

WEDNESDAY 2-25-26



Dr. Brett Dutton



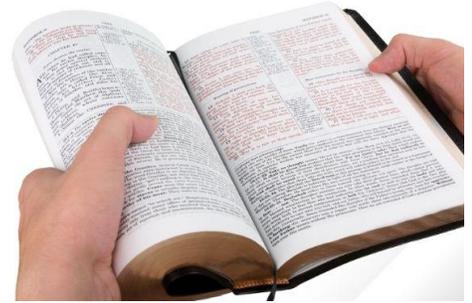
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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR ALL ITS WORTH

EVERYDAY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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Genres of Literature and OT Law

Dr. Brett Dutton (2/25/26)

I. Introduction

A. What is a “genre?”

- a synonym for “variety,” “type,” or “kind”
- Scripture is made up of many different kinds of literature
- we should think of the Bible not as one “book,” but as a “library” of books
- when investigating the biblical text, we must acknowledge the different types of literature in it
- the biblical literature is categorized by its genre

B. Why is genre important?

- each genre has unique principles of interpretation that must be employed
- we cannot interpret the Psalms in the same way as Galatians
- the form, context, and purpose of each genre are different
- to properly interpret a passage, we must first identify its genre
- then we must utilize the interpretive tools unique to that genre (different tools for different jobs)
- each type of literature has its own principles of interpretation and purpose

II. Old Testament Law

A. Scope

- 1) The *Torah* consists of five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
- 2) Although the Hebrew word *torah* means “law” or “instruction,” within the *Torah*, only certain sections contain actual law code.
- 3) Four major collections:
 - a) the Covenant Code (Exodus 20:22-23:33)
 - b) the Deuteronomistic Code (Deuteronomy 12-26)
 - c) the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26)
 - d) the Priestly Code (Exodus 25-31; 34:29-Leviticus 16; parts of Numbers)
- 4) Five distinct types:
 - a) criminal law—defines offenses against God and the Israelite community
 - b) civil law—governs private disputes between Israelite citizens
 - c) family law—governs family relationships
 - d) cultic law—gives instructions for Israelite feasts and festivals
 - e) charitable law—provisions for humanitarian aid¹

B. Categories of Law

1) Apodictic (“absolute”)

- this English word is derived from the Greek word *apodeiktikos*
- literally means “shown away from doubt”
- practically, it means “proved with certainty”
- these are unconditional, direct commands that are true in every circumstance
- they do not allow for any exceptions
- they are often phrased using “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not”
- “Do _____...” or “Do not _____...” (positive vs. negative)

¹This list is summarized from C. J. H. Wright, *An Eye for An Eye: The Place of Old Ethics Today* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983), 153-59.

- best known example in the OT: The Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21)
- the demands are of a general nature and sweeping in tone
- because of their straightforward tone, these laws are grammatically simple (2 words)
- the purpose of these laws was to give a broad overview of how the Israelites were to behave in their relationship with God and with other human beings
- as such, not every situation is addressed in these laws
- OT apodictic laws do not have many counterparts in other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cultures (and why would they?)
- some exceptions can be found in the Code of Hammurabi and the Laws of Eshnunna

2) Casuistic (“case-by-case”)

- derived from the Latin word *casus*, or “case”
- these laws are much more specific in tone
- in contrast to apodictic law, casuistic law is precise and carefully defines situations, causes, and outcomes (see below)
- in most cases, they are conditional and circumstantial
- OT casuistic law usually addresses civil or criminal cases, not spiritual ones
- they often use “if...then” language
- because of their detailed nature, casuistic laws are more grammatically complex than apodictic laws
- the majority of OT Law is casuistic in nature
- this type of law was extremely common in the ANE and can be found in the law codes of numerous other cultures

If men have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but remains in bed, if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished; he shall only pay for his loss of time, and shall take care of him until he is completely healed.
(Exodus 21:18-19—NASB; underlines added)

3) The Sermon on the Mount

- Jesus blended these types of laws during his teaching in Matthew 5-7
- “You are the light of the world...Let your light shine before men...” (5:14-16)
(positive apodictic)
- “do not be worried about your life” (6:25) (negative apodictic)
- “If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, (then) let him have your coat also.”
(5:40) (casuistic)

C. Interpretive Models for OT Law

1) OT Law is still **fully valid** and should be faithfully kept.

- regardless of what the NT states about the Law, it should still be followed to the letter
- there are belief systems, such as the Amish and some Orthodox Jews, that adhere to this
- for most, however, this is both logically and practically impossible
- and what does this say about the role of internal faith versus external rules?
- see Jeremiah 31:33-34

2) OT Law is **partially valid** and only parts of it should be kept.

a) A law is still valid unless the NT specifically **Cancels** it.

- Mark 7:19—Jesus declared all foods clean, canceling the dietary laws
- Leviticus 19:28—“Christians should not get tattooed.”
- What about Leviticus 19:27, which forbids cutting sideburns and beards?

