

CHAPTER

2

The Fertile Crescent

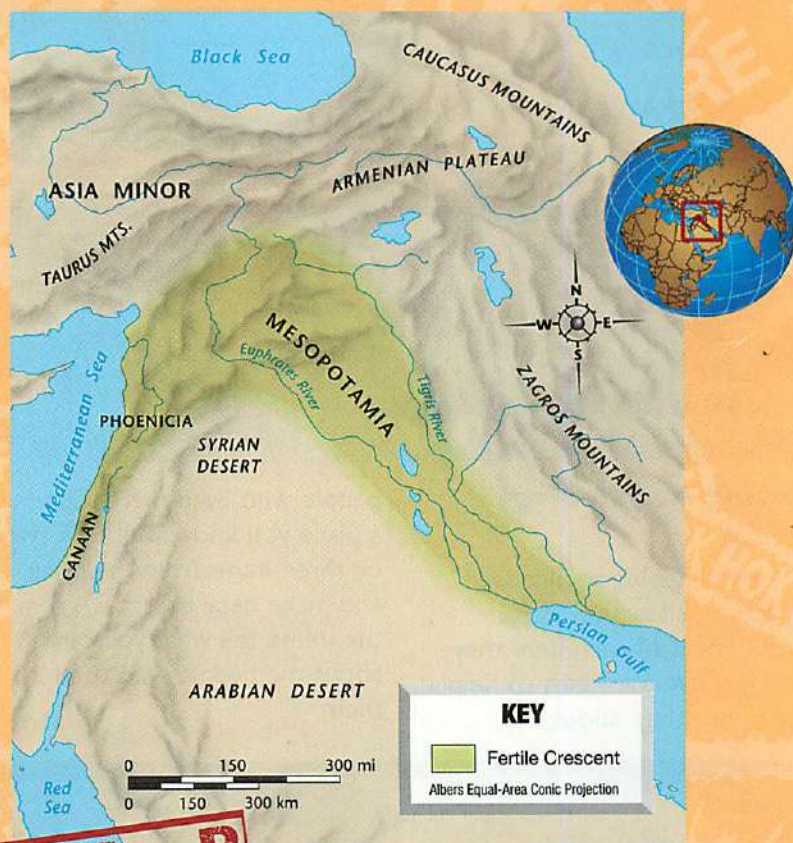
SECTION 1 Land Between Two Rivers

SECTION 2 Babylonia and Assyria

SECTION 3 The Legacy of Mesopotamia

SECTION 4 Mediterranean Civilizations

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MAP ACTIVITIES

The land that stretched in an arc from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf had many attractions to the people of the ancient world. Get to know this land by completing the following activities.

Build a city

If you were to build three cities in the region shown on the map, where would you locate them? What makes these locations good places to build a city?

Protect yourself against invaders

Which areas might attract invaders? Why? How could people living in these areas protect their cities from invaders?

Land Between Two Rivers

SECTION 1

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

What is the land like where you live? Is the area flat, hilly, or mountainous? Does it have any deserts, lakes, rivers, or

cities nearby? What in the geography of the area do you think attracted people to first settle in your community?

Questions to Explore

1. How did the geography of Mesopotamia make this a likely area for the rise of civilization?
2. What was it like to live in a Sumerian city?

Key Terms

scribe
city-state
polytheism
myth

Key Places

Sumer
Mesopotamia
Fertile Crescent
Tigris River
Euphrates River

“**M**y headmaster read my tablet and said: ‘There is something missing,’ and hit me with a cane . . . The fellow in charge of silence said: ‘Why did you talk without permission?’ and caned me.”

These words from the past come from a student at one of the world’s first schools. He told what happened to him when his homework was sloppy or when he spoke without permission. Punishment was severe.

The first known schools were set up in the land of Sumer (soo mur) over 4,000 years ago. Sumerian schools taught boys—and a few girls—the new invention of writing. Graduates of the schools became professional writers called **scribes**. Scribes were important people in Sumer because they were the only people in the land who could keep records for the kings and priests.

Learning to be a scribe was hard work. Boys normally began school at the age of 8 and didn’t finish until they were 20.

The Geographic Setting of the Fertile Crescent

As you can see on the map on the next page, Sumer was located in a region called Mesopotamia (meh suh pah TAY mee uh). Like the place where you live, ancient

▼ The language on this clay tablet—Sumerian—is the oldest known written language.



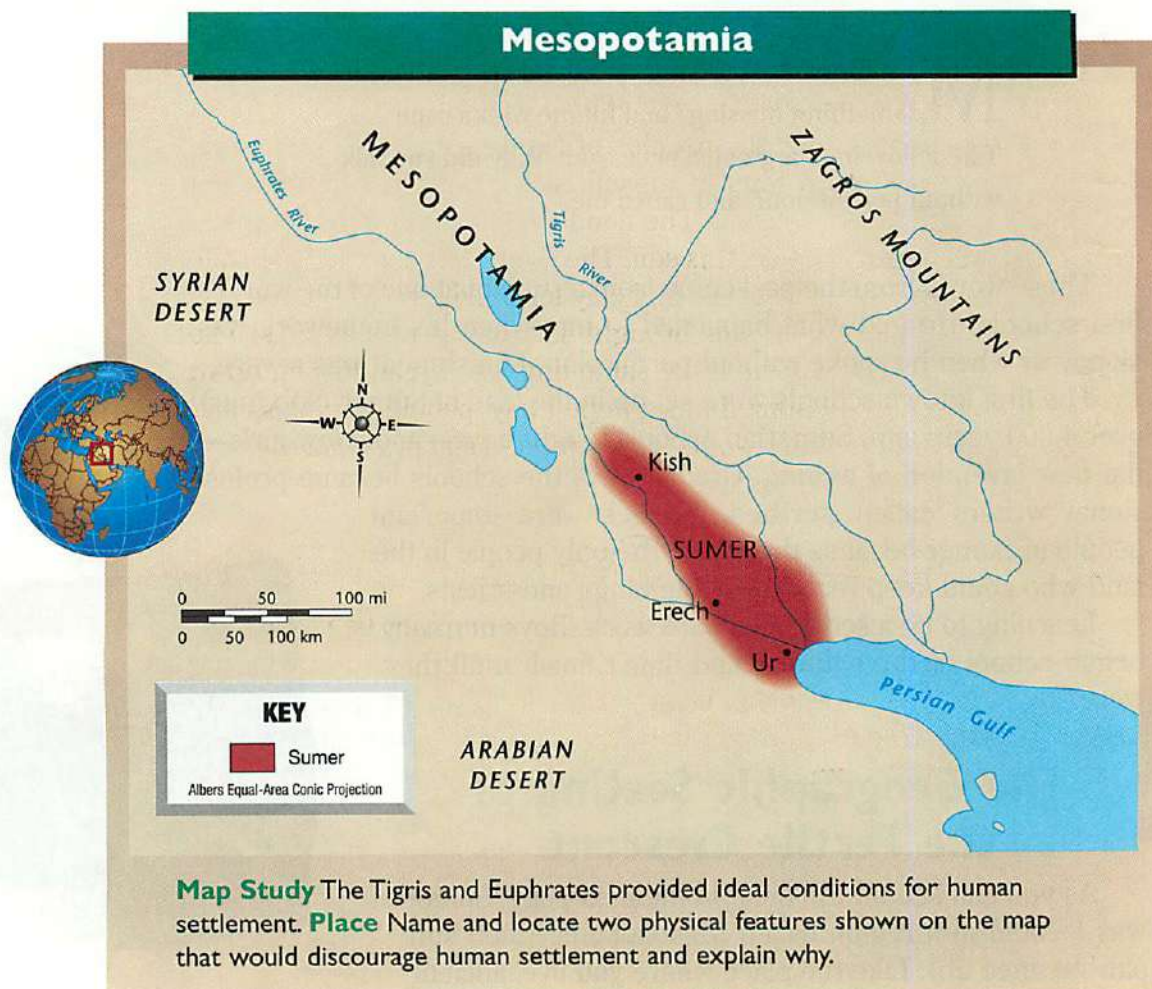


Predict What might be some advantages and disadvantages to living between two rivers?

Mesopotamia had special attractions that drew people to settle there. Most important to the people, it had rich soil and life-giving rivers. These attractions drew people who became farmers and city builders. Sumer's central location within the ancient world drew many traders. Sumer became one of the most prosperous areas of the ancient world.

The Location of Mesopotamia Mesopotamia's name describes its location. The word *Mesopotamia* comes from Greek words that mean *between the rivers*. The map below shows that Mesopotamia lies between two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates.

Mesopotamia is part of a larger area that is called the Fertile Crescent. The Fertile Crescent is shown on the map at the beginning of this chapter. To see how this region got its name, place your finger at the eastern edge of the Mediterranean (med uh tuh RAY nee un) Sea on the map. Move eastward from the Mediterranean coast to Mesopotamia. Then move south to the Persian Gulf. Notice that the region you've traced is shaped like a crescent moon. The rivers of this crescent-shaped region made it one of the best places in Southwest Asia for growing crops.



Where Two Rivers Meet

The Tigris and Euphrates meet in the southern part of modern Iraq. The land between the rivers continues to be good farmland. Iraqi farmers grow dates, barley, grapes, rice, and tomatoes in the Tigris-Euphrates valley.



Rivers of Life and Death The Tigris and Euphrates rivers were the source of life for the peoples of Mesopotamia. In the spring, melting snow picked up tons of topsoil as it rushed down from the mountains and flooded the land. The floods left this topsoil on the plain below. Farmers grew crops in this soil. The rivers also supplied fish; tall, strong reeds used to make boats; and clay for building.

