

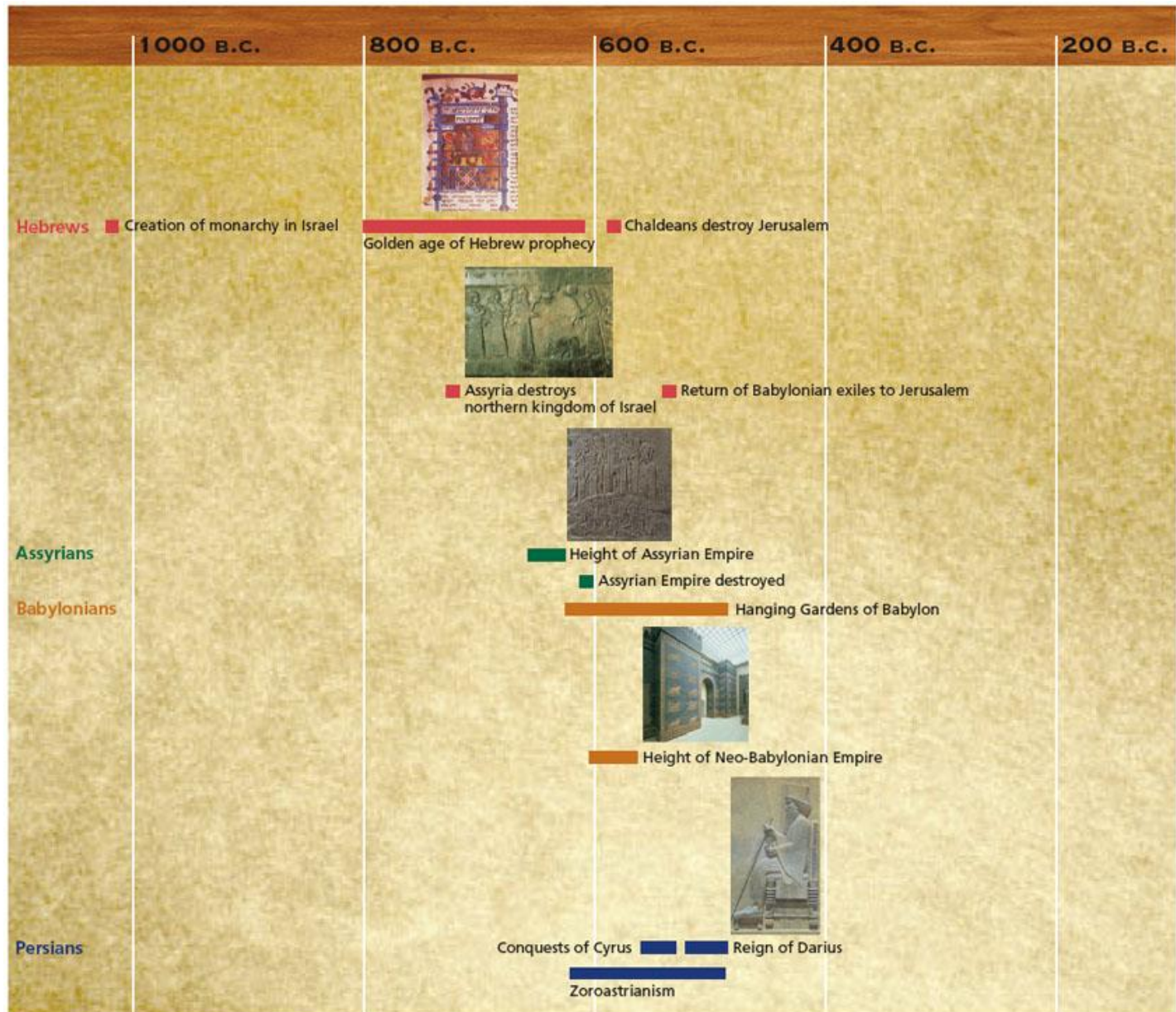
# Chapter 2

The Ancient Near East:  
Peoples and Empires

# Solomon's judgement

- Solomon became the king around 970 B.C.

# Timeline



# The Impact of the Indo–Europeans

- The original Indo–European speaking peoples lived in the steppe region north of the Black Sea or in southwestern Asia, in modern Iran or Afghanistan.
- Around 2000 B.C. these people began to move into
- Europe (including present–day Italy and Greece), India, and western Asia.
- (including present–day Italy and Greece), India, and western Asia.
- One group of Indo–Europeans moved into Asia Minor and Anatolia (modern Turkey), around 1750 B.C. built Hittite kingdom.

