

# UNIT 2

## Southwest Asia (Middle East)



## **Chapter 4      The Geography and History of Southwest Asia (Middle East)**

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# Chapter 4

## The Geography and History of Southwest Asia (Middle East)

### Chapter Preview

#### People

Kurds, Arabs, Persians, Abraham, Moses, Saul, David, Solomon, Jesus, Muhammad, Gabriel, Rightly Guided Caliphs, Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden

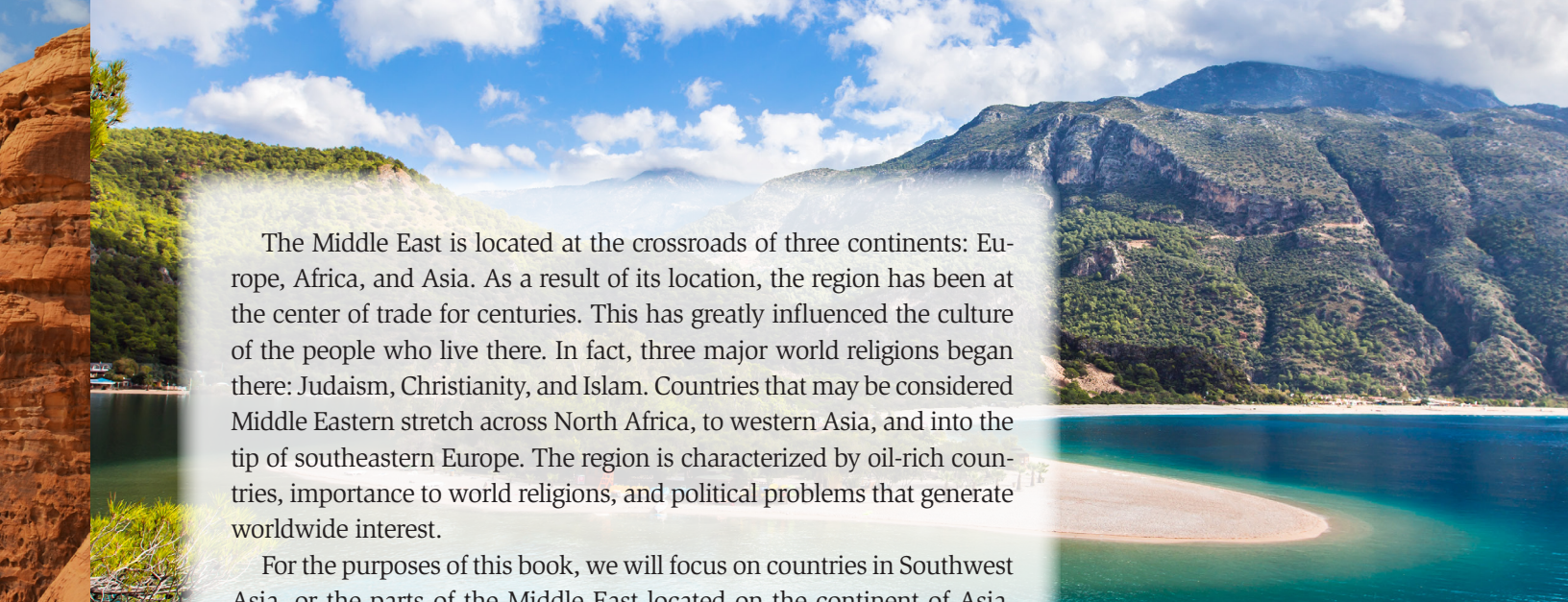
#### Places

Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, Tigris River, Euphrates River, Mediterranean Sea, West Bank, Gaza Strip, Red Sea, Jordan River, Canaan, Jerusalem, Mecca, Medina

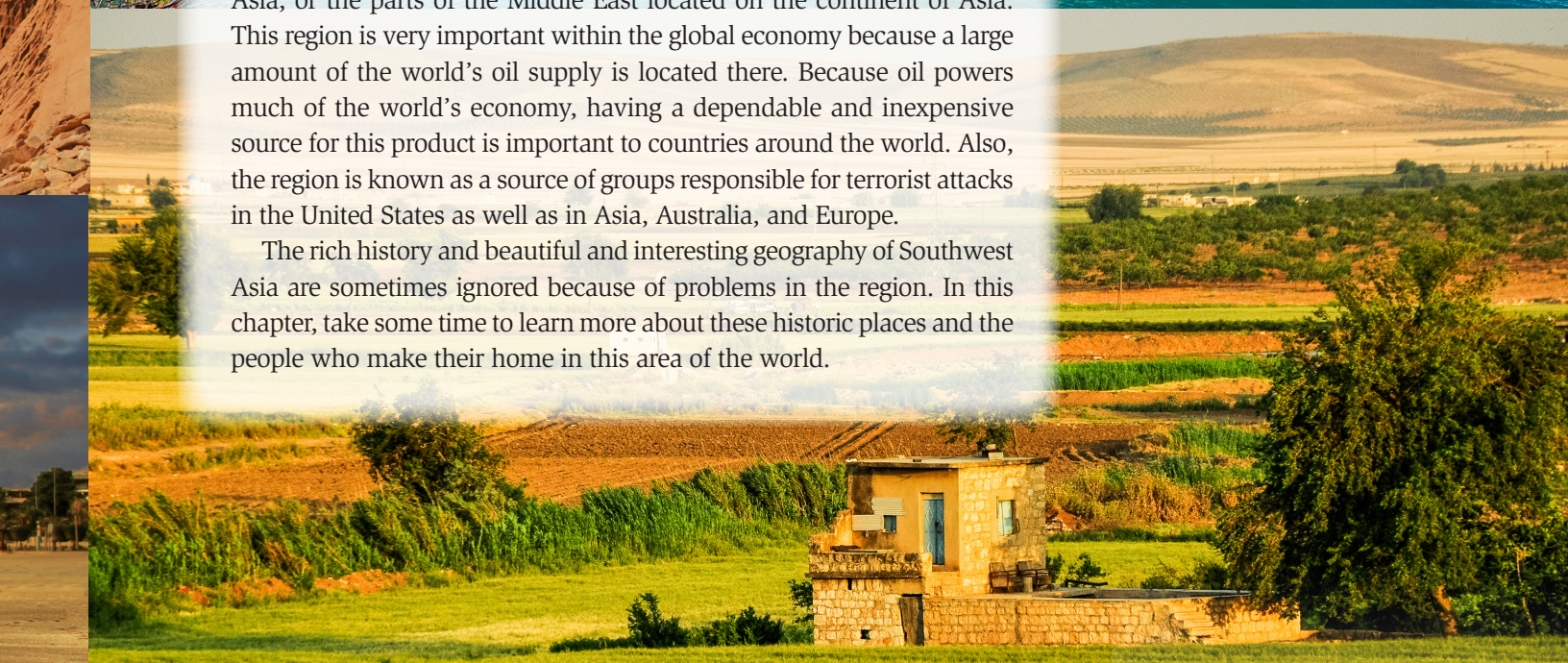
#### Terms

oasis, Suez Canal, nomad, subsistence agriculture, irrigation, reservoir, aquifer, fossil water, drip irrigation, desalination, ethnic group, religious group, monotheism, Judaism, polytheistic, Torah, Exodus, Ten Commandments, synagogue, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Christianity, disciple, New Testament, Messiah, crucifixion, resurrection, Bible, church, Islam, Ka'bah, Allah, Muslim, Quran, mosque, Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, al-Hijrah, Five Pillars, Sharia Law, petroleum, OPEC, Ottoman Empire, San Remo Agreement, nationalism, Palestinian-Israeli conflict, refugee, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, assimilate, ISIS, Operation Desert Storm, al-Qaeda, Taliban, Operation Iraqi Freedom


**Top:** Three of the world's largest religions have their roots in the Middle East. **Middle:** Kuwait City. **Bottom:** Tehran, Iran.



The Middle East is located at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia. As a result of its location, the region has been at the center of trade for centuries. This has greatly influenced the culture of the people who live there. In fact, three major world religions began there: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Countries that may be considered Middle Eastern stretch across North Africa, to western Asia, and into the tip of southeastern Europe. The region is characterized by oil-rich countries, importance to world religions, and political problems that generate worldwide interest.



For the purposes of this book, we will focus on countries in Southwest Asia, or the parts of the Middle East located on the continent of Asia. This region is very important within the global economy because a large amount of the world's oil supply is located there. Because oil powers much of the world's economy, having a dependable and inexpensive source for this product is important to countries around the world. Also, the region is known as a source of groups responsible for terrorist attacks in the United States as well as in Asia, Australia, and Europe.



The rich history and beautiful and interesting geography of Southwest Asia are sometimes ignored because of problems in the region. In this chapter, take some time to learn more about these historic places and the people who make their home in this area of the world.