- What about 19:19 that forbids wearing clothing of two kinds of material?
- The NT does not revoke these, so consistency demands that we observe them.

b) A law is not valid unless the NT **repeats** it.

- This assumes that most of the OT Law does not apply to Christians.
- Only those laws that reappear in the NT are binding.
- Ex: Matt 22:40//Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 (love God and your neighbor)
- What about in those instances where there is no specific reference?
- If practicing sorcery is forbidden in OT Law (Deut. 18:10), and this is not repeated in the NT, is it acceptable?

3) OT Law is **informational** for NT believers but, for the most part, **not binding**.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16)

- because Jesus ushered in the “new covenant” (Luke 22:20), Christians are no longer bound by the OT Law
- What about Jesus’ statement that he did not come to abolish the Law? (see Matt. 5:17)

*“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”
(Matthew 5:17—underline added)*

- Jesus was the completion of *all* the OT, including, but not limited to, the law
- flip the word “fulfill” to “fill full,” meaning that Jesus was the fullest expression of what the spirit and intent of the Law was

Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Galatians 3:24-25)

D. Interpreting Law

1) Realize to whom the Law was originally addressed.

- in most cases, it is obvious that the Law was not written for NT believers
- the majority of the Law was given specifically to Israel in their cultural context
- historical and literary context will help

2) Realize that in several instances, Jesus and/or the NT revoked the OT Law.

- Mark 7:19—dietary laws
- Hebrews 9:1-10:25—sacrificial laws
- Galatians 5:2-6—no more need for circumcision

3) Realize that in several instances, Jesus affirmed and/or expanded the OT Law.

- Matthew 5:21-37—“you have heard it said...but I tell you.”
- Jesus’ ethic requires *more* of His followers than the OT Law does because Jesus was more concerned with the heart, not just actions
- reference is made to every one of the 10 Commandments in the NT, whether in direct quotation or allusion

- 4) Try to understand the cultural significance of the OT law you are investigating.
- Leviticus 19:19, 28 (practices to separate Israel from other nations)
 - ask the question, “*WHY* was this law given to Israel in the first place?”
 - example: many of the foods forbidden in Leviticus 11 were objects of worship in other cultures or are naturally unhealthy

“For I am the Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:45)

- 5) Be consistent in interpreting the OT Law.
- avoid picking and choosing which laws to follow
 - if you choose to follow and apply one law, you should be consistent and apply them all (best of luck to you!)
- 6) Search for the intention (“spirit”) of each individual law.
- Why would God not allow Israel to cut themselves or get tattooed?
 - What is the “timeless truth” that is communicated by the law?
 - in most cases, it can be traced back to the truth that the Lord wanted Israel to be “holy,” set apart from the other nations and their practices
- 7) Determine what the law states about human nature or the nature of God.
- Why would the Lord need to provide a law governing...?
 - What does it say about human beings that they would do this?
 - What does it say about God that He did not want His people doing this?

Old Testament Narrative

Dr. Brett Dutton (2/25/26)

I. Introduction to Old Testament Narrative

A. Scope

- narrative is the most common genre of literature in Scripture
- approximately 40% of the OT is narrative
- according to Fee and Stuart, almost all OT books (with the exception of some Wisdom and Latter Prophets) have some form of narrative
- OT Narrative can be some of the most “charming and alarming” of all literature types (Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 261)
- while there are small portions of the NT that can be called “narrative,” most of the NT (with the exception of the book of Acts), consists of other genres

B. Definition of Narrative: a historical record of God’s interaction with His creation, with Israel, or with other nations

C. Two strands of “history”

1. The actual events that occurred
2. The written record (interpretation) of those events (1 Ki. 22:48 // 2 Chr. 20:37—see below)

D. Purpose of Narrative Material

1. Primary: revelation of God to his people
2. Secondary: record of events

II. Types of OT Narrative (from KBH, *Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 261-274)

A. Reports—a brief, self-contained narration, usually in third person, about a single event, situation, or person in the past

1) Types

- a) anecdote—a report of an event or experience in a person’s life (1 Kings 19:19-21)
- b) battle report—recounts a military clash and its outcome (Num. 21:21-24)
- c) construction report—reports of an important building, such as the Tabernacle (see Exod. 36:8-37:16) or the Temple (1 Kings 6-7)
- d) dream report—such as Joseph (Gen. 37:5-11) or Pharaoh (Gen. 41:1-8)
- e) epiphany report—reports an experience when God or a messenger of the Lord appeared to someone with a message, such as Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 17:1-21), Moses (Exod. 3:3-12), or Gideon (Judges 6:11-24)
- f) historical stories—written with more detail than a simple report, including dialogue and dramatic literary touches (Saul: 1 Sam. 11:1-11; Rehoboam: 1 Kings 12:1-20)
- g) history—a lengthy document written on a particular subject or historical era (such as the entire books of Kings and Chronicles)
- h) memoir—a report written in first person (Ezra 7:27-9:15; Nehemiah 1:1-7:73)

2) Guidelines for interpretation

- a) Since these reports usually focus on a factual account, it is important not to try and turn these accounts into devotional descriptions.
- b) As reports make their points indirectly, the key questions are, “What is this text attempting to say? What message is it trying to convey?”

