

1: Theology Network - Biblical Studies - Beginning to Study the Old Testament

The Nature of Narratives: Over 40 percent of the Old Testament is narratives and since the Old Testament constitutes three-quarters of the bible it is no surprise that the single most common type of literature in the entire bible is narrative.

These individual books were not written for the same purpose, nor were they considered to be of equal importance at the times when they were written. Many were in existence in some form long before they were assembled into a single collection and given the status of Scripture, or sacred writing. Not until the sixth and fifth centuries B. During this period, they came to be regarded as authoritative documents for declaring the word of the deity to the people of Israel. At later times, other writings were added to the original collection, but not until near the close of the first century A. The importance of the Old Testament as reflected in the influence it has had through the centuries can scarcely be overestimated. Its religious significance is indicated primarily by the fact that it is recognized as a part of the inspired sacred literature of three of the major religions of the world. First of all, it was the sacred Bible of Judaism and is so regarded at the present time. Along with the New Testament, it is included in the Bible of Christianity, and it holds a similar place in the religion of Islam, for the followers of Mohammed accept its teachings along with those of the Koran. But the influence of the Old Testament has not been confined to the adherents of these three religions: It has permeated the cultures of many countries of the world and has been one of the main sources of the moral and political ideals that have played so vital a role in the history of Western nations. The ideas of democracy, individual worth, freedom in its various forms, the rights of humans, divine purpose in the world, human destiny — all find their origin, in part, in the literature of the Old Testament. The influence of this book is also reflected in the great literatures of Europe and America. Allusions to passages in the Old Testament are so frequent that many of the great books in English and American literature cannot be read intelligently without some familiarity with the context from which these passages are taken. To understand the writings included in the Old Testament, we must bear in mind that they are predominantly an expression of the religious life of the ancient Hebrew people. In this respect, they must be distinguished from writings that are primarily scientific or historical in the secular sense in which these terms are used. Modern scientists and historians have as their main objective an accurate description of the way in which events occur. Whether these events are related to some divine purpose or merely illustrate the sequence of their occurrence is not for historians to say; they neither deny nor affirm any divine activity. But this passive stance is not true of the Old Testament authors, who begin with the assumption of a divine being whose character and purpose are disclosed, at least to some extent, in the course of human events. With this assumption, they write for the specific purpose of pointing out the divine element as they see it illustrated in the historical process. In this respect, the real significance of their writings is to be understood, and to judge the value of the Old Testament account of events on the sole basis of either scientific or historical accuracy is a mistake. The individual books of the Old Testament were written with a different objective in mind, which does not mean that the narratives in the Old Testament have no historical value at all. They are recognized, even by secular historians, as one of the most reliable sources available for reconstructing the history of the Hebrew people. But as source materials, they must be evaluated in the same way as any other source material. The greatness of the writings lies in another area: It has long been customary to regard the books of the Bible as the revealed word of God. Speaking of them in this way is justified provided that one understands the meaning of revelation. Important to remember in this connection is that revelation is always and necessarily a two-way process that involves both a giving and a receiving. We may appropriately think of the giving as the divine element and the receiving as the human element. However perfect the source of divine revelation may be, the human understanding of it is necessarily limited and subject to error, which is not to say that divine wisdom can never be imparted to human beings at all, but it does mean that the reception of this wisdom must take into account the limitations that belong to human understanding.

Historical Background To understand the Old Testament, it is necessary to have some familiarity with the history of the people who wrote it. Judaism is a historical religion, which means that the ideas associated with it were disclosed to the Hebrew people through the concrete events that occurred in that part of the world

where they lived during the centuries in which the Old Testament was in the making. A detailed account of the entire history of the Hebrew people would go far beyond the scope of this present study; however, a brief outline of some of the major high points in that history will be sufficient for our purpose. While it is true that the books of the Old Testament begin with an account of the creation of the world, we must bear in mind that the narratives dealing with such topics as the Creation, the Garden of Eden, the Fall, the Great Flood, and other events related in the Book of Genesis were never intended to be regarded as an accurate historical account of the entire world process. None of these accounts appeared in written form until after the Hebrews had settled in the land of Canaan, west of the Jordan River, which did not take place prior to the ninth century B. Obviously, the stories that one finds in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis, as well as those that have to do with the activities of the patriarchs, who were believed to have lived before the time of the Exodus from Egypt, were not written by eyewitnesses of the events that were recorded. Neither were they written by people who lived during the times about which they wrote. Not until after the men who eventually wrote the narratives had reflected on the events connected with the history of their people was any attempt made to record these events or to set forth their meanings. When this recording was done, the interpretations necessarily reflected the perspective from which they were written. The beginnings of Hebrew history are obscure and cannot be known with certainty. It is generally believed that the people from whom the Old Testament eventually emerged came from a group of Semitic tribes known as the Habiru. These tribes inhabited the region referred to as the Fertile Crescent, a strip of land lying between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and stretching southward for some distance in the direction of Egypt and the Nile River. They are known to have moved about in this territory as early as B. Eventually, some of these tribes migrated to Egypt and lived there for some time, probably for three or four centuries. Apparently, they were initially welcomed by the Egyptians, for the Hebrew colony grew and prospered. But their numbers increased to the extent that the Egyptians became alarmed lest their own security become endangered. An Egyptian pharaoh, in order to protect his people against any further advances on the part of the Hebrews, inaugurated a program of harsh measures toward the newcomers, forcing them into a condition of servitude and slavery. This situation is referred to in the Old Testament as the period of Egyptian bondage. In connection with this period of oppression, we first learn of Moses and his role in bringing about the deliverance of his people. Under his guidance and leadership, the Hebrews were able to leave the land of Egypt and journey to new territory, where they were to make their home. The Exodus from the land of Egypt, usually dated as B. It was to this event that the great prophets and teachers of later generations always referred when they recounted the way in which their god known to them as Yahweh so graciously dealt with them. The Exodus was followed by a period of wandering in the wilderness, after which the various tribes now known as the Israelites established themselves in the land of Canaan. Those who had emerged from bondage in Egypt were then united with other tribes that had not been involved in the Egyptian oppression, and together they formed the nucleus from which the Hebrew state came into existence. Although the literature that is now included in the Old Testament did not begin to appear until after the settlement in the land of Canaan, it was only natural that the history of the people should be projected back into the period that preceded the migration into Egypt, for a relatively large number of stories and legends had been handed down orally from one generation to another. Although there are good reasons for believing that these stories grew out of actual experiences, the narratives cannot be regarded as authentic history, nor can we place the same reliance on them as we do on the accounts of events that occurred after the settlement in Canaan. Accordingly, biblical scholars customarily refer to the period that preceded the migration to Egypt as the Age of the Patriarchs, or the prehistoric era of the Hebrew people. After leaving Egypt, the Hebrews are said to have spent forty years wandering in the wilderness prior to their entrance into the land of Canaan. The number forty is generally understood to represent a relatively long period of time rather than an exact number of years. Although the settlement in Canaan is described in two widely differing accounts, we can be fairly certain that it required a considerable number of years before the new settlers obtained full possession of the land. During this time, the various tribes were organized into a confederacy, and judges were appointed to rule over the people. In theory at least, these judges were governed by Yahweh, who communicated directly with them. This theocratic government came to an end when the

people demanded a king, and Saul was chosen to head the newly formed monarchy. He was succeeded by David, and after David, Solomon, who was the last ruler of the united kingdom. Ten tribes revolted and formed what came to be known as the northern kingdom, or the Israelite nation. Because the tribe of Ephraim was the largest and most influential of this ten-tribe group, the new unit of government was frequently referred to as the Ephraimite kingdom. The two tribes that did not revolt became the southern, or Judean, kingdom. The two separate kingdoms existed until about the year B. The people were taken into captivity, and their national existence came to an end. The southern kingdom continued until B. The Babylonian exile lasted for more than a century but finally came to an end when permission was given to the Hebrews to return to their own land. The Hebrews rebuilt the city of Jerusalem, restored the Temple and its services, and organized their state along lines that had been laid down by the prophets and priests of the exile. But the restored state never enjoyed the peace and prosperity that was anticipated. Internal difficulties arose, the land was troubled with drought and pestilence, and the danger of attack from surrounding states never diminished. The close of the Persian period and the death of Alexander the Great brought about a new set of circumstances most unfavorable to the Hebrews. Egypt and Syria were two rival powers, each struggling for supremacy over the other, and the Jewish nation became a buffer state between them. Toward the latter part of the second century B. Fortunately, the Jews were able to survive this crisis. Under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus and his successors, they were able to regain the land that was taken from them and once again become free and independent. However, this situation did not last very long, for the Roman government ultimately conquered the region. Some of the more important events and accomplishments in these successive periods of Hebrew history may be summarized briefly as follows.

