

History for the thoughtful child... ...from Greenleaf Press

Real History! The stories of real people for students in the elementary grades.

In the Bible God uses the stories of the Patriarchs, Judges, Prophets, and Kings to teach us a number of important truths. For this reason, above all others, we believe that the history of Israel ought to be the first history taught to every child. The Old Testament history of Israel is the model of how history ought to be done.

The 180 readings in this study are designed to be done orally. They can be used with students as young as first grade (though you may have to break the Scripture reading into smaller segments). They can also be used as a daily family devotional with students through grade twelve. And some innovative teachers have used them in Sunday school classrooms and/or with new Christians to give them an introduction to the history of God's people.

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GREENLEAF GUIDE TO OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

SHEARER



The Greenleaf Guide to OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

History for the thoughtful child

Rob & Cyndy Shearer

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Revised

The 1st thru 11th editions had 196 lessons. This edition has been edited and some lessons have been combined in order to fit the standard 180 day school year.

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For more information about:

Alexander the Great
 Antiochus Epiphanes, and the Maccabees
 Herod the Great

I refer readers to ***Josephus, The Essential Writings***, by Paul L. Maier. Josephus is a skilled writer and his work provides fascinating coverage of the history of Israel during the time between Old & New Testaments.

Introduction

This book was written to guide parents in introducing the history of Israel to their children. It is our conviction that children should be acquainted with the Bible as early as is practical. We are convinced that the stories from the Old Testament are given to us to teach us and our children important lessons about godliness and wisdom.

Whenever we have talked about teaching history to children, we have encouraged families to make the history of Israel, the Old Testament, their children's first history. It has not mattered where we are — we can always count on seeing one of three reactions from our listeners. Some look at us as if we are crazy: "What else **would** you start with, we've been doing that all along." Some look at us as if we are crazy: "Sure, we'd like to teach the Bible to our children, but surely you don't mean **young** children. It's too hard!" And the rest look at us as if we are crazy. In fact, this group often tells us we are crazy. They say "You don't expect me to teach the Old Testament to **children** — I can't even understand the Old Testament."

As a people, we do not really know the Scriptures very well. And we have forgotten that God has commanded, not merely suggested, that we pass on these things (these Old Testament stories) to our children. Sometimes we are overwhelmed, paralyzed by a realization of our own shortcomings. So very often, we honestly do not know where to start. And sadly, with few exceptions, our churches are not helping us very much.

As we have read through the story of Israel again this time, we have been most struck by something we already knew — but have seen again. We have been painfully reminded of the fact that we truly are always only one generation away from a return to paganism. This is true and demonstrated all the way through the history of Israel, the history of the Church, and is in evidence in our own churches (and I mean the good, solid, doctrinally-correct churches that most of us seek out). We are not immune.

The pattern runs something like this: Parents are blessed by God and set about to enjoy the blessings. Children remember that their parents were blessed by God and continue to enjoy the blessings. Grandchildren enjoy the blessings and forget their source. And all of a sudden we have a generation who know neither Joseph or his God. God becomes for them some small part of their cultural identity — something like the state bird or flower. They know there is one, but its existence really doesn't trouble them very much.

This pattern is played out over and over again throughout the history of Israel. A history of a people who, for the most part, keep forgetting who their God is and what He has done for them. Our deepest fear and sadness is that the same pattern is being played out again within the believing Church today. If we do not pass on to our children our own love for and delight in the Word of God; if we allow the Sunday School or youth group to become the primary source of Biblical instruction; if in our home instruction, we make the Word of God a slave to workbook pages and fill in the blank lessons, we will lose our children. Our believing churches (for all their doctrinal soundness) are producing a generation of children who, for all their head knowledge, have no heart for God.

However, we do not believe that such an outcome is inevitable. The good news is that we can as adults, fall in love with the Word of God. We can infect our children with a love for

the Word if we will just let the Bible speak for itself. Tell its stories as if they are real, living stories. Read them with the same loving expression that we use when we read our favorite family read-alouds. We should be able to laugh just a little as the angel announces to a cowering Gideon, “Hail, mighty man of valor!” We should cheer David on as he confronts Goliath in the name of the Living God. We should feel the sadness that David feels as he realizes that his best friend, Jonathan, is dead. And we should rejoice with God’s people in Susa as God delivers them from the hand of wicked Haman.

If we find delight in the Word, for the most part, our children will follow. If we approach it with fear and uncertainty, we can be sure our children will follow our lead here, too. With the psalmist we need to call our children to join us, to “Taste and see that the Lord is Good!”

