

>> The ancient Egyptians believed in many gods and goddesses, each of whom had a role in maintaining peace and prosperity across Egypt.

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Around 3300 B.C., Sumer, the world's first civilization, arose in southeastern Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia lay within the Fertile Crescent, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The region's geography affected its people. Frequent flooding forced Sumerians to work together to protect homes and control water for irrigating farms. Although the region had rich soil, it lacked natural resources. Yet, Sumerians built some of the world's first great cities using bricks from readily available clay and water. Sumerians also became traders along the rivers.

>> Objectives

Understand how geography influenced the development of civilization in the Fertile Crescent.

Understand how conquests brought new empires and ideas into the Middle East.

Outline the main events in the early history of the Israelites and the central moral and ethical ideas of Judaism.

Describe the ways in which religion shaped the lives of ancient Egyptians and outline the advances Egyptians made in learning, the arts, science, and literature.

>> Key Terms

Fertile Crescent
Mesopotamia
The Epic of Gilgamesh
Hammurabi
alphabet
monotheistic
Torah
Abraham
Moses
David
Solomon
Diaspora
hieroglyphics
Rosetta Stone
mummification
Amon-Re pharaoh

The Ancient Middle East and Egypt

A Civilization Emerges in Sumer

Eventually, Sumer had 12 city-states, which often battled over control of land and water. So people turned to war leaders for protection. Over time, this changed when war leadership evolved into hereditary monarchy, in which a king or queen exercises central power.

Sumerian Civilization Develops Sumerian society had a social rank, or hierarchy, including an upper class (rulers, priests, officials), a small middle class (lesser priests, scribes, merchants, artisans), and a vast lower class (peasant farmers). Like most ancient peoples, Sumerians practiced polytheism, the worship of many gods. In ziggurats, stepped platforms topped by a temple, priests led religious ceremonies.

Perhaps the Sumerians' greatest achievement was the invention of writing. Beginning as simple pictographs, by 3200 B.C. writing had developed into wedge-like symbols, called cuneiform. Cuneiform could be used to record complex information. People now had access to knowledge beyond what they could remember. Eventually, conquering Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian armies swept across the region.

Sumer's Legacy However, Sumerians left a lasting legacy. Besides creating a writing system, they developed basic astronomy and early mathematics. They created a number system based on six, setting up 60-minute hours and 360-degree circles. We still use this system today. Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians carried Sumerian learning across the Middle East. They adopted cuneiform for their own use. Babylonians recorded the Sumerian oral poem, **The Epic of Gilgamesh**, in cuneiform, thus preserving it. They also expanded on Sumerian learning to develop basic algebra and geometry, to create accurate calendars, and to predict eclipses. Later, the Greeks and Romans built on Sumerian knowledge; then they went on to influence all of Western civilization.

? IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS How did geography influence the development of civilizations in the Fertile Crescent?

