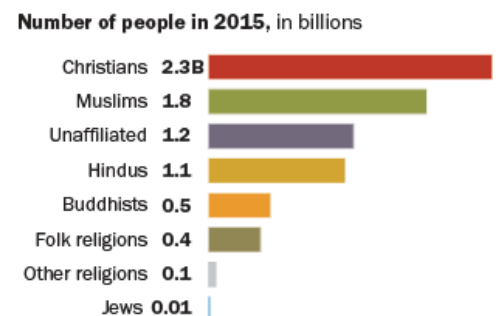
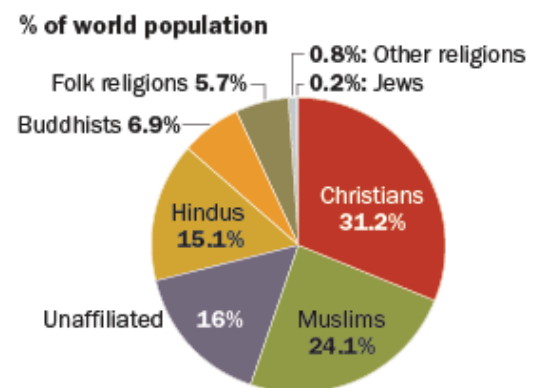
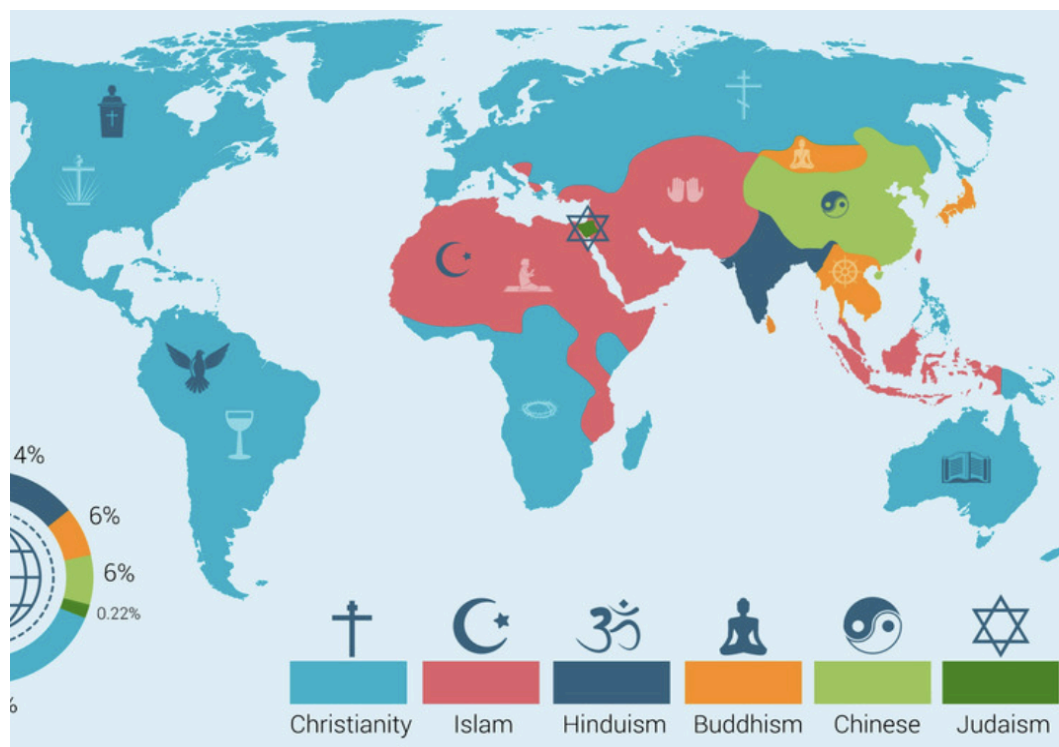


World Religions *and* Ethical Systems

A Global View

Religion is defined as an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices, and worship that centers on one or more gods. As many chapters in this book explain, religion has had a significant impact on world history. Throughout the centuries, religion has guided the beliefs and actions of millions around the globe. It has brought people together. But it has also torn them apart.

