



# People and Nations of the Old Testament

People Groups

This is about the history and times of the different nations that rose and fell before and during the times of Israel. It brings into perspective What Israel faced during its establishment.

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Here, we look at the mighty conquerors of the time and their aggressive never ending drives for expansion. We trace this back to the Sumerians, the first empire which was located at end of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. We will look at the Akkadian Empire with Sargon of Akkad. The Akkadian city Nippur provides us with a look at a less famous ancient city and people. Then we will look the people of the mighty Assyria Empire and their culture, history and gods. We also look at two well known Assyrian cities: Ashur and the infamous Nineveh. A more noticeable people especially in the Bible are the Biblical Amorites who were referred to as hill people by the Israelites but there was also an Amorite Empire. We will read about their part in the history of Mesopotamia. Next we take a really good look at Anatolian plateau (a bit of geography here) and the Hittite people who lived and died there. Following the Hittites, we briefly mentioned the Kingdom of Moab and the part they placed in this historical mosaic of this module and especially the Bible. The Chaldeans are the next people that arise up to power and show their stuff in history, followed by the Persian Empire. We then look at the Elamites and their capital, Susa, and how it was used by various empires of the time. Susa was the second capital of the Persian Empire. And lastly we end up looking at the background of the Island City State of Tyre. Their story presents an interesting history and closure to already mentioned empires. Oh, in addition, references to the Bible are also included whenever mentioned.

The Sumerians are considered the first empire to develop after the flood. They described themselves as 'the black headed people' and called their land ki-en-gir or place of the civilized lords. This was, of course, the Tigris & Euphrates delta area in what is today called southern Iraq. The Sumerian people only spoke the Sumerian language which amazingly wasn't Semitic in origin. The origin of their language can't be traced. Archaeological records show a cultural continuity from the early Ubaid period between 5200 and 4500 BC. The Sumerian language had many words associated with their watery surroundings. During this period, they were classified under a distinctive style of painted pottery which was then used throughout Mesopotamia. At first they centred themselves around an ancient cult centre of a city state called Eridu. However, later during the Uruk period (4500 - 3100 BC) a gradual shift and thus change in this painted pottery was seen to the more to the mass produced unpainted pottery done on a fast wheel. The end of the Uruk period came about the same time as of the great 'dry period' from 3200 to 2900 BC. Some of the major early Sumerian cities were Eridu, Kish, Lagash, Uruk, Ur and Nippur. Most of

these cities warred against each other continually over water rights. Many of the kings of these cities were listed on the Sumerian King list; an ancient text recording the location of the 'official' kingship, rulers and lengths of their rule. Interestingly, out of this list, there appears to be one female ruler: Kug-Baba who reigned during the third dynasty of Kish. The Gilgamesh Epic mentions Enmebaragesi of Kish whose identity has already been authenticated through archaeological digs. One of the first empires in recorded history was that of Eannatum of Lagash, who annexed all of Sumer, including Kish, Uruk, Ur and Larsa and he extended his kingdom to parts of Elam and along the Persian Gulf. Another historical name is King Lugal-Zage-Si of Uruk of the 23rd century who took Lagash and in turn he was conquered by the famous Sargon of Akkadian Empire. Now the Akkadians were Semitic and used a Semitic language like the Arabs and Jews of today. Akkad wasn't that far from the original Sumerian Empire; in fact it was just a little farther north. The city of Akkad has never been found and some even think it to be actual Babylon. According to Thorkild Jacobsen, a known archaeologist, there was little difference in the historical continuity when the Akkadian Empire took over. People seem to go about their business as usual. As this came about, the Sumerian language began to take a back seat to the Akkadian language. The Akkadian language used the cuneiform script of writing just as the Sumerians. Well, actually the Sumerians seemed to have been the people who originated the cuneiform writing system. There was no other writing system available except the Sumerians one. After the fall of Akkad, its capital, the Samarian resurfaced later as the 3rd dynasty of Ur. It revived.

As mentioned already, the Akkadian's capital was Akkad some say it was between Nineveh and Babylon in central part of Mesopotamia while other think that it was just immediately south of present day Bagdad on the west bank of the Euphrates between Sippar and Kish. However, the city itself has never been found. The empire reached its peak somewhere between the 24th and 22nd centuries BC through the conquests of King Sargon of Akkad. It was claimed that Sargon fought and won over thirty four battles. It's sometimes said that Sargon was also the first ruler of a combined empire of Akkad and Sumer but this isn't confirmed. One legend has it that Sargon experienced a Moses type upbringing by way of the gods of the day. His mother put him in a basket of rushes and cast him into the river where the Akki, the drawer and god of water reared him. He was appointed gardener and Ishtar looked over him and gave him her love. The earliest recording known date from the time of Sargon who also claimed to be the son of La'ibum, a gardener. So Sargon became a gardener which gave him access to a corps of workers. He later used these people and

replaced Ur-Zababa and began to conquer the lands to the west: Syria, Anatolia, Canaan, Elam, Oman and all the city states of Sumer. There were uprisings and battles but even in his old age, he defeated them all. The empire was bound by roads and even had a regular postal service. An interesting feature of his empire was the use of clay seals to stamp postage bearing the names of Sargon and his sons. This revealed a sense of an advanced and modern society way back in antiquity.

