

Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

Facilitator Guide



DATE _____	Session 1	_____	Session 11	_____	Session 21
_____	Session 2	_____	Session 12	_____	Session 22
_____	Session 3	_____	Session 13	_____	Session 23
_____	Session 4	_____	Session 14	_____	Session 24
_____	Session 5	_____	Session 15	_____	Session 25
_____	Session 6	_____	Session 16	_____	Session 26
_____	Session 7	_____	Session 17	_____	Session 27
_____	Session 8	_____	Session 18	_____	Session 28
_____	Session 9	_____	Session 19	_____	Session 29
_____	Session 10	_____	Session 20		

About This Guide

The Bible is communal literature, designed to be read and studied by groups of people learning to live within its story. BibleProject Classroom seeks to model this communal approach to Bible study and provide individuals and communities with the opportunity to participate. We designed this guide to support folks leading others through a BibleProject class. So grab a friend or gather with your small group to journey together!

Suggested Formats

To get started, we recommend picking a regular meeting rhythm. While many groups find that weekly meetings work well, every group is different. There's no single "right" way to facilitate this class, so choose what works best for your group. Here are a couple of possible formats.

FORMAT 1 Watch Together	FORMAT 2 Watch Individually
1. Welcome Start by welcoming the group and creating space for connection. This might look like sharing a meal, doing a brief icebreaker, or opening in prayer—whatever helps your group relax and feel united.	1. Watch Before each meeting, everyone watches the assigned session(s) on their own. This can be helpful for groups that would like more time for discussion or for group members who prefer to watch the sessions at their own pace.
2. Watch Most groups choose to watch about an hour of content at a time (1-2 sessions). We've found that connecting to a larger screen (e.g., via cable or AirPlay) is often helpful. Some groups pause for reflection and discussion throughout the session.	2. Welcome Start by welcoming the group and creating space for connection. This might look like sharing a meal, doing a brief icebreaker, or opening in prayer—whatever helps your group relax and feel united.
3. Discuss Reserve some time at the end of your meeting (we recommend 30 minutes-1 hour) to discuss questions from this guide or from your group. It's also a great time to re-read and meditate on any passages covered during the session.	3. Discuss Discuss questions from this guide or from your group. It's also a great time to re-read and meditate on any passages covered during the session.

Tips for Facilitators

Create space for connection and questions

You don't have to be a Bible nerd to be a facilitator! As a facilitator, your role is to guide the group's discussion rather than to teach the content. We try to model curiosity and humility, inviting questions and encouraging deep meditation on the biblical text, rather than rushing to interpretation and application.

We want to build a community where our unique perspectives help us see the bigger picture together, finding unity in our diversity, and where everyone feels comfortable enough to voice their real questions, even the messy ones. Rather than reaching for quick fixes, we seek to invite the group to practice holding hard truths in tension, consistently going back to the text to discover what God is revealing through the biblical writers.

A little prep goes a long way

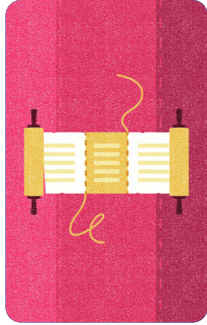
Each session includes Teacher Notes that can be a valuable digital or printed resource for note-taking or reference during your meetings. Many past facilitators have recommended watching the session(s) and reviewing the Teacher Notes for each meeting (or even the entire class!) in advance. This guide contains key takeaways to help your group recall core ideas and reflection questions to seed discussion. Some facilitators also find it helpful to prepare their own discussion questions, tailored to their group, before the meeting. If you are planning to watch the sessions together, consider setting up your viewing plan and testing the technology beforehand.

Finally, take a few minutes at the end of each meeting to confirm the date of the next meeting and which session(s) you'll cover.

Bible Study Guide

Some sessions will dive deep into a specific passage. For those sessions, you can reference this guide to help your group meditate on Scripture together. This Bible study method encourages you to allow your curiosity to drive you, and it honors the Bible as both literary art and divine wisdom.

1. **Read the Passage.** Read the selected passage slowly and with the expectation of discovery.
2. **Collect Questions.** Every question is good. Let's get them all out and write them down. The Bible is inviting us to lean in and be curious.
3. **Watch the Session.** The corresponding video shows the literary design of the passage and encourages deeper discussion.
4. **For discussion time:**
 - **Make Observations.** Continue the conversation! What other details can we observe about the passage? What is the point of repeated words or phrases? What can we see by comparing lines or comparing sections?
 - **Choose One Question and Discuss.** Which one of the questions collected during step 2 does the group find most interesting? Which question seems most aligned with what the passage wants us to ask? Choose one and discuss it.
 - **Examine Hyperlinks.** What other passages in the Bible discuss the same question? What other passages have the same key words or themes? Let's find one or two and compare them.
 - **Discern Wisdom.** What is God's invitation to us as a community through this passage?



