

FROM INFORMATION STRUCTURE, TOPIC
AND FOCUS, TO THEME IN BIBLICAL
HEBREW NARRATIVE

by

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Dissertation submitted for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE

in ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

at the

University of Stellenbosch

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Date submitted: April 2004

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any university for a degree,

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Date: 1 December 2003

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the information structure of Biblical Hebrew narrative, and develop accounts of topic and focus in Biblical Hebrew, respectively. Both topic and focus categories have been determined for Biblical Hebrew (cf. chapters 3 and 5), as well as the information structure strategies that these categories can fulfill in discourse.

For topic categories, four different categories of information structure topics in Biblical Hebrew have been distinguished. These are

1. Primary topics
2. Secondary topics
3. Tail topics
4. Topic frames

In addition, associated with topics are topic contrastiveness as well as deictic orientations or text-world frames. All these categories, when present, are part of the topical framework of a discourse.

For focus structure categories, three different types of focus structure in Biblical Hebrew have been distinguished. These are:

1. Predicate focus
2. Sentence focus
3. Argument focus

Again, like in the case of topics, contrastiveness is associated with focus structures.

The strategies of information structure topics and focus structures in theme developments were distinguished. For topics, the following information structure strategies or functions stand out:

1. Topic continuity
2. Topic promotion
3. Topic shift
4. Topic deictic text-world framing
5. Topic contrasting

For focus structures, the following information structure strategies or functions stand out:

1. Commenting on topics
2. Presenting unidentifiable or inactive participants
3. Reporting, that is, event-reporting and state-reporting of out-of-the-blue, unexpected, discourse new events or states. Some reporting re-directs the theme, other reporting, especially that of states, supports the theme.

4. Identifying referents, either as identifying contrastive, unexpected referents or deictic text-world frames, or by announcing theme macrowords.

Contrastiveness is a pragmatic overlay in the case of many focus constituents, especially presupposed information that is focused on.

In other words, the three focus structures are used in certain strategies:

1. Predicate focus structures are used for commenting in topic-comment articulations.
2. Sentence focus structures are used for presentational sentences, and for theme-redirecting and theme-supporting, event-reporting and state-reporting sentences. The word-order is generally marked.
3. Argument focus is used for unexpected, contrastive identification, and for the announcement of theme macrowords. The word-order is marked, similar to sentence focus structures.

All the topic and focus categories and their respective information structure strategies have a link with the theme of a discourse. Theme has been defined in this study as the *developing and coherent core or thread of a discourse in the mind of the speaker-author and hearer-reader, functioning as the prominent macrostructure of the discourse* (chapter 7 (7.4.4)).

The information structure with its topics and focus structures and its strategies, can be used as a tool to identify and analyse themes. These categories and strategies together are called theme traces when they occur in marked syntactic constructions or in other prominence configurations like relexicalisation, end-weight, and repetition of macrowords. Theme traces are defined with the following wording: *A theme trace is a clue in the surface form of a discourse, viewed from the perspective of information structure, that points to the cognitive macrostructure or theme of a text. This clue is in the form of (1) a marked syntactical configuration, be it marked word-order or marked in the sense of explicit and seemingly “redundant”, all signaling some thematic sequencing strategy, or (2) some recurring concept(s) signaling some prominence and coherence* (chapter 7 (7.5.4)).

By investigating these theme traces, the analyst will have a tool to study themes in discourse. This theme traces tool will assist in the demarcation of the sections in the developing theme of a text by means of a variety of boundary features, and once these thematic units have been established, the study of the topic framework together with the focus content will yield a verifiable understanding of the macrostructure of a text in Biblical Hebrew. Global themes are contrasted with local themes. Global themes occur in the higher-level thematic groupings, like whole narratives and smaller episodes within the narratives. Within the episodes are sub-units like scenes and thematic paragraphs, the smallest thematic unit. In scenes and thematic paragraphs, local themes occur.

Between the different thematic units, a variety of theme sequential strategies occur. Theme shifting is a wider information structure strategy that is in operation in discourse. For instance, topic promotion, topic shift, and topic text-world framing are all cases of theme shifting. To study the theme of a narrative discourse from the perspective of the information structure, four steps of a theme-tracing model have been suggested, and applied to Genesis 17.

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List of abbreviations

ADVP – Adverbial phrase

BH – Biblical Hebrew

BHRG – Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar

CI – Construction-Integration (model)

DFE – Dominant Focal Element

FG – Functional Grammar

FSP – Functional Sentence Perspective

NP – Noun phrase

NRSV – New Revised Standard Version

qatal – subject-suffixed, perfective indicative form of the Hebrew verb

SFG – Structure Function Grammar

VSO – Verb-Subject-Object

wayyiqtol – waw consecutive plus the subject-prefixed indicative form of the Hebrew verb,
frequently used in narratives

Acknowledgements

To attempt a study of this nature, one cannot begin without the encouragement and guidance of variety of people. To each of the following people I want to express my sincere appreciation:

To my study leader and promotor, Prof. C.H.J. van der Merwe, for his professional guidance and technical expertise in the subject matter, and for his warm and encouraging manner.

To Dr. Tom Crowell, Africa Area Director of SIL International, who first put me in contact with Prof. Van der Merwe and the Centre of Bible Translation in Africa in Stellenbosch, and also to my SIL colleagues in Mozambique, for their constant encouragement and interest.

To my father, Prof. L. Floor, a New Testament scholar and writer, for his constant inspiration and encouragement.

To my wife, Karen, who patiently encouraged me throughout this study program, was a sounding board on some issues at times, and who assisted with the language editing. My four sons, Justin, Adrian, Nathan and Dean contributed through their good and encouraging attitude all along.

The author wishes to acknowledge, with gratefulness, the financial assistance received from the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa and from SIL International to conduct this study program.

But all glory to God. Without Him, this work would have been impossible. He gave good health, energy, joy, and the perseverance to come to this point. I trust that somehow, in whatever modest way, the results of this study will contribute to the understanding and translation of his Word.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROBLEM

The main concern of this study is the analysis of theme and information structure in Biblical Hebrew discourse. Three problem areas are contained in this opening statement: *theme*, *information structure*, and Biblical Hebrew *discourse*.

The first problem is theme. To establish the theme of a text is on the one hand easy and straightforward. Intuitively the reader or hearer can infer the main gist of what is said or written. But on deeper scrutiny, uncertainties arise. In addition, the theme abstracted from a discourse often differs from person to person. It is often very personal. Theme analysis is a problem. Theme is proving to be more enigmatic and intuitive than assumed, but at the same time there is no doubt that a discourse has a theme (or themes).

The study of discourse topic or discourse theme (these terms will be defined in this study, but here taken as meaning the same) is receiving a lot of attention in recent literature (cf. Kintsch, 1998; Callow, 1998; Goutsos, 1997; Hanker, 1998; Heimerdinger, 1999; Dooley & Levinsohn, 2001; et al.). For Dionysis Goutsos, “[t]his persistent interest is certainly indicative of the importance of the area” (1997:1). Goutsos quoted Francis & Hunston (1992) who assert that topic must remain a pretheoretical and intuitive notion, but that the segmentation of thematic units is nevertheless possible. The review of thematics in chapters 6 and 7 will confirm this enigmatic nature of theme, but simultaneously its reality and importance.

What then, is the exact nature of theme, and in addition, what is the nature of theme in the ancient text of Biblical Hebrew? It may be enigmatic and subjective, but it is real, and it is crucial to understanding and translation. The study of it cannot be avoided, but the themes of texts are hard to analyse. Through the past three decades several approaches of theme analysis have been proposed (to be discussed in more detail in chapter 6). But what is theme? Is it a grammatical-syntactic notion, traceable in the syntax of a text? Or is it a purely semantic concept, traceable as the dominating “topic of discourse”? What about the communication

situation in which a text was uttered? In what way does that influence the formulation of the theme? Is theme “traceable” at all? Or is it traceable only in some utterances, but not in all? What makes a string of words thematic? These and many more problems have plagued linguists and translators. Some approaches have been top-down cognitive approaches, while others have preferred a more bottom-up structural approach.

Theme in poetry is even harder. Themes in poetry are often impressions, and not exact impressions, confirmed in an artistic way through all sorts of literal and especially figurative speech. Multiple interpretations are often possible, whether intended or not. Most studies on the Book of Psalms, for example, will deal with themes in a variety of ways, but often pretheoretically and intuitively (using the terms of Francis & Hunston (1992)). For lack of space, themes in Biblical Hebrew poetry will not be dealt with in this study, but it is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the study of theme in poetry in the future.

A lot has been written on themes and motifs, but often theme analysis approaches have been accused of being subjective and too intuitive. Different interpretations abound. Be that, as it may, it is necessary also to consider the nature of language and the study of language. Some aspects of linguistics as the study of language can be very rigorous and even mathematical in exactness, for example the phonological and even the morphological system of a language. The higher levels of discourse cannot always be studied like an exact science such as mathematics. For that, communication and the cognition that drives communication, is just too complex.

In the light of the above, the question can be asked ‘why do we need a theory of theme discovery for the identification of themes?’ Theme analysis, as abstract, and often as subjective as such an analysis may be, can nevertheless be very important for the exegesis of Biblical texts, as well as for its translation. The following benefits of theme analysis can be listed:

1. Theme discovery analysis will assist in determining theme transitions, making the segmentation of the text so much easier.
2. Theme analysis will help to identify where theme interpretations can diverge and differ. Such an analysis will pinpoint the hinges on which texts turn. This in turn will help the exegete to pinpoint instances of the text where exegetical interpretations differ from each other.

The *second* problem to be addressed in this study, and in fact will be the dominant subject matter, is *information structure* in Biblical Hebrew. This field of study in Biblical Hebrew is quite recent, with earlier work by Givón (1979), Murauka (1985), Buth (1987), Bailey & Levinsohn (1992) and Bandstra (1992). More recent work has been done by Gross (1996), Disse (1998), and especially Van der Merwe (1999a and 1999c), Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), and Heimerdinger (1999) setting the scene.

The theoretical approach to information structure originally began to develop at the Prague School of linguists before the Second World War. They have approached the sentence as consisting of two elements which they call the theme and the rheme. The theme is the old or given information, and the rheme is the new information (see Firbas, 1964; for overviews, see Baker, 1992:chapter 5, especially pp160-172, and Gómez-Gonzalez, 2001). The theme-rheme theory is discussed in more detail in chapter 4 (4.2.1), where the Functional Sentence Perspective comes under scrutiny. For now it suffices to state that information structure has to do with the flow of given and new information in discourse, basically called the interaction between topic and focus in the clause, the sentence, and how this interaction is influenced by the cognitive and pragmatic context. Information structure generally falls in the linguistic discipline of pragmatics, but its close links and interface with syntax and semantics make it something more than just a pragmatic approach to text. The study of the linear ordering of clause constituents in terms of the notions *topic* and *focus* has helped us towards understanding Hebrew word order (see Van der Merwe (1999a, 1999c), Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze (1999), Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), Gross (1996), Heimerdinger (1999) and Disse (1998)). These recent studies have been influenced by Knud Lambrecht's theory on *information structure* (Lambrecht, 1994). Topic and focus are the main components of the information structure. He defines *topic* as what the sentence is about, often - but not always - referred to by subjects. *Focus* is defined as the element of information that is added to the presupposition of a sentence. The presupposition and assertion now differ from each other (Lambrecht, 1994:117, 206). Although the above-mentioned studies help us better to explain Biblical Hebrew word order in terms of information structure and the co-text, it does not shed light on the *uses* and *effects* of topic and focus in Hebrew discourse. Do topic and focus contribute to the development of the theme of a text?

A problem related to the need to find a theory of theme analysis in Biblical Hebrew, is that the value of information structure for theme analysis has not been explored to the full. In many, especially more recent cognitive studies, pragmatic information structure has not been far beneath the surface, but an explicit treatment of the issue is still outstanding.

The *third* problem to be addressed in this study is the need to integrate information studies and theme studies with discourse studies in Biblical Hebrew. Criteria for determining themes in longer texts have been investigated before (cf. Alter, 1981), but the application of information structure theory to understand the functions of word-order variations in longer Biblical Hebrew texts is a new field with much still unexplored. Recent works by Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), Heimerdinger (1999), Shimasaki (2002), and Levinsohn (2002) have brought the subject to the attention of scholars, but research on Biblical Hebrew information structure in discourse is in its early stages.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The overall purpose of this study is to investigate in what way, and in what sense, themes can be more objectively traced in Biblical Hebrew by means of a cognitive approach of information structure. Is there a link between theme and information structure, or not? The goal is to investigate, for example, how the identification, activation, re-activation, and continuity of *topics* contribute to *theme-discovery* in Hebrew. In addition to topic research, this study also intends to investigate how the *foci* of the clauses contribute to the overall cognitive development of a text. In other words, how does the development of the information packaging at sentence-level in a discourse relate to determining the overall *theme* or *gist* of that discourse?

The goal of this study is to fulfill the following requirements of an approach to information structure and discourse theme in Biblical Hebrew:

1. The approach must be an integrated account, linking information structure to discourse theme.
2. The approach must incorporate cognitive theory, attempting to account for the mental representations activated by the text. It should be more than a mere taxonomy of functions.

3. The approach must be a discourse-pragmatic approach to utterances. This is a discourse approach, because it must account for natural text processing, and not only individual clauses or sentences. This is a pragmatic approach, because it must give a functional account of language use. The communication situation must be reflected in the model.
4. The approach should be teachable and usable in exegesis and translation. New terminology must be avoided as far as possible, and where a new term is suggested, or an old term redefined, clear definitions should be provided.

This study sets out to investigate the following two areas, namely 1) information structure in Biblical Hebrew, and 2) the interface between information structure and theme in Biblical Hebrew.

In relation to the above two research goals, my goal is to do research on marked Biblical Hebrew word-order and other marked constructions, the identification of the information structure strategies, and the interface between information structure and the cognitive macrostructure or theme. A goal here is to arrive at some theme-tracing model and apply it successfully on a chapter from the corpus selected for this study.

In practical terms, this study sets out to review and reinterpret current research on topic and focus, and provide a cognitive-pragmatic model for information structure analysis. In addition, this study sets out to contribute to the research and understanding of Biblical Hebrew word-order. The wide-ranging uses of fronting and left-dislocation especially beg an explanation from the perspective of information structure. The different uses of fronting will be researched, and other marked word-orders like left-dislocation and right-dislocation, for instance, investigated. Lastly, this study sets out to investigate how information structure helps in identifying the theme at different levels.

1.3 HYPOTHESES

The overall hypothesis of this study is that there is indeed a link between information structure theory and thematics theory, and that out of that link an exegetical instrument for theme analysis for Biblical Hebrew can be developed. The goal of this study is to investigate this link.

My hypothesis is that theme discovery will have taken place once the reader has linked the various segments or information blocks which are nested in the developing discourse. Each information block (or thematic unit) consists of three entities: an active discourse topic (or topics), the most salient information about that topic(s), inferred from all the focus data presented in that block, and thirdly, a link with the previous block and the co-text (which could be a discourse particle or any other processing signpost). Discourse processors cooperating with the overall topic(s) then link these information blocks to infer the gist of the text.

This hypothesis is supported by related hypotheses:

1. The *first* hypothesis is that discourse theme is a reality. It may be intuitive, subjective, and pretheoretical, but it exists. It is called discourse topic, theme, or macrostructure in literature. I will demonstrate that theme is a cognitive reality (Callow, 1998:229ff; Chafe, 1994:135; Kintsch, 1998), something in the mind of the reader or hearer. But it is also true that discourse theme is and remains enigmatic. It can be compared with an analogy from physics, the molecule, in that while its exact nature cannot be observed and defined, its properties can be observed and defined.
2. The *second*, and related hypothesis is that a discourse, especially a longer discourse, has a hierarchy of themes. Lower-level themes are nested in a higher-level theme or themes (Callow, 1998:228; Chafe, 1994:137). It means that a discourse can be segmented into smaller units. Such smaller thematic units Dooley & Levinsohn call *thematic groupings*, and these thematic groupings signal thematic continuity and discontinuity (2001:35ff). It also means that such smaller units are definable. There are criteria for segmenting a text into smaller thematic units. These criteria can be syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. As will be seen in the overview of thematics in literature, texts can have single or multiple themes, and lower and higher level themes. In complex and longer texts, smaller themes are embedded in greater themes. The fact that narratives consist of such thematic units that can be analysed and segmented, is a hypothesis of this study. Related to the possibility of segmentation of discourse, is the fact that there are features in the syntax and in the semantics of a text that indicate transitions between such thematic units. These boundary features make a contribution to the segmentation of the text, and will assist the theme analyst.

3. The *third* hypothesis is that information structure, as a pragmatic approach to discourse, with its notions of topic and focus, is crucial for the development of criteria for such boundary markings of thematic groupings. Information structure is the interface between pragmatics and syntax (Van Valin, forthcoming). Information structure is the only approach available to explain allosentences, sentences with different word-orders, but which basically communicate the same ideas (Lambrecht, 1994:6,9,11,35). Marked word-order configurations are best interpreted by means of an information structure theory with its notions of topic and focus, given and new, presupposed and asserted.

4. The *fourth* hypothesis of this study is that a cognitive-pragmatic approach to information structure and thematics is more effective in explaining variant word-orders and their thematic implications than a mere structural syntactic or semantic approach. Theme and discourse are more than only the meaning and surface text by themselves. There is also the factor of what is going on in the mind. It is necessary to have a theory that is more than just syntactic, or only semantic, but one that links the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of a text with what is going on in the minds of the communicators. Cognition will assist towards investigating the intention of the speaker-writer, and the actual understanding of the hearer-reader. As Van der Merwe (2000) noticed, it is necessary to have a model that is more than just two-dimensional. A more holistic and discourse-based approach will better explain the processes that are taking place. A cognitive approach to information structure will have consciousness (Chafe, 1994) and activation (Chafe, 1994; Lambrecht, 1994) as integral parts of its theory. Tracing active, semi-active, and inactive referents in discourse will be revealing for which events, states, and referents are really prominent and in thematic focus at any given time. Van der Merwe (1999c:292) defines a cognitive frame of reference in the following words:

A basic assumption of this (complementary, SF) frame of reference is that participants in a communicative situation, i.e., the interlocutors, each have a cognitive world of their own. This world, among other things, consists of mental representations of persons, places (entities) and states of affairs and events (propositions). These mental representations that are identifiable in the case of entities or presupposed in the case of propositions make up their knowledge of the world.

5. The *fifth* hypothesis is that markedness in the sense of marked word-order is important to theme-tracing. Discourse themes, although enigmatic, have certain “properties” that are observable. There are traces in the text of the theme. The hypothesis is that marked word-order is one of these properties or traces. Marked word-order can be better understood when studied within the framework of information structure. I will argue that the notion of *markedness* is crucial to the analysis of theme. Marked syntactic and semantic-pragmatic configurations are important – but not exclusive – theme-carriers or *theme traces*. Markedness is an assumed property of language. Marked word-order and so-called pleonastic or superfluous reference to participants are all assumed to be included in the concept of markedness.

6. It is therefore our *sixth* hypothesis that marked word-order configurations, although not exclusively, are significant pointers to discourse segmentation and thematic groupings. Francis & Hunston (1992), as quoted in Goutsos (1997), argue that (discourse) topic must remain a pretheoretical and intuitive notion, but that “the identification of a transaction boundary should be consistent with considerations of topic, since the transaction is basically a topic unit.” (By transaction they mean a conversational exchange.) Therefore, to be able to come to the point of identifying themes in Biblical Hebrew, it is necessary first to make a detailed analysis of the information structure of a text. It is believed that marked structures cognitively mark thematic boundaries and thematic peaks of texts.

1.4 ASSUMPTIONS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

1.4.1 Assumption 1: word-order in Biblical Hebrew

One of the linguistic assumptions of this study is the basic Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) Biblical Hebrew word-order for main clauses, the SVO word-order for participial clauses, and Subject-Complement for verbless clauses. For discussions of this issue, see Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze (1999:336ff), Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), and Buth (1999). The positions taken in these publications are assumed in this study. The notion of markedness mentioned under the hypotheses of section 1.2 above is related to word-order. Marked word-order in main clauses is when the word-order is something other than VSO, normally an S or an O, or both, fronted before the verb. A marked word-order participial clause is where the object is fronted before the verb. The absence of an explicit subject does not make a participial construction marked for word-order. A marked word-order for verbless clauses is where the complement is fronted before the subject.

1.4.2 Assumption 2: markedness

Markedness as a linguistic concept needs to be clearly defined. Edwin Battistella, in his 1996 work titled “The Logic of Markedness”, gives an insightful overview of the theoretical problem of markedness. His final conclusion is that there is no specific theory of markedness per se, but rather a number of different domains and goals of markedness (1996:133). Basically, markedness is a categorical bi-polar asymmetry marking or not marking some type of information: something is marked for information x, and something is not marked for information x. In this asymmetry, “one element dominates its opposite”, or the unmarked is more basic than the other (ibid.:15, 10).

[The] less informative, less conceptually complex elements will be the norm and the more informative, more complex elements will somehow be foregrounded (ibid.:10).

The marked element shows a “constraining, focusing characteristic”, more narrowly specified and delimited (ibid.:10, quoting Waugh 1982:299).

John Lyons (1977:304-7) distinguishes three forms of lexical markedness: formal markedness, where there is a morpheme (or a specific word-order, SJF) that is formally elaborated, distributional markedness, where some elements are restricted to certain contexts

and conditions, and semantic markedness, where there is more specificity of meaning (for example in part-whole relationships, the part is more marked).

Givón (1990:654) defines markedness in terms of the following criteria: an element is marked when it has some formal complexity in comparison with the unmarked one, when the frequency distribution is more limited and when it has more “substantive grounds.” The substantive grounds that make an element a marked one are when it is more complex “in terms of *attention, mental effort or processing time* – than the unmarked one” (ibid.:974). Marked elements as “conceptually deeper and more complex categories have fewer subdistinctions and a narrower distribution” (Battistella, 1996:56).

In a similar vein, Cynthia Miller (1996:309, cf. Shimasaki’s discussion, 2002:120) proposes three criteria to indicate markedness, namely frequency (less frequent forms are more marked), complexity (more complex forms are more marked), and prototypicality (unmarked forms are more prototypical). She then distinguishes two types of markedness, namely privative and equipollent. Privative markedness is where some constituent is marked for x, whereas the unmarked form does not have this specific marking.¹ Equipollent markedness is where a constituent is marked for x, whereas the unmarked constituent is the logical opposite.

In Biblical Hebrew, as in all languages, there are elements that are marked in the sense of having more formal complexity, being less frequent, being constrained to certain contexts, and taking more mental effort and processing time. For our study of information structure in Biblical Hebrew, we assume that certain information structures (like certain word-orders) are more marked than others, therefore less frequent, but formally and cognitively more complex and specific. We also assume that on the basis of the presence of such marked structures in Biblical Hebrew, these marked structures play a specific role in text processing and theme. We will argue that theme in language, and therefore also in Biblical Hebrew, is carried by both marked and unmarked information structures, but that the marked information structures play a very crucial and specific role in theme marking.

Marked word-order is not the only type of “marked” configuration in Biblical Hebrew. Another, less frequent, specialized, and context-specific configuration is the insertion of additional words and particles, for example explicit subject pronouns (in many cases

¹ It is also true that the constituent that is not marked for x, can still have the meaning aspect of x. The meaning of markedness in this case is that x is an obligatory and important part of the marked constituent, whereas it can be present or absent in the unmarked form.

obligatory (Naudé, unpublished manuscript), but in other cases optional), focus particles and discourse particles.

1.4.3 Assumption 3: Biblical Hebrew prosody and pitch prominence patterns are inaccessible

This study also assumes that the prosodic and intonation prominence in topic and focus of Biblical Hebrew is not retrievable. Word-order markedness and other configurations of markedness like full pronouns and relexicalisation are what can be worked with. This is in agreement with what Shimasaki argues about focus and pitch prominence. Shimasaki (2002:58) presents his working hypothesis that Biblical Hebrew expresses focus by pitch prominence, on the basis of language universals, but at the same time argues that we cannot conclusively prove it. He also cannot “find any direct relationship between the Masoretic accents and our focus patterns”, but welcomes the fledging research in this area (ibid.:58, footnote 5.).

1.4.4 Assumption 4: Narrative lends itself better to theme studies

It is assumed that theme discovery is more straightforward in narratives. Narratives have plot structures and characters that enter and leave the scene. Text-world information in terms of the narrative’s setting or spatio-temporal context also helps to limit characters to a specific context, which in turn makes the task of determining the theme easier.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed for this study will have four stages. The first stage is the literary overview, done for topic, focus, and theme separately (chapters 2, 4, and 6). The second is the testing of the account of topic and focus on data from a corpus (chapters 3 and 5). The third stage is to develop a model of theme analysis and theme-tracing (chapter 7), followed by a fourth and final stage, that of applying that model on data from a corpus (chapters 8, 9, and 10), using the same corpus for the topic and focus accounts.

Research in Biblical Hebrew information structure that is currently available, will be incorporated in – and will even be foundational to – this study. Before an account of the information structure in Biblical Hebrew can be proposed, it is therefore necessary to review the current literature on linguistics and on Hebrew studies on information structure. Studies from both the functional and generative approach to linguistics will be included. As set out in the previous section, certain assumptions about cognition and discourse pragmatics will be

guiding this research, so the review and evaluation of the current literature on information structure will be done in the light of those assumptions and requirements. Where it is found that the current theory is not sufficient, or satisfactory, some new notions and concepts will be suggested. But the principal approach will be to maximize the currently available insights in information structure and thematics. For that reason, a large part of this study will entail reviewing and evaluating the current literature on the matter. The goal of the literature review is then to arrive at an account of information structure categories (topic and focus) in Biblical Hebrew. The survey of Biblical Hebrew word-order studies and information structure application will include Gross (1996), Buth (1999), Van der Merwe (1999a, 1999c, 2000), Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), Heimerdinger (1999), Rosenbaum (1997), Levinsohn (2002) and Bailey & Levinsohn (1992).

In addition to the literature review, the approach will be to look extensively at Hebrew data for topic-focus patterns. Genesis 1-25 will provide the bulk of the data, but also examples from the Hebrew Bible that other authors used as illustrative material. This account of topic and focus will then be the tool to approach the next step, namely discovering discourse theme.

A full model of theme and theme analysis will not be attempted in this study, the focus will be more limited to understanding the cognitive properties of theme and seeing how information structure can assist the analyst or exegete in tracing the linguistic clues of theme in Biblical Hebrew texts. So the goal is not to propose a comprehensive new model of theme, but to see if there are any verifiable, traceable properties of theme from the perspective of information structure. To do that, an overview of the literature on thematics will be done in order to arrive at a working definition of theme and the theme processing signals, also called theme traces.

To test the proposed account of information structure in Biblical Hebrew, as well as the tool of theme discovery, narrative texts will be analysed. A corpus has been chosen, which is Genesis 1-25. Genesis 1-25 contains several narratives: the creation, the fall, the Flood, some genealogies, and then the Abraham Narrative from chapters 12 to 25. The corpus contains continuous main participants and participants that appear for short scenes. But our data is not limited to the corpus. Examples from other parts of the Old Testament, and especially from elsewhere in Genesis, are used as well. These examples will normally be quoted again because they come up in the studies of other authors on this subject. But the bulk of illustrative examples will come from those 25 chapters in Genesis. The corpus is used in this study at three places: where accounts of topic and focus in Biblical Hebrew are set out

(chapters 3 and 5), where the different information structure strategies as theme traces in Biblical Hebrew are laid out (chapters 8 and 9), and finally, one longer stretch of narrative from the entire Genesis-corpus has been selected to illustrate and test the theme-tracing model: Genesis 17.

This study will be interdisciplinary, but mainly linguistic. Old Testament studies, Biblical Hebrew language studies, as well as modern linguistics represented by cognitive discourse pragmatics will be the instruments to resolve the research problem. This is so because cognitive-pragmatic theory, like Lambrecht's, has only been applied to modern spoken languages. We need to make the jump to apply modern pragmatics to the study of ancient texts. Since the study is on an ancient language text, there is the problem of secondary communication. Our data is from the received written texts. My exegetical approach will not emphasize reader-response, but rather author intent and especially communication processes. Here the Relevance Theory approach to communication (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, and others), the cognitive-semantic meaning-based approach of Callow (1998) and the discourse processing theory of Kintsch (1998) will be important.

A few practical conventions need to be mentioned here. The approach taken in this research is to avoid, as far as possible, any new terminology. The terminology in the field of information structure and thematics is vast and confusing as it is. Therefore, the terminology suggested by those whose theories are the most convincing for our purposes, will be followed, and where needed, a few new terms will be suggested. But that will hopefully be kept to the minimum.

To illustrate a point, actual text from the Hebrew Old Testament is quoted. The Hebrew text is laid out in tables, with an English translation provided in a parallel column, but not exactly lined up. The English translation used is the New Revised Standard Version - NRSV (Oxford University Press, 1989), but at some places the translation has been changed to indicate the more literal word-order in the Hebrew. All those cases are indicated with a note "author's translation" or "own translation" at the end of the English translation.

1.6 RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY

The impact and relevance of this study is that an instrument will emerge for exegetes and especially for Bible translators, which will enable them to identify theme within the information structure framework. This study will explicitly and verifiably link the notions of topic and focus to the information structure as a whole, and in turn link them to the discovery

of discourse theme. Moreover, translators could additionally use this very instrument to explore the grammaticalisations of information structure and theme in their respective target languages.

Information Structure may be a new approach to tackle discourse analysis, exegesis, and translation, though in many ways this approach is not new at all. For long, exegetes have arrived at the same conclusions, be it more intuitively. But if an exegete can figure out the information structure, he or she will be in a better position to understand the macrostructure and the thematic relevance. In particular, understanding the information structure and theme – with its marked topic and marked focus structures and macrostructures – is important in three areas:

- 1) Information structure provides a perspective on the *information flow* of a sentence or a discourse. By understanding how new information is activated, and how given and new information are interrelated and build on each other, the analyst has a tool for tracing information flow in a way that incorporates not only the semantics, but also the syntax and pragmatics of a text. Presupposition-assertion and topic-comment insights from the information structure, provided that analysis is done from a cognitive point of view, will give a perspective on identifiability and activation of referents.
- 2) Information structure is the *interface* between syntax and cognitive-pragmatics. By means of information structure, the analyst has a tool to approach syntax from a discourse-pragmatic perspective. The starting point is not syntax *per se*, but rather the cognitive-pragmatic realities in the minds of the speaker-author and hearer-reader. These realities then “manifest” themselves in certain syntactic structures. Information structure analysis will offer the analyst and exegete the tool to explain hereunto difficult to accounts for word-order configurations and other syntactic issues.
- 3) Information structure will provide the analyst-exegete with a tool to trace themes, especially microthemes, in a discourse. Theme analysis, vague at its worst and abstract at its best, can be approached from various perspectives, be it a literary, cognitive, rhetorical or purely semantic perspective. Because information structure analysis is basically a multi-discipline linguistic approach to text analysis, bringing together syntax, semantics, pragmatics and cognition, it may be ideally suited to assist the analyst in discovering theme.

In addition, information structure analysis will have the following application for exegesis and Bible translation.

1.6.1 Implications for exegesis

- 1) Information structure adds a new perspective to *participant identification* and *participant tracing* in discourse. The notions of topic and focus, and the subcategories of topic and focus provide the exegete with a tool to differentiate between the different participants, and this tool will also provide a framework in which to study the respective roles and prominence of the participants.
- 2) Information structure analysis will provide insight into *word-order* and especially into explaining more marked word-orders in Biblical Hebrew. The issue of fronting constituents before the verb in a basically VSO language like Biblical Hebrew is complex (cf. Van der Merwe, 1999a, 1999c; Bailey & Levinsohn, 1992, Longacre's (1992) response to Bailey & Levinsohn, et al.). Double fronting of constituents occurs in Biblical Hebrew (for example, Proverbs 7.1,2). Then there is the syntactical distinction between fronted constituents within the clause proper, and a left-dislocation (as in Genesis 17.6). A further complication is the presence of temporal adjuncts and temporal clauses preceded by $\psi\eta\psi\omega$ (cf. Van der Merwe, 1999b). Information structure and discourse theme analysis will cast some new light onto these complex issues.
- 3) An information structure analysis will contribute to the debate on the exact nature of "*emphasis*" in Biblical Hebrew (Muraoka, 1985; Bandstra, 1992, et al.), by approaching the problem from the pragmatic notion of contrastiveness (see chapters 2 and 4). The exact nature of this contrastiveness and its relation to the discourse and theme will be looked at in this study. By approaching the contrastiveness problem from the angle of information structure and discourse theme analysis, the exegete will achieve a deeper exegetical *penetration* into a text. Fine distinctions like whether, for instance, predicates focus has a contrastive overlay or not, will be revealing to the exegete. For example, Lambrecht gives the example of focus vagueness in the clause "Birds fly south" (1994:299-301). The point, depending on the context, is either the direction the birds fly in (south, in contrast to any other possible direction), or the migrational behaviour of birds in the (northern hemisphere) autumn. The question is

whether the focal part of that clause is [fly south] or just [south]. Information structure analysis will provide the exegete with some verifiable tools to arrive at this otherwise intuitive interpretation.

- 4) Information structure analysis will pinpoint areas of *exegetical difficulty*, for example what information is topical, identifiable, and discourse-active, versus what is discourse-new, and the implications of that. In addition, the continuity and discontinuity of topics will provide insight in paragraph and episode boundaries. The exegete, by means of information structure analysis, will be able to pinpoint instances of exegetical difficulties. Such an analysis will even assist in making exegetical choices. The exegesis may still be inconclusive, but he/she will have a better grasp on problem spots.
- 5) Information structure, with its notion of marked word-orders, primary topic and focus content, will provide the analyst-exegete with a tool – among others – to tackle the enigmatic notion of discourse theme. It will be argued in this study that *trace themes*, and especially micro-themes, are identifiable and verifiable in a discourse, and are key to segmentation and paragraph boundary marking. With the identifiable smaller units, lower-level themes can be inferred, moving on to the higher-level themes. From that starting point, information structure will also assist in the identification of thematic *leitwords* (Alter, 1981:93-94) or *macrowords* (Kintsch, 1998), which in turn are carriers of themes.

1.6.2 Implications for Bible translation

- 1) The tracing of themes in turn will give the exegete and Bible translator better control over *thematic* and *non-thematic information* and how to translate such information effectively. Languages differ in how thematic and non-thematic information is differentiated. By translating this appropriately, the translator will have more control of the thematic versus non-thematic material². The translator will also have more control over natural information flow in the translation, by matching topic and focus patterns cross-linguistically.

² For example, translation consultant checks could include a check if thematic propositions were not translated in non-thematic background mode (e.g., in subordinate clauses).

- 2) Moreover, by understanding the information flow and thematic development of a Biblical discourse, the translator (and translation consultant) will be in a better position to make sure that the theme comes across successfully, both in actual translation and eventual translation testing. In *testing* a translation, the testing of the effective communication of the theme is foundational. Without a proper understanding of theme in a text, its testing in translation will be subjective, intuitive and ineffective. Information structure analysis, and its application in theme traces, can assist in this process.

1.7 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into two parts. The first part (chapters 2-5) has to do with the theory of information structure and its application in Biblical Hebrew. The second part (chapters 6-10) deals with the link between information structure and theme, again with applications of the theory in Biblical Hebrew texts.

In Part 1 on information structure, the study of topic and focus is dealt with separately, in spite of the fact that the two are totally intertwined. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with topic, and chapters 4 and 5 with focus. Chapters 2 to 5 are foundational to the development of the argument in Part 2 on information structure and theme, in chapters 6 to 10. The last chapter, chapter 10, is an application of the information structure accounts and discourse theme-tracing model on a longer text from our Genesis-corpus.

In **Chapter 2** an overview of the theoretical notion of topic will be given. The development of the notion of topic will be described, as well as the different approaches to defining topic, in particular the functional and the generative approaches. The strengths and weaknesses of these approaches will be discussed. This will be followed by an overview of how the notion of topic has been applied to recent studies of Biblical Hebrew. The chapter ends with a summary and a list of requirements such an account of topic needs to meet.

Chapter 3, building on chapter 2, proposes an account of topic in Biblical Hebrew, with examples.

Chapter 4 is an overview of the theoretical notion of focus, similar to the equivalent chapter on topic, dealing with different definitions and approaches to focus from functional and

generative perspectives. This is followed by an overview of how the notion of focus has been applied to recent studies of Biblical Hebrew.

Chapter 5, building on chapter 4, proposes an account of focus in Biblical Hebrew, with examples.

Chapter 6 is an introduction to the field of thematics and introduces Part 2 of this study. Discourse analysis models of theme are reviewed, with special reference to how these theories made or did not make use of information structure notions. Semantic-propositional approaches as well as functional approaches are described, followed by an overview of more recent cognitive approaches. The theories of Callow (1998), and especially Kintsch (1998), are of particular importance here.

Chapter 7 again builds on chapter 6. Studies on theme in Biblical Hebrew are reviewed. The goal of this chapter is to propose a definition for theme analysis in Biblical Hebrew, as well as to propose a definition for the concept of theme traces. Theme traces are topic and focus-related categories and strategies that have thematic import.

Chapter 8 discusses the topical theme traces with examples, especially from Genesis 1-25. The categories of topic and their information structure strategies are set out and illustrated.

Chapter 9, a mirror image of chapter 8, discusses the focus theme traces, also with examples, especially from Genesis 1-25. This time, the different focus structures and their discourse strategies are set out and illustrated.

Chapter 10, the final chapter, applies the theme-tracing model to a longer text in Biblical Hebrew, with several embedded scenes in one episode. The episode chosen is Genesis 17, which consists of one episode, limited in time and space, namely God's interaction with Abraham on matters of the covenant. But the episode divides into several scenes or subdivisions, each with its own theme and theme traces. The study ends with a list of prospects, areas of study that lay beyond the scope and means of this investigation, but to which this study has given rise.

PART I

INFORMATION STRUCTURE: TOPIC AND FOCUS

Chapter 2

INTRODUCTION TO TOPIC

As the first step in proposing a model for analysing Biblical Hebrew information structure, it is necessary to look at what recent linguistic research on topic in general has proposed. It is necessary especially to review what the recent application of such linguistic research on Biblical Hebrew has done to date. The method followed in this chapter is first of all to provide a theoretical overview of the linguistic treatment of topic, together with some of the conceptual problems involved. This is followed by theoretical introductions to the study of topic from a functional and a generative linguistic approach. Under the section of the functional approaches, the notion of discourse topic is included as well, pointing towards a further treatment of the matter in chapter 6 on thematics. Some of the weaknesses of the functional and generative approaches are pointed out, as well as their strengths. This is then followed by an overview of the recent application of topic on Biblical Hebrew texts from the perspective of modern linguistics discussed earlier in the chapter. Out of the research overview and Hebrew applications, a preferred theoretical orientation is indicated, which is that of Lambrecht (1994), and the application of his theory on Biblical Hebrew by Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript). Lambrecht's approach is not found to be altogether complete and adaptable to Biblical Hebrew, so a few modifications to his model are suggested. These modifications either arise from topic research done by linguists like Givón, Dik, some Chomskyan linguists, and others (all reviewed in this chapter), or from the requirements of the Hebrew text itself.

2.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE TREATMENT OF TOPIC

The study of topic is not a new one. Topic, as an object of grammatical investigation, was first raised by Hockett (1958). He proposed a theory in which a sentence can be divided in two parts, a topic and a comment, as in, for example, the sentence

The boy ate the hamburger

The bold-faced subject is the topic about which some new information is mentioned. The predicate *ate the hamburger* is the comment.

The topic normally corresponds with the subject, and the comment normally corresponds with the verb and its complements, the predicate. The topic is what the sentence is about, and the comment is what is said about the topic. Topic is basically seen as a grammatical entity (Brown & Yule, 1983:70-71). But there is much more to topic than just this.

Basically most studies of topic can be categorized into two distinct approaches. One group focuses on discourse topic, with topic then taken as a concept related to what the discourse is about. The focus is on what the complete multi-sentence utterance is all about (Van Dijk, 1977; Brown & Yule, 1983; Callow, 1998). The other group focuses more on clause topic. Both sentence functional studies and generative studies on topic have this emphasis. Typical theorists of topic in the functional clause sense are Dik (1980), Givón (1984, 1990), and Lambrecht (1994). There is a group of functional linguists whose approach to topic can be categorized neither as discourse topic nor clause topic, but as an attempt to combine the two approaches. The most prominent among this group are linguists like Talmy Givón (1990).

The sentence functional approach has been further developed by Simon Dik (1980;1989). The interest in discourse topic has developed out of the sentence functional approaches. Important contributors in this area have been Brown & Yule (1983) and Kathleen Callow (1998).

Discourse topic is of particular importance to this study, since one of the stated goals is to pursue the link between clause topic and the tracing of theme. The relation between clause topic and discourse topic will be looked at in detail in the chapter on thematics (chapter 6).

The second major approach to topic at sentence level is the generative approach. The generative approach is followed by theorists like Vallduví & Engdahl (1996) and McNally (1998). Among linguists using the clause topic approach, clause topic is often called sentence topic, but generally complex sentences are not included in any significant descriptions of topic. The typical corpus of examples consists of simple sentences with one predicate, in other words, clauses. Generative approaches found a new impetus with Noam Chomsky's article that redirected generative studies, "The minimalist approach" (Chomsky, 1995). This study has mostly benefited from Vallduví & Engdahl (1996) and McNally (1998), who developed Chomsky's thoughts on topic and focus (see 2.3 below for the discussion). The standard generative approach has been clause topic only, focusing strongly on word-order and

movement rules, with typically little reference to functional issues, not to mention discourse considerations.

But within the functional and generative approaches, there is quite a variance of opinion on what topic really is and how it is manifested at the linguistic surface level or sentence form. Some of the debatable issues are listed below:

1. As mentioned above, there is a problem with the different definitions of the *scope* of topic. It has already been mentioned that linguists differ in what they use as the scope of topic, be it clause topic, sentence topic, paragraph topic, or discourse topic.

2. Secondly, there is debate about the exact nature of *topic*. Does it only have to do with semantic *aboutness*, or is there something more included in the term, like syntax? In general, there is agreement that the notion of topic is principally a pragmatic concept, but which is often expressed as a clause subject syntactically (cf. for example Lambrecht's discussion (1994:131-150)). A pragmatic definition of topic is that the non-topic part of a clause is *about* the referent expressing itself as the topic (Lambrecht, 1994:118). But the pragmatic *aboutness* definition of topic is not without its problems. It seems that the *aboutness* can function at different levels, as was pointed out by Jacobs (2001, see discussion further below). It seems that *aboutness* is present where some semantic enrichment of an entity has taken place. This entails that other *given* topics in a clause that is not the subject, as presupposed (in Lambrecht's sense) objects or even presupposed adverbials, behave "topically" and are enriched semantically by the sentence. The event or state in focus enriches something about those "topics" as well. All this calls for a wider definition of topic and for a subcategorization of topic types.

3. Topic is sometimes equated with *theme*. Different definitions of theme again prevail, but the most common is the Hallidayan definition of theme as the very first constituent of a sentence, whatever grammatical word-class it may be. In these studies (see for example Gómez-González (2001:89-136), discussed in this chapter under 2.2.3 below), topic is used in the sense of theme, that which can describe the contents of a paragraph or discourse in one word or a short sentence. The term topical theme is what Gómez-González employs for sentence-initial constituents that behave like topics.

4. Topic is often defined as *given information* (see for example Gómez-González (2001:34-49), discussed further under 2.2.3). There is uncertainty about the exact nature of givenness.

Most theorists agree that givenness is more than a co-text presupposition, in other words, it is more than just activated by the preceding text leading up to it. Also, cognitive and wider extra-textual assumptions and *knowledge of the world* determine how much of a topic is given. The Prague School also argued that there are degrees of givenness (referred to in Gómez-González, 2001:61-89).

5. Another problem, especially when dealing with discourse topic, is the problem of topic and *multiple participants*. Can a discourse, or even a complex sentence, have more than one topic? And can a clause have multiple topics? How can we understand this problem of multiple actors or participants, which all at one stage or another fulfill the role of clause topic? It seems that most of the definitions of topic lack a certain sub-categorisation of different types of topic. We will see that the generative linguists like Valldúvi & Engdahl (1996) do specify some subcategories, as did Gómez-González (2001), a functional linguist in the school of Halliday. To a certain extent, Lambrecht (1994) named some subcategories like *secondary topic* and *antitopic*, but these terms didn't function extensively in his theory.

6. *Topicalisation*³ is another term that has attracted varying definitions and uses. Generally, topicalisation has to do with the movement of an object (normally by means of fronting or clefting) before the verb, which then becomes the pragmatic topic of the clause (Lambrecht, 1994:31):

The term “topicalization” is commonly used with reference to syntactic constructions in which an object noun phrase whose canonical position is after the verb appears in clause-initial position before the subject (or directly before the verb in languages with V-2 order.)

The object NP is now taken to be the topic instead of being part of the focus domain. Generative linguists operate largely with the concept of *topicalisation*, which for them is a syntactic movement indicator.

³ I will generally refrain from using the term *topicalisation* because of the observation made by Lambrecht where he states that use (as defined above) of the term *topicalisation* is problematic, because the fronted NP can either be in a topic relation or a focus relation to the proposition (1994:31). *Topicalisation* as used in the literature is a word referring simultaneously to some syntactic configuration (fronting, left-dislocation, Y-movement) and its semantic and pragmatic properties. In this study I prefer to distinguish the syntactical configuration and pragmatic function by referring to the syntactical configuration either as fronting, Y-movement, or left-dislocation, and to the pragmatic function by the type of topic or focus relation it has to the rest of the sentence (to be defined further in the next three chapters).

7. The relation between pragmatic topic and a *dislocated* constituent, mostly left-location, is often discussed. Dik uses theme to indicate the pre-predication, extra-clausal, dislocated constituent (1980:153), where for him the topic is part of the clause proper. (See for example Gregory & Michaelis, 2001.)

8. An additional issue is the interpretation of complex grammatical structures such as *clefting* (e.g., It is the man who knocked at the door) and *pseudo-clefting*, sometimes called subject or object clauses (e.g., The man's knocking at doors became the talk of the town). These structures normally carry new, rhematic information, but how topic functions in such sentences, needs to be understood.

9. The question of the relationship between topic, be it clause topic or discourse topic, and *discourse focus or theme* is also problematic. How does the one feed into the other, if at all? For the purposes of this study, this problem is of particular importance. Does sentence-level pragmatic topics have any relevance for discourse, and if so, what is its relevance? As stated in the introduction, the hypothesis of this study is that the informational relation called *topic* indeed has such relevance.

In the next section, some of these problematic definitions will be discussed again under the name of each author below, to give an overview of opinions and theoretical approaches that are taken to be representative of the problem. Functional and Chomskyan/generative approaches to the description of clause topic are discussed in particular. First the functional approaches will be reviewed.

2.2. AN OVERVIEW OF FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES TO TOPIC

In this section on functional approaches, the work of Simon Dik, Talmy Givón, Knud Lambrecht, and María Gómez-González will be reviewed.

2.2.1 Simon Dik and Functional Grammar

The first influential functional approach to the description of topic is Simon Dik's Functional Grammar. A later refinement of his theory in his 2 volumes called "The Theory of Functional Grammar. Part 1: The Structure of the Clause" (1989) is used as the basis of the following summary of his views on information structure and topic. His approach is pragmatic or functional:

By pragmatic functions (as relevant within the structure of the clause) we understand functions which specify the informational status of the constituents, in relation to the wider communicative setting in which they are used. The main parameters along which (clause-internal) pragmatic functions can be distinguished are “topicality” (=characterizing “the things we talk about”) and “focality” (=characterizing the most important or salient parts of what we say about the topical things) (1989:264).

Dik made the useful distinction between intra-clausal and extra-clausal constituents (ECCs), in which “ECCs are not part of the clause proper, but more loosely associated with it” (1989:264). Pre-clausal ECC he calls a *theme*, and a post-clausal ECC he calls a *tail*. Another useful insight from Dik is that topicality and focality are not altogether complementary. There are cases where there is overlap between topic and focus. For example, certain topical constituents may receive focus as well. Dik also seriously attempted to bring discourse topic and sentence topic together in one grammatical theory, with some measure of success.

Dik defines topic as that entity to which the discourse imparts information (1989:267), about which the discourse “is about.” He proposes several topic types: Discourse Topic (D-Topic) is an entity that runs central to a unit of discourse. A discourse can have several D-Topics, and these can be structured hierarchically or sequentially. Some D-Topics are short-lived, while others are more continuous. D-Topics need to be introduced for the first time. Such topics Dik then calls New Topics (NewTop), which then afterwards, when referred to, can be called Given Topics (GivTop). Dik also proposes the concept of a Sub-Topic (SubTop), which is a topic that has not been stated explicitly, but has been made “available” to the hearer by implication. For example, the topic “party” can make the SubTop “music” or “dancing” available. Lastly, Dik distinguishes the Resumed Topic (ResTop) where a certain Given Topic “which has not been mentioned for a certain time may be “revived” and re-established as a GivTop” (1989:267).

Dik then proposes four of what he calls “topicality strategies” (1989:268-277):

1. Strategies to introduce a NewTop, where he distinguishes four such strategies:

1.1 An explicit mega-linguistic statement of what is going to be the topic, e.g.

“I am going to tell you a story about **an elephant called Jumbo**”

1.2 Object position to introduce a new topic, e.g.

“In the circus we saw **an elephant called Jumbo**”

1.3 An existential or locative-existential construction, e.g.

“Once upon a time there was **an elephant called Jumbo**”

1.4 The “appearing on the scene” strategy, e.g.

“Suddenly, right before our very eyes, there appeared **a huge elephant**”

This last strategy is not necessarily a different strategy, but seems rather to be a variant of the existential strategy.

Dik remarks that such NewTops are always indefinite, and often appear late in a clause, sometimes at the very end. Also, NewTops appear to be out of their default or canonical word-order position, as in SVO languages, NewTops are often in a VS word-order. This is clearly the case with many Bantu languages like Swahili and Mwani.

2. Strategies to maintain a D-Topic in a so-called “topic chain”, according to Dik, and for our purposes of Biblical Hebrew application, are anaphoric reference devices (like pronouns, generic words of which the topic is of the same class) and syntactic parallel structures (topics appear in similar syntactic positions) (1989:271-272). Sometimes the full noun is repeated to maintain the “topic chain”, although this use is normally reserved for Resumed Topic strategies.
3. A Given-Topic can be maintained by reference to it by means of a Sub-Topic. A SubTop is an entity that can be inferred from a GivTop “on the basis of our knowledge of what is normally the case in the world” (1989:275). SubTop formation can be done when entity X is in relation to Y, where the relation could be part of, member of, subset of, instance of, copy of, aspect of, opposite of, projection of, associated with, etc.
4. The strategy of resuming a Given Topic is by indicating that a topic shift is now taking place, or by means of anaphorical reference, or referring to the Resumed Topic as an entity that has been introduced before, so that it is somehow accessible to the hearer (so therefore no indefinite nouns, for example), or by any combination of these three means.

Dik's topic category distinctions and strategies are significant and will be returned to again. His Functional Grammar approach to topic has been applied on Biblical Hebrew by Buth (1999) and Rosenbaum (1997), and is to be discussed later in this chapter (2.4.3. and 2.4.2. respectively).

2.2.2 Talmy Givón

Givón calls his approach to syntax a discourse-pragmatic approach (1984: 239). While his main focus is on syntax, the coding of discourse function and/or discourse structure in syntax is the mainstay of his approach to syntax. Like Dik, he also attempts to lift the study of sentence topic to the level of including discourse topic, with some success. Givón (1990:902) holds that “the topic is only *talked about* or *important*, if it remains *talked about* or *important* during a number of successive clauses” (italics Givón's). Topical information in discourse for Givón is called old information. The old information has a role in integrating the new information, and he defines that integration process as follows: “The chunks of old, topical, background information in the proposition constitute its addressing mechanism, referring it to the right pre-established location, to be filed there within the coherence network of the discourse” (1984:263).

In chapter 7 of his volume *Syntax, Vol. 1*, under the chapter heading “Information-theoretic preliminaries to discourse pragmatics” he gives an introduction to information structure. In his second volume on syntax (1990), a whole chapter is devoted to what he calls “marked-topic constructions” (chapter 17, pp.739-778). He discusses seven topic-coding devices, with the “pragmatic use of word-order” as the common theme between these devices:

- (a) Existential-presentative constructions (EPCs) are also known as indefinite subject constructions, introducing “new referents, but in particular new *important* referents” (1990:741). Normally such constructions will consist of frozen forms of existential verbs like ‘to be’, ‘to have’, ‘to give’, normally followed by the indefinite subject noun (VS).

For example in English:

There is a person that sells carrots

And in Portuguese:

“*Há alguém que quer falar contigo*”

There-is someone who wants to-speak with-you. (Givon, 1990:744)

- (b) Topic-marking morphology. Here Givón discusses the use of the numeral ‘one’, the demonstrative ‘this’, noun-class prefixes in Bantu languages, and noun classifiers as markers of indefinite cataphoric referents, marking the referents as cataphorically (or thematically) important (1990:748-752). One can add the modifier ‘certain’ as another marker of cataphorical importance, or the first introduction into the discourse. For example in Mwani:

Kaja munu *mmoja* kutiona.

3SPERF-come 1-person 1-one INF-1Pobj-see

“A *certain* man came to see us”

- (c) Y-movement, also called ‘contrastive topicalisation’, is where an object is typically fronted before the verb, marking it as topic. Givón argues that Y-movement is used typically when a referent is contrasted with another of roughly the same semantic class. For example,

I saw John there. **Mary** I never saw. (object contrast)

Contrastive topicalisation need not always be Y-moved. Some languages, like Japanese, have a topic marker. In English, contrastive topicalisation of the subject is indicated by stress assignment:

John saw me there. **Mary** never did. (subject contrast)

Givón then states that

*Y-moved referents also tend to be **anaphorically topical**. That is, they tend to be overwhelmingly definite, or generic, but never REF-indefinite (1990:753).*

- (d) Left dislocation is different to Y-movement. In Y-movement, the moved constituent is still part of the argument structure of a proposition. In left-location, a referent stands outside the proposition’s argument structure syntactically, but has a semantic-pragmatic relationship with it on the one hand, and in many cases a deictic reference to it in the proposition proper. Givón says the following of left dislocated referents:

Left dislocation is typically a device to mark topics – most commonly definite – that have been out of the focus of attention for a while, and are being brought back. (1990:757)

It is anaphorically topical and cannot be used to introduce a new topic into the discourse (1990:756)

For example in Japanese (1990:759):

Okane-wa, John-ga hosii

Money-TOP John-SUBJ want

‘Money, John wants (some)’

(e) Right dislocation. Functionally, right dislocation is taken by Hyman (1975) “as an afterthought or repair device” (Givón, 1990:760). Givón claims that a right dislocated referent is fully, even highly accessible, codable as an *anaphoric pronoun*, but speaker reconsiders and re-codes the referent rather as a *full NP* as well (1990:761). Givón states that in Ute and in Japanese the right dislocated independent pronouns function to mark the end of a thematic paragraph, also called cataphoric discontinuity (1990:761).

According to Givón, in Hebrew cataphoric importance of topicality controls the word-order. That is, topical referents that are important for the discourse to come, will be put further forward in the clause, while the more accessible referent is placed *last* (1990:764).

Givón’s treatment of marked topic is valuable in the sense that it lists various syntactic means languages use to mark topic. He also develops the pragmatic functions of such marked constructions. A marked construction for him means that it has some formal complexity in comparison with the unmarked one (1990:654). The substantive grounds that make an element a marked one are that it is more complex “in terms of *attention, mental effort* or *processing time* – than the unmarked one” (ibid.:974). Givón leaves the impression that all the participants, once active in a developing discourse, are in some form or another topical. Topic continuity and discontinuity in all its variety is central to his thinking on topic.

2.2.3 María Gómez-González and the Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar

Gómez-González (2001) provides an extensive overview of information structure issues relating to topic. She sympathetically discusses the Prague School, Dik’s Functional

Grammar, and the Hallidayan Systemic-Functional Grammar (SFG). SFG she very much adopts as her theoretical frame of reference. She describes her approach to the problem of topic and theme (as in the sense of sentence-initial constituent) as intrinsically a functionalist-separating framework (2001:173). Basically, in SFG, relational information structure of given and new information is separated from the thematic structure which is divided in the theme-rheme dichotomy. The *theme* is always the very first constituent in clause, be it a connective, a subject, a verb, or whatever else. This method of discourse analysis will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6 under “Thematics”, but first a few brief remarks on Gómez-González’s handling of sentence topic and especially multiple sentence topics will be mentioned. Topic as defined in this chapter is called *theme* by Gómez-González. She distinguishes 4 types of sentence-initial themes, namely 1) Beta themes (temporal, spatial and manner clauses), 2) topical themes (subjects, special topical themes like it-clefts, left-dislocation, there-existential constructions, etc.), 3) interpersonal themes (like vocatives, modal adjuncts, etc.), and 4) logico-conjunctive themes (previously called *textual themes* like conjunctive adjuncts, etc.) (ibid.: 180-184 and appendix 359-361). Themes can also be multiple or non-multiple. Extended Multiple Themes (EMTs) is another term she uses. EMTs occur when more than one of the above list of sentence-initial themes occurs in one sentence in English. She argues that the syntactic Theme has cross-linguistic validity because of the *linearisation* constraint and because the Theme zone “constitutes an orientation zone,... giving orientation or anchoring for what is to follow (ibid.:185), the *point of departure* or *starting point*. Since her theory separates information structure relations, fronted focus constituents can function as themes too, thereby communicating special interpersonal or textual import. “Theme choices can be plausibly analyzed as involving a combination of ideational, textual and interpersonal meaning” (ibid.:191). The functional relevance of syntactic Theme, or clause-initial position, is that it has *cognitive salience*, in both fixed word-order languages as well as in flexible order languages (2001:174). It is here that many theorists disagree with SFG. English as a fixed word-order language lends itself rather nicely to the SFG thematic analysis, as her study in the wide corpus shows. But in basic VSO languages like Biblical Hebrew, such analyses are not as straightforward (Baker, 1992:140)

Where the work of Gómez-González is useful for the purpose of this study is that she gives a more nuanced definition of what *givenness* is than that of Dik or Lambrecht. Her different types of givenness are the following (ibid.: 348):

- a. relational givenness, i.e. the Given (Giv) with respect to the New in individual clauses/messages;
- b. contextual givenness, i.e. given information as rendered by the co(n)text, in terms of:
 - i. recoverability (Giv_r): information that is recoverable from the co(n)text;
 - ii. predictability (Giv_p): information that is predictable from the context;
 - iii. shared knowledge (Giv_k): knowledge shared by speaker and her/his addressee;
 - iv. assumed familiarity (Giv_f): a scalar notion of information which the speaker assumes her/his addressee can retrieve or infer from the co(n)text; and
- c. activated givenness (Giv_s): i.e. what both speaker and/or her/his addressee have in the mind.

Her definition of givenness will be followed in this study. A second valuable contribution is the SFG notion of multiple themes (for us, multiple topics), and while her categorisation of the different types of topical themes is insightful, it does give an elaborated taxonomy of possible configurations. As just mentioned, such a taxonomy may well explain what is happening in English with its fixed SVO word-order, but Biblical Hebrew with its VSO order raises some questions. For example, verb-initial clauses with full subject noun phrases like Biblical Hebrew cannot be equated with the English subject-verb inverted order configurations. Lastly, she attempts to integrate *all* sentence-initial constituents, be they subjects, adverbial phrases, multiple themes, and even vocatives and logical connectors, into one theory of *Theme*. The SFG approach to thematic structure in discourse analysis is nevertheless a significant approach. Gómez-González's views on discourse themes are discussed further in Chapter 6.

2.2.4 Knud Lambrecht

Lambrecht's book "Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus and the mental representations of discourse referents" (1994) earned high appraisal from reviewers. His theory is seen as the "state of the art" in pragmatic theory on information structure (Ziv, 1996:706). Lambrecht's theory on information structure is a sophisticated and comprehensive one. He does not approach the issues of information structure and topic from the perspective of surface syntactic structures only, but has embedded his theory in what happens cognitively when people communicate. Before getting into Lambrecht's theory of topic, it is necessary to

go back and summarize some of his underlying definitions of information structure. He distinguishes four major pragmatic categories, namely presupposition, assertion, identifiability, and activation.

Pragmatic presupposition he defines as

“the set of propositions lexicographically evoked in a sentence which the speaker assumes the hearer already knows or is ready to take for granted at the time the sentence is uttered” (1994:52).

Pragmatic assertion is defined as

“the proposition expressed by a sentence which the hearer is expected to know or take for granted as a result of hearing the sentence uttered” (1994:52).

His theory on topic hinges on his two sets of information-structure categories, namely those indicating temporary cognitive states, on the one hand, and those indicating relations between referents and propositions, on the other. The temporary cognitive state categories are *identifiability* and *activation*, and the terms indicating relations between referents and propositions are *topic* and *focus*. This is how identifiability, a term originating from Wallace Chafe (1987), is described in the following quote from Lambrecht:

“When a speaker wishes to make an assertion involving some entity which she assumes is not yet represented in the addressee’s mind and which cannot be referred to deictically it is necessary for her to create a representation of that entity via a linguistic description, which can then be anaphorically referred to in subsequent discourse. The creation of such a new discourse representation for the addressee can be compared to the establishment of a new referential “file” in the discourse register, to which further elements of information may be added in the course of the conversation and which can be reopened in future discourses” (1994:77).

Identifiability is not exactly the same as *definiteness*. Identifiability is the pragmatic reality, while definiteness is grammaticalized identifiability that does not appear in all languages, or in all languages in the same way. Definiteness is not a universal linguistic category, while identifiability as a cognitive category, is such a universal category (1994:79-87).

The fourth pragmatic concept that Lambrecht develops, and which is highly relevant to topic, is the concept of *activation*⁴. Activation brings the conveying of information from knowledge to consciousness (1994:93). Identifiability has to do with the access of knowledge, while activation has to do with consciousness. There are three activation states, namely *inactive (unused but still in long term memory)*, *semi-active (or accessible)*, and *active* (1994:106). A referent that is *active* is the same as one that is “given”, but Lambrecht avoids what he feels is an ambiguous term. So an unidentifiable referent has no activation state as yet, and when such a referent is identified, it is a *brand-new* item. Lambrecht distinguishes two types of brand-new items, following Prince (1981:236), namely an *anchored* brand-new item, which is linked to some other discourse entity, and an *unanchored* brand-new item, which does not have such a link. For example, *a bus* is unanchored, where *a guy I work with* is anchored. In summary then, Lambrecht distinguishes seven cognitive-pragmatic states of referents, namely

- (1) unidentifiable/brand-new unanchored
- (2) unidentifiable/brand-new anchored
- (3) inactive/unused
- (4) textually accessible
- (5) situationally accessible
- (6) inferentially accessible
- (7) active/given

The above list is simultaneously a topic accessibility scale. The active/given referents are the most accessible where the unanchored brand-new referents are the least accessible (ibid.:165). The unaccented pronominals are the preferred topic expressions, the most accessible, and the least marked in word-order in the unmarked topic-comment articulations (ibid.:172, 132).

With this theoretical foundation, Lambrecht defines his notion of topic. For him it is not “discourse topic” as defined by Brown & Yule (1983). Neither is it “theme” in the sense of the first constituent of a sentence according to the theory of the Prague School. It is also not the topic according to Givón, who uses topic to refer to any participant in a discourse. For

⁴ Lambrecht has been influenced by Wallace Chafe. Chafe (1987:25) also has three different activation states: active (in focus of consciousness), semi-active (peripheral consciousness, but not focused on), and inactive (“currently in long-term memory, neither focally or peripherally active”).

Lambrecht, topic is what the sentence is about. The rest of the clause that is not the topic, is relevant to the topic (1994:119). Topic is a pragmatic relation, standing in a certain relation to a proposition (ibid.:160) as a mental representation. One part of the relationship between entities in the mental representation is topic. The other part is focus. A linguistic constituent is defined as the topic referent when it is identifiable, has been activated, is presupposed, and when it has something that is said about it, something said to “enrich” it. But presupposed information is related, though not identical, to topic (ibid.:122). There is a vast overlap, but it is possible that some presupposed information, like open propositions, is not the topic. For example, in the identificational sentences “Who went to school? The CHILDREN went to school”, the presupposition is: “X went to school.” It is an open proposition and therefore incomplete. As such it cannot be a topic. The “CHILDREN” is not about “went to school.”

Lambrecht makes the useful distinction between *topic referent* and *topic expression*. A topic expression is a linguistic expression designating a topic referent in a sentence. Sometimes it is called the topic phrase or the topic constituent. The topic constituent can be divided between a lexical topical expression (a noun or a noun phrase) versus a pronominal topic expression (a pronoun or a pronominal clitic) (ibid.:128).

While a topic expression always necessarily designates a topic referent, but a referent which is topical in a discourse is not necessarily coded as a topic expression in a given sentence or clause (ibid.:130).

The definitions of topic and topic expression taken as our working definitions are those of Lambrecht:

TOPIC: A referent is interpreted as the topic of a proposition if in a given situation the proposition is construed as being about this referent, i.e. as expressing information which is relevant to and which increases the addressee’s knowledge of this referent.

TOPIC EXPRESSION: A constituent is a topic expression if the proposition expressed by the clause with which it is associated is pragmatically construed as being about the referent of this constituent (ibid.:131).

Topic is most often the subject in the unmarked pragmatic sentence articulation of *topic-comment*. This is a universal feature of language. Lambrecht takes topic as a marked construction when there is a deviation from the canonical constituent order (ibid.:15).

Not all subjects are topics, as in the case of *thetic*, event-reporting or presentational sentences. There are non-topical subjects in sentences that are *thetic*⁵, and Lambrecht distinguishes two types, namely the *event-reporting* sentence in which the newly introduced element is an event, and the *presentational* sentence, in which the newly introduced element is an entity, a discourse referent. These sentences are topicless (ibid.:142-144) in the sense that there is no topic about which the sentence says something.

When non-subject arguments are fronted, the process is called *topicalisation*. *Topicalisation* is a marked word-order. It can happen by means of accentuation in some languages, and in others by means of fronting the non-subject constituent. Important here is Lambrecht's observation that not all cases of fronting are necessarily topicalisation. Sometimes the fronted object, for instance, is focus information, and not topical. But where the object is already presupposed and discourse-active, the fronting can be called topicalisation.

According to Lambrecht, when a non-subject becomes the 'topic', it is not always the case that the subject loses its topic status. Some sentences can have multiple topics, with one the primary topic and the other the secondary topic (1994:147). If there is more than one topic in a sentence, the sentence conveys information about the relation that exists between them as arguments in the proposition (1994:148). It seems that he in this case follows Givón who calls all active participants topics, by active meaning discourse active as agent or beneficiary or in whatever semantic role. He calls the subject topic a primary topic and the non-subject topic⁶ a secondary topic, even when topicalised in the sense of being brought forward, away from its canonical position (ibid.:147, 161). These terms are fundamental to this study and will again be referred to and defined in more detail.

⁵ Thetic sentences are sentences that answer the question "What happened?", in which topics are identified and activated (Lambrecht, 1994:137-8).

⁶ See 2.3.1. in this chapter where the terms GROUND-LINK and GROUND-TAIL are discussed. The distinction between GROUND-LINK and GROUND-TAIL, made by generative linguists like Vallduví & Engdahl (1996), in this respect seem justified.

The following example, quoted by Lambrecht, but originally from Givón (1976), illustrates a presentational topic construction and a topic dislocation construction, where the dislocation re-activates the topic as a topic promotion device:

*Once there was a **wizard**. **He** was very wise, rich, and married.... They had two sons. One was tall and brooding... The second was short and vivacious, a bit crazy but always game. Now **the wizard**, he lived in Africa.*

Once there was a wizard is a presentation topic construction and *now the wizard, he ...* a detached topic construction. Both these configurations are topic promotion devices, meaning that the referent is promoted to a higher scale on the topic accessibility scale (see above). In the example above, the topic *wizard* has been presented in a presentational construction, left accessible but inactive due to a description of his two sons. Then, by means of a dislocated construction, it is made active again. Detachment constructions promote cognitively accessible but non-active topics to active topics (ibid.:177-182). Another way of looking at it is to say that left-detachment is used “to mark a shift of attention from one to another of two or more already active topic referents” (ibid.:183). Lambrecht also calls this type of left-dislocation a *topic-announcing* device (ibid.:188). In regard to topic announcing and left-dislocation, Lambrecht posits the Principle of Separation of Reference and Role (ibid.:184vv). According to this principle, one topic expression cannot simultaneously introduce a referent (REFERING function) and talk about it in the same clause (relational ROLE as topic). For this reason, languages have mechanisms such as presentational sentences (see Chapter 4.2.5 in this study, and Lambrecht, 1994:137vv) and left-dislocation. Not all cases of left-dislocation have a recurring “trace” in the clause proper. Spoken language in particular, has what he calls *unlinked topic constructions*, which occur where there is no recurring pronoun or equivalent expression (ibid.:193).

Lambrecht disagrees with attempts to explain the detached constituent as somehow syntactically part of the main clause, to reinterpret it as a subject NP. The detached NP does have a pragmatic relationship with the clause it is associated with, a pragmatic relation of aboutness and relevance (1994:193). In many languages, by being detached and “autonomous”, the lexical noun phrase has a specific function, namely that of activating a non-active topic.

Related to the issue of left-dislocation or left-detachment, is the question of “fronted” subordinate clauses, such as adverbial and locative adverbial clauses. Lambrecht categorizes these clauses as one of the four information structure sentence types⁷, and calls them the *background-establishing* clauses. Background-establishing clauses are pragmatically presupposed propositions with the function of setting the scene for another proposition. What is interesting is that Lambrecht asserts that this scene-setting clause functions as a topic for the proposition it is associated with, which in turn can be any of the other three information structure sentence types. He does not go into any more detail about this type, but he does express some doubt as to whether it is really a major information structure category (1994:126). Most background-establishing clauses are sentence-initial and therefore in the privileged cognitive position. It may be that he is influenced here by Hallidayan discourse analysts, who categorize the sentence-initial background-establishing clauses as topics or themes. There are two issues here: one is the question of whether background-establishing clauses include only temporal-spacial clauses, or also all logical subordinate⁸ clauses like reason-RESULT, ground-CONCLUSION, concession-COUNTEREXPECTATION, and condition-CONSEQUENCE⁹. This is a weakness in Lambrecht’s theory, in that these logical referential relations between clauses are not further developed and incorporated in his theory on information structure. But it could be argued that it was outside the scope of his study. The second issue is whether these background-establishing clauses are indeed topical. Following Lambrecht, what then is their exact pragmatic relationship to the clause they are associated with? He calls such clauses *scene-setting topics* expressing presupposed information. The example he uses is the following:

(John was very busy that morning.) After the children went to SCHOOL, he had to clean the HOUSE and go shopping for the PARTY.

“After the children went to SCHOOL” he defines as a scene-setting topic, or a topical adverbial clause. The whole clause is presupposed. Such clauses are called topics, because the associated proposition is “about” what happened at this place or at that time, or for this or that

⁷ The four types are topic-comment sentences, identificational sentences, event-reporting sentences (including presentational sentences), and background-establishing clauses (Lambrecht, 1994:126).

⁸ Some of the logical referential relations listed, like reason-RESULT, are not always grammaticalized by subordinate clauses in all languages. In some languages it is possible just to juxtapose the reason clause and the RESULT clause, and the hearer will pragmatically infer the reason-RESULT relationship.

⁹ These logical subordinate clauses are referred to by Callow as referential relations and a complete listing and description is provided in her book “Man and Message” (1998, chapter 16).

reason. By extension then, these scene-setting topics are just extended forms of his left-detached topics¹⁰. In this regard his theory is the same as Dik's notion of "theme" and ECC (extra-clausal constituent) and what has been called "basis"¹¹ or "point of departure." In the chapter on focus, Lambrecht returns to *scene-setting topical clauses*, and argues that they do not contain any focus information. Nothing is asserted. They are non-focal topical adjunct clauses.

One last important insight from Lambrecht's theory is his notion of *antitopic*. Antitopic is an apposition that is right-detached or right-dislocated, which Dik has called "tail" or "afterthought." In the sentence

"He is a nice guy, *your brother*"

the detached constituent "your brother" is what Lambrecht calls the antitopic. The antitopic is not an afterthought, Lambrecht argues, but the repetition of topical information because the speaker knows that the unmarked topic pronoun in the clause proper is insufficient for the hearer. The speaker judges that it is insufficient, but that it would not be appropriate to insert the full NP in that clause. It is therefore added in a detached way at the end, immediately after the proposition with which it is associated. The topic in the clause is a not-yet-active topic (1994:203), made active by the antitopic. Antitopics are always highly accessible, and cannot indicate a new topic or a topic shift (ibid.:204). A contrasting function is also excluded. The concept *antitopic* will be used in this study according to Lambrecht's definition, with only one difference, which I call the pragmatic function *tail topic*¹², and the syntactic configuration a *right dislocation*. The term *antitopic* can be misunderstood as an opposite topic (definitely not what Lambrecht had in mind) or a substitution topic (which is closer to what he intended). Tail topic echo's Dik's term for right-dislocated constituents. The term only indicates its

¹⁰ Lambrecht sees left-detached NPs as topical. The left-detached NP as well as the clause subject (for example) are both topics of that sentence. The relationship between the left-detached topic and the clause topic is vague. It is probably a relationship of inclusion, wider-context setting, or orienter.

¹¹ The term "basis" originates from the Prague School Functional Sentence Perspective linguists (Firbas, 1962).

¹² Lambrecht's term *antitopic* can be misleading. Although the concept *anti-* does indeed mean "instead of, in substitution of" as well, its more common meaning is "against, contra." For this reason I prefer to call an antitopic a tail topic in the FG manner, because in Biblical Hebrew the *antitopic* is either a full noun phrase pointing to a pronominal in the preceding main clause, or it is a longer noun phrase pointing to a noun in the preceding clause, but it is pushed to the end of the clause because of the so-called "heaviness" principle where longer and more complex phrases are pushed more to the end of a clause (cf. Rosenbaum, 1997:138-147). In some cases, some form of *elaboration* therefore does take place. Otherwise, the split construction, an initial pronominal reference is recapped in the right-dislocated tail construction (for more on the split constructions in Biblical Hebrew, see Michel (1997:45-71)).

relative position to the main clause, not something about its meaning or use. Its use can be quite complex as will be seen in examples from Biblical Hebrew.

One would have hoped that Lambrecht's theory would bring out more strongly the link between clause topic and the development of theme in discourse. He touches on it when he discusses the "discourse topic" (ibid.:184) as defined by Ochs Keenan & Schieffelin (1976b:338) in semantic terms as "the proposition (or set of propositions) about which the speaker is providing or requesting information." He states that his functional approach to information structure will focus on the sentence and not on discourse structure (1994:7-10). But in spite of his general focus on the information structure of the clause only, Lambrecht does link his notion of topic to discourse by means of his notions of *activation* of topics. In discourse, topics can be presented in what is called presentational constructions, whose function is to introduce a referent to discourse. In such cases, the presented topic is normally brand-new or activated, but unused. Identifiability and activation are definitely important starting points in analysing discourse theme.

Lambrecht's insights have been applied to Biblical Hebrew by Van der Merwe (1999a and 1999b), Bailey (1998), Heimerdinger (1999), and Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript). Lambrecht's notions of identifiability, activation and pragmatic presupposition are foundational to our model of information structure in Biblical Hebrew and will also be used in this study as the starting point of the proposed model for topic identification and analysis in Biblical Hebrew. His position on topical detached constructions, multiple topics, and antitopics will also be followed, using only slightly different terminology¹³.

2.2.5 Wallace Chafe¹⁴

Wallace Chafe is another cognitive-pragmatic linguist who provides a description of information structure from a cognitive perspective. According to Chafe (1994:82, cf. chapters 5 and 6 especially), ideas of events and states are expressed in clauses. Such clauses may consist of one or more intonation unit. Each intonation unit has some activation cost. The

¹³ As a preview, for syntactic subject and semantic agent topics the term PRIMARY TOPIC will be used. It is similar to Links as a term used in generative descriptions of focus (see Vallduví & Engdahl, 1996). For topical referents within the focus structures, the term SECONDARY TOPIC will be used. For fronted or left-dislocated topical information about a primary or secondary topic, the term TOPIC FRAME will be used, and for Lambrecht's antitopic the term TOPIC TAIL.

¹⁴ Knud Lambrecht was a research assistant of Wallace Chafe at the Institute of Cognitive Studies at Berkeley (cf. Lambrecht, 1994:xv). Lambrecht acknowledges that much of his thinking in the area of mental representations, like identifiability and activation, has been "conceived in relation and reaction to his ideas" (ibid.:xv).

activation cost varies: it either expresses information that is given, accessible, or new. Sometimes part of the clause is given or accessible, and the rest discourse new.

He also holds to contrastiveness not as a property of information structure as such, but rather as a pragmatic operation. “Contrastiveness is independent of activation cost” (ibid.:77), that is, contrast can be applied to given, accessible, or new referents. Both topic and focus can have contrastiveness (cf. Chafe’s discussion on contrastiveness, ibid.:76-78).

In his chapter 7, entitled “Starting Points, Subjects, and the Light Subject Constraint”, Chafe sets out his theory on topic, and especially on syntactical subjects as topics. Syntactical subjects are normally expressions of starting points, the *hitching post* to which a new contribution is attached (ibid.:83). Subjects are typically identifiable and definite. A large proportion of subjects in conversational language, in many cases pronouns, express given information. Chafe then proposes the notion of the *light subject constraint*, saying that subjects not only express given information in pronominal form (that is, given information), but that accessible information can also be a starting point (ibid.:86-87):

Accessibility may be established either through prior activation in the discourse or through direct association with something activated in the discourse or with something present in the environment (ibid.:92).

Chafe then suggests the interesting concept that some new information can qualify as a *light subject*. Even in cases of topicalisation (that is, a non-subject fronted before the verb), the subject of the verb is still the hitching post, like the first person singular in the following example:

Bágels I like.

Light subjects can even be discourse new information, but it must be of trivial importance (ibid.:90-91). Such new information can express sources of information, as in the following example:

But Dòctor Gílberty told me,
That everybody gets backaches.
Bill Jóhnsón said nó,
just check your injéctor

Other cases of light subjects expressing new information are cases of parallel contrast, as in the following example:

Well, she wènt yesterday,
And the doctor wasn't there,
But the physicians' assísant...lòoked at her.

A third case of light subjects expressing new information is where the referent expresses surprise. This concept is in line with Lambrecht's sentence focus structures, where "out of the blue" event-reporting sentences contain a subject that is not given or accessible.

Chafe's approach to information structure has the following insights that need to be applied in Biblical Hebrew:

1. His concept of the light subject constraint sheds light on certain subjects that are not syntactically prominent. Chafe defined the presence of a light subject as a primary topic when there is also a fronted (or topicalised) constituent. The pronominal anaphoric chain of subjects falls in this category.
2. Some light subjects can actually be new information, but are trivial to the discourse. This insight will help to explain "odd" subjects that seem discourse new but behave as topics.
3. His concept of referential importance (of referents being of primary, secondary and trivial importance in discourse) confirms the need to differentiate between topics. Not all topics are equally important. In the account of topic in Biblical Hebrew, this differentiation will be maintained.
4. Chafe's grouping of all forms of givenness (like retrievable, familiar, etc, in either given/active or accessible/semi-active information) simplifies the cognitive categories.
5. Chafe's view of contrastiveness that is pragmatically separate from topic and focus as such, confirms the view of Lambrecht (1994) and Valldúvi & Vilkuna (1998), and will be maintained in this study.

All these insights from Chafe will be incorporated in an information structure account of Biblical Hebrew.

2.3 AN OVERVIEW OF CHOMSKYAN/GENERATIVE APPROACHES TO TOPIC

Generative linguists also study information structure with topic and focus as complementary notions. Since the approach of this study is mainly a functional one, a detailed description of the generative approach to information structure is outside the scope of what is necessary to develop a model for information structure in Biblical Hebrew. Generative linguists limit the study of information structure to the clause-level. For them the focus is not on functional issues, but mainly on explaining syntactic movement at the clause or sentence level. A notion like ‘topicalisation’, therefore, as the movement of a nominal from its default or expected position to the front, is one of their main tools. In this brief description of generative approaches to information structure and topic, the works of Vallduvi & Engdahl (1996), and Robert Holmstedt¹⁵ (undated) are looked at.

2.3.1 Vallduvi & Engdahl

Generative linguists differentiated between Ground-Focus and Topic-Comment (Vallduvi & Engdahl, 1996:468). Topic-Comment corresponds with Halliday’s Theme-Rheme distinction, where Ground-Focus corresponds with Halliday’s Given-New distinction and Lambrecht’s presupposed-asserted information distinction. For example, sentence a. has a topic-comment structure, and b. a ground-focus structure:

a. What about Jim?

[_{Topic} Jim] [_{Comment} drinks COFFEE]

b. What does he drink?

[_{Ground} Jim drinks] [_{Focus} COFFEE]

The same syntactical and accentual surface structure expresses two different pragmatic realities. Example a. corresponds with Lambrecht’s predicate focus construction, while example b. with Lambrecht’s argument focus, where COFFEE alone is in focus. It is true that often these two distinctions conflate in one surface structure, but not always. One important insight arises from this analysis, which is that Lambrecht’s presupposed information is more

¹⁵ Holmstedt applied a generative approach of information structure to Biblical Hebrew, and while his Hebrew application is looked at in more detail under 2.5.4. notions from his introduction to generative information structure are discussed here in this chapter.

than only the subject topic. The topic could be just a part of the given or presupposed information.

A second valuable distinction that Vallduví & Engdahl make is to distinguish between ground-link and ground-tail. In the above example, both ‘Jim’ the link and the tail ‘his coffee’, is part of GROUND, while only ‘Jim’ is the LINK to which the rest of the clause is slotted in. This is how they define link and tail:

Link and tail each contribute in their own way to the ushering role of the ground. Links indicate WHERE the focus should go in the input information state: they establish a particular focus of update in the input information state. A tail indicates HOW the focus fits there: the presence of the tail indicates that the non-default mode of update is (in the speaker’s eyes) required at that point of discourse (1996:469).

But Vallduví & Engdahl go further and instead of maintaining the two pragmatic interpretations of the information structure, propose that there is only one, namely GROUND-FOCUS, but that GROUND is divided into LINK and TAIL. Link is defined as the ground, familiar information into which the new information of the sentence is slotted. A LINK-ground is called theme by Prague linguists. Actually, the term LINK is borrowed from the Prague School (from Trávníček, cited in Firbas, 1964a:269). Other linguists would refer to link-ground as topic (for example, Reinhart, 1982:24). TAIL-ground is defined as “ground material that does not display link-like behaviour”, that is, it does not link the clause to the referent whose file is to be updated by the sentence. It only “specifies how the update must be effected” (Vallduví & Engdahl, 1996:470). In the example below, “his coffee” is GROUND-TAIL, while “Jim” is GROUND-LINK

[GROUND-LINK Jim] [FOCUS DRINKS] [GROUND-TAIL his coffee]

This last example Vallduví & Engdahl calls a link-focus-tail construction. The ground-LINK “Jim” is the subject that is the topical entity that is first enriched with new information. Lambrecht would call it a *primary topic*. I cannot say that Vallduví & Engdahl would always call the subject the ground-LINK (and surely languages differ in what subjects do in relation to information structure). But it is clear that given the syntactic prominence of subjects, its discourse continuity, its “tendency” to be identified with the primary topic, and the fact that in most sentences a subject is obligatory, the subject constituent in most cases can be identified

with the ground-LINK. In this study ground-LINK constituents will be called *primary topics*, following Lambrecht, providing the topic continuity in discourse where there is such continuity. Vallduví & Engdahl (1996:470) distinguish four information structure combinations:

- 1) link-focus constructions
- 2) link-focus-tail constructions
- 3) all-focus constructions
- 4) focus-tail constructions

What is very interesting is that generative linguists working on information structure have come to many of the same results independently from functionalists. For example, what the generative linguists call a topicless, all-focus construction is the same as that which Lambrecht calls sentence focus. The link-focus construction he calls a topic-comment, predicate focus construction, and a focus-tail construction is what he would call an argument focus construction. The only type of construction that Lambrecht does not distinguish as separate, is the link-focus-tail construction. He takes such constructions as topic-comment, predicate focus constructions. But it is not to say that he doesn't deal with the issue. Lambrecht calls the tail topic a secondary topic (1994:147-148). This distinction between the generative link and tail, or between Lambrecht's primary topic and secondary topic, will be incorporated and further developed in the topic model proposed for Biblical Hebrew, in chapter 3. The link-focus-tail construction type of Vallduví & Engdahl will also be incorporated and further developed in the discussion on the model for predicate focus in chapter 5.

2.3.2 Vallduví & Vilkkuna

Vallduví & Vilkkuna make a contribution to our understanding of contrastiveness. They, in their own words, 'tease apart' from rhematicity proper what they call *kontrast*¹⁶. Rhematicity is what can also be called focus or focality (to be further defined in chapter 4). *Kontrast* is often also called *focus* in the literature. *Kontrast* is associated with "narrow focus", and is "an operator-like element, whose exact semantic import varies from author to author" (ibid.: 81),

¹⁶ The k- for *kontrast* is purposeful; to make a distinction between the concept of contrastiveness and the term they want to employ to cover the pragmatic operation of contrastiveness.

for example an exhaustiveness¹⁷ operator, a contrastiveness operator, or an identificational operator. The idea of *kontrast* is that a certain element associated with a constituent activates a certain membership set {membership set M = ..., a, b, ...}. The members of M have to be comparable and their membership is determined both ontologically and contextually (ibid.: 84). The semantic import of *kontrast* is according to Vallduví & Vilkuna either *identificational kontrast* (“He gave the book to Mary (not to Ann)”), or *exhaustiveness kontrast* (“only Mary came yesterday”) (ibid.: 84, examples SJF). “Kontrastiveness as defined here is orthogonal¹⁸ to informational rhematicity and thematicity (topicality - SJF). A *kontrast* may indeed be coextensive with a (complete, SJF) semantic rheme, in which case, of course, a given expression is doubly “focal” in the sense of being rhematic and *kontrastive*. Alternatively, a *kontrast* may be coextensive with a substring of a rheme. ... Unless a distinction between *kontrast* and rheme is made, examples like (...) can be accounted for only if one allows for the possibility of having foci-within-foci” (ibid.: 85). Vallduví & Vilkuna wants to separate the pragmatic notion of *kontrast* altogether from information packaging, since *kontrast* can be an overlay for both focus structures and topics. They prefer not to talk of focus-within-focus, but their *kontrast* is an additional overlay.

I wish to add a third *kontrast* import, namely *confirmative kontrast*. In confirmative *kontrast* the *identity of a is confirmed to be a*. In English, the morpheme *-self* often indicates confirmative contrast: “You *yourselves* knew that he would come.” The boundaries between these different semantic imports of *kontrast* are often blurred, but nevertheless useful. In addition, the relation between comparing and contrasting is not always clear. For clarity, comparing in this study will be taken as a separate *kontrast* operation. Thus four pragmatic operations marking *kontrast* can be identified: identificational contrast, exhaustive identification contrast, confirming contrast, and comparing contrast. *Contrastiveness*¹⁹ (the *kontrast* of Vallduví & Vilkuna) as a separate pragmatic overlay over both topical and focal expressions, is a useful concept. These four types of contrast will be used for both topic and focus expressions in Biblical Hebrew.

¹⁷ Exhaustiveness operator means an element that indicates exhaustive listing; one and only one is what is indicated.

¹⁸ “Orthogonal” is used by Vallduví & Vilkuna to mean “not exclusive” (ibid.:88)

¹⁹ Contrastiveness, contrastive topic and contrastive focus are frequent terms in the literature on information structure, both functionalist and generative. For convenience, the terms *kontrast* and *kontrastiveness* will be used in this study, but in the sense of Vallduví & Vilkuna’s *kontrast* and *kontrastiveness*, not in the sense of Givón and Dik.

Before the overview of applications of information structure and topic on Biblical Hebrew, it is necessary to make a few observations about the weaknesses of the functional and generative approaches to topic.

2.3.3 APPRAISAL OF THE FUNCTIONAL AND CHOMSKYAN APPROACHES TO TOPIC

Neither of these approaches proposes a satisfying model in which sentence topic is linked to discourse topic. Discourse topic remains enigmatic. While proponents of the functional approach still make an attempt at the problem, the Chomskyan approach is basically limited to describing information structure at sentence level only. Discourse integration or theme integration is not a goal.

While Lambrecht's approach is a sophisticated one with regard to cognitive-pragmatic notions of discourse and communication, and his activation theory does indeed have a discourse application, his approach also lacks a more seamless integration with discourse and discourse functions. He calls his approach a functional, discourse-pragmatic approach (1994:2,4-5), but limits his analysis and model to sentence topic only. His notions of topic identifiability and topic activation are critical notions in the analysis of discourse theme, as will be seen in chapters 6 and 7, but his theory lacks a fully-developed 'discourse topic' perspective and how to move from sentence topic to discourse topic to theme. He also fails to describe a wide range of possible marked and unmarked topic surface-level expressions. Here Givón made an important contribution.