The 'Ensi', a name used by the highest functionary of the Sumerian city states. Initially this came about by marrying the high goddess of the temple but later on it became independent of the temple and whoever controlled the city of Kish was recognised as king of Kish and controlled all the irrigated lands between the rivers; however when Sargon conquered more and more of the kingdoms around him, he became ruler of what was called the 'totality under heaven'. Sargon and Naram-Sin (Sargon's grandson) installed their daughters as high priestesses to the god Sin, a moon deity and their sons as provincial Ensi governors in strategic locations in around the empire for the purpose of control. One such high priestess, Enheduanna, the high priestess of Nanna, daughter of Sargon of the temple of Sin at Ur became a famous poet whose works are known today and included hymns to the goddess Inanna and a group of hymns known as the Temple Hymns. She set standards in all three of her roles: poetess, princess and priestess. Also known from Akkadian literature is the Atrahasis Epic which was a story written in the early 2nd millennium BC in Akkadian. It's an epic of creation and early human history and it includes a flood story. The hero of the epic was Atrahasis. This was very similar to the Gilgamesh Epic of the Sumerians which in turn is similar to the Genesis flood account.

The people spoke a Semitic dialect, naming it Akkadu, but used the unrelated cuneiform writing system from ancient Sumerians. Their scribes struggled with this writing system. The cuneiform writing system as already mentioned was devised by the Sumerians used wedge-shaped signs pressed into wet clay. The cuneiform writing system was exactly that; it was a writing system not a language as such. This represented Sumerian logograms, Sumerian syllables, Akkadian syllables and phonetic complements. The problems also in using cuneiform for a Semitic language revolved around its inability to represent certain phonemes such as the glottal stop, pharyngeals and emphatic consonants. It was a syllabary writing system involving consonant plus vowel which comprise one writing unit. But a Semitic language was made up of Triconsonantal roots or three consonants minus any vowels. Akkadian grammar was an inflected language which was very similar to Classical Arabic;

however it has a subject, object, verb (SOV) sentence pattern whereas Arabic and Hebrew consists of a VSO word order. Like Arabic, it was masculine and feminine and the same for personal pronouns and in addition verb conjugations had an additional dual form. There were three cases, nominative, accusative and genitive and three numbers of singular, dual and plural. As mentioned, Akkadian verbs usually displayed the tri-consonantal root with variants of two and four consonants which were called radicals. There were three tenses: present, preterite and permansive. The present tense indicated incomplete action with the preterite tense indicating complete actions. The permansive tense expressed a state or condition and took a particle. It had regular plurals, unlike Arabic with some masculine words taking feminine plurals which was similar to Hebrew. But please understand that all Semitic languages are more similar and like than unlike. Akkadian was eventually divided into eight dialects: Old Akkadian which was used between 2500 and 1950 BC, Old Babylonian/Old Assyrian which was used from 1950 to 1530 BC, Middle Babylonian/Middle Assyrian between 1530 and 1000 BC, Neo-Babylonian/Neo-Assyrian which was between 1000 and 600 BC and then the Late Babylonian which ruled between 600 and 100 BC.

The Akkadian Empire was dependent upon the agriculture from the irrigated farmlands of the south and farmlands of the north. Over the years, due to salutation of the soil, barley was chosen over wheat in the southern part of the country. However, this forced shipments of grain to the south to make up for the lost of grain. Harvest was in the late spring and dry summer months. Generally, there was always a surplus of agricultural products but the empire had a shortage of everything else, especially ore, timber and building stones which had to be imported. Flood levels had been stable for nearly 400 years but between 3200 and 2,800 BC it started falling. So within a hundred years of its birth, the empire collapsed from barbarians known as 'Gutians'. This happened in 2083 BC. Afterward this, it was said to be the dark ages as the site was abandoned soon after a rebuilding process. Everybody had moved on due to a drought that seemed to have covered not only Mesopotamia but the whole of the Fertile Crescent. Agriculture in the north collapsed and the Tigris and Euphrates fell by a metre and a half.

The city of Nippur having been associated with both Sumer and later with the Akkadian Empire was located about 160 km southeast of Baghdad. It was one of the most ancient cities dating back to 5262 BC. It was located on both sides of the Shatt-en-Nil canal. To start off, it was a reed village in the marsh land which eventually became mud bricks. One stratum of ruins is marked by painted pottery similar to that of Susa. In the 4th millennium

linear inscriptions written in Sumerian tongue was found on clay. The city came to be known for the worship of the Sumerian god, Enlil. There was also a shine with inscriptions of Uruk and Ur kings. There was a raised ziggurat made of bricks. Early in the 3rd millennium BC, the city was taken over by the Akkadian Empire. The last Akkadian king, Naram-Sin, rebuilt both the temple and the city walls. After the empire fell, the first Semitic dynasty of Ur built the construction of Ur-Gur and other Babylonian temples. At this stage, the temple covered some 32,000 m. There was a Ziggurat built towards the western corner which consisted of three stages of unburned brick with a layer of kiln-burned bricks laid with bitumen. To the north-east stood the House of Bel and in its courts were other buildings, shrines and various chambers. The temple proper, according to a discovered map, covered 8 acres and was surrounded by double walls. These continued to be built on and rebuilt by various dynasties of Ur and Isin. In the 2nd millennium BC, Hammurabi moved the religious and political centre to Babylon. Marduk became lord of the pantheon and as many of Enlil's attributes were transferred to Marduk. Ekur was neglected. The middle of the 2nd millennium the Kassit dynasty restored Nippur and Ekur. Several kings of that dynasty built and added to the city. At the close of the 8th century BC, the Assyrian Sargon started restoration with Ekur and then completely restored by Assurbanipal in the middle of the 7th century. In the Seleucid period, the temple was turned into a fortress and added to and built upon until the close of the Parthian period of AD250.

