."

# When and where did the religions originate?



**The Bible recounts that God told Abraham to go to Canaan. It is now known as Israel, named after Abraham's grandson. The land is often referred to as the Promised Land because of God's repeated promise to give the land to the descendants of Abraham. Judaism began about 4000 years ago; it is the oldest of the three Abrahamic religions.**



**Christianity originated in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The Bible recounts that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Although the Western system for dating years is based on the birth of Jesus, historical evidence suggests that he was born around 4 BCE.**

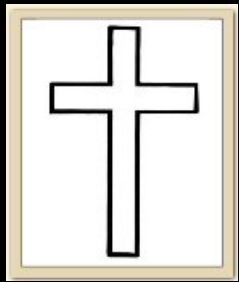


**Muhammad proclaimed that he first received Allah's (God in Arabic) revelations in a cave near Mecca, in present day Saudi Arabia, beginning in 610 CE; he continued to receive new revelations until his death in 632 CE.**

# What was the language of the first followers?



The primary language of the Jewish people and the Torah is *Hebrew*.



Jesus' native language was *Aramaic*, but the New Testament was written in *Greek*, the common language of the region.



The language of the Qur'an is classical *Arabic*.



# Who are important religious leaders in early Judaism?

## The Patriarchs:

- **Abraham:** Jewish tradition calls him the first monotheist, entering into a covenant with God that gave his descendants the Promised Land and committed them to worshipping God alone; according to the Hebrew Scriptures, he married Sarah, fathering Ishmael with his maidservant Hagar and Isaac with Sarah.
- **Isaac:** Abraham's second son; the Hebrew Scriptures tells that God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a test of Abraham's faith; he later married Rebecca and fathered Jacob and Esau.
- **Jacob:** Named "Israel" by an angel, which means "champion of God" and bore 12 sons, who would become the founders of the 12 tribes of Israel, or the Children of Israel.

# Moses:

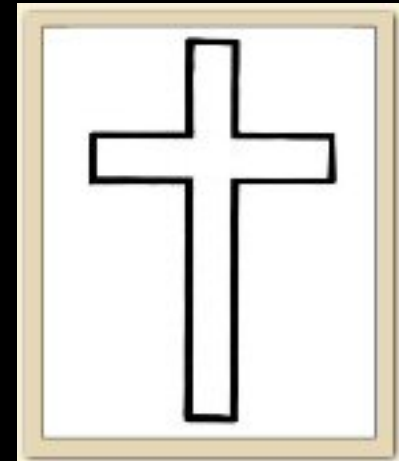


Judaism teaches that God appeared to Moses and chose him to free the Children of Israel from Egyptian slavery and take them to the Promised Land. He led the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai. There, Jews believe, God gave Moses the Torah: the first five books of the Bible. Moses was said to have led the Jews in their forty years' wandering in the desert of Sinai. He died just before the Children of Israel reached the Promised Land of Canaan, as a punishment for his disobedience to God.

In addition to Moses, there were prophets who were essential in reinforcing the sacred covenant of restoring justice and peace to all people.

# Who are important religious leaders in early Christianity?

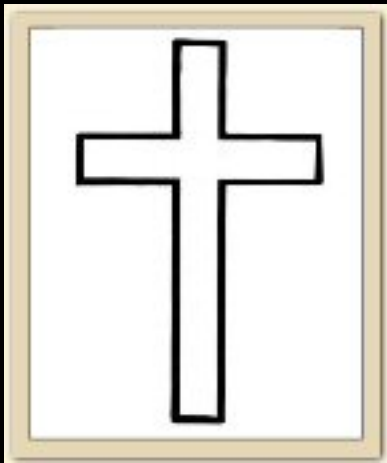
Because Christianity uses the Hebrew Bible as part of their Bible, Christians recognize the Jewish patriarchs and prophets. Much of the groundwork for Christianity comes from Judaism, including Jesus Himself, who was brought up in a traditional Jewish culture.



# Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus is also known as “Christ.” “Christ” is a theological title meaning “anointed” or “the anointed one”; it is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Mashiach* or “Messiah.”