The Prehistoric Period This period is recounted in the stories and legends preserved by the Hebrews as a vital part of their cultural heritage. Narratives concerning the Hebrew ancestors enabled later generations to establish continuity with the great traditions of the past. To what extent these stories record actual events that took place we have no way of knowing, nor does it matter a great deal. The important thing about them is the way in which the ideals of a later age are reflected in them. Because the historical period of Hebrew activities begins with the Exodus from Egypt, we can say only that the stories about what happened prior to the Exodus provide a record of what later generations believed to have taken place, although we do have good reasons for thinking that these accounts were originally based on actual events. In these stories, the beginnings of Hebrew history are traced back to Abraham, who, according to the record, was called out of the land of Ur of the Chaldeans; to him, it was promised that his seed would become a great nation and inherit the land of Canaan. This promise seemed impossible to fulfill because both Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were old and childless. However, Yahweh intervened, and in due time Isaac was born to the couple. One of the sons, Joseph, who had been sold into slavery at an earlier time, was now a prominent official in the Egyptian government. He had charge of the food supplies, and when his brothers came to make their purchase, they had to deal with him. His identity was concealed from them for a time, but eventually he made himself known. As a result of these meetings, it was arranged that Jacob and all of his sons and their families should move to Egypt, where they were peaceably settled in the district known as Goshen. Here they remained until the Egyptian pharaoh of the oppression ascended the throne and began a policy of hostilities toward them.

The Wilderness Journey The journey into the wilderness following the Exodus from Egypt was marked by two important, closely related events: The basis of the covenant was the body of laws that Yahweh had given and that the people had agreed to obey. This covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people, one of the dominant ideas throughout the entire Old Testament, served to distinguish Yahweh from the gods of the surrounding nations. Generally, these other gods were believed to be related to their peoples by the natural ties of physical descent. In other words, they were bound to their people by ties that were not dependent on any contractual agreement or on any type of moral qualification.

2: Understanding the Old Testament: - ensign

Since much of the Old Testament tells and ostensibly historical story, questions of historical accuracy must be addressed. In part, this is a matter of correlating the biblical account with evidence derived from archaeology and other historical sources.

Excerpt We must work with the literary as well as the historical dimensions of Biblical narrative. They cannot be separated into isolated compartments Over the course of the 19th and early 20 centuries, the seeds of doubt in the ve David Livingston has devoted his life to teaching the Word of God and upholding and defending th It contains the complete Tags Support Like this artice? Our Ministry relies on the generosity of people like you. Every small donation helps us develop and publish great articles. Thus it is a reconstructed reality and always heuristic in its conclusions. Moreover, since all history-writing is interpretive at heart, true objectivity is impossible. The Bible is not just history but theology as well, and there has been a long-standing debate as to whether history and theology can cohere. Despite the truth-allergic pathologies of our postmodern culture, truth remains to be considered, known, and embraced. Both seem to be moving in a more positive direction than at any time in the past years, but NT study seems to be more optimistic at this point. The reason is obvious: The OT, however, covers two millennia with a relative paucity of historical information behind much of its details. Therefore, while virtually no one doubts the existence of Jesus or Paul, many doubt the existence of Abraham or David. Still, the growth of knowledge in both fields has led to a corresponding growth of more positive attitudes to the possibility of reliable history in the Bible. Thus social science methodology triumphed, and societal forces and material conditions were the focus of research. A determinist model took over, and a hierarchy of interests developed, with the first tier being economic and demographic evidence, the second tier being social structure, and the third almost forgotten tier being the intellectual, religious, and cultural element. A new skepticism toward the biblical narrative resulted, and radical scholars such as P. Lemche could say confidently that biblical Israel is only a literary creation and has almost no resemblance to Iron Age Israel. Walter Kaiser looks at the major schools of the last century: Third, the Norman Gottwald school took an ethnographic approach based on social theory and turned the conquest of Canaan into an internal peasant revolt of disenfranchised Canaanite tribes. Fourth, the non-Pan Israelite tribal confederation schools e. Thompson, for example, questions the historicity of David and Solomon as well as of Jerusalem and the temple. So the academy is divided, with a resurgent interest in the literary as well as material evidence, and utilizing narrative as well as social factors in reconstructing the history of ancient Israel. Merrill provides eight characteristics of OT history: The NT academy has followed a similar direction, although there is a generally more positive state of the issue today. History or theology â€” For Bultmann, the historic Christ was a product of the early Church and the Jesus of history a mere presupposition of NT theology. Their negative portrayal has not met with widespread favor in the academy. History and theology â€” Two major sets of publications paved the way for a reappraisal: Marshall contended, Luke followed historical sources and combined history and theology in a faithful portrait of the historical Jesus. Harvey, whose *Jesus and the Constraints of History* said that the historical Jesus could be viably identified by seeing how he interacted with the historical figures and forces of his day. History through theology to the present. It is now widely recognized that theology is a partner and a path to history, an essential aspect of all historical enquiry into the life of Jesus. Sanders departed from radical skepticism and argued that the historical Jesus can be found by situating Jesus within the Judaism of his day and by explaining how his movement eventually broke with Judaism. Wright believes the Gospels were indeed ancient biographies and for the most part were reliable documents. Utilizing the methods of critical realism and far more positive criteria for deciding historical material see further below , he has more than anyone brought theology fully back into the discussion of the historical Jesus. Collins says this forcefully: The rediscovery of biblical narrative has been largely a consequence of the negative results of historical research. This point has theological importance. Many conservative Biblicists have invoked literary criticism as a way of avoiding unwelcome historical conclusions. It should be clear that such will not work. But how valid is such an assumption? Meir Sternberg addresses those who think biblical research cannot recover the

past: Long attributes the bias to a modern concatenation of two forces, a view of literature as increasingly linked with poetry and fiction, and a view of history in positivistic terms as linked to the natural sciences. Thus the gap between narrative and history is an unnecessary one. This is the task of critical research. It recognizes that there is a definite meaning to be discovered but that it comes only after serious critical reflection and debate on the alternative hypotheses. Through critical reflection such as this, the bridge between narrative and history and between story and theology can be erected. It has long been recognized that genre plays an important role in interpretation. We will utilize the classic definition of Wellek and Warren: The communicative competence is learned like any other language game, namely through practice, as the reader understands and then rightly interprets the generic intentions of the text. Through genre the reader can reconstruct the thought and life situation of the literary work. One must utilize the extrinsic and intrinsic factors mentioned above and decide carefully whether the text considers itself history or fiction. The key is the illocutionary stance of the author, as non-fiction works make certain commitments with the reader that are not relevant to the speech acts of fiction, such as tying the reader to the real world implied in the text, while fiction breaks this connection. In fiction, the author presents certain states of affairs for reflection, but the historian takes an assertive stance, making truth claims about the world in the text. In point of fact, it is not even demanded that the author be correct, only that he thought he was. Nearly every historical work today can be found to contain factual errors, as the author did not have all the data, but that does not mean they are not historical. For instance, the parable of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke In historical narrative, of course, one also has two aspects of truth, the truth of the event as narrated and the truth of the interpretation as provided. One can simply not write history without interpretation. Moreover, we must add a third dimension, the literary creativity of the author. No historical work can be exhaustive, and ancient historians did not even try to be. There was not the demand in the ancient world unlike today to be chronologically exact or to show all the interrelationships between the events. Rather, biblical authors were highly selective in their depictions, like the cyclical depiction in Judges or the narrow trajectories regarding only Peter and Paul in the Book of Acts. When one compares the order of events in the Synoptic Gospels, one realizes that chronological exactness was not a part of their purpose indeed, in ancient history-writing as a whole. This is where the sacred imagination plays a part. The life of Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, is told quite differently in 2 Kgs In Chronicles, however, his repentance and later good deeds are added. The evil he did earlier is still present, but his later covenant faithfulness is added, probably in order to emphasize this aspect for the post-exilic community. There were two different agendas operating, and that led the authors to omit certain parts and add others from their sources pointing to the historical worth of both accounts. Rarely has there ever been such a futile expense of spirit in a noble cause; rarely have such grandiose theories of origination been built and revised and pitted against one another on the evidential equivalent of a head of a pin; rarely have so many worked so long and so hard with so little to show for their trouble. There is no theoretical reason why literary and historical interests cannot coincide, and why the stories cannot be trustworthy representations of what really happened. Historical narrative as narrative and as history. Most ancient history comes down to us in narrative form, and so the reader must be aware of both the literary and the historical elements. As history, the author seeks a depiction of what really happened. A definition will help: The question is always whether the contours and sequence of the narration fit the reality of the ancient events or have been imaginatively created by the author. There is not necessarily an absolute disjunction between the two. Long states that the OT interpreter needs three things: Yet the historical-critical method, the product of the Enlightenment, is ill suited to do so because it centers on the principles of analogy the criterion is normal, everyday experiences, usually ruling out divine intervention and correlation all events arise from secular causes rather than being unique or supernatural in origin. Such a skeptical approach is no longer mandated in modern historiography. So the biblical historian must be open to the possibility of divine action. How narrative communicates meaning. Narrative does not merely inform; it acts. The illocutionary force takes place via plot, characterization, and a point of view that invites readers to share its world. As such there are at least two aspects that are communicated, the historical event told in the story and its theological interpretation accomplished by the imaginative reconstruction of the author. The two aspects are interdependent and not meant to be separated, yet still both can be identified and studied by the

