THE ANALYSIS OF EVENTS IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

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SUMMARY

In this article the way in which events are analysed in narrative-critical approaches to Biblical narratives is discussed. In many of these analyses one can detect a tendency to reduce the analysis of events to a discussion of only one or two aspects. Although, as such, the results of an analysis of events based on such a view of events may be quite legitimate, it may result in important features being overlooked. In order to rectify this, it is proposed in this article that scholars who follow a narrative-critical approach to Biblical narratives should take note of the sophisticated models already developed within theory of literature for the analysis of events. Some of these models are discussed and then illustrated by means of two examples: Genesis 2:4b-3:25 and Acts 27:1-44.

OPSOMMING

In hierdie artikel word die manier waarop gebeure-analise gewoonlik in narratologiese benaderings van Bybelse narratiewe gedoen word, bespreek. In baie van hierdie analises kan 'n mens die tendens bespeur dat gebeure-analise beperk word tot die bespreking van slegs een of twee aspekte. Alhoewel die resultate van so 'n soort gebeure-analise wel oortuigend mag wees, mag so 'n benadering daartoe lei dat belangrike aspekte misgekyk word. Om hierdie tekortkoming reg te stel, word in hierdie artikel voorgestel dat eksegete wat gebruik wil maak van 'n narratologiese benadering kennis sal neem van die gesofistikeerde modelle vir gebeure-analise wat reeds in die Algemene Literatuurwetenskap ontwikkel is. Sommige van hierdie modelle word bespreek en ook geïllustreer deur twee voorbeelde uit die Bybel: Genesis 2:4b-3:25 en Handelinge 27:1-44.

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the last fifteen to twenty years quite a number of Old and
New Testament scholars have been devoting themselves to reading,
analysing and explaining Biblical narratives in terms of a narrative-
critical or narratological approach.[2] Through the years this new kind
of approach[3] has been rewarded by new insights and perspectives
with regard to the way in which Biblical narratives function. The
issues that are usually studied are characterisation, events, temporal
relationships, space, point of view/focalisation, narration, implied
author and implied reader. As is to be expected, no uniform approach
with regard to the procedures followed when doing a narrative-

There is no real difference between the concepts "narrative criticism" and
"narratology". Many exegetes prefer the term "narrative criticism", but I prefer
the term "narratology". In this article I shall use these concepts as synonyms.
For a definition of the concept "narratology", see Cohan and Shires (1988:53):

> Narratology studies narrative as a general category of texts which can
> be classified according to *poetics*, the set of identifiable conventions that
> make a given text recognisable as a narrated story. Narrative poetics
> outlines the competence required of readers and tellers of narrative.
> Like language (*langue*), narrative can be understood as a system
> underlying individual texts: narrative poetics is to given narrative what
> grammar is to a given utterance, so a reader's knowledge of how
> narrative operates as a system partly determines the sense he or she
> makes of a text. Such competence is not limited to so-called literary
> texts or even to fictional ones. It is, moreover, culturally learned,
> reinforced by narratives of all sorts: novels, short stories, and films, of
> course, but also newspapers, advertisements, histories, myths, letters,
> anecdotes, jokes, popular entertainment, and public ceremonies.

This does not mean that narrative aspects were totally ignored before. For
example, one of the great German Biblical scholars, Herman Gunkel (1862-
1932), already drew attention to certain aspects of the narrative dynamics of
texts. In his commentary on Genesis (1972) he discussed the artistic quality of
this Bible book and, amongst other things, pointed out the way in which the
narratives were divided into "scenes", the differences between main and
secondary characters, the ways in which persons were characterised in the
narratives, the use of dialogue, and the importance of events in the structuring
of the narratives — all aspects which are usually considered in a narratological
analysis.

critical analysis of Biblical narratives, exists. This can be confirmed easily by comparing such analyses of Biblical narratives at random. There may be various reasons for this situation. The most obvious one that comes to mind, is that Biblical scholars do not always use the same models or, in other words, they are not always influenced by the same movements in theory of literature. However, this is not the issue that is addressed in this article. In this article I wish to draw attention to the way in which *events* are usually studied by Biblical scholars who practise narrative criticism. The analysis of events — or the "plot" of a narrative, as it is often called — is one of the most important issues in the narratological analysis of any narrative. In this regard I wish to draw attention to the fact that the way in which Biblical scholars analyse plots of Biblical narratives does not always compare very well to the way in which this is done by narratologists in general.[4] Although there are exceptions,[5] Biblical scholars tend to reduce the study of plot to only one or two aspects which they consider as important. The following examples will prove the point: Rhoads and Michie (1982:73-100) reduce the analysis of the plot of the Gospel according to Mark to the study of only one aspect, namely conflict. In this regard they are followed by Kingsbury whose well-known analyses of the three Synoptic Gospels (see Kingsbury 1988:2-9; 1989:27-29 and 1991:34-36) also focus on this aspect only. Moore (1989:14-60) reduces plot to two aspects, namely chronology and causality. This tendency can also be indicated with regard to the way in which Old Testament narratives are studied. Turner (1990:15-16) singles out chronology and causality as the two issues to be discussed, Sherwood (1990:26ff.) singles out action and knowledge, and Fewell (1988:19-21) emphasises conflict. Craig (1993) even presents a detailed analysis of what is called the "poetics" of the Book of Jonah without an analysis of the plot of the book. It may be argued that these approaches are not entirely wrong and even

4   For example, Bal (1985:22-30), Prince (1982:64-80), Rimmon-Kenan (1983:52-82), Martin (1986:81-89), Cohan and Shires (1988:52-82) and Brink (1987:45-65).

