

GEOGRAPHY AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST



The Death of Darius By the time he died, Darius I had expanded the Persian Empire across the Middle East as far as the Indus Valley. He had also sent expeditions to explore the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.

Fine Art Although this drawing was done 2,000 years after Darius' rule, how does it show continued respect for him?

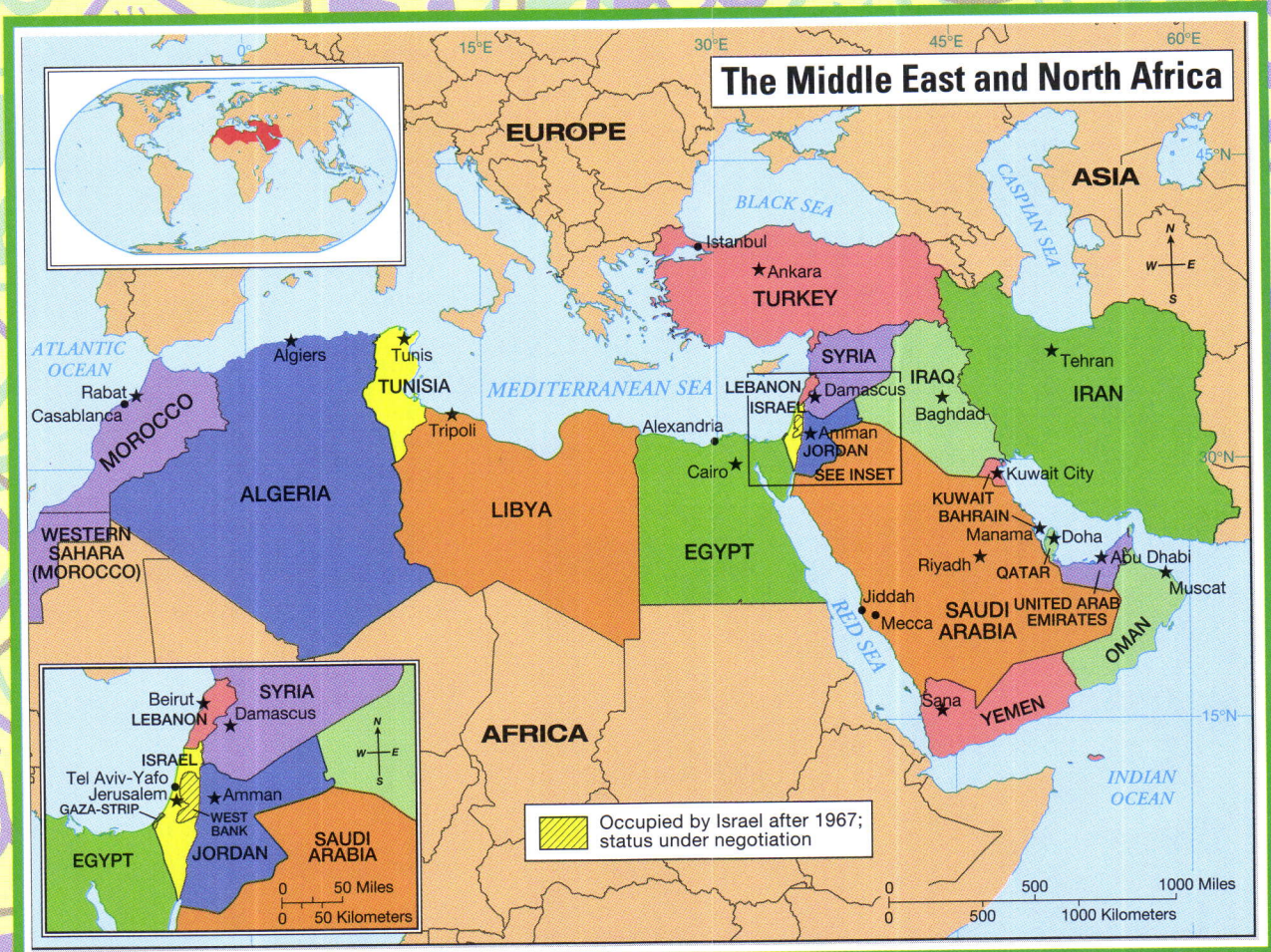
CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 1 The Land and the People
- 2 Early Civilizations
- 3 Judaism and Christianity

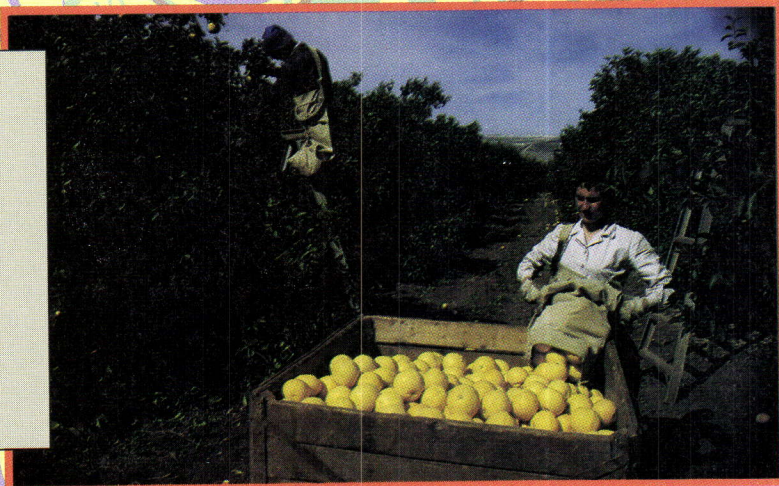
Day after day, stone masons chipped away at the rock cliff. High above the surrounding land, they carved the great figure of the emperor Darius I. Smaller figures, hands tied behind their backs, stood before him. They were conquered rulers whose lands Darius had added to the Persian Empire. Dust flew as the masons cut an inscription into the rock. It recorded the emperor's successes.

“I am Darius, the great King, the King of Kings These are the countries which have fallen into my hands—by the grace of Ormuzd I have become king of them—Persia, Susiana, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt; . . . Sparta and Ionia; Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Zarangia, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, the Sacae, the Sattagydes, Arachosia, and the Mecians, the total being twenty-one countries.”

By 516 B.C., Darius ruled an empire that stretched from the Nile River to the Indus Valley.



4 Members of this kibbutz, or collective farm, in Israel are harvesting grapefruits. Israeli farmers have developed new methods of irrigation to grow a variety of fruits and vegetables in their dry desert land.



1400	1600	1800	2000
▲ 1453 Constantinople falls to Ottomans	▲ 1566 Ottoman Empire flourishes under Suleiman I	▲ Late 1800s Zionist movement develops	▲ 1948 ▲ Israel created ▲ 1994 ▲ Israel and PLO reach accord on Gaza
▲ 1500s Persians develop the art of miniature painting	▲ 1598-1629 Safavid Shah Abbas builds magnificent capital in Isfahan	▲ 1869 Suez Canal completed	▲ 1999 Ahmed Zewail of Egypt wins Nobel Prize in Chemistry
▲ 1450s Ottomans establish European and Asian trade routes			▲ 1960 OPEC formed

Within its borders lived dozens of different peoples. To rule such a diverse empire, Darius developed an efficient system of government. He then ordered the creation of great carvings and statues to remind his subjects of his power.

