



## Judaism key facts

You are expected to know all of the information in this booklet.  
You will be assessed on this knowledge.

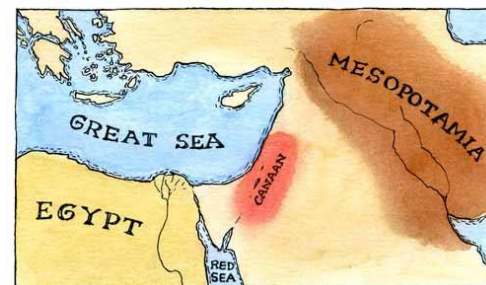
### Who are the Jews?

- Judaism is a religion followed by **Jews**.
- Unlike many other religions, people are born into Judaism. Even if someone does not follow the religion, he or she may still be Jewish.
- Jews can be any nationality or colour, and they live in many countries.
- Jews who do not believe in God are called **secular Jews**.
- Most Jews believe that you are Jewish if your mother is Jewish, or if you become Jewish through a long course of study and practice.
- There are several different branches of Judaism. In Britain there are large **Orthodox**, **Reform** and **Liberal** groups.
- Many Jews believe that it is essential to keep the traditional beliefs and the Jewish way of life alive. They try to honour as many of God's 613 laws (**mitzvot**) as possible.
- Reform Jews and Liberal Jews think that Jewish belief and worship can change or modernise over time.

### How did Judaism begin?

- Jews believe that Judaism began about 4000 years ago when **Abraham** began to worship **one God** instead of many idols as his father had done.
- God tested Abraham in ten different ways to see how strong his faith was.
- God told Abraham that he had chosen him and his descendants to be a great nation of people who would have a special relationship with Him.
- Abraham entered into a **covenant** (agreement) with God, promising to be faithful and to teach His laws. God said he would bless Abraham and make his family a great nation.
- As part of this contract, God told Abraham that all of the males in his family must be **circumcised**.
- Originally, the descendants of Abraham were known as **Hebrews** or **Israelites**. People began to call them Jews about 2700 years ago because many of them were living in a southern part of Israel called Judah.

### The Promised Land



- The Torah (the Jewish holy book) refers to God's offer of a Promised Land for Abraham and his descendants. This is part of the covenant relationship.

## Core beliefs

- Judaism is a **monotheistic** religion which means that Jews believe in one God. Judaism is the oldest of the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).
- Jews believe that the name of God is so holy that it should not be spoken or written. They often write **G-d** or use names like **HaShem** (which means 'The Name') or **Adonai** (which means My Lord), or **Melech HaOlam** (which means King of the Universe).
- Jews describe G-d as **eternal**, which means He has no beginning or end.
- Jews believe that G-d is the **creator** of everything.
- Jews believe that G-d is **almighty**, which means that He is all-powerful.
- Jews believe that G-d is **good and loving**.
- Orthodox Jews think that God's laws (in the Holy Book, the Torah) should be followed very closely.
- Reform Jews and Liberal Jews may interpret and apply some of the laws in the Torah differently because they reflect the times in which they were written rather than how G-d wants people to live now.
- Jews try to follow the 613 **mitzvot** – these are the laws given in the Torah.
- There are many food laws (**kashrut**) in Judaism. Food that is acceptable to eat is called **kosher**, which means fit or correct. Any food that is not kosher is described as **trefah**.

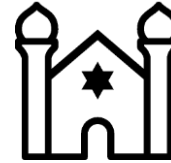
## Holy Books / Prayer

- The holiest Jewish book is the **Torah**, a parchment scroll on which the Five Books of Moses are handwritten in Hebrew.
- The Torah teaches Jews about how their religion began and the laws that G-d wants them to follow as part of their special covenant relationship.
- The Torah contains the 613 laws (**mitzvot**) that Jews must follow. This includes the **Ten Commandments**.
- The person reading from the Torah uses a pointing stick with a hand on it. This is called a **Yad**. It is used so that no fingers can damage the holy scroll and because it would be inappropriate to touch the holy scroll with a finger.
- **Prayer books** are also important Jewish holy books. There are different prayer books for **Shabbat** and the **High Holy Days**.
- One of the most important prayers in Judaism is called the **Shema** (Hebrew for 'Hear'). In the Shema, Jews says that they believe in one G-d. It is a statement of faith rather than a prayer to G-d.
- The first line of the Shema is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One.'



## The synagogue

- A synagogue (also known as **Shul**) is where the traditional practices and forms of worship take place.
- Each synagogue has at least one handwritten copy of the **Torah** on a scroll.
- When the Torah is not being used it is stored in the **Ark** (a special cupboard).
- The service is often led by a **rabbi**,
- In Orthodox synagogues, almost all rabbis are men. Many Reform and Liberal synagogues allow women to be rabbis.
- Men and women can only sit together in Reform synagogues.
- Women attend services in all synagogues, but can only lead worship in Reform and Liberal synagogues.



## Important stories in Judaism

- **Abraham** thought that his wife (Sarah) was too old to have a baby. Sarah then fell pregnant. She gave birth to a son, **Isaac**. Isaac had twin sons, **Jacob** and **Esau**.
- Jacob had 12 sons of his own. They settled in Egypt. G-d changed Jacob's name to **Israel** and the families of his sons became known as the **Twelve Tribes of Israel**. They were forced to work for the Egyptians as slaves.
- **Moses** was a descendant of Abraham. G-d told Moses to free the Israelites and lead them to the land that G-d had promised them. At first, the Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go, so G-d sent **10 plagues** to Egypt. The final plague was an angel of death that killed all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, including Pharaoh's oldest son. After this, he agreed to free the slaves. This is remembered at Passover.
- Moses led them through the desert to the Red Sea, where G-d parted the water to let them cross. The **Israelites** then lived in the desert for 40 years before they finally settled in the **Promised Land**. During this time, G-d gave Moses the **Ten Commandments** – 10 laws that the Israelites had to follow.

