

Design Patterns in Biblical Narrative

Study Notes

Introduction

Biblical authors used design patterns as a key way to unify the story of the Bible. Repeated words, phrases, and parallel themes connect individual stories across the Old and New Testaments. These patterns highlight central themes of the biblical story to show how it all leads to Jesus. Use these study notes to go deeper into the ideas we explore in our video [Design Patterns in Biblical Narrative](#).

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Design Patterns in Biblical Narrative

Understanding biblical design patterns is key to reading the Bible as a unified story. The biblical authors were brilliant writers, and the storyline of the Bible is filled with rich imagery and allusions that point to a cohesive narrative. When we learn how to spot these patterns, the entire Bible will come into clearer focus. Here, we'll look at specific examples of the many ways that biblical authors establish patterns through key words, juxtaposed scenes, intertextual references, and more.

A coherent reading of any work of art, whatever the medium, requires some detailed awareness of the grid of conventions upon which and against which this particular work operates. Usually, these are elaborate sets of tacit agreements between artist and audience that create the enabling context in which the complex communication of art occurs. Through our awareness of convention we can recognize significant or simply pleasing patterns of repetition, symmetry, or contrast; we can detect subtle cues and clues as to the meaning of the work; we can spot what is innovative and what is traditional at each part of the artistic creation ... One of the chief difficulties modern readers have in perceiving the artistry in biblical narrative is precisely that we have lost most of the keys to the conventions out of which these texts were shaped.

Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 47

Repetition and Key Words

Repetition is one of the most important design features of biblical narrative. Repetition is used to create patterns that guide the reader's focus, and it's used to create expectations around where to look for meaning.

Biblical authors do this in a unique and pervasive way. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenweig, two Jewish scholars, gave this technique the name *leitwort*, which means "lead word" or "control word."

A "lead word" is a word that repeats significantly in a text or group of texts, and by following these repetitions, one is able to decipher or grasp a meaning of the text ... The repetition may not be of the same exact word, but of the word-root ... which intensifies the dynamic action of the repetition ... If you imagine the entire text stretched out before you, you can sense waves moving back and forth between key words, matching the rhythm of the text ... it is one of the most powerful means of conveying meaning.

Martin Buber, *Schriften zur Bibel*, 1131

Let's look at three examples of this lead word concept in the books of Genesis, Luke, and 1 Samuel.

Example 1: “Good” in Genesis 1-4

In Genesis 1, “God **saw that it was good**” is repeated six times, leading up to the seventh time in verse 31.

And God **saw all that** he had made, and behold, **it was very good**.

Genesis 1:31

LORD God caused the growth of every tree that was ... **good** for eating ... and the tree of knowledge of **good and evil**.

Genesis 2:9

The gold of that land was **good**.

Genesis 2:12

Then the LORD God said, “It is **not good** for the human to be alone.”

Genesis 2:18

You will be like God, knowing **good and evil**.

Genesis 3:5

When the woman **saw that** the tree **was good** for eating.

Genesis 3:6

If you do **good** you’ll be accepted, but if you don’t do **good**, sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you ...

Genesis 4:7

Example 2: “Son of God” in Luke 3-4

Sometimes a key phrase is repeated at strategic points. Luke has woven these stories together to emphasize how Jesus is the Son of God, Israel’s Messiah, and humanity’s representative. However, his identity is contested because some people question, doubt, or even reject him.

At Jesus’ baptism he is declared to be God’s “beloved **Son**.”

Luke 3:21-22

Jesus’ genealogy is linked back to Adam, “the **son of God**.”

Luke 3:23-38

Jesus is tested in the wilderness by the Satan, who questions Jesus’ identity as the “**Son of God**.”

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus is rejected by his hometown of Nazareth: “Whose **son** is this?”

Luke 4:14-32

Jesus casts out demons who proclaim, “You are the **Son of God**.”

Luke 4:33-41

Example 3: “Seeing” Saul, David, and Samuel in 1 Samuel 9-16

This example spans a longer stretch of narrative, but the repeated idea of “seeing” serves as the lead word that ties the individual events together.