5   For example, Matera (1987:233-253), Bar-Efrat (1989:93-140), Funk (1988:27-130) and Kurz (1993:17-39).

yield important results. Nevertheless, the fact that many Biblical scholars operate from a limited perspective on the way in which the plot of a narrative should be analysed usually results in important features being overlooked. In this article I wish to draw attention to the fact that narratologists in the field of theory of literature have already developed quite sophisticated models for the analysis of events in narrative texts. By bringing this to the attention of Biblical scholars I hope to enhance the effectiveness of the use of narratology as an exegetical tool. Even if the specific models that I discuss are not adapted by other Biblical scholars, this article will serve its purpose if the message that more aspects should be considered when the plot of a narrative is studied, is accepted.

Before turning to the discussion of the models, two issues should be clarified.

1. I follow a movement in theory of literature that can be broadly typified as a semiotic-structuralist approach to texts. This means that the way in which I shall discuss the analysis of events in a narrative text will be largely influenced by this choice. Accordingly I shall follow narratologists whose models reflect this approach to literature.

2. In order to illustrate the use of the models, I shall provide two examples — one each from the Old and New Testament. Note that these are only used to illustrate procedures for analysing events in Biblical narratives. Since the plot constitutes but one of the issues addressed in a narratological analysis, these examples should not be seen as complete or detailed narratological analyses.

2. DEFINING AND ANALYSING EVENTS NARRATOLOGICALLY

Defining an event is not very difficult. One could say that anything that happens to someone/something or anything that is done by someone/something is an event. If a more formal definition is required, the one provided by Cohan and Shires (1988:53-54) seems to be right on target:

> An *event* depicts some sort of physical or mental activity, an
> occurrence in time (an action performed by or upon a human agent)
> or a state of existing in time (such as thinking, feeling, being or
> having).

Whenever we read a narrative, we are confronted with a number
of events that are organised and presented to us in a certain way. This
"interpretative ordering of events" (Brooks 1984:25) is usually called
the *plot* of the narrative.

How does one analyse the plot of a narrative? Narratologists who
follow a semiotic-structural approach to literature, take as their basic
point of departure that the organisation of events in a narrative text
can be analysed from two different, yet complementary perspectives.
On the one hand, the events in the narrative text are organised
syntagmatically, that is, they are narrated one after the other. This
can be called the *surface structure* of events. On the other hand, it is
also possible to analyse the events in the narrative text in terms of a
paradigmatic structure. In other words, the various events may also
be analysed in terms of the ways in which they are related to one
another, for example in terms of the oppositions that can be detected
between groups of events. These relationships are not necessarily
indicated on the surface level, but can be inferred in terms of the
underlying logic in the text. This aspect is called the *deep structure* of
events.[6] Procedures for the analysis of the *surface structure* will be
considered first.

2.1 *The surface structure of events*

The procedure for analysing the surface structure of events can be
divided into three steps (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:13-28):

a) Paraphrasing the events
b) Classifying the events
c) Determining the relationship between the events

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6   For more detailed discussions of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic structure of
    events, see Cohan and Shires (1988:54-68) as well as Rimmon-Kenan
    (1983:11-28).

The paraphrasing of events can be achieved in various ways, but the most useful option seems to be to paraphrase each event in terms of a single sentence in such a way that the subject performing the action, as well as the action that is being performed, is clearly indicated, for example: Peter kicks the ball.

The next step is devoted to the *classification of the events* and is followed in order to distinguish between the various types of events (as paraphrased in the previous step). In this regard there are various systems that may be used. One of these is the one used by Seymour Chatman (1986:43-49) which can be summarised as follows: As a first distinction, *actions* and *happenings* can be distinguished. Although both are changes of state, in the case of actions a character is the narrative subject (not necessarily the grammatical subject) of the event. Example: The thief stole the diamonds/the diamonds were stolen by the thief. In the case of happenings, a character is the narrative object of the event. Example: The storm cast Peter adrift.

The first category distinguished as *actions* may be classified further in terms of the following five principle kinds of actions:[7]

External events

    1   Verbal acts (He told me to leave.)

    2   Non-verbal physical acts (He pushed me out of the door.)

Internal events

    3   Mental acts (I thought about leaving.)

    4   Emotional events (I felt uneasy about leaving.)

    5   Sensory events (I heard someone leaving.)

A further distinction that may be useful is the distinction between *durative events* (for example, he loves her) and *punctual events* (for example, he kicks his dog).

