

Worldview of the World's Major Religions

1. Naturalism:

- **Reality:** The material universe is all that exists.
- **Man:** A chance product of an evolutionary process.
- **Truth:** Gauged using the five senses to perceive reality.
- **Values:** No objective values or morals exist.
- **Examples:** Atheism, Agnosticism, and Existentialism.

2. Pantheism:

- **Reality:** Only spiritual dimensions exist.
- **Man:** Spiritual, eternal, and impersonal.
- **Truth:** Beyond all rational description.
- **Values:** No real distinction between good and evil.
- **Examples:** Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism.

3. Theism:

- **Reality:** Both material and spiritual things exist.
- **Man:** People were created in the image of God.
- **Truth:** Gained via revelation and the five senses.
- **Values:** Objective expression of an absolute moral being.
- **Examples:** Christianity, Islam, Judaism.

4. Spiritism and Polytheism:

- **Reality:** Material things are real but possess spirits.
- **Man:** Creation of the gods, similar to the rest of creation.
- **Truth:** Discovered through a shaman.
- **Values:** Moral values often take the form of taboos.

5. Postmodernism:

- **Reality:** Interpreted by language and culture.
- **Man:** Nodes in cultural reality, products of social settings.
- **Truth:** Mental constructs meaningful to individuals within a particular paradigm.
- **Values:** Part of social paradigms.

Categories of Belief Regarding Divinity

- **A. The Monistic Idea (All is One):** A metaphysical and theological view positing that all is one, with no fundamental divisions and a unified set of laws underlying all nature.
- **B. The Many Gods (Polytheistic):** The worship or belief in many deities assembled in a pantheon of gods and goddesses.
- **C. One God (Monotheistic):** Believing in one god.
- **D. No God (Atheistic):** The absence or belief in the existence of deities.

Quote 3

"We humans can tolerate suffering but we cannot tolerate meaningless." - Desmond Tutu

Academic Approaches to Religion

Theology

- The study of **theistic thought**.
- Involves the **rational analysis** of religious faith.
- Aims to examine and critically analyze the principles laid out in any given religion.

Religious Studies

- An **academic study of religion** that differs from theology.
- Conducted and studied by individuals who are **insiders** to the religion being studied.

Philosophy of Religion

- A **philosophical study** concerning the nature and meaning of religion.
- Involves analyzing religious concepts, beliefs, and practices of adherents.
- Poses critical questions about religious assumptions that are often taken for granted.

Relationship Between Religion and Theology

- **Religion:** Humans' way to God.
- **Theology:** A study of God's way to humans.
- **Philosophy of Religion:** A reflection of humans' lived experience of God.

Faith and Philosophy of Religion

A diagram illustrates the interplay between **Religion, Theology, Spirituality, FAITH,** and **Philosophy of Religion.**

Elements of Religion and Spirituality

Elements of Religion

The elements of religion include:

- a. Reflects an effort to **elevate the whole self** to a higher dimension of existence.
- b. A framework of **transcendent beliefs.**
- c. **Text or scriptures.**
- d. **Rituals.**
- e. **Sacred spaces** (e.g., church, temple, mosque, synagogue, kingdom).

Elements of Spirituality

The elements of spirituality include:

- a. **Holistic:** Full integration of one's view on life.
- b. **Quest for meaning:** Seeking purpose in life.
- c. **Quest for the Sacred.**
- d. Suggests a **self-reflective existence.**

Quote

"When the heart is far from God, worship and religious rituals become an empty and ridiculous human gesture incapable of nurturing a loving relationship with God." - Fr. Joey Rapadas

LESSON 2

Origin of World Religions: Introduction

This lesson explores the historical origins and diffusion of major global religions, emphasizing the connection between their beginnings and how they spread.

Key themes include:

- The interplay of **religion, geography, and cultural context**, noting how geographical factors influence religious practices as they adapt to new cultures.
- The intrinsic link between **livelihood, way of life, and religious expression**.

