

How to use these Facilitator Notes

We want to help group facilitators in two ways:

- (1) Support/direction for facilitating weekly discussions. The Bible is a massive text. A 90-minute discussion can go in many directions. We want to help you make this a “big picture” Bible journey experience for the group, using the “Threads” as teaching guides. These facilitator notes can help you prepare for weekly discussions and keep you on track with the Big Picture thread themes.
- (2) Freedom for facilitators. Do not feel restricted or confined by these notes. We believe the best facilitator and participant experience comes from getting your hands dirty – reading and exploring and digging in God’s word on your own. We want these notes to be helpful – but not restrictive or limiting.

It’s a crucial balance: Providing direction and providing freedom. Too much direction and you become dependent on these notes. Too much freedom and the groups can drift from our core messaging and thematic objectives below.

Teaching vs Facilitating -

Give thought to your balance of facilitating vs teaching. Naturally, you will find yourself in a teacher position at times, but try to make that your secondary role. Make facilitator your primary role.

- Facilitating works to spread around the conversation (teaching can dominate the conversation)
- Facilitating feeds off questions to the group (teaching is focused on presenting information)
- Facilitating is replicable – we can multiply facilitators but not everyone will necessarily be a “teacher.”

Like a teacher, facilitators need to be prepared. It’s the facilitators job to keep control of the conversation and make sure the group addresses the key themes and topics.

Discussion Guidance - Keep the following themes in mind while facilitating discussions:

1. **Big Picture** - We're focused on the Bible's overall narrative, the 30,000 ft view; the timeline - 4,000 years of Jewish history, followed by 2,000 years of church history, and an eschatological plan for the "last days;" we'll become very familiar with breaking down the 4,000-year OT history on a napkin for easy teaching and transfer to others.

Application - Each week someone should put a version of a timeline or chart on the board.

2. **Key Threads** – Our four themes (red-blue-green-yellow threads) help us track God's key covenants that route the path of Jewish history and set the course for eschatology as well. One of these threads is the "Seed" - 64 generations of fathers from Adam to Jesus Christ.

Application - Each week the group should be able to identify the threads from that week's reading assignment.

3. **Prophecy** - 27% of the Bible, when it was written, spoke of future events (Dr. Mark Hitchcock, *The End* p.23). Furthermore, more prophecies remained unfulfilled than prophecies that have been fulfilled.

Application – Each week, pay particular attention to the prophecy texts. These texts carry the threads forward in our reading.

4. **Grammatical-historical hermeneutic** – This is a fancy phrase that describes a particular method of Bible interpretation. We apply a literal interpretation wherever possible – that is the plain, ordinary, everyday meaning of the Bible's text (grammatical). And when symbols and less clear language is used, we "use scripture to interpret scripture."

Application – this happens naturally after setting this tone in the early weeks.

5. **God's plan for humanity vs God's plan for my life** - Inevitably we will discuss life application to some degree. But this is a minor, secondary focus to our primary focus - that of global, Biblical worldview application.

Application – For example, we're less interested in study of the characteristics of King David (courage, faithful, etc.); instead we're more interested in God's unique covenant

with God and the “forever King” and “kingdom” that would come from David’s lineage. Shifting focus from “me-centered” Bible read experience changes the experience to learning about history, geography, and the providence of God in working out His ongoing plan to redeem the world.

6. Current day application - Given our focus on prophecy, we’re interested in what’s going on in the world today - Israel, geo-political developments, globalization, apostasy trends, and yes – some “signs of times.” These are examples of topics that fit our opportunity for applying “wisdom” and “understanding” in tracking the work of God.

Application – Look for natural opportunities to relate the thread activity with what we’re seeing in the world. The daily news feed is generating material for us. This does not need to be a frequent discussion – it may not be weekly but should certainly be at least monthly.

The Big Picture View of Scripture: The macro is the Big Picture view, and is a key to biblical literacy. This macro/micro is not a “better than” comparison. But they are very different and it’s important to understand their respective uniqueness. We believe the macro approach is highly out of favor among churches and families and is the reason so many Christians have grown dull and disinterested in the Bible.

