

Lesson 1 The Origins of the Hebrews

MAIN IDEAS

Belief Systems The Hebrews believed in one God and tried to follow his commandments.

Geography Enslaved Hebrews returned from Egypt to Canaan to reclaim land.

Government Hebrew leaders called judges attempted to rule according to their understanding of God's laws.

The Hebrew People in Canaan

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What is the central belief of the Hebrews?

From Ur to Canaan

- Torah—first five holy books, or scriptures, of Hebrew Bible
- Hebrew history, laws, beliefs believed to have been given by God
- **Abraham**—shepherd in Ur around 1800 B.C.; was father of Hebrews
- Torah says God sent Abraham to settle in Canaan, the Promised Land

Judaism and Monotheism

- Many people in ancient world were polytheists, worshiped many gods
- Hebrews believed God gave Abraham important teachings
 - believed in one all-powerful God and his moral laws—**monotheism**
- **Judaism**—religion that descended from ancient Hebrew religion
 - name comes from Judah, one of 12 tribes of Abraham
- Hebrews believed they were chosen by, had covenant with God

REVIEW QUESTION

How was Judaism different from other religions?

Canaan to Egypt and Back

ESSENTIAL QUESTION Why did the Hebrews go to Egypt?

Moses Leads the Israelites

- Hebrews in Canaan became known as Israelites
 - according to Torah, Abraham's grandson Jacob was called Israel
 - 12 of Jacob's sons and grandsons were fathers of the 12 tribes
- Famine forced Israelites to Egypt; later, pharaoh enslaved Israelites
- **Moses** led Israelites from Egypt on a migration called the **Exodus**

The Ten Commandments

- Israelites wandered as nomads in Sinai desert for 40 years
- Torah says God gave Moses two stone tablets at top of Mount Sinai
 - contained **Ten Commandments**—basis for Israelite laws
- Commandments became major part of Western moral, ethical traditions

An Agreement Confirmed

- Israelites believed commandments renewed their covenant with God
 - people thought if they obeyed His laws, God would protect them

REVIEW QUESTION

How did the Israelites escape from slavery in Egypt?

Return to the Promised Land

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What role did the judges play in the life of the ancient Israelites?

The 12 Tribes of Israel

- Moses chose Joshua to lead 12 tribes of Israelites back to Canaan
 - upon returning, found other groups in Canaan under powerful rule
- Jacob's descendants formed fighting force to reclaim land
 - movement to take over city-states, such as Jericho, lasted 200 years
- After wars, Israelite soldiers became farmers, herders
 - divided land in mountains and plains between tribes

Judges Lead the Israelites

- No single Israelite leader during 200 years of war
- Respected male and female judges were used as advisors
- First judges acted as military leaders, later judges gave legal advice
 - famous judges included Gideon, Samson, Samuel, Deborah
- Strong judges helped keep 12 tribes united
 - in times without strong judges, some tribes turned to other gods

REVIEW QUESTION

Who were some of the important judges of Israel?

Lesson Summary

- Abraham led the Hebrews to Canaan.
- Moses gave the Hebrews the Ten Commandments.
- The judges led the Israelites in Canaan.

Why It Matters Now . . .

Judaism was the first monotheistic religion and influenced other world religions, particularly Christianity and Islam.