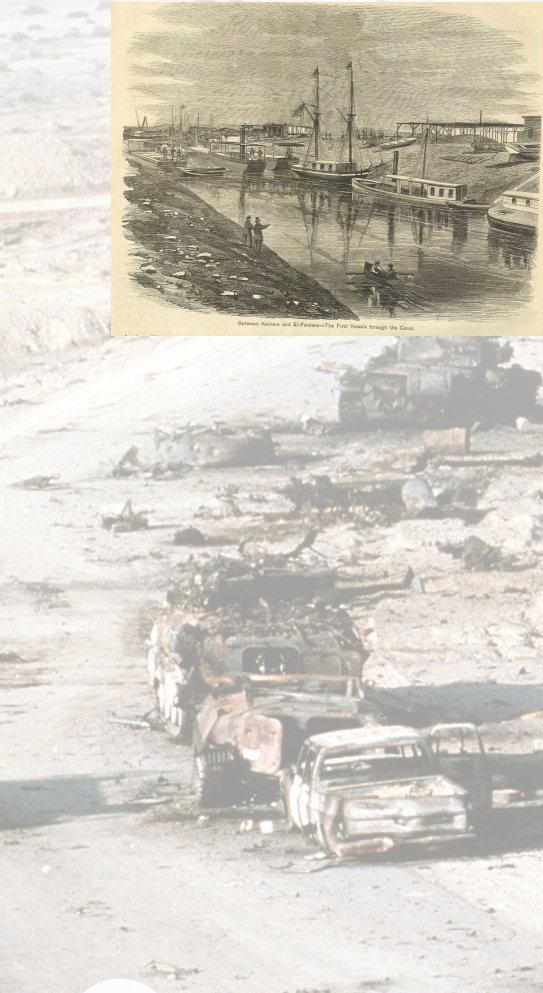
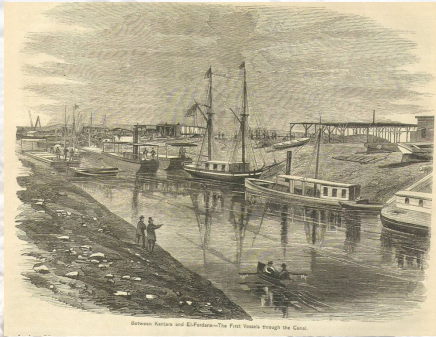
Turkey (**top**), Syria (**middle**) and Israel (**bottom**) are countries of the Middle East that are located in Southwest Asia.

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*In the Middle East, the conflict today is a matter of generations and not of cultures.*

- Shimon Peres, former President of Israel

**Top Left:** The birth of Jesus is shown in *Adoration of the Shepherds* by Gerard van Honthorst. **Middle Right:** Artist David Roberts depicted *The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans*. **Bottom Left:** The first ships passed through the Suez Canal in November 1869. **Background:** An attack by coalition members destroyed Iraqi armored personnel carriers, tanks, and trucks during Operation Desert Storm.



# TIMELINE

## OF SOUTHWEST ASIA HISTORY



Figure 4.1

1 AD

- 4** Approximate birth year of Jesus
- 70** Romans destroyed temple in Jerusalem
- 313** Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity a legal religion
- 570** Birth of Muhammad
- 622** First year of Islamic calendar
- 630** Muhammad conquered Mecca



1900

- 1869** Suez Canal built
- 1920** San Remo agreement
- 1948** Israel created as a Jewish homeland
- 1960** OPEC founded
- 1973** Arab-Israeli War led to OPEC oil embargo
- 1978** Turkish Kurds created Kurdistan Workers' Party
- 1990** Iraq invaded Kuwait
- 1991** Persian Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm) pushed Iraq out of Kuwait

2000

- 2001** Terrorist attacks of September 11 on the United States  
US invasion of Afghanistan
- 2003** Operation Iraqi Freedom
- 2005** Saddam Hussein found  
Elections held in Iraq
- 2011** Arab Spring began  
US Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden  
US troops withdrew from Iraq
- 2014** United States withdrew most troops from Afghanistan
- 2015** Over 2,000 killed in hajj stampede



**Map 4.1**  
**Southwest Asia**

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**Map Skill:** Imagine an oil tanker is traveling from Iraq to Georgia. List four bodies of water it might travel through before arriving in the state.

**Below:** This satellite image shows northern Africa at left, southwestern Asia at right, and southern Europe at the top.

## Section 1

# The Geography of Southwest Asia

### As you read, look for

Setting a Purpose

- ▶ the importance of the Suez Canal to trade;
- ▶ water issues in the region;
- ▶ how technology leads to environmental problems;
- ▶ countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Israel, West Bank, Gaza Strip, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait;
- ▶ rivers and bodies of water: Euphrates River, Tigris River, Jordan River, Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Suez Canal;
- ▶ deserts: Rub' al-Khali, Syrian Desert;
- ▶ terms: **oasis, Suez Canal, nomad, subsistence agriculture, irrigation, reservoir, aquifer, fossil water, drip irrigation, desalination.**

### Location of the Countries of Southwest Asia

The best thing to do when learning about a new region or continent is to learn where the countries are located. As you read about each country, follow along with the map on the previous page or in the back of the book. This will help to create a mental map so you will know where the Southwest Asia countries are located in relation to one another as you learn about them.





Find the country of Afghanistan on the map and place your finger on it. Afghanistan is located at the far eastern edge of Southwest Asia. Afghanistan is landlocked, which means it does not border any major bodies of water. The country is very mountainous, and the people who live there are divided into a number of different ethnic groups or tribes. Afghanistan was at the center of world attention after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States because it was seen as a location where terrorists could hide and train.

Find Iran on the map and place your finger on it. Iran is located to the west of Afghanistan and is one of the largest countries in Southwest Asia. Like Afghanistan, it is also mountainous; however, unlike Afghanistan, it has long coastlines on the Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea, and Arabian Sea. Iran takes advantage of its location on the Persian Gulf to use the Strait of Hormuz to ship petroleum and other goods to the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean where they can reach many world markets.

Located just west of Iran is the country of Iraq. Find Iraq on the map and put your finger on it. It has a small amount of coastline on the Persian Gulf, and two of the largest rivers in Southwest Asia—the Tigris and Euphrates—flow through Iraq. In southern Iraq, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers join together and form a waterway called the Shatt al-Arab. This river runs for 125 miles before flowing into the Persian Gulf. It also serves as part of the border between Iraq and Iran and has caused several disputes between the two countries.

Now, move your finger to the northwest of Iraq and you will find the country of Syria. Although much of the land is covered with desert, Syria does have a coastline on the Mediterranean Sea. The narrow coastal plain found along the Mediterranean is where much of Syria's agricultural activity occurs. The capital of Syria, Damascus, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. It is located near a large oasis. An **oasis** is a spring of fresh water found in a desert.

Directly north of Syria is the country of Turkey. Find Turkey on your map and put your finger on it. Turkey borders Iraq, Syria, and Iran in Southwest Asia. The Euphrates and Tigris Rivers both begin in the mountains of Turkey. Recently, Turkey has been building dams along both of these rivers to create reservoirs to help with irrigation. These dams, however, have caused problems for countries downstream that are getting less water.



**Top:** Kabul is the capital of the mountainous country of Afghanistan. This war-torn country has been at the center of conflicts for many years. **Above:** Shatt al-Arab (“Stream of the Arabs”) is formed when the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers come together before emptying into the Persian Gulf. This part of the waterway runs through a military camp in Basra, Iraq.





Now move your finger south from Turkey, following the Mediterranean Sea coastline. You will pass over Syria and then the country of Lebanon. South of Lebanon is the country of Israel. Until 1948, this area was known as Palestine. In 1948, following World War II, the United Nations divided Palestine between the Arabs and Jews. Israel was created as a Jewish homeland. Look more closely at Israel, and find the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These are territories where the Palestinian Arabs live today. The Gaza Strip is located between Israel and the Mediterranean Sea. Its area is only 140 square miles, which is a bit larger than the area of Atlanta. The West Bank is located between Israel and Jordan, along the banks of the Jordan River.

Take your finger and travel west from the West Bank through Jordan. Then you should arrive at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the largest country on the Arabian Peninsula. Most of the land in Saudi Arabia is covered with desert. It has coasts along the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia is one of the largest oil-producing countries in the world!

Finally, find the tiny country of Kuwait located north of the northeast corner of Saudi Arabia and put your finger on it. Do you think it looks like a heart? It would make sense for it to be heart-shaped since it is in the heart, or center, of Southwest Asia. Kuwait has a large amount of oil and has an important location on the Persian Gulf. In fact, Kuwait's oil reserves led to the Persian Gulf War in 1990-1991. Iraq invaded Kuwait for control of their oil fields. You will learn more about this conflict later.

Now you should have a mental image of Southwest Asia and where the countries are within the region. Keep practicing the countries' locations until you have them memorized. You will need a clear understanding of their locations in order to understand their history, government, and economies.

### Major Bodies of Water in Southwest Asia

Now it is time to learn about the physical features of this region. Turn to the map in this chapter. Locate the major bodies of water as you learn about them.