	Macro Bible approach	Micro Bible approach
Characterized by	Bible reading	Bible study
Context for reading is	The 30,000-foot view, overarching story of Bible	A particular book or chapter or passage
	Relies heavily on OT for NT context	Often NT-centric, and ignores OT
Areas of Study	Attentive to common themes, events, patterns and cycles	Deep word study (Hebrew/Greek)
Bible mastery defined by	Scripture understanding	Scripture memory
Book study	Always done in context of the other books	Often done in isolation from other books
Character study and application	Learn how God deals with humanity	To learn how to live (live like Moses, David, etc.)
Focus areas for young Bible students	Bible timeline and geography	Memory verses and books of the bible
Sees prophecy	Throughout the entire Bible	Pertaining to “latter days”

Summary of Threads

Threads	What is it?	Who/where?	Seed Context	Future Context
Red	The King	Jesus Christ	The Genesis 3:15 SEED is Jesus; but the “Seed Carriers” include over 60 generations of men from Adam to Noah to Abraham to David... ultimately to Joseph, father of Jesus.	Millennial King and then heavenly King
Blue	The Nation/ People (family)	Israelites – God’s chosen nation	The “Seed Family” – 12 tribes of Jacob, banding together to make up the Jewish ancestry	Continued persecution by the “nations”; eventually protection and salvation for the Jews and renewal as a nation during millennial kingdom
Green	The Land	Israel (Jerusalem)	The Seed Land – historically, it’s the land of Canaan that then became territory of Israel under David and Solomon	Earthly Jerusalem during millennium; then the New Heavenly Jerusalem
Yellow	The Nations	All non-Jews (Gentiles)	Descendants of Noah’s sons Ham, Japheth and all lines of Seth (except for line of Abraham-Isaac- Jacob); Gentiles includes Abraham’s son Ishmael, and Isaac’s son Esau – they are outside the Seed line family...	But still God promised the nations from them would be great and will share in the promise and salvation of the Jews one day in future kingdom.

Genesis: Facilitator Notes

Genesis is LOADED. It's such a crucial book to the Bible reading journey. These can be challenging weeks to facilitate because there's SO much good stuff to cover – and time is limited.

We will reference back to Genesis throughout our entire journey. Genesis and Revelation, the beginning and the end, contribute the most to building the Bible's Big Picture framework.

The Big Picture – Genesis 3:15

Reading and understanding the Bible starts with understanding the Bible's most foundational premise. The Bible is largely centered around the battle between good and evil. God allows evil to exist. He even sets up a character to be the author of evil. Satan is this character.

The Genesis 3:15 promise is the declaration of “game on!” God engages Satan (the serpent) in a sort of one-on-one contest.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Interpretation: In the end, Good will win. God is going to destroy Satan. His promise is a seed (offspring) from the woman. This eventual Seed is Jesus, sent from heaven but born on earth. Satan understands the promise. It's the reason for his various seed attacks. When Satan makes a chess move, God makes a counter move. (Example: the flood of Noah is God's response to an attack on the human seed – see Genesis 6 notes below).

God is allowing this seed battle to continue. He's not in a hurry. But through the Bible's prophecies, God tells us how His seed strategy will unfold and how it will reach final fulfillment. Throughout the Bible read, we'll continuously come back to this Big Picture – because everything points back to the Genesis 3:15 promise.

God's Game Plan – the Covenants (Threads)

If the Big Picture is the SEED battle and eventual victory – good defeats evil – what's the strategy? How is God going to bring about this Seed victory?

God provides the details through promises, or “covenants” with various people. The Abrahamic Covenant is the most famous. Imbedded in this covenant are the various “threads” that we will track all throughout the Bible:

- **Red Thread** – the Seed line – 64 generations from Adam to Jesus Christ. God is going to route the Seed throughout human history. This is the “promised Seed” through Abraham.
- **Blue Thread** – this Seed line will come out of a certain nation, or family. The Israelites. This nation is going to have an in-and-out journey with God – short seasons of submission and obedience, followed by longer seasons of rebellion and disobedience. In the end God promises to restore this nation and bring them back to obedience and to enjoy salvation.
- **Green Thread** – this Seed nation will inhabit a special land initially known as Canaan. It’s also called the Promise Land, and later called Israel. The capital is Jerusalem. The covenant says that one day Jesus will return to earth to defeat Satan and set up his reign in this very land, Jerusalem.
- **Yellow Thread** – the nations. The blessings of salvation will be shared by all the Gentile nations outside of the chosen Israel nation.

Promises

Red – king promise

Blue – people promise

Green – land promise

Yellow – “nations” promise

Working with the Big Picture, here are some key observations about Genesis:

- Timeline - Genesis covers roughly 2,400 years of the 4,000 years of Old Testament history. That’s over half (60%) of OT history in this book alone.

[Refer to Timeline Chart, a handy notebook reference]

- The Seed (Red thread) - Of the 64 seed carriers from Adam to Jesus, 25 are in Genesis (Perez #25 – Genesis 46:12). The book gets the Seed to almost the 40-yard line (39%). 60 Yards to go.

