Ancient Israel
Historical Overview

- Ancient Israel is the birthplace of the 3 great monotheistic religions of the world: Judaism, Christianity and Islam

- Ancient Israel dates back approximately 4000 years to the books of the Old Testament

- Great patriarchs of Judaism: Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua

- Hebrews, Israelites, Jews, Semites: have all undergone persecution throughout history; from Babylonian Captivity, Exodus, Diaspora, Spanish Inquisition, Holocaust
What is in a name?

- **Hebrew** means “From across”-name given to Abraham and his followers.

- **Israelites**: Abraham’s grandson Jacob renamed Israel which means “he who has wrestled with God”. His descendants were called “Israelites”.

- **Jews**: named after Jacob’s son Judah, ancient father of tribe of King David’s dynasty.
Tracing Roots of Israel’s History

- Nomadic tribes wandered into Palestine from east in approximately 1900 BCE
- Mesopotamian society dominated by polytheism
- God (Yahweh) appeared before Patriarch Abraham and told Abraham “to go and raise a great nation”
- This began the monotheistic tradition of the Hebrew faith with the establishment of the “Covenant”, “Chosen People” and “Promised Land”
- Abraham settled in Canaan
- Story: Sacrifice of Abraham
THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST BEFORE THE EXODUS

Abraham’s Journey

SCALE OF MILES

0  50  100  200  300

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LIBYA

PUT

Mediterranean Sea

HITTITE EMPIRE

ARARAT

MEDIA

Caspian Sea

MITANNI

ASSYRIA

ELAM

BABYLONIA

ARABIA

PERSIAN GULF

EGYPT

LIBYA

PUT

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

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MEDIA

CASPIAN SEA

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Jacob (grandson of Abraham)

- Abraham’s grandson Jacob took name “Israel” which means “God ruled” and organized Israelites into 12 tribes.

- Some tribes settled in Egypt (due to drought and famine) and where subjected to Pharaoh rule and slavery.

**Twelve Tribes of Israel**

- Manasseh
- Asher
- Naphtali
- Zebulun
- Issachar
- Gad
- Ephraim
- Dan
- Benjamin
- Reuben
- Simeon
- Judah
Moses

An illustrated story of Moses
Moses & Exodus: “Let My People Go!”

- Moses received **revelations** from God: burning bush, rod / staff, 10 plagues, parting of the Red Sea
- End of 13th century BCE- Moses led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt during Rames II reign called the **EXODUS**
- Moses led the 12 Tribes of Israel to Mount Sinai where Yahweh gave him the **10 Commandments**, uniting the Hebrews under one God
- Moses and Hebrews searched for the “**Promised Land**” or the land of milk and honey, however they wandered in the desert for 40 years
God's Commandments: the 1st draft

It's good... I like it... but I know these people...

They're gonna want specifics!

THOU SHALT NOT DO THINGS THAT ARE BAD.
THOU SHALT BE NICE TO EACH OTHER.

I prefer 'Flaming Shrub', 'Burning Bush' is too alliterative.

Yah-weh!

No way...

The Pharaoh and Moses as Children
**Ten Commandments**
Exodus 20:3-17 the summary of God’s absolute Divine Law

1. Thou shalt have no other gods but 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. Honour thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not murder.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

Moses and the ten commandments
And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone.
(Exodus 34:30)

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Kings of Israel

- 1230 BCE, Israelites invaded Canaan (Promised Land)
- 1020 BCE: first king of Israelites was Saul, then David, then Solomon
- Under King David the Israelites captured city of Jerusalem
- King Solomon built the Temple of Jerusalem, to house the Arc of the Covenant (sacred box to hold Torah)
- Solomon’s Temple was destroyed during Babylonian invasion, rebuilt in 6th century BCE, and destroyed again in 70 CE by the Romans
- Only remaining part of Solomon’s Temple is the Western Wall
Lost Tribes of Israel

- After the death of Solomon, Kingdom of Israel split into two (north= Israel; south= Judah)

- Israel was conquered by Assyrians in 722 BCE and the scattered people were known as the ‘Lost Tribes of Israel’

- Judah was eventually destroyed by Babylon in 586 BCE and inhabitants were held in captivity (called the Exile or Babylonian Captivity)

- Emergence of synagogues and rabbis during Exile

- Released by Persians in 538 BCE and returned to Jerusalem to rebuild temple

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The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. From its greatest extent under Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel split into rival northern and southern kingdoms and then progressively lost ground against Assyria and Babylon.
Diaspora

- Diaspora is a Greek word meaning “sowing of seed” or “dispersal” which refers to Jewish population living outside of Israel.
- In 332 BCE, Jewish people fell under Hellenization (Greek culture) as Alexander the Great conquered Persia, Egypt, and India.
- 164 BCE, group of Jews called the Maccabees revolted against Greek rule, took control of Jerusalem and rededicated the Temple to God (Hanukkah).
- 64 BCE, Jerusalem fell to Romans and the Kingdom of Judah became one of the provinces of the Roman Empire (Judea). The people living there were called Judeans, and it is from this word that we get the word Jew.
- In 66 CE the people of Judea revolted against Rome. This uprising was crushed and the temple was destroyed for a second time in 70 CE.
- Despite the dispersion of Jewish people throughout Europe after 70 CE, their culture and religious beliefs have been by far the most influential of all the ancient cultures of the Near East.
Covenant = formal agreement between Hebrews and God (Yahweh); Hebrews worshipped God and only God, and in return, they would be God’s Chosen People and given Canaan as the Promised Land

Spiritual ideas profoundly influenced Western culture, morality, ethics and conduct

Three of the world’s most dominant religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam all derive their roots from the spiritual beliefs of the Ancient Israelites
Links

- Judaism Religion and Ethics
- Ancient History Sourcebook- Israel
- Ancient Israel