reader. By comparing the historical story to external data on the event in history, one can evaluate the event itself as a contribution to historical knowledge. And by ascertaining the implicit commentary and point of view, one can see how the author is developing the significance and moral content of the story. It is clear that in the historical narratives of the Scriptures the authors believed they were retelling the historical past of Israel and the early Church so as to solidify the self-conscious identity of the people in their present time. In other words, there was a historical purpose throughout. At the same time, they were evaluating those events to provide both negative and positive models for the nation. There is a dialogue between the author who imaginatively reconstructs the story and evaluates its significance, the text that embeds that story in its reconstructed form, and the reader who studies the text and attempts to reconstruct the intended meaning of the text. The reader does not study the author but the text the author has written. The story has a performative function in guiding the reader into its narrative world⁵⁹ as well as a referential dimension as the illocutionary act enables the readers to identify the rules of the language game utilized in the communication.

3: Old Testament - Dallas Theological Seminary

Old Testament Narratives Most of the Old Testament is written in the style of historical narrative. The story of God and people unfolds through history, capturing major and minor events and details along the way.

Bill Pratt 3 Comments Post Author: Bill Pratt Some Christians and many skeptics of Christianity take a simple approach to reading the Bible. They treat the entire Bible and all of its contents as a moral command textbook. In other words, every single sentence is to be read with an eye toward what moral behavior the author is sanctioning or condemning, regardless of the literary genre. Certainly some parts of the Bible are directly teaching us moral standards, but not all. As an example, I recently discussed the issue of polygamy with a skeptic. The skeptic seemed to be saying that if a certain behavior is found in the Old Testament narratives, and that behavior is not specifically condemned in those same narratives, then the narratives are teaching that this behavior is morally acceptable. Is that how we should understand the narratives in the OT? Following are ten principles for interpreting OT narratives that Fee and Stuart recommend: An OT narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine. An OT narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere. OT narratives record what happened “not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral application. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite. Most of the characters in OT narratives are far from perfect” as are their actions as well. We are not always told at the end of an OT narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge this on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically elsewhere in Scripture. All OT narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given cf. What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know. OT narratives are not written to answer all of our theological questions. They have particular, specific, limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere in other ways. OT narratives may teach either explicitly by clearly stating something or implicitly by clearly implying something without actually stating it. In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives. With regard to polygamy, the Bible clearly illustrates and explains the ideal for marriage in Genesis 2, and the author of subsequent OT narratives in Genesis, Exodus, and so on would expect his readers to know what Genesis 2 taught. God did not create two women for Adam, or three or four, but one.

4: Old Testament Narratives – Daniel Anlezark | Harvard University Press

Subtitle: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts () Davis is a respected Old Testament scholar and pastor. Puzzled by the prevalent view that the Old Testament is a "problem" (caused, he asserts, by a skeptical brand of Old Testament criticism during the last two centuries), he sets out to show that preaching from the Old Testament is not that difficult.

Many people find parts of the Old Testament daunting and challenging to understand. We begin today with how to read the narrative stories of the Old Testament. If you know someone or a group who would like to follow along, encourage them to learn more and sign up to receive the series via email. And it is not too late to begin Christmas Scripture devotional readings. When I was a boy, I was given a set of recordings of dramatized Bible stories, and they captivated my attention. The stories lodged in my head as I listened to the recordings over and over. It is common in Christian churches for children to be taught the Bible story by story. Then, somehow, we get the idea that as adults we can handle the higher truths we find in places like the epistles of the New Testament. But this is to miss the grand scheme of the Bible. The backbone of the Bible is story or narrative. If we look at the whole sweep of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, there is one grand story: This is the metanarrative of the Bible. That big story is divided into two large narratives: God working through a chosen people the old covenant, and then, with the coming of Jesus, how God forged a new covenant open to people from every part of the world. Break that down further, and we get to the individual stories of Joseph, of the exodus, of Ruth, of Joshua, of the destruction of Jerusalem, of Daniel in Babylon—and hundreds of others. So how should we understand the narratives of the Old Testament, which constitute almost half of the Old Testament text? We should read individual narratives in their specific contexts, but with the wider narratives in mind. The story of Ruth, for instance, is a rich and poignant story within itself, about struggle, commitment, faith, and redemption. But then we learn that Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David, so she fits into the wider Old Testament picture. More amazing, this woman from Moab is listed in the genealogy of Jesus because of her lineage with David. So the significance of the story of Ruth goes beyond her relatives and the harvesting of grain. We should take Old Testament narratives at face value, reading for the natural sense. The purpose of narrative is to tell us what happened and to help us understand the broad significance of what happened. Not every story has a moral. The account of Joshua leading the Hebrews across the Jordan River means exactly that. We should not assume there is some symbolic meaning to the river, or to Joshua, or to the place where they crossed. It is wrong-headed to impose a symbolic or allegorical meaning on a biblical story. It is misleading and it is arbitrary. It assumes there is a hidden meaning to biblical stories, which leaves the normal Bible reader to ask: This is to read Scripture on its own terms, respecting the intentionality of the biblical authors. Taking Old Testament narratives at face value removes much of the anxiety we might have if we are always looking for some supposed hidden meaning. We should also avoid moralizing or spiritualizing every Old Testament story we read. What, for instance, might be the moral to the story of Jacob deceiving his brother Esau and later his uncle Laban, cheating each of them out of a fortune? The text does not condemn what Jacob did, nor does it endorse his actions. The narrative simply tells us what happened. The story of Isaac finding a wife Gen. That is the best way to read them. We should learn from the complex lives of the characters of biblical stories. We could feel a lot of tension over the fact that even the great heroes of faith in the Old Testament had faults and overt transgressions. It is assumed we will figure that out based on the parts of Scripture that do teach morality. The Bible is wonderfully honest. The characters in the narratives are all sinners, yet they are part of the historic unfolding of the greatest story of Scripture: We should read through biblical narrative seeing it as the great story of God who is its central character. The narrative of the Old Testament reveals the Creator of all things as the God of holiness and of love. In the stories we witness the God of holiness for whom right and wrong, good and evil, really do matter. And his love is seen in his patience, forgiveness, guidance, protection, and mercy. What is true of all great narratives, and especially the narratives of Holy Scripture, is that every time we go through them, we will see something new. A detail here and there. An attitude in one of the

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES pdf

characters. A sight, smell, or sound. A silhouette of an attribute of God. We see our sins, not just the sins of the characters in the story. And we see hope for all of us who would be without hope if not for the mercy of God. You can follow along here at the blog, but we recommend signing up for email updates here.

5: THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES: THEIR PROPER USE (Part 6) – Redeemer Church

Old Testament narratives express meaning in larger blocks of material than do other genres in the Bible. Expositors used to preaching from a few verses in New Testament epistolary literature will have to adjust to Old Testament narrative sections.