WATCH

SESSION 1: What on Earth Is the Hebrew Bible?

Acknowledge and embrace both your own assumptions and the authors' intentions for a given text.

Key Takeaways

- The Hebrew Bible can present particular challenges for different people, such as talking animals, genocide, the portrayal of God, and how to truly apply this ancient text to our modern lives.
- When approaching the Hebrew Bible, it is helpful to be aware of our own assumptions and questions and to pay attention to the intent of the biblical authors.

Reflection Questions

1. What are common experiences you or those in your context have with the Hebrew Bible? When you encounter challenges, what are some ways to work through them?
2. What are current assumptions you hold about the Bible that might be worth examining more deeply?

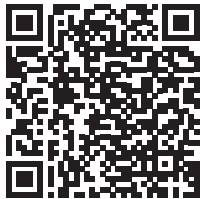


SESSION 2: How Jesus and the Apostles Read Their Bibles

What did Jesus and the apostles think the Hebrew Bible was all about? Discover what they believed to be the main essence of the Hebrew Bible.

Meditate on Scripture

Luke 24:25-27, 44-47



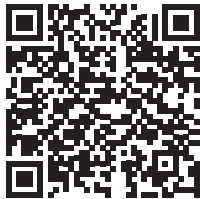
WATCH

Key Takeaways

- Jesus and his first followers portray the Hebrew Bible as a unified collection of wisdom literature that tells a story about a future anointed one who will rescue humanity.
- The Hebrew Bible is about an anointed representative who enters into suffering and death, goes through death and out the other side, and offers new life for humanity.
- By recovering a way of reading these texts that matches the contours of their design intentions, we will learn to read the Hebrew Bible as Jesus did.

Reflection Questions

1. How would you express what Jesus and the apostles thought the Hebrew Bible was all about? And what do you make of this idea? Is it similar to or different from how you have viewed the Hebrew Bible?
2. What does Jesus mean when he says, “Everything . . . that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44 NIV)?
3. How can reading the Bible with an awareness of its design structure help us better understand the Bible’s meaning?



WATCH

SESSION 3: The Ancient Shape of Scriptures

Explore the ancient shape of the Hebrew Bible and why this organization is significant for readers today.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus' Bible was a three-part collection of scrolls called the TaNaK. TaNaK is a designation for the Hebrew Bible taken from the first letter of its three major sections. T stands for Torah, which is Hebrew for "instruction"; N is for Nevi'im, meaning "prophets"; and K is for Ketuvim, meaning "writings."
- The three-part macro design dates to somewhere in the 3rd-2nd century B.C.E. This order is preserved in modern Jewish tradition and is well-attested in Second Temple Jewish texts and the New Testament.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the main differences between the TaNaK arrangement and the Christian arrangement of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament? Could a different arrangement change the meaning of a text in the Bible?
2. How do you see the biblical authors drawing themes together between books by placing them side by side?



WATCH

SESSION 4: Seams Between Texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls

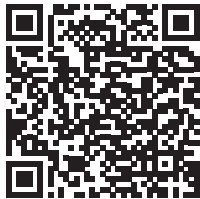
What can the seams of the Dead Sea Scrolls teach us about the Hebrew Bible? Jump in and find out!

Key Takeaways

- The Dead Sea Scrolls preserve the technology of scroll making during the pre-Christian period, revealing what the Hebrew Bible would have looked like in Jesus' synagogue.
- Within the specific technology of the time, the beginning and end of a scroll are two of the most likely places we can look to find intentional clues and hyperlinks.

Reflection Questions

1. How does viewing the Hebrew Bible as a series of scrolls rather than a bound book impact how you understand it?
2. How does the analogy of "seams" between scrolls or collections of scrolls help you understand their interconnectedness? How would you describe the way the biblical authors link together different parts of the biblical collection?



WATCH

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

Trace the seams of the Torah and the Prophets to discover a message about an anticipated future leader.

Key Takeaways

- The final sentences of the Torah and the opening sentences of the Prophets (“Seam One”) anticipate a coming Moses-like prophet who is promised but is yet to come.
- The final sentences of the Prophets and the opening sentences of the Ketuvim (“Seam Two”) anticipate a coming Elijah-like prophet who will call the people back to the Torah and restore the hearts of Israel to Yahweh.

Reflection Questions

1. How do the two transitions—between the Torah and the Prophets, and then between the Prophets and the Ketuvim—build momentum towards a future hoped-for Messiah?
2. How do the seams of the TaNaK describe the kind of leader humanity needs?



