

The Early Hebrews

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Abraham led the Hebrews to Canaan and to a new religion, and Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.
2. Strong kings united the Israelites to fight off invaders.
3. Invaders conquered and ruled the Israelites after their kingdom broke apart.
4. Some women in Israelite society made great contributions to their history.

The Big Idea

Originally desert nomads, the Hebrews' descendants, the Israelites, established a great kingdom.

Key Terms and People

Judaism, p. 202

Abraham, p. 202

Moses, p. 203

Exodus, p. 203

Ten Commandments, p. 204

David, p. 205

Solomon, p. 205

Diaspora, p. 206



Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the stages of Hebrew and later Jewish history from its beginnings in Canaan to Roman rule.

If YOU were there...

You and your family are herders, looking after large flocks of sheep. Your grandfather is the leader of your tribe. One day your grandfather says that your whole family will be moving to a new country where there is more water and food for your flocks. The trip will be long and difficult.

How do you feel about moving to a faraway land?

BUILDING BACKGROUND Like the family described above, the early Hebrews moved to new lands in ancient times. According to Jewish tradition, their history began when God told an early Hebrew leader to travel west to a new land.

Abraham and Moses Lead Their People

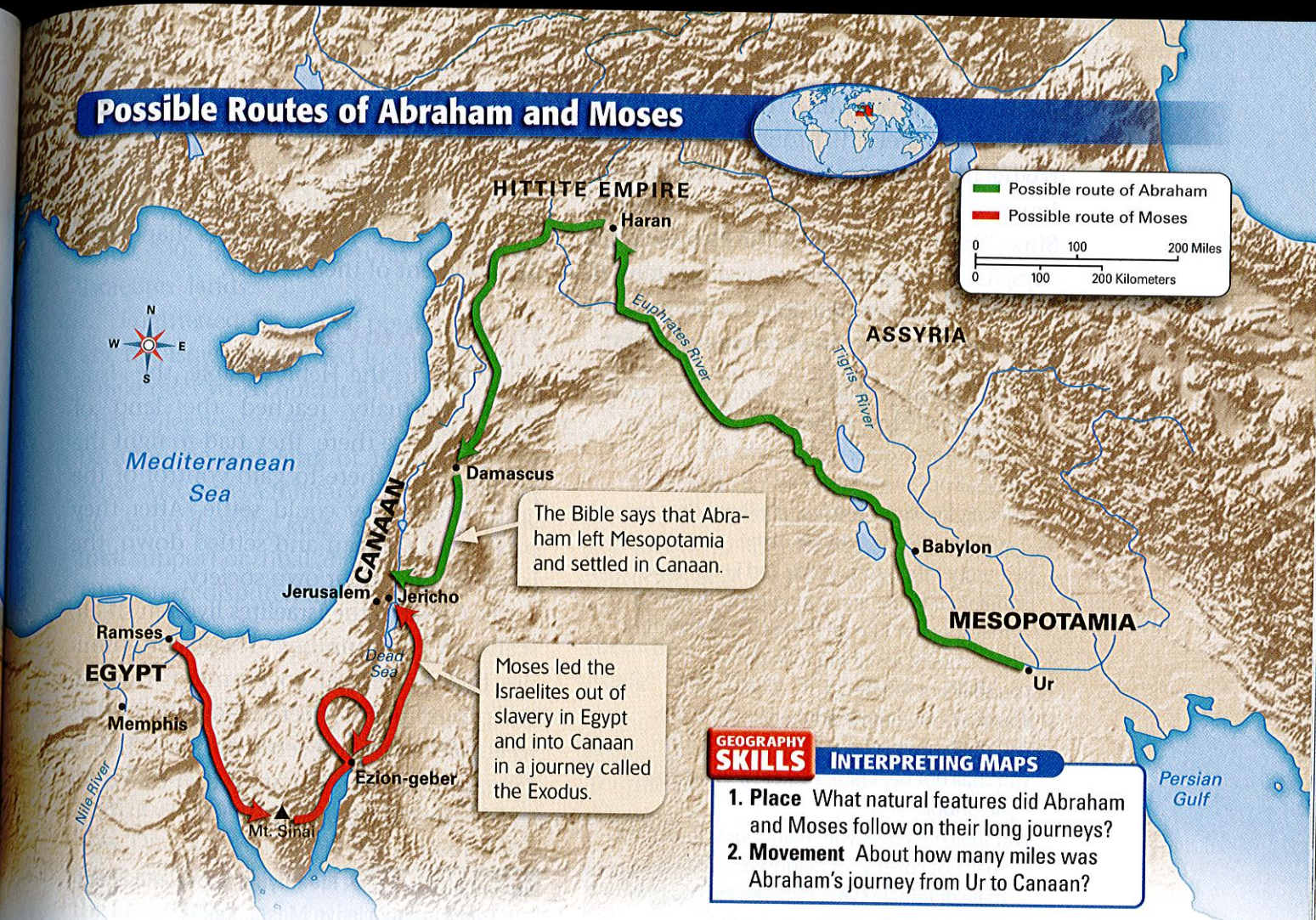
Sometime between 2000 and 1500 BC a new people appeared in Southwest Asia. They were the Hebrews (HEE-brooz), ancestors of the Israelites and Jews. The early Hebrews were simple herders, but they developed a culture that became a major influence on later civilizations.

