

# FAITH AND CULTURE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

**Footsteps of Faith**

Windstar Cruises  
Ross Arnold, Fall 2013

# Footsteps of Faith: Lectures

- Footsteps of Faith: Introduction
- The Crusades
- **Faith & Culture in the ANE**
- The Children of Abraham
- Birthplace of Empires
- Alexander the Great & Hellenism
- Mysteries of the Minoans
- The Unlikely Rise of Greece

# Footsteps of Faith

“From the ancient gods of the Greeks and the Egyptians to the sacred places of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, this voyage follows the footsteps of religion throughout the ages. Walk the paths of history as you retrace the beginnings of western civilization on this fascinating journey through history... In these places, much of human thought and culture was influenced.”

# World Religions by Size

	<u>Pop. (000s)</u>	<u>% of World</u>	<u>Founded (c.)</u>	<u>Where</u>
Christianity	2,100,000	29.52%	30 AD	Palestine
Islam	1,500,000	21.09%	622 AD	Arabia
Hinduism	900,000	12.65%	4000-2500BC	Indus Valley
Chinese Trad. <sup>1</sup>	394,000	5.54%	500 BC	China
Buddhism	376,000	5.29%	560-490 BC	India
Sikhism	23,000	0.32%	1500 AD	India
Judaism	14,000	0.20%	2000 BC	Palestine
Bah'aism	7,000	0.10%	1863 AD	Persia
Jainism	4,200	0.06%	420 BC	India
Shinto	4,000	0.06%	500 BC	Japan
Other <sup>2</sup>	690,000	9.70%		
Non-relig. <sup>3</sup>	1,100,000	15.46%		

<sup>1</sup> Includes Confucianism, Taoism, Shamanism

<sup>2</sup> Includes all other smaller religious affiliations identified

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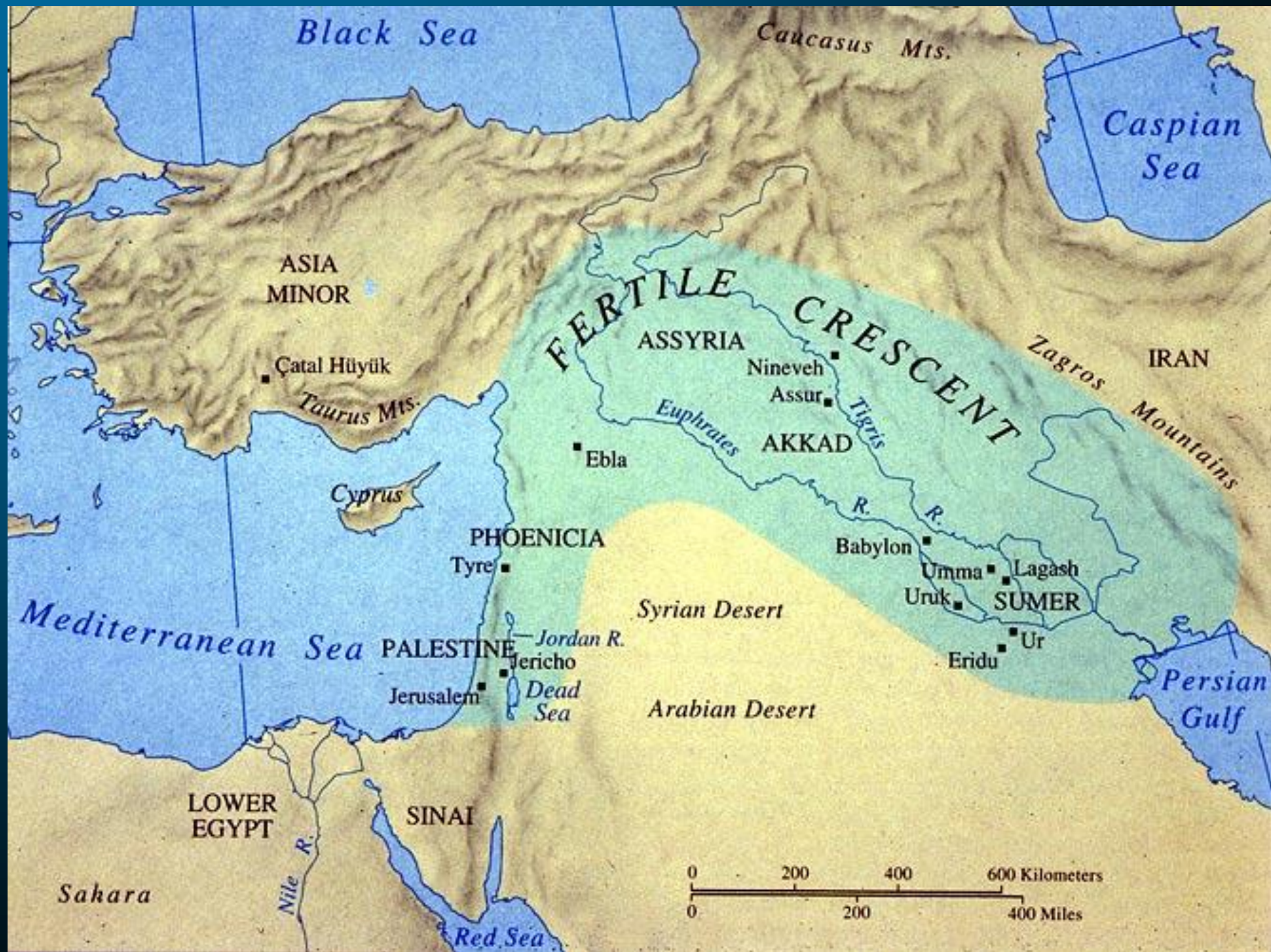
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# Religious Beliefs of the Ancient Near East

1. Mesopotamian primitive polytheism
2. Egyptian sophisticated polytheism
3. Greek sophisticated polytheism
4. Roman sophisticated polytheism
5. The ancient Mystery Religions
6. The Rise of Monotheism
  - Judaism
  - Christianity
  - Islam
    - Baha'ism







