



THE ANCIENT WORLD

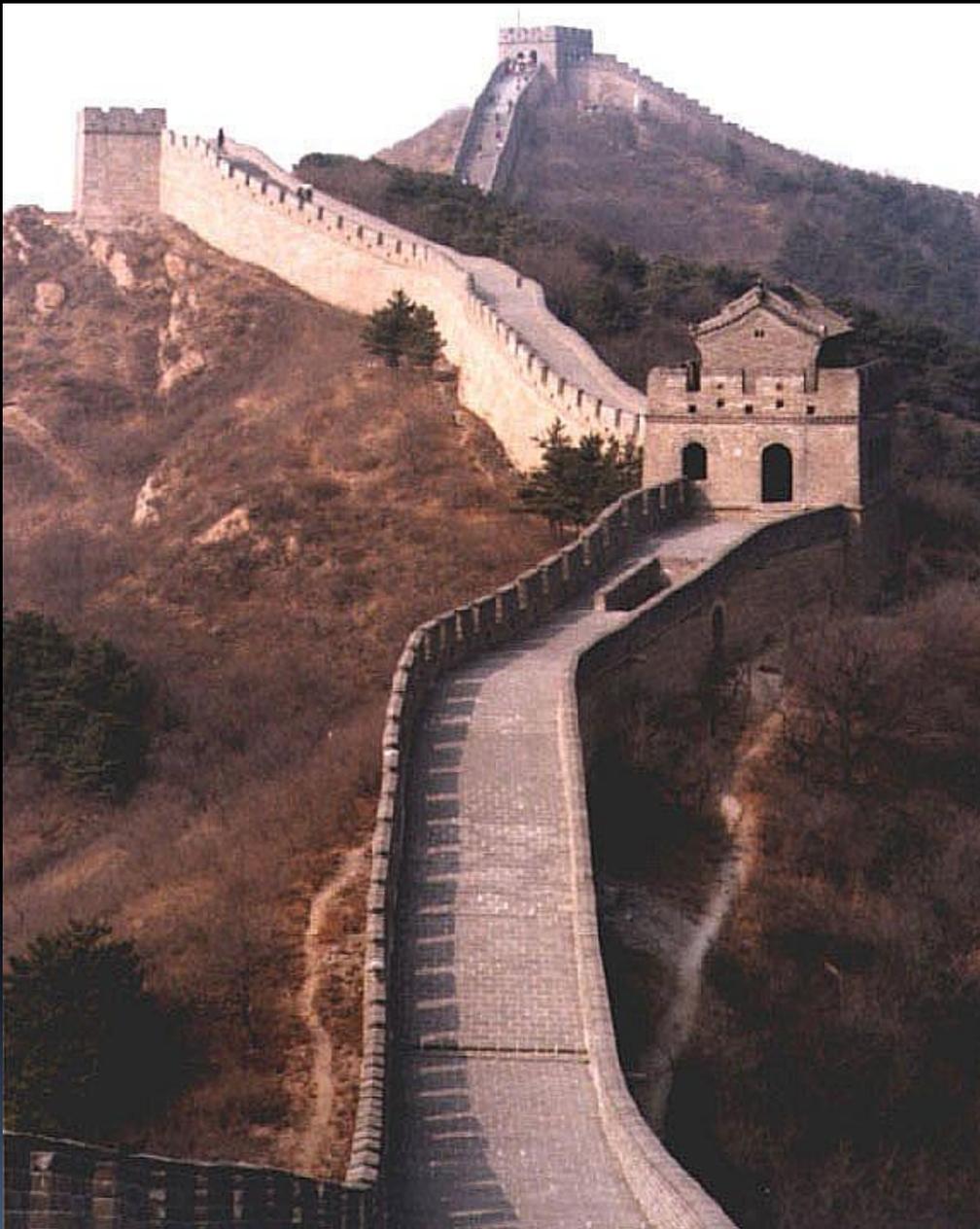
S. Anderson
World History



How you do something – and sometimes whether you succeed – is often determined by how you start. The human story also has a beginning: the ancient world.



