

Faith and Culture in the Ancient Near East

Wonders of Arabia

Windstar Cruises
Ross Arnold, Fall 2014

Today's World Religions by Date of Founding

	<u>Pop. (000s)</u>	<u>% of World</u>	<u>Founded (c.)</u>	<u>Where</u>
Hinduism	1,100,000	12.65%	4000-2500BC	Indus Valley
Judaism	14,000	0.20%	2000 BC	Palestine
Buddhism	488,000	5.29%	560-490 BC	India
Chinese Trad. ¹	394,000	5.54%	500 BC	China
Shinto	4,000	0.06%	500 BC	Japan
Jainism	4,200	0.06%	420 BC	India
Christianity	2,200,000	29.52%	30 AD	Palestine
Islam	1,600,000	21.09%	622 AD	Arabia
Sikhism	28,000	0.32%	1500 AD	India
Bah'aism	7,300	0.10%	1863 AD	Persia
Other ²	690,000	9.70%		
Non-relig. ³	1,100,000	15.46%		

¹ Includes Confucianism, Taoism, Shamanism

² Includes all other smaller religious affiliations identified

³ Includes secular, non-religious, agnostic and atheist

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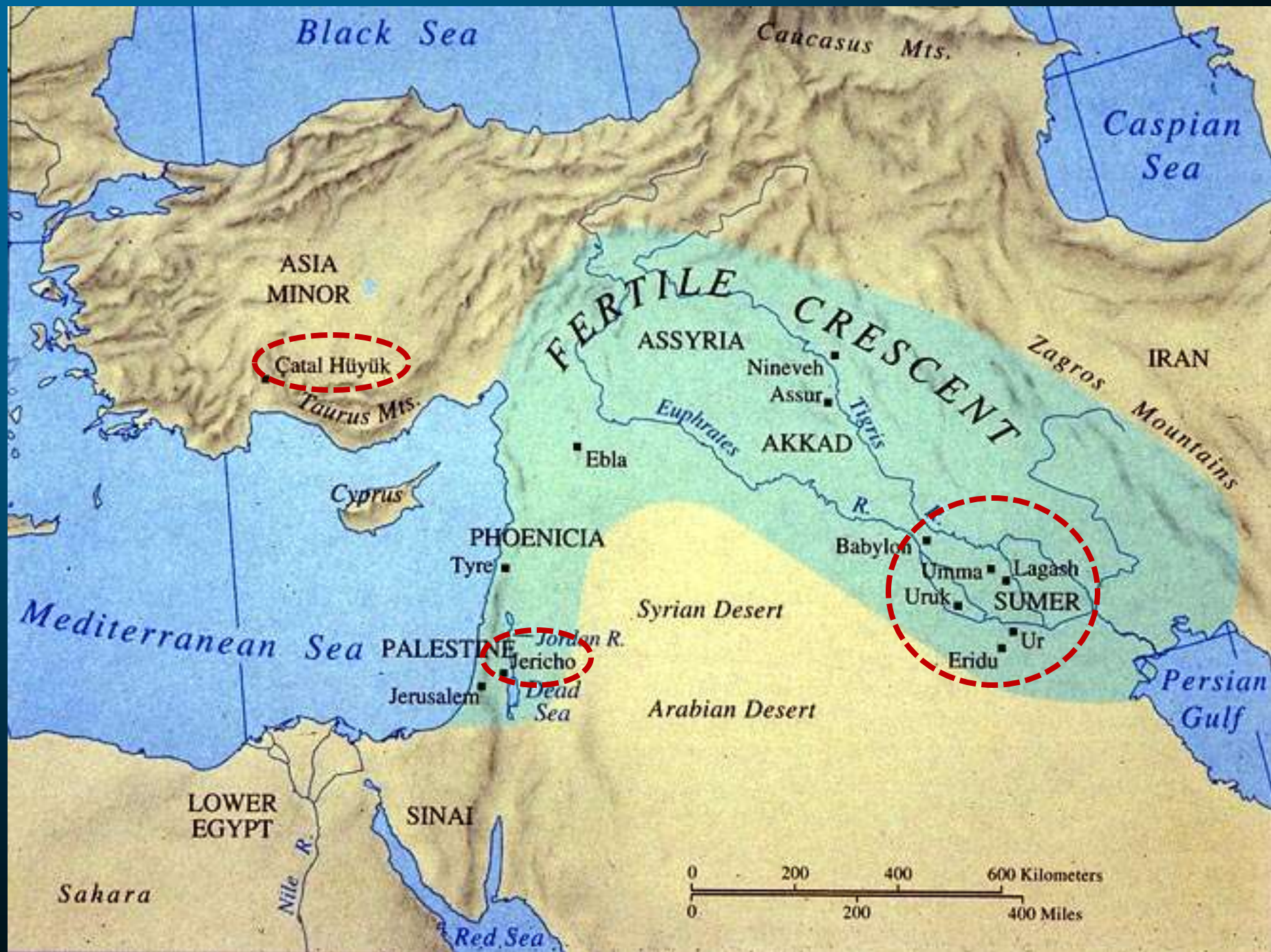
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Religious Beliefs of the Ancient Near East

