

LB 101 – Introduction to the Old Testament



Certificate and Diploma level

**Teacher's Handbook
Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene
Africa Region**

Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene- Africa Region

LB 101 – Introduction to the Old Testament

Author: Rev. Chanshi CHANDA, B.A., M.A.

Editors: R. Lovett and G. Crofford

Note to teachers: To correct mistakes in future editions, please send notice of errors to: admin.itn@gmail.com

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 Biblica. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Description

This course presents the content, history and the important people of the Old Testament, and teaching based on each section of the Old Testament according to its contribution to Christian theology.

Course rationale

Narration

Christian faith demands total consecration of believers to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives. All that we can know about Jesus is revealed to us in the Bible, that is to say the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. One of the first tasks therefore of a minister or church leader is to share the word of God with the faithful in the church whether by preaching or by Bible studies. That teaching is aimed to increase the spiritual maturity of the faithful and to increase their effectiveness in witnessing to what Christ has done in their lives thanks to the grace of salvation which he worked through the means of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' apostles and the first believers based their understanding of Jesus on the texts of the Old Testament as the eternal word of God. To better understand the Christian faith, the minister must begin studies of the Bible with that base. From the point of view that the story of the Bible is the story of salvation offered by God to his people, this course introduces the Old Testament as Christian writing which presents the beginnings of what God would offer in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Program outcomes

The following program outcomes assigned to this module are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

CON 1	Knowledge of the history and content of the Old Testament
CON 3	Use of the principles of Biblical Interpretation
CON 4	Appreciation of the theological foundations of the Christian faith from the Biblical point-of-view when read from a Wesleyan perspective
COM 4	Ability to teach the Word of God and make disciples that can make other disciples
COM 10	Ability to interpret and apply the Bible according to the best principles of Biblical interpretation
CAR 3	Ability to worship God by using personal and public means of grace
CAR 6	Ability to give value to relationships through openness, righteousness, and honesty.
CXT 2	Ability to understand the context within which he or she lives with objectivity
CXT 3	Ability to understand the principles of cross-cultural ministry
CXT 4	Ability to understand the differences between the worldviews of the Western world, that of Africa, and that of the Bible

Course outcomes for this module

For achieving the competencies listed about, this module organizes several learning activities and requirements around the following intended learning outcomes for this course. At the end of this course, the student will know/be able to:

1. Tell the principal events from the Old Testament in chronological order, including the important people and their roles in that story. (CON 1);
2. Recognize different literary genres and the necessity to read and understand the meaning of and biblical text according to the characteristics of its genre. (CON 3, 4; COM 10);
3. Appreciate how the Old Testament texts deepen the quality of our worship of God (CON 4 ; CAR 3) ;
4. Compare the cultural background and the understanding of the universe presented in the Old Testament with the local culture and the understanding of the universe held in the context of ministry. (CON 3; CXT 2, 4);

5. Prepare a sermon and/or a Bible study based on an Old Testament text which relates to the Christian life (CON 4; COM 4; CXT 3);
6. Evaluate the character and the actions of principal people in the Old Testament in relation to the level of divine revelation available in that era (CON 1; COM 4; CAR 6; CXT 4);
7. Describe the major theological concepts which underline the salvation story (CON 1, 4 ; COM 10 ; CXT 3) ;

The lessons and exercises of this course offer the following percentages of the four C's:

Content	45%
Competence	20%
Character	10%
Context	25%

Resources used for supplemental research

French:

Alexander, Pat, ed. *Le Monde de la Bible*. Brépols : EBV, 1996

Carson, D. A. *Commentaire Biblique Edition du 21^{ème} siècle*.

LeBeau, Richard. *Atlas des Hébreux : 1200 av. J.-C. – 135 apr. J.-C.* Paris : Autrement, 2003.

Mears, Henrietta. *Panorama de l'Ancien Testament*. Deerfield, FL. : VIDA, 1982.

Thompson. *La Bible Déchiffrée*

English:

Varughese, Alex, ed. *Discovering the Bible: Story and Faith of the Biblical Communities*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2006.

Course requirements/assignments

Note to the leader: As the context of each course differs, it is desirable that you decide in consultation with the students the due date for each assignment. The requirements for the certificate level students are lighter than for those at the diploma level.

N.B. – Some useful hints for sermon preparation are found at the end of lesson three. It would therefore be good to set the date for the aforementioned draft to be set after the completion of the third lesson.

To complete the particular objectives of this module, the student must complete the following requirements:

Diploma level

- A. Attend all class sessions. An absence of more than 2.5 hours of class will cost a reduction of 25% of the final grade.

- B. Take the final exam (objectives 1, 2, 4, 7), 30% of the final grade
- C. Complete the exercise on the important people of the Old Testament – see the chart in the Student Handbook (objectives 1 et 6), 10%
- D. Complete the chart of the Old Testament books according to the different textual structures of the Old Testament. – See lesson 2; also the Student Handbook (objective 2), 10%
- E. Plan a worship service which includes several Old Testament readings and which is built around a precise theme (objective 3), 5%
- F. Prepare a sermon outline of a Bible study based on a text chosen from the list which is towards the end of Lesson 3 (objective 5) 10%
- G. Memorize the key verses for each lesson in the course (objectives 3 et 7), 15%
- H. Complete the exercise concerning the Old Testament world view – See the chart in the Student Handbook (objective 4), 10%
- I. Read the assigned Bible passages before each lesson – each student must confirm before the lesson that he/she has read the passages in question – 10%

Certificate level

- A. Attend all the class sessions. An absence of more than 2.5 hours will cost a reduction of 25% in the final grade.
- B. Taking a final exam -- 30% of the final grade – This exam may be given orally between the student and course leader. It is not required to be written.
- C. Plan a worship service which includes several Old Testament readings and which is built around a precise theme – 20% -- A student at the diploma level may help in writing down the service elements which the certificate level student chooses.
- D. Memorization of key verses – 20%
- E. With the help of a diploma level student (who may help with the writing), prepare a sermon outline or a Bible study based on a text chosen by the leader – 10%
- F. Complete the exercise concerning the important people of the Old Testament – 10%
- G. Read the assigned Bible passages before each lesson – each student must confirm before the lesson that he/she has read the passages in question – 10%

Course Outline

This course is designed for intensive sessions in one week – eight class sessions plus the final exam. Of course, this course could be presented in several ways according to the availabilities of the students at a particular center. The eight lessons are as follows:

Lesson 1: The Old Testament as a collection of sacred texts (religion, inspiration, universality, etc.)

Lesson 2: The structure of the Old Testament (the sections [Jewish and Christian], the genres, historic periods, etc.)

Lesson 3: The Old Testament story – Adam to Joseph

- Lesson 4: The Old Testament story— Moses to David
- Lesson 5: The Old Testament story — Solomon to the exile
- Lesson 6: Old Testament story and from other sources—from the Exile to Jesus
- Lesson 7: The worldview of the Old Testament authors
- Lesson 8: Theological themes of the Old Testament (God, humanity, covenant, grace, etc.)
- Final Exam

Note to the leader

The leader must assign the following passages to be read *before* the first session: Genesis 1-3; Exodus 3-4; Psalm 19; Isaiah 44:13-20

~~~~~

~~~~~

Lesson 1: The Old Testament as a collection of sacred texts

Basic instructions for this lesson

Objectives for this Lesson

This lesson has three primary objectives : (1) that the Old Testament be recognized as a collection of independent and separate texts ; (2) that these texts are considered sacred because they find their source in the thoughts of God as revealed to the authors of the texts, and as a revelation of God, they form a group of texts which maintain one theology ; (3) that many other religions also have texts which they consider sacred, and that the Bible is different than others because its inspiration alone is not a sufficient argument for its authority.

Presentations

There are three presentations in this lesson which aim at the objectives cited above. Each presentation is followed by a class activity. The activity after the second presentation involves group work. If you have several sessions per lesson you must decide how to distribute the activities according to the hours available. It is possible that the presentations will introduce completely new ideas or strange ideas to the students. Be sensitive to respond to questions or lack of understanding.

N.B. – The leader can ask someone to write the questions on the board, so that each student can copy them into their notebook. These questions are to on during the presentation. At the end, revisit the questions to check the responses. The

correct answers (with a few exceptions) are not included in the workbook, but are to be looked for by the leader before the class day.

Verses to memorize

The Psalms underline the official faith of Israel, and the personal faith of the faithful among them. In this lesson we will memorize some verses of a Psalm. Psalm 1:1-2

Lesson Plan

1. Meditation

For the first lesson, the leader will present a 5- minute Scriptural meditation. Later, a paper can be distributed so that the students can sign up for a time (at the beginning of each lesson) to present a meditation taken from a passage of the Old Testament.

2. Introduce the song for the day and then pray

3. Work on memorizing the Bible verses (Psalm 1:1-2)

4. Presentations et Activities: There will be an activity for each presentation. Note that the Student Handbook contains some questions that the student can use to better follow the presentations.

~~~~~

***First presentation***

**"A religion of a God who speaks, and of whose words were written"**

Introduction

This course is one of two courses offered on the subject of the Old Testament which are found in the curriculum in the Diploma of Theology (Dip.Th.) of the Nazarene Theological Institute. Little by little, the Nazarene Theological Institute will offer other courses so that pastors can more deeply understand these texts.

There are several ways to introduce a course on the Old Testament. The manner one chooses depends on the objectives of the course. This course proposes to present the Old Testament as a collection of sacred texts which belong to ancient and present-day Judaism, and which were incorporated by Christianity among her sacred texts because this collection was the source of the message of Jesus and his first apostles. By the Pharisee's means of interpretation, the first Christian preachers could present Jesus as the fulfillment of several Old Testament texts. In fact, when Luke described the meeting between Jesus and a couple of disciples on the day of

his resurrection, Luke said that Jesus “explained to them all the Scriptures which concerned him.” By the word Scriptures, Luke meant the Old Testament, the texts that the Jews at the time of Jesus considered as God’s revelation to them.

In fact, an element that distinguishes ancient Judaism from other religions of that era was the fact that their God, Yahweh, would reveal himself by words and ideas as well as by action. The God of Israel kept his eye on them, he gave them instructions on how they could please him, he blessed them, and he corrected them. Sometimes he predicted future events. Sometimes he threatened his people with acts of discipline, some happened, others not. This God, in contrast to the false gods that other people feared, could see, listen and speak. That is the subject of this presentation.

### A God who speaks

All the Bible passages that we have read for this lesson and the verses to memorize emphasize the same thing, that Yahweh, who is the subject of worship and covenant in the Old Testament, is a God who speaks. In Genesis 1, God speaks and the elements of creation appeared thanks to the power of his word. In Genesis 2 & 3, this same God who created the heavens and the earth by his word enters into conversation with his principal creation – humanity, man and woman. But he also speaks with another creature – the serpent – with whom he does not dialogue. To the serpent, God commands and the serpent can do nothing against it: the word of God is final. In Exodus, this same God begins to reveal his plan of redemption through words communicated to man chosen as his special ministers. This plan begins with the deliverance from slavery in Egypt, but God wanted his people to benefit also from many promises the realization of these however depended on their obedience to his word. Even though God knew that his people would not obey him, he spoke to them. The plan of redemption always seems needed, not only a deliverance from physical slavery from the Egyptians, but the deliverance of the slave to sin.

The instruction that God gave his people became essential to the development of a people, generation after generation, and the subject of their songs – the Psalms. In fact, the longest Psalm in the Bible, Psalm 119, with 176 verses, is consecrated totally to the love of, faithfulness to, and obedience of the instructions and laws of God. Finally, the whole system both formal and informal of the prophets as God’s spokesmen highlights the fact not only that God speaks, but also that he watches what happens and he gives a precise word according to the circumstances of his people and according to their spiritual condition. The prophet carries a message of how God’s people must apply his instructions in real time.

### A context of false gods, blind and deaf

During different periods in the history of God’s people, they find themselves in places where the local people claim the sovereignty of one or several other gods.

Some of these gods are named in the Old Testament and others are not. Several of these groups were polytheists.

The Egyptians, for example, worshipped the sun and the Nile. But they also worshipped all the animals that are depicted in the plagues that God inflicted against them. The Canaanites worshipped 70 gods, the principal one was Baal, his father El and his mother Asherah, all which are mentioned in the Bible. The Philistines worship Dagon; the Moabites, Chemosh; the Assyrians, Nebo and Asshur; the Babylonians, about twenty gods including Nebo, Bel and principally Marduk (also known as Merodach). This last one is not mentioned in the Bible, but he was the patron of the city of Babylon. The religions of these people consisted in making these gods the servants of the people who worshipped them. Most of these gods were only forces of nature that the worshippers by magical rites tried to control in their favor. They could neither see, nor hear, nor speak. The Old Testament teaches us that these false gods are just that – false. They can do nothing. It is Yahweh who does everything. It is he who sends the rains or holds them back, for example, who makes the plants grow which provide food (See Elijah versus the prophets of Baal – 1 Kings 18:20-46).

In the Old Testament, we find certain religious phenomena that are also found here in Africa. For example, here we find the worship of ancestors and what we call animism, which means the idea that the trees, animals, and other elements of nature possess a spiritual force. Moreover, the rites used here to try to maintain the favor of ancestors serve in the same way as the false religions of the Old Testament, meaning, to manipulate the forces of nature in our favor.

### Spiritual conflicts

The Old Testament suggests these contexts often presented to the people of God a temptation to turn from God to serve other gods – a spiritual battle for the soul of a nation—and the way by which God and his spokesmen, the prophets, confronted that battle which goes back to Old Testament days. The Egyptians had sacred texts consecrated to the worship of their gods. The Babylonians and the Assyrians had a whole gamut of sacred texts which spoke of creation and the human condition caused by the rebellion of a group of gods against the majority. According to these texts, human beings were created to suffer the punishment of the rebellious gods in order to make reconciliation between the rebels and the other gods. Humanity suffers because of them. This is a message completely contrary to the true gospel, where it is God himself who carries the necessary suffering so that a sinful humanity can be reconciled with a holy God.

Other sacred texts speak of the flood as a capricious act of the supreme god and that a family was saved thanks to the pity of other gods who hid their plan of salvation from the supreme God. The Old Testament texts therefore were not the only available to the people of God. A library discovered in the Middle East in the last century brought to light a great number of texts which would accompany the worship of Baal and his consort. Don't forget that the Code of Hammurabi (also known as Hammurapi), the king of Babylon, is much older than the laws God

dictated to Moses. The spiritual conflict was not restrained on the level of messages transmitted orally, but also on the level of sacred texts recognized as gifts from the gods.

The soul of African cultures was consecrated throughout the centuries to the false gods similar to those that we find in the Old Testament. It is truly difficult to uproot that consecration of the soul of a people, even after years of Christianity, especially when the form of Christianity taught does not underscore the holy life of a Christian characterized by a total consecration to the God of the Bible. Voodoo, tribalism, exploitation of disadvantaged people, worship of ancestors, sorcery (fetishes), and services which mix a form of Christianity with one or more these elements (syncretism) all are a part of our spiritual battle everyday here in Africa.

We have a God who listens to our prayers, who honors our covenant with him and who can protect and even countermand the attacks that the enemy may throw in our direction. The story of our church on Africa is full of such episodes. It is necessary to retell them often in order to encourage our members to totally consecrate themselves to the only God who can do all in their lives. *If you as the leader have such a story to tell, it would be a good idea to do so now.*

*Here is one which comes from Bénin. A member of our church in Tanguéta, Bénin tried to start a new church in her house. In the beginning all went well, but at a certain time, our member went crazy and it was necessary to close the church, even before its organization as such. The others took that lady to the doctor to see if they could find anything wrong. Nothing. They later asserted that a local fetisher himself had cast the spell. The members of the church began to pray for her and in the end the spell was totally conquered. She became herself again, safe and sound at that moment. The church could therefore begin again.*

#### *Activity 1. Familiarize yourself with the Table of Contents in the Bible*

(Several students will know all the names of the books of the Old Testament, while others will not yet have them mastered. Give them some time to do this exercise.) This will be worked on again during the next lesson.

Bible contest to see who can find the announced Bible passages the quickest. Announce a verse, the first one to find it reads it aloud. Take the time to discuss the verse if the students would like. Do the same with all the verses, one at a time.

|                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| Psalm 19:15      | 2 Samuel 24:24 |
| Deuteronomy 30:6 | Jeremiah 31:33 |
| Josuha 24:15     | Amos 5:18-20   |

N.B.: The Student Handbook contains the following questions as an aide to the students to follow the presentation. Some of these questions may appear on the final exam. It would therefore be a good idea to check the responses that they have

given. You can do this now or at the beginning of the next lesson. *The leader must find the correct answers himself or herself.*

1. Who taught the methods of biblical interpretation which permits Christians to present Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God?
2. According to Genesis 1, 2 & 3 what is the power of the word of God?
3. What were the two needs which required a plan of redemption?
4. What type of worship is not found in the Old Testament?
5. What was the source of the spiritual conflicts in the Old Testament?
6. Reflection: What can we preach to those who are associated with sorcery?

~~~~~

Second presentation

"The Canon of the Old Testament, and the concept of inspiration"

Introduction

This lesson's presentations treat introductory subjects to the study of the Old Testament as sacred Christian writings. We stated in the first presentation that there were other ways to study and present the Old Testament. We began with the fact that God speaks, that God acts and that he maintains a relationship with his people. These facts encouraged the people of Israel to write and save these texts which told of the actions of God, the official interpretation of those actions and his own words. That was one of the ways the Israelites used to share from one generation to the next the stories of the acts of God on behalf of his people.

In the beginning, the people of Israel, as many African people, recounted the stories of their past orally from one generation to another. But at a certain time in their history, they found it necessary to keep the stories and the words by writing so that they would no longer be subjected to changes – in order to keep their divine nature. Later in their history they used the chronicles of the royal court of Israel and other countries as sources to research in order to tell and evaluate the precise events in history. In that case, it was necessary to have an interpretation before the resulting text could be considered as the word of God. The Israelites viewed that writing their history and even the research as obedience to God and they gave that job only to

those they recognized as anointed by God to do it – some prophets, and sometimes kings and priests. Many of these texts have undergone revisions which better reflect the new contexts that the people faced later in their history. Even these revisions were made by people recognized as anointed to do this work. That means that the majority of texts that we have in the Old Testament are not the first editions. Even so, they are recognized as inspired.

The Authors

The books of the prophets have their roots in the work of the prophet of whose name appears as the author of the text. Most of the Psalms have some indication as to who wrote them. The books of wisdom come from Solomon and the wise men of the Israel court. As to the other books, there are several theories about who wrote them. In the Church of the Nazarene, we prefer to not choose a single theory above the others if even the Bible scholars can not agree. Therefore, we do not hold a position as to who must be the author in such a case, even if we believe in the inspiration of all the texts and that they were written by men and women well chosen by God for that task. Concerning the stories in Genesis, for example, no theory exists that can be proven convincingly, not even the theory that attributes the book to Moses. Only the long story of Joseph has the feel of an original written text, while all the other stories seem to be the traditions passed from one generation to another orally with the possibility of changes during the years of transmission. No one knows when this book took its final form and who edited it.

The same thing can be said for most of the historical books. The books credited to Samuel were written well after the death of Samuel which is recounted in the first book. The books of Kings were written probably during the exile because all that is there reflects the reason for the exile – the disobedience of the people of God by following unfaithful kings in place of following the word of God. In these two cases, Samuel and Kings, the original text was only one book in Hebrew. It is the translation into Greek which caused the need for two rolls of paper instead of one.

The first author of biblical texts that the Old Testament recognizes is Moses. In Exodus 24:4 we read, "Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said." The context does not indicate the totality of what Moses wrote, but it is difficult to interpret this text to mean that Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament. He had written the laws that God dictated, of that we are sure, for that part there is no speculation. He probably did not write Deuteronomy either, even if this book presents as a series of speeches from Moses to the people of Israel just before the time of the conquest. We can propose that idea because Deuteronomy condemns many practices that Solomon introduced to the court of Israel and that his successors tried to continue. In addition, this book was found in the temple after the death of Manasseh and seems to reflect the period of King Jehoshaphat, during the spiritual revival of his reign.

After Moses, the other authors that the Bible recognizes are the scribes of the kings who maintained the court records, David and the other song leaders, Solomon and the other wise men, the prophets starting with Amos (the first of the prophets who

wrote), and the priest-scribe Ezra. It is clear that the prophetic books are works of literary art, by their use of language and by their composition. The kings and the prophet-priests were all anointed in a ceremony of some sort like that of Saul or David by Samuel. The only ones who were not anointed were the lay prophets like Amos and Haggai. However, since their prophecies happened according to their words, the people of Israel considered them true prophets.

Inspiration of the texts

The Israelites believed therefore that all the Scriptures were written and edited by prophets or by other people anointed by God. The prophets served as God's spokesmen and they often used the phrase, "Thus says the Lord" as an indication that their message came directly from God. The anointing ceremony was an act by which the Holy Spirit of God entered in the person to make them capable to accomplish the task to which God had called them. This is where the word inspired comes from – the Spirit of God entered in the person so the result of his work would be the work of God.

The Formation of the Canon

The New Testament uses three words to speak of the structure of the Old Testament: the law, the prophets and the Psalms. In the next lesson we will take more time to explain what these titles mean. All that it is necessary to know today is to realize that at the time of Jesus the books of the Old Testament were organized in groups of the same type and that these texts were more or less fixed. We use the word "canon" with a single "n" in the middle to indicate something which is sacred and in a standard form which would no longer be changed.

In fact the word "canon" originally meant a collection of books which present the standard in faith and practice and which carry the authority of God in themselves. The basis of that idea is found in several biblical passages like Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Jer. 26:2; Prv. 30:6; and Eccles. 3:14 in the Old Testament. In Exodus 24:7 the people respond to Moses' recitation of God's words saying, "Everything God has said, we'll do." Another important passage is Nehemiah 8:9 where the people at the time of the restoration of the country cry while hearing the reading of the Scripture and renewed their obedience to the law. The prophets, as already stated, recognized that their messages came directly from God and therefore carried his authority.

The first written proof that there was a collection of sacred books is found in the book of Sirach where he refers to the law, the prophets and the writers who had followed them. He called them all "Scripture". This text was written around 132 years before Christ. It is unknown when the process of creating a collection started. The first reference to a collection, probably incomplete, is found in Daniel 9:2 where Daniel finds in a text of Jeremiah that the exile was to last seventy years. Other passages of the Old Testament also indicate the presence of certain texts, but not yet a collection considered standard. Most of the proof we have which speaks of a beginning of such a collection comes from the period of the exile and restoration. The loss of the Holy Land and the destruction of the temple had so deeply upset the

soul of the nation of Judah that the spiritual leaders who were transported to Babylon had collected and studied and texts to see a message from God for the new situation. Most of what we know as the Old Testament was prepared therefore during this period. Finally with the death of Malachi, the Jews believed that the voice of God stopped. Nothing was added to the collection after. Therefore the essential element of what is our Old Testament was formed around 300 years before Christ.

For five books for the Old Testament, however, discussion continued until the end of the second century of our era around the questions that some scholars saw as controversies. These books are Ezekiel, Proverbs, Esther, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. They were all finally incorporated in the final Canon of the Old Testament.

Activity 2: In groups, respond to the question: "How can we be sure that what we read in our Bible is the word of God?"