Much of what is known about their early history comes from the work of archaeologists and from accounts written by Jewish scribes. These accounts describe the early history of the Jews' ancestors and the laws of **Judaism** (JOO-dee-i-zuhm), their religion. In time these accounts became the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible is largely the same as the Old Testament of the Christian Bible.

The Beginnings in Canaan and Egypt

The Hebrew Bible traces the Hebrews back to a man named **Abraham**. One day, the Hebrew Bible says, God told Abraham to leave his home in Mesopotamia. He was to take his family on a long journey to the west. God promised to lead Abraham to a new land and make his descendants into a mighty nation.

Possible Routes of Abraham and Moses



Abraham left Mesopotamia and settled in Canaan (KAY-nuhn), on the Mediterranean Sea. Some of his descendants, the Israelites, lived in Canaan for many years. Later, however, some Israelites moved to Egypt, perhaps because of famine in Canaan.

The Israelites lived well in Egypt, and their population grew. This growth worried Egypt's ruler, the pharaoh. He feared that the Israelites might soon become too powerful. To stop this from happening, the pharaoh made the Israelites slaves.

The Exodus

According to the Hebrew Bible, a leader named **Moses** appeared among the Israelites in Egypt. In the 1200s BC, God told Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses went to the pharaoh and demanded that

the Israelites be freed. The pharaoh refused. Soon afterward a series of terrible plagues, or disasters, struck Egypt.

The plagues frightened the pharaoh so much that he agreed to free the Israelites. Overjoyed with the news of their release, **Moses led his people out of Egypt in a journey called the Exodus.** To the Israelites, the release from slavery proved that God was protecting and watching over them. They believed that they had been set free because God loved them.

The Exodus is a major event in Jewish history, but other people recognize its significance as well. Throughout history, for example, enslaved people have found hope in the story. Before the Civil War, American slaves sang about Moses to keep their hopes of freedom alive.

For many years after their release, the Israelites traveled through the desert, trying to return to Canaan. During their journey they reached a mountain called Sinai. On that mountain, the Hebrew Bible says, God gave Moses two stone tablets. On the tablets was written a code of moral laws known as the **Ten Commandments**:

“I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: You shall have no other gods besides Me....
You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord will not clear one who swears falsely by His name.
Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy....
Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you.
You shall not murder.
You shall not commit adultery.
You shall not steal.
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
You shall not covet your neighbor’s house: you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

—Exodus 20:2–14

As you can see, by accepting the Ten Commandments, the Israelites agreed to worship only God. They also agreed to value human life, self-control, and justice. Over time the commandments shaped the development of their society.

