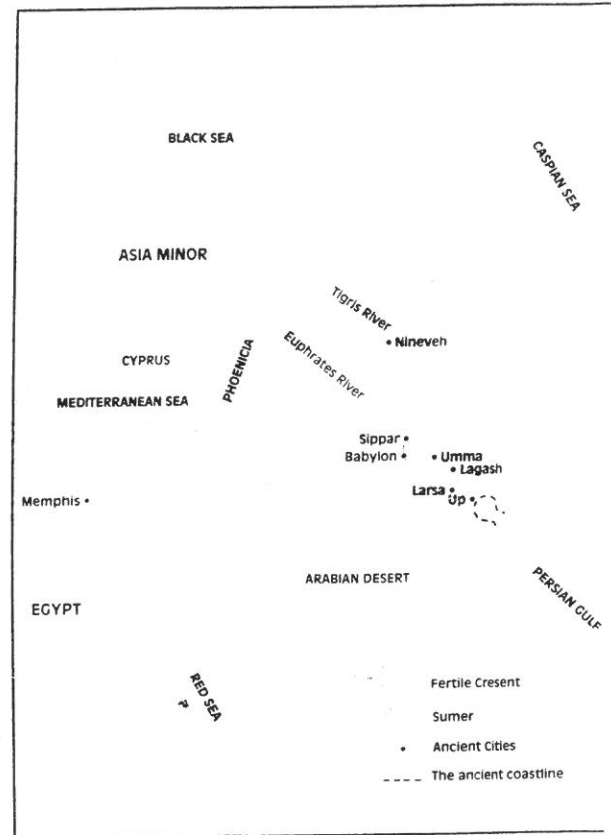


ANCIENT HISTORY (4000 B.C. – A.D. 500)

The Fertile Crescent

Civilization began in the area known as the Fertile Crescent. (A civilization is a human organization that involves a central government, permanent buildings, food production, and, sometimes, a system of writing.) The Fertile Crescent was a piece of land that stretched from the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. It got its name because the soil was rich, and it was shaped like a half-moon, or crescent.

The eastern section of the Fertile Crescent, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, was called *Mesopotamia*. Mesopotamia means "land between the rivers." The western part of the Fertile Crescent was called the *Mediterranean* section.



The civilization of Sumer begins
It develops the first written language

The powerful kingdom of Egypt begins

The Egyptians build the great pyramids and monuments

The city of Babylon is settled along the Euphrates River

The Hittite empire is among the first to use iron

The Assyrians build a powerful empire

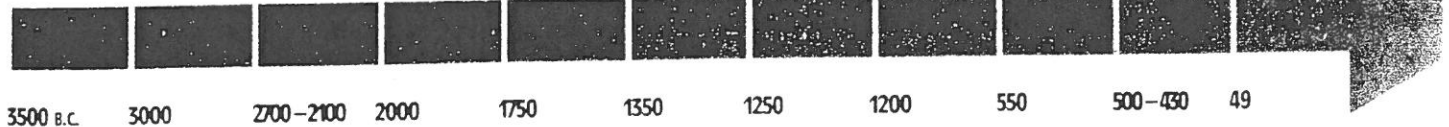
Moses leads the Hebrews out of Egypt and back to Canaan, their homeland

The Phoenicians invent an alphabet

Persia conquers Asia Minor and the Fertile Crescent

The Golden Age of Athens

Julius Caesar takes power in Rome



The Sumerians

In the southern part of Mesopotamia was an area known as Sumer. The Sumerians were one of the first people known to live in the Fertile Crescent. They lived there from about 3500 to 2000 B.C.

The Sumerians farmed and raised cattle. Many were tradespeople and artisans (craftspeople) who lived in cities. In the cities, the Sumerians built huge temples and monuments. They invented the arch and the *ziggurat*, a temple shaped like a pyramid with terraces and steps. One of their cities was called Ur. This city was found buried in sand in 1927, along with many graves and artifacts. The graves that were found turned out to be the tombs of kings. The people who unearthed these tombs, called *archaeologists*, discovered a number of things about the Sumerians:

- They were skilled builders and artists.
- They had an alphabet and knew how to write.
- Their army was supplied with weapons.
- Their metals, stones, and wood were obtained from trading with other people.
- Kings were treated as gods who had great power and wealth.

Sumer consisted of three classes of people. The upper class included kings, nobles, priests, wealthy landowners, and government officials. The middle class was made up of merchants, farmers, tradespeople, and soldiers. The lowest class was made up of slaves.

