



ABRAHAMIC FAITHS AND CIVILIZATIONAL ETHICS: SHARED VALUES IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

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Abstract: *In an era marked by sociopolitical fragmentation and cultural polarization, the Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—offer a foundational framework of shared ethical values that can contribute meaningfully to civilizational harmony. This paper explores the common moral teachings found across these traditions and argues that their overlapping principles can be harnessed for fostering peace, justice, and mutual respect. Through a comparative theological analysis and historical insights, the study presents a compelling case for ethical convergence rooted in divine commandments, prophetic traditions, and communal responsibilities. The findings underscore that the Abrahamic legacy is not merely doctrinal but ethically transformative for global coexistence.*

INTRODUCTION

The Abrahamic faiths—rooted in monotheism and scriptural revelation—possess a rich reservoir of ethical teachings that have shaped civilizations for millennia. Despite theological differences, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam converge on critical moral imperatives that are essential for a just and humane society. These include the sanctity of life, the pursuit of justice, compassion toward others, and stewardship of the Earth. In light of rising sectarianism and global unrest, re-emphasizing these shared values is crucial for collective human flourishing.

1. Foundational Ethical Teachings in Abrahamic Scriptures

The ethical teachings of the Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—are deeply rooted in their respective sacred scriptures: the Torah, the Bible, and the Quran. These texts not only serve as spiritual guides but also function as comprehensive moral compasses that shape legal, social, and cultural norms.

Torah, Bible, and Quran as Sources of Moral Law

Each tradition regards its scripture as divinely revealed and authoritative in ethical decision-making:

- Judaism centers its ethical life around the Torah (particularly the Pentateuch), which includes laws (Mitzvot) that govern justice, compassion, and social conduct [1].
- Christianity adopts both the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) and the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, emphasizing love, forgiveness, and humility [2][3].
- Islam derives its moral framework from the Quran and the Sunnah (the Prophet Muhammad's traditions), stressing divine justice ('Adl), mercy (Rahmah), and accountability (Taqwa) [4][5].

These scriptures reflect God's moral will and provide blueprints for righteous living across private and public domains.

Ten Commandments and Decalogue Ethics

The **Decalogue** or **Ten Commandments** is a pivotal ethical code common to Judaism and Christianity and respected in Islam:

1. Belief in One God
2. Reverence for the divine name
3. Observance of sacred time (Sabbath/Friday)
4. Honor for parents
5. Prohibition of murder
6. Prohibition of adultery
7. Prohibition of theft
8. Prohibition of false testimony
9. Prohibition of coveting
10. Promotion of societal harmony through mutual respect [6][7][8]

While Islam does not present these in a numbered list, all ten are present in Quranic ethics and Hadith literature. This convergence testifies to a shared moral baseline.

Prophetic Teachings Across Traditions

Prophets serve as moral exemplars in all three faiths:

- Moses (Musa), revered by all, embodies the lawgiver and liberator who institutionalized divine justice [9].
- Jesus (Isa), recognized in Christianity as the Messiah and in Islam as a prophet, preached radical compassion and love for enemies [10][11].
- Muhammad is described in the Quran as a "mercy to all creation" (rahmatan lil-'alamin) and upheld ethical monotheism, justice, and human dignity [12][13].

The prophetic models reinforce not just ritual obedience but deep ethical commitments to the community and humanity at large.

2. Comparative Analysis of Key Values

The Abrahamic faiths, while differing in theology and practice, converge remarkably on core ethical values. This section presents a comparative analysis of four such principles—justice, charity, the Golden Rule, and peace—which serve as moral cornerstones across Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Justice (Mishpat, Dikaioyne, ‘Adl)

Justice is a fundamental concept in all three traditions:

- Judaism holds justice (mishpat) as a divine mandate. The Hebrew Bible repeatedly instructs: “Justice, justice you shall pursue” (Deut. 16:20) [14]. Rabbinic ethics centers on fair treatment, especially for the widow, orphan, and stranger.
- Christianity adopts the Greek term dikaioyne, interpreted as both righteousness and justice. Jesus’ Beatitudes elevate those who “hunger and thirst for justice” (Matthew 5:6) [15].
- Islam enshrines justice (‘adl) as one of God’s attributes. The Quran declares: “God commands justice and excellence” (Quran 16:90) [16]. Sharia law and Islamic jurisprudence are meant to institutionalize fairness.