I would suggest that the distinctions outlined above should not be regarded as a rigid system for classifying events, but only as a general guideline indicating how it can be achieved. In the end one should classify the events in the specific narrative text in such a way that it can be used as a basis for further interpretation, and therefore

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7   In this regard I follow Wilhelm Wuellner's (1981:14) summary of Chatman, since it is organised better.

the system used should suit this purpose. For example, in the case of a narrative consisting of more than 90% verbal acts, the system outlined above will not be of great use. In such a case it would be better to use another system such as speech act theory, since it may produce much better results.

The last issue to be discussed is the procedure for *determining the relationships between events*. In this regard two important aspects should be considered.

First of all the *hierarchy* between events must be considered. Some events are more important than others. Accordingly, one can distinguish between those events that are crucial to the logic of the plot and others that may be deleted without disturbing the logic of the plot (although their omission will impoverish the narrative in other ways). The events that are absolutely crucial to understanding the logic of the plot are called *kernels* by Seymour Chatman (1986:53-54), whereas other events are called *satellites*. These are then defined as follows:

> Kernels are narrative moments that give rise to cruxes in the direction taken by events. They are nodes or hinges in the structure, branching points which force a movement into one of two (or more) possible paths ... Satellites entail no choice, but are solely the workings-out of the choices made at the kernels. They necessarily imply the existence of kernels, but not vice versa. Their function is that of filling in, elaborating, completing the kernel; they form the flesh on the skeleton.

The second procedure is to combine the individual events into *microsequences* that, in turn, should be combined into *macrosequences*. In this regard the distinctions between kernels and satellites could be helpful, but this is not always the case. Accordingly, the indication of microsequences can be rather subjective. The best approach seems to be to combine the events that fit logically together. For example, consider the following series of events:

1   John picked up his gun.
2   John aimed at Peter.
3   John pulled the trigger.
4   The bullet hit Peter in his temple.
5   Peter fell on the ground.
6   Peter started bleeding.
7   Peter died.

These seven events can be regarded as a microsequence and summarised as "John killed Peter". In the same way, a number of microsequences can be combined to form one macrosequence, which, in turn, can be combined with other macrosequences to form a series of macrosequences.

However, it is not enough merely to indicate the groups of micro- and macrosequences of events. It is also necessary to ask whether the implied author has provided any clues with regard to the way in which the micro/macrosequences are combined. The principles used in the combination of micro/macrosequences are important as they provide a basis for describing the interpretative ordering of events — an aspect that is usually vital for understanding the ideological perspective of a narrative.

As to the various principles that may be used for combining micro/macrosequences, the following five can be pointed out:[8]

- *Time*: The implied reader will usually assume that, unless indications are given to the contrary, events are narrated in a chronological order.

- *Causality*: One micro/macrosequence may serve as the cause of another micro/macro-sequence.

- *Space*: Micro/macrosequences may also be combined by the fact that they are situated in the same geographical location.

- *Character*: Micro/macrosequences may be dominated by/devoted to the same character(s). In such a case the principle of character can be indicated.

- *Internal relationships*: In some cases structural relationships can be indicated between various groups of micro/macrosequences. In this regard issues such as contrast and similarity, as well as stylistic issues (for example, the use of chiasms) should be considered.

8   Rimmon-Kenan (1983:13-20) only mentions the first two. The rest are added by Brink (1987:62-64).

2.2 *The deep structure of events*

In order to study the deep structure of events one has to try to uncover the paradigmatic relations between them. Unfortunately this is a more complicated process, since we have to uncover the *underlying logic* of the narrative — something that is not necessarily mentioned explicitly in the surface structure. There are various ways to go about determining and representing the deep structure of events, but, following Rimmon-Kenan (1983:11-15) I would suggest the use of the semiotic square developed by Greimas. The semiotic square forms part of a comprehensive semiotic theory, called the generative trajectory (see Greimas 1977:23-40 and Greimas & Courtés 1982:132-134) where it is used to describe various semantic levels.

Greimas's semiotic theory is very complicated, but for our purpose it will suffice to know that a semiotic square may be used as a visual representation of the underlying logic of the narrative text. In order to determine the underlying logical relations in a narrative text, one should try to isolate lines of meaning or isotopies in the text (Van Wolde 1989:61). An isotopy is defined as follows by David Jobling (1986:14):

> A semantic category defined broadly enough to subsume a large number of elements of meaning in the text, but precisely enough for useful organisation of these elements.

In order to determine isotopies, it is useful to look for groupings of events that are portrayed as or imply opposing categories. Examples of these are the following (Cohan & Shires 1988:67-68):

- Opposing types of events (good/bad; love/hate)
- Opposing locations (inside/outside)
- Opposing groups of characters (friends/enemies)

Once the most important isotopies have been distinguished, the contents of each have to be analysed in terms of its logical relations. Greimas distinguishes three types of relations that may exist (see Van Wolde 1989:125-126):

- Contradictory: If it becomes clear that the contents of the isotopy do not only differ, but are also mutually exclusive, the

relationship can be described as contradictory. Examples: white and ~~white~~; poor and ~~poor~~. (The horizontal line indicates a negation: not white, not poor). When textual elements are regarded as contradictory, these elements indicate extremes between which no intermediate position/value is possible.

