**Paleolithic Period**  
The [**Paleolithic**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=paleolithic%20age','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) Period lasts from the beginnings of human life until about **10,000 BCE**. Evidence suggests that the earliest humans lived in **East** **Africa**, and slowly migrated to **Europe** and **Asia**. Over time, some of these early peoples [**migrated**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=migration','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) across a **land** **bridge** from **Asia** to **America** and spread out there. Others moved by boat to the various **Pacific** island chains. During these migrations, ideas and beliefs were transmitted between different [**cultures**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=culture','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) through warfare and [**trade**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=trade','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');).

Paleolithic people were [**nomads**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=nomad','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). They lived in groups of 20 -30, and spent most of their time [**hunting and gathering**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=hunting%20and%20gathering','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). In these groups, work was divided between men and women, with the men hunting game animals, and women gathering fruits, berries, and other edibles. These early peoples developed simple tools such as spears and axes made from bone, wood, and stone. Human beings lived in this manner from earliest times until about **10,000 BCE**, when they started to cultivate crops and [**domesticate**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=domesticate','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) animals. This is known as the [**Neolithic Revolution**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=neolithic%20revolution','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');).

**Early River Civilizations**  
**Egypt**: Ancient Egypt consisted of Upper Egypt in the south, and Lower Egypt in the north. About **3100** **BCE**, **Menes**, King of Upper Egypt, united the two kingdoms. Under Menes and his successors, the **Nile** river became a **highway** in the exchange of goods and ideas. [**Merchants**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=merchant','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) would take ships and barges up and down the river trading goods from inner Africa, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean. This helped to make Egypt a very powerful nation.

During the **New** **Kingdom**, (**1550 BCE - 1100 BCE**) powerful pharaohs conquered an empire that stretched from **Nubia** in the south, to the **Euphrates** **River** in **Mesopotamia**. For centuries, Nubia was a major rival and trading partner of Egypt's. Nubia sent **ivory**, **cattle**, and [**slaves**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=slave','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) to Egypt, and left a cultural mark when Egypt conquered them during the [**New Kingdom**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=new%20kingdom','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) Period. Nubia conquered Egypt in the 8th century BCE, and ruled for about 100 years. Nubian influence can be seen in **Egyptian** **art**, which portrays Nubian soldiers, musicians, and prisoners of war.

**Mesopotamia**: The **Sumerians** in Mesopotamia established trade along the **Tigris** and **Euphrates** **Rivers**, and across the desert. They traded goods within the **Middle** **East**, with **Egypt**, the **Mediterranean**, and as far away as **India**. Many other groups controlled this region at one time or another, adding to the diversity of culture. By the early **600s** **BCE**, the **Assyrians** had conquered the entire Fertile Crescent, but their [**empire**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=empire','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) was short lived. Later, around **500** **BCE**, the region was conquered and made part of the **Persian** **Empire** under the great leader [**Darius**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=darius%20i','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). Under Darius, the Persian Empire covered the Middle East, Asia Minor, Egypt, and a small part of India. Extensive trade occurred throughout the empire which resulted in vast [**cultural diffusion**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=cultural%20diffusion','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');).

**Indus** **River**: About **2500** **BCE**, the first Indian [**civilization**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=civilization','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) began on the Indus River. Like other early civilizations, most people were **farmers**, with their main crop being **cotton**. Merchants would travel as far as the city states of Sumeria to trade their cotton cloth. About **1750** **BCE**, this civilization began to decline, and was replaced by nomadic warriors called [**Aryans**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=aryans','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');).

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| **The Earliest Systems of Justice and Law** In the prehistoric and ancient world, people usually lived together in villages or cities for protection against wild animals, invaders or other dangers. When people live close together, disagreements are bound to happen. In fact, it was often in response to a domestic dispute that kings or city councils made laws.  Most kings and councils quickly realized that any law the ordinary people had to obey needed to be simple, and had to make sense to them. Keep in mind that police forces, like those in the modern world, did not exist. So, for a law to be effective, the people needed to have very good reasons to obey. As a result, **most ancient codes of law seemed to be either a punishment for, or prohibition of, some specific action or behavior**. In ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, for example, the punishment for most crimes was the same: **death!**  Such harsh punishments make more sense when it is understood that ancient peoples thought law was something that had been **given to them by God**. So, in their view, if a person broke a law, they were also disobeying God. And if a person disobeyed God, then their whole city might get punished, too. In that light, punishing a criminal by death can be seen as an attempt to make sure God does not become offended or angry.  **Egypt** In the lands along the Nile, the all-powerful monarch was called [**pharaoh**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=pharaoh','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). The people thought pharaoh was the physical incarnation of the god Horus here on earth. As **both a man and a god**, pharaoh blended and used both politics and religion to govern his lands.  As an [**absolute monarch**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=absolute%20monarchy','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');), pharaoh claimed the [**divine right**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=divine%20right','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) to rule Egypt. In other words, pharaoh ruled because god had decreed it. Under pharaoh, law and justice were at his whim. His decisions were final, with no way to appeal.  **Mesopotamia** In Sumer and Babylon, the king was often both the[**monarch**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=monarchy','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) and the high priest. The position of these so-called priest-kings was relatively unstable. If the god(s) didn't provide for welfare of the citizens, the people often held the king responsible, and deposed him.  In the first half of the 18th century BCE., King Hammurabi had a code of law written down for all to see. It was carved on a stone eight feet tall (seen left). It was one of the first times a ruler was known to have publicly proclaimed a set of laws for everyone to follow.  [***Hammurabi's Code***](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=hammurabis%20code','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) dealt with both criminal (**crimes and punishments**) and civil (e.g. grievances between people over **property, money, relationships**) law.  Despite the progress made by Hammurabi's Code, the heavy use of the death penalty as punishment makes it seem barbaric to the modern observer. The chart below may reveal some of the limitations of the Code.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Crime** | **Punishment** | | murder | **DEATH** | | theft, burglary, stealing | | hitting a parent | | lying in court | | kidnapping | | hiding runaway slaves | | conspiracy-planning  to commit a crime | | offending the gods | |