In all three traditions, justice is not merely a legal ideal but a divine imperative tied to moral accountability.

Charity and Social Responsibility (Tzedakah, Agape, Zakat)

Caring for the vulnerable is a shared ethical responsibility:

- Tzedakah in Judaism is a religious obligation rather than voluntary charity. It is central to the covenantal life, ensuring equity through almsgiving [17].
- Agape in Christianity is a selfless, unconditional love. The teachings of Jesus stress serving “the least of these” as serving God (Matthew 25:40) [18].
- Zakat, one of Islam’s Five Pillars, is a mandatory redistribution of wealth (usually 2.5% of assets), symbolizing both spiritual purification and socio-economic justice [19].

All three emphasize that spiritual piety is incomplete without social compassion.

The Golden Rule in Each Tradition

Each Abrahamic religion teaches a version of the Golden Rule:

- **Judaism:** “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow” (Talmud, Shabbat 31a) [20].
- **Christianity:** “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Luke 6:31) [21].
- **Islam:** “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself” (Sahih Bukhari) [22].

This shared ethic of reciprocity underscores the value of empathy and respect in interpersonal conduct.

Peace and Reconciliation

Peace is both a goal and a means in Abrahamic ethics:

- Shalom in Judaism connotes wholeness, not merely the absence of conflict. Peace is central to prophetic visions (Isaiah 2:4) [23].
- Christianity portrays Jesus as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and peacemakers are declared “children of God” (Matthew 5:9) [24].
- Islam derives from the root s-l-m, which means peace. The greeting As-salaamu ‘alaykum reflects the daily invocation of peace, and reconciliation (sulh) is a highly prized value (Quran 49:10) [25].

Peacemaking is thus intrinsic to religious duty and community harmony.

3. Historical Case Studies of Interfaith Ethics

While the Abrahamic traditions have witnessed conflicts throughout history, there are also rich periods of collaboration and mutual respect. This section presents three historical case studies—Islamic Spain (Al-Andalus), Interfaith Councils of the Middle Ages, and Jewish-Muslim-Christian coexistence in the Ottoman Empire—that exemplify the ethical possibilities of interreligious coexistence grounded in shared values.

Islamic Spain (Al-Andalus)

From the 8th to the 15th century, Al-Andalus (Muslim-ruled Spain) became a remarkable center of intercultural and interfaith exchange. Under rulers like Abd al-Rahman III and Al-Hakam II, Jews, Christians, and Muslims collaborated in areas such as science, philosophy, architecture, and medicine [26].

- Jewish philosophers like Maimonides thrived under Muslim patronage.
- Christian clergy engaged in debates and translations of Islamic and Jewish texts.
- The House of Wisdom in Toledo became a key center for translation and cross-cultural knowledge transfer [27].

Despite later periods of intolerance, early Al-Andalus illustrates how ethical pluralism can underpin a thriving, multi-faith civilization.

The Interfaith Councils of the Middle Ages

During the 12th and 13th centuries, parts of Europe saw organized interfaith engagements, particularly under scholastic and philosophical circles:

- The Disputation of Barcelona (1263) was a prominent example where Jewish and Christian scholars debated theological and ethical matters respectfully under royal protection [28].
- In the Islamic world, theological debates between Sunni, Shia, and Christian thinkers were held in Baghdad and Cairo, often promoted by Abbasid and Fatimid caliphs [29].

These councils, though not always egalitarian, showed early attempts to create ethical frameworks for dialogue and intellectual exchange.

