Early Civilization in Afroeurasia
to 450 B.C.E.

With the development of agriculture and animal husbandry in the Neolithic period (ca. 7000–3000 B.C.E.), humans began to construct more complex societies that required systems of organization and communication. Around 3000 B.C.E., the Sumerians in Mesopotamia invented writing for administrative purposes. Early writing was cumbersome and limited to an elite group of scribes, but as writing became less complex, more people learned to read and write. Although literacy was still restricted to the priests and elite members of society, this larger audience prompted the recording of cultural, political, and religious documents such as myths, laws, scriptures, imperial propaganda, poems, and personal letters. Ancient Egyptians developed writing soon after the Sumerians, possibly after seeing how it was used in Mesopotamia. All successive civilizations in the Near East, such as the Hebrews, Assyrians, and Phoenicians, followed with written forms of their own languages.

From The Epic of Gilgamesh
ca. 2700–2500 B.C.E.

The exact composition date of The Epic of Gilgamesh is unknown, but the legendary king Gilgamesh probably ruled the city of Uruk around 2700 B.C.E. While the core of the poem had been written by 2000 B.C.E., each successive culture in Mesopotamia added to or altered elements of the story to incorporate their own myths. The epic recounts the friendship of Gilgamesh and the warrior Enkidu and their various adventures in Mesopotamia and

As Enkidu slept alone in his sickness, in bitterness of spirit he poured out his heart to his friend. "It was I who cut down the cedar, I who leveled the forest, I who slew Humbaba\(^2\) and now see what has become of me. Listen, my friend, this is the dream I dreamed last night. The heavens roared, and earth rumbled back an answer; between them stood I before an awful being, the somber-faced manbird; he had directed on me his purpose. His was a vampire face, his foot was a lion's foot, his hand was an eagle's talon. He fell on me and his claws were in my hair, he held me fast and I smothered; then he transformed me so that my arms became wings covered with feathers. He turned his stare towards me, and he led me away to the palace of Ikralla, the Queen of Darkness [Goddess of the underworld], to the house from which none who enters ever returns, down the road from which there is no coming back.

"There is the house whose people sit in darkness; dust is their food and clay their meat. They are clothed like birds with wings for covering, they see no light, they sit in darkness. I entered the house of dust and I saw the kings of the earth, their crowns put away forever; rulers and princes, all those who once wore kingly crowns and ruled the world in the days of old. They who had stood in the place of the gods like Anu [King of the gods] and Enlil,\(^3\) stood now like servants to fetch baked meats in the house of dust, to carry cooked meat and cold water from the waterskin. In the house of dust which I entered were high priests and acolytes, priests of the incantation and of ecstasy; there were servers of the temple, and there was Etana, that king of Kish\(^4\) whom the eagle carried to Heaven in the days of old. There was Ereshkigal the Queen of the Underworld; and Belit-Sheri squatted in front of her, she who is recorder of the gods and keeps the book of death. She held a tablet from which she read. She raised her head, and she spoke: 'Who has brought this one here?' Then I awoke like a

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\(^1\) cedar: He refers to a journey to Lebanon during which Gilgamesh and Enkidu cut down the cedar forest that Humbaba was appointed to guard.

\(^2\) Humbaba: A giant from Lebanon whom Gilgamesh and Enkidu killed.

\(^3\) Enlil: God of the sky who guided human affairs.

\(^4\) Kish: A Sumerian city. Etana wanted to obtain a magical plant from heaven that would allow him to father a son.
ate, she flew around, she cawed, and she did not come back. Then I threw everything open to the four winds, I made a sacrifice and poured out a libation [liquid offering] on the mountain top. Seven and again seven cauldrons I set up on their stands, I heaped up wood and cane and cedar and myrtle. When the gods smelled the sweet savour, they gathered like flies over the sacrifice. Then, at last, Ishtar [Goddess of love and war] also came, she lifted her necklace with the jewels of Heaven [rainbow] that once Anu had made to please her. O you gods here present, by the lapis lazuli round my neck I shall remember these days as I remember the jewels of my throat; these last days I shall not forget. Let all the gods gather round the sacrifice, except Enlil. He shall not approach this offering, for without reflection he brought the flood; he consigned my people to destruction.