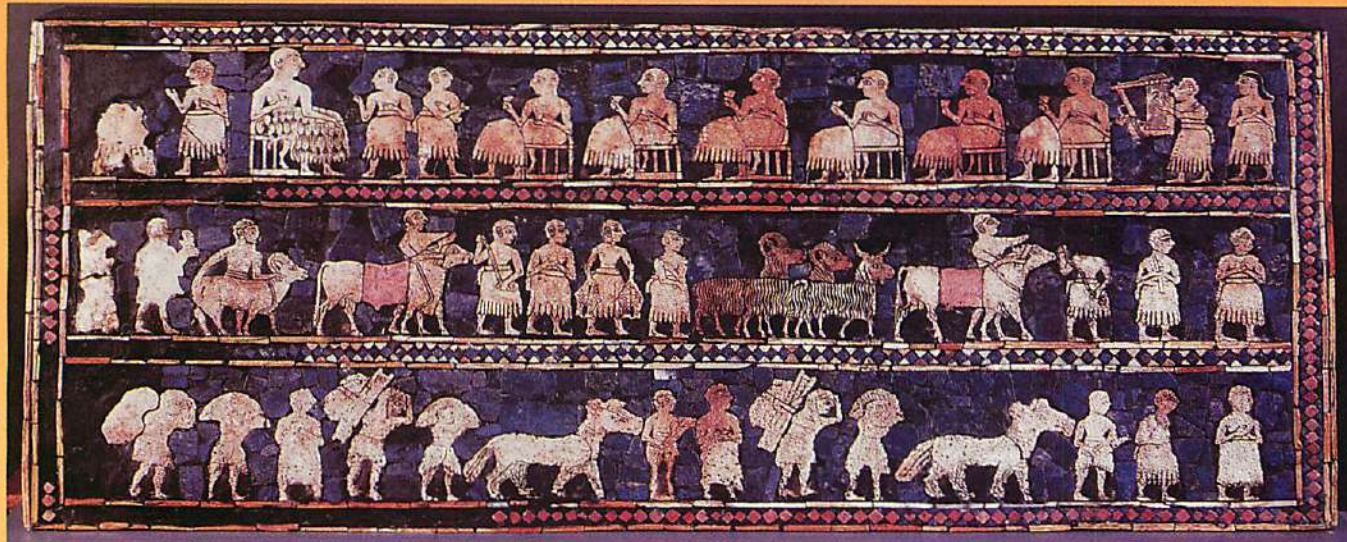
The flood waters sometimes brought sorrows as well as gifts. The floods did not always happen at the same time each year. Racing down without warning, they sometimes swept away people, animals, and houses. Then, the survivors would slowly rebuild and pray that the next flood would not be so destructive.

The First Cities

As farming succeeded in Mesopotamia, communities began to have surpluses of food. In time, food surpluses encouraged the building of cities. By 3500 B.C., Mesopotamia had a number of growing cities in the region of Sumer. People coming to these cities were probably amazed. They saw high walls, built to keep out invaders. They stared at the large temples, the houses, the busy shops, and the splendid royal palace. They may have envied the large farms of the nobles outside the walls.

Independent Cities Form As the map on the previous page shows, cities grew up at different points along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. These cities were separated by long distances, usually including

Peacetime in Sumer



Around 2500 B.C., artists from the Sumerian city-state of Ur created this record of peacetime activities. The reverse side documents a battle. **Critical Thinking** How do the activities shown in the three rows provide clues about jobs and social classes in Ur?



a desert. This made it difficult for Sumerians in different cities to unite under one ruler. Each city acted as a state with its own special god or goddess, its own government, and, eventually, its own king. That is why they are called **city-states**.

A Brief Tour of a Sumerian City Some of the earliest cities arose in the region of Sumer. If you visited a Sumerian city, you'd spend much time in traffic jams. The streets were so narrow that carts could not get through them. People had to press themselves against the buildings to let donkeys squeeze by.

Sumerian houses faced away from the crowded streets, onto inner courtyards where families ate and children played. On hot nights, people slept outdoors on their homes' flat roofs. Oil lamps supplied light for Sumerian homes. Clay pipes, buried deep in the ground, carried liquid wastes away. Inventions like plumbing would not come to most other parts of the world for thousands of years.

The public squares buzzed with activity. Merchants displayed goods in outdoor stalls, shouting out to passersby to admire their goods. The streets filled with musicians, acrobats, beggars, and water sellers. Scribes wrote letters for those who could not read or write—for a price.



Visualize What kinds of sights would you see and sounds would you hear on market day in a Sumerian city?

Sumerian Religion

A stranger coming to a Sumerian city *would first* notice a giant stone building at the center of the city. This was the ziggurat (ZIHG uh raht), the main temple to the gods of the city. Ziggurats were made of terraces,

one on top of the other, linked by ramps and stairs. Some were more than seven stories high. At the top of the ziggurat was a temple. The Sumerians believed that gods descended to the Earth using the ziggurat as a ladder.

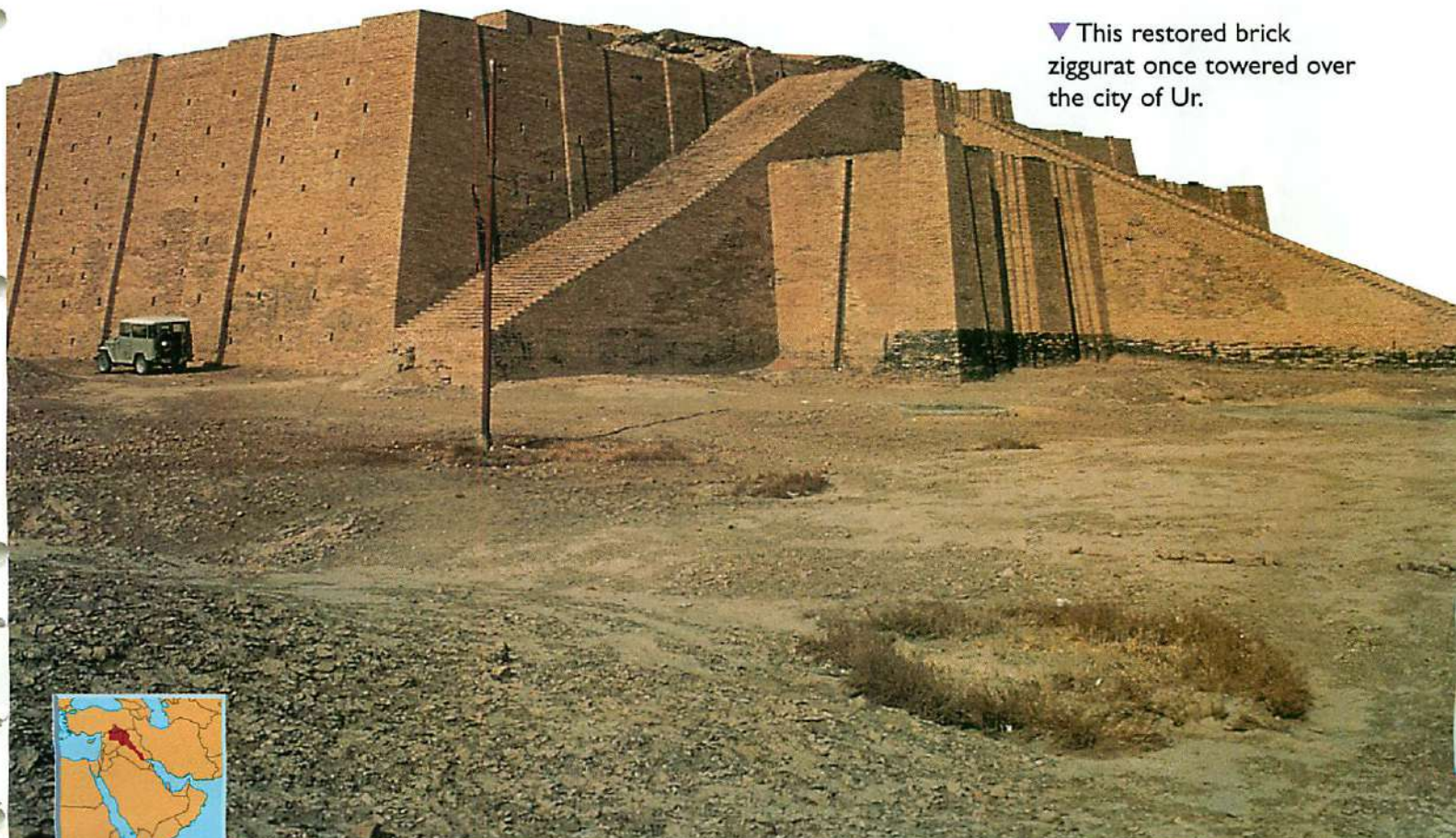
The people of Sumer worshipped not one, but many, gods and goddesses. This belief in many gods is called **polytheism**. To understand this word, break it up into its parts. *Poly*, a Greek word, means "many." *Theism* refers to gods.

Sumerian **myths**, or stories about gods that explain people's beliefs, warned that the gods would punish people who angered them. The myths also promised rewards to people who served the gods well. Sumerians made sure that their gods were properly cared for. Temple priests washed the statues of gods before and after each meal. Music sounded and incense burned as huge plates of food were laid before them. The god Anu was offered the following meal daily:

21 rams	7 ducks	3 cranes
60 birds	2 bulls	1 bullock
8 lambs	4 wild boars	3 duck eggs
3 ostrich eggs	29 bushels of	243 loaves of bread
2 vessels of milk	dates	



Ur—Then and Now The Sumerian city-state of Ur was destroyed by war in 2006 B.C. In 1991, war came again to Ur. During the Persian Gulf War, the armies of the United States and Iraq fought not far from the ruins of this ancient city. Fortunately, what's left of Ur has survived the latest battles.



▼ This restored brick ziggurat once towered over the city of Ur.

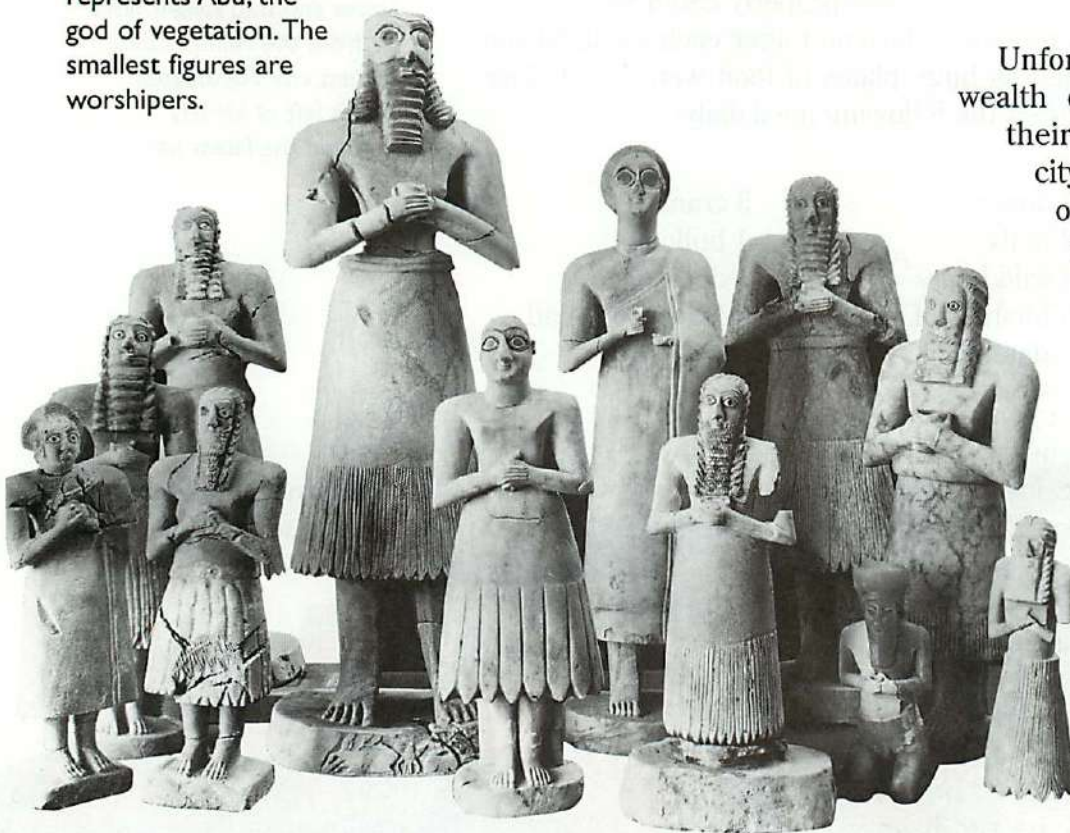


The religious beliefs of the Sumerians give us an idea of what was really important to them. Notice the love of the city expressed in this Sumerian poem.