The Return to Canaan

According to the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites eventually reached the land of Canaan. Once there, they had to fight the people living there to gain control of the land before they could settle. After they conquered Canaan and settled down, the Israelites built their own society.

In Canaan, the Israelites lived in small, scattered communities. These communities had no central government. Instead, each community selected judges as leaders to enforce laws and settle disputes. Before long, though, a threat arose that called for a new kind of leadership.

READING CHECK Identifying Cause and Effect

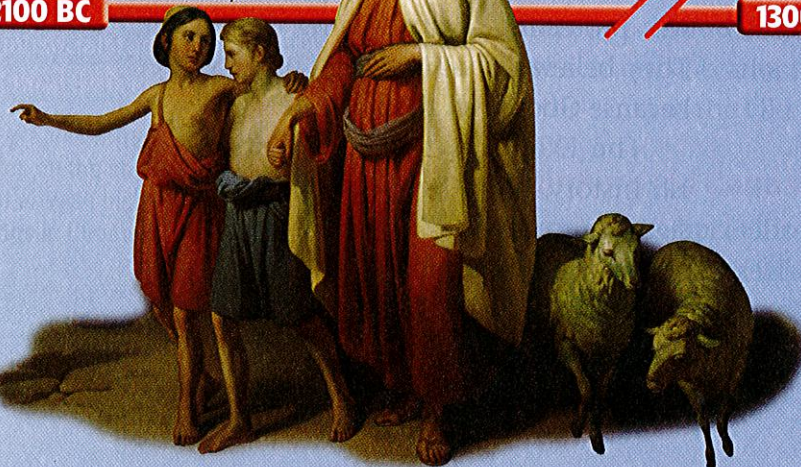
Why did Abraham leave Mesopotamia?

Time Line

Early Hebrew History

c. 2000 BC
Abraham leaves Mesopotamia and goes to Canaan.

2100 BC



1200s BC
Moses leads the Israelites on the Exodus out of slavery in Egypt.

1300 BC

1200 BC



Kings Unite the Israelites

The new threat to the Israelites came from the Philistines (FI-li-steenz), who lived along the Mediterranean coast. In the mid-1000s BC the Philistines invaded the Israelites' lands.

Frightened by these powerful invaders, the Israelites banded together under a single ruler who could lead them in battle. That ruler was a man named Saul, who became the first king of Israel. Saul had some success as a military commander, but he wasn't a strong king. He never won the total support of tribal and religious leaders. They often disputed his decisions.

King David

After Saul died, a man once out of favor with Saul became king. That king's name was **David**. As a young man, David had been a shepherd. The Hebrew Bible tells how David slew the Philistine giant Goliath, which brought him to the attention of the king. David was admired for his military skills and as a poet; many of the Psalms are

attributed to him. For many years, David lived in the desert, gathering support from local people. When Saul died, David used this support to become king.

Unlike Saul, David was well loved by the Israelites. He won the full support of Israel's tribal leaders. David defeated the Philistines and fought and won wars against many other peoples of Canaan. He established the capital of Israel in Jerusalem.

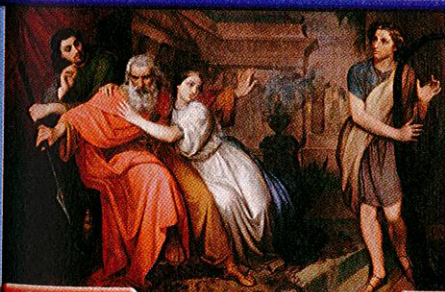
King Solomon

David's son **Solomon** (SAHL-uh-muhn) took the throne in about 965 BC. Like his father, Solomon was a strong king. He expanded the kingdom and made nearby kingdoms, including Egypt and Phoenicia, his allies. Trade with these allies made Israel very rich. With these riches, Solomon built a great Temple to God in Jerusalem. This Temple became the center of the Israelites' religious life and a symbol of their faith.

