



The Success of the Persian Empire

Civilizations of the Ancient World | Meeting #11

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Upcoming Dates

- Monday, October 5
Gilgamesh essay due
- Tuesday, October 13
No class meeting (Monday classes meet)
- Thursday, October 15
Midterm Exam
- Sunday, October 11
Responses for Week 6 Due

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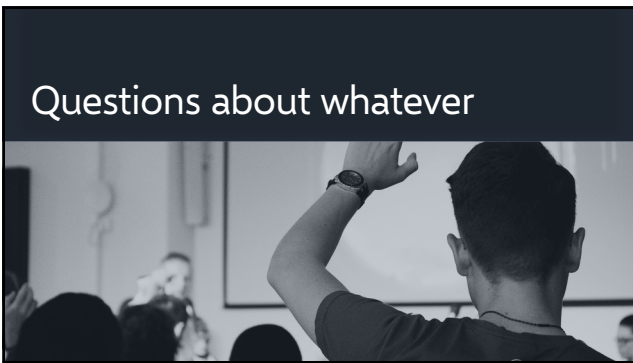
Four things today

- The rise of Babylon
- The Persians
- Cyrus and the Great Kings
- Success of the Persian Empire

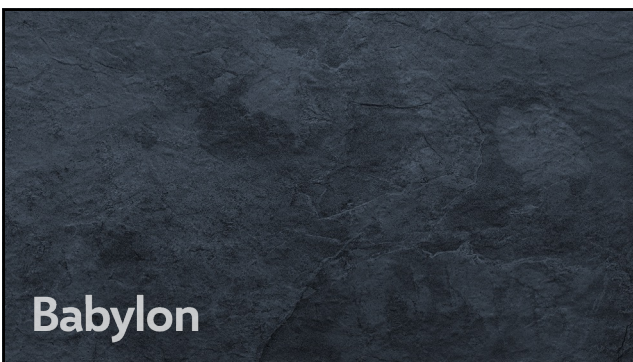
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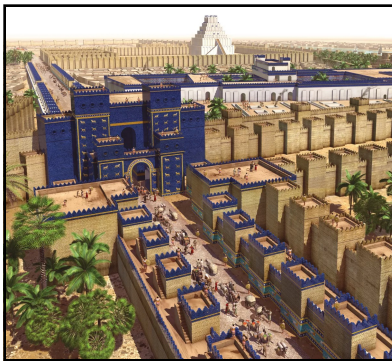
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Failure of the Neo-Assyrian Empire

- 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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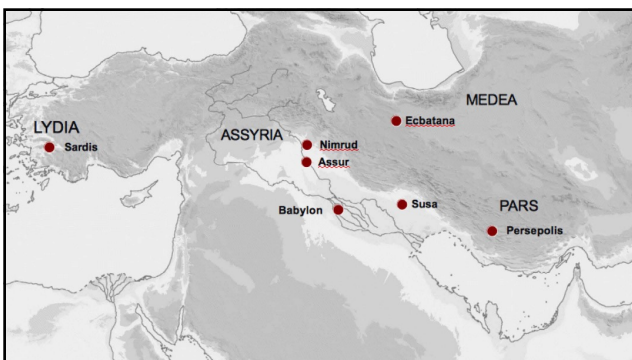
Monotheism as a religious revolution

- 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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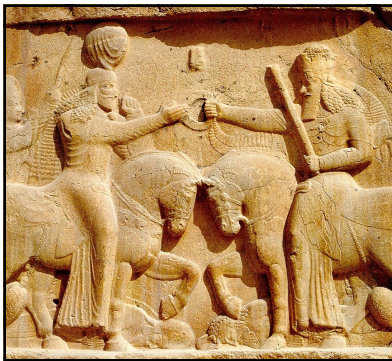
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The Medes