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New Covenant, and the relevance of the law in the Christian life. Credit is allowed proportionate to the amount of work but not to exceed 4 semester hours in any one subject. Limited to advanced students and subject to consent of the professor. OT Old Testament Thesis Independent research and writing of a thesis on an approved topic under the supervision of two faculty advisers. Students will have one calendar year to complete the thesis. If the thesis is not completed by the end of a year, students will be registered in OT Enrollment requires consent of the department. OT Old Testament Thesis Continuation The thesis continuation course is required of all students writing a thesis who are beyond one year in the thesis process. Students must register for this course each fall, spring, and summer until completion of the thesis. Thesis continuation is permitted for a maximum of one additional semester for a 2-hour thesis, including summer or two additional semesters for a 3-hour thesis, including summer. OT Special Topics in O. Studies OT Old Testament Criticism An introductory study of Old Testament criticism, including theories on the text and its composition, modern methods of textual analysis, canonicity, and the history, theory, and practice of Old Testament criticism. Successful completion of the Hebrew proficiency exam. OT Exegesis in the Torah An exegetical, critical, and literary study of selected passages in the Torah, designed to enhance an appreciation and comprehension of the literature and an understanding of how it contributes to the overall purpose and message of the Old Testament. OT Exegesis in the Prophets An exegetical, critical, and literary study of selected passages in the Prophets, designed to enhance an appreciation and comprehension of the literature and an understanding of how it contributes to the overall purpose and message of the Old Testament. OT Exegesis in the Writings An exegetical, critical, and literary study of passages in hymnic, apocalyptic, and wisdom literature designed to enhance an appreciation and comprehension of the literature and an understanding of how it contributes to the overall purpose and message of the Old Testament. OT Old Testament Dissertation Independent research and writing of a dissertation on an approved topic pertaining to Old Testament studies, under the supervision of three faculty advisers. OT Old Testament Diss Continuation The dissertation continuation course is required of all students writing a dissertation who are beyond one year in the dissertation process. Students must register for this course each fall and spring until completion of the dissertation. OT Intro to Akkadian An introduction to the most important ancient Near Eastern Semitic languages and their major comparative features. The course surveys the basic grammar of Akkadian, Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Arabic, and considers how to use the resources available for the study of these languages for research in the text of the Old Testament. Independent research on an approved topic within the scope of the department with a thesis required.

We should take Old Testament narratives at face value, reading for the natural sense. The purpose of narrative is to tell us what happened and to help us understand the broad significance of what happened.

Chapter 1 - What Is the Old Testament? THE Old Testament is a collection of selected writings composed and edited by members of the Hebrew-Jewish community between the twelfth century B. It includes such diverse materials as prophetic oracles, teachings of wise men, instructions of priests and ancient records of the royal courts. Some material is historical, some is legendary; some is legalistic, some is didactic. For the most part the literature was written in Hebrew, but a few passages were written in Aramaic, a kindred language which came into common usage among the Jews during the post-Exilic era after the sixth century B. The Aramaic portions include Dan. Jewish scholars prefer the term "Tanak," a word formed by combining the initial letters of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible: The Bible, as we know it today, is the end product of a long process of writing, editing and selecting of literature primarily concerned with Jewish religious concepts, and, as such, it has a long literary history. It cannot be assumed that a group of men composed writings echoing what they thought God was dictating. The literary history of the Bible can be said to have begun in the time of Solomon when two men, or groups of men, produced what was to become the nucleus of the Old Testament. The other writer or writers delved into the oral and written traditions of the past to enrich the understanding of the present. Stories of patriarchal ancestors, songs and folk-tales of the tribes, explanations concerning the origin of the world, and accounts of the action of God in the affairs of men, were gathered and woven into a saga explaining how the nation Israel came to be, and how God, who had acted in the past on behalf of his chosen people, was acting in the present and could be counted upon to act in the future. The theologized tradition or "sacred history," as it has been called, was probably utilized in the festivals and cultic rites of the temple. But the writing did not stop in the tenth century. New events and new monarchs required the extension of national history, and a developing theology saw new facets of the relationship believed to exist between God and the nation. Some materials were undoubtedly discarded over the years, for the Bible reflects selectivity of materials, as we shall see. Study of the sacred literature and new historical events developed new insights and resulted in the addition of new materials. Other literary forms were added: Differing theological insights are often apparent, so that as one writing reflects a universalistic spirit, another stresses particularism. Over and over again, however, it is made clear that the writers believed that traditions of what God had done for his people in the past symbolized what he could be counted upon to do in the future. Thus, a people in captivity to the Babylonians could see that as God once delivered others from the Egyptians, he would do the same for those presently enslaved. The literature had, therefore, a dynamic rather than a static quality; being more than a record of the past, it constituted a narrative of the activity of God on behalf of his people. In its present form, the Old Testament opens with religious traditions concerning the origin of the world and of mankind. In broad literary strokes, the transition is made to the beginnings of the Hebrew people with the adventures of the patriarchs-Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-as they dwelt in the land of Canaan. Because of famine, the Hebrews migrated to Egypt where Joseph attained high office and his descendants were treated well. Change in Egyptian leaders altered their attitude to the newcomers, and the Hebrews were pressed into virtual slavery. Led by Moses, they escaped to the wilderness. Ultimately, internal and external pressure became so great that a single leader, a king, became a necessity. Under Saul, David, and Solomon, Canaan was united into a single empire. When Solomon died, the Hebrew kingdom split into northern Israel or Ephraim and southern Judah sections, and during the next few centuries the great prophetic figures Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, etc. Israel fell to the Assyrians in B. Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians and Judaeans Jews were taken into exile in Babylon, where they managed to maintain their identity. The exiled Judaeans were permitted to return to their homeland, reestablish themselves, and rebuild Jerusalem. Two leaders in the restoration movement, which reached its peak about the middle of the fifth century, were Ezra and Nehemiah. For two centuries, or until the coming of the Greeks under Alexander the Great in B. The introduction of Greek culture brought drastic changes. When Alexander died in B. From this time onward, Greek social and

cultural patterns made inroads into Jewish life, causing anguish and suffering to those who opposed change. Unable to endure the situation any longer the Jews rebelled and won freedom. For a short time, under Maccabean leadership, Judah enjoyed the status of an independent nation, only to come under the control of the Roman empire. Here we leave the Old Testament period and enter the Christian era. However, as we shall see, there is far more than history or the interpretation of historical events within the literature of the Old Testament. The term "canon," the Anglicized form of the Greek word *kanon* designating a rod used for measuring, is related to a Semitic root appearing in Hebrew as *kaneh*, meaning a "reed. The number of books constituting the canon of Old Testament Scripture varies among different religious groups. The difference between the Jewish and Protestant versions is easily explained: The additional books in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Bibles include writings not accepted as canonical by Jews and Protestants, who place them in a collection known as "The Apocrypha. The term "Apocrypha" as applied to writings is first known to us through the work of Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* iii, 5 , a Christian theologian-philosopher living in Egypt at the close of the second and beginning of the third centuries A. In the preface to his translation of Samuel and Kings Prologus Galeatus in the fourth century, Jerome, the great Christian scholar who made the Latin translation of the Bible known as the "Vulgate" see Part Ten , applied the term to books found in the Greek translation of Hebrew scriptures but excluded from the Jewish canon. Etymologically, "apocrypha" is derived from a Greek word meaning "hidden" or "concealed. In one sense, the books were hidden because they contained esoteric knowledge to be revealed only to members of a particular group. How parts of the Apocrypha came to be accepted by some and rejected by others is part of the story of the development of the canon. It is estimated that close to 1., Jews lived in Alexandria, Egypt, during the third century B. Having been separated from Palestinian Judaism for many generations, the Alexandrian Jews spoke only Greek and could not understand the Hebrew scriptures. According to a legend preserved in "The Letter of Aristeas,"³ in response to a request that the Jewish scriptures be translated into Greek, seventy Jewish scholars another tradition says seventy-two went to Egypt and translated the first five books of the Bible the Law or Torah. These books, believed to be the work of Moses, had achieved a relatively fixed form and canonical status during the fifth century B. Subsequently other Jewish writings were translated: The tradition of the translation by the seventy was extended to include the entire Greek version which came to be known as "The Seventy" or in the Latin form as *Septuaginta*, now Anglicized to "Septuagint" and given a numerical abbreviation LXX. The contents of the Law and the Prophets had been determined by usage in the Jewish community prior to the LXX translation, but the limits of the *Kethubhim* had not been defined and books were included that were not to achieve canonical status among all Jews. The authors of the New Testament Gospels drew upon the LXX to prove that Jesus was the Messiah and the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy, using some passages which the Jews argued had been inadequately translated from the Hebrew to the Greek particularly Isaiah 7: The destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 A. Consequently, in 90 A. The books agreed upon by the Council constitute the Jewish canon of today. Concerning other writings, both Jewish and Christian, the Council stated: The Gospel and the books of the heretics are not Sacred Scripture. The books of Ben Sira and whatever books have been written since his time, are not Sacred Scripture. There was, however, some uneasiness among Christian scholars concerning certain of the books and just prior to the Protestant Reformation questions were being raised about the authority of the Apocrypha. Seeking to go back to ancient sources, Protestant reformers accepted the Jewish canon and relegated the Apocrypha to the status of writings without authority for doctrine, partially, no doubt, because certain unacceptable doctrines were based upon these writings. The Roman Catholic Church took the opposite stand at the Council of Trent held in Tridentum, Italy from to and, partially on the basis of traditional usage among Christians, declared the books of the Apocrypha, with the exception of I and II Esdras and the prayer of Manasseh, to be canonical and pronounced anathema upon all who denied their status. The accepted books are labeled "Deuterocanonical"⁶ by Roman Catholic scholars who restrict the use of the term "Apocrypha" to designate writings purporting to be inspired but not accepted into the Roman Catholic canon. The latter writings are labeled "Pseudepigrapha" False Writings by Protestant scholars. For those with religious training received in Church or Synagogue, the answer to the question "Why do we read? One reads for religious, theological, devotional, or inspirational reasons, for spiritual edification, to nourish

