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The Mediterranean and Middle East, 2000–500 B.C.E.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Cosmopolitan Middle East, 1700–1100 B.C.E.

The Aegean World, 2000–1100 B.C.E.

The Assyrian Empire, 911–612 B.C.E.

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DIVERSITY AND DOMINANCE: An Israelite Prophet Chastizes the Ruling Class

ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY: Ancient Textiles and Dyes

Ancient peoples' stories—even those that are not historically accurate—provide valuable insights into how people thought about their origins and identity. One famous story concerned the city of Carthage^o in present-day Tunisia, which for centuries dominated the commerce of the western Mediterranean. Tradition held that Dido, a member of the royal family of the Phoenician city-state of Tyre^o in southern Lebanon, fled with her supporters to the western Mediterranean after her husband was murdered by her brother, the king of Tyre. Landing on the North African coast, the refugees made friendly contact with local people, who agreed to give them as much land as a cow's hide could cover. By cleverly cutting the hide into narrow strips, they were able to mark out a substantial piece of territory for Kart Khadasht, the “New City” (called *Carthago* by their Roman enemies). Later, faithful to the memory of her dead husband, Dido committed suicide rather than marry a local chieftain.

This story highlights the spread of cultural patterns from older centers to new regions, and the migration and resettlement of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age peoples in the Mediterranean lands and western Asia. Just as Egyptian cultural influences helped transform Nubian society, influences from the older centers in Mesopotamia and Egypt penetrated throughout western Asia and the Mediterranean. Far-flung trade, diplomatic contacts, military conquests, and the relocation of large numbers of people spread knowledge, beliefs, practices, and technologies.

By the end of the second millennium B.C.E. many of the societies of the Eastern Hemisphere had entered the **Iron Age**: they had begun to use iron instead of bronze for tools and weapons. Iron offered several advantages. It was a single metal rather than an alloy and thus was simpler to obtain; and there were many potential sources of iron ore. Once the technology of iron making had been mastered—iron has to be heated to a higher temperature than bronze, and its

hardness depends on the amount of carbon added during the forging process—iron tools were found to have harder, sharper edges than bronze tools.

The first part of this chapter resumes the story of Mesopotamia and Egypt in the Late Bronze Age, the second millennium B.C.E.: their complex relations with neighboring peoples, the development of a prosperous, “cosmopolitan” network of states in the Middle East, and the period of destruction and decline that set in around 1200 B.C.E. We also look at how the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations of the Aegean Sea were inspired by the technologies and cultural patterns of the older Middle Eastern centers and prospered from participation in long-distance networks of trade. The remainder of the chapter examines the resurgence of this region in the early Iron Age, from 1000 to 500 B.C.E. The focus is on three societies: the Assyrians of northern Mesopotamia; the Israelites of Israel; and the Phoenicians of Lebanon and Syria and their colonies in the western Mediterranean, mainly Carthage. After the decline or demise of the ancient centers dominant throughout the third and second millennia B.C.E., these societies evolved into new political, cultural, and commercial centers.

As you read this chapter, ask yourself the following questions:

- What environmental, technological, political, and cultural factors led these societies to develop their distinctive institutions and values?
- In what ways were the societies of this era more interconnected and interdependent than before, and what were the consequences—positive and negative—of these connections?
- What were the causes and consequences of large-scale movements of peoples to new homes during this era?
- Why were certain cultures destroyed or assimilated while others survived?

Carthage (KAHR-thuhj) **Tyre** (tire)

C H R O N O L O G Y				
	Western Asia	Egypt	Syria–Palestine	Mediterranean
2000 B.C.E.	2000 B.C.E. Horses in use	2040–1640 B.C.E. Middle Kingdom		2000 B.C.E. Rise of Minoan civilization on Crete; early Greeks arrive in Greece
	1700–1200 B.C.E. Hittites dominant in Anatolia	1640–1532 B.C.E. Hyksos dominate northern Egypt 1532 B.C.E. Beginning of New Kingdom		1600 B.C.E. Rise of Mycenaean civilization in Greece
1500 B.C.E.	1500 B.C.E. Hittites develop iron metallurgy		1500 B.C.E. Early “alphabetic” script developed at Ugarit	
	1460 B.C.E. Kassites assume control of southern Mesopotamia	1470 B.C.E. Queen Hatshepsut dispatches expedition to Punt 1353 B.C.E. Akhenaten launches reforms	1250–1200 B.C.E. Israelite occupation of Canaan	1450 B.C.E. Destruction of Minoan palaces in Crete
	1200 B.C.E. Destruction of Hittite kingdom	1200–1150 B.C.E. Sea Peoples attack Egypt 1070 B.C.E. End of New Kingdom	1150 B.C.E. Philistines settle southern coast of Israel	1200–1150 B.C.E. Destruction of Mycenaean centers in Greece
1000 B.C.E.	1000 B.C.E. Iron metallurgy begins		1000 B.C.E. David establishes Jerusalem as Israelite capital	1000 B.C.E. Iron metallurgy
	911 B.C.E. Rise of Neo-Assyrian Empire	750 B.C.E. Kings of Kush control Egypt	969 B.C.E. Hiram of Tyre comes to power 960 B.C.E. Solomon builds First Temple	814 B.C.E. Foundation of Carthage
	744–727 B.C.E. Reforms of Tiglath-pileser	671 B.C.E. Assyrian conquest of Egypt	920 B.C.E. Division into two kingdoms of Israel and Judah 721 B.C.E. Assyrian conquest of northern kingdom	
	668–627 B.C.E. Reign of Ashurbanipal		701 B.C.E. Assyrian humiliation of Tyre	
	626–539 B.C.E. Neo-Babylonian kingdom		587 B.C.E. Neo-Babylonian capture of Jerusalem	
	612 B.C.E. Fall of Assyria		515 B.C.E. Deportees from Babylon return to Jerusalem	
600 B.C.E.			450 B.C.E. Completion of Hebrew Bible; Hanno the Phoenician explores West Africa	550–300 B.C.E. Rivalry of Carthaginians and Greeks in western Mediterranean

THE COSMOPOLITAN MIDDLE EAST, 1700–1100 B.C.E.

Both Mesopotamia and Egypt succumbed to outside invaders in the seventeenth century B.C.E. (see Chapter 1). Eventually the outsiders were either ejected or assimilated, and conditions of stability and prosperity were restored. Between 1500 and 1200 B.C.E. a number of large territorial states dominated the Middle East (see Map 3.1). These centers of power controlled the smaller city-states, kingdoms, and kinship groups as they competed with, and sometimes fought against, one another for control of valuable commodities and trade routes.

Historians have called the Late Bronze Age in the Middle East a “cosmopolitan” era, meaning a time of widely shared cultures and lifestyles. Extensive diplomatic relations and commercial contacts between states fostered the flow of goods and ideas, and elite groups shared similar values and enjoyed a relatively high standard of living. The peasants in the countryside who comprised the majority of the population may have seen some improvement in their standard of living, but they reaped far fewer benefits from the increasing contacts and trade.

Western Asia

By 1500 B.C.E. Mesopotamia was divided into two distinct political zones: Babylonia in the south and Assyria in the north (see Map 3.1). The city of Babylon had gained political and cultural ascendancy over the southern plain under the dynasty of Hammurabi in the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries B.C.E. Subsequently there was a persistent inflow of Kassites°, peoples from the Zagros° Mountains to the east who spoke a non-Semitic language, and by 1460 B.C.E. a Kassite dynasty had come to power in Babylon. The Kassites retained names in their native language but otherwise embraced Babylonian language and culture and intermarried with the native population. During their 250 years in power, the Kassite lords of Babylonia defended their core area and traded for raw materials, but they did not pursue territorial conquest.

The Assyrians of the north had more ambitious designs. As early as the twentieth century B.C.E. the city of Ashur°, the leading urban center on the northern Tigris, anchored a busy trade route across the northern Mesopotamian plain and onto the Anatolian Plateau. Repre-

Kassite (KAS-ite) **Zagros** (ZAH-groes) **Ashur** (AH-shoor)

sentatives of Assyrian merchant families maintained settlements outside the walls of important Anatolian cities. The Assyrians exported textiles and tin, used since about 2500 B.C.E. to make bronze, which they exchanged for silver from Anatolia. In the eighteenth century B.C.E. an Assyrian dynasty briefly gained control of the upper Euphrates River near the present-day border of Syria and Iraq. This “Old Assyrian” kingdom, as it is now called, illustrates the importance of the trade routes connecting Mesopotamia to Anatolia and the Syria-Palestine coast. After 1400 B.C.E. a resurgent “Middle Assyrian” kingdom again engaged in campaigns of conquest and expansion of its economic interests.

Other ambitious states emerged on the periphery of the Mesopotamian heartland, including Elam in southwest Iran and Mitanni° in the broad plain between the upper Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Most formidable of all were the **Hittites**°, speakers of an Indo-European language, who became the foremost power in Anatolia from around 1700 to 1200 B.C.E. From their capital at Hattusha°, near present-day Ankara° in central Turkey, they deployed the fearsome new technology of horse-drawn war chariots. The Hittites exploited Anatolia’s rich deposits of copper, silver, and iron to play an indispensable role in international commerce. Many historians believe that the Hittites were the first to develop a technique for making tools and weapons of iron. They heated the ore until it was soft enough to shape, pounded it to remove impurities, and then plunged it into cold water to harden. The Hittites were anxious to keep knowledge of this process secret, since it provided both military and economic advantages.

During the second millennium B.C.E. Mesopotamian political and cultural concepts spread across much of western Asia. Akkadian° became the language of diplomacy and correspondence between governments. The Elamites° and Hittites, among others, adapted the cuneiform system to write their own languages. In the Syrian coastal city of Ugarit° thirty cuneiform symbols were used to write consonant sounds, an early use of the alphabetic principle and a considerable advance over the hundreds of signs required in conventional cuneiform and hieroglyphic writing. Mesopotamian myths and legends and styles of art and architecture were widely imitated. Newcomers who had learned and improved on the lessons of Mesopotamian civilization often put pressure on the old core area. The small, fractious city-states

Mitanni (mih-TAH-nee) **Hittite** (HIT-ite)
Hattusha (haht-tush-SHAH) **Ankara** (ANG-kuh-ruh)
Akkadian (uh-KAY-dee-uhn) **Elamite** (EE-luh-mite)
Ugarit (OO-guh-reet)

of the third millennium B.C.E. had been concerned only with their immediate neighbors in southern Mesopotamia. In contrast, the larger states of the second millennium B.C.E. interacted politically, militarily, and economically in a geopolitical sphere encompassing all of western Asia.

New Kingdom Egypt

After flourishing for nearly four hundred years (see Chapter 1), the Egyptian Middle Kingdom declined in the seventeenth century B.C.E. As high-level officials in the countryside became increasingly independent and new groups migrated into the Nile Delta, central authority broke down, and Egypt entered a period of political fragmentation and economic decline. Around 1640 B.C.E. Egypt came under foreign rule for the first time, at the hands of the Hyksos^o, or “Princes of Foreign Lands.”

