2. LITERARY UNITS AND TEXT HIERARCHY

Part 1: Text – "What is the makeup of the passage?"
How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament
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Spring 2019

Goal: Determine the limits and basic structure of the passage.

1. **Key Questions**

2. **Basic Rules for Establishing Literary Units**

   a. Don't automatically follow an English translation's verse and chapter divisions.

      - Facts:

      - Examples:

   b. Remember that some multivolume works in our English Bible were single books in Jesus's Bible.

      - Group 1: Books that expanded beyond scroll size when vowels were added.

      - Group 2: Books we treat as multiple volumes that the Jews treat as single volumes.

   c. Look for recognizable beginning and ending markers.

      - What clues do we give in English communication?

- Samples of similar clues in Scripture:

  (1) Beginning markers:
  - a) Title
  - b) Introductory formula
  - c) Common beginning words or phrases
  - d) Vocative address
  - e) Rhetorical questions
  - f) Shifts in time
  - g) Shifts in place
  - h) Shifts in characters or speakers
  - i) Shifts in topic or theme
  - j) Shifts in genre
  - k) Shifts from poetry to prose or vice versa

  (2) Ending markers
  - a) Concluding formulae
  - b) Poetic refrains
  - c) Summary statements
  - d) Conclusions

d. Treat literary units as wholes.

- Look for patterns of similarity.

- Specific rules for different genres:

  (1) Historical narrative: Deal with scenes in light of whole episodes.

  (2) Prophetic sermons: Deal with paragraphs in light of whole oracles.

  (3) Poetry in the Psalms: Deal with stanzas (poetic paragraphs) in light of whole psalms.

e. Check your decision against modern translations.