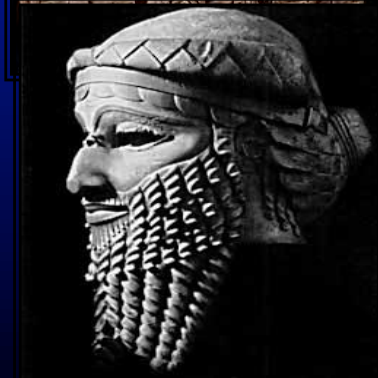


# The Sumerians

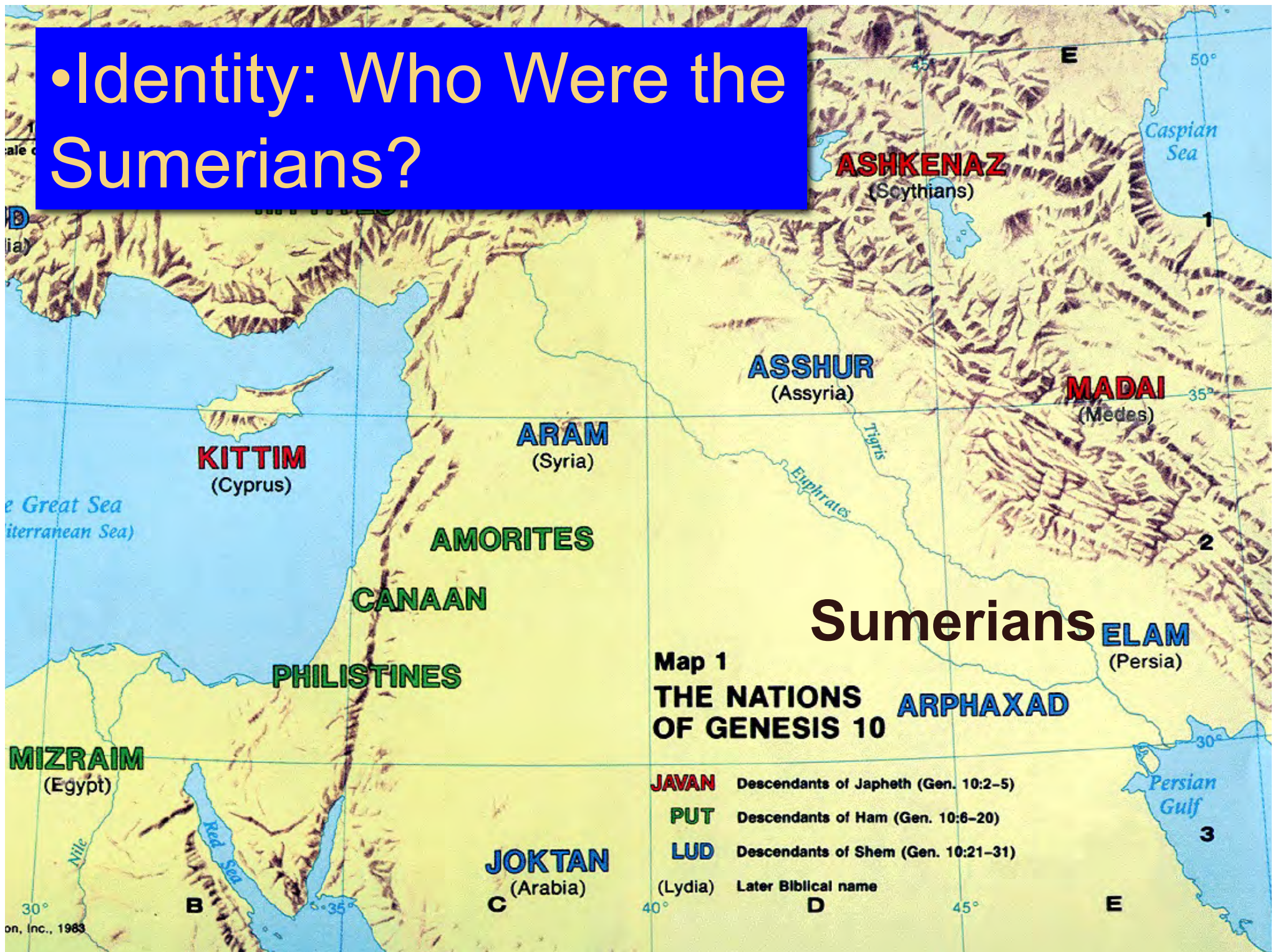
## AGENDA:

- ✕ Origin
- ✕ Geography
- ✕ History
- ✕ Government
- ✕ Society
- ✕ Language
- ✕ Writing
- ✕ Education
- ✕ Literature
- ✕ Religion
- ✕ Relevance



