

Premium TimeMaps Unit Slideshow

The Ancient Middle East

Slideshow Commentary

Contents

Introduction	p. 2
Slideshow commentary	p. 3
Questions	p. 27
Further Reading	p. 30

Introduction

This slideshow presentation can be used as an introduction to this topic in world history, as a wrap up/reinforcement exercise, or simply as a stand-alone.

The slideshow can also be used by students in their project work. For this they will need to access the resource themselves, as well as the student commentary (or a printout of it). This will require a multi-user licence.

For each slide, this commentary mostly follows the same formula:

1. Slide number and date

2. Introductory paragraph (in bold)

This seeks to encapsulate in a sentence or two what's going on in the map. These are in bold.

3. Bullet points

One or more bullet points, giving very brief points of interest in the map, or in the period it covers.

4. Additional note(s)

For most slides there are additional notes. These give more in-depth support to the bullet points. Much of the information these contain may be superfluous to your needs, especially if you are covering the topic quickly. However, we have included it so that it is there for you if you want it.

We suggest that, prior to using the Presentation with your class, you go through these additional notes and highlight any you wish to use.

Sometimes there are notes in italics - these are simply hints and tips for teachers. They don't occur very often.

A suggestion:

To keep your students more engaged (and, by the way, if your students are not engaged or benefitting from these maps, then let us know and we'll refund your money!), why not start each new map with a question, such as, "How is this map different from the previous one?"

Commentary

When using this Slideshow in class it might be helpful to print these notes out.

Slide 1: 3500 BCE

(A point to note, which sounds obvious but may be worth making, is that the cities shown in all slides are just the most important ones - or perhaps simply the ones which show the most impressive archaeological remains. They are by no means the only ones.)

The first civilization in world history is appearing in the Middle East.

- On the flood plains of Mesopotamia, irrigation farming supports a large population. The first true cities in world history are appearing. This heralds the rise of the earliest civilization in history, that of the Sumerians (note 1).

The area shaded orange denotes the Sumerian civilization.

- In the Nile Valley, there is a second area of irrigation-supported farming. At present, this fertile land is divided between several powerful chieftains (note 2).
- To the north of the Middle East (in present-day Ukraine) are a group of nomadic peoples who speak an early form of Indo-European language. Keep an eye on them! (Note 3)

Additional Notes:

1. Mesopotamia

The word Mesopotamia means “land between the rivers” in Greek. This land is made up of the flood plains of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates.

Here, the inhabitants have constructed a growing network of irrigation systems over many centuries. This has made the soil very fertile. As a result, a large, dense population has grown up here.

This is most true of southern Mesopotamia. Here, the surplus of food grown supports groups of people who don't have to work as farmers. These include professional artisans, officials, soldiers and rulers.

These groups live in the first true cities, with temples, palaces, wide streets and spaces for public ceremonies. They also have well-built defensive walls.

This area of the southern Mesopotamia is called Sumer. The people who live in the cities here are the Sumerians, and they are developing the earliest civilization in world history.

Sumerian city-states

Each Sumerian city is at the center of its own territory. This forms a political unit which today we would call a city-state. The Sumerian city-states are fiercely independent, and often at war with one another.

Each city-state is ruled by a priest-king. To help him govern, he is supported by groups of priests and officials. The Sumerians practice a polytheistic religion, and the kings are seen as the Earthly representatives of the cities' patron god.

The economies of these states are very tightly controlled by the temple priests. Much of the food produced by the farmers is collected into temple storehouses and redistributed by officials. It is used to support the king and the royal family, the palace attendants, the temple priests and craftsmen, and numerous officials, overseers, and soldiers.

Writing

To help them organize and keep track of all this activity, Sumerian officials are developing methods of record keeping which will evolve into the first writing system.

This is based on the cuneiform script. This is made up of hundreds of separate characters, which are in fact based on very stylised pictures (it is therefore called a pictographic script).

It is "written" by pressing a wedge-shaped stylus onto soft wet clay tablets. When the clay dries, it hardens to provide a permanent record of what has been written.

2. The Nile Valley

The Nile is the longest river in the world, with its waters rising far to the south, in central Africa. The river's northern half - roughly 1000 miles - slices through the Sahara desert, creating a thin strip of fertile land about 13 miles wide on average.

About 750 miles south of where the Nile reaches the sea there are a series of cataracts, or rapids. The river crashes over these on its way north. They mark the southern boundary of the land of Egypt.

The river then flows smoothly northward through Egypt to the sea.

The Delta is where the river finally meets the Mediterranean Sea. Today it is covered with fertile farmland, but at this time much of it was swampy and impassable.

Chieftains

By this date, powerful chieftainships have grown up along the banks of the river. These are centered on large walled villages.

These chieftains owe the growth of their power to the need to distribute the river water to the inhabitants, and to manage the irrigation systems which make farming possible.

Such is their success that a large population is growing on this long strip of fertile land.

3. Indo-European speakers

These people keep herds of cattle and sheep, which they graze on the great grasslands (steppes) that stretch from east to west across central Asia.

They have learnt to domesticate horses, and their nomadic lifestyle allows them to roam far and wide. Shortly, some of them will begin moving out from the steppes, into Europe and the Middle East.

As they spread, their language will evolve into several early Indo-European languages. These will include Greek, Latin, Celtic, German, Persian and Sanskrit (in India). These in turn have developed into modern languages such as English, French, Spanish, Italian and several Indian languages.

In the coming centuries, Indo-European speakers will play an important part in Middle Eastern history.

Slide 2: 2500 BCE

(Note that in the map, the borders of Mesopotamian civilization are not solid, whereas the borders of Egypt are. This is to show that Egypt a single state, whereas Sumerian civilization (in orange) consists of numerous small city-states.)

Civilization has spread across much of the Middle East. Most important, a second great civilization now flourishes in the Middle East. This is the civilization of Ancient Egypt.

- The people of Egypt have become unified under the rule of a single king (called a pharaoh).. Already at this time, the Egyptians have built some of the most iconic buildings in world history, the Great Pyramids of Giza. Egypt has developed its own writing systems, and has made great advances in other areas (note 1).
- At around this time, the making of bronze is pioneered, probably in Mesopotamia. To meet the demand for bronze, trade routes have been spreading out from the land of Sumer in Mesopotamia. Along them, civilization spreads (note 2).
- Indo-European nomads are spearing southwards, from the steppes of central Asia into the Middle East (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. Egypt

By c. 3200 BCE the different chieftainships had been swallowed up into two larger states. The southern one covered Upper Egypt, the northern one covered Lower Egypt, including the Nile Delta.

By c. 3000 BCE, the rulers of Upper Egypt had conquered Lower Egypt, uniting the whole of the land of Egypt under a single rule.