WATCH

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

Gain further insight into how Psalms 1 and 2 build onto the portrait of the promised prophet who will rescue humanity.

Meditate on Scripture

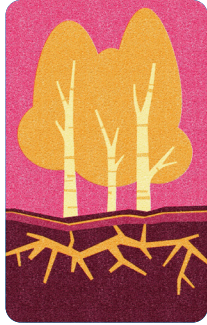
Psalms 1-2

Key Takeaways

- Psalm 1 paints a picture of a righteous human who meditates on the Torah day and night, bringing forth life around him.
- Psalm 2 describes the righteous human of Psalm 1 as 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.
- The portrait of the Spirit of God woven throughout the Bible helps us see the collaboration between God and humans more clearly, revealing how the Bible's origin truly is human and divine together.

Reflection Questions

1. What does Psalm 1 emphasize in its portrait of the righteous one?
2. How does Psalm 2 overlap with Psalm 1, and how does it go beyond it?
3. 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?



WATCH

SESSION 7: An Important Premise: The Inspiration of Scripture

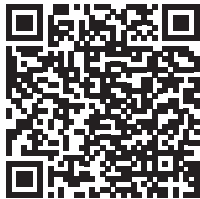
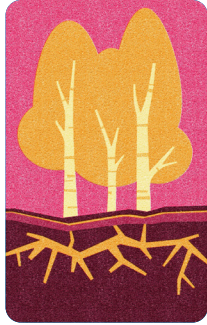
Did God or people write the Bible? Examine how the Bible's origin is both human and divine.

Key Takeaways

- The Bible's narratives, poems, histories, letters, prophecies, and other writings come from a profound collaboration between humanity and God.
- Whenever the biblical authors talk about the Spirit's activity, they describe the Spirit working with and through God's human partners, not in spite of human partners.
- God's divine word is communicated through the words of the human authors. So when we talk about the human author, we are talking about the divine author at the same time.

Reflection Questions

1. How do the Bible's various literary styles and historical roots give us insight into the way God chose to work in and through human partners?
2. How do you, or those in your context, tend to view the relationship between the spiritual and physical realms? How do you think this affects your view of the inspiration of Scripture?
3. How can we hold both the human and divine authors in mind as we discuss the Bible?



WATCH

SESSION 8: What the Torah Says About the Bible's Origins

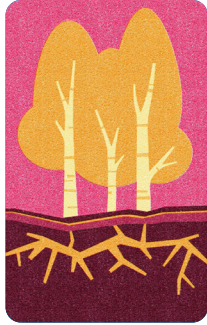
Where in the Torah do the authors talk about the writing of the Bible? And what do these mentions teach us about the Bible's purpose? Let's take a look!

Key Takeaways

- The first three mentions of the writing of the Bible in the Torah give us important clues to the purpose of the Bible.
- The Bible shows us that it was written (1) to tell the story of how God has rescued and formed a people, (2) to invite those rescued people into a covenant partnership to represent him to the rest of the world, and (3) to call to account the betrayal of the covenant while offering hope for the future of God's people and his world.

Reflection Questions

1. How would you describe the relationship between the Bible's references to its own writing (for example, Moses writing about God delivering the Israelites from the Amalekites in Exodus 17:14) and the text we have preserved today?
2. How would you summarize why the Bible was written? How do you think that should affect how we read it today?



WATCH

SESSION 9: What the Prophets Say About the Bible's Origin

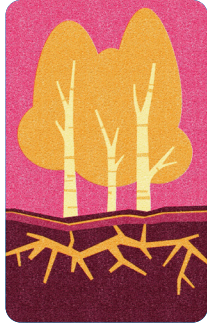
What did the prophets have to say about the origin of the Hebrew Bible? Dive in and find out!

Key Takeaways

- The Hebrew Bible claims to come from a tradition of prophetic leaders in Israel that stems from Moses.
- The texts reflect a minority report within ancient Israel that comes from those who were faithful to Yahweh and remained true to the covenant.

Reflection Questions

1. What is implied by saying that the biblical authors saw themselves in continuity with the tradition stemming from Moses, and why is that significant?
2. 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 Hebrew Bible in any way? If so, how? How might this idea shape the way you read in the Hebrew Bible?



WATCH

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

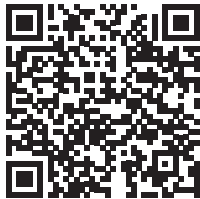
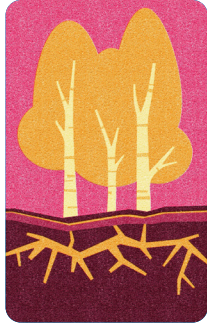
How does the compositional process of the Bible affect our understanding of the divinity of the Bible? Learn what the Bible says about this process!

