

Teachers notes for the Premium TimeMaps Unit

The Ancient Middle East

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Introduction

The Premium TimeMaps unit The Ancient Middle East, 3500 to 500 BCE, is a sequence of maps showing the history of the most important region of the ancient world.

The sequence can be clicked through to gain a panoramic view of this area of world history.

Aims

The unit's aim is to quickly and clearly show the main episodes in that history, as well as the key developments in the civilizations of the ancient Sumerians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Nubians, Hittites, Phoenicians and Assyrians. It ends with the rise of the huge Persian empire.

One specific strand which runs through the maps (at least from 2000 BCE onwards) is the story of the Israelites, starting with Abraham's journey from Ur to the Promised Land. The aim here is not to go into great detail, but to enable students to see this history in its broader context within the Ancient Middle East.

On completing this unit, students should have a rounded overview of Middle Eastern history in this period. For example, they should have an awareness that:

- The twin pillars of the Ancient Middle East were the civilizations of Ancient Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt;
- These civilizations had strong similarities (most notably, their irrigation-based economies), but also great differences (for example one was a unified kingdom from the outset, the other initially a collection of city-states);
- Civilization spread out from these centres as a result of the growing trade routes of the region, and other civilizations appeared - the Elamites, Hittites, Phoenicians, Kushites and of course the Israelites;
- In political terms Israel was a minor player, making it all the more remarkable that it had such a huge impact on world history;
- The end of the Bronze Age and start of the Iron Age was a major turning point, a time of great upheaval but also of great advance.

How to use the Timemap

This Timemap is a supplementary resource that can be slotted in whenever the teacher thinks fit. It is ideal for use, either as an introduction to this era of world history, or as a "wrap up".

The unit can be used as

1. a whole-class presentation, and/or
2. the basis for student-based activities.

For more, see below.

Section 1: Whole-class presentation

Using a projector/whiteboard system, you can show the map sequence to your class, talking through each map.

To help you do this, we have prepared accompanying Presentation Notes, which you can use as a script or an *aide-memoire*.

This activity can be used as a stand-alone exercise; as an introduction to this period of world history; or as a wrap up/reinforcement exercise.

For each map, these notes mostly follow the same formula:

1. Date and introduction

The date to which the map refers, followed by a small introductory paragraph which seeks to encapsulate in a sentence or two what's going on in the map. These are in **bold**.

2. Bullet points

One or more bullet points, giving very brief points of interest in the map, or in the period it covers.

3. Additional notes

These give more in-depth support to the bullet points.

Much of the information they contain may be superfluous to your needs, especially if you are covering the topic quickly. However, we have included it so that it is there for you if you want it. We suggest that, prior to using the Presentation with your class, you go through these additional notes and highlight any you wish to use.

Some key words or phrases are in **bold**. They are there to help you see at a glance the main points in a paragraph.

The Presentation commentary notes are followed by a short **quiz**.

A suggestion:

To keep your students more engaged (and, by the way, if your students are not engaged or benefitting from these maps, then let us know and we'll refund your money!), why not start each new map with a question: *How is this map different from the previous one?*

Another question for some maps might be, *What happens next, do you think?*

Presentation Notes

If using these in class it might be helpful to print these notes out.

3500 BCE

Note that in the map, the orange shaded area denotes the area covered by the Sumerian civilization.

Another point to note (which sounds obvious but may be worth making) is that the cities shown are by no means the only ones - there were many more. These are just the most important ones (or perhaps simply the ones which show the most impressive archaeological remains, or otherwise show up most clearly in the historical record).

The first civilization in world history is appearing in the Middle East.

- On the flood plains of **Mesopotamia**, irrigation farming supports a large population and the earliest civilization in world history, that of the **Sumerians**, is appearing (note 1).
- In the **Nile Valley**, there is a second area of **irrigation**-supported farming (note 2).

Additional Notes:

1. Mesopotamia

The word **Mesopotamia** means “land between the rivers” in Greek. Here, on the flood plains of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, a growing network of **irrigation** systems has developed over many centuries. This has made the soil very fertile. As a result, a large and concentrated population has grown up here.

This is most true of the southern Mesopotamian plain. Here, irrigation has allowed a **surplus** of food to be grown, which supports social groups who need not be involved in agriculture - professional **artisans, officials** and **rulers**. These groups live in the first true **cities**, with temples, palaces, wide streets and public spaces for public ceremonies, and well-built defensive walls.

This area of the southern Mesopotamia is called **Sumer**. The people who live in the cities here are the **Sumerians**, and they are developing the earliest **civilization** in world history.

Sumerian city-states

Each Sumerian city is at the centre of its own territory, which forms a political unit that today we would call a **city-state**. They are fiercely independent, and often at war with one another.

Each city-state is ruled by a **priest-king**, supported by groups of **priests** and **officials**. The Sumerians practice a **polytheistic** religion, and the kings are seen as the Earthly representatives of the cities' patron gods.

The economies of these states are very tightly organized. Some or all of the food produced by the farmers is collected into **storehouses** and redistributed by officials. It is used to support the kings and his attendants in the palace, the priests and craftsmen in the temple, and the officials, overseers, and soldiers.

Writing

To help them organize and keep track of all this activity, Sumerian officials are developing methods of **record keeping** which will evolve into the first **writing** system. This is based on the **cuneiform** script.

This script is made up of hundreds of separate characters, which are in fact based on very stylised pictures (it is therefore called a **pictographic** script). It is written by pressing a wedge-shaped stylus onto soft wet clay tablets. When the clay dries, it hardens to provide a permanent record of what was written.

2. The Nile Valley

The Nile is the longest river in the world, with its waters rising deep in central Africa. Its northern half - roughly 2000 miles - slices through the Sahara desert, creating a thin strip of fertile land about 13 miles wide on average.

About 750 miles south of where the Nile reaches the sea there are a series of **cataracts**, or rapids, over which the river flows on its way north. These mark the southern boundary of the land of Egypt. North of these the river flows smoothly to the sea.

The delta is where the river finally meets the Mediterranean Sea. Today it is covered with fertile farmland, but at this time much of it was swampy and impassable.

Chieftains

By this date, powerful chieftainships have grown up along the banks of the river. These are centred on large walled villages.

These chieftains owe the growth of their power to the need to distribute the river water to the inhabitants, and to manage the **irrigation** systems which make the farming possible.