The ruler who united Egypt was called Menes. He was the first of the long succession of pharaohs to rule Egypt. He established the First Dynasty of ancient Egypt (there will ultimately be thirty native dynasties).

He ruled the land from his capital, Memphis, just south of the Nile Delta.

Nation-wide mobilization of labor

Shortly after its unification, ancient Egypt entered its first period of greatness; this is called the Old Kingdom.

The fact that a single monarch now rules an entire country, not just a city-state, means that they are able to mobilize a work force on a national scale hit the building of massive structures. The largest of all of them, the Great Pyramids of Giza, are being built at this date. The latest and largest

of these has been commissioned by the pharaoh Khufu, probably the best-known of all the Old Kingdom rulers,

To us the building of pyramids seems like an enormous waste of resources. To the Egyptians it was a way of bringing divine blessing on their land.

Ancient Egyptian writing and other achievements

The Egyptians have developed their own writing systems. A hieroglyphic script is used on stone monuments for public proclamations. For more everyday use a less formal cursive script is used, written on papyrus leaves.

Like Mesopotamian cuneiform, these Egyptian scripts are pictographic, using hundreds of characters based on simplified pictures.

Egyptian achievements in medicine, science, mathematics, and, as the Pyramids show, engineering, are very advanced for the time; for example they have developed a 365-day calendar.

2. The Dawn of the Bronze Age

The Sumerian cities are far larger and wealthier than any previous communities in history. Mesopotamia has little by way of natural resources such as timber, stone or metal. These have to be brought in, in exchange for grain and high quality goods made by professional Sumerian textile and metal workers.

As a result, trade routes are spreading out from Sumer (the land of the Sumerians in southern Mesopotamia). Around some trading settlements, new cities grow. The traders spread techniques such as writing, the construction of large buildings, and so on. Civilization is spreading.

Bronze technology

This process is boosted by the development of bronze technology.

Before then, copper was the most common metal used. This, however, is quite a soft metal. It was therefore used mostly for making jewellery. Sumerian metal smiths, however, have learnt to mix copper with other metals, especially tin, to produce bronze.

This hard alloy (a metal made by mixing two or more other metals) can be used to make armour and weapons. The Sumerian city-states are now in one of the first arms races in history, as they equip their soldiers with metal armour and weaponry.

This increases the demand for copper and tin. These metals are found in dispersed locations scattered across the Middle East and beyond. Trade routes therefore spread ever further out from Mesopotamia, across the Middle East and on into north west India and south east Europe.

3. Indo-European peoples

The Indo-European peoples' nomadic lifestyle has given them an edge in conflicts with farming people. In particular, their domestication of the horse means that they have much greater speed and mobility than foot-soldiers.

It is probably around this date that they begin making the earliest wheeled vehicles, ox-drawn carts.

Slide 3: 2324 BCE

The whole of Southern Mesopotamia - the land of Sumer - has been brought under the rule of King Sargon of Akkad.

- Sargon was not a Sumerian. He was an outsider from an unrelated people (note 1)
- He was able to take control of the Sumerian city of Kish, and then of all Sumer (note 2).
- He founded the city of Agade, or Akkad (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. Sargon

The birth legend of Sargon is similar to that of Moses, the first great leader of the Israelite people. According to this story, the baby Sargon was found in a basket floating on a river by a gardener. This man brought him up as his own son.

Sargon is not a Sumerian. He belongs to a people who speak a Semitic language, related to modern Arabic and Hebrew. His tribe may have originally been nomadic herders, like other Semitic peoples. However, they have long been settled in Mesopotamia, just north-west of the main area of Sumerian city-states.

2. King of the Sumerians

Sargon apparently entered the service of the king of the Sumerian city-state of Kish. He rose to be a very important official in the royal court. Somehow he was able to take control of Kish, and then brought all the Sumerian city-states under his rule.

Sargon thus made himself master over all the Sumerians.

3. Akkad

At some point Sargon is credited with founding a new city, Akkad (Agade) as his capital. Sargon has therefore gone down in history as "Sargon of Akkad".

Akkad also gave its name to the people from which Sargon was drawn. Scholars call this people the Akkadians.

The city of Agade has not yet been located by archaeologists.

Slide 4: 2230 BCE

Sargon of Akkad is the first great conqueror in history, and has founded the first true empire.

Additional Note

Having conquered the whole of Sumer, Sargon has gone on to conquer far and wide - northwest into Asia Minor, west as far as the Mediterranean coast, and east into what is now Iran. He thus created the earliest empire in world history.

Wherever he rules, Sargon apparently insists on his own native tongue, Akkadian, being used for government affairs. This spreads the use of Akkadian far and wide. However, it is only in the core area of his empire, in southern Mesopotamia, that it comes into common use.

Slide 5: 2150 BCE

The two most important states of the period have now collapsed.

- Sargon's empire lasted for less than a hundred years before it fell. However, it has left a strong legacy (note 1).
- The Old Kingdom of Egypt has also collapsed, after more than 500 years (note 2).

Additional Notes:

1. The Akkadian legacy

The area of southern Mesopotamia is now called Sumer and Akkad in contemporary sources. This shows how important the legacy of the Akkadian empire is. The Akkadian language, used by the government of Sargon's empire, has become widely spoken in Mesopotamia.

Elam

To the east of Mesopotamia is the land of Elam. The people here have long been influenced by Sumerian civilization. The area came under the rule of Sargon and his successors, but with the decline of their empire, Elam has emerged as an independent state under its own kings.

As in southern Mesopotamia, Akkadian remains the language of government here.

This kingdom will remain important for more than a thousand years.

2. Egypt

In Egypt, the Old Kingdom has now collapsed.

The country is now in chaos as rival princes control different parts of the country. This period is known in ancient Egyptian history as the First Intermediate Period.

Slide 6: 2100 BCE

The Sumerian city of Ur now dominates Mesopotamia.

Additional Note:

The city of Ur

Ur has from early times been one of the leading Sumerian city-states. It has grown wealthy on maritime trade in the Gulf, and well beyond. It even trades with the Indus Valley cities.

The kings of Ur have now conquered much of Mesopotamia, and some neighboring lands as well. They make Sumerian the language of government again.

A bureaucratic state

Ur has a claim to being the first bureaucratic state in world history. Thousands of administrative documents have come down to us from this period. They were all written in cuneiform on clay tablets by Sumerian scribes.

They show us that the kings of Ur attempted to control their subjects' lives very tightly. This was especially true of their economic activities.

It is at this time that the great Ziggurat of Ur, the most spectacular Sumerian structure, is built.

Slide 7: 2100 BCE

Much of the Middle East is now experiencing upheavals.

- A nomadic people called the Amorites are attacking neighboring lands in Mesopotamia, Syria and Canaan (note 1).
- It is probably around this time that Abraham, the founding father of the Israelite people, lived (note 2).

