

# CHAPTER 2

## The Hebrews and Their God

### GETTING STARTED

1 You may have heard many stories from the Bible. Today, you can even see movies based on the Bible. The first part of the Bible tells the story of the Hebrew people, one of the peoples who lived in the Near East. (During the period from about 2000 B.C. to about 586 B.C., the Hebrews ruled themselves for only a short time) But during this time, the Hebrews made two very important contributions to the world. One was the idea of monotheism, or the belief in one God. The other contribution was the Old Testament. In this chapter, you will find out about these contributions.

2 Before you begin reading the chapter lesson, survey the lesson. Begin your survey by reading the beginning of the lesson. Then look through the lesson and read the headings. Next, study the pictures and read the picture captions. Then study the map of Palestine on page 14. Finally, read the review section called "Summing Up" at the end of the lesson. This survey of the whole lesson will help you to discover the important ideas in this chapter.

### Know the Main Idea

As you read the chapter lesson, try to remember the following important MAIN IDEA of the chapter.

**The Hebrews gave the world two great contributions—the idea of a belief in one God and the Old Testament.**

All the facts that you will learn in this chapter are related to this MAIN IDEA. The following questions will help you to understand the MAIN IDEA. Look for the answers to these questions as you read the lesson.

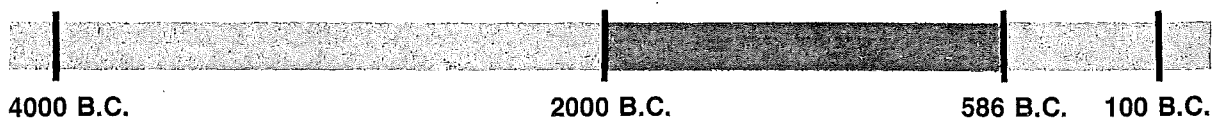
1. What great leader helped the Hebrew people to escape from slavery in Egypt?
2. Who was leader of the Hebrew people in the years of their greatest power?
3. What idea kept the Hebrew people together and united?

