Classroom

Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

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Unit 1: The Shape of the Hebrew Bible

SESSIONS: 1—6

Session 1: What on Earth is the Hebrew Bible?

Key Question

What experiences from your life have shaped your view of the cosmos? How has that affected you or those in your context? What are common experiences people have with the Hebrew Bible? What are some ways to move through any challenges you might have?

Session Quote

"Are we imposing a set of questions that are foreign to what the authors are trying to communicate? Do we need to set our cultural agendas aside to just listen?"

Notes

One of the most fundamental questions which has faced theology and the Church in every age... is whether or not Christianity also needs an Old Testament. Is the Old Testament to be thrown away as obsolete, or preserved as a relic from days of yore, or treasured as a classic and read by scholars, or used occasionally as a change from the New Testament, or kept in a box in case it should be needed some day? Or is the Old Testament an essential part of the Christian Bible, with continuing validity alongside the New Testament? — D.L. BAKER, TWO TESTAMENTS, ONE BIBLE: A STUDY OF THE THEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS; CITED IN T. DESMOND ALEXANDER, "ROYAL EXPECTATIONS IN GENESIS THROUGH KINGS: THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR BIBLICAL THEOLOGY" TYNDALE BULLETIN 49/2 (1998): 191-192

Session 2: How Jesus and the Apostles Read Their Bibles

Key Question

This session reflects on how Jesus and Paul talk about Scripture. Summarize how you would express what they think the Hebrew Bible is all about. What do you make of their view of the Hebrew Bible? Is it similar or different from how you typically view these Scriptures?

Session Quote

"It's about an anointed representative who goes into death and suffering, out the other side, so that a whole new direction—repentance and forgiveness—can open up for all of the nations."

What is the Hebrew Bible?

Jesus and the TaNak

Jesus and his first followers consistently portray the Hebrew scriptures as a unified collection of wisdom literature that tells a forward pointing story.

Luke 24:25-27

[Jesus] said to [the disciples], "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And ***beginning with Moses and all the Prophets****, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

Luke 24:44-47

Now He said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are ***written about me in the Torah of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms*** *must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*

2 Timothy 3:14-17

You [Timothy], continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned, how from childhood you have known ***the sacred scriptures*** *which are able to* ***give you wisdom*** *that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Messiah Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in doing what is right, so that God's people can be proficient, equipped for doing good.*

How did Jesus and his followers reach this conclusion? They did not invent this way of reading the Hebrew Bible. Rather, they inherited from their Jewish tradition a set of convictions about the origin, nature, and meaning of these texts. And not only that, they also grew up in communities that modeled how to read and make sense of the Hebrew scriptures.

Notice that Jesus refers to the Hebrew scriptures as a two-part ("Torah…and prophets") or three-part ("Torah…prophets…the Psalms") collection. Jesus is not alone in this. He is expressing the most common way the Bible was referred to in Jewish culture from this period.

Also, when we look at how Jesus and the apostles actually interpret and appeal to the Hebrew Bible, they see it as a repository of patterns, or in Greek types (τύπος).

Romans 5:14

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a ***type/pattern*** *of Him who was to come.*

1 Corinthians 10:1-6

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.... Now these things happened to them as a ***type/pattern****, and* ***they were written for our instruction****, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

1 Peter 3:20-21

who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. A ***matching type/pattern*** *to that is baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

These passages help us set an agenda for this class:

- We are going to take a deep dive into the writing, collection, and composition of the Hebrew Bible.
- We are going to recover a way of reading these texts that matches the contours of their design intentions.

Session 3: The Ancient Shape of the Scriptures

Key Question

What are some of the main differences between the TaNaK arrangement and the Christian Old Testament? Could a different arrangement change the meaning of a text?

Session Quote

"The most reasonable case to be made is that there is an intentional compositional ordering and organization here. You notice certain things when you read it from this perspective, and you notice different things when it's organized in a different way."

Luke 24:25-27

[Jesus] said to [the disciples], "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And ***beginning with Moses and all the Prophets****, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

The Macro-Shape of the TaNaK

The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures that Jesus and the apostles read, consisted of a three-part collection, called the "TaNaKh" (a.k.a. "TaNaK") in later Jewish tradition.

TaNaK compared with the Christian Old Testament

SESSION 3 FIGURE: TaNaK compared with the Christian Old Testament

Torah	**Pentateuch**
Genesis - Exodus - Leviticus - Numbers - Deuteronomy	Genesis - Exodus - Leviticus - Numbers - Deuteronomy
Nevi'im — The Prophets	**History**
Former Prophets Joshua - Judges - Samuel - Kings	Joshua - Judges - Ruth 1-2 Samuel - 1-2 Kings 1-2 Chronicles Ezra - Nehemiah - Esther
Latter Prophets Isaiah - Jeremiah - Ezekiel Hosea - Joel - Amos - Obadiah - Jonah - Micah - Nahum - Habakkuk - Zephaniah - Haggai - Zechariah - Malachi	**Poetry** Job - Psalms - Proverbs - Ecclesiastes - Song of Solomon
Ketuvim — The writings	**Prophets**
Psalms - Job - Proverbs Ruth - Song of Songs - Ecclesiastes - Lamentations - Esther [The Megillot] Daniel - Ezra-Nehemiah - Chronicles	Isaiah - Jeremiah - Lamentations Ezekiel - Daniel Hosea - Joel - Amos - Obadiah - Jonah - Micah - Nahum - Habakkuk - Zephaniah - Haggai - Zechariah - Malachi

Ancient Evidence for the Shape of the TaNaK

When Jesus alludes to the order of the Hebrew Bible, he assumes a three part design, which agrees with other contemporary Jewish authors who allude to the ordered sections.

- Luke 24:44: "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Torah of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.
- Luke 11:51: "Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary."

    - Abel was murdered by Cain in Genesis 4, and Zechariah son of Jehoiadah was murdered by Joash in 2 Chronicles 24, which corresponds to the TaNaK order.

- Prologue to the Wisdom of Ben Sirah: “Many great teachings have been given to us through the Law [= Torah], and the Prophets [= Nevi’im], and the others that follow them [= Ketuvim]… So my grandfather Yeshua devoted himself especially to the reading of the Law and the Prophets and the other scrolls of our Ancestors.”
- Dead Sea Scrolls (4QMMT): “The scrolls of Moses, the words of the prophets, and of David.”
- Philo of Alexandria (De Vita Contempletiva, 25): “The laws and the oracles given by inspiration through the prophets and the Psalms, and the other scrolls whereby knowledge and piety are increased and completed.”

Session 4: “Seams” Between Texts in the Dead Sea Scroll

Key Question

How does viewing the Scriptures as a series of scrolls rather than a bound book impact how you understand it?

Session Quote

“Here’s why these scrolls are so important: they actually preserve for us the technology of scroll making in the very period of the pre-Christian movement and of what the Bible would’ve looked like in Jesus’ synagogue.”

The Editorial Design of the TaNaK

SESSION 4 FIGURE: The Editorial Design of the TaNaK



Session 5: The Prophet to Come: The "Seams" of the Torah and Prophets

Key Question

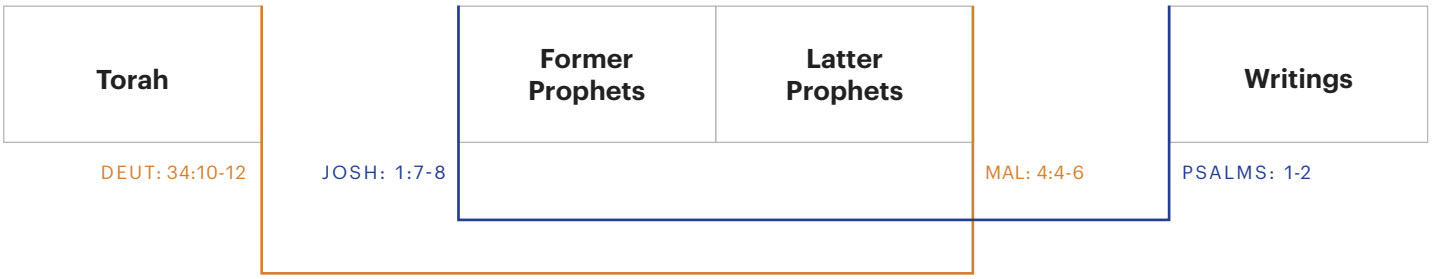
The "seams" of the TaNaK describe the kind of leader humanity really needs. What do the Torah and Prophets say this person is like?

Session Quote

"Someone is registering a note of hope and waiting for a future figure here at the end of the Torah."

The Editorial Design of the TaNaK

SESSION 4 FIGURE: The Editorial Design of the TaNaK



The three-part shape of the Hebrew Bible isn't simply a matter of arrangement. Rather, the books themselves have been designed to fit into this particular shape. If you look at the editorial seams of the major sections (remember, the book technology was papyrus or leather scrolls), you'll find intentional design clues at the beginning and ending of these sections.

Seam #1: The final sentences of the Torah and opening sentences of the Prophets:

- Deuteronomy 34:10-12: Anticipation of a coming Moses-like prophet who was promised but never came
- Joshua 1:1-9: God's appointed leader, Joshua, who will lead the people into the promised land, must meditate on the Torah day and night to find success.

Seam #2: The final sentences of the Prophets and the opening sentences of the Ketuvim

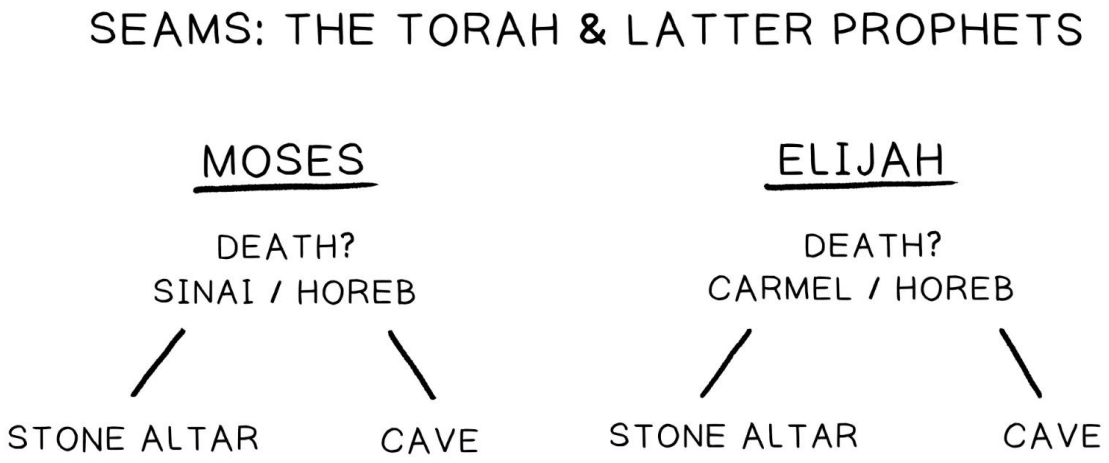
- Malachi 4:4-6: Anticipation of a coming Elijah-like prophet who will call the people back to the Torah and restore the hearts of Israel before the Day of the Lord.

- Psalm 1-2: The righteous one who will be vindicated in the final judgment, is one who meditates on the Torah day and night to find success (Psalm 1). This righteous one is the future messianic king from the line of David, who is appointed by God to rule the nations and overcome evil once and for all (Psalm 2).

The Point: The Hebrew Bible is meditation literature (Joshua 1, Psalm 1) that is designed to foster...

1. A lifetime practice of reading and pondering the meaning of these texts.
2. Future hope in the promised prophet who will herald the arrival of the day of the Lord and the messianic kingdom (Deuteronomy 34, Malachi 4)
3. A covenantal way of life that creates a counter-culture to the prevailing world-systems (Joshua 1, Psalm 1).

Illustration: Session 5



Session 6 : The Prophet to Come: Psalms 1 and 2

Key Question

We've been talking about how the "seams" of the TaNaK describe the kind of leader humanity really needs. What do Psalms 1 and 2 add to that portrait?

Session Quote

"The Christian tradition has found it hard to maintain something biblical authors view as a unity, namely that when God's Spirit is at work, what it means is that humans are at work, who are so in tune with God's will that it's a marvel to behold. What we tend to do is separate and say that if God is at work, it's at the expense of human involvement. But that's never the way the Spirit works."

Notes

Tim continues to cover the seams of the TaNaK in this session. Refer to session 5 notes.

The Origins of the Hebrew Bible: Two Perspectives

Where did this remarkable collection of scrolls come from? Why were they written in the first place, and then collected and formed into an organized whole?

An Important Premise: The Inspiration of Scripture

Descriptions of the Bible's origins found within the Bible consistently describe its origins in a joint-partnership between humans and God's guiding presence through the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16

*"All Scripture is God-breathed..." = Greek theopneustos (*θεόπνευστος*), a compound word from: theos - "God" + pneustos = "spirit/breath"*

2 Peter 1:19-21

[19] "and we have the reliable prophetic word, to which you would do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a place of gloomy darkness, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, [20] knowing this firstly important thing, that no prophecy of Scripture comes of one's own interpretation. [21] For prophecy was never brought by the purpose of a human, but being carried by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God."

In both of these texts, the apostles reflect on how the Scriptures are not merely the result of human purpose and activity. Rather, the Bible is the product of a human-divine partnership, neither one cancelling out the other.

The following texts are drawing upon a whole network of texts that portray the biblical prophets as humans were who energized and empowered by God's Spirit to speak to their generation:

Micah 3:8

As for me, I am filled with power
*with the **Spirit** of Yahweh,*
and with justice and strength,
to announce to Jacob his rebellious act,
and to Israel his sin.

Isaiah 61:1

*The **Spirit** of Lord Yahweh is upon me,*
because Yahweh has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

2 Samuel 23:1-2

Now these are the final words of David.
David the son of Jesse declares,
The man who was raised on high declares,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
and the sweet psalmist of Israel,
*"The **Spirit** of Yahweh spoke through me,*
and His word was on my tongue."

Unit 2: The Origins of the Hebrew Bible

SESSIONS: 7—13

Session 7: An Important Premise: The Inspiration of Scripture

Key Question

Do you or those in your context tend to view the spiritual and physical realms as distinct? How do you think this affects your view of the inspiration of Scripture?

Session Quote

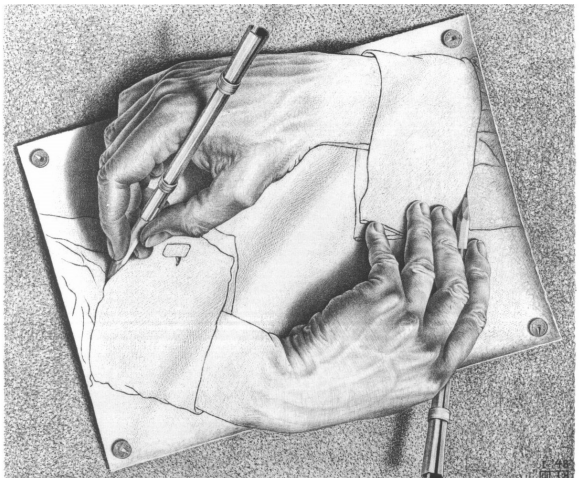
"The human history of the Bible is its Holy Spirit history. They're not different things. So when I talk about the human author, I'm also talking about the divine author at the same time."

Notes

Tim refers to notes in session 6.

The Divine-Human Partnership

We are asked to imagine what seems to us like a paradox that is well illustrated by the famous image by M.C. Escher, "Drawing Hands" (1948).



The Scriptures claim to be the product of a divine-human partnership. Both are necessary, but neither alone are sufficient causes to explain the origins and nature of the biblical text. God's involvement does not diminish the human dimension, just the opposite. Within the biblical story, the Holy Spirit is portrayed as one who enhances and energizes human beings to be more fully the divine-image they were created to be. The agency of God's Spirit does not work at the expense of human agency, just the opposite. Humans become more human through the empowering influence of the Spirit. This is true of all the Spirit-empowered figures in the Bible (Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, the prophets, the apostles, etc.)

When we look at biblical descriptions of the writing of biblical books, notice how the prophetic figure is not in a trance, but is in full possession of their faculties. This gives us an important window into the production of biblical literature.

- See Exodus 17:8-14, or Jeremiah 36, or Isaiah 8

On the occasions where we do see prophets in a state of elevated consciousness, they are not writing or producing texts. Rather they are experiencing a vision or interpreting the meaning of a vision in light of their understanding of the Scriptures.

- Daniel 9-11, Ezekiel 1-3

For a deeper dive on the portrait of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament:

- Christopher J.H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament*
- David G. Firth & Paul D. Wegner, *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament*.

Illustration 1 Session 7

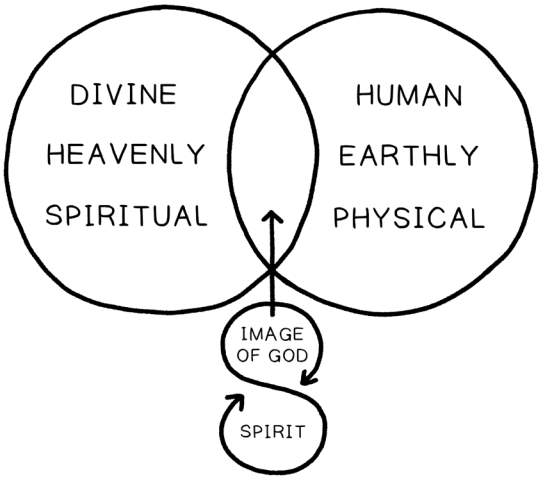
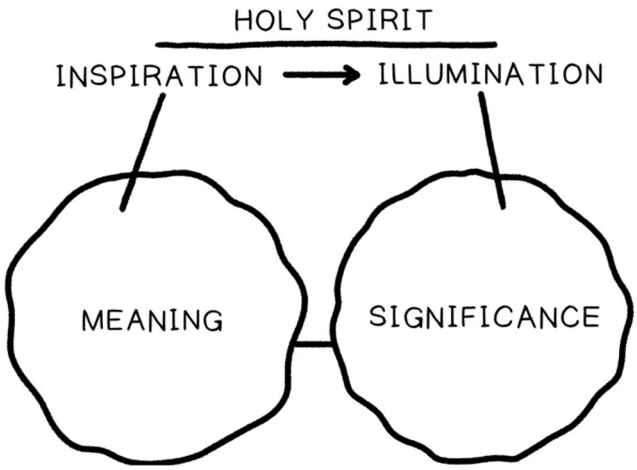


Illustration 2 Session 7



Session 8: Perspective 1: What the Torah Says about the Bible's Origins

Key Question

How would you summarize why the Bible was written? What is its purpose?

Session Quote

"The paradigm is that the future hope for God's people is discovered in seeing the patterns of the past, which is why these stories have been designed in the first place. "

Perspective 1: The Origin of the Bible, as Told within the Bible.

The Torah

1. The first mention in the Bible of the writing of the Bible

Exodus 17:8-9, 14

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands..."
*...then Yahweh said to Moses, "***Write this on a scroll as something *to be remembered*...***"*

This is a "salvation story." Israel has just been rescued from slavery and oppression in Egypt, and as they wander in the wilderness toward Mt. Sinai, the Amalekites (ancient kinsmen) pounce on the vulnerable Israelites. Through Moses and Joshua, God delivers the Israelites and this is the occasion for Moses' first writing activity.

The origins of the Bible are first and foremost concerned with telling the story of how God delivers his people.

2. The second mention of the writing of the Bible

Exodus 24:3-4

When Moses went and told the people all Yahweh's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything Yahweh's has said we will do!"
***Moses then wrote down everything Yahweh had said**.*

This is a "covenant story." In Exodus 19-24 God invited Israel into a covenant partnership so that they could be his royal-priestly representatives to the nations (Exodus 19:4-6). Moses has just spent time on top of Mt. Sinai in the presence of Yahweh, and he wrote down the 10 + 42 terms of the covenant partnership. This is what the people agree to and what Moses writes down.

3. The last mention of Moses writing in the Torah

Deuteronomy 31:19, 22, 24-26

And Yahweh said to Moses, "Now therefore ***write this song*** *and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, so that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel..."* ***So Moses wrote this song*** *the same day and taught it to the people of Israel.*

It came about, when Moses ***finished writing the words of this Torah in a scroll*** *until they were complete, that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, saying, "Take* ***this scroll of the Torah and place it beside the ark of the covenant*** *of Yahweh your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you.*

After forty years of Israel's rebellion in the wilderness, Yahweh tells Moses to write a prophetic song, that anticipates the entire story of Israel in the promised land. It is one long history of failure and self-destruction, with periodic bright moments of hope for the future of God's promise.

Moses' song acts as a prophetic witness of accusation and also as a memorial of future hope that Yahweh will not abandon his promises to restore his divine blessing to all of the nations through the family of Abraham (Genesis 12).

Conclusions on the meaning of the Bible from these three examples about why the Bible came into existence:

Exodus 17: To tell the story of how God has rescued and formed a people

Exodus 24: To invite those rescued people into a covenant partnership so that they can represent him to the rest of the world.

Deuteronomy 31-32: To accuse the covenant partners of their failure and rebellion, and to offer hope for the future of God's people and his world.

Session 9: What the Prophets Say About the Origin of the Hebrew Bible

Key Question

Reflect on the idea that the Hebrew Bible was written over a long period of time by a minority group criticizing the nation's leadership. Does this change or challenge your view of the Scriptures in any way? If so, how? How do you think this idea contributes to what you find in the Scriptures?

Session Quote

"What we're beginning to see even within these texts is the texts recognize that they had a developing life over the course of many generations. The Torah didn't just pop into existence in the form we know it on the fords of the Jordan River and then Joshua just toted that around."

The Prophets: Joshua-2 Kings, and Isaiah-Malachi

Joshua as the guardian of the covenant texts:

Joshua 1:7-8

"Be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all ***the Torah*** *which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. "****This scroll of the Torah*** *shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.*

Joshua 8:30-35

[Joshua] wrote there on stones a copy of the ***Torah of Moses****, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of Yahweh… Then afterward he read all* ***the words of the Torah****, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is* ***written in the book of the Torah****. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel…*

Joshua is presented as a new Moses, who guards the covenant scriptures and who guides Israel in their role as Yahweh's representatives. He is a faithful leader throughout his life.

Notice how Joshua 8 continues the association of the covenant texts with the ark of the covenant. Notice also that the Torah is short enough to be written on memorial stones (like the Mesha stele here). Its is not likely that this refers to the current form of the Torah, but to a "proto-Torah."

