

Institute of Christian Teaching
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**THE BIBLE AS A SOURCE IN INTRODUCTORY HISTORY LESSONS:
PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE IN
THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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1. Introduction

This presentation entitled “The Bible as a Source in Introductory History Lessons” should give a practical idea of how to use a generally-known, world widespread book. First, I want to explain the chosen subject in detail. Afterwards, I would like to present the outline of my presentation.

Personally, I am trying to create very vivid, illustrated history lessons. Especially in this course, pupils have the possibility of taking a good look at the events in our world and step-by-step understand current events, as well as politics and economics. In order to achieve this basis it has to be structured according to their age groups. Of course, in grade 6, social structures can be explained, but today’s complex system with its worldwide interdependence can only be shown over a period of time. History classes greatly contribute to political education, as there is the possibility of studying the development of different systems of government, starting from their rise through their apex until their decline.

Especially in introductory history classes, themes such as *Early Advanced Civilizations*, *The Greeks* and *The Romans* can be presented by means of concrete examples which, often consciously for the first time, confronting the pupils with the question: “How was it in the past – how it is today?” Only in later years will the question why be asked more and more often and then can partially be answered by the young persons themselves.

In introductory history lessons, the pupils gain an insight into the variety of and work with sources. Apart from buildings and the ruins, clothes or similar items, books and websites are the most important way of discovering tradition in the earliest centuries. For the young it is always exciting to make their own discoveries, to settle questions or to master themes with different aspects by themselves. But often, there is a problem in obtaining the sources. Originals are either too expensive - and thus they are not at the disposal of all the pupils as required (copies, quality, etc.) - or they are written in foreign languages.

But if one thinks with the pupils about obtaining sources a little bit longer, somebody will surely come up with one book containing different stories, mentioning e.g. the Romans or the Egyptians. This book is the most widely spread book in the world, the *Bible*. Every child in Germany is acquainted with it from the religious education in the primary school, thus the

Bible is a *familiar medium*. In (almost) every household in Germany there is a Bible, thus it is also an *easily available source*. During the last decades, scientists have found more and more evidence supporting the historical data and the bibliography, they are an *authentic sources*. The almost total preservation of the original text of the Bible is an important aspect. The Bible is therefore a *reliable source* giving information about other cultures. Without considering the author or his aims in creating the text, one can thus use it as a *neutral source*. For young pupils it is possible (up to a certain degree) to figure out a certain aim which an author had when he created his book, but this requires an intensely cognitive study of the theme which however acts as a deterrent for most of the age-group. Therefore this kind of use of sources in the introductory history classes is to be ruled out. The Bible offers an ideal opportunity for letting the pupils investigate for themselves (everybody has the possibility of working independently, as a researcher). When intensely searching for evidence, they are automatically reading different books or stories in the Bible. Through this, the children are able to gain other insight in on the biblical events (a book in which there are not only stories which sound like fairytales). Now these stories of the Bible are getting a sound, scientifically-proven background. Thus, some of them may find out the truthfulness of the Bible for themselves. At least, one can achieve that the Bible will no longer be regarded as a book of fairytales.

In order to build up a broad basis for my presentation I want to introduce the reader to the currently valid curriculum of the State of Hessen for History classes for the 6th grade (first history course of all). This is to establish a general basis, as even in Germany there are different curricula in the different states. E.g. other states of the Federal Republic of Germany begin with history lessons at a later age, or history is being taught within the framework of social studies together with geography, politics and economics.

Following these general basic presuppositions, I would like to describe how to find out the different characteristics of a source with the pupils. In connection with this, the pupils should also learn about the various kinds of sources, such as maps, texts, pictures, etc. An analysis of the source can be elaborated concerning its essential features like author, form, target group or contents. This makes it easier to compare parallel text passages. When using the Bible as a source, one should take care that of all the pupils become versed in finding chapters and verses. It is also necessary for the teacher to verify whether the youth are using a complete Bible or a Children's bible, i.e. without corresponding subdivisions in books, chapters or verses.

In my fourth chapter, I would like to deal with different examples of practical teaching in detail. There, I would like to make a juxtaposition of themes, possible helpful instructions and corresponding passages in the Bible. However it is not possible to be comprehensive here, as there are certainly more passages which could be used for the themes mentioned, but I will limit myself in order not to go beyond the scope of this presentation. The same is valid for the selection of the examples. I would like this part to be understood as only suggestions for a non-conventional use of the Bible in the introductory history classes and not as completely elaborated, detailed guidelines (or even as comprehensive class notes indicating all the materials or solutions for the task descriptions given).