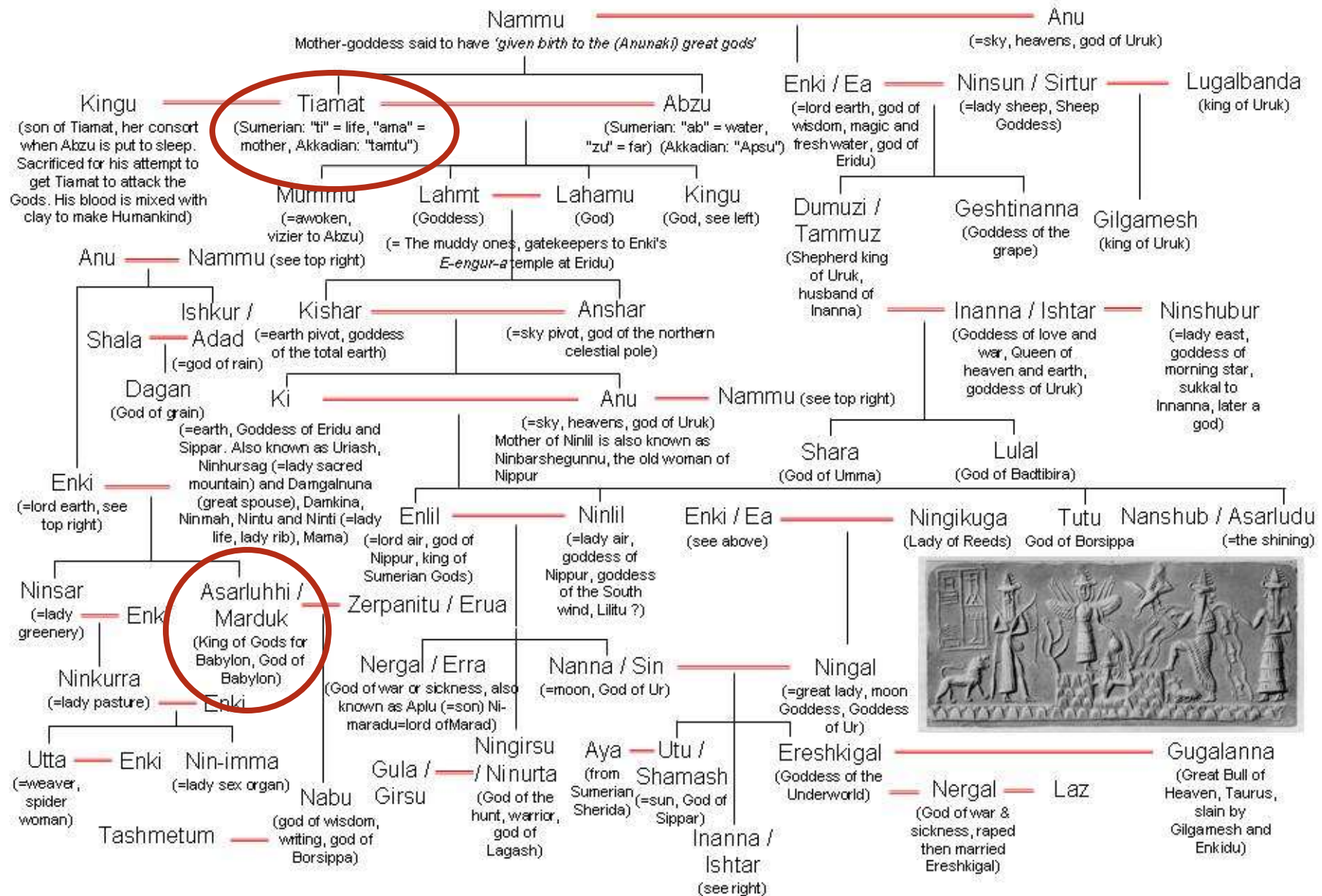
1. Mesopotamian primitive polytheism
2. Egyptian sophisticated polytheism
3. Greek sophisticated polytheism
4. Roman sophisticated polytheism
5. The ancient Mystery Religions
6. The Rise of Monotheism
 - Judaism
 - Christianity
 - Islam





