

**HOW A STORY MEANS:  
A NARRATIVE LINGUISTIC READING OF EXODUS 2-4**

by

**DOUGLAS JAMES DUNBAR**

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

.....  
Dr. Robert J. V. Hiebert, PhD; Thesis Supervisor

.....  
Dr. Larry Perkins, Ph.D.; Second Reader

.....  
Dr. Dirk Büchner, Ph.D.; External Examiner

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

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## **Abstract**

Well-written narratives communicate more than information. What a story communicates is as important as how the story communicates. The narrative flow of a story engages the reader in the action. Narrative conventions assist the reader in connecting prior knowledge or experience with the story. Authors also make linguistic decisions as to how the story is conveyed. The syntax of clauses, sentences, paragraphs and whole documents conveys the story to the reader in expected, and at times unexpected, ways.

This study merges narrative and text-linguistic exegetical methods in the reading of Exodus 2-4. Text-linguistics, the primary method employed, examines the syntax of the story in an effort to understand how the language has been employed in the communicative act. These observations are then combined with narrative observations: characterization, plot, type-scenes, and connections with other stories within the same work, in this case the Pentateuch.

## Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	iv
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter One. Exodus 2-4: A Narrative Unit</b>	15
Dividing Chapters One and Two	16
Dividing Chapters Four and Five	19
<i>We-X-Qatal</i> in the Pentateuch	22
Conclusion	31
<b>Chapter Two. The Narrative Structure of Exodus 2-4</b>	34
Narrative Syntax of Exodus 2-4	37
From Narrative Syntax to Narrative Context	46
Conclusion	51
<b>Chapter Three. The Structure and Genre of Direct Speech</b>	53
Method and Genre Categories of Direct Speech Analysis	55
Clause Types in the Direct Speeches of Exodus 2-4	67
From Dialogue Syntax to Narrative Purpose	99
Conclusion	101
<b>Conclusion</b>	102
<b>Bibliography</b>	107
<b>Curriculum Vitae</b>	112

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## Introduction

The study of Exodus is, for many, primarily concerned with the events recounted in the text. Commentators have been more concerned with whether or not the Exodus from Egypt occurred, the role of the tradition in Israel's religion, or the prehistory of the present text, than with the text itself. Some scholars seek archaeological and historical evidence that they use to date and map the exodus and wilderness journeys, as well as to attempt to prove that Moses did in fact write the book of Exodus—and the Pentateuch as a whole. Other scholars look at the same data and conclude the opposite, i.e., there was no exodus or Moses, at least not as the Bible recounts them. The events recounted in the text and the origins of the text tend to receive more attention than the text itself.<sup>1</sup> However, this is beginning to change as the methods of narrative criticism and text-linguistics are being used in the reading of biblical texts.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this study is to follow this latter trend and merge these two reading strategies in relation to Exodus 2-4, which describes the call of Moses.

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<sup>1</sup> Representatives of these two approaches can be found in Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Interpretation, A Bible Commentary For Teaching And Preaching; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991); Richard E. Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003); Richard E. Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah: With a new English translation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001); Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); William H. Propp, *Exodus 1-18: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1999); Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus* (The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Carol L. Meyers, *Exodus* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); G. W. Ashby, *Go Out and Meet God: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids; Edinburgh: Eerdmans; Handsel Press, 1998); Jean-Marc Heimerdinger, *Topic, Focus and Foreground in Ancient Hebrew Narratives* (JSOTSup 295, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Arie C. Leder, "The Coherence of Exodus: Narrative Unity and Meaning," *Calvin Theological Journal* 36 (2001): 251-269; Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989); Pamela T. Reis, *Reading the Lines: A Fresh Look at the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002); John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

## Underlying Assumptions and Limitations of this Study

It will be necessary, from the very outset, to define and examine the underlying presuppositions of the current investigation. Discussing the developments in pentateuchal scholarship, Jean-Louis Ska concludes, "From now on, no one can begin to study the Pentateuch without first taking into consideration what his or her methodological presuppositions are, because there is no longer a consensus."<sup>3</sup> Since the 1970s, Ska contends, the assumptions and methods behind research on the Pentateuch have become so varied and diverse that it is essential for interpreters to examine and defend their particular mode of investigation. In discussing text-linguistics, a method employed in this study, David A. Dawson asserts that "there are at least three things to which a reader should find access—in addition to the results of a work undertaken—in a research publication: the author's presuppositions, theoretical perspectives and methodology."<sup>4</sup> What follows in this introduction is a response to these challenges.

This investigation of Exodus 2-4 will concern itself with the text and little else. This assumes that the text of Exodus is to be explored as a piece of literature within the larger literary unit of the Pentateuch.<sup>5</sup> Whether or not the text as it stands is the combination of various sources redacted and edited over time until it obtained canonical status is, for the purpose of this study, a non-issue. The compositional history of the text is largely a matter of conjecture and remains theoretical. "Despite the massive amount of information provided by these studies, much of it helpful, an understanding of the Book of Exodus as a whole, and as it stands in the received text

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<sup>3</sup> Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 129.

<sup>4</sup> David Allan Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, JSOTSup 177 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>5</sup> This agrees with the tradition that the Pentateuch is a unified document at some level, distinct from the other divisions of the Hebrew Bible. Thus the notion of a Hexateuch (Genesis-Joshua) is not in view in this work.

of the OT, has been lacking."<sup>6</sup> While it is possible that the text has been composed and reworked in the course of its compositional history, all that remains is the completed text. The underlying assumption being made is that one can read the Pentateuch as a literary unit, and therefore interpret the parts in the light of the whole.

A further implication of the focus of this study is that the events behind the text are of secondary importance. "In other words, whether or not the story is true history, its *meaning* is detachable from the specific story it sets forth."<sup>7</sup> The question as to the historical veracity of the events recounted in the text has been set aside. While the historical location of the events and persons recounted is valuable in certain contexts, the present study is concerned with the linguistic and narrative features of the text that create a coherent story.

The text before the reader is that preserved in the Masoretic Text [MT] and presented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* [BHS].<sup>8</sup> With the exception of Exodus 2:24 and 4:24-26, Exodus 2-4 is not very problematic from a text-critical perspective, and alternate readings do not significantly contribute to, or challenge, the methods employed.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, this study will not offer a reconstruction of the text, but will assume the veracity of the text as it stands. Admittedly this creates some hermeneutical tensions in relation to defining author(s) and reader(s) and their respective historical relationship to the events and the text under investigation.

A further assumption of this investigation is that literary themes, variations, and type scenes are related to others within the Pentateuch. Though the text may be reminiscent of other

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<sup>6</sup> John I. Durham, *Exodus* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco: Word Books, 1987), xxi.

<sup>7</sup> Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 6. This is a summary statement regarding the approach of Dr. Conyers Middleton.

<sup>8</sup> *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: With Werkgroep Informatica, Vrije Universiteit Morphology; Bible. O.T. Hebrew. Werkgroep Informatica, Vrije Universiteit.* (Logos Bible Software, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 26–27.



ancient Near Eastern traditions, these comparative studies will be set aside. For example, the birth story of Moses will be investigated in relation to the birth narratives in Genesis rather than in the Sargon birth legend. An attendant study of comparative philology will also be set aside. Thus, for example, whether or not the "ark" of Moses is a common term in cognate languages for a "basket" is not as important as the fact that the biblical use of the word is elsewhere restricted to the vessel built by Noah. The present study, therefore, only engages in comparative studies that could be termed inner-biblical.

Though much has been written regarding the analysis of biblical narrative, the narrative segments of Exodus have received little attention. The bulk of work has focused on Genesis and the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua - 2 Kings).<sup>10</sup> The reason for this is probably that the genre of these works, in contrast to Exodus, is almost completely narrative. Exodus contains large segments of legal material, though an examination of the narrative framework of the legal material is a fascinating study.<sup>11</sup> The change of genres throughout the book makes it rather cumbersome for taking a narrative critical reading, inasmuch as that necessitates considerable discussion of how the other genre elements contribute to, or distract from, the narrative flow of the text. Exodus does not present a series of vignettes, but rather an extended story, which does not end within the confines of the book – unless one takes the entire Pentateuch (or at least Exodus-Deuteronomy, itself a debatable termination point for the story) as a single literary unit,

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<sup>10</sup> A survey seminal works on biblical narrative supports this claim. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); Shimeon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (JSOTSup 70, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994); J. P. Fokkeman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana Studies In Biblical Literature 16; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch*, 47-59.

as John Sailhamer has done.<sup>12</sup>

Discourse analysis, a relative newcomer to the field of OT studies, has also tended to focus attention on Genesis and the Deuteronomistic History.<sup>13</sup> The reason for this may simply be that the field is young and those researching and publishing in this field have yet to apply the method to Exodus. Instead the focus has been on developing the method's theoretical base, and then using various other texts to demonstrate the its usefulness. This method will be employed in the present study and in the process its legitimacy as an exegetical tool will be shown.

In summary, then, this investigation seeks to sidestep the previously mentioned historical-critical problems involved in Exodus research by focusing solely on the text and utilizing methods that are compatible with such an approach. The decision to do so does not, however, mean that the prehistory of the text, comparative studies, or the historical investigation into the events described in the text are not important or relevant in the task of interpretation. These are merely being set aside in order to investigate the text as it is presented. It is the hope of this writer that the present study contributes to a fuller understanding of the text as we now have it and its place within the larger complex of the literary traditions of ancient Israel.

### Description of Method

As mentioned above, this analysis is predicated upon the merging of two text-centered approaches. Narrative criticism focuses on the story as presented by the text, with attention given to the elements of plot, character, setting, intertextual links and rhetorical function/features of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Robert D. Bergen, "The Role of Genesis 22:1-19 in the Abraham Cycle: A Computer Assisted Textual Interpretation," *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (1990): 313-326. Walter R. Bodine, *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers* (The Society Of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies 46; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); Alviero Nicciacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose* (JSOTSup 86; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990). Some work has been done in Exodus. See E. J. van Wolde, *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996* (Biblical Interpretation Series 29; Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997).

text. Discourse analysis focuses on the linguistic structuring of the text. Both approaches assume the unity and coherence of the text as presented, regardless of the form-, source-, and redaction-critical possibilities that may or may not underlie the final form of the text. What follows is a brief description of the strengths and weaknesses of each method. In the analysis of Exodus 2-4, both methods will be used either comparatively or contrastively.

### *Narrative Criticism – Assumptions and Procedures*

The narrative critical approach to the biblical text assumes the coherence of the text as it stands. Rather than explaining inconsistency or repetition of material as evidence of separate sources, narrative critics endeavour to explain the literary function of such phenomena. They assume that the final redactor or author has written a cogent text, and that apparent problems in the text may indicate lack of understanding on the part of the modern reader. The primary focus is the text as it is presented, rather than facets that might lie behind the text.

Narrative criticism looks primarily at the elements that make up a story, and how the story will impact readers. The question of *what* a text means is secondary to *how* a text means. "Literary theory has shifted from assuming that meaning exists objectively in texts to assuming that meaning is relative, not fixed or absolute, and that meaning arises as the result of a complex interaction between the reader and the text – and the cultures from which both emerge."<sup>14</sup> This shift in approach indicates that meaning is ascertained as the reader encounters the text. While this assertion of modern literary theory may be valid, the assumption made here is that the author of the text has attempted to control the reader's response. Using type scenes (a repeated or familiar storyline), specialized vocabulary, grammatical constructs, and the narrator's point of

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<sup>14</sup> Gary F. Waller, et al, *The Lexington Introduction to Literature: Reading and Responding to Texts* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1987), 4-5.

view; the author seeks to guide the reader in appraising the events and characters of the text.

*How* the story means is the artistic design of the author to guide the reader in determining *what* the story means.<sup>15</sup>

### *Narrative Criticism – Weaknesses of the Method*

That the text of Scripture should be analyzed based on the assumptions of twenty-first century literary-analytical methodologies has caused some to question the validity of the approach. Various scholars have employed narrative criticism. Those who use this method, at times, do so from a perspective that a biblical narrative is no more than a story.

Narrative critics often assume when they study the Bible as literature that the text must be viewed as fiction. This seems to result, however, not from the nature of the method itself but from a misunderstanding of the number of features that historical and fictional texts share. Students of ancient historiography helpfully stress how few literary characteristics actually enable the reader to distinguish what we today would call historical fiction from well-written, interesting history.<sup>16</sup>

While the present study, as has already been stated, sets aside the issue of the historical veracity of the events behind the text, this is not to say that the text does not have a historical background. The commitment to reading the text as story does not necessarily imply that the events depicted are fictitious. Since the aim of this study is to determine the function of Exodus 2-4 within the narrative of the Pentateuch as a whole, it falls outside the scope of investigation to attempt to distinguish historical and fictitious elements of the text.

A second charge leveled against applying a narrative critical method is the tendency of some literary critics to ignore the original intention behind the composition of the text. The modern reader replaces the initial audience, for whom the text was intended. Reader response

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<sup>15</sup> Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 17.

<sup>16</sup> William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: W Publishing Group a Division of Thomas Nelson, Inc. 1993), 437.

criticism, one extreme along the narrative critical spectrum, assumes that meaning is not inherent in the text itself, but in the reader's/hearer's understanding of the text.<sup>17</sup> The contention of this study is that the response of the reader is important, but that the text has been composed in such a way as to guide this response.<sup>18</sup>

### *Discourse Analysis – Assumption and Procedures*

Discourse analysis, like narrative criticism, assumes the basic coherence of the final form of the biblical text and seeks to understand the syntactic strategy of the language. In addition, discourse analysis focuses on larger units of communication. "It is now recognized that human communication as it is normally practiced actually occurs only above the sentence level."<sup>19</sup> A linguistic exegesis of a text must therefore locate its findings within the larger work to which a pericope is related; meaning is not found in the analysis of sentences and clauses, but in the communication act as a whole. While the prehistory of the text may be acknowledged, the linguistic structuring of the final text is assumed to be deliberate and meaningful. "[B]iblical exegesis that fails to take into account the morphosyntactic contours of the text overlooks significant aspects of the message deposited by the producer(s) of the text."<sup>20</sup> The text as a whole is taken as the object of investigation.

The primary goal of discourse analysis is to understand the linguistic hierarchy of the passage based on the verbal forms found in the text. It has long been noted that biblical Hebrew

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<sup>17</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 153.

<sup>18</sup> Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch*, 90.

<sup>19</sup> Robert D. Bergen, "Text as a Guide to Authorial Intention: An Introduction to Discourse Criticism," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* September (1987): 327.

<sup>20</sup> Robert D. Bergen, "Evil Spirits and Eccentric Grammar: A Study in the Relationship between Text and Meaning in Hebrew Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake: Summer Institute of Linguistics; Eisenbrauns, 1994), 332.

narrative is driven along the temporal plane primarily by the *waw consecutive* verb form. Many discourse grammarians refer to this as the *wayyiqtol* form of the verb, and consider this to be the mainline of the discourse. While this is often discussed in grammars and syntax texts in connection with Hebrew sentences, discourse analysis focuses on larger sections of text beyond the sentence. "By noting how the text itself syntactically defines paragraphs, the interpreter can better know what elements of the narrative are to be read together or separately."<sup>21</sup> "A full-fledged discourse analysis is not only concerned with the smallest units within the language, but is also concerned with how these smaller units comprise ever more complex and larger units."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the linguistic structure of a paragraph or episode and the linguistic organization of a text are examined, as is the syntax of individual clauses, phrases and sentences. Ernst R. Wendland's succinct description of the procedure of discourse analysis is instructive for the present study,

The procedures of discourse analysis cannot be regarded as valid unless they are applied to a complete, self-contained unit, or pericope, of some kind. The text must have recognizable borders that can be precisely defined and defended—at whatever level in the compositional hierarchy it happens to lie. Furthermore, a smaller segment will have to be related to the larger portion in which it is included as an integral unit, while a larger section must be broken down during the course of analysis into its constituent elements. This implies that a holistic (whole-part), *discourse perspective* has been adopted from the start and consistently maintained throughout a particular study.<sup>23</sup>

The works of Alviero Niccacci, Roy Heller, Brian Rocine, Robert Longacre and Robert Bergen are the primary sources for this study. Niccacci has provided a framework for analyzing, categorizing and diagramming the text by means of verb form and syntax, and that framework

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<sup>21</sup> Roy L. Heller, *Narrative Structure and Discourse Constellations: An Analysis of Clause Function in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 429.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989), 38.

<sup>23</sup> Ernst R. Wendland, "Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry: A Procedural Outline," in *Discourse Perspectives on Hebrew Poetry in the Scriptures* ed. Ernst R. Wendland, USB Monograph Series 7 (Reading; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 7.

will be used in the analysis to follow.<sup>24</sup> Heller, Rocine and Longacre have developed discourse linguistic tools and understandings that are similar to one another, yet diverse as well. The discussion on direct speech in chapter three will reveal the diversity of these authors and some of the challenges of utilizing discourse linguistics. Bergen's work on eccentric grammar as a rhetorical device of the text will also be applied to the text that is the focus of the present analysis.<sup>25</sup> Bergen suggests that biblical authors employ unusual syntax and vocabulary to indicate points of emphasis or salience.

Exodus 2-4 will be analyzed linguistically to determine both its boundaries and its inner divisions. It should then be possible to determine whether or not there are correlations between the linguistic structure and the narrative elements of the text that suggest a specific and deliberate organization of the passage.

#### *Discourses Analysis – Weaknesses*

One of the first weaknesses encountered in text-linguistics or discourse analysis is the diversity of nomenclature used by various scholars. The first problem has to do with the two common designations for the method just mentioned, and this has caused confusion and misunderstanding in the field. Dawson critiques Niccacci for his use of "discourse" to refer only to direct speech elements, when—in Dawson's understanding—a "discourse" refers to a self-contained pericope.<sup>26</sup> Niccacci explains the misunderstanding, "I would have never suspected that an 'innocent' term like 'discourse' might cause so many misunderstandings until I became

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<sup>24</sup> Nicciacci, *Syntax*, 218.

<sup>25</sup> Bergen, "Evil Spirits and Eccentric Grammar," 320-335.

<sup>26</sup> Dawson, *Text-Linguistics*, 31.

familiar with 'discourse analysis,' the USA counterpart to European text-linguistics."<sup>27</sup> What one considers a "discourse" the other considers a "text"; what one considers a "speech" the other considers a "discourse." From that root comes many other theoretical designations and tags that suggest that the discipline is in need of clarity in terminology. One struggles through the publications to find common ground. It will be understood throughout this work that discourse analysis and text-linguistics are synonymous and refer to method rather than text types or genre.

Once the above fog has cleared, however, the primary weakness of discourse analysis is that it tends to be descriptive and focused essentially on syntax, thus contributing little to discerning the meaning of the text because the investigator typically stops short of taking this exegetical step.

Overall, these studies [modern linguistic analyses] might be characterized as abundant in formal analyses but somewhat skimpy in meaning... The descriptive studies of forms and constructions are of value since they represent systematic and rigorous inventories of specific linguistic phenomena. They sort out items and classify them, giving a clearer picture of the linguistic material at hand in Old Hebrew. But one has to remember that it is not syntactic forms and construction types on their own which produce meaning in natural language understanding.<sup>28</sup>

The method is primarily designed to decipher how the language communicates through detailed analysis of clause forms and hierarchy within a larger text. It is for this reason that the present study will correlate the linguistic data with the narrative function of the passage within the larger story of the Pentateuch, with a view to demonstrating how the linguistic elements of the text contribute to its meaning.

Another weakness of the method is not so much the fault of the method as it is with the practitioner. In order to discuss the discourse structures of the language one must have a high

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<sup>27</sup> Alviero Niccacci, "Review of Dawson, D. A., *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*," *Libre Annuus* 45 (1995), 544.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Marc Heimerdinger, *Topic Focus and Foreground in Ancient Hebrew Narrative* (JSOTSup 295; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 13.



level of competence in the language, and the ability to relate findings and conclusions of a particular passage to the composition or book as a whole.<sup>29</sup> The successful employment of discourse analysis then depends greatly on the analyst's competence in the language and knowledge of the composition in question. In the case of biblical Hebrew, the extant corpus upon which to make judgments as to what is typical ancient Hebrew syntax and what is unusual—and therefore marked or highlighted in the text—is limited. However, since this investigation is limited to the narrative segments of the Pentateuch, the linguistic data under consideration is confined to that particular textual body.

#### The Combination of Methods

By bringing narrative criticism and discourse analysis together, this writer proposes that the strengths of each will offset the weaknesses in the other. The descriptive and syntactic study of the text through discourse analysis can be enriched by considering the artistry of the storytelling, and vice versa. "A narrative is, in the last analysis, words: storytelling builds worlds, and characters, and actions, out of vocabulary and syntax—nothing more, nothing less."<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, a discourse linguistic approach to the text assumes that the results of the analysis will point to the intentions of the author(s) as they have been encoded in the linguistic phenomena of the text.<sup>31</sup> This offsets the tendency of narrative criticism to analyze the text based on modern literary conventions. Studying the linguistic conventions of biblical Hebrew brings the literary structure and artistry of the text to the fore. Thus, linguistic analysis offers a needed

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<sup>29</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 54.

<sup>30</sup> Jerome T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Bergen, "Text as a Guide," 327-336.

control.<sup>32</sup>

Both methods focus on blocks of text that are larger than clauses or sentences. However, in order to appreciate the structure of larger blocks of text, the form and function of individual clause types must be considered. Throughout this study, a "necessarily circular"<sup>33</sup> approach will be taken, moving from the larger to smaller contexts and back again. The syntactic phenomena will be considered in the light of the narrative function of the clause types.

In chapter one, the boundaries of the text will be established based on linguistic signaling and plot structure. Whether or not Exodus 2-4 can be treated as a self-contained unit needs to be established at the outset. Chapter two will then proceed to examine the internal structure of the pericope. The narrative (non-quotational) material will be examined. Narrative and direct speech, as will be evident in the discussions, operate on the basis of different grammatical and syntactic parameters and, therefore, will be examined separately. The traditional divisions of the text – be they marked paragraphs in the MT, chapter and verse designations, or the boundaries of constituent sources – will be set aside. How the author tells the story linguistically and how the story itself develops should converge to yield a fuller understanding of the story's intention. Since both methods are text-centered, the blend is natural and even necessary, as will be evident in the subsequent discussion.

Chapter three will focus on the direct speeches found in Exodus 2-4. The syntax and structure of direct speech is markedly different than that of narrative. As a result this will be the

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<sup>32</sup> This, of course, assumes that the intention of the exegete is to explore the meaning communicated in and through the text by the author(s). For some literary critics this is not a concern as they assume that meaning is only produced in the mind and response of the reader. In this thesis, the assumption is that the meaning of the text is contained in the text and is so intended by the author(s), and therefore is to some extent recoverable from the text itself.

<sup>33</sup> Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 42.

most involved and complex chapter. The individual clause types and how the clauses function to create a cohesive text will be considered. Among the text-linguistic models consulted in this study, there seems to be significant diversity as to how to analyze direct speech. It is hoped that by combining various approaches and analyzing the text, that some clarity as to a unified method may be suggested.

## Chapter One

### Exodus 2-4: A Narrative Unit

Exodus 2-4 is to be read as an uninterrupted and continual text that introduces the reader to the character of Moses and the plan of God to deliver his people. Moses' early life and call are necessarily recounted together to communicate his status as the agent of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The events of his early life (Exodus 2) suggest his connection to the Patriarch stories of Genesis, while the account of his Call (Exodus 3:1-4:18) reflects a development in God's relationship with "the sons of Israel" (Exodus 1:1). Moses is not a Patriarch—a founding father of the nation—but his significance and authority as leader are strongly intimated in a unified reading of Exodus 2-4 as the complete Call Narrative. The principle actors in the narrative, God and Moses, are introduced and their relationship is established.

