Judaism is the oldest religion of the western world and has influenced Christianity and Islam. The Hebrews were the ancestors of the Jewish people. The Hebrews were different from others of their time because the Hebrews were monotheistic; they believed in only one God. The Hebrews believed they had a special relationship with their God and that they were God’s chosen people.

The Hebrews trace their ancestry to Abraham. Hebraic tradition says that Abraham left his home in the Mesopotamian city of Ur about 2200BC. Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, established a nation called Israel on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. About 1300BCE, many Hebrews moved to Egypt to escape a famine. A famine is a great hunger. At first, the Hebrews were treated well in Egypt, but in time the Hebrews were enslaved by the Egyptians. According to Hebraic tradition, God sent ten deadly plagues to Egypt when the Egyptians would not release the Hebrew slaves. When the Hebrews did escape, tradition states that Moses, the leader of the Hebrews, parted the Red Sea for just enough time to allow the Hebrews to pass. Once the Hebrews reached the other side of the Red Sea, tradition states that the waters returned and the Egyptian army drowned. After their escape across the Red Sea about 1250BCE, God revealed Ten Commandments to Moses. The Ten Commandments formed the basis of Mosaic Law and are the model for both Jewish and Christian moral thought.

The Torah is the most holy book of Judaism. The Torah is also holy to Christians, who include it as the Old Testament of their Bible. The Talmud is another holy book in Judaism. The Talmud is a collection of the laws and customs of the Jewish people.

There are approximately fifteen million Jews throughout the world. Two-thirds of the Jewish population is concentrated in the United States and Israel. Europe was once home to millions of Jewish people, but most of the survivors of the Holocaust emigrated to Israel, the United States or other nations.

Answer in complete sentences

1. What is the oldest religion of the western world? About how old is the faith?

2. Who were the Hebrews? How was the religious faith of the Hebrews different than most other people in ancient history?
Fill in the Blanks

The beliefs of Christianity and *Islam are rooted in Judaism, the oldest religion of the western world. The Jews are the descendants of the Hebrews. The Hebrews trace ancestry to Abraham, who left his home in Ur, in Mesopotamia about ________ years ago. The Hebrews believed in one God, so they were monotheistic. The Hebrews believed they had a special relationship with their god, and that they were his chosen people.

The Hebrews left their home in Israel to escape a famine. Moses led them back home. Moses is often called the “law-giver” because both Jews and Christians believe God revealed Ten Commandments to Moses about ________ years ago. The Ten Commandments are the model for both Jewish and Christian moral thought.

Jews have been persecuted many times in their history. Famine and persecution forced the Jews to leave Europe at the end of the fifteenth century. Jews also faced organized massacres, particularly in Eastern Europe. In the last century, the National Socialist party of Germany attempted genocide by killing as many as six million Jews in the Holocaust.

Jews worship in synagogues led by a rabbi or “teacher.” Their high holy period lasts from Shabbat Friday to sunset Saturday. The Jewish holidays include their New Year, Rosh Hashanah; Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement; a celebration of a military victory in Custer’s Last Stand; and Passover, an observance of the time the Jews lived in Egypt.

The United States is home to about ________ percent of the world’s Jews. Europe was once home to millions of Jews, but most of the Jews of the Holocaust were killed in other nations.

3. What is the most holy book of Judaism?

4. What is the Talmud?

5. What was the Diaspora?

6. What does rabbi mean?