In summary then, we have looked at the functional approach of Dik, with his notions of Discourse-Topic, New-Topic, Resumed-Topic, Sub-Topic, and Theme, and noticed that although his model is clear and he indeed did make an attempt to account for discourse notions, his approach lacks the finer cognitive-pragmatic distinctions made by Lambrecht and some Chomskyan linguists. We have also looked at Givón with his exhaustive discussion of typical surface level marked topic constructions. Lambrecht presents us with a very sophisticated theory of information structure, with his refined definitions of cognitive pragmatic concepts like identifiability and activation, and presupposition and assertion. However, his approach is found to be lacking in the explaining of presupposed 'topics' in the focus part of a sentence. We have also found a few interesting notions and terms from Chomskyan linguists like Vallduví & Engdahl (ground-link and ground-tail as two different notions of topic). The generative approaches lack a wider discourse application, and do not

have the more complete cognitive-pragmatic theory of information structure proposed by Lambrecht.

2.3.4 CONCLUSIONS AND JACOBS' RECENT PERSPECTIVE ON TOPIC-COMMENT

Recently, Jacobs (2001:641-681) has also written on some of the problems inherent to topic-comment constructions and his notions are particularly important in understanding “aboutness.” He argues that the comment in the topic-comment dichotomy has more than just a single, functional, informational “aboutness” relation to the topic, but rather that “they share some salient semantic attributes with prototypical examples of TC (Topic-comment)” (ibid.: 641). He argues that there is no proper or rigorous definition of “topic”. The “aboutness” – definition is not sufficient. Instead, he proposes four salient semantic attributes of topic-comment:

- 1) informational separation (where there is a clear separation in the information structure role of constituents X and Y. X is topical and Y is focal),
- 2) Predication (where X is the semantic subject and Y the semantic predicate),
- 3) Addressation (where there the comment Y is “about” topic X. Y is relevant to X, regardless of grammatical or semantic relation),
- 4) And frame-setting (where the X sets the frame for the interpretation of Y). (For an in-depth discussion of these categories, see Jacobs, 2001: 645-655.)

This new categorisation of topic is useful to our study, and will form the basis of a new categorisation of topics for Biblical Hebrew. Several of Jacob’s four categories can be combined in different configurations. For example, a left-dislocated, extra-clausal topical expression can be marked for informational separation, and frame-setting, but not for predication and addressation. Lambrecht’s secondary topic can be marked for addressation, but not informational separateness, because secondary topics are often part of a focus structure or comment. Chafe defines the frame-setting concept in this way: “In brief, ‘real’ topics (in topic prominent languages) are not so much ‘what the sentence is about’ as ‘the frame within which the sentence holds’” (as quoted by Jacobs, 2001:656). Some frames can be subjects and can perhaps be marked as a form of predication, “[b]ut... not all semantic subjects are frames” (ibid.: 658). Goutsos (1997:52) also confirms that sentence-initial adjuncts like adverbial phrases or clauses frame the subsequent clause:

The use of sentence-initial adverbial clauses has long been related to the creation of a local context for the text that follows (cf. Chafe, 1984; Thompson & Longacre, 1985).

On the basis of Jacob's distinctions, two previously-mentioned categories will be redefined, and one new topic category proposed. One of Lambrecht's categories, *secondary topics* (which have a component of addressation, but not one of predication and informational separation) will be redefined as a separate topic category. By having this category, Vallduví & Engdahl's ground-tail category will be sufficiently accounted for. Subject topics will be redefined as topics (that have informational separation, predication as subjects, and addressation status, but NOT frame-setting), and will be called *primary topics*. Fronted or left-dislocated elements (which have the component of frame-setting) will be defined as a separate topic category called *topic frame*. Frame-setting topics "seems to restrict the application of the proposition by the rest of the sentence to a certain domain" (ibid.: 656). *Frames* as defined by Jacobs are similar to what Prague linguists have called *basis* (Benes, 1962) and *point of departure* (Levinsohn, 2000:8; Dooley & Levinsohn, 2001:68-69). Lambrecht's antitopic will be maintained under the term *tail topic*. So in summary, four topic categories can be distinguished, all to be further defined and developed in chapter 3:

1. Primary topic
2. Secondary topic
3. Topic frame
4. Tail topic

In the next section the application of some of the above functional and generative approaches and theories to topic in Biblical Hebrew is developed.

2.4 An overview of studies on topic in Biblical Hebrew

Insights from information structure theory have only been applied on Biblical Hebrew texts since 1990. The reason for this late study is due to the fact that applications of modern linguistics on Biblical Hebrew language studies normally follow quite some time after the initial development of such theories, mainly because the theory of information structure has only ripened in the late eighties and early nineties with the works of Lambrecht, Vallduví, Gómez-González, etc.

2.4.1 Givón

Givón was one of the first to work on topic continuity and information structure issues in Hebrew. He describes Biblical Hebrew word-order from a typological word-order approach (Givón, 1977; 1984:208-210), focusing in his earlier work in the VS versus SV order. According to his study, when a referent is definite and mentioned in the previous discourse, the VS order is used. Thematic continuity has been maintained. But in his example from Genesis 19.1, when the referent Lot is introduced for the first time the SV word-order is used (1984:208). SV is according to him the “more discontinuous/disruptive word order, ... used to code either *topic* discontinuity or *action/theme* discontinuity – or, since they most commonly coincide, both” (1984: 208, footnote 34; 216). Furthermore, “in Biblical Hebrew the few indefinite subjects introduced to the text are introduced via the discontinuous SV word-order” which he then illustrates by means of 1 Samuel 25.1-2 (1984:209). In addition he argues that definite objects are re-introduced pre-verbally while indefinite objects post-verbally. His example for the pre-verbal objects (Genesis 2.15-17) is a case of a fronted definite object that is contrasted by a fronted definite object in the subsequent clause (1984:209-210). These fronted objects could better be interpreted as fronted topics. He also discusses Y-movement²⁰ in Biblical Hebrew (1990, Syntax Vol. II, pp755-756).

Givón (1977:181-254) takes the view that Old Hebrew is ‘a rigid VO language with flexible subject position’ (cf. Givón, 1989:230). In the light of the fact that the theory of a basic VSO word-order is widely accepted among Hebrew scholars (Van der Merwe, 1999, but not Holmstedt), to argue that Biblical Hebrew is a rigid VO language is debatable. There are many cases where objects are fronted for argument focus, or for some other expression of contrastiveness (see for example Isaiah 50.5-6 and 2 Kings 1.4).

Quoting Givón (1977:189), Heimerdinger states Givón’s argument that “in Genesis there is a dominant V-S order in the realis clauses. This order is explained pragmatically: V comes first because it is new information and there is a general tendency in VO languages to put new information in the initial position” (1999:26). It is interesting to note that for Givón, new information can be explained as predicate focus. The other focus distinctions that were later made by Lambrecht, are not covered by Givón’s approach.

²⁰ Y-movement is when a constituent other than subject is moved to the beginning of the clause, normally before the verb.

2.4.2 Rosenbaum

Buth (1999) and Rosenbaum (1997) have applied Simon Dik's Functional Grammar to Biblical Hebrew in an attempt to describe Hebrew word-order issues in poetry.

Rosenbaum follows Dik's definition of topic, namely that the topic is the entity 'about' which the utterance predicates something in the discourse setting (1997:26). Rosenbaum also adopts Dik's topic categories of New Topic, Given Topic, Resumed Topic and Sub-topics (also called Inferrables) (ibid.:28-29).

Following Functional Grammar, the word-order positions in the Hebrew clause are basically the following:

P₂ P_{dp} P₁ V S O

VSO is the basic functional pattern, P₁ the initial special (preverbal) position that is still morphosyntactically fully integrated with the clause; P_{dp} a discourse particle; and P₂ is the theme, which is dislocated and external to the clause, also called the External Clause Constituent (ECC).

About the special P₁ position, he has the following to say:

If there is no danger of confusing the Topic or losing Topic continuity, then the basic functional pattern (VSO) can safely be adopted. Otherwise, the Speaker will adopt the strategy of placing the Topic in a special position (P₁ VSO) to facilitate the Addressee's ability to identify the topic. Thus, the initial P₁ position is universally recognized as a Topic marking position in natural languages (ibid.:31).

The appearance of a subject in the initial P₁ position rather than the Subject slot of the basic functional pattern (VSO) is clearly a marked construction and very useful to the Speaker when the identification of the Topic requires special consideration (ibid.:35).

In his chapter on topic, Rosenbaum deals mainly with marked topic in the P₁ position. An interesting observation made by Rosenbaum is that although the basic word-order frequency in Isaiah 40-55 is Verb-Subject, when there is an explicit subject pronoun, that subject pronoun is in almost 100% of the cases pre-verbal, in the special P₁ position (1997:31-32).

One use of the fronted pronoun is the resuming of a topic, as illustrated by the “you” in Isaiah. 41.15b-16.

On the issue of subject and topic and the initial P₁ position, Rosenbaum maintains the Functional Grammar position that subject and topic are not identical. The confusion of the two he ascribes to the conflation of the syntactic and pragmatic levels. Subject is the primary orientation of the action or state denoted by the verb, according to Li & Thompson (1976:464), quoted by Rosenbaum, while topic is the constituent the rest of the predicate comments on.

It is true that in most cases subjects also indicate topics, but not always. Direct objects can also be topics, appearing in the fronted P₁ position. An example is Isaiah 50.5-6 where the sub-topics “my back”, “my cheeks” and “my face”, inferable from the “I (the Chosen Servant)” Topic, are all direct objects and fronted before the verb in the P₁ position. An example of where another clause-initial topic “I” in a verbless clause is followed by Sub-topics in fronted P₁ positions as the topics of those clauses is Isaiah. 48.12-13a.

Participles beg the question of whether they as a whole are topics, or whether only the agent of the process is the topic. One cannot impose the linguistic categories of European languages on Hebrew. Trying to distinguish in a participle both a topic and comment (predicate), is imposing incompatible categories on Hebrew. The participle is a constituent in itself, and I therefore agree with Rosenbaum that the participle in Isaiah 44.9, extra-posed from the main clause, introduces a topic. This topic “maker-of-idols” is then further described by a verbless clause and further maintained by Sub-Topics. Another example illustrated by Rosenbaum, of where the topic is stated in an extra-clausal position (P₂) followed by a verbless clause, is Isaiah 44.11.

Adverbial phrases, be they spatial or temporal, also appear in the special P₁ position. Rosenbaum calls such constituents “setting”, following Buth (1987). “Setting” is not an original Functional Grammar category. Buth defines setting in the following way:

Setting is not the entity talked about [i.e., Topic], nor is it the salient information [i.e., Focus]... Setting presents the framework within which the Topic is stated and commented upon. (Buth, 1987:50-51, as quoted in Rosenbaum.)

For the constituents in the extra-clausal P2 position, he follows Dik's "Theme" categorization. There is not always certainty when a constituent is extra-clausal and therefore a theme. Rosenbaum and Buth state that Dik struggles to distinguish Topic from Theme because he doesn't want a clause to have two Topics. Dik then distinguishes Topic from Theme not at a pragmatic level, but only at the syntactic: theme is extra-clausal and Topic is intra-clausal. Thus Rosenbaum maintains the functional category Theme, but as a marked Topic, standing only outside the clause syntactically. He also fails to find an example in Isaiah 40-55 that does not have syntactical resumption of the extra-clausal constituent in the main clause in some way or another (1997:46-47).

Although Buth's and Rosenbaum's applications of Functional Grammar on Biblical Hebrew word-order issues raise valuable insights, the FG theory lacks the means to explain more complex topic issues like post-positioning of non-subject topics (that is, presupposed referents that follow the verb, which are not syntactic subjects), and how to handle the occurrence of subjects that are not topics. Is there a way to know what is the topic in such clauses? Is it more fronted? A deeper problem with the Functional Grammar approach to information structure *à la* Dik is that the theory lacks a cognitive base. Surface structures and functions are described and categorized, but there is no account of wider discourse pragmatic realities such as presupposed versus asserted information, and identification and activation. The theory of Lambrecht with its account of presupposition and assertion is therefore in a better position to account for some of the problems just mentioned. For example, Rosenbaum's Sub-Topic "my right hand" in Isaiah 48.12-13a can also be interpreted as focus subject argument focus to be specific, if one assumes that the predicate "spread out the heavens" is already presupposed.

Functional Grammar and Rosenbaum's significant contribution to understanding Biblical Hebrew information structure may be described as follows:

- Making the contrast between unmarked topic versus marked topic, with the marked topic in the P₁ position.
- Observing the fact that almost 100% of subject pronouns are in the special P₁ position.
- Proposing that the introduction of new topics in some cases happens by means of a dislocated noun or pronoun, followed by a verbless clause.

- The concept of LIPOC, the heaviness principle, of languages preferring heavier, more complex constituents to be later in the sentence, is helpful in that it explains the occurrence of lists or other complex phrases at the end of clauses. But it is not clear whether LIPOC constructions mark topic in one way or another.
- The FG concept of Sub-topic as an inferable of a Topic is useful in the sense that Topic continuity can be better traced. Not every deviation from a stated Topic is a new Topic. It can be a Sub-Topic. By having it fronted in the P₁ position, the addressee will recognize it as a Sub-Topic (1997:35).

2.4.3 Buth and the word-order in the verbless clause

Randal Buth (1999)²¹ claims that his approach to word-order is not only functional, but also generative. His description seems to be generally functional, but it looks as if he uses the term “generative”, not according to general Chomskyan theory, but rather as a claim to indicate that he wants to theoretically account for syntactic movement (like fronting). Without going into details, two aspects of Buth’s study on topic are significant for our study. One is his definition of topic as a Contextualising Constituent, and another is his conclusion about the typical word-order of verbless and participial clauses in Biblical Hebrew.

His definition of topic is the following:

Pragmatically, a Topic is a specially signaled constituent for the purposes of relating the clause to the larger context. Because a pragmatic Topic is not limited to the Subject of a clause, yet the name Subject and Topic are synonymous in informal English as well as in many other languages, I prefer to use the less-salient pragmatically marked constituent a Contextualizing Constituent (CC), that is, a constituent that orients the clause to the larger context (1999:81).

It is important to note that Buth excludes an unmarked, basic subject from being a Contextualizing Constituent. A CC he also calls a theme (ibid.:82). The term “contextualizing constituent” redefines the rather vague notion of “marked topic”. In one cover-term it conveniently covers topical constituents that are marked subjects as well as other fronted and

²¹ Buth’s 1999 article gives a more sophisticated account of topic than the one found in his 1992 article on Topic and Focus in Psalm 51.

left-dislocated topical elements. Buth’s CC does not cover post-positioned “tail” topics what Lambrecht calls “antitopics”, nor does it cover “secondary topics” which are topical elements within the predicate.

In his article, Buth then proceeds to propose a basic word-order for verbless, nominal clauses and participle clauses. The basic order for a participle clause is *pragmatic (Focus or Contextualizing) Constituent – subject – participle – x* (ibid.:88)²². In participle clauses, the subject, when mentioned, is before the verb. When the object is fronted, it appears before the subject, and not between the subject and the participle (ibid.: 83). The clause then has a *marked* word-order, and the fronted object is either a CC or has Focus²³. The subject, when lexicalised, is not pragmatically marked. This according to Buth is the most common word-order when there is fronting.

For a verbless clause the basic or neutral word-order is *subject – predicate* as the unmarked order. The marked order is *predicate – subject*. An example is Genesis 34.21 (ibid.:97), an example of a split predicate where a part of the predicate, *friendly*, is fronted for focus. (In the example, both the CC and the fronted element are boxed.)²⁴

<p> $\text{Jv} \square \text{A} \Gamma \tau \iota \varepsilon \leq \square \square \square \text{E} \eta$ $\leq \psi \square \iota \mu \text{E} \lambda \square \text{H}$ $\eta \varepsilon \Gamma \lambda \square \text{E} \varepsilon \text{A} \eta \leq \psi$ </p>	<p> These men, friendly they (are) with us CC, fronted focus PRO rest of predicate </p>
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On left-dislocated topical constituents, Buth has this to say:

²² Examples he quoted are Deuteronomy 9.4; Genesis 37.15-16; Jeremiah 1.11, 13, and more.

²³ Sometimes, according to Buth and illustrated by Numbers 16.3, such marked structures can still be ambiguous, “where the theory helps us to understand the possibilities but does not resolve the problem” (1999:98).

²⁴ The Hebrew text used throughout this study is that of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.

These Contextualizing Constituents can also be treated as casus pendens and technically outside the grammar of the clause. Within Functional Grammar, such pragmatic functions are called Theme, to distinguish them from Topic (= my CC). Pragmatically, there is no difference in these contexts, because both Theme and Topic are marking a constituent as a point of reference to the larger context. The question is whether or not the constituent is part of the clause proper or “sitting outside.” With verbal clauses one can use resumptive pronouns as a means for defining when one or the other (Theme or Topic) is being employed as the clause is generated. With verbless/nominal clauses this distinction seems an unnecessary complication, because a pronoun is usually necessary to mark the predication core and to show that fronting of a constituent has occurred (ibid.:97).

From Buth’s discussion one point needs attention for the purposes of an account of topic for Biblical Hebrew, and that is terminology. His term Contextualizing Constituent as well as applying the FG theme-topic distinction to Biblical Hebrew, is helpful, because by this he isolates the fronted topic from the left-dislocated “theme” and the unmarked topic post-verbally. There is a syntactical distinction between the fronted and the left-dislocated topic, but the pragmatic distinction is not always clear and I do not think it necessary to distinguish these two pragmatically. There is some overlap in pragmatic function. This problem will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3. For now, for the frame-setting (Jacobs) or CC (Buth) fronted topics, I propose the term *deictic orientation* for temporal-spatial CCs as a concept that is not topical (it has no aboutness relation), but is associated with what is topical, and *topic frame* for a referent that sets the frame for another topical referent (cf. Jacobs’ frame-setting category, 2001). For the subject topics, both marked and unmarked word-order, I propose *primary topic*²⁵.

2.4.4 Holmstedt

Robert Holmstedt applied a generative approach to information structure to Biblical Hebrew texts in an unpublished article called “The Syntax and Pragmatics of ‘Fronting’ in Biblical

²⁵ It is possible, as with marked verbless clauses with left-dislocations and resumptive pronouns – as illustrated by Buth – that both the CC and the obligatory resumptive pronoun have the same referent. But the left-dislocated constituent is still a topic basis and the resumptive pronoun the primary topic (using Lambrecht’s distinctions). This is of theoretical significance, because such marked clauses have thematic significance for cognitive higher-level theme identification procedures (cf. chapter 6 and 7 on thematics and Biblical Hebrew).

Hebrew.” His goal was to describe “fronting” in Biblical Hebrew²⁶, and for that purpose he applies the generative notions of “dislocation” and “topicalization.” He describes the generative notions of “dislocation” and “topicalization”, both relevant to the study of topic in Biblical Hebrew. A *dislocated* constituent is when a constituent like a Noun Phrase “stands outside and to the left²⁷ of the following related clause” (ibid.: 3). For example,

Rachel _i, she _i loves ice cream

The subscript _i indicates the dislocated element and the resumptive element in the clause proper²⁸. The dislocated NP does have a resumptive element in the main clause.

Different to *dislocation*, *topicalisation* “is the result of constituent movement” (ibid.:4). He defines topicalisation as when a phrase is moved to the front of the clause, in front of the verb, of the clause to which it belongs, but placed inside the borders of the clause proper, not outside²⁹. He prefers, like Van der Merwe (1999a), to use the term “fronting” instead of topicalisation, since ‘topicalisation’ can bring with it the misunderstanding that the fronted item is now topical (which it is not the fact in many cases). Dislocation in Biblical Hebrew can have “three basic arrangements depending on the type of resumptive NP (trace, SJF) within the clause” (ibid.: 5). These three types of resumptive NPs can be an independent pronoun (as in Genesis 34.23), a clitic (suffixed) pronoun (as in Psalms 18.31a), and a full NP (as in Exodus 12.15). He then continues this discussion in stating that dislocations are marked by certain elements at their boundaries, these elements being the interrogative particle (as in Genesis 34.23), WH-interrogatives (as in Numbers 16.11), the adverbial *lipnim* (as in Joshua

²⁶ Holmstedt argues for a basic SVO word-order for Biblical Hebrew, against Van der Merwe’s Hebrew as a VS language (1999:3), but in his paper he does not justify his position nor does it become clear why he needs a SVO order for his description of Biblical Hebrew information structure. In the example from 1 Kings 20.17 with the pre-posed subject “*Men* have come out of Samaria”, the subject is pre-posed to mark the focus structure as sentence focus for the purpose of identifying and activating new participants to the discourse. Lambrecht’s and Van der Merwe’s approach to such cases of fronting is therefore more convincing.

²⁷ ‘Left’ is left, sentence initially, from the perspective of European languages. He rejects the term ‘left-location’, which is confusing when applied to languages written from right-to-left, like Hebrew and Arabic.

²⁸ Holmstedt also echoes the consensus of generative linguists that dislocation, contrary to the implication of its name, is a *base-generated* construction and therefore not the product of movement (ibid.:4).

²⁹ In generative language, the topicalized NP creates a gap (the place it has moved from), while dislocation does not leave a gap because of movement. While this is not critical or relevant to our analysis of Hebrew topic, it is necessary to state that dislocated NPs may not leave a gap where it came from; they do have a cataphoric quality, using the notion of Givón (1990:748-751). First, the syntactic resumptive element appears in the clause proper, and secondly, dislocated NPs in Biblical Hebrew indicate thematic topics, topics with continuity and range, and therefore important. The fact that a topicalized NP leaves a gap is not relevant to our purposes. What is important is that we understand what syntactic case role it fulfills, namely, is it a direct object, and indirect object, or a temporal or locative noun or noun phrase.

11.10), and the conjunction *waw* (as in Leviticus. 7.20) (ibid.: 6). He then takes on some very difficult poetic verses to illustrate the problem of the third person pronoun as found in 2 Chronicles 20.6 [Are you not he,], [God in the heavens?] and argue that “*you* and *he* constitute the subject and predicate of the verbless clause....the remaining NP *God*, is right-dislocated and co-referential with *he* in the preceding clause” (ibid.: 7).

Following McNally (1998), he proposes several categories for ‘topic’, namely Theme, Link and Tail. Theme is “that piece of information which anchors the added information to the existing information state” (ibid.: 10). Link is the information instruction to “tell the addressee where to insert the ‘added information’ of the rheme” (ibid.: 12). It is not clear to me how to distinguish between McNally’s *Theme* and *Link*. Why can a Link not be a Theme as well, since both seem to ‘anchor’? There is also uncertainty as to what exactly he (and McNally) mean by distinguishing *theme* (anchoring information) from *link*. The ‘aboutness’ definition of topic/theme of functional linguists seems better to describe the information structure (compare the views of Jacobs, 2.4 above). As the third category for topic, Tail instructs the hearer “to go to entry X under some given address.” In the example Holmstedt uses to explain Tail, he makes Tail the right-dislocated afterthought similar to Dik’s definition of Tail (ibid.: 12). Tail, however, according to McNally (1998) as well as Vallduví & Engdahl (1996), is rather more like Lambrecht’s *secondary topic*.

Where he is correct, following McNally and Vallduví & Vilkuna, is that contrast is a different pragmatic category that can be an overlay over other topic and focus categories, for example, he talks about *contrastive links* and *contrastive tails* (ibid.: 13,14). This distinction from McNally and Vallduví & Vilkuna of contrastiveness as a separate pragmatic operation, and not to be integrated in its totality with focus is very valuable and will be discussed in more detail later.

A further distinction that he makes is that fronted *links* are either Discourse-New Links or Contrastive Links. In the examples provided below, both have left dislocated or pendens constructions. An example of a Discourse-New Link is *their cattle*...in Genesis 34.23: “*Their cattle and their property and all their beasts*, shall they not be ours?” (ibid.:13). Not operating

with the terms topic and focus, one is left unsure as to whether a discourse-New Link is topical or focal³⁰.

An example of a Contrastive Link is *Aaron* in Numbers 16.11: “Therefore, you and all your community have banded together against Yahweh! *But Aaron*, what is he that you should murmur against him?” (ibid.:14). That it is contrastive is without doubt.

But there are also other fronted topical constituents that can be contrastive. Contrastive topic frames as well as contrasted secondary topics can also appear in the pre-verbal position in Biblical Hebrew. His definition of “contrastiveness” is not adequate. Comparison, exhaustive identification (“he *and only* he”), and confirmation of identity are other such pragmatic functions of contrastiveness that need to be accounted for in a theory of topic in Biblical Hebrew (cf. chapter 3 (3.3.2))

His notion of the fronted or what he calls the ‘topicalized’ *non-rhematic contrastive link* merits a comment as well. He argues, against Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze (1999:346-347) that there are not two information structure choices available (namely topic or focus), but that ‘topicalisation’ has two information instructions collapsed into one. It is a Link as well as a member of a set, i.e. contrastive. While this is true when the fronted element is discourse-active or at least cognitively recoverable, what about such ‘topicalised’ constituents that are totally new information, and at the same time contrastive? It is possible that he misunderstood Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze’s use of the term ‘focus’.

2.4.5 Application of Lambrecht’s insights on Biblical Hebrew

2.4.5.1. Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze

Christo van der Merwe, Jackie Naudé, and Jan Kroeze, in ‘A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar’, came with a well-developed model for Biblical Hebrew word-order (1999:336-350), following some of the views of Walter Gross (1996). Lambrecht’s notions of the identifiability and activation of topics are included in the model. The model will be briefly summarized below.

³⁰ The question here is whether *their cattle...* is presupposed or not. According to the theories of Lambrecht, Chafe, and Gómez-González, cognitively the *cattle* have been semi-active as inferable and retrievable from the immediately preceding discourse. According to Levinsohn (2002:135), such activations are not really new information, but just temporarily given prominence in this left-dislocation configuration. It seems more likely to be a focus structure, and in particular, an argument focus.

Biblical Hebrew is understood to have a basic VSO (verb-subject-object) word-order, but constituents can appear before the verb. Therefore a distinction between the preverbal field and the main field is made. When the preverbal field is occupied (it could be empty, which is most frequently the case), this phenomenon is called *fronting*. In fronting, a subject, an object or an adverbial phrase can precede the verb. The fronted constituent could be one member (a word, a word chain or a clause modifying a word), or it could consist of more than one constituent. There are other constituents that appear before the verb, but are not syntactically fully-integrated parts of the clause. These are dislocated constructions (pendens construction) and adjunct of time constructions. The pendens construction functions usually “to (re)activate an identifiable referent that is talked about” (1999:339). In clauses with participles, the subject normally precedes the verb.

To achieve chiasmic patterns in poetry, fronting is also used, but fronting in poetry can fulfill the same functions as in prose (ibid.:340). Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze name the three obligatory entities in the preverbal field, namely interrogative particles (WH-interrogatives like who?, what?, etc.), the demonstrative (deictic) adverb in the *messenger formula* ‘Thus says the Lord’, and when the subject of a clause is realized by means of an *independent personal pronoun* (ibid.:340). In the case of the fronted independent personal pronoun, it is always marked because the subject is already signaled in the inflected verb itself.

Topic is defined in the following way:

[T]he entity or entities about which an utterance says something is referred to as the topic of that utterance. A discourse active topic is normally referred to by means of a pronoun that is the subject of the sentence involved (ibid.:344).

When the topic of an utterance is discourse active, it is normally referred to by means of a pronoun or other unmarked construction. However, when the topic of an utterance is not discourse active, and needs to be newly introduced, or re-activated, a special construction may be involved again. ... In Biblical Hebrew a dislocated construction may be used... Fronting, however, is more frequently used to introduce or (re-)activate the topic of an utterance that is not discourse active (ibid.:346).

On fronting, Van der Merwe, et al., describe the semantic-pragmatic function of fronting as follows:

The fronted complement or adjunct signals that an entity is introduced, activated or reactivated to function as the topic of an utterance. The event referred to by means of the predicate of that utterance is not discourse active (ibid.:347).

Five functions of topic fronting are then listed: (1) introducing a new referent to be topic of a sentence at the beginning of a new episode (as in 1 Kings 20.1) or (2) as part of background information (as in 2 Kings 13.20-21); (3) activating an identifiable referent or referents as topic at the beginning of a new scene; reactivating referents as topics as part of summaries of a paragraph, episode or narrative (as in 2 Kings 11.20); (4) reactivating referents to comment on different referents that are involved in the same situation (as in 2 Samuel 13.19); or (5) reactivating referents that are compared or contrasted (as in 1 Samuel 1.22).

Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze accurately pinpoint the notion of topic in Biblical Hebrew, and their five functions of topic fronting are particularly useful. But two problems with their description of topic can be raised. One is that an utterance can only have one topic. We have seen in Lambrecht's account that sentences can have multiple topics. Even an object as a secondary topic, for instance, has "something said about it." It is enriched semantically. It is true that one is the primary topic, but their description has not gone far enough in differentiating. A second and related problem is that they haven't described the issue of topical frame-setting and the recurrence of topical referents as objects or indirect objects post-verbally. A fuller classification of topic *types* is called for, as well as an account of some pragmatic operations other than the activation and re-activation and related functions of topic proposed by them (for example, contrastiveness, comparison, exhaustive identification, and identity confirmation). This fuller classification and account of additional pragmatic operations is proposed in chapter 3.

2.4.5.2 Heimerdinger (1999)

Jean-Jacques Heimerdinger's functional approach to topic and focus, applying information structure notions to Biblical Hebrew, though partly based on Tomlin and Givón's theories, is especially based on that of Knud Lambrecht.

In his chapter 3, under the heading TOPICALITY AND TOPICAL ENTITIES: AN ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 22, Heimerdinger goes into the background of how topic studies have developed, and found that

Apart from the two statistical studies of Givón (1977) and Fox (1983), the question of topicality in Old Hebrew has not been the subject of detailed research (1999:101).

He defines topic as that which a clause or sentence is all about. “As such the topic of a clause is the referential material which provides a plug-in point for the comment, the comment having the specific function of ‘point-making’” (ibid.:102). Heimerdinger further defines topic in this way:

The referent is the topic of the proposition if the proposition is about the referent, that is, if it communicates information which is relevant to the hearer’s knowledge of the referent or increases it (ibid.:130).

Heimerdinger defines topicality as something that is best described cognitively as the “centering of attention of speaker and hearer on discourse entities which are the main concern of the story” (ibid.:124).

Heimerdinger’s distinction between topic and fronted adverbials (which he calls *basis*) is important. Heimerdinger argues that fronted adverbials (such as a temporal, e.g. Genesis 22.4a) are not topicalisations, but rather a ‘point of departure’, limiting “the domain of applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain” (Heimerdinger quoting Chafe, 1976:50). This is very much in line with what Jacobs has defined as *frame-setting*. It is confusing to call sentence-initial adverbials topicalisation, because such fronted adverbials function at a different pragmatic level. It seems that fronted adverbials are not topics per se, but associated with topics. “Topical entities are the essential elements around which a story is constructed; the main topical participants belong to the goal of the discourse. Spatio-temporal settings do not have such a role and cannot be categorized in such a way” (ibid.:122). While he still calls this fronted element a topic, Chafe has offered the following view of topic for topic-prominent languages, which will be useful in understanding the role of this phrase:

What the topic appears to do is to limit the domain of applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain. The topic sets the spatial, temporal or individual framework within which the predication holds (Chafe, 1976: 50).

This definition was proposed to describe the function of certain initial elements in Mandarin Chinese. But even when applied to the main predication of the clause only, the amalgamation

of spatio-temporal setting and topical participant under the single notion of topicality is not very helpful. Topicality, understood cognitively as the fixation of attention on an entity, overlaps with what Chafe calls 'the individual domain'. But it is confusing to analyse temporal or locative expressions as topicalized items. Such constituents function pragmatically at a different level to that of topical participants. Topical entities are the essential elements around which a story is constructed; the main topical participants belong to the goal of the discourse. Spatio-temporal settings do not have such a role and cannot be categorized in such a way. Heimerdinger prefers to call such adverbials 'basis'³¹ (1999:122). Heimerdinger is in agreement with Rosenbaum on basis (Rosenbaum, 1997:41) in calling a 'basis' a setting. What is not clear from Heimerdinger's position on fronted adverbials is what role they then exactly fulfill in the information structure of a proposition. Are they topical, or do they belong to the focus structure? Or is it neither of the two? I will argue that these fronted adverbials, be it temporal or locative, are part of the topic-focus structure of a proposition in the sense that they are associated with the topics, or in other words, that they frame the topics. If the fronted adverbial is presupposed or inferable from the context, it functions as a topic frame. If it is not presupposed, and part of the asserted new information in the sentence, it functions as an orientation to the focus structure, mostly in the form of argument focus structures. My definition of "topic frame" is generally the same as that which Chafe holds for fronted topics, namely that it *limits the domain of applicability* of the topic or the focus. It sets the *framework* in which the topic or the focus holds. An example is Genesis 15.18, an example used by Heimerdinger where the ADVP with anaphoric function can't be a Dominant Focal Element (ibid.: 205). The fronted "In that day" does indeed have an anaphoric function, and it is a topic frame.

Heimerdinger then proceeds to classify the syntactic configurations used in Biblical Hebrew narratives for the various pragmatic functions of topics. For the first occurrence of a referent in a story, to make it identifiable, a variety of means are used:

A. Topic identification³²

³¹ 'Basis' is a concept first proposed by Benes (1962: 6-11) who defined basis as the opening element of the sentence which serves as a 'point of departure' and which is tied in with the context.

³² The terms "topic identification" and "topic activation" do not need to be understood that the actual information structure of those referents are necessarily topical. Such participants often are in focus and part of focus structures. It could be argued that "participant identification" or "participant activation" may be more accurate. But since these identified and activated referents do become topics in the ensuing discourse, it is still acceptable to call them "topic identification" or "topic activation."

Generally, if a referent is brand new, unidentifiable, and not-yet-activated³³, verbless or copular clauses with fronted noun phrases (NPs) are used to introduce it (ibid.:147). These propositions are presentational sentences without a topic³⁴. The referent that will become a topic in the immediately following discourse is identified and activated. Such referents are what Givón calls ‘cataphoric topics’.

For example³⁵,

- 1) NP + qatal (hayah) is used to anchor “the serpent” in Genesis 3.1.
- 2) a generic expression in a NP + qatal (copular verb) construction is used in 2 Kings 7.3 “four men with leprosy”
- 3) a deictic reference is used in 1 Samuel 1.1-2 ‘a man from ..., in land of Gilead’
- 4) in an anaphoric reference “his son Ahazia” 1 Kings 22.40 the brand-new referent appears in a wayyiqtol clause. But when these topics are identified in this way, they are semantically set apart from other wayyiqtol clauses. For example, 1 Kings 22.40; 2.39; 1 Samuel 2.27 are all examples of formulaic notices of succession, and are framing devices. More examples by Heimerdinger are 1 Samuel 17.4-5 as a presentational wayyiqtol motion verb followed by a verbless clause; and Exodus 1.8 and 1 Samuel 2.27; 11.1 where presentational sentences are wayyiqtol clauses with intransitive motion verbs³⁶.

B. Topic activation

Topics that are identifiable can be activated by either a NP + qatal clause or by a wayyiqtol clause. Topics introduced as subject in a NP + qatal are overall more important topics (with more span, SJF) than wayyiqtol-presented topics (ibid.:147).

The detached or front dislocated constituent (pendens construction) is another configuration used in Biblical Hebrew to activate non-active referents. 1 Samuel 11.11 is an example of

³³ Heimerdinger’s use of the term ‘not-yet-activated’ for unidentifiable referents is slightly confusing. ‘Not-yet-activated’ can also mean that the referent has indeed been identified but for a certain stretch of discourse not-yet-activated. It is then the same as what Lambrecht calls ‘inactive’.

³⁴ One cannot do two cognitive operations at the same time (Lambrecht 1988:146-149). One cannot both present a new referent and give this referent topic status.

³⁵ 1 Kings 20.35; 2 Kings 4.1; 2.23-25

where a non-active referent as topic is detached, followed by a wayyiqtol verb in the clause it is associated with (ibid.:151):

NP, + wayyiqtol + PRO

A case of a double topic is a fronting (topicalisation for Heimerdinger) followed by a pendens as in

1 Samuel 17.24, where the “Men of Israel” is semi-active.

NP_Subj, + NP_Casus Pendens, + wayyiqtol

The activation of non-active referents by multiple topics in a wayyiqtol clause, as in 1 Kings 13.11 (ibid.:151-2), is rare.

C. Topic re-activation

Once a referent is identifiable, had once been activated as a pragmatic topic but then becomes inactive, only to be newly activated in the narrative (that is, it was inactive after being active), it is often the subject of a wayyiqtol clause (ibid.:156). Examples are 2 Kings 1.2; 2 Samuel 11.6c-7; and Genesis 20.1.

Semi-active referents are also sometimes re-introduced by NP+qatal³⁷. This form is routine, the most common for activating semi-active referents (ibid.:157-159). Such sentences are often event-reporting clauses (with no pragmatic topics). Examples are: Jonah 1.4 (God not a brand-new topic); 1 Samuel 4.11 (ark semi-active, the event is reported); 2 Kings 9.1.

In summary, according to Heimerdinger, the fronted NP+qatal construction is used in event-reporting sentences presenting topics, as well as (rarer) for activating non-active or semi-active topics. But not ALL NP+qatal are presentational. Sometimes this configuration is used to re-activate an important actor in the narrative (ibid.:148). The NP+qatal form is also used to re-activate semi-active or non-active referents. Heimerdinger argues that topics introduced in X-qatal clauses are more prominent than those introduced, or re-introduced, by wayyiqtol clauses (1999:146). Levinsohn, in his 2002 review of Heimerdinger, disagrees. He points to examples (2 Kings 2.23 and Exodus 1.18) where the opposite is shown to be the case (2002:133).

³⁷ Non-active referent in NP+qatal clause = event-reporting (Heimerdinger, 1999:150-1),

e.g. Judges 6.34; 2 Kings 1.3. These referents are not presented, because they do not have span or continuity.

Wayyiqtol clauses, on the other hand, with clause-initial verbs, are the most general form used to activate referents, and only rarely in special formulaic constructions present and identify a brand-new referent.

In spite of the fact that Heimerdinger has not added much to Lambrecht's theory on topic, his contribution is the successful attempt to identify typical Biblical Hebrew structures and configurations used for each of the different topic categories, and he has supplied a lot of data on the issue of topic in Biblical Hebrew. More specifically, he has placed the study of topic in a wider context of narratology and discourse continuity, notably his incorporation of Givón's and Tomlin's views on topic continuity and topic as the center of attention, respectively. In addition, in determining the topical importance of referents relative to others he echoes Kintsch (cf. Chapter 6), who finds macrostructures by tracing macroterms, terms that were strengthened cognitively through repetitive anaphoric reference and relexicalisation. The concept of levels of topical importance will be further developed below when the different categories of topic are discussed, presenting differentiations such as primary versus secondary topics, for instance. Heimerdinger also makes a lot of Brown & Yule's (1983) topical framework where all the participating referents in a narrative are listed and their relative prominence evaluated. The concept of topical framework is used in analysing topics and their roles in the thematic development (cf. chapters 7 and 8).

2.4.5.3 Van der Merwe (1999a) and Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript)

Van der Merwe (1999a) gives an overview of the study by Walter Gross on Biblical Hebrew word-order, and remarks on the absence of a theory for topic in Gross's work that "leads to an excessive number of examples that are not accounted for in a coherent theory." Van der Merwe (1999c:179) states that assigning semantic-pragmatic labels to syntactic categories, the way Rosenbaum's and Buth's approaches do, has its problems. Such labels, "without a well-justified pragmatic frame of reference may easily lead to the *ad hoc* assignment of these labels. One's definitions must be able to be verified intersubjectively." Van der Merwe then proposes his complementing theory, which is very much influenced by Lambrecht (1994). I will not go into any detail here, since Lambrecht has been discussed above, but there are a few applications to Biblical Hebrew topic that Van der Merwe makes that are worth mentioning.

Van der Merwe hypothesizes that “one of the functions of fronting in Biblical Hebrew, ..., is to *establish an entity as the topic* of an utterance”, in other words, fronting is “a topic-promoting device” (ibid.:294-295). This happens in various contexts (ibid.:294):

- (a) “when an entity that has been modified in order to be identifiable is established as the topic of an utterance (normally at the beginning of a discourse paragraph), as in 1 Kings 20.1.
- (b) when an already identifiable entity is (re-)established as the topic of an utterance, as in Joshua 12.6.
- (c) when a discourse active entity is (re-)established as the topic of an utterance (in a context where entities are contrasted, compared or listed), as in 1 Samuel 1.22.”

In Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), a further and more extensive account of topic and word-order in Biblical Hebrew is given (ibid.:15-23). Biblical Hebrew word-order is explained in the light of Lambrecht’s theory of pragmatic information structure. In their account, Biblical Hebrew is divided into verbal clauses, participial clauses, nominal clauses and pendens constructions.

About word-order, they argue that “the VSO (VSX) order of constituents represents for Biblical Hebrew its most unmarked order” (ibid.:15). The unmarked verbal clauses are those that contain only presupposed information for topics, like relative clauses, and they are topic-comment articulations with predicate focus. In addition to Lambrecht’s criteria for an unmarked topic-comment sentence, Van der Merwe & Talstra argue that the clause must also “have an established topic that functions as the subject of the clause” (ibid.:16), in other words, it must have a primary topic. “The topic-subject can be an enclitic pronoun or a noun phrase”, and when lexicalized, it follows the verb, mostly a wayyiqtol or weqatal denoting “progress.” But they also argue that not every wayyiqtol-clause is necessarily a topic-comment sentence: in some cases it does not communicate “progress” and in some other cases it can identify a brand-new referent in a sentence focus “event-reporting” sentence like the example in Genesis 32.25 with the referent “a man” (cf. also Heimerdinger (1999) for wayyiqtol-sentences as event-reporting or presentational sentences). But generally, the wayyiqtol-clause is the unmarked topic-comment articulation (cf. also Heimerdinger (1999), above).

Marked word-orders are when there is a fronted or left-dislocated constituent in the clause, or multiple cases of each or even both. These types of construction that are focus constructions are discussed in chapters 4 and 5. For now our concern is fronted topical or presupposed constituents. One category for fronting of topics for Van der Merwe & Talstra is when “[t]he fronting *establishes* entities as the *topics to be compared* (e.g. Deuteronomy 4.13-14) or *contrasted*” (e.g. Deuteronomy 28.67) (ibid.:20). Another type of topic fronting is when “a type of temporal construction is involved”, with 1 Samuel 9.5 as example: “(When) they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him....”, where the third person plural pronoun is fronted in the first clause (ibid.:22).

For participial clauses the most unmarked order is subject + predicate, which is also the case for the nominal (or verbless) clause (e.g. Genesis 39.3) (ibid.:22-23).

For left-dislocated or pendens constructions, they argue that “[i]n verbal and nominal clauses pendens constructions *establish* (promote) identifiable, but non-active entities to a state of discourse activeness” (ibid.:23), giving as examples 1 Samuel 9.21, 2 Kings 15.36, and Genesis 34.21. In this regard their position agrees with Gregory & Michaelis (2001) on the function of left-dislocation.

In the account of Topic presented in Chapter 3, the theoretical point of departure of Van der Merwe & Talstra, as well as their listing of the different topic expressions in Biblical Hebrew are foundational.

2.4.5.4 Shimasaki (2002)

Katsuomi Shimasaki’s study of focus structures follows most of the main theoretical aspects of information structure as developed by Lambrecht (1994).

He defines topic on the basis that old information versus new information, is different to the topic-comment differentiation:

Old or new information is concerned with the status of information in the consciousness of the interlocuters (old or new, shared knowledge or not), whereas topic and comment are concerned with “aboutness” of a proposition or with the relationship to the proposition. Therefore, a topic referent can be a new piece of information. For example, “John” in (1), “John is my friend” is new information, but at the same time, is the topic of the sentence.

This last statement is problematic. If both *John* and *my friend* are new information, the whole sentence is in focus and it is in Lambrecht's terms a sentence focus structure (cf. 1994:233-235), and discussion on focus in chapters 4 and 5). According to Lambrecht, topics are always presupposed information (old information in its widest sense), but not all presupposed information is topical (1994:151). Shimasaki's position on such "topical" new information constituents is evident in the way he handles *marked word-order* or *explicit* pronouns, in both old or new information expressions that have some component of contrast. He takes such expressions to be expressions of emphasis, which for him are focus structures (2002:86-88), but according to the definition quoted above, such expressions can be topics too. The problem is that he tries to detach the old versus new information dichotomy altogether from the topic versus comment dichotomy, which in turn leads to theoretical inconsistencies. His example (1) above, for instance, does not have a pragmatic "aboutness" relation anywhere. Both sentence focus and argument focus structures, in Lambrecht's theory, do not have topics and no topic-comment articulation at all. It is this view of contrastive topics that makes Shimasaki's criticism of Buth's Subject-Predicate for verbless and participial clauses all the more problematic (cf. *ibid.*:121-130).

2.5 THE TERM "TOPICALISATION"

The term "topicalisation" has been used by several scholars, but with so many varying definitions, that a conclusive definition is not yet clear. In the account of topic in chapter 3 the term "topicalisation" has been avoided except for a few references. The reason for this is that the term "topicalisation" has been quite confusing with regard to the understanding of topic as an information structure category. In the literature, the term often refers to a pragmatic function of fronting something for some reason or another, and simultaneously it refers to some syntactic process or configuration. Then in some uses, topicalisation refers to both a syntactic fronting construction and a left-dislocated construction, whereas others, such as Gregory & Michaelis (2001) keep the two forms very much apart.

Often the term topicalisation is used in the sense that a referent that is not normally expected to be topical (like an object) is now made topical by means of some syntactic operation like Y-movement. The term topicalisation has generally been used in the sense of some syntactic movement for a pragmatic reason. Y-movement of objects in particular, is seen as topicalisation, where the object now becomes the topic instead of being part of the focus

domain. Lambrecht (1994:31) describes this definition. The problem with such a definition is that such fronted objects do not necessarily become the topic of the proposition. The aboutness relation between the different constituents has not now automatically changed with the syntactic fronting. Where presupposition, topicness, and marked syntactic word-order vis-à-vis its pragmatic function are not clearly defined, the use of the term topicalisation becomes problematic and ambiguous.

The fronted non-subject, or subject that is fronted in a non-canonical cognitively salient position, is also seen by some as a pragmatic means of marking topic promotion. Michealis & Gregory (2001) follow this line. Topicalised referents, normally fronted or left-dislocated, are also seen as marked for being some or other prominent thematic or “discourse” topic. Shimasaki (2002:245) follows this line. Topicalisation in this sense is what marks a certain topic expression as prominent in terms of the discourse development, in other words, it has thematic importance beyond its own sentence or clause.

Studies in Biblical Hebrew that have used the term “topicalisation” are Bandstra (1992), and Bailey & Levinsohn (1992). Fronted “contextualizing constituents” (using Buth’s term) and fronted spatio-temporal deictic frames are all referred to in some way or another as “topicalisation.”

These different uses are not altogether helpful. Too much meaning is loaded into one term. So instead of the loaded term “topicalisation” I prefer either to refer to the exact syntactic process, like Y-movement or left-dislocation, or to the pragmatic information structure function of such a movement in a more exact way, for example topic promotion, topic shift, or whatever may be the case in that specific instance.

2.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the reviews of the functional approaches to Topic, the approaches of Dik and Givón came under scrutiny, not only for their own sakes, but to give a general introduction to topic from functional perspectives. Dik’s theme, topic and tail distinctions have proved to be valuable. Dik’s *theme* is called *basis* or *frame* in the Biblical Hebrew account in chapter 3, but the term *frame* (from Jacobs), which includes the term *basis* (from the Prague School), has a wider application in the sense that not only extra-clausal left-dislocated constituents are bases or frames, but that fronted elements in the clause proper can also fall under this category. These insights need to be part of an account for topic in Biblical Hebrew.

The generative linguists bring value to the study of topic with their concept of Ground for topical, presupposed information, and its two sub-forms, Link and Tail. Both concepts have been taken over, with Links becoming *primary topics* and Tails *secondary topics*, rather using the terms that Lambrecht proposed. Proper definitions for each of these two topic types are called for in the account of topic in Biblical Hebrew. The term “Tail” is preferably used to indicate Dik’s extra-clausal right-dislocated constituent, also called “antitopic” by Lambrecht.

The manifold and overlapping uses of the terms *theme*, *topic*, *link*, *ground*, *topicalisation*, and *thematization* have made the study of topic a complex issue. It is necessary to limit the number of terms in use and clearly define them. Because of the confusing uses of *topicalisation* for all sorts of fronting, be it presupposed or focus information, I will tend not to use that term in the account of topic in Biblical Hebrew in chapter 3. The syntactic term *fronting*, or Y-movement in the case of fronted objects, will rather be used, following Van der Merwe (1999a and 1999c).

In the application of information structure theory to Biblical Hebrew, real progress has been made during the Nineties. Lambrecht’s view of topic and how it is related to the mental representation of referents is found to be the most satisfying theory to underlie an account of topic in Biblical Hebrew. By anchoring information structure theory in a more comprehensive theory of cognition and discourse pragmatics, with his notions of identifiability, activation, and pragmatic presupposition, he has provided a solid foundation for the study of topic. Initial applications of Lambrecht’s theory to Biblical Hebrew have come to light (cf. section 2.4.5 above), and these are foundational to this study. But as already strongly hinted at in Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), a more rigorous application of Lambrecht is called for.

There are some notions developed by Lambrecht that need further attention. For instance, his notion of *multiple topics* is very useful, but these different topics need to be specified more. Related to this is the fact that he doesn’t give a term for topical constituents that are not subjects, but function more as a frame or a basis. An account of topic in Biblical Hebrew needs to have this sub-specification made. While differentiating sub-types of topic, like primary topics, secondary topics and antitopics, he has not really developed these sub-types. In this account of topic in Biblical Hebrew, his notion of secondary topic will be further defined. Like topic frames, secondary topics are indeed topical in the sense that the new information in the sentence enriches them. They have “aboutness” pragmatically, but what

are secondary topics syntactically and semantically, and is this important? It will be argued that it is indeed important, not only to differentiate different types of topics, but also to understand the overlay of contrastiveness on each of these different types. Secondary topic is also a concept that is significant in understanding different kinds of predicate focus structures (to be discussed in chapters 4 and 5). Another point that Lambrecht discusses but doesn't propose as a specific sub-type is the issue of topic frames (or frame-setting as proposed by Jacobs). In the next chapter this point will also be elaborated.

On the basis of this overview of topic, and the aspects of Lambrecht's theory that should be incorporated in a Biblical Hebrew account of topic, the following requirements need to be addressed:

1. The need to account for multiple topic categories. Lambrecht's notion of secondary topic for topics that are not semantic agents but are part of the predicate, as well as his notion of the antitopic, needs to be accounted for in a theory of topic for Biblical Hebrew, not forgetting to find a place for deictic frames or orientations and other frame-setting devices in such a categorization.
2. The issue of fronting of topics needs to be accounted for. What type of topic is a fronted topic, and what is its function? The fronting of nouns that activate a new participant, or re-activate a participant, needs to be explained pragmatically within a framework of information structure analysis. Double fronting, as well as left-dislocation need to be accounted for.
3. A functional category must be created for topical, presupposed referents that function as a basis or frame-setting for the rest of the proposition, but appear simultaneously with grammatical subjects/semantic agents. What is the relationship between these two types of topic?
4. The matter of settings and deictic orientations needs to be addressed. How do contextual frames or spatio-temporal deixis relate to information structure and to topics? Are these constituents topical, with an "aboutness" component, or do they just provide frameworks within which topics operate? Intuitively the framing option has appeal, but what about presupposed versus newly-asserted frames? An account of topic must define the relationship between topics, topic expressions and deictic expressions.

5. And lastly, the fact that topical referents sometimes receive special “emphasis” by means of fronting. Concepts of contrastiveness, identification, and confirmation have been raised (cf. 2.3.2 above). A model of information structure must account for such dynamics. The relationship between contrastiveness and information structure calls for further research.

In the following chapter an account of topic in Biblical Hebrew is proposed.

Chapter 3

AN ACCOUNT OF TOPIC IN BIBLICAL HEBREW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

On the basis of the preceding theoretical considerations and overview of different theories on the subject, I proceed to propose an account of topic in Biblical Hebrew. First of all, recapping from chapter 2, topic is defined in terms of the framework of Lambrecht's information structure theory (cf. 2.2.4. in chapter 2) as well as following the approach of scholars who have applied Lambrecht's theory to Biblical Hebrew (Van der Merwe (1999a), Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), and Heimerdinger (1999) (cf. 2.4.5 in chapter 2).

Topic in this chapter is defined as referring to that element in a proposition, which the proposition is about. It is the presupposed referent to which the newly asserted information (the focus) adds. Topic according to Lambrecht's approach is primarily "a relation between a REFERENT and a PROPOSITION" (1994:127). Topic is seen as a cognitive-pragmatic concept, the concept or referent in the user's mind *about* which something is asserted in a particular communication situation. A topic expression, on the other hand, is the way such cognitive mental representations are expressed and made explicit in the language utterance.

When the mental representation of a topic is unknown and not part of the addressee's background knowledge of the world, it needs to be identified first. Once identified in a topicless presentational sentence, it becomes active and presupposed in the proceeding discourse. As the discourse unfolds, a certain topic referent can become cognitively semi-active or even inactive, and by a variety of syntactic configurations, can be made discourse active again. The pragmatic presupposition and the cognitive activation state of referents are both crucial to the analysis of topic. Following Lambrecht, there are three information structure sentence types that are relevant for our description of the notion "topic." The different types of topic only occur in one of these two types:

- 1) The topic-comment sentence. This is the unmarked and most frequent information structure sentence type.

- 2) The scene-setting all-topic sentence (or clause). Such a sentence (or better, clause) is always a subordinate clause, with no new information asserted. Tail-head constructions fall in this category, where information is repeated as part of the introduction to a subsequent section.

A definition of “aboutness” is foundational to a theory of topic. This is true because there are sentences or propositions without topics. These propositions do not contain a topic, since a predicate and its arguments are newly presented and asserted, or a part of the proposition is presupposed, but no aboutness relation is communicated. Topic, in line with Lambrecht’s pragmatic definition, is a relational entity in the information structure, standing in a certain relationship with a proposition. Topic and presupposition are not identical, according to Lambrecht (1994:151). Presuppositions are propositions, whereas topic referents are entities, which are part of the presupposed proposition. Not all presupposed information is topical. Tests must be applied to the presupposed information to determine what is topical. These heuristic tests of proof are best put in the form of questions, the *as-for* test and the *about* test (ibid.:152). Lambrecht gives an example of each of the two tests (ibid.:152):

“As for the children, they went to school”, in which “children” is the topic.

“He said about the children that they went to school”, in which “children” is the topic.

A third test (or proof tool) can be added to this: “As far as x is concerned, x and y are true.” Once a topic is identified, it is easier to determine the assertion and the information in focus. If no topic can be found, it becomes clear that the sentence is a marked focus structure. More on that in chapters 4 and 5. This distinction of topic and presupposition is important, as will be seen later in this study when focus structures are discussed. The topic-presupposition is important because in some propositions with marked focus structures, there can be presupposed information present, but no topic. Presupposed information can also be part of the focus structure, as will be seen in chapters 4 and 5.

But as Jacobs (2001) rightly observes, topic as a notion is not without its problems and it is therefore necessary to distinguish the different pragmatic categories that are often not differentiated when scholars deal with pragmatic topic. In the account below, topic will not be handled as a single concept in the way that Lambrecht deals with the term. Although Lambrecht’s approach to information structure and the pragmatic role of topic in it, will still be the guiding model, a variety of pragmatic topic categories and types of topic expressions

will be distinguished. Lambrecht indeed raises a number of subcategories of topic, as seen in Chapter 2 (2.2.4), for example secondary topic and antitopic, but he doesn't develop these concepts significantly in his 1994 work. Before these subcategories are defined, however, it is necessary to look once more at topic-hood and "aboutness."

This "aboutness" of topics is best defined by the four categories proposed by Jacobs (2001). He proposes four salient semantic attributes of topic-comment:

- 1) Informational separation (where there is a clear separation in the information structure role of constituents X and Y, X is topical and Y is focal),
- 2) Predication (where X is the semantic subject and Y the semantic predicate),
- 3) Addressation (where the comment Y is "about" topic X, Y is relevant to X, regardless of grammatical or semantic relation)
- 4) And frame-setting (where X sets the frame for the interpretation of Y). (For an in-depth discussion of these categories, see Jacobs, 2001: 645-655).

Jacobs's four attributes of topic-comment articulations provide a new perspective on topic. The four attributes give rise to different topic types when they are grouped together in different combinations or configurations. For example, primary topics typically fulfill the attributes 1) informational separation, 2) predication, and 3) addressation. For Lambrecht's notion of secondary topics, 1) informational separation is attested, but differently to primary topics. Some new information is addressed to secondary topics (attribute 3), but not predicatively as is the case with primary topics. This is because secondary topics are part of a focus structure or comment. Secondary topics have the attributes of 1) informational separation, and 3) addressation, but not 2) predication. Neither primary topics nor secondary topics have the attribute 4), frame-setting. A different topic category must be set up with that attribute, for which we propose topic frame. Topic frames have the attribute of 4) frame-setting, as well as 1) informational separation (not focal) and 3) addressation (some information is added to the topic frame referent, enriching it). But topic frames do not have attribute 2), predication. Topic frames set a frame for another topic, generally a primary topic, which in turn has the predication attribute. Lambrecht's *antitopic* is another topic category that can be defined in terms of Jacobs's attributes.

What is different in the proposed account of topic in Biblical Hebrew to what has been discussed in the previous sections is that this model tries to account for the topic and any topical referents that may or may not appear in the focus structure of a sentence. The four types of topic proposed are *primary topic*, *secondary topic*, *tail topic*, and *topic frame*.

In summary, Jacob's topic attributes have been combined in different combinations to give the following different topic types or topic categories:

- 1) Primary topic – primary topics will be redefined as topics that have 1) informational separation, 2) predication as subjects, and 3) addressation status, but not 4) frame-setting.
- 2) Secondary topic – secondary topics are topics that have a component of 3) addressation but not one of 2) predication. There is informational separation in the sense that they presuppose, but differently to the way primary topics do. Secondary topics are an integral part of the comment or focus structure, whereas none of the other three topic categories can be part of focus structures. In secondary topics there can also not be 4) frames-setting.
- 3) Tail topic – A tail topic is a presupposed constituent in the form of a word or a phrase that syntactically appears at the end of a sentence, and is a right-dislocated extraclausal constituent. A tail topic must have a corresponding primary topic. Like primary topics, it has the following attributes: 1) informational separation (it is not part of the focus structure) and 3) addressation, but it does not have predication (2). The primary topic takes the predication. Tail topics can also not be 4) setting frames.
- 4) Topic frame – Fronted or left-dislocated elements (which have the component of frame-setting) will be defined as a case of the separate topic category called topic frame. Frame-setting topic “seems to restrict the application of the proposition by the rest of the sentence to a certain domain” (Jacobs, 2001:656). Both fronted and left-dislocated constructions are possible for topic frames, as will be illustrated below (3.2.4).

These attribute combinations can be laid out in the following table:

	Primary topic	Secondary topic	Tail topic	Topic frame
Informational separation	+	-	+	+
Predication	+	-	-	-
Addressation	+	+	+	+
Frame-setting	-	-	-	+

With these topic categories in mind, a further distinction is necessary. In Biblical Hebrew, there are marked word-order versus unmarked word-order topic expressions. Marked word-order topics are those where the topic expression appears in a different word-order to the canonical VSO³⁸ with S (subject) the topic (see discussion in chapter 1 (1.4.1) on the assumptions of Biblical Hebrew canonical word-order). These different configurations of topic expression will be accounted for in this description of topic in Biblical Hebrew. For each type, where relevant, the unmarked word-order topic expressions will be discussed first, followed by the marked word-order expressions.

It is also necessary, in this account of topic in Biblical Hebrew, to maintain Lambrecht's distinction between topic and topic expression. Topic is first and foremost a cognitive, pragmatic mental representation, whereas a topic expression is the surface manifestation of that mental representation in spoken and written discourse.

There are also pragmatic operations that can be associated with topics, meaning especially primary and secondary topics, as discussed in chapter 2 (2.6, points 4 and 5) and listed as a requirement for any account of topic in Biblical Hebrew. These pragmatic associations or overlays are two-fold: deictic orientations and contrast.

A deictic orientation is a pragmatic operation that interfaces with the information structure, and with topics. Deictic orientations (or text-world frames, cf. chapter 6) provide the setting and orientation of topics in the communication situation, in terms of spatio-temporal deixis. These orientations can be presupposed or newly-asserted information. Where these deictic orientations just update and reconfirm the present presupposed and active deictic frame, and

³⁸ See Van der Merwe (1999a)

do not present a new situation frame, they are referred to as topical deictic orientations or text-world frames. Topical deictic orientations are discussed below in section 3.3.1.

Contrastiveness, as seen in chapter 2 (2.3.2) can be defined in terms of membership of a set, where a member of the set is compared, its identity confirmed, or its identity restricted. It is a pragmatic overlay or pragmatic operation associated with topics. So several topic types (as will also be seen in chapter 4 and 5, focus structures) can simultaneously be part of a context-driven, pragmatic contrastiveness. There are contrastive primary topics, contrastive secondary topics, and contrastive topic frames. As Shimasaki (2002:72) and Lambrecht (1994) have remarked, contrast is not an information structure category, but a context-driven, pragmatic operation interacting with topics. Contrastive topic is discussed below in section 3.3.2.

3.2 THE FOUR TYPES OF TOPIC

Primary topic

Secondary Topic

Tail Topic

Topic Frame

These four types or categories of topic are now discussed in more detail, together with their surface-level expressions.

3.2.1 Primary Topic

Following Jacob's (2001) categories, a primary topic has informational separation (the sentence is *about* the primary topic, the focus structure asserts something new about it), primary topic has grammatical predication as grammatical subjects (in most cases, and it is the address of new information. But it is not frame-setting. The term primary topic is useful in that a primary topic has two *links*, operating at two levels: on the one hand it links clauses in the sense that it recurs in a sequence of clauses³⁹, as a marker of cohesion. On the other hand, it is a cognitive link. The primary topic referent is linked with the mental *text base* that is constructed as the discourse progresses. This last concept is explained in chapters 6 and 7.

³⁹ This is a feature primary topics share with secondary topics. But primary topics generally occur in chains of two or more occurrences.

The definition from Vallduví & Engdahl (1996:469) quoted in chapter 2 for what they call *ground-link* is what is followed for this model as well. The ground is the given information on which the sentence is built. The newly asserted (focus) information of each of these sentences in a sequence is principally about this topic referent, the primary topic indicates the address of the new information. A primary topic is discourse active and accessible, and generally so accessible that only pronominal reference to it is sufficient. Generally, the primary topic is a grammatical subject in Biblical Hebrew. As a general rule of thumb, primary topics appear more than once in a sequence. But even where there is a subject switch in a paragraph, and a discourse-active referent only appears once as a subject, that topic expression is still a topic link and primary topic⁴⁰.

How can a primary topic be identified? The following heuristic criteria can be applied:

1. Primary topic is identifiable, that is, “it has to exist in the universe of that discourse”, “independently of its role in a given proposition” (Van der Merwe, 1999a:293 and Lambrecht, 1994:336). The primary topic has either been made identifiable in the context, or its identity is known and assumed as known from the cognitive text-world.
2. A primary topic is a referent that has been made discourse active.
3. A primary topic remains active, in other words, continues, through a span of discourse. It remains the topic of a sequence of sentences. It has at least some continuity after it has been activated as a topic, and it normally occurs in some syntactic subject or semantic agent chain. A primary topic is in a chain of at least one occurrence after being activated in some assertion or focus structure.
4. Subjects are not always primary topics. Sometimes subjects are part of an all-focus sentence, and sometimes the subject referent only appears once as a subject, and not again in the subsequent discourse. In such cases, the primary topic may be another presupposed/given referent in the sentence, most likely one that is discourse active and better still, referred to in the previous clause. In some focus structures, like argument focus, as will be seen in chapter 5, the subject is part of the presupposed information of a proposition, but it is not the topic.

⁴⁰ This type of subject switching is rhetorically significant. If the speaker-author wants to maintain the topic link, he or she could use the many mechanisms in the language to do so, for example, passivization.

5. A primary topic is the pragmatically most salient topic, if there is more than one topic in a proposition (for example a subject as well as an object about which the assertion is made) (Lambrecht, 1994:150⁴¹). The primary topic is pragmatically more salient than the secondary topic. It is the most important referent about which something is asserted. This saliency of the primary topic can be determined by both the pragmatics and the syntax of the proposition. In terms of the pragmatics, the primary topic is separate from the rest of the proposition, which enriches the primary topic with new assertions (Jacobs' separateness principle). Saliency in terms of syntax can be determined by means of the topic accessibility scale: the more accessible and salient a topic is, the less it is expressed in the syntax. So a topic that is only referred to anaphorically by the verb prefix, for instance, is more salient than an object noun phrase⁴².
6. Primary topics are not always the semantic agent in transitive clauses. In passives, for example, the subject is the primary topic, as the undergoer of the predication. The aboutness relation is key. In passive clauses, the predicate communicates information about the subject, and the subject therefore is the topic⁴³.

Primary topic expressions occur in both unmarked and marked word-order configurations.

3.2.1.1 Unmarked word-order primary topic⁴⁴

In Biblical Hebrew, primary topics that are unmarked in terms of word-order are those that are highest on the topic accessibility scale (cf. Lambrecht, 1994:165-168, cf. chapter 2 (2.2.4)). Pronominal reference to the primary topic, expressed in the verb affix, is one case of such primary topics. Such primary topics indicate topic continuity and thematic continuity.

An example is 2 Kings 1.2⁴⁵

⁴¹ As illustrated by his discussion of the saliency of the grandson and the cereal in an example quoted from Reinhart (Lambrecht, 1994:150).

⁴² When both the subject and object are only referred to by affixes on the verb, the subject is then more salient than the object by nature of its semantic function of actor, and because of its pragmatic status as the address of the predicate. Semantically the object is the undergoer, syntactically it is part of the predicate, and pragmatically it is part of the comment.

⁴³ For this very reason the use of passives is a discourse strategy of the speaker/writer to maintain and continue a certain topic as primary topic.

⁴⁴ Primary topic is the same as what Vallduví & Engdahl (1996) call GROUND-LINK.

⁴⁵ The English translation in the example is taken from the New Revised Standard Version (1989) unless indicated otherwise.

<p> $\lfloor _ \tau \wp X\psi\iota\lambda(\tau\alpha\angle\beta \eta\Box A\kappa A\beta) K\Omega\alpha\eta \delta\Box\Box\Box\Box\alpha$ $\tau\Box\angle\beta \eta M \wp\psi\zeta\alpha\zeta(\exists) \lambda\Box OK\pi\cap X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ 2 $\lambda\alpha\zeta\Box\Box X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ $\leq\psi\Box\iota\kappa A\exists\} \lambda\alpha\mu \xi\Box\Box\alpha\lambda\} H\Box X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ $\leq\epsilon\eta E\lambda(\exists \rho\epsilon\mu\exists \Box X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ </p>	<p> Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice in his upper chamber., and he lay injured; so he sent messengers, and he told them </p>
---	---

King Ahaziah is already identifiable from the preceding discourse in 1 Kings, as well as from the world knowledge of the interlocutors. He is made a discourse active topic as the proper noun subject in a wayyiqtol-clause, and the pronominal clitics referring to him are all primary topics.

Example: 2 Kings 1.11-12

<p> $\Box\dots \leq\psi\Box\iota KH\iota\mu(\xi-\rho\alpha\Omega \omega\psi\Box A\lambda E\exists \xi\Box\alpha\lambda) H\cap X\psi$ $\mathfrak{R}\omega \beta AHM \wp X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ 11 $\Box\Box/\alpha\tau\mathfrak{R}X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ $\omega\psi\Box A\lambda E\exists \Box\rho\Box\Box\Box\Box E\angle\beta\Rightarrow\delta\Box\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ $\Box\Box\dots\dots$ $\Box\leq\epsilon\eta\psi E\lambda(\exists \rho\Box\Box\Box\Box E\angle\beta\Rightarrow\delta\Box\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ 12 </p>	<p> 11 Again he (king) sent to him (Elijah) another captain of fifty and he went up And he said to him, 12 But Elijah answered and he said to them, (own translation) </p>
--	--

The third captain of fifty is identified and activated as a post-verb object noun phrase, and sequentially referred to by subject clitics that are primary topics. In v.12, the post-verb topic and subject Elijah, already discourse active, is a primary topic as well. The full noun instead of a pronominal clitic is used to confirm the identity of the topic and to avoid misunderstanding.

The primary topic is also expressed through relexicalisation⁴⁶ of the subject noun, after the verb, in other words, a VS word-order. There is primary topic continuity, but some thematic discontinuity. Normally primary topic discontinuity is signaled through a fronting of the primary topic subject, as will be illustrated below in the section of primary topic expressions with a marked word-order. But not all cases of primary topic change are through the fronting of primary topic subjects. In Genesis 14.21 is an example of a primary topic change in a wayyiqtol clause. The full noun phrase follows the verb.

<p> $H\epsilon\pi\downarrow\wp\Phi\nu\alpha\eta \psi\Box\Box\iota\lambda-\epsilon\Gamma\tau \leq\{\downarrow\rho\} \beta\alpha\exists-\lambda\epsilon\exists \leq\{\text{O}\delta\}$ $\sigma-\blacktriangleright\epsilon\lambda\Box\epsilon\mu \rho\epsilon\mu\exists B\cdot X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ $:\blacktriangleright\Box A\lambda-\xi-\nabla\theta H\Box\iota\kappa\downarrow\rho A\eta\subset\omega$ </p>	<p> The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself." </p>
--	--

⁴⁶ There are many examples in our Genesis corpus of unmarked word-order relexicalisation. A sample from chapter 23 is verses 2, 16, and 19.

In verse 21, the primary topic changes to the king of Sodom, after the interlude of the interaction of Abram and Melchizedeq. But instead of marking the primary topic shift with a *we-X-qatal* clause, a *wayyiqtol* clause is used and the primary topic relexicalized after the verb.

Another example of a primary topic is 1 Samuel 1.19 (from Van der Merwe, 1999a:294), where the third person plural ‘they’, referring to Elkanah and Hannah, is the unmarked, identifiable, discourse-active, continuing subject agent, in other words, a primary topic:

ρΠθ□ΟΖβαβ μ□□□ιζκ ΗϩΧψϩω η↓ ϩωη□ψ ψ□□□⊕ν πιλ □□□ ω(ξαΓτ) Η□∩Χψ ϩω	They rose in the morning And they worshipped before the LORD.
---	--

In Biblical Hebrew, primary topics are not always grammatical subjects. The possessor in possession clauses (the referent of the pronominal suffix after *le*) is also a primary topic. Additionally, the implied agent of infinitive construct verbs is also primary topics, coreferential with the subject of the main clause.

In *indicative* clauses, when the subject is eclipsed, the subject is still signaled in the pronominal affix on the verb. Such pronominal referents are primary topics, already identifiable, discourse-active, and presupposed. When the subject is not eclipsed, it can either appear after the verb or in front of the verb.

In *nominal* clauses with a *participle verbal-nominal*, the semantic agent of the verbal event is the primary topic. This semantic agent is either presupposed contextually or made explicit with a pronoun or nominal before the participle. The basic, unmarked word-order of such nominal clauses is *(subject)-participle-complement* (following Buth, 1999), with the explicit subject optional. An example is Deuteronomy 4.1 (as quoted by Van der Merwe & Talstra, 22):

≤ψ□ιΞΑΚπ) ΗιΓμαη-λεε□ω □□□≤ψ√ζθυξ□αη- λεε π□αμ) Η λ□Εε↓ρ) Ω∩ψ η□□□ΑΓταπ□ω τ [Ω(παλ ≤□εκ) τεε δ□□□ΕΓμαλ) μ ψ□ικΟν□Αε ρ□□□εΗ(ε	And now, o Israel, listen to the statutes and ordinances That I am teaching you to observe
---	---

In *verbless* clauses, with the basic word-order of *subject-predicate* (following Buth, 1999), the subject is the primary topic. An example is Genesis 39.3 (as quoted by Van der Merwe & Talstra, page 22):

ΥΓτε η□ϩωη□ψ ψ□ιζκ ωψ↓ ϩνΟδ(ε ε\ρ□□□	And his master saw that the LORD was with him
--	--

□□ϩXψϩω

In clauses with *imperative* verbs, the addressee is presupposed contextually. When an imperative clause is transformed into an indicative clause, the addressee becomes the subject.

Subject pronominals are primary topic expressions. They are used as subjects in verbless clauses, or as optional topical expressions in we-X-qatal clauses.

*Vocatives*⁴⁷ are topics as well. Vocatives make explicit the identity of the addressee. A vocative is an extra-clausal element referring to the primary topic or to the secondary topic, depending on the syntactic role of the addressee in the clause proper. For example

Deuteronomy 4.1:

≤ψ□ιΞAKπ) ΗιΓμαη-λεεεω □□□≤ψ√/∠θυξ□αη- And now, o Israel, listen to the statutes and the
λεεε π□αμ) Η λ□Εε↓ρ) Ω∩ψ η□□□ΑΓταπεω ordinances...

“Israel” the vocative and the addressees are co-referential, in this case as primary topic.

3.2.1.2 *Marked word-order primary topic*

For all forms of marked primary topic in Biblical Hebrew, some form of syntactic pre-positioning takes place. Primary topics can also be fronted before the verb, and even be left-dislocated⁴⁸. Marked primary topics are those topic expressions that are marked for specific pragmatic functions by means of their irregular word-order. Such marked primary topics are topics in the sense that they must be presupposed, they are discourse active or at least semi-active, and thirdly, some new information is asserted about them in the comment of the proposition. This means that sentences with primary topics in pre-verbal positions are still topic-comment sentences with predicate focus structure. When the pre-verbal constituent is anything other than a primary, secondary topic, or topic frame, the focus structure of the proposition is different and it cannot be topic-comment sentence articulation.

Two different configurations for contrastive primary topic fronting can be distinguished, namely subject fronting, and left dislocation of the subject.

1) FRONTING OF PRIMARY TOPICS⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See Lambrecht (1996: On the formal and functional relationship between topics and vocatives. Evidence from French).

⁴⁸ Cf. Dooley & Levinsohn, 2001:67.

⁴⁹ Further examples of fronted primary topics in our corpus are the following: Genesis 1.20, 22, 30; 3.15, 16, 20; 4.1, 2, 20; 6.17, 21; 7.4, 8-9, 19, 22; 8.19; 9.7, 9; 13.12, 14; 14.3, 23; 15.3, 15; 16.5, 12; 17.9; 18.13, 17, 33; 19.4; 20.4, 5; 25.34; 26.35; 32.1-2; 37.2b-3, 11, 35-36; 38.25; 39.1; 42.10, 23; 44.2, 4.

Marked primary topic by means of fronting is generally used for some form of topic discontinuity. Some topic change or topic switch takes place.

An example from Genesis of the change from God to the human (Adam) as the primary topic in Genesis 3.24-4.1:

|ΥΓτ) Ηιθ η□□□ ρ Φωαξ-τεε πΨ⇒δ ρ ψ ≤□↓δA And **Adam** lay with his wife Eve,
□□□Aη□ω and she became pregnant and gave birth to
 .../ρψ□∇θ-τεε δελ□□□ΕΓ τϩω □□□ραηαΓτϩω Cain...

“God” is the primary topic until Genesis 3.24, and in 4.1 it changes to ‘the Man’ (Adam).

A further example is seen in the change from Jacob’s sons to the Midianites as primary topics in Genesis 37.35-36; and to Joseph in 39.1, after the interlude of Genesis 38:

□□□ραπνιΞ | πλ ≤ρψ/↓ρ) χιμ-λεε | ΨτΟε ↓ ρ) 37.36 Meanwhile, **the Midianites** sold Joseph in
 κΑμ ≤ψ↓ρν↓δ) Γμ□αη□ω 37.36 Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the
 > :≤ψ□ιξA ZβαΛΞαη ρ□□□αΩ η□□Οω(ραΚπ σψZ(ρ) captain of the guard.
 σ 39.1 Now **Joseph** had been taken down to Egypt...

...ηΑμ<ψ/↓ρ) χιμ δ□□Z⇒ρ)η ∞□Eσ | ψ□ω 39.1

Genesis 22.5 is a further example, this time of a longer noun phrase as primary topic:

η[ΟZκ-δαπ η□Ακ) λ⊕ν ραπ↓ϩΦναη□ω ψ□□□ while **I and the boy** go over there.
ρν(εϩ)ω We will worship and then we will come back to
 :≤□εκψΕλ(ε ηΑβ)BH ρ ν□ω η□□Οω(ξαΓτ) Η□□ρν you.
 □ω

This primary topic is a double-noun noun phrase. Notice how the first-person plural in the second and third clauses maintains the primary topic continuity.

Genesis 17.9

≤□Αη↓ρ) βαε-λεε □□□≤ψιηυλ]ε ρεμε Χψϩω Then God said to Abraham,
 ρ□□]Ομ) Ηιτ ψ□□□ιτψ/ρ) Zβ-τεε] η□ΑΓταε□ω "As for you, you must keep my covenant,
 :≤□ΑτΟρΟδ) λ ♣ψΨΣρ(ξαϩε □♣(τ) ρϩζ□ω η□Α you and your descendants after you for the
 Γταε generations to come.

This is an example of double fronting, but not left-dislocation as the NRSV translation rendering. “You”, that is, Abraham, is the primary topic. It is not left-dislocation in the Hebrew because the second-person singular pronoun “you” is the subject of the clause proper (and the subject prefix of the verb, cf. definition of left-dislocation, 3.2.1.2, section 2) on left-dislocation, below), and there is no syntactic separation.

These changes of primary topic also occur at the end of sections, as the example in Genesis 32.1-2 (Masoretic text) illustrate:

but fronting. Purely syntactic criteria for left-dislocation constructions can be listed as follows:

- The constituent must be pre-positioned before the verb, and occur sentence-initially.
- There must be some syntactic separation from the clause proper, either by means of some conjunction or a particle.
- If there is no such syntactic separation, the nominal is still left-dislocated if it has a recursive element in the syntactic clause proper that is more explicit than only the subject verb affix. In other words, a full pronoun as subject, object, or indirect object, each qualifies as a recursive element for a left-dislocated constituent.⁵¹
- The detached constituent can be preceded by a conjunction.

For left-dislocated or pendens constructions, Van der Merwe & Talstra argue that “[i]n verbal and nominal clauses pendens constructions *establishes (promote)* identifiable, but non-active entities to a state of discourse activeness” (2002:23). Gregory & Michaelis (2001:1665, 1670-73) argue that, in English, left-dislocation has a single discourse function as a “topic-promoting device” with “restrictive and distinct use conditions.” Left-dislocation is a sentence-level topic establishing device (ibid.:1671) which often has some anaphoric continuity as topic in the subsequent discourse. In addition, left-dislocated topics can be contrastive and must be identifiable and cognitively semi-active (ibid.:1670, cf. Lambrecht, 1994:177). I expect this definition for left-dislocation in English broadly agrees with pendens constructions or left-dislocation in Biblical Hebrew.

An example of two fronted primary topics is in Genesis 17.17, showing a case of left-dislocation in the second clause of Abraham’s utterance:

<p>ωψ□ ρvAKπ-λασ ≤□Aη↓ρ) βαε λ⊥OKπ∩Xψϑω □∠βιλ ∠β ρεμ□·Xψϑω θΥΑξ χ∩Xψϑω δ□Ελ ρΦω∩ψ □□η ρvAH-η□Aεμ/□εβ Γλ□αη :δ□□ΕλΕΓ τ η□ ρvAH ≤ψ□ιω) ΗιΓτ-ταβ(η η□↓ρAΩ</p>	<p>Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"</p>
--	---

⁵¹ This strict syntactic definition of left-dislocation has implications for the left-dislocation status of first or second person pronouns which turn up as subjects in the clause proper. Especially the second person pronouns can syntactically be vocatives. If it can be proved from the context that such pre-posed second person pronouns are indeed vocatives, these pronouns are then left-dislocated. According to the above definition, sentence-initial first person pronouns recurring as subjects are not left-dislocated. What criteria can be applied to define such pronominals as pendens constructions will be much harder to determine, if ever possible.

-≤□ιθCω

In this example there is both a fronting construction (inside rhetorical question clause), and a left-dislocation (outside rhetorical question clause), but both cases (Abraham as the man of 100 years and Sarah as a woman of 90 years) are primary topics. “Sarah” in the second clause of Abraham’s utterance is a case of left-dislocation, because it is excluded by the clause proper by the question particle. “Sarah” here is the same as the “daughter of 90 years”, making the left-dislocated proper name a topic frame (see 3.2.4 below).

Another example is 2 Kings 15.36

ηΥΑΩΑτ ρ□□□□□εΗ(θ ≤□Ατ ψ ψB⊙ρ) β(∠δ ρ ετ□⊙ψ□ω	As for the other events of Jotham's reign, and what he did,
≤ψ□ιμ ρ Xψαη ψB⊙ρ) β(∠δ ρεπ□Eσ-λατ ≤ψ□ ιβ]τ) ∠κ ≤□□Eη-θ-λ(η :η ↓δ]ηCψ ψ□Eκ) λαμ) λ	are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?

“The other events of Jotham’s reign” is a left-dislocated noun phrase, presupposed but inactive. The recursive pronoun is the subject and primary topic in the clause proper. Like the subsequent example from Genesis 24.7, long noun phrases serving as reactivated topics, in other words, topics that are promoted from identifiable to active status, sometimes require a left-dislocated construction. One possible explanation for this is that if a long, presupposed noun phrase occurs within the syntax of the clause proper, it will be in a disadvantaged position.

Left-dislocation configurations are also used to add information to a primary topic that is then taken further as the subject in the clause proper. Left-dislocation constructions lend themselves to extended pre-verbal noun phrases, with even relative clauses inserted as part of the left-dislocation. An example of such a rather complex left-dislocated primary topic with the recursive full pronoun fronted before the verb, and which also has two relative clauses attached to the left-dislocated structure, is Genesis 24.7:

≤ρψ□αμAKHαη ψ□□□Eη∪λ] ε η□□□ ρ ωηCψ □ψιΓτ(δαλ μ fΣρ□□□□εEμ] □ψιβαE τψ□□□E ∠βιμ ψρν□αξ⊙θ) λ ρ□εΗ(θ ρ□OμEελ □□ψιλ-τ□α∠β) Η□ρν ρ□□□εΗ(θϱω ψ □ιλ-ρε∠β(∠δ ρ□εΗ(θϱω τEY·ζαη fΣρ□□□□□AεAη-τεε/□EΓ τεε ↓ ♣(τ(ρ=ϱ ζ) λ ♣ψ↓⊙vAπ) λ □□□ κAε) λαμ ξ□αλ) Ηρν ψ ε]□η]	The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, ...
--	---

In this example, the referent of both the left-dislocated constituent and the subject is “the LORD.” The left-dislocated constituent is a topic frame, orienting the hearer-reader to the

identity of the referent that is re-activated by being mentioned first: “The LORD, the God of heaven.” This re-activated topical expression is co-referential with the subject-agent in the main clause, the primary topic. The identity of the LORD is presupposed but modified by adding some new information to it in the form of two relative clauses introduced by each⁵². The reconfirmed information is that the LORD took him from his family home and also that He made a certain promise to Abraham. In the main clause, the fronted pronominal אֲנִי as the recurring pronoun for the left-dislocated constituent, is the marked, topicalised primary topic, confirming his identity: “[The LORD]...*He himself* will send his angel before you....”

When the two criteria for left-dislocation are not met (that is, there is no recursive that is not a verbal subject affix or there is no other signal that indicates that the noun phrase is syntactically outside the clause proper), the pre-posed noun phrase is not left-dislocated at all, but just fronted. It is then not a *pendens* construction.

Since I could not produce any evidence to the contrary, I have argued that left-dislocated referents in Biblical Hebrew are always presupposed and topical, promoting presupposed topics from inactive to active status (following Van der Merwe & Talstra (p. 23)).

In chapter 8 the function of primary topics in the development of the discourse theme is discussed.

3.2.2 Secondary Topics

Like primary topics, *secondary topics* are presupposed, discourse-active topic expressions, referential and anaphoric. To define secondary topics, it is necessary to contrast them with primary topics. The difference between primary and secondary topics is that secondary topics are less salient than primary topics, and that secondary topics are dependent on the presence of a primary topic in the proposition. In addition, and simultaneously, secondary topics differ from primary topics by virtue of being part of the asserted or new information in a sentence, whereas primary topics cannot, by definition, be part of the focus domain. The difference between a primary topic and a secondary topic is that a secondary topic is not the primary address of the proposition of new information. It does not have its own address (for discussion, see Vallduví & Engdahl, 1996).

⁵² It can also be argued that the statements made in the two relative clauses are recoverable from the co-text and the context. In that case, it is presupposed.

It is important to give a label to this type of topic and not just let it “disappear” in the comment of a predicate focus structure, because such topics are still topics in the sense that something is commented about them and by being able to identify secondary topics, will be easier to trace topic continuity in discourse.

The question can be raised as to whether secondary topics are really topical, because when a discourse active referent appears as a secondary topic, it is part of the focus structure of the sentence. Strictly speaking, the sentence is not primarily about the referent of the secondary topic, but to a certain extent new information is nevertheless attributed to that secondary topic referent. Such secondary topic referents are always presupposed and discourse active, but is something new really said about them? I want to argue that secondary topics are indeed topical, because they display the following topical properties: activation (they are activated), information enrichment (the asserted information adds something new to the knowledge of secondary topic referent in the mind of the addressee), and important (even primary participants) in a discourse.

Secondary topics can be important or minor participants in a narrative, and can also refer to non-animate referents. Secondary topics cannot be grammatical subjects, but they tend to be direct objects, indirect objects, and referents referred to with suffixes in prepositional phrases. Direct objects with the direct object marker mark the expression they are attached to as a topical expression, a secondary topic. An example from Genesis 22.9 illustrates Isaac as a secondary topic. Such objects with the object marker appear with or without a definite article, but are always taken as definite, identifiable, and discourse active.

The heuristic tools for identifying secondary topics can be summarized in the following way:

1. Secondary topics are always cognitively identifiable.
2. Secondary topics are always discourse active, which implies that they are always cognitively presupposed.
3. Secondary topics are always part of the comment in topic-comment sentence articulations.
4. Secondary topics tend to be objects and indirect objects within the predication of transitive verbs.

5. Not all objects are secondary topics. The object must meet the above-mentioned requirements of being an identifiable, presupposed, and active referent as part of the comment or predicate focus structure of a topic-comment sentence. In practical terms, this means that the secondary topic object must be definite (marked by the definite object particle) and/or pronominal. This also means that objects that identify or activate discourse-new participants, and also indefinite objects, are not secondary topics.
6. Secondary topics must be accompanied by a primary topic. Without a primary topic in the clause, secondary topics are not possible. Secondary topics are always cognitively less salient than primary topics, even in constructions where they are pre-posed before the verb⁵³.

A sentence can have more than one secondary topic, in various combinations, with the most frequent combination that of indirect object and object, or object and then indirect object.

3.2.2.1 Unmarked word-order secondary topic

Secondary topic expressions with an unmarked word-order in Biblical Hebrew are listed below.

- A secondary topic can be a referent referred to by an object or indirect object suffix to a verb.
- A secondary topic can be referred to by an object pronoun, *et* - + suffix, as can be seen in the example below of Genesis 22.9 in the fifth clause of that verse (he laid *him* on the altar).
- A secondary topic can be referred to by an indirect object in a prepositional phrase.
- A secondary topic can be referred to by a full object or indirect object noun or noun phrase, as can be seen in the example below of Genesis 22.9 in the fourth clause (he bound *Isaac his son*).

Some unmarked secondary topics are illustrated by means of the story of Genesis 22, where Abraham is instructed by God to sacrifice Isaac. God, Abraham and Isaac are all primary

⁵³ The pre-posing of secondary topics has a different function to becoming cognitively more salient than the primary topic. The pragmatic function of such pre-posed secondary topics needs to be looked for in the area of discourse theme transition, for example, theme introduction, theme closure, or some theme shifting.

participants. The topicality of Isaac is displayed by the fact that it has some topical properties: 1) Isaac is a primary participant in the discourse, 2) he is informationally enriched. New, non-presupposed events have happened with him and to him, and 3) Isaac has been activated in Genesis 22.2.

Example: Genesis 22.9

<p>□ ≤ ψιηυλΓ εΑη Ζλ-ραμ□ Αε ρ□□□□εΗ(ε □ ≤ θΑΓμαη-λ□εε] ε□Οβ ρ Χψϩω ⇒ ξ□Ε□β□ζιΓμαη-τεε □□□ ≤ Αη ↓ ρ) β α ε □ □ ΑΗ /εβ = ρ Χψϩω ≤ ψΥιχΕπΑη-τεε ♣ Ορ(πϩΧψ□ϩω ↓ ν) ↓ β θ□□□ Αξ) χ ρ ψ-τεε □□□ δΟθ(πϩΧψ□ϩω ω : ≤ ψ□ιχΕπΑλ λαπ□αΓμιμ ⇒ ξ□Ε□β□ζιΓμαη-λ απ □□□ τΟε ≤ εΩ□ ρ Χψϩω</p>	<p>When they came to the place that God had shown him, and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and he bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.</p>
---	---

Isaac is identifiable, already introduced earlier in the narrative, discourse active, because of God’s command to Abraham to take his son and sacrifice him. For a short span the focus was on the journey and Isaac, though only semi-active as a participant of the scene, is here re-activated as a discourse active topic by means of the full noun phrase including the possessive modifier “his son.” After the re-activation, Isaac is referred to pronominally as “him.” Isaac does not become a primary topic because of now being active in a continuous span of discourse and only referred to pronominally. Abraham is the primary topic because the focus of the narrative here is on what he is doing to obey God’s command to him. We conclude therefore that secondary topics indeed have topical properties⁵⁴.