- Contrary: If the contents of the isotopies are different from each other, yet mutually inclusive, the relationship between them is regarded as contrary. Accordingly, they are presented in the text as opposites, but each presupposes the existence of the other. Example: poor and rich. When textual elements are regarded as contrary, the elements indicate extremes between which intermediate positions/values are possible, for example grey (between black and white).

- Complementary: If the elements distinguished in the isotopy are related to one another in such a way that the absence is a condition for the presence of another element, the relationship is regarded as complementary. Examples ~~rich~~ implies poor and ~~poor~~ implies rich.

These relationships can be presented in terms of a semiotic square:
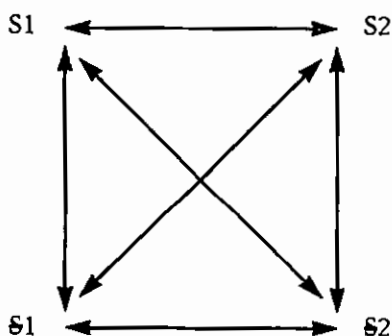
- * S1/S2 and ~~S2/S1~~: Contrary relationship
- * S1/~~S1~~ and S2/~~S2~~: Contradictory relationship
- * S1/~~S2~~ and S2/~~S1~~: Complementary relationships

It should be noted that the semiotic square might also be used to indicate the dynamics of the underlying logical structure. This can be indicated by means of arrows in the semiotic square.

In order to illustrate the way in which events can be analysed in a narratological analysis, I shall discuss two examples.

3. EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROCEDURES OUTLINED ABOVE

The first example comes from the Old Testament: Gen. 2:4b-3:25.[9] I shall first discuss the organisation of the surface structure. In the following diagram you will find the result of the following procedures

a)   A paraphrasing of all the events

b)   A classification of all the events

c)   An indication of the kernels (underlined)

d)   A summary of microsequences (italics)

A: *God creates man.*

1	God forms man from the dust.	Physical act
2	God breathes into his nostrils to make him a human being.	Physical act

B: *God creates a garden in Eden.*

1	God plants a garden in Eden.	Physical act
2	God places man in the garden.	Physical act
3	God makes many trees grow in the garden: pleasant for sight and good for food.	Physical act
4	God places the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden.	Physical act
5	A river flows out of Eden.	Physical act

9   Due to the complicated editorial process of this narrative, one can detect several tensions and irregularities in it. However, this does not mean that a consistent train of thought cannot be indicated. See Gerhard von Rad (1972:75):
  No matter how much a knowledge of the previous stages of the present text can preserve us from false exposition, still there is no question that the narrative of chs. 2f., in spite of certain tensions and irregularities, is not a rubble heap of individual recensions, but is to be understood as a whole with a consistent train of thought. Above all else the exegete must come to terms with this existing complex unity.

C: *God forbids man to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*
1 God places man in the garden to till and keep it.   Physical act
2 <u>God forbids man to eat of the tree of knowledge of</u>
   <u>good and evil.</u>   Verbal act:
                                                        prohibition

D: *God creates woman.*
1 <u>God decides to create a partner for man.</u>   Mental act
2 God creates animals and birds.   Physical act
3 God brings them to man.   Physical act
4 Man gives names to all creatures.   Verbal act: naming
5 Man looks in vain for a partner.   Physical act
6 God causes a deep sleep to fall upon man.   Physical act
7 God takes one of man's ribs.   Physical act
8 God closes the place with flesh.   Physical act
9 <u>God creates woman</u>.   Physical act
10 God brings her to man   Physical act
11 Man calls her "woman".   Verbal act: naming

E: *Man and woman eat of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden.*
1 <u>The serpent asks the woman whether they are</u>
   <u>not allowed to eat of any tree.</u>   Verbal act: question
2 Woman replies that they may not eat or touch the
   tree in the middle of the garden or they will die. Verbal act: answer
3 The serpent says that they will not die, but that
   they will become like God, knowing good and evil.   Verbal act: answer
4 Woman sees that the tree is good for food and a
   delight to the eyes.   Sensory/mental act
5 Woman desires the fruit of the tree.   Emotional act
6 <u>Woman takes and eats of its fruit</u>.   Physical act
7 <u>Woman gives some of the fruit to man</u>.   Physical act
8 Man eats some of the fruit.   Physical act
9 They realise that they are naked.   Mental act
10 They sew fig leaves together to make loincloths.   Physical act

F: *Man and woman hide from God.*
1 <u>God walks in the garden</u>.   Physical act
2 Man and woman hide themselves.   Physical act

G: *God and man.*
1 <u>God calls man.</u>   Verbal act: question
2 Man replies that he hid himself because he is naked. Verbal act: answer
3 God asks him who told him that he is naked.   Verbal act: question
4 God asks him whether he ate of the tree in the
   middle of the garden.   Verbal act: question
5 Man replies that the woman gave to him and
   that he ate.   Verbal act: answer

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H: *God and woman*
1	God asks woman what she has done.	Verbal act: rebuke
2	Woman answers that the serpent tricked her.	Verbal act: answer