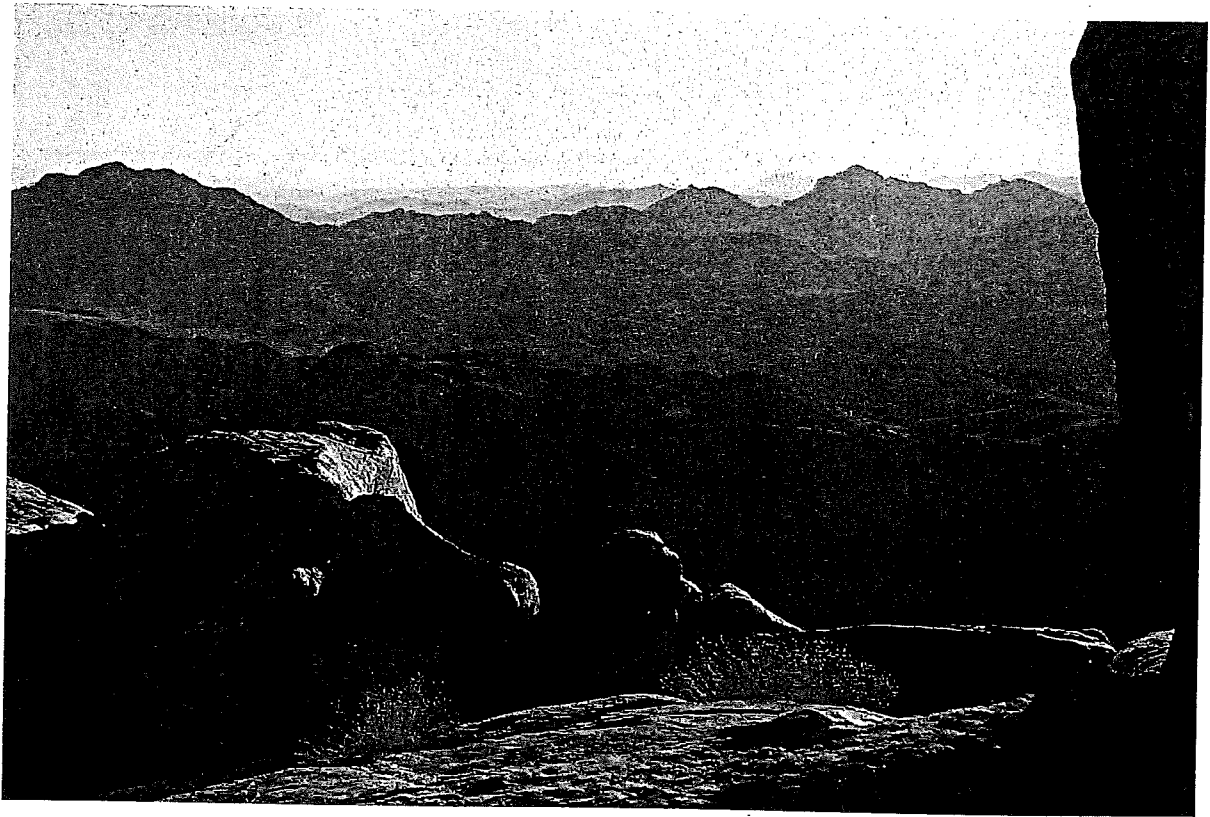
### Know These Important Terms

Near East	Talmud
temple	Old Testament
Ten Commandments	Bible
monotheism	

### Know the Years of This Chapter

Look at the time-line below. It shows the years of this chapter, 2000 B.C. to 586 B.C.





View from the top of Mount Sinai, a peak in the peninsula between Egypt and Israel

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## EXPLORING THE TIME

The Hebrews were never a large nation. They ruled the small land of Palestine in the Near East for only a few hundred years. Yet, the ideas developed by the early Hebrew people have lasted until today. In this chapter, you will find out about the contributions that the Hebrews made to the world.

### **Palestine Was a Small Country**

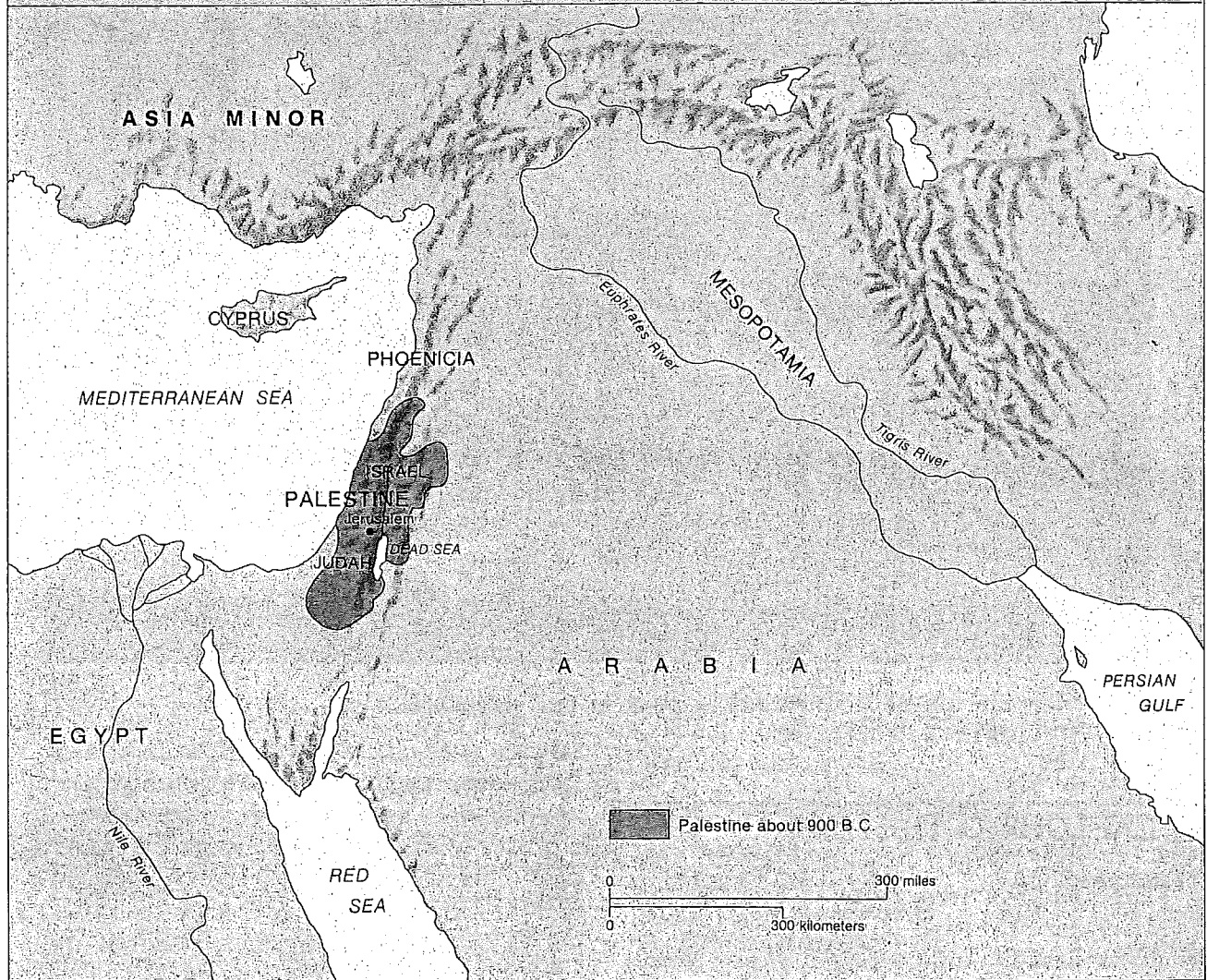
Palestine was a narrow desert land in the Near East, the lands at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and southwest

Asia. It was located on a trade route between Egypt and Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris (TY-gris) and Euphrates (you-FRAY-teez) River. The cultures of the peoples of both these areas were well known in Palestine. In fact, Palestine was ruled by Egypt or Mesopotamia during most of its history.

