



Darshan Yeshiva

Context of Israelite Religion 2000 B.C.E. to 587 B.C.E.

One problem with studying Israelite religion is that, according to the prophets, the people strayed from it all the time.

Ancient Israelite religion was covenantal, priestly, historical

Priestly outlook sees God as immanent, potentially dangerous if not approached correctly; cf. Lev. 10, 2 Sam. 6.

Is Israel monotheist? The Torah is not concerned with abstracts, just doesn't want you worshipping anyone else.

First evidence for Israel in history comes from the victory stele of Pharaoh Merneptah who reigned 1213-1203 BCE

Israel as amphictyony (tribal league)

Israel wants a king- Samuel chooses Saul. This doesn't work out so well, eventually.

David becomes King- captures Jerusalem and moves his capital there.

Solomon succeeds David- builds the temple in Jerusalem; temple palace complex signals both political centralization and religious centralization.

All other sites of worship are now illegitimate.

After Solomon, the kingdom splits- northern kingdom of Israel, southern kingdom of Judah.

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8th century- Assyrian Invasion- northern kingdom destroyed completely in 722 BCE. Judah suffers heavy losses, but Jerusalem is (miraculously?) spared.

Rise of Jerusalem theology, age of writing prophets.

586- Babylonian invasion. Judah captured, Jerusalem burned, Temple destroyed- Much of Judah taken as captives to Babylon.

Further reading:

History of the Jews by Paul Johnson

Sinai and Zion by Jon Levenson