[Refer to Seed Chart, another helpful notebook reference]

- Seed Family (Blue thread) - Substantial text (Chapters 12-50, 39 total chapters) is devoted to the lives and events of the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is clearly intentional. These Patriarchs launch the BLUE thread family – the Israelites, the 12 tribes of Jacob.
 - o As a side note, the life story of Joseph covers a surprising number of chapters of Genesis (13 chapters, or 33% of the 39 devoted to the patriarchs). God’s sovereignty with Joseph sets up the Exodus story – and as we’ll learn later, the exodus from Egypt is referenced more than just about any other event throughout the OT.
- Geography - Genesis sets the boundary map for most all the lands covered throughout the entire Old Testament. Looking at an OT map, you can see the journey of the Israelite nation in Genesis. After the Tower of Babel event,
 - God starts with Abraham in Ur, (which is near Babylon);
 - moves him to Haran;
 - and then to Canaan.
 - To escape famine, they head to Egypt, then back to Canaan again.
 - Then another trip to Egypt with Joseph to escape another famine.

Canaan (Green Thread) is essentially modern-day Israel. It’s the land God promised to Abraham’s descendants. It’s a hotly contested piece of land throughout Bible history, and remains wildly controversial today.

[Looking ahead: In Exodus the Israelites get the break-away from Egypt, then enter the Promised Land (with Joshua) where they will remain until they are exiled to... where of all places? To Babylon! (See end of 2 Kings). Under Ezra/Nehemiah God moves the Israelites back to the land of Israel]

[Refer to OT maps and world map for global context of the land of Israel]

The Abrahamic covenants – a MASSIVE Theme!

- As mentioned already, God’s covenants tie the “threads” together (**Red**, **Blue**, **Green**, **Yellow**) – the rest of the Bible shows God working out these covenants to bring about the Genesis 3:15 promise.
- Spiritual warfare has always been intense around Abraham’s spiritual legacy – dating back to Ishmael and Isaac. The conflicts remain today. (And yes, this is the result of the Seed battle). Three large religions - Christianity, Judaism, Islam - trace back to Abraham. Even Christians today are divided on the implications of these covenants. Many cling to “replacement theology” (the “Church” replaces

Israel) and believe the covenants no longer apply; while others consider the covenants to be open and unfulfilled and believe God still has a plan for Israel and Jerusalem. The Thread view supports the latter position.

- Redundancy – the Abraham Promise introduced in Genesis 12:1-3 is restated in Chapters 13, 15, 17, 26 & 28. Before Moses wrote the Genesis account, the knowledge of God’s Seed plan was passed down orally - from generation to generation (to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob). For Bible readers today, this repetition is our clue – as if Moses himself was telling the reader, “don’t miss these threads!” The Abrahamic covenants, anchored in Genesis, are crucial for readers seeking to understand the Bible’s Big Picture.

A Prophecy Book – The Bible is about God telling man what He’s going to do. And He tells certain people (usually the Israelites) what they will do (mostly bad stuff). And sure enough, they do those things as predicted.

The Bible is essentially a prophecy book. 27% of the Bible, when it was written, spoke of events that had not yet happened. As you read through the Bible, noticed God’s prophetic voice being worked out time and time again.

Simple examples:

- Gen 3:15 – God tells the Adam, Eve and the serpent the Seed Strategy – “the seed of the woman will crush your head”
- Genesis 6 – God tells Noah, “build an ark, I’m going to destroy the earth”
- Genesis 12 and elsewhere – God tells Abraham, “You’re going to have a child and be father to many nations”
- Exodus 3 – God tells Moses, “I will deliver the Israelites from Egypt and bring them to a new land.”

I MAY NOT BUILD THIS OUT FURTHER... MAY CUT ENTIRELY – THIS IS THE WORK WE WANT STUDENTS/FACILITATORS TO DO ON THEIR OWN

Chapter 1-11 Highlights – (and some possible thread connections)

- Gen. 1 – Creation 6 days
 - o “let us make a man in our image” – v.26 (cool verse – “our” – trinity implied?)
 - o “be fruitful and multiply” – v.28 (a frequent command going forward)
- Gen. 2 – The 7th day, God rests. Then returns to the earlier creation account
 - o “Tree of knowledge” – don’t eat it; “Tree of life” in middle of garden keeps them alive
 - o Woman made from a man; man leaves mother and father and becomes “one flesh” with wife – and so that’s how it began. What would get it off track?
- Gen. 3 –
 - o the 3:15 Seed Promise - sums up Bible in single verse
 - o “the man has become like one of us” v22 (there’s the trinity implied again)
- Gen. 5 – helpful for dating the Bible – first ten generations from Adam to Noah – 1656 years to Noah’s flood – Methuselah died during year of flood. V29. Lamech has an interesting prophecy – of Noah, says “this one shall bring relief”
- Gen 6 – “sons of God” took “daughters of man” as wives and bore children to them. A plain, straightforward reading refers to some form of angelic or demonic mixing with humans. This is a direct attack on the Seed - tainting the human seed with non-human race - and threatens the Genesis 3:15 promise.
- Gen. 7 – Verses 20-23 rule out any idea of a “local flood”; Flood was a complete “reset” event – God’s “do over”
- Gen. 8 & 9 – God’s covenant with Noah – interesting that God says will not ever destroy earth again with water. But plans to nearly do so (destroy the earth) in Revelation – just not with water.
- Gen. 9 – once again, God ordains “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (v1 & 7); God chooses line of Shem and curses Canaan (v26-27) – we’re going to see these resulting nations battle it out in the future.
- Gen. 10 – make mental note of the land of Shinar (v10), where Babylon is and also Ur (where Abram is called); Nimrod builds his empire in Shinar and also

built Nineveh in Assyria; we'll see these lands in our reading; notice the sons of Canaan all move toward the land that becomes "Canaan", the land the Israelites will one day possess