CHAPTER PERSPECTIVE

The Persians were one of many peoples who ruled the region we call the Middle East. Located where Europe, Asia, and Africa meet, the Middle East is a cultural crossroads. Throughout history, traders and invaders crossed the region, promoting a constant flow of knowledge and ideas between the Middle East and the rest of the world.

As you read, look for these chapter themes:

- ▶ Geographic factors, including scarcity of water, have influenced the cultures of the Middle East.
- ▶ Location has made the Middle East a meeting ground for many peoples and a center from which ideas have spread around the world.
- ▶ Ancient civilizations developed in the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile river valleys.
- ▶ The Middle East is the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Literature Connections

In this chapter, you will encounter passages from the following works.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Zend-Avesta

Exodus

For other suggestions, see Connections With Literature, pages 804–808.

1

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

FIND OUT

How has location affected the peoples of the Middle East?

What are the main physical regions of the Middle East?

What geographic factors influence population patterns in the Middle East?

Which ethnic and religious groups live in the Middle East?

Vocabulary *oasis*

What is the Middle East? Europeans invented the term to describe the region that lies between Europe and distant parts of Asia—what they once called the Far East. In fact, the Middle East lies in southwestern Asia. Today, some people use the term Southwest Asia instead of the term Middle East. The Middle East, they point out, is “Middle” only in relation to Europe. Still, most Americans, including the United States government, continue to refer to the region as the Middle East.

Often, the Middle East includes North Africa. North Africa has a double heritage. It is part of Africa, but it also has strong ties to the Middle East. As you will read in this unit, the religion of Islam and the use of the Arabic language make North Africa part of the cultural region known as the Muslim world.

Crossroads of the World

The Middle East stands at the crossroads of three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. Since ancient times, it has connected major trade routes, both overland and on the seas. Caravans from India and China brought goods to the busy markets of the Middle East. From there, traders carried the goods across the Mediterranean into Europe. Other routes

took traders across the Red Sea or down the coast of East Africa.

Cultural diffusion. Over thousands of years, migrating peoples, traders, and conquerors crossed the Middle East. They spread the ideas, inventions, and achievements of many civilizations. Some of these ideas, such as iron making, the alphabet we use today, and the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, originated in the Middle East. Others started in Asia and traveled to Europe by way of the Middle East. Examples include Arabic numerals from India and the lateen sail from Southeast Asia.

Strategic location. Today, Middle Eastern nations command vital sea routes. Some sit

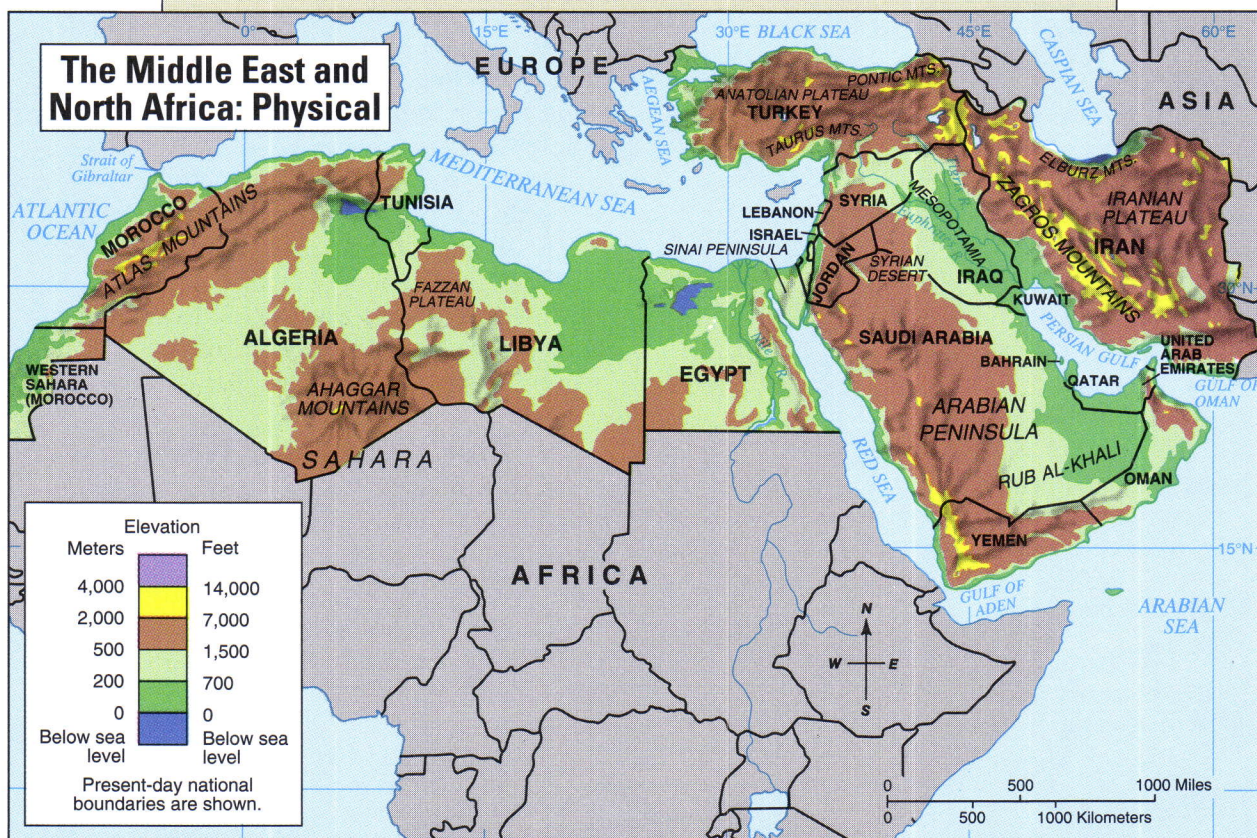
atop vast reserves of oil. As a result, the Middle East has strategic importance—that is, it is important to the world for military and economic reasons.

Egypt, for example, operates the Suez Canal. The canal links the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, creating a water route to the Indian Ocean. Turkey controls the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, two vital straits that link the Black and Aegean seas. Geographers call these two waterways the Turkish Straits. The Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf is another strategic waterway. Through its waters travel huge tankers loaded with oil for industries and homes half a world away.

MAP STUDY

The Middle East is a region in Southwest Asia that is located at the crossroads of three continents.

- 1. Location** (a) Name the three continents that meet in the Middle East. (b) What bodies of water border the Middle East?
- 2. Region** (a) In which two countries are plateaus the dominant landform? (b) Which mountain ranges have elevations over 7,000 feet (2,000 m)?
- 3. Understanding Causes and Effects** Why do you think early civilizations arose in the valleys of the Nile and of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers?



Major Regions

As elsewhere around the world, physical features have affected human settlement in the Middle East. The five main physical regions of the Middle East are the Northern Tier, Arabian Peninsula, Fertile Crescent, Nile Valley, and the Maghreb.

Northern Tier. The Northern Tier stretches across present-day Turkey and Iran. It is a region of mountains and plateaus. In the west lies the Anatolian Plateau, ringed by the Ponic and Taurus mountains. The Anatolian Plateau has fertile soil and receives enough moisture to support farming. As a result, it has a large population.

The Anatolian Plateau is located in Asia Minor, a large peninsula that connects Asia and Europe. As you will read in Chapter 26, the Ottoman Empire flourished in this region for hundreds of years.