In this unit, you will learn about that world: how human beings developed the first tools and agriculture, giving rise to the earliest civilizations. These ancient people made startling discoveries in science and mathematics, invented new technologies from wheels to writing, and gave birth to ideas that still influence us today.



One of
humankind's
greatest
achievements
– the *Great
Wall of China* –
stretches for
over 5,000
miles

The Rise of River Valley Civilizations

- In this section, you will learn about the rise of the first civilizations – ancient cultures that still influence us.



Early Human Society

- **Anthropologists** study the origins, customs, and beliefs of humankind. Most anthropologists now believe the **Great Rift Valley** in East Africa was the birthplace of humankind. Many scientists believe that human beings as we know them today – **homo sapiens** – first appeared sometime between 400,000 and 200,000 years ago, during the last Ice Age.





The Importance of Culture

- Human beings had several important advantages over other animals: superior intellect, the use of hands to make tools, and the ability to communicate through speech.
 - Because human beings had these ways of communicating, remembering, and making things, they were able to pass on what they learned and their way of doing things from one generation to the next. In this way, the first human **cultures** developed.
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Culture refers to a people's way of life. Culture includes such things as a people's language, types of clothing, homes, family organization, system of government, and methods of obtaining food. Culture also includes a people's crafts, arts, music, and religious beliefs.



The Hunter-Gatherers

- People in the earliest human societies were hunter-gatherers. They did not know how to grow their own food. Instead, they relied on hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plants for food. They learned to make fires, to make spears with pieces of bone or stone and to make canoes and boats out of logs. Because these people made tools of stone, historians refer to these early societies as **Stone Age** cultures. Over thousands of years, Stone Age peoples also learned to make clay pottery and **domesticate** (*tame*) dogs.