"When Enlil had come, when he saw the boat, he was wrath and swelled with anger at the gods, the host of Heaven, 'Has any of these mortals escaped? Not one was to have survived the destruction.' Then the god of the wells and canals Ninurta opened his mouth and said to the warrior Enlil, 'Who is there of the gods that can devise without Ea? It is Ea alone who knows all things.' Then Ea opened his mouth and spoke to warrior Enlil, 'Wisest of gods, hero Enlil, how could you so senselessly bring down the flood?' ... It was not that I revealed the secret of the gods; the wise man learned it in a dream. Now take your counsel what shall be done with him.

"Then Enlil went up into the boat, he took me by the hand and my wife and made us enter the boat and kneel down on either side, he standing between us. He touched our foreheads to bless us saying, 'In time past Utnapishtim was a mortal man; henceforth he and his wife shall live in the distance at the mouth of the rivers.' Thus it was that the gods took me and placed me here to live in the distance, at the mouth of the rivers."

Utnapishtim said, "As for you, Gilgamesh, who will assemble the gods for your sake, so that you may find that life for which you are searching?"

[After telling his story, Utnapishtim challenges Gilgamesh to resist sleep for six days and seven nights. When Gilgamesh fails the test, Utnapishtim points out how preposterous it is to search for immortality when one cannot even resist sleep. Out of kindness, Utnapishtim does tell Gilgamesh where he can find a submarine plant that will at least rejuvenate him.

5like flies over the sacrifice: The gods were thought to consume the smoke of incense and animal offerings.
6lapis lazuli: A gemstone with a deep blue color often used in Egyptian jewelry.
Consequently, the hero dives to the bottom of the sea and plucks it. However, humanity is to be denied even the blessing of forestalling old age and decrepitude, because the plant is stolen from Gilgamesh by a serpent. His mission a failure, Gilgamesh returns to Uruk.

The destiny was fulfilled which the father of the gods, Enlil of the mountain, had decreed for Gilgamesh: “In nether-earth the darkness will show him a light: of mankind, all that are known, none will leave a monument for generations to come to compare with his. The heroes, the wise men, like the new moon have their waxing and waning. Men will say, ‘Who has ever ruled with might and with power like him?’ As in the dark month, the month of shadows, so without him there is no light. O Gilgamesh, this was the meaning of your dream. You were given the kingship, such was your destiny, everlasting life was not your destiny. Because of this do not be sad at heart, do not be grieved or oppressed; he has given you power to bind and to loose, to be the darkness and the light of mankind. He has given unexampled supremacy over the people, victory in battle from which no fugitive returns, in forays and assaults from which there is no going back. But do not abuse this power, deal justly with your servants in the palace, deal justly before the face of the Sun.”

Gilgamesh, the son of Ninsun, lies in the tomb. At the place of offerings he weighed the bread-offering, at the place of libation he poured out the wine. In those days the lord Gilgamesh departed, the son of Ninsun, the king, peerless, without an equal among men, who did not neglect Enlil his master. O Gilgamesh, lord of Kullab [in Uruk], great is thy praise.

**READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How does this passage describe the afterlife?
2. How are the gods characterized in this passage? What is the gods' attitude toward mortals?
3. Would you describe *The Epic of Gilgamesh* as pessimistic or optimistic? Why?

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**The Egyptian Book of the Dead:**

The Egyptian Book of the Dead consists of spells, prayers, and rituals that were necessary for a successful transition to the afterlife. Illustrated quotations from the book discovered inside ornate tombs were placed so that the dead could consult important passages during their trying ordeal. Many other examples have been discovered written on papyrus with the dead person's name inserted into the text. The following passage from the Book of the Dead contains the formula that an Egyptian must recite in order to enter the afterlife.

To be said on reaching the Hall of the Two Truths [Hall of Judgment]
so as to purge [name] of any sins committed and to see the face of every god:

Hail to you, great God, Lord of the Two Truths!
I have come to you, my Lord,
I was brought to see your beauty.
I know you, I know the names of the forty-two gods
Who are with you in the Hall of the Two Truths,
Who live by warding off evildoers,
Who drink of their blood,
On that day of judging characters before Wennofer,
Lo, your name is "He-of-Two-Daughters," (And) "He-of-Ma'at's Two-Eyes."