Here are the questions taken from the second presentation:

1. What were the different sources of texts of the Old Testament? (at least 3)
2. To which instructions was it that the Jews saw the writing of the sacred texts as obedience?
3. Who was the first author of portions of the Bible mentioned in the Bible itself?
4. For which books of the Old Testament is it the most difficult to know the authors?
5. What historic event seemed to have the most importance for the formation of a canon?
6. What text is the first to indicate a canon of the Old Testament with three categories of books?

~~~~~

### ***Third presentation***

**"The first translations, the Old testament becomes universal?"**

#### Introduction

The large ceremony where Ezra directed the reading of the law to Jerusalem (see Nehemiah 8) suggests that at that time the people of Israel, for the most part, did not speak Hebrew. While Ezra read the text in Hebrew, groups of people around him listened to interpreters who recounted the law in Aramaic and supplemented the reading by giving up to date explanations (interpretation) of the text. Soon those

translations appeared as translations and official commentaries. Therefore, the first translation of the Old Testament was prepared for the Jews themselves because they no longer spoke the language of their ancestors. In the time of Jesus, most of the synagogues in Palestine used that translation of the Old Testament, because everyone spoke Aramaic including Jesus, his parents and family, as well as the twelve disciples. The Apostle Paul himself also spoke Aramaic as a mother tongue and he knew well that translation and cited it occasionally in his letters.

In the period of Alexander the Great, the influence of the Greek language and literature is scattered throughout the known world, from Europe to Persia including Palestine. It was not until after his death, however, that the Greek influence weighed heavily in Palestine. The prophecies of Malachi, for example reflect a Greek literary style more than Hebrew. Later, the wars between Syria and Egypt which happened during the third century before Jesus-Christ resulted in the victory of the Syrians (see Daniel chapter 11), and with that victory, the imposition of all things Greek on the Jews by the Syrians. There was a long period of oppression which saw the dispersion of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Palestine to Egypt, Asia Minor and even to Southern Europe. After one or two generations these Jews, known as the "Diaspora", spoke neither Hebrew nor Aramaic. They spoke Greek of that day and therefore to study the word of God required a translation in Greek. This translation is called the "Septuagint", because the legend associated with it states that seventy-two wise men (six for each of the twelve tribes of Israel) worked independently and in the end the seventy-two translations were exactly the same. This is only a legend and is not true at all.

While the Aramaic translation served the Jews in Palestine well, the Septuagint served the Jews of the Diaspora and all the Greek people who attended synagogues of the Diaspora. The Aramaic translation was the base for the ministry of Jesus when he wanted to cite Bible passages. The authors of the New Testament, in contrast, almost exclusively used the Greek translation, because most of the believers at the end of the first century spoke Greek. Even the Gospel of Matthew, which was addressed to Jews, used the Greek because the Jews were of the Diaspora.

The Jews of that period exercised a strong influence in the world outside of Palestine, because they were a people of the book, all the men knew how to read and write. They could therefore find jobs which required those skills. Often rich families looked for Jews to be their children's tutors because they knew how to read and write well and because they could count on their character and moral behavior as an example for the children. The Greek world ridiculed the Jews a little because of their Sabbath practices and above all for circumcision, but they appreciated their morality and the morality of their God. The Greek gods were all immoral and capricious. They did not respond to the needs of their worshippers. Moreover, they did not respond to a terrible famine that attacked Europe and Asia Minor in the second century before Christ, many Greeks approached Jews to study the word of God and to believe in God, yet without accepting the knife of circumcision. The Jews allowed anyone to attend services in the synagogue; even so the Greeks were not permitted into the Court of Men at the temple in Jerusalem. Thousands of Gentiles therefore heard the word of God every week in synagogues. The knowledge of the

Scripture spread among these people. Herod's Temple was constructed in Jerusalem with a huge court reserved for non-Jews; there they could approach (but not too close) the temple.

Another particular phenomenon helped the listening to and understanding of the Jewish Scriptures. Because Judaism is a religion of texts which contain the revelation of God, the Jews taught all their boys to read and many of the girls. In the dispersion of the Jews during the time of the wars between Egypt and Syria, many Jews had to look for work in new environments. Often, these Jews who worked in the houses of the rich as pedagogues for the children taught personal discipline to the children. The parents appreciated the morality of these Jews very much and began little by little to listen to their explanations of the morality based on worship of a holy God, messages which they found in the sacred texts of Israel. And when the first missionaries were presented in the synagogues in Asia, in Europe and in North Africa they found thousands of Greeks and other people ready to receive Jesus as their Messiah, he who calls all people of all races and tribes. Thanks to the translations and the dispersion of Jews during the third and second centuries before Christ, the Old Testament was scattered all over the world which had never known it before. The Old Testament belonged already to many races of people, and it had spread to all the continents known at that time.

*Activity 3: Make a list of all the languages of your country in which the Old Testament was translated.*

Questions taken from the presentation:

1. What are the first two languages in to which the Bible was translated?
2. Why was it necessary to translate the first time?
3. Why was it necessary to translate it into the other language?

Assignment:

- a. Memorize Ps. 1:3-4.
- b. Read Gen. 4-11.

~~~~~

Lesson 2: The Structure of the Old Testament

Meditation – presented by a student

Song and prayer

Review Ps. 1:1-2 with the students, and then take time to memorize verses 3-4 of that Psalm.

Lesson Plan

Lesson objectives

This lesson has two primary objectives. The first is to note the diverse literary genre that the authors of the Old Testament use and compare these types of texts with the ways that parents in our places of ministry teach their children the subject of philosophy, religion and their purpose.

The second is to become familiar with the geography of the Holy Land and its neighbors in order to understand the movements of the Israelites during their history.

Assignments to correct

Review the correct answers to the presentation questions from the first lesson.

Then do the following activity:

Activity 1: Create a list of ways that parents use to teach life truths, spiritual truths and their culture to their children. [Fairy tales, rules, proverbs, etc.]

~~~~~

***First presentation***

**"The Christian Structure of the Old Testament"**

Christianity adopted the Jewish Scriptures recognized as the official texts of Judaism as the Scriptures of the new religion. (According to many Jewish Christians of the first century, Christianity was not a new religion, but rather a fulfillment and renewal of Judaism from the period of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, Gentile Christians insisted to the political authorities that Christianity was not a Jewish sect, but a new religion.) The local churches of the first century had only the texts of the Old Testament as their Scriptures and they read them from the point of view of a Christian.

Nearly all the Christians who lived outside Palestine used the Greek translation of the Scriptures, the Septuagint. That translation reflects not only the Greek language of that era, but also Greek thought concerning the organization and the ideas of literature. They were very accustomed to distinguish between poetry and prose. They distinguished also between different literary genres, such as songs, prophecies, the "lives" of heroes from the past and essays on various subjects, and in particular history.

The Septuagint organized the Jewish Scriptures according to the usual literary classifications. For them, the Old Testament divided into four main literary genres: law, history, poetry and prophecy.

1. The prophetic books were, for the most part, written in poetry, but the content, as prophecy of one representing God distinguished them from the other poetical books. The prophets were divided into major and minor prophets. That distinction had nothing to do with the importance of the prophet or his ministry: all that these titles indicated was the length of the book. The Septuagint kept the "minor prophets" together in the Jewish Scriptures without changing anything. These books are almost all short, except for Hosea which is longer than Daniel. *Ask the students to look at the Table of Contents in their Bible and give the names of all the "minor prophets". Ask them which book begins the list.*

Concerning the "major prophets", the longest books among the prophets, the editors of the Septuagint re-evaluated the Jewish organization of the material. They recognized Daniel as a major prophet because what he predicted was happening at the time they were editing the Septuagint. Also, the book of Lamentations which was attributed to Jeremiah was added to the books of the "major prophets". *Ask the students to give a list of the Major Prophets from the Bible.*

2. The rest of the poetical books were divided between the Psalms and the books of wisdom literature. *Ask: Which are the books of wisdom literature?*

3. Concerning the law, the editors of the Septuagint again kept the Jewish system of choice of texts intact. These are the five books sometimes attributed to Moses, the first five books of the Old Testament. Among these five, only Genesis does not present a lot of laws. But even this book gives all the first commandments from God to Adam and Eve, as well as the conditions of the covenant between God and Adam, Isaac and Jacob. *Ask: What are the five books of the law? Do you know other words used to refer to these books? Pentateuch (5 scrolls); the Torah; "Moses"*

4. The other books—All the other books are written in prose. In Greek thought, in reading these books, one sees the stories of the people of Israel, whether on a large or small scale (Judges covers between 200-300 years, Chronicles covers the entire history of Israel; while Ruth only covers the life of a single family, and Esther only covers a few months). In Greek thought, together these recounts are called history. Christians therefore accepted the organization of the Old Testament with that series of books entitled "history". *Ask: Which books are in the historical division?*

These books covered the material we will look at in lessons 4, 5 & 6.

For the most part Christians have adopted the Greek system for organizing the books of the Old Testament with these four categories:

Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

History: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

Poetry: Job (wisdom), Psalms (songs), Proverbs, Ecclesiastics, Song of Songs  
Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel  
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk,  
Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi

Questions taken from this presentation

1. The Greek translation of the Old Testament reflects two things, which?
2. What were the four categories of texts in the Old Testament according to Christian thought?
3. Why would Genesis be included with the books of the law?

~~~~~

Second Presentation

"The Jewish Structure of the Old Testament"¹

In the presentation of the Christian structure of the Old Testament, we began with the Greek thought by saying that the Greek translation of the Old Testament had a greater influence on Christian understanding of the genres which formed it. Since it acted on the Jewish structure of the Old Testament, Jewish thought must also be treated. The Jewish culture up until the time of the exile was completely religious and theo-centric. This last word means that God is at the center of everything. In the context of the Old Testament, that means that the will and action of God underlay everything that happened in people's lives. God directed political relations and family relations. God provided what was needed for a good harvest. God controlled in one way or another childbirth (see Genesis 29:31-35) and reproduction of animals (see Genesis 30:31-43). God was therefore the main actor in all the affairs of humans and animals.

With this thought, a pure history did not exist in the Jewish mentality. Everything was God's action. Moreover the so-called stories the Old Testament are not simply stories, but more of an evaluation on the part of God of what happened and an accounting of his actions in the events recounted. The stories therefore which present such evaluations are part of the category of prophecy, because in this type of literature God used a spokesman to pronounce his will and his will which worked in historical events. Because of that mentality which did not allow for a pure history, the Jews only had three categories of texts in the Old Testament: the law (the same five books); the prophets (divided in two groups – the first prophets and the last prophets); and all the other texts, the writings. This is what Luke refers to in Luke 24:44. Jesus said, "...Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." These were the formal words as titles of each group of texts in Jesus' day. The people used the expressions Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms to indicate all three sections of the Old Testament. In fact, the phrase that Luke used means that all the Old Testament revealed Jesus. It is

true that throughout Christian history some preachers have abused that idea from time to time by preaching the Old Testament with a very bad interpretation of certain passages. That does not change the fact that the revelation God had given his people would serve to prove to them the identity of Jesus.

The structure therefore of the Old Testament according to Jewish thought is thus (the books appearing in this order):

Law : Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea to Malachi

Writings: Psalms, Job, Proverb, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations of Jeremiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ruth, Esther, Daniel

Questions taken from this presentation:

1. What does the word "theo-centric" mean?
2. Why did the Jews not accept a category of texts as "history"?
3. What are the three categories of texts in the Jewish Old Testament and what expressions did people in Christ's day use to express them?

Activity 2: Write a Table of Contents of the books of the Old Testament according to the different structures.

The students must prepare their own copy of this chart and complete it as an assignment. They can use different colors or other means to distinguish the three following cases:

Printing: Christian structure only

Cursive writing: Jewish structure only

Underline: Both structures

Law	History	Poetry/Literature	Prophets
<u>Genesis</u>	Joshua	<u>Job</u>	<i>Joshua</i>
<u>Exodus</u>	Judges	<u>Psalms</u>	<i>Judges</i>
<u>Leviticus</u>	Ruth	<u>Proverbs</u>	<i>1 & 2 Samuel</i>
<u>Numbers</u>	1 & 2 Samuel	<u>Ecclesiastes</u>	<i>1 & 2 Kings</i>
<u>Deuteronomy</u>	1 & 2 Kings	<u>Song of Songs</u>	<u>Isaiah</u>
	1 & 2 Chronicles	<i>Lamentations</i>	<u>Jeremiah</u>
	Ezra	<i>1 & 2 Chroniques</i>	Lamentations
	Nehemiah	<i>Ezra</i>	<u>Ezechiel</u>
	Esther	<i>Nehemiah</i>	Daniel
		<i>Ruth</i>	<u>Hosea</u>
		<i>Esther</i>	<u>Joel</u>
		<i>Daniel</i>	<u>Amos</u>
			<u>Obadiah</u>
			<u>Jonah</u>
			<u>Micah</u>
			<u>Nahum</u>
			<u>Habakkuk</u>
			<u>Zephaniah</u>
			<u>Haggai</u>
			<u>Zachariah</u>
			<u>Malachi</u>

*Sample Questions: **It is not necessary to ask these questions, but the responses are here just in case a student asks them.***

- 1. Why is neither Ezra nor Nehemiah considered a prophet? Neither book was written by someone whom was considered a prophet by the Jews.*
- 2. Why isn't Daniel considered a prophet according to the Jews? This book is of a particular genre which is not actually prophecy, but a word of encouragement given through unreal images to a persecuted people. He simply says, "God knows what is happening and he is in charge, even if we cannot see the results before our eyes."*
- 3. Why are the Chronicles not considered prophecy? Because the Chronicles represent an evaluation of Israel's history from the point of view of the priests instead of the point of view of the prophets.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Third Presentation

"Survey of the History and Geography of the Old Testament"

Historic periods covered by the Old Testament

Before the reign of David, it is difficult to give precise dates to the periods covered by the stories of the Old Testament. His reign, over all the kingdom of Israel, dates from 1000 BCE. The lengths of the periods before that are difficult to date because of some gaps in the Hebrew texts. Translators tried their best to write something of the places without indicating that certain numbers are lacking. We know what historic periods are presented in the Old Testament even if we do not know exactly their duration. There are eight historical periods noted in Jewish Scriptures:

- 1) the prehistory of the creation to the times of Abraham;
- 2) the period of the patriarchs;
- 3) the Exodus and the period in the desert;
- 4) the conquest of the Promised Land;
- 5) the united kingdom;
- 6) the divided kingdom;
- 7) the exile;
- 8) the restoration

1. *The Prehistoric Period* – We say prehistoric because, for the Jews, their history begins by the obedience of Abraham to God by leaving his country and by following God to the country where God wanted him to live. Before that the Old Testament is considered prehistoric even is one has available the stories of several people in great detail before the appearance of Abraham on the scene of history.

This period starts with the creation and the fall, generations develop where all human beings experience original sin even if they do not yet have the precise laws of God to follow. Later the flood arrives and the reconstruction of the human race by the descendants of Noah. According to most conservative interpretations, these events happened in the region occupied today by Iraq and Turkey.

2. *The Patriarchial Period* – A patriarch is a tribal chief, the tribe consisted of his living descendants and slaves or servants who depended on them. A son of a patriarch could not manage his own family as long as his father or grandfather still lives.

This is the period of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons. This is the beginning of the covenant, and the people began to recognize it as such. The covenant between God and Abraham is found in Genesis 12:2-3 and 17:3-8 with the promise of a son as proof of the faithfulness of God. This period ends with the family of Jacob in Egypt. Joseph and the pharaoh too care of the family and the twelve sons finally began to form the twelve tribes of Israel.

3. *In Egypt* – The book of Exodus opens with a phrase that sums up 400 years of the history of the family in Egypt about which the Bible says nothing else (see Ex. 1:8). Moses received the call of God to conduct the people of Israel from Egypt and take possession of the Promised Land. In the process, the people must become a holy people faithful to their God. God conducts them in the desert near Mount Sinai where they accept a new covenant sealed by the 10 Commandments. The people's disobedience creates a situation where the entire nation must wander in the Sinai desert for 40 years. Only Caleb and Joshua survive to enter the Promised Land. The story of that period ends with the death of Moses and the conquest of the land east of the Jordan. Joshua was the bridge between this period and the next.

4. *The period of the conquest and the judges* – This period is characterised by total tribalism, without a central government, and even if the religion of Israel must unite the peoples, there was not much success. The country was not totally conquered under Joshua's leadership. There were centers for each conquered tribe, but the country was still occupied by the Canaanites, idolaters of the worst of the religions based on fertility rites and sacred prostitution. That period is described as a period of cycles of rebellion and repentance, one following the other. God stayed faithful to his people in sending judges to exercise the justice of God on the enemies of the people. In this period one finds important people like Gideon, Samson, Deborah and others. The last of the judges was Samuel, who served as the bridge between that period and the next.

5. *The United Kingdom* – The fifth period is that of the United Kingdom and the end of the conquest of the Promised Land. The three kings of this period are Saul, David and Solomon. Saul had to spend his time conquering countries and hunting enemies of the people. He did not have much success. When he died, the Philistines and other people had taken most of the riches of the land. David, by trickery and other means, succeeded in finishing the work started by Joshua and created a nation of Israel with a territory maybe three times larger than the Israel of today. Solomon became probably the best known of the kings of Israel in their entire history because of his wisdom and because of his alliances with almost all known countries of that era. His royal marriages began to cost the royal treasury dearly and he had to collect taxes with a higher and higher rate. A rebellion of the tribes in the northern part of the countries ended in a division of the nation in two parts after the death of Solomon.

6. *The divided kingdoms*— The period with the most details concerning the life of the people is that of the divided kingdom. 1 & 2 Kings portray with some difficulty what happened because they attempt to maintain a simple thread of history while things happened independently in the two countries. This period is characterized by the idolatry of the people at the same time that the worship service of God became more and more elaborate. The priests did their work, but apart from a few moments of revival, the heart of the people was faithful neither to God nor to his commandments. This period is also the period of the great prophets, from Elijah to Jeremiah. This period ends by the people dispersed throughout the known world of that era—from Egypt to what is now Iran.

7. *Exile*– The period of the exile is probably the most important for theology and the faith in all the history of Israel. After having lost everything, the people were forced to reflect on their actions and their lack of faithfulness to God. The period of the exile, especially for those in Babylon, served as the womb of a pregnant woman. Thanks to the prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and another whose name is no longer known (his messages are found in the book of Isaiah), the people reformed themselves and developed a unique culture which expressed in many ways the desire to remain faithful to God no matter the country and no matter the circumstances. The period of the exile saw the birth of an important idea - the dream of a Messiah.

8. *Restoration* – The last period covered by the Old Testament writings is that of the restoration of Jerusalem and Israel under the direction of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and later by Ezra and Nehemiah. This is a period of poverty and discouragement. But for the first time in the history of the people, they listened to the voice of the prophets and God blessed them. This period ends with the story of an indecisive people and the growing hope for a Messiah.

Introduction to Old Testament geography (*Look at the maps in your Bibles*)

All the events in the Old Testament, beginning with the sailing of the Noah's ark took place in a territory that now includes the countries of Iraq, Syria, Libya, Jordan, Israel and the extreme north of Egypt. This territory is smaller than either the French Equatorial Field or the Africa West Field as designated by the work of the Church of the Nazarene in Africa. Precisely, it takes place in what is called the Fertile Crescent. This crescent begins where two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris empty into the Persian Gulf. It continues towards the northwest by following the two rivers and especially the Euphrates to Syria where the crescent descends towards the southwest to the Sinai Desert passing through Galilee and following the Jordan. From there, it turns towards the west to Egypt and the Nile Delta. It is called fertile because of the rivers which cross this territory and the more or less regular rains. This crescent encircles the Arabian Desert.

It is believed that the human story began somewhere north of this crescent, but all the theories about this are only speculation. The movements and moving of Abraham and his family cover all this area. The ancient city of Ur is found very close to the Persian Gulf, whereas Harran is at the point where the crescent turns toward the south. According to the stories, Abraham also traveled as far as Egypt. Most of Abraham's life was spent near the southwest of the crescent, between Hebron (the area just south of Jerusalem) and Beersheba on the border of the Sinai Desert.

Most of the people who live in this area were the descendents of Shem, the Noah's second son. The Canaanites and the Egyptians, both inhabitants of the extreme southwest descended from Ham. In contrast the Philistines are the people who came from southern Europe and the islands that are situated between Greece and Turkey.

The country of Israel itself occupied the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea with the Arabian Desert as its eastern border and the Sinai Desert as the southern border. The mountains of Lebanon and Mount Hermon form the northern border. In all, it encompasses about half of the southern Mediterranean coast. Traveling from the west towards the east of the country, there are five types of terrain which run the length of the country from north to south. On the west is a coastal plain. From there, it goes up to an area of foothills. For the third region one mounts again a vertical band of hills like those in Rwanda. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth are found in this third region. From there, it descends to the valley of the Jordan, the lowest valley on Earth. The city of Jericho and the Sea of Galilee are both found there. Finally, it again climbs towards the heights of the Trans-Jordan where Moab, Edom and the territory of the tribes of Rueben, Gad and Manasseh are found.

Questions taken from this presentation:

1. Make a list of the 8 historical periods cited in the Old Testament.
2. Place each of these important people in the correct period:

David, Moses, Samson, Abraham, Solomon, Isaiah, Nehemiah, Joshua, Haggai, Noah, Joseph, Ahab, and Jezebel

3. Samuel served as a bridge between two periods – which?
4. How many years of silence are there between Genesis and Exodus?
5. What modern countries occupy the territory which sheltered the principal important people of the Old Testament?
6. What is the name given to that territory? Why is it called that?
7. Which section of Israel most resembles Rwanda? Which section most resembles the south of Ghana and Liberia?

Activity: A geographic map. Using the maps at the end of your Bible, help the students find the following: Abraham's route, the route of the Exodus, the route of the Philistines; the countries of Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, the Hittites, Moab, Greece; the cities of Ur, Babylon, Nineveh, Harran, Jerusalem, Damascus and Gaza.

Assignments for the next lesson:

1. Memorize Psalm 1:5-6.
2. Read Gen. 37-50.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Lesson 3: The Story of the Old Testament – Adam to Joseph

Meditation – presented by a student

Song and prayer

Review with the leader Psalm 1:1-6.

Lesson Plan

Objective of the lesson

With this lesson we begin the story of the Old Testament (and even of the Bible), a story which continues, from the beginning to the end, the story of the redemption of a sinful humanity by a holy God. The students must see that connection despite different periods and different experiences of the people of Israel. The second objective of this lesson is to understand the concept and the experience of covenant. Finally the student must understand how to read different types of texts which contain the narration. The book of Genesis will help us because there are different types of narration. We will not have time to say everything, but the students will have all their lives to deepen their understanding of the stories. Because of the different presentations and activities, this lesson could take longer than the others.

Reading check: Gen. 1-11

The leader will ask the students to give their observations about this passage. All the students are required to have read the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Be careful not to lose too much time by trying to respond to all the questions that the students may ask. You may not have enough biblical grounding personally to answer, and it is better to say you don't know than to give a wrong answer. (Then later attempt to find the correct answer from a reliable source. If a question seems particularly interesting or difficult, please make note of it and send it in with the report at the end of the class. The question and its answer may be incorporated into future editions of this course.)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

First Presentation

"The texts of Genesis 1-11, in their context"

Introduction

The book of Genesis contains many types of narration. Actually, except for a few verses, the whole book is nothing but a gathering of narrations, different types of narrations and some from different periods in the history of Israel. The book begins,

for example, with two Jewish creation accounts which reflect two different types of texts and two different periods in the history of Israel. We will speak more about that soon.

From Genesis 4:17 to the end of the chapter 5, we find yet another type of narration. This is time it is in the form of genealogies. The Jews use genealogies not only to show someone's line of birth, but also to indicate the importance of certain events using numbers or other literary tricks. From 6:1 to 37:1 we see stories, more or less independent, which tell of prehistoric events, before the flood, and the family of Abraham and his first descendants. These stories, precisely because they are more or less independent, have the feel of stories told orally for generations or even centuries so that people would remember the story of their ancestors. These stories were first written down independently and later were put together by a series of editors which kept them in tact in order to produce a series of racial and familial stories. Even so, their independence is still clear. It is possible that Moses, or another person of his era, wrote them down for the first time, but we cannot confirm this theory. The last writing section in this series of texts was written during the exile from the texts that the priests and nobility carried to Babylon.

The rest of Genesis, from 37:2, is clearly a single story written as a literary unit. But once again, it is very difficult to determine the period in the history of Israel when it was written. It is clear, however, that this story was necessary in order for the beginning of Exodus to make any sense. Exodus requires an understanding of Joseph's life and his importance for Egypt as well as for Israel.

Let's return now to Genesis 1-11.

Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 – This passage was probably written during the exile, Old Testament scholars say this for two reasons:

1) This passage reflects precisely the Babylonian culture that the Jews encountered in the exile. For the Babylonians, the sun, the moon and above all the stars were gods who were at the same time the source of all that existed and the managers of the destiny of all human beings. Their stories of creation are very clear that the gods of the stars and waters were at the foundation of the entire universe. Genesis 1:2 reacts to that idea by saying that it is the Spirit of the Eternal God who moved on the water. However, in Genesis 1, the sun, the moon, and the stars are only servants of God without spiritual or creative powers of their own.

The Babylonians organize their calendar around a period of 10 days such that three of these periods make a month. The Jews, by divine revelation, insist on a period of seven days as the basis of calculating time. For the Babylonians, humans were created as slaves for the purpose of suffering the pain inflicted on rebellious gods by the council of gods. Humanity, by its suffering, did what was necessary for the sinful gods to be reconciled to the principle gods. Genesis suggests just the opposite. Humans were the ultimate work of all the creative powers of God. It is on humankind that God confided all the management of his creation – the earth, the plants, the animals, etc. he is therefore a type of viceroy, deputy ruler over the

world and its inhabitants. Humanity's role towards God is hardly to suffer in his place, but to love and worship in the presence of him who wants to keep an intimate and personal relationship with this fantastic creation. Human suffering comes, not from creation, but as a result of sin that mankind committed after creation.

2) Even the text of Genesis 1:1-2:3, by its rhythms and its structure, represents the work of the priests more than the prophets. With the destruction of the temple, the priests assumed an important role in the education of the Jews during the period of the exile and after, they had no other role since they had no opportunity to make the daily sacrifices. Before, the training was the role of the fathers in each family and possibly the prophets instructed the people of the meaning of the law of God during different periods and circumstances of their history. The priests liked to work with numbers and learned by repetition. The structure therefore of this passage which is based on the number seven and the repetition of literary formulations seems to be the creation of the priests.

According to the structure, the first and fourth days are in parallel around the light of which God is the source. He created servants in his place which manage the light on earth (the sun, the moon, the stars). From this story, it is therefore not strange that in the life of Joshua, God decided that his servant – the sun- should stay longer than usual at one place allowing the armies of Israel more time to win a victory. It is not strange either that the sun refused to shine while Jesus was dying on the cross.

The second and the fifth days are also in parallel as are the third and the sixth. When Apostle Paul speaks of the subject of the resurrection (I Corinthians 15), he refers to the bodies created on days four and six. When John, in Revelation 4, describes the worship of God in heaven he uses the animals created on days five and six, to say that all creation worships God and his Lamb.

