TWELFTH
EDITION

VOLUME 1
TO 1740

THE WESTERN HERITAGE

Donald Kagan | Steven Ozment | Frank M. Turner
with Gregory F. Viggiano

The Western Heritage

Volume 1: To 1740

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Twelfth Edition

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Preface

The years since the publication of the eleventh edition of *The Western Heritage* have produced significant changes that present new and serious challenges to the West and the rest of the world. The most striking of these changes is in the economy. In 2008, a serious financial crisis produced a deep recession that diminished the widespread economic growth and prosperity of the West and much of the world and threatened to produce the political instability that usually accompanies economic upheaval. By 2012, the European Union, long an economic powerhouse, felt the threat to its currency and the solvency of its weaker members. The United States also suffered a severe setback, and the recovery from its recession was the slowest in decades. After a decade of slow growth and mixed results from attempts at fiscal austerity and loose monetary policy, the global economy appears to be returning to expansion.

In the realms of international relations and politics, the United States and its European friends and allies pursued mixed policies. The war in Iraq, which some had thought lost, took a turn in 2008 when the Americans changed their approach by introducing a sharply increased military force, popularly called "the surge," and a new counter-insurgence strategy. It was so successful that the western allies chose to withdraw their combat troops and leave the remaining fighting to the new Iraqi government. With fewer troops and a less clear commitment, the Americans undertook a similar "surge" in Afghanistan. The effort met with considerable success, but the prospect of continued fighting and diminishing support by the engaged Western powers left the future of their efforts to clear the region of terrorist bases uncertain. The reduced commitment of American forces led to the rise of new waves of threats from terrorism in the form of militant organizations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and in protracted war in Syria.

New challenges arose in still another area involving important Western interests: North Africa and the Middle East. Insurrections against well-established autocracies in Libya and Egypt drew support in different degrees from members of NATO. Both nations succeeded in removing dictatorial rulers, but the character of the new regimes and their relationship with the West remains uncertain. The war in Syria and the migration crisis it has fueled add to these difficulties.

The authors of this volume continue to believe that the heritage of Western civilization remains a major point of departure for understanding and defining the challenges of our time. The spread of its interests and influence throughout the world has made the West a crucial part of the world's economy and a major player on the international scene. This book aims to introduce its readers to the Western heritage so that they may be better-informed and more culturally sensitive citizens of the increasingly troubled and challenging global age.

Since *The Western Heritage* first appeared, we have sought to provide our readers with a work that does justice to the richness and variety of Western civilization and its many complexities. We hope that such an understanding of the West will foster lively debate about its character, values, institutions, and global influence. Indeed, we believe such a critical outlook on their own culture has characterized the peoples of the West since the dawn of history. Through such debates we define ourselves and the values of our culture. Consequently, we welcome the debate and hope that *The Western Heritage* can help foster an informed discussion through its history of the West's strengths and weaknesses and the controversies surrounding Western history.

We also believe that any course addressing the experience of the West must also look beyond its historical European borders. Students reading this book come from a wide variety of cultures and experiences. They live in a world of highly interconnected economies and instant communication between cultures. In this emerging multicultural society, it seems both appropriate and necessary to recognize how Western civilization has interacted with other cultures throughout its history, both influencing and being influenced by them. For this reason, there is a chapter that focuses on the nineteenth-century European age of imperialism. Further examples of Western interaction with other parts of the world, such as with Islam, appear throughout the text. To further highlight the theme of cultural interaction, *The Western Heritage* includes a series of comparative essays, "The West and the World," which fall at the end of every part.

What Is the Western Heritage?

This book invites students and instructors to explore the Western heritage. What is that heritage? The Western heritage emerges from an evolved and evolving story of human actions and interactions, peaceful and violent, that arose in the eastern Mediterranean, then spread across the western Mediterranean into northern Europe, and eventually to the American continents, and in their broadest impact, to the peoples of Africa and Asia as well.

The Western heritage as a distinct portion of world history descends from the ancient Greeks. They saw their own political life based on open discussion of law and policy as different from that of Mesopotamia, Persia, and Egypt, where kings ruled without regard to public opinion. The Greeks invented the concept of citizenship, defining it as engagement in some form of self-government. Furthermore, through their literature and philosophy, the Greeks established the conviction that became characteristic of the West, that reason can shape and analyze physical nature, politics, and morality.

The city of Rome, spreading its authority through military conquest across the Mediterranean world, embraced Greek literature and philosophy. Through their conquests and imposition of their law, the Romans created the Western world as a vast empire stretching from Egypt and Syria in the east to Britain in the west. Although the Roman Republic, governed by a senate and popular political institutions, gave way after civil wars to the autocratic rule of the Roman Empire, the idea of a free republic of engaged citizens governed by public law and constitutional arrangements limiting political authority survived centuries of arbitrary rule by emperors. As in the rest of the world, the Greeks, the Romans, and virtually all other ancient peoples excluded women and slaves from political life and tolerated considerable social inequality.

In the early fourth century C.E., the emperor Constantine reorganized the Roman Empire in two fundamental ways that reshaped the West. First, he moved the imperial capital from Rome to Constantinople (Istanbul), establishing separate emperors in the east and west. Thereafter, large portions of the Western empire became subject to the rulers of Germanic tribes. In the confusion of these times, most of the texts embodying ancient

philosophy, literature, and history became lost in the West, and for centuries Western Europeans were intellectually severed from that ancient heritage, which would later be recovered in a series of renaissances, or cultural rebirths, beginning in the eighth century.

Constantine's second fateful major reshaping of the West was his recognition of Christianity as the official religion of the empire. Christianity had grown out of the ancient monotheistic religion of the Hebrew people living in ancient Palestine. With the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and the spread of his teachings by the Apostle Paul, Christianity had established itself as one of many religions in the empire. Because Christianity was monotheistic, Constantine's official embrace of it led to the eradication of pagan polytheism. Thereafter, the West became more or less coterminous with Latin Christianity, or that portion of the Christian church acknowledging the Bishop of Rome as its head.

As the emperors' rule broke down, bishops became the effective political rulers in many parts of Western Europe. But the Christian church in the West never governed without negotiation or conflict with secular rulers, and religious law never replaced secular law. Nor could secular rulers govern if they ignored the influence of the church. Hence from the fourth century C.E. to the present day, rival claims to political and moral authority between ecclesiastical and political officials have characterized the West.

In the seventh century the Christian West faced a new challenge from the rise of Islam. This new monotheistic religion originating in the teachings of the prophet Muhammad arose on the Arabian Peninsula and spread through rapid conquests across North Africa and eventually into Spain, turning the Mediterranean into what one historian has termed "a Muslim lake." Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, Christians attempted to reclaim the Holy Land from Muslim control in church-inspired military Crusades that still resonate negatively in the Islamic world.

It was, however, in the Muslim world that most of the texts of ancient Greek and Latin learning survived and were studied, while intellectual life languished in the West. Commencing in the twelfth century, knowledge of those texts began to work its way back into Western Europe. By the fourteenth century, European thinkers redefined themselves and their intellectual ambitions by recovering the literature and science from the ancient world, reuniting Europe with its Greco-Roman past.

From the twelfth through the eighteenth centuries, a new European political system slowly arose, based on centralized monarchies characterized by large armies, navies, and bureaucracies loyal to the monarch, and by the capacity to raise revenues. Whatever the personal ambitions of individual rulers, for the most part these monarchies recognized both the political role of local or national assemblies drawn from the propertied elites and the binding power of constitutional law on themselves. Also, in each of these monarchies, church officials and church law played important roles in public life. The monarchies, their military, and their expanding commercial economies became the basis for the extension of European and Western influence around the globe.

In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, two transforming events occurred. The firs t was the European discovery and conquest of the American continents, thus opening the Americas to Western institutions, religion, and economic exploitation. Over time, the labor shortages of the Americas led to the forced migration of millions of Africans as slaves to the New World. By the mid-seventeenth century, the West consequently embraced the entire transatlantic world and its multiracial societies.

Second, shortly after the American encounter, a religious schism erupted within Latin Christianity. Reformers rejecting both many medieval Christian doctrines as unbiblical and the primacy of the pope in Rome established Protestant churches across much of northern Europe. As a consequence, for almost two centuries religious warfare between Protestants and Roman Catholics overwhelmed the continent as monarchies chose to defend one side or the other. This religious turmoil meant that the Europeans who conquered and settled the Americas carried with them particularly energized religious convictions, with Roman Catholics dominating Latin America, and English Protestants most of North America.

By the late eighteenth century, the idea of the West denoted a culture increasingly dominated by two new forces. First, science arising from a new understanding of nature achieved during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries persuaded growing numbers of the educated elite that human beings can rationally master nature for ever-expanding productive purposes improving the health and well-being of humankind. From this era to the present, the West has been associated with advances in technology, medicine, and scientific research. Second, during the eighteenth century, a drive for economic improvement that vastly increased agricultural production and then industrial manufacturing transformed economic life, especially in Western Europe and later the United States. Both of these economic developments went hand in hand with urbanization and the movement of the industrial economy into cities where the new urban populations experienced major social dislocation.

During these decades, certain West European elites came to regard advances in agricultural and manufacturing economies that were based on science and tied to commercial expansion as "civilized" in contrast to cultures that lacked those characteristics. From these ideas emerged the concept of "Western Civilization" defined to suggest that peoples dwelling outside Europe or inside Europe east of the Elbe River were less than civilized. Whereas Europeans had once defined themselves against the rest of the world as free citizens and then later as Christians, they now defined themselves as "civilized." Europeans would carry this self-assured superiority into their nineteenth- and early twentieth-century encounters with the peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific.

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, political revolution erupted across the transatlantic world. The British colonies of North America revolted. Then revolution occurred in France and spread across much of Europe. From 1791 through 1830, the Wars of Independence liberated Latin America from its European conquerors. These revolutions created bold new modes of political life, rooting the legitimacy of the state in some form of popular government and generally written constitutions. Thereafter, despite the presence of authoritarian governments on the European continent, the idea of the West, now including the new republics of the United States and Latin America, became associated with liberal democratic governments.

Furthermore, during the nineteenth century, most major European states came to identify themselves in terms of nationality—language, history, and ethnicity—rather than loyalty to a monarch. Nationalism eventually inflamed popular opinion and unloosed unprecedented political ambition by European governments.

These ambitions led to imperialism and the creation of new overseas European empires in the late nineteenth century. For the peoples living in European-administered Asian and African colonies, the idea and reality of the West embodied foreign domination and often disadvantageous involvement in a world economy. When in 1945 the close of World War II led to a sharp decline in European imperial authority, colonial peoples around the globe challenged that authority and gained independence. These former colonial peoples, however, often still suspected the West of seeking to control them. Hence, anticolonialism, like colonialism before it, redefined definitions of the West far from its borders.

Late nineteenth-century nationalism and imperialism also unleashed with World War I in 1914 unprecedented military

hostilities among European nations that spread around the globe, followed a quarter-century later by an even greater world war. As one result of World War I, revolution occurred in Russia with the establishment of the Communist Soviet Union. During the interwar years a Fascist Party seized power in Italy and a Nazi Party took control of Germany. In response to these new authoritarian regimes, West European powers and the United States identified themselves with liberal democratic constitutionalism, individual freedom, commercial capitalism, science and learning freely pursued, and religious liberty, all of which they defined as the Western heritage. During the Cold War, conceived of as an East versus West, democratic versus Communist struggle that concluded with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Western powers led by the United States continued to embrace those values in conscious opposition to the Soviet government, which since 1945 had also dominated much of Eastern Europe.

Since 1991 the West has again become redefined in the minds of many people as a world political and economic order dominated by the United States. Europe clearly remains the West, but political leadership has moved to North America. That American domination and recent American foreign policy have led throughout the West and elsewhere to much criticism of the United States.

Such self-criticism itself embodies one of the most important and persistent parts of the Western heritage. From the Hebrew prophets and Socrates to the critics of European imperialism, American foreign policy, social inequality, and environmental devastation, voices in the West have again and again been raised to criticize often in the most strident manner the policies of Western governments and the thought, values, social conditions, and inequalities of Western societies.

