

1.1

Abraham and Moses



While mighty empires rose and fell, a group of shepherds grew into a small nation. These people never ruled a powerful empire. But they were bound together by a strong religious faith, and their influence has been greater than that of many empires. These people are known by various names, including Hebrews, Israelites, and Jews.

MAIN IDEA

Abraham and Moses were important leaders of Judaism, the first religion based on the worship of a single God.

mt THE PROMISED LAND

The Hebrews were a people who settled in Canaan (KAY-nuhn) around 1800 B.C. Canaan was on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This region was later called Israel and also Palestine. The Hebrews differed from all other ancient people in an important way: they practiced **monotheism**, the worship of a single God. All other ancient people practiced polytheism, which you may recall is the worship of many gods. Monotheism was a significant development in religion and has had a great impact on cultures around the world.

Most of what we know about the Hebrews comes from the **Hebrew Bible**, a collection of ancient religious writings. According to these writings, God told **Abraham**, a Mesopotamian shepherd, to take his family and settle in Canaan. The region would be their Promised Land—a land that would belong to Abraham and his family forever. Abraham's descendants would have a special **covenant** (KUHV-uh-nuhnt), or religious agreement, with God. According to the covenant, God would protect the Hebrews if they accepted no other god and did what God asked.

The early Hebrews led a quiet, seminomadic life in Canaan. Seminomadic people move frequently with their flocks, but they often return to one place where they grow crops.

THE EXODUS mt

The land of Canaan sometimes became too dry for growing crops. According to the Hebrew Bible, a devastating drought, or dry period, caused such a severe shortage of food that the Hebrews left Canaan and settled in northern Egypt, perhaps around 1650 B.C. Here, the pharaoh enslaved them to work on his building projects. Around this time, the Hebrews became known as the Israelites.

The Hebrew Bible relates that the Israelites endured centuries of suffering before God chose a man named **Moses** to help them escape from Egypt. The Israelites returned to Canaan in a journey from slavery to freedom called the **Exodus**, possibly in the 1200s B.C. According to the Bible, the Israelites traveled through the desert for 40 years before finally returning to Canaan. Along the way Moses climbed Mount Sinai (SY-ny), where God gave him the **Ten Commandments** and other laws. This religious, moral, and civil code reaffirmed and expanded the Israelites' covenant with God. Today, the Ten Commandments form the basis of many modern laws, such as the law against stealing another person's property.

JOURNEYS TO THE PROMISED LAND, c. 1800–1250 B.C.

ABRAHAM

The Jews regard Abraham, shown in this detail from a painting, as the father of the Jewish people. According to the Hebrew Bible, God changed his name from *Abram*, meaning "exalted father," to *Abraham*, meaning "father of many."

Detail from Sacrifice of Isaac, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, 1603–1604

REVIEW & ASSESS

- READING CHECK** Why are Abraham and Moses important in the history of Judaism?
- INTERPRET MAPS** What natural feature did Abraham follow on the first part of the long journey to Canaan?
- COMPARE AND CONTRAST** How did Judaism differ from the religions of other ancient peoples?

1.2

A Distinct Culture



You need a lot of nerve to go against a common belief. Abraham had this courage. But his strong belief ended up leading his people down a path filled with intolerance and harsh treatment, which continue in some places today. As you will see, acting out of strong belief became an important part of the distinct culture of the Israelites.

MAIN IDEA

As the Israelites fought to win control of their Promised Land, their religious beliefs and practices set them apart from the Canaanites.



Critical Viewing At Mount Tabor, the Israelites battled the Canaanites. This view shows the town of Dabburiya at the foot of Mount Tabor today. Based on this view, how would you describe the terrain of the Promised Land?



DEBORAH

Deborah was the Israelites' only female judge. At the Battle of Mount Tabor around 1125 B.C., she led the Israelites to victory against a Canaanite king.