Religion continues to be a dominant force throughout the world, affecting everything from what people wear to how they behave. There are thousands of religions in the world. The following pages concentrate on five major religions and on Confucianism, an ethical system. They examine some of the characteristics and rituals that make these religions and systems similar as well as unique. They also present some of each religion's sects and denominations.



World Religions *and* Ethical Systems

Judaism



Judaism is the religion of the more than 14 million Jews throughout the world. Judaism was the first major religion to teach the existence of only one god. The basic laws and teachings of Judaism come from the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

Judaism teaches that a person serves God by studying the Torah and living by its teachings. Orthodox Jews closely observe the laws of the Torah. Conservative and Reform Jews interpret the Torah less strictly and literally. The Star of David (shown above), also called the Shield of David, is the universal symbol of Judaism. The emblem refers to King David, who ruled the kingdom of Israel from about 1000–962 B.C.

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

RESEARCH LINKS For more on Judaism, go to classzone.com

Ritual ►

Major events in a Jew's life are marked by special rites and ceremonies. When Jewish children reach the age of 12 (girls) or 13 (boys), for example, they enter the adult religious community. The event is marked in the synagogue with a ceremony called a bar mitzvah for a boy and a bat mitzvah for a girl, shown here.



▲ Worship Practices

The synagogue is the Jewish house of worship and the center of Jewish community life. Services in the synagogue are usually conducted by a rabbi, the congregation's teacher and spiritual leader. Many Jews make the pilgrimage to the Western Wall, shown here. The sacred structure, built in the second century B.C., formed the western wall of the courtyard of the Second Temple of Jerusalem. The Romans destroyed the temple in A.D. 70.





▼ Celebration

Jews celebrate a number of holidays that honor their history as well as their God. Pictured here are Jews celebrating the holiday of Purim. Purim is a festival honoring the survival of the Jews who, in the fifth century B.C., were marked for death by their Persian rulers.

Jews celebrate Purim by sending food and gifts. They also dress in costumes and hold carnivals and dances.



Learn More About Judaism

Major Jewish Sects



Yarmulke



Out of respect for God, Jewish men are not supposed to leave their head uncovered. Therefore, many Orthodox and Conservative Jews wear a skullcap known as a yarmulke, or kippah.

The Torah

PRIMARY SOURCE

During a synagogue service, the Torah scroll is lifted, while the congregation declares: "This is the Law which Moses set before the children of Israel." The following verse from the Torah makes clear Moses's law regarding belief in one God:

Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

Deuteronomy 6:4

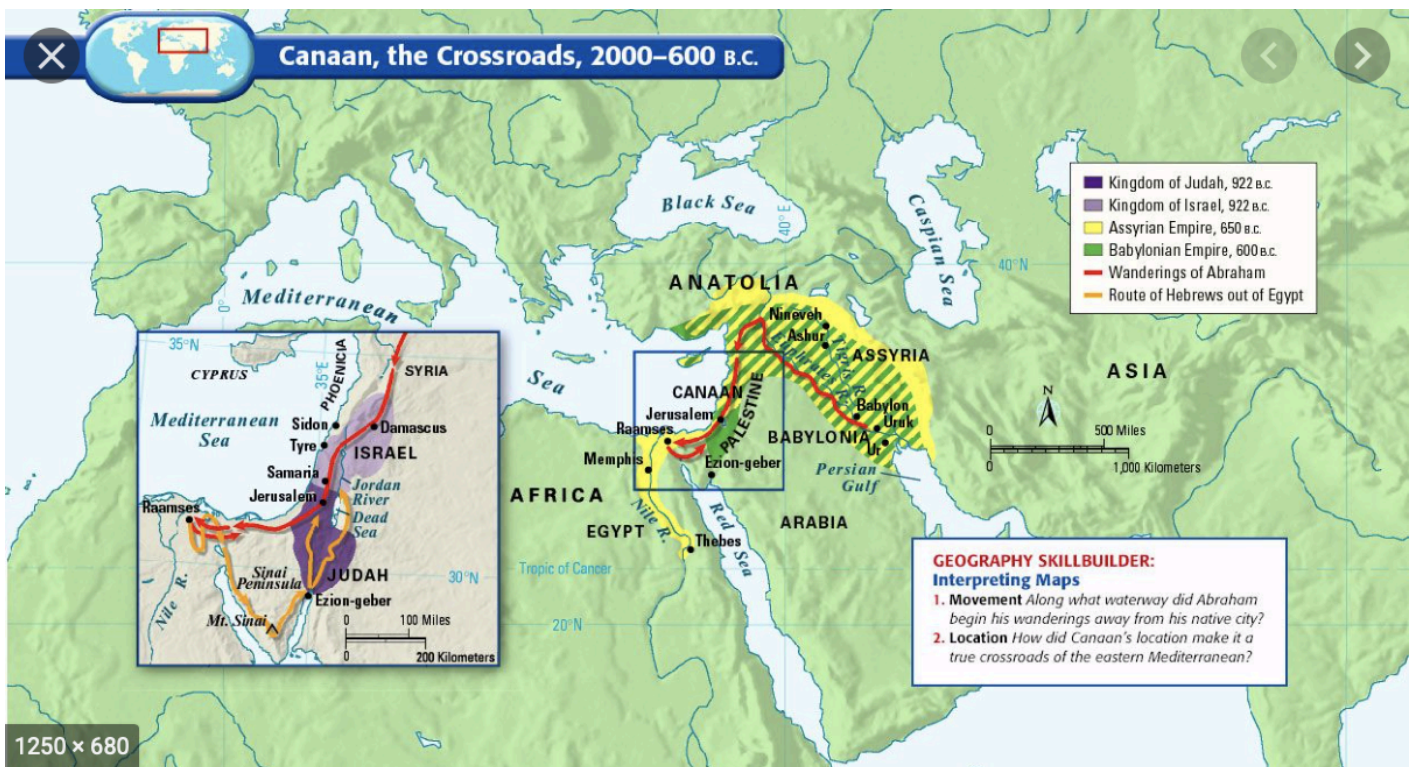


Chapter Connection

For a historical examination of Judaism, as well as the development of the Kingdom of Israel, see pages 77–80 of Chapter 3.

Judaism and the Search for a Promised Land

Ancient Palestine's location made it a cultural crossroads of the ancient world. By land, it connected Asia and Africa and two great empires, both eager to expand. To the east lay Assyria and Babylonia and to the west Egypt. Palestine's seaports opened onto the two most important waterways of that time: the Mediterranean and the Red seas. The Hebrews settled in Canaan, which lay between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, Hebrews often used the word Canaan to refer to all of ancient Palestine. According to the Bible, Canaan was the land God had promised to the Hebrew people.



From Ur to Egypt Most of what we know about the early history of the Hebrews is contained in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Jews call these books the **Torah** (TAWR•uh) and consider them the most sacred writings in their tradition. Christians respect them as part of the Old Testament.

In the Torah, God chose **Abraham** (AY•bruH•HAM) to be the “father” of the Hebrew people. God’s words to Abraham expressed a promise of land and a pledge:

PRIMARY SOURCE

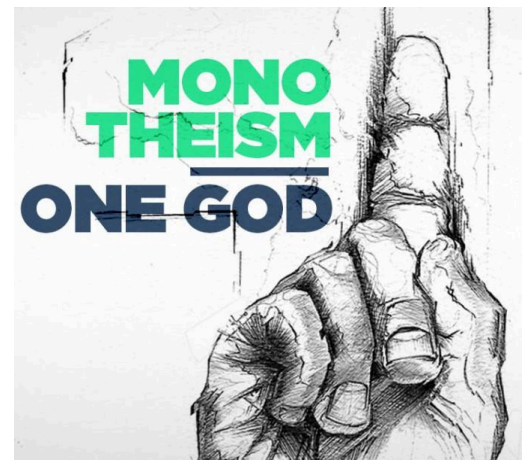
Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great.

