

A GEO-HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

CREATION TO ABRAHAM

This study is designed as a quick introduction to the geography and history mentioned in the Bible. Since it is designed for four one hour sessions that will hopefully be interesting, I will concentrate on what I think are the highlights, and this can thus be used as a springboard for your own studies.

1. A natural place to start is the Garden of Eden. Read Genesis 2:8-17, 3:22-24. To place Eden we must link up all the clues and make (at least) one big assumption. Where did God plant the garden? East of what? What are the rivers? The Pishon (to cascade) and the Gihon (to bubble/gush) are unknown. What about the minerals? Is onyx our modern stone with that name? How about the presence of gold? Well what about the lands mentioned? Read Genesis 10:7,29. Why did God put a guard on the garden, and what might this say about human settlement? Assuming we could find a spot fitting this today, what is the big assumption?
2. What about the flood? Read Genesis 4:16-24. What does this tell us of the pre-flood world? So what might we expect to find in archeology? Ur, Kish, Fara, and Nineveh all show a massive (6-8 feet of clean water-laid clay between earliest settlements and latter ones. Most Bible scholars date the flood happening sometime between 3000 BC and 2400 BC, with most views around 2400 BC. Now since the Bible clearly states in Genesis 10,11 that all races came from those on the ark, what would you expect to see in the history and legends of all kinds of people? The following groups have similar traditions with regard to the flood: Egyptians, Greek, Hindu, Chinese, Druids, Polynesians, Mexicans, Peruvians, American Indians, Greenland, etc.
3. What happened after the flood? Read Genesis 10:8-12. What is described here? Look at the map and identify the two famous empires that come from this. It is interesting to note that both Assyria and Babylon look to Nimrod as their founder. Why would they mention that he was a great hunter? How does this relate to Genesis 11:1-9? Why was God upset with what they did? Read Genesis 9:1-7. Now read Genesis 6:9-13. What was the tower they were building?
4. Where was Abram from? Why did he move from Ur to Haran? Read Genesis 11:27-32. Why did he continue to Canaan? Read Genesis 12:1-9. For time considerations I will skip Abram's time in Egypt and the separation with Lot, but I want to pick up an important theme. In the beginning of Chapter 14 we have a description of some vassal kings rebelling, and Lot getting caught up in it. Abram comes to his rescue and defeats the kings (one of whom is regarded to be Hammurabi). Read Genesis 14:18-24 and see what Hebrews 7 says about it? Where was Salem? As a final link to this, what happens in Genesis 22? Where was the sacrifice to take place? What is so special about it? What happens? What is the connection in the New Testament?

A GEO-HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

PATRIARCHS TO EGYPT

1. Many interesting stories abound around the patriarchs, but we will concentrate on those that center on geography. Read Genesis 24:1-11, 27:41-28:9. What is the basic idea of both passages? How is this carried into the Old Covenant? Read Ezra 9:1-2. Does this carry into the New Covenant? Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. What is the big deal? To get back to the original passages, where is Paddan Aram? Why does Genesis 27:46 call the women of the land Hittites, while Genesis 28:1 calls them Canaanites? Where are the Hittites from? Where is Canaan? Why the connection then?
2. What happens in Genesis 28:10-22? Bethel is a major site in the Bible, Abraham camps there in Genesis 12:8 and builds an altar to the Lord, it is one of the cities on Samuel's circuit as judge in 1 Samuel 7:16, but most importantly it is the site of one of Israel's greatest sins. Read 1 Kings 12:25-33
3. What happens in Genesis 37:12-36? Where are the merchants from and what do they sell? Read Jeremiah 8:18-22. What happens in Genesis 39? What was Potiphar's job? Why could he not manage his own house, but needed another to do it? Where does Joseph end up? What is significant here? What happens in Genesis 40? What was the cupbearer's duty? How is Joseph rewarded by men? How does God reward him in Genesis 41? Who sent Joseph to Egypt and why? Read Genesis 45:3-8. Did Joseph know the big picture while he was suffering? Why did he have to go to prison, why not just use the connection by Potiphar? Where did the Israelites settle in Egypt? Reference Genesis 47:1-4.
4. What happens in Genesis 48-49? What is significant about Genesis 48:17-20? Read Hosea 5:1-7. What is significant here? How about what is said in Genesis 49:8-12? To which brother is the kingly line traced?

