



**Mennonite
Schools
Council**

Affiliated with the
Mennonite Church

High School Bible Curriculum

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The People of God: A Story Begun

**RECOMMENDED FOR GRADE 9
SEMESTER COURSE**

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW.....	3
Unit 1: INTRODUCTION	4
Unit 2: GENESIS	5
Unit 3: EXODUS 1-19	7
Unit 4: EXODUS 20-40, LEVITICUS AND NUMBERS.....	8
Unit 5: BEGINNING OF NATIONHOOD	9
Unit 6: PROPHETS AND POLITICS	10
Unit 7: OLD TRADITIONS/NEW VISIONS	11
Unit 8: ISRAEL PUTS ITS FAITH INTO THE BOOK.....	12
TEACHER RESOURCES	13
APPENDIX.....	15

OVERVIEW

“The People of God: A Story Begun” introduces the student to the story of God calling out and working with his people, from creation through the return from exile. The study is in chronological sequence but focuses on major Old Testament themes along the way. This course serves as a base for the 10th grade course, “The People of God: The Story Continued: Jesus and the Church.” The theme of God’s unfailing grace is suggested for emphasis throughout these two courses. In addition, the courses are linked since the various stories are seen as elements of one complete story—the way God reveals himself to us.

This outline does not define how the units are paced. It is suggested that the curriculum is developed with a sensitivity for growth in both content-knowledge and personal faith formation. Building in-depth understanding will mean that not all content is “covered.”

Grade nine presents specific opportunities and challenges in schools that begin with grade nine, or have large numbers of incoming students at this grade level. Biblical literacy may vary considerably. Pretests or other formative assessment strategies may help the teacher better understand the needs of the students. Learning groups, portfolios, assignment choices and other strategies for differentiated learning will be especially useful. In addition, the students may be coming from a number of other school settings. Activities that build a sense of community will help the school culture of learning, dialogue and support for faith development. Simulations and other “hands-on” activities are especially effective in engaging students of all backgrounds in the biblical story. Bible memory assignments can be very meaningful learning experiences with long-term rewards. Video clips of Old Testament stories can lead to interesting discussions of story themes, characters, alignment of video with Scripture and other topics. Journals and assessment activities can be useful in encouraging growth since students are asked to articulate elements of what they know, questions they have and what they believe.

See the Teacher Resources section of this course and the other courses for a variety of tools for teacher preparation, classroom activities and student assignments. The General Introduction to the curriculum also contains a foundational resource list for youth ministry and Mennonite faith perspectives.

The objectives of “The People of God: A Story Begun” relate to the following educational objectives of _____ : *(Fill in name of school and list relevant objectives.)*

Unit 1: INTRODUCTION

This material can be addressed as a specific introductory unit or integrated in lessons throughout the semester as questions are raised by students.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Understand the major events and time periods in the formation of the Old Testament text.
2. Know the major political powers and geography of the ancient Near East.

CONTENT

1. Formation of the Old Testament
 - a. When and how it was written
 - b. Types of literature
2. Bible lands
 - a. Egypt
 - b. Palestine
 - c. Mesopotamia
 - d. Geography

MATERIALS, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

1. Complete a general knowledge pretest on the Old Testament.
2. Memorize the names of the Old Testament books and be able to classify them according to the type of literature.
3. Use online resources to understand the geography of the region. *Google maps* has Earth view to see maps in 3D and many other useful tools for understanding geography. (Google “Google Earth”)
4. Online tools (e.g., <http://scribblemaps.com>) may also be used to have students draw maps of the ancient Near East and identify the following:
 - a. Vicinity of Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia
 - b. Five to ten major cities
 - c. Four major rivers
 - d. General topography
5. Create a wall-sized timeline for the classroom.
6. Have students write their spiritual autobiographies. Refer to the Appendix for a sample assignment sheet.

Unit 2: GENESIS

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Understand the creation accounts and what they teach about God and the purpose for humanity.
2. Examine the cause and nature of human sin and God's response.
3. Examine "the promise" and see how it was kept alive from generation to generation.

