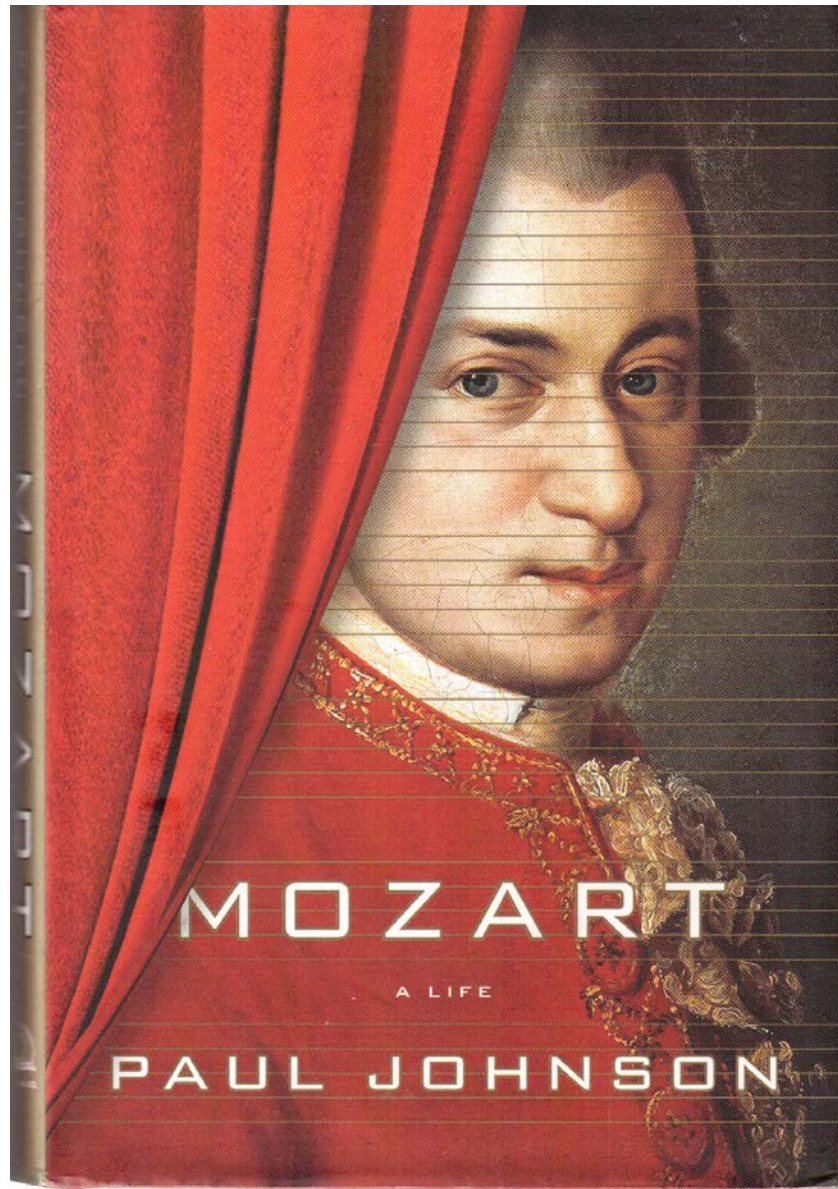


Rightly Handling the Genres of Scripture

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SPD Faith and Science Conference
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DEFINITION

Genres are categories of literature, art or media which can be distinguished by different forms and content.



