

# What is the basic timeline of the Old Testament?

The following timeline of the Old Testament has been compiled with the assumption that the genealogies are literal and complete. If so, God created the world about 6000 years ago. All years are approximate.

## Creation to the Flood

Creation: 4000 B.C. (we don't know how long Adam and Eve lived in the Garden before their exile.)

Adam: 4000 B.C. – 3070 B.C. ([Genesis 2:7](#); [5:5](#))

Methuselah: 3350 B.C. – 2350 B.C. ([Genesis 5:21](#); [5:27](#))

Noah: 2950 B.C. – 2000 B.C. ([Genesis 5:29](#); [9:29](#))

Flood: 2350 B.C. ([Genesis 6-9](#))

Note that Methuselah died a very short time before the Flood. It is possible that his name, literally "death/spear/violence – bring," was the prophecy "his death shall bring." His death certainly did herald a significant event.

## The Flood to Abraham

Flood: 2350 B.C. ([Genesis 6-9](#))

Tower of Babel: 2250 B.C. ([Genesis 11:1-9](#))

Egypt founded: 2170 B.C.

Abraham: 2165 B.C. – 1990 B.C. ([Genesis 11:26](#); [25:8](#))

The genealogies in the Old Testament show that Noah died while Abraham's father was living. Noah's father, Lamech, was born about eighty years before Adam died. It's very possible that the story of creation could have been passed on through very few steps.

## Abraham to the Exile

Abraham: 2165 B.C. – 1990 B.C. ([Genesis 11:26](#); [25:8](#))

Abraham goes to Canaan: 2090 B.C. ([Genesis 11:31](#))

Ishmael: 2080 B.C. – ? ([Genesis 16:11](#))

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed: 2065 B.C. ([Genesis 19:1-29](#))

Isaac: 2065 B.C. – 1885 B.C. ([Genesis 21:1](#); [25:29](#))

Jacob: 2050 B.C. – 1855 B.C. ([Genesis 25:26](#); [49:33](#))

Joseph: 1910 B.C. – 1800 B.C. ([Genesis 30:23-24](#); [50:26](#))

Joseph sold into slavery: 1895 B.C. ([Genesis 37:18-36](#))

Jacob and family move to Egypt: 1870 B.C. ([Genesis 46-47](#))

Exile to Egypt: 1870 B.C. – 1450 B.C. ([Genesis 46](#)--[Exodus 12:33-41](#))

After the Flood, lifespans drastically decreased. Noah lived to be 950 years old. Abraham, who was born shortly after Noah died, lived to be only 175.

### **The Exile to the Monarchy**

Exile to Egypt: 1870 B.C. – 1450 B.C. ([Genesis 46](#)--[Exodus 12:33-41](#))

Moses: 1530 B.C. - 1410 B.C. ([Exodus 2:2](#); [Deuteronomy 34:5](#))

Moses flees to Midian: 1490 B.C. ([Exodus 2:15-25](#))

Exodus from Egypt: 1450 B.C. ([Exodus 12:33-14:31](#))

Forty years in the Wilderness: 1450 B.C. – 1410 B.C. ([Exodus 16](#)--[Joshua 1](#))

Joshua's rule: 1410 B.C. – 1390 B.C. ([Deuteronomy 34:50](#)--[Judges 2:8](#))

Conquest of Canaan Completed: 1400 B.C. ([Judges 1](#))

Deborah serves as Judge: 1245 B.C. – 1200 B.C. ([Judges 4-5](#))

Gideon serves as Judge: 1195 B.C. – 1155 B.C. ([Judges 6](#))

Samuel serves as Judge: 1090 B.C. – 1045 B.C. ([1 Samuel 1:1-25:1](#))

The Timeline of the Old Testament shows the Israelites were in Egypt for about 400 years and then were ruled by judges for about 400 years. They then demanded a king.

### **The Unified Monarchy**

Saul Reigns: 1095 B.C. – 1015 B.C. ([1 Samuel 10:17-2:13](#))

David Reigns: 1015 B.C. – 970 B.C. ([2 Samuel 1:1](#)--[1 Chronicles 19:1](#))

Solomon Reigns: 970 B.C. – 930 B.C. ([1 Chronicles 19:1](#)--[2 Chronicles 9:31](#))

The Kingdom Splits: 930 B.C. ([2 Chronicles 10](#))

### **Israel**

Israel, the Northern Kingdom: 930 B.C. – 725 B.C.

Elijah serves as Prophet: circa 870 B.C.

Obadiah serves as Prophet: circa 845 B.C.

Elisha serves as Prophet: circa 840 B.C.

Jonah serves as Prophet: circa 780 B.C.

Hosea serves as Prophet: circa 760 B.C.

Assyria destroys Israel: 725 B.C. ([2 Kings 17](#))

### **Judah**

Judah, the Southern Kingdom: 930 B.C. – 590 B.C.

Joel serves as Prophet: circa 825 B.C.

Amos serves as Prophet: circa 750 B.C.

