THE MITANNIANS
The Mitannians belonged to a large group of people called the Hurrians, some of whom had been living in Mesopotamia during Akkad and Ur. The Hurrians were important mediators of Mesopotamian culture to Syria and Anatolia. They developed the art of chariot warfare and horse training and created a large state that reached from the Euphrates to the foothills of Iran. The Hittites destroyed their kingdom, and the Assyrian empire incorporated what was left of it.

THE ASSYRIANS
The Assyrians were originally a people living in Assur, a city in northern Mesopotamia on the Tigris river. They spoke a Semitic language, and had a culture heavily influenced by Babylonia. Assur emerged as a political power during the 14th century B.C.E. The first Assyrian Empire spread north and west against the Neo-Hittite states but was brought to collapse at the end of the second millennium. A people called the Arameans, a Semitic nomadic and agricultural people originally from northern Syria invaded Assyria.

The Second Assyrian Empire
After 1000 B.C.E. The Assyrians began a second period of expansion, and by 665 B.C.E. they controlled all of Mesopotamia, much of southern Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt to its southern border. They succeeded thanks to a large, well-disciplined army and a society that valued military skills. The Assyrian kings constructed magnificent palaces at Nineveh and Nimrud surrounded by parks and gardens. The walls in the hallways were decorated with inscriptions proclaiming the power of the king. The Assyrians organized their empire into provinces with governors, military garrisons, and administration for taxation. Agricultural colonies were set up in key regions to store up supplies for military actions beyond the borders. Tens of thousands of people were forcibly displaced from their homes, to populate sparsely inhabited regions and to diminish resistance to Assyrian rule. Among those resettled were, the people of the kingdom of Israel, which the Assyrians invaded and destroyed.

The empire became too large to govern efficiently. Civil war divided the country. The Medes, a powerful people from western and central Iran attacked Assyria and were joined by the Babylonians under the leadership of a general named Nebuchadnezzar. In 612 B.C.E. they destroyed the Assyrian city, and Assyria never recovered.