In chapter five I would like to present Nebuchadnezzar's Dream as an additional topic for introductory history lessons. It can be viewed as a summary of all the main themes in the curriculum.

With my presentation I would like to make a contribution to bring young persons in contact with the Bible in a way which is rather unusual for them. Often, they only know this book from religion class or fragmentarily from their Children's Bible. Now, this book itself is brought forward, in another context and under another task description. Here is a possibility for evoking their interest in biblical books yet unknown to them or even in answering questions concerning the Bible in general (e.g. concerning the history of its origin, its contents, the latest status of scientific discussions) in an adequate manner and corresponding to their age-group.

2. Presentation of the curriculum for the history courses in the High School in the State of Hessen

In the 6th grade in Hessen, the first history classes¹ are taught. First of all, the previous knowledge of the pupils should be considered. Here it is important to find out the interests of the children, their concept of the new subject and also their expectations. Maybe some of the pupils have already made a trip to a museum or an archeological digging site with their families or friends.

¹ Lehrplan Geschichte hrsg. vom Hessischen Kultusministerium 2002. p. 7

An introduction to the possibility of different *calendars* is also important. Our usual calendar with “before Christ” and “anno Domini” (BC/AD) is not the only possible way. For some pupils this is totally new and will certainly motivate them to further reflection. The different kinds of sources or the different ways of obtaining information are surely exciting for the young persons of the 21st century, the so-called information age.

Apart from this introduction, different cultures are the subject of the introductory history lessons². The people in the so-called ‘prehistoric times’, that is the phase from hunters and gatherers to farming and to cattle breeding, are to be the basis for contemplation or comparison with early advanced civilizations. Here especially Egypt has to be discussed intensively. Optional is the treatment of Mesopotamia (the two-river country of about 1700 before Christ). Ancient Israel is also an optional subject.

But due to a lack of time you cannot teach all of them. Therefore I have decided to place emphasis on two of them, Egypt and Israel.

The broad subject *Egypt* should include the facts of living in a culture near a big river, including the rising of the Nile, irrigation systems, climate and topography. Moreover, the governmental organization, i.e. living at the court of the Pharaoh, state officials and priests, the simple manual laborer and farmer is the focus point of one teaching sequence. Surely, the young persons are also interested in the third main emphasis – the architecture and writings of the Egyptians. The pyramids are known by most of the children. Apart from these cultural capabilities the art of surveying the land and the development of the writing tools can also be dealt with in more detail.

The religion of the Egyptians or their cult of death offers a good starting-point for a comparison of our beliefs today or the possibility of confronting it with the monotheism of the Israelites. In this context subjects like Abraham, Moses, and the world outlook of the Israelites and the empire of David as well as the Babylonian captivity may be studied³.

The third major teaching sequence is to be *Greece*⁴. The colonization of the Greeks in the Mediterranean region can be a link to this present unit. Often, comparisons can be done

² Lehrplan Geschichte, hrsg. vom hessischen Kultusministerium 2002. p. 9

³ Lehrplan Geschichte, hrsg. vom hessischen Kultusministerium 2002. p.10

⁴ Lehrplan Geschichte, hrsg. vom hessischen Kultusministerium 2002. p. 11

between the already known advanced civilization and the Greeks as anciently dominant power can be done. Especially their religion, their understanding of the world and of human beings, their dominance and their legitimization as well as 'Hellenism' with the empire of Alexander the Great between 336 and 323 BC may be considered.

After ancient Greece, *Rome* is the fourth main subject to be studied⁵. Its rise (from village to the great empire) can be shown in different ways. The influence of the Roman state on the development of Christianity can be dealt with in detail at this point. Moreover, life in the Roman Republic and during the time of the Emperors is to be shown more in detail. As a regional excursus, the different German tribes and their situation in the Roman Empire may be mentioned.