and nurture faith. It is used in public and private worship linking the individual Jew to the household of faith throughout history, providing strength in time of need, offering hope in moments of darkness, and giving assurance that the Covenant made with God in the past has relevance today. Often, it is viewed as the prologue to the New Testament, as a document which, pointing forward to Jesus, is to be interpreted in the light of the New Testament, where Old Testament promises find fulfillment. The approach of the Synagogue or Church directs attention to the essentially religious nature of the Bible, to the fact that the Old Testament is the product of a community of faith reflecting theological convictions, and to the subsequent fact that this ancient document is still a powerful factor in shaping and sustaining beliefs. However, the purposes of Bible study as defined or understood by religious organizations do not determine the goals of the classroom. Often hailed as a "literary classic," the Bible has been approached as great literature, and there have been those who have read with deep appreciation, particularly in the King James Version, the magnificent prose and poetry appearing in many passages. Biblical themes have been compared with those of other literary masterpieces. The remarkable historical record preserved in the Old Testament¹³ has led archaeologists and historians to study it for contributions to the understanding of Near Eastern history. The great American archaeologist, W. Albright, has commented upon the significant role the Bible has played in the identification of Palestinian sites,¹⁴ and in some instances the Bible has led to the discovery of ancient places by describing locations. Beyond the study of the Old Testament for the contribution it may make to personal and corporate piety or to literary, historical, and archaeological studies, is the recognition of the role this body of writings has played and continues to play in shaping human concepts and values through the adherents of three great religions that acknowledge its authority: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. To study these ancient writings is, therefore, to study works that for centuries have influenced social, literary, musical, artistic, ethical, moral, and many other aspects of society. Whether or not one believes that the religious, social and ethical concepts of the Old Testament are acceptable as authoritative guides for present day belief and conduct must remain a personal matter. The question then becomes, "Why not read? Tertullian, a Roman centurion who became a Christian, is believed to have been the first to designate the Christian writings as the "New Testament" about A. D. 200. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A. D. Harper and Brothers, The Qumran Jewish community located near the Dead Sea, which produced the so-called "Dead Sea Scrolls," included among their writings all of the books of the Old Testament with the possible exception of Esther, the book of Enoch and Jubilees, plus numerous writings of their sect including "The War of the Children of Light versus the Children of Darkness," many hymns, and a community rule book. It should be noted that at least some members of the early Christian community used the book of Enoch cf. For example, the doctrine of Purgatory cf. Indicating that they were written later. The other books in the canon are called "Protocanonical. Prentice-Hall, , pp. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, , p. For a different evaluation, cf. Hebrew Union College Press, , pp. Tos, Approaches to The Bible:

7: Making Sense of the Bible: Old Testament Narratives

Proper interpretation and application of Old Testament narrative is built on the principle that such scripture is historical, theological and literary in nature. Old Testament Narrative as History In contrast with a nationalistic myth, Old Testament narrative is a truthful recording of history, with the goal of revealing and glorifying God.

A large and complex library] Turning from the Jewish and mediaeval traditions and theories which so easily beset us, we ask, What is the real nature of the Old Testament as it is revealed in this new and clearer light? The first conclusion is that it is a library containing a large and complex literature, recording the varied experiences, political, social, ethical, and religious, of the Israelitish race. The fact that it is a library consisting of many different books is recognized by the common designation of the two testaments. As is well known, our English word Bible came originally from the Papyrus or Byblus reed, the pith of which was widely used in antiquity as the material from which books were made. It was natural, therefore, that in the Greek a little book should be designated as a biblion. About the middle of the second Christian century the Greek Christians first in the so-called Second Epistle of Clement xlv. When this title was transferred to the Latin it was, by reason of a natural and yet significant error, treated as a feminine singular, Biblia, which, reappears in English as Bible. This most appropriate name emphasizes the fact that the books thus described are a unit and yet a collection of little books, selected from a larger literature and given their present position of preeminent authority. It is the English translation, through the Latin and Greek, of the Hebrew word, berith, usually rendered, covenant. It means a bond or basis of agreement. It implies a close and binding contract between two parties, and defines the terms to which each subscribes and the obligations which they thus assume. The Old Covenant or Testament, therefore, is primarily the written record of the origin, terms, and history of the solemn agreement which existed between the Israelitish nation and Jehovah. The early narratives preserve the traditions of its origin; the lawgivers endeavored to define its terms and the obligations that rested upon the people; the prophets interpreted them in the life of the nation, and the sages into the life of the individual; and the historical books recorded its practical working. The significant fact is that back of the Old Testament records exists something greater and deeper than pen can fully describe: Thus through life, and in the concrete terms of life, God reveals himself to the life of humanity. Written in history and human minds and hearts] In the light of this truth the Jewish and medieval dogma that every word, and even every letter of Scripture, was directly dictated by God himself, seems sadly mechanical and bears the marks of the narrow schools of thought in which it took form. Hebrew was not, and probably will never be, the language of heaven! Not on skins and papyrus rolls, but in the life of the Israelitish race and on the minds and consciences of enlightened men, God wrote his revelation. History and the character and consciousness of the human race are its imperishable records. Fortunately he also aroused certain men of old, not by word and act only, but by the pen as well, to record the revelation that was being perfected in the life of their nation and in their own minds and hearts. He did not, however, dictate to them the form of their writings nor vouch for their verbal inerrancy. In time, out of their writings were gradually collected and combined the most significant passages and books, and to these was finally attributed the authority that they now rightfully enjoy. Secondary sources of its authority] The ultimate basis of that authority, however, is not their presence in the canon of the Old Testament. At the same time their presence there is deeply significant, for it represents the indorsement of many ages and of countless thousands who, from the most varied points of view and amid the most diverse experiences, have tested and found these ancient scriptures worthy of the exalted position that has gradually been assigned to them. It is not the support of the Church, although this also for the same reason is exceedingly significant. It is not the calm assumption, of authority that appears at every point throughout the Old Testament, although this is richly suggestive; the sacred writings of other religions make even more pretentious claims. It is not that its commands and doctrines come from the mouths of great prophets and priests, like Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. This fact undoubtedly had great weight with those who formed the final canon of the Old Testament, and the authority of a strong, noble personality is supremely impressive; but divine authority never emanates primarily from a man, however great be his sanctity. Furthermore, to establish the authority derived