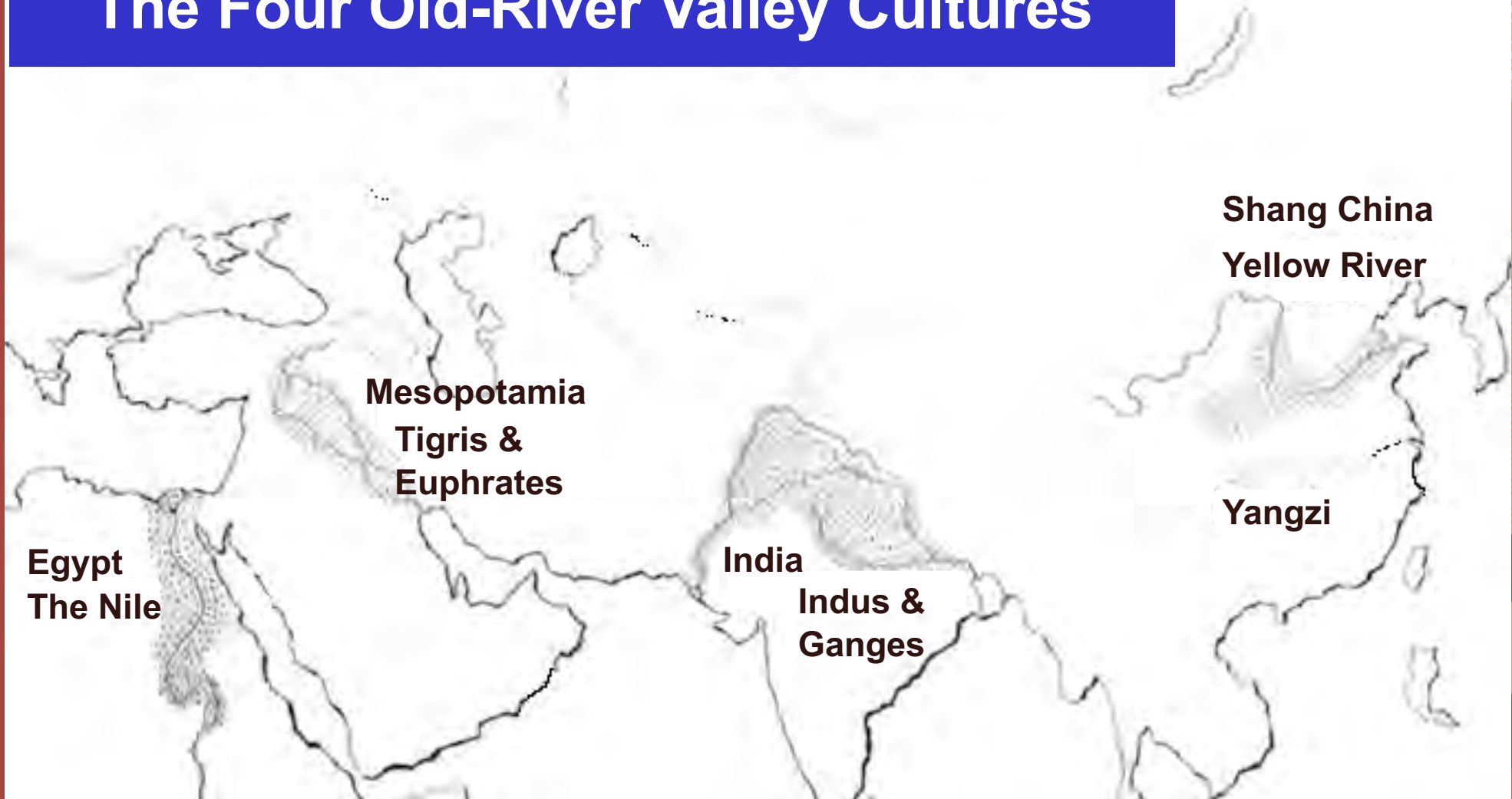


# • Identity: Who Were the Sumerians?



# Man has always needed water

## The Four Old-River Valley Cultures

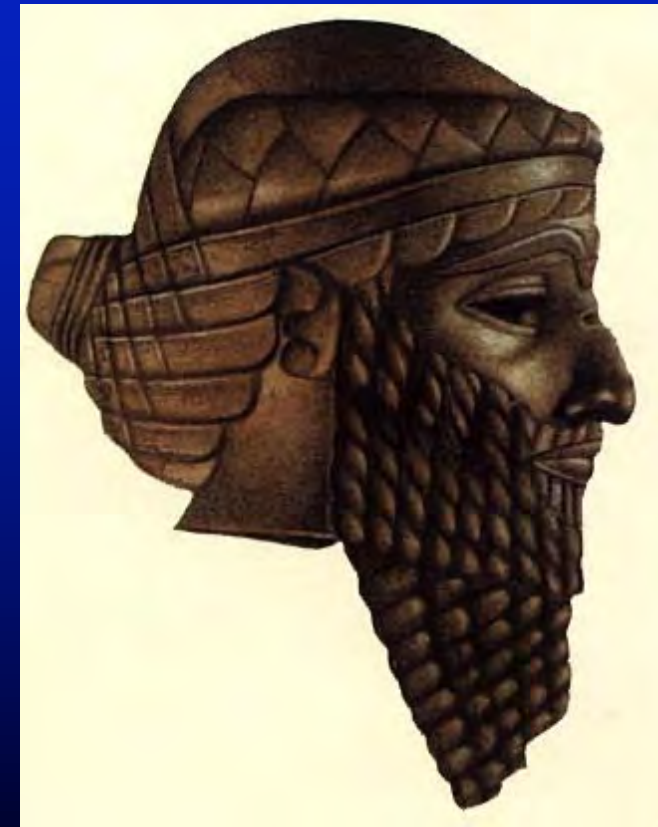


# • Geography of Sumer

- Known as Babylonia, included South Iraq –(from Baghdad to the Persian Gulf)
- Linked with Akkad
- Possibly biblical “*Shinar*” (Gen. 10:10; 11:2; 14:1, 9)
- Arable land