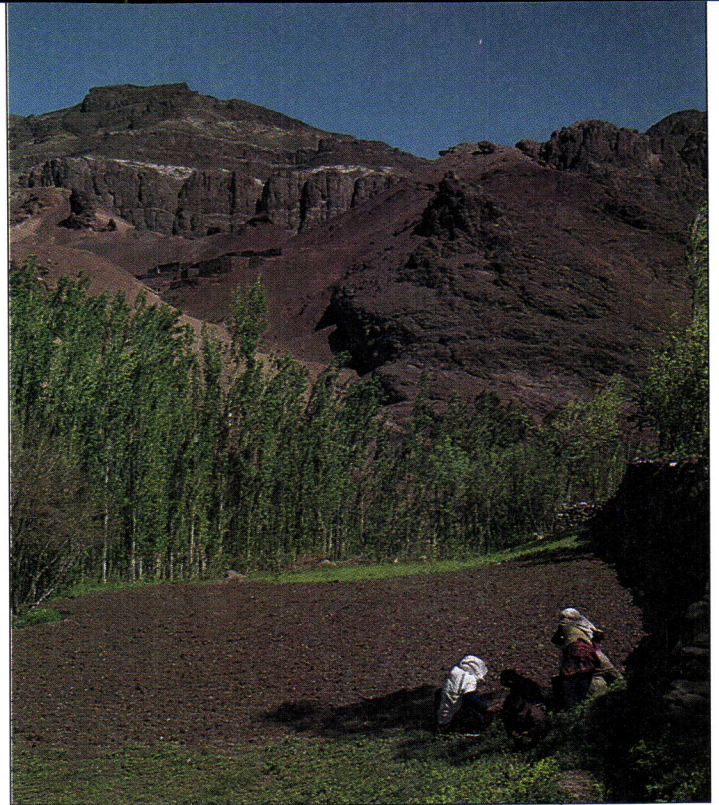
To the east lies the Iranian Plateau. Like Anatolia, it is ringed by mountains, including the Elburz and Zagros ranges. Unlike Anatolia, however, most of the region is dry and the population remains small. Still, several major empires, such as the Persian Empire, were founded on the Iranian Plateau. These empires controlled large parts of the Middle East.

Arabian Peninsula. The Arabian Peninsula is a vast plateau that is about one third the size of the United States. It borders on several important bodies of water, including the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia is the largest nation in the region.

Despite its size, the Arabian Peninsula has a small population. The reason is lack of water. Except for some fertile areas on the mountainous southern coast, the peninsula is a barren desert. Most people in the region live around scattered oases. An **oasis** is a fertile desert area that has enough water to support plant and animal life.

The Arabian Peninsula plays a major role in the world economy. Beneath its desert surface lie huge amounts of oil. Due to the growing demand for oil, some countries in the region have gained great wealth.

The Arabian Peninsula is important for other reasons, too. It is the birthplace of Islam,



Farming in a Dry Land The Elburz Mountains along Iran's northern border block winds that carry moisture from the north. Thus, the land south of the mountains is generally dry. However, melting snow from the hillsides provides enough water for farmers to grow limited crops of wheat and barley. **Geography** What other geographic features shown in this photograph would make farming difficult?

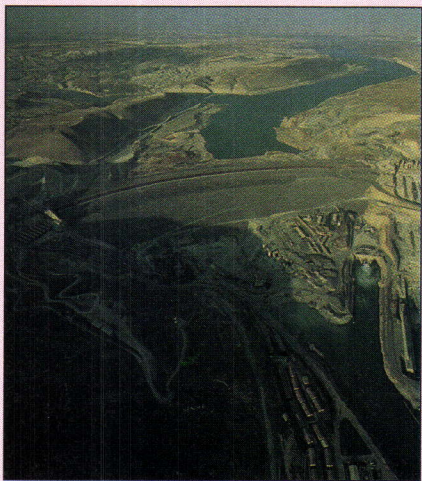
and the holy city of Mecca attracts Muslims from around the globe.

Fertile Crescent. The Fertile Crescent is an arc-shaped region that stretches from the eastern Mediterranean along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the Persian Gulf. Rich soil and abundant water have made it a major population center. One of the world's earliest civilizations emerged in the fertile Tigris-Euphrates Valley.

The Fertile Crescent has few natural barriers. Throughout history, invaders have conquered its fertile lands and rich cities. The wealthiest settlements lay in Mesopotamia, the "land between the rivers." Other cities grew up in Syria and Palestine, along the Mediterranean coast.

Clash Over the Euphrates

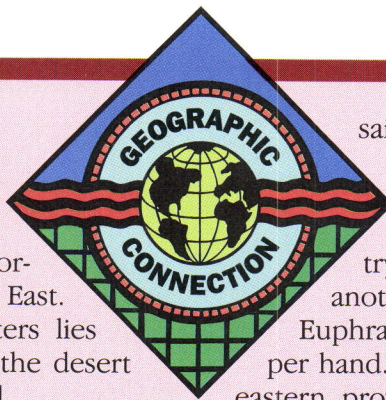
A narrow band of green borders the rivers in the Middle East. Beyond the reach of the waters lies barren desert. Without water, the desert will expand its hold on the land.



For nearly 6,000 years, the Euphrates River, which rises in the mountains of eastern Turkey and flows south through Syria and Iraq, has been the source of life along its fertile banks. Today, it is also a source of strife.

One day in January 1990, the president of Turkey proudly began the process of filling the new Atatürk Reservoir with water from the Euphrates. For several weeks, Turkey siphoned off 75 percent of the water that usually flowed through Syria and Iraq. Syria and Iraq reacted angrily to this move, which they

In the spring or early summer, melting snows from surrounding mountains sometimes cause the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to flood. The flood waters spread fertile soil over Mesopotamia. The flooding is unpredictable, however. Some years, tremendous flood waters sweep over farmlands, bringing disaster and death. In other years, the rivers

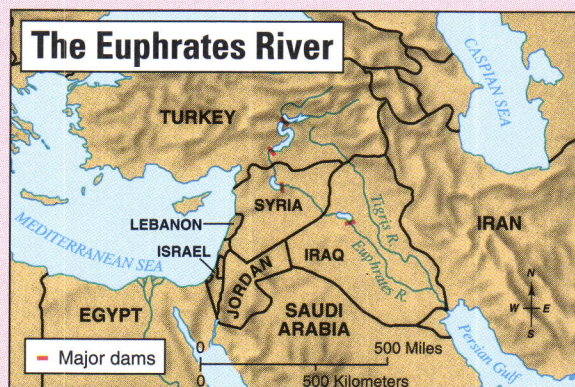


said endangered both their agriculture and their industry.

Water security is a vital issue in the Middle East. One country's source of water often lies in another country. In the case of the Euphrates, it is Turkey that has the upper hand. Turkey's plan to turn its southeastern provinces into the breadbasket of the Middle East threatens Syria's supply of drinking water as well as its irrigation systems and hydroelectric power plants.

As population grows in the Middle East, the demands will become even greater and the shortages more acute. Tensions in the region, already high because of political differences and age-old rivalries, will be heightened.