### **The Hebrews Won Control of Palestine**

The earliest Hebrews were shepherds who moved into Palestine from Mesopotamia about the year 2000 B.C. Some of the early Hebrews stayed in Palestine, but others moved southward into Egypt. However,

## THE HEBREW KINGDOMS OF PALESTINE — 900 B.C.



the Hebrews were not happy in Egypt. They were treated badly, and they were forced to work as slaves. But a great leader named Moses helped the Hebrews to escape from slavery. About the year 1275 B.C., Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt to freedom!

When the Hebrews returned to Palestine, this land was not ruled by Egypt or

Mesopotamia. But Palestine was not a united country, either. Each city in Palestine ruled itself and the land around it. The Hebrews fought for many years to win control of all the land of Palestine.

### The Hebrews Formed a Kingdom

Saul, David, and Solomon were the three

rulers who helped the Hebrews to become one nation. Saul became the first king of the Hebrews (about 1025 B.C.). Saul led the Hebrews against the warlike Philistines (FILL-uh-STEENZ), who lived near Palestine. But Saul was killed, and the Philistines were not defeated. King David, who ruled after Saul, did defeat the Philistines. David formed the Hebrew kingdom, and he made Jerusalem (juh-ROO-suh-LUM) its capital city.

The Hebrew kingdom reached its greatest power under Solomon, who was David's son. Solomon traded with many nations and built many fine buildings in Jerusalem. These buildings included beautiful palaces for himself and a great Hebrew temple, or place of worship.

### The Hebrew Kingdom Became Divided

King Solomon's costly building program required the Hebrews to pay heavy taxes and to work very hard. After Solomon died (about 930 B.C.), the unhappy Hebrews revolted, and the Hebrew kingdom became divided into two parts. The northern part became the kingdom of Israel (IZ-ree-UL), and the southern part became the kingdom of Judah (juh-duh).

However, neither of the two Hebrew kingdoms was very strong. Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians, who ruled Mesopotamia, in 722 B.C.. Judah was conquered by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

### The Hebrews Remained One People \*

Although both Hebrew kingdoms were conquered, the Hebrews did not disappear as a people. What was it that kept the Hebrew people together and united?

The Hebrew religion kept the Hebrews together and united. The Hebrews worshiped one great, all-powerful God. They

## DAVID—POWERFUL KING OF THE HEBREWS



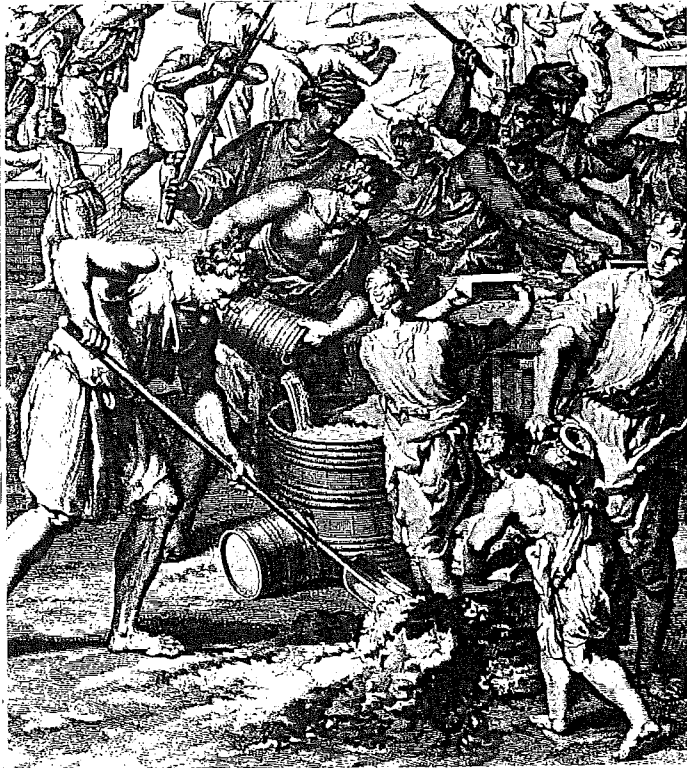
David—King of Judah and Israel

King David, the powerful ruler of the Hebrews, began life as the son of a shepherd of Bethlehem. One day young David was attacked by a giant Philistine soldier named Goliath. David fought Goliath with a sling-shot and killed him. King Saul of the Hebrews learned of David's bravery, and brought David to live in the royal palace. Soon after, however, King Saul became jealous of David. David was forced to leave the palace and hide in the desert.