- Gen 11 – [Genesis 1-11 is a natural break point – from Adam to the nations; sets us up for the life and call of Abram. Rest of Genesis, Chapters 12-50, deals with the Patriarchs.]
 - Tower of Babel is fascinating – Nimrod's rebellion invites God's attention. The confusion of languages leads to scattering of the nations. Jewish Historian Josephus makes the remarkable connection that Nimrod's rebellion was spurred on, in part, by distrust of God's Noahic promise, suggesting that God might flood the earth again; so they built a tower towards the heavens instead of spreading out over the earth as God commanded.
 - 11:4 (build a tower so we wont be dispersed over the face of whole earth) and direct contrast to 9:1 – multiply and fill the earth)
 - Then 11:8,9 – Lord dispersed them over the earth
 - Globalism?
 - More genealogy to date the Bible from Shem to Abram – 10 more generations – ten is the biblical number for "completeness" (like the 10 generations from Adam to Noah); Abram is called out of Ur, then settle in Haran before later settling to Canaan
 -

Chapter 12-?? Highlights – (and some possible thread connections)

[Need to come back and work on more chapters later]. OR NOT

- Gen 18 – destroying Sodom & Gomorrah. What does this judgment and the flood judgments have in common? God deals with sexual immorality. In the days of Noah, “sons of God intermarrying with daughters of man.” Sodom of course deals with homosexuality.

Exodus: Facilitator Notes

Big Picture Reminder - (why we're doing what we're doing): There are two very different ways to approach scriptures: (1) the “macro view” and (2) the “micro view.” The macro is the Big Picture view, and is a key to biblical literacy. That’s what we’re doing. We’re walking through scriptures with a view of the full Bible timeline and of God’s overall plan. While “micro” Bible study (word study, character study, verse-by-verse study, etc.) has its place, without the Big Picture to enhance understanding, people often lose interest in the Bible.

[Optional question - How has this Big Picture perspective impacted the way you are reading the Bible?]

[It helps to keep this reminder in front of the group regularly]

Back to the Seed Battle – Remember the Genesis 3:15 Promise: The Seed of the woman will one day crush the serpent. If God is going to allow Satan to engage in this epic Seed battle, the serpent is going to mount serious attacks against the **Seed line**, the **Seed family**, and the **Seed land**. That pretty much sums up the Old Testament drama. And is exactly the storyline to kick off the book of Exodus.

A blueprint for the Israelites: The Exodus Story is one of God’s proudest victories for the Israelite nation. We’ll see this story referenced more throughout the Bible than just about any other biblical account. Behind this classic story – of baby Moses in a basket, of the hardened-hearted Pharaoh, of Egyptian slavery and the famous plagues – is a macro blueprint that helps explain the entire Bible.

This blueprint lays out the basic life cycle for the Hebrew nation. The cycle reveals how God’s sovereignty and His will work to bring about the fulfillment of the thread promises. While God is moving the Seed down the road, Satan is trying to stop it in its tracks.

Here’s how the cycle generally works.

- Israelites endure persecution – Gentiles persecute God’s chosen people.
- God’s intervention - God steps in to bring judgment on the Gentiles.
- Wrath Overflow – While God’s wrath is directed toward the enemy, the spill-over effect often flows to the Israelites, making their conditions even worse.

- Victory and Freedom - Eventually God breaks the will of the persecutors, bringing them to total destruction. Israel is finally free.
- Rest and Celebration - Israel celebrates God's deliverance from oppression

Let's look more closely at the Exodus story.