Micah serves as Prophet: circa 725 B.C.

Isaiah serves as Prophet: circa 690 B.C.  
Zephaniah serves as Prophet: circa 640 B.C.  
Nahum serves as Prophet: circa 625 B.C.  
Habakkuk serves as Prophet: circa 620 B.C.  
Ninevah destroyed: 612 B.C.  
Jeremiah serves as Prophet: circa 600 B.C.  
Babylonian exile: 590 B.C. ([2 Kings 25](#))

After being ruled by judges for 400 years, the nation of Israel only lasted about 165 more years united under one king. The Northern Kingdom of Israel so rebelled against God that it was only another 200 years before the Assyrians destroyed them. The Southern Kingdom of Judah managed to last about 340 years before the Babylonian captivity.

### **Exile in Babylon**

Babylonian Empire: 1984 B.C. – 539 B.C.  
Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon: 605 B.C. – 562 B.C.  
Daniel taken to Babylon: 605 B.C. ([Daniel 1](#))  
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego survive the fiery furnace: 595 B.C. ([Daniel 3](#))  
Daniel's confrontation with Belshazzar: 539 B.C. ([Daniel 5](#))  
Persian Empire: 539 B.C. – 330 B.C.  
Cyrus King of Great Persian Empire: 576 B.C. – 530 B.C.  
Jews start returning to Jerusalem: 536 B.C.  
Temple Rebuilt: 530 B.C. – 515 B.C. (Ezra)  
Haggai serves as Prophet: circa 525 B.C.  
Zechariah serves as Prophet: circa 525 B.C.  
Xerxes (Ahasuerus) King of Persia: 485 B.C. – 465 B.C. (Esther)  
Esther becomes Queen: 475 B.C.  
Esther saves the Jews: 470 B.C.  
Ezra serves as Priest: 460 B.C. – 430 B.C.  
Nehemiah Governor of Jerusalem: 460 B.C. – 430 B.C.  
Malachi serves as Prophet: circa 440 B.C.

Jeremiah was right—from the fall of Judah to the first refugees returning to Jerusalem was about seventy years ([Jeremiah 25:11](#)). But the Old Testament timeline doesn't tell the whole story. Not all the Jews left, and there are still small pockets of Jews in such places as Iran and India.

### **The Intertestamental Period**

Alexander the Great reigns in Greece: 336 B.C. – 323 B.C.  
Judea ruled by the Greek Empire: 330 B.C. – 308 B.C.  
Judea ruled by Egypt: 308 B.C. – 195 B.C.

Judea ruled by Syria: 195 B.C. – 130 B.C.

Maccabean Revolt: 164 B.C. – 63 B.C.

Judea ruled by the Roman Empire: 63 B.C. – 70 A.D.

Julius Caesar rules Roman Empire: 46 B.C. – 44 B.C.

Herod the Great reigns as King of the Jews: 37 B.C. – 4 B.C.

Jesus born: 6-4 B.C.

Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament have much to say about the timeline between Malachi and the birth of John the Baptist. Most of what we can gather from this period comes from the Apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees as well as secular historical records.

## Quick Summary of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is the period from creation (4000 BC) to the period of the Persian Empire and Cyrus who allowed the Jews to return from captivity and rebuild their temple. The Old Testament ended around 400 BC. Follow along on the right-hand side and learn about the main events that took place in Old Testament times.

### Quick Summary of the Bible

The Bible covers the period from the creation of man which took place approximately 4000 BC, all the way to the coming of Jesus Christ, his death and his resurrection, and the good news (gospel) which spread rapidly in the first century A.D. with the preaching of Paul the apostle and the establishment of churches throughout the Roman Empire. The New Testament ends around the same time that the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. This quick summary will cover the main events that took place during the periods of the Old and New Testaments. After reading this brief overview you can follow the outline of the right hand side and quickly go through each of the main sections of the Bible.

## The Old Testament Main Historical Periods

The Old Testament can be summarized by nine main historical periods which are: The Creation, Abraham and the Hebrew Patriarchs, Moses and the Exodus, Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan, Samson and the Judges, David and Solomon, The Divided Kingdom, The Destruction of Israel and Judah, and Ezra and the Return from Captivity. It would be good to memorize these main sections to create a summary of what took place. Here are the brief sections.

(Dates are Approximate)



### Historical Period #1

#### The Creation and Fall Period (4004-2234 BC)

The main events of creation (Genesis 1-11) were:

**The Creation** of the heavens and the earth, and all living things including mankind. God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day to establish the Sabbath day.

**The Fall** of Adam and Eve and sin and death entering into the world. God made a covering for them indicating that it was only through the blood of a substitute that they could approach God. God pronounced a curse upon the man, woman, and serpent, and he also declared that the Messiah would someday come and crush the head of the serpent.