## Practising Judaism



- Jewish children become adults at **Bar/Bat Mitzvah**. This means son/daughter of the commandments. After this, they are expected to observe all the Jewish rules (mitzvot) and become adult members of their community.

- Once a week, Jews stop work for the day of **Shabbat**. Shabbat begins at sunset on Friday evening and ends after sundown on Saturday night when there are three stars visible. Many Jews attend services at Shul on Friday and Saturday and Orthodox Jews also study Torah.
- The Torah describes 39 types of action as **work**, and these are all forbidden on Shabbat.





# Christianity key facts

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## Christianity

- **Messiah** is a Hebrew word that means a rescuer or saviour. The Greek word for Messiah is **Christ**.
- People who believed that Jesus was the Messiah called him **Jesus Christ** and so they were given the name 'Christians'.
- There are over 30,000 **denominations** (different groups) of Christians. These groups have different beliefs and practices. They include Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, Baptists, The Salvation Army and Quakers.
- Christians often worship in a **church**, although they can worship in other places too, including at home.

## The Bible

- The **Bible** is a very important book for Christians because it teaches them about God and tells them how to live in a way that pleases Him.
- The Bible is split into two sections: the **Old Testament** and the **New Testament**.
- The Bible contains many books, each of which is divided into chapters and verses. eg. Genesis 1:27 means the Book of Genesis, Chapter 1, Verse 27.
- The Old Testament was written in the centuries before the birth of Jesus.
- The first four books of the New Testament are about Jesus' life. They are known as the **Gospels**.
- The **Ten Commandments**, given to Moses by God, are in the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament.
- Some Christians interpret the Bible **literally**. They believe that God dictated the words to the authors and that they recorded the words perfectly.
- **Liberal** Christians believe that God inspired and directed the authors of the Bible but let them express themselves in their own way. They think that many parts of the Bible are metaphors and not factually accurate.



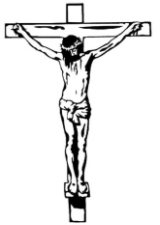
## The Ten Commandments



1. Have no other Gods
2. Do not worship idols
3. Do not misuse God's name
4. Keep the Sabbath day (Sunday) holy
5. Respect your parents
6. Do not kill
7. Do not commit adultery
8. Do not steal
9. Do not lie
10. Do not want things that belong to other people

## • Beliefs about the nature of God

- Christians are **monotheists** which means they believe in one God.
- Christians also believe that God is three – this is called the **Trinity**. The three persons of the Trinity are: **God the Father** (God in heaven); **God the Son** (Jesus); **God the Holy Spirit** (God at work in the world)
- Christians believe that God the Father is the **creator** of the world.
- Genesis 1:1 describes the creation of the world: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'
- Christians believe that God is **eternal**, which means He has no beginning or end. He has always existed, even before the world was created, and will exist after it ends.
- Christians believe that God is **omnipotent**, which means He is all powerful.
- Christians believe that God is **omniscient**, which means that He is all knowing.
- Christians believe that God is **omnibenevolent**, which means that He is all good and loving.
- Christians believe that God is **immanent**. This means that He is active in the world today.



## Jesus' birth, teachings, life and death

- Christians believe that God became human as **Jesus**. This is known as **incarnation** (becoming flesh).
- John 1:14 says 'the Word became flesh and lived amongst us' – this is referring to Jesus.
- Jesus was fully God and fully human at the same time.
- Christians believe that Jesus was born to the **Virgin Mary**, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus often taught in **parables** – these are stories that explain important ideas. An example is the Parable of the Good Samaritan.
- Jesus also performed **miracles**. Examples are feeding the 5000 and turning water into wine.
- Jesus taught that Christians should **help other people**. Many Christians give to charity, support food banks and help the elderly as they are following Jesus' teachings.
- On the night before he died, Jesus had a meal with his 12 **disciples** (followers). This is called the **Last Supper**.
- Jesus was arrested by the Jewish authorities for blasphemy, put on trial, convicted and put to death. He was **crucified** (killed by hanging on a cross).
- Christians believe that, 3 days after **crucifixion**, Jesus rose from the dead (came back to life). This is known as the **resurrection**. Jesus appeared to his followers over the next 40 days.
- Christians believe that, on the 40<sup>th</sup> day after the resurrection, Jesus **ascended**. This means that he was taken up to heaven to be with God the Father. This is known as the **ascension**.

Jesus summarised the 10 commandments of the Old Testament into his Two Greatest Commandments:

- 1: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul.
- 2: Love your neighbour as yourself.



## Salvation

- Christians believe that Jesus' death made up for their sins, bringing God and people back together. This is known as **atonement**.
- **Salvation** means being accepted by God and having eternal life in heaven.

## The afterlife

- Many Christians believe that the only way to get to heaven is by believing in Jesus. One reason for this is that the Bible says 'God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.' (John 3:16)
- Christians often take part in **evangelism** – spreading the Christian message in order to convert people to Christianity – as they believe that they have a responsibility to help everyone get to heaven.
- Some Christians believe that they must believe in Jesus *and* follow his teachings to get to heaven. John 14:6 says 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'
- Other Christians believe that an omnibenevolent God would not send anybody to hell for not believing in Him, so they think everyone will go to heaven.