Additional Notes:

1. The Amorites

The Amorites live in nomadic groups, herding sheep and goats. They speak a Semitic language, closely related to Akkadian.

2. Abraham

It is probably about this time that Abraham, the ancestor of the Israelites, leaves Ur on travels that would eventually take him and his followers to Canaan (which the Israelites would later call the "Promised Land").

Abraham would have belonged to a nomadic Amorite clan. Nomadic groups like this frequently lived in the neighbourhood of Sumerian cities. They were often on the move, grazing their flocks on the grasslands that fringed the desert or which lay between the different cities.

Particularly in a times of upheaval, as this period was, nomadic clans would sometimes travel long distances across the Middle East.

Slide 8: 2000 BCE

Life has settled down again in much of the Middle East.

- Amorite chieftains now rule many cities in Mesopotamia (note 1).
- Egypt has been reunified under the Middle Kingdom (note 2).
- Indo-European groups have moved further into the Middle East, and have brought with them a new weapon of war, the chariot (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. Mesopotamia

Ur's period of dominance was also the final era of Sumerian greatness. As Ur's power has crumbled, groups of Amorite nomads have migrated into the land.

Some Amorite chiefs establish themselves as rulers over Mesopotamian city-states, or establish new ones - for example the city of Babylon.

The upheavals of the time, and the migration of new peoples into Mesopotamia, are leading to the decline of Sumerian as a language in everyday use. It is being replaced by Akkadian - or "Old Babylonian", as modern scholars call it.

2. Egypt

By this time, rulers from southern Egypt have reunited the land and founded the Middle Kingdom (c. 2045 BCE).

This is the achievement of the pharaoh Mentuhotep II, of the 11th Dynasty. This has its capital at Thebes, in southern Egypt, not Memphis in the north. This shows that there has been a major shift in political power to the southern part of the country.

3. Indo-Europeans in the Middle East

Indo-European groups have moved further into the Middle East. They have migrated into north Iran (where they will be called Iranians), and also into Asia Minor. Here they have attacked cities and disrupted trade.

The incomers bring with them a new weapon of war. We have noted above (see notes of Slide 1) that the nomads of the steppes, to the north of the Middle East, had domesticated the horse, and also developed wheeled vehicles.

These had at first been ox-drawn wagons. Over time, however, the nomads have developed lighter versions, with only two wheels. They have also developed a new kind of wheel, with spokes rather than solid wood. This makes them tougher and lighter, and able to travel much faster. Finally, they have succeeded in harnessing horses to them.

The result is the chariot - a weapon of war which can defeat many times their number of foot soldiers.

It is not long before all the leading states in the Middle East equip their armies with this new battle-winning vehicle.

Slide 9: 1750 BCE

Hammurabi, king of Babylon, has united Mesopotamia under his rule.

(Note that the city of Babylon has appeared on the map.)

- Babylon, Hammurabi's capital, is now the leading city in Mesopotamia. It is the center of a large state, and will go down as one of the most famous cities in all history. Apart from conquering far and wide, Hammurabi is known for the famous law code he issues (note 1).
- The Middle Kingdom of Egypt now dominates territory well beyond the Nile Valley (note 2).
- Abraham's descendants are now roaming the land of Canaan or settling in Egypt (note 4).

Additional Notes:

1. Babylon

In Mesopotamia, the city of Babylon was founded by an Amorite clan. At first small and unimportant, it gained more and more territory under a succession of vigorous kings.

Babylon's famous king Hammurabi (reigns 1792-49 BC), has been able to unite almost all Mesopotamia under his rule, and even to extend his power into Syria.

Hammurabi's law code

Hammurabi is famous not only for his conquest, but also for issuing a law code, which he has had carved on stone pillars and set up in different locations around his empire.

This law code is not the first in Mesopotamian history; it is likely that many, if not all, Mesopotamian city-states had such codes. However, Hammurabi's is the most comprehensive that has survived, and has given modern scholars a clear insight into ancient Mesopotamian life.

The purpose of issuing his code is so that all his subjects, wherever they are, are able to obey, and to be judged by, a single set of laws, rather than by a confusion of local laws.

2. Middle Kingdom Egypt

The Middle Kingdom of Egypt has expanded its borders, southward into Kush and outwards into the desert oases surrounding the Nile Valley. These are valuable for the salt, copper and gold mines located there. From Kush come exotic products from sub-Saharan Africa, such as ivory, black slaves and ostrich feathers.

3. Abraham's descendants

According to the Biblical account, by this date, Abraham's descendants are roaming the land of Canaan, or perhaps have already settled in Egypt.

This nomadic group is not alone. Archeologists have shown that, during this period, both Canaan and Egypt experienced an influx of Semitic tribes, including Amorites, Hyksos and Hapiru (Hebrews) - although to what extent these are distinct peoples, or one group of people under different names, is difficult to say.

In Canaan they graze their flocks in the scrub between the small cities there, and in Egypt they usually live on the margins of the Nile valley.

Slide 10: 1650 BCE

Both Mesopotamia and Egypt are going through a period of weakness.

- Hammurabi's empire went into decline immediately after his death (note 1).
- In Egypt, the Middle Kingdom has collapsed (note 2).
- One group of Indo-Europeans, the Hittites, have established a powerful kingdom in Asia Minor (note 3).
- Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, are now in Egypt (note 4).

Additional Notes:

1. Southern Mesopotamia

Hammurabi's successors soon lost much of the empire he had conquered. The city-states of southern Mesopotamia, however, remained under their rule, with the city of Babylon as their capital. As a result, this region is now called Babylonia.

As we have noted (see notes for Slide 8), the people of the region no longer speak Sumerian, but a language which modern scholars call "Old Babylonian". Nevertheless, the civilization of Mesopotamia - its religion, art, architecture, literature and so on - is based firmly on lines laid down by their Sumerian forebears.

2. Egypt

The Middle Kingdom of Egypt collapses about now. This starts a century of disunity and chaos in the country, in the era of ancient Egyptian history known as the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1650 to 1550 BCE).

During it, a people from western Asia, the Hyksos, briefly occupy the Nile Delta. They are the first foreigners to rule in Egypt.

3. The Hittites

The Indo-Europeans' battle-winning weapon, the chariot, allows them to conquer large areas in the northern Middle East. One group in particular has established a powerful kingdom in Asia Minor. This is the Hittites.

4. The Israelites

According to the Biblical account, Abraham's descendants are now living in Egypt. They call themselves the "Children of Israel". This is after Abraham's grandson, Israel (or Jacob as he was originally called), who was the chief of their clan when they migrated into Egypt.

It is likely that they form one group amongst the Hapiru (Hebrew) people. These appear in Egyptian documents of the time, as troublesome outsiders who are infiltrating the country.

Slide 11: 1275 BCE

This period marks the high point of Bronze Age civilization in the Middle East. New Kingdom Egypt and the Hittite Empire are the leading powers of the region.

