Story-Teller Teacher

Reading Passage

History of Ancient Israel

The Promised Land and Egyptian Slavery

Israel's history is wrapped up in their religion, called **Judaism**. People who practice this religion believe that their god, Yahweh, guides them through time and directs them through life. According to the Jews who wrote the Old Testament book of Genesis, this history of Israel began when Yahweh told Abraham to leave the Mesopotamian city of Ur to start a new nation around 1900 BC. Years later, Abraham arrived in the land called Canaan; this land would be called the "Promised Land" because Yahweh had promised this land to the Israelites.

Egyptian Slavery

Eventually, Abraham took his family out of Canaan and into Egypt in order to find food. Over time, the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites and made them work for the Pharaoh. After 430 long years the Israelites were able to escape under Moses's leadership. This "escape" or exit from Egypt is called the "**Exodus**" in Israelite history. Moses (around 1450 BC) was an important leader over Israel; he received the Ten Commandments from Yahweh and led the Israelites back to the Promised Land of Canaan. His second-in-command named Joshua helped the Israelites conquer their land from a group of people called the Canaanites, and Israel started a new civilization of 12 small tribes.

Moses

The Good and Bad of Kings

When the 12 tribes couldn't figure out how to govern (organize) themselves, the people of Israel asked for a king to be named. This part of Israelite history is called the **united monarchy**, a time when Israel was unified under one king. Their first king, Saul, was not well-liked by the people; Israel's second king, named David (around 1000 BC), did a much better job. He was called the "man after God's own

King David

heart", and he was well-known for his devotion to Yahweh and his beautiful music that he played on the harp. The united monarchy expanded under King David's rule, and he named his son Solomon as king. Solomon was a very wise king, and he served well as Israel's third king.

After Solomon, though, Israel's leadership weakened. The Israelites argued about who should rule Israel after Solomon, and the civilization split into two kingdoms. This part of Israelite history is called the **divided monarchy**, and the two kingdoms were called Israel and Judah. These two groups were eventually taken over by different Mesopotamian civilizations. Israel's history after this moment goes back and forth with different civilizations conquering Israel, setting them free, and then conquering Israel again.

Israel's land was added to the Roman Empire.

Life After the Monarchy

There was not one consistent ruler over Israel until the Romans entered the picture. In 63 BC, the Romans took over Israel and most of Mesopotamia. They created a huge empire, and Israel was absorbed into it. It wasn't until 1948 AD (almost 2000 years later!) that Israel gained back the land it had in ancient history and became it's own self-run country. Israel is a country in the Middle East today.