CONTENT

1. Creation stories (Genesis 1, 2)
 - a. Compare the two creation accounts.
 - b. What does creation say about God?
 - c. What is God's purpose for humanity?
2. Sin enters the picture.
 - a. The Fall (Genesis 3)
 - i. People's good relationships with each other are broken by human sinfulness.
 - ii. People's good relations with the land are broken by human greed.
 - iii. People's good relations with God are broken by human pride.
 - b. Murder of Abel (Genesis 4)
 - c. The flood (Genesis 6-9)
 - d. Confusion at Babel (Genesis 11)
3. Formation of the promise (Genesis 12-50)
 - a. Abraham and Sarah
 - i. The meaning of faith
 - ii. The questioning of faith: Abraham tested with Isaac
 - iii. The ups and downs of faith
 - iv. Will our faith be passed along?
 - b. Isaac and Rebekah
 - c. Jacob and Rachel
 - i. Scheming and manipulation
 - d. Joseph and his brothers
 - i. Rebellion turned into salvation
 - ii. Faithfulness in the midst of temptation

MATERIALS, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

1. Complete selected readings from Genesis with study guides, quizzes or notes.
2. Create a diagram or artistic image of the Genesis 1 account of creation.
3. Trace on a map the journey of Abraham and his descendents from Mesopotamia to Egypt (e.g., <http://scribblemaps.com>).
4. Memorize Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 50:20.
5. See Teacher Resources for video titles.
6. Poem: Johnson, James Weldon. "Creation," *God's Trombones*. New York: Viking, 1927.
7. Have students create and present skits based on the Old Testament stories.
8. Activities from the *Serendipity Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996)
9. Consider Article Five (Creation and Divine Providence) in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. Be aware of the non-creedal nature of the Mennonite Church. The Mennonite Church has traditionally spoken of confessions rather than creeds. A helpful statement on the Anabaptist/Mennonite emphasis regarding creeds is found in Paul M. Lederach's *A Third Way* (Herald Press, 1980), chapter 1. Also note the appendix by Lederach in "Affirming Our Faith In Word and Deed" (www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/A33.html).
10. Moyer, Joanne. *Earth Trek: Celebrating and Sustaining God's Creation*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 2004.

Unit 3: EXODUS 1-19

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Become familiar with the Exodus story and the key events surrounding it.
2. See God as the initiator of revelation, deliverance and salvation for his people.
3. Grasp the significance of the Exodus event as salvation history.

CONTENT

1. Moses (Exodus 2-6)
 - a. Moses' calling: missions and service
 - b. Meaning of Yahweh
 - c. God hears the cry of his people
2. Ten plagues and Passover
 - a. What is a miracle?
 - b. Salvation out of oppression
 - c. Meaning of Passover
3. Crossing the Red Sea
 - a. Song of Moses and Miriam
 - b. God fighting for his people
4. Route of the Exodus

MATERIALS, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

1. Complete selected readings from Exodus with study guides, quizzes or notes.
2. Know the significance and meaning of Passover symbols.
3. Write an essay on the meaning of salvation as revealed in Exodus.
4. Outline on a map the route of the Exodus (e.g., <http://scribblemaps.com>).
5. Prepare a newspaper or TV newscast (in small groups) on the Exodus. Students can easily create video via I-video and other technologies.
6. Have a guest do presentation on Passover meal (Seder).
7. Cardozo, Arlene R. *Jewish Family Celebrations*. New York: St. Martins Griffin, 1985.

Unit 4: EXODUS 20-40, LEVITICUS AND NUMBERS

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Understand the conditional nature, the content and meaning of the Mosaic covenant.
2. Understand the concept of atonement.
3. Examine what it means to be a holy, set-apart people.
4. Understand sabbatical/jubilee years and God's concern for justice.
5. See God's faithfulness in covenant while his people rebelled.

CONTENT

1. Mosaic covenant (Mt. Sinai)
 - a. Comparison of Noah and Abraham covenants
 - b. Non-stop rebellion of God's people
 - c. Law for righteousness and justice
2. Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)
 - a. Spiritual health and wholeness of community
3. Holiness code (Leviticus 17-26)
 - a. Holiness: being set apart
 - b. Sabbatical/Jubilee years: justice
 - c. The tabernacle
4. Numbers
 - a. Yahweh's anger at Israel (Numbers 13-14)
 - b. Israel rebels against Moses (Numbers 11-14, 16)
 - c. Balaam's blessing (Numbers 22-24)
5. Archeology

MATERIALS, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

1. Complete selected readings from Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers with study guides, quizzes or notes.
2. Memorize Exodus 20:2-17.
3. Have students write paraphrases of the Ten Commandments for God's people today.
4. Have students discuss and/or attempt to live out (for a specific time period) what it means to keep the Sabbath.
5. Show portions of the 1956 *Ten Commandments* film. Discuss alignment between biblical text and the film.
6. Explore the layout of the tabernacle online or via other resources (e.g., www.the-tabernacle-place.com/tabernacle_articles/print/basic_layout.aspx).