- Genesis 12:1–2

Abraham was a shepherd who lived in the city of Ur, in Mesopotamia. The Book of Genesis tells that God commanded him to move his people to Canaan. Around 1800 BCE, Abraham, his family, and their herds made their way to Canaan. Then, around 1650 BCE, the descendants of Abraham moved to Egypt.

The God of Abraham The Bible tells how Abraham and his family roamed for many years from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt and back to Canaan. All the while, their God, whose name was Yahweh, watched over them. Gods worshiped by other people were often local, and were associated with a specific place.

Unlike the other groups around them, who were polytheists, the Hebrews were monotheists. They prayed to only one God. **Monotheism** (MAHN•uh•thee•IHZ•uhm), a belief in a single god, comes from the Greek words mono, meaning “one,” and the-ism, meaning “god-worship.” The Hebrews proclaimed Yahweh as the one and only God. In their eyes, Yahweh had power over all peoples, everywhere. To the Hebrews, God was not a physical being, and no physical images were to be made of him.



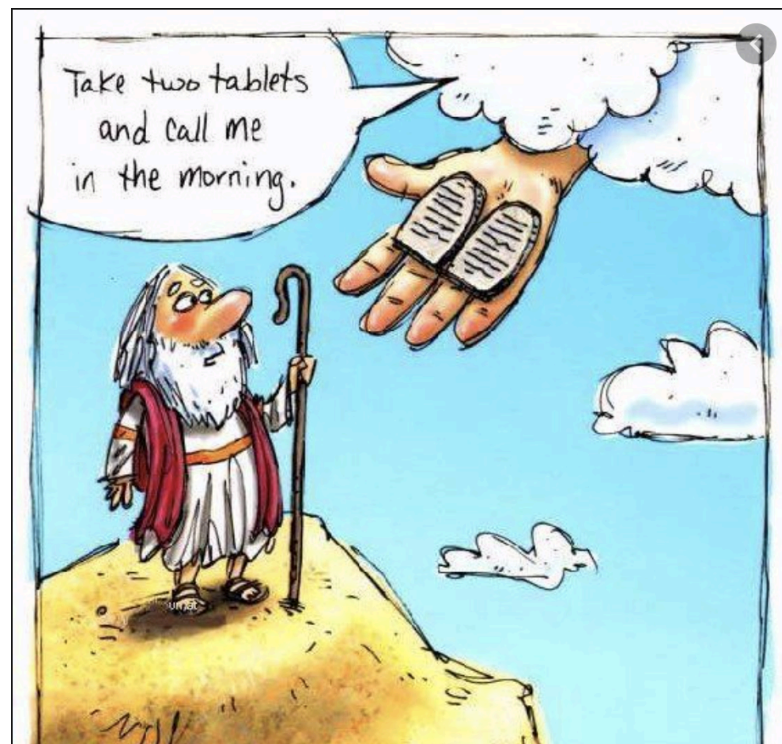
The Hebrews asked Yahweh for protection from their enemies, just as other people prayed to their gods to defend them. According to the Bible, Yahweh looked after the Hebrews not so much because of ritual ceremonies and sacrifices but because Abraham had promised to obey him. In return, Yahweh had promised to protect Abraham and his descendants. This mutual promise between God and the founder of the Hebrew people is called a **covenant** (KUHV•uh•nuhnt).

Moses and the Exodus

The Bible says the Hebrews migrated to Egypt because of a drought and threat of a famine. At first, the Hebrews were given places of honor in the Egyptian kingdom. Later, however, they were forced into slavery.

“Let My People Go” The Hebrews fled Egypt—perhaps between 1300 and 1200 B.C. Jews call this event “the Exodus,” and they remember it every year during the festival of Passover. The Torah says that the man who led the Hebrews out of slavery was named **Moses**. It is told that at the time of Moses’ birth, the Egyptian pharaoh felt threatened by the number of Hebrews in Egypt. He thus ordered all Hebrew male babies to be killed. Moses’ mother hid her baby in the reeds along the banks of the Nile. There, an Egyptian princess found and adopted him. Though raised in luxury, he did not forget his Hebrew birth. When God commanded him to lead the Jews out of Egypt, he obeyed.

