

***ACCURACY MATTERS WHEN SOULS ARE AT STAKE:
Interpreting the Word with care and precision***

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Introduction

How does the preacher prepare his exposition of God's Word in order to present a powerful pulpit? How can he study his text with accuracy and care, so that he preaches with precision as well as with power? He must saturate himself with the text and apply it to his own life before stepping into the pulpit. Rushing into exposition produces shallowness, irrelevance, and hypocrisy—neither accuracy nor power. Lack of preparation spiritually, mentally, and emotionally will produce inaccuracy.

Get It Right from the Start

Unless the heart and mind are right with God, there is no way that the expositor can be right with the text.

We are, in a certain sense, our own tools, and therefore must keep ourselves in order. If I want to preach the gospel, I can only use my own voice; therefore I must train my vocal powers. I can only think with my own brains, and feel with my own heart, and therefore I must educate my intellectual and emotional faculties. I can only weep and agonise for souls in my own renewed nature, therefore must I watchfully maintain the tenderness which was in Christ Jesus. It will be in vain for me to stock my library, or organize societies, or project schemes, if I neglect the culture of myself; for books, and agencies, and systems, are only remotely the instruments of my holy calling; my own spirit, soul, and body, are my nearest machinery for sacred service; my spiritual faculties, and my inner life, are my battle axe and weapons of war.¹

Since preaching without prayer is presumption, pray with the psalmists:

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer” (Ps 19:14, NKJV).

“Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law” (Ps 119:18, NKJV).

Exegesis starts with the text and views it within its syntactical, lexical, literary, historical, social/cultural, geographical, and theological contexts. Although exegesis of the biblical text focuses upon the languages, the expositor must give attention to more than just the language factor. Everyday life in Bible times differed greatly from our present day Western culture. In biblical times, culture changed from one century to another, from one people to another, and from one environment to another—just as it changes within our own setting. We must give attention to identifying the separate context for each passage. So much is unfamiliar to the modern, Western reader: clothing, food, the medium of exchange, local customs, religious observances, and

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc., n.d.), 1–2.

dialects. How did these factors affect the meaning for both writer and recipient? This is the exegete's (and, the expositor's) challenge.

Resist the temptation to merely catalogue, collate, and arrange information. Exegesis consists of more than the collection and filing of data. Focus on interpreting information you glean from the biblical text itself. Biblical exposition does not consist of merely copying and pasting quotations from electronic sources and references into a MSWord document. You must examine, evaluate, assimilate, and interact with the biblical text in a coherent interpretative exposition employing only the most pertinent citations. In addition, you must synthesize the interpretation and its theological and pragmatic implications. When your sermon preparation reflects this approach, you will have attained a significant goal in your ministry: you will become an accurate exegete and expositor of God's Word.

The Exegetical Process

The following steps represent one potential approach to the biblical text designed to produce a full examination of the language, context, and background with a view to exposition. For a sample text, I will employ Judges 16:1–3 to illustrate the exegetical process.

1. Read/Translate

Read and reread the text until saturated with it—not just the sermon passage, but the entire book that forms its setting. If you know the biblical language, perform a provisional or preliminary translation of the sermon text. Diligently compare the original language with a literal translation such as the New American Standard Bible (NASB) or New American Standard Update (NASU), New King James Version (NKJV), English Standard Version (ESV), or Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). Note any translational variations from the original language.

Compose a preliminary summary statement for what the passage says. What did the text mean to the original recipients? Describe briefly what the text talks about.

Judges 16:1–3: *Samson visited a harlot and got trapped, but miraculously escaped.*

2. Observe

Ask questions about anything and everything in the text. What information does it give? *Who?*—list all persons in the text and identify the key players. *What?*—list all actions, objects, and conditions. Move on to the adverbial questions: *When?*—establish the historical context for the text. *Where?*—identify the geographical setting(s). *How?*—specify the manner in which the subjects take action. *Why?*—look for reasons (“because/for”), purposes (“in order that”), and results (“so that”). Pay attention to details—be a Sherlock Holmes! Record any question that comes to mind—even if it might turn out to be a “dumb” one upon further reflection. Determine to discover the basis for any textual variant followed by the translation or suggested in the margins of the translation. Remember: no translation is perfect.