Accomplishments of the Sumerians

1 They developed the first written language, a system of writing called cuneiform. The alphabet consisted of about 500 characters, or wedge-shaped forms.

2 They studied science and mathematics. Their skills in mathematics were so developed that they created a system for subdividing a day and a year as well as dividing a circle into 360 parts.

3 They were skillful in using the wheel and made vehicles for farming, moving goods for trade, and fighting enemies.

The Babylonians

The city of Babylon was located on the Euphrates River. It was founded about 2000 B.C. and is part of present-day Iraq. Babylon became the capital of the empire of Babylonia and was an important center for trade and religious worship. The city included splendid temples to the *deities* (the gods and goddesses they worshiped).

One of the greatest kings of Babylon was *Hammurabi*, who ruled for 42 years, from 1792 to 1750 B.C. He was the first ruler to record a set of laws for his people. Hammurabi's Code of Laws consisted of 282 laws and was displayed in every town. Hammurabi based his laws on the principle that the strong should not injure the weak. These laws created a reasonable tax system, set fair prices and wages, acknowledged the rights of women (even allowing them to own property), and set up a strong system of punishments for the guilty.

Another famous king was *Nebuchadnezzar II*. He ruled Babylonia for 43 years, from 605 to 562 B.C., and is mentioned in the Bible, in the Book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar II conquered Jerusalem and forced thousands of people to move to Babylon to live in captivity. He also captured the cities of Tyre and Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar II spent enormous amounts of money in building up Babylon, and its Hanging Gardens eventually became a wonder of the ancient world (see p. 25). He is said to have gone mad toward the end of his life; Babylon grew weaker when he died.

Accomplishments of the Babylonians

1 They established a code of laws.

2 They believed in astrology, which holds that the movements of the stars and planets have a direct effect on human life. Their recognition of the different planets and stars led to the scientific study of astronomy, the study of the universe.

The Assyrians

Starting about 1350 B.C., the Assyrians lived in the area where the Sumerians had once lived. They were traders and fierce warriors who built a mighty empire by conquering others with their highly skilled army. When enemies were captured they were either taken as slaves or murdered. Sometimes the Assyrians destroyed entire cities, such as the conquered city of Elam in 640 B.C.

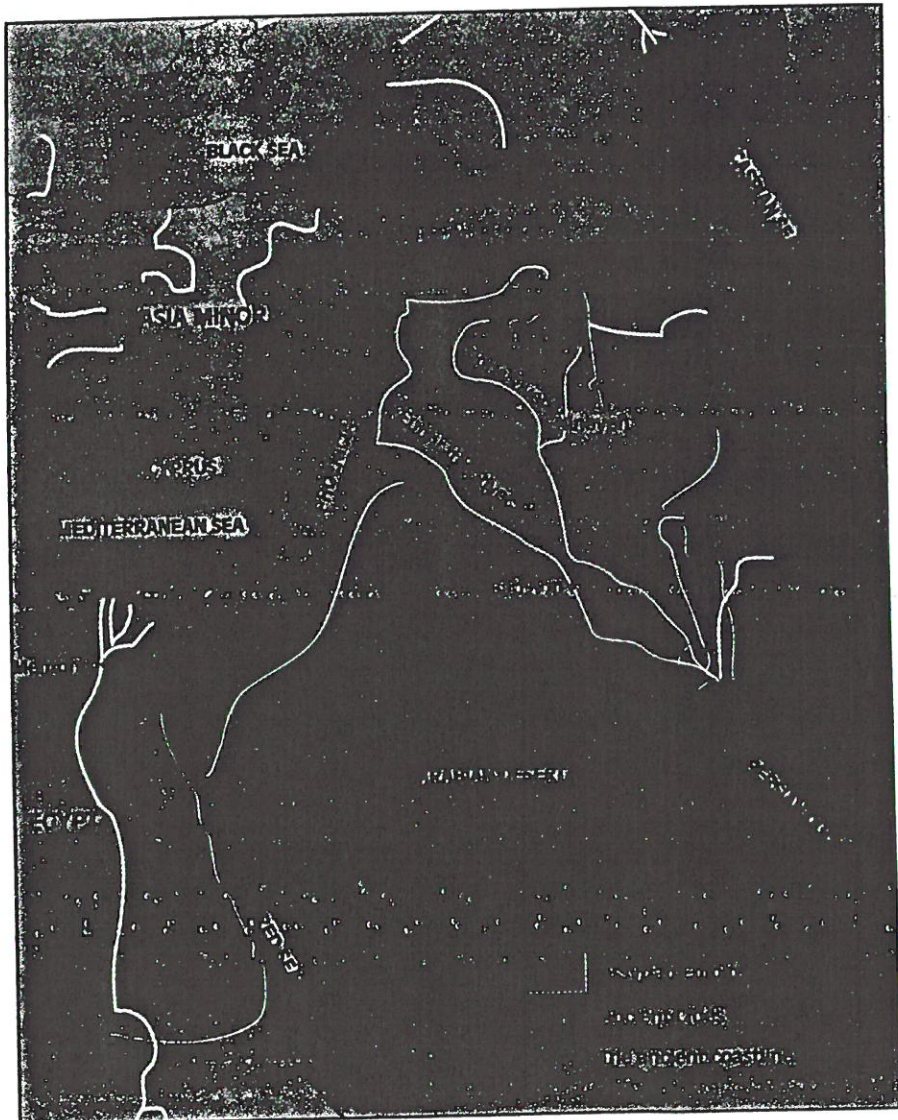
The Assyrians conquered the Fertile Crescent, including Babylon and Egypt. Their capital was at Nineveh. The empire grew wealthy from the cities the Assyrians captured and the taxes they collected from the defeated peoples.