Interestingly, the city of Nipper was really only an appendage of the temple. The temple owned all the land where the farmer would rent and work it. Tablets found indicate temple treasures, temple officials and salary lists from archaeological digs. The city is the most explored city of any other Babylonian city except for Babylon and Lagash. But the exploration of the city is in fact quite difficult and costly because of the lack of inaccessibility of the site. There were over 40,000 tablets and fragments found dating to the middle the 3rd millennium consisting of temple archives, school exercises and text books, some of which were math tables. On the upper surface a Jewish town was actually found with a large number of incantation bowls along with Persian documents which listed Jewish names. The settlement was from a much earlier period and even could have been the one that Ezekiel belonged to.

Assyrians in early times included the area of the Upper Tigris River and around 6000 BC life this was made up of villages with houses and buildings of mud bricks. This was very far from the original southern empire of Akkad. The home of the Assyrians eventually was



Nineveh. Of course this rings bells of the Biblical story of Jonah. Asshur and the Assyrians were originally considered to be a colony of Babylon. Later, as it grew, the ancient city of Ashur became its capital and their land extended along the Tigris all the way to the Carduchian mountain range of Armenia. These mountains were also called the Mountains of Ashur. Some think that Ashur was the son of the Biblical Shem. Besides Ashur, there were three other Assyrian cities: Calah (Nimrud), Khorsabad and Nineveh. Eventually the capital was moved to Nineveh.

The Assyrian culture experienced advancements in science, maths, astronomy and medicine which was mainly due to it many wars and conflicts. Besides learning how to divide the circle into 360 degrees, they invented longitude and latitude and developed their own medical science. There even was an optical lens found in one of the palaces. The ancient Assyrian language was similar to Akkadian except they also used a form of neo Syriac as a second language. They had extensive contact with cities on the Anatolian plateau and established merchant colonies in Cappadocia in 1920 to 1840 BC and again in 1798 to 1740 BC. These colonies were physically separate and had special tax status. Trade was in metals and textiles.

The Assyrians worshiped Anu the sky god as father and king of all gods plus a few other major gods. He was sometimes identified with the Greek god Zeus by the Greeks. The story goes that Anum left sovereign authority to another god, Enlil. Now, Anu's home was in Uruk, together with the goddess Ita. In the Creation Epic Enuma eli, Anu transferred power to Marduk the city god of Babylon. Enlil in later times was known as 'Lord of the Atmosphere' and was also the city god of Nippur which had been the Sumerian sacred city and religious centre. Enlil was a stern, strict god who behaved in an authoritative way. Enki/Ea was the water god and the third deity in the lists of gods. He is also referred to the Lord of Cunning/Skill and was also seen as Lord Earth in folk etymology. His realm was the rivers, lakes and subterranean waters. He was also the god of Eridu which which I have already briefly mentioned being a Sumerian city in the south situated on a large lake and surrounded by marsh and swamps. Ishtar was the goddess of love, procreation, and war who was shown to be the lover of the shepherd god, Dumuzi. A story was between these two gods saw them fighting and one being cast to the underworld. Earth was known to be made up of heaven, the earth and the netherworld. Heaven was the upper level of the universe and associated with a celestial sphere. The supernatural universe was made up of gods and demons and portrayed with have more powerful beings with endless lives. Some gods had human appearances, such

as a body. They needed food and water with each having a well defined character. There was also a winged genie figure who represented a priest, a king or a god holding a cone in his right hand and a bucket in his left. This was associated with purification and protection. During the Neo-Assyrian period, two human headed winged bulls guarded the throne room of King Sargon II.

In 1813-1791 BC, Ashur was taken by an Amorite conqueror called Shamshi-Adad I but trade seemed to continue as usual at the time. After Shamshi-Adad I's death, Hammurabi of Babylon conquered Ashur. Due to the increased trade with Babylon, the trading colonies in Anatolia ceased to operate. It wasn't until 1365 to 1330 that Assyria became powerful again. This on again and off again power of the Assyrian went on for a thousand or so years. Earlier in the 15th century the Hurrians sacked Ashur and made Assyria a vassal state and the Hurrians was paid tribute until the Hittites grew in power. Ashuruballit I over powered the Hurrians and in turn, he was eventually was conquered by Adad-nirari I. And his successor was Shalmaneser I who then made his capital in Calah and further expanded the kingdom to Carchemish. His son and successor, Tukulti-Ninurta took Babylon and ruled there as king for seven years. Afterward during the reigns of Babylonian kings Melishipak II and Marduk-apal-iddin I revolted against Assyria.