Such is their success that a large **population** is growing on this long strip of fertile land.

3000 BCE

Another civilization has appeared in the Middle East. This is the civilization of Egypt, in the Nile Valley.

- The people of **Egypt** have become unified under the rule of a single king (note 1).
- **Trade routes** are spreading out from the land of **Sumer** in Mesopotamia (note 2).
- At around this time, the making of **bronze** is pioneered, probably in Mesopotamia (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. Egypt

The numerous chiefdoms located along the long river **Nile** were constantly at war with one another. Some of these wars may well have been caused by disputes over control over the river's water.

By c. 3200 BCE the different chieftainships had been swallowed up into two larger states. The southern one covered **Upper Egypt**, the northern one covered **Lower Egypt**, including the Nile Delta.

By c. 3000 BCE, further wars had led to the rulers of Upper Egypt conquering Lower Egypt, and uniting the whole of the land of Egypt under a single rule.

The ruler who united Egypt is called **Menes**. He is the first of the long succession of **pharaohs** to rule Egypt. He establishes the **First Dynasty** of ancient Egypt (there will ultimately be thirty native dynasties).

He rules the land from his capital, **Memphis**, just south of the Nile Delta.

A well-defended land

Unlike the city-states of Mesopotamia, the kingdom of Egypt was well protected by its geographical location. To east and west there was hundreds of miles of desert. Invading armies could not cross this very easily, and none would do so for hundreds of years.

To the south the River Nile crossed the **cataracts**, which passed through narrow gorges. These gorges were easily defended, so that invaders would find it hard to attack from this direction.

To the north was the Mediterranean Sea. Until ships had been developed to carry soldiers for long distances over water, no trouble could be expected from this quarter.

These factors allowed the Egyptians to develop their civilization in comparative safety. They were not isolated from the rest of the world, however. There is plenty of evidence for **trade** with neighboring peoples from a very early date - with Nubia in the south, and with the peoples of Canaan, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia to the north and east.

Geography helps to explain the differences in the histories of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Early Mesopotamian history was characterised by constant warfare between city-states, by invasion from neighboring peoples, and by the rise and fall of short-lived empires which could not keep control of their conquests for long.

Early Egyptian history, on the other hand, saw long periods of peace within the land of Egypt itself, and for a long time there were no serious invasions from outside the country. It was only when the

central government of the pharaohs became weak that war ravaged the land. Under these conditions, local governors took more power for themselves, challenging the authority of the pharaohs and their officials. Eventually, they set themselves up as independent princes, and fell to fighting amongst themselves. But sooner or later one of them would conquer the others, and stability would return to the country.

2. Mesopotamia

The Sumerian cities are far larger and wealthier than any previous communities in history. Mesopotamia has little by way of **natural resources** such as timber, stone or metal. These have to be brought in in **exchange** for grain and high quality goods made by professional Sumerian textile and metal workers.

As a result, **trade routes** are spreading out from **Sumer** (the land of the Sumerians in southern Mesopotamia). Settlements of traders are being planted away from the core area of the Sumerian civilization. Around some of these settlements new cities are beginning to grow. Civilization is spreading.

3. The dawn of the Bronze Age

At this date, **copper** is the most common metal used. Being soft, it is mostly used for making jewellery. Sumerian metalsmiths, however, are working on ways to make it tougher by mixing (**alloying**) it with other metals, especially **tin**. At around this time they succeed in producing **bronze**. This will have a major impact on the development of civilization.

2500 BCE

Note that in the map, the borders of Mesopotamian civilization are not solid, whereas borders of Egypt are. This is to show that Egypt a single state, whereas Sumerian civilization (in orange) consists of numerous small city-states.

Urban civilization has spread from Mesopotamia and Egypt into Asia Minor, Syria and Canaan. In all these regions, city-states and small kingdoms have developed.

- To meet the demand for bronze, **trade routes** have reached further and further out from Mesopotamia; along them, civilization spreads (note 1).
- Already at this time, the Egyptians have built some of the most iconic buildings in world history, the **Great Pyramids of Giza** (note 2).
- Egypt has developed its own **writing systems**, and has made great advances in other areas (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. Bronze Age trade routes

The Sumerian cities have a big demand for copper and tin with which to make **bronze**. This is highly-valued for use in high-status **ornaments**, but also in **weapons**. The Sumerian cities are now in one of the first arms races in history, equipping their soldiers with metal armour and weaponry.

To meet this demand, trade routes spread ever further out from Mesopotamia: eastward to **India**; westward across **Asia Minor** into south east **Europe**; and south west to **Egypt**, either over land through **Canaan**, or through the port of Byblos (on the coast of Syria) to Egyptian harbours at the mouth of the Nile.

2. Nation-wide mobilization of labor

Since about 3000 BCE Egypt has been a single unified kingdom (unlike Mesopotamia, which is divided into numerous city-states). Shortly after its unification, ancient Egypt entered its first period of greatness; this is called the **Old Kingdom**.

Egypt is ruled by divine kings called **pharaohs**, regarded as the earthly incarnations of the chief god, Amun.

The Egyptians' ability to mobilize a work force on a nation-wide scale has allowed the pharaohs and their officials to organize the building of massive structures. The largest of all of them, the **Great Pyramids of Giza**, are being built at this date. The latest and largest of these has been commissioned by the pharaoh Khufu, probably the best-known of all the Old Kingdom rulers. He belonged to the **Fourth Dynasty** of ancient Egypt.

To us the building of pyramids seems like an enormous waste of resources. To the Egyptians it was a way of bringing divine blessing on their land.

3. Egyptian civilization

The Egyptians have developed their own writing systems. A **hieroglyphic** script is used on stone monuments for public proclamations. For more everyday use a less formal **cursive** script is used, written on **papyrus** leaves.

Like Mesopotamian cuneiform, these Egyptian scripts are **pictographic**, using hundreds of characters based on simplified pictures.

Egyptian achievements in **medicine, science, mathematics**, and as the Pyramids show, **engineering**, are very advanced for the time; for example they have developed a 365-day calendar.

2230 BCE

The first empire of world history has now appeared in the Middle East. This is the achievement of a Mesopotamian king called Sargon of Akkad.

- The **Akkadians** are not Sumerians - they belong to an unrelated group of peoples (note 1),
- **Sargon of Akkad** is the first great conqueror in history, and founded the first true **empire** (note 2).