3.2.2.2 Marked word-order secondary topic

Like primary topics, secondary topics⁵⁵ can also appear in marked constructions. The most frequent construction is the fronting of the secondary topic expression (often called “topicalisation” or Y-movement in the literature). Such fronting of secondary topic expressions before the primary topic and before the predicate raises the question of whether such topics are still secondary topics, now that they are in a salient position. As a heuristic tool, many, if not most, cases of object fronting will naturally be cases of argument focus or

⁵⁴ In the analysis of theme, the notion of *secondary topics* becomes important when the ‘topics’ of the comments, or better still, the contents of the focus expressions are identified, called Focus content. Focus content is distinct from sentence topics dealt with in this chapter. The interaction between the sentence topics and the so-called focus content then becomes crucial in the identification of macropropositions. Macropropositions in turn form the framework of the thematic structure of a text.

⁵⁵ Vallduví & Vilkuña (1998:107) argue that only primary topics can be contrasted. The reason why they hold this position is because their theoretical framework does not deal with the issue of the marking of what they call “tail topics” (which is the same as our “secondary topic”).

sentence focus, but there are cases where this is not the case. These cases entail the fronting of a presupposed, discourse-active, definite object (with the object marker et), and in addition, a primary topic is clearly definable. In such cases there is no question that the sentence has anything other than a predicate focus structure. The question remains of the relationship between the primary topic and the secondary topic. Is the secondary topic now raised to a more cognitively salient position than the primary topic? I argue that fronting has a different function. The evidence points to the presence of some comparing and contrasting, and this type of construction tends to occur at “faultlines” in the discourse, normally as a closure device at the end of sections or where there is some redirection of the thematic development within an episode.

A. FRONTED SECONDARY TOPICS⁵⁶

Paired topics that are both topics are generally displayed by a Y-movement configuration in Biblical Hebrew in the second clause of the pair. An example of contrastive secondary topics in a symmetrical clause pair construction is Joshua 7.25:

<p>β□Eεζ-τεεζω βZ©ρOπ-τεε/M ρψλδιμ ψ□©ρ AΩ-ψ□Θν H □δ Zκ λXψ□ϩω □□β©ρ π-ρ χ Zβ β ©ρ π-τεε =γλραηϩXψ ϩω β□Eεζ-βΠθ□ϩψ β □γλραη □□βEεζ-τεε ω</p>	<p>They captured the two captains of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the wine press of Zeeb</p>
--	---

Both Midianite captains, Oreb and Zeeb, are activated in the first clause. “They” are the soldiers of Gideon - the presupposed primary topic right through. In the second and third lines, Oreb and Zeeb are discourse-active, presupposed topics that are secondary topics as part of the predicate. Zeeb in the third clause is fronted for contrastiveness, here in the sense of comparing him with Oreb. But it remains a secondary topic. Topic contrast by means of fronting and comparing has been achieved.

An additional example is Genesis 1:5a

<p>≤ ↓ψ □□□ρ εΑλ ≤ψ□ιηυλΓ ε □□↓ρ^θ^Xψϩω ηΑλcψΥΑλ ε↓ρ□□□□□⊗θ ▲εΗΨΟξαλ cω</p>	<p>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night</p>
--	---

More examples of such contrastive fronted secondary topics are the following (a word-for-word English translation is given without the Hebrew text for brevity):

⁵⁶ Further examples of fronted secondary topics from our corpus are: Genesis 1.5, 10; 2.20; 3.16a, 17a; 9.23; 12.3, 12, 15; 19.6, 10-11; 17.14; 20.16; 27.15-16; 40.21.

- Genesis 4.4-5 and-he-directed-gaze Yahweh to-Abel and-to-his-offering,
and-to-Cain and-to-his-offering he-did-not-direct-gaze.
- Genesis 14.21 Give-me the-people,
and-goods take-for-yourself
- Genesis 41.13 **Me** he-restored to my-position,
him he-hanged

B. LEFT-DISLOCATED SECONDARY TOPICS⁵⁷

Left-dislocation is also used as a configuration for marked word-order secondary topics. A theme shift is often the discourse strategy for which this marked construction is used. An example is “Sarai your wife” in Genesis 17.5:

<p>↓ ≤□Aη↓ρ βαε-λεεε □□□≤ψιη∪λ ε ρεμε ·XψRω ψ ↓ρAΩ ∠η□Aμ H-τεε εB↓ρ∧θιτ-ελ :∠η□Aμ H ηΨ↓ρAΩ ψ□ι∠κ</p>	<p>God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.</p>
--	---

The recursive pronominal reference in the clause proper refers back to the pre-clause “Sarai your wife”, but the primary topic is not “Sarai.” It is Abraham, the one who needs to change her name. “Sarah” continues to be the secondary topic from verse 6 onwards.

In chapter 8 the function of secondary topics in the development of the discourse theme is discussed.

3.2.3 Tail Topics⁵⁸

A tail topic is what Lambrecht (1994:118, 202-205) calls an *antitopic*. He defines an antitopic as the repetition of topical information because the speaker is of the opinion that the unmarked topic pronoun in the clause proper is insufficient for the hearer. The pronominal topic is substituted by its full noun or noun phrase, detached and post-located from the proposition it is associated with. In Hebrew, tail topic is carried by right-dislocated constituents. Tail topic can only occur in topic-comment sentences with its primary topic. The tail topic then elaborates on the primary topic information already active, by doing one of

⁵⁷ Genesis 17.14 is another example of a left-dislocated secondary topic.

⁵⁸ Further examples of tail topics from our corpus are: Genesis 2.23; 6.18; 7.8-9a, 21; 13.1; 20.7, and also Genesis 44.2-4.

three things: providing some additional, but less salient, information about that topic, by making explicit any information that is already cognitively accessible about that topic, and in this way disambiguating any information associated with the primary topic.

A noun or noun phrase at the end of the clause it is associated with, and detached from it, is a right dislocation. Right dislocation is the syntactic opposite of left dislocation. Right dislocation is the syntactic description of a constituent that pragmatically functions as, what Lambrecht calls an antitopic, a topic substitute. Such tail topics can also serve to modify the topic or elaborate on the topic, and are often called *afterthought* in the literature (Dik, 1980; Rosenbaum, 1997:chapter 4; Gómez-Gonzalez, 2001:155-156). The post-dislocated constituent substitutes the (normally) pronominal topic expression within the clause with a full noun or noun phrase at the end. Andreas Michel (1997:45-71) calls this expression a *split coordination structure*, and he argues that such expressions in Biblical Hebrew tend to contain *lists*. This configuration is used because the author wishes to focus more on one participant rather than each one on the list equally. That one participant is more prominent or even representative of all the others in the list.

Tail topics cognitively strengthen primary topics. The predicate focus structure commenting on the primary topic, by implication also comments on the tail topic.

The heuristic tools for discovering tail topics can be set out in the following steps:

1. Right-dislocated constructions, anchored to a primary topic earlier in the proposition, are logical candidates for tail topic status.
2. The question must be asked whether the information in the right-dislocated construction elaborates or expands information of the discourse-active primary topic in the clause proper. If no such corresponding topic in the clause proper can be identified, it cannot be a tail topic. By using a tail topic construction, the speaker-writer is saying: “by topic x I actually mean y, or I mean y as well.”
3. Lists at the end of sentences often qualify for tail topic status, when the above criteria are met as well. Otherwise, such lists are just newly-asserted information as part of the focus structure of a proposition, most likely being some form of end-weight (end-weight is defined in Chapter 5 (5.3.1.)

An example of a right-dislocation construction that is a tail topic is Exodus 20.10:

♣ψΥ□εη∪λ┘ ε η□□□ ρωηψαλ |τ□□□□ΑΖβαΗ ψ□□ι
 ψψιβ|ΚΗαη □□□≤ |ψ□ω
 η□□ΑκεΑλ|μ-λΑκ η□□□□εΩ(τωατ-ε□□□↓∪λ
 □□□□♣ρ⊕γ□ω ♣□□εΓτ|μεη|β]□□♣τ□Αμ(εϑω □\
 ∟♣δ|βαω ♣□εΓτιβ]□-□□□□Ακ<νιβ] η□□□ΑΓταε
 ♣ψ□□ΣρΑω|Ηι∟β ρ□□□□□εΗ(ε

But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD
 your God;
 You shall not do any work-
**-you, your son or your daughter, your male or
 female slave, your livestock, or the alien
 resident in your towns.**

The “you” primary topic is modified and elaborated on in the list provided in the right-
 dislocation, making explicit what is meant by “you.” The principle of end-weight is at work
 here: the string of information that, if included in the clause proper would have made the
 clause too cumbersome, has been shifted right to the end.

Genesis 20.7 is another example of a primary topic as tail topic:

τ | Ζμ-ψι∟κ ω⇒∟δ□□□
 :♣□Αλ-ρεΗ(ε-λΑκ<ω η□□ΑΓταε τ]□μΑΓτ

...know that die you will die
you and all who belong to you.

A last example⁵⁹ is Joshua 24.12

η□Αω(ριΦχαη-τεε ε □□□≤εκψ⊕ν) πιλ ξ□αλ) Ηεε ρ
 ω
 ψ|/ρΟμ|εΑη ψ□□□Εκ|λαμ| ψ□⊕ν) Η ≤εκψ⊕ν) Κ
 πιμ □□□≤Ατ | ε ΗΣρ□□□ ργ) Γτϑω

I sent the hornet ahead of you,
 And it drove them out before you, **the two kings
 of the Amorites,**

In chapter 8 the function of tail topics in the development of the discourse theme is discussed.

3.2.4 Topic Frames

A fourth type of topic expression is *topic frame*⁶⁰. A topic frame is a presupposed, topical
 referent that sets a frame for another topic, normally primary topic. The primary topic is
 interpreted in terms of this framing topic.

Topic frames are not the same as spatio-temporal deictic orientations that also “frame” the
 subsequent discourse in terms of its text-world situation. In contrast to deictic orientations,
 what I call topic frames can be of two types of relationship with the subsequent primary topic:

⁵⁹ A further example is Genesis 2.25: ‘The two of them were naked, *the man and his wife*, but they were not ashamed’.

⁶⁰ A contrastive topic frame is not a form of argument focus (to be studied in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5). Suffice to say
 here that in argument focus, in which fronting is also the preferred syntactic configuration in Biblical Hebrew, the fronted
 constituent is either new and asserted, or some new information (like confirming identity) about a presupposed referent is
 asserted. The arguments in focus in an argument focus construction are not necessarily discourse active, while contrastive
 topics are always discourse active or at least semi-active and inferable.

either whole to part, or general to specific⁶¹. Generic topic frames are semantically the more generic referent, while the primary topic is the more specific referent with regards to that generic frame. *The generic frame then frames the more specific primary topic*, with the frame normally in a left-dislocated position syntactically. Take for example the following sentence:

“As for Paris, the Eiffel Tower is worth seeing”

This example illustrates a generic individual-referential frame (Paris) and a specific primary topic (the Eiffel Tower). The frame frames the primary topic, so to speak. “As for...” left-dislocated constructions are often of this type.

This concept has been called “basis” and “point of departure” by the Prague School of linguists (cf. Dooley & Levinsohn, 2001:68-70; Levinsohn, 2000a:7-21). In the literature this type of topic is often called *theme* (Gómez-González, 2001; Dik, 1989: e.a.), but in this study the term *frame* (following Jacob’s (2001) topical category of frame-setting), is preferred. The term *theme* has been used in the literature for a syntactic sentence-initial constituent (Halliday, Gómez-González), for the information structure component of topic (Prague School), for the syntactic extra-clausal left-dislocated constituent (Dik) and also for the prominent core of the discourse flow (Callow). Since I prefer to reserve the term *theme* for this last definition, namely for thematics, I refrain from using the term *theme topic* or just *theme* for this informational category.

Topic frames, as topics, cannot be newly asserted information, but are always presupposed active or re-activated information.

Where “double” topics appear, in a part-whole relationship or something similar, the first-mentioned topic is then a topic frame. Topic frames do not occur alone as the only topic of a clause. They must be accompanied by a primary topic for which they set a frame. In the case of sentences that only have a noun phrase as topic frame in either a left dislocation or in the fronted position, that noun is one of the multiple topics.

The heuristic tools for identifying a topic frame can be summarized in the following way:

⁶¹ These two types of topic frames could be collapsed into one if no particular criteria can be identified to set them apart. So far I have not found any such criteria, but still keep them apart in the hope that further investigation will yield some criteria to distinguish the types.

- There must be some marked noun phrase in a pre-verbal position, fronted or left-dislocated.
- The fronted noun phrase must set a semantic frame for the primary topic, which is normally expected to be the subject of the verb.
- The frame must be in some way presupposed and topical. It cannot be a newly-asserted or newly-activated referent.
- The topic frame normally precedes the primary topic in terms of word-order, but a topic frame can also precede a fronted argument focus structure in some cases.

Topic frames in Biblical Hebrew are always fronted or left-dislocated. Two syntactic configurations for topic frames can be distinguished, namely 1) fronting of a nominal phrase or an adverbial phrase in the pre-verbal field, and 2) left dislocation. The fronted adjunct can be a temporal or locative adverbial phrase, be it a single word or a multiple-word phrase. The fronted adjunct is pragmatically different from the adverbial that follows the verb⁶². When it is fronted, it takes on the function of orienting or framing the sentence. But this is only the case if the fronted adverbial is presupposed and discourse active or at least semi-active and inferable⁶³. The configurations of left dislocation and fronted all-topical clauses are syntactically detached from the proposition they are associated with. The fronted and detached constituent can be a noun, a nominal phrase, a temporal or locative nominal, or in the case of a topical clause, a full clause with a predication. In the case of a topical clause, the whole clause is presupposed. Nothing is asserted, in spite of the presence of a verb. All three configurations have in common that they function as topic frames in the sense of being the ‘basis’⁶⁴ or ‘point of departure’ of the topic and the proposition following it. Buth (1999) coined the term “contextualizing constituent” for fronted NPs. In some cases topic frames, topical themselves, could indeed be called contextualizing constituents.

A. FRONTING

⁶² Adverbials of location or time following the verb are part of the predication, and part of the predicate focus structure.

⁶³ If the adverbial is not presupposed and in some state of discourse activation, it is an argument focus construction. When the main predication of the clause is not presupposed either, that proposition has a double focus construction. See Chapter 2 for a description of double focus structures.

⁶⁴ Following Chafe’s definition. See the discussion under 5.5.2. on Heimerdinger’s treatment of topic in Biblical Hebrew, where he quotes Chafe’s definition.

FRONTING of an object (Y-movement or topicalisation) can also be employed to raise the object referent to a topic frame. For example, see Isaiah 50.6⁶⁵

ΨιΓ ≤ψ□ι∠καμ) λ ψιΓτ□□□ατ ρν □□□ψ□ω⊕Φγ **my back I** gave to those who strike,
 □□□ψ□ϱνAKπ ≤ψΥιΞ(ρ□□∠Oμ) λ ψ□ϱψAξ) λ] and **my cheeks (I give)** to those who pulled out the
 :θΞOρ ρω τ | □Γμιλ) ∠κιμ τ(ρ□αΓτ) σιη εZ·λ beard;
I did not hide from insult and spitting. (own translation)

“My back”, discourse active because of being identifiable cognitively by inference⁶⁶, is raised by means of fronting to become a topic frame to the primary topic “I”, the Suffering Servant. By its fronting, its privileged clause-initial position makes it the primary topic, while the primary topic “I” is the secondary topic.

B. LEFT DISLOCATION

A fronted left-dislocation construction⁶⁷ is one format used to indicate a ‘point of departure’ or topic frame, and consists of a noun or a noun phrase. It also sets a frame or parameters for the primary topic.

An example of such a left-dislocated topic frame is Shechem in Genesis 34.8:

ρ□□[OμεEλ ≤□□□ΑΓτἰε ρ | Ψμ(ξ ρ□□□E∠β⇒δ< But Hamor said to them,
 ≤□εκ) Γτἰβ) ∠β □□□ | H) πϱν η□@θ) H□Aξ ψϱω "My son Shechem has his heart set on your
 □ | ∠β ≤□□□εκ) H] daughter.
 :η□AKHἰε) λ | Ψλ ∠η□AτOε ε□ ρν]=v) Γτ Please give her to him as his wife.

“My son Shechem” is a left-dislocated construction, with its recursive the third-person singular pronominal suffix on “soul”, the primary topic of the clause. “My son Shechem” is the topic frame of the primary topic. Again the NRSV translation and the requirements of the English language, obscure the topic frame.

A second example of a left-dislocated topic frame is in Genesis 17.17

ωψ□ ρνAKπ-λααω ≤□Aη↓ρ) βαε λ⊥OKπ∩Xψϱ Abraham fell facedown;
 ω he laughed and said to himself,
 | □∠βιλ) ∠β ρεμε□·Xψϱω θΥAξ) χ∩Xψϱω "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old?

⁶⁵ Rosenbaum (1997) calls “my-face” and “my-back” in Isaiah 50.5-6 sub-topics because they are inferable from the knowledge of the world of both speaker and hearer.

⁶⁶ It would be incorrect if the fronted “my back” is interpreted as newly-asserted information now in focus, and as a result be an argument focus structure. “My back” is a secondary topic within the predicate focus, saying: “I gave my back to the strikers.” By its fronting, its privileged clause-initial position makes it topic frame, setting a parameter for the primary topic “I.”

⁶⁷ It should be noted that a front dislocated construction does include a fronted temporal or locative adverbial noun or noun phrase. This is what Buth and Rosenbaum call ‘setting’. Cf. 3.3.1.

δ□Ελ φΦωϞψ □□□η φνΑΗ-η□ΑεΕμ/□εβ|Γλζη
 :δ□□□ΕΛΕΓτ η□ φνΑΗ ≤ψ□ιω| ΗιΓτ-ταβ|η η□
 ↓ρΑΩ-≤□ιεζω

Will **Sarah** bear a child at the age of ninety?"

The NRSV rendering obscures the topic frame. Literally, the Hebrew says: “As what Sarah is concerned, will a woman of 90 years have children?” As quoted as an example of fronted and left-dislocated topics above (3.2.1.2), in this example both a fronting construction (inside the rhetorical question clause), and a left-dislocation (outside the rhetorical question clause) occur, but in both cases (Abraham as the man of 100 years and Sarah as a woman of 90 years) are primary topics. The difference between the two clauses is “Sarah” in the second clause of Abraham’s utterance. It is a case of left-dislocation, because it is excluded by the clause proper by the question particle. “Sarah” here is the same as the “daughter of 90 years”, making the left-dislocated proper name a topic frame.

Another example is “bed” in 2 Kings 1.4 as a left-dislocated topic frame, setting a frame for the primary topic “you” (King Ahaziah):

η φΦν□εΓμιμ δ□□BϞρετ-ελ·λ ≤□AKH Ατψ□ιλ
 Απ-ρεΗ(ε η□ΑΛΞιΓμζη)

the **bed to which you have gone** you shall not leave

“You”, included in the verb and referring to the king, is the primary topic. The left-dislocated constituent, “the bed to which you have gone”, is a topic frame setting the scene for the asserted information “shall not leave (it).” Its prominent position is that it is able to function as a frame. “The bed” has a definite article and is identifiable and semi-active as information that is shared and recoverable by inference from the frame “sickness” activated earlier in the discourse. 2 Kings 1.4 is an example of object fronting in which the object becomes the topic frame. We can call such constructions *double topic* constructions, not in the sense of the proposition having two topics, but rather in the sense of one topic (the primary topic) included in the other (the topic frame). “The bed” as well as “you”, is what the proposition is about, but both refer to the king Ahaziah.

C. TOPIC FRAME PRECEDING ARGUMENT FOCUS⁶⁸

An example of a topic frame preceding a fronted argument focus structure is Genesis 6.19⁶⁹

εψ□ιβαΓτ λ Οζκιμ ≤Ϟψ□Ϟν|Η| ρ□ΑΩΑζβ-λΑ
 ζκιμ ψαξΑη□-λΑζκιμ
 ♣ΥΑΓτιε τ□Οψ(ξζη)λ η□ΑΒΕΓταη-λεε

And of all living creatures, of all flesh, two of each one you are to bring into the ark to keep them alive with you.

⁶⁸ Argument focus is defined in Chapter 5 (5.2.3).

⁶⁹ An almost identical example of a topic frame is the next verse: Genesis 6.20.

:| | ψ) η □ ∩ ψ η □ Α β τ μ θ ∩ ν | ρ □ □ □ Α κ φ ζ **Male and female** they must be.

The topic frame is the presupposed “And all living creatures, of all flesh”, already activated in verse 17 (“every creature that has life in it”). This noun phrase sets the frame for the “two of each one” phrase, meaning “two of each one of all the types of living creatures and flesh.” “Two of each one” is fronted and is what is in focus in this proposition. The fronted “male and female” then further specifies the exact nature of the “two of each one.” “Male and female” is also a case of argument focus.

3.3 PRAGMATIC OPERATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH TOPICS

There are two pragmatic operations that are associated with topics, in the sense of some meaning overlay. In both cases, the referents, be they nominal, pronominal, or spatio-temporal, are presupposed information. The two operations are deictic orientations and topic contrastiveness.

3.3.1 Deictic Orientations

Deictic orientations are not topical in the sense that the subsequent discourse is about them, but they set the spatio-temporal framework in which the topics operate. When the information in such deictic orientations is presupposed, the deictic orientation is associated with the topics of the text, always the primary topics, but also some of the other three types.

The terms “setting” and “point of departure” are possible synonyms. The term “setting” is often used for this type of spatio-temporal orientation (cf. Buth, 1999; Rosenbaum, 1997). Levinsohn’s term ‘point of departure’ also has relevance to deictic orientations (2000a:7-21). All presupposed spatio-temporal orientations are points of departure, although according to his definition, points of departure are more than spatio-temporal orientations.

But what is the relationship between deictic orientations and the information structure? Heimerdinger (1999:122) provides a useful insight. He points out that fronted adverbial phrases (temporal ADVP, e.g. Genesis 22.4a) are not topicalisations, but rather a ‘point of departure’, it is confusing to call it topicalisation, because such fronted adverbials function at a different pragmatic level.

Topical entities are the essential elements around which a story is constructed; the main topical participants belong to the goal of the discourse. Spatio-temporal settings do not have such a role and cannot be categorized in such a way (Heimerdinger, 1999:122).

It is better to call such constituents ‘basis’, Heimerdinger argues. *Basis* is a term that first was proposed by linguists from the Prague School, and specifically Benes (1962:6-11). In his work, the term ‘basis’ “will be reserved for the spatial or temporal framework set by a preverbal adverbial and within which the ensuing stretch of discourse holds” (Heimerdinger, 1999:122). Instead of the term ‘basis’, Stephen Levinsohn (2000a:8) uses the term *point of departure* for such sentence-initial constituents. He defines his notion of *point of departure* with the following definition:

The term POINT OF DEPARTURE designates an element that is placed at the beginning of a clause or sentence with a dual function:

- *It provides a starting point for the communication, and*
- *It “cohesively anchors the subsequent clause(s) to something which is already in the context” (i.e., to something accessible in the hearer’s mental representation) (SIL-UND, sec. 11.3.1).*

About the framing or orienting character of such adjuncts, Goutsos (1997:52) writes the following:

The use of sentence-initial adverbial clauses has long been related to the creation of a local context for the text that follows (cf. Chafe, 1984; Thompson & Longacre, 1985).

Deictic orientations provide the framing information that is necessary to build the cognitive text-world of the subsequent discourse. Adjunct frames can be further subdivided into either temporal frames, or locative frames. These two adjunct frames, temporal and locative frames, are deictic to some text-world temporal or locative reality.

A temporal frame is a pre-positioned adjunct phrase, a prepositional phrase or a temporal clause containing elements that refer to the time frame within which the continuing discourse must be understood. Where a $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ -clause frame is involved, the temporal deixis

provides the hearer-reader with an updated current reference time. Some progression on the time-line is involved. Where no $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ + temporal adjunct is involved, only a temporal adjunct, no progression on the time-line is involved (Van der Merwe, 1999b:109).

According to Van der Merwe's discussion of $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ and temporal frames in 1 Samuel (1999b), when a deictic orientation contains presupposed information, recoverable from the context, they update the current reference time. Reference time is the time on the time line where a narrative is anchored, providing a vantage point for the narrator (Van der Merwe, 1999b:95). Reference time and event time "may be the same point(s) on the time line" (ibid.:95), where the simple past tense is used. The reference time is "current" until discontinued or updated.

According to Van der Merwe (1999b:109), the occurrence of a temporal adjunct construction before a $\mathfrak{R}\omega$ plus verb in some form or another indicates some break in the temporal continuity (ibid.:112). Where there is no $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$, no progression in time is communicated (ibid.:109). But when such a temporal adjunct plus $\mathfrak{R}\omega$ plus sentence is preceded by a $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$, the $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ signals that the reference time of the preceding event, events, or state of affairs is maintained, but only updated or specified (ibid.:109), as he explains: "updating the current reference time of an event referred to in a Biblical Hebrew utterance means specifying with a temporal adjunct that the reference time of an utterance is not an unspecified point in time after a previously completed event, but that signaled by the temporal adjunct" (ibid.:110). The use of the $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ is to avoid ambiguity that the new deictic temporal frame is unrelated to the preceding discourse (ibid.:112). Both appear at some faultline or boundary in the discourse development. These temporal orientations are not an integral part of the information structure of the episode or scene, but rather provide a frame or orientation to the episode or scene. In this sense these inferable deictic orientations are associated with the discourse-active topic(s), but not in themselves an integral part of the information structure. Other temporal references are totally unrecoverable or non-inferable from the previous discourse. Such adjuncts contain newly-asserted information and are focal. They provide a new deictic reference time⁷⁰ (cf. Van der Merwe, 1999b).

⁷⁰ When that is the case, such frames are temporal focus frames, and not temporal topic frames. See discussion further below in the same section.

Fronting is most commonly used for configurations with topic deictic orientations. The fronting of an adjunct can be used to raise a temporal or locative adjunct to a topic deictic orientation. But the adjunct must be inferable and retrievable from the context.

An example is Genesis 12.11

<p>□□□ρεμᾶ·Xψῥω ηAμ<ψ ↓ρ χιμᾶ Zβαλ βψΨ ρ ^θιη ρ□□□εH<α<κ ψ□ιη<ψῥω 11 □Γτ Ηιᾶ ψZ⇒ρAΩ-λεᾶ</p>	<p>10 Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land. 11 When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance;"</p>
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Genesis 12.11 contains an example of a ψιη<ψῥω -clause as a temporal deictic orientation or text-world frame. In Van der Merwe’s classification, this is a case of a ψιη<ψῥω + temporal adjunct that updates the reference time at the beginning of a complicating scene in the episode (1999b:106-107). In verse 10 the setting of the following narrative is set out, including the location (going to Egypt) and reason (when there was a famine). Entering Egypt some time or another is now presupposed and expected. In verse 11, the ρ□□□εH<α<κ ψιη<ψῥω introduces a temporal frame, pinpointing the event for which it provides the temporal frame, as the time just before entering Egypt. This follows Van der Merwe’s proposal of ψιη<ψῥω plus ke constructions as updating the reference time by marking an exact point on it (1999b:104). In verse 11 it is the time just before entering Egypt. This temporal deixis frames a certain event that is discourse-new, namely Abraham’s request to his wife Sarai. It orients only that event, since an additional temporal orientation is mentioned in verse 14.

A second example is Genesis 26.32:

<p>θ□Aξ χιψ ψZ⊙δ βαπ □□□ ᾶ□Oβ φ Xψῥω ᾶ□η αη ≤ □□□Xψα<β ψ□□□ιη<ψῥω 32 ρ□□□Eᾶ <βαη τ J δOᾶ-λαπ □λ Jδ□□□□□Φγ ῥXψῥω :≤ρψ□Aμ Jνᾶ□AχAμ Ψλ Jρ μᾶB·Xψῥω Jρ□□YA πAξ ρ□□□□□εH<ᾶ</p>	<p>31 In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths; and Isaac set them on their way, and they departed from him in peace. 32 That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well that they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water!"</p>
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A slightly different configuration is a ψιη<ψῥω as well as a definite temporal phrase with a preposition β. The meaning of the frame is the same as illustrated by the example in Genesis 15.18 immediately above. Once again the active and presupposed temporal frame has been

confirmed and updated. The $\psi\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ clause frame marks a progression on the time-line, a switch of scene.

All-presupposed clauses with a preposition preceding a participle also occur in Biblical Hebrew. Such clauses have a temporal or spatial reference, and contain a verb, sometimes an infinitive construct with a prefixed preposition. Such an all-presupposed temporal adjunct functioning as deictic an orientation is illustrated by Esther 2.7:

$\begin{array}{l} \square\delta O \angle \delta - \tau \alpha \angle \beta \square\square\square\rho E \Gamma \tau \} \sigma \varepsilon \varepsilon \exists \psi \square \eta \eta \square A \angle \sigma \Rightarrow \delta \langle \\ \eta - \tau \varepsilon \varepsilon / \square E \mu O \exists \psi \square \eta \subset \psi \mathfrak{R} \omega \\ \leq Y E \exists \wp \omega \beta \square\square\square A \exists \angle \eta \square A \lambda / \psi \square E \exists \psi \square \iota \angle \kappa \\ \angle \eta \square \varepsilon \exists \backslash \rho \alpha \mu \tau \square\square\square \alpha \beta \Xi \subset \omega \square\square\square \rho \alpha \varepsilon \square O \Gamma \tau - \tau \alpha \pi \subset \psi \\ \eta \Downarrow \rho \langle \omega \mathfrak{R} \Phi \nu \alpha \eta \subset \omega \\ \boxed{\eta \square A \Gamma \mu \varepsilon \subset \omega \square\square\square A \eta \psi \iota \beta A \varepsilon \tau \mu \beta} \\ : \tau \square \alpha \beta \lambda \Psi \lambda \psi \square \alpha \kappa \rangle \angle \delta \backslash \rho A \mu \angle \eta \square A \xi \langle \theta \rangle \lambda \end{array}$	<p>And having brought up Hadassah, she is Esther, his cousin, for she had neither father nor mother; the girl was fair and beautiful, and when her father and her mother died, for himself Mordecai took her as daughter. (own translation)</p>
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In the last sentence, the reference to the time Esther’s parents died, is the topic frame for the proposition “Mordecai adopted her as daughter.” The death of her parents was already made discourse-active when it is said that she does not have a father or mother, just above.

In addition to temporal deictic orientations, locative orientations are also associated with information structure. A locative frame is a pre-positioned adjunct phrase or a prepositional phrase containing elements that refer to the text-world location framework within which the continuing discourse must be understood. Like temporal adjunct references, many, but not all, such locative references link back to the previous discourse. When such orientations activate altogether new text-world information, more than just updating already discourse active presuppositions about the locative orientation, and present deixis information that is non-inferable or unrecoverable from the previous discourse, they form part of the focus structure.

3.3.2 Contrastive Topics

A problem that remains to be discussed is that of *topic contrastiveness*. The question is whether contrastiveness is a cognitive-pragmatic function associated with topics, that is, does it fall within the purview of information structure topichood, or is it something different? Contrast is generally associated with focus, and some linguists describe contrast altogether in terms of focus (cf. Givón, 1990, Dik, 1989, Shimasaki, 2002).

This concept of contrast has been raised – with different terminology – as far back as 1975 in Kathleen Callow’s book *Discourse Considerations in Translating the Word of God*. She defines three types of prominence, namely thematic prominence as the discourse core, focus

as spotlight, and emphasis as interactive stress. This placing of stress on a constituent, giving it emphasis because of some pragmatic interactive dynamic, is a concept very much in line with contrastiveness. The “emphasis of stress” as a distinct pragmatic operator, distinct from informational topic and focus expressions, is a concept further developed by Vallduví & Vilkkuna (1998) who call this type of “emphasis” *kontrast* (cf. discussion further below).

According to Dik (as quoted in Levinsohn, 2000a:37, footnote 16), contrastiveness is always focal. Shimasaki follows a similar line of argument. He argues that contrastiveness is a contextual, pragmatic operation that is not to be identified with information structure categories as such (2002:63-65). Shimasaki sees a link between emphasis, contrast, intensification, and focus (ibid.:73-80). Contrast and intensification are part of emphasis, which is a pragmatic operation separate from information structure (ibid.:75-79). I agree with him in this regard, as will be laid out immediately below. But emphasis can only be expressed in a focus structure, he argues (ibid.:65-69). Only within focus domains (salient assertions) can contrastiveness be found. Topics cannot be contrastive. Once constituents are indicated as contrastive by the context, these constituents cannot be topics.

I can only disagree with the general statement of Dik and Shimasaki that contrast is always part of a focus domain. I grant that Dik and Shimasaki may have had a different concept of contrastiveness in mind, in the sense of unexpected or counter-expected information, and in that case, as a more limited and sharper definition of contrast, it is indeed focal. I also grant that *most* cases of contrast are probably focal. But there are definitely cases of contrast and contrastiveness that are *not* focal. Topics can be contrastive. Lambrecht (1994:291-296) discusses this possibility of contrastive topics and provides examples from several languages.

In the overview of focus theory, the term proposed by Vallduví & Vilkkuna (1998, cf. discussion in chapter 4 (4.3.2.)), called *kontrast*, is of particular interest. *Kontrast* is defined by them as the activation of set membership, which one member, the one with the focus peak (this term is defined in chapter 5 (5.3)), has identified or listed *exhaustively*. Semantically, *kontrastiveness* means contrast in the sense of pragmatic *counter-expectation*, but also confirmation of identity in the sense of what Vallduví & Vilkkuna (1998) call *exhaustiveness*.

But since the term *contrastiveness* is so widely used in the literature on focus, and contrast as such is only one of several sub-functions, I am hesitant to introduce a totally new term in spite of feeling the need for something distinct. It is preferable to use *contrastiveness*, but with the

understanding that it refers to contrastiveness in its widest sense (namely, in terms of the three subfunctions of 1) comparing members of a set, 2) restricting the identity of a member of a set, and 3) confirming⁷¹ the identity of a member of a set vis-à-vis the other members of its set). Stated in a different way, the three categories of contrastiveness can be compared in the following way:

1. comparing → (x [...] and/whereas y [...]),
2. exhaustive or restricting identification → (x, and only x),
3. confirming identification → (the very x, x itself).

Not all three types of contrastiveness are applicable to topics. The nature of the contrastiveness meaning of topic contrast is to assign to a topic one of two possibilities, namely *comparing a pair of discourse-active topics*, or *confirming the identity of a discourse-active topic*. Exhaustive identification or restricting the identity of a referent is a focus contrastiveness function (cf. Chapter 5).

Topic contrast is a pragmatic element that can be an overlay for every type of topic, marked and unmarked topic expressions. This means that all types of topics – primary topics, secondary topics, and topic frames – can have an element of contrastiveness as overlay.

The term “topicalisation” is sometimes used in the literature to indicate topics with some extra saliency. Topicalisation in the literature refers to a syntactic process of the marking of a topic, normally by means of word-order like fronting in Y-movement or some other fronting device (cf. Gregory & Michaelis, 2001). In this study, the term *topic contrast* has a specialized use, namely *the pragmatic overlay of contrastiveness over topical elements*. It is not a syntactic process *per se*, in spite of the fact that in most cases of topic contrast in Biblical Hebrew, some syntactic fronting or pre-verbal insertion takes place. The term “topicalisation” will therefore not be used here for topic contrastiveness.

Topic contrast happens when primary topics, or secondary topics are marked constructions, normally by fronting in the sense of moving a constituent from an expected post-verbal position to a pre-verbal one, or by inserting subjects before the verb. Topic frames, sometimes in contrastive pairs, can also attract topic contrast.

⁷¹ This is in agreement with Van der Merwe, 1999c:296, who provides an explanation of “topic confirmation” as a pragmatic function.

In summary, in terms of topics,

1. a presupposed topic can be **compared** with another topic

e.g. (A couple before going out)

“We need to leave within 20 minutes. What if I quickly wash the car and you do the dishes?”

2. a presupposed topic can have its identity **confirmed**

e.g. “He *himself* said...”

Genesis 3.15c and d is an example of a comparing pair of topics⁷²:

<p> $\angle \eta \square \text{AKH} \iota \varepsilon \square \text{A} \eta \square \text{v} \square \square \square \text{E} \beta \square \square \square \clubsuit \text{C} \text{v} \psi \square$ $\text{E} \angle \beta \tau \psi \square \iota \text{HA} \varepsilon \square \eta \square \square \square \text{A} \beta \psi \text{E} \varepsilon \text{C} \omega$ $\eta \Upsilon \text{A} \omega \langle \rho \text{N} \zeta \text{A} \psi \square \square \square \text{E} \beta \square \square \clubsuit \langle \omega \langle \rho \text{N} \zeta \text{A} \psi \square \text{E} \beta \square \square$ $\text{H} \varepsilon \square \cdot \rho \square \square \square \clubsuit \square \pi \square \text{H} \text{C} \psi \varepsilon \square \eta \square$ $:\beta \text{---}^{\text{TM}} \theta \text{A} \omega \square \Phi \text{v} \square \varepsilon \pi \square \text{H} \square \Gamma \tau \eta \square \text{A} \Gamma \tau \alpha \varepsilon \text{C} \omega$ </p>	<p>I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."</p>
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Genesis 15.15 is an example of a contrastive topic confirming the identity of a topic:

<p> $\rho \square \square \square \text{E} \beta \text{R} \angle \theta \iota \Gamma \tau \leq \square \square \square \text{A} \text{H} \square \square \square \clubsuit \psi \square \varepsilon \tau \text{O} \beta \langle \varepsilon \text{---} \lambda \varepsilon \varepsilon \varepsilon \varepsilon$ $\square \square \square \text{B} \beta \text{A} \Gamma \tau \square \square \square \text{A} \Gamma \tau \alpha \varepsilon \square \square \text{C} \omega$ $:\eta \square \text{A} \beta \square \square \square \eta \square \text{A} \beta \psi \text{E} \Omega \square \square \square \angle \beta$ </p>	<p>You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age.</p>
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The second-person pronoun “you” is a primary topic with a contrastive overlay of identity confirmation, i.e. “you yourself, the very you.” This marked primary topic also signals a primary topic shift in the discourse development.

Both primary topics and secondary topics can be contrastive topics. Even topic frames, theoretically, can be contrastive topics, but I have not found evidence for that in the Hebrew of Genesis 1-25.

3.4 SUMMARY

In the overview of Topic studies in chapter 2, the approach of Lambrecht is seen as a sophisticated theory, especially his notions of pragmatic presupposition and assertion, and identification and activation undergirding the topic relations in sentences. His approach, and the way it is applied to Biblical Hebrew by Van der Merwe (1999), Van der Merwe & Talstra

⁷² See also Genesis 3.16b: in-pain you-will-bear children, and-to-your-husband you-will-desire-him, and-he will-rule over-you.

(unpublished manuscript), Heimerdinger (1999), and Bailey (1998), is followed in the above account of topic in Biblical Hebrew.

Four types of topic in Biblical Hebrew have been defined:

1. Primary topic
2. Secondary topic
3. Tail topic
4. Topic frame

Two pragmatic operations that are associated with topics and topic expressions are the following:

1. Deictic orientations (text-world frames) to topics
2. Contrastive topics

Next, in chapters 4 and 5, the complementary part of topic in the information structure framework, namely focus, will come under scrutiny.

Chapter 4

INTRODUCTION TO FOCUS

The counterpart of topic in the information structure is focus. Since the information in a sentence that is in focus tends to be the bulk of information, the focus structures also tend to be more complex than those related to topic. The next two chapters give an overview of the theory of focus, and propose an account of focus in Biblical Hebrew. Understanding the topic and focus roles of constituents in sentences is foundational to understanding the information flow in a discourse. Understanding the information flow is one step further in understanding the themes in text, to be developed further in chapters 6 to 10 (Part 2).

In this chapter, a brief overview of the study of focus is given in which the requirements for a model to describe Biblical Hebrew focus is also outlined. The overview will contain brief introductions to functional and generative approaches to focus. This followed by an overview of recent studies of focus in Biblical Hebrew.

4.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE TREATMENT OF FOCUS

The linguistic study of focus is, like that of topic, not new. Jackendoff (1972) was the first to talk about focus, building on some foundational issues raised by Zellig Harris (1952).

The functional grammarians have made a large contribution to our understanding of focus. Four functional theories of focus will be looked at in particular, namely that of the Prague School (Firbas, 1964), Simon Dik (1980, 1989), Talmy Givón (1984, 1990) and especially the one of Knud Lambrecht (1994).

Since 1980 significant works on focus in this tradition have come to light. In spite of the fact that the generative descriptions of focus are limited to clause-level focus, in many ways the Chomskyan or generative model of focus overlaps with that of the functional grammarians. For that reason the generative view of focus will not be studied in such detail. But two specific works are reviewed in more detail because, one, these articles are representative of the generative approach to focus, and, two, these articles are particularly relevant to the new light they shed on the functional approaches.

4.2 FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES TO FOCUS

4.2.1 The Prague School

For a brief review of the Prague School's theory on focus, those of Gómez-González (2001:61-88) and Mona Baker (1992:160-172) have been foundational. The Prague School (PS) developed, before the Second World War, a theory on sentence structure that in many ways became foundational to current functional information structure studies. They divided a sentence in two parts, a theme and a rheme. The theme is normally the given, context-dependent information, the foundation of the sentence. The rheme, on the other hand, is the new, context-independent information. Rhemes can also be marked and preposed. The PS does not have a rigid linear left-right approach to theme and rheme. Theories vary within the PS, but the views of Firbas (1962, 1964a, 1964b, 1964c) are the most relevant to the purposes of this study.

Firbas, in defining rheme, introduced the notion of *communicative dynamism*. The element that most carries the communication forward, has more communicative dynamism. There are degrees of communicative importance between the different elements in a sentence.

According to Firbas, a sentence has a theme, a transition, and a rheme. The one part in a sentence that has more communicative dynamism than the rest (cf. Baker, 1992:161-163) is the rheme. In the following example from Baker (*ibid.*: 162),

John has been taken ill

John is the theme, *has been* the transition, and *take + ill* the rheme. The transition carries the lowest degree of communicative dynamism within the non-theme.

Another valuable notion from the Prague School is *basis* (as proposed by Benes, 1962), also called point of departure, and in chapters 2 and 3 called a frame (cf. 2.4 and 3.4.3). But what is significant for the study of focus is that a point of departure or basis can also be new, focal information. Topical basis has both “perspective (against the background of a context) and prospective” (quoted in Gómez-Gonzalez, 2001:81), while focal basis is only prospective.

A general criticism against the Prague School is that they in the end still used functional, semantic and syntactic categories interchangeably, and that their theory is limited to sentence level. In spite of introducing terms like hypertheme for themes (similar to topic as defined in chapter 2) that have a span of influence wider than only one sentence, and hyperrheme, for

rhememes that have a wider discourse span, the PS theory generally lacks an integration of sentence information structure with the wider discourse (Gómez-González, 2001:87-88).

What is useful for the account of focus in Biblical Hebrew is Firbas' definition of rheme, namely that there is one element in the sentence that has more communicative dynamism than the rest. The PS theory on what is called "point of departure" or "basis" is valuable too. These two points are incorporated in the account of focus in Biblical Hebrew.

4.2.2 Simon Dik and Functional Grammar

Simon Dik defined "focality" as a clause-internal pragmatic function (1989:266). His definition of Focus is the following (1989:277):

The focal information in a linguistic expression is that information which is relatively the most important or salient in the given communicative setting, and considered by S (Speaker) to be most essential for A (Addressee) to integrate into his pragmatic information.

The changes S wants to bring to the information of A are that S wants to *add* pieces of information, or to *replace* some piece of information (ibid.: 278). But not all focused information is new:

It may include information already (assumed to be) available to A, but focused on by virtue of some implicit or explicit contrast (ibid.: 278).

Dik further mentions four of what he calls focalizing devices that appear cross-linguistically, namely prosodic prominence or emphatic accent, special constituent order, special focus markers, and special focus constructions (ibid.: 278). Dik distinguishes the different *scopes* of focus and the different *communicative points* of focus. He acknowledges that this part of his theory was strongly influenced by Watters (1979) who described focus in Aghem, a language in Cameroon, and Thwing & Watters (1987). The different scopes are where the focus is placed, and these can be π -operators like Tense, Mood, and Aspect, and polarity operators like negatives on the predicate, and on terms, which can be subdivided into subject and other. The different communicative points are New (Completive Focus) versus Contrastive Focus. Contrastive Focus is divided into Parallel contrast and Counter-presuppositional contrast. Counter-presuppositional contrast can be Replacing (not X but Y), Expanding (also Y), Restricting (only X), or Selecting (X!) (ibid.: 281-283).

Dik's Functional Grammar approach to pragmatic functions is according to Gómez-González (2001:170) a mixed syntactic, informational and semantic approach, where sometimes the differences are handled in a loose manner. Van der Merwe (1999a, see below) also points out that the mapping by Dik of pragmatic categories to syntactic and semantic categories is not without its problems.

One problem with Dik's notion of focus is defining it as the most salient element in a clause. This definition has two problems. Often the topic is salient as well. Dik has the following example (Dik, 1989:278):

John and Bill came to see me. JOHN was NICE, but BILL was rather BORing

Which one of the two is the most salient: JOHN or NICE, and between, BILL or BORing? Dik does mention that topicality⁷³ and focality may overlap, "in that certain topical elements may at the same time be focal to the communication" (ibid.: 266). This goes to show that salience is not always a clear-cut element, and that maybe a more sophisticated definition of focus is needed.

A second problem with this definition is that more than one element of the new information can be salient. For example in the topic-comment clause "John fixed the PIPES", in answer to the question "What about John?" two elements are "salient." One of these is the comment, attributing an action to John. The underlined part in John fixed the PIPES is in focus. The other is the clause-final PIPES, which attracts the stress and is also salient. With Dik's definition, only PIPES will be the focus. But his definition does not give an account of the focality of the whole predicate that is newly-asserted and unpredictable by the hearer. An account of focus therefore needs to be able to account for both the focality of the comment part of the clause and the constituent that is intonationally stressed, when such intonation stress is verifiable.

Dik's semantic categorisation of communicative point of Focus is helpful for the analysis of the Hebrew Focus particles (cf. chapter 5, 5.3.2.3), but Van der Merwe's criticism of Dik is valid: Dik "provides a taxonomy of pragmatic labels to be mapped onto syntactic and semantic ones, without addressing the issue of whether these labels are suitable and informative at the pragmatic level (1999b:178-179). Heimerdinger (1999:170) and Gómez-

⁷³ The issue of cognitive salience of topics, as seen in the contrastive topics of this example, has been discussed in Chapter 3 (3.3.2).

González (2001:170) share this concern about Dik's categorisation of focus types. Heimerdinger's application of those focus types to just the focus particles, thereby semantically categorizing those focus particles, has some merit.

At its heart, Dik's FG notion of focus does not clearly distinguish between focus domain and focus peaking as two related, but distinct focus operations.

4.2.3 Kathleen Callow

Kathleen Callow, in a discussion on prominence developed what she called three "values of prominence." These prominence values are theme, focus and emphasis. Theme is what contributes to the development of the narrative or argument (1974:52), while non-thematic material "serves as a commentary on the thematic." Her concept on theme is basic to the concept of theme elaborated in chapters 6 and 7. Focus prominence she defines as "items of thematic material as being of particular interest or significance" (ibid.: 52) which sometimes can stretch over a few paragraphs. Her views on the third prominence value have particular relevance for this study. Emphatic prominence she defines as follows:

Prominence that occurs with emphatic significance normally involves the speaker-hearer relationship in some way... emphasis has two different functions: it highlights an item of information which the narrator considers surprising to the hearer, or else it warns the hearer that the emotions of the speaker are quite strongly involved. Both functions tend to operate over a relatively short domain... (ibid.:52)

What she has intuitively felt is that there is a difference between focus *span* (the spotlight) and focus *emphasis* (the intensity between speaker and hearer). This difference has plagued studies on focus, where the collapse of these two values into one category of focus description has led to all sorts of theoretical difficulties (cf. Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998) below). In this study, it is argued that there is indeed a difference between focus as a discourse-pragmatic notion of information structure, and focus as a purely pragmatic notion of emphasis and especially contrast. Pragmatic emphasis or contrastiveness is an optional overlay over focus structures as well as over topical expressions. This difference is borne out by the generative linguists Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998), described below.

4.2.4 Talmy Givón's notion of contrastive focus

Givón worked with the concept of focus and contrastiveness, not concerning himself with what he calls the focus of assertion or *scope of assertion* (which is similar to Dik's notion of completive focus) (1990:699-737). All contrastive focus is scope of assertion, but not all scope of assertion is contrastive focus (1990:701-702). This insight is important when the concept of contrastive focus overlay is considered in chapter 5 in the account for focus in Biblical Hebrew.

Givón further contributes to our understanding of focus by his insights that “clauses in natural discourse tend to have, on the average, *one chunk* of asserted information per clause – be it nominal, predicate or adverbial word/phrase –, while the rest of the information is not asserted” (1990:701-702). He argues that in intransitive verbs, the new information is vested in the verb, while in transitive verbs, “either the verb or the object would tend to be old information (‘topical’) as well” (1984:259). For him wide focus is when both the verb and object has new information, while narrow focus is where the new information is only the verb or only one of the verb's arguments. This phenomenon is supported by grammatical constructions in languages where in the tense-aspect system, special coding exists to distinguish whether the verb is included or excluded in the scope of new information. Bantu languages like Ekoti and Makwe in Mozambique have conjoining and disjoining constructions that do exactly this (Devos (ms.), Schadeberg & Mucanheia, 2000). If Givón's one-chunk means only one focus domain per clause, I agree. I also agree if it means only one communicative point as the salient peak of the focus information domain, but only if the one-chunk entity does not equal one wordclass or constituent.

Givón also wrote about focus-attracting grammatical devices. He distinguishes negation, yes/no questions, WH-questions, and contrastive quantifiers like ‘even’, ‘all’, ‘every’, ‘other’, ‘first’, ‘only’, ‘self’, ‘really’ and ‘just’ (1990: 715-716). He argues that these don't attract such strong contrastive focus as in cleft sentences, but rather weaker contrast as in Y-movement. He does not seem to work with the notion of focus particles.

In closing, one important insight from Givón that links marked structures with memory (and by implication, theme) is his Code Quantity principle: “The less *predictable* – or more *important* – the information is, the more prominent, more distinct or larger will be the code element(s) that convey it” (1990:736). This entails, according to him, that “information that attracts more attention is memorized, stored, and retrieved more efficiently” (ibid.: 763). For

example, his pre-posed order principle states that fronted information is less predictable or more important. This explains the abundance of marked word-order focus structures in Hebrew poetry.

In summary then, Givón's pragmatic-syntactic perspective on focus has produced valuable insights on scope of assertion versus contrastive focus, on the *one-chunk* per sentence principle and the wide versus narrow focus contrast, and on focus-attracting devices. But like Dik's FG notion of focus, Givón does not clearly distinguish between focus domain and focus peaking as two related but distinct focus operations. He focuses mainly on contrastive focus.

Givón did make an attempt to link information structure with cognition, memory, and discourse, and his views will be under scrutiny in chapter 6 "Thematics."

4.2.5 Knud Lambrecht

His 1994 theory is as foundational in the account of topic described in chapters 2 and 3 as it is in the account of focus in Biblical Hebrew. He defines focus in the following way (1994:207 and 213):

The focus of the proposition expressed by a sentence in a given utterance context, is seen as the element of information whereby the presupposition and the assertion DIFFER from each other.... It is the UNPREDICTABLE or pragmatically NON-RECOVERABLE element in an utterance. The focus is what makes an utterance into an assertion.

Also: FOCUS: The semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the preposition.

Focus according to Lambrecht is not the new information as the complement of the presupposed information in a sentence⁷⁴. For him, the "new information" is the pragmatic presupposition with the pragmatic assertion SUPERIMPOSED to it. What is asserted is a *new pragmatic relation* (or *new idea* in Chafe's⁷⁵ terms) between referents, not necessarily that new referents are activated. Often the focal referent is indeed newly activated, but focal information is not the same as activation. This point Chafe (1994) makes as well, that both the

⁷⁴ The view of early generative linguists on focus is that focus is the complement of presupposition in FOCUS-presupposition sentences (cf. Jackendoff, 1972 and Chomsky, 1970).

⁷⁵ Cf. his chapter 9 (pp 108-120).

presupposition and the information in a new pragmatic relation form the assertion. “Just as topic is included in the presupposition without being identical to it, a focus is part of an assertion without coinciding with it” (ibid.: 206). Focus is therefore not always newly activated referents, but it is a new assertion or a new idea, something that is *newsworthy* or *interesting* (Chafe, 1994:119, 121). This is a very important aspect of Lambrecht’s theory, because within this framework he can account for contrastiveness or other asserting devices on presupposed active or accessible referents. For example in a clause where all the referents are discourse active, and only one of those is accented, that referent is then the one that makes the whole proposition into asserted information and is therefore focal.

In languages focus is marked by different devices: phonological accent placing, morphological focus markers, and syntactic constructions. But sentence accent or stress prosody is not to be equated with focus marking. Lambrecht argues that such sentence accents mark “different ACTIVATION STATES of discourse referents, which in turn serve to indicate certain TOPIC DISCONTINUITIES” (ibid.: 208). Instead, there are morphosyntactic criteria that determine whether an activated denotatum is topical or focal. The topic and focus categories establish pragmatic relations between denotata and their propositions. “Pragmatic relations between denotata and propositions are ... expressed by morphosyntactic means” (topic and focus markers, word order, complex grammatical constructions, etc.) (ibid.: 337). For example, Lambrecht discusses the following exchange:

Q: Where did you go last night?

A: I went to the MOVIES.

MOVIES alone cannot be the new information. By itself it is not informative. Neither the constituent, nor its denotatum is new, but the relation it is in with “go-to.” There is a pragmatic *focus relation* between the denotatum MOVIES and the proposition it is part of. So some constituent(s) is marked for focus when it signals a focus relation between itself “and the rest of the proposition that creates the new state of information in the addressee’s mind” (ibid.: 210).

Focus relations are marked in certain syntactic domains. The focus domain is “the syntactic domain in a sentence which expresses the focus component of the pragmatically structured proposition” (ibid.: 214). Focus domains could be phrasal categories like noun phrases, lexical categories, predicates, arguments, and even whole propositions. Next, Lambrecht links

the focus domains with focus structures. By focus structure he means “the conventional association of a focus meaning with a sentence form” (ibid.: 222). The three pragmatic categories of sentences, namely the topic-comment articulation, the identificational sentence articulation, and the event-reporting sentence articulation (which includes presentational sentence forms), are closely associated with his distinction of three focus structures. The three focus structures are 1) sentence focus structure, 2) argument focus structure, and 3) predicate focus structure.

1. Sentence-focus structure is defined as an “event-reporting or presentational sentence type, in which the focus extends over both the subject and the predicate (minus any topical non-subject elements)” (ibid.: 222). Sentence focus is the response “My CAR broke down” to the question “What happened?”⁷⁶ Not *all* the information is automatically new in sentence focus structures. Discourse-active material can be objects or adverbials, but not subjects (ibid.: 233-234). A primary topic therefore cannot be part of a sentence focus structure.
2. Argument-focus structure is defined as “any sentence in which the focus is an argument rather than the predicate or an entire proposition” (ibid.: 224). “Argument” is any non-predicating expression in a proposition, and it includes references of time, place and manner. Subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases, can all be arguments that can be in focus. Argument focus appears in identificational sentence forms which identify a referent (ibid.: 222). Argument focus is the response “My CAR broke down” to the question “I heard your motorcycle broke down?” where “I heard x broke down” is the presupposition. Argument focus is not restricted to the syntactic argument as a whole. A part of an argument can also be that which is in focus, for example, “My wife bought a BLUE dress (and not a GREEN one).”
3. Predicate-focus structure is defined as a topic-comment sentence type “in which the predicate is in focus and in which the subject (plus any other topical elements) is in the presupposition” (ibid.: 222). Of the three focus structures, predicate focus is the focus for unmarked topic-comment sentence forms. Predicate focus is the response “My

⁷⁶ Examples from Lambrecht, 1994:223.

car/it broke DOWN” to the question “What happened to your car?” where “car” is topical.

What is interesting from the above examples of the different focus structures, is that the answer “My CAR broke down” is the same for both sentence focus and argument focus. Both these focus structures are marked focus structures, and in many languages the marked configurations of sentence focus and argument focus is the same. Lambrecht states that “the argument-focus structures and the sentence-focus structures are often homophonous or near-homophonous” across languages (ibid.: 336). This fact is significant in the analysis of focus structures in Biblical Hebrew, where a fronting configuration is often used for sentence focus as well as argument focus.

Focus marking is not the same as marked focus. Predicate focus is unmarked and argument focus and sentence focus are marked. In unmarked predicate focus structures, in the example “Birds fly SOUTH”, two focus interpretations are possible (ibid.: 306):

- a. $\text{Top}[\text{Birds}] \text{Foc}[\text{fly SOUTH}]$
- b. $\text{Top}[\text{Birds}] \text{fly Foc}[\text{SOUTH}]$

Example b. is uttered to correct someone’s mistaken belief about the direction of the flight of birds (ibid.: 306), and example a. is to inform about migratory behaviour. In example a., both the verb and the complement form a semantic unit, which one can call a *conjoint construction*⁷⁷. In example b. only the complement takes the dominant stress or saliency. This construction can be called a *disjoint construction*. The predicate focus structure in this example is according to Lambrecht not ambiguous, but vague and underspecified (ibid.: 306). Predicate focus structures are all unmarked, but within predicate focus structures three may be secondary saliency on ‘narrow’ constituents like the verb, the complement, or both together.

This theoretical consideration sheds light on the same problem in Biblical Hebrew, where we cannot specify marking by means of prosodic accentuation if the verb or (one of) the

⁷⁷ For the terms conjoint and disjoint construction, cf. Schadeberg (personal communication). In Bantu languages like Makhuwa and Ekoti in Mozambique, there are what are called conjoining and disjoining constructions. In conjoining constructions, the tone pattern in the predicate between verb and the following complement has no lowering, and no break, at the beginning of the complement. This is called predicative lowering. The verb and complement is semantically and focus-wise a unit. Not so the disjoining constructions, where the tone-lowering at the complement indicates the fact that the complement is more in focus than the verb. The disjoint construction is signaled by predicate lowering, where the high tone of the complement is lowered. Predicate lowering is used for focus (cf. Predicative lowering and predicative focus in Ekoti, cf. Schadeberg & Mucanheia, 2000:124, 129-130).

argument(s) is in narrow focus. Post-verbal word-order in Biblical Hebrew may shed light on the problem. For example, where the verb is split from its complement by the subject or deictic pronominal, the object complement is isolated and more in focus. Often such complements tend to be sentence-final. The principles of End-Focus and End-Weight (Gómez-González, 2001:31-33, 256, 352-354) are at work here (like example b. above). Where the verb is not isolated from its complement, the verb itself may attract narrow focus. On the other hand, the verb and its complement together will attract broad focus (like example a. above).

This semantic vagueness of predicate focus structures is not the case in sentence focus and argument focus structures. In these two structures, focus marking can be similar or close to similar. Contextual considerations will aid the focus interpretation of both the different secondary foci of unmarked predicate focus constructions as well, as the similar-in-form sentence focus versus argument focus. In English, Lambrecht argues that the subject is accented and the predicate unaccented, not because “the subject is “newer”, more “important”, or more “focusworthy” (ibid.: 321), but to mark it as sentence or argument focus vis-à-vis predicate focus. What sentence focus and argument focus have in common is “the non-topical relation of the subject to the proposition, allowing the unaccented verbs to be interpreted as either focus (i.e., sentence focus, SJF) or non-focal (i.e., argument focus, SJF), depending on the construction” (ibid.: 321). Sentence focus and argument focus are thus seen as two distinct functions with one form.

In summary, Lambrecht distinguishes the following related focus categories: the whole focus domain is the primary focus structure, and can be sentence, argument, or predicate focus structure. The primary focus domain in the case of unmarked predicate focus structures does or does not have a secondary focus overlay. This secondary focus overlay can be broad or narrow. When broad, then the focus can be on both the verb and the complement. When narrow, the secondary focus can be on the verb or on the complement. When on the complement only, activation of a constituent is affected.

Focus and **activation** is another important issue in Lambrecht’s theory of focus. Lambrecht defines **ACTIVATE** in the following way (ibid.: 324):

To ACTIVATE a referent is then not simply to conjure up a representation of it in the mind of the addressee but to ESTABLISH A RELATION between it and a proposition.

In English, sentence accentuation is used as the device to mark activation. The activated referent is per definition part of the focus domain, but there is no identification of the two. When not marked for activation, presupposed elements are marked for ESTABLISHED TOPIC (ibid.: 324). Activation and focus do not have a direct correlation. Presupposed information can also be in focus. When this is the case, it is the contrast that the speaker-hearer is asserting, making it a focus structure.

As with activation, contrastiveness is not seen as directly correlating to the structural focus domain, but rather as a pragmatic overlay on both topical and focal expressions. When contrastiveness is the only meaning, however, that makes the assertion different from the presupposition, the contrasted domain then being the focus domain. Lambrecht argues that “[c]ontrastiveness is not a category of grammar but the result of the general cognitive processes referred to as “conversational implicatures”” (ibid.: 291). A conversational implicature is a meaning implication that can be inferred from the utterance in the context in which it occurred. Contrastiveness is such a meaning implication. This separation is necessary because discourse-active constituents, which are presupposed, can also attract contrastiveness marking (ibid.: 287). In other words, contrastiveness is a pragmatic overlay on the sentence that is distinct from grammatical (for instance, morphological) marking as such. We have seen in chapters 2 and 3 that already activated referents can have contrastiveness, and that in some cases such contrastive presupposed referents actually become the only part of the assertion that is asserted, becoming as such the focus. But it is helpful, as Chafe (1994) suggested, to keep “cost of activation” separate from contrastiveness:

Contrastiveness is independent of activation cost. That is, a contrastive referent may be given, accessible, or new (1994:77).

To end this overview of Lambrecht, one short note: adverbial clauses may express presupposed or asserted information, depending on the context and on the word-order or phrase order in a sentence.

4.2.6 Wallace Chafe and his “one new idea constraint” in an intonation unit

Wallace Chafe (1994, cf. chapter 2 (2.2.5)) developed the concept of the one new idea constraint within his cognitive model of consciousness and discourse processing. It is important for us to briefly look at his concept, because it was developed within his theory on consciousness in relation to information structure, cognition and discourse analysis.

Conversational language appears subject to a constraint that limits an intonation unit to the expression of no more than one new idea (1994:119, cf. his chapter 9).

He defines an intonation unit as the smallest unit in which an idea can be asserted. More than one content word can come together in one intonation unit. He describes four constructions that show the potential to violate this constraint, namely the verb-object construction (ibid.:110-116), the use of a prepositional phrase with the verb (ibid.:116-117), the use of an attributive adjective with a noun (ibid.:117-118), and the conjoining of two or more content words (ibid.:118-119). These four constructions do not violate the one idea constraint, because either one of the content words express given or accessible information, or “one of the constituents was a low-content word that did not exact a separate activation cost” (ibid.:119). In the remainder of cases there was an idiom or a conventional collocation. He could not find in his data any examples “in which two independent new ideas were contained within a single intonation unit” (ibid.:119). Givón also made the point of the “one chunk per clause” principle (1984:258-263).

This insight from Chafe (and Givón) in the cognitive processing of language has far-reaching significance for the study of information structure and discourse theme, not to mention the significance for translation. The only significance and implication that will be isolated at this stage, and which is significant for the purposes of this study, is that intonation units can have one focus structure (Lambrecht also argued that clauses can have only one focus structure (1994:299-306, 354 note 4) and that only one idea is asserted, even if vague). By implication, this focus structure must therefore have a most salient semantic point. This argues for a notion of what I call a *focus peak*. Functionalists like Dik and Firbas, with their definition of focus as the most salient element in clause, may therefore have a point. Lambrecht doesn't argue along these lines. He only defines focus in terms of focus structure, the domain of the asserted information, and that in the unmarked predicate focus structure the focus can be vague (but not ambiguous). For lack of any convincing argument against such focus peaks, I will

incorporate the notion in my account of focus in Hebrew. The criteria for determining the focus peak is a vast subject beyond the scope of this study, but a few suggestive criteria will be presented in the next chapter on the account of focus in Biblical Hebrew (cf. 5.3).

4.2.7 Summary and evaluation of the functional approaches to focus

The definition of focus from the Prague School's Functional Sentence Perspective, as well as that of Dik and Callow, is that focus is the most salient element in a sentence. This definition has been used by several applications in Biblical Hebrew, most notably Buth (1999), Rosenbaum (1997), and Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze (1999). Whether there is one element or constituent that is more salient than the rest, needs further investigation. Heimerdinger (1999) and Dooley & Levinsohn (2001) propose the terms Dominant Focal Element and focus proper respectively. Chafe's (1994) notion of newsworthiness and information units as the smallest cognitive unit of consciousness is significant in that it sheds light on the "most salient element" of the functionalists, and especially on Lambrecht's accentuation placement principle. I will argue below that there is such a saliency, and term it *focus peaking*.

Givón (1990) emphasizes the contrastiveness aspect of focus, seeing it as part of focus itself.

Lambrecht (1994), in my opinion, provides a very sophisticated functional theory of focus. He argues against focus as the most salient element in a sentence, and separates contrastiveness from focus, an approach similar to some generativists, most notably Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998, see discussion below, 4.3.2). There are, however, some aspects of his theory that do not make it comprehensive enough for application in Biblical Hebrew. Obviously, his work has focused on European languages like English, French, Italian, and German, with some reference to Japanese, meaning that some particular problems of topic and focus in Biblical Hebrew are therefore not explicitly covered. Further refinements are needed, and these can be summarized in the following three points:

(1) His theory has accounted for saliency within the predicate focus structure, indicating accentuation on a constituent as the device to mark activation and sometimes even contrast. He analyses the stressed elements in predicate focus as marking the end of the predicate focus span in the clause (1994:247, cf. his concept of the Default Phrasal Accent Principle, *ibid.*:248-251). The question can now be asked whether or not there is a need to account

separately for an element of elements within the focus structure that has more saliency than the rest.

In the following example,

John went to the cinema

both “going” and “cinema” were seen as part of the newly-asserted information about the topic John. What is the relationship between the predicator “went (to)” and the argument “cinema”, if there is any? According to the theory of Firbas (cf. 1964b), the “cinema” has “a higher degree of communicative dynamism” than the verb (quoted by Levinsohn, 2002:137). Firbas calls such an argument a rheme, Levinsohn calls it focus proper, and Heimerdinger calls it the DFE, the dominant focal element. Other authors refer to this phenomenon as End-Focus (cf. Gómez-González, 2001:31-33, 245, 256, 352-354). Lambrecht does not make the distinction between the verb and its arguments. Even where such arguments are presupposed and are secondary topics, they still form part of Lambrecht’s predicate focus structure. Now, should such a distinction be made? The question is, in the case of predicate focus, whether there is not also a further distinction between the predicator being in focus by itself, as opposed to the whole of the predication including its arguments. It comes down to the accounting of presupposed, already discourse-active secondary topics as objects or adjuncts within the predicate focus structure. Do such elements form part of the predicate focus structure or not? Lambrecht argues that they do. But Chafe’s notion of the *one new idea constraint*, and Firbas’s *communicative point* (referring to something semantic in the clause that is more salient than the rest of the asserted, focal information) points to the necessity of somehow pinpointing the most prominent information within all the newly-asserted information. Defining the exact nature of this *peak* needs further investigation beyond this study, but unless evidence to the contrary is found, the concept of *focus peaking* will be maintained in the account of Biblical Hebrew information structure.

(2) A second problem with Lambrecht’s focus theory is that it does not give an account of focus particles. Normally, in English modifiers like ‘only’, ‘also’, ‘all’ are not treated as focus particles. What pragmatic meaning do function words like “only” or “also” have in English? Do they mark focus on the constituent following it? Many questions are linked to such particles. For example, do they specifically *mark* the constituent for marked versus unmarked

focus? What discourse functions do such particles fulfill? Simon Dik (1989) has given a semantic classification of the different types, but Lambrecht has not given it attention.

(3) A third problem with Lambrecht's theory on focus is what to do with points of departure (also termed 'basis', 'orientation', or 'setting') in sentences that are *not* presupposed, but altogether *unrecoverable* new information. Such expressions do not occur in argument focus structures, but rather in what is called *marked* predicate focus structures (Dooley & Levinsohn, 2001:74-75; Heimerdinger, 1999:200-211). These points of departure are sentence-initial, in a cognitively-salient position. Often these expressions have pragmatic contrast and can even be used for activation. It is proposed in chapter 5 that, just as fronted topical expressions can be a topic basis or topic frame, so fronted focal expressions also have a focus basis or focus frame. It is here that Lambrecht's distinction between marked and unmarked focus structures run into some difficulties. Lambrecht takes predicate focus structures as unmarked, and sentence focus and argument focus as marked. Although that is probably true in most cases, there is such a thing as marked predicate focus (normally by fronting a focus frame or a contrastive focus peak) on the one hand, and unmarked argument focus (although rare) and unmarked sentence focus on the other. By *marking* I understand grammatical syntactic marking, like for example fronting or other non-canonical word-order configuration. Since these marked versus unmarked structures are so important for the model of theme discovery elaborated in chapters 6 and 7, all these issues are reflected in the account for focus in chapter 5.

Dooley & Levinsohn (2001:62) propose a slight refining of Lambrecht's definition of focus:

[T]he focus of an utterance is that part which indicates what the speaker intends as the most important or salient change to be made in the hearer's mental representation.

Basically the difference in the two definitions is that the one by Lambrecht is a description of the cognitive *process*, while that of Dooley & Levinsohn is of the cognitive-pragmatic *result*.

Their definition includes the cognitive effect of focus on the hearer, and for the purposes of linking information structure to mental representations, one can argue that the refinement Dooley & Levinsohn propose is correct. In broad terms, the two definitions are very similar and will function as the basis of the account of focus in Biblical Hebrew presented in the next chapter.

In short, Lambrecht's approach to focus will guide our study of focus in Biblical Hebrew, with modifications for accommodating contrastiveness, the most salient element, the focus particles, and distinguishing narrow and broad predicate focus.

4.3 THE CHOMSKYAN OR GENERATIVE APPROACH TO FOCUS

Two papers on focus by generative grammarians are of particular importance to the development of a model for Biblical Hebrew, namely Vallduví & Engdahl (1996) and Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998).

4.3.1 Vallduví & Engdahl

Vallduví & Engdahl came to very much the same interpretation of focus structures as Lambrecht, but as seen in chapter 2, they distinguish the additional *link-focus-tail* construction (1996:470). The topic-comment articulation is slightly different for what they call the link-focus-tail construction versus the ground-focus construction. The difference is that only the verb is new information. The tail (what Lambrecht calls the secondary topic) is part of the comment, but it is not new information. It has been presupposed and it is discourse active.

Vallduví & Engdahl (1996:470) present this example:

And what about the president? How does he feel about chocolate?

The president [_F HATES] chocolate.

For cases like this it is necessary to define the notion of the narrow predicate focus in the proposed account of focus in Biblical Hebrew. It is necessary to account for such cases of narrow focus in contrast with broad focus structures, where both the verb and its arguments are new information. There are cases where some of the arguments of the comment are new, while others are given and presupposed. In such cases, the focus structure is still a broad predicate focus structure. It is only where the verb is newly asserted and in focus that we can talk of link-focus-tail constructions or narrow predicate focus.

Vallduví & Engdahl's 1996-paper also presents another theoretical issue that is relevant to the model for Biblical Hebrew, what they call focus preposing, focus topicalization, Y(iddish)-movement or rhematisation (1996:474), where "[i]n this configuration the focal element is fronted in a topicalization-like process."

They give an example:

a. *They named their dog* [_F *FIDO*]

b. [_F *FIDO*] *they named their dog*

It is true that what Vallduví & Engdahl argue, namely “that focus proposing is not equivalent in its information import to its nonfronted counterpart” (1996:474). (28)a and (28)b is not the same. Vallduví (1992) argues that “the fronted phrase actually refers to two discourse elements: the first, a set or scale, and the second, a specification of a value or an element in that set or scale.... in (28b), the set is the set of dog names, probably ordered among them in terms of clichédness, and the value is the extremely clichéd *Fido*. In these examples the specification of the relevant value is indeed focal and triggers the appropriate structural realisation by means of prosody, but the scale this value belongs to is part of the ground. In fact, it is a link, and this is what triggers its realisation as a fronted element. *Fido* in (28a) does not give rise to the same interpretation” (1996:475). So, in other words, the scale or set is part of presupposed, accessible, familiar knowledge, only the fact that *Fido* was chosen out of that set, is new information. What this analysis doesn’t do is explain the scope or span of focus in the sentences of (28). Is the verb “named” also new information? If yes, the sentence has a topic-comment articulation and the fronted FIDO in (28)b makes that sentence a marked predicate focus structure or argument focus. The question that can be raised is for what is the predicate focus marked? If only the name FIDO is in focus, a case of narrow focus or argument focus, it is clearly marked for contrastiveness, a contrast being made between the name FIDO and the other names in the set. This example is clear. But there are many examples of such object fronting where both the predicator and the fronted referent are new information. What type of focus is this? Just “focus contrast” is not sufficient, neither is just “marked predicate focus.” Such preposing is a type of focus peaking and is often marked for contrast, but a finer distinction is called for.

4.3.2 Vallduvi & Vilkuuna

Vallduvi & Vilkuuna make a “conceptual distinction between two interpretative notions, the informational **rhematicity** and the quantificational **kontrast**, that often hide behind the single term *focus*” (1998:79). Terms “like *contrast*, *focus*, *topic*, and *theme* inhabit a terminological minefield that has hindered research in pragmatics and discourse for decades” (ibid.: 79-80). They argue that there had been a tendency in the semantic tradition of focus studies to

assimilate and unify these two concepts, with unsatisfying results. Sometimes pragmatists have interpreted the operator-like properties of *kontrast* as a conversational implicature⁷⁸ or an epiphenomenon of the rheme, but Vallduví & Vilkuna argue to separate the two categories altogether. They argue that if this distinction is accounted for, “many of the problems that plague *focus* disappear and the disagreement between the semantic and the pragmatic literature on focus is explained away” (ibid.: 81).

Rheme they define as the new information of a sentence, the information that is asserted and not presupposed (following Lambrecht’s definition of focus). Like Lambrecht, Vallduví & Vilkuna follow a cognitive perspective on rhematic new information, “that belong to the domain of information packaging”⁷⁹ with its packaging instructions⁸⁰ (ibid.: 80-81). Rheme gives the information packaging instruction to “add information” (McNally, 1998:165, following Vallduví & Vilkuna)

The other category that they, in their words, ‘tease apart’ from rhematicity proper is what they call ***kontrast***. *Kontrast* is often called *focus* in the literature. *Kontrast* is associated with “narrow focus”, and is “an operator-like element, whose exact semantic import varies from author to author” (ibid.: 81), for example an exhaustiveness⁸¹ operator, a contrastiveness operator, or an identificational operator. The idea of *kontrast* is that a certain element associated with a constituent activates a certain membership set {membership set M = ..., a, b, ...}. This has been described in chapter 2 (2.3.2) As discussed in chapter 2,

⁷⁸ This is the position of Lambrecht (1994:303).

⁷⁹ Information packaging is another term for information structure, originally posited by Wallace Chafe (1976).

⁸⁰ “A packaging instruction consists of an element which corresponds to the actual update potential of the utterance – the rheme – and, optionally, of an element that spells out how the rheme is to be anchored to the input information state – the theme” (Vallduví & Vilkuna, 1998:81).

⁸¹ Exhaustiveness operator means an element that indicates exhaustive listing, where one and only one is indicated.

Kontrastiveness as defined here is orthogonal⁸² to informational rhematicity and thematicity. A kontrast may indeed be coextensive with a (complete, SJF) semantic rheme, in which case, of course, a given expression is doubly “focal” in the sense of being rhematic and kontrastive. Alternatively, a kontrast may be coextensive with a substring of a rheme. ... Unless a distinction between kontrast and rheme is made, examples like (4b) can be accounted for only if one allows for the possibility of having foci-within-foci (ibid.: 85).

Vallduví & Vilkuña want to separate the pragmatic notion of *kontrast* altogether from information packaging, since *kontrast* can be an overlay for both focus structures and topics. They prefer not to talk of focus-within-focus, but their *kontrast* is an additional overlay.

The above is a very significant new insight in the notion of focus, and will be incorporated in the account for Biblical Hebrew focus under the term *focus peaking*. Their proposed term *kontrast* is still too closely associated with pragmatic contrastiveness. Contrastive identification as a polar antithesis (*x versus y*) is only one of the four pragmatic overlay operations. The other three are exhaustive identification (*x and only x*), confirmation of identity (*the very x*, or *x itself*), and comparing⁸³ (*x [...] and y [...]*). This issue of focus peaking needs to be developed further in an integrated account of focus.

Vallduví & Vilkuña give attention to one more aspect of focus that is relevant to our pursuit of an account of focus in Biblical Hebrew, and that is how to interpret the information structure value of words like *only* and *also*. They argue that *only* proves the independence of *kontrast* and information structure, because *only* is “focus-sensitive” in the sense that it has “*kontrast* sensitivity” and not information packaging sensitivity. It is not a marker of rheme, but of *kontrast* (ibid.: 88). Their reasoning is that *only* can be associated with both focus structures and topic structures, which they illustrate by means of examples from Japanese where *only* (*dake*) can appear in a constituent with the focus-marking *-ga* as well as in a constituent with the topic-marking *-wa* (ibid.: 88). If the separate interpretive domains are not

⁸² “Orthogonal” is used by Vallduví & Vilkuña to mean “not exclusive” (ibid.:88)

⁸³ Theoretically it can be argued that the operation of comparing is only a different type of contrasting, or even a vague and general type of contrasting. On the other hand it can be argued that contrasting is a very marked and specific form of comparing. It is not clear which one encompasses the other. The boundary between the two operations is indeed fuzzy and unclear. But for the purposes of this study, the two operations will be kept apart for clarity of explanation for as far as it is possible.

maintained between *kontrast* and information packaging, and *kontrast* seen as only “focus-sensitive”, the interpretation of the Japanese “-dake-wa”-example will be puzzling.

A last comment from the work of Vallduví & Vilkuna is their assertion that languages differ in how they realize *kontrast* and rhematicity.

None of the languages discussed (Hungarian, Finnish, and Catalan, SJF) displays a simultaneous across-the-board realisation of both kontrast and rhematicity (although such languages can and should exist). This, we have argued, should not be taken to mean that one of the other category is not present in a given language, or that the two categories can be conflated into one. What it shows, we believe, is that in natural language structure – syntax, prosody, and morphology – has its quantitative limits (ibid.: 103).

Before going on to overview different applications of focus theory on Biblical Hebrew, a short recapitulation may be in order: the Prague School, Dik and especially Lambrecht and the Chomskyan linguists make a significant contribution to our understanding of focus. These theories lack an integrated approach to focus particles as well as lack an integrated approach to the problem of saliency within focus structures, Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998) being an obvious exception. Different scholars have contributed different perspectives. In the account of focus in Biblical Hebrew below, I hope to propose a model basically following Lambrecht as enriched by the generative linguists, but with some further refinements, for instance, a more integrated account of broad and narrow focus on predicates. I will also propose the notion of focus peak to account for saliency within focus structures, as well as the notion of *focus content*. In chapter 6 on “Thematics”, a further weakness in both Lambrecht and the generative linguists’ theories will be discussed, namely that of the effects of focus on discourse information flow (what Bearth (1999:152) calls the “focus effects”, the use of focus in discourse), together with the application of focus content to discourse theme analysis.

A contribution that is significant from the generativist approach is that of separating contrastiveness from focus structures proper. This will be incorporated in the account of focus in Biblical Hebrew, set out in the next chapter.

4.4 FOCUS APPLICATIONS IN BIBLICAL HEBREW

4.4.1 Functional Grammar applications: Rosenbaum and Buth

4.4.1.1 Rosenbaum and Isaiah 40-55

Rosenbaum follows Dik's definition of focus, as that part of the clause that is relatively the most salient. Parameters of focus distinguished by Rosenbaum following Dik (1980 and 1989), are the following: (1) Six types of focus. Completive focus (without contrast), and then five forms with contrast. These five subtypes are replacing focus, expanding focus, restricting focus, selecting focus, and comparing⁸⁴ focus. (2) Scope of focus can be over the whole predication, or only over a constituent, which in turn is either the predicate or a term (or argument). (3) Negation is a third parameter to delimit focus (1997:71). He calls it negative focus versus positive focus. Negative focus examples quoted by Rosenbaum are Isaiah 41.12 and 42.20b. Sometimes the negative marker fronts a NP, giving restricting focus (Is. 48.10) or replacing focus (Is. 48.7a)(1997:77). Sometimes the term marked with the negative marker is fronted, for an example of comparing focus (Is. 45.18b)(*ibid.*: 77) or replacing focus (Is. 43.22a) p77 and Is. 45.19a (*ibid.*: 78).

Rosenbaum argues that the third person singular pronoun “functions like an enclitic highlighting the previous word or suffix (following Geller (1991:30-31) who calls this a pleonastic pronoun as quasi-clefting), for example Isaiah 53.4a⁸⁵ “however, our-illness he he-bear//and-our-suffering he-carried-them.” The problem with this interpretation is twofold: 1) why is the enclitic pronoun only used in some cases and not consistently to highlight fronted elements, as in for example the second line of the parallelism? And 2), what is the pragmatic function of this highlighting? Naudé (unpublished manuscript), coming from a generative approach, offers a different interpretation of the third person pronoun in tripartite verbless clauses. He argues that such a pronoun is neither a copular, nor a recurring reference from some left-dislocated construction, but that it is a pronominal clitic that is used as a last resort for the correct semantic (referential) interpretation of specificational verbless clauses (Naudé, p12).

Rosenbaum rightly rejects ‘emphasis’ as too vague a term to use. Although Rosenbaum thoroughly applies Dik's model of focus, his main shortcoming is the theoretical lack of

⁸⁴ Rosenbaum prefers comparing focus with Dik's parallel focus, so as not to confuse form and function (1997:70).

⁸⁵ Compare Holmstedt's analysis of the information structure of Isaiah 53.4a below (4.4.2).

means to describe the different forms of focus like activation, and focus scope. Only fronted constituents in focus are described. He only discusses the instances where focus is marked, and marked by means of fronting (1997:73). Like Dik, he identifies salient new information elements with focus, and limits the scope of focus to that. The value of FG is that it gives valuable descriptive tools for word-order explanations, like the P2 P1 VSO notation. Basically, Dik's model is inadequate to account for both *kontrast*-like operations such as contrastiveness and exhaustive identification vis-à-vis the scope of the newly-activated information in a clause, as well as for fronting of expressions that are part of a predicate focus structure.

In the following example discussed by Rosenbaum, some of the shortcomings of Dik's model can be readily illustrated. The semantic notion of fronting for focus is discussed in some detail by Rosenbaum⁸⁶. Rosenbaum writes that “*Comparing focus* is the most familiar and frequent type of marked Focus in Isaiah 40-55. It is no doubt due to its obvious suitability to parallelism, the dominant poetic device in Isaiah 40-55.” (1997:83). As an example of comparing foci he gives Isaiah 40.30-31, where the expressions compared are both fronted:

*and-they-are-tired youths and-grow-weary / and-young-men stumble
they-stumble, //*

*but-hopers-in-Yahweh they-exchange strength / they-sprout wing like-
vultures //*

they-run and-not grow-weary / they-walk and-not become-tired //

In the above example, *young men* and *hopers-in-Yahweh* are not necessarily contrastive in the strict sense of the word. *Young men* indicates that everybody, even the normally strong young men, stumble. *Young men* shows the extreme to which things have developed. *Hopers-in-Yahweh* is a new group, a new selection, maybe even a remnant among the whole nation. This group is now thriving. The contrast is more with the predicators, the actual stumbling versus the gaining strength. It is indeed true that both the fronted constituents are in focus. *Young men* is the subject and is presupposed, but the predicate is presupposed as well, repeating the thought of the first colon. The fronted *young men* is marked for argument focus, with the whole colon intensifying the thought of the first colon. Even the *young men* are stumbling.

⁸⁶ In Isaiah 40-55 he found that the VO⁸⁶ constituent order is 415 cases (78.15%) and OV⁸⁶ 116 cases (21.85%) (1997:74). PP⁸⁶-VSO 24.56% and VSO-PP 75.44% (1997:75).

Hopers-in-Yahweh, on the other hand, is activating new, irrecoverable information, that becomes the primary topic in the three cola following. It is fronted because it is marked in an argument focus structure. Only the *hopers-in-Yahweh* is asserted, the predicate “exchange strength” is recoverable from the previous “weakness”-frame and therefore presupposed. It is an identificational focus-presupposition articulation, where the argument in focus simultaneously activates and contrasts the new denotata. What this explanation shows, is that the two fronted constituents are more than just contrastive focus elements. The marked information structure of the two cola does indeed carry contrastiveness, but that contrastiveness is not limited to the fronted referents. The two cola are both thematic. The doubly-marked “young men stumble they-stumble” (with the infinitive absolute intensifying the verbal action, mark the climax of the misery of God-forsakenness, but the activation of the new referents in a marked position marks the high beginning of a new blessing, that continues over the next three cola.

4.4.1.2 *Buth on the nominal and verbless clause*

In his article “A Generative and Functional approach to the verbless clause” (1999), Buth also deals extensively with focus. He defines as the most salient information in the clause (1999:81):

Focus refers to a specially signaled constituent for highlighting salient information of a clause. This information may be contrastive. It may be contrastive, that is, the speaker/writer assumes his or her audience may be expecting something different and so marks it for Focus. It may also be new information that is specially marked to fill in, or to complete, assumed missing information. It may also be old information that needs special reinforcement, through repetition.

Buth’s definition is a semantic-pragmatic one, in line with Dik’s Functional Grammar and the Prague School’s rheme, and not the informational topic-focus relation according to the definition of Lambrecht (1994) and the Generative school’s rheme. Buth says “focus is limited to *specially marked* rhemic material. Focus does not equal rheme; Focus usually only marks part of the rheme” (ibid.:81) Here he uses *rheme* in the information relational sense, like Vallduví & Vilkkuna, and focus in Vallduví & Vilkkuna’s sense of *kontrast*.

Buth argues that in the verbless clause the basic word-order is *subject-predicate*, and that a *predicate-subject* order is marked for focus⁸⁷.

Jeremiah 1.11 is an example of a verbless clause with a fronted focus constituent (boxed) (ibid.:89):

]ηΥ ρψ) μ(ρ∩ψ ηεεΟρ ηΑΓταε-ηΑμ

“What (do) you see, Jeremiah?”

 :ηεεΟρ ψ∩∩ν(ε δ∩∩∩™θΑΗ λ∩™∠θαμ ρ∩αμ

And he answered: “An almond stick I am seeing.”
Οε ρω

I agree with Buth that in response to the WH-question, which typically induces focus as well as focus peaking, that “an almond stick” is in focus. The pronominal “I” is obligatory, marking the subject of the participle and not for anything else. According to Lambrecht’s approach combined with Vallduví & Vilkuna’s, the fronted “an almond stick” has argument focus structure which makes the presupposition “I am seeing x” into an assertion, but simultaneously the whole informational focus structure attracts *kontrast* or focus peaking. The focused constituent now also *identifies* what is being seen. In argument focus sentences like this one, focus structure and focus peaking totally overlap each other, the one superimposed over the other.

Psalm 100.3 has a resumptive pronominal in both a verbless clause and a participle clause, which Buth sees as focal as well (ibid.:86):

≤ψ∩η∩∩λ[ε ε] η ∩η ρωη∩ψ

The LORD, he is God

]ν| ξΥϩ∩ν(ε ~ ελω]νΑΩΑ∩∩-ε]∩η

He (is the one who) made us and not we ourselves

The unmarked structure would have been “The LORD (is) God”, but by inserting the pronominal “he” in the first line, the “LORD” becomes a contextual constituent and the “he” as subject attracts the pragmatic focus marking, according to Buth. As insightful as this interpretation is, there are two minor problems with it. One is that the information structure relations are not clear. What is the asserted information in focus? There are two options: One is that “the Lord/he” are two topic expressions referring to the same topic, “the Lord” is the topic frame and the pronoun “he” is the primary topic of the clause. In this interpretation of the verse – in agreement with Buth – the “LORD” is indeed a Contextualizing Constituent, but in a left-dislocated construction functioning as a topic promotion device and is the topic frame for both lines. In this interpretation, the predicate “(is) God” is the focus structure. A second interpretation is that the pronoun “he” is in focus with a contrastiveness overlay: The

⁸⁷ A good example proving his position is Deuteronomy 9.4 (ibid.: 89)

Lord, *He and no one else*, is God; He is the one who made us and no one else.” In this last case, the “He” would be a contrastive argument focus structure. To put it in other words, the choice of focus structure (in the Lambrechtian sense of what makes the presupposition into an assertion) is either the predicate, “(is) God” or it is the subject argument, “He and no one else.” This example illustrates the need to distinguish between different topics, albeit that they refer to the same referent, because from the point of information structure as well as pragmatic saliency, topics function slightly differently. It also illustrates the need to determine the focus domain of a proposition. The implications for exegesis are obvious.