A New Covenant While the Hebrews were traveling across the **Sinai** (SY•ny) Peninsula, Moses climbed to the top of Mount Sinai to pray. The Bible says he spoke with God. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he brought down two stone tablets on which Yahweh had written the Ten Commandments. These commandments and the other teachings that Moses delivered to his people became the basis for the civil and religious laws of Judaism. The Hebrews believed that these laws formed a new covenant between God and the Hebrew people. God promised to protect the Hebrews. They promised to keep God’s commandments.



The Land and People of the Bible The Torah reports that the Hebrews wandered for 40 years in the Sinai Desert. Later books of the Bible tell about the history of the Hebrews after their wanderings. After the death of Moses, they returned to Canaan, where Abraham had lived. The Hebrews made a change from a nomadic, tribal society to settled herders, farmers, and city dwellers. They learned new technologies from neighboring peoples in ancient Palestine.

When the Hebrews arrived in Canaan, they were loosely organized into twelve tribes. These tribes lived in separate territories and were self-governing. In times of emergency, the Bible reports that God would raise up judges. They would unite the tribes and provide judicial and military leadership during a crisis. In the course of time, God chose a series of judges, one of the most prominent of whom was a woman, Deborah.

Hebrew Law Deborah's leadership was unusual for a Hebrew woman. The roles of men and women were quite separate in Hebrew society. Women could not officiate at religious ceremonies. In general, a Hebrew woman's most important duty was to raise her children and provide moral leadership for them.

The Ten Commandments were part of a code of laws delivered to Moses. The code included other rules regulating social and religious behavior. In some ways, this code resembled Hammurabi's Code with its attitude of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." However, its strict justice was softened by expressions of God's mercy. The code was later interpreted by religious teachers called prophets. These interpretations tended to emphasize greater equality before the law than did other codes of the time. The prophets constantly urged the Hebrews to stay true to their covenant with God.

The prophets taught that the Hebrews had a duty to worship God and live justly with one another. The goal was a moral life lived in accordance with God's laws. In the words of the prophet Micah, "He has told you, O mortal what is good; and what does

PRIMARY SOURCE

1. I am the Lord thy God. . . . Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . .
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. . . .
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother. . . .
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. Thou shalt not covet . . . anything that is thy neighbor's.

Deuteronomy 5:6-22

the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” This emphasis on right conduct and the worship of one God is called ethical monotheism—a Hebrew idea that has influenced human behavior for thousands of years through Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The Kingdom of Israel

Canaan—the land that the Hebrews believed had been promised them by God—combined largely harsh features such as arid desert, rocky wilderness, grassy hills, and the dry, hot valley of the Jordan River. Water was never plentiful; even the numerous limestone formations soaked up any excess rainfall. After first settling in the south-central area of ancient Palestine, the Hebrews expanded south and north.

Saul and David Establish a Kingdom The judges occasionally pulled together the widely scattered tribes for a united military effort. Nonetheless, the Philistines, another people in the area, threatened the Hebrews’ position in ancient Palestine. The Hebrews got along somewhat better with their Canaanite neighbors. Eventually, the only large tribe left of the 12 tribes was the tribe of Judah. As a result, Hebrews came to be called Jews, and their religion, Judaism.

From about 1020 to 922 BCE, the Hebrews united under three able kings: Saul, David, and Solomon. The new kingdom was called **Israel** (IHZ•ree•uhl). For 100 years, Israel enjoyed its greatest period of power and independence.

Saul, the first of the three kings, was chosen largely because of his success in driving out the Philistines from the central hills of ancient Palestine. Saul is portrayed in the Bible as a tragic man, who was given to bouts of jealousy. After his death, he was succeeded by his son-in-law, David. King David, an extremely popular leader, united the tribes, established Jerusalem as the capital, and founded a dynasty.