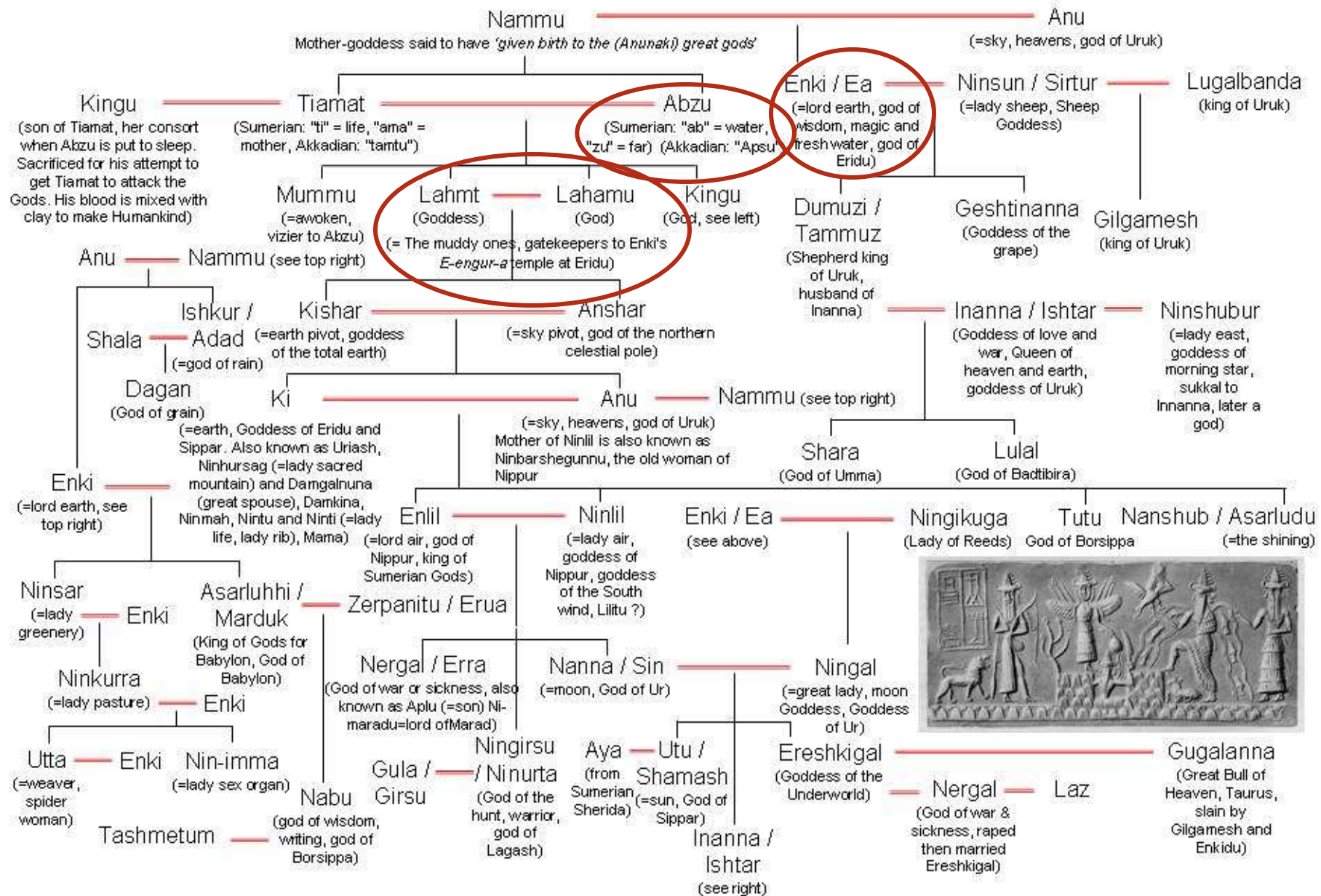
Genealogy of Later Mesopotamian Gods

Sumerian names given first, Akkadian last



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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



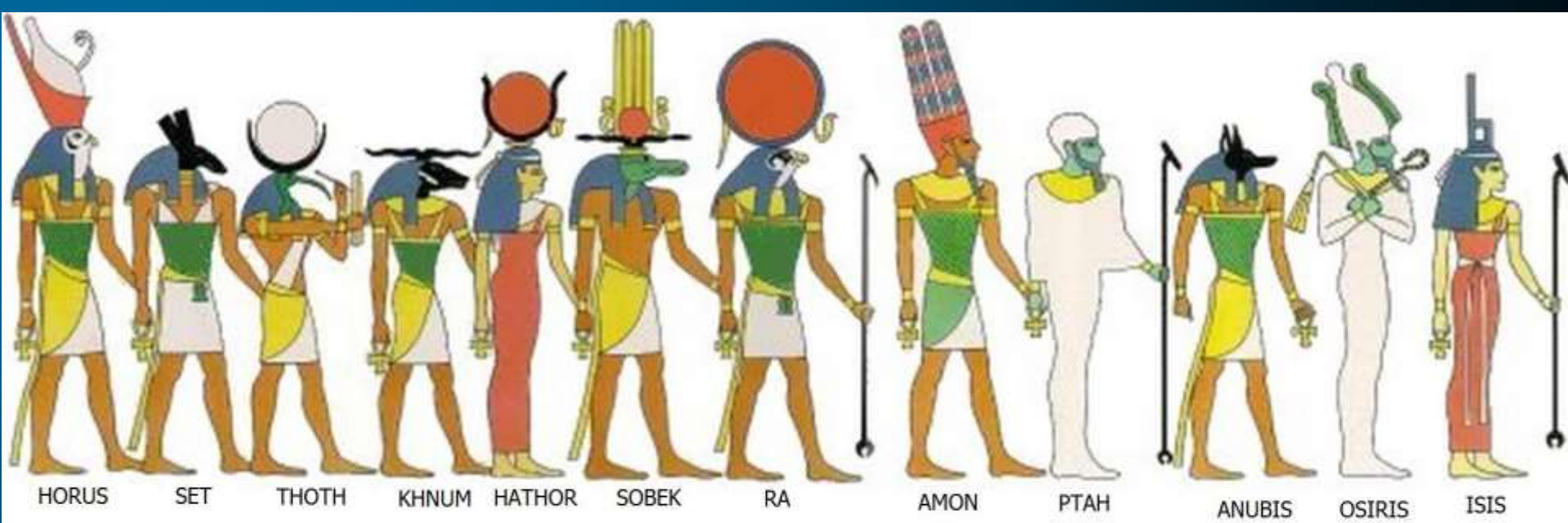
Khnum
Creation



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
1st 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

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, not limited by social status.

Cult of Cybele

Cult of Attis

Mithraic Mysteries

Mysteries of Isis

Dionysian Mysteries

Eleusinian Mysteries

Orphic Mysteries

Cult of Serapis



Symbols of Mystery Religions

The Rise of Monotheism

(or “ethical monotheism”)

Polytheism was based primarily on PERCEPTION of nature or natural phenomena.

Monotheism was founded on REVELATION – an event in which the One God chose to reveal Himself to humanity.