4.4.2 A Chomskyan application: Holmstedt

Holmstedt (unpublished) Chomskyan application on Biblical Hebrew information structure only looks at syntactic fronting, what he calls “topicalisation” for fronted constituents within the clause and “left-dislocation” for constituents outside the clause proper, but with the presence of a resumptive pronoun within the clause.

He presents three examples of object fronting within the clause boundaries (Genesis 31.42; 1 Samuel 15.1; Deuteronomy 32.37-38a) as ‘topicalisations’, but also shows that such ‘topicalisations’ can occur outside the clause proper as a left dislocation without the resumptive noun phrase (Numbers 23.3; Jeremiah 22.15) or as a parametric variation of the rule that topicalisation is limited to clause-internal movement (ibid.: 9). His use of ‘topicalisation’ is unfortunate in the case of Numbers 23.3 ([whatever he shows-me] I shall tell you), which can better be interpreted as a case of argument focus.

Holmstedt also adopts McNally’s (1998) notions of focus. McNally does not use the term focus, but rather uses *rheme* and *contrast*. Her *rheme* seems to correspond to the focus domain, where the concept *contrast* (from Vallduví & Vilkuna, 1998, see discussion above) is applied to constituents within such rheme domains where contrastive membership of a set is at stake. *Rheme* is the “added information.” Where Holmstedt argues to interpret Genesis 31.42 “[my oppression and the toil of my hands] God **saw** it”, with the fronted constituent a presupposed *Contrastive Link*, *God* as presupposed⁸⁸, and *saw* as the rheme, I would suggest the fronted element as the focus domain (in other words, argument focus), *God* and the predicate *saw it* as inferable from the context of verse 42 and thus recoverable and

⁸⁸ The fact that Holmstedt only interprets the information status of *God* as being presupposed, not making it a link or topic, shows a certain shortcoming in his approach where multiple topics are present in one clause.

presupposed as well. It is an answer to the question “**What** did God see (and acted upon)?” The focus domain also has contrastiveness as a pragmatic overlay, “**my** oppression and toil (and not your’s, Laban!).” It is an identificational sentence articulation, where “my oppression and toil of my hands” is the identity of what God saw and acted upon. The focus domain is actually a topic frame, but due to the contrastiveness overlay the topic basis is made into contrastive information. As a whole the sentence asserts that “God has treated me specially due to *my toil* at your hands.” The same interpretation can be offered for his example of Genesis 20.5.

4.4.3 Application of Lambrecht’s insights on Biblical Hebrew

In a few recent publications the information structure theory of Lambrecht, with its redefined notions of topic and focus, was applied to Hebrew word order issues. As in the overview of topic in chapter 2, here again the most significant recent contributions came from Van der Merwe (1999a and 1999c), Heimerdinger (1999) and Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript).

4.4.3.1 Jean Heimerdinger

Heimerdinger’s contribution to our understanding of topic has been discussed in chapter 2. He also dedicates a whole chapter to focus. The heading of the chapter of focus is “Focus In Direct Speech Clauses And Focus In Narrative Verbal Clauses.” Heimerdinger divides Lambrecht’s focus structures in two groups, broad focus and narrow focus. Broad focus is sentence focus and predicate focus, where argument focus is narrow focus. Broad focus includes sentence focus and predicate focus, while argument focus is narrow focus.

Heimerdinger refers to Dik’s (1981) categories of focus information denotation of complete focus versus contrastive focus, with contrastive focus then subdivided between parallel and counter-presuppositional focus. Contrastive counter-presuppositional focus has four subcategories, namely replacive focus, expanding focus, restricted focus and selective focus. Heimerdinger says that these “contrastive notions are not as clear-cut as the classification offered might lead us to think. There are instances where it is difficult to decide which kind of contrast can be inferred, or even if there is any contrastive meaning intended at all.” (1999:170)

In Old Hebrew, two main devices for marking focus can be distinguished (in the absence of prosodic clues): 1) Word order, and 2) focusing particles (raq ‘only’ selective or restrictive;

af ‘only’ restrictive; gam ‘also’ expanding; ki im ‘except’ selective, applying Dik’s focus categories) (ibid.: 170).

1. Predicate focus structure is the normal word order, unmarked focus, “and the most common form of focus in Old Hebrew.” (ibid.: 171). “Within the predicate focus domain, the denotatum expressed by the object NP is informationally more important than the V. ... These NP’s are the DFEs.” (ibid.: 171). He defines the DFE as “a constituent is the DFE when its corresponding denotatum represents the informationally pivotal element of the assertion” (ibid.: 168). His concept of the DFE is significant because it is not part of the information structure of Lambrecht. Lambrecht, as seen above, does deal with contrastiveness and activation, but does not take them to be part of the information structure proper. For Lambrecht, these pragmatic peak features are pragmatic overlays. Heimerdinger, however, incorporates these pragmatic peaks in his theory of focus of Biblical Hebrew. Since it is an issue also raised by the generative linguists like Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998) and even before with the Prague School, where this issue has been an integral part of their Functional Sentence Perspective (cf. Levinsohn, 2002:136), it is necessary to look at this in more detail.

The following example illustrates the DFE:

What did Gary do?

Gary went to the theatre.

‘Went to the theatre’ is the predicate focus structure, while ‘theatre’ is the DFE. In this example, the DFE is at the end (1999:167).

In transitive clauses, with predicate focus structure, the DFE is often the noun phrase object of the verb. This object can be fronted, and is still the DFE. When fronted, such clauses are marked predicate focus structures. Isaiah 1.2⁸⁹ is discussed as an example. The verb is in focus too. The fronting only marks the change of topic (ibid.: 171-2)

A. Children I-have-reared and-I-have-raised,

⁸⁹ Other examples of marked predicate focus structures with fronted objects include Jeremiah 12.3 (where fronted “but-thorns they-reaped” is counter-expectational and thus has marked DFE focus, and thorns contrasted with the ‘wheat’ as DFE in first line “they-have-sown wheat” (1999:171-172) and also Genesis 14.21.

B. But-they have-rebelled against-Me

A different interpretation I suggest for line A is that the fronted ‘children’ is part of the focus domain, but that it is something of a basis or orientation for the newly-asserted information. It is a DFE, some type of a focus peak, of the focus domain. ‘I’ is God and is the primary topic. In line B ‘they’ refer to the ‘children’ activated in the focus basis in line A. ‘They’ is made explicit, not in the first place because it is a change in topic in the sense that it has now become a primary topic, but because of counter-expectational behaviour of the primary topic. The fronted pronoun is emphatic in the sense of confirming the identity of those who, against all expectation, have now rebelled against God. As if one can freely translate it in the following way: *but, can you believe it, those very people rebelled against Him*. This example illustrates the discourse span or influence of the focus basis, a focus frame that activates a new referent that becomes the basis of what is said in both lines⁹⁰. The basis becomes the link, the presupposed ground, in generative terms. Furthermore, I doubt Heimerdinger’s interpretation that ‘against-me’ is the DFE of line B. Line B does indeed have a predicate focus structure, commenting on something about the primary topic ‘they’, but the predicator together with the deictic pronoun is the focus peak. The predicator ‘rebel’ requires a bonded complement. This example is a case of a conjoining construction or a conjoint peak. One more issue about this verse: the two fronted items in Isaiah 1.2 are not in contrast. What is contrasted is the behaviour of God, the primary topic in line A, and the reaction of the people of Israel. The predicates are in contrast.

Another example which illustrates Heimerdinger’s use of the DFE is 1 Samuel 17.38: “Saul clothed David with his garments”; with predicate focus structure. ‘David’ is the direct object and presupposed. ‘Garments’ is the indirect object and the DFE. If something is in focus, then it is contrastive with someone/thing else. This is why ‘garments’ is DFE. (ibid.: 189-190). Van der Merwe (2000:578) expresses some doubt about Heimerdinger’s concept of the DFE. He asks why the verb should be any less dominant. This specific point is important to pursue.

⁹⁰ In Chapters 5 and 9 the term ‘theme-announcing macroword’ and ‘focus theme frame’ are used to describe this function of focus basis. Theme-announcing macrowords are a subtype of argument focus structures.

The concept of object-verb bonding as developed by Tomlin (1986:74) and quoted by Heimerdinger, is significant. Where such object-verb bonding exists, the DFE will be both the verb and its object.

2. Heimerdinger's inclusion of the particles in Biblical Hebrew as focus particles (ibid.:170) agrees with the Functional Grammar theory of Simon Dik. Applying Dik's categories to the particles is interesting, as is the evaluation that this analysis is not watertight (Heimerdinger, 1999:170-171; and cf. comment Van der Merwe, 2000:578). Levinsohn (2002:6) reinforces Heimerdinger's position that these focus particles "only tend" to be fronted. Fronting is not always the case, as seen in Genesis 3.6. It is also a fact that the focus particles can appear in both predicate focus and argument focus structures. But what is a path to pursue is that the focus particle is also a specialized contrastive focus marker. It does not mark focus domain, limiting the focus structure to only that part following it. The presence of the focus particle may be proof that there is a real distinction between the focus domain and the focus peak. Furthermore, in Levinsohn's (2002) review of Heimerdinger, he argues that the use of $\leq\gamma$ in Genesis 19.38 "and **also the younger one** she bore a son" shows that $\leq\gamma$ can also be associated with topical, presupposed (and in this case, fronted) elements. The "younger one" is a presupposed primary topic, and contrastiveness is added by the fronting and the $\leq\gamma$. The contrastiveness (or *kontrast*, the other member of the set of two sisters) here marked by the $\leq\gamma$ is actually the information that makes this presupposition into an assertion and while the $\leq\gamma$ marks a primary topic, that marked primary topic now becomes part of the focus structure, in this case an argument focus structure.

If both object NP's are presuppositional, the speaker uses word order to indicate which one is the DFE. "This principle explains the obligatory fronting of an object PRO (pronoun). A referent encoded as PRO is always presuppositional" (ibid.: 192).

In summary then, the non-presupposed post-verbal referent is always the DFE, according to Heimerdinger. If there are two, look at the fact whether it is obligatory with the verb or not, then look at word order (sentence-final position has preference), and then the context (ibid.: 197-198).

Regarding argument focus in Old Hebrew, argument focus appears in three different contexts: question-answer exchanges, in fronted constructions, and following certain focus particles⁹¹. Heimerdinger's statement that "[f]ormally, nothing distinguishes forefronting for focus from forefronting for topicalization" (ibid.: 185), is true. One needs to look at context and presuppositions.

On symmetrical and contrastive topics and foci, Heimerdinger presents the following definition of contrast: "Two topical referents are contrasted with one another, but the assertion of the second clause does not go against, deny, or correct the truth value of the previously expressed proposition. This differs from a contrastive foci construction made out of two adjacent clauses, and in which the assertion of the second clause denies, goes against or corrects the first one." (ibid.:206). "Special morphosyntactic devices to differentiate between contrastive topics and contrastive foci do not exist in Old Hebrew. It is through inferring from the context that one can establish which notion is encoded in a NP + qatal clause. In the contrastive topics construction, the topical referents may be encoded as NPs subject, direct object or indirect object" (ibid.:207). To account for this unique case of fronting Heimerdinger has applied his concept of *marked* predicate focus. But positing the notion of *marked predicate focus* is problematic. Heimerdinger needs such a structure because of his concept of the DFE, the Dominant Focal Element. When the predicate is transitive and has an argument, the predicate foci construction will have a DFE. And when such a DFE is fronted, it becomes a marked predicate focus. If one holds to the concept of a DFE - in the case of non-presupposed fronted referents - it is an argument that is fronted and therefore marked. Van der Merwe, in his review of Heimerdinger, remarks that the concept of a DFE is superfluous (2000:578). What is really marked by the DFE? Logically, it cannot be the actual predicate verb, unless it is a narrow predicate focus structure. It seems that Heimerdinger needs the DFE concept to explain these cases of fronting where both the fronted referent and the predicate is in focus.

A broad predicate focus structure, where every element of the comment is newly asserted, can also have a word-order configuration where an element of the focused predication is fronted. This fronted element can be an object or a temporal or locative adverbial. When the fronted constituent is an adverbial, for example a locative, that locative has been raised and thus

⁹¹ As examples are given $\theta\rho$ and $\leq\gamma$: Exodus 10.24; 2 Samuel 19.30-31

becomes some form of a focus orientation. It orients the focus in the sense that it pinpoints and limits the application of the predicate. When there is no such fronting, the adverbial is not raised to prominence. Isaiah 40.3 is an example of the type of focus orientation that is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

Heimerdinger divides the examples of third-person narrative clauses with Sentence Focus structure into two groups, that of presentational NP+qatal clauses, and event reporting clauses. Presentational NP+Qatal clauses can either be simple clauses, as in 2 Kings 6.26, or anchored clauses, as in 1 Kings 14.25; 16.34.

For Event-reporting Clause he distinguishes simple clauses as in 2 Kings 13.14; Genesis 29.9; 1 Kings 13.5; anchored clauses as in 1 Kings 14.1, and event-reporting clause as flashback, as in Genesis 31.19.

Finally, Van der Merwe has this to say about Heimerdinger's book: "It represents a valuable overview of the effects of some of the useful insights recent developments in pragmatics have had on the understanding of Biblical Hebrew narrative texts" (Van der Merwe, 2000:578). But three real issues remain to be solved: First, Heimerdinger's concept of DFE may be a valid one, but there is a need to incorporate it in a wider framework of focus, and it is especially necessary to address Van der Merwe's (2000) concern of separating the verb from the arguments. Why should the arguments in predicate focus structures be DFEs and not the verb? Second, assuming that the concept of DFE is correct, the question of whether the DFE is now a focus-within-focus needs to be addressed. The concept of focus peaking as a pragmatic overlay to the focus domain (Lambrecht's three focus structure types) may provide a more satisfying account of the phenomenon. It is also necessary to be exact about the function of the DFE. Why do languages, and why does Biblical Hebrew mark the DFE? Third, marked predicate focus structures with fronting needs to be further qualified and defined, and there is need for a notion that captures the fronted constituent that in some way or another *frames* or *orients* the rest of the information in the focus structure domain. In chapter 5 an account of these three issues is proposed.

4.4.3.2 Van der Merwe (1999c)

Van der Merwe (1999c) reviews Gross's (1996) approach to Biblical Hebrew focus and adds his own views on how to approach focus in Biblical Hebrew. He regards Walter Gross's study on Biblical Hebrew word order in Deuteronomy, Judges and 2 Kings as "a high-water mark in

the study of Biblical Hebrew word order”, mainly because of Gross’s attempt to incorporate modern linguistic perspectives in his description of word-order. Gross argues that Biblical Hebrew only “needs a distinction between the “Vorfeld”, that part of a sentence that precedes the verbal predicate, and a “Hauptfeld”, that part that follows the verbal predicate” (cf. Van der Merwe, 1999c:282). Van der Merwe indicates a shortcoming in Gross’s work, in that he avoids the topic-comment dichotomy and prefers to work with the notion *focus-background* only. Focus is the prominent, and background the non-prominent. Topic is not a notion that is a significant part of his theory, mostly because he does not regard topic⁹² definitions, and theme-rheme definitions, as adequate for describing Biblical Hebrew word-order (ibid.: 287). While his concept of focus-background can readily explain many cases of fronting in the “Vorfeld”, the result has been that his findings have been complex with unexplained taxonomic lists for those instances not covered by his theory (ibid.:290). Van der Merwe, however,

[wants] to hypothesize that a broader definition of the concept “focus” and in general a more top-down mentalistic approach for studying word order as the interface between grammar and the conceptual world of interlocutors in a communicative process may render a less complex, in the sense of containing fewer unexplained taxonomic lists, and a more complete frame of reference for the study of BH word order (ibid.: 290-291).

It is necessary to have a theory of information structure that includes both focus and topic. Van der Merwe then proceeds with a description of focus from the point of view of Lambrecht (1994). On fronting, he writes the following:

In BH fronting is one of the constructions used to signal that an entity or an attribute of an entity is the focus of the utterance. ... Fronting is a grammatical signal in BH that reflects the judgment of speakers concerning the cognitive environment of their addressees. Pending the information structure of the communication situation at the moment of the utterance it may be interpreted as follows:

⁹² He does use the term “topicalization”, but only for fronting of a sentence constituent, the same way the term is used in generative studies (Van der Merwe, 1999c:287).

- (1) *a fronted non-verbal entity is established as entering a topic relation with the proposition conveyed by the utterance;*
- (2) *the fronted non-verbal entity, or an aspect of it, is in a focus relationship with the rest of the proposition, i.e., it represents that element whose presence makes the proposition into an assertion;*
- (3) *whenever neither of the above-mentioned relationships is realised, one may expect a type of circumstantial clause that conveys one or other type of background or temporal information. The latter category⁹³ needs some further theoretical reflection (ibid.:297).*

What is significant is that Van der Merwe adds a perspective on focus, in that focus “not only conveys *the identity* of an entity or event, it may also *confirm* it, e.g. ‘Did SHE tell you?’ ‘Yes, SHE HERSELF told me’ (ibid.:296). This notion of confirming the identity of an entity, over and above contrasting or merely identifying the identity of an entity, is valuable and is incorporated in the account for topic and focus in Biblical Hebrew proposed in this study.

In the Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar of Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze (1999:311-318), focus particles are presented as a distinct word class, defined in the following words:

Focus particles are a group of adverbs that can modify a word (as part of a word chain or of a constituent), a constituent or a clause. They... place a particular focus on the entity or clause that follows them. An outstanding feature of focus particles is that their meaning always indicates that the referent to which they refer is an addition to or limitation of another referent. This is why some people prefer to call these adverbs quantifiers (ibid.:311).

The particles always mark a sentence or a constituent as for focus. These focus particles and how they fit in the overall account for focus in Biblical Hebrew, are discussed in the next chapter.

Van der Merwe also wrote an article on fronting in Biblical Hebrew (1999a), developing the approach he laid out in his 1999c-article where he reviews and evaluates Gross’ approach.

⁹³ The category of fronted entities that are circumstantial or that function as points of departure, will be discussed in chapter 5 as focus frames.

4.4.3.3 Van der Merwe (1999a)

In an article named “Explaining Fronting in Biblical Hebrew”, Van der Merwe builds on his arguments presented in the article as summarized above, namely that the notions of topic and focus in Biblical Hebrew are better understood from a cognitive-pragmatic framework, in particular the framework of Lambrecht (1994). In this article he gives an overview of current explanations of fronting, quoting Muraoka (1985), Gross (1996), Bandstra (1992), Rosenbaum (1997) and Buth (1999), and then proceeds to give “a more coherent theoretical frame of reference for explaining fronting” with examples from Deuteronomy 31 and 32.

I intend to demonstrate that a substantial number of cases of fronting in both prose and poetry can be explained in terms of this frame of reference, though it cannot explain all of them (ibid.:174).

He distinguishes three forms of focus, namely predicate focus, sentence focus, and argument focus.

The communication situation is crucial in the determining of the exact reason of certain word-order configurations like fronting:

...[T]he position of a sentence constituent, e.g. fronting, may be determined by a speaker’s judgment of the state of his/her audience’s cognitive world. By the state of the cognitive world I mean which entities or propositions are active in the consciousness of the interlocutors at a particular point in a discourse(....) Apart from the formal grammatical constraints of Biblical Hebrew grammar, the position of the sentence constituent, e.g. fronting, may be determined by a speaker’s judgment of the state of his/her audience’s cognitive world. (ibid.:180-181).

He explains this statement from Deuteronomy 31.2:

<p>≤ ↓Xψαη □□□ψικOvAε η□ϕvAH ≤ψ□(ρ) Ωεω□ □□ηAεEμ-εZβ ε βAλ□ω τε□□□EχAλ δ Ψω λ□ακ□ε-ε·λ ψ□αλEε ρ□□□□αμAε □□ηϕωηψ□□ω :η□∅•ζαη/B©Zδ(ρ)Xψαη-τεε ρ□□ΨOβ(πατ εB· λ</p>	<p>he said to them: "one hundred twenty years old I am today. I am no longer able to get about, And the LORD has told me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.'</p>
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The “I” and “today” is presupposed and discourse-active. The fronted “one hundred and twenty years” is identifiable to the hearers, but not activated. This fronted and newly-activated

Here we have three discourse active entities, he=the Lord, you=the Israelites and the “those nations.” The fact of the matter is that, on the basis of the co-text, one may assume the entire proposition “The Lord will destroy those nations before the Israelites” is already shared by Moses and the Israelites. The fronting of the subject confirms the active role God will play in the destruction of the nations. When a constituent is fronted in an utterance containing a proposition shared by the interlocutors, argument focus is involved. The identity of an entity that has a particular role in a proposition may be provided, confirmed (e.g. in Deuteronomy 32.3) or denied (e.g. in Deuteronomy 32.27) (ibid.:182-183).

In response to Van der Merwe, the providing, confirming or denying the identity of an entity in propositions that for the rest are presupposed, as is indeed the case in Deuteronomy 32.3, forms part of fronted argument focus structures. Where such identities are provided or denied, all such cases are argument focus. These are identificational sentences with a focus-presupposition articulation.

In the article by Van der Merwe & Talstra, discussed below, a further proposal of fronting for focus in Biblical Hebrew is made: sentence focus and argument focus can both have fronted constituents.

Although Heimerdinger proposed and illustrated some examples of *fronted marked predicate focus* structures (not discussed by Van der Merwe) there are still examples of fronting in predicate focus structures in Biblical Hebrew where the fronted constituent fulfills the role of a basis, an orientation, or a frame for the rest of the new information in the focus structure. In chapter 5 these examples are discussed.

4.4.3.4 Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze

Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze defined focus in terms of “the most salient information conveyed by a particular utterance” (1999:345). This definition is in line with that of the functional grammarians. Van der Merwe, in a later study (cf. Van der Merwe & Talstra) defined focus more in line with that of Lambrecht.

In the Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar (abbreviated BHRG) there is a whole section on focus particles (1999:311-318). These particles will be discussed, and the BHRG reviewed in this regard in chapter 5 (5.3.2.3). Focus particles are called this way “because they place a

particular focus on the entity or clause that follows them” (ibid.:311). These particles are also called quantifiers because “their meaning always indicates that the referent to which they refer *is an addition or limitation of another referent*” (ibid.:311). Particles like *also* are also called *additive words* in the literature (cf. Dimroth, 2002:891), where particles like *only* are also called *restrictive words*. What the BHRG argues, is that these particles are always part of focus structures. Some form of contrastiveness is always involved as well. But it is necessary to remember that the referents to which such focus particles refer are not always discourse-new. Presupposed (topical) referents can also have these particles, but the presence of such particles makes those presupposed elements focal. Something is asserted about them.

4.4.3.5 Van der Merwe & Talstra

Van der Merwe & Talstra provide an introduction to information structure theory, followed by a listed presentation of topic and focus structures in Biblical Hebrew. A similar summary appears in Chapter 1, but is repeated for convenience: In their account, Biblical Hebrew is divided into verbal clauses, participial clauses, nominal clauses and pendens constructions. The verbal clauses have either unmarked or marked order. “The VSO (VSX) order of constituents represents for Biblical Hebrew its most unmarked order” (ibid.:15). The unmarked verbal clauses are those which contain only presupposed information, like relative clauses, and they are topic-comment articulations with predicate focus. Since the wayyiqtol and weqatal clauses disallow any form of fronting, they represent the most unmarked word-order. That is not to say that all wayyiqtol and weqatal clauses have predicate focus. In some cases, where “progress” needed to be specified as well, the author used wayyiqtol clauses with brand-new entities in event-reporting, sentence focus structures (e.g. Genesis 32.25) (ibid.:16-17).

In the case of marked verbal constructions, there are fronted constituents. Such clauses with fronted constituents are cases either of argument focus or of sentence focus.

(1) Fronting for argument focus:

This happens when the argument, or some aspect of it, represents that semantic element that turns the “presupposed proposition” conveyed in the clause into a piece of information. This means the “new” proposition (i.e. focus entity plus presupposed proposition) is intended to have some effect on the cognitive world of the addressee (ibid.:18).

This “effect” could be to *add* some information to the cognitive world of the addressee, to *contradict* the relation between a proposition and an entity, or to *confirm* the already established role of a particular entity in a presupposed proposition (ibid.:18). Examples given are Judges 1.1-2, Exodus 5.3, and Joshua 5.4.

(2) Fronting for sentence focus:

This happens when the fronted argument refers to a brand-new entity and the predicate refers to a proposition that is neither discourse active nor can be inferred from the co-text or context (ibid.:19)

Sentence focus can also report an event “out of the blue”, with or without a discourse active topic. “Crucial is the fact that the utterance report primarily what happened, not what did the discourse active entity (i.e. primary topic, SJF) did next” (ibid.:20).

In the case of participial clauses, the unmarked order is *subject + predicate* (e.g. Deuteronomy 4.1), and the marked order is where any other constituent is fronted, which then signals argument focus (e.g. Genesis 37.15) (ibid.:22). In the case of nominal clauses, the unmarked order is *subject + predicate* (Genesis 39.3), with the predicate in focus. The marked order is *predicate + subject*, with the fronting signaling predicate focus, as in Judges 7.2 (ibid.:23). Also, “when an adjunct precedes a nominal clause, argument focus is involved” (e.g. Judges 7.4).

In the next chapter, in the footsteps and spirit of Van der Merwe (1999a, 1999c, and 2000), Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), as well as Heimerdinger (1999), an account of focus in Biblical Hebrew is proposed.

4.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter on the development of our understanding of focus, several theories of focus come under scrutiny. The functional approaches of the Prague School, Simon Dik, and Talmy Givón are briefly summarized. Dik’s semantic-pragmatic approach provided a valuable taxonomy of contrastive focus. The taxonomy by Heimerdinger has been applied to the Hebrew focus particles⁹⁴. But Dik’s definition of focus as the most salient constituent in a

⁹⁴ Levinsohn (2002:136-137) expressed some doubt about the calling of quantitative particles like ‘only’, ‘also’, ‘even’, ‘just’ focus particles, suggesting that they may be quantitative particles as well or instead. He did not suggest an alternative interpretation.

sentence has the problem that topical information can on the one hand sometimes have even more saliency than what any focus structure in the sentence could have (for example, with prominent word-order), and on the other hand, different constituents can have a marked saliency relative to each other. A theory that grounds focus in not only semantic-pragmatics, but also in cognitive processes, is called for, as well as a theory that distinguishes saliency from asserted information. This point also goes for those who apply Dik's Functional Grammar to Biblical Hebrew.

From Lambrecht (1994) came a significant new approach to focus, with his cognitive definition of focus (*focus information is that which makes a presupposition into an assertion*). His distinction of the three focus structures (which can also be called focus domains), namely *sentence focus*, *argument focus*, and *predicate focus*, will be foundational to the account of focus in Biblical Hebrew.

Biblical scholars also studied focus in the last decade. Buth (1999) and Rosenbaum (1997) applied Functional Grammar notions of focus to Biblical Hebrew. Buth's contribution to our understanding of fronting in verbless clauses is very important. Jean Heimerdinger (1999) was the first to comprehensively apply Lambrecht's information structure theory on Biblical Hebrew. But he includes in his theory of focus what he calls the Dominant Focal Element (DFE). The DFE is the salient element in a focus structure, something very much related to Vallduví & Vilkuna's "orthogonal" contrast in relation to rheme, and in line with the thinking of Functional Grammar and Functional Sentence Perspective. This theoretical overview emphasizes the need for a cognitive-pragmatic definition of focus, semantic-pragmatic distinctions of contrastive focus, the separating out of cognitively salient processes like activation and contrast from the actual focus domain, rather seeing it as a secondary overlay. It is therefore necessary to determine whether the concept of *focus peaking* (a more descriptive term maybe for the *DFE*, Dooley & Levinsohn's *focus proper*, and FSP's *rheme*) is viable and whether it has any real explanatory power.

Over and above investigating the possibility of *focus peaking* in Biblical Hebrew, three additional theoretical issues with focus in Biblical Hebrew remain.

1. First, the problem of *contrastiveness*. In the literature review, *contrastiveness* recurs as an issue. Lambrecht argues that contrastiveness as well as activation are not the

same as focus. This point has been convincingly argued by Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998), as well as by Chafe (1994, cf. above). Sentence stress or sentence accentuation is seen as a cognitive means of activation, which does not completely overlap with the focus structures. The same is said of contrastiveness. In the account of focus in Biblical Hebrew it will be necessary to give a proposal on how to handle saliency within focus structures, and what is the exact place of focus particles. For that reason the notion of focus peaking (very much the same as Heimerdinger's DFE and the Functional Sentence Perspective's rheme) will be developed. Although their approach is formal and not functional, generative linguistics have brought several useful insights to bear on this problem of the relationship between focus and contrastiveness. This study has especially benefited from Vallduví & Vilkuna's (1998) distinction between focus and *contrastiveness* (what they called *kontrast*). Their rheme versus *kontrast* distinction has cast light on the "secondary focus" concept of Lambrecht and on the DFE concept of Heimerdinger. What is not conclusive yet, is the exact relationship between *kontrast* and information structure focus in general. Are they totally independent but not mutually exclusive, or is *kontrast* a type of **focus peak** within a focus information structure in the same way that it can mark a topic peak in a topic structure? My hypothesis is that *contrasts as focus peak* within focus structures – like topic peaks or topicalisations in topical structures – are significant for the linking of information structure to higher-level discourse themes, and for that reason will be maintained as an "aspect" of focus.

2. Second, how to account for *marked word-order* in the post-verbal field – or in some cases in the preverbal field where a focus framing interpretation is unsatisfactory – in Biblical Hebrew. Heimerdinger (1999) and Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze (1999:336-350) have cast significant light on the issues before us. Generative linguistics have made a contribution in terms of terminology, like *narrow predicate focus*, something that needs to be accounted for in a comprehensive theory of focus. One avenue to pursue is the theoretical distinction that the generative linguists Vallduví & Vilkuna have made between rheme and *kontrast*. This is believed to be significant and will be incorporated in the account for focus in the next chapter. Another avenue to pursue is the syntactic-semantic relationship between the verb and its complement(s). Is there in Biblical Hebrew such a distinction between *narrow*

versus *broad* predicate focus? To investigate this, it is necessary to address the pragmatic implications of *conjoint* versus *disjoint* predicate constructions.

3. The third problem of focus in Biblical Hebrew is the problem of how to relate focus to the discovery of *theme(s)*, which is one of the main purposes of this study. The notion of *focus content* is believed to be important in this regard. Focus content is briefly introduced and defined in chapter 5, and further developed and applied in chapters 9 and 10.

Chapter 5

AN ACCOUNT OF FOCUS IN BIBLICAL HEBREW

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Based on the preceding overview of focus, what follows now is an account of focus in Biblical Hebrew. This chapter starts off with a listing of requirements for an account of focus in Biblical Hebrew, followed by a short recapitulation of Lambrecht's model for focus as applied by Van der Merwe, Van der Merwe & Talstra (unpublished manuscript), and Heimerdinger (1999) on Biblical Hebrew. Next, the three focus structures in Biblical Hebrew are discussed in more detail, followed by descriptions and definitions of *focus peaking* and the two pragmatic operations that are associated with focus structures, namely contrastiveness and intensification. In the treatment of focus structures, both marked and unmarked word-orders are discussed. Residue data is discussed briefly in the section of special focus structures and focus in poetry.

This account does not claim to be comprehensive in the sense that *all* cases of focus in Biblical Hebrew are covered. The goal of the account is to take the recent discoveries of focus in Biblical Hebrew one step further: to identify the focus structures with marked word-orders in Biblical Hebrew. The main hypothesis of this study is to prove that those marked word-order structures do indeed have particular importance in the identification of theme in Biblical Hebrew narrative.

In the light of the overview of focus in chapter 4, it is necessary to list some highlighted issues about focus. These highlighted issues are reformulated into requirements that an account of focus needs to consider.

Requirements of an account for the explanation of focus in Biblical Hebrew:

- It needs to be able to account for the pragmatic relations of information within a sentence in Biblical Hebrew, in relation to the categories of topic defined in chapters one and two.

- It needs to define the scope of focus in a sentence, the focus domain, indicating which constituents form the focus and which have topicality.
- It needs to be able to account for the neutral, unmarked word-order configurations of focus structure in Biblical Hebrew. By “structure” it is not meant a syntactic configuration, but rather the structure of the pragmatic relationship between given and new information.
- It needs to account for the specially marked word-order focus structures in Biblical Hebrew, especially fronting for focus and the focus particles.
- It needs to define the relationship between the scope of focus and speaker-intentional pragmatic functions such as activation and contrastiveness, if indeed there is such a relationship.
- It needs to account for special cases in Biblical Hebrew, such as particles like $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$.
- It needs to account for all genres, or at least most genres of Biblical Hebrew. Focus should be accounted for in poetry as well as in narrative.
- It needs to model focus in such a way that it will be possible to see the links between information structure and theme, if there are any such links.

The goal of this account of focus

The goal of this focus account is that it should be a linguistic instrument, amongst others, for exegeting Biblical Hebrew texts of a variety of genres. The model should not be a taxonomy of pragmatic functions of focus structures. Such taxonomies can be subjective and to an extent, unending. Different languages mark focus in different ways. Accounting for *all* focus functions in Biblical Hebrew, is a task far too complex and extensive for the purposes of this study. The account in the first place needs to be such that the focus structures significant for *theme* identification can be identified. A secondary goal is to present a model that is compact, coherent, and without too many new terms. Its terminology should be consistent, clear, usable, and above all, teachable.

As said before, the original views of Lambrecht on focus form the foundation of this account. But Lambrecht’s views are complemented and refined by the work of Van der Merwe (1996,

1998, and unpublished manuscript, with E. Talstra), Heimerdinger (1999), and Shimasaki (2002). This study is also influenced by the work of Buth (1999). The Chomskyan contribution to the model takes credit for the separation of contrastiveness from the scope of focus (or focus domain) in the information structure equation of a sentence. *Contrastiveness* is taken as a pragmatic operation associated with focus, together with another pragmatic operation called *intensification*. The term *emphasis* is avoided, being too generic a pragmatic term that can include contrastiveness, focus, and intensification (cf. Shimasaki's discussion on contrast, emphasis, and focus, 2002:63-82).

The definition of focus by Lambrecht is still underlying to this account. According to his view, focus is not just the complement of topic, nor is it necessarily, or only, the most salient constituent in a clause or sentence.

Focus ... is seen as an element of information that is ADDED TO, rather than superimposed on, the pragmatic information.... The focus of a proposition is seen as the element of information whereby the presupposition and the assertion DIFFER from each other. The focus is that portion of the proposition which cannot be taken for granted at the time of speech. It is the UNPREDICTABLE or pragmatically NON-RECOVERABLE element in an utterance. The focus is what makes an utterance into an assertion (1994:206-207).

Following Lambrecht, there are three sentence types each with its own focus structure:

- 1) The Topic-comment sentence - with a Predicate focus structure
- 2) The Identificational or Focus-presupposition sentence - with an Argument Focus structure⁹⁵
- 3) The Event-reporting sentence, with sub-type as the presentational sentence - with an All-focus or Sentence Focus structure

What is distinct in this account vis-à-vis Lambrecht, is that I suggest a slight refinement of some of his categories. No new focus categories are introduced in this account, other than

⁹⁵ Argument focus has also been subdivided into two different types, namely argument focus that has a marked word-order or construction, for example fronting or the use of a focus particle, on the one hand, and on the other hand unmarked word-order argument focus where the focused argument is in an unmarked, normal word-order position. This last form is theoretically possible, but so rare that only one Biblical Hebrew example can be offered so far.

focus peaking as a pragmatic overlay on one constituent in the focus domain. The contrastive pair focus which Lambrecht considers to be a fourth type of focus – but he does not develop that in his model – has been accounted for in the notion of contrastiveness and focus peaking present in all three main focus structures.⁹⁶

In this chapter on the account of focus structures in Biblical Hebrew, the three types or categories of focus structures are discussed in more detail and illustrated with examples from the Hebrew Bible (section 5.2). In section 5.3 the notion of focus peaking is further developed and defined, and the two focus peaking mechanisms, namely end-weight and fronting in predicate focus structures, are described and illustrated. In section 5.4 the pragmatic operations overlaying or associated with focus structures are discussed. These pragmatic operations are contrastiveness intensification.

5.2 THE THREE FOCUS STRUCTURES

Predicate focus structures

Sentence focus structures

Argument focus structures

5.2.1 Predicate Focus Structures

Predicate focus is the most common form of focus in Biblical Hebrew narratives. Predicate Focus structures are topic-comment sentence articulations. To identify predicate focus structures, it is first necessary to identify a topic, using the heuristic tool of questioning the text with the aboutness test (“is the sentence about a referent?”), the as-for test (“as for referent x, this and this is true”), or the concerning test (“concerning referent x, this and this is the case”).

The comment part can have either the predicate and its complements (if there are any) newly asserted and in focus, or only the predicate verb itself asserting new information. But even in this last case, where only the verb is newly asserted and in focus, the whole predication including the presupposed complement forms the comment. For instance, in the following exchange (from Vallduví & Engdahl, 1996:463)

⁹⁶ The notion of contrastiveness of focus is symmetrical to the possible contrastiveness of the three main topic types. Contrastiveness can be a potential property of all three focus types. This entails that fronting as a means of expressing contrast can also appear in all focus structures in the same way that it can appear in all topic structures.

A. What about the pipes? What's wrong with them?

B. The pipes [_F are RUSTY].

The “pipes” is the topic of the answer sentence. Some new information is now asserted about the “pipes”, namely that they “are RUSTY.” The copular “are” is presupposed, because the question is about the condition of the pipes. The “are” is nevertheless part of the comment on the topic “pipes.” This comment, which includes presupposed information together with the new information, is also called the “rheme” of a sentence by some theorists like Vallduví & Engdahl (1996), Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998)⁹⁷.

Two types of predicate focus structures can be distinguished, namely the Broad Predicate focus and the Narrow Predicate Focus structures. Broad predicate focus is where both the verb as the predicator, and its complement(s) are newly-asserted information. Such complements include adverbial phrases and prepositional phrases. Narrow predicate focus is where only the verb is newly-asserted information, or where the predicate does not contain any complements. In clauses where there are secondary topics as complements, we have narrow predicate focus. Where there is only one newly-asserted complement in a predicate, and other complements are presupposed or secondary topics, it is still a case of broad predicate focus. The broad predicate focus can include presupposed topical information. Dooley & Levinsohn (2001:63) prefer to call the predicate focus structure the *comment*, and call the one element in the predicate focus structure that attracts additional focus, *focus proper*⁹⁸. What they call focus proper (in the FG and Prague School sense), will be termed *focus peaking* in this account. To maintain the distinction between broad and narrow predicate focus, the terms narrow and broad predicate focus are preferred to *comment*.

5.2.1.1 Broad predicate focus

In broad predicate focus structures, both the predicate and the predicate complement(s) (or argument(s)) are asserted or new information; information that differs from the discourse-active presupposed information and makes that presupposition into an assertion. As new

⁹⁷ Halliday (1967) defined rheme as everything that is not theme in a sentence. Theme is the first constituent in a sentence. Theorists from the Prague School, like Firbas, on the other hand define rheme as the pragmatically salient new information. Vallduví & Vilkuna define rheme very much as the comment or predicate focus as defined by Lambrecht (1994). Because of the potential of misunderstanding, the term rheme is avoided as far as possible in this study.

⁹⁸ Focus proper is for Dooley & Levinsohn (2001) what rheme is for the Prague Functional Sentence Perspective (Firbas), and the DFE is, for Heimerdinger (1999) the dominant focal element.

information, the comment contains the verb and all its arguments, even those arguments that are presupposed. Most predicate focus structures are of this nature.

For example Exodus 19.1:

<p>ψ↓ϩνψισ ρ□□□□□α∠β\διμ □□□]ε□Οβ ϕ Χψϩω ρ□□ΥΑ∠β\διΓμα∠β]Ψν<ξϩΧψ□ϩω :ρ□□□ΑηΑη δϑγ□ϑν λ□Εε↓ρ]Ωϩψ ≤□ΑΗ→αξ□ ϩΧψϩω</p>	<p>And they entered the wilderness of Sinai, and they camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.</p>
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In the above example, people of Israel is discourse active and the primary topic. In the first line the whole predicate is newly-asserted information, namely that they “entered” somewhere, and that the place they entered is the “wilderness of Sinai.” The whole predicate is new, except for the subject pronominal reference to the topic on the wayyiqtol verb. Notice that “wilderness” is without a definite article thereby activating predicate structure.

For example Exodus 20.4:

<p>η↓... ϕν]μ] Γτ-λΑκ<ω □λεσ□□□επ □□□♣λ-η □εΩ<παϩτ ε□□□.∟∟λ λαϑ□□αΓμιμ ≤ϩψ□□□αμΑΚΗα∠β ρ□□□□□εΗ <ε ταξ□□ΥΑΓτιμ fΣρ□□□□ΑεΑ∠β □ρ□□□εΗ<εϩϩ ω fΣρ□□□□ΑεΑλ ταξ□□□□αΓτιμ ≤ϩψ□□□□αΓμα ∠β ρ□□□□□εΗ<εϩω</p>	<p>You shall not make for yourself an idol, or the form of anything, whether it is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.</p>
--	---

The addressee and subject of the imperative verb “you shall not make for yourself” is the people of Israel. Israel is the topic, the primary topic as continuing addressee. The rest of the sentence, including the three subordinate relative clauses, constitutes the predicate, which in its totality is what is in focus.

The post-verbal elements in predicate focus structures, except for lexicalized or pronominalized subjects, are part of the predicate focus domain. As mentioned in the discussion of Lambrecht’s theory of focus in chapter 4, the whole predicate focus structure domain does not have the same saliency degree of communicative force. The salient peak can be on the verb alone, on a complement following the verb alone, or on both the verb and its complement. In Biblical Hebrew, three structures can be distinguished that indicate exactly where the salient peak or communicative point of focus information lies. Two of them are broad predicate focus structures, and one is narrow predicate focus structure.

5.2.1.2 *Narrow predicate focus*

Narrow predicate focus structure is where the verb is the salient peak and the verb complements or adjuncts are presupposed or altogether absent. If a proposition has only a verb and no complementing arguments, it is a case of broad predicate focus. The whole predication is new information. Narrow predicate focus structures also occur in topic-comment articulations. In Narrow Predicate focus structures, it is strictly the VERB predicate that is asserted as new information⁹⁹. This is the same as the Link-Focus-Tail sentences described by Vallduví & Engdahl (1996). It is here that predicate focus and comment differ. In narrow predicate focus structures, the comment contains the verb and all its arguments, while only the verb is in focus. In such structures, the presupposed complement or argument of the predicate is called a Secondary topic as discussed above. No new information may appear in the rest of the comment. Once there is some new information among the post-verbal constituents, the focus structure is broad predicate focus. Narrow Predicate focus can be illustrated by the following example:

A. *Did the fly half run with the ball?*

B. *No, he kicked it.*

The above contrastive sentence pair contrasts the action the fly half took with the ball. The fly half, the rugby ball, and some action taken by the fly half on the ball, are all part of what is presupposed. The fly half is the primary topic, the ball the secondary topic. The answer, B, differs from A in that *the action* has been specified. The only part of B that differs from A is the verb “kicked.” It is not the whole comment “kicked it (the ball)” that is in focus. It is therefore a case of narrow predicate focus, focusing on the verb only. The difference in relation to broad predicate focus is illustrated by the following example:

A. *What did the fly half do with the ball?*

B. *He kicked it through the posts.*

Again, the fly half, the rugby ball, and some action taken by the fly half on the ball, are all presupposed. The fly half is the primary topic, taking a comment in this topic-comment

⁹⁹ Nigerian Fulfulde, as reported by Mary MacIntosh (1984), has a special verb tense-aspect called the emphatic completive that is used for verbs that are in focus. In the sentence /Ahokkam ceede den, naa ‘aramsamde/ which means “You gave me the money, you didn’t lend it to me”, the verbs hokk- “gave” and rams- “lend” are combined with completive aspect, necessitating the Emphatic Completive (1984:134). Only the verbs are in focus. She adds that the Emphatic Completive cannot be used with sentences with a focused NP or adverbial expression (ibid, 135).

articulation. The ball is the secondary topic. In B, the asserted information that differs from the presupposition is one, that he *kicked* it, and two, that he kicked it *through the posts*. Two constituents are new information in B: the action and the spatial information about where the ball went. Once there is more than one constituent in a comment of a topic-comment articulation that is new, it is broad predicate focus, regardless of the amount of secondary topics in the comment. When there is only one new constituent in the comment, the verb itself, it is a case of narrow predicate focus. When there is only one new constituent other than the verb, it is a case of argument focus.

For example Exodus 19.1:

<p>ψ↓ϩνψιτ ρ□□□□α∠β\διμ □□□]ε□Οβ ϕ Χψϩω ρ□□ΥΑ∠β\διΓμ∠β]Ψν(ξϩΧψ□ϩω :ρ□□□ΑηΑη δ∅γ□∅ν λ□Εε↓ρ) Ωϩψ ≤□ ΑΗ→αξ□ϩΧψϩω</p>	<p>And they entered the wilderness of Sinai, and they camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.</p>
---	--

In the above example, people of Israel is discourse active and the primary topic. As mentioned above under the same example for broad predicate focus, the whole predicate in the first line is newly-asserted information: they “entered” somewhere, and the place they entered is the “wilderness of Sinai.” Now, in the second line, “Israel” is still the discourse-active primary topic expressed by a pronominal subject clitic to the verb. The locative argument “in the wilderness” is made discourse active in the previous line, and marked as such by the definite article. It is therefore a secondary topic and presupposed. The only newly-asserted information is that they “camped” somewhere. The predicate verb is in focus, taking narrow predicate focus.

All intransitive verbs do not necessarily take Narrow predicate focus. Intransitive verbs can still have arguments in the form of adverbial phrases, that may or may not be part of the newly-asserted focus information.

In the discussion of focus peaking below, it will be shown that narrow predicate focus also attracts the focus peak to the verb. The focus domain (predicate focus structure) as well as the focus peak is limited to the verb only.

Predicates with an infinitive absolute construction would in most cases fall into the category of narrow predicate focus. The verb is cognitively strengthened and confirmed.

5.2.1.3 Predicate focus structures in verbless clauses and participial clauses

As described in chapter 4, Both’s description of word-order and information structure in verbless clauses and nominal clauses is adopted in this account of focus. For verbless clauses, the canonical or neutral word-order is *subject-complement* (cf. Both, 1999). When in this unmarked¹⁰⁰ word order, the sentence type is topic-comment. The comment part is what is in focus. The subject is presupposed and therefore topical. What is said about the subject-topic, is what is in focus.

In marked word-order predicate focus structures, there is some form of fronting of any other constituent except the subject, in other words, Y-movement. An example of predicate fronting in copular clauses that are topic-comment sentences, is Genesis 6.9:

$\Rightarrow \xi \downarrow \text{Ov} \tau \text{O} \delta \lambda \mid \Gamma \tau \eta \epsilon \Gamma \lambda \epsilon \Xi \square$ $\theta \psi _ / \angle \delta \alpha \chi \text{H} \psi \square \iota \Xi \Rightarrow \xi \rightarrow \text{Ov}$ $\omega \psi \Upsilon \text{A} \tau \text{O} \rho \square \square \text{O} \delta \mid \angle \beta \eta \square \wp \psi \text{A} \eta \square \leq \psi \square \iota \mu \text{A} \Gamma \tau$ $:= \xi \mid \text{Ov} - \blacktriangle \epsilon \Gamma \lambda \alpha \eta \mid \tau \square \iota \eta \leq \psi \square \iota \eta \cup \lambda \mid \Xi \text{A} \text{O} \eta - \tau \epsilon \Xi$	This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.
--	--

Line 3, “blameless among the people of his time” is a nominal clause with a copular verb. Noah is the topic, presupposed and discourse-active since line 1. Some information is asserted about him. In this clause the topic is expressed as the pronominal, unexpressed subject of the copular verb. The rest of the line is all a predicate focus structure, with one element of the focus domain, “blameless” fronted.

5.2.1.4 Negative particles in predicate focus structures

The negative marker $\Xi \cdot \lambda$ before verbs signals predicate focus and before nominal phrases marks argument focus. Even if the verb and all the arguments are presupposed and are discourse active, the negating of the verb alone suffices to mark the clause for predicate focus. The predicate as a whole is asserted to be *not* what the reader-hearer expected. Negation is the speaker’s denial or contradiction of presupposed information the hearer is believed to have (cf. Givón, 1986:323-325). The negative marker $\Xi \cdot \lambda$ also occurs before noun phrases, and in such cases it signals argument focus.

¹⁰⁰ The word-order is marked, that is, the predicate is fronted before the subject, the verbless clause is either a sentence focus or an argument focus structure, depending on whether there is a presupposed subject or not. The fronted construction with the presupposed subject will be a case of argument focus.

5.2.2 Sentence Focus

When no topic can be identified, using the heuristic tool of questioning as mentioned under predicate focus structures, the clause or sentence under investigation is not a topic-comment articulation. Sentence focus structures can be recognized by means of the following criteria:

1. There is no topic and no commenting on a referent within the sentence.
2. There is some discontinuity with the preceding discourse. The sentence interrupts the information flow in some way. Some thematic shift has taken place, be it from one text-world scene to another, or some shift within the active text-world scene, or from the foregrounding events to some background state or event.
3. The discontinuity would be generally unexpected or even surprising, something of an out-of-the-blue development.
4. Checking whether the question “what happened?” or “is something or someone presented?” is valid. If the first question is valid, the proposition is a case of event-reporting sentence focus. If the second is valid, it is a presentational sentence focus structure.
5. The weight of the communication would be on the sentence as a unit. Reporting on a state of affairs or a certain event, or presenting a unit of information that is not predicated to a referent within the sentence, is the goal of the sentence. There is no commenting on one of the referents in the sentence, and there is no constituent more salient than the rest.
6. Normally one would expect some form of irregular or marked word-order in the sentence focus structure.
7. The subject of the sentence is irregular syntactically and semantically. It is syntactically irregular, either in the sense that it is not in its canonical word-order position (i.e., it is in a more marked position), or that it redundantly makes explicit again (a full noun phrase, for example). Otherwise it is semantically irregular in the sense that it is a presupposed referent, even with a definite article, which is what Chafe (1994:90-91) calls a *light subject*, for subjects that express new but trivial information.

The subject is not topical in the sense that the rest of the sentence predicates or addresses some information to the subject¹⁰¹.

Sentence focus will sometimes be hard to identify, and one way to reach a sentence focus conclusion is to eliminate any possibility of a predicate focus topic-comment sentence as well as an identificational argument focus structure. If it is not one of the first two, it follows that the proposition may have a sentence focus structure.

Two semantic types of sentence focus structures can be distinguished, namely event-reporting sentences and participant presentation – or presentational – sentences. There are cases of sentence focus for event-reporting with canonical word-order, even in wayyiqtol clauses (cf. Van der Merwe & Talstra, pp. 16-17, contra Heimerdinger, 1999:218). Van der Merwe & Talstra imply that where canonical word-order sentences do not meet the pragmatic criteria for topic-comment sentences, namely that they have an established topic that functions as subject, some other sentence articulation that is not topic-comment is in play. Event-reporting sentences can also have a sub-category called state-reporting sentences.

5.2.2.1 Marked Word-Order Sentence Focus

Marked word-order sentence focus is where presentational or event-reporting sentences have a marked word-order, which in this case means that it has a constituent or constituents that are fronted before the verb.

For example Exodus 19.2¹⁰²:

≤ψΥιη∪λ┘εΑη-λεε η□ΑλΑσ η□εΗΟμ┘ ρ□□□□ΑηΑη-ίμ □□η ρωηϙψ ωψ□ΑλΕε ε□↓ρ ^θ∩Χψθω ρ□ΟμεΕλ	Then Moses went up to God; The LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, ...
---	---

¹⁰¹ In the case of presupposed subjects, and even more so when such subjects are marked for definiteness, the distinction between commenting on the subject as a topic or the reporting of some state or event is a fine one. If none of the other criteria for identifying sentence focus structures apply (especially the two criteria of thematic discontinuity and unexpectedness), such a definite subject is nothing other than a topic in a topic-comment sentence, complemented by a predicate focus structure.

¹⁰² As an additional example, see Genesis 16.1, where “Sarah” is promoted as topic in a fronted subject construction.

5.2.2.2 Event-reporting sentences¹⁰³

Event-reporting sentences are what Van der Merwe & Talstra (p. 19) called “out of the blue” sentences. The subject and predicate is not presupposed, but it may contain a presupposed secondary topic. Such event-reporting sentences often appear at the beginning of discourses, or at important points of change of scene and participants, providing setting information, background information, or theme-redirecting information. X-qatal-clause *anterior constructions* functioning as flashback can in some cases also be event-reporting sentences, in the sense that a totally new text-world is briefly created. There is a switch of scene.

Event-reporting sentences can be marked or unmarked word-order constructions, depending on the clause type. Wayyiqtol-clauses functioning as event-reporting sentences are unmarked, and X-qatal clauses marked.

2 Kings 1.1 is an example of an unmarked word-order event-reporting sentence with a wayyiqtol verb.

:β□Aε} ξαε τ | Bμ ψΨ⊙ρ(ξαε λ□Eε↓ρ) Ω∩ψ} ∠β And Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of
 □□□βAε | μ π□αH} π∩Xψϩω Ahab.

The whole sentence, a wayyiqtol-clause with a full noun after the verb, is event-reporting, activating topics, which are all in focus¹⁰⁴. “Moab”, “Israel”, and “Ahab” are all identifiable referents. This event-reporting sentence is scene-setting background information for what is to follow. Its relevance is not immediately clear to the reader.

5.2.2.3 State-reporting sentences

State-reporting sentences are often negative sentences where the subject is not discourse active (but could be semi-active), and where the state mentioned is important for the subsequent development of the narrative (be it a short or longer section).

For example Genesis 2.5:

fΣρ□AεAβ η□□□∅ψ} η□∩ψ ≤ΣρεΞ□ η□ΣδAKΩ and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the
 αη ⇒ξψ□□□ιΩ | λZOκCω earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up,
 ξYAμ} χ∩ψ ≤Σρ□□□□εΞ ηΨΣδAKΩαη βεΩ□E for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth
 π-λAKCω and there was no man to work the ground,
 fΣρ□AεAη-λαπ □□□≤ψιηυλΓ ε η□ ∅ωηCψ ρψ

¹⁰³ More examples of event-reporting sentences from our corpus are the following: 2.6, 10; 6.4; 7.11; 14.4a; 15.1, 17-18; 22.11, 20; 24.43; 40.1; 44.2.

¹⁰⁴ This specific example is backgrounded, non-thematic information. It will be argued that although most cases of sentence focus contain thematic material, that is not always the case, as this example illustrates.

□ιΞ | μιη ε·λ □ψιζκ
 :η□Αμ↓δ(ε□Αη-τεε δ□□ΨΟβ(τ□αλ/∧ψ□αε ≤Z↓
 δΑεζω

In line 1-2 the state of plants and in line 4 the state of lack of cultivators (in a negative existential clause) are state-reporting sentence focus structures.

An example of a negative event-reporting sentence is Genesis 16.1.

[λ ηΨ↓δ] λ ρψ εB·λ ≤□↓ρ) βαε τεH□□□Eε □□□ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no
 ψ⇒ρAΩζω children.

Negative event-reporting is logically speaking a form of state-reporting¹⁰⁵.

5.2.2.4 Participant presentation sentences

The focus structure of presentational sentences, such as event-reporting sentences, is that of sentence focus. The whole sentence is in focus. It does not contain a primary topic, although it is possible to contain a secondary topic. This type of focus is used to present new participants as topics, often primary topics, for the discourse to follow. Givón would call this the cataphoric function of topics, but in the theory proposed here, it is not a *topic* that is presented, but a participant referent that *from then on* will have topical status, normally as a primary topic.

Presentation sentences can come in a variety of configurations, as set out by Heimerdinger (1999:215-216, cf. discussion in chapter 4) and not all repeated here. Verbless clauses, nominal clauses, X-qatal clauses and wayyiqtol-clauses can all be used in presentational sentence focus structures. Presentational sentences often appear at the beginning of a new narrative, with new participants and storyline themes, or at major changes in the development of a longer narrative.

An example of a X-qatal presentational sentence with ‘a man’ fronted, is 2 Kings 1.6:

ωψ□ΑλEε ↓□ρ) με·Xψϑω	They answered him,
↓v□Eτε↓ρ∧θιλ η□□□ΑλAτ Hψ□□□ιε	"There came a man to meet us,
□↓vψEλEε ρεμε□·Xψϑω	who said to us,
▲ελ□□□εΓμααη-λεε □↓β]H]Zκ)λ	'Go back to the king

The presentational sentence “There came a man to meet us” is all in focus. The “man” is promoted as a participant, by being identified and activated.

In presentational sentences the main participant of a subsequent discourse is presented.

Genesis 6.9 again is an example¹⁰⁶:

$\Rightarrow \xi \downarrow \text{Ov} \tau \uparrow \text{O}\delta \mid \lambda \mid \Gamma \tau \eta \varepsilon \Gamma \lambda \text{E}\delta \square$ $\theta \psi _ / \angle \delta \alpha \chi \text{H} \psi \square \text{I}\varepsilon \Rightarrow \xi \rightarrow \text{Ov}$ $\omega \psi \Upsilon \text{A} \tau \text{O} \rho \square \square \text{I}\delta \mid \angle \beta \eta \square \wp \psi \text{A} \eta \leq \psi \square \text{I} \mu \text{A} \Gamma \tau$ $:\Rightarrow \xi \mid \text{Ov} - \spadesuit \varepsilon \Gamma \lambda \alpha \eta \mid \tau \square \text{I} \eta \leq \psi \square \text{I} \eta \cup \lambda \uparrow \varepsilon \text{A} \text{I} \eta - \tau \varepsilon \varepsilon$	<p>This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.</p>
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In line 1 a presentational sentence promotes Noah as the topic of the subsequent discourse. Noah is promoted from identifiable to discourse-active in this sentence focus structure.

5.2.2.5 $\eta \oplus \Phi \nu \iota \eta$ in sentence focus structures

$\eta \oplus \Phi \nu \iota \eta$ according to the Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar (Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze, 1999:330) is a discourse marker that has as function to “*focus attention on the utterance that follows it.*” They define two further functions for $\eta \oplus \Phi \nu \iota \eta$:

- 1) “*Attention is focused on events that are surprising or unexpected for the person addressed or the characters in a story.*” Examples quoted are 1 Samuel 3.11; 1 Kings 1.22 and Numbers 25.6.
- 2) “*By using $\eta \oplus \Phi \nu \iota \eta$ speakers present themselves, someone or something else as available at the moment of speaking.*” Examples quoted are Genesis 20.15; 1 Samuel 14.43; 1 Samuel 3.4.

A similar interpretation of the meaning of $\eta \oplus \Phi \nu \iota \eta$ is Follingstad’s (1995) definition of $\eta \oplus \Phi \nu \iota \eta$ as a marker of prominent emphasis focus, following Dik’s Functional Grammar classification. An emphasis focus marker is non-completive as well as non-contrastive according to Dik’s theory. $\eta \oplus \Phi \nu \iota \eta$ is a marker of surprises and of surprise entries of participants or props in narrative discourse (Follingstad, 1995:15). In dialogue or speech discourse, it is used in the presentation of the speaker(s), in ground presuppositions followed by an exhortation, or in warning clauses (ibid.:15).

From the perspective of information structure theory, it is possible that $\eta \oplus \Phi \nu \iota \eta$ transforms the associated clause into an event-reporting or participant presentation sentence with sentence focus.

¹⁰⁵ An additional example of a state-reporting sentence is Genesis 6.6.

¹⁰⁶ Genesis 3.1 is a copular clause with fronted subject. It is a presentational sentence.

What is clear is that the clause marked by $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ is always promoted to the mental representation called the text-base, where the theme is progressively being formed. An example of a sentence focus with $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ is Genesis 18:2¹⁰⁹:

<p> $\epsilon\lambda\rho\downarrow\text{X}\psi\text{R}\omega$ $\square\square\omega\psi$ $\rho\nu\psi\text{E}\omega$ $\epsilon\text{AK}\Omega\text{H}\text{X}\psi\text{R}\omega$ $\omega\psi\text{Y}\text{A}\lambda\text{A}\omega$ $\leq\psi\square\text{i}\beta\text{A}\Phi\chi\text{H}\nu$ $\leq\psi\square\text{i}\text{H}$ $\rho\nu(\epsilon\eta\square\square\square\text{A}\text{H}$ $\cup\lambda)\text{H}$ $\square\square\square\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ $\text{C}\omega$ $\lambda\epsilon\eta\square\text{O}\epsilon\text{A}\eta$ $\xi\alpha\tau\square\square\square\epsilon\text{K}\pi\text{i}\mu$ $\square\square\square\leq\text{A}\tau\epsilon\downarrow\rho\wedge\theta\text{i}\lambda$ $f\downarrow\rho\square$ $\square\square\rho\text{X}\psi\text{R}\omega$ $\epsilon\lambda\rho\rightarrow\text{X}\psi\text{R}\omega$ $:\eta\text{A}\chi\downarrow\rho\square\square\square\text{A}\epsilon$ $\downarrow\xi\square\alpha\Gamma\tau\downarrow\text{H}\text{H}\text{X}\psi\text{R}\omega$ </p>	<p> Abraham looked up and saw, and behold, three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. </p>
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The clause introduced by the $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ “and behold, three men standing nearby” is a sentence focus structure with a subject – participle – complement syntactic configuration. The three men are presented as unexpected participants. These three are thematic participants in the subsequent discourse.

5.2.3 Argument Focus

An argument of a proposition is defined here as any non-predicate constituent, be it a subject, an object, an indirect object, a spatio-temporal adjunct, a manner adjunct, or qualitative adjunct. An argument constituents can be an affix, a full noun or noun phrase, or an adjunct particle, word or phrase. Verbs per definition are excluded.

Argument focus structures are identificational sentences, as defined by Lambrecht (1994). Identificational sentences are of the focus-presupposition type. Only one argument of the predication, be it a referent or an adjunct of quantity, manner, space or time, is newly asserted and in focus. It is not possible to have more than one argument or constituent in focus. Argument focus information structures are answers to WH-questions like “What did he eat?”, “Where will she go to?”, “When did the president arrive?” or “Who ate the apple?”.

The heuristic tools to identify argument focus structures can be listed in the following way:

1. The proposition has no topic. No topic-comment articulation is expressed.
2. One part of the proposition must always be presupposed, be it at least the predicate in a subject-predicate-(object) clause, or one of the two constituents in a subject-complement (verbless) clause. But the presupposed information cannot contain a topic or be a topic.

¹⁰⁹ An additional example of $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ preceding a verbless clause is Genesis 15.18; 20.15.

3. Apply a WH-question to the proposition to see if it provides an answer for any of the constituents of the proposition. The noun, noun phrase, or adjunct, that identifies the content of the WH-question, is the argument that is in focus. The manner-question (“how?”) is included here. The argument in focus provides an answer to any “who”, “when”, “what”, “where”, “how” and “how many/much” question.
4. Arguments per definition exclude predicates (verbs). When only the verb is in focus, it is a case of narrow predicate focus.
5. Argument focus structures are generally marked word-order structures, with the constituent in a marked position (like fronted or following a focus particle), and the argument in focus. The marked constructions are often similar in form to sentence focus structures (for example, with fronting or with some special particle). But this is not always the case. As will be seen below, there are a few cases of argument focus with no special word-order marking or special particles, but still carrying the first three criteria.
6. To argue conclusively that a certain proposition has argument focus structure, it must be clear that only one argument is cognitively salient.

Theoretically two types of argument focus can be distinguished. One is marked word-order argument focus and the other unmarked word-order. The marked word-order form normally has the argument in focus fronted before the verb or is preceded by a focus particle, fronted or not fronted. Such a construction with a post-verbal argument that has an argument focus structure as well as a focus particle in that domain is classified as a construction with marked word-order argument focus structure.

5.2.3.1 Unmarked word-order argument focus structures

The unmarked word-order argument focus structure is where the argument in focus appears in the normal canonical word-order post-verbally, without an additional focus particle.

Unmarked word-order argument focus structures are rare.

In some cases of unmarked word-order argument focus, the mechanism of end-weight is at work. The focused constituent tends to be sentence-final. In the following question-answer set, the answer is an example of unmarked word-order argument focus:

Where did John buy the car?

He bought it **in Krugersdorp**.

For example Exodus 19.1:

$\psi \downarrow \mathfrak{R} \nu \eta \tau \sigma \rho \square \square \square \square \alpha \angle \beta \backslash \delta \iota \mu \square \square \square \square \beta \wp \mathfrak{X} \psi \mathfrak{R} \omega$ $\rho \square \square \Upsilon \mathfrak{A} \angle \beta \backslash \delta \iota \Gamma \mu \alpha \angle \beta \downarrow \Psi \nu \langle \xi \mathfrak{R} \mathfrak{X} \psi \square \mathfrak{R} \omega$ $:\rho \square \square \square \mathfrak{A} \eta \mathfrak{A} \eta \delta \wp \gamma \square \wp \nu \lambda \square \square \mathfrak{E} \wp \downarrow \rho \mid \Omega \cap \psi \square \square \mathfrak{A} \mathfrak{H} \rangle \neg \alpha \xi \square$ $\cap \mathfrak{X} \psi \mathfrak{R} \omega$	And they entered the wilderness of Sinai, And they camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there (at the) foot of the mountain .
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In the above example, people of Israel is discourse active and the primary topic. The predicate “entered the wilderness of Sinai” has a broad predicate focus structure, while the second line has a narrow predicate focus structure with only the verb predicate as newly-asserted information and the “wilderness” a presupposed secondary topic. In the third line the “wilderness” is presupposed by the locative adverb “there”, “Israel” is the primary topic, and the verb “camped” is repeated from the previous line and therefore also presupposed and topical. “In front of the mountain” is the only newly-asserted information and is in focus. This is an example of unmarked word-order argument focus. The argument focus structure is in sentence-final position. It has the element of end-weight as well. Unmarked word-order argument focus structures take the focused argument in normal, unmarked positions post-verbally, whereas marked word-order argument focus has the focused argument fronted or marked by a focus particle. This example also illustrates a case of end-weight (see discussion below), by having the focused constituent “foot of the mountain” right at the end of the sentence, split from the verb by the anaphoric locative adverb “there” as well as the lexicalized primary topic “the Israelites.”

5.2.3.2 *Marked word-order argument focus*¹¹⁰

Marked word-order argument focus is the more common form of argument focus. All the subheadings below refer to configurations of marked word-order argument focus. Marked word-order argument focus structures refer to the cases where the argument that is in focus is fronted before the verb, and before the subject in cases of verbless clauses. Alternatively there is some focusing particle. Two subtypes of marked word-order argument focus constructions can be distinguished, namely fronted argument focus and argument focus with focus particles¹¹¹. In this section only fronting as a syntactic device for argument focus is

¹¹⁰ For additional examples of marked argument focus in question-answer sets, see 1 Samuel 28.13 (What did you see? **Spirits** I see coming up from the ground), Genesis 37.15-16 (What are you looking for? **My brothers** I am looking for), Genesis 16.8 (Where are you from and where do you go? **From the face of Sarai my mistress** I am running).

¹¹¹ Not all occurrences of focus particles mark argument focus. Some focus particles mark the whole clause, marking sentence focus.

discussed. Five fronting configurations with argument focus structure can be distinguished: WH questions and answers, subject fronting, object fronting, prepositional phrase fronting, and spatio-temporal adjuncts:

A. WH-QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS¹¹²

WH-questions are in themselves argument focus structures, on condition that the identification of some information is at stake, and not merely a rhetorical question. In such question clauses, the WH-word is the focus. An example is Genesis 3.11¹¹³:

ηΑΓτΥΑε ≤ |ΟρψΕτ ψ□ιζκ ↓♣) λ δψ□□□ □ Φγιη ψιμ ρεμεΔ·Χψθω And he said, "**Who** told you that you were naked?"

B. SUBJECT FRONTING¹¹⁴

An example of fronted argument focus is Judges 6.29 (the subject is fronted):

<p>□η□Ετ□ρ-λεε Ηψ□□□ιε □□□□ρ) με ·Χψθω ηΥΘ•ζαη ρ□□□□Αβ↓ζδαη η□ΑΩΑτ ψιμ □ρ) με□·Χψθω □□Η^θαβ<ψθω □□□□Η\ρ\δ□Χ ψθω :η□Θ•ζαη ρ□□□□Αβ↓ζδαη η□ΑΩΑτ Η□Αε ψ- εζβ □□□/ τ\δ□Φγ</p>	<p>So they said to one another, "Who has done this?" They then searched and inquired, and they were told, "Gideon son of Joash did this thing" (own translation)</p>
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The above example is from Heimerdinger (1999:178). It clearly illustrates a question-answer identificational clause. The answer to the WHO-clause is the fronted “Gideon son of Joash.” The predicate of the identificational sentence is repeated and therefore presupposed. The semantic predicate forms the pragmatic topic.

A more complex case of marked word-order argument focus is where a fronted and a left-dislocated element both appear, and they are co-referential with each other. Genesis 3.12 is an example:

<p>ρ□□□εΗ(ε f□ΕτΑη-ιμ(η ηΑΓτΥΑε ≤ ΟρψΕτ ψ□ιζκ ↓ ♣) λ δψ□□□ □ Φγιη ψιμ ρεμεΔ·Χψθω 11 :ΑΓτ) λ□ΑκΑε □Φν□εΓμιμ-λΑκ(ε ψ□ιΓτ) λιβ) λ ♣ψ□ιτψ □Φωιχ ≤ ↓δΑε□Αη ρεμεΨ·Χψθω 12</p>	<p>11 He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate."</p>
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¹¹² Additional examples of argument focus in WH-clauses are the following: Genesis 3.11; 15.8; 16.8; 20.9.

¹¹³ In this example, the identification of some unknown information is actually not so straightforward, because God already knew the answer but used this interrogation method to draw a confession.

¹¹⁴ Additional examples of fronted subjects as argument focus structures in the Genesis-corpus are the following: Genesis 3.12; 15.16; 17.6, 12, 16.

:λ□EκOε ρω f□EπAη-ίμ ψ□ιΓλ-η ρν) τ□ ρν εω□ιη ψ
 □(δAΓμτ ηAΓτ□□□ατ ρ□□□□εH(ε □□□ηAKHιε□A
 η

In this example, a typical WH-question-and-answer pair in dialogue, the left-dislocated constituent is “the woman whom you gave me” and the fronted argument is the optional – and thus marked – pronominal εω□ιη ‘she’. The predicate “(x) gave me fruit from the tree and I ate” is all presupposed and discourse-active. The left-dislocated constituent (in *italics* in the translation) is a topic frame, reactivating “the woman” and setting her up as the frame within which the rest of the clause must be interpreted. The dislocated constituent is not in focus, but makes this sentence so complex that it is co-referential with the argument in focus. The argument in focus is the fronted and marked subject “she”, giving the sentence an identificational sentence articulation.

C. OBJECT FRONTING¹¹⁵

Genesis 17.5c is an example of an argument focus structure that is a second object in the clause:

:♣ψ□ιΓτατcν ε□ιψ | Φγ/ | Bμ(η-βαε) ψ□ιζ for **a father of many nations** I have made you
 κ (own translation)

D. FRONTED PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES¹¹⁶

Genesis 12.7a is an example of a fronted indirect object (with preposition) in an argument focus structure:

ρεμΔ·Xψθω ≤□↓ρ) βαε-λεε □□□η ρωηcψ The LORD appeared to Abram and said,
 ε ↓ρ⊕Xψθω "To your offspring I will give this land...."
 ... τεΥ·•ζαη fΣρ□□□□□AεAη-τεε/□EΓτεε ↓
♣(τω\ρ=θζ)λ

Genesis 24.7

ε□ιη τεΥ·•ζαη fΣρ□□□□□AεAη-τεε/□EΓτεε To your offspring I will give this land
 ε ↓♣(τω\ρ=θζ)λ

¹¹⁵ Additional examples of fronted objects as argument focus structures in the Genesis-corpus are the following: Genesis 3.18; 6.1, 19; 17.21; 19.12; 34.25-26; 37.16; 39.4.
¹¹⁶ Additional examples of fronted prepositional phrases as argument focus structures in the Genesis-corpus are the following: Genesis 3.2-3; 16b, 17, 19; 6.9; 9.2; 15.8; 16.12.

The primary topic is the subject “I”, meaning God, and the rest of the clause is the predicate. “Give this land” is presupposed from the context. The fronted argument “to your offspring” is the focus domain. The fronted element also has the focalised peak of contrastiveness as overlay, contrastiveness here meaning exhaustive listing (or restricted identification): “to your offspring and them only.”

Genesis 1.27

<p>□□□≤↓δAεAζη-τεε ≤ψ□ιηυλΓ ε ε□↓ρ) βΓX ψϑω ΓτOε εZ↓ρA<β ≤ψ□ιηυλΓ ε ≤ελ□εχ) <β □μ λαχ <β :≤□AτOε εB↓ρA<β η□Aβ™θ<v] ρ□□□Ak φ ζ</p>	<p>So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.</p>
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E. FRONTED SPATIO-TEMPORAL ADJUNCTS¹¹⁷

There is such a subtype of argument focus that identifies deictic orientations referring to spatio-temporal settings or text-world frames. These frames are newly-asserted information. Adjuncts of time and place, nouns of time and place, and even adverbial phrases and prepositional phrases of time and place can be fronted argument focus structures.

An example of such a locative adverbial phrase that is newly-asserted, fronted, and in an argument focus structure, is 2 Kings 20.14:¹¹⁸

<p>ωψ□AλEε ρεμε=-Xψϑω]ηΥ φ Xψ√θ<ζιξ ♣ελ□εΓμαη- λεε εψ□ιβ φΦvαη]η□□□ φψ) π□αH<ψ □□□ε-β φXψϑ ω ♣ψ□ελEε]εZOβ φψ □□□[ΓψαεEμ] ηεΓλ□EεAη ≤ψ□ □□ιH φv<εAη]ρ] μAε]η□Aμ]η↓ φ Xψ√θ<ζιξ □□□ρεμε□·Xψϑω :λ□εβα<βιμ]ε□A<β η□□θ ξ\r fΣρ□□□εεEμ</p>	<p>And the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say? From where did they come to you?" Hezekiah answered, "from a far country they have come, from Babylon." (own translation)</p>
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The two WH-questions with the fronted WH-interrogatives indicate that the answer will have an argument focus structure in an identificational sentence. The fronted locative adverbial phrase is the argument in focus. What is interesting in this example is that not the whole answer is fronted: “from Babylon” is after the verb. A chiasitic structure can be discerned in

¹¹⁷ Additional examples of fronted spatio-temporal adjuncts as argument focus structures in the Genesis-corpus are the following: Genesis 3.5; 7.11, 13, 20; 8.5, 6, 12-14; 14.4; 17.26; 19.2; 20.15; 26.32.

¹¹⁸ Another example of marked argument focus where the predicate is presupposed, is Isa. 45.12a, and Isa. 44.9 “Makers-of-idols all-them nothing//and-[their-desired-things] not-be-of-use// and-[their-witnesses] not-they-see//”.

verse 14, but I believe that information structure considerations are the reason for this word-order in the first place, and not the desire to produce a stylistic pattern per se.

Another example is Genesis 19.2:

<p>ψ→ϩνΟδ(α→εϩΦν η□□□ΟΦνιη ρεμᾶΜ·Χψϩῶ ≤□εκ\Ζδ\βατ τψ□ΕΖβ-λεε εϩν÷ ρ\Ζσ ≤Υεκ\Ζκ\ρ⇒δ\λ ≤□□□εΓτ\καλαηϩῶ ≤□εΓτ\μα\Ζκ \Ηιηεω ≤□εκψΕλ\γ⇒ρ ρ\Ζχ\ξ⇒ρ\εω □□□\νψ□ι\εω □□□\ρ\μᾶ·Χψϩῶ :ψ□ι\λ ϩν β\Ψξ\ρ\Αβ ψ□ι\Ζκ ε□·Γλ</p>	<p>He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; in the square we will spend the night."</p>
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5.2.3.3 Theme-announcing macrowords in argument focus structures

Theme-announcing words or theme frames are a subfunction of identification in argument focus structures. In this case words that are important thematically, are identified, activated, and announced. *Focus theme frames* is an alternative term for such specialized argument focus structures.

Theme-announcing words appear only in fronted configurations, and are by definition focal in the sense of newly-asserted information that is unrecoverable from the preceding context. Pragmatically, important concepts are activated and introduced to the discourse. But its thematic prominence is only confirmed by the subsequent discourse, when the concept is repeated and strengthened cognitively. One difference between this type of argument focus and “general” argument focus is that the criteria for argument focus of the presupposed and discourse-active status of the constituents *not* in focus, does not always hold.

An example¹¹⁹ of a theme-announcing argument focus structure is *enmity* in Genesis 3.15a:

<p>∠ η□ΑΚΗιᾶ□Αη\ψ□□□Εβ\□□□♣\νψ□ΕΖβ τψ□ ιΗΑε η□□□ΑβψΕεεω ηΥΑτ\ρϩζ\ψ□□□Εβ\□♣\τ\ρϩζ\ψ□Εβ\ Ηε□·ρ □□□♣\π\Η\εψ ε\η□ :β—™θΑτ \Φν□επ\Η\Γτ η□ΑΓτ\αεω</p>	<p>Enmity I will put between you and the woman, And between your offspring and hers; He will strike your head, And you will strike his heel.</p>
---	--

The “enmity” that God puts between the serpent and the woman is fronted, but also newly-asserted information. “Enmity” forms the basis of the whole verse, including the contrastive clauses at the end, which in fact provide the details of the enmity.

Another example of this type of theme announcement is Genesis 21.6:

¹¹⁹ Additional examples from the corpus of theme word-announcing argument focus structures are the following: Genesis 3.14, 16b, 16c, 17; 4.11, 14; 9.13, 17, 18, 26, 27.

$\eta \downarrow \rho A \Omega \rho \epsilon \mu \epsilon Z \cdot \Gamma \tau \mathfrak{R} \omega$ And Sarah said,
 $\leq \psi \Upsilon \iota \eta \cup \lambda \lceil \varepsilon \psi \square \iota \lambda \eta A \Omega \square A \omega \square \theta \square O \xi \lceil \chi$ "Laughter God has brought for me;
 $:\psi \square \iota \lambda - \theta \alpha \xi \lceil \chi \square \cap \psi \Rightarrow \square \square E \mu O K H \alpha \eta - \lambda A \angle \kappa$ everyone who hears will laugh at me."
 (own translation)

In this example, the fronted “laughter” is asserted information that becomes the basis of the information in the whole paragraph. “God” is the primary topic, “to-me” (Sarah) the secondary topic. “Laughter” also functions as the basis of the second line. The second line is an argument focus structure with the fronted “every one who hears” in focus. The predicator “he will laugh” is now presupposed, as well as the prepositional phrase “with me” as the secondary topic. It “controls” stretches of text longer than just the clause it appears in.

A third example of a theme-announcing key word is Isaiah 1.2:

$\square f \Sigma \rho \square \varepsilon \varepsilon \psi \cap \nu \psi \square \square \square \cap \zeta (\varepsilon \alpha \eta \subset \omega \square \square \square \leq \cap \psi \alpha \mu A H$ Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth;
 $\lceil \square \square \mu \iota H$ because the LORD has spoken:
 $\rho \square \square \Upsilon E \angle \beta (\angle \delta \eta \square \wp \omega \eta \subset \psi \psi \square \iota \angle \kappa$ Children I reared and brought them up¹²⁰;
 $\psi \iota \Gamma \tau \lceil \mu \square \alpha \mu \lceil \rho \subset \omega \psi \iota \Gamma \tau \lceil \lambda Z \Rightarrow \angle \delta \cap \Phi \gamma \square \square \leq \psi \cap \nu$ But they are the very ones who have rebelled against
 $\square \square A \angle \beta$ me. (own translation)
 $:\psi \square \iota \beta \lceil \square \square H \square A K \pi \leq \square E \eta \subset \omega$

“Children” is the basis of the two sentences. These children were reared and brought up by God, but they turned around and rebelled against Him. “I” refers to the Lord and is the primary topic. Both sentences have a predicate focus structure. The first line is marked because of the fronted focus basis “children.” In the second line “they”, the children, is now the primary topic and “me”(the Lord) in the prepositional phrase is the secondary topic. The primary topic has a pragmatic contrastiveness as overlay of the confirmative type, in the sense of “they”, those very ones I reared and brought up, not others. Confirmation of identify as well as counter-expectation is at play.

5.2.3.4 The use of focus particles in argument focus structures

Focus particles mark their subsequent constituents as focal. The particles that have the meaning component of addition (even, also), restriction (only), and even quantification (each, all) are all particles indicating some form of focus as well. The theoretical question is whether these particles are primarily additive, restrictive, and quantifying particles with an associated focus “overlay”, or whether they are primarily focus particles with the semantic-pragmatic meaning of addition, restriction, and quantification as the overlay. This is a question that needs further investigation and is, for lack of space, beyond the scope of this study.

¹²⁰ This clause with the fronted “children” is an example of a marked predicate focus structure with a fronted argument, or it is a case of double focus, with both predicate focus (“rear”) and argument focus (“children”).

According to a personal communication of Van der Merwe, focus particles do not have an effect on word-order. They can occur anywhere in the sentence. This means that some clause-initial particles are there either because they have an impact on the complete clause, or because they govern an already-fronted constituent.

For the sake of completeness the focus particles are mentioned below, but a full integration of these particles in an account of focus in Biblical Hebrew will not be attempted. According to Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze (1999:311-318), the following particles are focus particles:

$\leq\mathfrak{R}\gamma$ ¹²¹ is defined as giving “an explicit indication to the audience *that a specific something or someone* must be added to something or someone referred to in the preceding context”, translatable as *also, even, moreover, even more so* (ibid.:315). $\leq\mathfrak{R}\gamma$ is an additive quantifier that governs the immediately following constituent and the constituent is in focus, or else if it precedes the whole clause, it governs the whole clause and the whole clause is in focus. If it precedes a fronted constituent, it either marks that constituent for focus, or it marks the whole clause for focus. The context will determine what is in focus.

$\spadesuit\alpha\varepsilon$, indicates a *limitation/excluding something or someone* in the preceding context, translatable by ‘only, just’ (ibid.:312). $\spadesuit\alpha\varepsilon$ is a restrictive quantifier.

$\theta\Rightarrow\rho$ also indicates *limitation*, limiting/excluding *something or someone* with respect to something or someone in the preceding context or preceding context, translatable as *only* (ibid.:317). $\theta\Rightarrow\rho$ is a restrictive quantifier.

Other focus particles mentioned are $\infty\Box\alpha\varepsilon$ (indicating *addition*, ‘also’), $\sigma\epsilon\pi\epsilon\varepsilon$ indicating *limitation*, ‘only, nevertheless’), and $\psi\iota\Gamma\tau\} \lambda\iota\angle\beta$ (indicating *exclusion*, ‘only, unless’) (ibid.:312-317).

¹²¹ About $\leq\mathfrak{R}\gamma$, Van der Merwe (1993:181) gives the following summary of its meaning from the pragmatic Relevance Theory point of view: “[A] lexical means for minimizing the processing cost of an utterance by demarcating the particular set of assumptions that an utterance should be connected to. The contextual effects of the utterance containing $\leq\mathfrak{R}\gamma$ may be (1) the stronger confirmation of an existing assumption or newly established assumption, (2) the confirmation of a possible implicature of an established or newly-established assumption or (3) the confirmation of the commitment of a speaker to or confrontation of a hearer with his role in a reciprocal, corresponding or resultative process.”

Focus constituents with focus particles can be fronted or in default post-verbal positions. Focus particles are used in argument focus structures, or in marked word-order predicate focus structures.¹²²

A. ≤℞γ

A rare example of both a fronted and post-positioned ≤℞γ-construction in an argument focus structure is found in Genesis 14.16:

<p> ΗΥοκ\ρΑη-λΑΖκ τΕε βεΗΔ ρΧψ℞ω βψ□ιΗΕη □□ Ηοκ\ρ\ ωψ□ιξΑε Ξ □λ-τεε □≤ :□ΑσΑη-τεε□ω ≤ψ□ιΗ ρΦναη-τεε ≤□℞γ□ω </p>	<p> Then he brought back all the goods, And also his nephew Lot with his goods he brought back, and also the women and the people. (own translation) </p>
---	---

An example of a fronted comparing ≤℞γ + constituent pair, is Genesis 21.26, with the meaning of “both” but in the sense of “this as well, this on top of it”, strengthening the reason why he didn’t know about it (line 2):

<p> ♣ελ□εμψιβ(ε ρεμ□·Χψ℞ω ηΥ∅•ζαη ρ□□□□□Αβ\Ζδση-τεε η□ΑΩΑσ ψ□ιμ ψιΓτ\ τ□⇒δ ρψ εΖ·λ ψ□ιΓλ ΑΓτ\δ□□□□□℞Φγιη-ε·λ η□ΑΓταε-≤ :≤ □Χψση ψ□ιΓτ\ λιΖβ ψιΓτ\ τ□αμΑΗ εΒ· λ ψ□ικΟναε ≤□℞γ□ω </p>	<p> And Abimelech said: I do not know who has done this thing. Neither you did you tell me, and nor I have not heard of it until today. </p>
--	---

An example of a post-verbal ≤℞γ + constituent, is Genesis 38.10:

<p> : □τΟε-≤℞Φγ\ τεμ□ ρΧψ℞ω ηΥΑΩΑσ ρ□□□□□ εΗ(ε η□ ρωη□ψ ψ□ΘνψΕσ) Ζβ τ⇒ρ□□□□Χψ℞ω ω </p>	<p> And what he (Onan) did was displeasing in the eyes of the Lord, and he slew him also. </p>
--	--

Another such an example of a post-verbal ≤℞γ is Genesis 3.6b-c¹²³:

<p> Ζ λΥακε·Γτ℞ω Ψψ\ριΚπιμ ξ□∇ΖθιΓτ℞ω η□ΑΓμιτ η□ΑΗψιε\ λ-≤℞Φγ\ /□ΕΓτιΓτ℞ω :λ□ακε·Χψ℞ω </p>	<p> she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave also some to her husband with her, and he ate. </p>
--	--

¹²² Additional examples of argument focus structures with focus particles are Genesis 13.5; 14.6; 15.14; 19.37-38; 20.4b, 6; 21.26; 22.20; 24.8,14, 19, 25 (x3), 46.

An example of a double post-verbal ≤Rγ+constituent, is Genesis 50.9:

≤ψΥιΗ↓ρΑΚπ-≤RΦγ βεκΨΣρ-≤RΦγ	□Γμιτ λα π□□RΧψRω :δ□□-Οε) μ δ□□ΕβαΖκ η□□ϑν(ξαΓμ□αη ψ□ιηϑ ψRω	And there went up with him also chariots (and) also horsemen. It was a very great company.
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An example of a post-verbal ≤Rγ+constituent in an argument focus structure, is Genesis 22.20:

ηεΓλ□ΕεΑη ≤ψΖ(ρΑβ\Ζδαη □□□ψ□ρ(ξαε ψ□ιηϑ ψRω ÷ ρ□□[ΟμεΕλ ≤□Αη↓ρ) βαε) λ δ□□□RΦγ□ΧψRω :♣ψ□ιξΑε ρ Βξ ρν) λ ≤ψ□ρνΑΖβ [εω□ιη-≤Rγ] η □ΑΖκ) λιμ η□↓δ) λ ρψ η□Φνιη	Now after these things it was told Abraham, “Behold, Milcah, also she has borne children to your brother.”
--	--

B. ♠αε

Example of a fronted ♠αε + constituent as a marked word-order argument focus, 1 Samuel 20.39:

ηΑμ [ε] μ πΖ⇒δ ρψ-ε-λ ραπ□RΦναηϑω :ρ□□Αβ↓Ζδαη-τεε]Ψπ(δ ρψ β↓ρω↓δϑω □□/Ατ ρν -ηϑψ ♠□αε	But the lad knew nothing, only Jonathan and David knew the matter
--	---

Genesis 9.3-4

:λ□Εκε-τ εΒ-λ Ψμ↓δ BH) πRν) Ζβ ρ□ΑΩ ΑΖβ-♠αε 4	3 Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. 4 "But meat that has its lifeblood still in it you must not eat (author's translation).
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Genesis 20.12

εω□ιη □□□ψιβαε-ταβ ψ□ιτΟξ(ε η→ ρν) μΑε -≤Rγϑω 12 ψΥιΓμιε-ταβ εΖ-λ ♠□αε :η□ΑΚΗε) λ ψ□ιλ-ψιη) ΓτRω	Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife.
---	--

¹²³ Examples from Heimerdinger (1999:173) and Levinsohn (2002:6).

C. $\theta \Rightarrow \rho$

An example of $\theta \Rightarrow \rho$ followed by a negative existential clause, is Genesis 20:11

<p>ψιΓτ(ρ□αμΑε ψ□□□ιζκ ≤□Αη↓ρ)βαε □□□ρε με□·Χψϑω ηΥΘ•ζαη ≤ θΑΓμααζβ ≤ψ□ιηυλ ε τ□□□αε ρ∩ψ-λψΕε θ⇒ρ□□□ :ψ□ιΓτ Ηιε ρ□□□αβ\ζδ-λαπ ψ∩ν Ψγ↓ρ(ηϑ ω</p>	<p>Abraham replied, "I said to myself, 'There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'</p>
--	---

In this case $\theta \Rightarrow \rho$ introduces a state-reporting sentence focus structure.