- Persecution - After *200 years since the death of Joseph, the Israelites find themselves trapped in Egypt away from their land, and locked in a life of slavery. Persecution intensifies to where Egyptians are killing baby boy Israelites. From Satan's perspective, it's an early attempt to exterminate the "seed." It's not a good start for the Israelite nation.
- God's intervention - But from God's perspective, it's the perfect setup to reveal His power to His children and to the rest of the outside nations. It's opportunity for God to show the world how He relates to the Israelites (His chosen nation) and how God deals with their enemies (killing Hebrew baby boys gets the full wrath of God). God is uninterested in an easy escape for the Israelites. Instead, He has a bigger, longer-term plan. God plays Pharaoh like a puppet, hardening the man's heart, then causing him to soften, only to then harden him again. Rinse... repeat. It's part of God's master plan: bringing maximum frustration to Pharaoh.
- Wrath Overflow – Each plague and subsequent heart-hardening yields another degree of defiance and rebellion in Pharaoh. While the Egyptians bear the direct wrath of God, the Israelites bear the spillover effects of a frustrated Pharaoh – more persecution.
- Victory/Freedom – Finally the last wave of judgment (tenth plague) – the death of firstborns - breaks the will of the Pharaoh. He sends the Israelites away. But Pharaoh hardens one more time, sending the Egyptian army after the Israelites, only for them to be destroyed by the Red Sea parting and drowning episode.
- Rest and Celebration – The Israelites enter the wilderness rest for 40 years. God gives them a calendar with festivals and a system for worship, celebration and remembrance of God's mighty acts that freed them from bondage.

Spoiler alert – Again, this cycle of the exodus from Egypt is God's blueprint pattern. This is how God operates. We'll see this pattern time and time again throughout the

Old Testament. And this is exactly the end times scenario we will see play out in Revelation.

[Note: It may or may not be necessary to introduce this Exodus-Revelation comparison, but if you see a natural opportunity to mention, go for it.]

Revelation Look-ahead: As God does with the Pharoah, God gives Satan’s antichrist power and control over the future Jewish nation. Meanwhile God’s wrath is unleashed against earth and mankind. Yes, the Jews suffer the spillover wrath. But God preserves them in the final hour as the rider on a white horse (Jesus Christ – the SEED) returns to strike down the nations. The redeemed nation of Israel enters into God’s rest for the 1,000-year kingdom on Mount Zion (Jerusalem), ruled by King Jesus (the SEED.)

Cycle of Persecution	Exodus	Revelation
Israelite persecution (by Gentiles)	Hebrews (Israelites) enslaved by Egyptians	Jews persecuted by the Antichrist
God’s intervention (wrath poured out on Gentiles)	Ten plagues	Seal, trumpet, bowl judgments
Israel suffers further persecution (from Gentiles)	Pharoah further hardening toward Israel	Antichrist pursues Jews more aggressively
Victory & Freedom – after God finally breaks the will of Gentiles	Tenth plague (death of firstborn) and Red Sea Crossing	The Day of the Lord – “2 nd coming of Christ” to destroy the wicked
Israel’s rest - celebrates God’s deliverance	Freedom from slavery– rest and celebrates God in the wilderness	Millennial kingdom rest and restoration for redeemed Jews

Timeline Tip - Put the timeline on a board and show how the Genesis story moves forward after the death of Joseph. 200 years later, the Egyptians have forgotten all about Joseph and the Pharoah’s once preferential treatment of Jacob’s family. Instead, the Israelites are slaves in Egypt.

[*You may be tempted to show a 400-year advance on the timeline from Joseph to Moses based on various references: Gen. 15:13, 12:40-41, Acts 7:6. For discussion on reconciling the 400/430 year references with the 200 years, see <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-questions/how-long-were-the-israelites-in-egypt/>]

Exodus – other key themes

Outside of the macro backdrop of the Exodus story, there are a several sub-themes to be watching for in the reading of Exodus. It's helpful to organize these various sub-themes through a view of the Threads.

Sub-Themes	Seed Line (Jesus)	Seed Family (Israel)	Seed Land (Canaan)
Blood Sacrifices	Temporary atonement for sins (one day be permanently satisfied by blood of Jesus Christ)	Provide food for feasting and celebration at annual feasts and festivals	Only offered at tabernacle, or future temple
Tent Tabernacle	Designated location for blood sacrifices – equipped and furnished to handle blood waste	Location where God meets with the people and where people gather to celebrate and worship	Eventually the temple will be the focal point in the land of Jerusalem
Priesthood (Levites)	Conduct, perform animal sacrifices	Organize and govern laws of the nation	Set up, take down tabernacle (one day service the temple)
Laws, Customs, Commandments	Some laws pertain to sacrifices	Some laws serve to make Israelites clean and holy before God; some laws are functional and seek to bring justice and order to tribes	Some laws protect and preserve the land

Blood animal sacrifices - **Blood** is very symbolic in scriptures. According to God's game plan, bloodshed is required to atone for sin. We see the history of animal sacrifices as early as Cain and Abel. And we presume God sacrificed an animal to provide clothing for Adam and Eve.

After the escape from Egypt, God implements a detailed system of blood animal sacrifices to be offered on a regular basis. The Israelites did not know it, but these sacrifices were a foreshadow of a day in the future when God's Son, **Jesus (The SEED)**, would shed his blood on the cross for the permanent sins of the world.