## Baptism

- Baptism removes sin and welcomes a person into the Christian church.
- Some Christian churches, including the Catholic Church, baptise babies. This is known as **infant baptism**. Holy water is taken from the font and poured three times over the forehead of the baby and the sign of the cross is made on their forehead in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- **Believer's baptism** is a ceremony for older children and adults. The person who is going to be baptised says why they want this to happen, says they are sorry for their sins and says that they intend to follow Jesus in the future. They are usually fully submerged in the holy water. Baptists practise believers' baptism.



## Prayer

- Christians believe that they can have a conversation with God through prayer.
- When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he taught them the Lord's Prayer.



## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.

## Holy Communion

- Holy Communion (also known as the **Eucharist**, or **Mass** for Catholics) uses bread and wine to remember the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection.
- Holy Communion uses the words and actions of Jesus from the **Last Supper**.
- The Bible says that he took bread and broke it and told them 'This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' It also says that he took wine and drank it, saying 'This is my blood, do this in remembrance of me.'





## Islam key facts

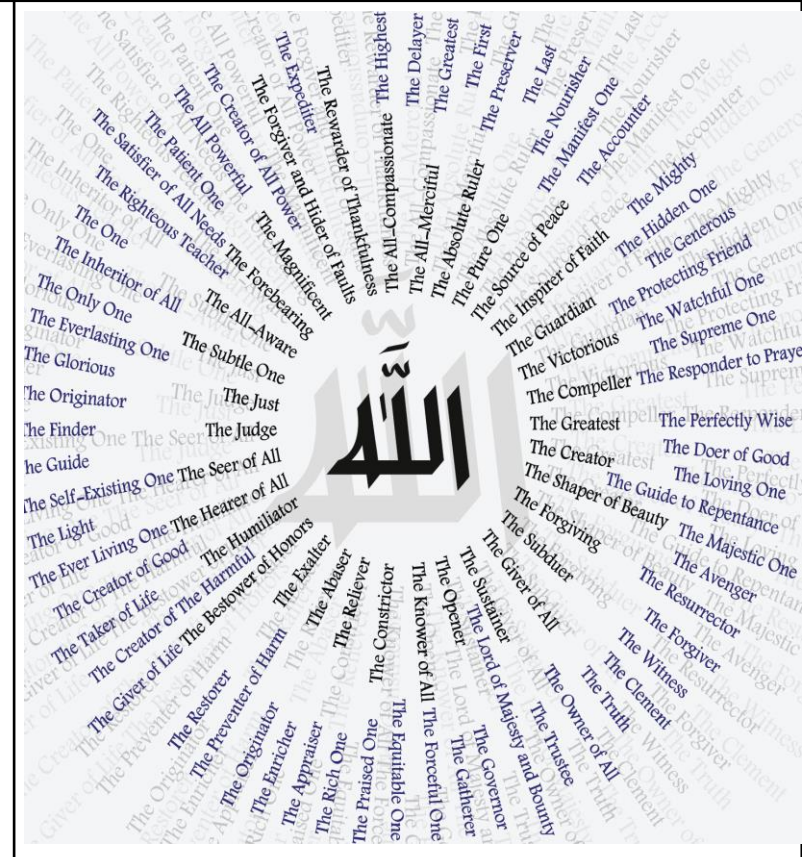
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### Islam

- People who follow Islam are called **Muslims**.
- Islam is a **monotheistic** religion. Muslims believe that there is one God, **Allah**.
- Muslims submit to God and believe that they should live their whole life for God. The Arabic word 'Islam' means 'submission'.
- **Salam** means peace. Salam is the word used by Muslims to greet other Muslims.
- Muslims believe that Allah created the world out of nothing and that he has complete control over it and the people in it.
- Men and women are equal in Islam. In the eyes of God, Nobody is better than anyone else.
- There are two main traditions in Islam – **Sunni** and **Shi'a**.

### What do Muslims believe about God?

- Allah begot no-one, nor was He begotten. This means that Allah has never had offspring (children), nor was he born. This is mentioned in the Qur'an in chapter 112 called Surah Al-Ikhlâs.
- Muslims believe that there is nothing greater than God and that no words can get close to explaining what he is like – he is beyond anything that humans can think or say.
- However, Muslims believe that God has revealed some of his characteristics in the Qur'an and other sayings of Muhammad. These characteristics are sometimes known as the **99 names of Allah**.
- Muslims believe that God is One and that there are no gods other than Him. This belief in the oneness of God is called **tawhid**.
- Muslims believe that God is the **creator** of everything.
- Muslims believe that God is **eternal** (everlasting).
- Muslims believe that God has power over everything – he is **omnipotent**.
- Muslims believe that God knows and sees everything – he is **omniscient**.
- Muslims believe that God is generous and compassionate and merciful and that He will always forgive people for their sins if they are truly sorry.
- Muslims believe that, at the end of the world, Allah will judge everyone with fairness and total justice. People who were good will go to heaven (**Jannah**) and people who were evil will go to hell (**Jahannam**).
- Muslims believe that only Allah is worthy of praise.



