

Entering the World of the Old Testament: Reading Scripture with Ancient Eyes

Reflection Worksheet for Continued Study: A guide for personal reflection on timeline, genre, ancient context, and your own place in the story.

1. Where Am I in the Story?

- a. Which part of Israel's story (Patriarchs, Exodus, Wilderness, Conquest, Monarchy, Exile, Return) resonates most with your life right now? Why?
- b. What emotions or themes from that period connect with your current faith journey?
- c. How does seeing the Old Testament as a lived story change the way you read it?

2. Connecting Genre to the Ancient World

- a. Law: How might the covenant laws have helped shape Israel's identity after coming out of Egypt? What kind of identity-shaping guidance do you rely on today?
- b. History: How can the themes of reconciliation, personal encounter, and transformation help you read historical books differently?
- c. Poetry & Wisdom: What human experiences (joy, grief, fear, hope) do you see reflected in Psalms, Job, or Proverbs? How do these writings give voice to your own life?
- d. Prophets: What challenges was Israel facing when prophets like Isaiah or Jeremiah spoke? How do prophetic themes of justice, faithfulness, and hope speak to our world today?

3. How the Book Categories Reflect Israel's Lived Experience

- a. Which category (Law, History, Poetry/Wisdom, Prophets) feels most relatable to you as a modern reader? Why?
- b. How does knowing the struggle or situation Israel faced help you understand a book's message more clearly?
- c. What does it mean to you that Scripture arose from real moments of human messiness, crisis, celebration, doubt, and hope?

4. Examples of Each Genre and Their Function

Reflect on one of the following (or another passage of your choice):

- Law: Deuteronomy 6 or Exodus 19
- History: 2 Samuel 12
- Poetry: Psalm 113 or Psalm 139
- Wisdom: Job 28 or Proverbs 3
- Prophets: Amos 5

What new insight emerges when you consider the passage with ancient eyes?

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5. In what ways does Scripture shape your own identity, imagination, or spiritual life?

6. Why These Books? What Needs Were They Addressing?

- a. What human question or need do you think each category or book addresses?
- b. Which of those needs do you personally identify with most today?
- c. How does this understanding help you approach the Old Testament with fresh perspective?

7. Geography as Theology: Place in the Story

- a. Which biblical places (wilderness, mountains, rivers, Jerusalem, exile lands) stand out most to you?
- b. What spiritual themes are connected to those places?
- c. How does thinking about physical settings enrich your reading of Scripture?

8. A Three-World Reading Approach

Choose any Old Testament passage and reflect:

- World Behind the Text: What historical, cultural, or geographical background might matter here?
 - World Of the Text: What features of genre, structure, or imagery stand out?
 - World In Front of the Text: How does this text speak into your life and community today?
- a. What did you discover about the ancient world?
 - b. What features helped shape the meaning?
 - c. What personal or communal insight emerges as you bring the text into the present?

9. Bringing It All Together

- a. How has learning about context—timeline, themes, categories—changed your understanding of the Old Testament?
- b. What question or theme do you want to continue exploring?
- c. How might you approach reading Scripture differently going forward?