

During your study of Persia, spend some time discussing the duality of the Persian spiritual life. Of course, do use language that your child understands: one wants her to understand though one also takes care never to dumb down the material. What does it mean to see the world in terms of good and evil, black and white? Does an understanding of karma and reincarnation fit with this? Again – go lightly but do not be afraid to broach such subjects with your child. It is all food for her soul.

Whilst studying the Babylonian culture, do take time out from your reading of *Gilgamesh the Hero* to talk a bit about the story (though don't interrupt your reading to talk – just make a mental note to go back to something and talk about it later). Try to ask open-ended questions like “Why on earth was Gilgamesh so afraid of death?” and see where you get. Be sensitive – paradoxically, it can actually be easier to have these kinds of conversations in a class where some lively child is bound to be champing at the bit to discuss all of this and the more quiet souls will then follow his or her lead. It can be a bit intense for some children to have such discussions all on their own with a parent. It might be that your child is one who needs to think about something for several days, perhaps largely unconsciously, before being able to say something about a story – and then it might be while washing dishes or taking the dog for a walk. This is absolutely fine. There is no good reason in the world for confining important conversations only to “school time.” But do make sure that you open the opportunity for them to take place. And if your child says little, then think aloud and share your own thoughts with no pressure on him to contribute. His silent act of taking in what you say is just as important as his responding to any questions. If not more.

Have a good talk about Hammurabi's Code while studying Babylon as well. Turn to page 93 for more on this.

When you get to Egypt, do make sure to share your thoughts on how this culture is different from the other three. Spend some time on this and draw your child into conversation. After reading the stories together, talk about them and pick up themes and contrast them with the spiritual traditions of the other cultures. Again, go carefully – try not to dissect this study and boil it down to an exercise in “compare and contrast”. Think more in terms of synthesis and less in terms of analysis. Open up doors, look at possibilities. Try not to nail things down or deaden them with reductionist classifying.

A few themes which might come up during these six weeks are:

- Death and what happens after death / reincarnation
- Relationship to God / God and gods
- Freedom and fate or karma
- The relationship between the human being and the earth
- How laws came from the gods through the kings and/or priests: this is an important subject to address during this main lesson as you will highlight a very different relationship between the law and gods and men when we get to Ancient Greece later this year and then to Rome next year.

Take every opportunity to address such important issues with your child: by putting these into the context of great civilizations and spiritual traditions, you are helping your child see that he is not alone with his inner questioning and can take some com-