

## History or Religious Teachings?

The Bible contains stories about the beginnings of the Jewish people, but its greatest value is as a sacred text—a book of stories and religious laws and instructions. Among its many teachings are moral lessons that are accepted by all peoples, for example, the commandments against murder and stealing. Other teachings, such as the commandments to observe Shabbat and study Torah, are meant specifically for the Jewish people.

As you learn more about Jewish history, you may note differences between historical and biblical accounts. Remember that each presents a different type of knowledge. Historians try to uncover the literal facts of Jewish history. The Bible teaches the spiritual values of the Jewish people, such as the importance of pursuing justice and peace. Both types of knowledge have great worth and can help us understand more about ourselves as Jews.



The early Israelites were divided into twelve tribes, each with its own portion of land.