- *Who?*—Samson, son of Manoah from the tribe of Dan, became Israel's warrior-deliverer from the Philistines in the days of the judges. Judges 13–16 records his story. Samson's reputation involved his physical strength and his moral weakness (especially for Philistine women).
- *When?*—The date of the Book of Judges rests heavily upon one's dating of the exodus out of Egypt. The early date of the exodus (which has the strongest biblical and extrabiblical evidence) places the Book of Judges in the period between the 14th

and 11th centuries B.C. Samson's day comes late in the chronology of the Israelite judges, in the early 11th century B.C.

- *Where?*—As far as location goes, this brief text unit focuses on the Philistine city of Gaza and then moves to the area of Hebron, about 40 miles away as the crow flies (by modern highways between the two locations the distance is over 45 miles). Gaza was one of the five chief cities (pentapolis) of the Philistines. It had been the capital of Egyptian-controlled Canaan (1550–1150 B.C.). The Sea Peoples attacked Egypt by land and sea in the first half of the 12th century B.C. Among them were the Peleset or Philistines. The Philistines originally came from Greece via Crete and Cyprus. When Pharaoh Rameses III (1195–1164 B.C.) defeated the Sea Peoples, they took Gaza and settled in south-western Canaan.
- Obtain a sense of the passage's overall tone. Samson's problem with women continues. The prostitute goes about her publicly-recognized business, but Samson does not go about his publicly-recognized business (Boling, *Judges*, AB, 247). He uses his God-given strength to get him out of a fix.

Revise your preliminary summary statement. What did the text mean to the original recipients? Start developing your descriptive summary statement toward a theological and prescriptive summary.

Judges 16:1–3: Samson's victory over 1,000 Philistine warriors in chapter 15 contrasts greatly with his moral defeat at the hands of one Philistine woman. His loose living gets him into a tight place. He escapes trouble by using the physical strength God gave him, but did not escape the temptation by using the spiritual strength God could give to him.

3. Identify

Analyze the text word by word and phrase by phrase. For many pastors with limited biblical language skills, good commentaries and various language tools provide a great deal of information for grammatical, literary, and lexical analysis (word studies). Read as many of the better exegetical commentaries as possible. Keep an accurate record of every element that has potential exegetical and expository significance—observe how commentators explain the significance of each element of the text.

The most consistently reliable commentary series include,

- Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (BCOT)
- Baker Exegetical Commentary (BEC)
- Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (EEC)
- *Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC)*
- New American Commentary (NAC)
- New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)
- New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT)
- NIV Application Commentary (NIVAC)
- Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (TOTC)
- Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (TNTC)

An excellent series does not guarantee that each volume treats the text in the same way or with consistency interpretatively. Keep in mind that some independent commentaries are superior to those within a series. Read book reviews and talk with other expositors about the volumes they have found most helpful. When looking at a commentary prior to purchase, look at how it handles a text with which you are most familiar exegetically.

3.1 Grammar and syntax.

3.1.1 *To what does each word, phrase, clause, sentence, and paragraph relate? in what way? for what purpose? Diagramming (either grammatical diagramming for NT or logical block diagramming for OT and NT) can be a valuable aid for understanding the text's structure (see 3.1.2, below).*

OT: Andersen, Francis I., and A. Dean Forbes. *The Hebrew Bible: Andersen-Forbes Phrase Marker Analysis*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2006.

NT: Rogers, Cleon L., Jr., and Cleon L. Rogers III. *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

