

How are religion and culture connected?



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The aspect of religion and culture is what shapes the lives of all humans, whether they are believers or not. Whole nations have dress codes to keep to their religious values. Government officials are elected upon their views of certain religious and culturist views such as abortion. Even wars between two stable governments can be initiated because of the differences in religious beliefs. The Hebrew religious culture is the most influential ancient culture to the modern world.

The Hebrew culture was solely centered upon religion. The one main literature item modern scholars have to study from this nation was the Torah. The Torah also known as the Pentateuch is the main source of the Hebrew government and everyday living situations. The Pentateuch consists of five books. The first book is Genesis. Genesis consists of the early history of the world and how certain questions such as how the earth was formed and where the first humans came from. The second book, Exodus, explains how the Hebrews escaped bondage from Egypt and ended up into Jerusalem area for which the Israelites name came from. Leviticus, the next book, is a book of laws. Leviticus teaches the Hebrew nation which meats to eat, how to clean and what is clean, property rights and rules, and regulations of worship. These principles directed Israelites of the past how to live their everyday lives. After Leviticus is Numbers; Numbers is a record of all the tribes of Judah (which there were twelve). The record was like a modern census of the tribes as they traveled through out the wilderness as they left Egypt to the Promised Land. The final book of the Torah is Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is known as the second law. This final book is a collection of Moses' (the Hebrew that led the Israelites out of Egypt) last sermons. These

five books are what formed and shaped Hebrew culture as the tribes moved throughout the Middle East in the ancient times.

The Jewish tribes were nomadic and were shepherds of their flocks during biblical times. Throughout the Bible, references were made to God being the shepherd to his flocks below. The shepherd lifestyle impacted the literature in the Bible. Since the Hebrew culture was influenced by a nomadic lifestyle, senses were used in concrete thought. Jeff A. Benner states what concrete thought was like for the Israelite community:

All five of the senses are used when speaking and hearing and writing and reading the Hebrew language. An example of this can be found in Psalms 1: 3; “ He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither”. In this passage we have concrete words expressing abstract thoughts, such as a tree (one who is upright, righteous), streams of water (grace), fruit (good character) and an unwithered leaf (prosperity).

With the Greek abstract culture coming down from the north, the Hebrew concrete belief slowly faded away.

The Hebrews’ most powerful time was the reigns of King David and Solomon (1005-925 B. C. E.). After King Solomon passed away, the kingdom became a warring nation. Outside influences and rulers kept seeping into the Hebrew nation. In 586 B. C. E., Cyrus captured Jerusalem and transported the Jews out of their holy land. Eventually they came back to their land. Then the Greeks came and Alexander the Great brought with him the Greek culture. Then the Romans conquered Israel and brought their culture. Slowly the

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Hebrew culture was lost. Even though the culture's concrete thought faded away, the religious influence did not. The Hebrew religious culture's greatest attribute to modern cultures is the creation of Christianity and Islam.

Christianity is based on the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah for which would deliver the Israelites. Around 4 B. C. E., a child was born from a virgin according to the Bible. This child's name was Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was God's son and the Messiah for which was going to become the King of the Jews. Jesus started teaching his father's words and spread the good news. Jesus was then crucified and buried. After three days he resurrected from his death. Christianity is based upon Jesus' life and teachings. His main points are love God with all your heart, all your mind, and all your soul, and love your neighbor as just as Jesus loved human kind. Christians believe that one day he will come back to earth from Heaven and judgment day will come onto earth.

Christianity has played a major role in government over the last two millenniums. After becoming the sole religion of the Roman Empire, Christianity became the dominant religion of Europe. Many nations became one under God. Today, United States, the most powerful nation in the world, has "One Nation under God" in the national pledge and printed its currency. With Christianity being a major influence of government officials, the religion has caused several wars, mainly against Islamic nations.

Islam was founded by Muhammad around 622 A. D. in the Middle-East. With a background of the Bible, Muhammad spoke of how the Jews corrupted the bible. So he wrote the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the words for which Gabriel, one

of the arc angels, translated God's words to Muhammad. Muhammad then started the Islamic religion. Same as Christianity, Islam has made a major impact on the world's government and people. The Islamic nation spread over Northern Africa, Spain, Eastern Europe, the Middle-East and some of Asia. With the spread of the religion, the foods, spices, and technologies of these areas spread throughout the world. As Islam spread throughout Europe, sparks began to create a fire between Christians and Muslims (another word the Islamic people).

The Islamic nations conquered Jerusalem, a Christian holy city, and started advancing towards Constantinople around the late first millennium. These advances ignited the Christian Crusades. The Christian Crusades were missions to free Spain and Jerusalem from Islamic rule. The war between Christians and Muslims continued for centuries and never really rested. Recently on September 11, 2001, Islamic terrorist flew two airplanes into New York City's World Trade Center. This act by the terrorist started the War on Terrorism between the Allies and the terrorist with America leading the Allies. As the War has slowly dwindled down, old tensions of these religions have kindled old flames. Whither the two religions have any more negative feelings toward each other than did before, they became more aware of each other. With similar Hebrew backgrounds, these two religions have changed the face of this earth for all time.

Though Hebrew culture mainly lives through Christianity and Islam, small institutes still keep the Israelite culture in touch with the modern world. Founded in 1892, the mission of the American Jewish Historical Society is to foster awareness and appreciation of the American Jewish heritage and to

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serve as a national scholarly resource for research through the collection, preservation and dissemination of materials relating to American Jewish history. The American Jewish Historical Society is the oldest national ethnic historical organization in the United States. The Society's library, archives, photograph, and art and artifacts collections document the American Jewish experience. The Hebrew state was a small population and ruled over a small area. From this small region, a powerful influence on today's society and cultures of many different countries has been formed.