

INTERPRETING OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES

I. INTRODUCTION

As for the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer (1 Chron. 29:29).

The Levites ... instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read (Neh. 8:7-8).

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

II. THE LITERARY FORM OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

A. Prose vs. poetry

III. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AS HISTORY

A. Definitions of "History"

*[History is] the science which first investigates and then records, in their causal relations and development, such past human activities as are (a) definite in time and space, (b) social in nature, and (c) socially significant.*¹

*The story of experiences of men living in civilized societies.*²

*History is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of the past.*³

*History is the undertaking of rendering an account of a particular, significant, and coherent sequence of past human events.*⁴

B. The Intent of History

C. History as "The Facts"

D. History as the Record of the Facts

IV. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AS LITERATURE

a. Historical Narrative as Story

b. Definitions of “story”

"the telling of a happening or connected series of happenings, whether true or fictitious; account; narration."⁵

"any account, written, oral or in the mind, true or imaginary, of actions in a time sequence."⁶

c. Characteristics of Historical narrative

1. Historical
2. Artistic
3. Entertaining
4. Anthological
5. Selective
6. Unified
7. Realistic
8. Romantic
9. Revelatory
10. Response-evoking
11. Theological

V. CONCLUSION: READING HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

¹ Gilbert J. Garraghan, *A Guide to Historical Method* (New York: Fordham University, 1946), p. 10.

² Gustaaf Johannes Renier, *History: Its Purpose and Method* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University, 1982), p. 38.

³ Johan Huizinga, "A Definition of the Concept of History," R. Klibansky and H. J. Paton, eds., *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1936), p. 9.

⁴ Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 6.

⁵ *Webster's New World Dictionary*, s.v. "story." (1980)

⁶ Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*, p. 511, s.v. "Story."