

TESTAMENT

ROLEPLAYING IN THE BIBLICAL ERA

Sample file

BY SCOTT BENNIE

3rd
ERA

MYTHIC
VISTAS



GR1019

TESTAMENT

ROLEPLAYING IN THE BIBLICAL ERA

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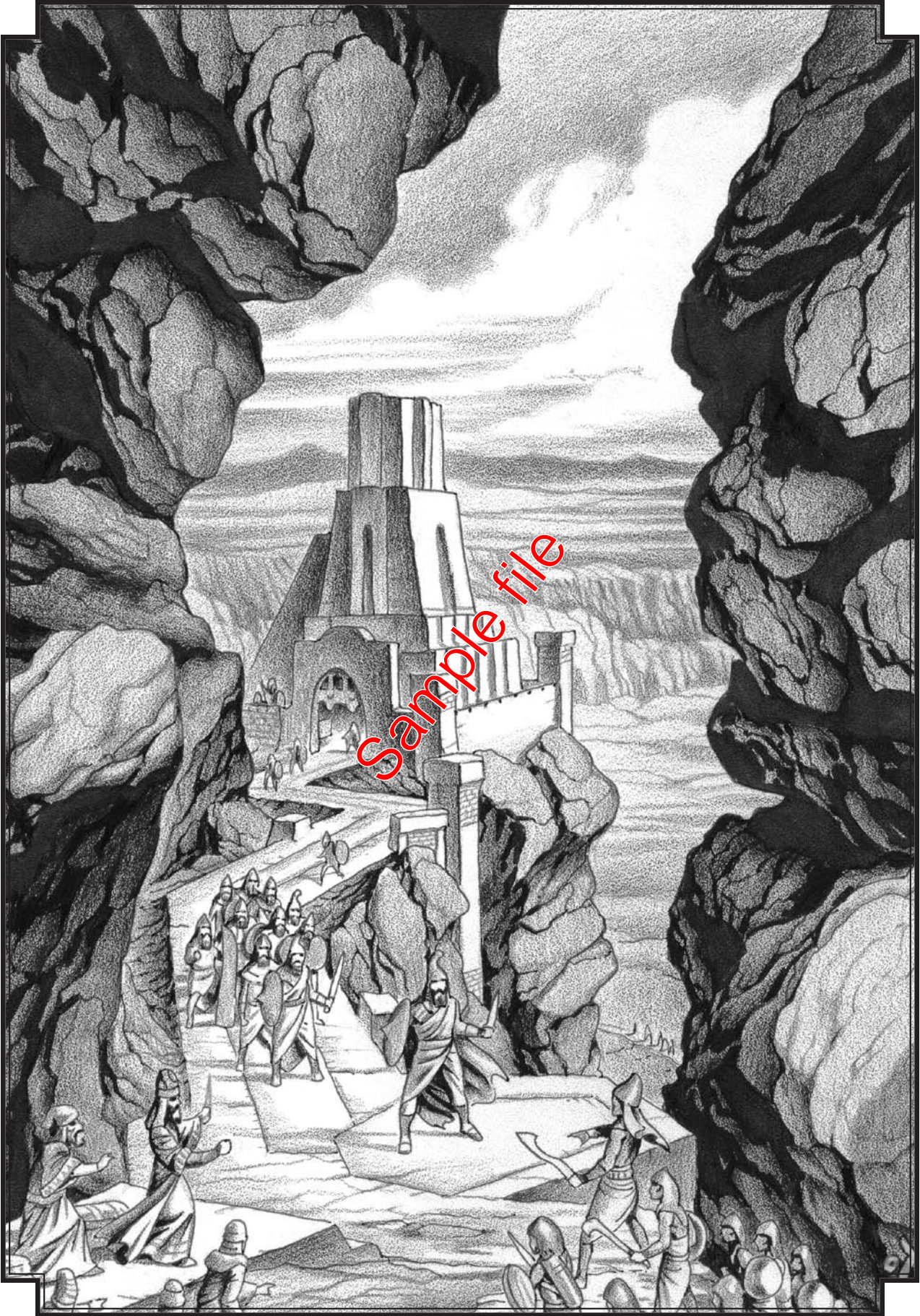
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INTRODUCTION

- AGE OF BRONZE, MEN OF GOD -

In the Middle East, the two millennia that preceded the time of Jesus were not the dawn of civilization, but the steps that humanity took during this era were impressive. It was not the age of Pyramids, but great builders constructed less heralded works of even greater scope.

It was an era of kingships and rebellion, a time of clashing superpowers that built cities and monuments to the gods and the egos of great kings. It was an era when charioteers rode the battlefield like knights, when the warnings of wizards were treated like the voices of the gods, and when empires fell without a trace before an enemy whose footsteps have managed to elude history, the Peoples of the Sea. And yet somehow, in the middle of all this, a small tribe called the Israelites rebelled against the great powers, enduring, and becoming the foundation for three of the world's great religions. Given how much of human history is shaped by lofty gilded bullies, it is humbling to consider that these descendants of nomads and slaves, a tiny, historically insignificant culture, could cast such a mighty shadow on human destiny.

It's a great story, but can you turn it into a roleplaying game?

The Bible may be a little short on dungeons and hoards of magic and treasure, but it does have plenty of conflict, the battle between good and evil, sex, politics, religion, and enough violence to make even the blood-thirstiest barbarian wince. That sounds like a good place to game.

Some gamers may feel that there are certain subjects that shouldn't be roleplayed, and the Bible may be at the top of their list. That's a legitimate opinion, but if you can make a film out of controversial subject matter, you can game it. But because it is a sensitive subject, we need to offer an explanation for some of the choices we've made.