As you may have noticed, much of Southwest Asia is covered with deserts. As a result of this hot and dry climate, rivers are very important to the region's people. There are three major river systems in Southwest Asia: the Euphrates River, the Tigris River, and the Jordan River. These rivers are an important source of fresh water that is used both for drinking and irrigation. These rivers are used for the transportation of goods and people. Many people live along these rivers, and many of the largest cities in Southwest Asia are located along them. These cities and towns are also centers of industry. Finally, these rivers are important because they provide boundaries between nations.



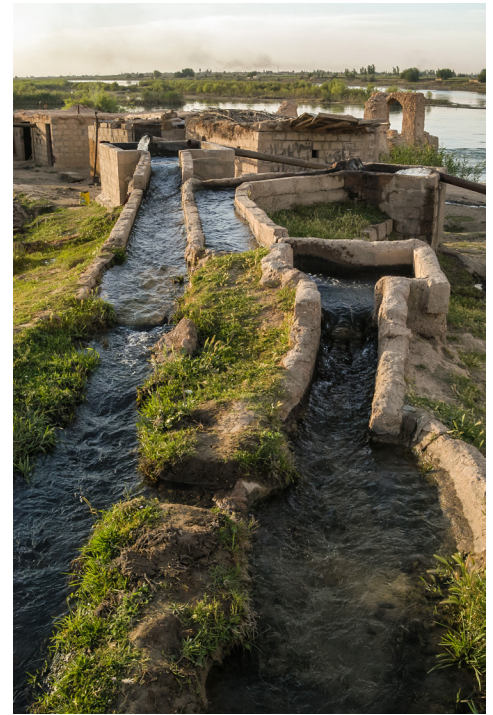
**Top:** Both the old city and the modern city of Jerusalem, Israel, are seen in this view from the Mount of Olives.

**Above:** Hasankeyf is an ancient town and district on the Tigris River in southeastern Turkey. It has been declared a natural conservation area.

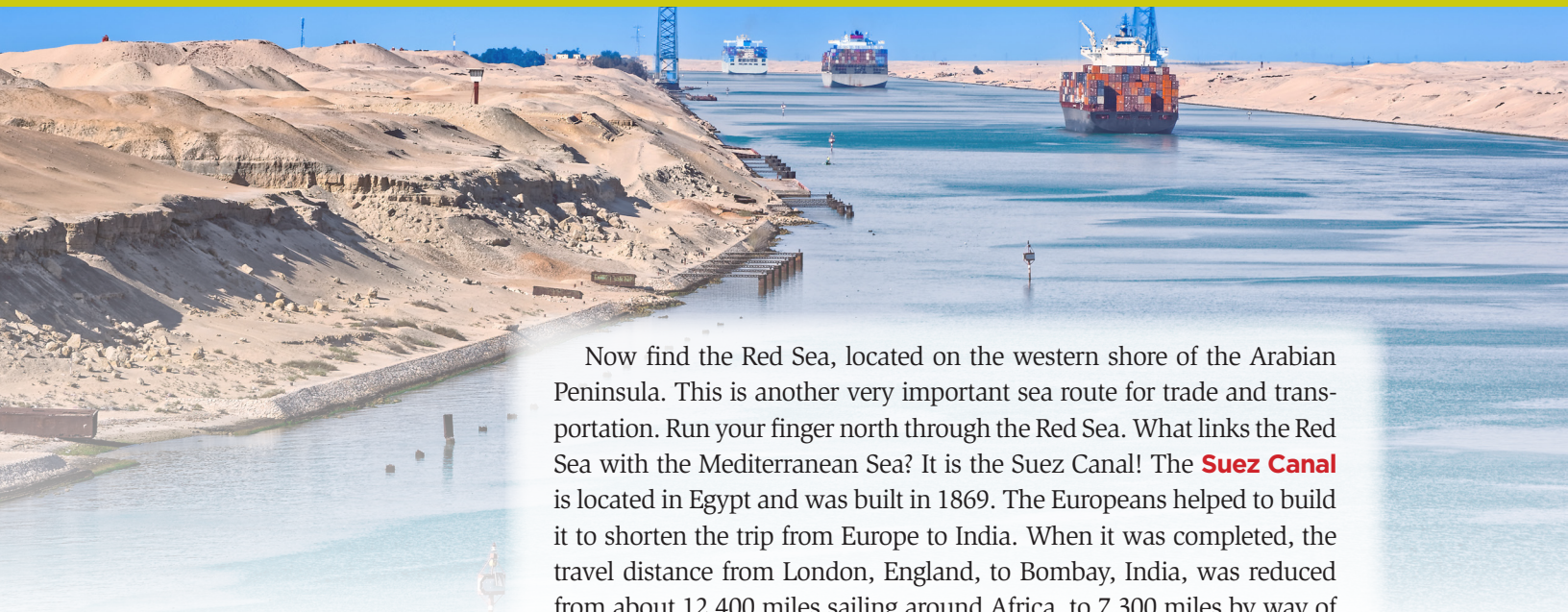
On a map of Southwest Asia, find the Euphrates River and the Tigris River. Trace their paths through the region before ending in the Persian Gulf. The Euphrates River is one of the longest rivers in the world. It begins in Turkey and flows through Syria and Iraq before joining with the Tigris River to finish its journey to the Persian Gulf. The Tigris River is a bit smaller than the Euphrates, but it is still very valuable. It begins in Turkey as well and then flows through Iraq to the Persian Gulf. These two rivers provide fresh water that is used for drinking and irrigation. The countries that share these rivers have had problems over how the water will be shared among them.

The smallest of the three river systems is the Jordan River. Now find the Jordan River. It is very small and hard to locate. The tributaries of the Jordan River begin in the mountains of Lebanon and Syria and flow south through Israel before reaching the Sea of Galilee. The Jordan River begins at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee. It flows south before ending at the Dead Sea—which is so salty that nothing can live in it. The Jordan River is one of the main sources of fresh water for Israel, Jordan, parts of Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. It is also important because it is the political boundary between Israel and the West Bank, a small part of Syria, and the country of Jordan.

Located in the center of Southwest Asia is the Persian Gulf. Find the Persian Gulf and put your finger on it. Your finger is now resting on the center of all oil production in Southwest Asia. It is very important for the transportation of oil. The countries of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other countries along the gulf use its waters to ship oil to other parts of the world. In fact, all countries in Southwest Asia that produce oil depend on the Persian Gulf as a shipping route. Before the Persian Gulf flows into the Arabian Sea, the water must pass through a strait (narrow waterway) called the Strait of Hormuz. Run your finger from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz to the Arabian Sea. Once in the Arabian Sea, ships can sail west toward Africa and the Red Sea or they can sail east toward India.



**Above:** This ancient canal system near Dura Europos, Syria, was constructed to divert water from the Euphrates River for irrigation. **Left:** A night view shows activity in a busy industrial port in Kuwait.



Now find the Red Sea, located on the western shore of the Arabian Peninsula. This is another very important sea route for trade and transportation. Run your finger north through the Red Sea. What links the Red Sea with the Mediterranean Sea? It is the Suez Canal! The **Suez Canal** is located in Egypt and was built in 1869. The Europeans helped to build it to shorten the trip from Europe to India. When it was completed, the travel distance from London, England, to Bombay, India, was reduced from about 12,400 miles sailing around Africa, to 7,300 miles by way of the canal. By the early 20th century, the journey from London through the canal to Bombay could be made in as little as three weeks.

### Deserts in Southwest Asia

The climate of Southwest Asia is hot and dry. Even though Southwest Asia is surrounded by many large bodies of water like the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean, much of the land is still very dry. Mountain ranges that are close to the coasts block rains coming from these bodies of water, which means that a lot of the interior of Southwest Asia is desert. However, some parts of this region have enough water to support agriculture. It is in these areas with access to water that the largest cities in Southwest Asia have developed.

The largest all-sand desert in the world is located on the Arabian Peninsula. It is called the Rub' al-Khali, or "Empty Quarter." There is also a large desert called the Syrian Desert located between Syria and Iraq. These deserts have shaped the history of Southwest Asia. At times throughout history, they have acted as protection and have shielded the people from invaders. However, the people of Southwest Asia have had to adapt to their harsh environment. For a long period of history, the people who lived in this region were **nomads**, meaning they moved from place to place. Usually nomads herd livestock and move them from oasis to oasis in the desert. The Bedouins are the largest group of nomads on the Arabian Peninsula. Their lifestyle is slowly disappearing as the governments restrict their movements.

As the nomadic lifestyle has declined, a number of people in Southwest Asia have begun to farm. Many people practice **subsistence agriculture**, which means they grow small amounts of crops that are enough for a family's survival. Because the climate is so hot and dry, farmers must depend on **irrigation** (watering crops so they will continue to grow when there is insufficient rainfall). In some of the milder areas with better access to fresh water, there are even some commercial farms that can grow large amounts of crops that are sold at markets for profit.



**Top:** This convoy of ships is passing through the Suez Canal. **Above:** The Rub' al-Khali, or "Empty Quarter," encompasses one-third of the Arabian Peninsula, including parts of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman (pictured here).

