



# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

<u>Date</u>	<u>Observance</u>	<u>Faith</u>
<b>September</b>		
6-7	Krishna Janmashtami	Hindu
11	Paryushan	Jain
15-17	Rosh Hashanah	Jewish
24-25	Yom Kippur	Jewish
26-27	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Islam
29	Sukkot	Jewish
<b>October</b>		
1-6	Sukkot	Jewish
6	Shemini Atzeret Begins	Jewish
7-8	Simchat Torah	Jewish
8	Shemini Atzeret Ends	Jewish
26-27	Birth of Bab	Baha'l'
27-28	Birth of Baha'ullah	Baha'l'
<b>November</b>		
1	All Saints Day	Christian/Catholic
2	All Souls Day	Catholic
12	Diwali	Hindu/Jain
24	Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib	Sikh
26	Feast of Christ the King	Christian/Catholic
27	Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib	Sikh
28	Ascension Of Abdu'l-Baha	Baha'l'
<b>December</b>		
3	Advent Season	Christian
3	Feast of St. Francis Xavier	Christian/Catholic
7	Hanukkah Begins	Jewish
8	Feast of Immaculate Conception	Christian/Catholic
8	Feast of the Immaculate Conception	Christian/Catholic
12	Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe	Christian/Catholic
15	Hanukkah Ends	Jewish
25	Christmas	Christian
26	Kwanzaa	African-American
<b>January 2024</b>		
1	Feast of Mary Mother of God	Christian/Catholic
1	Oshogatsu	Shinto
6	Epiphany	Christian/Catholic
7	Christmas	Eastern Orthodox
17	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib	Sikh
18	Bodhi Day	Buddhist



# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

## February

14 Ash Wednesday Christian/Catholic

## March

8 Maha Shivaratri Hindu  
 10 Ramadan Begins Islam  
 15 Shri Ramakrishna Javanti Hindu  
 19-20 Naw-Ruz Baha’I’  
 20-21 Nowruz Persian  
 23-24 Purim Jewish  
 24 Palm Sunday Easter Orthodox/Christian  
 25 Feast of the Annunciation Christian/Catholic  
 29 Good Friday Christian/Catholic  
 31 Easter Eastern Orthodox/Christian/Catholic

## April

9 Ramadan Ends Islam  
 9-10 Eid al-Fitr Islam  
 13 Vaisakhi Sikh  
 17 Ravami Hindu  
 21 Ridvan Begins Baha’I’  
 22 Passover Begins Jewish  
 23 Vesak Buddhist  
 30 Passover Ends Jewish

## May

2 Ridvan Ends Baha’I’  
 2 Holy Thursday Eastern Orthodox/Christian  
 3 Good Friday Eastern Orthodox/Christian  
 9 Feast of Ascension Christian/Catholic  
 19 Pentecost Christian/Catholic  
 22 Declaration of the Bab Baha’I’  
 26 Trinity Sunday Christian/Catholic  
 29 Ascension of Baha’u’llah Baha’I’  
 30 Corpus Christi Sunday Christian/Corpus

## June

7 Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christian Catholic  
 11-13 Shavuot Jewish  
 16 Martyrdom of Guru Sikh  
 16-17 Eid-ul-Adha Islam

## (12) Twelve Major Religions:



# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

## Baha'i

The **Bahá'í Faith** ([/bə'hɑːʔiː, bə'haɪ/](#); Persian: بهائی *Bahā'ī*) is a relatively new religion<sup>[a]</sup> teaching the **essential worth of all religions** and **the unity of all people**.<sup>[b]</sup> Established by **Bahá'u'lláh** in the 19th century, it initially developed in Iran and parts of the Middle East, where it has faced ongoing persecution since its inception.<sup>[13]</sup> The religion is estimated to have **over five million adherents**, known as Bahá'ís, spread throughout most of the world's countries and territories.<sup>[14]</sup>

The religion has three central figures: the **Báb** (1819–1850), considered a herald who taught that God would soon send a **prophet** in the same way of **Jesus** or **Muhammad**, and who was executed by Iranian authorities in 1850; **Bahá'u'lláh** (1817–1892), who claimed to be that prophet in 1863 and faced exile and imprisonment for most of his life; and his son, **'Abdu'l-Bahá** (1844–1921), who was released from confinement in 1908 and made teaching trips to Europe and the United States. After 'Abdu'l-Bahá's death in 1921, leadership of the religion fell to his grandson **Shoghi Effendi** (1897–1957). Bahá'ís annually elect local, regional, and national **Spiritual Assemblies** that govern the religion's affairs. Every five years the members of all National Spiritual Assemblies elect the **Universal House of Justice**, the nine-member supreme governing institution of the worldwide Bahá'í community that is located in **Haifa**, Israel, near the **Shrine of the Báb**.