The pupils are to be acquainted with in all the points of view of the history of the human race in a vivid, concrete way. Again the questions "How was it? – How is it today?" is certainly important. Thus, the young persons may learn to look at their environment in a new light. Surely it is interesting to study the shaping of the different religions and the development of Christianity. This whole subject will offer sufficient cause for a discussion of the topic of being a Christian, one's own faith and one's perception of the other religions. The answers in this context will certainly be according to the age-group and less reflective, but nevertheless a valuable contribution to motivating an independent personal faith.

3. Sources in introductory history classes

3.1. The use of sources in history classes

The use of sources in history classes is an indispensable means for developing a concrete, current picture of the different cultures together with the pupils. Texts providing an overview may overcome linguistic barriers, but direct, i.e. contemporary sources, make better impressions on young minds.

Historical sources are traditions from which one can receive details of a certain phase in the past. Apart from written records (e.g. letters, diary entries and documents), pictures,

⁵ Lehrplan Geschichte, hrsg. vom hessischen Kultusministerium 2002. p. 12

jewelry or tools may be studied as relics from former times. The reports of contemporary witnesses or different customs may also supply clues and function as sources for those days.

Of course the different kinds of sources have to be evaluated in a very differentiated way or under the respect of their origin. E.g. a document has to be analyzed in a different way than a picture. This can already be taken into consideration in the first history classes. The pupils are certainly able to distinguish more clearly between the different written or artistic traditions. Also an evaluation of the texts may be of great attraction. Children can only rarely adapt themselves to another kind of formulation, but if one tries to develop some sort of a riddle out of it and tries to decipher the content of a source, e.g. from the myths of Homer, many of them will become curious and will be interested in this so-called 'game'.

I am sure that different types of writing are also very fascinating for children in the 6th grade. Many of them know the Roman numbers from mathematics and are now learning new letters similar to a secret writing, e. g. of the Egyptians and are now able to decipher the hieroglyphs on the tombs. In 1822 Francois Champollion found out how to decode the hieroglyphs⁶. At that point it could be interesting for the students to compare the different types of ancient writings in Egypt, Greece and Rome. Also Hebrew writing could be shown.

When using sources, the dating has to be considered. There, the calendar is important as a further aspect when working with sources. Some children already know our usual way of dating 'before Christ' and 'anno Domini'. Certainly, they are not aware of the meaning of these words. This offers a reason for discussing the importance of Christianity for Europe and our culture as well as for the subject History itself or for presenting other calendar systems such as the Jewish or the Islamic calendars. According to the Jewish calendar the world was created in 3,761 BC, while the Islamic calendar begins with the escape of Mohammed from Mecca 622 AD.

In the context of chronology a discussion of the question "Where do humans come from?" may follow. Then, the Bible may be used as a source and the story of the Creation may be used as a basis for a comparison between other records. Children of the 6th grade with the age of 12 - 13 already have had the subject of sexuality and know the scientific background of human reproduction in the subject of Biology. In this context the question of where

⁶ Forum Geschichte Hessen Band 1. Berlin 2002. p. 66

the first human beings came from may arise. An answer from another discipline is certainly interesting. Apart from Biology, colleagues from the Religion department may also treat the topic “In search of Adam and Eve”.

3.2. The Bible as a source in history classes

In connection with the topic mentioned above there is the possibility of using the Bible as a source in history classes. From their religion classes, the pupils are already acquainted with different biblical events and perhaps have a Bible at home. This is what makes it so easy to introduce the Bible in the first history classes.

First, the pupils should look at the table of contents, and an introduction to deal with the biblical passages has to be given. This will be much easier, if many children or the whole class can use the same Bible – the translations may not vary very much regarding the sense, but the different wording may cause irritation. On the other hand, this may increase the attraction of studying the contents of a text. Everyone has to make a decision regarding his group himself, whether only one edition or different ones are allowed. Perhaps it is possible to borrow Bibles from the school or the public library for the class, the pupils might appreciate this, because it would be more comfortable for them to work with the same layout.

Pupils like to use abbreviations. So they should also know those for the biblical books. Then it could be easier for the students to note the references, when they do this alone.

The development of a guide through the Bible is certainly of great advantage for later usage. Some pupils may have good previous knowledge, and then there is the possibility of having a group of experts who share their knowledge with the other pupils. Together, the most important elements such as chapter and verse, headlines and parallel passages or footnotes can be discovered. One cannot do the work without these basic steps.