# Origin

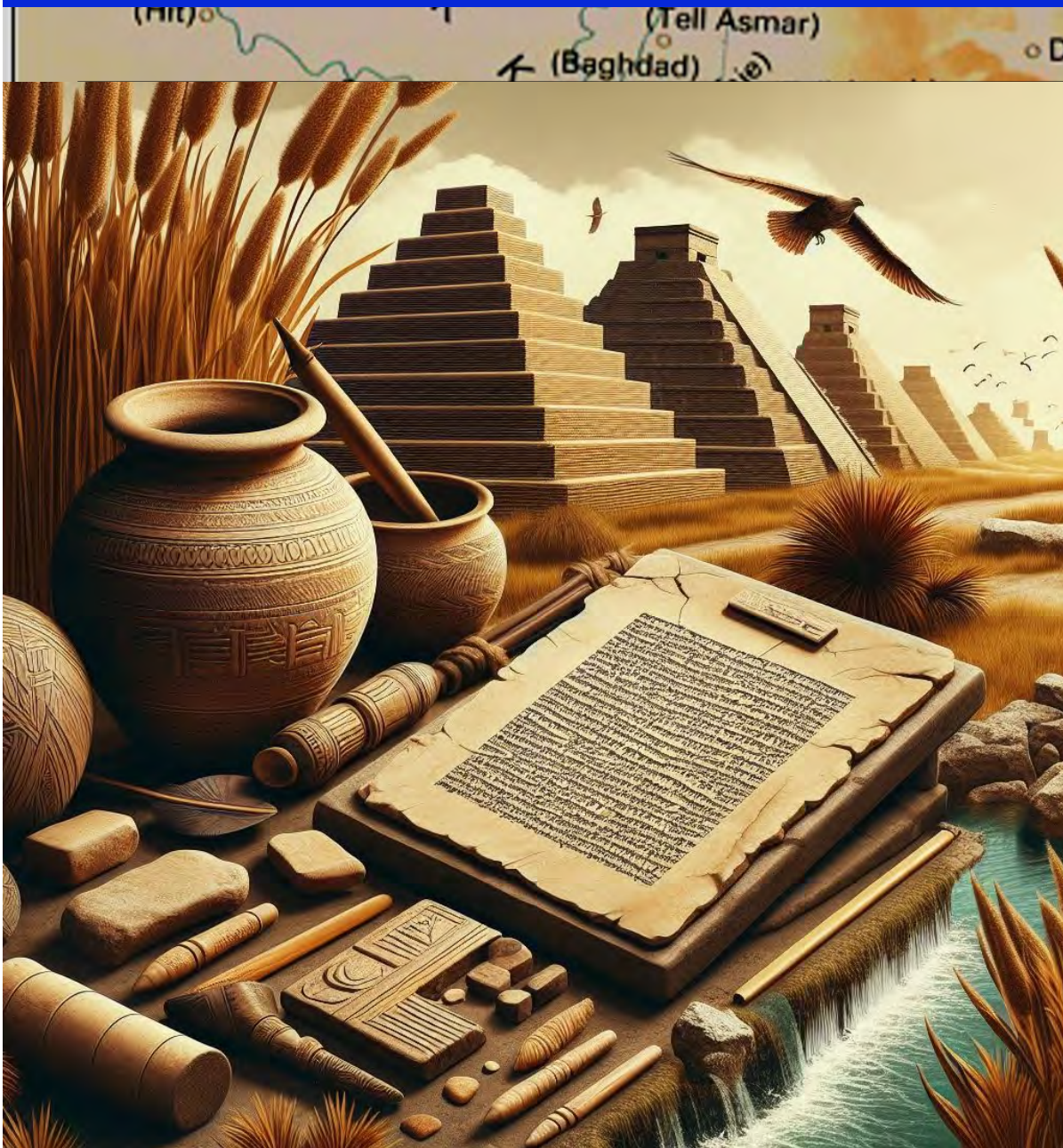
- Entered Mesopotamia from mountains
  - city - Aratta
  - temple – Enlil
- Arrived via Persian Gulf



# Geography



# History



- Three periods:
  - Early Sumerian:  
3000 – 2700 B.C.
  - Classic Sumerian:  
2700 – 2250 B.C.
  - Neo-Sumerian:  
2100 – 1960 B.C.

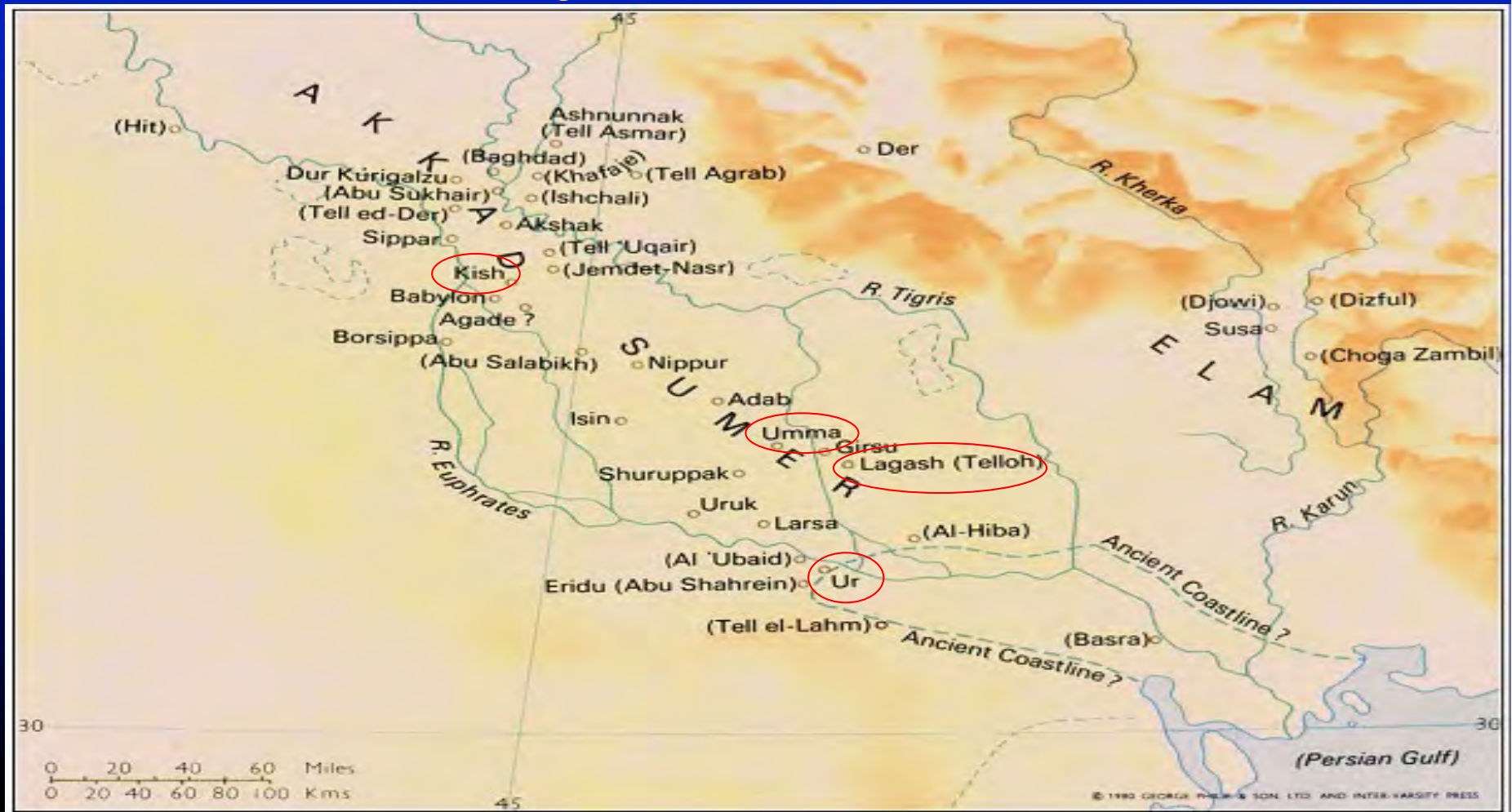
## Early Sumerian 3000 – 2700 B.C.