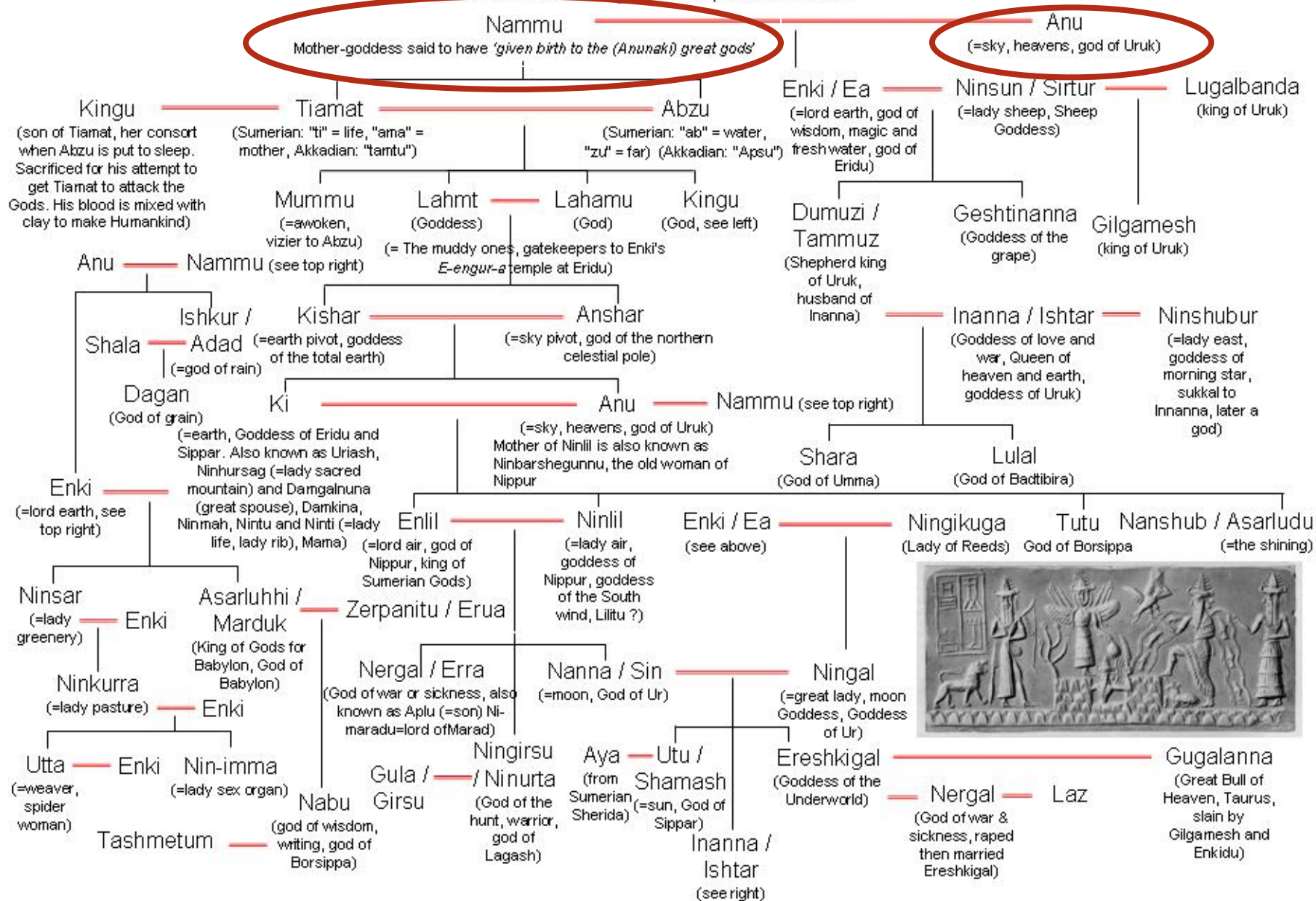






# Genealogy of Later Mesopotamian Gods

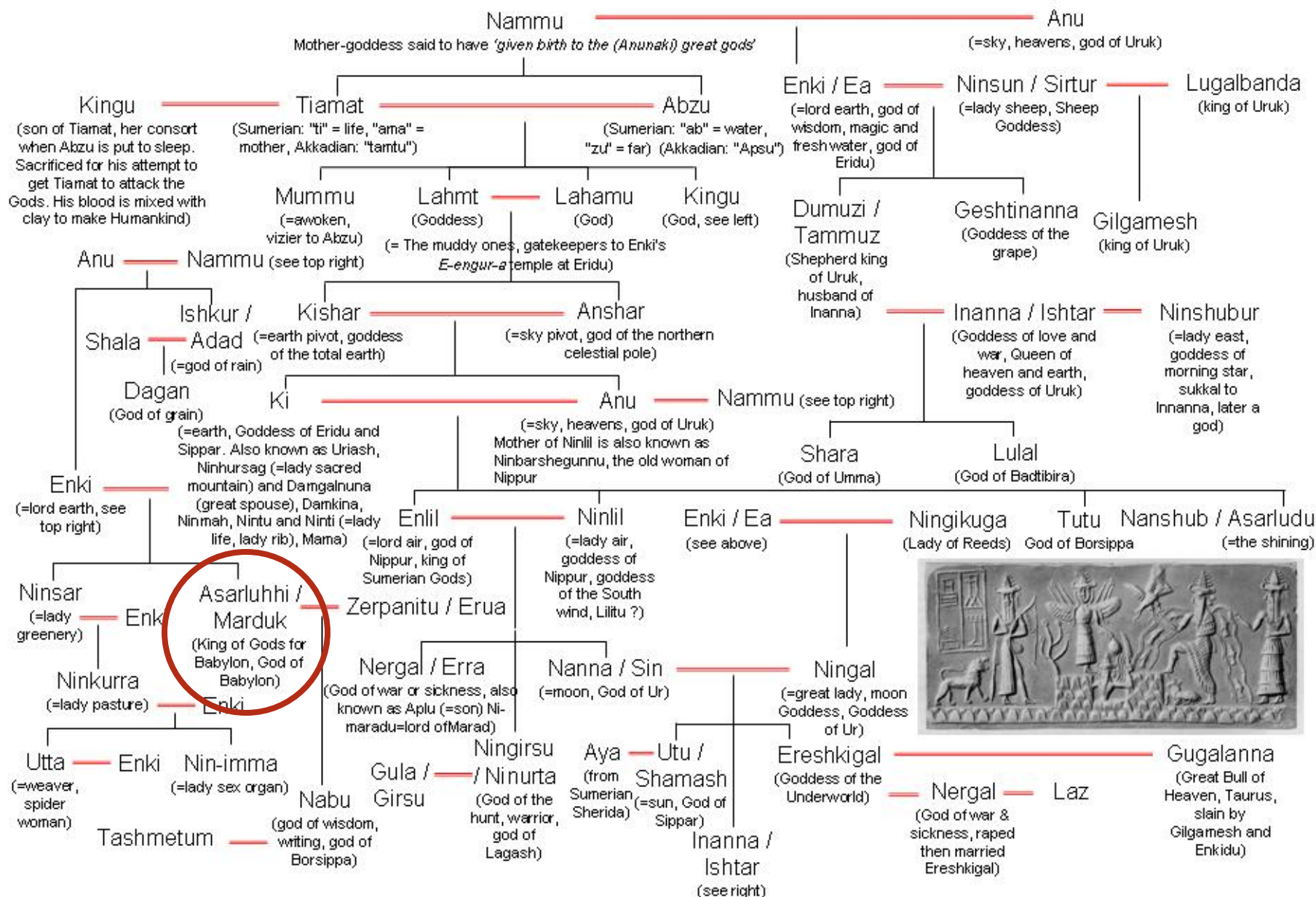
Sumerian names given first, Akkadian last





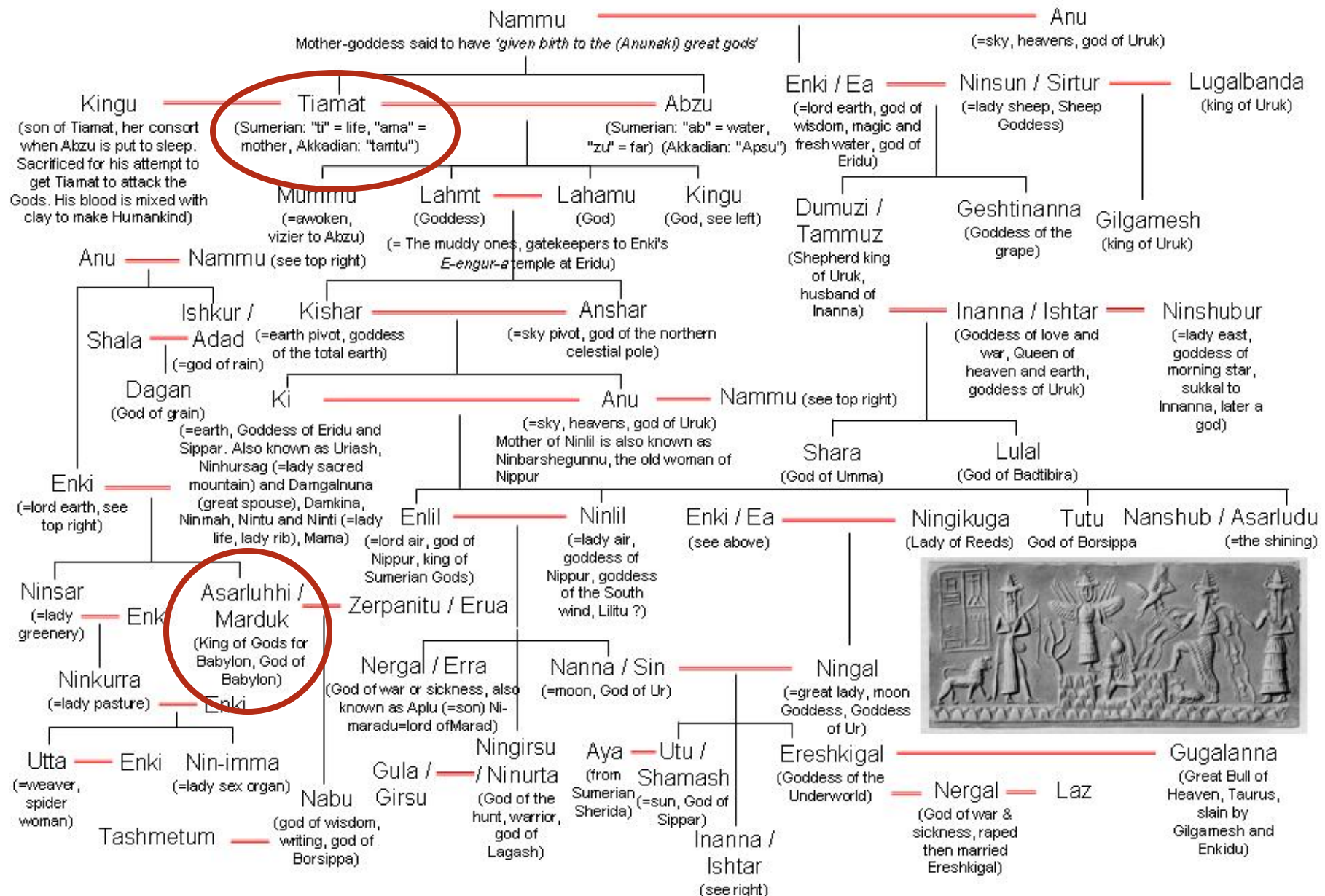