- Under the pharaohs of the New Kingdom, ancient Egypt reaches the height of its power (note 1).
- Egypt and the Hittite empire fight each other for control of Canaan (note 2).
- Babylonia (southern Mesopotamia) has fallen under the control of an Indo-European tribe called the Kassites (note 3).
- The new power of Assyria is beginning to threaten both Egypt and the Hittites (note 4).
- Barely a generation will pass before the whole Middle East will sink into chaos. The Children of Israel will have a part in this (note 5).

Additional Notes:

1. New Kingdom Egypt

In around 1550 BCE a line of kings from southern Egypt drove the Hyksos out, reunited the country under their rule. They thus established the New Kingdom. The pharaoh who established the New Kingdom was Ahmose I, one of the most famous of all ancient Egypt's rulers.

The monarchs of the New Kingdom are ambitious and warlike.

It is likely that the experience of having foreigners (Hyksos) rule part of their land came as a shock to the people of Egypt. This has probably made their rulers much more aware of the need for a strong army than in previous times. It is in the New Kingdom that ancient Egypt reaches the height of its glory and power.

Famous pharaohs

In c. 1500 BCE, the pharaoh Thutmose I, uses this new powerful army to re-occupy Nubia and invade Canaan.

One of the most extraordinary of pharaohs at this time was Hatshepsut (reigned c. 1479-1458 BCE). She was one of the very few women in ancient Egyptian history to rule the country in her own right (rather than as the queen, or queen mother, of a weak or young male ruler).

Another remarkable pharaoh was Akhenaten (reigned c. 1353-1336 BCE). He tried to install the worship of the Sun god Aten as the official religion of Egypt.

This policy of course aroused the fury of the priests of Amun, the main god of the Egyptians at this time. Akhenaten's religious reforms did not survive his death, but some modern scholars see this episode as a first experiment in monotheism.

Akhenaten's wife was Queen Nefertiti. She apparently became the real ruler of Egypt after his death. A bust of her is one of the most beautiful of all Egyptian works of art.

Her son, the boy king Tutankhamen (reigned 1332-1323 BCE) is today probably the most famous of all the pharaohs. He did not reign long nor did he accomplish much, but his magnificent burial chamber in the Valley of the Kings was discovered by archaeologists in 1922.

Great monuments

Rameses II (reigns 1279 to 1213) is the ruler reigning at this date. He is a successful military leader, and a builder of magnificent monuments.

At this time, pharaohs and their queens are buried in the magnificent tombs of the Valley of the Kings. This is near the city of Thebes (near modern-day Luxor), the capital of New Kingdom Egypt.

Here, some of the most spectacular temples from the Ancient World can still be seen, near the banks of the Nile.

Rameses has either constructed or renovated three of the greatest of all ancient Egyptian temples, at Karnak, Luxor and Abu Simbel. He has enormous statues of himself carved, and on them inscribes his many achievements. Later Egyptians will regard him as the greatest of all pharaohs.

Kush

The kingdom of Kush, or Nubia, is the land to the south of Egypt. The region has for centuries acted as a trade bridge between Egypt and central Africa, to the south.

In this region the course of the River Nile is interrupted by a series of fierce cataracts. As boats cannot pass these, trade is limited to overland transport (i.e. by caravans of donkeys).

This limits the influence of Egyptian civilization in the region. The Nubians have a culture more similar to that of other central African peoples at this time.

In Nubia, farming has long been practiced, but the land is less fertile than in Egypt and cattle grazing is also important.

In earlier times, the land came under the (perhaps loose) control of chieftains or kings based in the large royal settlement at Kerma.

The region has been brought under Egyptian rule by the aggressive pharaohs of the New Kingdom. Egyptian influences become much more powerful in Nubia. Many Egyptians settle in the region, as soldiers, officials and traders. They establish Egyptian towns in the region, and the pharaohs build huge temples there. Many members of the Nubian upper classes become Egyptianized, and even enter the service of the pharaohs as soldiers and officials.

The Egyptian capital in Kush is the city of Napata. The Pharaoh's governor is based here.

2. Great power competition in Canaan

The many small kingdoms of Syria and Canaan are dominated by their more powerful neighbors, the Egyptians and the Hittites.

The Hittites have greatly expanded their kingdom until it covers a large part of Asia Minor and Syria.

The rivalry between the Egyptians and Hittites culminates in the Battle of Kadesh, which takes place around this time (probably 1274 BCE).

Rameses II claims it as a great victory on his monuments, but it is not followed up by any territorial gains for the Egyptians. In fact, the Egyptians and Hittites seem to have come to an agreement to divide control of Canaan between them.

In any case, both powers were soon more concerned at the aggressive actions of Assyria than with each other.

3. Assyria

The Assyrians are a people of northern Mesopotamia. Their culture is heavily influenced by the Babylonian civilization of southern Mesopotamia. Living in territory under constant threat from hostile neighbors, however, they seem to have had a more warlike society

They have now formed their own kingdom. For centuries to come, Assyria will play a huge role in the history of the ancient Middle East.

4. Babylonia under foreign rule

In 1595 BCE, the city of Babylon was attacked and sacked by the Hittites (see below). This weakened its kingdom, and it soon fell under the control of Indo-European rulers, the Kassites. This group had infiltrated the hill country to the north-east of Mesopotamia in the previous centuries.

Even though they are foreigners, the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia thrives under Kassite control.

5. The Israelites

According to the Biblical account of the origins of the Israelites, the Children of Israel have now fled Egypt in a migration known as the "Exodus".

Of this there is no mention in the historical record apart from the Bible. If over two million people had been involved, as a literal reading of the Bible implies (scholars argue over the exact interpretation of the numbers), then there would almost certainly have been evidence for it. In fact, ancient Egyptian society would surely have collapsed overnight - which it clearly did not.

Nevertheless, as with many ancient origin stories (for this is what the accounts of the Exodus are), it probably did have some basis in history. It is otherwise hard to think how they could have been so broadly accepted by later generations.

In any case, at some point they certainly picked up their distinctive monotheistic religion.

It is quite possible that a group of Hapiru did move out of Egypt, perhaps as a result of anti-foreigner policies by the Egyptian government.

Slide 12: 1200 BCE

The period after the late 13th century was one of great turbulence for the Middle East. All the great states in the region were devastated, and some vanished altogether.

- From Europe, a migratory group known to historians as the Sea Peoples attacked the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean, as far as Egypt (note 1).
- From the deserts between Syria and Mesopotamia came the Arameans. They invaded Syria, Assyria, Canaan and Mesopotamia (note 2).
- Another group of invaders were the Israelites, who invaded Canaan (note 3).

