

# Unit 3: Ancient River Valley Civilizations - Mesopotamia

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## Standard(s) of Learning:

**WHI.3** – The student will demonstrate knowledge of ancient river valley civilizations, including those of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus River Valley, and China and the civilizations of the Hebrews, Phoenicians, and Nubians, by

- a) Locating these civilizations in time and place
  - b) Describing the development of social, political, and economic patterns, including slavery
  - c) Explaining the development of religious traditions
  - d) Describing the origins, beliefs, traditions, customs, and spread of Judaism
  - e) Explaining the development of language and writing
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## **WHI.3a – Location and Geography of Mesopotamia**



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Locate Mesopotamia on the map – Color it RED

- During the New Stone Age, permanent settlements appeared in river valleys and around the **Fertile Crescent**.
- River valleys provided **water** and rich **soil** for crops as well as protection from invasion.
  - Mesopotamian Civilization: **Tigris** and **Euphrates** River Valleys (Southwest Asia)

### The Fertile Crescent

- The **Tigris** and **Euphrates** Rivers are the major geographical features of the Fertile Crescent
- Soil is very **fertile**
- Surround by **deserts** and **mountains**
- Often **invaded** and **conquered**

### Geographical Challenges

- **Unpredictable** flooding of Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
- No **natural barriers** for protection
- Limited **natural resources**

## The Sumerians

Date(s):	<b>3300 BCE</b>
Location/Important Areas:	<b>Sumer</b> (capital) and <b>Ur</b>
Government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>City-states</b> – had same culture, but developed their own governments</li> <li>• Most governments were controlled by the temple priests or by a strong military leader</li> </ul>
Society:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Upper Class:</b> Kings, landowners, and priests</li> <li>• <b>Middle Class:</b> Wealthy merchants</li> <li>• <b>Lower Class:</b> Farmers and laborers (majority of population)</li> <li>• <b>Slaves:</b> Prisoners of war, people who owed debts (could buy freedom)</li> <li>• Women's rights: some job choice, could own property, could receive an education</li> </ul>
Religion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Polytheistic</b> – Gods were associated with forces of nature (i.e. storms, air, water)</li> <li>• Built <b>ziggurats</b> for them and offered sacrifices (animals, food, wine) to please them</li> <li>• Believed souls went to the “land of no return” – a dismal, gloomy place between the earth's crust and the ancient sea</li> </ul>
Economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly based on <b>trade</b> – traded grain, cloth, and craft goods for raw materials such as stone, wood, and metal</li> </ul>
Achievements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cuneiform</b> – pictograph writing on clay tablets created using a stylus</li> <li>• Invented the <b>wheel, sail, arch</b> and <b>plow</b></li> <li>• First to use <b>bronze</b></li> <li>• Developed a number system based on <b>60</b> (basis for modern time system 60 sec = 1 min)</li> <li>• Geometry – 360 degrees in a <b>circle</b></li> <li>• <b>Irrigation</b> systems for crops</li> <li>• Built walled cities for protection</li> </ul>
Empire Ended:	Conquered by <b>Sargon</b> and the <b>Akkadins</b>

## The Akkadians

Date(s):	<b><u>2350 ~ 2150 BCE</u></b>
Location/Important Areas:	Came from <b><u>Akkad</u></b> and conquered Sumer (capital)
Government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Sargon</u></b> created the world's first <b><u>empire</u></b> when he took control of northern and southern Mesopotamia</li></ul>
Society:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adopted much of the <b><u>Sumerian</u></b> culture</li></ul>
Religion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Polytheistic</u></b></li></ul>
Economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Based on <b><u>agriculture</u></b> and <b><u>trade</u></b></li></ul>
Achievements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Created the first <b><u>empire</u></b> (government where one ruler controls many territories)</li></ul>
Empire Ended:	Empire lasted about 200 years – declined due to internal, fighting, invasions, and a famine

## The Babylonians

Date(s):	<b><u>1792 – 1750 BCE</u></b>
Location/Important Areas:	<b><u>Babylon</u></b> (capital)
Government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Hammurabi</u></b> ruled the Babylonian Empire at its peak</li> <li>• <b><u>Hammurabi’s Code</u></b>: Collection of 282 specific laws dealing with family relations, business conduct, and crime</li> <li>• Based on the principle of <b><u>retaliation</u></b> – “An eye for an eye”</li> </ul>
Society:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fair and just society – laws applied to everyone, but your punishment depended on your place in society (rich vs. poor, male vs. female)</li> <li>• Laws sought to protect women and children</li> </ul>
Religion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Polytheistic</u></b></li> </ul>
Economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on agriculture and trade</li> </ul>
Achievements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First written law code – <b><u>Hammurabi’s Code</u></b></li> <li>• Astronomy/Astrology – created the <b><u>horoscope</u></b></li> </ul>
Empire Ended:	Conquered by the <b><u>Hittites</u></b>