**The Flood** which came upon the whole world and God saved Noah and his family.

**The Tower of Babel** where rebellious mankind gathered and God divided their languages.



## Historical Period #2

### The Abraham and Sons Period (1996-1689 BC)

The main people surrounding Abraham and the Hebrews (Genesis 12-50) were:

**Abraham** was the first Hebrew, God called him from a distant land in the Middle East called Ur of the Chaldees. God promised him that if he obey him God would multiply his descendants as the sand in the seashore and the stars in the sky, and one of his descendants would be the Savior of all mankind.

**Isaac** was Abraham's child that was born in his old age according to the promise of the Lord. His name means laughter because Abraham's wife Sarah laughed that she was going to bear a son in her old age.

**Jacob** was the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob's name actually means deceiver but God turned everything about his life into a blessing and his name was changed to Israel.

**Joseph** was the favorite son of Jacob, his beloved wife Rachel died giving birth to him. Joseph was gifted in that he could interpret dreams, and his brothers were jealous of him and sold him into slavery in the land of Egypt. That God was with him and through his life Joseph was able to save the Hebrews from extinction.



## Historical Period #3

### The Moses and Exodus Period (1571-1451 BC)

The main events of the period of Moses (Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) were:

**The Calling of Moses** when the Hebrews were in the land of Egypt. The Pharaoh had ordered the death of all Hebrew male babies because they were growing so rapidly. Moses was born and grew up in the house of Pharaoh. Later he developed a yearning to seek after the Hebrew God whom he met at a burning bush. Moses later returned to free the Hebrew slaves.

**The 10 Plagues and the Exodus** was the period of time when Moses and Aaron came into the house of Pharaoh and demanded to let the people of Israel go. Pharaoh refused and after a series of 10 plagues the Hebrews escaped Egypt after putting the blood of a lamb upon the doorpost of their homes to protect them from the death Angel that would strike the land of Egypt. The Hebrews escaped with all the wealth of Egypt and the Lord appeared in a pillar of fire and let them through the Red Sea. Later the Egyptians became furious and chased after them and the waters collapsed upon the chariots of Egypt.

**The Giving of the Law at Mount Sinai** was when the Hebrews came to Mount Sinai and God gave Moses the 10 Commandments. The Hebrews rebelled while waiting for Moses and built a golden calf. When Moses came down from the mountain he broke the tables of stone. Later God wrote the 10 Commandments with his own fingers on a new set of stone tablets. He also gave Moses a description of the tabernacle which was a tent that God's presence would dwell in throughout their journeys until they entered the promised land.

**The 40 Years of Wandering in the Wilderness** was when the children of Israel would not believe in the promises of God and they desired to go back to the land of Egypt and into slavery again. When they came to Kadesh Barnea to look over the land that God had promised them they became afraid and only Joshua and Caleb had the courage to move with the promises of God. This lack of faith caused them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years.



## Historical Period #4

### The Joshua and Conquest Period (1451-1443 BC)

The main events surrounding Joshua and the conquest (Joshua 1-24) were:

**The Death of Moses** was the period when Moses gave his final speech to the Hebrews regarding all the promises of God. He reminded them that if they would obey God they would be blessed, but if they disobeyed they would be cursed and scattered throughout the earth, and a sword of persecution would follow them wherever they went. Moses died on Mount Nebo after becoming frustrated with the people and losing the blessing of God in entering the land. He would only see the land and then it would be Joshua who would lead them in.

**The Crossing of the Jordan** was the event when the Hebrews crossed into the promised land, the land flowing of milk and honey. Joshua led them in ordering the priests to carry the Ark of the covenant and the waters of the Jordan split in two as they entered into the promised land. Joshua set up a memorial to remember the great event.

**7 Years Conquering the Land** was a time of conquering the rebellious idolaters that inhabited the land. They were instructed to conquer and destroy yet they were disobedient, because they did not conquer all the land as they were instructed. They did not drive out the Canaanites and they intermarried with Canaanite women. The three most prominent deities of Canaanite worship were Baal, Asherah, and Dagon.

**Settling in the Land of Canaan** where the territory was distributed among the 12 tribes, and later Joshua gave a farewell speech to encourage the people and also to warn them what would happen if they disobeyed. He told them "choose you this day whom you will serve."



## Historical Period #5

## **The Judges and Samuel Period** (1443-1095 BC)

The main events during the period of the Judges (Judges 1-21) were:

**The 7 Cycles of Sin, Bondage, Deliverance, Blessing.** Every generation fell into a terrible cycle. First they would forget God's commands and commit idolatry. Second a foreign invasion would take place and bring severe oppression. Third they would cry out to God for help. Fourth God would send a judge or deliverer to save them.

**The first 300 Years of Israel's history.** The book of Judges begins just after the death of Joshua, and ends with Samuel the last judge of Israel. After this was the period of the Kings.

**The Deliverer Judges** came by the hand of God to help the oppressed Israelites. The main judges were: Othniel a nephew of Caleb, delivered Israel from the Mesopotamians. Ehud was left-handed and killed Eglon, king of Moab. Jephthah was a harlot's son who defeated the Amorites. Gideon led 300 Israelites to defeat the entire army of the Midianites. Samson delivered Israel from the Philistines. Known for his great strength. Deborah urged Barak to attack the mighty army of the Canaanites. ([See map](#)).

