Name: _____ Date: _____

Study Guide #9 Kingdoms and Empires in the Levant

The Phoenicians and the Philistines. As the large empires in Southwest Asia fell, new smaller states emerged to take their place. For example, the Phoenicians entered the trading vacuum opened by the fall of the Mycenaeans. A Semitic-speaking people who settled in what is now Lebanon, the Phoenicians came to dominate the Mediterranean trade, establishing a network of trading colonies, including Carthage. To keep trade records the Phoenicians developed an alphabet where each symbol represented a particular sound rather than a word or idea. Farther south, the Philistines arrived with a larger group of peoples who raided the civilizations of Southwest Asia. Unlike many of these peoples, however, the Philistines brought their families and eventually settled on the coast of Canaan in present-day Israel. They used iron weapons to defeat the Egyptians and found Philistia, or Palestine. Known for their ceramic ware, the Philistines prospered by trading with the Phoenicia, Egypt, and Cyprus.

The Hebrews. Originally nomadic pastoralists, the Hebrews were a Semitic-speaking group that eventually migrated to Palestine. The Hebrews claimed to be descendants of a Sumerian shepherd named Abraham who migrated with his family to Palestine. Each of Abraham's 12 great-grandsons established a tribe, and they called themselves the **Twelve Tribes of Israe**l. Some Hebrews eventually went to Egypt where they were enslaved.

Around 1200 B.C. Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt to search for the "promised land," an event called the **Exodus**. Moses and his followers went to Mount Sinai, where the Hebrew god Yahweh handed down the **Ten Commandments**, a set of moral laws. The Hebrews entered a **covenant**, or contract, with Yahweh, agreeing to follow his commandments. Eventually, the Hebrews developed **monotheism**, the belief in only one
God.

Around 1020 B.C. the Hebrews returned to Palestine, where they recognized that banding together would improve defense. They formed the Kingdom of Israel under the leadership of King Saul. Saul's successor, David, began a tradition of making a covenant between the people and the king similar to the one the people had made with God. Israel reached the height of its power under David's successor, Solomon. However, struggles over succession and foreign influences divided the kingdom into Israel and Judah. Although both kingdoms survived for several hundred years, they eventually fell to new imperial powers from Mesopotamia.

Under the relatively peaceful rule of the early Hebrew kings, the Hebrew religion began to take on a more definite character through an extended set of religious laws. In written form these laws, based on the teachings of Moses, were known as the **Torah**. Like the Code of Hammurabi, these laws demanded "an eye for an eye," but did not allow money payments as substitute punishment and set a higher value on human life.

The Assyrians and Chaldeans. The Assyrians, a Semitic-speaking people, established the city of Assur in northern Mesopotamia around 2000 B.C. However, the open terrain of the region made them easy prey for invaders. After repeated conquest, the Assyrians became determined never to be dominated again and organized formidable,

innovative army. They required all adult men to serve in the army, based promotions on ability, were the first to organize into regular units of uniform size, and pioneered the use of the iron battering ram, cavalry, and massed archers.

To maintain order, the Assyrians established a standardized system of law and government, and they developed a communication system based on a road network combined with a messenger system of relay riders. They also controlled the empire by inflicting cruel punishments on anyone who opposed them. To prevent revolts they would settle soldiers in conquered areas, and they would deport peoples from one area of the empire to another. For example, after conquering Israel they deported most of the Israelites to Assyria.

Assyrian ruthlessness led to a series of rebellions that made their empire vulnerable to the Medes, an Indo-European-speaking people, and the Chaldeans, a Semitic-speaking people from Babylon. After Chaldeans took control of much of the former Assyrian Empire, they also adopted the Assyrian's brutal tactics. For instance, when they conquered Judah they destroyed Solomon's great temple and deported Judah's entire population to Babylon in what became known as the **Babylonian Captivity**. The people of Judah became known as Jews and their deportation to Babylon marked the beginning of the Jewish **Diaspora**, or scattering. These people maintained their religion and identity even as they allowed their religion to be influenced by eastern ideas. The Chaldeans, too, were overthrown in 539 B.C. by another Indo-European group called the Persians.

Answer the questions below in your own words and in complete sentence. Highlight your evidence.

1. Why did the Phoenicians develop a written language and what was unique about it?

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2. How did the Philistines differ from other migratory groups in Southwest Asia?

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3. What were the results of the Hebrew Exodus?

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4. How was the code of Hebrew laws in the Torah like the Code of Hammurabi?

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5. What techniques did the Assyrians use to maintain their empire?

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6. How did Chaldean conquest affect the development of Jewish culture?

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