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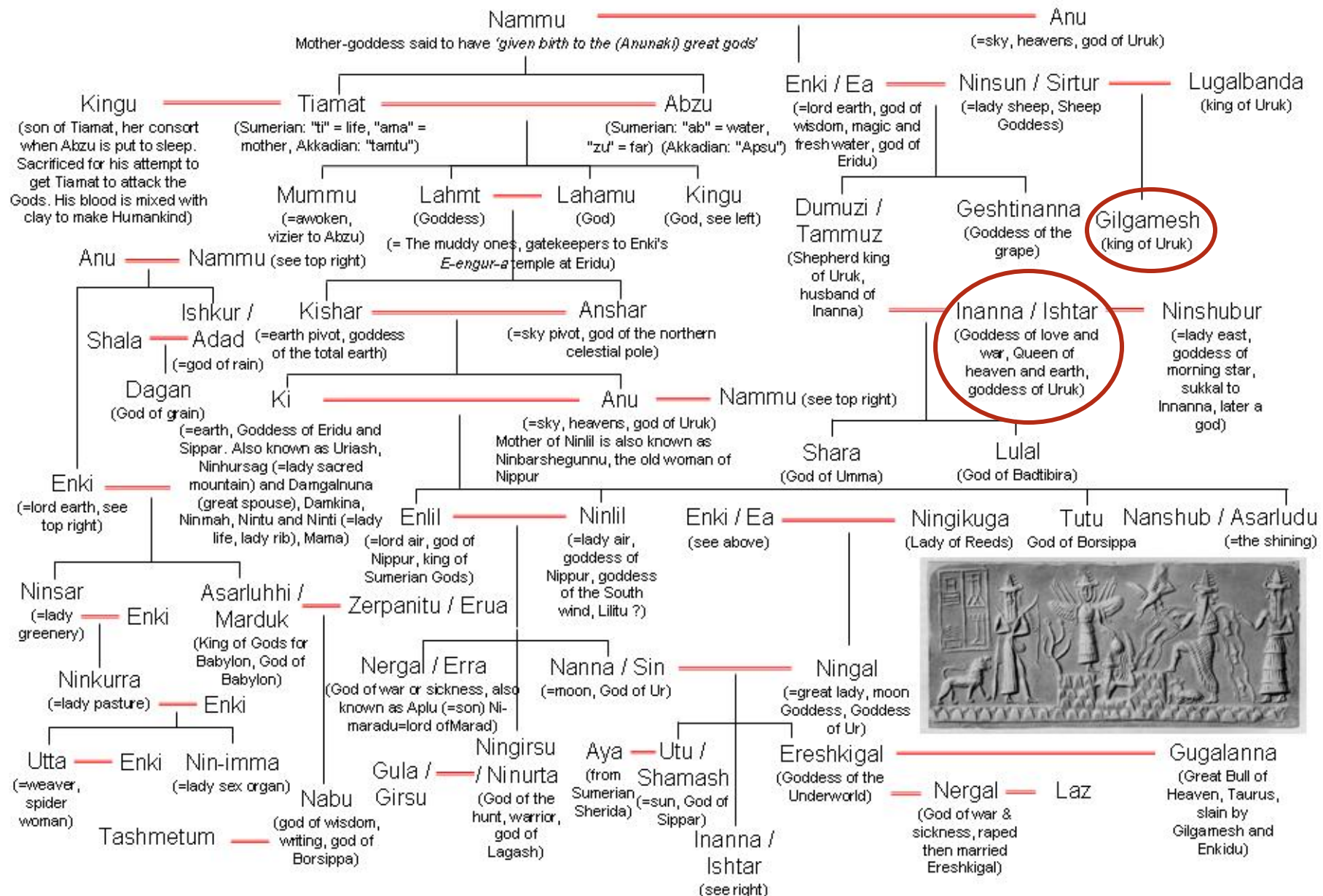
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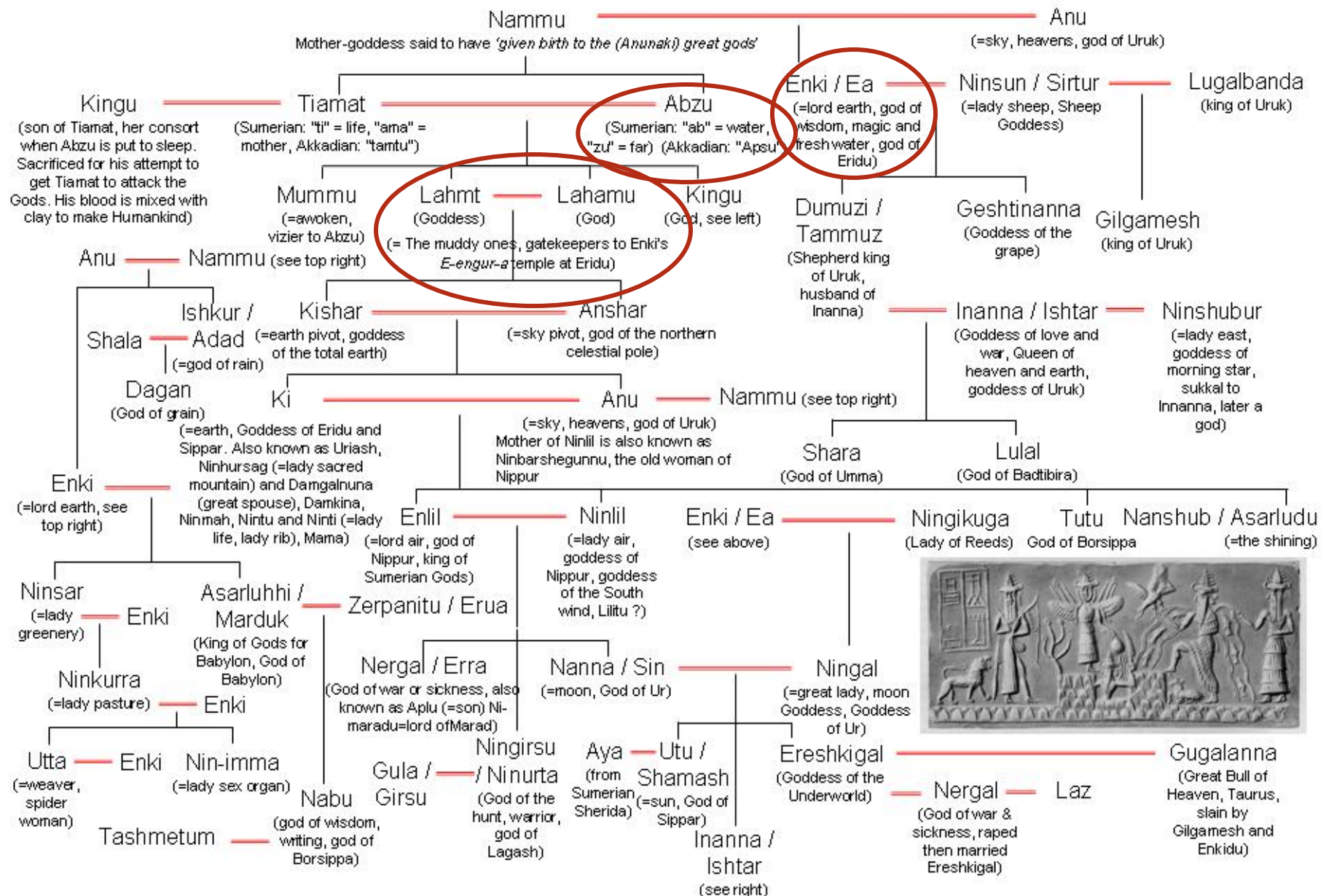
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# ANCIENT EGYPTIAN GODS



