

# CHAPTER 6

## World Religions



In this chapter we will focus on three religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, collectively known as the Religions of the Book or the Abrahamic Traditions. The titles reflect what the three religious traditions have in common: similar characters, prophets and some stories. Judaism, Christianity

and Islam are monotheistic religions because each religion professes a belief in one God. While each religion is monotheistic, understandings of God differ in each religious tradition and these differences are reflected in the beliefs and practices of each tradition.

## 6.1 Judaism

In Chapter 20 of the Book of Exodus, the **G-d** of Israel delivers a clear set of moral guidelines for the Hebrew people. These guidelines we know as the Ten Commandments, but in Hebrew they are called the Ten Statements (*Aseret ha-Dibrot*). The first commandment begins with a statement from G-d – ‘I am the Lord your G-d’ – which requires a religious response from the people. So for the Jewish people, belief in G-d is the first and most important aspect of their lives. The statement is followed by the phrase, ‘You shall have no other gods before me’. This second statement provides us with key insights into the nature of G-d in Judaism. Together the two phrases make a very clear statement: ‘I am the Lord your G-d’ refers to belief in the existence of one G-d only and ‘You shall have no other gods before me’ refers to worship of a single god, while admitting that other people believe in existence of other gods. Judaism, therefore, expresses exclusive belief in and worship of the one G-d. Consequently, one of the most serious sins in Judaism is idolatry: the introduction or worship of ‘other gods’ before the One.

The Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith, expounded by the 12th-century Moshe ben Maimon, also known as *Maimonides*, provides the key elements of Jewish faith.

- 1 G-d exists.
- 2 G-d is one.
- 3 G-d is incorporeal.
- 4 G-d is eternal.
- 5 G-d alone should be worshipped.
- 6 G-d has communicated through the prophets.
- 7 Moses was the greatest of the prophets.
- 8 The Torah is the word of G-d.
- 9 The Torah is authentic and cannot be changed.
- 10 G-d is aware of all our actions.
- 11 G-d rewards the just and punishes the wicked.
- 12 The Messiah will come.
- 13 The dead will be resurrected.

### G-d

When Moses demanded to know the name of God, God said to Moses, ‘Ehyeh-asher-ehyeh’ (‘I am who I am, YHWH’) (Exodus 3:14). Traditionally, rather than uttering the sacred name, YHWH, Jews say Adonai, Lord. This respect or prohibition is expressed in English as G-d.



▲ **Figure 6.1** The Wailing Wall, a religiously significant site in Jerusalem

The principles of *Maimonides* were eventually incorporated in a Yigdal hymn that is recited in synagogues each morning as part of Jewish daily prayer:

Exalted be the Living G-d and praised.  
He exists – unbounded by time in His existence.  
He is One – and there is not unity like His Oneness.  
Inscrutable and infinite is His Oneness.

Another prayer used in the daily liturgy, which is taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, also reinforces belief in one G-d. The *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4–9) begins with the declaration ‘*Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad*, which means: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our G-d, is the Lord alone’. The text continues encouraging believers to love the one G-d with all of their hearts, mind and deeds, reminding them that the love of G-d should permeate all aspects of their lives: ‘when you lie down and when you rise’.

### Deuteronomy 6:4–9

#### The Shema

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.  
<sup>5</sup>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. <sup>8</sup>Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, <sup>9</sup>and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The *Shema* is part of all evening and morning prayers and G-d’s oneness is proclaimed by Jews as the sun rises and sets all across the world each day.



▲ Figure 6.2 The tefillin

The *Shema* is not only prayed but is also worn on the body and fixed to doorways as a constant reminder of divine unity. The words of the *Shema* are contained in *tefillin*, small black wooden boxes containing parchment scrolls on which the words of four paragraphs from the Torah (Exodus 13:1–10, 11–16 and Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 13–21) are written.



▲ Figure 6.3 A young Jewish man wearing tefillin

The Hebrew letter *shin* (ש), the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, is written on one of the boxes; the head strap is tied with a knot in the shape of the letter *daled* (ד); and the arm strap is tied with a knot in the shape of the letter *yud* (י). These three letters spell *Shaddai* (יָדָדָשׁ) (Hebrew is read right to left), one of the names of G-d.