7 [name]: This is where the dead would have inserted their name in the formula.
8 Lord of the Two Truths: Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, who weighed the souls of the dead (thought to live in the heart) against the feather of the goddess Ma'at. Those with hearts as light as the feather were permitted to go on to the afterlife; hearts made heavy by sin were devoured by a demon.
9 I know . . . the forty-two gods: The dead had to recite the names and descriptions of the forty-two gods.
10 Wennofer: Osiris, god of the underworld.
11 Ma'at: The goddess who symbolized divine order, truth, and justice.
Lo, I come before you,
Bringing Maat to you,
Having repelled evil for you.
I have not done crimes against people,
I have not mistreated cattle,
I have not sinned in the Place of Truth,12
I have not known what should not be known,
I have not done any harm.
I did not begin a day by exacting more than my due,
My name did not reach the bark of the mighty ruler.
I have not blasphemed a god,
I have not robbed the poor.
I have not done what the god abhors,
I have not maligned a servant to his master.
I have not caused pain,
I have not caused tears.
I have not killed,
I have not ordered to kill,
I have not made anyone suffer.
I have not damaged the offerings in the temples,
I have not depleted the loaves of the gods,
I have not stolen the cakes of the dead.
I have not copulated nor defiled myself.
I have not increased nor reduced the measure,
I have not diminished the arura,13
I have not cheated in the fields.
I have not added to the weight of the balance,
I have not falsified the plummet of the scales.
I have not taken milk from the mouth of children,
I have not deprived cattle of their pasture.
I have not snared birds in the reeds of the gods,
I have not caught fish in their ponds.
I have not held back water in its season,
I have not dammed a flowing stream,
I have not quenched a needed fire.
I have not neglected the days of meat offerings,
I have not detained cattle belonging to the god,
I have not stopped a god in his procession.
I am pure, I am pure, I am pure, I am pure! . . .

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What actions could prevent someone from entering the afterlife? What does this imply about how people should live their lives?
2. A number of the prohibitions mention the Egyptian gods. What role did the gods play in mortals' lives? How were mortals supposed to treat them?
3. What information about agricultural life in ancient Egypt can be found in this passage?

HAMMURABI

Hammurabi's Code: The State Regulates Health Care
ca. 1800 B.C.E.

Among Hammurabi of Babylon's many accomplishments were the unification of Mesopotamia under Babylonian rule, the establishment of the supremacy of the Babylonian god Marduk, and the composition of a law code. Although Hammurabi's code is not the first known law code, it is the earliest one to survive largely intact. The code deals with the family, commercial activities, and agricultural life, providing valuable insight into Babylonian society. The following selections, which deal with medical practices, are typical of the laws in the code and exemplify the brutal nature of Babylonian justice often characterized by the phrase "an eye for an eye."

215. If a physician performed a major operation on a freeman with a bronze lancet and has saved the freeman's life, or he opened up the

12 the Place of Truth: The Valley of the Kings in which the pharaohs were buried.
13 arura: Unit of land measurement equal to the amount of land an ox could plow in one day.
eye-socket of a freeman with a bronze lancet and has saved the freeman's eye, he shall receive ten shekels [coins] of silver.

216. If it was a commoner, he shall receive five shekels of silver.

217. If it was a freeman's slave, the owner of the slave shall give two shekels of silver to the physician.

218. If a physician performed a major operation on a freeman with a bronze lancet and has caused the freeman's death, or he opened up the eye-socket of a freeman and has destroyed the freeman's eye, they shall cut off his hand.

219. If a physician performed a major operation on a commoner's slave with a bronze lancet and has caused his death, he shall make good slave for slave.

220. If he opened up [the slave's] eye-socket with a bronze lancet and has destroyed his eye, he shall pay half its value in silver.

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What different social classes does this passage define? How does justice differ for these various classes?

2. Do you think these laws would encourage the growth of the medical profession? Why or why not?

NEBMARE-NAKHT

Advice to Ambitious Young Egyptians from a Royal Scribe

ca. 1350-1200 B.C.E.

The Egyptians used the fiber of a plant from the Nile to make sheets of papyrus, on which they recorded both important religious and official texts and personal letters. Egypt's dry climate prevented the disintegration of papyri and preserved a great deal of information about everyday life. The following passage was originally written to encourage a young scribe to continue working at his profession. The surviving examples of this text are likely exercises copied by students as they contain frequent spelling and grammatical mistakes. The errors might indicate the difficulty of the training, and why the young scribe in this passage was ignoring his studies.

1. Title

[Beginning of the instruction in letter-writing made by the royal scribe and chief overseer of the cattle of Amen-Re, King of Gods, Nebmare-nakht] for his apprentice, the scribe Wenemdiutum.