The Voyage of the SPACE BEAGLE

by A.E. van Vogt



IDENTIFYING GENRE

CONTENT CUES

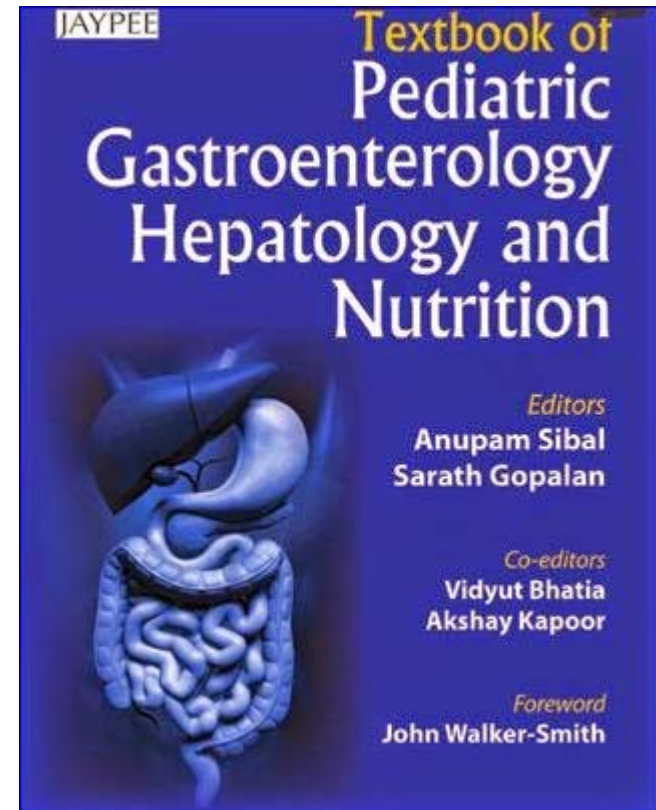
“Once upon a time. . .”

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could . . .”



DIFFERENT GENRES

Would you approach these two types of literature in the same way?