- These troubled times witness the end of the Bronze Age in the Middle East. The Iron Age is dawning. This is one of the great turning points in human history (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. The Sea Peoples

Some modern scholars think that the 'Sea Peoples' originated in European lands to west - Sardinia, Sicily, Italy, Greece, western Asia Minor. They may themselves have been fleeing migrations from central Europe.

Many scholars envisage a mass migration, which devastated the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean, destroyed many cities and led to the downfall of the Hittite Empire.

Other scholars are less sure that there was any such migration. Mentions of "Sea Peoples" in the ancient sources may refer to pirates and other lawless groups.

According to such scholars, the Hittite Empire may have fallen as a result of internal problems, or of military pressure from the Assyrians.

Whatever the cause, however, this was clearly a period of destruction, and destructive attacks coming from the sea were a feature of the times.

The Philistines

The Philistines, who appear as Israel's foes in the Bible (and produced Goliath, the giant warrior felled by the sling of the young shepherd, David), seem to have formed an element of the Sea Peoples. Their origins were possibly in the western Mediterranean. They eventually ended up on the coast of Canaan. There they established five cities, linked together in an alliance.

Because they controlled the coasts of Canaan, in centuries to come the Greeks would come into contact with them as trading partners. This led the Greeks to call the whole land of Canaan "the land of the Philistines", or Palestine in modern English.

2. The Arameans

The Arameans were Semitic-speaking nomads whose homeland was in the deserts lying to the east of Syria and Canaan. This had previously been the homeland of the Amorites, and the Arameans were probably connected to these people in some way - they may have been their direct descendants.

During this period they spread out of their homeland into all the neighboring lands - northern Syria, Assyria and southern Mesopotamia.

3. The Israelites

The weakened power of Egypt has allowed the Israelites to enter Canaan. They have brought with them their monotheistic religion.

The Bible suggests that they ejected or annihilated the older inhabitants of this area. To what extent this happened is unclear. Even the Biblical accounts are ambivalent on this point. Some modern scholars think that this may have been more by the absorption of the old Canaanite culture into the newcomers' way of life, rather than by genocide.

The end result was clear, however. This was the eventual triumph of their monotheistic religion.

4. From Bronze Age to Iron Age

These troubled centuries have seen the Bronze Age give way to the Iron Age in the Middle East.

The spread of the use of iron will have huge consequences for the future.

More efficient farming...

Bronze is too expensive to be used much in farming. Up to now, farmers have mostly had to make do with tools made of wood, stone and bone - just as their ancestors did in the Stone Age.

Iron is much cheaper than bronze. This means that it can be made into tools that ordinary farmers can own. Iron plows can turn the soil much more easily than wooden ones, and iron axes can clear forested land for fields much faster. Farming therefore becomes much more productive. More food can be grown and more mouths fed.

...leads to population growth....

This will cause populations to increase, towns and cities to grow, and trade to expand. Civilization will come to more areas, especially outside the floodplains which gave rise to the older civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

...but not yet

Most of the impact from these developments will only be felt in the coming centuries. This will occur when the use of iron tools will spread far and wide across the Middle East, and well beyond.

Slide 13: 931 BCE

The troubles of the times continued into the 11th century BCE, reshaping the map of the Middle East.

- The Hittite Empire has vanished, Egypt has become weak and divided, Assyria has sunk, Babylonia has experienced what sources from the time describe as a “Time of Troubles”, and Elam is now surrounded by newcomers to the region (note 1).
- The weaknesses of the leading powers in the region have allowed two new peoples to gain prominence, the Israelites and the Phoenicians (note 2).
- Trade is helping to spread the use of new alphabetic scripts across the Middle East and beyond (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. A Map Reshaped

Asia Minor and Syria

At the beginning of the 12th century BCE the Hittite Empire was attacked by the Sea Peoples (see previous slide), and then by invaders from the Balkans, the Phrygians. The empire collapsed, leaving a group of small Neo-Hittite kingdoms to continue the Hittite heritage.

After the collapse of Hittite power in Syria, Arameans have occupied many of the city-states of the region.

Egypt and Kush

In the 12th century, Egypt came under repeated attack, from the Peoples of the Sea and the Libyans - desert nomads who lived in the desert to the west of Egypt.

Under these blows, the pharaohs had lost control of Canaan, and glorious period of the New Kingdom had come to an end. It was replaced by what modern scholars call the Third Intermediate Period.

By this date Egypt has broken up into various separate kingdoms. In these circumstances, a revived kingdom of Kush has been formed, with its capital at Napata.

Assyria

During the 12th and 11th centuries, Aramean invaders have occupied a huge portion of Assyria. Also, another threat has emerged to Assyria's the north. A warlike new kingdom, Urartu, now poses a threat to its security from that direction.

Babylonia

In the 12th and 11th centuries BCE Babylonia went a period of near anarchy. Eventually a tribe closely related to the Arameans, the Kuldu (in English: Chaldeans), were able to become dominant, and have restored order. Their kings will preserve the civilization of the ancient Babylonians, and indeed take it to new heights.

Elam

The ancient kingdom of Elam has survived the period of upheavals in the Middle East comparatively unscathed. However, it is now surrounded to north and east by Iranian tribes.

The Iranians are an Indo-European speaking group of peoples whose original homeland was in the steppes in modern-day Ukraine. They have a warrior culture, and their many separate tribes are frequently at war with each other.

One of their tribes has settled in the mountainous country bordering Elam. This tribe is called the Persians. To the north of them are another tribe called the Medes. We will hear more of both these tribes in coming slides.

2. Israelites and Phoenicians

The Israelites

After the Israelites occupied the hill country of Canaan (the coastal plain being dominated by the Philistines), they were divided into several (traditionally twelve) tribes. By this date, however, the Israelites have formed themselves into a single kingdom. They have prospered under their famous kings David (who we met in the notes of the the previous slide as a young shepherd boy) and his son Solomon.

Their capital is Jerusalem. This city is not only the political center of the Israelites, but the spiritual center as well. Here Solomon has built a temple to Yahweh. This temple is the focus of Israel's monotheistic religion.

The Phoenicians

A civilization also new to history are the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians are a branch of the Canaanite peoples, and have established prosperous trading city-states on the coast of the area of modern-day Lebanon, such as Tyre and Sidon.

These have become wealthier than any trading cities before them. Phoenician sailors and merchants are taking over what remains of the maritime trade of the eastern Mediterranean and pioneering new trade routes right across the Mediterranean Sea. They have even ventured beyond, into the Atlantic.

3. A new kind of script

A key change at this time is the development of alphabetic writing.

The cuneiform script of ancient Mesopotamia, the hieroglyphic script of ancient Egypt, and other scripts based on hundreds of symbols, take a long time to learn. As a result, only a small section of the population has been able to afford the long period of time it takes to read and write.

Compared to these, alphabetic scripts are easy and quick to master. This means that a larger section of society can become literate and educated.