from a Moses or a Samuel it is necessary in every case to prove that the books attributed to them by late tradition actually came from their pens. Even if this could in every case be done, some of the noblest passages in the Old Testament remain avowedly anonymous; for the tendency of the great majority of its authors was clearly to send forth their messages without any attempt to associate their own names with them. Its ultimate basis of authority] The ultimate authority of the Old Testament, therefore, is not dependent upon devoted canon-makers, nor the weighty testimony of the Church, nor upon its own claims, nor the reputation of the inspired men who have written it, nor the estimate of any age. Its seat of authority is more fundamental. Back of the Old Testament is a vast variety of vital experiences, national and individual, political and spiritual, social and ethical, pleasurable and painful. Back of all these deeply significant experiences is God himself, through them making known his character and laws and purpose to man. Its authority ethical and religious, not scientific] Students of the rediscovered Old Testament also recognize, in the light of a broader and more careful study, the fact, so often and so fatally overlooked in the past, that its authority lies not in the field of natural science, nor even of history in the limited sense. The teaching of the Old Testament is authoritative only in the far more important realm of ethics and religion. Paul truly voiced its supreme claim when he said that it was profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, completely fitted for every good work II Tim. The assertion by the Church in the past of claims nowhere made or implied by the Old Testament itself is unfortunately still a fertile source of perplexity and dissension to many faithful souls. Their salvation is to be found in a clear and intelligent appreciation of the real nature and claim of these ancient writings. Its dominant purpose to teach spiritual truth] One dominant aim determines the form of each book and the selection of individual passages and binds together the whole: It was the supreme bond that bound together prophets, priests, sages, and psalmists, although the means by which they accomplished their common purpose differed widely. Many a current tradition, and the crude conceptions of the ancients regarding the natural world, are recorded in the Old Testament; but they are not there merely to perpetuate history nor to increase the total of scientific knowledge, but rather because they concretely illustrate and impress some vital ethical and spiritual truth. Such singleness of religious purpose is paralleled nowhere else except in the work and teachings of Jesus and his apostles. Its present fruits the proof of its inspired authority] The ever-present evidence of the divine authority back of the spiritual teachings of the Old Testament as a whole is that they ring true to life and meet its needs. By their fruits we know them. It is the demonstration of the laboratory. We know that they are inspired because they inspire. The principles underlying the social sermons of Amos are as applicable to present conditions as when first uttered. The sooner they are practically applied the sooner our capitalistic civilization can raise its head now bowed in shame. The faith that breathes through the Psalms is the faith that upholds men to-day in the midst of temptation and trial. The standards of justice, tempered by love, which are maintained in the Old Testament laws make good citizens both of earth and heaven. As long as men continue to test the teachings of the Old Testament scriptures in the laboratory of experience and to know them by their fruits, nothing can permanently endanger their position in the Christian Church or in the life of humanity. Neglect and indifference, not Higher Criticism, alone permanently threaten the authority of the Old Testament as well as that of the New. Significance of the variations and inconsistencies] Recognizing the real nature and purpose of these ancient records, the true student neither denies nor is disturbed by the marks of their human authorship. As in the case of the Gospels, the variations between the parallel narratives are all evidence of their genuineness and of the sincerity of their purpose. Their individual peculiarities and minor errors often introduce us more intimately to the biblical writers and help us to understand more clearly and sympathetically their visions of truth and of God. Above all, they teach us to look ever through and beyond all these written records to the greater revelation, which they reflect, and to the infinite Source of all knowledge and truth. The record of a gradual revelation] The inconsistencies and imperfect teachings which are revealed by a critical study of the Old Testament are also but a few of the many indices that it is the record of a gradually unfolding revelation. Late Jewish tradition, which is traceable even in the Old Testament itself, was inclined to assign the origin of everything which it held dear to the very beginnings of Hebrew history, and in so doing it has done much to obscure its true genesis. Jesus with his divine intuition appreciated this principle of growth. Unhesitatingly he

abrogated certain time-honored Old Testament laws with the words, Ye have heard that it was said His own interpretation of his relation to the sacred writings of his race was that he came to bring them to complete fulfilment. Rearranged in their approximately chronological order, the Old Testament books become the harmonious and many-sided record of ten centuries of strenuous human endeavor to know and to do the will of God and of his full and gracious response to that effort. The beatitude of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness was as true in the days of Moses as it was when Jesus proclaimed it. Its different books of very different values] Finally, the right and normal attitude toward the Old Testament leads to the wholesome conclusion that its different books are of very different values. The great critic of Nazareth again set the example. As we have just seen, certain of the Old Testament laws he distinctly abrogated; others he quietly ignored; others, as, for example, the law of love Deut. A careful study of the Gospels, in the light of the Old Testament, demonstrates that a very important element in his work, as the Saviour of men, was in thus separating the dross in the older teachings from the gold, and then in giving to the vital truth a clearer, more personal, and yet more universal application. For the intelligent student and teacher of to-day the Old Testament still remains a great mine of historical, ethical, and religious truth. Others, like Numbers, Chronicles, and Esther, are comparatively barren. Application of this truth] Since the Old Testament is the record of a progressively unfolding revelation, it is obvious that all parts do not possess an equal authority. To place the example of the patriarchs or of David, who lived when ethical standards and religious beliefs were only partially developed, on an equality with the exalted ideals of the later prophets, is to misinterpret those ancient Scriptures and to reject the leadership of the Great Teacher. At the same time, studied from the newer point of view, the examples of those early heroes are found to illustrate vital principles in human life and to inspire and warn the child of to-day as effectively as they did far back in the childhood of the race. The Old Testament not a fetish but a spiritual guidebook] In these later days God has taken the Bible from the throne of infallibility on which Protestantism sought to place it. By a gradual yet benign process, which we were nevertheless at first inclined bitterly to resent, he has opened our eyes to its true character and purpose. Again, he has pronounced his Thou shall not to the natural and yet selfish human desire to transfer moral and intellectual responsibility from the individual conscience to some external authority. Again, he has told us that only in the sanctuary of the human soul is the Infallible One to be found. Yet in order that we each may find him there, the cumulative religious experience of the countless thousands who have already found him is of inestimable value. The Old Testament contains not merely the word of God, but, together with its complement the New, is the great guide-book in finding and knowing him, It blazes the way which, the pilgrim of to-day, as in the past, must follow from his cradle to the throne of God. At each point it is richly illustrated by the actual religious experiences of real men and women. Their mistakes and their victories, are equally instructive.

8: Story in the Old Testament by R.W.L. Moberly

Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without actually stating it). In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.

The reason is simple: According to Holbert this phenomenon occurs in preaching. It is the stories, the anecdotes, the jokes, the biographical and autobiographical tales, the rabbinic midrashim, the newspaper snippets, and the recountings of triumphs and tragedies that people remember. Unfortunately, though, preaching from Old Testament narratives resembles playing the saxophone: Such exegesis is, of course, of enormous importance. But in students who do not have a feel for literature, it can have the unwitting effect of so focusing on the tree that the entire forest remains unseen, except perhaps as a vague and ominous challenge. Some preachers have adopted a style of exposition that is not conducive to preaching Old Testament narratives.