Consequently, we study the Western heritage not because the subject always or even primarily presents an admirable picture, but because the study of the Western heritage, like the study of all history, calls us to an integrity of research, observation, and analysis that clarifies our minds and challenges our moral sensibilities. The challenge of history is the challenge of thinking, and it is to that challenge that this book invites its readers.

Content Highlights

In this edition, as in past editions, our goal has been to present Western civilization fairly, accurately, and in a way that does justice to this great, diverse legacy of human enterprise. History has many facets, no single one of which can alone account for the others. Any attempt to tell the story of the West from a single overarching perspective, no matter how timely, is bound to neglect or suppress some important parts of this story. Like all other authors of introductory texts, we have had to make choices, but we have attempted to provide the broadest possible introduction to Western civilization.

Goals of the Text

Our primary goal has been to present a strong, clear, narrative account of the central developments in Western history. We have also sought to call attention to certain critical themes:

- The capacity of Western civilization, from the time of the Greeks to the present, to transform itself through self-criticism.
- The development in the West of political freedom, constitutional government, and concern for the rule of law and individual rights.
- The shifting relations among religion, society, and the state.
- The development of science and technology and their expanding impact on Western thought, social institutions, and everyday life.
- The major religious and intellectual currents that have shaped Western culture.

We believe that these themes have been fundamental in Western civilization, shaping the past and exerting a continuing influence on the present.

Flexible Presentation

The Western Heritage is designed to accommodate a variety of approaches to a course in Western civilization, allowing instructors to stress what is most important to them. Some instructors will ask students to read all the chapters. Others will select from among them to reinforce assigned readings and lectures. We believe the "Compare and Connect" documents, as well as the "Encountering the Past," and "A Closer Look" features may also be adopted selectively by instructors for purposes of classroom presentation and debate and as the basis for short written assignments.

Integrated Social, Cultural, and Political History

The Western Heritage provides one of the richest accounts of the social history of the West available today, with strong coverage of family life, the changing roles of women, and the place of the family in relation to broader economic, political, and social developments. This coverage reflects the explosive growth in social historical research in the past half-century, which has enriched virtually all areas of historical study.

We have also been told repeatedly by instructors that no matter what their own historical specialization, they believe that a political narrative gives students an effective tool to begin to understand the past. Consequently, we have sought to integrate such a strong political narrative with our treatment of the social, cultural, and intellectual factors in Western history.

We also believe that religious faith and religious institutions have been fundamental to the development of the West. No other survey text presents so full an account of the religious and intellectual development of the West. People may be political and social beings, but they are also reasoning and spiritual beings. What they think and believe are among the most important things we can know about them. Their ideas about God, society, law, gender, human nature, and the physical world have changed over the centuries and continue to change. We cannot fully grasp our own approach to the world without understanding the religious and intellectual currents of the past and how they have influenced our thoughts and conceptual categories. We seek to recognize the impact of religion in the expansion of the West, including the settlement of the Americas in the sixteenth century and the role of missionaries in nineteenth-century Western imperialism.

Clarity and Accessibility

Good narrative history requires clear, vigorous prose. As with earlier editions, we have paid careful attention to our writing, subjecting every paragraph to critical scrutiny. Our goal has been to make the history of the West accessible to students without compromising vocabulary or conceptual level. We hope this effort will benefit both instructors and students.

A Note on Dates and Transliterations

This edition of *The Western Heritage* continues the practice of using B.C.E. (before the common era) and C.E. (common era) instead of B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (*anno Domini*, in the year of our Lord) to designate dates. We also follow the most

accurate currently accepted English transliterations of Arabic words. For example, today *Koran* has been replaced by the more accurate *Qur'an;* similarly *Muhammad* is preferable to *Mohammed* and *Muslim* to *Moslem*.

New to This Edition

Here are just some of the changes, updates, and refinements that can be found throughout this new edition of *The Western Heritage*.

Improved Structure
To improve narrative structure and accessibility, chapters have been divided, wherever pertinent, into shorter subsections. Each new subsection carries its own heading, designed to reach readers and draw them in, in addition to aiding them in the skimming and scanning of pages for relevant information and insights. Explicit attention, also, has been paid to shortening passages for clarity.

New Illustrations
Images of historical figures, events, objects, sites, and period art and architecture can be as striking and informative as the ideas they represent. Over a third of the nearly 200 images in *The Western Heritage* are new to this edition.

New Key Terms
To encourage and facilitate comprehension and review, each chapter now ends with an expanded list of key terms and definitions.

New Content
Every opportunity to provide additional context for shifts in the evolving story of human actions and interactions within the larger history of Western civilization has been energetically pursued. In particular, new content has been written for many of our popular "Compare and Connect" and "Encountering the Past" sidebars—all in the service of good storytelling—to make them even more responsive to students' interests:

Chapter 2—Encountering the Past: Marriage in Ancient Athens

Chapter 4—Compare and Connect: Why Did Rome Win the Punic Wars?

Chapter 5—Encountering the Past: The Roman Love of Bathing

Chapter 6—Encountering the Past: Medieval Cooking

Chapter 7—Compare and Connect: Anti-Jewish Violence and the First Crusade

Chapter 8—Compare and Connect: What Do Kings Have to Do with Universities?

Chapter 9—Compare and Connect: Peasant Revolts in England and France

Chapter 11—Compare and Connect: Can Anyone Understand the Word of God?

Chapter 11—Encountering the Past: Pictures, Preachers, and Songs

Chapter 13—Compare and Connect: The World Turned Upside Down

Chapter 14—Encountering the Past: The Science of Healthy Eating

Streamlined Timelines
The histories of key events, publications, dates, campaigns, and dynasties rendered as timelines in *The Western Heritage* have been judiciously edited to cover only the essentials.

Revel™ for *The Western Heritage*

Revel is an interactive learning environment that deeply engages students and prepares them for class. Media and assessment integrated directly within the authors' narrative lets students read, explore interactive content, and practice in one continuous learning path. Thanks to the dynamic reading experience in Revel, students come to class prepared to discuss, apply, and learn from instructors and from each other.

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Chapter 1

The Birth of Civilization

THE PHARAOH TUTANKHAMUN (r. 1336–1327 B.C.E.) With his "ka" (life force) in attendance, the Pharaoh Tutankhamun embraces Osiris, god of the Afterlife. This wall painting is from Tutankhamun's tomb, which was discovered in the 1920s. "King Tut" died at the age of eighteen.
SOURCE: François Guenet/Art Resource, NY

Contents and Focus Questions

The Chapter in Brief

HISTORY, IN ITS TWO SENSES—as the events of the past that make up the human experience on earth and as the written record of those events—is a subject of both interest and importance. We naturally want to know how we came to be who we are, and how the world we live in came to be what it is. But beyond its intrinsic interest, history provides crucial insight into present human behavior. To understand who we are now, we need to know the record of the past and to try to understand the people and forces that shaped it.

For hundreds of thousands of years after the human species emerged, people lived by hunting, fishing, and collecting wild plants. Only some 10,000 years ago did they learn to cultivate plants, herd animals, and make airtight pottery for storage. These discoveries transformed people from gatherers to producers and allowed them to grow in number and to lead a settled life. About 5,000 years ago humans learned how to control the waters of great river valleys, making possible much richer harvests and supporting a further increase in population. The peoples of these river valley societies created the earliest civilizations. They invented writing, which, among other things, enabled them to keep inventories of food and other resources. They discovered the secret of smelting metal to make tools and weapons of bronze far superior to the stone implements of earlier times. They came together in towns and cities, where industry and commerce flourished. Complex religions took form, and social divisions increased. Kings—considered to be representatives of the gods or to be themselves divine—emerged as rulers, assisted by priests and defended by well-organized armies.

The first of these civilizations appeared among the Sumerians before 3500 B.C.E. in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley we call Mesopotamia. From the Sumerians to the Assyrians and Babylonians, a series of peoples ruled Mesopotamia, each shaping and passing along its distinctive culture, before the region fell under the control of great foreign empires. A second early civilization emerged in the Nile Valley around 3100 B.C.E. Egyptian civilization developed a remarkably continuous pattern, in part because Egypt was largely protected from invasion by the formidable deserts surrounding the valley. The essential character of Egyptian civilization changed little for nearly 3,000 years. Influences from other areas, however, especially Nubia to the south, Syria-Palestine to the northeast, and the Aegean to the north, may be seen during many periods of Egyptian history.

By the fourteenth century B.C.E., several powerful empires had arisen and were vying for dominance in regions that included Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor. Northern warrior peoples, such as the Hittites who dominated Asia Minor, conquered and ruled peoples in various areas. For two centuries, the Hittite and Egyptian empires struggled with each other for control of Syria-Palestine. By about 1200 B.C.E., however, both these empires had collapsed. Beginning about 850 B.C.E., the Assyrians arose in northern Mesopotamia and ultimately established a mighty new empire, even invading Egypt in the early seventh century B.C.E. The Assyrians were dominant until the late seventh century B.C.E., when they fell to a combination of enemies. Their vast empire was overtaken by the Babylonians, but these people, too, would soon become only a small, though important, part of the enormous empire of Persia.

Among all these great empires nestled a people called the Israelites, who maintained a small, independent kingdom in the region between Egypt and Syria for several centuries. This kingdom ultimately fell to the Assyrians and later remained subject to other conquerors. The Israelites possessed little worldly power or wealth, but they created a powerful religion, Judaism, the first certain and lasting worship of a single god in a world of polytheism. Judaism was the seedbed of two other religions that have played a mighty role in the history of the world: Christianity and Islam. The great empires have collapsed, forgotten for millennia until the tools of archaeologists uncovered their remains, but the religion of the Israelites, itself and through its offshoots, has endured as a powerful force.

1.1 Early Humans and Their Culture

How did life in the Neolithic Age differ from the Paleolithic?

Scientists estimate that creatures very much like humans appeared perhaps three to five million years ago, probably in Africa. Some one to two million years ago, erect and tool-using early humans spread throughout much of Africa, Europe, and Asia. Our own species, ***Homo sapiens***, meaning "wise man," probably emerged some 200,000 years ago, and the earliest remains of fully modern humans date to about 90,000 years ago.

Humans, unlike other animals, are cultural beings. **Culture** may be defined as the ways of living built up by a group and passed on from one generation to another. It includes behavior such as courtship or childrearing practices; material things such as tools, clothing, and shelter; and ideas, institutions, and beliefs. Language, apparently a uniquely human trait, lies behind our ability to create ideas and institutions and to transmit culture from one generation to another. Our flexible and dexterous hands enable us to hold and make tools and so to create the material artifacts of culture. Because culture is learned and not inherited, it permits rapid adaptation to changing conditions,

making possible the spread of humanity to almost all the lands of the globe.

1.1.1 The Paleolithic Age

Anthropologists designate early human cultures by their tools. The earliest period—the **Paleolithic Age** (from Greek, "old stone")—dates from the first use of stone tools some one million years ago to about 10000 B.C.E. During this immensely long period, people were hunters, fishers, and gatherers, but not producers, of food. They learned to make and use increasingly sophisticated tools of stone and perishable materials like wood; they learned to make and control fire; and they acquired language and the ability to use it to pass on what they had learned.

These early humans, dependent on nature for food and vulnerable to wild beasts and natural disasters, may have developed responses to a world rooted in fear of the unknown—of the uncertainties of human life or the overpowering forces of nature. Religious and magical beliefs and practices may have emerged in an effort to propitiate or coerce the superhuman forces thought to animate or direct the natural world. Evidence of religious faith and practice, as well as of magic, goes as far back as archaeology can take us. Fear or awe, exaltation, gratitude, and empathy with the natural world must all have figured into the cave art and into the ritual practices, such as burial, that we find at Paleolithic sites around the globe. The sense that there is more to the world than meets the eye—in other words, the religious response to the world—seems to be as old as humankind.

The style of life and the level of technology of the Paleolithic period could support only a sparsely settled society. If hunters were too numerous, game would not suffice. In Paleolithic times, people were subject to the same natural and ecological constraints that today maintain a balance between wolves and deer in Alaska.