POSSIBILITIES

There are a number of approaches that we could have taken to roleplaying in a Biblical setting. We could have tried to make this into a game targeted specifically at Christians or Jews who wanted to study about their faith. But RPGs work best as entertainment, particularly when the designer is not a pastor and not trained in theology. *Testament* draws on the Bible as its primary inspiration, but it's not meant to be a vehicle to proselytize the author's (or anyone else's) views.

We could have done this purely as a historical supplement and viewed any event (especially the supernatural or miraculous) with the suspicion of a modern eye. But we're running a fantasy game, a game of magic and mythology, and if prophets aren't empowered by the god of Israel, demons don't drive men mad, and giants don't walk the Earth, we're not doing the source material justice.

Instead elements of history and the religions of four major cultures have been mixed together, and it all could be true. The *Testament* setting draws upon historical sources that describe the cultures of the Israelites, but also includes neighboring civilizations, such as the Babylonians, Egyptians, Canaanites, and Hittites, who also have gods who empower their cultures. We've also included creatures from non-Hebrew mythology and the Apocrypha to expand the monstrous challenges faced by heroes, and to facilitate GMs who don't want to run Israel-centric campaigns.

Roleplaying games empower the Game Master and the players to tell the stories they want to tell, and play the games they want to play, and it's up to the GM to decide what's true and what isn't in this recreation of a mythological world. We've provided advice on a few of the more controversial questions, but in the end the GM has to run the campaign he feels comfortable running.

MOSES WAS A WHAT?

In the world of *Testament*, Moses is listed as a 3rd-level paladin/7th-level Levite priest/10th-level prophet of the Lord. We know that Moses didn't throw around cure spells in the Bible, his staff was not enchanted

with a control water spell, he probably didn't look a thing like Charlton Heston, and he likely didn't race around in a chariot with Ramesses before he became pharaoh; we aren't claiming factual accuracy.

Instead, we are striving to capture the spirit of the Bible. We're trying to portray the general characteristics of the Biblical characters: Samson is really strong, Moses is a miracle-worker of incredible power, David is a poet as well as a warrior, and angels are great and terrifying creatures.

We interpret the source material metaphorically. In other words, the Bible doesn't tell us that Israelites physically battled tempter devils, or sphinxes, or other mythical monsters, or that seraphs transformed into fiery serpents (although there is etymological evidence to suggest that they could), but adding these features makes the game more playable.

This is a milieu where the gap between the mundane and the mythic is pretty large. In a typical RPG campaign, there's a smooth gradation of power levels; in the stories of the Bible, power tends to come in two forms: very small and very large. In order to provide challenges to a wide variety of power levels, we've extrapolated a lot of the magic and monsters (which has happened to an awful lot to Biblical material throughout the ages).

We're also dealing with subject matter where there are more differences in interpretation than in any other literature in history. No simulation of the Jewish Bible will satisfy all interpretations. We provide our version, but ultimately the interpretation of the campaign belongs to the GM, who can alter it to taste.

ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

Some concepts that set the world of *Testament* apart from other 3rd Era campaign settings include the following.

ERAS

Unlike many other settings, which focus on a single point in time, *Testament* covers four major political spheres over a millennium of time. Era is the term used to describe the specific place and time in which the GM chooses to set the campaign.

COSMOLOGICAL SPHERES

In the conflicting worlds of *Testament* the contradictory cosmologies of the ancient world aren't reconciled into a single truth; instead, each of the truths of the different cultures is valid for its members.

Thus, Egyptian characters are sure that when they die they're judged on their adherence to the principles of ma'at, and if they pass the test the nine parts of their souls enjoy a healthy afterlife, so one of the motivating principles in life for them is to ensure that they do well after death. At the same time, Israelite characters believe that their purpose in life is to hold true to the terms of their covenant with the Lord, to ensure the continued prosperity of his Chosen People in this world. And from the Canaanite perspective, life is a struggle, then you die, the afterlife is no great shakes, so you may as well enjoy life as it lasts.

The gods of the different pantheons all exist, and each pantheon has roughly the same amount of power over the domains of its mortal followers.

DIVINE VS. ARCANÉ MAGIC

Some cultures straddle the traditional boundary between divine and arcane magic; the Egyptians, for example, see little or no difference between the forms. On the other hand, the Hebrews think of magic as solely the province of the Lord and the use of arcane magic ranks among the highest of blasphemies.

- INTRODUCTION -

THE NAME OF GOD

The god of Israel is referred to in many ways in the Bible. His personal name is YHVH (often pronounced Yahweh in modern times; possibly pronounced more like Yau or Yau in ancient times). This holy name probably stems from the Hebrew word meaning “to be,” and it was not generally bandied about by the Israelites; the only time it was spoken aloud was by priests at the First Temple, who said it only on Yom Kippur, the most sacred day of the year, at a time when their words were drowned out by the singing of psalms, and by priests of the Second Temple who whispered the word so as to keep it secret and sacred.

The first two letters of this holy name appear in many Jewish names: names with “yah” or “iah” like Jeremiah or Netanyahu, or “Jo” (“Yeho” in Hebrew) like Joshua. The elements can even appear more than once, such as in the name Josiah.

In general usage, though, Israelites substituted another word for the personal name of their god when they spoke it aloud. Adonai (“Lord”) was a common substitute, and when the consonants YHVH were written in the Bible, diacritical marks representing the vowels for Adonai were written under the letters as a reminder of what word should be spoken in its place when reading the Bible or prayers that used Biblical quotations. Texts that included the personal name of the god of Israel could not be deliberately destroyed by Israelites, so they didn’t write his name on anything that they weren’t willing to preserve forever in the way they stored holy texts.

