

Small Kingdoms and Mighty Empires in the Near East



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- I. Recovery and Diffusion
 - A. As the great empires collapsed, their cultures diffused through the small kingdoms on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean.
 - II. A Shattered Egypt and a Rising Phoenicia
 - A. Invaders from Africa and the Near East shattered the power of Egypt and the Hittites.
 - 1. Long wars weakened Egypt, causing political and economic chaos.
 - 2. Nubians extended power northward.
 - 3. Kingdom of Kush grew up in the area of modern Sudan.
 - 4. Egyptian ideas and beliefs made their way, through Palestine and Syria, to Europe.
 - B. A cluster of smaller kingdoms evolved: Phoenicians, Syrians, Hebrews.
 - C. The Phoenicians were traders, experts in metalworking, textile manufacturers, and inventors of the phonetic alphabet from which our own is derived.
 - III. The Children of Israel
 - A. South of Phoenicia arose the small kingdom of the ancient Jews.
 - 1. Origin of the Hebrews is uncertain.
 - 2. Hebrews came to Palestine through the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt.
 - B. Political stability was established by the kings Saul, David, and Solomon.
 - 1. Saul warred against the Philistines and established a monarchy over the twelve tribes.
 - 2. David carried on Saul's work.
 - a. Captured and fortified the city of Jerusalem.
 - b. Made Jerusalem the political and religious center.
 - 3. Solomon organized the collective tribes into twelve territorial districts.
 - a. Temple at Jerusalem was part of his overall building program.
 - b. Dedicated temple and made it the home of the Ark of the Covenant.
 - 4. Hebrews broke into two political halves on Solomon's death.

- a. Northern kingdom (Israel) destroyed by Assyrians (eighth century B.C.).
 - b. Southern kingdom defeated by Babylonians in 587 B.C.
 - c. Cyrus the Great of Persia permitted exiles to return to Jerusalem.
 - C. Jewish Religion
 - 1. Old Testament was the key sacred writing.
 - 2. The Covenant was a kind of contract between Yahweh and the Hebrews.
 - 3. Yahweh was the Jews' only god (monotheism).
 - 4. Ten Commandments
 - a. The Torah, or Mosaic Law, was very harsh.
 - b. Later custom and law were more humanitarian.
- IV. Assyria, the Military Monarchy
 - A. Many Near Eastern kingdoms fell to Tiglath-Pileser III (774–727 B.C.) and Sargon II (721–705 B.C.).
 - B. Assyria's success was due to sophisticated military organization.
 - 1. The Assyrians developed a wide variety of siege machinery and sapping techniques for attacking fortifications.
 - 2. Assyrian art, in particular the sculptures and sculpted friezes, influenced Persian, and thus, Western art.
- V. The Empire of the Persian Kings
 - A. Persians (or Iranians) were Indo-European nomads, like the Aryans who conquered India in the second millennium B.C. They arrived in present-day Iran around 1000 B.C.
 - B. The Persian ruler Cyrus the Great (r. 559-530 B.C.) created the largest empire yet to exist in the Near East.
 - 1. Cyrus had an enlightened view of empire, practiced religious tolerance, and allowed the subject peoples of his empire great autonomy.
 - 2. The Persian Emperor Darius (r. 521-486 B.C.) adopted the Zoroastrian religion.
 - 3. Zoroaster preached a new concept of divinity and human life.
 - 4. He described the cosmos as a battle between opposing forces of good and evil, represented by the gods Ahuramazda and Ahriman.
 - 5. He taught that individuals must decide whether to choose Ahuramazda or Ahriman.
 - 6. Zoroaster preached a Last Judgment.
 - 7. Zoroastrian thought influenced Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.