

Western civ (greeks vs, hebrews)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Comparing Greek and Hebrew Civilizations The fundamental difference between the Greek civilization and the Hebrew civilization were their views on religion. In ancient times, religion remained a major driver of socio-economic and political realities. While the Greek religious tradition relied on a number of gods, the Hebrew tradition insisted on the oneness of Moses' One True God. Furthermore, the Greeks were open to question religious ideas that in turn led to freer thinking. In comparison the Hebrew were reluctant to question God and faith in fear of inculcating God's wrath that led to thinking that is more conservative. Consequently, the Greek system prepared individuals to serve the state while the Hebrew system prepared individuals to serve God. There is little question that religion played an important part in the social lives of both civilizations but dogmatic religious practices are more readily associated with the Hebrew tradition. In similar fashion, the political realities of the day reflected the intrusion of religion into the affairs of the state. The Hebrews believed that God would hold everyone accountable one day so the ruler was expected to be accountable to God alone. In contrast, the Greek system of personal accountability relied on philosophy and on the discretion of fellow men. Hence, the Greek ruler was accountable to his fellow men more than his accountability to any gods. This increased accountability paved for the world's first democracy in Athens (Blainey).

The achievements of various Athenians such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Hippocrates, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle among others laid the foundation for the modern Western civilization. The move to democracy strengthened the Greek quest for knowledge.

Furthermore, the Greeks had managed to disassociate divinity with

exploration of things around them. Even after Athens was subsumed into the larger Greek civilization, the traditions of learning and development continued unabated. The epistemological drive of the Greeks led to developments in science, architecture, law, philosophy, commerce and numerous other fields. A rich scientific tradition can be traced back to the Greeks with names such as Archimedes, Hero of Alexandria, Galen and others appearing in scientific discussions to this day (Thornton).

In contrast, the Hebrew tradition kept God intact with learning limitations. God was seen as the center of the universe in the literal sense and ideas upheld by the scripture were unquestionable. The strength of the Hebrew tradition of advancement lay in social values that projected Abraham as the father of all Jews that made all Jews brothers. The fraternal spirit brought to prominence in this manner allowed people to exist together in society without large social distinctions. In addition, social values were proclaimed through religious undertones such as the “ Ten Commandments” that form the basis for modern Western morality and ethics. Another of the more prominent accomplishments of the Hebrews was the introduction of a day of rest known as “ Sabbath” which is considered as the first wide-ranging law of social welfare in the world. This day is still celebrated as the weekend around the world. Moreover, a large volume of Western art, literature and scholarship is derived from traditions of the Hebrew Bible. The depiction of Jesus, Moses, Madonna and other such holy figures in modern art is undeniable. Similarly, the influence of Hebrew philosophy is undeniable in the sense that most Western philosophy tends to either deny or acknowledge these ideas including philosophy derived from the Greek tradition to support or deny these claims (Wilken).

Bibliography

Blainey, Geoffrey. *A Very Short History of the World*. London: Penguin Books, 2004.

Thornton, Bruce. *Greek Ways: How the Greeks Created Western Civilization*. New York: Encounter Books, 2002.

Wilken, Robert L. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.