FOCUS ON READING

Are the sentences in this paragraph facts or opinions? How can you tell?

READING CHECK Finding Main Ideas Why did the Israelites unite under a king?



1100 BC

mid-1000s BC
Saul becomes the first king of Israel.

c. 1000 BC
David becomes king of Israel.

1000 BC

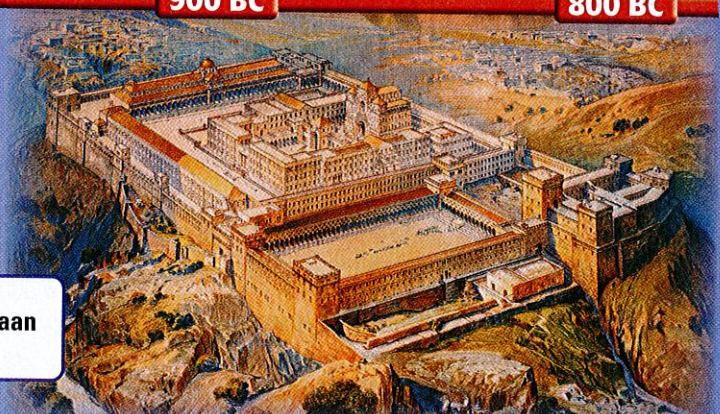
c. 965 BC
David's son Solomon becomes king of Israel. Solomon builds a great temple in Jerusalem.

c. 930 BC
Solomon dies. His kingdom is split into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

900 BC



800 BC



ANALYSIS SKILL

READING TIME LINES

About how many years after Abraham settled in Canaan did Saul become the first king of Israel?

Invaders Conquer and Rule

After Solomon's death in about 930 BC, revolts broke out over who should be king. Within a year, conflict tore Israel apart. Israel split into two kingdoms called Israel and called Judah (JOO-duh). The people of Judah became known as Jews.

The two new kingdoms lasted for a few centuries. In the end, however, both were conquered. The Assyrians defeated Israel around 722 BC. The kingdom fell apart because most of its people were dispersed. Judah lasted longer, but before long it was defeated by the Chaldeans.

The Dispersal of the Jews

The Chaldeans captured Jerusalem and destroyed Solomon's Temple in 586 BC. They marched thousands of Jews to their capital, Babylon, to work as slaves. The Jews called this enslavement the Babylonian Captivity. It lasted about 50 years.

In the 530s BC a people called the Persians conquered the Chaldeans and let the Jews return to Jerusalem. But many never took this opportunity to return home. Instead, some moved to other parts of the Persian Empire. Scholars call **the dispersal of the Jews outside of Israel and Judah the Diaspora** (dy-AS-pruh).

The rest of the Jews did return home to Jerusalem. There they rebuilt Solomon's Temple, which became known as the Second Temple. The Jews remained under Persian control until the 330s BC, when the Persians were conquered by invaders.

Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, c. 920 BC



GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

INTERPRETING MAPS

Place How did Israel and Judah compare in size to Solomon's kingdom?

Independence and Conquest

Tired of foreign rule, a Jewish family called the Maccabees (MA-kuh-beez) led a successful revolt in the 160s BC. For about 100 years, the Jews again ruled their own kingdom. Their independence, however, didn't last. In 63 BC the Jews were conquered again, this time by the Romans.

Although Jewish leaders added to the Second Temple under Roman rule, life was difficult. Heavy taxes burdened the people. The Romans were brutal masters who had no respect for the Jewish religion and way of life.

Some rulers tried to force the Jews to worship the Roman Emperor. The Roman rulers even appointed the high priests, the leaders of the Temple. This was more than the Jews could bear. They called on their people to rebel against the Romans.

READING CHECK

Summarizing How did Roman rule affect Jewish society?

