

EXPLORING MY STRANGE BIBLE

WITH TIM MACKIE



Understanding the Torah

Our Approach: Big Story vs. Little Story

LUKE 24:36–49

The Torah is a collection of lots of little stories whose individual meaning is determined by the big story in which they are located. Jesus saw the big story as pointing to himself.

Big Story Part 1: Yahweh and the Entire World

GENESIS 1–11

Genesis 1–11 provides the basic plot conflict underlying the entire Bible.

- Genesis 1–2: God makes a world of order and beauty out of chaos and darkness.
- Genesis 1:26–28: God rules his world through his image-bearing creatures.
- Genesis 3: The image bearers foolishly rebel.
- Genesis 4–11: The downward spiral of human sin.

Big Story Part 2: Yahweh and the Family of Abraham

GENESIS 12–EXODUS 15

1. Yahweh's mission is to rescue creation through the covenant story with Israel.

- Blessing to the nations through Abraham's family
- Yahweh ratifies his promises by a covenant with Abraham.
- Abraham's family is a comedy of errors and deception (i.e. "Jacob") of putting the covenant into jeopardy.
- The book is summed up in Genesis 50:20.

GENESIS 12

GENESIS 15, 17

2. Yahweh keeps his promise to Abraham by redeeming Israel from slavery in Egypt.

- Egypt represents the archetypal 'bad guy' in the Bible.
- Israel's Redemption takes place through:
 - Divine justice on Pharaoh and Egypt in the ten plagues
 - The substitution of the Passover Lamb
 - Passing through the waters
 - Israel "grumbles" immediately after being redeemed

EXODUS 1–5

EXODUS 6:6, 15:13

EXODUS 6–11

EXODUS 12–13

EXODUS 14–15

EXODUS 15:22–16

Big Story Part 3: Israel, the Torah, and the Sinai Covenant

EXODUS 16–NUMBERS 36

1. Yahweh calls Israel into a covenant relationship with himself on behalf of the nations.

- Obedience to the Torah is part of being a light to the nations.
 - They are to be a holy people.
 - They are to be people of justice and wisdom.
- Yahweh comes to dwell among his people in the tabernacle to recreate the intimacy of the garden of Eden.

EXODUS 19–20

LEVITICUS 19:1–2

DEUTERONOMY 4:5–8

EXODUS 25:22; 29:42–46

2. Israel is consistently disobedient and unable to keep the Torah.

- Right after they agree to the covenant, we read the Golden Calf story.
- Law leads into a rebellion/grumbling narrative pattern. The laws keep increasing the more Israel disobeys the Torah.

EXODUS 24, 32–34

EXODUS 16–NUMBERS 36

3. Israel's sin conflicts with Yahweh's holiness and is resolved by sacrifice.

- Even Moses can't enter the tent of Yahweh's presence.
- Sacrifice as substitute

EXODUS 40:34–35,

LEVITICUS 1:1, NUMBERS 1:1

LEVITICUS 16–17

Big Story Part 4 Israel and the Need for a New Covenant

DEUTERONOMY

1. Moses knows Israel will abandon Yahweh in the promised land and disobey the Torah.

- He calls them to obey but knows they're unable.
- Moses knows only Yahweh can heal Israel's sinful heart.
- Moses' hope for a new covenant is elaborated by Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

DEUTERONOMY 8, 28

DEUTERONOMY 30:1–6

JEREMIAH 31:31–34,

EZEKIEL 36:24–29

2. Two future figures are anticipated in the Torah:

- A coming messiah who will destroy evil, fulfill God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham, and come from the line of Judah to rule over the nations.
- A coming prophet like Moses who will perform signs and wonders and rescue the people.

GENESIS 3:15, 12:1–3,

22:17, 49:8–11

DEUTERONOMY 18:14–15,

34:10–12