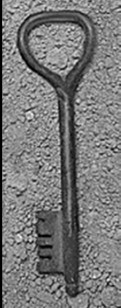


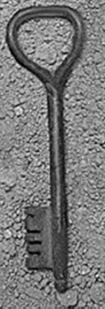
Interpreting Old Testament Narratives

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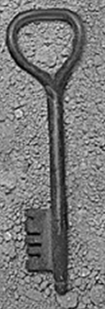
The Nature of Narratives

- ◆ Narratives are true stories (history) selected to show God at work among His people.
- ◆ They are not works of fiction
- ◆ They are not stories with hidden meanings
- ◆ They are not lists of events w/o purpose
- ◆ They do not answer all our questions:
 - How did God do this?
 - Why did God do this?



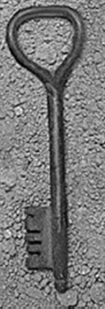
Three Levels of Narrative:

- ◆ Top Level:
How God deals with *all humanity*.
- ◆ Middle Level:
How God deals with *His Chosen People*.
 - In the Old Testament: Israel
 - In the New Testament: the Church
- ◆ Bottom Level:
How God deals with *Individuals*.



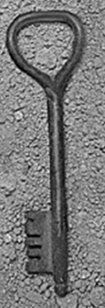
Warnings about Narratives

- ◆ *God* is the hero of the story, not people.
- ◆ We are only told *that* these events took place; we are not told *how* they took place.
- ◆ Narratives do not teach; they *illustrate*. The lesson is usually *implied*, not stated.
- ◆ The *whole* unit gives the message, not the separate, individual parts.



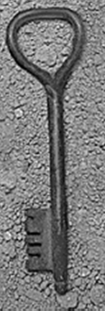
Principles for Interpreting Narratives

- ◆ Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.
- ◆ Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine taught elsewhere in Scripture.
- ◆ Narratives record what happened, not what ought to happen every time.
- ◆ What people do in a narrative is not always a good example for us to follow.
- ◆ Most Old Testament characters are far from perfect, and so are their actions.



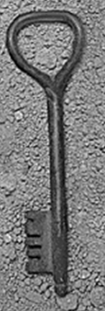
Principles for Interpreting Narratives

- ◆ We evaluate the narrative's moral based on what God has taught elsewhere in Scripture.
- ◆ Every narrative is selective and incomplete. It has essential details, but not all details.
- ◆ Narratives don't answer all our theological questions. They deal with specific issues.
- ◆ Narratives may teach either by clearly stating or by merely implying the lesson.
- ◆ God is the hero of all Biblical narratives.



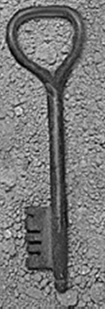
Key Elements in OT Narratives

- ◆ Study the Plot – What happened?
 - Exposition – Introduction
 - Crisis - Complication – Tension
 - Resolution – solution to crisis/complication
 - Conclusion – wrap up loose ends
- ◆ Study the People – Who were involved?
 - Protagonist: central character – indispensable to plot
 - Antagonist: main adversary against central character
 - Foil: provides contrast / parallel to central character
- ◆ Study the Setting – When and Where?



Key Elements: 1 Sam 17

- ◆ Setting: King Saul unfaithful; Samuel anointed David
- ◆ Plot: Exposition, Crisis, Resolution, Conclusion
 - Philistines at war with Israel. Armies aligned for battle.
 - Goliath challenges Israel's champion to duel – winner take all
 - Saul declines to fight; David declines armor & defeats Goliath
 - Seeing Goliath defeated, Philistine army flees from Israelites.
- ◆ Characters: Protagonist, Antagonist, Foil
 - Goliath (Antagonist) – Philistine Giant: Insults God of Israel
 - Saul (Foil) – Israel's champion: who is no match for Goliath
 - David (Protagonist) – Youth sees Goliath is no match for God



Key Elements: Ruth

- ◆ Setting: Bethlehem in Judges period (1240-1030 BC)
- ◆ Plot: Exposition, Crisis, Resolution, Conclusion
 - Famine in Bethlehem; Elimelech moves family to Moab
 - Elimelech & sons die. Naomi & Ruth return w/o male heir.
 - Ruth meets Boaz gleaning, later requests Levirate marriage
 - Other kinsman declines, Boaz & Ruth → Obed → David
- ◆ Implicit Points
 - Ruth converted to faith in the God of Israel (1:16)
 - Boaz was a righteous Israelite (2:3-13,22; 3:10-12; 4:9-10)
 - A foreign woman is an ancestor of King David (4:17-21)
- ◆ Characters: Naomi (Protagonist); Ruth & Boaz (Foils)