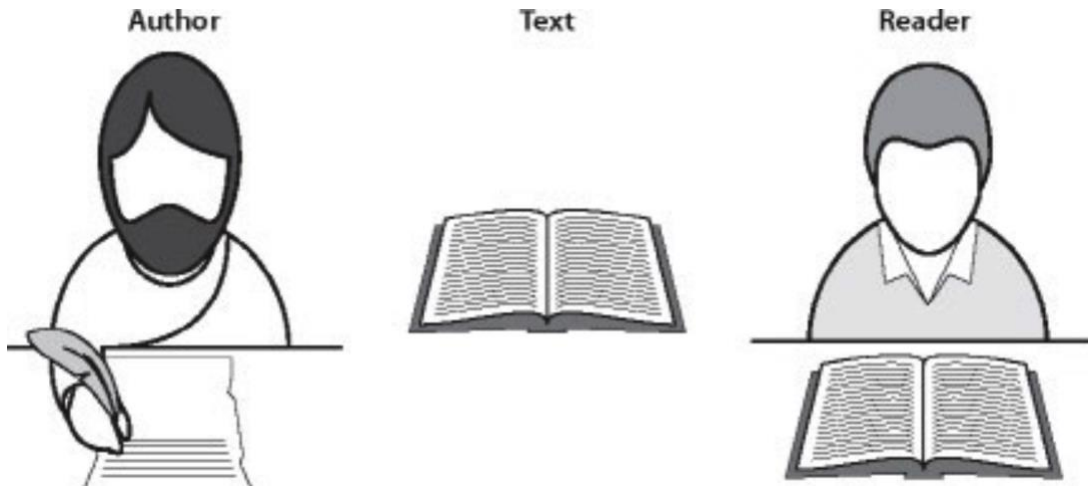


SOME INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

WHERE DOES MEANING RESIDE?

In all communication there must be present three basic components:



All three have to be present if there is communication that takes place. *Now who or what it is that determines the meaning of a text?*

Text


Reader

Author

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SOME TOOLS YOU NEED TO INTERPRET . . . NARRATIVES

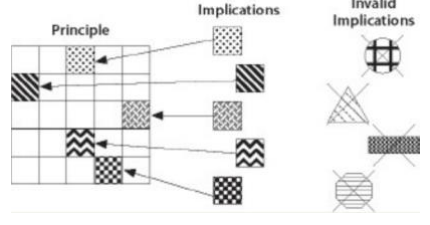
□ **CLARIFYING THE TERMS WE USE**

□ **Meaning**

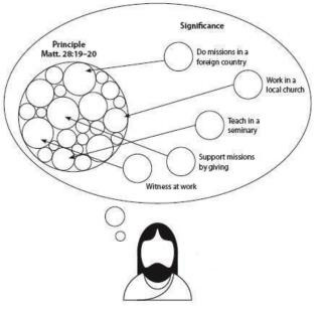


The meaning of a text is the principle that an author consciously willed to convey by the words (shareable symbols) used