The last great king of Assyria was *Ashurbanipal*. His library held a great deal of information about Assyria. It was the first known library and contained more than 22,000 clay tablets written in Sumerian cuneiform. These tablet "books" included proverbs, fables, folktales, as well as writings on religion, science, law, and magic.

The Assyrian Empire lasted over 700 years, to 612 B.C., when the Babylonians and the Medes destroyed Nineveh.

Accomplishments of the Assyrians

- 1** They built a system of roads.
- 2** They instituted a form of government for the provinces in which a governor was appointed to oversee the king's territory.
- 3** They established the first library.



The Assyrian Empire around 1350 B.C.

The Hebrews

The Hebrews lived in Canaan, a narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Originally, they were nomads who wandered the land. When severe drought forced them into Egypt, the Egyptians made them slaves. Around 1250 B.C., their leader, **Moses**, led them out of Egypt and back to their homeland. This journey back is known as the **Exodus**, which means "going out."

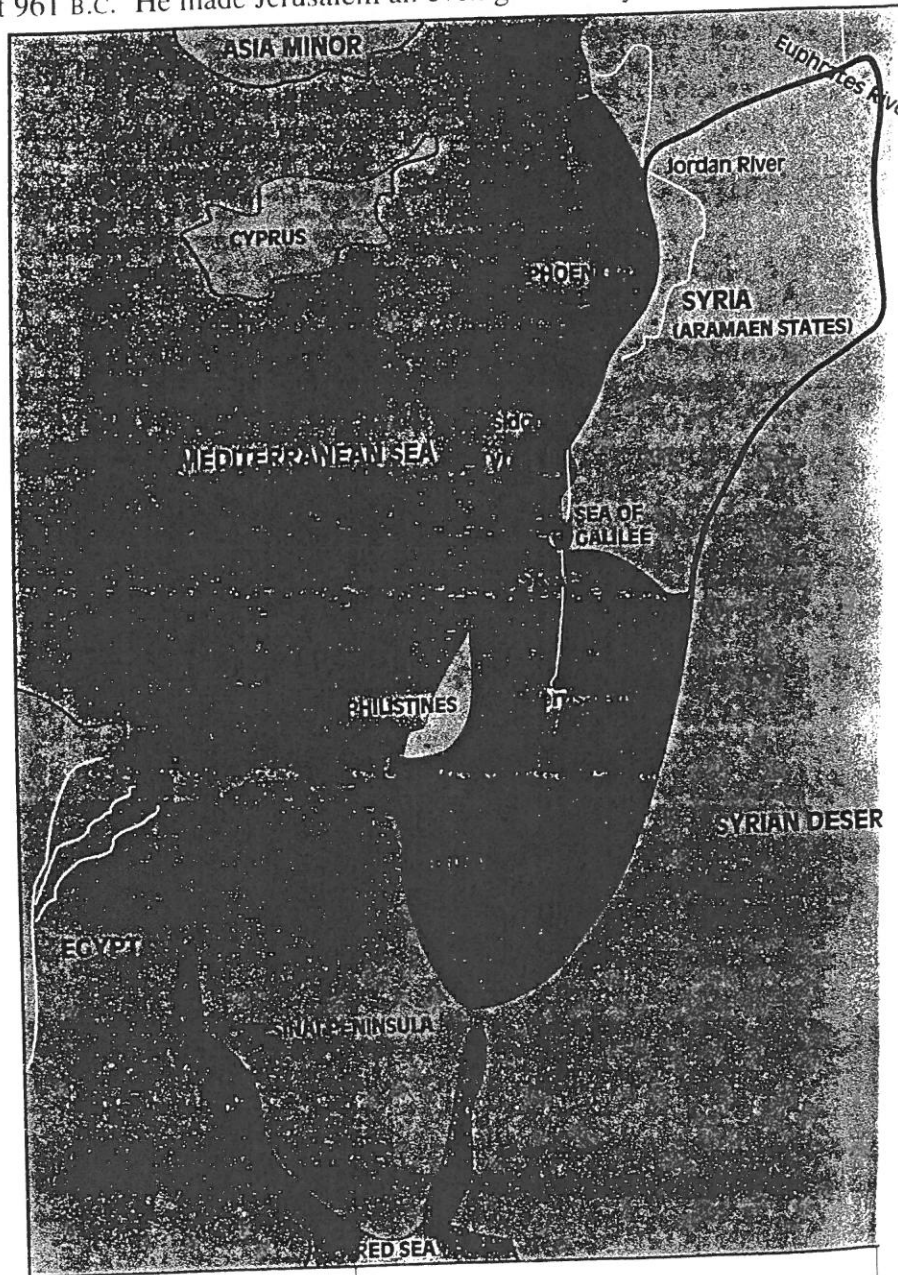
After arriving in Canaan, the Hebrews lived in tribes, or groups. There were 12 tribes that lived separately until they banded together to fight an enemy invader. The leader who brought the tribes together was **Saul**. He defeated the Philistines and was named the first king. During the battle with the Philistines, a man named **David** killed **Goliath**, the powerful Philistine leader. This made David a hero, and he became king around 1000 B.C., after the death of Saul. David built Israel into the greatest power in the area. He named Jerusalem the capital. Jerusalem is also known as the City of David, and it has become one of the most influential cities of all time.