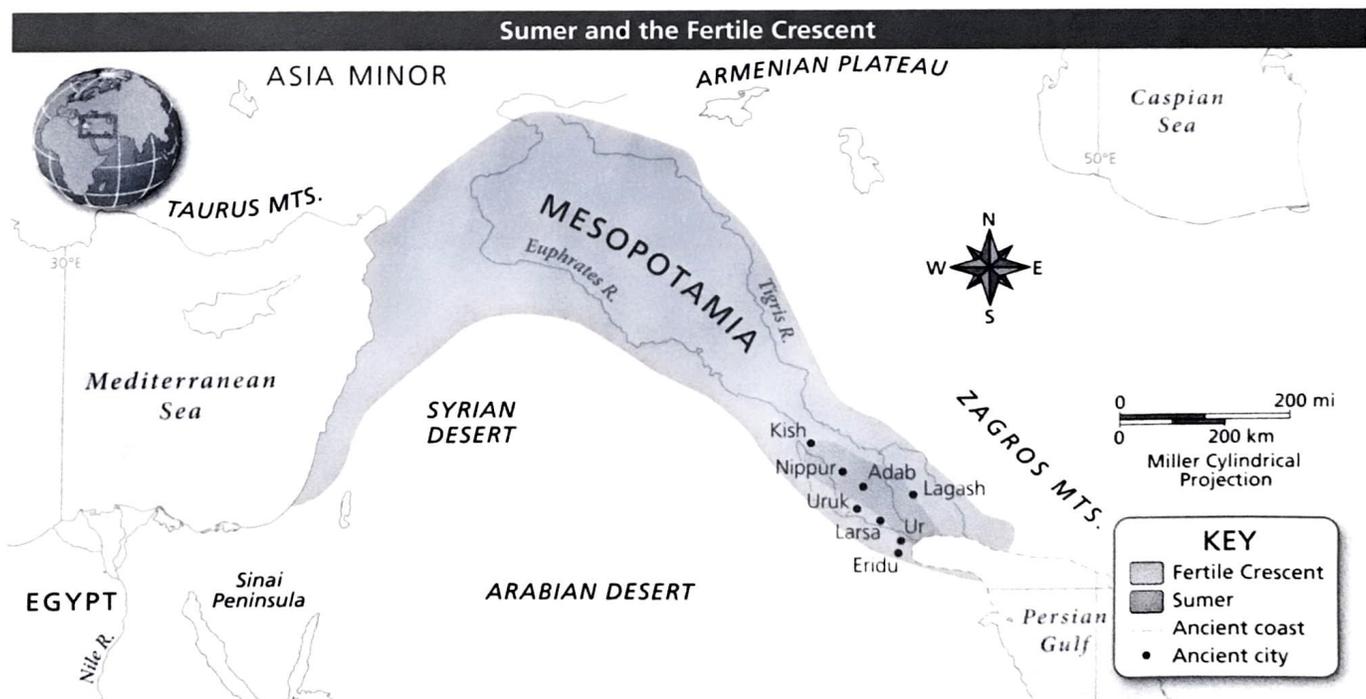
Empires of Mesopotamia

Many groups rose to power in ancient Mesopotamia and made long-lasting cultural contributions. Some invaders simply destroyed; others created vast empires. The first invader, in 2300 B.C., was the Akkadian leader,

Sargon. He conquered Sumer and formed the world's first empire. In 1790 B.C., **Hammurabi**, king of Babylon, unified Mesopotamia. He made the first important attempt to codify, or arrange and record, all laws of a state. Hammurabi's Code was carved on public pillars for all to see. It included civil laws, which covered private matters, like contracts, taxes, marriage, and divorce, and criminal laws, which covered offenses against others, like robbery and murder.

Empires Rise and Fall Other conquerors brought new learning to Mesopotamia. Hittites extracted iron from ore to forge strong weapons. Although their empire collapsed around 1200 B.C., ironsmithing spread to Asia, Africa, and Europe, launching the Iron Age. Next, Assyrians, though warlike, created a well-ordered society and founded one of the world's first libraries.

Later, the ruthless Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar controlled the region. He rebuilt and restored the city of Babylon to greatness. His empire eventually stretched from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. However, it fell to Persia in 539 B.C. The Persian empire was enormous. It reached from present-day Turkey to India. Emperor Darius I formed provinces ruled by local governors and a bureaucracy, or system of government through departments and subdivisions administered by officials who follow set rules.



>> Analyze Maps A series of early civilizations arose between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, called Mesopotamia. What natural features may have limited the expansion of these civilizations?

Interactive Map

He also encouraged unity by building roads across the empire and establishing a single Persian coinage. This helped people move from a barter economy toward a money economy. Another unifying force came from the Persian prophet Zoroaster, who taught belief in a single god and ideas of heaven, hell, and final judgment day. When both Christianity and Islam emerged, or arose, in the Middle East, these new religions stressed similar beliefs.

Phoenician Contributions Not all achievements came from conquerors, however. The Phoenicians were skilled sea traders from the eastern Mediterranean coast. They formed colonies around the Mediterranean. A colony is a settlement ruled by people from another land. The Phoenicians spread Middle Eastern culture over a large area. However, perhaps their greatest achievement was the creation of an **alphabet**. The Greeks expanded on this letter system, leading to the alphabet we use today.

IDENTIFY Name a significant contribution made by the Hittites, Assyrians, and Babylonians after each group's conquest in the Middle East.