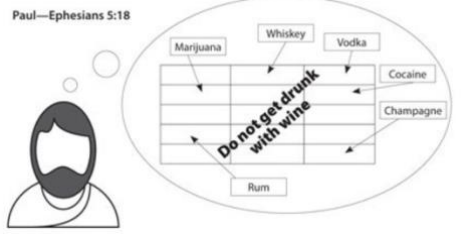
□ **Implications**



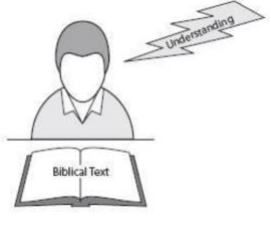
□ **Significance**



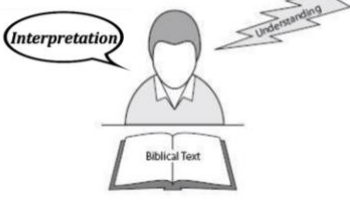
□ **Implications**



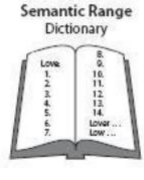
□ **Understanding**



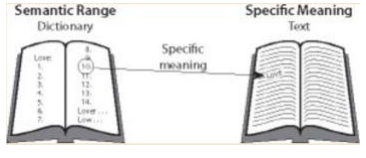
□ **Interpretation**



□ **Semantic Range**

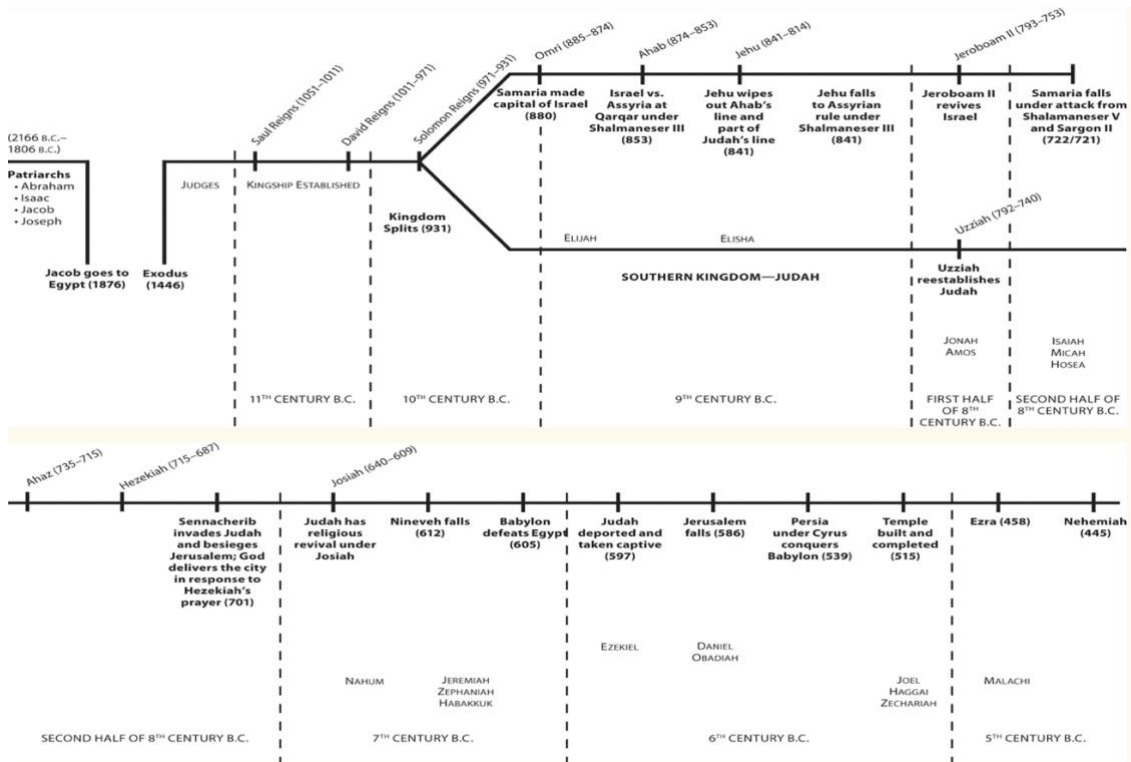


□ **Specific Meaning**



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□ **ONE BIG STORY: FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION**



Old Testament Outline

- AYN_Old_Testament_Outline.pdf
- AYN_Harmony_Of_The_Gospels.pdf
- AYN_Outline_Of_The_Acts_Of_The_Apostles.pdf

[provided by Day One Publications]

GRAPPLING WITH OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES

□ **KNOW THE SETTING**

Every narrative has a *setting*. Historical narratives are set in a particular time and place. Hence the background is important in understanding the narrative and its meaning.

- The Immediate *Setting*

- The Wider *Setting*

The Whole-Bible *Setting*

Checklist

What comes before this story?

What comes after it?

How is the meaning of this story affected by its own immediate surrounding context?

Is it before or after God's promise to Abraham?

Is it before or after the Mosaic Covenant?

Is it before or after Israel settled in Canaan?

Is it before or after the division of kingdom after Solomon?

Is it before or after the exile?

IDENTIFY THE CHARACTERS (MAJOR & MINOR)

Every story is about somebody, and sometimes it is more than one person! Therefore, we need to identify:

the central character (three-dimensional) of the story:

the secondary characters (two-dimensional) of the story:
[they either oppose or support the central character]

the supportive characters (one-dimensional) to complete the story:

In addition, we must take note of how the central and secondary characters are portrayed:

- What did they do (good or bad)?

- Why did they do it (motives)?

Checklist

*Is there any contradiction between what a character says with
what the narrator said about him/her?*

Is there conflict between the characters? Who can you trust?

How does the words of the character reveal the thinking and motives of the character?

How does what the character said indicate what the narrator wants to convey to you?

Is the character both “the good guy” and “the bad guy”?

Ultimately, God is the Main and Central Character! What can we learn about God from this story?

Checklist

How is God involved in this event or series of events?

Where does this story fit into what God has been doing so far in Israel?

How does this event affect what God does later in Israel’s history?

What do I learn from this story about the character and purpose of God?