And that’s the basic purpose behind this book. It is intended to be a guide to help you, as parents, to organize your study of the Old Testament with your children.

This book is not a commentary. It will not answer all your questions about the Old Testament. We have concentrated on the historical narratives, telling where the laws and the prophets fit into the history, but we concentrate on the historical books themselves. This is a source book for a basic historical overview. Once you have given your children the big picture, you will want to continue through the Gospels and Acts. And then, once they grasp the stories and the major themes, you will want to show them how to camp out in the Scriptures — learn how to inductively study the Word for themselves. We strongly recommend that your Bible instruction go far beyond the scope of this guide. We hope that the study you begin with your children here will only be the beginning of a lifelong passion for the Word of God that will produce a generation of believers like those described by Daniel 11.32 — a people who know their God, are strong and do great things.

How to Use this Book

The readings from the Bible outlined here are selected for the purpose of studying the history of Israel. The focus is on history — not theology. The audience intended are children — not adults. The focus is always on one or two central characters. Repeatedly, we will ask, “What actions are worthy of imitation?” “What actions should we avoid?” “What is God’s judgment on this life?”

The focus is on understanding God’s providential action and intervention through history, guiding the destiny of the children of Israel. Like the Famous Men series (with titles on Egypt, Greece, Rome, Middle Ages, Renaissance & Reformation) which follows it, this history unit is built around a series of biographies. We have not attempted to write a Famous Men of the Old Testament book, since one already exists, and we don’t presume to suppose that we could improve upon it (the Bible!).

The 196 readings are intended to be used, one each day throughout the school year. Yes, we know that’s a few more readings than most people have school days. Be creative. You could do more than one reading on some days, or you could continue the study into the summer or the next school year. We really tried to fit Old Testament History into 180 readings, but we just couldn’t do it and we couldn’t bear to leave anything out.

The readings are designed to give the student (and parent/teacher) an overview of the history of Israel and an introduction to the key figures whose lives God uses to teach us about Himself and His character. These stories are intended for children in the elementary grades, and should be accessible, even to children in kindergarten or first grade. (Actually, anyone of any age wanting to get an overview of Old Testament history might find this book to be helpful.) If this seems surprising, the reader is reminded that God’s plan for families is for fathers to teach these stories to their children. When God decrees in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 that “you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up,” he is not referring to math facts and grammar rules. God’s textbook for children are the stories from the Old Testament. He is specifically referring here to the story of the Exodus from Egypt, but by implication he means the entire Old Testament. The Old Testament is God’s textbook for children. It is the only textbook, quite probably, which Jesus used during his education in the house of his parents (and perhaps with a rabbi in Nazareth).

For each reading, we recommend the following outline:

Pray

Review

Read-aloud

Narrate

Discuss

Pray

As a teaching technique, we heartily commend to you a practice described as narration by Charlotte Mason (for more about her educational philosophies, see **For the Children's Sake** by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay and **The Original Home Education Series** by Charlotte Mason). Narration is a simple technique in which the child reads or listens to a story and then is asked to tell the story back in his own words. This exercise is difficult at first, but over time (actually a short time) the child will learn to focus his attention and remember significant details so that he can retell what he has learned. It is important not to do too much prompting or correcting and not to offer the child a second reading too readily. Begin with short passages (a paragraph or two) and before long, your child will be able to recount passages of 3-4 pages (about 5-10 minutes worth of out-loud reading).

After giving his own narration back to you (this is your check to make sure he has comprehended the passage), use the discussion questions as a guide to help focus on significant events, ideas, and lessons in each passage.

After you have read the passage out loud, have your students tell the story back to you. If you have more than one student, then have them alternate telling the story as you call on them. This will keep the attention of those who are NOT at the moment narrating from wandering.

From the start, train your students to listen for answers to the basic questions that begin with the words who, what, when, where, why, and how. This simple habit is a foundational study skill (for any study) and is especially important for inductive Bible study.

Teaching Aids

Maps, coloring books, flannel graphs, puzzles, story tapes, animated video versions all have their place (though with regard to audios and videos - be scrupulously fanatical about accuracy). Any or all of these may prove helpful with your child. None of these will catch their interest and work ALL of the time. If you notice their eyes glazing over, stop. Don't push them too hard. This is supposed to be fun.

