



# **Introducing the Old Testament**

Week 2

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## **Overview of this week**

- ❖ Keys to understanding the Old Testament
- ❖ Interpreting the OT narratives
  - Based on Fee & Stuart's excellent book, *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*
- ❖ A brief look at the Pentateuch
  - Genesis
  - Exodus
  - Leviticus
  - Numbers
  - Deuteronomy

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## Keys (Longman)

- ❖ Begin with the author's meaning  
God⇒human author⇒Biblical text⇒first readers⇒present day readers
- ❖ Read in context
- ❖ Genre matters!
  - Let poetry be poetry!
- ❖ Historical & cultural background
- ❖ Grammar and structure
- ❖ Seek the full counsel of scripture
  - Let clearer passages help you interpret the obscure
- ❖ Look toward Jesus and the New Testament!



## The Old Testament Narratives/Stories

More than 40% of  
the OT is narrative





## **What the OT stories are not! (Fee & Stuart)**

- ❖ These are not just stories about people who live in ancient times!
  - They are about what God did to and thru those people
- ❖ These are not stories filled with all sorts of hidden meanings – be careful what you read into them!
- ❖ The stories rarely teach directly!
  - The bible is the spiritual journal of the people of God.
  - The teaching is implicit and by illustration.
- ❖ Every story and episode DOES NOT have a moral of its own.



## **A Few More Keys**

- ❖ The narratives record what happened – *not what should have or ought to have happened.*
  - Often, we aren't even told whether the story is a good example or a bad one!
  - There are lots of Old Testament characters we would not want to emulate.
- ❖ **ALL** the stories are incomplete and selectively told. The authors are not journalists. There is intended meaning in all these writings.
- ❖ Still . . . the narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions!



## **The Pentateuch**

- ❖ The first five books of the Bible
  - Also sometimes called the Law of Moses
- ❖ Also referred to as the Torah
  - “Torah” is Hebrew for “instruction” or “teaching”
  - Sometimes also called the “Law” – but instruction is the way to think of it. It is God’s instructions to Israel about how they are to live in communion with him.
  - What a joy and privilege to be the ones chosen by God, with whom he would dwell, and tell how to live in right relationship with him.
- ❖ More sacred to the Jews than the rest of the Old Testament
  - A canon within the canon



## **Genesis**

- ❖ God created and it is good!
- ❖ Humans are made in God’s image
- ❖ In our desire to be like gods, we disobeyed God, creating a cosmic rift in creation
- ❖ God begins a process of redemption built around a covenant with his people. God’s purpose is to restore his creation.
  - God makes a covenant with Abraham. This covenant passes to Isaac and then Jacob and then Jacob’s 12 sons.





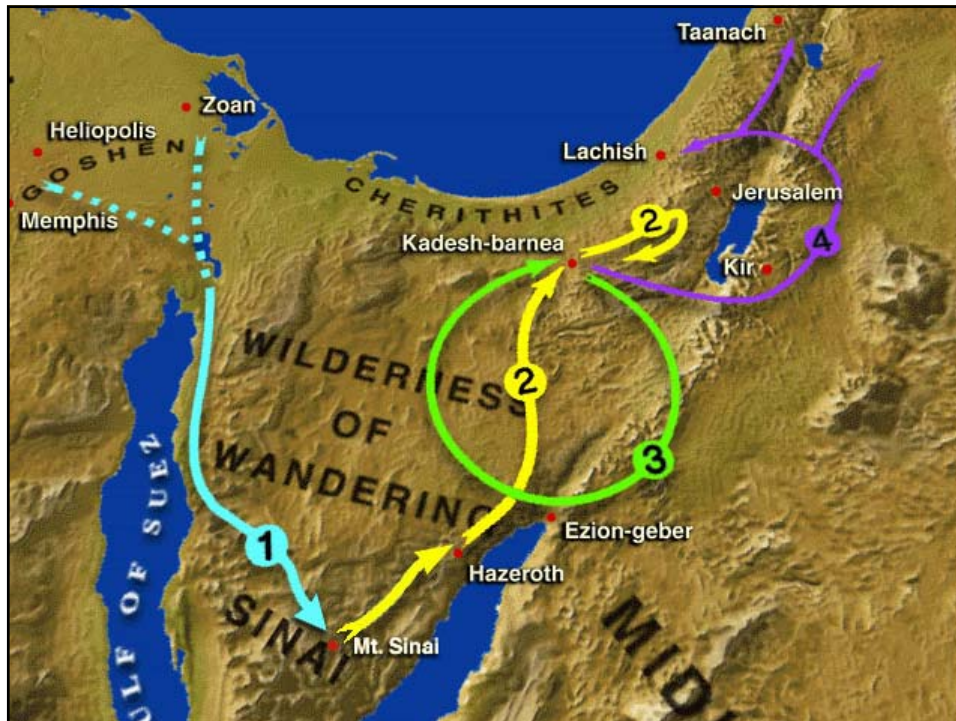
## **Exodus** (much from Dillard and Longman)

❖ Three part structure

Israel in Egypt	God saves Israel from Egyptian bondage
Israel in the wilderness	God gives Israel his law
Israel at Sinai	God commands Israel to build the tabernacle

❖ Keys to look for

- God is present with his people as their King and their savior.
- The deliverance and exodus from Egypt is THE great event in Israel's history.





## Leviticus

- ❖ Leviticus is about the formal rules and rituals of Israel's worship, focusing on sacrifice, priesthood, and purity
  - "I am the LORD your God."
  - "Therefore be holy, because I am holy."
- ❖ Sacrifice – this is tough for most of us. But, if you are going to make sense of the Lamb of God you must come to grips with OT sacrifice.
  - A *gift* from the worshiper to the covenant partner
  - A number of sacrifices include the notion of *communion* or fellowship
  - Heals a *rift* between the covenant partners
  - *Confession* must always precede the sacrifice



## Numbers

- ❖ A bit of a grab-bag – nearly all sorts of literature can be found here
- ❖ Outline (from Olson, in D&L, p87)
  - The end of the old
    - The march through the wilderness begins
    - Cycles of rebellion
  - The beginning of the new: the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation prepares to enter the promised land
    - Preparation and organization of the new holy people of God
    - Will they be faithful or rebel?
- ❖ God relentlessly pursues his people!



## Deuteronomy

- ❖ A treaty/covenant document
  - The constitution of Israel, God's chosen people
  - Blessings are to come from keeping the covenant, curses (including loss of the land) are to come from unfaithfulness to the covenant
  - An elaboration of the 10 commandments (the decalogue)
  - More interested in the "spirit" than the "letter" of the law
- ❖ Widely used in the New Testament!



## Old Testament Timeline 3