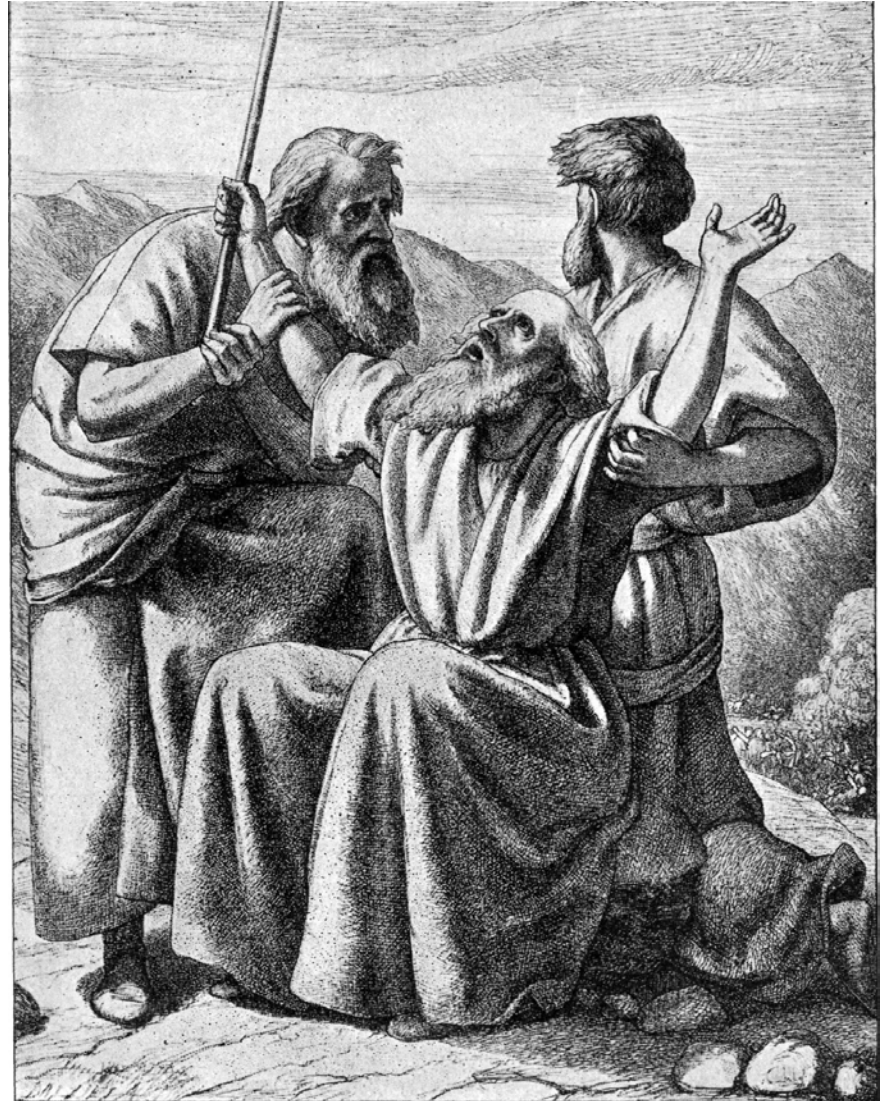
IMPORTANCE OF GENRE

- It tells us what to expect when we read, and how we should approach the passage.
- It helps us make sense out of sections of Scripture that at first might seem confusing.
- It can open up new depth to our understanding of Scripture.
- With a better understanding of Scripture we can better apply it to our lives.

NARRATIVE

VALUE

- Stories are interesting and catch our attention
- Stories help us remember information more easily
- Stories can help us make sense of multiple pieces of information

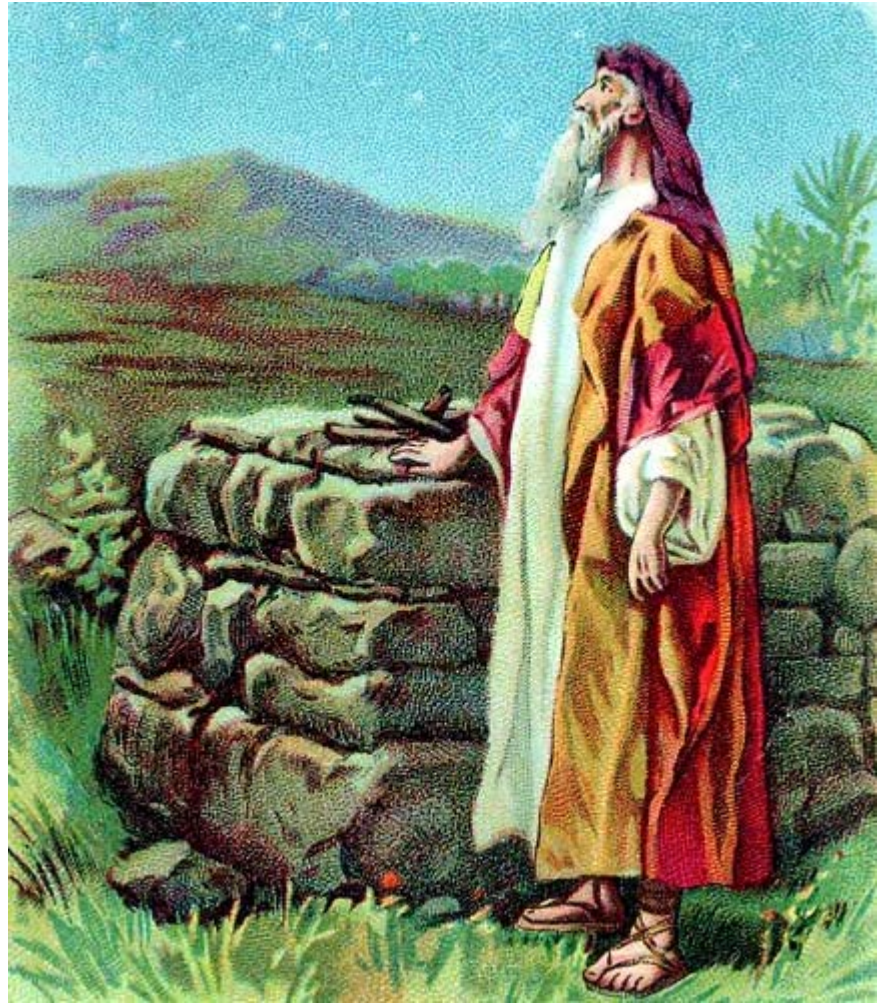


Picture in public domain

NARRATIVE

FEATURES

- Tells a story of events
- Tells the story of God's relationship with humans
- Important Features:
 - Plot
 - Character
 - Scene
- Every detail is important



Picture in public domain

NARRATIVE

THINGS TO NOTE



How does it fit with the metanarrative of Scripture?