Unit 5: BEGINNING OF NATIONHOOD

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Understand the nature of the settlement of Canaan including how the land was occupied and the divisions of the twelve tribes.
2. Study the role of judges and the rise of kingship.
3. Examine the kingship and personal lives of Saul and David.
4. See the glory of the monarchy as well as the abuses of power.
5. Understand God's provision for protection: "holy war."

CONTENT

1. Settlement of the land (Joshua, Judges)
 - a. Twelve tribes
 - b. Twelve judges (Deborah, Samuel)
 - c. Could the settlement have been peaceful if the people had been obedient?
 - d. God's protection: "holy war"
 - e. No central government
2. Rise of kingship (I Samuel)
 - a. Samuel (I Samuel 1-7)
 - b. Saul (I Samuel 8-15)
 - c. David (I Samuel 16-31)
 - d. Clamor for central government
3. Kingdom united (II Samuel; I Kings 1-11)
 - a. Solomon
 - b. Abuse of centralized power
4. The theology and politics of Israel
 - a. The royal psalms
 - b. The songs of Zion

MATERIALS, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

1. Complete selected readings from Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, and I Kings 1-11, with study guides, quizzes or notes.
2. Draw a map of Palestine outlining the twelve tribes (e.g., <http://scribblemaps.com>).
3. Be able to outline basic biographical information on Deborah, Samuel, Saul, David and Solomon.
4. Memorize I Samuel 16:7b.
5. Note activities from the *Serendipity Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

Unit 6: **PROPHETS AND POLITICS**

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Gain a broad understanding of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, including their socio-economic, political and religious climates.
2. Examine the lives of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah as two kings who attempted reform.
3. Examine the calling and prophetic ministry of several prophets including Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Micah, Isaiah and Ezekiel.
4. Study the nature of God’s covenant relationship with his people from the prophet Hosea.
5. Anticipate “the new covenant” as set forth by Jeremiah.

CONTENT

1. Northern Kingdom (I Kings 12-22; II Kings 1-17; Hosea; Amos)
2. Southern Kingdom: (II Kings 18-25; Ezekiel 1-24; Obadiah; Micah; Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah)
 - a. Socio-economic, political and religious climate
 - b. Kings for reform: Jehosophat and Hezekiah
 - c. Prophets of God: Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Micah, Isaiah and Ezekiel
3. Covenant relationship (Hosea)
 - a. God’s covenant relationship with his people
 - b. The meaning of covenant in human relationships
4. Covenant renewed
 - a. Josiah renews covenant.
 - b. Jeremiah sets forth a new covenant.

MATERIALS, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

1. Complete selected readings from I and II Kings and the prophets with study guides, quizzes or notes.
2. Draw a map of Palestine outlining the divided kingdom (e.g., <http://scribblemaps.com>).
3. Write an essay on the meaning of covenant as understood by the prophets.
4. Discuss the role of “covenants,” “contracts” and other pledges in today’s world.
5. Identify key information on each of the kings and prophets studied.

Unit 7: OLD TRADITIONS/NEW VISIONS

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Examine the events that led to captivity.
2. Understand the lives and hopes of God's people in exile.
3. Study the role of prophets in proclaiming hope and restoration.
4. Become familiar with the events of restoration and rebuilding the temple.
5. Examine the prophetic roles of Ezra, Nehemiah and Jonah.
6. Understand the concept of God's nation as a global idea.

CONTENT

1. Exile and rebirth (Isaiah 40-55; Ezekiel 25-39)
 - a. Life in exile
 - b. Rebirth of a people
 - c. Prophets proclaim hope
2. Restoration (Ezra; Nehemiah; Isaiah 56-66; Ezekiel 40-48; Joel; Jonah; Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi; Chronicles)
 - a. Temple restored
 - b. Covenant community restored
3. Hope for God's nation
 - a. A nation with land
 - b. A scattered nation - no land
 - c. An international people
 - d. Jesus: A Man for all nations

MATERIALS, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

1. Complete selected readings with study guides, quizzes or notes.
2. Consider the role of prophets in the church today.
3. Christine Sine has posted a YouTube video entitled *Jesus, a Man for all Nations* which includes images of Jesus from many cultures. Search YouTube for the Christine Sine video dated July 2007. **Always preview online videos before showing.**
4. Work with Mennonite Mission Network or other agencies to make connections with church workers in various countries. Skype or other services can be useful in setting up dialogue that enhances global understandings of the church. Time zone differences can be an obstacle to live conversation and should be a key part of planning.