Hyksos (HICK-soes)

Historians are uncertain about who the Hyksos were and how they came to power. Semitic peoples had been migrating from the Syria-Palestine region (sometimes called the Levant, present-day Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and the Palestinian territories) into the eastern Nile Delta for centuries. In the chaotic conditions of this time, other peoples may have joined them and established control, first in the delta and then in the middle of the country. The Hyksos possessed military technologies that gave them an advantage over the Egyptians, such as the horse-drawn war chariot and a composite bow, made of wood and horn, that had greater range and velocity than the simple wooden bow. The process by which the Hyksos came to dominate much of Egypt may not have been far different from that by which the Kassites first settled and gained control in Babylonia. The Hyksos intermarried with Egyptians and assimilated to native ways. They used the Egyptian language and maintained Egyptian institutions and culture. Nevertheless, in contrast to the relative ease with which outsiders were assimilated in Mesopotamia, the Egyptians, with their

strong ethnic identity, continued to regard the Hyksos as “foreigners.”

As with the formation of the Middle Kingdom five hundred years earlier, the reunification of Egypt under a native dynasty was accomplished by princes from Thebes. After three decades of warfare, Kamose° and Ahmose° expelled the Hyksos from Egypt and inaugurated the New Kingdom, which lasted from about 1532 to 1070 B.C.E.

A century of foreign domination had shaken Egyptian pride and shattered the isolationist mindset of earlier eras. New Kingdom Egypt was an aggressive and expansionist state, extending its territorial control north into Syria-Palestine and south into Nubia and winning access to timber, gold, and copper (bronze metallurgy took hold in Egypt around 1500 B.C.E.) as well as taxes and tribute (payments from the territories it had conquered). The occupied territories provided a buffer zone, protecting Egypt from attack. In Nubia, Egypt imposed direct control and pressed the native population to adopt Egyptian language and culture. In the Syria-Palestine region, in contrast, the Egyptians stationed garrisons at strategically placed forts and supported local rulers willing to collaborate.

The New Kingdom was a period of innovation. Egypt fully participated in the diplomatic and commercial networks that linked the states of western Asia. Egyptian soldiers, administrators, diplomats, and merchants traveled widely, exposing Egypt to exotic fruits and vegetables, new musical instruments, and new technologies, such as an improved potter’s wheel and weaver’s loom.

At least one woman held the throne of New Kingdom Egypt. When Pharaoh Tuthmosis° II died, his queen, **Hatshepsut**°, served as regent for her young stepson and soon claimed the royal title for herself (r. 1473–1458 B.C.E.). In inscriptions she often used the male pronoun to refer to herself, and drawings and sculptures show her wearing the long, conical beard of the ruler of Egypt.

Around 1460 B.C.E. Hatshepsut sent a naval expedition down the Red Sea to the fabled land that the Egyptians called “Punt°.” Historians believe that Punt may have been near the coast of eastern Sudan or Eritrea. Hatshepsut was seeking the source of myrrh°, a reddish-brown resin from the hardened sap of a local tree, which the Egyptians burned on the altars of their gods and used as an ingredient in medicines and cosmetics. She hoped to bypass the middlemen who drove up the price exorbitantly, and establish direct trade between Punt and

Egypt. When the expedition returned with myrrh and various sub-Saharan luxury goods—ebony and other rare woods, ivory, cosmetics, live monkeys, panther skins—Hatshepsut celebrated the achievement in a great public display and in words and pictures on the walls of the mortuary temple she built for herself at Deir el-Bahri°. She may have used the success of this expedition to bolster her claim to the throne. After her death, in a reaction that reflected some official opposition to a woman ruler, her image was defaced and her name blotted out wherever it appeared.

Another ruler who departed from traditional ways ascended the throne as Amenhotep° IV. He soon began to refer to himself as **Akhenaten**° (r. 1353–1335 B.C.E.), meaning “beneficial to the Aten°” (the disk of the sun). Changing his name was one of the ways in which he sought to spread his belief in Aten as the supreme deity. He closed the temples of other gods, challenging the age-old supremacy of the chief god Amon° and the power and influence of the priests of Amon.

Some scholars have credited Akhenaten with the invention of monotheism—the belief in one exclusive god. It is likely, however, that Akhenaten was attempting to reassert the superiority of the king over the priests and to renew belief in the king’s divinity. Worship of Aten was confined to the royal family: the people of Egypt were pressed to revere the divine ruler.

Akhenaten built a new capital at modern-day Amarna°, halfway between Memphis and Thebes (see Map 3.1). He transplanted thousands of Egyptians to construct the site and serve the ruling elite. Akhenaten and his artists created a new style that broke with the conventions of earlier art: the king, his wife Nefertiti°, and their daughters were depicted in fluid, natural poses with strangely elongated heads and limbs and swelling abdomens.

Akhenaten’s reforms were strongly resented by government officials, priests, and others whose privileges and wealth were linked to the traditional system. After his death the temples were reopened; Amon was reinstated as chief god; the capital returned to Thebes; and the institution of kingship was weakened to the advantage of the priests. The boy-king Tutankhamun° (r. 1333–1323 B.C.E.), one of the immediate successors of Akhenaten and famous solely because his was the only royal tomb found by archaeologists that had not been pillaged

Kamose (KAH-mose) **Ahmose** (AH-mose)
Tuthmosis (tuth_MOE-sis) **Hatshepsut** (hat-SHEP-soot)
Punt (poont) **myrrh** (murrh)

Deir el-Bahri (DARE uhl-BAH-ree)
Amenhotep (ah-muhn-HOE-tep) **Akhenaten** (ah-ken-AHT-n)
Aten (AHT-n) **Amon** (AH-muhn) **Amarna** (uh-MAHR-nuh)
Nefertiti (nef-uhr-TEE-tee)
Tutankhamun (tuht-uhnk-AH-muhn)

by tomb robbers, reveals both in his name (meaning “beautiful in life is Amon”) and in his insignificant reign the ultimate failure of Akhenaten’s revolution.

In 1323 B.C.E. the general Haremhab seized the throne and established a new dynasty, the Ramessides°. The rulers of this line renewed the policy of conquest and expansion that Akhenaten had neglected. The greatest of these monarchs, **Ramesses° II**—sometimes called Ramesses the Great—ruled for sixty-six years (r. 1290–1224 B.C.E.) and dominated his age. Ramesses looms large in the archaeological record because he undertook monumental building projects all over Egypt. Living into his nineties, he had many wives and concubines and may have fathered more than a hundred children. Since 1990 archaeologists have been excavating a network of more than a hundred corridors and chambers carved deep into a hillside in the Valley of the Kings where many sons of Ramesses were buried.

Ramesside (RAM-ih-side) **Ramesses** (RAM-ih-seez)

Commerce and Communication

Early in his reign Ramesses II fought a major battle against the Hittites at Kadesh in northern Syria (1285 B.C.E.). Although Egyptian scribes presented this encounter as a great victory, the lack of territorial gains suggests that it was essentially a draw. In subsequent years Egyptian and Hittite diplomats negotiated a treaty, which was strengthened by Ramesses’ marriage to a Hittite princess. At issue was control of Syria-Palestine, strategically located at a crossroads between the great powers of the Middle East and at the end of the east-west trade route across Asia. The inland cities of Syria-Palestine—such as Mari° on the upper Euphrates and Alalakh° in western Syria—were active centers of international trade. The coastal towns—particularly Ugarit and the Phoenician towns of the Lebanese seaboard—served as transshipment points for trade to and from the lands ringing the Mediterranean Sea.

Mari (MAH-ree) **Alalakh** (UH-luh-luhk)

In the eastern Mediterranean, northeastern Africa, and western Asia in the Late Bronze Age, any state that wanted to project its power needed metal to make tools and weapons. Commerce in metals energized the long-distance trade of the time.

New modes of transportation expedited communications and commerce across great distances and inhospitable landscapes. Horses arrived in western Asia around 2000 B.C.E. Domesticated by nomadic peoples in Central Asia, they were brought into Mesopotamia through the Zagros mountains and reached Egypt by 1600 B.C.E. The speed of travel and communication made possible by horses contributed to the creation of large states and empires. Soldiers and government agents could cover great distances quickly, and swift, maneuverable horse-drawn chariots became the premier instrument of war. The team of driver and archer could ride forward and unleash a volley of arrows or trample terrified foot soldiers.

THE AEGEAN WORLD, 2000–1100 B.C.E.

In this era of far-flung trade and communication, the influence of Mesopotamia and Egypt was felt as far away as the Aegean Sea, a gulf of the eastern Mediterranean. The emergence of the Minoan^o civilization on the island of Crete and the Mycenaean^o civilization of Greece is another manifestation of the fertilizing influence of older centers on outlying lands and peoples, who then struck out on their own unique paths of cultural evolution.

The landscape of southern Greece and the Aegean islands is mostly rocky and arid, with small plains lying between ranges of hills. The limited arable land is suitable for grains, grapevines, and olive trees. Flocks of sheep and goats graze the slopes. Sharply indented coastlines, natural harbors, and small islands within sight of one another made the sea the fastest and least costly mode of travel and transport. With few deposits of metals and little timber, Aegean peoples had to import these commodities, as well as food, from abroad. As a result, the rise, success, and eventual fall of the Minoan and Mycenaean societies were closely tied to their commercial and political relations with other peoples in the region.

Minoan (mih-NO-uhn) **Mycenaean** (my-suh-NEE-uhn)

Minoan Crete

By 2000 B.C.E. the island of Crete (see Map 3.2) housed the first European civilization to have complex political and social structures and advanced technologies like those found in western Asia and northeastern Africa. The **Minoan** civilization had centralized government, monumental building, bronze metallurgy, writing, and recordkeeping. Archaeologists named this civilization after Greek legends about King Minos, who was said to have ruled a vast naval empire, including the southern Greek mainland, and to have kept the monstrous Minotaur^o (half-man, half-bull) beneath his palace in a mazelike labyrinth built by the ingenious inventor Daedalus^o. Thus later Greeks recollected a time when Crete was home to many ships and skilled craftsmen.

The ethnicity of the Minoans is uncertain, and their writing has not been deciphered. But their sprawling palace complexes at Cnossus^o, Phaistos^o, and Mallia^o and the distribution of Cretan pottery and other artifacts around the Mediterranean and Middle East testify to widespread trading connections. Egyptian, Syrian, and Mesopotamian influences can be seen in the design of the Minoan palaces, centralized government, and system of writing. The absence of identifiable representations of Cretan rulers, however, contrasts sharply with the grandiose depictions of kings in the Middle East and suggests a different conception of authority. Also noteworthy is the absence of fortifications at the palace sites and the presence of high-quality indoor plumbing.