BELIEF IN ONE GOD **mt**

The belief in one God is central to Judaism. This idea may seem normal to many people today, but it was a radical idea in the ancient world. The Israelites were the first people to reject polytheism, making Judaism the world's oldest monotheistic religion.

Belief in one God helped unify the Israelites, but their beliefs and practices also set them apart from other ancient cultures. According to the Hebrew Bible, God gave Moses a code of religious practices that governed most aspects of life. The Israelites did not worship

idols, or false gods. They ate only certain foods. They did not work on the Sabbath, a weekly day of rest. While they traded with other peoples, they tried to keep a distinct cultural identity. Most Israelites did not marry outside their faith, and they were careful not to adopt foreign customs. They generally avoided the cultural diffusion, or mixing, that was a major part of many other civilizations.

THE TWELVE TRIBES **mt**

According to the Hebrew Bible, when the Israelites returned to Canaan from Egypt, they consisted of 12 **tribes**, or extended family units. Each tribe was descended from a son

of Jacob, Abraham's grandson. Since Jacob was also called Israel, the tribes were called the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and Jacob's descendants were called Israelites. They referred to Canaan as the Promised Land.

Moses had died before the Israelites returned to Canaan. The Bible describes how a new leader named Joshua brought the Israelites into the Promised Land around 1250 B.C. Joshua went to war against local people

known as the Canaanites, who practiced polytheism. After battling for about 200 years, the Israelites conquered most of Canaan. The tribes then divided up the conquered lands among themselves. They lived separately but acted together as a loose **confederation**, or group of allies. Powerful leaders called judges came to head the confederation of tribes. The judges directed battles, made decisions on policy, and helped keep the tribes united.

REVIEW & ASSESS

- 1. READING CHECK** What was a major difference between the Israelites and the Canaanites?
- 2. IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS AND DETAILS** According to the text, how was Israelite society organized?
- 3. MAKE INFERENCES** How did the Israelites maintain a distinct cultural identity?

1.3 Beliefs and Texts of Judaism



Your teachers probably have high expectations of you. At the very least, they'd like you

to act responsibly and follow the class rules. Likewise, the Israelites believed that God had high expectations of them and wanted them to follow his rules. These rules were written down and covered almost every aspect of their lives.

MAIN IDEA
The Israelites followed religious teachings written down in their holy books.

mt JEWISH BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Hebrew Bible describes how Moses transmitted a religious code that governed the lives of the Israelites. It addressed all aspects of life, including how to worship God, how to treat all members of society well, and what to eat. For example, they could eat only **kosher** foods, foods that were specially prepared according to Jewish dietary laws. According to these laws, animals had to be killed humanely, dairy and meat could not be eaten together, and pork and shellfish were not allowed.

Judaism stressed the importance of treating others well. It promoted social justice, equality, and the holiness of human life. The Israelites also highly valued education, charity, and hospitality, or the

kind treatment of guests. In addition, Israelite women were treated well for the time. Religious teachings told husbands to love and respect their wives, who were considered to be the heart of the family.

In time, Jews began gathering to worship in buildings called **synagogues** (SIHN-uh-gahgs), meaning "places of assembly." A spiritual leader called a **rabbi**, or "teacher," usually conducted services. Rabbis upheld Jewish customs and provided guidance for living a Jewish life.

An important practice of Judaism is the observance of a weekly day of rest known as the Sabbath. It begins at sunset on Friday and ends on Saturday night. On the Sabbath, the Jewish community gathers for prayer and to read from sacred texts. Families enjoy festive meals, and people leave behind weekday work and concerns.

SACRED TEXTS mt

The Hebrew Bible consists of 24 books in three sections: the **Torah**, Prophets, and Writings. The Torah consists of the five books of Moses. The name *Torah* means "the teachings." Jews believe that the Torah contains the word of God as revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Torah includes religious and moral guidance covering most areas of life. In fact, it forms the basis of all Jewish law. Every synagogue has a Torah scroll, handwritten on parchment, which is treated with enormous respect and read from beginning to end over the course of a year. The Torah and other Jewish laws are discussed and explained in the **Talmud**, a collection of writings by early rabbis.

