

4. The Early Babylonian Period.

By a series of wars and by clever diplomatic dealings, the city of Babylon, peopled by western Semites, got control over all of Mesopotamia, and also over quite a number of the neighboring regions. The sixth king of the first dynasty of Babylon, who succeeded in making most of these conquests, was named Hammurabi. Hammurabi put up a great law code in the central square of Babylon so that anyone who thought himself wronged should be able to come to the central square and read the law and know what his rights were. The law is a very extensive one, primarily a code of civil and criminal law, rather than of religious law. It has many points of contact with the laws of the Pentateuch. The time of Hammurabi was a time of great literary activity. Priests in the temple of Nippur worked on the organization of the language and of the writing to make it more suitable. The language is much purer at this time than ever before or after. The grammar is followed more consistently and the case endings are used more correctly than at any other period.

The city of Mari, on the upper Euphrates, was in league with Babylon for many years, but was conquered and destroyed near the end of Hammurabi's long reign. Excavations at Mari have uncovered the remains of great capital buildings, throwing much light on the life of the period. Thousands of clay tablets were found, largely consisting of administrative letters giving us a vivid picture of the culture and of the political vicissitudes of the times.

5. The Remainder of the Second Millennium B.C.

The second millennium B.C. was a time of great upheavals and movements of nations. A mountain people, the Cassites, swept into Mesopotamia, overcame Babylon, and set up a Cassite regime which imitated the forms of the Babylonian rulers for over a century. Great numbers of Hurrians settled in northern Mesopotamia