A further important point is the authenticity of the Bible and the translations through the centuries. Here, one can go into detail over the discovery of the scrolls of Qumran in 1947⁷. Gaining some insight into archeology is surely very interesting for the pupils. When

⁷ Wegener Günther S.: 6000 Jahre und ein Buch. Kassel 1999. S. 203

you mention those scrolls, you can also invite the pupils to have a closer look at how the Qumran scrolls were found and how the scientists⁸ worked together, more or less, to decode the information.⁹ The proof of authenticity and the exactness of the copying of the biblical books since their origin may be pointed out in more detail as a fascinating element. The scroll of Isaiah may be mentioned as an example¹⁰. Also translations of the oldest books found (in order to avoid linguistic barriers) could be compared with modern translations. By this, the Bible as a scientific, authentic, unadulterated source will receive greater value for further use in class.

As already mentioned above, different themes can be studied by using the Bible. Some of them will be presented as examples in the following chapter. Surely there are other ways of using the Bible as a source in class. In this section, I would like to talk about two possibilities. On the one hand, its usage is possible as evidence for different facts. On the other hand, the pupils may study certain passages for themselves in connection with a corresponding question, i.e. the pupils are looking for answers by means of Bible passages, and secondary literature (portraying texts) will only be used later.

At this point, I would also like to stress the point of cooperation with other colleagues teaching the same pupils other subjects. Sometimes it is very good to teach the same theme in different subjects, so the pupils may see that there are connections between such subjects as geography, art, biology or religion with history. Because of the different appearance of the subject in other contexts, pupil will learn facts, etc. easier than in other ways. It would also be a nice experience for the teachers to help each other und encourage the in colleagues. There are some possibilities of arranging such work – perhaps it is possible to have special day and spend the whole day just with one main theme and some specialist teachers who can also stay with this class the whole day to show a connection between the historical theme and other subjects.

⁸scientists like f.e. historians, linguists or theologians

⁹ Wegener Günther S.: 6000 Jahre und ein Buch. Kassel 1999. S. 203ff

4. Examples of the usage of the Bible as a source

In this chapter I would like to present different topics where the Bible can be used as a source in class. I lay no claim to referring to all the possible biblical source texts, but only as a list to the corresponding sub-divisions. Regarding the topics selected I have only considered those which are dealt with within the introductory history classes in Hessen. Certainly in this context more topics based on the Bible may be studied. It is also possible to use selected passages to start class. Other departments may use the Bible as evidence or stimulation, e.g. the formula for circumference π is mentioned indirectly. In the description of the temple of Salomon, different vessels are indicated. There is, in 1. Kings 7,23 an approximation of the figure for circles π ¹¹. This short excursus shows that the Bible may also be used as a source for other subjects, especially for mathematics.

4.1. The story of Creation

The story of creation may be used in order to show the pupils a common differentiation between so-called 'science' and faith. In this age-group, some have already occupied themselves with the creation of the Earth. The knowledge of the children can be collected and compared with the story of creation in the Bible. Here, common facts and differences may be clearly compared with each other. Certainly, a link is the different terminology, the 'scientific' evolution theory and the biblical Creation. Here, the first questions about the significance will be posed.

The beginning of the world is also a point at which a discussion will occur amongst the young persons in this age-group. Many of them are certainly astonished about the creation of the world and of its young age of several thousand years, whereas there is a 'scientific' opinion talking about the 'big bang' theory, among many other possibilities, estimating the age of the world at several billion years.

Here is a list of topics¹² with the corresponding passages from the Bible¹³:

¹⁰ Maybe it is possible to visit a Jewish temple at that time, or later when the theme Israel is the progress. So pupils can possible feel the main influence of the religion upon the tribe.

¹¹ Lambacher Schweizer Hessen 10. Stuttgart 1997 S. 80

¹² Lexikon zur Bibel. Wuppertal 1998, Stichwort Schöpfung

¹³ The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version. Toronto / London 1952

| Topic | Passage from the Bible |
|-------------------|--|
| Idea of Creation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 1 • Genesis 2 • Genesis 34,10; [...] shall <i>dwell</i> with us [...] • Is 22,11 [...] a reservoir between the <i>two walls</i> for the <i>water</i> [...] • Jer 31,10 [...] declare it in the <i>coastlands</i> afar off [...] |
| Story of Creation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 1 <i>In the beginning God</i> [...] • Genesis 2 <i>Thus heaven and earth were finished</i> [...] • Is 48,12 [...] <i>I am the first, and I am the last</i> [...] • Is 48,13 <i>My hand laid the foundation of the earth</i> [...] • 1.Cor 15,24ff <i>Then comes the end</i> [...] • Col 1,16ff [...] <i>for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible</i> [...] |