Additional Notes:

1. The Akkadians

Sargon is an **Akkadian**, not a Sumerian. The Akkadians belong to a group of peoples unrelated to the Sumerians. They speak a **Semitic** language distantly related to Arabic and Hebrew.

The Akkadians may have originally been nomadic herders, like other Semitic peoples. However, they have long been settled in the farmlands of Mesopotamia, north of the main area of Sumerian city-states. Their homeland will from now on be called the land of **Akkad**, to distinguish it from the land of **Sumer**, where the Sumerian city-states were located.

2. Sargon

The birth legend of **Sargon** is similar to that of Moses, the first great leader of the Hebrew people. According to this story, the baby Sargon was found in a basket floating on a river by a gardener. This man brought him up as his own son.

Despite this humble background, Sargon apparently entered the service of the king of the Sumerian city-state of Kish. He rose to be the royal cup-bearer. This sounds to us like quite a lowly post, but was probably a very important one.

The first great conqueror

In any case, Sargon was somehow able to take control of Kish for himself. He then defeated a powerful king who claimed to have brought all the Sumerian city-states under his rule. Sargon thus made himself master of Sumer.

He then went on to conquer far and wide - northwest into Asia Minor, west as far as the Mediterranean coast, and east into what is now Iran. He thus created the earliest **empire** in world history.

At some point Sargon is credited with founding a new city, **Akkad** (Agade) as his capital. The fact that this city has a Sumerian name, however, suggests that it may have already existed. It has not yet been discovered by archaeologists.

2100 BCE

Sargon's empire lasted barely two generations before it collapsed. Another power, the Sumerian city of Ur, has replaced it in Mesopotamia.

- Short-lived though it was, Sargon's empire has left an enduring mark on **Mesopotamian** civilization (1).
- Rulers of the famous **3rd dynasty of Ur** have conquered a large territory, which they now rule with a high degree of control (2).
- In Egypt, the **Old Kingdom** has collapsed (3).

Additional Notes:

1. The Akkadian legacy

The area of southern Mesopotamia is now called **Sumer and Akkad** in contemporary sources. This shows how important the legacy of the Akkadian empire is. The Akkadian language, used by the government of Sargon's empire, has become widely spoken in Mesopotamia.

2. The city of Ur

Ur has from early times been one of the leading Sumerian city-states. It has grown wealthy on **maritime trade** in the Gulf, and well beyond. It even trades with the **Indus Valley** cities.

The kings of Ur have now conquered much of Mesopotamia, and some neighbouring lands as well. They make **Sumerian** the language of government again.

Ur has a claim to being the first **bureaucratic** state in world history. Thousands of administrative documents have come down to us from this period. They were all written in cuneiform by Sumerian scribes on clay tablets.

They show us that the kings of Ur attempted to control their subjects' lives very tightly. This was especially true of their economic activities.

It is at this time that the great **Ziggurat** of Ur, the most spectacular Sumerian structure, is built.

3. Egypt

The Old Kingdom has now collapsed. Egypt is now in chaos as rival princes control different parts of the country. This period is known in ancient Egyptian history as the **First Intermediate Period**.

2000 BCE: Both Mesopotamia and Egypt have experienced major ups and downs.

- In **Mesopotamia**, the powerful state of Ur has collapsed, and the land is being overrun by a nomadic people called the Amorites (note 1).
- It is around this time that **Abraham**, the founding father of the Israelite people, probably lived (note 2).
- Egypt has been reunified under the **Middle Kingdom**, and at around this time the kingdom of **Kush** is emerging to the south of Egypt (note 3).
- At this date nomadic tribes from the steppes of **central Asia** are moving down into the Middle East. They speak **Indo-European** languages (note 4).

Additional Notes:

1. Mesopotamia

Ur's period of dominance was also the final era of **Sumerian** greatness. As Ur's power has crumbled, nomadic herders from the grasslands bordering Mesopotamia have migrated into the land. These people are called the **Amorites**. Their chiefs establish themselves as rulers over ancient city-states, or establish new ones - for example the city of **Babylon**.

The newcomers speak a Semitic language, closely related to Akkadian. In due course this language will completely oust Sumerian in everyday life. Scholars will label it "Old Babylonian".

2. Abraham

It is probably about now that **Abraham**, the ancestor of the **Israelites**, left Ur on travels that would eventually take him and his followers to Canaan (the "Promised Land").

Abraham would have belonged to a nomadic Amorite clan. Nomadic groups like this frequently lived in the neighbourhood of Sumerian cities. They were also frequently on the move, grazing their flocks on the grasslands which lay between the different settlements. Particularly in a time of upheaval, as this period was, nomadic clans would frequently travel from one region to another in the Middle East.

3. Egypt

By this time, rulers from southern Egypt have reunited the land and founded the **Middle Kingdom** (c. 2045 BCE). This is the achievement of the pharaoh **Mentuhotep II**, of the 11th Dynasty. This has its capital at **Thebes**, in southern Egypt, not Memphis in the north. This shows that there was a major shift in political power to the southern part of the country.

Kush

In Nubia, the land to the south of Egypt, farming has long taken root. The land is less fertile than in Egypt, however, and **cattle grazing** is also important.

At around this time, the different chiefdoms of the area come under the control of a single ruler, and the kingdom of Kush is formed. Its capital is at **Kerma**.

Kush acts as a trade bridge between Egypt and central Africa, to the south. In this region the course of the River Nile is interrupted by a series of fierce **cataracts**. As boats cannot pass these, trade is limited to overland transport (caravans of donkey).

This limits the influence of Egyptian civilization in the region. The Nubians have a culture more similar to that of other central African peoples at this time.

4. Indo-Europeans

By this period tribes from the Black Sea region have been migrating down into the northern Middle East. They are descended from peoples who for centuries have inhabited the steppes of central Asia. They follow a herding lifestyle and speak **Indo-European** languages. Their culture is related to other groups moving into Europe at this time and, later, the Indian subcontinent.

They bring with them a new weapon of war, the **chariot**. This will give them an advantage in battle over the more populous and advanced societies of the Middle East.

1750 BCE

Hammurabi, king of Babylon, has united almost all Mesopotamia under his rule.

Note: The city of Babylon has appeared.

- **Babylon**, Hammurabi's capital, is now the leading city in Mesopotamia; it will be one of the most famous in all ancient history (note 1).
- Apart from conquering far and wide, Hammurabi is known for the famous **law code** he issues (note 2).
- The Middle Kingdom of **Egypt** now dominates territory well beyond its former borders (note 3).
- **Abraham's** clan are now roaming the land of **Canaan** (note 4).

Additional Notes:

1. Babylon

In Mesopotamia, the city of **Babylon** was founded by an Amorite clan. At first small and unimportant, it gained more and more territory under a succession of vigorous kings.

Eventually it ruled much of central Mesopotamia. Babylon's famous king **Hammurabi** (reigns 1792-49 BC), has been able to unite almost all Mesopotamia under his rule, and even extend his power into Syria.

2. Hammurabi's law code

Hammurabi is famous not only for his conquest, but also for issuing a **law code**, which he has had carved on stone pillars and set up in different locations around his empire.

This law code is not the first in Mesopotamian history; it is likely that many, if not all, Mesopotamian city-states had such codes. However, Hammurabi's is the most comprehensive that has survived, and has given modern scholars a clear insight into ancient Mesopotamian life.

The purpose of issuing his code is so that all his subjects, wherever they are, are able to obey, and be judged by, a single set of laws, rather than by a confusion of local laws.

3. Middle Kingdom Egypt

The **Middle Kingdom** of Egypt has expanded its borders, southward into **Kush** and outwards into the desert oases surrounding the Nile Valley. These are valuable for the salt, copper and gold mines located there. From Kush come exotic products from **sub-Saharan Africa**, such as ivory, black slaves and ostrich feathers.

Kush

Although the Egyptians have destroyed the kingdom of Kush, their presence in the region is limited to a series of forts. The culture of **Nubia** remains largely untouched by influences from the north.

4. Abraham's clan

According to the Biblical account, by this date, Abraham's descendants are roaming the land of Canaan.

This nomadic group was not alone. Archeologists have shown that, during this period, Canaan experienced an influx of Semitic tribes, including Amorites. They grazed their flocks in the scrub between the small Canaanite cities.

1500 BCE:

Peoples speaking Indo-European languages have occupied large parts of the Middle East.

- Hammurabi's empire collapsed soon after his death, and shortly after this southern Mesopotamia fell under the control of an Indo-European tribe called the **Kassites** (note 1).
- Other Indo-European peoples have occupied much of **Asia Minor** and northern **Syria** (note 2).
- In Egypt, the Middle Kingdom has been replaced by the **New Kingdom**. This is a more warlike state than any that have previously ruled the country (note 3).
- Abraham's clan are now in Egypt (note 4).

Additional Notes:

1. Southern Mesopotamia

Hammurabi's successors soon lost much of the empire he had conquered. The city-states of southern Mesopotamia, however, remained under their rule, with the city of **Babylon** as their capital. As a result, this region is now called **Babylonia**.

The people of the region no longer speak **Sumerian**, but a language which modern scholars call "**Old Babylonian**". Nevertheless, their civilization, including its religion, art, architecture and literature, is based firmly on the lines laid down by their Sumerian forebears.

In 1595 BCE, the city of Babylon was attacked and sacked by the Hittites (see below). This weakened its kingdom, and it fell under the control of Indo-European rulers from the northeast hill country. These are the Kassites.

Even though they are foreigners, the ancient civilization of Mesopotamian thrives under Kassite control.

2. Hittites and Mitanni

The **Indo-Europeans'** battle-winning weapon, the **chariot**, allows them to conquer large areas in the north of the Middle East. Two groups in particular have established powerful kingdoms. These are the **Mitanni** and the **Hittites**. Also, as noted above, the Kassites conquer southern Mesopotamia (Babylonia).

3. Egypt

The **Middle Kingdom** of Egypt collapsed after a couple of centuries (c. 1650 BCE). This started a century of disunity and chaos in the country, in the era known to ancient Egyptian history as the **Second Intermediate Period** (c. 1650 to 1550 BCE). During it, a people from western Asia, the **Hyksos**, briefly occupied the Nile Delta. They were the first foreigners to rule Egyptian land.

A line of kings from southern Egypt drove the Hyksos out, reunited the country and established the **New Kingdom**. They rule Egypt as the 18th dynasty. The pharaoh who established their rule was **Ahmose I**, one of the most famous of all ancient Egypt's rulers.

One of the most extraordinary of pharaohs at this time is **Hatshepsut**. She is one of the very few women in ancient Egyptian history to rule the country in her own right (rather than as the queen or queen mother of a weak or young male ruler).

The monarchs of the New Kingdom are ambitious and warlike. It is likely that the experience of having foreigners (Hyksos) rule part of their land came as a shock to the people of Egypt. This has probably made their rulers much more aware of the need for a strong army than in previous times.

At about this time, the pharaoh **Thutmose I**, uses this new powerful army to re-occupy **Nubia** and to invade **Canaan**.

4. Abraham's clan

According to the Biblical account, Abraham's descendants are now living in Egypt. They now call themselves the "**Children of Israel**". This is after Abraham's grandson, Israel (or Jacob as he was originally called), who was their more recent common ancestor.

It is likely that they form one group amongst the *Hapiru* (Hebrew) people. These appear in Egyptian documents of the time, as troublesome outsiders who are infiltrating the country.

1275 BCE: This period marks the high point of Bronze Age civilization in the Middle East. New Kingdom Egypt and the Hittite empire are the leading powers of the region.

- Under the pharaohs of the **New Kingdom**, ancient Egypt reaches the height of its power (note 1).
- Egypt and the Hittite empire fight each other for control of **Canaan** (note 2).
- The new power of **Assyria** is beginning to threaten both Egypt and the Hittites (note 3).
- Barely a generation will pass before the whole Middle East will sink into chaos. The **Children of Israel** will have a part in this (note 4).

Additional Notes:

1. New Kingdom Egypt

Under the pharaohs of the **New Kingdom**, Egypt has expanded its territory enormously, south into **Kush** and northeast into **Canaan**. It is at this period that ancient Egypt reaches the height of its glory and power.

At this time, pharaohs and their queens are buried in the magnificent tombs of the **Valley of the Kings**. This is near the city of **Thebes** (near modern-day Luxor), the capital of New Kingdom Egypt.

Egypt has several famous rulers during this period. A remarkable one was the pharaoh **Akhenaten**, who tried to install the worship of the Sun god Aten as the official religion of Egypt. He seems to have tried to suppress the worship of all the other gods.