The Canaanites seem to have been the first to use an alphabetic script, back in the Bronze Age. But it is only now that this kind of script begins to spread, which we shall see in the next slide.

The Canaanite alphabetic script has now evolved into several different scripts, notable the Phoenician, Aramaic and Hebrew alphabets.

Phoenician merchants are spreading their alphabet westward, where it will become the ancestor of Greek, Latin and all modern European writing.

The Aramaic alphabet is beginning to spread throughout the Middle East, and will later be taken to India. It will become the basis for all the alphabetic scripts there.

Closely related to the Aramaic script, the Hebrew alphabet will be used in the writing of the Israelite scriptures (the Old Testament of the Christian Bible).

Slide 14: 824 BCE

The Assyrians have re-occupied their former territory, and expanded it in all directions.

- After much hard fighting, the Assyrian kings eventually succeeded in stemming the tide of Aramean occupation. They have since gone on the offensive, and regained all their former territory - and much more (note 1).
- The Israelite kingdom of David and Solomon has now divided into two (note 2).

Additional Notes:

1. Assyrian expansion

Under Shalmaneser III (reigned 859-824), the Assyrian army has conducted far-reaching campaigns in all directions.

These are great raids rather than campaigns of conquest. Their aim is to bring home as much booty and tribute as possible. They also spread terror of the Assyrian army far and wide across the Middle East, so that their opponents often melt away before them.

2. The Israelite kingdoms

The northern Kingdom of Israel is the larger of the two, at least in terms of population. The southern Kingdom of Judah, however, is the location for the temple in Jerusalem. Since Solomon's time, this has been the center of the Israelite's monotheistic religion (despite the Northern Kingdom's attempt to set up a rival center). Also, Judah is ruled by the descendants of King David and Solomon. Their dynasty therefore has a far greater legitimacy amongst the Israelites than the short-lived dynasties of the North.

Slide 15: 722 BCE

The Assyrians have become by far the dominant power in the Middle East. Their empire now stretches from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf.

- Assyrian territory now takes in the areas of Syria, down into Israelite lands, up into part of Asia Minor, and all of Mesopotamia (note 1).
- The Assyrians are in the process of conquering the northern kingdom of Israel (note 2).
- In Iran, a powerful new kingdom has arisen (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. The Assyrian Empire

After the reign of Shalmaneser III (see above) there was a long period where little expansion took place. This changed under the rule of Tiglath-Pileser III (reigned 745-727).

This ruler centralized power in his own hands. He created a standing army made up of full-time, professional soldiers. It was divided into different branches - infantry, cavalry, and also engineers, who used the first siege engines in history.

Under Tiglath-Pileser, the great raids of former times turned into wars of conquest. Instead of ruling through vassal kings, Tiglath-Pileser divided the Assyrian Empire into provinces, each under a governor appointed directly by the king. The exception was Babylonia, which was kept as a full kingdom, but now with Assyrian kings as its ruler.

2. The Israelites

Tiglath-Pileser III annexed the whole northern portions of the Northern kingdom of Israel in two campaigns (722 and 720 BCE). The Assyrians deported a portion of the population to Assyria. Many people fled south to Jerusalem and surrounding areas.

3. The Medes

The Medes were one amongst many Iranian tribes which have settled the region of modern-day Iran (see notes to slide 10). The Medes have settled in western Iran and built a powerful kingdom to the east of the Assyrian Empire.

Their close relatives, the Persians, are vassals of the Medes. They are settling in south-west Iran, in lands once ruled by the kings of Elam.

Slide 16: 664 BCE

The Assyrian Empire now covers a major portion of the Middle East - but threats to its power are growing.

- Assyrian rule in the Middle East has led to dramatic changes in the region (more 1).
- The Assyrians have recently invaded Egypt (note 2). They now rule the largest empire the world has seen up to this date.
- Threats to Assyrian power are gathering, however. These are from both outside and inside the empire (note 3).

Additional Notes:

1. The Assyrian Empire

The Assyrians owe their success to their large, well-organized army. This is the first army known to have used siege engines and an efficient supply organization.

The Assyrian kings make sure that their empire is crossed by a good road network, so that troops can march quickly along them to any trouble spots. Also, messengers on horseback can ride swiftly along them to carry orders from the king to his officials in distant parts of the empire.

The Assyrians use terror tactics - massacres of civilian populations, terrible revenge on rebels - to keep their enemies in check.

Resettlement

The Assyrians often deport conquered peoples from their homelands, and resettle them in different parts of their empire. In place of the deported populations, colonists from elsewhere are brought in.

This was the fate of many small kingdoms and their cultures. It turned the areas occupied by the Assyrians into a melting pot of many different peoples. Ancient languages were lost and Aramaic became the common language of the region.

The most famous example of this practice was the kingdom of Israel. This was the northern of the two kingdoms into which the Israelites had been divided. It was conquered by the Assyrians in 720 BCE.

Other states did not suffer this fate. The Phoenician cities, for example, continue to be ruled by their own kings. The same is true for the kingdom of Judah, the southern of the two kingdoms into which the Israelites had been divided.

These kingdoms are only allowed to exist so long as they send tribute to the Assyrian king and obey his orders.

2. Egypt and Kush

Pharaohs from Kush

We saw in the notes to slide 11 that when Egypt broke up, Kush became an independent kingdom.

In the 750s, the king Piankhi of Kush conquered Egypt.

These Kushite kings rule Egypt in the tradition of the ancient pharaohs (in fact they formed the 25th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt). They see it as their duty, not just to re-establish Egyptian power, but to build and restore many temples and monuments, and even revive the custom of royal burials in pyramids. This is a practice the Egyptians themselves had discarded centuries before.

As well as extending their control over Egypt, they expanded their power a long way southward along the Nile Valley as well.

The Assyrians invade

Having conquered the whole of Egypt, the Kushite pharaoh Taharqa unwisely attacked the Assyrians. The Assyrian king, Earshaddon, responded by invading Egypt and driving the Kushite kings back into Nubia.

3. Gathering Threats

While the Assyrians have been conquering and ruling their empire, several new powers have emerged along the borders of their empire. At the same time, populations within the empire have become more rebellious.

The Medes and Persians

The Medes are the most powerful group of Iranians (see note to slide 11).

Lydia and Urartu

In Asia Minor, a tribe called the Lydians have founded a wealthy kingdom. Some time around now their kings start issuing the first metal coinage in world history.

The Medes, Lydians and Urartu (a warlike state to the north of Assyria), now form a ring of hostile kingdoms around the Assyrian empire.

By this date, too, nomads from the steppes (the Scythians and Cimmerians) have taken to raiding deep into the northern regions of the Middle East.

Internal rebels

Within their empire, the Assyrians' harsh rule has always provoked rebellions. These are now getting more dangerous. Major revolts are breaking out in Babylonia and Egypt.

Trouble is brewing for the Assyrians, both inside and outside their empire.