4.2. The Egyptians

Dealing with this topic young persons will surely have many questions and will be fascinated by both the differences of their culture and the way of living. Therefore, in this case it is better to make note of their questions, to use the Bible as a source in order to answer them and only later to make use of descriptive texts. Concerning the topic Egypt there are certainly lots of subjects areas, which can be treated. But in order not to go beyond the scope of this presentation I would like to restrict myself to a tabular juxtaposition of selected topics¹⁴ and passages from the Bible¹⁵.

| Topic | Passage from the Bible |
|-------|---|
| Name | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 10,6 [...] son of Ham: Cush, <i>Egypt</i>, Put [...] • Is 11,11 [...] left of his people, from Asyra, from <i>Egypt</i>, [...] • Jer 44,15 [...] who dwell in Pathros in the land of <i>Egypt</i> [...] |
| Area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers 34, 5 [...] and the boundary shall turn from Azmon to the |

¹⁴ Lexikon zur Bibel. Wuppertal 1998, Stichwort: Ägypten

¹⁵ The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version. Toronto / London 1952

| | |
|-------------|---|
| | <p><i>brook of Egypt, and its termination shall be at the sea [...]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jos 15, 4 [...] <i>brook of Egypt, and comes to its end at the sea [...]</i> |
| Nile | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is 19, 5-9 [...] <i>And the waters of the Nile will be dried up and the river will be parched and dry and its canals will become foul [...]</i> • Numbers 11, 5 [...] <i>the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing [...]</i> |
| Agriculture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deuteronomy 11,10 [...] <i>you sowed your seed and watered it with your feet, like a garden of vegetables [...]</i> • Numbers 11,5 [...] <i>the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic [...]</i> • Genesis 46,34 [...] <i>for every shepherd is abolition [...]</i> |
| Religion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 41,45 [...] <i>the daughter of Poti Phera priest of On [...]</i> • Ezek 30,13 [...] <i>I will destroy the idols and put an end to the images, in Memphis there shall not longer be a prince in the land Egypt [...]</i> • Jer. 46,25 [...] <i>and her gods and her kings [...]</i> |
| State | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exodus 6,13 [...] <i>and to Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring [...]</i> • Exodus 20,2 [...] <i>out of the house of bondage [...]</i> • 2. Kings 18,21 [...] <i>Such is the Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. [...]</i> • 2. Kings 23,29 [...] <i>for not he will able to deliver you out of my hand. [...]</i> • Jer 44,30 [...] <i>I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies [...]</i> |
| History | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 12, 20ff <i>And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him; and they set him on the way, with his wife, and all that he had, and lot with him into the Negeb. [...]</i> • 1. Kings 9,16 [...] <i>(Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burnt it with fire, and had slain the Canaanites who dwelt in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter [...]</i> • 1. Kings 11, 40 <i>Solomon sought therefore to kill Jerobo'am; but Jerobo'am a rose, and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, [...]</i> • 1. Kings 14,25 [...] <i>In the fifth year of King Rehobo'am Shishak</i> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Continuation of the Topic History</i> | <p>king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, [...]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2. Kings 18,21 [...] Behold, you are <i>relying now on Egypt</i>, that [...] • Jer 46,2 [...] About Egypt. Concerning the army of <i>Pharao Nece</i>, king of Egypt, witch was be the river Euphra'tes at [...] |
|--|--|

But nevertheless I would like to mention the maps of Egypt, Sinai and Canaan in the Bible. They can also give the students some hints about the topography or a special topic, when it is marked in the map, e.g. the trade routes in those days. With those biblical maps you can make a comparison with our modern facts and boundaries. Perhaps a combined lesson with the geography colleague is possible.