While some animal sacrifices are entirely focused on the atonement for sins (i.e. the "whole burnt offering"), some sacrifices are also intended to provide a barbeque feast for the people. Feasting and fellowship play an integral role in **Israelite living** and keeping the **nation** in community together.

The Passover sacrifice is an example. The Passover Festival is one of three annual festivals throughout the Jewish calendar. (And the Passover Feast is the first of seven feasts spread out over these three holiday periods). The first Passover observance was the night of the tenth plague in Egypt – when the death angel "passed over" the door of

each home and struck dead the firstborn son of any family that did not sprinkle the blood of the lamb over their homes. The details of the Passover week – the selection, observance, preparation and eating of the Passover Lamb - has stunning symbolism pointing toward the gospel accounts of Passover week when Jesus endured his crucifixion.

The Tent Tabernacle - One day God’s dwelling would be the temple in **Jerusalem** – but during the wilderness season, a portable tent tabernacle was their meeting place. The tabernacle, and eventually the temple, is where the blood was shed for **animal sacrifices**. It’s where the Levites served – and it’s where high priest (initially Moses) met with God. The tabernacle was constructed and furnished with the materials obtained when they plundered the Egyptians on their way out of Egypt.

The temple-tabernacle was a special location, a conduit that integrates all three themes - the red, the blue and the green. It’s where **God dwells**. It’s where the **people gather to worship**. And it’s a focal point of **the land**.

Priesthood – God ruled the nation of Israel as a “theocracy.” He selected the Levite tribe to serve the priesthood as God’s intermediary to the people.

In God’s view, the Levites bore the sins of the Israelite nation. They had to undergo extra layers of holiness and purification rites to **administer the sacrifices** and to manage the responsibilities for the tent tabernacle (and eventually the temple house of worship).

The priesthood also helped the twelve tribes to organize and work together to function as a **nation and as a society**. They had laws to govern themselves, and a system of worship and sacrifices to stay in fellowship with God.

Laws, Customs, Ordinances - After their escape from Egypt, God gives the Israelites a system of **laws and ordinances** (i.e Ten Commandments, etc.) to manage themselves as a nation. Some laws were designed to administer justice (rules for restitution, property rights, etc.). Some laws were designed to reinforce worship practices (Sabbath laws, sacrifice customs, etc.). Some were simply to show that God is holy and man is not (laws of cleanliness, etc.). Some of these details make sense to us. Many of them do not.

In summary, there’s much minutia and details in Exodus (and Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), that are sometimes difficult to read. But these details were crucial for keeping and supporting the functions of the theocracy.

Back to the Big Picture, this theocracy (God-ruled system of government) was God's system for protecting and keeping the Seed Family and Seed Line alive and for keeping the nation on track to possess the Promised Land.

Leviticus: Facilitator Notes

Leviticus might be responsible for crashing more Bible read-thru attempts than any other book (sounds like a joke, but it was true for me for years). It can be rough.

The book is largely detailed laws, ordinances, and guidelines for sacrifices. I'll address this later, but first I want to call out what I consider to be the key chapter of Leviticus. Actually, it's one of the most revealing chapters in the entire Old Testament.

Leviticus Chapter 26

Remember, the Bible is 27% prophecy. That means that when the various portions of the Bible were written, 27% was speaking of events that had not yet happened. And while Leviticus is not normally included among the prophecy texts, Chapter 26 is extremely prophetic.

God is laying down a conditional covenant for the Israelites:

- If they obey – abundant blessings.
- If they disobey, crushing curses.

Interestingly, the attention given to disobedience and God's curses is about double the volume of verses devoted to obedience and God's blessings, probably because that's the path (disobedience) the Israelites will take.

Land blessings and curses - Notice specifically how God's blessings and curses are directed at the **land** as well as to the people. When the Israelites obey, the land is fertile, crops flourish, livestock is plentiful, the land enjoys peace and God drives out their enemies.

When they disobey, God will send plagues on the land, the ground will not produce its fruit, enemies will drive Israelites from the land and leave their cities in ruins.

This sounds like a threat – but it's a stunning prophecy too. This is exactly what happens to the Israelites (spoiler alert!)

Fortunately, the rest of Chapter 26 is prophetic as well. If the Israelites will repent and confess of their sins, God will remember his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and will restore **Israel** to their **lands**.

Getting on and off the Cycle - Remember the Cycle of Persecution we discussed in Exodus? In its simplest form,

- Misfortune comes upon Israel.
- God delivers them from their troubles.
- Israel rejoices and rests in God's goodness.

So what perpetuates the cycle? What puts Israel back on the path of oppression and hardship after they experience a season of rest and freedom? How do they continue to repeat this time and time again? Answer: their disobedience.

When Israel disobeys, they find themselves trapped back in a season of hardship (God's punishment). And the only way out is by repentance and forgiveness.