After Joshua, Israel abandons its covenant partnership with Yahweh, and begins a centuries long history of apostasy and covenant rebellion.



The Mesha Stele (9th cent. B.C.)

Judges 2:6-10

When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land. ***The people served Yahweh all the days of Joshua,*** *and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Yahweh which He had done for Israel. Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died at the age of one hundred and ten…*

All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and ***there arose another generation after them who did not know Yahweh, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.***

From this point on, Yahweh has to choose from a minority of faithful representatives among the Israelites who are called "prophets." These are Yahweh's covenant representatives, who provide regular critique and guidance to Israel's kings, priests, and prophets.

The biblical prophets are on the whole suspicious of the Israelite institutions of the monarchy, temple priesthood, and the official prophets.

- Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Elijah, Elisha, all confronted Israel's kings, priests, or prophets
- Prophetic resistance against the Israelite monarchy

1 Samuel 12:13-15, 19-20

"Now therefore, ***here is the king whom you have chosen,*** *whom you have asked for, and behold, the Lord has set a king over you. "If you will fear Yahweh and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of Yahweh, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow Yahweh your God. "****If you will not listen to the voice of Yahweh****, but rebel against the command of Yahweh,* ***then the hand of Yahweh will be against you,*** *as it was against your fathers. Then all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to Yahweh your God, so that we may not die, for* ***we have added to all our sins this evil by asking for ourselves a king****."Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear.* ***You have committed all this evil****, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve Yahweh with all your heart.*

See also Amos 7:10-17; Isaiah 39; Jeremiah 36

Prophetic critique of the Israelite priesthood and their sponsored prophets

Jeremiah 5:30-31

"A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land:
The ***prophets*** *prophesy lies,*
the ***priests*** *rule by their own authority,*
and my people love it this way;
but what will you do in the end?

Jeremiah 32:32-33

The people of Israel and Judah have provoked me *by all the evil they have done—they,* ***their kings and officials, their priests and prophets,*** *the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem. They turned their backs to me and not their faces…*

See also Hosea 4:4-9; Amos 7:14; Isaiah 28:7; 1 Kings 17-19

Late in the Israelite monarchy, the covenant texts of the Scriptures are neglected and forgotten, until they are discovered by a Moses-like king (Josiah), and interpreted by a Moses-like prophet (Huldah) in 2 Kings 22:1-20.

The point: The scriptural scrolls claim to come from a tradition of prophetic leaders in Israel that stems from Moses. These texts reflect a "minority report" within ancient Israel that comes from those who were faithful to Yahweh and remained true to the Sinai covenant.

The story of Judges through 2 Kings depicts the majority of Israelites and their kings as apostate. This portrait could only come from the minority group of Israelites who remained faithful to Yahweh and critical of the majority (think of the "7,000 who haven't bowed to Baal" 1 Kgs 17:14, 18).

For this faithful prophetic remnant within Israel, the Torah remained a source of covenant authority to diagnose Israel's present failure, but also a source of future hope for the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham.

Hosea uses the ten commandments (from Exodus 20 & Deuteronomy 5) and the covenant curses (Leviticus 26 & Deuteronomy 28) to accuse Israel of apostasy (Hosea 4:1-6).

Amos derives much of his language and imagery from the Pentateuch: Covenant curses should generate "repentance" (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11; all derived from Deuteronomy 28-30).

Pentateuchal narratives are paradigmatic for even the earliest prophets: Hosea 12:2-4 sees Israel's entire history anticipated in the Jacob narratives of Genesis.

The imagery of future hope is rooted in the storyline and key texts of the Torah: the messianic seed from the line of Judah, the future priest-king like Melchizedek, the need for a new covenant, the recreation of the human heart by the power of the Spirit.

The Babylonian Exile and the Making of the Bible

The institutions of the monarchy, priesthood, and court prophets were all eliminated.

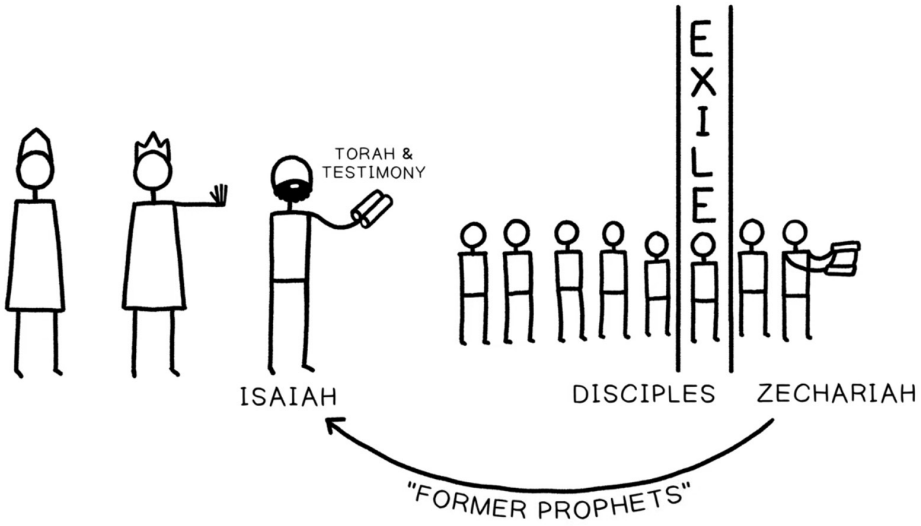
Lamenations 2:6-9

*He has laid waste **his dwelling** like a garden; he has destroyed **his place of meeting**.*
*Yahweh has made **Zion** forget her appointed **festivals** and her **Sabbaths**;*
*in his fierce anger he has spurned both **king and priest**.*
*Yahweh has rejected his **altar** and abandoned his **sanctuary**.*
*He has given the walls of her **palaces** into the hands of the enemy;*
*they have raised a shout in **the house of Yahweh** as on the day of an appointed festival.*
*Yahweh determined to tear down **the wall** around Daughter Zion.*
He stretched out a measuring line and did not withhold his hand from destroying.
*He made **ramparts** and **walls** lament; together they wasted away.*
*Her **gates** have sunk into the ground; their **bars** he has broken and destroyed.*
*Her **king and her princes** are exiled among the nations,*
***the Torah** is no more, and her **prophets** no longer find visions from Yahweh.*

A minority group among the exiles turned to the writings preserved by the true prophets, whose words about Israel's judgment had come to pass:

- Isaiah's limmudim (Isaiah 8:11-17) continued Isaiah's high view of the prophetic scriptures (Isa 8:19-20).
- Daniel looks to the Mosaic Torah as the product of "Moses and the Prophets" (Dan 9:9-10) that points forward to the restoration of the new Jerusalem after a "hyper-Jubilee" period.
- Malachi 3:16-18 reflects the mindset of the community behind the Hebrew Bible. They meditate on the scriptures, called "the scroll of remembering," which fosters hope in a future "sorting out" of Israel.
- The exiles who return from Babylon have a high view of the Torah and Prophets, and they anticipate the fulfillment of the prophetic promises of restoration:
    - Ezra's main task was to teach the Scriptures: Ezra 7:6, 25-26; Nehemiah 8.
    - The exilic prophets are aware of their dependence on the pre-exilic Scripture: Zechariah 1:2-6; chs. 7-8.
- The final canonical shape of the TaNaK collection has a post-exilic stamp, and elevates the importance of immersing oneself in the Scriptures (Joshua 1, Psalm 1), to foster the future hope of restoration (Deut 34:10-12; Mal 4:4-5) and counter-cultural faithfulness in the present.

Illustration Session 9



Session 10: The Origin of the Bible From a Historical Perspective

Key Question

Summarize what you think is most important for people to understand about the compositional process of the Bible or about the nature of the Bible as human and divine.

Session Quote

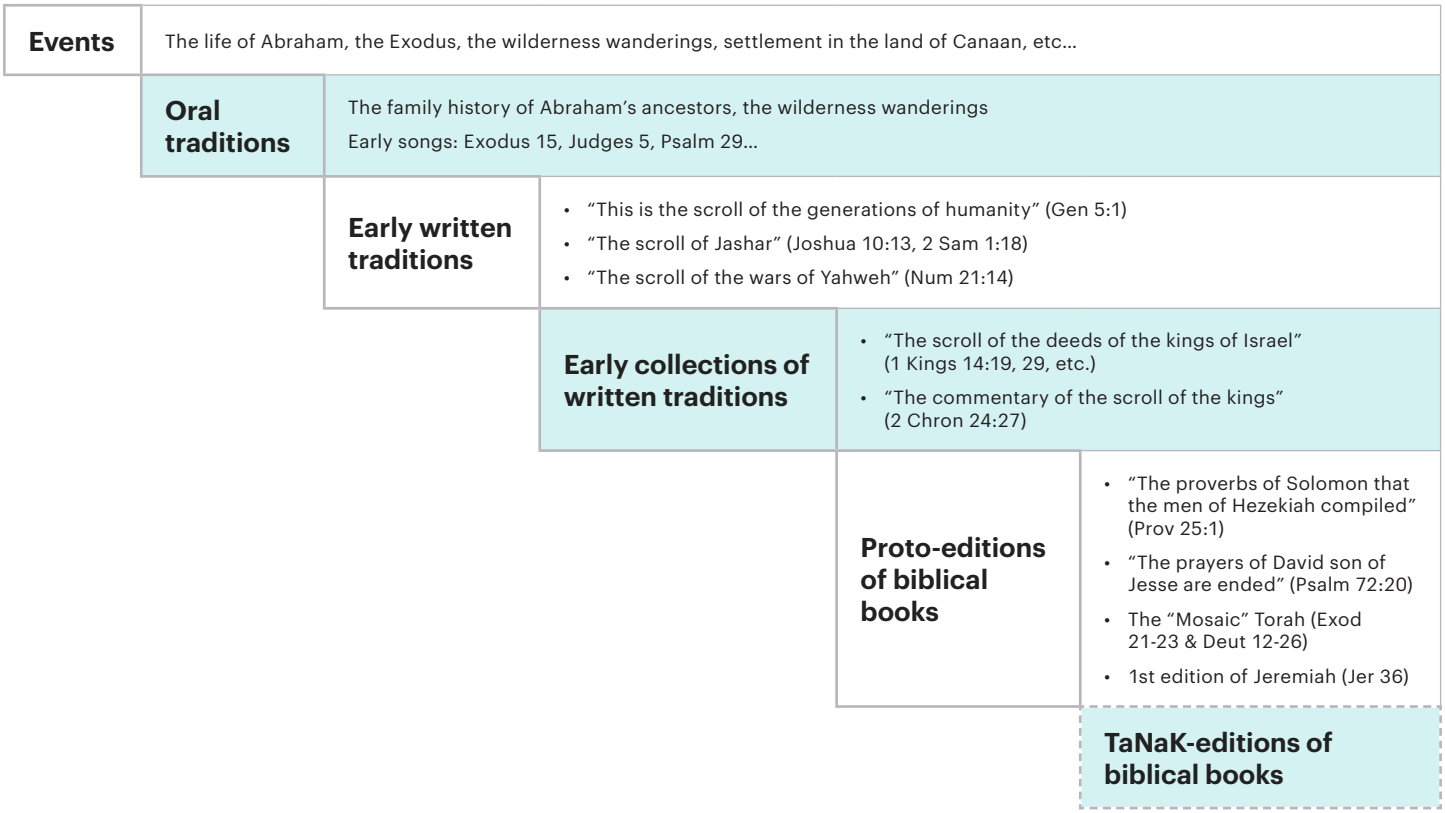
"The human origins doesn't negate or diminish its divine word and authority, but its divine word and authority doesn't diminish the human processes that brought them into existence."

Perspective 2: The Origins of the Bible from a Historical Perspective

The written origins of the Bible are also illuminated through historical research into the technology of writing, text-production and transmission in ancient Israel and their surrounding cultures.

The Old Testament is a collection of collections, made up of textual materials from all periods of Israel's history, religion, and literature. Ancient Israelite tradition-literature came into existence through a multi-step process that is still discernible by looking at literary evidence within the texts themselves.

SESSION 10 FIGURE: The Origins of the Bible from a Historical Perspective



The Scribal Origins of the Bible

We have an abundance of evidence about the status and practice of the professional scribe in the ancient near east. For recent scholarship see the following:

- Brett Sanday and John Walton, The Lost World of Scripture
- William Schniedewind, How the Bible became a Book
- Karel van der Toorn, Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible

Scribes were a professional class in the ancient world, who handled and create texts in a variety of ways:

- They created new texts that were commissioned: Letters, receipts, diplomatic correspondence
- They preserved the cherished traditional literature of their culture: poems, epic stories, ritual texts, cultural mythology
- They preserved the official records of their political and religious institutions: annals of the king's wars and activities

Session 11: The Hebrew Bible as a Mosaic

Key Question

You've seen how the book of Ruth is hyperlinked to Judges, Samuel, and Proverbs. This happens all throughout the Hebrew Bible! Do you think that seeing these hyperlinks is necessary for understanding the meaning of a text or book? Why or why not?

Session Quote

"This is why the Ketuvim (the Writings) is so cool—because they're like little mini-commentaries on the themes and ideas at work elsewhere within the collection."

Analogies for Understanding the Nature of the Hebrew Bible

The Family Quilt metaphor



A quilt is made of many pre-existing materials, consisting of individual pieces (like Ruth or Esther) or sub-collections (the laws at Mt. Sinai, Psalms). These earlier materials can be incorporated as they stand or editorially reshaped to fit the new context. But this new overall context of the "final quilt" gives each individual piece a new layer of meaning when viewed within a larger context and frame of reference.

Aspen grove analogy vs. collection of potted plants



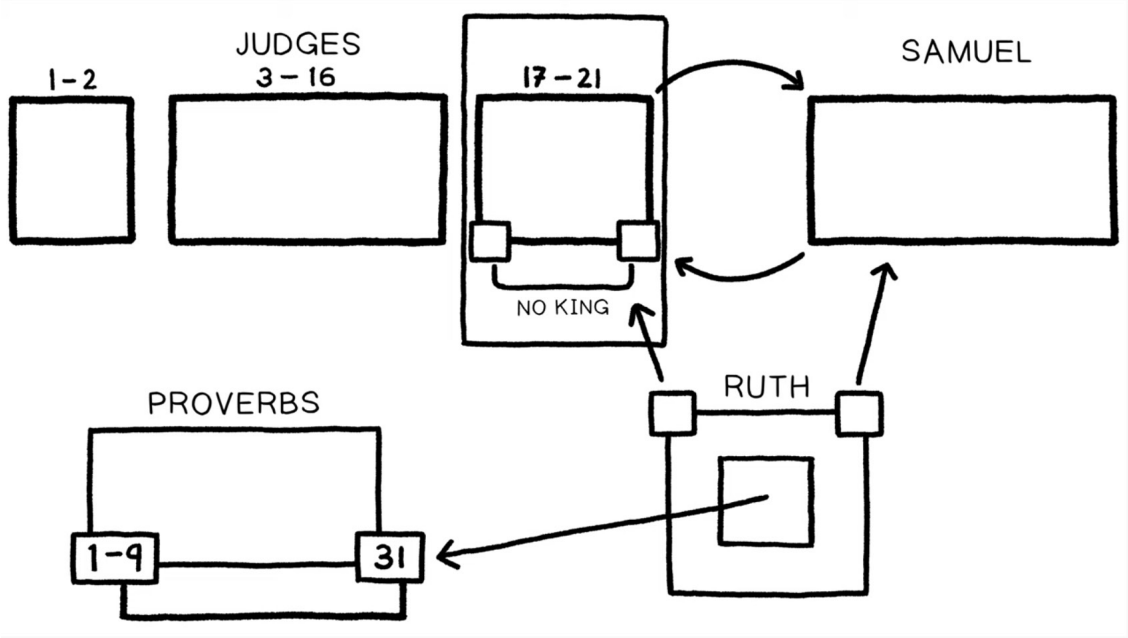
Our common conception of the "canon" of the Hebrew Bible is similar to a collection of potted plants. Each book is a self-contained entity that was formed in basic isolation from the others, and there was a long process of pots/books being moved in or out of garden, until one day the gardener decides to put up a fence and lock the gate so that no more movement can take place.

A view of the Canon informed by both historical and textual data found within the Hebrew Bible is more similar to a grove of aspen trees. There is an oldest root complex underground that branches out and grows new trees that are distinct above ground. But underground they are interconnected and share the same genetic code, so that they grow symbiotically and mutually until they all reach maturity together.



Analogy adapted from Julius Steinberg and Timothy Stone, "The Historical Formation of the Writings in Antiquity," in *The Shape of the Writings* (Eisenbrauns, 2015) pp. 5-11.

Illustration Session 11



Cut Topics

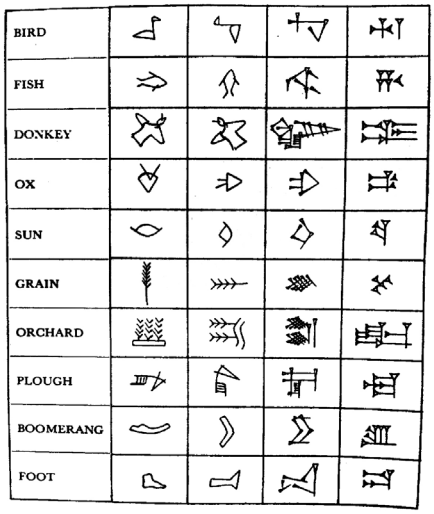
In session 11, Tim refers to origins of the Hebrew alphabet and some other topics he could not cover because of time. If you'd like to take a deep dive into these topics on your own time, take a look at these cut notes.

The Origins of Writing, the Alphabet, and the Scribal Class

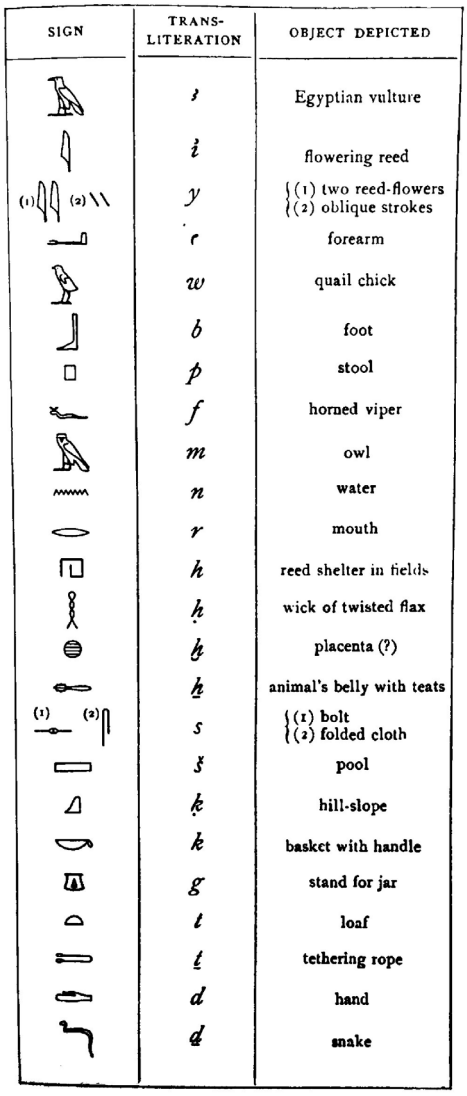
The earliest forms of writing systems are from Mesopotamia (Sumerian pictograms) and Egypt (Hierglyphics), from the fourth to third millennium B.C., while the alphabet was an invention among Semitic peoples in the 18th century B.C.

Ancient Sumerian Pictographs

From Joseph Naveh, The Early History of the Alphabet



Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics





Semitic Alphabet writings systems

Chart from F. Simon, "Proto-Sinaitic – Progenitor of the Alphabet" Rosetta 9 (2011), 16–40

Early and Classical Hebrew Scripts are marked in orange boxes

The earliest texts were inscribed on wet clay tablets and then baked. These were produced by Mesopotamian scribes associated with the palace and temple institutions.

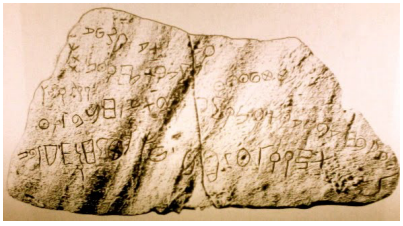
The ancient near east was a non-literate culture that produced oral histories, poetry, and traditions. Written texts were not produced or read by widespread audiences.

The invention of a 22-26 letter alphabet in the 18th century B.C. was a revolutionary invention, as it allowed non professional scribes to learn a simple sign system that anyone could learn.

The Semitic alphabet is first attested on inscriptions from the Sinai peninsula, and the earliest written form of Semitic Hebrew outside the Bible is a shard from the Israelite hill country

While there are a few written inscriptions from the period of the early monarchy of Israel, the majority come from the period of the late monarchy in the 8th century B.C. and later.





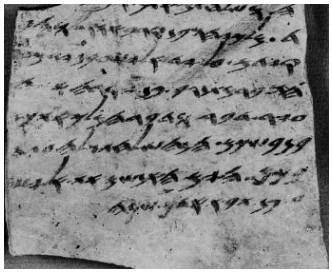
Izbet Sartah Ostracon (12th cent. B.C.)



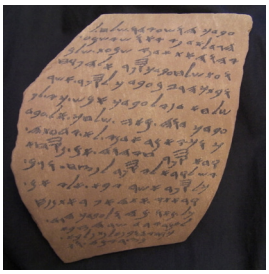
Proto-Sinaitic inscription (18th cent. B.C)



Tel Dan Stele, Aramaic, (9th cent. B.C)



Arad Ostracon, Hebrew, (7th cent. B.C.)



Lachish Letters , Hebrew, (8th cent. B.C.)

Early Israelite Oral Poetry

Ancient Israel was, in its earliest periods, an oral culture, which means that the material we find in the Bible was first composed and passed on through oral tradition.

As far as we can discern, the earliest phase of Israelite literature was oral poetry. A contemporary sample from a neighboring culture would be the epic poems (the Baal Epic) and poetry found at Ugarit, a Phoenecian city north of Canaan, from the 13th-12th century B.C.).

Tablet 24: A Prayer to Baal for Deliverance

(Ugaritic text, 12th century B.C.)

When a strong (foe) attacks your gate,
a warrior at your walls,
You shall lift your eyes to Baʿal:
O Baʿal, if you drive the strong one from our gate,
the warrior from our walls,
A bull, O Baʿal, we shall set apart,
a vow, O Baʿal, we shall fulfill…
To the sanctuary, O Baʿal, we shall ascend,
that path, O Baʿal, we shall take.
And Baʿal will hear [your] prayer:
He will drive the strong foe from your gate,
the warrior from your walls.