▲ Figure 6.4 Worshippers touching the mezuzah on their way into a synagogue

The text of the *Shema* is also enclosed in the *mezuzah*, which is a small rectangular container made of wood or brass attached to the upper part of the right-hand side of a door post. The *mezuzah* is slanted inwards to the room. There is normally a *mezuzah* on the front door of every house, and each room within the house except for the bathroom and toilet. In Jewish schools there is a *mezuzah* on the doorpost of each classroom and people touch the *mezuzah* with their hand when entering or leaving the room as a way of expressing their fulfilment of the commandment and of expressing gratitude to G-d.

The *tefillin* and *mezuzah* act as a constant reminder of the oneness of G-d in the daily lives of Jews.

The second line of the Yigdal hymn assists us to understand how Jews imagine or picture G-d: 'He has no semblance of a body nor is He corporeal; nor has His holiness any comparison.' Jewish theology does not anthropomorphise G-d; that is, it does not give G-d human attributes. While some of the Jewish scripture

and the Talmud occasionally refer to G-d's hands, eyes or mouth, Jewish theology insists that these descriptions are metaphorical only. *Maimonides* also stresses this in Principle 3, which says 'G-d is incorporeal'.

The second commandment ('You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your G-d, am a jealous G-d') not only warns against worship of other gods reaffirming the monotheistic principle but also tells people not to depict G-d. G-d is mystery and the otherness and invisibility of G-d is found in the Hebrew word *kadosh* meaning 'different' or 'holy'.

In Judaism, G-d is transcendent and so any attempt to depict G-d is imperfect and a failure. That is why there are no images, statues or paintings of G-d in synagogues or Jewish homes. For the Jewish faith, G-d is indivisible and invisible.

## ACTIVITY 6.1

- 1 Explain what *Maimonides* principles mean for daily living. Copy the table below and write an extended explanation that breaks down each of the principles listed on the left hand side.

1 G-d exists.	
2 G-d is one.	
3 G-d is incorporeal.	
4 G-d is eternal.	
5 G-d alone should be worshipped.	
6 G-d has communicated through the prophets.	
7 Moses was the greatest of the prophets.	
8 The Torah is the word of G-d.	
9 The Torah is authentic and cannot be changed.	
10 G-d is aware of all our actions.	
11 G-d rewards the just and punishes the wicked.	
12 The Messiah will come.	
13 The dead will be resurrected.	

- 2 Using the program Pixton (available at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5974>), create a comic strip that incorporates 13 frames. In each frame, depict and describe how each of the above principles might be evidenced in day-to-day life.

- 3 Watch the video clip about the *tallit* and *tefillin* available at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5975>. Based on the video content, write a series of steps involved with donning each garment. Along with writing the steps down, record each one on the figure below with a brief description of how each step is conducted as well as the special meaning behind the gestures and words.



- 4 Watch the video clips available via the following links:
  - <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5976>
  - <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5977>
  - a What is a *mezuzah*?
  - b What purpose does the *mezuzah* serve?
  - c Describe the process of hanging the *mezuzah*. Where should it be located?
  - d Why is it important to touch the *mezuzah* upon moving through each entrance?

## 6.2 Christianity

When the followers of Jesus eventually separated themselves from Judaism, they retained the belief in one God. They also believed in Jesus and wanted to express their belief in words. The followers of Jesus struggled to represent in words and images the identity and significance of Jesus and his life, death and resurrection. Their first attempt came after the resurrection when they used the phrase ‘Jesus is Lord’. Later, people referred to Jesus as ‘Jesus the Christ’. Christ, from the Greek word *Christos*, means ‘anointed one’, which is a translation of the Hebrew term *masiah* (‘messiah’). The statement that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah is one of the most fundamental differences between Christianity and Judaism. Some Jews still look forward to the coming of the Messiah, while Christians believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

As the early Christians attempted to use words to explain their experience of an all-expansive God, they began to speak of the Divine Being as one God but with three personas or expressions: God the Creator or Father; God the Son, Jesus; and God the Holy Spirit. These expressions eventually developed into the Christian doctrine known as the Trinity.



▲ **Figure 6.5** The New Testament contains one- and two-clause statements of faith that form the basis of the creed.

It took several centuries for Christians to agree on both the concept and the most appropriate way of expressing the Trinity in language. Eventually, formal statements about God were recorded in creeds, which are concise statements of faith expressed in a set formula and approved by Church authorities. Through a study of the Creeds, we can see how understandings of God, and particularly the doctrine of the Trinity, developed.