The upper classes and land owners of the time were mainly military commanders who grew rich from the wars. Their army was the most advanced in the world with iron swords, lances, metal armour and battering rams. Then came the collapse of the Hittite empire in Aytolia, and so Babylon and Assyria went after the land that was left over. The Assyrian king Ashur-resh-ishi defeated Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon. In 1120 BC, Ashur-resh-ishi's son, Tiglath-Pileser I defeated the Mushki and what Hittites that were left and took Carchemish. He marched into Babylonia. You need to understand that this went on not far from the events that were taking place in Israel where we know that they often experienced direct intervention from Assyria with ten of the tribes being carried off, never to return. Some consider Tiglath-Pileser I the founder of the first Assyrian empire. But after this, The Assyrian Empire was very weak until 911 BC; Adad-nirari II brought the vassal states back under control. He was succeeded by Tukulti-Ninurta II. In 883 BC-858 BC Ashurnasipal II fought tyrannical battles to the north and with the Aramaeans and to the Mediterranean shores. He moved the capital to Kalhu (Nimrud). His son Shalmaneser III fought again Urartu in 858 to 823 BC in the reign of Ahab, king of Israel, against the alliance of the Syrian states. This battle was a



deadlock. Shalmaneser retook Carchemish in 849 BC and in 841 BC marched an army against Hazael, King of Damascus and made Jehu of Israel pay tribute.

Note that by 752 BC Aramaic became the second official language in the Persian Empire which included a large base of Akkadian words. Remember, both Aramaic and Akkadian were Semitic languages, just like that of Israel.

A military adventurer seized the Assyrian kingship in 745 BC call Pul. He assumed the name of Tiglath-Pileser III, reconquered Babylon and made them pay tribute and retook Urartu and Syria and also Arpad near Aleppo. He also took Hamath and thus made Uzziah to pay tribute. In 738 BC, he made Israel pay tribute (2 Kings 15:19). He retook Damascus again in 732 BC and was crowned 'King Pul of Babylon' in 729 BC. He died in 727 BC and was succeeded by Shalmaneser V, who reorganized the Empire into provinces, establishing Assyrian governors. He was deposed in 722 BC by Sargon who carried 27,000 Israelites away which completely brought an end the Hebrew Kingdom. In 721 BC, Babylon rebelled but was retaken later in 710 BC. Sargon built a new capital near Nineveh. Sargon was slain fighting the Cimmerians and was succeeded by Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13; 19:37; Isa 7:17) who then moved the capital to Nineveh.

Hezekiah of Judah formed an alliance with Egypt against Assyria which caused Sennacherib to march against Judah but an angel of the Lord smote the Assyrian army at Jerusalem. In 689 BC, Babylonia revolted again, but Sennacherib destroyed the city. The Babylonian really hated him for this. He was later murdered by one of his sons. Esarhaddon gained the throne and had Babylon rebuilt. He moved against Egypt and Phoenicia and sacked Sidon in 677 BC. He captured Manasseh of Judah and invaded Egypt in 674 BC which brought Assyria to it greatest territorial extent. Egypt still continued to be a problem for the Assyrians even after appointing Assyrian governors and Ashurbanipal, Esarhaddon's son, later installed a vassal king there in 663 BC hoping this would lesson the problems with Egypt. During Ashurbanipal reign, he promoted art and culture and created a large library of cuneiform tablets at Nineveh. He again, later, sacked Babylon and Elam also which he completely destroyed in 640 BC. Ashurbanipal died in 627 BC and soon after the Assyrian Empire disintegrated. Nineveh along with Assyria completely fell in 612 BC.

According to the Book of Jonah, Nineveh was described as an 'exceeding great city'. It was a place of worship of the god Ishtar in the early 2nd millennium BC but it wasn't until the 8th century it came into the limelight. Sennacherib established in Capital at Nineveh however later kings Shalmaneser I and Tiglath-Pilese I were active builders in Asshur. When

Ashurnaisrpal II came to power in 883 BC, he moved the capital back to Nineveh and expanded it considerably. There places, temples to Sin, Nergal, Nanna, Samas, Ishtar and Nabu of Borsippa built during this time. Sennacherib in 700 BC even laid out fresh streets and squares and built a new palace of 80 rooms which were lined with sculptures. However, in 633 BC the Assyrian empire started to weaken and was attacked by the Medes in 625 BC and then joined by the Babylonians and Susians in 612 BC.

Nineveh was first mentioned in Gen 10:11 and then again in Jonah 3:3 & 4:11. It was a mighty capital of the Assyrian empire in 2 King 19:36 and Isaiah 37:37. Nahum denounced the city to ruin and utter desolation in Nah 1:14; 3:19 and again in 2:6-11. Zephaniah also predicted its destruction in Zephaniah 2:13-15. Assyria's pride was mentioned Isaiah 10:5-19, Matthew 12:41 and Luke 11:32. Nineveh was completely destroyed and almost forgotten except for the Bible.