- Judges 16:1—“Now” (NKJV, NASU), “Once” (NJPS, NRSV), and “One day” (NIV) are all legitimate translations of the Hebrew *wayyiqtol* (וַיִּקְרַח, *wayyēlek*). At the beginning of a new section, the conjunction need not be translated at all (ESV, HCSB).
- Judges 16:1—“to Gaza” represents the proper noun with a *he*-directive as a suffix (עֲזָתָה, *‘azzātā*).
- Judges 16:2—לְעֲזָתִים | לְאֹמֵר (*la‘azzātīm lē’mōr*) represents either the loss of the initial verb or an idiomatic way of saying “the Gazites were told.”
- Judges 16:2—וַיִּתְחַרְשׁוּ (*wayyithārēšū*) stands alone as the only Hithpael form of חָרַשׁ (*ḥrš*) in the Hebrew Bible. Its normal stem is Hiphil. Keil suggests that the unusual stem evidently indicates “the subordinate idea of giving themselves up to careless repose.” However, it might have nothing more than a reflexive sense: “they kept themselves quiet.” The Hiphil means to keep something or someone else quiet.
- Judges 16:2—עַד־אֹרְ הַבֶּקֶר וְהַרְגָּהוּ (*‘ad-’ōr habbōqer wahārgēnuhū*) employs an ellipsis of the understood concept “let us wait,” placing emphasis upon the time (“until the light of the morning” = “until daylight” or “until dawn”). The *waw*-correlative on the Qal perfect 1cpl verb introduces a temporal clause, “when we will kill him.”
- Judges 16:3—אֶשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי חֶבְרוֹן (*‘āšer ‘al-pēnē hebrôn*) allows some ambiguity: “in front of Hebron” or “in the direction of Hebron” (the latter being the opinion of Karl Friedrich Keil in his commentary). However, many sound exegetes take the position that Samson did carry the gates to a hill just outside Hebron: Boling (AB), Block (NAC), Jackman (Preacher’s Commentary), and Moore (ICC). Moore says, “A late Latin tradition, of which the inhabitants of the city are said to know nothing, fixes the place where Samson deposited the gates of Gaza at El-Muntār, a hill SE. of Gaza, and only a quarter of an hour outside the walls, and this site is adopted, against the plain text, by some recent commentators, who are inclined to reduce as much as possible the wonderful character of Samson’s feats.” Jackman provides an interesting aspect of the issue, “Goslinga asserts, ‘I believe that Samson indeed brought the gates back to Israelite soil, and that the author included the name Hebron to show that he deposited them in the centre of Judah so that Israel would have tangible proof of his victory.’ Admitting that this would involve a journey of forty miles, he nevertheless argues that the lifting of the gates at all was a miracle, and that such a great distance presents no additional problem for supernatural power.”

Certainly it would seem to give more purpose, both to the event itself and to its being recorded here, if the people of Israel saw this visible reminder of Yahweh's power over their enemies, within their own land."

3.1.2 *Where is the prominence or emphasis?* Pay attention to word order and the employment of emphatic words.

- Judges 16:1–3: The emphatic elements in this particular text unit relate to a literary analysis by diagramming more than to a grammatical analysis.

1a		וַיִּלְךָ שִׁמְשׁוֹן עִזָּתָה	1
1b α		וַיֵּרָא שָׁם אִשָּׁה \leftrightarrow זֹנָה	
1b β		וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ:	
2a α	A	לְעִזָּתִים לֵאמֹר	2
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">בָּא שִׁמְשׁוֹן הֵנָּה</div>	
2a β	B	וַיִּסְבּוּ	
2a γ		וַיֵּאָרְבוּ לֹו כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה בְּשַׁעַר הָעִיר	
2b α	B'	וַיִּתְחַרְשׁוּ כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה	
2b β	A'	לֵאמֹר	
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">עַד־אֹר הַבֶּקֶר וַהֲרִגְנָהּ:</div>	
3a α		וַיִּשְׁכַּב שִׁמְשׁוֹן	3
3a β		עַד־חֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּקָּם	
3a γ		בְּחֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיֵּאָחֵז בְּדַלְתוֹת שַׁעַר־הָעִיר וּבְשֵׁתֵי הַמְּזוּזוֹת	
3a δ		וַיִּסָּעַם	
3a ϵ		עַם־הַבְּרִיחַ וַיִּשָּׂם	
3b		עַל־כַּתְּפָיו וַיַּעֲלֵם אֶל־רֹאשׁ הַהָר	

אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי חֶבְרוֹן: פ

Here is what this diagram looks like in English (NKJV), retaining the Hebrew structure:

<p>1a Now Samson went to Gaza 1bα and saw a harlot there 1bβ and went in to her. 2aα When the Gazites <i>were told</i>,</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>“Samson has come here!”</p> </div>	<p>A</p>
<p>2aβ they surrounded <i>the place</i> 2aγ and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city.</p>		<p>B</p>
<p>2bα They were quiet all night, saying,</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>“In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him.”</p> </div>	<p>B'</p> <p>A'</p>
<p>3aα And Samson lay <i>low</i> till midnight;</p>		
<p>3aβ then he arose at midnight,</p>		
<p>3aγ took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts,</p>		
<p>3aδ pulled them up, bar and all,</p>		
<p>3aϵ put <i>them</i> on his shoulders,</p>		
<p>3b and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.</p>		

Prepare an exegetical outline that reflects the major divisions of the text. This might not be your actual sermon outline, although the divisions should be the same.