The question of whether this reading can be supported by the linguistic structure of the passage or not is the focus of this chapter. If the language suggests certain main divisions, the pericope boundaries need to be evaluated in the light of linguistic functions evident in the text. Whether the linguistic structure accords with the above claim—based on a preliminary conclusion from a narrative-critical stance—will be discussed at the conclusion of this chapter. Alviero Niccacci argues that Exodus 1-4 should be divided as chapters 1-2 and 3-4. As he bases his argument on both text-linguistic and narrative critical evidence—an approach employed in the present study—his conclusion will be examined and evaluated.<sup>34</sup> Most commentators separate the early life of Moses (Exodus 2:1-22) from the call (Exodus 3:1-4:18) and return to Egypt (Exodus 4:19-31). Exodus 2:23-25 is usually treated as a separate segment—an intrusion

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<sup>34</sup> Alviero Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, trans. W. G. E. Watson, JSOTSupp 86 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 56–60.

or transition in the text—owing to the shift in locale and participants, or as editorial insertion.<sup>35</sup> The function of Exodus 2:23-35 is variously explained, and will be discussed in this chapter. In addition, Exodus 4:19-31 is often separated into various segments. The goal of this chapter is to examine the boundaries of the proposed textual unit, with attention given to the linguistic evidence for or against reading chapters 2-4 as a unit. Specific linguistic elements in Exodus 2-4 will be examined as they occur throughout the Pentateuch to determine their basic functions.

### Dividing Chapters One and Two

It may be argued that the events of chapter two can only be understood in the light of chapter 1 and, therefore, that the proposed reading of Exodus 2-4 may be misguided. This concern is supported by the fact that there is no clear linguistic form that marks Exodus 2:1 as a new textual unit. One may read Exodus 1:22-2:1ff as a continual text. The *wayyiqtol* verbs suggest that this is the case:

1:22a	<i>And Pharaoh commanded all his people saying</i>	וַיִּצַו פַּרְעֹה לְכָל־עַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר
b	<i>"Every son born, you shall cast into the Nile</i>	כָּל־חֵבֶן הַיְלֹד הַיְאֹרָה תִשְׁלֵיכֵהוּ
c	<i>and every daughter you shall preserve."</i>	וְכָל־הַבַּת תַּחְיֶינָהּ
2:1a	<i>And a man went from the house of Levi</i>	וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי
b	<i>And he married a daughter of Levi</i>	וַיִּקַּח אֶת־בַּת־לֵוִי

The chain of *wayyiqtol* verbs typically communicates sequential actions. This means that the command of Pharaoh is followed by further action by the unnamed man and woman marrying and subsequently having children. They now stand as the foils to Pharaoh's decree, as did the midwives in chapter one. In addition, it is the *daughters*—those allowed to live—in chapter two who will thwart the decree of Pharaoh. The repeated use of בַּת (*daughter*) in the passage surely connects with Exodus 1:22 as they become the principle actors in the next episode

<sup>35</sup> Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003), 121; George W. Coats, *Exodus 1-18*, vol. IIa, *The Forms of Old Testament Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 33; Meyers, *Exodus*, 46.

(Exodus 2:1-10).<sup>36</sup>

It may also be argued that Exodus 1:21 serves as a conclusion to the second attempt at controlling the population (Exodus 1:15-21). Therefore, the next verse introduces Pharaoh's new solution that is again ineffective, as the story of Moses' birth and early life indicates. If it is the case that Exodus 1:21 closes a narrative unit, then 1:22 stands as the introduction to 2:1. The uses of וַיְהִי at 1:21 may suggest that the text be read in this manner. While וַיְהִי often begins a pericope,<sup>37</sup> it can also serve as a conclusion marker (cf. Genesis 2:7; Exodus 1:5).<sup>38</sup> The scene with the midwives concludes at Exodus 1:21. It is possible, therefore, that both the chapter division and MT paragraph markers are misplaced by one verse—if such a division should even be made.<sup>39</sup> The decree of 1:22 and the subsequent hiding of the child in the river belong together.

The program of Pharaoh to deal with the Hebrew threat in chapter 1 comes to a climax with the command in Exodus 1:22. The tension builds throughout chapter 1. In this it can be said that to approach any pericope of the Pentateuch as a unified entity is not to argue for its independence from the larger narrative. Indeed, as will be argued, the call of Moses is intrinsically and deliberately bound up with the prior book of Genesis and also intimates significant aspects of the coming narrative. From his mother's first evaluation of Moses to the Midianite sojourn, the author is deliberately reminding the audience of the stories of Genesis. One cannot completely separate a scene from the entire play and hope to understand all the

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<sup>36</sup> Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1967), 17.

<sup>37</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley (Bellingham: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2003), 327. §111.g.

<sup>38</sup> C. H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naude, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 333. §44.5.1.ii.d.

<sup>39</sup> One has to wonder if traditional reading boundaries of chapter/verse or ancient paragraph markers have influenced not only interpretation of verses and narrative units, but also the understanding of syntax—as will be explored in relation to Exodus 3:1 and 5:1.

nuances and intricacies present in the smaller segment.

The boundaries of a unit are dynamic; they are not defined in advance, once and for all, but are redefined and reorganized anew, according to the questions one seeks to answer, according to the kind of observation that one wishes to apply... Every researcher and every research [sic] demarcate their own boundaries, and are quite free to do so, provided they take into account—explicitly or implicitly—all the other frameworks, both narrower and wider, to which the unit in question belongs.<sup>40</sup>

However, a few narrative elements may support the chapter or paragraph division between Exodus 1:22 and 2:1. First, the participant has changed. The speech of Pharaoh concludes and he effectively exits the scene with these words and a new cast of characters is introduced: a man and a daughter of Levi. This shift of participant can be understood as a disjunctive feature of the text. "Generally, change of time or period or of place, introduction of new participants and full noun phrase reintroduction (or re-identification) of old participants are some of the context-changing devices that may mark the beginning of a new paragraph."<sup>41</sup> Since Exodus 2:1 introduces new characters—including the mother, who is the main character of the next verses—one may conclude that a new scene is beginning.

The second issue that may support a division of chapter two from chapter one is that the infanticide program of the Pharaoh is left at this point. There is no further mention of it in the book. As a character, Pharaoh is absent until chapter five. Throughout chapter one he has been a central character, now he fades to the background and is only indirectly involved. However, the plan to control the Hebrew population through the killing of the sons continues the theme established in the first chapter. Chapter two provides the contrast that, while echoing the midwives' deliberate refusal to comply, brings the action of women to the foreground again and

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<sup>40</sup> Menahem Perry and Meir Sternberg, "Caution: A Literary Text! Problems in the Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative," *Hasifrut/Literature* 2:608-663, 1970: 632 [Heb.]; quoted in Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 15-16.

<sup>41</sup> L. J. de Regt, *Participants in Old Testament Texts and the Translator: Reference Devices and Their Rhetorical Impact*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 39 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999), 17.

in a more ironic manner.

To separate Exodus 1:22 and 2:1 is not, therefore, completely acceptable. The change of characters and setting suggests that a new scene is being presented. However, the command of Pharaoh provides the context in which the following narrative is to be understood.<sup>42</sup> That a man takes a בַּת (*daughter*) and immediately has a son stands in stark contrast to the command.

Furthermore, the command of Pharaoh provides the reason that Moses' mother acts as she does, and makes his adoption as a son of Pharaoh's daughter all the more ironic.<sup>43</sup> In addition, Exodus 1:21 closes the previous pericope involving the rebellion of the midwives against Pharaoh's second decree. Therefore, the subversive actions of Moses' mother and his own daughter provide the foil for his third decree.

#### Dividing Chapters Four and Five

Our focus now turns to the other end of the proposed pericope. What evidence exists to support concluding the reading at Exodus 4:31? Exodus 4:31-5:1 reads:

4:31a	<i>And the people believed</i>	וַיֵּאֱמֵן הָעָם
b	<i>And they heard</i>	וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ
c	<i>that YHWH was concerned about the sons of Israel</i>	↑ כִּי־פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
d	<i>and that he saw their suffering</i>	↑ וְכִי רָאָה אֶת־עֲנָנָם
e	<i>And they bowed down</i>	וַיִּקְדּוּ
f	<i>And they prostrated themselves</i>	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ
5:1a	<i>And afterward Moses and Aaron entered</i>	וַאֲחֵר בָּאוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן
b	<i>And they said to Pharaoh</i>	וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה
c	<i>"Thus says YHWH, the God of Israel</i>	׀ כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
d	<i>'Send out my people</i>	׀ שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי
e	<i>that they may hold a feast to me in the desert."</i>	׀ וַיַּחֲגוּ לִי בַמִּדְבָּר

The action of Moses and Aaron coming to the people in Exodus 4:31 logically follows

<sup>42</sup> Coats, *Exodus 1-18*, 26.

<sup>43</sup> John Van Seters, "The Patriarchs and the Exodus: Bridging the Gap Between Two Origin Traditions," in *The Interpretation of Exodus: Studies in Honour of Cornelius Houtman*, ed. Riemer Roukema, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 44 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 8.



the command of God to Moses and Aaron. "In its present stage, the text accounts for an execution of the commission to Moses and Aaron leading to an increase in oppression (cf. Exodus 1:8-12) and finally the exodus."<sup>44</sup> Moses and Aaron have passed on the message given by God and have won the support of the people (Exodus 3:16-18; 4:27-31). Their coming before Pharaoh opens a new scene, while also completing the prior instruction of God to do so (Exodus 3:10, 18; 4:21-23) with the participants for the next chapters being reintroduced. The character of Pharaoh is not named, but this is a new Pharaoh of whom it may be said that he does not know Moses (cf. Exodus 1:8). The previous Pharaoh who would have been Moses' adoptive grandfather has passed away (Exodus 2:23). Therefore, the new Pharaoh is a new character and a new conflict is about to ensue. The narrative issues of plot and character imply a division of the text at this point.

The linguistic marker of *we-X-qatal*<sup>45</sup> may also suggest a text division. While it is a complete sentence, Niccacci suggests that the clause type is dependent on a preceding or following *wayyiqtol*.<sup>46</sup> The action to take place happens *after* Moses and Aaron complete the journey to Egypt and have secured the support of the people. The question of *where* Moses and Aaron have come is answered in the rest of Exodus 5:1—they have entered the presence of Pharaoh after having departed from the people. However, determining whether the *we-X-qatal* is tied to the preceding or following *wayyiqtol* is more problematic.

The *we-X-qatal* construction may also serve to reintroduce previous characters. The actors—the subject of the verbs—in Exodus 4:31 are the people. In Exodus 5:1 the focus

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<sup>44</sup> Coats, *Exodus 1-18*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> This grammatical structure consists of a waw conjunction + any non-verbal element, typically a noun that is the subject, + perfect verb form.

<sup>46</sup> Alviero Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake: Summer Institute of Linguistics; Eisenbrauns, 1994), 123.

changes from the people's acceptance of the message and promise of God through Aaron and Moses to the beginning of the confrontation with Pharaoh. In the case of Exodus 2:23-3:1 the attention of the reader is diverted from Moses in Midian to the plight of the people in Egypt and the response of God. In both cases, the narrator returns to Moses with the same construction (*we-X-qatal*). This construction marks a reintroduction of a previous character as well as a new scene in the story. This observation accords with traditional Hebrew grammars against a discourse linguistic approach. This understanding of the function of *we-X-qatal* supports the assertion that a historical narrative begins with *qatal* and the storyline is then continued by the *wayyiqtol*.<sup>47</sup>

Text-linguists argue against this understanding, stating that the *we-X-qatal* is a dependent construction. "Narrative never begins with QATAL; initial QATAL only denotes the antecedent; the narrative proper begins with a WAYYIQTOL."<sup>48</sup> However, in practice it seems that this may be an overstatement regarding the function of *we-X-qatal*. Randall Buth notes that this form often serves simply to mark the beginning of a paragraph. "They [*we-X-qatal* clauses] are used as a discontinuity structure to break up and mark off time, paragraph, or episode divisions."<sup>49</sup> The *we-X-qatal* construction is a disjunctive marker, providing background or antecedent information, which continues from the disjunctive using the *wayyiqtol* form.

This creates a problem for the proposed reading of Exodus 2-4 as a single unit. How can the linguistic marker *we-X-qatal* provide a reading boundary in one instance (5:1) and not in the other (3:1)? In addition, Exodus 2:1-10 and 2:21-22 can be viewed as demarcating the limits of

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<sup>47</sup> Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, para. 111.1; Coats, *Exodus 1-18*, 40.

<sup>48</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 37; "Basic Facts and Theory of the Biblical Hebrew Verb System in Prose," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. E. J. van Wolde, Biblical Interpretation Series 29 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 178.

<sup>49</sup> Randal Buth, "Functional Grammar, Hebrew and Aramaic: An Integrated Textlinguistic Approach to Syntax," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine, Semeia Studies (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Scholars Press, 1995), 89.

an *inclusio*, which would suggest that chapter 2 be read as a unit, to the exclusion of chapter 3-4. In order to maintain a reading of Exodus 2-4 as a unit, the following questions will need to be explored in detail: 1) What are the basic functions of the *we-X-qatal* construction in the Pentateuch, and how do these two instances (Exodus 3:1; 5:1) compare to other occurrences? 2) Do 2:1-10 and 2:21-22 really form an *inclusio* or do they serve another function on the literary level?

### *We-X-Qatal* in the Pentateuch

Biblical Hebrew is often described as a language system whose default pattern is Verb-Subject-Object (VSO). This means that the typical grammatical construction of a sentence has the verb as the initial grammatical unit, followed by the subject and then the object. In narrative, the first position element is typically the *wayyiqtol* form of the verb. If a sentence or clause begins with another element, the sentence is said to be marked, being dependent on either a preceding or a following *wayyiqtol* construction. Niccacci describes the relationship of the two sentence types as coordinate or subordinate. "The distinction between a verbal sentence with the finite verb in the first position and a compound nominal sentence with a finite verb in the second position provides us with a criterion for determining if a sentence is main or subordinate."<sup>50</sup> Whether the *we-X-qatal* clause is dependent on a prior *wayyiqtol* or a following one depends on context and, perhaps, on content. The two occurrences at Exodus 3:1 and 5:1 differ in that the first has a proper noun in the X position, and the second a temporal adverb. An examination of the various forms and functions of these two grammatical constructions throughout the Pentateuch may suggest a solution.

Within the Pentateuch there are ninety-eight verses that contain a *we-X-qatal*

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<sup>50</sup> Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 127.

construction, where the 'X' element is a noun.<sup>51</sup> The distribution of occurrences is as follows: Genesis (61) Exodus (16), Leviticus (3), Numbers (10), and Deuteronomy (8). The contexts in which these are found need to be examined in order to understand the function of this clause structure. The first division of the search results is between narrative and direct speech. "In Hebrew, as in many languages, some verb forms used for narrative are different from those used for direct speech, while other verb forms are commonly used in both."<sup>52</sup> In Genesis it is necessary to note that the *we-X-qatal* construction is frequently used in genealogical lists (e.g., Genesis 10:15, 24, 26), which may be considered a separate genre. Another observation is that this grammatical construction is predominantly found in narrative texts. The occurrences drop dramatically once the Pentateuch shifts from story to legal material, which is presented as direct speech. In general, then, the *we-X-qatal* construction is a narrative device.

An examination of the context in which *we-X-qatal* occurs, outside of the genealogical and direct speech occurrences, leads to the conclusion that there are four specific functions for this construction. First, it can mark a contrast with previous material or actions (Genesis 6:8; 31:47; 35:18). Second, it can indicate simultaneous action by a subsequent party (Genesis 18:33; 19:23-24; 45:14; Exodus 9:23; 10:13a). Third, it can signal a pause in the narrative—an intrusion of the narrator on the action, providing comment (Genesis 24:1; 24:62). Fourth, it can signify the resumption of a story after an interruption by reminding the reader of a previous situation or

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<sup>51</sup> BibleWorks 8 search using the Groves-Wheeler Westminster Hebrew OT Morphology database (WTM) release 4.10 (2008): search string = '\*@v?p\* \*@n\* ı = search for all phrases beginning with *waw* + any noun + any verb in the perfect tense. This search string does not include occurrences of nouns with the definite article or a preposition. Eliminating the *waw* conjunction from the search string yields 602 results in the Pentateuch—many of which occur in direct speech.

<sup>52</sup> Alviero Niccacci, "Analysis of Biblical Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake: Summer Institute of Linguistics; Eisenbrauns, 1994), 176.

character (Genesis 39:1).<sup>53</sup> This relates specifically to those constructions in which the X element is a noun. What follows is a short explanation and example of each function listed above.

### *We-X-Qatal: Contrastive Function*

The *we-X-qatal* clause can serve to draw a contrast between two elements. In some instances, this is immediately apparent (Genesis 4:2b; 31:47) as the clause is non-initial and two characters' actions are being paralleled. In both of these examples, the contrast is clear in the repetition of the verbs: הָיָה in the case of Genesis 4:2, and קָרָא in Genesis 31:47. It should also be noted in these examples that the *we-X-qatal* form is the second element in the contrast.

4:2b *Abel was a shepherd of flocks*  
c *while Cain was a worker of the soil*

וַיְהִי־הֶבֶל רֹעֵה צֹאן  
וַקַּיִן הָיָה עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה

31:47a *And Laban called it Yegar-sahadutha*  
b *while Jacob called it Galeed*

וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ לְבֵן יַגֵּר שְׁהַדוּתָא  
וַיַּעֲקֹב קָרָא לוֹ גַּלְעָד

In other cases the contrast takes place after a narrative diversion; i.e., a character or situation is left while the narrator relates another story and then comes back to the previous character or situation. The introduction of Noah in Genesis 5:29-32 is followed by the story of the Nephilim (Genesis 6:1-7), after which the story continues with Noah as the main character.

5:32a *And when Noah was 500 years old...*

וַיְהִי־נֹחַ בֶּן־חָמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה

6:1-7 *Story of the Increase of Wickedness & Nephilim*

6:5 *And YHWH saw that man's wickedness on the earth  
had become great...*

וַיִּרְא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ

6:8 *But Noah found favour in the eyes of YHWH*

וַנֹּחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה

In Genesis 6:8 the contrast between Noah and the rest of humanity prior to the flood is

<sup>53</sup> These four functions have been determined after examining the contexts of each occurrence within the defined limits of this study; i.e. the Pentateuch. Niccacci has done similar studies with the entire Hebrew Bible in view. There is some overlap with his categories and those of this study. His categories have developed over the course of time as well. In *Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew*, he describes five functions: 1. anteriority, 2. simultaneity, 3. contrast, 4. emphasis, and 5. circumstance of the following *wayyiqtol*. In a later article, "Basic Facts and Theory of the Biblical Hebrew Verbal System in Prose" (1997) 172-175, he lists three narrative functions of *we-X-qatal* (the fourth being its function in oral report): 1. antecedent information, 2. circumstance, 3. contrast.

separated from the immediate contrast (Genesis 6:5) by the narrator's report of YHWH's decision and proclamation to destroy humanity along with all animal life (Genesis 6:6-7). The contrast is made, not in the comparison of two participants, but in YHWH's evaluation of the two, using the sense of sight (רָאָה in 6:5 and רָאָה in 6:8) as the contrast. This example also demonstrates the resumptive function of the *we-X-qatal*. The narrator introduces Noah in Genesis 5:29-32, but then recounts the increase of wickedness on the earth and YHWH's decision to act before returning to Noah and his role in the story (Genesis 6:1-7). The above three examples provide a contextual clue as to whether or not the subjects are being contrasted: both parties are in close proximity and their actions are being compared via reuse of the verb, or with opposite evaluative statements.

#### *We-X-Qatal: Simultaneous Action*

Actions that occur simultaneously are difficult to represent in a text. This is the second function of *we-X-qatal*. Niccacci cites Exodus 9:23 and 10:13a as prime examples of this function.<sup>54</sup> Since the construction of these two examples is almost identical, one example will suffice.

9:23a *And Moses stretched his staff toward the heavens*  
 b *and YHWH sent (gave) thunder and hail*

וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מַטְּהוֹ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם  
 וַיְהִיָּה נִתָּן קֶלֶת וּבָרָד

The action of Moses and YHWH are simultaneous. If the verb in 23b were a *wayyiqtol* the action would appear as subsequent to Moses raising his staff.<sup>55</sup> Similarly the chain of *we-X-qatal* clauses in Genesis 19:23-24 can be understood as actions that are occurring at the same moment; i.e., everything happened at sunrise.

<sup>54</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 63.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

19:23a	<i>The sun had risen on the land</i>	הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יָצָא עַל־הָאָרֶץ
b	<i>and Lot had entered Zoar</i>	וְלוֹט בָּא צִעָרָה
24a	<i>and YHWH rained upon Sodom and upon Gamorrah...</i>	וַיְהִי הָהֵמָּה יָרַח עַל־סְדֹם וְעַל־עֲמֹרָה

### *We-X-Qatal: Narrative Pause*

In some cases the *we-X-qatal* provides the narrator with the means of pausing the narrative so as to provide information necessary for the following narrative. Niccacci terms this "antecedent" information.<sup>56</sup> A break from the preceding *wayyiqtol* chain is made, and the narrative resumes following the background information presented in the *we-X-qatal* clause(s). These clauses could be called *scene-setting* devices, in which the narrator switches participants, locations or jumps ahead in time without providing a temporal indicator. This seems to be the case in Genesis 24:1. This verse introduces Abraham's last act in the narrative. It also reminds the reader of God's promises in Genesis 12, 15, 17 and 22; God has fulfilled his promises to Abraham and the last thing Abraham must do is to ensure, as best he can, that the family line continues.

24:1a	<i>Now Abraham was old, advanced in years</i>	וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַיָּמִים
b	<i>and YHWH blessed Abraham in everything</i>	וַיְהִי בְרַךְ אֱת־אַבְרָהָם בְּכֹל
24:2a	<i>Then Abraham said to his servant...</i>	וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל־עַבְדּוֹ

In this example, the narrator is transitioning from the account of Sarah's death and burial with the attendant land purchase, to the story of Rebekah and Abraham's servant. This introduction comes into play later in the narrative in the words of Abraham's servant to Laban (24:34). The introduction provides the reason for the following narrative. There is an urgency embedded in this introduction as the promise of God to Abraham is becoming realized, yet Abraham is getting old and Isaac has yet to marry.<sup>57</sup> The introduction sets the scene for the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 63.

coming narrative.

### *We-X-Qatal: Resumptive Function*

As noted above in the discussion of Genesis 5:32-6:8, the *we-X-qatal* can also be used to re-introduce a character. The narrator may leave one character for a while in order to recount another story and then resume by reminding the reader about the situation in which the character was last seen. A comparison of Genesis 37:28e and 39:1a is a clear example.

37:28e	<i>And they brought Joseph to Egypt</i>	וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִצְרָיִמָּה
39:1a	<i>And Joseph had been brought/taken down to Egypt</i>	וְיוֹסֵף הוֹרֵד מִצְרָיִמָּה

After Genesis 37:28 the story continues with the brothers, and then the story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38). When the narrator returns to Joseph, he does so by reminding the reader of the fact that Joseph is now in Egypt, and that he had been brought there. This effectively reminds the reader of the prior narrative as to *how* Joseph had come to Egypt.<sup>58</sup>

### *We-X-Qatal in Exodus 3:1 and 5:1*

In Exodus 3:1 the X element of the initial clause is a proper noun. The function of this clause construction with X as a proper noun in the Pentateuch is variable. However, in the majority of occurrences it serves either to provide a contrast between characters<sup>59</sup> or to present simultaneous actions. Can these two functions come together in Exodus 3:1? The prior character is God (2:24-25). While God is hearing, remembering, seeing, and knowing, Moses is shepherding. Moses cannot hear or see the plight of Israel in Egypt as he had done in Exodus

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<sup>57</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 323.

<sup>58</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 36. Niccacci also cites 1 Samuel 25:1; 28:3 as an example of recalling previous information (the death of Samuel). In 1 Samuel 25:1 the account is told with the *wayyiqtol*, recounting the historical event. In 1Sam 28:3 the reader is reminded of the fact with the *we-X-qatal* form (48).