Statuettes of women with elaborate headdresses and serpents coiling around their limbs may represent fertility goddesses. Colorful frescoes (paintings done on a moist plaster surface) on the walls of Cretan palaces portray groups of women in frilly, layered skirts engaged in conversation or watching rituals or entertainment. We do not know whether pictures of young acrobats vaulting over the horns and back of an onrushing bull show a religious activity or mere sport. Scenes of servants carrying jars and fishermen throwing nets and hooks from their boats suggest a joyful attitude toward work, but this portrayal may say more about the tastes of the elite than about the reality of daily toil. The stylized depictions of plants and animals on Minoan vases—plants with swaying leaves and playful octopuses whose tentacles wind around the surface of the vase—seem to reflect a delight in the beauty and order of the natural world.

Minotaur (MIN-uh-tor) **Daedalus** (DED-ih-luhs)
Cnossus (NOSS-suhs) **Phaistos** (FIE-stuhs) **Mallia** (mahl-YAH)

All the Cretan palaces except Cnossus, along with the houses of the elite and peasants in the countryside, were deliberately destroyed around 1450 B.C.E. Because Mycenaean Greeks took over at Cnossus, most historians regard them as the likely culprits.

Mycenaean Greece

Most historians believe that speakers of an Indo-European language ancestral to Greek migrated into the Greek peninsula around 2000 B.C.E., although some argue for earlier and later dates. Through intermarriage, blending of languages, and melding of cultural practices, the indigenous population and the newcomers created the first Greek culture. For centuries this society remained sim-

ple and static. Farmers and shepherds lived in Stone Age conditions, wringing a bare living from the land. Then, sometime around 1600 B.C.E., life changed relatively suddenly.

More than a century ago a German businessman, Heinrich Schliemann^o, set out to prove that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were true. These epics attributed to the poet Homer, who probably lived shortly before 700 B.C.E., spoke of Agamemnon^o, the king of **Mycenae**^o in southern Greece. In 1876 Schliemann stunned the scholarly world by discovering at Mycenae a circle of graves at the base of deep, rectangular shafts. These **shaft graves** contained the bodies of men, women, and children and

Schliemann (SHLEE-muhn) **Agamemnon** (ag-uh-MEM-non)
Mycenae (my-SEE-nee)

were filled with gold jewelry and ornaments, weapons, and utensils. Clearly, some people in this society had acquired wealth, authority, and the capacity to mobilize human labor. Subsequent excavation uncovered a large palace complex, massive walls, more shaft graves, and other evidence of a rich and technologically advanced civilization that lasted from around 1600 to 1150 B.C.E.

Despite legends about the power of King Minos of Crete, there is no archaeological evidence of Cretan political control of the Greek mainland. But Crete exerted a powerful cultural influence. The Mycenaean borrowed the Minoan idea of the palace, centralized economy, and administrative bureaucracy, as well as the Minoan writing system. They adopted Minoan styles and techniques of architecture, pottery making, and fresco and vase painting. This explains where the Mycenaean Greeks got their technology. But how did they suddenly accumulate power and wealth? Most historians look to the profits

from trade and piracy and perhaps also to the pay and booty brought back by mercenaries (soldiers who served for pay in foreign lands).

The first advanced civilization in Greece is called “Mycenaean” largely because Mycenae was the first site excavated. Excavations at other centers have revealed that Mycenae exemplifies the common pattern of these citadels: built at a commanding location on a hilltop and surrounded by high, thick fortification walls made of stones so large that later Greeks believed that the giant, one-eyed Cyclopes^o of legend had lifted them into place. The fortified enclosure provided a place of refuge for the entire community in time of danger and contained the palace and administrative complex. The large central hall with an open hearth and columned porch was sur-

Cyclopes (SIGH-kloe-pees)

rounded by courtyards, living quarters for the royal family and their retainers, and offices, storerooms, and workshops. The palace walls were covered with brightly painted frescoes depicting scenes of war, the hunt, and daily life, as well as decorative motifs from nature.

Nearby lay the tombs of the rulers and leading families: shaft graves at first; later, grand beehive-shaped structures made of stone and covered with a mound of earth. Large houses, probably belonging to the aristocracy, lay just outside the walls. The peasants lived on the lower slopes and in the plain below, close to the land they worked.

Additional information about Mycenaean life is provided by over four thousand baked clay tablets written in a script now called **Linear B**. Like its predecessor, the undeciphered Minoan script called Linear A, Linear B uses pictorial signs to represent syllables, but it is recognizably an early form of Greek. The extensive palace bureaucracy kept track of people, animals, and objects in exhaustive detail and exercised a high degree of control over the economy of the kingdom. The tablets list everything from the number of chariot wheels in palace storerooms, the rations paid to textile workers, and the gifts dedicated to various gods, to the ships stationed along the coasts.

The government organized and coordinated grain production and controlled the wool industry from raw material to finished product. Scribes kept track of the flocks in the field, the sheared wool, the allocation of raw wool to spinners and weavers, and the production, storage, and distribution of cloth articles.

The tablets say almost nothing about individual people—not even the name of a single Mycenaean king—and very little about the political and legal systems, social structures, gender relations, and religious beliefs. They tell nothing about particular historical events and relations with other Mycenaean centers or peoples overseas.

The evidence for a broad political organization of Greece in this period is contradictory. In Homer's *Iliad*, Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, leads a great expedition of Greeks from different regions against the city of Troy in northwest Anatolia. To this can be added the cultural uniformity of all the Mycenaean centers: a remarkable similarity in the shapes, decorative styles, and production techniques of buildings, tombs, utensils, tools, clothing, and works of art. Some scholars argue that such cultural uniformity could have occurred only in a context of political unity. The plot of the *Iliad*, however, revolves around the difficulties Agamemnon has in asserting control over other Greek leaders. Moreover, the archaeological remains and the Linear B tablets give

strong indications of independent centers of power at Mycenae, Pylos^o, and elsewhere.

Long-distance contact and trade were made possible by the seafaring skill of Minoans and Mycenaean. Commercial vessels depended primarily on wind and sail. In general, ancient sailors preferred to sail in daylight hours and keep the land in sight. Their light, wooden vessels had little storage area and decking, so the crew had to go ashore to eat and sleep every night. With their low keels the ships could run up onto the beach.

Cretan and Greek pottery and crafted goods are found not only in the Aegean but also in other parts of the Mediterranean and Middle East. At certain sites the quantity and range of artifacts suggest settlements of Aegean peoples. The oldest artifacts are Minoan; then Minoan and Mycenaean objects are found side by side;

Pylos (PIE-lohs)

and eventually Greek wares replace Cretan goods altogether. Such evidence indicates that Cretan merchants pioneered trade routes and established trading posts and then admitted Mycenaean traders, who eventually supplanted them in the fifteenth century B.C.E.

The numerous Aegean pots found throughout the Mediterranean and Middle East must once have contained such products as wine and olive oil. Other possible exports include weapons and other crafted goods, as well as slaves and mercenary soldiers. Minoan and Mycenaean sailors also may have made tidy profits by transporting the trade goods of other peoples.

As for imports, amber (a hard, translucent, yellowish-brown fossil resin used for jewelry) from northern Europe and ivory carved in Syria have been discovered at Aegean sites, and the large population of southwest Greece and other regions probably relied on imports of grain. Above all, the Aegean lands needed metals, both the gold prized by rulers and the copper and tin needed to make bronze. A number of sunken ships carrying copper ingots have been found on the floor of the Mediterranean. Scholars believe that these ships were transporting metals from Cyprus to the Aegean (see Map 3.2). As in early China, the elite classes were practically the only people who owned metal goods, which may have been symbols of their superior status.

In this era, trade and piracy were closely linked. Mycenaean were tough, warlike, and acquisitive. They traded with those who were strong and took from those who were weak. This may have led to conflict with the Hittite kings of Anatolia in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C.E. Documents found in the archives at Hattusha, the Hittite capital, refer to the king and land of Ahhijawa^o, most likely a Hittite rendering of *Achaeans*^o, the term used most frequently by Homer for the Greeks. The documents indicate that relations were sometimes friendly, sometimes strained, and that the people of Ahhijawa were aggressive and tried to take advantage of Hittite preoccupation or weakness.

The Fall of Late Bronze Age Civilizations

Hittite difficulties with Ahhijawa and the Greek attack on Troy foreshadowed the troubles that culminated in the destruction of many of the old centers of the Middle East and Mediterranean around 1200 B.C.E. In this period, for reasons that historians do not completely understand, large numbers of people

were on the move. As migrants swarmed into one region, they displaced other peoples, who then joined the tide of refugees.

Around 1200 B.C.E. unidentified invaders destroyed Hattusha, and the Hittite kingdom in Anatolia came crashing down. The tide of destruction moved south into Syria, and the great coastal city of Ugarit was swept away. Around 1190 Ramesses III of Egypt checked a major invasion of Palestine by the “Sea Peoples.” Although he claimed to have won a great victory, the Philistines^o were able to occupy the coast of Palestine. Egypt soon surrendered all its territory in Syria-Palestine and lost contact with the rest of western Asia. The Egyptians also lost their foothold in Nubia, opening the way for the emergence of the native kingdom centered on Napata (see Chapter 2).

Among the invaders listed in the Egyptian inscriptions are the Ekwesh^o, who could be Achaeans—that is, Greeks. Whether or not the Mycenaean participated in the destructions elsewhere, their own centers collapsed in the first half of the twelfth century B.C.E. The rulers had seen trouble coming; at some sites they began to build more extensive fortifications and took steps to guarantee the water supply of the citadels. But their efforts were in vain, and nearly all the palaces were destroyed.

The end of Mycenaean civilization illustrates the consequences of political and economic collapse. The deconstruction of the palaces ended the domination of the ruling class. The massive administrative apparatus revealed in the Linear B tablets disappeared, and the technique of writing was forgotten, since it had been known only to a few palace officials and was no longer useful. Archaeological studies indicate the depopulation of some regions of Greece and an inflow of people to other regions that had escaped destruction. The Greek language persisted, and a thousand years later people were still worshiping gods mentioned in the Linear B tablets. People also continued to make the vessels and implements that they were familiar with, although there was a marked decline in artistic and technical skill in the new, much poorer society. The cultural uniformity of the Mycenaean Age gave way to regional variations in shapes, styles, and techniques, reflecting increased isolation of different parts of Greece.

Thus perished the cosmopolitan world of the Late Bronze Age in the Mediterranean and Middle East. Societies that had long prospered through complex links of trade, diplomacy, and shared technologies now collapsed in the face of external violence and internal weakness,

Ahhijawa (uh-key-YAW-wuh) **Achaeans** (uh-KEY-uhns)

Philistine (FIH-luh-steen) **Ekwesh** (ECK-wesh)

and the peoples of the region entered a centuries-long “Dark Age” of poverty, isolation, and loss of knowledge.

THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE, 911–612 B.C.E.

A number of new centers emerged in western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean in the centuries after 1000 B.C.E. The chief force for change was the powerful and aggressive **Neo-Assyrian Empire** (911–612 B.C.E.). Although historians sometimes apply the term *empire* to earlier regional powers, the Assyrians of this era were the first to rule over far-flung lands and diverse peoples (see Map 3.3).