Evidence from Paleolithic art and from modern hunter-gatherer societies suggests that human life in the Paleolithic Age was probably characterized by a division of labor by sex. Men engaged in hunting, fishing, making tools and weapons, and fighting against other families, clans, and tribes. Women, less mobile because of childbearing, gathered nuts, berries, and wild grains, wove baskets, and made clothing. Women gathering food probably discovered how to plant and care for seeds. This knowledge eventually made possible the development of agriculture and animal husbandry.

1.1.2 The Neolithic Age

Only a few Paleolithic societies made the initial shift from hunting and gathering to agriculture. Some 10,000 years ago parts of what we now call the Near East began to change from a nomadic hunter-gatherer culture to a more settled agricultural one. Because the shift to agriculture coincided with advances in stone tool technology, this period is called the **Neolithic Age** (from Greek, "new stone," the later period in the Stone Age). Productive animals, such as sheep and goats, and food crops, such as wheat and barley, were first domesticated in the mountain foothills. Once domestication had taken place, people could move to new areas, such as the river valleys of the Near East. The invention of pottery during the Neolithic Age enabled people to store surplus foods and liquids and to transport them, as well as to cook agricultural products. The invention of the wheel and its use for making pottery made it possible to create bowls and plates more efficiently. Cloth was made from flax and wool. Crops required constant care from planting to harvest, so Neolithic farmers built permanent dwellings. Houses in a Neolithic village were normally all the same size and were built on the same plan, suggesting that most Neolithic villagers had about the same level of wealth and social status. Neolithic villages tended to be self-sufficient.

PALEOLITHIC CAVE PAINTING Cave paintings discovered in Lascaux in southwestern France in 1940 suggest that early humans had developed beliefs and practices that helped them to understand and control their world. In this Paleolithic painting, a bird-headed man, an arrow at his feet, is surrounded by a bison, a small bird, and the partial outline of another animal.

SOURCE: Glasshouse Images/Alamy Stock Photo

Two larger Neolithic settlements do not fit this village pattern. One was found at Çatal Höyük, in a fertile agricultural region about 150 miles south of Ankara, the capital of present-day Turkey. This was a large town covering more than fifteen acres, with a population probably well over 6,000 people. The site of Jericho, an oasis around a spring near the Dead Sea, was occupied as early as 12,000 B.C.E. Around 8000 B.C.E., a town of eight to ten acres grew up, surrounded by a massive stone wall with at least one tower against the inner face. The inhabitants of Neolithic Jericho had a mixed agricultural, herding, and hunting economy and may have traded salt. They had no pottery but plastered the skulls of their dead to make realistic memorial portraits of them. Over time, in the regions where agriculture and animal husbandry appeared, the number of human beings grew at an unprecedented rate. One reason for this is that farmers usually had larger families than hunters. When animals and plants were domesticated and brought to the river valleys, the relationship between human beings and nature was changed forever. People had learned to control nature, a vital prerequisite for the emergence of civilization. But farmers had to work harder and longer than hunters did, and they had to stay in one place. Herders, in contrast, often moved from place to place in search of pasture and water, returning to their villages in the spring. Some scholars refer to the dramatic changes in subsistence, settlement, technology, and population of this time as the *Neolithic Revolution*. The earliest Neolithic societies appeared in the Mideast about 8000 B.C.E., in China about 4000 B.C.E., and in India about 3600 B.C.E. Neolithic agriculture was based on wheat and barley in the Mideast, on millet and rice in China, and on corn in Mesoamerica, several millennia later.

1.1.3 The Bronze Age and the Birth of Civilization

Neolithic agricultural villages and herding cultures gradually replaced Paleolithic culture in much of the world. Then another major shift occurred, first in the plains along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in the region the Greeks and Romans called **Mesopotamia** (modern Iraq), later in the Nile River valley in Egypt, and somewhat later in India and the Yellow River basin in China. This shift was associated initially with the growth of towns alongside villages, creating a hierarchy of larger and smaller settlements in the same region. Some towns then grew into much larger urban centers and often drew populations to them, so that nearby villages and towns declined. The urban centers, or cities, usually had monumental buildings, such as temples and fortifications. These were vastly larger than individual houses and could be built only by the sustained effort of hundreds and even thousands of people over many years. Elaborate representational artwork appeared, sometimes made of rare and imported materials. New technologies, such as smelting and the manufacture of metal tools and weapons, were characteristic of urban life. Commodities, like pottery and textiles that had been made in individual houses in villages, were mass produced in cities. Cities were characterized by social stratification; that is, the grouping of people into classes based on factors such as control of resources; family, religious or political authority; and personal wealth. The development of wheeled vehicles helped promote long-distance trade. The earliest writing is also associated with the growth of cities. Writing, like representational art, was a powerful means of communicating over space and time and was probably invented to deal with urban problems of management and record keeping.

These attributes—urbanism; technological, industrial, and social change; long-distance trade; and new methods of symbolic communication—are defining characteristics of the form of human culture called **civilization**. At about the time the earliest civilizations were emerging, someone discovered how to combine tin and copper to make a stronger and more useful material—bronze. Archaeologists coined the term **Bronze Age** to refer to this period.

1.2 Early Civilizations to ca. 1000 B.C.E.

Why did the first cities develop?

By 4000 B.C.E., people had settled in large numbers in the river-watered lowlands of Mesopotamia and Egypt. By about 3000 B.C.E., when the invention of writing gave birth to history, urban life and the organization of society into centralized states were well established in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Mesopotamia and of the Nile River in Egypt.

Much of the population of cities consists of people who do not grow their own food, so urban life is possible only where farmers and stockbreeders can be made to produce a substantial surplus beyond their own needs. Also, a process has to be in place so this surplus can be collected and redeployed to sustain city dwellers. Efficient farming of plains alongside rivers, moreover, requires intelligent management of water resources for irrigation. In Mesopotamia, irrigation was essential because, in the south (later Babylonia), there was not enough rainfall to sustain crops. Furthermore, the rivers, fed by melting snows in Armenia, rose to flood the fields in the spring, about the time for harvest, when water was not needed. When water was needed for the autumn planting, less was available. This meant that people had to build dikes to keep the rivers from flooding the fields in the spring and had to devise a means to store water for use in the autumn. The Mesopotamians became skilled at that activity early on. In Egypt, however, the Nile River flooded

at the right moment for cultivation, so irrigation was simply a matter of directing the water to the fields. In Mesopotamia, villages, towns, and cities tended to be strung along natural watercourses and, eventually, man-made canal systems. Thus, control of water could be important in warfare because an enemy could cut off water upstream of a city to force it to submit. Since the Mesopotamian plain was flat, branches of the rivers often changed their courses, and people would have to abandon their cities and move to new locations. Large-scale irrigation appeared only long after urban civilization had already developed, so major waterworks were a *consequence* of urbanism, not a cause of it.

1.2.1 Mesopotamian Civilization

The first civilization appears to have arisen in Mesopotamia. The region is divided into two ecological zones, roughly north and south of modern Baghdad. In the south (Babylonia), irrigation is vital; in the north (later Assyria), agriculture is possible with rainfall and wells. The south has high yields from irrigated lands, whereas the north has lower yields, but much more land under cultivation, so it can produce more than the south. The oldest Mesopotamian cities seem to have been founded by a people called the Sumerians during the fourth millennium B.C.E. in the land of Sumer, which is the southern half of Babylonia. By 3000 B.C.E., the Sumerian city of Uruk was the largest city in the world. (See Map 1–1.)

From about 2800 to 2370 B.C.E., in what is called the Early Dynastic period, several Sumerian city-states, independent political units consisting of a major city and its surrounding territory, existed in southern Mesopotamia, arranged in north–south lines along the major watercourses. Among these cities were Uruk, Ur, Nippur, Shuruppak, and Lagash. Some of the city-states formed leagues among themselves that apparently had both political and religious significance. Quarrels over water and agricultural land led to incessant warfare, and in time, stronger towns and leagues conquered weaker ones and expanded to form kingdoms ruling several city-states.

Map 1–1 THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

There were two ancient river valley civilizations. Egypt was united into a single state, and Mesopotamia was long divided into a number of city-states.

KEY EVENTS IN MESOPOTAMIAN HISTORY

ca. 3500 B.C.E.	Development of Sumerian cities, especially Uruk
ca. 2800–2370 B.C.E.	Early Dynastic period of Sumerian city-states
ca. 2370 B.C.E.	Sargon establishes Akkadian dynasty and Akkadian Empire
ca. 2125–2027 B.C.E.	Third Dynasty of Ur
ca. 2000–1800 B.C.E.	Establishment of Amorites in Mesopotamia
ca. 1792–1750 B.C.E.	Reign of Hammurabi

Peoples who, unlike the Sumerians, mostly spoke Semitic languages (that is, languages in the same family as Arabic and Hebrew) occupied northern Mesopotamia and Syria. The Sumerian language is not related to any language known today. Many of these Semitic peoples absorbed aspects of Sumerian culture, especially writing. In northern Babylonia, the Mesopotamians believed that the large city of Kish had the first kings in history. Far east of this territory, not far from modern Baghdad, a people known as the Akkadians established their own kingdom at a capital city called Akkade under their first king, Sargon, who had been a servant of the king of Kish.

The Akkadians conquered all the Sumerian city-states and invaded southwestern Iran and northern Syria. This was the first empire in history, with a heartland, provinces, and an absolute ruler. It included numerous peoples, cities, languages, and cultures, as well as different ecological zones, under one rule. Sargon's name became legendary as the first great conqueror of history. His grandson, **Naram-Sin**, ruled from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea, with a standardized administration, unheard-of wealth and power, and a grand style that to later Mesopotamians was a high point of their history. Naram-Sin even declared himself a god and had temples built to himself, something no Sumerian ruler had ever done. External attack and internal weakness eventually destroyed the Akkadian Empire, but several smaller states flourished independently, notably Lagash in Sumer, under its ruler Gudea.

About 2125 B.C.E., the Sumerian city of Ur rose to dominance, and the rulers of the **Third Dynasty of Ur** established an empire built on the foundation of the Akkadian Empire, but far smaller. In this period, Sumerian culture and literature flourished. Epic poems were composed, glorifying the deeds of the ancestors of the kings of Ur. A highly centralized administration kept detailed records of agriculture, animal husbandry, commerce, and other matters. After little more than a century of prominence, however, the kingdom of Ur disintegrated in the face of famine and invasion. From the east, the Elamites attacked the city of Ur and captured the king. From the north and west, a Semitic-speaking people, the Amorites, invaded Mesopotamia in large numbers, settling around the Sumerian cities and eventually founding their own dynasties in some of them, such as at Uruk, Babylon, Isin, and Larsa.

The fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur put an end to Sumerian rule, and the Sumerians gradually disappeared as an identifiable group. The Sumerian language survived only in writing as the learned language of Babylonia taught in schools and used by priests and scholars. So great was the respect for the Sumerian language that seventeen centuries after the fall of Ur, when Alexander the Great arrived in Babylon in 331 B.C.E., Sumerian was still used as a scholarly and religious language there.

For some time after the fall of Ur, there was relative peace in Babylonia under the Amorite kings of Isin, who used the Sumerian language at their court and considered themselves the successors of the kings of Ur. Eventually, another Amorite dynasty at the city of Larsa contested control of Babylonia, and a period of warfare began, consisting mostly of attacks on strategic points on waterways. A powerful new dynasty at Babylon defeated Isin, Larsa, and other rivals and dominated Mesopotamia for nearly 300 years. Its high point was the reign of its most famous king, **Hammurabi** (r. ca. 1792–1750 B.C.E.), best known today for the collection

VICTORY STELE OF NARAM-SIN, KING OF AKKAD This carved stone slab, or stele, commemorates the Akkadian king Naram-Sin's campaign against the Lullubi (c. 2230 B.C.E.), a people living in the northern Zagros Mountains, along the eastern frontier of Mesopotamia. Kings set up monuments like this one in the courtyards of temples to record their deeds. They were also left in remote corners of the empire to warn distant peoples of the death and enslavement awaiting the king's enemies.