Christians believe that Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus, conceived Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Her husband, Joseph, was only His adoptive father, as his real Father is God.

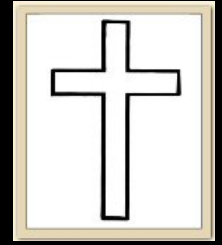


Jesus preached in Galilee and Judea, with a message of *repentance and forgiveness of sins through faith in the Kingdom of God.*

Jesus was executed by the Romans. He was crucified around 30AD. Crucifixion was a long and painful process, and it was generally reserved only for criminals.



# Fully God, Fully Human



**Central to Christian belief is the idea that Jesus is both human and divine, and that God is experienced as a Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is the “Son” in the Holy Trinity.**

**Christians believe that Jesus was resurrected from his grave 3 days after his execution, and was seen by many people before he ascended into heaven.**

**Christians also believe that Jesus' death was an act of atonement. The most common understanding is that by dying on the Cross, Jesus made it possible for those who believe in him to overcome the separation between themselves and God caused by sin and death.**

# The Apostles



The Bible recounts that Jesus had twelve core disciples or apostles to carry out his teachings. Most of the information about Jesus' life comes from the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament. Two of the twelve disciples, Matthew and John, were authors. The other two were Mark, a companion of the disciple Simon Peter, and Luke, a companion of Paul.

Paul, a Jew whose Hebrew name was Saul, had an enormous impact on the spread of Christianity. He never met Jesus and at first opposed Christians, but he had a vision of the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. He became an apostle of Christianity, traveling the Roman empire to interpret and spread "the good news" of Jesus as the Christ. Paul was influential in making the church open to all.

# Who are important religious leaders in early Islam?

**For Muslims, the *Prophet Muhammad* is the final messenger, the recipient of the last of God's (Allah in Arabic) revelations preserved in its original form in the Qur'an.**



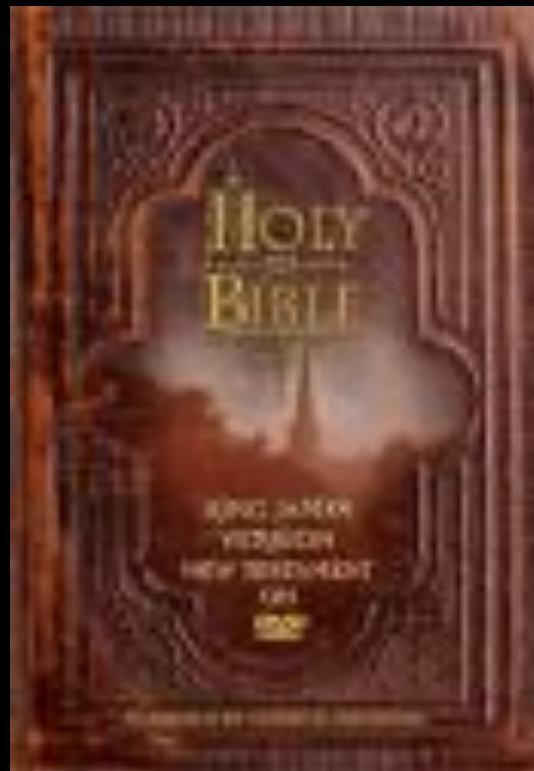
**Muslims believe God's message is perfected in the Qur'an, the same message that existed since Adam. Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mary are all mentioned in the Qur'an. Islam maintains that God communicated His message to all people in history. The prophets mentioned by name in the Qur'an are primarily those in the Bible.**



# Muhammad

Muhammad was born 570 CE in Mecca, Arabia to a family of the Quraysh tribe. In his early life he earned the title 'trustworthy (Al-Amin)' from pagan Arabs. At 40, Muhammad received his first revelation through Archangel Gabriel. After a gap of 3 years, the revelations continued for 20 more years. Muhammad and his few followers were persecuted for 13 years, preaching reform & monotheism to Meccan idolaters, and then were forced to migrate to Medina where Muhammad established the first Islamic state. He was a preacher, statesman, soldier, and exemplary family man before his death in 632. His sayings and traditions (Hadith & Sunnah) are well -preserved as the 2<sup>nd</sup> source of Islamic faith after the Qur' an.