I: *God curses the serpent.*
1	God tells the serpent that he will go upon his belly and eat dust.	Verbal act: curse
2	God tells the serpent that there will be enmity between him and woman.	Verbal act: curse

J: *God curses woman.*
1	God tells woman that her pangs in childbearing will increase greatly.	Verbal act: curse
2	God tells woman that she will desire for her husband and that he will rule over her.	Verbal act: curse

K: *God curses man.*
1	God tells man that the earth will be cursed.	Verbal act: curse
2	God tells man that he will eat bread by the sweat of his face until he returns to the ground.	Verbal act: curse

L: *Man calls his wife "Eve".*
1	Man calls his wife "Eve" ("the mother of all living").	Verbal act: naming

M: *God clothes man and woman.*
1	God makes garments of skin for them.	Physical act
2	God clothes them.	Physical act

N: *God expels man and woman from the garden.*
1	God says that man may also eat of the tree of life.	Mental act
2	God expels them from Eden to till the ground.	Verbal act: expulsion
3	God places the cherubim at the garden.	Physical act
4	God places a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life.	Physical act

A few comments need to be made:

- Please note that this diagram only provides a summary of the *events* in this narrative. Accordingly, those parts that do not recount events, are not included, for example, the presentation of the setting in 2:4b-6 and the narrator's commentary in 2:24-25 and 3:1.

- Since this is a representation of the events as narrated in the narrative text, events that are narrated more than once are indicated more than once. See, for example B2 and C1.

- In some instances the classification of acts could possibly be done in another way. This is especially true of some of the actions performed by God. For example: Is C1 a physical or a verbal act? Is D1 a mental or verbal act?

- Some of the verbal acts are more intricate than the classification indicates. A few examples: The serpent's "question" in E1 is not intended as an innocent question, but is a complete distortion of what God said (Von Rad 1972:88). Similarly woman's "answer" is more than a simple answer to the serpent's question: She wrongly indicates that God forbade them *to touch the tree* and in this way probably betrays her feelings of discontent (Sternberg 1978:391-393). See also man's "answer" to God in G5. This is not simply an answer, but also contains an implied accusation against God himself, since he gave woman to him (Bar-Efrat 1989:206).

The last issue to be discussed concerns the plot: How is the plot organised in this narrative? In order to discuss this issue, I shall present a short overview of the microsequences:

A: God creates man.
B: God creates a garden in Eden.
C: God forbids man to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
D: God creates woman.
E: Man and woman eat of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden.
F: Man and woman hide from God.
G: God and man.
H: God and woman.
I: God curses the serpent.
J: God curses woman.
K: God curses man.
L: Man calls his wife "Eve".
M: God clothes man and woman.
N: God expels man and woman from the garden.

Broadly speaking, the plot can be divided into three macrosequences, namely

A-D: process of improvement
E-K; N: process of deterioration
L-M: process of improvement

In the first sequence a definite process of improvement can be detected. The situation as described by the narrator in 2:4b-6 is characterised by a series of deficiencies: 1. no vegetation, 2. no rain, 3. no-one to till the ground (Jobling 1986:23). As the sequence develops, these deficiencies are resolved one by one.[10] God even provides man with a partner. However, in the third microsequence in this chain (C) the lack of a tiller of the ground is not only resolved, but a new kernel (C2) is introduced, that, in Chatman's words, could "force the movement into one of two (or more) possible paths" (Chatman 1986:53-54). This happens in the second macrosequence (E-K, N) which is clearly a process of deterioration. From microsequence E to N there is a dramatic change in man and woman's situation, not only in terms of their relationship to God, but also in terms of their relationship to one another, to the animal world, and to the earth from which they were taken. The whole series of deterioration is started by the serpent's crafty question and finally ends when man and woman find themselves expelled from the garden in Eden. However, significantly, the series of deterioration is interrupted by a short series (consisting of two microsequences only, namely L and M), that I wish to typify as a process of improvement. In fact, in God's reaction something along this lines has already been foreshadowed, since, although he cursed man, woman and serpent, he, nevertheless, allowed grace to prevail, since he did not immediately cause them to die. Furthermore, man's action in L should be seen as an act of faith, "an embracing of life, which as a great miracle and mystery is maintained and carried by the motherhood of woman over hardship and death."(Von Rad 1972:96).

That God made them garments of skin (M) is also to be regarded as significant, since God's curses and the expulsion from the garden are somewhat tempered by his role as preserver in this act.[11]

10   However, see Jobling (1986:23-29) for a different view with regard to the lack of some-one to till the (whole) earth.

11   See Claus Westermann (1974:269):
     (T)he last action of the Creator toward his creature before expelling him from the garden is an action of care and concern ... (T)he Creator 'protects' his creatures while putting them at a distance, and the protective action accompanies them on their way.

Although this short series of improvement cannot reverse the catastrophe that man brought over himself, it at least brings a flicker of light into the darkness.

Which principles are used in the combination of microsequences into macrosequences? To my mind the most important principles are time and causation. *Time* plays a definite role, since the events are narrated in a chronological order. *Causation* plays a role almost everywhere: The series of lacks in 4b-6 causes God to act; God's prohibition causes the serpent to ask woman a question that, in turn, triggers a disastrous development of events; man and woman's disobedience causes God's actions, etc.