SOURCE: Louvre, Paris, France/Bridgeman Images

of laws that bears his name. Hammurabi destroyed the great city of Mari on the Euphrates and created a kingdom embracing most of Mesopotamia.

Collections of laws existed as early as the Third Dynasty of Ur, and Hammurabi's owed much to earlier models and different legal traditions. His collection of laws, now referred to as the Code of Hammurabi, revealed a society divided by class. There were nobles, commoners, and slaves, and the law did not treat all of them equally. In general, punishments were harsh, based literally on the principle of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," whereas Sumerian law often levied fines instead of bodily mutilation or death. Disputes over property and other complaints were heard first by local city assemblies of leading citizens and heads of families. Professional judges heard cases for a fee and held court near the city gate. In Mesopotamian trials, witnesses and written evidence had to be produced and a written verdict issued. False testimony was punishable by death. Sometimes the contesting parties would submit to an oath before the gods, based on the theory that no one would risk swearing a false oath. In cases where evidence or oath could not establish the truth, the contesting parties might take an ordeal, such as being thrown into the river for the god to decide who was telling the truth. Cases of capital punishment could be appealed to the king. Hammurabi was closely involved with the details of his kingdom, and his surviving letters often deal with minor local disputes.

About 1600 B.C.E., the Babylonian kingdom fell apart under the impact of invasions from the north by the Hittites, Hurrians, and Kassites, all non-Mesopotamian peoples.

1.2.1.1 GOVERNMENT From the earliest historical records, it is clear the Sumerians were ruled by monarchs in some form. The type of rule varied at different times and places. In later Assyria, for example, the king served as chief priest; in Babylonia, the priesthood was separate from royalty. Royal princesses were sometimes appointed as priestesses of important gods. One of the most famous of these was Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon of Akkad. She is the first author in history whose writings can be identified with a real person. Although she was an Akkadian, she wrote complicated, passionate, and intensely personal poetry in the Sumerian language, in which she tells of important historical events that she experienced. In one passage, she compares the agony of writing a poem to giving birth.

The government and the temples cultivated large areas of land to support their staffs and retinue. Laborers of low social status who were given rations of raw foods and other commodities to sustain them and their families did some of the work on this land. Citizens leased some land for a share of the crop and a cash payment. The government and temples owned large herds of sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys. The Sumerian city-states exported wool and textiles to buy metals, such as copper, that were not available in Mesopotamia. Families and private individuals often owned their own farmland or houses in the cities, which they bought and sold as they liked.

1.2.1.2 WRITING AND MATHEMATICS Government, business, and scholarship required a good system of writing. The Sumerians invented the writing system now known as **cuneiform** (from the Latin *cuneus*, "wedge") because of the wedge-shaped marks made by writing on clay tablets with a cut reed stylus. The Sumerian writing system used several thousand characters, some of which stood for words and some for sounds. Some characters stood for many different sounds or words, and some sounds could be written using a choice of many different characters. The result was a writing system that was difficult to learn. Sumerian students were fond of complaining about their unfair teachers, how hard their schoolwork was, and their too-short vacations. Sumerian and Babylonian schools emphasized language and literature, accounting, legal practice, and mathematics, especially geometry, along with memorization of much abstract knowledge that had no relevance to everyday life. The ability to read and write was restricted to an elite who could afford to go to school. Success in school, however, and factors such as good family connections, meant a literate Sumerian could find employment as a clerk, surveyor, teacher, diplomat, or administrator.

The Sumerians also began the development of mathematics. The earliest Sumerian records suggest that before 3000 B.C.E. people had not yet thought of the concept of "number" independently of counting specific things. Therefore, the earliest writing used different numerals for counting different things, and the numerals had no independent value. (The same sign could be ten or eighteen, for example, depending on what was counted.) Once an independent concept of number was established, mathematics developed rapidly. The Sumerian system was based on the number sixty ("sexagesimal"), rather than the number ten ("decimal"), the system in general use today. Sumerian counting survives in the modern sixty-minute hour and the circle of 360 degrees. By the time of Hammurabi, the Mesopotamians were expert in many types of mathematics, including mathematical astronomy. The calendar the Mesopotamians used had twelve lunar months of thirty days each. To keep the calendar synched with the solar year and the seasons, the Mesopotamians occasionally introduced a thirteenth month.

1.2.1.3 RELIGION The Sumerians and their successors worshiped many gods and goddesses. Most of the gods were identified with some natural phenomenon such as the sky, fresh water, or storms. They were visualized in human form, with human needs and weaknesses, but they differed from humans in their greater power, sublime position in the universe, and immortality. The Mesopotamians believed humans were created to serve the gods and to relieve the gods of the necessity of providing for themselves. The gods were considered universal, but also residing in specific places—usually one important god or goddess in each city. Mesopotamian temples were run like great households where the gods were fed lavish meals, entertained with music, and honored with devotion and ritual. There

were gardens for their pleasure and bedrooms to retire to at night. The images of the gods were dressed and adorned with the finest materials. Theologians organized the gods into families and generations. Human social institutions like kingship, or crafts like carpentry, were associated with specific gods, so the boundaries between human and divine society were not always clearly drawn. Because the great gods were visualized as human rulers, remote from the common people and their concerns, the Mesopotamians imagined another, more personal, intercessor god to look after a person, rather like a guardian spirit. The public festivals of the gods were important holidays, with parades, ceremonies, and special foods. People wore their best clothes and celebrated their city and its gods. The Mesopotamians were religiously tolerant and readily accepted the possibility that different people might have different gods.

The Mesopotamians had a vague and gloomy picture of the afterworld. The winged spirits of the dead were recognizable as individuals. They were confined to a dusty, dark netherworld, doomed to perpetual hunger and thirst unless someone offered them food and drink. Some spirits escaped to haunt human beings. There was no preferential treatment in the afterlife for those who had led religious or virtuous lives—everyone was equally miserable.

Mesopotamian families often had ceremonies to remember and honor their dead. People were usually buried together with goods such as pottery and ornaments. In the Early Dynastic period, certain kings were buried with a large retinue of attendants, including soldiers and musicians, who apparently took poison during the funeral ceremony and were buried where they fell. But this practice soon disappeared. Children were sometimes buried under the floors of houses. Some families used burial vaults; others, large cemeteries. No tombstones or inscriptions identified the deceased. Mesopotamian religion focused on problems of this world and how to lead a good life before dying.

The ancient Mesopotamians also put much thought and effort into discovering signs that they believed would indicate future events, interpreting the meaning of these signs, and taking steps to avert evil. Mesopotamians believed in divination the way many people today put their trust in science. (See the "Encountering the Past" sidebar, which follows below, on divination in ancient Mesopotamia.)

Encountering the Past

Divination in Ancient Mesopotamia

DIVINATION ATTEMPTS TO foretell the future using magic or occult practices. One of the earliest divination methods the Mesopotamians used involved the sacrifice of sheep and goats. Seers examined the entrails of the sacrificed animals for deformations that could foretell the future. Clay tablets recorded particular deformations and the historical events they had foretold. The search for omens in the innards of sacrificial animals was especially important to Mesopotamian kings, who always performed that ceremony before undertaking important affairs of state.

MESOPOTAMIAN CLAY HUMBABA DEMON MASK
In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the oldest surviving work of literature in the world, the grimacing demon Humbaba (also spelled Huwawa) guards a forest of cedars. This clay mask of Humbaba comes from the city of Sippar in southern Iraq and dates from around 1800–1600 B.C.E.
SOURCE: www.BibleLandPictures.com/Alamy Stock Photo

But animal sacrifice was expensive. Most Mesopotamians, therefore, used other devices for divination. They burned incense and examined the shape of the smoke that arose. They poured oil into water and studied the resulting patterns for signs. They found omens in how people answered questions or in what they overheard strangers say. They collected clay tablets—their books—that described people's appearance and what it might tell them about the future.

The heavens were another source of omens. Astrologers recorded and interpreted the movements of the stars, planets, comets, and other heavenly bodies. Mesopotamia's great progress in astronomy derived in large part from this practice. The study of dreams and of unusual births, both human and animal, was also important. Troubled dreams and strange offspring had frightening implications for human affairs.

These practices all derived from the belief that the gods sent omens to warn human beings. Once the omens had been interpreted, Mesopotamians sought to avert danger with magic and prayers.

Questions

1. How did Mesopotamians try to predict the future, and what did they attempt to do about what they learned?
2. How would Mesopotamians explain their great interest in omens?

Religion played a large part in the literature and art of Mesopotamia. Epic poems told of the deeds of the gods, such as how the world was created and organized, of a great flood the gods sent to wipe out humanity, and of the hero-king Gilgamesh, who tried to escape death by going on a fantastic journey to find the sole survivor of a great flood. (See the "Compare and Connect" sidebar on two ancient stories of great floods.) Religious architecture

Compare and Connect

The Great Flood

STORIES OF A GREAT deluge appeared in many cultures at various times in the ancient world. In the Mesopotamian world, the earliest known story of a great flood sent by the gods to destroy mankind appeared in the Sumerian civilization. Later the story was included in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in a Semitic language. The great flood of Noah's time appears in the book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible.

THE FLOOD TABLET (TABLET XI) The Flood Tablet, the eleventh tablet in a series that relates the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* describes the meeting of Gilgamesh and Utnapishtim who, along with his wife, survived a great flood that destroyed the rest of humankind.

SOURCE: The Trustees of the British Museum/Art Resource, NY

Before Reading

- In the Babylonian story of the flood, notice how Enlil sends the deluge to destroy mankind.
- In the story of the flood from Genesis, think about why God makes a covenant with Noah.

Questions

1. In what ways is the story from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* similar to the story of Noah in the Hebrew Bible?
2. How is the account of a great flood in the story of Noah different from that in the *Epic of Gilgamesh?*
3. What is the significance of the similarities and differences between the two accounts?

I. THE BABYLONIAN STORY OF THE FLOOD

The passage that follows is part of the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh. *An earlier independent Babylonian Story of the Flood suggested that the gods sent a flood because there were too many people on the earth. A version of this story was later combined with the* Epic of Gilgamesh, *a legendary king who became terrified of death when his best friend and companion died. After many adventures, Gilgamesh crossed the distant ocean and the "waters of death" to ask Utnapishtim, who, with his wife, was the only survivor of the great flood, the secret of eternal life. In response, Utnapishtim narrated the story of the great flood to show that his own immortality derived from a onetime event in the past, so Gilgamesh could not share his destiny.*

For six days and [seven] nights the wind blew, and the flood and the storm swept the land. But the seventh day arriving did the rainstorm subside and the flood which had heaved like a woman in travail; there quieted the sea, and the storm-wind stood still, the flood stayed her flowing. I opened a vent and the fresh air moved over my cheek-bones. And I looked at the sea; there was silence, the tide-way lay flat as a roof-top—but the whole of mankind had returned unto clay. I bowed low: I sat and I wept: o'er my cheek-bones my tears kept on running.

When I looked out again in the directions, across the expanse of the sea, mountain ranges had emerged in twelve places and on Mount Nisir the vessel had grounded. Mount Nisir held the vessel fast nor allowed any movement. For a first day and a second, fast Mount Nisir held the vessel nor allowed of any movement. For a third day and a fourth day, fast Mount Nisir held the vessel nor allowed of any movement. For a fifth and a sixth day, held Mount Nisir fast the vessel nor allowed of any movement.

On the seventh day's arriving, I freed a dove and did release him. Forth went the dove but came back to me: there was not yet a resting-place and he came returning. Then I set free a swallow and did release him. Forth went the swallow but came back to me: there was not yet a resting-place and he came returning. So I set free a raven and did release him. Forth went the raven—and he saw again the natural flowing of the waters, and he ate and he flew about and he croaked, and came not returning.

So all set I free to the four winds of heaven, and I poured a libation, and scattered a food-offering, on the height of the mountain. Seven and seven did I lay the vessels, heaped into their incense-basins sweet cane, cedarwood and myrtle. And the gods smelled the savour, the gods smelled the sweet savour, the gods gathered like flies about the priest of the offering.