Key Takeaways

- The Bible's divinity and authority doesn't negate the human processes that brought it into existence.
- The Hebrew Bible is a collection of collections made up of preexisting textual materials from different periods of Israel's history and literature.
- We find clues throughout the Hebrew Bible that reveal how each book is an organized collection of preexisting materials that have been brought into, and play a new function within, a new composition.

Reflection Questions

1. 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.
2. How does recognizing that unnamed human authors and scribes collected and arranged earlier material into its later biblical form affect how we view the Bible and its reliability? How can we think about the relationship between the biblical text and its earlier sources?
3. What can we observe about the way earlier sources are used and arranged? How does this shape the message of the Bible?



WATCH

SESSION 11: The Hebrew Bible as a Mosaic

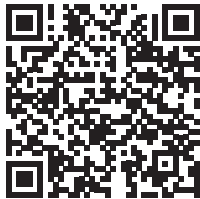
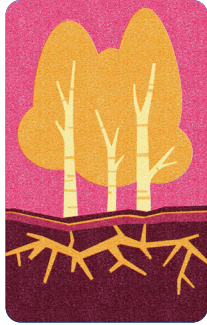
Learn to recognize how smaller literary units in Scripture trace repeated themes and see how they fit together to form a larger narrative.

Key Takeaways

- The Hebrew Bible is a collection of scrolls that has been arranged with a mosaic (i.e., composite) unity.
- The Ketuvim (i.e., the Writings) acts as mini-commentaries on the themes and ideas at work elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.
- The Hebrew Bible can be likened to a family quilt made up of individual pieces from various people throughout different time periods. And each individual piece adds new layers of meaning and significance when viewed within the context of the piece as a whole.

Reflection Questions

1. You've seen how the book of Ruth is hyperlinked to Judges, Samuel, and Proverbs. This happens all throughout the Hebrew Bible! How important do you think that seeing these hyperlinks is for understanding the meaning of a text or book? Discuss your reasoning.
2. How do we see the Bible providing its own commentary and interpretation as we begin to read each part in light of the whole?
3. How can the idea of a family quilt help us understand how to think about the Bible? What does this mean for the significance of each part individually and for the collection as a whole?



WATCH

SESSION 12: The Hebrew Bible Is Like an Aspen Grove

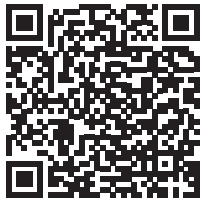
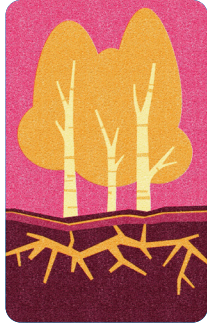
How is the Hebrew Bible like an aspen grove? Dive in and find out!

Key Takeaways

- The Hebrew Bible can be likened to an aspen grove: It's a collection of texts that are distinctive yet share interconnected origin points and grow together as a united structure telling one cohesive narrative.
- Another way to describe hyperlinks is intertextuality, where a specific text only means what it means in light of the entirety of texts it is connected to. The meaning is found in the interconnection of the texts.

Reflection Questions

1. The Hebrew Bible can be likened to both a quilt and an aspen grove. Which analogy resonates most with you and why?
2. How does intertextuality (the linked nature of biblical texts) shape the meaning of specific texts?



WATCH

SESSION 13: The Different “Encyclopedias” of Authors and Readers

Explore two revolutionary ideas about the biblical text and how they impact how we read and understand the Bible.

Key Takeaways

- Learning to read the Hebrew Bible well requires an awareness of our personal “encyclopedias of reception” and a discovery of the “encyclopedias of production” assumed by the biblical authors as they communicate.
- The Hebrew Bible is carefully crafted literature with every word placed intentionally to convey a specific message.
- Learning to read the Hebrew Bible requires studying the specific conventions and ways the biblical authors wrote narrative, poetry, and discourse.

Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on the intricacies of our ability to communicate with one another in writing. How can we become more aware of our own “encyclopedias of reception” (definitions and the context we automatically presume as we’re reading biblical texts)? How can we develop a better understanding of the biblical authors’ “encyclopedias of production”?
2. How would you respond to someone who says, “I don’t need to understand the ancient conventions of the author because I think God will speak to me through the text even though I don’t understand the ancient context”?
3. In what ways can studying the writing style and expectations of the biblical authors be seen as an act of loving our neighbors?



SESSION 14: How Biblical Poetry Communicates

Reflect on Psalm 29 to gain insight into how Hebrew poetry works.