The other principles are used too, but to a lesser extent. The principle of *character* is used in the sense that at least two of the same constellation of characters are found in each scene: God, man, woman and the serpent. God is only "absent" from two microsequences (E and L). In the first case, events take a catastrophic turn, but in the second case a flicker of hope can be seen. The principle of character can also be detected in the way in which the relationships between characters change: From A to D there is harmony, but afterwards, it is disturbed quite drastically and turns into alienation.[12]

The principle of *space* is used in the sense that all the micro-sequences are situated in the same location, namely in the garden at Eden. In the end, however, man and woman find themselves outside and barred from the garden.

The principle of *internal relationships* can be indicated in patterns such as the threefold curse (I-K) or the following:

G: man
H: woman
I: serpent
J: woman
K: man

Some attempts have been made to see this as the most important principle in the organisation of the narrative, for example Walsh (1977:166-177), but I remain doubtful.

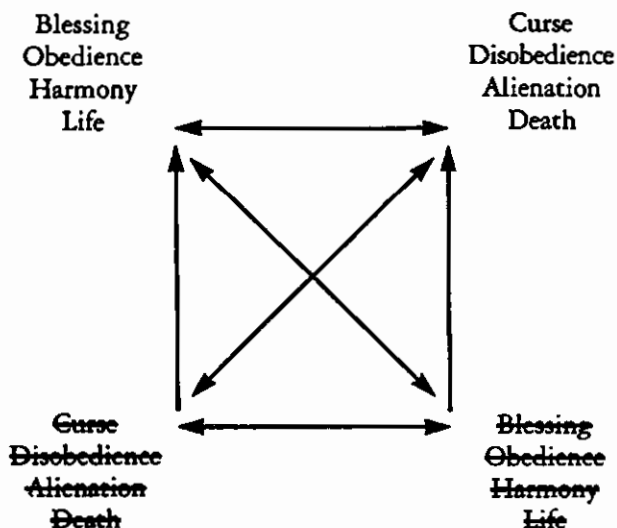12 See Alan Hauser (1982:20-36) for a detailed discussion.

The deep structure of events in Gen 2:4b-3:24 will now be discussed. However, before presenting my own analysis of the deep structure I wish to point out the careful and detailed analysis of Ellen van Wolde (1989:132-139)[13] who distinguishes the following five isotopies:

1 The relation between God and man
2 The relation between man and earth
3 The relation between man and animal
4 The relation between man and woman
5 The relation between life and death

In each case she indicates a movement ~~S1~~ > S2 > ~~S2~~ > S1. For example, in the case of the first isotopy, this movement is as follows: ~~S1: No existence of man besides God~~ (Gen. 2:4b-6) > S2: Absolute subservience of man to God (Gen. 2:7-25) > ~~S2: Absolute subservience of man to God (Gen. 3:1-7)~~ > S1: Relative autonomy of man in relation to God (Gen. 3:8-24).

In my own representation of the deep structure of Gen. 2:4b-3:24 the same isotopies are important, but I shall organise and describe them in a different way. Since they are closely related to one another, I present them in one semiotic square:

Blessing   Curse
Obedience   Disobedience
Harmony   Alienation
Life   Death

~~Curse~~   ~~Blessing~~
~~Disobedience~~   ~~Obedience~~
~~Alienation~~   ~~Harmony~~
~~Death~~   ~~Life~~

13   For other semiotic analyses, see Jobling (1986:17-43).

To my mind the movement in the underlying logic is as follows: S1 represents the situation in the narrative world after the creation of man, woman, animals and vegetation (the garden). This situation is characterised by God's blessing, harmony between all the characters, and man's obedient behaviour towards God — all of which is a depiction of life in its fullest sense. However, this situation is drastically changed by woman's decision not to be obedient to God's commandment (a movement from S1 to S̶1̶) resulting in an act of disobedience (S2). The act of disobedience has further implications: God's blessing is replaced by its opposite, namely a threefold curse, harmony (between man and woman, as well as between them and God, the animals and the earth) is replaced by a situation of alienation; and life is shadowed by the reality of death. Fortunately, this is not the end: A last and significant movement can also be detected in the deep structure of the text (S2 towards S̶2̶): God's curse is softened by the fact that the aspect of death is tempered in the sense that man and woman do not die immediately; as well as by the prospect of a progressive "chain of life" in spite of death. In the same way the alienation between God and man is softened by God's action of clothing man and woman before expelling them from the garden. Thus, although the wonderful situation depicted in S1 is not attainable any more, at least the possibility of negating God's curse, disobedience, alienation and death is indicated in the deep structure of the narrative as a possible situation

The second example comes from the New Testament: Acts 27:1-44 (The shipwreck on the way to Rome).