1. Why will the question of water rights continue to be an issue in the Middle East?
2. **Synthesizing Information** Using the map and the information in the text, explain why Syria is concerned about the security of its water supply.



carry little water, which makes irrigation difficult and causes crops to wither. Today, as in the past, governments help farmers to build dikes and canals to control the flooding.

Nile Valley. As you have read, the fertile Nile Valley in northeastern Africa was a cradle of ancient civilization. The Nile Valley enjoyed geographic advantages that Mesopotamia did

not possess. Forbidding deserts in the east and west protected it from invaders, and the flooding of the Nile River was both predictable and dependable.

In ancient times, trade and other contacts linked Egyptians in the Nile Valley with the peoples of the Fertile Crescent. From Egypt, caravans and armies crossed the Sinai Peninsula, while ships sailed from Nile delta ports to lands adjoining the Mediterranean.

The Maghreb. The Maghreb includes the North African nations of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. Five other African nations—Libya, Chad, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania—share geographic and cultural links with the Maghreb.

Maghreb comes from an Arab term meaning “western isle.” To the early Arabs, this region, which lies west of the Arabian Peninsula, seemed like an isolated land surrounded by water, mountains, and deserts. During the 600s and 700s, Arab armies carried the religion of Islam to this “western isle.”

Among the chief features of the Maghreb are the vast Sahara and the rugged Atlas Mountains. Because of the scarcity of water, both areas have few inhabitants. Most people live along the Mediterranean coast, which has fertile soil and plenty of rain.

The Maghreb has long been a major crossroads. It commands the southern rim of the Mediterranean as well as the gateway to the Atlantic. Traders from the Maghreb exchanged goods from West Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

Climate and Resources

Climate has dictated where people live in the Middle East. Nearly all of the region is desert. People have clustered in well-watered areas along the coasts and in river valleys where they irrigate and farm the land. Settlements were scattered. Many separate nations developed throughout the Middle East.

Adapting to scarcity. Lack of rainfall and scarcity of water have shaped the cultures of the Middle East. Less than 10 percent of the land receives enough water to make farming possible.

From earliest times, people built irrigation systems to carry water from rivers to

crops. Ancient Egyptians used the shaduf, a simple water hoist, to transfer water from ditches and canals to their fields. Modern technology has improved on older irrigation methods, and people have developed new ones such as drip irrigation, which delivers a measured amount of water to each plant. The nations of the Arabian Peninsula also have invested huge amounts of money in desalination plants, which convert the water from the surrounding seas into fresh water. (See the feature on page 613.)

Oil. The Middle East has a variety of resources, including salt, phosphate—which is used in fertilizers—and copper. The most valuable resource, however, is oil.

Oil is unevenly distributed across the region. As a result, great economic differences exist between oil-rich countries and those that lack oil.

Peoples

The Middle East is home to many different peoples with a variety of languages, religions, and traditions. Among the major languages of the region are Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew, Kurdish, Persian, Greek, and Armenian. Religions

Water in Saudi Arabia Sections of a pipeline are waiting to be hooked up to carry fresh water from a desalination plant. Pipelines carry millions of gallons of treated water to such inland cities as Riyadh. **Scarcity** How has scarcity of water affected the development of nations in the Middle East?



include Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The region—including the Maghreb—consists of 19 countries and almost 350 million people.

Ethnic diversity. Arabs are the majority group in many Middle Eastern countries. But what is an Arab? Beginning in the mid-600s, Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula conquered many different peoples in the Middle East and North Africa. Over time, the conquered peoples adopted the Arabic language and many adopted the religion of Islam. They, too, became known as Arabs. Today, the term Arab is used to describe anyone whose native language is Arabic. Within this large group, however, Arabs may differ greatly from one another.

Besides Arabs, the Middle East is home to other ethnic groups such as Turks, Iranians, and Kurds. Some of these groups migrated to the Middle East from other parts of Asia. They all have their own languages and traditions.

Religious diversity. Islam is the religion observed by the majority of people in the Middle East. Most Arabs are Muslims. Many non-Arabic people are also Muslims. For example, most Iranians, Turks, and Kurds are Muslims. Yet Islam itself is divided into different sects, or groups. (See Chapter 26.)

A significant number of Christians live in Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. Like Muslims, these Christians belong to different sects. They include Coptic, Greek Orthodox, and Maronite Christians.

Judaism is the most ancient of the three religions of the Middle East. In Israel, the majority of the people are Jewish. Many are descended from recent European, Asian, and North African immigrants.

SECTION 1 REVIEW

- 1. Locate:** (a) Red Sea, (b) Persian Gulf, (c) Tigris River, (d) Euphrates River, (e) Nile River.
- 2. Identify:** (a) Suez Canal, (b) Strait of Hormuz, (c) Asia Minor, (d) Fertile Crescent, (e) Mesopotamia.
- 3. Define:** oasis.
- 4.** Why does the Middle East have strategic importance?

- 5.** (a) What are the five main physical regions in the Middle East? (b) Describe two features of each region.
- 6.** (a) Where do most people in the Middle East live? (b) Why is the population so unevenly distributed?
- 7. Understanding Causes and Effects** How has location contributed to cultural diversity in the Middle East?
- 8. Writing Across Cultures** Keep a record of your use of water for one day. Then list five ways in which your life would be different if water were as scarce in your area as it is in parts of the Middle East.

2

EARLY CIVILIZATIONS

FIND OUT

What civilizations developed in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley?

What were the major achievements of ancient Mesopotamian civilizations?

How did trade and warfare affect Middle Eastern civilizations?

How did the Greek and Roman cultures blend with the culture of the Middle East?

Vocabulary ziggurat, scribe, cuneiform, satrap

“**W**hatever I had of gold I loaded aboard the ship; Whatever I had of the seed of all living creatures I loaded aboard. After I had caused all my family and relations to go up into the ship, I caused the game of the field, the beasts of the field, and all the craftsmen to go into it. . . . I entered the ship and closed my door.”

These lines are from an ancient poem called the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The poem was composed in about 2000 B.C. and includes many stories and myths from the Middle East. In the episode quoted here, Utnapishtim tells how he and his family escaped by boat from a savage flood that swept across the delta of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Devastating floods were a frequent occurrence in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Controlling these floods required large-scale cooperation. This need to work together contributed to the rise of the earliest civilizations in the Middle East.

Sumerian Civilization

The first civilization in the Middle East was that of Sumer, in the fertile Tigris-Euphrates delta. As in other early civilizations, rich soil, rivers filled with fish, and a ready source of water for irrigation attracted early settlers. They lived by raising grain and dates. Working together, farmers drained swamps and controlled flood waters by building dikes and canals.

City-states. By about 3500 B.C., the most successful farming settlements had grown into powerful city-states. Each city-state controlled the farmlands that surrounded it. It

had its own ruler as well as its special god or goddess, laws, and army. Rival city-states such as Erech, Ur, and Kish often fought each other. (See Connections With Literature, page 807, “Prologue” and “The Battle With Humbaba.”)