After Saul was killed in a battle with the Philistines, David became the ruler of the Hebrew nation. David defeated the Philistine armies and captured the city of Jerusalem, which he made his capital. He built a beautiful palace on one of Jerusalem's hills, known as Mount Zion.

King David is remembered as a great warrior who defeated the Hebrew people's main enemy, the Philistines. David also is known because his son Solomon became the famous Hebrew ruler who built the great Hebrew temple in Jerusalem.

**Question:** What people did King David defeat?



**The Hebrews in Egypt were forced to work as slaves**

believed that God loved them, protected them, and required them to obey God's laws. The Hebrews believed that God gave these laws—called the **Ten Commandments**—to Moses when the Hebrew people left Egypt.

### **The Hebrews Believed in One God for All Peoples**

At first, the Hebrews believed that other nations had gods of their own. But later, the leaders of the Hebrew religion declared the Hebrew God was the one and only God for all peoples. (This belief in one God is called **monotheism** (muh-NOH-thee-IZ-um).)

Monotheism, or the belief in one God, became the basis of the Hebrew religion. The Hebrews came to believe that God loved justice and truth and demanded good deeds from all peoples. Therefore, if the

Hebrews were to be good human beings, they must obey God's laws, the Ten Commandments. If they did not obey the Ten Commandments, God punished them. This strong God—who gave them great laws to live by—also gave the Hebrews a reason for remaining together as one people.

### **The Talmud Gave the Hebrews a Guide for Living**

The teachings of the Hebrew religious leaders, the history of the Hebrew people, and the laws to be followed by the Hebrews were written down in the **Talmud**, a collection of books about the Hebrew people and their God. Together with the **Old Testament**, these books contain the ideas and beliefs of the Hebrew people. With these books to guide them, the Hebrews were able to remain Hebrews wherever they lived—in Mesopotamia, in Egypt, or anywhere else.

Today, the Hebrew religion is called the Jewish religion and the people who follow the Jewish religion are known as Jews. The books of the Old Testament later became part of the Christian **Bible**, the religious book of the Christian religion!

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## **SUMMING UP**

The Hebrew people made two very important contributions to the world. One was the idea of monotheism, or the belief in one God. The other contribution was the Old Testament. Both monotheism and the Old Testament helped the Hebrews to remain together as a people. In the next chapter, you will learn about the beginning of the Christian religion that developed during the early years of the Roman Empire.

## UNDERSTANDING THE LESSON

### Do You Know These Important Terms?

For each sentence below, choose the term that best completes the sentence.

1. The (Code of Laws/Ten Commandments) were laws that the Hebrews believed were given to them by God.
2. A belief in one God is called (worship/monotheism).
3. The books that contain the history, the ideas, and the beliefs of the Hebrew people are (The Talmud/papyrus).
4. The (Bible/Koran) became the religious book of the Christian religion.

### Do You Remember These People and Events?

1. Tell something about each person.  
Moses      David  
Saul        Solomon
2. Explain how or why each of the following events probably happened.
  - a. The Hebrew nation split into two parts.
  - b. The Hebrews remained one group of people, although they were conquered many times.

### Can You Locate These Places?

Use the map on page 14 to do the following map work.

1. Locate the following places and tell how each place is related to the chapter.  
Palestine      Judah  
Egypt          Jerusalem  
Israel          Mesopotamia

2. How does the crossroad location of Palestine (between Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor) help to explain why the Hebrew people were conquered many times?

### Do You Know When It Happened?

Why are the following years important in Hebrew history?

1275 B.C.      586 B.C.

### Do You Remember the Main Idea?

Which one of the following ideas is the MAIN IDEA of this chapter?

1. The Hebrews were a large group of people in the Near East who were able to conquer both Egypt and Mesopotamia.
2. The Hebrews made a contribution to our culture of today through their number system and code of laws.
3. The Hebrews gave the world two great contributions—the idea of a belief in one God and the Old Testament.

### What Do You Think?

From what you have read in this chapter, try to answer the following thought questions.

1. How did the Hebrews' belief in one God differ from most early beliefs?
2. Why do you think the Hebrews chose Palestine as a place to settle and build a nation?
3. Why do you think that the Hebrews were shepherds rather than farmers? What kinds of conditions are needed for farming?