



HEBREW STORYTELLING IN SCRIPTURE

TYPICALLY, HEBREW STORIES HAVE THE following characteristics:¹

- *Omniscient narrator.* Stories are told by an anonymous third-person narrator who sees all and knows all. In the Bible, this point of view reinforces the perception that God Himself is telling the story.
- *“Show,” not “tell.”* Speech and actions reveal plot and character. We learn who the characters are and what they are like by what they say and do. If we are *told* what someone is like, it’s important.
- *Sparse physical descriptions.* If details are given, they’re significant to the story.
- *Motivations seldom stated.* Motives must be deduced from conversations and behavior.

In Scripture, we can’t assume that everything a “good” person does is good or that all a “bad” person does is bad. We must discern whether God approves or disapproves of the person’s behavior, based on God’s standards. The Bible not only tells us what God says, but it also alerts us to Satan’s schemes and lies. We are to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Hebrew storytelling in the Bible requires us to do what we must do in life—apply God’s Word to distinguish between His ways and the ways of the world.

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¹ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Exodus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2009, Kindle Edition), 35–36.