D. $\infty \square \alpha \varepsilon$

An example¹²⁴ of a fronted $\infty \square \alpha \varepsilon$ + constituent is Deut 15.17:

<p>τελ□Σζδαβ □□□ νζΑε β η□ΑΓτατ ρνϷω ⇒π□Εχ\ραΓμαη-τεε □□□ΑΓτ ξ∇ΘΑλϷω ≤ΥΑλ π δεβ□□□επ □♣ λ η□ ρψΑηϷω :□Εζκ-ηεΩ(παΓτ □♣) τΑμ(εαλ ∞□αε)Ϸω</p>	<p>then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his earlobe into the door, and he shall be your slave forever. And also to your maidservant you shall do likewise.</p>
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5.2.3.5 *Verbless clauses with fronting in argument focus structures*

When the presupposed pronoun is clause final in a verbless clause, it is a case of argument focus. The expected word-order is subject – predicate (cf. Buth, 1999),¹²⁵ which would be a case of predicate focus. An example of such fronted arguments¹²⁶ is Genesis 3.10:

<p>ε_↓ρψιε ρω/Υ ρΦγαζβ ψιΓτ π□αμΑΗ □♣ λΟΘ -τεε ρεμεΔ·Χψϑω ψικΨΟνΑε ≤ J ΟρψΕπ -ψ□ιζκ :ε□ΕβΑξεΕε ρω</p>	<p>He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."</p>
--	--

¹²⁴ Additional examples of argument focus structures in verbless clauses and copular clauses with fronting, from the Genesis-corpus, are the following: Genesis 6.2, 9; 9.2; 19.20; 20.5, 7, 12.

¹²⁵ Contra Buth, Shimasaki (2002:121-129) argues that the predicate-subject word-order in verbless nominal clauses is the normal unmarked word-order.

¹²⁶ It could be argued that it is a predicate that is fronted in verbless clause fronting, and that it therefore is a case of predicate focus. An argument, however, as defined in this study, is not only a valence constituent of a verb. A constituent of a verbless clause also qualifies as an argument. In a certain sense, constituent focus would be a better term for this type of focus, because of the theoretical implications of the term "argument." But to remain consistent with Lambrecht, argument focus is nevertheless used in this account.

Verbless clauses can have fronted focus structures, thus becoming marked word-order constructions as well. When the complement of a verbless clause is fronted, the focus structure is that of marked word-order predicate focus, following Randall Buth (1999).

Example: 2 Kings 1.8¹²⁷

⋮⋮η ψ□ι<β ΗιΓταη η□φ Χυρι **Elijah the Tishbite** he is.
λΕΞ

The above example is an example of a fronted argument focus in a verbless clause where a topic pronoun is required. The normal word-order for verbless nominal sentences is subject-predicate. In this example, the fronted constituent is the argument in focus¹²⁸.

Another example is Genesis 3.14

η]ΣδΑΚΩαη τ□□□ϑΧψαξ λΨΟ<κιμ] η□ΑμΕη] <βα **Cursed** (are) you among all the animals and all
η-λΑ<κιμ □□□ηΑΓταε ρ] ρΑΞ the creatures of the field

5.2.3.6 The negative particle in argument focus structures

The negative particle, when used before a noun phrase, also marks a constituent for argument focus. The negative particle by itself does not influence the word-order. Without the negative marker, the noun would still be fronted. Genesis 45.8a is an example:

≤□εκψ⊕ν] πιλ □□□≤ψιηυλ] ε ψιρν□ΕξΑλ] Η 7 God sent me before you to preserve for
ϋΧψϑω 7 you a remnant on earth,
fΣρ□□ΥΑεΑ<β τψΨ(ρΕε] Η ≤□εκΑλ ≤]ΒΩ and to keep alive for you many survivors.
Αλ 8 So it was **not you** who sent me here, but
:η□ΑλΟδ<Φγ η□ΑΞψΕλ] πιλ ≤□εκΑλ τ | □ψ< God;
ξαη] λ] he has made me a father to Pharaoh,
η φΦν□Εη □□□ψιτΟε ≤□εΓτ] ξαλ] Η ≤□εΓτ and lord of all his house
αε-ε-λ] η□ΑΓταεω 8 and ruler over all the land of Egypt.
≤ψΥιηυλ] εΑη ψ□ι<κ
η□Οω(ραπ] λ β□Αε] λ ψ□ρν□ΕμψιΩ<ψϑω
| □τψΕ<β-λΑκ] λ □□□| δΑε] λ]
:≤ϋψ | ↓ρ] χιμ fΣρ□□□εε-λΑκ] <β λ□ΕΗΟμ]

¹²⁷ As an additional example, see Genesis 20.2 for Abraham’s answer: “sister-of-me (is) she.” See also Genesis 26.24 “because with-you (am) I and I will bless you.”

¹²⁸ It is clearly a case of argument focus because the sentence is identificational: the sentence is an answer to the identificational WH-question: “**Who** is he?”, and instead of the answer in normal word-order “He is Elijah the Tishbite”, the predicate is fronted to “Elijah the Tishbite (is) he.” So arguably this is a case of argument focus.

The negative particle in verse 8a functions in the comparison between of “you” (Joseph’s brothers) and God. The pair that is compared is “you” (i.e., Joseph’s brothers) and God. Both referents have a particle preposed: “*not* you” and “*but* God.” “God” is already discourse-active (cf. verse 7), and the primary topic, but the author wanted to strengthen the fact that God alone is the real cause behind all the events. The contrast between the brothers and God is what is asserted. The negative focus marker brings out this antithesis between the intentions of God and the brothers, with God overriding the brothers.

5.2.3.7 *Argument focus and contrastiveness*

An example of a fronted argument focus structure with a contrastive overlay is Genesis 3.12:

< δAε□Aη ρεμϑΨ·Xψϩω ψ□(δAΓμϑ ηAΓτ□□□ατ ρ□□□□εH(ε □ □□ηAKHιε□Aη :λ□EκOε ρω f□EϑAη-ιμ ψ□ιΓλ-η ρv) τ□ ρ v □ <u>εω□τη</u>	The man said, "The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."
---	--

“The-woman that you-gave me” is left-dislocated and presupposed. This left-dislocated construction reactivates the referent, “Eve.” The fronted pronoun “she” is presupposed and discourse-active, and what is in focus in this argument focus structure. When an already active referent is in an argument focus structure, it is the contrastiveness overlay that is asserted. The contrastiveness overlay in this case is the restrictive identity of the one who gave him the fruit to eat. As if Adam was saying that “the one you gave me, she and she only did it! I am not responsible.”

5.2.3.8 *Argument focus as the Biblical Hebrew mechanism for clefting*

In this section on argument focus, there is also the final question of clefting¹²⁹ in Biblical Hebrew. I argue that there is no cleft construction in Biblical Hebrew and that the function of clefted contrastiveness has been subsumed in argument focus. Before going into the details of marked word-order argument focus, a word about *clefting* (for example as in “*It is PAUL* who bought the book” where Paul is clefted). Clefting normally marks some contrastive focus, as noted above in the discussion on Givón. There is more than one type of clefting, as discussed in Lambrecht (2001)(cf. also Givón, 1990; Dik, 1989). Normally some form of syntactic

¹²⁹ A clefted construction is a syntactic configuration where a nominal is focused on by means of an “it-cleft”, in English. For example, “It is the book that I was looking for (and not the file).” The clefted word or phrase is what is in focus, followed by a clause that is the ground or presupposition of the proposition. In many languages this ground or presupposed clause is relativized, as in Kimwani (Floor, 2003b:24). Clefting is normally used for contrastive focus, and is attested in many languages of the world. In Biblical Hebrew fronted argument focus structures fulfill more or less the same pragmatic contrastive function.

relativizing occurs in clefts. Gessler (1992) argued that Biblical Hebrew has clefting where the optional pronominal is inserted after a fronted noun phrase. In this account, such marked word-order configurations are explained in different terms. The fronted noun phrase is reinterpreted as a case of *casus pendens*, a left-dislocation, with the inserted pronominal the recurring element in the main clause. The focus structure is that of argument focus.

5.3 FOCUS PEAKING¹³⁰

Focus peaking is where certain pragmatic categories function as overlay in the focus structures. Predicate and argument focus structures can have focus peaking. In sentence focus, the whole proposition is in focus and no one specific element draws more attention to it than others.

In predicate focus, the one constituent that attracts the most attention, or is the most salient in the sense of the goal of the assertion, is the focus peak. Not all predicate focus structures have focus peaks.

In argument focus structures, quantifiers like “all” and other attributive components (for example adjectives) could be that which is in focus. The whole constituent is in focus, but this additional assertion is the focus peak. This concept has not been developed in this study. It requires further investigation.

Focus peaking is a cover term for cognitively salient elements within the focus structure, also called Focus Proper (Dooley & Levinsohn, 2000) or the Communicative Point in Functional Sentence Perspective. Focus peaking is in broad terms what Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998:81) call *kontrast*, what Firbas calls *rheme*, having the highest degree of “communicative dynamism” (as cited in Baker (1992:161-162)), what Heimerdinger (1999:166-167) calls the DFE, the Dominant Focal Element, and to an extent what Givón calls *contrastive focus* (1990:699, 702).

As mentioned in chapter 4, it is necessary to suggest some criteria for the determination of focus peaks. It is argued that the post-verbal elements in predicate focus structures are part of

¹³⁰ One can argue that focus peaking is in actual fact not focal at all, but rather a pragmatic operation in addition to the pragmatic information structure. This can be so because a peaking category like contrastiveness is not limited to focus structures but also occurs with topics. My argument in favor of seeing (focus) peaking as a focal element is that peaking, as for example activation and contrast, additionally marks something within the focus structure (or *all* of the focus domain) as cognitively salient. What the concept of focus peaking attempts to do is to merge Lambrecht’s informational definition of focus with the operational-salient definition of focus of the Prague School, Dik, Givón, and others.

the predicate focus domain, but that three sub-distinctions can be made of predicates as to where exactly the salient peak or communicative point of the focus information lies. These three distinctions are the (1) conjoint construction, where a non-discourse active complement immediately follows the verb, (2) the disjoint construction, where the verb is split from its complement, with the verb the salient peak, and (3) the disjoint construction, where the verb is also split from its complement, but where the complement, typically sentence-final, is the communicative point or peak. The two disjoint configurations, one with the verb as focal peak and one with a constituent at the end of the clause as focus peak, can be differentiated only by the presence or lack thereof of focal information after the verb. When there is a focal constituent or constituents after the verb, new information, the post-verb element always takes the focus peak, or in the case of more than one new post-verbal element, one of those. When the verb is not followed by any argument, or when the post-verbal argument is topical and presupposed, the verb itself is the focus peak.

Focus peaks are limited to certain sentence constituents or groups of constituents (for example in broad predicate focus both the verb and the complement form the focus peak). Normally a sentence cannot have more than one focus peak. Contrastiveness alone is not a focus peaking device, but the functions of contrastiveness and activation can co-occur with one constituent. Such a constituent will then be a focus peak if it is newly-activated information. When such co-occurring of focus peaking features happen, a higher degree of peaking intensity is achieved. In turn, such cases of *intense* peaking mark the constituents as particularly prominent and as such promote them to a higher thematic status.

Activation of participants, in its widest sense, is a focus peaking function. Activation of referents in Biblical Hebrew could have been marked by sentence accentuation, the way they are in English, but since we do not have accurate access to accentuation patterns of Biblical Hebrew, word-order considerations are all the analyst can go on. Activation is defined in terms of Lambrecht's approach (see chapter 4 (4.2.5)) as the cognitive activation of identifiable but new participants to the discourse. Activation here also includes re-activation from a semi-active or non-active cognitive state.

The most neutral and unmarked form of activation, in contrast with marked cases of activation like argument focus or sentence focus, is the activation of topics in topic-comment, predicate focus structures. In such structures, there is an obligatory presupposed primary topic, and

optional secondary topics as for example indirect objects. The activated element tends to be later in the clause, often even clause-final. Activation and end-weight often co-occur.

Example: Proverbs 7.7

$\leq \rightarrow \cap \psi \exists A \tau \mid K \pi \alpha \beta \exists \Sigma \rho \square \square \square E \exists \wp \omega$ $:\beta \square E \lambda - \rho \alpha \sigma (\xi \rho \alpha \omega \square \square \square \wp \nu \mid \leq \psi \rightarrow \cap \nu A \angle \beta \alpha \beta \eta \wp \nu \psi$ $\square \iota \beta \square A \exists$	and I saw among the simple ones, I observed among the youths a young man without sense.
--	---

The sentence-final constituent “young man without sense” activates the main actor in the imaginary narrative. It is the only place in the syntax of the clause where this element occurs, so no pragmatic choice is involved. There is, however, the pragmatic issue of the author having decided to add quantitative information to the “young man”, namely that he is “without sense.”

For more examples, see below in the discussion under end-weight (5.3.1) below.

Activation can also occur in constructions with fronting. In such X-qatal clauses, the focus structure is sentence focus as a presentational or event-reporting sentence.

5.3.1. End-weight as a focus peaking mechanism

Rosenbaum discussed the term LIPOC (Language Independent Preferred Order of Constituents), referring to this principle as the “heaviness principle”, wherein those constituents which are more complex or “heavy” tend to be placed further back in the order of constituents” (Rosenbaum, 1997:138). He argues that, “[a]ccording to LIPOC, *clitic pronouns* are less complex categorically and prefer to precede more complex constituents. The result is that they are often placed earlier in the order of constituents even though they should come later in the basic functional pattern according to preference.” Examples quoted are Isaiah 49.21; 50.5,49.10; 43.20, and 48.6.

Construct phrases (e.g. Isaiah 43.23; 47.9, 55.3; 40.12 (without presence of a clitic pronoun)), phrases of Apposition and Coordination (e.g. Isaiah 41.19; 42.25; 45.3), relative clauses, and subordinate clauses (such as direct speech or quotation, e.g. Is 45.9; 41.9; 49.3) are all cases of LIPOC. But LIPOC does not affect the *special positions*, which in Dik’s terms are P1 and P2 (cf. discussion in chapter 4 (4.2.2)). “Those constituents that qualify for these special positions can be placed in those positions regardless of their complexity” (ibid.:147). For example, see Isaiah 54.7.

The use of the term focus peaking may be helpful as the information structure term for the phenomenon of “heavy” phrases towards the end of a clause. Focus refers to the pragmatic domain of the newly-asserted information. Focus peaking, on the other hand, does not refer to a pragmatic domain, but is a catch-all term for specific pragmatic operations *within* the focus domain.

End-weight is the feature of some focus structures that is in accordance with the pragmatic principle that new information tends to be moved towards the end of a sentence. End-weight is an overlay to predicate focus or even sentence focus structures, where one specific constituent right at the end of a sentence receives the additional element of what can be called *focus weight*. It is the focus peak within the focus structure. End-weight is sometimes used as a form of activation. Unrecoverable referents are often activated in end-weight configuration, that is, sentence-finally. With the focus peaking overlay, one constituent within a focus structure receives additional weight or “emphasis.” But constituents in end-weight configuration are not always contrastive. Contrastiveness as well as activation, or each of these on its own, can be part of the focus peaking overlay in end-weight. In this account, a final constituent in a sentence can only have end-weight when it is new information. When it is presupposed, like a secondary topic, it cannot be end-weight¹³¹ focus peaking.

Example¹³²: Genesis 3.24

<p> $\leq \downarrow \delta A \varepsilon \square A \eta - \tau \varepsilon \exists H \Sigma \rho \square \square \square \wp \gamma \subset \psi \mathfrak{R} \omega$ $\leq \psi \square \iota \beta \mid \rho \mid \angle \kappa \alpha \eta - \tau \varepsilon \exists / \Sigma \delta \square E \pi - \mathfrak{R} \gamma \mid \lambda \leq \Sigma \delta \square \Pi \angle \theta \iota \mu$ $\square E \angle \kappa \mid H \mathfrak{R} X \psi \mathfrak{R} \omega$ $\tau \varepsilon \kappa \square \varepsilon K \pi \alpha \eta \mid \tau \iota \Gamma \mu \alpha \eta \square \square \square \beta \Sigma \rho \varepsilon \xi \alpha \eta \Xi \alpha \eta \square \alpha \lambda \tau \square E \exists$ $\subset \omega$ $:\leq \psi \square \wedge X \psi \alpha \xi \square \alpha \eta f \square E \pi \spadesuit \Sigma \rho \square \square \Psi \Sigma \angle \delta - \tau \varepsilon \exists \rho \square O \mu$ $\mid H \iota \lambda$ </p>	<p>He drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.</p>
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In the above example “he” (God) is the primary topic, and “man” the secondary topic. Both sentences, if one does not take the purpose clause as a separate sentence, have predicate focus. This verse illustrates the end-weight principle, where a long constituent (and two constituents even) is at the end of the clause and has the element of focus peaking as overlay. The goal of the utterance is to focus the attention on what God did, but especially on his positioning of the “object(s)”, and the reason(s) for this position.

¹³¹ The term “end-weight” in the literature is also used for “heavy” sentence-final topical constituents, but in this study the term is reserved for focus peaks that are sentence-final.

¹³² Some other examples of end-weight from the Genesis 1-25 corpus are 21.3; 22.2a, 2b, 3, 18; 23.9, 16; 24.2, 3.

5.4 PRAGMATIC OPERATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH FOCUS STRUCTURES

Two pragmatic operations are associated with focus structures, and these are contrastiveness and quantification.

5.4.1 Contrastiveness

The notion of contrastiveness is mentioned in the literature on focus (Gómez-González, 2001:35-37, 326-328; Vallduví & Vilkkuna, 1998), and discussed in chapter 4 (4.3.2). For many theorists on focus, like Dik and Givón, contrastiveness is what makes focus focus. That contrastiveness is associated with focus, as it is with topic, is beyond doubt. The question is what is the exact relationship?

Vallduví & Vilkkuna call this feature *kontrast*, with the k- to distinguish it from contrast as such. *Kontrast* is contrastiveness in its widest sense, as seen in chapters 2 and 3. Over and above contrasting it also includes comparing, exhaustive identification¹³³, and confirming of identity¹³⁴. Not all of these four occur in focus. Only exhaustive identification, and confirming of identity overlay focus structures.

Vallduví & Vilkkuna describe their *kontrast* as distinct from *rheme* (1998; cf. discussion in chapter 4 (4.3.2)), having contrastiveness in the widest sense as its distinguishing component. As argued by Vallduví & Vilkkuna (1998) above, contrastiveness as a discourse-pragmatic category is a distinct part of focus, not to be confused with the scope of focus information that differs from the presupposed information according to Lambrecht's definition of focus. Contrastiveness is thus an element of focus that can optionally overlay any of the focus structures and constituents in the information structure of the sentence. As seen in Chapter 3, contrastiveness can optionally overlay any primary topic, secondary topic or topic frame as well, and as such mark these constituents for contrast in the widest sense. This contrastiveness is also possible, even common in many focus structures. It is speaker-intended.

These contrastive operations either exhaustively identify or confirm the identity of a referent. A focus overlay can be attached to any constituent in the predicate focus structure, in the argument focus structure, and also in the sentence focus structure. Sometimes, as in the case of argument focus, the whole focus domain is focalised and marked for one of the four

¹³³ Exhaustive listing or exhaustive identification is similar to the concept of restrictive focus: "only x is true."

¹³⁴ The question can be raised whether all four functions of contrastiveness are also valid for focus.

contrastiveness operations. As seen in the examples of contrastive and comparing topic pair constructions (see chapter 3 (3.3.2), kontrastive focus pairs also make use of fronting in the second line to indicate a contrast or a comparison.

An example of an argument focus structure that is also contrastive is Jeremiah 12.13a¹³⁵:

□□□≤ψιΛΞιξ ¯ϖ\ρ ρ ζ	They have sown wheat,
]ρ□Aχ@θ <u>≤ψ□□□ιχOθ</u> ¯ω	But/and thorns they have reaped

In the above example the fronted *thorns* seems to be a case of marked word-order argument focus. The verb “reaped” has been presupposed and activated in the verb “sown” of the first line. The verb “sown” had activated the sow-reap script as part of a wider agricultural script, so “reaping” was semi-active. For this reason the explanation that this is a case of marked word-order predicate focus may be questionable.

Genesis 14.23 is an example of an argument focus function with a contrastive overlay of restricting the identity of the referent:

λ α ¯ω ↓ ρ ν - ♣ Ϛ ρ Ω δ □ □ □ □ α ¯ ω ¯ ω □ □ □ □] ξ ι μ - ≤ ι ε	...that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not
♣ Υ Α λ - ρ ε Η (ε - λ Α < κ ι μ ξ □ ∇ < θ ε ε - ≤ ι ε ¯ ω	even a thread or the thong of a sandal,
ρ □ α μ ε · τ ε Ζ · λ ¯ ω	so that you will never be able to say,
: ≤ ↓ ρ β α ε - τ ε ε ψ ι Γ τ \ ρ □ □ □ α Η [¯ ω ε η] ψ □ ∩ ν (ε	I made Abram rich.'

The pragmatic overlay in this example is that of restricting the identity of the subject pronoun “I”: “I and no one else, only I did it.” The predicate is presupposed from the context.

5.4.2 Quantification

Although not developed in any depth here, quantification as a pragmatic operation associated with information structure is understood to be those constructions and mechanisms that either add a certain intensity to the predication, for example by infinitive absolute constructions and adverbs like δ □ O ε] μ ‘very’, or constructions that strengthen the quantity of a nominal reference, for example - λ κ ‘all, each’. These mechanisms are closely associated with information structure, because in cases where the information contained by these words or particles is the **only** newly-asserted information in the proposition, the content or element of meaning of these intensifying words or particles then becomes the focus domain.

¹³⁵ Example from Heimerdinger (1999). Both Heimerdinger and Levinsohn call this marked predicate focus, but the predicator “reap” is presupposed and semi-active because of the sowing-reaping script activated by “sow.”

When these words or particles are not the focus domain, but only a part of the focus domain, though intensifying it, they signal focus peaking in the case of $-\lambda\kappa$ and nominal phrases, and predicate focus in the case of the infinitive absolute and the adverb $\delta\Box\Theta\Xi\} \mu$.

The infinitive absolute in predicate focus structures functions as a quantification mechanism. In narrow predicate focus, only the actual verb is the focus domain and the pragmatic focus structure. In such cases of narrow predicate focus, the truth value of the verb event or state is confirmed, all uncertainty countered. The infinitive absolute is a counter-expectation device: the speaker counters any assumed uncertainty or doubt on the part of the hearer. All cases of narrow predicate focus structure also have a focus peak on the verb. In other words, the event or state referred to by the verb, and nothing else, is what makes the proposition an assertion. As is the case with argument focus, the focus domain in its totality is what is peaked or focalised as well.

In some cases, the infinitive absolute construction overtly marks narrow predicate focus. The infinitive absolute cannot be governed by a preposition like the infinitive construct, and likewise it cannot take a suffix. In terms of word-order, it normally precedes the verb it is governed by, but in some cases it does follow the main verb (Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze, 1999:158). This is how the semantic-pragmatics of the infinitive absolute are defined, verifying or strengthening the truth of the actual event or state:

[The infinitive absolute] usually intensifies the verbal idea. In this way Biblical Hebrew speakers/narrators express their conviction of the verity of their statements regarding an action (original italics) (ibid.:158).

Example: 2 Kings 1.6

$\delta\Box\Theta\Xi\} \rho E \tau - \epsilon \cdot \lambda \leq \Box AKH A \tau \psi \Box i \lambda A \sigma - \rho \epsilon H \langle \epsilon \eta \Box A$ $\Lambda \Xi i \Gamma \mu \alpha \eta / \epsilon \kappa A \lambda \div$ $: \tau \cdot \mu \mathbf{A} \Gamma \tau \boxed{\tau} \boxed{B \mu} - \psi \Box i \angle \kappa$	Therefore the bed to which you have gone you shall not leave, You shall surely die!
--	--

The pre-verbal infinitive absolute of the verb “die” intensifies the actual intransitive verb, “to die”: “dying you will die!” In this example, the predicate focus structure has been intensified pragmatically. In the first proposition of verse 6, the pronouncement is made that King Ahaziah will not get better. The contextual implications activated are that he will either remain sick for the rest of his life, or that he will die. The second clause then constrains and

limits those two contextual implications to only one, to the fact that he will die, intensified by the infinitive absolute.

This area of quantification and its association to focus structures also needs further investigation.

5.5 SUMMARY

5.5.1 A listing of focus structures

1. Predicate focus in TOPIC-COMMENT ARTICULATIONS

1.1 End-weight is a focus peaking device in predicate focus structures

2. Argument focus in IDENTIFICATIONAL or FOCUS-PRESUPPOSITION ARTICULATIONS

2.1 Unmarked word-order argument focus

2.2 Marked word-order argument focus

3. Sentence focus in EVENT-REPORTING or PRESENTATIONAL SENTENCES

3.1 Event-reporting sentences

3.2 Presentational sentences

5.5.2 A summary of fronting

Fronting, be it argument fronting like a subject, object or adverbial phrase, or be it front dislocation or double fronting, is the most frequently used syntactic configuration to mark topic or focus in Biblical Hebrew. For convenience, a summary of all fronted configurations and their pragmatic functions is given below:

A. Fronting of topic

- Topic promotion
- Topic shifting
- Topic frame-setting¹³⁶

B. Fronting for focus

- Marked word-order Sentence focus
- Marked word-order Argument focus
- Marked word-order Predicate Focus in case of verbless clauses with fronting.

In cases of double fronting, when more than one constituent have been fronted and/or left-dislocated, the constituent most to the left is topical and the second is focus (often argument focus).

5.5.3 Heuristic tools for discovering focus structures

By way of summary, the following steps, in the given order, are proposed to identify focus structures and the categories of focus structure.

1. First, look at what information is presupposed, from the context and from the co-text, and what information seems to be newly-asserted or altogether discourse-new activated.
2. In the presupposed information, be it referents, states, deictic orientations, or qualities, determine whether there is information that qualifies as topical, that is, that presents itself as a topic about which the rest of the proposition is a comment. If such a topic can be identified, the sentence is a straightforward topic-comment articulation.
3. If no topic can be found, but there is presupposed information stated, apply the heuristic tools for argument focus and determine whether the newly-asserted information or the newly activated information is an argument of a predicate and whether it identifies an answer to a WH-question. Marked word-order configurations will further confirm such a proposition as a focus-presupposition articulation.
4. If it is a marked word-order configuration, but no topic and also no focused argument can be identified, the sentence is a case of sentence focus structure, with the focus on the whole event or state or presentation of a referent. Sentence focus structures can contain presupposed information, but the communicative weight of such presupposed information is less significant than the communicative import of the proposition as a whole. The whole sentence is salient cognitively, whereas in the case of predicate

¹³⁶ Inserting a presupposed frame as a point of departure, basis, setting; inserting a topic frame contrastive pair.

focus and argument focus, only the predication or an argument of the predication is salient.

5. Test whether the proof questions of “what happened?” or “is someone or something presented?” are valid, as final evidence that the proposition does indeed have a sentence focus structure.

PART II

THE INFORMATION STRUCTURE AND DISCOURSE THEME INTERFACE

Chapter 6

INTRODUCTION TO THEMATICS

Language is so complex that it could be said that exact theme discovery analysis as a worthwhile enterprise is doubtful. Theme analysis is not an exact science. For that, the human mind, human communication, and language itself is too complex. However, languages and texts do contain clues and traces to their themes.

In the previous four chapters the discourse-pragmatic concepts of topic and focus have been discussed and accounts of information structure in Biblical Hebrew proposed. The argument of this study is that information structure is foundational to the discovery of theme. Thus in order for an exegete to discover theme or themes in Biblical Hebrew, an analysis is called for of topic and focus of a text, together with the cognitive notions of identifiability, activation, presupposition and assertion. While it is argued that there is a definite link between information structure and theme, it is not argued that the link between information structure and theme is the *only* link for understanding theme development. Theme is a wide concept with many sides to it. This study still assumes that discourse can be compared with a molecule, the exact nature of which is not identifiable, but which has certain observable properties. Similarly theme has some observable properties. Part two, the next four chapters, will look at theme, at some of the verifiable properties, and how to observe these in Biblical Hebrew. The syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive interface of texts is in many respects enigmatic, and this study does not claim to provide wide-ranging answers to these complexities. Nevertheless, it is assumed that semantic themes come to our understanding by means of thematic structures and other communicative clues, which are identifiable, albeit by means of enigmatic traces in many cases.

As hypothesized in the introduction (chapter 1 (1.3 and 1.6)), tracking the theme and thematic transitions of a text will assist the exegete in more than one way. Transitions, for instance, will assist the exegete in the segmentation of the text. Additionally, a theme analysis will help to identify why and where different theme interpretations diverge. To do such a theme analysis effectively, the interpreter needs to be equipped with tools to identify and trace theme. For that, a proper definition of theme is necessary, a definition that is able to identify

in texts what is thematic and what is not. Every text, in any language, in different degrees, has some signals of the theme in the text itself. What are these theme traces or theme signals, and how can they be detected with some reasonable degree of objectivity?

Information structure by itself is useful for explaining grammatical word-order and for determining information flow at sentence level. But the objective of this chapter is to see whether the information structure or information packaging of sentences has a link with the development of the theme at a level higher than sentences. The first step will be to review the different definitions and studies of thematics, and how the theory of theme analysis has developed from more semantic approaches to more cognitive-pragmatic approaches.

In this chapter various theories of theme discovery come under scrutiny. Semantic discourse analysis approaches from the seventies and eighties are first discussed, most notably the earlier Semantic Structure theory developed in SIL, the approach of Linda Jones, and the work of Teun van Dijk. This is followed by functional approaches like that of the FSP (Functional Sentence Perspective) by the Prague School, and MAK Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. The views of Brown & Yule (1983) are also looked at, especially their views on discourse topic and 'staging' or thematization. Givón's discourse-pragmatics is also not excluded. Lastly, the latest cognitive-pragmatic approaches to theme analysis are discussed: some perspectives on theme from Relevance Theory (Gutt, 2000), the work of Dooley & Levinsohn (2001), the work of Kathleen Callow (1998), who in clearer terms than any other, proposed an explicit model for theme discovery from a cognitive-semantic perspective. This is followed by an introduction to the Construction-Integration model of Walter Kintsch (Kintsch, 1998), the model of consciousness and information flow of Wallace Chafe (1994), and lastly by the Discourse Topic Signaling model of Dionysis Goutsos (1997).

In the review below, consideration will only be given to those aspects of the theory that have bearing on the link between linguistic signals in the text and theme. The hypothesis is that these linguistic signals will have a clear link with the notions of information structure like topic and focus. All other aspects of theories on theme are outside the scope of this study. I am especially thinking here of the more literary approaches to thematics.

6.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THEME ANALYSIS APPROACHES IN THE SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES

Two schools of theme analysis in the 1970s and 1980s can be identified, namely the semantic approaches and the functional approaches. There is not much that differentiates these two approaches. The difference between the two schools of thinking is mainly that the functional approaches incorporate in a more systematic way a range of pragmatic considerations.

6.1.1 Semantic propositional approaches

In these approaches, the proposition as the underlying semantic element of discourse, is foundational. Three semantic propositional approaches are reviewed, namely the SSA or Semantic Structure Analysis developed in SIL (Beekman, Callow & Kopesec, 1981), the theme identification approach of Linda Jones (1976), and the macrostructures approach to text and coherence by Teun Van Dijk (1977).

6.1.1.1 Linda Jones

Linda Jones in her 1977 book “Theme in English Expository Discourse”, as reviewed by Burgenhagen (1979), proposed a theory of theme identification that significantly touches on some features of information structure. Theme for her is “referential prominence”, “what is referentially nuclear” (1977:130), or the main idea the speaker-authors want to get across to achieve their goals. The main ideas are also those that other ideas relate back to. The referentially nuclear information is distinct from subsidiary information, which is unessential to the impact of the message. Subsidiary information only supports and clarifies the central assertions of the message (Burgenhagen, 1979:64). Jones adds the following features of themes: 1) Themes are hierarchical. There are high-level and low-level themes.

2) Themes are packaged. They can be succinctly stated or scattered throughout the discourse¹³⁷.

3) Themes are reinforced by various phonological, grammatical, and referential prominences (ibid.:65).

All three these features, and especially the last two, the packaging and reinforcing of themes, touch on the interface between theme and information structure, and hint at the notion of *theme traces* that will be introduced in the next chapter, Chapter 7, in this study. That Jones

¹³⁷ This concept of *scattered* will be further developed in the notion of *theme traces* in the next chapter.

had information structure in mind, without a comprehensive theory of pragmatic information structure, is evident from her discussion of the nature of theme packaging and theme reinforcement.

In situations where theme is more diffuse (such as is found sometimes in hortatory portions of the New Testament), an examination of the various lexical items may reveal a certain core of meaning. This core would then be thematic. Generally, there is a mutual reinforcement of concept clustering and logical relation which together serve to indicate the theme (ibid.:66)

On the packaging and reinforcement of themes, Jones and Burgenhagen state that grammatical prominence tends to reinforce referential prominence, and that there are (at least in English) certain surface structure devices that indicate thematicity. These are, for instance, rhetorical questions marking high-level themes, pseudo-cleft (“What the President wants is...”) and cleft (“It is my contention that...”) both marking mid-level themes, and topicalisation/fronting and relative clauses, which both mark low-level themes. Relative clauses themselves have low thematicity, but mark as high their head (Burgenhagen, 1979:66-67). Repetition of words and phrases, and the “reference to members of the same semantic class or situation set” also reinforce theme.

In the method she proposes for theme identification, she uses the proposition “as clause-like chunks” as the basic unit of text. The method then is to identify all *unusual* grammatical devices (read: marked constructions) and *key concepts*, indicating these on a chart of the propositions.

Although this method is still somewhat subjective, according to her, it still provides some objective means to discover themes. What makes her approach useful is that it does indeed connect themes with the information structure, for example marked constructions, key topics, key referents activated and enriched in focus constructions, and so on. In addition, her notion of a hierarchy of themes, and the fact that themes can be succinctly stated or scattered throughout the discourse points to a variety of different ways in which signals of the theme are communicated.

6.1.1.2 Van Dijk

Teun van Dijk’s approach is basically a semantic one, but a real attempt is made to incorporate pragmatics and speech act theory (cf. Part 2 of his 1977 book). He argues that

semantic coherence needs “to be formulated relative to such notions as TOPIC OF CONVERSATION or TOPIC OF DISCOURSE” (1977:130), two terms handled synonymously and which very much correspond to the idea of theme to be developed in this study. He asks penetrating questions about the notion of discourse topic and its relation to the sentences in the discourse sequence. For example: “Does a sequence have only one or more than one discourse topic?”, “What is the relation between the respective parts of topics of discourse and the macrostructure of a discourse?” and “Is there linguistic evidence for the notion of discourse topic?” (ibid.:131). This is how he differentiates between sentence topics and discourse topics:

Sentential topics (...) determine the distribution of information along sequences of sentences, whereas discourse topics seem to reduce, organize and categorize semantic information of sequences as wholes (ibid.:132).

Discourse topics can be made explicit in terms of propositional structures, and “a concept or a conceptual structure (a proposition) may become a discourse topic if it hierarchically organizes the conceptual (propositional) structure of a sequence” (ibid.:134). Often sentences explicitly expressing the discourse topic occur, to emphasize the topic, but they don’t need to occur (ibid.:136).

He uses the term *macrostructures* for a linguistic text feature similar to *theme*, in order to develop his theory on discourse topic. The semantic representation is its *macrostructure* which defines ‘the meaning of parts of a discourse and of the whole discourse on the basis of the meanings of the individual sentences.’ (Van Dijk, 1977:6). A “macrostructure of a sequence of sentences is a semantic representation of some kind”, there can be several levels of macrostructure, and “any proposition entailed by a subset of a sequence is a macrostructure for that subsequence” (ibid.:137). Topic changes indicate the border of a subset of macrostructure. Such topic changes are often clearly marked by a variety of devices, like connectives, participant changes, etc. (ibid.:139-140).

Propositions are processed and incorporated into the macrostructure by means of deletion rules, what he calls macro-operations and semantic information reduction.

Language users, cannot, and need not, store all the propositional information of a given discourse in verbal processing. Hence, this information will, at least in part, be REDUCED to the macrostructures... (ibid.:143).

The meaning of the sentences in the sequence is not “the sum” of the meaning of the underlying propositions, but the macrostructure reflects the meaning of the sequence as a whole, “hierarchically ordering the respective meanings of its sentences” (ibid.:143). So sequential meaning “is subsumed” in the global meaning of a discourse. This process of reduction and integration by the macrostructure takes place by means of various operations, expressed by rules. In his 1977 work he defines four information reduction rules, that “define what is RELATIVELY IMPORTANT in a passage” (ibid.:146). These rules are (1) deletion of accidental information, (2) deletion of information that is associated with a certain activated frame, (3) simple generalisation of essential (as opposed to accidental) information, and (4) combination and integration of essential information at a higher level (ibid.:144-146). These rules have been updated by Van Dijk in his 1980 publication, now called *macro-rules*¹³⁸.

- (1) Selection: Given a sequence of propositions, propositions that are not an interpretation condition for another proposition may be deleted.
- (2) Generalization: A proposition that is entailed by each of a sequence of propositions may be substituted for that sequence.
- (3) Construction: A proposition that is entailed by the joint set of a sequence of propositions may be substituted for that sequence.

There is linguistic evidence for macrostructures, according to Van Dijk. Although macrostructures “are higher level properties of sequences of propositions” (ibid.:150), there are surface structure phenomena that “indicate the presence of macrostructures”: for example, intonation, stress, syntactic structure and lexical units all “show” semantic properties necessary for the macrostructure (ibid.:150). Other linguistic devices related to the macrostructure he names are (1) *topical sentences* at the beginning or end of utterances that directly provide the macrostructure (ibid.:150), (2) connectives, especially what he calls macro-connections like *furthermore*, *but*, *however*, etc., are surface markers of the macrostructure (ibid.:150-151), and (3) referential markers like pronominals and pronominal

¹³⁸ About Van Dijk’s rules, Kintsch (ibid.:184) says that Van Dijk’s macrorules for macrostructure construction (deletion, generalization, and construction) cannot be automated. Looking at a paragraph, we can suggest plausible macropropositions for it, “but these rules do not specify a unique solution.” Latent Semantic analysis provides a better solution, where macrostructures are represented as vectors in the semantic space. For lack of space, we will not go deeper into this feature of Kintsch’s theory.

demonstratives, through anaphora, also point to the macrostructure. The relevance of information structure in macrostructure (i.e. theme) analysis cannot be more evident.

His propositional approach has been criticized by Brown & Yule (1983). Brown & Yule argued that Van Dijk tried to produce a 'text-grammar' in which the topic can be expressed as a complex proposition. "A concept or a conceptual structure (a proposition) may become a discourse topic if it hierarchically organizes the conceptual (propositional) structure of the sequence" (Van Dijk, 1977:133-134). It should be emphasized that van Dijk's analysis is based on an underlying semantic representation of the text rather than the sequence of sentences, which constitutes a text. According to Brown & Yule, this merely provides a 'translation' of a text in a different format, and does not provide what Van Dijk (1977:32) points out: "discourse topics seem to reduce, organize and categorize semantic information of sequences as wholes." This "formal means of identifying the topic for a piece of discourse... is an illusion" (1983:110). This only gives a schoolchildren type summary, more easily applied to some texts than others (ibid.:110). It only helps us to determine 'possible topics' of a discourse. Both Van Dijk (1977) and Kintsch (1974) are seen by Brown & Yule as too subjective and unverifiable (1983:114). Another problem is that it concentrates only on the semantic 'content' while ignoring textual and communicative aspects (1983:113). In conclusion, I agree with Brown & Yule that Van Dijk's method depends too heavily on semantic content at the expense of other discourse features such as organization, and especially the interpersonal dynamics of interactive communication. In a model for theme analysis, these additional features must be accounted for. Where I disagree is that Van Dijk's approach to macrostructures for discourse topic identification is an illusion. It is in the nature of language that text properties like themes are inexact. Van Dijk's approach is valuable and has been further developed by Kintsch (1998). The real problem to account for is the fact that in spite of the presence of certain linguistic evidences of the macrostructure, it is still possible to arrive at different macrostructures or themes. Relevance Theory with its notion of contextual assumptions, and Kintsch's notion of the situation model integrating the propositions of the macrostructure by means of various contextual inferences, seems to be the key to that problem.

Van Dijk's theory touches on the problem of the relation between sentence topic and what he calls discourse topic, but unfortunately he does not incorporate a full model of information structure. This sentence topic-discourse theme interface is basic to this study. Nevertheless,

Van Dijk's theory of macrostructures, with its semantic reduction rules, still provides a good foundation to our understanding of theme. His notion of macrostructures has been adopted and further developed by Kintsch (1998), who co-authored "Discourse Strategies" (1983) with Van Dijk. Robert Longacre also adopted Van Dijk's notion of macrostructures (1989:17). Callow (1998) developed the SSA and Linda Brown's notion of prominent relations. But as will be seen below, Brown & Yule (1983) and Goutsos (1997) found the propositional approach wanting in the sense that propositional discourse theme descriptions are inexact, subjective, and cumbersome. Discourse theme has a much more enigmatic nature than these propositional analysts may have recognized, but the fact that texts do have macrostructures and prominent theme lines and topics, has been borne out (cf. Callow (1998) and Kintsch (1998)).

6.1.1.3 Semantic Structure Analysis theory

Beekman, Callow & Kopesec (1981) proposed a model in which theme is determined by tracing all the prominent HEAD propositions. For example, in the *reason-RESULT*-relation, the result is more prominent and as such carries the thematically prominent information. Though very helpful in the analysis of argumentative discourse in highly "subordinating" languages like Koine Greek, the value of Beekman, Callow & Kopesec's approach for finding themes in Biblical Hebrew is not convincing. Since, in this theory, information structure notions are not taken into consideration for theme identification, no further discussion on the SSA approach is necessary here.

6.1.2 Functional approaches

In the functional approaches, theme is approached from a functional syntactic view, as in Halliday's notion of theme (cf. Baker, 1992; Gómez-González, 2001), or from a syntactic plus a more functional cognitive point of view (Brown & Yule, 1983; Tomlin, 1986; and Givón, 1984; 1990).

6.1.2.1 Halliday's notion of Theme as the first sentence constituent¹³⁹

Halliday theoretically divides the study of discourse into the study of *information structure* (given and new information) and *thematic structure*. While linguists from the Prague School, for example, combine both into one theory, Halliday maintains the distinction. His approach

¹³⁹ Halliday's views are discussed from the in-depth overviews provided in the books of Mona Baker (1992) and Gómez-González (2001).

is called the *separating* approach (Gómez-González, 2001:135-136). The thematic structure of a text is divided into Theme and Rheme. Theme is syntactically always the first constituent in a sentence. The rest of the sentence is the rheme. Theme for Halliday does not correspond with information structure topic, nor does rheme correspond with focus. By isolating the first element of each sentence, the thematic structure of a text can be determined. The theme is what the sentence is about, with two functions: “point of orientation by connecting back to previous stretches of discourse and thereby maintaining a coherent point of view”, and secondly, “a point of departure by connecting forward and contributing to the development of later stretches” (Baker, 1992:121). The rheme, in turn, “is the goal of discourse... that fulfills the communicative purpose of the utterance” (Baker, 1992:122). Themes can be any left-most constituent, be it a subject, a predicator, an object, a conjunction, etc. (ibid.:123). Themes can also be marked. These sentence-initial elements “control the information flow” (ibid.:124). Among other criticisms against this approach of theme analysis, is that WH-question clauses with fronted content-question words, as well as verb-initial clauses that thematize processes instead of referents, make Halliday’s theory not very applicable in languages that prefer to front WH-question words or verbs, the way Biblical Hebrew does (ibid.:140-141).

This approach is also called *staging* or *thematization* (for more elaborate discussions, cf. Grimes, 1975 and; Brown & Yule, 1983:125-153). Brown & Yule discussed this problem under the heading of *staging*:

When (a speaker) orders these single words into sentences, and those sentences into texts, he confronts what has come to be called the ‘linearisation problem’. He has to choose a beginning point. This point will influence the hearer/reader’s interpretation of everything that follows in the discourse since it will constitute the initial textual context for everything that follows (1983:125).

There is an *ordo naturalis* which dictates that “the first-mentioned event happened first and the second-mentioned event followed it” (ibid.:125). Theme is defined as the first word of a sentence:

*We shall use the term theme to refer to a formal category, the left-most constituent of the sentence. Every simple sentence has a **theme** ‘starting point of the utterance’ and a **rheme**, everything else that follows in the sentence which consists of ‘what the speaker states about, or in regard to, the starting point of the utterance’ (Mathesius, 1942) (ibid.:126).*

Halliday (1967:212) calls it ‘a point of departure’. The principal problem with this approach is that it may work well for English as a rigid word-order SVO language, but for predominantly VSO languages like Biblical Hebrew, which tend to give the ‘privileged’ first position in a sentence to verbs, this theory does not work (cf. Mona Baker, 1992:141).

The problem with Halliday’s Structure Function Grammar (SFG) is that theme is more than a linguistic, even pragmatic, category. Theme is anchored in cognition. It is attested by the work of Gómez-González (2001), among others, that the Hallidayan model of theme-rheme may work well for English for discovering theme, but in languages like Biblical Hebrew with a VSO word-order things are more complex.

6.1.2.2 De Beaugrande & Dressler on cohesion and coherence

De Beaugrande & Dressler treated the various aspects of discourse. They didn’t fail to illustrate the enigmatic nature of theme and understanding of texts. According to them, texts have seven standards of textuality: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativeness, situationality, and intertextuality. Cohesion is understood to be the surface structures such as lexical repetition and anaphora that bind texts together. It is the continuity of occurrences that upholds the stability of the text (1981:48). By coherence is meant the underlying semantic structures and inferences of a text, also the most prominent factor in text processing. Intentionality means the goal of the text producer, where acceptability has to do with the relevance of the text to the receiver. Informativeness “concerns the extent to which the occurrences of the presented text are expected versus unexpected or known versus unknown” (1981:8-9). Situationality “concerns the factors which make a text RELEVANT to a SITUATION of occurrence” (ibid.:9). A text will be understood differently from what is intended if the correct situation is not clear or inferable from the text. The seventh standard of textuality is known as Intertextuality. Intertextuality “concerns the factors which make the utilisation of one text dependent upon knowledge of one or more previously encountered texts” (ibid.:10). In spite of the fact that De Beaugrande & Dressler do not specifically operate

with the terms “theme” or “discourse topic”, all of these standards of text, in one way or another, have to do with theme and the macrostructure of a text. It confirms the complexity of theme, and that pinpointing one specific aspect of text organisation in order to extract theme will remain problematic. Their exposition has confirmed that theme analysis and text analysis is much more than just tracing cohesive and coherent features. There is a whole cognitive and situational world than needs to be brought into consideration as well.

What is of particular interest to our study on theme is where De Beaugrande & Dressler make the link between text processing and information structure in one of their seven standards. There are three such links, namely the one on word-order in informativity, the one on continuity of occurrence in cohesion, and the one on “density of linkage” in coherence.

1. **Informativity.** “The processing of highly informative occurrences is more demanding than otherwise, but correspondingly more interesting as well” (ibid.:9). Information load that is too high, however, will overload the processing of it and endanger communication (ibid.:9). This means that the flow of information is linked to the inference of theme. Highly informative elements tend to be closer to the end of the clause, while “elements of low informativity tend to appear towards the beginning of clauses ... “ compacted in pronominal forms or even ellipsis (ibid.:148; cf. 75-78). This is to “maintain a balance between two opposing tendencies: maintaining a clear point of orientation, and keeping informativity reasonably high” (ibid.:149).
2. **Cohesion.** Surface-level cohesion is promoted by the “continuity of occurrence” of words, repeated in lexical or pronominal form. Anaphora, in other words. Anaphora is always linked to topic continuity, and especially primary and secondary topic continuity. The manifestation of this continuity is thematic, and my argument in this study is that tracing such continuities in Biblical Hebrew will assist in determining the theme, or at least some aspect of it.
3. **Coherence.** Under coherence De Beaugrande & Dressler discuss the concept of “strength of linkage” (ibid.:86). When a word has many (direct or inferred) syntactic and semantic links with the rest of the context, or when a link is particularly strong as signaled by whatever means, that word is providing coherence¹⁴⁰. The density of

¹⁴⁰ This concept is the similar to Kintsch’s “strengthening” that makes strengthened words “macrowords” and key to the macrostructure (cf. Kintsch, 6.2.4 below).

linkage as manifested in the semantic network of a text is a manifestation of topic (presumably discourse topic, SJF) (ibid.:104). Using the terminology defined in chapters 2 and 3, where primary or secondary topics gain strength of linkage, their importance to the unfolding of theme is all the more apparent.

6.1.2.3 Brown & Yule's notion of discourse topic

One of the issues that Brown & Yule discuss that is relevant to this overview of thematics, is the issue of discourse topic. In the chapter on “Discourse Topic and the Representation of Discourse Content”, they argue that there is not really something like a discourse topic. Texts don't have topics, speakers and writers have (1983:68). Their understanding of the term *discourse topic* is not in terms of information structure, but rather in the sense of discourse semantics. Their discourse topic is the same as what is called *theme* in this study.

Brown & Yule is critical of the fact that there is a single “discourse topic” in a text. There could be any amount of topics. Against Keenan & Schieffelin (1976:380) who argue that topic is not a Noun Phrase, but a proposition (phrase or sentence) “which represents the discourse topic of the whole of the fragment” (as quoted by Brown & Yule, 1989:71), Brown & Yule argue that this definition of topic is too simplistic. According to Keenan & Schieffelin's definition, topic is just the equivalent of the title. The problem is that there can be a number of titles or topics (1983:73). All depends on the point of view of the hearer or reader. The definition of Topic as ‘aboutness’ they also find problematic: *aboutness* “will be judged differently at different points” (1983:73). Complex texts complicate matters even more.

What Brown & Yule propose instead is the notion of topic framework. They define their position in this way:

*What is required is a characterisation of ‘topic’, which would allow each of the possible expressions, including titles, to be considered (partially) correct, thus incorporating all reasonable judgements of ‘what is being talked about’. We suggest that such a characterisation can be developed in terms of a **topic framework**. (75).*

A topic framework is a list of the topical elements or participants around which the story is constructed (Heimerdinger, 1999: 105-106, commenting on Brown & Yule). Brown & Yule (1983:139) say that the topic framework functions ‘as a particularly powerful thematisation

device'. By this they mean that the thematic development of a discourse depends on the way the different constituents of the topic framework interact with one another. By analysing the topic framework with its different topical participants or referents, the theme of a discourse can be analysed more readily.

Activated features of context "constitute the contextual framework within which the topic is constituted" (ibid.:75). And the 'topic framework', as an analytical device, "is essentially a means of characterising the area of overlap in contributions to a discourse" (ibid.:87). So instead of trying to find the discourse topic, it is better to attempt a definition of the topic framework or topic area of a text. Topic framework elements that are *activated* 'about' a particular time and place (ibid.:77).

Brown & Yule elaborate on the analysis of topic in the following way:

...but we do suggest that the analyst should not simply assume that there is a single, static 'topic of conversation' in any conversational fragment. If there is an entity identifiable as the 'topic of conversation', the analyst should consider what evidence from each individual speaker's contribution he is using to make that identification. He should also remain aware of the fact that conversation is a process and that each contribution should be treated as part of the negotiation of 'what is being talked about'. Above all, he should remember that it is speakers, and not conversations or discourses, that have 'topics'. (ibid.:94).

Brown & Yule argue that there is a connection between 'discourse topic' and 'discourse content' (ibid.:107). "The former can be viewed as, in some sense, consisting of the 'important' elements of the latter", but the discourse topic as discourse content is a cognitive feature:

If it can be shown that people remember these top-most elements better than others, then this might be evidence that what 'we have in our heads' after reading a text are those elements which constitute the discourse topic (ibid.:107).

The contribution Brown & Yule have made to our study of theme is that discourse topic is more enigmatic than expected, and although there can be signals in the text, this is not sufficient. It is better to describe the *topic framework*.

6.1.2.4 Givón on topic continuity

Talmy Givón has not written explicitly on theme analysis, but his treatment of topicality in discourse has been so significant that it cannot be overlooked in this study. While Givón also did not propose an explicit theory of information structure, his goal was to produce work on some information structure and discourse topicality and focality issues within the framework of a typology of syntax. He brought a discourse-pragmatic and a functional cognitive perspective to text and topics.

Firstly, in his theory of topic continuity, with the four *unities*, topic continuity is maintained when there is continuity of time, place, action, and referent (1984:245). This insight is useful for observing the behaviour of primary topics in theme analysis.

Secondly, as referred to in chapter 1, Givón's (1984:263-264 and 1990:740) distinction of anaphoric versus cataphoric topicality is important for theme continuity. The activation of primary topics and secondary topics is cataphoric, and appears in sentence focus structures. As the primary topic is maintained, it *links* it back to the previous expressions in the same scene or even further back. As such, primary topics, being anaphoric as well as cataphoric, carry a significant thematic burden. Adverbial deictic frames are anaphoric in that they anchor the associated proposition within the text-world framework already established in the co-text.

And lastly, he asserts the importance of information structure (for him old and new information) relations for cognitive processing. For example, he argues that the more chunks of old information the proposition has, the more securely and permanently, and the faster, the proposition will be integrated into the coherence structure of the discourse (1984:263). But there is a cost in integrating information, be it the cost of old information or the cost of new information. The cost of integrating information works as follows, making a fine distinction between old information integration and new: the more old information chunks there are in a proposition, the more easier (and faster) the integration into the pre-existing coherence network; the more new information chunks there are in a proposition, the more complex (and slower) the task of integrating it in the pre-existing coherence network (1984:264).

Goutsos (1997:17 and 25) criticizes Givón's work (and also Tomlin, see immediately below) for being too syntactical, and also for reducing discourse topic analysis to the sum of the discourse active, continuous topics or participants. This is too simplistic a way to look at discourse theme. Nevertheless, Givón's theory provides valuable insight on the cognitive process going on in communication, and with his theory on the interaction of old and new information, he is one of the first linguists who attempted to bring cognitive linguistics, discourse pragmatics, and information structure together. He confirms the participation and importance of information structure in the cognitive processes.

6.1.2.5 Tomlin and topicality

Tomlin's approach to topic and theme is very much in line with Givón's. Tomlin's (1986:41-44) model for topicality specifies one method that has potential to identify topical information. He calls it the experimental method, "which consists in examining the allocation of attention in discourse production" (as quoted by Heimerdinger, 1999:104). Tomlin (1986:39-40) said this about thematic information:

Information in an expression is thematic to the extent the speaker assumes the hearer attends to the referent of the expression...Thematic information appears to help the hearer orient attention to specific information within the hearer's mental model.

Tomlin gives the example of ice hockey and players focusing their attention on the puck. The players are topical, the puck is the center of attention. The reference to a player that handles the puck a lot becomes 'more topical' than reference to the puck or another player without the puck.

Tomlin proposes the following hierarchy of thematic information:

Player in control of puck > puck > player without puck > other

(as quoted by Heimerdinger, 1999:105)

Like Givón, Tomlin seems to take the discourse theme to be the sum of the continuous topics and participants and how they interact.

6.1.3 Conclusions

The studies on the propositional and functional approaches to discourse have a few things in common. One of them is that there is general agreement about there being such a reality as a macrostructure, but what its real nature is, remains unclear and depends very much on the analysts point of view. In most studies the term “discourse topic” is mentioned, but as something that remains enigmatic, as is well illustrated by Brown & Yule (1983, chapter 3).

In some of the studies information structure is touched upon, especially from the perspective of Halliday or from the Prague School’s Functional Sentence perspective. On the whole the incorporation of information structure in the analysis of discourse theme (or discourse topic, as generally referred to) is superficial and not developed in depth. Possible causes of this state of affairs is that a more sophisticated theory of information structure was not yet available, and secondly, a comprehensive definition of the very complex notion of “discourse topic” remained beyond the reach of discourse theorists.

On the whole, the link between information structure and discourse theme has not been developed and clearly laid out. There are many hints to information structure, and that information structure can function as a carrier of theme, but an explicit theory of this interaction has not come to the fore.

In the next section some approaches to discourse theme and discourse topic from more recent cognitive approaches are reviewed. In these cognitive approaches, the procedural and not the structural aspects of discourse have been emphasized.

6.2 AN OVERVIEW OF COGNITIVE-PROCEDURAL APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE THEME

One of the requirements of an instrument for theme analysis in Biblical Hebrew is that it needs a cognitive linguistic base (as set out in the Introduction, chapter 1). In this section, some other general, and more recent, cognitive-linguistic positions on thematic foregrounding come under scrutiny, with the purpose of evaluating their usefulness for a model of discovering Biblical Hebrew discourse themes through the information structure.

6.2.1 Relevance Theory

One application in translation of the cognitive-pragmatic Relevance Theory as developed by Sperber & Wilson (1986) has been the work of Ernst-August Gutt. It is outside the scope of

this study to go into the details of the theory¹⁴¹. Gutt (2000¹⁴²) does not provide a full treatment of theme as such, but he raises insights from pragmatics about discourse processing that are significant to the theme model proposed in this study. Gutt's work touches on two points that are crucial to the understanding and analysis of theme, and theme's link with information structure. These two points are 1) the reality of contextual assumptions and inferences, and 2) the impact of contextual assumptions on theme formation.

First, because Relevance Theory (RT) is concerned with cognitive-pragmatic *process*, the theory has identified contextual assumptions in the mind of the reader-hearer as crucial to understanding. Not only the structure of a text, but also the cognitive process of comprehension, is part of theme analysis.

Second, contextual assumptions influence the cognitive *formation of theme*. Multiple theme interpretations are possible, depending on the contextual assumptions of the reader-hearer. The knowledge structures of the hearer-reader are therefore crucial to theme. Theme is not an inherent element of the text itself. The original author has a theme in his mind and to the best of his or her ability expresses that theme in language, but this does not guarantee that the theme is deposited into the text and will always be understood as intended. Contextual assumptions, external to the text, but activated by the text, form a part in the account of the interface of information structure and theme analysis.

Sperber & Wilson (1986a:174) argue that the semantic representation of an utterance is not the final meaning of it:

Linguistically encoded semantic representations are abstract mental structures which must be inferentially enriched before they can be taken to represent anything of interest.

In other words, to achieve relevant communication, the text as represented by the surface structure as well as by the abstract mental semantic representation of it, undergoes a cognitive process called inference where contextual assumptions as the sum of knowledge structures in the mind of the reader-hearer, are integrated with the text to produce relevant meaning.

Kintsch (1998), as discussed below (6.3.4.), argues along these lines as well.

¹⁴¹ For a more complete introduction to Relevance theory, see Blakemore (1992) and Gutt (1990, 1991, and 2000).

¹⁴² Gutt (2000) is a revision of his 1990 publication, mainly with an additional chapter on responses to various reactions to his 1990 work.

What is significant is that Relevance Theory is a theory that focuses on text reception and comprehension, as does the theory of Walter Kintsch (see 6.2.4 below). From the point of view of exegeting Biblical Hebrew texts, the exegete-analyst is actually more interested in the original *intention* of the author. In the absence of both the original author(s) and the original audience, the exegete-analyst has only the explicit text to go on, with whatever clues the text, co-text and context give about the communication situation, including the contextual assumptions needed to properly interpret the text. For this reason, the exegete is more interested in the author's intention rather than in reader-listener comprehension only. It is the mental representation of the theme that was in the mind of the author that interests the exegete-analyst. The extent to which that is recoverable would theoretically be a firmer basis to work from than to attempt theme discovery from the point of view of comprehension alone. The linguistic choices available to the author compelled him to deposit theme traces in the text. Those theme traces could easily be misread by the reader-listener, depending on his or her contextual assumptions and the inferences made by him/her. It is here that I am in full agreement with Gutt's (2000) position that a text can have a variety of theme interpretations. It is obviously very likely that the author didn't intend *all* of the possible interpretations, and so the task of the theme analyst is to reverse the comprehension process and figure out what theme traces of the author's intention can be detected in the text and context. Tracing the theme from the perspective of the cognitive process, and not from the structure only, is believed to yield results.

6.2.2 Dooley & Levinsohn

Dooley & Levinsohn, while not discussing the concept of *theme* per se, do treat discourse as a cognitive reality of a *text-world* consisting of a variety of mental representations (2001:21-24). They equate Van Dijk's (1977) macrostructures with the concept of text-world or de Beaugrande & Dressler's (1981) *textual world* (ibid.:25). Coherence is achieved through internal and external contextualisation (following Fillmore, 1981) of the text-world. Internal contextualisation is "when the hearer constructs a mental representation from the content of the text itself" (ibid.:25) and external contextualisation "is the real-world context of the text, a mental representation in which the text-world is embedded, and thus includes the speaker, hearer(s), and all circumstances that are relevant to the purpose of the text" (ibid.:25).

Dooley & Levinsohn posit the useful terms of *thematic groupings* and *thematic discontinuities* (ibid.:chapter 7). These groupings can be hierarchically embedded (ibid.:50).

Thematic groupings come with boundaries, marked by discontinuities of referents, the connectedness of conceptual chunking, and adverbial expressions that mark a change in spatio-temporal setting. Following Givón (1984), thematic groupings have continuity and unity of time, place, action, and participants, or a selection of these (ibid.:37-38). This concept of thematic grouping has been developed by Callow (1998) as well, and will be an element of any theme analysis model.

In their book, chapter 10 headed “Activation Status, Definiteness, and Referential Status” and chapter 11 headed “Discourse-Pragmatic Structuring of Sentences”, Dooley & Levinsohn deal with the notions of information structure as elaborated in chapters 2-5 of this study. Their exposition of information structure at sentence level reflects recent theory.

Although they extensively treat information structure as an element of the discourse-pragmatic analysis of texts, they do not explicitly link information structure with theme discovery analysis or say what the function of information packaging is in the larger discourse. But their description of the anchoring of discourse analysis in cognition and pragmatics is succinct and valuable.

6.2.3 Callow

Kathleen Callow (1998) has provided a fully-developed cognitive theory of theme identification in text. Callow works on the assumption that texts contain special prominence, and that this special prominence is identifiable. This special prominent part of a text is the *theme*. Next Callow develops her notion of *theme*. Theme for her is a cognitive reality of “mental structures consisting of units within units, and we associate with these units their most prominent features” (1998:229). She defines theme as the prominent core of the developing message (ibid.:230). It is necessary to note that it is not just the prominent material, but the prominent material that moves the message forward to the communicator’s goal, which is thematic material (ibid.:231). Texts also have layers of themes, sometimes following the boundaries of the “configurations” but not always, and “the lower-level themes contributing to the prominence and purposive development of the main one” (ibid.:231). But how can theme or themes be traced? Is there something in the message itself that points to this prominent, developing core? Callow proposes four sources of thematic prominence:

- 1) topic prominence
- 2) schematic prominence

- 3) relational prominence
- 4) and special prominence markers.

Each will be discussed in turn, and in some detail because of its particular relevance to this study. But before we look at Callow's ideas on these four theme-bearing features, it is necessary to understand what she means by *prominence*. In chapter 11, headed "The message as a unit", Callow discusses *special prominence* as a feature of discourse topic and discourse theme.

Some texts exhibit little or no special prominence, but this is unusual. Much more commonly the writer uses a variety of prominence devices to highlight major points,... (1998:181).

Looking for special prominence in the analysis will give us valuable clues to the writer's purpose, and be helpful to structural analysis (ibid.:182). Schema provides purposive prominence, topic and theme referential prominence, and then there is relational prominence and special prominence. Special prominence can be signaled lexically, by means of three devices: words or phrases, which express superlatives, which carry emotive overtones, and those which have some other inherent forcefulness (ibid.:182). Special prominence can be signaled rhetorically, by figures of speech, especially in expressive texts, "often signal some important point in its development", patterned arrangement of the material, like repetition, chiasm, and enveloping devices (sandwich structure), often for highlighting or contrastive purposes (ibid.:183). Special prominence is also signaled by departure from norms, such as unusual word order, sudden change to direct speech, and elements of surprise (ibid.:184). There are degrees of prominence, depending on the context, but departure from norms are more prominent than rhetorical devices, and rhetorical devices more prominent than lexical devices (ibid.:185).

1) The first of the four theme-bearing features is *schematic prominence*. About *schema* she writes that a well-formed message has development and thrust. Schema provides this purposive prominence. Her definition of *schema* is the following:

The sender communicates the message as a directional entity, developing towards a communicative goal, and the addressee is drawn along this purposive pathway as he receives the message. As the message unfolds, some elements are perceived as more central to its development than others. They are signaled as such. We are therefore dealing ... with prominent elements of a particular kind, elements that carry the purposive flow of the message and combine to form the significant patterning of the message. This we call its schema (ibid.:187-188).

There are also some messages which do not exhibit any developmental thrust. They do have organisation, but no sense of progression towards a communicative goal, no sense of expectations aroused and fulfilled. Such messages have a nonschematic structure... (ibid.:188).

The sender's desire is to create interest through tension. Tension in area of known/unknown, schema is mystery-explanation. Tension in area of will, schema = purpose-fulfillment or plan-execution. Tension in area of felt need or distress, schema = problem-resolution (ibid.:198).

When any such tensions are aroused, expectations are also aroused that those tensions will be resolved.

Thus problems are matched with their resolutions, purposes with their fulfillments, and puzzles and mysteries with their explanations (ibid.:190).

Then there are also messages with *nonschematic patterns* in texts: for example nonschematic volitional messages like directives and offers, nonschematic expressive messages like evaluative messages (those that don't develop along argument lines, but by association and description), or attitudinal messages. Nonschematic informational messages are messages either on a timeline or not on a timeline (namely presentation of new facts like in newspapers, or presentation of already-available facts like encyclopedias) (ibid.:201-7).

In summary, schemas are organizational structures through which the sender purposefully develops the referential development of a discourse, be it a mystery-explanation schema, or a problem-solution schema. Not all messages have clear schemas, and some may even have

more than one. To discover such schema-bearing elements – if present – is an important part of the theme identification procedure.

2) The second of her theme-bearing features is *topical prominence*. Like Brown & Yule, Kathleen Callow defines topic not as sentence or clause topic, but discourse topic. For her, a topic of a discourse is the central referential material.

By “topic” we mean conceptual material which is of central importance throughout a unit - what a unitary stretch of text is primarily about ... We will be using the term “topic” only in its higher-level sense of a concept that is referential, important, and extensive (1998:218).

According to her definition, topic is not an element that occurs in only one clause, nor is it a surface structure representation such as an initial noun phrase, a definite noun phrase, or a front-shifted phrase (1998:218). A sentence topic is indeed a linking device in a discourse, but a sentence topic is not always prominent, continuous or extensive.

In “He suddenly spotted a brightly-coloured snake not two feet away,” the sentence topic is “he,” but the person concerned is much less prominent than the snake. Nor is it very convincing to say that “he” is what the sentence is about – most people would say it was about a snake. But although the sentence topic cannot be correlated directly with either prominence or “aboutness” it has a crucial role in message structure. It acts as the adhesive that glues the clause content to exactly the right spot in the conceptual model of the message being constructed by the recipient (1998:218).

This analysis of Callow shows that the notion of discourse topic can easily be exchanged with an explanation of the interaction between the primary topics and secondary topics in the focus structures. In the sense that Callow uses discourse topic, she actually refers to theme as well. She argues that prominent discourse topics are part of the theme. Her definition is helpful in the sense that it pinpoints the central referential material. But the central referential material of a discourse is a very wide definition. I would argue that, by dividing her notion of the referential topic into the information structure components of topic and focus, a sharper tool becomes available. For example, where she says that “the topic functions as the major load-bearing element in the conveying and assimilation of new information” (ibid.:218), the link with information packaging is not a distant one. Topics get activated and enriched by the

content of the focus structures, exactly as she states in these words: “As a concept moves through the message, and is related to other concepts, it develops. The other concepts add colour and body to it, change our attitude to it, and enhance its significance, even though it is essentially the “same” topic which is referred to throughout” (ibid.:226). There is no such thing as a static topic. Topics develop and are enriched through changing situations in the mental text-world and through the developing schema (ibid.:226-228). The whole concept of activating cognitive frames and scripts¹⁴³ comes into play here.

3) The third category in Callow’s theme discovery model is *relational prominence*. Here she builds on previous work of Beekman, Callow, & Kopesec (1981) and other propositional semanticists. She argues that

all referential units stand in referential or presentational relations with respect to other units at the same hierarchical level...[b]ut many of the relations carry an inbuilt prominence: results are more prominent than reasons, illustrations are less prominent than what they are illustrating. In general, any proposition that operates in a nonprominent (supporting) role can be excluded from the theme (ibid.:233).

Especially where relational prominent propositions coincide with schematic prominence propositions, theme becomes quite clearly identifiable. But this point does raise questions. The problem with an approach that always demotes supporting propositions such as REASON-propositions to non-thematic, is that sometimes such apparently non-prominent material can contain crucial information for the proper interpretation of the message. It may not be syntactically prominent, but thematically it may be very prominent. It is probably true that much, or even most nonprominent supporting or background material is not theme-bearing development material in the basic referential and purposeful core of the discourse, but are there not exceptions? In addition, prominent relations may behave differently in different genres. Semantic relations are useful for understanding the structure of complex argumentation discourse, like for example the Epistles in New Testament Greek (Heins, 1996:personal communication), but they are less useful in narratives, especially in narratives in Biblical Hebrew where there is very little subordination. In poetry, as a further case in point, a wide range of thematic interpretations is possible, and more definite theme-bearing

¹⁴³ For an introduction, see Brown & Yule, 1983:236-270 and below, chapter 6.

units – if there are such in poetry – need to be identified. Although the value of relational prominence is noted and recognized, I will not develop it further in this study on the interface between information structure and discourse theme.

4) The fourth category in Callow's model of theme identification is that of *special prominence*. "Sometimes material that has a supporting role relationally is given special or marked prominence" (ibid.:234) by means of some marked syntactic configuration or by pragmatic structures where new participants are promoted. Such propositions are then signaled as part of the theme-bearing core. To an extent this category can compensate for some of the concerns raised in the paragraph above about relational prominence. I still argue that theme-bearing material can appear in unmarked propositions, even in syntactic subordinate constructions. This category of *special prominence* can be accounted for by an adequate model of information structure. Information structure with its emphasis on marked word-order and other framing and peaking devices, can fully account for this category of *special prominence* as theme-bearing. In the next chapter (chapter 7), such marked constructions indicated by a detailed information structure analysis which has thematic importance, will be discussed in more detail.

One very significant step in Callow's model is to determine all non-thematic, non-prominent core material. For example, she claims for themeline texts as non-thematic information all "intensifying and modifying support" information, all orienting material as "authorial signposts" treated as "support by orientation" (ibid.:235), as well as all "support by association" (equivalence, classification, amplification, and comparison). For timeline texts, relational non-prominent materials, as well as elements that stand apart, do not carry theme. Included here are courtesy elements, descriptive detail, and no-content phrases (ibid.:242-3).

Very much related to her theory of theme identification is the issue of segmentation or boundaries. Mental structures are nested in units in thematic groupings, which she calls *configurations*. She explains the importance of such configurations in our understanding of theme in this way:

These groupings, large and small, are what we call configurations; they provide the nesting structures that comprise the internal layers of the message, the smallest of which is itself composed of propositions..., configurations represent a cognitive reality, a part of our normal thinking processes (ibid.:209).

“Each cognitive configuration exhibits both referential and functional unity and contains both prominent and less prominent material” (ibid.:210). “Internally, a configuration is a patterned structure. It will consist either of smaller configurations or of propositions, and of these some configuration or proposition will normally be more prominent than the rest. It is to these prominent elements that we react when making a summary... We are calling the central referential material in a configuration its topic, and the central significance bearing elements its theme” (ibid.:210). The boundaries of configurations can be determined by doing a referential analysis and a purposive analysis. The referential and purposive cohesiveness is the strongest indication of where boundaries lie, but Callow also mentions some typical boundary-marking signals: particles, connectives and fixed phrases at the beginning of sentences, authorial signposts (like evaluations and summaries), structural patterns (like sandwich structures), parallelism, chiasm, and a change in one or other “major parameter of the message”, for example the change of verb tense-aspect (ibid.:214).

In spite of demoting the importance of relational prominence, Callow’s definition of theme and her model of theme analysis will be the underlying working definition of theme in this study. Her differentiation of discourse topic from theme, her notions of topical prominence and schematic prominence, as well as her (rather wide) category of special prominence features, all form part of the notion of theme as elaborated in this study and can readily be linked with a theory of information structure. She has linked the signaling of theme to some very specific linguistic features. In all of this, Callow’s cognitive and meaning-based approach to text analysis will be underlying much that will be said about discourse topic and discourse theme.

6.2.4 The Construction-Integration model of comprehension of Walter Kintsch

The book by Walter Kintsch, “Comprehension: A Paradigm for Cognition” (1998) is a monument on a life-long career of studying human communication, cognition and comprehension. As in the work of Callow, Kintsch links the macrostructure with notions of

topic and focus, although not directly but only indirectly through his notion of propositions. What makes Kintsch's work so useful is his model of comprehension called the Construction-Integration model. The pragmatic information structure is comfortably accommodated within his framework, which makes it of particular importance to our study.

Basically, Kintsch argues that both perception and understanding can each be described as a two-stage process. The one process is the construction of inaccurate mental representations by means of context-insensitive construction rules (the text-base), which is then integrated by means of constraint satisfaction via a process of spreading activation (ibid.:3-4). His model is called the Construction-Integration (CI) model.

As an introductory overview of the Construction-Integration process, the following quote (ibid.: 4-5) is important:

We start with a comprehender who has specific goals, a given background of knowledge and experience, and a given perceptual situation. The perceptual situation may, for instance, be the printed words on a page of text. We mostly skip the question of how the reader forms basic idea units from these words (though we deal extensively with word identification in a discourse context and, at least tangentially, with the question of how sentences are parsed into their constituents). Given these idea units in the form of propositions as well as the reader's goals, associated elements from the reader's long-term memory (knowledge, experience) are retrieved to form an interrelated network together with the already existing perceptual elements. Because this retrieval is entirely a bottom-up process, unguided by the larger discourse context, the nascent network will contain both relevant and irrelevant items. Spreading activation around this network until the pattern of activation stability works as a constraint-satisfaction process, selectively activating those elements that fit together or are somehow related and deactivating the rest. Hence, the name of the theory, the construction-integration (CI) theory: A context-insensitive construction process is followed by a constraint-satisfaction, or integration, process that yields if all goes well, an orderly mental structure out of initial chaos.

6.2.4.1 Summary of steps of the comprehension process

Kintsch's Construction-Integration model models comprehension with the following simultaneous and sequential steps. The terms mentioned in this summary will be explained further below.

- (1) The sequential input of sentences forms a large propositional net. This propositional input sets in process a large-scale activation of referents, the activation of concepts associated with them. The text data is processed in mental propositions in the *predicate[argument]* schema and as such forms what is called the text-base microstructure.
- (2) The macrowords and macropropositions fulfil the dominant role in the text-base. "Topic sentences", where present, also gain macroproposition status and control further processing. Primary topics with a longer span are often such macrowords or thematic concepts. The macrostructure of the text-base continues to form.
- (3) Some propositions and referents gain additional strength because of recurring reference through anaphora and through strong associations and activated links. Such propositions are macropropositions and such referents are called macrowords, all of which are important to the macrostructure of the text-base and the situation model.
- (4) As the discourse unfolds, the manifold activated referents, meaning associations, and expectations are constrained by the incoming input. The constraining operates in the field of the spatio-temporal deixis, which starts to integrate the text-base propositions into some cognitive text-world. In addition, the processing signals in the text constrain the possible semantic relations between sentences and paragraphs, and as such start to provide some form of textual structure.
- (5) Simultaneously, and almost right from the start, inferences from the knowledge of the world and other retrieval structures also constrain the activated propositions and start to integrate those into a situation model that makes sense. A variety of mental processes and knowledge structures is activated. The incoming words and propositions activate associated information, like scripts, frames, schemas, and other inferential processes. Discourse processing markers like connectives, spatio-temporal indicators, etc., all add constraints to the integration process.
- (6) The simultaneous bottom-up text-base input into the text-base macrostructure and top-down contextual processing and integration of that very macrostructure continues until a

macrostructure of the situation model becomes clear. Theme is identified and comprehension takes place.

Kintsch argues against a model that wants to force comprehension into a procrustean schema. Instead of a top-down process, he prefers a theory in which one can understand comprehension as a loosely structured, bottom-up process that is highly sensitive to context and that flexibly adjusts to shifts in the environment.

So when a reader processes a text, schema/script/frame patterns and expectations are activated, and these in turn help to integrate and constrain the meaning of the highly context-dependent, idiosyncratic, unstable, almost chaotic concepts as they are activated. This process is not one-off. Sometimes the reader needs to return to the text several times to extract the meaning.

Readers can study a text over and over again and construct very elaborate meanings for its propositions and concepts. Linguists, philosophers, and literary critics do this all the time, and most people do so at least some of the time. But most of the time, in reading or conversation, the process of meaning construction remains shallow, not just because comprehenders are inherently lazy but mostly because no more is required. A slight knowledge elaboration of a text is usually quite sufficient for whatever action is intended (ibid.:80).

Kintsch argues that the *representing* of mental structures can best be done by propositions, by the predicate-argument schema:

The study of cognition entails the need for some way of representing mental structures. The difficulty is that there are many different kinds of mental structures and that a good format for the representation of mental structures should be suitable for all kinds of structures. The basic linguistic meaning unit is the predicate-argument schema, and this schema can be used to represent other types of structures as well. It is a very general format that subsumes feature representations, semantic nets, production systems, and frame systems. However, predicate-argument units must not only represent abstract units of meaning but must also represent meaning at multiple levels, including the perceptual, action, linguistic, and abstract-symbolic levels (ibid.:47-48).

6.2.4.2 The text-base and situation model

The first comprehension process is the construction of the text base, which is then integrated into a situation model by means of a variety of cognitive processes. Kintsch defines this process as follows:

The microstructure is the local structure of the text, the sentence-by-sentence information, that goes into the textbase. It is supplemented by and integrated with long-term memory information. The macrostructure, on the other hand, “is a hierarchically ordered set of propositions representing the global structure of the text that is derived from the microstructure. It is sometimes directly signaled in a text, but often it must be inferred by the comprehender. An ideal summary is (or should be) a text expressing the macrostructure.

Thus, the textbase, with its micro- and macrostructure, is obtained from a semantic analysis of a text and its rhetorical structure, as the author of the text intended it. It is the sort of analysis linguists and semanticists perform. The mental representation of a text a reader constructs includes the textbase (not necessarily complete or veridical) plus varying amounts of knowledge elaborations and knowledge-based interpretations of the text -the situation model. Neither the micro- nor the macrostructure of the situation model is necessarily the same as the micro- and macrostructure of the textbase, for the reader may deviate from the author's design and restructure a text both locally and globally according to his or her own knowledge and beliefs (ibid.:50).

In this model mental representations are formed by weak production rules that yield disorderly, redundant, and even contradictory output. However, this output undergoes a process of integration, which results in a well-structured mental representation (ibid.:94-95).

What is of particular importance from his theory here is his concept of the macrostructure. Kintsch does not use the term “theme”, but his definition of the macrostructure is very much in line with our definition of theme as the purposive and developing prominent core of a discourse.

6.2.4.3 *The macrostructure*

Kintsch argues that macrostructure and its psychological reality is a concept that has “overwhelming evidence” (e.g., van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). This is how Kintsch describes the nature and function of macrostructures:

Macrostructures thus represent the global organisation of a text. As such, they are linguistic structures, like the phrase structure of a sentence (ibid.:67).

Texts have a global as well as a local structure. The microstructure consists of the complex propositions that comprise the text and their interrelationships.

The macrostructure organizes the propositions of the microstructure hierarchically. It consists of macropropositions and their hierarchical relations. Macropropositions may or may not be expressed explicitly in the text (ibid.:65-66).

Macrostructures are crucial for comprehension and remembering a story or message, “the gist of a text - expressed formally by the macrostructure”:

A well-organized macrostructure is crucial for understanding and remembering a text. Texts that are locally coherent but that contain global inconsistencies are read more slowly and remembered less well (Albrecht, O’Brien, Mason & Myers, 1995; Albrecht & O’Brien, 1993) (ibid.:181).

6.2.4.4 *Macrostructure formation*

Macrostructure formation is an integral part of normal text comprehension. Readers quickly pick up topic sentences. However, there also “exists good experimental data to support the stronger claim that that macrostructure formation occurs as an integral part of comprehension” (ibid.:174). If there are good retrieval structures, that is, the information in focus can readily be integrated with the listener-readers’ knowledge of the world, the macropropositions being constructed on the basis of the topic sentence(s). If there are no topic sentence(s), then macropropositions are inferred.

The macrowords¹⁴⁴ in experiments are recognized faster¹⁴⁵ than thematically related non-macrowords (ibid.:175). “Albrecht & O’Brien (1991) found that macrorelevant, central

¹⁴⁴ About the identification of word meanings, Kintsch argues that the construction of word meanings in the text base, in the case of homographs, is that all possible meanings, literal and figurative, are activated at the same time:

concepts were more rapidly recognized than peripheral concepts” (ibid.:175)¹⁴⁶. This notion of macrowords¹⁴⁷, words with a global span, is crucial to text comprehension in Kintsch’s model, and also in the interface between information structure and theme that we will propose in the next chapter. Once again, these macrowords interface with the information structure.

Topic shifts are significant as well in that they include some extra cognitive processing¹⁴⁸, and to facilitate this processing effort, these shifts are often marked. Once again the importance of a theory that incorporates information structure notions is evident.

The generation of macrostructures can be considered as some kind of inference – “an inference that does not add information to the text but that reduces information” (ibid.:176; Kintsch, 1993). In selecting a macroproposition, micropropositions are deleted, and in forming a generalisation or construction, several micropropositions are replaced by an appropriate macroproposition.” Macrostructure construction is largely automatic when dealing with familiar domains.

6.2.4.5 Signaling the macrostructure in the text

Kintsch argues that there are linguistic hints in the text of the macrostructure:

[T]here are, however, also rich signals in the texts themselves that enable the formation of macrostructures. These may be structural signals, such as titles, initial topic sentences, summary statements, and the like, as well as a great variety of syntactic and semantic signals that are mainly used to indicate local importance in a discourse but that may achieve macrorelevance through cumulative inference (ibid.:67).

“The alternative theory, suggested by the CI model as well as by modular conceptions of cognition (Fodor, 1983), maintains that all meanings of a homograph are accessed initially but that the contextually appropriate meaning wins out before any of the alternate meanings reach consciousness....[D]espite this confusion (of theories (SF)), the issue seems to be settled today: Initial lexical access does appear to be exhaustive and context independent, at least for homographs with two balanced meanings” (ibid.:128-129).

¹⁴⁵ Word meanings are fixed between 300 and 350 ms, for topic inferences 500 to 750 ms (ibid.:132-133).

¹⁴⁶ In a study by Long, Orpy, and Seely (1994), they found that “appropriate topic words were responded to significantly faster than inappropriate topic words” (ibid.:132).

¹⁴⁷ “[G]lobally relevant inference words corresponding to the theme of the sentence do become activated after a certain time even in the absence of any local associations (ibid.:131).

¹⁴⁸ Lorch, Lorch, and Matthews (1985) found that after major topic shifts sentences required 300ms more reading time than after a minor shift. “However, there were no shift effects on sentence reading times when the sentences were presented in a disorganized fashion, thus preventing readers from generating an orderly macrostructure” (ibid.:176). This finding is proof that marked information structures like sentence focus structures will help the reader.

The elements that Kintsch proposes that are important for macrostructure formation, are all related to the information structure as discussed in this study, because “[t]ext elements that have been repeatedly signaled to be of local importance become important for the macrostructure” (ibid.:68). These signals are syntactic signals and semantic signals, as well as textual schemas¹⁴⁹. These textual signals are where the interface between information structure and the cognitive processing of discourse macrostructures becomes evident:

(1) Syntactic signals for discourse relevance include phonetic stress, cleft sentences, passives, the clause structure of sentences, and other foregrounding and topicalisation devices.

*(2) Semantic signals in a text include topic change markers (such as change in time or place, introduction of new participants, change of perspective, and so on) and various cues that indicate local coherence or a break thereof that subjects can use either to maintain or to change their current **macrohypothesis** (Givón, 1995; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983).*

*(3) Textual schemas¹⁵⁰, what van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) have called the **rhetorical superstructures**, also play an important role in the formation of macrostructures. Readers know that particular text types tend to be organized in certain ways and employ this knowledge to construct schema-based macrostructures. Thus, narratives in our culture have a basic exposition-complication-resolution structure, with the possibility of embedding. By assigning macropropositions to these schematic categories, readers can simplify for themselves the task of deriving the overall organisation of a story. ... (Bartlett, 1932; Kintsch & Greene, 1978) (ibid.:67-68).*

But if this syntactic and semantic signaling of the macrostructure is overdone and excessive, or not associated with the right thematic words or propositions, it can lead to serious distortions of the meaning of a text (ibid.:181)¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁹ Textual schemas or rhetorical superstructures are in general the same as what Callow (1998) termed as “schemas” and “schematic prominence.”

¹⁵⁰ Kintsch’s textual schemas are similar to the schemas of Callow (1998).

¹⁵¹ Otero & Kintsch (1992) have shown how certain pathological interpretations of texts containing an outright contradiction can arise as a consequence of such an overemphasis on the macrostructure of the text” (ibid.:181).

Experiments show that texts with *topic sentences* (theme statements, SJF) are better and more quickly understood. Topic sentences were read more slowly, but testees wrote better summaries. “Linguistic marking not only allowed readers to process the texts faster, but also helped them to write better summaries. Topic marking thus appears to be a powerful means for facilitating macroprocessing” (ibid.:179). Such topic sentences (with sentence focus structure, for instance) are examples of theme traces, clearly marked deposits of the theme in a discourse. “Indeed, the language makes available a variety of more subtle means to signal whether we are continuing with a topic or shifting to a new one, and speakers and writers use these means liberally. One technique used to signal a topic shift is to overspecify anaphora” (ibid.:179), normally by relexicalizing primary topics in Biblical Hebrew (cf. chapter 3 in this study, and Levinsohn, 2002:132).

On the other hand, Kintsch also said that one can over-represent the situation model in the text form. Too many markers are not at all helpful. This statement is of particular importance in translation: too many theme traces in the translation can even distort the correct processing of the theme.

[T]he enormous importance of macroprocesses for text understanding: how easy a text is, how well readers understand it, how well they can remember it, what they learn from it – all this is strongly dependent on a successful macrostructure. Local comprehension problems may be a nuisance, but problems at the macrolevel tend to be a disaster (ibid.:180).

As seen above, in macrostructure formation, three things are key to our thesis of theme analysis: (1) topic sentences, (2) macrowords, and (3) the strengthening of activated referents by means of repetition and argument overlap, that is, the recurring use of these referents in argument-predicate propositions. All these three have a direct link with information structure, and will be foundational to the notion of theme analysis by means of information structure (cf. chapter 7). Finally, the model of Kintsch is the most explicit and the most sophisticated model where information structure notions like topic and focus play a crucial role. His CI theory confirms that there are linguistic clues in the text that assist the reader-hearer in constructing a macrostructure. That the clues he mentions are related to the information structure, is also significant for the purposes of this study.

6.2.5 Wallace Chafe and his model of discourse topic, activation, and consciousness

Wallace Chafe made a contribution to discourse and discourse theme research from an explicit cognitive perspective. We have noted some of his insights in relation to cognition, activation and topic and focus (1994, chapters 2 and 4). As seen there, Chafe's notions of active, semi-active, and inactive referents have influenced the thinking of Lambrecht who applied these concepts to information structure and refined them (1994:93-94). The fact that Lambrecht did that, confirms the hypothesis that there is indeed a link between information structure and discourse theme. But Chafe may have come closest to identifying this intuitive link, and the same 1994 work merits our attention.

In a chapter entitled "Discourse topics" (Chafe, 1994:120-136), he uses *topic* or *discourse topic* in the sense of *topic of a paragraph*, like Brown & Yule (1983:71-106). For him, discourse topics are aggregates of coherently related events, states, and referents; aggregates of semiactive information. In some form these events, states, and referents are held together in the speaker's semiactive consciousness (ibid.:121). Discourse topics segment a conversation into larger chunks than intonation units (ibid.:135). Something is a discourse topic when it has the quality of being interesting (ibid.:121-122), and topics develop through elicitation (dialogue) (ibid.:123-127) or when self-sustaining, through narratives (ibid.:127-132).

In a subsequent chapter entitled "Topic hierarchies and sentences" (ibid.:137-145), Chafe argues that "topics within a conversation show a hierarchical organization, with larger topics embracing smaller ones" (ibid.:137). He distinguishes between basic-level topics and supertopics:

1. "Basic-level topics are often linked within more inclusive supertopics, the latter functioning as unifying ideas that persist in semiactive consciousness through longer stretches of conversation, triggering first one narrative and then another" (ibid.:145).
2. "Supertopics achieve their coherence from the presence of some general orientation (...), which extends through and supports a series of basic-level topics, but exhibit no unifying schema of their own. It is possible, too, that basic-level topics represent the largest amount of information that can be held in semiactive consciousness at once" (ibid.:138).

