



# Narrative in the Hebrew Bible (Oxford Bible Series)

*David M. Gunn, Danna Nolan Fewell*

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After almost two centuries of historical criticism, biblical scholarship has recently taken major shifts in direction, most notably towards literary study of the Bible. Much germinal criticism has taken as its primary focus narrative texts of the Hebrew Bible (the 'Old Testament'). This book belongs in this movement and provides a lucid guide to its interpretative possibilities. It tries to be both theoretical and practical, combining discussion of method and the business of reading in general with numerous illustrations through readings of particular texts. The opening chapter indicates how literary criticism is related to other dominant ways of reading the text over the last two thousand years, using as an example the story of Cain and Abel. In subsequent methodological chapters, the authors discuss characters, not excluding the narrator and God; plot, modifying recent theory to accommodate the peculiar complexity of biblical narratives; and the play of language through repetition, ambiguity, multivalence, metaphor and intertextuality. The concluding chapter, on readers and responsibility, explores the ideological dimension of narrative interpretation, with particular attention to Genesis 1-3, a story which has generated much discussion about gender and social hierarchy. Does this text define or challenge the status quo (of either the ancient or the modern world)? The authors lay out some of the debate and question what values are at work when we and others read and champion readings. Other extended readings include: the stories of Abraham and Sarah, and of Tamar and Judah in Genesis, the book of Jonah, and the account of Nebuchadnezzar and the three Jews thrown into the fiery furnace, from the book of Daniel. An extensive bibliography completes the book, arranged by subject and biblical text.

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