El (“High One”) was often combined with other words to refer to the god of Israel; e.g., El HaKadosh (“the holy god”), El Emet (“the god of truth”), or El Shaddai (“God almighty”).

Related to El are the words Elohah (“god”; a generic term referring to any deity) and Elohim (a plural form, meaning “gods” when referring to foreign deities, and the abstract quality of “divinity” when referring to the god of Israel).

The importance of the name of Israel’s god in the religion should not be underestimated. Sin was called Chillul Ha-Shem (“profanity against the Name”), while deeds that glorified him and enhanced Israel’s reputation were called Kiddush Ha-Shem (“Sanctification of the Name”).

Testament uses the personal names of the gods of other religions, but the terms “god of Israel” and “the Lord” to refer to YHVH.

THE HIDDEN WORLD

Many powerful beings are Hidden from the world; they walk among mortals unseen. This is more than invisibility or etherealness; it’s a state of divine

grace (spiritual power) that hides them from humanity, unless called upon to interact in our world.

PIETY

In *Testament* campaigns, the GM is given the option of replacing traditional 3rd Era alignments with Piety, a measure of how well attuned the character is to his society’s concept of a moral person. A pious character can hope to receive boons from his god, but when a character commit evil acts, his Piety score decreases, making it difficult to contact his god, and improving the chance of the character being cursed.

COMMUNITY

This is a historical era where the health of the community is more important than the glory of the individual, so as well as adventuring, player characters can participate in the activities of their home villages or towns: herding cattle, growing crops, and making trade goods, in addition to assisting with the many problems (internal and external) faced by the tribe.

ADVENTURE AWAITS!

Welcome to the wild world of the late Bronze Age Middle East, where the servants of the gods walk hidden among men, and empires struggle to maintain their supremacy in a world of change, where the descendants of fallen angels plot against man, and monsters tread the Earth. Have fun.



BCE?

Throughout *Testament* we use the religiously neutral terms BCE (Before Common Era) instead of BC (Before Christ), and CE (Common Era) instead of AD (Anno Domini).

- INTRODUCTION -

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CHAPTER 1: CHARACTERS

- CHARACTER CREATION -

Character generation in the *Testament* setting is identical to that in other 3rd Era settings with only a couple additional steps.

- The GM decides the era in which the campaign will be staged
- The player decides his PC's nationality and picks a character flaw for him.

ERA

Before the campaign begins, the GM must pick an era for the campaign. The era specifies the time and place in which the campaign is set, and which people are the focus of the campaign. If a GM chooses to focus on the Israelites, the following eras are available:

ANTEDILUVIAN

(APPROX. 3000 BCE)

This is before the Flood, when men live to be over 900 years old, and giants walk the Earth in great abundance. This is an age of mythic kingdoms, demons, and the struggle of humanity to survive against primal forces and terrifying evils that both threaten and tempt it.

In this era, the heroes may either seek to fight the growing wickedness that threatens to bring down the Lord's wrath, or they may work to preserve a remnant of humanity from the Deluge. Heroes in this era increase their age categories by a multiple of 10, such that they are considered Middle Age at 350 years, Old at 530 years, and Venerable at 700 years. Characters can live up to $700 + (2d20 \times 10)$ years.

ISRAEL: PRE-EGYPT

(APPROX. 2000-1800 BCE)

This is the time of Abraham through Joseph, before the 12 Tribes were established; good people wander amid primitive, evil cities, such as the infamous Sodom and Gomorrah. It is also a time of awakening faith and the struggle to discover the Lord, in both his benign and wrathful forms, when one is as likely to wrestle an angel as to receive his assistance.

In this era, the PCs are herdsmen, farmers, and city dwellers sympathetic to the Patriarchs and their search for a homeland and a purpose in life.

ISRAEL: THE EXODUS

(1274-1234 BCE)

The Israelite slaves fled Egypt in search of the Promised Land, spending 40 years wandering in the wilderness. This is a time when faith is tested by trial, adversity, and uncertainty about what awaits in the Land of Milk and Honey.

In this era, the PCs fight off hostile tribes and other wilderness menaces, while attempting to keep the morale and the faith of the people strong as they wander.

ISRAEL: TIME OF THE JUDGES

(1234-1028 BCE)

This is an uncertain time, when the Peoples of the Sea devastate the Mediterranean coasts, and the 12 Tribes of Israel take advantage of the upheaval by moving into Canaan. At this time there are no kings in Israel, and law and order is kept by elite men and women called by the Lord to be judges and prophets.

In the first part of this era, the PCs take the role of advance scouts for the people of Israel, looking for Canaanite weaknesses and opportunities to establish a foothold in the Promised Land. Later they assist the judges in

resolving inter-tribal conflicts and handling external threats, while tending their own flocks and serving as leaders of their local communities. Some may even be judges, on a local, tribal, or even national level, or prophets, warning the people of threats from within and without.

ISRAEL: THE EARLY KINGDOM

(1028-924 BCE)

This is the time of Saul and David and Solomon, of war and rebellion and the deeds of mighty men, the rise and corruption of great kings, and the attempts of a fledgling nation to assert itself against its traditional enemies.

In this era, the PCs are soldiers and heroes, assisting kings whose personal instincts aren't always the best or completely in tune with the will of the god of Israel.