Meditate on Scripture

Psalm 29

Key Takeaways

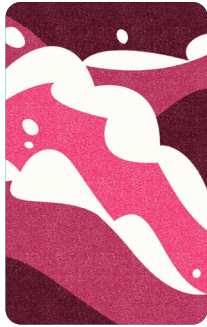
- Hebrew poetry is shaped into a line-rhythm or verse. It is not metrical (based on syllable counts) but a form of free verse.
- Hebrew poetry uses intentional, creative language (e.g., heavy use of metaphor) with unique word combinations, repetition, patterns, and hyperlinking to other parts of Scripture.
- The biblical authors build out their theology of God's character, essence, and purpose from within their worldview.



WATCH

Reflection Questions

1. How is biblical poetry similar to or different from other forms of poetry you are familiar with?
2. What are some of the most striking images you have encountered in biblical poetry, and how do they communicate the author's point?
3. Summarize what you've learned so far about how biblical poetry works. What are some of the things to look for as you read?

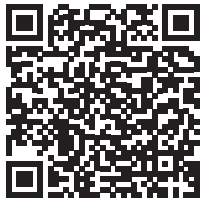


SESSION 15: Common Poetic Conventions in Biblical Hebrew

Discover how to locate the “what” the authors intend to communicate by understanding the “how” of the poetic form of communication.

Meditate on Scripture

Psalms 29



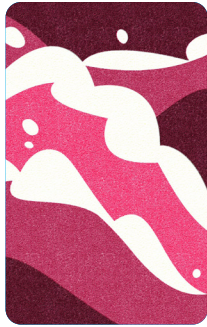
WATCH

Key Takeaways

- Poetry is a form of communication that invites the reader into a partnership with the written word in order to discover its meaning.
- Learning the function of repetition and of literary design is the most fundamental tool for reading and understanding biblical literature.
- When reading biblical poetry, the fundamental communication tool is repetition with slight variations that create patterns that build anticipation and expectations for the reader.

Reflection Questions

1. How do we participate with the written words in biblical poetry to discover the poem’s meaning?
2. How does paying attention to how the biblical authors use repetition with slight variation help us understand the meaning of the text?
3. What are some ways we can grow in our ability to recognize and appreciate patterns of repetition in biblical poetry?



SESSION 16: How Hebrew Parallelism Works

What is parallelism? How does it work? And why is it important for understanding biblical poetry? Work through examples to develop crucial study skills!

Meditate on Scripture

Psalms 29



WATCH

Key Takeaways

- Biblical authors often use parallelism in their poetry, which causes the readers to place two or more things in comparison with each other to show their relation.
- At its root, parallelism is a form of comparison and analogy. It assumes that to truly understand and experience a thing, you need to grasp not only that thing but also another thing that is both similar and distinct at the same time.
- Parallelism employs comparison techniques such as analogy, complement, contrast, and sequence—each requiring and aiding the reader to discover the uniqueness and meaning behind the poetic lines.

Reflection Questions

1. What happens in your mind when you see two lines set in parallel? What do you notice when you consider each line by itself versus considering the two lines together?
2. How does parallelism stretch the capacity for each line's meaning?
3. What would you say is the benefit of communicating with parallelism? What do lines of poetic parallelism do that narrative and discourse do not?



SESSION 17: Macro-Level Repetition in Biblical Poetry

How does symmetrical parallelism work in biblical poetry? Dive in and find out!

Meditate on Scripture

Psalms 67

Key Takeaways

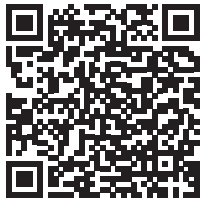
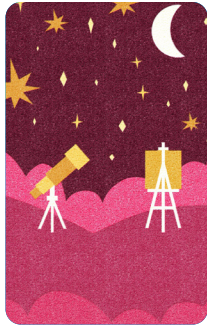
- In biblical poetry, the authors invite us to compare parallel words/images in lines that are not next to each other through the use of symmetry (e.g., a symmetrical design such as ABBA).
- The biblical authors often employ wordplay using graphically similar words in Hebrew to convey relationships and meaning.



WATCH

Reflection Questions

1. 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?
2. If some wordplay is only apparent in the original Hebrew, what does that mean for readers who don't know Hebrew? How might we think about the layers of meaning that remain hidden to us?



WATCH

SESSION 18: Literary Representation and Reality

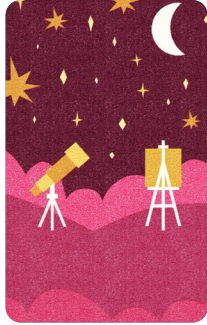
Does biblical narrative offer us security camera footage of ancient Israelite history? If not, what does it do? Take a look!