- Dominated by 3 major cities:
  - Uruk, Aratta and Kish
- 3 leading figures:
  - Enmerkar, Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh



# Classic Sumerian 2700 – 2250 B.C.

- Focused primarily on 4 cities:
  - Ur, Kish, Umma and Lagash



# Classic Sumerian 2700 – 2250 B.C.

- 4 renowned figures :
  - Eannatum
  - Urukagina
  - Gudea of Lagash
  - Lugalzaggisi of Umma
- The greatest treasure
- The first true historic document



# Neo-Sumerian 2100 – 1960 B.C.

- ⌘ The ruins of Akkadian dynasty, Ur arose
- ⌘ Widespread immigration of other people
- ⌘ Sumerians disappeared and the language no longer was used





# Sumerian Dynasties



3100-2700 Uruk IV-Early Dynastic I  
Periods

2600-2370 3rd Early Dynastic Period

2370-2228 Old Akkadian (Agade) Period

2306-2292 Manistusu

2254-2230 Sar-kali-sarri

2113-1991 3rd Dynasty of Ur

2113-2096 Ur-Nammu

2037-2029 Su-Sin

2028-2004 Ibbi-Sin



1991-1786 Isin-Larsa Dynasties

2017-1985 Isbi-Erra

1934-1924 Lipit-Istar

1894-1595 Old  
Babylonian Period (1st  
Dynasty of Babylon)

1792-1750 Hammurabi

**– 1750 BC: The Sumerians at this point were absorbed by the Semites who inhabited the same area.**

# Government

- ❏ **Groups of agricultural villages**
- ❏ **Temple with political power over society**
- ❏ **Formation of a secular government**
- ❏ **War leader (*Lugal*) grew in importance**



# Society

- ⌘ Pantheistic worldview and social classes
- ⌘ The birth of the concept of laws
- ⌘ Divine authority of the law and government
- ⌘ Distinct laws for men and women



# Language

77

- ⌘ An unknown language
- ⌘ Preservation of Sumerian written language



# Writing

## ⌘ Facts of Sumerian writing

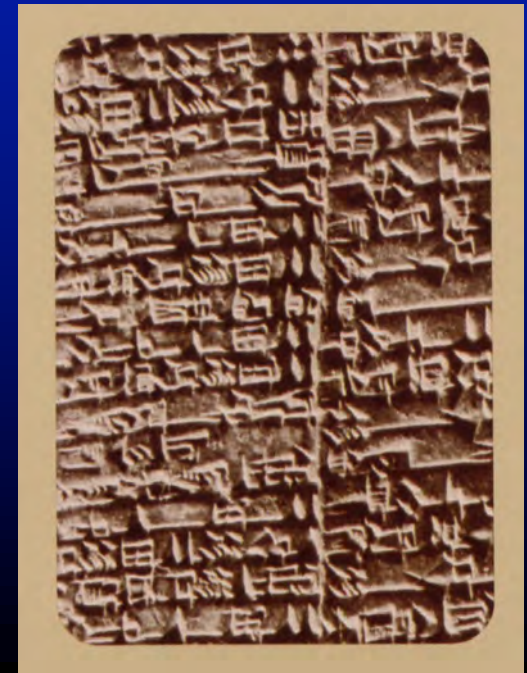
- Writing first appeared in Sumer
- Syllabic pronunciation
- Earliest inscriptions are in Sumerian

## ⌘ Different uses of picture-signs

	3200 BCE	3000 BCE	2400 BCE	1000 BCE
sag 'head'				
gin 'to walk'				
šu 'hand'				
še 'barley'				
ninda 'bread'				
a 'water'				
ud 'day'				
mušen 'bird'				

## ⌘ Stages of Cuneiform Development

- Simple stylized pictures (pictographs)
- Simplified picture signs into wedge-shaped script
- Complex signs were reduced to uniform script

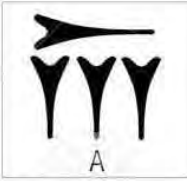
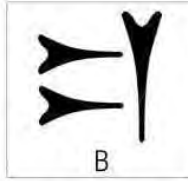
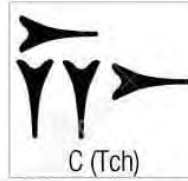
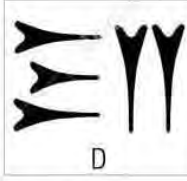

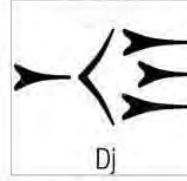
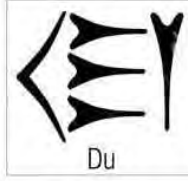
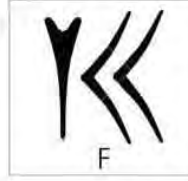
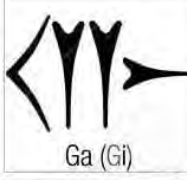
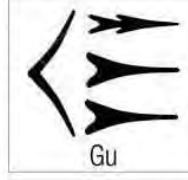
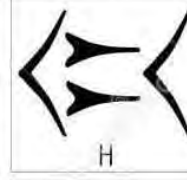

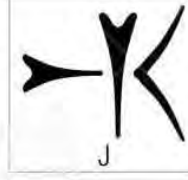
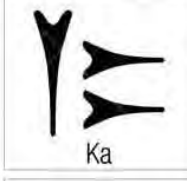
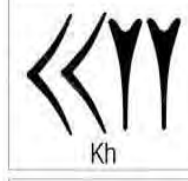
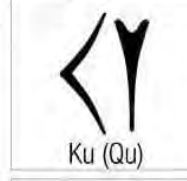
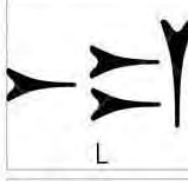
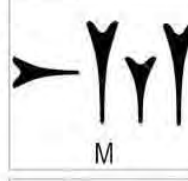
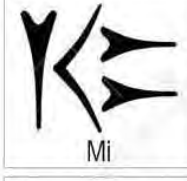
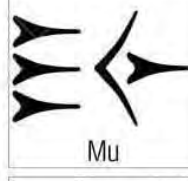
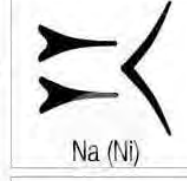
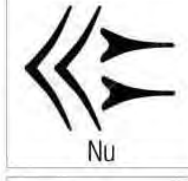