From William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, The Context of Scripture (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997–), 284–285.

- The memories of oral poetry, narrative, and traditions from this period are found all over the Hebrew Bible.
    - Songs of Yahweh's deeds
        - Judges 5, Exodus 15, Psalm 29 and 68 are some of the oldest Hebrew texts in the Bible, dated by their archaic language features (see Jan Joosten and Ronald Hendel, How Old is the Hebrew Bible? A Linguistic, Textual, and Historical Study).
- The mention of pre-biblical narrative sources are always of poetic texts:
    - "The scroll of Yashar" and the "scroll of the wars of Yahweh"

Numbers 21:13-18

13 From there the Israelites journeyed and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness that comes out of the border of the Amorites, for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.
14 Therefore it is said in ***the scroll of the Wars of the Lord,***
"Waheb in Suphah,
And the wadis of the Arnon,
15 And the slope of the wadis
That extends to the site of Ar,
And leans to the border of Moab."
16 From there they continued to Beer, that is the well where the Lord said to Moses, "Assemble the people, that I may give them water."
17 Then Israel ***sang this song:***
"Spring up, O well! Sing to it!
18 The well, which the leaders sank,
which the nobles of the people dug,
with the scepter and with their staffs."
And from the wilderness they continued to Mattanah,

Joshua 10:12-13

12 Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,
"Sun, stand still at Gibeon,
and moon, in the valley of Aijalon."
13 So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies.
Is it not written in the scroll of Jashar?

The "scroll of Jashar" (Heb. ספר הישר) means "scroll of singing." It was a collection of sacred poems that had a long pre-history before being written.

Other texts where the poetic celebration of Yahweh's deeds with Israel is remembered:

Job 36:22-24

22 Behold, God is exalted in His power;
who is a teacher like Him? ...
24 Remember that you should exalt ***his work,***
of which men have sung.

Judges 5:10

You who ride on white donkeys,
sitting on your saddle blankets,
and you who walk along the road,
consider ***the voice of the singers*** *at the watering places*
they recite the righteous acts of Yahweh...

Psalm 105:1-2

Give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name;
make known his deeds *among the peoples.*
Sing of Him*, sing praises to him;*
Speak of all his wonders.

Other examples: Deuteronomy 32:1-4; Psalms 78, 106, 136, etc.

**For more information, see Umberto Cassuto, "The Israelite Epic," in Biblical and Oriental Studies: Volume 2: Bible and Ancient Oriental Texts (1943), pp. 69-109.*

The Role of Prophetic-Scribes in the Making of the Biblical Books

Professional scribes are first mentioned in the Bible with the advent of the Israelite monarchy, which could create administrative and political infrastructures that needed scribes and recorders:

David's administration in 2 Samuel 8:15-18

15 David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just
and right for all his people.
16 Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army;
Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was ***recorder****;*
17 Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelek son of Abiathar
were priests;
Seraiah was a ***scribe****;*
18 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites
and Pelethites;
and David's sons were priests.

Solomon's administration in 1 Kings 4:1-6

So King Solomon ruled over all Israel. 2 And these
were his chief officials:
Azariah son of Zadok—the priest;
*3 Elihoreph and Ahijah, sons of Shisha—****scribes****;*
*Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud—****recorder****;*
4 Benaiah son of Jehoiada—commander in chief;
Zadok and Abiathar—priests;
5 Azariah son of Nathan—in charge of the district
governors;
Zabud son of Nathan—a priest and adviser to the
king;
6 Ahishar—palace administrator;
Adoniram son of Abda—in charge of forced labor.

Hezekiah's administration in 2 Kings 19:2

Hezekiah sent Eliakim the palace administrator,
Shebna the ***scribe*** *and the leading priests,*

However, it seems that the tradition of prophets and scribes behind the TaNaK tradition of the biblical books were not located in the royal administration. Rather, they were among prominent Israelite prophets and their disciples, who offered a minority viewpoint that was critical of the royal-priestly establishment.

The mention of scroll production and tradition-preservation among the prophets is extremely significant.

Isaiah and his scribal "disciples"

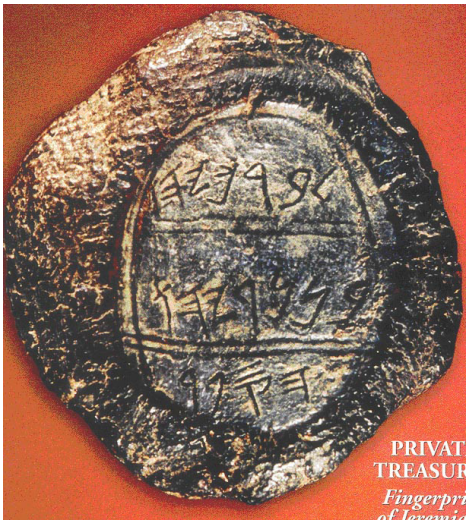
Isaiah 8: 14-17

14"[Yahweh] will become a sanctuary [for Isaiah and his disciples], but
to both the houses of Israel, he will become a stone for stubbing and a
rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jeru-
salem. 15"Many will stumble over them, Then they will fall and be broken;
They will even be snared and caught."
*16****Bind up the testimony, seal the Torah among my disciples****. 17And I*
will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I
will even look eagerly for Him.

Jeremiah and Baruch

Jeremiah 36: 1–4

[1]In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying,
*[2]"**Take a scroll and write on it** all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations, from the day I first spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day.*
[3]"Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity which I plan to bring on them, in order that every man will turn from his evil way; then I will forgive their iniquity and their sin."
*[4]Then **Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah** all the words of the Lord which He had spoken to him.*



A fossilized seal from Jerusalem, 6th Century B.C.

'Belonging to Baruch, Son of Neriah, The Scribe'

Can you see the fingerprint?

Prophetic narrative: Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles

These narrative compositions are considered "prophetic" in Jewish tradition because they recount the story of Israel from the minority view of the Mosaic prophetic tradition, which claims to offer Yahweh's point of view. They are not simply "royalist propaganda" from Israel's kings, but rather represent a "minority report" on Israel's history.

The scribes composing the history of the monarchy regularly cite their archival sources:

1 Kings 14:25-29

In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt went up against Jerusalem. He carried off the treasures of the temple of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made. So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace. Whenever the king went to the Lord's temple, the guards bore the shields, and afterward they returned them to the guardroom. As for the other events of Rehoboam's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the scroll of the annals of the kings of Judah?

This event is recounted in the scroll of 1-2 Kings, which in its final form dates to the period after the exile to Babylon (see the events of 2 Kings 25). But this story makes it clear that the author has excerpted from an earlier archival source.

This helps us understand the accurate chronological placement of this story in the 10th century B.C. by a scribe living nearly 400 years later! This chronology is corroborated by the account of this very same attack found in Egyptian sources, namely the Bubastite portal relief on the temple of Karnak the recounts Pharaoh Sheshonk's military campaign into Canaan in the 10th century B.C.

Just as fascinating is the expanded account of this event offered by the Chronicler who composed his work two centuries after 1-2 Kings, in the 4th century B.C. He used 1-2 Kings as a primary source, but he has interwoven it with other ancient sources to introduce new themes into the story.

- The material adopted verbatim from 1-2 Kings is marked by blue hi-light
- The new material adopted from his other sources in marked in orange hi-light

2 Chronicles 12:2-9

And it came about in King Rehoboam's fifth year, because they had been unfaithful to the Lord, that ***Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem*** *with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. And the people who came with him from Egypt were without number: the Lubim, the Sukkiim and the Ethiopians. He captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem. Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the princes of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and he said to them, "Thus says the Lord, 'You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken you to Shishak.' " So the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The Lord is righteous." When the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying, "They have humbled themselves so I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some measure of deliverance, and My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by means of Shishak. "But they will become his slaves so that they may learn the difference between My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."* ***and Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem****, and took the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's palace. He took everything; he even took the golden shields which Solomon had made. Then King Rehoboam made shields of bronze in their place and committed them to the care of the commanders of the guard who guarded the door of the king's house. As often as the king entered the house of the Lord, the guards came and carried them and then brought them back into the guards' room. And when he humbled himself, the anger of the Lord turned away from him, so as not to destroy him completely; and also conditions were good in Judah. So King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Now Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen from all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. And his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the Lord. Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer, according to genealogical enrollment?*

The Chronicler has fully interwoven his two sources to create a new, almost seamless, account. He also marked the first and largest expansion with a common scribal marker called "resumptive repetition": The line from his source ***"Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem"*** is repeated both before and after the addition. It is not a claim that Shishak came up two times, rather it is a compositional marker to the informed reader that the intervening material is an expansion. For more on this technique, see Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel, pp. 44-65.

Notice also that the Chronicler is now 600 years past the event, and after the exile, and yet he still has access to ancient sources.

The Psalms and Proverbs

- Early Psalm collections and Psalm superscriptions
- The Book of Psalms is a composition made up of many pre-existing poems and collections that can still be discerned within the scroll's present shape.

Psalm 72:20 This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse

"Psalms of Ascents": Pss 120–134 + 135-136

"Hallel" Psalms: Pss 111–118

Twin Psalms: Pss 9-10, 42-43, 105-106, 112-113

Psalms of Asaph: Pss 50, 73–83

Psalms of Korah: Pss 42-49, 84–88

"Yahweh Reigns" Psalms: Pss 93–99

The early "David" collection: 3-41, 51-71, conclusion at Ps 72:20

The five-fold Psalms scroll has incorporated all of the earlier collections into a larger macro-design.

Introduction	**Psalms 1-2**	
Book 1	Psalms 3-41 ➡	**41:13** ***Blessed be the Lord,*** *the God of Israel,* *From* ***forever*** *to* ***forever.*** ***Amen and Amen.***
Book 2	Psalms 42-72 ➡	**72:18-19** ***Blessed be the Lord God****, the God of Israel,* *Who alone works wonders.* *And blessed be His glorious name* ***forever;*** *And may the whole earth be filled with His glory.* ***Amen, and Amen.***
Book 3	Psalms 73-89 ➡	**89:52** ***Blessed be the Lord forever!*** ***Amen and Amen.***
Book 4	Psalms 90-106 ➡	**106:48** ***Blessed be the Lord,*** *the God of Israel,* *From* ***forever*** *even to* ***forever****.* *And let all the people say, "****Amen.****"*
Book 5	Psalms 107-145	
Conclusion	**Psalms 146-150**	



The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll; early 1st century A.D.

The Proverbs

1:1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel

22:17 The sayings of the wise ones

25:1 More proverbs of Solomon, compiled by the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah

30:1 The sayings of Agur son of Yakeh

31:1 The sayings of king Lemuel, that his mother taught him

The Final Composition of the TaNaK

The final composition of the TaNaK scrolls dates somewhere in the 3rd-2nd centuries B.C. This date is provided by the latest books added to the collection (Chronicles, Esther, 4th-3rd cent. B.C.), and also by the probable date of the final editorial activity that adapted scrolls into the collection (the expanded editions of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc.)

There are abundant signs that the collection continued to be edited and arranged in ways that coordinate and unify the various scrolls.

The "canonical seams": Deuteronomy 34:10-12, Joshua 1:7-8; Malachi 4:4-6; Psalms 1-2

The compositional design of the book of Psalms imitates the five-scroll structure of the Torah. And since Psalms 1-2 are linked to the final composition of the TaNaK this tells us that the final form of the Torah and Psalms are coordinated.

The refrain in Judges 17-21, "In those days Israel had no king" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) is a clear set-up strategy for the story in 1-2 Samuel which introduces the monarchy and David into Israel's story. But even this history is explicitly told from a post-exile perspective (see the clear comment 18:30) that dates many centuries after the events recounted in the book.

Ruth 1:1 hyperlinks the book to the Judges scroll. Ruth 4:16-17 as the conclusion of the book + 4:18-22 as an "intertextual hyperlink" integrating the story into the heritage of David in the TaNaK (cf. 1 Chron 2:5-15).

All of the fifteen books of the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea-Malachi) begin with a superscription, some of which are clear cross-references to the narrative account of 1-2 Kings so that the reader can place the prophet in a narrative-historical context (see Isaiah 1:1; Jeremiah 1:1-3; Ezekiel 1:1-3; Hosea 1:1, etc.).

The narrative of Hezekiah and Isaiah in 2 Kings 18-20 = Isaiah 36-38, or 2 Kings 25 = Jeremiah 52. It is the same narrative, slightly altered and put to different compositional purposes in their respective books. This shows us that whoever put together the narrative account of Genesis—2 Kings is also responsible for the composition of the Prophets.

Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 brings the Teacher's sayings into dialogue with the other wisdom books (reference to 'fear of God' in Proverbs and Job).

Hosea 14:9 is a wisdom-inspired reflection that frames Hosea's prophecies as wisdom instruction for later generations (linked to Psalm 1 and Deut 32:4).

1-2 Chronicles is itself a canonical conclusion: With Chronicles as a conclusion "the TaNaKh purposely ends on an eschatological note" [Dempster, Dominion and Dynasty, 224]. The positioning of Chronicles at the conclusion of TaNaK, the edict of Cyrus in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Jeremiah 25:8-14, and Daniel 9 and the location of Ezra-Nehemiah.

Session 12: The Hebrew Bible is Like an Aspen Grove

Key Question

The Hebrew Bible can be likened to both a quilt and an aspen grove. Do either of these images strike you as particularly helpful? Why or why not?

Session Quote

"You have a text, but that text only means what it means in light of a whole bunch of other texts that it's connected to, and the meaning is in the interconnections of the texts. That's intertextuality."

Notes

In this session, Tim continues to refer to analogies for understanding the nature of the Hebrew Bible found in session 11 notes.

Session 13: The Different "Encyclopedias" of Authors and Readers

Key Question

During this session, a student brings up a great question worth considering: How would you respond to someone who says, "I don't need to understand the ancient conventions of the author because I think that God will speak to me through the text even though I don't understand the ancient context?"

Session Quote

"Am I willing to set my agenda aside and hear another person on their terms—not listening with the agenda of what I'm going to say next or what use I could put their words to in my own mind. Just to listen to for listening's sake. This is "Sermon on the Mount" kind of stuff, loving your neighbor as yourself. Imagine reading the Hebrew Bible as an act of loving your ancient neighbor."

How to Read the Hebrew Bible

A Revolutionary Idea: The Old Testament is an ancient text.

Another Revolutionary Idea: A text is an act of intentional literary communication.

A way of thinking about textual communication

Author	→	Text	→ ←	Reader/Audience
Encyclopedia of production				**Encyclopedia of reception**

Where is "meaning" located? At first in the mind of an author. But in the case of ancient authors, we no longer have access to their mind, apart from the text.

The text is the literary embodiment of an author's purposed communication.

"Encyclopedia of production" and "encyclopedia of reception" [cf. Stefan Alkier, Reading the Bible Intertextually, 3-21]

Our "encyclopedia" is the mental storehouse of words, ideas, images, and stories that we are gathering and storing in our memories from our first waking moments. Every text we read will be interpreted and understood in light of our current operating "encyclopedia." Authors have their encyclopedias from which they produce texts, and readers have encyclopedias by means of which they process and understand texts.

The model reader who wants to understand an author on their own terms will adapt their encyclopedia of reception by learning about the author's encyclopedia of production.

One of the great challenges in reading the Bible is that it takes work to...

1. ...become aware of our own modern encyclopedias of reception that we (unknowingly) impose upon the biblical author:
    - Like when we impose modern cosmology onto the ancient cosmology of Genesis 1;
    - Or when we attribute much later doctrinal ideas/debates to the biblical authors: debates about Calvinism vs. Arminianism, divine sovereignty and human free will, etc.
2. ...discover the encyclopedia of production assumed by the author as they communicate.
    - ***Historical and cultural:*** Learning something about Hebrew, ancient near eastern world-views, ancient Israelite history and culture.
    - ***Textual:*** The biblical authors assume a high degree of familiarity with the TaNaK, because it was first produced and read within a small community that was immersed in its textual world. It is a highly "hyperlinked" set of texts, whose puzzles and ambiguities become more clear after repeated re-reading over a lifetime.

How to Read an Ancient Literary "Mosaic" Text like the Hebrew Bible

Lessons in Literature

What is "Literature?"

A form of written communication through which an author conveys a "what" (the "message") through a a carefully and intentionally crafted "how" (an artistically formed/shaped literary work).

> *"A text-focused approach "sets out to understand not the realities behind the text, but the text itself as a pattern of meaning and effect. What does this piece of language...signify in context? What are the rules governing the transaction between the storyteller or poet and the reader? ... What image of a world does the narrative project? Why does it unfold the action in this particular order and from this particular viewpoint? ... How does the work hang together? In what relationship does each part stand to the whole? To pursue this line of questioning is to make sense of the work as an act of*

> *communication, always goal-directed on the writer's part and always requiring interpretive activity on the addressee's. The author wields certain linguistic and literary tools with an eye to certain effects on the reader, while the reader infers a coherent message from the signals, and it is the text itself that mediates between these two, embodying the author's intent and guiding the reader's response."* — MEIR STERNBERG, THE POETICS OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE: IDEOLOGICAL LITERATURE AND THE DRAMA OF READING, P. 15.

The "Poetics" of Biblical Literature = the "how" of Israelite literature

"Poetics" (noun): The unique set of literary techniques, conventions, and strategies employed by the biblical authors: Biblical narrative, poetry, and discourse all have a particular stylistic profile that is both similar to and different from other ancient near Eastern literature.

> *"A coherent reading of any work of art, whatever the medium, requires some detailed awareness of the grid of conventions upon which and against which this particular work operates. Usually, these are elaborate sets of tacit agreements between artist and audience that create the enabling context in which the complex communication of art occurs. Through our awareness of convention we can recognize significant or simply pleasing patterns of repetition, symmetry, or contrast; we can detect subtle cues and clues as to the meaning of the work; we can spot what is innovative and what is traditional at each part of the artistic creation.... One of the chief difficulties modern readers have in perceiving the artistry in biblical narrative is precisely that we have lost most of the keys to the conventions out of which these texts were shaped."* — ROBERT ALTER, THE ART OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE, 47.

Unit 3: Interpreting Hebrew Poetry

SESSIONS: 14—17

Session 14: How Biblical Poetry Communicates

Key Question

Summarize what you've learned so far about how biblical poetry works. What are some of the things to look for as you read?

Session Quote

"For God to have chosen to address his covenant people through the family of Israel means that we need to learn about how they saw the world, so that we can understand what they're trying to communicate."

The Poetics of Biblical Poetry

Psalm 29

["voice" = Hebrew qol = "sound, voice, thunder"]

*1 **Give** to Yahweh, O sons of God*
give to Yahweh glory and strength.
2 give to Yahweh the glory due his name;
worship Yahweh in the majesty of his holiness.

*3 **The voice** of Yahweh is over the waters;*
the God of glory thunders,
Yahweh over the mighty waters.

*4 **The voice** of Yahweh is powerful;*
the voice of Yahweh is majestic;
*5 **the voice** of Yahweh breaks the cedars;*
Yahweh breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

6 He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
Mt. Sirion like a young wild ox.

*7 **The voice** of Yahweh strikes with flashes of fire.*
8 The voice of Yahweh shakes the desert;
Yahweh shakes the Desert of Kadesh;
*9 **the voice** of Yahweh shakes apart the oaks*
and strips the forests bare.

And in his temple everything shouts, "Glory!"
10 Yahweh sits enthroned over the flood;
Yahweh is enthroned as King eternal.
11 Yahweh gives strength to his people*;*
Yahweh blesses his people *with peace.*

Definitions and Features of Poetry in General

Encyclopedia Brittanica: "A kind of literature that evokes a concentrated imaginative awareness of one's experience or emotions by means of well-crafted language that is chosen for its meaning, sound, and rhythm."

Laurence Perrine: "Poetry is a kind of human language that says more, and says it more intensely than does ordinary language." — SOUND AND SENSE: AN INTRODUCTION TO POETRY (1968), PP. 3-4.

Adele Berlin: "Poetry conveys thought; there is something the poet wants to communicate. And poetry conveys that thought in a self-conscious manner, through a special structuring of the language that calls attention to the "how" of the message as well as the "what." In fact, in good poetry, the "how" and the "what" become indistinguishable. As Robert Alter puts it: "Poetry...is not just a set of techniques for saying impressively what could be said otherwise. Rather, it is a particular way of imagining the world." — ADELE BERLIN, "INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL POETRY," QUOTING FROM ROBERT ALTER, THE ART OF BIBLICAL POETRY.

Typical Features of Poetry

- Density of expression, terseness = fewer words than normal speech
- Intentionally creative use of language (unique word combinations, or repetition)
- Heavy use of imagery and metaphor: combining images that don't normally occur to us: defeat in battle = washed away by chaotic waters
- Poetry invites you into an imaginative experience in order to communicate more.

A rhythmic use of language (meter, rhyme, measure) that places constraints on the poet and forces an economy of expression, a compression of thought so that words have to perform unusual functions.

Illustration 1 Session 14

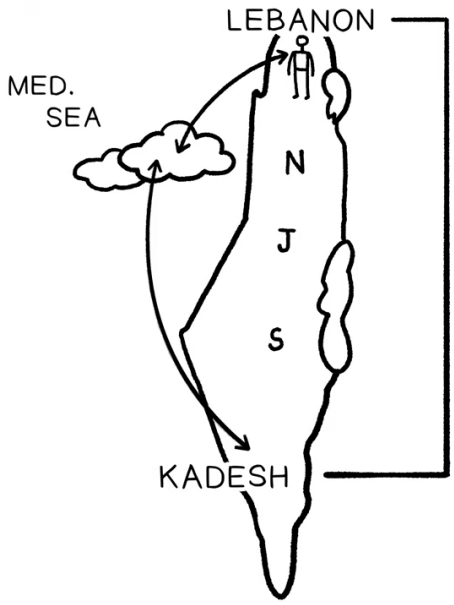


Illustration 2 Session 14



Session 15: Common Poetic Conventions in Biblical Hebrew

Key Question

What is the primary communication tool used in biblical poetry? How do you think it helps us understand the meaning of the text?

Session Quote

"The "what" that authors want to communicate is directly connected to the "how" of the poetic form of the communication."

Psalm 29, again!

["voice" = Hebrew qol = "sound, voice, thunder"]

*1 **Give** to Yahweh, O sons of God*
give to Yahweh glory and strength.
2 give to Yahweh the glory due his name;
worship Yahweh in the majesty of his holiness.