- I. Samson's fleshly desires take him to Gaza where he gets involved with a prostitute (Judg 16:1).
 - A. Samson travels to Gaza (v. 1a).
 - B. Samson gets involved with a prostitute (v. 1b).
 - 1. He sees a prostitute (v. 1b α).
 - 2. He lies with that prostitute (v. 1b β).
- II. The Gazites' plot to kill Samson (Judg 16:2).
 - A. Someone *speaks* to the Gazites about Samson's presence in Gaza (v. 2a α).
 - B. The Gazites set an **all-night** trap for Samson (v. 2a β).
 - B'. The Gazites keep silence **all night** (v. 2b α).
 - A'. The Gazites *speak* about their plan to kill Samson **in the morning** (v. 2b β).

- III.** Samson escapes the Gazites' trap (Judg 16:3).
- A.** **At midnight** Samson breaks free from the Gazites' trap (v. 3a).
1. Samson lays in bed **until midnight** (v. 3aα).
 2. Samson rises **at midnight** (v. 3aβ).
 3. Samson seizes the city gates (v. 3aγ).
 4. Samson pulls up the city gates with the bar in place (v. 3aδ).
 5. Samson sets the city gates on his shoulders (v. 3aε).
- B.** Samson carries the gates of Gaza to a hill near Hebron (v. 3b).

3.2 Expression.

3.2.1 What idioms does the author employ? What do those idioms mean? What did the original recipients understand by them?

- Judges 16:1, “and went in to her” (וַיֵּבֶן אֶלֶיָּהָ, *wayyābōd' ʿēleyhā*): This comprises a euphemism for having sexual intercourse with a woman.
- Judges 16:2, “In the morning when it is daylight” (עַד־אֹרֶן הַבֹּקֶר, *ʿad-ʾōr habbōqer*): Literally, “until the light of the morning” = “until daylight” or “until the dawn.” This might not refer to the actual sunrise, which can come up to an hour after the first light of day.
- Judges 16:3, “the top of the hill” (רֹאשׁ הַהַר, *rōš hāhār*): Literally, “the head of the hill.”
- Judges 16:3, “that faces Hebron” (NKJV; אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הַבְּרֹן, *ʾāšer ʿal-pēnē hebrôn*): See discussion under 3.1.1, above.

3.2.2 *What is the literary form (type of literature)?* Some refer to the literary form as the genre. Is the text narrative or poetry? Is it a national history or personal history? Is it law?—case law or direct commandment? Is it prophecy or wisdom? Is it lament or praise? Is it an epistle or a gospel? Is it a parable?

Resource: Sandy, D. Brent, and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., eds. *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995.

- Judges 16:1–3 is *narrative*. The elements of Hebrew narrative include:
 - ✓ *Scene*: A segment of an account with a specific time and place with two or more characters.
 - ✓ *Plot*: Sequential movement toward a climax and resolution.
 - ✓ *Point of View*: The teller's perspective.
 - ✓ *Characterization*: Development of characters, their actions, and their words.
 - ✓ *Setting*: Space and time location of the account.
 - ✓ *Dialogue*: Conversations between characters or groups.
 - ✓ *Key Word(s)/Leitwort(e)*: Repetition and pattern of the leading word(s) throughout the account.
 - ✓ *Structure*: A deliberate arrangement of the account.
 - ✓ *Rhetorical Devices*: Literary devices employed in narrative may include inclusio (inclusion or envelope figure), repetition, chiasm (chiasmus or inverted parallelism), ellipsis (gapping), metaphor, irony, and paronomasia (word play or pun).

- **Guidelines for analyzing Hebrew narrative:**

- ✓ *Identify the limits of the text unit.*

- (1) For Judges 16:1–3 this must first involve giving attention to the cycles in the Book of Judges:
 - Rebellion: 3:7 – “So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD”; cp. 2:11.
 - Retribution: 3:8 – “Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of”; cp. 2:14.
 - Request: 3:9 – “When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD”; cp. 2:18.
 - Rescue: 3:9 – “the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them”; 3:10 – “The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel”; cp. 2:16.
 - Rest: 3:11 – “So the land had rest for forty years.”