The study of religious origins requires understanding two essential elements:

1. The **places where these religions originated**
2. The **processes employed in their dispersion and diffusion**

Forms of Livelihood and Way of Life

The concepts of "Forms of Livelihood" and "Way of Life" are intrinsic to understanding religious expression and development. These terms highlight how human activities related to sustenance and daily living are deeply intertwined with the beliefs and practices of a religion.

- **Forms of Livelihood:** This refers to the various ways people earn a living, such as farming, herding, trade, or craftsmanship. The economic activities of a community often influence their worldview and, consequently, their religious practices and beliefs.
- **Way of Life:** This encompasses the broader patterns of social, cultural, and daily living of a group of people. It includes customs, traditions, social structures, and daily routines. Religion often shapes and is shaped by a community's way of life.

Geography and Religious Practices

Geography plays a significant role in how religions adapt and evolve, particularly when they spread to new cultural contexts.

Question for Consideration:

- How does geography shape the internal practices of a religion once there is a change of cultural milieu (cultural background)?

This question prompts an examination of how environmental factors, available resources, climate, and the physical landscape can influence:

- Rituals and ceremonies
- Dietary laws

- Architectural styles of places of worship
- Symbolism and iconography
- The interpretation of sacred texts
- The relationship between the religion and its environment

Geographical Origins of Major Religions

- **Hindu Dharma** and **Buddhism**: Both originated in the **South Asian subcontinent of India** around **2000 BCE**. India remains the home of Hindu Dharma, while Buddhism spread across Asia to countries like Cambodia, China, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Taoism/Daoism** and **Confucianism**: These emerged in **China**
- **Shintoism**: This religion originates in **Japan**

Origin of World Religions: Specific Faiths

Buddhism

- The founder was an **Indian prince** who renounced his possessions to seek truth about life.
- He discovered that **suffering** was the primary problem and that **enlightenment** was the way to overcome it.
- **Siddhartha Gautama** was born in Lumbini, northern India, in **563 BCE**.

Judaism

- Judaism was the **earliest religion to evolve in the Middle East**, preceding Christianity and Islam
- It emphasizes a God who **revealed himself** so that humanity could know him
- Key figures and events include:
 - **Abraham**
 - **Moses** and the Patriarch Fathers
 - The giving of the **Mosaic Law at Sinai**
 - The establishment of the **Torah-based 'Great Synagogue'** in the time of Ezra, which significantly shaped Judaism over the following two millennia

Christianity

- The earliest Christian Church emerged as a **spirit-filled community** characterized by prophecy and social revolution
- The Book of Acts in the New Testament describes followers of Jesus being **miraculously filled with spiritual power** after his death and subsequently going out into the streets of Jerusalem

LESSON 3

Biblical and Historical Origins

Judaism's origins trace back to **Abraham** (c. 2000 BCE). God called Abraham from Mesopotamia, promising him descendants and the land of Canaan. Abraham's belief in one God established the foundation of **ethical monotheism** and the concept of **covenant**

Key figures and events include:

- Abraham's descendants: **Isaac** and **Jacob** (also known as Israel).
- **Moses** and the **Exodus** (c. 13th century BCE)
- The **Covenant at Sinai**, which established Judaism as a **law-centered faith** binding the people to God through obedience to the **commandments (mitzvot)**

The Jewish Religion

The Jewish day begins and ends at sunset. A central prayer, the **Shema**, is recited in the morning and evening, proclaiming, "The Lord is One". This prayer is the first one taught to Jewish children, emphasizing that faith in God requires total devotion and obedience.

Devotion to God is expressed through practices and symbolic items, including:

- **Mezuzah**: A small scroll containing verses from the Torah, placed on doorposts.
- **Tefillin**: Phylacteries, small leather boxes containing Torah verses, worn on the head and arm during prayer.
- **Tallit**: A prayer shawl worn during morning services.

Sacred Texts

The sacred texts of Judaism are foundational to its beliefs and practices.

Torah (Law)

The **Torah** is the most sacred and authoritative text in Judaism. It comprises the first five books of the Hebrew Bible:

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

Traditionally, the Torah is believed to have been given to Moses by God at Mount Sinai

The Torah contains:

- Accounts of **creation** and early human history.
- The **covenant** between God and Israel.
- **613 commandments (mitzvot)** that govern religious, moral, and social life.

