ANCIENT WORLD HISTORY

CHAPTER 2: THE FIRST CIVILIZATIONS
The Origins of Egypt and its people resides in the Nile River Valley. A river that spans 4000 miles and allowed its people to travel, drink and replenish their soils. Greek historian Herodotus describe Egypt as “the gift of the Nile”.

(a) Physically Egypt was protected by desert to the east and west, equatorial jungles in the south and the Mediterranean Sea in the north.

(b) The Nile does not flood erratically and the rich soil allowed for two crops a year.
ARCHIAC PERIOD
OLD KINGDOM
FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD
MIDDLE KINGDOM
SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD
NEW KINGDOM
POST EMPIRE
A. OUTLINE OF EGYPTIAN HISTORY

ARCHAIC PERIOD (5000-2685 B.C.E.)

(1) by 5000 B.C.E. agriculture was well developed and copper was used to make tools. Sometime before 3000 the Egyptians had invented writing (hieroglyphics) which it is believed was adapted from the Mesopotamians.

(2) Egypt was divided between the upper and lower kingdoms, the ruler of the upper kingdom (Menes) conquered the lower kingdom and thus unified the all of Egypt; thus establishing the first Dynasty.
SECTION 1: ANCIENT KINGDOMS OF THE NILE

THE OLD KINGDOM (2686-2181 B.C.E.)

(1) The old kingdom consisted of the first six dynasties of Egyptian rulers.

(2) Establishment of most of the traditions that were to become characteristic of Egyptian life for the next two thousand years.

(3) The King was a living god and held absolute power and controlled all aspects of economic life, such as taxes and trade. Taxes were paid in grain which were stored in the royal warehouse in case of a famine and then distributed to the people.

(4) Also known as the Pyramid Age. After the burial sites for the Pharaoh. (name mentioned in the bible was necessarily what they called themselves.)

(5) The Pharaoh’s chief responsibility was to rule according to “Ma’at”, which is an untranslatable Egyptian concept that includes, justice, truth, law and order.
SECTION 1: ANCIENT KINGDOMS OF THE NILE

THE FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD (2180-2040 B.C.E.)

Period marked by the collapse of the central government of the Old Kingdom.

(1) the expenditures necessary for projects such as pyramids exhausted the state’s revenues.
(2) climatic disasters reduced the amount of grain, weakening the state.
(3) the nobility grew powerful and autonomous, power reverted to the regional authority (nomes)
SECTION 1: ANCIENT KINGDOMS OF THE NILE

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM (2040-1700)

Period of disorder and anarchy ended when a powerful noble family from Thebes subdued their rivals and established a new dynasty.

The Middle Kingdom was one of brilliance. Flourishment of trade, culture and gold.

During the 12th Dynasty the Pharaohs undertook a massive land reclamation project at an Oasis west of the Nile. Dams and reservoirs were constructed to insure adequate water supply throughout the year.

The 13th Dynasty already weakened by a resurgence of the nobility, fell victim to external invaders.
Invasion of Egypt by the Hyksos marks a turning point in Egyptian History. It is uncertain precisely what the origins of the Hyksos was, they did however bring three innovations with them.

1. use of horses
2. chariots
3. body armor

By 1560 they had either been driven out of Egypt or were enslaved.
SECTION 1: ANCIENT KINGDOMS OF THE NILE

THE NEW KINGDOM (1560-1085 B.C.E)

The invasion by the Hyksos left a lasting impression on Egypt. Egypt began a policy of expansion by conquering land in Africa and Mesopotamia, (Empire Age). Reached its zenith in 1400 B.C.E.

Invaded and controlled Nubia in the south and Palestine and Syria. During this period the Jews came under the control of Egypt.

Created two new classes of people, professional soldiers and slaves. Kingdom was ruled by many outstanding rulers, including Tutankhamen.

Confronted with economic disasters and wars the empire finally fell to a foreign empire never to exist again.
POST EMPIRE (1085-30 B.C.E.)

Egypt was repeatedly invaded between 1085 and 30 B.C.E. The barbaric Libyans and Nubians were the first to attack. Between 663 and 525 B.C.E., Egypt was part of the Assyrian Empire. The Persians controlled Egypt between 525 and 325 B.C.E. Alexander the Great’s armies conquered Egypt in 325 and made it part of his Empire. In 30 B.C.E., the Romans succeeded in bringing Egypt under their control.
A. Social Classes

(1) there were four classes in the Old and Middle Kingdoms: the royal family, nobles, middle class (including scribes, artisans and wealthy farmers) and the peasants, which made up the major of the population.

(2) agriculture was the basis of economic life

(3) women could own land, Egypt was one of the few ancient civilizations that allowed women to succeed to the throne (Queen Hatshepsut 8th Dynasty)

(4) family structure was based on monogamous marriage though polygamy was permitted.
B. Religion

(1) Egypt has always had a polytheistic view of religion. During the Archaic Period, each village had its own pantheon of gods and spirits (animism). The unification of Upper and Lower Egypt introduced a new stage in the evolution of Egyptian religious thought. In the Old Kingdom the Sun God (Amon-Re or Re) emerged as the most powerful of the gods.

