

How to Read The Bible: History, Prophecy, Literature - Why modern readers need to know the difference and what it means for faith today  
by Steven L. McKenzie. OUP 2006

There seems little doubt that *How to read the Bible* is the personal manifesto of its author. He is desperate to make known what to him is the obvious truth that the Bible is not a work of history, or authored by God, and that it is a complex jumble of genres written by multiple human hands.

As a Jew who has long been persuaded intellectually and emotionally by the scholarship of Higher Biblical Criticism this is hardly iconoclastic or shocking, but the fact that Steven L McKenzie is Professor of Hebrew Bible at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee is an indication that for his students and the members of Christian faith communities in his part of the United States the opposite might well be the case.

McKenzie introduces his subject by analysing the book of Jonah, and using it as the platform to explain his views about the genres of literature that exist in the Bible and the importance of recognizing the type of text one is reading before trying to understand it. In the course of five following chapters he then considers biblical historiography, prophecy, wisdom literature, apocalyptic and finally the letters in the New Testament.

The author's mission is clear on every page and is to be applauded; *How to Read the Bible* is an excellent summary of the position of regular biblical scholarship and a pointer to all but the irrevocably close-minded of how much richness may be derived from the Bible when one's full rational faculties are deployed.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh