SECTION 2

Western Asia and Egypt

Guide to Reading

- · The civilizations of western Asia and Egypt contributed technology and beliefs that affect our lives today.
- The rise and fall of empires is an important part of history.

Key Terms

city-state, empire, patriarchal, cuneiform, dynasty, hieroglyphics, Judaism, monotheistic

People to Identify

Sargon, Hammurabi, Menes, King Solomon, Cyrus

Places to Locate

Tigris River, Euphrates River, Fertile Crescent, Nile River, Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt, Jerusalem, Royal Road

Preview Question

1. How did geography affect the civilizations of western Asia and Egypt?

Reading Strategy

Organizing Information As you read this section complete a chart like the one below listing the geographic locations of the civilizations of western Asia and Egypt.

| Western Asia | Egypt | | |
|--------------|-------|--|--|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Preview of Events

♦ 1500 B.C. ♦ 1000 B.C. \$500 B.C. ♦2000 B.C. ♦3500 B.C. ♦3000 B.C. 1200 B.C. 559 B.C. -1792 B.C. c. 3000 B.C. Cyrus rules Israelites emerge as a Hammurabi comes distinct group of people

King Menes unites Upper and Lower Egypt

Sumerians establish independent city-states

to power

Persian Empire

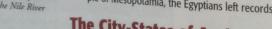
Voices from the Past

The Nile was crucial to the development of Egyptian civilization.

● The Egyptian Nile," wrote one Arab traveler, "surpasses all the rivers of the world in sweetness of taste, in length of course and usefulness. No other river in the world can show such a continuous series of towns and villages along its banks." In their "Hymn to the Nile," Egyptians wrote of their reliance on the river: "The bringer of food, rich in provisions, creator of all good, lord of majesty, sweet of fragrance. . . . [The Nile] makes the granaries wide, and gives things to the poor. He who makes every beloved tree to grow. 99

-Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard, 1969

Egypt, like Mesopotamia, was one of the first river valley civilizations. Like the people of Mesopotamia, the Egyptians left records of their developing civilization.



The City-States of Ancient Mesopotamia The ancient Greeks spoke of the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers as Mesopotamia, the land "between the rivers." Mesopotamia was at the eastern end of an area known as the Fertile Crescent, an arc of land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. Because this land had rich soil and abundant crops it was all dant crops, it was able to sustain an early civilization.

Farming in ancient Mesopotamia could be done only when people controlled e flow of the rivers. Irrigation the flow of the rivers. Irrigation and drainage ditches—part of a large-scale system of water control tem of water control—made it possible to grow crops on a regular basis. The resulting abundance of food enabled large numbers of people to live together



Shepherd and his sheep on the banks of the Nile River

The first states in Mesopotamia were city-states (cities that came to have political and economic control over the surrounding countryside). They were created by the Sumerians, a people whose origin remains a mystery. By 3000 B.C., the Sumerians had established a number of independent city-states in southern Mesopotamia, including Eridu, Ur, and Uruk.

The most prominent building in a Sumerian city was the temple dedicated to the chief god or goddess of the city. The Sumerians believed that gods and goddesses owned the cities. The people devoted much of their wealth to building temples, as well as elaborate houses for the priests and priestesses who served the gods.

Priests and priestesses, who supervised the temples and their property, had a great deal of power. Eventually, however, ruling power passed into the hands of kings. Kings led armies and organized workers for the irrigation projects on which Mesopotamian farming depended.

Reading Check Explaining What role did geography play in the development of Mesopotamian civilization?

Empires in Ancient Mesopotamia

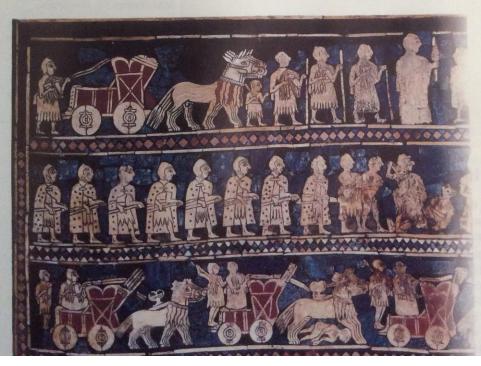
As the number of Sumerian city-states grew and the city-states expanded, new conflicts arose.

City-state fought city-state for control of land and water. Located on the flat land of Mesopotamia, the Sumerian city-states were also open to invasion by other groups.

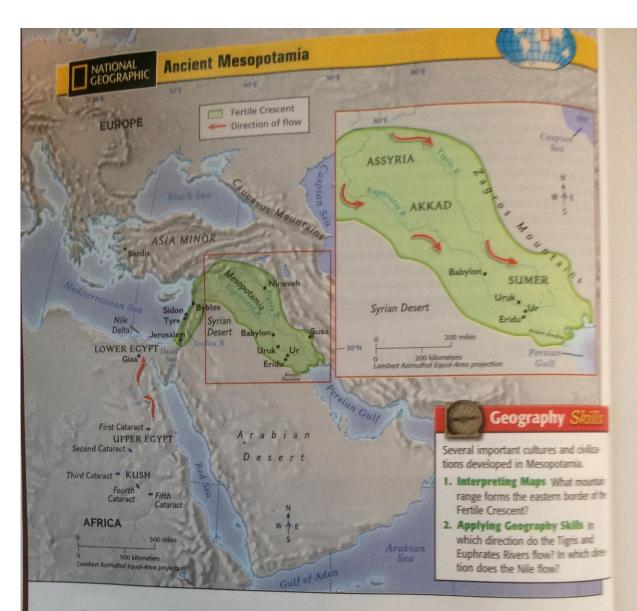
To the north of the Sumerian city-states were the Akkadians (uh•KAY•dee•uhnz). Around 2340 B.C., Sargon, leader of the Akkadians, overran the Sumerian city-states and set up the first empire in world history. An empire is a large political unit or state, usually under a single leader, that controls many peoples or territories. Empires are often easy to create but difficult to maintain. The rise and fall of empires is an important part of history.

Attacks from neighboring hill peoples eventually caused the Akkadian Empire to fall. Its end by 2100 B.C. brought a return to warring city-states. Not until 1792 B.C. did a new empire come to control much of Mesopotamia. Leadership came from Babylon, a city-state south of Akkad, where Hammurabi (HA•muh• RAH•bee) came to power. He gained control of Sumer and Akkad, thus creating a new Mesopotamian kingdom. As ruler, Hammurabi built temples, encouraged trade, and brought an economic revival to his land. After his death in 1750 B.C., however, Hammurabi's empire fell to new invaders.

Reading Check Evaluating Why was it so easy for Sargon and his army to invade the Sumerian city-states?



The Royal Standard of Ur is a box, created about 2700 B.C., that depicts different Sumer ian scenes. This panel shows a royal celebration following a military victory.



The Code of Hammurabi

Hammurabi is remembered for his law code, a collection of 282 laws. Many of its ideas were similar to later Israelite codes.

The Code of Hammurabi was based on a system of strict justice. Penalties for criminal offenses were severe, and they varied according to the social class of the victim. A crime against a member of the upper class (a noble) by a member of the lower class (a commoner) was punished more severely than the same offense against a member of the lower class. The principle of retaliation ("an eye for an eye, tooth

for a tooth") was a fundamental part of this system of justice.

The law code encouraged the proper performance of work with what could be called consumer protection laws. Builders were held responsible for the buildings they constructed. If a house collapsed and caused the death of the owner, the builder was put to death. If the collapse caused the death of the son of the owner, the son of the builder was put to death. If goods were destroyed, they had to be replaced and the house rebuilt at the builder's expense

The largest category of laws in the Code of Hummurabi focused on marriage and the family. Pages

arranged marriages for their children. After marriage, the two parties signed a marriage contract. Without a contract, no one was considered legally married.

Society in ancient Mesopotamia was patriarchal—that is, Mesopotamian society was dominated by men. Hammurabi's code makes it clear that women had far fewer privileges and rights in marriage than did men.

A woman's place was in the home. If she failed to fulfill her duties, her husband had legal grounds for divorce. If a wife was not able to bear children or tried to leave home to engage in business, her husband could divorce her. A wife who was a "gadabout... neglecting her house [and] humiliating her husband," could be drowned.

Fathers ruled their children as well as their wives. Obedience was expected: "If a son has struck his father, he shall cut off his hand." If a son committed a serious enough offense, his father could disinherit him. Obviously, Hammurabi's law code covered almost every aspect of people's lives.

Reading Check Identifying Identify at least three aspects of Mesopotamian society as revealed by the Code of Hammurabi.

The Creativity of the Sumerians

The Sumerians invented the oldest writing system. Historians also credit them with many technological innovations.

Writing Around 3000 B.C., the Sumerians created a cuneiform ("wedge-shaped") system of writing. Using a reed stylus (a tool for writing), they made wedge-shaped impressions on clay tablets, which were then baked or dried in the sun. Once dried, these tablets lasted a very long time. Several hundred thousand tablets have been found. They have been a valuable source of information for modern scholars.

Writing was important because it allowed a society to keep records and to pass along knowledge from person to person and generation to generation. Writing also made it possible for people to communicate ideas in new ways. This is especially evident in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, a Mesopotamian poem that records the exploits of a legendary king named Gilgamesh.

Technology The Sumerians also invented several tools and devices that made daily life easier and more productive. They developed the wagon wheel, for example, to help transport people and goods from place to place. The potter's wheel to shape containers, the sundial to keep time, and the arch used in

construction are other examples of Sumerian technology. The Sumerians were the first to make bronze out of copper and tin, creating finely crafted metalwork.

The Sumerians also made outstanding achievements in mathematics and astronomy. In math, they devised a number system based on 60. Geometry was used to measure fields and to erect buildings. In astronomy, the Sumerians charted the heavenly constellations. A quick glance at your watch and its division into 60 minutes in an hour should remind you of our debt to the Sumerians.

Reading Check Identifying Name two major inventions of the Sumerians and tell how those inventions affect our lives today.

The Course of Egyptian History

The Nile is a unique river, beginning in the heart of Africa and coursing northward for more than 4,000 miles (6,436 km). It is the longest river in the world. Before it empties into the Mediterranean, the Nile splits into two major branches. This split forms a triangular territory, the delta. The Nile Delta is called Lower Egypt; the land upstream, to the south, is called Upper Egypt. Egypt's important cities developed at the tip of the delta, the point at which the Nile divides.

Egyptian history can be divided into three major periods: the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom. These were periods of long-term stability marked by strong leadership, freedom from invasion, the building of temples and pyramids, and considerable intellectual and cultural activity. Between the periods of stability were ages of political chaos and invasion, known as the Intermediate periods.

The history of Egypt begins around 3100 B.C., when Menes (MEE•NEEZ) the king united the villages of Upper and Lower Egypt into a single kingdom and created the first Egyptian royal dynasty. A dynasty is a family of rulers whose right to rule is passed on within the family.

The Old Kingdom The Old Kingdom, which lasted from around 2700 to 2200 B.C., was an age of prosperity and splendor. Like the kings of the Sumerian city-states, the monarchs of the Old Kingdom were powerful rulers over a unified state. Among the various titles of Egyptian monarchs, that of pharaoh (originally meaning "great house" or "palace") eventually became the most common.

Kingship was a divine institution in ancient Egypt and formed part of a universal cosmic order: "What



Picturing History

The mummy of Ramses the Great has remained intact for 3,000 years. Ramses, who ruled Egypt from 1279 to 1213 B.C., was nearly 90 when he died. What might medical investigators discover about Egyptian life from this mummy?

is the king of Upper and Lower Egypt? He is a god by whose dealings one lives, the father and mother of all men, alone by himself, without an equal." In obeying their pharaoh, subjects believed that they were helping to maintain a stable world order.

The Pyramids One of the great achievements of Egyptian civilization, the building of pyramids, occurred in the time of the Old Kingdom. Pyramids were built as part of a larger complex of buildings dedicated to the dead—in effect, a city of the dead. The area included several structures: a large pyramid for the pharaoh's burial; smaller pyramids for his family; and several mastabas, rectangular structures with flat roofs used as tombs for the pharaoh's officials.

To preserve the physical body after death, the Egyptians practiced mummification, a process of slowly drying a dead body to prevent it from rotting. This process took place in workshops run by priests, primarily for the wealthy families who could afford it. Workers first removed the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines and placed them in four special jars that were put in the tomb with the mummy. The priests also removed the brain by extracting it through the nose. They then covered the corpse with a natural salt that absorbed the body's water. Later, they filled the body with spices and wrapped it with layers of linen soaked in resin. At the end of the process, which took about 70 days, a lifelike mask

was placed over the head and shoulders of the mummy. The mummy was then sealed in a case and placed in its tomb.

Pyramids were tombs for the mummified bodies of pharaohs and their families. The largest and most magnificent of all the pyramids was built under King Khufu (KOO•FOO). Constructed at Giza around 2540 B.C., the famous Great Pyramid of King Khufu covers 13 acres (5.3 ha), measures 756 feet (230 m) at each side of its base, and stands 481 feet (147 m) high.

Guarding the Great Pyramid at Giza is a huge statue carved from rock, known as the Great Sphinx. This colossal statue is 240 feet (73 m) long and 66 feet (20 m) high. It has the body of a lion and a human head. The head is believed by many to be a likeness of Khufu's son Khafre, who ordered the statue's construction.

The Middle Kingdom The Old Kingdom's collapse was followed by a period of chaos that lasted about 150 years. Eventually, a new royal dynasty gained control of all Egypt and began the Middle Kingdom, a period of stability lasting from about 2050 to 1652 B.C. Egyptians later portrayed the Middle Kingdom as a golden age—an age of stability.

One feature of the Middle Kingdom was a new concern of the pharaohs for the people. Pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom undertook a number of helpful projects. The draining of swampland in the Nile Delta provided thousands of acres of new farmland.

The digging of a canal to connect the Nile to the Red Sea aided trade and transportation.

The New Kingdom The Middle Kingdom came to an end around 1652 B.C. with the invasion of Egypt by a group of people from western Asia known to the Egyptians as the Hyksos (HIK •SAHS). The Hyksos used horse-drawn war chariots and overwhelmed the Egyptian soldiers, who fought from donkey carts.

For almost a hundred years, the Hyksos ruled much of Egypt. The conquered Egyptians learned a great deal, however, from their conquerors. From the Hyksos, the Egyptians learned to use bronze in the making of their farming tools and their weapons. The Egyptians also mastered many of the military skills of the Hyksos, especially the use of horse-drawn war chariots.

Eventually, a new dynasty of pharaohs used the new weapons to drive out the Hyksos and reunite Egypt. The New Kingdom was established and lasted from approximately 1567 to 1085 B.C. This reunification launched the Egyptians along a new militaristic path. During the period of the New Kingdom, Egypt created an empire and became the most powerful state in Southwest Asia.

Massive wealth boosted the power of the New Kingdom pharaohs. The Egyptian rulers showed their wealth by building new temples. Hatshepsut—the first woman to become pharaoh—built a great temple at Deir el Bahri, near Thebes.

The New Kingdom was not without troubles, however. New invasions in the thirteenth century B.C. by the "Sea Peoples," as Egyptians called them, drove the Egyptians back within their old frontiers and ended the Egyptian Empire. The New Kingdom itself collapsed in 1085 B.C.



The Egyptians learned much, including the use of war chariots, from the Hyksos.

People In History

Hatshepsut

Ruled 1503–1482 B.C. Egyptian pharaoh

Hatshepsut was the daughter of the pharaoh Thutmose I. She married her half-brother, who became the pharaoh Thutmose II. When he died, Hatshepsut assumed the full power of pharaoh. Statues show Hatshepsut clothed and bearded as a king would be. She was addressed as "His Majesty."

Hatshepsut's reign was a prosperous one. She is best known for the temple dedicated to herself at Deir el Bahri on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes. One of the inscriptions she had placed there reads: "Now my heart turns to and fro, in thinking what will the people say, they who shall see my monument in later years, and shall speak of what I have done."



For the next thousand years, Egypt was dominated by Libyans, Nubians, Persians, and finally Macedonians after the conquest of Alexander the Great (see Chapter 2). In the first century B.C., the pharaoh Cleopatra VII tried to reestablish Egypt's independence. However, her involvement with Rome led to her defeat and suicide, and Egypt became a province in Rome's mighty empire.

Reading Check Contrasting What were the major differences between the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom?

Society in Ancient Egypt

Over a period of thousands of years, Egyptian society maintained a simple structure. It was organized like a pyramid, with the god-king at the top. The pharaoh was surrounded by an upper class of nobles and priests, who joined in the elaborate rituals of the pharaoh's life. The members of this ruling class ran the government and managed their own landed estates. (See page 772 to read excerpts from Vizier Ptahhotep's An Egyptian Father's Advice to His Son in the Primary Sources Library.)

Below the upper class were merchants, artisans, scribes, and tax collectors. Merchants carried on an active trade up and down the Nile, as well as in town and village markets. Egyptian artisans made an

| Comparing Life in Mesopotamia and Egypt | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| Com | paring Life III III | Egypt | | | |
| | Mesopotamia Fertile Crescent (Southwest Asia) | Africa | | | |
| Geography | Fertile Crescelli (Schalles | Nile | | | |
| Rivers | Tigris and Euphrates | Deserts, seas, cataracts | | | |
| Natural Sarriers | Flat plains | Polytheistic | | | |
| Religion | Polytheistic City-states; theocracy; large bureaucracy; kings ruled | Rural villages; dynasties; divine kings ruled | | | |
| Social Structure | Nobles, commoners, slaves | Upper classes, merchants, artisans, peasants | | | |
| Economy | Farming and trade | Farming and trade | | | |
| Written Language | Cuneiform The H | Hieroglyphics 4 | | | |

is and Fovot

Chart Skills

Ancient civilizations thrived in both Mesopotamia and Egypt.

- Making Comparisons Create a map of Mesopotamia and Egypt Develop icons to illustrate the differences and similarities in the cultures
- Evaluating How did geographical differences influence the development of these cultures?

incredible variety of well-built, beautiful goods: stone dishes, painted boxes; wooden furniture; gold, silver, and copper tools and containers; and linen clothes.

By fat, the largest number of people in Egypt simply worked the land. In theory, the pharaoh owned all the land but granted portions of it to the subjects. Most of the lower classes were peasants who farmed the land of these estates. They paid taxes in the form of crops to the pharaoh, nobles, and priests; lived in small villages or towns; and provided military service and forced labor for building projects.

Reading Check Summarizing List the social classes of ancient Egypt and identify their roles.

Writing, Art, and Science

Writing in Egypt emerged around 3000 B.C. The Greeks later called this earliest Egyptian writing hieroglyphics, meaning "priest-carvings" or "sacred writings." The hieroglyphic system of writing, which used both pictures and more abstract forms, was complex. Learning and practicing it took much time and skill. Hieroglyphic script was used for writing on temple walls and in tombs. A highly simplified version of hieroglyphics, known as hieratic script, came into being. It used the same principles as hieroglyphic writing, but the drawings were simplified by using dashes, strokes, and curves to represent them. Hieratic script was used for business transactions, record keeping, and the general needs of daily life. Egyptian hieroglyphs were at first carved in stone. Later, hieratic script was written on papyrus, a paper made from the papyrus reed that grew along the Nile.

Pyramids, temples, and other monuments bear witness to the architectural and artistic achievements of the Egyptians. Artists and sculptors were expected to follow particular formulas in style. This gave Egyptian art a distinctive look for thousands of years. For example, the human body was often portrayed as a combination of profile, semiprofile, and frontal view to accurately represent each part.

Egyptians also made advances in mathematics and science. Mathematics helped them in building their massive monuments. Egyptians were able to calculate area and volume and used geometry to survey flooded land. The Egyptians developed an accurate 365-day calendar by basing their year not only on the movements of the moon, but also the bright star Sirius. Egyptians also had medical expertise. Archaeologists have recovered directions from Egyptian doctors for treating wounds and diseases.

Reading Check Contrasting What are the differences between hieroglyphics and hieratic script?

New Centers of Civilization: The Israelites

By 1500 B.C., much of the creative impulse of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations was beginning to decline. By 1200 B.C., a power vacuum had emerged in western Asia that allowed a number of small states to emerge and flourish. The Israelites were one of these peoples. Though the Israelites did not create an empire, their religion, Judaism, flourished as a world religion and later influenced the religions of Christianity and Islam.

The "Children of Israel" The Israelites were a group of Semitic-speaking people. Much of the history and the religious beliefs of the Israelites were eventually recorded in written form in the Hebrew Bible, parts of which are known to Christians as the Old Testament. According to their history, the Israelites migrated from Mesopotamia to the land that they referred to as Canaan. They followed a lifestyle based on grazing flocks and herds rather than on farming. Then, because of drought, the Israelites migrated to Egypt, where they were enslaved until a leader named Moses led them out of Egypt. They wandered for many years in the desert of the Sinai Peninsula until they returned to Canaan.

Recent interpretations of archaeological evidence sometimes contradict the details of the biblical account. What is generally agreed, however, is that between 1200 and 1000 B.C., the Israelites emerged as a distinct group of people, organized in tribes, who established a united kingdom known as Israel.

By the time of **King Solomon**, who ruled from about 970 to 930 B.C., the Israelites had established control over much of Canaan and had made **Jerusalem**

into the capital of Israel. Solomon greatly strengthened royal power. He expanded the government and army and encouraged trade. Solomon is best known for building a temple in the city of Jerusalem. The Israelites viewed the temple as the symbolic center of their religion and of the Israelite kingdom itself. Under Solomon, ancient Israel was at the height of its power.



King Solomon

After Solomon's death, tension between the northern and southern Israelite tribes led to the creation of two separate kingdoms—a northern kingdom of Israel and a southern kingdom of Judah. Both kingdoms eventually fell to the large empires of the Assyrians and Babylonians. However, the people of Judah survived, eventually becoming known as the Jews and giving their name to Judaism. It became a stateless religion based on the belief that God was not fixed to one particular land but instead was creator and lord of the whole world.

CONNECTIONS Past To Present

Conflict in Palestine

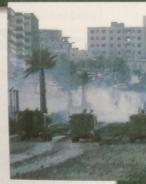
Conflict in Southwest Asia has a long history. When the Israelites entered Canaan, around 1220 B.C., other peoples were already settled there. One of these peoples was the Philistines. For over two centuries, Israelites and Philistines fought for control.

By 1020 B.C., the Israelites found themselves on the verge of being conquered by the Philistines. The Israelites decided to give up their loose tribal organization, choosing to unite behind one of their members—Saul—as king.

At first, Saul and the small army he organized were successful. Around 1000 B.C., however, when they dared to meet the Philistines on an open plain, Saul and his army were defeated.

David, the next king of the Israelites, defeated the Philistines and established control over much of Canaan. Although the Israelites eventually would be conquered and scattered, Canaan (later called Palestine) remained the Promised Land in the minds of many Jews.

In 1948, the independent Jewish state of Israel was established in part of Palestine. About 90 percent of the people in Palestine were Arabs who were not eager to be governed by the Israelis. Arab neighbors of the new state were outraged. In 1964, an Arab organization called the Palestine Liberation Organization was founded to bring about an independent Arab state of Palestine. Conflict between Arabs and Israelis over Palestine continues to this day.



Conflict in the

Comparing Past and Present

Research the steps that have been taken to reach a settlement between the Israelis and Palestinian Arabs over the past five years. What actions have been the most successful? What are the most significant reasons that a lasting peace still does not exist?

The Spiritual Dimensions of Israel According to Jewish beliefs, there is but one God, called Yahweh (YAH•WAY), the Creator of the world and everything in it. In the Jewish view, God ruled the world; all peoples were his servants, whether they knew it or not. God had created nature but was not in nature. The stars, moon, rivers, wind, and other natural phenomena were not gods, as other ancient peoples believed, but God's handiwork. All of God's creations could be admired for their awesome beauty, but not worshipped as gods.

This powerful creator, however, was not removed from the life he had created. God was just and good, and he expected goodness from his people. If they did not obey his will, they would be punished. However, God was also full of mercy and love: "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made." Each person could have a personal relationship with this powerful being.

The Jews were monotheistic; they believed in one God. The covenant, law, and prophets were three aspects of the Jewish religious tradition. The Jews believed that during their exodus from Egypt, when Moses led his people out of bondage toward the promised land, God made a covenant, or contract, with them. Yahweh promised to guide them if they obeyed the law of God stated in the Ten Command-

The Ten Commandments

- 1. I am the Lord thy God Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- 2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image
- 3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain . . .
- 4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- 5. Honor thy father and thy mother
- 6. Thou shalt not kill.
- 7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- 8. Thou shalt not steal.
- Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
- 10. Thou shalt not covet . . . anything that is thy neighbor's.

Source: Exodus 20:1-17

ments. According to the Bible, Yahweh gave these commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Jews believed that certain religious teachers, called prophets, were sent by God to serve as his voice to his people. The following selection from the biblical book of Isaiah makes clear the prophets' belief that unjust actions would bring God's punishment.

and leaders of his people: 'It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?' declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty. The Lord says, 'The women of Zion are haughty . . . with ornaments jingling on their ankles. Therefore the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; the Lord will make their scalps bald. . . . Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; . . . instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding. Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors in battle. The gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground. **

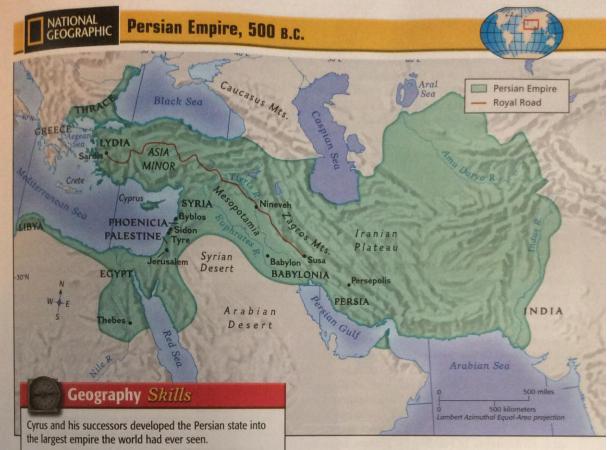
The age of prophecy lasted from the eleventh to the fifth centuries B.C., during the time when the people of Israel and Judah faced threats or endured conquests by powerful neighbors. The prophets declared that faithlessness to God would bring punishment and catastrophe, but that turning from evil would bring God's mercy.

From the prophets came new concepts that enriched the Jewish tradition. Later prophets, such as Isaiah, embraced a concern for all humanity. All nations would someday come to the God of Israel This vision included the end of war and the establishment of peace for all the nations of the world. In the words of the prophet Isaiah:

disputes for many people. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

The prophets also cried out against social injustice. They condemned the rich for causing the poor to suffer. They denounced luxuries as worthless, and they threatened Israel with prophecies of dire punishments for these sins. They said that God's command was to live justly, share with one's neighbors, care for the poor and the unfortunate, and act with compassion.

The religion of Israel was unique among the religions of western Asia and Egypt. The most dramatic difference was the Jewish belief that there is only one



 Interpreting Maps Explain why the Royal Road was constructed and why it was constructed where it was.

2. Applying Geography Skills Using your text, identify the areas added to the empire by Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius. What problems might these rulers have encountered as the empire grew?

God for all peoples (monotheism). In all other religions at that time, only priests (and some rulers) had access to the gods. In the Jewish tradition, God's wishes, though communicated to the people through prophets, had all been written down. No spiritual leader could claim that he alone knew God's will. This knowledge was open to anyone who could read the Torah

Reading Check Identifying Which aspect of the Israelite culture had the greatest impact on Western civilization?

The Rise of New Empires

A small and independent Israelite state could exist only as long as no larger state dominated western

Asia. New empires soon arose in Assyria and Persia, however, that conquered vast stretches of the ancient world.

The Assyrian Empire The first of the new empires was formed in Assyria, located on the upper Tigris River. The Assyrians were a Semitic-speaking people who exploited the use of iron weapons to establish an empire by 700 B.C. The Assyrian Empire included Mesopotamia, parts of the Iranian Plateau, sections of Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt down to Thebes. Within less than a hundred years, however, internal strife and resentment of Assyrian kings began to tear the Assyrian Empire apart. In 612 B.C., the empire fell to a coalition of Chaldeans and Medes (people who lived in the East), and was divided between those two powers.

The Assyrians used terror as an instrument of warfare. They regularly laid waste to the land in which they were fighting. They smashed dams; looted and destroyed towns; set crops on fire; and cut down trees, particularly fruit trees. The Assyrians were especially known for committing atrocities on their captives. King Ashurnasirpal recorded this account of his treatment of prisoners: "3,000 of their combat troops I felled with weapons. . . . Many I took alive; from some of these I cut off their hands to the wrist, from others I cut off their noses, ears and fingers; I put out the eyes of many of the soldiers. . . . I burned their young men and women to death."

The Persian Empire The Persians were an Indo-European people who lived in what is today southwestern Iran. Primarily nomadic, the Persians were organized in groups until one family managed to unify them. One of the family's members, **Cyrus**, created a powerful Persian state that stretched from Asia Minor to western India.

Cyrus ruled from 559 to 530 B.C. In 539 B.C., he entered Mesopotamia and captured Babylon. His treatment of Babylonia showed remarkable restraint and wisdom. Cyrus also issued an edict permitting the Jews, who had been brought to Babylon earlier in the century, to return to Jerusalem.

The people of his time called Cyrus "the Great." Indeed, he must have been an unusual ruler for his time, a man who demonstrated much wisdom and compassion in the conquest and organization of his empire. Unlike the Assyrian rulers, Cyrus had a reputation for mercy. Cyrus had a genuine respect for other civilizations. In building his palaces, for example, he made use of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian designs and building methods.

Cyrus's successors extended the territory of the Persian Empire. His son Cambyses (kam•By•sez) successfully invaded Egypt. Darius, who ruled from 521 to 486 B.C., added a new Persian province in western India that extended to the Indus River. He then moved into Europe, conquering Thrace and creating the largest empire the world had yet seen.

An efficient system of communication was crucial to sustaining the Persian Empire. Well-maintained roads made it easy for officials to travel throughout the entire kingdom. The Royal Road stretched from Lydia to Susa, the chief capital of the empire. Like the Assyrians, the Persians set up way stations that provided food and shelter, as well as fresh horses, for the king's messengers.

In this vast system, the Persian king—the "Great King"—occupied an exalted position. The Great King held the power of life and death.

After Darius, the Persian kings became more and more isolated at their courts, surrounded by luxuries provided by the immense quantities of gold and silver that flowed into their treasuries. As the Persian kings increased taxes to gain more wealth, loyalty to the empire declined. Struggles over the throne weakened the monarchy (rule by a king or queen). Over a period of time, this bloody struggle for the throne weakened the empire and led to its conquest by the Greek ruler Alexander the Great during the 330s B.C.

Reading Check Examining What caused the Persian Empire to decline after the death of Darius?

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

- Define city-state, empire, patriarchal, cuneiform, dynasty, hieroglyphics, Judaism, monotheistic.
- 2. Identify Sargon, Hammurabi, Code of Hammurabi, Menes, King Solomon, Cyrus.
- Locate Tigris River, Euphrates River, Fertile Crescent, Nile River, Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt, Jerusalem, Royal Road.
- 4. Explain why Cyrus was called "the Great."
- 5. List the technological achievements of the civilizations of western Asia and Egypt.

Critical Thinking

- 6. Describe What were the unique aspects of the Jewish religion compared to the other religions of western Asia and Egypt? Include the impact of Judaism on the development of Islam and Christianity.
- 7. Organizing Information Use a chart like the one below to compare the Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, and New Kingdom of Egypt.

| 01. | Dates | Achievements |
|----------------|-------|--------------|
| Old Kingdom | | Acinevements |
| Middle Kingdom | | |
| New Kingdom | | |

Analyzing Visuals

8. Compare the Royal Standard of Ur on page 25 with the photo of the war chariot on page 29. What can historial's learn about the cultures of the Sumerians and the Egyptians from these two pieces of art? What technologies and cultural values are evident?

Writing About History

9. Expository Writing Explain why Hammurabi's code was a significant development. Develop a set of laws based on the Code of Hammurabi that would apply to your community today. Explain why your code differs from that developed by Hammurabi, or why it is similar.