

How to Read Your Bible – Wednesdays at 6:30p

Topic: #4 How to Read Narrative

Preliminary: Genres of the OT (Contents)

1 Samuel 8 through 2 Samuel 2:7

How did the homework assignment go? Questions?

- 1) What problem/conflict/plot is revealed in the story?
- 2) Keep in mind the Big Story (Meta-narrative):

Reading Old Testament Narrative:

Narrative (most common genre in Bible)

“Purposeful stories retelling of the historical events of the past, intended to give meaning and direction for a given people in the present.” (How to... ch 5)

ESV Study Bible: “To read the book of Joshua in keeping with its literary purpose, one needs to place oneself in *the narrative world of the text*. Readers need to imagine themselves present at the events, and take the literal, physical details seriously. They need to relish the suspense, the danger, and the plot conflicts that the storyteller puts forward. An *epic* presents heightened images of good and evil, and all the more so with the implied holy war motif encountered in the OT. Along with the images of good and evil, there are images of heroism to admire and emulate. Finally, the reader should look not only at the world of the story and its characters but through that world to life as it is now.

Three Levels of the Story: “David and Goliath”

Third Level

Big Story
(Meta-Narrative)

Second Level

Middle Story
(OT Patterns)

First Level

Little Story
(What Happened)

Key Thoughts in Reading OT Narrative:

- God is the Protagonist (Main Actor)
- Satan and His Kingdom is the Antagonist (Against the Main Actor)
- The People are the Agonists (Those Caught Up into the Struggle)
- The Plot is Ultimately Directing us the Resolution found in Jesus Christ

1 Samuel 8- 2 Samuel 2 – David Becomes King

Hebrew Narrative:

#1 - The Narrator: What does he want us to know?

He doesn't tell us everything, he rarely explains stuff, significant when he does explain

He won't normally make moral judgments, because the story is bigger

(e.g. in 31 Saul kills himself, in 2 Samuel 1 the Amalekite says he killed him)

#2 - Scenes: like movie, pictures based on location or perspective

Fast moving "Chasing David" - when it slows down, it is significant (chapter 17)

Historical locations are important (might need a map) - Gath/Philistia

#3 - Characters: main points are made through characters, not explanations

Who are they? What sorts of people are they? How does the Lord deal with them?

Focus on "Leadership" and "Relationships" -- Contrasts between David and Saul: how

are they each chosen? How does Saul change from the initial to the later? What kind of

leader is Jonathan 14:24&14:29-30? Leader is David 30:21-24? How does Jonathan

relate to David and Saul?

#4 - Dialogue: what does the narrator want you to know and think

First words of a dialogue are key

Characterization is key to understanding where the story is heading

Repeated words or phrases or summaries are important to driving home

#5 - Plot: What are the conflicts that need resolving?

Beginning (intro), middle (conflict), end (resolution??) - e.g. Deuteronomy

Pace will indicate importance - e.g. 2 Sam 1 David's Lament

Elaboration is a clue - e.g. Nabal (ch 25)

#6 Structure: how is it ordered and why?

Meant to be read orally, needs to be memorable, key transitions and repetitions

Ch 1 Samuel born, ch 8 Samuel is old ... ch 12 Samuel's farewell ... ch 25 Samuel dies

#7 God: Most Important to Everything

God is Main Character and it all relates to him

Where does he appear, speaks, acts... Where does he disappear, silent, get angry...

e.g. How many times does Saul use "me" and David use "LORD" (22:7-8, 26:21-25)

E.g. Saul calls on the Lord in chapter 28, what happens?

(200 Level: Shared assumptions of the readers - What's going on with David and Jonathan?)

Assignment for Next Time:

Topic: #5 How to Read Torah

Read: Exodus 19-20; Exodus 29; Leviticus 19; Deuteronomy 5-8; Deuteronomy 15

Getting More Out of Your Reading

- 1) Have a place and a plan
- 2) Skim headings to get a content awareness for the surrounding text
- 3) Try to read a specific chunk / whole book in one sitting & reread

What to Know When Reading The Torah

Torah means “Instruction.” It is normally translated “Law” or The Law of Moses. The Law of Moses in the broad sense refers to the first five books of the Bible which Moses wrote (also called *the Pentateuch* “Five Scrolls”). In the narrow sense, Torah refers to the laws/instructions given by God at Mount Sinai and also reiterated and reinforced by God’s word in later scripture passages. (Primarily Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)

First of all, know the context of the Torah. Who does this apply to? What is the situation surrounding the people at the time it is given? What is the bigger story about what God is intending for this people? Secondly, remember that the “instructions” are meant to protect Israel’s spiritual character and, at times, to foreshadow God’s plan for salvation. They were not intended to prescribe religious exercises for getting on God’s good side.

Here is a quote from “How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth” (ch 9):

Along with the patriarchal narratives found in Genesis, the three defining narratives for Israel as a people are found in the book of Exodus (see *How to 2*, pp. 35 – 38). First, their miraculous deliverance (the “exodus”) from slavery in Egypt, the most powerful empire in the ancient world at that time (Exod 1 – 18); second, the return of the presence of God as distinguishing his people from all other peoples on earth (Exod 33; 40); and third, God’s reconstituting them as a people for his name at the foot of Mount Sinai (Exod 19 – Num 10:10). It is hard for us even to imagine the enormity of difficulty involved in this third matter.

Here were people who for hundreds of years had known only slavery and Egyptian culture. And now God was about to reconstitute them into a totally new people on the face of the earth. Not only must they be formed into an army of warriors in order to conquer the land promised to their ancestors, but they must also be formed into a community that would be able to live together both during their time in the wilderness and eventually in the land itself. At the same time they needed direction as to how they were to be *God’s* people — both in their relationships with each other and in their relationship with God — so that they would shed the ways and culture of Egypt and not adopt the ways and culture of the Canaanites whose land they were to possess. A further challenge was the rapid assimilation of large numbers of non-Israelites into the people of Israel, not just ethnically, but, far more importantly, religiously (Exod 12:38).

And this is the role of the law in Israel’s history. It was God’s *gift* to his people to establish the ways they were to live in community with one another and to provide for their relationship with and worship of Yahweh, their God. At the same time the law set boundaries with regard to their relationships with the cultures around them. A formidable task indeed!

If we are going to read and understand the law well, we must begin with this understanding of its role in Israel’s own history. At the same time we must be aware of its covenantal nature — because our understanding not only of the law, but of the prophetic texts and of the New Testament story itself as a new covenant, depends on it. So the first purpose of this chapter is to guide you into a good understanding of the nature and role of the law(s) in Israel. But we also care about its second purpose. What role do these laws have for those of us who live under God’s new covenant with his people?

Resources:

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, Fee-Stuart (ch 9)

“How To Read” Bible Project Videos: [The Law](#)