The Assyrian homeland in northern Mesopotamia differs in essential respects from the flat expanse of Sumer and Akkad to the south. It is hillier, has a more temperate climate and greater rainfall, and is more exposed to raiders from the mountains to the east and north and from the arid plain to the west. Peasant farmers, accustomed to defending themselves against marauders, provided the foot-soldiers for the revival of Assyrian power in the ninth century B.C.E. The rulers of the Neo-Assyrian Empire struck out in a ceaseless series of campaigns: westward across the steppe and desert as far as the Mediterranean, north into mountainous Urartu° (modern Armenia), east across the Zagros range onto the Iranian Plateau, and south along the Tigris River to Babylonia.

These campaigns largely followed the most important long-distance trade routes in western Asia and provided immediate booty and the prospect of tribute and taxes. They also secured access to vital resources such as iron and silver and brought the Assyrians control of international commerce. As noted earlier in this chapter, Assyria already had a long tradition of commercial and political interests in Syria and Anatolia. What started out as an aggressive program of self-defense and reestablishment of old claims soon became far more ambitious. Driven by pride, greed, and religious conviction, the Assyrians defeated all the great kingdoms of the day—Elam (southwest Iran), Urartu, Babylon, and Egypt. At its peak their empire stretched from Anatolia, Syria-Palestine, and Egypt in the west, across Armenia and Mesopotamia, as far as western Iran. The Assyrians created a new kind of empire, larger in extent than anything seen

before and dedicated to the enrichment of the imperial center at the expense of the subjugated periphery.

God and King

The king was literally and symbolically the center of the Assyrian universe. All the land belonged to him, and all the people, even the highest-ranking officials, were his servants. Assyrians believed that the gods chose the king to rule as their earthly representative. Normally the king chose one of his sons to be his successor, and his choice was confirmed by divine oracles and the Assyrian elite. In the revered ancient city of Ashur the high priest anointed the new king by sprinkling his head with oil and gave him the insignia of kingship: a crown and scepter. The kings were buried in Ashur.

Every day messengers and spies brought the king information from every corner of the empire. He made

Urartu (ur-RAHR-too)

decisions, appointed officials, and heard complaints. He dictated his correspondence to an army of scribes and received and entertained foreign envoys and high-ranking government figures. He was the military leader, responsible for planning campaigns, and he often was away from the capital commanding operations in the field.

Among the king's chief responsibilities was supervision of the state religion. He devoted much of his time to elaborate public and private rituals and to overseeing the upkeep of the temples. He made no decisions of state without consulting the gods through elaborate rituals. All state actions were carried out in the name of Ashur, the chief god. Military victories were cited as proof of Ashur's superiority over the gods of the conquered peoples.

Relentless government propaganda secured popular support for military campaigns that mostly benefited the king and the nobility. Royal inscriptions posted throughout the empire catalogued recent military victories, extolled the charisma and relentless will of the king, and promised ruthless punishments to anyone who resisted him. Art, too, served the Assyrian state. Relief sculptures depicting hunts, battles, sieges, executions, and deportations covered the walls of the royal palaces at Kalhu° and Nineveh°. Looming over most scenes was the king, larger than anyone else, muscular and fierce, with the appearance of a god. Few visitors to the Assyrian court could fail to be awed—and intimidated.

Conquest and Control

Assyrian armies consisted of men who served in return for grants of land, and peasants and slaves whose service was contributed by large landowners. Later, King Tiglathpileser° (r. 744–727 B.C.E.) created a core army of professional soldiers made up of Assyrians and the most formidable subject peoples. At its peak the Assyrian state could mobilize a half-million troops, including light-armed bowmen and slingers who launched stone projectiles, armored spearmen, cavalry equipped with bows or spears, and four-man chariots.

Iron weapons gave Assyrian soldiers an advantage over many opponents, and cavalry provided unprecedented speed and mobility. Assyrian engineers developed machinery and tactics for besieging fortified towns. They dug tunnels under the walls, built mobile towers

Kalhu (KAL-oo) **Nineveh** (NIN-uh-vuh)
Tiglathpileser (TIG-lath-pih-LEE-zuhr)

for their archers, and applied battering rams to weak points. The Assyrians destroyed some of the best-fortified cities of the Middle East—Babylon, Thebes in Egypt, Tyre in Phoenicia, and Susa in Elam (see Map 3.3). Couriers and signal fires provided long-distance communication, while a network of spies gathered intelligence.

The Assyrians used terror tactics to discourage resistance and rebellion, inflicting swift and harsh retribution and publicizing their brutality: civilians were thrown into fires, prisoners were skinned alive, and the severed heads of defeated rulers hung on city walls. **Mass deportation**—forcibly uprooting entire communities and resettling them elsewhere—broke the spirit of rebellious peoples. This tactic had a long history in the ancient Middle East—in Sumer, Babylon, Urartu, Egypt, and the Hittite Empire—but the Neo-Assyrian monarchs used it on an unprecedented scale. Surviving documents record the relocation of over 1 million people, and historians estimate that the true figure exceeds 4 million. Deportation also shifted human resources from the periphery to the center, where the deportees worked on royal and noble estates, opened new lands for agriculture, and built new palaces and cities.

The Assyrians never found a single, enduring method of governing an empire that included nomadic and sedentary kinship groups, temple-states, city-states, and kingdoms. Control tended to be tight and effective at the center and in lands closest to the core area, and less so farther away. The Assyrian kings waged many campaigns to reimpose control on territories subdued in previous wars.

Assyrian provincial officials oversaw the payment of tribute and taxes, maintained law and order, raised troops, undertook public works, and provisioned armies and administrators that were passing through their territory. Provincial governors were subject to frequent inspections by royal overseers.

The elite class was bound to the monarch by oaths of obedience, fear of punishment, and the expectation of rewards, such as land grants or shares of booty and taxes. Skilled professionals—priests, diviners, scribes, doctors, and artisans—were similarly bound.

The Assyrians ruthlessly exploited the wealth and resources of their subjects. Military campaigns and administration had to be funded by plunder and tribute. Wealth from the periphery was funneled to the center, where the king and nobility grew rich. Proud kings used their riches to expand the ancestral capital and religious center at Ashur and to build magnificent new royal cities. Dur Sharrukin°, the “Fortress of Sargon,” was completed in a

Dur Sharrukin (DOOR SHAH-roo-keen)

mere ten years, thanks to a massive labor force composed of prisoners of war and Assyrian citizens who owed periodic service to the state.

Nevertheless, the Assyrian Empire was not simply parasitic. There is some evidence of royal investment in provincial infrastructure. The cities and merchant classes thrived on expanded long-distance commerce, and some subject populations were surprisingly loyal to their Assyrian rulers.

Assyrian Society and Culture

A few things are known about the lives and activities of the millions of Assyrian subjects. In the core area people belonged to the same three classes that had existed in Hammurabi's Babylon a millennium before (see Chapter 1): (1) free, landowning citizens, (2) farmers and artisans attached to the estates of the king or other rich landholders, and (3) slaves. Slaves—debtors and prisoners of war—had legal rights and, if sufficiently talented, could rise to positions of influence.

The government normally did not distinguish between native Assyrians and the increasingly large number of immigrants and deportees residing in the Assyrian homeland. All were referred to as “human beings,” entitled to the same legal protections and liable for the same labor and military service. Over time the inflow of outsiders changed the ethnic makeup of the core area.

The vast majority of subjects worked on the land. The agricultural surpluses they produced allowed substantial numbers of people—the standing army, government officials, religious experts, merchants, artisans, and all manner of professionals in the towns and cities—to engage in specialized activities.

Individual artisans and small workshops in the towns manufactured pottery, tools, and clothing, and most trade took place at the local level. The state fostered long-distance trade, since imported luxury goods—metals, fine textiles, dyes, gems, and ivory—brought in substantial customs revenues and found their way to the royal family and elite classes. Silver was the basic medium of exchange, weighed out for each transaction in a time before the invention of coins.

Building on the achievements of their Mesopotamian ancestors, Assyrian scholars created and preserved lists of plant and animal names, geographic terms, and astronomical occurrences, and made original contributions in mathematics and astronomy. Their assumption that gods or demons caused disease obstructed the investigation of natural causes, but in addition to exorcists trained to expel demons, another type of physician experimented with medicines and surgical treatments to relieve symptoms.

Some Assyrian temples may have had libraries. When archaeologists excavated the palace of Ashurbanipal° (r. 668–627 B.C.E.), one of the last Assyrian kings, at Nineveh, they discovered more than twenty-five thousand tablets or fragments of tablets. The **Library of Ashurbanipal** contained official documents as well as literary and scientific texts. Some were originals that had been brought to the capital; others were copies made at the king's request. Ashurbanipal was an avid collector of the literary and scientific heritage of Mesopotamia, and the “House of Knowledge” referred to in some of the documents may have been an academy that attracted learned men to the imperial center.

ISRAEL, 2000–500 B.C.E.

On the western edge of the Assyrian Empire lived a people who probably seemed of no great significance to the masters of western Asia but were destined to play an important role in world history. The history of ancient Israel is marked by two grand and interconnected dramas that played out from around 2000 to 500 B.C.E. First, a loose collection of nomadic kinship groups engaged in herding and caravan traffic became a sedentary, agricultural people, developed complex political and social institutions, and became integrated into the commercial and diplomatic networks of the Middle East. Second, these people transformed the austere cult of a desert god into the concept of a single, all-powerful, and all-knowing deity, in the process creating the ethical and intellectual traditions that underlie the beliefs and values of Judaism and Christianity.

The land and the people at the heart of this story have gone by various names: Canaan, Israel, Palestine; Hebrews, Israelites, Jews. For the sake of consistency, the people are referred to here as *Israelites*, the land they occupied in antiquity as **Israel**.

Israel is a crossroads, linking Anatolia, Egypt, Arabia, and Mesopotamia (see Map 3.4). Its location has given

Israel an importance in history out of all proportion to its size. Its natural resources are few. The Negev Desert and the vast wasteland of the Sinai° lie to the south. The Mediterranean coastal plain was usually in the hands of others, particularly the Philistines, throughout much of this period. At the center are the rock-strewn hills of the Shephelah°. Galilee to the north, with its sea of the same name, was a relatively fertile land of grassy hills and small plains. The narrow ribbon of the Jordan River runs down the eastern side of the region into the Dead Sea, so named because its high salt content is toxic to life.