## Prophet Muhammad



- Islam started after the other Abrahamic religions (Judaism and Christianity) but Muslims often call Jews and Christians 'People of the Book'. This is because Muslims believe that God revealed himself to the earlier **prophets** mentioned in the Bible, such as Abraham, Moses and Jesus. However, Muslims believe that over time the message of these prophets was changed and so God sent one **final prophet** – Muhammad – to make His message clear. Muhammad is known as the **Seal of the Prophets**.
- Muslims believe that God revealed messages to Muhammad about what people should believe and how they should live their lives. They think that these **revelations** were perfect.
- Some Muslims add a short Arabic phrase whenever they hear or say Muhammad's name. This translates to 'peace be upon him' (**pbuh**). Non-Muslims do not do this.
- The first revelation came from the **Angel Jibril** (Gabriel) on the **Night of Power**. Jibril told Muhammad to recite words that were later recorded in the **Qur'an**.
- After the Night of Power, Muhammad began preaching his message in Makkah. He told the Makkans that it was wrong for them to worship many gods and told them that there was only one true God, Allah.
- The Muslims were persecuted in Makkah. Eventually, Muhammad and his followers had to leave. They travelled to Medinah. There were a series of battles between Makkah and Medinah. Muhammad finally conquered Makkah in 629 CE. He rode straight to the **Ka'aba** and circled it 7 times before destroying all the idols inside of it. He then dedicated the Ka'aba to Allah. It is known as the **House of God on earth**.

## Sources of authority

- For Muslims, the main sources of guidance are the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Hadith.
- The **Sunnah** is the actions of the Prophet Muhammad. He was a role model for Muslims and Muslims try to live like he did.
- The **Hadith** is a collection of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

## The Qur'an



- The **Qur'an** is the most important holy book for Muslims. They believe that it is the perfect word of God, revealed to Muhammad.
- Some parts of the Qur'an are similar to stories found in Jewish and Christian holy books. However, Muslims believe these contain inaccuracies, so God gave the Qur'an to correct them.
- The chapters of the Qur'an are called **surahs**.
- To show respect to the Qur'an, Muslims will often wash before they touch it and they will keep it in a clean place with nothing on top of it or above it.

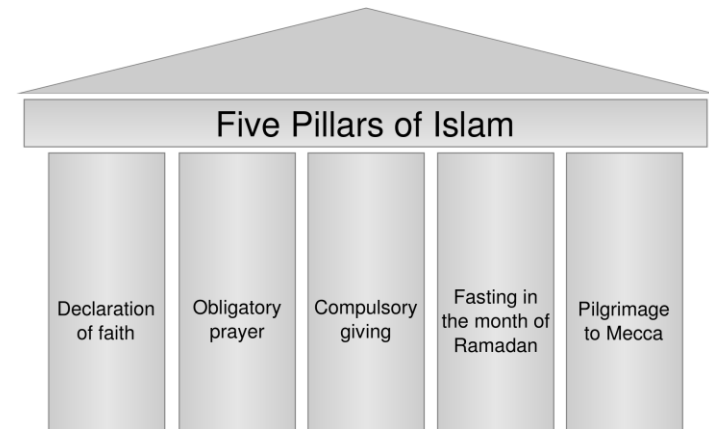
## Angels

- Muslims believe in angels. They believe that Allah created the angels from special light – this is mentioned in an Hadith.
- The angels are pure and can only do what Allah wants them to do.
- Muslims believe that the angels live in heaven but they sometimes get sent to earth to complete tasks for God, for example to protect people.
- Muslims believe that they have an angel on each shoulder, recording the good and bad things that they do (their good and bad deeds).



## The Five Pillars of Islam

- The Five Pillars are five acts of worship that all Muslims are expected to do. They are called pillars because they help to support a Muslim's faith. If one of the pillars collapses, the whole of the person's faith might fall with it.
- The Five Pillars are The Shahadah, Salah, Sawm, Zakah and Hajj.
- **The Shahadah** is the declaration of faith: 'There is no god but God and Muhammad is His messenger'. It is always recited in Arabic.
- The Shahadah is whispered into the ears of Muslim children when they are born and most Muslims will make it the last words they say before they die.
- **Salah** is prayer. Muslims pray at least 5 prayers every day.
- Muslims can pray at the Mosque in congregation (with other people) or at home with their family, or on their own.
- **Zakah** means giving 2.5% of your savings to charity. Zakah is paid on disposable income – what is left after the money needed to pay bills, rent etc.
- Muslims give zakah because they believe their wealth is given to them by God and they therefore have a responsibility to share some of it with those who are less fortunate than themselves.
- Muslims believe that giving zakah makes the rest of their money pure.
- **Sawm** means fasting during Ramadan. The fast lasts from dawn to sunset. There is usually a celebratory meal in the evening, when the fast is over. During the fast, Muslims must not eat or drink or have sex.
- The day after Ramadan ends is called **Id ul-Fitr**.
- **Hajj** is a pilgrimage to Makkah. Hajj takes place once a year and millions of people attend from all over the world.
- Every Muslim is expected to complete Hajj at least once in their lifetime.



## Prayer in the mosque

- Prayers usually happen five times a day at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, dusk and evening.
- At every mosque, the five prayer times are announced by a **muezzin** reciting the call to prayer (**adhan**).
- Muslims can pray anywhere that is clean, but many choose to visit the mosque to pray.
- When entering a mosque, Muslims remove their shoes to show respect to God and keep the space clean.
- Before praying, Muslims must perform a ritual wash called **wudu**. They wash their hands, mouth, nostrils, face, arms, the top of their head and their feet in a specific order.
- The only time when attending a mosque is compulsory is for Friday noon prayer, and this only applies to men. Women can attend if they want to. The Friday noon prayer is called **Jumma**.
- Jumma can be performed outside a mosque as long as there is a person who can lead the prayer and at least 3 other people who are willing to join in and pray.
- When Muslims pray outside of a mosque they use a **prayer mat** to make sure they are still praying somewhere clean.