Dates

The dates we have used are those generally agreed upon by conservative scholars. If you have a King James Bible with Bishop Ussher's dates (an Irish Bishop who worked out a system of dates for the Old Testament in the 19th century), then you will find substantial agreement. Other conservative scholars may vary somewhat. For the later time periods of the Old Testament, there is little controversy. The regnal dates of Saul, David, and Solomon are confirmed by records from other contemporary cultures that mention them. The further back in time you go from Saul however, the greater the divergence of opinion. The largest area of controversy concerns the dating of the Exodus.

In the 19th century, critical (read that skeptical and quite often heretical) scholars began to express doubts about the traditional dating of the Exodus. They argued, for example, that Moses could not have developed the law and his monotheistic emphasis as early as had been supposed. He must, they argued, have picked these ideas up from later developments in Egyptian history. In particular, the critics argued that Moses drew heavily on Ahkmaton, the monotheistic pharaoh whose reign was from 1361 B.C. to 1344 B.C.

But the skeptics' arguments beg the question. They assume Moses' ideas were derived from Egyptian culture, therefore they move his dates to a much later period, then they point to the earlier Egyptian ideas as their "proof" that Moses "borrowed" his best ideas. It is all a fairly transparent and calculated attempt to cast doubt on the authority of the Bible.

But if God is who He claims He is, does it not make sense that His giving of the law would be a unique event, without immediate antecedents? And if Egypt was rocked by plagues and a military disaster during the Exodus, would it be unusual if that brought about a turning away from the traditional Egyptian gods and the rise of a group seeking the truth about one true God. Seen in this light, the reforms of Pharaoh Ahkmaton are a sign that the Exodus had a spiritual impact on Egypt.

An Outline of the History of Israel

Most of us know instinctively the major periods of American history:

Explorers-----	1400-1600
Pilgrims and Colonists -----	1604-1750
The American Revolution-----	1750-1787
The War of 1812-----	1812-1815
Sectionalism and Westward Expansion-----	1815-1860
The War Between the States -----	1861-1865
Reconstruction -----	1865-1900
World War 1 -----	1914-1921
The Great Depression-----	1929-1940
World War 2 -----	1941-1945

We should spend at least as much time learning the outline of **Israel's history**.

The Patriarchs-----	2200-1700 B.C.
Slavery in Egypt-----	1700-1450 B.C.
The Exodus-----	-1453 B.C.
Judges -----	1413-1020 B.C.
The United Kingdom -----	1051-931 B.C.
The Divided Kingdom (Israel & Judah) -----	931-586 B.C.
The Babylonian Exile -----	605-535 B.C.
The Return & Rebuilding -----	536-415 B.C.

On the preceding page is a graphical overview of the history of Israel from the tower of Babel through the exile and return. The history of Israel is shown along the top line (the descendants of Shem). The development of other, neighboring civilizations are shown in the lines of Ham, and Japheth

Lesson 1

God Creates

Genesis 1:1-2:3

Background: *The first three chapters of scripture contain rich lessons for all of us. For children, it is important to establish for them that God is the creator of the entire universe, and of everything, and everyone in it.*

1. When do the events of the passage happen?
2. Who acts in the passage? Note any pronouns. Are they singular or plural? What significance might this have?
3. You might want to make a chart with the words “Light, waters, earth, and dry land” and note what you learn about each.

Notice how the 6 days divides into two groups of threes. In the first 3 days, God creates three realms, the heavens, the expanse between the waters, and the dry land. In the second 3 days God populates each of the realms: stars in the heavens, fish and birds in the skies and the waters, and finally animals and man on the dry land.

Day 1: light and darkness

Day 2: division of the waters

Day 3: dry land, seas, vegetation

Day 4: stars, sun, & moon (for the heavens)

Day 5: fish and birds (for the seas and the skies)

Day 6: land animals, man (for the dry land)

4. What is God’s opinion of His creation? How often is this judgement repeated?
5. What is different about the creation of man from the creation of the animals?

*Some families have found it profitable to organize the study of science around the days of creation. One resource for this is the book, **Science in the Creation Week** by Unfred.*

Lesson 2.

Adam and Eve

Genesis 2:4-3:24

Remember the outline: Pray, Review, Read, Narrate, Discuss, and Pray again.