Unit 8: ISRAEL PUTS ITS FAITH INTO THE BOOK

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Understand how the Hebrews used their Scriptures on festival occasions.
2. Use the understanding gained in interpreting these Scriptures.
3. Identify the differences between the types of Scriptures: law, prophets and wisdom.
4. Gain insights into the meaning of suffering.
5. Understand the literary types of psalms and use this knowledge to help understand specific psalms.

CONTENT

1. The festival scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther)
 - a. Song of Songs at Passover
 - b. Ruth and Pentecost
 - c. The laments
 - d. Esther and Purim
2. The treasury of wisdom
 - a. Proverbs
 - b. Job and the mystery of suffering
3. Insights into the human experience (Psalms)
 - a. Psalm types
 - b. Private and community use
 - c. To love and obey the law

MATERIALS, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

1. Complete selected readings with study guides, quizzes and class notes.
2. Note activities from the *Serendipity Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).
3. Read current events articles or blogs related to those suffering from war, disease, discrimination, natural disasters, etc.
4. Have students write their own psalms, laments and proverbs.
5. Create artwork to illustrate a Scripture passage from the readings suggested.

TEACHER RESOURCES

Used copies of many of these resources are available online (e.g. www.amazon.com).

Barrett, Lois. *The Way God Fights*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1987. Peace and Justice Series #1.

Cardozo, Arlene R. *Jewish Family Celebrations*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.

Creation Chronicles. Ted and Lee. Third Way Media, 1999. DVD.

SCENES: The Creation, Cain & Abel, The Flood, The Tower of Babel, Abraham, Desert Song, The Golden Calf, Jericho, Samuel, Solomon, Jeremiah, WXP (Prophet Radio), Jonah, Advent

Available from <https://store.thirdwaymedia.org/p-205-creation-chronicles-dvd.aspx>

Drane, John. *Introducing the Old Testament*. Rev. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.

Finkel, Donald L. *Teaching with Your Mouth Shut*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2000.

Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. The Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO). Web. <<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia>>

Harris, Stephen, and Robert Platzner. *The Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* 2nd ed. Columbus: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008.

Herschberger, Michele. *God's Story, Our Story: Exploring Christian Faith and Life*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 2003.

Jenkins, Simon. *The Bible from Scratch*. Oxford: Lion, 2009.

L'Engle, Madeline. *Sold Into Egypt: Joseph's Journey Into Human Being*. Wheaton: Shaw, 2000.

Lederach, Paul. *A Third Way*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1980.

Miller, John W. *Meet the Prophets: A Beginner's Guide to the Books of the Biblical Prophets*. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987.

Moyer, Joanne. *Earth Trek: Celebrating and Sustaining God's Creation*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 2004.

Newland, Mary Reed. *Written on Our Hearts: The Old Testament Story of God's Love*. 3rd ed. Winona: Saint Mary's Press, 2009.

Read the Book: A Reading Record for the Whole Bible. Scottdale: Faith & Life Resources, 2006.

The Revised Common Lectionary. Vanderbilt Divinity Library. Web.
<<http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu>>

Serendipity Bible: For Personal and Small Group Study. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

The TNT Bible Collection. Turner Classic Movies, 1994/1996/1997. DVD. Six-disc set includes "Jacob," "Joseph," "Abraham," "Samson and Delilah," "Moses" and "David." Twelve-disc set includes "Jeremiah," "Solomon," "Genesis," "Esther," "Paul the Apostle," "The Apocalypse," "Samson and Delilah," "Moses," "Joseph," "Jacob," "David" and "Abraham."

Wiesel, Elie. *Messengers of God.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

APPENDIX

The People of God: A Story Begun

Assignment: Spiritual Autobiography

Keep in mind that this assignment is intended to be of maximum value to **you**. The following questions should assist you in getting started.

MY STORY, MY HOPES AND MY DREAMS

1. When and where I was born
2. What my life was like before I went to school
3. My school days in elementary, middle and high school (to date)
4. The story of my learning to know about God
5. My response to Jesus Christ
6. My hopes and dreams for the future, and the part that Jesus and the church have in my hopes and dreams
7. Other interesting parts to my personal story, dreams and hopes