## Sikhism key facts

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### Sikhism

- People who follow Sikhism are called **Sikhs**.
- The Sikh place of worship is called a **Gurdwara**. Gurdwara means doorway to the Guru.
- Sikhs are **monotheists** – they believe that there is only one God. The words **Ik Onkar**, which mean there is only one God, are often displayed inside gurdwaras or in people's homes.
- Sikhs believe that God loves everyone **equally**, no matter how they worship him.
- The Sikh holy book is called the **Guru Granth Sahib**. It is referred to as the Book of Wisdom or as the **Living Guru**.

### What do Sikhs believe about God?

- The **Mool Mantra** is a summary of the teachings about God. It is repeated more than 100 times in the **Guru Granth Sahib**.
- In the Guru Granth Sahib, there are different names given to the same God. The most commonly used name is **Waheguru**, which means Wonderful Lord or Wonderful Guru.
- Sikhs believe that there is only **one God**.
- Sikhs believe that God is the **creator** of everything.
- Sikhs believe that God is **omnipotent** (all powerful) and **omnipresent** (present everywhere),
- Sikhs believe that God is eternal. He is **immortal** and beyond birth and death.
- Sikhs believe that God is without fear and without hate.
- Most Sikhs believe that God is **beyond human comprehension** so humans cannot describe him in words.
- Sikhs believe that the best way to understand God is through the lives of the Gurus and the teachings found in the Guru Granth Sahib.
- Sikhs believe that they can get to know God and develop a personal relationship with him through **prayer** and **service to others**.

### The Khanda

The symbol of Sikhism is called the Khanda. The Khanda contains three swords. The left sword reflects worldly authority. The right sword reflects spiritual authority. The sword in the middle reminds Sikhs that it is their duty to fight for justice in the world. The circle in the middle is called a chakkar. It has two meanings. The spiritual meaning is that the circle represents God, who is eternal. The other meaning is a military one. Sikhs used sharp circular weapons called chakrams in battle.



## Guru Nanak – the founder of Sikhism

- Nanak was born in 1469 CE into a Hindu family.
- When Nanak was about 30 years old, he had an experience that changed his life. He went to the Kali Bein river early one morning to wash and pray. He left his clothes on the river bank and waded into the river. Then he vanished. Three days later he reappeared, but he was in a trance and did not speak for a long time. When he finally spoke, he said he had been with God and had been given a special revelation. He said 'There is no Hindu or Muslim, but only man. So whose path shall I follow? I shall follow God's path. God is neither Hindu nor Muslim and the path which I follow is God's.'
- Nanak was given the title 'Guru' after this. Guru means a religious teacher or guide.
- Guru Nanak was convinced that it was his duty to share the revelation he had received so he went on four long journeys to visit holy Buddhist and Hindu sites as well as the Muslim cities of Makkah and Medinah.
- After spending 20 years traveling, Guru Nanak and his followers set up the first permanent Sikh community at a place called Kartapur (this means city of God).
- Every day, Nanak's followers prayed and did community work. They cooked food and welcomed anyone who wished to eat with them, regardless of their caste or religion.

## The Ten Gurus

- Guru Nanak appointed his successor, Angad, just before he died. He tested him to make sure that he was worthy of the honour by making him do lots of menial tasks like carrying bundles of grass and washing dirty clothes. Angad passed the test and his willingness to do the menial tasks teaches Sikhs that service and equality are important.
- For 200 years after Guru Nanak's death, the title of Guru was passed on to nine more men who became leaders of Sikhism.
- Guru Amar Das developed the langar (free kitchen) and insisted that everyone who came to visit him must first go to the langar and eat.
- The fifth guru, Guru Arjan, arranged for the Golden Temple to be built at Amritsar. This is the holiest place in the world for Sikhs.
- As the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, was dying he told his followers that he would be the last human guru. He declared that the Sikh holy scriptures would become a living and eternal Guru for the Sikhs after his death. They are called the Guru Granth Sahib.

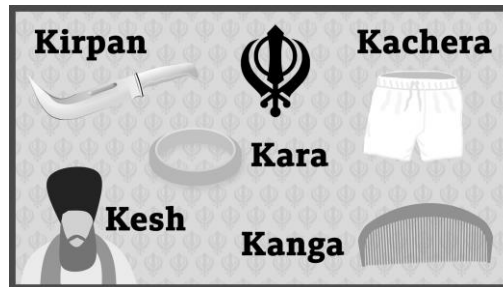
## The Guru Granth Sahib – the final Guru

- Sikhs look to the Guru Granth Sahib for guidance and leadership.
- The Guru Granth Sahib is used during worship.
- Since the first printed editions, the Guru Granth Sahib has always had 1430 pages. These are known as angas (limbs). All copies of the book are the same.
- Sikhs do not worship the Guru Granth Sahib as it is a book, not a God. However, they do show it the same respect that they would show to a living Guru. The book is given a room of its own in a house or a Gurdwara.
- At some Sikh festivals, the whole of the Guru Granth Sahib will be read from start to finish. This is called an Akhand Path and it takes about 48 hours. People usually read for 2 hours each.



