Appendix

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

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This worksheet is a guide for "translating" a Biblical narrative text from a writing-and-reading medium to a telling-and-listening medium. It is organized around four qualitative components found in Aristotle's Poetics: plot, character, thought, and diction.

1. *Plot* is the structure of the story's action expressed as a decisive transaction, struggle, or change with assessable consequences in a life. It is the human action of the story. Analysis of plot proceeds in two directions.

    a. *Structure:* Try to discern the overall sequence of events within which the story is placed. With biblical stories, how are things being built up and pulled together? What is the impact of this story upon that? Look at the book as a whole and at the section of the book in which the story occurs.

    Next try to discern internal structure of events through which the story is developed. What signs of tensions and resolutions are there? What is the impact of all this upon the storylisteners?

    tensions: resolutions:

    b. *Episodes:* Identify the steps in the story. These steps are usually two, three, or four sentence episodes, each of which deals with a common subject matter. When the who's, what's, where's, when's and how's change, chances are a new episode has begun. Watch for possible structural parallelisms between the first and last episodes. Name each episode in a way that will trigger your memory concerning its contents.

2. *Character* is the motivation of the story's characters by which they are ascribed moral qualities on the basis of what they seek or avoid. It is the human motivation of the story. Analysis of character proceeds in three directions.

    a. *Perspective:* Notice the shifts from "objective" description of the story's action to "subjective" interpretation of the story's characters. These inside points of view are rarely used, but when they are, they give insights into the characters that are invaluable to a person trying to "get into" the story.

    b. *Norms:* Place yourself (and your listeners) into the world of the story and its ancient storytellers and storylisteners. What norms of judgment about what is good and bad, right and wrong, happy and unhappy are operative? How can these values be translated in the storytelling so that they can be experienced by contemporary storylisteners? Commentaries are a primary resource for this task.

    good/right/happy   *bad/wrong/unhappy*

    c. *Distance:* On the basis of the shifts of perspective and norms of judgment, sense how close to or far from the characters you feel throughout the story. Does this change as the story progresses? (Can you identify modern day counterparts of the ancient characters?)

    close: *far:*
    (or identification with)   (or alienation from)

3. *Thought* is the expression of the story's ideas as listener expectations are built up and then reversed. It is the human decision-making of the story. Analysis of thought seeks to discover the suspense and surprise of a story's development.

a. *Verbal Threads* are the words and phrases that are repeated in a story. They reflect the mnemonic and imaginative patterns of the original storyteller. Look for words and phrases that recur not only within the story but also across the stories that precede it (an exhaustive concordance is the key tool here). Look for associations and not definitions, for what is heightened, reversed, altered.

b. *Diction Rules* are communication guidelines. They are applied to a story based upon analysis of plot, character, and thought.
   i. Adapt delivery verbally and nonverbally.
   ii. Achieve clarity with alternate wordings and brief explanations.
   iii. Avoid trivialization by keeping metaphorical terms and narrative forms.

REMEMBER: Analysis of the text is not an end in itself. It is a means to translating a written text into the spoken word!