## Environmental Issues of Southwest Asia

Water is a very important resource in Southwest Asia for both farming and trading. Because the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow through more than one country, access to water has led to political conflicts in recent years. Several countries have built dams along their section of these rivers to create **reservoirs** (lakes where water is stored) for irrigation and to generate hydroelectric power (electricity). Each dam reduces the amount of water available to countries further downstream. No agriculture or animal herding can take place without access to adequate sources of fresh water.

Fresh water is distributed unevenly in Southwest Asia. Some countries, like Turkey and Iraq, have major rivers that provide enough water for farming communities. Israel, Syria, and Jordan share the Jordan River. Others, like Saudi Arabia, have almost no water. They are mostly made up of desert. Still others, like Iran, have areas with access to rivers and areas that are made up of deserts.

As a result of the short supply of water, irrigation is necessary for those who want to farm and raise livestock. Many types of irrigation can be found in Southwest Asia. Some farmers use underground **aquifers** (layers of underground rock where water runoff from rains and streams is trapped) as a source of water. Other farmers use water from wells that tap into **fossil water** (water that has been underground for centuries). A problem with both aquifers and fossil water is that the amount of water they have is fixed and cannot be replaced once it is used up. Farmers in rural areas are still using methods that their ancestors used to irrigate their fields. These traditional methods include waterwheels, irrigation ditches and canals, and animal power to lift water from underground wells.

Technology is helping farmers use water more efficiently with new irrigation techniques. Israel and Saudi Arabia have developed systems of **drip irrigation**, in which computers measure how much water each plant receives. This system reduces the amount of water that is wasted when plants are overwatered. There has also been a lot of research on how to desalinate seawater for drinking and irrigation. **Desalination** is the process of removing salt and other chemicals from seawater. While desalination sounds like it could solve Southwest Asia's water scarcity problems, it has its drawbacks. Desalination is very expensive and requires complex technology, which means poorer countries cannot afford it.



**Above:** The origins of the Aflaj Irrigation Systems of Oman may date back to AD 500, but some 3,000 such systems are still in use in Oman. The round building is one of the watchtowers built to defend the water systems. **Left:** The Ataturk Dam on the Euphrates River is the largest dam in Turkey.





Countries in Southwest Asia have also used technology to modernize their agricultural techniques. These new techniques allow farms to be more productive, but they have also led to water pollution. As farms grow larger, the amount of water they need for irrigation increases. This has led to the overuse of rivers and streams. Farmers are also using chemical fertilizers now to help their crops grow faster and be more productive. However, these chemicals have contaminated water supplies. When it rains or the ground is heavily irrigated, these chemicals run off into rivers and streams, which leads to water pollution. Another problem with the use of fertilizers is that eventually salts will build up in the soil, which will make it difficult to grow anything. Many places in Southwest Asia that have been irrigated for years no longer produce anything.

There has been a rush to develop industry in Southwest Asia. As a result, many cities and towns have grown very quickly. Unfortunately, cities sometimes have not been as quick to develop infrastructure such as waste management (garbage) and sewer systems to keep up with rapid growth. As a result, garbage and sewage end up in the region's rivers.

## Reviewing the Section

1. What are the three most important rivers in Southwest Asia? Why are they so important?
2. Why is the Suez Canal important for trade?
3. What is irrigation? Why is it important in Southwest Asia?
4. Copy the chart below and fill it in with information from the reading.

Source of Water	Definition	Benefit	Drawback
Aquifer			
Fossil Water			
Desalination			

5. How has technology led to environmental problems?
6. Putting It All Together: How has the geography of Southwest Asia affected where people live and how they trade? Where do most people live and why? Which physical features make trade easier, and which physical features make trade more difficult?

**Above:** These oil refineries are in an industrial zone of Haifa, Israel.

## Section 2

# The People of Southwest Asia



### As you read, look for

- ▶ ethnic groups and religious groups in the region;
- ▶ monotheism and the three religions that originated in Southwest Asia;
- ▶ terms: **ethnic group, religious group, monotheism, Judaism, polytheistic, Torah, Exodus, Ten Commandments, synagogue, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Christianity, disciple, New Testament, Messiah, crucifixion, resurrection, Bible, church, Islam, Ka'bah, Allah, Muslim, Quran, mosque, Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, al-Hijrah, Five Pillars, Sharia Law.**

## Ethnic Groups in Southwest Asia

Stop for a moment and think about the different ways people can be grouped together. Some examples are nationality, gender, religion, or even a certain sports team or hobby. In human geography, there are two main ways people are divided: ethnic groups and religious groups. The people of Southwest Asia fall into many ethnic groups and religious groups that often overlap.

An **ethnic group** is a group of people who share cultural ideas and beliefs that have been a part of their community for generations. Some of the characteristics include language, religious beliefs, history, types of foods, and a set of traditional stories, beliefs, or celebrations. These things make up a common culture that is shared by people in the same ethnic group. There are many different ethnic groups found throughout Southwest Asia. Three of the largest are the Kurds, Arabs, and Persians.

 A large crowd of people, many wearing traditional headscarves, are gathered together. Many are raising their hands in a gesture of peace or celebration. Some are holding flags. The scene is festive and crowded.
 

**Background:** Kurds celebrate Newroz, the festival of the spring equinox, in the Zeytinburnu neighborhood of Istanbul.

### Kurds

The Kurds live in a mountain region that spans Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Kurds speak Kurdish, and most are Sunni Muslims. Kurds do not have their own homeland or government. They are a minority group ruled by the country where they live. Many Kurds hope that one day they will have their own country.



### Arabs

Arabs are the largest ethnic group in Southwest Asia. Most Arabs speak Arabic as their primary language. There is a lot of diversity among the Arabs in regard to religious beliefs. Many Arabs are Sunni Muslims. However, some Arabs are Shia Muslims, while others are Christians. Being part of an ethnic group does not mean that everyone follows the same religion. Ethnic groups focus more on a shared culture and history.



### Persians

Persians are another ethnic group in Southwest Asia. You might have heard of the Persian Empire. These people are the descendants of that great empire. Persians mainly live in Iran. In fact, the country of Persia changed its name to Iran after World War I. Persians speak a language called Farsi. While Farsi uses the same alphabet as Arabic, it is a different language. Most Persians practice Islam, and they mainly practice Shia Islam.

## Religious Groups in Southwest Asia

The other main way people are grouped is based on religious beliefs. A **religious group** shares a belief system in a god or gods, with a specific set of rituals and literature. People from different ethnic groups may share the same religion even though their cultures might be very different. Religion has been very important in the history and government of Southwest Asia. Three of the largest religions in the world began in Southwest Asia: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

All three of the religions have some similarities. One of the biggest similarities is **monotheism**, which is the belief in one god. These religions also all have a sacred text and place of worship, and Abraham is an important figure in all of them.

**Top Left:** Many Saudi Arabian men wear a red-and-white-checked *ghutra* headdress, which is secured to the head with a black cord called an *igal*.

**Middle Right:** This Persian family, like many in the ancient village of Abyaneh, Iran, continue to wear their traditional costumes.

Even though Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have a lot in common, there has been conflict among these groups throughout the history of Southwest Asia. Today, Israel is the only country that mainly practices Judaism. The rest of the countries in Southwest Asia mainly practice Islam. Christianity is a minority religion in many Southwest Asia countries.

## Judaism

**Judaism** is the oldest of the three dominant religions in Southwest Asia. It traces its origins back to Abraham, a man born in Mesopotamia (an area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) in approximately 2000 BC. He was one of the first people to believe in only one god. Most of the people who lived in Mesopotamia were **polytheistic**, which means they believed in more than one god. According to the **Torah**, the Jewish sacred text, God made a covenant, or agreement, with Abraham. God promised Abraham a new nation if he would dedicate himself and the Hebrew people to monotheism. Abraham left Mesopotamia and went to a land that he believed God promised him. This land was called Canaan and is part of the country of Israel today.

The Hebrews lived in a land that was surrounded by other powerful kingdoms. Around 1300-1200 BC, the Hebrews were forced into slavery in Egypt. After years of suffering, Moses led them out of slavery. This escape is known as the **Exodus**, and it is remembered every year with the celebration of Passover. During their journey back to Canaan, God revealed **Ten Commandments** (divine rules of conduct) to Moses and the Hebrews. Eventually, the Hebrews returned to Canaan and lived in twelve self-governing tribes. The largest of these was called Judah, which is where the name Judaism comes from.

**Below:** Jewish men in prayer shawls pray at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Israel.







Eventually, these tribes united into one kingdom called Israel. They were ruled by many powerful kings, like Saul, David, and Solomon. David established the city of Jerusalem, and Solomon would later build a great temple there. However, the Israelites struggled in conflicts with powerful neighbors. The Israelites would eventually lose control of their lands to the Roman Empire. In AD 70, the Romans destroyed most of the second temple in Jerusalem. The only remaining part of the temple is the Western Wall, which is now also known as the Wailing Wall and is a place where Jews go to pray in Jerusalem. At this point in history, the Jews were forced out of their lands and were scattered throughout the world. This is known as the diaspora, or scattering of the Jews. Even though they lost control of Jerusalem and their lands, Jews still believed that this was the land God promised to them.

