



Shepherds Theological Seminary  
Israel Initiative - Program and Protocols 2020-2021

The Israel Initiative Defined and Described

1a Substance of the Initiative

A 3-unit course has been introduced into the seminary curriculum which includes first a stateside classroom experience (lectures, reading & written assignments, exam) and, following that class, a 14-day Study Trip to Israel. The course, including both the stateside class and the Study Trip, will be provided to qualified STS students basically for the cost of tuition.

In addition, the seminary recognizes the value of a study trip to non-student travelers such as student spouses, STS alumni and certain ministry partners, and would like to provide such individuals the opportunity to participate in the Study Trip at their own expense. Non-student travelers should understand that the primary emphasis of the Initiative is to provide sound instruction to STS students; therefore decisions regarding participation on the trip will be made to support that goal.

2a The Definition Specified

1b It is imperative that students and travelers understand what the commitment of STS *is* in this regard, and what it is *not*!

1c Positively, Shepherds Seminary is committed to trust God and to struggle carefully in the effort to provide STS students with a genuine and *affordable* study trip to Israel as part of their studies at the seminary. That commitment is born of the persuasion that any serious student of Scripture, but especially one who is pursuing a calling to preach and teach those Scriptures, is greatly advantaged by a careful study trip to the land of Israel.

But a trip of this sort costs at least eight times the tuition cost of the course. In order to make it possible to offer the experience *affordably* – which we have defined as demanding of the student basically the cost of tuition – the seminary has had to find donors who are capable of underwriting almost all the expenses of the travel and trip, and who believe in the value of the experience as part of the training of those who will handle the Scriptures. This is why we are careful to refer to the effort as an “initiative”; STS is sufficiently convinced of the worth of such a Study Trip that we have taken the initiative and have waited upon God and worked hard to provide the funds. God has blessed those efforts. STS Study Trips took place in 2012, 2013, and 2014. But the funding of the Initiative is no mean effort, and we have no right to presume upon the future. Therefore...

2c Negatively, the Initiative must not be taken as a contractual obligation on the part of the seminary to provide a study trip to Israel for the cost of tuition. It is simply and only a commitment to work to make that happen. Further, eligibility for the Study Trip will be qualified in several ways, and the student must not assume that he will be included. Finally, funds are limited, and thus students who do apply in a given year will be prioritized according to a number of factors (iterated below), some

more objective than others. In that regard, STS will expect any student who does make application to do so with the animating recognition that the Study Trip is not his to expect or claim, that funds – and thus the availability of the trip to those needing those funds – are limited, and that some hard decisions may have to be made relative to who is accepted into the Class & Study Trip in a given year.

- 3c In order to be faithful stewards of the funds being raised toward the stated seminary goal of training STS students, non-student travelers are responsible for covering the entire cost of the trip. This includes arranging and paying for individual airfare, and providing the seminary with payment for the “land costs” associated with the trip. Please contact the seminary for specific information on cost and payment options.

2b Some fine points of specification:

- 1c The commitment is to provide the Study Trip for STS students *who will graduate from the institution with an accredited degree or institutional diploma*. The seminary recognizes that plans sometimes change and intentions are sometimes frustrated. But we will ask each student registering for the Study Trip to stipulate that he/she fully intends to graduate from the seminary, that she/he is making steady and deliberate progress toward that goal, and that participation in the Study Trip will not in any foreseeable way interfere with that progress.
- 2c The Initiative is born of the realization that a genuine Study Trip would be invaluable as part of a seminary education, but that such a trip lies beyond the financial means of most seminary students. That is the rationale upon which donors have been approached, and the reason for which the donations have been made. We believe God is in the effort, and those donors are eager to help STS students avail themselves of this experience. If, on the other hand, any interested student is financially able to cover the costs of the trip, or even to defray those costs in part (either with his own funds or with funds available to him), we would beseech him to do that. Again, the Initiative is not funded from some bottomless reserve; the trip of each supported student must be covered by donors convinced of the value of the effort. It would be unconscionable for a student to avail himself of those funds if, in fact, he was able to cover the cost from his own funds with no strain or difficulty. But having said that, know that the seminary is working with the assumption that students cannot afford a trip such as this. That will be our default understanding unless you inform us otherwise.
- 3c At any rate, STS calls upon any participating student – and especially those whose costs are covered by donated funds – to regard the opportunity with a profound sense of stewardship, realizing that someone has in fact given generously and sacrificially to make the Study Trip possible, that those benefactors who have donated to make the Initiative a reality did so without any knowledge as to who the beneficiaries of that selfless generosity would be. Certainly, the only morally appropriate response to all of that is for the student thus enabled to embrace the opportunity with a heart filled with gratitude and with a mind fully determined to work and pray so as to get everything possible out of the experience, to the end that the investment made by those donors would pay rich dividends throughout the years of ministry for which that student is preparing himself.
- 4c The intent of the Initiative is that the Study Trip will be *almost* entirely provided for the student at a cost equal to tuition. The student will be charged for 3 units of class at the rate he/she normally pays. The student must also understand that the seminary will then cover a significant portion of the “land costs” of the trip including hotel accommodations, tour bus expenses, entrance fees, teacher/guide, tips, and breakfast/supper.

On the other hand, there will be *some* expenses that students will have to cover. Specifically:

- 1) Airfare costs which exceed the travel credit provided by the seminary: Each student will be responsible to *arrange* for his own airfare (but not to finance that airfare entirely – keep reading!); the group will assemble on a given date in Tel Aviv to begin the Study Tour. On several counts, this procedure works better than trying to arrange group air, but it means that *air costs will not be standard for all travelers*. The commitment of the Initiative is to include a travel credit toward the air cost of each student. Thus, the participating student will be responsible to raise any funds to cover the cost above that credit.

Note: Again, if the student is able to fund his air travel via air miles (his own or those contributed to him) or special relationships (a relative who works for the airlines), we would expect and request that he husband that resource. And further, if air can be purchased for less than the credit, the student should receive only enough to cover the actual costs of air travel.

- 2) Transportation between hotels and airport at beginning /end of trip. Average cost for this expense is \$40-\$60 in total.
- 3) Lunches: The cost will average about \$15/day; there will be ways to economize, but the traveler is well-advised to plan to spend about that much each day on lunch.

NOTE: Non-student travelers are responsible for their own airfare and do not receive a travel credit from the seminary. Payment to the seminary for the cost of the trip covers “land costs” which include hotel accommodations, tour bus expenses, entrance fees and teacher/guide. In addition, non-student travelers are responsible for:

- 1) Transportation between hotels and airport at beginning /end of trip. Average cost for this expense is \$40-\$60 in total.
- 2) Lunches: The cost will average about \$15/day; there will be ways to economize, but the traveler is well-advised to plan to spend about that much each day on lunch.

#### Expectations of those participating in The Israel Initiative

- 1a Students are expected to enroll and participate in the 3-credit History and Geography of Israel course (BE513) *if in fact that course is required in their course of study*. The course is composed of both a stateside classroom component and the 14-day Study Trip to the land of Israel. The stateside classroom section of the course must be completed prior to the student traveling to Israel.

Non-student travelers are expected to participate in the stateside classroom lectures prior to departure to Israel in order to be part of the Study Trip. Non-student travelers are welcome to attend classes in person; however the stateside class will be recorded and made available remotely. The requirement is that each traveler must have participated in the lectures and exercises included in the class; it is not that each traveler be in attendance when the class is initially taught.