<sup>59</sup> C. H. J. van der Merwe, "Discourse Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Grammar," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake: Summer Institute of Linguistics; Eisenbrauns, 1994), 32.



2:11. At this point, he does not know what has transpired, though he does seem to be aware that the situation is unchanged (cf. 4:18). Therefore, the *we-X-qatal* clause in this instance could be contrastive, connecting Moses and God who are the focus of the narrative for the next two chapters. Beyond the specific reference to Moses, this may involve a scene-setting technique whereby the new Pharaoh (who will be the central antagonist in 5:1-14:28), the people of Israel, God, and Moses are rapidly introduced and the setting for the story established. However, as noted above, the two elements of close proximity of participants and parallel actions reflected in repeated verbs (or synonyms) are not evident. Therefore, the contrastive function seems unlikely.

The report of the Pharaoh's death, the people's crying out, and God's response occur in sequential order—as the chain of *wayyiqtol*s in Exodus 2:23-25 indicates. The simultaneous function of *we-X-qatal* in Exodus 3:1, that Moses' occupation as shepherd coincides with God's awareness of the situation in Egypt, could be in effect. This understanding would make the transition back to Moses conjunctive. This is a textual way of presenting two scenes that overlap and belong together. All at once the reader is to hear the cry of Israel, the response of God, and the location and vocation of Moses as a simultaneous occurrence.

The resumptive function of the clause in Exodus 3:1 is perhaps most obvious. The narrator intrudes into the Moses story to provide details as to the situation in Egypt and YHWH's decision to act in response to the cry of the Israelites.<sup>60</sup> He has left Moses, married and now a father, settled in Midian. The question of the state of the nation is now renewed. A second unnamed Pharaoh has come to power, but the oppression of the people is unchanged. The narrator informs the reader that God is now going to act. The reader/hearer of the story may know that Moses is the chosen deliverer (assuming a prior oral tradition, the text will not have

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<sup>60</sup> Cassuto, *Exodus*, 30.

been the first encounter with the Exodus story for the ancient audience), but at this juncture in the story he is removed from the situation of the people of Israel.<sup>61</sup> How will Moses move from his settled-down life to the wandering, Law-giving, triumphant leader who will have no parallel in Israel's history? This question drives the following narrative. In fact, one of the themes of the Pentateuch is that God will act in and through the least likely candidate for success. Moses, at this point, is just that.

Given the above discussion, we conclude that the *we-X-qatal* construction in Exodus 3:1 is transitional. The use of this grammatical construction ties the preceding and following sections of text together. Though a contrast between Moses and God is unlikely, the two main characters are introduced side-by-side after the establishment of the situation in Egypt. Moses and God have not yet met, but now they will meet in the first extended dialogue in the book of Exodus. However, the disjunctive function of this clause type as a paragraph marker must also be acknowledged.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, this clause introduces a new setting and character palette; all other characters are removed from the scene. A unified reading of Exodus 2-4 provides a clear introduction of the two main protagonists (sometimes antagonistic toward each other) throughout the rest of the Pentateuch.

In the case of Exodus 5:1, the X element is an adverb (וְהִנֵּה). This type of construction is found twelve times in the Pentateuch (Genesis 10:18; 30:21; 32:11; 33:7; 38:30; 49:31; Exodus 5:1; 15:25; Numbers 2:34; 12:16; 13:33; Deuteronomy 10:22).<sup>63</sup> Of these, six use וְהִנֵּה (Genesis 10:18; 30:21; 33:7; 38:30; Exodus 5:1; Numbers 12:16). In each case—apart from Exodus 5:1—

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<sup>61</sup> Martin Sicker, *The Exodus and the Reluctant Prophet* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2007), 37.

<sup>62</sup> Buth, "Functional Grammar," 89.

<sup>63</sup> BibleWorks 8 WTM. Search string = \*@v?p\* \*@Pd\* ׀: waw + any Particle, limited to adverbs + any perfect verb.

the clause concludes a scene and serves as a transitional device to the next. In Genesis 10:18 the transition is from genealogical list to narrative comment. In Numbers 12:16 the transition is from a short narrative regarding a situation that occurred at Hazeroth back to the geographic movements of Israel in the wilderness.

Gen 10:18 *And afterward the families of the Canaanites dispersed...* וְאַחַר נִפְצוּ מִשְׁפָּחוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי

Num 12:16 *And afterward the people set out from Hazeroth...* וְאַחַר נָסְעוּ הָעָם מִחֶזְרוֹת

In Genesis 30:21, 33:7 and 38:30 the clause appears as a conclusion to a series of events, the last action being conveyed in the "and afterward..." clause. The conclusion does not, however close the scene, but presents the last action prior that sets up the ensuing action.

30:21 *And afterward she gave birth to a daughter...* וְאַחַר יָלְדָה בַּת

33:7 *And afterward Joseph and Rachel drew near...* וְאַחַר נָגַשׁ יוֹסֵף וְרָחֵל

38:30 *And afterward his brother came out...* וְאַחַר יָצָא אָחִיו

If this formula tends to conclude a scene, in what sense does Exodus 5:1 conclude a scene or series of events? George W. Coats suggests that "[t]his unit must be classified as an ACCOUNT dependent on the VOCATION ACCOUNT in 3:1-4:18. Its apparent relationship with 1:8-12; 3:1-4:18; and 7:7-10:29 suggests that it serves as one element of a more extended popular history."<sup>64</sup> Based on the linguistic data of the Pentateuch and following Coats' form critical approach, it seems that 5:1 naturally flows from the call narrative to the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh, or, more accurately, God and Pharaoh. The parameters and expectations of how the exodus from Egypt is going to come about are clearly intimated in Exodus 3-4.

It could very well be that the description of Moses and Aaron entering Pharaoh's presence completes the thwarting of the previous Pharaoh's command to have the male children of the

<sup>64</sup> Coats, *Exodus 1-18*, 52.

Hebrews executed at birth (1:22). The first address directed to Pharaoh, after the declaration of infanticide, is made by those who should have been victims of that command. This encounter picks up the oppression of the people, and intensifies it yet again. Although not stated, the general failure of the infanticide program (note the presence of other males questioning and confronting Pharaoh in 5:15-16) leads to increased oppression. This observation would suggest that the oppression narratives of chapters 1 and 5 frame the call of Moses in chapters 2-4. Pharaoh's "solutions" to the Hebrew problem are answered by the commissioning of Moses and the revelation that God will ultimately overcome the oppression of Egyptian servitude, resulting in a worshipping (serving) community that He saves.

### Conclusion

Exodus 2-4 cannot be entirely separated as an independent unit. It is linguistically bound to the surrounding context so that one must read before and after in order to make sense of the text. The early life of Moses is focused on the thwarting of the third program of Pharaoh to control the Israelite population—the elimination of the male Israelite population.<sup>65</sup> If this is true, then the unit can be treated as the third movement in the story of Israel's oppression. The setting is established in Exodus 1:1-7, which is followed by a description of the triad of attempts at controlling the Israelite population that runs from Exodus 1:8-4:31: first, the forced labour (1:8-13); second, the command to the midwives to kill the male children (1:15-21); third, the general command to kill all male Israelite babies (1:22). All three attempts fail.

However, this does not end the oppression narrative as evidenced by the response of Pharaoh in Exodus 5:5-9. The language of Pharaoh at 5:5-9 could even be understood as an

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<sup>65</sup> J. Cheryl Exum, "You Shall Let Every Daughter Live: A Study of Exodus 1:8–2:10," *Semeia* 28 (1983), 74–81.

inclusio with 1:9-11.<sup>66</sup> This new Pharaoh notes that the Israelites have become numerous, and proceeds to increase their workload. Perhaps the call narrative is to be viewed in the larger context of the oppression stories that book end the introduction and call of Moses. Pharaoh's oppressions are presented as a triad + one: the first three attempts to control the population in Exodus 1, then increased oppression in Exodus 5. Perhaps this is connected to the three triads of plagues + one (Passover) that YHWH will inflict on Egypt in order to free His *son* (compare Exodus 1:22 and 4:22-23). Furthermore, chapters 1-5 could be construed as a chiasmic structure:

- A. Oppression under Pharaoh (Exodus 1)
  - B. Rescue and Escape of Moses who will "draw out" (Exodus 2)
    - C. Divine Commission and Calling of Moses (Exodus 3-4:17)
  - B'. Return of Moses to "draw out" Israel (Exodus 4:18-31)
- A'. Increased Oppression of Pharaoh (Exodus 5)

"What all this means is that the biblical stories call for dynamic reading, which must determine the boundaries of the stories and even their titles."<sup>67</sup> On the basis of both the narrative and the linguistic evidence, one cannot separate the proposed pericope from the larger context. This creates a tension for the proposed reading of Exodus 1:22-4:31 as a narrative unit. It was noted in the introduction that "the procedures of discourse analysis cannot be regarded as valid unless they are applied to a complete, self-contained unit, or pericope, of some kind."<sup>68</sup> Maintaining the pericope boundaries as Exodus 1:22-4:31 can only be done by acknowledging its interconnectedness with the surrounding context (Exodus 1 and 5) and its dependence on the larger narrative begun in Genesis.

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<sup>66</sup> Bruckner, *Exodus*, 57; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 83.

<sup>67</sup> Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 16.

<sup>68</sup> Wendland, "Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry," 7.

Given the fact that the approach taken here is synchronic, reading the text of the Pentateuch as a finished and unified product, the preceding conclusion is not surprising. The linguistic and narrative evidence supports reading the text as it has been preserved. Exodus 2-4 is integral to the overall narrative strategy of the Pentateuch. It introduces the main characters—God and Moses—and brings the foreshadowed oppression of Abraham's descendants (Genesis 15:12-16) to a climactic point. The reader, cognizant of the preceding Genesis narrative, knows that God has promised deliverance. This passage begins answering the questions of how, and through whom, that deliverance will be accomplished. As the following chapter will explore, the narrator uses specialized vocabulary, syntax and literary type scenes from Genesis in Exodus 1:22-4:31 that both recall the past and anticipate the future.

## Chapter Two

### The Narrative Structure of Exodus 2-4

The focus of this chapter is on the linguistic structure of the narrative elements of Exodus 2-4. The primary method employed comes from the work of Alviero Niccacci. His articles on the Hebrew verbal system and analysis of biblical narrative will be used extensively. In addition, Robert Bergen's argument that rare grammatical structures and vocabulary choices provide clues as to the text's organization and inherent structure will be explored.<sup>69</sup> The overall goal of this chapter is to offer an analysis of Exodus 2-4 that moves from the morphological to syntactical and then discourse structures of the text.

Three different levels of analysis need to be established. Proceeding from the bottom up (from small to broad units), they are: morphological, syntactical, and discourse levels. Morphology is concerned with grammatical analysis of the sentence. Syntax identifies the relationships among sentences and paragraphs in the framework of a text. Discourse analysis brings to the fore the macrosyntactic, semantic, and pragmatic devices used by the author to convey his message in a forcible way. I insist that the higher levels be based on the lower ones. Syntax must be based on morphology, and discourse analysis on syntax.<sup>70</sup>

However, Bergen argues that the direction of investigation proceed from the higher levels to the lower. His contention is that the genre employed by the author dictates how the story will be shaped, how sentences will be structured, and what grammatical forms will be used to achieve the desired meaning.

Each successive higher level of textual organization influences all the lower levels of which it is composed. Language is organized from the top down. Thus within narrative, story-level considerations place constraints upon episodes, paragraphs, sentences, clauses, phrases, words, syllables, and letters, while word-level considerations place constraints only upon syllables and letters.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Bergen, "Evil Spirits and Eccentric Grammar," 320–335; "Text as a Guide," 327–336.

<sup>70</sup> Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 118.

<sup>71</sup> Bergen, "Text as a Guide," 330.

According to this view, the linguistic structures employed depend on the genre of text one is composing. The author is bound by conventions of communication. But by introducing elements that are uncommon—grammatically or lexically—the author may intentionally indicate points of emphasis or reading boundaries. However, it seems that a decision as to genre can only be made after first analyzing content and how a passage is structured syntactically (if Bergen's contention that verb form is an indicator of genre holds true). Therefore, it is more natural to begin—as Niccacci does—at the bottom, at the level of morphology and syntax, and proceed upward to paragraph and discourse structures.

In practice, however, a spiralling approach between the two is necessary. To determine what is normative syntactically, parallel genre texts must be examined. The results of careful study of large blocks of text suggest that certain patterns of morphology and syntax emerge in various genres. Whether one starts at the micro- or macro-syntactic level, it is necessary to proceed to the opposite pole and back again in the course of investigation. The present investigation will follow the approach of Niccacci. A determining factor for this writer is Niccacci's extensive publications that both detail his theoretical framework and demonstrate the relevance of his methodology to various biblical texts, thereby providing a more well-developed model to follow than that of most other text-linguists, including Bergen.

Both Bergen and Niccacci begin their analysis of biblical narrative by bracketing out direct speech or dialogue.<sup>72</sup> Direct speech involves grammatical and syntactic rules and verb forms that differ from those of narrative.<sup>73</sup> The narrative, or nonquotational, material is primarily characterized by the *wayyiqtol* verb form that communicates a sequence of actions. Breaks in the

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<sup>72</sup> Bergen, "Evil Spirits and Eccentric Grammar," 323; Niccacci, *Syntax*, 29–34.

<sup>73</sup> Niccacci, "Basic Facts," 164.



sequence of this verb form are to be analyzed as to their function in the text. According to Niccacci, the principle verb form in direct speech<sup>74</sup> (dialogue, prayer, or sermon) is *yiqtol*, even though discourse typically contains a wider variety of verb forms than does narrative.<sup>75</sup>

Accordingly, the present chapter will begin with an analysis of the nonquotational material, focusing on the syntactic elements that break the *wayyiqtol* chains. The discussion will then move to other syntactic features that may point to significant elements of the text and its connections with the larger body of the Pentateuch. The following chapter will focus on the direct speech elements of Exodus 1:22-4:31 in similar fashion.

In this chapter we will follow Niccacci's lead in first analyzing and presenting the Hebrew text that is broken down into clauses and diagrammed in four levels: mainline clauses, dependent clauses, background/antecedent clauses, and direct speech.<sup>76</sup> The mainline (*wayyiqtol*) clauses will be the furthest right in the diagram. Dependent clauses will be marked with a vertical arrow (↑). Background or antecedent clauses (*non-wayyiqtol*) will be indented five

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<sup>74</sup> In *The Syntax of the Verb*, Niccacci uses the term "discourse" in discussing direct speech. In his later works, he replaces the term "discourse" as it has become a somewhat broad term. The terminology discussed in this later work is historical narrative vs. direct speech, rather than narrative vs. discourse. The clarification in terminology in the field of text-linguistics and its use in biblical studies is the focus of David A. Dawson's opening chapters in *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, JSOT Supp 177 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994). Dawson criticizes Niccacci on his rather inclusive definition of "discourse" as not recognizing the different text types (dialogue, prayer, sermon, etc) (Dawson, 31).

Since different genre types seem to be communicated in direct speech, Dawson's critique seems justified. Exodus 15, for example, is presented as a quoted song of Moses, yet one would need to recognize the genre of poetry as distinct from the conversation between Moses and God in Exodus 3. Further distinctions would need to be made in Exodus as the legal material is presented as direct speech from God, but here again there is variety in the genre of texts and legal types. However, Niccacci does offer justification for limiting his text-types to two genres because the verbal system seems to be consistent within the broad scope of "direct speech" regardless of suggested sub-genre (hortatory, procedural, expository, etc.); see "On the Hebrew Verbal System" (119).

Niccacci responds to Dawson's critique and book in an extensive review in "Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew," (*Liber Annuus* 45, 1995), 543-580. In his review of Dawson, Niccacci notes that the confusion over the word "discourse" is due to the difference between the European "text-linguistic" method and the "discourse analysis" method of the USA; two separate terms have been used for the same method.

<sup>75</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 29. Since Niccacci also states that traditional grammars assume that the *qatal* form is dominant in discourse, this claim will be evaluated in the analysis of Exodus 3-4, as it contains extended dialogue.

<sup>76</sup> Niccacci, "Analysis of Biblical Narrative," 175-198; "Syntactic Analysis of Ruth" (1995): 69-106; "Syntactic Analysis of Jonah" (1996): 9-32.

spaces. Direct speech will be indented and a vertical line will be placed to the right of the text. A translation of the text is provided in the left column.

The results of this analysis will contribute to the discussion of the particular form and function of the passage by identifying the macrosyntactic structure inherent in the text itself. The goal is to determine what elements of the text shape the reading experience. The key issue is, again, *how* the text means. Understanding how the text is organized syntactically will assist the narrative analysis by defining the salient elements of the text based on syntax, grammar, and vocabulary. The assumption is that the text is constructed in such a way as to guide the reader's interpretation of the content.<sup>77</sup>

#### Narrative Syntax of Exodus 2-4

Due to the fact that Exodus 3-4 contains an extended dialogue, this analysis of the narrative elements (nonquotational material) in these chapters is relatively limited. The percentage of verbs in the *wayyiqtol* form in these chapters is as follows: Exodus 2 = 65.5%, Exodus 3 = 21.2%, and Exodus 4 = 40.6%.<sup>78</sup> Noting that *wayyiqtol* initiates the majority of clauses in narrative, we will examine the remaining clauses that have some other element in the

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<sup>77</sup> Bergen, "Text as a Guide," 331; Niccacci, "Basic Facts," 189. While Bergen and Niccacci discuss these features as intended by the author, I am choosing to discuss this as a feature of the text itself. This leaves open the debate as to what one means by "authorship" and the possibility that more than one "author" has been involved in the production of the Pentateuch in its final form. In the technical sense, the Pentateuch is an anonymous book, and one should perhaps take that as part of the intention of the author(s). Kirk E. Lowery notes, "Regardless of the history of the text, the text appeared in a final form. Why was the text placed in the form that it was? Here was a question that could be explored profitably without knowing the history of that text. Whether by an editor, a team of editors or the original author, there was a purpose to the text as it now stands." Kirk E. Lowery, "The Theoretical Foundations of a Hebrew Discourse Grammar," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine, Semeia Studies (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1995), 104.

<sup>78</sup> These percentages reflect the total number of *wayyiqtol* forms against the total verb count in each chapter regardless of whether the verbs occur in narrative or dialogue. According to Bergen, quantity of information—where the author spends more time—indicates salience ("Text", 332). Therefore, the narrative elements of Exodus 2-4 seem to provide a platform for the dialogue, most notably the extended speeches made by God in Exodus 3-4. It is not the story of Moses that is central, but the speeches of God. The following chapter will focus on the implications of this reality in more detail.



way it should be considered on the same level as the *wayyiqtol*.

However, this *we-X-qatal* clause may serve a particular function in the narrative flow of the paragraph. According to Bryan Rocine, grammatical constructions such as this serve to "slow or even freeze the video for commentary, often at points of greatest emphasis."<sup>83</sup> Given that the clause is also accented by *segolta*, the clause seems to slow the narrative, as well as create a moment of tension.<sup>84</sup> The content and context of the clause support the conclusion that a dramatic pause is intended: The child cannot remain hidden. What will happen? The answer to the question comes in the next segment. Therefore, this clause—while moving the plot forward—serves as a bridge between the birth account and the following exposed-infant / threat-to-life story.

#### *Exodus 2:4-5, 16 – Infinitives Construct*

2:4a *And his sister stationed herself at a distance*

b *to know what would happen to him*

2:5a *And the daughter of Pharaoh came down*

b *to bathe at the Nile*

c *and her maidens walked along the side of the Nile*

2:16c *And they filled the watering troughs*

d *to give drink to their father's flock*

וַתִּצַב אֶחָתוּ מֵרָחֵק

לְדַעַת מַה־יֵעָשֶׂה לּוֹ ↑

וַתֵּרַד בַּת־פַּרְעֹה

לְרַחֵץ עַל־הַיָּאֵר ↑

וַנְעַרְתִּיהָ הַלְכַת עַל־יַד הַיָּאֵר ↑

וַתִּמְלֵא אֵנָה אֶת־הַרְרֹתַיִם

לְהַשְׁקוֹת צֹאן אֲבִיהֶן ↑

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Lars Lode, "A Discourse Perspective on the Significance of the Masoretic Accents," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 160. Admittedly, recourse to the Masoretic accentuation system is, in my opinion, perhaps more of a window into the Masoretes' understanding of the text and could be taken as an interpretive interpolation onto the text. It may reflect an early and useful insight into an ancient understanding of the syntax and relationship of clauses and, as Lode suggests, indicate section breaks and that the accents—such as *segolta*—contain "semantic overtones of focus and emphasis in addition to their traditionally recognized disjunctive value" (156). The seven occurrences of *segolta* in Exodus 2-4 do occur at key moments in the narrative flow; often the clause introduces a significant moment or statement. While a full exploration of the syntactic and discourse functions of the accentuation of the text may yield some insight, such conclusions should come from the syntax and narrative analysis. A detailed analysis of the accentuation of Exodus 2-4, in line with Lode's article, would be beyond the scope of this thesis—as evidenced by the choice to represent the Hebrew text in consonantal form.

The clauses in Exodus 2:4b, 5b and 16d each begin with  $\text{ל} +$  infinitive construct. In every case the clause is connected to the preceding *wayyiqtol* and does not constitute a disjunctive verb form. The infinitives construct introduce purpose/result clauses.<sup>85</sup> The verbal ideas are depicted, not as sequential, but as contingent on the *wayyiqtol* verbs.

*Exodus 2:6c, 13b; 3:2c; 4:6e, 7e – וַהֲנִיחַ*

2:6a	<i>And she opened it</i>	וַתִּפְתַּח
b	<i>And she saw the child</i>	וַתִּרְאֶהוּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד
c	<i>And behold! the boy was crying.</i>	וַהֲנִיחַ־נֶעֱר בִּבְכָה ↑
2:13a	<i>He went out on the second day</i>	וַיֵּצֵא בַיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי
b	<i>And behold! two Hebrew men were struggling</i>	וַהֲנִיחַ שְׁנַיִם־אֲנָשִׁים עֹבְרִים נֹצְיִים ↑

The particle  $\text{וַהֲנִיחַ}$  has a distinct function when it appears in narrative. "It often introduces an important change of perspective in a story."<sup>86</sup> This description fits the contexts in Exodus 2:6c and 2:13b. In the first case, what is in question is how Pharaoh's daughter will respond given the command of Pharaoh recorded in Exodus 1:22. Will she comply with the edict? The tension surrounding the outcome is held up for a moment—the child is crying. Will she toss him in the river? She is standing in a place where the situation can go either way. An important change takes place and the Pharaoh's command is disobeyed yet again, this time by his own daughter. The clause following the  $\text{וַהֲנִיחַ}$  clause answers the question as to whether or not this child will live or die.

Taken with the rest of the sentence, this clause adds to the tension of the situation. Exodus 2:6b-c literally reads, "And she saw him, the child. And behold, the young boy was crying." Note that the pronominal suffix ( $\text{וּ}$ ) is specified in 2:6b, and then a modifier ( $\text{נֶעֱר}$ ) is

<sup>85</sup> Merwe, Naude, and Kroeze, *BHRG*, 154; Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, 36.2.3.c–d.

<sup>86</sup> Merwe, Naude, and Kroeze, *BHRG*, 330.

used in 2:6c. "This unusual style adds to the suspense of the narrative."<sup>87</sup> The reader knows that the "him" is the child in the basket, and that it is a Hebrew male child. The modifier is, therefore, seemingly unnecessary. However, the point-of-view is that of the princess. The reader is experiencing the discovery of the child from her perspective, and it is her decision that will decide the fate of the child.