The level of organisation below the basic-level topic is the sentence: "identifiable conceptual units that are smaller than those expressed in basic-level topics, but larger than intonation

units” (ibid.:139). Sentences as units are important cognitively, because both prosody and syntax converge on its delimitation (ibid.:139-140). So, below the basic-level topics are “coherences of a special sort, verbalized as sentences, which can be regarded as superfoci of consciousness. They bring together chunks of information too large to be accommodated within a single focus, often intermediate in comprehensiveness between a single focus and a basic-level topic” (ibid.:145). Sentences are recognizable in part by sentence-final prosody, and in part by syntactic completeness (ibid.:145). Chafe also calls sentences *centers of interest*: “[S]entence boundaries appear when a speaker judges, during a particular telling, that a coherent center of interest has been verbalized at that point” (ibid.:145). A super focus is too large to be embraced in a single focus, and can therefore be dealt with only by allowing a series of more limited foci to play across it, fully activating first one part and then another.” It is what he calls a center of interest.

Summarizing, he asserts that *intonation units* verbalize the content of active consciousness, that basic-level *topics* verbalize the content of semiactive consciousness”, and that sentences verbalize superfoci of consciousness, as super-intonation units. One can add that supertopics are the coherent thread of a few basic-level topics. He then draws a line to narrative¹⁵².

The main contribution from Chafe is his definition that discourse topic (the same as our discourse theme) is semiactive. Discourse topic is a cognitive reality, as also asserted by Callow (1998) and Kintsch (1998). Chafe’s topic hierarchy is insightful with the link between information structure and discourse topic (or theme) revealing. As consciousness and activation move through a discourse, the smallest unit is the *intonation unit*, which only has one newsworthy idea at a time. In chapter 4 we have seen how the focus structure, with its focus peak, forms one such *intonation unit*. More than one such intonation unit forms a sentence, a center of interest with its superfocus. A few sentences are then held together by the semiactive, basic-level (discourse) topic. Higher up, such basic-level topics are held together by a supertopic, which can be of a complex nature. What Chafe is saying here is very

¹⁵² “Self-sustaining topics, those that do not require interaction for their development, typically take the form of narratives” (ibid.:135). Narrations can sometimes have an initial summary, but normally begin with “an orientation that provides information essential to a well-ordered consciousness, including location in space and time, the identification of one or more protagonists, and specification of an ongoing normal activity” (ibid.:135). Then follows a complication, a climax (“in conflict with expectations”) and the denouement “that may begin with reactions by other parties to the unexpectedness, continuing with a series of events and states that return consciousness to a new normalcy. There may be a coda that includes comments from an external perspective” (ibid.:135-136). “Narratives that are longer and more complex (...) may contain more than a single topic, since a longer narrative may overflow the bounds of semiactive consciousness. In such a case each basic-level topic within the larger narrative constitutes an included *episode* of which the longer narrative is constructed” (ibid.:138).

much the same as the concept proposed for focus peak and focus content (cf. discussions in chapter 5 and 7 (7.5.2)). By isolating the primary and secondary topics (as defined in chapters 2 and 3), and identifying the focus structures as intonation units of a sentence, the analyst can do two things: (1) identify all the focus peaks of the focus structures, and (2) make inferences of the semantic centers of interest, based on the focus peaks and focus structures of all the respective intonation units. This idea will be developed in chapter 9 when focus peaking and focus content (see introduction of the term in chapter 7) as a means to trace discourse theme will be discussed.

6.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we first of all reviewed several semantic discourse analysis models from the seventies and eighties. Van Dijk's (1977, 1980) model of macrostructures, with the processing rules he proposed, has made its way in slightly modified form into Kintsch's CI model. Van Dijk's concept of macrostructures is underlying to our understanding of discourse theme. On the whole, the propositional and functional approaches to the study of theme has not fully incorporated the notions of cognition and pragmatic information structure analysis, in spite of the fact that information packaging has never been far from the surface in those studies.

Callow's, Kintsch's, and Chafe's models are all very recent developments, and the most relevant for our purposes, because of their emphasis on finding the linguistic clues in the text of the mental macrostructure. They agree that theme is a cognitive representation, with a varying degree of signals to it in the text. But as the models of Kintsch, Callow and Chafe show, comprehension is a complex process. Current theory has not developed beyond very short chunks of discourse. Our understanding of the nature of discourse theme is still in its early stages, and an exact definition of what theme is remains problematic. The review above has shown that there is no agreement on the exact nature of theme, and that theme remains a pre-theoretic and enigmatic, though intuitively very real, concept.

Building on the foundations of Callow, Kintsch, and Chafe, we will attempt in the next chapter a working definition of discourse theme from a cognitive perspective, and then look at what appears in the surface text that points to the theme (or themes). The contribution of Callow (1998) to theme is a comprehensive attempt to identify the properties or signals in texts that carry prominent and thematic material. The prominent core of a discourse consists

of a prominent discourse topic, prominent schemas, prominent relations, and special prominence. The contribution of Kintsch (1998) to our study of discourse theme is the model of the cognitive macrostructure of theme. His theory will not be extensively applied, but his notions of macrostructure, text-base and situation model will be underlying concepts. Chafe's contribution to our understanding of discourse theme is his cognitive approach to the spreading consciousness. His hierarchy of discourse theme as consisting of supertopics, basic-level topics, sentence superfoci as centers of interest, as well as intonation units as the smallest units of focus is helpful.

On the whole, the link between information structure (with its notions of topic and focus) and discourse theme has not been developed and clearly laid out. The work on theme as reviewed above, contains many hints to information structure, and that information structure functions as a carrier of theme, but an explicit theory of this interaction has not come to the fore. The hypothesis to be verified is that information structure, and especially information structures as expressed in marked word-orders, will provide this link between the cognitive discourse theme and the sentence structure of the text.

These notions will now be further developed in the next chapters.

Chapter 7

FROM INFORMATION STRUCTURE TO DISCOURSE THEME

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was an overview of theoretical Thematics, with the goal of providing a foundation for an approach to theme analysis in Biblical Hebrew. The goal of this chapter is to elaborate the link between information structure and discourse themes.

The theories of Callow, Chafe, and Kintsch will be synthesized in order to arrive at a workable definition of discourse theme. The next step will then be to argue that especially marked structures have a particular importance in determining theme boundaries and tracing theme developments. Understanding the patterns of marked language provides the discourse analyst with some clues to the theme. Information structure is not the only clue to discovering theme, but it is believed to be a significant one. Information structure will give the analyst some objective perspectives on discourse during an often rather subjective and intuitive process.

Before this definition of theme can be presented, and the interface of theme with information structure in Biblical Hebrew developed, it is necessary, first of all, to provide an overview of the literature on discourse theme in Biblical Hebrew (7.1). This will be followed by a presentation of some preliminary assumptions about text and theme, followed by a listing of some requirements and features for a responsible account of the information structure–theme interface (7.2). Before the interface between information structure and theme is discussed, it is necessary to further define *theme* (7.3). The first step towards the interface with theme is showing in what respect the marked information structures in Biblical Hebrew are *theme carriers* or, to use the preferred term, *theme traces*. This section is an elaboration of all the aspects of information structure in Biblical Hebrew that potentially have thematic import (7.4). The last section in this chapter is a description of the notions of discourse topic and discourse focus (7.5). Information structure topic categories and discourse topic is what the

next chapter (chapter 8) is about, followed by information structure focus categories and discourse focus in chapter 9.

7.2 AN OVERVIEW OF STUDIES OF DISCOURSE THEME IN BIBLICAL HEBREW

As old as the study and interpretation of Hebrew Old Testament is, theme analysis has until the 1980's had a relatively low prominence in commentaries and other works. Theme analysis was generally done with controlled intuition. It was only since the structural discourse analysis of the seventies that structural and rhetorical patterns were studied more seriously. It was with the publication of the work of Robert Longacre (for example, 1979), that Hebrew discourse and theme was studied from a more functional syntactic approach. Longacre's work (1989a and 1989b especially), and later studies by Heimerdinger (1999) and Rosenbaum (1997), will be briefly discussed below. Other discourse approaches to Biblical Hebrew, like that of Bergen (1994), will not be discussed due to the lack of reference to theme as understood in this study.

7.2.1 Robert Longacre

Longacre's story grammar approach to Biblical narratives, as exemplified by his article on the Flood (Longacre, 1979) and especially his book "Joseph. A Story of Divine Providence" (1989a), has been one of the early studies in Biblical Hebrew discourse incorporating modern linguistic approaches. Not that there has been no criticism of his approach. Heimerdinger (1999, especially Chapter 2) has extensively criticized his dependence on plot structure and grammatico-syntactic devices for foregrounding and backgrounding. Bailey & Levinsohn (1992) also differ from Longacre on the function of preverbal elements in Biblical Hebrew.

By means of a brief review, Longacre approached Biblical Hebrew discourse from a syntactic-semantic perspective (1989a:13-19). Longacre does not specifically work with the pragmatic notions of topic and focus in an information structure framework, but some of his instruments can be indirectly related to some of the issues important to information packaging.

Longacre did employ the term of *macrostructure*, following Van Dijk (1977), as the "overall meaning and plan" of text. He defines the macrostructure as the germinal idea ("or closely related complex of germinal ideas"), or the "main thrust and intent of the text" (1989a:17).

Macrostructures provide explanatory control in a story, when received, but this same control was at work in its composition:

A story must be selective as to what it elaborates if it is to be effective.

Macrostructure analysis attempts to make explicit how the overall plan and global purpose of a story exercise a selective control on the incidents that are included... (ibid.:42).

He distinguishes two levels of macrostructure, namely the foregrounded¹⁵³ macrostructure given in the text and the backgrounded macrostructure as broader concerns deduced from the story in its context. In addition, sometimes a “story contains its own interpretative summary” (ibid.:42).

In *Joseph* (Longacre, 1989a) he operates with the term *macrostructure*, the foregrounded macrostructure¹⁵⁴ pinpointed as the operation of divine providence in the life of Joseph and in the family of Jacob as a whole.

Unfortunately Longacre did not overtly apply Van Dijk’s full model of macrostructures. Van Dijk’s rules of determining the macrostructure of texts, for example his three deletion rules (1977:143-148), were summarized by Longacre (1989a:17), but they did not feature prominently in his work on *Joseph*. In a different work (Longacre, 1979) he did apply Van Dijk’s reduction rules to deleting certain verbs from the wayyiqtol-chain to arrive at the macrostructure. But limiting the application of these reduction rules to only the wayyiqtol chain, while not taking into consideration the direct quotations and dialogue, is unfortunate. This approach results in nothing more than a “summary” of the action line itself, which is not necessarily the same as the discourse theme. The thematic development cannot effectively be traced this way, just because too much of the discourse theme is concentrated in the dialogues.

There are four specific areas that are covered in his model that are of particular importance to the goals of this chapter on Biblical Hebrew thematics, and will be briefly presented and discussed:

¹⁵³ His use of the terms foregrounded and backgrounded here is not directly related to his semantico-syntactic foregrounding and backgrounding as exemplified by verb ranking (to be discussed below).

¹⁵⁴ The five main macrostructural elements in *Joseph* are in the two divine providences, namely (1) the intent of Joseph’s brothers to harm him, and (2) the selling into Egypt, the dominant element, (3) which is the divine intent to make Joseph a saviour from starvation (...), with the final the result (4) the salvation of Joseph’s family and others in the face of (5) the severity of the famine.

(1) *Plot structure* is central to his model of discourse analysis. “Texts of any sort typically have a cumulative development. The plot of a story moves towards climax and resolution” (1989a:18). This cumulative development “manifests itself in certain grammatico-lexical characteristics” (ibid.:18). He specifies the following plot structure categories: (1) inciting incident/setting, (2) pre-peak, (3) peak, (4) post-peak and (5) denouement. He argues that for each of these categories, there is specific morphosyntactic signaling in the text. Often the transition between one incident and another is marked in the text. One is the introduction and re-introduction of participants, for example the *casus pendens* after a wayehi in Genesis 39.1 to reintroduce the main participant Joseph (ibid.:26). Peaks in the Joseph story are often marked by wayehi constructions, the repetition of the full proper name of the active participant, and a significant amount of descriptive detail to slow down the narration (ibid.:30).

(2) *Storyline grammar* and the related notion of *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* is another central instrument of his model. In relation to the macrostructure, he tends to concentrate on action continuity only, as marked by the chains of wayyiqtol-verbs. Wayyiqtol-chains carry the storyline forward, but, as such, also mark the foregrounded storyline. His theory has been criticized by Heimerdinger¹⁵⁵ (1999: 75-77) and Van der Merwe (2000). I agree with Heimerdinger that it is true that theme cannot be equated with storyline in narratives. Not everything in the storyline is thematic¹⁵⁶. There are backgrounded storylines, which Longacre correctly defines as secondary storylines with its own morphosyntactic marking in some languages (cf. Longacre (1989b, 1992:215-216), for a more extensive description of his position). To him, only foregrounded and frontgrounded¹⁵⁷ storylines are traces of the theme.

In summary then, his theory allows for three levels of foregrounded storylines, over and above the backgrounding. Longacre’s notions of secondary storyline as well as augmented primary storyline, over and above the primary storyline, are nevertheless very significant. A model for theme analysis in Biblical Hebrew needs to take *grounding* into account in

¹⁵⁵ Heimerdinger argues convincingly – against Longacre – that the NP+qatal configuration cannot signal backgrounding in all cases. NP+qatal constructions are event reporting, so actually foregrounded and thematic (1999:93-98). The non-topic event-reporting or presentational sentences are always sentences with scope and thematic impact.

¹⁵⁶ This concept will be elaborated in Chapter 6 where it will be shown that narrative discourse has different levels of thematicity, and that some secondary storylines are not thematic in the sense of carrying the development of the theme forward.

¹⁵⁷ Frontgrounding is a term used by Stanley Porter (1992) in his explanation of word-order in Koine Greek.

some form or another, and Longacre's position is seminal. But his theory lacks integration with information structure notions, and as such limits its usefulness for our purposes.

- (3) His notion of *participant reference*. Participant identification is the third area of interest in Longacre's model, and it is here especially that overlap with the theory of information structure is evident. He argues that Biblical Hebrew "is extremely circumspect in the identification of new participants (especially minor ones) who are brought into the narrative" (1989a:31). Reference in Biblical Hebrew is achieved through nouns and proper names plus or minus qualifiers, surrogate nouns as substitutes, pronominal elements, independent and affixed, as well as null or zero reference (ibid.:141-142). Notice here the overlap with the concepts of topic promotion and topic maintenance as developed in chapter 3 and especially in chapter 8. In the *Joseph* story, Longacre argues, the central participant Joseph is frequently referred to by full proper name, maintained by pronominal anaphoric reference, but at "crucial transitions" the proper name is relexicalized (ibid.:145). Furthermore, "[i]n spite of the overwhelming social dominance of Pharaoh, the centrality of Joseph to the whole narrative is maintained by persistent use of his name" (ibid.:146). He distinguishes the following participant reference operations: introduction into the story, integration as central, tracking, reinstatement, indication of confrontation, marking local contrastive status, and narrator evaluation (ibid.:143). The name of the thematic participant, here Joseph, often brackets the paragraph (ibid.:148), brackets "the span wherein he is a local theme" (ibid.:152). Special procedures to mark Pharaoh, back-referenced participants, oblique objects, off-line participants, etc., have all been signaled in the Joseph story as well (cf. ibid.150-157).
- (4) His categorizing of *paragraph types* is novel and indeed very useful in the discourse analysis of Biblical Hebrew. He distinguishes the narrative sequence paragraph, and has for direct speech the following categories: simple dialogue paragraphs (subdivided in simple resolved and simple unresolved dialogue paragraphs), complex and compound dialogue paragraphs. Other interactional paragraphs are execution paragraphs and stimulus-response paragraphs (ibid.:186-202).

Some of his paragraph types have a schema structure, like for example his simple resolved dialogue paragraphs, which have paired schemas, as seen in question-answer, proposal-response, and remark-evaluation paragraphs (ibid.:189).

In summary, in spite of lacking a more cognitive pragmatic approach, Robert Longacre's contribution is in the area of analyzing Biblical Hebrew discourse from a discourse-syntax approach. He worked within a tagmemic and structural framework, with due focus on the bottom-up syntactic approach. His theme discovery approach is to the discovery of the themeline or storyline (in narratives), marked grammatically. The themeline and plotline together give the analyst access to the macrostructure or theme.

7.2.2 Heimerdinger's notion of 'foregrounding'

Heimerdinger's criticism of Longacre, as mentioned above, is concentrated on Longacre's semantic-syntactic approach to the storyline in narratives, focusing on the marking of the storyline by certain verb forms. Heimerdinger expressed criticism of Longacre's plot in Biblical Hebrew as a carrier of theme, as well as Longacre's position of the foregrounding of wayyiqtol-clauses¹⁵⁸. In his review of Heimerdinger's book, Van der Merwe (2000:575) points to the fact that "[t]he primary aim of his (Heimerdinger's) study is to illustrate that information in Biblical Hebrew narratives is not merely structured according to the dichotomy of foreground/background that correlates with the formal structures wayyiqtol/(we)-x-qatal or weqatal/(we)-x-yiqtol respectively. What happens in communicating a narrative is more complicated and a variety of linguistic devices may be involved."

Heimerdinger (1999:66, footnote 23) defines *theme* in the following way:

A theme is a more abstract and more general unit than a motif. As such a theme might comprise of several motifs. A theme of the story of Jacob is deception. But 'stones' are a motif of the same story.

Theme is not the same as motif. Heimerdinger (1999:66, footnote 22) defines *motif* in the following way:

A motif is a small and precise element in a story or tale which persists and is recurrent with its specific features in the literary or folkloric tradition of a particular group.

Heimerdinger links the concept of theme to foregrounding. To him, "the concept of 'foregrounding' is pivotal: 'Foregrounding, or the assignment of saliency, may be broadly

¹⁵⁸ Against Longacre, wayyiqtol clauses carry topics in varying degrees of topicality, not only the ones with saliency (cf. *ibid.*:126).

compared to a paintbrush operation resulting in some of the narrative material brought to the attention of the reader' (Heimerdinger, 1999:12). For the purposes of foregrounding, the linear ordering of constituents may be used, as well as a range of devices that linguists normally relegate to the domain of stylistics" (Van der Merwe, 2000:575).

In addition to the information structure at clause level, Heimerdinger also developed the idea of *foregrounding mechanisms*. One of these mechanisms is the flaunting of norms/standards in communication. By means of marked constructions, for example constructions that are unusual. The unexpectedness, that which is contrary to hearer's expectation, or unpredictable concerning what is coming next, contributes to foregrounding. In addition, foregrounding is linked to broad expectations, with these expectations in turn activated by broad knowledge structures – frames, schemas, scripts, and plans (ibid.: chapter 6).

According to Heimerdinger, foregrounding is also indicated by *evaluation*. He distinguishes between external and internal evaluation devices. External evaluation is by the author and narrator "The author steps outside the story to speak more directly to the reader" (ibid.:243-245). Examples quoted are Genesis 25.34 and 2 Kings 22.2. Internal evaluation can have global scope or local scope. Internal evaluation with global scope has the repetition of key words (as in 1 Kings 11.26-14.20), and as a concealed strategy, participants' view (as in 1 Samuel 24.17-18; 18.28; and 2 Samuel 3.37). Internal evaluation with local scope employs evaluative vocabulary in repetitions (as in 2 Samuel 13.15), or as intensifiers¹⁵⁹ and quantifiers (like 'greatly', 'all', etc.), comparators (like superlatives, metaphors, similes, as in 2 Samuel 11.9-10), correlatives (progressive; appended particles, etc), and explicatives (subordinate clauses that specify reason, for example).

While I am in full agreement with the fact that evaluatives and other unexpected foregrounding mechanisms indeed provide evidence for theme, I find it unfortunate in Heimerdinger's approach to foregrounding (and by implication, theme analysis) that he notices all the correct starting points, without following through to integrate information structure with an integrated theory of foregrounding. He develops an elaborate description of information structure in Biblical Hebrew (chapters 4 and 5), but doesn't look there in depth for answers to foregrounding. For example, as Van der Merwe correctly observed, "[i]n his endeavor to identify linguistic devices that may be used to manipulate foregrounding

¹⁵⁹ Heimerdinger calls evaluations like intensifiers foregrounded, while Callow (1998) interprets them as non-thematic.

Heimerdinger considers the pragmatic articulation that can be expressed at clause-level to be the most justifiable place to start” (ibid.:2000:575). Not that he fails to take topicality into consideration at all in his analysis of foregrounding¹⁶⁰. One very significant way of doing that is Heimerdinger’s approach of counting the nominal and pronominal references to activated referents. Such a counting provides evidence for the prominence of certain topics, *topical peaks* as he called them (Heimerdinger, 1999:127). If the counting of active topics can be differentiated between primary topics and secondary topics, as defined in chapter 3, an even clearer picture of the topicality of a sequence of sentences emerges. Van der Merwe raises an important question to Heimerdinger’s counting of topics:

These views (counting of active topics, SJF) on topicality are indeed novel when applied to BH. However, it is not clear to me how one can verify that a participant that is formally identified as a ‘topical peak’ contributes more directly to the goal of a story than any other possible contributing factor. The question also arises, what factors do determine the goal of a Biblical Hebrew story? (Van der Merwe, 2000:576).

In spite of Heimerdinger’s ground-breaking application of information structure theory to the Biblical Hebrew text of the Old Testament, a wider theory is needed. In the end, Van der Merwe has this to say of the overall value of Heimerdinger’s work:

It (Heimerdinger’s 1999 work) represents a valuable overview of the effects of some of the useful insights recent developments in pragmatics have had for the understanding of Biblical Hebrew narrative texts. It demonstrates clearly that the study of texts beyond the boundaries of sentence is emerging from the two-dimensional pioneering efforts of Longacre and are venturing into the multifaceted fields of pragmatics and cognitive linguistics (ibid.: 578).

¹⁶⁰ The following three quotes show how much was he concerned with topic: “Topical importance is the central dimension of topicality and the title provides a good indication as to which entities are the main topical ones in the story” (ibid.:108). “But computation will show it in a more precise way. Levels of topical importance can be determined by examining semantic roles. Actor/agent role more dominant, and when it coincides with an important Undergoer, gains even more prominence” (ibid.:116-117). “A topic is salient in terms of attention, the topic who is in ‘control’ ” (1999:126). “One may conclude that the grammatical encoding of topical entities is a significant indicator of topical importance in Old Hebrew narrative” (1999:116).

7.2.3 Rosenbaum's 'foregrounding'

Rosenbaum (1997) deals with information structure in depth from the perspective of Functional Grammar of Simon Dik (see Chapter 2 for the discussion of topic and focus in Isaiah). Rosenbaum connects thematic foregrounding with *defamiliar* communication:

In sum, language gravitates toward habitual or familiar patterns in order to ease communication. However, linguists have noticed that not all language is familiarizing. In fact, some language intrudes on (and even interferes with) the communicative process by making language itself prominent. This has been called defamiliarisation or foregrounding (Rosenbaum, 1997:149).

Virtually all language contains some defamiliarization, but the language which is most in the foreground is identified as "poetry." In other words, marked constructions are defamiliar and therefore foregrounded. Languages develop a variety of (de)familiar patterns which serve the (poetic) function of foregrounding, and alert the reader/hearer that this is 'foreground language' (ibid.:151). Such defamiliar devices are inversion, insertion, parallelism, chiasm, etc. Rosenbaum's idea of looking for defamiliar structures as carriers of theme is in agreement with the hypothesis of this study that marked information structures form part of the so-called theme traces. The fact that this is particularly true in poetic material needs to be underlined. Defamiliar structures will be shown as one of the primary theme marking mechanisms. But marked structures do not always and automatically carry thematic material. In many Biblical Hebrew narratives, unmarked wayyiqtol clauses often carry the theme. A wider, more cognitive-orientated theory is needed to account for those "unmarked" processes.

These reviews of Longacre, Heimerdinger, and Rosenbaum confirm the enigmatic nature of theme, and that approaching discourse topic or discourse theme from a purely syntactic or even semantic perspective is insightful, though not fully satisfactory. A more cognitive-pragmatic approach is called for, and it is here that the models of Callow, Kintsch, Chafe, and Goutsos (1997, cf. discussion below, 7. 5.2) prove to be valuable.

7.3 THEME: PRELIMINARY ASSUMPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Before we can proceed with a working definition of discourse theme and the interaction between discourse theme and information structure, it is necessary to briefly highlight some preliminary assumptions about texts that are foundational to theme analysis. With the preceding review of some recent studies in Biblical Hebrew "foregrounding" and theme, and

on the basis of the review of Thematics in chapter 6, we can make some general, underlying statements about discourse or text:

1. A text has *cohesion*. Texts have surface-level, grammatical marking of the links and coherence relationships. Such cohesion markers can be anaphora, lexical repetition, tense-aspect continuity, frame-setting devices, structural patterning like inclusion and chiasm, and more.
2. A text has *coherence*. In order to communicate effectively, texts need to integrate mental representations in such a way that communication is coherent.
3. A text is *hierarchical*. Textual or thematic groupings are nested or embedded in higher level groupings (Callow, 1998; Dooley & Levinsohn, 2001).
4. A text has levels of *grounding*. Some discrimination of prominence is evident. Both foregrounded and backgrounded information is present in texts, in varying degrees. Callow's (1998) themes, Van Dijk's (1977) macrostructures, Longacre's (1989) different levels of storyline, Heimerdinger's (1999) and Rosenbaum's (1997) foregrounding, and Kintsch's (1998) macrostructures, all point to some discrimination of information (cf. chapter 6).
5. A text has *theme* and a macrostructure. It needs to have a theme or macrostructure to be relevant and for it to be recoverable from memory (Kintsch, 1998). If one is not able to reduce the whole discourse to a gist or theme, or to extract something from it like a summary or a precis, one must either remember every word, or find that one remembers nothing. Theme as defined in terms of Kintsch's CI model, has been identified as the *cognitive text-base macrostructure*.
6. A text can have *more than one theme* or macrostructure, depending on the cognitive knowledge structures and particularly, the contextual assumptions of the reader-listener (Gutt, 2000). Discourses differ in their degree of thematic complexity.
7. There are *degrees of theme retrieval* and gist generation, and there is semantic and syntactic grounding in terms of foregrounding and backgrounding.

8. The theme of a text is a *cognitive* reality, but not readily or easily identifiable as *something*. The nature of discourse theme remains enigmatic and intuitive to current research.
9. While the exact nature of theme remains enigmatic, the certainty of its presence is without doubt. There must therefore be *clues* in the text to the theme, linguistic or otherwise.
10. Theme is dynamic and develops as the discourse unfolds. Some of the processes involved, the so-called *sequential strategies* (cf. Goutsos, 1997) will shed light on discourse theme. It is probably here that the interface between information structure and theme will be more evident.

From the overview of Thematics in chapter 6, those aspects of cognition and pragmatics that are certain and foundational for theme analysis can now be highlighted: Macrostructures, themes, the salient core, and gist are different terms for a definite cognitive-semantic reality. Mental structures in the form of clusters of propositions are quite universally accepted as the cognitive building blocks, and these propositions undergo cognitive processes like inferences and contextual assumptions before they reach final relevance in a particular situation. These same propositions also activate other top-down cognitive processes like schemas and frames. There are limits to the meaning and function of syntax and morphosyntax. Syntax and morphosyntax interact with cognitive structures to arrive at macrostructures of meaning. Finally, it is certain that the cognitive-pragmatic processing of the information structure of propositions is crucial to marking and highlighting certain lexical units, and that the information structure build-up – or information flow – does have a direct correlation with macrostructure formation. The discovery of themes depends on such mental macrostructure formations.

In the light of these theoretical certainties, a few requirements for theme analysis can now be stipulated:

1. Theme analysis must *not be subjective and arbitrary* (cf. Van der Merwe's review of Heimerdinger, 2000:575). As stated in the introduction, a certain measure of subjectivity in any model of theme analysis is inevitable, due to the inexact nature of language. But subjectivity and arbitrariness need to be limited to the maximum extent. For this reason, an attempt to find a workable definition for discourse theme will be

made, but it is simultaneously suggested that the exact nature of theme is still beyond the capacity of current research. For this reason, it is necessary instead to pursue the more objective thematic clues or signals, instead of attempting a comprehensive model for theme. The hypothesis of this chapter is that the information structure of sentences provides the analyst with a less subjective instrument to determine segmentation or paragraph boundaries. Marked word-order constructions, topic and focus frames, and focus structures like sentence focus provide useful handles for text segmentation. This point is further argued under “Theme traces” below (7.4).

2. Theme analysis must account for *linguistic features*. This requires that the approach must be semantic and meaning-based, it must account for syntax with a particular account of word-order configurations, and for the morphosyntactic account of grammatical structures, for example *verb tense-aspect* such as the X-qatal versus wayyiqtol switching in Biblical Hebrew.
3. Theme analysis must be *cognitive* – it must be able to account for what happens in hearer-reader’s mind. It must account for mental representations (Dooley & Levinsohn, 2001:21-22). Therefore, the theme models of Callow, Kintsch, Chafe, and Goutsos are of particular importance for this study.
4. Theme analysis must distinguish between *what* the theme is versus *how* the theme unfolds, in other words, the difference between the contents of the theme and the outworking of the theme. This important point has been made by Goutsos (1997). The theme contents could be some hyperconcept, a set of hyperconcepts, a proposition, or a set of propositions. But since the pinpointing of the theme contents is often very subjective and influenced by the background of the reader-hearer, theme contents remains enigmatic, especially in more complex discourse. For this reason, the manner in which the theme unfolds and develops will also throw significant light on the theme itself. These shifts, developments and transitions are often more traceable than the content itself.
5. Theme analysis must have the notion of *theme traces*. Texts do not have topics or themes in the sense of being clearly and consistently marked in the text. Texts do not have themes, speakers-writers have them, and they have them mentally. The thematic “material” in the text only *points* to the theme, helping the hearer-reader build a

mental representation of the text. Theme traces are deposited in a variety of ways in the text, in the form of linguistic clues. These clues need to be defined.

6. An approach to theme discovery must equip the analyst with tools to determine *thematic groupings*. The segmentation of the text must be facilitated. It is important to establish boundaries of thematic units. Goutsos's approach to sequential strategies and the boundaries and transitions between such groupings are therefore important.
7. Theme analysis must also account for *grounding* – for foregrounding versus backgrounding, recognizing that there are levels in grounding. Since grounding is such an important part of theme development, it will be touched upon where it interfaces with information structure, but to give a full explanation of grounding in the light of discourse theme and information structure is beyond the scope of this study. Its importance demands further and future research.
8. Theme analysis must be *discourse-pragmatic* – that is discourse functional, from a higher-than-the-sentence perspective, including the communication situation, and the place for co-text, context, and assumptions. The analyst must be able to define *topicality* and its contribution to the theme of a thematic grouping and even the larger text. Primary topics and topic bases/frames are important in theme analysis. The analyst must also be able to define *focality* and its contribution to the theme of a thematic grouping.
9. Theme analysis must account for *genre* – must work for prose as well as poetry, and must work for different genres of narrative prose (monologue, dialogue, poetic narration). For lack of space, this point will not be extensively dealt with in this study. The focus in this study will be limited to narrative and the sub-genres such as dialogue within narration only. Expository, hortatory, and poetic discourse will not be studied.

7.4 A DEFINITION OF THEME

Before a definition of theme is proposed some definitions proposed by other scholars are repeated again for convenience.

The contribution of Callow (1998) to theme is a comprehensive attempt to identify the properties or signals in texts that carry prominent and thematic material. The prominent core of a discourse consists of a prominent discourse topic, prominent schemas, prominent

relations, and special prominence. For Callow, theme is the cognitive reality of a message, the mental structures we build “consisting of units within units.”

The contribution of Kintsch (1998) to our study of discourse theme is the model of the cognitive macrostructure of theme. His notions of macrostructure, text-base and situation model will be underlying concepts.

Chafe’s contribution to our understanding of discourse theme is his cognitive approach to the spreading consciousness. His hierarchy of discourse theme as consisting of supertopics, basic-level topics, sentences superfoci and as centers of interest, as well as the intonation units as the smallest units of focus is helpful.

Before a definition of theme is attempted, it is necessary to state that discourse theme is *not* one of the following, per se.

7.4.1 What theme is not

Theme is not any of the below, in itself:

1. Theme is not the *primary topic(s)* only. The primary topic is a crucial part of the theme, but does not cover the entire development of the theme. Primary topics interact with other information structures and together they carry the theme development forward.
2. Theme is not all the *discourse-new* information, in other words, information contained in the focus structures. Some discourse-new information is not thematic, because it supplies information that is incidental and supportive. Theme-strengthening information is not always thematic, for example adjectives and relative clauses; in other words, the non-thematic content is what Callow calls *support by modification and intensification* (1998:235-236). In addition, redundant information that is only distantly related to the semantic core development of a text is supplied for rhetorical or other reasons. Such redundant information can contain discourse-new information that cannot automatically be thematic.
3. Theme is not a *macro-word* in isolation. Macro-words are indeed thematic (cf. Kintsch, 1998), but isolating macro-words will not represent the theme’s development through the discourse. It is true that some macro-words activate mental knowledge structures like scripts, schemas, and frames, and that the macro-

word, when recalled in memory, will activate simultaneously the associated events and states. But macro-words, extracted as the only representation of the macrostructure and theme, are inadequate.

4. Theme is not a single *macro-proposition* in the form of a title statement that captures the complete thematic development of the discourse. It is rare that a single proposition is sufficient to cognitively represent the whole thread of discourse, its developmental core, but this is possible for less complex and shorter discourses. Such a theme statement is at best a summary of the theme thread, an extraction of it. A one-proposition theme statement is different from a theme statement that represents the whole foregrounded thread. The first is just a heading or a title, a certain type of reduced theme statement, not a complete theme statement.
5. Theme is not the same as a *motif* (cf. Heimerdinger's definitions above). A motif-word can greatly contribute to the thematic core, but alone in isolation it does not capture the theme in its totality.
6. Theme is not the *chronological action line* or story line in a narrative. Some parts of the action line are sometimes only transitional and incidental to the developing theme.
7. Theme as defined here is also not the *first constituent* of a sentence, as in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar¹⁶¹.

7.4.2 What theme is

Theme is better seen as the semantic thread providing coherence that is perceived cognitively in the mind of the communicators. Theme has a variety of properties. The thread can consist of one or even multiple microthemes, one or multiple motifs, expressed by one or more macro-words, and expressed by one or more primary topics. More than one title statement can capture the same summary of the discourse.

In summary, theme can be some type of concept, say some hyperconcept or set of hyperconcepts, or a proposition or set of propositions, which may differ from hearer to hearer and analyst to analyst. Sometimes this thematic concept or proposition is even explicitly

¹⁶¹ For an introduction to MAK Halliday's notion of theme as the first constituent of a sentence, see Baker (1992:121-159).

stated in the text, but that does not always occur. From studies in comprehension (cf. Kintsch, 1998, and others) we know and acknowledge that there is such a thing as a macrostructure that is the discourse theme. We see the signals or traces of it, but find it difficult to pinpoint it with scientific exactness. Discourse theme will remain something intuitive and enigmatic, in spite of the many properties that can be isolated. Discourse theme is the linear, developing cognitive macrostructure of a discourse, leaving a varying degree of traces in the text. These theme traces are signaled in the form of continuous topics like primary and secondary sentence topics, and in the form of discontinuous topics like frame-setting topics and topic promotion. Discourse theme can be a concept such as hypertopic, it can be a combination of hypertopics, it can be a proposition containing a hypertopic or hypertopics, or even a set of propositions. It will differ from text to text, and from audience to audience. Therefore, theme is rather to be defined as a cognitive concept in contrast to something that is limited to a surface text property. There are parts of the surface text that more clearly communicate thematic information than other parts, and these explicit theme signals are important. These explicit theme signals should be understood in terms of an underlying cognitive coherence. Theme is something intended in the mind of the speaker/author and something understood in the mind of the hearer/reader, and in various manners and degrees made explicit in discourse.

7.4.3 The terms *gist* and *drift*

The issue of author-speaker purpose of a discourse vis-à-vis theme needs to be made explicit as well (cf. Callow, 1998:231). Two helpful terms here are *gist* and *drift*. Gist, according to Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (1995:711), is defined as the general meaning of a speech, conversation or piece of writing. Gist therefore is very much identical to theme as defined in this study. The gist is the text-base macrostructure, using Kintsch's categories. The *drift* of a speaker-author, on the other hand, has to do with purpose and intention. "The **drift of an argument** is the general point that is being made in it" (ibid.:507). The drift of a discourse is how the gist is used to achieve a communication purpose. Drift is more than the text-base macrostructure. It has to do with the integration of the theme into the situation model. The situation model includes the goals and purposes of the speaker-author.

7.4.4 A definition of theme

In the light of the preceding introduction, the following definition of theme is suggested:

Theme is the developing and coherent core or thread

of a discourse in the mind of the speaker-author and hearer-reader, functioning as the prominent macrostructure of the discourse.

The above definition needs to be clarified and qualified:

THEME is the developing and coherent core or thread of a discourse... The key words here are *core* or *thread*. It is a property that runs through the discourse from beginning to end, and simultaneously binds it together providing coherence. This core or thread develops and unfolds in a linear way. The thread is basically cognitive and semantic, embedded in the pragmatic situation of the utterance. The core is also optionally – and in degrees – marked by traces in the morphosyntax and lexicon of the discourse.

...functioning as the macrostructure of the discourse. The discourse core is also its cognitive macrostructure in terms of the definitions of Van Dijk (1977) and Kintsch (1998). It is a mental structure consisting of propositions and its related mental knowledge structures are activated by inference.

Theme as the developing thread is basically information that is flowing and unfolding in a particularly prominent way. Information flow is the key. The spreading activation (Kintsch, 1998) also called the conscious focus (Chafe, 1994), in the process of the unfolding sequences holds the key to theme and the signals of theme. Different pieces of information form the successive “building blocks” of the theme. Some pieces are recurring, and thus, according to Kintsch (1998:67, cf. discussion in chapter 6 (6.2.4.)), are being strengthened cognitively because of the repetition.

7.4.5 Units of theme

In the same way that the morpheme functions as the smallest unit of syntax, discourse theme also needs to have its “building blocks.” Limiting ourselves to only the genre of narrative in this study, from the largest to the smallest units of theme is the narrative, the episode, and the scene (cf. Van der Merwe, 1999b:93). In chapter 6 (6.2.5) Chafe’s units have been quoted, namely the intonation unit as the smallest focus domain, and the sentence as a “center of interest” consisting of several intonation units.

Rather than use Chafe’s sentence, thematic paragraph is proposed as the term for the smallest unit of theme. Thematic paragraph captures both the sentence, as the syntactically complex

sentence, and the paragraph as an orthographic representation of a memory block or minimal local theme. Thematic paragraph is similar to Chafe's concept of sentences, which "bring together chunks of information too large to be accommodated within a single focus, often intermediate in comprehensiveness between a single focus and a basic-level topic" (1994:145). In other words, the thematic paragraph is a cognitive unit that is more than a mere proposition, but less than a group of propositions that together form a local theme. A thematic paragraph can be a sentence, but also more than a sentence. It can be, for example a speech introducer together with the utterance associated with it.

Each thematic grouping or unit is now more closely defined below:

- A narrative consists of at least one, but more likely several episodes, each with its own topic framework (set of topics) and focus content. In a narrative one expects some hypertopic, that is, a primary topic than is recurring across most if not all the subunits (episodes and scenes) of the narrative. A hypertopic brings coherence between the various episodes, like for example Abraham in the Abraham Narrative (Genesis 12-25) or Noah in the Flood Narrative of Genesis 6-9. The hypertopic is frequently the primary topic in episodes and scenes in the theme units lower down in the hierarchy. A narrative can have a variety of topical frameworks, as well as a variety (but related) of spatio-temporal text-worlds.
- Embedded in one narrative are episodes. An episode is theme span with only one topic framework, not several as is the case with a narrative. An episode can have more than one spatial and temporal setting. However, just one set of primary and secondary topics is commented on.
- Embedded in one episode are scenes. A scene is a subunit of an episode, with only one primary topic and the comment on the topic limited to one "picture", in Kim's terms (cf. 2002:152). A scene is limited to one set of participants at one time in one place, and normally consists of more than one proposition event (cf. Louwse & Van Peer's review of Kim, 2002:6). Scenes (or Kim's "pictures") can be very short, but minimally two propositions with a sequentiality relation between them.
- The thematic paragraph is proposed as the smallest theme unit, smaller than the scene. The thematic paragraph must consist of at least one sentence with one primary topic or a topicless sentence focus structure. Although a single proposition can function as a

thematic paragraph, normally a thematic paragraph has at least two propositions, with only one primary topic. The units of setting, background comments, digressions, and closures (like summaries or evaluations, both common in Biblical Hebrew narrative) fit into the category of theme paragraphs, not scenes.

These different thematic groupings (Dooley & Levinsohn's term), or thematic units "are related to each other by a set of relations (e.g. causal or temporal relations)" (ibid.:7).

Myung-Hee Kim (2002), in a description of some subject markers and topic markers in Korean, offers a fine-tuned definition of theme and thematic units that is helpful for this study. Kim defines theme as something that "has to do with a speaker's (or writer's) perspective towards a series of events he or she is to convey", and "which is superimposed on the entire discourse and ultimately reflected in its surface structure" (2002:137). Thus Kim distinguishes between global themes, local themes, and previous themes. Kim's "global themes" is "what the whole story is about", corresponding to the hypertopics of narratives and multi-scene episodes, as well as what we have defined as the developing macrostructure or theme of a discourse (cf. Louwse & Van Peer's review of Kim, 2002:6). Global theme "is defined as the most important or salient referent in the whole discourse, whereas local themes are the most "salient persons in a given event or picture (Kim, 2002:143). Kim's "global theme" is similar to Chafe's "supertopic", and "local theme" similar to Chafe's "basic-level topic" (1994:137-145; cf. chapter 6 (6.2.5)). Kim's "previous themes" are the discourse-active primary topics in the co-text. Both global themes and local themes correspond to the macrostructure of a discourse, the one is just at a higher level. There is an overlap between theme and information structure topic in these definitions. Kim also limits global theme to a macro referent that is prominent in the whole discourse, very much in terms of Callow's definition of discourse topic (1998, cf. discussion of Callow in chapter 6). Furthermore, he disagrees with the idea that theme is a proposition (2002: 143, footnote 48). What he fails to see is the necessity to link the thematic participant with the rhematic events to trace the theme development.

But Kim's distinction of global theme and local theme is useful in that it throws light on the four thematic units as set out above. The units of narrative and episode both have global themes, while scenes and thematic paragraphs have local themes. I extend the definition of local themes beyond events to include states. All the terms defined in this section will be recurrent in chapters 8 and 9.

7.4.6 Theme shifts

Theme transitions or theme shifts occur in one of two places. They occur between the various thematic units (narrative, episode, scene, and thematic paragraph) at the same level of the hierarchy (e.g. between one episode and another) and between different levels in the thematic hierarchy (e.g. from the last scene of episode A to the start of episode B). These theme shifts are at the boundaries of thematic segments, at the faultlines of the discourse. Theme continuity and topic continuity occurs within thematic units, and tracing these continuities is necessary for identifying the theme. Before such theme spans can be successfully analysed, it is necessary to find the boundaries of the different thematic segments. It is at these transitions where some marking occurs to indicate the theme shift.

Theme shifts between higher-level thematic units are normally clearly marked, if not syntactically then definitely semantically. The presupposition is that the greater the discontinuity, for example between two episodes or between two narratives, the more marked is that theme shift in the information structure. Lower down on the thematic hierarchy less marking is observed, and between two scenes and two subscenes, sometimes no marked configurations occur in terms of the information structure.

There is a difference between a theme shift and a topic shift. All topic shifts are also theme shifts, but not all theme shifts include topic shifts. It is possible for the theme to shift in terms of space, time, and goal, but the primary (and secondary) topic remain(s) the same. The developmental marking relexicalisation of subjects in Biblical Hebrew (cf. Levinsohn, 2000b), is an example of this type of theme shift without topic shift. Theme closures and the scene changes to direct speech¹⁶² are other instances.

7.5 INFORMATION STRUCTURES AS “THEME TRACES” OR SIGNALS OF DISCOURSE THEMES

Until now the point has been made that although theme as such is enigmatic, various linguistic clues in the text will assist the analyst in tracing the theme somewhat less subjectively. From the work of Linda Jones (1976), Van Dijk (1977), Callow (1998), Chafe (1994), and Kintsch (1998), as discussed in chapter 6, it is clear that *hints* of the theme of a

¹⁶² In the case of direct speech, there is a theme shift in the sense that a distinct cognitive text-world is activated. The primary topic remains the same, but the “picture” is different.

discourse are in various degrees deposited in a text. As suggested so far, such explicit signals of theme can be called *theme traces*.

The basic discourse function of such theme hints or theme traces is to mark macro-words, which in turn provide the coherence of the thematic thread. Such macro-words belong to the cognitive macrostructure, and its special presence in sentences promotes these macro-words and the clauses that contain them, to the macrostructure or theme. Not every word in a prominent sentence is automatically thematic, as illustrated by Callow (1998:234-236, 242) using supporting and elaborating phrases like adjectives. But the marked topics and marked focus structures are theme traces in the sense that they indicate that the clause at hand, and that the core arguments of this clause are thematic. It is necessary to stress that sentences without any marked word-order or other special markers like the focus particles, are not necessarily non-thematic. In such “unmarked” sentences, the important information structure categories of primary topic and focus content are always present, and as such can still play a thematic function. In these “unmarked” cases, van Dijk’s macro-rules or deletion rules are important (cf. chapter 6 (6.1.1.3)). What is crucial here is that marked-word order configurations normally have some cognitive-pragmatic import, and that these prominent and cognitively-salient configurations tend to be thematic. Hypothetically, there could be cases of marked constructions, for example contrastive topics, which refer to minor participants that potentially are not thematic, but this is an area that needs further research. But the pragmatic functions of left-dislocation and fronting, for instance, are generally thematic in some way or another, for two reasons: one, because of its cognitively salient position (cf. Gómez-González (2001)), and two, because functions like topic promotion, topic announcing, topic shift, etc., are significant in the development of the discourse thread.

There are two ways of looking at a text to find theme traces that are linked with the information structure. One is to look at syntactic configurations that are marked, infrequent, and with a specific use. The second way is to look at the discourse-pragmatic strategies used for expression in the information structure. Both of these form the basis of theme traces¹⁶³.

¹⁶³ There are other theme traces, like certain connectives and other conjunctions between sentences that are outside the scope of this study.

7.5.1 Marked syntactic configurations as possible theme traces in Biblical Hebrew

Certain syntactic configurations occur at the points of theme shifts that have been determined by the information structure. There is significant overlap between what Goutsos (1997, cf. discussion of his views below, 7.5.2) calls sequencing strategies, and the different information structure strategies of topic and focus categories and surface expressions arrived at in chapters 3 and 5 (cf. the respective summaries and conclusions of these chapters for a listing of these functions). On the basis of this overlap, we argue that Goutsos' topic signals are the same, or at least very similar, to the functions proposed in chapters 3 and 5. These signals we will call theme traces. A theme trace is the same as a theme signal in the sense that Goutsos uses it, but the term *trace* may be preferable in the light of the enigmatic and abstract nature of theme. As the discourse unfolds, the speaker-author intentionally or unintentionally leaves explicit traces of the discourse theme in the surface structure of the text.

A theme trace is some surface level feature that has direct bearing on the construction of the macrostructure. Theme traces go automatically into the text-base macrostructure or theme. In Biblical Hebrew there are, to a greater or lesser extent, a few mechanisms that are theme traces:

1. Word-order is a mechanism that can indicate a theme trace. Marked word-order constructions like fronting and left-dislocation can be theme traces.
2. Seemingly redundant and optional explicit pronominal marking can be a theme trace.
3. The relexicalisation of discourse-active or semi-active referents can be a theme trace.

Grammatical elements other than information structure-determined configurations, for example discourse markers, like $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$, and interclausal connectives like $\psi\Box\Box\angle\kappa$, can also function as theme traces. However, these theme traces are outside the scope of this study.

The above-mentioned mechanisms, as well as the categories of information structure, such as the categories of topic and focus structures, are significant mechanisms of theme traces. The reason for this is that information structure provides the most comprehensive explanation of word-order variation and marked word-orders, as well as an explanation of the use of seemingly redundant pronominal marking, relexicalisation, and even some discourse markers.

The various information structure categories functioning as theme traces will be discussed next, with special attention to marked word-orders.

As a last step before a definition of a theme trace is attempted, it is necessary to take a brief look at the sequencing strategies proposed by Goutsos (1997), hinted at several times already. His insights on sequencing are foundational to our understanding of the strategies used in information structure configurations.

7.5.2 Goutsos' sequencing strategies as theme traces

Goutsos' strategies of continuation and discontinuation of sequences in discourse will provide a useful model in which to categorize some of the information structure categories identified in chapters 3 and 5. His sequencing strategies are distinguished into two main groupings, called topic shift and topic continuity. Topic shift in turn is subdivided into topic framing, topic introduction, and topic closure.

7.5.2.1 *Topic shift*

“Topic shift is the general strategy for indicating discontinuity, or, specifically, effecting transition from one continuation span to another.” The sequential techniques associated with topic shift deal with the closing of the current continuation span and the opening of a transition span (topic framing), the opening of a continuation span (topic introduction), and the opening of a transition span with the upcoming closing of the current continuation span (topic closure) (Goutsos, 1997:46).

1) TOPIC FRAMING

As the first of the topic shift strategies, “[t]opic framing is the sequential technique used for the explicit indication of sequential boundaries. It is achieved by simultaneously indicating the ending of a continuation span and the starting of an ensuing transition span” (ibid.:46). “Topic framing provides a new orientation for the discourse, which anticipates an ensuing topic introduction” (ibid.:48). Topic framing sees to it that the succession of transition and continuation spans is not abrupt but gradual (ibid.:46). Topic framing and topic introduction can be in the same sentence (ibid.:47), and furthermore, topic framing is optional. The signals of topic framing are the following:

1. Paragraph breaks (ibid.:49)

2. Metadiscourse items e.g. “at this point, now,” in the sense of “now I am opening a new domain.” This is an open class, new ones can be added (ibid.:50)
3. Discourse markers. These are grammaticalized metadiscourse items. A closed class of items, like connectives “therefore, accordingly, but, then, etc.” (ibid.:50-51)
4. Sentence-initial adjuncts like adverbial phrases or clauses. “The use of sentence-initial adverbial clauses has long been related to the creation of a local context for the text that follows (cf. Chafe, 1984; Thompson & Longacre, 1985)” (ibid.:52).
5. Encapsulating nominals, like deictic demonstratives e.g. “This could show...” or: “After that,...” (ibid.:53-54)
6. Prediction pairs: there are four types (ibid.:55):
 - 1) Advanced labeling by anaphoric nouns: x indicated *another way* to...
 - 2) Enumeration through numerals: There are *three* advantages: ...
 - 3) Hypothetical pairs: *Take* one newish problem: American opinion...
 - 4) Question-answer pairs: *What then shall we say of this?* X...

2) TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The second of the topic shift categories is topic introduction. Goutsos argues that topic introduction is obligatory, where topic framing and topic closure are optional (ibid.:55). This is what happens: “Topic introduction involves the opening of a continuation span. This may effect the closing of the previous continuation span by itself, that is, without a transition span. The indication of boundaries would thus be achieved by virtue of the shift from one continuation span to another alone.” But this last instance is rare (ibid.:56). Marked word-orders are often employed for topic introduction (ibid.:57). Theme changes are made by topic changes without transitions like connectives or other framing material. The $\psi\eta\psi\omega$ -clauses are obviously transitional, topic framing, information, but such $\psi\eta\psi\omega$ -clauses tend to occur at the bigger discontinuities. The signals of topic introduction are the following:

1. Existential clauses¹⁶⁴ (with a dummy): “There has been...” (ibid.:57)
2. It-clefts and WH-clefts, in thematic (=first) position “have also been related to the setting of a topic or the opening of a theme.”
3. “*Clauses with a context-independent subject*, signal topic introduction, usually following topic framing, ...” (ibid.:58).
4. Renominalization. “Continuation spans have the property of allowing identity or reference chains (Hasan, 1984), with pronominal elements within their boundaries. However, the transition into a continuation span requires renominalization...” (ibid.:58). Renominalisation is the same as relexicalisation.
5. Tense shift. “Temporal continuity and shift have been shown to be significant signals of structure in narratives (e.g., Givón (1983)).”
6. “to be” sentences often indicate topic introduction (ibid.:59)
7. Predicated members.

3) TOPIC CLOSURE

Topic closure is the third sequential technique. Topic closure involves the opening of a transition span, but the continuation span continues parallel to topic closure until topic closure or topic introduction finally effects closing (ibid.:61-61). The signals of topic closure are the following:

1. Paragraph breaks
2. Metadiscourse items: summaries, closing comments, e.g. so far so good...
3. Discourse markers, e.g. therefore, so (ibid.:62). Even “and” can be a topic closure signal. “and” does not always indicate continuity (ibid.:63)
4. Tense shift to the Perfect (rare)
5. Encapsulation. “Anaphoric nouns can have both encapsulating and prospective aspects” (ibid.:63). Commas and other punctuation can also indicate closure.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Givón, 1990:741-748.

7.5.2.2 *Topic continuation*

The second of the two main sequencing strategies is topic continuation. Topic continuity is the default: "... the *signaling* of topic continuation is not obligatory, because continuity is the default strategy" (ibid.:64) for only one primary topic. Continuation spans are within paragraph breaks. Two successive topic introductions are impossible. At least one utterance must follow a topic introduction as topic continuation (ibid.:64). Signals of topic continuation are the following (ibid.:65-66):

1. Parenthesis
2. Discourse markers, e.g. "in other words, for example, again", and additive conjunctions like "also, too", even "moreover, furthermore"
3. Tense continuity
4. Local cohesive devices (including parallelism and pronominalization).

Goutsos also distinguishes secondary techniques, one of which is functioning as a correction to, an aside to, a digression from, or an interruption of what came before (ibid.:70). Another is topic drift.

Where Goutsos's approach¹⁶⁵ is lacking, is in the area of focality. He states that "... a large number of themes (...) cannot be understood without reference to rhematic parts, which, however, seem more unruly than themes and for this reason have not been the object of detailed study" (Goutsos, 1997:11). The notions of focus structure for Biblical Hebrew, as laid out in Chapter 5, will suggest some aspects of the thematic impact of these "rhematic parts" (that is, information contained in focus structures).

In the light of the definition of theme as the semi-active, cognitive macrostructure of a text, and in the light of the fact that determining the exact theme of a discourse is difficult, and in the light that discourse theme is better studied from the point of view of sequential strategies,

¹⁶⁵ Goutsos also proposes a hierarchy and synergy of signals (ibid.:82):

- Orthographic markers (written discourse)
- Metadiscourse items
- Prediction pairs
- Discourse markers
- Cohesive devices
- Time framing
- Sentence-structure patterns

it has now become necessary to bring the categories of information structure and Goutsos' sequencing strategies together.

7.5.3 The information structure strategies as theme traces in Biblical Hebrew

If Goutsos's list of topic signals or topic sequencing strategies, as seen in the section above, are compared with the information structure topic functions as laid out at the end of chapter 3 (the summary in 3.4), several overlapping concepts can be noticed. The only differences are that Goutsos has topic closure as an additional signal, and his topic introduction and topic framing are slightly differently categorized in the information structure topic model for Biblical Hebrew. Goutsos also does not operate with the information structure categories for topic as distinguished in chapter 2 and 3, and as stated above, he does not work at all with focality and the focus structures as laid out in chapters 4 and 5 of this study.

Goutsos's topic continuity has been maintained with our notion of topic continuity and topic maintenance. His topic shift is equivalent to our topic discontinuity, and where he has topic introduction, we have topic promotion (up the discourse-active scale) and topic shift (from one active to another active topic). His topic closure has no real equivalent in our system. Concluding connectives and summary statements, for example, call for a wider study of theme traces than proposed in this limited study of information structure theme traces. His concept of topic framing is partly equivalent to our topic text-world frame-setting (topical deictic orientations, in other words). Altogether new to our system is the strategy of topic theme announcing. Since this approach in this study to theme is from an information structure perspective, other theme traces like connectives, summary statements, tense-aspect switching, and so forth, are not dealt with in any detail. That is not to say that these are not theme traces. They are, and they require further investigation.

The higher-level information structure strategies are theme continuity (Goutsos's topic continuity), theme shift (Goutsos's topic introduction), theme framing (Goutsos's topic framing), and theme closure (Goutsos's topic closure). These underlying thematic functions are expressed by a variety of information structure strategies that are linked to the information structure. For topical functions, these information structure-driven functions are topic continuity, topic discontinuity, topic strengthening, and topical deictic orientation. The four basic topic expression categories, mostly primary and secondary topics, and to a lesser extent,

topic frames and tail topics, are employed in these thematic information structure strategies, thus becoming theme traces.

The basic system of theme traces for Biblical Hebrew, based on information structure considerations is the following list of information structure strategies. In the area of topic and topicality, the following theme strategies have been identified:

1. Maintaining topic continuity
 - Topic maintenance, simultaneously maintaining the theme
2. Introducing topic discontinuity
 - Topic promotion (from identifiable or inactive or semi-active to active), signaling a theme shift
 - Topic shift (from one active to another active topic), also signaling a theme shift
3. Topic frame-setting
4. Topic strengthening by means of topic contrasting
 - Confirming the identity of a topic
 - Restricting the identity of a topic
 - Comparing a pair of topics
5. Topic deictic orientation (situation or text-world frame-setting), signaling a theme shift

Theme shifts or theme re-directions are possible without topic discontinuity. In such cases topics are maintained, but the spatio-temporal situation changes. For theme shifts, either topic discontinuity or deictic orientation shift takes place. Theme shifts without any one of those two shifting functions are not possible.

On the basis of some of the information structure strategies of focus, as set out by Lambrecht (1994) and modified somewhat for our purposes, the following five cognitive-pragmatic processes are signaled by focus information structures. Lambrecht identifies four functions:

1. Commenting on topics, and where necessary, highlighting one particular argument of the comment in focus peaking constructions
2. Presenting participants, redirecting the theme
3. Event-reporting and state-reporting, re-directing or supporting the theme
4. Identifying referents or qualities of referents

I want to add to number 4 the sub-strategy of announcing arguments as theme words or macrowords.

Predicate focus structures are used in commenting sentences, and sentence focus structures in presentational, and event-reporting and state-reporting sentences. Argument focus structures are used in identificational sentences. The information structures all have syntactic configurations or other surface expressions in the actual discourse. All these information structure strategies and their morphosyntactic expressions are explored in chapters 8 and 9.

Given Goutsos' approach to theme continuity, it is necessary to stress here that not all theme traces are always at transitions and thematic boundaries. Many are not, as will be seen in the examples laid out in chapters 8 to 10.

In summary, two types of information structure categories and strategies are theme traces. One is the marked word-order topic and focus constructions, including explicit pronouns and focus particles. The second is mostly unmarked in terms of word-order, but is the repetition and relexicalisation of topics. Such recurring referents become thematic macrowords.

7.5.4 A definition of a theme trace

The definition of a theme trace is the following:

A theme trace is a clue in the surface form of a discourse, viewed from the perspective of information structure, that points to the cognitive macrostructure or theme of a text. This clue is in the form of (1) a marked syntactic configuration, be it marked word-order or marked in the sense of explicit and seemingly "redundant", signaling some thematic sequencing strategy, or (2) some recurring concept(s) signaling some prominence and

coherence.

7.6 OUTLINE OF THE MODEL FOR TRACING THEMES BY MEANS OF THE INFORMATION STRUCTURE

There are two assumptions of this model for theme-tracing. One is that discourses have layers of themes, with local themes embedded in global themes. The second is that the smaller and the lower the thematic unit is in the hierarchy, the easier it is to determine the theme. Local themes or microthemes are easier to determine than global themes.

With these two assumptions in mind, a model for identifying themes by means of information structure theme traces can be briefly set out in the following four steps:

7.6.1 STEP 1: Identify any potential theme traces

Identify any potential theme traces in the form of either a) syntactically marked configurations in the text, like fronting, left-dislocation, right-dislocation, explicit pronouns, focus particles, fronted spatio-temporal orientations, or b) syntactically unmarked but still cognitively prominent configurations, like relexicalisation, repetition, and end-weight. In other words, search for any marked word-order constructions, seemingly “redundant” pronouns, and seemingly “redundant” relexicalized nominals.

7.6.2 STEP 2: Analyse the information structure of the theme traces

Analyse the information structure of these potential theme traces and determine what information structure strategies are at play. In other words, analyse these potential theme traces in terms of the information structure of the proposition it is part of, and in its cognitive context, determine (1) the information structure of the relevant propositions and (2) the cognitive strategies it is used for in that specific context.

7.6.3 STEP 3: Determine the thematic units

Determine the thematic units by means of the information structure strategies of the theme traces, as well as by means of text-world orientations and topic continuation spans (for instance, the repetition of topics). In other words, on the basis of the information structure strategies that an information structure analysis in context will reveal, identify the thematic units, from thematic paragraphs to scenes at the local

theme level, and from episodes to narratives at the global theme level. The internal discourse boundaries are now tentatively determined.

7.6.4 STEP 4: Determine the theme

Determine the local theme of each thematic unit by identifying its topic framework and the focus content. Doing this with smaller units is easier to do. Then, determine the global theme of an episode once the local themes have been established. In other words, within each thematic unit, determine the topic framework as well as the focus content from which the theme is abstracted, making use of macrowords, topic continuity and the content of focus structures where applicable.

For step 4, the bringing together of information structure (topic and focus) categories with the information structure strategies as defined above, will give the analyst access to the theme¹⁶⁶. The topic and focus categories and their underlying information structure strategies exist in two areas of discourse, namely the area of topic framework and the area of focus content. These two areas are now discussed briefly.

7.6.4.1 Theme and the topic framework

The *topic framework* is an additional concept that brings all information structure topics in a discourse under one umbrella. As discussed in chapter 6 (6.1.2.3), Brown & Yule (1983:73-79) argue for a topic framework where all participants mentioned in a discourse are listed and categorized. A discourse could have just one topic (then always a primary topic), but could also have more than one topic. Heimerdinger (1999:chapter 3) applies this concept on Genesis 22, adding Tomlin's concept of counting the occurrences and references to each participant. This counting indicates the "heaviest" or most important topics. This very notion has also been developed by Kintsch, using different terms. For him, every time a topic is referred to, it gains additional cognitive strength. Those topics with the most cognitive strength are more thematic than those with less strength (cf. 1998:chapter 6). This area will be called the discourse topic area. The discourse topic is not the theme, but only one part of the theme development. Neither is discourse topic the primary topic or secondary topic. It is a cover term that includes the four topic types.

¹⁶⁶ There are more theme traces, for example, sentence connectives, tense-aspect continuities and discontinuities, and other discourse particles, but these are outside the scope of this study. Only information structure-based theme traces are under investigation.

7.6.4.2 Theme and the focus content

The second area where information structure will provide theme traces is in the area of the discourse-new or asserted information, the *rhetic* part of the discourse. Instead of the term rheme, which is defined and used differently by different scholars, I propose the semantic concept of *focus content*. Focus content can be defined by what the newly-asserted information in the focus structures is about, the coherent core of all the newly asserted information put together, or in other words, the content or topic of what is focused on. Focus content¹⁶⁷ is a concept quite different from the information structure concepts topic and focus. It is not related to the one part of information structure, topic, but instead it refers to the information contained in the focus of sentences. The term focus content explains more clearly the discourse-semantic concept it is. Its relevance becomes clear when the focus structures of a grouping of sentences are put together to find a coherent core meaning. In other words, it is the topic of that part of the information structure in focus. Focus content has to do with what the information is about, *strictly within the focus constructions*. All information that is expressed by a primary topic, a topic frame, and a tail topic, is stripped off. Secondary topic is not stripped off because the relationship between the verb and the secondary topic is significant for the focus content. Secondary topics still form a part of the focus structure, especially in predicate focus structures. So all the new information in both broad and narrow predicate focus structures is included. Focus content is the information that all the asserted in-focus information has in common. The value of the notion of focus content is that by combining the primary topic with the focus content information, the theme can be abstracted and even a *title statement* of a section of discourse made. Only in stretches of discourse will the notion of focus content be applicable. By stretches of text is meant two sentences or more. In a single clause focus content will be indeterminable, because there is only one chunk of new or asserted information. An example will illustrate this concept.

Example: Exodus 19.10-11

<p>□□ηεΗΟμ-λεε η□ ρωηϑψ ρεμε=-Χψϑω 10 ≤□ΑϞΑη-λεε ♠□□□Ελ ρ□□ΥΑξΑμ] ≤ □Χψαη ≤□ΑΓτ] Η⇒∠δ√θ<ω :≤□Ατ∪λ) μιΩ]Ψσ] ∠βικ<ω ψΥιΗψιλ) ΚΗαη ≤ □□□Χψαλ ≤ψ□ρνΟκ<ν]ΒψΑη <ω 11 ≤□ΑϞΑη-λακ ψ□⊕νψΕϞ) λ η□ ρωηϑψ δ□□⊥⊙ρ⊕</p>	<p>10 the LORD said to Moses: "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes 11 and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the LORD will come</p>
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¹⁶⁷ Another possibility is to call it jointly “focustopic”, but it could bring confusion with the information structure usage of the term topic.

ψ $\boxed{\psi \square \iota \text{H} \psi \iota \lambda \mid \text{KH} \alpha \eta \leq \mid \square \square \square \text{X} \psi \alpha \angle \beta \mid \mid \psi \square \square \square \iota \angle \kappa}$ down in the sight of all the people upon Mount
 $:\psi \square \wp \nu \psi \iota \sigma \rho \square \square \square \alpha \eta - \lambda \alpha \omega$ Sinai.

The two actors or topical participants in these verses are the LORD and Moses. The LORD gave Moses an instruction about what he –Moses- had to do with the people. “The people” – the children of Israel- are discourse-active as confirmed by the definite article in verse 10. There are four orders, with the first an imperative and the other three *weqatals*. Moses is the primary topic of the first two instructions, with the “people” as secondary topics. From the third line, the “people” become the primary topics. By extracting the primary topics in the left column and the newly-asserted information in every line of these four instructions in the right column, we find the following:

[primary TOP] Moses	go [secondary TOP to the people]
[primary TOP] Moses	consecrate [secondary TOP them]
[primary TOP] they	wash clothes
[primary TOP] they	prepare for third day

In the following reason statement (proposition 5), the LORD is the discourse-active topic. The fronted temporal adverbial phrase “on the third day” is a repetition from the line before and is therefore presupposed information. Here it is in an argument focus construction, identifying that very day as the important day:

ON THE THIRD DAY_[argument focus] the Lord will come down in the sight of all on Mount Sinai

A title statement¹⁶⁸ of these five propositions will be the following:

“Moses must prepare¹⁶⁹ the people to see the LORD on the third day. It is on the third day when He will come down on Mount Sinai.”

As illustrated above, the focus content of the section as a whole will therefore contribute to our tracing of the theme. This will be possible in both marked and unmarked focus structures and syntactic configurations. But focus content is not the only tool the analyst can use to trace

¹⁶⁸ A title statement could also be called a theme statement. It is more or less the same as what Brown & Yule (1983) would call a “discourse topic” and Kintsch (1998) a “topic sentence.”

¹⁶⁹ The going of Moses, the consecrating of the people, and the people washing their clothes, are all part of the “preparing”, following Van Dijk’s (1977) summary and deletion rule.

the theme. Marked focus structures like argument focus and sentence focus structures, will become apparent to the analyst as additional theme traces.

The area of discourse topic strategies will be discussed in detail in chapter 8, and the area of discourse focus strategies in chapter 9.

7.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter some previous studies on Biblical Hebrew discourse, and especially their approaches to discourse theme, have been briefly reviewed. It was found that a cognitive definition of discourse theme was lacking, and that there was no explicit integration of information structure and discourse theme. Some assumptions and requirements of a workable concept of theme have been listed, followed by a definition of theme: *Theme is the developing and coherent core or thread of a discourse in the mind of the speaker-author and hearer-reader, functioning as the prominent macrostructure of the discourse.*

Then, building on the “discourse topic signaling” model of Goutsos, some features of continuity and discontinuity in discourse have been listed. These signals are called theme traces. These theme traces are believed to be verifiable clues to segmentation and paragraph boundaries in Biblical Hebrew. Topic introductions, and deictic frames like text-world deictic orientations, and theme announcing words or phrases, can all be termed theme traces. Theme traces are valuable in tracking prominent *components* of the theme, like the continuity of primary topics, and the identification of thematic macro-words. Once the segments have been established, it will be easier to determine the theme area or topic framework (to use Brown & Yule’s (1983) term), as well as the contents of all the discourse-new or asserted information, as defined in the concept of Focus content. Above all, these theme traces are components of the text that help the reader-hearer to construct a mental representation of the macrostructure, in line with the CI model of Kintsch (1998). Theme traces are information automatically promoted to a cognitive text-base, from which, after integration with a variety of knowledge structures and background information, the thematic macrostructure is constructed.

These information structure functions all have syntactic configurations or other surface expressions in the actual discourse. In the next chapter (chapter 8), the theme traces having to do with topic and topicality and which have been termed the *discourse topic* or Brown & Yule’s *topic framework*, will be analysed in more detail. The same will be done in chapter 9 for theme traces that are focal where the contents of the information are contained in the focus

structures. The focus in these chapters will not so much be an application of the four steps of the model, but in seeing how information structure theme traces contribute to theme analysis. A full application of the four steps on a text from the Genesis-corpus (Genesis 17) will occur in Chapter 10.

Chapter 8

INFORMATION STRUCTURE TOPIC AND DISCOURSE THEME: THE TOPIC THEME TRACES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3 four different types or categories of information structure topic in Biblical Hebrew have been distinguished. These are

5. Primary topics
6. Secondary topics
7. Topic frames
8. Tail topics

All four these types of topic can fulfill a theme trace role, contributing to expression of the discourse topic and the discourse theme. All four, when present, are part of the topical framework of a discourse (cf. Brown & Yule, 1983 and discussion in chapter 6 (6.1.2.3). Each one of the four, as well as the topic contrasting overlay, is now described in terms of its information structure strategy and thematic function.

In chapter 7 (7.4.4), several information structure strategies of discourse topics were distinguished:

1. Maintaining topic continuity
 - Topic maintenance
2. Introducing topic discontinuity
 - Topic promotion (from identifiable or inactive or semi-active to active), signaling a theme shift
 - Topic shift (from one active to another active topic), also signaling a theme shift

3. Topic frame-setting

4. Topic strengthening by means of topic contrasting

- Confirming the identity of a topic
- Restricting the identity of a topic
- Comparing a pair of topics

5. Topic deictic orientation (situation or text-world frame-setting), signaling a theme shift

Any of the four topic categories (i.e., primary topics, secondary topics, etc.) is selected by the speaker-author to express these information structure strategies. More than one topic category can be used to express one information structure strategy. These topic categories are expressed in the following information structure strategies, viz., theme continuity, theme shifting, theme framing, and theme closure.

These topical theme traces can be expressed in a variety of syntactic configurations, as subjects, nominalised or pronominalised, express primary topics. Fronting and left-dislocation are marked word-order configurations for topics. Full noun phrases and relexicalisation, and the explicit mention of pronouns, are additional syntactic mechanisms used to express topics and topic pragmatic functions. The relevance to theme of these different topic categories, topic pragmatic functions, and syntactic configurations is now explored in this chapter. Each topic category is discussed separately, in connection with the pragmatic function it fulfils and the implications for theme it may have as a theme trace.

In this chapter, only Steps 1 and 2 of the theme-tracing model are developed. This is done, because Steps 1 and 2 are the crucial steps that show the link between information structure and theme. An example from Genesis giving all four steps is developed in chapter 10.

Most of the cases of topic theme traces in this chapter occur in local themes and scenes.

8.2 THE THEMATICITY OF PRIMARY TOPICS

The most significant case of topic in the area of topicality, is primary topic, which is thematic in marked as well as unmarked structures. Topic promotion, topic continuity, topic change, topic framing, and topic contrasting all have a bearing on theme. For instance, a participant(s)

expressed through on-going primary topics, expressed by lexicalized and pronominal subjects and anaphora¹⁷⁰, is on the whole the principal carrier of theme. Primary topics (mostly subjects) have both high topic persistence and anaphoricity (cf. Gregory & Michealis (2001) for a description of these terms).

The concepts of primary topic and focus content are key to theme providing there is some coherence between the two. If a primary topic is enriched by focus structure information that is not coherent within itself no relevant thematic development can be discerned. The discourse then does not have coherence. Look for example at the following paragraph (from Halliday, 1978 as in Baker, 1992:124):

Now comes the President here. It's the window he is stepping through to wave to the crowd. On his victory his opponent congratulates him. 'Gentlemen and ladies, that you are confident in me, honours me.'

The above text is an artificially created one to illustrate how too many fronted, marked constructions, though grammatically correct, become incoherent and thematically ill-formed. It also shows that the primary topic “the President” does not in itself bring coherence and well-formedness. It is the interaction of the primary topic with the information in the focus content that is thematic, as well as the coherence within the focus content information itself. Having made this qualification, primary topics as such are nevertheless vital to theme.

The morphological encoding of topics is another issue raised by Heimerdinger (1999, following Givón). Some topics are more accessible than others. When minimally marked, they are more accessible; when maximally marked, less accessible. He proposes the following accessibility scale from the most accessible referent to the least - 1. Zero anaphora 2. Clitic pronoun 3. Independent pronoun 4. Full noun (1999:124). It happens frequently in Biblical Hebrew, however, that a full noun is repeated while still the main topical participant, and while still very accessible. It indicates that such repeated full nouns have an alternative rhetorical function as well. In Genesis 22, for instance, a main topic like Abraham is well-marked, and frequently relexicalized, with several full NPs used to refer to him (cf. paper by S.Levinsohn, 2000b:5). The repeated full NPs underline Abraham's prominence in the topic

¹⁷⁰ “Thus, explicit anaphora are treated much like other non-anaphoric words in a text, except that in the construction of their meaning the context of their prior appearance is integrated. This seems reasonable and plausible. After all, when readers encounter a definite noun phrase or a proper name, these may or may not be used as anaphora. Pronouns, on the other

framework of the narrative. But this is not the case in 2 Kings 1. Ahazia the king and the main participant next to the prophet Elijah, is only twice marked with his name and otherwise just referred to as “the king.” In response to this situation, Heimerdinger argues that “it may be concluded that a weak morphological encoding of one of the main participants makes the other main participant, *Elijah*, to stand out” (ibid.:125), and is thus used not only as topic marking for attention and accessibility, but also as a highlighting device. A related point made by Heimerdinger is that normally discourse active referents are signaled by subject pronominal reference, while in Biblical Hebrew not all active referents are referred to pronominally. Often they are referred to with a lexical NP. Heimerdinger says commentaries do not ascribe a literary reason to that fact, and suggests that the narrator seeks to have the effect of breaking down ‘an almost instantaneous event into its ... separate phases. The pace of narration is slowed down and the attention is centered on the main participant *David*” (ibid.:154), in his comments on 2 Samuel 12.19; 10.6; 15.16-17.

Primary topics are used in several of the theme-tracing information structure strategies listed above (point 8.1). They are used for topic continuity, topic shift, topic promotion, topic theme announcing, and topic contrasting. Below I will treat the use of primary topic in each of the theme-tracing information structure strategies.

8.2.1 Primary topic for topic continuity (topic maintenance)

2 Kings 6.5 is an example of a thematic primary topic continuing for a certain span in the narrative, with the primary topic chain introduced by a full NP.

≤ψ□ιη∪λ┘ λΥΑπ ρν	And the man of God said,
ηϕν□□□Αε	"Where did it fall?"
≤ □θΑΓμση-τεε □□□ηΕε\ρϩΧψϩω	And he showed him the place,
□□□fEπ-βΑχ^θ∩Χψϩω	And he cut off a stick,
ηΑΓμ□ΑΗ-▲ελ\ΗϩΧψϩω	And he threw it in there,
:λ□∅ζ\ρα∠βαη ∞εχ□ ϕ Χψϩω	And he made the iron float.

This example has been discussed in chapter 7 (7.4.5), but is repeated here for convenience. In verses 5 and 6 the man of God (Elisha) and the prophet-son with the axe alternate between primary topic and secondary topic. In verse 6, the “man of God”, already discourse active, is again fully lexicalized in a wayyiqtol clause. The relexicalisation signals the switching from one to another of the discourse-active primary topics, and introduces a development in the

hand, are different; readers know they are dealing with anaphora (or perhaps kataphora – a pronoun whose referent has not yet been introduced)” (ibid.:147).

narrative, which is dominated by this particular primary topic. It switches back to the axe-prophet, without any particular marking, and then immediately back to Elisha in a chain of three wayyiqtol clauses at the thematic high point of the narrative, namely of Elisha who is instrumental in making the axe float. The primary topic chain is maintained by means of pronominal coding in the verb.

The theme of the narrative of which 2 Kings 6.6 is a part, is the following: “*The log-feller loses his axe-head in the water and Elisha miraculously makes the axe-head float*”. The recurring pronominal reference to a discourse-active primary topic strengthens the thematic importance of that topic, in this case Elisha. He is resolving the tension of the narrative plot.

Topic continuity in Biblical Hebrew is also signaled by the topic being fully relexicalized. Shimasaki (2002:89-100) made this observation, but it is Stephen Levinsohn (2000b) who argued that this relexicalisation is used as a development marker in Biblical Hebrew.

Relexicalisation of the nominal signals the thematic shift to a different scene, but the shift is not a major one. The participants, at least the primary topics, and the text-world scene, remain the same. Relexicalisation in Biblical Hebrew can occur in both *we-X-qatal* clauses (with the relexicalized referent fronted, e.g. Genesis) and in *wayyiqtol* clauses (with the relexicalized referent following the verb, e.g. Genesis 23.1-3).

Naturally, the question can be asked whether the relexicalisation of a referent is not obligatory to confirming or re-establishing reference assignment, in other words, that relexicalisation is not used as a development marker but as an obligatory, disambiguating reference assignment. Certainly in many cases this reference disambiguating function is the reason why a referent is relexicalized, as seen from the above example, that relexication is also used as a rhetorical device to strengthen a referent cognitively for macrostructure purposes. Therefore, in summary, three functions of relexicalisation can be discerned: 1) reference disambiguation, 2) thematic development marking, and 3) cognitive strengthening of a macroword. In many cases, some of the functions even co-occur. Arguably in some cases, all three functions co-occur. This issue needs further investigation. At this stage there are no clear criteria to determine which function is used in which circumstances.

Genesis 23.1-20 provides an extended example of the continuity of primary topics in relexicalized noun phrases. For convenience, the names that each time are relexicalized in the Hebrew, have been blocked in the Hebrew text¹⁷¹ and bold-faced in the English translation.

⊖αβ□□□εΗϞω η□ϙνAH ≤ψB(ρ)Ωε⊖ω η□ϙνAH η
 □AεEμ η□↓ρAΩ ψ□□□⊕Xψαξ □□□ψ η□Xψϑω 1
 :η□↓ρAΩ ψ□⊕Xψαξ ψ□⊕ν H ≤ψΥ□νAH
 /α⊖Υ ϙν) <κ fΣρ□□□□εα) <β/ | ρ) βεξ ε⊖□η ⊖□α
 <β\ραε τ□ϑϑψ\ρ\θ) <β η□↓ρAΩ τAμ□□□AΓτϑω 2
 :<η□AτO<κ) βιλϞω ηΨ↓ρAΩ λ δ□□BOKπ) σιλ □□A
 η↓ρ) βαξ □□□ε·β ϙXψϑω
 | fτEμ ψ□□□⊕ν) Kπ λ□α⊖Eμ □□Aη↓ρ) βαξ □□□ε⊕θ
 ϙXψϑω 3
 :ρ□□⊖OμεEλ τ□Eξ-ψ⊕ν) <β-λεε ρ□□E<β⇒δϞψϑ
 ω

1 **Sarah** lived one hundred twenty-seven years; this was the length of **Sarah's** life.

2 And **Sarah** died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and **Abraham** went in to mourn for **Sarah** and to weep for her.

3 **Abraham** rose up from beside his dead, and said to the **Hittites**,

4 "I am a stranger and an alien residing among you; give me property among you for a burying place, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

5 The **Hittites** answered **Abraham**,

6 "Hear us, my lord; you are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places; none of us will withhold from you any burial ground for burying your dead."

7 **Abraham** rose and bowed to the **Hittites**, the people of the land.

8 He said to them, "If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me **Ephron son of Zohar**,

9 so that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as a possession for a burying place."

10 Now **Ephron** was sitting among the Hittites;

and **Ephron the Hittite** answered **Abraham** in the hearing of the **Hittites**, of all who went in at the gate of his city,

11 "No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it; in the presence of my people I give it to you; bury your dead."

12 Then **Abraham** bowed down before the people of the land.

13 He said to **Ephron** in the hearing of the people of the land, "If you only will listen to me! I will give the price of the field; accept it from me, so that I may bury my dead there."

14 **Ephron** answered **Abraham**,

15 "My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver--what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."

16 **Abraham** agreed with **Ephron**; and **Abraham** weighed out for **Ephron** the

: | Δλ ρ□□BOμεEλ □□Aη↓ρ) βαξ-τεε τ□Eξ-ψ⊕ν) β) ⊥
 v(⊖ϑXψϑω 5

fΣρ□□□AεAη-≤α⊖) λ]ξ□αΓτ) Η□Xψϑω □□Aη↓ρ) β)
 □□≤⊕θ□ ϙXψϑω 7
 :τ□Eξ-ψ⊕ν) βιλ

τΥEξ-ψ⊕ν) <β ♠ | Zτ) <β β□EHOψ | J ρ) πε⊖⊖ω 10
 □□□□Aη↓ρ) βαξ-τεε ψ□ιΓτιξαη/ | □ρ) πε⊖⊖ω □/α⊖ϑX
 ψϑω
 | | ρψι⊖-ρα⊖□αH ψ□EεA<β λ_ Ok) λ τ□Eξ-ψ⊕ν) β) ψ
 □□□⊕νϞζAε) <β
 :ρ□□⊖OμεEλ

:fΣρ□□□AεAη ≤α⊖ ψ□⊕ν) πιλ □□Aη↓ρ) βαξ □□□ξ
 αΓτ) Η□Xψϑω 12
 ρ□OμεEλ □□□fΣρAεAη-≤α⊖ ψ□⊕νϞζAε) <β | □ρ) π
 ε⊖-λεε ρ□E<β⇒δϞψϑω 13

¹⁷¹ For long Hebrew texts, only the relevant Hebrew text is provided, while for the reader's convenience, the complete English translation of the section is given.

: | λ ρ BO μ ε λ [A η ↓ ρ] β α ε - τ ε ε [| ρ] π ε ω / α ω
 ϩ X ψ ϩ ω 14

□ [| ρ] π ε ω - λ ε ε [≤ A η ↓ ρ] β α ε τ □ □ α μ) H ∩ X ψ ϩ ω 1
 6

∞ ε σ □ ε λ κ α η - τ ε ε [□ O ρ] π ε ω | λ □ □ [≤ A η ↓ ρ] β α ε λ □ O θ |
 H ∩ X ψ ϩ ω

τ □ α λ β ρ α ε τ γ ε ξ - ψ ⊕ ν | β | ψ □ □ □ ⊕ ν < ζ A ε | λ β ρ □ □ ε
 λ β / λ δ ρ □ □ ε H (ε

: ρ □ □ □ E ξ O λ σ α λ ρ □ □ □ E β O τ ∞ ε σ □ ε λ κ λ Π θ □ □ □ ε H □ □
 □ τ | ε E μ

silver
 that he had named in the hearing of the **Hittites**, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.

17 So the field of **Ephron** in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, passed

18 to **Abraham** as a possession in the presence of the **Hittites**, in the presence of all who went in at the gate of his city.

19 After this, **Abraham** buried **Sarah his wife** in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.

20 The field and the cave that is in it passed from the Hittites into Abraham's possession as a burying place.

[□ Γ τ) Η ι ε η Ζ ↓ ρ Α Ω] - τ ε ε [≤ A η ↓ ρ] β α ε ρ □ α β ⊗ θ □ / Ε κ -
 ψ ⊙ ρ (ξ α ε ω 19

ε ω □ □ □ ι η ε Ψ ⊙ ρ) μ α μ ψ □ ⊕ ν) Κ π - λ α τ η □ Α λ Ε Κ π | κ α Γ
 μ α η η ⊥ ⊙ δ) Ω τ □ ⇒ ρ Α τ | μ - λ ε ε
 : α τ □ ρ ν | λ κ f Σ ρ □ □ □ ε ε) λ β / | ϣ ρ | β ε ξ

This sample of Hebrew narrative shows the constant use of relexicalisation. Notice for example the relexicalisation of Sarah in verses 1 and 2. Her name is mentioned up to four times. The theme of the narrative of Genesis 23 is Abraham buying the plot of land with the cave of Machpela for a burial ground, needed first of all for his own wife Sarah. Verses 1-2 provide the grounding for the unfolding theme of the purchase of a burial place, providing more than only the text-world setting. It is setting the frame for the theme which is to unfold.

Again Sarah is mentioned in a full relexicalized noun phrase in verse 19, the concluding high point and conclusion of the story. The relexicalisation of Sarah in this case is not an example of a development marker, but rather of repetition strengthening a theme. It is all about finding a burial place for *her*. This argument is further evidenced by the use of “his wife” in verse 19. This presupposed information is thought to be so important that it must be reiterated. There is no evidence that Biblical Hebrew authors do this as a rule, but this seemingly redundant explication and repetition of known information is one of the devices used to strengthen a topic cognitively.

The relexicalisation of Abraham in Genesis 23 follows a different pattern. The function used is that of a development marker in the sense of that described by Levinsohn (2000b), as well as that of reference disambiguation. In addition, the overall cognitive effect of these repeated

an active cognitive state, using the same phrase as in verse 3, “the LORD, the God of heaven and earth.” It can be argued that Yahweh remained discourse active for the whole continuation span, all the way from verse 3 until verse 7. By not being central to the theme, Yahweh remains cognitively accessible, but only semi-active. In verse 7, by means of a complex and long left-dislocation configuration, Yahweh becomes discourse active again in a predicate focus structure (the assertion being “God (...) will send his angel before you.” The three relative clauses within the left-dislocated construction reconfirm, reiterate, and strengthen the identity of the One who will send his angel before the servant, and as such, over and above the function of topic promotion, the promoted topic also fulfills the function of topic confirming (as a from of topic contrasting). While the topic in both the left-dislocation and the fronting constructions is one referent, namely Yahweh, the left-dislocated topic expression fulfills the topic shift function and the recursive fronted pronoun the topic confirming function. The identity of the referent in the three relative clauses is confirmed in the fronted pronoun: “...He who took me... and he who spoke to me...., **he himself** will send his angel before you.” In the unfolding story of the servant successfully finding a wife for Isaac, the thematic importance of God’s divine assistance is an underlying thread, confirmed for example by the servant’s prayer (24:12-14) following not too long after verse 7. The marked configuration in verse 7 is a theme trace in the sense that it adds to the theme the perspective of divine intervention (God himself) over and above the human activity as played out in this narrative.

Genesis 24.62 is an example of an identifiable and semi-active topic promoted to discourse active status.

<p>Αηψ□ετΟρ(τϖϛϖ<ω η□@θ)β(ρ ≤@θ□ΑΓτϛω 61 ≤ψ□ιΓλαμ<Φγαη-λατ □□η ρν)βα<κ(ριΓτ ϛω ΗψΥι&Αη ψΖ@ρ(ξ&α η ρν)κ□αλΕΓτϛω :▲□αλ⊕Χψϛω η□@θ)β(ρ-τε& δεβ□ετΑη ξ□ ∇<θ∩Χψϛω ψΥι&Ορ ψ□αξ&αλ ρ□□□Ε& <β ε □<βιμ ε□□□ Α<β □□□□Αξ]χ∩ψ]τ<ω 62 :β∅γ□∅Φν&η fΣρ□□□ε& <β β□ΕΗ ψ ε]Βη <ω βΣρ□□ΥΑτ τ □ν)πιλ ηΨΣδ&ΚΩα<β =>ξ]Β ΩΑλ θ□Αξ]χ∩ψ ε□Εχ⊕Χψϛω 63 □□ωψ ρνψΕτ ε□ΑΚΩ∩Χψϛω :≤ψ□ι&Α<β ≤ψ□ιΓλαμ<γ η□⊕Φνιη<ω ε\ρ↓ ϛΧψϛω</p>	<p>61 Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. 62 Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. 63 Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. 64 And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, 65 and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself.</p>
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Αηψ↓∅νψΕπ-τεε □□□η@θ) β(ρ ε□ΑΚΩιΓτϩ
 ω 64
 θΥΑξ) χ∩ψ-τεε εΣρ□□□ΕΓτϩω
 :λ□Αμ ρΦγαη λ□απΕμ λΨΟΚπιΓτϩω

A wife for Isaac was the goal for which the servant set out (24.10). Isaac as the “son of my master” is referred to with these terms in verses 14, 36, 37, 38, 40, 44, 48, and 51, not as a primary topic but as a secondary topic. The proper name was last used in verse 14, and thereafter only “my son” and “my master’s son.” Isaac in these verses is a semi-active participant. But in verse 62 Isaac is fully relexicalized and in a fronted we-X-qatal clause promoted to a fully active primary topic. The clause also signals a scene change. Isaac is the primary topic for the continuation span from verse 62 until verse 64, when Rebekah saw him. Isaac now remains discourse active until the end of the narrative. The topic promotion in verse 62 is a theme trace in the sense that it raises a thematic participant (a part of the goal of the story) to active status. This change introduces the climactic part of the narrative, the final outcome of the solution part of the problem-solution schema.