- (2) Next the exegete must look closely at the larger Samson account:
Resource: Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 607–13.

- Rebellion: 13:1a – “Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD.”
- Retribution: 13:1b – “and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.”
- Request: cp. 13:8.
- Rescue: 13:5 – “For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.”
- Rest: 16:31 – “He had judged Israel twenty years.”

- ✓ *Identify the structure of the Samson account using literary and grammatical elements.*

- (1) Note that the Masoretes indicate major section breaks at 12:15 and 13:1 to be major section breaks by using a פ (= paragraph division). פתוח (*petûah*, “open”), referring to an “open paragraph,” which they follow with a large space. They employ ס to identify a “closed [סתומה, *setûmâ*] paragraph.” פ is the more major break that might contain within its section a number of occurrences of the ס. Two examples help to illustrate these markers:

12:15 נִימַת עֲבָדָיו בְּזִהְלֵל הַפְּרָעוֹתָיו וַיִּקְבֹּר בַּפְּרָעוֹתָיו בְּאֶרֶץ אֲפֹרִים בְּהַר הָעֵמְלָקִי: פ

13:18 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מִלֵּאדָּה יְהוָה לָמָּה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשִׁמִּי וְהוֹאֲפִלְאִי: ס

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(2) Next, note the employment of macrosyntactic וַיְהִי (*wayyehi*, “Now there was” NKJV) to commence the following narrative section:

(3) Observe the subsequent repetitions of the various פ and ס paragraph markers and the macrosyntactic וַיְהִי:

- פ: 13:7, 25; 14:4, 19; 15:20; 16:23, 31.
- ס: 13:18; 15:8.
- וַיְהִי: 13:20 (concluding and followed in 13:21 by a disjunctive clause); 14:11 (concluding; but followed by *wayyiqtol* in v. 12); 14:15 (initial); 14:17 (internal); 15:1 (initial); 15:17 (internal); 16:4 (initial); 16:16 (initial); 16:21 (internal); 16:25 (initial); 17:1.
- Note the use of disjunctive clauses as markers: esp. 16:31b,

וַיֵּרְדוּ אֶחָיו וְכָל־בֵּית אָבִיהוּ וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֹתוֹ וַיַּעֲלוּ וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אוֹתוֹ בֵּין צָרְעָה וּבֵין אֲשֶׁתָאֵל בְּקֶבֶר מְנוּחַ אֲבִיו וְהוּא שָׁפַט אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה: פ

(4) Develop an outline of the Samson account that observes these markers as much as the context allows.

- ✓ *Identify the scenes in the Samson account with regard to place, time, and characters.*
 1. 13:2–24 (the messenger of Yahweh, Manoah and his wife).
 2. 13:25–15:20 (Samson’s Timnite affairs).
 3. 16:1–31 (Samson’s Gazite affairs).
- ✓ *Determine the point of view.*

Ultimately, this is God’s Word from His perspective. Although the book is anonymous, the human author might have been Samuel, who was a prophet (seer), having received direct revelation from God. Such direct revelation accounts for the details of the account that only could be known firsthand.
- ✓ *List the characters in the immediate text unit (Judg 16:1–3).*

16:1—Samson and the Gazite prostitute.
16:2—The Gazites.
16:3—Samson.
- ✓ *Analyze the plot of Judges 16:1–3.*

Samson is attracted to a prostitute and fulfills his desire/lust (16:1).
Parenthetical information (incomplete, non-verbal clause)—
Samson’s presence in the city is exposed (16:2a).
The Gazites conceive a plot against Samson’s life and take steps to see it through to completion (16:2b).
Tension: Will he escape? If so, how?
Resolution: Samson escapes (16:3).
- ✓ *Research the geographical, historical, and cultural aspects of the setting.*

Resources:

- Aharoni, Yohanan, and Michael Avi-Yonah. *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*. Revised edition. New York: Macmillan Company, 1977.
- Baly, Denis. *The Geography of the Bible: A Study in Historical Geography*. Revised edition. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
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- King, Philip J., and Lawrence E. Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
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- Unger, Merrill F. *The New Unger's Bible Handbook*. Edited by Gary N. Larson. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984.
- Walton, John H., ed. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. 5 volumes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- , Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

- (1) The gates of Gaza probably weighed over 10,000 pounds without the bar of bronze or iron and without the gate posts.
- (2) As the crow flies, the distance from Gaza to Hebron stand around 36–40 miles over terrain that starts at an elevation of about 100 feet above sea level at Gaza to over 3,300 feet above sea level at Hebron—a change of 3,200 feet in elevation.
- (3) Only a divine miracle provides a plausible explanation for this performance (even if Samson only carried the gates a half-mile to a hill top near Gaza).