Key Takeaways

- When we read biblical narrative, we are reading an interpretation of the biblical events within the stylized poetics (i.e., conventions) of biblical narrative.
- Biblical narrative invites us into the narrative world of the authors, and it also invites us to view the world from their perspective. The narratives work on you, and over time, they begin to affect the way we view ourselves and the world we're living in.
- When reading the Hebrew Bible, it is helpful to familiarize ourselves with the basic elements of ancient Near Eastern culture to gain insight into the culture of the ancient Israelites.
- However, the main key to understanding the text is the text itself. For example, to understand one narrative in Genesis, we need to understand it in light of the entire Genesis scroll and the TaNaK as a whole.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the ways biblical narrative style differs from the narrative styles of our modern context?
2. How does the narrative world of the biblical authors shape us as we read? What are some key features of how the biblical authors represent their narratives?
3. What are some ways we can grow in our understanding of the biblical authors' ancient Near Eastern cultural context?
4. Have you ever thought of the biblical text as a representation of reality rather than as the reality itself? How might that affect how we view the text? If it is a representation, what does it mean for it to be truthful?



WATCH

SESSION 19: Plot in Biblical Narrative: The Story of Jonah

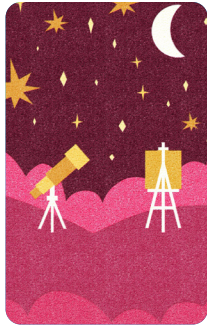
How is plot used in biblical narrative to communicate the meaning of the text?
Trace the plot of Jonah to reveal how authors use plot to convey meaning!

Key Takeaways

- The plot of a narrative invests the story with meaning—the conflict within a plot and how the conflict is resolved invests the narrative with its ethical message.
- Narrative meaning can also be found through plot sequence, or the use of conflict, climax, and resolution to convey a message. The same characters in the same conflict but with different resolutions of the climax can have a different message.

Reflection Questions

1. How can we infer a narrative's ethical message if the narrator doesn't outright tell us whether a character is acting righteously or unrighteously?
2. What are some of your main takeaways from this discussion on biblical plot and subplot in the book of Jonah? What does it help you notice that you haven't noticed before?



WATCH

SESSION 20: Plots and Subplots

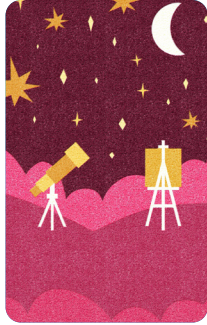
Discover how the biblical authors use “plot embedding” to convey meaning within the text.

Key Takeaways

- One way biblical narrative uses plot is through plot embedding, or layers of storylines working together to tell the overall story of the Bible.
- Individual narratives are framed within a larger context that gives them a meaning that transcends the individual events.
- The Hebrew Bible is about our need for the messiah, and the New Testament reveals that Jesus is the Messiah we need. Both Jesus and the apostles appeal to the Hebrew Bible to reveal Jesus’ true identity.

Reflection Questions

1. How do the biblical authors build larger plot arcs from smaller stories?
2. How do individual stories gain layered meaning by their function within a larger plot?
3. How would you summarize the way that the story of Abraham’s family relates to the story of the whole Hebrew Bible?



WATCH

SESSION 21: Characterization and Setting in Biblical Narrative

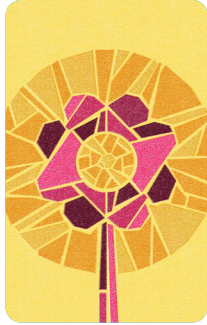
How do the biblical authors use characters and setting in their narratives? Dive in and find out!

Key Takeaways

- Biblical authors use characters as vehicles for their message primarily through showing rather than telling.
- Narrators rarely make comments in biblical narrative, and when they do, it's with small details or brief phrases.
- Biblical authors give us the trace of a character but we have to fill in the rest based on the little we know.
- The minimalist policy is very intentional. It forces us, the readers, to participate in the making of meaning.
- Biblical authors use the setting as a tool in biblical narratives to evoke memories and emotions and to generate expectations about what could happen in the story.

Reflection Questions

1. Why might the narrator leave ambiguities in characterization? What is the effect of creating complex characters or leaving gaps?
2. Do you ever wish the narrator would provide more commentary in biblical narrative? What benefits or challenges come from the narrator's relative silence?
3. How does the hyperlinked nature of the Bible shape how we interpret characters and their actions?
4. What methods and techniques do the biblical authors use to invite readers to participate in making sense of a story's meaning?



WATCH

SESSION 22: Design Patterns and Literary Units

Gain tools for recognizing smaller literary units in Scripture to trace repeated themes and see how they fit together to form a larger narrative.

