

HINDUISM

Place of worship

- The Mandir is the Hindu temple
- The Mandir can also be a meeting place
- Most Hindus worship at home before a shrine

Sacred Scriptures

- Smriti 'that which is heard' and Shruti 'that which is remembered': the written scripture has more importance placed upon it.
- The scriptures include stories, hymns, prayers and poems
- The scriptures are written in Sanskrit

Origins

- India

Prayer time

- Sunrise and Sunset
- Usually at home
- Most worship is conducted individually not in a communal service
- There is not one particular holy day of the week

Leaders

- Brahmins - Priests
- Gurus - teachers (some Gurus may also be Brahmins)

Key Figures

- Brahman is God. The other forms of god represent different expressions of Brahman.
- There are no pictures or statues of Brahman
- Brahma, Vishnu Shiva are the three main gods
- Rama, Krishna, Hanuman, Durga, Ganesh, Lakshmi are other gods/deities

Preparation for prayer

- Shoes are removed
- Hands are washed

Life at home

- Central to Hindu beliefs is respect for life. This is why most Hindus are vegetarian.
- The home is the main place of worship
- Most homes have a shrine dedicated to their favoured god
- The shrine will contain statues of the deities. Candles, incense, water, a bell and a flower may also be placed on the shrine as may prayer beads and offerings of food
- Hindus who do eat meat do not eat beef because cows are sacred to Hindus

Prayer

- Puja (worship) will include murtis (images), mantras (prayers) and yantras (diagrams of the universe)
- Puja can be performed by either the priest at the Mandir or by people at home
- Prasad (the offering of gifts)
- Mudras (hand gestures)

Festivals

- Holi - celebrates Krishna's childhood
- Divali- celebrates Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth

Holy Places

- There are many places in India where Hindus go on pilgrimage
- River Ganges

What rites and ceremonies do we have?

- Sacred Thread Ceremony

JUDAISM

Place of Worship

- The Synagogue
- The Bimah is a raised platform
- The focal point of the synagogue is the Ark in which the Torah scrolls are kept
- The tablets of the ten commandments are above the Ark
- The synagogue is also used as a meeting place and for study

Sacred Scriptures

- The Jewish Bible is The Torah – the five books of Moses
- The Torah is written in Hebrew on scrolls and kept in the Ark
- The Ark always faces Jerusalem
- The reader uses a yad so that they do not touch the scroll

Prayer time

- Daily prayer three times a day and before and after meals
- Shabbat Prayers on the seventh day (sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday) at home followed by a meal
- Shabbat services take place at the synagogue. The scrolls are carried in a procession whilst everyone stands and sings

Leaders

- The Rabbi is the teacher
- The cantor leads the parts of the service which are sung
- Any man can lead the service

Origins

- Israel

Key Figures

- Abraham
- Moses
- Elijah
- David

Preparation for Prayer

- Males wear the kippah (skull cap) and the tallit (fringed prayer shawl)
- Orthodox males also wear the tefillin (tiny boxes containing scripture) and tsitit (vest under the shirt with tassels on)

Life at home

- A mezuzah is fixed to the front doorpost. It contains the words of the shema. People touch or kiss it as they enter the home.
- All food must be kosher food
- Only meat from animals which chew the cud and have cloven hooves is eaten
- Poultry may be eaten but not birds of prey
- Shellfish may not be eaten
- Meat and dairy products cannot be stored, prepared, cooked or eaten together. Jewish homes often have a kitchen with two of everything
- Children may go to the synagogue to learn Hebrew and to study the Torah

Prayer

- In orthodox synagogues women pray in a gallery separate from the men
- Towards Jerusalem

Festivals

- Purim – story of Esther
- Pesach – Passover
- Shavuot
- Rosh Hoshanah – New year
- Yom Kippur – day of Atonement
- Sukkot – Feast of Tabernacles
- Chanukah/Hanukah – Festival of Lights

Holy Places

The Western Wall, Jerusalem

Rites and Ceremonies

- Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah

SIKHISM

Place of worship

- The Gurdwara ('doorway to the Guru')
- Nishan Sahib – the flag outside the Gurdwara on which is the Khanda symbol
- Inside is a prayer hall and a Langar (kitchen). After services all the worshippers and visitors share a meal in the Langar. Members of the community volunteer in turn to organise the Langar.

Sacred scriptures

- Guru Granth Sahib
- During the day, the sacred scriptures are placed on a manji and are covered overhead by the chanani.
- The chauri is waved over the scriptures.
- The rumalallahs cover the sacred scriptures when they are not in use.

Prayer time

- Daily at home with family

Preparation for prayer

- Shoes are removed and the head is covered
- Sikhs bow before Guru Granth Sahib and leave an offering
- Feet must not point towards the Guru Granth Sahib as this is seen as an insult

Holy Places

- The Golden Temple at Amritsar in the Punjab

Leaders

- The Granthi is the most senior person at the Gurdwara

Origins

- Punjab

Key Figures

- The Ten Gurus including the founder Guru Nanak
- The sacred scriptures are also regarded as a Guru

Life at home

- Sikhs believe in the equality of all people regardless of gender or religion. This stems from their rejection of the caste system. Great emphasis is placed on living, eating and sharing as a community.
- Daily Prayer takes place before the shrine in the home
- If there is a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib it is kept in a separate room
- A prayer book called sacred Nitnem may be used
- The 5 K's are worn as symbols of the Sikh faith

Prayer

- The scriptures are read by either a man or a woman
- The singing of the scriptures is accompanied by the baja and tabla
- Men sit on the right of the Gurdwara and women on the left

Festivals

- Baisakhi – founding of the Khalsa
- Divali – the story of Guru Hargobind
- The birthday of the Guru Nanak and Gobind Singh and the martyrdom of Guru Arjan

Rites and ceremonies

- Amrit – rite of passage
- Naming ceremony: first letter of the Guru Granth Sahib reading denotes the initial letter

ISLAM

Place of worship

- Mosque – a place of congregation or prostration
- Mihrab- an alcove which indicates the direction of Makkah
- Minaret- tower from which we are called to prayer
- There are no images of living things as trying to copy God's creation is disrespectful

Sacred Scriptures

- The Qur'an or Koran is written in Arabic
- The Qur'an is kept elevated on a stand
- The Qur'an provides guidance as to how Muslims should lead their lives

Prayer time

- Five times a day
- Muslims usually attend the Mosque for prayer on Friday, the Holy day of the week

Preparation for Prayer

- Shoes are removed and the head is covered
- Wuduh must be performed

Prayer

- Facing Makkah
- Prayer mat
- Men and women pray separately

Life at home

- Muslim life is based upon the Five Pillars of Islam
- Fasting – during the season of Ramadan nothing is eaten between dawn and dusk
- Family life and service for the community are central to Muslim belief. Giving alms to the poor is one of the Five Pillars.
- Children attend Qur'an school to learn to read the scripture.
- At home the same respect shown in the Mosque for the Qur'an is maintained. It is wrapped in cloth to keep it clean and will be placed on a high shelf with nothing else beside it
- Meat is eaten but it must be Halal

Festivals

- Eid-ul-Fitr
- Eid-ul Adha
- The Prophet Muhammad's birthday

Leaders

- The Iman

Key Figures

- Mohammed

Origins

- Arabia

Holy Places

- Makkah

Rites and Ceremonies

- Adhan – the call to prayer
- Aqiqah – naming ceremonies
- Hajj – pilgrimage to Makkah