4.3 The Israelites

The topic the Israelites is considered optional in the curriculum of Hessen. This is an opportunity, since it has already been mentioned in the topic "Egypt". The pupils can make use of their knowledge from their religion class. There are surely some pupils who know the film about the Exodus or the animated film "Moses, Prince of Egypt". Thus, some may definitely have previous knowledge. Then it is possible to collect this knowledge and to assign it to groups. Contrary to the method mentioned above, I would prefer, here at this point, to use the Bible as text evidence after having discussed some items already. A comparison (combined with the colleague responsible for the Religion class) between the topics Christianity and Judaism is possible. The development of the two world religions is an exciting thing and very well shows the common possibilities of subjects, which are normally separated. Here integrated thinking and learning can be introduced. But now back to the theme 'the Israelites'. Here are many different items or areas, which can be treated in class. Due to time limits, a look at only the main points can to be considered. In order to give an overview I want to present some selected topics¹⁶ in tabular form with the corresponding passages from the Bible¹⁷.

¹⁶ Lexikon zur Bibel, Wuppertal 1998, Stichwort: Israel

¹⁷ The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version. Toronto / London 1952

| Topic | Passage from the Bible |
|--------------------------|---|
| Name | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 32,28 [...] <i>no more Jacob, but Israel</i>, [...] • Genesis 46,8 [...] Now these are the names of the <i>descendants of Israel</i>, who came to Egypt, [...] • Exodus 1,1 [...] these are <i>the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob</i> [...] |
| Division of the Empire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2. Sam 2,9 [...] and he made him king over [...] and all Israel [...] |
| Continuation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jer 10,1 [...] O house of Israel [...] |
| Babylonian Captivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezra 9,1 [...] people of Israel and the priests and the Levites <i>have not separated themselves</i> from the peoples of the Lands with their abominations, from Canaanites [...] • Ezra 10,5 [...] <i>Ezra arose</i> and made the leading priests and Levites and all Israel take oath that [...] • Neh 9,1ff [...] the <i>Israelites separated themselves</i> from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins [...] • Neh 11,3 [...] These are the chiefs of the province who lived in Jerusalem; but in the towns of Judah every one lived on his property [...] |
| Jesus and the Israelites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 12,ff Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will you make a great nation [...] • Exodus 19,5 [...] if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, <i>you shall be my own possession</i> among all peoples; for all the earth is mine [...] |
| Egypt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 46 (pilgrim, settlement) • Genesis 47 • Exodus 1 (lowercase) • Exodus 12, 34ff [...] for they had asked of the Egyptians jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing, so that they let them have what they asked [...] |

4.4. The Greeks

The pupils should have previous knowledge of this topic. The Bible may be used as a source of evidence for the colonization, as well as for the modern elements in the time of antiquity. Greek language and letters were spread all this over the whole Mediterranean area. Even early documents of the Bible exist in Greek. At point it would be possible to mention the archaeological finds of Qumran once more. They were written in the 2nd century BC. and much older than the other copies of the Bible in Hebrew¹⁸.

Not only the inhabitants from Attica or Sparta were named Greeks, but also the Jews speaking Greek:

Acts 6,1 [...] the *Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews* [...] ¹⁹

Acts 9,29 [...] and *disputed against the Hellenists*; but [...] ²⁰

In this context it is possible to deal with the journeys of Apostle Paul, who visited several cities in the Mediterranean area. This is a possible link to the topic *colonization and trade or traffic and transportation* in the time of Hellenism. Here, the maps of the Bible are very useful.

On hand of the voyages of Paul I would now like to show now how the biblical maps could be used. Perhaps it is possible to hand out a bigger map as copies, so the pupils have the possibility of gaining insights into this map. Another suggestion could be, to have the students copy a map out of an atlas, illustrate it by themselves and there note the journeys of Paul. In my opinion this topic could also be a good opportunity to connect the subject history with the art, geography and religion class.

And then one could go on to discuss the possibilities of traffic and trade in the Mediterranean area, using other secondary literature. At this point it would be interesting to make a comparison between the towns with are mentioned in the map and the main trading areas at this time. It would also be a point of interest whether those stations still exist today or have become ghost towns in time part. So the pupils could find similarities in the names and to which country those stations now belong.

¹⁸ Wegener Günther S.: 6000 Jahre und ein Buch. Kassel 1999. p 216

¹⁹ Holy Bible Revised Standard Version. Toronto / London 1952

²⁰ Holy Bible Revised Standard Version. Toronto / London 1952

According to my experience, it would be more interesting for the students if they could do practical work mixed up with dry theory, like doing map studies and work out trading routes. But if they could do this job independently or perhaps in partnership with another student, this would be more effective, one looking for the travel route, the other drawing each station on the map.