▼ In this statue grouping of Sumerian gods and worshipers from about 2500 B.C., height indicates importance. The tallest figure represents Abu, the god of vegetation. The smallest figures are worshipers.

“Behold the bond of Heaven and Earth, the city.
Behold the kindly wall, the city,
its pure river,
its dock where the boats stand.
Behold . . . its well of good water.
Behold . . . its pure canal.”

Unfortunately for Sumer, the wealth of the city-states became their downfall. Sumerian city-states fought each other over land and, especially, the use of river water. Constant warfare weakened Sumer's rulers and exhausted its armies. Sumer was no longer a major power after 2000 B.C. It fell to a northern rival—Babylonia—in 1759 B.C.



SECTION 1 REVIEW

- 1. Define** (a) scribe, (b) city-state, (c) polytheism, (d) myth.
- 2. Identify** (a) Sumer, (b) Mesopotamia, (c) Fertile Crescent, (d) Tigris River, (e) Euphrates River.

- 3.** What geographic features helped civilizations develop in Mesopotamia?
- 4.** How did Mesopotamia become a center of trade?

Critical Thinking

- 5. Distinguishing Fact From Opinion** Write one fact about Sumerian religion. Write one opinion.

Activity

- 6. Writing to Learn** Pretend you are a student scribe in Sumer. Write a journal entry describing what you see on your walk to school.

Babylonia and Assyria



BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

Why do you think one country might decide to

invade another country? List two or three reasons.

Questions to Explore

1. Why did civilizations rise and fall in Mesopotamia?
2. What characteristics describe the Babylonian and Assyrian empires?

Key Terms

empire
caravan
bazaar

Key People and Places

Babylonia
Assyria
New Babylonian empire
Nebuchadnezzar II

King Sargon II of Assyria (uh SEER ee uh) must have scowled when he heard the news. The nearby kingdoms of Urartu and Zikirtu had joined forces against him. How dare they challenge the most powerful monarch in the world? In the summer of 714 B.C., Sargon set out to “muzzle the mouths” of his enemies.

The rebels were no match for the powerful Sargon. His armies quickly overcame the forces of Urartu and killed all who resisted. The Assyrians howled with laughter when they saw the king of Urartu fleeing on an old horse. Sargon let him go. He knew that the survivors would serve as a grim warning to others who might later be tempted to oppose the mighty Assyrians.

The Two Empires of Mesopotamia

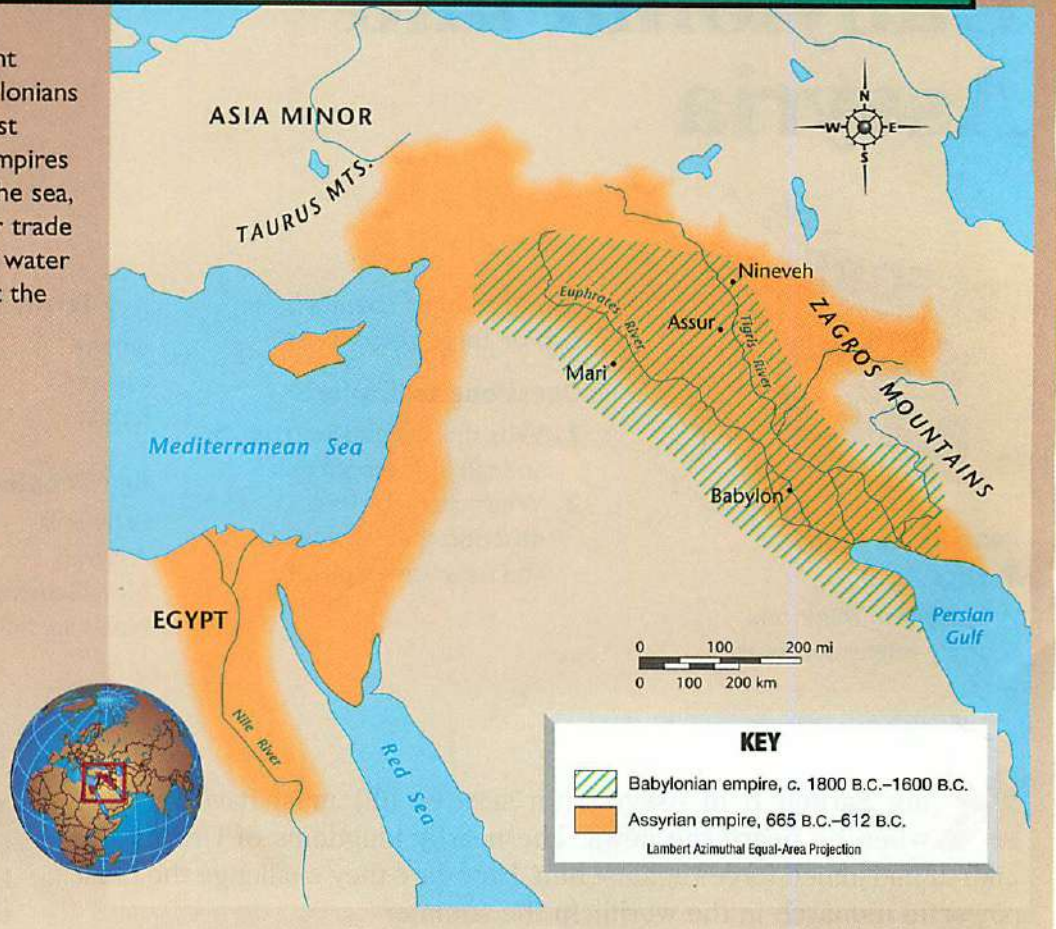
Sargon II was one of many kings who ruled Mesopotamia after the fall of Sumer. The history of Mesopotamia is filled with stories of conquest by one powerful warrior after another. This was a land worth taking. It brought great wealth to the army that could conquer it. But after winning it, each ruler became a target for another conqueror.

▼ This carving shows the powerful Assyrian warrior-king, Sargon II (left), and one of his officials.



Babylonian and Assyrian Empires

Map Study During different periods of history, the Babylonians and Assyrians controlled vast empires. **Place** Rulers of empires wanted to gain control of the sea, so they could increase their trade and wealth. What bodies of water did the Assyrians reach that the Babylonians did not?



Ask Questions What questions would you like to ask about the Babylonian empire?

The biggest and most important Mesopotamian civilizations were the empires of Babylonia (bab uh LOH nee uh) and Assyria. An **empire** is an area of many territories and people that are controlled by one government. The beautiful city of Babylon was the center of the Babylonian empire. This empire reached its height around 1750 B.C. The Assyrians, who got their name from the northern city of Assur, began expanding their lands in the 1300s B.C. By the 600s B.C., they controlled a huge empire. It stretched from the Persian Gulf across the Fertile Crescent and through Egypt.

The Babylonians and the Assyrians had two things in common. In their quest for riches, they were vicious warriors. And in the enjoyment of their riches, they built grand cities where culture and learning were highly valued.

The Babylonian Empire

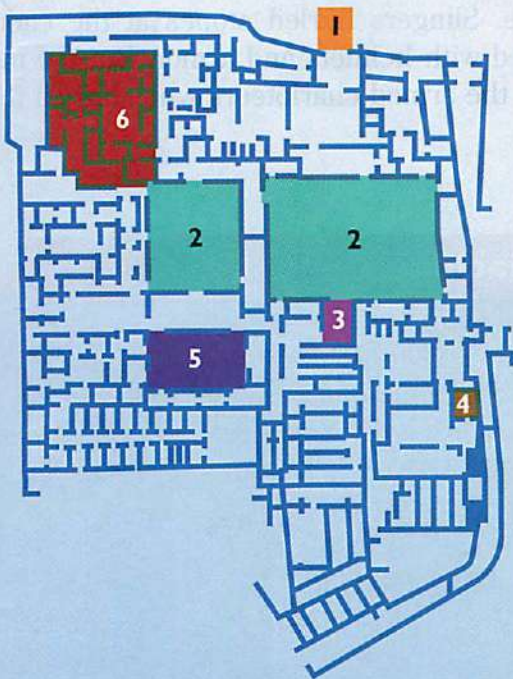
A Babylonian king named Hammurabi (hahm uh RAH bee) created the Babylonian empire by uniting the cities of Sumer. Then, he conquered lands all the way to Asia Minor, the present-day country of Turkey, as you can see on the map above.

A Crossroads of Trade Babylon's location made it a crossroads of trade. **Caravans**, or groups of travelers, coming and going from the cities of Sumer to the south and Akkad to the north, stopped in Babylon. In the city's **bazaars**, or markets, you could buy cotton cloth from India and spices from Egypt. Trade made Babylon rich. So did conquest.

Wealth Through Conquest A conqueror—if successful—reaped great rewards. In about 1760 B.C., Hammurabi conquered the city of Mari. He seized Mari's war chariots, weapons, and tools, which were the best in the world. But all the wealth that Babylon gathered could not save it from conquest. By about 1600 B.C., the empire first conquered by Hammurabi had shrunk and was finally destroyed.

Royal Palace Complex at Mari

Plan of the Palace at Mari



Key

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1 Entrance | 5 Throne Room |
| 2 Courtyards | 6 Courtyard and Royal Apartments |
| 3 Audience Hall | |
| 4 Royal Chapel | |

Hammurabi (below) completely destroyed Mari's 300-room royal palace. The design of the palace (left) included several courtyards. In the courtyard near the audience hall, the palace held public gatherings. The richly decorated throne room had a private courtyard. **Critical Thinking** Why do you think the Royal Chapel was smaller than the throne room?