**The Oppressors** were foreign invaders that came to torment Israel. The first were the Mesopotamians, then the Moabites, next was the Philistines, then came the Canaanites, after that was the Midianites, later the Ammonites, and then again came the Philistines.



## **Historical Period #6**

### **The David and Solomon Period** (1085-922 BC)

The main people during the period of the Kings (Samuel and 1 Kings) were:

**Samuel** was the first of the great prophets of Israel. His mother Hannah had been barren her whole life and prayed to the Lord for a son promising that she would dedicate his life to the service of the Lord if he would fulfill her desire. God answered her prayer and Samuel became famous in the land for his prophecies. He anointed the first king of Israel Saul, as well as David.

**Saul** was the first king of Israel. The people had cried for a King because the lands around them all had a King, but the Lord was there King. The Lord finally told Samuel to anoint Saul the tribe of Benjamin, a very good-looking man who was head and shoulders taller than any other man in the kingdom. Saul had an evil heart, and God gave them a king who was fashioned after their own image because they had evil hearts. Saul spent most of his life hunting down David so that he could destroy him because he knew that David was the Lord's anointed.

**David** was Israel's rightful King chosen by the Lord and anointed by Samuel the Prophet. David was a man after God's own heart, he was from Bethlehem. When he was still a young boy he fearlessly slew the Philistine giant Goliath who had taunted the armies of God. David defeated him with a sling and a stone. David spent much of his life running from Saul, but finally when

King Saul died seven years later the tribes crowned David king at Hebron. David was a warrior king and because of that he was not allowed to build the Temple which he so longed to do. He would pass on that task to his son Solomon, the man of peace.

**Solomon** was the son of David who built the Temple in Jerusalem. During a dream God offered Solomon anything he wished for and Solomon asked for wisdom to lead God's people. Because of this God gave him great power and wealth and his fame was known throughout the world. Solomon made a mistake by marrying the daughters of foreign Kings. He allowed them to build altars to their gods and this brought a great downfall to Israel. By the time Solomon was in his old age the kingdom was ready to be split in two.



## Historical Period #7

### The Divided Kingdom Period (922-722 BC)

The main events and people during the period of the Divided Kingdom (Samuel and 1 Kings) were:

**Civil War** happened when Solomon died in 922 BC as Solomon's sons and military commanders struggled for the throne. Solomon had blessed Rehoboam to be the new King, but Jeroboam had more military influence. Each claimed to be God's chosen King.

**Israel and Judah.** Finally after the struggle 10 tribes went to the North following Jeroboam in the name of the northern kingdom was called "Israel". The remaining two tribes in the South made Rehoboam their King and the southern kingdom was called "Judah".

**Isaiah** was a great prophet who lived in Jerusalem during the time when the Assyrians were rising to power (around 740 BC). He warned Jerusalem and her Kings about their idolatry and their foreign allegiances. He spoke about the captivity's that would come in the North and in the South. Isaiah was one of the great prophets and he spoke more about the Messiah than any other book in the Old Testament. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered the scroll of Isaiah was found in perfect condition.

**Jeremiah** was one of the great prophets and he lived during the time that the Babylonians were coming to power around 620 BC. He spoke against Judah and all the cities in the whole territory about the folly of idolatry. He prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed in her temple would be plundered by the Babylonians. He said that the Jews would be taken away from their land to the land of Babylon, the land of idolatry for 70 years and then they would return. He also spoke



### The Messiah

The subject of a coming Messiah is woven into every part of the Old Testament. The Bible traces the blood lineage of the Messiah beginning with **Adam and Eve**, and then all the way to **Noah** and his son **Shem**. Then the Bible reveals that the Messiah would come through the line of **Abraham**, and then **Isaac**, and then **Jacob**, and then from Jacobs 12 sons **Judah** would be the one that the Messiah would descend from. Finally the lineage passes on to a man named **Boaz** who had a grandson named **Jesse** who lived in Bethlehem, and one of his sons was **David** who would be of the promised seed and became king of Israel. The book of Matthew in the New Testament traces the entire lineage of the Messiah from King David all the way to **Jesus** Christ, the son of Joseph and Mary who was born in a manger, a donkeys stable, in Bethlehem the city of David. The Prophet Daniel around 550 BC predicted the exact date that the Messiah would die and be "cut off" which would take place 483 years after the decree of the king of Persia to allow the Jews to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.



about a new covenant (testament) in chapter 31 that would come in the future where God would write the law on men's hearts.



