Chapter 2

The Fertile Crescent
Section 1
Land Between Two Rivers
What were the first schools like?

- First schools located in Sumer 4,000 years ago
- Taught boys and girls
  - Went to school from 8-20 years old
- Taught a new invention
  - Writing
    - Once they graduated they became scribes – professional writers
- Kept records for Kings and priests

Why did people settle in Mesopotamia?

- Rich soil & good river
- Attracted:
  - Farmers
  - City builders
  - Traders
Why is Mesopotamia’s location important?

- Mesopotamia – means “Between two rivers”
- Between the Tigris & Euphrates Rivers
- Part of a large area called the Fertile Crescent – shaped like a crescent moon
- Rivers made it one of the best places to grow crops in Southwest Asia

Why was it a good place to grow crops?

- Flooded every spring after snow melts in the mountains
  - Water picks up top soil as it goes down mountain
  - Flood leaves top soil = good crops
  - Flood without warning
    - Swept away people, animals, buildings
What else did the river do?
- Provide fish
- Tall strong reeds
  - Make boats
- Clay
  - Make buildings

Why did cities grow in Mesopotamia?
- Farming = surplus of food
  - 3500 B.C. several cities growing in the Sumer area

Did these cities communicate?
- Yes, distance made it difficult, desert between each
- Each city acted as its own state – called city-states
  - Each had:
    - Own special god or goddess
    - Government
    - King
What did these cities look like?

- 3 cities in Mesopotamia, Sumer
  - Kish
  - Erech
  - Ur
- High walls
  - Keep out invaders
- Very narrow streets – traffic jams
  - Carts could not go through
- Large temples
- Public Squares
  - Merchants display goods
  - Streets filled with musicians, acrobats, beggars, and water sellers
  - Scribes wrote letters for people who could no read or write – for a price
- Houses faced away from streets onto courtyards
  - Families ate and children played there
  - Hot nights people slept on their flat roofs
  - Oil lamps supplied light
  - Clay pipes buried in ground carried liquid waste away from house
What else did they look like?

- Royal Palace
- Outside of Walls
- Large farms of nobles

What are the people doing in this picture?
What was Sumerian religion like?

- In the center of the city was a giant stone building – Ziggurat – main temple to the gods of the city
  - Made of terraces – one on top of another – linked with ramps and stairs – some over 7 stories high
  - At top – temple

- They believed that gods descended to Earth to use the ziggurat as a ladder

- Worshipped many gods
  - Polytheism – belief in many gods
    - Greek word Poly – many, Theism - gods

- Sumerian myths warned that the gods would punish people who angered them
  - Myth – stories about gods that explain people’s beliefs
What were some of the gods?

- Adad – storm and rain god
- Anu – father of the gods and god of heaven
- Ea – god of wisdom
- Enlil – god of earth, wind, and air
- Ishtar – goddess of love and war, Queen of Heaven
- Sin – god of the moon

What did they think the gods would do for them??

- Promised rewards to people who served the gods well
- Temple priests washed statues of gods before and after every meal
- Music sounded and incense burned as huge plates of food were put in front of the statues
- Example of food on page 33
- This shows religion was very important to them
What happened to Sumer city-states?

- Fought with each other over land and use of water
- Constant fighting weakened rulers and armies
- **Not a major power after 2000 B.C.**
- Fell to northern rival in 1759 B.C. - Babylonia
Why were there so many battles?

- Brought wealth to armies that could conquer Mesopotamia
  - Once the area was conquered, new ruler became target

What was the biggest and most important Mesopotamia civilizations?

- Babylonia and Assyria
  - These were empires – an area of many territories and people that are controlled by the government
  - 1750 B.C. Babylonian empire reached its height
    - Center of it was city of Babylon
  - Assyrians got their name from northern city of Assur
    - Began to expand in 1300 B.C.

They had 2 things in common:

- Quest for riches
  - Built grand cities where culture and learning were highly valued
- Vicious warriors
Who created the Babylonian Empire?

- King named Hammurabi
  - United cities of Sumer
  - Conquered land into Asia Minor (present day Turkey)
- Location made it a crossroad of trade
  - Caravans – small groups of travelers coming and going
    - Went from cities of:
      - Sumer to the south
      - Akkad to the north
      - Stopped in Babylon
- In the cities there were bazaars – markets where you could buy cotton clothes from India and spices from Egypt
- Became wealthy on trade and conquest
What were the results of gaining control?