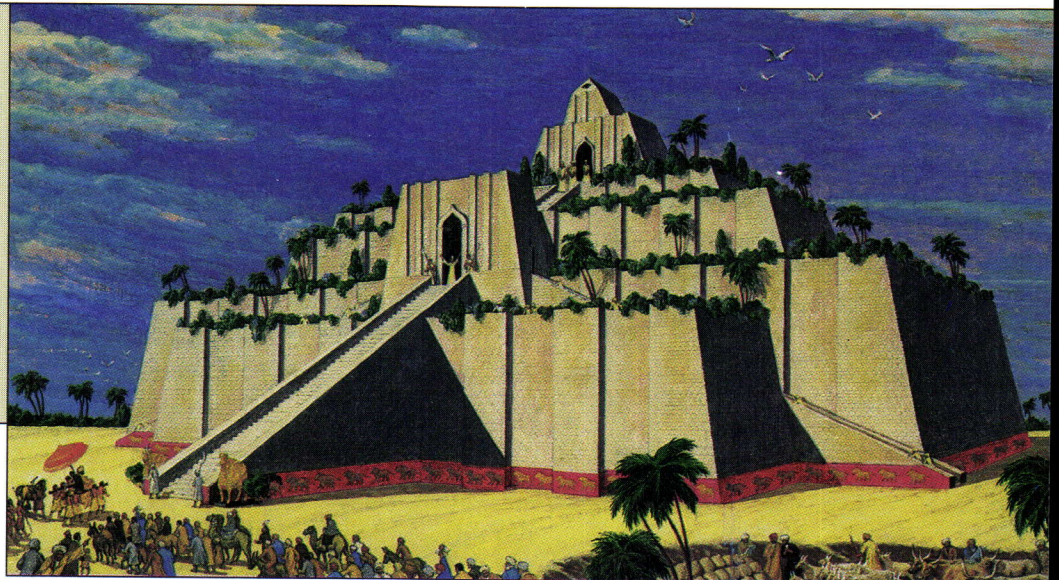
Religion. Sumerians believed that the gods were all-powerful. If the gods were angry, they sent disasters such as floods and disease. As a result, Sumerian priests were very important. Only they knew the prayers, hymns, and other rituals that were needed to keep the gods happy.

The chief building in each city-state was the **ziggurat**, a huge, many-tiered temple. From the ziggurat, priests controlled the daily lives of the people. They collected taxes in the form of crops. They used grain as offerings to the gods and to support the many activities of the temple. At temple schools, young men learned to read and write. They then became **scribes**, who kept the temple records.

A system of writing. Like other advanced ancient peoples, the Sumerians developed a system of writing. Writing enabled people to record information pertaining to trade, government, and ideas. Writing was also an important tool for cultural diffusion. With a writing system, the Sumerians could transfer ideas to other people and places.

A Sumerian Ziggurat

Large temple complexes were the center of life in the Sumerian city-states. A modern artist drew this picture of the ziggurat at Ur based on the discoveries of archaeologists and historians. **Technology** What evidence do ziggurats provide about Sumerian building skills?





MAP STUDY

Several important early civilizations developed in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East. The contributions of these cultures also spread to other world regions.

- 1. Location** (a) What was the earliest civilization in the Middle East?
(b) Describe its relative location.
- 2. Interaction** How might you explain the location of the cities shown on the map?
- 3. Synthesizing Information** How did trade and warfare encourage cultural diffusion among the peoples of the ancient Middle East?

At first, Sumerian writing was in the form of pictographs. To write “ox,” for example, the scribe would draw an ox head. In time, the Sumerians added phonetic symbols to represent sounds. This made it possible for them to represent both objects, such as tables and chairs, and ideas, such as heaven, distance, and anger.

Sumerians wrote on clay tablets. They used a stylus, or sharpened reed, to cut wedge-shaped symbols into wet clay. The clay was then hardened by baking. The Romans, who conquered the Middle East much later,

called this ancient writing **cuneiform** (kyoo NEE uh form), from the Latin word *cuneus*, meaning “wedge.”

Cuneiform gradually spread across the Fertile Crescent. Archaeologists have found thousands of cuneiform tablets that record laws, prayers, treaties, medical knowledge, and other information. Some tablets date from Sumerian times. Others are the records of later civilizations.

Other achievements. The Sumerians made many advances that influenced later peoples. They were the first people who were known to have used the wheel, and they invented the sail. Sumerian wheeled carts and sailing ships carried trade goods and knowledge across the region and even beyond, to the Indus Valley in South Asia.

The Sumerians also invented the plow and developed an accurate calendar. They used arithmetic and geometry to survey fields. They set up a system of measurement based on the number 60. Because of the Sumerians, people today use the 60-second minute, 60-minute hour, and 360° circle.

Warfare and Trade Spread Culture

The Fertile Crescent has few natural barriers, and throughout its long history, a pattern emerged. Nomadic people from the highlands were attracted to the fertile river valleys and rich cities of the plains. They conquered the settled lands. Over time, they adopted the advanced civilization of the peoples they defeated, adding their own ideas and beliefs to those they found.

Despite the frequent turmoil of the region, trade flourished across wide areas. Over thousands of years, warfare and trade created a rich blend of cultures in the Middle East.

A code of law. In about 1700 B.C., the Babylonians, under King Hammurabi (hah moo RAH bee), conquered much of the Fertile Crescent. To provide justice throughout his large empire, Hammurabi drew up a single code of law, replacing the many law codes of earlier peoples.

Hammurabi's Code included 282 laws. They regulated economic, social, and moral affairs. The purpose of the code, Hammurabi declared, was:

“to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak . . . and to further the welfare of the people.”

The code distinguished between major and minor crimes. It also tried to make the punishment fit the crime. The basic principle of punishment was “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” If one person blinded another, he or she would be blinded as punishment.

Hammurabi had these laws carved in stone and placed where everyone could read them. His law code became an example for later peoples and served as a foundation for future codes of law.

The spread of iron. In about 1500 B.C., the Hittites marched into the Fertile Crescent from their homeland in Asia Minor. After they conquered the region, they adopted cuneiform and absorbed other ideas from the Babylonians. The Hittites carried Mesopotamian culture back to Asia Minor, where it later influenced the Greeks.

The Hittites are best known in history for their mastery of iron. In fact, iron helped them win their empire. Their strong iron weapons gave them an advantage over enemies armed with soft bronze spears and shields. The Hittites tried to keep the technology of iron making a secret, but it soon spread to other peoples.

The Phoenician alphabet. While the Hittites ruled the Fertile Crescent, the Phoenicians (fuh NEE shuhns) moved into what is now Lebanon. They set up small city-states along the eastern Mediterranean coast and earned a living through commerce and trade. They never built an empire, but hardy Phoenician traders sailed the Mediterranean Sea, planting colonies from North Africa to Spain. Today, the Phoenicians are known as the “carriers of civilization” because they

spread the culture of the ancient Middle East across a wide area.

The Phoenicians developed an alphabet that eventually evolved into the one we use today. Unlike the many signs in Egyptian hieroglyphics, the Phoenician alphabet used just 22 symbols and was easy to learn. About 800 B.C., the Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet and added four symbols. Later, the Romans adapted the Greek alphabet, which was then passed on to the western world. The Phoenicians also passed their alphabet to other peoples of the Middle East, including the Hebrews, Persians, and Arabs.

