

# The Assyrian Army



The Assyrian Empire was built on the strength of their powerful army. The warrior society of the Assyrians produced fearsome soldiers as well as innovative generals.

## What does it mean “A Standing Army” ?

The early Assyrians were a warrior society. Every young man was expected to train as a warrior. A standing army is one made up of professional soldiers whose only job is to fight. The Assyrian soldiers were trained in siege warfare, battle tactics, and hand-to-hand combat. Every spring the Assyrian army would launch a battle campaign.

## How Assyrians were able to build an Empire ?

The kings of the Assyrians used this fearsome army to build and expand their empire. The fear of the army was used to keep the newly conquered people in line. They built forts and roads throughout the empire to help the army to travel quickly to troubled spots. Any rebellion was quickly crushed.

Eventually, the Assyrian Empire became too big to manage in this way. The cruelty of the Assyrian soldiers caused rebellion throughout the empire spreading the army thin.

## Why the Assyrian kings are called “Warrior Kings” ?

The kings of the Assyrians were expected to be warriors themselves. They led the Assyrian army into battle and fought fiercely. Of course, they were surrounded by an elite force of troops whose job was to keep the king alive.

## What were the Assyrian Chariots ?

One of the greatest strengths of the Assyrian army was its chariots. A chariot is a wheeled vehicle pulled by two to four horses. Riders would stand on the chariot. Typically there were two riders; a driver and a soldier armed with a spear and a bow and arrow. Sometimes a third man was added to protect the rear. Chariots were used to smash into enemy lines to create a gap for the rest of the army.

## What were the weapons used by Assyrian Soldiers ?

The Assyrians used a wide variety of weapons including swords, spears, bows and arrows, slings, and daggers. The Assyrians were the first to use iron to make their weapons. Iron was stronger than the bronze used by their enemies.

The main armor used by Assyrian soldiers was a shield and helmet. Archers had a shield bearer who would cover them while they got off shots. Full body armor was generally reserved for the officers and generals.

## What did Assyrian Soldiers use during Sieges ?

The Assyrians invented some of the first siege equipment to defeat fortified cities. They used **battering rams** to break down gates and **siege towers** to go over walls.

## Interesting Facts about the Assyrian Army

- The Assyrians were experts in the area of **logistics**. They built food stores along the roads of their empire to feed their army as it traveled.
- The **king's court** generally accompanied him while on a war campaign. This included his family, servants, advisors, and even entertainment.
- The Assyrian army was one of the first to use **cavalry**.