ISRAEL: THE TWO KINGDOMS

(924-587 BCE)

In the days before Babylon and Assyria broke the Israelite kingdoms and sent the best of their people into exile, brave men and women known as prophets attempt to warn the people of the impending disaster brought on by their own shortcomings as much as by the strength of neighboring kingdoms.

In this campaign, the PCs deal with threats to the nation from all quarters. They must try to forestall the wrath of the Lord by awakening a spark of faith in a people grown cold and decadent.

ISRAEL: THE EXILE

(587-539 BCE)

Israel and Judah's elite were deported to foreign lands, some scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire, others concentrated in the capital of Babylon. Many assimilated themselves into the surrounding culture and abandoned their Israelite heritage, but some struggled to remain true to the Lord, praying for a return to the land promised to their ancestors.

PCs can be slaves, soldiers, priests, prophets, or scribes trying to maintain their traditions and loyalty to the Lord while in a strange land, and working to engineer a second Exodus. Or they can be part of the population left behind in Israel, coping with harsh overlords and attempting to preserve themselves in expectation of a change in circumstances.

ISRAEL: THE RETURN

(539-323 BCE)

After a few generations of exile, the Jews were allowed to return to Judea and rebuild the Temple. But they'd have to deal with the kinsmen who'd been left behind during the Exile, and the foreigners resettled in the land by the Babylonians, none of whom were happy to relinquish territory and power to the returning exiles.

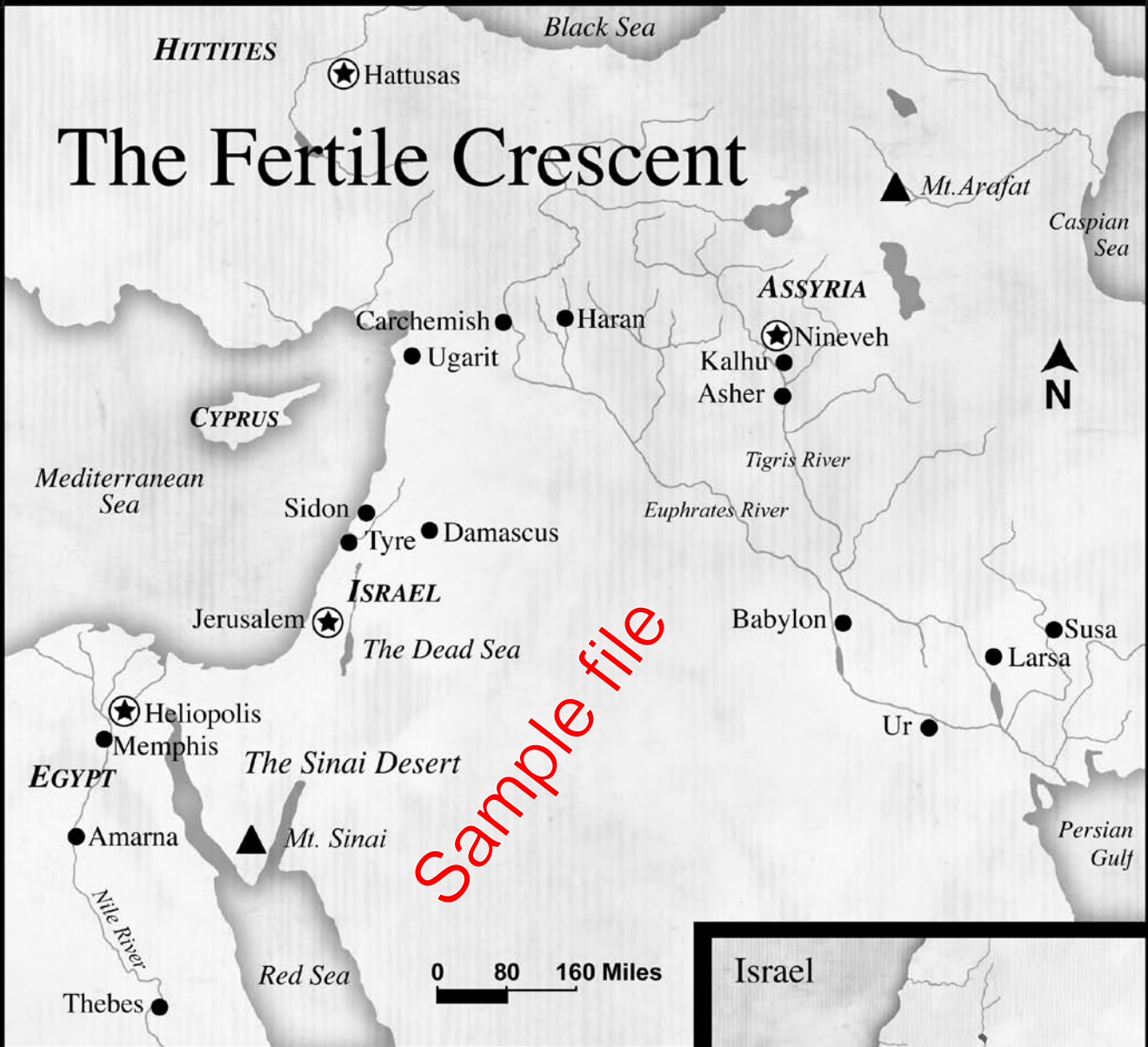
The PCs can be part of the wave of religious reformers attempting to reinstate the proper worship of the Lord in Judea.