LINKS TO LANGUAGE ARTS

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Several clay tablets discovered in the great library of Nineveh contained a long narrative poem, or epic. This epic told of the Sumerian hero-king Gilgamesh. It described his adventures and his search for eternal life. It is the oldest epic ever discovered.

The Empire of the Assyrians

North of Babylon was a small kingdom of a few walled cities known as Assyria. Its capital, Nineveh (NIHN uh vuh), was a sleepy village on the Tigris River. Assyria, as you can see on the map in this section, lay in an open land, which other peoples could easily invade.

Because they were constantly defending themselves, the Assyrians became skilled warriors. About 1365 B.C., they decided the best method of defense was to attack. By 650 B.C., Assyria had conquered a large empire. It stretched across the Fertile Crescent, from the Nile River to the Persian Gulf.

Assyria's Contributions The Assyrians were more than warriors. As Assyrian power grew, Nineveh became a city of great learning. Nineveh had a fabulous library that held thousands of clay tablets with writings from Sumer and Babylon. Because the Assyrians kept these records, we now know a great deal about life in early Mesopotamia.

Most of all, however, the Assyrians were geniuses at waging war. They invented the battering ram, a powerful weapon on wheels that pounded city walls to rubble. Slingers hurled stones at the enemy. Expert archers were protected with helmets and armor. But the most feared part of the army were the armed charioteers who slashed their way through the enemy.

The Assyrian War Machine

Historians have learned a great deal about Assyrian weapons and war tactics by studying Assyrian carvings. Here, a battering ram demolishes a wall while archers take aim. **Critical Thinking** What other weapons and equipment did the Assyrians use?



Assyria Overthrown The Assyrians had few friends in the lands that they ruled. Conquered peoples attempted a number of rebellions against Assyrian rule. Two groups, the Medes and Chaldeans (kal DEE uhns), joined together to smash the Assyrian empire in 612 B.C.

Babylonia Rises Again

Under the Chaldeans, Babylon rose again. It became the center of an even more splendid kingdom, known as the New Babylonian empire. Its greatest king was Nebuchadnezzar (nehb uh kuhd NEHZ uhr) II. Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt the city of Babylon, which the Assyrians had destroyed. He put up massive walls around the city for protection. He also built a gigantic palace, decorated with colored tiles. Carved on the tiles were plants, animals, birds, designs—and a boastful sentence by the king. “I am Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon,” it said.

Nebuchadnezzar’s royal palace was built on several terraces that rose to the height of some 350 feet (110 m). It had a dazzling landscape of trees and gardens. According to legend, he built the gardens for his wife, who came from the high plateau and hated the dry plains of Mesopotamia.

Under the Chaldeans, the New Babylonian empire became a center of learning and science. Chaldean astronomers charted the paths of the stars and measured the length of a year that was only a few minutes different from the length modern scientists have calculated. And Chaldean farmers raised “the flies which collect honey”—wild bees.

Like other Mesopotamian empires, the Chaldeans were open to attack by powerful neighbors. In 539 B.C., the New Babylonian empire fell. But the city of Babylon was spared.



▲ This clay tablet contains a map of the known world, which shows that the Babylonians were well aware of lands beyond their empire.

SECTION 2 REVIEW

1. Define (a) empire,
(b) caravan, (c) bazaar.

2. Identify

- (a) Babylonia, (b) Assyria,
(c) New Babylonian empire,
(d) Nebuchadnezzar II.

3. Why did civilizations rise and fall in Mesopotamia?

4. How did Babylon become rich?

5. What accomplishments is Assyria known for?

Critical Thinking

6. Cause and Effect How did Babylon’s location affect what happened to it?

Activity

7. Writing to Learn Write an epitaph, a statement carved on a tombstone, for Nebuchadnezzar.

The Legacy of Mesopotamia

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

What is your most prized accomplishment? Was it a sport or musical instrument

you mastered? A friend you made? A job you did? Why does this accomplishment mean so much to you?

Questions to Explore

1. Why was Hammurabi's Code a major step forward for humankind?
2. How did writing develop in Mesopotamia?

Key Terms

code
cuneiform

Key People

Hammurabi

▼ King Hammurabi stands before Shamash, the god of justice. According to Babylonian legend, Shamash presented the code of laws to Hammurabi.



“If a man has destroyed the eye of a man of the class of gentlemen, they shall destroy his eye. If he has broken a gentleman's bone, they shall break his bone. If he has destroyed the eye of a commoner or broken a bone of a commoner, he shall pay one mina of silver. If he has destroyed the eye of a gentleman's slave, or broken a bone of a gentleman's slave, he shall pay half [the slave's] price. If a gentleman's slave strikes the cheek of a gentleman, they shall cut off [the slave's] ear.”

—from *Hammurabi's Code*

Hammurabi's Code

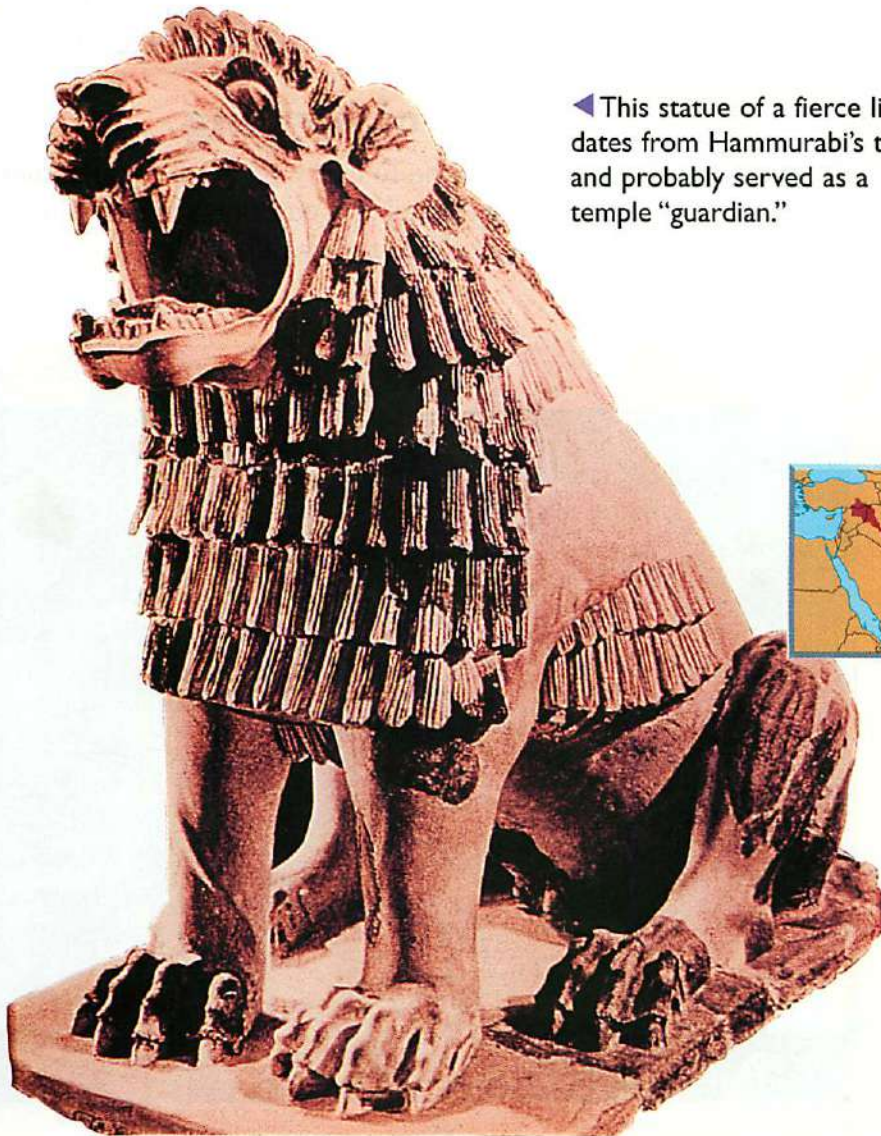
What kind of justice system do you think we would have if our laws were not written down? What if a judge was free to make any law he or she wanted? What if the judge could give any punishment? Would people think that laws were fair? A written **code**, or organized list, of laws helps make sure laws are applied fairly to all.

We owe the idea that all laws should be written down and applied fairly to the Babylonians. It was King Hammurabi who set down rules for everyone in his empire to follow. These rules are known as

Hammurabi's Code. The code told the people of Babylon how to settle conflicts in all areas of life.

Hammurabi's Code contained 282 laws organized in different categories. These included trade, labor, property, and family. The code had laws for adopting children, practicing medicine, hiring wagons or boats, and controlling dangerous animals.

An Eye for an Eye Hammurabi's Code was based on the idea of "an eye for an eye." In other words, a man who blinded another person would have his own eye put out. However, the code did not apply equally to all people. As the laws at the beginning of this section show, the code gave different punishments for breaking the same rules. The harshness of the punishment depended on how important the victim was. The higher the class of the victim, the stiffer the penalty. Thus, an ox owner would pay half a mina of silver if the ox gored a noble. If the victim was a slave, the owner would pay only one third of a mina.



◀ This statue of a fierce lion dates from Hammurabi's time and probably served as a temple "guardian."





Connect What other kinds of rules or codes of behavior do you know about? How do they compare in fairness to Hammurabi's Code?

A person who accidentally broke a rule was just as guilty as a criminal. Results were what mattered. People such as doctors, who could not control the outcome of their work, had to be very careful, as the following law shows:

"If a surgeon performed a major operation on a citizen with a bronze lancet [knife] and has caused the death of this citizen . . . his hand shall be cut off."

Laws for Everyone You probably know a lot of rules. There are rules for taking tests, playing ball, and just living in your home. People follow—or break—rules all the time. What, then, was the importance of Hammurabi's Code?