Today, Jews can be found throughout the world. While some traditions may vary between groups of Jews, there are some things that are the same. Followers of Judaism are called Jews. The sacred text is called the Torah. Jews worship in a **synagogue** or temple. Some of the important Jewish holidays include **Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) and **Rosh Hashanah** (Jewish New Year).



**Top:** The Western Wall is the only remaining part of the second temple in Jerusalem. Often called the “Wailing Wall,” it is a traditional place for Jews to pray. **Above:** A handwritten Torah, along with a *kippah* (skullcap) and *tallit* (fringed prayer shawl), lie on a synagogue altar.

### Christianity

**Christianity** is the second-oldest religion that originated in Southwest Asia. It began in the first century AD. Christianity is a religious movement that grew out of Judaism during the time of Roman rule in Palestine. The founding figure in Christianity is Jesus, a man who was born in Bethlehem in Judea to a Jewish family in about 4 BC. Jesus lived in Nazareth and worked as a carpenter until he began to attract attention as a teacher and preacher when he reached the age of thirty. Even though Jesus followed Jewish law and beliefs, he taught about a more personal relationship with God that focused on both the love of God and the generous treatment of neighbors and acquaintances. His followers were called **disciples**, and much of their writings provide what we know about the life and teachings of Jesus. In fact, the first four books of the **New Testament** are made of these writings. They are often referred to as the Gospels.



Many Roman and Jewish leaders grew worried about the attention Jesus attracted among the common people. His followers were calling him the **Messiah**, or “savior of man,” that Jews had been waiting for. Jewish leaders claimed that Jesus was encouraging his followers to believe this and was therefore guilty of crimes against Jewish teachings. Pontius Pilate, a Roman governor, saw Jesus as a threat to his authority and that of the Roman Empire. As a result, Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion. During this time, **crucifixion** was a common form of execution in which a person was nailed or tied to a cross and suspended there until he died.

Jesus’s followers believed that he rose from the dead after three days and walked among them before going to heaven. They continued to call him the Messiah or the Greek word “Christos,” which was eventually shortened to “Christ.” They also called him the “Son of God.” News of Jesus’s **resurrection**, or rising from the dead, began to spread quickly. The resurrection along with his teachings became the basis for Christianity.

The Romans were angered by this new religion because followers refused to worship the Roman gods and goddesses. Many early Christians were killed by Roman authorities in the years after Jesus’s time, but the religion continued to gain new followers. People liked the new religion because it emphasized the teachings from the Old Testament as well as the loving and forgiving God that Jesus described. By the year AD 300, Christianity had spread to most parts of the Roman Empire. In AD 313, Roman Emperor Constantine officially ended the harsh treatment of Christians and made Christianity a legal religion within the empire. This allowed Christianity to gain even more followers and continue to spread.

Today, Christianity is the largest religion in the world. Followers, who are called Christians, can be found on all the continents. While some traditions vary among different denominations of Christianity, many of the main beliefs and traditions are the same. The biggest difference between Judaism and Christianity is that Christians believe Jesus was the Messiah. The Christian sacred text is called the **Bible**. The first five books of the Christian Bible are the same as the text of the Jewish Torah. Christians worship in a **church** or cathedral. Some of the important Christian holidays include Christmas (celebrating Jesus’s birth) and Easter (celebrating Jesus’s resurrection).



**Top:** The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Israel, is built on the site traditionally believed to be the birthplace of Christ. **Above:** The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is said to have been built on two of Christianity’s most important places: the site of Jesus’s execution and the site of his burial and resurrection.



## Islam

The third religion that began in Southwest Asia is **Islam**. It began in the city of Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula in the AD 600s. Before Islam began, Mecca was a center for trade along a route that connected the Red Sea with the Byzantine Empire. Many different people visited Mecca because it was a stop on the trade route. In the center of town stood a cube-shaped building, the **Ka'bah**, which held several hundred different idols. The people of Mecca believed that the building had originally been built by Abraham and his son, Ishmael,

to honor God for saving them from dying in the desert. Over the centuries, however, statues of many idols and gods were placed in the building.

Muhammad was born in Mecca in AD 570. Orphaned at an early age, he went to live with his uncle, who trained him to be a merchant. Muhammad married an older woman and took over her caravan business and became a respected member of the Mecca community. His life changed at the age of forty, when he heard the voice of the angel Gabriel telling him to bring the word of **Allah**, or the one God, to the people. After much worrying and discussions with his wife, Muhammad decided that the voice was real, and he began to tell others in Mecca about what he had heard. He told the people that they needed to worship Allah. Those who were willing to agree to this monotheistic belief became known as **Muslims**, which means “ones who submit” to the will of God.

Many people in Mecca were worried that Muhammad’s teachings would hurt their trade by angering people who worshipped other gods. Some of his followers began to face threats and violence. To escape these hazards, in AD 622, Muhammad and his followers moved to Yathrib, a city about 200 miles north of Mecca. Muhammad renamed the city Medina, which means “the city of the prophet.” Muslims call this move the Hijrah (or Hijra), and the year 622 became the first year of the Islamic calendar. The people of Medina accepted Muhammad as both a political and religious leader. Many of them converted to the new religion of Islam.



**Top:** The Great Mosque of Mecca, the largest mosque in the world, surrounds Islam’s holiest place, the cube-shaped building called the Ka’bah. **Right:** A green dome covers the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina.

In AD 630, Muhammad returned to Mecca with an army. The city surrendered so they could avoid a war. One of Muhammad's first acts after entering Mecca was to go to the Ka'bah and remove all the idols. He then dedicated the buildings to Allah.

Islam continued to spread after Muhammad's death. It spread rapidly throughout the Arabian Peninsula and parts of the Persian and Byzantine Empires. The Rightly Guided Caliphs, four men who had been friends with Muhammad, led Muslim armies. They conquered areas where the older empires had weakened over the years. The word "caliph" means leader or ruler. Many people welcomed the Muslims and converted to Islam. After Muhammad's death, his followers collected the teachings from the angel Gabriel into the **Quran**, the holy book of Islam. Some stories and characters from the Christian Bible are also included in the Quran, so Muslims see the Quran and Islam as the final and complete word of Allah.

Today, Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world. It is also the largest religion practiced in Southwest Asia. Its followers, called Muslims, worship in a **mosque**. There are two main branches of Islam: Shia and Sunni. Even though the different branches of Islam have some different interpretations of beliefs, there are many traditions and beliefs they share. Some of the important Muslim holidays include **Ramadan** (month of fasting), **Eid al-Fitr** (at the end of Ramadan), **Eid al-Adha** (festival of sacrifice at the end of the hajj), and **al-Hijra** (the Islamic New Year).



**Top:** A young Shia Muslim woman prays at the Nasir Al-Mulk Mosque in Iran. Most Iranians are Shia Muslim.

**Left:** Sunni Muslims perform Tarawih (extra prayers at night) during the Islamic month of Ramadan.



Mecca and the Ka'bah are still important to Muslims. A visit to Mecca and the Ka'bah are part of the **Five Pillars** or five basic obligations of Islam. The first is called the Shahada, which is the declaration of faith. The second is Salat, which means praying five times a day in the direction of Mecca. The third is Zakat, or giving to charity to help the poor. The fourth is Sawm, which means no drinking or eating while the sun is up during the month of Ramadan. The final Pillar is the hajj, which is a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Some Muslim countries have based their laws on the law of the Quran. This is called **Sharia Law**. You will find Sharia Law practiced in many countries in Southwest Asia, like Saudi Arabia and Iran. Muslims view Jews and Christians as “People of the Book,” because so much of the Torah and Bible is included in the Quran. This means that Jews and Christians should be respected. They are not required to give Zakat to the poor, but they must pay a special tax in countries following Sharia Law.

## Reviewing the Section

1. What is an ethnic group? Give three examples in Southwest Asia.
2. Copy the chart below and fill it in with information from the reading.

Ethnic Group	Where Do They Live?	What Are the Main Religions Practiced?
Kurds		
Arabs		
Persians		

3. What three main religions were started in Southwest Asia?
4. What is monotheism?
5. Copy the chart below and complete it with information from the reading.

Religion	Founder	Followers	Sacred Text	Place of Worship	Major Beliefs
Judaism					
Christianity					
Islam					

6. Putting It All Together: Southwest Asia is a land of incredible diversity in the ethnic groups and religious groups of its people. How do you think this affects the people who live there?

**Above:** One of the Five Pillars of Islam is the Salat—praying five times a day in the direction of Mecca.

## Section 3

# OPEC and Oil in Southwest Asia

### As you read, look for

- ▶ the most valuable natural resources in the region;
- ▶ the purpose of OPEC;
- ▶ how the presence or absence of oil impacts economies of the region;
- ▶ how Israel and Turkey have been economically successful without oil reserves;
- ▶ terms: **petroleum**, **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**.