Origins, Exodus, and Settlement

Information about ancient Israel comes partly from archaeological excavations and references in contemporary documents such as the royal annals of Egypt and Assyria. However, the fundamental source is the collection of

Ashurbanipal (ah-shur-BAH-nee-pahl)

Sinai (SIE-nie) **Shephelah** (sheh-FEH-luh)

writings preserved in the **Hebrew Bible** (called the Old Testament by Christians). The Hebrew Bible is a compilation of several collections of materials that originated with different groups, employed distinctive vocabularies, and advocated particular interpretations of past events. Traditions about the Israelites' early days were long transmitted orally. Not until the tenth century B.C.E. were they written down in a script borrowed from the Phoenicians. The text that we have today dates from the fifth century B.C.E., with a few later additions, and reflects the point of view of the priests who controlled the Temple in Jerusalem. Historians disagree about how accurately this document represents Israelite history. In the absence of other written sources, however, it provides a foundation to be used critically and modified in light of archaeological discoveries.

The Hebrew language of the Bible reflects the speech of the Israelites until about 500 B.C.E. It is a Semitic language, most closely related to Phoenician and Aramaic (which later supplanted Hebrew in Israel), more distantly related to Arabic and the Akkadian language of the Assyrians. This linguistic affinity probably parallels the Israelites' ethnic relationship to the neighboring peoples.

The Hebrew Bible tells the story of the family of Abraham. Born in the city of Ur in southern Mesopotamia, Abraham rejected the traditional idol worship of his homeland and migrated with his family and livestock across the Syrian desert. Eventually he arrived in the land of Israel, which, according to the biblical account, had been promised to him and his descendants as part of a "covenant," or pact, with the Israelite god, Yahweh.

These "recollections" of the journey of Abraham (who, if he was a real person, probably lived in the twentieth century B.C.E.) may compress the experiences of generations of pastoralists who migrated from the grazing lands between the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to the Mediterranean coastal plain. Abraham, his family, and his companions were following the usual pattern in this part of the world. They camped by a permanent water source in the dry season, then drove herds of domesticated animals (sheep, cattle, donkeys) to a well-established sequence of grazing areas during the rest of the year.

Abraham's son Isaac and then his grandson Jacob became the leaders of this wandering group of herders. In the next generation the squabbling sons of Jacob's several wives sold their brother Joseph as a slave to passing merchants heading for Egypt. According to the biblical account, through luck and ability Joseph became a high official at Pharaoh's court. Thus he was in a position to help his people when drought struck Israel and forced

the Israelites to migrate to Egypt. The sophisticated Egyptians feared and looked down on these rough herders and eventually reduced the Israelites to slaves, putting them to work on the grand building projects of the pharaoh.

That is the version of events given in the Hebrew Bible. Several points need to be made about it. First, the biblical account glosses over the period from 1700 to 1500 B.C.E., when Egypt was dominated by the Hyksos. Since the Hyksos are thought to have been Semitic groups that infiltrated the Nile Delta from the northeast, the Israelite migration to Egypt and later enslavement could have been connected to the Hyksos' rise and fall. Second, although the surviving Egyptian sources do not refer to Israelite slaves, they do complain about *Apiru*^o, a derogatory term applied to caravan drivers, outcasts, bandits, and other marginal groups. The word seems to designate a class of people rather than a particular ethnic group, but some scholars believe there may be a connection between the similar-sounding terms *Apiru* and *Hebrew*. Third, the period of alleged Israelite slavery coincided with the era of ambitious building programs launched by several New Kingdom pharaohs.

According to the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites were led out of captivity by Moses, an Israelite with connections to the Egyptian royal family. It is possible that oral tradition may have preserved memories of a real emigration from Egypt followed by years of wandering in the wilderness of Sinai.

During their reported forty years in the desert, the Israelites became devoted to a stern and warlike god. According to the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh made a covenant with the Israelites: they would be his "Chosen People" if they promised to worship him exclusively. This pact was confirmed by tablets that Moses brought down from the top of Mount Sinai. Written on the tablets were the Ten Commandments, which set out the basic tenets of Jewish belief and practice. The Commandments prohibited murder, adultery, theft, lying, and envy, and demanded respect for parents and rest from work on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

The biblical account tells how Joshua, Moses's successor, led the Israelites from the east side of the Jordan River into the land of Canaan^o (modern Israel and the Palestinian territories). They attacked and destroyed Jericho^o and other Canaanite^o cities. Archaeological evidence confirms the destruction of some Canaanite towns between 1250 and 1200 B.C.E., though not precisely the towns mentioned in the biblical account. Shortly thereafter, lowland sites were resettled and new

Apiru (uh-PEE-roo) **Canaan** (KAY-nuhn) **Jericho** (JEH-rih-koe)
Canaanite (KAY-nuh-nite)

sites were established in the hills, thanks to the development of cisterns carved into nonporous rock to hold rainwater and the construction of leveled terraces on the slopes to expand the cultivable area. The material culture of the new settlers was cruder but continued Canaanite patterns.

Most scholars doubt that Canaan was conquered by a unified Israelite army. In a time of widespread disruption, movements of peoples, and decline and destruction of cities throughout this region, it is more likely that Israelite migrants took advantage of the disorder and were joined by other loosely organized groups and even refugees from the Canaanite cities.

In a pattern common throughout history, the new coalition of peoples invented a common ancestry. The “Children of Israel,” as they called themselves, were divided into twelve tribes supposedly descended from the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Each tribe installed itself in a different part of the country and was led by one or more chiefs. Such leaders usually had limited power and were primarily responsible for mediating disputes and seeing to the welfare and protection of the group. Certain charismatic figures, famed for their daring in war or genius in arbitration, were called “Judges” and enjoyed a special standing that transcended tribal boundaries. The tribes also shared access to a shrine in the hill country at Shiloh^o, which housed the Ark of the Covenant, a sacred chest containing the tablets that Yahweh had given Moses.

Rise of the Monarchy

The time of troubles that struck the eastern Mediterranean around 1200 B.C.E. also brought the Philistines to Israel. Possibly related to the pre-Greek population of the Aegean Sea region and likely participants in the Sea People’s attack on Egypt, the Philistines occupied the coastal plain of Israel and came into frequent conflict with the Israelites. Their wars were memorialized in Bible stories about the long-haired strongman Samson, who toppled a Philistine temple, and the shepherd boy David, whose slingshot felled the towering warrior Goliath.

A religious leader named Samuel recognized the need for a stronger central authority to lead the Israelites against the Philistine city-states and anointed Saul as the first king of Israel around 1020 B.C.E. When Saul perished in battle, the throne passed to David (r. ca. 1000–960 B.C.E.).

A gifted musician, warrior, and politician, David oversaw Israel’s transition from a tribal confederacy to a unified monarchy. He strengthened royal authority by

Shiloh (SHIE-loe)

making the captured hill city of Jerusalem, which lay outside tribal boundaries, his capital. Soon after, David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, making the city the religious as well as the political center of the kingdom. A census was taken to facilitate the collection of taxes, and a standing army, with soldiers paid by and loyal to the king, was instituted. These innovations enabled David to win a string of military victories and expand Israel’s borders.

The reign of David’s son Solomon (r. ca. 960–920 B.C.E.) marked the high point of the Israelite monarchy. Alliances and trade linked Israel with near and distant lands. Solomon and Hiram, the king of Phoenician Tyre, together commissioned a fleet that sailed into the Red Sea and brought back gold, ivory, jewels, sandalwood, and exotic animals. The story of the visit to Solomon by the queen of Sheba, who brought gold, precious stones, and spices, may be mythical, but it reflects the reality of trade with Saba^o in south Arabia (present-day Yemen) or the Horn of Africa (present-day Somalia). Such wealth supported a lavish court life, a sizeable bureaucracy, and an intimidating chariot army that made Israel a regional power. Solomon undertook an ambitious building program employing slaves and the compulsory labor of citizens. To strengthen the link between religious and secular authority, he built the **First Temple** in Jerusalem. The Israelites now had a central shrine and an impressive set of rituals that could compete with other religions in the area.

The Temple priests became a powerful and wealthy class, receiving a share of the annual harvest in return for making animal sacrifices to Yahweh on behalf of the community. The expansion of Jerusalem, new commercial opportunities, and the increasing prestige of the Temple hierarchy changed the social composition of Israelite society. A gap between urban and rural, rich and poor, polarized a people that previously had been relatively homogeneous. Fiery prophets, claiming revelation from Yahweh, accused the monarchs and aristocracy of corruption, impiety, and neglect of the poor (see Diversity and Dominance: An Israelite Prophet Chastizes the Ruling Class).

The Israelites lived in extended families, several generations residing together under the authority of the eldest male. Marriage, usually arranged between families, was an important economic as well as social institution. When the groom, in order to prove his financial worthiness, gave a substantial gift to the father of the bride, her entire family participated in the ceremonial weighing out of silver or gold. The wife’s dowry often included a slave girl who attended her for life.

Saba (SUH-buh)

Male heirs were of paramount importance, and first-born sons received a double share of the inheritance. If a couple had no son, they could adopt one, or the husband could have a child by the wife's slave attendant. If a man died childless, his brother was expected to marry his widow and sire an heir.

In early Israel women provided a vital portion of the goods and services that sustained the family. As a result, women were respected and enjoyed relative equality with their husbands. Unlike men, however, they could not inherit property or initiate divorce, and a woman caught in extramarital relations could be put to death. Working-class women labored with other family members in agriculture or herding in addition to caring for the house and children. As the society became urbanized, some women worked outside the home as cooks, bakers, perfumers, wet nurses (usually a recent mother, still producing milk, hired to provide nourishment to another person's child),

prostitutes, and singers of laments at funerals. A few women reached positions of influence, such as Deborah the Judge, who led troops in battle against the Canaanites. Women known collectively as "wise women" appear to have composed sacred texts in poetry and prose. This reality has been obscured, in part by the male bias of the Hebrew Bible, in part because the status of women declined as Israelite society became more urbanized.

Fragmentation and Dispersal

After Solomon's death around 920 B.C.E., resentment over royal demands and the neglect of tribal prerogatives split the monarchy into two kingdoms: Israel in the north, with its capital at Samaria^o; and Judah^o in the southern territory

Samaria (suh-MAH-ree-yuh) **Judah** (JOO-duh)

DIVERSITY AND DOMINANCE

AN ISRAELITE PROPHET CHASTIZES THE RULING CLASS

Israelite society underwent profound changes in the period of the monarchy. A loosely organized society of village-based farmers and herders was transformed relatively rapidly into a centrally controlled state with urban centers, a standing army, an administrative bureaucracy supported by taxation, and involvement in long-distance trade networks. A central religious shrine emerged, with a hierarchy of priests and other religious specialists maintained at public expense. The new opportunities for some to acquire considerable wealth led to greater disparities between rich and poor.

Throughout this period a series of prophets publicly challenged the behavior of the Israelite ruling elite. They denounced the changes in Israelite society as corrupting people and separating them from the religious devotion and moral rectitude of an earlier, better time. The prophets often spoke out on behalf of the uneducated, inarticulate, illiterate, and powerless lower classes, and thus provide valuable information about the experiences of different social groups. Theirs was not objective reporting, but rather the angry, anguished visions of unconventional individuals.

