Religion

**Religion in Mesopotamia**

The [Sumerians](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/wwww/world/sumeriadef.htm) believed that the forces of nature (rain, wind, floods) were alive. The people couldn't control these forces of nature, so they worshipped them as gods. The people also believed that they were living on Earth only to please the gods. The universe was divided into three levels, the top level where the gods lived, earth below it, and the underworld where you went when you died.

The gods stuck people together in their social groups and were believed to have provided what they needed to survive. The Sumerians developed stories and festivals to explain and harness help for their physical environment. New year was extremely important for Sumerians because on that day they believed the gods decided what would happen to mankind for the coming year.

The Sumerians had hundreds, perhaps thousands of gods, both male and female. The most important gods included Anu, the ruler of the gods; Enki, the god of earth; and Enlil, the god of the air, who separated heaven and earth. Enlil it was also who gave the Sumerians their knowledge of farming.

Each Sumerian city also had its own god. The focus of the city was the ziggurat, a large temple that was the home of that city's god. The priests who worked in the ziggurats were the only ones who knew the will of the gods, so they were very powerful. For example, the city's god owned the land, but the priests made decisions of how to run that land. Each profession was also connected to different gods who looked after those workers. The Mesopotamians worshipped images of their gods, which it was believed actually held the essence or personality of the god that they represented.

The ancient Mesopotamians believed in an [afterlife](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterlife) that was a land below our world. This land was known by a Sumerian word that meant "Great Below". It was believed everyone went to the “Great Below” after death no matter where they were in Mesopotamian social structure or the actions performed during life.

In parts of Mesopotamian religion, [magic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_%28paranormal%29) was believed in and actively practiced. At the city of [Uruk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruk), archaeologists have excavated houses dating from the 5th and 4th centuries BCE in which cuneiform clay tablets have been unearthed containing magical incantations.[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian_religion#cite_note-22)

Sources: about.com, Wikipedia.com, kidskonnect.com, socialstudiesforkids.com