According to the **Bahá'í teachings**, **God** is single and all-powerful. Bahá'u'lláh taught that religion is revealed in an orderly and progressive way by **Manifestations of God**, who are the founders of **major world religions** throughout history; **Buddha**, **Jesus**, and **Muhammad** are noted as the most recent of these before the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'ís regard the major religions as fundamentally unified in purpose, though varied in social practices and interpretations. The Bahá'í Faith stresses the unity of all people, explicitly rejecting **racism** and **nationalism**. At the heart of Bahá'í teachings is the goal of a **unified world order** that ensures the prosperity of all nations, races, creeds, and classes.<sup>[15][16]</sup>

Letters written by Bahá'u'lláh to various people, including some heads of state, have been collected and assembled into a canon of **Bahá'í scripture**. This includes works by his son **'Abdu'l-Bahá**, and **the Báb**, who is regarded as Bahá'u'lláh's forerunner. Prominent among Bahá'í literature are the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, *Some Answered Questions*, and *The Dawn-Breakers*.

## Buddhism

**Buddhism** ([/ˈbʊdɪzəm/](#), US: [/ˈbuːd-/](#))<sup>[1][2]</sup> is an **Indian religion** and **philosophy** based on a series of **original teachings** attributed to **Gautama Buddha**.<sup>[3]</sup> It originated in **ancient India** as a **Sramana** tradition sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE, spreading through much of **Asia**. It is the **world's fourth-largest**



# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

religion<sup>[4][5]</sup> with over 520 million followers, or over 7% of the global population, known as **Buddhists**.<sup>[6][7]</sup>

Buddhism encompasses a variety of [traditions](#), [beliefs](#) and [spiritual practices](#) largely based on the Buddha's teachings (born Siddhārtha Gautama in the 5th or 4th century BCE) and resulting [interpreted philosophies](#).

As expressed in the Buddha's [Four Noble Truths](#), the goal of Buddhism is to overcome [suffering](#) (*duḥkha*) caused by [desire](#) and [ignorance](#) of [reality's](#) true nature, including [impermanence](#) (*anicca*) and the [non-existence of the self](#) (*anattā*).<sup>[8]</sup> Most Buddhist traditions emphasize transcending the individual self

through the attainment of [Nirvana](#) or by following the [path of Buddhahood](#), ending the [cycle of death and rebirth](#).<sup>[9][10][11]</sup> [Buddhist schools](#) vary in their interpretation of the [path to liberation](#), the relative

importance and canonicity assigned to the various [Buddhist texts](#), and their specific teachings and

practices.<sup>[12][13]</sup> Widely observed practices include [meditation](#), observance of [moral precepts](#), [monasticism](#), taking [refuge](#) in the [Buddha](#), the [Dharma](#) and the [Sangha](#), and the cultivation of the [Paramitas](#) (perfections, or virtues).

Two major extant branches of Buddhism are generally recognized by scholars: [Theravāda](#) (Pali: "The School of the Elders") and [Mahāyāna](#) (Sanskrit: "The Great Vehicle"). Theravada has a widespread following in [Sri Lanka](#) and [Southeast Asia](#) such as [Cambodia](#), [Laos](#), [Myanmar](#) and [Thailand](#). Mahayana, which includes the

traditions of [Zen](#), [Pure Land](#), [Nichiren Buddhism](#), [Tiantai Buddhism](#) (Tendai), and [Shingon](#), is practiced prominently in [Nepal](#), [Malaysia](#), [Bhutan](#), [China](#), [Japan](#), [Korea](#), [Vietnam](#), and [Taiwan](#). [Vajrayana](#), a body of teachings attributed to [Indian adepts](#), may be viewed as a separate branch or as an aspect of Mahayana

Buddhism.<sup>[14]</sup> [Tibetan Buddhism](#), which preserves the Vajrayana teachings of eighth-century India, is

practiced in the countries of the [Himalayan region](#), [Mongolia](#),<sup>[15]</sup> and [Kalmykia](#).<sup>[16]</sup> Historically, until the early

[2nd millennium](#), Buddhism was also widely practiced in [Afghanistan](#) and it also had a foothold to some extent in other places including the [Philippines](#), the [Maldives](#), and [Uzbekistan](#).



# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

## Christianity

**Christianity** is an [Abrahamic, monotheistic religion](#) based on the [life and teachings](#) of [Jesus of Nazareth](#). It is the [world's largest religion](#), with about 2.4 billion followers.<sup>[1]</sup> Its adherents, known as [Christians](#), make up a majority of the population in [157 countries and territories](#),<sup>[2]</sup> and believe that [Jesus](#) is the [Christ](#), whose coming as the [Messiah](#) was [prophesied](#) in the [Hebrew Bible](#) (called the [Old Testament](#) in Christianity) and chronicled in the [New Testament](#).<sup>[3]</sup>

Christianity remains [culturally diverse](#) in its [Western](#) and [Eastern branches](#), as well as in its doctrines concerning [justification and the nature of salvation](#), [ecclesiology](#), [ordination](#), and [Christology](#). The [creeds](#) of various [Christian denominations](#) generally hold in common [Jesus as the Son of God—the Logos incarnated](#)—who [ministered](#), [suffered](#), and [died on a cross](#), but [rose from the dead](#) for the [salvation](#) of mankind; and referred to as [the gospel](#), meaning the "good news". Describing [Jesus' life and teachings](#) are the four [canonical gospels](#) of [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), [Luke](#) and [John](#), with the [Old Testament](#) as the [gospel's](#) respected background.

[Christianity began](#) as a [Second Temple Judaic sect](#) in the [1st century](#) in the [Roman province of Judea](#). [Jesus' apostles](#) and their followers [spread](#) around the [Levant](#), [Europe](#), [Anatolia](#), [Mesopotamia](#), [Transcaucasia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Ethiopia](#), despite [initial persecution](#). It soon attracted [gentile God-fearers](#), which led to a departure from [Jewish customs](#), and, after the [Fall of Jerusalem, AD 70](#) which ended the [Temple-based Judaism](#), [Christianity slowly separated from Judaism](#). Emperor [Constantine the Great](#) decriminalized Christianity in the Roman Empire by the [Edict of Milan](#) (313), later convening the [Council of Nicaea](#) (325) where Early Christianity was consolidated into what would become the [State church of the Roman Empire](#) (380). The early history of Christianity's united church before major [schisms](#) is sometimes referred to as the "[Great Church](#)" (though divergent sects existed at the same time, including [Gnostics](#) and [Jewish Christians](#)). The [Church of the East](#) split after the [Council of Ephesus](#) (431) and [Oriental Orthodoxy](#) split after the [Council of Chalcedon](#) (451) over differences in [Christology](#),<sup>[4]</sup> while the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) and the [Catholic Church](#) separated in the [East–West Schism](#) (1054), especially over the authority of the [bishop of Rome](#). [Protestantism](#) split into numerous denominations from the Catholic Church in the [Reformation era](#) (16th century) over [theological](#) and [ecclesiological](#) disputes, most predominantly [on the issue of justification](#) and the [primacy of the bishop of Rome](#). Christianity played a [prominent role](#) in the [development](#) of [Western civilization](#), particularly in Europe from [late antiquity](#) and the [Middle Ages](#).<sup>[5][6][7][8]</sup> Following the [Age of Discovery](#) (15th–17th century), Christianity was spread into the [Americas](#), [Oceania](#), [sub-Saharan Africa](#), and the rest of the world via [missionary work](#).<sup>[9][10][11]</sup>

The four largest [branches of Christianity](#) are the [Catholic Church](#) (1.3 billion/50.1%), [Protestantism](#) (920 million/36.7%), the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) (230 million), and the [Oriental Orthodox churches](#) (62 million)







# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

## Hinduism

**Hinduism** (/ˈhɪnduːɪzəm/)<sup>[1]</sup> is an [Indian religion](#) and *dharma*, or way of life.<sup>[note 1][note 2]</sup> It is the [world's third-largest religion](#), with over 1.2 billion followers, or 15–16% of the global population, known as [Hindus](#).<sup>[2][web 1][web 2]</sup> The word *Hindu* is an [exonym](#),<sup>[3][4][note 3]</sup> and while Hinduism has been called the oldest religion in the world,<sup>[note 4]</sup> many practitioners refer to their religion as *Sanātana Dharma* (Sanskrit: सनातन धर्म, lit. "the Eternal Dharma"), which refers to the idea that its origins lie beyond human history, as revealed in the [Hindu texts](#).<sup>[5][6][7][8][note 5][excessive citations]</sup> Another, though less fitting,<sup>[9]</sup> self-designation is *Vaidika dharma*,<sup>[10][11][12][13]</sup> the 'dharma related to the [Vedas](#).'<sup>[web 3]</sup>