The Hebrews and the Origins of Judaism

About 4,000 years ago, the ancient Israelites developed the religion of Judaism, which became a defining feature of their culture. Today, Judaism is one of the world's major faiths. Unlike neighboring peoples, the Israelites, also called the Hebrews for the first three generations, were **monotheistic**, believing that there was only one god. They believed every event reflected God's plan for the people of Israel. The **Torah**, their most sacred text, or the Israelites, or Jews, tells the history of the ancient Israelites and their continuing relationship with God. The Torah includes the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

Abraham and Moses According to the Torah, about 2000 B.C., **Abraham** and his family migrated to a region called Canaan. Abraham is considered the father of the Israelites. The Israelites believed that God made a covenant, or promise and agreement, with Abraham. This covenant promised a special relationship with God and a homeland in Canaan, which they viewed as their "promised land." However, because of the Israelites' relationship with Egypt, where they became slaves. Much later, **Moses** led their exodus, or departure, from Egypt back to Canaan.

Persian Empire, about 500 B.C.



Analyze Maps Study the locations of the Persian capitals. Were they well placed for rule over the entire empire?

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments helped shape American laws and people's ideas about right and wrong.	
COMMANDMENT	EXPLANATION
1 st "Thou shalt not have strange gods before me."	to recognize God as the one and only God
2 nd "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."	to speak the truth; seen today in legal oaths
3 rd "Remember that you keep Holy the Sabbath Day."	to dedicate one day to worship
4 th "Honor thy father and thy mother..."	to respect and love one's parents
5 th "Thou shalt not kill."	to avoid killing others; seen today in laws about murder
6 th "Thou shalt not commit adultery."	to ensure faithfulness to one's spouse; seen today in divorce laws
7 th "Thou shalt not steal."	to prevent taking another person's belongings
8 th "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."	to prevent lying; seen today by laws against testifying falsely in a court of law
9 th "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods."	to prevent wanting other people's possessions
10 th "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife."	to help ensure that families are not broken up

>> Over time, the ideas in the Ten Commandments have influenced aspects of some modern legal and political systems.

 **Interactive Gallery**

There, they set up the kingdom of Israel by 1000 B.C. The Torah tells of twelve separate tribes of Israel that were not united before this time. Saul, the first king of Israel, united these tribes into a single nation. The second king, **David**, established Jerusalem as its national capital and led successful military campaigns creating secure borders for Israel. Then, David's son **Solomon** undertook the task of turning Jerusalem into an impressive capital city. He completed a massive temple and tried to increase Israel's influence in the region. However, after his death, the kingdom split and eventually fell to the Assyrians and Babylonians.

Jewish Law and Ethics Like other early civilizations, Israelite society was patriarchal, meaning that men held the greatest legal and moral authority. Also from early times, law was central to Judaism. The Torah contains laws on such subjects as cleanliness, food preparation, and crime. Also in the Torah is a special set of laws called the Ten Commandments, a set of laws that Jews believe God gave to them through Moses. These laws stress moral conduct and religious duty, such as keeping the Sabbath, a holy day of rest and worship. Often in Jewish history, prophets, or spiritual leaders, arose. They urged social justice and taught strong codes of ethics, or moral standards of behavior.

During a 500-year period called the **Diaspora**, the Jews left or were exiled from Israel, and they spread out

around the world. Still, they maintained their identity in close-knit communities, following religious laws and traditions. This helped them to survive centuries of persecution.

Judaism's Legacy Today, Judaism is numbered among the world's major religions for its contributions to religious thought as well as its strong influence on Christianity and Islam, two other monotheistic faiths that also arose in the Middle East. Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike honor Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, and they all teach the ethical worldview developed by the Israelites. Today, in the West, this shared heritage of Jews and Christians is known as the Judeo-Christian tradition.

2 IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS According to the Torah, where did the Israelites go once they left Egypt? What was special to them about their destination?

Egyptian Civilization

Fertile land along the Nile brought early peoples to Egypt, and over time, a powerful Egyptian civilization arose. Farming flourished in the rich soil deposits from annual river floods. People cooperated to build dikes,

reservoirs, and irrigation ditches to channel the floods and store water for the dry season.

