

Handout #4 - Mesopotamia & Egypt

a. Inscriptions and Writings: Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III



It is the most complete Assyrian obelisk yet discovered, and is historically significant because it displays the earliest ancient depiction of an Israelite. It was erected as a public monument in 825 BCE at a time of civil war.

The second register from the top includes the earliest surviving picture of an Israelite: the Biblical Jehu, king of Israel. It describes how Jehu brought or sent his tribute in or around 841 BCE.

Jehu severed Israel's alliances with Phoenicia and Judah, and became subject to Assyria. The caption above the scene, written in Assyrian cuneiform, can be translated:

"The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri: I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king [and] spears."

b. Mesopotamia & Egypt - a geology shapes theology

i. Outline of Early Mesopotamian History

1. Proto-Literary Period.

Our earliest samples of writing begin around 3500 B.C.

The earliest writing was in the form of pictographs where a single picture would represent a single object. These developed into ideographs and from there to a system of wedge-shaped characters made on soft tablets of clay with a triangular stick or cunios. This writing became known as cuneiform.

2. The Early Dynastic Period.

From 3000 B.C. to about 2300 B.C. various city-states gained supremacy over their neighbors, establishing short periods of suzerainty. It was during this period that Gilgamesh became king of Erech (2650 B.C.)

3. Sargon the Great (Died 2330 B.C.).

4. The Third Dynasty of Ur. This was to be the last Sumerian dynasty to rule in Mesopotamia. It would rule from 2100 to 2000 B.C. Under these kings, Sumer was restored to much of her former glory. All branches of the arts saw a period of renaissance as economic prosperity became the order of the day.

The Ziggurat. *referenced in Genesis 11:1-4?*

c The Fall of Ur, birthplace of Abram.

ii. Contrast between Ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian Theology

Mesopotamia	Egypt
Legalistic in their religious outlook, looking more to the letter of the law.	More of an ethical outlook on life with a focus on the spirit of the law.
Art and literature reflects a gloomy, pessimistic outlook on life.	Demonstrates a cheerful resignation to the problems of life.
Euphrates and Tigris flooded unexpectedly and often killed those who were caught. These rivers came to be feared.	The Nile flooded on a regular cycle and the Egyptians came to expect and depend upon its flooding. They eventually began to worship the Nile.
Surrounded by hostile forces on all sides. People lived in constant fear of invasion.	Egypt has natural boundaries in the sea and the desert which usually kept out invaders.
Lived from day to day always in fear of invasion and death.	Looked forward to immortality and a life after death.
Selfish and practical.	Giving and idealistic.

Discussion Questions:

stories can be found in does it make you feel to know that so many details of the biblical How Mesopotamia and Egypt? Does it surprise you ancient the history, archeology, and geography of theology was shaped apparently the geography and natural events have an influence on how that ?in the ancient world