Hinduism is a diverse system of thought marked by a range of [philosophies](#) and shared concepts, [rituals](#), [cosmological](#) systems, [pilgrimage sites](#), and shared textual sources that discuss theology, [metaphysics](#), [mythology](#), Vedic [yajna](#), [yoga](#), [agamic](#) rituals, and [temple building](#), among other topics.<sup>[14]</sup> Prominent themes in Hindu beliefs include the four [Puruṣārthas](#), the proper goals or aims of human life; namely, [dharma](#) (ethics/duties), [artha](#) (prosperity/work), [kama](#) (desires/passions) and [moksha](#) (liberation/freedom from the passions and the cycle of death and [rebirth](#)),<sup>[15][16]</sup> as well as [karma](#) (action, intent and consequences) and [saṃsāra](#) (cycle of death and rebirth).<sup>[17][18]</sup> Hinduism prescribes the eternal duties, such as honesty, refraining from injuring living beings (*Ahiṃsā*), patience, forbearance, self-restraint, virtue, and compassion, among others.<sup>[web 4][19]</sup> Hindu practices include rituals such as [puja](#) (worship) and recitations, [japa](#), meditation ([dhyāna](#)), family-oriented [rites of passage](#), annual festivals, and occasional pilgrimages. Along with the practice of various [yogas](#), some Hindus leave their social world and material possessions and engage in lifelong [Sannyasa](#) (monasticism) in order to achieve moksha.<sup>[20]</sup>

Hindu texts are classified into [Śruti](#) ("heard") and [Smṛti](#) ("remembered"), the major scriptures of which are the [Vedas](#), the [Upanishads](#), the [Purānas](#), the [Mahābhārata](#), the [Rāmāyana](#), and the [Āgamas](#).<sup>[17][21]</sup> There are six [āstika](#) schools of Hindu philosophy, who recognise the authority of the Vedas, namely [Sāṅkhya](#), [Yoga](#), [Nyāya](#), [Vaisheshika](#), [Mimāṃsā](#) and [Vedānta](#).<sup>[22][23][24]</sup> While the [Puranic chronology](#) presents a genealogy of thousands of years, starting with the Vedic [rishis](#), scholars regard Hinduism as a fusion<sup>[note 6]</sup> or synthesis<sup>[25][note 7]</sup> of [Brahmanical orthopraxy](#)<sup>[note 8]</sup> with various Indian cultures,<sup>[26][note 9]</sup> having diverse roots<sup>[27][note 10]</sup> and no specific founder.<sup>[28]</sup> This [Hindu synthesis](#) emerged after the Vedic period, between c. 500<sup>[29]</sup>–200<sup>[30]</sup> BCE and c. 300 CE,<sup>[29]</sup> in the period of the [Second Urbanisation](#) and the early [classical period](#)






# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

of Hinduism, when the [Epics](#) and the first Purānas were composed.<sup>[29][30]</sup> It flourished in the [medieval period](#), with the [decline of Buddhism in India](#).<sup>[31]</sup>

Currently, the four largest [denominations](#) of Hinduism are [Vaishnavism](#), [Shaivism](#), [Shaktism](#), and [Smartism](#).<sup>[32][33]</sup> Sources of authority and eternal truths in the Hindu texts play an important role, but there is also a strong Hindu tradition of questioning authority in order to deepen the understanding of these truths and to further develop the tradition.<sup>[34]</sup> Hinduism is the most widely professed faith in [India](#), [Nepal](#) and [Mauritius](#). Significant numbers of Hindu communities are found in [Southeast Asia](#) including in [Bali](#), [Indonesia](#),<sup>[35]</sup> the [Caribbean](#), [North America](#), [Europe](#), [Oceania](#), [Africa](#), and [other regions](#).<sup>[36][37]</sup>

## Islam

Islam ([/ˈɪslɑːm/](#);<sup>[a]</sup> Arabic: [الإِسْلَامُ](#), romanized: *al-ʾIslām*, [\[ɪsˈlɑːm\]](#) (  listen) "submission [to God]"<sup>[1]</sup> is an [Abrahamic monotheistic](#) religion started by the prophet [Muhammad](#) in the early 7th century.<sup>[2][3]</sup> It is the [world's second-largest religion](#) with 1.9 billion followers, or 24.9% of the world's population,<sup>[4][5]</sup> known as [Muslims](#).<sup>[6]</sup> Muslims make up a majority of the population in [47 countries](#).<sup>[7][8]</sup> Islam teaches that [God](#) is [merciful](#), [all-powerful](#), and [unique](#),<sup>[9]</sup> and has guided humanity through [prophets](#), [revealed scriptures](#), and [natural signs](#).<sup>[3][10]</sup> The primary scriptures of Islam are the [Quran](#), believed to be the verbatim word of God, as well as the teachings and normative examples (called the [sunnah](#), composed of accounts called [hadith](#)) of [Muhammad](#) (c. 570 – 632 CE).<sup>[11]</sup>