Its location is modern day Mosul, Iraq. It is marked by two large mounds, Kouyunjik and Nabi Yunkus. Kouyunjik has been thoroughly explored. However, Nabi Yunkus has a Muslim shrine dedicated to the prophet Jonah on it. In the 19th century, the French consul at Mosul had the mound of Kirsabad searched and found the royal palace of Sargon II. In 1847, adventurer Sir Austen Henry Layard searched the Kouyunjik mound and rediscovered the lost palace of Sennacherib with its 71 rooms and bas-reliefs. He also found the palace and famous library of Ashurbanipal with its 22,000 clay tablets. Later, work continued by such archaeologists as George Smith, Hormuzd Rassam, L.W. King and others. The Kouyunjik mound was excavated by L.W. King of the British Museum. In 1927 Campbell Thompson worked on the mound of Nebi Yunus near the North Western corner of the walls and found nearly 300 pieces of the royal annals of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal plus a perfect prism of Esarhaddon. Shortly after this, the panelled interior walls of a palace provided an accurate depiction of the Judean city of Lachish and its destruction as mentioned in II Kings 18:13-14. Unfortunately, Sennacherib's palace was vandalized in the 1990's with a number of reliefs stolen. Two palaces were restored by the Iraqi government in the 1960s. The palace of Ashurbanipal II at Nimrud contained some hundred slabs in various states of preservation.

The city of Asshur was first a colony of Babylonia and as already mentioned later became one of the capitals of Assyria. The city was built by Sennacherib on an old course of the Tigris. Ashurbanipal II later moved the capital to Kalhu (Nimrud). Asshur was also known as the religious capital of Assyria with temples of both Ishtar and Asshur. Even today, it's

known for its striking Ziggurat devoted to the god Asshur. Other temples were devoted to the gods of the sun and the moon plus one had two towers which were sacred to the god of the sky, Anu and god of the storms, Adad. The city was conquered by the Babylonians in 614 BC.

The Amorites were also a Semitic group that existed around 2200 BC and occupied an area west of the Euphrates. They were fierce tribal clans who forced themselves into land for the purpose of grazing their herds. The urban Sumerians considered their nomadic way of life as disgusting. They worshipped the god, Amurru. This name is also found in Akkadian and Sumerian texts. Amurru is also referred to as a shepherd and son of the sky god Anu. Amurru is sometimes called bel sade or lord of the mountain and alternatively could have been the fertility god 'Ba'al' who the Canaanites had adopted as their god. Ba'al was a rival and enemy of Yahweh. Amurru had storm god features and was even called hurler of the thunderbolt and Adad of the deluge. Along with Amurru, the Amorites seemed to have worshipped the moon god Sin. Amurru was also identified with the Perseus constellation and in early Babylonian inscriptions, all western lands, including Syria and Canaan, were known as 'the land of the Amorites'. They wrote in a dialect of the Akkadians. Many of their proper names were similar to later Biblical Hebrew names. A wider use of the term Amurru also applied to a district in Babylonia. Unlike the Akkadians and Sumerians, the Amorites gave the land to farmers, freed the inhabitants from forced labour and taxes and set up a society of largely farmers, free citizens and enterprising merchants. This was very different than the Assyrians. The king cared for the welfare of the people. Besides Sin and Amurru, the Amorites worshipped the Sumerian gods and believed in their myths and epic tales.

The Biblical Amorites were referred to as hill people (Gen 14:7) and descendants of Canaan and last of the remnant of the giants (Deut 3:11). At an earlier time, often the distinction between Amorites and Canaanites was blurred. But still, the Amorites were looked upon as people of the past whereas the Canaanites were people of the present. They seem to have originally occupied the land stretching from the heights west of the Dead Sea (Gen 14:7) to Hebron. In Joshua (10:10), five kings of the Amorites were defeated and again in Joshua 11:8 at the water of Merom. In Deut. 1:44 and Numbers 14:45, the terms 'Amorites' and 'Amalekites' were used synonymously for the 'Canaanites'. Also In Genesis 34:2, the Hivites are the Amorites of Genesis 48:22.

Looking at the geography of In Asia Minor or Anatolia we have the rise of the Hittites, 'the land where the sun rises' you can understand how an empire came to power. At the time

they were somewhat hidden amongst the mountains with seas situated all around, the black sea, Aegean Sea and The Mediterranean Sea. The Black Sea and The Aegean Sea is connected by a narrow strait known as the Bosphorus. Anatolia had an abundance of iron ore and plus rivers running in various directions. The Sangarios River flows into the black sea along with the River Halys with a length of 400 miles. The Iris River flows from eastern Anatolia and also flows into the Black Sea. The Tigris and Euphrates flows out of Eastern Tuckey into Mesopotamia. And then there's the Araxes that flows through the Caucasus east into the Caspian Sea.

There are two mountain chains, the Pontic which runs along the Black Sea coast to the north and then the Taurus mountain chain that parallels the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and goes into Eastern Tuckey. Mt Ararat is the highest peak with an elevation of 16,000 feet and Mt Nemrut with an altitude of 5,500 feet has one of the largest volcanic craters in the world, 4.25 miles diameter. Another mountain Erciyes located in Eastern Cappadocia has an elevation of 13,000 feet and finally Mt Hasan forming the western border of Cappadocia with an elevation of 10,000 feet.