Osiris  
Judge



Sobek  
Protection



Ra  
Sun



Shu  
Air, Light



Bes  
Children



Ptah  
Time



Anubis  
Underworld



Hapi  
The Nile



Seth  
Chaos



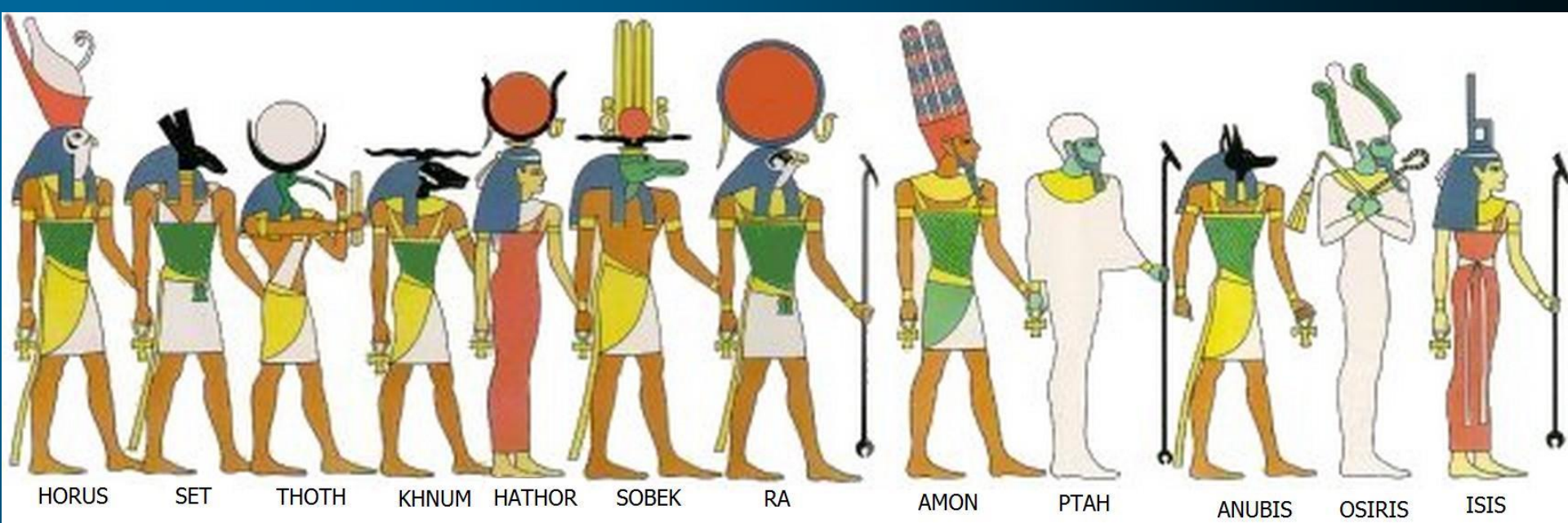
Khnum  
Creation



Horus  
Sky



Thoth  
Science









**Minoan Civilization, 1700-1450 BC**  
**Mycenaean Civilization, 1450-1250 BC**



# Athenian Empire

## 478-404 BC

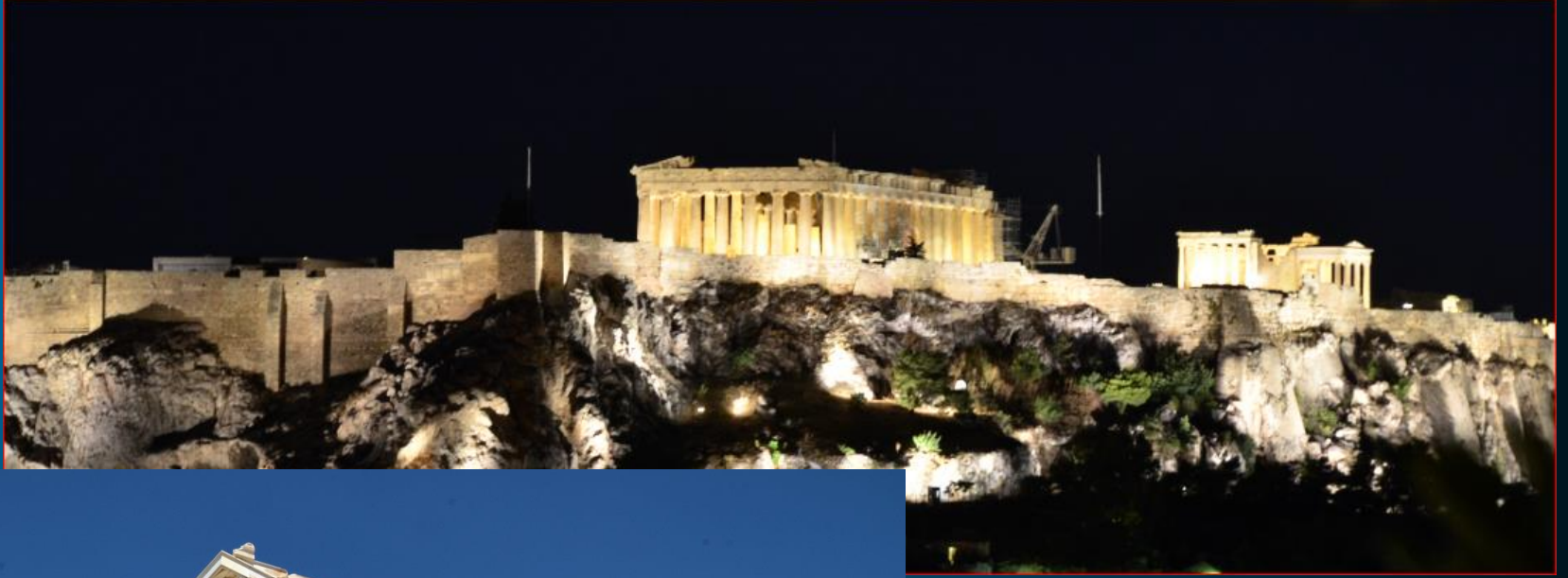






Greek Pantheon









# Conquests & Empire of Alexander the Great 334-323 BC



**The Roman Empire**  
1<sup>st</sup> century AD





Roman gods

# The Greek and Roman Pantheons

<u>Greek</u>	<u>Roman</u>	
Zeus	Jupiter	Father of the gods, sky god
Hera	Juno	Wife of Zeus/Jupiter, goddess of marriage, women
Aphrodite	Venus	goddess of love & beauty
Ares	Mars	god of war
Athena	Minerva	goddess of war & wisdom
Artemis	Diana	goddess of hunting, fertility & childbirth
Apollo		god of the sun, music, prophecy, archery
Hermes	Mercury	messenger of the gods, healing, communication
Hephaestus	Vulcan	god of fire, volcanoes, blacksmiths, crafts
Poseidon	Neptune	god of the sea, causes earthquakes
Hestia	Vesta	goddess of the hearth, family & home, Rome
Demeter	Ceres	goddess of corn and crops
Hades	Pluto	god of the underworld
Dionysus	Bacchus	god of wine, fruit, and ecstasy





# Roman Temples





# The Mystery Religions

Religious cults of the Greco-Roman world for which participation was reserved to initiates (*mystai*). The main characterization was the secrecy associated with the particulars of the initiation and the cult practice.

Due to the secret nature of these cults, details of religious practices are unknown to modern scholarship, although there are educated guesses as to their general content.

## Characteristics:

- \*Secrecy; initiates only
- \*Heavily ritualistic; mystical awakening
- \*Exotic; most were from Egypt or Persia
- \*Most offered some type of immortality/afterlife
- \*They encouraged relationship – both with the deity and with other initiates, minus status in the culture.

Cult of Attis

Cult of Cybele

Mysteries of Isis

Dionysian Mysteries

Eleusinian Mysteries

Mithraic Mysteries

Orphic mysteries

Serapis



Symbols of Mystery Religions



# The Rise of Monotheism

## (or “ethical monotheism”)

While polytheism was based primarily on PERCEPTION (of nature or natural phenomena), monotheism was founded on REVELATION – an event in which God chose to reveal Himself to humanity.

# Events in the Creation of Jewish Monotheism

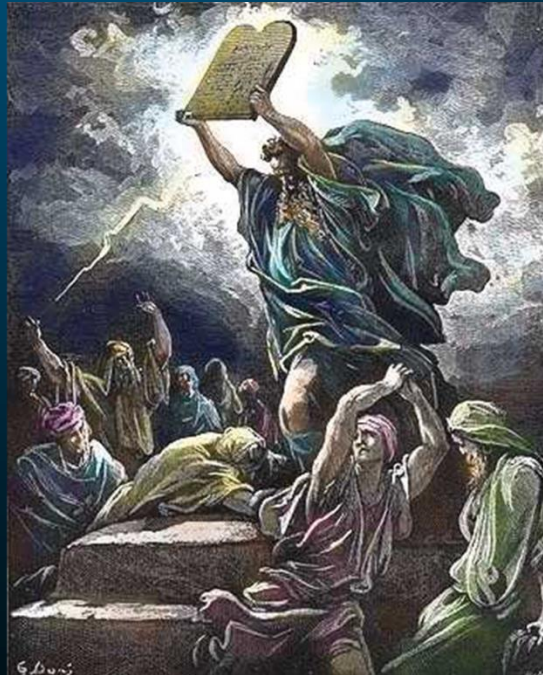
c. 2091 BC – **God speaks** to Abraham (later to become Abraham) and calls him to follow Him, and so creates the *People of the God*, the Hebrews.