Events in the Creation of Jewish Monotheism

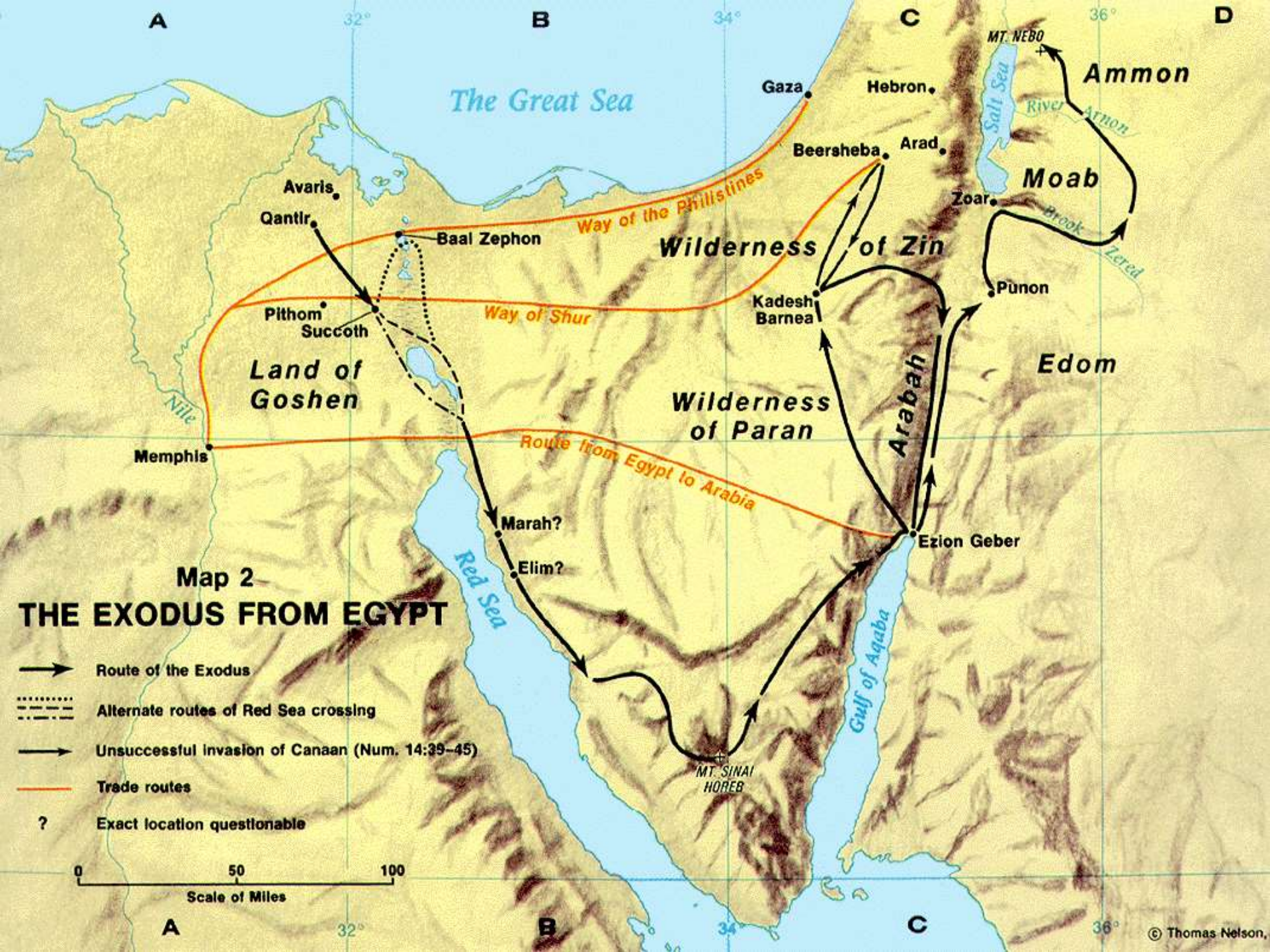
c. 2091 BC – **God speaks** to Abram (later to become Abraham) and calls him to follow Him, and so begins the *People of the God*, the Hebrews.



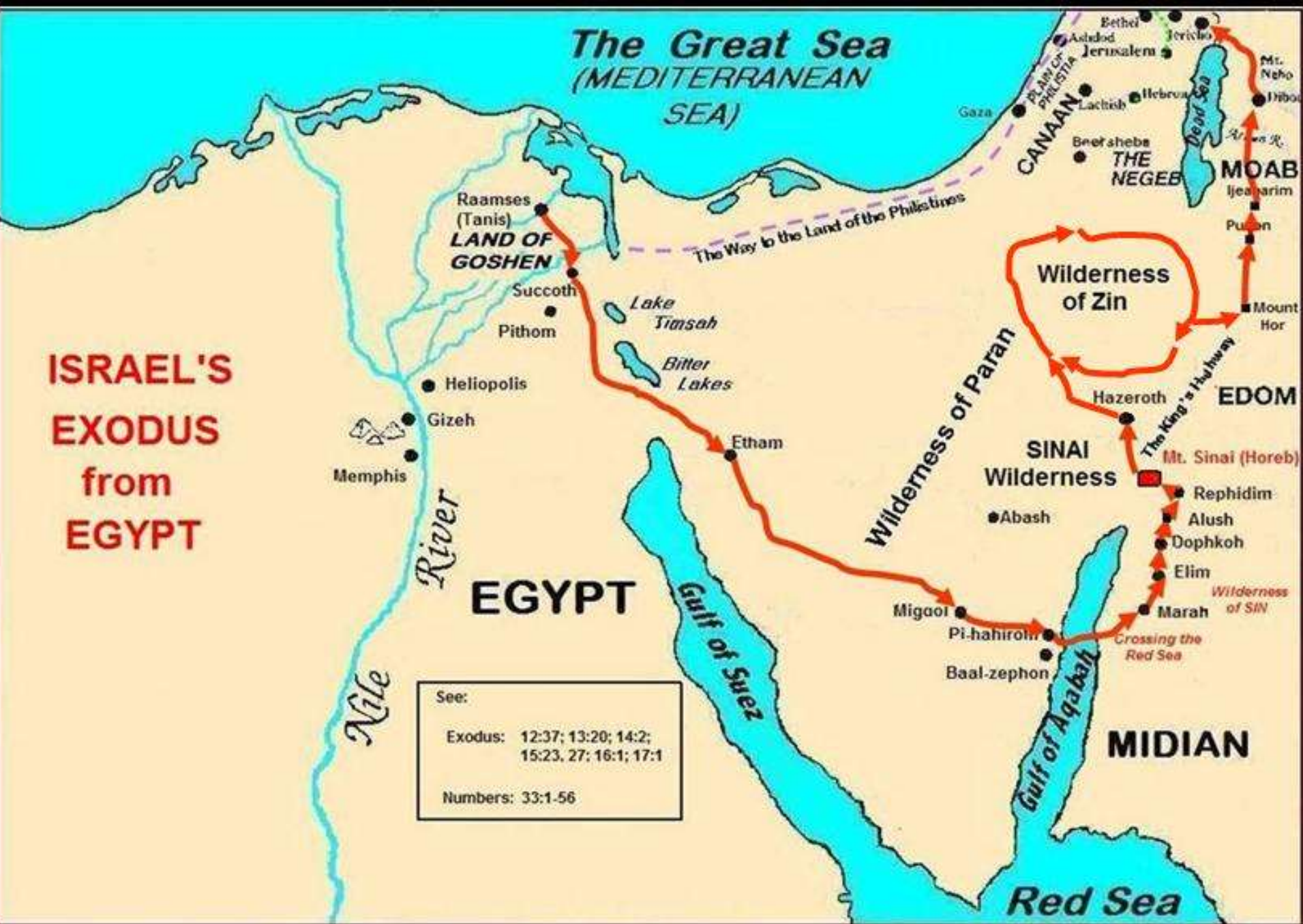
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- c. 1446 BC – **God calls** Moses to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt, giving the Law through him, and so begins the *Religion of Judaism*.