This policy was of course furiously resisted by the priests of Amun, the main god of the Egyptians at this time. Akhenaten's religious reforms did not survive his death, but some modern scholars see this episode as a first experiment in **monotheism**.

Akhenaten's wife was Queen **Nefertiti**. She apparently became the real ruler of Egypt after his death. A bust of her is one of the most beautiful of all Egyptian works of art.

Her son, the boy king **Tutankhamen** (reigned 1332-1323 BCE) is today probably the most famous of all the pharaohs. He did not reign long nor did he accomplish much, but his magnificent burial chamber in the Valley of the Kings was discovered in 1922.

Ramesses II (reigned 1279 to 1213) is the ruler reigning at this date. He is a successful military leader, and a builder of magnificent monuments. He has either constructed or renovated three of the greatest of all ancient Egyptian temples, at Karnak, Luxor and Abu Simbel. He has enormous statues of himself carved, and on them inscribes his many achievements. Later Egyptians will regard him as the greatest of all pharaohs.

Kush

Under the New Kingdom, Egyptian influences become much more powerful in Nubia. Many Egyptians settle in the region, as soldiers, officials and traders. They establish Egyptian towns in the region, and the pharaohs build huge temples there. Many members of the Nubian upper classes become **Egyptianized**, and even enter the service of the pharaohs as soldiers and officials.

The Egyptian capital in Kush is the city of **Napata**. The Pharaoh's deputy is based here.

2. Great power competition in Canaan

The many small kingdoms of **Syria** and **Canaan** are dominated by their more powerful neighbours, the Egyptians and the **Hittites**.

The Hittites have greatly expanded their kingdom until it covers a large part of Asia Minor and Syria. Along with Assyria (see below) they have swallowed up the Mitanni kingdom.

The rivalry between the Egyptians and Hittites culminates in the **Battle of Kadesh**, which takes place around this time (probably 1274).

Ramesses II claims it as a great victory on his monuments, but it is not followed up by any territorial gains for the Egyptians. In fact, the Egyptians and Hittites seem to have come to an agreement to divide control of Canaan between them.

In any case, both powers were soon more concerned at the aggressive actions of **Assyria** than with each other.

3. The Assyrians

The Assyrians were a people of northern Mesopotamia who had previously been under Mitanni overlordship. They rebelled and won their independence, then dismembered the Mitanni kingdom and divided it with the **Hittite empire**.

For centuries to come Assyria will appear on the map of the Middle East. The Hittite empire, on the other hand, will be wiped off the map before the century is out.

4. The Children of Israel

According to the Biblical account of the origins of the Israelites, the Children of Israel have now fled Egypt in a migration known as the "**Exodus**".

Of this there is no evidence in the historical record, and if over two million people had been involved, as the Bible implies, then there almost certainly would have been evidence for it. In fact, ancient Egyptian society would surely have collapsed overnight - which it clearly did not.

Nevertheless most ancient origin stories (for this is what the account of the Exodus is) probably did have some basis in history - it is hard to think how otherwise they could have been so broadly accepted by later generations. *Something* surely happened. It is quite possible that a group of *Hapiru* did move out of Egypt, perhaps as a result of persecution.

825 BCE

The period after the late 13th century was one of turbulence for the Middle East - but also one when great advances were made.

- For a few centuries from the late 13th century BCE, **migrations** in Europe and the Middle East caused all the old civilizations in the region to be attacked and devastated (note 1).
- **Egypt** was weakened, and later broke up into several separate states. One of these was the kingdom of **Kush** (note 2).
- A people on the coast of Syria, the **Phoenicians**, are making the most of the weaknesses of their more powerful neighbours. They are becoming wealthy through trade (note 3).
- The **Israelites** have established kingdoms in what was Canaan (note 4).
- These troubled times have seen the **Bronze Age** come to an end in the Middle East, to be replaced by the **Iron Age**. This is one of the great turning points in human history (note 5).

Additional Notes:

1. Population movements and the devastation of ancient civilizations

In the late second millennium BCE, a large number of people were on the move. These migrations brought chaos and devastation to the whole Middle East. The **Hittite empire** was destroyed, old trading cities vanished, **Egypt** was weakened, **Assyria** was invaded, and **Babylonia** and **Elam** thrown into chaos.

However, by the 9th century BCE things are settling down. **Assyria** has survived, and is now growing in power again. A trading people, the **Phoenicians**, are growing in wealth. The **Israelite** kingdoms have become the centre of a new monotheistic religion. In southern Mesopotamia, the Chaldeans have taken control of the city of Ur (which is why it is called "**Ur of the Chaldeans**" in the Bible), and will soon take over Babylon itself.

2. Egypt and Kush

In the 12th and 11th centuries, **Egypt** came under repeated attack, from the Peoples of the Sea and desert tribes.

Under these blows, the pharaohs first lost control of Canaan, and then of Egypt itself as the country broke up into rival kingdoms. This period of the New Kingdom was replaced by the **Third Intermediate Period**.

Kush

With the decline of New Kingdom Egypt, however, Nubia came under its own kings again, and a revived kingdom of Kush has been formed. Its capital is **Napata**.

3. The Phoenicians

A people new to history have taken over the maritime trade of the eastern Mediterranean. These are the **Phoenicians**, and they live in prosperous trading cities such as **Tyre** and **Sidon**. These have become wealthier than any trading cities before them.

Phoenician sailors and merchants have pioneered new **trade routes** right across the Mediterranean Sea. They have even ventured beyond, into the Atlantic.

4. The Israelites

The **Israelites** probably moved into Canaan in the 13th century BCE.

They practice the first **monotheistic** religion in world history; it is based on the worship of the One God, **Yahweh**. This faith is also distinctive for requiring its followers to practice a high standard of morality. The Israelites are taught not to kill, or steal, or covet each others' goods; instead they are to treat each other - and especially the weaker and more vulnerable members of society such as widows, orphans and foreigners - with kindness and respect. The basis of these ideas are set out in a short law code called the **Ten Commandments**.

At first the Israelites are divided into different tribes, but in the 11th century they formed themselves into a kingdom. This prospered under its famous kings **David** and his son **Solomon**, who ruled from their capital, **Jerusalem**. Here Solomon built a temple to Yahweh.

In the 10th century, however, the kingdom divided into two: a northern kingdom, **Israel**, and a southern kingdom, **Judah**.