The Persian Empire

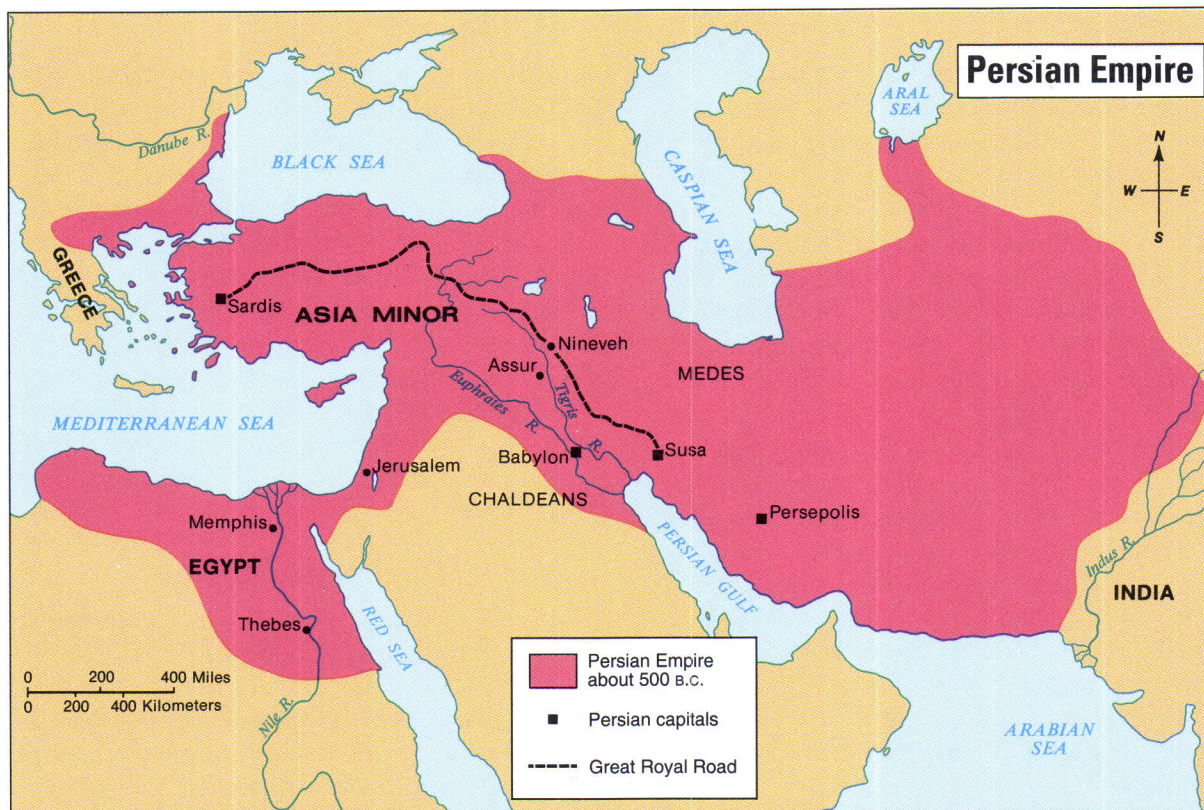
By 500 B.C., the Persians had conquered a vast empire that stretched from Asia Minor to the Indus Valley. As you have read, the emperor Darius I developed an efficient system of government to rule the diverse peoples of his empire. Later rulers modeled their governments on the Persian system.

Government. Darius divided his empire into 20 provinces. Each province roughly corresponded to the homeland of a particular group of people. The Persians tolerated diversity among the peoples they conquered, allowing them to keep their own languages, customs, and religions.

The governor, or **satrap**, of each province was responsible for collecting taxes and for keeping order. To check on the satraps, Darius sent special inspectors, known as the “eyes and ears of the king,” on regular tours of the empire.

Communications and trade. The Persians improved and expanded the road system built by earlier peoples. On the main roads connecting the four capital cities of the Persian Empire stood relay stations. There, royal messengers could get fresh horses as they quickly spread news and information across the empire.

Peace and good roads encouraged trade. To further promote trade, Darius set up a uniform system of coinage—that is, he established a standard value for each coin. Metal coins were first introduced to the Middle East by the Lydians, who lived on the Anatolian

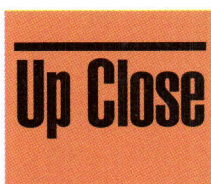


MAP STUDY

At its height, the Persian Empire extended into Europe, Africa, and Asia.

- Place** (a) What river bordered the empire on the east? (b) What body of water bordered it on the west?
- Movement** (a) Name the two capitals that were connected by the Great Royal Road. (b) Why do you think the road was important?
- Comparing** Like the Persians, the Incas in South America built roads to unite their empire. (a) In what ways were the roads of these two civilizations similar? (b) In what ways were they different?

Plateau. The idea of coined money soon spread. Merchants found coins easier to count, store, and carry than the bulky goods they had been using for barter, or trade.



Zoroaster and the Forces of Good and Evil

Zoroaster (zoh roh AS tuhr), the founder of the ancient Persian religion Zoroastrianism, is a figure shrouded in mystery. Scholars think he lived in about 600 B.C. Although we know little about him, his ideas influenced many peo-

ples, including the ancient Greeks, Hebrews, and Christians.

In ancient Persia, farmers and herders believed that many gods controlled the forces of nature. They relied on priests, called Magi (MAY jī), to win the favor of these gods.

According to legend, the Magi learned that a child named Zoroaster* had been born who would destroy their idols and magic. They seized the child and placed him on a burning altar, but the fire did not harm the boy. They then left him in the path of a herd of cattle, but the cows turned aside, leaving him unharmed.

* In Persian, he was called Zarathustra.

When the child grew up, he became a healer, visiting the poor and the sick. Like the Buddha and other great thinkers of the ancient world, Zoroaster sought to understand why misery and suffering existed alongside good in the world. One day, Zoroaster had a vision that proclaimed:

“ From good must come good; and from evil must come evil. ”

As a result of this vision, Zoroaster became convinced that the world was a battleground between good and evil. The forces of good were led by the god Ahura Mazda (ah HOO ruh MAHZ duh). The god Ahriman (AH rih muhn) commanded the forces of evil. Ahura Mazda appeared to Zoroaster many times. Each person must choose whether to fight on the side of good or evil, Ahura Mazda instructed.

For 10 years, Zoroaster traveled the land, spreading the message of Ahura Mazda. Few people listened, however.

At last, Zoroaster reached the kingdom of Bactria. There, he asked to see King Vishtaspa.



A Golden Bull In Zoroastrianism, the bull was linked with Ahura Mazda. Priests carried this bull's head on a staff to symbolize their leadership in the war against the forces of evil. Priests encouraged people to perform good deeds, such as giving alms and protecting animals. **Choice** How do you think Vishtaspa's conversion strengthened Zoroastrianism?

“ ‘And who are you?’ asked the guard. ‘Go, and tell King Vishtaspa that I, [Zoroaster], have come to preach the True Religion, the religion of the Holy One, Ahura Mazda, and to turn him and his court away from the worship of idols to the worship of the Beneficent One.’ ”

For three days, Zoroaster spoke to the king and his court about the struggle between the forces of good and evil. Said Zoroaster:

“ ‘There will come a day, the Judgment Day, when Ahura Mazda will conquer and banish Ahriman.’

‘And when will that be?’ asked the king's chief priest.