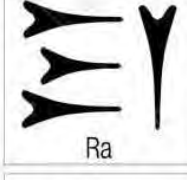
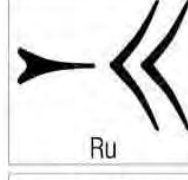
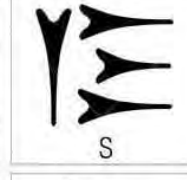
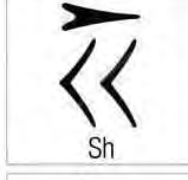
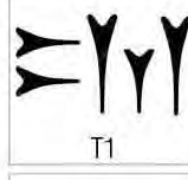
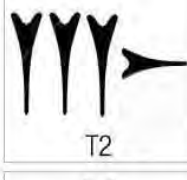
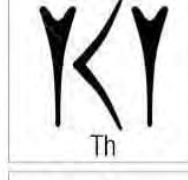
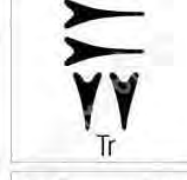

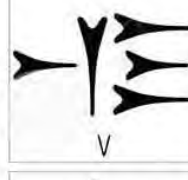


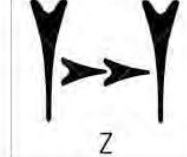




# Writing

## ⌘ Characteristics of Sumerian writing

- Each sound was composed of 3-5 strokes of the stylus
- Words had two types of dividers

## Cuneiform WRITING SYSTEM

- ⌘ Evidence of ancient Sumerian education
- ⌘ What was the purpose of the school (Edubba)?
- ⌘ Where did students learn?
- ⌘ Who went to school?



# Edduba Organization

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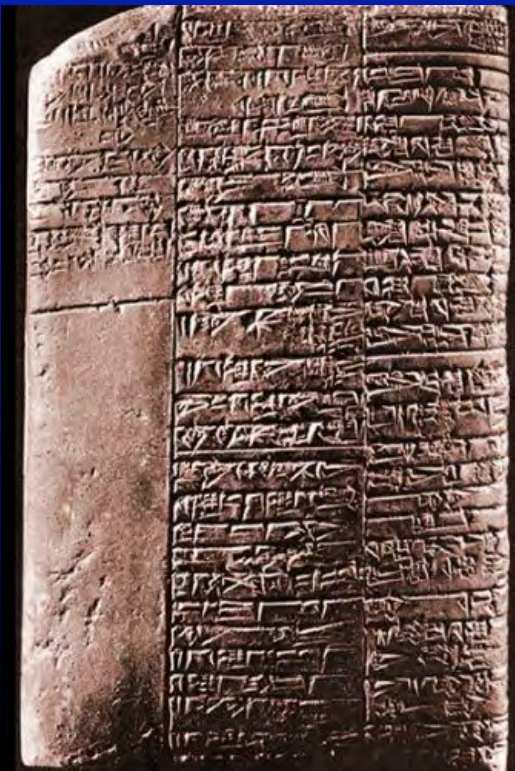
- *Ummia* - principal
- *Adda edubba*, “the father of the tablet house”
- *Ses edubba*, “brother of the tablet house”
- *Dummui edudbba*, “son of the tablet house”



# Literature

- ⌘ Two different types of tablets
  - Twelve-column tablets
  - Other type of tablets

## Sumerian Medical Text



# Atrahasis Epic

**“Let the birth-goddess create offspring, and let man bear the toil of the gods... create humanity that he may bear the yoke... let Nintu mix clay, that god and man may be thoroughly mixed in the clay, let there be a spirit from the god's flesh”**

**(Arnold/Beyer, 24)**

- **Akkadian 1650 BC**
- **Creation & flood stories**
- **Man created to help overworked gods**
- **Man made from clay**

# Atrahasis Epic

# Genesis 188i

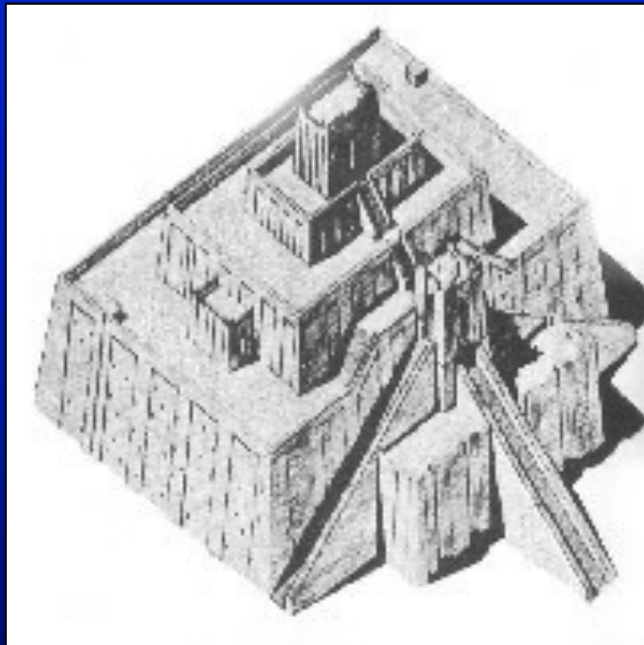
- Anu, the high god
- Man too noisy
- Atrahasis built boat
- Pitch used
- Animals caught
- Rained 7 days
- Regretted Flood

(Arnold/Beyer, 21-31)

- Yahweh, the only God
- Man too sinful
- Noah built boat
- Pitch used
- God brought animals
- Rained 40 days
- Rainbow promise

(Genesis 6-9)

## ⌘ Ziggurat



# Sumer Cosmology

- ⌘ Heaven - an
- ⌘ Atmosphere/ air/ wind - lil
- ⌘ Earth - ki
- ⌘ Sea/ abyss - absu
  
- ⌘ En - lord



# Gilgamesh Epic Tablet XI

- Nineveh, Iraq
- 650 BC
- Flood story similar to Gen. 6–9



# Four Leading Deities



(Tell Asmar)  
Baghdad)