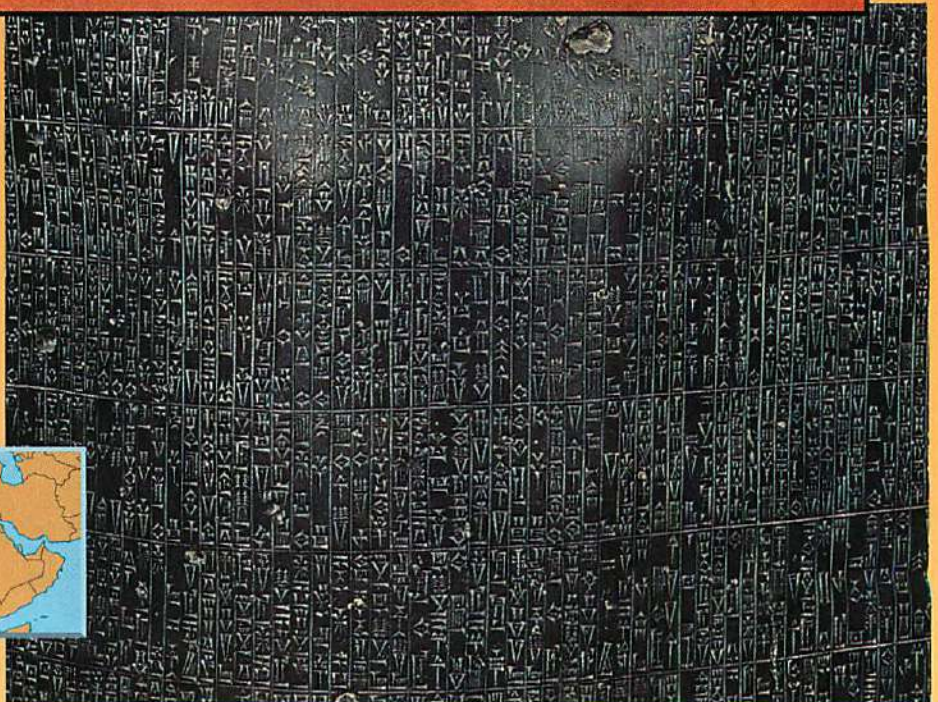
The laws are important to us because they were written down. With written laws, everyone could know the rules—and the punishments. These punishments may seem harsh to us. But they were the first attempt by a society to set up a code of laws that would apply to everyone.

The Art of Writing

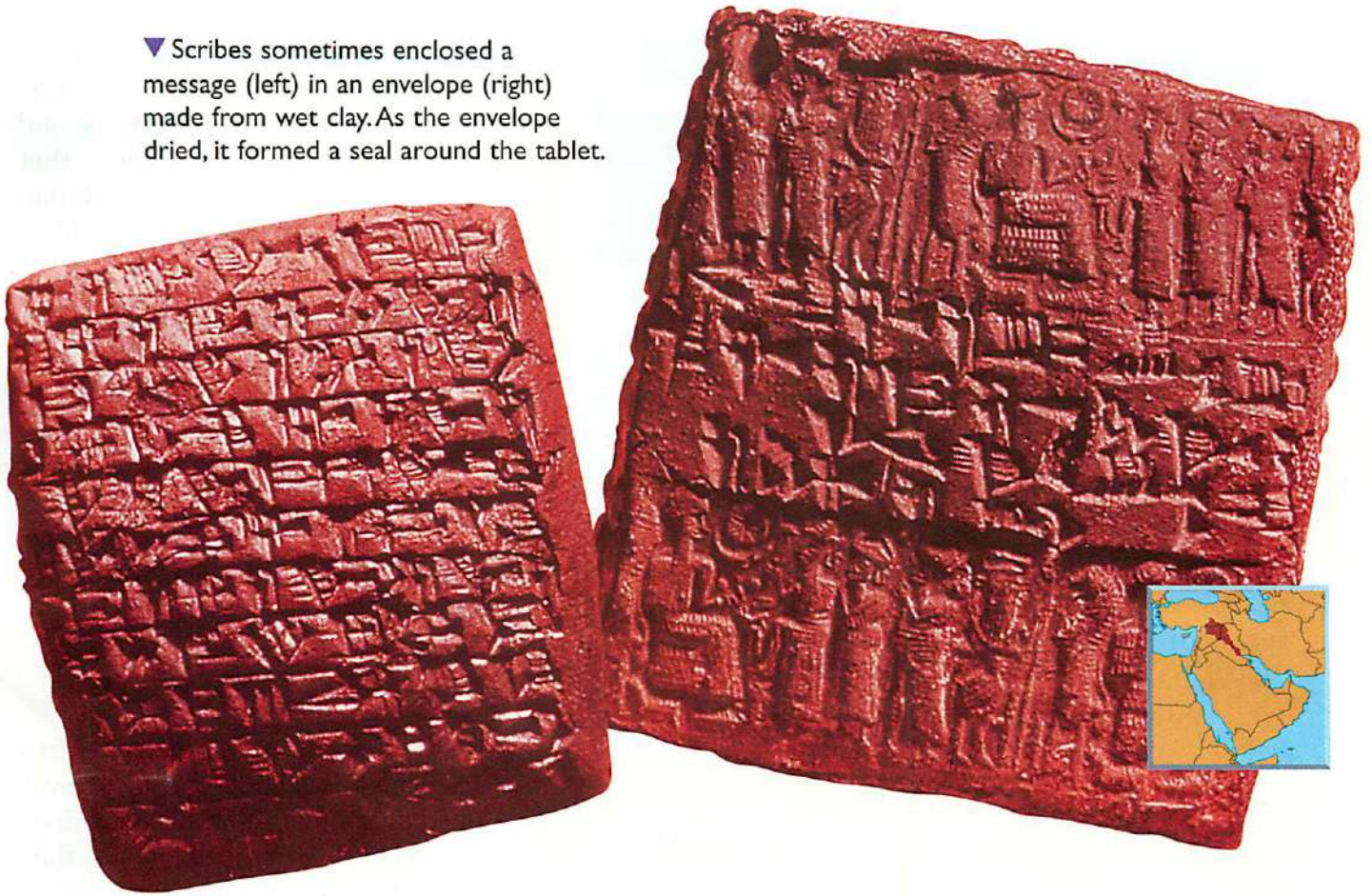
Think how difficult it would be to carry on life if no one knew how to read and write. But writing did not just naturally develop. For most of human life, people did not have the art of writing.

Laws Set in Stone

This shows a detail of a stone pillar that has Hammurabi's Code written on it. Many of the laws in Hammurabi's Code were based upon the laws of earlier Mesopotamian civilizations. Hammurabi's great achievement was organizing the laws and preserving them in written form.



▼ Scribes sometimes enclosed a message (left) in an envelope (right) made from wet clay. As the envelope dried, it formed a seal around the tablet.



Writing developed in Mesopotamia in about 3500 B.C. Long before Hammurabi issued his code, the people of Sumer developed a system of writing. Writing met the need of Sumerians to keep records. Record keepers were very important—and busy—people in Sumer. Since only a few people could write, it was one of the most valuable skills in the ancient world. Scribes held positions of great respect in Mesopotamia.

The scribes of Sumer recorded sales and trades, tax payments, gifts for the gods, and marriages and deaths. Some scribes had special tasks. Military scribes calculated the amount of food and supplies that an army would need. Government scribes figured out the number of diggers needed to build a canal. Written records then went out to local officials who had to provide these supplies or workers.

“Pages” of Hard Clay What did the scribes of Mesopotamia write on? The Tigris and Euphrates rivers provided a perfect material—clay. Each spring, the rivers brought down clay from the mountains. Scribes shaped the soft, wet clay into smooth, flat surfaces called tablets. They marked their letters in it with sharp tools. When the clay dried, it left an almost permanent record.

The shape and size of a tablet depended on its purpose. Larger tablets were used for reference. They stayed in one place, like the heavy atlases and dictionaries in today’s libraries. Smaller tablets, the size of



Babylonian Mathematics

The Babylonians developed a useful system of mathematics for solving everyday problems. For example, they learned to calculate areas of geometric shapes. Such calculations were important for making building plans. Their number system was based on numbers from 1 to 60. We still divide minutes and hours into units of 60.

The Development of Writing


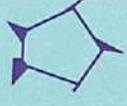






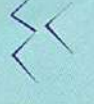



Meaning	Outline Character, About 3000 B.C.	Sumerian, About 2000 B.C.	Assyrian, About 700 B.C.	Chaldean, About 500 B.C.
Sun				
God or Heaven				
Mountain				

Table Study This table shows how writing based on pictures changed over time. These characters were used by civilizations in Southwest Asia for more than 3,000 years. The last clay tablets using them were written about 2,100 years ago. Then the languages of the tablets were forgotten. Scholars did not figure out how to read the tablets until the A.D. 1800s.

Critical Thinking How does this form of writing differ from your own?

letters or postcards, were used for personal messages. Even today, these personal tablets can be fun to read. They show that Mesopotamians used writing during the ups and downs of everyday life:

“This is really a fine way of behaving! The gardeners keep breaking into the date storehouse and taking dates. You yourselves cover it up and do not report it to me! Bring these men to me—after they have paid for the dates.”

From Pictures to Writing

Like most inventions, writing developed over time. At first, people drew pictures to represent what they wanted to say. Grain, oxen, water, stars—each important object had its own symbol.

As people learned to record ideas as well as facts, the symbols changed. Eventually, scribes combined symbols to make groups of wedges and

lines known as **cuneiform** (kyoo NEE uh form). Cuneiform script could be used to represent different languages. This made it highly useful in a land of many peoples.

SECTION 3 REVIEW

- Define** (a) code, (b) cuneiform.
- Identify** Hammurabi.
- Why was Hammurabi's Code important?

- Why was the development of writing a big step in human history?

Critical Thinking

- Drawing Conclusions** What skills would help a student scribe succeed?

Activity

- Writing to Learn** Reread the letter that complains about the gardeners. Write a law that relates to the gardeners who stole the dates. What should their punishment be? What should happen to the people who didn't tell about the theft?

Mediterranean Civilizations

SECTION 4

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

Just as people can chart the history of a civilization on a timeline, you can also chart your own personal history. What are some major events in the history of your family?

In what year did your family move to the home where you live now, for example? Make a time line that shows major events in your family history.

Questions to Explore

1. How did the Phoenicians help spread civilization throughout the Mediterranean area?
2. What were the major events in the history of the Israelites?