See William D. Barrick, "Samson's Removal of Gaza's Gates," *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin* 8 (1976): 83–93.

3.2.3 What literary devices (repetition, parallelism, inclusio, chiasm, assonance, paronomasia, etc.) are employed? What are the shifts or pivots in the passage? Is dialogue present? How is it employed to tell the story?

Resource: Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

- *Inclusio*: The key place names bracket (mark off) this text unit: "Gaza" (v. 1), "Hebron" (v. 3).

- *Repetition*: כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה (*kol-hallayēlâ*, “all the night”—2x); חֲצִי הַלַּיְלָה (*hăṣî hallayēlâ*, “midnight”—2x); שַׁעַר הָעִיר (*ša‘ar hā‘îr*, “the gate of the city”—2x). The 5-fold use of time phrases (see next device, also) focuses the reader or hearer on the timing of events. This builds tension in the account. The repetition of “the gate of the city” places attention on the key object in the account.
- *Ellipsis*: עַד־אֹר הַבֹּקֶר (*‘ad-‘ôr habbōqer*, “Let us wait until the morning light,” NASU, ESV, HCSB, NRSV; “He will not leave until morning comes,” NET). Omission of the verb engages the reader’s or hearer’s imagination and also contributes to an emphasis on this time element in the middle of the account. Note that the other two time phrases are evenly distributed before and after this time phrase.
- *Chiasm*: Note how the two occurrences of “saying” bracket the two major actions of the conspiring Gazites. Note that the two occurrences of “all the night” precede the reference to “the morning light” and that the two occurrences of “midnight” follow it—making “the morning light” the focal point.

3.2.4 Perform a word study for each word crucial to the text. Keep in mind that many words have no great “golden nugget” of expositional truth outside their usage within the text’s proposition (which proves true in these three verses).

- The only candidates for word studies (meaning that something more might be gained than what lexicons offer) in Judges 16:1–3 are וַיִּאָרְבוּ (*wayye’erēbû*) and וַיִּתְחַרְשׁוּ (*wayyithārēšû*). Both occur in verse 2.
- וַיִּאָרְבוּ (*wayye’erēbû*): From the root אָרַב (*‘rb*) meaning “lie in ambush” or “lay an ambush” or “lie in wait.” The OT uses the verb of animals lying in wait for their prey, but occurs metaphorically for the way that enemies ambush their victims. Beyond this, no other meaning or figure presents itself.
- וַיִּתְחַרְשׁוּ (*wayyithārēšû*): From the root חָרַשׁ (*hṛš*) which carries a variety of meanings from “be deaf” to “remain inactive,” as well as “keep still” or “become silent.” Because of the Hithpael stem used for the verb in Judges 16:2, the silence or stillness or inactivity comes as the result of self-constraint. The reflexive factitive stem brings out the meaning “they brought themselves into the state of being silent/still.” It fits well the setting of the ambush.

Valuable tools for word studies include:

OT: VanGemeren, Willem A., ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. 5 volumes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. 2 volumes. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

NT: Brown, Colin, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 4 volumes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Abridged edition. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. ("Little Kittel").

The Expository Process

Moving from exegesis to exposition requires consideration of the theological teaching of the text unit and its practical implications (application). Then the preacher must produce the sermon proposition and homiletical outline. These are the vehicles for making the implications plain to the listeners sitting in the pews.

1. Biblical Theology and Practical Implications

Examine the canonical and theological implications of the text unit (Judg 16:1–3) and summarize its theological teaching.