God initiates the first cycle. By God's sovereignty, the Israelites ended up in Egypt and subjected to slavery. Then God took it upon Himself to break them free from Egyptian bondage. He showed the Israelites His power and might and allowed them to plunder the Egyptians of their possessions. He blessed them in all ways.

In Leviticus 26 Moses clarifies for the people that they are in control of their predicament. As long as they obey, they will continue to experience blessings. But if they disobey, here's how it looks:

- Enjoy God's rest and blessings
- Slide back toward disobedience
- Misfortune comes upon Israel (hardship from enemies and/or discipline from God)
- Forgiveness and Repentance – leads to restoration with God.

Then restart the cycle – enjoying God's blessings (until they sin again).

Keep this pattern in mind. We're going to see it again and again and again.

Thread Alert Passage

⁴⁰ “But if **they** will confess their sins and the sins of **their ancestors**—their unfaithfulness and their hostility toward me,⁴¹ which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin,⁴² I will remember my covenant with **Jacob** and my covenant with **Isaac** and my covenant with **Abraham**, and I will remember **the land**.⁴³ For **the land** will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees.⁴⁴ Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am

the Lord their God. ⁴⁵ But for their sake I will remember the covenant with **their ancestors** whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord.” [Leviticus 26:40-45]

Questions to consider

1. What do the various sacrifices and the detailed prescribed treatment of blood, animals, etc. make you think about God? About sin?
2. a. What does the incident of Nadab and Abihu make you think about God? About sin and obedience?
b. [by the way, how are Nadab and Abihu related to the line of the Seed? See Exodus 6]
3. What particular laws or customs make sense to you? What are some that don't make any sense to you?
4. What are the 7 prescribed biblical feasts (Chapter 23)
5. Make a list of all the specific blessings and curses promised by God, and the respective acts of obedience and disobedience by the Israelites. In your upcoming reading sessions, you'll be able to see very specific fulfillment of these various conditions – when the Israelites obey, they experience the promised blessings; when they sin, they suffer the promised curses.

Thread Sub-themes

Much of the minutia in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy fits in one of the thread categories. See Notes in Exodus for description of these sub-themes.

Sub-Themes	Seed Line (Jesus)	Seed Family (Israel)	Seed Land (Canaan)
Blood Sacrifices	Temporary atonement for sins (one day be permanently satisfied by blood of Jesus Christ)	Provide food for feasting and celebration at annual feasts and festivals	Only offered at tabernacle, or future temple
Tent Tabernacle	Designated location for blood sacrifices – equipped and furnished to handle blood waste	Location where God meets with the people and where people gather to celebrate and worship	Eventually the temple will be the focal point in the land of Jerusalem
Priesthood (Levites)	Conduct, perform animal sacrifices	Organize and govern laws of the nation	Set up, take down tabernacle (one day service the temple)
Laws, Customs, Commandments	Some laws pertain to sacrifices	Some laws serve to make Israelites clean and holy before God; some laws are functional and seek to bring justice and order to tribes	Some laws protect and preserve the land

Numbers: Facilitator Notes

Double Trouble

The book of Numbers is about...numbers. There's lots of counting going on. The **twelve tribes** are inventoried – twice (Chapters 1 & 26). This census reporting shows God's interest in the condition of each tribe and their respective roles in the formative years of the nation's history.

But there are other interesting sets of numbers in this book. Like “Double 10's” and “Double 40's.” For the Israelites, these numbers spell D-o-u-b-l-e T-r-o-u-b-l-e

Double 10's – It had been a wild ride for the Israelites as God struck their enemies with 10 shocking plagues of destruction, culminating with the death of firstborns on the first Passover night. But if the 10 miracle plagues weren't enough to seal God's wonders into memory, the Red Sea crossing event should have done it - when God parted the waters for the escaping Israelites and then drowned the Egyptians (Exodus 14).

So guess how the Israelites responded over the next year? They test God... 10 times! (Numbers 14:22). That's right. **God wows the Israelites with His power and might 10 times. And in return, the Israelites show their faithless, stiff-necked disobedience on 10 different occasions.** These ten tests (covering over a roughly one-year period) begin in the book of Exodus (7 tests) and carry into Numbers (3 tests).

Biblically speaking, the number “10” is considered a “perfect” number, symbolizing completeness, wholeness, etc. The 10th man in the line of Adam is Noah – God's start over point. And the 10th man from Noah's son Shem was Abraham...God's next launch point for birthing the blue thread nation.

Then there's the 10 commandments. Jesus shares the parables of the 10 virgins, and the 10 minas, and the 10 lepers. There are lots of “10's” in the Bible.

Back to the exodus event – God's 10 acts of wonder were followed by 10 tests, or faith breakdowns. The final test - when the 12 spies returned from spying the promised land - is what ultimately earned God's eventual wrath and punishment (Numbers 13 & 14.)