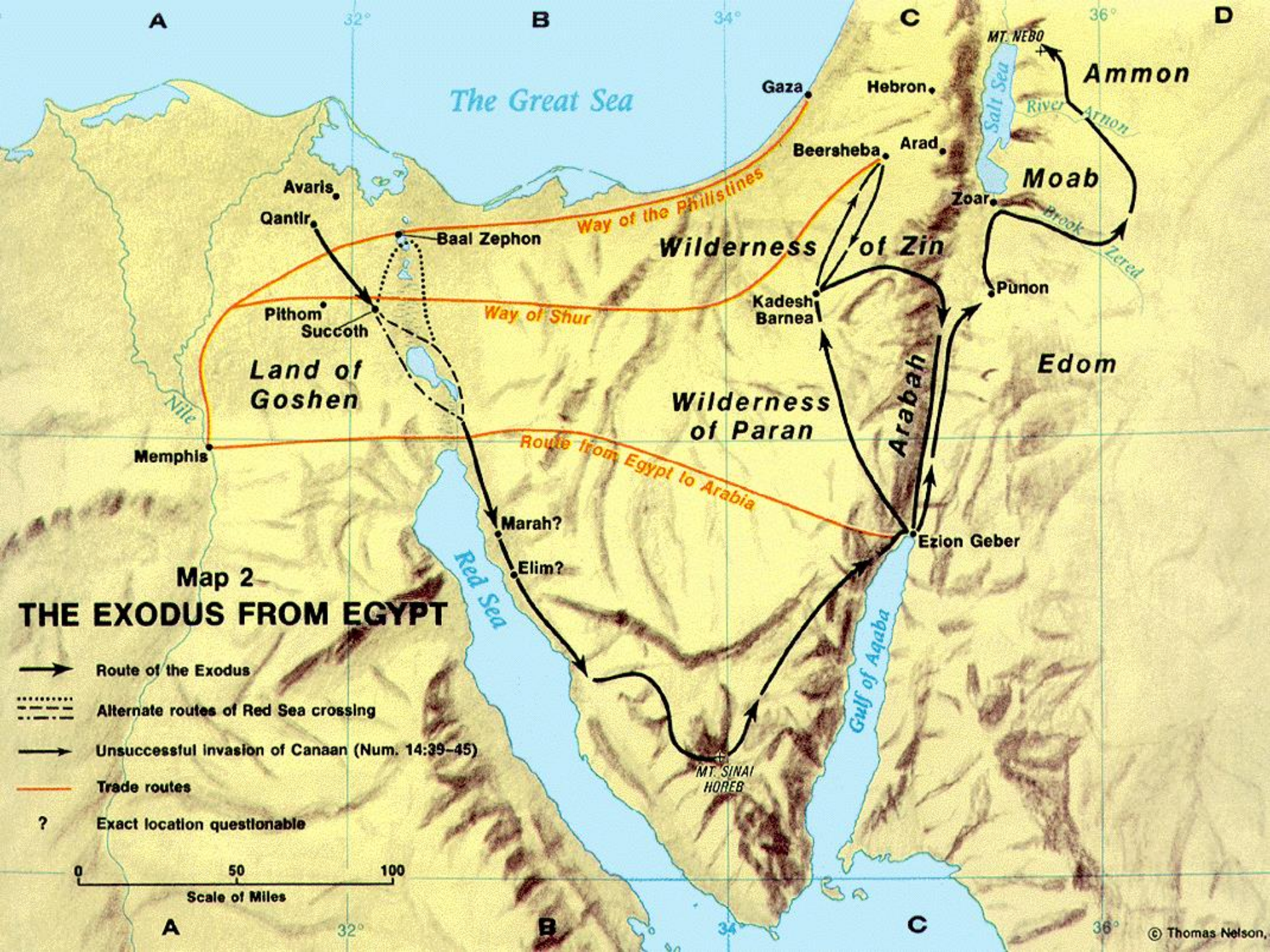


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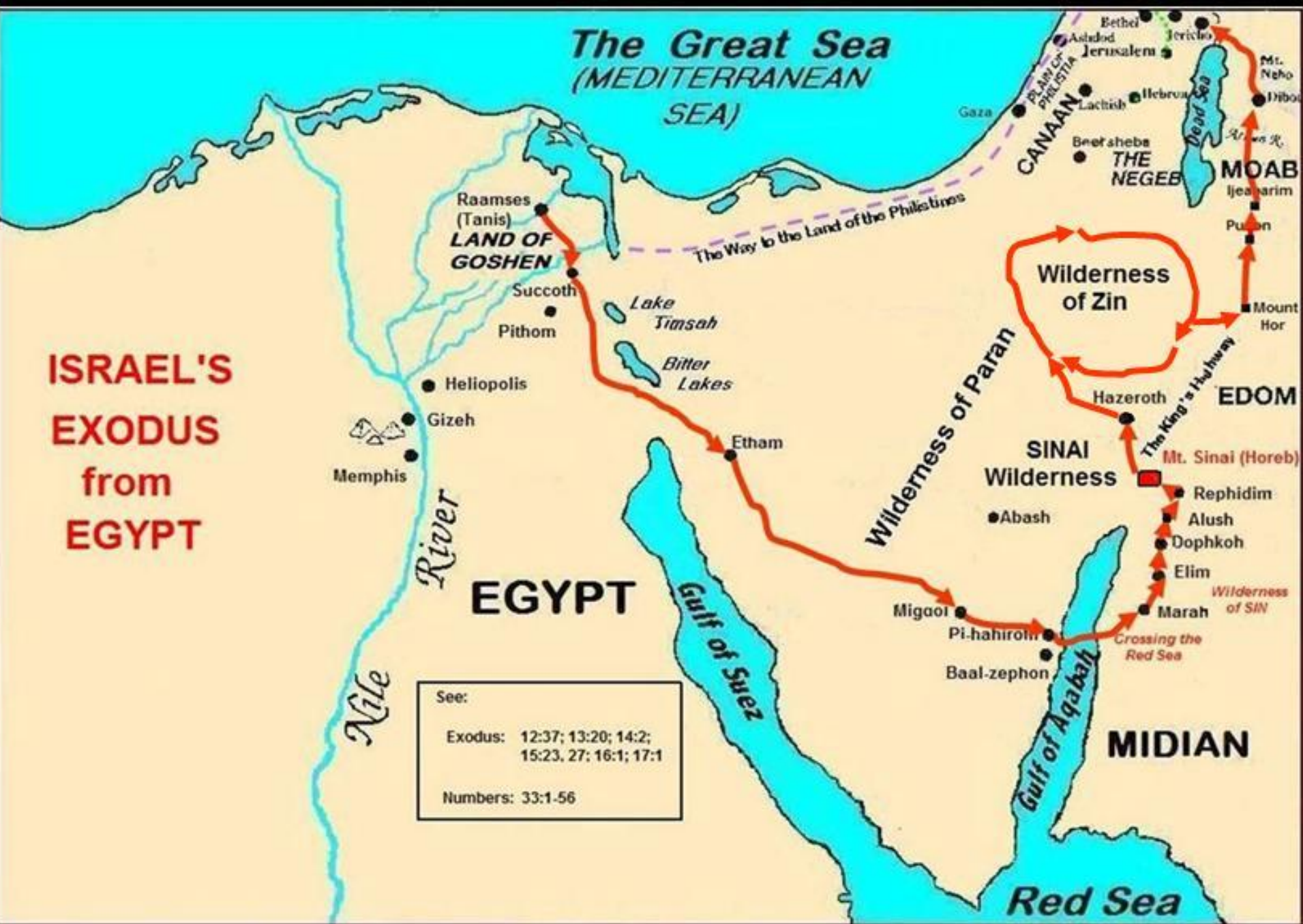








# ISRAEL'S EXODUS from EGYPT



See:  
Exodus: 12:37; 13:20; 14:2;  
15:23, 27; 16:1; 17:1  
Numbers: 33:1-56





THE TORAH

# The Hebrew TaNaKh

- Torah (“Instruction”)
- Nevi'im (“Prophets”)
- Ketuvim (“Writings”)

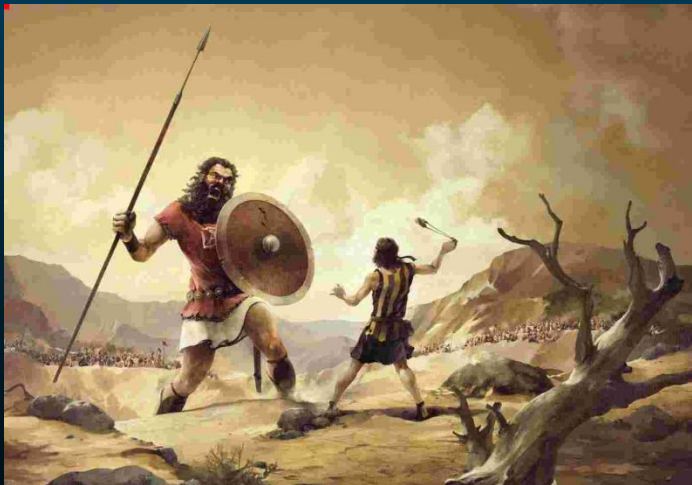
בְּאֶרֶץ נִשְׁן וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בָהּ  
מֵאֵד וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ  
שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וַיֵּי  
שְׁנֵי חַיָּיו שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וְאַ  
וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה וַיִּקְרָבוּ יָמָיו  
לְמִוְרָתוֹ וַיִּקְרָא רָאִי בְנוֹ  
וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בָהּ

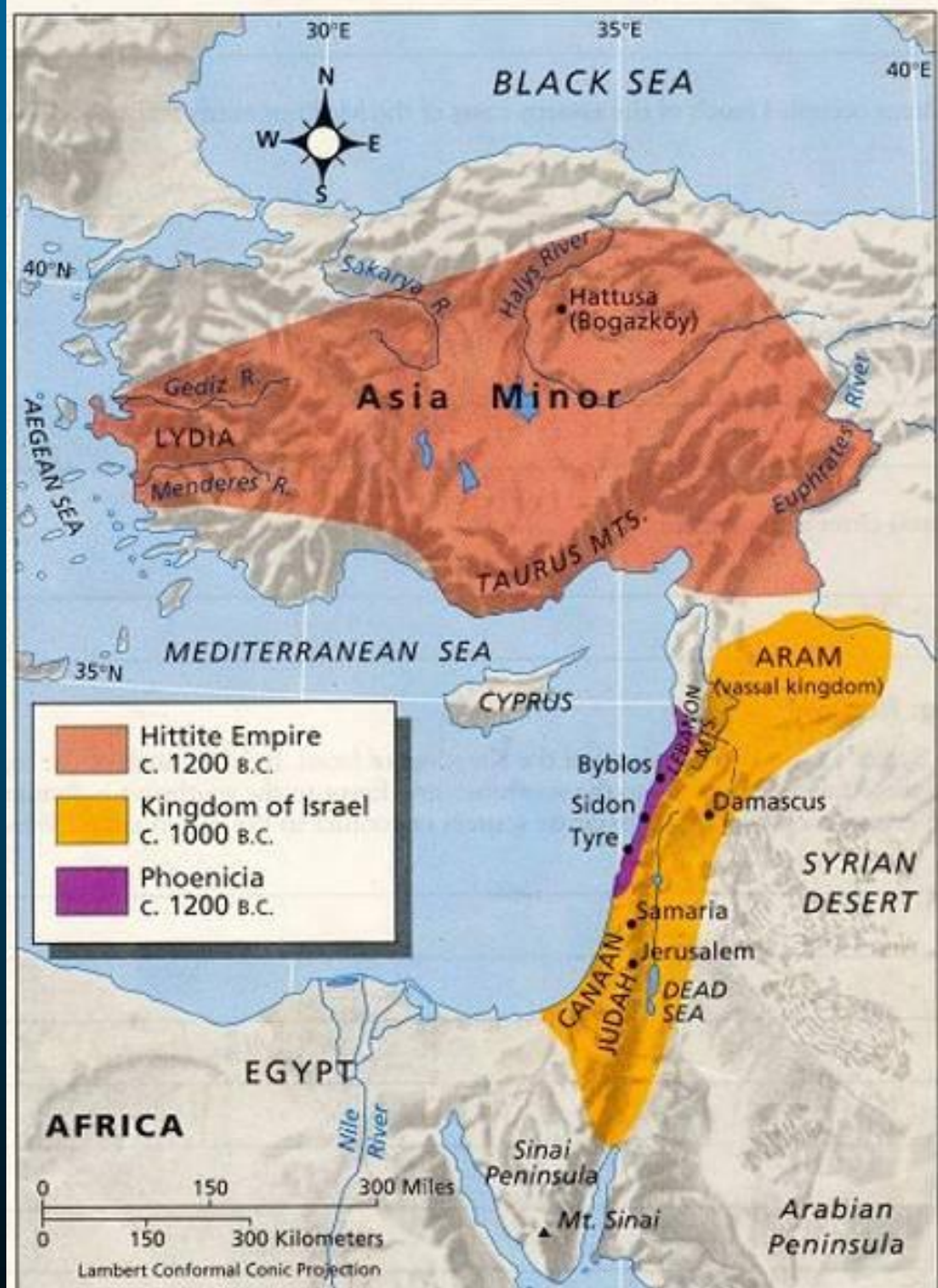




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- 1010 BC – **God leads** the Prophet Samuel to call young David to become King of Israel, thus creating the *Nation of Israel*.







EDOM Vassals and defeated peoples

**EDOM** Vassals and defeated peoples



# Divided Monarchies



- Judah (Southern Kingdom)
- Israel (Northern Kingdom)
- Area Possibly Included under Israel's Control





## **Jewish Dates Leading Up to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century**

**722 BC – Assyria destroys Northern kingdom of Israel.**

**586 BC – Babylonia destroys Southern kingdom of Judah; Babylonian Captivity & Jewish diaspora.**

# Effect of Babylonian Captivity on the Jews

- The Babylonian Exile staggered Judaism.
  1. Is YHWH God NOT as powerful as the Babylonian gods?
  2. Does God no longer love us, or no longer accept us as His Chosen People?
  3. How do we continue without the things that represent our election by God – the Promised Land and the Temple? (*Creation of the synagogue system, with a formalized focus on prayer and study rather than sacrifice.*)
  4. How do we worship without the Temple?
  5. Are we to be assimilated into a foreign culture – as happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel? (*Why synagogues became community centers.*)



# **Jewish Dates Leading Up to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century**

- 930 BC – King Solomon dies; Kingdom is divided.**
- 722 BC – Assyria destroys Northern kingdom of Israel.**
- 586 BC – Babylonia destroys Southern kingdom of Judah; Babylonian Captivity & Jewish diaspora.**
- 538 BC – Persian King Cyrus lets Jews return home.**
- 332 BC – Alexander the Great conquers the Persian Empire and spreads the Greek language/culture. Judaism begins to split into more Hebraic Jews (Pharisees) and Hellenized Jews (Sadducees).**