Saul is introduced as a man “*choice and good, there was no man more good than him, from his shoulders up, he was taller than anyone from among all the people.*”

1 Samuel 9:2

Saul is searching for his father’s lost donkeys, but he can’t find them. He goes to the town where the prophet Samuel lives, and we find a rare narrator’s note in the text. “*Formerly, in Israel, when someone wanted to inquire of God, they would say ‘Hey, let’s go to a seer.’ Today’s prophet was in that day, called a seer.*”

1 Samuel 9:9

*Extra emphasis on Samuel as “one who sees” (Hebrew *ro’eh*, from the root “to see” *ra’ah*).

Later, “When Samuel **saw** Saul, the LORD said to him, ‘*this is the man who will direct my people.*’”

1 Samuel 9:17

Later, when Samuel declares Saul as king over Israel, he tells the people, “Do you **see** this one whom the LORD has chosen, there is none like him from among all the people.”

1 Samuel 10:24

Saul totally fails as Israel’s king, and Samuel says, “*You Saul have rejected the word of the LORD, so the LORD has rejected you as king.*”

1 Samuel 15:26

Next, we’re introduced to young David, and his story opens with: “The LORD said to Samuel ... ‘I have rejected Saul as king over Israel ... I will send you to Jesse of Bethlehem, because from among his sons I have **seen** for myself a king.’”

1 Samuel 16:1

Jesse brings seven of his eight sons before Samuel. “When Samuel **saw** Eliab the firstborn, he said ‘Surely, the anointed king of the LORD is before me.’ And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not focus on **his appearance** [Heb. *mar’eh* from *ra’ah* “to see”] or at the **height of his stature, for I have rejected him: for God does not see as humans see; for humans see with their eyes, but the LORD sees the heart.**”

1 Samuel 16:6-7

One of the most imposing barriers that stands between modern readers and the imaginative subtlety of the biblical authors is the prominence of repetition. We are accustomed to stories in which repetition is far less obvious, and so this is probably the feature of biblical narrative that looks most “primitive” to the modern eye ... In order to appreciate the artfulness of this kind of repetition, a modern reader has to cultivate a new, even opposite, set of expectations than what they bring to literary works. Modern stories usually attempt to mimic reality by giving us large amounts of information that is not crucial to the plot, so that one is expected to detect the repetition of key themes and words among lots of other background noise. Biblical narrative is the opposite. Here we are confronted with an extremely spare narrative with a high degree of repetition and similarity, and what we are expected to notice is the small but revealing differences among the sea of similarities. This is how new meanings emerge in the pattern of expectations created by explicit repetition.

Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 96-97

[paraphrased quote]

Narrative Analogy and Intertextual Linkage

Repeated theme words can unite a whole string of stories, but this kind of unifying technique can work in different ways. 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.

This is a common tool in the design of epic narratives. A popular modern epic is the Star Wars universe, which is now a collage of echoes to earlier movies, establishing meaningful comparisons. For example, in Episode IV Luke flies to destroy the Death Star, and Poe Dameron does the same in Episode VII. Poe is not a Jedi, but the parallelism of these two moments encourages us to assume the Force is working through Poe as well (Rey is also compared to Luke throughout the new films).

Narrative Comparison in Side-by-Side Scenes

Sometimes the narratives to be compared are next to each other like in Genesis 2-3 and Genesis 4.

	Genesis 2-3: Adam and Eve	Genesis 4: Cain and Abel
The human is given a significant choice for an unstated reason	2:16-17 ... from any tree of the garden you may eat, but from the tree of knowing good and evil you should not eat, because the day you eat from it you will surely die.	4:6 Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? Isn't it the case that if you do good , you will be lifted up?
The human is tempted by an animal	3:1 Now the snake was more crafty than any creature of the field ... and he said to the woman, "Did God really say not to eat from any tree in the garden?"	4:6 But if you don't do good, sin is crouching at the door , and its desire is for you.
The human gives into temptation with destructive consequences	3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and desirable to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom ... she took ...	4:5, 8 And Cain was very angry ... And Cain spoke to Abel his brother and while they were in the field Cain rose up against Abel his brother and murdered him.
God shows up to ask a question	3:9 And God called out to the human, and said " Where are you? " 3:12 And God said to the woman, " What have you done? "	4:9 And God said to Cain, " Where is your brother Abel?" 4:10 And God said, " What have you done? "
The human dodges the question	3:12 The human said, "The woman who you set with me, she gave to me and I ate."	4:9 I don't know! Am I my brother's keeper?
The perpetrator is cursed	3:14 God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed from every beast and from every creature of the field." 3:17 Cursed is the ground because of you.	4:11 And now you are cursed from the ground ...
Working the ground will now be more difficult	3:17b ... in pain you will eat from the ground. 3:23 And God sent him from the garden of Eden to work the ground.	4:12 For you will work the ground , and it will no longer give its strength to you.
The human is banished from the divine presence	3:24 And [God] banished the human and he camped east of the garden of Eden.	4:14 Behold, you have banished me from the face of the ground and from your presence. 4:16 And Cain settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Intentional Comparisons Between Distant Narratives