# What are some holy texts of the Abrahamic religions?



# What are some Jewish holy texts?



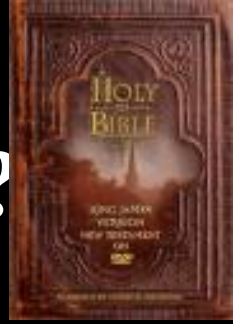
**The holiest texts in Judaism are the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), which Jews call the Torah and believe that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.**

**The Hebrew Scriptures, comprising the Torah, the prophets, and the historical books called “the writings,” were codified by Jewish religious scholars somewhere between 200 BCE and 200 CE. They are identical to books in the “Old Testament” Christians read; 100 CE is the date of the earliest Old Testament canon.**

**At least one copy of the Torah in Hebrew is kept in every synagogue in the form of a hand-written parchment scroll. Jews read a particular, set portion of the Torah scroll every week in synagogue.**

**The Talmud is a compendium of law and commentary on the Torah applying it to life in later and changed circumstances.**

# What are some Christian holy texts?



**In addition to the Hebrew Scriptures, Christians rely on the New Testament, the name given to the Christian Scriptures that were written after the birth of Jesus. They considered these writings sacred texts.**

**Of the books that became part of the New Testament, the oldest are the letters of Paul, usually considered to have been written in the 40s and 50s of the first century. Other letters are thought to have been written over the next couple of decades. Of the four gospels, Mark is considered the earliest at about 68-70 CE, while John is the latest at about 110. Acts is later than Luke (around 100) and Revelation was probably composed in the 90s.**

# What are some Islamic holy texts?



Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the actual word of God, revealed to Muhammad by God (Allah in Arabic).

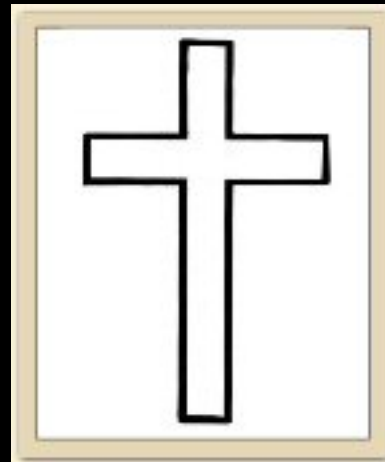
The Qur'an is not altered in any way since it was first compiled during Muhammad's life (570-632 CE). It has been written down in Arabic and memorized in its original form by Muslims around the world – 4 of the original copies are still available.

The only authoritative text of the Qur'an is in the original Arabic. Muslims regard "translations" of the Qur'an into other languages as paraphrases or versions of the original.

The Qur'an consists of 114 chapters (called "surahs"), which have names as well as numbers. They are arranged in the Qur'an according to their length, not in the order that Muhammed announced them or according to the chronology of stories that they tell.



What are the physical spaces of worship in the  
Abrahamic religions?



## What do Jewish spaces of worship look like?

The Jewish house of worship is called a synagogue, or temple which is actually a Greek translation of Beit K'nesset: "place of assembly." The synagogue or temple is a beit tefilah, a house of prayer. It is the place where Jews come together for community prayer services. The synagogue or temple is also a beit midrash, a house of study.

Probably the most important feature of the sanctuary is the Ark. The name "Ark" is an acronym of the Hebrew words "Aron Kodesh," which means "holy cabinet." The Ark is a cabinet or recession in the wall, which holds the Torah scrolls.



# What do Christian spaces of worship look like?

The Church: The Christian Scripture says that the church is actually the body of believers.

Altars occupy a prominent place in Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and other highly liturgical denominations. They are used to hold and to prepare the bread and wine used in the Eucharist. In Protestant churches, a table serves as the centerpiece of the holy communion service, a remembrance of Jesus' death and resurrection.



Some churches focus on the preaching of “the Word of God” and they also are contextually focused on the pulpit where “the Word” is preached.