The books in the Hebrew Bible also make up the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, though the books are ordered, divided, and sometimes named differently. Many stories related in the Hebrew Bible and in the Christian Bible also appear in the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam. For example, stories about Abraham appear in all three texts.



This page from a Hebrew Bible dated 1299 is written in Hebrew script.

REVIEW & ASSESS

- 1. READING CHECK** What are some important beliefs and texts of Judaism?
- 2. MAKE GENERALIZATIONS** What were important values in Judaism, and why might they have stood out in the ancient world?
- 3. DRAW CONCLUSIONS** Why do you think the Torah is treated with great respect by Jews?

2.1

Israel and Judah



Twelve friends decide to go to a movie, but everyone has different ideas about what to see. Finally, they agree to put one person in charge—a natural-born leader. His decision is quick and readily accepted. For a similar reason, the Israelites swapped decision-making by judges for rule by a single strong king.

MAIN IDEA

The Israelites united under a line of kings, but they later became divided and were defeated by external powers.



DAVID

David, a simple shepherd, attracted attention when he killed a gigantic warrior called Goliath using only his shepherd's sling and stones. David became one of the Israelites' greatest kings. His emblem, the six-pointed star called the Star of David or Shield of David, became a symbol of Judaism and modern Israel.

mt A LINE OF KINGS

The Israelites realized they needed greater unity and stronger leadership when they were attacked by another people called the Philistines (FIH-luh-steens), who lived in the area. The Israelites appointed a king named Saul to rule. In 1020 B.C., Saul defended Israel against the Philistines and other enemies.

When Saul died, **David** was crowned king. David united the tribes and continued the fight against the Philistines and other enemies. He captured Jerusalem and made it his capital, starting its transformation into one of history's most important cities.

David's son **Solomon** inherited a peaceful kingdom. He built a great stone temple in Jerusalem. Solomon's Temple became the focus of religious life. Solomon used trade and taxes to fund other huge building projects. However, most of the tax burden fell on the northern tribes, who came to resent Solomon's rule. Once again, trouble began.

Soon war broke out between the northern and southern tribes. Around 922 B.C., Israel was divided into two kingdoms: **Israel** in the north and **Judah** in the south. The northern kingdom consisted of ten of the original tribes, while the southern kingdom consisted of the remaining two. The kingdoms sometimes fought each other and sometimes formed alliances against common enemies. Eventually, Judaism and the Jewish people would be named after Judah.

INVADED AND CONQUERED mt

In 722 B.C., the Assyrian Empire conquered Israel. The ten tribes of Israel were scattered to other lands and disappeared from history. Judah, though, survived and was able to fight off Assyria.