Sometimes the narrative comparison is prompted by an identical repetition in distant narratives, like the 40 days and nights of testing found throughout the biblical story. Through an obvious use of key word repetitions, biblical authors lead us to compare and contrast characters in order to advance the narrative argument.

Genesis 7:4	The first time is with Noah on the ark for 40 days and nights.
Exodus; Acts 7:30	Moses lives in the land of Midian for 40 years (inferred from the Exodus chronology, explicit in Acts 7:30).
Exodus 32	Israel waits for 40 days while Moses is on Mount Sinai.
Numbers 11-21	Israelite spies in the promised land (40 days) (Numbers 13) > Israel wanders in the wilderness (40 years).
1 Kings 19	Elijah wanders in the Sinai wilderness for 40 days.
Matthew 4	Jesus is tested in the wilderness for 40 days.

Sometimes the linkage is an identical action done by different characters.

Aaron and the golden calf	King Jeroboam's golden calves and the split of the Israelite tribes
<p><i>Aaron took [the gold and jewelry] from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."</i></p> <p>Exodus 32:4</p>	<p><i>So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt." So he set one in Bethel and the other he put in Dan.</i></p> <p>1 Kings 12:28-29</p>

Narrative Comparison by Subtle Repetition

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. Take for example one of the main themes of the Bible, the complex and tragic human condition as people give into temptation over and over again.

Example 1: The Temptation Pattern

Adam and Eve

From any tree in the garden you may eat, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat from it, for on the day you eat from it you will surely die.

Genesis 2:16-17

*... and the woman **saw that** (וּתְרָא כִּי) the tree was **good** (טוֹב) for eating, and that it was desirable (תְּאוֹהָה) to the eyes (לְעֵינַיִם), and the tree was **desirable** (נְחֻמָּה) for making wise (לְהַשְׁכִּיל), and she took (וַתִּקַּח) from its fruit and **she ate** (וַתֹּאכַל) and **she gave** also to her husband with her, and **he ate** (וַיֹּאכַל).*

Genesis 3:6

Naked > Sin > Clothed

*... and **they heard the voice/sound** (וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת) of Yahweh God walking in the garden, and they **hid themselves** (חָבְאוּ) ...*

Genesis 3:8

And the man said, "The woman that you gave to be with me, she gave to me from the tree and I ate" [weak excuse, blame shifting].

Genesis 3:12

What have you done? (מָה עָשִׂיתָ)

Genesis 3:13

Because you listened to the voice of your wife ...

Genesis 3:17

Abraham and Sarai

The next story is about Abraham and Sarai, a husband and wife who also make a crucial decision related to God's earlier word (here, of promise).

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar. [Sarai speaks first]: "Go now into my female servant, perhaps **I will be built up from her.**" [Gen. 2:22: "and Yahweh God **built** the side which he took from the human into a woman, and he brought her to the man."]

Genesis 16:1-2

And Abram **listened to the voice** of Sarai [Gen. 3:17: God says to Adam, "because you **listened to the voice of your wife**"].

Genesis 16:2b

And Sarai, the wife of Abram **took** Hagar the Egyptian her female slave ... and **she gave** her to Abram her husband as a wife [Gen. 3:6] and he went into her and she became pregnant and **she saw** that (ותרא כי) she was pregnant, and her mistress became less in her eyes.

Genesis 16:3-4

And Abram said to Sarai, "Look, your female slave is in your hand. Do to her what is **good in your eyes** (טוב בעיניך) [Gen. 3:6]."

Genesis 16:6

So Sarah oppressed her and Hagar fled from before her. And the angel of Yahweh found her by a spring of waters **in the wilderness** [Gen. 3:24].