Slide 17: 611 BCE

The Assyrian Empire is no more. Its enemies have torn it to pieces.

- The Medes, Scythians and Cimmerians invaders joined forces with Babylonian and Egyptian rebels to destroy the empire (note 1).
- The Assyrian empire was then divided between the Babylonians, the Egyptians and the Medes (note 2).

Additional Notes:

1. The fall of the Assyrian empire

In the late seventh century BCE, the mighty Assyrian Empire suddenly found itself dealing with too many powerful enemies at the same time. The Medes, Scythians and Cimmerians all invaded the empire in 612-611 BCE. They joined forces with Babylonian and Egyptian rebels to overwhelm the Assyrian armies. They utterly destroyed the Assyrian capital of Nineveh and other Assyrian cities.

2. The division of the spoils

While the Scythians and Cimmerians returned to their homelands, the other victors have divided the empire between themselves:

- The Babylonians have taken the core area of the empire: Mesopotamia, Syria and Israel.
- The Egyptians have re-established their independence under a new native dynasty of pharaohs.
- The Medes have taken over the eastern portions of the Assyrian Empire.

Slide 18: 585 BCE

In the years after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt have had one last flourish as independent civilizations.

- Under king Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonian civilization has reached a grandeur it has never before experienced (note 1).
- However, Nebuchadnezzar is today most famous for destroying the kingdom of Judah (note 2).
- Egyptian civilization is experiencing a final period of glory under its last native dynasty of pharaoh (note 3).

- Kush has begun the process of evolving into a more “African” civilization (note 4).
- The Medes have expanded their territory by conquering the ancient kingdoms of Urartu and more (note 5).

Additional Notes:

1. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon

Nebuchadnezzar reigns as king of the Babylonian Empire (605 - 562 BCE). He adorns his capital with magnificent temples, vast palaces and the fabled Hanging Gardens of Babylon (although its existence has yet to be proved by archaeologists).

It is under Nebuchadnezzar that the Babylonians bring Mesopotamian astronomy to its peak. They are following in a Mesopotamian tradition started by the Sumerians two thousand years before.

2. The destruction of Jerusalem

In 587 the king of Judah rebelled against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar led his forces in besieging and taking Judah’s capital, Jerusalem. He destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, and deported Judah’s upper classes to Babylon.

Here, unlike all the other peoples who had been deported by the Assyrians and Babylonians, they remain faithful to their religious beliefs. This revolves around the worship of the One God, Yahweh. In exile they set down their belief-system (up to now mostly oral) into writing. The Jewish scriptures (the Christian Old Testament) are taking shape.

3. Egypt

The re-establishment of Egypt’s independence from Assyria has begun the last great period of Ancient Egypt’s long history. This phase is known as the Late Dynastic Period.

Scholars have noted that the pharaohs of this period seem to have deliberately harked back to the artistic forms of earlier times - to the glory days of Ancient Egypt, in fact. This reflects a nationalist revival within the country, in which foreign influences were held in suspicion and foreign merchants confined to just a few ports.

4. Kush

The Kushites had remained a threat to the Egyptian’s southern flank, and the pharaoh Psamtik II of the 26th Dynasty decided to invade their kingdom. His army defeated the Kushites and sacked the capital of Kush, Napata (590 BCE).

Kush has not been conquered, however. The Kushite kings have now moved their capital to Meroë, much further south.

This will be a permanent move. As a result, Kush’s culture will gradually become increasingly “Africanized”, and Egyptian influences will begin to fade. For example, the old Egyptian gods and goddesses will give way to ones which resemble African animals such as elephants and lions. They will also develop their own writing script (which has yet to be deciphered by modern scholars).

5. The Medes

Emerging as one of the leading powers in the Middle East after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, the Medes have since expanded their territory over a vast area, far into Asia Minor. In the course of their expansion they have put an end to the kingdom of Urartu, a warlike state which had been a thorn in the side of the Assyrians for centuries.

Slide 19: 560 BCE

The Persians have rebelled against their superior, the king of the Medes.

Additional Note:

The Persians are an Iranian tribe closely related to the Medes. They have been vassals of the Medes for about a hundred years. They have recently occupied the lands formerly covered by the kingdom of Elam.

In around 560 BCE their king, Cyrus II, rebels against his overlord, the king of the Medes. This is an important event in history, for reasons which will become clear in the next slide.

Slide 20: 500 BCE

Having rebelled against his overlord, the king of the Medes, the Persian king Cyrus II went on to become one of the greatest conquerors in world history.

- The Persian king Cyrus the Great and his successors have created the largest empire the world has seen up to this time (note 1).
- The Persian kings have allowed the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to their homeland and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its temple (note 2).

Additional Notes:

1. The Persian empire

Cyrus, a prince of the Persians, rebelled against his superior, the king of the Medes, in about 560 BCE. Within a few years he had defeated the Medes, and then went on to overrun the kingdom of Lydia, the Greek city-states of western Asia Minor, and the Babylonian empire. He next turned against the nomadic tribes to the north of Iran, extending Persian control over a huge territory in central Asia. However, he was killed in battle in 530 BCE.

Cyrus has gone down in history as one of the great conquerors of all time.

His son Cambyses (reigned 530-522 BCE) conquered Egypt, before dying unexpectedly, probably as the result of an accident. By this time, a major rebellion had broken out in central Iran. This was put down quickly by a relative of Cambyses, called Darius.

Darius the Great (reigned 522-486 BCE) further expands the borders of the empire, mostly into central Asia and India. By the end of his reign, the Persians will rule by far the largest empire that the world had yet seen.

2. The Jewish return from exile

The Persians rule their vast empire with a much lighter touch than the Assyrians and Babylonians had done. Cyrus the Great set the tone by respecting the traditions and cultures of the conquered peoples.

Most famously, he ordered that the Jewish exiles in Babylon should have their homeland, and above all, Jerusalem, restored to them. Many have returned there after 70 years of exile in Babylon, and begun rebuilding the temple to Yahweh, the heart of their faith.