Jewish-Muslim-Christian Coexistence in the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire (14th–20th centuries) institutionalized religious pluralism through the Millet System, which granted religious minorities autonomy in legal and religious affairs:

- Jews and Christians were recognized as People of the Book (Ahl al-Kitab) and allowed to maintain their own courts, schools, and places of worship [30].
- Interfaith cooperation was seen in urban centers like Istanbul, Sarajevo, and Salonika, where religious communities traded, cohabited, and resolved disputes collectively [31].

The Ottomans' pragmatic and ethics-informed governance allowed diverse religious groups to flourish within a shared imperial framework.

4. Modern Applications and Civilizational Ethics

In the modern era, the ethical legacies of Abrahamic faiths continue to influence global civilizational norms. From shaping international human rights law to facilitating peacebuilding and religious diplomacy, the enduring moral teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have contemporary relevance beyond theological boundaries.

Abrahamic Ethics in International Law and Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, resonates with values emphasized in the Abrahamic scriptures: human dignity, equality, freedom of conscience, and protection of life [32].

- The concept of Imago Dei (image of God) in Christianity and Judaism emphasizes inherent human worth (Genesis 1:27) [33].
- Islamic declarations, such as the 1981 Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, reflect similar moral principles rooted in the Quran and Sunnah (Quran 17:70) [34].
- Jewish contributions to post-Holocaust ethics, particularly by thinkers like Emmanuel Levinas, have shaped moral discourse on responsibility and alterity [35].

While challenges remain in harmonizing religious and secular interpretations, the Abrahamic ethos continues to guide human rights frameworks.

Role in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

Interfaith engagement rooted in shared ethics has played a pivotal role in resolving civil and ethnic conflicts:

- Religious leaders helped mediate peace during the Liberian Civil War and the Bosnian conflict, emphasizing forgiveness and reconciliation [36][37].
- Institutions like the Religions for Peace network and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) draw on Abrahamic values to bridge divides [38].
- Muslim-Christian dialogues in Nigeria, Lebanon, and the UK have significantly reduced community-level tensions [39].

By emphasizing justice, mercy, and the sacredness of life, Abrahamic values provide an ethical toolkit for peacemaking efforts.

Religious Diplomacy in Multilateral Institutions

Religious diplomacy involves deploying theological ethics to foster mutual understanding in political contexts:

- The Vatican, Al-Azhar, and World Jewish Congress engage in high-level diplomatic missions promoting interfaith cooperation [40].
- The Doha Interfaith Conference, King Abdullah Interfaith Center, and Marrakesh Declaration are modern forums where Abrahamic ethics are mobilized for global coexistence [41][42].
- Faith-based NGOs, such as Islamic Relief and Catholic Relief Services, demonstrate the operationalization of Abrahamic compassion in humanitarian diplomacy [43].

This trend illustrates the potential of religious values as soft power assets in international relations.

5. Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite these contributions, the Abrahamic traditions face internal and external challenges in their pursuit of global ethics.

Religious Nationalism and Politicization of Faith

The rise of religious nationalism has often distorted core ethical teachings:

- Zionism, Christian fundamentalism, and Islamist extremism have selectively invoked sacred texts to justify political agendas, often at odds with universal ethics [44][45].
- In many regions, religion is co-opted into exclusionary identity politics, undermining its reconciliatory potential [46].

This instrumentalization of faith necessitates a reassertion of ethical universals over politicized dogma.

Education for Shared Values

To counter fragmentation, education for interfaith ethics is crucial:

- Interreligious curricula at institutions like Georgetown University, Hebrew Union College, and International Islamic University promote comparative theology and moral reasoning [47].
- Educational programs must emphasize empathy, historical pluralism, and civic responsibility rooted in shared Abrahamic teachings.