Then, as soon as the Mother-goddess arrived, she lifted up the great jewels which (in childhood, her father) Anu had made as a plaything for her: "O ye gods here present, as I still do not forget these lapis stones of my neck, so shall I remember these days—shall not forever forget them! If it please now the gods to come here to the offering, never shall Enlil come here to the offering, for without any discrimination he brought on the deluge, even (the whole of) my people consigned to destruction."

But as soon as Enlil arrived, he saw only the vessel—and furious was Enlil, he was filled with anger against the (heaven-) gods, the Igigi: "Has aught of livingkind escaped? Not a man should have survived the destruction!"

Ninurta opened his mouth and spake unto warrior Enlil: "Who except Ea could have designed such a craft? For Ea doth know every skill of invention."

Then Ea opened his mouth and spake unto warrior Enlil: "O warrior, thou wisest among gods, how thus indiscriminately couldst thou bring about this deluge? (Had thou counselled): On the sinner lay his sin, on the transgressor lay his transgression: loosen (the rope) that his life be not cut off, yet pull tight (on the rope) that he do not [escape]: then instead of thy sending a Flood would that the lion had come and diminished mankind: instead of thy sending a Flood would that the wolf had come and diminished mankind; instead of thy sending a Flood would that a famine had occurred and impoverished mankind; instead of thy sending a Flood would that a pestilence had come and smitten mankind. And I, since I could not oppose the decision of the great gods, did reveal unto the Exceeding-Wise a (magic) dream, and thus did he hear the gods' decision. Wherefore now take thee counsel concerning him."

Thereupon Enlil went up into the vessel: he took hold of my hand and made me go aboard, he bade my wife go aboard and made her kneel at my side. Standing between us, he touched our foreheads and did bless us, saying: "Hitherto Utnapishti has been but a man; but now Utnapishti and his wife shall be as gods like ourselves. In the Far Distance, at the mouth of the Rivers, Utnapishti shall dwell."

So they took me and did make me to dwell in the Far Distance, at the mouth of the Rivers. . . .

II. NOAH'S FLOOD

In Genesis, Noah is the hero of a different kind of creation story.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. . . .

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more. . . .

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

SOURCES: (I) "The Babylonian Story of the Flood" from *Documents from Old Testament Times*, D. Winton Thomas, editor and translator (Harper Torchbook Series, 1958), pp. 22–24. (II) Genesis 7.11–9.11.

took the form of great temple complexes in the major cities. The most imposing religious structure was the **ziggurat**, a tower in stages, sometimes with a small chamber on top. The terraces may have been planted with trees to resemble a mountain. Poetry about ziggurats often compares them to mountains, with their peaks in the sky and their roots in the netherworld, linking heaven to earth, but their precise purpose is not known. Eroded remains of many of these monumental structures still dot the Iraqi landscape. Through the Bible, ziggurats have entered Western tradition as "the tower of Babel."

1.2.1.4 SOCIETY Hundreds of thousands of cuneiform texts from the early third millennium B.C.E. until the third century B.C.E. give us a detailed picture of how peoples in ancient Mesopotamia conducted their lives and of the social conditions in which they lived. From the time of Hammurabi, for example, there are many royal letters to and from various rulers of the age, letters from the king to his subordinates, administrative records from many different cities, and numerous letters and documents belonging to private families.

Categorizing the laws of Hammurabi according to the aspects of life with which they deal reveals much about Babylonian life in his time. The third largest category of laws deals with commerce, relating to such issues as contracts, debts, rates of interest, security, and default. Business documents of Hammurabi's time show how people invested their money in land, money lending, government contracts, and international trade. Some of these laws regulate professionals, such as builders, judges, and surgeons. The second largest category of laws deals with land tenure, especially land given by the king to soldiers and marines in return for their service. The letters of Hammurabi that deal with land tenure show he was concerned with upholding the individual rights of landholders against powerful officials who tried to take their land from them. The largest category of laws relates to the family and its maintenance and protection, including marriage, inheritance, and adoption.

Parents usually arranged marriages, and betrothal was followed by the signing of a marriage contract. The bride usually left her own family to join her husband's. The husband-to-be could make a bridal payment, and the father of the bride-to-be provided a dowry for his daughter in money, land, or objects. A marriage began as monogamous, but a husband whose wife was childless or sickly could take a second wife. Sometimes husbands also sired children from domestic slave women. Women divorced by their husbands without good cause could get their dowry back, and a woman seeking divorce could also recover her dowry if her husband could not convict her of wrongdoing. A married woman's place was thought to be in the home, but women could possess their own property and do business on their own. Hundreds of letters between Mesopotamian wives and husbands show them as equal partners in the ventures of life. Single women who were not part of families could set up business on their own, often as tavern owners or moneylenders, or could be associated with temples, sometimes working as midwives and wet nurses, or taking care of orphaned children.

1.2.1.5 SLAVERY: CHATTEL SLAVES AND DEBT SLAVES There were two main types of slavery in Mesopotamia: chattel and debt slavery. Chattel slaves were bought like any other piece of property and had no legal rights. They had to wear their hair in a certain way and were sometimes branded or tattooed on their hands. They were often non-Mesopotamians bought from slave merchants. Prisoners of war could also be enslaved. Chattel slaves were expensive luxuries during most of Mesopotamian history. They were used in domestic service rather than in production, such as fieldwork. A wealthy household might have five or six chattel slaves, male and female. True chattel slavery did not become common until the Neo-Babylonian period (612–539 B.C.E.).

Debt slavery was more common than chattel slavery. Rates of interest were high, as much as 33.3 percent, so people often defaulted on loans. One reason the interest rates were so high was that the government periodically canceled certain types of debts, debt slavery, and obligations, so lenders ran the risk of losing their money. If debtors had pledged themselves or members of their families as surety for a loan, they became the debt slave of the creditor; their labor paid the interest on the loan. Debt slaves could not be sold but could redeem their freedom by paying off the loan.

Although laws against fugitive slaves or slaves who denied their masters were harsh, Mesopotamian slavery appears enlightened compared with other slave systems in history. Slaves were generally of the same people as their masters. They had been enslaved because of misfortune from which their masters were not immune, and they generally labored alongside them. Slaves could engage in business and, with certain restrictions, hold property. They could marry free men or women, and the resulting children would normally be free. A slave who acquired the means could buy his or her freedom. Children of a slave by a master might be allowed to share his property after his death. Nevertheless, slaves were property, subject to an owner's will, and had little legal protection.

1.2.2 Egyptian Civilization

As Mesopotamian civilization arose in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, another great civilization emerged in Egypt, centered on the Nile River. From its sources in Lake Victoria and the Ethiopian highlands, the Nile flows north some 4,000 miles to the Mediterranean Sea. Ancient Egypt included the 750-mile stretch of smooth, navigable river from Aswan to the sea. South of Aswan the river's course is interrupted by several cataracts—rocky areas of rapids and whirlpools.

The Egyptians recognized two sets of geographical divisions in their country. **Upper** (southern) **Egypt** consisted of the narrow valley of the Nile. **Lower** (northern) **Egypt** referred to the broad triangular area, named by the Greeks after their letter "delta," formed by the Nile as it branches out to empty into the Mediterranean. (See Map 1–2.) Egyptians also made a distinction between what they termed the "black land," the dark fertile fields along the Nile, and the "red land," the desert cliffs and plateaus bordering the valley.

The Nile alone made agriculture possible in Egypt's desert environment. Each year the rains of central Africa caused the river to rise over its floodplain, cresting in September and October. In places, the plain extended several miles on either side; elsewhere the cliffs sloped down to the water's edge. When the floodwaters receded, they left a rich layer of organically fertile silt. The construction and maintenance of canals, dams, and irrigation ditches to control the river's water, together with careful planning and organization of planting and harvesting, produced an agricultural prosperity unmatched in the ancient world.

The Nile served as the major highway connecting Upper and Lower Egypt. There was also a network of desert roads running north and south, as well as routes across the eastern desert to the Sinai and the Red Sea. Other tracks led to oases

Map 1–2 THE NEAR EAST AND GREECE ABOUT 1400 B.C.E.

About 1400 B.C.E., the Near East was divided among four empires. Egypt extended south to Nubia and north through Palestine and Phoenicia. The Kassites ruled in Mesopotamia, the Hittites in Asia Minor, and the Mitannians in Assyrian lands. In the Aegean, the Mycenaean kingdoms were at their height.

MAJOR PERIODS IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN HISTORY

	Dynastic Period	*Dynastic Number*
3100–2700 B.C.E.	Early Dynastic Period	(1–2)
2700–2200 B.C.E.	Old Kingdom	(3–6)
2200–2052 B.C.E.	First Intermediate Period	(7–11)
2052–1630 B.C.E.	Middle Kingdom	(12–13)
1630–1550 B.C.E.	Second Intermediate Period	(14–17)
1550–1075 B.C.E.	New Kingdom	(18–20)

in the western desert. Thanks to geography and climate, Egypt was more isolated and enjoyed far more security than Mesopotamia. This security, along with the predictable flood calendar, gave Egyptian civilization a more optimistic outlook than the civilizations of the Tigris and Euphrates, which were more prone to storms, flash floods, and invasions.

The 3,000-year span of ancient Egyptian history is traditionally divided into thirty-one royal dynasties. The first was said to have been founded by Menes, the king who originally united Upper and Lower Egypt, while the last was established by Alexander the Great, who conquered Egypt in 332 B.C.E. Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals, founded the Ptolemaic dynasty, whose last ruler was Cleopatra. In 30 B.C.E., the Romans defeated Egypt, effectively ending the independent existence of a civilization that had lasted three millennia.

The unification of Upper and Lower Egypt was vital, for it meant the entire river valley could benefit from an unimpeded distribution of resources. Three times in its history, Egypt experienced a century or more of political and social disintegration, known as Intermediate Periods. During these eras, rival dynasties often set up separate power bases in Upper and Lower Egypt until a strong leader reunified the land.

1.2.2.1 THE OLD KINGDOM (2700–2200 B.C.E.) The Old Kingdom represents the culmination of the cultural and historical developments of the Early Dynastic period. For more than 400 years, Egypt enjoyed internal stability and great prosperity. During this period, the pharaoh was a king who was also a god. From his capital at Memphis, the god-king administered Egypt according to set principles, prime among them being ***maat***, an ideal of order, justice, and truth. In return for the king's building and maintaining temples, the gods preserved the equilibrium of the state and ensured the king's continuing power, which was absolute. Since the king was obligated to act infallibly in a benign and beneficent manner, the welfare of the people of Egypt was automatically guaranteed and safeguarded.

Nothing better illustrates the nature of Old Kingdom royal power than the pyramids built as pharaonic tombs. Beginning in the Early Dynastic period, kings constructed increasingly elaborate burial complexes in Upper Egypt. Djoser, a Third Dynasty king, was the first to erect a monumental six-step pyramid of hard stone. Subsequent pharaohs built other stepped pyramids until Snefru, the founder of the Fourth Dynasty, converted a stepped to a true pyramid over the course of putting up three monuments.

His son Khufu (Cheops in the Greek version of his name) chose the desert plateau of Giza, south of Memphis, as the site for the largest pyramid ever constructed. Its dimensions are prodigious: 481 feet high, 756 feet long on each side, and its base covering 13.1 acres. The pyramid is made of 2.3 million stone blocks averaging 2.5 tons each. It is also a geometrical wonder, deviating from absolutely level and square only by the most minute measurements using the latest modern devices. Khufu's successors, Khafre (Chephren) and Menkaure (Mycerinus), built equally perfect pyramids at Giza, and together, the three constitute one of the most extraordinary achievements in human history. Khafre also built the huge composite creature, part lion and part human, that the Greeks named the Sphinx. Recent research has shown that the Great Sphinx played a crucial role in the solar cult aspects of the pyramid complex.

The pyramids are remarkable, not only for the great technical skill they demonstrate, but also for the concentration of resources they represent. They are evidence that the pharaohs controlled vast wealth and had the power to focus and organize enormous human effort over the years it took to build each pyramid. They also provide a visible indication of the nature of the Egyptian state: the pyramids, like the pharaohs, tower above the land; the low tombs at their base, like the officials buried there, seem to huddle in relative unimportance.