Two Regions United Egypt was made up of two regions. Upper Egypt began at the Nile's first cataract, or waterfall, in the south. Lower Egypt covered the Nile's delta, the triangular marshland where it emptied into the Mediterranean. According to classical tradition, about 3100 B.C. King Menes united both regions. Though leadership passed from one dynasty, or ruling family, to another, Egypt generally remained united.

During the Old Kingdom, **pharaohs**, or Egyptian kings, organized a strong central government and established a bureaucracy, with different jobs and authority levels. A vizier, or chief minister, was the pharaoh's chief of government business.

The Middle Kingdom saw unpredictable flooding and rebellion, but also growth in farmland and trade. Powerful Egyptian leaders ushered in an age of expansion in the New Kingdom. One of these leaders was Hatshepsut, the first female pharaoh. Her stepson, Thutmose III, a great military leader, stretched Egypt's borders to their greatest extent. Much later, Ramses II pushed north into Syria.

Egyptian Culture Ancient Egyptians made lasting contributions to civilization in many fields. Their religion, written language, art, science, and literature have fascinated people for thousands of years.

During the Old Kingdom, the chief god was the sun god, Re. By the Middle Kingdom, Egyptians called the supreme god **Amon-Re**. Most Egyptians related to the god Osiris, who ruled the dead. They also worshipped the goddess Isis, who promised life after death.

People believed the afterlife was much like life on Earth, so they buried people's possessions with them. The Egyptians also learned to preserve bodies by **mummification**, or embalming and wrapping in cloth, so that the soul could return to the body. During the Old Kingdom, they buried the bodies of their dead rulers in majestic pyramids.

Ancient Egyptians made advances in learning. Their first writing system, **hieroglyphics**, used symbols. Symbols were originally carved in stone. They also developed material to write on, made from papyrus plants.

Egyptian civilization eventually declined, yet its written records survived. No one understood them until the early 1800s, when a French scholar, Jean Champollion, deciphered, or figured out meanings for, the carvings on the **Rosetta Stone**.

BUILDING THE **PYRAMIDS**

THE GREAT PYRAMID OF KHUFU

HEIGHT
481 FT.

TOTAL WEIGHT
6 MILLION TONS

AREA OF EACH SIDE
5+ ACRES

AREA OF BASE
~13.6 ACRES

TYPE OF STONE MOSTLY **LIMESTONE** AND SOME **GRANITE**

DISTANCE FROM LIMESTONE QUARRY TO GREAT PYRAMID
500 YARDS

NUMBER OF CUT STONES USED 2.3 MILLION

AVERAGE WEIGHT OF CUT STONES USED 2.5 TONS
WEIGHT OF LARGEST CUT STONE 40 TONS

LENGTH OF CONSTRUCTION 20 TO 30 YEARS
CONSTRUCTION STARTED 2584 B.C.

SIZE OF WORKFORCE 20,000 TO 30,000 WORKERS

TYPES OF WORKERS CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, CARPENTERS, WATER CARRIERS, TOOLMAKERS, POTTERS, OVERSEERS, SCRIBES, COOKS, BAKERS, BUTCHERS, PHYSICIANS, PRIESTS

Sources: Encyclopedia Britannica Online; National Geographic Online; NOVA Online; Tim McNeese, The Pyramids of Giza

>> Analyze Data Pharaohs spent a great deal of resources and time building pyramids. Based on the information here, why do you think Giza pyramids built after Khufu's were not as large as his?

Egyptians also made advances in medicine, astronomy, and mathematics. Egyptian artwork and literature has endured for thousands of years.

? DRAW CONCLUSIONS How did mummification reflect Egyptian beliefs about the afterlife?

ASSESSMENT

1. **Describe** What are some Sumerian inventions and advances in learning that influenced the development of later civilizations?

2. **Synthesize** How did the geography of the Fertile Crescent affect the development of civilizations there?
3. **Compare** How did conquests contribute to the growth of well-organized empires?
4. **Support Ideas with Examples** Name two events from Jewish history that reflect the Israelites' belief that God had a plan for the people of Israel.
5. **Describe** Describe some of the main achievements of the ancient Egyptians.