Genesis 2:4 – 4:16

This passage reflects mainly the life of the Israelites in Palestine where that must confront the ideas of the pagan religion concentrated on Baal, the god of the storm. According to this religion, the problems of suffering and death find their source on the battles between gods (they had seventy), and death comes from the god of death, Mot. This religion and the vision of life it creates follow the seasonal agricultural cycle of rain and drought as well as the rules of animal reproduction. A creation account from this religion no longer exists. According to it, history makes no sense: one year follows another and nothing changes; neither the beginning nor the future matters, only the present and the continuation of the seasons.

According to Israel and what this passage (Gen. 2:4- 4:16) underscores, God, by creation, started a story that he personally directs: the history of the world and his people, even if the people of Israel are not mentioned until the end of the list of Noah's descendants (see 10:24 and the birth of Eber). For the Jews, suffering and death are not the result of battles between gods, as the Baal worshippers believe, but the result of sin committed by the first humans who tried to make their own rules against the direction of God concerning the new creation. Even when God

intervened, human beings no longer recognized their personal responsibility for their actions – neither Adam, nor Eve, nor Cain – so corrupt had become their human nature.

Questions taken from this presentation:

1. What types of narration are found in Genesis?
2. Why is it thought that Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 was written during the exile? (Several possible responses)
3. How does Genesis 2:4 - 4:16 reflect the period when the Israelites lives in Palestine?

Soon you will allow the students to give their observations or ask questions from Genesis 1-11. Here is a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ). It is not necessary to introduce the following questions and answers to the class. They are furnished here only in case a student asks the question.

Question: Where was the Garden of Eden? According to the description in the Bible, the location was near the north of Iraq. In any case, it is a description of a place which serves as the source of the Fertile Crescent, the place where all the history of the Old Testament happens.

Question: What fruit was on the tree from which Adam and Eve must not eat? No one knows. Some say apples and others say apricots, both fruits which only grow in places with colder weather. Since Adam and Eve did not wear clothes, the garden did not have winter. Therefore the fruit was neither an apple nor an apricot. In any case, the answer to the question does not change the meaning of the story and the fact of no longer eating that fruit in no way changes the sinful condition of humanity.

Question: What was the form of the serpent before God cursed it? No one knows the answer to that question either. Evidently the story suggests a mix between a literal happening and symbolism. Some painters have tried to depict the serpent with legs, beginning in a coil. Our mental image most often creates the scene with the serpent already in the tree close to the fruit.

Question: How did Cain know that God had not accepted his sacrifice? First, it must be said that the fact that the sacrifice consisted of vegetables instead of blood had nothing to do with the unacceptability of it. This offering was only that, a regular offering not within a redemption context. Knowing how to tell if a sacrifice was accepted comes directly from the Jewish culture. Nothing is indicated in the text. It seems that for burnt offerings, the response could be found in the direction of the smoke. Jewish legends speak of the fact that the smoke rises straight up despite the direction of the wind. Neither the Bible, nor Jewish culture offer any other explanations.

Question: What was the mark put on Cain? Again, here is a question without a precise answer. There was a period on history where certain Europeans (some whites) thought that the mark was the black skin of the Africans. That answer is surely wrong, but those who defended it could continue the practice of slavery of black people by using it.

Question: Where did Cain's wife come from? This question underlines the role of narration regarding historic possibilities. Cain had a sister available as a wife for him (Gen. 5:4). The storyline does not require that his wife came from somewhere else, as if God created other human beings in other places on Earth.

Question: How did Noah gather all the animals? The only response to this question seems that God himself inspired the animals to find Noah.

Question: What was the shape of the ark? Where is it now? The ark was mostly flat and rectangular like a barge which was rounded like a ship. The Mountains of Ararat are found between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, which is in Turkey today. Some explorers claim to have seen the remains of a boat broken in two pieces high up in the mountains, underlining that the ark was flat.

Question: Why was there a curse against Canaan? All the recent research of the language of the text of Genesis seems to indicate that Canaan was the illegitimate son of an incestuous act between Ham and his mother, when Noah, drunk, couldn't complete the act himself. (An interpretation of Genesis 9:18-25 which has not been proven.)

~~~~~

## ***Second presentation***

### **"From Adam to Noah"**

The Old Testament stories are not history dissertations. They primarily recount the relations between God and humanity, as the reasons for and the results of bad relations and the attempts on God's part to reconcile with his creation. The part of the story which treats the period between Adam and Noah comes from the period when Israel knew a system of sacrifices which on one hand created reconciliation between a sinful humanity and God and on the other hand permits individuals to express their worship and their submission to God.

After Adam and Eve's sin, God prepared the first sacrifice which serves to "cover" their sin by covering the shame attached to it. God had therefore forgiven their sin without removing the consequences. They were evicted from the garden and made to live and work outside of it. But, they kept a system of sacrifices as a means to worship God, and they taught their sons, Abel and Cain. The Apostle Paul

underscores the symbolic character of this story by speaking of Jesus as the second Adam (Rom. 5:14-21; 1 Cor. 15:45-49).

### Cain and Abel

The story of Abel and Cain continues the same theme— God’s desire that humans maintain an intimate relationship with him despite their sinful condition. This story underlines this fact many times – God tries to persuade Cain to admit that he was wrong even before he killed his brother and to change his attitude. According to the text, Cain’s offering was not accepted because he had an attitude problem in his heart. It was not the offering in itself that was the problem. No Jew would accuse Cain of having offered an improper sacrifice. Offerings of grain and vegetables were as acceptable as animal offerings according to the Jewish system of daily sacrifice. There is nothing in the context which indicates that Abel and Cain were offering sacrifices for atonement – only worship offerings. Both offered the results of their labors, as all worship offerings even today. We do not know how Cain knew that his offering was unacceptable, but God communicated that it was because of a problem in his heart that must be resolved. Instead of acting as God suggested, Cain killed his brother through jealousy and tried to cover his crime. God tried again two times to turn Cain from his sins and his bad attitudes towards his family and God himself, but Cain refused.

A third-born son and he followed his parents’ instructions concerning his relationship with God. The two genealogies which follow the birth of Seth indicate that the result of the two lifestyles: that of Cain who refused to listen to God and Seth who listened to his parents and worshipped God both in his heart and in his actions.

### The sons of God

The first verses of chapter six contain a very short and strange story concerning a race of giants that Genesis calls “the heroes of old”. The objective of this story is to show that what other cultures called gods were not, but that they had their origins in the reproduction system that the only God had put in place. Other religions base their culture on stories of former heroes as gods from olden days. The story of Genesis also describes the origin of the beings that the Jewish spies found among the Canaanites during the period of the conquest. There are many hypotheses about what this passage means by the sons of God, but none are satisfactory. It is better therefore to conclude nothing about these beings.

### Noah and the flood

The Jews had not developed as clear a doctrine of original sin as that of the evangelical Christians. They knew, however, that most people live in sin instead of following God’s instructions, even if the genealogy of Seth seems to indicate that a greater portion of the human population would have followed the instructions. The story of Noah begins by the universality of sin and the judgment of God which had replaced his patience. There are those who say that the “sons of God” contributed to that condition because of the two stories that are found in the same chapter. This

does not mean, however, that God made a mistake in creating the human race, or that his plan no longer worked and that he had to try again. God respects rather, at all costs, the freedom that he gave to his creation to not obey him at the same time to respect their personal character. In contrast, God must also express his own personality as it concerns the free growth of a sinful culture.

By this, God would show his creation his plan of choosing a people who would represent as messengers by words and actions of God's love and his plan of salvation.

After Noah, God introduced his system of the "remnant" which he was going to use throughout the Old Testament period up to Jesus himself. The "remnant" is those Jews who remained after God had disciplined the whole group. The prophets Isaiah and Amos often spoke of it. The "remnant," by means of natural reproduction replenished the ranks of the Israelites. The last "remnant" of the people of Israel who obeyed the word of God is Jesus, a "remnant" of a single person who replenished the people of God by faith and by the growth of the church instead of by biological reproduction.

There are a hundred stories of a flood as a critical event in human history. They all represent a moment in the development of the culture and the local religion, because in all these cases it acts as a new beginning of the race after total destruction by the people who were saved in a boat. Many of these stories speak of a local flood in the region of the Holy Lands, while others like the account in the Bible speak of a flood that covered all the earth. It is true that, during that era, the authors did not understand the world to be spherical and their understanding of the size of the earth only covered the area between Egypt to the west, India to the east, Ethiopia to the south and the mountains of Ararat to the north. Further than that, they did not venture. They saw a flat land with more or less precise boundaries. The difference between a local flood and a universal flood was not very much for them.

The story of the Bible follows the theology of Israel: There is only one God, sovereign, who directs human history while at the same time allowing humanity the choice to obey him or not. After years of patience, this God exerted a discipline on the human race and on all of creation, but he kept a "remnant" of all the species in for a new beginning. This God entered into an alliance with the human race after having saved it. This alliance assures the human race that God will never again destroy the earth by a flood, and it guarantees the necessary seasons for the agricultural cycle each year. The description of the agricultural cycle in these stories reflects, as one can imagine, the seasons as they are in Palestine, especially the rainy and dry seasons, or a period of summer and another of winter. Israel, by occupying Palestine at the same time as the Canaanites, found itself in a contextual conflict with their neighbors and their conception of the world. According to the religion of Baal, the gods did not guarantee the rain, even if they represented the rain and other means of giving water to the fields. The Canaanites must persuade their gods to send the rain each year. The episode between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:25-30, especially verse 28) shows the force of

that belief and the difficulty that it caused its disciples. Genesis would say the opposite. God takes care of his own.

Questions taken from this presentation:

1. What was the first offering for covering the sins of human beings?
2. How does the story of Abel and Cain present the spiritual truth of God that all people should be saved?
3. Who are the sons of God?
4. The story of Noah begins with what spiritual truth?
5. What is the system that God uses that is called "the remnant"?
6. Reflection: What difference does it make that the Biblical flood account records a universal flood?
7. What are the elements of the alliance between God and Noah?

*Activity 1: Compare Lamech and Enoch and the genealogies in Genesis 4 and 5.*

*In groups, together respond to the following questions:*

1. *Prepare a description of Cain and Seth noting their relationship with God.*
2. *Notice the fact that Lamech is the 7<sup>th</sup> generation from Cain and Enoch is the 7<sup>th</sup> generation from Seth. What is the meaning of the number "7"? ["7" means that this is the result of the direction established by the tribal ancestor.]*
3. *What does the story of Lamech teach concerning polygamy? [It was part of the rebellion against the will of God established by the marriage between Adam and Eve. It is the result of the sin of Cain.]*
4. *What effect did sin have on Lamech's character? [He lost all sense of good and evil.]*
5. *What does the story of Enoch teach us about death? [That a good relationship with God results in eternal life. (This story foreshadows the teaching of Jesus on eternal life.)*

~~~~~

Third presentation

"From Noah to Isaac"

The specific story of Israel only begins after the story of Noah in the genealogy which lists Eber. The reconciliation that God proposed applies to all humanity and the covenant between God and Abraham prepares a people as ambassadors to the human race. The universality of the Gospel begins therefore in Genesis and not with Jesus.

The Tower of Babel

After the flood, the sin of the human race continued and directed what happened to humans. Mankind wanted to demonstrate that they could, by their own efforts, get to the level of the gods. The city and the tower of Babel indicate, probably, the desire of mankind to take the place of the gods by going to their residence in heaven. A story of the tower of Babel is found among the documents that were found in Babylon in 1876. The tower's construction was an offense to God.

In the Old Testament, this story teaches many things: 1) it speaks of the life in Babylon, be it in the time of Abraham in Old Babylon or be it in the time of the exile in the New Babylon; 2) it was a way to say (according to many prophets) that city life tends to add to the tendency to sin, because the restraints placed by neighbors are not as strong as in a village; 3) when mankind attempts to take God's place, there will be destruction, of one type or another; 4) the division of humanity into different language and culture groups is at the same time a punishment and a blessing from God—a punishment for having gone beyond the limits God gave them and a blessing because humanity is no longer able to unite in the same sinful way; 5) the act of making a name for oneself is not humans' work, but it rests always the will of God. Immediately after this story, God tells Abram that he will make great the name of Abram (Gen. 12:2). We are servants of God, not the lords of the earth. Even Jesus said to John and James that only God could assign the places on his left and right.

An introduction to Abraham and the promises of God

Probably, the most important person in the Old Testament would be Abraham. While presenting himself to Abraham, God invited Abraham to follow him to a place that he would reveal later. Through a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, God would demonstrate his grace, blessings and the best manner of living to all the families on the earth. At the beginning of the story, it is very clear that the goal of this call was larger than a personal relationship with him. In fact, God promised Abraham four things according to Genesis 12:2-3: a great nation, the benediction of God, a great name and that he would be a source of blessing for all the people of the earth. Later, God makes clear some of the details of these promises by saying that Abraham would have a family more numerous than the grains of sand in the

ocean, and that all the earth over which Abraham passed would belong to his descendants.

Abraham's story serves as a story of the realization of the promises of God, and the exercise of faith despite the fact that the promises were not fulfilled quickly. Moreover, the idea of blessing, which is repeated five times in the first verses of Genesis 12 underscores God's goal of providing all things necessary for all his creation so that their lives reflect all that God had intended for them since creation.

The Covenant between Abraham and God

Chapters 15 and 17 of Genesis contain other promises that God gave to Abraham. Genesis 15:7-18 gives a detailed account of the covenant between God and Abraham. Even the language used in the Old Testament to speak of a covenant of any type is found at the roots of the story. Hebrew states that one "cuts" a covenant, since Abraham cut an animal in two and he and God walked between the two parts that were prepared for sacrifice. Moreover, the sign of the covenant for Abraham and his descendants was circumcision, which requires a physical cutting. (If necessary, explain what circumcision is.)

In Abraham's day, as it is even today, a covenant includes obligations and promises. For Israel, the obligation between God and his people were concentrated in the expression, "You will be my people and I will be your God." Each time one sees that expression in the Old Testament, it is understood that the theme of the paragraph or message is the covenant. For the people of God (Abraham and his descendants) that obligation is exclusive. This means that Israel must never worship another god than that of the covenant. For God, the expression does not reflect the same exclusivity. God has never chosen another people as his own, but he could (and he would) love other people (see the message of the book of Jonah), but he acts as God towards his people in all circumstances with blessings when necessary and with discipline when needed. God has the right to bless or discipline other people as well. Furthermore, God uses his people as his messengers to other people of the world. All communication and all business between the great powers of the era passed through the land promised to Abraham. The entire world must see that this is a people who are faithful to God.

The other obligation of this covenant with Abraham was for him to be faithful and to live as the people of God—to believe and submit to God. They would have to wait until the time of Moses for a more precise definition of how to do that (the law). However, God expected his people – through their consciences and by the work of his spirit – to know how to live as the people of God and differently from the pagan people who lived all around them. (See for example Gen. 18-19, where a specific message came in order to inform them.)

For God's part, the promises included a personal relationship with his people, the growth of the family into a large, expansive people, so large that they cannot be counted, with the necessary blessings for that growth and land. It was by his faith,

without even living to see the realization of these promises that God declared that Abraham was righteous before him.

Abraham must learn to trust God in all circumstances. The hardest lesson for him was to trust God even when God asked him to offer his son Isaac, the son of the promise, as a sacrifice (Genesis 22). This story shocked readers of the Old Testament more than any other, because in other texts God called it an abomination when in other pagan religions people offered their children as sacrifices to their gods. This lesson helps us think about what is pleasing to God. This same God could, from time to time, ask us also to do things that are difficult to understand, even for us to sacrifice the things that we hold most dear in life and for those the future will not be clear. But if we are sure that the call comes from the voice of God, our faithfulness requires an affirmative response.

Isaac, the son of the promise

The rest of Genesis, as long as it is, only reinforces the obligations of the covenant and the faithfulness of to the covenant despite the wicked actions of Abraham's descendants who had been chosen by God as Abraham's successors. In the case of Isaac, God had promised Abraham that he would have a son. Since Sarah could no longer get pregnant because she was past the age of childbearing, Abraham and Sarah decided to help God achieve that promise by a culturally accepted method—a surrogate mother for Sarah. The baby born to the Sarah's servant would be given to Sarah as the son of the promise of God. But God had not agreed to this plan. He could deliver on his promise in his own way. Several years later, Sarah discovered she was pregnant and Isaac was born, the son of the promise. God confirmed his covenant with Isaac, nevertheless without abandoning Ishmael. He gave him other promises.

Isaac grew up much attached to both of his parents. We do not know if he was spoiled, but it is clear that as a father he did not know how to share his love between his two children. He found himself on his father's side in all matters concerning family affairs and the faith of the clan. He joined his mother in all domestic things to the extent that he could not be consoled after his mother's death until his own wife arrived.

Genesis does not say much concerning Isaac. He contented himself maintaining the family affairs and did not get too involved in local politics. And yet, the family was so rich and the number of servants do great that the small kings of the area considered him as a threat in the long run if he wanted to move. The others came therefore to enter into an alliance with him for their own protection. What was important about his life was that God confirmed the covenant with him, and that he lived all his life as outlined by the covenant and that God also was faithful according to his part of the covenant.

Questions taken from the presentation:

1. What is the meaning of the Tower of Babel story? (five responses)
2. What is the new thing that God introduced by his relations with Abraham?
3. What are the obligations and promises attached to the covenant between God and Abraham (cite both sides)?
4. What was the toughest test of faith for Abraham? What does that test teach us?
5. Even if the marriage between Abraham and Sarah's servant was accepted in their culture, why was God not pleased?
6. What is the only characteristic of Isaac's public life that the book of Genesis underlines?

Activity 2: The Chart of Important People in the Old Testament

With your help, and using the information that you have already given, the students can begin to fill in the chart of important people that is found in the student's handbook at the end of this lesson. A copy is attached as an appendix to this handbook. The following chart offers suggestions to present. The students may suggest others (which are just as valid).

Important People of the Old Testament					
Name	O.T. texts	Importance	Important tests	N.T. texts	Importance
Abraham	Genesis 12-23	Father of the Covenant	Birth of Ismael Sacrifice of Isaac	John 8:30-59 Rom. 4; Gal. 3	Father of all those who believe in Jesus
Moses					

Activity 3: (In groups) Find the promises that were not fulfilled during Abraham's lifetime.

1. While reading through the texts of Genesis 12, 16 and other chapters, find a list of promises that God had given Abraham.
2. From chapters 23 and 24 and other chapters, determine which promises were not fulfilled in Abraham's lifetime.
3. Think of a message to share with the faithful of our day based on this exercise.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Fourth presentation

"From Jacob to Joseph (Gen. 25-50)"

The last half of the book of Genesis treats only the family of Jacob, and includes a long story about Joseph, his second to youngest son. Chapter 49 recounts the death of Jacob, while chapter 50 addresses Joseph's death. Through these two patriarchs of the covenant, we see how the grace of God acts to transform someone's character who at the beginning maybe was not worthy to receive so many blessings from God.

Jacob, the early years

From his birth, Jacob seems to have the character to take what does not belong to him by right. Isaac, his father, did not know how to share his affection between his two sons. He showed a preference for his elder son, Esau, even though he was not as involved with the family affairs as Jacob was. In order to balance out the situation, their mother showed affection to Jacob. The actions of all four of them were against the will of God: favoritism, indifference to others, dishonesty, and trickery are all outside the will of God for his people. God could not bless this type of behavior despite the fulfillment of his promise to Rebekah to establish a covenant with Jacob. Nevertheless, Jacob had to learn to live in another way.

The right of the firstborn (25:29-34) Jacob thought to have purchased from his brother the birthright of the firstborn by selling him a bowl of lentil soup. In the end however, this event gave him no advantage over his brother at the death of the father. If Jacob was absent at the moment of the death of their father, Esau would receive all as the family inheritance. Jacob had to count of his own tricks in order to get an inheritance for his family, this time from his uncle.

The father's blessing (Chapter 27) In Middle Eastern countries, the father's blessing is one of the most important moments in the life of a son. We see such an event several times in the Old Testament. Sometimes, we see it through an event such as in the case of the priests Eli and Samuel instead of with Eli's own sons. In the case of Esau and Jacob, it is clear that in preparing the benedictions for his sons, Isaac thought only of Esau and left nothing in reserve for Jacob. What he had prepared was not in accordance with what God had promised Rebekah during her pregnancy. Jacob, knowing in advance maybe that that was the case, working with his mother put in to action a plan to trick his father onto giving him the blessing prepared for his brother. Once again, the trickery gained him nothing. He had to flee his home; he would never again see his mother or his father. It was by the word of God to Rebekah before his birth that Esau would serve Jacob and not by the word of Isaac. That did not happen during their lifetime as heads of their families. This was not fulfilled until the time of David and Solomon.

The affirmation of the covenant Two events in Jacob's life recall the faithfulness of God to Jacob concerning the covenant between them. The first is the dream, at Bethel during his flight from his home to that of his uncle, where the angels ascended and descended the ladder between heaven and earth. Using almost the same words that he spoke to Abraham, God affirmed his covenant with Jacob. On his side, by contrast, Jacob established very clear conditions before he would promise his faithfulness to God (see 28:20-21). Jacob still needed transformation.

It was only after staying twenty years with his uncle, during his trip to return home, that once again God drew close to him (32:25-33). Because he feared revenge from his brother, this time Jacob held nothing back and he fought with God's messenger and held fast to the end. Jacob no longer counted on his strength not on his ability to manipulate. It is there that he finally received the assurance that he sought and he was filled with the faithfulness necessary to the covenant. It was also there that he received a new name, Israel, "prince with God". The relations between Jacob and Esau were reestablished and Jacob moved into the area that was occupied before by his father and grandfather.

Jacob as father of the family

Among the patriarchs, Jacob was the first to have a large family, with four wives, twelve sons, and no one knows how many daughters (only one is named in the story).¹ Evidently the art of trickery ran in his mother's family because his uncle, Laban, tricked him in the area of his marriage. Jacob, waking up the morning after his wedding found himself married to the sister whom he did not like of the cousin he had wanted to marry. After a week his uncle let him marry the girl he preferred and polygamy entered fully into the family of the people of God. The two wives cost Jacob 14 years of labor as a payment for them. Because of the rivalry between the two sisters to produce the greater number of sons for their husband, each offered him a servant as a wife, so Jacob had four wives. Children were born to each except the most beloved, Rachel. Finally, God answered her prayers and she had a son, the eleventh son of Jacob, but the most preferred because he was born of Rachel.

After finishing the 14 years of work, Jacob continued working another 6 years to earn a herd of animals for himself. At the end of this time, he left his uncle's house to return home. During the journey, the events in chapter 32 happened. Arriving home, daily life began as a routine. His sons worked in the family industry – raising sheep. Jacob well played the role of the patriarch in financial as well as spiritual matters. All the family claimed to be the people of God, owners of the covenant. Nevertheless, the rivalry between the four women became a rivalry between the eleven sons of Jacob, and the poor Joseph, favored son of the old age of the father, received all the animosity of the others. With the birth of the last son, Benjamin (the last of Rachel), Joseph finally found a true brother. Rachel, however, died in childbirth and Jacob remained inconsolable after her death despite having 10 young men as sons of other wives. The jealousy only grew and waited for a moment of expression.

Joseph, favorite son, suffers in innocence, and finally viceroy of Egypt

Joseph, eleventh son of Jacob, was the favorite of his father. He liked that position and walked around in his special robe and told stories of his dreams where he was the lord of all the others. His older brothers were strong men and accustomed to a life of work. They decided to put him in his place. Between them they had never reached an agreement about what to do with him. The eldest brother, Reuben, wanted to solve the situation secretly and regain favor with his father by returning Joseph safe and sound. But in his absence from the group, the others sold Joseph to buyers from Egypt. Jacob never recovered his spirit after this event.

In Egypt, sold as a slave, Joseph worked in the house of a national official where he was well received and his value as an employee was highly appreciated. But this was not the end of the story. The lady of the house found Joseph more desirable than her own husband, and several times she tried to seduce him. After Joseph refused, the woman tore Joseph's garment and accused him of trying to rape her. Because a slave had no legal voice before his master, Joseph was found guilty. His master, however, seemed to recognize his innocence and put him in prison instead of executing him. In prison, Joseph rightly interpreted dreams of some people from the court. When, much later, the Pharaoh had trouble with nightmares, his official finally remembered Joseph and his ability to read dreams. Joseph was invited to appear before the Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. He became an officer of the court with all authority to manage the funds and grain during the seven dry years and the famine which would come to Egypt. It was then that the other sons of Jacob came to Egypt to buy food. By a series of manipulations, Joseph put to the test his brothers' loyalty and love towards their father before revealing himself to them. Finally he invited all the family to leave Canaan and come to Egypt where everyone would be received by the Pharaoh and where Jacob, as a representative of God, blessed the Pharaoh. All went well for the family in Egypt until a few years after the death of Joseph. All the trickery whether on the part of Joseph's brothers or the officers in the court of Egypt were used by God so that his promises to Abraham and Jacob would be fulfilled. Joseph himself told his brothers (Gen. 45:5): "... God sent me before you to preserve life..." Later he underlines this: "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good..." (Gen. 50:20a).

Understanding the lives of the patriarchs

The Israelites were convinced that they were a people divinely chosen in order to accomplish the will of God in the world. This choice began with a particular man, Abraham, accompanied by the symbols of the covenant which engaged the loyalty of Abraham to God and the benedictions of God to Abraham and his descendants. The covenant was reaffirmed with each one of the patriarchs including their understanding of and submission to the obligations. Jacob required purifying through long years of work with his uncle before a battle with God which was at the same time real and symbolic. The writers of these texts knew that God must use imperfect human beings to do his will because there are no others. Through many years, God prepared a person, a family and finally a people to accomplish his goals in the world.

