

2.2 Birthplace of Three Religions

of the birthplace of three religions

Maps and Graphs

Main Idea Three of the world's most influential religions began in Southwest Asia.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all began in Southwest Asia. All three religions are **monotheistic**, meaning that they worship one God.

Judaism

The Jewish people trace their ancestry to Abraham, who lived in southern Mesopotamia around 1800 B.C. According to the Hebrew Bible, God told Abraham to move his people to Canaan—where Lebanon and Israel are located today. Over hundreds of years, the descendants of Abraham developed a distinct religion, Judaism. In 1000 B.C., King David made Jerusalem the capital of the Kingdom of Israel. Jews built and rebuilt the sacred First and Second Temples there. Jerusalem remains the holiest city for Jews today.

The Jewish belief in one God was new. At the time, most people believed in many gods. The establishment of monotheism

marked a shift in religious practices. The **Hebrew Bible** is the sacred text of Judaism. It contains Jewish history and teaches how to lead a moral life.

Christianity

Christianity also developed as a monotheistic religion. Among Jewish teachings was the expectation of a **Messiah**, a leader or savior. Jews believe the Messiah has yet to come. Christians, however, believe the Messiah was a Jew named Jesus. Born in Nazareth, Jesus began to preach in Galilee sometime around A.D. 30. Jesus drew many followers as he preached. Roman leaders who resented his popularity sentenced Jesus to death and he died in Jerusalem.

According to Christian literature, Jesus rose from the dead and told his followers to spread his message. The sacred book of Christianity is the **Christian Bible**, which includes the Old Testament, containing the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament. The New Testament is about the life and teachings of Jesus.

Islam

Another monotheistic religion that developed in this region was Islam. According to its followers, called Muslims, in the early 600s, a man from Mecca named Muhammad received revelations from Allah, the Arabic name for God. Muslims recognize Abraham, Jesus, and others as God's messengers, or prophets. For Muslims, Muhammad is the last prophet.

The holy book of Islam is the **Qur'an**, which contains the revelations Muhammad received until his death. Muslims fulfill religious duties known as the Five Pillars of Islam. One of these duties includes a **pilgrimage**, or journey, to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, at least once in a lifetime.

Before You Move On

Monitor Comprehension What characteristics do these three religions share?

BIRTHPLACE OF THREE RELIGIONS

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam



The Dome of the Rock (far left) in Jerusalem was built on the site where Muslims believe Muhammad ascended into heaven. It was also built on top of the site of the First and Second Temples, and Judaism's holiest site, the Temple Mount. Just below the Dome, where people are standing and praying, is the Western Wall, Judaism's most accessible holy site.



Critical Viewing The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was built on the site where Christians believe Jesus was buried. What details in the photo convey the religious nature of this setting?

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

READING LAB

GeoJournal

- Turn and Talk** With a partner, reread passages and talk about why religious institutions are basic to societies.
- Location** Describe Jerusalem's relative location. Then answer, *Why is it there? What is significant about its location to each of the three religions?*
- Understand Culture** Read more about these religions on pages R52–R54. Then conduct research to evaluate the importance of either Moses or Abraham to each religion. Prepare a brief oral report, being sure to include main ideas and important supporting ideas from your research.