*3 **The voice** of Yahweh is over the waters;*
the God of glory thunders,
Yahweh over the mighty waters.

*4 **The voice** of Yahweh is powerful;*
the voice of Yahweh is majestic;
*5 **the voice** of Yahweh breaks the cedars;*
Yahweh breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

6 He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
Mt. Sirion like a young wild ox.

*7 **The voice** of Yahweh strikes with flashes of fire.*
8 The voice of Yahweh shakes the desert;
Yahweh shakes the Desert of Kadesh;
*9 **the voice** of Yahweh shakes apart the oaks*
and strips the forests bare.

And in his temple everything shouts, "Glory!"
10 Yahweh sits enthroned over the flood;
Yahweh is enthroned as King eternal.
11 Yahweh gives strength to his people;
Yahweh blesses his people with peace.

Session 16: How Hebrew Parallelism Works

Key Question

By the end of this session, try to articulate what you think the benefit of communicating using parallelism is. What does it do that narrative and discourse do not?

Session Quote

"There's one thing being communicated, but we're holding it from many facets. Poetry allows you to break single ideas into multiple components, but the poetic form forces you to build it back into one thing in your mind again."

Poetic Conventions in Ancient Israel

The Ancient Israelite poetry preserved for us in the Bible doesn't fit any kind of master "system" like meter (though some think so). However, the Israelites were aware of a certain kind of speech that was poetic, dense, and distinct from normal speech. They even have vocabulary for it.

- "Song" (Heb. shir / shirah):
    - Exodus 15:1 "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song...
- "Psalm" (Heb. mizmor): Many headings to the Psalms have these:
    - Psalm 3: "A mizmor of David."
- "Lament" (Heb. qinah):
    - 2 Samuel 1:17 "David lamented this qinah over Saul and Jonathan"

These compositions show a unique, cultural form of Hebrew poetry, not a formal system, but a series of characteristics:

John Hollander, Rhyme's Reason, A Guide to English Verse, p. 26.

The Verse of the Hebrew Bible is strange
The meter of Psalms and Proverbs perplexes
It is not a matter of number,
No counting of beats or syllables
Its song is a music of matching,
Its rhythm a kind of paralleling
One line makes an assertion;
The other part expresses in other words
Sometimes a third part will vary yet again

1. Rhythm and Free Verse

Hebrew poetry is shaped into a "line-rhythm" or "verse." It is not metrical (based on syllable counts), but a form of "free verse" compose of poetic "lines."

- ***"Verse"*** = a description of poetic form: "A succession of words arranged according to natural or artificially created rules, forming a complete line; a verse is one of the lines of a poem or a piece of versification" [Oxford English Dictionary]
- ***"Line"*** = The smallest segment of poetry, consisting of a dense, complete statement. People have proposed many words to describe the poetic line (stich, colon, verse, membrum), but "line" is the most simple and common English word

"Free Verse" as defined by Chip Dobbs-Allsopp, On Biblical Poetry, p. 120-121.

"The poetry of the Hebrew Bible is a natural, free, and rhythmic system. The poems have no consistent metrical scheme, and so have a freedom from predetermined arrangments. But their language is organized so as to create impressions and fulfill the functions of poetic rhythm. Free verse is totally free, it is verse, but it's free to play with the verse rhythm in a variety of ways, making use of all manner of linguistic artistry."

The line in Hebrew poetry is most often...

1 ... a complete sentence or subordinate clause,

2 ...consisting of 3-5 words

3. ...marked by repetition and clear end-stop signals

Example: Psalm 51:1-4

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;
according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against You, You only, I have sinned
and done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak
and blameless when You judge.

2. Parallelism

Robert Lowth (1753), Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, and a commentary on Isaiah created the first comprehensive synthesis of features in Biblical poetry. In his words...

"There is a certain conformation of the sentences, which is chiefly observable in those passages which frequently occur in Hebrew poetry, in which they treat one subject in many different ways, and dwell upon the same sentiment; when they express the same thing in different words, or different things in a similar form of words: and since this artifice of composition seldom fails to produce an agreeable and measured cadence, we can scarcely doubt it must have imparted to their poetry an exquisite degree of beauty and grace."

"The correspondence of one verse or line with another, I call Parallelism. When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it, in sense; or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction; these I call parallel lines; and the words or phrases answering one to another in the corresponding line, I call parallel terms" (Isaiah, 14)

There is a wide diversity of types of parallel relationships. It causes the readers to place two or more things in comparison with each other, so that their uniqueness and meaning becomes more visible after the comparison.

Comparison/ Analogy	*The corresponding words and images are meant to stimulate imaginative reflection on the shared metaphorical attributes of the paired items*
	Psalm 33:6 *By **the word of Yahweh** the heavens were made,* *And by **the breath of his mouth** all their host.* *Isaiah 44:3* *For **I will pour out** **water** on the thirsty land,* *and **streams** on the dry ground;* ***I will pour out** **my Spirit** on your offspring* *And **my blessing** on your descendants;*

Contrast	*The corresponding words and images stimulate imaginative reflection on the differences highlighted by the contrast*
	Proverbs 10:11 ***The mouth** of the righteous is a fountain of life,* *but **the mouth** of the wicked conceals violence.*

Complement	*The second line complements the first in a general way, to complete a thought or image, or to heighten the point in some way.*
	Psalm 133:1 *Behold, **how good and how pleasant** it is* *For **brothers to dwell together** in unity!* *Habakkuk 3:2* *Lord, I have heard the report about You; I fear.* *Yahweh, **renew Your work** in the midst of the years,* *in the midst of the years **make it known**;* *in wrath remember mercy.*

Sequence	*The lines are not strictly parallel, but develop a short 'narrative' sequence.*
	Psalms 31:1 *In You, Yahweh, I have taken refuge;* *Let me never be ashamed;* *In Your righteousness deliver me.* *Psalm 31:22* *As for me, I said in my alarm,* *"I am cut off from before Your eyes";* *however, you heard the voice of my petition* *when I cried to You.* *Proverbs 4:10* *Hear, my son, and accept my sayings* *And the years of your life will be many.*

Example: Psalm 32:1-7

1 How fortunate the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered!
2 How fortunate the one to whom Yahweh does not impute iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit!

3 When I kept silent, my body wasted away,
through my groaning all day long.
4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
my energy was drained,
with the heat of summer.
Selah.

5 I acknowledged my sin to You,
and my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord";
and You forgave the guilt of my sin.

6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You
in a time when You may be found;
surely in a flood of great waters
they will not reach him.
7 You are my hiding place;
You preserve me from trouble;
You surround me with songs of deliverance.

The Function of Repetition and Double-Poetic Expression

This "speaking in pairs" creates opportunities to use multiple words and images to communicate one core idea from many angles. This type of poetic style is a wonderful way to express complex thoughts through pairing words, images, in order to communicate more by means of the juxtaposition.

The biblical authors developed vocabulary for this technique:

Hebrew mashal (משל): comparison, analogy, proverb.

"The parallel lines of biblical poetry are "like a pair of binoculars. Some centuries, the lenses of a field glass were set in cylinders that could be slid in and out, but they remained in a single tube. The lookout on a ship looked through it with one eye. Today's field glass is a binocular: we look through two cylinders, with both eyes, so that we have the advantage of seeing depth. Our eyes, with or without binoculars, see 'in stereo.' The effect results from the fact that one eye has a slightly different angle than the other, and so produces a minimally different image. These two pictures are easily superimposed and assembled into one image inside our brain. Biblical parallelism does something comparable: this poetic device creates two subtly different images with two lines that are to be associated through parallel expression. It allows us an opportunity to consider both pictures separately, and then let them sink in together... The point of similarity between two parallel lines is their very difference! Only those who look closely and have patience will discover and savor the role played by dissimilarity, its surprises, and its richness of meaning." — J.P. FOKKELMAN, READING BIBLICAL POETRY PP. 78-79.

Psalm 62:12-13

One thing God has spoken
Two things I have heard:
That power belongs to God,
And covenant loyalty is yours, O Lord

Session 17: Repetition on the Macro-Level in Biblical Poetry

Key Question

Repetition can occur between poetic lines and also between larger chunks of text called stanzas. What are some practical ways to help you notice when repetition occurs between stanzas? What do you think this kind of repetition contributes to the meaning of a poem?

Session Quote

"I am trying to hone in on this feature: repetition that is patterned and then variations linking many things into one mental whole. The result is one long sprawling set of texts that feels like it has an order now."

Poetry is a form of speech that achieves a unique balance of maximum communication and ambiguity at the same time.

"If we could hear God talking, making his will manifest in words of Hebrew language, what would it sound like? Poetry is our best human model of intricately rich communication. It's not only solemn, weighty, and forceful, but also densely woven with complex internal connections, meanings, and implications. It makes perfect sense why divine speech in the Hebrew Bible is most often represented as poetry....The form of this divine poetry helps explain why these texts have touched the lives of millions of readers far removed in time, space, and situation from the small groups of ancient Hebrews who produced and first read these texts." — ROBERT ALTER, THE ART OF BIBLICAL POETRY, 141.

A starter's bibliography on biblical poetry

- J.P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide*
- Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*
- Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*
- Chip Dobbs-Allsop, *On Biblical Poetry*

Larger levels of Symmetry and Parallelism in Biblical Poetry

The biblical poets employ symmetrical parallelism in "multiple dimensions," so to speak. They can invite the reader to compare parallel words/images that are next to each other in the text sequence, but they can also signal that words/images should be compared with a parallel in a text that is distant. This signal is called "symmetry." The poetic lines are given a symmetrical design, so that the reader notices parallels in non-juxtaposed lines.

Symmetry between individual poetic lines:

Psalm 137:5-6 [Reverse symmetry, a.k.a. "chiasm"]

A If I forget you Jerusalem
B let my right hand wither;
B Let my tongue stick to my palate
A if I don't remember you.

Psalm 33:10-11 [Forward symmetry]

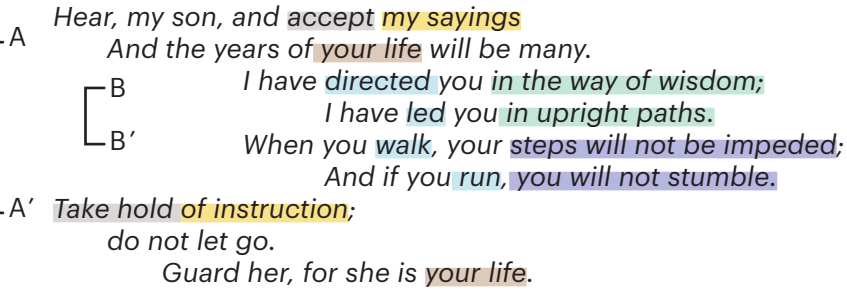
A Yahweh frustrated the plans of the nations
B He reduces to nothing the schemes of the peoples,
A Yahweh's plan endures forever,
B The schemes of his heart, from generation to generation

Psalm 31:23-24 [Complex Reverse symmetry]

A Love the Lord,
B all you His godly ones!
C The Lord preserves the faithful
C And fully recompenses the proud.
A Be strong and let your heart take courage,
B all you who hope in the Lord.

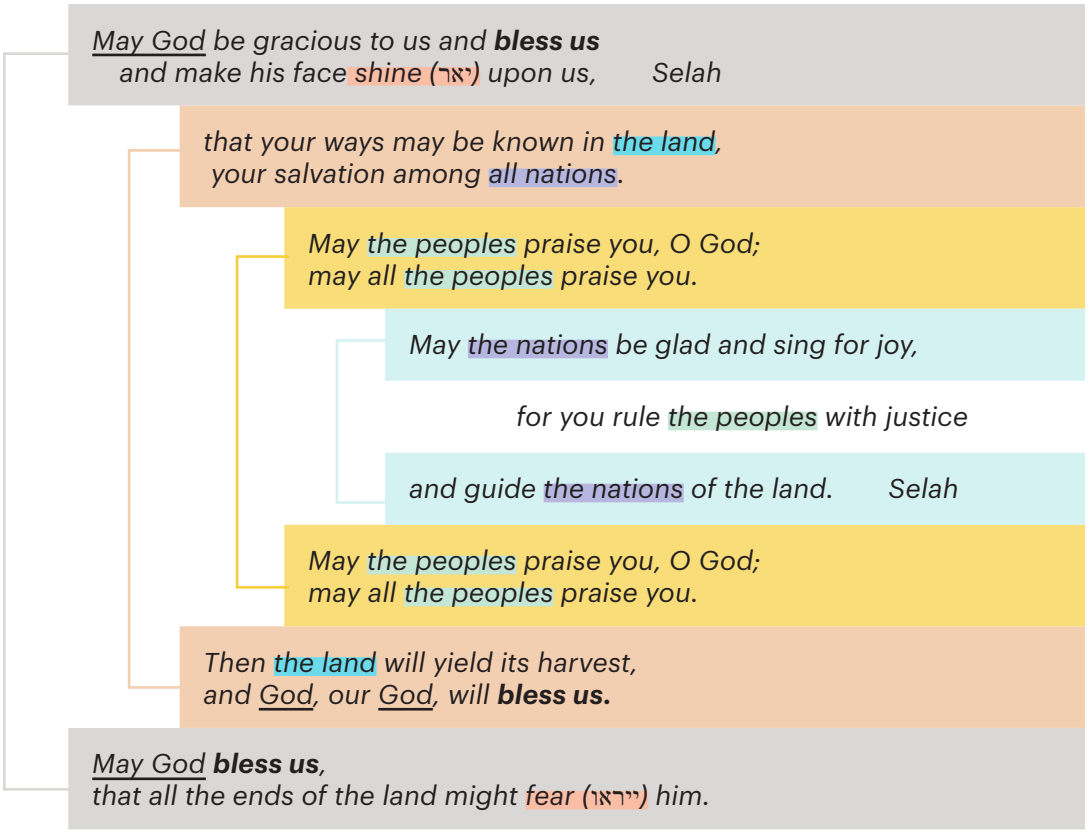
Symmetry between parts of a stanza (a group of poetic lines)

Proverbs 4:10-13



Symmetrical design of an entire poem

Psalm 67



This pattern invites the reader to compare and contrast lines that are parallel and distant from one another.

The poem begins by calling upon God in the language of the blessing of Aaron (from Numbers 6:24-26)

A comparison of symmetrically matching lines yields a deeper layer of meaning in the poem:

The opening and closing lines call for God's blessing upon Israel, but for what purpose. The final line makes clear that God's blessing serves a larger purpose, namely so that through Israel all the nations come to recognize the power and authority of Yahweh.

This same theme is carried deeper by the next pair of lines: Yahweh's "ways" and "salvation" are to be made known in all the land. How, exactly? By the land producing such a rich harvest of divine blessing that they will be forced to acknowledge Israel's God.

The refrain in the center of the poem makes clear that Israel's blessing fits into a wider purpose, that all nations comes to honor Yahweh the way that Israel does.

The poem's central lines focus on this theme: It's a request for the nations to experience the same divine presence and blessing that Israel does, by Yahweh bringing justice and his royal rule to bear upon them.

This entire poem, therefore, is a poetic meditation on the role of God's promise to Abraham, that through his seed, God's blessing might be restored to all the nations. The symmetrical parallelism fosters and increases the visibility of this theme.

Psalm 29, again!

["voice" = Hebrew qol = "sound, voice, thunder"]

*1 **Give** to Yahweh, O sons of God*
* **give** to Yahweh glory and strength.*
*2 **give** to Yahweh the glory due his name;*
* **worship** Yahweh in the majesty of his holiness.*

*3 **The voice** of Yahweh is over the waters;*
* the God of glory thunders,*
* Yahweh over the mighty waters.*

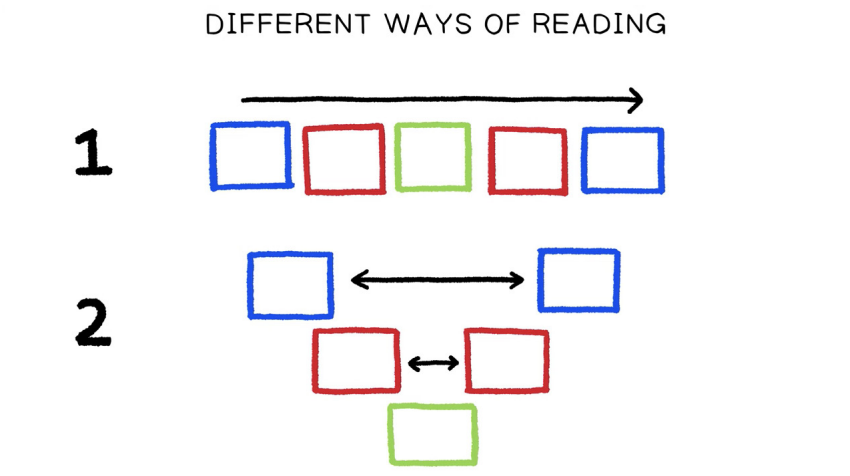
*4 **The voice** of Yahweh is powerful;*
* **the voice** of Yahweh is majestic;*
*5 **the voice** of Yahweh breaks the cedars;*
* Yahweh breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.*

6 He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
* Mt. Sirion like a young wild ox.*

*7 **The voice** of Yahweh strikes with flashes of fire.*
*8 **The voice** of Yahweh shakes the desert;*
* Yahweh shakes the Desert of Kadesh;*
*9 **the voice** of Yahweh shakes apart the oaks*
* and strips the forests bare.*

And in his temple everything shouts, "Glory!"
10 Yahweh sits enthroned over the flood;
* Yahweh is enthroned as King eternal.*
11 Yahweh gives strength to his people;
* Yahweh blesses his people with peace.*

Illustration Session 17



Unit 4: Interpreting Biblical Narrative

SESSIONS: 18-21

Session 18: Literary Representation and "Reality"

Key Question

Have you ever thought of the biblical text as a representation of reality rather than as the reality itself? What does this mean for what we will encounter in the text? If it is a representation, can it still be truthful?

Session Quote

"What biblical narratives do is they invite us into the narrative world and invite us to see things from their point of view. What these narratives do is work on you, and often in very subtle, indirect ways over time, they start to affect your view of yourself and your view of the world you're living in. And you emerge from these narratives seeing things a little bit differently."

The Poetics of Biblical Narrative

A Premise:

Biblical narrative is a highly stylized kind of literature that (1) recounts Israel's history while (2) at the same time offering a prophetic interpretation of that history.

- Discerning the historical truthfulness of the biblical story is an important topic of research and debate, but it should not be confused with interpretation of these carefully crafted narratives. In other words, apologetics should not be confused with interpretation.
- Biblical narrative does not offer us "security-camera" footage of ancient Israelite history. Rather, the authors have employed the historiographical tools of "selectivity" and "thematic arrangement," to construct narratives with stylized conventions of plot, characterization, setting, and design patterns. Their rhetorical goal is to help the reader see the meaning and significance of the story they are telling.

An illustration:



Hubble space telescope photo

VS.



Vincent van Gogh's "Starry night"

Which image presents the night sky, as it actually is?

Neither one, of course! Both images are *re-presentations* of the starry universe, portrayed through different media, for different purposes and with different effects on the viewer.

Neither one is the starry universe itself. The Hubble photo represents a maximal realism, while "Starry Night" employs an impressionistic style. But both are "images," colored pixels on a two-dimensional surface of digital paper! That is a far cry from the *actual night sky*!

"Starry Night" conveys the impression and feeling of the night sky as it is relevant to a small human community. It communicates much through minimal detail, and uses juxtaposition and contrast (swirling skies vs. geometric human buildings) as well as similarity (blue tones in the sky and on land).

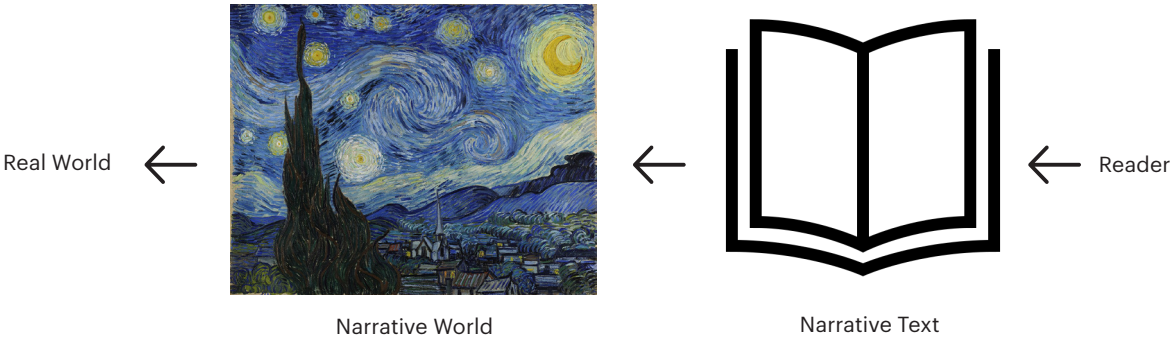
> *"A photograph of a tree is a good example of the distinction between a text and the event depicted in it. A photograph is a representation of a tree, yet it does not have bark and leaves, nor is the sky behind the tree a real sky. To say that a photograph only represents the tree but is not actually the tree does not mean the tree never existed or that the photograph is inaccurate because it only shows one side of the tree. The same can be said of the biblical narrative texts. To say they re-present events but are not the events themselves is simply to recognize a very obvious fact about biblical narratives: They are texts, which means we stand not before events, but representations of events through words."* — JOHN SAILHAMER, INTRODUCTION TO OT THEOLOGY, 47.

Text vs. Event and the Meaning of Biblical Narrative

A text provides a literary representation of an object that helps the reader grasp its meaning and significance from a particular perspective.



Rene Magritte: "The Treachery of Images"
"Ah, the famous pipe. How people reproached me for it! And yet, could you stuff my pipe? No, it's just a representation, is it not? So if I had written on my picture 'This is a pipe', I'd have been lying!" — HARRY TORCYZNER, MAGRITTE: THE TRUE ART OF PAINTING, 85.



The biblical authors "take the raw material of language and shape it into a version of the world of empirical reality. Its essentially linguistic structures that are adapted to conform to events in real life... The reader looks at the events in the narrative in much the same way as he or she would look at events in real life, which makes it easy to forget that one is looking at words not the event itself... While there are other avenues through which information can be gained about the real world events beyond the text, they are not, in fact, part of the text and not controlled by the author of the text. Whatever may be said about the world behind the narrative, it should not be identified with the narrative world depicted in the text itself. The textual world is a version of the events it depicts. It should not be taken as their replacement." — JOHN H. SAILHAMER, INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, 51.

