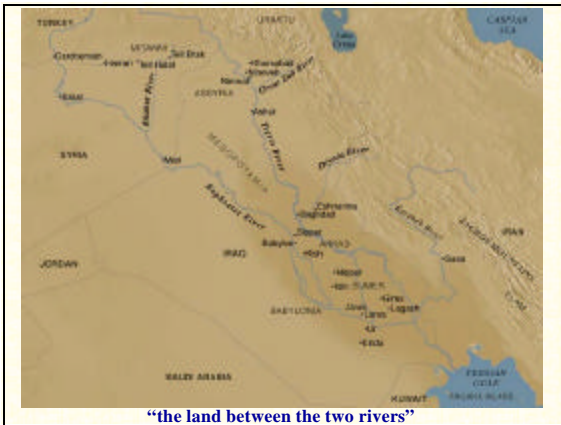
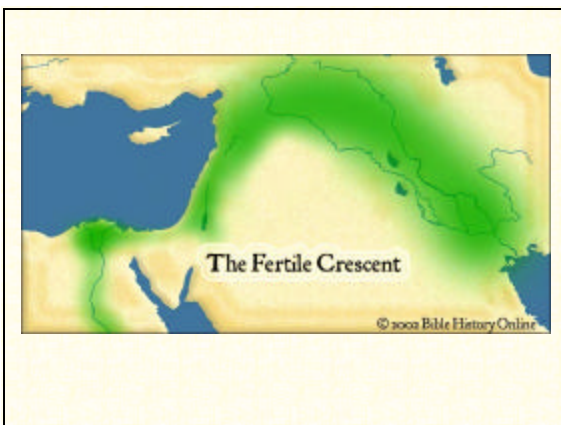


Chapter 2—Mesopotamia





"the land between the two rivers"



The Fertile Crescent

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Chapter 2—Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent

- Unlike the Egyptians, ancient Mesopotamia varied greatly.
- Sumerians 3500-2350 BC lived in Fertile Crescent and created cuneiform writing system. Gilgamesh Epic ca. 2000 BC that is the basis for some OT stories: creation, fall, flood, etc. It asks the question: is life worth it considering death awaits us all.
- Akkadian (named for the capital city of Akkad) and Babylonian Culture—2350-2150 BC Sargon and his successors ruled Mesopotamia. Hammurabi ca. 1800 and the Babylonians.
- Assyrians—1000-612 BC last great Mesopotamian culture.... Palaces at Nimrud and Nineveh were built. The Medes and the Persians took over with Cyrus the Great (590-529) They in turn were defeated by Alexander the Great ca. 330 BC.

Mesopotamian Theology

- Polytheism (Marduk founds Babylon—“home of the gods”)
- Religion tied to nature and agriculture
- Religion reflects the fickleness of nature and gods
- Gilgamesh Epic
 1. first great epic poem—a search for immortality
 2. used in the Genesis narrative
- Abraham of Ur (early Israelites came from Sumer)
- Monotheism—YHWH (N.B. Akhenaten)
- Babylonian Captivity
- Zoroastrianism



Deities and worshippers from Temple of Abu 2900-2600 BCE





Bull Lyre, Ur
(wood, gold, lapis lazuli, shell)
2680 BCE



Gilgamesh

Mesopotamian Social Order

- Early Sumer society was made up of city-states (parallel to those of the Greeks)
- Sargon I unified them resulting in the first empire
- Social strata required for urban life—see Standard
- Law and Order—Hammurabi
- Women were considered second-class with some rights



Standard
of Ur
ca. 2700
BCE



Code of Hammurabi 1792-1750 BCE
containing 282 rules based upon status

Mesopotamian Art—the ziggurat

Ziggurat—
a gateway to
heaven
(Tower of Babel)





Stele of Naramsin 2254-2218 BCE



Statue of Gudea 2120 BCE



Nebuchadnezzar II ca. 600



cup with gazelles ca. 250

The Babylonian Captivity

- The fall of Judah 586 BCE
- Nebuchadnezzar exported Hebrews to Babylon
“By the waters of Babylon....”
- Exiled artisans and leaders...not all the people of Israel went into exile

The Iron Age

- Hittites use of iron changed warfare
- Iron resulted in the creation of three great empires:
 - » Assyrian
 - » Chaldean
 - » Persian



Guardian of Sargon II 720 BCE



From Khorsabad, capital of the Assyrian Empire

For an interesting world timeline:

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hm/04/hm04.htm>