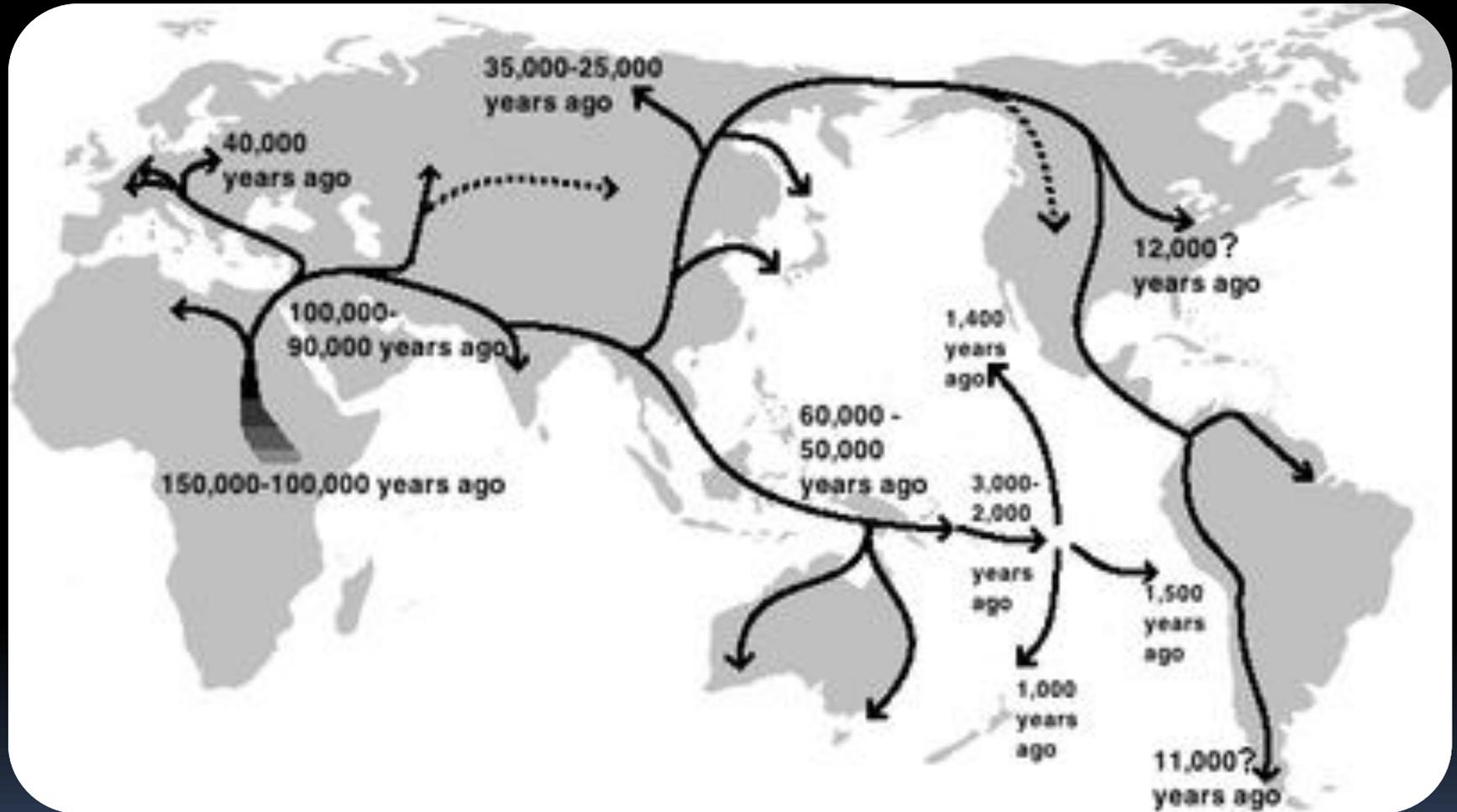
The Hunter-Gatherers, cont'd

- Early humans spent most of their time hunting for food. They migrated to areas where food – nuts, berries, fruits, grains, and especially herds of wild animals – could be found. During the **Ice Age**, people migrated out of Africa to other parts of the world.



- Eventually, people even migrated to the Americas and Australia. Wherever people went, they showed great ingenuity in adapting to local conditions.

Human Migration





The Neolithic Revolution

- About 10,000 years ago, one of the great turning points in history occurred. People began to change from hunters and gatherers to producers of food. Two important developments brought about this change: people learned how to grow food and how to herd animals.
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The Neolithic Revolution, cont'd

Anthropologists believe this change first occurred in parts of the Middle East, where wild wheat and barley were plentiful. People noticed that they could spread the seeds of these grains to plant and grow their own crops. They also learned how to herd and farm animals such as goats, sheep, and cattle. These advances are now referred to as the **Neolithic Revolution**.



The Neolithic Revolution, cont'd

- Wherever agriculture was introduced, people no longer had to wander in search of food. Instead, they could build permanent homes and villages and establish a fixed way of life. Populations grew. Although the emergence of agricultural societies is believed to have first occurred in Southwest Asia, it also took place independently at later times in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

"I'M TIRED OF HUNTING AND GATHERING, TOO, BUT
NOBODY'S INVENTED GROCERY STORES YET."



The Neolithic Revolution, cont'd

The Emergence of Social Classes.

The Neolithic Revolution brought both benefits and problems. People could grow more food than they had been able to gather or hunt, but they were also more vulnerable to attack by other peoples. Thus changes in **economics** – how these people met their needs for food and shelter – led to political changes. The introduction of agriculture and settlements led to the emergence of new social classes: warriors and priests. Defense of the new village became a major concern, resulting in the emergence of a warrior class. A priesthood emerged to conduct religious rituals in order to promote a good harvest and to protect the village from danger.

First Stone Age City



The Rise of River Valley Civilizations

As agricultural societies developed and grew, their way of life further changed. Around 3,500 B.C., the **first civilizations** arose.

A **civilization** is a form of human culture in which some people live in cities, have complex social institutions, use some form of writing, and are skilled at using science and technology.

The first civilizations developed in four separate **river valleys**. Each of these river valleys offered a mild climate and a water highway to other places. Water from the rivers also could be used for drinking and for cooking food. Each of these valleys was also a flood plain where an overflowing river deposited fertile soil. This rich soil led to abundant harvests and food surpluses.



Mesopotamia

(3500 B.C. – 100 B.C.)

Sometime between 5,000 and 6,000 years ago, the first river valley civilization developed in **Mesopotamia**, the region located between the **Tigris** and **Euphrates Rivers** (*in present day Iraq*). *Mesopotamia* was a Greek term meaning the “land between two rivers.”