Implications:

The Hebrew Bible is a literary representation of Israel's history that claims to be a divinely inspired, prophetic interpretation of Israel's history. It is not a "history of Israel," but a theological interpretation of Israel's story in the context of a cosmic history of creation (Genesis 1-11). The narrative claims to both re-present history and to show its meaning and significance, with the aim of eliciting a response from the reader.

When reading the Hebrew Bible, we need to become familiar with the basic elements of ancient near eastern culture, but the primary focus of the reader's effort to understand the text should be the text itself. In other words, the entire TaNaK is the first and most primary context for the meaning of the biblical text.

Key Elements in Interpreting Biblical Narrative

A starter's bibligraphy on biblical narrative

- J.P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*
- Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*
- Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*
- Shimon bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*

Session 19: Plot in Biblical Narrative

Key Question

What are some of your main takeaways from this discussion on biblical plot and subplot in the book of Jonah?

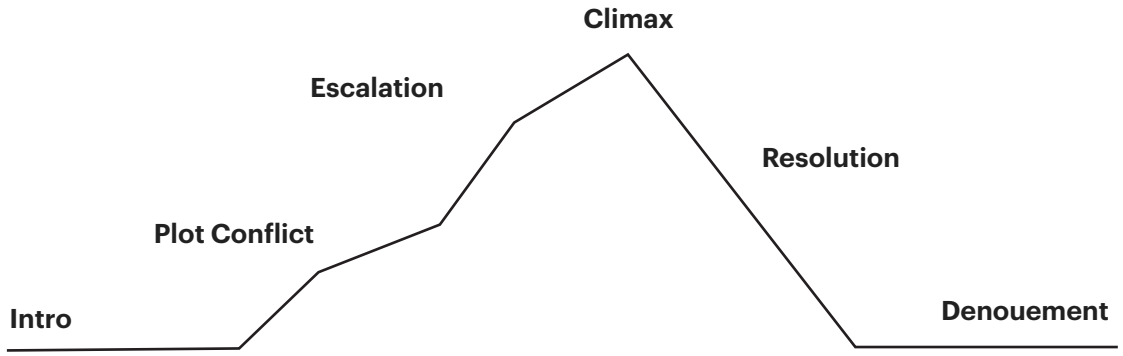
Session Quote

"Plots invest stories with meaning, and plot conflict and how they're resolved invests stories with their ethical message."

Plot

The arrangement of characters and events into a meaningful sequence in order to communicate the meaning of the story.

A classic diagram of plot-structure



> *"Stories and plots are the crucial agents that invest events with meaning. The way the facts are described, the point at which the tension is created and the climax occurs, the selection and arrangement of the parts, these all indicate the meaning which the events are believed to possess, and thus what an author means to communicate by telling them to the reader."*
>
> — N.T. WRIGHT, THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD, 79.

A. **Narrative meaning and plot sequence**

Narratives communicate by identifying a particular event as the "problem" that ignites tension and forces the characters into a story of finding a resolution. The selection of "the problem" and the way characters overcome it and find a solution, these plot-points assume and manifest the narrator's ethical value-set, and is part of how stories make moral claims on the reader.

The same exact series of events can carry a totally different moral message based on the chosen plot conflict and resolution.

- Story #1: Billy is a young, growing boy. He keeps sneaking cookies from the cupboards at night. His mom keeps catching him, and so he develops more and more creative ways to steal the cookies.
- Story #2: Billy is a young, growing boy. He keeps sneaking cookies from the cupboards at night. His mom gets more and more concerned, and eventually develops a reward system so that if he cleans his room weekly, he can earn lots of cookies.

B. **Reading biblical narrative requires a developed skill of tracking the plot, so that the reader gets the message intended by the author.**

Example: The story of Jonah: What is the real plot conflict?

Ch. 1: Two plot conflicts:

- #1: God and Nineveh: 1:1-2: The word of Yahweh came to Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me."
- #2: God and Jonah: "But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."

Ch. 2: Plot conflict #2 is addressed, as Jonah nears death, prays to God, and is delivered.

Ch. 3: Plot conflict #1 is addressed, as the Ninevites turn away from their evil after Jonah's message.

If the story ended at Ch. 3 (as it does in many children's books), it would be a nice and neat story: People should turn away from their evil (like the Ninevites) and rebellion (like Jonah) and obey God.

But ch. 4 problematizes all this! Here we find out that while Jonah has technically obeyed, he still harbors anger, resentment, and contempt for God. In other words, plot conflict #2 was never really resolved, and the book ends with that conflict up in the air.

The four chapter book is about how God's own people can become the biggest obstacle to God's purposes in the world!

C. **Biblical stories consists of multiple overlapping plot-lines.**

The reader must distinguish between the overall plot-line, and the many sub-plots that make up the "episodes" of a larger story with its own plot-line. But not only that, the lower-level plot-lines all connect with and contribute to the bigger plot-line.

Example: The Abraham story: What is the plot conflict?

Genesis 12:1-3: God calls Abraham to an act of radical faith, so that the divine blessing can be restored to all the nations through him.

- *Potential plot conflict:* "Those who bless you, I will bless, and those who curse you I will curse. And all the families of the land will find blessing through you" (Gen 12:3).

Genesis 12:4-9: Abraham obeys and goes to Canaan!

Genesis 12:10-20: Abraham lacks faith and leaves the land, and then lies about his wife, placing her in danger of being taken by other men. God then brings death-plagues on Pharaoh's house. Abraham lack of faith brings a curse and not blessing on the nations. So Pharaoh gives him wealth and slaves, and send him back to Canaan.

Genesis 15: God promises Abraham that a child will come from his body and not another, and this descendant will become God's blessing to the nations.

Genesis 16: Sarah and Abraham sexually abuse an Egyptian slave (Hagar) in an effort to produce a son by their own wisdom, resulting in the birth of Ishmael.

Genesis 21: Abraham and Sarah have their own child, Isaac, and Sarah jealously exiles Hagar and Ishmael. So Abraham abandons them to their fate by sending them out into the desert with a small amount of water. He loses is firstborn son.

Genesis 22: God "tests" Abraham by demanding back the life of his beloved son. Abraham finally surrenders his most precious and valued son, and God spares him by providing a substitute (the ram). This is why God says he will fulfill his promise from Genesis 12:3, see Genesis 22:15-18.

- *The point:* The overarching plot conflict of Genesis 12-22 is created by God's choice of Abraham. God has committed to spreading his divine blessing to all nations through this man and his wife. But, Abraham and Sarah actually become "the problem" that God has to overcome!

> *"The very first, and only really rigid, rule in literary theory is that texts must be read from beginning to end. The meaning of a word is not determined by its definition, but by its context. So also a single story's meaning is only determined by the relationship of all its elements to the whole text."*
>
> — SEAN MCEVENUE, INTERPRETATION AND THE BIBLE: ESSAYS ON TRUTH IN LITERATURE, 171

Illustration 1 Session 19

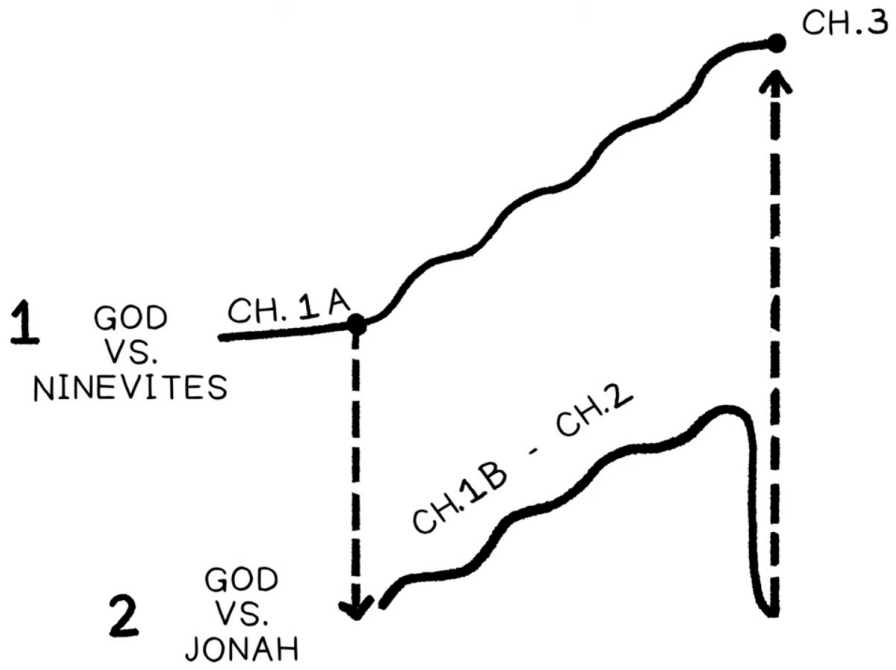
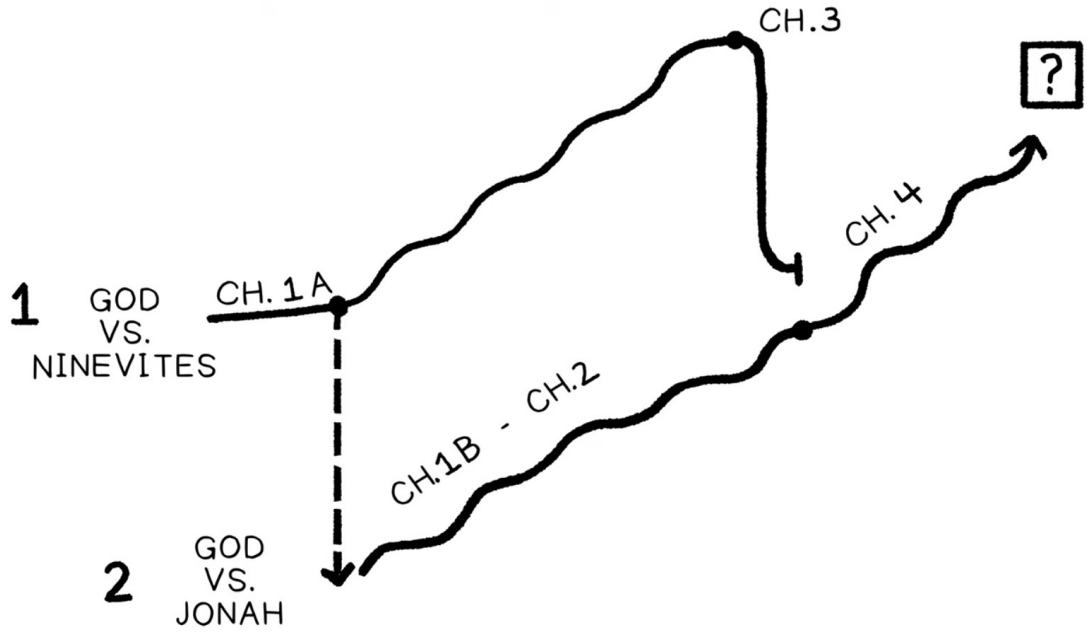


Illustration 2 Session 19



Session 20: Plots and Subplots

Key Question

How would you summarize how the story of Abraham's family relates to the story of the whole Hebrew Bible?

Session Quote

"The whole Hebrew Bible is about how we need the Messiah as Lord, and it turns out that the Messiah's name is Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus and the apostles appeal to their Scriptures as a way of showing the true identity of who Jesus is."

Example: The Biblical Story: Plots within Plots within Plots....

The entire biblical narrative works like a complex interweaving of plot layers, each sub-plot contributing to the higher level, and each higher level determining the ultimate meaning of the sub-plot.

Plot Level 1: Genesis 1-11 - God and the Nations

- Humans are installed as divine images to rule on God's behalf
- Human foolishly forfeit their responsibility, and are exiled unto the land of death.
- BUT, God promises to raise up a "seed" who will overcome evil through death...
- From outside Eden to Babylon (Gen 4-11)

Plot Level 2: God and Abraham's Family: Genesis 12-the rest of the Hebrew Bible

- The Story of God and Israel
    - Abraham's family and the covenant promise (Gen 12-50)
    - The Exodus (Exod 1-18)
    - The covenant at Mt. Sinai (Exod 19-Num 10)
    - Wilderness wanderings (Num 10-Deut 34)
    - Entry to the promise land (Joshua)
    - The failure of the judges (Judges)
    - The failure of the monarchy (Samuel-Kings)
    - Return from exile and unrealized hopes (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Plot Levels 1, and 2 combine! - Jesus and the restoration of God's reign

- Jesus is both the faithful human image that rules the world with God (Plot level 1) and the faithful Israelite through whom God's covenant promises can spread to the nations (Plot level 2).

Plot Level 3

- The hundreds of individual narratives that make up all of the larger movements.
- Every individual narrative is framed within its larger plot context. The ultimate meaning of these individual stories ultimate depends on their placement in the overall story.

Characters in Biblical Narrative

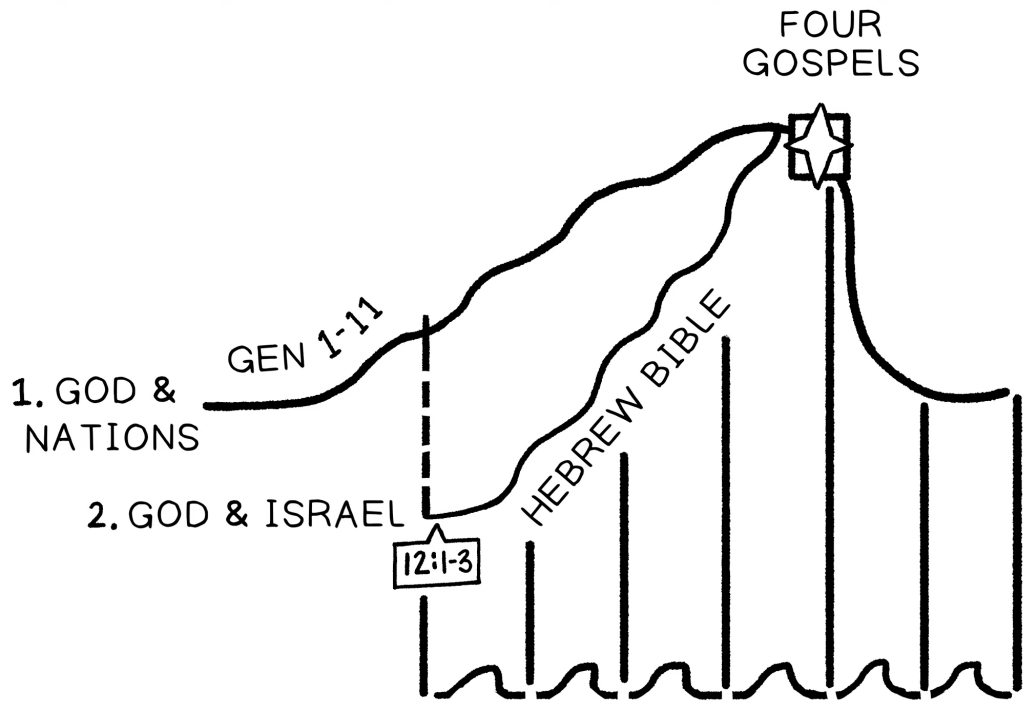
A. **Narrative and Moral Values**

Narrative characters are the most effective means of communicating the moral vision of the biblical authors. But how exactly?

> *"Most of an author's view of the world and the values they want to communicate are embodied in the narrative and expressed through the characters. Not only do characters serve as a narrator's mouthpiece, but also what is and is not related about them, which of their personality traits are emphasized and which are not, these all reveal the ethical values and moral norms within the narrative. The decisions that characters are called upon to make when confronted with moral choices, and the results of their decisions provide undisputable evidence of a narrative's ethical dimension."* — SHIMON BAR-EFRAT, NARRATIVE ART IN THE BIBLE, 47.

- Characters in the Bible are not so much "models for behavior" as they are "mirrors for self-reflection." Through means of identification the reader comes to either sympathize with a character's challenges and choices, or they disassociate by viewing their behavior as ethically inferior or unwise.
- By sympathizing with the plot-conflict of the characters, the narrator invites the reader to view themselves in light of this story and its resolution.

Illustration 1 Session 20



Session 21: Characterization and Setting in Biblical Narrative

Key Question

Why might the narrator leave ambiguities in characterization? What is the effect of creating complex characters or leaving gaps?

Session Quote

"The narrator is just as often, if not more than often, evaluating characters' decisions by narrating consequences and putting the ball in your court to make connections."

B. **Biblical style in narrative characterization:**

> *"The Greek storytelling tendency of loading the story with details is one that modern literary practice has by and large adopted and developed. Precisely for that reason we have to adjust our habits as readers in order to bring an adequate attentiveness to the rather different narrative maneuvers characteristic of the Hebrew Bible. The underlying biblical conception of people's character is that they're unpredictable, constantly emerging from and slipping back into ambiguity. Thus, biblical narrative style is marked by the art of reticence."* — ROBERT ALTER, THE ART OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE, 129.

Direct Characterization

The biblical narrators sometimes provides direction description or evaluation of a character, but not as often as we might assume.

- *Physical appearance:* Joseph's looks, Saul's stature, Esau's hair, only when relevant to narrative
- *Moral evaluation:* "So and so "did evil/good in the eyes of Yahweh."

Direct characterization is not as common in the Bible as is often assumed. Adele Berlin, in *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* uses the illustration of two types of painting: realism (modern, Western novels) vs. impressionism or pointilism (ancient biblical narrative)

- Esau is hairy = in the story he's 'outdoorsy' and primitive and behaves like an animal.
- Eli is old and blind, literally, and relationally blind as he ignored the rebellion of his sons.
- Saul is tall and David is small: it speaks to the contrast of their character. Saul imposes himself from above, David humbly allows God to exalt him from below.

In impressionist art "the suggestion of a thing may be more convincing than a detailed portrayal. This is due to the tendency of our brains to project meaning onto images in order to complete our expectations. We see what we expect to see, and the surrounding information guides our perception. This is why we fill in a partially drawn figure to conform to our expectations, and in some cases too much information may destroy the image. The trick, from the artist's point of view, is how much detail to include and how much to omit. This is a good corrective for those who wish biblical stories provided more concrete details, but this is precisely its narrative technique. The gaps left in biblical narratives are intentional, so that with a few deft strokes the biblical author engages the imagination of the reader to construct a picture that is more "real" than if he had filled in David or Abraham or Joseph's portrait with more detail. Minimal representation can give maximal illusion." — ADELE BERLIN, POETICS AND INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE.

Indirect Characterization

"Characters are something the biblical authors tend to speak with rather than about." — J.M. MCCRACKEN, "CHARACTER IN THE BOUNDARIES OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE," IN SEMEIA 63 (1993), P. 29-42.

Names: Characters' names often indicate their role in the story

- Saul = "the one asked for"
- Abram/Abraham = Exalted father / father of a multitude
- Israel = struggles with God
- Adam = humanity
- Elijah = Yahweh is my god
- Mahlon/Kilion = Sicko and Done-for [Ruth ch. 1]

Actions: Biblical narrator's prefer to show people's character rather than tell you an evaluation.

"Biblical narratives demonstrate a decided preference for using deeds to reveal character, letting us learn about characters through observing the way they behave in various situations. They prefer showing to telling." — RAY LUBECK, SWALLOWING JONAH — STRATEGIES OF READING BIBLICAL NARRATIVES, P. 9.

Instead of moralizing about characters' decisions, biblical narrators simply show you the decision and consequences of characters' decisions and allow you to ponder the significance.

- Moses kills Egyptian: Why? Justice? Anger problem? Is this good or bad.
- Abraham gives Sarah away, twice
- David & Solomon assasionation spree?

Speech

Character dialogue:

Biblical authors use dialogue in sophisticated ways to offer windows into the motives and moral values of the character.

Speeches:

Very often the narratives pause and a key character will offer a long speech, and the reader is left to determine the character's authenticity and motives

Key speeches:

- Joshua in Joshua 24;
- Samuel in 1 Sam 8 or 12;
- Solomon in 1 Kgs 8

Inset Poems:

Poems are often inserted into the narrative in order to summarize the core themes of the story so far, or to preview the themes that are going to be developed in the following narrative. Often the poems use dramatic or cosmic imagery in order to show how the narrative links up to the larger scale storyline of the biblical narrative.

Key songs:

- Jacob in Gen 49
- Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15
- Moses in Deuteronomy 32-33
- Deborah and Barak: Judges 5
- Hannah in 1 Samuel 2
- David in 2 Samuel 22-23

The Bible as Anti-Didactic literature: "One you realizes the Bible's "anti-didactic style is a narrative policy, you gain insight into the role of the aesthetic subtlety of these stories. They almost always shun extended commentary or explanation, let a lone homiletics [= sermoning, moralizing]. These authors intentionally leave gaps for the reader to puzzle over—discontintinuities, indeterminacies, non-sequiturs, unexplained motives—and they're fully aware of the disorienting effect this has on readers as they try to draw lessons from the past. Biblical narrators conceal the meaning of their stories to an extent seldom equalled by any other literature in history. This style was not inherited by Israel's neighboring cultures, rather it was invented and elaborated in the Israelite tradition of narrative and it's nothing less than deliberate.

In day to day life, knowledge and information and the ability to understand the meaning of events is power. But in reading the bible, we're constantly puzzling over the gaps in the stories [why did Moses do that? why did God do that?], and this is is strategic: our puzzlement is an imitation of our real position in life. It exposes our ignorance about the meaning of history or our lives. Biblical stories imitate our real-life conditions of inference, as we too are daily surrounded by ambiguities, baffled and misled by appearances, reduced to piecing fragments together by trial and error of interpretation, and we're often left in the dark about the meaning of our lives to the very end. The scarcity of commentary by the biblical narrators forces us to constantly evaluate the character's motives and the meaning of the plot as we look for clues. It is only by sustained effort that the reader of biblical narratives can attain to the point of view that God has possessed all along. Making sense of biblical stories is to gain a sense of being human." — MEIR STERNBERG, THE POETICS OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE - IDEOLOGICAL LITERATURE AND THE DRAMA OF READING, 42, 47.

Setting: Space and Time in Biblical Narrative

Place: As the biblical story develops, places begin to take on a symbolic/meaningful significance based on the events that happen there.

- Example: Garden of Eden > The East > Babylon: The human spiral of sin and selfishness move from the garden to Babylon (Genesis 1-11 = Tragic)
    - Adam & Eve banished "to the east" [Gen 3]
    - Cain is banished "to the East" [Gen 4]
    - People move "to the east" to build Babylon [Gen 11:1-2]

Babylon becomes a superpower in the story that comes back to take over the family of Abraham

Egypt, Moab, the wilderness, Bethlehem, Jerusalem... all become loaded with more and more meaning as the biblical story develops

Time: Narrative Time VS. Time of Narration

You can tell which events are most meaningful to the author's message by what gets the most "air-time," what time periods are given the most textual space.