David's son **Solomon** became king about 961 B.C. He made Jerusalem an even greater city, building many monuments and palaces, including the magnificent **Temple of Jerusalem**. Both David and Solomon put heavy taxes on their people to pay for these buildings and to keep a large army. People began to resent the taxes. After Solomon's death, the citizens began to separate into tribes again, and eventually the north and south split. The northern Hebrews called their land the kingdom of **Israel**. The southern Hebrews called theirs the kingdom of **Judah**.

The Hebrews' religion is known as **Judaism**. They were unusual in that they worshiped only one God. This belief in one God later influenced Christianity as well as Islam, the religion of the Muslims.

The story of the ancient Hebrews (also called Israelites), along with their beliefs and prayers, is told in the Bible. According to the Bible, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, the foundation of Judaism. These new religious rules set standards for goodness and moral behavior.

The Hebrews and Phoenicians shared a narrow strip of land along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.



Accomplishments of the Hebrews

- 1 They believed in a single all-powerful God.
- 2 They recorded the Bible.
- 3 Their high moral behavior, founded on the Ten Commandments, set new standards.
- 4 Their prophets fought for justice for the poor and weak.

The Phoenicians

The Phoenicians lived in small city-states along the Mediterranean coast, in present-day Lebanon, from about 1200 to 800 B.C. Tyre and Sidon were their chief cities. The Phoenicians were the most famous traders of the ancient world. They turned to trade because they had little land to farm. They were skilled shipbuilders and master sailors, becoming one of the first people to sail at night by the stars. The Phoenicians were also explorers. They sailed across the Mediterranean and built colonies such as Carthage in North Africa.

Many Phoenicians became wealthy. They controlled trade throughout the Mediterranean area for nearly 300 years. They traded their wool, papyrus, ivory, and glass for goods they needed. One of the products the Phoenicians were most known for was a vivid purple dye made from tiny shells. It was so expensive to make that only very wealthy people could buy purple cloth. It became the favorite color of royalty.