In Exodus 2:13, Moses witnesses two Hebrews fighting. The verb of action (אָרָץ) is followed by a temporal note (בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי), which is immediately followed by the הִנֵּה clause. While the prior event—the killing of the Egyptian—is related with the *wayyiqtol* verb chain, the second conflict that Moses observes is the striving of the two Hebrews, and is presented with this "off-the-line" construction. This may serve to increase the tension of this scene in contrast to the previous one. The struggle between the Egyptian and Israelite is somewhat natural given the context. The surprise is that the Israelites are struggling amongst themselves as well. This foreshadows the situation to come: Moses will mediate the striking of the Egyptians (Exodus 7-14), but then will be embroiled in conflicts among Israelites (Exodus 18) and in challenges to his place as leader and judge as well (Exodus 32; Numbers 12).

3:2a	<i>And the messenger of YHWH appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush</i>	וַיֵּרָא מֵאֵד יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלַבַּת־אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה
b	<i>And he looked</i>	וַיֵּרָא
c	<i>And behold! the bush burned with fire</i>	↑ וַהֲנִיחָה הַסֵּנֶה בְּעֵר בָּאֵשׁ
d	<i>but the bush was not consumed</i>	↑ וְהַסֵּנֶה אֵינְנוֹ אֲכָל

The הִנֵּה clause in Exodus 3:2 fits Christo van der Merwe's description of the particle's use in narrative: "A close or personal observation, often after an act of movement + וַהֲנִיחָה + cognitive effects of personal experience (i.e., cognitive proximity) or a character. What a

<sup>87</sup> Noel D. Osborn and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, UBS Handbook Series; Helps for Translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), 34.

character experiences as noteworthy is sometimes already known to the reader or other characters in the narrative."<sup>88</sup> The act of movement is described in Exodus 3:1b-c (וַיִּנְהַג...וַיָּבֹא). The report of the messenger of YHWH appearing to him "in a flame of fire out of a bush" follows in 3:2a and alerts the reader to the situation, the full implications of which Moses is unaware. His experience of the vision is then communicated beginning with the וַיִּנְהַג clause of 3:2c. This first break in the *wayyiqtol* chain signals a slowing down of the narrative pace in the remainder of chapter three and into chapter four. Rather than encountering the quick overview with substantial time gaps that has been evident in Exodus 1-2, the reader experiences the conversation at the bush "as it happens."

4:6a	<i>And YHWH said to him again,</i>	וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לוֹ עוֹד
b	<i>"Put your hand in your bosom."</i>	אֲבִי־אֵזָא יָדְךָ בְּחִיקְךָ
c	<i>And he placed his hand in his bosom</i>	וַיָּבֵא יָדוֹ בְּחִיקוֹ
d	<i>And he drew it out</i>	וַיּוֹצֵאָהּ
e	<i>And behold! His hand was leprous like the snow</i>	↑ וַהֲנִיחַ יָדוֹ מִצַּרְעַת כַּשֶּׁלֶג
4:7a	<i>And he said,</i>	וַיֹּאמֶר
b	<i>"Return your hand into your bosom."</i>	אֲשִׁב־יָדְךָ אֶל־חִיקְךָ
c	<i>And he returned his hand into his bosom.</i>	וַיָּשֵׁב יָדוֹ אֶל־חִיקוֹ
d	<i>And he drew it out from his bosom</i>	וַיּוֹצֵאָהּ מִחִיקוֹ
e	<i>And behold! It had returned to flesh.</i>	↑ וַהֲנִיחָהּ שָׁבָה כַּבָּשָׂרוֹ

The passage in Exodus 4:6-7 exhibits an interesting pattern with the וַיִּנְהַג clauses that conclude each verse. The order of each verse is parallel. The 'a' line contains the introduction of direct speech (וַיֹּאמֶר), the 'b' the content of the speech. Parts 'c' and 'd' contain verbs of motion, which are then followed by the וַיִּנְהַג clause that describes the result. It is as if reader is watching the action and is just as surprised at the result as Moses.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> C. H. J. van der Merwe, "A Cognitive Linguistic Perspective on וַיִּנְהַג in the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth," *Hebrew Studies* 48 (2007): 134.

<sup>89</sup> *NET* translators note: "The particle וַיִּנְהַג (hinneh) points out the startling or amazing sight as if the reader were catching first glimpse of it with Moses." *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006). Logos Bible Software.

*Exodus 2:10c, 11a, 23a; 4:3d, 4d, 24a – וַיְהִי*

וַיְהִי is the third masculine singular *wayyiqtol* form of הָיָה (to be, become), and should, therefore, function as a mainline verb. However, it often appears as a marker of time at a transition point in a narrative.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the fact that it is a verb it is not essentially an action word but a word that describes a state or condition of being. For that reason clauses that use the verb "to be" are most closely akin to verbless clauses than to verbal ones....As we might expect, clauses that use "to be" in the simple past break narrative sequence. But even clauses that use the narrative tense of "to be" are usually "off-line" and often function as unit boundaries.<sup>91</sup>

The occurrences of וַיְהִי in Exodus 2-4 seem to be divided into two classes: 1) those that describe a state of being (2:10c; 4:3d, 4d), and 2) those that are part of a clause that contains a scene shift, either temporal or locative (2:11a, 23a; 4:24a).

2:10a	<i>And the child grew</i>	וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד
b	<i>And she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh</i>	וַתְּבִאֵהוּ לְבַת־פַּרְעֹה
c	<i>And he became her son</i>	וַיְהִי־לָהּ לְבֵן
d	<i>And she called his name Moses</i>	וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה
4:3c	<i>And he cast it to the ground</i>	וַיִּשְׁלִיכֵהוּ אֶרֶץ
d	<i>And it became a snake</i>	וַיְהִי לְנָחָשׁ
4:4d	<i>And he grasped it</i>	וַיַּחֲזֵק בּוֹ
e	<i>And it became a staff in his palm</i>	וַיְהִי לְמִטָּה בְּכַפּוֹ

The first class follows actions that bring about the state of being described in the וַיְהִי clause. Note that the clauses are not first in the verse structure. In these cases the clause is not disjunctive; the content of the clause describes a new state of being contingent on the prior

<sup>90</sup> The function of וַיְהִי has been a source of contention in linguistic studies of biblical Hebrew. Niccacci and Dawson's reviews of each other's work evidences considerable difference of opinion regarding the function of the word and its text-level importance. Niccacci, "Review of Dawson," 547–548; David Allan Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, JSOTSupp 177 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 34–35.

<sup>91</sup> Walsh, *Style and Structure*, 159.



action. Therefore, these clauses do not highlight divisions in the text or paragraph boundaries.

2:11a	<i>And it came about in those days</i>	וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָהֵם
b	<i>when Moses grew older</i>	וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה
2:23a	<i>And it came about in those many days</i>	וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם
b	<i>that the king of Egypt died</i>	וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם
4:24a	<i>And it came about on the way to the lodging place</i>	וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן
b	<i>that YHWH met him</i>	וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ יְהוָה

The second class, however, heads the verse. These three contain a time reference and indicate that a new scene is about to be described that is temporally different from the preceding section. Therefore, the clause in Exodus 2:11a separates the birth and adoption narrative from the next section that describes Moses' action in Egypt and his flight to Midian. Similarly, Exodus 2:23a breaks into the narrative flow to inform the reader of the state of affairs in Egypt. The narrator uses this device to "fast-forward" to a new temporal setting.

In Exodus 4:24a, a switch in location is evident in the content of the clause. The prior report had to do with YHWH's command to Moses in Midian. This clause informs the reader that Moses is now "on the way" to Egypt, and has left Midian. Perhaps this is a bit of a narrative flashback considering that Exodus 4:20c has informed the reader that "he returned to the land of Egypt."

#### *Exodus 2:16a – Verbless Clause*

2:16a	<i>Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters</i>	וּלְכַהֵן מִדְיָן שֶׁבַע בָּנוֹת
b	<i>And they came</i>	וַתָּבֹאוּ
c	<i>And they drew water</i>	וַתִּדְרְגוּ

This is the only verbless clause in the narrative of Exodus 2-4. The preceding verse describes Moses settling in Midian. Attention is now turned to a new character of some significance in the Exodus narrative, though at this point his title and family are of more

importance than his name. Discussing this particular verse, Niccacci states "from the context, however, it is clear that this is not 'a significant break in communication' but a slight pause, since the narrative returns to the same topic."<sup>92</sup> The information of the verbless clause serves to identify the participants in the scene with their father. Moses is at the well, the identity of the women coming to the well is defined, and then the description of what happens at the well is recounted.

*Exodus 2:22c; 3:1a, 6g; 4:26b, 28b-c, 30b, 31c-d – X-Qatal Clauses*

Since Exodus 3:1a was discussed in the previous chapter, attention here will focus on the remainder of *(we)-X-qatal* occurrences. Of these constructions, four are  $\text{וְ}$  clauses (2:22c; 3:6g; 4:31b-c); two have  $\text{אֵל}$ , the direct object marker, at the beginning of the clause (4:28b-c); and one is an  $\text{וְאֵל}$  clause. These clauses are syntactically dependent on the preceding *wayyiqtol* and do not constitute independent sentences and, therefore, are not breaks in the narrative. They supply information that supplements that of the main clause.

The remaining instance, 4:26b, however, requires additional consideration.

4:26b *At that time she said, "a bridegroom of blood" because of the circumcision.*

$\text{וְאֵל אִמְרָהּ חָתָן דָּמִים לְמוֹלֶת}$

The conjunction  $\text{וְ}$  occurs in Exodus 4:26b at the conclusion of the threat to life / circumcision story (4:24-26). This clause seems to elaborate further on Zipporah's speech in 4:25 after the threat has been removed (4:26a). The narrator does not stop to explain the meaning of Zipporah's words until after the conclusion of the story. He then 'rewinds the tape' a bit to explain what Zipporah meant. The function of  $\text{וְ}$  in this instance introduces the narrator's comment on a rather

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<sup>92</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 58.

puzzling element of the scene.<sup>93</sup> This particle and clause close the scene and mark a short break before the call of Aaron is recounted (Exodus 4:27).

### From Narrative Syntax to Narrative Context

One of the weaknesses of text-linguistics noted in the introduction is the tendency for the analyst to get lost in the minutiae of clausal relationships and never really to emerge with something concrete in terms of exegetical worth. Perhaps this danger is more evident in the bottom-up approach advocated by Niccacci, whereas the top-down approach of Bergen can help one to avoid failing to see the forest for the trees. The syntactic signaling within a passage or paragraph only provides a starting point for the discussion of how the text in question relates to the whole. These segments must be understood to comprise a whole communication event. The salient information has been encoded in the linguistic choices of the author(s).

Modern linguistics recognizes that when an author creates a text he personally considers certain portions of his literary creation to be more important than others. To help the audience figure out which portions he considers to be more significant, the author drops hints in the text. These hints are created by the manipulation of three variable factors: (1) order of information, (2) quality of information, and (3) type of information.<sup>94</sup>

In the preceding discussion, the various elements of the text that break into the normal mode of moving the story along in Hebrew narrative have been examined. However, the question as to what those signals may mean to the macro-structure of the text remains. In addition, there may be elements encoded in the text that do not emerge from syntactic analysis alone. Bergen's first variable (order of information) has been the primary concern of the first section of this chapter. The two remaining factors will be the focus of the next section. As other textual clues are explored, the question of how this passage relates to the larger context of the Pentateuch will

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<sup>93</sup> The biblical narrator seems a bit more reserved in his explanation than modern essays on the same topic.

<sup>94</sup> Bergen, "Text as a Guide," 331.

be in view.

On the basis of the preceding analysis of Exodus 1:22-4:31 the following outline may be suggested:

1. Exodus 1:22-2:10 – The Third Failure of Pharaoh
  - a. Marriage and Birth Account (2:1-2)
  - b. Preservation of the Male Child (2:3-9)
  - c. Adoption and Naming of the Child (2:10)
2. Exodus 2:11-22 – From the Palace to Priest: Moses in Exile
  - a. Confrontations
    - i. With the Egyptian: resulting in a final "smiting" (2:11-12)
    - ii. With the Hebrews: resulting in unresolved challenge (2:13-14)
  - b. Flight from Pharaoh to Midian (2:15)
  - c. Settlement in Midian (2:16-22)
3. Exodus 2:23-4:31 – The Plight of Israel and the Response of God
  - a. Endurance of Oppression (2:23-24)
  - b. God Enters as an Active Participant (2:25-3:1)
  - c. God Confronts Moses (3:2-4:17)
  - d. From Midian to Egypt (4:18-26)
  - e. Introduction of Aaron (4:27-28)
  - f. Israel Initially Accepts the Leadership of Moses and of YHWH (4:29-31)

This three-part outline centres on the temporal clauses introduced by וַיְהִי. These macro-syntactic markers serve to divide the passage into historical periods based on the experience of the participants. The first marks the time between Moses as an infant and Moses as an adult. The

second marks the time between the Pharaoh of the oppression and the Pharaoh to be confronted by Moses in the remainder of Exodus. Notably, when this later Pharaoh leaves the scene (Exodus 14), the people of Israel will celebrate their freedom from oppression (Exodus 15). From 2:23 on, the narrative does not seem to offer much in the way of temporal cues. That is to say, the narrative ceases to jump from one time period to another, in effect slowing the pace down.

Within each of these time frames, the passages can be outlined in various ways. The conversation between Moses and God in Exodus 3-4 will be evaluated as to its structure and genre(s) in the following chapter. At this point, it is enough to note that the shorter sections (1 and 2 above) serve to move Moses from Egypt to Midian. What does the narrator intend to communicate regarding Moses at this point?

The introduction of Moses in Exodus 2:1-10 deviates from the standard way of introducing main characters in the Pentateuch. Throughout Genesis, a key character is often introduced after a genealogy sets the stage for the arrival of that person. In this case, Moses' birth and vocational call are recounted and the genealogy comes later (Exodus 6). While the inversion of information is usually considered at the clause level (e.g., another word coming before the verb), this is an example of an episodic or even a story-cycle inversion.<sup>95</sup> Had the genealogy come before the birth narrative, the reader would have been aware of the fact that Moses was the second oldest son of his parents.

The introduction of Aaron in chapter four comes as a surprise. The fact that Moses has a sibling in addition to his as yet unnamed elder sister has been suppressed. The relative age of Moses and Aaron are also suppressed at this point, and will not be revealed until Exodus 6.

"Biblical narrative often withholds pieces of exposition until the moment in the story when they

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

are immediately relevant."<sup>96</sup> As it stands, Moses is presented as the oldest boy of the Levite couple. It is somewhat odd that the narrator has chosen to relate the marriage and the birth without mention of other sons or daughters. The fact that the three children are born of a Levite couple may hint at their combined roles in the leadership of Israel in the coming narrative, but at this point the focus of attention is Moses. This inversion of material—birth announcement and genealogy—serves to direct the reader's attention solely toward Moses as the main human character of the story.<sup>97</sup> With the exception of Jethro, Zipporah, Gershom, and Aaron, all other characters in Exodus 2-4 are nameless, serving to highlight the importance and prominence of Moses as the key character of the text.

In addition, Moses' introduction occurs at the beginning of a "new creation" account. His mother notes that he is "good" (טוֹב; cf. Genesis 1). When she can no longer hide him from the Egyptians, she places him in an "ark" (תֵּבָה; cf. Genesis 6:9ff). Both the creation account of Genesis 1 and the account of Noah (which includes the first example of re-creation: see Genesis 9:1-7) are brought together in this introductory text to indicate that something monumental is about to take place. If the intention is to recall these prior narratives, the implications of the birth narrative and adoption story can be understood as having universal implications. The Genesis texts being hinted at are global in nature—not specific to Israel as a nation, but to humanity as a whole. However, the global implications will not be declared until Exodus 19:5-6.

The narrative gap between Moses' birth account and the conflict in Egypt (Exodus 2:11-14) provides no information as to how Moses was aware of whom "his own people" were,

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<sup>96</sup> Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 66.

<sup>97</sup> Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament.*, Logos electronic edition. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), vol 1, 277.

though later tradition would fill this gap.<sup>98</sup> The focus of the two scenes is the identification of Moses with the Hebrews as אֶחָיו "his brothers," which occurs twice in Exodus 2:11. The narrator wants to ensure that the reader understands Moses' awareness of his relationship to the Hebrew people. The nation is becoming the focus, not the individual. The reader is returned to the plight of Israel in Egypt, and the agent of deliverance is now introduced to the situation. "Interest in Moses is restricted to those events which relate to the destiny of the new nation Israel."<sup>99</sup> How Moses knows about his family relationships (Exodus 4:14) and his relationship to the Hebrew slaves is not important.

As is commonly noted, the action of Moses in these scenes foreshadows God's actions in the coming narrative of Exodus 7-12. Moses sees the labours and oppression of "his brothers" (2:11c, e) and acts on behalf of the oppressed. In the same way, when God sees the oppression of the people He is moved to action. Both Moses and God act decisively and violently in "striking" (נָכַח) the oppressor.

The story of the flight to Midian has many parallels with the Patriarch stories of Genesis. In Genesis, from Isaac onward, the Patriarchs find their wives in a foreign land. There is an encounter of the future bride at a well, and a time of service to the father-in-law. These close parallels with the Jacob story may suggest that the reader is to understand that God stands behind all that is happening.<sup>100</sup> The conflict that causes Jacob to flee from Esau, his brother, can be seen as an outworking of the word of God to Rebekah regarding the adversarial relationship of the

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<sup>98</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, rev. ed., trans. William Whiston, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990), Antiquities 2.227.

<sup>99</sup> James S. Ackerman, "The Literary Context of the Moses Birth Story (Exodus 1-2)," in *Literary Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, vol. 1, ed. Kenneth R. R. Gros Loui, James S. Ackerman, and Thayer S. Warshaw (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 96.

<sup>100</sup> Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch*, 244.

brothers (Genesis 25:23). God promises to be present with Jacob as he flees to Laban's household (Genesis 28:10ff) with the specific statement  $\text{אֲנִי עִמָּךְ}$  "I am with you." He then flees from Laban—his place of safety becomes one of oppression, a microcosm of Israel's later experience in Egypt—at which point God says to him,  $\text{אֲהִיֶּה עִמָּךְ}$  "I will be with you" (Genesis 31:3; cf. Exodus 3:12, 14; 4:12, 15). The promise of divine presence connects the Patriarchal stories with Moses' call, and answers the question of the Hebrew slave, "Who made you prince and judge over us?" (Exodus 2:14).

YHWH's attack on Moses contrasts with YHWH's previous statement that he would strike the firstborn of Pharaoh. Carol Meyers notes that this scene foreshadows the later events of the Passover, both the salvation by blood and the identification of those able to participate in the ceremony (Exodus 12:43-49).<sup>101</sup> Again, the reader is not told whether or not Moses was aware of the covenant implications of circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14). From a narrative perspective, the uncircumcised son indicates reluctance on Moses' part to identify completely with "his brothers," an attitude that needs to be addressed. Moses cannot act as mediator for God and deliverer of the people unless he fully identifies with them.

### Conclusion

The exploration of the narrative elements of Exodus 2-4 reveal that the text intentionally brings past themes from Genesis into the account of Moses, and foreshadows the narrative to come. The account of the birth and early life of Moses constitutes a re-creation account; God is beginning again. Creation and the Flood are hinted at in the birth narrative, while the account of the life of Moses before and after his encounter with God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-4:17) reflects themes and events in the lives of the Patriarchs.

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<sup>101</sup> Meyers, *Exodus*, 67.



The emphasis of Exodus 2-4 is on the emergence of Moses as the deliverer through the divine commission. In regard to content, however, the story is told less in terms of narrative and more through dialogue. The emphasis on the words of God and his self-revelation to Moses forms the core of these chapters. God/YHWH speaks for the first time since Genesis 35:12. These speeches describe God's intentions and goals with respect to Israel's exodus from Egypt.

## Chapter Three

### The Structure And Genre Of Direct Speech

As one moves from narrative to direct speech in biblical Hebrew, changes in syntax and morphology become evident. The dominance of the *wayyiqtol* verb form in narrative gives way to a variety of verb and clausal forms. As was noted in the previous chapter, the text of Exodus 3-4 consists predominantly of direct speech: the percentage of *wayyiqtol* verbs is 21.2% and 40.6%, respectively.<sup>102</sup> Without the convention of quotation marks, Hebrew narrative introduces each speech with a narrative cue (often a form of אָמַר), and sets off the material as a quotation by means of specific distinctive syntax. Exodus 2:8-9 provides a succinct example of the shift from narrative to direct speech:

2:7a	<i>And his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter,</i>	וַתֹּאמֶר אֶחָתוֹ אֶל־בַּת־פַּרְעֹה
b	<i>"Shall I go</i>	אִם אֵלֵךְ
c	<i>And call for you a nursing woman from the Hebrews</i>	וַיִּקְרָאֶתִי לָךְ עֲשֵׂה מִיִּנְקָת מִן הָעִבְרִיִּים
d	<i>To nurse the child for you?</i>	וַתִּינַק לָךְ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד
2:8a	<i>And Pharaoh's daughter said to her,</i>	וַתֹּאמֶר־לָהּ בַּת־פַּרְעֹה
b	<i>"Go!"</i>	לֵךְ
c	<i>So the young girl went</i>	וַתֵּלֶךְ הָעַלְמָה
d	<i>And she called the mother of the child</i>	וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שֵׁם הַיֶּלֶד

Outside of the speeches the action is conveyed with *wayyiqtol* forms. Note that lines 2:7b-c use the same verbs as lines 2:8c-d. First, in the speech of "his sister," the verbs occur in the *yiqtol* and *weqatal* forms. In reporting the follow-up action, the narrator repeats the verbs in *wayyiqtol* form. Examining any narrative text with dialogue shows the move from *wayyiqtol* in the narrative to various verb forms in direct speech to be the norm. The aim of this chapter is to examine the speeches of Exodus 2-4, determine their various genres, and relate these findings to the narrative strategy of the text. Roy Heller introduces the topic well:

<sup>102</sup> For a detailed discussion regarding the percentages of verb occurrences in Exodus 2-4 see p. 37 above.

The structure of direct discourse in biblical Hebrew prose differs from that of narrative proper in several respects. Because they are marked otherwise, no predominant verbal or clausal type characterizes the beginning or ending of speeches or characters. Moreover, whereas narrative is marked throughout by chains of *WAYYIQTOL* clauses, *no consistent clause type occurs regularly throughout speeches. Likewise, in general, there is no consistent syntactically marked means of expressing points on or off the mainline of the discourse.* Furthermore, whereas the predominant purpose of narrative proper is to relate events in the past, only rarely is this the purpose of direct discourse. Finally, whereas narrative generally has the single predominant function of relating sequential events in the past, direct discourse has multiple functions: occasionally to relate past events, in other cases to predict or plan the future, in still other cases to explain universal truths or to declare immediate relationships or actions. Moreover, direct discourse, unlike narrative, can occasionally directly motivate actions in its hearers, either as a response to a stated question or as a reaction (or rebellion) to a command or request. For this reason, the structure of direct discourse is more complex than that found in narrative. *Although it is more complex, however, its structure is still consistent and regular.*<sup>103</sup>

The different syntactic structures employed and the dominant functions of direct speech passages are the basic problems to be addressed in this chapter. The complexity of the problem is highlighted in the italicized segments in the above quotation. Heller claims a lack of consistency in the syntax of direct speech, and yet states that there are consistent and regular structures. These seemingly contradictory claims are resolved by creating genre categories for direct speech based on common syntactic patterns and content. In other words, direct speech communicates for a specific purpose (Heller lists several possibilities above) and utilizes specific and consistent linguistic features in doing so.

Heller identifies five basic genres of speech and describes the syntactical elements that characterize each. Bryan Rocine lists three main genres of direct speech: Predictive Narrative, Instructional Discourse, and Hortatory Discourse.<sup>104</sup> Rocine also includes Embedded Direct Speech and Procedural Discourse as off-the-line elements in his Historical Narrative Discourse Profile Scheme. Alviero Niccacci discusses direct speech syntax under the heading "Discourse"

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<sup>103</sup> Heller, *Narrative Structure*, 456-457. Italics added.