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 Hebrew TaNaKh

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



THE TORAH

בְּאֶרֶץ נִשְׁן וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בָהּ
מֵאֵד וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ
שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וַיֵּי
שְׁנֵי חַיָּיו שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וְאֶ
וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה וַיִּקְרְבוּ יָמָיו
לְמִוְרָתוֹ וַיִּקְרָא לְבָנָיו
וַיֵּאָמֶר הִנֵּנִי וְאַתָּה



Events in the Creation of Jewish Monotheism

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- c. 1446 BC – God calls Moses to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt, giving the Law through him, and so begins the *Religion of Judaism*.
- c. 1010 BC – **God leads** the Prophet Samuel to call the young David to become King of Israel, thus creating the *Nation of Israel*.

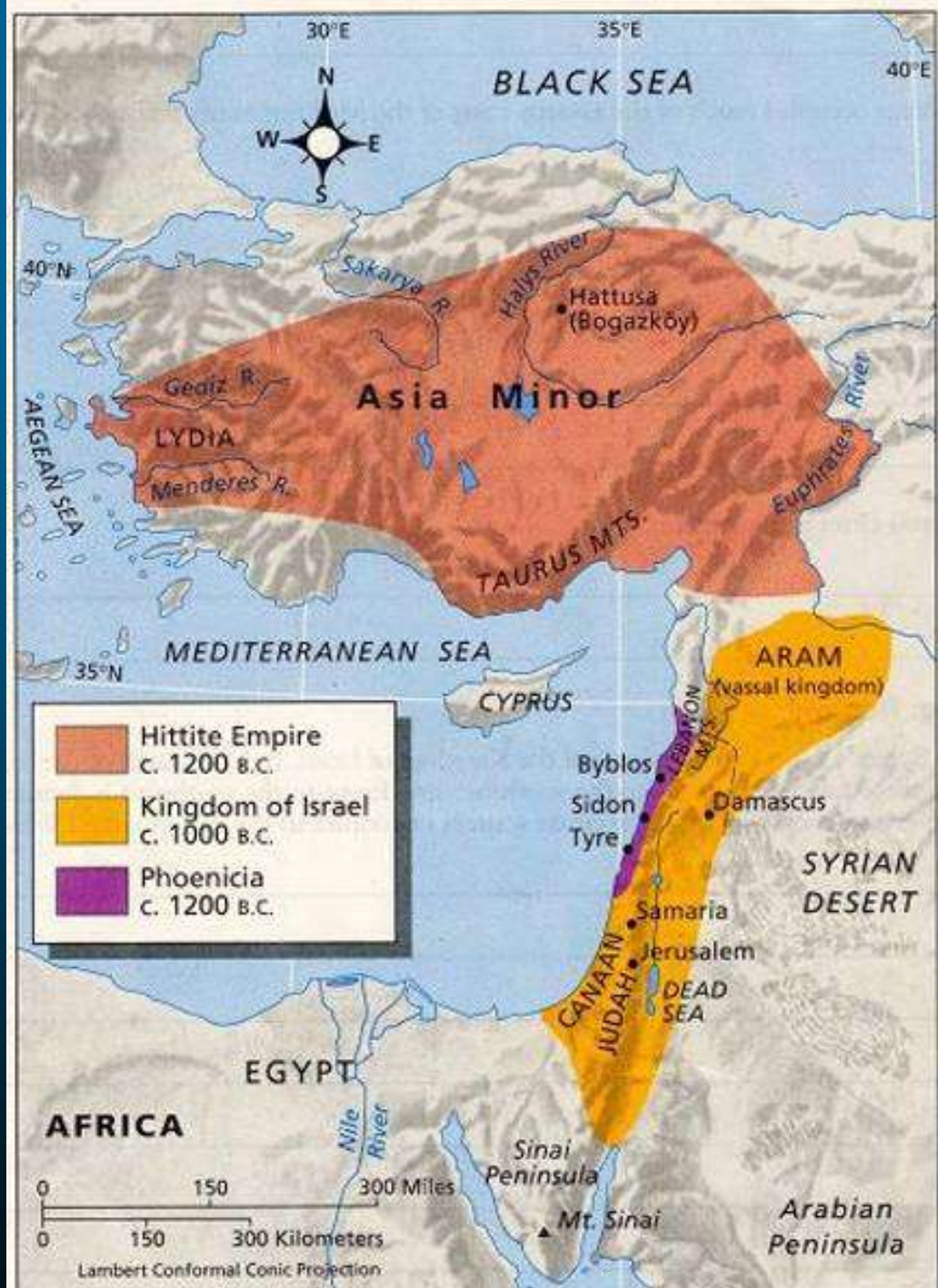


THE UNITED KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

Around the time of
SAUL AND DAVID

EDOM Vassals and defeated peoples





Jewish Dates Leading Up to the 1st Century

930 BC – King Solomon dies; Kingdom is divided.



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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? *(Development 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.)*