The following excerpts from the Hebrew Bible are taken from the book of Amos. A herdsman from the southern kingdom of Judah (in the era of the divided monarchy), Amos was active in the northern kingdom of Israel in the mid-eighth century B.C.E., when Assyria threatened the Syria-Palestine region.

1:1 The following is a record of what Amos prophesied. He was one of the herdsmen from Tekoa. These prophecies about Israel were revealed to him during the time of King Uzziah of Judah and King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake. . . .

3:1 Listen, you Israelites, to this message which the Lord is proclaiming against you. This message is for the entire clan I brought up from the land of Egypt:

3:2 "I have chosen you alone from all the clans of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all your sins" . . .

3:9 Make this announcement in the fortresses of Ashdod and in the fortresses in the land of Egypt. Say this: "Gather on the hills around Samaria! [capital of the northern kingdom]

Observe the many acts of violence taking place within the city, the oppressive deeds occurring in it."

3:10 "They do not know how to do what is right. They store up the spoils of destructive violence in their fortresses."

3:11 "Therefore," says the sovereign Lord, "an enemy will encircle the land. Your power, Samaria, will be taken away; your fortresses will be looted."

3:12 This is what the Lord says: "Just as a shepherd salvages from the lion's mouth a couple of leg bones or a piece of an ear, so the Israelites who live in Samaria will be salvaged. They will be left with just a corner of a bed, and a part of a couch" . . .

3:14 "Certainly when I punish Israel for their treaty violations, I will destroy Bethel's altars. The horns of the altars will be cut off and fall to the ground.

3:15 I will destroy both the winter and summer houses. The houses filled with ivory will be ruined, the great houses will be swept away." The Lord is speaking!

4:1 Listen to this message, you "cows of Bashan" who live on Mount Samaria! You oppress the poor; you crush the needy. You say to your husbands, "Bring us more to drink so we can party!"

4:2 The sovereign Lord confirms this oath by his own holy character: "Certainly the time is approaching! You will be carried away in baskets, every last one of you in fishermen's pots.

4:3 Each of you will go straight through the gaps in the walls; you will be thrown out toward Harmon" . . .

5:10 The Israelites hate anyone who arbitrates at the city gate; they despise anyone who speaks honestly.

5:11 Therefore, because you make the poor pay taxes on their crops and exact a grain tax from them, you will not live in the houses you built with chiseled stone, nor will you drink the wine from the fine vineyards you planted.

5:12 Certainly I am aware of your many rebellious acts and your numerous sins. You torment the innocent, you take bribes, and you deny justice to the needy at the city gate.

5:13 For this reason whoever is smart keeps quiet in such a time, for it is an evil time.

5:15 Hate what is wrong, love what is right! Promote justice at the city gate! Maybe the Lord, the God who leads armies, will have mercy on those who are left from Joseph [the Israelites] . . .

5:21 "I absolutely despise your festivals. I get no pleasure from your religious assemblies.

5:22 Even if you offer me burnt and grain offerings, I will not be satisfied; I will not look with favor on the fattened calves you offer in peace.

5:23 Take away from me your noisy songs; I don't want to hear the music of your stringed instruments.

5:24 Justice must flow like water, right actions like a stream that never dries up . . ."

6:3 You refuse to believe a day of disaster will come, but you establish a reign of violence.

6:4 They lie around on beds decorated with ivory, and sprawl out on their couches. They eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the middle of the pen.

6:5 They sing to the tune of stringed instruments; like David they invent musical instruments.

6:6 They drink wine from sacrificial bowls, and pour the very best oils on themselves.

6:7 Therefore they will now be the first to go into exile, and the religious banquets where they sprawl out on couches will end.

7:10 Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent this message to King Jeroboam of Israel: "Amos is conspiring against you in the very heart of the kingdom of Israel! The land cannot endure all his prophecies.

7:11 As a matter of fact, Amos is saying this: 'Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly be carried into exile away from its land!'"

7:12 Amaziah then said to Amos, "Leave, you visionary! Run away to the land of Judah! Earn money and prophesy there!"

7:13 Don't prophesy at Bethel any longer, for a royal temple and palace are here!"

7:14 Amos replied to Amaziah, "I was not a prophet by profession. No, I was a herdsman who also took care of sycamore fig trees.

7:15 Then the Lord took me from tending flocks and gave me this commission, 'Go! Prophesy to my people Israel!'

7:16 So now listen to the Lord's message! You say, 'Don't prophesy against Israel! Don't preach against the family of Isaac!'

7:17 "Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'Your wife will become a prostitute in the streets and your sons and daughters will die violently. Your land will be given to others and you will die in a foreign land. Israel will certainly be carried into exile away from its land!'"

8:4 Listen to this, you who trample the needy, and get rid of the destitute in the land.

8:5 You say, "When will the new moon festival be over, so we can sell grain? When will the Sabbath end, so we can open up the grain bins? We're eager to sell less for a higher price, and to cheat the buyer with rigged scales.

8:6 We're eager to trade silver for the poor, a pair of sandals for the needy. We want to mix in some chaff with the grain."

8:7 The Lord confirms this oath by the arrogance of Jacob: "I swear I will never forget all you have done!

8:8 Because of this the earth will quake, and all who live in it will mourn. The whole earth will rise like the River Nile, it will surge upward and then grow calm, like the Nile in Egypt.

8:9 In that day," says the sovereign Lord, "I will make the sun set at noon, and make the earth dark in the middle of the day.

8:10 I will turn your festivals into funerals, and all your songs into funeral dirges. I will make everyone wear funeral clothes and cause every head to be shaved bald. I will make you mourn as if you had lost your only son; when it ends it will indeed have been a bitter day.

8:11 Be certain of this, the time is coming," says the sovereign Lord, "when I will send a famine through the land. I'm not talking about a shortage of food or water, but an end to divine revelation.

8:12 People will stagger from sea to sea, and from the north around to the east. They will wander around looking for a revelation from the Lord, but they will not find any . . ."

9:8 "Look, the sovereign Lord is watching the sinful nation, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth. But I will not completely destroy the family of Jacob," says the Lord.

9:9 "For look, I am giving a command and I will shake the family of Israel together with all the nations. It will resemble a sieve being shaken, when not even a pebble falls to the ground.

9:10 All the sinners among my people will die by the sword, the ones who say, 'Disaster will not come near, it will not confront us!'

9:11 In that day I will rebuild the collapsing hut of David. I will seal its gaps, repair its ruins, and restore it to what it was like in days gone by."

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. For whom is Amos's message primarily intended? How does the ruling class react to Amos's prophetic activity, and how does he respond to their tactics?
2. What does Amos see as wrong in Israelite society, and who is at fault? Why are even the religious practices of the elite criticized?
3. What will be the means by which God punishes Israel, and why does God punish them this way? What grounds for hope remain?

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around Jerusalem (see Map 3.4). The two were sometimes at war, sometimes allied. This period saw the final formulation of **monotheism**, the absolute belief in Yahweh as the one and only god.

The small states of Syria and the two Israelite kingdoms laid aside their rivalries to mount a joint resistance to the Neo-Assyrian Empire, but to no avail. In 721 B.C.E. the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and deported much of its population to the east. New settlers were brought in from Syria, Babylon, and Iran, changing the area's ethnic, cultural, and religious character and removing it from the mainstream of Jewish history. The kingdom of Judah survived for more than a century longer, sometimes rebelling, sometimes paying tribute to the Assyrians or the Neo-Babylonian kingdom (626–539 B.C.E.) that succeeded them. When the Neo-Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar^o captured Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E., he destroyed the Temple and deported to Babylon the royal family, the aristocracy, and many skilled workers such as blacksmiths and scribes.

The deportees prospered so well in their new home “by the waters of Babylon” that half a century later most of their descendants refused the offer of the Persian monarch Cyrus (see Chapter 4) to return to their homeland. This was the origin of the **Diaspora**^o—a Greek word meaning “dispersion” or “scattering.” This dispersion outside the homeland of many Jews—as we may now call these people, since an independent Israel no longer existed—continues to this day. To maintain their religion and culture outside the homeland, the Diaspora communities developed institutions like the synagogue (Greek for “bringing together”), a communal meeting place that served religious, educational, and social functions.

Several groups of Babylonian Jews did make the long trek back to Judah, where they met with a cold reception from the local population. Persevering, they rebuilt the Temple in modest form and drafted the Deuteronomic^o Code (*deuteronomic* is Greek for “second set of laws”) of law and conduct. The fifth century B.C.E. also saw the compilation of much of the Hebrew Bible in roughly its present form.

The loss of political autonomy and the experience of exile had sharpened Jewish identity, with an unyielding monotheism as the core belief. Jews lived by a rigid set of rules. Dietary restrictions forbade the eating of pork and

shellfish and mandated that meat and dairy products not be consumed together. Ritual baths were used to achieve spiritual purity, and women were required to take ritual baths after menstruation. The Jews venerated the Sabbath (Saturday, the seventh day of the week) by refraining from work and from fighting, following the example of Yahweh, who, according to the Bible, rested on the seventh day after creating the world (this is the origin of the concept of the weekend). These strictures and others, including a ban on marrying non-Jews, tended to isolate the Jews from other peoples, but they also fostered a powerful sense of community and the belief that they were protected by a watchful and beneficent deity.

PHOENICIA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN, 1200–500 B.C.E.

While the Israelite tribes were being forged into a united kingdom, the people who occupied the coast of the Mediterranean to the north were developing their own distinctive civilization. Historians refer to a major element of the ancient population of Syria-Palestine as **Phoenicians**^o, though they referred to themselves as “Can’ani”—Canaanites. Despite the sparse written record and the disturbance of the archaeological record by frequent migrations and invasions, enough of their history survives to reveal major transformations.

The Phoenician City-States

When the eastern Mediterranean entered a period of violent upheaval and mass migrations around 1200 B.C.E. (discussed earlier), many Canaanite settlements were destroyed. Aramaeans^o—nomadic pastoralists similar to the early Israelites—migrated into the interior portions of Syria.

By 1100 B.C.E. Canaanite territory had shrunk to a narrow strip of present-day Lebanon between the mountains and the sea (see Map 3.4). The inhabitants of this densely populated area adopted new political forms and turned to seaborne commerce and new kinds of manufacture for their survival. Sometime after 1000 B.C.E. the Canaanites encountered the Greeks, who referred to them as *Phoinikes*, or Phoenicians. The term may mean “red men” and refer to the color of their skin, or it may re-

Nebuchadnezzar (NAB-oo-kuhd-nez-uhr)

Diaspora (die-ASS-peh-rah)

Deuteronomic (doo-tuhr-uh-NAHM-ik)

Phoenician (fi-NEE-shun) **Aramaean** (ah-ruh-MAY-uhn)

fer to the highly valued purple dye they extracted from the murex snail (see Environment and Technology: Ancient Textiles and Dyes).