Mesopotamia, cont'd



Mesopotamia, cont'd

Agriculture.

Although Mesopotamia was hot and dry, people learned how to irrigate the land by diverting water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Irrigation allowed farming settlements to flourish and food supplies to increase. Fewer people were able to produce more food, leading to a surplus. Other people could begin to specialize in activities other than farming. Some became potters, weavers, and metal workers. Others became warriors and priests.

Mesopotamia, cont'd

Government.

The people of Mesopotamia built several cities. At first, each city-state, such as **Uruk**, **Ur**, and **Babylon**, had its own ruler and local gods. Later, several of these city-states were united together under a single ruler.

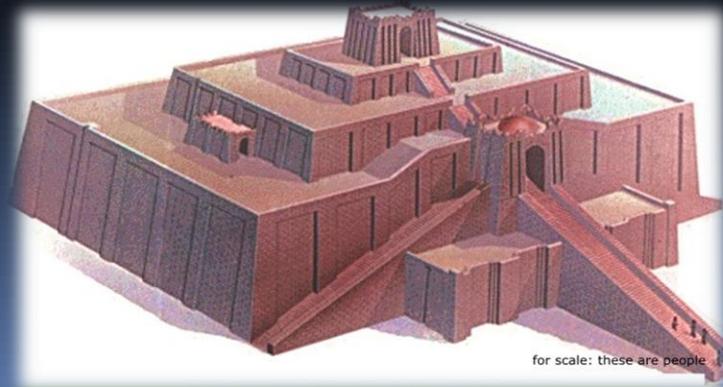
Religion.

The Mesopotamians were **polytheistic**, believing in as many as 2,000 different gods. Some historians contend that Mesopotamian religions were the world's oldest faiths. Mesopotamian rulers were often priests. A society governed by religious leaders is known as a **theocracy**.

Mesopotamia, cont'd

Building.

The Mesopotamians were the world's first city-builders. They lacked stone or timber to build their cities. Instead, they made their building from mud bricks and crushed reeds. They built walled cities, temples with arches, and stepped-pyramids known as **ziggurats**. Each ziggurat was made of a series of square levels, with each level slightly smaller than the one below it.



Mesopotamia, cont'd

Cultural and Scientific Contributions.

Some of the most important inventions in history took place in ancient Mesopotamia. The **Sumerians** (*the people of Sumer*) invented the wheel and the sailboat. They were able to figure out how to reroute some of the water to irrigate fields farther away. They also developed tools and weapons of copper and bronze. Bronze is made by melting tin and copper together: it is stronger than copper alone.

Mesopotamia, cont'd

The Sumerians devised a calendar, dividing the year into 12 months. Later, the Babylonians developed a number system based on 60, providing the basis for our seconds and minutes today. They also invented the world's earliest known writing system, **cuneiform**, a form of symbol writing on clay tablets. Cuneiform writing used three-dimensional marks by a stylus into clay before it hardened. Only the elite could read and write in cuneiform. Generally, priests and scribes were the ones who had this knowledge.



Mesopotamia, cont'd

Legal System.

The Babylonians developed the earliest written law code – the **Code of Hammurabi**. It covered most occurrences in daily life. Its aim was to ensure and protect the weak.



Mesopotamia, cont'd

Women in Mesopotamia.

Most girls stayed at home with their mothers, where they learned cooking and housekeeping. Women were responsible for raising the children and crushing the grain. There were enormous variations in the rights enjoyed by women in different social classes. Wealthier women were able to go to the marketplace to buy goods, could complete legal matters in their husband's absence, and could even own property. These women could engage in business for themselves, and obtain divorces. A few women, such as relatives of the ruler, enjoyed even higher status in Mesopotamian society.

Mesopotamia, cont'd



Mr. Nicky

Egypt

(3200 B.C. – 500 B.C.)



Egypt is located in Northeast Africa. The world's longest river, the **Nile**, runs through it. Each year, the Nile floods the lands along its banks, depositing fertile soil. With bright sunshine, a long growing season, rich soil, and an ample supply of fresh water, Egyptian farmers were able to grow large amounts of food. Farmers along the Nile were able to support a large number of craftsmen, warriors, priests, and nobles. Ease of communication along the river encouraged the development of a highly centralized government.

