

THE SOJOURNS OF ANCIENT ISRAEL: AN OLD TESTAMENT JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY (I)

Defining: Vocabulary words taken from each Travelogue reading are listed with space provided for students to define them. These terms are provided to build vocabulary, spelling, and alphabetizing skills. The last two italicized terms in each list are considered enrichment words.

Discussing: The organizing principle of these statements is to scaffold learning by providing the kind of instructional support that fosters interaction with important ideas contained in the readings and encourages student evaluation of these ideas in light of knowledge and experience. The statements are generally associated with the three general cognitive levels: information (understanding facts and definitions), knowledge (comprehending experiences and concepts), and judgments (evaluating ideas and actions).

Wellbeing: Suggested projects and activities related to various disciplines are derived from the Travelogue. Student responses may be orally presented following adequate preparation time or included in the student journal when written responses and illustrations are appropriate.

Connecting: Articles from National Geographic Society Magazine and other NGS publications associated with the daily Sourcebook selections is offered for further student and teacher inquiry.

SidetrIPPING: Information on historic sites, museums, festivals, and other special events and places in the vicinity of Travelogue locations is offered for further investigation through study of reference works or internet searches.

Travelogue Readings—Bible readings follow a chronological sequence from Genesis to Deuteronomy and are correlated to the itineraries of major Old Testament figures as shown on the “Sojourns of Ancient Israel Travelogue Map.” Map insets for each lesson show the geographic setting for each reading. All Travelogue Bible readings are from the English Standard Version of the Bible (Crossway Books, 2001). Sidebar annotations offer definitions of key words and explanations of obscure or technical textual references. Brief commentary selections are taken from Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, and Alfred Edersheim, *The Bible History from Creation to Exodus*. Henry’s commentaries are known for insights provided on matters related to history, literature, and science; while Edersheim presents a thorough understanding of Jewish culture. Blackline illustrations may be colored by students and depict persons, events, and objects mentioned in the readings.

Resource Pages—The last page of each four-page lesson series contains further information and other instructional resources that relate to the time and areas described in the daily Travelogue readings. These “resource pages” follow a sequence involving *Journey Update* mapping activities, *Ancient Civilization* profiles, *Literature* readings, and *Problem-solving* exercises. The literature selections are psalms from the New King James Version (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979) that are correlated to the Travelogue readings. These ancient civilization resource pages present information in a content area sequence of paragraphs related to geography, social studies, literature, science and mathematics, and fine arts.

Leading Questions of Discovery for Student Journalizing

A fundamental aspect of interdisciplinary learning involves the search for significant unifying conceptual themes. The themes, once established, become a rallying point of the curriculum, the place to go to be sure in searching for further meaning from the readings. Themes provide a means for the social studies and language arts, mathematics and the natural sciences, the arts, and other disciplines to be at once different, showcasing their unique properties, while at the same time revealing a similarity of purpose.

The liberating sense of carefully chosen, content enriching themes is that it supports connected, interdisciplinary experiences, and it alleviates a superficial tyranny of integration for its own sake from taking over the curriculum. Moreover, as Rutherford and Ahigren write in *Science For All Americans*, “Schools do not need to be asked to teach more and more content, but to teach less in order to teach it better. By concentrating on fewer topics, teachers can introduce ideas gradually, in a variety of contexts, reinforcing and extending them as students mature. Students will

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end up with richer insights and deeper understandings than they could hope to gain from a superficial exposure to more topics than they can assimilate.”

Regular student journalizing in response to the Travelogue readings as an on-going academic endeavor is facilitated through the designation of eight broad conceptual themes that are central to discovery learning. These following themes and related “leading questions” can be objects of recurrent classroom discussion, presentation, and writing, whether considering Abraham’s travels, Joseph’s Egyptian captivity, or psalms of Moses.

Cause and Effect: What is this action and change in conditions?

Commonality and Diversity: How are these the same or different?

Systems and Patterns: How is this organized or arranged?

Scale and Symmetry: What is the size and shape?

Cycles and Change: Is this effect repeated over time?

Interaction and Relationships: How do these relate to each other?

Time and Space: When and where did this happen?

Equilibrium and Order: Is there stability to this arrangement?

Thematic, interdisciplinary studies are at the heart of the Journeys of Discovery curriculum. To these a vibrant human dimension is added through the dramatic stories from the Bible that are fundamental elements of our cultural heritage. These timeless models of inquiry can serve as dynamic instructional opportunities as students seek to grow spiritually and intellectually and explore issues influencing their future wellbeing.