## The Chaldeans

Date(s):	<b><u>600 BCE</u></b>
Location/Important Areas:	<b><u>Ninevah</u></b> and <b><u>Babylon</u></b> (capital)
Government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ruled by King <b><u>Nebuchadnezzar</u></b></li></ul>
Society:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prosperous society – built many canals, buildings, walled cities</li></ul>
Religion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Polytheistic</u></b></li></ul>
Economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trade flourished</li></ul>
Achievements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Hanging Gardens</u></b> of Babylon – built by Nebuchadnezzar for his homesick wife (one of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World)</li><li>• Gate of Ishtar</li><li>• Skilled <b><u>astronomers</u></b> – predicted solar/lunar eclipses, discovered the sun, moon, Earth, and 5 other planets belong to same solar system</li></ul>
Empire Ended:	Conquered by <b><u>Persians</u></b>

## The Assyrians

Date(s):	<b><u>850 – 612 BCE</u></b>
Location/Important Areas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invaded from <b><u>Assyria</u></b> (Northern Mesopotamia)</li> <li>• <b><u>Ninevah</u></b> (capital city – walled city) and Ashur</li> </ul>
Government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruled by <b><u>king</u></b> with <b><u>absolute</u></b> power               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Empire was divided into <b><u>provinces</u></b></li> <li>○ Each province had a <b><u>governor</u></b> who reported back to the king</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Effectively ruled a large empire: Syria, Palestine, Babylonia, parts of Anatolia, and Egypt</li> </ul>
Society:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>War-like</u></b> society</li> <li>• Used <b><u>terror</u></b> to control enemies – killed or enslaved enemies, deported populations</li> </ul>
Religion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Polytheistic</u></b></li> </ul>
Economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forced conquered territories to pay <b><u>taxes</u></b> and <b><u>tribute</u></b></li> <li>• Trade</li> </ul>
Achievements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fierce effective <b><u>warriors</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b><u>Ironworking</u></b> technology – iron armor, weapons, spears</li> <li>○ Excellent military strategists</li> </ul> </li> <li>• King <b><u>Ashurbanipal</u></b> created the <b><u>Library at Ninevah</u></b> – collected 20,000 clay tablets including the <b><u>Epic of Gilgamesh</u></b></li> </ul>
Empire Ended:	Conquered by the <b><u>Chaldeans</u></b>

## The Hittites

Date(s):	<b><u>1650 – 1190 BCE</u></b>
Location/Important Areas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invaded from <b><u>Anatolia</u></b> (Asia Minor)</li><li>• Hattusas (capital city)</li></ul>
Government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empire of <b><u>city-states</u></b></li></ul>
Society:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spoke an <b><u>Indo-European</u></b> language</li><li>• <b><u>Warlike</u></b> people</li><li>• Borrowed ideas about literature, art, politics, and law from other more advanced societies</li></ul>
Religion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Polytheistic</u></b></li></ul>
Economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Trade</u></b> and <b><u>conquest</u></b></li></ul>
Achievements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Excelled in the technology of war<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ First to <b><u>smelt</u></b> iron – used to make weapons, armor, and chariots</li></ul></li><li>• Occupied Babylon for 450 years</li></ul>
Empire Ended:	Empire ended suddenly after a series of invasions



## The Phoenicians

Date(s):	<b><u>1100 – 842 BCE</u></b>
Location/Important Areas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modern day Lebanon</li><li>• Seaports – <b><u>Carthage</u></b>, <b><u>Tyre</u></b>, and <b><u>Sidon</u></b></li></ul>
Government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Never united into one country</li><li>• Founded a number of wealth <b><u>city-states</u></b></li></ul>
Society:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Seafaring</u></b> society</li></ul>
Religion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Polytheistic</u></b></li></ul>
Economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Based on trade</u></b></li></ul>
Achievements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highly skilled <b><u>sailors</u></b> and ship builders</li><li>• Produced <b><u>red-purple</u></b> dye</li><li>• Excellent craftspeople: wood, metal, glass blowing</li><li>• <b><u>Phoenician Alphabet</u></b> – phonetic system where one sign was used for one sound – basis for our alphabet</li></ul>
Empire Ended:	Conquered by the <b><u>Assyrians</u></b>