Egypt, cont'd

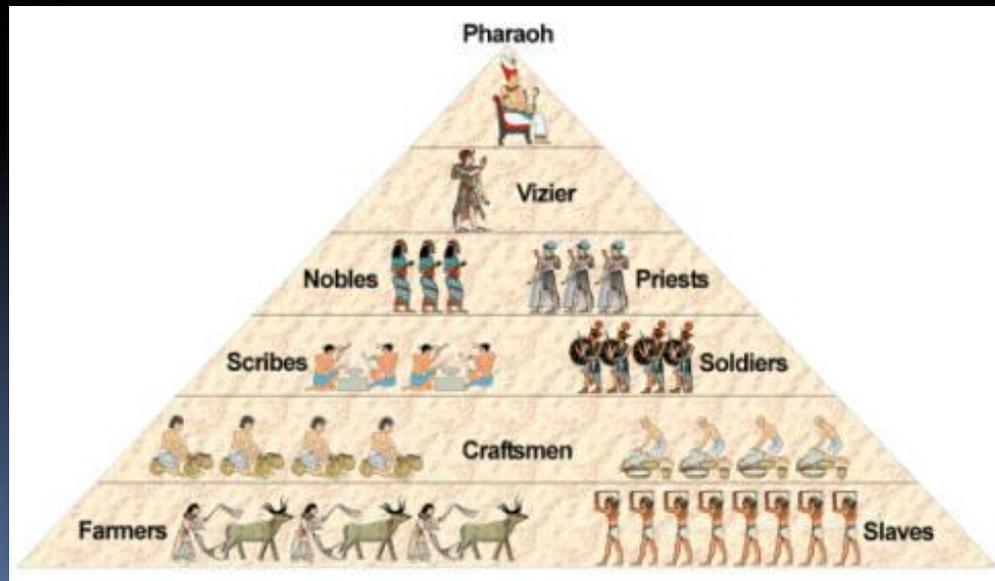
- **Government and Society.**

The most powerful person in ancient Egypt was the **pharaoh** (*king*). The pharaoh governed Egypt as an absolute ruler. The pharaoh owned all the land, commanded the army, made laws, controlled irrigation and grain supplies, and defended Egypt from foreigners. Egyptians considered the pharaoh to be a god. Egypt was a **monarchy**, a system of government in which political power is inherited. Each pharaoh inherited absolute power from his father.

Egypt

Government and Society, cont'd

Next in the social order below the pharaoh came the priests and nobles. Then came Egypt's warriors, scribes, merchants and craftsmen. At the bottom of society peasants and slaves. They spent their time farming, herding cattle, and working on building projects for the pharaohs.



Egypt, cont'd

- **Religion.**

The ancient Egyptians believed the body should be preserved after death to participate in the afterlife. When pharaohs died, their bodies were embalmed and buried in a special room under a large triangular stone tomb known as a pyramid. Here they were surrounded with gold, jewels, and other precious objects for use in the afterlife, which Egyptians imagined as similar to life before death. Archaeologists have used these artifacts to learn a great deal about ancient Egypt.

Egypt, cont'd





Egypt, cont'd

Egyptian Accomplishments

- **Medicine.**

Egyptians developed knowledge of the human body through **embalming** (*preserving*). They performed surgical operations, such as setting fractures.

- **Hieroglyphics.**

Ancient Egyptians developed one of the earliest forms of writing, based on picture symbols. Hieroglyphics appeared on temples, pyramids and on scrolls of reed paper, known as papyrus.

Egyptian Accomplishments, cont'd

- **Building and Art.**

Egyptian architects and engineers built magnificent pyramids, palaces, and temples of stone. They decorated their buildings with paintings and sculptures.

- **Geometry and Astronomy.**

Egyptians developed geometry to build projects such as pyramids. By observing the stars, they developed a calendar based on 365 days.

Egypt, cont'd



India



- More than 5,000 years ago, the **Indus River Valley** became another of the first centers of human civilization. In this region, as in Egypt and Mesopotamia, a river deposited rich soil over the neighboring plain during it's annual flood.

