

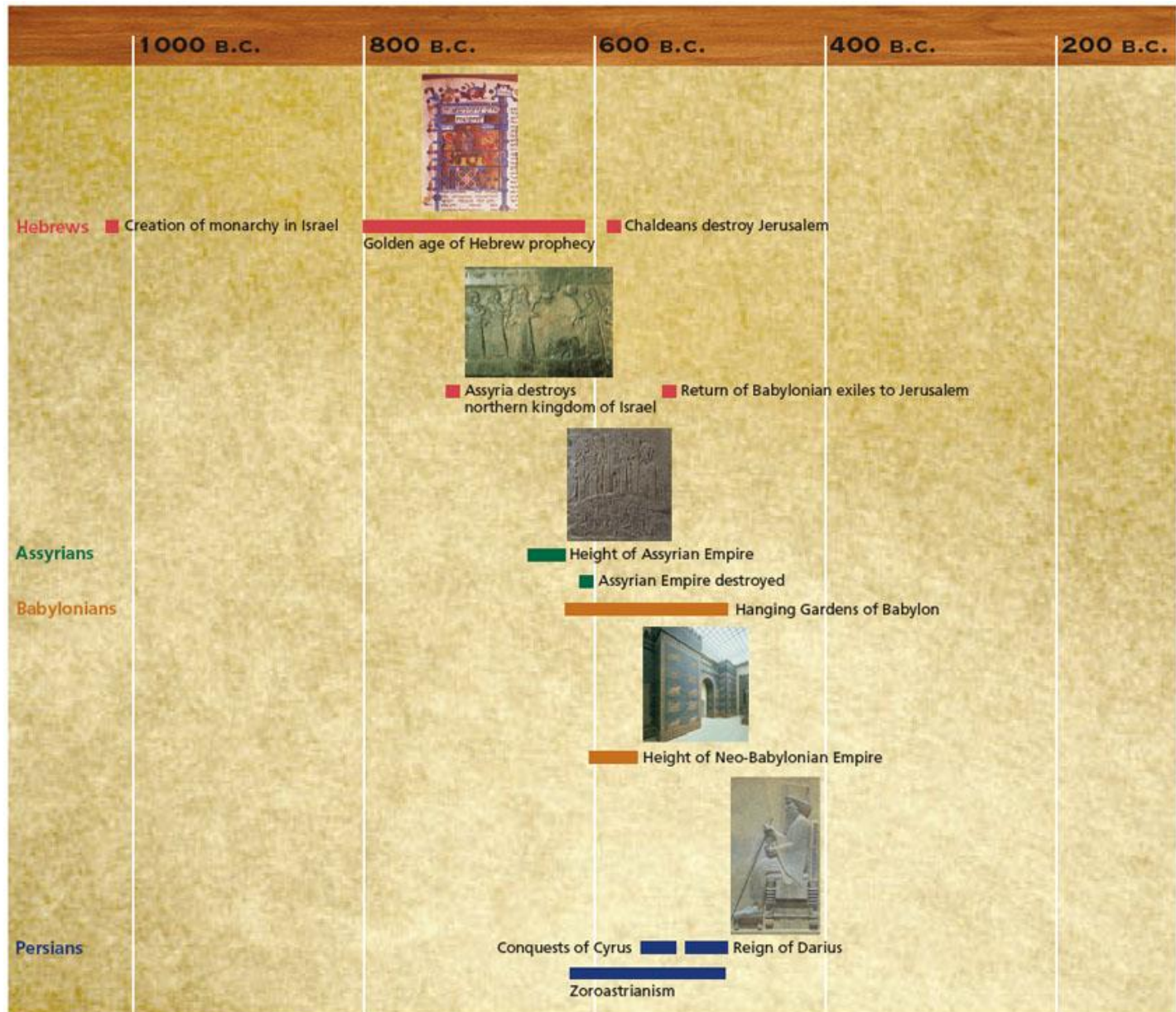
Chapter 2

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.