So, the Hittite kingdom controlled central Anatolia or what is now called Tuckey. Their early history is by way of a group of tablets called the Anitta Tex. These were written in the 17th century BC but survived as copies which were made in the 14th century. They spoke an Indo-European language but used cuneiform as a writing system. Their capital was Hattushash. At its height, it controlled central Anatolia, north western Syrian down to Ugarit and Mesopotamia down to Babylon and lasted from 1680 BC to 1180 BC. But its' influence continued long past this date as independent city states. The kingdom was referred to as Hatti but this isn't the Hattic of the 2nd millennium BC, who spoke a non Indo European language. But the name 'Hattic' was used to distinguish their language from the Indo-European Hittite language. It's not known what happened to the Hattic culture or its people. They could have been absorbed by the Hittite kingdom. The Hittite lineage is broken up into the Old kingdom with Hattusa as their capital from 1750 to 1500 BC. Then there was the Middle Hittite Kingdom from the year 1500 to 1450 BC and last, the New Hittite Empire from 1450 to 1180 BC where Suppiluliumas I conquers Syria and Muwatalli attacked the Egyptians at Kadesh. The founding of the Old Kingdom was attributed to Hattusili I. His son, Mursili I conquered modern day Aleppo in Syria. He also took Babylon but gave it over to the Kassites. Mursili was soon assassinated and the Empire was soon in chaos. The Hurrians people seized Aleppo and other areas close to them renaming it Kizzuwadna (later Cilicia). For the next 500

hundred years, the empire seemed to float along having highs and lows. In 1500 BC Telepinu fought against Mitanni which was close to the Hurrian state. This was the end of the Old Kingdom. Then there was the Middle Kingdom which became very good at writing treaties with neighbouring states. Shortly after 1400 BC the Hittite capital Hattusa was razed but then came Suppiluluma I in 1350 BC who made another push outward and took Aleppo, Mitanni defeated Carchemish, a Syrian city state. Mursili II, his son attacked Arzawa and Millawanda to the west. Then in 1275 BC a battle between Rameses II and the Hittite king Muwatalli was fought ending in what seems to be a draw. During a short weakness in the Hittite Empire, Assyria seized Mitanni from the Hittites and expanded to the Euphrates. Hattusili III took the throne from his uncle concluded a peace and alliance with Rameses II which resulted in the Treaty of Kadesh, one of the oldest treaties in history signed in 1258 BC. Then the Sea People came against the very last king, Suppiluliuma II, taking Cilicia and Cyprus and then the Hittite capital, Hattusa, which was burnt to the ground and so the Hittite Empire vanished somewhere around 1180 BC. However, there did remain a number of Neo-Hittite Kingdoms in northern Syria at Carchemish and Milid but these were gradually taken over by the Assyrians. Sargon II conquered Carchemish in the late 8th BC and Milid a few decades later.

The Hittites are mentioned in the Bible many times. They were famous for building chariots and working iron. The first mention of the Hittites was from tablets found at Kultepe an Assyrian colony. There were some diplomatic letters discovered at Tell El-Amarna in Egypt addressed to Pharaoh Amenhotep III and his son Akhenaten. They were written in Akkadian cuneiform script.

The Hittites are said to be the children of Heth mentioned several times in the Old Testament. It seems that the Israelites considered them to be a small tribe living in the hills of Canaan during the era of the Patriarchs. Some people think that these Hittites are different from the Hittites of Anatolia however a more popular view is that they are related to the Anatolia Hittites. They could even be associated with the Hurrian tribes living in Palestine. The Hittite laws came from the Old Babylonian Empire but they used a much more scaled down version of the rigid Babylonian laws. The population became tenant farmers and there were few severe sentences. Interestingly, the Hittites adopted the gods from all the nations they conquered. The Assyrians did the same with the Israelites and that's why there was a schism between Jews and Samaritans.

There are many Archaeological sites in Anatolia, some not yet discovered, hidden by present day villages and cities while others that are well preserved such as Ephesus

Pergamum, Aphrodisias, Hierapolis Miletus and Perge. Others have been built over perhaps a dozen or so times such as the ancient city of Troy.

Moab and the Moabites were located some 4,300 feet high above the east side of the Dead Sea. This is a mountainous strip of land in modern day Jordan just south of Ammon. Besides the Jordan, the principal rivers mentioned in the Bible were the Amon, the Dimon and the Nimrim. The rainfall is fairly good and cooler than western Palestine. Sometimes, snow falls in the winter. The treeless plateau was covered with grass in the spring and produces grain as a commodity. To the north are deep ravines and Mount Nebo where Moses died. The area contains a number of ruins from the Roman and Byzantine era but now there are small towns and Bedouins who live on the land. One such town is called Kerak, then capital of Moab named Kir-Hareshet. Their early history included taking the land from Emim, the original inhabitants. When the Amorites came, they were driven further south where the then Arnon River formed their northern boundary. The land contains natural resources such as limestone, salt and balsam. The country was also located on the ancient trade route from Egypt to Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia which gave them considerable revenue. The Moabite god was known as Chemosh with a female counterpart Ashtar-Chemosh and also a god called Nebo. In times of trouble they would offer human sacrifices to them. King Solomon built a shrine on the hill before Jerusalem which was obviously for one of his wives. As you remember, the Israelites did not pass through Moab when entering the Promised Land.