### Creeds

Creedal statements have their origins in the New Testament. While there are no creeds explicitly stated in the New Testament, there are short phrases that focus on the identity of Jesus and form the foundation for later statements that became creeds. Mostly, these are one-clause statements such as ‘Jesus is Lord’.

#### ACTIVITY 6.2

Locate the following passages, copy the table below and record the one-clause statements.

Biblical reference	Statement of faith
1 Corinthians 12:3	
Romans 10:9	
Philippians 2:11	
Colossians 2:6	
Acts 9:21	
1 John 4:15	
1 John 5:5	

Evolving from these one-clause statements came more developed statements, such as this one from 1 Corinthians 15:3–5:

<sup>3</sup>For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

The statements of faith used by early Christian believers eventually developed into creeds. One of the earliest creeds is the Apostles' Creed, which developed from an early 2nd-century creed known as the Old Roman Creed. The Apostles' Creed was used in Western Christian baptismal

liturgies. The Nicene Creed, developed at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE and then revised slightly at the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE, was used by Greek Christians in baptismal liturgies.

### ACTIVITY 6.3

The Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed are presented below. Read each of the creeds, taking note where the words and ideas are identical. Where the words and ideas are not identical, provide a possible explanation for the differences.

Apostles' Creed	Nicene Creed
I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,	I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead;	I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.
he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.	He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.	I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## Images and Idolatry

In 726 CE, Byzantine Emperor Leo III issued an edict declaring that holy images contravened the second commandment and therefore all images and statues were classified as idols and had to be destroyed. This declaration was motivated by a variety of reasons, including a volcanic eruption at Thera, which was misinterpreted as God's displeasure against images; a desire to control the monasteries, which were the centres of icon veneration; and the idea that icon veneration acted as a hindrance to the conversion of Jews and Muslims to Christianity.

When the image of Christ on the gate of the palace in Constantinople was removed, a riot resulted. The destruction of holy images is called 'iconoclasm' from the word 'iconoclast', which means 'image breaker'. There were two occasions during the Byzantine period of the 8th and 9th centuries when veneration of religious images was forbidden and images were destroyed.

The monk, John Damascus, worked to overthrow the ban on religious images. He argued that the commandment forbidding images of God had been superseded by the Incarnation: God's son becoming human in the person of Jesus. In 787 CE, the Empress Irene organised a council of bishops that declared iconoclasm as a heresy and therefore wrong. In 843 CE, when a second period of iconoclastic destruction occurred, the Empress Theodora used her influence to restore icons to churches. Ever since that time, the restoration of images in churches has been commemorated in Eastern Christianity on the First Sunday of Greater Lent and is known as the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

The Trinity has never been a major theme in Christian art because while it might be relatively easy to portray the Son (Jesus the Christ), it is more difficult to portray the Father or Creator and the Holy Spirit. In many of the instances where this is attempted, God the Father is portrayed as a bearded old man and the Spirit as a dove. Such representations may satisfy artists, but the representations are poor theology because they do not adequately represent the mystery of God.

Iconoclasm was also an issue during the Reformation in the 16th century. Protestant reformers John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli condemned the use of statues, relics and other holy objects as idolatry. In 1556, several monasteries in Belgium and the Netherlands were attacked and statues destroyed. Protestant Christianity is characterised by its lack of religious imagery. Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, on the other hand, embraced the use of images and their churches are adorned by mosaics, murals, stained-glass windows, paintings and statues. Many of the images in Catholic and Orthodox Christian churches have the life

of Jesus as their focus, while others focus on Mary and the saints. One of the many things that distinguishes Christianity from the other monotheistic religions, Judaism and Islam, is its use of imagery to teach people and as an aid for prayer.



▲ **Figure 6.6** *Triumph of Orthodoxy*, created in the late 14th or early 15th century, celebrates Empress Theodora's victory over iconoclasm.

### ACTIVITY 6.4

- 1 Access the New Advent website, available at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5978>. As a class, use the information located on this site to create a class timeline of the events that occurred during iconoclast persecutions.
- 2 Write a list of perspectives (points of view) for Emperor Leo III and Christians. Consider Emperor Leo's reasons for wanting to eliminate religious art, as well as reasons Christians might have seen value in such art. Copy the table below to record your ideas.

