

CHAPTER 4

MESOPOTAMIA

In this chapter, read to discover:

- How religion, family life, and city-state government influenced Sumerian civilization.
- Why Hammurabi and his reforms were important.
- How the Mesopotamian civilizations contributed to other civilizations.

The earliest known civilizations developed along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which begin in the mountains of eastern Turkey. The twin rivers flow more than 1,000 miles, or 1,600 kilometers, southeast across a great plain in an area known as the Middle East. Then, the waters join and empty into the Persian Gulf. Today, the land between the two rivers is part of the country of Iraq. In ancient times, the area was called Mesopotamia (mes uh puh ta' mē uh), "the land between the rivers."

About 5000 B.C., groups of people were *migrating*, or moving from one place to another. Groups of herders from the Arabian Peninsula moved north. Other groups from the grassy highlands near present-day Turkey moved south. Both groups found that the land between the rivers was rich and fertile. Water from the twin rivers provided fish and waterfowl for food.

THE RISE OF SUMER

The people who settled in southern Mesopotamia about 3500 B.C. were a short, stocky, black-haired people called Sumerians (sū mer' ē uhnz). Their area of Mesopotamia was known as Sumer (sū' muhr).

Sumerian Woman