## Historical Period #8

### The Destruction of Israel and Judah Period (722-586 BC)

The main events and people during the period of the Fall of Israel and Judah (2 Kings) were:

**The Prophets** appeared during the time of the Kings of Israel and Judah. The prophets were mouthpieces of God bringing his message to a rebellious people who had forsaken the Lord. The prophets of the Assyrian period were Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, and Nahum. The prophets of the Babylonian period were Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, Obadiah, and Daniel. The last prophets were of the Persian period and they were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

**The Fall of Israel in 722 BC** happened because all the Kings in the northern kingdom of Israel were wicked, every one of them. They were idol worshipers and they forsook the commandments of the Lord until the Assyrians came, an unstoppable army and destroyed their capital in the North and led them away as prisoners to the land of Assyria which is modern day Iraq in the Northern portion of the Tigris River. These were known as the 10 lost Tribes of Israel, because no one knows what happened to them. There are allusions to them but nothing is certain.

**Revival in Jerusalem** happen because eight of the Kings in the southern kingdom of Judah sought the Lord, and the other 20 were wicked. The Kings who served the Lord were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

**The Fall of Judah in 586 BC** happened because they had forsaken the Lord and disaster was inevitable. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC and took them out of the land to the land of Babylon, the land of idolatry.



## Historical Period #9

### The Return from Captivity Period (539-400 BC)

The main events and people during the Return from Captivity (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther) were:

**Cyrus Allows the Jews to Return after 70 Years.** Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon around 540 BC. It was by the hand of God that Persian tradition was to allow conquered peoples to return to their homelands and rebuild their cities and temples as long as they pay taxes to the Persian Empire. Cyrus made a decree allowing the Jews to return home and rebuild their temple. Unfortunately only a small portion returned.

**Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.** The first move back to Israel was led by Zerubbabel who was of royal blood from the house of David. They found Jerusalem in ruins with a mixed breed of corrupt Jews (Samaritans) living there. But in spite of this they laid the foundations for the new Temple, and built an altar to the Lord in 536 BC. They finished the work on the Temple by 516 BC, exactly 70 years after they were taken captive, just as Jeremiah had predicted. Later (458 BC) more Jews returned with a man named Ezra, a Priest and a Scribe. Shortly after this Nehemiah obtained permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, which miraculously happened within 52 days (444 BC).

**The Temple of Zerubbabel** was known as the Second Temple, it was a remarkable achievement but nothing compared to Solomon's Temple. Later it was Herod the Great who would beautify the Temple of Zerubbabel and so much so that it became a marvel in the ancient world.

**The Final Prophets and the Close of the Old Testament.** The Prophet Malachi warned Israel about turning from their Lord. Ezra and Nehemiah canonized the books of the Old Testament and they were read aloud to the people and interpretation was given. It would not be long before they would again forget about the Lord.

## **Between the Testaments**

### The 400 Years of Silence

The main events and people during the Intertestamental Period were:

**No Anointed Prophet**

**Alexander the Great**

**Hellenization and the Greek Philosophers**

**Jewish Rabbinical Writings and Sects**

## **The New Testament**

### The Coming of Jesus

The main events and people during the time of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) were:

**The Birth of John and Jesus**

**The Ministry of Jesus**

**The Death and Resurrection of Jesus**

**Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**

## The Coming of the Church

The main events and people during the early Church (Acts 1-7) were:

**The Holy Spirit**

**Peter and the Believers**

**The Church in Jerusalem**

**The Stoning of Stephen**

## The Gospel to the Ends of the Earth

The main events and people during the time of Paul (Acts 8-28) were:

**Paul the Apostle**

**The Gentiles and Establishing Churches**

**Miracles and Persecution**

**Writing the New Testament**

# Israel and Judah: When Will They Be Reunited?

by [David Treybig](#)

**The division of Israel and Judah plays a big role in Bible history and prophecy, though this is confusing to many today. When will they be reunited?**

After the death of King Solomon of Israel, the [12 tribes of Israel](#) divided into two kingdoms. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, became king of the southern kingdom of Judah, which was comprised of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and much of the tribe of Levi, the tribe that served at the temple. Jeroboam, a former servant of King Solomon, became king of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was comprised of the remaining 10 tribes (1 Kings 11 and 12).

1. [Tribe of Reuben](#)
2. [Tribe of Simeon](#)
3. [Tribe of Levi](#) (Part of this Tribe)
4. [Tribe of Issachar](#)
5. [Tribe of Zebulun](#)
6. [Tribe of Dan](#)
7. [Tribe of Naphtali](#)
8. [Tribe of Gad](#)
9. [Tribe of Asher](#)
10. [Tribe of Joseph](#)

Even though all the tribes were descendants of Jacob (also called Israel, Genesis 32:28; 35:10) and were known as Israelites under the single nation with this name, these peoples were now separated into two nations.

The [Bible](#) reveals that Israel and Judah will eventually be reunited as one nation. Before we look at this prophecy, consider a brief history of what happened to these two groups of people.

## What happened to Israel and Judah?

It is important to note the distinction between the peoples of these two nations: Israel and Judah. While all Jews were Israelites because they were descendants of Jacob (Israel), not all Israelites were Jews. Some Israelites came from tribes other than Judah and Benjamin. Reflecting this distinction, the first time the word *Jew* appears in the [King James Version](#) of the Bible, the nations of Israel and Syria are at war with the “Jews” (2 Kings 16:5-6).