Questions taken from the presentation:

1. What was the character of Jacob from his birth? How did he demonstrate this?
2. What were the two events in Jacob's life, that together, affirm the alliance between God and him?
3. Why did Jacob have four wives?
4. Why was Joseph his father's favorite?
5. What tests did Joseph face in Egypt?
6. How/Why did Jacob's family come to Egypt to stay?

Activity 4: Presentation of a sermon outline, and the chosen passages

Prepare a sermon outline or a Bible study based on the text chosen by the teacher.

Teacher's Note: It will be your task to present the following list and explain the different elements so that the students can prepare this assignment in the best manner possible. The idea behind this exercise is that pastors use New Testament texts by referring to the stories in the Old Testament in such a way as to apply the texts and the stories to present day life.

Elements of a sermon outline:

1. Title
2. Principal theme
3. Point of the sermon: a single phrase
4. Introduction
5. Points and principal sub-points of the message (it is required to mention the person or event cited)
6. Some illustrations taken from real life
7. Application
8. Conclusion and call (The call simply answers the question, "What must I do with this message?" It does not mean that you necessarily must invite people to the altar to repent or other things.)

Texts to assign: (It is up to you to decide which student takes which passage. In classes with more students, several students may be working on the same text.)

Matthew 2:1-8
Mark 10:1-9
Luke 12:22-31
John 3:14-17
John 8:33-39

Romans 4:1-13
2 Corinthians 3:9-28
Galatians 4:22-5.1
James 5:13-20

Hebrews 9:11-14 the
context
Revelation 4:6b-11

Other Assignments

1. Read Deut. 5-6, 30; 2 Sam. 11-12 and Psalm 51
2. Memorize Ps. 51:10-12

~~~~~

**Lesson 4: The Old Testament story –from Moses to David**

Meditation – presented by a student

Recite together Ps. 1 and then Ps. 51:10-12.

Chorus and prayer

*Basic instructions for this lesson*

Bible reading by the teacher: Acts 13:16-39

Lesson Objective

This lesson covers the narration in six chapters of the Old Testament. It will be impossible to discuss everything in a single lesson. Lessons 8 and 9 in this course will therefore cover some of the themes in this period between the Exodus and the establishment of a kingdom. For us, this lesson briefly treats the principle events in the period with a concentration on the covenant between God and his people, this time initiated by Moses and concluded with David.

Concerning the material of this lesson, we must cover five precise periods:

- 1) Moses and the Exodus
- 2) Joshua and the conquest
- 3) The period of the judges
- 4) Samuel, the last judge
- 5) The beginning of the kingdom

~~~~~

First presentation

"The Exodus, the covenant, and the desert"

The message that Paul preached in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13) covers, in six verses, the period of Old Testament history treated by this lesson.

Introduction

In the the time of Joseph, the Egyptian government was in the hands of foreigners from the same racial strain as Abraham and his descendants. Between that time and the birth of Moses, there was a rebellion of Egyptians who took the government into their own hands. It was therefore this new government which decided that Joseph's family, the Hebrews, being from the same race as the pharaohs that they had overthrown, must submit to being slaves as a conquered people.

Such were the circumstances behind Exodus 1:8: "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph." In this period, the people of God were large both in number and strength, and because of the slavery in Egypt they were ready to leave for the land that God had promised to Abraham. But it was necessary that this people know their God and that it become a nation faithful to their God with a political, social and religious unity. To accomplish this work, God prepared Moses.

Moses

The stories about Moses are well known. At the beginning of his life, his parents hid him at their house. Later it was necessary to hide him outside the house in a waterproof basket. His life changed as the adoptive prince in Egypt. His attempts to join in the suffering of his people resulted in the murder of an Egyptian guard. Moses spent forty years in the desert before God called him. There is no need to go deeper into these points.

God chose Moses to be his spokesperson. Throughout the whole period of history, it is clear that Moses is not the source of the power to perform the miracles that happen. For four centuries, God had not manifested himself specifically. This generation of Hebrews who lived at the time of the Exodus of Israel and who entered into the covenant with God must know God and not only Moses. The Exodus is only the end of a series of miracles that did to reveal himself to his people. Chapters 7-12 of Exodus recount ten plagues, which affected the spirit of the Egyptians even if the Pharaoh was hardened in heart. The fact that God spared his people in each case showed the faithfulness of God towards his people and the Egyptians wanted them to leave the country.

Before the last plague, Moses, under God's instructions, instituted the Passover with all its ceremonies. Never confuse the Passover with the Day of Atonement. Passover

is the celebration of deliverance from political enemies through the work of God, and the Jews count their years of existence as a people from that date. It is an important celebration at the same time religious, familial and cultural. The atonement, by contrast, is an annual sacrifice for the redemption of sins committed during the preceding year. Both are held once a year, but the destruction of the temple in 70 c.e., the sacrifice of atonement is no longer done, while the Passover lamb is still killed in all families. The celebration of Passover in the time of Jesus carried strong emotions for the people because once again Israel was under the yoke of foreign oppressors.

Under God's direction, and with great miracles, Moses led his people from slavery to liberty, by passing through the sea and guiding them to the Sinai Peninsula to Mount Horeb where they stopped for an entire year to get to know God and to commit themselves to a covenant with him.

The covenant

Passover and the exodus which followed were for the Jews what the death and resurrection of Christ are for Christians: the acts of God which deliver believers from their old lives of sin and usher them into a new life as members of a new people. The books of Exodus, and even more the book of Deuteronomy, present the covenant between God and his people in a format which reflects the common usage among kings and their people at that time. God uses, as we say, the familiar things for teaching his truth. Here, he uses a formal relation between a king and a people who submit to that king.

There are four elements that define such a covenant, and all are found in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy: 1) a preamble (an introduction) which emphasizes the majesty of the king and his right to propose a covenant; 2) a historic prologue which recounts the relations between the two parties in question, especially the service and the power that the king exercises on favor of the people; 3) the list of accepted obligations by the two parties; 4) the final legal points, the supplementary instructions and blessings and curses which result from the fulfillment or negligence of the obligations.

In the Old Testament, the introduction of the law functions to show the people of God how to live to please him. The Jews of the period after the exile and in the time of Jesus saw the law therefore as the greatest gift that God had given his people. But, before the exile, from the time of Moses to the exile, the loyalty of the people to the law only existed by comparison with the piety of the human leader of the people. Under Moses and David, for example, one sees the majority of the people follow the law most of the time. In other periods, like the times of the judges, each lived according to his own desire. The consequences of this lifestyle touched their economic, political and religious conditions.

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel would speak of a new covenant, underscored in the New Testament in the letter to the Hebrews. This covenant was prepared by the blood of Christ and administered in the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of each

believer and in the midst of the community of believers. Jesus, himself, used another cultural element of his time to speak of the life of the people of God—that of master and disciples. That was the fashion of living used by the Jews and the Greeks in his day: in the manner that artisans train their assistants, the Pharisees prepared the new students, etc. In the case of Jesus, the disciples followed the words of their master, counted on the strength that comes through prayer, and listened each day to the voice of the Spirit of Christ living in them.

Living in the Sinai Desert – Exodus 19

After having seen all God's miracles on their behalf, after their flight freeing them from Egypt, after having "struck" a covenant with God at Sinai, the people of God were on the road to the promised land. By rebelling against Moses and refusing to practice their faith in God, the people lost the chance that God had given them to conquer the Promised Land and they were forced to stay in the desert until the entire generation of adults that left Egypt died there. All the stories from that period are found in the book of Numbers, up until the arrival at the Jordan River.

Despite the sadness of this time, God continued to meet the needs of his people, to heal them and to make them fruitful – in brief, to fulfill the obligations that the covenant placed on him. His people, on the other hand, continued to rebel against Moses and against God. One of the best known events of this period was the plague of the poisonous serpents. God told Moses to make a serpent of bronze and hang it in the middle of the camp so that all who were bit could see it and be healed. Jesus explained the meaning of the cross by using this image (John 3:14-15).

During this period of Israel's history, God was revealed by wonders and his power. All the events would serve to attract the attention of Abraham's descendants so that they kept the covenant with him. But, since God was holy, his people must also be holy. This is revealed also through his words of the law which regulate life and a system of sacrifices which serve to restore holiness to the people.

Questions taken from this presentation:

1. Why did the new king of Egypt not know Joseph?
2. What is the difference between Passover and the Day of Atonement?
3. In which books is the covenant between God and Israel found?
4. Reflection : Why did Jeremiah and Ezekiel announce a new covenant?

Activity: Chart of important people—Moses

Teacher's note: This is a task for the students, they must find the answers in each category. As for you, you need to find a means to see that the students do it, even if you decide the class will work individually or in groups. It is necessary that each student knows how to do such research by using their own Bible.

The New Testament references cited below are from a complete concordance of the Bible. It will probably be too difficult for several of the students to find them without such a reference. You can, therefore, help them with this part of the exercise.

Important People in the Old Testament					
Name	O.T. texts	Importance	Important tests	N.T. texts	Importance
Moses	Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy	Founder of Israel Mediator of the law	Often stood against the whole nation	Heb. 3:3; 11:24 2 Cor. 3:13, et al.	Source of the Law Example of glory
Samuel					

~~~~~

### ***Second presentation***

#### **"From the Conquest to Samuel"**

According to Deut. 18:18, God promised his people another prophet like Moses: "I will raise up for them another prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all I commanded him." This promise throws us into the mystery of real prophecy. Since the time of the first disciple of Jesus, the Old Testament passages were interpreted as much as possible in the light of Jesus. The passages that could in one manner or another refer to Jesus and/or the time of the early church are called prophecy. Some of the passages represent true prophecy while others do not. In the case of Deut. 18:18, we see an example of true prophecy – a word of God that speaks to the current situation of his own people and which makes reference also to their future. The mystery of prophecy is that often the same prophecy will be fulfilled several times in several periods in the history of the people of God by different means. The prophecy of Deut. 18:18 does not speak exclusively of Jesus, even if his coming is one of the several times when it was fulfilled. This prophecy was fulfilled the first time in the person of Joshua.

#### The conquest

Like Moses, Joshua received a vision direct from God in the form of a soldier, he would lead his people across a barrier of water (the Jordan) in order that they could cross on dry land, he lead his people in the celebration of Passover and in the end he gave them the law of God. The editors of the book of Joshua wanted to let us

know that Joshua was a man of God like Moses. The same editors also wanted to underline that the new generation of Israelites was as rebellious as their parents. Even as God stayed faithful to his people in the desert despite their sins and the frustration of Moses, he stayed faithful during the period of the conquest despite their disobedience and the frustrations Joshua faced. Under the direction of Joshua, Israel conquered the principal cities in all the regions of the Promised Land. At the end of the book is the ceremony of the renewing of the covenant, there was a lot more territory to conquer, The Israelites shared the territory with many Canaanite people, who served as spiritual traps for them throughout the centuries. On the death of Joshua, the people of Israel no longer had a central organization for the military or politics. The only thing that united them was the worship of Yahweh their God.

The fact that the Israelites were not the only people in the era who would occupy that territory complicated the situation. The Philistines, newly arrived from the islands around the west coast of Greece, began also to conquer little by little and best agricultural land. It took just until the time of David to see this problem finally put under permanent control.

### The judges

In occupying the land, that generation of Israelites did not know the science of farming. They knew how to graze animals and they knew how to win battles because of the strong hand of God. When they saw therefore the products of their neighbors the Canaanites were more valuable than their own, they asked how to improve their production. The answer that received reflected the worldview of the Canaanites: "Your God knows how to win battles, and we are afraid of him, But clearly he doesn't know how to make plants grow. If you want a better income from your fields, it is necessary to worship Baal, the god of this place. It is he who makes the plants grow and makes the harvest plentiful." The Israelites, despite their wishes which are found at the end of the book of Joshua, had quickly fallen to that temptation.

All the doctrine of that false religion is based on the annual cycle of planting and harvesting in the fields, Among the 70 gods, Baal is the god of the storm, at the time the best source of water for the fields, and source of the thunder and lightning which created fear and made him worthy of worship. In that religion the gods had neither a past nor a future, they promised nothing to the people – not even rain. All that counts is the annual cycle, and the gods were wedged in a cycle of life and death which reflects the seasons of the area. The Canaanites neither knew their past nor their future. They had neither a doctrine of creation -where they came from- nor a sense of the future -where they were headed. Those who lead in worship exercised magic in trying to manipulate the gods for acting according to the will of the worshippers. Israel, by following the suggestions of their neighbors entered a "vicious cycle" of unfaithfulness which repeated many times in different places.

*The authors of the book of Judges wrote in a manner to make felt the idea of this vicious cycle. Israel began to worship false gods, Yahweh disciplined them through*

foreign oppression, they repented, and God sent them a Judge-Liberator. And then, it began again. In the book, we see only this repetition, time after time, without hope of a real future, as long as people remain stuck in the cycle of unfaithfulness.

Why was the word "judge" used when most of the heroes in this book were not judges in the usual sense of the word? Here, the word "judge" means "one who practices God's justice towards his people." By acting in the name of Yahweh, the heroes delivered the people of the covenant by the power and the direction of God. Later, they often became judges in the normal sense of the word. The book, from beginning to end, shows that God is faithful to the covenant; he send blessings, he disciplines, he delivers his people when they return to him.

### Samuel

Samuel was the last judge. Under his direction, Israel left the cycle to enter into another system of living. The story of Samuel's birth, as for Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Sampson, indicates that God wants to do something special through his life in one manner or another. His mother, instead of offering the sacrifice of redemption (see Luke 2:23-24), offered Samuel to God as a servant for life, under the care of the priest, Eli. When God began to reveal himself to Samuel, Eli could not hear the voice of God that spoke to Samuel. Eli serves as a symbol of what happens when spiritual leaders do not take care of their personal relationship with God, but on the contrary only take care of the business of the institution.

In his faithfulness to his people, God acted in another way through the person of Samuel.

Only in Samuel do we find on one person the priest, the judge and the prophet. Eli taught him all that was needed to become a priest like him. And when God condemned Eli's sons for their corruption, there was only Samuel to take their place. As a judge, Samuel fulfilled the two definitions of "judge" as explained earlier. He led the people in battles victoriously. He also maintained a circuit of three courts where he heard cases. As a prophet, he preached the word of God to the people, and especially to King Saul. Towards the end of his life, the people thought that even the sons of Samuel were corrupt and they would not accept them as his replacement. They asked him to therefore institute a monarchy "like the other countries around them." It was that last phrase that irritated Samuel, because according to him (and the covenant) only God is king in Israel (see also the testimony of Gideon after his victory). The other countries were pagan countries with corrupt kings and they lived in a manner contrary to the law of God. Two chapters, I Samuel 7-8 give witness to Samuel's interior battle with the effects of the two different positions concerning the nomination of a king.

In this role of the prophet we see him administer the rite of anointing first King Saul and later his replacement, David. In the case of Saul, against his personal will it seems and in the case of David knowing that the monarchy was in the end a system that God could use. In fact, Israel had a unique monarchy with two chiefs of state:

the political/ military chief - the king and the spiritual chief – the prophet. The prophet was the only person in the kingdom who had free access to the king in order to present the word of God. All went well if the king listened to and obeyed the word of God. In the other case, things did not work well. This is the historical sense of the presentations in I Samuel 7 & 8.

*Questions taken from this presentation:*

1. Explain the reason why a prophecy can be fulfilled several times.
2. How can the generation of Israelites that followed Joshua to the one that followed Moses be compared?
3. How many countries had been conquered when Joshua renewed the covenant between God and the people of God?
4. What element of daily life tempted the Israelites for fall into idolatry?
5. What relationship exists between the worship of Baal and the book of Judges?
6. What does the word "judge" mean (2 meanings)?
7. What were the three ministry roles that Samuel filled?
8. Why, at the end of his life, did the people ask Samuel to give them a king ?

*Activity 3: Chart of Important People—Samuel*

| <b>Important People in the Old Testament</b> |                   |                            |                        |                        |                   |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Name</b>                                  | <b>O.T. texts</b> | <b>Importance</b>          | <b>Important tests</b> | <b>N.T. texts</b>      | <b>Importance</b> |
| Samuel                                       | 1 Sam 1:20-16.13  | Last judge, anointed kings | Corrupt sons           | Acts 3:19-26; 13:18-22 | First prophet     |
| David                                        |                   |                            |                        |                        |                   |

~~~~~

Third presentation

Covenant with David

After Saul's disobedience, and especially because of his attitude of thinking that his power surpassed that of the prophet of God, God found another young man who served him with his whole heart. This young man was named David. It is interesting

that in his family he was never considered as a valuable person. Jesse sent seven of his eight sons before Samuel, without even considering David as a candidate for anointing. Nevertheless, for David, the anointing by the prophet had much worth.

The meaning of the anointing

In the Old Testament, anointing serves in the preparation for the ministry for three different roles: the priest, the king and the prophet. The lead prophet, having received a word from God, was the only one who had the responsibility and the privilege to anoint those whom God had chosen as his ministers. The anointing of Saul and David take a prominent place in the first book of Samuel. The Bible also records the anointing of Solomon as king and also Jeroboam I, the first king of the rebel kingdom (see the next lesson). A clear passage about this is I Kings 19:15-16. God gave the following order to Elijah, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as a king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place."

Question to discuss: What does the anointing of a foreign king by the command of God teach us?

Anointing symbolizes the arrival of the Holy Spirit in the life a person with his power and wisdom to accomplish the task for which that person was called. It was therefore more than a symbol. The Holy Spirit would fill the one that was the anointed of God. That was the reason David refused to touch Saul, even when Saul wanted to kill him, because he was the anointed of the Lord. In the case of David, one sees that immediately after his anointing he had the strength necessary to kill a lion and a bear, followed, of course, by the successful attack against Goliath. All these events show the truth of the presence of the Holy Spirit on David. The prophecy of Joel concerning the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the people of God, which Peter cited on the day of Pentecost, indicates one of the most important differences between the Old and the New Testaments. Now, God sends his Spirit on all his people. Entire Sanctification, available to all believers, takes the place today that anointing took in the Old Testament.

David as king

After the death of Saul and his son, Jonathan, the kingdom which only had a short history to that point, divided. The two southern tribes, where David lived during the time he was fleeing from Saul, chose him as their king and the others followed the son of Saul, Ishbosheth. This situation lasted several years. David dared not take Saul's throne, but because of the poor administration of Ishbosheth, the other tribes finally asked David to reign over all the tribes. In the end, David unified the kingdom and began a system of expansion in every direction, until the territory covered all that God had promised Abraham. (Most Bibles have a map of the Kingdom of David and Solomon. Look for it in yours) Israel's territory was never again as large as it was during this period. As king and as a man of God, David served as a model

during all of Israel's history, especially at the beginning of his reign. All the kings of Judah were compared to David. David listened to the voice of God through his personal relationship with him and he listened to God's voice also through the prophet, Nathan. He administered his kingdom with justice and power. And even when he fell into temptation by thinking that he was more important than he was and he took for himself another man's wife and then had that man killed, he listened to the message of the prophet and showed deep repentance. David's character and devotion show through the psalms he wrote. He did not write them all, but in his one sees a man in all of life's circumstances with confidence in God, often despite the appearances.

In a moment of devotion, God entered into a covenant with David through his prophet Nathan. The story is found in 2 Samuel, chapter 7. David was well installed in Jerusalem. He had conquered the Jebusites, he had constructed his palace, he had installed the Ark of the Covenant and he had established the kingdom's administration. He sensed, at some moments of rest, that he might build a "house" for God in Jerusalem next to his palace. He had chosen the place where according to tradition Abraham had offered Isaac. This was a sacred place in the Canaanite religion.

The Covenant with David

Clearly, there was a mix of devotion and political interest in that request, because God responded to him in the same manner—with mixed ideas. Regarding a house for God, God was opposed. He didn't want anyone to think that the king could contain God in a palace of sorts; however, God gave permission for David's son to build a permanent place of worship. But God used this occasion to enter into a covenant with David concerning the kingdom and the throne. God would build for David "a house." In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, God said: "...I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." In verses 15-16, God adds: "But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." From that moment until the exile, the throne of David was secure even after the division of the country in two kingdoms. Even the one who directed the first part of the restoration of Israel after the period of the exile was an heir of the throne of David (see Lesson 6). And all David's descendants carefully kept track of their ancestral line (see Joseph in Luke 2). It is from this covenant that the idea of the Messiah – The Anointed of God – was born. From the period of the restoration, everyone waited only for the arrival of a new son of David that God would anoint as his servant.

Conclusion—Three Covenants

We have seen three covenants between God and his people:

- 1) that made with Abraham, based on a personal faith which led to a relationship with God and which lead to a benediction for the entire world;

2) that made by the mediation of Moses based on the faithfulness of the people in obeying the law and a program of sacrifices under the administration of priests anointed by God, and

3) that made with David which guaranteed his kingdom in perpetuity, which brought back the prosperity and blessings of God under the reigns of David and Solomon and which kept the hope that one day the kingdom would regain the same appearance under the new "son of David."

All the Old Testament – the history, the psalms, the prophets – are reactions to one or the other of these three covenants. The faithfulness of God towards his people, and especially to the king, is presented in contrast to the unfaithfulness of his people and of the king with a call to return to God and fulfill the requirements of the covenant.

Even the events in the life of Jesus and the different reactions to him take place in a political and spiritual atmosphere of these covenants. The Sadducees see themselves as heirs of the covenant with Moses and were the priests who guaranteed the worship and sacrifices which maintained the covenant. They did not look for a Messiah. A Messiah would take their place of power. The Pharisees, also saw themselves as heirs of the covenant with Moses, but from the viewpoint of obeying the God's laws in daily life. For them, whether the Messiah came or not did not make much difference. But at the level of those who resented the oppression of the Roman political regime, most of the people and a limited number of rebels who formed a secret militia, the hope of the arrival of the Messiah as a fulfillment of the covenant with David steered most of their thoughts.

The first Christians also described Jesus in the light of one of another of these covenants. When Paul presented the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus, he underlines the covenant with Abraham. The letter to the Hebrews describes Jesus in the terminology of the covenant with Moses. Revelation describes Jesus in the images of the covenant with David – he who reigns on his throne above all other thrones. The concept of the covenant is therefore one of the most important in the Old Testament and is recognized as absolutely necessary for understanding the Old and New Testaments.

Questions taken from this presentation:

1. What is the meaning of anointing?
2. What connection is there between the Joel's prophecy cited by Paul on the Day of Pentecost and the rite of anointing as it was practiced in the Old Testament?
3. Reflect: Where does the idea of a Messiah come from and what relationship does that have with the reign of David?
4. What is the covenant between God and David?

5. What importance do the covenants play in the New Testament?

Activity 4: Chart of Important People--David

Important People in the Old Testament					
Name	O.T. texts	Importance	Important tests	N.T. test	Importance
David	1 Sam. 16 – 1 Kings 2	Model king who pleased God	Hunted by Saul, Consequences of his sin	Luke 20; John 7; Acts 13	Ancestor of Christ
Elie					

Homework for the next lesson

1. Memorize Micah 6:8.
2. Read the following Bible passages: (Note: it is impossible to assign enough of the texts for the students to be able to follow the entire storyline, These are among the most important, and present some events that shape the destiny of Israel and Judah.)

1 Kings 2:12-3:28; 8:22-43; 11:1-9
 1 Kings 12:1-17; 18:22
 2 Kings 2:10; 17:20, 22-23; 2 Chronicles 33
 Isaiah 5-6; Micah 6; Hosea 13-14; Amos 1-2

2. Begin to put together the ideas that you will use in the sermon.



Lesson 5: The Old Testament story –from Solomon to the Exile

Meditation presented by a student

Chorus and prayer

Recite together Micah 6.8. Discuss this verse with the students. According to you, what must a person do who wants to put this verse into practice?

Basic instructions for this lesson

Lesson objectives: Once again we will be covering too much of the Old Testament story to allow time for a deep understanding, the three objectives of this lesson are as follows:

1. That the students understand why God disciplined his people by the Exile;
2. That the students know the role of the prophets among the people of God, and how they, themselves, can exercise this role in the church today.
3. To note how cultural differences play into the understanding of God's message.

Lesson Plan

Activity 1: (in groups) Discussion

In the preceding lesson we saw the difference between the worldviews of the Hebrews and the Canaanites. That is to say, the one follows a single creator God, who makes covenants with his people and guides them through time towards a blessed future; the other suggests a large number of gods who subject the world to their whims. *Discuss some differences between the biblical worldview and the cultural worldview in the context of your ministry.* Each group can choose a person to present the results of their discussion to the group.

