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Article: Point of View in the Book of Ezra

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## Point of View in the Book of Ezra

*This is the third article in a four-part series "Studies in the Book of Ezra."*

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Every narrative reflects a point of view, whether with conscious intent or not, and the Book of Ezra is no exception. A literary analysis of Ezra would therefore be incomplete without consideration of its point of view and the implications of its point of view for the book's theological message.

### The Meaning of Point of View

Point of view influences how a story is told.<sup>1</sup> It is the perspective from which an author presents the setting, characters, actions, and events of a narrative.<sup>2</sup> Literary critics usually distinguish two elements in point of view: person and position.<sup>3</sup> Person refers to the

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one who tells the story, the narrator.<sup>4</sup> The narrator may speak in the first person or third person. In first-person narration the narrator tells the story using first-person pronouns. In third-person narration the narrator recounts events "in the manner of an impersonal historical account."<sup>5</sup>

Position, on the other hand, refers to the vantage point from which the narrator tells the story.<sup>6</sup> The narrator's position involves

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both his knowledge and his values.<sup>7</sup> In terms of knowledge the narrator may be either omniscient or limited. A first-person narrator invariably operates from a limited point of view, since the story filters through his eyes or consciousness and is restricted to his knowledge.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand a third-person narrator may be "omniscient," knowing everything inside out,<sup>9</sup> or limited in knowledge, ranging from less than divine to more ignorant than his audience.<sup>10</sup> Every narrator has an ideological standpoint from which he approaches his material. His evaluations of events and characters reflect his value system. Not only does the narrator's value system play a role in the text's formative background, shaping its selection, arrangement, and presentation, but it also constitutes a crucial aspect of the message he desires to communicate.

### Point of View and Biblical Theology

Apart from its important literar...

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