Characters are broken people like us
Not always examples to follow.

EPISTLES

- Follow the form of ancient letters
- Address real life situations



- Cautions:

We only have one side of a two sided conversation

Be careful about applying all the solutions universally

POETRY

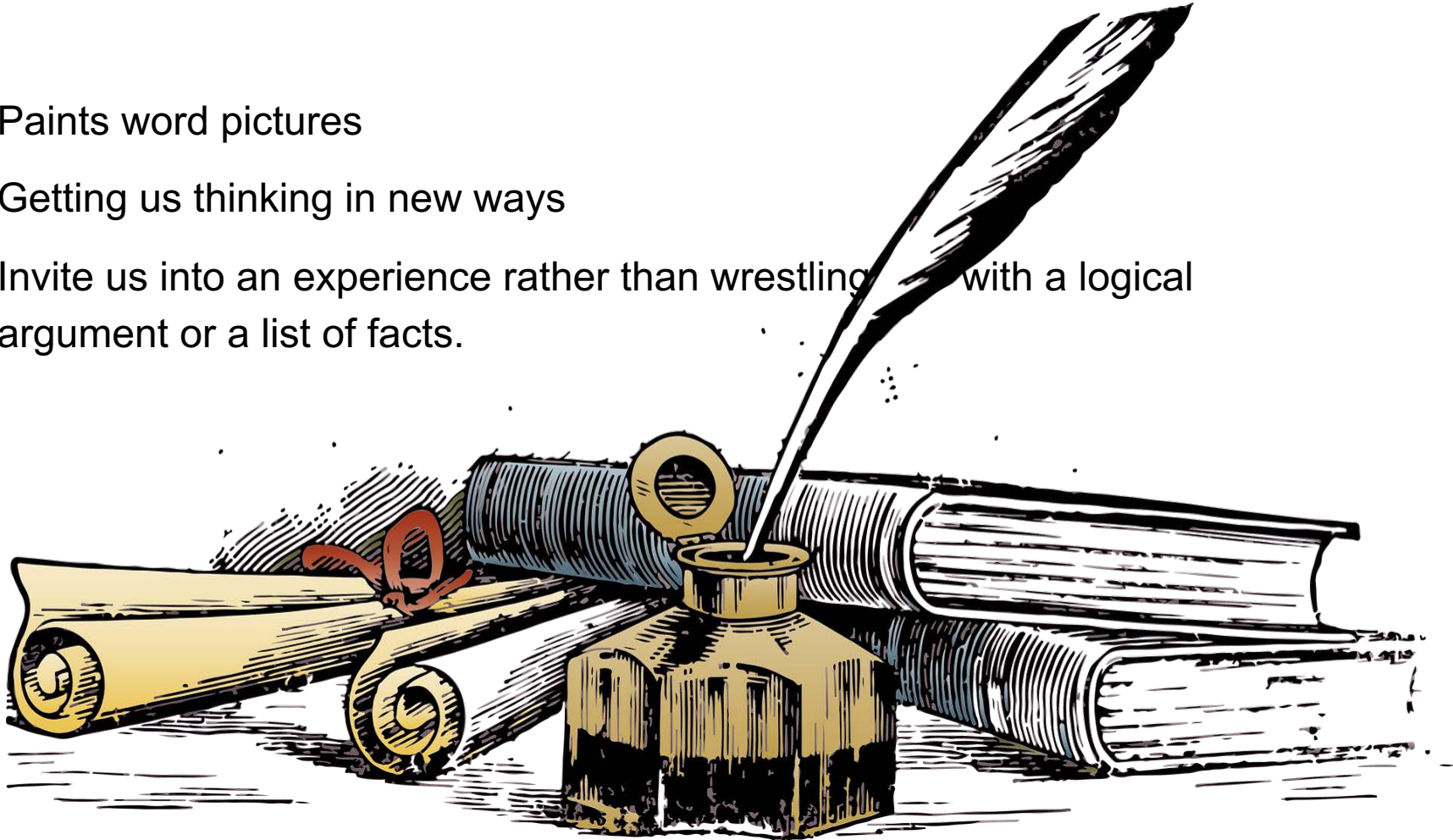
FEATURES

- Brevity of form
- Figurative language
- Imagery
- Emotive language
- Structural features including parallelism, refrains, and chiasms

POETRY

IMPACT

- Paints word pictures
- Getting us thinking in new ways
- Invite us into an experience rather than wrestling with a logical argument or a list of facts.



PROPHECY

| Classical Prophecy (Most of the prophets) | Apocalyptic Prophecy (Daniel and Revelation) |
|--|--|
| Primarily local or nationally focused | Primarily universal in its sweep of history with an emphasis on end time |
| Eschatology is within history | Eschatology comes from outside of history |
| Some contrasts | Striking contrasts |
| Limited symbolism | Profuse, composite symbolism |
| Basis = word of the Lord and some visions | Basis = visions and dreams often with an angel interpreter |
| Mostly Conditional unless Messianic | Unconditional – the outcome is assured |

LAW

CATEGORIES OF LAW

Apodictic

- Absolute
- Universal

Casuistic

- Case specific
- Apply in selected circumstances

LAW

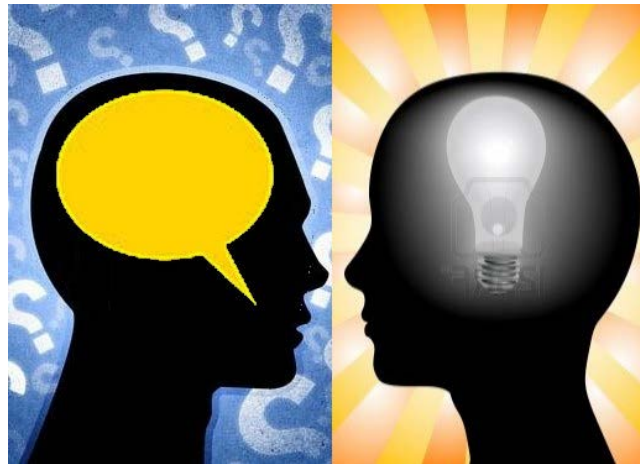
READING THE LAWS

- Israel's laws generally related to one of three things
 - Sanctuary and sacrificial system (pointing to Christ)