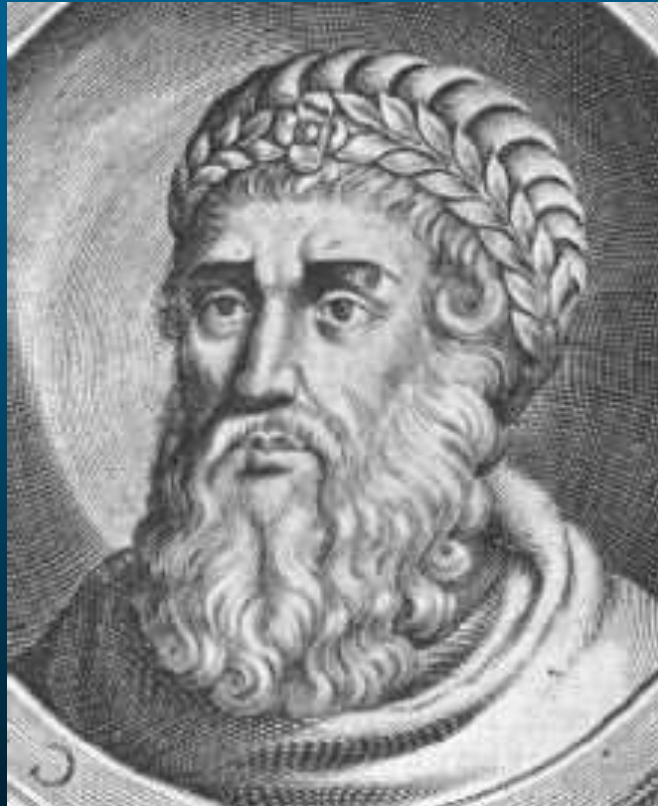
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- 538 BC – Persian King Cyrus lets Jews return home.**
- 332 BC – Alexander the Great conquers the Persian Empire and spreads the Greek language/culture. Judaism begins to split into more Hebraic Jews (Pharisees) and Hellenized Jews (Sadducees).**

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

1st Century Palestine



Herod the great



The 1st Century AD and Judaism

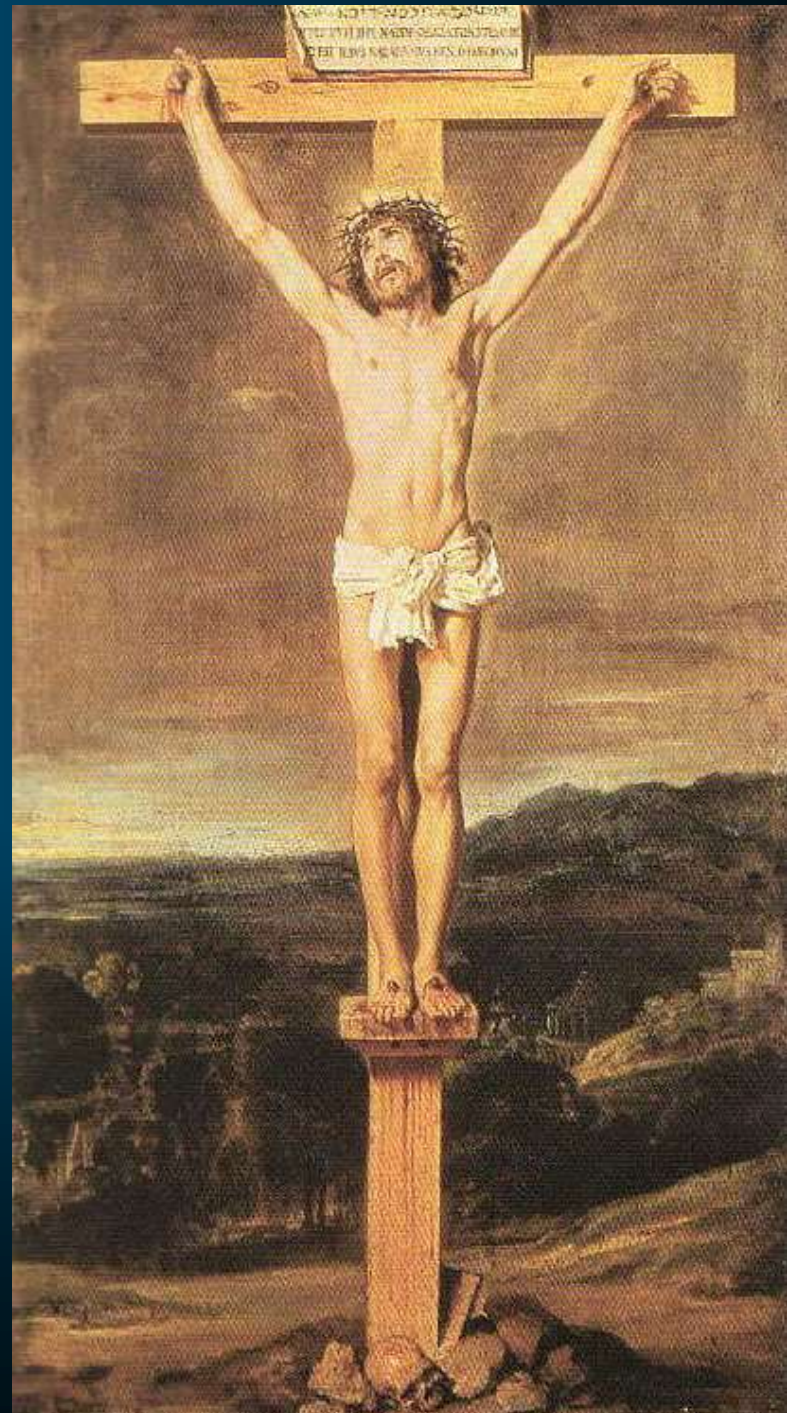
- The last prophet of God – Malachi – had been over 400 years earlier. Where was God?
- The Greek influence on Jewish culture and religion had created tremendous rifts.
 - Pharisees – the “set apart ones” were Jewish fundamentalists, holding to strict acceptance of all the Hebrew Bible and opposing Hellenization.
 - 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.