Hermeneutical Guidelines

The following hermeneutical guidelines can help exegetes recapture the "mode of perception that was second nature to the original audiences. If we know how texts mean, we are in a better position to discover what a particular text means. They attempt to persuade. The following guidelines focus on the main literary features an exegete must pursue. These plots build on a conflict or a collision between two forces. Conclusion denouement such as to inspire or inform. It introduces the characters, giving their names, traits, physical appearance, position in life, and relationships among them. This information, which shows Judah making a break with his brothers and establishing relationships with the Canaanites, tips off the reader that Judah is not walking in fellowship with Yahweh. According to Esther 2: This information becomes crucial in the events recorded in Esther 6. Bar-Efrat recognizes that this is the climax of a story. Actually two crises are present. Rather than moving quickly to a resolution, verses build toward another crisis that flares up in verse In Genesis 38 the resolution occurs in verses when Tamar produced the objects that indict Judah as the man who impregnated her. Judah then pronounced her more righteous than himself. In the Book of Esther the resolution occurs in 5: Stories end in a conclusion or denouement. Some scholars lump this together with the resolution. Less certain is whether Genesis According to Bar-Efrat the conclusion in many biblical narratives is clearly marked, often by someone who returns home or leaves for another destination. A comedy is a "U-shaped story that begins in prosperity, descends into tragedy, and rises again to [] end happily. A tragedy, on the other hand, is "the story of exceptional calamity. It portrays a movement from prosperity to catastrophe. Observe the Pace At Which the Story Unfolds While tracking the plot, an interpreter should observe the pace at which a narrative unfolds. Literary scholars differentiate between "narration time" and "narrated time. Narrated time is subject to gaps, delays, acceleration, and even movement in different directions. Since the decision as to what to include and what to omit, what to convey rapidly and on what to dwell at length, is closely bound up with the importance of the various subjects, the character of time as it is shaped within the narrative will be of great value in any attempt to analyze and interpret the narrative. Here, as at other points in the episode, nothing is allowed to detract our focused attention from the primary, problematic subject of the proper channel for the [] seed. In a triad of verbs that admits nothing adventitious, Judah sees, takes, lies with a woman; and she, responding appropriately, conceived, bears and gives the son a name. Then the action accelerates again in verse While the quick pace in verses presented background information, the return to a pace in verse 24 enables the narrative to proceed "quickly to its dramatic climax. Four phrases slow down the narrated time. With each phrase, the tension builds as the specificity increases. God said, "Take your son the only son you have the one you love Isaac" Gen Focus on the Dialogue Embedded in the Story Stories often focus on statements made by the characters. Alter speaks of "the highly subsidiary role of narration in comparison to direct speech by the characters. They are highly concentrated and stylized, are devoid of idle chatter, and all the details they contain are carefully calculated to fulfill a clear function. But even more significantly, conversation points to meaning. Similarly statements by David in 1 Samuel Two more features of speech deserve attention. This is simply one of the principles of selectivity and emphasis [employed by] storytellers. Beginning in 1 Samuel 16, David emerges as the protagonist, while Saul functions both as an antagonist and as a foil. While there was a contest at one level between David and

Goliath, Goliath provided the "challenge" that revealed the character of both David and Saul. David changed so that by the end of the episode he shared the same conviction as Abigail. Interpreters must do more than label the characters, though. Interpreters must go through the story as a "traveling companion of the protagonist" and view this protagonist as "someone who undertakes an experiment in living. The designations or names of characters reflect their nature, whether real or perceived. For instance a designation may betray how one character is perceived by other characters. And 2 Samuel It is no accident that the text [1 Sam Stek shows the significance of the names in the Judges 4 account of the defeat of Sisera, the cruel Canaanite commander. The glory went to two faithful and fearless women: Deborah, the bee, dispensed her sweet justice under a honey tree and kept prodding stinging? Barak to pursue Sisera. Jael, the mountain goat, provided the fleeing Sisera with nourishing milk and then stabbed him when he lay down to rest. As a result, peace was restored to the Promised Land of milk and honey. The names in the Book of Ruth contribute to the story as well. Call me Bitter one because [] Shaddai has made me extremely bitter. Boaz addressed him with the Hebrew expression "certain one". Hubbard captures the intention of this expression by translating verse 1 this way: We meet the biblical characters primarily in special and unusual circumstances, in times of crisis and stress, when they have to undergo severe tests. As Sternberg suggests, elaborate descriptions "perform no other role than realistic fullness. The absence of depictions in biblical narrative is connected with the tension which exists in a work of literature between the categories of time and space. By stopping narrated time a [] static element is introduced, and this is incompatible with the dynamic and vigorous nature of biblical narrative. The biblical narrative is wholly devoted to creating a sense of time which flows continually and rapidly, and this is inevitably achieved at the expense of the shaping of space. Because space is fundamentally static and unchanging it is an alien element in biblical narrative. In most cases, Sternberg suggests, "epithet prefigures drama. The description of Esau as a "hairy man" Gen Notice How the Story Uses the Technique of Repetition Whereas English prose eschews repetition, so that we are constantly looking for synonyms as we write, ancient Hebrew prose enjoys it. The verbatim repetition of a word, phrase, sentence, or set of sentences, or even the recurrence of words falling into the same semantic range can function to structure the story, to create atmosphere, to construct a theme or character, to emphasize a certain point to the reader, or to build suspense. Sometimes a command or prophecy is cited at one point and then "closely followed by its verbatim fulfillment. Repetition may also occur by means of a key word leitwort. The guidelines suggested above can help preachers do solid exegesis that is sensitive to the literary features of Old Testament narratives. Expositors who wish to gain more proficiency should work through the sources already cited. Homiletical Guidelines After an expositor does thorough exegesis marked by sensitivity to the literary art of a narrative, sermon preparation still remains incomplete. Now the preacher must tackle the homiletical side of the task. As Osborne states, great preachers "have all worked as hard on presentation as they have on exegesis. Expositors used to preaching from a few verses in New Testament epistolary literature will have to adjust to Old Testament narrative sections. Instead he would probably take his sermon from the entire eleventh chapter of 2 Samuel and at least part of the twelfth , since all of this records the sin and its devastating consequences. A preacher must make sure his selected unit contains a background, crisis, and resolution and sometimes a separate conclusion. By using this guideline, a preacher would not choose 1 Samuel Expositors should select the entire chapter 17 as a preaching unit. Actually a preacher should determine the preaching unit sometime during the exegetical process. That process, as noted earlier, will enable him to discover the meaning, or theological point, of the text. Deuel counsels expositors to preach the "total theological message," not just "character traits. As Greidanus explains, "The narrative form has to strike a delicate balance between simply narrating the story and providing explicit statements for right understanding. Through the story the preacher communicates ideas. In a narrative sermon, as in any other sermon, a major idea continues to be supported by other ideas, but the content supporting the points is drawn directly from the incidents in the story. In other words the details of the story are woven together to make a point, and all the points develop the central idea of the sermon. Develop theological points that are developed from the "crisis" and "resolution" elements of the plot. After the background is related v. As a result, Pharaoh took Sarai into his harem vv.

9: About the Old Testament of the Bible

The Spoken Nature of the Prophets - Finally, the spoken nature of their prophecies causes many of our difficulties in understanding. For example, of the hundreds of prophets in ancient Israel in Old Testament times, only 16 were chosen to speak oracles that would be collected and written down into books.

Introduction The great acts of salvation in the Bible, the Exodus and Sinai covenant in the Old Testament, and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament, have been the subject of intense study in modern times. Given their centrality to the Bible and to Christian faith that is hardly surprising, indeed it is clearly desirable. One fact about these acts of salvation, which has always been noted but usually rather taken for granted, is that they are presented in narrative, or story, form. Usually significance has been attached to this in two main ways. First, it has been argued that because the narrative is historical in appearance it is appropriate to study it in the way that other ancient historical narratives are studied. This has led to historical analyses both of the events recorded in the text and also of the sources, transmission and composition of the text itself. Secondly there have been numerous theological arguments about the importance of history as the sphere in which God truly acts and reveals himself. One of the most interesting and significant developments in recent biblical study has been a growth in literary approaches to the biblical text. In the Old Testament in particular, whose narratives down the ages have captured the imagination of artists, poets, and musicians as well as ordinary believers, a literary approach may offer some deliverance from the predominance of a historical study that has all too often seemed impervious to the reasons why these ancient stories have actually mattered to people. As such a literary approach is much to be welcomed. Since helpful surveys are available elsewhere,^[3] the present discussion will concentrate on just one area of literary study, that which has attached particular importance to the story form of so much of the Old Testament. On the other hand, one reason why many literary studies are illuminating is because they are simultaneously theological studies. Given the thoroughly theological nature of most Old Testament narratives, it is hardly surprising that an approach which concentrates on what the text is saying and the way it says it should throw light upon its theological perspectives and assumptions. This means not only that a literary interest in story will often overlap with a theological approach to the text, but also that a sensitive appreciation of the characteristic assumptions and paradoxes of theology will often be needed by the literary critic. With these two qualifications in mind, this paper will concentrate on three areas of enquiry. First, the current debate about the importance of story for theology; secondly, the ways in which approaching the biblical text as story can prove illuminating; thirdly, the question of truth in relation to literary and historical approaches to the biblical text. The importance of story for theology On a general theological level, much has been made of the importance of story or narrative as a peculiarly appropriate vehicle for conveying theological truth. Everybody likes a good story; and stories linger in the mind long after other things are forgotten. To say this is, of course, not to say anything new but rather to state the obvious. Followers of Jesus, whose favoured means of teaching was the parable, should find nothing surprising in the idea that stories are a particularly effective means of communicating theological truth. Generally speaking, a recognition of the value of story can be a valuable corrective to the dominant tendency in western theology to abstract and to analyze. Since so much modern theology rapidly becomes technical and abstract, it is not surprising that in the current enthusiasm for story it has been suggested that some of the problematic debates of modern theology may owe some of their problems precisely to the exclusively abstract form of the debate. To recast some of the propositions of, say, Christology in narrative form might, it is proposed, help shed fresh light on old controversies. Or, in other words, what is the relationship between the content of a passage and the form in which it is pre- [p. For both Old Testament and New Testament contain much material that is not narrative; law, poetry, proverb, and prophetic oracle in the Old Testament, and theological letters and apocalypse in the New Testament. In the New Testament in particular this extra material provides the indispensable reflection on the story of Jesus that enables the construction of a coherent and rational faith around the story, and the effective application of its challenge to a wide variety of situations. Although, for example, Luke Because the normative content of Christian faith in

