THE SEMITIC RELIGIONS

When we speak about the Semitic religions we are referring to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The word Semitic describes the people who came from the Middle East and their languages. Arabs and Jews are both Semitic. Christianity is a Semitic religion because it originated in the Middle East.

Another feature that Semitic religions share is monotheism. The prefix MONO mean one while THEISM means belief in a God or Gods. So, although these religions differ greatly in their modern form, they each believe in only one God….potentially the same entity.

The writings in the Old Testament (Torah) originated in the lands between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. As you will see, both Judaism and Christianity are rooted in these writings (and to a certain extent so is Islam).

Today, the area where these writings came from is the modern state of Israel. Its capital, historic Jerusalem, is sacred to all three Semitic religions. Not far to the west of Israel you will find Saudi Arabia. The cities of Mecca and Medina are holy cities for Muslims around the world. Millions of Muslims make a pilgrimage (the Hajj) to Mecca every year. Medina is where the prophet Mohammed established the first Islamic community after being forced to flee Mecca in 622CE.

1. What does the word Semitic describe?

2. Which religions are considered Semitic?

3. Are Semitic religions monotheistic or polytheistic?

4. What city is sacred to all three Semitic Religioins?

5. What two cities are considered holy cities to Muslims?