Rivers and rocky spurs of Mount Lebanon sliced the coastal plain into a series of small city-states, chief among them Byblos°, Berytus°, Sidon°, and Tyre. A thriving trade in raw materials (cedar and pine, metals, incense, papyrus), foodstuffs (wine, spices, salted fish), and crafted luxury goods (textiles, carved ivory, glass) brought considerable wealth to the Phoenician city-states and gave them an important role in international politics.

The Phoenicians developed earlier Canaanite models into an “alphabetic” system of writing with about two dozen symbols, in which each symbol represented a sound. (The Phoenicians represented only consonants, leaving the vowel sounds to be inferred by the reader. The Greeks added symbols for vowel sounds, thereby creating the first truly alphabetic system of writing—see Chapter 4.) Little Phoenician writing survives, however, probably because scribes used perishable papyrus. Some information in Greek and Roman documents may be based on Phoenician sources.

Before 1000 B.C.E. Byblos had been the most important Phoenician city-state. It was a distribution center for cedar timber from the slopes of Mount Lebanon and for papyrus from Egypt. The English word *bible* comes from the Greek *biblion*, meaning “book written on papyrus from Byblos.” After 1000 B.C.E. Tyre, in southern Lebanon, surpassed Byblos. King Hiram, who came to power in 969 B.C.E., was responsible for Tyre’s rise to prominence. According to the Bible, he formed a close alliance with the Israelite king Solomon and provided skilled Phoenician craftsmen and cedar wood for building the Temple in Jerusalem. In return, Tyre gained access to silver, food, and trade routes to the east and south. In the 800s B.C.E. Tyre took control of nearby Sidon and monopolized the Mediterranean coastal trade.

Located on an offshore island, Tyre was practically impregnable. It had two harbors, one facing north, the other south, connected by a canal. The city boasted a large marketplace, a magnificent palace complex with treasury and archives, and temples to the gods. Some of its thirty thousand or more inhabitants lived in suburbs on the mainland. Its one weakness was its dependence on the mainland for food and fresh water.

Little is known about the internal affairs of Tyre and other Phoenician cities. The names of a series of kings are preserved, and the scant evidence suggests that the political arena was dominated by leading merchant families.

Byblos (BIB-loss) **Berytus** (buh-RIE-tuhs) **Sidon** (SIE-duhn)

Between the ninth and seventh centuries B.C.E. the Phoenician city-states contended with Assyrian aggression, followed in the sixth century B.C.E. by the expansion of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom and later the Persian Empire (see Chapter 4).

Expansion into the Mediterranean

After 900 B.C.E. Tyre began to turn its attention westward, establishing colonies on Cyprus, a copper-rich island 100 miles (161 kilometers) from the Syrian coast (see Map 3.4) that was strategically located on a major trade route. Phoenician merchants sailing into the Aegean Sea are mentioned in Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* around 700 B.C.E. By that time a string of settlements in the western Mediterranean formed a “Phoenician triangle” composed of the North African coast from western Libya to Morocco; the south and southeast coast of Spain, including Gades° (modern Cadiz°) on the Strait of Gibraltar, controlling passage between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean; and the islands of Sardinia, Sicily, and Malta off the coast of Italy (see Map 3.5). Many of these new settlements were situated on promontories or offshore islands in imitation of Tyre. The Phoenician trading network spanned the entire Mediterranean.

Overseas settlement provided an outlet for excess population, new sources of trade goods, and new trading partners. Tyre maintained its autonomy until 701 B.C.E. by paying tribute to the Assyrian kings. In that year it finally fell to an Assyrian army that stripped it of much of its territory and population, allowing Sidon to become the leading city in Phoenicia.

The Phoenicians’ activities in the western Mediterranean often brought them into conflict with the Greeks, who were also expanding trade and establishing colonies. The focal point of this rivalry was Sicily. Phoenicians occupied the western end of the island, Greeks its eastern and central parts. For centuries Greeks and Phoenicians fought for control of Sicily in some of the most savage wars in the history of the ancient Mediterranean. The Phoenicians controlled all of Sicily by the mid-third century B.C.E.

Carthage’s Commercial Empire

Historians know far more about **Carthage** and the other Phoenician colonies than they do about the Phoenician homeland. Much of this knowledge

Gades (GAH-days) **Cadiz** (kuh-DEEZ)

Ancient Textiles and Dyes

Throughout human history the production of textiles—cloth for clothing, blankets, carpets, and coverings of various sorts—may have required an expenditure of human labor second only to the amount of work necessary to provide food. Nevertheless, textile production in antiquity has left few traces in the archaeological record. The plant fibers and animal hair used for cloth are organic and quickly decompose except in rare and special circumstances. Some textile remains have been found in the hot, dry conditions of Egypt, the cool, arid Andes of South America, and the peat bogs of northern Europe. But most of our knowledge of ancient textiles depends on the discovery of equipment used in textile production—such as spindles, loom weights, and dyeing vats—and on pictorial representations and descriptions in texts.

The production of cloth usually has been the work of women for a simple but important reason. Responsibility for child rearing limits women's ability to participate in other activities but does not consume all their time and energy. In many societies textile production has been complementary to child-rearing activities, for it can be done in the home, is relatively safe, does not require great concentration, and can be interrupted without consequence. For many thousands of years cloth production has been one of the great common experiences of women around the globe. The growing and harvesting of plants such as cotton or flax (from which linen is made) and the shearing of wool from sheep and, in the Andes, llamas are outdoor activities, but the subsequent stages of production can be carried out inside the home. The basic methods of textile production did not change much from early antiquity until the late eighteenth century C.E., when the fabrication of textiles was transferred to mills and mass production began.

When textile production has been considered "women's work," most of the output has been for household consumption. One exception was in the early civilizations of Peru,

where women weavers developed new raw materials, new techniques, and new decorative motifs around three thousand years ago. They began to use the wool of llamas and alpacas in addition to cotton. Three women worked side by side and passed the weft from hand to hand in order to overcome limitations to the width of woven fabric imposed by the back-strap loom. Women weavers also introduced embroidery, and they decorated garments with new religious motifs, such as the jaguar-god of Chavin. Their high-quality textiles were given as tribute to the elite and were used in trade to acquire luxury goods as well as dyes and metals.

More typically, men dominated commercial production. In ancient Phoenicia, fine textiles with bright, permanent colors became a major export product. These striking colors were produced by dyes derived from several species of snail. Most prized was the red-purple known as Tyrian purple because Tyre was the major

source. Persian and Hellenistic kings wore robes dyed this color, and a white toga with a purple border was the sign of a Roman senator.

The production of Tyrian purple was an exceedingly laborious process. The spiny dye-murex snail lives on the sandy Mediterranean bottom at depths ranging from 30 to 500 feet (10 to 150 meters). Nine thousand snails were needed to produce 1 gram (0.035 ounce) of dye. The dye was made from a colorless liquid in the snail's hypobranchial gland. The gland sacs were removed, crushed, soaked with salt, and exposed to sunlight and air for some days; then they were subject to controlled boiling and heating.

Huge mounds of broken shells on the Phoenician coast are testimony to the ancient industry. It is likely that the snail was rendered nearly extinct at many locations, and some scholars have speculated that Phoenician colonization in the Mediterranean may have been motivated in part by the search for new sources of snails.

comes from Greek and Roman reports of their wars with the western Phoenician communities. For example, the account of the origins of Carthage that begins this chapter comes from Roman sources (most famously Virgil's epic poem *The Aeneid*) but probably is based on a Carthaginian original. Archaeological excavation has roughly confirmed the city's traditional foundation date of 814 B.C.E. Just outside the present-day city of Tunis in Tunisia, Carthage controlled the middle portion of the Mediterranean where Europe comes closest to Africa. The new settlement grew rapidly and soon dominated other Phoenician colonies in the west.

Located on a narrow promontory jutting into the Mediterranean, Carthage stretched between Byrsa^o, the original hilltop citadel of the community, and a double harbor. The inner harbor could accommodate up to 220 warships. A watchtower allowed surveillance of the sur-

Byrsa (BURR-suh)

rounding area, and high walls made it impossible to see in from the outside. The outer commercial harbor was filled with docks for merchant ships and shipyards. In case of attack, the harbor could be closed off by a huge iron chain.

Government offices ringed a large central square where magistrates heard legal cases outdoors. The inner city was a maze of narrow, winding streets, multistory apartment buildings, and sacred enclosures. Farther out was a sprawling suburban district where the wealthy built spacious villas amid fields and vegetable gardens. This entire urban complex was enclosed by a wall 22 miles (35 kilometers) in length.

With a population of roughly 400,000, Carthage was one of the largest cities in the world by 500 B.C.E. The population was ethnically diverse, including people of Phoenician stock, indigenous peoples likely to have been the ancestors of modern-day Berbers, and immigrants from other Mediterranean lands and sub-Saharan

Africa. Contrary to the story of Dido's reluctance to marry, Phoenicians intermarried quite readily with other peoples.

Each year two "judges" were elected from upper-class families to serve as heads of state and carry out administrative and judicial functions. The real seat of power was the Senate, where members of the leading merchant families, who sat for life, formulated policy and directed the affairs of the state. An inner circle of thirty or so senators made the crucial decisions. From time to time the leadership convened an Assembly of the citizens to elect public officials or vote on important issues, particularly when the leaders were divided or wanted to stir up popular enthusiasm for some venture.

Carthaginian power rested on its navy, which dominated the western Mediterranean for centuries. Phoenician towns provided a chain of friendly ports. The Carthaginian fleet consisted of fast, maneuverable galleys—oared warships. A galley had a sturdy, pointed ram in front that could pierce the hull of an enemy vessel below the water line, while marines (soldiers aboard a ship) fired weapons. Innovations in the placement of benches and oars made room for 30, 50, and eventually as many as 170 rowers.

Carthaginian foreign policy reflected its economic interests. Protection of the sea lanes, access to raw materials, and fostering trade mattered most to the dominant merchant class. Indeed, Carthage claimed the waters of the western Mediterranean as its own. Foreign merchants were free to sail to Carthage to market their goods, but if they tried to operate on their own, they risked having their ships sunk by the Carthaginian navy. Treaties between Carthage and other states included formal recognition of this maritime commercial monopoly.

The archaeological record provides few clues about the commodities traded by the Carthaginians. Commerce may have included perishable goods—foodstuffs, textiles, animal skins, slaves—and raw metals such as silver, lead, iron, and tin, whose Carthaginian origin would not be evident. We know that Carthaginian ships carried goods manufactured elsewhere and that products brought to Carthage by foreign traders were reexported.

There is also evidence for trade with sub-Saharan Africa. Hanno°, a Carthaginian captain of the fifth century B.C.E., claimed to have sailed through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Atlantic Ocean and to have explored the West African coast (see Map 3.5). Other Carthaginians explored the Atlantic coast of Spain and France and secured control of an important source of tin in the "Tin Islands," probably Cornwall in southwestern England.