5. From Bronze Age to Iron Age

These troubled centuries have seen the Bronze Age give way to the Iron Age in the Middle East. The spread of the use of iron will have huge consequences for humanity.

Bronze is far too expensive to be used much in farming. Up to now farmers have had to make do with tools made of wood, stone and bone, just as their ancestors did in the Stone Age.

Iron is a much cheaper metal than bronze. This means that it can be made into tools cheap enough for ordinary farmers to own.

Iron plows are much better at turning the soil than wooden ones are, and iron axes make it much easier to chop down trees and clear land for fields. Iron tools therefore make farming much more productive. More food can be grown and more mouths fed. Populations grow, towns and cities expand and more trade can take place. Civilization can now flourish more easily, even in areas away from the floodplains.

The Alphabet

Another change at this time is the spreading use of **alphabetic** writing.

The **cuneiform** script of ancient Mesopotamia, the **hieroglyphic** script of ancient Egypt, and other scripts based on hundreds of symbols, take a long time to learn. As a result, only a small section of the population has been able to read and write.

Compared to these, alphabetic scripts are easy and quick to learn. This means that a larger section of society can become literate and educated.

The **Canaanites** seem to have developed the earliest alphabetic script back in the Bronze Age. This has now evolving into several different scripts. **Phoenician** merchants are spreading their alphabet westward, where it becomes the ancestor of Greek, Latin and all modern European writing. The **Aramaic** alphabet spreads throughout the Middle East, and a little later to India. The **Hebrew** alphabet is being used in the writing of the Israelite scriptures (the Old Testament of the Christian Bible).

722 BCE: Assyria is now by far the dominant power in the Middle East.

- It has expanded to take in **Mesopotamia**, **Syria** and some of **Asia Minor** (note 1).
- The Assyrians often resettle conquered peoples far away from their homelands. The most famous example of this is in the destruction of the northern **kingdom of Israel** (note 2).
- To the east, **Iranian** peoples are spreading throughout what is present-day Iran. Two of their tribes are of particular note at this time, the Medes and the Persians (note 3).
- The **Kingdom of Kush** has united the whole of Egypt under its rule (note 4).

Additional Notes:

1. The Assyrian empire

The Assyrian empire now dominates the Middle East.

The Assyrians owe their success to their large, well-organized army. This is the first army known to have had its own **siege engines** (portable wooden towers, ladders and so on for attacking city walls), and also its own **supply organization**. The Assyrian kings make sure that their empire is crossed by a good **road network**, so that troops can march quickly along them to any trouble spots. Also, **messengers** on horseback can ride swiftly along them to carry orders from the king to his officials in distant parts of the empire.

Often, the Assyrians do not even have to fight battles in order to defeat their enemies. They use **terror tactics** - massacres of civilian populations, terrible tortures of enemy leaders and so on - very effectively. Enemy forces often melt away before the Assyrian troops arrive. Even if they stand and fight, they are often half-defeated already, such is their fear of the mighty Assyrian army.

Many subject peoples, such as the Phoenicians, continue to be ruled by their own kings. These, however, are only allowed to keep their thrones so long as they send tribute to the Assyrian king and obey his orders.

2. Resettlement

The Assyrians often deport conquered peoples from their homelands, and resettle them in different parts of their empire.

In place of the deported populations, colonists from elsewhere are brought in to settle the land.

The most famous example of this practice was the **kingdom of Israel**. This was the northern of the two kingdoms into which the Israelites had been divided. It was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BCE.

The inhabitants of this state were scattered to different parts of the Assyrian empire, and to take their place newcomers were brought in, mostly, it seems, from Mesopotamia.

This was the fate of many small kingdoms and their cultures. It turned the areas occupied by the Assyrians into a melting pot of many different peoples. Ancient languages were lost and **Aramaic** became the common language of the region.

3. The Medes and the Persians

Iran is being occupied by the people from whom it would take its name, the **Iranians**. These are an **Indo-European** people, closely related to the Aryans who have settled in northern India (“Aryan” and “Iranian” are related terms).

The **Medes** are the most powerful group of Iranians. They have settled in western Iran. Their close relatives, the **Persians**, are settling in south-west Iran, in lands once ruled by the kings of Elam. Both these groups will later form famous states.

4. Kings from Kush

Kush has become a powerful kingdom. In the 750s its king, Kashta, conquered lower Egypt. Kashta’s son, **Piankhi**, has completed the conquest of Egypt and established the 25th Dynasty.

These Kushite kings rule Egypt in the tradition of the ancient pharaohs. They see it as their duty, not just to re-establish Egyptian power, but to restore Egyptian civilization to its former purity (it has, in their view, become degraded during the centuries of Egyptian weakness). They build and restore many temples and monuments, and even revive the custom of royal burials in pyramids. This is a practice the Egyptians themselves discarded centuries before.

The Kushite kings rule from **Napata**. As well as extending their control over Egypt, they have expanded their power a long way southward along the Nile Valley as well.

664 BCE: The Assyrian empire is now at its height, and has conquered Egypt.

- They have invaded **Egypt** and driven the Kushite pharaohs south. This conquest has brought the Assyrian empire to its largest extent (note 1).
- The Assyrians have imposed their control over the small kingdom of **Judah**, but have not destroyed it (note 2).
- Other powerful states have been emerging in the Middle East, such as those of **Medea** and **Lydia**. These pose a growing threat to the Assyrians (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. The Assyrians and Egypt

Having conquered the whole of Egypt, the Kings of **Kush** then found themselves confronting the huge Assyrian empire. The pharaoh Taharqa unwisely attacked it. The Assyrian king, Earshaddon, responded by invading Egypt and driving the Kushite kings back into Nubia.

The conquest of Egypt brings the Assyrian empire to the height of its size and power.

2. The Assyrians and Judah

After the destruction of the northern Israelite kingdom, in 722 BCE, the Assyrians made at least one serious attempt to conquer the southern Israelite kingdom, **Judah**. According to both Jewish and Assyrian sources, this was not a success.

Nevertheless, the kings of Judah have become **vassals** of the Assyrians. Controlling Judah's territory is vital for Assyria's hold on Egypt, as the overland route between Assyria and Egypt passes right through it.

3. Storm clouds are gathering

The **Medes** are the most powerful of the Iranian peoples, and have built a powerful state to the east of the Assyrian empire. In Asia Minor, a tribe called the **Lydians** have founded a wealthy kingdom. Some time around now their kings start issuing the first **metal coinage** in world history.