THE GREAT SPHINX With the body of a lion and the head of a man, the Great Sphinx was carved at Giza in the reign of the pharaoh Khafre (c. 2570–2544 B.C.E.).
SOURCE: Joana Kruse/Alamy Stock Photo

Originally, the pyramids and their associated cult buildings contained statuary, offerings, and all the pharaoh needed for the afterlife. Despite great precautions and ingenious concealment methods, tomb robbers took nearly everything. Several full-size wooden boats have been found, however, still in their own graves at the base of the pyramids, ready for the pharaoh's journeys in the next world. Recent excavations have uncovered remains of the large town built to house the thousands of pyramid builders, including the farmers who worked at Giza during the annual flooding of their fields.

Numerous officials, both members of the royal family and nonroyal men of ability, aided the god-kings. The highest office was the *vizier* (a modern term from Arabic). Central offices dealing with granaries, surveys, assessments, taxes, and salaries administered the land. Water management was local rather than on a national level. Upper and Lower Egypt were divided into ***nomes***, or districts, each governed by a *nomarch*, or governor, and his local officials. The kings could also appoint royal officials to oversee groups of nomes or to supervise pharaonic landholdings throughout Egypt.

1.2.2.2 THE FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD AND MIDDLE KINGDOM (2200–1630 B.C.E.) Toward the end of the Old Kingdom absolute pharaonic power waned as the nomarchs and other officials became more independent and influential. About 2200 B.C.E., the Old Kingdom collapsed and gave way to the decentralization and disorder of the First Intermediate Period, which lasted until about 2052 B.C.E. Eventually, the kings of Dynasty 11, based in Thebes in Upper Egypt, defeated the rival Dynasty 10, based in a city south of Giza.

Amunemhet I, the founder of Dynasty 12 and the Middle Kingdom, probably began his career as a successful vizier under an Eleventh Dynasty king. After reuniting Upper and Lower Egypt, he turned his attention to making three important and long-lasting administrative changes. First, he moved his royal residence from Thebes to a brand-new town, just south of the old capital at Memphis, signaling a fresh start rooted in past glories. Second, he reorganized the nome structure by more clearly defining the nomarchs' duties to the state, granting them some local autonomy within the royal structure. Third, he established a co-regency system to smooth transitions from one reign to another.

Amunemhet I and the other Middle Kingdom pharaohs sought to evoke the past by building pyramid complexes like those of the later Old Kingdom rulers. Yet the events of the First Intermediate Period had irrevocably changed the nature of Egyptian kingship. Gone was the absolute, distant god-king; the king was now more directly concerned with his people. In art, instead of the supremely confident faces of the Old Kingdom pharaohs, the Middle Kingdom rulers seemed thoughtful, careworn, and brooding.

Egypt's relations with its neighbors became more aggressive during the Middle Kingdom. To the south, royal fortresses were built to control Nubia and the growing trade in African resources. To the north and east, Syria and Palestine increasingly came under Egyptian influence, even as fortifications sought to prevent settlers from the Levant from moving into the Delta.

1.2.2.3 THE SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD AND THE NEW KINGDOM (1630–1075 B.C.E.) During Dynasty 13, the kingship changed hands rapidly and the western Delta established itself as an independent Dynasty 14, ushering in the Second Intermediate Period. The eastern Delta, with its expanding Asiatic populations, came under the control of the **Hyksos** (Dynasty 15) and minor Asiatic kings (Dynasty 16). Meanwhile, the Dynasty 13 kings left their northern capital and regrouped in Thebes (Dynasty 17).

Though much later sources describe the Hyksos ("chief of foreign lands" in Egyptian) as ruthless invaders from parts unknown, they were almost certainly Amorites from the Levant, part of the gradual infiltration of the Delta during the Middle Kingdom. After nearly a century of rule, the Hyksos were expelled, a process begun by Kamose, the last king of Dynasty 17, and completed by his brother Ahmose, the first king of the Eighteenth Dynasty and the founder of the New Kingdom.

During Dynasty 18, Egypt pursued foreign expansion with renewed vigor. Military expeditions reached as far north as the Euphrates in Syria, with frequent campaigns in the Levant. To the south, major Egyptian temples were built in the Sudan, almost 1,300 miles from Memphis. Egypt's economic and political power was at its height.

Egypt's position was reflected in the unprecedented luxury and cosmopolitanism of the royal court and in the ambitious palace and temple projects undertaken throughout the country. Perhaps to foil tomb robbers, the Dynasty 18 pharaohs were the first to cut their tombs deep into the rock cliffs of a desolate valley in Thebes, known today as the Valley of the Kings. To date, only one intact royal tomb has been discovered there, that of the young Dynasty 18 king, Tutankhamun, and even it had been disturbed shortly after his death. The thousands of goods buried with him, many of them marvels of craftsmanship, give an idea of Egypt's material wealth during this period.

Following the premature death of Tutankhamun in 1323 B.C.E., a military commander named Horemheb assumed the kingship, which passed in turn to his own army commander, Ramses I. The pharaohs Ramessides of Dynasty 19 undertook numerous monumental projects, among them Ramses II's rock-cut temples at Abu Simbel, south of the First Cataract. There and elsewhere, Ramses II left textual and pictorial accounts of the **Battle of Kadesh** in 1285 B.C.E. against the Hittites on the Orontes in Syria. Sixteen years later, the Egyptians and Hittites signed a formal peace treaty, forging an alliance against an increasingly volatile political situation in the Mideast and eastern Mediterranean during the thirteenth century B.C.E.

Merneptah, one of the hundred offspring of Ramses II, held off a hostile Libyan attack, as well as incursions by the

Sea Peoples, a loose coalition of Mediterranean raiders who seem to have provoked and taken advantage of unsettled conditions. One of Merneptah's inscriptions commemorating his military triumphs contains the first known mention of Israel.

Despite Merneptah's efforts, by the end of Dynasty 20, Egypt's period of imperial glory had passed. The next thousand years witnessed a Third Intermediate Period, a Saite Renaissance, Persian domination, conquest by Alexander the Great, the Ptolemaic period, and finally, defeat at the hands of Octavian in 30 B.C.E.

1.2.2.4 LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE Writing first appears in Egypt about 3000 B.C.E. The writing system, dubbed **hieroglyphics** ("sacred carvings") by the Greeks, was highly sophisticated, involving hundreds of picture signs that remained relatively constant in the way they were rendered for over 3,000 years. A cursive version of hieroglyphics was used for business documents and literary texts, which were penned rapidly in black and red ink. The Egyptian language, part of the Afro-Asiatic (or Hamito-Semitic) family, evolved through several stages—Old, Middle, and Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic—thus giving it a history of continuous recorded use well into the medieval period.

Egyptian literature includes narratives, myths, books of instruction in wisdom, letters, religious texts, and poetry, written on papyri, limestone flakes, and potsherds. Unfortunately, only a small fraction of this enormous literature has survived, and many texts are incomplete.

1.2.2.5 RELIGION: GODS AND TEMPLES Egyptian religion encompasses a multitude of concepts that often seem mutually contradictory to us. Three separate explanations for the origin of the universe were formulated, each based in the philosophical traditions of a venerable Egyptian city. The cosmogony of Heliopolis, north of Memphis, held that the creator sun god Atum (also identified as Re) emerged from the darkness of a vast sea to stand upon a primeval mound, containing within himself the life force of the gods he was to create. At Memphis, it was the god Ptah who created the other gods by uttering their names. Further south, at Hermopolis, eight male and female entities within a primordial slime suddenly exploded, and the energy that resulted created the sun and Atum, from which the rest came.

Amun, one of the eight entities in the Hermopolitan cosmogony, provides a good example. Thebes, Amun's cult center, rose to prominence in the Middle Kingdom. In the New Kingdom, Amun was elevated above his seven cohorts and took on aspects of the sun god Re to become Amun-Re.

Not surprisingly in a nearly rainless land, solar cults and mythologies were highly developed. Much thought was devoted to conceptualizing what happened as the sun god made his perilous way through the underworld in the night hours between sunset and sunrise.

The Eighteenth Dynasty was one of several periods during which solar cults were in ascendancy. Early in his reign,

SEATED EGYPTIAN SCRIBE, FIFTH DYNASTY, ca. 2510–2460 B.C.E. One of the hallmarks of the early river valley civilizations was the development of writing. Ancient Egyptian scribes such as this one had to undergo rigorous training but were rewarded with a position of respect and privilege.
SOURCE: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

Amunhotep IV promoted a single, previously minor aspect of the sun, the Aten ("disk"), above Re himself and the rest of the gods. He declared that the Aten was the creator god who brought life to humankind and all living beings, with himself and his queen Nefertiti as the sole mediators between the Aten and the people. Amunhotep went further, changing his name to Akhenaten ("the effective spirit of the Aten"), building a new capital called Akhetaten ("the horizon of the Aten") near Amarna north of Thebes, and chiseling out the name of Amun from inscriptions everywhere. Shortly after his death, Amarna was abandoned and partially razed. During the reigns of Akhenaten's successors, Tutankhamun (born Tutankhaten) and Horemheb, Amun was restored to his former position, and Akhenaten's monuments were defaced and even demolished.

In representations, Egyptian gods have human bodies, possess human or animal heads, and wear crowns, celestial disks, or thorns. The lone exception is the Aten, made nearly abstract by Akhenaten, who altered its image to a plain disk with solar rays ending in small hands holding the hieroglyphic sign for life to the nostrils of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. The gods were thought to reside in their cult centers, where, from the New Kingdom on, increasingly ostentatious temples were built, staffed by full-time priests. Though the ordinary person could not enter a temple precinct, great festivals took place for all to see. During Amun's major festival of Opet, the statue of the god traveled in a divine boat along the Nile, whose banks were thronged with spectators.

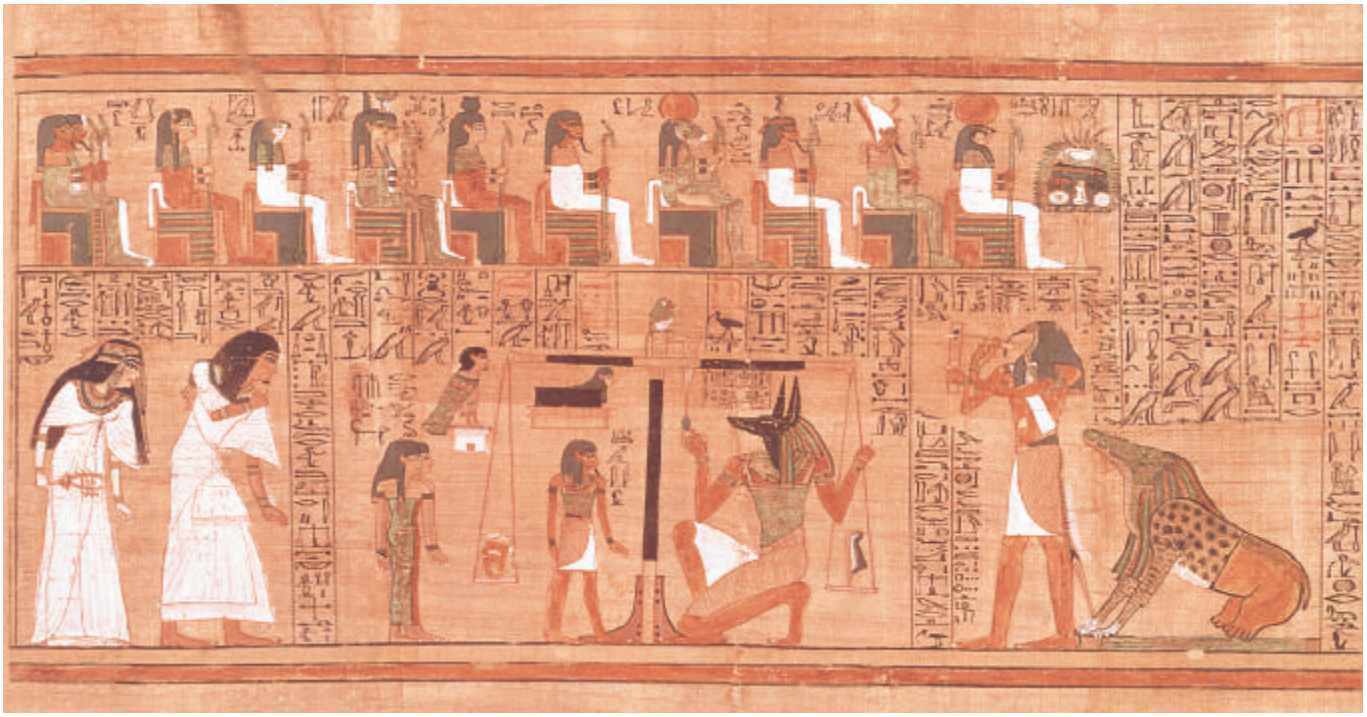
1.2.2.6 WORSHIP AND THE AFTERLIFE For most Egyptians, worship took place at small local shrines. They left offerings to the chosen gods, as well as votive inscriptions with simple prayers. Private houses often had niches containing busts for ancestor worship and statues of household deities. The Egyptians strongly believed in the power of magic, dreams, and oracles, and they possessed a wide variety of amulets to ward off evil.