Unit 5: Repeated Words and Design Patterns

SESSIONS: 22-29

Session 22: Design Patterns and Literary Units

Key Question

What are some different ways to identify where literary units begin and end? Why is this important?

Session Quote

"The Hebrew Bible is a composite unity, and that unity is created by similar stories and poems connected to each other through repetition and similarity but also difference."

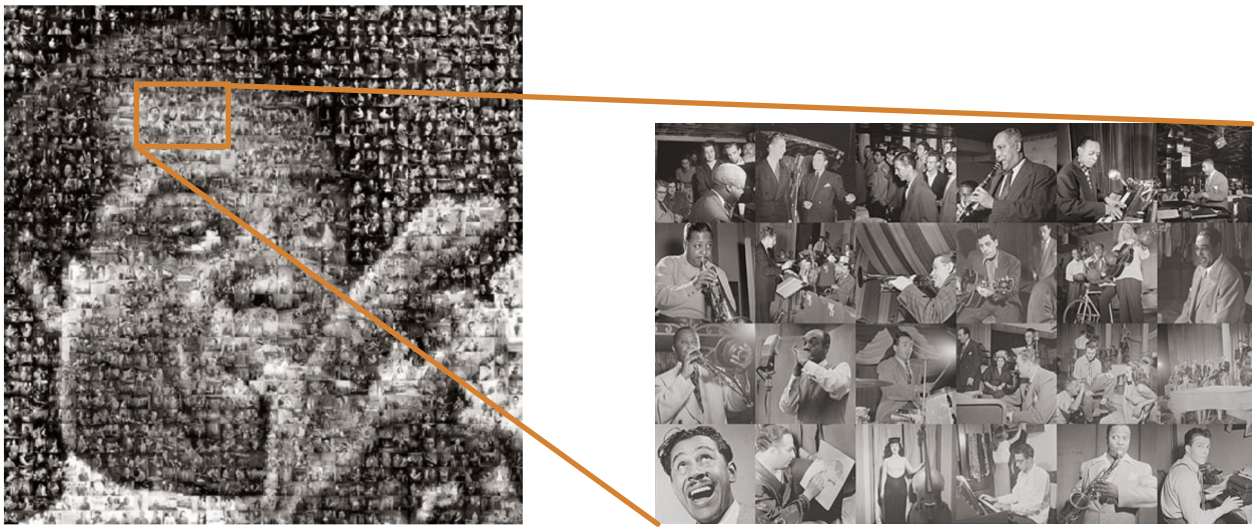
Design Patterns and Literary Analysis

Recall our earlier exploration of the origins of the Hebrew Bible, how it's a collection of collections that has been written, adapted, and edited into a unified whole. Consider two additional analogies that will help us understand the significance of this fact for how we read and interpret biblical literature.

Analogy #1: The photomosaic:

Portrait of Louis Armstrong, created by Robert Silvers (www.photomosaic.com).

It consists of hundreds of smaller photos taken from actual recording sessions with Louis Armstrong.



- The unique "unity" of the larger photomosaic is achieved precisely by its composite nature. The thematic arrangement of light/dark/great tiny squares becomes a tool in the artists hand to create larger patterns of color that provide an ordered, unified picture of the subject.
- The Hebrew Bible displays this kind of "mosaic unity" on a large and small scale level.

Analogy #2: Repeated Motifs and Themes in film

- Movie directors often create a cohesive unity to the themes and plot-line of a story by repetition and variation. By building up viewer expectations through repetition, the artist can introduce variation and surprise.
- In the Lord of the Rings trilogy, consider the motif of the "ring temptation" scene.
- Some characters are tempted by the ring's power, and they succumb to it (Smeagol, Boromir, Frodo).
- Other characters resist its power, but in different ways: Bilbo (just barely), Gandalf and Galadriel (through fear and trembling), and Aragorn (like it's no problem!).
- This diverse set of responses to the ring's power creates a rich palette of characters and a complex portrait of power in the story.



The biblical authors were masters of this technique. In fact, this basic principle of patterned repetition and analogy is the most fundamental tool in their repertoire. And it's accomplished through the simplest of means: strategic repetition of key words.

These two analogies illustrate different features of the TaNaK collection, that creates the need for two related reading strategies:

1. *Identifying Literary Units [segmentation]*
    - Just as a photomosaic consists of hundreds of smaller photos, so the epic biblical narrative consists of hundreds of smaller episodes. Learning to identify the beginning and ending of literary units that make up the larger mosaic of a biblical book.

2. *Identifying repeated words and themes that weave the literary units together [coordination]*

    - Just as the smaller photos in a photomosaic are organized according to patterns of color, light, and tone, so the literary units of the biblical narrative are woven together through patterns of repeated words, themes, and images. These repetitions invite the reader to see continuity and an ongoing argument that develops through the course of the story.

Identifying Literary Units [segmentation]

If we imagine the individual images in a photomosaic or the smallest pieces of a quilt, then "segmentation" means paying attention to the boundaries of the smallest literary unit. The biblical authors have a wide variety of techniques to indicate the opening and conclusion of literary units, depending on literary genre and context. The most helpful introduction to this method of study is found in David Dorsey, The Literary Structure of the Old Testament, chapters 1-5.

Markers of literary units in narrative:

Shift in Character, time, setting, or plot:

- Abram, Sarai, Pharaoh go to Egypt in Gen 12:10-20
- Plot: The action initiated in the unit's beginning comes to resolution: Joshua 2:1 (the spies are sent), Joshua 2:23-24 (the spies return).

Conclusion marked by the next unit's introduction:

- Genesis chs. 14-15-16. The conclusion of the narrative is clearly marked by the beginning of the following unit (see 14:1, 15:1, 16:1, etc.)

Hierarchies of Literary Units in biblical narrative

When all of the above principles are applied to a literary analysis, it yields the following outline of the Eden narrative

<table>
<tr><td>2:4-6 - No garden, humans, or rain</td><td rowspan="5">2:4-17
From wasteland to Eden</td><td rowspan="8">2:4-25
From isolated wasteland to communion in Eden</td><td rowspan="13">2:4-3:24
The Eden Narrative: From Garden to Exile</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:7-9 - God plants a garden and forms human</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:10-14 - The Eden river flows to become 4 rivers</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:15-17 - Human put in the garden + divine command</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:18-20 - Problem: a human alone</td><td rowspan="3">2:18-25
From isolation to communion</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:21-23 - Solution: two humans out of one</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:24-25 - Two humans married</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:1-5 - Dialogue between snake and woman</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="3">3:1-13
Folly and the Fall</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:6-7 - Woman and man eat from the tree</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:8-13 - Dialogue between God and humans</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:14-15 - Curse on the snake</td><td rowspan="4">3:14-24
The Fallout</td><td rowspan="5">3:14-24
The Fallout and exile from Eden</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:16 - Consequences for the woman</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:17-19 - Consequences for the man</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:20-21 - Provision of garments</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">3:22-24
Humans exiled from Eden</td></tr>
</table>

When the same information is displayed in a vertical form, you can begin to see the "hierarchy" of context for any given story, which is itself made up of many nested layers of smaller episodes and scenes.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="12">Genesis 1-50</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="12">Genesis 1-11</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="12">Genesis 2:4-3:24 - The Eden Narrative</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">2:4-25</td><td colspan="3">3:1-13</td><td colspan="4">3:14-24</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">2:4-17</td><td colspan="2">2:18-25</td><td>3:1-5</td><td>3:6-7</td><td>3:8-13</td><td colspan="3">3:14-21</td><td>3:22 -24</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:4-6</td><td>2:7-9</td><td>2:10-14</td><td>2:15-17</td><td>2:18-20</td><td>2:21-23</td><td>2:24-25</td><td></td><td>3:14-15</td><td>3:16</td><td>3:17-19</td><td>3:20-21</td></tr>
</table>

This "segmentation" of biblical narrative is immensely helpful as a first step in understanding, but it raises the need for the next step: studying how all these different literary units have been woven together with developing themes and ideas. This is the study of "coordination" in biblical narrative.

Session 23: Identifying Repeated Words

Key Question

What's something that stands out to you about how repetition or structure works in Genesis 1?

Session Quote

"It's as if the distribution of "good" is giving us a clue as to what good means. Good in Genesis 1 is about when we make concrete steps forward towards human flourishing on the land. This is God's definition of good."

Identifying Repeated Words [Coordination]

As the biblical authors collected the narratives and poems and arranged them, they also created coordinating connections, by linking units together through repeated words and themes. The biblical authors were masters of this technique. Patterned repetition and analogy is the most fundamental tool in their repertoire, accomplished through the simplest of means: strategic repetition of key words.

1. Dense repetition can signal a core theme of a literary unit: lead-words

Lead-words in biblical narrative

A "lead-word" (German leitwort) is "a word or word-root that repeats significantly in a text or group of texts, and by following these repetitions, one is able to decipher or grasp a meaning of the text... The repetition may not be of the same exact word, but of the word-root...which intensifies the dynamic action of the repetition... if you imagine the entire text stretched out before you, you can sense waves moving back and forth between key words, matching the rhythm of the text... it is one of the most powerful means of conveying meaning." — MARTIN BUBER, SCHRIFTEN ZUR BIBEL, P. 1131.

Example: "Good" in Genesis 1-6

Gen 1:4	And God saw that the light was good (וירא...כי טוב)
Gen 1:10	And God saw that it [the dry land] was good (וירא...כי טוב)
Gen 1:12	And God saw that it [the vegetation] was good (וירא...כי טוב)
Gen 1:18	And God saw that it [the lights] was good (וירא...כי טוב)
Gen 1:21	And God saw that it [the sea life] was good (וירא...כי טוב)
Gen 1:25	And God saw that it [land life] was good (וירא...כי טוב)
Gen 1:31	And God saw all that he had made, and look, it was very good (וירא ...והנה טוב מאר)

This phrase is like a drum beat through days 1-6, setting the reader's expectation so that the different wording of the 7th repetition sticks out and feels climactic: "very good"!

In terms of God's character portrait, this repetition makes a clear claim: God is the provider and evaluator of what is truly good. In Genesis 1, "good" defines the ordered environments that make life possible (days 1-3) and the abundant creatures that fill the skies and the land (days 4-6).

Example: Blessing in Genesis 12:1-3

1 Now the Lord said to Abram,
"Go forth from your country,
and from your relatives
and from your father's house,
to the land which I will show you;
2 and I will make you a great nation,
and I will bless you,
and make your name great;
and so you shall be a blessing;
3 and I will bless those who bless you,
and the one who curses you I will curse.
and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

2. Repetition and literary design

The biblical authors also use repetition to "package" the information of a narrative in multiple layers of interconnection, using the same techniques as Hebrew poetry:

Example: Genesis 12:1-3

1 Now the Lord said to Abram,
a Go forth from your country,
b and from your relatives
b' and from your father's house,
a' to the land which I will show you;

a [2]and I will make you a great nation,
b and I will bless you,
a and make your name great;
b' and so you shall be a blessing;

a [3]and I will bless those
*b those who **bless you**,*
*b' and the one who **curses you***
a' I will curse.
c and in you all the families of the ground will be blessed."

God's speech is designed with the features of Hebrew poetry. The symmetrically paired elements illuminate each other and deepen the significance through similarity and difference:

- Sources of identity: One's land // one's family;
- Signs of blessing: great nation // great name
- Signs of divine protection: blessing & curse

The final sentence is also offset by its lack of a symmetrical partner, identifying it as a climactic statement.

Illustration 1 Session 23

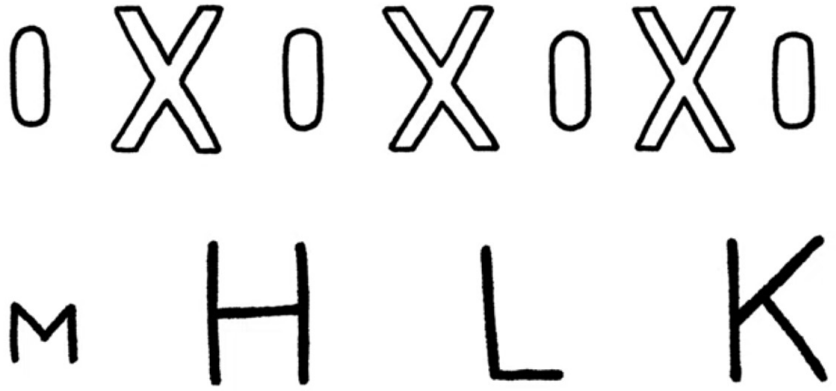
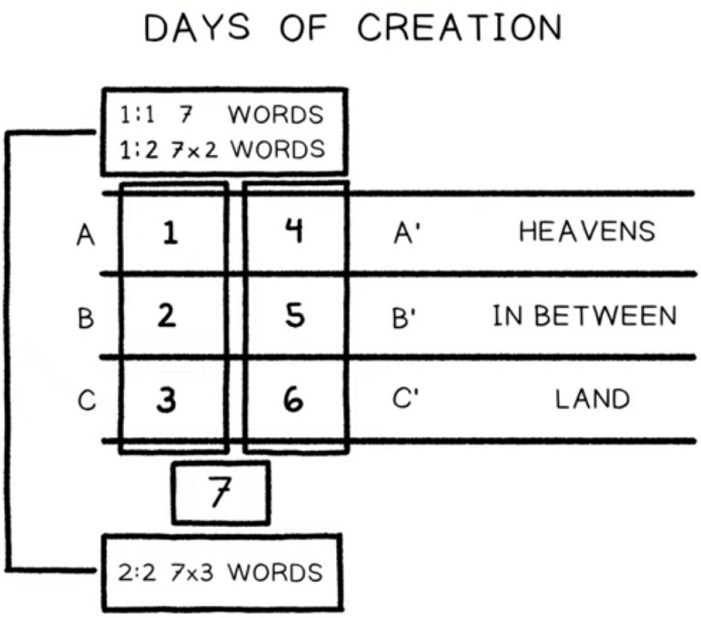


Illustration 2 Session 23



Session 24: Repeated Words and Literary Design

Key Question

What are some pros and cons of breaking passages down according to their structures? What does it help you see? What is the benefit of reading without identifying the structure?

Session Quote

"The message is bound up with the literary form. It's actually the literary form that is a part of the message. You experience this in that the overabundance of words is actually a neat image of the overabundance of oil."

Example: 2 Kings 4:1-7

First, let's read the text and register all of the key repeated words with color patterns.

*[1]Now **a certain woman** of the wives of the sons of the prophets **cried out to Elisha**, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared Yahweh; and **the lender** has come to take my two children to be his slaves." [2]And Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil." [3]and he said, "Go, request for yourself **vessels** from outside, from all your neighbors, empty **vessels**; do not get a few. [4]And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and you shall pour out into all these **vessels**, and you shall set aside what is full." [5]and she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing to her and she was pouring. [6]and it came about when the **vessels** were full, and she said to her son, "Bring near to me another **vessel**." and he said to her, "There is not another **vessel**." and the oil stopped. [7]and **she came and she told the man of God**. and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay **your lender**, and you and your sons can live on the rest."*

The story seems like a jumble of repetition, but the main themes and the plot arc of the story are clear. The woman's situation changes from death and debt into life and abundance, all because she obeys the word of the prophet. However, if the reader ponders (and memorizes) the story, reciting it and breaking it down into its smallest literary units, the repetitions fall into a sophisticated literary arrangement.

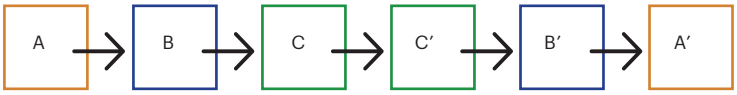
2 Kings 4:1-7, again!

A	a [1]Now **a certain woman** of the wives of the sons of the prophets **cried out to Elisha**, b "Your servant my husband is dead, b′ and you know that your servant feared Yahweh; c and **the lender** has come to take my two children to be his slaves."		**Woman to prophet Elisha** **Conflict:** **death & debt**
B	a [2]and Elisha said to her, b "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" a′ and she said, b′ "Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil."		**Man/woman Dialogue:** **he said** **she said**
C		[3]and he said, "Go, request for yourself **vessels** from outside, from all your neighbors, empty **vessels**; do not get a few. [4]"And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and you shall pour out into all these **vessels**, and you shall set aside what is full."	**Command:** **Get Empty vessels** **pour out until full**
C′		[5]and she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing to her and she was pouring. [6]and it came about when the **vessels** were full,	**Fulfillment:** **Empty vessels** **poured out until full**
B′	a and she said to her son, b "Bring near to me another **vessel**." a′ and he said to her, b′ "There is not another **vessel**." c and the oil stopped.		**Man/woman Dialogue:** **she said** **he said**
A′	[7]and **she came and she told the man of God**. and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay **your lender**, and you and your sons can live on the rest."		**Woman to man of God** **Resolution:** **life and debt paid**

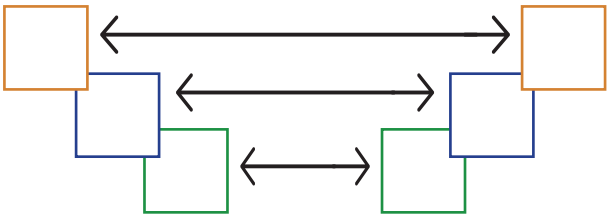
When the reader pays attention to the narrative sequence and the repetitions, it becomes clear the story has a symmetrical shape of both key words and plot/character element (all indicated in the right column).

The reader is invited to read the story in two dimensions (just like biblical poetry!): (1) In a forward linear sequence and also (2) in a non-linear symmetrical sequence.

1. A forward sequence



2. A non-linear symmetrical sequence



Just as in Hebrew poetry, so each corresponding part of the narrative invites the reader to compare and contrast matching "scenes" as though they were matching parallel lines. When the reader juxtaposes parallel scenes, certain details become more significant.

- The story moves from "death" (A) to "life" (A′), and potential slavery (A) to freedom. These are important coordinated images drawn from the Exodus narrative where death and slavery are the opposite of life and liberation.
- The key agent who turns death into life, is the word of the prophet, who is called "the prophet" (A) and the "the man of God" (A′).
- The word of God through the prophet creates a "test of faith" for the woman, whether she will trust that God can provide "oil" (an agricultural staple) out of nothing (B and B′).
- The woman's home and jars change from "empty" (C) to "full" (C′) because of her trust in God's power.

Summary: This story is about how the word of God through the prophets can turn death into life, and abundance out of nothing, if only God's people will trust him as Creator.

Genesis 39 - A complex Example

a Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt;
b and Potiphar bought him:
c an officer of Pharaoh,
c' the captain (שר) of the bodyguard,
c'' an Egyptian man (איש מצרי)
b' from the hand of the Ishmaelites,
a' who had taken him down there.

a And Yahweh was with Joseph,
b so he became a successful man (איש מצליח).
c And he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.
a' And his master saw that Yahweh was with him
b' and how everything that he did (כל אשר הוא עשה) Yahweh made successful (מצליח) in his hand.
c' And Joseph found favor in his eyes (חן בעיניו) and he attended him,
and he appointed him over his house, and everything that was his (כל יש לו), he gave into his hand.

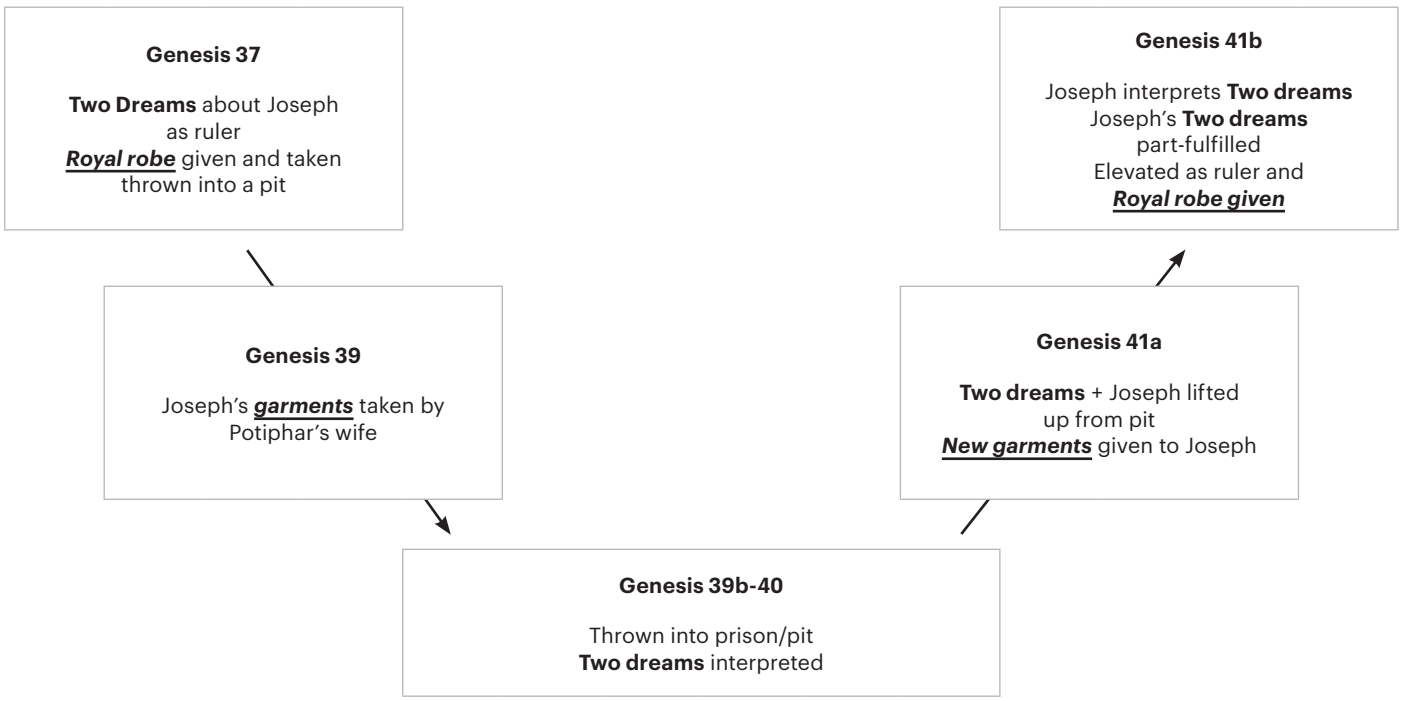
5and it came about when he appointed him in his house and over everything that was his (כל אשר יש לו),
Yahweh blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus Yahweh's blessing was upon everything that was his (כל אשר יש לו), in the house and in the field.
6So he abandoned (עזב) everything that was his (כל אשר יש לו) in the hand of Joseph;
and he did not know anything with him, except the food which he ate.
and Joseph was beautiful of form and beautiful of sight.