Key Terms

alphabet
monotheism
famine
exile

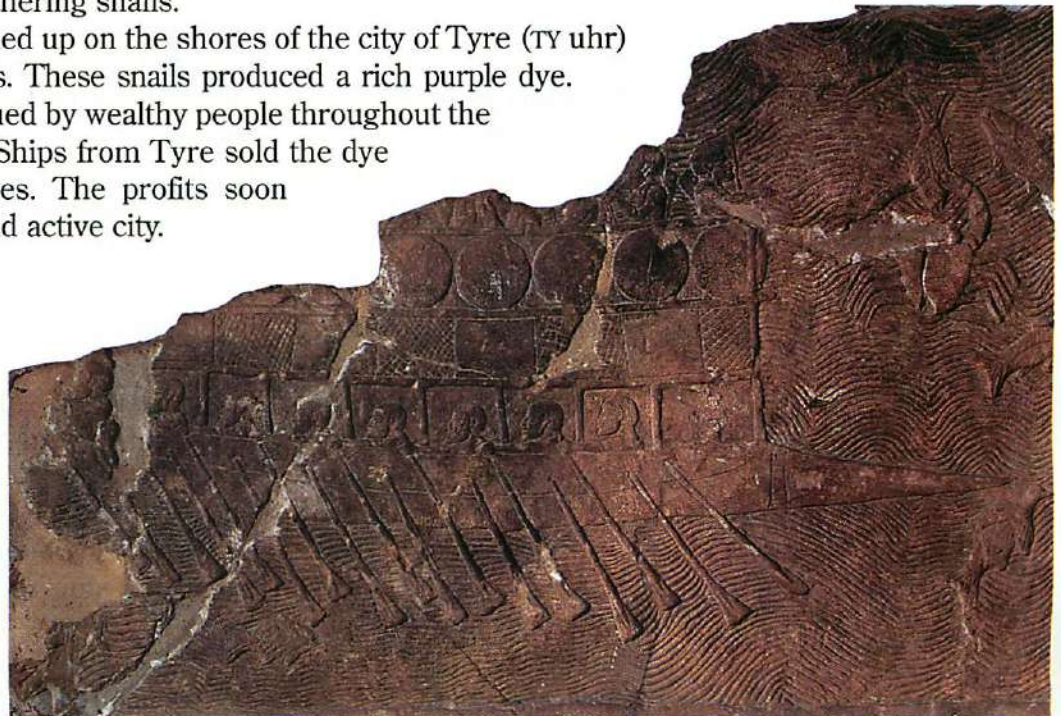
Key People and Places

Moses
Phoenicia
Canaan
Jerusalem
Israel
Judah

While the great empire of Hammurabi was rising and falling, the people of a poor city on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea were getting rich by gathering snails.

The snails that washed up on the shores of the city of Tyre (TY uhr) were not ordinary snails. These snails produced a rich purple dye. This dye was highly valued by wealthy people throughout the Mediterranean region. Ships from Tyre sold the dye at extremely high prices. The profits soon made Tyre a wealthy and active city.

► The Phoenicians left few details about the appearance of their ships. An Assyrian artist made this carving.



Phoenician Colonies and Trade Routes



Map Study Although the Phoenicians were expert sailors, they usually sailed close to the coast and did not venture far into the unfamiliar waters of the rough, open sea. **Location** Which Phoenician trading center was farthest west?

The Phoenicians: Sailors of the Mediterranean

Tyre was the major city in a region called Phoenicia (fuh NEE shuh), shown on the map. The Phoenicians' outlook was not eastward, toward Mesopotamia. Rather, the Phoenicians looked westward, toward the Mediterranean Sea and the cities that were growing up around it.

The Phoenicians had settled in a land that had few, but important, resources. Besides the snails, there were dense forests of cedar trees. Phoenicians sold these resources to neighboring peoples.

As trade grew, the Phoenicians looked to the sea to increase their profits. In time, they became the world's first trading empire. From about 1100 B.C. to 800 B.C., Phoenicia was a great sea power. Phoenician ships sailed all over the Mediterranean Sea. They even sailed out into the stormy Atlantic Ocean. They came back from these trips with stories of horrible monsters who lived in the ocean depths. Did the Phoenicians really believe these stories? Nobody knows for sure. But the stories did help keep other people from trying to compete for trade in the Atlantic.

Trade brought rich goods from lands around the Mediterranean Sea to the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon (sy duhn). Bazaars swelled with foods brought from faraway places. These foods included figs, olives, honey, and spices. In the bazaars, merchants sold strange animals, such as giraffes and warthogs from Africa and bears from Europe.



Ask Questions What kinds of questions might you ask about the different and unusual lands that Phoenician sailors visited on their trading voyages?

Travelers throughout the Mediterranean area were awed by the grand ships and the overflowing markets of Tyre. This little poem was written by one ancient traveler who visited Tyre's bazaars:

“When your wares came from the seas,
you satisfied many peoples.
With your great wealth and merchandise,
you enriched the kings of the earth.”



Predict What would be some results of an easier, simpler system of writing?

The Phoenician Alphabet: One Sound, One Letter

Because they had so much trade, the Phoenicians needed to simplify writing. Cuneiform, with its hundreds of symbols, was just too complicated.

The Phoenicians found a way to write using just 22 symbols. This was the Phoenician **alphabet**, a set of symbols that represented the sounds of the language. It forms the basis of the alphabet that people in the United States and many other countries use today. Each of the 22 letters in the Phoenician alphabet stood for one consonant sound.

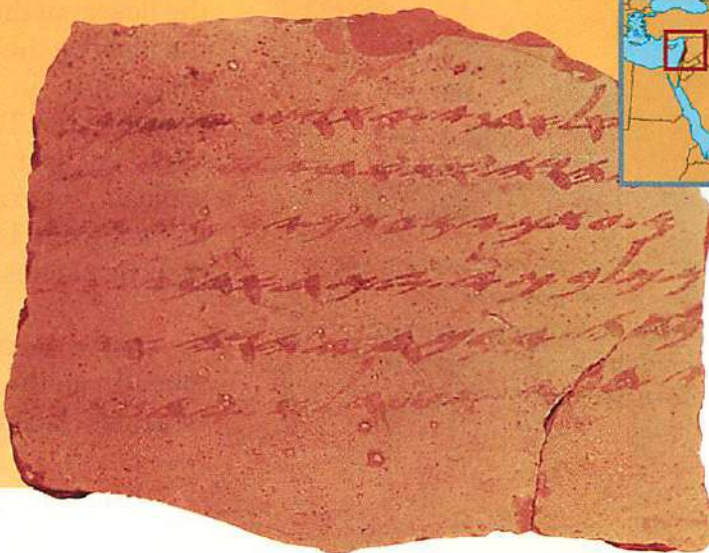
The simple Phoenician alphabet was far easier to learn than cuneiform. Before the alphabet, highly educated scribes controlled the power of writing. With the alphabet, many more people could learn.

The Phoenician Alphabet

The Phoenician Alphabet

A	𐤀	N	𐤒
B	𐤁	O	𐤓
C	𐤂	P	𐤔
D	𐤃	Q	𐤕
E	𐤄	R	𐤖
F	𐤅	S	𐤗
G	𐤆	T	𐤘
H	𐤇	U	𐤙
I	𐤈	V	𐤚
J	𐤉	W	𐤛
K	𐤊	X	𐤜
L	𐤋	Y	𐤝
M	𐤌	Z	𐤞

Chart Study The chart (left) shows the Phoenician letters that correspond to our alphabet. The tablet (below) is an example of cursive Phoenician writing.
Critical Thinking Use of the Phoenician alphabet spread throughout the Mediterranean. How do you think this occurred?



LINKS TO LANGUAGE ARTS

The Exodus The name given to the Israelites' escape from Egypt is the Exodus. It comes from an ancient Greek word meaning "going out." Scholars think the Exodus happened in the early 1200s B.C.

The Rise of the Israelites

South of Phoenicia, a small band of people settled along the shores of the Mediterranean. They were called the Israelites. Although the Israelites never built a large empire, they made a deep impact on our civilization.

The Israelites traced their beginnings to Mesopotamia. For hundreds of years, they lived as shepherds and merchants who grazed their flocks outside Sumerian cities.

According to the Bible, a leader named Abraham led his people to a belief in one God. This practice is called **monotheism**. *Mono* is the Greek word for "one." *Theism*, as you know, refers to *gods*. The Bible explains that God promised Abraham that his people would have their own land if they would follow his word:

"Get you out of your country, and from your kindred [relatives], and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation."

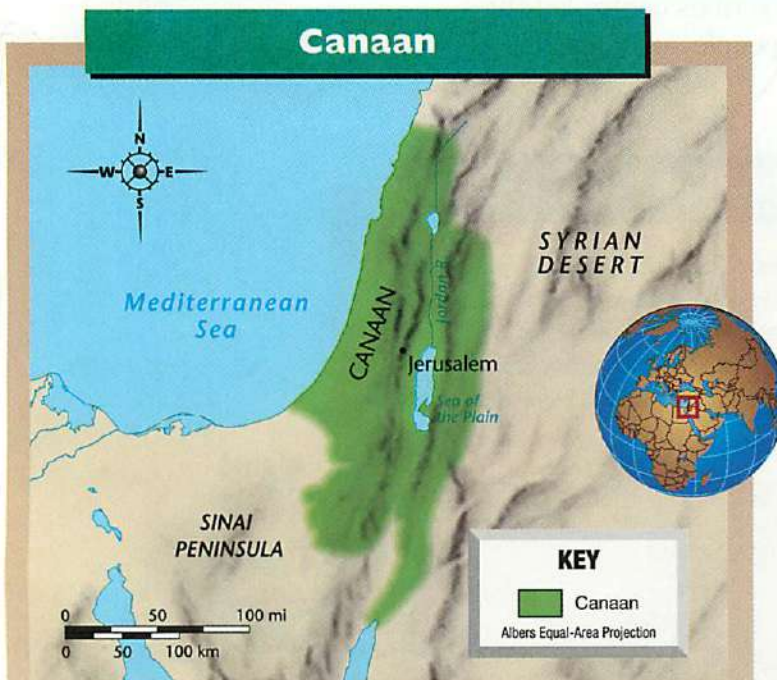
The Bible goes on to explain how, around 1900 B.C., Abraham led the Israelites from Mesopotamia to a new home in Canaan (KAY nuhn). Find Canaan on the map. Around 1800 B.C., a famine spread across Canaan.

A **famine** is a time when there is so little food that many people starve. The famine caused the Israelites to flee south to Egypt.

In Egypt, the Israelites lived well for about 600 years. Many of them reached high positions in the government. Later, they were enslaved when an Egyptian king grew jealous of their wealth and suspicious of their power.

Return to Canaan The Bible tells how an Israelite hero named Moses led his enslaved people out of Egypt. For the next 40 years, the Israelites wandered through the desert of the Sinai (sy ny) Peninsula. Find the Sinai on the map to the left. The Bible says that while in the desert, God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments, a code of laws. At last, the Israelites returned to Canaan. There, over time, the Israelites moved from herding to farming and built their own cities.

