

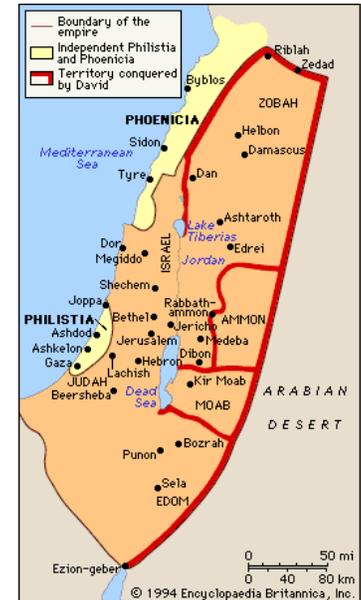
The Hebrew and Phoenician Civilizations

I. The Hebrews

Hebrews (or Jewish) civilization began around 2,000 B.C. in the land of Palestine (present day Israel). Because of their location, the ancient Hebrews were deeply influenced by both Mesopotamia and Egypt. “Judaism”, the ancient Hebrew religion, had a great influence on later civilizations.

1. Key Features of Judaism

- Other people in the ancient world were “animists”, believing each object had its own spirit, or “polytheists”, who believed in many gods. The Hebrews believed in one God. “Monotheism”, the belief in one God, became the basis for later religions such as Christianity & Islam.
- The history of the Hebrews and their relationship with God is told in the first books of the Bible, known as the “Old Testament”. Jews refer to the early books of the Old Testament as the “Torah”
- The “Ten Commandments”, which the Hebrews believed were given to Moses by God, prohibited immoral conduct such as stealing and murder.



2. The Exodus

According to Jewish tradition, the ancient Hebrews migrated to Egypt in 1800 B.C. to escape food shortages. They remained in Egypt for hundreds of years, where they became enslaved. Their leader, Moses, eventually led to Hebrews out of Egypt and slavery. Their flight from Egypt is known as the “Exodus”. Afterwards, according to the Bible, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, which he presented to his people.

3. The Diaspora

When the Hebrews returned to Israel about 1,000 B.C., it was occupied by the Philistines. This led to a series of wars in which the Hebrews re-conquered Israel. King David united the Hebrew tribes into the Kingdom of Israel by 1,000 B.C.. His son, King Solomon, made Jerusalem the capital of Israel and built a great temple for worship. The Hebrews were later conquered by Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans. When they rebelled against Roman rule, the Romans destroyed their temple at Jerusalem, forcing large numbers of Jews to flee to Europe, Asia, and Africa. This period of Jewish history is known as the “Dispora” (dispersion).

II. The Phoenicians

Phoenicia was located on the Mediterranean coast, by present-day Lebanon. By 1,200 B.C., the Phoenicians had become known as great traders, setting up trading posts in Italy, Spain, and North Africa. They invented a new way of writing that used only 26 symbols. This became our modern-day alphabet.

Questions to Answer

1. What are some of the key features of Judaism?
2. Why did the “Exodus” occur?
3. Why did the “Diaspora” occur?
4. Why were the Phoenicians significant?