The Medes and Lydians, together with **Urartu** (a warlike state in the north), now form a ring of hostile kingdoms around the Assyrian empire.

By this date, too, nomads from the steppes (the **Scythians** and **Cimmerians**) have taken to raiding deep into the northern regions of the Middle East.

Within their empire, the Assyrians' harsh rule has always provoked rebellions. These are now getting more powerful. Major revolts are breaking out in **Babylonia** and **Egypt**.

Trouble is brewing for the Assyrians, both inside and outside their empire.

585 BCE: The Assyrian empire is no more: its enemies have torn it to pieces.

- Foes from both inside and outside the **Assyrian empire** have fallen on it and torn it apart (note 1).
- The **Babylonian** king, **Nebuchadnezzar**, has destroyed the **kingdom of Judah** (note 2).
- This is the last period of greatness for **Egypt** as an independent nation. It has attempted to bring **Kush** under its control, without success (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. The fall of the Assyrian empire

In the late seventh century BCE, the mighty Assyrian empire suddenly found itself dealing with too many powerful enemies at the same time. The Medes, Scythians and Cimmerians all invaded the empire in 612-611 BCE, and joined forces with the Babylonian and Egyptian rebels to overwhelm the Assyrian armies. They utterly destroyed the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, along with other Assyrian cities.

They then divided the empire between themselves. The **Babylonians** took most of it. The **Egyptians** re-established their independence under a new native dynasty of pharaohs.

The **Medes** meanwhile expanded their territory by conquering the ancient kingdoms of **Urartu** and **Elam**.

2. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon

Nebuchadnezzar reigns as king of the Babylonian empire (605 - 562 BCE). He adorns his capital with magnificent temples, vast palaces and the fabled **Hanging Gardens** of Babylon (although its existence has yet to be proved by archaeologists).

It is under Nebuchadnezzar that the Babylonians bring Mesopotamian **astronomy** to its peak. They are following in a tradition started by the Sumerians two thousand years before.

The destruction of Jerusalem

In 587 the king of **Judah** rebelled against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar led his forces in besieging and taking Judah's capital, **Jerusalem**. He destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, and deported Judah's upper classes to Babylon.

Here, unlike all the other peoples who had been deported by the Assyrians and Babylonians, they remain faithful to their religious beliefs. This revolves around the worship of the One God, **Yahweh**. In exile they set down their belief-system, up to now mostly **oral**, into writing. The Jewish scriptures (the Christian Old Testament) are taking shape.

3. Egypt and Kush

The re-establishment of Egypt's independence from Assyria has begun the last great period of Ancient Egypt's long history. This phase is known as the **Late Dynastic Period**.

The Kushites had remained a threat to the Egyptian's southern flank, and the pharaoh Psamtik II of the 26th Dynasty decided to invade their kingdom. His army defeated the Kushites and sacked the capital of Kush, **Napata**.

The Kushites have now moved their capital to **Meroë**, much further south. This will be a permanent move. As a result, Kush's "Egyptian" traditions begin to fade, and Kush's culture will gradually become increasingly "Africanized". For example, the old Egyptian gods and goddesses will give way to ones who resemble African animals like elephants and lions. They also develop their own writing script (which has yet to be deciphered by modern scholars).

500 BCE: The Persian empire now covers most of the Middle East.

- **Cyrus the Great** and his successors, Cambyses and **Darius the Great**, have conquered the largest empire the world has seen up to this time (note 1).
- These Persian kings have allowed the **Jewish** exiles in Babylon to return to their homeland and rebuild the city of **Jerusalem** and its temple (3).

Additional Notes:

1. The Persian empire

Cyrus, a prince of the **Persians**, rebelled against his superior, the king of the **Medes**, in about 560 BCE. Within a few years he had defeated the Medes, and then went on to overrun the kingdom of **Lydia**, the **Greek** city-states of western Asia Minor, and the **Babylonian empire**. He next turned against the nomadic tribes to the north of Iran, extending Persian control over a huge territory in **central Asia**. However, he was killed in battle in 530 BCE.

Cyrus has gone down in history as one of the great conquerors of all time.

His son **Cambyses** (reigned 530-522 BCE) conquered **Egypt**, before dying unexpectedly, probably as the result of an accident.

By the time of Cambyses' death a major rebellion had broken out in central Iran. This was put down quickly by a relative of Cambyses, called Darius.

He would go down in history as **Darius the Great** (reigned 522-486 BCE). He further expands the borders of the empire, mostly in central Asia and into **India**. By the end of his' reign, the Persians will rule by far the largest empire that the world had yet seen.

2. The Jewish return from exile

The Persians rule their vast empire with a much lighter touch than the Assyrians and Babylonians had done. Cyrus the Great set the tone by respecting the traditions and cultures of the conquered peoples.

Most famously, he ordered that the Jewish **exiles** in Babylon should have their homeland, and above all, **Jerusalem**, restored to them. Many returned there after 70 years of exile in Babylon, and began rebuilding the temple to **Yahweh**, the heart of their faith.

Quiz:

1. What are the two great rivers of Mesopotamia called?
2. What is the great river in Egypt?
3. Who were the people who developed the first civilization in world history?
4. What was the name of the writing system that they used?
5. By what term was the king of Egypt known?
6. What was the name of the early writing systems that the Egyptians used?
7. Which huge monuments did the Egyptians build that are still in existence today?
8. A Mesopotamian king is regarded as the first emperor in world history - who was he?
9. What famous Sumerian city followed this empire as the leading power in Mesopotamia?
10. A kingdom appeared to the south of Egypt in c. 2000 BCE - what is its name?
11. Hammurabi was a great king of Babylon who created a large empire - what else is he famous for?
12. A pharaoh who reigned only briefly and died young is today possibly the best known of all the pharaohs - who was he?
13. What is the name of the seafaring and trading people who rose to wealth in the period around 1000 BCE?
14. What people were the first to follow a monotheistic faith?
15. From the 10th century BCE, more and more of the Middle East fell under the rule of which people?
16. In the 10th century, the kingdom of Israel divides into two parts; what happened to the northern kingdom in 722 BCE?
17. Which empire took over most of the Assyrian empire at the end of the 7th century BCE?
18. Who was its famous king? - and for what is he most famous?
19. Egyptian attacks on the kingdom of Kush caused the Kushites to move their capital from - where to where?
20. Who was the founder of the Persian empire?
21. He is famous as a great conqueror, and also for a particular act - what was that?
22. Under which ruler did the Persian empire reach its height?