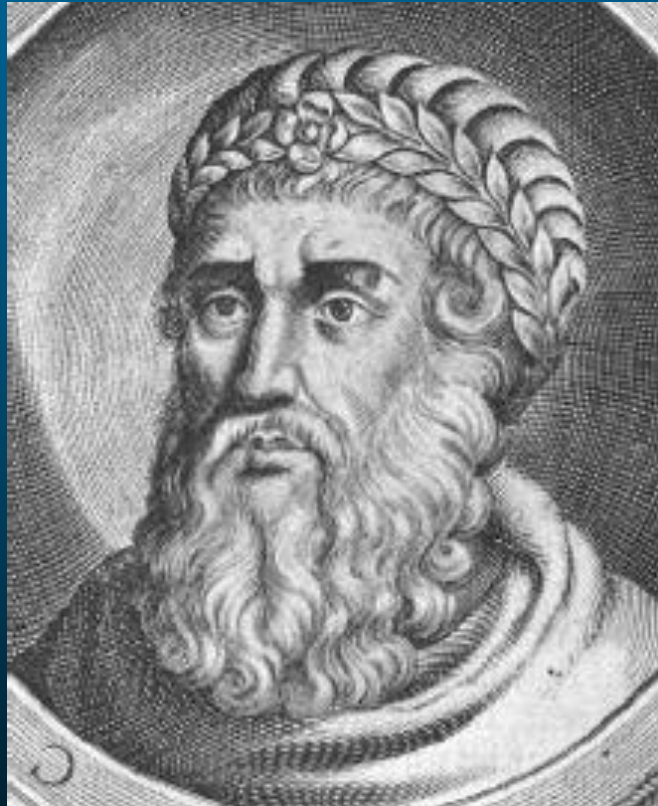
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- 63 BC – Pompey conquers the region for Rome.**
- 39 BC – Roman Senate makes Herod “King of the Jews”**

# 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine



Herod the great





# The 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD and Judaism

- The last prophet of God – Malachi – had been over 400 years earlier. Where was God?
- The Greek influence on Jewish culture and religion had created tremendous rifts.
  - Pharisees – the “set apart ones” were Jewish fundamentalists, holding to strict acceptance of all the Hebrew Bible and opposing Hellenization.
  - Sadducees were liberal Hellenized Jews with a limited interpretation of Torah (but not the rest of the Tanakh), and most of the political power.
  - Essenes were cultic, apocalyptic Jewish sect that advocated complete separation.
  - Zealots saw Roman oppression as the enemy, to be driven out at all costs.

# The 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD and Judaism

- The Roman occupation and oppression violated the Jewish sense of independence.
  - It smacked of the Babylonian Exile and Seleucid oppression – previous times when foreign unbelievers controlled God's Chosen People.
  - It was economically almost unbearable.
  - The cause of frequent rebellions, eventually resulting in the Great Jewish Revolt, which prompted Rome to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. *(Leading to same questions as the Babylonian Exile.)*
  - Eventually caused final split between Jews and Christians, when Christians refused to support the Bar Kochba rebellion in 132 AD.

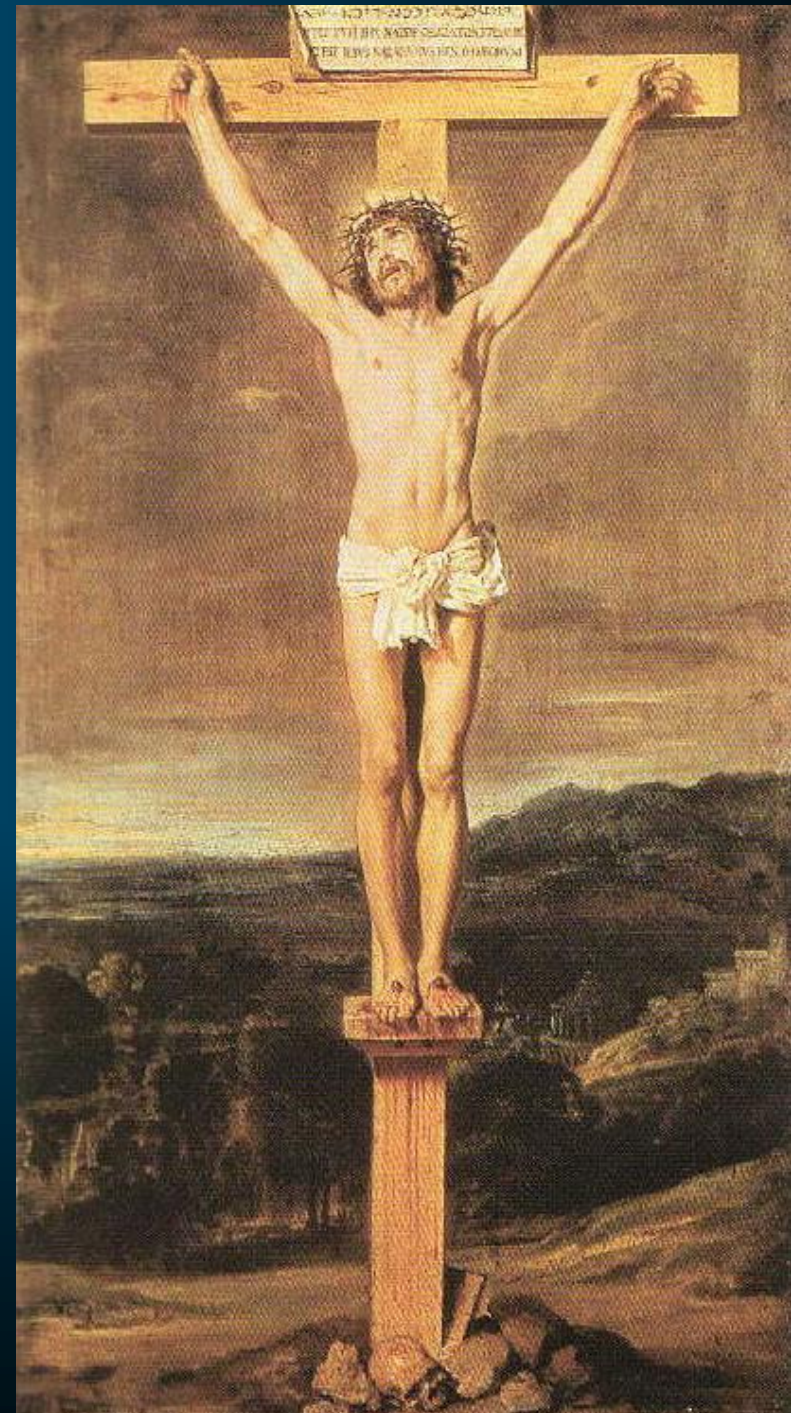
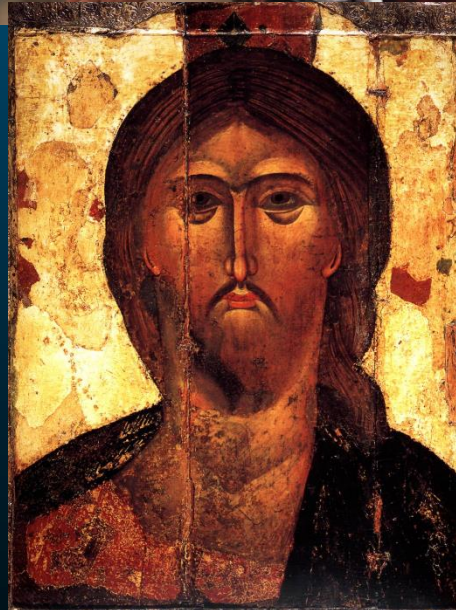