2. Praise of the Scribe's Profession

[The royal scribe and chief overseer of the cattle of Amen-Re, King of Gods, Nebmare-nakht speaks to the scribe Wenemdiutum]. [Apply yourself to this] noble profession. "Follower of Thoth" [God of wisdom] is the good name of him who exercises it. He makes friends with those greater than he. Joyful. Write with your hand, read with your mouth. Act according to my words. —, my heart is not disgusted. — to my instructing you. You will find it useful. — [with bread and] beer. You will be advanced by your superiors. You will be sent on a mission. Love writing, shun dancing; then you become a worthy official. Do not long for the marsh ticket. Turn your back on throw stick and chase. By day write with your fingers, recite by night. Befriend the scroll, the palette. It pleases more than wine. Writing for him who knows it is better than all other professions. It pleases more than bread and beer, more than clothing and ointment. It is worth more than an inheritance in Egypt, than a tomb in the west.

3. Advice to the Unwilling Pupil

Young fellow, how conceited you are! You do not listen when I speak. Your heart is denser than a great obelisk, a hundred cubits[4] high, ten cubits thick. When it is finished and ready for loading, many work gangs draw it. It hears the words of men; it is loaded on a barge. Departing from Yebu [in Upper Egypt] it is conveyed, until it comes to rest on its place in Thebes [the capital of Egypt].

[4] A hundred cubits. A cubit was a unit of measurement equal to the length of a forearm.
So also a cow is bought this year, and it plows the following year. It learns to listen to the herdsman; it only lacks words. Horses brought from the field, they forget their mothers. Yoked they go up and down on all his majesty's errands. They become like those that bore them, that stand in the stable. They do their utmost for fear of a beating.

But though I beat you with every kind of stick, you do not listen. If I knew another way of doing it, I would do it for you, that you might listen. You are a person fit for writing, though you have not yet known a woman. Your heart discerns, your fingers are skilled, your mouth is apt for reciting.

Writing is more enjoyable than enjoying a basket of— and beans; more enjoyable than a mother's giving birth, when her heart knows no distaste. She is constant in nursing her son; her breast is in his mouth every day. Happy is the heart of him who writes; he is young each day.

5. ALL OCCUPATIONS ARE BAD EXCEPT THAT OF THE Scribe

See for yourself with your own eye. The occupations lie before you.

The washerman’s day is going up, going down. All his limbs are weak, (from) whitening his neighbors’ clothes every day, from washing their linen.

The maker of pots is smeared with soil, like one whose relations have died. His hands, his feet are full of clay; he is like one who lives in the bog.

The cobler mingle with vats. His odor is penetrating. His hands are red with madder, like one who is smeared with blood. He looks behind him for the kite, like one whose flesh is exposed.

The watchman prepares garlands and polishes vasestands. He spends a night of toil just as one on whom the sun shines.

The merchants travel downstream and upstream. They are as busy as can be, carrying goods from one town to another. They supply him who has wants. But the tax collectors carry off the gold, that most precious of metals.

The ships’ crews from every house (of commerce), they receive their loads. They depart from Egypt for Syria, and each man’s god is with him. (But) not one of them says: “We shall see Egypt again!”

The carpenter who is in the shipyard carries the timber and stacks it. If he gives today the output of yesterday, woe to his limbs! The shipwright stands behind him to tell him evil things.

His outsweer who is in the fields, his is the toughest of all the jobs. He spends the day loaded with his tools, tied to his tool-box. When he returns home at night, he is loaded with the tool-box and the timbers, his drinking mug, and his whalestones.

The scribe, he alone, records the output of all of them. Take note of it!

6. THE MISFORTUNES OF THE Peasant

Let me also expound to you the situation of the peasant, that other tough occupation. [Comes] the inundation and soaks him—, he attends to his equipment. By day he cuts his farming tools; by night he twists rope. Even his midday hour he spends on farm labor. He equips himself to go to the field as if he were a warrior. The dried field lies before him; he goes out to get his team. When he has been after the herdsman for many days, he gets his team and comes back with it. He makes for it a place in the field. Comes dawn, he goes to make a start and does not find it in its place. He spends three days searching for it; he finds it in the bog. He finds no hides on them; the jackals have chewed them. He comes out, his garment in his hand, to beg for himself a team.