Verification of the reading

The teacher will do a tour of the room asking the students to talk about a fascinating idea found in the Bible reading done as homework before today's lecture. Try to discover the reason why the student thought it was fascinating.

~~~~~

***First presentation***

**"Solomon, builder and wise, but..."**

Solomon, the last son of Bathsheba, was named as king towards the end of David's life, as the result of a kind of coup mounted by Bathsheba and the prophet, Nathan. He was nevertheless God's choice, and among David's other sons, there was no other candidate as devout or as wise as Solomon. He must have faces opposition from his half-brothers, but he proved worthy to be king by settling situations in a manner which his brothers were able to get used to.

It was Solomon that God allowed to build the temple. David and Solomon worked together to make the design, and plan the teams of builders and construction materials. 1Kings 6-9 recounts the story of the building and dedication of the temple. It is important to note that the temple is not a place where God lives. It is only a

place where he comes to receive the worship, the prayers and the wishes of his people – a place of meeting.

Evidently, Solomon liked to build, because he continued to build other things during almost all his life, even if most of the construction was only for the king or one or another of his numerous wives: a great palace for himself (his father's was not sufficient), some enormous stables for his horses in several places in the kingdom, the Millo (a type of fortress attached to the northern walls of the city which guard the temple and the northern part of the city), a palace for each of his wives, etc. While David enlarged the kingdom through military victories, Solomon kept the kingdom in tact by means of political alliances. And each of these alliances was sealed by a marriage-of-state with the daughter of the foreign king. The budget for these construction projects came at first from payment of tribute from these alliances and from large shipping enterprises. But, when the national budget continued to grow, it became necessary to impose enormous amounts to pay even on the Israelites themselves.

Solomon managed the kingdom as a grand eastern king of that era, with a large group of ministers, secretaries and a number of people who carried the title of "wise man." According to the Bible, Solomon's reputation spread throughout the Middle East, North Africa and maybe even further than that. The best known example is the story of the two women who argued over which was the true mother of a baby (see 2 Kings 3:16-28). Solomon was also a botanical specialist. People came from everywhere to listen to his lectures on plants. All the eastern kings had "wise men" as civil servants in the court who acted as councilors. In the case of Solomon, their work also took on another aspect. These men had the task of collecting the wisdom from all the known countries of the world, evaluating what they found, adapting it to the faith and the worldview of Israel, and incorporating what was fitting into the literature and wisdom of the country. We call them philosophers. Solomon was, of course, the first among them in collecting and even writing wisdom literature and many of the books in that genre in our Bible are attributed to him, even if many were the result of the research of others. His thoughts were behind most of the material, but other people among the wise men of Israel also contributed to this literature – Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastics, Song of Songs. Jewish literary heritage contains many other books of wisdom which are not part of the scriptural canon.

Solomon began his reign in the wisdom of a young man devoted to God and consecrated to the task as a minister of God himself. The kingdom was greatly blessed because of that from the start. As a man of peace, Solomon used alliances with neighboring countries to keep his kingdom in tact. These alliances however compromised the exclusivity of his devotion to God. According to the customs of the time, a marriage-of-state required that the wife could live according to the customs of her home country: a palace for herself and eventually her children; all the servants (men and women) needed to run the household; a budget to manage with the help of a minister of state; and the practice of her own religion including a temple to conduct the services, if she did not want to convert to the worship of Yahweh, etc.

It is this last point that contributed the most to the fall of Solomon. Not only must Solomon construct the pagan temples, but his wives insisted that he also complete his job as husband by joining them in the pagan services. Once the ministers and the people saw Solomon attending the pagan services, they also accompanied him. So, Solomon guided the leaders of Israelite society in the paths of idolatry. What was for Solomon a political compromise became the normal custom of the people. Therefore from the end of Solomon's reign, the religious situation in Israel deteriorated until the exile, except for some short period of reform.

*Note the number of Solomon's wives (1Kings 11:3):* the numbers "700" and "300" are evidently symbolic. Of course, he probably had hundreds of wives or at least a number so great that they no longer counted them. The numbers "7" and "3" both have a qualitative meaning apart from their quantitative meaning and that is probably the case here. The number "7" signals "fulfillment" or "completion", in this case "finally enough." The number "3" indicates the establishment of a fact or habit. The distinction between princesses and concubines secured the rank of the children, Children of the princesses were heirs to the throne, while those of the others were not. All the women were officially married to Solomon despite their different social statuses.

*Questions taken from the presentation:*

1. How did Solomon obtain the throne?
2. Make a list of Solomon's building projects.
3. What were the "wise men"?
4. In what way is Solomon considered the source of the wisdom literature in the Bible?
5. How did Solomon's marriages compromise his faithfulness to God?

Activity 2: Discussion in groups

Read 1 Kings 11 and 12, then respond to the following questions:

1. Reflect and imagine: What were the possible means that God could use to respond to Solomon's unfaithfulness?
2. Try to create a description of Jeroboam 1.
3. What do you think will happen in Israel because of the religious practices that Jeroboam established?

~~~~~

Second presentation

"The divided kingdom and the fall"

See the chart of the Kings and Prophets in the appendix (or in the student handbook)

Teacher's note: *There are not questions taken from this presentation for the students to answer. Instead, they must simply note the conditions of life for the kings that you cite in the presentation.*

By following the bad council of the young men, Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, sealed the permanent division between the tribes of Israel, by saying that he would be tougher on the people than his father had been. Rehoboam could not avoid the division because the military force that stayed faithful to him could not battle the others. The details of this period are found in 1 Kings beginning with chapter 12, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles beginning with chapter 10. The editors of Kings wrote the stories of this period recognizing that even if there were two kingdoms, there was only one people. The Chronicles followed mainly the history of the southern kingdom, because it was the one, according to them, that would be reestablished. (A Chart of Kings and Prophets of this period is in the appendix of the handbook.)

What makes this period difficult to understand is the name of the two kingdoms. They were named Israel and Judah.

Teacher's note: *The following explanation may need to be repeated many times so that the students deeply understand it. It may be necessary to use a map when making reference to the two countries.*

The new kingdom, where Jeroboam reigned as the first king, was named Israel because it represented the greatest number of the tribes of Israel. The throne passed from one family to another during its history according to which seemed the most worthy or the strongest at the time. The kingdom which resulted in the covenant between God and David (where a descendant of David would always reign) was called Judah, because it was principally the tribe of Judah that remained faithful to David. A part of the tribe of Benjamin also stayed faithful to the house of David because of the faithfulness of David to the family of Saul and Jonathan even after their deaths.

Solomon compromised the covenant with David by marriages to so many pagan women, especially of the nations that God had forbidden relations. Jeroboam I compromised the promise given by the prophet (see 1 Kings 11) by constructing worship centers with idols which were symbolic of the worship of Baal – more precisely a golden calf. Other kings would add other idols. Jeroboam said that the golden calf was the god that liberated them from Egypt. This type of compromise is called "syncretism," which means a mix of the elements of two or three religions. In

this case, it mixes the story of the Exodus and the worship of God with the golden calf, a pagan idol. During the whole history of Israel, including a brief period of religious reform under King Jehu, they never abandoned this mix of religions. (for the rest of this presentation, it is necessary to follow along on the Chart of Kings and Prophets.)

The Kings of Israel (left side of the chart)

Instead of presenting all the kings and problems of Israel, we will only cite the most important. We have already seen Jehoboam I. It is not necessary to repeat the events of his life. The next important kings are **Omri** and his son, **Ahab**. Despite the fact that the Bible only mentions 6 verses to Omri, in a political and economic sense, he was the most important king of Israel. He defeated the capitol of the country of Samaria. The countries around Israel began to call Israel "the land of Omri."

Since Omri did nothing on the spiritual level, be it good or bad, the editors of the Bible said the bare minimum about him. Ahab, by contrast, who was a formidable king in the political and military sense like his father, changed the spiritual direction of the kingdom through the work of his wife, Jezebel, who was a devoted follower of Baal worship. She recognized the "syncretism" at Bethel and proceeded to purify the place making it a center for Baal worship pure and simple. At the same time she persuaded her husband to prohibit worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel, in the whole country.

The prophet **Elijah** arrived on the scene in this period. Elijah presented a challenge against Baal, god of the storm, by saying that there would be no rain in Israel until Elijah announced it. The God of Israel is the only source of water. The result: three years of drought with the accompanying famine. This was followed by the well known episode on Mt. Carmel (see 1 Kings 18:19-40) which determined who would be the God in Israel. This was the battle for the soul of a country. After the Elijah's victory and the arrival of rain, Elijah ran for his life from the anger of Jezebel. Ahab had developed the habit of not listening to the true prophets of God and he was killed in battle because he did not follow the warning of the prophet Micaiah the son of Imlah (see 1 Kings 22:1-39).

The next important king was **Jehu**. As a military man, he did not understand very much concerning politics and especially how to act on an international level. His reign saw the only religious reform of the country. But his reform was primarily a slaughter of leaders of Baal worship and not a real spiritual revival (see 2 Kings 10:18-28). He killed Jezebel and all the sons of Ahab from all his wives so that he would have no descendants to dare to try to grab the throne. He also hoped to eliminate the source of idolatry in Israel. This was not totally effective, but there was an improvement. By killing Ahab's entire family, he also killed all the people who understood national affairs. As a result, Jehu lost much territory to the Assyrians and he was forced to pay tribute to the King of Assyria.

The third king to take note of in this period is **Jeroboam II** (not to be confused with Jeroboam I). The Assyrian Empire, the great military power of the era, went through a period of political weakness on one side and attacks on its border on the other. Jeroboam II took advantage of that situation to enrich the country in territory, alliances and industry. Everything produced marvelously and he managed to have a country with a social level that could be called the "nouveaux riches" (newly rich). The country was characterized by a large economic injustice where the riches were concentrated in the strongboxes of a few important families while the majority of the citizens suffered under intense poverty. The rich thought that their riches came from the hand of God as his blessings and therefore the others suffered from his curses. Two prophets, Amos and Hosea, spoke to the contrary, that their riches were the result of spiritual prostitution to the gods of riches to which they had lost their souls and they would soon lose the country as well because of it.

Finally, we will look at two kings, **Pekah and Hoshea**, who formed an alliance with their northern neighbor, Syria, to fight, if possible, the Assyrian army which had begun to enlarge their empire in a western direction. In that period, Israel attacked Judah in an attempt to force Judah to take part in this alliance. It did not work. Assyria therefore completely destroyed the government of Israel. They were deported a large part of the population and they scattered them throughout the empire. These are the lost tribes of Israel. At the same time, the Assyrians brought other people to occupy the territory of Israel. They married with the remaining Israelites and thus was born the people that the New Testament calls the Samaritans, a mixed race of Israelites and pagans.

The Kings of Judah (see the middle of the chart)

Given the large number of kings of Judah because of its longer history, it is difficult to choose only a few to study. It is necessary to note that in the case of the kings of Judah there are two books of the Bible that relate the assessments of their lives. Often the two books say exactly the same thing, but other times the Chronicles assess events as a means of redoing the evaluation that the editors of Kings left us. In Judah, it is important to remember that the worship and adoration of Yahweh continued throughout the entire period, but it became more and more a formality, often without understanding even the law of Moses. It was the covenant with David that the people kept in their heart – always a son of David on the throne — and they let the covenant that God made through Moses fall away.

Among the most important, in spirit if not in results, was King **Jehoshaphat**. Two things characterize him: he initiated true religious reform in Judah, and he wanted to reunite the two countries. Concerning the reform, Jehoshaphat sent the temple personnel, the Levites, out to do religious education in all the villages of Judah so that all the people could follow the Law of Moses and so be the beneficiaries of God's blessings. This reform seems to have worked well during the life of the king. It is possible that some biblical texts were written or edited during this period. Concerning the unification of the country, this would never work especially during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel. The two kings often worked together as one; they formed a strong alliance between the two countries which worked very well with

only one problem. The alliance was sealed by the marriage between Jehoshaphat and the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. This woman had learned everything she knew about how to be a queen from her mother. After Jehoshaphat's death, the reform that he initiated ended and the influence of Ahab and Jezebel continued to be felt in Judah because the new king was also married to one of their daughters.

While Jeroboam II was king in Israel, **Uzziah** (sometimes called Azariah) reigned in Judah. Uzziah had the same spirit as Jeroboam II and obtained similar results to those in Israel. It was a period of great territorial and economic expansion. Uzziah constructed enormous fortresses to protect the country from a possible attack from the Egyptian army while Jeroboam protected the two countries from attacks from countries to the north. The same spirit of injustice reigned in Judah as in Israel with slightly less idolatry. Uzziah was proud and entered the temple to burn incense at the altar of incense. He was warned by the priests that he was in the wrong because offering incense was reserved for the sons of Aaron. Uzziah became angry with the priests and continued. God struck him with leprosy and from that moment on he was withdrawn to an apartment in the royal palace without the power to leave (see II Chronicles 26:16-23). The prophet Isaiah received his call the year King Uzziah died (see Isaiah 6).

The next three kings, **Ahaz**, **Hezekiah** and **Manasseh**, were all important for different reasons. Ahaz and Hezekiah ruled during the ministry of the great prophet Isaiah and it is their responses to his ministry that makes them important. Ahaz reigned while Kings Pekah and Hoshea of Israel prepared to attack Judah (see above). Isaiah pronounced his prophecy concerning "Emmanuel" to Ahaz specifically about that attack. A young woman would give birth meaning that her life and that of the baby would not be taken by the enemy. She would give him the name "Emmanuel" to announce to the world that God was with them and that he had kept Judah safe during the reign of Ahaz. This prophecy was only one of several that Isaiah gave to encourage Ahaz to keep a firm faith in God during this period. Ahaz did not listen, but sought out political and military alliances which would safeguard the country from attacks whether from Israel or Assyria. In the process, Judah became subjected to Assyria as a country that must pay tribute.

When Hezekiah was king of Judah, the annual homage, which Judah paid to Assyria, weighed heavily on the country. Moreover, Judah was flooded by refugees from Israel after its destruction. Isaiah served the king as personal counselor and at the same time was a prophet for the whole country. When Hezekiah refused to pay the homage, Judah found itself in a military crisis because Assyria was forced to come and destroy Judah as well. But, because of his obedience to Isaiah, Hezekiah saw the salvation of the country when in the middle of the night the Assyrian army abandoned its siege of Jerusalem and left the country leaving behind all their provisions of food. Jerusalem and Judah were saved through obedience to the voice of God.

Manasseh, son of Hezekiah's old age, shared the throne with his father during the last years of his life and took over the throne completely after the death of his father. His reign was characterized by the worst idolatry in the history of either

country. On the chart you will notice that there were no prophets during his reign. He killed them all including probably Isaiah. His reign was so ungodly and blasphemous that the editors of the book of Kings thought that he was the cause for the eventual fall of Judah, even if it did not happen until a century after his death. He stopped all worship of Yahweh at the temple which became a ruin. He practiced all the rites of the Canaanite religion including the worship of the god, Molech. Worship of this god included offering children as sacrifices which God had declared to be an abomination. The king even offered his own baby son to Molech as a burnt offering.

The last king we will treat is Josiah, who began his reign as a child under the direction of a pious priest. When he became an adult, Josiah financed a restoration of the temple in order to begin again the worship of God. During the restoration, a copy of the law was found which inspired a true religious reformation in Judah. Theologians think that this book was an edition of the book of Deuteronomy which listed the blessings and the curses that the story cites. Josiah destroyed all the high places of idol worship, and it was he who finally destroyed the large center at Bethel including the golden calf. The effects of this reform reached the whole country including places in Israel before its fall. But this reform did not reach deeply into the hearts of the people. When Jeremiah added his ministry to the reform guided by the king, he found that the people did not agree at all with the king. Josiah died while still young because he tried to stop a military movement from the Egyptian army which actually did not concern Judah at all. The reform that he began died with him because it had not had enough time to become rooted in the hearts of the people.

The remainder of the history of Judah is only small alliances and rebellions against the Babylonians, who later occupied the territory and relocating all the upper classes of society to Babylon therefore destroying the economic infrastructure which otherwise might have supported those who must stay there. Those who remained lived in the worst poverty. Jeremiah stayed there with a word of encouragement for them from God. But too few listened to him and most of them finally went to Egypt. God had therefore torn his people from the Promised Land and given them to other places, at least for a time.

Activity 3: Reflection in groups – hermeneutical exercise

*Read 2 Kings 22:1-2, the summary of Josiah's life. Replace the phrase "he walked in the way of David, his father" with "he walked in the way of Jesus, his Lord."
Describe the life of a believer who "turned neither to the right nor to the left" in the context of your ministry.*

~~~~~

### ***Third Presentation***

#### **“The Prophets before the Exile”**

*Teacher’s note:* *Instead of answering some questions, the students must note the living conditions during the time of each prophet that you present.*

The period of the monarchy saw the development of fixed religious structures which carried authority as the agent of God. The king in Israel also had the task of guiding his people in the worship of God, without accepting for himself the honor and respect that are due only to God. The role of the prophets in this situation was to preserve the true virtue of the faith by criticizing the king and the priest when necessary. From Nathan, the personal prophet to David, the first prophets who showed that attitude were Elijah and Micaiah son of Imlah (1 Kings 22:8), both during the time of Ahab, King of Israel.

Each prophet has his own personality and therefore the way the message is presented is different in each case. Nevertheless, the messages of the prophets that lived in the same circumstances are remarkably alike. Visions, dreams, daily life, trades, etc. serve as an inspiration to the prophets’ messages according to their personality and living circumstances. The Holy Spirit of God filled the prophet making his message the word of God.

In the monarchy of Israel, the system of a king and a prophet by his side must guarantee that the Word of God, the true king of the country was followed. When the kings who had no intention of following God named their own “court prophets”, they introduced the phenomenon of false prophets who always predict things in the favor of the king in a manner that resembled the messages of true prophets. Distinguishing between the messages of the true prophets and the false ones was very difficult sometimes. Deuteronomy says that one can distinguish the true prophet by the fact that the message is fulfilled. But, sometimes the fulfillment is not seen during the life of the prophet.

Example: Amos predicted an earthquake during his brief ministry in Samaria. Two years later, there was one. So people began to take seriously what he had said two years before, because at least that message was fulfilled. It therefore was necessary to review what he had predicted for the two years before the quake. The destruction of Israel, which he predicted, probably did not happen until after his death, while Hosea who lived in the same period also predicted the destruction of Israel experienced it along with his countrymen.

In the ninth century B.C.E., Elijah and Elisha were the two best known prophets. They represented a period where God spoke to his people with miracles as well as with words. They fulfilled their roles beside the kings as necessary, but they also took care of his people. IN the case of Elijah and Elisha we see the other innovation of the prophets, meaning that they had a sort of school of prophets. They kept some

so-called disciples a little like Jesus. (This is the reason why certain people in the time of Jesus thought that Jesus was Elijah returned.)

In the eighth century B.C.E., there were four principal prophets. This period began with what was called the period of the literary prophets. This means that someone wrote their messages -- either by themselves, or a secretary or a disciple. The messages of these prophets are, so to speak, works of literary art in poetry for the most part and in a precise form. Amos and Hosea preached in Israel while Isaiah and Micah preached in Judah. Among the four only Amos was not a career prophet. Amos was a shepherd and owner, but the Holy Spirit inspired him to preach during some business trips in Israel. All four prophets preached messages against economic injustice of society's higher class and against idolatry which characterized daily life in the two countries. The work of Isaiah is found primarily in the first 39 chapters of the book which carries his name.

During the seventh century, after the long reign of Manasseh, the situation which faced the prophets was very different. Israel no longer existed. Judah found itself first under the yoke of the Assyrians and later the Babylonians. The role of the prophets had to change. The prophets of that period carried a message of reconstruction of the country at the end of a waiting period after the fall of Judah. Zephaniah criticized the system in Judah before the reform of Josiah. Jeremiah began his work during that reform, but he saw the true condition of the people's hearts. As one can see on the chart, he continued his ministry near all the kings who lead at the end of Judah, several times at the risk of his life. He even accompanied those who went to Egypt, against his own self interest elsewhere. Nahum prophesied the destruction of Assyria because of the way that they had treated Israel, and Habakkuk prophesied against Babylon because of their treatment of Judah. He recognized that God had chosen Babylon as his agent of discipline against Judah, but they went too far. (We will discuss Ezekiel in the next lesson.)

#### *Activity 4: Individual work*

*As a preacher, you are the voice of God in your community, therefore a prophet. You carry messages of encouragement, the good news of salvation and sanctification, etc. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to bring a message of correction against the habits and attitudes of those who present a poor witness for Christ.*

*Make a list of behaviors and/or attitudes that the members of the church where you are pastor demonstrated at sometime that they must stop in order to improve their Christian witness e.g. adultery, prejudice, dishonesty in financial matters, wrath – anger, practice of traditional religion, laziness, etc.*

#### Homework for the next lesson

1. All the students must read: Jeremiah 29-30; 31:31-34; Ezekiel 17; 36:22-38; Ezra 1, 7; Nehemiah 2, 8-9.

2. All will attempt to fill in the Chart of Important People through Jeremiah.
3. Memorize Jeremiah 29:11.

~~~~~

Lesson 6

**“The Old Testament story and other sources
—from the exile to Jesus”**

Meditation – presented by a student

Chorus and prayer

Recite together Jeremiah 29:11.

Instruction for this lesson

Lesson Objective

With this lesson, we will end the stories of the people of God reported in the Old Testament. The goal of this lesson is to show that even if God, through his discipline, had forever dissolved the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, he had not forgotten his promises to his people. The periods of the exile and the restoration are very difficult periods in the history of Israel, but God had prepared his people to have a much larger vision of his majesty and his reign.

At the end of this lesson, the students will be able to recite Psalm 1 by heart from beginning to end.

Lesson Plan

Activity 1: Chart of Important People —Review of the previous lesson

Ask the students to fill in the chart for Elijah and Jeremiah

Important People in the Old Testament					
Name	OT texts	Importance	How tested?	NT texts	Importance
Elijah	1 Kings 17-19, 21:17-29; 2 Kings 1-2	The battle against Baal	Chased by Jezebel	On the mountain with Jesus	Announced the arrival of the Messiah
Ahab and Jezebel	1 Kings 17-22; 2 Kings 9	Worship of Baal, only religion of	Famine and drought	Rev. 2:20; figurative image	False prophetess who seduces

		state			
Isaiah	Isaiah 1-29; 2 Kings 18-20	Jerusalem saved by his message, predicted the Messiah	By kings who did not listen to him	Many references to the book of Isaiah	Prophecies of the Messiah
Jeremiah	Jeremiah;	Encourage the exiles; promise a future to Israel	Imprisoned; left to die in a well; as a traitor	Matt. 2:17; 27:9	Jesus preached the same message
Ezra					
Nehemiah					

~~~~~

***First presentation***

**"The Period of the Exile"**

The discipline that God inflicted on his people left them perplexed and in a theological crisis. Many already believed that there were many gods and Yahweh was the strongest. They saw the conquest as a battle lost between different gods, as if the gods of the Assyrians and/or the Babylonians were stronger than the God of Israel. The two prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel carried the burden of convincing his people fo the contrary – meaning that there is only one God and he controls whatever happens in the entire world. They tried to convince them that God must discipline them and they he would have a future for them after the exile if they remained faithful to him. The prophets of the eighth century B.C.E. all spoke of the exile, but the people did not want to believe them.

The physical and geographic aspects of the exile

When Assyria seized the northern country, Israel, they took a great number of Israelites and scattered them throughout the empire. They are referred to with the expression, the 10 lost tribes of Israel. But other things also happened. Many people from several tribes found refuge near Jerusalem. The city grew a great deal during this period, but it consisted of poor homeless refugees, and it remained so during some years. For those who were taken, the Assyrians tried to totally destroy the captured people’s culture by spreading them thinly throughout a large area without too many people from any one culture together. They also tried to create a loyalty to the Assyrian system. That did not work.

A little after the reign of Manasseh, Babylon succeeded in a coup against Assyria becoming the only great power in the Fertile Crescent. Babylon therefore began to take possession of some of the territories that Assyria had not occupied including the little country of Judah. In the beginning Babylon created a government in Jerusalem

that they led, after having sent the current king and his family to Babylon where they remained in prison for a short time along with other people of cultural influence. So, it was at a time when Ezekiel left for Babylon and when he began his ministry with the Judean prisoners in Babylon. After this puppet government unsuccessfully tried to mount a rebellion, Babylon completely destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and letting the poor suffer the consequences of this action while at the same time deporting the members of the upper classes to Babylon. Jeremiah had already predicted that the future of Israel rested with these people and that they must do their best to be good citizens of Babylon while remaining faithful to Yahweh and the covenant. The Babylonians incorporated the leaders of conquered people into government posts. This is what is behind the first chapter of Daniel. Here also we find the reason why Ezekiel had the privilege of continuing his ministry among the captives. The Babylonians kept the Jews in their own ghetto where they held on to their language, their culture and their faith without however a place to offer sacrifices.

With the departure of the powerful leaders, there was no longer an economic infrastructure making it possible for the others to survive. After a short time, many of them fled to Egypt against the advice of Jeremiah and he was forced to go with them. Those who went to Egypt during that period were eternally lost to the people of Israel.

### The results of the exile

The exile served as a cradle for the people of Israel. The heart of the people was converted from the practice of idolatry on a foundation of monotheism to a true monotheism, a truly strange doctrine in that era. They expressed their new loyalty to God by adopting a series of cultural and religious practices (one cannot separate these two aspects of life) which showed their intention to obey God in order to no longer go through another experience such as this. There are many proofs that it was during this period that most of the Old Testament texts took their current form. Others were written, like for example the first chapter of Genesis which is an artistic reaction against the Babylonian stories of the creation with its council of gods and other rebellious gods.

With the destruction of the temple, the priests stopped the sacrifices because they lacked a holy place where they could offer them. The faith of Israel began to therefore express itself by reading the word, including preaching and singing. The people adapted a system of parishes for weekly services and meetings. Here, they kept their faith in God, teaching their language (possibly lost after years in a foreign country), their culture, and their stories of creation in contrast to the story of the Babylonians. These meeting places were called synagogues, a system that the Jews continued to use during the time of Jesus (even after the reconstruction of the temple) and even today.

With the system of ghettos for the captive people, it seems that some members of the "lost tribes" joined with the Judean captives to form a culture which represented all the tribes of Israel. They refined many aspects of their particular culture with a

focus on circumcision, rules concerning food and the strict observance of the Sabbath. In this way, they wanted to keep - at all costs - their faithfulness to the covenant, if, by his grace, God would fulfill for them the promises which had been pronounced by the prophets even if they had been poorly received in the past. The Jews had learned that their God was with them in Babylon. It was not necessary to go to Jerusalem to be in his presence.

Speaking of the prophets, another result of this period is that the people began to listen thoroughly to the prophets, those that had predicted this period of discipline and those whom the Lord would call after. The prophets who preached against the idolatry of Israel and Judah had been right. Jeremiah and Ezekiel showed both the love and the compassion of God towards his people despite the discipline that he was exerting on them. Towards the end of the exile, God sent them another prophet, a disciple of Isaiah whose name is unknown. He prepared the hearts of the people for the restoration which was brewing. The messages of this prophet are found in the book of Isaiah beginning with chapter 40.

*Activity 2: Group exercise: Avoid such a discipline*

*In activity 4 of the preceding lesson, you made a list of the habits or attitudes that members of the church express from time to time. In groups, discuss the best way to encourage the church members to change their behavior to avoid the situation of God exercising his discipline on the local church.*

Questions taken from the presentation:

1. How did many of the Jews understand the meaning of the exile?
2. What means did the Assyrians use to create loyalty to themselves?
3. Under the Babylonians, how were the Jews able to keep their life from before?
4. How did the Jews in Babylon show their obedience to God?
5. What is a synagogue?

