Objectives

In this section you will

• Understand how the sea power of the Phoenicians helped spread civilization throughout the Mediterranean area.

• Learn about the major events in the history of the Israelites.
Key Terms

• alphabet – a set of symbols that represent the sounds of a language

• monotheism – the belief in one god

• famine – a time when there is so little food that many people starve

• exile – to force someone to live in another country
The Phoenicians: Sailors of the Mediterranean

The Phoenicians settled on the Mediterranean Sea. They were part of the fertile crescent that extended from Mesopotamia to Egypt and beyond.
The Phoenicians had a city on the eastern Mediterranean Sea called Tyre. Tyre was in present day Lebanon. The people of Tyre collected snails that washed up on the shores of their city. These snails produced a rich purple dye that the people could sell at very high prices. The profits made Tyre a very wealthy city.
Besides the snails, the Phoenicians had dense forests of cedar trees. They used the trees to build ships, and they also sold lumber to neighboring people. The Phoenicians built a powerful trading empire, and they were a great sea power from about 1100 B.C. to 800 B.C.
The Phoenician Empire stretched around the edges of the Mediterranean Sea. It’s principle cities were Sidon, Tyre, and Carthage.
What resources did the Phoenicians first use to build their wealth?

The Phoenicians used wood and the dye from snails to build their wealth.
The Phoenician Alphabet: One Sound, One Letter

The Phoenicians came into contact with lots of different kinds of people due to trading. They found that *cuneiform* writing was too complicated, as cuneiform had hundreds of symbols.

They decided to simplify writing.
The Phoenicians found a new way to write that only used 22 symbols.

This was the Phoenician alphabet, in which a symbol stood for a sound.

The Phoenicians could put these symbols together to make words.

Each symbol stood for a consonant sound, and this alphabet forms the basis for the alphabet used in the United States and many other countries today.
The 22 letters of the Phoenician alphabet.

Before, only highly educated scribes could read and write, but with the Phoenician alphabet, far more people could learn.
How did the Phoenician alphabet differ from cuneiform script?

The Phoenician alphabet used fewer symbols and was much easier to learn than the cuneiform script, which used symbols.
The Rise of the Israelites

The Israelites were a small group of people that traced their beginnings back to Mesopotamia. They lived as shepherds and merchants outside of Sumer. Eventually, they settled along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. They never built a large empire, but they still had an impact on the course of civilization.
According to the Bible, the Israelites were led by a man named Abraham, who led his people to believe in one god. Believing in one god is called **monotheism**. Abraham led the Israelites from Mesopotamia to a new home in Canaan, which is right by the Mediterranean Sea.
The Israelites lived in Canaan from about 1900 B.C. to 1800 B.C. Around 1800 B.C. a famine, or severe food shortage that causes many to starve, spread across Canaan. The Israelites decided to flee south to Egypt.
The Israelites lived well in Egypt for about 600 years. Many Israelites reached high positions in the government. As the Egyptian king grew jealous of their wealth and suspicious of their power, he enslaved the Israelites.
The Exodus and Return to Canaan

According to the Bible, an Israelite named Moses led the enslaved people out of Egypt. This was called the *exodus*, which is a word that is based on a Greek word that means “going out.” The Israelites wandered through the desert of the Sinai Peninsula for 40 years.
The Bible also states that when the Israelites were in the desert, God gave Moses a code of laws known as the Ten Commandments. After 40 years, the Israelites finally returned to Canaan.

The Israelites went back to herding and farming, but over time, they began building their own cities in Canaan.
As the Israelites moved back into Canaan, they began facing opposition from the people that had settled the lands. Slowly, through war, the Israelites conquered all of Canaan. There were two kings that led them to victory.
The first king of the Israelites was Saul, who defended his people against many enemies.

The next king was David. David united the 12 Israelite tribes into a single nation. David established Jerusalem as his capital.
After David died, his son Solomon became king. Under Solomon’s rule, the Israelite kingdom grew wealthy through trade. King Solomon also developed a sea trade with neighboring lands. Solomon also built a beautiful temple in Jerusalem that became the central place of worship for the Israelites.
Solomon’s building projects were very expensive. The country faced hard times, and after Solomon died it split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom was called Israel and the southern kingdom was named Judah.
The divided kingdom was much weaker, and in 722 B.C. the Assyrians seized the kingdom of Israel and exiled thousands of Israelites to distant parts of the empire. “Exile” means that they were forced to live in another country.

About 135 years after Israel fell to the Assyrians, Judah was conquered by the Chaldeans. The Judeans were exiled as well.
The Israelites originally came from Mesopotamia and were called Hebrews. Although they never built a large empire, they made a deep impact on our civilization.
1. (a) Identify
Who were the Phoenicians?

The Phoenicians developed an empire through trade along the coast of the Mediterranean sea.
(b) Recall
How did the Phoenicians gain their wealth and power?

At first they sold wood and dye; later they gained wealth and power through trade to and from lands around the Mediterranean Sea.
2. (a) Explain
What are some features of the Phoenician alphabet?

The alphabet had 22 symbols that represented the sounds of the Phoenician language; each letter stood for one consonant sound.
(b) Identify Effects
Describe the importance of the Phoenician alphabet. How did it affect the Mediterranean world and later civilizations?

The Phoenician alphabet was easy to learn. As a result, its use was widespread and no longer limited to scribes. It formed the basis for the alphabet used today in many countries.
3. (a) Identify Sequence

Briefly trace the history of the Israelites from the leadership of Abraham to King Solomon.

Abraham led the Israelites from Mesopotamia to Canaan. During a famine, many Israelites fled to Egypt, where they prospered for a few hundred years but then were forced into labor. Moses led them out of Egypt. Eventually, they returned to Canaan. Kings Saul and David reclaimed Canaan and unified the Israelite nation. Israel prospered under King Solomon.
(b) Identify Central Issues

What important events in the history of the Israelites were shaped by movement and by war?

The Israelites moved to Egypt to escape a famine. When they left Egypt, they wandered in the desert for 40 years. They fought a war to regain control of Canaan and live as a united nation. Later, they divided again, and were conquered and sent into exile.