

## Module 2: Ancient River Valley Civilizations


### Topic 3 Content: The Hebrews and Judaism

#### Introduction

### The Hebrews and Judaism

Introduction

The Jewish faith is rooted in the history of the Hebrews, a population living in the Fertile Crescent during the development of other ancient river valley civilizations. In this interactivity, click on each of the bars in the panel to learn more about the Hebrews and Judaism.



Abraham

Monotheism

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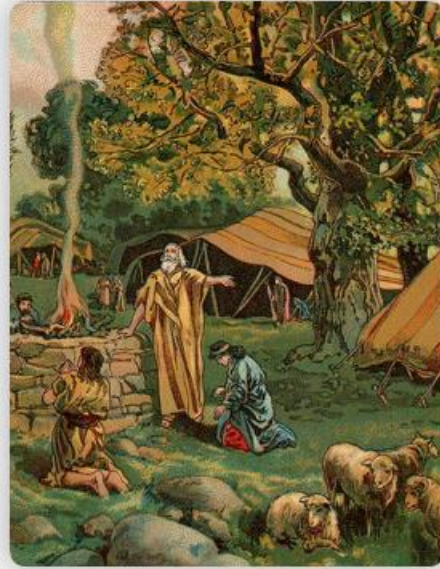
#### Abraham

##### The Hebrews and Judaism

###### Abraham

According to the Jewish faith, in about 2,000 B.C. (B.C.E), a nomadic herder named Abraham migrated from the city of Ur to a region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River Valley called Canaan. Canaan was part of the Fertile Crescent in what is modern-day Israel. In Ur, Abraham had observed the people praying to several different deities, and believed that this was wrong. He believed that there is only one God. Because of this, Abraham is considered the father of the Jewish faith. His descendants, the Hebrews, believed that God made a covenant, or agreement, with Abraham.

*Image: An artist's depiction of Abraham*



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#### Monotheism


### The Hebrews and Judaism

#### Abraham

#### Monotheism

The Hebrews are considered the first people to practice a monotheistic religion, which is now known as Judaism. Monotheism is the belief in one god. Yahweh is the Jewish word for God, and Jews believe that God created the world and everything and everyone in it. In comparison to other ancient river valley populations, the Hebrews did not believe in statue worship or worshipping elements of nature. This set them apart from neighboring populations.

*Image: Archeological evidence of the worship of Yahweh from the 8th century B.C. (B.C.E.)*



#### The Torah

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#### The Torah

### The Hebrews and Judaism

#### The Torah

Judaism's history and key beliefs are found in the Torah, which is the Jewish holy book written in biblical Hebrew. There are five books in the Torah:

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

The Torah is also the first five books of the Old Testament in the Christian Bible.

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#### Enslavement and Exodus

### The Hebrews and Judaism

#### Enslavement and Exodus

In Canaan, the Hebrews were herders and managed livestock. According to the Jewish tradition, when the area experienced extreme drought and famine, the Hebrews migrated to Egypt seeking resources. There, they were enslaved by the pharaoh. God inflicted punishment on Egypt until the slaves were freed. Jews believe that Moses, a Hebrew adopted by the Egyptian royal family, led the people on an exodus from enslavement in Egypt, through the desert, and back to Israel.

*Image: An artist's depiction of Moses leading the Hebrews during the exodus from Egypt*



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#### The Ten Commandments

#### The Hebrews and Judaism

##### The Ten Commandments

Jews believe that Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on top of Mount Sinai during the Jewish exodus from Egypt. The Ten Commandments were the earliest written laws of religious and moral conduct. The Jewish belief in one God is established in the opening of the Ten Commandments.

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#### The Kingdom of Israel


### The Hebrews and Judaism

#### The Ten Commandments

#### The Kingdom of Israel

Around 1200 B.C. (B.C.E.), the Hebrew people solidified as tribes, becoming known as Israelites in the kingdom of Israel. The Israelites made Jerusalem their capital and were ruled by a series of kings. One of the most well-known kings, King Solomon, built a temple in Jerusalem which became the center of the Jewish faith.

*Image: An artist's depiction of King Solomon planning the temple in Jerusalem*



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#### Exile and Diaspora

### The Hebrews and Judaism

#### Exile and Diaspora

While the kingdom was ruled under one government, the tribes of Israel began to war with one another. One group, the Kingdom of Israel, was conquered and assimilated, or merged, with other populations. The people in the other group, the Kingdom of Judah, were conquered by the Chaldeans in 586 B.C. (B.C.E.), and were exiled from the city of Jerusalem. This Diaspora, or scattering of the people of Judah, actually led to the spread of the Jewish religion. Later, the Persians would conquer the Chaldeans and allow these Israelites to return. Today, people who observe the Jewish faith are known as "Jews" because of their history as the people of Judah.

*Image: Ruins of ancient Jerusalem*



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#### Israel Today

#### The Hebrews and Judaism

##### Israel Today

People who practice Judaism are known as Jews or Jewish people. One of the key beliefs of Judaism is that God gave the Jews the promised land of Canaan. Jews only recently regained control of this territory, and for millennia did not rule this land because of conflict, bondage, and slavery. Today, this territory is known as Israel.



After World War II, the United Nations proposed to divide Palestine into two countries: one Jewish and one Arab. The city of Jerusalem would be administered by the U.N. After the Arabs rejected the proposal, the Jewish people in Palestine announced their independence and established the Jewish state of Israel in 1948. Today, people of Jewish faith live mostly in Israel and North America.

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