~~~~~

Second presentation

"The restoration of Israel"

Introduction

The period from the restoration to the ministry of the last Old Testament prophet, "Malachi", lasted nearly a century, and it had several stages under the direction of different people in authority. At the beginning, the work of the last prophet in Babylon, who was mentioned earlier, created strong hopes in the thoughts of those

who wanted to return and recalled the period of Joshua where the Promised Land profited from centuries of preparatory work by the Canaanites. Moreover, since the one who directed the first stage of the restoration was an heir of the throne of David, the hope included also the eventual re-establishment of the kingdom.

This period begins with the fall of Babylon to the hands of the Persians. The Bible recounted this event in the story of Balthazar’s celebration which is found in Daniel chapter 5. As a system to gain the loyalty of the conquered people, the Persians restored people to their country of origin with their particular cultures, traditional religions and cities. The prophecy of the prophet of the era (who is called “second Isaiah”, because his real name is unknown) cites the name of Cyrus, first king of the Persian Empire, as God’s agent to reestablish his people. In effect, the first stage of Israel’s restoration happened through him and the money that he furnished to reconstruct the walls of Jerusalem, and especially the temple for the worship of Yahweh. *Note the chart below, which is also found in the Student’s Handbook.*

Chart of the Restoration of Israel

The restoration of Israel	Date, B.C.E.	Official document	Leader	Tasks
1 st Stage	538	Proclamation of Cyrus Ezra 1:1-4	Sheshbazzar (Zerubbabel) “prince of Judah”	Reconstruction of Jerusalem, especially the temple
2 nd Stage	458	Letter of Artaxerxes Ezra 7:12-26	Ezra, priest and expert in the law of Israel	Teach the law, and establish a government based on that law
3 rd Stage	445	Letters of Artaxerxes Nehemiah 2:7-8	Nehemiah, the emperor’s cupbearer	Reconstruct the walls of Jerusalem, governor

Explanation of the Chart

The first stage of the restoration – Soon after the Persians conquered Babylon; Cyrus began his program of restoring people to their homelands. Babylonians kept Jehoiachin, King of Judah, in prison for many years. Finally, a new king released him and gave him a prominent seat in government and a provision for food for the rest of Judah/Israel in the hands of the actual heir to the throne of David, Sheshbazzar, born in Babylon.

In the texts, the leader of the first stage is called by two different names (Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel). Both names refer to the same person. The first chapter of Ezra presents a list of people who accompanied Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar) to Jerusalem for this stage. They began immediately the work before them, but discouragement seized them quickly. The city of Jerusalem was only ruins.

The administrative center of the province was in Samaria, the former capitol of Israel. No one had worked the fields around Jerusalem for decades. They began construction on the temple, but they quit before the task was finished.

The two prophets, the old Haggai and the young Zachariah, convinced the people to begin again the work on the temple, with the promise that the glory (the *shekina*) of God would return there even if the Ark of the Covenant was not longer there. The Jews, having learned during the exile to listen to and obey the prophets, finished the work and restarted the worship of the God of Israel with the daily sacrifices – almost a century after stopping that practice. Life remained difficult for decades, and the prophet Haggai even had to announce that Zerubbabel was not the long awaited Messiah. They would need to wait for another Zerubbabel, he said.

Second stage – It was clear that all the Jews had not dared to accept the challenge of the first stage of reconstruction. Many of them had created for themselves and for their family a pleasant life in Babylon. Others had found importance and influential posts as officials of the empire, etc. and they did not want to return. God's faithfulness was not in question, and they had become accustomed to worship at the synagogue and it was enough for them. God is the only god in the world and one could worship him anywhere. Moreover, it seems as if a whole new class of Jews had appeared, the priests and scribes who concentrated their ministry on the preparation, preservation and study of the holy texts of Israel.

In the midst of them was Ezra, a man of influence among the Jews in Babylon and with the king of Persia.

During the exile, as was mentioned in the last lesson, the Jews had adopted a religious life concentrated on the holy texts (the Old Testament), and the songs. Ezra and the other men of that class convinced the Jews that in order to keep the promises of God, including their occupation of the Promised Land, it was necessary to follow the law of God as precisely as possible whenever possible. This law touched not only on religious life and personal morality, but it also dictated a manner of living in community – the civil law, if you will.

How that happened, no one knows exactly, but the king of Persia gave Ezra the responsibility of teaching the Jewish law to the Jews who lived in the province of Judah and establish the government in Jerusalem based on the law of God. He started up the government and many reforms. Some of these reforms lasted while there was no sign of others when Nehemiah arrived several years later.

Third Stage – More than a decade after Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, another man of influence near the king of Persia, his cupbearer Nehemiah, intervened on behalf of the Jews who suffered in Jerusalem. For the Persians, the cupbearer had the responsibility of the personal security of the king and his wives – the chief of security. But, because he guarded the harems, he had to submit to the necessity of becoming a eunuch. For the Jews, such a mutilation made a man permanently impure. He could never go to the temple.

After receiving a letter from a relative who complained about the living conditions and especially that there were no walls to protect the city, Nehemiah began to fast and pray during a period of time. The king, noticing his sad appearance, engaged him in a conversation which resulted in the king giving Nehemiah letters of introduction to the Persians responsible for the province without saying what he was there to do.

The story of the construction of the walls of Jerusalem became a text about leadership. We use it, for example, in the Leadership course. The walls were finished with a delay in only 52 days, even though at the same time they were fighting off military attacks from local people. Protecting the city of Jerusalem seemed to them to be an attempt at treason against the king of Persia, whereas their refusal to let Nehemiah work became a true act of treason on their part.

After the dedication of the walls, Nehemiah stayed a short time in Jerusalem in order to correct certain abuses that had begun among the Jews even during the period of the construction. All this is included in the book of Nehemiah.

Whether before the arrival of Ezra or after the return of Nehemiah to the side of the king of Persia, a final prophet entered onto the scene in the history of Israel. He is known only by the title "my messenger", or Malachi. The prophecy of this messenger addresses a people who are no longer idolatrous, but which are becoming secularized. Their faith is no longer fervent, and they only offer God life's leftovers as offerings, as if worshipping God had no real value even though they continued the ceremonies. Malachi spoke for the last time the arrival of the Messiah; rather he foresaw the arrival of a messenger (whom he called "Elijah") who would announce the Messiah. This prophet's preaching style indicates the influence of Greek literature in the country. Soon after, Alexander would begin his attempt to conquer the Persians. Already in the time of Malachi, the Greek culture began to spread throughout the world, even if there were not yet any military actions creating an empire.

A final word – Even with the three stages of restoration in Judah during a period extending over a century, a great number of Jews stayed in Babylon and Persia. Until the third century C.E., the largest center of Judaism outside of Jerusalem could be found in Babylon, there where the texts the most representative of what it is to be a Jew were edited. The story of Esther underlines this phenomenon: Esther and her uncle were members not only of one Jewish family, but of a great community of Jews scattered throughout Persia.

Questions from this presentation

1. What biblical text recounts the story of Babylon's fall to the Persians?
2. Why was the nomination of Sheshbazzar as the leader of the first stage of the restoration of such importance?
3. What was the role of the two prophets, Zachariah and Haggai?

4. What was Ezra's profession?
5. What task did Nehemiah accomplish and in how much time?
6. Who was Malachi and what was his message?

Activity 3: The Chart of Important People in the Old Testament

At this point, take the time to finish this assignment. The information needed to fill in the blocks for Ezra and Nehemiah is in the presentation that was just given.