### The Importance of Oil

It is surprising the ways oil comes into our lives. Even getting ready for school puts a person in contact with many products made from oil, or **petroleum**. Some of the products include soap, shampoo, shower curtains, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, and many articles of clothing. Petroleum is used to make all of these things and more. Much of the world's economy relies on oil. Southwest Asia has large amounts of oil and natural gas. The high demand for these two resources brings wealth into the region.

Oil and natural gas were first discovered in Southwest Asia at the beginning of the 20th century. At first, the companies that were drilling and refining most of the oil were from the United States and Europe. Today, however, most of the oil operations are controlled by the countries of Southwest Asia. This has made some of those countries very rich and has given them a lot of control over the global economy.

### The Influence of OPEC

In 1960, several Southwest Asia countries that had large oil supplies joined with other oil-rich countries, like Venezuela, to create the **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**. The first five members of OPEC were Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Venezuela. More countries, like Nigeria and Indonesia, have joined since then. The primary function of OPEC is to control the price of oil on the world market. The most common way to control the price of a good or service is to control the supply. When the countries of OPEC produce less oil, its price increases. When they produce more oil, its price decreases.



The OPEC countries have worked throughout the last fifty years to try to influence world events by controlling the oil supply. Occasionally, OPEC has called for an embargo of oil supplies to get political and economic agreements from other countries. One example of this occurred during the Arab-Israeli War in 1973. The Arab members of OPEC supported the Palestinian Arabs in this war against the Israelis. The United States and countries in Europe supported the Israelis. To convince the United States to stop its support of Israel, OPEC placed an embargo on trade with the United States and the other countries that were supporting Israel, such as Canada and the United Kingdom. As a result of this embargo, countries were thrown into an oil crisis. This caused gas shortages throughout the United States, and in many places, gas was rationed. The embargo was lifted in 1974 once the conflict was over.



### Oil-Rich versus Oil-Poor Countries

While many countries in Southwest Asia, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, have benefited from the money that comes from exporting oil, other countries, such as Israel, have not been as lucky. The Southwest Asia countries with the largest oil reserves are Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Kuwait. Some of the other countries, especially those found around the Persian Gulf, have smaller reserves. These oil-rich countries have experienced tremendous growth in national wealth, which has led to an improved standard of living. Those countries without oil reserves have had a much more difficult time trying to improve living conditions for their populations. This difference in wealth in some of the Southwest Asia countries has led to conflicts among the nations.

Israel and Turkey, however, are exceptions. While Israel and Turkey do not have large oil reserves, their economies have had a lot of success and their people have enjoyed an increasing standard of living. One of the reasons for their success is that they have diversified their economies. This means they have found several different ways to create income and products to export, instead of relying on just one export, like oil-rich countries do.

### Reviewing the Section

1. What are the most valuable resources in Southwest Asia? Why are they so valuable?
2. What is the purpose of OPEC?
3. How does OPEC influence the price of oil?
4. How has the presence or absence of oil affected the economies of countries in Southwest Asia?
5. What have Israel and Turkey done to make up for their lack of oil reserves?

**Above:** There was a gas shortage in the United States in 1973 when OPEC embargoed sales of oil to Israel's allies during the Yom Kippur War.

## Section 4

# A Brief History of Southwest Asia



### As you read, look for

- ▶ how European partitioning of the Ottoman Empire after World War I led to problems and conflicts;
- ▶ the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis;
- ▶ the division of Islam into Sunni and Shia branches;
- ▶ the Kurdish nationalist movement;
- ▶ conflicts in the region involving US military forces;
- ▶ terms: **Ottoman Empire, San Remo Agreement, nationalism, Palestinian-Israeli conflict, refugee, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, assimilate, ISIS, Operation Desert Storm, al-Qaeda, Taliban, Operation Iraqi Freedom.**

## European Partitioning of Southwest Asia

Until the end of World War I, much of Southwest Asia was controlled by the **Ottoman Empire**, as it had been since the 1300s. During World War I, however, the Ottomans made a fatal error by allying with Germany, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary. Germany and her allies lost World War I.

At the end of the war, not only had the Ottoman Empire lost, but there was a rebellion within the weakened empire. After the **San Remo Agreement** in 1920, the remains of the empire were partitioned, or divided, into smaller countries. Many of these new countries, like Turkey, are part of Southwest Asia today.



**Left:** Mehmed VI, the last sultan of the Ottoman Empire, was exiled from Turkey after the abolition of the Ottoman sultanate. Turkey was declared a republic after the San Remo Agreement.



Even though people across Southwest Asia were happy to be free of Ottoman rule, independence did not bring peace to the region. When the European politicians drew borders for the new countries, they paid little attention to the ethnic and religious groups living in these areas, and the groups were not allowed to have input into these decisions. Additionally, the new boundaries did not take into consideration the sense of **nationalism** (the idea that countries are most successful if the people who live there share some common cultural, historic, or religious beliefs) among the people of Southwest Asia. As a result, there has been ongoing conflict in the region. Many different groups have tried to live together in countries that were created by those who did not realize the problems some of these new boundaries would cause.

### Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

One of the most important conflicts that resulted from the new boundaries is the **Palestinian-Israeli conflict**. In May 1948, the United Nations announced the creation of the country of Israel as a Jewish homeland.

War began shortly thereafter between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs who also lived in the area that was now the state of Israel. The neighboring Arab countries, like Jordan and Lebanon, supported the Palestinian claims to the land. The Israelis, however, were able to win the war and even gained more land than they were originally promised by the United Nations. As a result, many Palestinian Arabs became **refugees** (people who had to leave their homes as the result of the war).

Over the last sixty years, there have been additional wars between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Israel has continued to exist, and many of the Palestinians and their descendants still live in refugee camps or in parts of Israel that they feel should be a Palestinian state. The problems between these two people still exist, even though both sides continue to look for a peaceful solution to their disagreements. Arab countries in the area are strong supporters of the Palestinians, while the United States is a powerful supporter of the Israelis. The Arab-Israeli conflict plays a major role in the difficulties the United States and the rest of the world face when trying to find peaceful settlements to conflicts in Southwest Asia.



**Above:** Palestinians, such as these in 1948, were forced from their homes when the State of Israel was created.

### Sunni and Shia Division

Another source of conflict in Southwest Asia is the division in Islam between Sunnis and Shias. After Muhammad died, there was a disagreement about who should be the leader of the Muslim community. At first, the disagreement was solved by placing power in the hands of Muhammad's friends, the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. When the last of those four men died, however, the disagreement over the next leader came up again. One group thought leadership should go to whoever would be best at keeping the community together. Those people saw themselves as closely following Muhammad's example, and they became known as

#### **Sunni Muslims.**

The second group believed that leadership should go to Muhammad's heir, or a direct descendent of Muhammad. They wanted to choose one of Muhammad's grandsons, who were children of his son-in-law Ali, for leadership. They became known as the Shia-Ali, or "supporters of Ali." Today, those people are known as **Shia Muslims**. Soon after the last of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs died, a battle for control began, which resulted in the death of one of Muhammad's grandsons.

These divisions within Muslim communities remain even today, though there is little difference in their basic religious beliefs. The Sunni Muslims have always been the largest branch of Islam. Today, they make up about 85 percent of Muslims. The Shia Muslims have always been a minority, but they make up a large portion of some countries today, like Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. In fact, Iran is over 90 percent Shia. The disagreements between the two branches have sometimes led to tensions between countries within Southwest Asia. For example, Saudi Arabia is mainly Sunni and is home to the city of Mecca, where Muslims go on the pilgrimage called the hajj. In 2015, there was a major stampede during the hajj when over 2,000 people were killed. Many of those who were killed were from Iran, which is mainly Shia. The deaths of Iranian citizens in Saudi Arabia led to tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Iranian government criticized the way Saudi Arabia runs the hajj, and they even suspended Iranian participation in the hajj in 2016. The tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran continued.

**Above:** Flags of Iran and Saudi Arabia on a cracked paint wall symbolize the long conflict between the two nations. Tehran and Riyadh have had strained relations over different religious and political issues.



### Kurdish Nationalism

Another problem that resulted from the national boundaries is what happened to the Kurdish homeland. After the dust settled and the new borders were drawn, the Kurds found their land divided among four countries: Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. The Kurds are different from Arabs, Persians, and Turks. They speak their own language, Kurdish, and have a separate history, literature, music, and set of traditions.

The Kurds were very upset that they did not gain their own country following World War I. There was even a treaty that allowed for the creation of Kurdistan for the Kurds; but it was never signed and was replaced by a treaty that did not mention Kurdistan. Nationalist movements began to spread among Kurds in each of their assigned countries. The experience of each Kurdish group has been different in each country.

In Turkey, for example, the government worked to **assimilate** the Kurds into Turkish culture by trying to force them to give up their language and identity. In 1978, the Kurds living in Turkey created the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK in the Kurdish language. Members of this group support an independent Kurdistan.