Because of disobedience to His laws, God allowed the northern kingdom of Israel to be taken into captivity by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C. The Assyrians took these Israelites captive in successive deportations and settled them “in the cities of the Medes” (2 Kings 15:29; 18:9-12). Since this time, these people are known in history as the [\*lost 10 tribes of Israel\*](#).

Less than 150 years later, during the sixth century B.C., God allowed the nation of Judah, which likewise continued to sin, to fall to the Babylonian Empire. Many Jews, including [\*the prophet Daniel\*](#) and his three friends, were taken as captives to Babylon. After 70 years, the Jews were given their freedom and allowed to return to Judah and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple. They were still in their land when the Romans conquered Judea in 63 B.C.

### **Israel and Judah in the first century**

Although there had been some mixing of the peoples of Israel and Judah (2 Kings 18:9-13; 2 Chronicles 34:9) during their respective captivities, during the first century it was still understood that these remained distinct groups of people. Since he was of the tribe of Benjamin, Paul told people that he was both a Jew (Acts 21:39) and an Israelite (Philippians 3:5).

When James wrote his general epistle, he addressed it to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). Writing during this same time period, the Jewish historian [\*Josephus\*](#) said, “The entire body of the people of Israel remained in that country [Media]; wherefore there are but two tribes [Judah and Benjamin] in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.5.2, *Complete Works of Flavius Josephus*, combined translations of William Whiston, 1867, and the Standard Edition, 1960).

### **The modern nation of Israel**

When the modern nation of Israel was founded in 1948, it was established as a haven for Jews. Some have mistakenly assumed that because its founders chose the name *Israel*, this nation is now home for all of the descendants of ancient Israel. Several passages in the Bible make it clear that the modern nation of Israel does not represent all of the ancient Israelites.

First, we must realize that the Bible speaks of Abraham’s descendants as being an extremely large number of people—“as the sand of the sea” (Genesis 32:12). With the modern nation of Israel’s population approaching 8 million, compared to the earth’s current population of approximately 7 billion, the belief that the modern nation of Israel represents all of Abraham’s descendants doesn’t adequately respect or do justice to the promise God made to this patriarch.

Furthermore, Abraham’s descendant Ephraim was prophesied to “become a multitude of nations”; and his brother, Manasseh, a “great” nation (Genesis 48:19). Again, the modern nation of Israel has not fulfilled these biblical prophecies.

## Israel and Judah reunited

While delivering prophecies to the ancient peoples of Israel and Judah of the upcoming demise of their nations because of their disobedience to God's law, several prophets also spoke of a time of restoration after Christ returns to establish the [Kingdom of God](#) here on earth.

Jeremiah wrote: “‘In those days and in that time,’ says the LORD, ‘the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together; with continual weeping they shall come, and seek the LORD their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it, saying, “Come and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten”’” (Jeremiah 50:4-5). This prophecy speaks of both Israel and Judah jointly coming to God.

More explicitly via the use of a visual aid, [God](#) revealed through Ezekiel His plan to unite the two nations. “‘As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: “For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.” Then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.” Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.

“‘And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, “Will you not show us what you mean by these?”—say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.’” ... Then say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again’”’” (Ezekiel 37:16-19, 21-22).

The descendants of the ancient Israelites who had been part of the ancient nations of Israel and Judah will be reunited. They will once again be one nation.

## 12 Tribes of Patriarch [Jacob](#) (who was later named Israel)

1. [Tribe of Reuben](#)
2. [Tribe of Simeon](#)
3. [Tribe of Levi](#)
4. [Tribe of Judah](#)
5. [Tribe of Issachar](#)
6. [Tribe of Zebulun](#)
7. [Tribe of Dan](#)
8. [Tribe of Naphtali](#)
9. [Tribe of Gad](#)
10. [Tribe of Asher](#)
11. [Tribe of Joseph](#)
12. [Tribe of Benjamin](#)

Jacob elevated the descendants of [Ephraim](#) and [Manasseh](#) (the two sons of [Joseph](#) and his Egyptian wife [Asenath](#))<sup>[5]</sup> to the status of full tribes in their own right, replacing the tribe of Joseph.<sup>[6]</sup>

# Origins of the Words "Jew" and "Judaism"

The original name for the [people](#) we now call Jews was Hebrews. The word "Hebrew" (in [Hebrew](#), "Ivri") is first used in the [Torah](#) to describe [Abraham](#) (Gen. 14:13). The word is apparently derived from the name Eber, one of Abraham's ancestors. Another tradition teaches that the word comes from the word "eyver," which means "the other side," referring to the fact that Abraham came from the other side of the Euphrates, or referring to the fact Abraham was separated from the other [nations](#) morally and spiritually.

Another name used for the people is Children of [Israel](#) or Israelites, which refers to the fact that the people are descendants of [Jacob](#), who was also called Israel.