Important People in the Old Testament					
Name	O.T. texts	Importance	Important tests	N.T. texts	Importance
Jeremiah	Jeremiah;	Encourage the exiles; promise a future to Israel	Imprisoned; left to die in a well; treated as a traitor	Matt. 2.17; 27.9	Jesus preached the same message
Ezra	Ezra and Nehemiah	Teach the law and put it in practice	To face the sins of the people		Father to those who emphasize the law
Nehemiah	Nehemiah	Construction of the walls around Jerusalem	Resistance from all the non-Jews around the city		Influence on ministries of compassion

~~~~~

***Third presentation***

**"Between the testaments"**

Introduction

More than four centuries passed between the ministry of « Malachi » and the arrival of John the Baptist. They were stormy, eventful centuries at a political and cultural level, especially as concerns the life in Palestine where Jesus came to have his ministry. Countries that have undergone a period of colonization can better understand the changes and the influences that transformed life in Palestine during that period.

The roots of this transformation are found nevertheless in the periods of the exile and restoration. Between the time of the deportation and the third stage of the restoration (the stage under the direction of Nehemiah), the people of Judah who returned with Nehemiah represent more than two centuries that the Jews were in Babylon. They all spoke Aramaic, the language of Babylon. The grand ceremony of the reading of the law under the direction of Ezra (Nehemiah 8) necessitated a translation of the Hebrew text into Aramaic, the language of the people. Those who translated also gave their commentaries. From that period therefore come the first translations of the Old Testament, this time in Aramaic.

Most of the synagogues in Judah in the time of Jesus used a copy or an edition of this translation. Ezra's day also produced the first commentary of the texts, which tried to present the meaning of the old text to the modern people of the day. That experience became a habit. The Pharisees at the time of Jesus continued the same practice. Although the times and experiences of the people of God had changed, the texts remained the same.

The synagogue provided what was necessary at this point. Because of an informal organization in the beginning, the rabbis maintained schools which produced from time to time commentaries for teaching the meaning of the word on one side and how to obey the word (the law) of God on the other. However, different groups of Jewish authorities took to heart some particular interpretations as concerning the different political changes which happened during that period — see below.

The other influence one sees towards the end of the period of the restoration is hinted at in the book of Malachi. As was stated in the previous lesson, this book demonstrates the Greek manner of directing and maintaining an argument – the preacher used a form of dialogue between the listener and himself – “You say”, “I say”. This indicates to us that before Greece had exercised its political power in Palestine, its culture had already begun to have an impact on the thought process. That influence would continue.

#### Political and Military Movements in the period

The Persian Empire continued its conquest of the known world of that time. In only a few decades after the ministry of Malachi, the Persians had conquered up to the Greek islands on the coast of Asia Minor. The Greeks resisted nevertheless on the peninsula. In the years 350 B.C.E., Philip of Macedonia organized militias from different city-states to form a single Greek army. At the premature death of Philip, Alexander, his young son had to earn his place as the head of the army, and he made a success of it but with many difficult battles. With the aim of avenging themselves against the Persians, Alexander began moving east, first for taking the part of Greece that had been lost to the Persians, and finally for acquiring bit by bit the Persian Empire for Greece. In 332 he conquered Palestine and Egypt from Persian hands. He continued east, and on the first of October 331, conquered the enormous Persian Army to become the Great King of Asia.

The Greeks had exported their language, their literature, their theater, their athletic games and their manner of thinking throughout the world. And the little country of Judah was not completely resistant despite its determination to follow the law of God. The people from the high class learned Greek, the games arrived first from the north around Samaria and in the region which would one day be Galilee, and then in Jerusalem. The Jews even attended Greek theater even though the themes were at times obscene.

When Alexander committed suicide, the Greek Empire divided into four parts. Judah was under the authority of Egypt and many of the Jews went to Egypt to live in the new model city, Alexandria, to find a better life. Alexandria sheltered therefore a enormous Jewish colony, which of its own accord the commercial and economic life of the city. These Jews stayed faithful to the Lord, having learned in exile that God is there no matter where his people worship him. In the end, they had to translate the scriptures already existing in Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek – a translation called “The Septuagint” because of the legend which says that 72 translators worked independently to produce 72 copies which were exactly the same. That translation was the Bible preferred by the Apostle Paul and all the authors of the New Testament for their citations of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

The wars between Egypt and Syria – the 11th chapter of Daniel speaks of battles between two forces. It consists of an artistic description of the wars between Egypt and Syria for the possession of Palestine, the wars which took place a century after the death of Alexander. The new king of Syria wanted also to attempt to create for himself a larger kingdom than the one he had inherited. Syria won the war and Palestine was transformed into a colony. The Syrians abolished all the religious freedom that the Jews had exercised under the Egyptians. They forbid circumcision, burned copies of the Old Testament, banned the practice of the Sabbath and installed a statue of the Greek god, Zeus, in the temple at Jerusalem. Indeed, they wanted to eliminate Judaism in order to transform Judah into a completely Greek colony. The reaction of the Jews was as strong as the measures used by the Syrians. Many rebellions were repressed. It was a difficult period and many people fled for other cities far from Syria.

*The Maccabees* – When the Syrians tried to force a certain family of priests to sacrifice a pig on the altar of God, they refused and killed the soldier who had given them the order. The son of that family escaped in the desert of Judah and from there he formed an army to combat the Syrians. The people gave this force the name Maccabees, “the hammer”, in speaking of the brothers. What the book of Daniel did not foresee is that the rebellion mounted by the Maccabees would have a great success and Judah finally took its political independence for the first time since the conquest led by the Babylonians. It was 165 B.C.E. That independence lasted for a century.

*The arrival of the Romans* – With the new independence, the Jews thought that the promises of God were finally fulfilled and that it must now wait for the arrival of the Messiah. Some Jews returned to Jerusalem by hundreds and thousands, and the city became larger than it had ever been before. The family of the Maccabees assumed

the rule of the country. Everyone was not however content. The people began to divide into two camps. One camp wanted to reestablish the kingdom of David. The other wanted to keep the current system. Discussions became arguments; arguments became fights and the fights threatened to become a civil war. So, to put an end to the internal quarrels in his family and to avoid civil war and to stop the never-ending battles advanced by the Syrians and others, the priest-king John Hyrcanus invited the Romans to come establish order in Palestine and Judah. In 63 B.C.E. they came and established order as only the Romans could do. They installed John as the high priest and named Herod as king of Judah. This was the situation at the time of the birth of Jesus.

The reaction of the Jews to this event was varied:

- 1) Some saw it as a way to gain peace.
- 2) The families of the priests were for the most part content because the Romans left the power over the people in their hands.
- 3) The rabbis were not happy, but they looked for ways to persuade the people to stay faithful to God despite the situation. It was therefore the job of the Pharisees to show the people how to obey the laws of God and to wait for him to do his will in his time.
- 4) Others, the purists, organized themselves in rebellious colonies in the Judean desert and followed a bit the example of the first Maccabees. They formed some of the first monasteries which served a religious purpose – reestablish a pure priestly order in the temple (the priests were corrupted by the compromise with the Romans) and one political goal – mount a rebellion against the Romans as soon as the Messiah arrived on the scene. They prepared themselves by strict military and religious exercises.

#### Questions taken from this presentation

1. What were the two roots from the period of the restoration which influenced the later transformations?
2. Which city in Egypt had a large Jewish colony?
3. What is the Septuagint?
4. The book of Daniel did not foresee which event?
5. What were the reactions of the Jews to the arrival of the Romans in Palestine? (There are four possible responses)

#### Assignment

Verses to memorize: Daniel 3:17-18

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ***Lesson 7***

### **Old Testament Author's Worldview**

Meditation – presented by a student

Chorus and prayer

Recite together Dan. 3:17-18.

*Basic instructions for this lesson*

#### Lesson objectives

The best preachers are those who succeed in presenting biblical and spiritual truth in a manner that resonates with the cultural and philosophical context of the members of his or her church. They find ways of creating solid bridges between divine truth and daily life, and the worldview of the listener. In this lesson, we will recognize that God did the same thing in inspiring the Old Testament – he used the ideas about the world, the foundational ideas of the people of that time as objectives through which he passed the light of his word so that his people could understand as well as possible.

The goal of this lesson therefore is to recognize first that all the messages of the Old Testament (and of the New as well) take their shape according to the thoughts already existing before they were inspired. From there, we will learn the wisdom of not assuming too quickly the meaning of a passage as if we can pull it out of its historical context without changing it.

#### ***Lesson Plan***

*Activity 1: Class discussion; review the first presentation of the Lesson One.*

That presentation speaks of a personal God who speaks and is interested in his people in a cultural context of local gods (deaf and mute), or gods who did not care about the living conditions of those who live in their territories.

*3 questions in the Student Handbook:*

- 1) What was the most important thing we learned through Lesson 1?
- 2) In what sense is our "God who speaks" different than pagan gods?
- 3) Discuss among yourselves the ways spiritual conflicts are expressed in your ministry context. What role do the ancestors have in this spiritual conflict, or in the so-called destiny of people in your culture?

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

***First presentation***

**"A Different Conception of the Universe"**

Introduction

In a geography class, a young missionary tried to persuade the indigenous students that the world was a sphere, a completely foreign idea to their worldview. She even said that explorers had traveled around the world and returned to the point from where their voyage started and that airplanes which passed over the students heads did the same thing in these days. Unfortunately, she used a flat map hanging on the wall instead of a globe. On the final exam, she included a question about the shape of Earth. One of the students responded: "I must answer to this question by saying that the world is a sphere, even if I know it isn't." It takes a lot of time and a lot of experiences before a people change their conception of the universe. Sometimes, God used new experiences to persuade his people of the truth that he wanted to reveal to them. Other times, he used the ideas that the people had already formed, even if they did not reflect the truth as God knows it.

A conception of the universe develops at the cultural level in the exchange of ideas about personal evaluations of observable phenomenon between those recognized as the wisest. By developing such a worldview, each culture tries to explain what would otherwise be incomprehensible. All the cultures of the world do this, and the truly wise among them recognize that there is always something that cannot be explained. No one has the correct answers to all the questions, but it is necessary to have enough to live in peace. The ancient cultures only had the five human senses at their disposal to observe the universe and their intelligence which some think was affected negatively by the Fall.

When the various cultures met, the differences of opinion over certain questions inspired a feeling of unsettledness. Their cultures had reached different conclusions about the observable phenomenon in the universe. These differences created a worldview sometimes so different that one would no longer think they shared the same world. Abraham came from the east, in the region now occupied by the country of Iraq. The culture from that time and place benefited already from centuries of development. When he traveled through Haran, during many decades, other cultural influences formed the worldview that he passed on to his son.

Moses, by contrast, was born in Egypt and he was taught by the best professors of the country, who provided him with whole other conception of the universe. Moreover, he had at the same time the education and instruction that he had received from his birth parents. The people of Israel occupied during almost a century the territory which served as the communication center between the great powers of the age. (All the commercial routes passed through the Promised Land.) All the ideas came through during the centuries. Finally, the exile forced the people of Israel to encounter ideas about the universe that were completely different than

their own, especially others' emphasis upon astronomical observation. Biblical passages, written during different eras of Israel's history, reflect these cultural exchanges.

But, Israel served a God who speaks. This means that certain aspects of their worldview came from the voice of God through his special servants. However, God had to use the cultural conceptions that were already available to his people to present the truths about himself and on what he expected from them. Obviously he could not say everything about this because they could not understand it all. We can never understand everything about God. Our understanding of the universe is, as always, limited, even if in the last two centuries we have made much progress thanks to the research tools now available.

A worldview includes several subjects: astronomy and geology, which means the geography of the sky and earth; the value of human beings, animals and plants, materials and minerals of the earth and the relation between them and the earth itself; a system of societal organization, by families, by tribes, by defined classes in different manners, etc.; the sense of good and evil, including a sense of pure and impure animals and objects. In this lesson we will treat some of these subjects in comparison to the cultural ideas in your place of ministry.

### A small, closed universe

To thoroughly understand the idea of the geography of the universe for the majority of the Old Testament writers, it is necessary to study the texts which treat the creation and the phenomenon considered abnormal according to their observations. Clearly this includes the first chapters of Genesis and Joshua 10. It is also required to study all the Psalms which treat the subject, as well as Proverbs, Job and other wisdom literature, without neglecting the individual verses which also touch upon these ideas.

Read Psalm 19:1-7

According to the Psalms and the first chapter of Genesis, the universe only consisted of the earth as the center of everything. The universe was hardly larger than that. According to this conception, the sky was in the form of a vault, or an upside-down bowl which covered the land and which rested on the edges, whether on the oceans or on the mountains. We see the sky, the movement of the sun, moon, stars and clouds. For the Jews these "bodies" were only some of the servants of God to control the amount and the duration of the light which shone on the earth.\* They were all very small compared to the earth and very close to it, by tracing some outlines like a footpath on the interior of the vault – the sun was the greatest and most powerful; the moon might be the same size, but less powerful; and the stars, some permanent sparkles in the vault of the sky. The sun and the moon rose and set. There is no evidence in the Old Testament that the Jews studied the movement of the stars, while other cultures accorded these movements much social and spiritual force.

When one climbed the mountains, one could get very close to the vault. Since God lives outside our universe, when one approached the vault, one is closer to God himself. That is the reason why they looked to the high places as places to worship. In Genesis 11, we read the story of the Babylonians who tried to go through the vault by building a tower. That tower, according to this author, was not only to go to the vault but pierce it so that the builders could take over the places reserved to the gods. (The same temptation led Adam and Eve to sin.) Instead of mocking this false conception of the universe, God saw the attitude of the men towards him and he stopped the work without revealing another idea of the universe.

It was more difficult to see what was happening under the earth, except when one dug into it: whether digging some wells, like Isaac and Jacob did with much success, or burying the dead. For the Jews therefore, the dead were buried underground. The writers of the Old Testament had not yet developed a doctrine of what happens after death, but one can see the idea developing that God gives justice to all at some time in the future. But they were hesitant to say how he would do it.

The other observations inspired the conclusion that there was a large stock of pure water under the ground. One cannot probe the depths of the earth, but there is no proof that the people believed in an element of the universe deeper than the earth itself. Job 9:6 and Psalm 75:3-4 speaks of pillars of the earth. There were times where when one tried to dig a well, one only found rocks. In other places, one found water. The wise men in Israel therefore developed the idea that God had established some pillars of rock in the middle of subterranean waters, on which he then constructed the land. When there are earthquakes, God shakes these columns.

As was true in many other cultures of the era, the Jews based their comprehension of the universe on the presence of water. There was water below the earth that one found when digging wells. There is water on the land – the rivers, lakes and seas. The water of the sea even cause fear during the times of storms, etc. (note the episode when Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Matt. 8:23-27). In Revelation, the new universe has no sea, meaning that cause of fear will no longer exist. Finally, there is water above the earth, those which are stored high in the vault of the sky from which comes rain, storms, etc. The Old Testament even speaks of some celestial windows or flood gates that God opens to give rain as a blessing in Mal. 3:10 or as a punishment in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2.

The Babylonians and Canaanites saw the waters as gods who gave or withheld their blessings from the people. The Jews, by contrast, as monotheists was the water in an impersonal way. This then explains the difference between Gen. 1 :1-2 and the texts of the other ancient religions. There the waters, as gods, had created the rest, while in Genesis, God created even the waters first and then he created the rest and managed it all. He helped his people find the favorable places to dig wells. He had promised the rain necessary for sowing and reaping a harvest of plants, if his people remained faithful. Concerning the waters of the sea, many times we find in the texts, as in Job, where God said he had established the limits of the seas which they cannot go beyond. Their force, as great as it is, remains within the geographic limits that God has established.

### Life is found in the blood

The Jews had ideas about biology as well as geology. For them, "the life is in the blood." Genesis 1 and 2 represent two different periods in the development of the Jewish worldview. However, both indicate that plants are not considered as living creatures. In Genesis 1, that were only the last of the items that God created to prepare the earth for "living" creatures, the animals (see days 5 and 6). In Genesis 2, the plants serve as sources of food and shade. Moreover, it is the task of mankind to work the land so that the plants can grow as they must do. In Israel, the faithful could offer sacrifices of plants (food for the priests, etc.) or animals. Cain's offering in Genesis 4 was not rejected because it was of the fruit of the ground. For a sin offering, however, it was absolutely necessary that something lost its life, meaning blood was spilled. The uprooting of a plant is not considered a death, as that of an animal which loses its blood. The words "soul" and "life" are very close in meaning. All the animals have a "soul" according to the meaning of the word in Hebrew. That is life. They have blood.

According to Genesis 1, there are four or five categories of animals: birds and fish are in the same category, in one way or another, created the same day (yet since fish are not represented in Revelation 4 among the living beings, it may be that the Jews did distinguish one from the other); the animals with legs and/ or arms belong to other categories (created the sixth day) – wild animals, domestic animals, and humans. It is difficult to know if Genesis 1 created these categories or if the categories of animals already existed in the culture that created the structure of Genesis 1. Genesis 2 presents another image where God paraded the animals before Adam, but he did not find among them the companion that he needed.

### A society in equality

Society in Israel began by a patriarchal system which was explained in a preceding lesson. (*See if the students remember the meaning of the word "patriarch": "the first fathers, or the fathers who reign".*) The period of the patriarchs ended between the death of Joseph and the call of Moses. From there, Israel developed a system of families in the midst of the tribes. The nation did not develop a system of classes, even if personal economic gifts made some families richer than others. In principle, all the Israelites were brothers. They even had a system of forgiveness of debts and helping one another so that no one would stay in poverty (see the story of Ruth at this point).

The Levites, by contrast, were a tribe set apart for service in the temple of God. So, that tribe had a certain level of holiness that the others did not. But, in order to not put themselves on a higher social level than the others, the Levites had to depend on the tithes and offerings of the other tribes for their living. They owned no land. On the maps of Israel, there is no territory called Levi. They lived in the cities in the territory of others, but they had no inheritance except to be in the particular service of God. That only changed after the exile when the faithful came from afar carrying silver for offerings instead of animals to sacrifice.

The classes entered Jewish society only at the time of the kings and more with David than with Saul. The royal class separated from all the other people. One sees that the most strikingly in the life of Solomon and his son Rehoboam (review the stories of that period).

The Jews must even treat the foreigners among them with the same laws and the same gentleness that they had for themselves, because God said, "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the Land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:22)

Other societies of that era structured their social life according to classes. Their stories of creation, based on a group of gods who had their own structures of power and importance, inspired these classes. Since the gods were seen to have different class levels, it was necessary that humanity organized itself in the same way. The Indian caste system comes directly from a story of the creation where the gods all had a fixed level in the divine society.

The demonstrate the equality in Jewish society, we only need to look at the prophets. They came from several families and several tribes. They represent different level of economic resources. The four prophets Isaiah, Micah, Amos and Hosea lived more or less during the same period. They were all considered prophets of equal value. Isaiah was part (probably) of the royal family who only lived in the city; Micah, a poor farmer who saw city life as the source of many evils; Amos, a farmer/ businessman who traveled to sell his products; Hosea, a prophet of the royal court of the north, Israel. The people did not consider their social level before listening to their message, even if the priests of Israel, condemned by God for their sins, mocked Amos. Moreover, God did not choose a man from the upper class to be the king of his people. It was the covenant with David which changed this. But in Israel (the Northern Kingdom), the role of king was passed from family to family according to who seemed the best prepared or the most powerful, although not necessarily with the most money or the highest standing.

### *Activity 2: Chart of Worldviews*

*The following chart is found in the student handbook. In their handbook, it is blank. The students must fill it in. This exercise it a means to visualize the differences between the worldview of the authors of the Old Testament, the scientific worldview of our era, and that of the student's place of ministry- if there are any differences. We will do half at this point, stopping at "tools of research", and finish the second half after the second presentation. It is possible that the second half is the most relevant and the most important.*

#### *Instructions:*

- 1. All together, fill in the first column: Biblical worldview*
- 2. Discuss among the group what must be put in the second column (some answers are furnished below)*

3. IN GROUPS, discuss and fill in the third column.

| Chart of Worldviews                        |                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                   |                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Element                                    | Old Testament                                                                                                           | Moderne Conception                                                                                                                                | Place of Ministry |
| <i>Size of the universe</i>                | Small: the earth, the sky above and what is under the earth                                                             | Vast: Earth is a small planet among millions; space is almost infinite                                                                            |                   |
| <i>Sky</i>                                 | An upside-down bowl on the land, which holds water above in reserve for the rain.                                       | Space without end, with layers of different gases around the planet which allow our daily life.                                                   |                   |
| <i>Sun, Moon, stars</i>                    | The servants of God which shine in the interior of the sky-bowl. Some of the recipients of the light which God created. | The sun and the stars are the same thing; the stars however are further away from the Earth. The moon however only reflects the light of the sun. |                   |
| <i>What happens to people after death?</i> | Under the earth waiting for God who will render final justice. In Hebrew, <i>she'ol</i>                                 | Modern science does not have an answer for this question. Different religions answer as they will. Dead bodies decompose.                         |                   |
| <i>Life</i>                                | All animals which have blood flowing in their veins are living.                                                         | Life is found in protoplasm, a mixed chemical liquid in plants and animals. Blood is only one liquid of life among others.                        |                   |
| <i>Ideal society</i>                       | Equality between heads of families, economy based on mutual assistance                                                  | Different cultures have their own ideas about this                                                                                                |                   |
| <i>Tools of research</i>                   | The five human senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.                                                          | Very sophisticated machines which can explore space, earth, seas and molecules.                                                                   |                   |
| <i>Spiritual world</i>                     | An integral part of creation. Spirits live outside the universe, but can                                                | The discussion is left to religion and philosophy                                                                                                 |                   |

|                            |                                                                                                         |                                                |  |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--|
|                            | influence our lives.                                                                                    |                                                |  |
| <i>Evil spirits</i>        | The Old Testament speaks of servant spirits of God who exercise his discipline                          | (see Spiritual world)                          |  |
| <i>Degrees of holiness</i> | Holiness is connected to the presence of God and it diminishes according to the distance away from him. | (see Spiritual world)                          |  |
| <i>Pure and impure</i>     | Certain objects are impure by nature or by contamination                                                | This idea is tied to sickness and to microbes. |  |

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### ***Second presentation***

## **The Spiritual world as part of the Universe**

### Introduction

Like most African cultures, and in contrast with western scientific cultures, the Old Testament affirms that a part of the universe that God created includes what is called the spiritual world, which means, a place where God lives surrounded by spiritual beings (angels and others), and that some of these beings have the job of testing the faithfulness of those who say they are faithful to God. These beings were servants of the LORD. God reigned totally and absolutely in this realm, and no one revolted against Him until the rebellion of Satan and (later) humans. For other cultures of the era, the spiritual world included a large number of gods with different strengths and doubtful morals. Even if during the long period of Israel's history, the general population believed in local gods and not Yahweh, the God who revealed himself to Moses and the Old Testament writers never permitted such a doctrine.

### Spiritual beings according to the Old Testament

*The Council of Yahweh* – Daniel 7.9-14 seems to present a celestial council of spiritual beings who surround God. The best description of this council appears in the vision of the prophet Micaiah in 1 Kings 22.19-23 where God is surrounded by the "host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left" (v. 19, NIV). Yahweh created them, and he presides at their meetings, even if he doesn't seek their advice (Isa. 40.13-14) like the gods of other religions. Yahweh is called the "LORD of hosts" (Isa. 47:4, NASB). Before this council, true prophets appear to hear

the world of God (Jer. 23.18, 22). The number of angels or other members of God's council is never mentioned in the Bible.

God can send members of the council to carry out His will. They worship God, and they execute his wrath by acting as members of His celestial armies. The Old Testament gives to members of the council ranks according to their exact role: the adversary (Satan); the archangels, such as Gabriel and Michael (Dan. 8 & 10); and Job's advocate (33.22-25), an angel who defends the accused against the charges of Satan. The primary function of angels is to worship God in His court and to announce God's word, though they sometimes intervene to protect the lives of the faithful.

*The Angel of Yahweh (or Angel of the LORD)* – Of all the spiritual beings in God's presence, the strongest and most distinctive is the Angel of Yahweh who is given several functions (Gen. 25.7, Ex. 3.2, Num. 22.22, Joshua 5.13-15, etc.), especially the task of communicating God's messages to the prophets. In fact, it's the Angel of the LORD who makes a meeting between God and humans even possible. In some of the accounts of these meetings, God and His Angel seem indistinguishable (ex. Gen. 16.7-14). The Old Testament emphasizes that no one can see God and live. Meetings with God must have a mediator. This "Angel of Yahweh" appears in all periods of Israel's history and – thanks to this – we understand that God can act in the world of persons.

Several Christian theologians – to support to the doctrine of the Trinity and the fact that Jesus is by nature the Son of God – discern the person of Jesus in the Angel of the LORD as presented in the Old Testament. Jesus is the sole mediator between humanity and God, and it is Jesus who sanctifies believers.

*Leviathan* – The Old Testament often uses language borrowed from the cultures of Israel's neighbors. The title "Leviathan" is one example, taken from the religion of Canaan and perhaps Babylon. This title is connected to the power of the waters of the sea and the fear that this power engenders. In the Babylonian accounts of Creation, it's such an aquatic monster that is at the same time the power of the sea waters and the goddess of the sea who mounts a rebellion against the council of the gods. In the end, she is cut in two, and the pieces become elements of the Creation. The fear of this spiritual power is behind the Creation. In this Canaanite accounts, the sea waters destroy agriculture. The waters are presented as a sea monster.

For the Israelites, on the other hand, in conformity with their monotheism, they didn't believe in any creator gods except Yahweh, but they still were afraid of the sea powers. (See the explanation in the first presentation of this lesson). It seems – after reading several texts – that in the Jewish vocabulary, "Leviathan" referred to an ugly aquatic creature, one who is fearsome, but who also is pleasing to God. In some OT passages, "Leviathan" is translated as "crocodile," where it's clear according to the context that it's talking about an animal and not a spiritual force (see Ps. 104.26). In other passages, however, the word is used in a figurative sense, where the author is referring to evil spiritual forces (see Ps. 74. 13-14; Isa. 27.1; Job

3.8-9, 7.12, 26.12-13). In these cases, the author borrows this idea from the Canaanite literature. The same idea is expressed in Isaiah 51.9, where we read: "Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced that *monster* through?" The term "monster" comes from Babylonian literature.

*Satan* – The conception of "Satan," from the Christian point of view, takes shape in light of New Testament passages, such as the teaching of Jesus and the book of Revelation. However, the Old Testament presents Satan in a different light. In the Old Testament, one finds the expression "satan" (small "s") with the definite article "the." So, "the satan" is a role to play and a person. The best description we have of this character is found in Job 1 and 2. In God's council, God is the judge. There is also a prosecutor and a defense "attorney." In Job, the term "redeemer" is the defense lawyer. It's the redeemer who will appear before God in Job's place, since Job – as a mere man – cannot come before God and live (see the first presentation). The prosecutor is "the satan." His role is to test the faithfulness of God's people. However, the satan does his work in a particular way. He accuses the faithful by using lies, or suspicions. That's why the OT calls him the "adversary." This idea is behind Jesus' description of the devil in John 8:44b: "For he is a liar and the father of lies." A study of the royal courts in OT times shows that there wasn't a single person who played this role. In any case, the accused person had to prove his or her innocence, or else the "redeemer" (defense attorney) had to establish it. However, in the OT, it seems that a single angel always played the role of prosecutor.

In short, according to the Old Testament only, it would appear that the satan wasn't yet considered the chief of the rebellious angels, who were totally opposed to God's reign. He was a creature of God who acted according to God's commands. His job was to prove the faithfulness of God's people. Some OT writers attribute to him certain actions that they'd rather not attribute to God Himself. The OT also doesn't make the connection between the serpent in Genesis and the satan in Job. It's the book of Revelation that will make this connection many centuries later.

### Degrees of holiness

Holiness is a quality that belongs exclusively to God but that He shares thanks to relationships that He himself initiates. The word "holiness," in the languages of the peoples of the Old Testament, had the primary meaning of "separated" or "other than." All gods of all peoples were, according to this definition, holy gods, even if their behavior was capricious and immoral. In the case of Yahweh, the God of Israel, His holiness included perfection and moral purity, as well as a requirement that His people display the same purity. God must act with holy justice when His people rebel against Him, but with a love that will not destroy them, since they are His people (Hab. 1.12-13; Isaiah 1.4-20, 35:8). The holiness of God is so special and powerful that it cannot condone evil or tolerate sin.

Still, God wanted to maintain a relationship with His people. So, he made away for His people to come close to Him through an ambiance of holiness. In the OT, we read about a holy place and a Holy of Holies, holy utensils, a holy people, sanctification rites, and holy offerings. All these things allowed God to maintain a

relationship with His people. Places, utensils, and even individuals had degrees of holiness depending upon proximity to the presence of God.

In Israel's worship, the presence of God was found especially in the Holy of Holies – the small room in the tabernacle, and later in the Temple, where only the High Priest could go after making strict preparations. The degree of holiness connected to the room, the High Priest, and the Ark of the Covenant (the only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies) was the highest one could imagine here on earth. To touch the Ark meant immediate death. For just anyone to go into the room, or for the High Priest to neglect preparations, also meant immediate death. Other locations, such as the holy place (another room in the tabernacle and Temple), or the court of the people, were also considered holy, but less so, depending upon their proximity to the Holy of Holies. The other priests who were allowed to enter into the holy place also prepared themselves through rituals of sanctification. A similar type of preparation was required even for the people to enter the court of the people.

The parable of the Good Samaritan speaks of a priest and a Levite who – in the story – didn't want to touch the victim. They were both afraid of contaminating themselves by touching someone who may have already been dead. The city of Jerusalem was considered holy city, and later the country of Judah, and finally all of Israel was considered holy for the Jews (later in history) who lived outside the Promised Land. Scholars speak of divine boundaries, a geometric design with several concentric circles (i.e. drawn outside of each other), but each having the same center – the Holy of Holies where God encountered His people. The space covered by each circle was less holy than the closer circle. The priests had the responsibility to maintain the boundaries and the degree of holiness required by each.

### Pure and impure

The two ideas – purity and holiness – go together. The one necessitates the other. The book of Leviticus, as well as other OT passages, focus attention on what is pure and what isn't. Leviticus presents subjects that are – for the most part – the "turf" of the priests and/or Levites. Certain animals, as well as certain products that humans can consume, are considered by nature impure. Of course, it's culture that determines these things, and this becomes part of the worldview, according to culture. Students of ancient cultures find that Israel and the cultures of their region had a similar worldview. However, nothing compares with the Jewish system and its idea of impurity.

Despite centuries of studying the question, the key to the idea of "impurity" and how it related to the conception of the universe has yet to be found. Texts of the OT don't explain the basis of the system, but there seem to be both biological and spiritual elements involved, and sometimes it's hard to separate the two. Some suggestions seem better than others, but none explain the system well. The sacrifices and restrictions may have helped avoid contaminations (or sickness) that perhaps would have been caused by the impure things.

First, what is sanctified is, by definition, pure. Other things that are not sanctified can be considered pure or impure depending on the word of the priests. They classified animals that could be consumed as food according to the categories of "pure" – or if inedible – "impure." The two standards they used were: 1) how it moved, and 2) physical characteristics. Experts offer two further suggestions regarding these criteria. Certain ones say that animals that didn't have characteristics considered "normal" for its category of animal were considered impure. This seems to be an inference from the category of humans, where handicapped persons were also judged to be impure. As helpful as this suggestion seems, there are too many exceptions to make a rule. Others suggested that the animals that God would be willing to consume, i.e. as "acceptable sacrifices," are also the ones that the holy people of God can consume.

The Old Testament speaks of certain human bodily fluids as impure. These were particularly bodily fluids associated with life, such as the blood from menstruation and semen. While inside the body, these are associated with life, but once outside the body, they were considered associated with death, and therefore impure. Accordingly, women couldn't avoid a monthly period of impurity. Leprosy is in this category, because of the oozing fluid it involved, even if the sick person was still living. The leper is accordingly impure until he or she is healed.

To have contact with a corpse or other impure objects rendered a person impure. After such contact, one had to undergo a period of purification. This practice underscored another idea, namely, that impurity was more powerful than purity. See for example Haggai 2.12-13. A sacred object (one that is sanctified), if it touches another object, does it make the other object pure? No.<sup>1</sup> However, if an impure object touches another object, the second object becomes impure as well. Impurity is active, and can make other things impure. On the other hand, the pure object is passive; it can't sanctify another object.

This is one reason that contributed to the Jews rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. The Gospels report that Jesus touched lepers, a woman with a bleeding problem, as well as female prostitutes, and he purified them by his touch. The Jewish worldview could not accept that a holy person could have such an effect. According to them, Jesus made himself impure when he did so, and therefore could not be the Messiah. On the other hand, the Gospel teaches us that the one who is sanctified by God has an active power that can redeem the lost and the unclean by the power of God at work in him or her. (See for example 1 Cor. 7:14, where the unbelieving husband is "sanctified" by the believing wife).

### *Activity 3: Chart – Old Testament Worldviews*

*Follow the instructions for Activity 2 to finish the chart. Note that the scientific worldview does not accept the world of spirits as a reality that affects the daily life of*

---

<sup>1</sup> *Editor's note:* Isaiah 6:6-7 is an OT anticipation of the NT principle Rev. Chanda is discussing, since an angel takes a coal from the altar (i.e. a holy object) and touches it to Isaiah's lips, taking away his sin and guilt. This appears to be an OT example of "contagious holiness."

*human beings. So, many Christians, especially those who live in the West, do not know what to believe about evil spirits.*

Assignments

1. Read Isaiah 49 and 53.
2. Memorize Isaiah 53:5.

~~~~~

Lesson 8
"Theological themes of the Old Testament"

Meditation – presented by a student

Chorus and prayer

Recite together Isaiah 53:5

Basic Instructions for this lesson

Lesson objectives

During the class sessions in this course we have already presented several theological themes taken from the Old Testament. Throughout this lesson, we want to repeat some of them from the Christian point of view by recognizing that for the Christian, the Old Testament is the first two-thirds of the Bible. Certain themes Presented in the Old Testament continue in the same manner in the New Testament. Others are completed or fulfilled in the New Testament. Still other are cancelled or modified in one way or another.

The goal of this lesson is to help the preacher of the Bible to preach Old Testament texts with a particularly Christian point of view. The authors of this lesson recognize that a single lesson cannot achieve this goal for the whole lifetime of the minister. We want to however introduce the necessary items so that the students can pursue the development in this competency throughout their ministry.

Take the time to discuss the differences of the worldview in the students' context of ministry and open the question of how to approach this worldview with the gospel. You should have time to check the assignments during the group discussion.

Lesson Plan

Activity 1: Discussion of the homework (see above)

2 presentations of the lesson material (Theological Themes in the Old Testament)