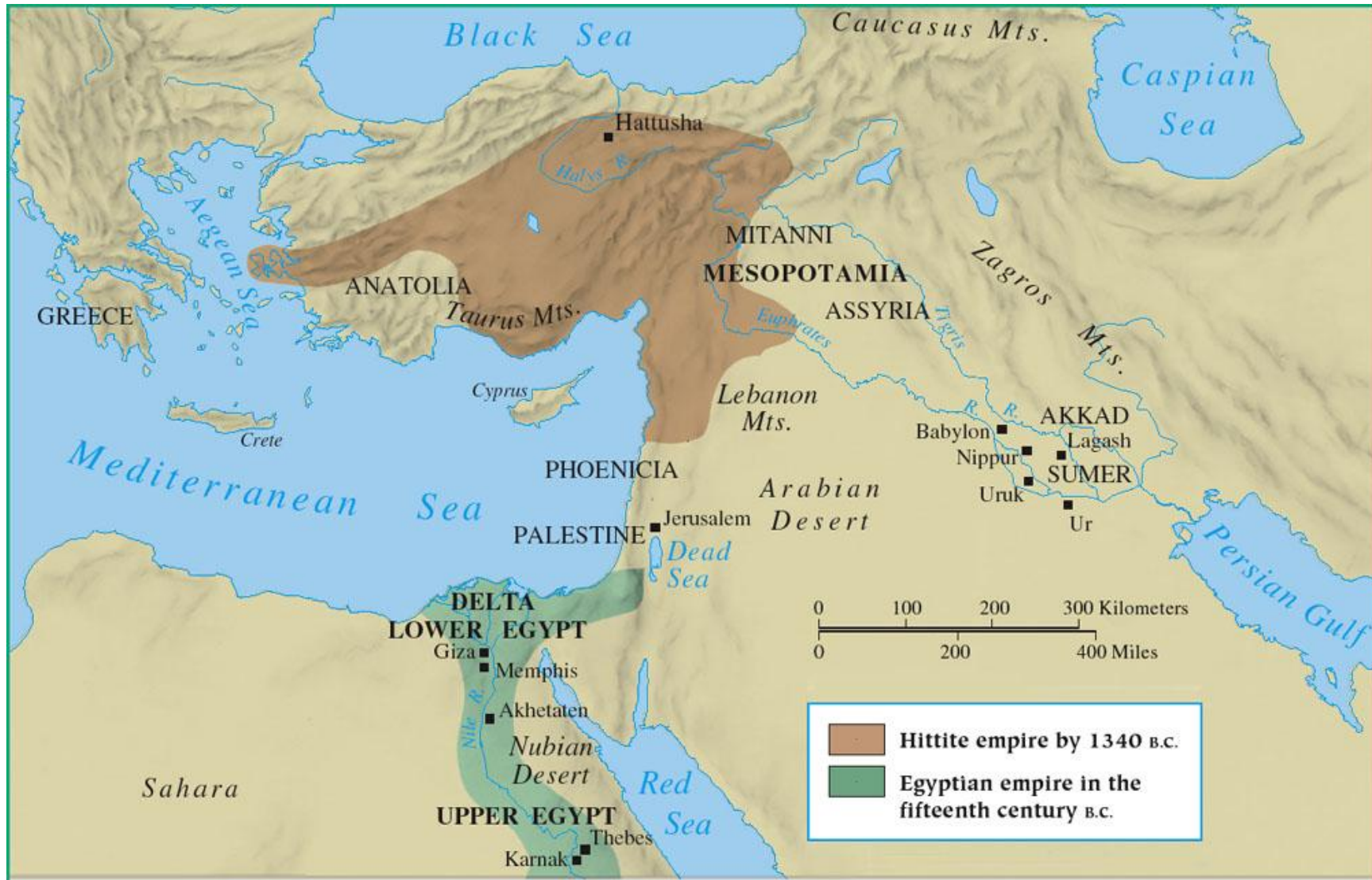


150° 4 120° 6 90° 8 60° 10 30° 12 0° 14 30° 16 60° 18 90° 20 120° 22 150° 24 180°





# Map 1.4: The Egyptian and Hittite Empires



# Table 1.2: Some Indo-European Languages

**TABLE 1.2** Some Indo-European Languages

<b>Subfamily</b>	<b>Languages</b>
Indo-Iranian	<i>Sanskrit</i> , Persian
Balto-Slavic	Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Czech, Polish, Lithuanian
Hellenic	Greek
Italic	<i>Latin</i> , Romance languages (French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian)
Celtic	Irish, Gaelic
Germanic	Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, German, Dutch, English

*Note:* Languages in italic type are no longer spoken.