ISRAEL: THE MACCABEES

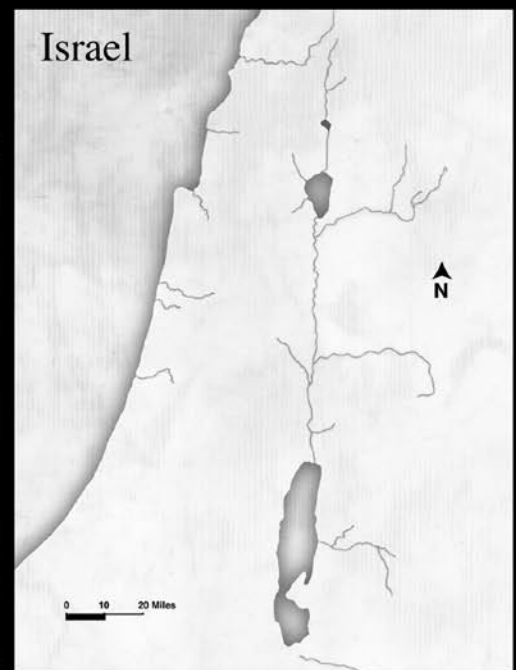
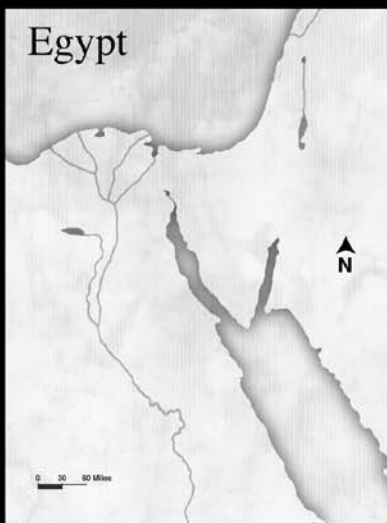
(323-135 BCE)

A century and a half after the return, a new threat emerged: the Seleucid Empire, which wanted to supplant the Jewish faith with pagan Greek practices.

The Fertile Crescent



Sample file



- CHAPTER 1: CHARACTERS -

In such troubled times, heroes emerged: prophets, clerics, and holy warriors, seeking to warn a populace that had become corrupt and complacent and wrest independence from the mighty Greek empire.

ALTERNATE CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

If the GM decides to focus on a different nation, PCs could be Babylonian magi who wander the Earth investigating astronomical phenomena, Egyptian priests or nobles trying to survive in the confusing and dangerous times of the reign of Akhenaten, the heretic pharaoh, or charioteers fighting alongside Ramesses the Great, Sumerian demigods seeking fame and immortality, or a coalition of Egyptians, Babylonians, Canaanites, and Israelites during the time of the invasion of the Sea Peoples. It is a world rich in myth and adventure.

NATIONALITY

Each player must choose a national background for his PC, which determines his allowed classes, and suggests likely languages for him to speak. Nationality also governs the choice of some feats (see p. 41). The four background nations available are Babylon, Canaan, Egypt, and Israel.

BABYLONIAN

The Mesopotamian region gave rise to many empires: Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian. The people of the region (called by specific names when referring to a particular empire, or Babylonians or Mesopotamians when referring to the region's peoples in general) view their nation as the superpower of the age and themselves as more

knowledgeable and advanced than anyone else. Whichever city is the center of a particular empire it is seen as the supreme achievement in human civilization—and naturally it is despised by jealous peoples in neighboring states.

Typical Babylonian PCs wish to maintain their nation's supremacy and honor the worship of the Babylonian pantheon while living joyful, prosperous lives.

ALLOWED CLASSES

assassin*, bard, blackguard*, cleric, *desert hermit**, fighter, *idol-maker**, loremaster*, *magus of the starry host*, paladin, *qedeshot*, ranger, rogue, *royal astrologer**, sorcerer, *spy*

*indicates a prestige class; *italics* indicates a class unique to the *Testament* setting

(**Note:** Because Babylonians used heavy (and brittle) clay tablets for writing, wizards are not a common adventuring class. Only the strongest of PCs could possibly lift or carry a high-level Babylonian wizard's spellbook.)

REGIONAL LANGUAGES

Primary: Sumerian (before 1800 BCE), Akkadian (1800-500 BCE), Aramaic (after 500 BCE); *Secondary:* Aramaic (800-500 BCE), Egyptian (3000-500 BCE), Elamite (2000-500 BCE), Greek (after 330 BCE), Hebrew (after 1300 BCE), Hittite (1500-1000 BCE), Hurrian (2000-1200 BCE), Medean (after 500 BCE), Old Arabic, Phoenician (1200-500 BCE), Ugaritic (2500-1200 BCE), Urartian (900-600 BCE)

CANAANITE

The indigenous peoples of Canaan are a sophisticated culture that established cities throughout the region.

There are three non-Israelite populations in Canaan, each with its own cultural identity. The first are the native Canaanites, who were farmers in the area for centuries before the invasion of the Israelites. Some are reputed to be descended from a race of giants (see the **Half-Nephilim** template, p. 128) who had ruled the land before the Canaanites' arrival.

The second Canaanite people are the Phoenicians: craftsmen, traders, and seafarers who live on the sea coast that lies immediately north of Israel.

The third people in the region are the Philistines, living in the Gaza area. The Philistines are descended from the Sea Peoples who ravaged the known world in about 1200 BCE. Some Philistines are also said to have mixed giant blood.

A typical Canaanite character resists the invasions of other peoples (Israelites, Egyptians, Babylonians) into his tiny kingdom, tries to come to some accommodation with the intruders, or tries to find some way in which he can maintain his way of life in his shrinking homeland.

