

Chapter 7: New Civilizations and Empires in Western and Central Asia Chapter Introduction

Book Title: World Civilizations

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## Chapter Introduction

*The Lord our God made a covenant, not only with our fathers, but with all of us living today... The Lord said, "I am the Lord your God ... Worship no God but me."*

—*The Bible*

### **Assyrian Attack on Lachish, c. 700-692 B.C.E.**

The Assyrians mobilized what was perhaps the most efficient fighting machine before that of Alexander the Great. Their assault on Palestine resulted in the wholesale forced emigration of the ten northern (so-called lost) Israelite tribes to Mesopotamia and their disappearance from history. The Assyrians had a genius for engineering, especially when applied to siege warfare. Note the use of siege machines in the relief.



World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

## Chronology

<b>1900s B.C.E.</b>	Hebrews leave Mesopotamia
<b>c. 1250 B.C.E.</b>	Hebrew exodus from Egypt
<b>c. 1000 B.C.E.</b>	Hebrew Kingdom established; Phoenicians develop early alphabet
<b>c. 800 B.C.E.</b>	Assyrian Empire expands; Carthage founded by Phoenicians
<b>722 B.C.E.</b>	Assyrians conquer Samaria
<b>612 B.C.E.</b>	Fall of Nineveh/End of Assyrian Empire
<b>500s B.C.E.</b>	Establishment and expansion of Persian Empire
<b>586–539 B.C.E.</b>	Babylonian Captivity of the Jews

The Near East, that area between the Nile Valley and the western borders of Iran, was from the earliest times a region of cultural overlap and interchange. First one people and then another would take command of a portion of the region for a century or more, only to fall under the sway of the next onslaught of newcomers. Petty states and kingdoms arose whose names are sometimes forgotten but whose contributions to the ascent of civilization in this region were collectively impressive. In this chapter we investigate three of the most important of these: it provides a brief look at the transitory glory of Assyria and Phoenicia, and a more detailed consideration of the much larger and longer-lived monarchy of Persia. Then we review the history of the [Hebrews \(The followers of Abraham, Isaac, and Moses who settled in the land of Canaan and who were governed by God's laws, the \*Tanakh\*; more commonly known as the Jews.\)](#), a people whose historic achievement lay in their gradual working out of a unique vision of the nature of the Divinity and the relationship of God and humans—a vision that passed on into the very heart of Western civilization.

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