An additional example of theme shifting and topic promotion to primary topic is Genesis 29.9:

<p> ≤ΥΑΓμιπ ρ□□□□□ΕΖβ⇒δ) μ]ΦνΨΣδ π 9 Αηψ□ιβΑε) λ ρ□□□□□ΕΗ(ε □□□/ε·Φγαη-≤ ιπ ηΑε□ΑΖβ [λ□□□□Εξ↓ρ□□ω :εω□ιη η□ΑπΟρ ψ□ιΖκ </p>	<p> 5 He said to them, "Do you know Laban son of Nahor?" They said, "We do." 6 He said to them, "Is it well with him?" "Yes," they replied, "and here is his daughter Rachel, coming with the sheep." 7 He said, "Look, it is still broad daylight; it is not time for the animals to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them." 8 But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep." 9 While he was still speaking with them, and Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. </p>
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Rachel is already identified in verse 6 as the daughter of Laban, and she is approaching with her sheep. In verse 9, Rachel arrives on the scene and the theme is re-directed to the dialogue between her and Jacob. “Rachel” is fronted in a we-X-qatal clause in verse 9b. The sentence has a predicate focus structure, with Rachel as semi-active topic now promoted to active status. The local theme has shifted and the proceedings from here onwards go in a new direction.

8.2.3 Primary topic for topic shifting

As seen in chapter 7 (7.4.4), topic shift is the change from one discourse active topic to another discourse active topic, but the topics are discontinuous. Like topic promotion, primary topics used in a topic shift function also indicate a theme shift.

Primary topic shift is a theme trace that often appears in a marked information structure, often as a fronted subject, with or without an article, or in a left-dislocated construction.¹⁷²

Example: Genesis 8.5 is a case of topic shift:

<p> ΗΣΔ□□ΖΟξα∠β □□□ηΑΒΕΓται ξϩν□ΑΓτ ΗΣΔ□□ Οξαλ ≤ Ψψ ρ□□□ΑΩΑπ-ηΑπ βι H ∠β ψ□ιπψιβ ΚΗαη :Ξ ↓ρ↓ρ(ε ψΒ©ρΑη λ□απ ρ □σΑξζω ♠ Ζλαη □□□ ψΑη κρψ□αΓ μαιζω 5 ψ ρψιΩ(πΑΣη ΗΣΔ□□Οξαι δ□□απ :≤ψ ρΑηεΣη ψ□ΕΗε↓ρ]Ψε\ρρν ΗΣΔ□□ ξαλ δ□□□□Αξεε]∠β ψ ρψιΩ(πΑ□∠β </p>	<p>4 and the ark came to rest in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat 5 (And) the waters abated continually until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month appeared the tops of the mountains.</p>
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In the above example, the primary topic until verse 4 is “the ark”¹⁷³. In verse 5 the primary topic changes to “the waters”, already discourse-active, in a subject-fronting construction followed by a comment in predicate focus structure. The topic change to “the waters” is the local theme for verse 5. The abating of the water is a slight theme shift from the beginning of verse 4 until the end of verse 5, signaling a slightly new development in terms of the abating waters. Verse 5b is a case of argument focus, with the fronted temporal phrase requiring the qatal verb construction, suggesting the following translation: “*Only in the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.*”

An example of a primary topic change right at the end of an episode is Genesis 18.33. It is a case where topic shift indicates a contrast, and such contrasting of primary topics is sometimes used for closure:

.... ρεμᾶ·Χψϩω÷ 32 32 Then he (Abraham) said,

¹⁷² Left-dislocation would be prototypically used in cases of topic shifting and topic promotion, as is the case in English (cf. the paper by Gregory & Michaelis (2001), but with the rigorous syntactic definition of left-dislocation as set forth in chapter 3 (3.2.1.2), cases of left-dislocation seem to be rather rare, at least in the first 25 chapters of Genesis.

¹⁷³ Notice how the focus peak is marked in verse 4 by means of end-weight “on the mountains of Ararat.” According to Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze (1999:342-343), the unmarked word-order in the main field, or after the verb, is the following: (VERB) + Subject + Object + indirect Object + prepositional Object + other complement/adjunct + complement/adjunct (place) +adjunct (time). In Genesis 8.4 the locative right at the end is in a marked position, after the temporal adjunct, and as such shows some marked post-verbal word order.

<p style="text-align: center;">: □□□ ρεμ□·Xψϱω η↓ ρωη□ψ ▲ελ□□□⊕Xψϱω 33 ≤ΥAη↓ρ) βαε-λεε ρ□□□E∠β⇒δ) λ η□AGλ ι∠κ ρ□□□□εH(εα∠κ : μOθ) μιλ β□AH □Aη↓ρ) βαε□ω</p>	<p>He (God) answered, 33 And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.</p>
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In this example, the two main participants since 18.1 are the Lord and Abraham. Both take turns to be the primary topic in the unfolding dialogue. Often, as in verse 32, the primary topic change is by means of wayyiqtol-clauses. This is one way in which the author can maintain the theme continuity. But the final change in verse 33 is a X-qatal-clause with Abraham fronted and contrasted with the LORD, used to close an episode. This end-of-section or end-of-episode type of theme trace is quite common in Biblical Hebrew.¹⁷⁴ The primary topic shift and topic contrast in a we-X-qatal construction at the end of a section in which the actions of the main characters are compared, seems to be a signal of what Goutsos (1997) calls a *topic closure*. It signals that a theme shift is imminent.

A similar example is Genesis 37.11 where a primary topic is used for topic shift at the end of a scene (closure):

<p style="text-align: center;">ωψΥAξεε Ψβ-]εCv∇θCψϱω 11 :ρ□□□Aβ↓∠δαη-τεε ρ□□□αμAH ωψ□ιβ Aε□ω</p>	<p>11 and were jealous of him his brothers, and his father kept the matter. 12 Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, (own translation)</p>
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The new major scene starts with the brothers going to graze the flocks, but in a wayyiqtol clause. The last clause of the preceding scene, with the theme of Joseph being hated by his brothers because of Jacob’s favoritism and Joseph’s provocative dreams, is that Jacob kept the matter (of the dreams) in his heart. In the we-X-qatal clause, the section is ended by the comment on the reaction of the brothers (their hatred) and of his father (Jacob keeping the matter in mind). The clause with Jacob as primary topic fronted ends the scene. “His father” is in a chiasmic structure comparing his reaction with that of “his brothers”. The fronting is used for contrasting the primary topics, not for theme closure *per se*. Episode closure is one of the uses of such contrasting constructions. The chiasm is incidental. By ending the previous section with a we-X-qatal construction, the next does not need to start with one. That is indeed the case here in Genesis 37.11-12. Whereas the closing clause of his father (Jacob) “keeping the matter” is not central to the theme thread of the previous few verses, it is the

¹⁷⁴ Amongst others, the end-of-sections describing what was created on each day in Genesis 1 also use fronting.

The fronted subject in Genesis 21.1 is Yahweh, but Yahweh is also the primary topic in the preceding verse, 20:18¹⁷⁵. Verse 1 is not really a discourse-active topic shift, but rather an indication of a change of theme and text-world scene. The sentence has a topic-comment articulation, with the focus as predicate focus. The change of scene is from how God dealt with Abimelech's house to what he now does for Sarah. He will fulfill his promise of a son for Abraham and Sarah. This local theme is signaled by the parallelism of Genesis 21.1, in which the first line of the parallelism has a marked word-order configuration *we-X-qatal*¹⁷⁶. A new continuation span or thematic grouping is now introduced. The birth scene goes on until verse 7. It can be concluded from this that the marked primary topic in Genesis 21.1a is a theme trace.

8.2.4 Primary topic for topic strengthening and topic contrasting

As defined in chapter 3 (3.2.3), topic contrasting is more than only the syntactic fronting of a constituent or the explicit mention of a pronoun already referred to in a verb affix. It is the pragmatic marking of fronted primary topics or secondary topics for *contrastiveness*.

Contrastiveness can be linked to both topic and focus (cf. chapter 2 and 4; cf. the discussions of Lambrecht (1994) in 2.2.4; Chafe (1994) in 2.2.5, and Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998) in 2.3.2).

The thematic function of the overlays of topic contrasting is the following: the *contrastiveness* function overlay *strengthens* referents cognitively and increases their thematic status. One or more of the participants in the topical framework can be put in some contrasting relation, contrasted with a semi-active referent, or with a referent actually discourse active in the topical frame. The author-speaker only does this with significant referents, referents that are so relevant to the theme that the special attention – and the special processing – is required. The topic contrasting overlay to primary topics and secondary topics therefore marks those referents as macro-words or main participants, and therefore thematic. The information structure strategy of topic contrasting is a theme trace. In this study, topic strengthening and contrasting is associated with primary topics and secondary topics. No cases of contrastive tail topics or contrastive topic frames were found in Genesis 1-25.

¹⁷⁵ Albeit not a wayyiqtol clause, but rather a ki-clause with an infinitive absolute confirming the event verb.

¹⁷⁶ A wayyiqtol clause with a relexicalized noun phrase could conceivably have done the same. Another possibility is a $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ -clause meaning something like “and after these things, ...” Subject fronting in a *we-X-qatal* clause is only one mechanism of theme shift. Other factors in the context need to be involved as well. Why the *we-X-qatal* construction has been chosen in this specific case, remains unclear. One possible explanation is that the *we-X-qatal* clause here also doubles as a type of heading.

The range of the topics that have contrastive overlays differs. Sometimes the range of topics has a local theme range, whilst in other cases it has a global theme range. I have found no evidence that it is one or the other. Cognitive strengthening seems to be the main strategy for its use.

Topic strengthening by means of contrasting takes place in three ways: strengthening the topic by confirming its identity, strengthening the topic by restricting its identity, and strengthening topics in pairs by comparing them. In Genesis 1-25 no examples have been found of restricting the identity of a topic, i.e. “only” topic x.

8.2.5. Topic confirming and discourse theme

An example of a primary topic used contrastively for thematic reasons is Genesis 3.16:

<p> \angle ρ□αμΑε η□□□ΑΚΗιθΑη-λ□εθ 16 \blacktriangle↓⊕νΟρ□□□Εη□ω \blacktriangle□□□⊕ν β Φχιτ □□ \squareηε∠β\ραε η□Α∠β\ραη \leqψΥ∩νΑβ ψΖ(δ) λ□ΕΓτ βεχ□εω ∠β \blacktriangle□Ετ⊗θ ΖΗ) Γτ □□□\blacktriangleΕΗψιθ-λεε□ω \square: \blacktriangle□Α∠β-λΑΗ) μ∩ψ \squareΨη□ω </p>	<p>16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet for your husband your desire shall be, and he shall rule over you."</p>
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The theme of the utterance on the woman’s punishment is that she will suffer in childbearing and that her husband will rule over her. The context (situation model) is about marriage and family. In the last clause of verse 16, the explicit third-person singular pronoun is the primary topic, made discourse-active in the previous clause in a sentence focus structure with a fronted configuration. The explicit pronoun confirms the identity of the husband, “he himself, the very one for whom your desire will be”, and is here a theme trace.

Genesis 6.17 is an example of a primary topic for confirming the identity of the referent:

<p> fΣρ□ΑεΑη-λαω □□□≤∩ψαμ λ □∠βαΓμα η-τεε εψ□ιβεμ \squareψ∩ν∩νιη ψ→∩ν(ε)ϑξω ρ□ΑΩΑ∠β-λΑ∠κ τ□□□ΕξαΗ) λ \leq∩ψΥΑμΑΚΗαη ταξ□αΓτιμ ≤ψ↓∩Χψαξ \Rightarrowξ]ρ □□□ ∠β-ρεΗ(ε \square: \square ρω∩γ∩ψ fΣρ□□□ΑεΑ∠β-ρεΗ(ε λΒΟ \angleκ </p>	<p>17 and I, behold I, am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you </p>
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In Genesis 6.17 is an important primary topic change: the “reason why” of all God’s instructions to Noah is now given. The use of the pronoun “I”, as well as the additional use of η⊕Φνιη with the first person singular suffix, reinforces the referent, who is God himself. The first pronoun is a contrastive topic shift. The *contrastiveness* overlay here is a comparing *contrast*, the “I” versus “you”, what each will do, contrasting Noah’s and God’s actions in the

sense of spelling each one's actions out in more detail. There is also an "I" subject verb affix in verse 18, active as the ongoing primary topic until verse 21. But the pronominal suffix here is the explicit subject of the subsequent participle and it may not have any particular information structure strategy beyond just cognitively strengthening the topic through repetition. The local theme is God pronouncing judgment on the world and the promise of a covenant with Noah, for which the fronted pronouns carry the primary topic.

8.2.5.1 Topic pair comparing and discourse theme

Contrasting in the sense of comparing two primary topics can become a theme trace.

An example is Genesis 4.3, where the pairs in compared contrast are underlined and the fronted constituents bold-faced in the English translation, and the fronted constituents blocked in the Hebrew text.

<p> $\leq\psi\Upsilon\iota\mu\ \phi\psi\ f\ \text{TM}\ \angle\theta\iota\mu\ \psi\ \square\iota\eta\ \subset\ \psi\ \mathfrak{R}\ \mathfrak{S}\ \omega\ 3$ $:\eta\ \square\ \phi\ \omega\eta\psi\ \square\alpha\lambda\ \eta\ \square\text{A}\xi\ \subset\ \nu\iota\mu\ \eta\ \square\text{A}\mu\ \downarrow\delta\langle\text{A}\mathfrak{S}\eta$ $\psi\ \perp\ (\rho)\ \text{K}\pi\iota\mu\ / \wedge\psi\ \square\ \nabla\theta\ \text{a}\ \square\text{E}\beta\ \phi\ \text{X}\psi\ \mathfrak{R}\ \omega$ $\mid\ \Psi\ \nu\text{a}\text{-}\chi\ \tau\ \mid\ \downarrow\ \rho\text{O}\kappa\ \mid\ \angle\beta\iota\mu\ \text{a}\ \downarrow\ \eta\text{-}\leq\mathfrak{R}\gamma\ \text{a}\psi\ \square\ \iota\beta\text{E}$ $\eta\ \underline{\lambda\epsilon\beta\ \square\ \epsilon\eta}\ \subset\ \omega\ 4$ $\text{A}\epsilon\eta\text{E}\beta\ \mid\ \lambda\epsilon\xi\ \square\ \text{E}\mu\ \downarrow$ $:\ \downarrow\ \text{A}\xi\ \subset\ \nu\iota\mu\text{-}\lambda\epsilon\text{a}\ \subset\ \omega\ \lambda\epsilon\beta\ \square\ \epsilon\eta\text{-}\lambda\epsilon\text{a}\ \eta\ \downarrow\ \phi\ \omega\eta$ $\subset\ \psi\ \text{a}\ \text{H}\ \square\ \square\ \square\ \text{H}\ \text{X}\psi\ \mathfrak{R}\ \omega$ $\eta\ \Upsilon\text{A}\ \text{a}\ \text{H}\ \text{a}\ \text{Z}\cdot\lambda\ \boxed{\mid\ \Psi\ \text{A}\xi\ \subset\ \nu\iota\mu\text{-}\lambda\epsilon\text{a}\ \subset\ \omega\ / \wedge\psi\ \square}$ $\boxed{\nabla\theta\text{-}\lambda\epsilon\text{a}\ \subset\ \omega\ 5}$ $\delta\ \square\ \text{O}\text{a}\ \mid\ \mu\ \square\ \square\ \square\ \wedge\psi\ \nabla\theta\ \mid\ \lambda\ \rho\alpha\ \xi\ \square\ \text{H}\ \text{X}\psi\ \mathfrak{R}\ \omega$ $:\ \omega\psi\ \square\ \phi\ \nu\text{A}\text{K}\pi\ \downarrow\ \Psi\lambda\ \mid\ \text{K}\pi\ \wedge\ \text{X}\psi\ \square\ \mathfrak{R}\ \omega$ </p>	<p>3 And in the course of time <u>Cain</u> brought of the fruit of the ground as an offering to the LORD, 4 and <u>Abel</u>, moreover, brought of the firstlings of his flock, of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard <u>for Abel and his offering</u>, 5 but <u>for Cain and his offering</u> he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. (author's translation)</p>
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Verses 3-5 form a thematic unit, with Abel and Cain sacrificing to the LORD as the thematic core. The comparison between the two is part of the theme. Marked word-order constructions in this unit function twice as theme traces. First Cain and Abel are compared as primary topics, with Abel fronted in verse 4a. Then Abel and Cain are compared again in verse 4b and 5a, this time as secondary topics and the LORD as primary topic. Again the second leg of the comparison is in a fronted we-X-qatal clause. All these comparing clauses have predicate focus structures¹⁷⁷.

Another example of comparing topics is Genesis 9.7, 9

<p> $:\angle\eta\ \square\ \text{A}\beta\text{-}\downarrow\beta\ \backslash\ \rho\ \downarrow\ f\ \Sigma\ \rho\ \square\ \square\ \square\ \text{A}\text{a}\beta\ \downarrow\ \text{B}\gamma\ \backslash\ \rho\ \iota\ \text{H}\ \downarrow\ \downarrow\ \beta\ \backslash\ \rho\ \downarrow$ $\downarrow\ \rho\ \downarrow\ \text{K}\pi\ \boxed{\leq\ \square\ \epsilon\ \Gamma\ \tau\ \alpha\ \text{a}\ \subset\ \omega\ 7}$ </p>	<p>6 Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind. 7 And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound</p>
--	--

¹⁷⁷ The negative in verse 5a is evidence of a predicate focus structure (see chapter 5 (5.2.1.4)).

positions. Both clauses are predicate focus structures, with the asserted information in the respective predicates.

In summary, this section has investigated how the cognitive-pragmatic theme functions of topic continuity, topic discontinuity (topic promotion, topic shift) and topic comparing contribute to the development of the macrostructure or theme of a text. On a concluding note, primary topics can have different levels of importance in longer discourse. Not all primary topics have the same degree of prominence. Sometimes their range is very short, maybe one or two clauses. It is expected that there are other rules that determine the relative importance of each, one of which would be recurrence and the quantity of cognitive strengthening it attracts. This is a subject for future investigation.

8.2.6 The rhetorical and syntactical devices of primary topics in Genesis 1-25

In order of frequency, six typical rhetorical and syntactic devices are used to carry the primary topic in Genesis 1-25. These six devices are affixed pronominal reference; relexicalized nominal reference in unmarked word order clauses; the two marked word-orders, fronted and left-dislocation; and fronting as divided into fronted explicit pronouns and fronted nouns, and left-dislocation and full pronouns.

8.2.6.1 Affixed pronominal reference in unmarked wayyiqtol clauses

The maintenance of primary topics through subject marking on the verb affix in wayyiqtol clauses is the most common marking of highly-accessible primary topics within continuation spans. At some boundaries of continuation spans affixed reference to the primary topic is maintained in many cases, but generally some scene-change, even with the same primary topic continuing, will be signaled by nominal relexicalisation.

8.2.6.2 Relexicalized nominal reference in unmarked wayyiqtol clauses

Relexicalisation of the primary topic, that is, full nominal reference, is common in the narratives of Genesis. As seen under 8.2.1, relexicalisation is a device of choice used to maintain primary topics when there is some development or shift of scene in the narrative. As seen so far, not all cases of relexicalisation mark a new development. In Genesis 23:1-2 (cf. example above, 8.2.1) relexicalisation is redundantly used to signal a thematic participant rhetorically. By means of contrast, Genesis 21.33,34 provides an interesting problem for the absence of relexicalisation where it should have been expected:

παβΥΑΗ ρ□□□□□Εε) βι<β τψΨ(ρ)β]Bτ(ρ)κ
 ρXψϑω 32
 | □εΑβ) χ-ραΩ □□□λΟκψιπ] ♣ελ□εμψιβ(ε≤
 @θ□□□ ρXψϑω
 :≤ψ□ιΓτ) Ηιλ) Κπ fΣρ□□□εε-λεε]β□υΗ ρXψ
 ϑω

32 When they had made a covenant at Beer-
 sheba,
 Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his
 army, left
 and returned to the land of the Philistines.
 33 And he planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba,
 and called there on the name of the LORD, the
 Everlasting God.

παβΥΑΗ ρ□□□□□Εε) βι<β λεΗ□εε τ□αΛΞ∩
 Xψϑω 33
 :≤□Αλ | τ λ□Εε η□ ρ ω η<ψ ≤□ΕΗ)]β ≤□ΑΗ-
 ε] ρλθ=∩Xψϑω

34 And **Abraham** resided as an alien many days
 in the land of the Philistines.

:≤ψ□ι<β⇒ρ ≤ψ□ιμ ρψ ≤ψ□ιΓτ) Ηιλ) Κπ fΣρ
 □□□εε)]β [≤□Αη] ρ] βαε] ρ ργ□ ρXψϑω 34

In verse 33 there is a primary topic shift to Abraham without the relexicalisation of Abraham, but in verse 34 there is no such shift though there is relexicalisation.

8.2.6.3 Fronting of an explicit pronoun signaling a theme shift

An example of a fronted primary topic for topic shift as well as theme shift is the pronoun ‘you’ in Genesis 15.15:

ρ□□□Εβ@<θιΓτ ≤ | [λΑΗ)]β ♣ψ□ετΟβ(ε
 -λεε ε | ΒβΑΓτ η□ΑΓτ αε<ω 15
 :η□Αβ | Ξ η□ΑβψΕΩ)]β

14 but I will bring judgment on the nation
 that they serve, and afterward they shall come
 out with great possessions.

15 And **as for yourself**, you shall go to your
 ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a
 good old age.

16 And they shall come back here in the
 fourth generation; for the iniquity of the
 Amorites is not yet complete."

Verse 15 is a theme trace because the fronted¹⁷⁸ pronoun signals a primary topic shift as well as announcing a theme participant, Abraham himself. Abraham as primary topical participant returned to be in focus: the blessing of his end is now given. There is a topic shift here, but the new primary topic is compared with the previous one in the same speech. It serves as a closure device, cf. Genesis 18.33 and 37:11.

8.2.6.4 Fronting of nouns for primary topic shift in marked we-X-qatal clauses

Both subject fronting and subject left-dislocation are theme traces. The difference between the two is not always clear, but it is suggested that primary topic changes and end-of-episode primary topic changes prefer fronting (where fronting is the pre-posing of the subject before the verb, but still part of the clause proper). Examples are presented below. Fronting is also

¹⁷⁸ The pronoun in the English translation comes across as a left-dislocation, but according to the strictly syntactic definition of left-dislocation the pronoun is just a case of fronting. One possible way to interpret the pre-posed pronoun as a case of left-dislocation is when the pronoun is taken as a vocative.

used for topic theme announcing and topic contrasting. One of the differences between left-dislocation and fronting in Genesis is that left-dislocation is generally used in direct speech, whereas fronting is not; see for instance Genesis 3.12; 17.14, 15; 19.20, 24.7, and 34.8.

Below follow a few examples of the fronting of primary topics as theme traces.

Genesis 26.26

<p>⇒ξ□E∠βcζιμ ≤□□□AH/εβ□∩Xψϩω 25 η↓ ρ ω η c ψ ≤□□□EH∠β □□□↓ρ∧θ∩Xψ ϩω ∫λ ∫ηAε ≤□AH-Ξ∅Xψϩω :ρ□□□Eε∠β θ□Aξ∣χ∩ψ-ψ∅δ∣βαπ ≤□A H-∣ρ∣κ∩Xψϩω ρ□□∣↓ρcΦγιμ ωψ□AλEε ♠□αλαη ♠ελ□ε □μνιβ<ε∩ω 26 : ∣∫εAβ∣χ-ραΩ λΨOκνιπ∣∣η□Eπ∅ρ□□□ Εμ □□τϩ•ζυξ<ε∩ω</p>	<p>24 And that very night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham's sake." 25 So he built an altar there, called on the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well. 26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army. 27 Isaac said to them,</p>
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The fronting of Abimelech in verse 26 is a primary topic promotion from semi-active to discourse active state. Abimelech was last mentioned in verse 16 and subsequently, became semi-active. But Abimelech and Isaac are the two main actors in the narratives of Genesis 26. This promotion of a semi-active main participant in this case is a theme trace. Verse 26 is also the introduction of a new and climactic scene, that of establishing a covenant between the two men.

8.2.6.5 Primary topic in a double fronting construction for simultaneous topic shift

Sometimes two fronted constituents, or a fronting and a left-dislocation, are used when the speaker-author wants to signal a topic shift¹⁷⁹ (Lambrecht's topic announcing). Left-dislocation is required in some cases because of the presence of another pre-verbal constituent (cf. the example of Genesis 17.9 below). It seems to occur frequently in direct speech. As such, it presents a different problem. Left-dislocation is more frequent in conversation and direct speech. Thematically the first fronted, or left-dislocated¹⁸⁰ constituent seems to have

¹⁷⁹ A left-dislocated subject that recurs in the clause proper, can also be a topic promotion device where a previously-active and temporarily dormant participant is re-activated.

¹⁸⁰ The fronted "you" pronoun is not left dislocated, but fronted in a double fronting construction. As defined in Chapter 3 (3.2.1.2), a left-dislocated constituent must have a resumptive in the clause proper, but resumptive may not be an affix of the verb. If the resumptive is a verb affix, then it is only a case of fronting (cf. Shimasaki, 2002:245; Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze, 1999:339).

range. An example of a primary topic shift, simultaneously signaling a theme shift as all topic shifts do, is Genesis 17.9. From verse 9 onwards, Abraham’s covenantal duties are thematic:

<p> $\leq \square A \eta \downarrow \rho \mid \beta \alpha \varepsilon - \lambda \varepsilon \varepsilon \square \square \leq \psi \iota \eta \cup \lambda \uparrow \varepsilon \rho \varepsilon \mu \varepsilon \bar{\cdot} X$ $\rho \square \square \mid O \mu \mid H \iota \tau \mid \psi \square \square \square \iota \tau \psi \mid \rho \mid \angle \beta - \tau \varepsilon \varepsilon \mid \eta \square \square A \Gamma \tau$ $:\leq \square A \tau O \rho O \delta \mid \lambda \clubsuit \psi \Psi \Sigma \rho \langle \xi \alpha \varepsilon \varepsilon \square \clubsuit \langle \omega \setminus \rho \mathfrak{R} \zeta$ $\square \omega \eta \square A \Gamma \tau \alpha \varepsilon$ $\psi \square \iota \tau \psi \mid \rho \mid \angle \beta \tau \varepsilon \square \cdot \zeta$ 10 $... \leq \square \varepsilon \kappa \psi \oplus \nu \psi \square \square \square E \beta \mid \square \square \square \psi \cap \nu \psi E \angle \beta \mid \square \rho \mid$ $\mu \mid H \iota \Gamma \tau \rho \square \square \square \square \square \varepsilon H \langle \varepsilon$ </p>	<p>9 God said to Abraham, "And as for you, my covenant you shall keep, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you</p>
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“Abraham” as a topic is already active as a secondary topic until verse 8. In verse 9, “and-you” (and as for you) is the primary topic change. It can be interpreted as a left-dislocation (as the translation would suggest) or a fronting, but fronting seems preferable, in line with the definition of left-dislocation. The topic shift also signals a contrast with the previous primary topic, the Lord himself. As such, verse 9 has three marked word-order configurations: fronting of the subject as the primary topic, fronting of the object in an argument focus construction, and tail topic elaborating on the primary topic (Abraham). This highly-marked configuration is a macroproposition and a theme trace.

8.3 THE THEMATICITY OF SECONDARY TOPICS.

Secondary topics can also be theme traces. When a secondary topic is continuously mentioned, lexicalized or pronominalised in one episode, it gains strength cognitively. And when a secondary topic switches and becomes a primary topic, such secondary topics gain in thematic importance.

Secondary topics appear in both marked and unmarked word-order configurations. The question can be asked whether secondary topics in unmarked constructions are less thematic, or whether they are just less important participants? I argue that the marked secondary topics are always important thematically, but that the unmarked ones are not necessarily less thematic or less important. Unmarked secondary topics can be either important thematically or less important, whereas marked secondary topics are always important. In addition, the marking of secondary topics often occurs at significant discontinuities in the narrative (for example at the end of scenes). As such, this confirms the thematic function of marked secondary topics by means of word-order.

In Genesis 1-25, secondary topics in fronted constructions appear at the end of sections or scenes. They mark thematic transition, either at the end of a scene or the beginning of a new one, marking some closure or some new development in the theme. When fronted secondary topics occur at the beginning of a new scene or thematic grouping, sometimes becoming theme-announcing or theme-shifting topic. A few such examples are presented in the next section. In addition, the fronted secondary topic expression is often in some topic contrasting relation to some other topical referent, often in a chiasmic structure¹⁸¹. These comparisons often occur at intersections or thematic boundaries in the narrative.

As with primary topics, secondary topics are used for topic continuity and for topic discontinuity, which include both topic promotion and topic shifting. Discontinuous secondary topics also function as theme shifts. Furthermore secondary topics are used where topics are contrasted. Examples of such thematic secondary topics are presented below.

8.3.1 Secondary topic for topic continuity (topic maintenance)

Once an activated referent becomes a secondary topic, it is recurrent and gains thematic significance. Its thematic importance increases to the degree that it does not have significant competition besides the primary topic, and to the degree that it is recurring. Once there is more than one secondary topic in a section, the relative importance of each to the other becomes significant, and the secondary topic mentioned most frequently, and receives the most cognitive strengthening by means of modifications and elaborations (like adjectives or dependent relative clauses), becomes thematic (cf. Heimerdinger’s observations on the repetition of referents as topical peaks, 1999:127 and discussion in chapter 7 (7.2.2.)).

Unmarked secondary topics often become pronominal. For instance, a recurring secondary topic is “the man/the human and his wife” in Genesis 3:21-23, where Adam and Eve are secondary topics:

<p> □Γτ Ηι ε λ ≤ ↓ δ Α ε λ ≤ ψ □ η υ λ ε η = ρ ω η < ψ □ Ω α π ρ Χ ψ ρ ω 21 : □ E H ι < β λ ρ Χ ψ ρ ω ρ Ψ π τ B ν τ Α < κ ≤ ψ □ η υ λ ε η □ □ □ ρ ω η < ψ ρ ε μ ε □ · Χ ψ ρ ω 22 : ...] Φ ν ε Γ μ μ δ □ □ □ □ α ξ α ε < κ □ □ □ η ρ ψ Α η □ □ □ ≤ ↓ δ Α ε □ Α η / □ Ε η / Σ δ □ Υ Ε π → ρ Φ γ μ μ ≤ ψ □ η υ λ ε η □ ρ ω η < ψ] η □ Ε ξ Γ λ α Η < ψ □ ρ ω 23 </p>	<p>21 And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.</p> <p>22 Then the LORD God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, ..."</p> <p>23 and the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken.</p>
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¹⁸¹ These chiasmic structures are incidental. The information structure relations are primary.

η□Αμ↓δ(ε□□□Αη-τεε □□□δΟβ(τ□αλ
 :≤□ΑΚΗιμ ξ□∇∠θυλ ρ□□□εΗ(ε

God is the primary topic of all three verses, and “the man and his wife” and “the man” are the secondary topics, all presupposed, in verses 21 and 23. The local theme is the immediate aftermath of the Fall, with God making garments of skin for Adam and Eve and then banishing them from the Garden of Eden. In the direct quote of verse 22, “the man” became a very local primary topic, but framed within the action of the more prominent primary topic, God, where God speaks to Himself. The direct speech here is an interlude, a different text-world¹⁸² briefly entered. There is no real local theme shift in the scene here. “The man” just continues as a secondary topic in verse 23. As seen in this example, recurring secondary topics, in spite of not being marked in any way, are theme traces.

8.3.2 Secondary topic for topic promotion

Genesis 17.15 is an example of a secondary topic that is promoted to discourse-active status, while shifting the theme as well:

<p>≤□Αη↓ρ βαε-λεε □□□≤ψιηυλ ε ρεμε X ψ98ω 15 ψ ↓ρΑΩ ∠η□Αμ Η-τεε εΒ↓ρ∧θιτ-ελ ↓ □ Γτ Ηιε ψΖ⇒ρΑΩ :∠η□Αμ Η ηΨ↓ρΑΩ ψ□ι∠κ</p>	<p>15 God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, for Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed....</p>
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The left-dislocated “Sarai your wife” is the object of the main clause and also a secondary topic. Abraham is the primary topic while the left-dislocating of “Sarai” marks Sarai as a topical point of departure of the subsequent discourse until the end of verse 16. “Sarai” was identifiable but discourse inactive until this point. She was last referred to in Genesis 16.8.

8.3.3 Secondary topic for topic shifting

Secondary topics in marked word order positions can also mark a shift between discourse active topics. In the example below of Genesis 19.10-11, recurring secondary topics fulfill a thematic role, in this case:

<p>≤□↓δ ρψ-τεε □□□≤ψιΗ ρv(εΑΩη ξ λ Η∩Χψ98ω 10</p>	<p>10 But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and the door they shut.</p>
---	---

¹⁸² The text-world of the narration and the text-world of the narrator are different (Christo van der Merwe, personal communication).

ηΑτϷψΥΑΖβαη ≤□εηψΕλ(ε Ξ | λ-τεε ε]β
 ψ□ιβ ϕ Χψϩω
 :]ρ□□□ ϕ γΑσ τελΨΣΖδαη-τεε□ω
 τ∩ψ□αΖβαη ξατ□□□εΚπ-ρεΗ(ε ≤ψ□ιΗϕ
]ν(εΑη-τεε□□ω 11
 ≤ψ□(ρΘωϷναΖσαΖβ □□□]Ζκιη
 λ | ϛδ ϕ Φγ-δαϷϷω/ΨΟΞ@Ζθιμ
 :ξατ□ΑΚπαη εΒ·χ]μιλ]Ψε]λ∩Χψϩω

11 And **the men who were at the entrance of the house**
 they struck with blindness
 from the small to the great,
 and they were unable to find the entrance.
 (author's translation)

The information flow in verses 10 and 11 is complex. More than one referent is highlighted in some form or another. The primary topic in verse 10 until verse 11b is “men”, the angels. The primary topic does not receive additional marking by fronting or any other means. But two secondary topics are fronted. The secondary topic “the door” (notice the definite article and the object marker) is fronted and thus mark the end of that specific sub-scene of ‘Lot outside his house’. Instead of the word “door”, a related concept, namely “entrance”, is used. “Entrance” is in the same cognitive domain of “door”, activated by the script of “the door.” Again the word “the entrance” appears at the beginning of verse 11, as part of the fronted secondary topic “the men of Sodom at the entrance”, and one last time right at the end of verse 11. Consequently, in spite of the two different words used, the cognitive frame “place to enter the house” has been cognitively strengthened and is therefore part of the local theme development. The fronting of a relexicalisation of “the men” outside signals a secondary topic shift. A tail topic further strengthens “the men” from Sodom: “both small and great”, as an elaboration. The relexicalized “men” then becomes primary topic in the last proposition of verse 11. This is the last time the men of Sodom are mentioned as a primary topic.

8.3.4 Secondary topic for theme shifting

All cases of topic promotion and topic shifting also shift the theme, be it a major or minor re-direction thereof. There are cases of a theme shift where the participants, the topic expressions, remain unchanged. Both fronting and left-dislocation are employed as syntactic devices. First some fronting examples.

An example of a simultaneous topic shift and a theme shift employing the syntactic device of fronting is Genesis 12.15-17, where a secondary topic (“Abram”) is fronted as a newly-activated secondary topic, but in verse 16b Abram immediately becomes the primary topic. What is happening to Abram is the thematic core of verse 16.

η□ΟϷ\ραπ ψΖ@ραΩ □□□ΖηΑτΟε] ελ
 ρ∩Χψϩω 15
 η]ΟϷ\ραΚπ-λεε Ζη□ΑτΟε]Βλ]λ□αηϷψ
 ϩω

15 And the officials of Pharaoh saw her,
 and they praised her to Pharaoh,
 and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

:η-|Οτ\ραΚπ τψ□ΕΖβ η□ΑΚΗιθΑη ξ□∇
 ∠η|↓ρ]β<τσα∠β βψ□ιΞψΕη [B↓ρ]βαε]λ
] 16
 ≤ψ□(ρΟμ<ξθω □□□ρ@θΑβ]-θ·χ | λ-ψι
 η<ψθΝω
 :≤ψ□ιΓλαμ<γ]τΨΟνΟτ<θθω τ□ΟξΑπ|Η
] □□□≤ψ(δΑβ<τθω
 ≤ψ□ιλΟδ<Φγ ≤ψ□ιτ ργ<ν η_Οτ\ραΚπ
 -τεε |η□ ρωη<ψ τ=θΦγθν<ψθω 17
 |]τψΕ∠β-τεε<ω
 :≤|↓ρ]βαε τεΗ□Εε ψΨ⇒ρΑΩ ρ□□□αβ\
 ∠δ-λατ

16 And **with Abram** he dealt well for her sake; and he acquired sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys, and camels.

17 But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

The comparison is between what happens to Sarai and to Abram. In verse 16, over and above signaling the *contrast* with Sarai, the fronting of “Abram” also indicates a topic shift, be it a short one. Only for the rest of verse 16 “Abram” is the primary topic. The focus structure of such configurations is predicate focus structure with a topic frame, having a marked word-order (i.e., fronting) construction. This marked construction states the key concept of the next thematic grouping (be it how short), as well as the transition to the new grouping. Verse 16 is a predicate focus structure with Abimelech the primary topic.

Genesis 20.16 is another example of a fronted secondary topic shift that simultaneously marks a theme shift:

ρ□αμΑε [ηΖ↓ρΑΩ]λ] 16
 ♣ψ□ιξΑε]λ □□□εεσε<κ ∞ελ□εε ψιΓτ□α
 τ ρν η=⊕Φνιη
 ≤ρψ↓θνψΕτ τ]Ζσ] <κ □□□♣Αλ-ε]η η□
 ⊕Φνιη
 :ταξ□ΑκΟν<ω λΨΟ<κ τ□Εε<ω ♣ΥΑΓτι
 ε ρ□□□□εΗ<ε λΨΟκ]λ

14 Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him.

15 Abimelech said, "My land is before you; settle where it pleases you."

16 **To Sarah** he said, "Look, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; it is your exoneration before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated."

17 Then Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children.

In verse 16, Abimelech is the primary topic, but “Sarah” as secondary topic is fronted in a predicate focus structure. In the rest of the verse he addresses Sarai.

In addition to fronting, syntactic left-dislocation of a secondary topic is used as a theme shifting or theme re-directing device. An example is Genesis 17.20 where the left-dislocated “Ishmael” signals some theme shift, but “Ishmael” is a secondary topic, not the primary topic. God remains the primary topic since verse 19. But Ishmael, while not the primary topic in the

subsequent exchange, is still central to the local theme. The picture is of what God will do about him.

≤ψΥτηυλΓ εΑΩη-λεε ≤□Αη↓ρ| βαε ρεμB
 ·Χψϑω 18
 :♣ψ□ΘνΑπ| λ η□Θψ| ξρψ λε□EπΑμ| ΗΓ
]Bλ

□♣ψιΓτ| πσΑμ| Η λε□EπΑμ| ΗΓψ| λ|] 20
 | □τΟε ψιΓτ| κΖ⇒ρΕΖβ | η□□□⊕Φνιη
 δ□□| Οε| μ δ□□ΖΟε| μιΖβ | ΨτΟε ψ□ιτψΕ
 Ζβ| ριηεω | _τΟε ψ□ιτψ⊙ρ| πιηεω
 δψ□ιλ | ψ □□□≤ιεψιΩεν ρ□□□ΑΩΑπ-≤ψ
 ⊕ν| Η
 :λ | Ξδ ρ Φγ ψ | Βγ| λ ωψ□ιΓτατ<ν|]

17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

18 And Abraham said to God, "O that **Ishmael** might live in your sight!"

19 God said, "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

20 And **as for Ishmael**, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous;

twelve princes he shall father, and I will make him a great nation.

21 But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year."

“Ishmael” is an identifiable referent, but has become inactive since last mentioned in Genesis 16.16. Ishmael was made discourse-active again in Genesis 17.18, in the words of Abraham: “Oh, that Ishmael may live in your sight”, with Ishmael fronted before the verb. In verse 19 the local theme is re-directed by God, “denying” Abraham’s wish and to replace Ishmael by a son to Abraham and Sarai as the true heir, and then, by means of comparing, God re-activates Ishmael in Abraham’s mind as a topic He wants to say something about him, namely what will happen to him in the future (verse 20). In verse 18, an event-reporting sentence focus structure, Ishmael is again promoted to discourse active status, in a marked, fronted configuration. In verse 20, in a left-dislocated noun phrase with a]λ preposition, the secondary topic is marked in terms of word-order. In verse 21 the theme is re-directed again to the heir Isaac, introduced with a fronted secondary topic “my covenant.” This example illustrates that although in many cases marked word-order configurations are used as theme traces, it is not so for all cases of theme shifting or re-direction. Genesis 3.16-17 is a case of discourse-active secondary topic shift:

ρ□αμΑε η□□□AKHιεΑη-λ□εε
 ≤ψΥρνΑβ ψΖ(δ) λ□ΕΓτ βεχ□επ| Ζβ ♣↓⊕νΟρ□□□Ε
 ηεω ♣□□⊕ν | β| Φχιεω □□□ηεΖβ| ραε η□ΑΖβ| ραη
 :♣□ΑΖβ-λΑΗ| μρψ ε| Ψηεω ♣□Ετ⊕θ| ΖΗ| Γτ □□□
 ♣ΕΗψιε-λεεεω
 η□ΑΖβ| ραη ρ□αμΑε η□□□AKHιεΑη-λ□εε 17

16 **To the woman** he said, "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

17 **To the man** he said...

The indirect object with preposition “to the woman” is fronted and functions here as a frame within which the rest of the verse is to be interpreted. The definite article is evidence that *woman* is presupposed and discourse-active, a present participant of the active text-world scene. This verse is a good example showing the *thematic range* of such a marked secondary topic: the rest of the verse deals with the punishment for the woman (and women). A similar example than Genesis 3.16 is Genesis 3.17a, where the thematic development shifts to *the man*: “**to the man** he said, ...” .

As seen above in the example of Genesis 17.15-17 (8.3.2), topic promotion is also employed to bring about a theme shift:

<p>≤□Aη↓ρ) βαε-λεε □□□≤ψιη∪λ[ε ρεμε X ψϱω 15 ψ↓ρAΩ ∠η□Aμ) H-τεε εB↓ρ∧θιτ-ε-λ ↓ □Γτ) Hιε ψZ⇒ρAΩ :∠η□Aμ) H ηΨ↓ρAΩ ψ□ι∠κ</p>	<p>15 God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."</p>
<p>ωψ□ ρvAKπ-λαω ≤□Aη↓ρ) βαε λ⊥OKπ∩ Xψϱω 17 □∠βιλ) ∠β ρεμε□·Xψϱω θYAξ] χ∩Xψϱω δ□Eλ ρΦω∩ψ □□η ρvAH-η□AεEμ/□εβ)Γλαη :δ□□EλEΓτ η□ ρvAH ≤ψ□ιω) HιΓτ-ταβ< η η□↓ρAΩ-≤□ιε∠ω</p>	<p>17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"</p>

“Sarai” was last mentioned in Genesis 16.8, but made active again in Genesis 17.15. The theme of verse 15 and 16 is God’s blessing for Sarai: her new name and her importance as mother of kings. But God is the primary topic in topic-comment sentences. The left-dislocated constituent “Sarai your wife” is a secondary topic, but central to the local theme of that thematic unit.

8.3.5 Secondary topic for topic strengthening and topic contrasting

Secondary topics are also employed in contrasting functions, mostly by comparing topics.

Fronting of the second one of the pair is common, as illustrated in Genesis 4.5 below:

<p>≤ψΥιμ ρψ f□□□™∠θιμ ψ□ιη∩ψϱϑω 3 :η□ ρωηψ□αλ η□Aξ∩νιμ η□Aμ↓δ<εAϑη ψ⊥(ρ) Kπιμ/∩ψ□∇θ ε□Eβ ρXψϱω Ψνε>χ τ J ρOκ) ∠βιμ ε] _η-≤ϱγ εψ□ιβε η λεβ□εη∠ω 4 /ΓεηEβ) λεξ□Eμ]</p>	<p>3 In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,</p>
--	--

8.4 THE THEMATICITY OF TOPIC FRAMES

As described in chapter 3 (3.2.4), topic frames are referents in terms of which the main referent is interpreted. The frame is a referent that sets the frame of reference for the primary topic. Jacobs (2001:656) describes this type of topic. A topic frame must always be followed by a primary or secondary topic for which it provides the frame. Topic frame is one of the four distinct topic categories (with primary, secondary, and tail topic), whereas a topic theme shifting or theme announcing is a primary or secondary topic that has an additional function of announcing a thematic macroword dominating the contents of the subsequent sentence or paragraph. Topic frames are rare.

An example of a locative topic frame is 2 Kings 1.4:

<p>η↓ ρ ω η ⊂ ψ ρ □ □ □ □ α μ Α ε - η ↓ Ο Ζ κ □ □ □ Ε κ Α λ ⊂ ω 4 η ρ Φ ν □ ε Γ μ μ δ □ □ Β ρ Ε τ - ε ↓ λ ≤ □ Α Κ Η Α τ ψ □ ι λ Α □ - ρ ε Η (ε η □ Α Λ Ξ ι Γ μ α η) τ ↓ μ Α Γ τ τ Ζ μ ψ □ □ □ ι Ζ κ</p>	<p>And therefore, so says the LORD: The bed on which you climbed there, you shall not leave it, Because you shall certainly die.</p>
--	---

The theme of verse 4 is the prediction of king Ahazia's certain death. The primary topic is "you", referring to the king in a direct speech utterance. The left-dislocated phrase "the bed on which you climbed there" is a topic frame. The main predication "you shall not leave it" in a predicate focus structure introduced by the negative particle is constrained to occur only within the frame set for it by the dislocated phrase. The whole proposition, the dislocated phrase plus the main predication, is thematic because of its strengthening by the next clause "because you shall certainly die", because it ties in with the initial sickness of the king activated in the first scene, and because it is a proposition that requires additional processing effort due to the "irregular" word-order and information structure.

Topic frames can serve as theme traces in the sense that they cognitively strengthen the topical referent they provide the frame for. Topic frames, as a category of topic expression are, like primary topics and secondary topics, not always a theme trace. The subsequent primary topic framed by the topic frame may have gained in cognitive strength, edging closer to being a macroword, but this is not necessarily always the case. A topic frame does occur in a marked construction, but this does not automatically make it a theme trace.

8.5 THE THEMATICITY OF TAIL TOPICS

As defined in Chapter 3 (3.2.3) tail topics, as rare as they are, are also topics that can be thematic. Tail topics function as an afterthought, in terms of an elaboration, or as a convenient recapitulation construction when the actual topic is too long to be incorporated in the clause proper. What is significant of tail topics in Kintsch's theory (1998) of comprehension is that the elaboration of the topic in a right-dislocation strengthens that topic cognitively. This strengthening does not always need to have thematic import, especially not when only background specification is taking place. But in cases where the tail topic reinforces the primary topic, it can be thematic.

The thematics of tail topics is not very clear. In some cases it seems only to be a syntactic mechanism incorporating longer nominal phrases without disrupting the flow of information. It can therefore be interpreted as a mechanism assisting the information flow. But tail topics also specify and elaborate primary topics or secondary topics. By means of the specification of such primary topics or secondary topics, these topics are strengthened thematically.

8.5.1 Tail topic for highlighting one member of a set

Tail topics as a rule elaborate, add to, and fill out the information of the anchor constituent mentioned earlier in the sentence. In other words, the referent of the tail topic is anchored to a referent in the main clause, and almost always co-referential, that is, referring to the same referent. Such an anchor constituent of the main clause is generally a primary topic. Andreas Michel (1997:45-71) calls this expression a *split coordination structure*, and argues that such expressions in Biblical Hebrew tend to contain *lists*.

Example: Genesis 13.1

<p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> ÷ ≤∩ψ□⇒ρ χΓμμμ ≤□↓ρ βαε □λααωϑXψ 1 So Abram went up from Egypt, </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> □Γμμω Ξ Bλ<ω _λ-ρεH(ε-λAκ<ω □ ϑω 1 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Γτ)Hτε<ω ε]η 2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. </div> 3 He journeyed on by stages from the Negeb as far as Bethel, ... </p>	<p>he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.</p>
---	---

The use of the list in this section of Genesis 13, is that it cognitively strengthens Abram as primary topic by providing information about his dependents. It stresses Abraham as the head of a group, and as the most important thematic participant in this narrative.

Another tail topic example is Genesis 20.7:

<p>□ □□□Hψιτᾶη-τεH□Eε β□EHAη η□AGτᾶ τω ε]□η εψ□□□ιβ ρν-ψ□ιζκ ♣\δαπα□ζβ λ□EΓλαKπ}τ∩ψζω ηΥ⊕ψ}ξ□∅ω τ]□μAGτ τ Zμ-ψιζκ τ⇒∠δ□□□ βψ□ιHE μ □□□♣cnψ□Eε-≤ιεζω :♣□Aλ-ρεH(ε-λAKζω η□AGτᾶε</p>	<p>Now then, return the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all that are yours."</p>
--	--

In this example, the tail topic contains additional information, filling out the detail of what is really meant by “you.” The author is saying that not only Abimelech, but his whole family and clan will be included in the punishment. The additional information is “those belonging to you.” Abimelech is responsible, and has been primarily addressed, but the utterance from God was ended with this additional afterthought. By means of this tail topic, the macro-word and macro-participant, Abimelech, has been cognitively strengthened. Over and above making explicit what was implied in Near-Eastern custom, it further stresses and highlights the severity and certainty of the punishment already expressed by the use of the infinitive absolute in the previous clause. The danger Abimelech put himself and his family in by taking Sarah is part of the macrostructure of this narrative. This illustrates the way God is protecting Abraham according to his promise. The tail topic construction strengthens that theme cognitively, and here it is a theme trace.

A similar example is Genesis 6.18

<p>♣ΥAGτᾶε ψ□ιτψ(ρ)∠β-τεε ψ□ιτOμ √θ(η)Rω 18 η□ABEΓταη-λεε □□□AτᾶAB] :♣□AGτᾶε ♣ψ□∅vAB-ψ□EHcn]□ ♣}Γτ}Hιεζω ♣ψ□∅vAB] η□AGτᾶ ε</p>	<p>17 For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.</p>
---	---

The rescuing of Noah and his family is central in the Flood narrative of Genesis 6-9. The tail topic elaboration on Noah’s family is significant. The author could have sufficed with just mentioning Noah, leaving his family implied. But by providing the full list, the mental picture of Noah’s whole family is strengthened and thus it is information that is part of the macrostructure. This list of his family is repeated altogether 7 times, of which 5 times are in right-dislocated tail topic constructions (Genesis 6.18, 7.1, 7.23, 8.15, and 8.18). In the other two cases, Genesis 7.7 and 7.13, the whole list occurs as subjects in the clause proper. In 7.15

the list of animals also occurs in a detached tail topic. There, the survival of two, male and female, of all species, is being underlined by the author.

8.5.2 Naming the collective group in the clause proper, while providing the submembers of the group in the detached, tail topic configuration

Such a tail topic example is from Genesis 7.21

<p>$f\Sigma\rho\Box A\exists A\eta-\lambda\alpha\omega \Omega\Box\Box\Box E\mu O\rho A\eta \rho\Box\Box\Box\Box A\Omega A$ $\angle\beta-\lambda A\angle\kappa \omega Y\mathfrak{R}\omega\subset\gamma\cap X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ 21 $\eta\downarrow\wp X\psi\alpha\xi\Box\Box\Box\alpha\beta\Box\Box\Box\eta A\mu E\eta \angle\beta\alpha\beta\Box\Box \overline{\omega}A$ $\angle\beta$ $f\Sigma\rho\Box\Box Y A\exists A\eta-\lambda\alpha\omega fZ\circ\rho OKH\alpha\eta f\Sigma\rho\Box\Box\Box\epsilon KH$ $\alpha\eta-\lambda A\kappa\Box\Box\Box$ $:\leq \Downarrow\delta A\exists A\eta \lambda\Psi O\kappa\subset\omega$ $\rho\Box\Box\Box\epsilon H(\exists \lambda_O\angle\kappa\mu \omega\psi\Box AK\pi\alpha\exists) \angle\beta \leq\psi M\cap X\psi$ $\alpha\xi \Rightarrow\xi\Box\Box\rho-\tau\alpha\mu H\cap\Box\Box\epsilon H(\exists \lambda\Box O\angle\kappa$ 22 $:\Box\Box E\mu \eta\Box A\beta\Downarrow\rho\Box\Box\Box A\xi\epsilon\angle\beta$</p>	<p>21 And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all human beings; 22 everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.</p>
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“All flesh” is the collective term in the main clause, with the members of that set in the detached tail topic. The thematic point is the comprehensiveness of the disaster; all living beings are included without exception, except of course the macroparticipants, Noah and his family. The comprehensiveness of the judgment is repeated in verse 22 with a fronted construction in an argument focus structure. The assertion is that *all on dryland* died, not just some. In this example, the use of a tail topic is thematic.

8.6 THE THEMATICITY OF TOPICAL DEICTIC ORIENTATIONS

Topic deictic orientations or text-world frames function to anchor the unfolding discourse in the mental text-world under construction. Such text-world constructing frames are spatio-temporal frames. A topical deictic orientation is a presupposed point of departure basic to the subsequent discourse, anchoring the subsequent discourse in the already active co-text and context (cf. the discussion on deictic text-world frames in chapter 3). Deictic orientations *frame* the theme in the sense of setting its spatio-temporal parameters. The spatio-temporal concepts activated by deictic orientations have range and influence over the subsequent discourse. The unfolding discourse is interpreted in the light of the information provided by the frame, in other words, it sets the framework for that scene. Such frames make the integration of the thematic macrostructure and the situation model possible, using concepts of the Construction-Integration model of Kintsch (1998). Take the deictic orientation away, and the integration fails. But as such, the frame is not inherent to the macrostructure or theme.

As argued in chapter 3 (3.3.1), deictic orientations are topical when the information contained in such constructions is cognitively recoverable from the context. The text-world information is not brand-new and unidentifiable. Where such brand-new and unidentifiable text-world information is activated, it occurs in focus constructions like post-verbal spatio-temporal adjuncts in predicate focus structures, fronted constituents in argument focus structures (often in response to WH-questions), and anywhere in the clause in event-reporting sentence focus structures.

Topical deictic orientations in many cases can be thematic in spite of being given, inferable information. Topic deictic can be adjunct words, phrases, or clauses, which are temporal or locative in nature.

Deictic orientations activate, re-confirm, or update cognitive text-world scenes. As Van der Merwe (1999b:114) pointed out, $\psi\iota\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ plus temporal adjuncts or clauses update the reference time. As such it frames a theme in terms of the text-world and provides thematic boundaries.

Genesis 7.10 is an example of a $\psi\iota\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ -clause functioning as a temporal adjunct deictic orientation:

<p> $\int\psi\psi\text{A}\eta\lambda\int\beta\alpha\Gamma\mu\alpha\eta\psi\text{E}\mu\int\leq\psi\Upsilon\iota\mu\wp\text{X}\psi\alpha\eta\tau$ $\text{E}\mu\int\beta\iota\text{H}\int\lambda\psi\text{E}\mu\int\text{S}\omega\text{10}$ $:f\text{S}\rho\text{A}\text{A}\eta-\lambda\alpha\omega$ </p>	<p>9 ... two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah.</p> <p>10 and then to the seven days (then after seven days) and <u>waters-of flood</u> came on-the-earth...</p>
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$\psi\iota\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ + preposition-clauses are temporal adjuncts. As argued by Van der Merwe (1999b:113-114), the $\psi\iota\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ anchors the continuing discourse to the reference time. The *seven days* are identifiable, presupposed, and discourse active, referred to in 7.4 “For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights.” “The days” is marked in the Hebrew with a definite article, further evidence that it is identifiably presupposed. The temporal $\psi\iota\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ -clause is a topic frame for the marked we-X-qatal clause that follows: “and waters came on the earth.” Also the immediately subsequent discourse all happens within this temporal frame. As such, a temporal topic frame like this plays the role of framing the events in the text-world scene. Without this frame the reader-listener will be lost as to when exactly the next events happened in the course of events.

Another example of a thematic text-world frame is 2 Kings 6.5, in this case a temporal topic frame:

<p> η□↓ρ ∠θαη λψ□□□ιΚπαμ □□□δΑξε□Αη ψ □ιη□ψϑω 5 ≤∩ψΥΑΓμαη-λεε λ□□□απ ρ ν λ□∅ζ\ρα∠β αη-τεε□ω ρεμ□_·Xψϑω θ□α□ χ∩Xψϑω :λ_□□AH □]Bη□ω ψ□∩νOδ(□ ∠η□Αη(□ </p>	<p> But as one was felling a log, his axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! And it was borrowed." </p>
--	--

The ψιη□ψϑω clause “as one was felling a log”, is a topical deictic orientation, since the log-felling has been presupposed and activated by the house-building script. As the topical deictic orientation, it sets up the text-world scene of the next episode, namely the losing of the axe-head in the water. The ψιη□ψϑω -clause is a case of theme framing, and the next clause a case of thematic foregrounding, activating the problem in a problem-solution schema that has thematic prominence (cf. Callow, 1998:232).

8.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As described in this chapter, the topical framework in a discourse of Biblical Hebrew contributes to the development of the theme. The topical framework, consisting of one or more topic expressions, is organized by following certain strategies of information flow. The various information structure strategies for topic have been discussed, and especially how these strategies contribute to the discourse theme.

Marked word-order topic expressions tend to be part of an information structure strategy of theme shifting. Theme shifts can be either in the form of a topic promotion (a topic raised on the activation scale), or a topic shift (from one active topic to another). But not all theme shifts entail some change of topic, be it a primary or secondary topic. Sometimes the topic expression is maintained, but the scene or text-world frame has now changed, as well as the events and states commented on. Such scene changes sometimes bring about the relexicalisation of the topic expression.

In the Biblical Hebrew of Genesis, the following information structure strategies for the discourse topic are used:

- For topic continuity, or topic maintenance, primary topics and secondary topics in pronominal and relexicalized nominal expressions are used. On the whole, topic continuity is not marked in terms of word-order or explicit grammatical expression.

- For topic discontinuity, topic promotion and topic shifting are the information structure strategies in which primary and secondary topics are employed. Such topic promotion and topic shifting topics are generally in fronted or left-dislocated constructions.
- For theme shifts, primary and secondary topics in fronted or left-dislocated constructions (marked constructions) are used. Such marked primary and secondary topics in such cases also function in the roles of topic promotion or topic shifting.
- For topic frame-setting, where one referent sets the frame of reference for the subsequent primary topic, topic expressions in fronted and left-dislocated constructions are used. These constructions are rare and their thematic import limited.
- For topic contrasting, primary and secondary topics can also be set in a contrasting relation. In addition, explicit, full personal pronouns are used for contrasting purposes of confirming the identity or restricting the identity of a topic expression.
- For topical deictic orientations, framing the text-world, $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ -clauses and other fronted adjuncts confirms and updates the mental text-world, while marking some degree of discontinuity with the preceding discourse.

The examples in this chapter show that the occurrence of the cognitive-pragmatic functions within an information structure framework of topic, as specified in chapter 7 and at the beginning of this chapter, indicates to a varying degree of prominence some theme trace, a clue to the macrostructure of the discourse in question. In the next chapter, the investigation of theme traces is taken a step further by looking at focality and focus structures.

Chapter 9

INFORMATION STRUCTURE FOCUS AND DISCOURSE THEME: THE FOCUS THEME TRACES

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The three types of focus structures proposed in Chapter 5, all have thematic import in some form or another. The three focus structures are:

1. Predicate focus
2. Sentence focus
3. Argument focus

Lambrecht (1994:296-321) argues for marked focus structures versus unmarked focus structures. Sentence focus and argument focus are the marked structures, whereas predicate focus is unmarked. Marked focus structures are marked because the linguistic form used to express them is different, even irregular, and more rare in comparison with the unmarked topic-comment sentences' predicate focus structure. Marked word-order structures are especially significant in the sense that such marked word-order configurations in many – if not most – cases become thematic (cf. discussion on markedness in Chapter 1.4.2, assumption 2).

But to what extent are focus structures thematic, or carriers of theme traces? Bearth (1999:152) already calls for research on the actual purpose of focus in African languages, and Goutsos laments the difficulty of understanding the role of focus (rhematic parts of a sentence, in his terminology) for the analysis of discourse topic (our discourse theme):

“... a large number of themes () cannot be understood without reference to rhematic parts, which, however, seem more unruly than themes and for this reason have not been the object of detailed study” (1997:11)

The functions of focus as set out by Lambrecht (1994, chapter 5) are the following:

1. Commenting¹⁸³ on topics (following the topic-comment sentence articulation)
2. Presenting of brand-new referents (cf. Lambrecht, 1994:86-92, 109, 143-144) or presenting inactive but identifiable referents.
3. Reporting events that are discontinuous to the flow of the narrative, re-directing the thematic development, and reporting events or states that support the theme: backgrounded anterior or simultaneous events or states
4. Identifying referents and deictic text-world frames

To these four functions are added a few refinements. As elaborated in chapter 7 (7.5.3), theme frame-setting (similar to but not identical to Goutsos' topic framing (1997:46-47)) is an additional function that some of Lambrecht's functions can fulfill. By theme framing is understood the setting of conceptual and text-world parameters for the subsequent developing theme, including its text-world boundaries. Theme framing is announcing what will be thematic. Theme frames can take the form of theme statements and summaries, discontinuous text-world parameters, and presenting words that have thematic import in the subsequent local theme. As seen in chapter 8, topical theme framing is achieved by theme shifts of discourse-active referents, and by updating or reconfirming the discourse-active text-world parameters. In terms of focus structures, both sentence focus and argument focus can be employed to frame themes. Sentence focus events reporting events that re-direct the theme, is an expression of theme framing. Argument focus structures identifying discourse-new text-world frames also function as theme frames. Both of these two sub-functions of theme framing are included in the four information structure functions/strategies of Lambrecht as laid out above.

A further sub-function of identifying, is that of the identifying and announcing theme words, or better still, theme macrowords. Theme macroword announcing is part of the larger cognitive pragmatic function of theme framing. The announcing of a theme macroword is similar to identifying referents and text-world frames in the sense that argument focus structures are generally used. Where macroword announcing is different from all other forms of identification is that a key word is activated that becomes central to the subsequently asserted information. The identified referent or event becomes the central thread of the following sequence of clauses. It is different from topic frames and primary/secondary topics

¹⁸³ For the term "commenting", I follow Shimasaki (2002:46-47, 84) for designating the process of "adding new information to a referent" (p.84).

signaling a theme shift in that the referent is newly-asserted and focal. Examples are provided below (9.4.2). The announcing of theme macrowords is also distinct from propositions that state the theme of the passage, the so-called theme statements. In this last case, sentence focus structures are used. Theme macrowords are announced as words or phrases, in argument focus structures.

Predicate focus structures are used in commenting sentences, and sentence focus structures in presentational and event-reporting and state-reporting sentences. Argument focus structures are used in identificational sentences. Of the five cognitive-pragmatic discourse focus functions, commenting is generally an unmarked structure. It is the most frequently-used function. The other four functions all have some form of markedness, be it marked word-order, explicit pronouns or constructions that are infrequent and discontinuous with topic-comment sentences.

The three focus structures and the four information structure strategies pertaining to discourse focus, are now discussed in detail below. The purpose of the discussion is to provide evidence that some focus structures and their related information structure strategies indeed contribute to theme forming, and as such should be classified as theme traces. In the sections below, each focus structure is studied in the light of the possible information structure strategy it could fulfill in discourse, beginning with the thematicity of predicate focus structures, followed by sentence focus structures and argument focus structures.

In this chapter, as in chapter 8, only Steps 1 and 2 of the theme-tracing model are developed. This is done, because Steps 1 and 2 are the crucial steps that show the link between information structure and theme. An example from the Genesis giving all four steps is developed in chapter 10.

Most of the cases of topic theme traces in this chapter occur in local themes and scenes.

9.2 THE THEMATICITY OF PREDICATE FOCUS STRUCTURES

Predicate focus structure with a primary topic is the most common sentence articulation. Its unmarked form, without fronting, for example, is used for both thematic and non-thematic information. The analysis of the focus content will determine whether or not a sentence is thematic. Marked predicate focus, on the other hand, tends to be a theme trace. A predicate

focus structure is marked when it has focus peaking. Focus peaking is signaled by fronting, by irregular post-verbal word-order or by end-weight (cf. Chapter 5 (5.3.1)) for discussion).

The information structure strategy operating in predicate focus structures is that of commenting. The author-speaker enriches the reader-hearer’s information about a topic. He/she is commenting on the topic. In other words, the information in predicate focus structures activates new information or assertions about a topic.

Topic-comment sentences are the default information structure articulation, at least in narratives. One aspect of predicate focus merits special attention, and that is the notion of focus peaking. Focus peaking does not occur in every predicate focus structure, as a matter of course. Focus peaking is where some constituent within the predicate focus domain, in the focus content, is in some way or other more salient than the rest. It only occurs where there is some special marking like end-weight or irregular word-order (for example indirect pronouns shifted closer to the end of a clause instead of immediately post-verbal, cf. Bandsta, 1992:117 and Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze, 1999:342). Whether or not all cases of focus peaking are thematic, only further investigation of all such cases will indicate. For instance, it is conceivable that focus peaking can activate new information in non-thematic propositions. By means of contrast, a predicate focus structure without end-weight can also be thematic in the sense that it activates a thematic referent that will be recurring in the subsequent discourse.

An example of unmarked clause-final constituents that are not focus peaks but thematically important is Genesis 2.21-22:

<p>□ ≤Ψ↓δΑεΑη-λαω η□Αμ©Ζδ\ραΓτ ≤ψ□ι ηυλ\ ε η= ρωηϷψ □λΕΚπϩΧψϩω 21 □□ΥΑΗψ∩Χψϩω ωψ□ΑτΟω\λαΦχιμ ταξαε ξ□∇Ζθ∩Χψϩ ω :η ρΦν□εΓτ\ξαΓτ ρ□□□ΑΩΑΖβ ρ□□ΒΟΦ γ\σ∩Χψϩω π□ΑΛΕΦχαη-τ□εε ≤ψ□ιηυλ\ ε η= ρωηϷ ψ □εβ∩Χψϩω 22 ηΥΑΚΗιε\λ ≤Ψ↓δΑε□Αη-ιμ ξ□∇θΑλ-ρ εΗ(ε :≤ ↓δΑε□Αη-λεε Αη□εειβϷψϩω</p>	<p>21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and he closed up with flesh in its place. 22 And the LORD God made the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.</p>
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The sentence-final words all activate important aspects of the thematic development, but this default end-of-clause or sentence-final activation is so common that no specially marked theme traces can be detected. These sentence-final constituents are unmarked. The author-speaker does not have a choice in these cases. Syntactically speaking there is nothing special

about these examples of sentence-final activations. They just show that the theme can also be carried by unmarked focus structures. It is not that such unmarked structures are without thematic material. In the majority of cases, important thematic referents are activated in this way, and can best be studied in tracing the focus content.

Having said all this, focus peaking does seem to be a significant theme trace, as will be shown below. A typical mechanism for focus peaking is end-weight. Although not in all cases, both these devices can function as theme traces. But in what way is end-weight focus peaking a theme trace? I argue that in many cases focus peaking signals the relevant macrowords or salient constituents as thematic.

9.2.1 The thematicity of end-weight as a focus peak

End-weight is a specific device used amongst other things for the activation of referents. The “heavier” constituent of new information appears at the end of the clause. Since activation has such wide thematic implications, one suspects that end-weight as a common mechanism for introducing important new referents and props in narratives, will be thematically significant.

An example of the thematicity of end-weight is found in Genesis 9.2-3. The end-weight focus peaks are indicated in bold in the English translation below.

<p>□ η↓∅ψ) η□□ψ □□□≤εκ} Γτιξσω ≤□εκ(ε⇒ ρ μ 2 fΣρ□AεAη τ□□□ϩXψαξ-λαΛκ λαω ≤□ψΥAμAKHαη ∞ Zω-λαΛκ λ□αωσω η□Aμ↓δ(εAϩη Ω⊥Oμ\ριΓτ ρ□εH(ε □λOκ) ∠β ≤□ ρ Xψαη ψ□⊕γ(∠δ-λακ) β□ :↓v□AΓτ□□ ≤□εκ(δ∅ψ) ∠β η□∅ψ) η□□ψ ≤□εκAλ ψ□αξ-ε]η ρ□□□□ε H(ε □□□ΩεμΣρ-λαΛκ 3 ηΥAλ) κAε] λ :λ-∠OΛκ-τεε ≤□εκAλ ψιΓτ□ατ ρ v βεΩ□E ω θΣρ□□□□∅ψ) ∠κ</p>	<p>2 The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air (lit. heavens), on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered.</p> <p>3 Every moving thing that lives, for you they shall be to eat; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.</p>
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The proposition in verse 2 is a sentence focus structure reporting a state of affairs that is to be. There is no topic, but the addressee (Noah and his descendents) is presupposed. The “heavy”, long complement in the sentence makes for an end-weight construction. The activated referents from the end-weight configuration in verse 2 are further strengthened by the fronted construction in verse 3a, “Every moving thing that lives” forming the end-weight information, by way of repetition and summary. The final ‘all’ at the end of verse 3 is a case of end-weight and further strengthens the central concept in this passage.

A further example showing end-weight as a theme trace, is Genesis 22.2

η□ΑΖσρν ≤ψ□ιηυλ|ε□□□Αησω ηεΓλ□ΕεΑη ≤ψΖ
 (ρΑβ|Ζδαη □□□ραξαα ψ□ιησψϋω 1
 ≤ΥΑη|ρ|βαε-τεε
 :ψρν□ΘΦνιη ρεμεΒ·Χψϋω ≤□Αη|ρ|βαε ωψ□Αλ
 Εε ρεμε□·Χψϋω
 □♣|δψ□ιξσψ-τεε □□□♣νι|β-τεε| ε ρν□-ξΥθ ρε
 με...·Χψϋω 2
 □□Αξ|χρψ-τεε □□□ΑΓτ|βαηΑε-ρεΗ(ε)
 ηΥ ρ Χψ(ρΟΓμαη fΣρ□□εε-λεε ↓♣|λ-♠ελσω
 ≤ψ□(ρΑη□εη δ□□□□αξαα λασ□ η□ΑλΟσ|λ □□
 □≤ΑΗ |η□Ελ(σσησω
 :♣ψ□ελΕε ρ□□□αμΟε ρ□□□εΗ(ε)

1 After these things God tested Abraham.
He said to him, "Abraham!"
And he said, "Here I am."

2 He said, "Take **your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac,** and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."

Literally, verse 2a says “and He said: take-please your-son your-only-son whom-you-love, Isaac.” A long phrase with a double -τεε object marker and a relative clause, and after it all, the name of Isaac, is a case of end-weight that is thematic¹⁸⁴. Theme traces are not only the marked word-order constructions. Unmarked primary topics, like relexicalized noun phrases, as well as unmarked but recurring macrowords in predicate focus structures (sometimes in end-weight constructions, sometimes not) also carry theme. This differs from the marked word-order in that the thematic status of unmarked word-order referents is primarily conferred by the content and context.

An extended example showing cases of end-weight as theme traces is in Genesis 23.9a, 16b, and 19:

:τ□Εξ-ψ□ν|βιλ fΣρ□□□ΑεΑη-≤ασ|λ |ξ□αΓτ| Η
 ςΧψϋω ≤□Αη|ρ|βαε ≤θθ□ ρ Χψϋω 7
 ρ□□ Οβλθιλ ≤□εκ|Η|πϋν-τ□εε Η□□□Θψ-≤ιε ρ
 □□|Ομεελ ≤□ΑΓτ|ε ρ□□□Εβ⇒δσψϋω 8
 ψρν|□σΑμ|Η ψ↓ϋνΑπ|Γλιμ □□ψιτΕμ-τεε
 :ραξ-|Οχ-εβ|/|ρ|πεσ|β ψ□ιλ-|σσγ|π|
 ρ□□□εΗ(ε |□λ-ρεΗ(ε □□□ηΑλΕΚπ|καΓμαη τ ⇒
 □□Ασ|μ-τεε|ψ□ιλ-εΓτρψσω 9
 |η|©δΑΩ η□□□Εχλθι|β

5 The Hittites answered Abraham,
6 "Hear us, my lord; you are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places; none of us will withhold from you any burial ground for burying your dead."
7 Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land.
8 He said to them, "If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me Ephron son of Zohar,
9 so that he may give me **the cave of Machpelah, which he owns, which¹⁸⁵ is at the end of his field;** For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as a possession for a

¹⁸⁴ It can be argued this way in terms of the content but not the syntax. The fact that the syntax does not show something in particular is a clue to the theme, but several predicate focus structures do seem to have some sentence-final heavy constituent, giving a clue to the developing theme. The content and the context provide the rest of the clues, and confirm what an analyst intuitively begins to expect from the end-weight clues. Another contra argument is that it is not the end-weight but the repetition that is relevant. This is true, but the end-weight and the repetition do not mutually exclude each other as a theme trace. In many cases the repetition is not accompanied by end-weight, but in others, like in the example from Genesis 21.1-5, repetition and end-weight occur simultaneously.

¹⁸⁵ Author's translation.

:ρεβ—⊗θ—τῆ•ζυξ(ααλ ≤□εκ) κ | τ | ∠β ψ□ιλ η ϕ Φ
 ν□∅ν | Γτϱψ ε□ΕΛΑμ ∞εσ□εκ | ∠β
 ψ□ιΓτιζαη / | □ρ | πεσ □/αωῆΧψῆω τΥΕξ—ψ⊕ν | ∠
 β ♠ | Ζτ | ∠β β□ΕΗΟψ / | J ρ | πεσϰω 10
 | | ρψιτ—ρατ□αΗ ψ□ΕΑ∠β λ_Οκ | λ τ□Εξ—ψ⊕ν |
 β ψ□□□⊕νϰζΑε | ∠β □□□≤Αη↓ρ | βαε—τεε
 :ρ□□↓ΟμᾶΕλ

ηΒ↓ρΑτ | Γμαηϰω ♠ □Αλ ψιΓτ□□□ατ ϕν □□□ηΣδ
 ΑΚΩαη ψϱν□ΕτΑμ | Η ψ□□□ϱνΟδ(ε—ε↓·λ 11
 ρ□□ΒΟβλθ ♠ □ΑΓλ Αηψ□ιΓτατϰν ψ□ιΓματ—ψ⊕ν
 | β ψ□⊕νψΕτ | λ ΑηψΥιΓτατϰν □□□♣ | λ | □∠β—ρε
 Η(ε
 :♣□ετΕμ

□□□≤Αη↓ρ | βαε λ□Οθ | ΗϱΧψῆω □/ | ρ | πεσ—λεε □
 ≤Αη↓ρ | βαε τ□□□αμ | ΗϱΧψῆω 16
 τ□α∠β\ραε | τΥΕξ—ψ⊕ν | β ψ□□□⊕νϰζΑε | ∠β ρ□□
 □ε∠β / ∠δ ρ□□□εΗ(ε ∞εσ□ε∠καη—τεε / □Ορ | πεσ | λ
 :ρ□□□ΕξΟ∠σαλ ρ□□□ΕβΟτ ∞εσ□ε∠κ λ | Πθ□□□εΗ
 □□□τ | εΕμ

| □Γτ | Ηιε ηΖ↓ρΑΩ—τεε ≤□Αη↓ρ | βαε ρ□αβ⊗θ □/Ε
 κ—ψ⊙ρ(ξιαϰω 19
 εω□□□ιη εΨ⊙ρ | μαμ ψ□⊕ν | Κπ—λατ η□ΑΛΕΚπ | κ
 αΓμαη η⊥⊙δ | Ω τ□⇒ρΑτ | μ—λεε
 :ατ□ ϕν | ∠κ fΣρ□□□εε | ∠β / | ρ | βεξ
 ≤□Αη↓ρ | βαε | λ | □∠β—ρεΗ(ε η↓↓ρΑτ | Γμαηϰω
 η□ΣδΑΚΩαη ≤⊗θ= ϕ Χψῆω 20
 < :τ□Εξ—ψ⊕ν | ∠β τ□ΕεΕμ ρεβΥ⊗θ—τῆ•ζυξ(ααλ

Of the three instances of end-weight in Genesis 23, all three extended phrases, two refer to the detailed identity of the piece of real estate Abraham wants to buy as a burial ground, and one (verse 16) is the full detail of the amount he paid for that real estate. The theme of the episode, consisting of the whole of chapter 23, is *Abraham purchasing the cave in the field of Machpelah from the Hittites as a burial ground*. All three end-weight constructions contribute directly to the thematic development.

More examples of end-weight as a theme trace are in Genesis 24¹⁸⁶:

¹⁸⁶ An additional example is in Genesis 25.5 where the indirect object "...to Isaac" is clause-final, in direct contrast to "and to sons of his concubines who Abraham...", which also occur clause-finally.

burying place."
 10 Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city,
 11 "No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it; in the presence of my people I give it to you; bury your dead."
 12 Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land.
 13 He said to Ephron ...
 14 Ephron answered Abraham,
 15 "My lord, listen to me; ...
 16 Abraham agreed with Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, **four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.**

17 So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, passed 18 to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, in the presence of all who went in at the gate of his city.
 19 After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife **in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.**
 20 The field and the cave that is in it passed from the Hittites into Abraham's possession as a burying place.

- Verse 2a “chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all he had”,
- Verse 3 “from among the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live”,
- Verse 5b “to the country you came from”,
- Verse 10b “to Aram Naharaim to the town of Nahor”,
- Verse 11 “at the time of evening, at the time of women going out to draw water”,
- Verse 24 “(Betuel) son of Milcah whom she bore for Nahor”,
- Verse 35 “sheep and cattle and silver and gold and menservants and maidservants and camels and donkeys”
- Verse 37 “from among the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live” (like verse 3)
- Verse 40b “from my own clan and from the house of my father”
- Verse 47c “daughter of Betuel son of Nahor whom Milcah bore for him”

As observed in Genesis 24, relative clauses or lists are often part of end-weight configurations.

9.2.2 The thematicity of marked post-verbal word-order as a focus peak

The unusual or marked word-order *after* the verb, is significant for focus peaking. According to Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze (1999:342-343), the unmarked word-order in the main field, or after the verb, is the following:

(VERB) + Subject + Object + indirect Object + prepositional Object + other complement/adjunct + complement/adjunct (place) + adjunct (time)

The further an element is moved away from its expected position, the more marked it is. An example is 2 Samuel 17.3, from the discourse of the advice of Ahitophel to Absalom, where an element is not in its expected position, but moved further away from the verb:

<p> $\leq \rho \psi \square \Rightarrow \delta \rho \psi \eta \square \square \square \text{E} \pi \backslash \rho \rfloor \square \square \square \Rightarrow \pi \Theta \gamma \rho \psi$ $\varepsilon \rfloor \eta \square \omega \omega \psi \square \text{A} \lambda \text{A} \pi \varepsilon \rfloor \text{Z} \beta \text{A} \varepsilon \square \omega \text{2}$ $\rfloor \square \tau \text{O} \varepsilon \psi \square \square \square \text{I} \Gamma \tau \backslash \delta \Rightarrow \rho \langle \xi \square \alpha \eta \square \omega$ $\rfloor \Upsilon \Gamma \tau \text{I} \varepsilon - \rho \varepsilon \text{H} \langle \varepsilon \leq \square \square \square \text{A} \pi \text{A} \eta - \lambda \text{A} \angle \kappa \sigma \square \rho \nu$ </p>	<p> 2 I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged, and I will throw him into a panic; and all the people who are with him will flee. And I will strike down only the king, </p>
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$: \square \angle \delta \alpha \beta \rangle \lambda \spadesuit \varepsilon \lambda \square \varepsilon \Gamma \mu \alpha \eta - \tau \varepsilon \exists \psi \square \iota \tau \psi E \angle \kappa \iota$ $\square \psi \Upsilon \varepsilon \lambda E \exists \leq \square A \varpi A \eta - \lambda A \kappa \eta A \beta \psi \square \iota H A \exists \subset \omega$ $\square \square \square H \psi \iota \exists A \eta \lambda \square O \angle \kappa \alpha \eta \beta \rangle Z H \rangle \angle \kappa$ $H \square \text{TM} \angle \theta \alpha \beta \rangle \mu \eta \square \square \square A \Gamma \tau \alpha \exists \rho \square \square \square \square \square \varepsilon H \langle \exists$ $: \leq \sqcup \lambda A H \eta \square \emptyset \psi \rangle \eta \cap \psi \leq \square A \varpi A \eta - \lambda A \angle \kappa$	$\subset \omega$ $\eta \subset \omega$ $\subset \omega$ \exists	3 and I will bring all the people back to you , as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man, all the people will be at peace.
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The normal position of the pronominalised complement is as close to the verb as possible. By moving it to the end, it has acquired end-weight and becomes the element that has the focus peak.

9.3 THE THEMATICITY OF SENTENCE FOCUS STRUCTURES

As stated in Chapter 5, sentence focus structures are recognized by the following cognitive-pragmatic characteristics:

1. Presenting a new participant by identifying an anchored brand-new or an unanchored brand-new referent,
2. Reporting an event that is discontinuous with the flow of thought and that re-directs the theme, or
3. Reporting an event or state that is background information to the current storyline or themeline. This can be a flashback, anterior to the events in the main storyline, or simultaneous but supportive of the storyline in terms of providing explanatory information necessary for the development of the theme.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the notion of theme framing also comes into play with sentence focus structures. Besides the functions of presenting and reporting, some sentence focus structures also make theme statements in the form of title statements at the beginning of episodes or summary statements at their closure. Syntactically, verbless clauses, demonstrative-initial clauses, we-X-qatal clauses, and clauses following the focus particle $\eta \oplus \Phi \nu \iota \eta$, all tend to be sentence focus structures. In sentence focus structures, as stated in chapter 5 (5.2.2), every constituent of the sentence is discourse-new, or both the subject and the verb is discourse-new, or the verb is discourse-new but the subject is presupposed (inactive or semi-active) but not continuous from the preceding discourse. The verb, where it exists, is as a rule discourse-new. Sentence focus structures provide unexpected and discontinuous information, out-of-the-blue information that redirects the thematic

development onto a new course. It is distinct from commenting in that it does not contain a topic. Sentence focus structures, by definition, do not informationally enrich any discourse-active topics. As Lambrecht argues (1994:296, 307), it is a marked focus structure, similarly marked as argument focus structures, and in contrast with the unmarked predicate focus structures used for topic-comment articulations.

The presentational and most event-reporting functions of sentence focus structures present new participants, events, states, or re-activate participants. They are generally discontinuous to the developing theme, interrupting a continuation span. As such, sentence focus structures are theme traces, contributing to the overall thread or theme. This contribution to the theme is generally discontinuous, in other words, some change in the cognitive development of the macrostructure is signaled. This is true even for cases of flashback, where the chronological storyline is interrupted. Thematic change takes the form of either a digression to support the current development of the theme, or it redirects the theme onto a new course. This re-direction can take the form of new text-world information, or of an unexpected event with new participants, or with old participants in a new and unexpected development.

Shimasaki (2002) discusses the role sentence focus plays in terms of theme. He calls sentence focus something different, namely Clause-Focus, and proposes four “discourse-level functions for Clause-Focus structure” (2002:163-181). Without going into all the detail he provides, he proposes the following four main functions, each with some sub-functions:

1. Onset functions. Under onset functions he groups topicalisation, topic- and theme-shifting and initiation, introductory formulas, and contextualisation (deictic phrases) (pp 163-175)
2. Background information, in terms of circumstantial information and offline information expressed in verbless clauses and nominal clauses (pp 175-178)
3. Climax function, in the sense of what Buth (1990:13) terms “dramatic pause” (p 179).
4. Closure function, in terms of expressing the end of an episode with a Clause-Focus structure (pp 179-180).

The onset and closure functions of Shimasaki are in broad agreement with the sequentiality notions of Goutsos as boundary phenomena. Both approaches deal with theme sequencing.

The fact that sentence focus is used in onset and closure functions, will be illustrated and confirmed below. The backgrounding function of sentence focus structures is discussed under 9.3.3. below. The climax function is more problematic. As Buth argued, instead of the expected wayyiqtol clauses, we-X-qatal clauses are used with fronting, in places where the plot reaches a climactic point. Shimakasi quotes Buth's examples from Esther 3.15 and Judges 20.39-41. The problem in Esther of example is in that there are a string of continuing primary and secondary topics that are all discourse-active (couriers, decree, the king, Haman, city of Susan), repeating what has been mentioned before, per definition denying that such clauses have sentence focus structure. These four subsequently fronted constructions rather seem to be predicate focus structures configured to indicate climactic execution and closure. In the same way the fronted constituents in Judges 20.39-41 (Benjamin, a cloud of smoke, and the men of Israel), apart from the cloud of smoke, are all discourse-active and topical and cannot be sentence focus structures. These fronted topics just indicate theme shifts. Therefore, of the four functions proposed by Shimakasi, only functions 1), 2), and 4) are in agreement with the application of sentence focus as proposed in this study. The difference with Shimakasi's approach is mainly one of wording and definition, in that I present the functions of sentence focus within the framework of theme development. Theme functions are defined in terms of presentational sentences (following Lambrecht) and in terms of event-reporting sentences that either have a theme re-directing or a theme supporting function.

The three information structure strategies of sentence focus structures in Biblical Hebrew, as theme traces, are now discussed in detail. There is some overlap between these information structure strategies, as will be duly indicated.

9.3.1 The thematicity of presentational sentences

Presentational sentences are defined as sentences that present new participants by identifying brand-new referents (Lambrecht. 1994:142-143). Presentation sentences in Biblical Hebrew can be divided into identifying brand-new anchored and unanchored referents (cf. discussion in chapter 5 (5.2.2.4)). Syntactically, verbless clauses are often used. The introduction of genealogies and toledoth statements are also presentational sentences, initiated by demonstratives. Some $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ plus noun phrase clauses are both presentational and event-reporting, as are some $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ plus participle clauses.

There is an overlap between presentational and event-reporting sentences. In many event-reporting sentences, referents are activated or re-activated, and topics are promoted or shifted. Presentationals and event-reporting overlap in all cases except where verbless clauses are used to present unidentifiable participants. By definition, event-reporting sentences need to have some explicit verb. The thematic import of presentational sentences is that these identify and promote new referents, normally brand-new participants in the narrative.

At least five syntactic devices can be distinguished for presentational sentences: (1) verbless clauses, (2) $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta$ clauses, (3) $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ clauses, (4) $\tau\delta\lambda\tau$ statements, and (5) $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ + noun + participle clauses.

These five devices are now discussed below¹⁸⁷.

9.3.1.1 *Verbless clauses*

Some of the major figures in Biblical Hebrew canon are identified and introduced in different ways: Noah in Genesis 6.9 is presented in a verbless presentational sentence. Other major participants are introduced in different ways: Abraham is first mentioned in a genealogy (Genesis 11.26), Job (Job 1.1) and Mordechai and Esther in Esther 2.5-7 in $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta$ clauses, Joseph in a predicate focus structure (Genesis 30.23-24) with his birth narrative, and likewise Moses in a predicate focus structure, also in a birth narrative. As with Jacob, the naming of Moses is quite delayed (cf. De Regt, 1999). By contrast, Moses' parents are identified in an event-reporting sentence (Exodus 2.1). Samuel is introduced in a similar way, with his father Elkanah presented in a sentence focus structure in 1 Samuel 1.1. David is first mentioned in a predicate focus structure, "I have chosen one of his sons to be the King" (1 Samuel 16.1). Jonah is presented as an object in a $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ clause (Jonah 1.1).

Ellen van Wolde (1999:321-336) developed a heuristic model of verbless clauses in Biblical Hebrew. She argues that verbless clauses have the discourse function of backgrounding:

¹⁸⁷ It is important to distinguish when $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta\omega$ and $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ function as discourse particles and when they function as normal verbs. Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze (1999:331-332) state that "the subject [...] must agree with it in number and gender and the semantic notion 'to become' must be involved." So $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta\omega$ and $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ have the meaning of a future "will become" or a past "became" respectively when functioning as a normal verb and not as a discourse marker. There is a difference between verbless clauses, $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta$ clauses, $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta\omega$ clauses, and $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ clauses. Both the verbless and $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta$ clauses are copular clauses indicating states. The copular $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta$ is sometimes omitted (Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze, 1999:356). $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta\omega$ and $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ clauses are discourse markers commenting "on the content of a sentence and/or sentences on a meta-level" (ibid.:328-329), and in many cases initiate copular clauses. $\psi\tau\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ anchors an event as subsequent on the time line; some temporal progression is involved (ibid.:331-332; cf. Van der Merwe, 1999b). $\eta\kappa\kappa \wp\psi A\eta\omega$ clauses do not have this notion of progression but introduce a new paragraph or sub-paragraph (Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze, 1999:331).

“Their function is, the presentation of background information in which a situation, circumstance, or event is depicted that occurs simultaneously with the sequence of actions expressed in the preceding foreground clause” (ibid.:330).

The problem with her use of the term background information is the uncertainty of this term’s exact meaning. In relation to what is it backgrounded? If it is backgrounded in relation to the storyline, in the sense of being offline while supporting the main eventline, it is in agreement with narrative discourse theories as elaborated by Longacre (cf. 1989) and Grimes (1975) in which backgrounding has to do with concepts like setting, collateral information, etc. Verbless clauses indeed fulfill this type of backgrounding function. But not all cases of verbless clauses are backgrounding. If backgrounded information is defined in terms of the thematic/non-thematic dichotomy, that is to say, backgrounded information is always non-thematic, one does not give an account of the role such information may play in the macrostructure. In some cases backgrounded information is crucial to the development and cognitive understanding of the macrostructure. For example, some verbless clauses are thematic in terms of presenting participants and of presenting states or settings at theme boundaries, where themes are re-directed or abandoned altogether. Presentational sentences have this thematic function.