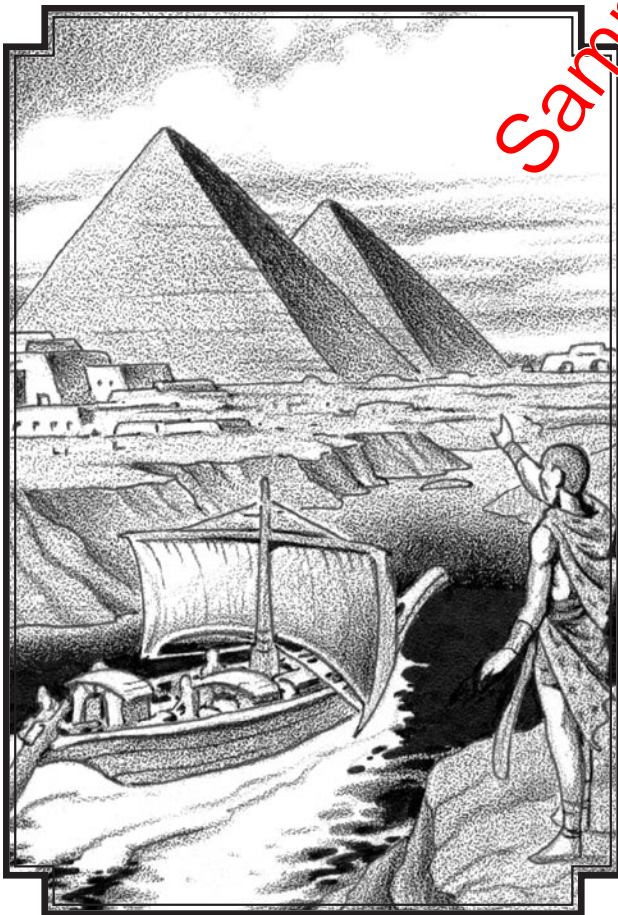
ALLOWED CLASSES

assassin*, bard, blackguard*, cleric, *desert hermit**, fighter, *idol-maker**, loremaster*, paladin, *qedeshot*, ranger, rogue, sorcerer, *spy*

*indicates a prestige class; *italics* indicates a class unique to the *Testament* setting

REGIONAL LANGUAGES

Primary: Ugaritic (2500-1200 BCE), Phoenician (1200-500 BCE), Aramaic (after 500 BCE); *Secondary:* Akkadian (1800-600 BCE), Ammonite (1500-800 BCE), Aramaic (800-500 BCE), Edomite (1500-600 BCE), Egyptian (2000-800 BCE), Greek (after 330 BCE), Hebrew (after 1400 BCE), Hittite (1500-1000 BCE), Hurrian (2000-1200 BCE), Moabite (1500-600 BCE), Old Arabic, Phoenician (1200-500 BCE), Roman (after 65 BCE), Syriac (after 600 BCE), Sumerian (3000-1800 BCE)



EGYPTIAN

The Egyptian people are convinced that their great nation is at the center of the world. Egypt was shaken when it was conquered and occupied by the Hyksos in the middle Bronze Age, after which the New Kingdom of Egypt attempted to anchor itself in a changing, uncertain world by building monuments, temples, and tombs of imovable unchanging stone.

Player characters of Egyptian origin are caught in the struggles of times that are more turbulent than the people would like to believe. Restoration of the natural order is a priority for them.

ALLOWED CLASSES

assassin*, bard, blackguard*, cleric, *desert hermit**, fighter, *kbery-heb* (replaces wizard), *idol-maker**, loremaster*, *master charioteer**, paladin, ranger, *ren-bekau**, rogue, *royal astrologer**, *spy*

*indicates a prestige class; *italics* indicates a class unique to *Testament*.

REGIONAL LANGUAGES

Primary: Egyptian, Aramaic (after 400 BCE); *Secondary*: Aramaic (600-400 BCE), Edomite (1500-1000 BCE), Hebrew (after 1200 BCE), Hittite (1500-1000 BCE), Hurrian (2000-1200 BCE), Kushite, Libyan, Moabite (1500-1000 BCE), Nubian, Old Arabic, Phoenician (1200-500 BCE), South Arabian, Ugaritic (2500-1200 BCE)

ISRAELITE

The Israelites are a serious lot, hardened by trials and the fight for survival, and resolute in the belief that no force will keep them from their destiny. They are a virtuous and courageous people who often need heroes and heroines to inspire them, guide them, and keep them on the proper moral path.

Israelite PCs are children of Israel, blessed by the Lord himself. Typically, they wish to advance their own fortunes while remaining faithful to the Lord.

ALLOWED CLASSES

assassin*, blackguard*, *champion of Israel**, *desert hermit**, fighter, *judge**, *Levite priest* (replaces cleric), loremaster*, *master charioteer**, paladin, *prophet*, *psalmist* (replaces bard), ranger, rogue, sorcerer, *spy*

* indicates a prestige class; *italics* indicates a class unique *Testament*.

(**Note:** Sorcerers accrue a *lot* of negative piety and this class is not recommended if the Piety system is being used.)

REGIONAL LANGUAGES

Primary: Hebrew (before 400 BCE), Aramaic (after 400 BCE); *Secondary*: Akkadian (1800-600 BCE), Ammonite (1500-800 BCE), Aramaic (800-400 BCE), Edomite (1500-600 BCE), Egyptian (2000-800 BCE), Greek (after 332 BCE), Hebrew (after 400 BCE), Hittite (1500-1000 BCE), Moabite (1500-600 BCE), Old Arabic, Phoenician (1200 BCE-500 BCE), Roman (after 65 BCE), Sumerian (3000-1800 BCE), Ugaritic (2500-1200 BCE)

(**Note:** An Israelite character must also choose a tribe of origin, which determines the geographical region from which he comes (refer to the map of tribes on p. 142). The tribes are Asher, Benjamin, Dan, Gad, Issachar, Judah, Levi, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun, and the "half-tribes" of Manasseh and Ephraim (Joseph's two sons). Priests must come from the tribe of Levi.)