Pope Leo III	Majority of Christian people

- 3 Examine the images in Figure 6.7 and Figure 6.8. In what way or ways does each one help to convey the significance of the birth and resurrection of Jesus? Refer to specific aspects within the artworks to support your response.



▲ **Figure 6.7** *Adoration of the Shepherds*, by Gerritt Van Honthorst, 1622



◀ **Figure 6.8** *Harbingers of the Resurrection*, by Nikolay Gay, 1867

For Christians, belief in one God is expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity and proclaimed by believers in the Creed and other prayers and blessings that invoke God as Creator or Father; God the Son as Redeemer; and God the Holy Spirit as Sustainer.



## 6.3 Islam

Muslims believe that there is only one God, Allah, who is without equal. The *Shahadah*, the first pillar of Islam, proclaims Islam's unshakeable belief in the oneness and uniqueness of God, a principle known as *tawhid*: 'Ashhadu Alla Ilaha Illa Allah Wa Ashhadu Anna Muhammad Rasulu Allah', which can be translated as: 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Messenger is the statement of faith woven into every element of daily life for Muslims'. The *Shahadah* is broadcast from mosques to call people to prayer, is whispered in the right ear of newly born children, and is the last thing whispered into the ear of a dying person.

The uniqueness and oneness of Allah is a recurring theme in the Qur'an and an oft quoted text is from 112th chapter called *Al Ikhlas* (The Unity):

Say: He is Allah, the One,  
Allah is He on whom all  
depend,  
He does not beget, nor is He  
begotten,  
And (there is) none like Him.

The opposite of *tawhid*, the oneness of Allah, is *shirk*, which means 'making a partner or an equal' and is usually translated as 'idolatry'. Designating a partner or equal to Allah denies the principle of Allah's uniqueness and unity, thereby undermining the foundations of Islam. *Shirk* is the gravest sin in Islam. For Muslims, understanding of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity leads them to consider it to be *shirk*. In the strict Saudi Arabian Wahhabi school of Islam, *shirk* can also occur when Muslim pilgrims display too much attention to the graves of saints, including the tomb of Muhammad in Medina.



▲ Figure 6.9 A Muslim woman during her daily prayers

For Muslims, belief in the oneness and unity of Allah does not restrict the richness of God. Islam has 99 names for Allah, and the litany of qualities contained in the 99 names begin with the two attributes that begin every chapter of the Qur'an: 'In the Name of Allah, the most compassionate, the most merciful'. Translated into English, the 99 names of Allah are:

- |                           |                                     |   |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 The Greatest Name       | 29 The Judge                        | 57 The Praised One                                |
| 2 The All-Compassionate   | 30 The Just                         | 58 The Appraiser                                  |
| 3 The All-Merciful        | 31 The Subtle One                   | 59 The Originator                                 |
| 4 The Absolute Ruler      | 32 The All-Aware                    | 60 The Restorer                                   |
| 5 The Pure One            | 33 The Forbearing                   | 61 The Giver of Life                              |
| 6 The Source of Peace     | 34 The Magnificent                  | 62 The Taker of Life                              |
| 7 The Inspirer of Faith   | 35 The Forgiver and Hider of Faults | 63 The Ever Living One                            |
| 8 The Guardian            | 36 The Rewarder of Thankfulness     | 64 The Self-Existing One                          |
| 9 The Victorious          | 37 The Highest                      | 65 The Finder                                     |
| 10 The Compeller          | 38 The Greatest                     | 66 The Glorious                                   |
| 11 The Greatest           | 39 The Preserver                    | 67 The One, the All Inclusive,<br>The Indivisible |
| 12 The Creator            | 40 The Nourisher                    | 68 The Satisfier of All Needs                     |
| 13 The Maker of Order     | 41 The Accounter                    | 69 The All Powerful                               |
| 14 The Shaper of Beauty   | 42 The Mighty                       | 70 The Creator of All Power                       |
| 15 The Forgiving          | 43 The Generous                     | 71 The Expediter                                  |
| 16 The Subduer            | 44 The Watchful One                 | 72 The Delayer                                    |
| 17 The Giver of All       | 45 The Responder to Prayer          | 73 The First                                      |
| 18 The Sustainer          | 46 The All-Comprehending            | 74 The Last                                       |
| 19 The Opener             | 47 The Perfectly Wise               | 75 The Manifest One                               |
| 20 The Knower of All      | 48 The Loving One                   | 76 The Hidden One                                 |
| 21 The Constrictor        | 49 The Majestic One                 | 77 The Protecting Friend                          |
| 22 The Reliever           | 50 The Resurrector                  | 78 The Supreme One                                |
| 23 The Abaser             | 51 The Witness                      | 79 The Doer of Good                               |
| 24 The Exalter            | 52 The Truth                        | 80 The Guide to Repentance                        |
| 25 The Bestower of Honors | 53 The Trustee                      | 81 The Avenger                                    |
| 26 The Humiliator         | 54 The Possessor of All Strength    | 82 The Forgiver                                   |
| 27 The Hearer of All      | 55 The Forceful One                 | 83 The Clement                                    |
| 28 The Seer of All        | 56 The Governor                     | 84 The Owner of All                               |
|                           |                                     | 85 The Lord of Majesty and Bounty                 |
|                           |                                     | 86 The Equitable One                              |
|                           |                                     | 87 The Gatherer                                   |
|                           |                                     | 88 The Rich One                                   |
|                           |                                     | 89 The Enricher                                   |
|                           |                                     | 90 The Preventer of Harm                          |
|                           |                                     | 91 The Creator of The Harmful                     |
|                           |                                     | 92 The Creator of Good                            |
|                           |                                     | 93 The Light                                      |
|                           |                                     | 94 The Guide                                      |
|                           |                                     | 95 The Originator                                 |
|                           |                                     | 96 The Everlasting One                            |
|                           |                                     | 97 The Inheritor of All                           |
|                           |                                     | 98 The Righteous Teacher                          |
|                           |                                     | 99 The Patient One.                               |