Section 2: Student-based enquiry work

The students can tackle these tasks either as individuals or in small groups. They will obviously need to have access to this Premium TimeMap unit.

They can present their answers in essay form or as presentations.

The questions are designed to stimulate enquiry, thought and discussion.

NB - You might also like to look at the questions for the Early Civilizations unit, and adapt those for use here.

Activity 1. Knowledge and presentation

Students go through the sequence of maps, and, carefully reading the information, answer the questions below.

Then they use their answers as the structure in preparing an essay or presentation about the history they have covered.

They choose one of the following (or do both in turn):

Mesopotamia and its neighbors

1. What are the two great rivers of Mesopotamia called?
2. Who were the people who developed the first civilization in world history?
3. What were the political units of the Sumerians?
4. What was the name of the writing system that they used?
5. What two metals were mixed ("alloyed") to make bronze?
6. A Mesopotamian king is regarded as the first emperor in world history - who was he?
7. What famous Sumerian city followed this empire as the leading power in Mesopotamia?
8. The Amorites invaded Mesopotamia at about this time - what famous city did a group of them establish?
9. What is the name of the group of languages spoken by peoples from central Asia who are moving into the Middle East from this time?
10. They bring with them a new weapon of war - what is it?
11. Hammurabi was a great king of Babylon who created a large empire - what else is he famous for?
12. What is the name of the seafaring and trading people who rose to wealth in the period around 1000 BCE?
13. What great contribution do they make to history?
14. What people are the first to follow a monotheistic faith?
15. From the 10th century BCE, more and more of the Middle East falls under the rule of which people?
16. In the 10th century, the kingdom of Israel divides into two parts; what happens to the northern kingdom in 722 BCE?
17. Which empire took over most of the Assyrian empire at the end of the 7th century BCE?
18. Who was its famous king? - and for what is he most famous?
19. What Iranian people ruled a powerful state at this time?
20. Who was the founder of the Persian empire?
21. He is famous as a great conqueror, and also for a particular act - what was that?
22. Under which ruler did the Persian empire reach its height?

Egypt and its neighbors

1. What is the great river in Egypt?
2. By what term was the king of Egypt known?
3. What is a dynasty?
4. Who was the first of these kings to unify Egypt under his rule?
5. What was the name of the early writing systems that the Egyptians used?
6. In what period of Ancient Egyptian history were the Pyramids of Giza built?
7. What period followed it?
8. A kingdom appeared to the south of Egypt in c. 2000 BCE - what is its name?
9. What geographic factor limits Egyptian influence on the region?
10. Also in c. 2000 BCE, Egypt is reunited under the kingdom; what word is missing?
11. During Egypt's Second Intermediate Period, a people from western Asia occupied much of the country - what were they called?
12. What was the name of the pharaoh who established the New kingdom of Egypt?
13. His achievement was built on by another pharaoh, who greatly expanded Egypt's borders - who was he?
14. What is the famous burial place of the New Kingdom kings and queens, still visited by thousands of tourists today?
15. Which was the pharaoh who abandoned the traditional polytheism of the Egyptians and tried to impose a new religion on the people?
16. His wife was probably the most famous queen of Egypt before Cleopatra - what was her name?
17. Her son only reigned briefly, and died young - yet today he is possibly the best known of all the pharaohs - who was he? - and why is he so well known?
18. The Egyptians themselves came to regard a later ruler as the greatest of all the pharaohs - his name was ?
19. How do the Peoples of the Sea appear in history - as traders? Missionaries? Raiders? Conquerors?
20. What is the name of the king of Kush who completes the conquest of Egypt in the 8th century BCE?
21. What is the last period of Ancient Egyptian independence called?
22. Egyptian attacks on the kingdom of Kush caused the Kushites to move their capital from - where to where?

Activity 2. Questions

Students tackle one or more of these questions by giving short answers.

1. What does "Mesopotamia" mean - and why was this term applied to the land? Why did this make it suitable as the location for an early civilization?
2. One of the lands dealt with in this unit has been called the "Gift of the Nile" - which was this, do you think? - and why?
3. The Sumerians achieved several "firsts" in world history. What were these and why were they important? (*Mention at least two of these, preferably three, maybe even four.*)
4. How was bronze made, what was it used for, and what impact did its use have on early Middle Eastern civilization?
5. Where did the kingdom of Kush develop? Why was it influenced by Egyptian civilization? What limited that influence?

6. The centuries between the 12th century BCE and the 9th century BCE were ones of great turbulence. They were also ones in which important advances took place. What were these? And what impact did they have?

7. Account for 1) the rise of the Assyrian empire, and 2) its fall.

8. Why did the Kushites move their capital southwards in the 6th century BCE, and what were the consequences?

Activity 3. Extended exercises:

Choose one or more of these exercises to do.

1. Carefully read the information provided, and then list 1. the similarities between the two civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and 2, the differences.
2. Choosing either Egyptian or Mesopotamian, divide that histories into distinct phases. There are no right or wrong answers here, but justify your answers by saying what the characteristics of each phase are.
3. Take one of the following peoples in ancient Middle Eastern history, and write (or prepare a presentation of) their history:
 1. The Babylonians
 2. The Assyria
 3. The Egyptians
 4. The Kushites
 5. The Israelites
 6. The Iranians
4. Write a history of the Israelites in the context of the broader developments taking place in the Middle East between 2000 and 500 BCE.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: TimeMaps articles for further reading

A list of all TimeMaps articles for Period 1 can be found on the Encyclopedia home page. Here is a selected list of the key articles which students should find most helpful.

[The Coming of Farming](#)

[Early Pastoralists](#)

[The Origins of Civilization](#)

[Ancient Mesopotamia](#)

[History of Ancient Mesopotamia](#)

[Ancient Egypt](#)

[History of Ancient Egypt](#)

[Elam \(Ancient Iran\)](#)

[The Hittites](#)

[Ancient Israel](#)

[History of Ancient Palestine](#) (this includes the histories of the Canaanites and other peoples of this land)

[History of the Assyrian Empire](#)

[The Civilization of the Ancient Assyrians](#)

[Ancient Babylon](#)

[History of the Babylonian Empire](#)

[The History of the Persian Empire](#)

[The Civilization of Ancient Persia](#)