FLAWS

One of the primary conflicts of the *Testament* setting is the struggle with the weaknesses every person has. Every character needs to take at least one flaw, a quality that is viewed as unacceptable by his native society

RACE IN TESTAMENT

Israelites were Semites, closely related to Canaanites, Babylonians, and Arabs. The coastal cities of Philistia and Phoenicia were inhabited by a mix of Canaanites and transplanted Indo-Europeans. Egypt had a mixed population of Semites and Africans with a wide range of skin colors.

and that can lead him into trouble. The player can roleplay the flaw as much as he wants but should not simply ignore it; the flaw should be an important part of his PC's personality.

With the GM's permission, an old flaw can be exchanged for a new one later, say when a World-Wearied veteran converts to a new religion and becomes a Fanatic.

Any of the following flaws can be taken to round out a PC from any culture.

BOASTER

The truth is only a canvas on which the boaster crafts a magnificent portrait of things as they should have been. If the boaster sees an opportunity to glorify his deeds, his family's heritage, or anything else that might draw attention to himself, he does so. He doesn't mean to do anything wrong, of course; after all, *everyone* exaggerates.

BULLY

The bully is cruel, makes his enemies suffer needlessly, and commits the most heinous acts. Whatever his motivation (a desire to "do it to them before they can do it to me" or just for sheer enjoyment), when he sees an opportunity to belittle or abuse someone, he takes it, regardless of the consequences.

COVETOUS

When they see a treasure, the covetous want it; when they see a beautiful gem, they try to take it; when they spot an item of exquisite craftsmanship, whether or not they need it, they *need* it. Through the eyes of a greedy man, the world is a storehouse, and he's determined that he (and only he) will possess the key.

COWARD

That the world is a dangerous place that requires courage to face is a fundamental truth understood by all adventurers. However, while a coward may face danger, he won't face it for very long before running away, congratulating himself for being smart enough not to waste his life with "unacceptable risks." Woe be to any who trusts in a coward to stand beside them in their hour of need.

DECEITFUL

The deceitful person thinks that there's nothing wrong with tricking a person out of something precious, as long as nobody actually gets hurt. He gets very upset when he's tricked himself.

DRUNKARD

Wine and beer make for warm nights when the cold wind is blowing in from the sea, and if a drunkard gets a little tipsy, well, he always has friends to help him when he staggers, clean up his vomit, and stop

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him from trying to beat up the temple guards for sneering at him. Of course, the one drawback about friends is that they're always trying to take the drunkard's wine away, so maybe he doesn't need them after all.

FANATIC

The fanatic takes his religion so seriously that it endangers him and those around him. If he's convinced that his god wants him to take a particular course of action, he will stop at nothing to fulfill his god's wishes, whether it means abandoning his first-born in the wilderness or offering to sacrifice his second-born on an altar.

GULLIBLE

The world requires a certain amount of trust, but the gullible individual doesn't know where to draw the line. He will follow someone he loves to the ends of the Earth, and support his actions regardless of what he's doing. He believes the most outrageous lies, and fights with all his might for the worst causes in the world.

HEDONIST

If this character is given a choice between doing his duty and having fun, he'll have fun. So what if he decides not to attend the sacrifice because Ishmael is having a game of dice in the fields? No one will miss him on watch just because he decided to see the dancing girls.

INHOSPITABLE

This character lacks any sense of charity and hospitality. The weak (lepers, the blind, the lame) are to be shunned and scorned, the poor, widowed, and orphaned are to be ignored, relatives are to be treated as strangers, and strangers are enemies who should be treated with indifference (if not hostility).



IRRITATING

There's something about this character that rubs some people the wrong way. Minor slights caused by the character lead to major grudges, and enemies go to unusual lengths to harm him or exact retribution. The character isn't necessarily arrogant or obnoxious, but he tends to incite his enemies.

NPC attitudes are changed as follows: indifferent reactions become unfriendly, while unfriendly reactions go to hostile. Positive reactions remain unchanged.

LECHER

The opposite sex was created for a reason, and that should be appreciated. Okay, so that man is married; a little flirting won't hurt anyone. And even if that woman is the daughter of the best fighter in the tribe, surely no one would object to a little ogling and maybe a discrete touch.

PROUD

Life requires compromise and the acknowledgment of one's faults, especially in a society where cooperation is essential to survival. The proud person neither accepts help, nor gives it to someone who's unlikely to acknowledge it. If a compromise must be made, he makes sure the other person is the one who gives in. In circumstances that require humility, he responds with arrogance. And if given a choice between performing menial labor and starvation, he'd rather starve. And whenever someone else is praised ahead of *his* efforts, look out!

PROFANE

This character refuses to be anyone's slave, especially a priest's, and if he refers to his god in ways that don't acknowledge his divine authority, or shows complete contempt for his priests, that's between him and the god.

QUARRELSOME

This person enjoys arguing, even over trivial matters, even when it's inappropriate. If he gets bored, he starts an argument. He finds fault where none exists, and exaggerates minor defects into tragic flaws.

RACIST

The racist thinks there are qualities inherent in the place where someone is born or the nature of one's ancestors that take precedence over the personal virtues of a person. The nicest, most generous, most intelligent person in the world is to be despised if he's "one of them."

