

## Religions of the Ancient Middle East—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

### Section 1



#### MAIN IDEAS

1. The Hebrews' early history began in Canaan and ended when the Romans forced them out of Israel.
2. Jewish beliefs in God, justice, and law anchor their society.
3. Jewish sacred texts describe the laws and principles of Judaism.
4. Traditions and holy days celebrate the history and religion of the Jewish people.

### Key Terms and Places

**Judaism** the Hebrews' religion

**Canaan** where Abraham settled on the Mediterranean Sea

**Exodus** a journey of the Hebrews out of Egypt, led by Moses

**monotheism** the belief in one and only one god

**Torah** the most sacred text of Judaism

**rabbis** religious teachers of Judaism

### Section Summary

#### EARLY HISTORY

The Hebrews appeared in Southwest Asia sometime between 2000 and 1500 BC. Their religion was **Judaism**. According to the Bible, the Hebrews are descended from Abraham. The Bible says that God told Abraham to lead his family to **Canaan** on the Mediterranean Sea. Later, some Hebrews moved from Canaan to Egypt.

The Hebrews were enslaved in Egypt. A leader named Moses helped the Hebrews get their freedom. He then led them on a journey out of Egypt called the **Exodus**. The Bible says that God gave Moses two stone tablets on a mountain called Sinai. A code of moral laws called the Ten Commandments was written on the tablets.

The Hebrews reached Canaan, or Israel. Israel eventually split into two kingdoms—Israel and Judah. The people of Judah became known as Jews. Invaders conquered Israel and Judah and sent the

Circle the name of the man who the Bible says is the ancestor of the Hebrews.

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Jews out of Jerusalem as slaves. When the invaders were conquered, some Jews returned home. Some moved to other places. This scattering of Jews outside of Israel is called the Diaspora.

**What is the Diaspora?**  
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**JEWISH BELIEFS**

Jews share several central beliefs. One of these is **monotheism**. Jews believe that there is one and only one God. Ideas of justice and righteousness are also important. Finally, the Jews believe in following religious and moral laws. These include those found in the Ten Commandments.

**Underline the definition of monotheism.**

**JEWISH TEXTS**

Judaism has several sacred texts. These contain the religion's basic laws and principles. The **Torah**, the first part of the Hebrew Bible, is the most sacred text. The Talmud is a set of laws, commentaries, stories and folklore. Jewish **rabbis**, or religious teachers, have studied these texts for centuries.

**TRADITIONS AND HOLY DAYS**

There are several Jewish traditions and holy days. Hanukkah and Passover are celebrations of historical events. The two most sacred Jewish holidays are Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah celebrates the start of the new year. On Yom Kippur, Jews ask God to forgive their sins. This is the holiest day of the year for the Jews.

**How is Jewish tradition preserved?**  
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**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Drawing Conclusions** Imagine you are a tour guide in a museum of Jewish history. Which part of the museum do you think that tourists might enjoy the most? Write a brief recommendation.