How should I respond to God in the light of what this story reveals about Him?

□ ***UNDERSTAND THE PLOT***

Every story has a plot. Something has to *happen*. Something has to *make things happen* in such a way that things actually change from one situation to another. So we ask:

- (i) What happens in this story?
- (ii) How does one thing lead to another?

While every story has a unique plot, most share the following common parts:

- An opening situation
- A problem/conflict
- A process of trying to overcome the problem/conflict
- A climax (problem/conflict reaches its worst)
- The resolution (problem/conflict is dealt with/resolved)
- A closing situation

Note that a good plot is likely to include:

- Suspense
- Surprise
- Humour

Checklist

What happens in the plot of the story?

How has the narrator woven it all together so that it reaches a satisfying conclusion?

What is the sequence of the scenes in the story?

Can you locate some (if not all) of the six elements of a plot listed in the previous page?

If you can, write out a summary of the plot of the story. This will greatly aid you grasp what the story means.

□ **LOCATE AND OBSERVE THE NARRATOR**

Every story has a storyteller. We may not know his name but his role is very important. As we work our way through the story, we need to be asking: *Why did the narrator choose to tell this story and why did he do it in this way?*

Why did the narrator choose to tell this story?

He could have chosen to tell another story instead. By choosing this story, he has decided to omit many others. Realizing this, we need to find out the reason behind his choice. And remembering that God is behind the storyteller, we realize that he included this story because God wanted it to be included!

Some reasons why certain stories are included:

- They are foundational historical events
- They illustrate what faith and obedience may involve
- They demonstrate what suffering and cost may be demanded of a life of faith
- They show what are the consequences of sin and rebellion

Why did he do it in this way?

There are many ways one can tell a story, and from the methods chosen, we are begin to see the main point of what the storyteller is seeking to convey.

Some of the methods include:

- How he begins and ends the story [Introductions and Conclusions]

- The comment he makes throughout the story [Authorial Comments]
- The summary statements he provides [Authorial Summaries]
- The repetitions he employs [Repeating Key Themes]
- The space he gives and the emphasis he underlines [Proportion and Emphasis]
- The speeches he reports [Dialogue or Direct Discourses]

Checklist

*Has the narrator built suspense and surprise into his story?
Why is he doing it?*

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*What does the narrator emphasize, and how does he do it?
(Look for repetitions of words and phrases)*

*How does the narrator pace his story?
Does he cover a lot of time in a few verses,
and then pause to cover a short period in a very long and intensive narrative?
Why is he doing that?*

Does the narrator leave you gaps to fill in by your own imagination?

Does the narrator build in great contrasts between one story and another?

Does the narrator tell the story in a way that echoes other stories in the Bible?

DON'T WALK AWAY UNAFFECTED

Every story needs a listener or reader, and that's you and me! The story was not told to entertain but to expose and edify. A classic Biblical example is that of Nathan telling a story to David in **2 SAMUEL 12** with the aim of finally saying to David, "*You are the man!*"

In other words, a proper reading of the *narratives* in the Bible must lead us to ask ourselves questions like these:

- How am I implicated in this story?
[If I am a child of God, then this story is the story of "my" people. Having now read the story of "my" people, how should I respond to my God?]

- Where do I fit into God's *whole story* in the light of *this particular* Bible story?

- How does this story help me in my commitment to be a follower of Jesus and obey His command to make disciples of all nations?

- How does this story challenge me to participate faithfully and effectively in God's big story in my generation?

- What does this story teach me about the God who has saved me and made me part of His people to share in His mission?

- How does this passage point me to Jesus Christ?

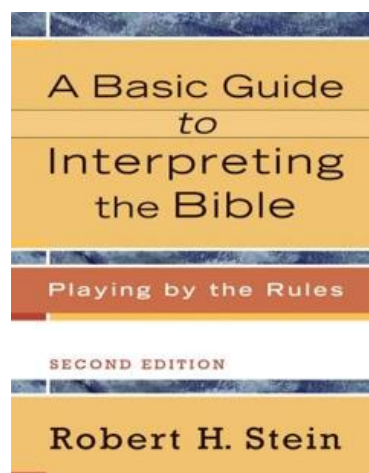
GROUP EXERCISE

Read **GENESIS 22:1-19**.

Grapple with this narrative using what you have learnt from *KNOW THE SETTING, IDENTIFY THE CHARACTERS (MAJOR & MINOR), UNDERSTAND THE PLOT, LOCATE AND OBSERVE THE NARRATOR* and *DON'T WALK AWAY UNAFFECTED*

Share the fruits of your exercise with the rest of us

Main References



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