SUPERSTITIOUS

The world of *Testament* is a world of understandable superstition, but to this person every minor occurrence is an omen to be interpreted and every major event is the result of some supernatural agent. As a result, he spends half his time trying to predict the best course of action to avoid supernatural disaster, and the rest of his time overreacting to incidents he couldn't avoid. Has one of the cows become sickly? Get rid of them all; obviously they displease the gods.

TRAGIC

Not only do bad things happen to this person, but he has the subconscious desire to be a victim. Minor actions will have major and horrifying consequences for their friends and comrades. The character views enduring suffering as a positive quality and wears martyrdom as the ultimate badge of honor (and the GM should assist him in collecting new ones).

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VAIN

The vain person is obsessed with his appearance; he cannot face the public unless he's looking his best, and he's jealous of anyone else with charisma and beauty, and may even plot to make sure they look bad or at the very least "know their place."

WARMONGER

To the warmonger peace is for weaklings, and the only thing in life that's noble is battle. When an enemy offers a surrender, he doesn't take it. When an enemy offers an opportunity for peace, he scorns it. The more dedicated someone is toward pacifism and diplomatic solutions, the angrier and more explosive the warmonger's reaction.

WEAK OF WILL

Even when he's right, this person has no faith in his own decisions, and is more than willing to change his opinion if someone questions his stance. He always goes along with the crowd, even when he has a suspicion that what they're doing is somehow wrong.

WORLD-WEARY

There is no enthusiasm for life in this person's life, nor even much melancholy; he spends most of his time in a listless depression. He's fatalistic about life, but even complaining does no good, so in times when his counsel would be useful, he's often silent.

WRATHFUL

The wrathful person is quick to take offense, suspicious of everyone's words, and prone to argue. There is no problem that can't be solved by raising his voice, and if raising his voice *doesn't* solve it, he speaks louder. When tempers flare, this person is the angriest, when people calm down, this man gets angrier.

LANGUAGES

Numerous languages were spoken in the world of *Testament*. They primarily fall into the following language families: Canaanite, Persian, Semitic, and Sumerian.

A character in *Testament* is familiar with one native tongue (usually the primary language listed for his nation) and may learn other languages as available. If a character is in conversation with someone who speaks a language in the same language family as one the PC is proficient in, but not the exact language of the PC, conversation is possible with a successful Intelligence check by the PC (DC 13).

Akkadian (Sumerian): The language of Mesopotamia. The language of diplomacy throughout the world of *Testament* from the 3rd millennium BCE to the early 1st millennium, it survived until around 100 CE.

Antediluvian (Semitic): In a mythic campaign set in the Antediluvian era, everyone on Earth spoke the same language before the Tower of Babel incident.

Arabian, South (Semitic): A language spoken in Ethiopia and southern Arabia. It has no written scheme until traders imported Phoenician script around 1300 BCE.

Arabic, Old (Semitic): A language spoken in northern Arabia by tribes such as the Amalekites and Nabateans.

Aramaic (Persian): A dialect heavily influenced by Greek. It replaced Akkadian in the region after the Exile.

Edomite (Canaanite): An ancient language of the area east of the Jordan River during the first half of the 1st millennium BCE.

Egyptian (Semitic): The language of Egypt. Used until about 300 BCE, after which it was replaced with Greek and Aramaic.

Elamite (Persian): The language of Persia between 2000 and 500 BCE.

Greek (Other): The language of Alexander's armies. Spoken in the region after 330 BCE.

Hebrew (Semitic): The language of the Jewish Bible. Spoken by Israelites before the Exile.

Hittite (Hittite): An Indo-European language spoken by the peoples north of Phoenicia, from 1500-1000 BCE.

Hurrian (Hittite): An Indo-European language spoken by the peoples of eastern Anatolia, from 2000-1200 BCE.

Kushite (Other): The language of the people far to the south of Egypt.

Libyan (Other): The language of the tribes living west of Egypt.

Medean (Persian): The language of the Medean Empire, 500-100 CE.

Moabite (Canaanite): An early Canaanite language, like Edomite, spoken in the area east of the Jordan River during the first half of the 1st millennium BCE.

Nubian (Other): The language of the people immediately to the south of Egypt. It was considered a magical tongue by the wizards of Egypt.

Phoenician (Canaanite): The predominant language of Canaan during the time of *Testament*.

Latino (Other): The language of the empire that dominated the region at the end of *Testament* time period.

Sumerian (Sumerian): The language spoken in the southern section of Babylonia, perhaps the most ancient language ever recorded.

Ugaritic (Canaanite): A close variant of Phoenician, common in Canaan between 2000 and 1200 BCE.

Urartian (Hittite): The language of the Urartu kingdom of central Anatolia, 900-600 BCE.

NEW SKILL

LITERACY (NONE; TRAINED ONLY)

There are four different writing schemes in the world of *Testament*: hieroglyphs (the pictographic script of Egypt), cuneiform (the wedge-shaped impressions in clay of Babylon), Phoenician (the alphabetic script of Canaan, precursor to the modern alphabet), and Hebrew (the alphabetic script of the Bible). To read or write your own language (or another language you are able to speak), you must buy the appropriate Literacy skill.

Languages tend to be written in the most closely-matched script (e.g., Egyptian is usually written in hieroglyphs), but words in one language can be written in the script of another if the writer speaks both languages.

This skill may be bought multiple times, once for each writing scheme.

Retry: Not applicable; there are no Literacy checks to fail.

Special: This skill can be bought with skill points or by sacrificing a bonus language slot. One writing scheme is learned for each skill rank bought or each bonus language slot used.

Priests and arcane spellcasters are automatically familiar with the script of their native language.