Genesis 16:6b-7

Aaron and the Israelites Make an Idol

And the people **saw** that (ירא כי) Moses delayed (בּוּשׁ) 'lit. "caused shame") in coming down from the mountain, and the people gathered against Aaron and said to him, "Arise, make for us gods who will go before us before us, for this Moses the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

Exodus 32:1

And the people took their **gold** rings ... and Aaron **took** from their hand, and fashioned it with a tool a golden calf ... and Aaron **saw** and he built an altar before it and Aaron proclaimed, "A feast for Yahweh tomorrow!" And they woke early the next day and offered sacrifices and brought their offerings, and the people sat down to **eat** and to drink, and they rose up **to play**. [eating + sexual connotation // eating > nakedness > shame in Gen. 3:7]

Exodus 32:3-6

- The people do precisely the thing God prohibited them from doing: worshipping other gods and making idols (Exod. 20:1-6) // Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit.
- "delayed" = lit. caused shame from בוּשׁ: the last time this root appeared in the story was Genesis 2:24: "and the two of them the man and woman were naked and were not ashamed (בוּשׁ)."

And Yahweh said to Moses, "**Go** (לך), **get down** (ירד)." [Yahweh's first reaction to the rebellious act = Josh. 7:10]

Exodus 32:7

And Joshua **listened the sound/voice** (וישמע את קול) of the people [Gen. 3:17 "because you listened to the voice"].

Exodus 32:17

What did this people do to you? (מה עשה לך העם הזה)

Exodus 32:21

Moses took the calf **and he burned it with fire** (אש + שרף = Josh. 7:15, 25).

Exodus 32:20

And Aaron said, "Don't let my master's anger burn! You know the people, they are in evil, and they said to me, 'Make us a god ...' And I said, 'Who has gold, take it off?' **and they gave to me** and I cast it in the fire and out came this calf! [weak excuse, blame shifting = "the woman gave to me ..." Gen. 3:12 // Sarai gave Hagar to Abram]

Exodus 32:22, 24

Joshua and Achan

Notice how the battle of Jericho in Joshua 6 is designed according to the Genesis 1 pattern with a six day cycle and a seventh day of rest. Afterwards, we have the first divine command given in the promised land, and the first story of sin (Josh. 6:18-19). Achan looks at forbidden gold, desires it, and takes it. One individual acts in lack of faith and brings ruin upon many others.

Only watch yourselves, don't take any of the dedicated plunder, **lest you take** from the dedicated plunder and place it in the camp of Israel ... and bring **trouble** (עבר) to it. All the silver and gold and **articles** (בליים) of bronze and iron are holy to Yahweh.

Joshua 6:18-19

But the sons of Israel committed treachery with the dedicated plunder, **and Achan**, the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, **he took** from the dedicated plunder.

Joshua 7:1

And Yahweh said to Joshua, "Get up, go." [Yahweh's first reaction = Exod. 32:7 "go, get down!"]

Joshua 7:10

Israel has sinned, and they have broken my covenant which I commanded them, and also **they have taken** from the dedicated things and stolen, and also they have lied and **placed it in their baggage** [lit. articles בכליהם].

Joshua 7:11

In the morning then you shall **bring near** by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD **captures** by lot shall **come near** by families, and the family which the LORD takes shall **come near** by households, and the household which the LORD **captures** shall **come near** man by man ... So Joshua arose early in the morning and **brought Israel near** by tribes, and the tribe of Judah was **captured**. He **brought** the family of Judah near, and he **captured** the family of the Zerahites; and he **brought** the family of the Zerahites **near** man by man, and Zabdi was **captured**. He **brought** his household **near** man by man; and Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was **captured**. [Lots are cast so that a tribe/clan/family/patriarch/individual are **captured**(לכד) and then **brought near** (קרב).]

Joshua 7:14-17

Achan says to Joshua, "And **I saw** among the plunder a cloak of Shinar, a **good one** (טוב), and 200 shekels of silver, and a tongue of **gold** [= golden calf] its weight being 50 shekels, and **I desired them** (חמד) and **I took them**, and behold, they are **hidden** in the ground in the midst of my tent."

Joshua 7:21

Joshua says to Achan, "what have you done?" [(מה עשית?) // Exod. 32:21 // Gen. 3:14.]