Muslims believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a [primordial faith](#) that was revealed many times before through prophets such as [Adam](#), [Abraham](#), [Moses](#), and [Jesus](#).<sup>[12]</sup> Muslims consider the Quran, in Arabic, to be the unaltered and final revelation of God.<sup>[13]</sup> Like other Abrahamic religions, Islam also teaches a final judgment with the righteous rewarded in [paradise](#) and the unrighteous punished in [hell](#).<sup>[14]</sup> Religious concepts and practices include the [Five Pillars of Islam](#), which are obligatory acts of worship, as well as following Islamic law ([sharia](#)), which touches on virtually every aspect of life and society, from [banking](#) and [welfare](#) to [women](#) and the [environment](#).<sup>[15][16]</sup> The cities of [Mecca](#), [Medina](#) and [Jerusalem](#) are home to the three [holiest sites in Islam](#).<sup>[17]</sup>

From a historical point of view, Islam originated in early 7th century CE in the [Arabian Peninsula](#), in [Mecca](#),<sup>[18]</sup> and by the 8th century, the [Umayyad Caliphate](#) extended from [Iberia](#) in the west to the [Indus River](#)



# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

in the east. The [Islamic Golden Age](#) refers to the period traditionally dated from the 8th century to the 13th century, during the [Abbasid Caliphate](#), when much of the historically [Muslim world](#) was experiencing a [scientific](#), [economic](#), and cultural flourishing.<sup>[19][20][21]</sup> The expansion of the Muslim world involved various [caliphates and states](#) such as the [Ottoman Empire](#), trade, and [conversion to Islam](#) by [missionary activities](#) (*dawah*).<sup>[22]</sup>

Most Muslims are of one of two [denominations](#): [Sunni](#) (85–90%)<sup>[23]</sup> or [Shia](#) (10–15%).<sup>[24][25][26]</sup> Sunni and Shia [differences](#) arose from disagreement over the [succession to Muhammad](#) and acquired broader political significance, as well as [theological](#) and [juridical](#) dimensions.<sup>[27]</sup> About 12% of Muslims live in [Indonesia](#), the most populous Muslim-majority country,<sup>[28]</sup> 31% live in [South Asia](#),<sup>[29]</sup> the largest percentage of Muslims in the world,<sup>[30]</sup> 20% in the [Middle East–North Africa](#), where it is the dominant religion,<sup>[31]</sup> and 15% in [sub-Saharan Africa](#).<sup>[31]</sup> Sizable Muslim communities can also be found in the [Americas](#), [China](#), and [Europe](#).<sup>[32][33]</sup> Islam is the [fastest-growing major religion](#) in the world.<sup>[34][35]</sup>

## Jainism

**Jainism** ([/ˈdʒeɪnɪzəm/](#)), traditionally known as **Jain Dharma**, is an ancient [Indian religion](#). It is one of the oldest Indian religions. The three main pillars of Jainism are [ahimsā](#) (non-violence), [anekāntavāda](#) (non-absolutism), and [aparigraha](#) (non-attachment).

Jains take five main vows: [ahimsā](#) (non-violence), [satya](#) (truth), [asteya](#) (not stealing), [brahmacharya](#) (sexual continence), and [aparigraha](#) (non-possessiveness). These principles have affected Jain culture in many ways, such as leading to a predominantly vegetarian lifestyle. [Parasparopagraho jīvānām](#) (the function of souls is to help one another) is the faith's motto and the [Namōkāra mantra](#) is its most common and basic prayer.

Jainism traces its spiritual ideas and history through a succession of twenty-four leaders or [Tirthankaras](#), with the first in the current time cycle being [Rishabhadeva](#), whom the tradition holds to have lived millions of years ago; the twenty-third [tirthankara](#) [Parshvanatha](#), whom historians date to 9th century BCE; and the twenty-fourth [tirthankara](#), [Mahavira](#) around 600 BCE. Jainism is considered to be an eternal [dharma](#) with the [tirthankaras](#) guiding every time cycle of the [cosmology](#).