Accomplishments of the Phoenicians

- 1 They invented an alphabet. In order to keep business records of their trade, the Phoenicians developed a system of writing. The Phoenician alphabet contained 22 letters and, unlike cuneiform and hieroglyphics, the letters represented the sounds of the human voice. This made it much easier to read and write. Because the Phoenicians traveled so much, they spread the use of the alphabet to many places.
- 2 They developed artistic skills, such as carving ivory figures and making colored glass ornaments.
- 3 They traded all over the Mediterranean, spreading both their own goods and those of their trading partners.

The Persians

The Persians lived east of the Fertile Crescent on the plateau of Iran. They were warriors on horseback who came from central Asia. Their capital city was Persepolis. It was built by the *Achaemenid* family, who ruled the Persian Empire from 550 to 330 B.C. As rulers, the Persians were generous to the people they conquered.

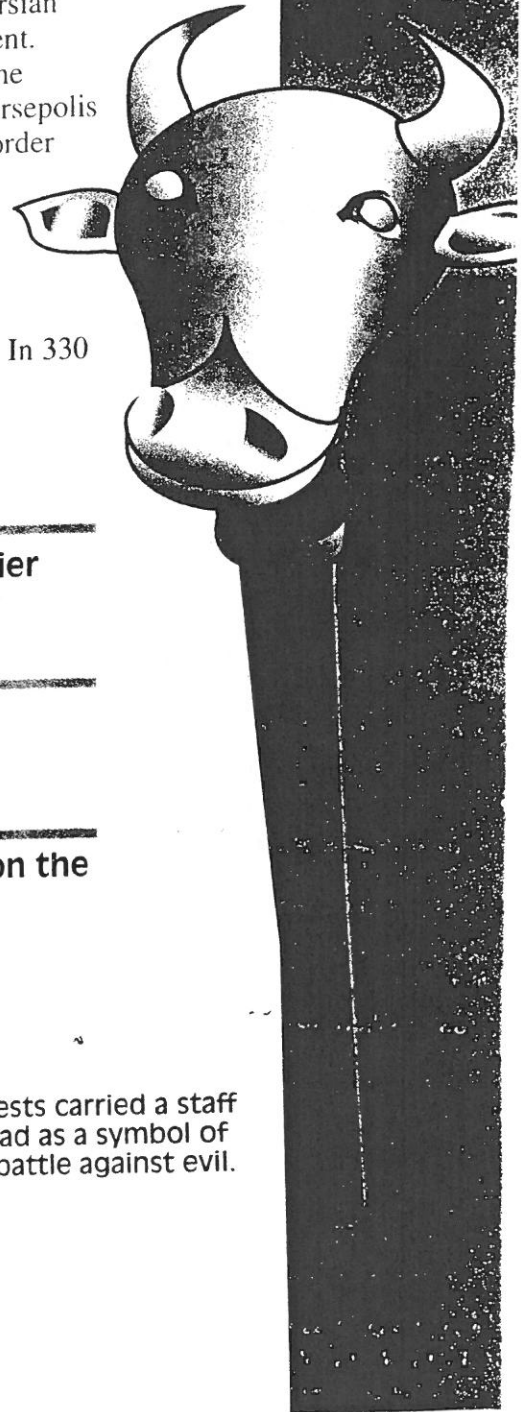
Cyrus the Great ruled from 559 to 530 B.C. and expanded the Persian Empire by conquering Asia Minor and eventually the Fertile Crescent. Under King *Darius I*, the empire was extended eastward as far as the Indus River in India. It was during his reign that the building of Persepolis began. He was often called *Darius the Great* because he restored order and made many improvements to the empire. Because the empire was so large, Darius divided it into 20 provinces, each ruled by an official called a *satrap*. The government built roads to improve trade and the movement of the army. It also built a canal that connected the Nile River to the Red Sea.

Persia fought several wars with the Greek city-states (see p. 15). In 330 B.C., Persia fell to the army of *Alexander the Great* (see p. 19).

Accomplishments of the Persians

- 1 They divided their empire into provinces for easier rule.
- 2 They built roads and canals.
- 3 They wrote the *Avesta*, a religious book based on the beliefs of the prophet Zoroaster.

Zoroastrian priests carried a staff with a bull's head as a symbol of their religious battle against evil.