This leads us to our next double.

Double 40's – Often the number 40 symbolizes a period of trial or testing. The flood of Noah rained for 40 days. Moses spent 40 years in Egypt, then 40 years in the wilderness before being commissioned to lead the people out of Egypt. Moses met and fasted on Mount Sinai for 40 days (twice).

So when Moses sent 12 spies into the promise land to scout out the land, they did so for... 40 days (Num. 13:25). When they came back scared and backing out of the promise land plan, God had a specific punishment for them - one year for each day, a total sentencing of 40 years (14:34).

Aside from this fascinating numbers game is a very real battle for the threads.

Remember, the Bible is about the “Journey of the Seed,” traveling through the course of human history, to one day redeem mankind. **Jesus is the Seed** and his direct line of ancestors make up the red thread. To support and protect this red thread family, we have the **Israelites** – twelve tribes or “cousins” - that grow into a mighty nation.

God selects special leaders (initially Moses) from this family to lead at various points in the journey. Each tribe has a leader (chapter 1). And each tribe is given a lodging position to camp alongside other tribes (chapter 2). Getting the Seed family into the **promised land** depends on the 12 tribes working together.

Meanwhile, the enemy recognizes the Seed strategy at hand. Therefore, the enemy strategy is also focused on the nation, using tribal conflict and division to weaken them and keep them from entering the promised land (chapters 11, 12, 13, 14, 16).

God knows this battle will wage for another 1,500 years when Jesus will take his place on the cross outside of Jerusalem in the promised land. From God’s perspective, a 40-year wait is no big deal to allow the current generation to die off – and teach their children and children’s children a valuable lesson about the costs of disobedience... and the reward for obedience. (See Leviticus 26.)

After God’s one year time-out, the older generation dies, a new generation emerges under the leadership of Joshua and Caleb and eventually God gives instructions of the boundaries to the promised land (chapter 34).

Other notes

- Balaam’s oracle (chapters 22-24) – the account of Balaam and Balak make a surprising number of return appearances throughout the Bible – watch for them. (Also, there’s a particular red thread prophecy in 24:17.)
- More minutia about: sacrifices, offerings, laws and ordinances [see “Sub-theme” chart in the Exodus notes]

Questions to consider

1. What were the differences between the first and second census? (Chapters 1 & 26) **Slightly less people in the 2nd census, all of the exodus generation had died off**
2. Where are we in the line of the Seed? (Hint: Numbers 26:64, 65) **After Nahshon and Amminadab (#27) and Nahshon (#28) died off, little Salmon (#29) must have been part of the next generation.**
3. Extra Credit: map out the configuration and arrangement of the camp of Israelites? (Chapter 2). Do any patterns come to mind? **Cross configuration**
4. Consider the 12 gifts dedicated to the Tabernacle in Chapter 7. What do you notice about these 12 gifts? Why does Moses record these details? **The gifts are exactly the same – for 12 straight days?!**
5. How was the second Passover feast different than the first Passover observance? (Chapter 9). **First Passover was taken in haste**
6. The Israelites test God ten times – 7 in Exodus, 3 in Numbers. What are the three tests in Numbers? And what is God's response (Chapter 14). **Complaining at Taberah, complaining over lack of food, spies complain of the promised land scout trip; God suspends the Promised Land entry 40 years – one year for each day.**
7. Does God's 40-year punishment seem extreme? Appropriate? Lax? What do you think would have been the value and practical lessons of a 40-year delay into the promised land. (Make a list of ideas).
8. Consider God's response to the sabbath-breaker (Chapter 15) and Korah's rebellion (Ch 16). Does this seem appropriate? Overly harsh?
9. There's a red-thread nugget (prophecy) buried inside one of Balaam's oracles – can you find it? **24:17 – a star from Jacob, a scepter from Israel**
10. Chapter 25 – where did the people of Moab come from (reference back to Genesis)? What does this story teach us about God's view of intermarrying foreign wives? What do you think of the zeal of Phinehas? **Moabites from Lot, born by his daughters; with foreign wives often come their foreign gods, a theme we will see repeatedly; Phinehas!**

11. Would you expect the 2nd census (Ch 26) to be more or less than the first (Ch 1)? Why do you think the 2nd census was less? Various plagues and wrath of God killed tens of thousands; other practical reasons? (Israelites always on the move, etc. never settling for long?)
12. Two and one-half tribes requested not to settle across the Jordan river. Why? And what was their appeal? (Chapter 32) To accommodate their growing livestock herds; they would join fellow tribes in the land conquest, but requested to return to settle their families east of the Jordan
13. Extra credit: refer to a biblical map. What are the land boundaries described in Chapter 34? How does this compare to present day Israel?