Activities 2 and 3: Group discussions after each presentation

Activity 4: Comparison of the Servant Songs (see the assigned readings of Isaiah) with the image of Jesus in the Gospels.

~~~~~

### ***First presentation***

#### **Classic Theological Themes**

The Old Testament was written during a period of at least a thousand years beginning with some texts attributed to Moses up until the book called Daniel. Several of these texts have passed through editions which reflect the life and ideas of the time period of the editing. A single lesson in an introductory course could never cover in an adequate fashion the title of this lesson. Therefore, we are going to present certain themes that the Old Testament presents in a variety of texts and throughout its history.

A few years ago, Nazarene authors produced two biblical theology texts. The first was called *God, Man and Salvation*. The other is called *Grace, Faith and Holiness*. Both represent Bible readings following the hermeneutic particular to the Wesleyan movement. (Hermeneutic means the manner of reading the Bible given certain aspects of our understanding of God and the subjects treated in the text. These two works present a list of classic subjects of biblical theology, and some of these will be treated in this lesson.

Discussion – During this course, we have already said some things concerning certain of these themes, and I would like to use this chance to review a little of what has been said:

1. On the subject of God, we began the course by a presentation on “a God who speaks”. Ask, “What did we say about this topic?”

*Permit them to respond*

[God hears our prayers; he responds to them, he gives his word both orally and in writing.]

2. What else have we said about God during the course?

[He inspired the Bible, he engages in a spiritual battle]

[He is the creator, he desires an intimate relationship with human beings, he created covenants, he makes promises to which he remains faithful, he considers people’s thoughts when formulating his word, and he is holy and asks for holiness on our part.]

## The character of God

Many times in the two testaments, God points out to his people that he is a holy God, and in order to meet with him they need to be a holy people. This point is very important because as time goes on a people begin to resemble their god. If they have a capricious god, they cannot be trusted – their word is not reliable. If their god is immoral, as the gods and goddesses in Baal worship, the people also become completely immoral. (This is the reason God commanded Joshua to destroy the nations that lived in the Promised Land.) But, if one is completely convinced that God is holy, full of grace and compassion, his qualities begin to be reflected in the character of the faithful.

To truly know someone, it is necessary to see how he or she acts in different circumstances. The Old Testament shows therefore the character of God not by a theological description, but by stories in which he acts according to his nature. By studying these events, we can understand and know God. And in knowing him, we can allow him to transform us through the work of his Spirit. It is significant that the first course on holiness in the NTI program emphasizes Christian holiness as a resemblance to Christ.

From the beginning of the Old Testament, the book of Genesis indicates at least three characteristics of God, which the rest of the Old Testament underscores in many ways and in several contexts.

1. *God is the sovereign ruler of all creation.* He controls all that happens, even if what happens is against his will. He is not a part of creation, but he can enter in the affairs of the universe and its inhabitants as well as leave them and let the rules that he instituted take their course, without ever forgetting his role. This is the essential message of the Psalms. Their prayers and their worship songs underline this truth. Since God controls everything, the faithful can keep faith and assurance in no matter what life circumstance, by exercising the wisdom with which God instructs us. Forgetting to recognize this fact will be, according to Romans 1, the first step towards idolatry and moral failure (Romans 1:18-32).

2. *God is the one and only God.* All the other so called gods are only from the imagination of a lost humanity that wants to try to control the forces of the universe by means of a religious magic. The waters, the heavenly bodies, and the animals are all creations of a single Creator God. In conflicts with false gods, the God of the Bible can do anything to demonstrate his powers. In contrast, this same God, when his people do not want to resemble him can discipline them through means that can seem like a victory for other gods.

3. *God is especially interested in human beings.* The creation stories indicate that he made everything as preparation for a perfect environment for the man and woman. Instead of creating man by his word, as he did for the rest of creation, God worked with his hands and with his spirit to create us. After the creation, we see that God did everything to keep a relationship with us, even after the Fall. Moreover, his plan to prepare a people for himself had as a goal to bless all the nations of the earth.

The book of Jonah emphasizes this fact – that God wanted to bless even the archenemy of his people, Nineveh, by restoring a relationship with them as well. Even though Jonah knew God’s character and that God would extend grace towards them, Jonah did not want to exercise that same grace.

### Humanity, the principal creation

The third point above introduces the idea of human beings. Psalm 8, which we are in the process of memorizing, asks this question concerning humanity: “What is man that you are mindful of him...” Or in other words, “Why God do you concern yourself so much with humanity?” The question was inspired by the observation of God’s actions in favor of people. According to the Canaanites, gods do not take care of people. According to the Babylonians, it is humanity that serves to make the gods life better, especially the rebellious gods. But the Bible illuminates very well that God created everything while thinking of humankind which would be his last and perfect creation. He created man and woman, precisely for each other, and both for himself. He placed them in an ideal setting and gave them the choice of their own moral destiny. Despite their decision to break the perfect relationship that God had established, other humans found themselves still under the grace and love of God who does everything to recall them into the relationship that they had lost. After the Fall, God looked for Adam and Eve, and he did what was necessary to recreate the broken relationship. After Cain killed his brother Abel, God pleads with him several times trying to get him to admit his fault and restart the relationship. It was Cain who continued to refuse.

After the exodus, God action toward his people come into focus, and despite their spirit of rebellion, He acts towards them the same way He lovingly acts toward all humanity. His covenant with Israel was centered on the law, his marvelous gift presented to them so that they could know how to live in a manner pleasing to him. The law, in effect, was only the instructions on how to know God and live in relationship with him. The core of everything is the relationship between God and his people. The instructional rites serve in place of magic or manipulation. One does not buy God’s favor through the sacrifices. He always sees the person’s heart, and he always accepts the contrite heart. The law also shows how the people of God could, by themselves, express the grace of God one to another, by the programs of mutual aide. God had never distributed his blessings equally to everyone. To the contrary, he counted on them to respond to the needs of each other. This system served therefore to create ties of love between his people, the ties which reflect the love of God towards his people. This was necessary so that foreigners crossing the Promised Land would see the character of God through the daily life of his people. Alas, his people did not cooperate.

### Sin broke and transformed the relationship between God and human beings

The basic character of sin is that someone takes the place of God in his/her own life. That is exactly what the serpent inspired in Eve and Adam’s thoughts in the garden. “... You will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:5) They knew good and evil, but not at all like God. On the contrary, they knew them as sinful humans, with

the legal and personal guilt which accompanied their action. The two symbols of their guilt were their sense of shame and fear. They had had neither before. Instead of eagerly anticipating their daily encounter with God, they fled from him. God had to search for them in a hidden part of the garden.

The sin transformed the perfect relationship between God and his creation into a relationship of fear and shame towards him, and blame, jealousy and hate entered in the interior of society. Adam did not accept the responsibility for his mistake, but placed it on God himself through the woman that God had given him. Cain killed Abel, his brother (Gen. 4) because of jealousy and refused at any cost to admit his responsibility and accept the grace that God offered to restore the bond between them.

What Adam and Eve experienced on a personal and family level, humanity suffered on all levels of society. (See the period just before the flood and the society in Babel.) The book of Judges ends with this critique, "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Israel and Judah both abandoned God to follow other gods. Some despotic, tyrannical empires tried to conquer the known world in their era. The Canaanite kings entered into war against others every year. God had to exercise his holiness by disciplining them often.

But the most important thing in the Old Testament is the times when he extended his grace which conquered all sin. It was God who offered the first sacrifice in the garden. It was God who liberated his people from slavery in Egypt. God sent the judge-heroes to keep his people alive for centuries. God restored his people lost among the Babylonians and the Persians. In the Old Testament, one sees a victory from time to time, but it was necessary to wait until the resurrection of Jesus from the dead to experience total victory against sin.

#### A holy people who bless the entire world

At the beginning of this course, we presented the idea of covenants between God and Abraham, God and Israel, and God and David. The first two covenants represented the creation of a people redeemed from an adverse situation, guided on road that God himself showed them, and the blessings that they would offer to all the peoples of the world. The promises given to Abraham include some benedictions to all the peoples of the world. The redemption of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt marked the God's choice of a people who must spread the restoration of the relationship between God and all humanity, including a means of living in community which was pleasing to God and safeguarded respect and love one for another.

But God reserved special privileges for his people so that they could serve him in a manner to bless the world as he wanted. The appeal that Moses used for the pharaoh, for example, was that the Hebrews were the people of God, and that they were required to worship him; and that they worship him outside Egypt: men, women, children and all the animals necessary to complete the service that God desired. Even before Moses returned to Egypt, God had given him the words to say to the pharaoh: "Israel is my son, my firstborn. So I say to you, let my son go that

he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn” (Exodus 4:22-23). Egypt was the first country that could have benefited from the people of God, but the pharaoh refused that blessing, against the interest of his own people.

Other people would receive blessings through their contact with Israel in the Promised Land. For most of its history though Israel rebelled against God instead of living according to covenant and in God’s likeness. Other people, instead of receiving benedictions, mocked God and his people. It was only after the Old Testament period that the people of God scattered to North Africa, Persia, Greece and Rome to bless all these people through their teaching and a morality that was more pragmatic and wise than any other. Since the men of Israel were a people of the book, knowing how to read and write, they served in positions of responsibility everywhere these skills were needed. The transformation that the exile created in the life of the Israelites stayed with them elsewhere in the world. Many people saw in the lives and message of the Jews a hope for humanity and they began to participate in the Jewish religion in the synagogues around the world. So when the Christians came with a message which proclaimed that the Messiah had come (See the next lesson), and that because of him, God accepted Gentiles as well as Jews, Christianity quickly became a universal religion.

*End of the presentation*

*Activity 2: Respond to the questions that accompany the presentation.*

1. What purpose do the Old Testament stories serve in relation to the character of God? *To show the character of God by his actions*
2. What are the three principal characteristics of God?
  - a. *sovereign*
  - b. *one and only God*
  - c. *interest in human beings*
3. How does God react to the sins of humans? *With grace*
4. What is the basic character of sin? *That a person takes the place of God in his/her own life*
5. In which historical period, did the Jews most bless the other people of the world? *After the exile and before the arrival of Christianity*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ***Second presentation***

### **"Some special themes"**

For the remainder of this lesson, we will treat only two principal themes: faith and hope for a Messiah.

#### The requirements of faith

In order for God to have a particular people to himself, it was necessary to teach them how to live by faith. In the biblical languages, there is a strong tie between the idea of "faith", "faithful" and "trust". Faith means much more than to have an intellectual agreement about certain concepts. Faith finds its meaning in trust and in actions. Trust has two meanings; that the faithful trust in God and God has trust in the faithful. One of the clearest illustrations of the second case is that of Job, where God tells Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (Job 1:8)

Since God acts, for example, in a way to make Abraham a blessing for all nations, he had to transform Abraham into a man of faith. God used a much time as was needed to accomplish that. To learn faith, Abraham had to act only on the word of God. Several times, he acted against it or in a manner acceptable in his culture, but not acceptable according to God's plan. He took another woman to fulfill the promise of having a son (Gen. 16), since Sarah had not yet given him one. To save his life he lied to Pharaoh (Gen. 20) concerning his relationship with Sarah. Both acts were acceptable culturally. The word of God to Abraham remained valid, even after these actions which showed a lack of faith. God is always Abraham's friend, and they worked together to develop his faith. He learned to intercede for his nephew; he offered his son of the promise as a sacrifice to God for, of course, Isaac would be restored to him; he found a wife for Isaac from his own people.

It is the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which serves as a title when God gave Moses and name to proclaim to the Hebrews: the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The same God who asked for faithfulness from their ancestors and who was also faithful to them would ask for the same faithfulness from Moses and the people of Israel. This idea is found throughout the Old Testament, but concentrated in the period of the kings and prophets, where God asked for a clear faithfulness and obedience on the part of the kings. The story of Saul, for example, shows the reaction of God to Saul's disobedience. It is true that God did not react in the same manner for all the kings that were unfaithful to him. In addition, we see that the nation was divided into two parts as a result of Solomon's disobedience. The king represented all the people of God; the faith and the faithfulness were required of him.

The faithfulness of God was best expressed by his presence at the temple where his people gathered to stay in his presence. His presence was also shown by his power

to deliver his people from their enemies. But, the God's deliverance of them depended also on their faithfulness. The songs of the Bible represent therefore the call of God to his people to maintain their faithfulness and obedience to him, as well as the call of God's people asking for him to show his faithfulness to them. The Psalms of the "lamentation" type express in a strong manner this last idea. The singer finds himself in a situation that requires a response on the part of God and asks the question where he is or how long will wait before acting. Nevertheless the same psalm always ends with a declaration of faith and faithfulness to God despite the wait and the situation.

The books of wisdom add their point of view concerning the faithfulness of the people of God to him. Biblical wisdom is much more important than some slogans for how to live a better life, or the results of observation. It embodies the declarations of how to live well in community to how to earn a living legally and honestly, the solid business of consecration and a real engagement with God, the understanding and the respect of good and evil, and the risks of a life lived outside the current directives for his people whether on a personal or community level.

Soon we will introduce the idea of sacrifices. We will speak more in depth in the next lesson, but the sacrifices were only some exercises in faithfulness of his people to God. The annual sacrifice of expiation covered the sins committed in error or ignorance, the way to maintain the faithful relationship with God despite such sins, It did not cover the sins committed on purpose. Those sins totally broke the relationship with God. Only God's grace in response to a true repentance can restore the relationship. The other sacrifices express the worship of the people to God, acts of faithfulness and faith in his promises.

Finally, the exile emphasized all the facets of the necessity of the faithfulness of the people of God as well as the faithfulness of God to his own character and to his people. Since the beginning of the restoration, the official Judaism did everything to never lose their position as the people of God, and all that was necessary to keep that faithfulness to God through rites, and daily and weekly observances. The Pharisees have taken on themselves this particular ministry of maintaining this faithfulness to God and to do it, if necessary, as representatives of all the people in spite of the others who did not want to commit themselves in a serious manner. Jesus did not criticize the Pharisees for their lack of faithfulness, not at all. If we read the gospels well, Jesus had a great respect for them. He criticized them more because of their egoism on one side and their lack of love on the other; meaning that even if the Pharisees call themselves the representatives of the people, Jesus did not see them as representing the character of God, especially not his grace and compassion. Several among them it seems had a misconception of God: hard, demanding concerning the rites, impatient and even racist. Jesus tried to show them a true conception of God. It remained for the disciples of Jesus to resemble Jesus and the Father.

## The hope of a Messiah

The word "Messiah" comes from the past participle of the Hebrew for "anoint". Messiah indicates someone who was particularly anointed to the service of God. Only three groups of people benefited from this ritual: the kings, the priests and the prophets. The idea of a messiah was more tied to the king than to God's other ministers. Nevertheless, some people in the period before the birth of Jesus looked for a priest messiah. The letter to the Hebrews touches this side of the hope. There are some texts in the Old Testament which speak of God's Anointed, but the hope of a "one and only" Messiah who would restore the throne of David was developed during the period between the testaments. Three biblical passages form the basis for this hope, and these passages were interpreted in an eschatological manner, meaning as a final act of God of give his people a place superior to all other nations.

**Genesis 49:10.** Here one sees the benediction of Jacob to his sons particularly that given to Judah where it is clear that eventually royalty would come to the tribe of Judah. David, being the first son of Judah to benefit from this benediction, received the covenant with God through the prophet Nathan. Since then and especially after the exile, the hopes of Israel included the reestablishment of the kingdom of David. The translations in Aramaic during the restoration of Israel, and the translation in Greek, the Septuagint, even later present Messianic interpretations of this verse.

**Numbers 24:17.** Here the original text says, "a star comes out of Jacob" in parallel with "a scepter rises from Israel." Because of the parallelism created by the poetry in this verse, we see that the two lines speak of a king, but only that king could be God, understanding that God is the only king in Israel. The translation in Aramaic says: "a king will rise from Jacob who will be anointed the Messiah in Israel" was interpreted as a universal king. The appearance of a star at the beginning of Matthew's gospel is well tied to the importance of this verse, as is the genealogy which declares Jesus as a son of Judah (and of David). In the time of Herod, someone who arrived in Jerusalem asking for the son born under the sign of the star caused excitement everywhere and incited enormous fear of the reaction that Herod would launch. In fact, Herod commanded the death of each male baby less than two years old. The last claimant of the title Jewish messiah was surnamed "bar kokhve" which means "son of the star". In 135 C.E., bar kokhva started a rebellion against Rome. His total failure resulted in the final and lasting expulsion of the Jews from the Promised Land during the remainder of the period of the Roman Empire.

**Isaiah 11:1-10.** This passage speaks of a "branch from the trunk of Jesse", another way to speak of the covenant with David, the son of Jesse. The passage ends by the nations turning towards him. The period of the restoration began with a hope of the restoration of the throne of David with the selection of Zerubbabel as leader. But this hope proved to be misplaced, and it was necessary to look for another son of Jesse as king. During the following centuries, the priests and the scribes seemed to have kept this hope alive. The Septuagint transforms verse 10 so that it reads "who will rise to reign over the nations". Other Jewish commentators of the period between the testaments spoke of the Messiah of Israel.

The original texts of the Bible speaks of the installation of/ or the restoration of the Kingdom of David, son of Judah, son of Jesse. The hopes for a Messiah joined with other ideas of that restoration according to the desires and points of view of the interpreters. Especially during the period before the Maccabees under the Greek Empire and during the Roman occupation, this hope found people ready to engage in rebellions because of the suffering at the hands of strangers. Even during the period of independence, the fact that a family of priests created a new dynasty contrary to the verses we just cited above added to the hope of the restoration of the kingdom of David, son of Judah, son of Jesse.

***The expectation of a Messiah until the time of Christ's coming*** – There is not agreement concerning the hope of a Messiah at the time of Jesus. Many Jews no longer held that hope. Too much time had passed since the prophet Malachi for them to keep such a hope. The priests would not believe it because they benefited from agreements with the Romans. The purists believed deeply in a military Messiah, and many of them had formed monastic military groups in the desert of Judah to await his arrival. The Pharisees were a little divided. They believed, but the lifestyle with rites and rules which they taught allowed them to live as Jews in a cosmopolitan world without the need for a Messiah. Nevertheless, many among them had kept that teaching during biblical studies in the synagogues, where many faithful Jews cherished the idea. The Pharisees added from time to time some articles of the Jewish faith, including some declaration concerning the Messiah.

The principle idea of the Messiah was a king or other important political person who was going to institute a reign of universal peace. This reign must show the omnipotence of the God of Israel in the entire world. The healings and the multiplication of bread done by Jesus served in the eyes of the crowd as proof that that era was going to arrive soon. No one conceived of the Messiah as a strictly spiritual leader with goals concentrated on the freedom from sin and the powers of the devil in the lives of the faithful. Rare also were those who believed that the Messiah must suffer for the people and especially at the hands of foreigners. No one foresaw the church as a religious organization uniting the faithful from the Jewish and Gentile communities. Only the Christians from the first centuries insisted on these ideas under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and in profoundly remembering the teachings of Jesus himself. Some Jews believed that the Gentiles would convert *en masse* to become Jews. That is the reason the synagogues welcomed Gentiles to come and worship the God of Israel.

In 1997, some scholars found a text among the Dead Sea Scrolls which indicate that a small group of people read the prophecy of Isaiah 53 as a reference to the Messiah which must die for the sins of the people. They believed that a period of universal peace under the power of God would require a purification of the people. This belief was immediately a part of the gospel preached by the apostles and the preachers of the generation after them. According to the gospel of Mark, Jesus did not want the crowd to acclaim him as Messiah because the people had a misconception of who the Messiah was. It was the role of Jesus to teach the disciples the proper definition of the Messiah and how he fulfilled this definition. The

teaching of Jesus on this subject begins in Mark 8:31 where he speaks about the subject of his own death in Jerusalem.

*End of the presentation*

*Activity 3: Questions taken from the presentation*

1. What is the largest meaning of the idea of faith?
2. What relationship is there between God's promises to Abraham and faith?
3. What are the two sides of the idea of trust?
4. What roles did the Pharisees accept in relation to the faith?
5. What is the criticism that Jesus made against the Pharisees?
6. Where did the word "Messiah" come from?
7. What are the three verses/ passages that serve as the base for the teaching concerning the Messiah?
8. What did people at the time of the birth of Jesus think concerning the Messiah?
9. What gospel passage did the teacher cite as foundational concerning Jesus and his teaching about the Messiah?

*Activity 4: Compare Isaiah 53 to the image of Jesus in the gospels.*

Assignment --- Distribution of the questions by photocopy, or written on the board

Prepare yourself for the final exam. Permit the students to prepare by using the six questions found below. HOWEVER, the day of the exam, the teacher will choose only three. *It is important to not tell the students which questions will be chosen for the exam!*

The students at the diploma level will write an essay of at least 150 words for each question (but not more than 250). The students at the certificate level will respond orally to the teacher. Each question is worth 10 points, for a total of 30 points (30 percent of the final grade). A good grade will be given to the person who uses the most details in the answer.

**Possible Questions for the final exam**

1. In the first lesson, we considered the theme "a God who speaks." What is the importance of this idea in the religion of Israel? Where in the book of Genesis do we find some evidence of the power of such words? How does the idea of a God who speaks make a distinction between the faith of the people of Israel and the false

gods who surrounded Israel in that era? Finally, what is the tie that John makes in his gospel between Jesus and the speaking?

2. What is the Septuagint? Why was this translation done? What are the four major literary categories of the Old Testament found in this translation? Give the names of at least two books classed in each of these categories. Compare this system of classification with that of the Jewish Bible. What is the difference between the two?

3. In class, we made a chart of "Important People in the Old Testament." Choose four, then for each one, state the following details:

- Where in the Old Testament do we find the life story of that person?
- Why do you think this person was important?
- What were the weaknesses of this person? the strengths?
- What important lesson can Christians of our day draw from this person's story?

4. For Israel, the relationship between God and the people of Israel is summed up in a single phrase: "You will be my people and I will be your God." Explain the significance of that phrase as it appears in the story of Abraham. What is the idea of the "covenant"? In the light of the whole Old Testament, was God faithful to his covenant? Were the people of God faithful to it? In both cases, cite stories to support your position. Don't forget to cite precise biblical references.

5. Between the testaments, the idea of a "Messiah" was developed. What is it? What passages of the Old Testament were interpreted as being a reference to the Messiah? If you must one day convince a Jew that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, which passages would be the most convincing? Why?

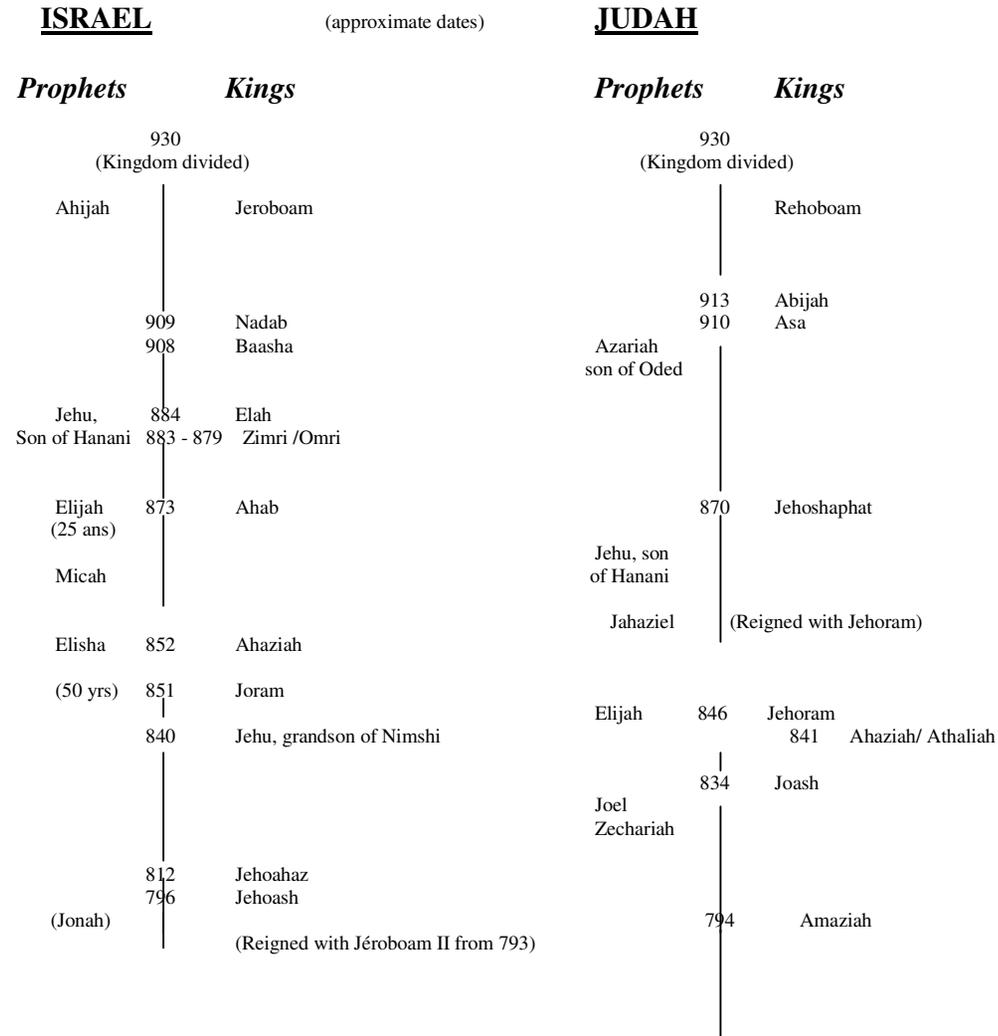
6. The Old Testament speaks of things that are "pure" and "impure". What is meant by these expressions? What is the relationship between the two terms and sanctification? The author of the course (Rev. Chanshi CHANDA) says that purity was "passive" but impurity was "active". What did he mean by that? How did Jesus turn the traditional position upside down in this sense? Give a concrete example of what he did. As usual, cite biblical references to support your ideas.

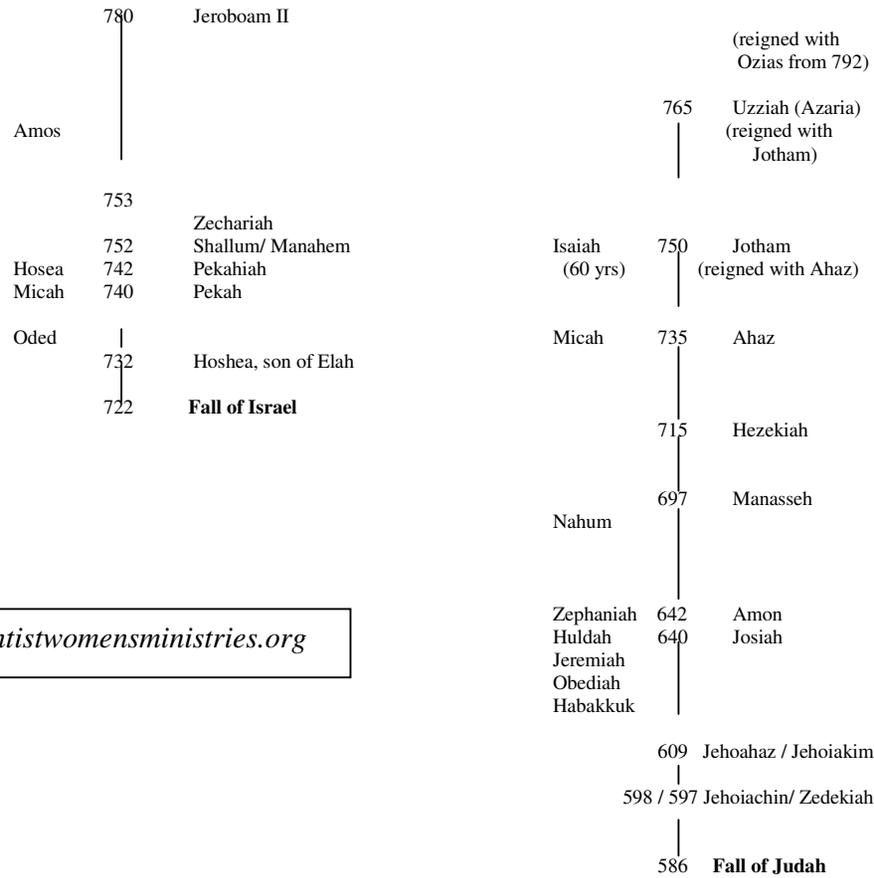
***The use of Bibles is permitted during the exam, but all notebooks are strictly forbidden.***

### CHART 1: Important People in the Old Testament

| Important People of the Old Testament |            |            |                 |            |                         |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Name                                  | O.T. texts | Importance | Important tests | N.T. texts | Importance in the N. T. |
| Abraham                               |            |            |                 |            |                         |
| Moses                                 |            |            |                 |            |                         |
| Samuel                                |            |            |                 |            |                         |
| David                                 |            |            |                 |            |                         |
| Elijah                                |            |            |                 |            |                         |
| Ahab et Jezabel                       |            |            |                 |            |                         |
| Isaiah                                |            |            |                 |            |                         |
| Jeremiah                              |            |            |                 |            |                         |
| Ezra                                  |            |            |                 |            |                         |
| Nehemiah                              |            |            |                 |            |                         |

## CHART 2: Kings and Prophets of the Divided Kingdoms





Source : [adventistwomensministries.org](http://adventistwomensministries.org)

Calculation of grades DIPLOMA  
LB 101 – Introduction to the Old Testament

Center name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dates of course: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

| <u>Student's name</u> | <u>Chart/ People</u><br>(out of 10) | <u>Chart – Books of the O.T.</u><br>( out of 10) | <u>Worship</u><br>(out of 5) | <u>Outline (sermon)</u><br>(out of 10) | <u>Verses</u><br>(out of 15) | <u>World view</u><br>(out of 10) | <u>Readings</u><br>(out of 10) | <u>Exam</u> * Grade (COURSE)<br>(out of 30) |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.

\* The presence of an asterisk (\*) beside the final grade indicates a reduction of 25% because of excess absences.

Calculation of grades: CERTIFICATE  
LB 101 – Introduction to the Old Testament

Name of Center: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Course: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

| <u>Student's name</u> | <u>Chart of People</u><br>(out of 10) | <u>Worship</u><br>(out of 20) | <u>Outline (sermon)</u><br>(out of 10) | <u>Verses</u><br>(out of 20) | <u>Readings</u><br>(out of 10) | <u>Exam</u><br>(out of 30) | * Grade (COURSE) |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1.                    |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 2.                    |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 3.                    |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 4.                    |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 5.                    |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 6.                    |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 7.                    |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 8.                    |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 9.                    |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 10.                   |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 11.                   |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 12.                   |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |
| 13.                   |                                       |                               |                                        |                              |                                |                            |                  |

\* The presence of an asterisk (\*) beside the final grade indicates a reduction of 25% because of excess absences.

**Grade Sheet  
(Diploma)**

**Course:**  
**Center:**  
**Teacher:**

**Student's name:**

**Grades:** Assignments

Grades out of a possible 100

|       |                                       |      |
|-------|---------------------------------------|------|
| 1     | Important People of the Old Testament | /10  |
| 2     | Chart of Old Testament books          | /10  |
| 3     | Worship service                       | /5   |
| 4     | Sermon outline                        | /10  |
| 5     | Verses to memorize                    | /15  |
| 6     | Worldviews                            | /10  |
| 7     | Reading assignments                   | /10  |
| 8     | Final exam                            | /30  |
| <hr/> |                                       |      |
|       | <i>Sub TOTAL</i>                      | /100 |

Reduction for poor attendance

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Grade Sheet  
(Certificate)**

**Course:**  
**Center:**  
**Leader:**

**Student's name:**

**Grades:** Assignments                      Grade    of a possible 100

|   |                                       |     |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----|
| 1 | Important People of the Old Testament | /10 |
| 2 | Worship service                       | /20 |
| 3 | Sermon outline                        | /10 |
| 4 | Verses to memorize                    | /20 |
| 5 | Reading assignments                   | /10 |
| 6 | Final exam                            | /30 |

---

*Sub TOTAL*                                              /100

Reduction for poor attendance

TOTAL --

**Signature:**

**Date:**