# The Hebrews: “The Children of Israel”

- The Hebrews were a Semitic-speaking people
- Hebrew Bible –
- They first appeared in
- By 1,900 b.c. they settled there.
- Descendants of Abraham
- They moved from Mesopotamia to Palestine.
- Migration to Egypt– drought



- Slaves of Pharaohs
- According to the Book of Exodus
- - led them out of Egypt (Exodus) around 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
- They crossed the Red Sea.
- Moses parts the waters to provide his people an escape route.
- Parting of the Red Sea – Ten Commandment
- He led them to the Sinai peninsula
- He persuaded them to become worshipers of Yahweh

- They wandered for many years in the desert
- Finally entered the land of Canaan
  
- 12 tribes
- Troubles with the Philistines
- Origins of United Kingdom (c. 1200 – c. 1000 B.C.)

# Chronology: The Israelites

## **CHRONOLOGY**

## **The Israelites**

<b>Saul—first king</b>	<b>c. 1020–1000 B.C.</b>
<b>King David</b>	<b>c. 1000–970 B.C.</b>
<b>King Solomon</b>	<b>c. 970–930 B.C.</b>
<b>Northern kingdom of Israel destroyed by Assyria</b>	<b>722 or 721 B.C.</b>
<b>Southern Kingdom of Judah falls to Chaldeans; destruction of Jerusalem</b>	<b>586 B.C.</b>
<b>Return of exiles to Jerusalem</b>	<b>538 B.C.</b>



# The United Kingdom

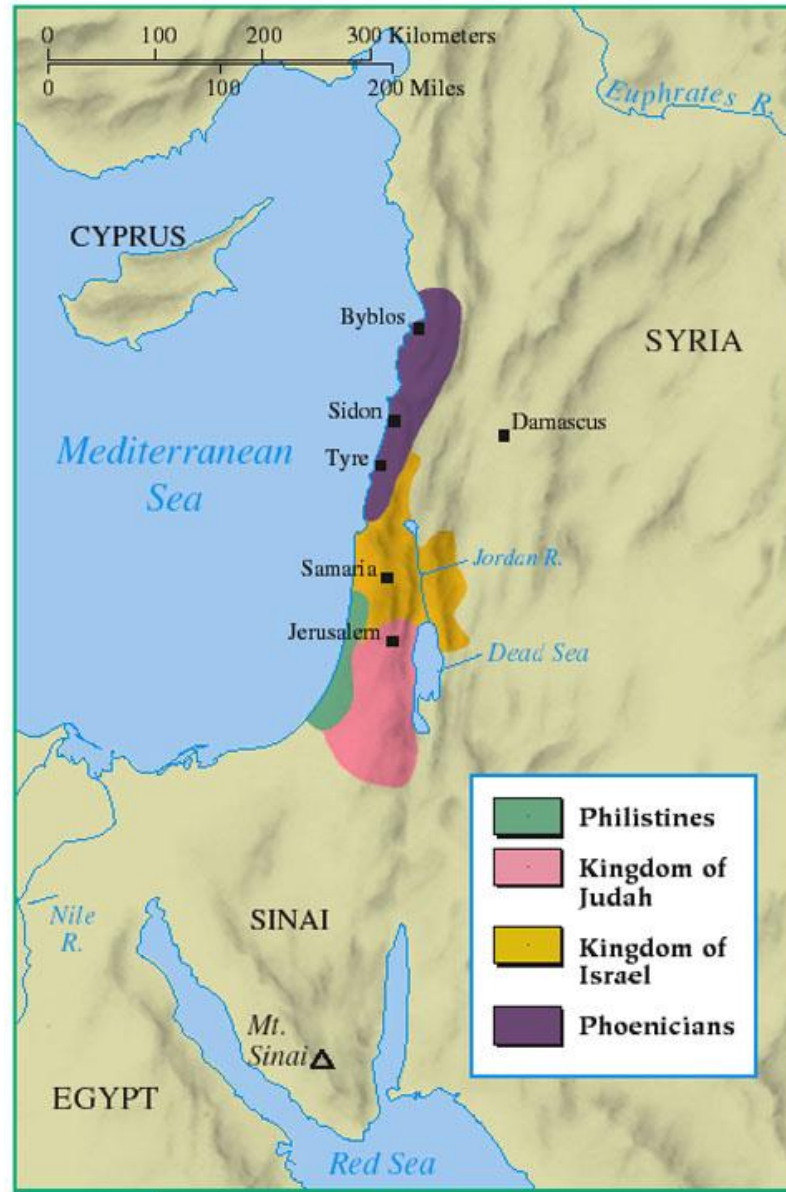
- Saul (c. 1020 – 1000 B.C.)
- David (c. 1000 – 970 B.C.)
- Saul and the Israelites are facing the Philistines at the Valley of Elah.
- the champion of the Philistines, challenges the Israelites to send out a champion of their own to decide the outcome in single combat