‘When man allies himself with Ahura Mazda and helps him to banish all that is evil, all that is darkness, and all that is death.’ ”

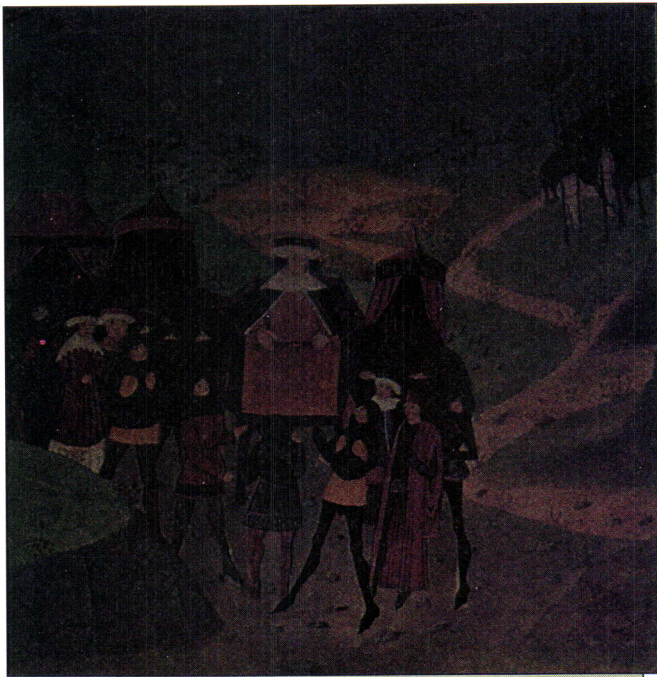
In the end, King Vishtaspa had his scribes write down everything Zoroaster had said. These writings became known as the *Zend-Avesta*. Vishtaspa then made the teachings of Zoroaster the official religion of the land. These teachings played a major role in encouraging the Persians to treat conquered peoples in a humane way. ■

Greek and Roman Influences

The civilizations of Greece and Rome added to the rich blend of cultures in the ancient Middle East.* In 334 B.C., Alexander of Macedonia set out to conquer the world. Macedonia is a mountainous region north of Greece. Alexander led his armies into Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. He defeated the powerful Persian Empire and pushed as far east as the Indus Valley.

Hellenistic civilization. Alexander died in 323 B.C., and his empire was divided among his generals. Alexander's most lasting achievement, however, was not military but cultural.

* You will read about the Greek and Roman civilizations in Chapter 29.



Alexander the Great This drawing of Alexander with his troops is from a French manuscript of the Middle Ages. Alexander, wishing to unite the peoples he ruled in Greece and Persia, married a Persian princess. His soldiers also had Persian wives. **Power** Why might Alexander's marriage have helped unite his empire?

His conquests paved the way for the blending of Greek civilization with the cultures of the ancient Middle East. That new culture is known today as Hellenistic civilization.

One center of Hellenistic civilization was Alexandria, Egypt. There, merchants and scholars gathered from all over the Mediterranean world as well as from distant parts of the Middle East. In Alexandria's great library, scholars pursued research in science, mathematics, medicine, and philosophy that continues to influence the world today.

Roman conquest. From its base in Italy, the powerful Roman Empire expanded eastward. By A.D. 115, it ruled much of the Middle East, including Asia Minor, the Nile Valley, and the Fertile Crescent.

Under Roman rule, trade flourished across a huge area that stretched from the

Persian Gulf to the Atlantic. The movement of people and goods that resulted increased the spread of ideas and technologies. The Romans carried their ideas about law and government as well as their engineering and building skills eastward. At the same time, Egyptian and Persian styles, beliefs, and traditions flowed westward. As you will read, followers of a new religion, Christianity, also spread their beliefs across the vast Roman Empire.

Byzantine Empire. By A.D. 395, the Roman Empire had split into two parts. The eastern half, which became known as the Byzantine Empire, included Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, and the eastern Fertile Crescent. From their capital at Constantinople, Byzantine emperors ruled much of the Middle East for the next 1,000 years. Their rich civilization blended Middle Eastern, Roman, Greek, and Christian ideas.

SECTION 2 REVIEW

- 1. Locate:** (a) Sumer, (b) Persian Empire, (c) Alexandria.
- 2. Identify:** (a) Hammurabi, (b) Hittites, (c) Phoenicians, (d) Zoroaster, (e) Hellenistic civilization, (f) Byzantine Empire.
- 3. Define:** (a) ziggurat, (b) scribe, (c) cuneiform, (d) satrap.
- 4.** What conditions favored the development of civilization in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley?
- 5.** Describe four achievements of ancient Middle Eastern civilizations.
- 6.** Give one example of how trade spread cultural ideas and one example of how warfare spread ideas.
- 7. Applying Information** How is Hellenistic civilization an example of cultural diffusion?
- 8. Writing Across Cultures** The Phoenicians were "carriers of civilization" because they spread ideas through commerce. List five ways in which Americans have been "carriers of civilization."

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

FIND OUT

What were the main religious beliefs of the ancient Hebrews?

How did Judaism influence Christianity?

What were the teachings of Jesus?

Why did Christianity attract a large following?

Vocabulary messiah, parable, martyr, pope

In about 1800 B.C.,* drought and famine drove some nomadic Hebrews from Canaan (later called Palestine), on the eastern Mediterranean coast. They migrated to Egypt, where they were eventually enslaved. After many years, a great leader, Moses, helped the Hebrews escape from Egypt. He led them into the Sinai Peninsula. There, according to Hebrew tradition, Moses heard the voice of God:

“ Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

The Hebrews believed that God had made a covenant, or binding agreement, with Moses. Under this agreement, the Hebrews accepted God as the ruler of heaven and Earth. In return, God made the Hebrews the chosen people on Earth.

The Hebrews set up a small state in the area of Canaan. The Hebrew political state lasted for a relatively short time. The ancient

* Many scholars use the terms B.C.E., before the common era, and C.E., common era, instead of B.C. and A.D.

Hebrews were eventually called Jews, from the name Judea given to their land. Jewish religious and cultural beliefs still influence the world today.

The Kingdom of Israel

After the Hebrews emerged from the Sinai Peninsula, they migrated into the Fertile Crescent. In about 1025 B.C., they formed the kingdom of Israel. Ancient Israel was located in Canaan, between Egypt and Mesopotamia. As a result, it was frequently threatened by invaders. Under its two greatest kings, David and Solomon, however, Israel flourished.

King David was a skilled general. He unified Israel and made it a power in the Middle East. David's son, Solomon, was noted for his wisdom, and his reign was marked by peace. Solomon transformed the city of Jerusalem

Ancient Jerusalem The tower and city wall beyond this gateway are among the few remains of ancient Jerusalem. Only one wall of the great temple built by Solomon still stands. **Culture** Why do you think many Jews visit these ancient monuments?



into a magnificent capital. There, he built palaces and a great temple dedicated to God. The outer walls of the temple were made of stone, but inside the walls were made of wood covered with gold.

Conquest. To pay for his many building projects, Solomon taxed the people heavily. Discontent grew, and after Solomon's death in 930 B.C., revolts weakened the kingdom. Foreign rulers soon conquered Israel and forced the Hebrews into exile.

When the Persians conquered the Fertile Crescent in 500 B.C., they allowed the Hebrews to return to Israel. The Hebrews rebuilt Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. However, they came under the rule of one foreign

people after another. After the Persians, the Greeks and then the Romans ruled Palestine.