- 1760 B.C. – Hammurabi took control of the city Mari he seized:
  - War chariots
  - Weapons
  - Tools

- By 1600 B.C. the empire shrunk and was destroyed

Where was the Assyrian Empire located?

- North of Babylonia
  - Had several small walled cities
  - Capital - Nineveh
  - In an open area where they could be easily be invaded
    - Always being invaded made them great warriors
    - 1365 B.C. decided best defense was to attack
    - By 650 B.C. conquered large empire
      - Land from Nile River to Persian Gulf
What else were the Assyrians good at?

- Had huge library with thousands of clay tablets with writing from Sumer and Babylon
  - Since they kept the records they knew a lot about early Mesopotamia

What did the Assyrians invent?

- Battering ram
- Powerful weapon on wheels that pounded city walls to rubble
- Also had:
  - Slingers hurled stones at enemies
  - Expert archers wore helmets and armor
  - Armed charioteers – slashed through enemies

How do we know about these battle tactics?

- Mainly from carvings
What happened to the Assyrians?

- 612 B.C. – Medes and Chaldeans joined together and destroyed the Assyrian empire
- Rebuilt Babylonia known as New Babylonia empire
- The greatest king Nebuchadnezzar II
- Rebuilt city of Babylon
  - Put up massive walls for protection
  - Built massive temples with:
    - Colored tiles
    - Carved tiles with plants, animals, birds, message by the king
  - Built a Royal Palace – 350 feet tall - called the Hanging Gardens
    - Landscape with trees and gardens
    - Built garden for his wife
      - She came from a high plateau and hated the dry plains of Mesopotamia
- Babylonia became center of learning and science
  - Astronomers charted paths of stars, length of year
- 539 B.C. empire fell but the city of Babylon was spared
Hanging Gardens

One of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World
Section 3
The Legacy of Mesopotamia
What kind of justice system was there in Mesopotamia?

- **Written code** – organized list
  - Made sure everyone knew the laws
- **Babylonians first to do this**
  - King Hammurabi – made rules called Hammurabi’s Code
  - Told people how to settle conflicts
- **Had 282 laws**, organized in different categories
  - Trade
  - Labor
  - Property
  - Family
  - Adopting children
  - Practicing medicine
  - Hiring wagons or boats
  - Controlling dangerous animals

  - The code was based on the idea of “an eye for an eye”
Who did the code apply to?

- Gave different punishments for breaking same rules
  - Punishment depended on how important victim was
  - Person who broke a rule was just as guilty as a criminal
  - People who could not control the outcome of their work had to be careful
    - Doctors
    - Construction workers

Why was this code so important?

- First attempt by society to set up a code of laws that applied to everyone
When was writing developed?

- Mesopotamia – 3500 B.C.
- Developed as a way to keep records
  - Few could do it – one of the most valuable skills in the ancient world
  - Scribes of Sumer recorded:
    - Sales
    - Trades
    - Tax payments
    - Gifts for the gods
    - Marriages
    - Death
  - Some scribes had special tasks:
    - Military scribes calculated the amount of food and supplies an army would need
    - Government scribes figured out the number of diggers to build canals
What did scribes write on?

- Clay
  - In spring, rivers brought clay from the mountains
  - Scribes shaped it into smooth flat surfaces called tablets
  - Used sharp tools and it left almost a permanent mark
  - Shape and size depended on its purpose
    - Larger – used for references – stay one place
    - Smaller – used for letters, postcards, personal messages

How did writing change?

- Originally used pictures to represent what they wanted to say
- Scribes eventually combined symbols to make groups of wedges and lines called cuneiform
  - Cuneiform could be used to represent different languages
  - Scholars did not figure out how to read until the 1800’s
Section 4
Mediterranean Civilizations
Who were the Phoenicians?

- Lived along the Mediterranean Sea
  - Had several important resources
    - Snails - produced rich purple dye
    - Cedar trees - sold to neighboring people
- Became world’s first great trading empire
  - 1100 B.C. - 800 B.C. - they were a great sea power
  - Sailed through the Mediterranean Sea and into the Atlantic Ocean
    - Came back with stories of sea monsters
    - Stories kept people from competing for trade
      - People were afraid to enter the Atlantic - only the Phoenicians went there

Were the Phoenicians wealthy? $\$

- Trade brought wealth to the cities of Tyre and Sidon
- Bazaars were filled with food and animals from far away lands
What types of things were in the bazaars?

- Figs
- Olives
- Honey
- Spices
- Giraffes and Warthogs from Africa
- Bears from Europe

Why was there such a need for writing in the lives of the Phoenicians?