Jainism is one of the world's oldest religions in practice to this day. It has two major ancient sub-traditions, [Digambaras](#) and [Śvētāmbaras](#), with different views on ascetic practices, gender and which texts can be considered canonical; both have [mendicants](#) supported by [laypersons](#) ([śrāvakas](#) and [śrāvikas](#)). The Śvētāmbara tradition in turn has three subtraditions: [Mandirvāsī](#), [Terapanthi](#) and [Sthānakavasī](#).<sup>[1]</sup> The



# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

religion has between four and five million followers, known as **Jains**, who reside mostly in [India](#). Outside India, some of the largest communities are in [Canada](#), [Europe](#), and the [United States](#), with [Japan](#) hosting a fast-growing community of converts.<sup>[2]</sup> Major festivals include *Paryushana* and *Das Lakshana*, *Ashtanika*, *Mahavir Janma Kalyanak*, *Akshaya Tertiya*, and *Diwali*.

Estimates for the population of Jains differ from just over four million to twelve million.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Judaism

**Judaism** ([Hebrew](#): יהודה, *Yahadut*; originally from [Hebrew](#) יהודה, *Yehudah*, "Judah", via [Greek](#) Ἰουδαϊσμός *Ioudaismos*;<sup>[6][7][8]</sup> the term itself is of Anglo-Latin origin c. 1400<sup>[9]</sup>) is an [Abrahamic](#), [monotheistic](#), and [ethnic religion](#) comprising the collective [religious](#), [cultural](#), and [legal](#) tradition and civilization of the [Jewish people](#), also sometimes called [Israelites](#).<sup>[10][1][11]</sup> Judaism is considered by religious Jews to be the expression of the [covenant](#) that [God](#) established with the [Children of Israel](#).<sup>[12]</sup> It encompasses a wide body of texts, practices, theological positions, and forms of organization. The [Torah](#) is part of the larger text known as the [Tanakh](#) or the [Hebrew Bible](#), and supplemental oral tradition represented by later texts such as the [Midrash](#) and the [Talmud](#). With between 14.5 and 17.4 million adherents worldwide,<sup>[13]</sup> Judaism is the tenth [largest religion in the world](#).

Within Judaism there are a variety of [religious movements](#), most of which emerged from [Rabbinic Judaism](#),<sup>[14][15]</sup> which holds that [God](#) revealed his laws and [commandments](#) to [Moses](#) on [Mount Sinai](#) in the form of both the [Written](#) and [Oral Torah](#).<sup>[16]</sup> Historically, all or part of this assertion was challenged by various groups such as the [Sadducees](#) and [Hellenistic Judaism](#) during the [Second Temple period](#);<sup>[14][17]</sup> the [Karaites](#) during the early and later medieval period; and among segments of the modern non-Orthodox denominations.<sup>[18]</sup> Some modern branches of Judaism such as [Humanistic Judaism](#) may be considered [secular](#) or [nontheistic](#).<sup>[19][20]</sup> Today, the largest [Jewish religious movements](#) are [Orthodox Judaism](#) ([Haredi Judaism](#) and [Modern Orthodox Judaism](#)), [Conservative Judaism](#), and [Reform Judaism](#). Major sources of difference between these groups are their approaches to [Jewish law](#), the authority of the [Rabbinic tradition](#), and the significance of the [State of Israel](#).<sup>[3][21][22]</sup> Orthodox Judaism maintains that the [Torah](#) and [Jewish law](#) are divine in origin, eternal and unalterable, and that they should be strictly followed. Conservative and Reform Judaism are more [liberal](#), with Conservative Judaism generally promoting a more traditionalist interpretation of Judaism's requirements than Reform Judaism. A typical Reform position is that [Jewish law](#) should be viewed as a set of general guidelines rather than as a set of restrictions and obligations whose





# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

by cleaning practices such as ritual washing and bathing. Shinto has no single creator or specific doctrinal text, but exists in a diverse range of local and regional forms.