◀ **Figure 6.10** Muslim pilgrims at the Ka'bah

It is common for Muslims to recite the 99 names while counting them on *tasbeih* (prayer beads), which is a circle of 99 beads divided into three sections of 33 beads each.

In pre-Islamic culture, Arabic people used to make an annual pilgrimage to a shrine that is now known as the Ka'bah. At the shrine, there were more than 300 statuettes representing the pantheon of local gods. In 630 CE, when Muhammad returned to Mecca, he ordered all the statuettes be destroyed. The Ka'bah was retained and transformed into a central focus of pilgrimage for Muslims. The Ka'bah is shaped like cube and stands about 16 metres above a marble base. It is grey stone and covered by the *kiswa*, a black cloth

embroidered with golden calligraphy. Islamic tradition says that the Ka'bah was built by Adam, and then rebuilt by Abraham and his son Ishmael after being destroyed in the waters of the Flood. Five times a day, every day, thousands of Muslims recite their daily prayers facing towards the Ka'bah as they fulfil one of the five pillars of Islam, *Salat*.

Another key principle of Islam is *aniconism*, which means that no representations, images or statues can be made of Allah because Allah is beyond all images. Instead of anthropomorphic figures, abstract geometric forms or calligraphy of texts from the Qur'an are the only visual images seen in Islam.

## ACTIVITY 6.5

To perform *Salat*, Muslims are required to perform *wudu* (ritual ablutions) and to remain clean during the prayer time. To this end, Muslims usually use a prayer mat to separate them from the ground below during prayer time.

- 1 View the images below and explore the Muslim Prayer Mats website available at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5979> to complete research into the various images that might be acceptable as decorations for prayer mats.



- 2 Design and colour a prayer mat appropriate for use by a Muslim. You might include some geometric design, Arabic calligraphy, a dome shape or a mosque outline. You may either annotate its design or explain your design choices when presenting to the class.

## 6.4 Conclusion

While Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all monotheistic religions because they profess a belief in one God – indeed, in the same God – their understandings of God differ significantly and these differences are most obvious in the teachings and practices of each tradition.

## End of Strand Activities

### Trinity: God, Jesus the Christ, Spirit

- Throughout the history of the church, individuals have created visual images of what they believe Jesus may have looked like, or images relating to the Gospel stories about Jesus. Create a visual timeline of images of the Trinity from the early Church paintings in the Catacombs to earliest times. Use the following headings as a guide for your timeline: Early Church (1st to 3rd centuries), the Middle Ages (4th to 10th centuries), 15th century, 17th century, 19th century and post Vatican II (after 1965). For each image, explain what you believe the artist was trying to convey about the Trinity.
- Prepare a class art exhibition called *Images of Jesus*. As part of this, each student is to create a contemporary piece of art revolving around Jesus and one of the titles used to refer to him by the Gospel writers (Son of Man, Son of God, Lord, and Christ or Messiah).