<sup>104</sup> Rocine, *Learning Biblical Hebrew*, 424.

in *Syntax of the Verb*.<sup>105</sup> However, he does not move to classify different speech structures with genre titles, as do Heller and Rocine.

The differences among these three authors are indicative of a lack of consensus regarding how to proceed in analyzing direct speech from a text-linguistic perspective. Indeed, it seems that each text-linguist has developed his/her own view as to the significance and function of verbal forms within direct speech. For example, Robert Longacre states that the *weqatal* form is not dependent on a prior verb form but forms the backbone of three discourse genres,<sup>106</sup> whereas Niccacci views the same form as continuative in relation to a prior verb form.<sup>107</sup> The grammatical rules seem less clear for speech than for narrative. The variety of syntactic structures and verbal forms used in communicating direct speech suggests that more needs to be done on this front. What does emerge when examining the biblical text, as well as the various approaches to analyzing direct speech, is that the *weqatal* and *yiqtol* verb forms assume prominence in most direct speech genres, with Hortatory Discourse exhibiting high concentrations of volitional (cohortative, imperative, and jussive) forms, while *wayyiqtol* fades to the background. Due to the variety of views presented on the verbal system within direct speech and the proposed genre classifications of direct speech units, it seems prudent to discuss these problems prior to analyzing the text of Exodus 2-4.

#### Method and Genre Categories of Direct Speech Analysis

As will be evident in the discussion below, various genres within direct speech are

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<sup>105</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 73–109.

<sup>106</sup> Robert E. Longacre, "Weqatal Forms in Biblical Hebrew Prose: A Discourse-Modular Approach," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake: Summer Institute of Linguistics; Eisenbrauns, 1994), 51.

<sup>107</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 82.

suggested in the text-linguistic studies consulted for this thesis. This diversity does tend to complicate matters, and thus it becomes necessary to articulate clearly what one means by "genre." For our purposes this term is used to denote a text-type that exhibits specific linguistic characteristics and rhetorical relationships within an overall communicative act. Employed in this fashion, it embraces a range of what might otherwise be regarded as genres and subgenres.

The Pentateuch, as a whole, could be divided into two primary genres: historical narrative and legal codes.<sup>108</sup> In the same corpus there are poems, songs, lists, and genealogies present in the Pentateuch, but history and law are the most prominent genres. Exodus 2-4 could be considered historical narrative, including both the narrator's report and (non-quotational) framework, on the one hand, and the direct speeches, on the other.

As has been noted already, there is a lack of consensus among scholars, both with respect to the ways that the syntactic functions that are operative in direct speech are characterized, and in regard to the matter of the classification of the different kinds of direct speech in Hebrew narrative. One may question whether or not such classification is even necessary.<sup>109</sup> What function or benefit to the exegete is there in being able to label an instance of direct speech as Instructional, Procedural, or Hortatory? Is it useful or even appropriate to apply the term genre to these forms of discourse? Does the context and the content of the speech provide sufficient information as to how the text is to be understood and read without the aid of such distinctions?

Speech and dialogue are primary in biblical narrative, and often the main point or message of the text is presented in the form of direct speech. "Spoken language is the substratum for everything human and divine that transpires in the Bible, and the Hebrew tendency to

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<sup>108</sup> Peter T. Vogt, *Interpreting the Pentateuch: An Exegetical Handbook*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 25.

<sup>109</sup> Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 119.

transpose what is preverbal or nonverbal into speech is finally a technique for getting at the essence of things, for obtruding their substratum."<sup>110</sup> Large portions of the Pentateuch consist of direct speech (e.g., Exodus 20:1-23:33; 25:1-31:18; Leviticus 1:1-8:3; 11:1-27:34; most of Deuteronomy). All the law codes are communicated by means of direct discourse from YHWH to Moses, with the introduction to the speech act being the only intrusion into these long spoken texts. Much of the Pentateuch is framed as monologue, first stated by YHWH to Moses (Exodus-Numbers), then reviewed by Moses (Deuteronomy). The narrator does not take it upon himself to announce the name of God or the content of any promises made to the Patriarchs or Moses. God himself speaks. The narrator does not question God's promises or plans, though Abraham and Moses may do so in conversation with God (Genesis 15:2-3; 17:17; Exodus 3:11, 13; 4:1).

The prevalence of direct speech and the syntactic variety evident suggests that "speech-genre" distinctions are possible. Content alone may be an indicator of different functions of speeches (e.g., reports about the past, commands for immediate action, predictions of future events). However, when observations of syntactic patterns are combined with content, a discernable system emerges. "The use of different verbal forms or clausal varieties in direct discourse in most cases defines the *type and function* of the speech."<sup>111</sup> Therefore, genre distinctions should be useful for helping one to discern the overall purpose of a speech, the expected syntactic phenomena. Deviations from the expected syntax within a speech can then be explored to determine if there has been a marked genre switch or if the change has been made for emphasis.

Because we are using the term "genre" to describe different speech types in a text, it is

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<sup>110</sup> Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 70.

<sup>111</sup> Heller, *Narrative Structure*, 457. Italics added.

necessary to determine how the identification of a genre on the basis of text-linguistics differs from doing so by means of a form-critical approach. Form criticism tends to assign genre categories based on the nature of the text's content (*what* the text says) and linguistic elements (*how* the text is constructed), an assumed or imagined use of the text (how a text may have been used), or the supposed oral stage (the "text" before the text). The latter two approaches are by nature speculative, whereas the first is the only verifiable or testable approach. Text-linguistics and form criticism overlap in some respects in that both define genre types based on how the text is constructed – *how* the text says. Dialogue between the two disciplines may, therefore, offer reciprocal correctives and/or clarifications.

While the assertion in the present study is that Exodus 2-4 may be termed a complete "Call Narrative," a rather form-critical thing to say, it must be the linguistic phenomena and the organization of the text that are determinative. In relation to the direct speeches in the text, the various genre classifications to be suggested will emerge from detailed study of the syntax and morphology. "Humans tend to process information in chunks and pieces, and these units need to be ordered in some way. Thus, language is hierarchical. This means that each form will be embedded in a higher form."<sup>112</sup> The higher form of Exodus 2-4 may indeed be "Call Narrative," but within this genre, sub-genres/forms may be discerned, forms that allow the reader to process the whole.

All three of the approaches of the previously mentioned authors (Niccacci, Heller, and Rocine) will be utilized in the analysis of the direct speeches of Exodus 2-4. Therefore, a summary and comparison of these approaches to direct speech and genre/function is in order.

Niccacci's analysis of direct speech (what he calls "discourse") has four elements that are

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<sup>112</sup> Lowery, "Theoretical Foundations," 114.

summarized in the following chart:<sup>113</sup>

<p>Foreground:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jussive <i>yiqtol</i> and volitional forms, <i>weyiqtol</i>, <i>weqatal</i></li> <li>• indicative <i>X-yiqtol</i></li> <li>• <i>(X-)qatal</i></li> <li>• simple noun clause</li> </ul>	<p>Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>we</i> + simple noun clause</li> <li>• <i>we-X-qatal</i></li> </ul>
<p>Recovered Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>qatal</i> preceded by ׀, ׀, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Anticipated information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indicative <i>yiqtol</i></li> <li>• other final clauses</li> </ul>

What is immediately obvious from this chart is that the majority of clauses in direct speech are termed "Foreground." In this regard, Niccacci's approach is easy to apply. One can readily identify secondary clauses, allowing investigation of the secondary elements to come to the forefront. However, the categories of "foreground/background" seem to place most clauses into very broad categories.

A second observation is that Niccacci does not look at direct speech in terms of genre. He states his position on the question of genre classifications quite clearly: "To distinguish different text types beyond these two [narrative and direct speech] is not relevant at this stage because there is not a distinct set of verb forms; the distinction of narrative and direct speech *is* relevant, however, because the two have a separate set of verb forms in Hebrew (as in many other languages)."<sup>114</sup> While he analyzes direct speech as a distinct form of communication, he does so within the broader category of prose, hence the title of his seminal work.

In contrast, Longacre, Rocine, and Heller have suggested various text types in which specific syntactical constructions are utilized. This makes their models somewhat more cumbersome, yet more detailed. Heller states, "The use of differing verbal forms or clausal

<sup>113</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 73–109.

<sup>114</sup> Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 119.



varieties in direct discourse in most cases defines the *type* and *function* of the speech."<sup>115</sup> This suggests that analysis of the content, context, and syntax of speeches should result in definable text types or genres. The distinction of genre types also assists the interpreter in defining what the author's overall tone or intent of a speech passage is meant to communicate to the reader, and, therefore, how the reader is to respond to the information contained in the speech.

Bryan Rocine's introductory grammar takes the work of Longacre and places it in a more general and systematic form that is more readily usable.<sup>116</sup> While Longacre's work is foundational, his focus is specifically on the Joseph story in Genesis 37, 39-48. Longacre applies a method to a body of text, whereas Rocine seeks to define the method that can then be applied to any text. Rocine's introductory grammar highlights two main "discourse profiles" for direct speech in the following charts. Examples of these genre types will follow in combination with Heller's discourse profile schemes.

### **PREDICTIVE NARRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL DISCOURSE PROFILE SCHEME:**

Note: The difference between Predictive Narrative and Instructional Discourse is often elusive. Instructional Discourse has an occasional imperative form. Whereas Predictive Narrative is participant oriented, Instructional Discourse is goal oriented.

**1. Mainline:** Weqatal (or in Instructional Discourse, an occasional Imperative to mark major procedures)

**Off-the-line:**

2. Topicalization: X-yiqtol
3. Relative past background: Qatal in dependent clause
4. Non-past background: Yiqtol in a dependent clause
5. Backgrounded activities: Participle
6. Transition marker: Mainline form of וְהִנֵּה
7. Scene-setting: Verbless clause
8. Irrealis: Negation of any verb

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<sup>115</sup> Heller, *Narrative Structure*, 457. Italics added.

<sup>116</sup> In his introduction Rocine thanks both Longacre and Niccacci for their contributions not only in print but in personal interactions during the writing of his text (Rocine, *Learning Biblical Hebrew*, vii).

**HORTATORY DISCOURSE PROFILE SCHEME:**

- Mainline:** 1a. Imperative  
 1b. Jussive  
 1c. Cohortative  
 1d. Weqatal (for Mitigated Hortatory Discourse)
- Note: These four are equally ranked

**Off-the-line:**

2. Topicalization: X-Imperative (or Jussive or Cohortative)
3. Prohibitive commands:  $\text{לֹא}$  or  $\text{אַל}$  + Yiqtol
4. Express possibility: Yiqtol
5. Consequence, purpose: Weqatal
6. Consequence, purpose:  $\text{כִּי}$  or  $\text{וְ$  + Yiqtol
7. Consequence, purpose: Embedded Predictive Narrative
8. Identification of problem: Embedded Historical Narrative
9. Backgrounded activities: Participle
10. Scene setting: Verbless Clause<sup>117</sup>

Rather than a simple Mainline/Off-the-line scheme (Niccacci's Foreground/Background), Rocine offers a more thorough analysis of the "off-the-line" material found in a speech. He goes beyond relegating the "off-the-line" clauses to the "background," and defines what kind of background information is being presented, based on the clausal forms. Regarding the descending order of clause forms Rocine states, "The lower a verb form is in the profile, the farther away it is from the mainline and the more it tends to retard the forward progress of the mainline."<sup>118</sup> Therefore, not only does the syntax of the clauses indicate linguistic hierarchy of clausal relationships, but narrative or functional structures as well. Substantiating the claims regarding the purpose or function of the off-the-line forms would require examining many direct speeches. The direct speech analysis of Exodus 2-4 will contribute to this end.

Roy Heller's approach seems to mediate between Niccacci and Rocine to some degree. Like Niccacci, he assigns only two levels of ranking: Primary and Secondary. However, the verb forms he associates with these functions does not comport totally with those identified by

<sup>117</sup> Rocine, *Learning Biblical Hebrew*, 425.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Niccacci. The distinction between jussive and indicative *yiqtol* is absent, as is clear discussion on pre-verbal clauses (X-verb). Clauses are identified not by the position of the verb in the sentence, but rather by verb form. Therefore, whereas Niccacci and Rocine differentiate between X-*yiqtol* and *yiqtol* clauses, Heller lists the clause type simply as *yiqtol*.

Heller's inclusion of other clause types with brief functional descriptions is similar, though not as specific as Rocine's. Neither does Heller suggest a hierarchy of clauses for the "Secondary" elements. Whereas Rocine outlines two main speech "schemes," Heller defines five speech genres (narrative, predictive, expository, hortatory, and interrogative). The first four are summarized in his Discourse Constellation Charts, with the fifth being defined simply as "marked by the use of interrogative adverbs or particles."<sup>119</sup> The other four genres are discussed in terms of their syntax and functions.

#### **Narrative Discourse**<sup>120</sup>

Primary Verbal/Clause Forms	<i>QATAL</i>	Basic Past
	<i>WAYYIQTOL</i>	Continuative Past
Secondary Verbal/Clausal Forms	Verbless	Off-line status
	ה'ה verbal	Off-line status
	Participle	Off-line action
	<i>YIQTOL</i>	Off-line ongoing action

It must be noted here that Narrative Discourse is to be understood as a direct speech genre distinct from the narrative framework of the text. Simply put, rather than the narrator/author describing a past event, one of the characters in the scene is speaking and is recounting a past event. The function of *wayyiqtol* is, therefore, similar on either side of the quotation marks. However, the recounting of a past event in direct speech is, according to Heller, initiated with *qatal* and continued with *wayyiqtol*. Niccacci similarly asserts that "historical

<sup>119</sup> Heller, *Narrative Structure*, 475.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 462.

narrative begins with *wayyiqtol* while oral narrative begins with *qatal* or *X-qatal*.<sup>121</sup> In this case both agree that there is a difference between narrative proper and the narration of past events within direct speech. An example of Narrative Discourse can be found at Exodus 3:7-9:

3:7a	And YHWH said	וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
b	"I have surely seen the affliction of my people in Egypt	כִּי רָאִיתִי אֶת-עֲנֵי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם
c	and I have heard their cry from their oppressors	וְאֶת-צַעֲקָתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נֹגְשָׁיו
d	for I have known their sorrows	כִּי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת-מַכְאֲבָיו
3:8a	And I have come down	וְאָרַד
b	to snatch them from Egypt's hand	לְהַצִּילוֹ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם
c	and to bring them up from this land	וּלְהַעֲלֹתוֹ מִן-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת
d	into a land good and spacious	אֶל-אָרֶץ טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה
e	into a land flowing with milk and honey	אֶל-אָרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ
f	into the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites	אֶל-מְקוֹם הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי
3:9a	And now Behold! the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me	וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה צַעֲקַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּאָה אֵלַי
b	And also I have seen the oppression	וְגַם-רָאִיתִי אֶת-הַלְחָץ
c	with which the Egyptians oppress them	אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם לֹחֲצִים אֹתָם

This speech is dominated by *X-qatal* clauses, the foundation of a Narrative Discourse.

Again, Heller's scheme leaves the 'X' element aside. However, as will become evident below, a clause initial *qatal* is rare in Exodus 2-4, whereas the *X-qatal* construction is prevalent. The *wayyiqtol* in 8a is, according to Heller, continuative past.<sup>122</sup> The switch from *qatal* to *wayyiqtol* clauses will be addressed in the following discussion.

### Predictive Discourse<sup>123</sup>

Primary Verbal/Clause Forms	<i>YIQTOL</i>	Basic Future
	<i>WeQATAL</i>	Continuative Future
Secondary Verbal/Clausal Forms	Verbless	Off-line status
	וְהִיא verbal	Off-line status
	Incomplete	Off-line status
	Participial	Off-line status

<sup>121</sup> Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 121.

<sup>122</sup> Heller, *Narrative Structure*, 461.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 464.

Exodus 3:12-13 provides a concise example of this genre:

3:12a	<i>And he said</i>	וַיֹּאמֶר
b	<i>"Surely I am (or will be) with you</i>	כִּי־אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ
c	<i>and this [will be] a sign for you</i>	וַיְהִי־לְךָ הָאוֹת
d	<i>that I myself have sent you</i>	כִּי אֲנֹכִי שָׁלַחְתִּיךָ
e	<i>when you [sg.] have delivered the people from Egypt</i>	בְּהוֹצִיאֶךָ אֶת־הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם
f	<i>you [pl.] will serve God on this mountain</i>	וְתַעֲבֹדוּן אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הַהָר הַזֶּה
3:13a	<i>And Moses said to God</i>	וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֱלֹהִים
b	<i>"Behold! I am about to go to the sons of Israel</i>	הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי בֹא אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
c	<i>and I will say to them</i>	וְאֹמְרָתִי לָהֶם
d	<i>'The God of your father has sent me to you'</i>	אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שָׁלַחַנִי אֵלַיְכֶם
e	<i>and they will say to me</i>	וְאֹמְרוּלִי
f	<i>'What is his name?'</i>	מַה־שְּׁמוֹ
g	<i>What shall I say to them?'</i>	מַה אֹמַר אֶל־הֶם

The primary verb forms of Predictive Discourse (*yiqtol* and *weqatal*) are highlighted in this example. The content of the speeches also indicates that the actions will take place following the dialogue between God and Moses at the bush. The *X-qatal* clause at 3:12d falls outside of the Predictive Discourse parameters, as it states a reality that is not to take place in the future, but is taking place in the present. At the time the events spoken of as future in this verse come to pass, the "sending" of Moses will be a past event.

### Expository Discourse<sup>124</sup>

Primary Verbal/Clausal Forms	Verbless	Primary Present status
	הִיָּה Verbal	Primary Present status
	Incomplete	Interj./Oath/Voc./Answer
	Participial	Primary Present action
Secondary Verbal/Clausal Forms	Obj. + <i>QATAL/YIQTOL</i>	Secondary Present action

3:6a	<i>And he said</i>	וַיֹּאמֶר
b	<i>"I [am] the God of your father</i>	אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ
c	<i>the God of Abraham</i>	אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם
d	<i>the God of Isaac</i>	אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק
e	<i>and the God of Jacob"</i>	וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 468.

- f *And Moses hid his face*  
g *for he feared to look at God*

וַיִּסְתֵּר מֹשֶׁה פָּנָיו  
↑ כִּי יִרְאֵה מִהִבֵּית אֱלֹהִים

Expository Discourse involves "a state or activity that is occurring at the time of the speech or that is perpetually true."<sup>125</sup> The clauses are verbless, but the present tense is understood not as an action but a state of being or existence. Rocine limits the function of verbless clauses to "scene setting," a low level, off-the-line clause form. However, the whole speech of Exodus 3:6 is verbless, therefore it seems best to understand this as something more than setting the scene. In Exodus 2-4 the Expository Discourse segments are declarations of identity.

### Hortatory Discourse<sup>126</sup>

Primary Verbal/Clausal Forms	Imperative	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Volitional
	Cohortative	1 <sup>st</sup> Person Volitional
	Jussive	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Volitional
	'al – <i>YIQTOL</i>	Negative Volitional
	(We) <i>YIQTOL-na</i>	Precatory Volitional
Secondary Verbal/Clausal Forms	<i>QATAL</i>	Performative Utterance
	<i>WeQATAL</i>	Continuative Volitional
	<i>YIQTOL</i>	Continuative Volitional
	<i>WeYIQTOL</i>	Consequential/Purpose

- 3:5a *And he said*  
b *"Do not draw closer*  
c *Remove the sandals from your feet*  
d *for the place on which you are standing is holy ground*

וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֲלֵה־תִּקְרַב הָלֵם |  
שֶׁל־נִעַל יָד מֵעַל רַגְלֵיךָ |  
כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹמֵד עָלָיו |  
אֲדַמְתִּי־קֹדֶשׁ הוּא |

In this short speech, the negative volitional and the imperative are present. Like predictive discourses, hortatory speeches are common in Exodus 2-4. Primary verb/clausal forms for Hortatory Discourse tend to come at the beginning of a speech and are then continued with *weqatal* or *yiqtol* clauses. These two forms are also the primary clause forms of Predictive Discourse. The following discussion will seek to clarify how these forms function in either

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 464.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 475.

context, given the usage in Exodus 2-4.

Examining Heller's genre distinctions brings to the fore the idea that genre must be identified in order to determine the function of the syntax. How is one to determine the function of a *yiqtol* clause without first determining whether the discourse is predictive (in which case the *yiqtol* is the primary verb form), or hortatory (in which case the *yiqtol* is a secondary form)? This can potentially lead to circular reasoning whereby genre is determined by syntax, and syntax dictated by genre. Longacre admits the potential circularity of this process:

Here, as everywhere, discourse analysis insists that the whole legislates the parts, while, in turn, a study of the parts is necessary to the comprehension of the whole. Our argumentation is, therefore, *necessarily circular*. However, if we construct our circles with sufficient care so that the overall design and the detail are brought into plausible harmony, our circle is not a vicious one.<sup>127</sup>

In summary, a cursory look at these tables suggests that Niccacci's claim that *yiqtol* is the dominant verb form of speech will either have to be confirmed, or viewed as too simplistic.<sup>128</sup>

Niccacci clearly identifies how clauses with a pre-verbal (X) element function within direct speech, whereas Heller does not. However, Niccacci does not pursue the combination of syntax and genre in as thoroughgoing a manner as do Heller and Rocine.

Rocine explores three main speech genres — hortatory, predictive, and instructional — and offers a way of analyzing the clause hierarchy of each.<sup>129</sup> Predictive and Instructional overlap in Rocine's model with no discernable difference. The only difference he notes is that occasionally an Instructional Discourse will include an imperative verb.<sup>130</sup> Heller, in contrast,

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<sup>127</sup> Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 42–43.

<sup>128</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 29.

<sup>129</sup> Rocine, *Learning Biblical Hebrew*, Module 2, 62–151.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

states that "whenever any of these [volitional] forms appear in a speech, the associated discourse is, by default, hortatory."<sup>131</sup> Heller does not posit an Instructional Discourse category, and it would seem that the Hortatory Discourse scheme he presents would have little need of the distinction.

The differences of approach and analysis of the clause functions evident between these authors suggest that no consensus has emerged. As James Gee asserts, "No one theory is universally right or universally applicable. Each theory offers tools, which work better for some kinds of data than they do for others. Furthermore, those engaged in their own discourse analysis must adapt the tools they have taken from a given theory to the needs and demands of their own study."<sup>132</sup> The diversity of opinion regarding the analysis of direct speech found in Niccacci, Longacre, Rocine, and Heller will be brought into conversation as the direct speeches of Exodus 2-4 are examined. The resulting "conversation" may suggest a more unified text-linguistic approach to direct speech as commonalities and differences among these approaches emerge.

#### Clause Types in the Direct Speeches of Exodus 2-4

The initial observation to be made regarding clause types in the direct speeches of Exodus 2-4 has to do with their distribution. Verb initial clauses dominate (73/178 [41%]), with (we)-X-verb clauses ranking second (67/178 [38%]), and the remainder being verbless clauses (38/178 [21%]). The distinction between verb initial clauses and those with the verb in second place needs to be defined. Do these two constructions serve differing purposes in the structure of the speech? In other words, is there a clear rationale for maintaining a distinction between the two syntactic constructions? These questions will be addressed following an examination of the

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<sup>131</sup> Heller, *Narrative Structure*, 469.

<sup>132</sup> James Paul Gee, *How to Do Discourse Analysis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), xi.



verb initial clauses. The verb-in-second-position clauses will then be examined with a view to determining the nature and function of the pre-verbal element. Finally, non-verbal clauses will be examined as to their form and function. Clauses without verbs sometimes involve lists (3:8, 15; 4:10-11), which may be understood as complete syntactic units, but they are here being counted as separate clauses. This investigation will proceed in descending order from those clause types and verb forms that dominate the dialogues to the less-used forms. The divergent interpretations of how these clauses function found in the writings of Heller, Rocine and Niccacci will be brought together with examples from Exodus 2-4.