Christian churches can range from very elaborate to very plain, without ornamentation other than a simple cross.

# What do Muslim places of worship look like?

Mosques (masjid) are simply places to pray, and are generally simple buildings with unadorned rooms, with only a denotation of the direction of Mecca. Later some mosques came to be decorated ornately.

In the U.S., mosques have become more like churches in that they form the center of a religious community, but in the Islamic world, anyone can walk into any mosque and pray. There are no denominations for any mosque, and anyone can lead the group prayer.

The prayer is the same as praying alone, but it is said that praying side by side with fellow humans regardless of race or class is beneficial to cultivating our humility.



# How do the faiths represent God as an image in worship spaces?

**Judaism:** Physical representations of God are not allowed. Judaism firmly maintains that God has no body.

**Christianity:** Because Christians believe that God became visible in Jesus through the workings of the Holy Spirit, they use many images to represent the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), the saints, and the angels. Christians do not worship the statues, images or symbols, but venerate that which they represent.

**Islam:** The Qur'an is clear that no one should make physical representations of either God or the Prophet, or even his companions, because no human being can conceive of God.

# What are some core beliefs of each faith?

## CHRISTIANITY:

- There is one God who reveals Himself in three 'persons': Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. However, these three persons are regarded as a unity, sharing one 'substance.'
- God has created the world distinct from Himself but is believed to be active within it as a Creator, Sustainer, and Sanctifier.
- Belief in Jesus' teachings: no one can earn God's mercy or be righteous in His eyes, but one can know His infinite forgiveness and mercy through turning to Him; following the Sermon on the Mount and being a witness in daily life; belief in heaven.

## ISLAM:

- Belief in one, omnipresent, almighty God who created the universe and all in it; belief in prophets, revelations, angels, the hereafter, and divine decree.
- Islam encompasses all aspects of earthly life, governed by Islamic law (sharia) and organized around 5 pillars: belief in God and His messengers, daily prayers, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage (Hajj).
- Islam means total "submission" to God's will, achieving "peace" within.

## JUDAISM:

- There is a single, all powerful God, who created the universe and everything in it
- Jews are directed to be like God, to be Kadosh/ sacred. Kedusha: seeking the sacred is central to Jewish beliefs. Judaism imagines a world in which each and every action has the potential for Kedusha.
- Each action or obligation that brings Kedusha into the world is called a mitzvah. Doing a mitzvah is the key that allows each person to experience the sacred. The mitzvah of Tikkun Olam (to be God's hands here on earth and help repair the world) is central to Jewish belief.
- Judaism tends to be more focused on the actions of mitzvah than faith alone.

# What beliefs are common to all three faiths?

- All human beings are created in the image of God.
- Monotheism, a belief in one God;
- Social justice and the concern for others;
- The pursuit of peace;
- All three express peace in their salutations:
  - For Jews, “Shalom Aleichem” May PEACE be unto you
  - For Muslims, “As Salaam Alaikum,” THE PEACE be with you and response, “Wa Alaikum As Salaam,” and to you THE PEACE
  - For Christians, “May PEACE be with you.”

# Some things to *THINK* about:

During the presentation you will feel ***challenged, emotional, and inquisitive***. Here are some questions to think about while watching the presentation this evening...

you will have a chance to voice some of them during the ***discussion*** time, as well as on a ***survey*** following the presentation.



What did you *LEARN*?

What *SURPRISED* you?

What *MOVED* you?

What *TROUBLED* you?

How was your **FAITH TRADITION**  
represented?

How will you continue this **DIALOGUE**?

What would you like to share about your  
**FAITH, CULTURE, or RACE**?

What would you like to ask a member of  
another **FAITH, CULTURE, or RACE**?

...and about the **slideshow**...

Did you find the **POWERPOINT** modules  
**HELPFUL**?

What **INTERESTED** you the most?

What did you find most **INFORMATIVE**?

Was there anything you would **CHANGE**?

Was there anything that **SUPRISED** you or  
**TAUGHT** you something **NEW**?

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