

The Success of the Persian Empire

Civilizations of the Ancient World | Meeting #11

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Upcoming Dates

- Tuesday, March 17
Midterm Exam
- Sunday, March 15
Responses for Week 7 Due

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Four things today

- The Neo-Assyrians
- Babylon
- Lost Tribes and Babylonian Captivity
- The Persians

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Quiz #5 | Success of the Persian Empire

- 1. Factors that helped make the Persian Empire more successful than the Assyrians included all of the following [\(1/1/20\)](#)
 - a. The Persians were more successful in convincing subject peoples they shared in the benefits of empire
 - b. The Persians earned a reputation for leniency and toleration toward peoples they ruled over and respect for native customs
 - c. The empire was organized locally, with strong local imperial officials and a system of spies watching for corruption and oppression
 - d. Cyrus declared himself to be a god, standardizing all pagan religions throughout the empire
- 2. Efforts at unifying the Persian empire included
 - a. the first large-scale road system in antiquity
 - b. adoption of Egyptian hieroglyphs as a common writing system
 - c. brutal wars against distant enemies to distract people from political controversies
 - d. a new monetary standard based on lead instead of gold and silver
- 3. Darius invaded central Asia in order to stop destructive raiding by
 - a. the Scythians
 - b. the Hittites
 - c. the Viet Minh
 - d. a colony of angry megalomaniacs
- 4. Persia conquered Egypt under the leadership of which king?
 - a. Cyrus
 - b. Cambyses
 - c. Darius
 - d. Louis XIV
- 5. The native Persian religion, Zoroastrianism, was
 - a. forcibly imposed on conquered territories
 - b. known for transparency of thought and permitting no secret knowledge
 - c. dualistic, expecting Persian nobles to engage in constant ritual swordfights with each other
 - d. dualistic, viewing the universe as being in perpetual conflict and balance between two opposing gods

Extra Credit

EC: What reasons might the Persian king have had for releasing the Jews to return home and rebuild in Jerusalem?

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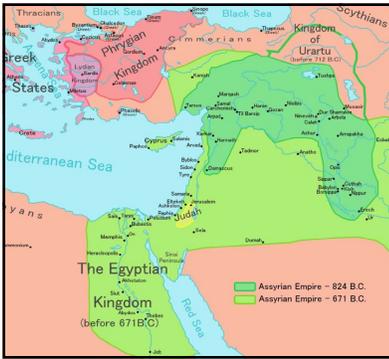
Questions about whatever



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Iron Age Mesopotamia

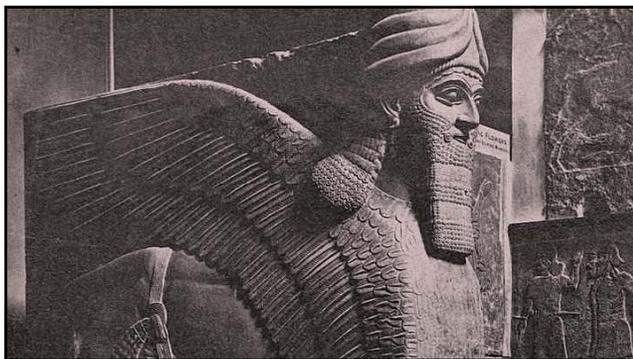
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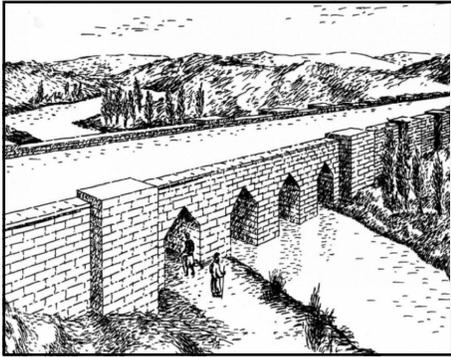
Neo-Assyrian Empire

- Called "Neo-Assyrian" because it's the "new" one
 - "Old" Assyrian empire fell with the collapse of the Bronze Age
- Rapid expansion to dominate Mesopotamia, then beyond