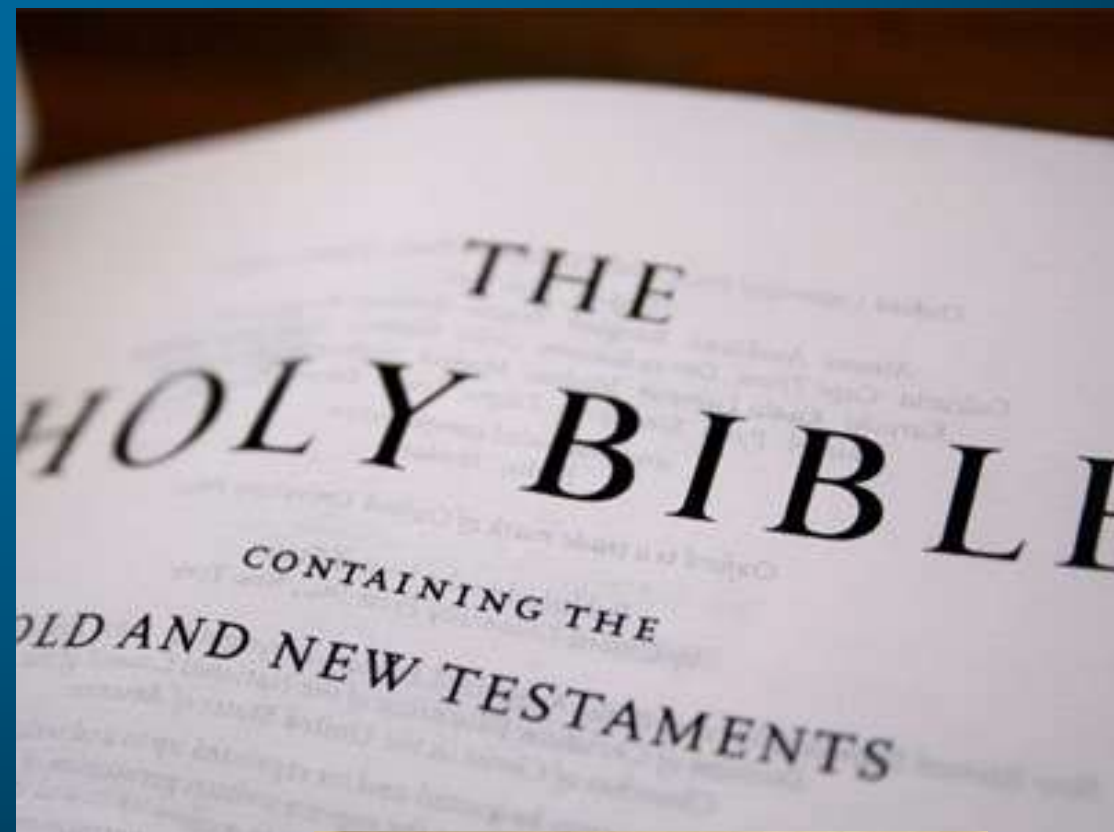
The 1st Century AD & the Birth of Christianity

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 1st 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.)



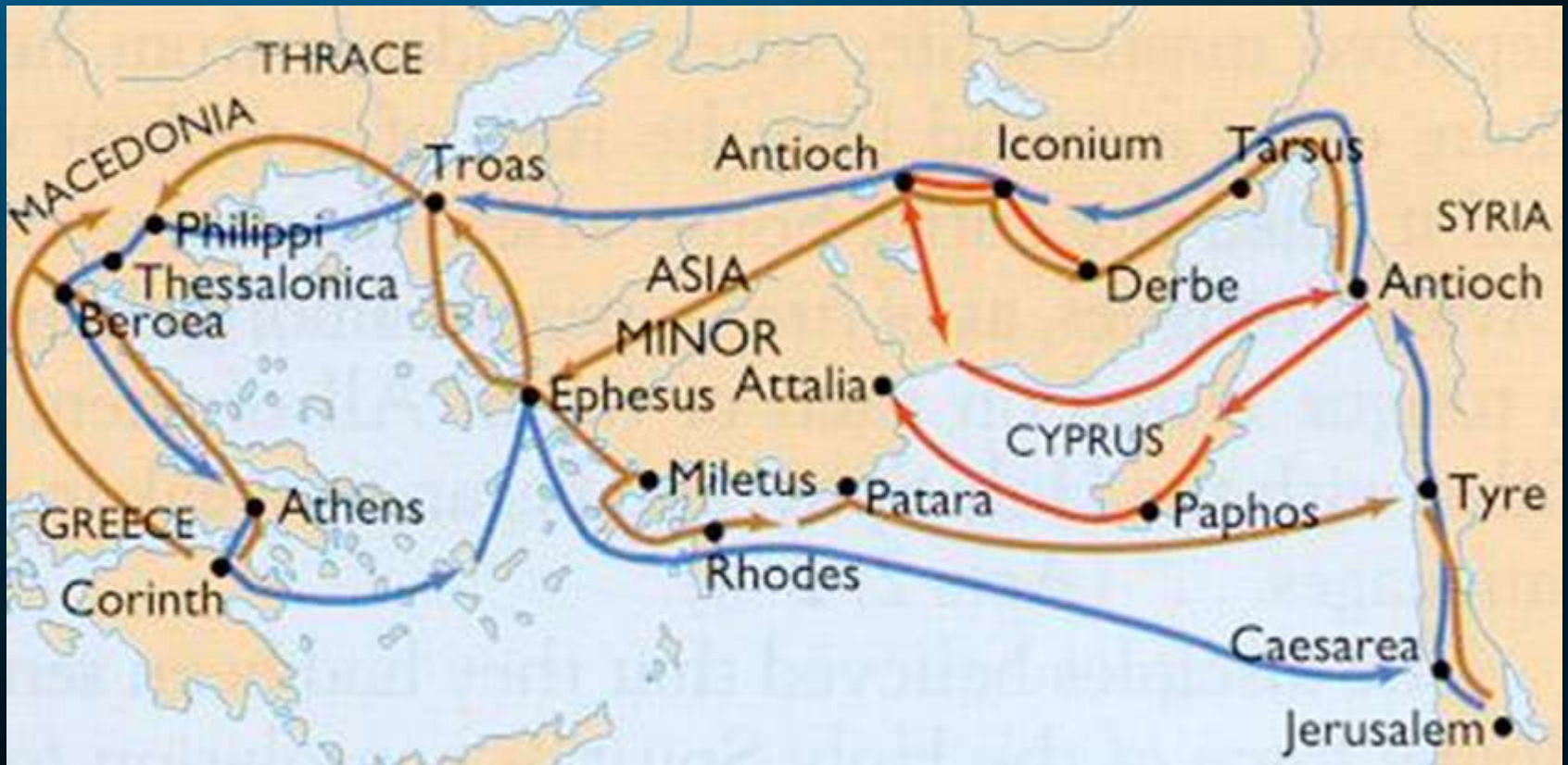
Jesus the Christ
– *Messiah,*
Anointed One
(c. 6 BC-27 AD)