Pharaoh Ramses II attests to the Moabites history listed Moab on the base of the second statue in front of the northern pylon at Ramses' temple. Moab also has a long history with the Israelites beginning with Lot who was the father of Moab and then through by having a child through his eldest daughter after God destroyed Sodom. The Book of Ruth traces King David's lineage to a Moabite woman and shown the relation between the two countries were sometime peaceful. David committed his parents to the protection of the king of Moab in 1 Samuel 22:3,4. Further, Moab is mentioned in the Bible in connection with the Amalekites, the inhabitants of Mt Seir, the Edomites, the Canaanites, the Sethites and the Philistine. The battle of Ziz is the last important date in the history of the Moabites as recorded in the bible. They are mentioned in II King 13:20 invading Israel and then in Jehoiakim (ib.xxiv 2) aided Nebuchadnezzar against Jehoiakim. They are alluded to in Isaiah 25:10, Ezek 25:8-11 and Amos 2:1-3 and finally in Zephaniah 2:8-11. Sargon II mentions



Moab, Philistia, Judah, and Edom on a Taylor prism bring tribute to Sargon. A Moabite king Muzuri was mentioned by Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal to be one of their subject princes.

The Moabites and Ammonites were excluded from the Israelite congregation as shown in Deut 23: 3-4. However, this was sometimes overlooked in regards to the marriages of the Bethlehem Ephrathites, Chilion and Mahlon to the Moabite women Orpah and Ruth and the marriage of the later, after her husband's death, who was the great grandfather of David.

Now we have the Chaldeans and their nation Chaldea who were in the southern part of Babylonia or Lower Mesopotamia. It eventually was used for the whole of Mesopotamia. But in general it was specifically used in reference to the Tigris Euphrates plain. The Chaldeans themselves was another Semitic people of Arabian origin who moved into southern Mesopotamia during the early first millennium BC. They use Aramaic for a language from which Arabic and Hebrew grew out of. The Chaldeans seemingly disappeared after the Persians conquered Babylon in 689 BC. With the advent of Christianity the whole of Iraq became Christian but with the eventually split of the Catholic church, the eastern church split into two, the Assyrian church and the Chaldean church which was pronominally Catholic. The Assyrian church followed the Nestorian thought and there are still thousands among the Assyrian who are Christians but not Roman Catholic. There are about 150,000 Chaldean in America and another 100,000 Assyrian and another 30,000 who classify themselves as Syriac. The greatest concentration of Chaldean Catholics lives in Iraq, altogether in the world, about a million.

The timeline on the Persian Empires and history goes back to the Neolithic age. They eventually over ran all the lands from Egypt to India. Around 6000 BC, the number of settlements started to increase in the eastern Zagros Mountains and from the 6th to 3rd millennium painted pottery become a characteristic in many Iranian sites. Persia's earliest kingdom was the proto-Elamite kingdom and afterwards, the Medes and then the Achaemenid Empire. The Achaemenid and Medes joined to form a power empire led by the following kings: Achaemenes, Teispes, Cyrus I, Cambyses I (Kambiz), Cyrus the Great, Start of Achaemenid Empire, 559BC -530BC, Kambiz II, 530BC - 522BC, Smerdis (the Magian), 522BC, Darius I the Great: 522BC - 486BC, Xerxes I (Khashyar): 486BC - 465BC, Artaxerxes I : 465BC - 425BC, Xerxes II: 425BC - 424BC (45 days), Darius II: 423BC - 404BC, Artaxerxes II: 404BC - 359BC, Artaxerxes III: 359BC - 339BC, Arses: 338BC - 336BC, and Darius III: 336BC - 330BC. The Persian Empire controlled Mesopotamia from

612 to 330 BC along with Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor and even India. They established a ceremonial capital at Persepolis in southern Iran which was built by King Darius the Great. Before this, both the Persians and Medes often had to pay tribute to the Assyrians. First the Medes rose up in 728 BC and established a short lived empire that had the Persians paying them tribute but soon they were taken over by the Scythians. But it was Cyrus II who really united the empire of the Persians and defeated the Medes in 550 BC. With the Medes by his side, he entered Babylon in 539 BC but Cyrus didn't destroy the city, instead he promised not to harm their institutions and culture. (The Cyrus cylinder is an artefact kept in the British Museum listing the Cyrus declaration.) After Cyrus, his son Cambyses II ruled. Cambyses II marched on King Amasis, the only remaining independent state of the Eastern world in 525. He wanted to march further south but was unable to cross the desert. He later sent an army of 50,000 to threaten the Oracel of Amun at the Siwa Oasis but the army was lost in the desert. Darius I in 512 BC conquered parts of the Indus River valley and turned toward Thrace in Europe but was halted at the Battle of Marathon. Darius I established a tax collection system, allowed locals to keep their customs and religions, divided the empire into Satrapies, built roads, a complex postal system, and established a network of spies throughout the kingdom. He also established two capital cities, at Susa and Persepolis.

The Persian Wars with Greece started in 499 BC and lasted for 20 years. These wars later exacted a history changing payback by Alexander the Great. The Greek cities which the Persians controlled in Asia Minor revolted with Athens sending 20 ships to help the Ionians. The Greeks then burned Sardis, the capital of Lyday and the Persians' head quarters in Asia Minor. Darius was so upset that he sent a force of 600 ships in 492 BC to take Athens however half of his ships were destroyed in a storm. Two years later Darius tried again and made landfall at a Greek port called Attica with 600 triremes. A small group Athenians of 192 over powered a host of Persians who lost 6,400 of their people. For the third time, the Persians sent a force in 480 BC led by King Xerxes. 300 Spartans held the Persians off until Attica was evacuated then Xerxes fleet and the Athenian fleet with smaller ships clashed between the coast of Attica and the island of Salamis where the Greeks destroyed two hundred of their ships and capturing others. Xerxes and his forces returned to Persia.