Joshua 7:19

And Joshua sent messengers **and they ran** to the tent, and behold, the silver was hidden underneath the tent.

Joshua 7:22

And all Israel ... **burned him with fire** [אש + שרף = Exod. 32:20].

Joshua 7:25

King Saul and the People of Israel

Saul becomes the desired idol of the people (think of Aaron's golden calf and Achan's contraband), but the prophet Samuel is told to listen to the people (think of how Adam listened to Eve, and Abram listened to Sarah), and their idolatry leads to ruin and exile.

The people approach Samuel and ask him to “give us a king to judge us, like all the nations.”

1 Samuel 8:5

God said to Samuel, “**listen to their voice** ... for they haven’t rejected you but they have rejected me ...”

1 Samuel 8:7

This is like all their deeds they’ve been doing since the day I brought them up out of Egypt and until today, abandoning me and serving other gods, that’s what they’re doing to you.

1 Samuel 8:8

Notice how the demand for a king and rejecting God as king is directly linked to idolatry and worship of other gods and the golden calf.

“listen to their voice” but warn them, and so Samuel does in 8:11-19, where the key repeated word is “the king will **take** ...” five times!

1 Samuel 8:9

But the people said, “No! A king will rule over us.”

1 Samuel 8:19

Saul, the mighty warrior of Benjamin, a shoulder taller than anyone else, “choice and **good**, there was no one among the sons of Israel **more good than him.**” > Lost donkeys episode.

1 Samuel 9:1-2

And when Samuel saw **Saul**, then the LORD told him, “Look, the man about whom I said to you, ‘This one will restrain my people.’”

1 Samuel 9:17

Samuel said to Saul, “I am **the one who sees** ... On whom is **all the desire** (חמדה = Gen. 3:6, Josh. 7:21) of Israel, is it not on you?”

1 Samuel 9:19-20

Saul is anointed by Samuel. “And Samuel **took** Saul, and his servant and he brought him to the inner room ...”

1 Samuel 9:22

- 10:17-27: Saul’s inauguration ceremony.
- 10:18-19: God’s speech: I’ve rescued you since the days of Egypt, but you’ve rejected me, so stand your tribes here. This is a recollection of the Exodus (and golden calf).

Lots are cast so that a tribe/clan/family/patriarch/individual are **captured** (לכד) and then **brought forward** (קרב).

Thus Samuel **brought** all the tribes of Israel **near**, and the tribe of Benjamin was **captured** by lot. Then he **brought** the tribe of Benjamin **near** by its families, and the Matrite family was **captured**. And Saul the son of Kish was **captured**; but when they looked for him, he could not be found [reminds us of the selection of Achan].

1 Samuel 10:20-22

Saul has hidden himself [נחבא, = Adam and Eve in Gen 3:10] among the baggage [הכלים, = Achan's idolatrous plunder, Josh. 7:11].

1 Samuel 10:22

And the people **ran and they took** him and stood him in the midst of the people, and he was taller than all the people, from his shoulders up [**more good**] than all the people, 1 Samuel 9:2].

1 Samuel 10:23

David and Bathsheba

And it came about at the time of evening, that David arose from his bed and walked about on the roof of the house of the king, and **he saw a woman** bathing on the roof, and the woman **was good of sight, very**. And David sent and he inquired about the woman ... and he sent messengers **and he took her** and he went into her.

2 Samuel 11:2

Example 2: The Chaotic Waters Pattern

Another major theme is the pattern of salvation at sunrise through the waters. God brings humanity through chaotic waters into a new world, and this pattern starts on page one of the Bible.

Genesis 1: Creation at Sunrise and the Separated Waters

God "creates" by means of his Spirit hovering over the dark, cosmic waters of "wild and waste" that make human communities impossible.

Genesis 1:1-2

Day 1:

Then God said, "let there be light" and there was light, and God saw that the light was good, and he separated between the light and between the darkness ...

Genesis 1:3-5

Day 2:

Let there be a **dome** and it will separate between the waters below the dome and the waters above the dome ...

Genesis 1:6-8

Day 3:

Let the waters under the skies **gather together** (קוה) into one place and let **the dry land** (יבשה) become visible.

Genesis 1:9-10

Noah and the Receding Waters in Genesis 7-8

The flood is presented as a de-creation.