# The 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD & the Birth of Christianity

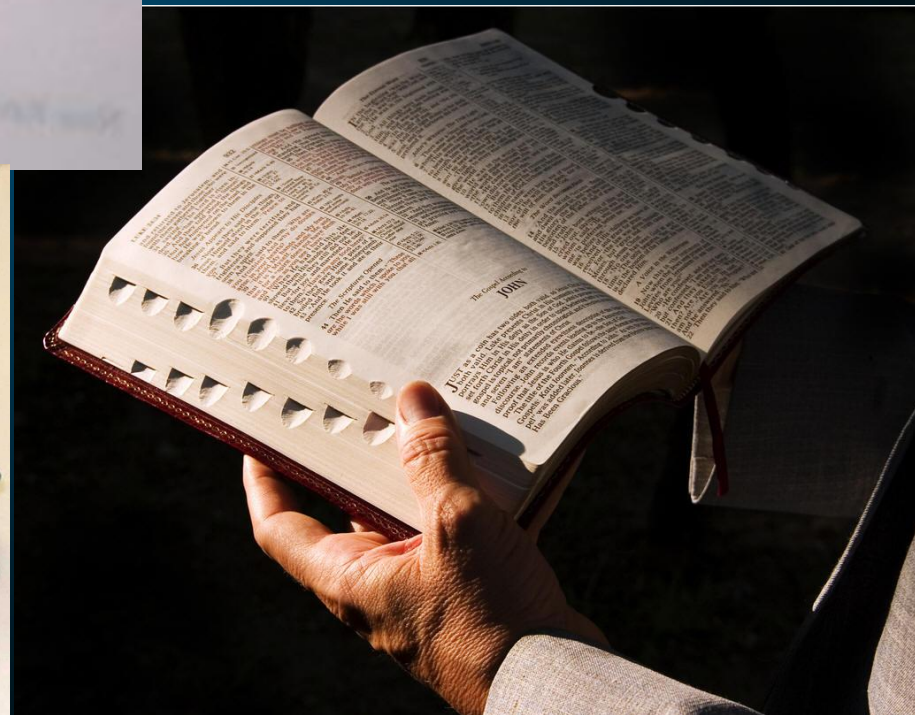
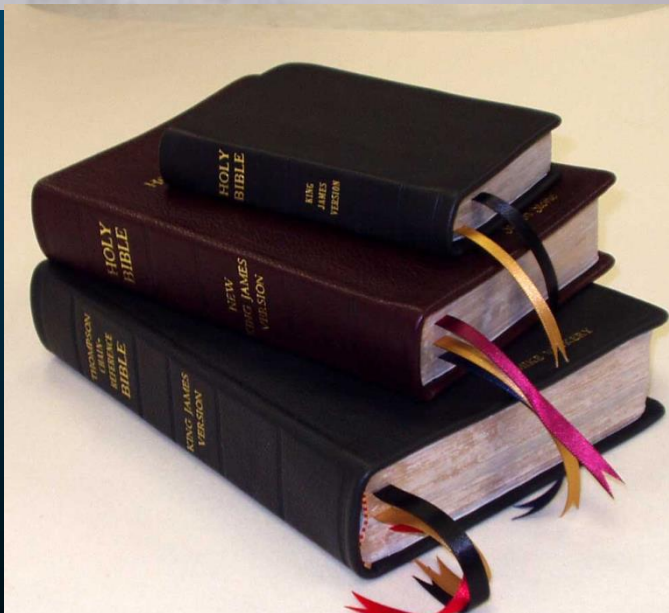
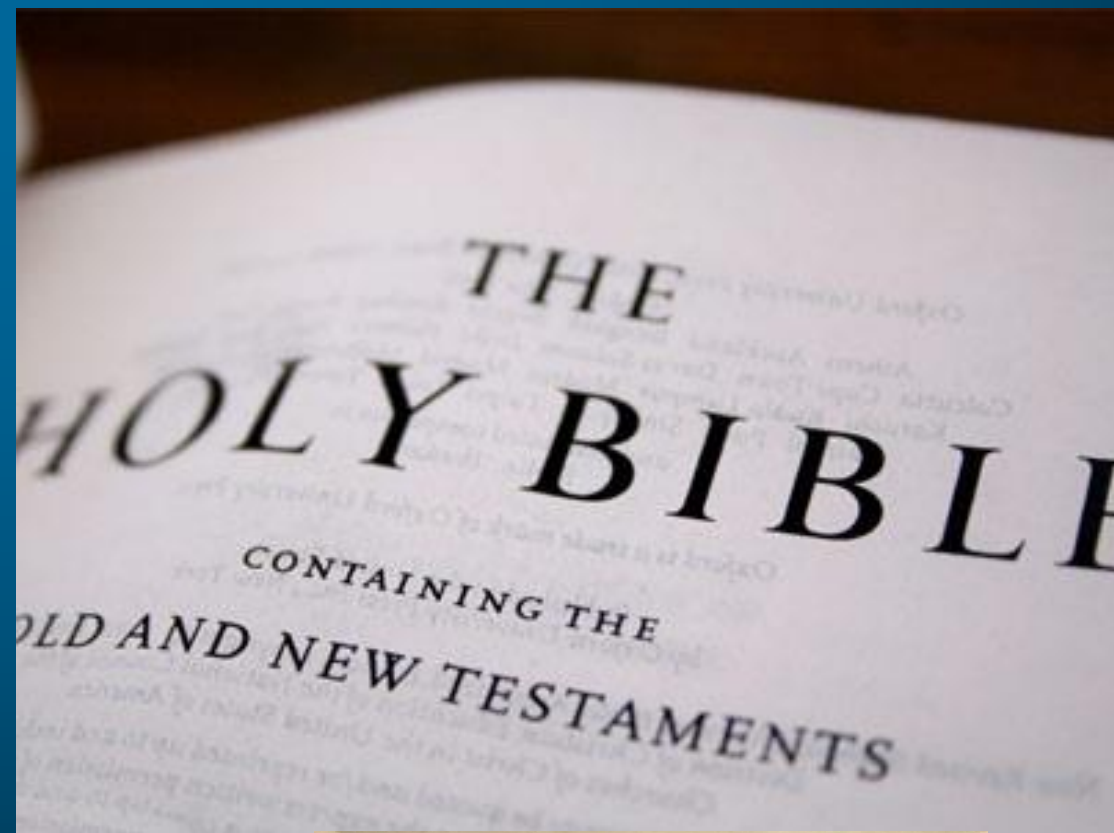
1. The Jewish people had a historic expectation of God's "Messiah."
2. Palestine was, in Jesus' time, very much center of the world, cross roads of three continents.
3. Politically and culturally, it was the perfect environment for a new faith to start and grow.
  - a) The *Pax Romana*
  - b) The Roman Roads
  - c) The Greek language.
4. Economically, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century was a perfect time for a new message of hope.
5. Morally and religiously, the world was tired and frustrated and ready for a change. (So many "God-fearing Gentiles" seeking monotheism.)