Now I would like to draw up a list of the four Journeys of Paul and the different stations in a table²¹ :

| Journey | Different stations |
|---|--|
| 1 | Acts 13, 1 – 15, 35: <i>Antioch – Seleucia – Cyprus – Salamis – Paphos – Perga in Pamphyl'ia – Antioch of Pisid'ia – Ico'nium – Lystra – Derbe – Lystra – Ico'nium – Antioch of Pisid'ia – Perga in Pamphyl'ia – Attali'a – Antioch</i> |
| 2 Here an alternative route can be mentioned in the Bible | Act 15, 36 – 18, 22: <i>Jerusalem – Antioch (Syr) – Derbe – Lystra – Tro'as – Sam'othrace – Neap'olis – Philippi – Macedo'nia – a Roman colony – Amphip'olis – Apollo'nia – Thessaloni'ca – Athen – Corinth – Cen'chre-ae – Antioch (Syr)</i> |
| 3 Here an alternative route can be mentioned in the Bible | Acts 18, 23 – 21, 17: <i>Antioch (Syr) – Tarsus – Derbe – Lystra – Antioch of Pisid'ia – Ephesus – Tro'as – Philippi – Thessaloni'ca – Athen – Corinth – Thessaloni'ca – Philippi – Ephesus – Cen'chre-ae – Jerusalem</i> Acts |
| 4 | Acts 27,1 – 28,16: <i>Cen'chre-ae – Sidon – Myra – Cnidus – Lasea – Malta – Puteoli – Appifor – Tre-tabern – Rom</i> |

²¹ The Holy Bible Revised Standard Version. Toronto / London 1952

4.5. The Romans

Almost every child knows this topic indirectly by means of the ‘Christmas story’ or a special computer program by Microsoft named Nero burning. Linked to this may be the administration of the Roman Empire in Jesus’ times and then turn to the origin or the development of Christianity, the persecution of the Christians, its installation as a state religion, and the division or ruin of the empire. Here are also some selected topics²² with the corresponding passages from the Bible in a tabular overview²³:

| Topic | Passage from the Bible |
|------------------------|--|
| City Rome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation 17,9 [...] <i>the seven hills</i> [...] |
| Romans – Jewish people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matthew 22,17-21 [...] <i>taxes to Caesar</i> [...] • Luke 2,1-7 [...] <i>Qurinius was governor of Syria</i> [...] • Luke 3,1ff [...] <i>reign of Tiberius Pontius, Pilatus Pilate</i> [...] • Acts 12,1 [...] <i>Herod the king laid violent hands</i> [...] • Acts 25,11+12 [...] <i>I appeal to Caesar. Then Festus</i> [...] |
| Christianity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts 18, 2 [...] <i>commande all the Jews to leave Rome</i> [...] • Acts 28,16 [...] <i>with the soldier that guarded him</i> [...] • Acts 28, 31 [...] <i>quite openly and unhindered</i> [...] • Romans 1, 7 [...] <i>To all God's beloved in Rome</i> [...] • Romans 1,15 [...] <i>eager to preach the gospel to you</i> [...] • Romans 15, 23 ff [...] <i>no longer have room for work</i> [...] |

But even the city of Rome is very interesting for the pupils, some will know it because of films like Ben Hure, Caesar and Gladiator. In Germany, we also have the possibility of visiting some Roman places, e.g. Trier, Aschaffenburg, Mainz or Köln. But also smaller castles like the Saalburg / Taunus would be very interesting for the pupils. There they could get the feel of history and antiquity and get in closer contact with the subject.

²² Lexikon zur Bibel, Wuppertal 1998. Stichwort: Römer

²³ Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version. Toronto / London 1952

5. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

This topic is not mentioned as optional in the curriculum of Hessen. I had a long debate with myself to add it to this essay as a suggestion for introductory history lessons. In my point of view it really could be one and there are several reasons for using it as a topic in history lessons. For example it can be used at the beginning of the history lessons to open the early advanced civilizations when you have introduced the different calendars and pre-history. Then pupils would have an overview, which could be used as a basis for the other following lessons dealing with Egypt, etc. But in my opinion you can also deal with these verses at the end, as a summary of the school year. Later I will give some more ideas on how to do this.

