Contents

List of Maps ix
List of Illustrations xi
List of Abbreviations xiii
Acknowledgments xvii
Preface xv
A Yardstick of Time xix

Introduction 1

VIGNETTES

Mesopotamia 7
In the Tablet Houses of Mesopotamia 7
New Year’s Day in Babylon 12
Decoding the Hammurabi Law Code 18
On the Lighter Side of Mesopotamia: A Glimpse into Sumerian Palace and Temple Household Life 24
Wild Animals and Game Parks 27
Archaeology: The “Cold Case File” of the Historian 33

Egypt 39
Theme and Variations on Herodotus’s Statement That “Egypt Is the Gift of the Nile” 39
On the Essential Cosmic Rhythms of Ancient Egyptian Life 46

The Palestinian Corridor 50
The Seagoing Phoenicians 50
From Tribal Coalition to Statehood in Ancient Israel 55
Ancient Persia and a Tale of Two Cities: Athens and Jerusalem in the Fifth Century 63
On Nomads and Nomadism 69

Anatolia 72
An Old Assyrian Trading Enterprise in Asia Minor 72
On Chariot Warfare 80