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A modern Iron Age Empire

- Artistic and technological advancements
- Exploitation of far-flung resources
- Large, well-equipped armies

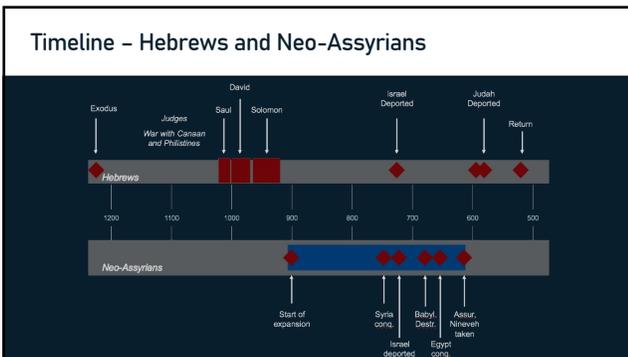
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Ruling the Neo-Assyrian Empire

- "How not to run an empire"
- Standing armies
- Wealth and resources all dragged to Nineveh
- Brutal suppression of local culture and identity
- Destruction of cities
- Deportation

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Deportation of Northern Kingdom (722 BCE)

- Monotheism gives the Hebrews a stronger identity
- Assyrians try to crush Northern Kingdom (Israel) with tributes and oppression
- Finally deport landholders to Assyria
- Northern Kingdom resettled with foreign colonists

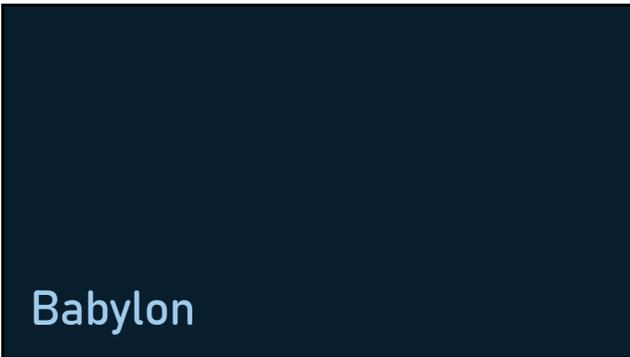
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Failure of the Neo-Assyrian Empire

- Oppressive rule and draining of conquered lands
- Conquered lands start to rebel
- Medes and Chaldeans ally to overthrow Assyrians

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Babylon

- Exerts authority through cultural and technological dominance
- Babylon draws the skilled and wealthy

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The Hanging Gardens

- Engineering marvel
- Demonstration of Babylon's preeminence
 - Economic power
 - Technological power

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"Tower of Babel"

- Hebrew metaphor for Babylonian arrogance

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Etemenanki Ziggurat

- Largest ziggurat in the world
- Home of Babylon's patron god, Marduk

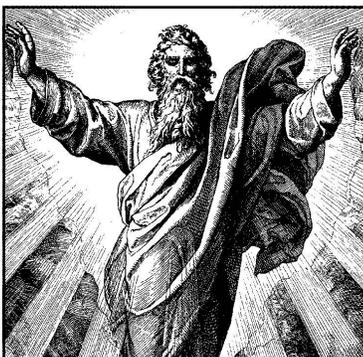
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The Babylonian Captivity (587-538 BCE)

- Southern Kingdom (Judah) resistant to Babylon
- Babylon deports landholders
- In Babylon, Judeans (Jews) fight assimilation
 - Preservation of history and language
 - Food and clothing taboos
 - Circumcision
 - Sabbath
- Jewish identity preserved

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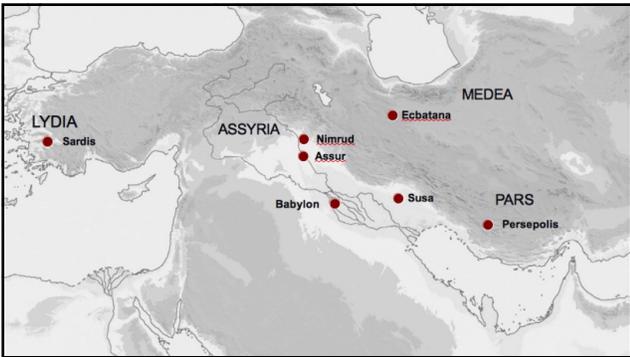
Monotheism as a religious revolution

