* Search For the Promised Land
* A group of people claimed an important piece of land- Palestine/Israel.
* This region sat on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea and on the Red Sea, which led to the Indian Ocean.
* Advantageous location for trade.
* The First Covenant
* The people who settled in Canaan were the Hebrews, and they believed that the land had been promised to them by God.
* In return for their devotion, God told Abraham that the Hebrews would build a great nation in the promised land.
* Today the Jewish people are the descendants of the ancient Hebrews.
* Monotheism
* The Hebrews were among the world’s earliest peoples to believe in **one god**. Their story began with Adam and moved into Mesopotamia (Ur), where a man named Abraham lived.
* God told him to move his family to Palestine, where he would prosper. Abraham promised that he and his people would always obey God.
* God, in turn, promised to always protect them from their enemies.
* The Exodus
* Later the Hebrews suffered from the failure of their crops. They moved to Egypt, but over time they were made into slaves.
* After many years, they left in a mass departure that Jews called the Exodus.
* According to the sacred book of the Jews, a man named Moses led them out of Egypt. They wandered 40 years in a wilderness.
* During that time, the story says, Moses received from God the Ten Commandments.
* These were the laws that the Hebrews were to follow. For the second time, God promised to protect these people in return for their obedience to his laws.
* Twelve Tribes of Israel
* After Moses died, the people finally reached Palestine and settled down. They began to adopt new ways of life. They often fought with other peoples living in the area, as each group tried to control the best land and other resources.
* The Philistines
* The Philistines were another people who lived in Canaan. They disliked the Hebrews and the Hebrews disliked them. Much of what we know about the Philistines was written in the Torah which may be a little biased.
* We do know that they had a military advantage over the Hebrews. They had ships and chariots as well as the ability to forge steel into swords and shields. Eventually the Hebrews learned how to create metal weapons from the Philistines.
* The Judges
* Each tribe was separate from the others, but in times of danger they would all get together under leaders called judges.
* One of those judges was a woman named Deborah. This was unusual for women in Hebrew society, who were expected to stay home and raise children.
* Duties of the Hebrews
* **The Hebrews had other leaders called prophets. They said that they were messengers sent by God to tell the people how he wanted them to act.**
* **These prophets told the people that they had two duties:**

**1. To worship God**

**2. To deal in just and fair**

**ways with each other.**

* Significance of Monotheism
* With monotheism, religion was changing.
* Instead of being a part of life run by priests who followed certain rituals, it was now a matter of each person living a moral life.
* The idea emerged that each individual was important and valuable to God; and God was accessible to everyone, not just the priests.
* Two Kingdoms of Israel
* From about 1020 to 922 B.C., the Hebrews were united under three kings.
  + **The first, Saul, drove off enemy peoples**;
  + **The second, David, made Jerusalem the capital;**
  + **The third, Solomon, built a magnificent temple to be used to worship God.**
* After his death, though, the kingdom split into two parts (Israel and Judea).

For the next two centuries, these kingdoms had their ups and downs.

* King Solomon
* Solomon had a great temple built in Jerusalem to house the Ark of the Covenant which housed the Ten Commandments.
* He asked his friend, King Hiram, from the Phoenician city of Tyre to help him with the design. Hiram sent his architects to Jerusalem to create the building.
* Solomon was very grateful and repaid the Phoenicians with ample supplies of wheat and oil.
* Achievements of Solomon
* Solomon is the most powerful of the Hebrew kings:
  1. He built a trading empire with the help of friend king Hiram of Tyre.
  2. He beautified the city of Jerusalem.
  3. He built the temple to hose the Ark of the Covenant- Solomon’s Temple
  4. He built a great royal palace.
  5. The Kingdom Divides
* Solomon’s building projects were costly and he had to raise taxes to pay for them.
* After his death, stressed from the high tax burdens of the past, the Hebrews in the North revolted and the kingdom was divided into two smaller kingdoms- Israel in the North and Judah in the South.
* The Babylonian Captivity
* Both of the Hebrew kingdoms came under attack from invaders.
* Both Israel and Judah began paying tribute (peace money) to keep the Assyrians from attacking. This only worked for a few years and Israel was eventually conquered.
* Judah falls to the Babylonians
* Judah was able to remain free from Assyrian domination but a new threat emerged- Babylon.
* Led by king Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and sent the Hebrew survivors into exile in Babylon.
* The Temple is Rebuilt
* Fifty years after the fall of Jerusalem, a new power emerges, the Persians. Led by King Cyrus, the Persians took control of the lands previously held by the Assyrians and Babylonians.
* King Cyrus allowed 40,000 Hebrews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. The Second Temple was completed in 515 B.C. Cyrus is mentioned in the Old Testament for his compassion toward the Hebrews.
* Cyrus allowed for religious freedom among his captive peoples.