Map 1.4: The Egyptian and Hittite Empires

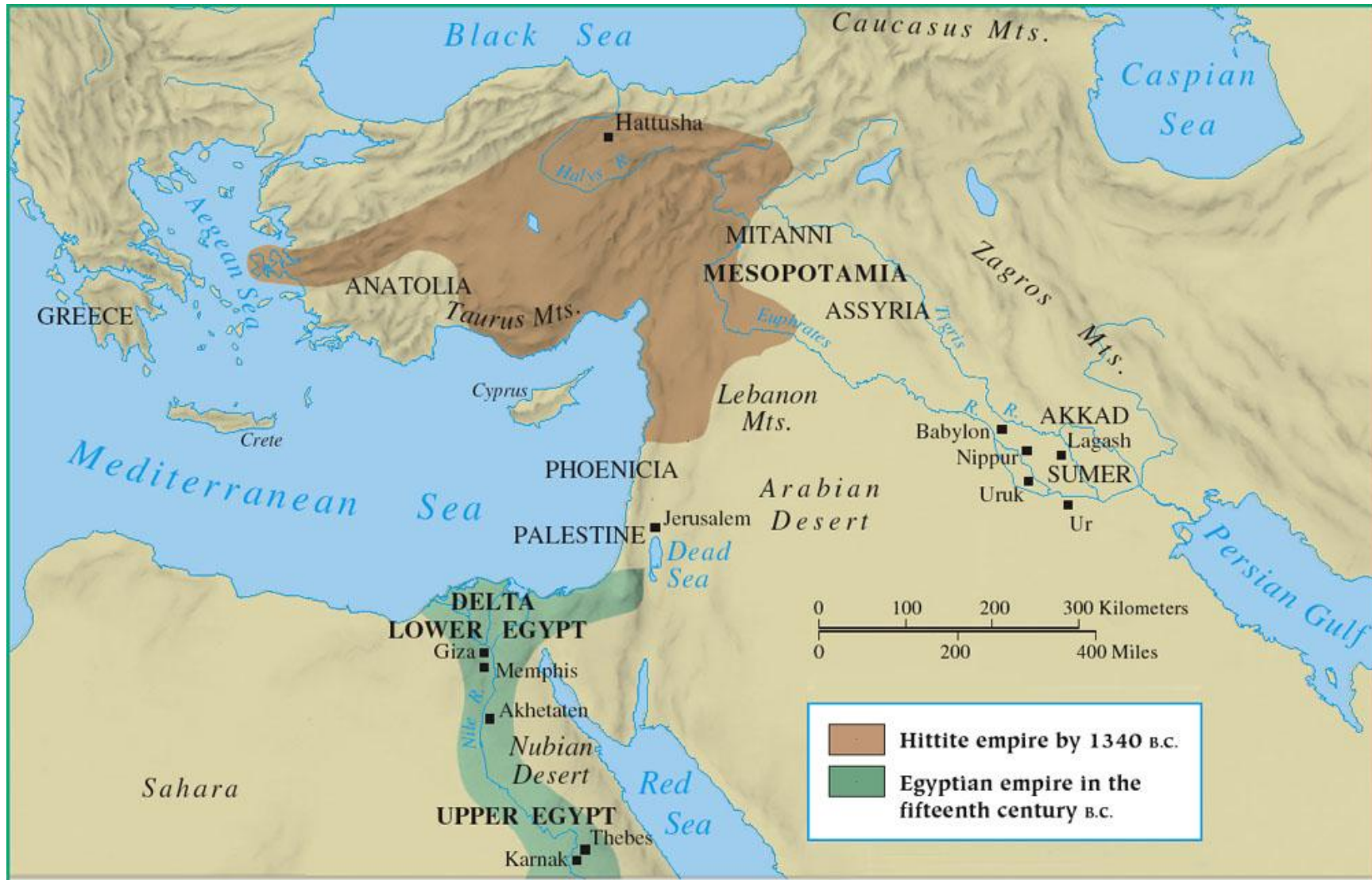


Table 1.2: Some Indo-European Languages

TABLE 1.2 Some Indo-European Languages

Subfamily	Languages
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 13th 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

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

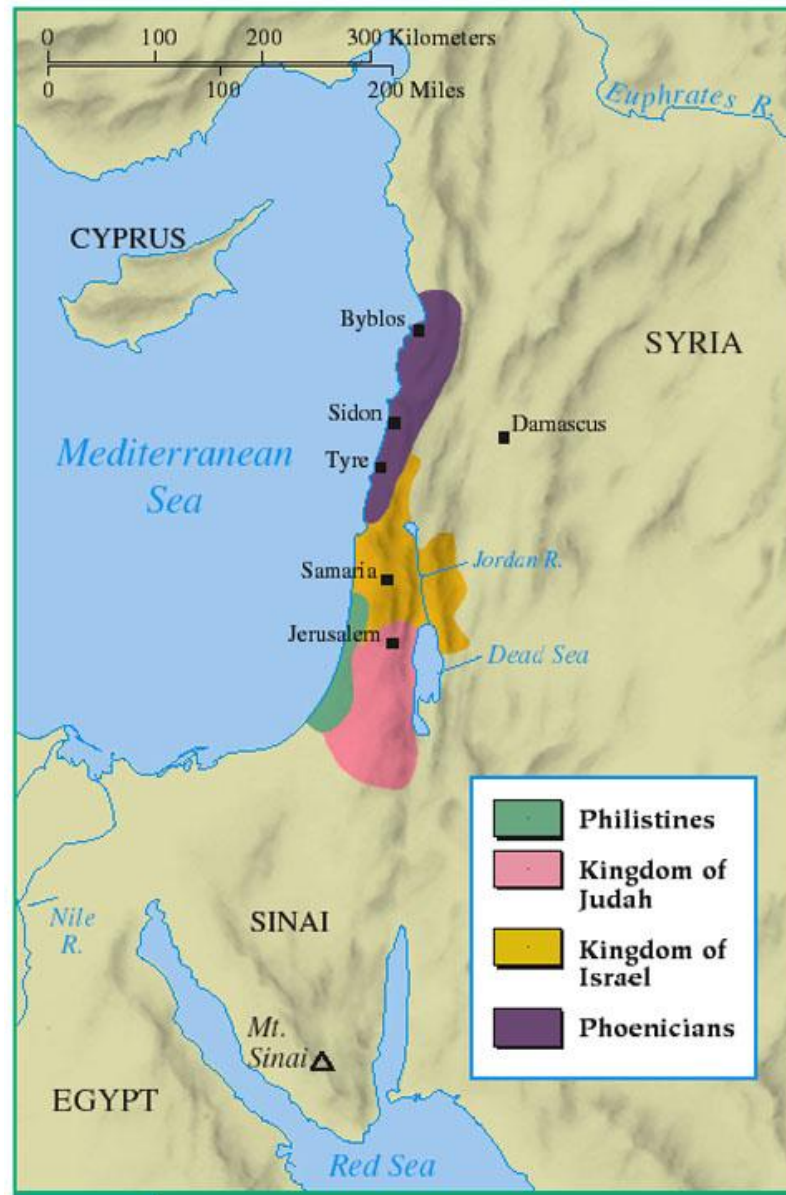
The United Kingdom

- 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

- David declares he will defeat him.
- Saul reluctantly agrees and offers his armor,
- which David declines in favor of
- He strikes Goliath in the head and cuts off his head
- This famous story was known more because
- sculpted David known as
- Statue of David
-
- is a masterpiece of Renaissance sculpture

- 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](#)