

The Abrahamic Religions:

An Introduction to World Religions

**An Introduction to the 3 Abrahamic
Religions**

Session Week 3

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Aim and Learning Outcomes – Week 3 Session

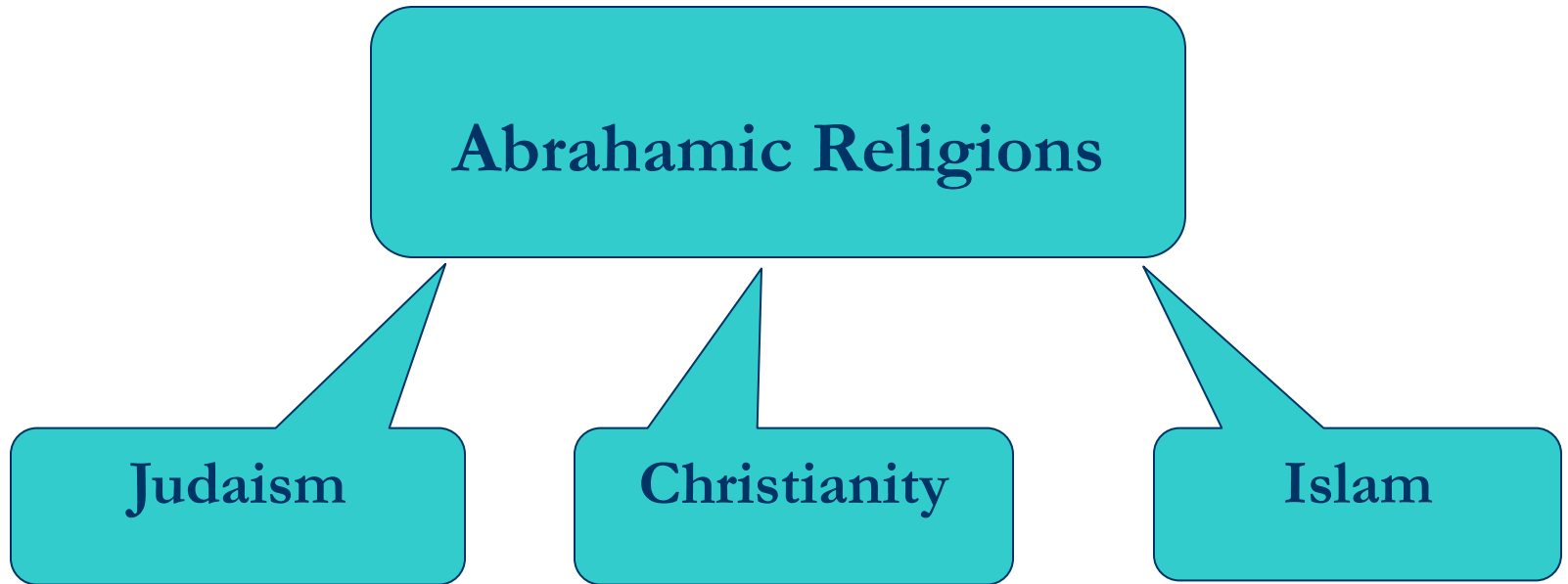
Aims

- This session aims to provide students with knowledge and insight in the area of three world religion – Abrahamic Religions.

Learning Outcomes

- Students have some understanding of:
 - Abrahamic Religions.

Three Abrahamic Religions



WHO IS ABRAHAM?

- Abraham:
 - From Ur to Haran with his father
 - God called him from Haran.
 - Abraham end up in Canaan
 - Abraham migrated with his father Terah from Ur to Haran.
 - God called Abraham to go to the land that he would show him, where He would make of Abraham a great nation.
 - Abraham went to Canaan with his wife Sarah and nephew Lot.
 - God promised that Abraham would become the father of a great nation, receive a land, and bring blessing to all nations.
 - As Abraham and Sarah grew older they had no children, so Abraham fathered a son, Ishmael, through Sarah's servant Hagar.
 - The birth of Ishmael did not fulfill God's promise of a child to Abraham and Sarah so the promise of a great nation remained unrealized.
 - God reaffirmed his promise to give Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars in heaven
 - When Abraham was 100 years old, Sarah bore a son named Isaac.

Abrahamic Religions

- Judaism, Christianity and Islam are known as:
 - Abrahamic faiths
 - Monotheistic faiths
- That recognize a spiritual tradition identified with Abraham. The term is mostly used to refer collectively to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
- In theology, monotheism (from Greek) is the belief that only one deity (supernatural being) exists.

Common Aspects

- A number of commonalities between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam exist:
 - With their emphasis on ethical monotheism, scripture, prophets, angels, prayer, pilgrimage, the Day of Judgement and an eternal afterlife there is clearly much that they share.
 - All three religions speak of a choice between good and evil, which is associated with obedience or disobedience to a single God and to Divine Law.

Why Abrahamic Religions?

- Why is it that these three monotheistic religions are known as Abrahamic Religions?
 - Straightforward answer: Jews claim to originate from Abraham through his son Isaac, and Arabs claim the same origins through his son Ismael. Jews gave birth to Judaism and Islam began as a religion of the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula.
- But what of Christianity?
 - Easy answer. Christianity's Founder – Our Lord Jesus Christ – all or most of His followers were Jews.
- Judaism appears to be the first conceived around the idea that there is one God for all of humankind. Christians, despite the concept of the Holy Trinity, and Muslims insist that they also are monotheistic religions.
- All three religions promote the idea that God provided a list commandments, or laws, which ought to determine our beliefs and actions.
- All three religions find all or most of the commandments in their scripture.

Judaism and Christians Subscribe:

- The idea of the 'Messiah' – 'anointed one' who belongs to the house of David. Christians believe the 'Messiah' has already come – in the form of the Galilean Jew called Jesus Christ – but Jews still await his arrival.
- The concept of Chosenness – Jews are Chosen, or people of Covenant, because God gave them His laws when Moses was on Mount Sinai. Christians frequently define themselves as People of the New Covenant because they believe that Jesus Christ is the 'Messiah' – the Son of God and follow the example of His life and teaching.

The Concepts of Salvation and Evil in Three Abrahamic Religions

- All Jews and most Christians and Muslims believe that:
 - Evil acts occur because humankind abuses one of God's supreme gifts, free will. God knows what is going to happen before things occur, but people are responsible for their own actions.
 - Salvation lies in living the good, or the morally sound, life, and people can choose whether or not they will live such a life. Such a life is defined in each religion's scripture and further guidance can be acquired, above all, from the example set by the founder, be he Jesus, Moses or Muhammad.
 - Christians state by believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God can you hope to attain salvation.

Other Characters – Three Abrahamic Religions

- Judaism and Christianity and Islam share other characteristics in that they emphasise the importance:
 - Of study
 - Of fasting
 - Of the family (Patriarchal character) and
 - Of belonging to a community of believers.
- Next Session will provide historical background of Judaism in detail.

Exercise

- List your understandings about ‘Abrahamic Religions’.
 - Some similarities
 - Differences

References

- Dirks, Jerald (2004) The Abrahamic Faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Similarities & Contrasts (Amana Publications)