## The Five Ks of Khalsa Sikhs

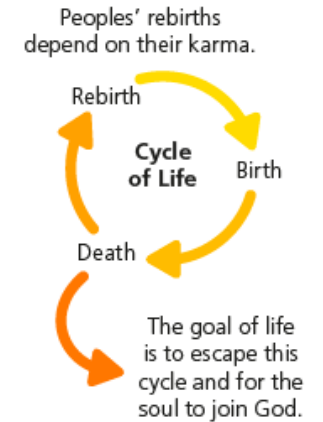
- Guru Gobind Singh taught that Khalsa Sikhs must wear five key items to show their faith.
- **Kesh** means uncut hair. Sikhs believe that their bodies are gifts from God. They do not cut their hair as it is a gift from God and shows acceptance of what God has given them. Most Khalsa Sikhs wear a turban to keep their hair clean and tidy.
- **Kangha** (a wooden comb). The comb is used to keep the hair clean and tidy and it is tucked into the turban when it is not being used. The kangha also reminds Sikhs of the importance of discipline and keeping their lives well ordered.
- **Kara** (a simple steel bracelet). It is worn on the right wrist. Steel is a strong metal so it symbolises the strength required to be a Sikh and defend the religion. The circular shape represents the eternity and oneness of God.
- **Kachera** (special cotton underwear). Guru Gobind Singh told his followers to wear kacheri because they made movement in battle easier. Kachera remind Sikhs that they should be ready to fight when others need help.
- **Kirpan** (a short sword). This reminds Sikhs of their duty to defend their religion and fight for justice.



- Guru Gobind Singh gave the Khalsa members some rules to follow. These included giving to those in need, earning an honest living, avoiding drugs, smoking and alcohol and wearing only simple clothes.

## Karma and mukti

- Sikhs believe that everyone is in a cycle of birth, death and rebirth (**reincarnation**). A person's rebirth is decided by God based on the law of **karma**.
- People can create good karma by worshipping God and performing good deeds.
- People who live selfishly and ignore the message of the Gurus will produce bad karma and achieve a lower rebirth.
- For Sikhs, the goal of life is to escape the cycle or birth, death and rebirth by achieving **mukti**. This is the union of the soul (**atma**) with God.



## Sewa

- Service to others (**sewa**) is a very important Sikh belief.
- Sikhs can perform sewa in lots of different ways.
- **Tan** (physical service). This is practical work, for example having a job that helps others like being a nurse or a teacher.
- **Man** (mental service). This is sewa that is performed through thought and words rather than direct actions. eg. reading the Guru Granth Sahib and talking about it to others.
- **Dhan** (material service). This is giving charity to those in need and can be done by offering money, making donations or volunteering time. Serving food in the community kitchen (langar) is an example of tan.



## Hinduism key facts

You are expected to know all of the information in this booklet.  
You will be assessed on this knowledge.

### Hinduism – an introduction

- Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world.
- The word 'Hindu' comes from a river called the Indus that flowed through the area of north west India where Hinduism developed.
- Unlike many other religions, there was not one person who founded Hinduism, nor was there one specific moment when it began. Hinduism developed among many different people over a long period of time across a very large area. The different people had different ideas.
- Hinduism is very diverse – Hindus do not all believe the same things or celebrate the same festivals or read the same sacred texts.
- Many Hindus believe that other religious beliefs may be equally true and so they do not try to convert others to Hinduism.

### Sacred texts

- There is no one book that tells Hindus what to believe or how to live: there are many different books that Hindus can choose to read, or choose not to read.
- Nearly all Hindus believe that the four Vedas are sacred and revealed by God. These are the oldest Hindu texts.
- The Vedas are written in Sanskrit.
- The Vedas include hymns to Hindu gods and goddesses as well as teachings about the soul and afterlife and detailed instructions on how to worship and how to perform rituals.
- The Vedas tell us what Hindus believed and how they worshipped 3000 years ago. Hindus believe that the Vedas were passed on so accurately that they are almost like a recording of what people were reciting 3000 years ago.
- The Vedas are sometimes called shruti, which means 'heard' because this is how Hindus believe the Vedas were first received.
- The people who received the Vedas were called Rishis. They were great meditators and this allowed them to see and hear things that ordinary people could not.
- After the Rishis heard the Vedas they taught them to priests who memorised them and recited them to the next generation. This continued for many centuries.
- The first of the four Vedas, the Rig Veda, says 'Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions' which shows that Hindus should welcome good ideas wherever they come from and that they are comfortable with diversity.



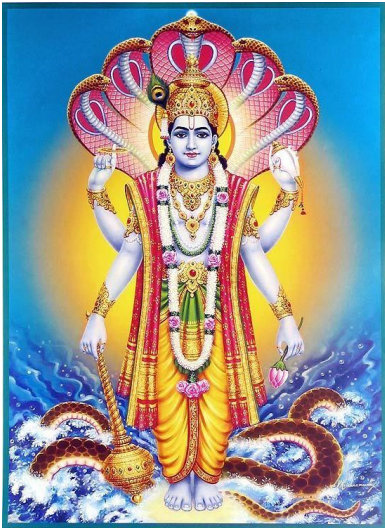
## Hindu beliefs about God



***The Trimurti  
Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva***

- Many Hindus believe that God has lots of different forms so there are many different ways to worship God. Hindus often worship different gods.
- Many Hindus today are monotheists and they believe that there is one supreme God who appears to humans in many different forms. Some Hindus believe that there are three main gods – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. These three gods are sometimes referred to as the Trimurti.
- Brahma is the creator of the world. Vishnu is the preserver. Shiva is the destroyer.
- Hindus will often worship a god that has traditionally been worshipped in their local area. However, they usually see this god as a form of the Supreme God.
- Hindu gods usually have an animal vehicle – a vahana – so that they can travel around and a god's vahana will usually appear alongside him or her in images.