Solomon Builds the Kingdom About the year 962 BCE, David was succeeded by his son Solomon, whose mother was Bathsheba. Solomon was the most powerful of the Hebrew kings. He built a trading empire with the help of his friend Hiram, the king of the Phoenician city of Tyre. Solomon also beautified the capital city of Jerusalem. The

crowning achievement of his extensive building program in Jerusalem was a great temple, which he built to glorify God. The temple was also to be a permanent home for the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tablets of Moses' law.

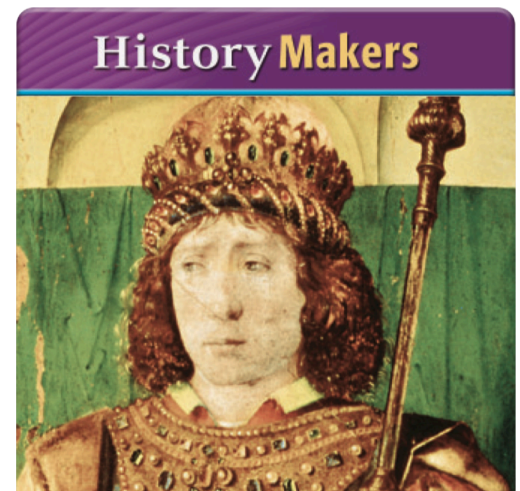
The temple that Solomon built was not large, but it gleamed like a precious gem. Bronze pillars stood at the temple's entrance. The temple was stone on the outside, while its inner walls were made of cedar covered in gold. The main hall was richly decorated with brass and gold. Solomon also built a royal palace even more costly and more magnificent than the temple.

The Kingdom Divides Solomon's building projects required high taxes and badly strained the kingdom's finances. In addition, men were forced to spend one month out of every three working on the temple. The expense and forced labor caused much discontent. As a result, after Solomon's death, the Jews in the northern part of the kingdom, which was located far from the south, revolted. By 922 BCE, the kingdom had divided in two. Israel was in the north and **Judah** (JOO•duh) was in the south.

The next 200 years were confusing for the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Sometimes they fought each other; sometimes they joined together to fight common enemies. Each of the kingdoms had periods of prosperity, followed by low periods of conflict and decline.

The Babylonian Captivity

Disaster finally struck as the two kingdoms lost their independence. In 738 BCE, both Israel and Judah began paying **tribute**—peace money paid by a weaker power to a stronger—to Assyria. By paying tribute, Israel and Judah hoped to ensure that the mighty Assyrian empire



King Solomon
962?–922? B.C.

In the Bible, Solomon prays to God for "an understanding mind," which God grants him.

Soon after, the story goes, two women and a baby boy were brought before him. Each woman claimed the baby was hers. After hearing their testimony, Solomon declared, "Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one and half to the other."

One said: "Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!" However, the other woman accepted: "It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it."

Solomon knew that the woman who would give up the child to save it was the real mother.

would not attack. But this tribute was not enough and in 725 the Assyrians began a relentless siege of Samaria, the capital of Israel. By 722, the whole northern kingdom had fallen to the Assyrians' ferocious assault.

The southern kingdom of Judah resisted for another 150 years before it too was destroyed. The destruction of Judah was to come at the hands of the Babylonians. After conquering Israel, the Assyrians rapidly lost power to a rising Babylonian empire. The great Babylonian king **Nebuchadnezzar** (nehb•uh•kuhd•NEHZ•uhr) ran the Egyptians out of Syria and ancient Palestine, and he twice attacked Jerusalem. The city finally fell in 586 BCE. Solomon's temple was destroyed in the Babylonian victory. Many of the survivors were exiled to Babylon. During the exile in Babylon, the Bible describes how the prophet Ezekiel urged his people to keep their religion alive in a foreign land.

Then about 50 years after the fall of Judah, another change in fortune occurred: in 539 BCE, the Persian king Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon. The next year, Cyrus allowed some 40,000 exiles to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Many, however, stayed in Babylonia.

Work on the second temple was completed in 515 BCE. The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in 445 BCE. Soon, however, other empires dominated the region—first the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans. These new empires would take control both of ancient Palestine and the destiny of the Jewish people.