The Egyptians thought the afterlife was full of dangers, which could be overcome by magical means, among them the spells in the *Book of the Dead*. The goals were to join and be identified with the gods, especially Osiris, or to sail in the "boat of millions." Originally only the king could hope to enjoy immortality with the gods, but gradually this became available to all. Since the Egyptians believed the preservation of the body was essential for continued existence in the afterlife, early on they developed mummification, a process that took seventy days by the New Kingdom. How lavishly tombs were prepared and decorated varied over the course of Egyptian history and in accordance with the wealth of a family. A high-ranking Dynasty 18 official, for example, typically had a Theban rock-cut tomb of several rooms embellished with scenes from daily life and funerary texts, as well as provisions and equipment for the afterlife, statuettes of workers, and a place for descendants to leave offerings.

1.2.2.7 WOMEN IN EGYPTIAN SOCIETY It is difficult to assess the position of women in Egyptian society, because our pictorial and textual evidence comes almost entirely from male sources. Women's primary roles were related to management of the household. They could not hold office, go to scribal schools, or become artisans. Nevertheless, women could own and control property, sue for divorce, and, at least in theory, enjoy equal legal protection.

Royal women often wielded considerable influence, particularly in the Eighteenth Dynasty. The most remarkable was **Hatshepsut**, daughter of Thutmose I and widow of Thutmose II, who ruled as pharaoh for nearly twenty years. Having acted as queen regent for seven years, she assumed the royal title of king of Egypt contrary to the tradition that only men could hold this revered position. She emphasized her role as divine king by representing herself with male dress and male body in statues and portraits. During her extraordinary reign, Hatshepsut engaged in ambitious building projects and trading expeditions. Her great naval voyage opened new ways of access to Punt and expanded trade in the region. Several successful military campaigns won her a reputation as a warrior. In addition to the exceptional reign of Hatshepsut, many Egyptian queens held the title "god's wife of Amun," a power base of great importance.

In Egyptian art, royal and nonroyal women are conventionally depicted smaller in size than their husbands or sons. Yet it is probably of greater significance that women are so frequently depicted in a wide variety of contexts. Much care was lavished on details of their gestures, clothing, and hairstyles. With their husbands, they attend banquets, boat in the papyrus marshes, make and receive offerings, and supervise the myriad affairs of daily life.



THE EGYPTIAN AFTERLIFE The Egyptians believed in the possibility of life after death through the god Osiris. Aspects of each person's life had to be tested by forty-two assessor-gods before the person could be presented to Osiris. In this scene from a papyrus manuscript of the *Book of the Dead*, the deceased and his wife (on the left) watch the scales of justice weighing his heart (on the left side of the scales) against the feather of truth. The jackal-headed god Anubis also watches the scales, and the ibis-headed god Thoth keeps the record.

SOURCE: British Museum, London, UK/Bridgeman Art Library

1.2.2.8 SLAVES Slaves did not become numerous in Egypt until the growth of Egyptian imperial power in the Middle Kingdom (2052–1786 B.C.E.). During that period, black Africans from Nubia to the south and Asians from the east were captured in war and brought back to Egypt as slaves. The great period of Egyptian imperial expansion, the New Kingdom (1550–1075 B.C.E.), vastly increased the number of slaves and captives in Egypt. Sometimes an entire people was enslaved, as the Bible says the Hebrews were.

Slaves in Egypt performed many tasks. They labored in the fields with the peasants, in the shops of artisans, and as domestic servants. Others worked as policemen and soldiers. Many slaves labored to erect the great temples, obelisks, and other huge monuments of Egypt's imperial age. As in Mesopotamia, slaves were branded for identification and to help prevent their escape. Slaves could be freed in Egypt, but manumission seems to have been rare. Nonetheless, former slaves were not set apart and could expect to be assimilated into the mass of the population.

1.3 Ancient Near Eastern Empires

What were the great empires of the ancient Near East?

KEY EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN EMPIRES

ca. 1400–1200 B.C.E.	Hittite Empire
ca. 1100 B.C.E.	Rise of Assyrian power
732–722 B.C.E.	Assyrian conquest of Syria-Palestine
671 B.C.E.	Assyrian conquest of Egypt
612 B.C.E.	Destruction of Assyrian capital at Nineveh
612–539 B.C.E.	Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire

In the time of Dynasty 18 in Egypt, new groups of peoples had established themselves in the Near East: the Kassites in Babylonia, the Hittites in Asia Minor, and the Mitannians in northern Syria and Mesopotamia. (See Map 1–2.) The Kassites and Mitannians were warrior peoples who ruled as a minority over more civilized folk and absorbed their culture. The Hittites established a kingdom of their own and forged an empire that lasted some 200 years.

1.3.1 The Hittites

The Hittites were an Indo-European people, speaking a language related to Greek and Sanskrit. By about 1500 B.C.E., they established a strong, centralized government with a capital at Hattusas (near Ankara, the capital of modern Turkey). Between 1400 and 1200 B.C.E., they emerged as a leading military power in the Mideast and contested Egypt's ambitions to control Palestine and Syria. This struggle culminated in a great battle between the Egyptian and Hittite armies at Kadesh in northern Syria (1285 B.C.E.) and ended as a standoff. The Hittites adopted Mesopotamian writing and many aspects of Mesopotamian culture, especially through the Hurrian peoples of northern Syria and southern Anatolia. Their extensive historical records are the first to mention the Greeks, whom the Hittites called Ahhiyawa (the Achaeans of Homer). The Hittite kingdom disappeared by 1200 B.C.E., swept away in the general invasions and collapse of the Mideastern states at that time.

1.3.1.1 THE DISCOVERY OF IRON An important technological change took place in northern Anatolia, somewhat earlier than the creation of the Hittite kingdom, but perhaps within its region. This was the discovery of how to smelt iron and the decision to use it to manufacture weapons and tools in preference to copper or bronze. Archaeologists refer to the period after 1100 B.C.E. as the Iron Age.

1.3.2 The Assyrians

The Assyrians were originally a people living in Assur, a city in northern Mesopotamia on the Tigris River. They spoke a Semitic language closely related to Babylonian. They had a proud, independent culture heavily influenced by Babylonia. Assur had been an early center for trade but emerged as a political power during the fourteenth century B.C.E. The first Assyrian Empire spread north and west but ended in the general collapse of Near Eastern states at the end of the second millennium. A people called the Arameans, a Semitic nomadic and agricultural people originally from northern Syria who spoke a language called Aramaic, invaded Assyria. Aramaic is still used in parts of the Near East and is one of the languages of medieval Jewish and Mideastern Christian culture.

1.3.3 The Second Assyrian Empire

After 1000 B.C.E., the Assyrians began a second period of expansion, and by 665 B.C.E., they controlled all of Mesopotamia, much of southern Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt to its southern frontier. They succeeded, thanks to a large, well-disciplined army and a society that valued military skills. Some Assyrian kings boasted of their atrocities, so their names inspired terror throughout the Near East. They constructed magnificent palaces at Nineveh and Nimrud (near modern Mosul, Iraq), surrounded by parks and gardens.

The Assyrians organized their empire into provinces with governors, military garrisons, and administration for taxation, communications, and intelligence. Important officers were assigned large areas of land throughout the empire, and agricultural colonies were set up in key regions to store supplies for military actions beyond the frontiers. Vassal kings had to send tribute and delegations to the Assyrian capital every year. Tens of thousands of people were forcibly displaced from their homes and resettled in other areas of the empire, partly to populate sparsely inhabited regions, partly to diminish resistance to Assyrian rule. People of the kingdom of Israel, which the Assyrians invaded and destroyed, were among them.

The empire became too large to govern efficiently. The Medes, a powerful people from western and central Iran,

had been expanding across the Iranian plateau. The Medes attacked Assyria and were joined by the Babylonians, who had always been restive under Assyrian rule, under the leadership of a general named Nebuchadnezzar. They eventually destroyed the Assyrian cities, including Nineveh in 612 B.C.E., so thoroughly that Assyria never recovered.

1.3.4 The Neo-Babylonians

The Medes did not follow up on their conquests, so Nebuchadnezzar took over much of the Assyrian Empire. Under him and his successors, Babylon grew into one of the greatest cities of the world. Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty did not last long, and the government passed to various men in rapid succession. The last independent king of Babylon set up a second capital in the Arabian desert and tried to force the Babylonians to honor the Moon-god above all other gods. He allowed dishonest or incompetent speculators to lease huge areas of temple land for their personal profit. These policies proved unpopular—some said that the king was insane—and many Babylonians may have welcomed the Persian conquest that came in 539 B.C.E. After that, Babylonia began another, even more prosperous phase of its history as one of the most important provinces of another great Eastern empire, that of the Persians. Cartography was among the many intellectual achievements of the Babylonians (see the "Closer Look," which follows below, to learn more.)

A Closer Look

Babylonian World Map

THE MAP ILLUSTRATED here, inscribed on a clay tablet about 600 B.C.E., is thought to be the earliest surviving map of the world. The Babylonians did not intend this map to be a precise or literal picture of the universe or even of the land on which human beings lived, as they did not represent such important and numerous peoples as the Egyptians and Persians, whom they knew very well.

The cuneiform inscription above the picture and on the back of the tablet helps make its identification as a map secure.

Beyond an encircling "Bitter River," seven islands are arranged to form a seven-pointed star.

The tablet shows the world from a Babylonian point of view as flat and round, with Babylon sitting at its center on the Euphrates River.

Cities and lands, including Armenia and Assyria, surround Babylon.

INSCRIBED MAP OF BABYLON AND THE WORLD

SOURCE: World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Questions

1. Why do you think this map locates some of the Babylonians' neighbors but ignores other important neighboring cultures?
2. Why has cartography remained so important throughout the ages?
3. Is the subjectivity reflected in this map unique, or is it a general characteristic of cartography throughout history?

1.4 The Persian Empire

What were the Persian rulers' attitudes toward the cultures they ruled?

The great Persian Empire arose in the region now called Iran. The ancestors of the people who would rule it spoke a language from the Aryan branch of the family of Indo-European languages, related to the Greek spoken by the Hellenic peoples and the Latin of the Romans. The most important collections of tribes among them were the Medes and the Persians, peoples so similar in language and customs that the Greeks used both names interchangeably.

KEY EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

550 B.C.E.	Cyrus the Great unites Persians and Medes
546 B.C.E.	Persia conquers Lydia
521–486 B.C.E.	Reign of Darius the Great

The Medes were the first Iranian people to organize their tribes into a union. They were aggressive enough to build a force that challenged the great empires of Mesopotamia. With the help of the ruler of Babylon, they defeated the mighty Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C.E. Until the middle of the sixth century, the Persians were subordinate to the Medes, but when Cyrus II (called the Great) became King of the Persians (r. 559–530 B.C.E.), their positions were reversed. About 550 B.C.E., Cyrus captured the capital at Ecbatana and united the Medes and Persians under his own rule.