- They traded so much
- Cuneiform was too complicated with hundreds of symbols
- Created their own alphabet
What did their alphabet look like?

- Had 22 symbols
  - Alphabet - set of symbols that represented the sound of language
  - Each letter stood for one consonant sound

What were the benefits of the Phoenician alphabet?

- Before only highly trained scribes could write
  - Now many people could learn to write
- Traders helped spread it throughout the Mediterranean

Who were the Israelites?

- Group that settled along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea
  - Lived as shepherds and merchants
Why are the Israelites so important?

According to the Bible:
- Leader named Abraham led his people in the belief of one God - monotheism
- God promised that Abraham and his people would have their own land if they did what he said
- Around 1900 B.C. Abraham led the Israelites from Mesopotamia to Canaan
- 1800 B.C. famine spread across Canaan - they fled to Egypt

What is a famine?
- Time when there is so little food many people starve
- For 600 years they lived well and some reached high positions in the Egyptian government
- The King then enslaved them
Why did the king enslave the Israelites?
- Became jealous of their wealth and suspicious of their power

Who led them away from Egypt?
- Moses

They than wondered the desert of Sinai for 40 years
- While in the desert Moses was given the Ten Commandments from God
  - They were a code of laws

- When they arrived back at Canaan they began to build cities
  - As they moved north they faced opposition
  - After several fierce wars they conquered all of Canaan
Who led the Israelites?

- 2 kings
  - Saul - 1st king of the Israelites - defended against many enemies
  - David - united 12 Israelite tribes into a single nation
    - Established a capital at the city of Jerusalem

What happened after David died?

- His son Solomon inherited the kingdom
  - Became successful through trade
  - Sold the following to neighbors:
    - Palm and olive oils
    - Honey
    - Fruit
    - Vegetables
    - Grain
  - Created Jerusalem into a magnificent capital
  - Built many large and expensive buildings
- Projects were too expensive
- After Solomon's death kingdom split into two
  - Northern kingdom - Israel
  - Southern kingdom - Judah
- 722 B.C. Assyrians captured the kingdom of Israel
  - Punished the Israelites - exiled thousands to distant parts of their empire
  - Exile - force them to live in another county
- 135 years later Judah fell to the Chaldeans
  - Judeans were also exiled
Section 5
Judaism
How was God part of the lives of the Israelites?
- Felt God was taking part in their history

Where did the Israelites record their history?
- Recorded events and laws in the Torah - their most sacred text
  - Torah is made up of 5 books:
    - Genesis
    - Exodus
    - Leviticus
    - Numbers
    - Deuteronomy
- Christians adopted these books as the first 5 books of the Old Testament
How did they think God was involved in their everyday life?

- Felt that each event showed God's plan
  - Their beliefs changed into what we know as Judaism
    - Monotheistic from the beginning
- Believed:
  - God was present everywhere
  - God knew everything and had complete power
- Thought God made a covenant - binding agreement, with Abraham
  - Because of this the Israelites considered themselves God’s “chosen people”
- Thought Moses renewed the covenant
  - He told the Israelites that God would lead them to the “promise land” - Canaan
  - In return for God doing this the Israelites had to obey him
What was at the center of Judaism?

- Ten Commandments - laws given to Moses
  - Set rules for moral behavior toward other people
  - Set religious duties to God
- Torah set many laws
  - How to prepare food
  - Crimes (law demands an eye for an eye)
  - Laws to be carried out with justice and mercy
  - Protected women

Were men and women equal?

- Men - head of family, owned his wife and children
  - Sold his daughter into marriage
  - Men could only seek divorce
- One successful woman - a judge - Deborah
- Later on, they were not allowed to take part in religious services
What is a prophet?

- **Prophet** - religious leader, told the Israelites what God wants them to do
- Disobeying Gods law = disaster
- Preached a code of moral behavior
- Said all people are equal before God
- Kings had to obey God’s laws

What happened to the Israelites?

- A.D. 135 Romans added to the diaspora - scattering of people - began by Assyrians and Chaldeans
- Romans drove the Israelites out of their land
  - Scattered them to different parts of the world
    - Wherever they settled they preserved their heritage
    - Lived in close communities
    - Obeyed religious laws and their traditions
      - Helped them get through harsh times
Is Judaism a major religion today?

- Yes
- Has influenced Christianity and Islam
  - Both:
    - From same geographic region
    - Monotheism
- All honor Abraham and Moses
- All share same moral view that Israelites first developed
Elements

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