Meditate on Scripture

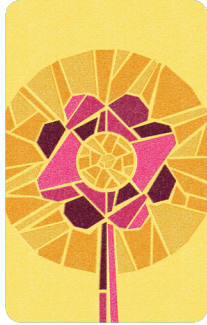
Genesis 2:4-3:24

Key Takeaways

- The Bible is like a photomosaic with identifiable smaller literary units crafted and arranged to work together and create a larger, overarching message.
- Biblical authors use repeated scenes, often with slight variations, to develop themes throughout the story.
- A concordance is a very helpful tool for identifying repeated words and phrases in our Bibles.

Reflection Questions

1. What does the photomosaic analogy communicate about the Bible's design?
2. What are some different ways to identify where literary units begin and end? Why is this important?
3. How might a concordance (a resource that indexes every word used in the Bible and where it occurs) help us meditate on the Bible?



WATCH

SESSION 23: Identifying Repeated Words

Discover helpful ways of identifying repeated words, phrases, and structures within biblical narrative.

Meditate on Scripture

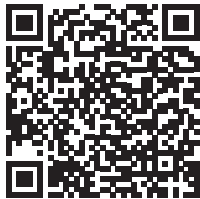
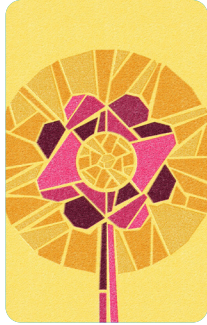
Genesis 1:1-2:4

Key Takeaways

- Repeated words, phrases, and parallel themes connect individual stories across the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.
- Biblical authors use repetition of lead words to create patterns that guide the reader's focus and create expectations for the reader.
- A "lead word" is a word that repeats significantly in a text or group of texts. The biblical authors use variations of Hebrew word roots to create wordplay and repetition.

Reflection Questions

1. What stands out to you about how repetition or structure works in Genesis 1?
2. Can you think of other places in the Bible where key words, phrases, or themes from Genesis 1 appear?
3. How does paying attention to repeated words help us meditate on the Bible?



WATCH

SESSION 24: Repeated Words and Literary Design

Fun fact: Biblical narrative works similarly to biblical poetry. Find out how in this session!

Meditate on Scripture

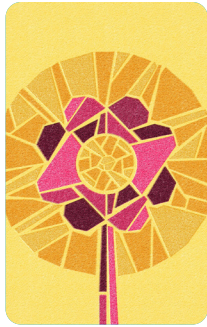
2 Kings 4:1-7; Genesis 39

Key Takeaways

- The message of the text is bound up with its literary form, and the literary form is part of the message.
- Like biblical poetry, biblical narrative is intentionally designed with an identifiable structure.
- Although it might not be helpful for everyone, for some, studying the literary design of Bible passages can be exactly what they need in their journey of reading and understanding the Bible.

Reflection Questions

1. How does a text's literary form shape its message?
2. What are some similarities and differences between the design of biblical narrative and poetry?
3. What are some benefits and challenges of breaking passages down according to their structures? What does it help you see?

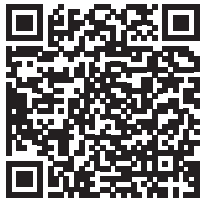


SESSION 25: Repeated Words Between Juxtaposed Literary Units

Compare repeated words in side-by-side narratives to see how biblical authors communicate meaning by tying multiple stories together.

Meditate on Scripture

Genesis 2-4



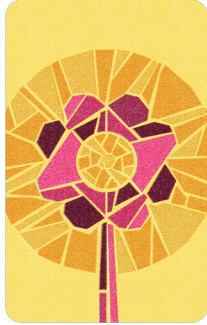
WATCH

Key Takeaways

- The relationships between connected literary units can work in different ways (e.g., contrast, create a sequence), but at the core is an analogy.
- The reader is being asked to read a particular literary unit on analogy with another literary unit in order to discover a deeper meaning.
- Sometimes, entire stories or scenes are designed to repeat elements of other stories. This involves not only repeated words but parallel narrative patterns, themes, and sequences.
- Sometimes the narratives to be compared are next to each other, like in Genesis 2-3 and Genesis 4. In these narratives, we watch Human and Life set a template for redefining “good” and “bad” on their own terms, which is replayed by the next generation.

Reflection Questions

1. What kinds of comparisons and connections do the biblical authors make between literary units?
2. How does noticing the repeated words and narrative patterns between Genesis 2-3 and Genesis 4 compare to how you have read these stories before? How would you describe the connection between these two literary units? With these connections in mind, what new layers of meaning do you perceive in Genesis 4?
3. 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.

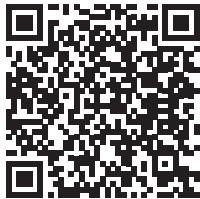


SESSION 26: Repeated Words Between Distant Literary Units

Discover how the biblical authors connect distant literary units with repeated words to progress the narrative.