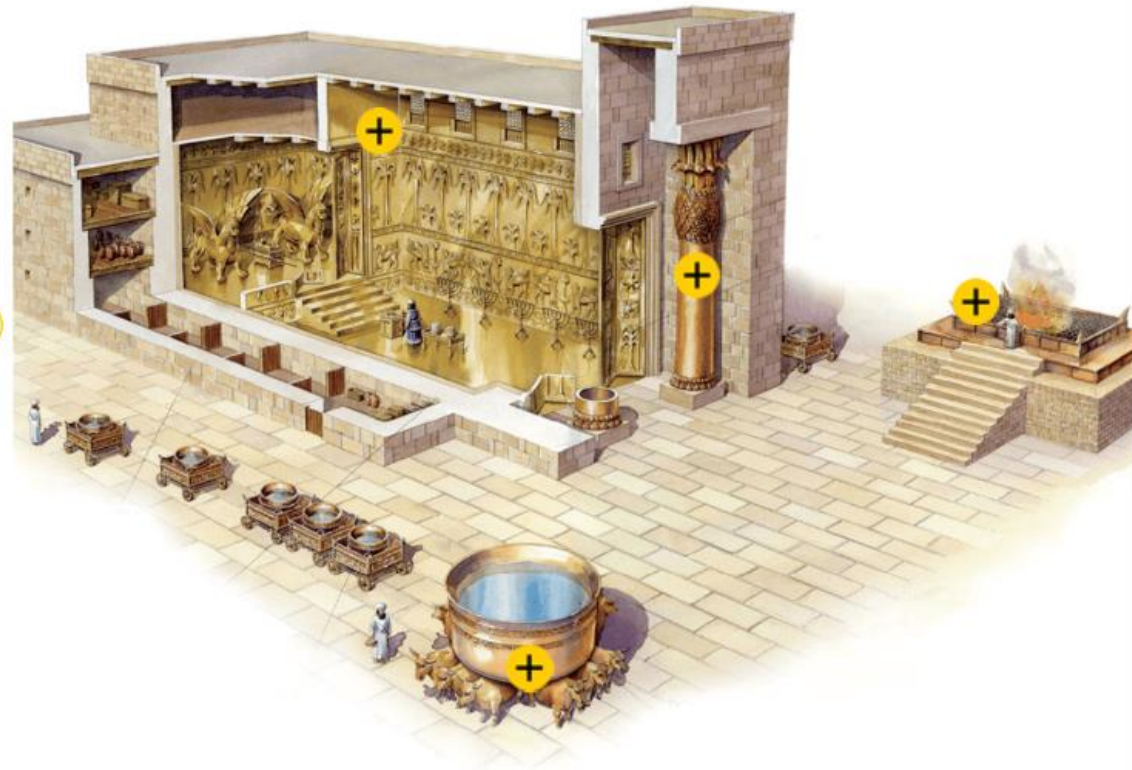
However, Judah soon found itself the battleground between two warring groups: the Egyptians and the New Babylonians. Egypt conquered Judah first. Then the New Babylonian army, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, overran Judah.

Judah rebelled. In 597 B.C., the king responded by invading Jerusalem. He moved the elite members of society to Babylon, leaving the poor behind. In 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's army destroyed Jerusalem, including Solomon's Temple. For the Jews, the age of kings was over.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

According to the Hebrew Bible, King Solomon built a magnificent temple in Jerusalem with walls and a floor of cedarwood overlaid in gold. The Bible indicates that Solomon's Temple housed the Ark of the Covenant, a container holding the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments. This reconstruction is based on descriptions of the Temple in the Hebrew Bible.

PRESS EACH AREA TO LEARN MORE.



REVIEW & ASSESS

- 1. READING CHECK** What events mark the rise and fall of the Jews' age of kings?
- 2. IDENTIFY PROBLEMS** What was one source of conflict between the northern and southern tribes of the Israelites?
- 3. MAKE INFERENCES** What do you think the destruction of Solomon's Temple meant to the Israelites?

Jews come to pray at Jerusalem's Western Wall, a remnant of the Second Temple. Many visitors leave written prayers in cracks in the wall.

2.2

Exile and Return



Psalm 137, from a book in the Hebrew Bible, captures the terrible upheaval the Jews

suffered when they were forced to leave Judah and live in Babylon: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept, as we thought of Zion [Israel]. How can we sing of the Lord on alien [foreign] soil?" But the Jews found a way, and they grew stronger as a result of the experience.

MAIN IDEA

While in Babylon, the Jews maintained, developed, and strengthened their identity and religion.

mt BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

The removal of some of the Jewish people from their homeland to faraway Babylonia was a deeply distressing experience. Their captivity, called the Babylonian Exile, lasted about 50 years. **Exile** is the forced removal from one's native country. During the exile, Jews built their first synagogues.