1.4.1 Cyrus the Great

Cyrus quickly expanded his power. The territory he inherited from the Medes touched on Lydia, ruled by the rich and powerful king Croesus. Croesus controlled western Asia Minor, having conquered the Greek cities of the coast about 560 B.C.E. Made confident by his victories, by alliances with Egypt and Babylon, and by what he thought was a favorable signal from the Greek oracle of Apollo at Delphi, he invaded Persian territory in 546 B.C.E. Cyrus achieved a decisive victory, capturing Croesus and his capital city of Sardis. By 539 B.C.E. Cyrus had conquered the Greek cities and extended his power as far to the east as the Indus valley and modern Afghanistan.

In that same year, he captured Babylon. Unlike the harsh Babylonian and Assyrian conquerors who preceded him, Cyrus pursued a policy of toleration and restoration. He did not impose the Persian religion but claimed to rule by the favor of the Babylonian god. Instead of deporting defeated peoples from their native lands and destroying their cities, he rebuilt their cities and allowed the exiles to return. The conquest of the Babylonian Empire had brought Palestine under Persian rule, so Cyrus permitted the Hebrews, taken into captivity by King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.E., to return to their native land of Judah. This policy, followed by that of his successors, was effective but not as gentle as it might seem. Wherever they ruled, Cyrus the Great and his successors demanded tribute from their subjects and military service, enforcing these requirements strictly and sometimes brutally.

1.4.2 Darius the Great

Cyrus's son Cambyses succeeded to the throne in 529 B.C.E. His great achievement was the conquest of Egypt, establishing it as a satrapy (province) that ran as far west as Libya and as far south as Ethiopia. The Persians ruled, as the Bible puts it, "from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces" (Esther 1:1). (See Map 1–3.) On Cambyses's death in 522 B.C.E., a civil war roiled much of the Persian Empire. Darius emerged as the new emperor in 521 B.C.E.

On a great rock hundreds of feet in the air near the mountain Iranian village of Behistun, Darius the Great had carved an inscription in three languages—Babylonian, Old Persian, and Elamite—all in the cuneiform script. It boasted of his victories and the greatness of his rule and, discovered almost 2,000 years later, greatly helped scholars decipher all three languages. Darius's long and prosperous reign lasted until 486 B.C.E., during which he brought the empire to its greatest extent. To the east he added new conquests in northern India. In the west, Darius sought to conquer the nomadic people called Scythians who roamed around the Black Sea. For this purpose, he crossed into Europe over the Hellespont (Dardanelles) to the Danube River and beyond, taking possession of Thrace and Macedonia on the fringes of the Greek mainland. In 499 B.C.E., the Ionian Greeks of western Asia Minor rebelled, launching the wars between Greeks and Persians that would not end until two decades later.

1.4.3 Government and Administration

Like the Mesopotamian kingdoms, the Persian Empire was a hereditary monarchy that claimed divine sanction from the god Ahura Mazda. The ruler's title was *Shahanshah*, "king of kings." In theory, all the land and the peoples in the empire belonged to him as absolute monarch, and he demanded tribute and service for the use of his property. In practice, he depended on the advice and administrative service of aristocratic courtiers, ministers, and provincial governors, the satraps. He was expected, as Ahura Mazda's chosen representative, to rule with justice, in accordance with established custom and the precedents in the Law of the Medes and Persians. Still, the king ruled as a semi-divine autocrat; anyone approaching him prostrated himself as before a god who could demand their wealth, labor, and military service and had the power of life and death. The Greeks would see him as the model of a despot or tyrant who regarded his people as slaves.

Map 1–3 THE ACHAEMENID PERSIAN EMPIRE

The empire created by Cyrus had reached its fullest extent under Darius when Persia attacked Greece in 490 B.C.E. It extended from India to the Aegean, and even into Europe, encompassing the lands formerly ruled by the Egyptians, Hittites, Babylonians, and Assyrians. A system of excellent royal roads, including the 1,500-mile route from Sardis in Lydia to the Persian capital at Susa, facilitated travel and communication.

The empire was divided into twenty-nine satrapies. The satraps were allowed considerable autonomy. They ruled over civil affairs and commanded the army in war, but the king exercised several means of control. In each satrapy, he appointed a secretary and a military commander. He also chose inspectors called "the eyes and ears of the king" who traveled throughout the empire reporting on what they learned in each satrapy. Their travels and those of royal couriers were made swifter and easier by a system of excellent royal roads. The royal postal system was served by a kind of "pony express" that placed men mounted on fast horses at stations along the way. It normally took three months to travel the 1,500 miles from Sardis in Lydia to the Persian capital at Susa. The royal postal service made the trip in less than two weeks. Ruling over a vast empire whose people spoke countless different languages, the Persians did not try to impose their own, but instead adopted Aramaic, the most common language of Middle-Eastern commerce, as the imperial tongue. This practical decision simplified both civil and military administration.

Medes and Persians made up the core of the army. Royal schools trained aristocratic Median and Persian boys as military officers and imperial administrators. The officers commanded not only the Iranian troops but also drafted large numbers of subject armies when needed. A large Persian army, such as the one that invaded Greece in 490 B.C.E., included hundreds of thousands of non-Iranian soldiers organized by ethnic group, each dressed in its own uniforms, taking orders from Iranian officers.

1.4.4 Religion

Persia's religion was different from that of its neighbors and subjects. Its roots lay in the Indo-European traditions of the Vedic religion that Aryan peoples brought into India about 1500 B.C.E. Their religious practices included animal sacrifices and a reverence for fire. Although the religion was polytheistic, its chief god Ahura Mazda, the "Wise Lord," placed an unusual emphasis on a stern ethical code. It took a new turn with the appearance of Zarathustra, a Mede whom the Greeks called Zoroaster, perhaps as early as 1000 B.C.E., as tradition states, although some scholars place him about 600 B.C.E. He was a great religious prophet and teacher who changed the traditional Aryan worship.

RELIEF OF DARIUS Persian nobles pay homage to King Darius in this relief from the treasury at the Persian capital of Persepolis. Darius is seated on the throne; his son and successor Xerxes stands behind him. Darius and Xerxes are carved in larger scale to indicate their royal status.
SOURCE: Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

Zarathustra's reform made Ahura Mazda the only god, dismissing the others as demons not to be worshipped but fought. There would be no more polytheism and no sacrifices. The old sacrificial fire was converted into a symbol of goodness and light. Zarathustra insisted that the people reject the "Lie" (*druj*) and speak only the "Truth" (*asha*), portraying life as an unending struggle between two great forces: Ahura Mazda, the creator and only god, representing goodness and light, and Ahriman, a demon, representing darkness and evil. He urged human beings to fight for the good, with the expectation that the good would be rewarded with glory and the evil punished with suffering.

Traditions and legends about Zarathustra as well as law, liturgy, and the teachings of the prophet are contained in the *Avesta*, the sacred book of the Persians. By the middle of the sixth century B.C.E., Zoroastrianism had become the chief religion of the Persians. On the great inscribed monument at Behistun, Darius the Great paid public homage to the god of Zarathustra and his teachings: "On this account Ahura Mazda brought me help . . . because I was not wicked, nor was I a liar, nor was I a tyrant, neither I nor any of my line. I have ruled according to righteousness."[1]

1.4.5 Art and Culture

The Persians learned much from the people they encountered and those they conquered, especially from Mesopotamia and Egypt, but they shaped this knowledge to fit comfortably in Persian society. A good example is the Persian system of writing: the Aramaic alphabet of the Semites was adapted to create a Persian alphabet, and the cuneiform symbols of Babylon to write the old Persian language they spoke. The Persians also borrowed their calendar from Egypt.

Persian art and architecture contain elements of styles borrowed from other societies and blended with Persian traditions to serve Persian purposes.

Probably the most magnificent of Persian remains are those of the Royal Palace at Persepolis, built by Darius and his son and successor Xerxes (r. 485–465 B.C.E.). Its foundation was a high platform supported on three sides by a stone wall 20 or 30 feet high. This could be reached by a grand stairway whose sides were covered with carvings.

The complex contained the Hall of a Hundred Columns where the kings did their judicial duties. More than any other tangible objects, the columns, stairway, and the gateway with winged bulls reveal the grandeur of the ancient Persian Empire.

1.5 Palestine

How was Hebrew monotheism different from Mesopotamian and Egyptian polytheism?

None of the powerful kingdoms of the ancient Near East had as much influence on the future of Western civilization as the small stretch of land between Syria and Egypt, the land called Palestine for much of its history. The three great religions of the modern world outside the Far East—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—trace their origins, at least in part, to the people who arrived there a little before 1200 B.C.E. The book that recounts their experiences is the Hebrew Bible.

1.5.1 The Canaanites and the Phoenicians

Before the Israelites arrived in their promised land, it was inhabited by groups of people speaking a Semitic language

called Canaanite. The Canaanites lived in walled cities and were farmers and seafarers. Instead of the hundreds of characters required to read Egyptian or cuneiform, their alphabet used between twenty and thirty characters. The Canaanites, like the other peoples of Syria-Palestine, worshipped many gods, especially gods of weather and fertility, whom they thought resided in the clouds atop the high mountains of northern Syria. The invading Israelites destroyed various Canaanite cities and holy places, and may have forced some of the population to move north and west, though Canaanite and Israelite culture also intermingled.

The **Phoenicians** were the descendants of the Canaanites and other peoples of Syria-Palestine, especially those who lived along the coast. They played an important role in Mediterranean trade, sailing to ports in Cyprus, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Egypt, and North Africa, as far as Gibraltar and possibly beyond. They founded colonies throughout the Mediterranean as far west as Spain. The most famous of these colonies was Carthage, near modern Tunis in North Africa. Sitting astride the trade routes, the Phoenician cities were important sites for the transmission of culture from east to west. The Greeks, who had long forgotten their older writing system of the Bronze Age, adopted a Phoenician version of the Canaanite alphabet that is the origin of our present alphabet.

1.5.2 The Israelites

The Israelites are mentioned only rarely in the records of their neighbors, so we must rely chiefly on their own account, the Hebrew Bible. This is not a history in our sense, but a complicated collection of historical narrative, pieces of wisdom, poetry, law, and religious witness. Scholars of an earlier time tended to discard it as a historical source, but the most recent trend is to take it seriously while using it with caution.

KEY EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE ISRAELITES

ca. 1000–961 B.C.E.	Reign of King David
ca. 961–922 B.C.E.	Reign of King Solomon
722 B.C.E.	Assyrian conquest of Israel (northern kingdom)
586 B.C.E.	Destruction of Jerusalem; fall of Judah (southern kingdom); Babylonian captivity
539 B.C.E.	Restoration of temple; return of exiles

According to tradition, the patriarch Abraham came from Ur and wandered west to tend his flocks in the land of the Canaanites. Some of his people settled there, and others wandered into Egypt. By the thirteenth century B.C.E., led by Moses, they had left Egypt and wandered in the desert until they reached and conquered Canaan. They established a united kingdom that reached its peak under David and Solomon in the tenth century B.C.E. The sons of Solomon could not maintain the unity of the kingdom, and it split into two parts: Israel in the north and Judah, with its capital at Jerusalem, in the south. (See Map 1–4.) The rise of the great empires brought disaster to the Israelites. The northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E., and its people—the **ten lost tribes**—were scattered and lost forever. Only the kingdom of Judah remained. It is from this time that we may call the Israelites Jews.

In 586 B.C.E., Judah was defeated by the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II. He destroyed the great temple built by Solomon and took thousands of hostages to Babylon. When the Persians defeated Babylonia, they ended this Babylonian captivity of the Jews and allowed them to return to their homeland. After that, the area of the old kingdom of the Jews in Palestine was dominated by foreign peoples for some 2,500 years, until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 C.E.

Map 1–4 ANCIENT PALESTINE

The Hebrews established a unified kingdom under Kings David and Solomon in the tenth century B.C.E. After Solomon, the kingdom was divided into Israel in the north and Judah, with its capital, Jerusalem, in the south. North of Israel were the great commercial cities of Phoenicia, Tyre, and Sidon.