When he reaches his field he finds (it) [broken up]. He spends time cultivating, and the snake is after him. It finishes off the seed as it is cast to the ground. He does not see a green blade. He does three plowings with borrowed grain. His wife has gone down to the merchants and found nothing for [barter.] Now the scribe lands on the shore. He surveys the harvests. Attendants are behind him with staffs, Nubians with clubs. One says (to him): “Give grain.” “There is none.” He is beaten savagely. He is bound, thrown in the well, submerged head down. His wife is bound in his presence. His children are in fetters. His neighbors abandon them and flee. When it's over, there's no grain.

If you have any sense, be a scribe. If you have learned about the peasant, you will not be able to be one. Take note of it! ...

8. THE Scribe DOES NOT SUFFER LIKE THE SOLDier

Furthermore. Look, I instruct you to make you sound; to make you hold the palette freely. To make you become one whom the king trusts; to make you gain entrance to treasury and granary. To make you receive the shipload at the gate of the granary. To make you issue the offerings on feast days. You are dressed in fine clothes; you own horses. Your boat is on the river; you are supplied with attendants. You stride about inspecting. A mansion is built in your town. You have a powerful office, given you by the king. Male and female slaves are about you. Those who are in the fields grasp your hand, on plots that you have made. Look, I make you into a staff of life! Put the writings in your heart, and you will be protected from all kinds of toil. You will become a worthy official.

Do you not recall the (fate of) the unskilled man? His name is not known. He is ever burdened (like an ass carrying) in front of the scribe who knows what he is about.
Come, (let me tell) you the woes of the soldier, and how many are his superiors: the general, the troop commander, the officer who leads, the standard-bearer, the lieutenant, the scribe, the commander of fifty, and the garrison-captain. They go in and out in the halls of the palace, saying: "Get laborers!" He is awakened at any hour. One is after him as (after) a donkey. He toils until the Aten [sun] sets in his darkness of night. He is hungry, his belly hurts; he is dead while yet alive. When he receives the grain-ration, having been released from duty, it is not good for grinding.

He is called up for Syria. He may not rest. There are no clothes, no sandals. The weapons of war are assembled at the fortress of Sile. His march is uphill through mountains. He drinks water every third day; it is smelly and tastes of salt. His body is ravaged by illness. The enemy comes, surrounds him with missiles, and life recedes from him. He is told: "Quick, forward, valiant soldier! Win for yourself a good name!" He does not know what he is about. His body is weak, his legs fail him. When victory is won, the captives are handed over to his majesty, to be taken to Egypt. The foreign woman faints on the march; she hangs herself (on) the soldier’s neck. His knapsack drops, another grabs it while he is burdened with the woman. His wife and children are in their village; he dies and does not reach it. If he comes out alive, he is worn out from marching. Be he at large, be he detained, the soldier suffers. If he leaps and joins the deserters, all his people are imprisoned. He dies on the edge of the desert, and there is none to perpetuate his name. He suffers in death as in life. A big sack is brought for him; he does not know his resting place.

Be a scribe, and be spared from soldiering! You call and one says: "Here I am." You are safe from torments. Everyone seeks to raise himself up. Take note of it!

4. Although the passage implies that being a scribe was better than other occupations, the teacher still had to encourage his pupil. Why might the life of a scribe be unattractive?

**DOCUMENT 1-5**

**Hymn to the Nile**

ca. 1350–1100 B.C.E.

Ancient Egypt, unlike Mesopotamia, shared a unified political structure, religious beliefs, and culture for most of its history. Around 3100 B.C.E., King Narmer-Menes unified the two separate kingdoms of Egypt: Lower Egypt, the delta land where the Nile emptied into the Mediterranean, and Upper Egypt, a narrow strip of land that the Nile watered as it ran north through the desert. The economy of the ancient Egyptians depended entirely on the success of crops and trade along the river and they worshipped the river as a god. As this hymn extols the river’s virtues, it becomes a catalogue of daily life in Egypt.

**WORSHIP OF THE NILE**

Hail to thee, O Nile, that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive! Hidden in his form of appearance, a darkness by day, to whom minstrels have sung. He that waters the meadows which Re created, in order to keep every kid alive. He that makes to drink the desert and the place distant from water: that is his dew coming down (from) heaven. The beloved of Geb [God of the earth], the one who controls Nepri [God of grain], and the one who makes the craftsmanship of Ptah to flourish.