Although historians debate at what point it is suitable to refer to Shinto as a distinct religion, *kami* veneration has been traced back to Japan's [Yayoi period](#) (300 BCE to 300 CE). [Buddhism](#) entered Japan at the end of the [Kofun period](#) (300 to 538 CE) and spread rapidly. [Religious syncretization](#) made *kami* worship and Buddhism functionally inseparable, a process called *shinbutsu-shūgō*. The *kami* came to be viewed as part of [Buddhist cosmology](#) and were increasingly depicted anthropomorphically. The earliest written tradition regarding *kami* worship was recorded in the 8th-century *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. In ensuing centuries, *shinbutsu-shūgō* was adopted by Japan's Imperial household. During the [Meiji era](#) (1868 to 1912 CE), Japan's [nationalist](#) leadership expelled Buddhist influence from *kami* worship and formed [State Shinto](#), which many historians regard as the origin of Shinto as a distinct religion. Shrines came under growing government influence and citizens were encouraged to worship the [emperor](#) as a *kami*. With the formation of the [Japanese Empire](#) in the early 20th century, Shinto was exported to other areas of East Asia. Following Japan's defeat in [World War II](#), Shinto was formally [separated from the state](#).

Shinto is primarily found in Japan, where there are around 100,000 public shrines, although practitioners are also found abroad. Numerically, it is Japan's largest religion, the second being Buddhism. Most of the country's population takes part in both Shinto and Buddhist activities, especially festivals, reflecting a common view in [Japanese culture](#) that the beliefs and practices of different religions need not be exclusive. Aspects of Shinto have also been incorporated into various [Japanese new religious movements](#).

## Sikhism

**Sikhism** ([/ˈsɪkɪzəm/](#)) or **Sikhi** (Punjabi: ਸਿੱਖੀ *Sikkhī*, [\[ˈsɪkhiː\]](#), from ਸਿੱਖ, *Sikh*, 'disciple', 'seeker', or 'learner')<sup>[i]</sup>

is an [Indian religion](#) that originated in the [Punjab](#) region of the [Indian subcontinent](#)<sup>[ii]</sup> around the end of the 15th century CE.<sup>[1][2][3][4][5][6]</sup> Sikhism is one of the youngest of the [major religions](#) and the [world's fifth-largest organized religion](#),<sup>[7]</sup> with about 25–30 million [Sikhs](#) as of the early 21st century.<sup>[8][9]</sup>

Sikhism developed from the spiritual teachings of [Guru Nanak](#), the first Guru (1469–1539),<sup>[10]</sup> and of the nine [Sikh gurus](#) who succeeded him. The tenth guru, [Gobind Singh](#) (1666–1708), named the [Sikh](#) scripture *Guru Granth Sahib* as his successor, bringing to a close the line of human gurus and establishing the scripture as the last eternal 11th living guru, a religious spiritual/life guide for Sikhs.<sup>[11][12][13]</sup> [Guru Nanak](#) taught that living an "active, creative, and practical life" of "truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity" is above metaphysical truth, and that the ideal man "establishes union with God, knows His Will, and carries out that



# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

Will".<sup>[14]</sup> **Guru Hargobind**, the sixth Sikh Guru (1606–1644), established the concept of mutual co-existence of the *miri* ('political'/'temporal') and *piri* ('spiritual') realms.<sup>[15]</sup>

The Sikh scripture opens with the *Mul Mantar* (ਮੂਲ ਮੰਤਰ), fundamental prayer about *ik onkar* (ੴ, 'One God').<sup>[16][17]</sup> The core beliefs of Sikhism, articulated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, include **faith** and **meditation** on the name of the **one creator**; **divine** unity and equality of all humankind; engaging in *seva* ('**selfless service**'); striving for justice for the **benefit and prosperity of all**; and honest conduct and livelihood while living a householder's life.<sup>[18][19][20]</sup> Following this standard, Sikhism rejects claims that any particular religious tradition has a monopoly on **Absolute Truth**.<sup>[iii][21]</sup>

Sikhism emphasizes *simran* (ਸਿਮਰਨ, meditation and remembrance of the teachings of Gurus),<sup>[22]</sup> which can be expressed musically through *kirtan*, or internally through *naam japna* ('meditation on His name') as a means to feel God's presence. It teaches followers to transform the "**Five Thieves**" (i.e. lust, rage, greed, attachment, and ego).<sup>[23]</sup>

The religion developed and evolved in times of **religious persecution**, gaining converts from both **Hinduism** and **Islam**.<sup>[24]</sup> **Mughal rulers** of India tortured and executed two of the Sikh gurus—**Guru Arjan** (1563–1605) and **Guru Tegh Bahadur** (1621–1675)—after **they refused to convert to Islam**.<sup>[25][26][27][28][29]</sup> The persecution of Sikhs triggered the founding of the *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 as an order to protect the **freedom of conscience** and **religion**,<sup>[25][30]</sup> with members expressing the qualities of a *Sant-Sipāhī* ('saint-soldier').<sup>[31][32]</sup>