## Vishnu



- Vishnu is the preserver.
- Some Hindus believe that from time to time Vishnu comes to the earth in the form of an avatar to fight evil and restore peace and goodness.
- Vishnu has ten avatars. Nine have already come to earth.
- Vishnu's wife is the goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.
- Vishnu's vahana is a bird called Garuda.
- Vishnu's weapon is a mace. This symbolises the way that Vishnu sometimes takes a physical form (an avatar) in order to fight evil.

## Shiva



- Shiva is the destroyer.
- Shiva's wife is Parvati, a goddess of love and fertility.
- Shiva's vahana is a bull called Nandi.
- Shiva's weapon is a trident, called a trishula. It has three spears. Some Hindus believe that, at the end of time, Shiva will destroy the universe with this weapon so that it can be created again.

## Ganesh

- Ganesh is the elephant-headed god of wisdom.
- There is a famous story about Ganesh in a Hindu text called the Shiva Purana. In the story, Ganesh's mother Parvati heard that Shiva was on his way home and wanted to take a bath and not be disturbed, so she created the boy Ganesh and ordered him to stand guard and not let anyone in. When Shiva arrived, Ganesh refused to let him in. Shiva told Ganesh that he was Parvati's husband but Ganesh still refused to let him in. Shiva was angry and cut off the boy's head. Parvati was furious that Shiva had destroyed her creation so Shiva told his helpers to bring him the head of the first dead creature they found. They came back with the head of an elephant and this was placed on Ganesh. He was then brought back to life as an elephant-headed god.



## Dharma

- Dharma is the moral law that Hindus must follow. It can be translated as 'duty'.
- Hindus believe that the Supreme Being has revealed dharma to people through sacred texts.
- Following dharma carefully is likely to create good karma and lead to a good reincarnation in the next life.
- Helping those in need is a very dharmic activity – it is part of the Hindu duty of sewa (service).
- Everyone follows dharma in a different way eg. being loyal and respectful to your family and community; giving to charity; showing kindness to people who are less fortunate than you.
- Hindus believe that ways of following dharma can change depending on your stage of life.

## What do Hindus believe about the next life?

- Most Hindus believe that the 'atman', the spirit or soul, is eternal (everlasting).
- Samsara is the continual process of death and reincarnation.
- Reincarnation is when a soul is reborn by passing into a new body.
- Hindus believe that their current life is just one of many lives that they have already led and will lead in the future.
- Hindus believe that when a person dies their soul is reborn into a new body. This will not necessarily be a human body.
- The person's next life depends on their karma – good deeds store up good karma and bad deeds store up bad karma. Depending on a person's actions, they might be reincarnated as any type of creature, or even find themselves in heaven or hell. All these reincarnations are temporary.
- Moksha is escaping from samsara and never dying again or being reincarnated again. This means that there is no further suffering of any kind.
- Most Hindus believe that achieving moksha can take many lifetimes. One way of achieving moksha is through yoga and meditation. Another way is through bhakti, which is Sanskrit for 'devotion' or 'worship'. As your worship and devotion increases, your soul will be purified and you will eventually achieve moksha.
- Some Hindus believe that moksha involves being united with God forever.



## Buddhism key facts

You are expected to know all of the information in this booklet.  
You will be assessed on this knowledge.

### Buddhism

- The founder of Buddhism was a prince called **Siddhartha Gautama**.
- Prince Siddhartha practised meditation in an effort to understand the truth about life. Through this, he eventually achieved **enlightenment**.
- After he achieved enlightenment, he travelled around India, sharing what he had learnt. People who followed him called him the **Buddha** because they believed that he was awakened to the true nature of reality.
- The Buddha never claimed to be a god and the Buddhist scriptures do not mention a creator god.
- Some Buddhists say that they pray, but this does not mean that they pray to a god. Buddhist prayer may involve personal reflection, often through chanting and making offerings.
- One of the most important sacred texts in Buddhism is the **Dhammapada**, which most Buddhists believe is an accurate collection of the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha did not write down any of these teachings himself: they were passed on by word of mouth and collected and recorded by his followers in the centuries after his death.
- Buddhist temples always contain a statue of the Buddha.
- Buddhists sometimes bow to the statue of the Buddha as a sign of respect, admiration and appreciation for his teachings, but they do not worship him as a god.

### The cycle of birth, death and rebirth

- Buddhists believe that we are travelling through a continual cycle of birth, death and rebirth. They call this cycle **samsara**.
- Buddhists aim to escape samsara by achieving enlightenment through meditation, wisdom and living a good life.
- Buddhists believe that when someone dies, he or she is reborn. The persons' next life may be better or worse, depending on the **karma** he or she has stored up.
- Good actions in life store up good karma; bad actions store up bad karma.
- Buddhists believe that people who escape samsara enter into a state of complete bliss called **parinirvana**.