Later in 486 BC, Xerxes I The great, son of Darius I suppressed a revolt in Egypt. He is mentioned in the Book of Ezra by the name Ashverosh. In the book of Ezra, he chooses the Jewess Esther as his queen. The Biblical story tells us of one of the king's ministers who felt insulted by Esther's cousin, Mordecai. This minister tried to bring down destruction on all the

Jews because of this but Esther managed to reverse this decision with the King. The end of the Persian Empire came swiftly in 334 BC when Alexander the Great defeated the Persian armies of Darius III seeking revenge for the destruction of the Acropolis by the Persians; Alexander burnt Persepolis and Susa, their two capitals, to the ground. The last defence of the Persians was at the gates of Persepolis.

Biblical Susa was an ancient city of the Elamites, Persian and Parthian empires of Iran. It played an important part in the history of both Persia and Mesopotamia. Located just 150 miles east of the Tigris River in the Khuzestan province of Iran, the city was founded around 4000 BC with evidence of a painted pottery civilization dating back to 5000 BC. Both Daniel and Nehemiah both lived in Susa during the Babylonian captivity of Judah of the 6th century BC and are mentioned in both books plus also in Esther. The Roman emperor Trajan also captured Susa in 116 CE which was the greatest advance into the east the Romans had ever made. Susa was destroyed a number of times, first by the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal in 647 BC. This was recorded in a relief showing the sack of Susa by Ashurbanipal. Then it was destroyed by Alexander the Great and then much later in 638 AD by the attacking Muslim armies. The next destruction took place by the invading Mongols in 1218 AD.

With his army, Alexander became lord of Asia. He founded Greek colony cities where ever he could. He conquered the entire Persian Empire and reigned down revenge on Susa and Decapolis. But he cut short his exploits and returned to Greece in 324 BC and died in 323 BC of a fever and exhaustion. Some say that he died from a wound in central Asia. The empire immediately broke up with Seleucus, one of Alexander's generals, taking control of Persia, Mesopotamia and later Syria and Asia Minor. Greek became the common tongue of diplomacy and literature. Eventually, the Greeks started to loose control having to move the capital from Seleucia in Mesopotamia to Antioch in Syria. The eastern provinces finally broke off and they eventually were conquered by Rome with the eastern lands coming under Parthian rule. The Sassanid dynasty began with Ardashir I taking over from Parthia. They warred again Rome even up to 260 AD, annexing the Levant and Egypt and then pushed into Anatolia in 605 AD. But they were defeated when they tried to go against Constantinople by the Byzantine Emperor. Everything changed in 643 when the Islamic Arab armies conquered the whole of the Middle East, Iran, Central Asia, and North Africa. Three major events happened during the life of the Muslim Empires. The first in 819 east Persia was conquered by the Persian Samanids and revived the Persian language. Second, The Seljuk Turks created its own Eastern Empire in 1037 and then the Mongol invasion from China in 1219 to 1500.

Over two hundred years later, the Persian Nadir Shah in 1730 drove the Russians out, fought against the Afghans and nomadic kahanates of Central Asia and that stability continued to 1925. In 1914 the Anglo Persian Oil Company obtained permission the start production of oil in Iran. The British forces protected oil interest against the Ottomans in WWI. Reza Shah Pahlavi controlled Iran from there on and he was eventually dethroned by Aetolia.

Robert I Bradshaw brings us the history of Tyre, one of the last great city states. It's a well known site consisting of two islands about 650 m off the coast of present Lebanon near Israel. Tyre has long been mentioned throughout the Bible. Joshua refers to it as the fortified city in 19:29. Throughout its life it has defended itself against the Assyrian, Esarshaddon, Ashurbanipal, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great and Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan. At various times, Tyre had its own powerful Navy and defended itself very well. It found the famous nation of Carthage which had a long history of its own with the Roman Empire. During the rule of Hiram I of Tyre, both David and Solomon had treaties with the island nation. Tyre assisted in the construction of Solomon's palace and major building projects, even a fleet of trading ships build at Ezion Geber. The city was dependent upon Israel for food stuffs for scores of years. Tyre traded in slaves, cypress, cedar, oak, ebony, ivory, linen, cloth, gold, silver, iron, tin, lead, bronze, horses, and just about anything else there was to trade. One of the downfalls of Israel concerned the marriage of Ahab, Omri's son and Jezebel, daughter of the king of Tyre. Jezebel went about killing the prophets of Israel. She was finally slain by Jehu. Tyre enjoyed political independence for several centuries beginning in the late 12th century but that ended when Ashurnasirpal II extended his empire to the Mediterranean coast in 868 BC. Tyre usually ended up paying tribute to the various empires but they became a bit over confident when Alexander's fleet arrived from Cyprus. Tyre executed Alexander's diplomatic group it had sent to discuss peace. Tyre's wall was breached after a six months battle and in his fury; Alexander crucified 2,000 people on the walls of the city and then sold another 20,000 into slavery. The Bible contains a number of specific prophesies concerning Tyre because of its pride and rejoicing in the misfortunes of Judah and the fall of Jerusalem. Tyre is said to have celebrated and hoped to benefit through the slave trade that would come from the destruction of Jerusalem. Tyre also appeared in the Gospels where Jesus having spent time in the region of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:21)

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