

# Writing Styles of the Bible

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## *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 109** In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.
- 110** In order to discover *the sacred authors' intention*, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current. “For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression.”

## Writing Styles

- Narrative:** Narratives tell a story in a straightforward way, recounting some event or story of an important person in Israel's history.
- Law:** The Law, mostly contained in the first five books of the Bible, called the Pentateuch, are writings that communicate how to best love God and each other. The Law is necessary to free us from sin and direct us toward the ultimate goodness, who is God.
- Prophecy:** The prophetic writings of the Bible foretold the consequences of the current course of action of the people of Israel and called them to repentance and right worship of God. Prophetic writings also warn us today of similar actions and consequences in our own lives and call us to turn away from sin and pursue holiness. These writings would also tell of the fulfillment of God's promises to His people and of His loving care for them.

- Poetry:** The poetic writings of the Bible use metaphorical and artistic language to communicate basic truths about God and human nature. Although they typically do not rhyme, they follow a certain rhythm and meter and employ characteristic literary devices such as parallelism and repetition.
- Wisdom/Proverbs:** Wisdom literature comments on the human condition using learned, quotable sayings. These often offer advice for a wide range of topics and situations.
- Parable:** Parables are short stories that communicate layers of truth. Jesus often used parables to teach His disciples.
- Genealogy:** Genealogies record family ancestries and reveal important family connections between individuals in the Bible.
- Epistle/Letter:** The epistles are letters written by St. Paul and other Apostles to early Christian communities and individuals to encourage them in their faith. They offer advice and teaching to their recipients that often apply to our situations today.
- Apocalyptic:** Apocalyptic writings communicate truths about God and our salvation through visions, often including strange imagery and symbolism.