And it came about after these things...
a and his master's wife lifted her eyes toward Joseph and said, "Lie with me." and he refused
and he said to his master's wife,
"Behold, my master does not know, with me, what is **in** the house,
b and everything that is his (כל אשר יש לו) he has given into my hand,
c There is no one greater **in** the house than me,
b' and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife.
and how could I do this great evil and sin against God?"
a' and it came about as she spoke to Joseph day after day,
he did not listen to her to lie with her, to be with her.

And it came about on this day...
a 11...that he went into the house to do his work, and no man from the men of the house was there in the house.
b 12and she seized him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!"
and he abandoned (עזב) his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.
b' 13and it came about when she saw
that he abandoned (עזב) his garment in her hand and had fled outside,
a' 14then she called to the men of her house
c and she said to them, "Look, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make fun of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a great voice. 15And when he heard that I raised my voice and cried out, he abandoned (עזב) his garment beside me and fled and went outside."
a'' 16So she rested his garment beside her until his master came to his house.
c' 17And she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make fun of me; 18and as I raised my voice and cried out, then he abandoned (עזב) his garment beside me and fled outside."
19and it came about when his master listened to the words of his wife,
which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," his anger burned hot.
20and Joseph's master took him and gave him into the house of the prison, where the king's prisoners were;

a And Yahweh was with Joseph and extended kindness to him,
and gave him favor in the eyes (חן בעיניו) of the captain (שר) of the house of prison.
b The captain (שר) of the house of prison gave into the hand of Joseph all the prisoners in the house of the prison,
and everything they were doing, he was doing (כל אשר עשים...הוא עשה).
b' The captain (שר) of the house of prison did not see anything in his hand
a' in as much as Yahweh was with him, and whatever he was doing (אשר הוא עשה), Yahweh made it successful (מצליח).

The role of the "garment" in the larger literary unit of Genesis 37-41



Session 25: Repeated Words Between Juxtaposed Literary Units

Key Question

We talked about the repeated word "good" a few sessions ago. Summarize what you've learned about how the author uses the word "good" to set up the story of the Bible.

Session Quote

"It's as if we've watched two characters named Human and Life set the template, and their failure is to redefine "good" and "not good" in their own eyes. And it's as if now, in the next generation, we see a more concrete realization and replay of what their parents did."

Lead Words and Narrative Analogy between Juxtaposed Literary Units

Narrative analogy is "[w]hen two or more characters, stories, scenes, or other aspects of a biblical text bear a significant amount of resemblance to one another, inviting further comparison between the two. The comparison sheds new light on both aspects of the text, highlighting parallels, foreshadowing, reversal, progression, or various other effects generated by their mutual resemblance and difference. Through this device, to quote Robert Alter, 'one part of the text provides oblique commentary on another." — BRIAN SIGMON, BETWEEN EDEN AND EGYPT: ECHOES OF THE GARDEN NARRATIVE IN THE STORY OF JOSEPH, P. 46.

Example: "Good" in Genesis 1-3

Gen 1:4	And God saw that the light was good (וירא…כי טוב)
Gen 1:10	And God saw that it [the dry land] was good (וירא…כי טוב)
Gen 1:12	And God saw that it [the vegetation] was good (וירא…כי טוב)
Gen 1:18	And God saw that it [the lights] was good (וירא…כי טוב)
Gen 1:21	And God saw that it [the sea life] was good (וירא…כי טוב)
Gen 1:25	And God saw that it [land life] was good (וירא…כי טוב)
Gen 1:31	And God saw all that he had made, and look, it was very good (וירא …והנה טוב מאר)

In terms of God's character portrait, this repetition makes a clear claim: God is the provider and evaluator of what is truly good. In Genesis 1, "good" defines the ordered environments that make life possible (days 1-3) and the abundant creatures that fill the skies and the land (days 4-6).

In the next literary unit, the Eden narrative (Gen 2:4-3:24), we find this same vocabulary continued, but in new and creative ways.

Gen 2:9

and Yahweh God caused the growth of every tree
*that was desirable **to see**, and **good** for eating,*
*and the tree of **life** was in the middle of the garden*
*and the tree of knowing of **good** **and bad**.*

Genesis 1 taught us that God is the provider, evaluator, and ultimate "knower" of what is good, and we know that he has appointed humans to rule the world on his behalf, as his divine image. So, this tree represents a choice that will lay before the humans, between two trees: one represents "life" (which is good), and the other represents knowing good and bad. Will the humans allow God to be the prime "knower" of what is good and not-good, or will they take this knowledge for themselves?

Gen 2:18

*Then Yahweh God said, 'It is **not** **good** for the human to be alone..."*

Once again, God is the evaluator of what is good and not good (as in Genesis 1), and once again he provides what is good for the human: a partner without whom he cannot accomplish the image of God mission given in Gen 1:26-28.

Summary of "good" in Genesis 1 and 2

Genesis 1:1-2:3

*"and God **saw that it was good**"*
*"and God **saw that it was good**"*
*"and God **saw that it was good**"*
...
*"and God **saw that it was very good**"*

Genesis 2:4-24

*"from the tree of knowing **good and bad** you shall not eat"*
*"it is **not good** for the human to be alone"*

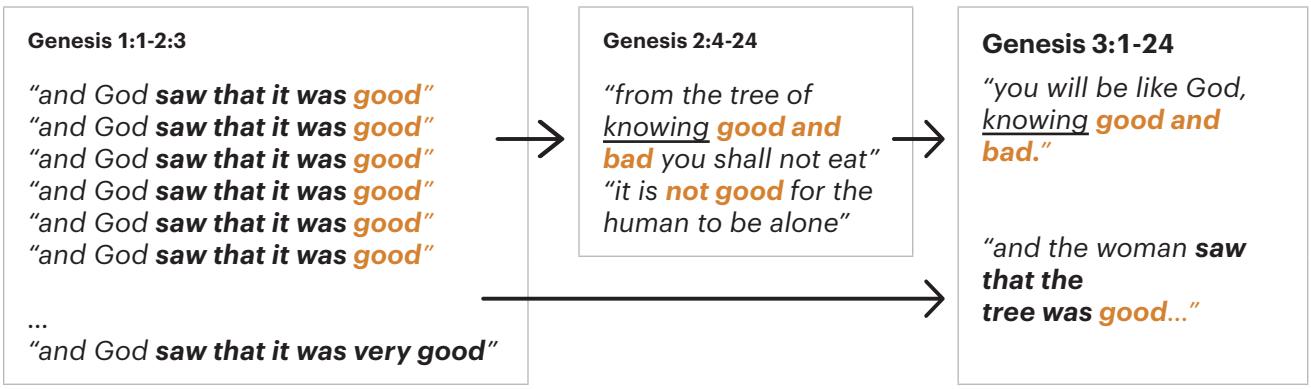
Genesis 3:1-13: Literary Design and key words

3:1-5	***Theme**: dialogue about God's command concerning the fruit* ***Characters**: snake, woman (active)* ***Setting**: inside the garden*	
	Snake: "did God really say you may not eat from any tree in the garden?" *Woman: "from the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, 'You shall not eat from it..."*	
3:6-7	***Theme**: the woman and man eat the fruit and are changed* ***Characters**: the woman and the husband* ***Setting**: the center of the garden*	
	*A. and **the woman saw that the tree** **was good** for eating* *B. and desirable to **the eyes** and desirable for becoming **wise*** *C. and she took from its fruit and she ate* *C.' and she gave also to her husband and he ate* *B. and **the eyes** of the two of them were opened and they knew they were **naked*** *A. and the leaves of a **fig tree** and made garments*	
3:8-13	***Theme**: dialogue about the eating of the fruit* ***Characters**: YHWH, ha'adam, the woman* ***Setting**: inside the garden*	
	Yahweh: "did you eat from the tree which I commanded you not to eat from it?" *Woman: "the snake deceived me, and I ate from it.*	

This story is the ultimate tragedy, as the snake presents itself as one with superior "knowledge" about God's "knowledge." He contradicts God's wisdom, saying that taking the knowing of good and bad will not lead to death, but to greater wisdom.

The key phrase "and the woman saw...good" is precisely the same phrase that was repeated 7 times in Genesis 1. Eve is being portrayed as one who usurps the role and prerogative of God. Not that what God was as good, he "gave," whereas what the woman sees as good, she "takes."

Summary of "good" in Genesis 1-3



Lead Words and Narrative Analogies between Genesis 3 and 4

The profile of Adam and Eve's actions in Genesis 3 provide a template for the next generation, that replays the failure of their parents. The failure of Cain in Genesis 4, is deliberately set on analogy to the story of Genesis 3, using all of its key vocabulary.

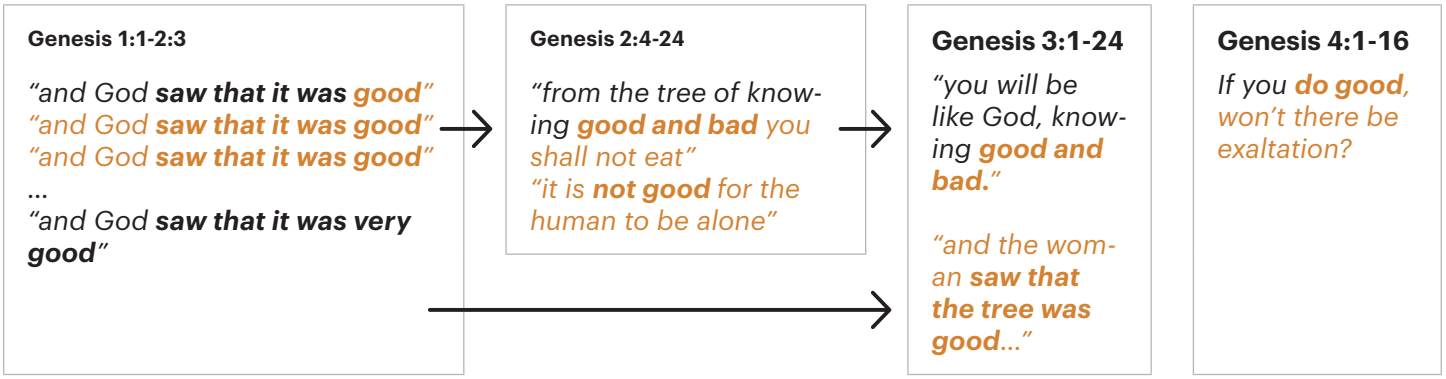
	Genesis 2-3: Adam & Eve	Genesis 4: Cain and Abel
Human given a significant choice about "good"	*2:14 "from any tree of the garden you may eat, but from the tree of knowing **good** and evil you should not eat, because the day you eat from it you will surely die.*	*4:5-6: But Yahweh did not regard Cain's offering, and Cain was very angry... Yahweh said "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? Isn't it the case that if you do **good**, you will be lifted up?"*
Humans tempted by an "animal"	*3:1 "Now the **snake** was more crafty than any creature of the field...and he said to the woman, 'Did God really say not to eat from any tree in the garden?"*	*4:6 "But if you don't do **good**, **sin is a croucher at the door**, and it's desire is for you."*
Human gives into temptation with destructive consequences	*3:6 "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and desirable to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom... she took..."*	*4:5 "And Cain was very angry..." [4:8] And Cain spoke to Abel his brother and while they were in the field Cain rose up against Abel his brother and murdered him"*
God shows up to ask a leading question	*3:9 "And God called out to the human, and said "Where are you (איכה)?"* *3:12 "And God said to the woman, 'What have you done?' (מה עשית)*	*4:9 "And God said to Cain, "where is your (אי) brother Abel?"* *4:10 "And God said, "What have you done?" (מה עשית)*
Human dodges the question	*3:12 "The human said 'The woman who you set with me, she gave to me and I ate.'"*	*4:9 "I don't know! Am I my brother's keeper?"*
The perpetrator is cursed	*3:14 "God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, **you are cursed** from every beast and from every creature of the field"*	*4:11 "And now **you are cursed** from the ground..."*
Inverted Desire	*3:16 "Your desire will be toward your husband, and he will rule over you."*	*4:7 "Sin...its desire is toward you, and you will rule it."*
Working the ground will now be more difficult	*3:17b "in pain you will eat from the **ground**"* *3:23 "And God sent him from the garden of Eden to **work the ground**"*	*4:12 "For you will **work the ground**, and it will no longer give its strength to you."*
The human is banished from the divine presence	*3:24 "And [God] banished the human and he camped east of the garden of Eden..."*	*4:14 "Behold, you have banished me from the face of the ground and from your presence." ... [4:16] "And Cain settled in the land of Nod, **east of Eden.***

Notice that in each parallel element, the reader is invited to make comparisons and contrasts between the two stories that offer deeper insight into Cain's character.

In both stories, the "tester" is presented as an animal: a snake in Genesis 3, and in Genesis 4 "sin" is animated as a "croucher," an animal-like reality that wants to take the lives of others for their own.

Genesis 3 and 4 "were purposely juxtaposed for the effect they would have early on in the sequence of primeval episodes from Eden to the Tower of Babel... The first human is probed within the Garden, while Can is tested outside the garden. The first test is that of the first human who is warned not to eat...lest he die. The second test is that of his son Cain who is admonished to rule over sin, so that his brother doesn't die... The first tester is a mysterious snake, the second is an animated character called 'sin.' While the man and woman share responsibility...Cain alone is guilty for his crime." — IGAL GERMAN, THE FALL RECONSIDERED: A LITERARY SYNTHESIS OF THE PRIMEVAL SIN NARRATIVES, CH. 4.

Summary of "good" in Genesis 1-4



Gen 1:1-2:3 God sees what it good, and gives it freely.

Gen 2:4-24 Knowing good and bad is dangerous for humans

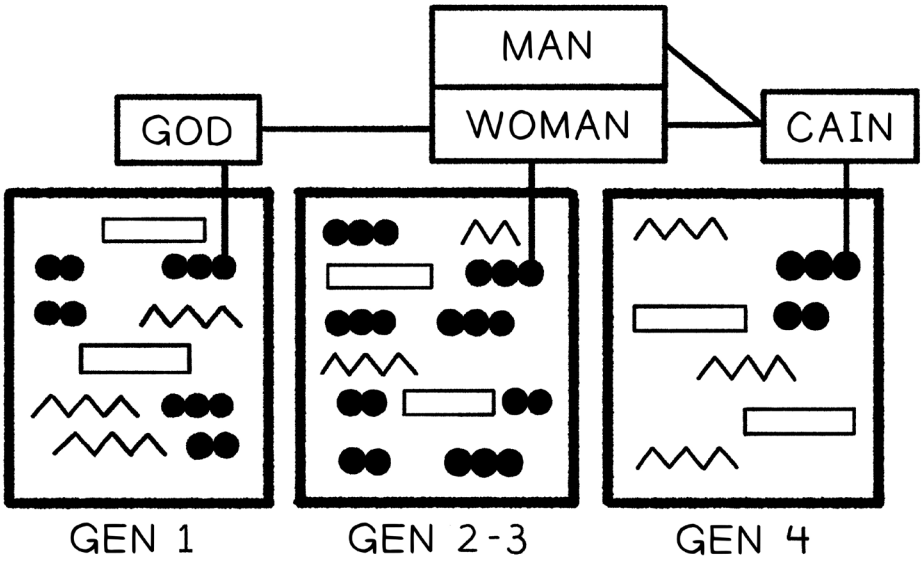
God also knows what is not good, and provides good instead

Gen 3:1-24 Humans who want god-like knowledge of good and not good too soon

end up ashamed and guilty,

Gen 4:1-17 and dead.

Illustration Session 25



Session 26: Repeated Words Between Distant Literary Units

Key Question

Repeated words can connect sections of text that are both close and farther away. How can you know when a repetition is meant to connect different sections or when it is just a coincidence? What are some ideas you have?

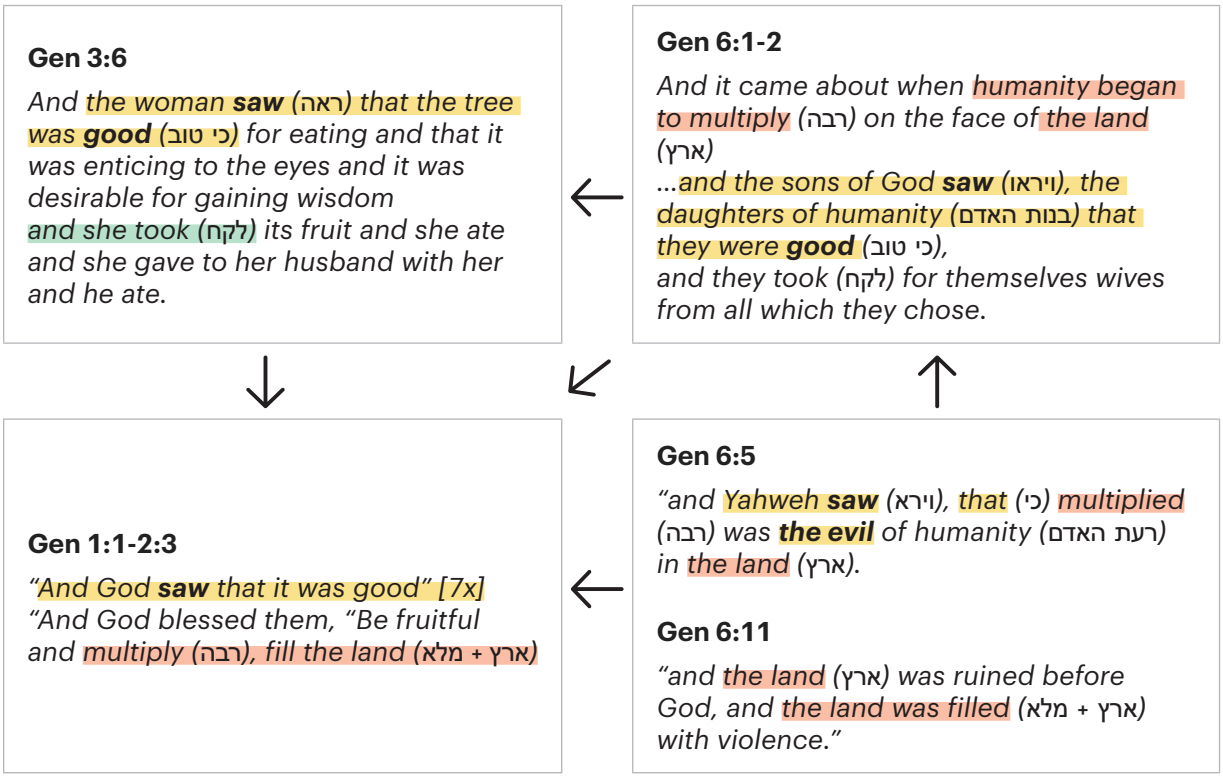
Session Quote

"The narrative is trying to make a theological argument here. Genesis 1-11 is diagnosing the problem in God's good world. It's a rebellion on earth and in heaven. And that is Genesis 1-11's explanation for why things are the way they are."

Lead Words and Narrative Analogy between Distant Literary Units

Recall the most basic principle of poetry: parallel words and images invite the reader to make comparison and contrasts, creating deeper insight into both texts. The same principle is at work here.

Genesis 6:1-8 and Genesis 3



The twin introduction to the flood narrative consists of two literary units, 6:1-4 and 6:5-8, both carefully shaped to coordinate with each other in a narrative analogy:

- 6:1-4: Humanity's multiplication leads to rebel spiritual beings seeing and taking human women
- 6:5-8: Yahweh sees that, as a result of 6:-14, evil and violence have multiplied in the land.

Both of these analogies are deepened when their dependence on the narrative analogy in Genesis 1-3 is recognized.

- The sons of God and daughters of men // Eve & the snake
- The daughters of men // The tree of knowing good and bad
- The blessing multiplication of humans on the land in Gen 1, is sadly turned into a multiplication of death in Gen 6.

Gen 1:1-2:3
*"And God **saw** that it was good" [7x]*
"And God blessed them, "Be fruitful and multiply (רבה), fill the land (מלא + ארץ)

Gen 3:6
*And the woman **saw** (ראה) that the tree was good (כי טוב) for eating and that it was enticing to the eyes and it was desirable for gaining wisdom*
and she took (לקח) its fruit and she ate and she gave to her husband with her and he ate.

Gen 6:1-2
And it came about when humanity began to multiply (רבה) on the face of the land (ארץ)
*...and the sons of God **saw** (ויראו), the daughters of humanity (בנות האדם) that they were good (כי טוב),*
and they took (לקח) for themselves wives from all which they chose.

Gen 6:5
*"and Yahweh **saw** (ויראו), that (כי) multiplied (רבה) was **the evil** of humanity (רעת האדם) in the land (ארץ).*

Gen 6:11
"and the land (ארץ) was ruined before God, and the land was filled (ארץ + מלא) with violence."

Session 27: Narrative Analogy: Sarai and Genesis 3

Key Question

Read Genesis 12:10-20. What do you notice about how this text relates to the previous pattern established in Genesis 3 of humanity choosing what is good apart from God?

Session Quote

"The narrative in no way vindicates or endorses Abram's behavior. The narrative analogy condemns his behavior, yet God made a promise. You have what feels like divine values in tension with one another. You have God's commitment to his promise and God's commitment to do justice."