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

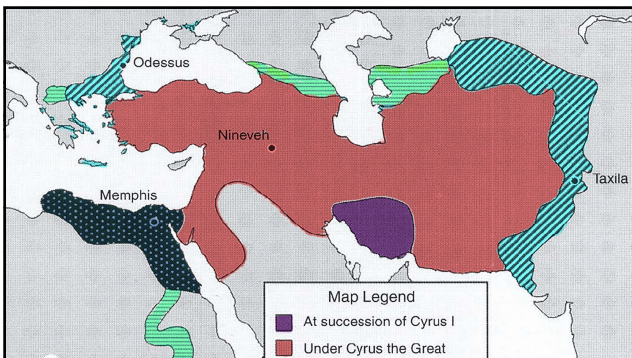
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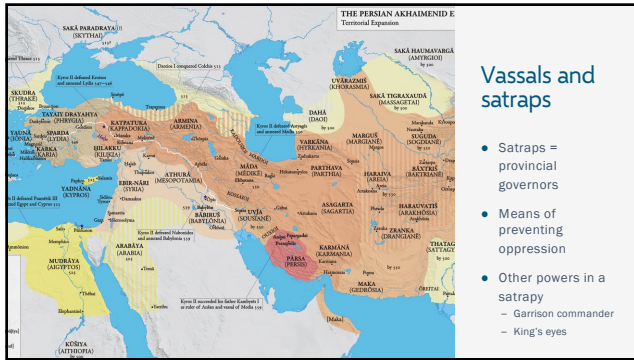
The Persians

- 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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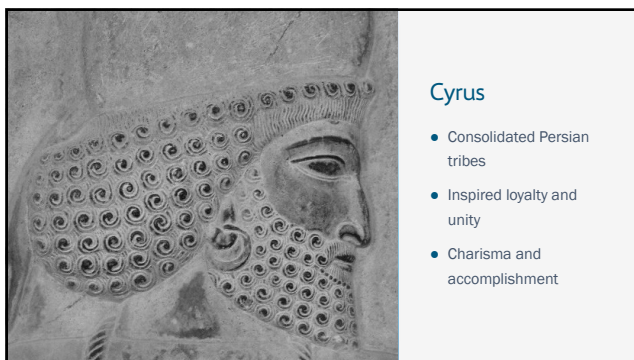
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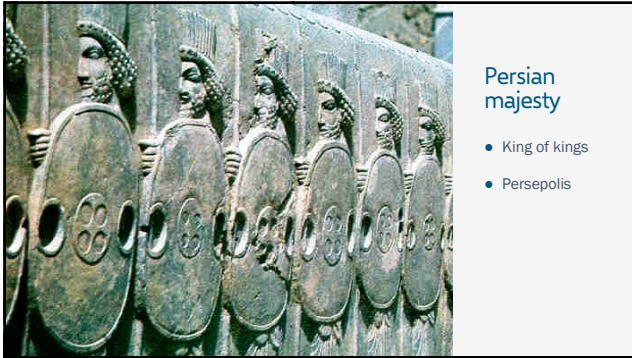
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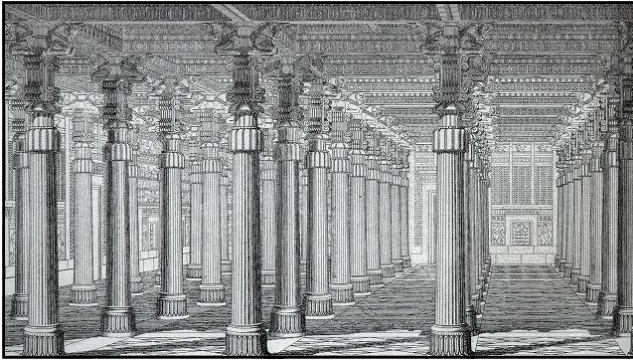
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Key reasons the Persian Empire works

- 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
 - Mycenaeans
 - Classical Greeks



Dualism

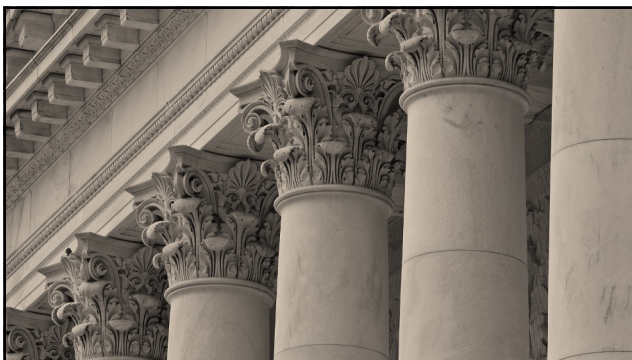
- Persia
 - Zoroastrianism
 - Mithraism



Monotheism

- Israel and Judah
 - Judaism
- Christianity

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