(2) Only the pharaoh was given eternal life, it wasn’t until the Middle Kingdom that everyone was granted that privilege. Had to preserve the Pharaoh’s “ka” (vital spirit). The first pyramid (Step Pyramid) was designed by the architect and engineer Imhotep as the Pharaoh’s stairway to heaven.

(3) Monotheism under Akhenaton (Amon the sun god) death resulted in a return to the old religious practices.
(4) **The Story of Osiris**

During the middle Kingdom the God Osiris attracted a wide following. Osiris was a vegetative god associated with the Nile. His followers believed that he had been murdered by his envious brother Seth. Seth killed Osiris because he coveted Isis, who was Osiris’ sister/wife. Seth cut Osiris into pieces and threw him into the Nile in Upper Egypt. Horus, Osiris’ dutiful son, collected the parts when they reached the Delta. Followers of the cult believed that Osiris was miraculously rejuvenated. His death and resurrection was taken as a guarantee for the possibility of an afterlife. The Osiris cult carried an ethical note. Funerary paintings from this period show the souls (ka) being judged on the basis of how much good and evil the individual had done in his life.
SECTION 2: EGYPTIAN LIFE AND CULTURE

- **Amon** - The creator god.
- **Anubis** - God of mummification.
- **Isis** - Mistress of Magic. Also the wife of Osiris and mother of Horus.
- **Osiris** - God of farming and ruler of the underworld.
- **Horus** - The sky god. Son of Osiris and Isis.
- **Set** - God of disorder. An enemy of Horus.
- **Sobek** - The crocodile god.
- **Ra** - The sun god.
C. Science and Technology

(1) **Mathematics**: made fewer advances than the Babylonians, they derived a better value for “pi”

(2) **Astronomy**: established a 12 month calendar, 30 day months and 365 days a year. No evidence that they had anything as good as the Babylonians.

D. **Medicine**

(1) made many advances in medicine which included diagnosis and a course of treatment. Disease is treated as a purely natural phenomenon.
A. GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

(1) A 600 mile long alluvial valley between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers. Bounded by the Taurus Mountains in the North, the Zagros Mountains in the East, the Syrian and Arabian Deserts in the West and the Persian Gulf in the South.

(2) Environmental Challenges confronted the region with droughts alternating with periods of flooding water and violent storms. Salinization, which was the result of irrigation, caused many to fight over land that was arable.
B. STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF MESOPOTAMIAN CIVILIZATION

(1) **Sumer (4000 to 2300 B.C.E.)**
   
   (a) began in the southern part of the Alluvial plain in the valley of Sumer.

   (b) origins are uncertain, but records show they believed themselves to come from the east.

   (c) “Epic of Gilgamesh” poem depicting hell

(2) **Akkad (2300-2200 B.C.E.)**

   (a) replaced the Sumerian and under the leadership of King Sargon they eventually meshed and became a single culture.

(3) **Amor (Old Babylonians 2000-1550 B.C.E.)**

   (a) established a new capital at Babylon.

   (b) Preserved much of the Sumerian traditions.

   (c) **Hanging Gardens of Babylon** (Seven Wonders of the Ancient World)

   (d) Establishment of **Hammurabi** (1792-1750 B.C.E.)
(4) **Hittites and Kassites**
   (a) Old Babylon fell (1595 B.C.E.) to bands of Hittite raiders from Asia Minor (Turkey) first to make extensive use of iron weapons. They withdrew and left Mesopotamia to the Kassites until 1000 B.C.E.

(5) **Assyrians (1100-612 B.C.E.)**
   (a) fierce people from Asia Minor who had by 665 B.C.E. conquered Syria and Palestine and much of Mesopotamia, southern border was Egypt.
   (b) soldier were one of the first to carry iron weapons, used terror to govern their subjects.

(6) **Chaldeans (New Babylonians 612-538 B.C.E.)**
   (a) drove out the Assyrians from lower Tigris/Euphrates Valley and by 587 had conquered Syria and Palestine
   (b) King Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the Temple of Solomon and ordered the leading Jews in Jerusalem into slavery. (Book of Daniel)
(7) **The Persians**

(a) little is known about the Persians, Under **Cyrus**, king of Southern Persia the Persians conquered the Chaldeans.

(b) **Cambyses** (Cyrus’ son) conquered the Egyptians in 525 B.C.E.

(c) Cambyses’ successor **Darius the Great** extended the Persian Empire into a battle with Greece. Later his son **Xerxes** would also fail to conquer the Greeks.