... the springs of the **cosmic deep waters** (תהום) **split** (נבקע) and the windows of the heavens were opened [reversing days 2 and 3].

Genesis 7:11

Everything which had the breath of the **breath of life** (נשמה רוח חיים) in its nostrils from everything **on the dry ground** (חרבה) died. And every being was wiped away that was on the face of the ground, from human (אדם) to beast to creeper to bird of the skies ... but Noah **remained** (שאר) and those with him in the ark [undoing of all the inhabitants from days five and six].

Genesis 7:22-23

But **God remembered Noah** ... and God caused a **ruakh** to pass (עבר) over the land, and the waters decreased ... and **the waters turned back** (וישבו המים) from upon the land.

Genesis 8:1, 3

And it came about in the six hundred and first year, on the first of the month, the waters **dried up** (חרב) from upon the land ... and by the second month on the fourteenth day, Noah looked and behold, the land **was dried up** (יבש).

Genesis 8:13-14

Exodus at Sunrise Through the Parted Waters

And God heard the Israelites' cry and **he remembered** his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God saw the sons of Israel, and God knew.

Exodus 2:24-25

And you [Moses] will say to Pharaoh, "Thus says Yahweh, '**Israel is my son, my firstborn son**. So I'm telling you, send my son free, that he may serve me ...'"

Exodus 4:22-23

Pharaoh took his chariot and took his people with him, and he took 600 choice chariots and all the chariotry of Egypt ...

Exodus 14:6-7

And Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid! **Stand here and see the salvation of Yahweh which he will accomplish for you today**. For the Egyptians you see today, you will not see them anymore, ever. Yahweh will fight for you, but you, keep quiet."

Exodus 14:13-14

Moses, lift your staff and extend your hand **over the sea and split** (נבקע) them, and let the sons of Israel go **in the midst of the sea on dry land** (יבשה).

Exodus 14:16

God sets the pillar of cloud and fire between the camps of Egypt and Israel "**all the night**" (הלילה לכ). [21]

And Moses stretched his hand over the sea and Yahweh led away the sea **by a strong east wind** (רוח קדים עזה) all the night, and he turned the sea into **dry ground** (חרבה), and the waters were split (נבקע) ... And the sons of Israel went **into the midst of the sea on dry land** (יבשה), and **the waters were a wall for them**, on their right and on their left. And Egypt chased and came after them, every horse of Pharaoh, his chariots and horsemen into the midst of the sea. And it came about at **the morning watch** (אשמרת הבקר) that Yahweh, in the pillar of fire and cloud, looked down at the camp of Egypt and confused the camp of Egypt ... And **the waters turned back** (וישבו המים) and covered the chariots and horsemen in the sea, and there was not one of them **remaining** (שאר). But the sons of Israel walked **on dry land** (יבשה). And Yahweh saved Israel on that day.

Exodus 14:20-30

Joshua Parts the Jordan River

And Joshua awoke **in the morning** and set out from Shittim and they came to the Jordan, and they stayed the night there before they crossed over.

Joshua 3:1

Yahweh said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to make you great in the eyes of all Israel, so they will know that just as I was with Moses, I will be with you."

Joshua 3:7

The people are instructed to wait for the priests to carry the ark across first, which will tell them the way to **cross the river**.

Joshua 3:2-4

Joshua said to the people, "Make yourselves holy, for tomorrow Yahweh will do wonders in your midst."

Joshua 3:5

The priests' feet touch the river, "and **the waters** of the Jordan were cut off where they flowed up above, and **they stood in a single heap** ... And the people crossed across from Jericho, and the priests stood carrying the ark of the covenant of Yahweh **on dry ground** (חרבה), standing in the midst of the Jordan, while all Israel was crossing **on dry ground** until all the nation had finished."

Joshua 3:16-17

New Exodus and Parting of the Nations in Isaiah

In the book of Isaiah, Isaiah prophesies a new king from the line of David, endowed by the Spirit, who will gather all his people together.

And it will come about on the day, the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples, and the nations will seek him out, and his resting place will be glory.

Isaiah 11:10

Isaiah 12: A new exodus song (Isaiah 12:2b = Exodus 15:2)
Behold, God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
For the LORD God is my strength
and song,
And he has become my salvation.