Questions

1. What are the two great rivers of Mesopotamia called? (*The Tigris and the Euphrates*)
2. What is the great river in Egypt? (*The Nile*)
3. Who were the people who developed the first civilization in world history? (*The Sumerians*)
4. What was the name of the writing system that they used? (*Cuneiform*)
5. By what term was the king of Egypt known? (*Pharaoh*)
6. What was the name of the early writing systems that the Egyptians used? (*Hieroglyphics*)
7. Which huge monuments did the Egyptians of the Old Kingdom build that are still in existence today? (*The Great Pyramids of Giza - just Great Pyramids, or even Pyramids, will do*)
8. A Mesopotamian king is regarded as the first emperor in world history - who was he? (*Sargon, or more specifically, Sargon of Akkad*)
9. What famous Sumerian city followed his empire as the leading power in Mesopotamia? (*Ur*)
10. Hammurabi was a great king of Babylon who created a large empire - what else is he famous for? (*A Law Code*)
11. A pharaoh who reigned only briefly and died young is today possibly the best known of all the pharaohs - who was he? (*Tutankhamen*)
12. What is the name of the seafaring and trading people who rose to wealth in the period around 1000 BCE and spread the alphabet to the Greeks? (*The Phoenicians*)
13. What people were the first to follow a monotheistic faith, so far as we know? (*The Israelites, or Jews*)
14. From the 10th century BCE, more and more of the Middle East fell under the rule of which people? (*The Assyrians*)
15. Kings from which country to the south of Egypt conquered Egypt in the 750s BCE? (*Kush*)
16. In the 10th century, the kingdom of Israel divided into two parts; what happened to the northern kingdom in 722 BCE? (*It was conquered by the Assyrians and many of its people were exiled*)
17. Which empire took over most of the Assyrian empire at the end of the 7th century BCE? (*The Babylonian empire*)
18. Who was its famous king? (*Nebuchadnezzar*)
19. What is he most famous for today? (*Any one of the following will do - captured Jerusalem, destroyed the temple there, and exiled many Jews to Babylon*)
20. Egyptian attacks on the kingdom of Kush caused the Kushites to move their capital from - where to where? (*Napata to Meroë*)

21. Who was the founder of the Persian empire? (*Any of the following will do - Cyrus, Cyrus II or Cyrus the Great*)
22. He is famous as a great conqueror, and also for a particular act - what was that? (*For allowing the Jews in exile in Babylon to return home to Jerusalem*)
23. Under which ruler did the Persian empire reach its height? (*Darius, or Darius the Great*)

Alternative questions

if you wish to treat Ancient Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt separately, you can use these following questions.

Mesopotamia and its neighbors

1. What are the two great rivers of Mesopotamia called? (*The Tigris and the Euphrates*)
2. Who were the people who developed the first civilization in world history? (*The Sumerians*)
3. What was the name of the writing system that they used? (*Cuneiform*)
4. What two metals were mixed ("alloyed") to make bronze? (*Tin and copper*)
5. A Mesopotamian king is regarded as the first emperor in world history - who was he? (*Sargon, or Sargon of Akkad*)
6. What famous Sumerian city followed his empire as the leading power in Mesopotamia? (*Ur*)
7. The Amorites invaded Mesopotamia at about this time - what famous city did a group of them establish? (*Babylon*)
8. What is the name of the group of languages spoken by peoples from central Asia who are moving into the Middle East from this time? (*Indo-European*)
9. They brought with them a new weapon of war - what is it? (*The chariot*)
10. Hammurabi was a great king of Babylon who created a large empire - what else is he famous for? (*A Law Code*)
11. What is the name of the seafaring and trading people who rose to wealth in the period around 1000 BCE? (*The Phoenicians*)
12. What great contribution do they make to history? (*They spread the alphabet to western peoples, including the Greeks*)
13. What people are the first to follow a monotheistic faith, as far as we know? (*The Israelites, or Jews*)
14. From the 10th century BCE, more and more of the Middle East falls under the rule of which people? (*The Assyrians*)
15. In the 10th century, the kingdom of Israel divided into two parts; what happens to the northern kingdom in 722 BCE? (*It was conquered by the Assyrians, and many of its people are exiled*)

16. Which empire took over most of the Assyrian empire at the end of the 7th century BCE? (*The Babylonian empire*)
17. Who was its famous king? - and for what is he most famous? (*Nebuchadnezzar*)
18. What is he most famous for today? (*Any one of the following will do - captured Jerusalem, destroyed the temple there, and exiled many Jews to Babylon*)
19. What Iranian people ruled a powerful state at this time? (*The Medes*)
20. Who was the founder of the Persian empire? (*Any of the following will do - Cyrus, Cyrus II or Cyrus the Great*)
21. He is famous as a great conqueror, and also for a particular act - what was that? (*For allowing the Jews in exile in Babylon to return home to Jerusalem*)
22. Under which ruler did the Persian empire reach its height? (*Darius, or Darius the Great*)

Egypt and its neighbors

1. What is the great river in Egypt? (*The Nile*)
2. By what term was the king of Egypt known? (*Pharaoh*)
3. Who was the first of these kings to unify Egypt under his rule? (*Menes*)
4. What was the name of the early writing systems that the Egyptians used? (*Hieroglyphics*)
5. In what period of Ancient Egyptian history were the Pyramids of Giza built? (*The Old Kingdom*)
6. What period followed it? (*The First Intermediate Period*)
7. During Egypt's Second Intermediate Period, a people from western Asia occupied much of the country - what were they called? (*The Hyksos*)
8. What was the name of the pharaoh who established the New kingdom of Egypt? (*Ahmose I*)
9. What is the famous burial place of the New Kingdom kings and queens, still visited by thousands of tourists today? (*The Valley of the Kings, near today's Luxor*)
10. Which was the pharaoh who abandoned the traditional polytheism of the Egyptians and tried to promote a new religion? (*Akhenaten*)
11. His wife was probably the most famous queen of Egypt before Cleopatra - what was her name? (*Nefertiti*)
12. Her son only reigned briefly, and died young - yet today he is possibly the best known of all the pharaohs - who was he? (*Tutankhamen*)
13. Why is he so well known? (*His tomb was discovered in 1926, full of the treasures which had been buried with him*)
14. The Egyptians themselves came to regard a later ruler as the greatest of all the pharaohs - his name was ? (*Rameses II*)

15. How do the Peoples of the Sea appear in history - as traders? Missionaries? Raiders? Conquerors? (*Raiders*)
16. What is the name of the king of Kush who completed the conquest of Egypt in the 8th century BCE? (*Piankhe*)
17. What is the last period of Ancient Egyptian independence called? (*The Late Dynastic Period*)
18. Egyptian attacks on the kingdom of Kush caused the Kushites to move their capital from - where to where? (*Napata to Meroë*)

Further Reading

This is a list of the key articles which teachers or students should find helpful.

[The Coming of Farming](#)

[Early Pastoralists](#)

[The Origins of Civilization](#)

[Ancient Mesopotamian Civilization](#)

[History of Ancient Mesopotamia](#)

[Ancient Egyptian Civilization](#)

[History of Ancient Egypt](#)

[Kingdom of Kush](#)

[Elam \(Ancient Iran\)](#)

[The Hittites](#)

[Ancient Israel](#)

[History of Ancient Palestine](#) (this includes the histories of the Canaanites and other peoples of this land)

[History of the Assyrian Empire](#)

[The Civilization of the Ancient Assyrians](#)

[Ancient Babylon](#)

[History of the Babylonian Empire](#)

[The History of the Persian Empire](#)

[The Civilization of Ancient Persia](#)