At the beginning of with this topic I would like to quote the verses of Daniel 2,31ff, which are important²⁴:

This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the sons of men, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, making you rule over them all – you are the head of gold. After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things; and like iron which crushes, it shall break and crush all these. And as you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. As you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of those kings of God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever; just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.

²⁴ Quoted from: The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version. Toronto / London 1952

Through the year, the pupils will get to know many of those kingdoms mentioned. Perhaps with the help of other biblical verses or an encyclopedia, they can now find out, perhaps with the help of other biblical verses or an encyclopedia, who the other kings are - so you could use it like a riddle. The pupils could again see which is the first and which is the last main ancient kingdom. So it could be used as a summary of the school year.

Now I would like just to give you a quick overview of the different kingdoms which are mentioned in the verses above. It could be possible to let the pupils make the applications by themselves with some further information or verses in the Bible²⁵:

| Kingdom with material | Translation / Interpretation |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| the head of gold | Babylon |
| another kingdom inferior to you | Medo-Persia |
| third kingdom of bronze | Greece |
| fourth kingdom, strong as iron | Rome |
| saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron [...] a divided kingdom; | Modern Europe |

You could also let them do some practical things with around these verses in Daniel 2,31ff. One possibility could be to try to build a statue as is mentioned which only has the same appearance, surely not with the same materials. Perhaps it would be possible to arrange the measurement of the statue in a scale, which is connected with the rule of those kingdoms. But it would also be a nice thing to let the pupils draw pictures of this dream statue. Another suggestion could be a theater play about Daniel or the king Nebuchadnezzar which the pupils could write on their own, maybe perform it for the parents or make a video recording.

Apart from those methods mentioned to go through this topic, it is important to make sure that the students have basic information about those kingdoms which is not the focus of the curriculum. As an alternative, you could give some main questions like about the land, the trade or agricultural facts and let them do a comparison with Egypt or Rome.

²⁵ It is easy to find some verses for each kingdom in a encyclopedia of the Bible.

There might be a place in your school where you and your class could arrange an exhibition with all of the things you have worked out through this topic and invite other classes, colleagues or the parents to the exhibition. This could really be a high point at the end of the school year.

6. Conclusions

My aim in this presentation was to show the possibilities of using the Bible as a source in history classes. This topic is limited to beginning history classes, as there the topics can be dealt with using the Bible directly. No time-robbing research in specialized literature is necessary in order to mention or prove historical events. Language or availability is no obstacle. The Bible is known world-wide and extant in many different translations. It cannot be expected that every child has the same edition in each class, but this is no obstacle when working with the Bible in history classes.

The topics selected offer a great scope of applicability. The introduction to the structure of the Bible, history in its origins, etc. does make sense, thus being a meaningful excursion. The use of the Bible and independent research projects with corresponding topic certainly support the interest in the Bible itself. In searching for evidence in its passages or in working with the separate books or chapters, many pupils will gain a different approach to this book. This may provoke a further, independent study, even if the pupils of 12 to 13 years are in an age which questions and is critical of everything.

With these suggestions, one can surely show the Bible in another (favorable) light. Also the biblical message is presented in another context, thus not only in church or within the Religion classes. Certainly in this context is the teacher needs instinctive intuitions not only concerning the topics but also for their preparation. Everybody has to be aware of her/his own position referring to these topics, as the question concerning the teacher's personal attitude will surely arise. This shows how important a well grounded knowledge of the Bible is for believers and only in this way is it possible to answer the different questions in a quick and specific way or to instruct the pupils in finding out the answer by themselves.

This essay also intends to give some opportunities of connecting different subjects together, e.g. you could cooperate with art, geography and biology or physics but with religion as well. Perhaps it would be possible to arrange an exhibition at your school to show other students, colleagues and parents something about the topic. Sometimes it would even be possible to write a little play about a topic or even a newspaper with 'news' about that era. The topics mentioned have not been presented in their full scale of possible suggestions for working with the Bible as a historical source. This would have been beyond the scope of my work. I would prefer to have my presentation understood as a suggestion for further research into for additional topics for using the Bible as a source in history classes. This would give possibility of relating to my pupils my experience with my faith and introducing them to faith.

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