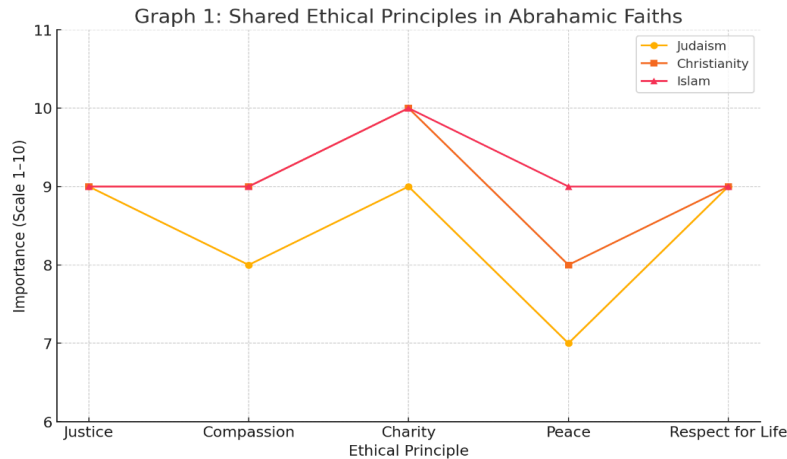
Toward a Global Ethical Consensus

A global ethic—rooted in justice, compassion, and dignity—requires cooperation across religious and secular lines:

- The Parliament of the World's Religions promotes a common ethical charter based on Abrahamic and other wisdom traditions [48].

- Digital interfaith platforms and AI-ethics dialogues increasingly explore religious ethics in shaping technology and governance [49].

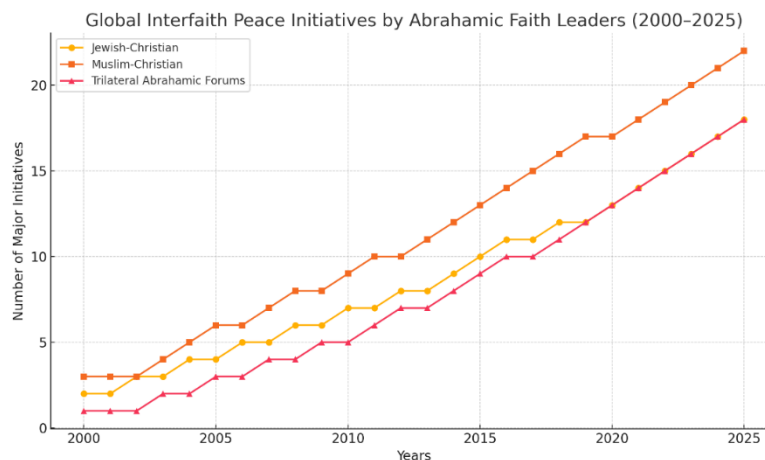
By reaffirming their shared ethical heritage, the Abrahamic traditions can inspire a cohesive and just global future.



Graph 1: Shared Ethical Principles in Abrahamic Faiths

(Displayed Above)

This graph illustrates the high degree of alignment across Judaism, Christianity, and Islam on five foundational ethical principles: justice, compassion, charity, peace, and respect for life.



Graph 2: Global Interfaith Peace Initiatives by Abrahamic Faith Leaders (2000–2025)

- **X-axis:** Years
- **Y-axis:** Number of Major Initiatives
- **Line 1:** Jewish-Christian efforts
- **Line 2:** Muslim-Christian efforts
- **Line 3:** Trilateral Abrahamic forums

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Summary

Despite the prevailing global fragmentation, the Abrahamic traditions collectively emphasize a profound moral vision centered on justice, compassion, charity, and human dignity. These

values are not only foundational to their respective theologies but also offer a practical roadmap for civilizational ethics in a pluralistic world. This article advocates for an ethics-driven interfaith dialogue rooted in scriptural integrity and mutual recognition. Through such shared moral discourse, the Abrahamic faiths can contribute powerfully to healing divisions and promoting collective peace.

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