Der

## ☿ An

- sky god
- male
- Uruk

## ☿ Enki

- god of abyss & wisdom
- male
- Eridu



## ☿ Enlil

- air god
- male
- Nippur



## ☿ Ninhursag

- female
- divine mother
- Enlil's wife



# 3 Astral Deities

## ☿ Nanna (later called Sin)

- the moon god
- male
- Ur

## ☼ Utu

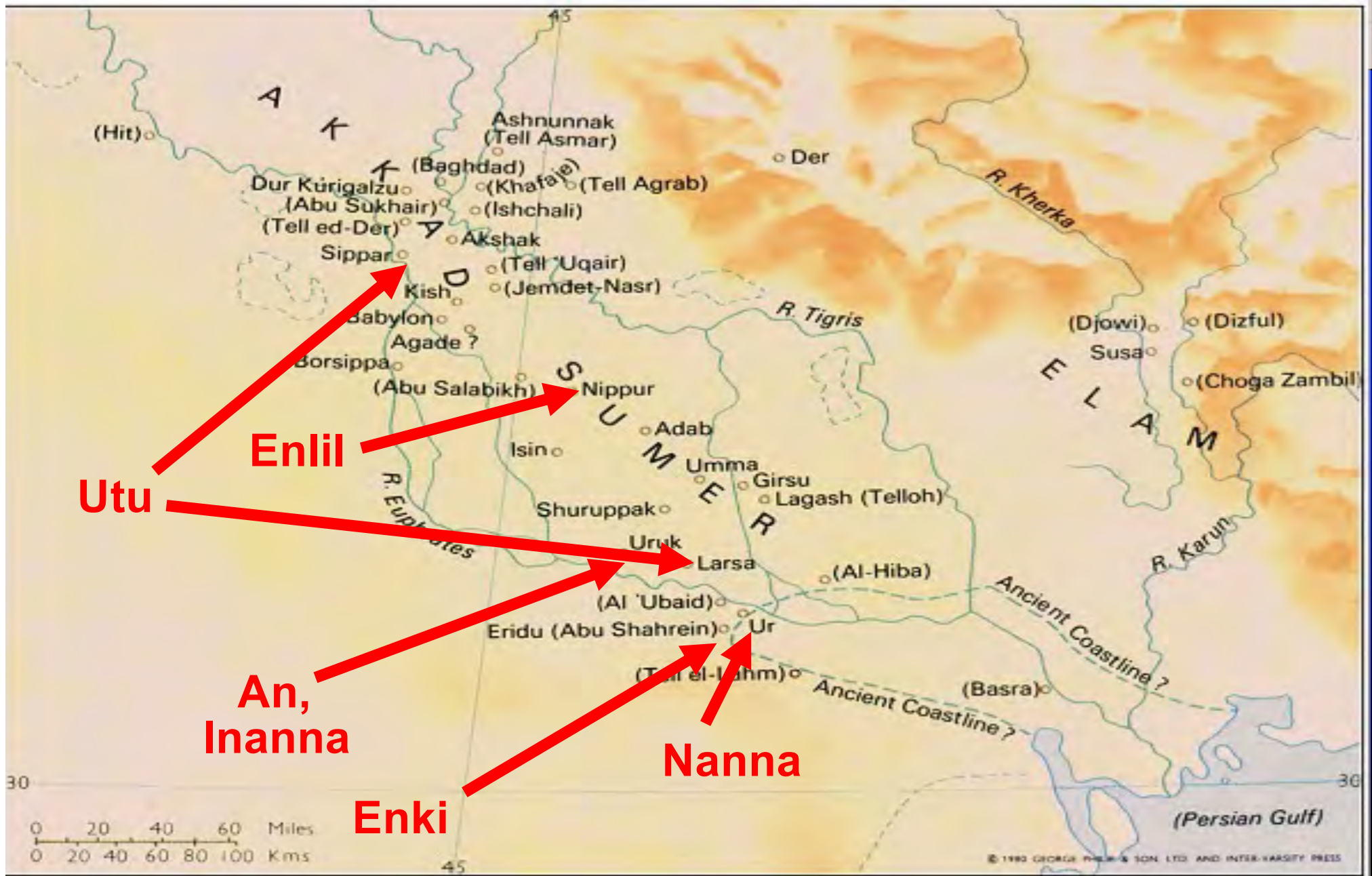
- sun god
- male
- Sippar and Larsa

## ♀ Inanna

- goddess of love & war
- female
- Uruk

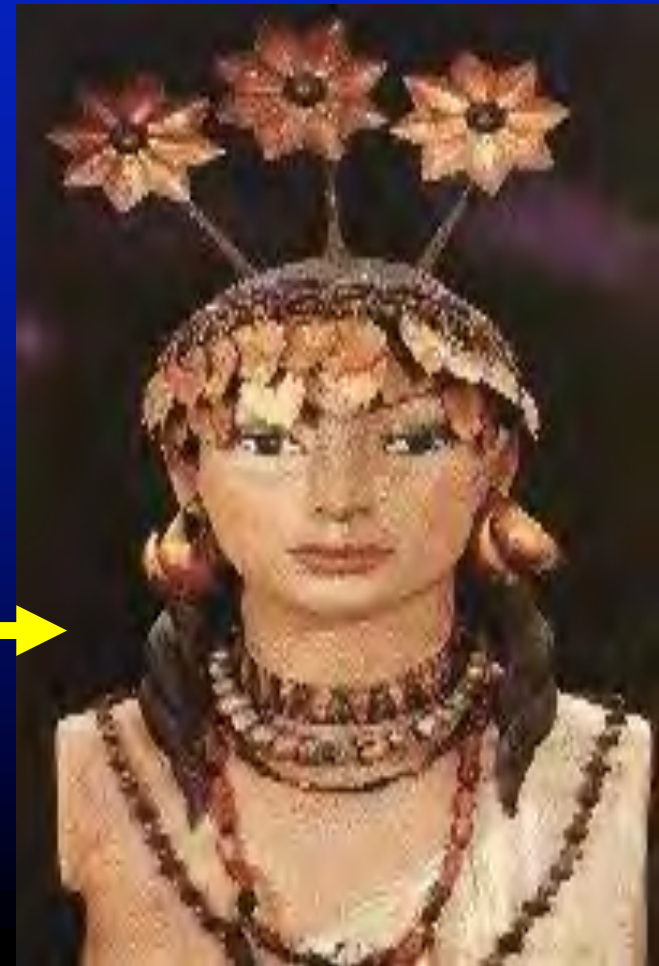


# Religion



# Religious Practices

- ⌘ Temple worship with sacrifices
- ⌘ Recitation of hymns and incantations
- ⌘ Feeding the gods
- ⌘ Appease offended spirits
- ⌘ Each deity is finely clothed