The lord of fishes, he who makes the marsh-birds to go upstream. There are no birds which come down because of the hot winds. He who makes barley and brings emmer [wheat] into being, that he may make the temples festive. If he is sluggish; ... the nostrils are stopped up, and everybody is poor. If there be (thus) a cutting down in the food-offerings of the

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15 Syria: During the New Kingdom (1570–1075 B.C.E.), Egyptian power extended into the Near East.

16 Ptah: God of creation who was associated with inundated fields.
gods, then a million men perish among mortals, covetousness is practiced, the entire land is in a fury, and great and small are on the execution-block. (But) people are different when he approaches. Khnum\textsuperscript{17} constructed him. When he rises, then the land is in jubilation, then every belly is in joy, every backbone takes on laughter, and every tooth is exposed.

The bringer of food, rich in provisions, creator of all good, lord of majesty, sweet of fragrance. What is in him is satisfaction. He who brings grass into being for the cattle and (thus) gives ... sacrifice to every god, whether he be in the underworld, heaven, or earth, he who is under his authority. He who takes in possession the Two Lands [Upper and Lower Egypt], fills the magazines,\textsuperscript{18} makes the granaries wide, and gives things (to) the poor.

He who makes every beloved tree to grow, without lack of them. He who brings a ship into being by his strength, without hewing in stone. The enduring image with the White Crown.\textsuperscript{19} He cannot be seen; (he has) no taxes; he has no levies; no one can read of the mystery; no one knows the place where he is; he cannot be found by the power of writing. (He has) no shrines; he has no portion. He has no service of (his) desire. (But) generations of thy children jubilate for thee, and men give thee greeting as a king, stable of laws, coming forth (at) his season and filling Upper and Lower Egypt. ... (Whenever) water is drunk, every eye is in him, who gives an excess of his good.

He who was sorrowful is come forth gay. ... Vomiting forth and making the field to drink. Anointing the whole land. Making one man rich and laying another, (but) there is no coming to trial with him, who makes satisfaction without being thwarted, for whom no boundaries are made.

A maker of light when issuing from darkness, a fat for his cattle. His limits are all that is created. There is no district which can live without him. Men are clothed ... with flax from his meadows, for (he) made Hedjhotep [Goddess of weaving] for his service. (He) made anointing with his unguments, being the associate of Ptah in his nature, bringing into being all service in him, all writings and divine words, his responsibility in Lower Egypt.

Entering into the underworld and coming forth above, loving to come forth as a mystery. If thou art (too) heavy (to rise), the people are few, and one begs for the water of the year. (Then) the rich man looks like him who is worried, and every man is seen (to be) carrying his weapons. This is no companion backing up a companion. There are no garments for clothing; there are no ornaments for the children of nobles. There is no listening at night, that one may answer with coolness. There is no anointing for anybody.

He who establishes truth in the heart of men, for it is said: "Deceit comes after poverty." If one compares thee with the great green sea, which does not ... control the Grain-God, whom all the gods praise, there are no birds coming down from his desert. His hand does not beat with gold, with making ingots of silver. No one can eat genuine lapis lazuli. (But) barley is foremost and lasting.

Men began to sing to thee with the harp, and men sing to thee with the hand. The generations of thy children jubilate for thee. Men equip messengers for thee, who come (back) bearing treasures (to) ornament this land. He who makes a ship to prosper before mankind; he who sustains hearts in pregnant women; he who loves a multitude of all (kinds of) his cattle.

When thou risest in the city of the ruler, then men are satisfied with the goodly produce of the meadows. ... Oh for the little lotus-blossoms, everything that pours forth upon earth, all (kinds of) herbs in the hands of children! They have (even) forgotten how to eat. Good things are strewed about the houses. The land comes down frolicking.

When the Nile floods, offering is made to thee, oxen are sacrificed to thee, great oblations are made to thee, birds are fattened for thee, lions are hunted for thee in the desert, fire is provided for thee. And offering is made to every (other) god, as is done for the Nile, with prime incense, oxen, cattle, birds, and flame. The Nile has made his cavern in Thebes, and his name is no (longer) known in the underworld. Not a god will come forth in his form, if the plan is ignored.

O all men who uphold the Ennead, ... fear ye the majesty which his son, the All-Lord, has made, (by) making verdtant the two banks. So it is "Verdant art thou!" So it is "Verdant art thou!" So it is "O Nile, verdant art thou, who makest man and cattle to live!"

It has come to a good and successful end.

\textsuperscript{17} Khnum: God who was both the source of the Nile and creator of human bodies.
\textsuperscript{18} magazines: Stores for military equipment.
\textsuperscript{19} White Crown: The symbol of Upper Egypt worn by the pharaohs.