The Missionary Journeys of the Apostle Paul



State of Christianity c.AD 565

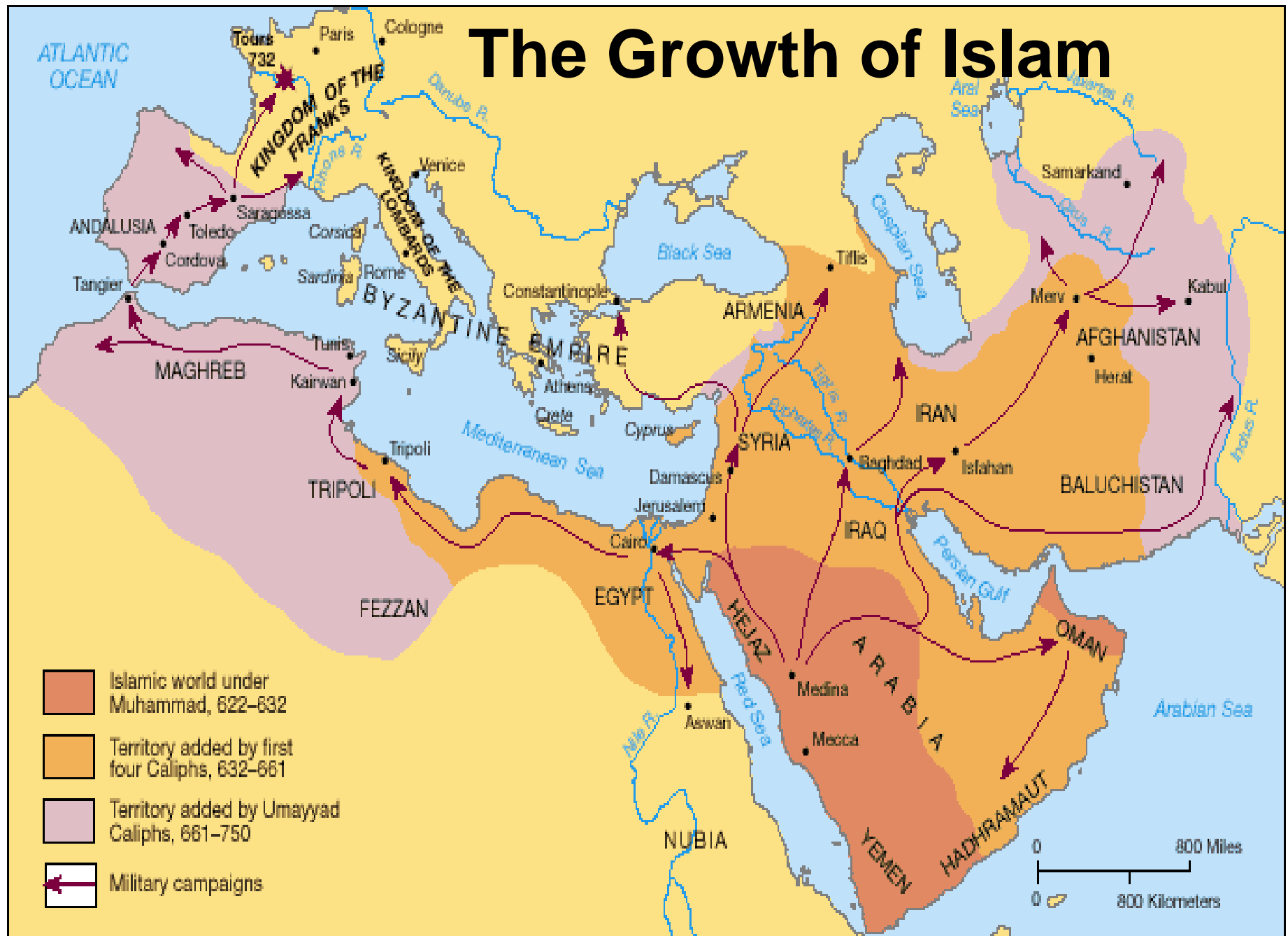




لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

Prophet Muhammad
570-632 AD

The Growth of Islam



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