Since the creation of the PKK, there have been armed conflicts between the PKK and the Turkish army. In 2002, Turkey finally allowed education in the Kurdish language for the first time in history. This change was made because Turkey wanted to become part of the European Union, and many European nations do not like the way Turkey had treated the Kurds. Despite this change in the laws, tensions between the PKK and the Turkish government are still high. Both groups have been involved with the fight against the terror group **ISIS** (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Even though they now have a common enemy, tensions remain high between Kurds and Turks.

The Kurds faced similar treatment in Iran. The Kurds are mainly Sunni Muslims, while the Iranians are mainly Shia Muslims. This led to a major conflict between the two groups. The Kurds in Iran created a nationalistic group called the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI). While the KDPI disagrees with the Iranian government, this conflict has not been as brutal as the conflict in Turkey.



**Above:** Members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) support an independent Kurdistan. **Right:** Protesters rally against Turkish attacks on Kurds who are fighting ISIS, the common enemy of Turks and Kurds.

In Iraq, the Kurds were never forced to give up their language or culture. However, the Iraqi government did not give them the same rights as Arab Iraqis. This has led to many conflicts between the Kurds and the Iraqi government. In the 1970s, the Iraqi government began allowing Arab Iraqis to live in the Kurdish areas within Iraq. The Kurds were forced to leave these areas, which they resisted. In retaliation to the Kurdish resistance, the Iraqi government, led by Saddam Hussein, used chemical weapons on the Kurds. They did not just target the Kurdish fighters, but women, children, and the elderly as well. Thousands of Kurds were killed during this time. Eventually, the United States helped the Kurds create an area in Iraq where they were safe from chemical weapons. Today, this part of northern Iraq is controlled by the Kurds, where they live like they are almost independent from the Iraqi government and even have their own parliament.

Regardless of which country they live in now, the Kurds continue to work for their own independent country within Southwest Asia. Many maps of Southwest Asia today show an area called Kurdistan. While it is not an official country, it is the area in which most Kurds live.



## US Presence and Interests in Southwest Asia

The United States has had major political and economic interests in Southwest Asia since the 1800s. During the 19th century, US merchants, missionaries, and tourists began to visit Southwest Asia. Additionally, vast oil supplies were found there, and the United States needed oil for its own energy supplies. Since the end of World War I, the United States has been involved in the politics of Southwest Asia. The United States helped with diplomacy between countries after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and has been one of the biggest supporters of Israel since 1948. As the 21st century began, the United States focused on Southwest Asia with the goal of trying to end terrorism and promote democracy within the region. The United States has fought three major wars in Southwest Asia since the 1990s.



**Above:** Hundreds of Kurdish victims of Saddam Hussein's 1988 chemical weapons attack are buried in a village cemetery. **Left:** In 2003, a US soldier stood guard duty near a burning oil well in Iraq's Rumalia oilfield.

### Persian Gulf Conflict (1990-1991)

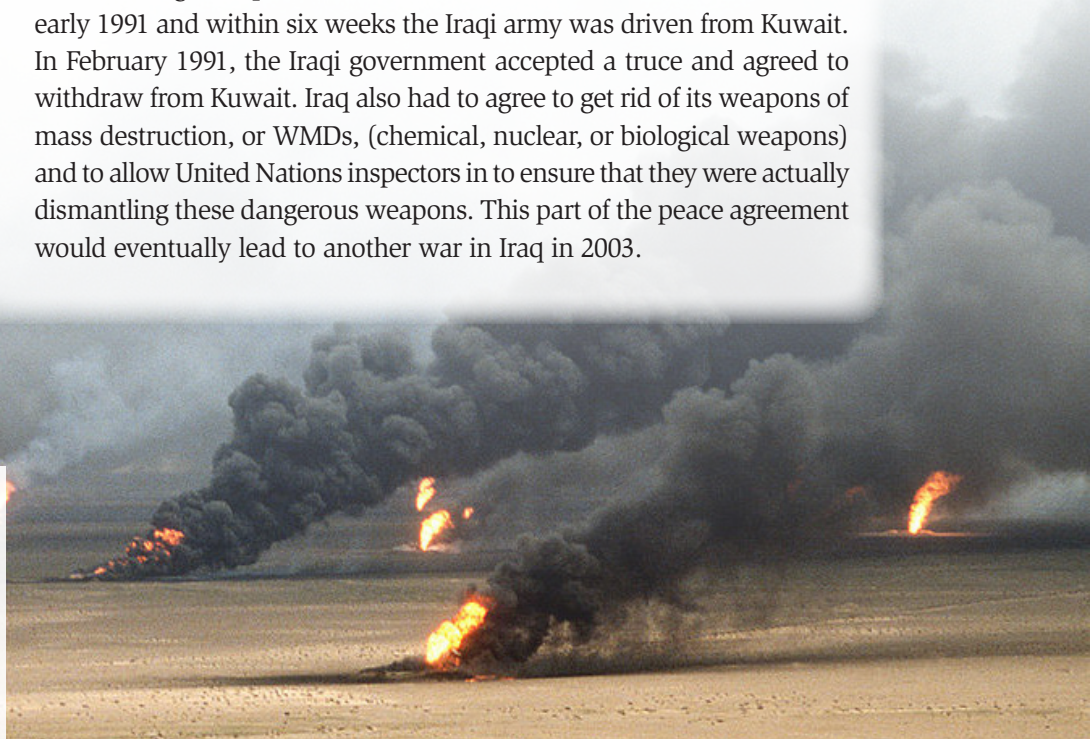
One major conflict that the United States was involved in occurred in 1990-1991. This war was called the Persian Gulf conflict and is sometimes referred to as **Operation Desert Storm**. It began in August 1990, when

Iraq invaded Kuwait in an attempt to gain control over Kuwait's large supplies of oil. Saddam Hussein, Iraq's leader, said that Kuwait was taking more oil than it should and had even drilled under the border to take Iraq's oil. Additionally, Saddam Hussein also claimed that, when the Ottoman Empire was broken up, the land that became Kuwait should have really been part of Iraq. The creation of the country of Kuwait in 1920 meant that Iraq lost most of its coastline on the Persian Gulf, which it needed so it could ship its oil to other countries more easily.

The United States was concerned about this invasion because, at the time, the United States got a large amount of its imported oil from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Kuwait was a member of the United Nations, like the United States. One of the purposes

of the United Nations is for member nations to help each other if one of the members is attacked by another country without reason. At first, the United Nations gave Iraq an ultimatum: withdraw its army from Kuwait or the UN would send armed forces to Kuwait. Iraq refused.

As a result of Iraq's refusal, the United Nations voted to send a military force to liberate, or free, Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. Since this invasion was a threat to their oil supply, the United States sent troops to be part of this UN force. Of the 700,000 soldiers in the UN military force, 540,000 were from the United States. In total, 39 different countries participated in the effort to get Iraq out of Kuwait. The United Nations forces arrived in early 1991 and within six weeks the Iraqi army was driven from Kuwait. In February 1991, the Iraqi government accepted a truce and agreed to withdraw from Kuwait. Iraq also had to agree to get rid of its weapons of mass destruction, or WMDs, (chemical, nuclear, or biological weapons) and to allow United Nations inspectors in to ensure that they were actually dismantling these dangerous weapons. This part of the peace agreement would eventually lead to another war in Iraq in 2003.



**Top:** Coalition troops from Egypt, Syria, Oman, France, and Kuwait fought in Operation Desert Storm. **Bottom:** Oil well fires raged outside Kuwait City in the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm.

## US Troops in Afghanistan (2001-2014)

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, changed the United States forever. On that day, terrorists hijacked four commercial jet airliners. Two jets were flown into the World Trade Center in New York City, causing so much damage that the Twin Towers collapsed. One jet flew into the Pentagon, which is where the United States Department of Defense is located, and destroyed part of the building. One final jet crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. We do not know its intended target, but many people think it was the White House or the Capitol in Washington, DC.

After these terrible attacks, US intelligence sources identified a terrorist group called **al-Qaeda**, or “the Force,” as the people who had planned and carried out the attack. Its leader was a man who was born in Saudi Arabia named Osama bin Laden. His family was very wealthy, and he had used this wealth to finance al-Qaeda. One of the goals of al-Qaeda was to stop the influence of American and European culture in Southwest Asia. Sources in the United States government believed that al-Qaeda members were hiding in the mountains of Afghanistan. At this time, the government of Afghanistan was controlled by a group of Islamic extremists called the **Taliban**, who enforced very strict Sharia Law throughout Afghanistan. The Taliban was sympathetic to al-Qaeda and allowed them to have their training camps in Afghanistan.

In October 2001, the United States launched a series of attacks on the mountain areas of Afghanistan where they believed al-Qaeda was hiding. The main goal of the invasion was to capture Osama bin Laden and destroy al-Qaeda. The Taliban-controlled government crumbled. It took ten years of fighting and searching, but Osama bin Laden was finally found in 2011. He was located in a compound in Pakistan, a country that borders Afghanistan. The United States sent a group of Navy SEALs into the compound and bin Laden was killed.