2) Guidelines for interpretation (continued)

- c) Discovering the historical context surrounding the composition of a report will help identify the purpose of its writing. For example, Kings was written during the Exile to help the Hebrews understand why the Exile happened. Chronicles, on the other hand, was written after the Exile to help the returnees understand how and why their worship in Jerusalem needed to remain pure.

B. Hero Stories

1) Types

- a) individual stories (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Judges, etc.)
- b) epic stories—stories of a hero told in greater length and with more details about the individual's or nation's exploits (conquest, kingdom, warfare, dominion)
- c) cosmic stories (Genesis 1-11)
- d) ancestral epics (Genesis 12-36)
- e) prophet stories (Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Jonah)

2) Guidelines for interpretation

- a) Since these stories focus on the life of an individual, the key questions are these:
 - i. "How does the hero's life model a relationship with God and other people?"
 - ii. "Are the traits in the hero's life to be emulated or avoided?"
 - iii. "What lessons can be learned from how the hero acted or did not act?"
- b) Ask what values (or anti-values) the hero represents, such as Abraham with faith or Samson with selfishness.
- c) When applying principles from stories about these heroes, because they were unique individuals chosen for specific purposes, it is better to keep the application points broad and general. (For instance, it is better to see David's defeat of Goliath as a call to be bold and brave rather than the Lord "slaying our giants.")

C. Comedies—a story that has a happy ending or an unexpected, dramatic reversal

1) Elements

- a) disguises (Jacob in Gen. 27; Tamar in Gen. 38; Joseph in Gen. 45)
- b) mistaken identity (Esther)
- c) providential circumstances
- d) surprising turns-of-events
- e) escape from disaster
- f) oftentimes, there is a marriage, feast, reconciliation, or victory

2) Examples

- a) Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25-32)
- b) Joseph (37-45)
- c) Job
- d) Esther

3) Guidelines for interpretation

- a) Trace how tragedy turns into triumph. Follow the story's crisis, chaos, and the turning point, and the climax.
- b) Focus on how the characters are developed, looking at both the heroes and the villains of the story and how their character traits determine their victory or demise.
- c) Determine whether the role of God in the story is a direct one or an indirect one.
- d) Ask what the story's main themes are.
 - i. Joseph's statement in Genesis 50:20— "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

- d) Ask what the story's main themes are. (continued)
 - ii. Job in Job 42:3—"Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."
 - iii. the Narrator in Esther 9:1—"on the day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain mastery over them, *it was turned to the contrary* so that the Jews themselves gained mastery over those who hated them." (emphasis added)
- e) Application should be made based on the story's main themes.
 - i. Joseph—God can use even bad decisions to accomplish His will.
 - ii. Job—Not all suffering is the direct result of a person's sin, and ultimately, only the Lord understands why it occurs.

III. The Nature of OT Narratives

A. Characteristics of Narrative

1. Selective in details

- as it would be impossible to record every single element of a story, many times, what we might consider important is not included
- as difficult as it might be, we must focus on what the author HAS given us instead of what he has NOT given us
- From where did Cain's wife arrive? Who would make Cain afraid?
- Who was the Pharaoh during the Exodus, and when did the Exodus occur?
- the birth of Moses' siblings is not recorded

2. Compression of time

- large chunks of historical periods are skipped or condensed
- Moses' middle 40 years (Exodus 2?)
- Israel's 40 years in the wilderness (not all of Numbers 14-35)
- Solomon's childhood?
- the Exile in Babylon?

3. Concurrent events are recorded one after the other

- this is especially evident in the books from 1 Kings 12 to the end of 2 Kings
- after the death of King Solomon and the split of Israel into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, Kings tells the stories of both kingdoms simultaneously
- without the luxury of a "split screen," the reader is left to untangle the stories

4. The author's intention determined the inclusion of details

- this is true with **any** recorded history
- even Herodotus, the "father of history," contended that there is no such thing as a "complete history"
- every author of every history makes editorial choices
- the destruction of Jehoshaphat's navy in 1 Kings 22:48 and 2 Chronicles 20:37
- King Manasseh's capture in 2 Kings 21 and repentance in 2 Chronicles 33

B. General Principles for Interpreting Narrative Passages

1. In general, narratives do not directly teach doctrine; they illustrate doctrine that has already been given. (Ex.: David and Bathsheba//Exodus 20:13-14)
2. Not all narratives give a mandate for personal action. (Ex: Judah and Tamar in Gen. 38)
 - this is why understanding historical and cultural background is so important!
3. The intention of the author was the primary criterion that he/she used to choose material to include or exclude in the account.
4. Remembering the overarching purpose of narrative (see above) is key to interpreting it correctly.