### *Verb Initial Clauses*

Within the dialogues of Exodus 2-4, verb initial constructions are made up of *weqatal* (34/73 [46.6%]), volitional forms (28/73 [38.4%]), *weyiqtol* (6/73 [8.2%]), *wayyiqtol* (4/73 [5.5%]), and *qatal* (1/73 [1.4%]).

#### 1. *Weqatal* clauses

In verb initial clauses the dominant form is *weqatal* (34/73 [46.6%]). In contrast, clause initial *qatal* occurs once (4:14d). Longacre considers *weqatal* in dialogue to be parallel to *wayyiqtol* in narrative. "I consider *weqatal* forms as *backbone structures* in predictive, procedural, and instructional discourses. Here they occur in their own right and not consecutive on other preceding verb forms."<sup>133</sup> However, if the genre of the speech is hortatory then, according to Longacre and Heller, the *weqatal* communicates a result clause connected to the preceding volitional form.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Longacre, "Weqatal Forms," 51.

<sup>134</sup> Longacre, *Joseph*, 134. Heller states that, "When any of these [volitional] forms appear in a speech, the associated discourse is, by default, hortatory." *Narrative Structure*, 469.

Niccacci too regards the *weqatal* form to be continuative, expressing a future or successive action that is linked to a preceding volitional form.<sup>135</sup> Like Longacre, he views the *weqatal* in direct speech as serving the same function as *wayyiqtol* in narrative.<sup>136</sup> However, a key difference is that Niccacci argues that *weqatal* is always a secondary form.

*Weqatal* is a first-position verb form at the level of the sentence but a second-position verb form at the text level because it is not found at the beginning of an autonomous text unit. In fact, no direct speech is found to begin with *weqatal*. It indicates a grammatically main but syntactically dependent sentence.<sup>137</sup>

Rocine's scheme suggests that the *weqatal* can serve two functions in hortatory discourse: as a mitigated hortatory utterance (a "softened" command) or an off-the-line statement of consequence or purpose. If the clause in question is preceded by a volitional form, and is therefore part of a hortatory discourse, then there seems to be consensus as to the continuative function of the *weqatal* form.

This is where a decision regarding the genre of the speech in question must be established. If *weqatal* is continuative (so Niccacci), this form could only occur within a paragraph and not at the beginning. Therefore, another verb form would have to be used to indicate the beginning of a new paragraph. If, however, *weqatal* forms the backbone of the dialogue, one might look to a break in the *weqatal* chain to determine the structural scheme. The question would be, does one arrive at the same structural scheme from both perspectives?

Two examples may help to establish some clarity of the function of *weqatal*. Exodus 3:13 contains two *weqatal* clauses that do not relate to a preceding volitional form. Exodus 3:16, 18

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<sup>135</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 82, 94.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>137</sup> Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 127.

offer examples of *weqatal* following an imperative.<sup>138</sup>

a. *Exodus 3:13*

3:13 a	<i>And Moses said to God,</i>	וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים
b	<i>"Behold! I am about to go to the sons of Israel</i>	הֲנִי אֵנֹכִי בָא אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
c	<i><u>And I shall say to them,</u></i>	וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם
d	<i>"The God of your fathers has sent me to you,"</i>	אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם
e	<i><u>And they will say to me,</u></i>	וְאָמְרוּ־לִי
f	<i>"What is his name?"</i>	מַה־שְּׁמוֹ
g	<i>What shall I say to them?</i>	מָה אֹמַר אֶל־הֶם

In both instances of the *weqatal* in this example, the actions are described in a sequential manner. Therefore, it seems that Longacre's claim that *weqatal* functions in direct speech as *wayyiqtol* does in narrative is evident here. Whereas *qatal* is normally understood to indicate a completed or past action, the *weqatal* forms, at least in this instance, carry a predictive sense. Moses is stating a future event as if it has happened. The specific function in this case—introducing embedded speech with אָמַר—is like that of the *wayyiqtol* in narrative. In this case, it is the speaker, Moses, who is narrator.

However, when one considers the narrative context, presenting this particular speech as predictive, seems a bit forced. Had Moses already decided that he was "about to go to the sons of Israel"? Given the entire narrative context and Moses' increased resistance, it would seem best to understand this speech more as a potential future rather than a certain future. This would lead one to translate, "If I go to the sons of Israel...", which has been done in most English translations.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>138</sup> In the textual examples the Hebrew forms in question will be shaded and the English translation underlined. Underlining the Hebrew text interferes with the vowel pointing of the text.

<sup>139</sup> NASB seems to be one of the few exceptions that maintains the more literal "Behold I am going..." The KJV and revisions maintain this as well, "Behold, *when* I come..." NIV, NRSV, NET, NLT, ESV all translate with the more reticent "If I go..." or a close equivalent. The LXX presents the verbs in the future active indicative.

b. Exodus 3:16a-c, 18a-c: *weqatal* in Hortatory Discourse

3:16 a	"Go!	לך
b	<u>and gather</u> the elders of Israel	וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת־זְקֵנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
c	<u>and say</u> to them,...	וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
3:18 a	... <u>and they will listen</u> to your voice	וְשָׁמְעוּ לְקוֹלְךָ
b	<u>and you and the elders of Israel shall go</u>	וּבָאתָ אַתָּה וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם
c	<u>and you [pl.] shall say</u> to him,...	וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֵלָיו

In this case the *weqatal* forms follow a clear imperative (16a). The sense of command continues in the additional instructions. The immediate command—what Moses is to do at this moment—is stated in the imperative. What he must do upon the completion of the first command is stated in *weqatal* forms instead of a continual list of imperatives. In fact, in Exodus 2-4 it is rare that a list of imperatives is given in one speech act without intervening forms or narration.

According to Rocine, the *weqatal* forms within Hortatory Discourse function either on or off the mainline of the discourse. As a mainline form they serve as mitigated commands. If they are understood to be off the mainline, they express consequence or purpose related to the preceding volitional form in the mainline. Longacre states that the *weqatal* form is not a simple continuation of the volitional sense, but rather expresses the result or consequence of the addressee following the mainline command.<sup>140</sup>

The string of *weqatal* verbs in Exodus 3:16 resumes in 3:18. The intervening clauses (3:17) comprise an embedded speech (what Moses is to say to the sons of Israel). While the result or purpose seems clear enough, the *weqatal* forms also present a logical sequence of events, i.e., they present the order in which the main command is to be carried out. This suggests that *weqatal* has the dual function of continuing the sense of command in these clauses while also presenting an expected sequence of events in a fashion similar to the way that *wayyiqtol* is

<sup>140</sup> Longacre, *Joseph*, 122; Longacre, "Weqatal Forms," 54.

used in narrative.

Within the lengthy speech of God that runs from Exodus 3:15-22, the *weqatal* form occurs eleven times. In addition to the above occurrences, which are connected to the imperative of 3:16a, *weqatal* verbs are found at 3:20a-b, 21a-b, 22a, c, and d. At 3:19a the focus of the verbal action changes from second to first person address.

*c. Exodus 3:19-22: weqatal in Predictive Discourse*

3:19 a	"But I know	וְאֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי
b	that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go	כִּי לֹא יִתֵּן אֶתְכֶם מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהֵלֵךְ
c	unless by a strong hand.	וְלֹא בְיַד חֲזָקָה
3:20 a	<u>But I will send out</u> my hand	וְשָׁלַחְתִּי אֶת־יָדִי
b	<u>and I will strike</u> Egypt with all my wonders	וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּכֹל נִפְלְאוֹתַי
c	which I shall do in the midst of it	אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּקִרְבּוֹ
d	and afterward he will send you out	וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם
3:21 a	<u>And I will give</u> this people favour in the eyes of Egypt	וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־חַן הָעַם־הַזֶּה בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרַיִם
b	<u>And it will be</u>	וְהָיָה
c	that when you go out	כִּי תֵלְכוּן
d	you will not go empty.	לֹא תֵלְכוּ רִיקִים
3:22 a	<u>And a woman will ask</u> her neighbor and the woman staying in her house	וְשִׂאלָה אִשָּׁה מִשְׁכַּנְתָּהּ וּמִגֵּרַת בֵּיתָהּ
b	for utensils of silver and utensils of gold and garments	כֹּל יִבְכֶסֶף וְכֹל יִזָּהֵב וְשִׂמְלוֹת
c	<u>and you shall put</u> them on your sons and daughters	וְשַׂמְתֶּם עַל־בְּנֵיכֶם וְעַל־בָּנוֹתֵיכֶם
d	<u>And you shall plunder</u> Egypt."	וְנָצַלְתֶּם אֶת־מִצְרַיִם

To emphasize the switch, the author has used the (we)-X-*qatal*, with the X element being the first person pronoun אֲנִי (3:19a). With the switch of personal address, the genre switches from Hortatory to Predictive. God is no longer commanding Moses to act, but is stating what will occur following Moses' actions and words in fulfilling the command.

However, the linear progression of the events is still evident in the *weqatal* verbs. Without content a basic paraphrase of the progression would be, "You go do this, and I'll then do this." Again the parallel function to that of the *wayyiqtol* in narrative seems apparent regardless

of the genre switch. This would, therefore, suggest that *weqatal* clauses are both mainline and unmarked clauses that, while moving the speech along, do not indicate macro-structural organization or points of importance.

## 2. Volitional verb forms

The second most common verb initial form is the imperative (20/73 [27%]). Since clause initial *yiqtol* forms also have a volitional sense, these are added to the imperative count for a total of volitional clauses (28/73 [38%]).<sup>141</sup> Therefore, 38% of the dialogue clauses in Exodus 2-4 are potentially volitional in meaning: the speaker is commanding or desiring the hearer to do something. If the *weqatal* form is continuative of a volitional form, 85% of the speeches in which the clauses are verb initial are potentially to be understood as volitional in some sense. This would amount to 35% of the total clauses in the dialogue of Exodus 2-4. As the preceding section suggests, however, each *weqatal* clause must be evaluated in the light of the context in which it occurs. Examining examples of volitional clauses and the surrounding contexts should illuminate the function of both the initial volitional clause and the varieties of constructions that may express the volitional sense.

### a. Exodus 2:8-9; 4:19: Volitional Verb Chains

Rarely are primary volitional verbs (imperative, jussive, cohortative forms) strung together in Exodus 2-4. Most often an initial volitional form is followed by *weqatal* clauses (see above). In the few instances where a chain of primary volitional forms appear together, the speeches are concise and pointed, and the command(s) obeyed.

- 2:8a *And the daughter of Pharaoh said to her,*  
 b *"Go!"*

וְהָאִמְרָלָה בְּתוֹפְרָעָה  
 לְכִי |

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<sup>141</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 78.

- c *And the girl went*  
 d *And she called the mother of the child*  
 2:9a *And the daughter of Pharaoh said to her,*  
 b *"Take this child*  
 c *and nurse him for me*  
 d *and I myself will give your wages."*  
 e *And the woman took the child*  
 f *And she nursed him*
- 4:19a *And Yhwh said to Moses*  
 b *"Go!*  
 c *Return to Egypt!..."*  
 4:20a *So Moses took...*  
 c *And he returned....*

וַתֵּלֶךְ הַעַלְמָה  
 וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־אִמּוֹת הַיֶּלֶד  
 וַתֹּאמֶר־לָהּ בַת־פַּרְעֹה  
 הַלִּי יָבִין אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה  
 וְהִנְקֵהוּ לִי  
 וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן אֶת־שִׂכְרֶךָ  
 וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה הַיֶּלֶד  
 וַתְּנִיקֵהוּ

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה  
 לֵךְ  
 שָׁב מִצְרַיִם  
 וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה...  
 וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָה מִצְרַיִם...

### b. Exodus 3:3, 14; 4:18: Jussive/Cohortative Sequence

Niccacci insists that when *yiqtol* comes first in a sentence it is always volitional, whereas (we)-X-*yiqtol* is always indicative unless it is immediately preceded by a volitional form, in which case it carries an indirect volitional force.<sup>142</sup> Similarly, though not as strongly, Gary Pratico and Miles Van Pelt state that clause initial *yiqtol* in the first person is usually cohortative in meaning.<sup>143</sup> There are only a few examples of clause initial *yiqtol* in the speeches of Exodus 2-4, one of which has involved a hotly debated translational problem. Given the rarity of this mode of speech, we must also consider the possibility suggested by Bergen that these clauses may indicate something with regard to the macro-structuring of the passage or to salient points that the author is intending to convey.

- 3:3a *And Moses said,*  
 b *"I must turn aside*  
 c *and take a look at this great sight*  
 d *why the bush is not burned up."*

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה  
 אֶסְרֶה־נָּה  
 וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הַמְּרֹאֶה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה  
 מִדּוּעַ לֹא־יִבְעַר הַסִּנֵּה

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 77–81.

<sup>143</sup> Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 217. The same claim is made as Niccacci; however, Pratico and Van Pelt state that this is the case "usually" or that "in general", whereas Niccacci states "always". In addition, Pratico and Van Pelt agree with Niccacci that the indicative (non-cohortative) is usually second in the sentence.

The first verb (3b) is clearly a cohortative form with the cohortative ending (הִי) and the addition of the particle of entreaty (אֲנִי). The second verb is a plain *weyiqtol*, but connected to the initial verb with by means of the coordinating conjunction, thereby transferring the cohortative meaning. In addition, the Masoretic accents indicate that the two verbs be understood as a unit.<sup>144</sup>

3:14a	<i>And God said to Moses,</i>	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה
b	<i>"I will be what I will be!"</i>	אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה
c	<i>And he said,</i>	וַיֹּאמֶר
d	<i>"Thus you are to say to the sons of Israel,</i>	כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
e	<i>'I Will Be' has sent me to you."</i>	אֲהִיָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלַיְכֶם

Clause 3:14b is problematic, as is evident in most English translations. Is this a statement of existence ("I Am"), a sense of promise or desire ("I will be"), or is it a simple future statement ("I shall be")?<sup>145</sup> If Niccacci's claim that indicative *yiqtol* never comes first in a sentence, and that initial *yiqtol* is always volitional, then "I will be" would be the appropriate translation. Niccacci would, then, solve the dispute by insisting that the verbs here be understood as volitional, i.e., cohortative.

Heller's profile schemes require a decision regarding genre, as he lists הִיְהִיְהִי verbal clauses under three genre types: 1) off-the-line status in Predictive and Narrative Discourse, 2) Primary Present status in Expository Discourse, or 3) Hortatory Discourse, if the cohortative sense is to be understood because the *yiqtol* is clause initial (in agreement with Niccacci). Without a clear discourse genre cue, Heller's approach leaves the question open. Can this three-word statement be given a genre classification? As an answer to Moses' question, it seems that this clause could

<sup>144</sup> The conjunctive accent *mûnah* is present with the אֲנִי particle. The second verb is accented with the disjunctive *zāqēp qātōn*.

<sup>145</sup> This assumes, of course, that English grammar maintains this distinction between the use of "will" versus "shall." Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad suggest no difference in current usage [Geoffrey Leech, Margaret Deuchar, and Robert Hoogenraad, *English Grammar for Today: A New Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 186.] Others maintain the distinction ["Modals - Shall versus Will," last modified February 22, 2012, accessed February 22, 2012, [http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/verbs-modals\\_shall-will.htm](http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/verbs-modals_shall-will.htm). accessed February 22, 2012].



fit any of the genre classifications. Heller's model does not help solve the problem.

However the issue may be resolved, it seems that the overall context of Exodus 3-4 and additional occurrences of  $\text{הָיָה}$  are often not taken into account. In the immediate context, it is apparent that the verb in clause 14e is also functioning as a noun. The main verb is  $\text{שָׁלַחְנִי}$ . What is the subject of this verb? The only possibility is that  $\text{הָיָה}$  is the grammatical subject of this clause. The line between verb and noun blurs in verses 14 and 15. The subject switches from the first person verbal form  $\text{הָיָה}$  to the proper noun  $\text{יְהוָה}$ , which may (potentially) be construed as a third person verb derived from the same root as that of  $\text{הָיָה}$ . The generic term for deity,  $\text{אֱלֹהִים}$ , with its modifying attributive phrases featuring the names of the Patriarchs, stands in apposition to  $\text{יְהוָה}$ , which, like  $\text{הָיָה}$  in verse 14, functions as the subject of  $\text{שָׁלַחְנִי}$ .

Perhaps it is best to suggest a dual meaning here and to understand the revelation of the divine name and character as a present person (noun) and one who will accomplish future action.

4:18a	<i>And Moses went</i>	$\text{וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה}$
b	<i>And he returned to Jethro his father-in-law</i>	$\text{וַיָּשָׁב אֶל-יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוֹ}$
c	<i>And he said to him,</i>	$\text{וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ}$
d	<i>"Please allow me to go</i>	$\text{אֲלֵכָה נָא}$
e	<i>so that I may return to my brothers who are in Egypt</i>	$\text{וְאֲשׁוּבָה אֶל-אֶחָי בְּמִצְרַיִם}$
f	<i>and see if they still live."</i>	$\text{וְאֲרֹאֶה הֲעוֹדֵם חַיִּים}$
g	<i>And Jethro said to Moses,</i>	$\text{וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה}$
h	<i>"Go in peace."</i>	$\text{לֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם}$

The cohortative sequence in 4:18d-f is similar to that in 3:3b-c discussed above. The first two forms include the cohortative ending. The first, as in 3:3b, has the particle  $\text{נָא}$  to mark this further as a cohortative clause. The difference here is that Moses is addressing someone and not talking to himself. The function of polite request seems most evident here, rather than an intensification of Moses' desire or wish. As with the example in 3:3, the chain is concluded with a *weyiqtol* form of the verb  $\text{הָיָה}$ .

c. Exodus 2:20: Imperative → *weyiqtol*

2:20a	And he said to his daughters,	וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-בָּנוֹתָיו
b	"Where is he?	וַיֹּאמֶר
c	What is this leaving the man?	לְמָה זֶה עֹזְבֶתָן אֶת-הָאִישׁ
d	Call to him	קְרְאוּ לוֹ
e	that he may eat bread."	וַיֹּאכַל לֶחֶם

Jethro's short speech begins with two interrogative clauses, and then switches to hortatory address. The first imperative (2:20d) is addressed to his daughters, stating what they are to do immediately. The second (2:20e) has been translated as a result clause.

### 3. Remaining verb initial forms

The remainder of verb initial forms attested in the direct speeches of Exodus 2-4 are: *weyiqtol* (6/73 [8.2%]), *wayyiqtol* (4/73 [5.5%]), and *qatal* (1/73 [1.4%]). Since these constitute the minority of clause types in the dialogues, it is possible that these clauses communicate either salient points, macro-structural markers, or both. Robert Bergen argues that deviations from normal syntactic patterns or vocabulary can point to elements of a text that the author wishes to emphasize.<sup>146</sup> However, Bergen's approach focuses on the narrative framework and brackets out direct speech. Therefore, whether or not these rare verb initial clauses function similarly within direct speech remains to be seen.

#### a. *Weyiqtol* clauses

Niccacci associates *weyiqtol* with a foreground clause, a continuative form dependent on a prior volitive or an indirect jussive.<sup>147</sup> Niccacci further differentiates the semantic function of the continuative forms (*weqatal* and *weyiqtol*) of direct speech. *Weyiqtol*, he claims, expresses

<sup>146</sup> Bergen, "Evil Spirits and Eccentric Grammar," 322.

<sup>147</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 88, 91.

intention, whereas *weqatal* expresses result.<sup>148</sup> Heller considers *weyiqtol* to be a secondary form of Hortatory Discourse. Rocine does not have the *weyiqtol* form listed.

Exodus 2:7 offers an example of *weqatal* and *weyiqtol* preceded by *yiqtol* that may not support Niccacci's view. The *weyiqtol* clause shifts the attention from the speaker (Moses' sister) to the one she will call and to the purpose for this call.

2:7a	<i>And his sister said to the daughter of Pharaoh,</i>	וְהֵאמֵר אָחֹתוֹ אֶל־בַּת־פַּרְעֹה
b	<i>"Shall I go</i>	הַאֵלֶּךְ
c	<i>and call for you a nursing woman from the Hebrews</i>	וְקָרָאתִי לְךָ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקָת מִן הָעִבְרִית
d	<i><u>that she may nurse the child for you?</u>"</i>	וְתִינַק לְךָ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד

The content of the verse suggests that the *weqatal* (7c) be understood as a continuative form signifying an action subsequent to that of the main verb (7b). The *weyiqtol* is not a secondary action, but a result clause, i.e., the expected outcome of the preceding clauses. Exodus 2:20e (see above) also communicates a result clause with the *weyiqtol* form. This observation suggests that Niccacci's above claim (that *weyiqtol* communicates intention, and *weqatal* purpose/result) is not quite accurate. The remaining *weyiqtol* occurrences (3:10b, 18f; 4:18e-f, 23c) are all dependent on the preceding clause, providing the purpose or expected result of the preceding statement. Therefore, from a narrative perspective, they do not constitute main breaks or salient points. Though rare, they seem to have a limited function in direct speech.

### *b. Wayyiqtol clauses*

All three authors (Rocine, Heller and Niccacci) identify the *wayyiqtol* as a primary form in Narrative Discourse speeches. However, the *wayyiqtol* in a Narrative Discourse must be preceded by another clause form, often an initial *qatal*. Narrative Discourse is the recounting of a

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 93.

past event within a direct speech. Heller identifies its function as "continuative past."<sup>149</sup> There are four occurrences of *wayyiqtol* in a Narrative Discourse in Exodus 2-4: 2:19d; 3:8a, 17a; 4:23a. Again it should be remembered that this form, prevalent in narrative, is rare in direct speech.

#### i. Exodus 2:19

- |       |   |   |
|-------|---|---|
| 2:19a | <i>And they said,</i>                                   | וַתֹּאמְרוּ                                 |
| b     | <i>"An Egyptian man delivered us from the shepherds</i> | אִישׁ מִצְרַיִם הִצִּילֵנוּ מִיַּד הָרֹעִים |
| c     | <i>and he also drew water for us</i>                    | וְגַם־דָּלָה דָּלָה לָנוּ                   |
| d     | <i>and he gave drink to the flock."</i>                 | וַיִּשְׁקֵן אֶת־הַצֹּאן                     |

Jethro's daughters are recounting the recent event in which they met Moses. The first two statements contain X-*qatal* clauses. In both instances the presence of a preverbal element negates the possible use of the *wayyiqtol*, as is the case in narrative that does not involve direct speech.

The short account of what happened follows the linear sequence of events.

#### ii. Exodus 3:7-8b

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| 3:7a | <i>And Yhwh said,</i>   | וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה  |
| b    | <i>"I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt</i> | רָאִיתִי רַאֲיִתִי אֶת־עֲנִי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם |
| c    | <i>and I have heard their cry on account of their oppressors</i>        | וְאֶת־צַעֲקוֹתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נַגְשָׁיו         |
| d    | <i>for I know their sorrows</i>   | ↑ כִּי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־מַכְאֹבֵיו                        |
| 3:8a | <i>So I have come down to snatch them from Egypt's hand</i>             | וְאָרַדְתִּי לְהַצִּילוֹ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם               |
| b    | <i>and to bring them up from the land..."</i>                           | וְלִהְעֲלֹתוֹ מִן־הָאָרֶץ הַהִוא                        |

#### iii. Exodus 3:16f-17b

- |       |   |                                    |
|-------|---|------------------------------------|
| 3:16f | <i>"saying,</i>                               | לֵאמֹר                             |
| g     | <i>'I am surely aware of you</i>              | פָּקֵד פְּקֻדָּתִי אֶתְכֶם         |
| h     | <i>and what has been done to you in Egypt</i> | וְאֶת־הַעֲשׂוּי לְכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם |
| 3:17a | <i>and therefore I say,</i>                   | וַאֲמַר                            |
| b     | <i>'I will bring you up...</i>                | אֶעֱלֶה אֶתְכֶם                    |

<sup>149</sup> see chart on p. 65.