In addition to a piece of art, each student is to write a brief caption for the artwork, explaining the title chosen and referring to a biblical passage where this title is used. You might start with the biblical passage and use it as inspiration for your work.

- You are a member or participant in various organisations and groups in your life; these range from family groups to sporting clubs to school groups and beyond. Select one of these communities and respond to the following:
  - What are the core beliefs that are central to membership (belonging) to this group?
  - What is the purpose of this group or community? Does it have a key focus or specific outcomes or objectives it wishes to achieve?
  - What actions and behaviours are required of members and participants of this group? Is there anything that would result in temporary or permanent exclusion?
  - Think of three key words that exemplify the essence of this group.
  - When you have collected this information, you need to use it to write a creed or statement of beliefs for this group. It needs to be presented as a poster or document that is decorated with images, photos and symbols appropriate to the group being represented.
  - Compare your statement of beliefs for the group with the Creed (statement of beliefs) in Christianity.

### Human Existence

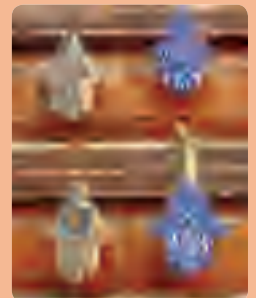
In 2005, Australia experienced a race riot. Read the report on the Australian News Commentary website, available at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5980>.

- What circumstances led to this event?
- The article mentions the term 'neo-Nazi'. What does this mean and could the term be offensive?
- Thinking of the information you have read on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum page and the information provided on the Cronulla Riots. Why do people discriminate based on ethnicity? Discuss with you class.
- Why were people so quick to respond in a violent way rather than a peaceful way?

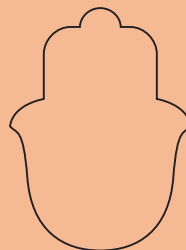
- As a class, create a survey investigating issues of racism and exclusion within your school. You might like to use a survey generating program such as Survey Monkey (available at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5981>) which will help you to create an anonymous online survey.
- Collate the results of your survey, and analyse the responses. Depict the results graphically using a table or a chart.
- Prioritise ways to raise awareness of these issues within your school. Brainstorm activities or events you might organise that will promote the issue and provoke people to take a stand against racism and exclusion within your student body. You might like to use the Racism No Way website, available at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5982>, as a starting point.

### World Religions

- The religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam share a heritage found in the Middle East. Imagine you are a tour guide who will be taking an escorted tour group through the region showing and explaining to your group key sites associated with the three religions. You will need to design a 14-day tour through the Middle East. Mention what you will see each day, as well as explaining the significance of the site. Put this into a PowerPoint presentation to convince prospective tourists to take your tour. Your teacher will choose a grade level to come to your class to listen to your presentations. The students from this grade will then vote on which tour they would like to go on!
- Working in small groups, revise the elements of a creed. With your group members, write a creed that could potentially be used as part of whole school events. Your School Creed must include professions of your school ethos and the central beliefs of your school. You could look to your school's motto and mission or vision statement for some inspiration.
- A *hamsa* is an amulet shaped like a hand, with three extended fingers in the middle and a curved thumb or little finger on either side. *Hamsa* comes from the Hebrew word *hamesh*, which means 'five'. In Judaism, it is called the 'Hand of Miriam' (Moses' sister): some say it represents the five books of the Torah. The *hamsa* is also a popular symbol in Islam and is called the 'Hand of Fatima' (Muhammad's daughter): some say that it represents the Five Pillars of Islam. You may have seen it as a contemporary piece of jewellery and it is said to protect against the 'evil eye'.



▲ **Figure 6.11** A brightly painted *hamsa* hanging in a Moroccan market



Copy the outline at left and create an Islamic *hamsa* and a Jewish *hamsa* that identifies the core beliefs in each tradition. What words and symbols will you include? What will you not use? The websites accessed via the links below may be of some benefit to you in gathering ideas to include in your design.

<http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5983>  
<http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5984>  
<http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5985>