Conquest of Canaan As they moved further north into Canaan, the Israelites faced opposition. Slowly, through



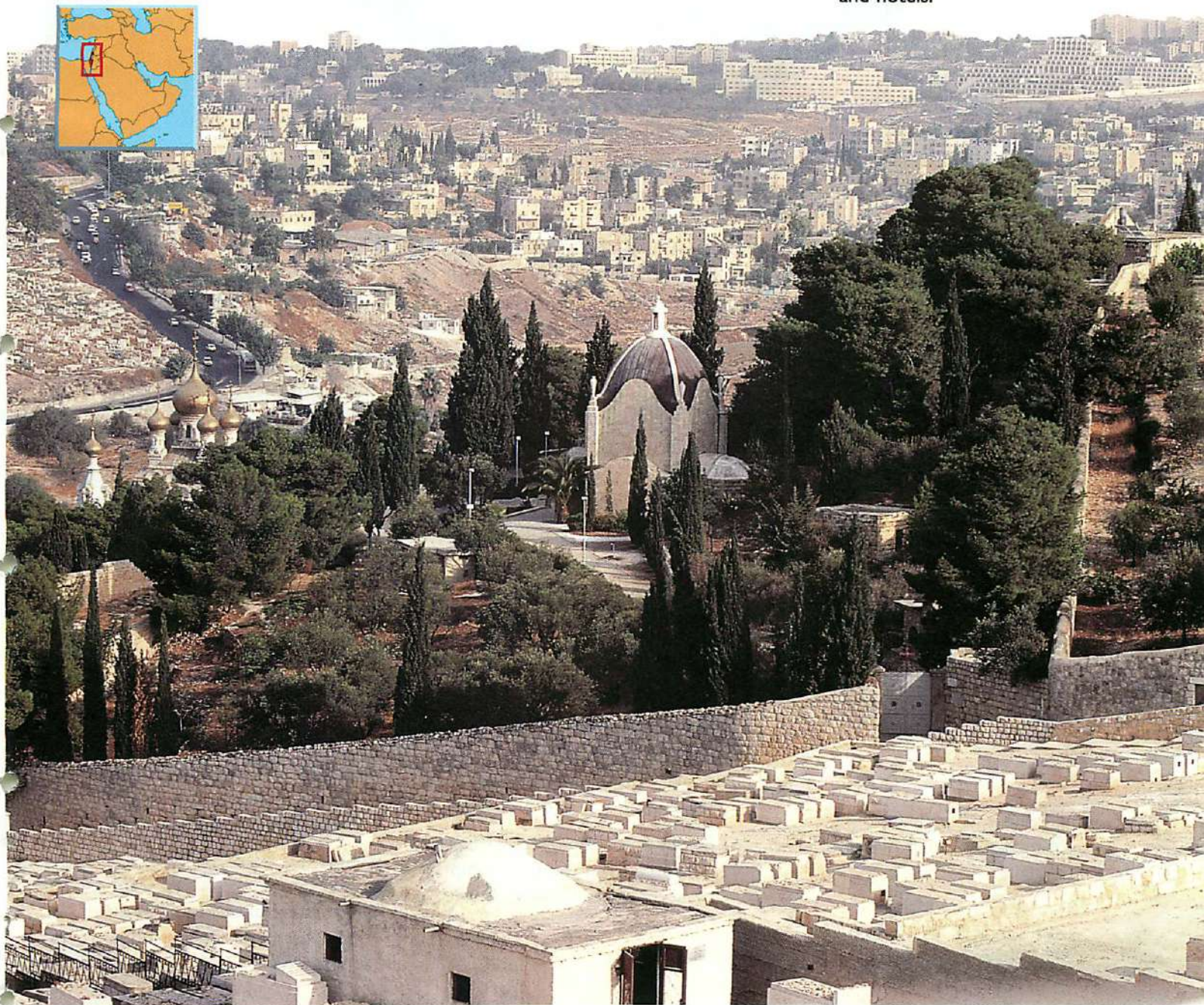
Map Study Canaan's location between two deserts made trade over land difficult. Since Canaan bordered the Mediterranean Sea, the Israelites developed a sea trade.

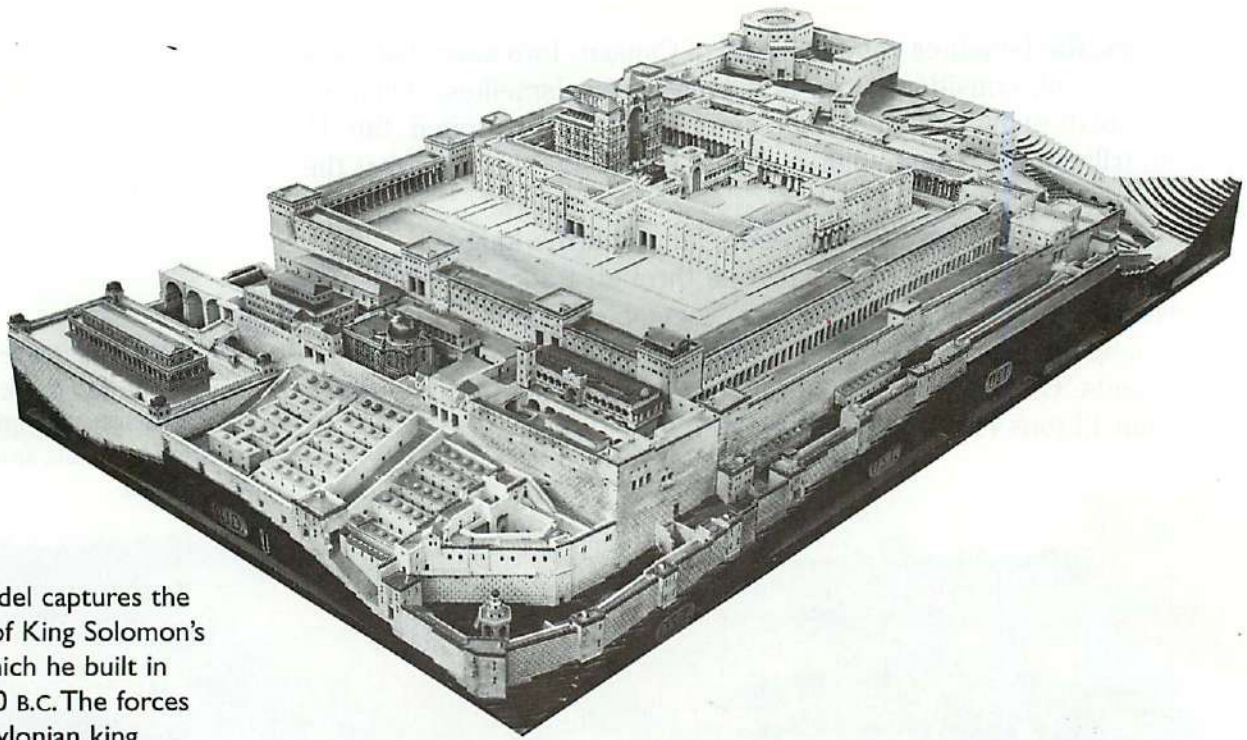
Location In what direction did the Israelites travel to return to Canaan from the Sinai Peninsula?

fierce wars, the Israelites conquered all of Canaan. Two kings led them to victory. Saul, considered the first king of the Israelites, defended them against many enemies. The next king, David, united the 12 Israelite tribes into a single nation. David established his capital at the city of Jerusalem.

After David died, his son, Solomon, inherited the kingdom. Under Solomon's rule, Israel grew prosperous through trade. The Israelites sold palm and olive oils, honey, fruits, vegetables, and grain to neighboring peoples. King Solomon also developed a sea trade with neighboring lands. On the very first voyage, an Israelite ship brought back more than 13 tons (11.8 metric tons) of gold.

▼ People have lived in Jerusalem since 1800 B.C. Today, centuries-old buildings stand not far from modern hospitals, apartments, and hotels.





► This model captures the grandeur of King Solomon's temple, which he built in about 1000 B.C. The forces of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar completely destroyed the temple in 586 B.C.

Solomon transformed the city of Jerusalem into a magnificent capital. His most prized monument was a beautiful temple in the center of Jerusalem. It became the central place of worship for the Israelites.

Solomon's building projects were very expensive, however. The country faced hard times, and after his death, it split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom was called Israel. The southern kingdom took the name Judah. The divided kingdom was ripe for invasion, and its dangerous neighbor, Assyria, was gaining power.

In 722 B.C., the Assyrians seized the kingdom of Israel. They punished the Israelites by exiling thousands to distant parts of their empire. To **exile** people means to force them to live in another country. About 135 years later, the kingdom of Judah fell to the Chaldeans. The Judeans were exiled as well.

SECTION 4 REVIEW

1. **Define** (a) alphabet, (b) monotheism, (c) famine, (d) exile.
2. **Identify** (a) Moses, (b) Phoenicia, (c) Canaan, (d) Jerusalem, (e) Israel, (f) Judah.

3. What impact did the Phoenicians have on the Mediterranean world?
4. Explain the importance of Phoenician writing.
5. Briefly trace the history of the Israelites from the leadership of Abraham to King Solomon.

Critical Thinking

6. Identifying Central Issues

What important events in the history of the Israelites were shaped by movement and by war?

Activity

7. **Writing to Learn** Look at the poem about Tyre. Write one humorous verse about Tyre's markets.

Judaism

SECTION 5

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

Have you ever spent time away from home? If so, what

did you do to stay in contact with family and friends?

Questions to Explore

1. How were Israelite religious beliefs unique in the ancient world?
2. What values did the Israelites have?

Key Terms

covenant
prophet
diaspora

Key People

Abraham
Deborah

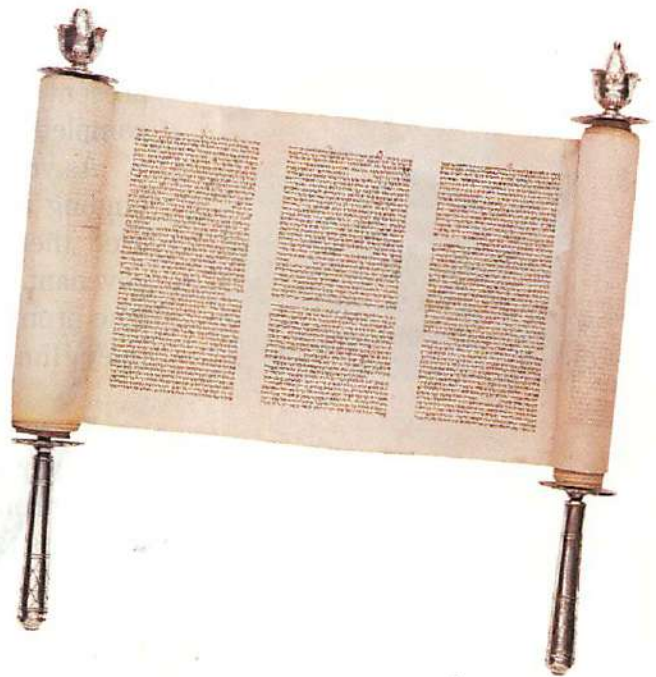
The Bible records a promise made by God to the Israelite leader Abraham:

I will give you many descendants, and some of them will be kings. You will have so many descendants that they will become nations. . . . I will keep my promise to you and your descendants in future generations as an everlasting covenant. I will be your God and the God of your descendants.”