Women in Israelite Society

Israelite government and society were dominated by men, as were most ancient societies. Women and men had different roles. Men made most decisions, and a woman's husband was chosen by her father. However, a daughter could not be forced into marriage. A family's property was inherited by the eldest son, who provided for all children and for women without husbands.

Some Israelite and Jewish women, however, made great contributions to their society. The Hebrew Bible describes them. Some were political and military leaders, such as Queen Esther and the judge Deborah. According to the Hebrew Bible, these women saved their people from their enemies. Other women, such as Miriam, the sister of Moses, were spiritual leaders.

Some women in the Hebrew Bible were seen as examples of how Israelite and Jewish women should behave. For example, Ruth, who left her people to care for her mother-in-law, was seen as a model of devotion to one's family. Ruth's story was told as an example of how people should treat their family members.

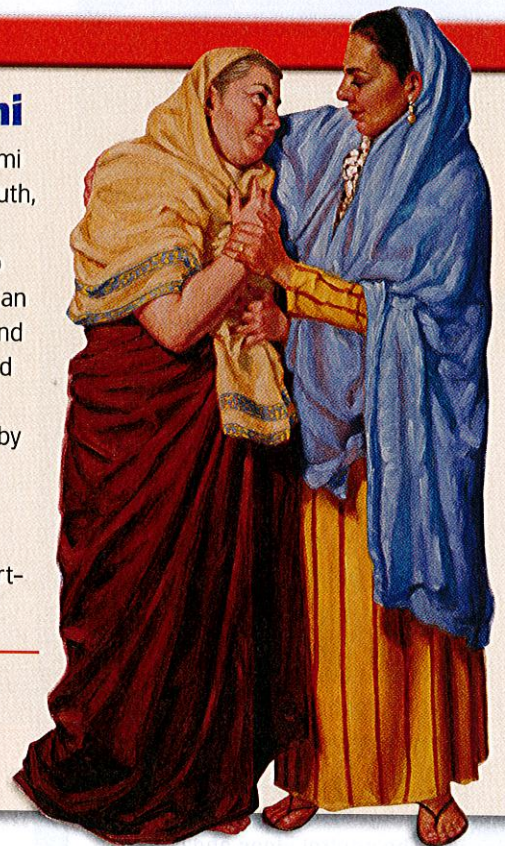
READING CHECK **Generalizing** What was life like for most Israelite women?

BIOGRAPHY

Ruth and Naomi

The story of Ruth and Naomi comes from the Book of Ruth, one of the books of the Hebrew Bible. According to this account, Ruth was not an Israelite, though her husband was. After he died, Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, resettled in Israel. Inspired by Naomi's faith in God, Ruth joined Naomi's family and adopted her beliefs. She dedicated her life to supporting Naomi.

Drawing Inferences What lessons might the story of Ruth be used to teach?



SUMMARY AND PREVIEW The history of the Jews and their ancestors began some 3,500 to 4,000 years ago. The instructions that Jews believe God gave to the early Hebrews and Israelites shaped their religion, Judaism. In the next section, you will learn about the main teachings of Judaism.

Section 1 Assessment



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ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Identify** Who was **Abraham**?
- b. Evaluate** Why is the Exodus a significant event in Jewish history?
- 2. Summarize** How did **David** and **Solomon** strengthen the kingdom of Israel?
- 3. Describe** What happened during the Babylonian Captivity?
- 4. a. Describe** Who had more rights in Israelite society, men or women?
- b. Make Inferences** How did Ruth and Naomi set an example for other Israelites?

Critical Thinking

- 5. Evaluating** Review your notes on the chapter. In a chart like this one, note the contributions of the four most important people.

Key Figure Contribution

Key Figure	Contribution

FOCUS ON WRITING

- 6. Taking Notes about Early Jewish History** Make a list of events and people that played key roles in early Jewish history. Look for ways to group your facts into features on your Web page.