## Taoism

**Taoism** (/ˈtaʊ-/), or **Daoism** (/ˈdaʊɪzəm/), is a philosophical and spiritual tradition of **Chinese** origin which emphasizes living in harmony with the *Tao* (**Chinese**: 道; **pinyin**: *Dào*; **lit.** 'Way', or *Dao*). In Taoism, the *Tao* is the source, pattern and substance of everything that exists.<sup>[2][3]</sup> Taoism teaches about the various disciplines for achieving "perfection" by becoming one with the unplanned rhythms of the all, called "the way" or "Tao".<sup>[2][4]</sup> Taoist ethics vary depending on the particular school, but in general tend to emphasize *wu wei* (action without intention), "naturalness", simplicity, spontaneity and the **Three Treasures**: 慈, "compassion", 儉, "frugality" and 不敢為天下先, "humility".

The roots of Taoism go back at least to the 4th century BCE. Early Taoism drew its cosmological notions from the **School of Yinyang** (Naturalists) and was deeply influenced by one of the oldest texts of **Chinese culture**, the *I Ching* (*Yi Jing*), which expounds a philosophical system about how to keep human behavior in



# Religious Observance Calendar 2023 - 2024

accordance with the alternating cycles of [nature](#). The "Legalist" [Shen Buhai](#) (c. 400 – c. 337 BCE) may also have been a major influence, expounding a [realpolitik](#) of *wu wei*.<sup>[5]</sup> The *Tao Te Ching* (*Dao De Jing*), a compact book containing teachings attributed to [Lao Tzu](#) (老子; *Lǎozǐ*; *Lao<sup>3</sup> Tzǔ<sup>3</sup>*), is widely considered the keystone work of the Taoist tradition, together with the later [writings of Zhuangzi](#).

Taoism has had a profound influence on Chinese culture in the course of the centuries and [Taoists](#) (*dàoshi*, "masters of the Tao"), a title traditionally attributed only to the clergy and not to their lay followers, usually take care to note the distinction between their ritual tradition and the practices of [Chinese folk religion](#) and non-Taoist [vernacular ritual orders](#), which are often mistakenly identified as pertaining to Taoism. [Chinese alchemy](#) (especially [neidan](#)), [Chinese astrology](#), [Chan \(Zen\) Buddhism](#), several [martial arts](#), [traditional Chinese medicine](#), [feng shui](#) and many styles of [qigong](#) have been intertwined with Taoism throughout history.

Today, the Taoist tradition is one of the [five religious doctrines](#) officially recognized by the [People's Republic of China](#).<sup>[6]</sup> It is also a [major religion in Taiwan](#)<sup>[7]</sup> and claims adherents in a number of other societies, in particular in [Hong Kong](#), [Macau](#) and [Southeast Asia](#).

## Zoroastrian

**Zoroastrianism** or **Mazdayasna** is one of the world's oldest continuously practiced [religions](#), based on the teachings of the [Iranian-speaking](#) prophet [Zoroaster](#) (also known as *Zarathuštra* in [Avestan](#) or *Zartosht* in [Modern Persian](#)).<sup>[1][2]</sup> Zoroastrianism has a [dualistic cosmology](#) of [good and evil](#) and an [eschatology](#) which predicts the ultimate conquest of evil by good.<sup>[3]</sup> Zoroastrianism exalts an uncreated and benevolent deity of wisdom, [Ahura Mazda](#) (*Wise Lord*), as its supreme being.<sup>[4]</sup> The unique historical features of Zoroastrianism, such as its [monotheism](#),<sup>[5][6][7][8][9]</sup> [messianism](#), [judgment after death](#), [heaven](#) and [hell](#), and [free will](#) may have influenced other religious and philosophical systems, including [Second Temple Judaism](#), [Gnosticism](#), [Greek philosophy](#),<sup>[10]</sup> [Christianity](#), [Islam](#),<sup>[11]</sup> the [Bahá'í Faith](#).

With possible roots dating back to the Second Millennium BCE, Zoroastrianism enters [written history](#) in the 5th century BCE.<sup>[12]</sup> It served as the [state religion](#) of the [ancient Iranian empires](#) for more than a millennium, from around 600 BCE to 650 CE, but [declined](#) from the 7th century CE onwards following the [Muslim conquest of Persia](#) of 633–654 and subsequent [persecution of the Zoroastrian people](#).<sup>[13]</sup> Recent estimates place the current number of Zoroastrians at around 110,000–120,000<sup>[14]</sup> at most, with the majority living in [India](#), [Iran](#), and [North America](#); their number has been thought to be declining.<sup>[15][16]</sup>