The word "Jew" (in Hebrew, "Yehudi") is derived from the name Judah, which was the name of one of Jacob's twelve sons. Judah was the ancestor of one of the tribes of Israel, which was named after him. Likewise, the word Judaism literally means "Judah-ism," that is, the religion of the Yehudim. Other sources, however, say that the word "Yehudim" means "People of [G-d](#)," because the first three letters of "Yehudah" are the same as the first three letters of G-d's four-letter [name](#).

Originally, the term Yehudi referred specifically to members of the tribe of Judah, as distinguished from the other tribes of Israel. However, after the death of King Solomon, the [nation](#) of Israel was split into two kingdoms: the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel (I Kings 12; II Chronicles 10). After that time, the word Yehudi could properly be used to describe anyone from the kingdom of Judah, which included the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi, as well as scattered settlements from other tribes. The most obvious biblical example of this usage is in Esther 2:5, where Mordecai is referred to as both a Yehudi and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

In the 6th century [B.C.E.](#), the kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria and the ten tribes were exiled from the land (II Kings 17), leaving only the tribes in the kingdom of Judah remaining to carry on Abraham's heritage. These people of the kingdom of Judah were generally known to themselves and to other nations as Yehudim (Jews), and that name continues to be used today.

In common speech, the word "Jew" is used to refer to all of the physical and spiritual descendants of Jacob/Israel, as well as to the patriarchs Abraham and [Isaac](#) and their wives, and the word "Judaism" is used to refer to their beliefs. Technically, this usage is inaccurate, just as it is technically inaccurate to use the word "Indian" to refer to the original inhabitants of the Americas. However, this technically inaccurate usage is common both within the Jewish community and outside of it, and is therefore used throughout this site.

## DIVISION NORTH AND SOUTH KINGDOM

Main article: [Jeroboam's Revolt](#)

After the death of [Solomon](#) in about 931 BCE, all the Israelite tribes except for [Judah](#) and [Benjamin](#) (called the ten northern tribes) refused to accept [Rehoboam](#), the son and successor of Solomon, as their king.<sup>[11]</sup> The rebellion against Rehoboam arose after he refused to lighten the burden of [taxation](#) and services that his father had imposed on his subjects.<sup>[12]</sup>

[Jeroboam](#), who was not of the Davidic line, was sent for from [Egypt](#) by the malcontents.<sup>[13]</sup> The [Tribe of Ephraim](#) and all Israel raised the old cry, "Every man to his tents, O Israel".<sup>[14]</sup> Rehoboam fled to Jerusalem,<sup>[15][16]</sup> and in 930 BCE (some date it in 920 BCE), Jeroboam was proclaimed king over all Israel at [Shechem](#). After the revolt at [Shechem](#) at first only the [tribe of Judah](#) remained loyal to the [house of David](#). But very soon after the [tribe of Benjamin](#) joined Judah. The northern kingdom continued to be called the Kingdom of Israel or Israel, while the southern kingdom was called the kingdom of Judah. 2 Chronicles 15:9<sup>[17]</sup> also says that members of the tribes of [Ephraim](#), [Manasseh](#) and [Simeon](#) fled to Judah during the reign of [Asa of Judah](#).

Both [Eusebius](#) and [Josephus](#) place the division in 997 BCE – lunar dates of Venus can be mistaken as 64 years later (c. 930 BCE). (Crossing of sun over Mars as [Tamuz](#) would be 10 July 997 BCE.)

[Shechem](#) was the first capital of the Kingdom of Israel.<sup>[18]</sup> Afterwards it was [Tirzah](#).<sup>[19]</sup> King [Omri](#) built his capital in [Samaria](#) (1 Kings 16:24), which continued as such until the destruction of the Kingdom by the [Assyrians](#) (2 Kings 17:5). During the three-year siege of Samaria by the Assyrians, [Shalmaneser V](#) died and was succeeded by [Sargon II of Assyria](#), who himself records the capture of that city thus: "Samaria I looked at, I captured; 27,280 men who dwelt in it I carried away" into Assyria. Thus, around 720 BCE, after two centuries, the kingdom of the ten tribes came to an end.

Today, among archaeologists, Samaria is one of the most universally accepted archaeological sites from the biblical period<sup>[20]</sup> At around 850 BCE, the [Mesha Stele](#), written in [Old Hebrew alphabet](#), records a victory of King [Mesha](#) of Moab against king [Omri](#) of Israel and his son [Ahab](#).<sup>[21]</sup>