## The four sights

- At the age of 29, Siddhartha decided that he wanted to leave the royal grounds for the first time to see the world outside. The king arranged for him to visit one of the royal parks near the palace, but he gave instructions that anyone who was poor, elderly or ill should be kept away.
- Siddhartha saw four things on four different visits (the **four sights**): old age, sickness, death and a holy man.
- On his final journey, the prince rode his horse into the forest, hoping to find peace. As he approached the woodland, he saw an **ascetic** man walking towards him from the trees. The man wore simple robes and explained that he had given up his home, his possessions and his family to search for an answer to all the suffering and unhappiness in the world. Then he disappeared.
- Siddhartha decided to leave his life as a prince – this is known as '**The Great Departure**'. He left his wife and child at the palace and went into the forest where he cut his hair and removed his robes and jewels and replaced them with simple clothes.

## Finding the Middle Way

- While travelling, Siddhartha met five ascetics. Ascetics are people who live a life of simplicity and self-denial. They saw that he was very good at meditation and decided to become his followers. He spent the next 6 years living as an ascetic.
- Ascetics punish their bodies to try and gain peace and wisdom. This can involve fasting, standing on one foot for a long time and sleeping on nails. Siddhartha tried to learn to control his breathing and to starve himself, but this made him ill and he realised he would die if he continued, so he decided to give up his ascetic life. His five ascetic followers found him eating and so they abandoned him.
- Siddhartha's asceticism led him to an important truth - he realised that denying his body what it needed was as bad as being surrounded by luxury. He saw that the only way to reach peace was to follow the **Middle Way**.
- The **Middle Way** is a life of moderation, with neither too much nor too little of anything. This is the way Buddhists live today.

## Achieving enlightenment and becoming the Buddha

- Siddhartha visited the north Indian city of **Bodh Gaya**. He sat down, cross-legged, in the shade of a **Bodhi tree** and began to meditate, saying 'I will not move from this spot until I have found supreme and final wisdom.'
- While he was meditating, the demon **Lord Mara** began to attack him. Eventually, Mara said 'Arise from that seat. It belongs to me!'. Siddhartha said nothing but lowered one of his hands to the ground. The sky filled with thunder and the earth shook. Mara was defeated.
- Siddhartha was finally free to achieve his goal of enlightenment. Siddhartha's enlightenment happened in three steps:
  1. He saw all of the many animal and human lives he had lived before.
  2. He saw the complete cycle of samsara, which was like a wheel, constantly spinning. He realised that the cycle of death and rebirth is determined by karma.
  3. He achieved enlightenment. He had found nirvana and become the **Buddha**.

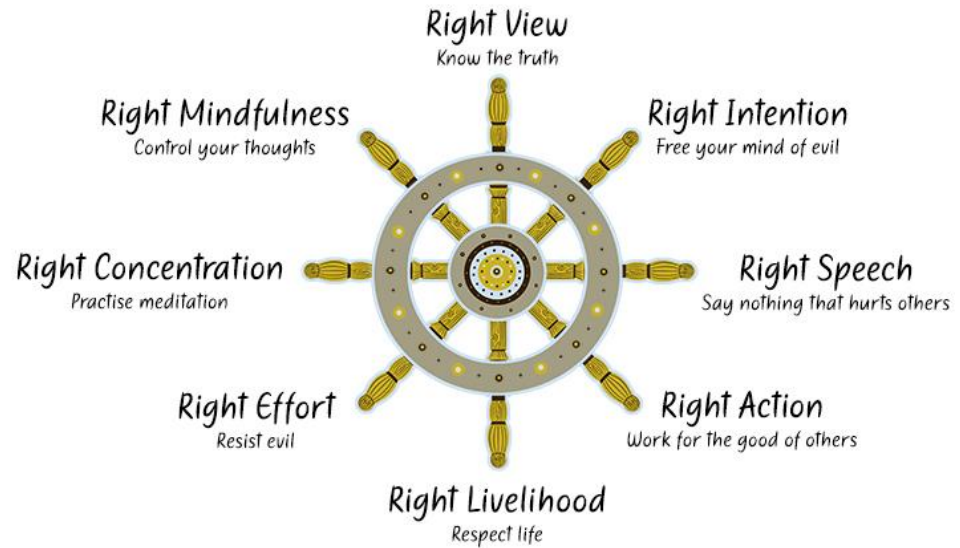
## The teachings of the Buddha

- After his enlightenment, Siddhartha realised he needed to share the truths that he had discovered. He said that he did not create any new ideas – he just tried to explain how the world was. The name that Buddhists give to the laws that Buddha discovered is the **dharm**.
- The Buddha went to a city called **Sarnath** and came to a deer park where he found the five followers who had abandoned him. He preached his first sermon to them, explaining what he had learned under the Bodhi tree. This sermon is called '**Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma**' and its teachings are known as the four noble truths. The ascetics became his followers again after the sermon.

## The four noble truths

- **All creatures suffer** – the Sanskrit word for this is **dukkha**.
- **Suffering is caused by selfish desires** – this could be for material things, for people, or even for immortality.
- **Suffering can be ended** – the way to overcome suffering and achieve nirvana is to eliminate the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion.
- **The way to end suffering is to follow the eightfold path**

## The Noble Eightfold Path



## The eightfold path

- The eightfold path provides a guide to how Buddhists should live their lives. The eightfold path helps Buddhists to overcome the selfish desires that cause all suffering.
- The eightfold path is not a set of rules that people must follow to please god because Buddhists do not believe that their actions are judged by a god.
- The eight parts all fit together and should not be taken individually. No step is more important than another. By following the path correctly, Buddhists believe that they can escape the suffering of **samsara** and achieve **nirvana**.
- Buddhists believe that people must follow the path in their own way and that they will almost certainly stumble or fall as they journey through life.