Mesopotamia, Greek for “land between the rivers” describes the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Tributaries originating in the mountains feed the “land between the rivers.” Rain fed agriculture in the northwest part of Mesopotamia is gradually replaced by irrigation to support more intensive farming further downstream.

The two rivers and their drainage basins are almost completely within the region that has come to be known as the Fertile Crescent, an area that supported early agriculture because of the fertile river valley soils and adequate precipitation and river flow.

The rivers now meet at Basra and flow into the Persian Gulf via the Shatt al Arab waterway. In ancient times, each river had a separate mouth at the Persian Gulf, and the shore line was further north.

Definitions
An arid area or desert receives less than 10 inches of rain a year.
A semi-arid area generally receives between 10 and 20 inches of rain per year.