1. Name those who are involved in the story told in 2:4-3:24
2. What do you learn about each one?
3. Where does this story take place?
4. What responsibility does God give to man? (2:15)
5. Who named the animals? (2:19)
6. Why was Eve created? How does her creation differ from the animals?
7. Look in more detail at the conversations between God and Adam in 2:15-17. Compare this with Satan's report in 3:1-6.
8. Where was Eve when God said these things? How would she have found out what God has said? Does she know what God said accurately?
9. Does the serpent repeat what God said accurately? (Try reading the two passages one after the other to your younger children and have them listen for the differences.)
10. What happened because Adam and Eve disobeyed?
11. Why is it silly to hide from God? Why is it "natural?"
12. Whom does God curse because of Adam and Eve's disobedience? How is the curse different for each of them?
Don't overlook Genesis 3:15, generally understood to be the first prophecy of the messiah.
13. Why do you think Adam calls Eve the "mother of all the living?" Why wouldn't he name her "cursed woman God saddled me with?"
14. What does God do for Adam and Eve AFTER the fall? How are the clothes God makes for Adam and Eve different from the clothes they made for themselves? How is this a picture of our own redemption?

Lesson 3.

Cain and Abel

Genesis 4

1. Who was the older of the two brothers?
2. **Something to think about:** Is it possible that Eve thought Cain was the Messiah who would bruise the serpent's heel?
3. What was Cain's occupation?
4. What was Abel's occupation?
5. How would you describe Cain's relationship with Abel?
6. Is Cain able to hide his sin? What implications does this have for us?
"The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground..."
7. What happens to Cain because of Abel's murder? Why does God place a special mark on Cain?

The rest of this chapter provides us with a history of Cain and his offspring. Our middle elementary children on up enjoyed making a genealogical chart of the people listed here. In addition to recording the names of the individuals, we also made note of any special accomplishments attributed to an individual. Our younger children (Kindergarten and first grade) bailed out before we got very deeply into this — so watch closely for the signals that say, "You may be enjoying this, but we're sure not!" In such cases it would probably be better for you to make the chart and share highlights with the kids briefly. Suggested highlights follow.

8. Notice when the men described in Genesis 4 do things like build cities, work with metals, play instruments, live in tents and raise cattle. Compare the sequence described in Genesis with the typical evolutionary scenario: "primitive man moves from caves to tents and follows animals to seasonal pastures for years and years and years, until he figures out how to build fences and houses and EUREKA! — cities!"
9. Be sure and ask your students to identify the specific offspring and the occupations they are noted for.
10. What is the name of Adam and Eve's third son?

Lesson 4.

Enoch and Methuselah

Genesis 5

Though at first, this chapter may appear to be one of those insufferable lists of who begat whom, don't be quick to skip it. Although your younger children may not be quite ready to walk through it in much detail, we would recommend that the parent or teacher at least do it themselves.

With our older children (3rd grade and up) we made a chart of Seth's descendants, noting names, ages of each father when his son was born, age of each man at his death. Out to the side of the chart, I kept a running tally of Adam's age — which will also give you, obviously, the amount of time MAN has been around.

*As I record Adam's age beside each name in the genealogy, I ask "Is Adam still alive?" And then I point out that Adam was indeed able to pass on a first hand account of life before and after The Fall to a long line of people. This activity seemed to help all of us see the early history of man in a new, very real light. It is possible to get the same information from the charts in ***The International Inductive Study Bible*** or ***The Wallchart of World History***. However, there is something about doing the numbers yourself that will really make the information "yours". Thus, we recommend it, at least to you, if not to your children.*

For Discussion:

1. The phrase "These are the generations of..." is repeated throughout Genesis. Watch for it. (This is, in fact, its second appearance).
2. How many sons and daughters did Adam and Eve have? Which ones are specifically named? (see v. 4: "He had other sons and daughters ..." This is the answer to the proverbial question of skeptics, "where did Cain's wife come from?")
3. How is Enoch different from the other descendants of Adam? When does the text say Enoch died? (WARNING! WARNING! TRICK QUESTION!) What does it say about how Enoch ended his time among men? What does Enoch name his son?

Background: *Enoch was apparently one of the first prophets/preachers in the Word. A look at Jude, verses 14 & 15 will give you a description of what he preached. Read this to your children. Enoch not only preached against the wickedness of the world, but provided a prophetic word about coming judgement through the name of his son, Methuselah. Methuselah's name means, "after me, it comes." God confirms this prophetic word by withholding judgement until after Methuselah's death.*

It is possible to calculate the flood year as you keep a tally of the years which have passed since Adam's creation. When you run the numbers, you find that Methuselah died the year the flood began. Our kids were greatly impressed by this.

4. What did Enoch preach?
5. When does Adam die? How long after his death was Noah born? How could Noah's father have found out the details of life before and after The Fall?
6. What does Lamech prophesy about Noah? (verse 29)