## The Persians

Date(s):	<b>550 BCE</b>
Location/Important Areas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Came from <b>Central Europe</b></li> <li>• Created the largest empire in the world – stretched from the <b>Indus River</b> to <b>Anatolia</b></li> </ul>
Government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empire was established by King <b>Cyrus</b></li> <li>• King Darius developed an <b>imperial bureaucracy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Empire divided into provinces ruled by a King with absolute power</li> <li>○ Each province had a satrap (governor), military leader, and tax collector who reported to the king</li> <li>○ Special inspectors (“King’s Eyes and Ears”) were sent to the provinces to ensure loyalty</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Society:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tolerant</b> of conquered people – allowed to keep their own languages and laws</li> </ul>
Religion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conquered people were allowed to practice their own religions (Polytheistic)</li> <li>• Persian religion: <b>Zoroastrianism (Monotheistic)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Founded by <b>Zoroaster</b></li> <li>○ Taught that Earth is a battle ground where a great struggle is fought between good and evil</li> <li>○ Believed in <b>one</b> god: Ahura Mazda – judged people after death</li> <li>○ Influenced Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collected <b>taxes</b></li> <li>• <b>Trade</b></li> <li>• Developed a standard <b>currency</b> (metal coins adopted from Lydians)</li> </ul>
Achievements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectively ruled a large empire for over 200 years</li> <li>• <b>Royal Road:</b> 1,677 miles of roads helped to connect the empire</li> </ul>
Empire Ended:	King Xerxes (Darius’ grandson) is defeated by the Greeks in the Persian Wars

## The Lydians

Date(s):	<b><u>600 BCE</u></b>
Location/Important Areas:	<b><u>Lydia</u></b> (West Asia Minor)
Achievements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First to <b><u>coin money</u></b> – created a money economy – use of money as a measure of value and a unit of account</li></ul>

## The Hebrews and The Origins of Judaism

Date	Event	Details
2000 BC	God commands Abraham to take his people to Canaan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Abraham</b> was a shepherd who lived in Ur</li> <li>• Receives vision from God and moves his family to <b>Canaan</b></li> <li>• Believes that God established a <b>covenant</b> – promise – of land and protection</li> </ul>
1650 BC	Descendants of Abraham move to Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move to <b>Egypt</b> to escape drought and famine</li> <li>• <b>Enslaved</b> by the Egyptians for <b>400</b> years</li> </ul>
1300 – 1200 BC	Hebrews begin their “exodus” from Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Moses</b> leads the Hebrews out of Egypt and slavery – The <b>Exodus</b></li> <li>• Flee to the <b>Sinai Peninsula</b></li> <li>• Moses climbs Mount Sinai to pray and receives the <b>10 Commandments</b> from God – civil and religious laws</li> <li>• Formed a new covenant with God – Hebrews promised to follow the 10 Commandments, God promised to protect them</li> <li>• Hebrew wander in the desert for 40 years – return to Canaan after the death of Moses</li> <li>• Loosely organized into <b>12</b> tribes – Twelve Tribes of Israel – who lived in separate territories and were self-governing</li> </ul>
1020 BC	Hebrews unite and form the kingdom of Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Saul</b> – First king of Israel – drives the Philistines out of the central hills of ancient Palestine</li> <li>• King <b>David</b> – unites the tribes, establishes Jerusalem as the capital, and founded a dynasty</li> </ul>
962 BC	King David is succeeded by his son Solomon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most <b>powerful</b> Hebrew king</li> <li>• Expanded trade and built a large temple in Jerusalem to honor God – Ark of Covenant also kept there</li> </ul>
922 BC	Kingdom splits into two, Israel and Judah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After Solomon’s death, the Jews in the south revolted because of high <b>taxes</b> and forced <b>labor</b></li> </ul>
722 BC	Assyrians conquer Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Judah</b> and <b>Israel</b> were forced to pay tribute in hopes that the Assyrians would not attack</li> <li>• By 722 BC Assyria had conquered Israel</li> </ul>
586 BC	Chaldeans attack Jerusalem and destroy Solomon’s Temple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judah is conquered by <b>Nebuchadnezzar</b></li> <li>• Solomon’s temple was destroyed during the conquest</li> <li>• Many surviving Jews were exiled to <b>Babylon</b></li> </ul>

515 BC	Second Temple is completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 539 BC, King <b>Cyrus</b> (Persia) conquers Babylon and allows the Jews to return to Jerusalem</li> <li>They rebuilt the temple</li> </ul>
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### **Judaism**



The monotheism of Abraham became the foundation of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – religions that changed the world. The Hebrews were the first to become monotheists.

Who founded the religion?	<b><u>Abraham</u></b>
Where was the religion founded?	<b><u>Ur/Canaan (Mesopotamia)</u></b>
Identify the sacred writings and holy books	<b><u>Torah</u></b>
Monotheistic or Polytheistic?	<b><u>Monotheistic (Yahweh)</u></b>
Major Beliefs, Customs, and Traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><u>10 Commandments</u></b> (ethical monotheism)</li> <li>Hanukkah/Passover</li> <li>Holy City – Jerusalem (Wailing Wall)</li> <li>Star of David</li> <li>Kosher</li> </ul>
Based on this religion, is there a heaven and, if so, how do you get there?	<b><u>Yes – Follow the 10 Commandments and teaching of the Torah</u></b>
How and where did this religion spread?	<b><u>Cultural Diffusion</u></b>  <b><u>Exodus/Disapora</u></b> (forced dispersal of the Jewish people)