In both of these examples the *wayyiqtol* introduces a result clause. It is, therefore, appropriate to reflect this in translation ("So" in 3:8a and "therefore" in 3:17a). Christo van der Merwe, however, suggests that the *wayyiqtol* in dialogue only has a continuative sense, assuming the tense/aspect of the preceding verbs.<sup>150</sup> However, this does not explain the switch and the content of the speeches. It seems evident in the above examples that the (*we*)-*X-qatal* statements describe the impetus for the actions being stated with the *wayyiqtol* verbs.

iv. Exodus 4:22-23a

4:22a	"And you shall say to Pharaoh,	וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה
b	'Thus says YHWH,	כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה
c	'My firstborn son is Israel.	בְּנִי בְכֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל
4:23a	<u>and so I said to you, ...</u> "	וְאָמַר אֵלַיךְ

This speech, the final words of YHWH in Exodus 2-4, is slightly more complex than other speech elements. The *wayyiqtol* verb is used to introduce a second level of embedded speech. The first level contains direct address to Moses (4:21-22a). The second level provides the introduction to the words that Moses is to speak to Pharaoh (4:22b). As in the prior examples, it seems that the statements following the *wayyiqtol* verb communicate a result flowing from the statement(s) made immediately prior to the *wayyiqtol*. In this case, the report of the prior command to release Israel to worship YHWH is related to the fact that Israel is YHWH's firstborn son.

From these four examples of *wayyiqtol* in direct speech, two functions are evident. First, there is a linear time aspect. The action described follows the preceding actions. In this way the *wayyiqtol* function is parallel to the function it serves in narrative. Second, the *wayyiqtol* introduces a clause that reports the anticipated outcome or result of the preceding clauses. Rather

<sup>150</sup> Merwe, "Discourse Linguistics," 24.

than being simply a rare form in dialogue, the *wayyiqtol* communicates, at least in these instances, significant information. The rarity of this verb form in direct speech serves to highlight the content of the clause. With the exception of Exodus 2:19, the *wayyiqtol* clauses of direct speech in Exodus 2-4 tell the reader exactly what YHWH is going to do for his people based on his knowledge of their situation in Egypt.

### c. *Qatal* clause

There is one occurrence of a verb initial *qatal* clause in Exodus 4:14. In this instance there seems to be a convergence of opinion between Heller and Niccacci, at least, that the genre of this speech is Narrative Discourse. Niccacci states that "Narrative Discourse begins with a (foreground) construction as is normal in pure discourse: either QATAL in first position or its equivalent, *x*-QATAL, or even with a simple noun clause (with or without a participle)."<sup>151</sup> The combination of the verbless clause followed by *qatal* would fit with Niccacci's definition. Heller's clause ranking would regard the first clause (14c) to be a secondary off-the-line clause, followed by the primary clause communicating a basic past sense. Accordingly, the translation provided below attempts to communicate the basic past sense. Aaron's ability to speak well has been known to YHWH.

4:14c	"What about Aaron your brother, the Levite?	הֲלֹא אֶהְרֵן אֶחָיִךְ הַלֵּוִי
d	<u>I already know</u>	יָדַעְתִּי
e	that he can speak well	כִּי־דַבֵּר יָדַבֵּר הוּא ↑
f	and also, behold, he is coming to meet you	וְגַם הֵנָּה־הוּא יָצָא לִקְרַאתְךָ
g	and he will see you	וְרָאָךְ
h	and he will rejoice in his heart"	וְשִׂמְחָה בְּלִבּוֹ

Rocine defines *qatal* at the third level of off-the-line clauses, defining it as relative past background in Predictive Narrative. This would indicate that the mainline of communication

<sup>151</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 109.

does not begin until the *weqatal* clauses. The introduction of Aaron and his ability to speak is then introduced as antecedent information to the following Predictive Discourse in which a chain of *weqatal* clauses (4:14g-4:17b), broken at times by (*we*)-*X-yiqtol* clauses, completes the speech. The transitional clause, then, must be 4:14f, with the presence of the two particles וַ and וְ marking the transition between the statement of fact (past narration of God's knowledge) with the imminent meeting of Moses and Aaron.

It was suggested at the beginning of this section that rare clause constructions may indicate salience or author-embedded macro-structural cues. The examples examined above reveal dependence of rare clauses types upon more common constructions. The fact that these last verb initial clause constructions are rare does not seem to support the idea that they are in some way syntactically marked for prominence or that they serve any macro-syntactic function in the text.

#### *Verb in Second Position Clauses: (we)-X-verb*

The second subsection of clause types to be considered from Exodus 2-4 is that in which the verb is in second position. First, the nature of the preverbal elements (X) needs to be discussed. In many cases, it seems that the linguistic parameters of biblical Hebrew confine various words or independent particles to the preverbal slot. The question as to whether or not these clauses should, therefore, be considered truly "verb in second position" clauses will be addressed. Second, whether the presence or absence of the *waw* affects the function of the clause must be established. Third, the verb forms associated with these clauses, and their functions within the dialogues, will be examined. Only four clause types are found in Exodus 2-4: (*we*)-*X-yiqtol* (33/67 [49%]), (*we*)-*X-qatal* (28/67 [41%]), (*we*)-*X-participle* (4/67 [6%]), and (*we*)-*X-imperative* (2/67 [3%]).

The X element in many of the clauses in question involves a word that cannot be placed anywhere else in the sentence. In other words, biblical Hebrew has no other way to construct the sentence. The following words appear in Exodus 2-4, and are necessarily preverbal: **כִּי**, **לְמַדָּה**, **מִי**, **גַם**, **אֵל**, **הִנֵּה**, **עֲתָה**, **הִנֵּה**, **כִּי**, **לֹא**, **אֲשֶׁר**, **לְמַעַן**, **אִו**. These fall into various classes of words and syntactic function, but all share the need to be first in the sentence or clause. While some initiate dependent or relative clauses (e.g., **כִּי**, **כִּי**, **אֲשֶׁר**), other words stand at the beginning of sentences that are not dependent, as in the case of a negative (**לֹא**, **לֹא**) or an exclamation (**עֲתָה**, **הִנֵּה**). The question is whether or not these constructions are necessarily secondary as most discourse grammarians seem to classify them. Biblical Hebrew necessitates that certain clause forms involve something other than the verb in the first position of the sentence and such clauses should not, therefore, automatically be relegated to off-the-line status. The X element of a verb in second position clause may be there out of linguistic necessity rather than authorial choice. As the various clause constructions are considered below, the various preverbal elements will be evaluated as to the potential subordination of the clause to a mainline form, or whether the clause could be understood as a mainline form with the verb in second position.

An element of discussion that seems absent in the literature on this topic has to do with whether or not the switch to, or use of, second position verb clauses in direct speech is analogous to that found in narrative. In narrative, the second position verb is usually *qatal* in place of *wayyiqtol* in the narrative mainline. Perhaps, as these occurrences are examined, it might be suggested that there is a pattern of verb-initial and verb-in-second-position counterparts analogous to that which is found in narrative. Given that the majority of *(we)-X-verb* clauses are not speech-initial, it may be that the non-initial occurrences are somehow grammatically dependent on the preceding or following verb-initial clauses. Whether these pairings reveal any



patterns that are similar to those that appear in narrative is yet to be determined.<sup>152</sup>

The *(we)-X-verb* clauses also exhibit variety in regard to the presence or absence of the *waw*. Does this affect the syntax of the clauses? Niccacci suggests that there is no significant difference in the function of the clause because "the function does not depend on the *waw* but on the position of the verb in the sentence."<sup>153</sup> His discussion regarding the function of וַיְהִי(ו) and וַיִּזְכֹּר(ו) notes no distinction between these particles with or without the conjunction, hence the bracket around the *waw*.<sup>154</sup> Heller's and Rocine's charts above reveal that they view the *waw* as significant only when it is attached to a verb. The present study will also bracket the *waw*, as has been done in the enumeration of clause types above, and leave the question open until the evidence of Exodus 1:22-4:31 is considered.

### 1. *(We)-X-yiqtol* Clauses

The first observation to make regarding this clause type is that in the majority of cases it does not begin a speech segment. None of the linguistic analysis models surveyed in this project have suggested that clause placement within paragraphs should be examined. The central concern seems to be with verb placement within the sentence or clause. This seems somewhat ironic since discourse linguists insist that the larger context determines the form and function of the parts. This then may be where the present study can make a contribution to the discipline.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> In chapter 1 the various functions of the *we-X-qatal* clauses revealed the following functions when considered alongside the narrative mainline: contrast, simultaneous action, narrative pause, or resuming a previous story or reintroducing a prior character.

<sup>153</sup> Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 128.

<sup>154</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 96–102; Alviero Niccacci, "Finite Verb in the Second Position of the Sentence Coherence of the Hebrew Verbal System.," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 108, no. 3 (1996): 439.

<sup>155</sup> Niccacci's chapter "The Two-Element Syntactic Construction" in *Syntax*, 125-162, discusses clause pairings (protasis/apodasis) and tense shifts between the two. Discussion of paragraph initial clauses in direct speech does not seem to factor into any his discussion. Rocine and Heller likewise do not discuss paragraph structuring or paragraph initial clause structures in this manner. While these elements are here confined to the speeches of Exodus

Of thirty-three (we)-X-*yiqtol* clauses in Exodus 1:22-4:31, only seven begin a speech segment.

1:22b	"Every son that is born, <u>you are to cast</u> into the Nile	כָּל־הַבֵּן הַיּוֹלֵד הַיְאֹרָה תַשְׁלִי יָבֹהוּ
c	but every daughter <u>you are to preserve</u> ."	וְכָל־הַבֵּת תַּחְיִין
2:13b	"Why <u>are you striking</u> your neighbour?"	לְמָה תִּכֶּה רֵעֶךָ
3:5b	"Do not <u>draw closer</u> ."	אַל־תִּקְרַב הָלֵם
3:14d	"Thus <u>you are to say</u> to the sons of Israel,"	כֹּה־תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
3:15b	"Thus <u>you are to say</u> to the sons of Israel,"	כֹּה־תֹאמַר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
4:1c	"But behold! <u>They will not believe me</u> ."	וְהֵן לֹא־יִאֱמִינוּ לִי

In 1:22, the preverbal elements are noun phrases and serve to highlight the distinction that the people of Egypt are to make between the sons and daughters. The placement of the noun phrase serves to emphasize the distinction, and points to the irony that will become evident in Exodus 2:1-11 as a "son" is saved through the actions and words of "daughters." The narrative introduction to Pharaoh's speech (וַיִּצַו פַּרְעֹה לְכָל־עַמּוֹ Then Pharaoh commanded all his people) indicates that this is to be understood as a command, or a hortatory speech. Niccacci suggests that X-*yiqtol* is only volitional when preceded by a clear volitional form.<sup>156</sup> However, the present instance reveals that this is not always the case. Though the statements do not follow an imperative, they must be considered volitional due to the narrator's comment.

The interrogative and negative particles (2:13b; 3:5b; 4:1c) are necessarily clause initial, and in these cases begin the direct speech as well. The interrogative statement (2:13b) with the *yiqtol* form serves the narrative purpose of indicating that the conflict between the two Hebrew workers and Moses' question occur at the same time. Moses is addressing an immediate and present action. The *yiqtol* in this case serves to give a present tense sense to the scene and

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2-4, further study of direct speech in the Pentateuch is needed to form a more solid conclusion.

<sup>156</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 94.

statement. In addition, the response of the Hebrew slave to Moses' question suggests that an authoritative stance is being taken by Moses. Thus although there is no command involved, a hortatory address seems to be understood.

The embedded speeches in 3:14d and 15b are the only clauses that could possibly be reworked and mean essentially the same thing. Removing the  $\text{כִּי}$  and beginning the sentence with the *yiqtol* alone would retain the hortatory nature of the speech. The inclusion of the particle places the emphasis on the content of the speech rather than on the action that Moses is to take in speaking. Of the 577 occurrences of  $\text{כִּי}$ , 500 are connected with the verb  $\text{אָמַר}$ .<sup>157</sup> A survey of these occurrences reveals that the function of this construction is to pass on to the addressee (a messenger or prophet) the exact wording he/she is to communicate to the audience.

All things considered, the preceding evidence indicates that speech initial *X-yiqtol* clauses are hortatory. This suggests that Niccacci's claim that the *X-yiqtol* clause is a secondary form that is dependent on a preceding clause is too restrictive.<sup>158</sup> Rocine places this construction as an "off-the-line" form in both discourse profiles.<sup>159</sup> Heller's omission of the preverbal slot may, therefore, be a more accurate reflection of the situation inasmuch as he also includes  $\text{לֵאמֹר}$  + *yiqtol* as a primary clause form in hortatory discourse, while both Niccacci and Rocine consider it secondary. It seems more likely that negative clauses, due to the fact that they cannot be expressed without the *X-verb* construction, belong on the mainline of communication as primary clause forms in both direct speech and narrative.

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<sup>157</sup> Search results from Bible Word Study  $\text{כִּי}$  showing Grammatical Relationships (Logos Bible Software 4.5 SR-3 (4.50.0.1881), 2012).

<sup>158</sup> Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 122.

<sup>159</sup> Rocine's discourse profiles (see 65-66 above) lists the *X-yiqtol* as either 1) off-the-line topicalization in predictive and instructional discourse, or 2) as off-the-line prohibitive commands or consequence/purpose statements in hortatory discourse.

Since the speech initial position of this clause type is rare, the phenomenon may suggest a linguistic flagging of a key moment in the narrative. Bergen's contour analysis suggests that this is so, though he does not discuss or analyze direct speech in his articles. Coupling Bergen's concept with Alter's claim that direct speech is the primary vehicle for communication, one concludes that these seven occurrences of this clause form at the beginning of a speech seem significant. Pharaoh's command to his people sets up the narrative of Exodus 2, as was noted earlier. The next clause considered above (2:13b) introduces the conflict that forces Moses to flee Egypt. The prohibition in 3:5b is the first recorded directive of God since the book of Genesis, and establishes a boundary around sacred space that Moses and the nation will encounter in the later Exodus narrative (Exodus 19 *et passim*). The specification of what Moses is to say to the Israelites in Exodus 3:14 and 15 is highly significant as this concerns the revelation of the divine covenant name. Finally, Moses' statement that the people will not believe him not only changes the direction of the dialogue between Moses and God (who now questions Moses), but also anticipates the relationship that Moses will have with Israel both personally and through Israel's history as they reject the instruction of God revealed through Moses. This suggests that the *(we)-X-yiqtol* of direct speech, when speech initial, might be a marked structure providing key information for the present text as well as a potential linkage to the larger biblical context.

## 2. *(we)-X-qatal* clauses

As with the *(we)-X-yiqtol* clauses, the majority of the *(we)-X-qatal* clauses are not speech initial (21/28 [75%]). Only seven of the clauses are found to be speech initial (2:14b, 14f, 18c, 19b, 22c; 3:7b; 4:11b). The X elements are similar to those associated with *(we)-X-yiqtol* clauses (interrogatives, nouns, pronouns, negative particle). One particular clause form occurs three

times – the infinitive absolute in the X position with the *qatal* of the same verbal root following (2:19b; 3:7b, 16g) – and it is speech initial only once (3:7b).

Ten of the non-speech-initial (*we*)-X-*qatal* clauses have a conjunctive particle as the X element. These particles make the clauses in question dependent on the preceding clause(s). Niccacci regards this clause form to be communicating recovered information, or a recounting/retrieval of information from a past event or speech.<sup>160</sup> A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this function:

2:14d	... <u>like you killed the Egyptian?</u>	כְּאַשֶׁר הִרְגַתְּ אֶת־הַמִּצְרִי
3:7d	... <u>for I know their sorrows...</u>	כִּי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־מַכְאֲבֵיו
3:9b	... <u>and also I have seen the oppression...</u>	וְגַם־רָאִיתִי אֶת־הַלְחָץ
4:1f	... <u>YHWH did not appear to you.</u>	לֹא־נִרְאָה אֵלַיךָ יְהוָה
4:19d	... <u>For they have died, all those seeking your life</u>	כִּי־יָמְתוּ כָּל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הַמְּבַקְשִׁים אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ
4:21d	... <u>which I have placed in your hand...</u>	אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמַתִּי בְיָדְךָ

In each of these cases, the information communicated in the (*we*)-X-*qatal* clause is reflecting a previous situation or making a statement of fact. Even in the predictive speech of Moses in 4:1, the imagined statement of the people is reflecting a past event. Niccacci's contention that the only function of this clause in direct speech "is to express a circumstance prior to the principal action or the background" seems to be confirmed.<sup>161</sup>

However, there are some formulations of this clause type that seem to be specific to a particular mode of speech. One such example is the use of the particle *כֹּה* in Exodus 4:22b, in the phrase *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* "Thus says YHWH." This is a specialized quotation formula standing apart

<sup>160</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 121.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

from usages of the X-*qatal* construction noted above. This construction is a quotative frame within a speech act. Within the Pentateuch, this specific clause only occurs in Exodus, with 4:22b being the first occurrence.<sup>162</sup> With the exception of Exodus 32:27, each occurrence involves a declaration concerning what Moses is to say or what he does say to Pharaoh on behalf of YHWH. With the addition of 32:27, it is notable that each occurrence has to do with impending judgment from YHWH against those who rebel against YHWH.

The second largest grouping of X elements consists of nouns, noun phrases, or personal pronouns. The following seven occurrences are concentrated in Exodus 3, and perhaps their function is related to the genre of speech in which they occur.

3:7c	...and I have heard their cry from their oppressors...	וְאֶת־צַעֲקָתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נַגְשָׁיו
3:13d	The God of your fathers <u>has sent me</u> to you.	אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שָׁלַחַנִּי אֵלֵיכֶם
3:14e	I Am <sup>163</sup> <u>has sent me</u> to you.	אֲהִיָּה שָׁלַחַנִּי אֵלֵיכֶם
3:15f	...and the God of Jacob <sup>164</sup> <u>sent me</u> to you.	וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב שָׁלַחַנִּי אֵלֵיכֶם
3:16d	YHWH the God of your fathers <u>appeared</u> to me.	יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם נִרְאָה אֵלַי
3:18d	YHWH the God of the Hebrews <u>has met</u> with us.	יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִיִּים נִקְרָה עָלֵינוּ
3:19a	But I, <u>I know</u> ...	וְאֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי

The majority of the examples occur in the midst of predictive discourse – i.e., the initial and dominant verbs are *yiqtol* and pertain to what Moses is called to do once he is back in Egypt. The information presented in these (we)-X-*qatal* clauses refers back to this experience of meeting

<sup>162</sup> Exodus 4:22; 5:1; 7:17; 8:1 [7:26 BHS]; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3; 11:4; 32:27.

<sup>163</sup> As has been suggested previously in this study, the verbal aspect of the initial *yiqtol* seems to be replaced as the nominal sense of "יהוה" takes over. It has also been pointed out that "יהוה" functions as the subject of the verb (see pp. 77-78).

<sup>164</sup> The complete X element of this statement runs from 3:15c to this phrase. This is a rare example of an elongated X element, "YHWH, God of your fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob has sent me to you."

God at the burning bush. Moses' future actions and words are anchored in his previous encounter with God.

It appears that (*we*)-X-*qatal* statements that are speech-initial tend to be found in short speeches, whereas longer speeches begin with other clause forms. Five of the speeches that begin with this clause type occur in Exodus 2, and consist of short one or two clause utterances. The content of these short speeches is either in the form of a direct question regarding a current situation, or of a statement regarding a past event that has some implications for the present.

2:14b *Who placed you as prince and judge over us?* | מי שָׂמָךְ לְאִישׁ שֶׁר וְשָׁפֵט עָלֵינוּ |

2:14f *Surely the matter has become known.* | אִכֵּן נֹדַע הַדָּבָר |

2:18c *Why have you returned early today?* | מַדּוּעַ מָהֲרָתָן בָּא הַיּוֹם |

2:19b *An Egyptian man delivered us from the shepherds.* | אִישׁ מִצְרַיִם הִצִּילָנוּ מִיַּד הָרֹעִים |

2:22c *I have become a sojourner in a foreign land.* | גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ נְכַרִּיהָ |

The remaining two speech-initial examples stand at the beginning of significant pronouncements.

3:7b *I have indeed seen the affliction of my people in Egypt* | רָאִה רְאִיתִי אֶת־עֲנִי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם |

4:11b *Who gave man his mouth?* | מִי שָׂם פֶּה לְאָדָם |

The statement in 3:7b begins the first long speech of God to Moses, announcing his awareness of the Israelites' suffering and his plan to redeem them. It should also be noted that this is the first speech act of YHWH in Exodus. Here in the episode of the burning bush, it is initially Elohim who speaks to Moses (3:4). The switch to YHWH in v. 7 is significant as the speech itself shows YHWH's close (immanent) awareness of Israel's plight and his readiness to act directly.<sup>165</sup>

The X element of 3:7b is the infinitive absolute of the same verbal root. This serves to

<sup>165</sup> Steven Runge and Joshua Westbury, eds., *The Lexham Discourse Hebrew Bible: Glossary* (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2012), 2.6.

alert the reader to YHWH's perception of the plight of Israel. There can be no question as to what he has seen and what he plans to do about it.<sup>166</sup> The other two examples of this clause form (2:19c; 3:16g), occurring within a speech rather than at the beginning of a speech, confirm the intensification of the verbal idea.

In 4:11b, the reader encounters one of the final speeches of God to Moses to be found in Exodus 3-4. Interestingly, the interrogative particle (וְ) and the verb (שָׁ) also appear in the first occurrence of this clause type within the passage boundaries of this investigation (2:14b). Is this the answer to the initial question, "Who placed you as prince and judge over us"? God's call of Moses to be the agent of the Exodus and his spokesman to both Israel and Pharaoh in effect puts Moses in the position of "prince and judge" over the people. In addition, it may be suggested that Moses will continue in this capacity throughout his lifetime and beyond through the Law issued at Sinai.

One final (*we*)-*X-qatal* clause requires some consideration.

3:9a *And now, behold! The cry of the sons of Israel has* וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה צַעֲקַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָזְנֵי  
*come up to me*

The X element of note here is the combination וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה, which occurs only thirteen times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>167</sup> The significance seems to be that this introduction to the clause draws the reader's attention to the following material as pivotal for all that has preceded and for what will follow. In most of the other uses, the clause occurs near the end of the speech unit or narrative episode. In Exodus, however, it occurs at the beginning of the conversation between Moses and God, and yet close to the end of God's initial speech that culminates in the command for Moses

<sup>166</sup> Merwe, Naude, and Kroeze, *BHRG*, 158.

<sup>167</sup> Genesis 12:19; Deuteronomy 26:10; 1 Samuel 12:2, 13; 24:21[20 Eng]; 1 Kings 1:18; 22:23; 2 Chronicles 18:22; 20:10; Jeremiah 40:4.



to go as his sent one to deliver the people. For the reader, then, the surprise is not so much due to the clause itself, but to the fact that the discussion takes a turn as Moses begins questioning this call and command. If the other uses of this clause type are indicative of a "normal" text, the reader would expect Moses' obedience to follow and a return to a narrative report at this juncture in the text. However, the extension of the text – the narrative time – at this point suggests that what is being presented is of high importance. The dialogue between Moses and YHWH is highlighted as crucial to the message of the text.<sup>168</sup>

Again the *(we)-X-qatal* communicates "a circumstance prior to the principal action or background" in this marked sentence.<sup>169</sup> The follow-up to this is the reuse of וַעֲתָהּ הִנֵּה at the start 3:10 and the employment of imperative verbs. The information presented in the וַעֲתָהּ הִנֵּה clauses provides the necessary background for the commands that follow.

