

# Example of religion critical thinking

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



## **Islam and Judaism**

These two religions are some of the oldest religions existing today. They have many similarities in terms of philosophy and practices. Interestingly, they also vary on the same basis. The major similarities are the belief in one God, the adherence to a holy text, the reverence to teachings of their fore leader and regard of the teachings as law. On the other hand, they vary in the manner of spreading the teachings, how converts are treated, and generally on the content of their teachings (Neusner, 1992).

Islam can be traced to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad in the 610 AD (Coulson, 2011). It is believed that Muhammad was sent by God to all people on earth. Accordingly, he is the main and last prophet as other prophets were sent to specific people only (Al Kalby, 1998). It is believed that the angel Gabriel (Jibril in Islamic teachings) appeared to him and gave him a message from God (O'Connor, 2009). The message was to teach about submission to God, hence the term Islam.

The then ruling class where hostile to his teachings, forcing him and his devotees to migrate to other areas. They moved to Medina where Muhammad established the Islamic caliphate, a state governed by his teachings. Through time he conquered neighboring territories, converting them to Islam. His teachings were later codified after his death in the holy book of Quran. Upon his death, his devotees took the task of spreading the message to all people on earth using all means, sometimes force. Disputes as to the rightful successor led to the division of the Islamic faith to two groups, the Sunni and the Shi'ia. Later denominations have evolved from these two. The Quran to date acts as the guide to all Muslims, regardless of the group they are in.

Judaism on the other hand has its origins around the 526 BC when God appeared to Abraham and chose him as his servant. It is believed that Abraham is the father of the Jews (Abramson and Kilpatrick, 2006), considered as God's people (Neusner, 1992), hence the forerunner to Judaism. The practice of Judaism effectively began after God gave the prophet Moses the Torah at Mount Sinai. Originally, the Torah was composed of teachings God had taught Moses but over time the teachings were codified. The codified Torah is generally referred to as the Talmud (Davies and Finkelstein, 1984). The process of codification however resulted to various versions. The interpretation of the Torah thus precipitated the split of Judaism to various sects based on their school of thought. One of the sects, Christianity, later became a distinct religion. The Torah however remains the guiding text to Judaism adherents

Islamic faith revolves around five pillars: prayer (five times a day); fasting; pilgrimage (to Mecca at least once in every believer's lifetime); testimony and alms giving. These are regarded as mandatory for all those who profess the faith. Similarly, all believers must adhere to the Sharia law, developed from the Quran. On the other hand, Judaism emphasizes actions than belief. Key values are truth, humility, justice, peace, kindness and compassion. Their main practices are charity and abstinence from negative words. Believers pray three times on normal days and four times on the worship day. Both these religions have strict guidelines on clothing, diet, worship days, and observance of religious holidays.

Religious leaders from these religions play an important role in the practice of the religion. They act as teachers (Imam for Islam and Rabbi for Judaism),

priests, and spiritual leaders. Additionally, in Islamic faith, they may serve as judges applying the Sharia law. Devotees play the role of spreading the message of the religion, supporting the faith in terms of finance and assisting the less fortunate believers.

Both these religions generally permit abortion; though differ as to when it is not permissible. For Judaism, abortion is generally allowable within the first forty days of pregnancy, after that, it is considered unallowable (Greenberg, 1981). Islam on the other hand allows abortion in the first three months, after that it is generally disallowed (Atighetchi, 2007). On the death penalty, both religions support this punishment. They however differ in relation to its preconditions. Islam favors due process of law while Judaism has stringent preconditions which ideally make the imposition of the penalty practically impossible. Both this religions allow divorce, adopting different procedures for men and women.

Judaism and Islam generally co-exist peacefully owing to the similarities between the religions. One great similarity is the position of Abraham whom both religions consider as a father. This has historically made the adherents of these two religions to co-exist together. For example, it is believed that Muhammad had a Jewish neighbor and even asked his wife to assist the neighbor. Again, during the persecution of the Jews in Europe in the 5-15 centuries, it was only Spain, then under Islam that offered refuge to them. A contemporary example is the peaceful co-existence of Jews and Muslims in Brooklyn (Cypel, 2011).

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