Meditate on Scripture

Genesis 6:1-11



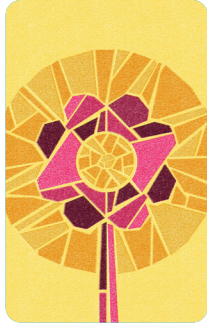
WATCH

Key Takeaways

- Sometimes the narrative comparison is prompted by an identical repetition in distant narratives. Through the use of key word repetitions, biblical authors lead us to compare and contrast characters in order to advance the narrative argument.
- Biblical authors often compare narratives and create patterns in subtle ways. To find a pattern, watch for embedded key words and images that link stories together, like the repetition of “see” and “take” in Genesis 3 and Genesis 6.

Reflection Questions

1. Can you think of any places where you’ve noticed a biblical story repeating words or narrative patterns from a prior story? What do you notice when you compare these stories?
2. How can you discern when a repetition is meant to connect different sections of biblical text and when it is just a coincidence? How much does the distance between texts matter when evaluating connections?



WATCH

SESSION 27: Narrative Analogy: Sarai and Genesis 3

What are the unique connections between Genesis 3 and a story in the Abraham narrative? Dive in and find out!

Meditate on Scripture

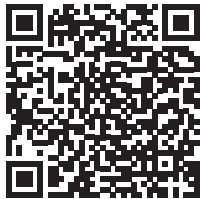
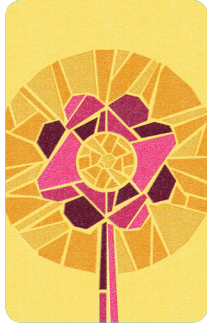
Genesis 12:10-20

Key Takeaways

- The story of Abram and Sarai in Genesis 12:10-20 is set on analogy to Genesis 3 through the use of repeated words.
- The story is an example of one of the main themes of the Bible—the complex and tragic human condition as people give into temptation over and over again. This temptation pattern is marked by repeated words such as “see,” “take,” “desire,” and “good in their eyes.”
- The story in Genesis 12:10-20 is an example of a dynamic analogy. This means characters move dynamically in and out of previously established character slots from stories to which the author is hyperlinking. For example, in a story hyperlinking to Genesis 3, a character can play the role of the snake and also be an inversion of the snake because their deception brings life instead of death.

Reflection Questions

1. How does Genesis 12:10-20 relate to the previous pattern established in Genesis 3 of humanity choosing what is good apart from God?
2. How do you see the themes of Genesis 3 and Genesis 12 repeating in later parts of the Bible?
3. The Bible uses dynamic analogy to place the same character in various thematic roles at different points of the narrative. What can this reveal to us about the Bible’s view of humanity?



WATCH

SESSION 28: Narrative Analogy: Jacob and Genesis 3

How is Jacob portrayed like the snake from Genesis 3? Explore this and more as we examine another narrative analogy.

Meditate on Scripture

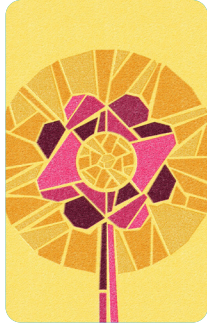
Genesis 25:20-26, 27:1-28:5

Key Takeaways

- Throughout the entire storyline of the Hebrew Bible, there will be snake-people and humanity-people, and they are going to be at enmity with one another in narrative after narrative.
- In the Hebrew Bible narratives, people can switch back and forth between being a seed of the woman and a seed of the snake. Even the people God calls to be his blessing to the world can become the seed of the snake.
- The birth of the nation of Israel is depicted as the birth of snake seed. The whole drama of the Jacob story is how God is going to turn Jacob (the snake-like deceiver) into a human.

Reflection Questions

1. How does the pattern of snake-people and humanity-people, introduced in Genesis 3, repeat throughout the biblical story?
2. What does it reveal about the biblical perspective on chosen and non-chosen people that the same characters can be identified at some times with the seed of the woman and at other times with the seed of the snake?
3. In the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25, in what way is Jacob like the snake from Genesis 3? What tension does this create for the overall storyline?



WATCH

SESSION 29: Design Patterns in the New Testament

See how the Gospel of Matthew carries forward the design patterns of the Hebrew Bible and listen in as the students share their personal takeaways from the course.

Key Takeaways

- Design patterns are the main way biblical authors unify hundreds of stories. And every pattern develops a core theme throughout the whole biblical story that leads to Jesus.
- The stories of Jesus in the Gospels have been designed to carry the patterns of the Hebrew forward to their climax, namely, Jesus.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the most important ways the biblical authors unify widely varying biblical texts?
2. How are themes introduced in the Torah carried forward and developed in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament?
3. What is your main takeaway from this class overall? Or what key questions still remain for you?