 - Setting Israel apart as God's holy people
 - Ethical living that balanced justice and mercy



SUMMARY

- Multiple literary genres can be found in the Bible
- Each genre appeals to us in different ways
- Clues to the nature of these genres can be found within the text
- Identifying the genre can help us understand how to approach the text and understand its meaning.



GENRE & THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF ORIGINS



- Three major proposals for the genre of Gen 1-3
 - Poetry or Poetic metaphor
 - Mythological (prose or narrative)
 - Historical Narrative

- The nature of the Genre determines whether we should take Gen 1-3 literally

GENRE OF GEN 1:1-2:4

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Statistical Approaches

- Stephen Boyd:

Compared ratio of *wayyiqtoles* (actions in the past, which are considered the main verb form of the narrative tense) to finite verbs. Result: The probability that Genesis 1:1–2:3 is narrative is between .999942 and .999987 at a 99.5 percent confidence level.

- Daniel Bediako

The percentage of prose particles (24.4%) falls in the category of narrative prose rather than poetry

Literary Evidence the Author Intended the account to be understood as real

- Events are presented in chronological order
- Specific temporal terms are used eg evening and morning
- The use of *toledot* (generations) in Gen 2:4 shows that the narrator intends the account of creation to be just as literal as the rest of the Genesis narratives.