India, cont'd

- **Agriculture and Building.**

Farmers grew barley, wheat, dates, and melons. Food surpluses allowed people to build large cities like Harrappa and Mohenjo Daro. Each of these cities had more than 30,000 people. More than 1,000 cities and settlements belonging to the Indus River Valley civilization have already been excavated. The artifacts found in these settlements suggest a technologically advanced urban culture. Dockyards, granaries, warehouses and brick platforms and protective walls were present in many of their cities. They were also among the first “urban planners,” with almost all their houses connected to the public sewers and water supply. These people, known as *Harrappans*, were also the first people known to make cotton cloth.

India, cont'd

- **Trade and Collapse.**

Trade was an important part of the Harrappan economy. Many small clay seals, probably used for trading purposes, have been discovered by archaeologists. They have also found kilns for making pottery and evidence of the use of metals. The Harrappans developed their own form of writing, although scholars are still unable to decipher it. No one knows exactly why this civilization collapsed, but its end occurred suddenly.

China

About 500 years after the settlement of the Indus River Valley, China's first civilization emerged in the fertile plains along the **Huang He** (*Yellow River*)



China, cont'd

- **Agriculture.**

As in the Nile and Indus River Valleys, the fertility of the soil along the Huang He was increased by the river's periodic floods. Around 4,500 B.C., people along the Huang He began growing millet (*a type of grain*). Later, they learned to farm soybeans and raise chickens, dogs and pigs.

China, cont'd

- **Government.**

Around 1700 B.C. a ruling family, or **dynasty**, known as the **Shang**, took power. They built the first Chinese cities and established their capital at Anyang, near the Huang He. The Shang ruled with the help of powerful nobles. Shang kings were military leaders. They were also high priests who offered sacrifices to their royal ancestors.

China, cont'd

- **Cultural Contributions.**

The people living in the Huang He Valley were skilled at many crafts. Their ability in bronze work can be seen in many objects surviving from this period, including superior weapons and ceremonial vessels. They also were the first to make silk textiles from silkworm cocoons. Finally, they developed a system of writing with pictographs known as **characters**. Each character represented one word. Their pictorial characteristics, often with only minor modifications, are still used in written Chinese today. Even those speaking different dialects use the same characteristics.



The Ancient Hebrews

- The ancient Hebrews, or Israelites, lived south of Phoenicia in the area occupied by present-day Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan. Because of their location, the Hebrews were deeply influenced by the civilizations of both Mesopotamia and Egypt. According to tradition, the forefather of the Hebrews, Abraham, grew up in Mesopotamia in the city of Ur. Later, Abraham moved to Israel.
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The Ancient Hebrews, cont'd

- Unlike other ancient peoples, the Hebrews did not believe in many gods. Instead, they believed in one universal God, who was both just and all-powerful. This new religion was called **Judaism**. Jews did not believe that God had human characteristics or the head or body of an animal, like the gods and goddesses of Mesopotamia and Egypt.
- Jews saw their God as an invisible but powerful force or spirit that created the world and that demanded proper moral conduct. **Monotheism**, the belief in one God, became the basis for several later religions, including both Christianity and Islam.

The Ten Commandments

The early history of the Hebrews and their relationship with God is told in the first books of the **Bible**, known as the **Old Testament**. According to the Bible, the ancient Hebrews migrated to Egypt to escape food shortages from drought. They remained in Egypt for hundreds of years, where they became enslaved. Their leader, **Moses**, later took them out of Egypt and freed them from slavery. According to the Bible, Moses also presented the Hebrews with the **Ten Commandments**, which came directly from God. These commandments forbade stealing, murder, adultery, and other forms of immoral behavior. They also commanded the Hebrews to worship one God and to keep the Sabbath (*a day of rest*).



The Ten Commandments, cont'd

When the Hebrews returned to Israel from Egypt, around 1,000 B.C., they found it was occupied by new peoples. This led to a series of wars, ending with the Jewish re-conquest of Israel. The Hebrews then established their capital at Jerusalem, where they built a temple to worship God.