Isaiah 12:2b

And it will come about on the day, **the Lord will again use his arm a second time**, to purchase **the remainder** (שאר) of his people which **remains** (שאר) in Assyria, Egypt, Patros, Cush, Elam, Babylon and the islands of the sea. And he will lift up a banner to the nations, and gather the scattered ones of Israel, and he will regather the dispersed ones of Judah ... And there will be a highway **for the remainder** (שאר) of his people who **remain** (שאר) from Assyria, just as there was for Israel on the day he came up from the land of Egypt.

Isaiah 11:11-16

Arise, shine, for your light has come! And the glory of Yahweh has risen upon you! For behold, **darkness covers the land**, and deep darkness covers the peoples, but **Yahweh has risen over you**, and his glory will be seen over you! And nations will come to **your light**, and kings to **your brightness!**

Isaiah 60:1-3

The Baptism of Jesus

Jesus' baptism clearly evokes the repeated images in the Hebrew Scriptures we have just seen of the Spirit/Word over the waters, Israel as a son saved through the waters, and Jesus as the new Israel led into the wilderness for forty days.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him; and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are my beloved Son, in you I am well-pleased."

Mark 1:9-11

Paul, Peter, and the Meaning of Baptism

*For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were **baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea** ...*

1 Corinthians 10:1-2

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were **baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death**? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Romans 6:1-4

*... when the patience of God kept waiting in the **days of Noah**, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were **brought safely through the water**. **Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you**—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—**through the resurrection of Jesus Christ** ...*

1 Peter 3:20-21

Narrative Archetypes and Collective Memory

See Halbwach's work on "collective memory" on pp. 81-82 of Barbour:

Collective memory refers to the ways in which societies construct and commemorate their shared past through common description of defining events, frequently traumatic ones ... It is often the case that strict historiography isn't the most important way to pass on a community's historical reflections, but rather the use of poetry, liturgy, and storytelling ... Collective memory is often insensitive to the differences between periods and qualities of time ... so that people, events, and historic institutions serve as prototypes of larger patterns. Collective memory establishes paradigms for historical events and then levels out the uniqueness of later episodes as they are moulded into the paradigm.

Jennie Barbour, *The Story of Israel in the Book of Qohelet: Ecclesiastes as Cultural Memory*, 81-82

An archetype may be an idea, character, action, object, institution, event, or setting containing essential characteristics which are primitive, general, and universal rather than sophisticated, unique, and particular ... When such elements are treated so as to bring forth their basic, essential, and fundamental attributes, they may form an archetypal pattern or patterns.

Jennie Barbour, *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 95

Inner-Biblical Allusion

Biblical authors do not usually refer to their source text by name. Rather it is stylistic features that flag the presence of an allusion:

they help the audience identify his reliance on sources, and the author may well have intended them to act that way. Nonetheless, the work of identifying a reference to a previous text is left to the reader or listener. By requiring the audience to detect the presence of such allusion, their pleasure is increased as they read and interpret the work. This sense of literary play (an important aspect of literary allusion) encourages the audience to engage themselves actively as they read or listen to a story or poem.

Benjamin Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusions in Isaiah*, 40-66; 171-73

QSa - Rule of the Community

And this is the rule of all the congregation of Israel in the final days, when they gather [in community to wa]lk in accordance with the regulation of the sons of Zadok, the priests, and the men of their covenant who have turn[ed away from the] path of the nation. These are the men of his counsel who have kept his covenant in the midst of wickedness to ato[ne for the ear]th. When they come, **they shall assemble all those who come, including children and women, and they shall read into [their] ea[rs] [a]ll the precepts of the covenant**, and shall instruct them in all their regulations, so that they do not stray in [the]ir e[rrors.] ... And this is the rule for all the armies of the congregation, for all native Israelites. From **[his] yo[uth] [they shall edu]cate him in the book of meditation**, and according to his age, instruct him in the precept[s of] the covenant, and he will **[receive] his [ins]truction** in their regulations **during ten years** he will be counted among the children. **At the a[ge] of twenty ye[ars, he will transfer] [to] those enrolled, to enter the lot amongst his fam[il]y and join the holy commun[ity].**

Garcia Martinez, F., and Tigchelaar, E. J. C. The Dead Sea scrolls study edition (translations)