- ✓ Being proud and arrogant, Samson depends upon his strength and enters the chief city of his enemies, the Philistines (Judg 16:1; cp. 1 John 2:16).
 - ✓ Samson yields to the lust of the eyes and the lust of his flesh when he sees the prostitute (Judg 16:1; cp. 1 John 2:16). Samson, like other disobedient Israelites, "did *what was* right in his own eyes" (Judg 21:10).
 - ✓ Arrogant actions and attitude together with sinful lusts will bring a person into danger (Judg 16:2; cp. Prov 1:8–19; 5:1–23; 6:24–29; Rom 6:23).
 - ✓ Failure to obey God and to live a holy life can only lead to trouble and a fall. Even God-given physical strength eventually will fail to be sufficient to deliver Samson from the dangers he encounters due to his sinful behavior.
 - ✓ The cycles of the Book of Judges will also play out in Samson's life as an individual: rebellion (Judg 16:1–20) > retribution (16:21–27) > request (16:28) > rescue (16:29–30) > rest (16:31).
 - ✓ In God's grace, Samson becomes God's instrument to deliver His people Israel from the Philistines. Flawed as he is, Samson appears in the roll call of faith in Hebrews 11:32.
- *The Lord remains faithful to His covenant promises to Abraham and his descendants regardless of the seemingly contradictory circumstances that had fallen upon the Israelites and their leaders. For blessing to take place, individuals and the nation must exercise faith and obedience.*

Because evangelical expositors often harbor a reluctance to derive New Testament preaching from the Old Testament, we should consider at least some of the biblical justification for applying Old Testament narrative to New Testament saints. The texts that are primary in such a consideration include Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6–13; and 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

2. Sermon Proposition

In order to produce the sermon proposition, you must seek to reduce all of the biblical theological thoughts and practical implications to one simple statement:

- *We must obey God and His Word, rather than yielding to sinful pride or to the lust of our eyes and of our flesh.*

3. Homiletical Outline

The homiletical outline follows the divisions of the exegetical outline as closely as possible. The key rests in seeking to restate each point so as to express the practical implications of each section of the text:

- I. We must turn from our fleshly desires that take us into places where we should not go or to get us involved with the wrong people (Judg 16:1; cp. 1 John 2:15–17; James 1:14; 4:4–10).
 - A. We should turn from “the pride of life,” so that we go to places unlike those where we used to go (v. 1a).
 - B. We should abandon fellowship with those who lead us into temptation and disobedience to God (v. 1b).
 - 1. We should love the Father, rather than the lust of our eyes (v. 1b α).
 - 2. We should submit to the Father, rather than to the lust of our flesh (v. 1b β).
- II. We must understand that our enemies, chief among whom is Satan, seek to trap us by means of our own sins (Judg 16:2; cp. John 15:19; 1 Pet 5:8; James 1:15).
 - A. Our enemies will learn of our disobedience (v. 2a α ; cp. Num 32:23).
 - B. We should behave like “children of the day” rather than like children of the night and darkness (v. 2a β –b β ; cp. Rom 13:12; Eph 5:11; 1 Thess 5:5).
- III. We should depend upon God to deliver us, rather than depending upon our own strength or wisdom (Judg 16:3; cp. James 4:10).
 - A. We must use the gifts of God for His service and praise, rather than for personal gain and comfort (v. 3a; cp. 1 Tim 6:5; 1 Pet 5:2).
 - B. We must avoid displaying the trophies of our own strength and wisdom, rather than allowing God’s deeds to be the focus (v. 3b; cp. John 3:30).

Commentaries

Judges:

- Block, Daniel I. *Judges, Ruth*. New American Commentary 6. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999.
- Cundall, Arthur E. “Judges: An Introduction and Commentary.” In *Judges, Ruth*. Arthur E. Cundall and Leon Morris, 7–215. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968.
- Wolf, Herbert. “Judges.” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. 12 volumes. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein, 3:373–506. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.
- Wood, Leon. *Distressing Days of the Judges*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975.

OT in NT:

- Beale, G. K., and D. A. Carson, eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007

Recommended Reading

- Carter, Terry G., J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays. *Preaching God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- MacArthur, John, Jr., and The Master's Seminary Faculty. *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition*. Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1992.
- Ryken, Leland, and Todd A. Wilson, eds. *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching in Honor of R. Kent Hughes*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007.

Old Testament

- Broyles, Craig C., ed. *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Chisholm, Robert B., Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.
- Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Sandy, D. Brent, and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., eds. *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995.

New Testament

- Liefeld, Walter L. *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon*. Ministry Resources Library. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984.