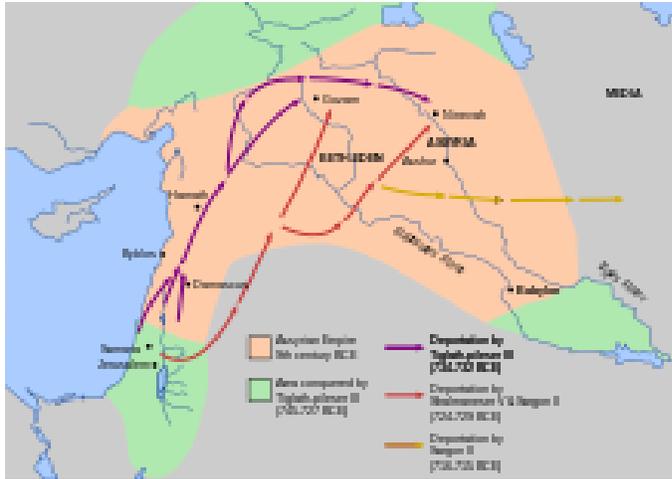
### Relations between the kingdoms

For the first sixty years, the kings of Judah tried to re-establish their authority over the northern kingdom, and there was perpetual war between them. For the following eighty years, there was no open war between them, and, for the most part, they were in friendly alliance, co-operating against their common enemies, especially against [Damascus](#).

The conflict between Israel and Judah was resolved when [Jehoshaphat](#), King of Judah, allied himself with the house of [Ahab](#) through marriage. Later, Jehosophat's son and successor,

[Jehoram of Judah](#), married Ahab's daughter [Athaliah](#), cementing the alliance. However, the sons of Ahab were slaughtered by [Jehu](#) following his [coup d'état](#) around 840 BCE.

## Destruction of the kingdom



Deportation of the Northern Kingdom by the [Assyrian Empire](#)

Main article: [Assyrian captivity](#)

In c. 732 BCE, [Pekah](#) of Israel, while allied with [Rezin](#), king of [Aram](#), threatened [Jerusalem](#). [Ahaz](#), king of Judah, appealed to [Tiglath-Pileser III](#), the king of [Assyria](#), for help. After Ahaz paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser<sup>[22]</sup> Tiglath-Pileser sacked Damascus and Israel, annexing Aram<sup>[23]</sup> and territory of the tribes of [Reuben](#), [Gad](#) and [Manasseh](#) in Gilead including the desert outposts of [Jetur](#), [Naphish](#) and [Nodab](#). People from these tribes including the Reubenite leader, were taken captive and resettled in the region of the [Khabur River](#) system. Tiglath-Pileser also captured the territory of [Naphtali](#) and the city of [Janoah](#) in [Ephraim](#) and an Assyrian governor was placed over the region of Naphtali. According to [2 Kings 16:9](#) and [15:29](#), the population of Aram and the annexed part of Israel was deported to Assyria.

Israel continued to exist within the reduced territory as an independent kingdom until around 720 BCE, when it was again invaded by [Assyria](#) and the rest of the population deported. The Bible relates that the population of Israel was exiled, becoming known as the [Ten Lost Tribes](#), leaving only the [Tribe of Judah](#), the [Tribe of Simeon](#) (that was "absorbed" into Judah), the [Tribe of Benjamin](#) and the people of the [Tribe of Levi](#) who lived among them of the original [Israelites](#) nation in the southern Kingdom of Judah. However, in their book *The Bible Unearthed*, authors [Israel Finkelstein](#) and [Neil Asher Silberman](#) estimate that only a fifth of the population (about 40,000) were actually resettled out of the area during the two deportation periods under [Tiglath-Pileser III](#) and [Sargon II](#).<sup>[5]:221</sup> Many also fled south to Jerusalem, which appears to have expanded in size fivefold during this period, requiring a new wall to be built, and a new source of water ([Siloam](#)) to be provided by King [Hezekiah](#).

The remainder of the northern kingdom was conquered by [Sargon II](#), who captured the capital city [Samaria](#) in the territory of Ephraim. He took 27,290 people captive from the city of Samaria

resettling some with the Israelites in the Khabur region and the rest in the land of the [Medes](#) thus establishing Hebrew communities in [Ecbatana](#) and [Rages](#).

The [Book of Tobit](#) additionally records that Sargon had taken other captives from the northern kingdom to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, in particular Tobit from the town of Thisbe in Naphtali.

In medieval Rabbinic fable, the concept of the ten tribes who were taken away from the House of David (who continued the rule of the southern kingdom of Judah), becomes confounded with accounts of the Assyrian deportations leading to the myth of the "Ten Lost Tribes". The recorded history differs from this fable: No record exists of the Assyrians having exiled people from Dan, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun or western Manasseh. Descriptions of the deportation of people from [Reuben](#), [Gad](#), [Manasseh](#) in [Gilead](#), [Ephraim](#) and Naphtali indicate that only a portion of these tribes were deported and the places to which they were deported are known locations given in the accounts. The deported communities are mentioned as still existing at the time of the composition of the books of Kings and Chronicles and did not disappear by assimilation. 2 Chronicles 30:1-11<sup>[24]</sup> explicitly mentions northern Israelites who had been spared by the Assyrians in particular people of [Ephraim](#), [Manasseh](#), [Asher](#), [Issachar](#) and [Zebulun](#) and how members of the latter three returned to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem during the reign of [Hezekiah](#).