REVIEW & ASSESS

- 1. READING CHECK** Why did Cyrus the Great become a hero to the Jews?
- 2. IDENTIFY DETAILS** While in exile, how did the Jews maintain their identity?
- 3. MAKE INFERENCES** Why did a large number of Jews return to Judah in 538 B.C.?

Any remaining tribal divisions disappeared, to be replaced by a sense of religious and social unity among the Jewish people. Scribes started writing down the holy texts in a new script that is still used today. Most importantly, the Jews found that it actually was possible to "sing of the Lord on alien soil." Although they had lost control of the Promised Land, the Jews held on to their cultural identity and their religious faith.

CYRUS THE GREAT OF PERSIA mt

The Jews' efforts to maintain their faith were aided when **Cyrus the Great**, king of the Persian Empire, conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. As you may remember, Cyrus became known as "the Great" because of his impressive military conquests and wise rule. He adopted a policy of tolerance, allowing conquered people to keep their own customs and beliefs.

While Judah remained under Persian control, Cyrus freed the Jewish people in Babylon and encouraged them to return to their homeland and rebuild the Jewish state. Because of his policy of tolerance, Cyrus became a hero to the Jews.

Many of the Jewish people decided to stay in Babylonia. They formed a large Jewish community that thrived for centuries and remains in small numbers in present-day Iran and Iraq. However, in 538 B.C., about 42,000 Jews returned to Judah. There, they began rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, called the Second Temple. Religious leaders began to refine Judaism into something like its modern form. In particular, they finalized the Hebrew Bible, which became the central document of the Jewish faith, and began public readings of the Torah.

2.3

The Diaspora



If you moved to another country to live, you might adopt its language and customs to get along. But when Jews settled abroad, most tried hard to keep practicing their own religion and customs. The ability of the Jewish people to preserve their religion and heritage has been one of the most remarkable achievements in world history.

MAIN IDEA

The Syrians and then the Romans tried to destroy Judaism but ultimately failed.



YOHANNAN BEN ZAKAI

When the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, a Jewish teacher named Yohannan Ben Zakai asked permission to establish a school to teach Jewish scholars. The school was important in preserving Jewish traditions. Today, Jews regard Zakai as a great hero.

SYRIAN CONTROL

After the Persians, competing foreign powers controlled Judah. By about 300 B.C., Egypt took over the Jewish homeland. The Egyptian rulers tolerated Judaism and largely left Judah alone.

In 198 B.C., a Syrian empire, the Seleucids, conquered Judah. The Seleucids treated the Jews well until 168 B.C., when the Seleucid king tried to force the Jews to worship Greek gods. He dedicated the Second Temple to the Greek god Zeus. Outraged Jews rebelled, led by a family called the Maccabees. Their small army fought hard, defeated the Seleucids, and rededicated the Second Temple to Judaism.