The diaspora. In A.D. 70, the Jews, as the Hebrews came to be called, revolted against Roman rule. In a savage war, many Jews were killed. The Romans forced the survivors out of Palestine. The scattering of Jews throughout the world is called the diaspora.

In their scattered communities, Jews preserved their religious and cultural traditions. Throughout the centuries, they made important contributions to science, medicine, business, and the arts in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

Teachings of Judaism

Hebrew beliefs developed slowly over time. Unlike nearby peoples, the Hebrews were monotheistic—that is, they believed in one God. The Hebrews called their God Yahweh. He was the Creator and ruler of the universe. The Hebrews recorded their early history as well as the moral and religious laws of God in their sacred book, the Torah.*

The importance of law. The Hebrews believed that God had chosen them as a special people. In the Torah, they recorded how God gave them the Ten Commandments while they were wandering in the Sinai Peninsula. The Ten Commandments are religious and ethical, or moral, laws. They urge people to respect and honor God. They also forbid stealing, lying, cheating, and murder.

The Torah recorded many other laws and set out the duties that people owed to God and to their fellow human beings. Like Hammurabi's Code, the laws of the Torah outlined standards of conduct for everyday life. The Torah differed from Hammurabi's Code in significant ways, however. For example, although slavery was accepted everywhere at that time, the Torah required Hebrews to treat slaves with kindness.

Ethical world view. The religious beliefs of the Hebrews came to be called Judaism. A major feature of Judaism is its ethical world

Menorah in Stained Glass The menorah, a seven-branched candleholder, was used in Jewish worship by the time of the exodus from Egypt. The menorah became a symbol of both the Jews' exile and their freedom from captivity. Today, it appears on the coat of arms of the Jewish state of Israel. **Culture** What teachings of Judaism set Jews apart from other early Middle Eastern peoples?



* Much later, Christians adopted the Torah as the first five books of the Bible.

view—that is, the belief that people and their rulers should lead moral lives.

Religious teachers, called prophets, reminded the Jews of their duties. Whenever Jews strayed from God's laws, the prophets warned of God's anger and punishment. They insisted that rulers, as well as common people, must obey God's laws. Unlike many other Middle Eastern peoples, the Jews did not regard their rulers as gods.

Judaism also taught that individuals were responsible for their actions. The teachings of Zoroaster influenced the Jews. Like Zoroastrians, Jews believed that people had to choose between good and evil.

Rise of Christianity

Palestine, the homeland of the Jews, gave rise to another major religion—Christianity. Christianity grew out of Jewish traditions.

Life of Jesus. Jesus, the founder of Christianity, was born in Palestine while it was under Roman rule. The story of the life of Jesus comes from Christian sources called the Gospels, which were written by his followers after his death. According to the Gospels, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a small town near Jerusalem. As a young man, he learned carpentry and studied with rabbis—Jewish scholars and teachers.

When he was about 30 years old, Jesus became a preacher, teaching the poor about God's goodness and mercy. The Gospels record that he performed miracles such as healing the sick and raising the dead.

Jesus attracted many disciples, or followers. The Jewish prophets had predicted that a **messiah**, or one anointed by God, would deliver the Jews from foreign rule and restore the kingdom of Israel. Some Jews believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Most Jewish leaders, however, rejected that view. They saw Jesus as a troublemaker who opposed traditional laws.

As Jesus' popularity grew, Roman officials became worried. To them, Jesus was a rebel. Although Jesus taught respect for the Roman emperor, like all Jews, he refused to accept the emperor as a god. In A.D. 33, Jesus was arrested. He was sentenced to die by crucifixion, a

Roman method of execution. Jesus was nailed to a wooden cross and left to die of exposure.

Teachings of Jesus. The teachings of Jesus were rooted in the Jewish tradition of monotheism. Jesus preached belief in one God, the God of the Jews. He also upheld the Ten Commandments of the Hebrews as God's law.

At the same time, Jesus put special emphasis on certain beliefs. He stressed love for God and compassion for other people. He offered his followers a forgiving God who was the loving father of all people, rich and poor, Jew and non-Jew. In the eyes of God, said Jesus, everyone was equal. He taught that people who were humble, merciful, and unselfish would be rewarded with eternal life.

Jesus used **parables**, or short stories with simple moral lessons, to teach people to be kind to one another. He warned that acquiring wealth on Earth did not guarantee salvation.

Spread of Christianity

Jesus' followers believed that he was the Son of God, and in the years after his death, they preserved his teachings. In time, these teachings were collected in the New Testament. The followers of Jesus became known as Christians, from the Greek word *Christos*, meaning "anointed."

From its small beginnings in Palestine, Christianity spread across the Roman world. Missionaries like Peter and Paul worked hard to spread Jesus' message. In their travels, they benefited from the good roads and peaceful conditions that existed under Roman rule.

Persecution. In general, the Romans tolerated the religious beliefs of the diverse peoples they ruled. They looked on Christians, however, with suspicion because Christians refused to show respect for Roman gods. As a result, Christians were often persecuted. During the early centuries of Christianity, thousands of Christians became **martyrs**, people who suffer or die for their beliefs.

Persecution failed to destroy Christianity, however. Instead, its numbers grew. As one Roman observed, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Christian Church." Finally, in A.D. 313, the Roman emperor Constantine



Jesus as the Good Shepherd The image of Jesus as shepherd comforted early Christians and strengthened their faith, especially during the Roman persecutions. In the Bible, Jesus tells the parable of the good shepherd protecting his flock, and adds, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." **Culture** Why might parables be a good way to teach moral lessons?

converted to Christianity and ended the persecution of Christians. By A.D. 395, Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Appeal of Christianity. Why did Christianity appeal to people? For many people, both rich and poor, the new religion offered hope of salvation and eternal life. The Christian belief that each person could achieve salvation through moral choices gave people a sense of control over their destiny. The poor found comfort in Jesus' teaching that all believers were equal in the eyes of God.

The Christian Church. Christian ideas developed over a period of centuries. In time, a formal church was organized. At first, the highest Church officials were bishops. Eventually, the bishop of Rome became the head of the Church. He took the title **pope**, or father of the Church.

The Byzantine Church. As you have read, the Roman Empire was divided by A.D. 395, and the eastern half eventually became the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine emperor refused to recognize the pope in Rome as the head of the Christian Church. Instead, the emperor controlled the Church himself. In time, the Christian Church also split into two parts: the Roman Catholic Church, with its center in

Rome, and the Eastern Orthodox Church, which was centered in Constantinople.

SECTION 3 REVIEW

- 1. Identify:** (a) Moses, (b) Solomon, (c) Torah, (d) Ten Commandments, (e) Jesus, (f) Gospels, (g) Eastern Orthodox Church.
- 2. Define:** (a) messiah, (b) parable, (c) martyr, (d) pope.
- 3.** (a) List three beliefs that were held by the ancient Hebrews. (b) What was the ethical world view of Judaism?
- 4.** (a) How did Christian beliefs reflect Hebrew traditions? (b) What ideas did Jesus emphasize?
- 5.** Give three reasons for the spread of Christianity.
- 6. Analyzing Ideas** Review this statement by an early Roman: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Christian Church." (a) What do you think he meant? (b) Why might this be true?
- 7. Writing Across Cultures** List five teachings from Judaism and Christianity that influence the values of Americans in their everyday lives.