Reflection: Old Testament Survey

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The Old Testament is a unique literature that besides its commandments and laws offers a unique insight into the history of Israel, engrossing a person in stories that are thousands of years old which have captured the imagination and heart of readers and the faithful ever since. In the course readings from Lasor, et al. (1996), I gained a number of insights that have personally impacted me as a man of faith. The *Old Testament Survey* offers unique historical perspectives that present the history of significant events in the Old Testament in an objective and historically accurate manner that has allowed me to comprehend Jewish history not just from the religious perspective but an anthropological, literary and sociological perspective as well. In the paper, I will reflect upon three key concepts and events that I found to be personally appealing and insightful, and attempt to share some of the perspectives and viewpoints I gained from the reading.

In the book, Lasor and colleagues (1996) offer a detailed account of the history of the patriarchs with an emphasis on Abraham as a key historic individual who personified faith. The history of Abraham is a stark reminder to the faithful how faith leads one to develop a personally close relationship to God. I learned from the reading that Paul regarded Abraham as the father of the faithful and believers in God[[1]](#footnote-1). Abraham, his son Isaac and grandson Jacob are personifications of mankind’s relationship to God. Yet among all, I find that Lasor (1996) gave the most important to Abraham's story in the Old Testament, as the key patriarch. A number of verses from the Old Testament are cited that depict the personal relationship between God and Abraham in which Lasor (1996) stresses on God’s initiative and purpose regarding Abraham in Genesis. I find the perspective unique and interesting that God made the covenant with Abraham for his purpose and initiative, and this understanding provides me a deeper understanding of the significance Abraham carried among all the Patriarchs and Prophets.

In Genesis, Lasor (1996) relates the account of Abraham being severely tested in his faith by God, who intervenes to save Abraham and his family at the final moments. One of the biggest tests Abraham faces was to sacrifice his son. “Take your son, your only son Isaac whom you love…and offer him there (in the land of Moriah) as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen 22:2). I learned the significance of the story when I looked into the deeper perspectives surrounding the event that Lasor (1996) offered; it was an unimaginably difficult test of faith that Abraham realized that God had the right to demand. It shows the total commitment God expects from a man who is complete in his faith, and only when God was satisfied with Abraham’s commitment, a ram replaced his son. For me, it is a reminder of the duty man owes to God, and helps me stay focused on the objectives in my life that are aligned with God’s mission.

The other concept I found highly interesting in the reading was the Golden age of Israel that Lasor (1986) discussed in the context of the reign of King David and his son. David "reigned over Israel for forty years, seven and a half in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem." The reign of King David marks a special phase in the history of Israel that started with David's reign and ended with the death of King Solomon in around 833 BC. It is also interesting for me to observe that each civilization in history enjoyed a golden period that saw economic, cultural and military advancement but the golden age of Israel was something unique, as it was built on the foundation of Moses and his Law. I see in terms of how It finally achieved what Moses had started by rescuing the Children of Israel from slavery and Pharoah’s oppression and provided for them a moral and legal code to govern themselves with. The golden age was what that nation was being prepared for. In his reign, David united all the Jews into a single national entity, set the stage for the building of the Temple and conquered the enemies of Israel.

Lasor (1986) outlines the changes Israel saw as King David took over. Jerusalem became Israel’s religious center and the political capital for both Israel and Judah[[2]](#footnote-2). The Ark was brought by the King to the city, something that had remained hidden in storage for a long time after the Philistines returned it. I learned the symbolic importance of bringing the Ark to Jerusalem as it symbolized a unifying element that strengthened Israel's bond with Judah. What is also interesting was the religious and spiritual nature of David's reign that was discussed in the chapter. David was an ardent and sincere devotee and worshipper of God. It not only paved the way for his acceptance but in my view, became the reason why he was favored by God above everyone else. His expansions are thus not imperialistic because imperial expansions are motivated only by a quest for resources. His expansion brought the Law and Justice of God with it. Lasor discussed his political marriages to his armies who would follow him everywhere he went. He defended Israel from the west and expanded the kingdom towards the east, and gained control over key trade routes. Eventually, the kingdom of Israel also saw itself become an economic power with Jerusalem as its capital. The golden age saw an extension with David’s heir, Solomon who went on to became the undisputed ruler of the land. In my view, studying this period opens up a lot of perspectives about the nature of the God-centric civilization that was Israel, and how it differs from the Greek, Persian or the Han empires.

The third important concept I learned in the readings was the significance of the Old Testament itself for people of Christian faith[[3]](#footnote-3). In my understanding of the Christian doctrine, the Old Testament is equally a part of the Bible as is the New Testament. It was, as Lasor (1986) explains, the key scripture for the early generations of Christians and continued to be for the first few centuries. Although, there have been those who did not accept the place of the Old Testament in Christian religious writings yet a significant majority has always upheld it as part of the sacred canon and scripture. For me, the most compelling argument is that the Old Testament itself had a key role in the life of Jesus, who received spiritual nourishment from the scripture. It inspired its consoling messages in his heart and was a source of evidence to prove the divinity of Jesus' mission. It foretold of his arrival, and thus I hold it to have a principal position in Christian doctrine.

The other important thing to be learned from Lasor’s discussion on the topic is that the whole Bible is linked to the character and nature of a human being, and the Old Testament provides us with key insights about it. The primary concepts to be gained from the reading is that a person of faith realizes that God speaks and reveals Himself to his agents or Prophets, and communicates through them his Will to mankind and creation. However, the Christian also realizes that the process was incomplete until the arrival of the Messiah. This leads the Christian reader of the Old Testament towards the New Testament, and in my view, Lasor (1986) provides an excellent account of how interconnected the Old, and the New Testaments are.

# Bibliography

Lasor, William Sanford, David Allan Hubbard, Frederic William Bush, and Leslie C. Allen. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament.* 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996.

1. Lasor, William Sanford, David Allan Hubbard, Frederic William Bush, and Leslie C. Allen. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament.* 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996. 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lasor, William Sanford, David Allan Hubbard, Frederic William Bush, and Leslie C. Allen. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament.* 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996. 181 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lasor, William Sanford, David Allan Hubbard, Frederic William Bush, and Leslie C. Allen. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament.* 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996. 585 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)