

Introducing World Religions

Student Discussion Questions

Chapter 4 Judaic tradition

1. What is the significance of the divine name YHVH in Judaic tradition? Why is this name not spoken aloud? How is the word Adonai (Lord) used in the reading of the *Hebrew Bible*?
2. Compare and contrast these two lists: (1) the Ten Commandments of the *Torah*, and (2) the Thirteen Principles outlined by Maimonides in terms of their relationship to action and/or belief. Consider which items refer to actions and which refer to beliefs. How do you think the Jewish understanding of the Lord may have been challenged in the face of the catastrophe of the Nazi Holocaust? Explain.
3. What are some connections between Jewish rituals and specific hierophanic events reported in the Hebrew scriptures in which the divine interacted with the Hebrew people. (For example, explore the symbolism of the Sabbath day, or the Pesach Seder meal.) What ritual responses might be appropriate to the kratophany of the Sho'ah?

Chapter 5 Christian tradition

1. Name a few occasions when angels are said to have communicated with human beings. What difference would it make to the *meaning* of these events if a Christian believed or did not believe in angels?
2. What did Emperor Constantine do in the fourth century CE to help establish Christian tradition in the Roman Empire? Do you think that such kinds of activities would be effective for any religious tradition at any point in history? Why or why not?
3. Do you tend to be an "iconoclast"? Why or why or not? Discuss what you consider to be positive and negative aspects of using visual representations of divine subjects.

Chapter 6 Islamic tradition

1. How might the life story of Prophet Muhammad inspire Muslims? (For example, think about the prophet's encounters with the angel Gabriel, the Night Journey, the Hijrah, and the Farewell Speech.)

2. How might Farīd al-Dīn Ḥattār's Ṣūfī path of seven valleys be applied to the lives of ordinary contemporary people – Muslims and non-Muslims alike?

3. How do the Five Pillars of Islam shape the experience of Muslims in their everyday lives? Are any of these Five Pillars similar to rituals found in other religious traditions? Which ones? In what ways?