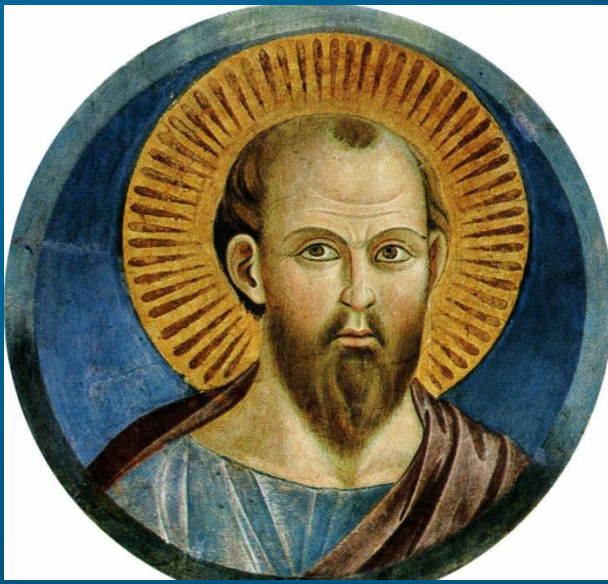


**Jesus the Christ**  
– *Messiah,*  
*Anointed One*  
(c. 6 BC-27 AD)

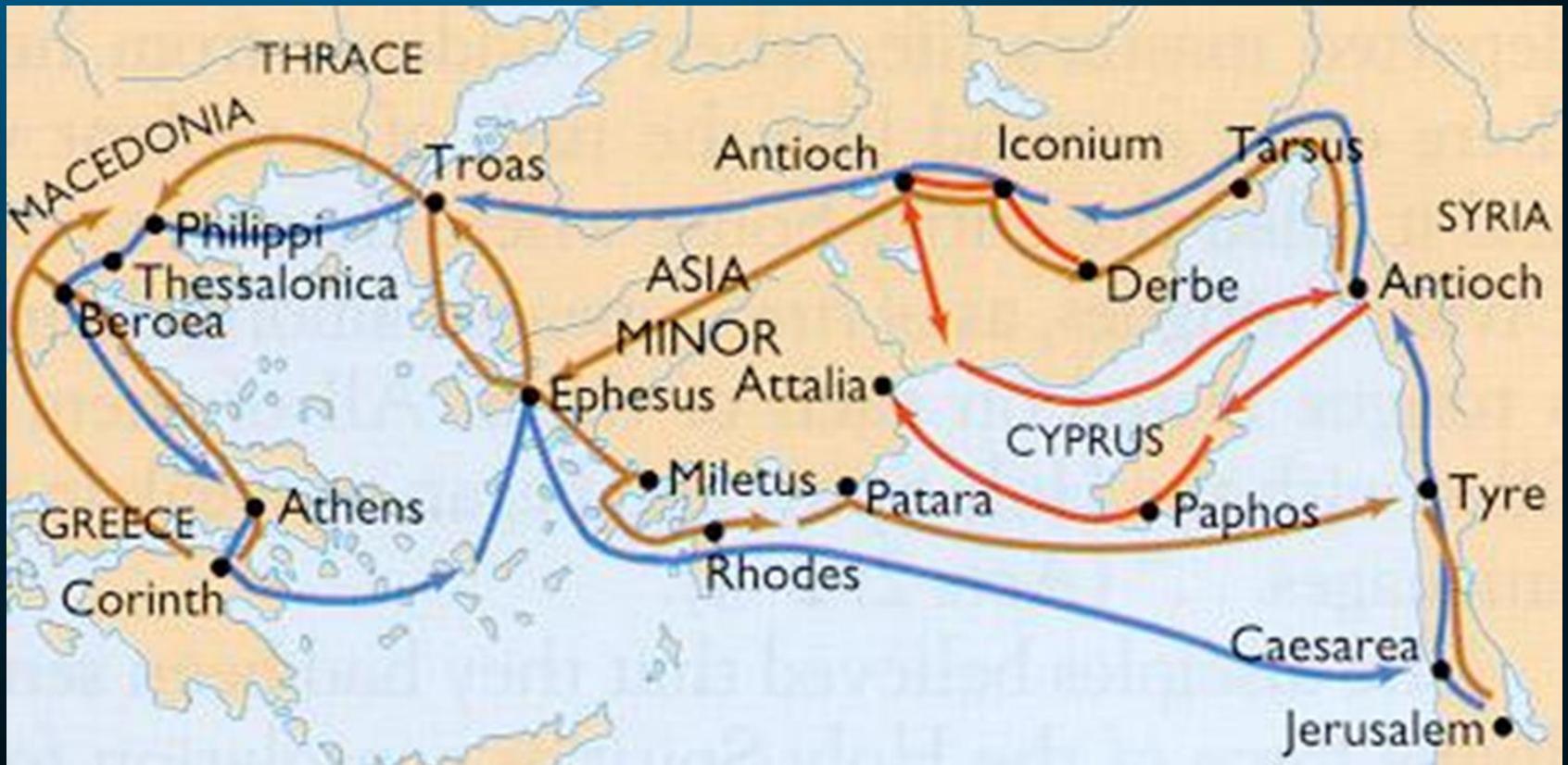








# The Missionary Journeys of the Apostle Paul

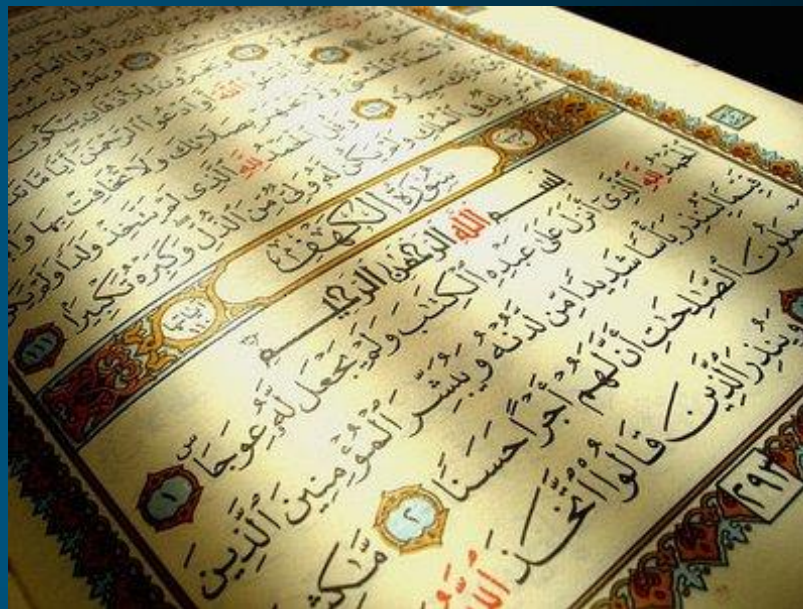




# State of Christianity c.AD 565





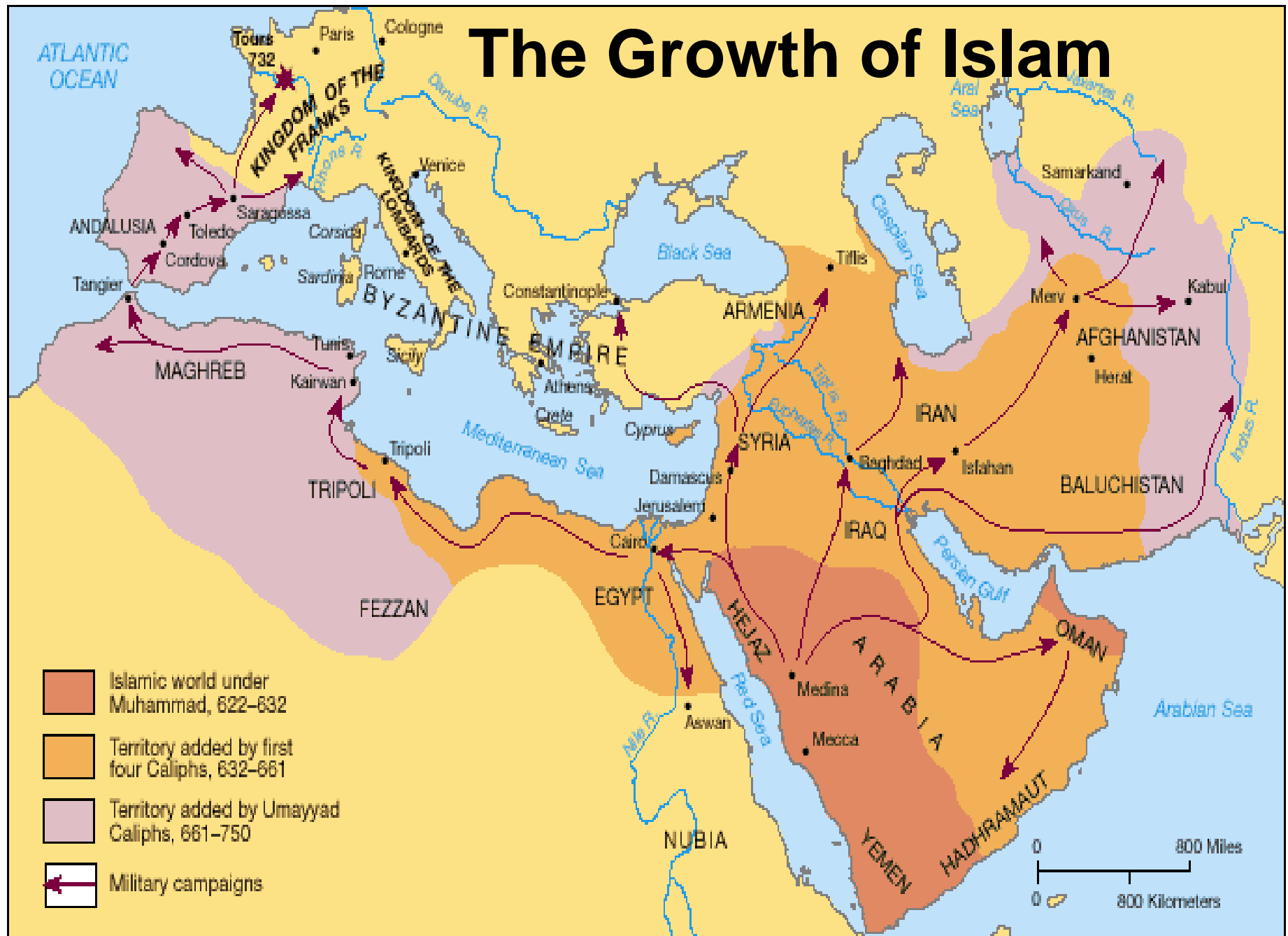


لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

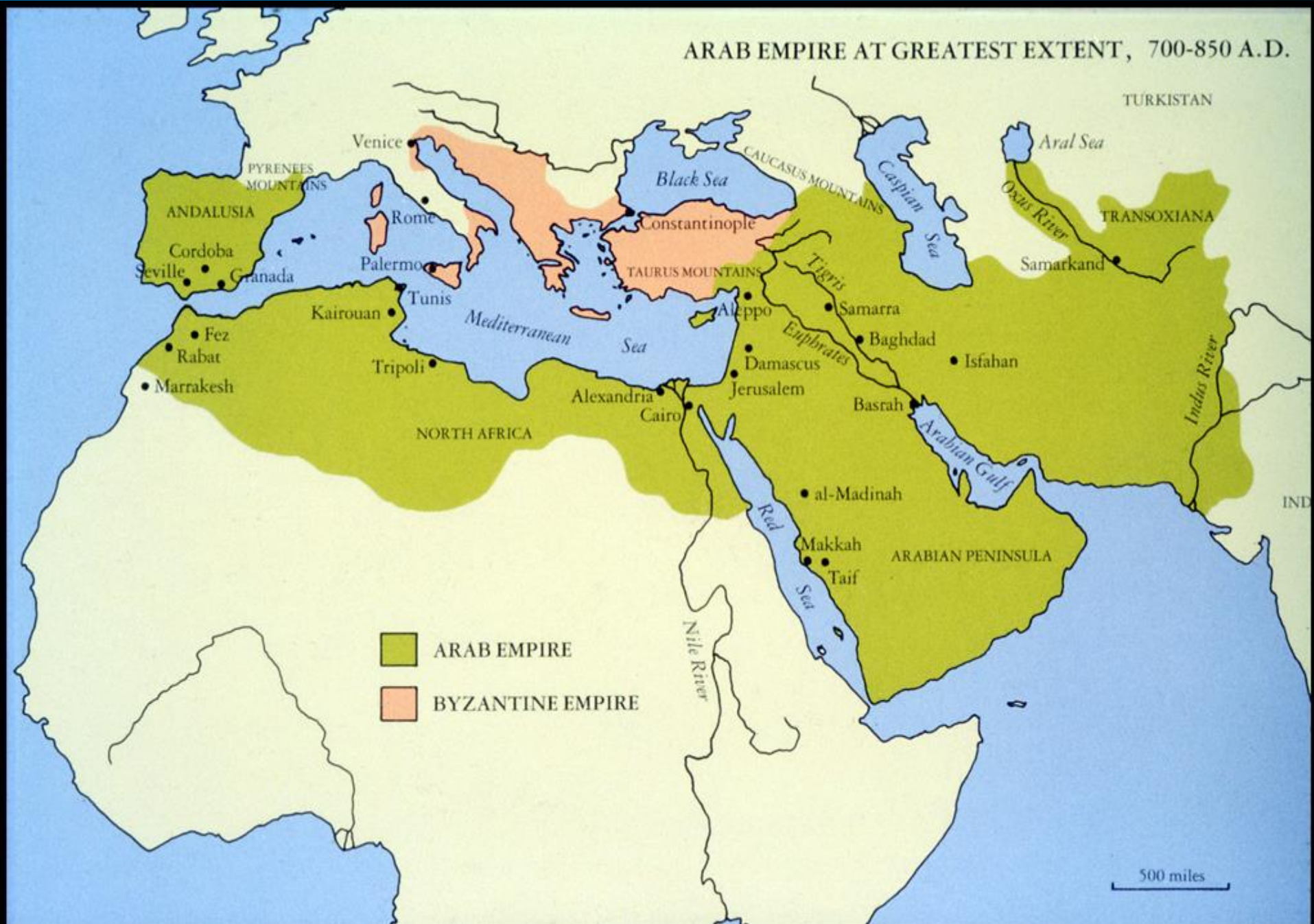
Prophet Muhammad  
570-632 AD



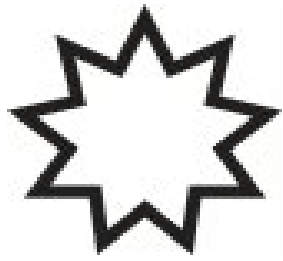
# The Growth of Islam



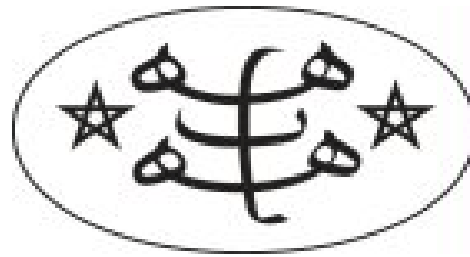
ARAB EMPIRE AT GREATEST EXTENT, 700-850 A.D.







Nine-pointed Star



The Ringstone Symbol



The Greatest Name

# Baha'ism



## Religious Distribution