(d) built a network of roads stretching some 1600 miles, established a communications system for the government.
SECTION 3 AND 4: MESOPOTAMIAN CIVILIZATION

C. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY

(1) The Sumerians were the first to respond to the twin problems of flooding and salinization. They established the first loose confederation between the different city-states.

(2) The Babylonians, influenced the ancient world through trade. The Code Of Hammurabi (1750) established culture and politics
   (a) administration of justice was unequal, punishment based on class.
   (b) “eye for an eye”
   (c) administration of justice was semi-private, individuals and families bore much of the responsibility for enforcing the Code.

(3) Government was lead by King

(4) The Assyrians, established a militaristic government because constantly at war. Used cruelty and brutality.
D. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN MESOPOTAMIA

(1) The Invention of Writing

(a) some evidence that writing may have been invented as early as 9000 B.C.E., most historians credit the Sumerians with beginning the tradition of writing that runs to the present.

(1) **pictographs**:  
(2) **ideograms**:  
(3) **phonogram**: sign or symbol is used to represent a class of specific sounds. Phoenicians (Lebanon) credited with spreading the use of the alphabet.
(2) **Mathematics**, Sumerians contributed much to the development of mathematics, devised multiplication tables, divided the circle into 360 degrees.

(3) **Astronomy**, divided year into 12 months with 30 days, the week into seven days and the day into 24 hours.

**E. RELIGION**

(1) **Sumerian**: established the Epic Poem of Gilgamesh, **ziggurat** (stepped mound) Many gods

(2) **Persian: Zoroastrianism** which consisted of two gods, a good one named **Ahura-Mazda** and the evil one **Ahriman**. Humans when they die are rewarded or punished on the basis of their lives. Everyone would eventually go to heaven and felt individuals are responsibility for there conduct.
F. REASONS FOR DECLINE

(1) natural boundaries presented a problem for the civilizations and constant warfare existed in the region.
(2) the Mesopotamians contributed to many of the ancient civilizations.
A. ORIGINS OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE
   (1) Area around Palestine and Syria, history is obscure. Likely part of the Semitic semi-nomadic tribes. Related to the Phoenicians and the Aramaeans.
   (2) Hebrew tribe origins are unknown. Bible tells the story, consisting of 39 books almost 2/3 of the bible

B. OUTLINE OF HEBREW HISTORY
   (1) It is believed that Abraham left the city of Ur in southern Mesopotamia, when it was ruled by Hammurabi. It is believed that they entered Egypt during the Hyksos invasion and felt that Joseph, Abraham’s great grandson served a Hyksos Pharoah. The resurgence of the Egyptians in the New Kingdom, resulted in the Hebrews enslavement.
(2) Moses will lead the Hebrews twelve tribes out of Egypt and Joshua led the survivors across the Jordan River into the Land of Canaan (Palestine).

(3) Canaanites and the Philistines

(a) Hebrews tribes faced two obstacles in their drive to Palestine

   (1) **Internally**: tribes were divided, loose confederation guided by Judges (arbiters of disputes between tribes)

   (2) **Externally**: were opposed by two peoples who contested the Hebrew claims (Canaanites/Philistines)

(b) **Canaan**: lived in walled forts and used Jerusalem as an urban center.

(c) **Philistines**: expelled from Egypt by Ramses III, they arrived and dominated the Hebrews because of the advanced weapons
(4) **David**: took command of the twelve tribes after Saul unsuccessfully led the unified Hebrew tribes in a revolt against the Philistines. David vanquished the Philistines and established the Hebrew capital of Jerusalem.

(5) **Solomon**: the son of David, his historical account was different than the biblical. He commissioned tremendous public projects, Temple and Palace. Tribes broke apart after his death because of the people unwillingness to except his son, Rehoboam.

(6) The tribes divide up into **Israel (10 tribes)** and **Judah (2 tribes)**. Judah is the poor agricultural and pastoral.

(7) conquest of the Hebrews last for many years, they are occupied by the Chaldeans (King Nebuchadnezzar (Book of Daniel)), the Persians, Alexander the Great and finally the Romans.
C. STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEBREW CONCEPTION OF GOD


(2) Henotheism or Period of National Monolatry (1250-800 B.C.E.): Moses transformed the Hebrew religion at the beginning of this period. Henotheists worshipped their god exclusively but acknowledged that there were other. **Yahweh** (I am what I am)

(3) The Prophetic Stage (800-600 B.C.E.): prophets (teachers) preached an absolute monotheism.

(4) Post-Exilic: Book of Job, Satan and the origins of evil. Hebrew scripture becomes the word of God
D. THE HEBREW CONTRIBUTION TO CIVILIZATION

(1) **Law**: Deuteronomistic Code shows influence of the Code of Hammurabi. Man must choose to obey or disobey God’s law.

(2) **History**: scriptures present history as a divinely inspired drama. History is a struggle to fulfill God’s plan. Man possesses free will.

(3) **Monotheism**: single most important contribution to the western civilization.