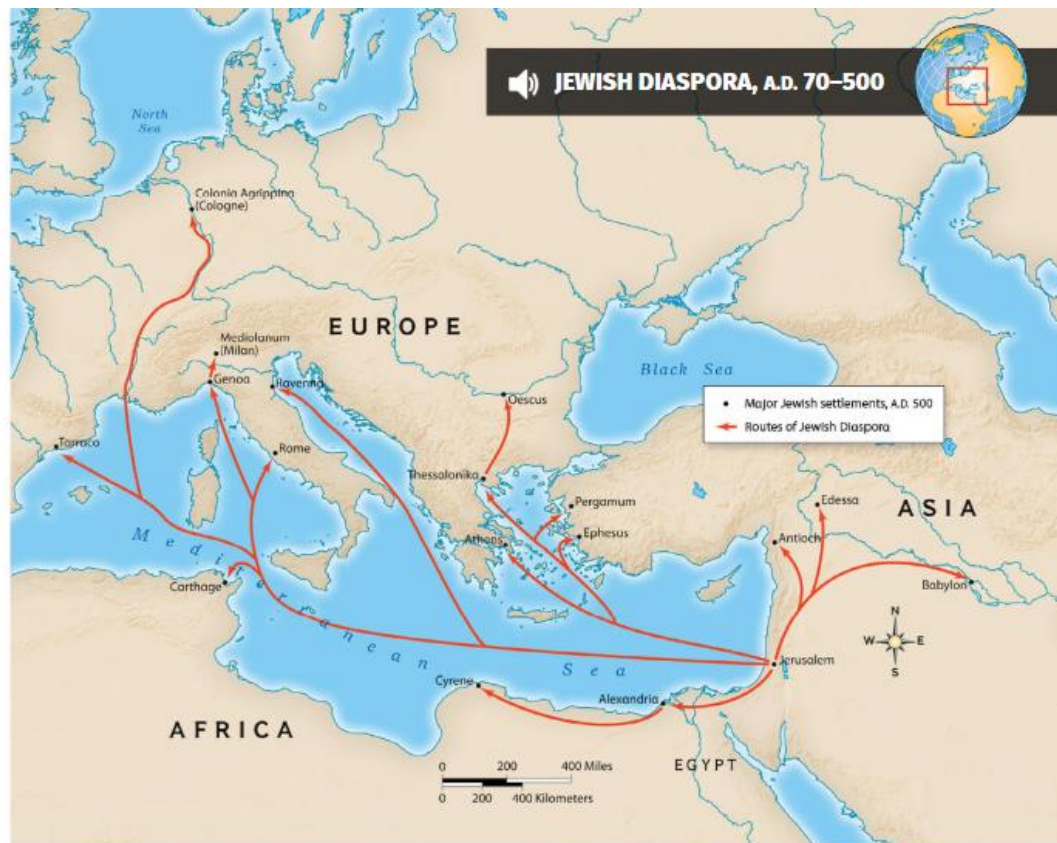
ROMAN RULE

Judah's freedom from foreign rule did not last long. In 63 B.C., Rome seized control of the region. At first the Romans allowed the Jews to rule themselves. In time, however, Rome took direct control of Judah and insisted that Jews worship the Roman gods. Many Jews, including revolutionaries called **Zealots**, favored armed rebellion.

War finally broke out in A.D. 66. Unfortunately, Jewish resistance was no match for the powerful Roman army. Rome's soldiers destroyed much of Jerusalem, including the Second Temple. By A.D. 70, the war was almost over. The Zealots fought on from the mountaintop fortress of Masada, but the Roman army eventually crushed the revolt.

After the rebellion, many Jews were forced to leave Jerusalem and settle in new places. The migration of Jews to places around the world, which began with the Babylonian Exile, is called the **Diaspora** (dy-AS-puh-ruh). Yet even after leaving their homeland, Jews kept their religion alive and maintained a strong connection to the land of Israel. The rabbis transformed Judaism into a home- and synagogue-based religion that could be practiced anywhere. By holding on to their religion and customs, the dispersed Jews ensured Judaism would become a worldwide religion.

The legacy of the Jewish people is important in world history. Judaism was the first monotheistic religion. Its emphasis on justice and morality influenced later religions, including Christianity. Judaism also had a great influence on other aspects of Western civilization, such as law.



HANUKKAH

One of the holiday traditions Jews continued to celebrate after the Diaspora is **Hanukkah**. The holiday commemorates religious freedom and the rededication of the Second Temple to Judaism.

According to tradition, the Temple had only enough holy oil to burn for one day, but the oil lasted eight days. This event is symbolized by a special menorah used for Hanukkah. The Hanukkah menorah has eight main holders for candles, plus a ninth holder for the candle that is used to light the others.

REVIEW & ASSESS

- 1. READING CHECK** How were Syrian rule and Roman rule of Judah similar?
- 2. INTERPRET MAPS** In what direction did most Jews travel during the Diaspora?
- 3. DRAW CONCLUSIONS** Why did Judaism become a worldwide religion?