#### 1b CATALOG DESCRIPTION of the Course:

##### **BE 513 History and Geography of Israel**

A thorough study of the land of Israel in the days of the Bible. Emphasis will be upon geography, topography, geology, climate and agricultural cycles, as well as issues relating to the archeology of the land and a brief survey of the history of the modern state of Israel. Classroom study will anticipate a study trip to the modern land of Israel. The purpose of the stateside class is first of all to enable the student to rightly assess the land as the stage on which the drama of Scripture was played out and secondly to equip the student to get as much as possible out of the Study Trip to follow. Units: 3

2b NOTES regarding the stateside classroom requirement:

1c The anticipatory classroom experience will be advantageous on several counts:

- 1d Absent the stateside classroom experience, all of the necessary instruction and lectures would have to be included during the time in Israel. When all of this is done in the land the schedule becomes so taxing that the student is unable to absorb the material as effectively as one would hope.
- 2d It is very difficult to absorb the measure of data which is compressed into a trip of just 10-13 days, given the sheer volume of the material. The best help for that is for the student to already have familiarized himself with much of that information, especially the defining dynamics of the land.
- 3d Because we will not need the time for those lectures in Israel, we can save several days in the land, thus reducing the cost of the experience significantly. That is, we can cover in 10-11 days the same ground that most seminary trips cover in 14-15 days, simply because we do not need to set aside the times for lectures, exams, etc. in the land.

2c Regarding the scheduling of the stateside class:

- 1d The class will be offered almost entirely online. The primary content is video lectures the student will be required to watch carefully. The intent is that the student will be able to fulfill all the requirements well before the Study Trip, and that he will have some time to absorb and contemplate the material in anticipation of that trip.
- 2d Again, all of this work must be completed and submitted *before* the Study Trip itself. Information on assignment and required texts will be available through the Populi system.

NOTE: Non-student travelers are not required to complete the assignments for the course; however, they may find the material beneficial to their overall travel experience. It is highly recommended that all travelers familiarize themselves with the Satellite Bible Atlas prior to the trip.

3b NOTES regarding the Study Trip to Israel:

- 1c The length – 10 full study days in the land (i.e., get up in the morning / go to bed at night in the land)
- 2c Itinerary will include a standard schedule of stops and on-site lectures, supplemented by special events.
- 3c The Study Trip will be in July 2021. (See Travel Itinerary for specific dates.)
- 4c The trip will be much more physically demanding than most trips to Israel. You must be able to endure (yea verily, enjoy) long days of physically demanding effort, including walking 6 to 7 miles a day, often over rough and steep terrain.

2a The application procedure and protocols

- 1b The following steps are necessary to make application for the Course and the Study Trip. Notice that all those who are interested in participating in the Study Trip (students and non-student travelers) must complete all of these steps.
- 1) Read thoroughly the document in your hands: “Israel Initiative: Program and Protocols”
  - 2) Fill out the appropriate application carefully and completely; both student and non-student applications can be found on the STS website (shepherds.edu). Deadline dates will be announced and will be available on the website as well.
  - 3) Reach out to the Initiative Coordinator to discuss the *possibility* of being included in the up-coming Class and Study Trip. Contact Chris Starks at [cstarks@shepherds.edu](mailto:cstarks@shepherds.edu) to this end.
- 2b Understand that very probably not all those who submit an application will be accepted for the trip. In that regard:
- 1c Again, only those who are accepted for the Study Trip will be allowed to take the stateside class, and only those who complete that class will be eligible for the Study Trip.
- 2c Understand that the issue is not space, but funds. Any STS student who is able to fund the trip on his own will be welcome, provided other demands and expectations are satisfied.
- 3c The most important priority factors to be appealed to in making the decision as to what students are accepted into the class and Study Trip:
- 1) Academic Standing – has the student proved his capacity to do seminary-level work?
  - 2) Commitment to obtaining an accredited degree– demonstrated by verbal affirmation and by meaningful progress toward that goal.
  - 3) Academic progress – the further along in his/her seminary work, the higher priority he will be given.
  - 4) Personal factors – issues related to work, family, health and so on will be taken into consideration when appropriate; these factors may be positive or negative.
  - 5) Prior trips to Israel – if the student has been to Israel in the past, the default conclusion will be that he/she is not eligible to have a trip paid for by the Initiative. On the other hand, if there are good reasons why that student should be included, we are anxious to discuss those.