This was the promise of a special relationship with God. It helped shape the history of the people of Israel from ancient times to the present.

The Israelites were among many peoples who lived in the Fertile Crescent. They came into contact with many other people and ideas. Over time, the Israelites developed their own ideas. These ideas reflected a blend of many traditions.

The early Israelites came to believe that God was taking part in their history. They recorded events and laws in their most sacred text, the Torah. The Torah is made up of five books. They are called Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The promise that you just read is from the Book of Genesis. Later, Christians adopted these books as the first five books of the Old Testament.



▲ All Jewish synagogues have a copy of the Torah, like the one above. The Torah's sacred text is handwritten on a parchment scroll.

Major Ancient Civilizations of the Fertile Crescent

2500 B.C.	2000 B.C.	1500 B.C.	1000 B.C.	500 B.C.
Sumer 3500 B.C.–1800 B.C. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. 3500 B.C. Sumerians develop writing. c. 2100–2000 B.C. Ziggurat of Ur built. 	Babylonia 1800 B.C.–1600 B.C. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. 1792–1750 B.C. Hammurabi rules and produces code. c. 1760 B.C. Hammurabi conquers Mari. 	Israel 2000 B.C.–587 B.C. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. 1800 B.C. Famine drives Israelites to Egypt. c. 1250 B.C. Moses leads Israelites back to Canaan. c. 1000–962 B.C. King David rules. 722 B.C. Israel falls to Assyria. 587 B.C. Judah falls to Chaldeans. 	Assyria 1365 B.C.–612 B.C. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 714 B.C. Sargon II conquers Urartu. c. 665–612 B.C. Assyrian empire 	New Babylonia (Chaldeans) 612 B.C.–539 B.C. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 605–562 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar rules. 587 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar captures Jerusalem.

A Covenant With God

To the Israelites, history and religion were closely joined. Each event showed God's plan for the Israelite people. In time, Israelite beliefs changed into the religion we know today as Judaism. You already know that Judaism was monotheistic from its beginning. It also differed in other ways from the beliefs of nearby peoples.

Most ancient people thought of their gods as being connected to certain places or people. The Israelites, however, believed that God was present everywhere. They believed that God knew everything and had complete power.

As you read, Israelites believed that God had made a **covenant**, or binding agreement, with Abraham. For this reason, Israelites considered themselves to be God's "chosen people." Moses renewed this covenant. He told the Israelites that God would lead them to Canaan, "the promised land." In return for God doing this, the Israelites had to obey Him faithfully.

The Ten Commandments At the heart of Judaism are the Ten Commandments. These are laws that Israelites believed God gave them through Moses. Some set out religious duties toward God. Others are rules for moral behavior toward other people. Here are four.

"I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. . . . You shall have no other gods beside Me. . . . Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded. . . . You shall not murder. You shall not steal."



Ask Questions What would you like to know about the Israelites' covenant with God?

In addition to the Ten Commandments, the Torah set out many other laws. Some had to do with everyday matters, such as how food should be prepared. Others had to do with crimes. Like Hammurabi's Code, many of the Israelites' laws demanded an eye for an eye. At the same time, preachers called on leaders to carry out the laws with justice and mercy.

Some laws protected women. The Ten Commandments, for example, make respect for mothers a basic law. But, as in many other religions, women were of lower status than men. A man who was head of a family owned his wife and children. A father could sell his daughters into marriage. Only a husband could seek a divorce.

Early in Israelite history, a few women leaders, such as the judge Deborah, won honor and respect. Later on, women were not allowed to take part in many religious ceremonies.

▼► Several ancient scrolls, concealed in jars like the one on the right, were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. Named the Dead Sea Scrolls, these manuscripts helped historians reconstruct the early history of the Israelites.



Justice and Morality Often in the history of the Israelites, **prophets**, or religious leaders, appeared. They told the Israelites what God wanted them to do. The prophets warned the people not to disobey God's law. Disobedience would bring disaster.

Prophets preached a strong code of moral behavior. They urged the Israelites to lead moral lives. They also called on the rich and powerful to protect the poor and weak. All people, the prophets said, were equal before God. In many ancient societies, the ruler was seen as a god. To the Israelites, however, their leaders were human. Kings had to obey God's law just the way shepherds and merchants did.



The Diaspora Because of the Diaspora, there were Jewish communities as far west as Spain and as far east as India. The first Jewish settlers in the Americas arrived in Brazil in the 1500s.

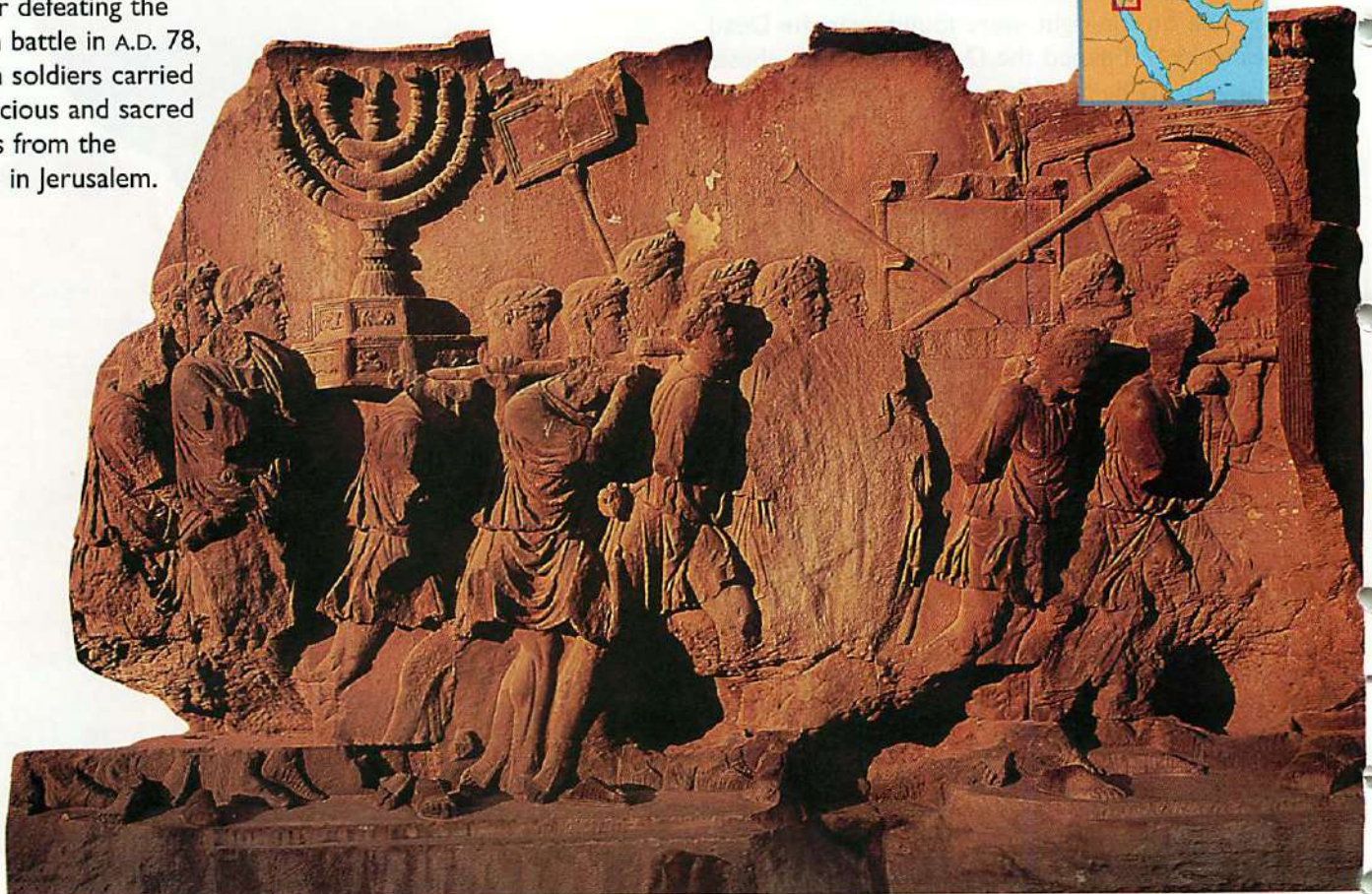
Looking Ahead

In A.D. 135, the Romans added to the **diaspora** (dy AS puh-r uh), or scattering of people, begun by the Assyrians and Chaldeans. After a rebellion, the Romans drove the Israelites out of their homeland. As a result, Israelites scattered to different parts of the world.

Wherever they settled, the Jews, as they had come to be called, preserved their heritage. They did so by living together in close communities. They took care to obey their religious laws and follow their traditions. These traditions set Jews apart. Yet, they also helped the Jews survive harsh treatment by others.



► After defeating the Jews in battle in A.D. 78, Roman soldiers carried off precious and sacred objects from the temple in Jerusalem.



Jewish Settlements in the Roman Empire, A.D. 100-300



Map Study By A.D. 300, Jews had settled in every part of the Roman Empire except Britain. **Movement** What role do you think the Mediterranean Sea played in the Diaspora?

Judaism is one of the world's major religions because of its special religious ideas. It also had an important influence on two later religions, Christianity and Islam. Both of those faiths came from the same geographical area. Both were monotheistic. Jews, Christians, and followers of Islam all honor Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. They also share the same moral point of view that the Israelites first developed.

SECTION 5 REVIEW

- 1. Define** (a) covenant, (b) prophet, (c) diaspora.
- 2. Identify** (a) Abraham, (b) Deborah.
- 3. How** were the Israelites' religious beliefs different from those of other peoples in the ancient world?

- 4. What** values of the Israelites are shown in the Ten Commandments and the covenant?

Critical Thinking

5. Drawing Conclusions

Why did the Israelites believe that they were God's chosen people?

Activity

6. Writing to Learn

Suppose you have a friend who wants to learn more about Judaism. Write him or her a letter explaining the special relationship that Israelites felt they had with God.

SKILLS ACTIVITY

Identifying Central Issues

That movie was sure confusing," Bob commented to his friend Juan as they left the theater. "I really had trouble figuring out what it was all about."

"Well, it had some great action, though," Juan answered. "What a neat adventure! Those people really had to go through a lot to find that treasure."

Juan's comment gave Bob an idea. "Maybe that was the point of the movie," he said. "Maybe the whole idea was just to show the great adventures they had while they tried to find the lost treasure."

Get Ready

Juan and Bob got the idea. You can, too. To understand anything you read or see, you need to identify the main idea, or the central issue.

Try It Out

Try identifying central issues by reading the following paragraph. Think about its main idea. Then complete the steps that follow.

◀ A scene from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The adventure of finding lost treasure was a central issue of this movie.