A GEO-HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

EXODUS

1. Probably one of the most contested areas of the Bible is the date of the Exodus. The dating breaks into two camps: the conservative camp dating the Exodus in 1446 BC, and the liberal camp dating Exodus in 1285 BC (original date 1230 BC). Lets look at the reasons and evidence:
2. **Liberal case.**
 - a) Merneptah Steele is the first record of the actual name Israel, and some Egyptian pharaoh's reverse the events to make themselves look better so, the reference to Israel's seed is not, could be a reference to the death of the Egyptian first born.
 - b) Rameses II claims he built Raamses and Pithom (Exodus 1:11), and in Raamses he claims he "built Raamses with Asiatic Semitic slaves." A reference to the Hebrews. Additionally thick walls with his stamp appears on the bricks.
 - c) The first born of Rameses II died before he took the throne.
3. **Conservative case.**
 - a) Read 1 Kings 6:1. Solomon started his reign in 970 BC, thus this passage dates the Exodus as 1446 BC. This is enough for me, but more proof is available.
 - b) Read Judges 11:26. Heshbon was taken by the Israelites in Numbers 21:25-26 about 40 years after the Exodus, and Jephthah was about 140 years before the Temple was built, thus also giving 480 years from the Exodus to the Temple.
 - c) Given these timelines, it is interesting to note that Joseph would have come into power as the Hyksos took over Egypt. The Hyksos were overthrown in 1570 BC thus a pharaoh who did not know Joseph came into power. This would be Thutmose I, who would have a vested interest in weakening the Israelites since they were of the same ethnic origin as the Hyksos, and associated with their rise to power.
 - d) The pharaoh of the Exodus is thus Amenhotep II, the pharaoh of the oppression his predecessor Thutmose III, and Queen Hatshepsut as the one who drew Moses from the river. In the Amarna Letters, Amenhotep III and IV are sent requests for help against the "Habiri" who are conquering the land of Canaan. Queen Hatshepsut was the first great queen of history and she kept her younger brothers under her thumb until her death. Thutmose III embarked in major expansion and domination after his half-sister's death. Since Moses was most likely a favorite of Hatshepsut, who had no children (thus the desire to draw Moses out of the river and call him her own), he would be unwelcome and without connections when he stood against the oppression of the Hebrews.
 - e) Amenhotep II first born also died before he took the throne.
 - f) Thutmose III conquered Canaan, and gained a huge number of chariots, which were relatively uncommon in ancient Egypt, and explaining how pharaoh had so many chariots.
 - g) Archaeological evidence shows Jericho fell just before 1400 BC, which is in perfect alignment of 1406 given in this view.
 - h) Merneptah, a liberal choice for the pharaoh of the Exodus, recorded on the Merneptah Steele, invading the land of Canaan and making Israel a widow. Since Merneptah only ruled 10 years and the tablet was written in his 5th year, he could hardly be the pharaoh of the Exodus. Additionally Israel is pictured as established in the text, thus making Rameses II unlikely as this invasion would have happened under the rule of Joshua, and no such indication is given in the Bible.
 - i) Rameses II is a well known plagiarist, for he removed the name of many predecessors and put his name in their place, taking credit for accomplishments he did not do. Likely

A GEO-HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

the bricks in Raamses are from repairs he did with Hebrew slaves taken during the time of the Judges. Note that Genesis 47:11 refers to the land of Rameses, which is a reference to the region around the city Raamses (note both Hebrew and Hieroglyphics have no vowels) indicating the city to have much more ancient roots.

4. What was the reason for the specific plagues? What does the Passover picture? Why Exodus 12:6-7? Does it relate to Deuteronomy 6:6-9? Why Exodus 14:1-4?

A GEO-HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

WILDERNESS

1. Read Deuteronomy 3:21-29. Why was Moses not allowed to enter the land? Read Numbers 20:1-13. Does this seem fair? What did God see in Moses actions? Did Moses ever enter the Promised Land? Read Matthew 17:1-13.
2. Read Numbers 21:4-9. What is going on here? Read John 3:11-15. What is a snake often symbolic of? Read Genesis 3:1-7. Is this saying Jesus was sinful? Read Galatians 3:10-18. So how was the bronze serpent symbolic of Christ? What happened to it? Read 2 Kings 18:1-8. If the bronze serpent represented Christ why did it need to be destroyed?

A GEO-HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

CONQUEST

1. We will be looking at Joshua 10, but let's start with a brief review of the beginning of the book of Joshua. The beginning of the book describes the Israelites crossing the Jordan, the taking of Jericho and Ai, and the treaty with Gibeon. Already the Israelites have seen the power of the Lord in their lives and the problems they can have if they do not diligently follow the Lord in everything. In particular they did not seek the Lord when making the treaty with the Gibeonites, and thus were tricked into breaking a commandment of the Lord for the conquest. Chapter 10 starts with the consequences of this, namely a coalition of local kings drawing them into battle...
2. Read Joshua 10:1-6. What is the state of the Amorites? Why do they band together and who do they attack? How do the Israelites get pulled in this? If you agree to something, are you obligated to carry through? Read Leviticus 19:11-12, Numbers 30:1-2, Matthew 5:33-37. What should Joshua do? Read Joshua 10:7-15. Did God support this action? What would it have meant for the Israelites to casually discard their word?
3. Read Joshua 10:28-43. What is going on here? What city don't they take? Why didn't they? Read 2 Samuel 5:6-16. Consult the map of the southern conquest. What was the geography of the land? Did they take the plains? Read Joshua 13:1-7. The people in the land requested help from Egypt, as we have found out in the El-Armana letters. Why was Egypt not concerned enough to help? Why did the people not take the whole land? Read Joshua 14:6-15. What was Caleb's attitude? Did he succeed? Read Joshua 15:13-19. Why did he control his inheritance?
4. How can we summarize the book? Read Joshua 24:14-28. Does this describe the message of the Old Testament? How does it relate to the New Testament?