# Religious Practices

⌘ Celebrating the festival of *Ezen* at the new moon

⌘ Sumerian New Year - *Akiti*

⌘ Sacred Marriage



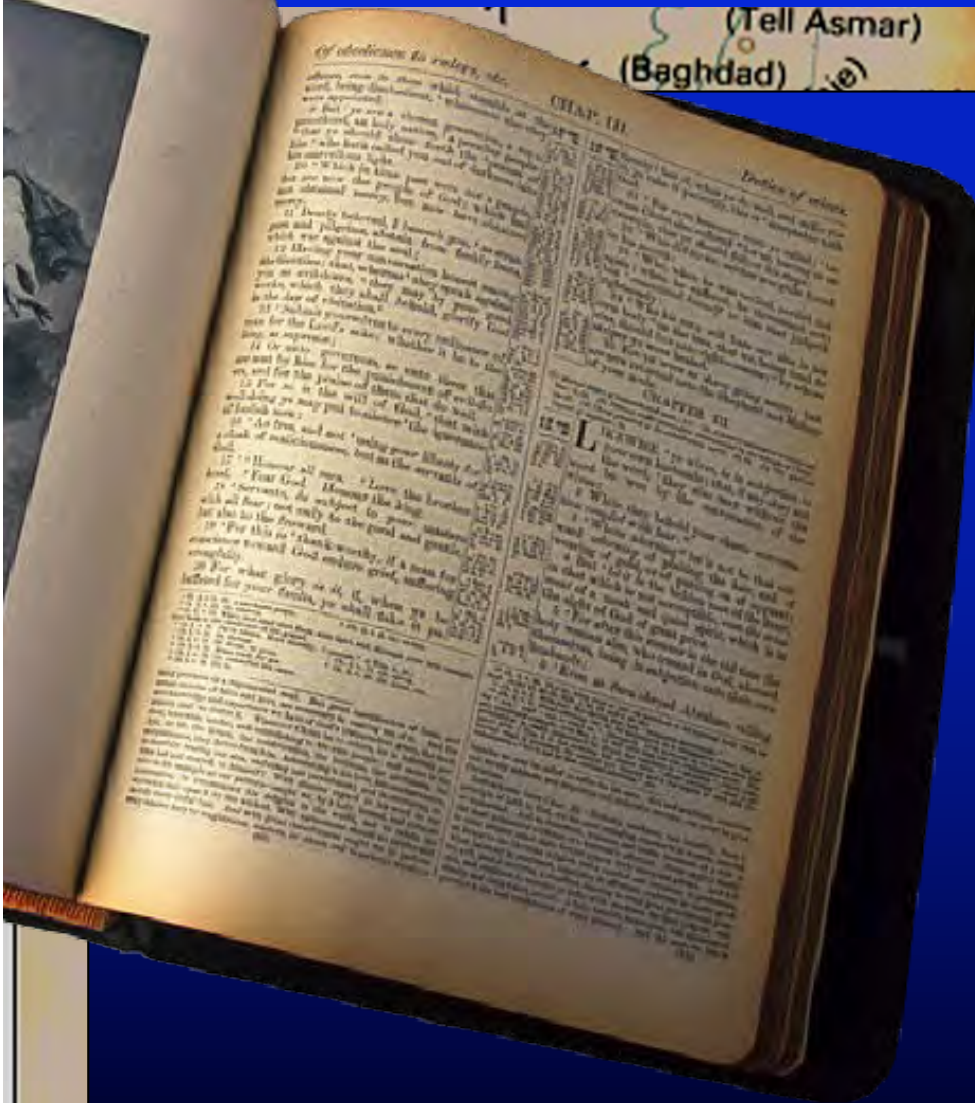
# Question...

So what's the point of knowing all this?



**Sumerian Math Tables**

# Understanding Sumerians and...



⌘ Their relation to the Old Testament

# Sumer Theology vs Torah

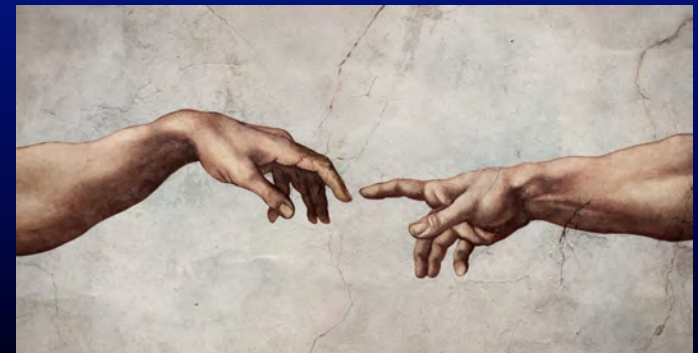
#1

Mankind was created to provide food for the lazy gods



Vs

Yahweh created man to rule over the earth and enjoy companionship with Yahweh



# Sumer Theology vs Torah

#2 True worship is:

α Polytheistic

Vs

α Monotheistic



# Sumer Theology vs Torah

#3


Sumerian gods had  
flawed character and  
personality

Vs

Yahweh is the perfect  
and infallible God  
incapable of sin and  
error



# City gods



<sup>31</sup> Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai, and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and left **Ur** of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But they stopped instead at the village of **Haran** and settled there. <sup>32</sup> Terah lived for 205 years and died while still at Haran.

*New Living Translation, Gen 11*

## Abram's understanding of Yahweh

<sup>19</sup> Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

“Blessed be Abram by **God Most High, (EL ELYON)**  
Creator of heaven and earth.

<sup>20</sup> And blessed be **God Most High,**  
who has helped you conquer your enemies.”

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

<sup>21</sup> The king of Sodom told him, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”

<sup>22</sup> Abram replied, “I have solemnly promised the Lord, **God Most High,** Creator of heaven and earth, <sup>23</sup> that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from you.

# The 3 Cs of Sumer

77

A map of Mesopotamia showing the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Labels include (Hit), (Tell Asmar), (Baghdad), and Der. A blue box is overlaid on the map, containing the text 'The 3 Cs of Sumer'.

