



TEN THINGS

**JEWS AND HINDUS
HAVE IN COMMON**



At first glance, India and Israel seem worlds apart. Yet, with a deeper look, there are some important similarities between these two countries, home to two ancient religions and modern peoples.



1. Sacred Homelands and Shared Histories - Judaism and Hinduism are religions connected to a land. This leads to a national identity or a heritage for both communities; for Judaism, it is Israel, and for Hinduism, it is India. The two religions have shared histories with several other religions, Judaism with other Abrahamic religions such as Christianity and Islam, and Hinduism with other Dharmic religions such as Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism.

2. Similar Holiday Themes - Both religions have festivals of light: Diwali for Hindus and Hanukkah for Jews. Diwali, which translates to “row of lights,” serves as a beacon of brightness every year, celebrating the victory of good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and the re-establishment of justice and righteousness (*dharma*). It’s a time to gather with friends and family and bask in the light of each other’s company while preparing for a fruitful year ahead. Hanukkah, meaning “dedication” in Hebrew, celebrates the re-establishment of religious freedom and symbolizes the Jewish people’s fight for, and achievement of, its liberty and freedom as a nation against overwhelming odds. It commemorates the rededication of the Holy Temple by lighting the holy flame.



3. Dietary Provisions -In Judaism, Kashrut is a set of dietary laws that restrict certain foods and methods of procurement. Kashrut is part of a spiritual discipline and a path to holiness. It incorporates the Jewish prohibition of cruelty to animals. While Hinduism does not require a specific diet, Hindu teachings support a vegetarian diet based on the principle of non-harming (*ahimsa*). Hindus may also follow the ancient healing system of Ayurveda, which is an individualized holistic health practice based on a variety of physical and energetic principles.

4. Common Rites and Practices -Symbols play a spiritual role in Hinduism and Judaism. For example, in both, a red string offers spiritual significance and protection for Hindus and Jews. In Hinduism, a *Kautuka* or *Kalava* is tied by a priest or elder family member on a devotee's wrist or around a vessel as a spiritual rite. In Judaism, the red string is known to ward off evil spirits. Some other similarities involve breaking a glass in Jewish weddings, whereas Hindus break a clay pot, and both Hindu and Jewish weddings take place under a four-post canopy.



Hindus most educated religious group in the US, says new report

The study by Pew used the four-year college degree as the marker, saying it is generally regarded as the key asset for economic success.



The Widener Library at Harvard Yard of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. A new study has found that Hindus are the most educated

Jews are world's best-educated religious group, study reveals

Pew report on schooling of different faiths finds disparity between religions in some areas of world such as sub-Saharan Africa



Students at a Jewish school in London. The report said that, worldwide, Jews had an average of 13.4 years of schooling. Photograph: Graham Turner/The Guardian

5. Global Diaspora - Practitioners of both religions have moved across the world, and diasporas are found globally in large numbers. The Hindu and Jewish diasporas have made significant contributions wherever they have settled, including in the U.S. In addition, there is an historic Jewish population in India and a smaller population of Hindus in Israel. Both groups place a high value on family and education.

6. Common Histories - Both cultures have an ancient origin in the Asian continent, with Judaism first emerging in the Iron Age around the 10th century BCE. The origins of Hindu civilization date back to the 30th century BCE, if not

further. In contemporary times, both India and Israel were colonized or administered by Great Britain. India and Israel gained their modern independence within nine months of each other; India became independent from the British on August 15, 1947, and Israel became an independent state on May 14, 1948.



7. Culture That Values Women - Both countries have had women prime ministers and prominent women in the military, government, and private sectors. The significance of females is prominently featured in religious texts and scriptures in both religions. Hinduism is one of the oldest surviving goddess-worshipping traditions and cultures. It teaches that God can be male, female, or transcend gender.





8. Modern Contributions - Both countries have contributed to modern technologies and living practices. India and Israel, together, have implemented a large number of cutting edge research projects in applied areas covering agricultural and medical biotechnology, human genomics, advanced materials & nanotechnology, imaging sensor & robotics, solar energy, communication & information technology, and lasers & electro-optics. Recently, India's Premas Biotech and Israel's Oramed Pharmaceuticals jointly developed oral vaccines for COVID-19.

9. Religious Pluralism - Neither religion proselytizes; instead, both accept that there are many paths to God. However, this liberty has not always been afforded to Judaism and Hinduism, as both faiths have experienced—and continue to experience—fervent efforts to convert their adherents.



10. Common Misconceptions and Stereotypes-Hindu and Jewish students and communities deal with many negative stereotypes and misconceptions about their faith, practices, and identities. Anti-Israel and anti-India conferences and campaigns are hosted on campuses, and the media often misrepresents Israel and India, replacing biased narratives for factual reporting. Jewish and Hindu groups, especially students, also face bullying and hatred on social media platforms, which can lead to shame, fear of isolation, or questioning one's identity.

Antisemitism

noun an·ti·Sem·i·tism
an-tē-•se-mə-•ti-zəm

International Holocaust
Remembrance Alliance Working
Definition of Antisemitism:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

Examples:

Calling for or justifying the harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or religion.

Making dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews.

Denying the fact and scope of the Holocaust. Accusing Jewish citizens of dual loyalty. Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.

Drawing comparisons of Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

Hinduphobia

noun hindo•••fōbēā
h•ndu•fo•biā

Conference held at Rutgers University in 2021:

“Hinduphobia is a set of antagonistic, destructive, and derogatory attitudes and behaviors towards Sanātana Dharma (Hinduism) and Hindus that may manifest as prejudice, fear, or hatred...”

Examples:

Targeted violence towards Hindu people, community institutions, organizations, and ethnic cleansing.

Calling for or normalizing the killing or harming of Hindus as a result of an extremist view of religion and history.

Accusing Hindus of inventing or exaggerating the persecution of Hindus.

Calling for the destruction and dissolution of Hinduism.

Accusing those who speak about Hinduphobia of being agents or pawns of violent, oppressive political agendas.

Conflating Hindu identity with Indian citizenship, ethnicity, and patriotism.

Ten Things Most People Don't Know Jews and Hindus Have in Common
was produced by StandWithUs and the Hindu American Foundation.

StandWithUs

StandWithUs is an international and non-partisan Israel education organization that inspires and educates people of all ages and backgrounds, challenges misinformation, and fights antisemitism.

StandWithUs empowers and energizes students and communities with leadership training and educational programs on hundreds of college campuses, high schools, and middle schools. StandWithUs informs through social media, print and digital materials, films, weekly newsletters, and missions to Israel.

Founded in 2001 and headquartered in Los Angeles, the organization has programs on five continents with chapters and offices throughout the U.S., Israel, the UK, Canada, and Brazil.



The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) is a non-profit, non-partisan educational and advocacy organization that focuses on educating the public about Hindus and Hinduism and advocating for policies and practices that ensure the well-being of all people and the planet. HAF works directly with educators and journalists to ensure an accurate understanding of Hindus and Hinduism. HAF also works with policymakers and key stakeholders to champion issues of concern to Hindu Americans, including defending civil and human rights and protecting all living beings. Inspired by Hindu teachings and guiding principles, HAF promotes dignity, mutual respect, and pluralism.

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