The Hittites

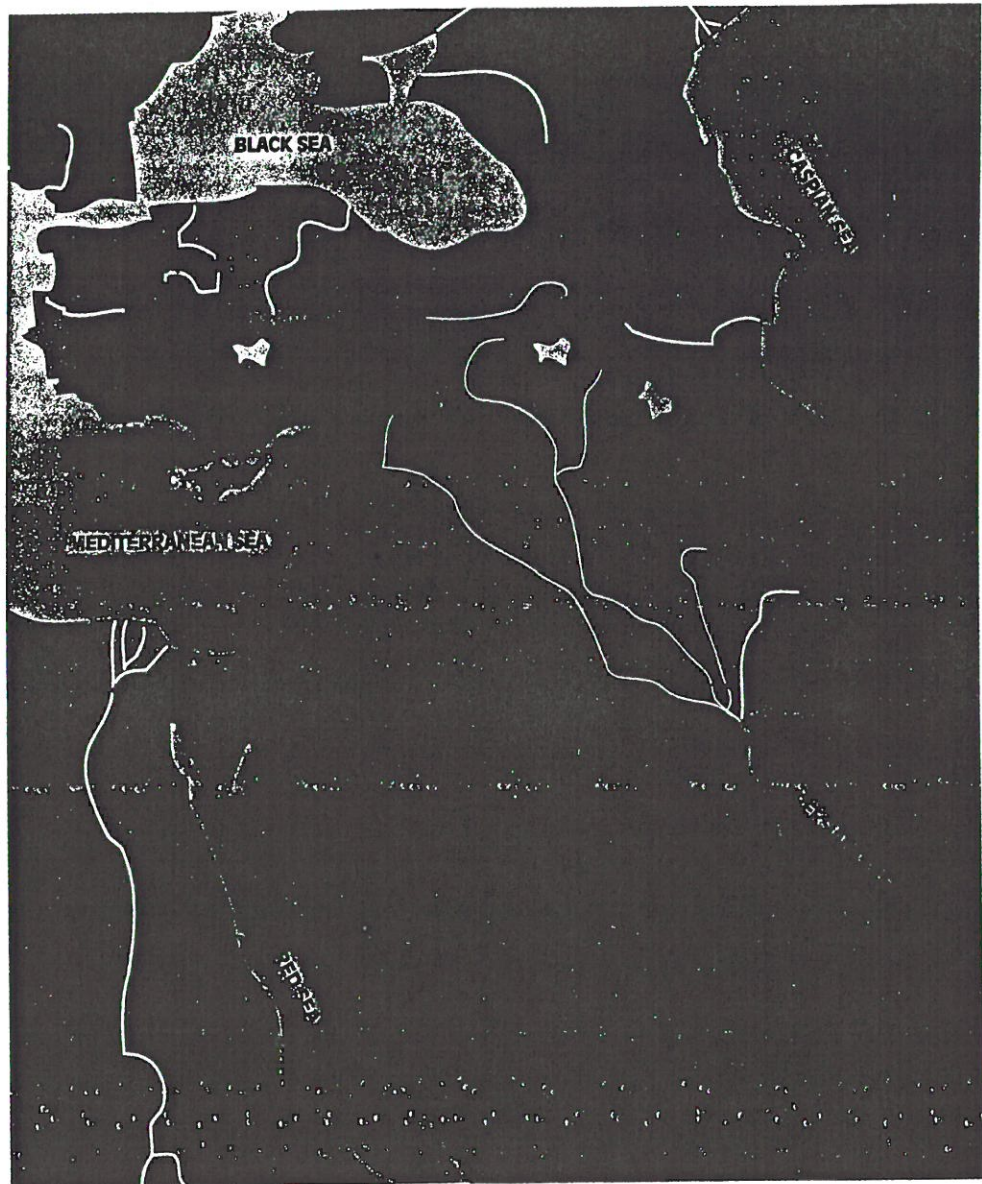
The Hittites lived in the mountains near modern Turkey. Their empire was established by 1750 B.C. and was known as *Hatti*. Its capital was *Hattusa*. Hattusa was 3,000 feet above sea level and surrounded by mountains as well as a stone wall up to 26 feet thick. The Hittites built a powerful empire that lasted about 550 years.

The Hittite rulers were the first to use a treaty to settle differences with other peoples. *King Hattusili III* and *King Ramses II* of Egypt signed a treaty in 1284 B.C. They agreed not to make war on each other, to help each other if attacked by a third party, and to respect each other's borders. It was one of the first treaties signed by two great empires.

Accomplishments of the Hittites

1 They were among the first people to use iron, which is easier to make than bronze. Before this, people used copper and bronze to make tools and weapons. This was one of the most important accomplishments of the ancient world.

2 They signed some of the first treaties.



The Hittite Empire covered much of Asia Minor in present-day Turkey.