The Torah is read publicly in synagogues on a yearly cycle.

The Tanakh (Hebrew Bible)

The **Tanakh** is the foundational text of Judaism, an acronym for its three sections:

- **Torah** (the Five Books of Moses)
- **Nevi'im** (Prophets)
- **Ketuvim** (Writings)

Poetry (Writings / Ketuvim)

Jewish poetry is primarily found in the **Ketuvim** (Writings), the third section of the Hebrew Bible. This section includes poetic and wisdom books such as:

- **Psalms**: Composed of prayers and hymns.
- **Proverbs**: Contains wisdom sayings.
- **Job**: Explores themes of suffering and faith.

These texts express a range of human emotions like joy, sorrow, doubt, praise, and hope. They significantly shape Jewish prayer, ethics, and spiritual reflection

Prophets (Nevi'im)

The **Nevi'im** (Prophets) record the messages of individuals chosen by God to guide the people of Israel. This section includes:

- **Former Prophets:** Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings.
- **Latter Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets.

The messages of the Prophets emphasize:

- **Faithfulness to the covenant.**
- **Social justice** and moral responsibility.
- Warnings against **idolatry** and injustice

Mishnah

The **Mishnah** is the first written compilation of the **Oral Law**, compiled around 200 CE . It organizes laws and traditions into six orders and preserves rabbinic debates and interpretations. The Mishnah's significance lies in explaining how to apply the biblical commandments in daily life .

Talmud

The **Talmud** is a comprehensive body of Jewish legal and ethical discussion, consisting of the Mishnah (the core text) and the **Gemara** (rabbinic commentary and debate) . There are two main versions: the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud, with the latter being considered more authoritative. The Talmud covers law, ethics, folklore, theology, and aspects of daily life .

Text Summary

Text	Focus	Significance
Torah	Divine law and covenant	Most sacred text
Ketuvim	Poetry (Writings)	Prayer and wisdom, shapes spirituality
Nevi'im	Moral guidance (Prophets)	Social justice and ethics
Mishnah	Oral Law (written)	Practical religious law
Talmud	Law and interpretation	Foundation of rabbinic practice

Practices in Judaism

Judaism involves various rituals and observances that mark life stages and express religious commitment.

Brit Milah (Circumcision)

Brit Milah is the Hebrew term for circumcision, an initiation ritual for Jewish newborn baby boys

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

A **Bar Mitzvah** is a ritual and celebration for Jewish boys on their 13th birthday, marking their religious maturity . A **Bat Mitzvah** serves the same purpose for girls, typically celebrated around the age of 12 or 13, depending on the denomination.

Shabbat (Sabbath)

Shabbat is the day of rest and holiness observed from sunset on Friday until nightfall on Saturday. It is a central observance in Jewish life.

Kosher Foods

Kosher foods are those that conform to **kashrut**, the Jewish dietary regulations . These laws apply to food derived from living creatures. Kosher dietary laws restrict the consumption of certain types of mammals, birds, and fish, and prohibit others that do not meet specific criteria .

Holidays/Festivals

Judaism observes several significant holidays and festivals throughout the year:

- **Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur:** Known as the High Holy Days, they mark the Jewish New Year and a period of atonement, involving fasting and deep reflection .
- **Passover (Pesach):** Commemorates the Exodus from Egypt. A key ritual involves eating unleavened bread (matzah) .
- **Sukkot:** A harvest festival where Jews build and dwell in temporary huts (sukkot) to commemorate the Israelites' wandering in the desert .
- **Hanukkah:** The Festival of Lights, celebrating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, marked by the lighting of the menorah .

Historical Distinction of Jewish Denominations

Judaism has evolved over centuries, leading to the development of various denominations and movements in response to historical circumstances and cultural influences.

Period	Major Groups	Defining Feature
Hellenistic	Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes	Temple-centered sects
Rabbinic	Rabbinic Judaism	Emphasis on Torah and Talmud
Early Modern	Orthodox, Reform, Conservative	Responses to modernity
Contemporary	Modern Orthodox, Reconstructionist, Humanistic	Pluralism and reinterpretation of tradition