Genesis 12:10-20 and Genesis 3

12:10: Introduction: Abram goes to Egypt because of a famine
a [10]*Now there was a* ***famine*** *i****n the land****;*
b *and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there,*
a' *for the* ***famine*** *was severe* ***in the land****.*

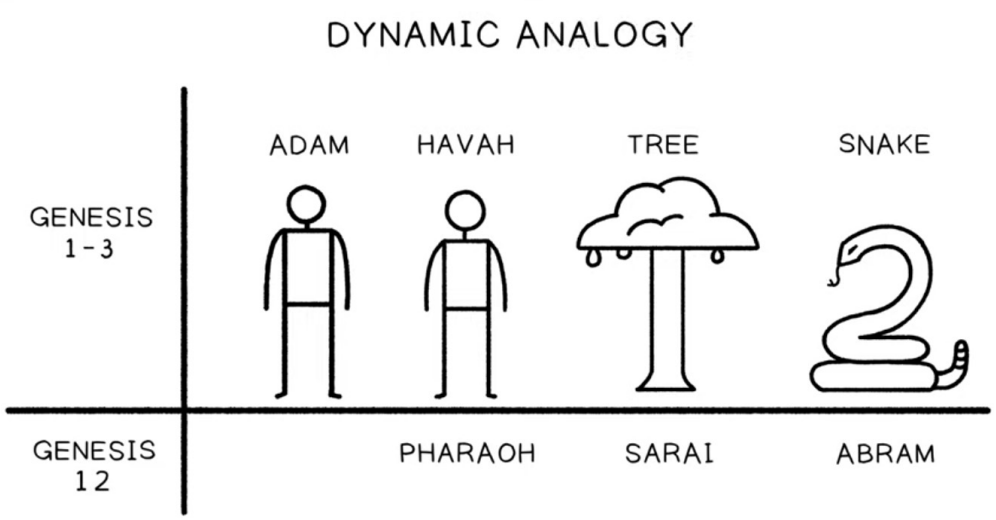
12:11-13: Abram nears Egypt + Abram's speech to Sarai
[11]*and came about when he came near to entering Egypt,*
and he said to Sarai his wife,
"See now, I know that you are ***a woman beautiful of sight****;*
[12]*and* ***when the Egyptians see you****,* ***they will say, 'This is his wife'****;*
and they will kill me, but they will let you live.
[13]*"Please* ***say that you are my sister*** *so that there will be good to me on account of you,*
and that I may live on account of you."

12:14-16: Egyptian see Sarai and Pharaoh takes her
[14]*and it came about when Abram came into Egypt,*
and ***the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful****.*
[15]*and Pharaoh's officials* ***saw her*** *and praised her to Pharaoh;*
and the woman was ***taken*** *into Pharaoh's house.*
[16] *and he did good to Abram on account of her;*
and there was for him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.

12:17-19: Plagues on Pharaoh + Pharaoh's speech to Abram
17and Yahweh plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues on account of Sarai,
***Abram's wife**.*
18and Pharaoh called Abram and he said,
*"What is this you have done to me? **Why did you not tell me that she was your wife**?*
*19"**Why did you say, 'She is my sister**,' so that I took her for **my wife**?*
*Now then, here is **your wife**, take her and go."*

12:20: Conclusion: Abram sent away from Egypt by Pharaoh
20and Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him;
and they sent him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

Illustration Session 27



Session 28: Narrative Analogy: Jacob and Genesis 3

Key Question

In the birth story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25, how is Jacob like the snake of Genesis 3? What tension does this create for the overall storyline?

Session Quote

"This is programmatic for the whole storyline of the Hebrew Bible. There are going to be snake-people, and there are going to be humanity-people, and these two are going to be at enmity with each other in narrative after narrative."

Genesis 16 and Genesis 3 and 6

Genesis 16	Genesis 3 and 6
16:1-2a Now, Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian slave whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, "Look, Yahweh has prevented me from giving birth. Please go in to my slave; maybe I can be built up (בנה) through her." *16:2b "and Abram listened to the voice of Sarai (שמ״ע + לקול)*	*2:21-22 "And Yahweh God took from one of the sides of the human...and he built (בנה) the side into a woman."* *3:17 "because you listened to the voice of your wife" (שמ״ע + לקול)*
16:3-3 "and Sarai took (ותתן) Hagar...and she gave (ותתן) her to Abram her husband (אישה) as a wife (לאשה)...And he went into her."	*6:2-4 And the sons of God saw (ראה״) the daughters of humanity, that they were good, and they took (לק״ח) for themselves wives (נשים)...when they went into (יבאו + אל) the daughters of humanity, and they gave birth (יל״ד).*
	3:6 "and the woman (אשה)...took (ותקח) the fruit...and she gave (ותתן) also to her husband (לאישה), and he ate."
16:4 "and she [Hagar] saw that (ותרא כי) she was pregnant, and her master was cursed in her eyes (בעיניה)." *Birth becomes curse to Sarai instead of blessing* *16:6 "Abram said to Sarai, 'Behold, your slave is in your hand, do to her what is good (טוב) in your eyes (בעיניך)."*	*3:6 "and the woman saw that (ותרא כי) the tree was good (טוב) for food, and desirable to the eyes (לעינים)* *"cursed is the ground because of you"*

16:8 "And [the angel] said to Hagar…'From where (אי מזה) have you come, and to where do you go?"	*3:9 "And Yahweh God called to the human and said, "Where are you (איכה)*
16:10 "And the angel of Yahweh said to her [Hagar]: 'I will great multiply (הרבה ארבה) your seed… You are pregnant (הרה), will give birth (ילד) to a son."	*3:17 "To the woman he said, 'I will greatly multiply (הרבה ארבה) your grief and pregnancy (הריונך), and in grief you will give birth (ילד)"*

In this analogy, Abram and Sarai's actions are set on analogy to both Genesis 6:1-4 and 3:1-9

- Hagar // the tree of knowing good and bad // the daughters of humanity
- Sarai // Eve // the rebel sons of God
- Abram // Adam

Jacob the snake in Genesis 25

20 and Isaac was a son of forty years
a when he took Rebekah,
b the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram,
b' the sister of Laban the Aramean,
a' to be his wife.

21 a and *Isaac petitioned Yahweh*
b on behalf of his wife, because she was barren;
a' and *Yahweh was petitioned by him*
b' and Rebekah his wife conceived.
22 and they struck one another, the sons within her,
and she said, "If it is so, why then am I?"
and she went to inquire of Yahweh.
23 and Yahweh said to her,

*a Two nations are in **your womb**;*
*a' and two peoples will be separated from **your body**;*
b and one people shall be stronger than the other;
b' and the older shall serve the younger."

24 and when her days were fulfilled to give birth,
behold, there were twins within her womb.
25 a and the first came out red (אדם),
b all over like a hairy garment (שער)
c and they named him Esau (עשו).
26 a' and afterward his brother came out
b' and his hand was grabbing the heel (עקב) of Esau,
c' and he called his name Jacob (יעקב);

and Isaac was a son of sixty years
when she gave birth to them.

What is the only other text in the Hebrew Bible that describes one character doing something to the "heel" (עקב) of another?

Genesis 3:14-15

And Yahweh God said to the snake...
"And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed;
he shall strike you on the head,
and you shall strike him on the heel (עקב)."

The very next narrative about Jacob shows him deceiving his brother with food in order to usurp his place as the first born. Just saying...

Rebekah and Jacob deceive Isaac and Esau: Genesis 27

27:1-5 Isaac instructs Esau to prepare food to receive the blessing
- 27:1 "And Isaac called for Esau his older son..."

27:6-17 Rebekah instructs Jacob to prepare food to steal Esau's blessing
- 27:5-6 "And Rebekah heard when Isaac spoke (בדבר) to Esau his son...
and she said to Jacob her son, "Behold..."
- 27:8 "And now, my son, listen to my voice...go now to the flock and take for me..."
- 27:15 "She took the clothes of Esau her older son...and clothed Jacob her younger son"

27:18-29 Jacob deceives his father Isaac to steal the blessing
- 27:18-19 "And he went to his father, and he said, 'Who are you my son?'"
"I am Esau your firstborn" ... "arise and eat...so that you may bless me!"

Poem of Blessing - 27:27-29

27:30-40 Esau begs his father Isaac to give him a blessing
- 27:31-32 "And he went to his father, and said, 'Let my father arise and eat so that you may bless me!"
"Who are you my son?" "I am Esau your firstborn"

Poem of non-Blessing 27:39-40

27:41-45 Rebekah instructs Jacob to flee to Paddan Aram
- 27:42 "And it was reported to Rebekah the words (דבר) of Esau her older son
and she sent and called to Jacob her smaller son and said, "Behold..."
- 27:43 "And now, my son, listen to my voice, arise and flee for yourself"

27:46-28:5 Isaac blesses and instructs Jacob to go to Aram to get married
- 28:1 "And Isaac called for Jacob..."

Narrative analogies between Genesis 27 and Genesis 3

Genesis 27	Genesis 1-3
27:1 "And [Isaac's] eyes were weak/dim to be seeing"	*Gen 3: The humans' eyes are "opened" because of the forbidden food.*
27:4, 7 Isaac requests that Esau bring fresh game "that I may eat (אכ״ל), on which account (בעבור) my being will bless you (בר״ך) before I die (מו״ת)	*3:6 "and she took and she ate (אכל)"* *3:17 "cursed (ארורה) is the ground on account of you (בעבורך)"*
27:8 "And now my son, listen to my voice (שמ״ע בקול) to what I am commanding (צו״ה) you.	*3:17 "And to the man he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice (שמע + בקול) of your wife and ate of the tree that I commanded (צוה) you..."*
27:9 "Go now to the flock and take (לק״ח) for me two young goats, good ones (טוב)...that he may eat (אכ״ל) and bless (בר״ך) you before his death (מות)	*3:6 "And she took (לקח) from its fruit and she ate (אכל)..."*
27:12-13 "Perhaps I will be in his eyes (עיניו) like one who makes a mockery, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing (קללה ולא ברכה). And she said, "May your curse (קללה) be upon me my son. Just listen to my voice (שמ״ע בקול), and go and take (לק״ח) for me."	*3:17 "And to the man he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice (שמע + בקול) of your wife and ate of the tree that I commanded (צוה) you...cursed (ארורה) is the ground on account of you."*
27:14-15 "And he went and he took (ויקח) and he brought to his mother...And she took (ותקח) the clothes of Esau her son, the bigger one, the desirable ones (החמדת) which were with her...	*3:6 "And the woman saw that the tree was good for eating, and desirable (תאוה) to the eyes, and desirable (נחמד) for becoming wise, and she took (לקח)..."*
27:15 "And she clothed (ותלבש) Jacob her son, the little one, and with the skins (ערת) of the goats she clothed (והלבישה) over his hands...	*3:21 "And God made for the man and his wife garments of skin (עור) and he clothed them (וילבשם)"*
27:17 "And she gave (ותתן) the tasty foods and the bread which she made into the hand of Jacob her son."	*3:6 "and she took from its fruit and she ate and she gave (ותתן) to her husband and he ate."*
27:33 "Who then is the one who hunted game and brought to and I ate from all (ואכל מכל)..."	*2:16 "from every/all (מכל) tree in the garden you may eat (תאכל); cf. also 3:1-2*
27:35-36 "Your brother came in deceit (במרמה), and he took (ויקח) your blessing." And [Esau] said, "Isn't he rightly called heel/deceiver (יעקב), for he heeled/deceived (עק״ב) me two times! He took (לק״ח) my birthright (בכרה), and he took (לק״ח) my blessing (ברכה).	*3:13 "And she said "the snake deceived me (נשא) and I ate"*
27:43 "And now my son, listen to my voice (שמ״ע בקול)	*3:17 "because you have listened to the voice (+ שמע בקול) of your wife"*

27:45 "Dwell [in Aram] for a few days, until… he forgets that which you have done to him (את אשר עשית לו)	*3:13 "and God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?" (מה זאת עשית)* *3:14 "And God said to the snake, 'Because you have done this thing (כי עשית זאת)…"*
28:3 "May El Shaddai bless you and make your fruitful and multiply	*1:28 "And God blessed them and said be fruitful and multiply"*

Genesis 30-31: Rachel twice replays Sarah's/Eve's sin to gain a child.

- Rachel // Sarah // Eve (30:1-6)

Gen 3:6 - "And the woman (האשה) saw (ותרא) that the tree was good for eating…and she took (ותקח) from its fruit and she ate and she gave (ותתן) also to her husband (אישה) with her and he ate."
Gen 3:17 "And God said to the man, "Because you have listened to the voice (שמע + לקול) of your wife…"

Sarah and Hagar: Genesis 16	Rachel and Bilhah
Gen 16:1 - And Sarai…had not given birth for Abram…	*30:1 - And Rachel saw (ותרא) that she had not given birth for Jacob and she was jealous of her sister*
16:2 - And Sarai said… "Behold (הנה), Yahweh has bound me from giving birth. Please go into my slave (שפחה). Perhaps I can be built up from her (בנה + מן)." And Abraham listened to her voice (שמע + בקול)	*30:2 "And Jacob said, 'Am I in the place of God who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"* *30:3 - "Behold (הנה), my maid-slave (אמתי) Bilhah, go into her and she will give birth upon my knees, and I will be built up, me too, from her (בנה + מן)*
16:3 - And Sarai took…her slave (שפחה)…and she gave her to (ותתן ל–) Abram…as a wife (לאשה), and he went into her…	*30:4 - And she gave to him (ותתן לו) Bilhah her slave (שפחה) as a wife (לאשה) and he went into her*
16:4 "And [Hagar] became pregnant and when she saw (ותרא) she was pregnant, her mistress was cursed in her eyes.	*30:5 And [Bilhah] became pregnant…*
16:11 "Behold you are pregnant, and you will bear a son and call his name 'Yishmael' (ישמעאל) for Yahweh has listened (שמע) to your suffering.	*30:6 And Rachel said "God has judged for my and also he has listened to my voice (שמע + בקול)…"*

Rachel's actions with Jacob are an intensified replay of Sarah's actions with Abraham, and a contrast with Rebekah from 25:21.

- Sarai is barren and she schemes her own way to produce the promised seed, accusing Abraham when the plan doesn't work.
- Rebekah is barren, but Isaac intercedes for her and Yahweh restores fertility to her womb.
- Rachel is barren, accuses her husband for not giving her sons, and then schemes her own way (identical to Sarai's) to produce seed.

This story makes it clear that the book of Genesis is arranged as a sequence of generations, each feuding over the possession of abundance, blessing, and royal power.

Divinely Chosen latecomer	**Non-chosen early-comer**
Adam & Eve	beast of the field (= snake)
Abel/Seth	Cain
Shem	Japheth (also Ham the younger)
Abram	Nahor, Haran
Isaac	Ishmael
Jacob	Esau
Joseph	The brothers
Judah	Reuben, Simeon, Levi

Some later iterations of the Genesis 3 pattern:

Joshua 6-7: Achan's sin at Jericho

Josh 6	*The victory at Jericho: For six days they march and on the 7th day they march 7 times and shout // Genesis 1: Six days of work + rest of the 7th day*
6:18-19	*Joshua to the people:"Only watch yourselves, don't take any of the dedicated plunder, lest you take from the dedicated plunder and place it in the camp of Israel...and bring trouble (עכר) to it. All the silver and gold and articles (כלים) of bronze and iron are holy to Yahweh."*
7:1	*"But the sons of Israel committed treachery with the dedicated plunder, and Achan, the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, he took from the dedicated plunder."*

7:11	*"Israel has sinned, and they have broken my covenant which I commanded them, and also they have taken from the dedicated things and stolen, and also they have lied and placed it in their baggage (lit. "articles" בכליהם).*
7:19-21	*And Joshua said to Achan, "... Tell me please, what have you done?! Don't conceal it from me. And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Truly, I have sinned against Yahweh God of Israel. Such and such have I done: I saw (ראה) among the plunder a cloak of Shinar (אדרת שנער), a good one (טוב), and two hundred shekels of silver... and I desired them (חמד), and I took them (לקח) and look, they are hidden in the ground in the middle of my tent, and the silver is under it."*

2 Samuel 11: David and Bathsheba

2 Samuel 11:2-3

*11:2 "And it came about at the time of evening, that David arose from his bed and walked about on the roof of the house of the king, **and he saw a woman** bathing on the roof, and the woman **was good of sight, very**. And David sent and he inquired about the woman...and he sent messengers **and he took her** and he went into her...*

And on and on... through the rest of the Hebrew Bible

A starter's bibliography on Narrative Analogy:

- Robert Alter, The Art of the Biblical Narrative, ch. 3.
- Yair Zakovitch, "Through the Looking Glass: Reflection/ Inversions of Genesis Stories in the Bible," in Biblical Interpretation, volume 1 (1993), pp. 139-152.
- Brian Sigmon, Between Eden and Egypt: Echoes of the Garden Narrative in the Story of Joseph and His Brothers (Unpublished Dissertation, Marquette Univ., 2009).
- Moshe Garsiel, The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies, and Parallels.
- Jonathan Grossman, "Dynamic Analogies in Esther," Vetus Testamentum volume 59 (2009), 394-414.
- Joshua Berman, Narrative Analogy in the Hebrew Bible (2004).

Narrative Analogy and Inner-Biblical Hyperlinks

Citation: An explicitly marked quotation from an earlier biblical text.

- Example: Joshua 8:30-35, cross-referencing and quoting Deuteronomy 27:4-6

Allusion: A non-explicit form of reference to an another text, marked by multiple conspicuous words or images from a known source text. In this case, the full meaning of the text will be diminished if the reader fails to recognize the implied reference to the earlier text.

- Example: Numbers 14:18-19 alluding back to Exodus 34:6-7

Echo: A more subtle technique, which may involve the inclusion of only a single phrase, word or image that alerts the reader to the reference to an another text. The text is fully intelligible to readers who don't recognize the echo, but those who do will experience a "surplus of significance" beyond the face value meaning of the text.

- Example: The "Genesis 3 design pattern" aboveb

Criteria for identifying intertextual Allusions and Hyperlinks [Leonard, "Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions."]

1. Clusters of shared words or phrases
2. Shared language consisting of unique vocabulary
3. Shared language within thematically similar contexts
4. Shared language between units that are united by other literary strategies (similar plot, themes, settings)

Summary Chart

	Citation	Allusion	Echo
Level of Communication	Explicit	Implicit	Subtle
Reader's Comprehension	Assumed	Expected	Hoped for
Technique	Quotation of source text	Key words from source text	Key words, images, themes from source text
	Analogy Parallel design patterns of character, plot, setting, key words Indicating an intended analogy between whole storylines		

The result: ***"Metalepsis"*** — "The literary technique of citing or echoing a small bit of a precursor text in such a way that the reader can grasp the significance of the echo only by recalling or recovering the original context of the echo and reading the two texts in fruitful juxtaposition. The effect of such an intertextual linkage lies in the unstated or suppressed points of correspondence between the two texts... creating a 'cave of resonant signification." — RICHARD B. HAYS, ECHOES OF SCRIPTURE IN THE GOSPELS, 10-11.

- Modern example: On the night of Barack Obama's presidential election victory in 2008, he declared that American citizens could "put their hands on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day." This phrase was an allusion to a famous line of a speech of Martin Luther King Jr., but the new context also signaled a series of adaptations to the new rhetorical setting.

Barack Obama	Martin Luther King Jr.
"Tonight begins our chance to put our hands on the **arc** of history and **bend** it once more toward the hope of a better day."	"The **arc** of the moral universe is long, but it **bends** towards justice.
A word of *exhortation* to recommit one's energies to building a better world, emphasizing the necessity of human agency to enact change.	A word of *assurance* that the civil rights struggle was governed by a larger providential purpose that would prevail.

Later in the speech:

Barack Obama	Martin Luther King Jr.'s Memphis speech on April 4, 1968, the day of his assassination.
"We may not get there in one year or even in one term, but America, I promise you, we as a people will get there."	"I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you.
Obama depicts himself as Joshua the successor to Moses (= King), who will play his part in leading America to the next step towards the promised land.	King was depicting himself as a Moses participating in a new Exodus, passing the baton to Joshua = his listeners.

This is precisely the kind of explicit and more subtle use of a "cultural encyclopedia" that happens in all forms of communication, especially people steeped in traditional literature.

Session 29: Design Patterns in the New Testament

Key Question

What is your main takeaway from this course overall? Or what main questions still remain for you?

Session Quote

"Jesus is both replaying the failure of Adam and Eve, and he's replaying the failure of his ancestors in the desert when they were tested—the wilderness narratives of Exodus and Numbers."

New Testament Examples of Design Patterns

Jesus as the obedient Adam and Israel: Matthew 4:1-4

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the slanderer.
And after he had fasted forty days and forty nights, and he became hungry.
And the tester came and said to Him,
"If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."
But He answered and said,
"It is written,
'A human cannot live on bread only, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.' "

Deuteronomy 8:

*"You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you **in the wilderness these forty years**, that He might humble you, **testing you**, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*
*"He humbled you and **let you be hungry,** and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but a human lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. "Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. "Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. "Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him...*
*"He led you through the great and terrible **wilderness**, with its fiery **serpents** and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. **"In the wilderness** He fed you **manna** which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and **that He might test you,** to do good for you in the end.*

Exodus 16

The Israelites "grumble"
16:3 "Oh that we would have died…in Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat, when we ate bread to fulness."
God will rain "bread from the heavens" for 6 days and then 1 day of rest.
16:4 Yahweh: "I will test them, whether they will walk in my Torah or not"
16:14-15 "In the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp…a thin flake, thin like frost…and the Israelites saw it and said… 'What is it (מן הוא)?

Numbers 11

11:4-5 "The mixed multitude…desired a desire, and turned and wept…and said, "Who will feed us meat?! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt"
11:6-7 "…There's nothing but this manna. Now, the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance had the look of fragrant gum…
11:18b "Yahweh will give you meat and you will eat it."

Genesis 1-3

6 days of divine ordering through God's "word" + 1 day of rest
God's word provides the garden
Humanity is "tested" in the garden about forbidden food by the "snake"

The "snake-crusher" of Genesis 3:15

- Abraham's "seed" who conquers enemies and blesses nations (Gen 12:3, 22:17)
- The messianic star from Jacob: Numbers 24:17
- Joshua vs. the five Canaanite kings (// the 5 kings in Genesis 14): Joshua 10:24
- Jael and Sisera: Judges 4:21 and 5:26-27
- David and Goliath: 1 Samuel 17
- Habakkuk 3:13: In the new exodus, Yahweh will crush the head of the future "Pharaoh"
- Malachi 4:2 - the righteous "trample the wicked under your feet"
- Psalm 68:21: In the new exodus, Yahweh will deliver his people from the region of "snake" (Heb. Bashan), and "crush the head" of his enemies.
- Psalm 110:1, 6 The royal-priest of Jerusalem will strike the head of all rebel powers, until all of God's enemies become his footstool.

Psalm 110:1-2, 5-6

[1]Yahweh says to my lord:
"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."
[2]The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion,
saying, "Rule in the midst of your enemies!"
[5]Yahweh is at your right hand;
he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.
[6]He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead
and crushing the heads of the whole earth.

These texts are all connected in the minds of Jesus and the apostles, which explain their constant allusion to Psalm 110 that activates this entire network of images that all lead back to Genesis 3:15.

1 John 3:7-8

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy what the devil's has accomplished.

1 Corinthians 15:21-27

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet..."

Ephesians 1:19-23

and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

1 Peter 3:21-22

and water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand, with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.