- Pagan gods represent natural forces
 - Bound to the land
 - Local
- Yahweh creates a covenant of mutual benefit
 - Protection in exchange for faith and rejection of other gods
 - Covenant is personal, not group
 - Relationship exists regardless of location
- No other gods
 - Pagan peoples are sinners/barbarians
 - Yahweh will protect

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The Persians

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The Medes

- Indo-European tribes
- Settled en masse in what is now northern Iran
- Tribes divided and hostile
- Unwilling to unite against Mesopotamian empires

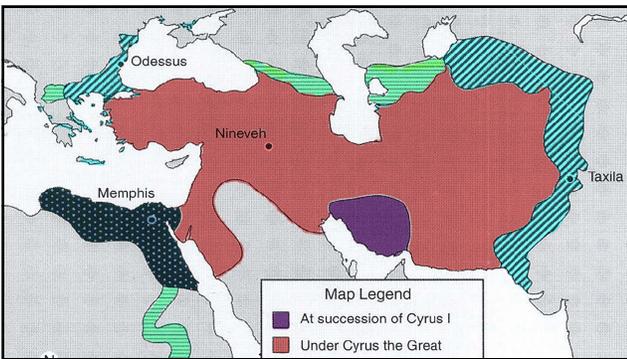
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The Persians

- More Indo-European tribes
- Settle further to the south, near the Persian Gulf (Pars)
- Originally competing tribes
- Gain great advantage uniting behind a single king

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Vassals and satraps

- Satraps = provincial governors
- Means of preventing oppression
- Other powers in a satrapy
 - Garrison commander
 - King's eyes

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The Great King

- Focal point of unity across unrelated peoples
- Larger than life
 - Inaccessible
 - Symbolic
- Not a god

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Cyrus

- Consolidated Persian tribes
- Inspired loyalty and unity
- Charisma and accomplishment

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Persian majesty

- King of kings
- Persepolis

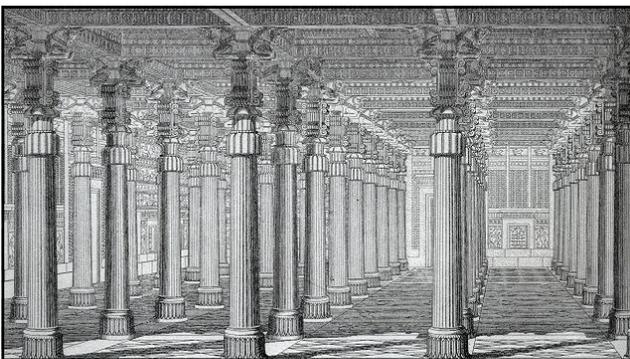
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Key reasons the Persian Empire works

- Minimized oppression / threat to identity
- Benefits of empire
- Satrapies
- The Great King
 - Larger than life
 - Not a god

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Restoration of Judah

- Cyrus releases from Babylonian Captivity
- Allows them to return to Judah
- Gratitude might mean loyalty
- Strategic location of Judah as base for the conquest of Egypt

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Cambyses

- Egypt conquered under Cyrus's successor

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Darius and Xerxes

- Systems and institutions, not personal rule
 - Civil service
 - Infrastructure
- Continuity and stability across reigns

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Zoroastrianism

- Dualist religion
 - God of light and order (Ahuramazda)
 - God of dark and chaos (Ahriman)
- Two natural forces
 - Both necessary
 - In balance with each other
- Light and dark is a choice of all living beings
 - Contrast with monotheism (only one choice)

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Ancient Religions

Polytheism

- Mesopotamia
 - Sumer
 - Akkad
 - Babylon
 - Assyria
- Egypt
- Anatolia
 - Hittites
- Aegean
 - Minoans
 - Mycenaean
 - Classical Greeks

Dualism

- Persia
 - Zoroastrianism
 - Mithraism

Monotheism

- Israel and Judah
 - Judaism
- Christianity

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