I shall follow the same procedure as in the discussion of the previous example and first discuss the organisation of the surface structure. The following diagram represents the result of the following procedures:

a) A paraphrasing of all the event

b) A classification of all the events

c) An indication of the kernels (underlined)

d) A summary of each microsequence (italics)

A: *The authorities decide to sail for Italy.*
1   The authorities decide to sail for Italy.   Mental act
2   The authorities hand over Paul and some other prisoners
    to Julius.   Physical act

B: *The party sails to Sidon.*
1   Accompanied by Aristarchus, the party sails to Sidon
    on a ship of Adramyttium.   Physical act
2   At Sidon Julius allows Paul to go to his friends.   Verbal act:
                                                                 permission

C: *The party sails to Myra in Lycia.*
1   Due to unfavourable winds the ship sails under the
    lee of Cyprus.   Physical act
2   The ship crosses the sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia.   Physical act
3   The ship reaches Myra.   Physical act

D: *The party sails to Fair Havens near Lasea.*
1   The centurion puts the prisoners on an Alexandrian
    ship sailing for Italy.   Physical act
2   With difficulty the ship reaches off Cnidus.   Physical act
3   Due to unfavourable winds the ship sails under the lee of
    Crete off Salome.   Physical act
4   With difficulty the ship reaches Fair Havens near
    Lasea.   .   Physical act

E: *The majority decides to attempt to reach Phoenix.*
1   Paul warns them against the dangers of sailing
    on further: the ship, its cargo, crew and
    passengers could be endangered.   Verbal act: warning
2   The centurion ignores Paul.   Mental act
3   The centurion pays more attention to the pilot
    and the owner of the ship.   Mental act
4   Fair Havens being an unsuitable harbour in
    which to overwinter, the majority decides to attempt
    to reach Phoenix.   Mental act
5   A moderate south wind begins to blow.   Physical act
6   The ship weighs anchor and begins to sail.   Physical act

F: *A violent wind causes havoc.*
1   A violent wind, the north easter, begins to blow.   Physical act
2   The ship is driven around by the wind.   Physical act
3   Near the small island Cauda they succeed in
    securing the ship's lifeboat.   Physical act
4   They undergird the ship.   Physical act
5   Fearing that they should run on the Syrtis, they
    let down a drag anchor to act as a brake.   Physical act
6   They throw the cargo overboard.   Physical act

7	They throw the ship's tackle overboard.	Physical act
8	They lose all hope of being saved.	Mental act

G: *Paul encourages the rest of the party by informing them of a divine revelation he received.*

1	Paul rebukes them for not having heeded his warning	Verbal act: rebuke
2	Paul urges them to keep up their courage.	Verbal act: encouragement
3	Paul foretells that there will be no loss of life, only of the ship.	Verbal act: prediction
4	Paul reveals that an angel of God has informed him the previous night that he shall stand before the emperor and that God has granted safety to all those sailing with him.	Verbal act: revelation
5	Paul urges them to keep up their courage, since he has faith in God that everything will happen in this way.	Verbal act: encouragement
6	Paul informs them that they will have to run aground on some island.	Verbal act: prediction

H: *The ship runs aground.*

1	During the fourteenth night (across the sea of Adria) the sailors suspect that they are nearing land.	Mental act
2	The sailors take soundings (twenty fathoms).	Physical act
3	The sailors take soundings (fifteen fathoms).	Physical act
4	The sailors let down four anchors.	Physical act
5	The sailors pray for day to come.	Verbal act: prayer
6	The sailors try to escape from the ship by using a lifeboat.	Physical act
7	Paul informs the centurion and the soldiers that they will not be saved unless the sailors stay on the ship.	Verbal act: information
8	The soldiers cut away the ropes of the lifeboat and set it adrift.	Physical act
9	Just before daybreak Paul urges them to take some food for they have not eaten anything for fourteen days.	Verbal act: advice
10	Paul informs them that none of them will lose a hair from their heads.	Verbal act: encouragement
11	Paul takes bread.	Physical act
12	Paul gives thanks to God.	Verbal act: thanksgiving
13	Paul begins to eat.	Physical act
14	The rest of the party begins to eat.	Physical act

15 They throw the wheat into the sea.	Physical act
16 They notice a bay with a beach.	Physical act
17 They attempt to run the ship ashore in the bay.	Physical act
18 The ship strikes a shoal and becomes immovable.	Physical act
19 The soldiers plan to kill the prisoners.	Mental act
20 The centurion prevents the soldiers from killing the prisoners.	Verbal act: prohibition
21 He orders everyone who is able to swim, to jump overboard.	Verbal act: order
22 He orders the rest to follow on planks and other pieces of the ship.	Verbal act: order
23 Everyone reaches land safely.	Physical act

Two remarks need to be made:

- Note that this diagram only provides a summary of the events in the narrative. Parts that do not refer to events, for example Acts 27:37, are therefore not included.

- In some instances the classification of an event could have been done in another way, since the event may include actions that could fall under more that one category. For example, in E4 and H19 the events are categorised as "mental acts", but just as well could have been categorised as "verbal acts", since in both cases this is also implied. However, this will have no effect on the discussion of the plot

In order to discuss the development of the plot in this narrative, a short overview of the microsequences is presented:

A: The authorities decide to sail for Italy.
B: The party sails to Sidon.
C: The party sails to Myra in Lycia.
D: The party sails to Fair Havens near Lasea.
E: The majority decides to attempt to reach Phoenix.
F: A violent wind causes havoc.
G: Paul encourages the rest of the party by informing them of a divine revelation that he received.
H: The ship runs aground.