the Bible is given in a variety of different forms, it is reasonable to expect that Christian theologizing should likewise adopt a variety of forms. The fact that from time to time somewhat extravagant claims may be made for one particular form, such as story, shows little more than that the theological world, like most other departments of life, has its fads and its fashions. Reading Old Testament narrative as story Given the need to take seriously the story form of much of the Old Testament, that is to try to grasp more of the meaning and significance of the text through studying the relationship between content and form, the value of the undertaking emerges in a variety of ways. First, an interest in story will alert the reader to elements in a text that are characteristic of a story - plot, foreshadowing, irony, echo, repetition, contrast, tension, resolution, etc; elements which are clearly present in many of the most famous and memorable Old Testament stories. Interest in story means that the scholar directs his attention to the text as meaningful in itself and looks for those elements that make a text coherent and interesting. Secondly, there is the fact that some truths can best, or perhaps only, be conveyed in story form because of the importance of symbol and image in human understanding. This is not to say that the medium is the message. It is to say that sometimes the message cannot be entirely separated from the medium. For example, stories such as the creation of woman Gen. This does not mean that one cannot comment intelligently upon the meaning of a story. A meaningful silence can be an unparalleled means of creating atmosphere and interest. The story of the Ascension of Elijah 2 Kgs. Standard commentaries leave its memorable impact largely unexamined and unexplained. First, everyone involved, Elijah, Elisha, and the sons of the prophets at both Bethel and Jericho, know that Elijah is to be taken away verses ; yet nothing is said about how they know. Secondly, why does Elijah try to put Elisha off three times verses 2, 4, 6? The story implies both that Elijah was right to try and that Elisha was right to resist; yet no explanation is given. Thirdly, why is Elijah sent in stages to Bethel, to Jericho, and to the Jordan? Did he know where he was going, or was it only revealed to him step by step? And if so, why? There is no explanation. Again, nothing is explained. Fifthly, why is Elijah taken up to heaven east of the Jordan, outside the promised land? Because he had failed? Because his own origins were from Gilead, east of Jordan? Because this is the same region where Moses died? The result of leaving so much unexplained is at least twofold. First, a sense of background depth and mystery is conveyed which fascinates and involves the reader. The sense of divine purpose and guidance is almost overwhelming, yet God himself remains constantly as it were offstage the only partial exception being in verse God is strongly present, and yet remains hidden. It is through a masterful use of the possibilities of narrative presentation that the writer has conveyed these effects. The fourth point, which is related to the previous point and yet distinct, is that a story can communicate through assumption and suggestion. For example, the story of Joseph Gen. One primary way in which this is conveyed is through those things which the writer takes for granted, for thereby the reader, who naturally identifies with what is happening in the story, is likewise invited to take the same things for granted too. Rather, the story takes it as self-evidently true that this is how God is and how he works. The reader who imaginatively enters into the story will thereby absorb these same assumptions himself. Such a means of communication can be a valuable counterpart to explicit declaration. Fifthly, a story may deliberately leave something vital to its understanding unsaid. This means that the reader is obliged to use his imagination and intelligence if he is to understand the story properly. On the one hand, this means that the meaning of the story, once so grasped, will be more deeply appropriated; on the other hand, this makes for a greater likelihood that the story will be only partially understood, or even misunderstood. A notable example is Genesis 3. Historically, this has been of enormous importance in Christian theology; and indeed its context at the beginning of Genesis clearly indicates that it is of fundamental significance. Yet its exact meaning is a matter of considerable debate,[15] precisely because the story is deliberately somewhat elusive and enigmatic. The interpretation of such a fundamental discrepancy between what God says and what he does will largely determine the readings of the story as a whole. Coupled with this is usually a tendency to downplay the traditional Christian interpretation of the story as the archetypal story of human sin and divine judgment as being a misunderstanding of the nature of the story. But what if the narrator expected his reader to take for granted that it was inconceivable that God should prove false in such a way, and that therefore the apparent incongruence between what God says and what happens is to provoke the reader into a deeper understanding

of what is going on? On such an approach the threatened death is to be found in the man and woman hiding in fear from God 3: That is, death is reinterpreted in terms of something in the inner life of man, a fear and distrust which separates him from God and from his fellow i. The writer is thus showing that the real consequence of disobedience to God lies not in being suddenly struck down, which might naturally be expected but clearly does not in fact happen in life generally, but in a process of inner fear and alienation which destroys the love and trust that matter most in life. It is not possible to prove that this second interpretation rather than the first is correct, for by the very nature of the story proof is not a possible option. The test must ultimately be whether an interpretation rings true and makes more sense than any other. Whatever conclusion one does come to, it is clear that one can only come to it by thinking intelligently and imaginatively to resolve what the story leaves as such unresolved. Sixthly, a story can provide a pattern or framework for understanding life and experience. For many, life and existence on the purely historical plane may appear random or chaotic, without purpose, meaning or dignity. A story can so arrange things that pattern and meaning can be seen. The biblical story purports to be a true story. This means that as the reader recognizes in it the patterns of how God works, he can then find pattern and meaning for his own life and experience of God. For example, life for the Jews in exile and the diaspora when they were deprived of all those things that had previously been central to their faith and identity - land, temple, king - must easily have appeared hopeless and meaningless. Stories such as those of Daniel and Esther do more than just show how life under God can be a reality in such situations. The way the stories show, both explicitly and implicitly, that God is in control and that what people do does matter makes the stories a powerful medium for creating trust in the wisdom of God and in the meaning and significance of life even in difficult circumstances. Finally, a story can act as a mirror to help people see themselves more clearly. That is, people naturally identify with the central figure in a story. Presumably, had Nathan simply related straightforwardly to David what he had done 2 Sam. Interestingly, a similar technique is used again on David by Joab and the woman of Tekoa, again with effect 2 Sam. It is in such a way that the book of Jonah is also probably to be understood. Jonah is therefore made to embody such attitudes in such a way as to show how foolish and unacceptable they are. The most unlikely prophet he flees from Yahweh, 1: When he finally gets there, this unlikely prophet has only to start preaching and he has the greatest success imaginable - everyone repents 3: But how does Jonah react to this unparalleled success? Because God spares Nineveh 3: That mercy which God had shown to Israel Ex. But what are pagan foreigners actually like? The first chapter of the book has already devoted considerable space to the pagan mariners who took Jonah on board.

Prompt-a-Day! (Grades 3-6) Nasty, Ilie Nastase vs. tennis Historical vocal pedagogy classics Masoneria Mexicana Ignore the dirty water. Pt. 8A B. Household tables (5 v.) The Howell book of cat care When police unionise ChangeOne: The Diet Fitness Plan Who Was Who in America Collaboration and conflict between Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli Annotated bibliography on competencies Karen Paulson. How to find chemical information Wild cousins of the dog The authority of the moral agent by Conrad D. Johnson. Goods 100 best books ever & Review of U.S. foreign policy Camera shot list template We live in Switzerland What are stocks really worth? Saga of Hog Island and other essays in inconvenient history Dungeons and dragons 1st edition world of greyhawk Urban Cowboy (That Special Woman/Hearts Of Wyoming) Jill Oxtons Cross Stitch Australia Issue No. 9 (May 1993) Answering the 8 cries of the spirited child True story memoir mea culpa Normalcy and reaction, 1921-1933 Crafts in a flash! The stars above us Healing Springs Baptist Church Database administration 2nd edition Learning to have faith. Medieval texts contemporary readers Telugu to bengali learning The destruction of the black civilization Why fixating on competitors is wrong Math Practice K-1 Virgil, the Aeneid Democracy in the family Behind the Glitter