\section*{READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS}

1. In what ways did ancient Egyptians worship and describe the Nile?
2. What does the Nile provide for Egypt? What harm can the Nile cause?
3. Why did the gods honor the Nile? How does this affect your conception of the Egyptian deities?

4. What details about daily life in Egypt can you find in this passage?

Book of Exodus: Moses Descends Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments

ca. 950–450 B.C.E.

The book of Exodus, the second book of the Hebrew Torah and the Christian Old Testament, recounts the escape of the Hebrew people from captivity in Egypt and their forty-year journey through the desert to the “promised land,” modern-day Israel and Palestine. Although Moses, who led the Hebrew people, is traditionally thought to have written the Torah, modern scholars argue that the work was composed over many centuries. The following passage recounts the climactic event of the Exodus, when Moses received the Covenant from God. It establishes monotheism, the worship of only one God, as a tenet of the Hebrew religion.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was all on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them. And Moses said unto the Lord, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargest us, saying. Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. And the Lord said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them. So Moses, went down unto the people, and spake unto them.

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How should the followers of the Hebrew God live their lives in a way that is acceptable to Him? What actions are specifically prohibited?

2. What role does the Hebrew God play for His people? How should the Hebrew people act toward their God?

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ASHUR-NASIR-PAL II

An Assyrian Emperor’s Resume

ca. 875 B.C.E.

Ashur-Nasir-Pal II (r. 883–859 B.C.E.) was responsible for expanding the emerging Neo-Assyrian Empire west from northern Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean. His account of the expansion describes excessively bloody and violent conquests and the use of terror as a common tactic to control conquered regions. Ashur-Nasir-Pal II most likely began the Assyrian habit of deporting peoples from their homelands and spreading them throughout the empire in order to prevent rebellions. The following selection is an official account of Ashur-Nasir-Pal II’s campaigns in Mesopotamia.

YEAR 4: A THIRD CAMPAIGN AGAINST ZAMUA

In the eponymy of Limulti-adur,20 while I was staying in Nineveh, men brought me word that Ameka and Arashtua [Mesopotamian cities] had withheld the tribute and forced labor due unto Assur,21 my lord. At the word of Assur, the great lord, my lord, and of Nergal [God of war and the sun], my leader, on the first day of the month of Simanu22 I ordered a call

d to arms for the third time against the land of Zamua. I did not wait for my chariots and hosts; I departed from the city of Kakzi, the Lower Zab I crossed. I entered the pass of Babite, I crossed the Radamu, drawing nearer every day to the foot of Mount Simaki. Culture, sheep and wine, the tribute of the land of Daghara, I received. The — chariots and picked cavalry (men) I took with me, and all the night, until the dawn, I marched from (along) the foot of the mountain of Simaki. I crossed the Turnat, and with all haste to the city of Ammali, the stronghold of Arashtua, I drew near. With battle and assault I stormed the city, I took (it). 800 of their fighting men I struck down with the sword, with their corpses I filled the streets of their city, with their blood I dyed their houses. Many men I captured alive with my hand, and I carried off great spoil from them; the city I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire.

The city of Hudun and twenty cities of its neighborhood I captured; I slew the inhabitants thereof, their spoil, their cattle, and their sheep I carried off; their cities I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire; their young men and their maidens I burned in the flames. The city of Kisirtu, their stronghold, ruled by Sabini, together with ten cities of its neighborhood, I captured, I slew their inhabitants, their spoil I carried away. The cities of the Bareans, which were ruled by Kirtiara, and those of the men of Dera and of Bunisa, as far as the pass of Hashmar, I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire, I turned them into mounds and ruins. I departed from the cities of Arashtua, I entered the pass between the steep mountains of Lara and Bidi, which for the passage of chariots and hosts was not suited to Zamri, the royal city of Ameka of the land of Zamua, I drew near.

