

INTERPRETING OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS: A CHECKLIST

Translations

- Compare several English translations.
- Are there different emphases or shifts of meaning?

Introductions

- Read Barry Banstra's *Reading the Old Testament* for the overall purpose, structure and historical setting of the book.

Beginnings and Endings

- What is the proper unit for reading?
- Are there any words, or shifts in scenery, subject matter or thought that mark the beginning and end of the text?
- How does this compare with the lectionary selection?

Word Study

- What important or thematic words shape the thought or movement of the text?
- Use a concordance to check various shades of meaning for the author?

Forms, Traditions and Editorial Activity

- What literary forms did the author use?
- How did the original author use or modify the traditions of Israel?
- What is the distinctive viewpoint, or intention of the biblical author that is expressed in the shape and organization of this book? How is that expressed in this text?

Literary Forms and Story World

- Outline the plot and flow of thought: beginning, middle and end.
- How do the details of the order, duration or frequency of events affect the text?
- How do aspects of scenery or place affect the text?
- Who are the main characters and how do they function in the text?
- What images are used in the text?
- What is the effect on the reader?
- What is the point of view of the voice that tells the story?
- What is the theme?

Consult Secondary Sources like Commentaries

- www.crossings.org
- www.textweek.com
- www.workingpreacher.org

Diagnosis (Law)

- Sin symptoms
- Disease or core malady
- Eternal consequences if not treated

Prognosis (Gospel)

- Why is Christ necessary?
- How is faith the antidote to malady?
- What are the new life symptoms?

Knowledge of Listeners

- What are the values, attitudes and beliefs that shape the way you listen to this text?
- What are the values, attitudes and beliefs that shape the way your faith community listens to this text?