- His reign was one of the most glorious periods in Hebrew history.
- Solomon (c. 970 – 930 B.C.)
  - Temple of Jerusalem
  - Harem of 700 wives and 300 concubines
  - Stables for 4,000 horses
- The Divided Kingdom
  - Kingdom of Israel
    - 10 Northern Tribes–refused to submit to his son Rehoboam
    - Capital in Samaria
  - Kingdom of Judah
    - 2 Southern Tribes
    - Capital in Jerusalem



# Map 2.1: Palestine in the First Millennium B.C.



- Assyria conquers Kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.)
- They were all dispersed
- They were called ten lost tribes.
- Jerusalem Destroyed
  - The southern kingdom of Judah sustained for a while but was also destructed in 586 B.C. by the Chaldeans from Babylonia.
  - People of Judah were forced to move to Babylonia.
  - They lived there as captives.

- Return to Jerusalem from Babylonia in 538 B.C.
- by permission of the Persian who became the new conqueror in that area.
- The ruler was changed to Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C.
- However, they survived and were known



# Spiritual Dimensions of Israel

- The most important characteristic of Judaism is
- monotheism, the belief that there is only one God for all peoples.
  - 10 Commandments
  - Regulation of economic, social and political life of all Hebrews
- Prophets
  - Yahweh's voice to his people
  - Universalism and Social Justice
  - Separation between Jews and non-Jews

# The Persian Empire

- Indo-European speaking people
- At the beginning of the 7th century the Persians became known.
- Unified under the Achaemenid dynasty
- Cyrus the Great (559 – 530 B.C.)
  - Conquered Kingdom of Lydia (c. 547 B.C.)
  - Conquered Greek city-states
  - Conquered Mesopotamia (539 B.C.)
  - He died in 529

- Cambyses (530 – 522 B.C.)
  - Conquered Egypt
  - Revolt spread
  - He was murdered
- Darius the Great (521 – 486 B.C. )
  - Crushed the revolts
  - Seized the throne
  - Ionian Revolt in Asia Minor
  - Invasion and Defeat in Greece (490 B.C.)
  - By the reign of Darius the Persians had created

# Map 2.3: The Persian Empire at the Time of Darius



- His great achievement is
- to standardize the currency and weights and measures.
- Another legacy of Persian rulers is
  
- Royal Road– from Sardis to Susa
- Some 1,600 miles in length
- These roads contributed
- to ease

# Persian Religion

- Zoroastrianism
  - Zoroaster (born c. 660 B.C.)
  - Monotheistic–dualistic
- Ahuramazda
- Ahriman (Evil Spirit)
- Struggle between good and evil



- Although the religion did not continue in its original state, it influenced a lot in the Western World continuously,
- in a different version such as
- Mithraism was the oldest one, deriving its name from Mithras, a lieutenant of Ahura-Mazda
- Mithras finally won recognition by many of the Persians as the god most deserving of worship.

- He believed to have lived an earthly existence involving great suffering and sacrifice.
- He performed
- giving bread and wine to man and
- ending
- Finally, he created much of the ritual of Zoroastrianism, proclaiming Sunday as
- 
- the twenty-fifth of December

# Conclusion

- The Assyrian Empire was the first to unite almost all of the ancient Near East.
- Even larger, however, was the Persian empire.
- Their form of government was adopted by the later Roman monarchs,
- in its character of divine-right despotism.

- However their rule was tolerant as well as efficient.
- Conquered peoples were allowed to keep their own
- It brought to the Near East many years of peace, and it helped to facilitate trade.
- It is no wonder that many people expressed their gratitude for being subjects of the Great Kings of Persia.

- The Romans were impressed by the Persian idea of a world empire.
- The Persians generally conducted their wars with a minimum of savagery and treated conquered peoples humanely.
- Their ideal was a kind of

# Discussion Questions

- Explain about Indo–European speaking people!
- Where did Hebrews appear first and where did they end up last and how?
- What was Persian's achievement and how was their rule?
- Explain about Zoroastrianism and its later version, Mithranism.
- In what way did Persian empire affect Roman empire later?



# Web Links

- [Internet Jewish History Sourcebook](#)
- [The Old Testament and the Ancient Near East](#)
- [ABZU: Internet Guide to the Ancient Near East](#)
- [Ancient Mesopotamia and the Levant](#)
- [Hittite Homepage](#)
- [Cyrus the Great](#)
- [AVESTA: Zoroastrian Archives](#)