It may be suggested, therefore, that when *(we)-X-qatal* is found in the speech-initial position, or when it is preceded by a strong narrative marker (וַעֲתָהּ הִנֵּה), it serves as a marker of importance. The examples found in Exodus 2-4 indicate that these come in the form of questions, or statements of circumstances or facts upon which the following narrative is based. In contrast, occurrences of *(we)-X-qatal* that are not speech initial make the clause dependent on a preceding clause/sentence.

### 3. *(we)-X-participle clauses*

Only three examples of this clause type are attested in Exodus 2-4:

3:13b *Behold! I am going to the sons of Israel...*

וַעֲתָהּ הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי בֹא אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל |

3:17d *...to a land flowing with milk and honey.*

אֶל-אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֵלֶב וְדָבָשׁ |

<sup>168</sup> Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 108–109.

<sup>169</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 189.

4:23d *Behold! I will kill your firstborn son.*

הִנֵּה אֲנִי הֹרֵג אֶת־בְּנֶךְ בְּכֹרְךָ |

In 3:17d, the reader encounters a fairly standard adjectival participle that does not stand out as a marked construction. The other two examples, however, warrant investigation. Both begin with the phrase "Behold! I..." (הִנֵּה אֲנִי). On the function of הִנֵּה, van der Merwe states, "*Attention is focused on events that are surprising or unexpected for the person addressed or the characters in a story.* It often introduces an important change of perspective in a story."<sup>170</sup> This, coupled with the fronting of the independent personal pronoun, which occurs only thirteen other times in the Pentateuch,<sup>171</sup> suggests that something significant about the identity or role of the speaker is being put forward. Of the fifteen occurrences in the Pentateuch, only two are followed by something other than a participle. Thus the default construction seems to be הִנֵּה אֲנִי followed by a participle. In that sense, it is not the participial form that is significant, but the clause construction in which the participle is found.

In 3:13b, הִנֵּה אֲנִי is speech initial, and the speech in question has been identified above as a predictive speech. Moses describes an imagined interchange with the Israelites that leads up to his key question at v. 13g. The question pertains to the name of the god who is sending Moses. This is, of course, answered with the revelation of the divine name, and so begins the central scene in the dialogue.

Exodus 4:23d contains the conclusion of a separate speech of YHWH to Moses that is placed outside of the long conversation that runs from 3:7 to 4:19. Moses has gone back to Jethro and is preparing to depart for Egypt when YHWH again commands him to return to Egypt and instructs him what to do and say when he comes to Pharaoh. The central aspect of the message is

<sup>170</sup> Merwe, Naude, and Kroeze, *BHRG*, 330. (Italics in original).

<sup>171</sup> Genesis 24:13, 43; 25:32; 28:15; 48:21; 50:5; Exodus 7:17, 27; 8:25; 19:9; 23:20; 34:10; Numbers 22:32.

twofold: 1. Israel is YHWH's firstborn, and 2. YHWH will be the killer of Pharaoh's firstborn in response to Pharaoh's refusal to release Israel.

The two examples of second position participial clauses (3:13b, 4:23d), fronted by **אֲנֹכִי הֵנִי**, occur in clauses that communicate or lead up to significant moments in the story.

#### 4. (we)-X-imperative clauses

Two occurrences of a second position imperative verb occur in Exodus 2-4. In both instances the imperative verb is preceded by **וַיֵּצֵא**. This clause form is found twenty-one additional times in the Pentateuch, and 110 times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>172</sup> Therefore, this specific construction may signal a key moment in the text. An additional observation, upon surveying the occurrences in the Pentateuch, is that these occur in narrative sections rather than in legal sections, so it is a narrative speech device.

3:10a *And now, Go!*

**וַיֵּצֵא לְכֹהֵן** |

4:12a *And now, Go!*

**וַיֵּצֵא לְךָ** |

The repetition of the command at the end of YHWH's first speech to Moses in Exodus 3-4, and close to the end of the discussion with Moses, serves to bracket the entire exchange. The placement of this imperative clause at the end of the speeches is connected with the function of **וַיֵּצֵא**. "It is an important particle which introduces the result arising or the conclusion to be drawn concerning the present action from an event or topic dealt with beforehand."<sup>173</sup> God has commanded Moses to go, based on who he is (3:6) and what he knows of the situation (3:7, 9) and what he intends for Israel (3:8). Despite Moses' reluctance (3:11-4:10), the command stays

<sup>172</sup> Occurrences in the Pentateuch: Genesis 20:7; 21:23; 27:3; 31:13, 44; 37:20; 50:17; Exodus 5:18; 9:19; 10:17; 18:19; 32:10, 24; 33:5; Numbers 22:6, 11, 19; 24:11; 31:37; Deuteronomy 2:13; 31:19.

<sup>173</sup> Niccacci, *Syntax*, 101.

the same.

A clause with the verb in second position in direct speech is often not a marked structure. In most cases, this clause type is syntactically connected to the preceding verb initial clause. However, the speech initial use of this clause type communicates important information. The nature of the preverbal (X) element needs to be examined on a case-by-case basis, as there are many particles in biblical Hebrew that are necessarily clause initial. In each case, therefore, it must be determined whether or not these clauses are secondary or off-the-line.

The presence of the *waw* does not seem to be related to the placement of the clause within the speech. Speech initial X-*verb* clauses often do not have the *waw*, but then neither do many of the speech medial clauses.

### *Verbless Clauses*

The remaining direct speech clauses in Exodus 2-4 are verbless, or nominal, clauses. It was noted in the previous chapter that, in narrative, verbless clauses are rare and that only one example is found in Exodus 2-4 (2:16). Within dialogue, however, the frequency of verbless clauses increases dramatically. Scholars differ in their explanations regarding how these clauses function within a given text. "Although much progress has been made in describing and understanding verbless clauses, uncertainty remains about their internal structure, their integration along with verbal clauses into an account of Biblical Hebrew syntax, and their distribution and rhetorical function on a text-linguistic level."<sup>174</sup> A quick review of the approaches taken by Niccacci, Rocine, and Heller reveals the variety of views on this common element in direct speech.

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<sup>174</sup> Cynthia L. Miller, "Pivotal Issues in Analyzing the Verbless Clause," in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches*, vol. 1, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 6. The various essays in this volume approach verbless clauses from various angles, utilizing different terminology, and coming to very different conclusions. A consensus approach seems rather elusive.

Niccacci prefers the designation "simple noun clause" over and against "verbless clause." The function of the simple noun clause, for Niccacci, depends on placement within the speech and the presence or absence of the *waw* conjunction. If the clause/sentence is independent, then it belongs in the foreground. However, if the clause is preceded by *waw* and embedded within a speech, then it is background. Rocine places the verbless clause low in his hierarchy of clause types in both discourse profile schemes, and describes its function in terms of "scene-setting." Heller assigns verbless clauses to secondary "off-line status" in narrative and predictive discourse, but to primary "present status" in expository discourse.

For the purposes of this study, the term "verbless clause" will be defined according to the following criteria: first, the clause contains no finite or infinitive verb form, and second, it is not syntactically dependent on a preceding verbal clause. Within Exodus 2-4, verbless clauses are found only at the beginning of a speech. Two basic categories emerge in this regard: 1. speech initial and complete, and 2. speech initial.

Verbless phrases, as opposed to clauses, are dependent on a verbal clause and occur in the speech medial position. Since they are connected to a preceding verbal clause, speech medial verbless phrases function to provide additional information regarding the verbal clauses. Therefore, they do not constitute significant breaks in the verbal chains. They expand upon or add information to the verbal clause upon which they depend. Therefore, these verbless phrases will not be considered as separate entities in the discussion below.

An additional consideration discussed in the literature is whether the verb  $\text{וַיִּבְרָא}$  is assumed or unnecessary, thereby making the clause in question implicitly verbal. "Verbless clauses have sometimes been understood as having an underlying form of the verb  $\text{וַיִּבְרָא}$  that has been

deleted."<sup>175</sup> This suggestion will be evaluated as the various clauses are examined. The issue may be more translational than linguistic in significance. What may be awkward syntax and grammar in English or Greek may not be in Biblical Hebrew.

## 1. Speech Initial and Complete

Speeches that consist entirely of one or more verbless clauses are rare, but significant. In

Exodus 2-4 these are found in the following places:

2:6f	<i>"This [is] from the children of the Hebrews."</i>	מִלְדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה
3:4d	<i>"Moses! Moses!"</i>	מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה
f	<i>"Here I [am]."</i>	הֲנִנִּי
3:6b	<i>"I [am] the God of your father</i>	אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ
c	<i>the God of Abraham</i>	אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם
d	<i>the God of Isaac</i>	אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק
e	<i>the God of Jacob."</i>	אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב
4:2b	<i>"What [is] in your hand?"</i>	מַזֵּה בְיָדְךָ
d	<i>"A staff."</i>	מִטָּה
4:10b	<i>"Please, Lord,</i>	בִּי אֲדֹנָי
c	<i>I [am] not a man of words</i>	לֹא אִישׁ דְּבָרִים אֲנֹכִי
d	<i>neither from yesterday</i>	גַּם מִתְּמוֹל
e	<i>neither from three days ago</i>	גַּם מִשְׁלָשָׁם
f	<i>neither from the time you spoke to your servant</i>	גַּם מֵאִזְ דִּבַּרְתָּ אֵל־עַבְדְּךָ
g	<i>for heavy of mouth and heavy of lips I [am]."</i>	כִּי כִבְד־פִּי וְכִבְד־לְשׁוֹן אֲנֹכִי
4:25e	<i>"For a bridegroom of blood you [are] to me."</i>	כִּי חַתָּן־דָּמִים אַתָּה לִּי

The first observation to be made is that these are relatively short speeches, and are declarative in nature. Heller places these types of speeches in the category of "Expository Discourse," whose purpose "is to explain a state or activity that is occurring at the time of the

<sup>175</sup> Miller, "Pivotal Issues in Analyzing the Verbless Clause," 9.

speech or that is perpetually true."<sup>176</sup> He further states that the tense of the clause, when the speech is entirely verbless, is always present.<sup>177</sup> In most cases, this necessitates including some form of the verb "to be" in English translation, as well as in the Septuagint. In fact, it is this present tense understanding of the verbless clause that Jesus utilizes in Matthew 22:32, citing Exodus 3:6, to argue the reality of the resurrection.

A second observation is that these speeches happen at key moments in the narrative. The first (2:6) involves the identification of the Hebrew baby boy by Pharaoh's daughter in the very spot where the command to kill male Hebrew infants could be carried out. The second and third (3:4, 6) can be considered together as they occur in the first speeches of God since Genesis. This significant moment of the calling of Moses and the identification of YHWH as the God of the patriarchs renews the narrative plot-line begun at Genesis 12. The transition from Moses' questions to his resistance at Exodus 4:1 is met with a terse question in 4:2, "What [is] in your hand?" The short rhetorical question introduces the giving of three miraculous signs that suggest that Moses is not to trust his perception of reality when God/YHWH is involved. What appears to be a staff can become a snake; what appears to be healthy can become leprous; what appears to be water can become blood.

Despite the miraculous signs given to Moses, his longest speech in Exodus 2-4 (at 4:10) increases the tension between himself and God. The final verbless speech in this category is the declaration of Zipporah following God's attack on Moses and the carrying out of the circumcision rite (4:24-26), again a moment of high tension in the narrative. It would seem that in each case Moses' life hangs in the balance.

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<sup>176</sup> Heller, *Narrative Structure*, 464.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 465.

The question regarding the implicit presence of הָיָה emerges in these speeches that are completely verbless. Again, this may be more an issue for English than for Hebrew. Translation of these clauses necessitates supplying some form of "to be" in English. Yet, there is a declarative sense that is somewhat lost in translation by the addition.

## 2. Speech Initial

Only one speech begins with a non-verbal clause and continues with verbal clauses.

4:14c *"What about Aaron, your brother, the Levite?"* | הַלֵּוִי אֶהְיֶה אֶחָיוֹן אֶהְיֶה הַלֵּוִי

If this is indeed a rare occurrence of a speech initial verbless clause, what might the significance be? This is the first mention of a brother to Moses, and the third time "Levite" has been mentioned, the first two occurring in 2:1. While Moses and the unnamed sister (2:4-8) may be considered Levites due to their parental lineage, this is not emphasized. Aaron is identified as "The Levite" – note the definite article. The identity of Aaron is not only expressed in terms of him being a relative of Moses (his brother), but also with regard to his role as a Levitical priest. This one speech initial verbless clause foreshadows the significance that Aaron will come to have in the coming narratives.

### From Dialogue Syntax to Narrative Purpose

Dialogue is the primary means by which the biblical text communicates. The narrative framework establishes the scene and characters involved. The syntax is limited and generally simple. But in and through direct speech, important information is transferred to the reader and/or listener. The complexity and variety of syntactic options available support this function of dialogue. It is within the speeches of Exodus 2-4 that the reader discovers the identity of God, the God who hears and acts on behalf of Israel, and learns the divine name, YHWH. It is within the speeches that the conflicts between Moses and Israel, and Moses and God are anticipated.



The actions that YHWH will take to free Israel, the struggle with Pharaoh, and Israel's eventual escape from Egypt are communicated in direct speech, which will then be retold in the ensuing narrative. This pattern of spoken instruction/prediction and then narrative account repeats, most notably, in Exodus 25-31 (speech) and Exodus 35-40 (narrative).

The speeches of Exodus 2-4 also tie these opening chapters of Exodus back to the narratives of Genesis. Repeatedly God identifies himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (3:6, 15, 16; 4:5). The narrative function of this repetition is not only to identify who YHWH God is, but also to connect back to the narratives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob found in Genesis, specifically those dealing with the covenant relationship and promises. The author deliberately repeats this identification formula in relation to the Patriarchs within dialogue to emphasize the importance of these scenes and "the significance of the subject"<sup>178</sup> at hand, namely the deliverance of Israel by the same God who had entered into covenant relationship with Abraham.

The speech of God in Exodus 3:6-10 is the first extended divine speech since the one directed to Jacob in Genesis 35:12: "The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you." The narrative note following this is also important in relation to the dialogue: "Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him" (Genesis 35:13 NIV). From that point on God is silent, even absent, in the narrative until we hear the call, "Moses, Moses!" and are reintroduced to God as an active and speaking character who will now bring the promise of Genesis 35:12 to fruition.

The dialogue between Moses and God also foreshadows much of the coming narrative. The destination of the Israelites following their emancipation from Egypt is the "mountain of God," the same "holy ground" (Exodus 19:12-13, 20-21) where God reveals himself to Moses in

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<sup>178</sup> Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 109.

Exodus 3-4 (see especially 3:1-5). As noted above, the struggle between God and Pharaoh is also clearly anticipated. Though the details and the idea of the "plagues" is absent, the conclusion of the killing of the firstborn of Egypt is specified as the final act that will lead to the freeing of Israel from bondage to Pharaoh.

The tense relationship that Moses will have with the people of Israel is also intimated in Moses' increased resistance to YHWH's call but his eventual capitulation as described in chapter four. The appointment of Aaron as the spokesperson for Moses is outlined, and the priestly function of Aaron, and by extension the priesthood, is anticipated. In later generations it will be the role of the priesthood to declare the word of Moses via the Torah to the people of Israel.

### Conclusion

The syntax of dialogue is complex and involves a wide variety of clause types. The verb initial clauses tend to be the mainline of communication. As in narrative, the mainline verb forms are not often used to mark central ideas. *X-verb* clauses with the verb in second position and that are speech initial are rare and seem to be used to communicate important information to the reader, especially when the X element is a strong marker such as הַנֶּה or אֲנִי. Verbless clauses, likewise, communicate salient information when they are speech initial, and especially when the speech is completely verbless.

Determining the genre of a speech is helpful in analysis as one can determine the relative importance of clause forms in relation to the speech as a whole. However, it seems that, as Niccacci argues, verb position in the sentence is a more reliable indicator of the organization and emphasis of the text, regardless of genre.

## Conclusion

This investigation has involved the merging of two text-centered exegetical tools: discourse linguistics and narrative criticism. Exodus 1:22-4:31 is the text on which this study has been focused. Merging a linguistic analysis of the text with that of the story being told by the text allows one to see both the internal structuring of the language employed and the trajectory of the story within the larger context of the Pentateuch.

These text-centered approaches are crucial for interpretation because the text is given centre stage. Discussions on textual prehistory, editorial additions or accretions during transmission history, hypothetical redaction layers, and even the events recounted by the text are secondary to the actual communicative intent of the text. By bracketing out these various concerns, one is able to explore the question of why the text exists rather than how it came into being. That a text is intended to be read and to affect the reader becomes central to the interpretive exploration.

From this combination of approaches one can also reevaluate traditional reading boundaries (chapter, verse, paragraph, etc.). It appears as though the longstanding division between Exodus 1 and 2 has been misplaced by at least one verse, if any division from chapter one should be made at all. The tendency to separate Moses' early life from his encounter with God at the burning bush has also potentially distorted the overall thrust of these episodes in the light of the possibility that Exodus 1:22-2:25 is integral to the call narrative. Overall, when the linguistic structures and narrative context are considered, there seems to be no reason to isolate part of the story from the whole. The interconnectedness of the text and the larger story make it advisable to keep the relationship between a pericope and its larger literary context constantly in view.

A fresh look at the text as a whole, rather than as a series of sentences or clauses, has facilitated the examination of the contours of the text with its natural break-points, often marked by grammatical and syntactical rarities. Such an approach aids the interpretive task by identifying the structure of the text from within the language. This kind of investigation involves a comparative analysis of linguistic structures with a view to determining whether or not a specific function can be assigned to a particular structure. The study of the *we-X-qatal* construction in Exodus 3:1 and 5:1 undertaken for this thesis has led to the conclusion that a no single function may be associated with it. The fact that for various types of clauses—though not all—the *we-X-qatal* construction is a necessary component makes a "one function fits all" approach untenable. It is clear, therefore, that the syntax of a clause by itself is not necessarily determinative; each occurrence must be assessed individually.

In adopting an approach that entails the synthesis of discourse linguistics and narrative criticism, it was suggested that the strengths of each would offset the stated weaknesses. It has become evident to this author that, while this does occur to some extent, the kind of investigation that is necessary for a thorough discourse linguistic approach often overshadows the narrative itself. It has proven to be difficult to wrestle the linguistic minutiae back into the larger narrative context. The extended chapter on direct speech has been the most challenging in this regard.

The secondary purpose of employing the above-mentioned approaches has been in order to determine how the text of Exodus 2-4 was structured and what sort of a response was it designed to elicit from the reader. The narrative analysis of this passage has shown that Moses is introduced and presented as God's chosen servant to lead Israel out of Egypt, and to be the intermediary between God and his people. He accepts this vocation only reluctantly, to say the least, inasmuch as he does not willingly take up the call, nor does he consider himself to be

qualified for it. Aaron is also introduced, quite clearly as "the Levite," an indication of his fuller role as the high priest later in the story. At this point the reader is only told of the familial relationship between Moses and Aaron, but the distinct roles of messenger and spokesman are suggested in the present text.

Based on this overview of the narrative, it seems that the reader is expected to respond with deference to Moses and the messages that he received from God to pass along to Aaron and the people of God. This would accord with the expected response of any Jewish reader throughout the reception history of the text. In time "Moses" becomes a synonym for the Law or the Pentateuch. Moses' personal reticence to accept the call of God is an indication that pentateuchal injunctions are not to be construed as manifestations of Moses' own will or as a set of his commands to the people, nor is he making a play for power over them. The text expects the reader to respond with obedience and humility to the way of living mediated through Moses because ultimately that blueprint for covenant life comes from God himself.

It may also be suggested that later readers would find here an indication of their constant struggle and resistance to God's instruction through Moses. "They won't believe me! They won't do what I tell them" (Exodus 4:1 NLT). When one considers the concluding comments of Moses in Deuteronomy 31:24-29, it seems that, on the whole, the disbelief of the people regarding the call and words of Moses was anticipated. The reader is reminded, from the call of Moses onward, that Israel has trouble believing and obeying God and his chosen messengers and leaders. In the larger complex of the literary traditions of ancient Israel, perhaps this text also points the readers to their past and/or present struggles to live out their calling as the people of God (Exodus 19:3-5).

Moses is presented as a thoroughly human agent, chosen by God for the task to which he has been called. Moses is not a divine figure come down to rescue his people. He himself is in need of rescue numerous times. Moses is not a person unaffected by injustice and wrong, and can in fact commit murder and flee for his life. He can be completely self-absorbed and self-protective; his flight to Midian and his resistance to God's call communicate a completely human agent who is nonetheless called to God's purposes. Perhaps in this readers are to see themselves as members of the resistant people of God, who have nevertheless been called to fulfill God's purposes.

#### Limitations of the Study

As was noted in the introduction, the present study has been restricted primarily to Exodus 2-4, though periodic reference has been made as well to the linguistic phenomena and narrative flow of Genesis and Exodus. This limitation was necessary in order to locate specific linguistic structures within defined parameters and relative proximity to Exodus 2-4. From a narrative perspective, this limitation also strengthened the view that these chapters, while introducing a new and central character, do so through already established narrative motifs. The limitations, therefore, allowed the questions of narrative structure and linguistic patterning to be examined in a focused manner. However, within such limitations, conclusions as to what may be considered normal or unusual grammatical and linguistic phenomena must be tempered by the need to test these observations much more broadly.

#### Areas for Further Research

Further research is required in the analysis of direct speech from a discourse linguistic perspective. The variety of views presented in chapter three of this study point up the need to attempt to achieve both clarity and consensus in coming to a comprehensive understanding of the

structures of direct speech. It was also noted in chapter three that further investigation of rare clause structures at the beginning of speeches needs to be explored in relation to the narrative context. The extended speeches of the Pentateuch provide fertile ground for such investigations. A complete linguistic analysis of Leviticus or Deuteronomy would advance these discussions considerably as they consist almost entirely of direct speech. Since the biblical text primarily communicates through direct speech elements, ongoing analysis and exploration of the linguistic structures employed is an exegetical imperative.

Linguistic and narrative exegesis offers the reader an avenue for investigating how a text communicates meaning. The textual act of communication assumes that readers will pick up on clues and codes that lead the reader through the story to its implications. By examining carefully a text's linguistic structures and broader narrative context, one comes to a fuller understanding of *how* a text means so that the intended *why* and *what* of the text are experienced and understood.

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## Curriculum Vitae

Douglas James Dunbar (b. July 6, 1971)

Douglas's post-secondary education began at Briercrest Bible College in 1989. Biblical studies were, at this point, secondary to musical studies. In 1991, he began studies at Grant MacEwan Community College, earning a Diploma in Music Performance in 1993. In 1995, Douglas enrolled at Northwest Baptist Theological College to continue in biblical and pastoral studies. Douglas then returned to Briercrest Bible College in Fall 1997, and eventually completed the Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies in 2004. In Fall 2003, Douglas began studying at ACTS. Over the course of his studies at ACTS he was awarded various scholarships: the A.A. Nieuwenhuis (2004), the Long Family (2004), the John Hoo Kee Lam Memorial (2005, 2006), and the Broadway West (2005, 2006).

Douglas has been teaching courses on the Pentateuch, Synoptic Gospels, Gospels, and Old Testament Poetical Books at Pacific Life Bible College since 2007. He presented a paper, "In You I Take Refuge: The Translation of Metaphor in the Septuagint Psalms," at the inaugural Septuagint Institute Symposium, September 2006.

Douglas has had the privilege of serving three churches in various capacities: Grace International Baptist Church in Vancouver, BC as Associate Pastor of Youth and Worship (August 1996 to July 1997); First Edmonton Evangelical Missionary Church in Edmonton, AB as Ministries Director (January 1998 to August 2003); North Valley Baptist Church, Mission BC as Worship Coordinator (May 2008 to September 2012) and Lead Pastor (October 2012 to present).

Douglas is also an active musician with *QuintEssential Jazz*. Together they have performed for more than 300 public and private functions, and produced three CDs.