The United States helped the Afghani people set up a democracy and hold free and fair elections for the first time in many years. However, peace had not come to Afghanistan. The Taliban tried to reclaim control of the government, and the country has not been very stable. The United States finally withdrew most of its troops in 2014, but there are still some American troops in Afghanistan helping to support the government and train new security and military forces.



**Above:** The south tower of the World Trade Center went up in flames after being struck by a plane on September 11, 2001. **Left:** After the September 11 terror attacks, the United States launched a series of attacks in Afghanistan to destroy al-Qaeda and capture its leader, Osama bin Laden.



**Top:** An inspector from the International Atomic Energy Agency performed weapons inspections in Iraq in 2002.

## US Invasion of Iraq (2003-2011)

As you have read, Iraq was required to destroy its weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) at the end of the Persian Gulf conflict, and UN inspectors were to observe the dismantling of the WMDs. Saddam Hussein refused to allow the inspection, and the United States worried that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons and offering help to groups like al-Qaeda. As a result of this view that Iraq was a threat, the United States invaded Iraq in 2003. This invasion is often referred to as **Operation Iraqi Freedom**.

Saddam Hussein's government quickly collapsed because so many Iraqi people felt he was a cruel and unfair leader. Hussein went into hiding and was not found until 2005. After the United States captured him, he was turned over to the Iraqi people and then put on trial. He was found guilty of many crimes and was executed. However, the end of Saddam Hussein's rule did not bring peace to Iraq. The United States did not have a plan to help reorganize the country once Hussein's dictatorship was over. The country fell into civil war between Sunni and Shia Muslims, as well as ethnic groups like the Kurds.

US forces remained in Iraq trying to set up a stable government. In 2005, elections were held in Iraq for the first time in many years, but the new government was not strong or stable, and conflict continued throughout the country. In 2011, the United States withdrew its last troops from Iraq. The country remains unstable and the rise of ISIS has caused additional problems throughout the country.

## Reviewing the Section

1. How did European partitioning of the Ottoman Empire after World War I lead to problems and conflict in Southwest Asia?
2. What event caused the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis?
3. Why did Islam split into Sunni and Shia branches? How does this division continue to affect Southwest Asia?
4. What is the goal of the Kurdish nationalist movement?
5. Copy the chart below and complete it with information from the reading.

Conflict	When Did This Conflict Happen?	What Caused This Conflict to Happen?	What Were the Results of This Conflict?
Persian Gulf War			
US Invasion of Afghanistan			
Operation Iraqi Freedom			

6. Based on the chart you completed above, what are the main interests of the United States in Southwest Asia?

# special Feature

## The Arab Spring

The Arab Spring is a term used to describe protests against governments that occurred throughout North Africa and Southwest Asia during 2010 and 2011. It all began with the actions of one man. In December 2010 in Tunisia, a street vendor protested his unfair treatment by Tunisian police by setting himself on fire. What followed was a revolution!

People began to protest against the government of Tunisia. Eventually, the president, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, fled the country after twenty-three years in power. A temporary government took control of Tunisia until a new constitution was written and free elections were finally held in December 2011.

The people in Egypt were watching the event unfold in Tunisia and became inspired. Violent protests against the rule of President Hosni Mubarak, who had been president for thirty years, began. Clashes between protestors and security forces occurred. Eventually, Mubarak fled the country after the military stopped supporting him. New elections were held in 2012, but things in Egypt are not completely stable even today.

Other countries throughout Southwest Asia and North Africa watched the events in Tunisia and Egypt with interest. In some countries, similar protests occurred but with different outcomes. In Bahrain, the government crushed the pro-democracy protests quickly. Protests in Libya led to a revolution, and a new government is in place that is not in control of the entire country. In Yemen and Syria, both countries descended into civil war. The governments of some countries, like Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, and Oman, took action to try and stop protests before they began. These actions included constitutional changes and the removal of unpopular government employees.

In the years since the Arab Spring began, the results of this pro-democracy movement have been a mixture of good and bad. In some countries, people still enjoy their new freedoms. On the other hand, the demonstrations and protests within countries have led to an increase in tensions and conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims throughout Southwest Asia and North Africa. Many people reported that corruption within many governments increased. Finally, the civil war in Syria and instability in Iraq caused the group called ISIS to try to create a new country that joined Syria and Iraq. While the protests of the Arab Spring were long over, their legacy has remained. What do you think the future holds for pro-democracy movements in Southwest Asia and North Africa?



**Top:** Protesters marched on Avenue Habib Bourguiba in the city of Tunis, Tunisia. The Arab Spring began with a protest by a Tunisian street vendor.

**Background:** An activist protested against Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi in Alexandria, Egypt, in 2013.



# Chapter Review

## Chapter Summary

### Section 1: The Geography of Southwest Asia

- The Euphrates, Tigris, and Jordan Rivers play an important role in farming, trade, and politics.
- Most Southwest Asia countries rely on bodies of water like rivers, the Persian Gulf, and the Suez Canal to ship their main export, oil.
- This region is largely covered by desert and mountains; this historically encouraged a nomadic lifestyle and now subsistence farming to survive in the harsh environment.
- In a region where water is scarce, systems of drip irrigation are used to ensure no water is wasted, and desalination is being researched to turn seawater into usable fresh water.

### Section 2: The People of Southwest Asia

- An ethnic group is a group of people who share cultural practices and beliefs such as language, food, and a shared history.
- A religious group is a group of people who practice the same religion. Although a certain religion may be practiced by most people of an ethnic group, ethnic and religious groups are not the same thing.
- Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all originated in Southwest Asia and share many traits such as monotheism, important cities, and shared history.

### Section 3: OPEC and Oil in Southwest Asia

- Petroleum is a natural resource that can be processed into many different goods we use every day such as gasoline, shampoo, and clothing.
- OPEC is an acronym for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Its purpose is to control oil production to make more money.

- Because people around the world have become dependent on oil in recent history, OPEC can influence world events by controlling supplies and enforcing embargoes.
- Many countries in this region have ample supplies of petroleum and have grown rich by exporting it, but some other countries without oil also flourish by having many exports.

### Section 4: A Brief History of Southwest Asia

- The Ottoman Empire controlled most of this region until World War I when Europeans divided the empire into new countries such as Iraq and Turkey.
- Europeans did not consider religious and ethnic groups when drawing political boundaries. This has caused conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups.
- The United States has been involved in this region's politics since western countries began relying on oil. The United States has invaded multiple countries.

## Activities for Learning

### Reviewing People, Places, and Things



Imagine you are an American journalist writing about Southwest Asia. Using your knowledge of the region, write realistic headlines using each of the words and names below.

irrigation	Jordan River
Persian Gulf	Kurds
Mecca	OPEC
petroleum	nationalism
refugees	United States

## Understanding the Facts



1. What is the capital of Syria?
2. Why is the Strait of Hormuz important?
3. Name one country that is not landlocked. What body of water does it touch?
4. What is the difference between monotheism and polytheism?
5. Name the places of worship for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.
6. What is the primary function of OPEC?
7. How do oil reserves help a country gain power?
8. What is nationalism?
9. Name one conflict that has arisen due to uninformed drawing of political boundaries after World War I.
10. What was Operation Desert Storm?

## Developing Critical Thinking



1. Water is incredibly important in this region because it is scarce. Countries often share sources of fresh water for necessities such as drinking water and farming. How do you think this need to share could encourage increased cooperation between countries? On the other hand, how could it lead to conflict?
2. Many countries around the Persian Gulf have large oil reserves and their economies rely almost solely on the export of petroleum. What are some positive and negative aspects of having such a valuable natural resource but lacking a diversified economy? Consider both economic and political aspects as well as the country's continued prosperity into the future.
3. Israel is the only predominately Jewish country in the world. How do you think the founding of Israel compares to the Kurdish people's desire for a country?

## Writing across the Curriculum



1. Write a short report on the history of United States interventions in Southwest Asia. Generalize about the success of these actions and list some of their unintended consequences.
2. Write a short report describing how decisions made by Europeans after World Wars I and II have led to conflicts in Southwest Asia. Use the Kurdish nationalist struggle as a concrete example for each point you make.

## Applying Your Skills



1. What is something you found interesting while reading Section 2? Formulate a research question about this interest. Write down your research question and name some sources that could help you answer this question.
2. Create a chart comparing and contrasting the beliefs, number of followers, and location of Shia and Sunni Muslims.

## Exploring Technology



1. Make a list of ten items (excluding gasoline and fuel) that you think may be made from petroleum. Using reliable sources on the Internet, research whether the items you listed are in fact made from petroleum. Mark items that are not made from petroleum and list another product that is.
2. Spend some time studying the Middle East in Google Maps and/or a map from your book. Then take the quiz at [tiny.cc/mequiz](http://tiny.cc/mequiz) and review your results. Record your score and any questions that were incorrect.