Ameka became afraid before my mighty weapons and my fierce battle array, and occupied a steep mountain. The goods of his palace and his chariot I carried away; from the city of Zamri I departed. I crossed the Lalle and marched to Mount Etini, a difficult region, which was not suited for the passage of chariots and armies, and unto which none among the kings, my fathers, had come nigh. The king, together with his armies, climbed up into Mount Etini. His goods and his possessions, many copper utensils, a copper wild-ox, vessels of copper, bowls of copper, cups of copper, the wealth of his palace, his heaped-up treasures, I carried out of the mountain, returned to my camp and spent the night. With the help of Assur and Shamash [God of justice], the gods, my helpers, I departed from that camp, and I set out after him. I crossed the Edir River and in the midst of the mighty mountains of Su and Elam I slew multitudes of them. His goods and his possessions, a copper wild-ox, vessels of copper, bowls of copper, dishes of copper, many copper utensils, tables which were overlaid

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20 eponymy of Limulti-adur: In the Assyrian calendar the names of an elected official called "limmu" were used to name the year. The name Limulti-adur does not survive in any of the Assyrian lists, but this year probably corresponds to 879 B.C.E.

21 Assur: Chief god of the Assyrians.

22 Simanu: May or June in the modern calendar.
with gold, their cattle and their flocks, their possessions, their heavy spoil, from the foot of Mount Elaniu I carried off. I took his horse from him. Ameka, to save his life, climbed up into Mount Sabua.

The cities of Zamri, Arasitiku, Ammaru, Parsindu, Iritu, and Suritu, his strongholds, together with 150 cities which lay round about, I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire, into mounds and ruin heaps I turned them. While I was staying before the city of Parsindu, I placed in reserve the cavalry and pioneers. Fifty of Ameka’s warriors I slew in the field, I cut off their heads and bound them to the trunk trunks within his palace court. Twenty men I captured alive and I immured them in the wall of his palace. From the city of Zamri I took with me the cavalry and pioneers, and marched against the cities of Ata, of Arzuzu, unto which none among the kings my fathers had come nigh. The cities of Arzizu and Arsindu, his strongholds, together with ten cities which lay round about on the steep mountain of Nispi, I captured. I slew the inhabitants thereof; the cities I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire, and returned to my camp.

At that time I received copper, tablli of copper, and rings of copper, and many shariahe from the land of Sipirmena who(se inhabitants) speak like women.

From the city of Zamri I departed and into the difficult mountain of Lara, which was not suited for the passage of chariots and armies, with hatchets of iron I cut and with axes of bronze I hewed (a way), and I brought over the chariots and troops and came down to the city of Tukulti-Assur-asbat, which the men of the land of Lullu call Arakdi. All the kings of the land of Zamua were affrighted before the fury of my arms and the terror of my dominion, and embraced my feet. Tribute and tax, — silver, gold, lead, copper, vessels of copper, garments of brightly colored wool, horses, cattle, sheep, and wine I laid upon them (in greater measure) than before and used their forced laborers in the city of Calah. While I was staying in the land of Zamua, the men of the cities Huduni, Hartishi, Hubushkia and Gilzani were overwhelmed with the terrifying splendors of Assur, my lord, and they brought me tribute and tax, — silver, gold, horses, garments of brightly colored wool, cattle, flocks, and wine. The people, such as had fled from before my arms, climbed up into the mountains. I pursued them. Between the mountains of Aziru and Simaki they had settled themselves, and had made the city of Mesu their stronghold. Mount Aziru I destroyed, I devastated, and from the midst of Mount Simaki as far as the river Turnat I strewed their corpses. 500 of their warriors I slew and carried off their heavy spoil, the cities I burned with fire.

At that time, in the land of Zamua, the city of Atilila, which for the scepter of the king of Karduniash they had seized, had decayed and had become a mound and ruin heap. Assur-Nasir-Pal restored it. I surrounded it with a wall, and I erected therein a palace for my royal dwelling. I adorned it and made it glorious and greater than it was before. Grain and straw from the whole land I heaped up within it, and I called its name Der-Assur.

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Ashur-Nasir-Pal II describe his victories? What aspects of the story might he have exaggerated to make them seem more impressive?

2. Why would Ashur-Nasir-Pal II want to publicize his conquests? What does this say about him as a leader?

COMPARATIVE QUESTIONS

1. How are the prohibitions contained within the Egyptian Book of the Dead similar to or different from those in the Hebrew book of Exodus?

2. The passages in this chapter illustrate various ways in which humans relate to their gods. How do the Sumerian, Egyptian, and Hebrew people differ in this respect?

3. How does the life of a soldier described by Nebmare-nakht compare to the account of war by Ashur-Nasir-Pal II?

4. What differences can you discern between the everyday life and religious beliefs of Mesopotamians and those of Egyptians? What might account for those differences?

21 pioneers: Soldiers trained in siege warfare.