**Civilization**

**Cuneiform**

**City gods**

# Writing was Sumer's greatest contribution

77



# The First City State



## Earliest Form of Government

**Sumerian King  
Temple Boss**

**Council of Elders**

**Free Adult Males**



# Invention of the Wheel

77

(Hit)  
(Baghdad)  
(Tell Asmar)  
Der



30

0

# Invention of the Wheel

(Hit)  
(Baghdad) (Tell Asmar) Der



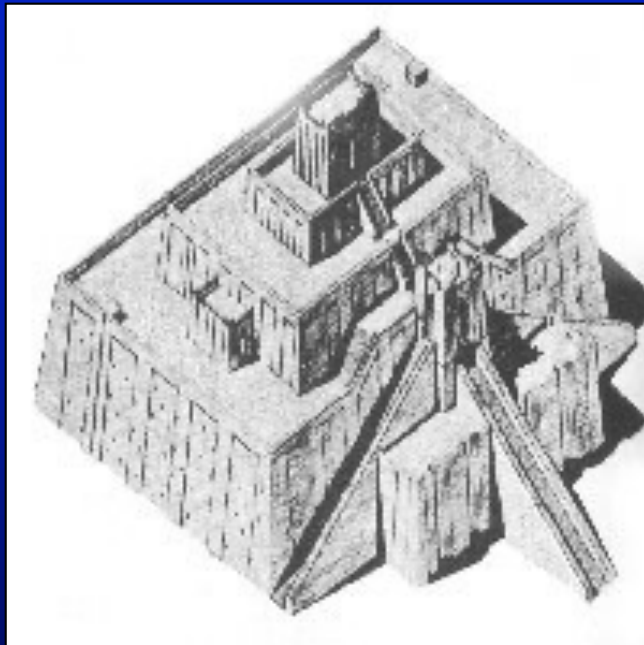
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# The Potter's Wheel



## α Ziggurat



# Lessons from Sumer

What principles can you discover regarding Sumer?

What does Abraham coming from this area say to us?



# Lessons from Sumer

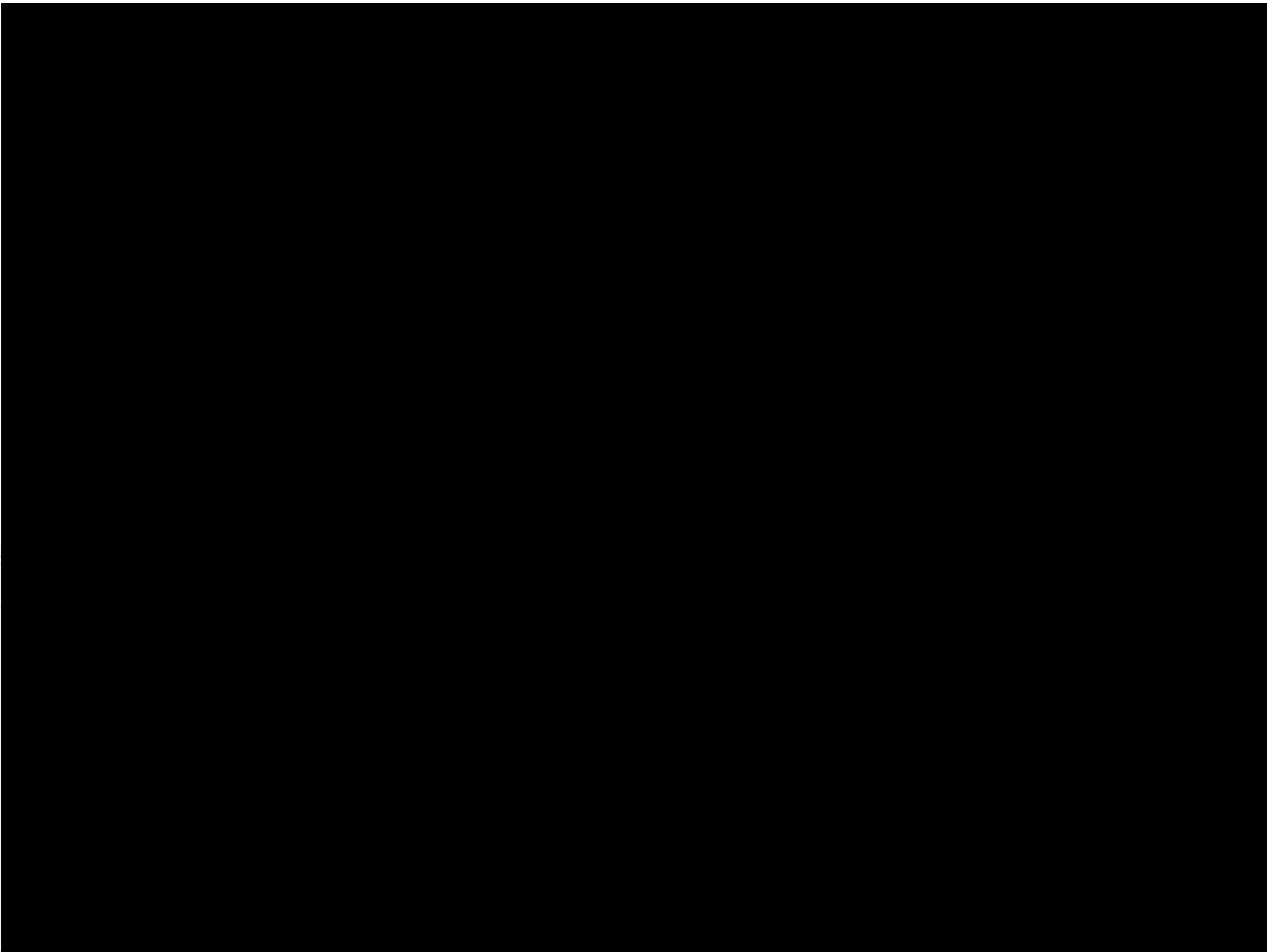
- **God brought Abraham out of his home in Sumer to give him a new start**
- **Abraham' training for rural life in Canaan was in the most advanced civilization of his day (Sumer)**
- **God often moves us physically to bring us into new avenues of His will**
- **God trains us to do His will but this does not mean He ever “overeducates” us**

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART  
THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST WING**



**THE SUMERIAN WINGED LION MEETS  
SMOOTCHIE-POOTCHIE**

# The Sumerians



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