Hanno (HA-noe)

War and Religion

Unlike Assyria, Carthage did not directly rule a large amount of territory. A belt of fertile land in northeastern Tunisia, worked by native peasants and imported slaves, provided a secure food supply. Beyond this core area the Carthaginians ruled most of their "empire" indirectly, and allowed other Phoenician communities in the western Mediterranean to remain independent. These Phoenician communities looked to Carthage for military protection and followed its lead in foreign policy. Only Sardinia and southern Spain were put under the direct control of a Carthaginian governor and garrison, presumably to safeguard their agricultural, metal, and manpower resources.

Carthage's focus on trade may explain the unusual fact that citizens were not required to serve in the army: they were of more value in other capacities, such as trading activities and the navy. Since the indigenous North African population was not politically or militarily well organized, Carthage had little to fear from potential enemies close to home. When Carthage was drawn into a series of wars with the Greeks and Romans from the fifth through third centuries B.C.E., it relied on mercenaries from the most warlike peoples in its dominions or from neighboring areas—Numidians from North Africa, Iberians from Spain, Gauls from France, and various Italian peoples. These well-paid mercenaries were under the command of Carthaginian officers.

Carthaginian religion fascinated Greek and Roman writers. Like the deities of Mesopotamia (see Chapter 1), the gods of the Carthaginians—chief among them Baal Hammon°, a male storm-god, and Tanit°, a female fertility figure—were powerful and capricious entities who had to be appeased by anxious worshipers. Roman sources report that members of the Carthaginian elite would sacrifice their own male children in times of crisis. Excavations at Carthage and other western Phoenician towns have turned up *tophets*°—walled enclosures where thousands of small, sealed urns containing the burned bones of children lay buried. Although some scholars argue that these were infants born prematurely or taken by childhood illnesses, most maintain that the western Phoenicians practiced child sacrifice on a more or less regular basis. Originally practiced by the upper classes, child sacrifice seems to have become more common and to have involved broader elements of the population after 400 B.C.E.

Baal Hammon (BAHL ha-MOHN) **Tanit** (TAH-nit)
tophet (TOE-fet)

FAILURE AND TRANSFORMATION, 750–550 B.C.E.

The extension of Assyrian power over the entire Middle East had enormous consequences for all the peoples of this region and caused the stories of Mesopotamia, Israel, and Phoenicia to converge.

By 650 B.C.E. Assyria stood unchallenged in western Asia. But the arms race with Urartu, the frequent expensive campaigns, and the protection of lengthy borders had sapped Assyrian resources. Assyrian brutality and exploitation aroused the hatred of conquered peoples. At the same time, changes in the ethnic composition of the army and the population of the homeland had reduced popular support for the Assyrian state.

Two new political entities spearheaded resistance to Assyria. First, Babylonia had been revived by the Neo-Babylonian, or Chaldaean^o, dynasty (the Chaldaeans

Chaldaean (chal-DEE-uhn)

had infiltrated southern Mesopotamia around 1000 B.C.E.). Second, the Medes^o, an Iranian people, were extending their kingdom eastward across the Iranian Plateau in the seventh century B.C.E. The two powers launched a series of attacks on the Assyrian homeland that destroyed the chief cities by 612 B.C.E.

The rapidity of the Assyrian fall is stunning. The destruction systematically carried out by the victorious attackers led to the depopulation of northern Mesopotamia. Two centuries later, when a corps of Greek mercenaries passed by mounds that concealed the ruins of the Assyrian capitals, the Athenian chronicler Xenophon^o had no inkling that their empire had ever existed.

The Medes took over the Assyrian homeland and the northern steppe as far as eastern Anatolia, but most of the territory of the old empire fell to the **Neo-Babylonian kingdom** (626–539 B.C.E.), thanks to the energetic campaigns of kings Nabopolassar^o (r. 625–605 B.C.E.) and

Mede (MEED) **Xenophon** (ZEN-uh-fahn)

Nabopolassar (NAB-oh-poe-lass-uhr)

Nebuchadnezzar (r. 604–562 B.C.E.). Babylonia underwent a cultural renaissance. The city of Babylon was enlarged and adorned, becoming the greatest metropolis of the world in the sixth century B.C.E. Old cults were revived, temples rebuilt, festivals resurrected. The related pursuits of mathematics, astronomy, and astrology reached new heights.

CONCLUSION

This chapter traces developments in the Middle East and the Mediterranean from 2000 to 500 B.C.E. The patterns of culture that originated in the river-valley civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia persisted into this era. Peoples such as the Amorites, Kassites, and Chaldeans, who migrated into the Tigris-Euphrates plain, were largely assimilated into the Sumerian-Semitic cultural tradition, adopting the language, religious beliefs, political and social institutions, and forms of artistic expression. Similarly, the Hyksos, who migrated into the Nile Delta and controlled much of Egypt for a time, adopted the ancient ways of Egypt. When the founders of the New Kingdom finally ended Hyksos domination, they reinstated the united monarchy and the religious and cultural traditions of earlier eras.

Yet the Middle East was in many important respects a different place after 2000 B.C.E. New centers of political and economic power had emerged—the Elamites in southwest Iran, the Assyrians in northern Mesopotamia, Urartu in present-day Armenia, the Hittites of Anatolia, and the Minoan and Mycenaean peoples of the Aegean Sea. These new centers often borrowed heavily from the technologies and cultural practices of Mesopotamia and Egypt, creating dynamic syntheses of imported and indigenous elements. The entire Middle East was drawn together by networks of trade and diplomacy, a situation that provided general stability and raised the standard of living for many. Ultimately, though, the very interdependence of these societies made them vulnerable to the destructions and disorder of the decades around 1200 B.C.E. The entire region slipped into a “Dark Age” of isolation, stagnation, and decline that lasted several centuries.

The early centuries after 1000 B.C.E. saw a resurgence of political organization and international commerce, and the spread of technologies and ideas. The Neo-Assyrian Empire, the great power of the time, represented a continuation of the Mesopotamian tradition, though the center of empire moved to the north. Israel and Phoenicia, on the other hand, reflected the influence of Mesopotamia and Egypt but also evolved distinctive cultural traditions.

Throughout this era people were on the move, sometimes voluntarily and sometimes under compulsion. The Assyrians deported large numbers of prisoners of war from outlying subject territories to the core area in northern Mesopotamia. The Phoenicians left their overpopulated homeland to establish new settlements in North Africa, Spain, and islands off the coast of Italy. In their new homes the Phoenician colonists tried to duplicate familiar ways of life from the old country. In contrast, the Israelites who settled in Canaan and, at a later time, emigrated to the Diaspora underwent significant political, social, and cultural transformations as they adapted to new zones of settlement.

Key Terms

Iron Age	mass deportation
Hittites	Library of Ashurbanipal
Hatshepsut	Israel
Akhenaten	Hebrew Bible
Ramesses II	First Temple
Minoan	monotheism
Mycenae	Diaspora
shaft graves	Phoenicians
Linear B	Carthage
Neo-Assyrian Empire	Neo-Babylonian kingdom

Suggested Reading

Fundamental for all periods in the ancient Middle East is Jack M. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 4 vols. (1995), containing nearly two hundred articles by contemporary experts and bibliography on a wide range of topics. John Boardman, I. E. S. Edwards, N. G. L. Hammond, and E. Sollberger, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2d ed., vols. 3.1–3.3 (1982–1991), provides extremely detailed historical coverage of the entire Mediterranean and western Asia. Barbara Lesko, ed., *Women's Earliest Records: From Ancient Egypt and Western Asia* (1989), is a collection of papers on the experiences of women in the ancient Middle East.

Many of the books recommended in the Suggested Reading list for Chapter 1 are useful for Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt in the Late Bronze Age. In addition, see Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, vol. 2, *The New Kingdom* (1978); Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (1992), which explores the relations of Egypt with the Syria-Palestine region in this period; Erik Hornung, *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light* (1999), which, while focusing on the religious innovations, deals with many facets of the reign of Akhenaten; Karol Mysliwiec, *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt: First Millennium B.C.E.* (2000), which traces the story of Egyptian civilization after the New Kingdom; and H. W. F. Saggs, *Babylonians* (1995), which devotes several chapters to this more thinly documented epoch in the history of southern

Mesopotamia. The most up-to-date treatment of the Hittites can be found in Trevor Boyce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites* (1998) and *Life and Society in the Hittite World* (2002). Also useful are O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites*, 2d ed., rev. (1990), and J. G. Macqueen, *The Hittites and Their Contemporaries in Asia Minor* (1975).

R. A. Higgins, *The Archaeology of Minoan Crete* (1973) and *Minoan and Mycenaean Art*, new rev. ed. (1997); Rodney Castleden, *Minoans: Life in Bronze Age Crete* (1990); J. Walter Graham, *The Palaces of Crete* (1987); O. Krzyszkowska and L. Nixon, *Minoan Society* (1983); and N. Marinatos, *Minoan Religion* (1993), examine the archaeological evidence for the Minoan civilization. The brief discussion of M. I. Finley, *Early Greece: The Bronze and Archaic Ages* (1970), and the much fuller accounts of Emily Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* (1972), and J. T. Hooker, *Mycenaean Greece* (1976), are still useful treatments of Mycenaean Greece, based primarily on archaeological evidence. Robert Drews, *The Coming of the Greeks: Indo-European Conquests in the Aegean and the Near East* (1988), examines the evidence for the earliest Greeks. For the Linear B tablets see John Chadwick, *Linear B and Related Scripts* (1987) and *The Mycenaean World* (1976). J. V. Luce, *Homer and the Heroic Age* (1975), and Carol G. Thomas, *Myth Becomes History: Pre-Classical Greece* (1993), examine the usefulness of the Homeric poems for reconstructing the Greek past. For the disruptions and destructions of the Late Bronze Age in the eastern Mediterranean, see N. K. Sandars, *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean* (1978), and Trude Dothan and Moshe Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* (1992).

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Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years: Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times* (1994), is an intriguing account of textile manufacture in antiquity, with emphasis on the social implications and primary role of women. I. Irving Ziderman, "Seashells and Ancient Purple Dyeing," *Biblical Archaeologist* 53 (June 1990): 98–101, is a convenient summary of Phoenician purple-dyeing technology.

Document-Based Question**The Power of the Ruling Class
in Ancient Egypt, Greece,
and Israel**

Using the following documents, analyze the various ways ruling classes demonstrated power in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Israel.

DOCUMENT 1

The Mortuary Temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri, Egypt, ca. 1460 B.C.E. (photo, p. 59)

DOCUMENT 2

Colossal Statues of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel (photo, p. 65)

DOCUMENT 3

Fresco from the Aegean Island of Thera, ca. 1600 B.C.E. (photo, p. 68)

DOCUMENT 4

Lion Gate at Mycenae (photo, p. 69)

DOCUMENT 5

Artist's Rendering of Solomon's Jerusalem (photo, p. 77)

DOCUMENT 6

An Israelite Prophet Chastizes the Ruling Class (Diversity and Dominance, pp. 78–79)

What is the tone of Document 6? How does the document's tone help you to determine its point of view? What additional types of documents would help you understand the power of the ruling class in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Israel?