Broadly speaking the plot can be described as a process of deterioration. Although events take a drastic change only at the sixth microsequence (F: A violent wind causes havoc), the process of

deterioration is already suggested in two ways in microsequences C-E:

Firstly, in C1, D2, D3 and D4 it is mentioned that the ship could proceed only very slowly and with difficulty due to unfavourable winds.

Secondly, microsequence E is situated chronologically "after the fast" (Acts 27:9) — an indication that it was an unsafe time to travel by sea.[14] Paul's explicit warning against the dangers of continuing their voyage at this stage suggests that the plot could develop into a process of deterioration.

In the development of the plot it is made clear that the process of deterioration is set in motion due to the wrong (and even foolhardy) choices made by the authorities — in particular the decision made by the centurion, the pilot and the owner of the ship in E4 — a decision that would endanger the cargo, crew and passengers. In fact, apart from this foolhardy decision, Paul's life (together with that of the other prisoners) is endangered at least twice in the rest of the narrative: in H6 by the decision of the sailors to escape from the ship and in H19 by the soldiers' plan to kill all the prisoners to prevent them from escaping.

However, it is also important to notice that the process of deterioration as such is not the focal point in the development of the plot. The emphasis is placed on the way in which the process of deterioration is softened by God. Microsequence G (Paul encourages the rest of the party by informing them of a divine revelation that he received) could thus be indicated as the focal point in the development of the plot. Since God wants Paul to stand before the emperor in Rome, he will grant safety to everyone on the ship even though the ship will run aground on an island.

14 According to ancient sources, the risk of travelling by sea varied with the seasons: 26 May to 14 September (safe season), 14 September to 11 November (risky), 11 November to 10 March (extremely dangerous) and 10 March to 26 May (risky). The events in Acts 27:9 are situated "after the fast", most probably after 5 October in the year 59 A.D. — already in the season considered to be risky for travelling by sea. See Rapske (1994:22-25).

Which principles are used in the combination of the microsequences into a plot? To my mind time, space and causality fulfil an important role. *Time* plays a role in the sense that all the microsequences are linked chronologically. *Space* is used as principle of combination in the sense that the changes in geographical location fulfil an important function. The principle of *causality* is very important, too: The decisions taken by those in charge set in motion a movement towards a big catastrophe. This, in turn, causes the divine intervention.

The last aspect to be discussed is the deep structure of this narrative. To my mind the underlying deep structure of Acts 27 can be reduced to one isotopy, namely the relationship between God and human beings, or more specifically humankind's role in relation to divine planning. Divine planning in Acts 27 can be summarised as follows: Paul should be taken to Rome, but only after the winter. In terms of a semiotic square, the various ways in which the isotopy is developed, can then be portrayed as follows:

Co-operation   Opposition

Opposition   Co-operation
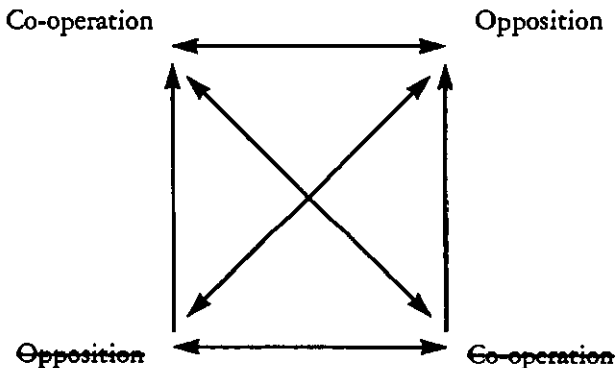
"Co-operation" is represented by Paul who realises that it would not be wise to attempt to sail to Rome at that specific time of year. According to the events that are narrated in Acts 27, such a situation is characterised by the following: life, order and hope. The contrary

relationship "Opposition" is represented in the narrative by the decision of the authorities to sail to Rome — in particular the decision of the centurion, the pilot and the owner of the ship to attempt to reach Phoenix in spite of Paul's warning against such a foolhardy decision (E3,4). The events narrated further on vividly portray the serious consequences of this position: death, chaos and despair. This situation is negated by "O̶p̶p̶o̶s̶i̶t̶i̶o̶n̶". In the narrative text this is portrayed in two ways: Firstly, the violent storm reveals all the grave consequences implied by opposing God's planning, since their desperate situation is characterised by increasing chaos and total despair as a result of the possibility of losing their lives. Secondly, the party is informed by means of a divine revelation that the situation will be changed: In the end no one will die and accordingly there is no need to despair. Thus, in the underlying logic of this narrative we have the following movement: "Opposition" > "O̶p̶p̶o̶s̶i̶t̶i̶o̶n̶" > "Co-operation". Significantly, the fourth possibility, "C̶o̶-̶o̶p̶e̶r̶a̶t̶i̶o̶n̶" is left open. In fact, this seems to be the basic message of the narrative: It is impossible not to co-operate in God's plans. Even those who try to oppose God's planning, in the end have to play their part!

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