9.3.1.2 η□□ ρψΑη clauses

As mentioned above, Job, Mordechai and Esther are introduced in this manner, with η□□ ρψΑη clauses.

An example of a we-X-qatal η□□ ρψΑη clause is Genesis 3.1

η□ΣδΑΚΩαη τ□□□ϩΧψαξ □□λΟΖκιμ ≤□ρΑπ η□□□ ρψΑη □□□ΗΑξ ρΦναη	1 And the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent,...
□ω 1 ≤ψΥτηυλΓ ε η□□□ ρωηϷψ η□ΑΩΑπ ρ□ □□εΗ(ε η□ΑΚΗιε□□□Αη-λεε □□□ρεμε□·Χψϩω ≤ψ□ιτηυλΓ ε ρ□□□□□αμαε-ψ□ιΖκ ∞αε □ ∷□ ρΦγαη f□Eπ λΨΟΖκιμ]□λ}κε·τ ε Ζ·λ ...ΗΥΑξ ρΦναη-λεε η□ΑΚΗιε□□Αη ρεμε Β·Γτϩω 2	

This we-X-qatal clause is a presentational sentence. The serpent is identified as a participant, and anchored in the concept of the wild animals of the field, which were already identified

earlier on (Genesis 1.24-25). For the subsequent episode, the serpent will be a main participant, occurring both as primary topic as well as secondary topic until Genesis 3.15.

9.3.1.3 *ψιη<ψῚω clauses*

Less continuous participants are also introduced by means of presentational sentences. An example is Elkanah in 1 Samuel 1.1:

ρ□□□□□αηΕμ ≤ψ□ιπ | χ ≤<ψ□ατΑμ↓ρΑη-ίμ δ□Α
 ξεε Ηψ□ιε □ψιη<ψῚω 1
 ≤□ΑξΟρ<ψ-ε<β η φv@θ | λεε÷ | □μ | Η | ≤<ψ | ↓ρ |
 :ψ□ιτ↓ρ | πεε ∞ | Ψχ-εβ | ξΒΟΓτ-ε<β ε | ηψιλ | ε-ε
 πεε
 <β
 ≤ψ□ιΗ φv ψ□□□ΕΓτ | Η □□□ | λ<ω 2
 ηΥ φΦv@ν | Κπ τψ□@νΕΚΗαη ≤□ΕΗ<ω η↓ φΦvα
 ξ □□□ταξαε ≤□ΕΗ
 :≤ψ | (δΑλ<ψ /ψ□Εε η□ φΦvαξ) λ | ≤ψ□(δΑλ<ψ □□
 □η φΦv@ν) πιλ ψ□ιη<ψῚω

1 **There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim**, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.
 2 He had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

In this verse, Elkanah is identified as a brand-new referent. Elkanah and his wife Hannah are the main protagonists of the narrative telling the story of Samuel’s birth. De Regt (1999:33) argues that participants identified in this way are often not enduring, main participants:

“Most of the participants introduced in this way are minor participants in the passage concerned. But, although their part is not necessarily large, they may still have a significant impact on events”

In 1 Samuel 1 Elkanah is one of the main participants and an important part of the topical framework. But it is true that Elkanah is not thematically enduring. A similar example is the identification of the father of Saul in 1 Samuel 9.1.

An example of a presentational as well as event-reporting sentence focus structure is Jonah 1.1:

:ρ□□□□ΟμεΕλ ψ□αΓτιμ(ε-εβ η□ φv | ψ-λεε η↓ φω
 η<ψ-ραβ<δ □□□ψιη<ψῚω

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying,

This is a typical way of expression in prophetic literature. The *ψιη<ψῚω* clause with VSO word-order is the syntactic configuration for this presentational sentence focus structure. Both the LORD as the initiator and Jonah the prophet are promoted as subsequent participants in this sentence focus structure. Both will turn out to be important and continuous primary topics. At the same time, the prophet frame is activated by the phrase “word of the LORD

came”, taken further by the speech introducer ρ□□μελ ‘saying’. The reader-listener now expects a divine utterance to a prophet, with many possible implications.

9.3.1.4 τδλτ statements before genealogies

An example of a τδλτ statement before a genealogy, initiated with a demonstrative, is Genesis 25.12vv.:

≤ΥΑη↓ρ βαε→εΖβ λε□ΕπΑμ Ηρψ τ↓Οδ λΟ	12 These are the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son,
Γτ ηεΓλ□Εεω 12	whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's slave-girl, bore to Abraham.
τψ_ (ρ) χιΓμαη ρ□□□ ργΑη η□↓δ λ ρψ ρ□εΗ	13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth:
:≤□Αη↓ρ βαε λ ηΨ↓ρΑΩ τ□αξ πιΗ	Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael;
≤□ΑτΟμ ΗιΖβ λε□ΕπΑμ Ηρψ ψ□□□⊕ν Ζβ	and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,...
□□□τ μ Η ηεΓλ□Εεω 13	
τ↓ΟψΑβ<ν □□□λεπΑμ Ηρψ ρ□□ Οκ Ζβ ≤	
ΥΑτΟδ λ τ λ	
:≤□ΑΩ βιμ λ□Εε Ζβ\δαε<ω ρ□□Β↓δ™θ<ω	

Both the contents of the demonstrative as the descendents of Ishmael are discourse-new information and in focus. It is a sentence focus structure. The demonstrative is a cataphoric pronoun, that is, the contents and reference information is provided in the immediately following discourse. The τδλτ statement functions as a title statement for what follows and is as such thematic. It frames the theme.

9.3.1.5 η⊕Φνιη + noun + participle clauses

Genesis 22.13 contains a theme trace that has the following configuration: η⊕Φνιη + noun + participle:

ωψ→ ρ νψΕπ-τεε ≤□Αη↓ρ βαε ε□ΑΚΩρΧ	And Abraham looked up and saw, look, a ram
ρ□αξεα λρψ□αε-η⊕Φνιη<ω □□□ε\ρψΧψ	caught in a thicket by its horns.
ωψΥ ρν\ρ∇θ Ζβ ♠□αβ ΖσαΖβ ζ□αξ εΘ∇	Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering
λρψ□αεΑη-τεε ξ□□□∇ΖθρΧψψω □□□≤Αη	instead of his son.
↓ρ βαε ♠ελ□⊕Χψψω	
: ν Ζβ ταξ□αΓτ η□ΑλΟπ λ]η□Ελ<πψΧ	
ψψω	

The sentence focus structure, “and behold a ram caught with its horns in the thickets”, is event-reporting, presenting referents. The ram is presented as an unexpected and surprising referent for the characters in the story, drastically changing the direction of the theme development. The η⊕Φνιη signals an unexpected and surprising development. With the developing theme *God commanding Abraham to make a sacrifice to Him at Mount Moria*, the provision of the sacrificial ram as a substitute for Isaac his son is highly thematic.

Genesis 24.15 Rebekah is presented in a clause with $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ followed by a participle in an event-reporting sentence.

<p>□ρE∠β⇒δ λ η□□□ΑΓλι∠κ □≤ΣρεΞ ε]□η-ψιη∠ψ □ϱω 15 τε□EχOψ η□□□@θ β(ρ η□⊕Φνιη∠ω ρ Ψξ ρν τεH□Eε η□A∠κ λιμ-ε∠β λ□□□Eε]τ βιλ □□□η∠δ)Γλ∠ψ ρ□□□εH(ε ≤ΥAη∠ρ)βαε ψ□□□ιξ(ε :∠η□Aμ κιH-λαω ∠ηΨ∠∠δακ∠ω</p>	<p>Before he had finished speaking, And behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, coming out with her water jar on her shoulder. (own translation)</p>
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Rebekah is presented as an unexpected and surprising new participant, signaled by the focus particle $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$. This $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ -initiated sentence is a presentational sentence presenting a new participant. Event-reporting is communicated by the use of the participle, but the main point here is the presentation of a participant, Rebekah. From here on, Rebekah will be a major participant on and off until Genesis 28, and especially between Genesis 25.20 and 27.46.

9.3.2 The thematics of event-reporting sentences functioning as theme re-directing devices

Event reporting with unexpected topic shift is a theme trace encountered in the narratives of Genesis. In Genesis 22, for example, the first theme switch is in verse 1, with a $\psi\eta\eta\subset\psi\varrho\omega$ followed by temporal adjunct followed by a we-X-qatal clause “and God tested Abraham.” Verse 11a is another redirection of theme, with the appearance of the angel. It is an event-reporting sentence, and in this case a wayyiqtol clause has been used. This is a sentence focus structure with no topic. Both subject and predicate are new and unexpected information. Verse 19 is redirecting the flow of the theme by mentioning Abraham’s return to his home, but this time in a predicate focus topic-comment sentence in a wayyiqtol clause. Verse 19 is probably best seen as a theme-closing sentence. The next major theme shift is verse 21, starting with a temporal deictic orientation in a $\psi\eta\eta\subset\psi\varrho\omega$ followed by temporal adjunct, “and after these things,...”, followed by a wayyiqtol sentence. We-X-qatal clauses seem to be a common device used for this type of event-reporting, but not exclusively so.

In the following section, three marked constructions as sentence focus, theme-redirecting devices are discussed: we-X-qatal clauses, hinneh + we-X-qatal clauses, and negative we-X-qatal clauses.

9.3.2.1 Unmarked word-order wayyiqtol clauses

Context and semantic content play a role in determining whether a sentence is a thematic boundary. Sometimes theme-redirecting sentences are in default, unmarked word-order, in a wayyiqtol clause¹⁸⁸. This unmarked word-order is then also part of the macrostructure. An example of such an event-reporting sentence with sentence focus structure redirecting the theme is Genesis 16.7

<p>ψ⇒ρΑΩ-λεε ≤ϑ↓ρ) βαε ρεμϑ=Xψϩω 6 ♠ϑδ ρψ) ∠β ϑϑϑ ♠ΕτΑξ) πιΗ ηϑ⊕Φνιη ♠ϧΥ ϩ νψΕϑ) ∠β β ϑϑϑΛΞαη ∠ηϑΑλ-ψιΩ(ϑ :ΑηψϑϑνΑΚπιμ ξΨ⇒ρ) βιΓτϩω ψ⇒ρΑΩ Αηϑ ϑϑϑϑΦναϑ) Γτϩω ρϑϑΥΑ∠β(δiΓμα∠β ≤ϧψϑαΓμαη /ψϑΕϑ-λαϑ η ϑ ϩ ω η ϑ ψ ♠ϑαε) λαμ ∠ηϑΑεΑχ) μϧΧψϩω 7 :ρ]ϑΗ ♠ΣρϑϑΒΣδ) ∠β/ϧψϑαϑΑη-λαϑ η ϩ νϑϑϑΑεϑ τϑϑΑβ ηϑϑ•ζιμ-ψϑΕε ψ_⇒ρΑΩ τϑαξ) πιΗ ρΥ ϩ γΑη ρϑαμϑ·Χψϩω 8 ψικΥΕλετ :ταξ ⇒ρΟ∠β ψϑικΟναε ψϑιΓτ(ριβϑΦγ ψΖ⇒ρΑ Ω ϑϑϑψϑν) Κπιμ ρεμϑ·Γτϩω η↓ ϩ ω η ϑ ψ ♠ϑϑϑαε) λαμ ϑϑϑ∠ηΑλ ρεμϑ ·Χψϩ ω 9 :Αηψ Σδ ϩ ψ ταξϑαΓτ ψϑϧΦναϑ) τιηϑω ♠ΥΕΓ τ(ριβϑΦγ-λεε ψιβ]ΨΗ</p>	<p>6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her. 7 The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." 9 The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her."</p>
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Genesis 16:1-6 deals with the theme of the childless Sarai giving Hagar to Abraham. Hagar gives birth, and problems arise between Sarai and Hagar. Hagar flees. Verse 6 ends with Hagar, having been a secondary topic up to this point, becoming the primary topic in a predicate focus topic-comment sentence: “and she (Hagar) flees from her (Sarai).” The text-world situation model of “fleeing” now becomes cognitively active. A new scene opens, a new time, a new location, and with a new participant, namely the Angel of the Lord. Next, in verse 7, the Angel of the Lord finds Hagar near a spring in the desert. From verse 7 until 12 we read the report of the dialogue between the Angel and Hagar, ending with the Angel’s utterance about the future of the child Hagar is carrying in her womb. This new scene is introduced in verse 7a by an event-reporting sentence with sentence focus structure, with the Angel of the Lord, already identifiable in the mind of the reader-hearer, activated and promoted as a main participant (for at least this thematic grouping). Some continuity with the previous scene is maintained: Hagar, one of the participants of the previous scene with Sarai and Abraham continuing to be discourse-active. This sentence focus structure thus serves as

¹⁸⁸ This type of unmarked word-order is expected to be rare. I did not find more wayyiqtol examples in the Genesis 1–25 corpus that would be theme-redirecting sentence focus structures.

an unexpected redirection of the theme thread. Verse 7b is also a sentence focus structure, in the form of a verbless clause explaining the location of the spring where the Angel found Hagar. It is a theme-supporting clause. Once again, this is a theme trace, because the spring is given its name by Hagar after this event as Beer Lahai Roi (verse 13, just after the completion of the Angel’s utterance concerning her child). Here the sentence focus structure provides theme-supporting or theme-strengthening information (see 9.3.3 below). The thematicity of naming in Biblical Hebrew needs further investigation.

9.3.2.2 We-X-qatal clauses

The more frequent form of event-reporting sentences that redirect themes, is marked word-order configurations. We-X-qatal constructions are one such form. An example of a sentence focus structure as a theme-redirecting event-reporting clause, is Genesis 39.1, picking up from Genesis 37.36:

<p>ηΑμ<ψ ↓ρ) χιμ δ□□Z⇒ρ_η □□ □□□ ψ□□ ω 1 ...ραπψιΞ Κπ _η... ⊕ν∧θ∩Xψϱ ω</p>	<p>1 And Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master.</p>
--	--

After the Judah and Tamar narrative in Genesis 38, the Joseph story is resumed in Genesis 39.1. The fronted, marked word-order focus structure in a we-X-qatal clause contains thematic information, but thematic in the sense of framing or staging the subsequent theme development. It provides the setting.

Genesis 2.10-11 is an example of a sentence focus event-reporting that introduces the theme of the subsequent verses, in the form of a subtheme embedded in the wider theme of the description of the Garden of Eden:

<p>∕ ρ Φγαη-τεε τ θ Ηαη λ/Σδ□EπEμ ε □□□EχOψ □□□ρΑη ρν<ω 10 :≤ψ□ιHε↓ρ η□AπA<β\ραε λ η□ ρψΑη <ω δ□@ρAKπ∩ψ □□□ ≤AKHιμ ... β□EβO<σαη ε Zη/ HψιKπ δ□□□Aξε ε□Aη ≤□EH 11</p>	<p>10 And a river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is...</p>
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The thematic grouping initiated by the shift in verse 10 goes until verse 14 and the theme is identifying and describing the four rivers coming out of Eden. The sentence focus structure with a we + NP + participle configuration is an unmarked word-order construction. But the “river”, indefinite, is now identified and activated, introducing a new local theme to the

overall description of the Garden. The fronted locative “from there” in the second clause is a case of argument focus, identifying the place where it divides into rivers presumably known to the readers-listeners and the people of antiquity. In the light of the text-world assumptions of the author and reader, the point the author wants to make is that all rivers originated from Eden. The “river”, now discourse-active, continues as presupposed information in this second clause of verse 10. The local theme is that there is a river flowing from the garden that divides into four rivers, and each river is named.

A last additional example of a re-directing event-reporting sentence is 2 Kings 1.3. This sentence focus structure has a we-X-qatal configuration:

<p>ψ□ι∠β) ΗιΓταη η□□□ ρXψιλεε-λεε □□□ρε∠β (∠δ η→ ρωη∠ψ ♠□□□αε) λαμ 3 / ρ) μOH-♠ελ□εμ ψ□□□εκ(ε) λαμ τεΨ⇒ρ∧θι λ η□ελ(τ ≤]θ ≤□εηελ(ε ρ□□□□□E∠β⇒δ∠ω</p>	<p>1 After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel. 2 Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay injured; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebul, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury." 3 And the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite: Get up go to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them,</p>
---	---

The “Angel of the Lord” is fronted in an event-reporting sentence focus structure, simultaneously presenting the divine as one of the participants in the narrative. While one would expect such a marked word-order structure to activate a participant that will very much be in the foreground of the story, on the surface it is not the case. Not once is there any mention of the divine again. But the fronting of the divine agent, the “Angel” is still thematically significant. When the divine is introduced in a narrative in Biblical Hebrew, it is normally through a X-qatal construction with the divine as the fronted subject. In that sense, 2 Kings 1.3 is nothing out of the ordinary. While not featuring more on the surface of the rest of the narrative, the prominent presentation of the divine agent points to a theological motif: while the divine is not explicitly and continuously mentioned as primary topic, the influence and power of the divine is manifest throughout the story. This fact can be noted in the calling of Elijah by the Angel of the Lord and by the miraculous power displayed by the prophet. Though not discourse active right through the episode, the activity and presence of the divine remains semi-active.

9.3.2.3 η⊕Φνιη plus we-X-qatal clauses

The sentence focus structures with focus particles as theme traces can also be attested. η⊕Φνιη as an attention-grabbing particle, communicating unexpectedness or surprise, marks as thematic the whole clause it is in (when preceding a whole clause), or the word or phrase it points to (preceding only that word or phrase). This does not exclude the fact that some clauses starting with a η⊕Φνιη may only provide non-core backgrounding information, but further data is needed to establish that.

As mentioned in chapter 5 (5.5.3), and repeated here, an example of η⊕Φνιη introducing a sentence with two clauses, both with sentence focus as an event-reporting sentence introducing new participants, is Numbers 25.6:

<p> ε□ΑΖβ λ□Εε↓ρ Ωϋψ ψ=⊕ν Ζβιμ □Ηψιε τψ↓ϋν ρψλδιΓμαη-τεε □□ωψΑξεε-λεε ...λΥΕε↓ρ Ωϋψ-ψ⊕ν Ζβ τΖ⇒δ(ϖ-λΑΖ κ ψ⊕⊕νψΕϖ λ] η□εΗΟμ ψ□□⊕⊕νψΕϖ λ </p>	<p> And behold, one of the Israelites came and brought a Midianite woman into his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the Israelites ... </p>
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The thematic development is redirected by this η⊕Φνιη-initial sentence focus structure, with a new episode introduced, namely that of Phineas killing the Israelite and his Midianite woman (Numbers 25.6-8). The event-report also presents the two participants that are to be killed by Phineas. Only the first clause in verse 6 has a we-X-qatal word-order and it can be argued that the second clause is a predicate focus structure activating a participant in the focus domain.

9.3.2.4 Negative we-X-qatal clauses

Negative clauses occur as state-reporting clauses. Although it is frequently the case, negative clauses do not always contain non-thematic collateral information. In some cases such clauses can be thematic. An example is Genesis 16.1-2:

<p> [] λ ηΨ↓δ λ ρψ εΒ·λ ≤□↓ρ βαε τεΗ□□□Ε : ρ□□ ργαη <η□Αμ Η] τψΨ(ρ) χιμ η□Α ξ] πιΗ <η□Αλ<ω ... τΣδ□εΓλιμ □□η ρωη<ψ ψϋν ⇒ρΑχ(</p>	<p> 1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl and her name was Hagar, 2 and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children </p>
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Verse 1a is a case of a state-reporting sentence with a sentence focus structure. It is sentence focus because Sarai is presupposed, though not topical in this case. Sarai is a main participant in these narratives (but inactive during chapters 13, 14 and 15; actually ever since the events in Egypt in Genesis 12.10-20). In Genesis 16.1 Sarai is made discourse-active again. Topic promotion has taken place. But it is important to state that verse 1a is not a comment on Sarai. It is not a topic-comment sentence. The referent “Sarai” is promoted to discourse-active status, and is thus in focus. Sarai was last mentioned in Genesis 12.20. But the negative state of Sarai is also in focus, she being child-less. Therefore the whole clause of verse 1a is in focus, not just a comment on Sarai. After the covenant establishment narrative or chapter 15, in Genesis 16.1 she is promoted again to thematic prominence. This is a case of what Chafe’s calls a “weak subject.” The marked and negative *we-X-qatal* clause of Genesis 16.1a is a theme trace: it redirects the sequential development of the theme by providing the framework for the rest of the narrative until verse 15, namely the scene of Sarai giving her slave Hagar to Abraham to produce offspring. This thematic grouping culminates with the birth of Ishmael. The promotion of Sarai is strengthened by the addition “his wife.” Being the wife of Abraham is significant in terms of the global theme.

9.3.3 The thematics of event-reporting and state-reporting sentences functioning as theme-supporting devices

Some sentences with sentence focus structures strengthen and support the theme by means of background information. This background information can take the form of a flashback or anterior construction (referring to an event or state previous in time to the reference time), or a simultaneous event that is off the storyline. In both cases the theme is strengthened, but the backgrounded material is not necessarily thematic information or a case of theme traces.

The information conveyed by sentence focus structures is generally thematic, but conceivably there are cases of sentence focus “event reporting” sentences that only provide non-thematic background information. The theme-supporting examples below illustrate this point.

9.3.3.1 Anterior *we-X-qatal* constructions

Background anterior constructions are theme-supporting propositions. Such a case of backgrounding event-reporting sentence focus with an *we-X-qatal* anterior construction is Genesis 31.17-20:

β } Oθ < τ ϩ ψ ≤ @ θ □ ϕ X ψ ϩ ω 17 17 So Jacob arose, and set his children and his
 : ≤ ψ □ ι Γ λ α μ < Φ γ α η - λ α ω ω ψ □ A H ϕ ν - τ ε ε < wives on camels;

ω ωψ□ ρ νΑΖβ-τεε ε□ΑΚΩΧψϑω
 □...-λαΖκ-τεεεω]η→ϕνλθιμ-λαΖκ-τε
 ε γ□□□αηεννΧψϑω 18
 |Υνθ-χ-τεε ζΨΟζενιλ ♠□αλαη [□□□ΑΒΑ
]λκω 19
 :Αηψ□ιβαε] λ ρ□□□εΗ(ε ≤ψ□ιπ↓ρ) Γταη-
 τεε λ□Εξ↓ρ β□ΟνενγΓτϑω
 ψΥιΓμ⇒ρ(εΑη/□ΑΒΑλ β□Ελ-τεε β□Οθ(π
 ϑψ β□ΟνενγΧψϑω 20
 :ε]η ⇒ξΨ©ρΟβ ψ□ιΖκ |□λ δψ□□□ϕγ
 ιη □□□ψιλ] Ζβ-λαεπ
 |□λ-ρεΗ(ε-λακκω □□□ε]η ξΒ⇒ρ) βΧ
 ψϑω 21
 ρ□□ΥΑη ρΦνναη-τεε ρ□□ΖΟβ(πϑΧψϑω
 ≤@θ□ ρ Χψϑω
 :δ□□□Απ] λϕγαη ρ□□□αη ωψ□ ρ νΑΚπ
 -τεε ≤εΩ□ ρ Χψϑω

18 and he drove away all his livestock, all ...
 19 **And Laban had gone to shear his sheep,
 and Rachel stole her father's household
 gods.**
 20 And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean, in
 that he did not tell him that he intended to
 flee.
 21 So he fled with all that he had; starting out
 he crossed the Euphrates, and set his face
 toward the hill country of Gilead.

In verse 19, in a we-X-qatal construction, Laban as the subject is fronted. The time reference in this verse is offline from the main storyline of Jacob fleeing, anterior to Jacob starting the actual process of fleeing. It is an anterior construction supporting the thematic development by providing information that “surrounds” or “frames” the main events. The clause just following the anterior construction about Laban is about Rachel stealing the household gods. This event must have happened *after* Laban left, thus simultaneous with the the events of the storyline of Jacob getting ready to flee and then actually fleeing. Both pieces of background information supplied in verse 19 are critical for the understanding and mental construction of the situation model. The text would not make sense without some information that Laban is not present while Jacob is fleeing. The stealing of the household goods is important for understanding the happenings of the subsequent pursuit (Genesis 31:22-55). Consequently these two background clauses are thematic background information¹⁸⁹.

9.3.3.2 Simultaneous states or events

Robert Alter (1981:114-115) made the observation that providing a lot of background information is not a feature of Biblical Hebrew narrative. Only the minimum amount of background information is provided, and generally the background information that is provided, is in different degrees significant to the development and understanding of the

¹⁸⁹ Thematic background information sounds like a contradiction in terms: how can information that is backgrounded at the same time be thematic and part of the macrostructure? Thematic backgrounding information as a concept is possible if it is recognized that some background information, backgrounded in the sense of being offline to the main event line of the narrative, is at the same time providing information that is critical to the correct construction of the mental macrostructure and situation model. Background information that is not critical to the theme, and that only supports the theme and participants by strengthening them, is non-thematic background information. Such non-thematic information is identifiable by the fact that macrostructure construction is not compromised by their absence.

macrostructure. Simultaneous state information, in the form of verbless clauses, is a common construction used in Biblical Hebrew for this function. Normally verbless clauses or $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ + participle clauses are employed to communicate simultaneous states and events, verbless clauses for simultaneous states, and ($\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ +) participle for background action in current mainline events (cf. Bowling, 1997:65-67). Simultaneous states in verbless clauses do not always have to be in sentence focus. An example is Genesis 21.5 (“Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him”), where a verbless clause is employed for simultaneous backgrounding, but not with a sentence focus structure. The verbless clause of verse 5 is a predicate focus structure with Abraham the primary topic about whom something is said. It is a theme-supporting sentence, but still crucial to the macrostructure. Even though without this information, the hearer-reader is able to construct the thread of the theme, he will miss the point of the significance of Abraham’s very old age when his son was born.

$\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ plus participle constructions are also used for simultaneous, theme-supporting events. Event-reporting is taking place, with sentence focus. An extended example of four such sentence focus event-reports that are simultaneous events with $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ + participle configurations, is Genesis 24: verses 30 (“look, he is standing...”), 43 (look, I am standing here by the water...”), 45 (look, Rebekah coming out with water...”), and 63 (and he saw, and look, camels coming).

$\psi Z\odot\delta\subset\psi-\lambda\alpha\omega \square\leq\psi/\delta\iota\mu\} \Phi\chi\alpha\eta-\tau\epsilon\alpha\Box\subset\omega \leq\emptyset\zeta\rightarrow\emptyset$
 $\Phi\nu\alpha\eta-\tau\epsilon\alpha \tau Z O\alpha\} \rho\iota\angle\kappa \mid \psi\Box\Box\Box\eta\subset\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ 30
 $\rho\Box O\mu\alpha\text{E}\lambda \Box\Box\Box \mid \tau O\xi\langle\alpha \eta\Box\text{B}\theta\} \beta/\rho \psi\Box\text{C}\rho\} \beta/\angle\delta-\tau\epsilon\alpha$
 $\mid \Box\text{C}\} \mu\text{A}\text{H}\} \kappa\} \Box \mid \tau O\xi\langle\alpha$
 $\delta\Box\Box\Box\text{E}\mu O\omega \eta\Box\oplus\Phi\nu\eta\} \subset\omega \text{H}\psi\Box\iota\alpha\text{A}\eta-\lambda\epsilon\alpha \Box\Box\Box\text{B}$
 $\wp X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega \text{H}\psi\Upsilon\iota\alpha\text{A}\eta \psi\Box\alpha\lambda\text{E}\alpha \rho\Box\Box\Box\epsilon\angle\beta/\delta-\eta\text{J} O\angle\kappa$
 $:\text{C}\psi\Box\text{A}\omega\text{A}\eta-\lambda\alpha\omega \leq\psi\Box\iota\Gamma\lambda\alpha\mu\subset\Phi\gamma\alpha\eta-\lambda\alpha\omega$

28 Then the girl ran and told her mother's household about these things.
 29 Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran out to the man, to the spring.
 30 As soon as he had seen the nose-ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, "Thus the man spoke to me," he went to the man; **and there he was, standing by the camels at the spring.**
 31 He said, "Come in, O blessed of the LORD. Why do you stand outside when I have prepared the house and a place for the camels?"
 ...
 41 Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kindred; even if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'
 42 "I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going!

$\Box\Box\Box\eta\text{A}\mu\} \lambda\alpha\omega\Box\text{A}\eta \eta\Box \wp\psi\text{A}\eta\subset\omega \leq\text{C}\psi\Upsilon\text{A}\Gamma\mu\alpha\eta/\psi$
 $\Box\Box\Box\text{E}\omega-\lambda\alpha\omega \beta\Box\text{A}\Phi\chi\text{C}\nu \psi\Box\iota\kappa O\nu\text{A}\alpha \eta\Box\oplus\Phi\nu\eta\} 43$

≤ϱψ□αμ-Ξαω) μ εϱ ρν-ψϱνψ-√θ) Ηαη Αηψ□ε
 λΕε ψ□□□ιΓτ(ραμαΑεω β□Οε) Ηιλ τε□□□ΕχΟΧψ
 αη
 :♣ | ©/Δα/κιμ
 ♣ψ□εΓλαμγιλ ≤□ϱγϱω η□Ετ) Η η□□□ΑΓταε-≤
 ϱΦγ □□□ψαλεε η ↓ρ) μΑεω 44
 :ψ□ϱνΟδ(ε-εβ) λ η□ ρωηϱψ ⇒ξψ□ικΟη-ρεΗ(ε
 η□ΑΚΗιΑΞη εω□□□ιη βΥΑε) Ηεε

η□⊕θ) β(ρ η=⊕Φνιη) ϱω ψ□ι/βιλ-λεε ρ□□□□□Ε
 /β⇒δ) λ η□εΓλακ(ε ≤Σρ□εΞ □ψϱν(ε 45
 ρ□□□αμΟε ρω βΥΑε) ΗιΓτϱω η ρνϱψ□αωΑη δ
 Σρ□□□ΕΓτϱω /η□Αμ) κιΗ-λαω /ηΖ↓/Δακϱω
 □□□τεΕχΟψ
 :εϱ ρν ψϱνψ□√θ) Ηαη Αηψ□ελεε

ε□ΑΚΩϱΧψϱω βΣρ□□ΥΑω τ | □ν) πιλ ηΨΣδΑΚ
 Ωα/β ⇒ξ) ΒΩΑλ θ□Αξ) χϱψ ε□Εχ⊕Χψϱω 63
 :≤ψ□ιεΑ/β ≤ψ□ιΓλαμγ η□⊕Φνιηϱω ε(ρ↓ϱΧψ
 ϱω □□□ωψ ρνψΕω

43 **Look, I am standing here by the spring of water;** let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, "Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,"
 44 and who will say to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also"--let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.'

45 "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, **look, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder;** and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.'

46 She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels.

....

60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes."

61 Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb.

63 Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw, **and behold, camels coming.**

64 And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, 65 and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself.

66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

These four examples of η⊕Φνιη + participle constructions all communicate simultaneous events, simultaneous in relation to the main thematic development of the eventline. In all cases η⊕Φνιη has an attention-grabbing aspect to it, as well as a surprise element (cf. Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze, 1999:330). All four examples are cases of sentence focus. All examples also communicate the beginning of a shift in the narrative's theme (ibid.: 330). In

spite of communicating background information simultaneous to the unfolding events, the information reported is still so significant that it supports the shift or redirection of the theme development. In this case, because of their theme shifting function, these $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ + participle constructions are theme traces.

9.4 THE THEMATICITY OF ARGUMENT FOCUS

Both sentence focus and argument focus tend to occur in marked word-order configurations (normally fronting or with focus particles). These are therefore expected to carry more thematic material. Argument focus structures are used in two information structure strategies, the identification of referents (Lambrecht, 1994:232) and the announcing of new theme macrowords.

The identification of referents always has a contrastive overlay. Not so the announcing of theme macrowords. Not all such macrowords are necessarily contrastive. How these two functions employ argument focus structures, and how it all impacts theme, is now discussed below.

9.4.1 The thematicity of argument focus as contrastively identifying referents

The thematicity of argument focus structures is to be found in the type of sentence articulation in which argument focus structures are found, namely in identificational sentences. When the scope of assertion is limited to an already discourse-active argument, argument focus strengthens a referent that is already active. Arguments that are presupposed but still in focus have a *contrastiveness* overlay. The contrastiveness is then what is in focus. Discourse-new referents with argument focus also have some *contrastiveness* overlay. The overlay, like the focus domain, is limited to one argument only. For a discussion of argument focus in Biblical Hebrew, see chapter 5 (5.2.3).

What argument focus does is that it marks as theme traces a specific constituent. Such a referent, be it a participant, a prop, a time or place deixis, is then marked as a macroword. In other words, the function of the identificational sentence is to identify a macroword. It cannot be categorically stated that all argument focus structures are thematic, albeit in different degrees, since more research of a large corpus is needed in order to establish some trends. In

:♣∃ψ□∅νψΕβ]ψ□∩νψΕΖβ η□∅ωηϷψ Ξ May the LORD judge between you and me!"
 BOKπ)H∩ψ

6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

The theme of this thematic grouping is that Abraham was given Sarai’s slave girl in order to have an heir. Sarai did the giving. Hagar conceived and showed contempt for her mistress, leading to Sarai’s protestations that she herself is the one that brought this situation about, and that action should be taken against Hagar. In verse 5, Sarai confirms her identity as the one who gave Hagar to Abraham (“I myself, and nobody else, gave my slavegirl ...”), and being the only newly-asserted information, is a case of argument focus. This information structuring is central to the thematic development. Sarai intensifies the rhetorical effect of her protest by identifying and confirming herself as the main cause of the situation, employing a marked configuration. This marked configuration is a theme trace.

In Biblical Hebrew, one genre where argument focus is productive is in dialogue with its use of WH-questions. Argument focus is the information structure used with WH-questions.

An example is Genesis 16.8-9

<p>ρ□αμ∅·Xψ∅ω 8 ψικΥΕλΕτ η∅ν□□□A∅]Ϸω τ∅□Aβ η□∅•ζιμ– ψ□E∅] ψ_⇒ρAΩ τ□αξ]πιH ρY ∅γAη ρεμ∅□·Γτ∅ω :ταξ ⇒ρOΖβ ψ□ικOνA∅]ψ□ιΓτ\ριβϷΦγ ψZ ⇒ρAΩ □□□ψ⊕ν]Kπιμ η↓ ∅ωηϷψ ♠□□□α∅]λαμ □□□∅ηAλ ρεμ∅ ·X ψ∅ω 9 ♠ΥΕΓτ\ριβϷΦγ–λε∅ ψιβ]ΨH :Aηψ Σδ ∅ψ ταξ□αΓτ ψ□∩Φνα∅]τιηϷω</p>	<p>8 And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "from my mistress Sarai I am running away." 9 The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her."</p>
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The two WH-question words are fronted before their respective clause verbs (verse 8b), and the answer is a fronted argument focus structure (verse 8d). The fronting of “my mistress Sarai” is thematically important. Sarai is not a discourse-new participant. This identificational sentence further strengthens Sarai as main participant, with the theme unfolding further with the reference to Sarai in verse 9b: “Return to your *mistress*...”

Instead of seeing “from my mistress Sarai” as focal, De Regt argues that the sentence-final part of verse 8d is the most salient part of the clause:

*“Hagar is not saying: “It is from Sarai and not from anybody else that I am fleeing.”
She is saying: “I am fleeing (from Sarai my mistress)” (2003:117)*

He argues this because Sarai is already made discourse-active in 8b, and because no contrastiveness is implied in the sense of restricting the identity to just Sarai. In response, a few arguments can be brought against his position: first, it could be argued that the fronting as such carries salient information. There is some marking going on. Second, verse 8d is a typical answer to a WH-question “Where are you from?” and “Where are you going?” The fronted constituent “From my mistress Sarai” is then the answer to the first question, but also the second in the sense that “I don’t have a destiny I am going to, I am just fleeing.” It is true that “my mistress Sarai” in Hagar’s answer is indeed presupposed, but the fleeing is also presupposed in the verbs of movement in the Angel’s question. By focusing on a marked argument focus structure, Sarai is identified and asserted as the one being fled from. After reading the command of the Angel, it can be inferred that the Angel knew all along that she was fleeing from Sarai. The WH-question is then a veiled rhetorical question, almost of the nature of “What in the world are you doing here?” The marked focus structure containing Hagar’s response can therefore be interpreted as a confession. After she confesses what she was doing, the Angel commands her to return to the one she is fleeing from. The rhetorical function of the WH-questions and the response is an argument focus structure highlighting Sarai as the origin and new destiny of Hagar’s movements, holding as such key macrostructure information in this short scene.

Exegetically, the domain of the focus structure in verse 8b is very significant. It is a question of whether Hagar’s answer is a response to the question “What in the world are you doing?” or to the question “Who is it you have left?” This indicates that two different situation models of the scene can be constructed, depending on the interpretation of the Angel’s question. If the first possibility is chosen, the information flow from this exchange to the command of the Angel is still possible, but more complicated. The information flow can be represented in this way:

“WHAT in the world are YOU doing?”

“From Sarai my mistress I AM FLEEING” (the topic is “I” and the predicate is in focus)

“(Stop fleeing and) return to your mistress”

If the second option, namely argument focus, is chosen, the theme flows much better:

“WHO is it you have left, and WHERE are you going?”

“FROM SARAI MY MISTRESS I am fleeing” (the presupposed topic and predicate is “I am fleeing”)

“Return to the ONE you are fleeing from (i.e. to your mistress)”

In this interpretation, Hagar’s mistress, Sarai, remains the thematic point in all three sentences. This last interpretation is preferable for two reasons: (1) the marked, fronted construction of Hagar’s answer, as an identificational sentence providing an answer to the WH-questions of the Angel, does not make sense if the answer to the WH-questions is fronted and seemingly salient in terms of word-order, while the predicate is what is most salient. (2) From an information structure perspective, the first interpretation would make it a topic-comment sentence, commenting on Hagar and what she is doing. A marked construction for the unmarked predicate focus structure is inconsistent with the theory. If Hagar’s answer is a marked construction, it should be either a sentence focus or an argument focus structure. (3) The referent identified in Hagar’s response (that is, “Sarai my mistress”) as the answer to the two WH-questions, actually answers both WH-questions in one clause. It identifies “Sarai” as the one departing from, and by mentioning the “mistress”, it is clear it is a slave fleeing. The “where”-question does not need answering. She is fleeing and her destiny is unsure.

Another example of thematic WH-questions is Genesis 37.15-17:

<p>η[ΣδΑΚΩαΖβ η□εωΟτ η□⊕Φνιηζω Η ψ□ιε]η□□□ΕεΑχ] μ∩Χψϩω 15 ρ□□ΨΟμεΕλ Ηψ□ιεΑη]η□ΕλΑε] Η∩Χψ ϩω :Η—™∠θαβ] Γτ—ηαμ ΗΥ™∠θαβ] μ ψ□□□ικΟνΑε]ψ□αξαε—τε ε ρεμεΔ·Χψϩω 16 :≤ψ□ιεΟρ ≤□Εη ηΨΟπψΕε] ψ□ιλ ε□□ ϩΦν—η↓δψ□∩Φγαη □□□ΗψιεΑη ρεμε ·Χψϩω 17 η↓∅•ζιμ]Ζσ] σ ϩν η ϩν<ψΥΑτΟ∠δ η□Ακ] λ⊕ν ≤ψ□(ρ) μ↓ Οε □□□ψιΓτ] παμΑΗ ψ□ι∠κ ωψ□Αξεε ρ□□□□αξαε □□□∞Εσ ψ ♠ε λ□⊕Χψϩω :∕ΑτΟδ] ∠β ≤□ΕεΑχ] μ∩Χψϩω</p>	<p>15 and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?"</p> <p>16 he said, "My brothers I am¹⁹⁰ seeking, tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock."</p> <p>17 The man said, "They have gone from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan?.' So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan.</p>
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¹⁹⁰ The pronouns before the participles are not marked configurations. Subject-Participle is the normal unmarked word-order.

]ν□Εκ | τ | ∠β □□ηΑΓτ αε ≤ψ□ιη∪λ[ε εψ□ιΩ<ν ψ→
 ςΥετΕμ-τ εε ρ□□ΨΟβ^θ]νψ□□ρΑβ^θ ρ□□□□αξ]βι
 η□ελ) κ∩ψ-ε-λ λ [ρ] βνθ-τ εε [Φν□εΓμμ Ηψ□□□ε
 :♣ετΕμ ρ□□ΒΟβ^∠θιμ □♣] Γμμ

prince among us.
in the choicest of our burial places bury
 your dead (own translation);
 any man from among us, **his burial ground**
 he will not withhold from you for burying
 your dead."

[□λ-ρ εΗ(ε □□ηΑλΕΚπ) κ αΓμ αη τ ⇨ ρΑσ] μ-τ εε ψ
 □ιλ-εΓτ∩ψ<ω 9
]η[εδΑΩ η□□□Εχ^λθι∠β ρ□□□εΗ(ε
 ≤□εκ) κ | τ | ∠β ψ□ιλ η ϕ Φν□∅ν) Γτ∩ψ ε□ΕλΑμ ∞εσ□
]εκ] ∠β
 :ρεβ—⊗θ-τℝ•ζυξ(εαλ

7 Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites,
 the people of the land.
 8 He said to them, "If you are willing that I
 should bury my dead out of my sight, hear
 me, and entreat for me Ephron son of
 Zohar,

ψ∩ν□ΕσΑμ) Η ψ□□□∩νΟδ(ε-ε-λ λ 11
 ♠□Αλ ψιΓτ□□□ατ ϕ ν □□ηΣδΑΚΩαη
 ΑηψΥιΓτατ<ν □□□♣] λ [] ∠β-ρ εΗ(ε ηΒ∩ρΑσ) Γμ α
]η<ω
 :♣ετΕμ ρ□□ΒΟβ^θ ♠□ΑΓλ Αηψ□ιΓτατ<ν ψ□ιΓμ α
 □-ψ⊕ν] β ψ□⊕νψΕσ] λ

9 so that he may give me *the cave of
 Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end
 of his field.*
For the full price let him give it to me in
 your presence as a possession for a burying
 place."

10 Now Ephron was sitting among the
 Hittites; and Ephron the Hittite answered
 Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all
 who went in at the gate of his city,

11 "No, my lord, hear me;
the field I give you,
 and **the cave that is in it, to you** I give (it);
in the presence of my people I give it to
 you; bury your dead."

12 Then Abraham bowed down before the
 people of the land.
 (own translation)

The local theme of this scene (verses 5-12) is part of the global theme of the episode, the legal purchase of a burial ground in Canaan. Abraham has bought real estate in the Promised Land. The subsection under scrutiny in this example is the initial negotiations, where the Hittites want to give him a piece of land, but Abraham makes known his intention to get a very specific piece of land, namely a part of Ephron's land, with the cave on it. For that land he will pay the full price. The fronted arguments in focus in verse 6 identify *any choice land he might want*, but Abraham refuses. The information structure of verse 6b is complex. The fronted "a man from among us" is presupposed, but no specific referent is identified. It is fronted to signal a topic shift from "you" (Abraham) to "us" (any of the Hittites). The fronting of the presupposed object, "his burial ground", already made active in the previous clause, is a case of argument focus. This is in focus because the having or giving away one's burial ground is no light matter. But Abraham is held in high esteem ("you are a mighty prince among us", verse 6a) and the Hittites presumably thought that they could strengthen their alliance with Abraham allowing him their best burial sites. The negated predicate in verse 6b is already presupposed because of the previous clause, implied by the concession to help

himself to any of the choicest burial places. The point of the local theme, is therefore that Abraham is free to take any of the best burial grounds. This local theme fits in with the global theme that not even this is good enough for Abraham: he wants to buy and own his own land.

Then Abraham identifies the land of Ephron as his choice, using an end-weight structure (with two relative clauses) in a predicate focus comment, in verse 9a-c. In verse 9d, he states in an argument focus structure that the *full price* is what he will pay for it. In verse 11 Ephron, in the continuing dialogue, agrees to give him the field, and the cave in it, with the people as witnesses. All along, the fronted arguments in focus identify and re-identify thematic referents: not just any choice land, but the field of Ephron and the cave on it, at the full price.

Genesis 3.19 is an example of fronted, presupposed locative orientations in argument focus structures:

<p> $\leq \varepsilon \xi \square \varepsilon \lambda \lambda \alpha \kappa \varepsilon \text{Z} \cdot \Gamma \tau \square \square \square \clubsuit \psi \varepsilon \text{K} \pi \alpha \varepsilon \tau \square \alpha \omega \oplus \zeta \} \angle \beta$ $\eta \square \text{A} \mu \downarrow \delta \langle \varepsilon \square \square \square \text{A} \eta - \lambda \varepsilon \varepsilon \square \square \square \clubsuit \rangle \beta \downarrow \text{H} \delta \square \square \square \alpha \omega$ $\text{A} \Gamma \tau \} \xi \Upsilon \otimes \angle \theta \upsilon \lambda \eta \wp \Phi \nu \square \varepsilon \Gamma \mu \iota \mu \psi \square \iota \angle \kappa$ $\eta \text{A} \Gamma \tau \square \alpha \varepsilon \rho \square \square \square \square \text{A} \pi \text{A} \omega - \psi \square \iota \angle \kappa$ $:\beta \downarrow \text{H} \text{A} \Gamma \tau \rho \square \square \square \text{A} \pi \text{A} \omega - \lambda \varepsilon \varepsilon \square \omega$ </p>	<p>By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you (are), and to dust you shall return</p>
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In this example, presumably a piece of poetry, two fronted discourse-active locatives become deictic orientations to the clauses they are in. In both cases, they are activated in the first clause of verse 19: the locative adjunct “to the ground” appearing post-verbally.

$\eta \wp \Phi \nu \square \varepsilon \Gamma \mu \iota \mu$ “from it” refers to the ground of the previous line. It is the same in the case of $\rho \square \square \square \text{A} \pi \text{A} \omega - \lambda \varepsilon \varepsilon$ “to dust”, both being locative orientations associated with presupposed, discourse-active information. Not only are locatives fronted and in focus, but also the predicate of the verbless, second $\psi \iota \angle \kappa$ clause is in focus. The local theme is that to the ground, to dust, you will return. Three times the information in the first line, “until you return to the ground”, is confirmed and strengthened. In addition two of the three fronted constructions initiate with the conjunction $\psi \iota \angle \kappa$, which means here that a reason of the previous statement follows.

Left-dislocation of a topic can precede an argument focus fronting in identifying sentences, for example Genesis 3.12-13:

<p> $\leq \downarrow \downarrow \delta \text{A} \varepsilon \square \text{A} \eta \rho \varepsilon \mu \varepsilon \Psi \cdot \text{X} \psi \mathfrak{R} \omega \text{ 12}$ $\psi \square \downarrow \delta \text{A} \Gamma \mu \iota \omega \eta \text{A} \Gamma \tau \square \square \square \alpha \tau \wp \nu \rho \square \square \square \square \varepsilon \text{H} \langle \varepsilon \rangle \square$ $\square \square \eta \text{A} \text{K} \text{H} \iota \varepsilon \square \text{A} \eta$ $:\lambda \square \text{E} \kappa \text{O} \varepsilon \wp \omega f \square \text{E} \omega \text{A} \eta - \acute{\iota} \mu \psi \square \iota \Gamma \lambda - \eta \wp \nu \downarrow \tau \square$ </p>	<p>12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?"</p>
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□HAξ ρ Φvναη-λ□εε |≤ψ□ιηυλ]ε η□A | ηc
 ψ □ρεμэ·XψRω 14
 □τэ·ζ Aτψ□□□ιΩAω ψ□□□ιZκ
 η[ΣΔAKΩαη τ□□□RΧψαξ λΨOZκiμ] η□A
 μEη] Zβαη-λAZκiμ □□□ηAΓταэ ρ] ρAэ
 ♠□EλEτ □□□♣cνOξcΦγ-λαω
 :♣ψ□ØXψαξ ψ□Eμcψ-λAZκ λ□ακэ·Γτ ρ]
 □□□AπAω]cω
 Z η□AKHιэ□Aη /ψ□□□Eβ] □□□♣cνψ□EZ
 β τψ□ιHAэ η□□□AβψEэcω 15
 ηYAω\rρRζ /ψ□□□Eβ] □♣(ω\rρRζ /ψ□Eβ]
 Hэ□·ρ □□□♣ | π]Hcψ ρ]η□
 :β—™θAω]Φv□επ]H] Γτ η□AΓταэ]cω

14 The LORD God said to the serpent,
 "Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all animals and among all
 wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,
 and **dust** you shall eat all the days of your life.

15 **Enmity** I will put between you and the woman,
 and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
 and **you** will strike his heel."

Verses 14 and 15 contain two focus frames, both of which are important in interpreting the subsequent discourse. In verse 14, “**cursed** are you among all ... ” is a predicate focus structure with a marked word-order: the predicate is fronted before the presupposed primary topic pronoun “you” (i.e. the serpent). The following two clauses also have marked, fronted configurations, and both are interpreted as argument focus. The first “**upon your belly** you shall go” and the second “and **dust** you shall eat all the days of your life” are both to be interpreted as marked-word order argument focus if it can be said with certainty that the predicates “going” and “eating” are presupposed from the knowledge of the world. As a rule serpents “go” and “eat.” But these two marked configurations provide the detail or outworking of the curse. The manner of being cursed is specified, giving it content. “Cursed” is the macroword that is elaborated on and is thematic in this paragraph. In verse 15, the fronted object “enmity” is likewise a theme macroword. The rest of the verse elaborates on the nature of this enmity and hostility. As found in verse 14, two marked word-order clauses are used to expand on what is meant by “enmity”, in this case two topicalized primary topics compared with each other. The macroword “enmity” in fact influences the whole verse, framing the theme. The same can be said of the macroword “cursed.”

The question can be raised whether all the marked word-order constructions in these two verses are indeed thematic. The clauses with the macrowords in marked constructions are cases of theme announcing and theme framing and as such the argument focus structures are cases of thematic foregrounding.

Another example of a theme macroword announcing is Genesis 6.19

ρ□AΩAZβ-λAZκ□iμ ψαξAη□-λAZκiμ] 19
 η□ABEΓταη-λεэ εψ□ιβαΓτ λ. OZκiμ ≤∩ψ□Rv]H
 :]|ψ)η□∩ψ η□AB™θcν] ρ□□□AK ρζ ♠YAΓτιэ τ□
 Oψ(ξαη]λ

19 **and-from-all living-things from-all-flesh**
two from-all you-must-bring to-the-ark to-live with-
 you, male and-female they-must-be.
 20 Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the

animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive.

21 Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them."

22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

In verse 19, two constituents are fronted, namely a double-barrel prepositional phrase “*from all living things, from all flesh*”, and a fronted object in a Y-movement syntactic construction. The primary topic is Noah. The theme of verse 19-21 is about the animals and food which Noah must bring into the ark. After being instructed to bring in his family, he is now instructed about the bringing in of animals. Since the event of “*bringing in*” is presupposed because of verse 18, the fronted constituent “two from all” in verse 19 is a case of fronted argument focus structure. The two prepositional phrases “*from all living things, from all flesh*” is the frame in which the “two from all” must be understood. It is newly-activated information with thematic range. Both fronted constituents are in focus, the first being the frame for the second, “two from all.” The exact nature of the “two” is further defined in the next clause: “*male and female they must be.*” The rest of verses 19 and 20 deals with the question of those animals in the ark.

9.4.2.2 The cataphoric demonstrative pronoun

A cataphoric pronoun looks to the subsequent discourse for its reference, and not to the preceding context like anaphoric pronouns. In Biblical Hebrew, this cataphoric pronoun is a demonstrative. Such cataphoric demonstrative pronouns occur in verbless clauses. Where the predicate of the verbless clause is also in focus, it is a sentence focus structure. The genealogy opening statements are examples of this (see above, 9.3.1). Where the predicate of the verbless clause (the complement of the demonstrative) is topical, discourse-active and presupposed, the demonstrative pronoun is the domain of an argument focus structure. The contents to which this demonstrative refers, is identified in the subsequent, normally immediately subsequent discourse. This device is used where the contents to be identified exceed what can fit into a normal sentence. The referent of the cataphoric pronoun is thus the theme of the subsequent span.

For example, Genesis 17.9-10

<p> $\leq \square A \eta \downarrow \rho \} \beta \alpha \varepsilon - \lambda \varepsilon \varepsilon \square \square \square \leq \psi \iota \eta \cup \lambda \uparrow \varepsilon \rho \varepsilon \mu \varepsilon \bar{X}$ $\rho \square \square [O \mu] H \iota \tau \square \square \square \square \iota \tau \psi \uparrow \rho \} \angle \beta - \tau \varepsilon \varepsilon \square \square \square A \Gamma \tau$ </p>	<p> 9 God said to Abraham, "And as for you, my covenant you shall keep, you and your offspring after you throughout </p>
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αεω
 10 This is my covenant,
 which you shall keep,
 between me and you

...εκψ⊕νψ□□□Eβ] □□□ψ∩νψE∠β]□ρ|
 μ) ΗιΓτ ρ□□□□εH(ε

Two argument focus structures occur in these verses. The fronted “covenant” in verse 9b and the sentence-initial demonstrative “this” in verse 10. The topical left-dislocation construction, “and (as for) you”, is a theme-shifting primary topic. From now on “you”, meaning Abraham and by implication his descendents, will now be talked about. The main concept in focus is “covenant”. “Covenant” has been activated earlier, in verses 3 and 7, but its fronting in verse 9b identifies the “covenant” as a macroword that will be central to the subsequent span. In the subsequent discourse, the question of Abraham’s covenant obligations is in focus, forming the theme. These references, both in marked constructions, have been presented as thematic in verse 9b. In verse 10a this thematic development is taken a step further in the form of a verbless clause with a clause-initial demonstrative. In verse 10a, “covenant” is discourse-active and presupposed. The demonstrative “this” refers cataphorically to the contents of the covenant, identified in verses 10c and 11a as the circumcision sign of the covenant. The demonstrative encapsulates the contents of the covenant that will be elaborated in the immediately subsequent discourse span. The clause with the cataphoric demonstrative in an argument focus construction is therefore a theme trace.

9.4.2.3 The prophetic formula

The –ηκ of the prophetic formula, “Thus says the Lord” is also a theme-announcing macroword in an argument focus structure. “Thus” is still semantically empty, but pointing ahead to the thematic reference. “The LORD” as primary topic is normally presupposed by the mention of the prophet or some other mouthpiece of the Lord, but the cataphoric reference “thus” points to subsequent information in the immediate discourse that is new and that is thematically significant. An example is 2 Kings 1.4:

η↓ ρωηεψ ρ□□□□αμΑε–η↓O∠κ] □□□/E
 κΑλCω 4
 η ρ Φν□εΓμμ δ□□B⊙ρEτ–ε↓·λ ≤□AKH A
 τψ□ιλΑσ–ρεH(ε η□ΑΛΞιΓμαη
 τ↓μΑΓτ τ | Ζμ ψ□□□ι∠κ

Now therefore **thus** says the LORD,
 'the bed to which you have gone you shall not
 leave,
 but you shall surely die.' "

9.5 CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the introduction in Chapter 1 (1.4.2) and in the introduction of this chapter, theme traces are the marked constructions, marked either in terms of word-order, or in terms of explicit pronouns. It has been made clear that unmarked constructions are not necessarily non-thematic. Marking, in the vast majority of cases indicates theme trace. When unmarked, it can be thematic or non-thematic, depending on other factors. This chapter has focused on the marked constructions in focus structures, pointing out how such structures contribute to the cognitive construction of the theme or macrostructure.

Each of the three categories of focus structure has marked configurations:

1. Predicate focus structures comment on a topic, the comment being that within which what is termed end-weight constructions can occur. These end-weight constructions in most cases communicate thematic information. Another configuration in commenting sentences is irregular post-verbal word-order, where a specific focus peak is placed on a constituent in an irregular position.
2. Sentence focus is per definition a marked focus structure with marked grammatical constructions. Apart from a few rare cases of wayyiqtol clauses fulfilling a sentence focus event-reporting function, sentence focus structures are generally in marked syntactic configurations. Three information structure strategies of sentence focus are suggested: presentational sentences, event-reporting sentences redirecting the theme, and event-reporting and state-reporting sentences that provide theme-supporting background information. Such backgrounding event-reporting or state-reporting can be thematic or nonthematic, depending on how crucial is the information it contains for the formation of the macrostructure and the situation model. Presentational sentences can be configured in verbless clauses, $\eta\Box\Box\wp\psi A\eta$ clauses, $\psi\eta\Box\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega$ clauses, toledoth statements, and $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ + noun + participle constructions. Theme redirecting event-reporting sentences appear in we-X-qatal clauses, $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\eta$ + we-X-qatal clauses, and in negative we-X-qatal clauses. In some cases wayyiqtol clauses can be interpreted as event-reporting sentence focus. Backgrounding theme-supporting event-reporting and state-reporting sentences are verbless clauses and participle clauses for simultaneous states or events, and we-X-qatal clauses for anterior events off the main narrative line.

3. Argument focus is also a marked focus structure, with its manifestation generally in marked grammatical constructions, often very similar in form to sentence focus constructions. Argument focus is used for two cognitive pragmatic functions: the identification of unexpected, discourse-new referents, which often has a pragmatic and context-driven contrastive overlay, and the announcement of so-called theme macrowords, words (or phrases) that are central to the subsequent development of the theme. For identificational argument focus structures, fronting, additive and restrictive focus particles, and negative focus particles are used. For theme-announcing macrowords, fronting, the cataphoric demonstrative, and the prophetic formula $\text{--}\eta\kappa$ “thus” is generally used.

Theme framing as a wider information structure strategy has also been recognized. Theme statements as theme introductions and theme summaries as theme closures are employed in Biblical Hebrew. Sentence focus structures as well as predicate focus structures are used for these. In the case of argument focus, theme framing takes place when discourse-new deictic orientations are identified, or when theme macrowords are announced.

The following information structure strategies of discourse focus have been distinguished in chapter 9:

1. Commenting on topics
2. Presenting unidentifiable or inactive participants
3. Reporting, meaning event-reporting and state-reporting of out-of-the-blue, unexpected, discourse new events or states. Some reporting redirects the theme, other reporting, especially that of states, supports the theme.
4. Identifying referents, as identifying contrastive, unexpected referents or deictic text-world frames, or by announcing theme macrowords.

The three focus structure categories are used in the information structure strategies of discourse focus:

1. Predicate focus structures are used for commenting in topic-comment articulations. This focus structure is generally unmarked in terms of word-order, but there are exceptions.

2. Sentence focus structures are used for presentational sentences, and for theme-redirecting and theme-supporting event-reporting and state-reporting sentences. The word-order is generally marked.
3. Argument focus is used for unexpected, contrastive identification, and for the announcement of theme macrowords. The word-order is marked, similarly to sentence focus structures.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION: APPLICATION OF THE THEME-TRACING MODEL TO GENESIS 17

The first two steps of the theme-tracing model have been implemented in chapters 8 and 9 to determine how the information structure strategies operate in narrative texts, illustrated with many examples from our corpus, Genesis 1-25. What has not yet been done is to implement all four steps in a text from our corpus. The next section deals with that.

10.1 ILLUSTRATING THE MODEL THROUGH AN EXTENDED EXAMPLE: GENESIS 17

This section contains a sample text from our corpus that serves as an illustration of how to work out the accounts of topic and focus for Biblical Hebrew, with their contribution to the analysis of theme – through the notion of theme traces.

Genesis 17 is chosen as a sample text, for the following reasons: the episode is relatively short and contained, it has clear boundaries on each side (with chapter 16 and 18), it signals transitions as thematic units, and it has quite a few marked work-order configurations and continuous topics. Genesis 17 provides examples of primary topics, secondary topics, fronting, left-dislocation, topic promotion, topic contrast, topic shift, sentence focus, argument focus, predicate focus, end-weight, dialogue, local themes embedded in a global theme, boundaries/transitions between scenes, macrowords, theme introduction, and theme closure. Genesis 17 also provides a good example of a thematic macroword, in this case the term “covenant”, which functions as a theme trace. “Covenant” recurs 9 times in this episode, and in three of the 9 times it occurs in a marked word-order construction.

In this analysis of a sample text, the following method will be followed, based on the steps of theme-tracing presented in chapter 7 (7.6).

STEP 1: All the marked word-order and other prominent words and constructions are noted.

STEP 2: Based on context, contents, and some of the marked constructions, tentative segments are proposed. The smallest segment is the thematic paragraph. The Hebrew text of

Genesis 17 is presented in these tentative groupings, with the marked constructions clearly indicated and discussed. Any continuous topics are also highlighted and discussed, making observations about the local themes while linking these topic frameworks with the focus contents. In other words, STEPS 2-4 are discussed together.

The exegetical analysis incorporated in the study below is not a full one because that would include the consultation of a variety of commentaries and other exegetical works. The sample only contains an application of the theme model in context of information structure. This is done for lack of space, so as not to distract from a very limited purpose. The goal of this sample is to point out briefly and coherently how to implement the accounts of topic and focus for Biblical Hebrew (cf. chapters 3 and 5) and a model for theme analysis with its notion of theme traces based on information structure categories.

Before we look in more detail at Genesis 17, it is necessary to determine and confirm the “outside” boundaries of our text. Genesis 17 fits within the Abraham Narrative that started in Genesis 11.27 and continues until Genesis 25. Genesis 16 deals with Abram being given Sarai’s slave to produce an heir, the birth of Hagar’s child, Ishmael, and the first flight of Hagar into the desert. The last scene in this chapter, deals with what happened with the pregnant Hagar at the well, ends with Hagar naming the well Beer Lahai Roi (16.13-14), the birth of Ishmael (16.15), and the important background information of Abram’s age of 86 years old (16.16). The break with chapter 17 is a clear one: God is speaking to Abram 13 years later – with Abram now 99 years old – on the theme of his covenant promises and obligations, namely circumcision. General closing comments re-emphasizing that Abraham, Ishmael and all the males in his household were circumcised, signals the closing of an episode. The transition between chapters 17 and 18 is marked by a text-world change in terms of time and space. Three “men” come to visit Abraham and Sara at Mamre, repeating the covenant promises mentioned in chapter 17 and continuing with the issue of the sin and imminent destruction of Sodom and Gomorra. The primary participants, God and Abraham, and Sarah to a lesser extent, with the concepts of covenant, heir, and circumcision, continue throughout the chapter, but chapter 18 begins a new episode with a new global theme, albeit with the same major participants, God, Abraham, and Sarah.

STEP 1

The following marked word-order constructions are noted in Genesis 17:

Left-dislocation in verses 4a, 14a, 15b, 17e, and 20a

Fronting in verses 5c, 6c, 9b, 14b, 15c (in a verbless clause), 16e, 17d, 18b, 19b, 20d, 21a, 26a (a temporal adjunct), and 27a

Right dislocation in verse 9c

End weight in verse 23a

The following explicit pronouns, and focus particles are noted in Genesis 17:

There are explicit pronouns in verses 4a, 9a and 9c (right-dislocation)

There are focus particles in verses 4a, 16b, and 20b

The following text-world deictic, spatio-temporal orientations are noted in Genesis 17:

Verses 1a and 26a

The following recurring topics and potential macrowords are noted in Genesis 17:

There are relexicalisations of God 11 times, in verses 1a, 1c, 3b, 7b, 8b, 9a, 15a, 18a, 19a, 22b, and 23c, and of Abraham 12 times, in verses 1a, 3a, 5a, 5b, 9a, 15a, 17a, 18a, 22b, 23a, 24a, and 26a. “Covenant” is relexicalized 12 times, in verses 2a, 4a, 7a, 7b, 9b, 10a, 11b, 13b, 14b, 19d, 19e, and 21a.

Sarai/Sara, Isaac, Ishmael, circumcision, and generations are repeated several times each.

STEPS 2-4

STEP 2-4 are worked out under each of the sections below. A tentative, intuitive decision on the divisions between the thematic units has been made, based on a rapid overview of the topic framework, topic shifts, and theme shifts based on the focus content. The detailed analysis for each scene will confirm or reject the tentative segmentation. There are seven thematic units, verses 1-2, 3-8, 9-14, 15-16, 17-18, 19-22, and 23-27.

10.1.1 First scene, verses 1-2

≤ψΥ∩νAH τασΗ□□□ΕτϷω η□ ρ νAH ≤ψ□ιτ) Ηι
 Γτ→εΖβ ≤□↓ρ) βαε ψ□□□ιηϷψϱω 1
 □□□ωψΑλΕε ρεμε ·Χψϱω ≤□↓ρ) βαε–λεε ηM ρ
 ωηϷψ ε□↓ρ⊕Χψϱω
 ψ□⇒∠δαΗ λ□□□Εε–ψ∩ν(ε
 :≤ψ□ιμΑτ η□⊕ψ) η∅ω ψ□ϱνΑπ) λ ♠□ΕΓλαη) τι
 η
 ♣Υ∅νψΕβ) ψ□□□∩νψΕΖβ ψ□ιτψ(ρ) β η□ ρ ν) Γ
 τεεϷω 2
 :δ□□∩Οε) μ δ□□ΒΟε) μι∠β □♣) τ | ε η□εΖβ\ραεϷ
 ω

1 When **Abram** was ninety-nine years old,
 the **LORD** appeared to him (Abram) and said,
 "I am **God Almighty**;
 walk before me and be blameless.
 2 I will confirm my **covenant** between me and you
 and I will greatly increase your numbers."

Step 2: determining the information structure and information structure strategy of the theme traces

In this scene, a temporal clause updates the reference time to when Abram is 99 years old – in contrast to the 86 years in Genesis 16.16 – and so provides a revised text-world deictic orientation. One now expects this scene to be a setting and theme-introducing scene. Abram is another theme trace, as is the LORD/God. Abram is relexicalized, while still discourse-active in 16.16, and the LORD is also relexicalized, twice (once as LORD and once as God) in this scene. Expectations are raised that both these participants will be referred to again in the subsequent discourse. In an unmarked word-order verbless clause God expresses his identity as El-Shaddai, and addresses Abram, still discourse-active. In verse 2 the term “covenant” is promoted as a secondary topic within a predicate focus structure with God as the primary topic. “Covenant” has originally been identified and activated in chapter 15, but here re-activated. Expectation is raised that more is to be said about “my covenant between me and you.”

Step 3: determining the boundaries of the section

The temporal deictic orientation marks the beginning of a new scene, in this case, an altogether new episode, as will be seen as the theme unfolds. This introductory scene makes a transition into a new scene with the brief change of primary topic to Abram in verse 3.

Step 4: discovering the theme of the thematic unit

The topic framework of this opening scene is God and Abram. The focus content of the predicate focus comments in this introduction scene is that God initiates communication with Abram, stating his identity as El-Shaddai, calling Abram to obedience, and expressing the wish to confirm his covenant with Abram. The local theme can be briefly stated that *God calls Abram and wants to confirm his covenant with him. For these purposes he indicates to Abraham both the conditions for, and the outcomes of a covenantal relationship.*

10.1.2 Second scene, verses 3-8

<p>ωψΥ ρνAKπ-λααπ ≤Ψ↓ρ) βαε λBOKπrXψϖω 3 :ρ□□.JOMεEλ ≤ψ□ιηυλΓε □Γτιε ρ□□□Eλβ→δε ψϖϖω ♣ΥΑΓτιε ψ□ιτψ(ρ) β η□⊕Φνιη ψΔρν(ε) 4 :≤□ηψ Φγ/ Βμ(η β□αε) λ ΑτψΔρνψΑηεω ≤[↓ρ) βαε □♣) μιΗ-τεε δ _π εB⊙ρ⊙θθρψ-ε·λ εω 5 ≤□Αη↓ρ) βαε □□□♣) μιΗ η□ ρψΑηεω :♣ψ□ιΓτατεν ≤□ηψ Φγ/ Βμ(η-βαε) ψ□ιζκ ≤Υρνψ γ) λ ♣ψ□ιΓτατεν] δ□Οε) μ δ□□ΖΟε) μιζ β □□□♣) τ. JΟε ψ□ιτ⊙ρ) πιηεω 6 :J□Eχ⊕ψ □♣) Γμιμ ≤ψ□ικΑλ) μ] □♣(κρϖζ/ιρ□Eβ] ♣→ϑνψEβ] ψ□□□ρνψEλβ ψ □ιτψ(ρ) λβ-τεε ψ□ιτΟμ\θ(ηϖω 7 ≤ΥΑλ π τψΖ(ρ) βιλ ≤□ΑτΟρΟδ) λ ♣ψ_Σρ(ξεα :♣ψ Σρ(ξεα □♣(κρϖζ) λ□] ≤ψ□ιηυλε□Eλ □□ □♣) λ τ ψ) ηιλ ♣ψ□Σρ(γ) μ fΣρ□□□□□εε τ□□□Eε ♣ψ□Σρ(ξεα □□□♣(κρϖζ) λ] ♣) λ÷ ψ□□□ιΓτατ ρνεω 8 ≤ΥΑλ π τϖϖ•ζυξ(εαλ/απ↓ϖν) λκ fΣρ□□□□□ εε-λAλκ τEε□ :≤ψ□ιηυλεEλ ≤□εηΑλ ψιτψ□ηψΑηεω</p>	<p>3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for a father of many nations I have made you. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, as an everlasting covenant, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 I will give to you and your descendants after you the whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (author's translation)</p>
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Step 2: determining the information structure and information structure strategy of the theme traces

A theme shift, although no real topic shift, is evident in verse 3. Briefly Abram acts, by falling down, and immediately God continues his discourse. Both Abram and God are relexicalized, active participants (thus theme traces).

The left-dislocated first person pronoun in verse 1, “I”, is a theme trace. Here God continues the speech of God to Abram. God is reconfirmed as the primary topic, the agent, of the subsequent speech. He will be doing things for Abram. The explicit

pronoun also confirms God's identity as the one who will act on Abram's behalf: "As far as I am concerned, my side of the covenant is this and this."

"Look, my covenant with you", a $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\iota\eta$ plus verbless clause, is another theme trace. The $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\iota\eta$ particle calls special attention to "covenant", signaling its thematic and topical centrality, as confirmed by the subsequent discourse. The $\eta\oplus\Phi\nu\iota\eta$ and verbless "my covenant with you" is a case of argument focus in a theme announcing strategy.

"Father of nations (I will make you)" is fronted, as well as "kings from you (will come)." Both of these are marked word-order theme traces, in argument focus structures, identifying the content of God's promises to him.

"Covenant" as a repeated, relexicalized object occurs in verse 7, repeating what was said in verse 2. The fact that God is establishing his covenant with Abram is now strengthened cognitively, even more so with a further relexicalisation of "covenant" at the end of verse 7. "Covenant" has been repeated four times since verse 2 already, emerging as a theme macroword.

"God" is relexicalized again in verses 7 and 8, in terms of another covenant blessing: his enduring commitment and presence.

The words "descendants" (thrice) and "everlasting" (twice) are also repeated concepts.

Step 3: determining the boundaries of the section

The two relexicalisations in verse 3, the theme shift, and brief topic shift, signal a new development in the theme, thus taken as the transition to a new scene. The transition to the next scene (a further part of God's monologue) occurs in verse 9, when God is relexicalized again in a speech-introducing matrix, briefly interrupting his monologue. The focus content in verses 3-8 is different to verses 9vv., in spite of the same topic framework. But only when the reader-listener comes to the transition in verse 9 and notices the theme shift of the contents of the monologue from verses 9 onwards, does it become clear that verses 3-8 is a thematic unit.

Step 4: discovering the theme of the thematic unit

The topic framework contains two topics, God as primary topic who will do things for Abraham, the secondary topic. The focus content contains information of what God told Abram, about the promises of his covenant with Abram¹⁹¹. The local theme therefore deals with what God would do for Abraham in terms of his covenant promises, namely that Abraham will have his name changed, that he will be fruitful and have royal descendents, that God will be in an eternal covenantal relationship to him, and that he and his descendents will possess a country forever.

10.1.3 Third scene, verses 9-14

≤□Αη↓ρ)βαε-λεε □□□≤ψιηυλ]ε ρεμε ·Χψϑω 9
 ρ□□]Ομ)Ηιτ [ψ□□□ιτψ(ρ)∠β-τεε]η□ΑΓταε□ω
 :≤□ΑτΟρΟδ)λ ♣ψΨΣρ(ξιαΞε □♣(τωρϑζεω η□ΑΓτ
 αε
 Αψ□Εβ]≤□εκψΘνψ□□□Εβ]□□□ψρηνψΕ∠β]□ρ)μ)Η
 ιΓτ ρ□□□□εΗ(ε ψ□ιτψ(ρ)∠β τεε·ζ 10
 :ρ□□□Ακ ρζ-λα∠κ ≤□εκΑλ λ |□Γμιη ♣ψ]Σρ(ξιαε
 □♣(τωρϑζ
 ≤Υεκ)ταλρΑω ρ□□□□αΩ]∠β τ□Εε ≤□εΓτ)λαμκ
 ν] 11
 :≤□εκψΘνψΕβ]ψ□ρηνψΕ∠β τψ□(ρ)∠β τ |Ζε]λ □□□
 η ρψΑηεω
 ρ□□□Ακ ρζ-λα∠κ ≤□εκΑλ λ |□Γμρψ ≤ψ□ιμ ρψ τ
 □□□ϑνΟμ)Η-εβ] 12
 ρ□ΑκΘν-ε∠β λΖΟ∠κιμ □□□εεσε∠κ-τϑνλθιμ]τρ
 ψ□Α∠β δψ□□□ιλψ ≤ΥεκψΕτΟρΟδ)λ
 :ε]η □♣(τωρϑζ□ιμ εβ·λ ρ□□□εΗ(ε
 ♣ΥεΚπ)σα∠κ τ□□□ϑνλθιμ]□♣)τψΕ□∠β δψ□ιλκ
 ψ λ |□Γμρψ |λ |□Γμιη 13
 :≤□Αλ |τω τψΒ(ρ)βιλ ≤□εκ(ραΩ)βι∠β ψ□ιτψ(ρ)β η
 □ΑτκψΑηεω
 |□τΑλρΑω ρ□□□□αΩ]∠β-τεε □□□λ |Γμρψ-ε]·
 λ ρ□□□εΗ(ε ρ□Ακ ρζ |λΖ@ρΑω□ω 14
 ηψΥεΓμαεμ εω□ιηαη Ηεπ□∅Φναη η□Ατ(ρ)κρν
 εω
 :ρ□□□απΕη [ψ□ιτψ(ρ)∠β-τεε]

9 God said to Abraham,
 "As for you, my **covenant** you shall keep, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.
 10 This is my **covenant**, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be **circumcised**.
 11 You shall **circumcise** the flesh of your foreskins, to be a sign of the **covenant** between me and you.
 12 Throughout your generations every male among you shall be **circumcised** when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring.
 13 Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be **circumcised**. So shall my **covenant** be in your flesh an everlasting **covenant**.
 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not **circumcised** in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; **my covenant** he has broken."

Step 2: determining the information structure and information structure strategy of the theme traces

¹⁹¹ In the Hebrew texts and the translation, the following conventions have been used: in the Hebrew text all fronted and left-dislocated constituents are boxed, and in the English, for a better overview, all the relexicalized cases of God/LORD, Abram/Abraham, and covenant have been put in bold face.

Theme trace in this scene begins with the relexicalisation of God and Abraham in verse 9

The left-dislocated full pronoun “you” in verse 9, referring to Abraham, signals a topic shift and a theme shift. In the previous scene the focus content was about what God promised he would do for Abraham and Sarah. In this scene, however, the focus content changes to what Abraham is to do. Abraham is given a command, how he should execute it, and to whom it should extend (who should be included).

“Covenant” as fronted object occurs twice in this scene (verses 9 and 14), both in argument focus structures identifying and in announcing a theme macroword. As if the author wants to say, “THIS is what is at stake: *my* covenant, and nobody else’s.

The other marked configuration is in verse 10 “This is my covenant which you shall keep ...”, where the clause-initial demonstrative pronoun is cataphoric. This clause is verbless, and has a theme-announcing argument focus structure. This structure allows a speaker-author to initiate a longer description that identifies something, in this case the actual demand of the sign of the covenant, namely circumcision. The clause-final, longer, end-weight construction “Every male among you shall be circumcised” is what is identified as the contents of the covenant referred to by the initial demonstrative. Again, it is a theme trace signaling the theme of the unfolding of God’s instructions in the subsequent continuation span.

The other four relexicalized occurrences of “my covenant” are in verses 11, 13, and 14. In verses 13 “covenant” occurs twice in one sentence, with the second occurrence of each a prepositional phrase. These prepositional phrases are indicators of end-weight, giving more information on “covenant” (they are eternal), thus strengthening this term as a macroword. In verse 11 “covenant” also occurs in a prepositional phrase, expanding the meaning of “circumcision.”

In this section the marked word-order constructions with $\tau\psi(\rho)\angle\beta$ as secondary topic (fronted in verses 9 and 14), as well as the six other repetitive occurrences of $\tau\psi(\rho)\angle\beta$, are evidence of a thematic macroword expressed as a secondary topic central to the macrostructure of the episode.

Another thematic macroword is “circumcision.” The concept “circumcision” is activated in a predicate focus structure in verse 10, and in this scene repeated four times, fully relexicalized (verses 11, 12, 13, and 14).

Step 3: determining the boundaries of the section

A speech-introducing phrase interrupts the speech of God that started in verse 2. God as primary topic continues to speak to Abraham. The left-dislocated “you”, referring to Abraham, is a theme-shift signal. From verse 9b, Abraham’s obligation regarding the covenant is stipulated, namely circumcision. God’s speech about circumcision continues until verse 14, then in verse 15 God changes the theme to what will happen to Sarah, Abraham’s wife, in connection with the covenant promises. Verses 9 to 14 form a thematic unit.

Step 4: discovering the theme of the thematic unit

Verses 9-14 contain God’s second speech to Abram (now Abraham), about his keeping of God’s covenant, and specifically, about Abraham’s duty to have the sign of the covenant, which is circumcision. The local theme can be stated in the following expression: “*God commands Abraham to practice and keep throughout all generations the sign of the covenant, circumcision.*”

10.1.4 Fourth scene, verses 15-16

$\leq \square \text{A} \eta \downarrow \rho \mid \beta \alpha \varepsilon - \lambda \varepsilon \varepsilon \square \square \square \leq \psi \iota \eta \cup \lambda \uparrow \varepsilon \rho \varepsilon \mu \varepsilon \bar{\cdot} \chi \psi \mathfrak{X} \omega \ 15$
 $\psi \uparrow \downarrow \rho \text{A} \Omega \angle \eta \square \text{A} \mu \mid \text{H} - \tau \varepsilon \varepsilon \varepsilon \text{B} \downarrow \rho \wedge \theta \iota \tau - \varepsilon \cdot \lambda \downarrow \clubsuit \mid \Gamma \tau \mid \text{H} \uparrow$
 $\varepsilon \psi \text{Z} \Rightarrow \rho \text{A} \Omega$
 $: \angle \eta \square \text{A} \mu \mid \text{H} \boxed{\eta \Psi \downarrow \rho \text{A} \Omega} \psi \square \iota \angle \kappa$
 $\gamma \text{E} \angle \beta \square \clubsuit \mid \lambda \eta \wp \Phi \nu \square \varepsilon \Gamma \mu \iota \mu \psi \iota \Gamma \tau \square \alpha \tau \wp \nu \boxed{\leq \mathfrak{R} \gamma} \subset \omega$
 $\angle \eta \square \text{A} \tau \text{O} \varepsilon \psi \square \square \square \iota \Gamma \tau \mid \kappa \Rightarrow \rho \text{E} \beta \mid \ 16$
 $\leq \downarrow \rho \psi \mid \gamma \mid \lambda \eta \square \square \square \text{A} \tau \subset \psi \square \text{A} \eta \subset \omega \square \square \square \text{A} \eta \psi \iota \Gamma \tau \mid \kappa \Rightarrow \rho$
 $\square \square \square \text{E} \beta \mid$
 $: \mid \psi \mid \eta \rho \psi \boxed{\eta \wp \Phi \nu \square \varepsilon \Gamma \mu \iota \mu} \boxed{\leq \psi \square \iota \Gamma \mu \alpha \omega \psi \square \text{E} \kappa \mid \lambda \alpha \mu}$

15 God said to Abraham,
 "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai,
 but Sarah shall be her name.

16 I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations;
kings of peoples shall come from her."

Step 2: determining the information structure and information structure strategy of the theme traces

The first theme trace in this scene is the full relexicalisation of the principal participants, God and Abraham, as well as Sarai/Sarah this time.

The three-time relexicalisation of Sarah within one verse (15) signals another theme trace. Two of these three relexicalisations of “Sarah” are in marked word-order positions. In 15b, Sarah is in a left-dislocated position, and in 15c “Sarah” is fronted in a verbless clause with the fronting in focus (argument focus).

But “Sarah” is not just repeated in a short space. Her full name together with the seemingly redundant, presupposed information “your wife”, occurs in a marked word-order position, left-dislocated. This signals a topic shift (which always includes a theme shift). From now on, “Sarah” as topic, is expected to be prominent, which turns out to be the case until the end of verse 16. “Sarah” is therefore a thematic secondary topic with God continuing as the primary topic, except for verses 16c and 16d, where she in turn becomes the primary topic.

The focus particle $\leq\alpha\gamma$ is a theme trace, putting the whole subsequent clause in focus: “and moreover/above this, I will give by her a son to you.” To the general blessing is added a very specific blessing, offspring. The force of the $\leq\alpha\gamma$ here is not that over and above a blessing, childbirth will be granted to her, but something of a counter-expectation, as if God was saying, “more than what you would have expected from my blessing, I also include the blessing of a child.”

Two constituents in verse 16, the noun “kings of nations” and the prepositional pronominal “from her” are both fronted. “Kings of nations” is identifiable, and already made discourse active in the preceding clause (in spite of a different noun used). “The kings of nations” is promoted to topic position. This promotion is packaged in the fronting construction. The fronted pronoun (“from her”, that is, from Sarah) is the argument that is in focus. This argument focus structure has a contrastiveness overlay: the nuance is that from her, of all people, all these important people will come. She has a unique place in history, she will be the mother of kings. This marked clause structure is a definite theme trace.

Step 3: determining the boundaries of the section

The speech-introducing clause with its relexicalisations of the thematic participants, and the left-dislocation of “Sarah”, confirms the transition to a new scene in God’s speech. This is now the fourth section in his speech. The end of this scene is indicated

by the end of the direct speech in verse 16, and the theme shift carried by the shift of the primary topic to Abraham in verse 17.

Step 4: discovering the theme of the thematic unit

The topic framework remains God, Abraham, this time including Sarah more prominently. The focus content concentrates on her name change, that she will be blessed, that this blessing includes offspring, and that the descendants of this offspring will be royalty. The local theme statement can be the following: *A third aspect of God's covenant with Abraham is that Sarah his wife will receive new status and a new name. She will be blessed. What is more, she will have a son, and from her, of all people, leaders of nations will come forth.*

10.1.5 Fifth scene¹⁹², verses 17-18

<p> □Ζβιλ Ζβ ρεμᾶ·Χψῖω θΥΑξ χῶΧψῖω ωψ□ ρ vAKπ-λαῶ ≤□Aη↓ρ βαῶ λ⊥OKπῶΧψῖω 17 δ□Eλ ρΦωῶψ □□□η ρ vAH-η□AῶEμ/□εβ Γλῶαη :δ□□□EλεΓτ η□ ρ vAH ≤ψ□ιῶ) ΗιΓτ-ταβ η η□↓ ≤ψΥτηυλ ᾶAῶη-λεῶ ≤□Aη↓ρ βαῶ ρεμᾶB·Χψῖω 18 :♣ψ□ØvΑπ λ η□Øψ ξῶψ λῶ□EῶAμ Ηῶψ Bλ</p>	<p>17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "To a man who is a hundred years old can a child be born? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!"</p>
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Step 2: determining the information structure and information structure strategy of the theme traces

Abraham is relexicalized again, indicating a new development in the narrative. Abraham's amazement and incredulity about childbirth at such an advanced age is expressed in two marked word-order clauses. The left-dislocated "Sarah" is a primary topic shift, contrasting her with the previous primary topic, Abraham. The two fronted constituents are cases of argument focus, identifying the highly improbable beneficiaries of child-birth.

¹⁹² It can be argued that verse 18 is a separate scene, set apart by relexicalisation and a different activity (speech directed at God and oriented to Ishmael).

“Ishmael” is fronted in a sentence focus, event-reporting structure. This marked word-order sentence shifts the theme to Ishmael as the preferred beneficiary of God’s covenant promises, from Abraham’s point of view.

Step 3: determining the boundaries of the section

The shift of primary topic away from God as speaker to Abraham’s reaction in verse 17 marks the onset of a new scene. Abraham’s reply to God is the closure of this scene, before God speaks again from verse 19 onwards.

Step 4: discovering the theme of the thematic unit

The fifth scene pictures Abraham’s incredulous response to God about his heir being his and Sarah’s own son, and his reply to God putting Ishmael forward as the likely heir in contrast with the unlikely heir – the yet unborn son. The local theme can be expressed in the following terms: *Abraham doubts God’s promise of a son and pleads with God not to forget Ishmael as heir.*

10.1.6 Sixth scene, verses 19-22

≤ψ□ιηϋλΓ̄ ε ρεμϵ□·Xψϱω 19
 /□E∠β □□□♣)λ τΣδ□□□ελOψ →□♣)Γτ|Hιε ηZ↓ρ
 □AΩ □□□λAβ<ε
 |□Γτιε ψ□ιτψ(ρ)∠β-τεε ψ□ιτOμ√θ(ηϱω θΥAξ)χ
 ρψ |Ψμ)H-τεε AτεB↓ρ@θCω
 :ωψ |↓ρ<ξαε |Bτ\ρϱζ)λ ≤□Aλ |τ τψB(ρ)βιλ
 □♣ψιΓτ|τoαμ)H □λεEτAμ)H(ψ)λ□] 20
 |□τOε ψιΓτ|κZ⇒ρE∠β |η□□□⊕Φvιη
 δ□□[Oε]μ δ□□ZOε]μι∠β |ΨτOε ψ□ιτψE∠β\ριηC
 ω |τOε ψ□ιτψ@ρ|πιηCω
 δψιλ |ψ □□□≤ιεψιΩCv ρ□□□AΩAτ-≤ψ⊕v)H
 :λ |Σδ ρΦγ ψ |Bγ)λ ωψ□ιΓτaτCv]
 □♣)λ δ□EλEΓτ □ρεH(ε θΥAξ)|χ(ψ-τεε ≤ψ□□□√θ
 Aε |ψ□ιτψ(ρ)∠β-τεε]Cω 21
 :τΣρ□□□εξαεAη η□ ρvAKHα∠β η↓∅•ζαη δ□□□
 □□Eτ |Γμαλ □□□η↓ρAΩ
 :≤□Aη↓ρ)βαε λ□ατEμ ≤ψ□ιηϋλΓ̄ ε λατ□□□ϱXψ
 ϱω |ΥΓτιε ρ□□□□E∠β⇒δ)λ λ□ακCψϱω 22

19 **God** said,
 "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son,
 and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my
covenant with him as an everlasting **covenant**
 for his offspring after him.
 20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you;
 Behold, I will bless him
 and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous;
 twelve princes he shall father,
 and I will make him a great nation.
 21 But my **covenant** I will establish with Isaac,
 whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next
 year."
 22 And when he had finished talking with him,
God went up from **Abraham**.

Step 2: determining the information structure and information structure strategy of the theme traces

All of the active and semi-active main participants and referents, God, Ishmael, Sarah, and Isaac, are at least once relexicalized in this scene.

The fronted subject “Sarah your wife” as a new primary topic is a theme trace, but the span is brief, immediately leading to how Abraham must name the son that Sarah will bear him.

The third marked configuration is in verse 21, where $\psi\tau\psi(\rho) \angle \beta\text{--}\tau\epsilon\epsilon$ as a secondary topic is fronted in a we-X-yiqtol clause. It is an argument focus structure, where “covenant” is identified as what is different in God’s dealings with Isaac and Ishmael respectively. The son of promise is the one that will continue to receive the full blessing of the covenant. With this final marked word-order construction, God ends the covenant dialogue with Abraham.

The fronted construction in verse 21, “my covenant”, is part of a theme-redirecting sentence focus structure. “Covenant” is contrasted with the general blessings of descendants, and Isaac is contrasted with Ishmael. Isaac will get the special blessing of God’s covenant promises, while Ishmael will just get the blessings of descendants.

Relexicalisation of the thematic participants, God and Abraham, in verse 22 signals the end of God’s interaction with Abraham, and the end of this last section of his speech: God went up from Abraham.

Step 3: determining the boundaries of the section

The speech introduction and the relexicalized primary topic “God” in verse 19 signals the onset of this thematic unit, and the theme closing thematic paragraph of God going up from Abraham in verse 22 signals the end of their interaction.

Step 4: discovering the theme of the thematic unit

This scene is about God’s final reply to Abraham, about Isaac the heir of the covenant, in contrast to Ishmael who will be blessed with descendants and a great nation, but not with the covenant. The local theme can be stated in the following terms: *God said to Abraham that Ishmael will have descendants, but Isaac will be the heir of the covenant.*

10.1.7 Seventh scene, verses 23-27

$\tau\Box E\epsilon\subset\omega \mid \rightarrow v \mid \angle \beta \lambda\epsilon\Box\Box\Box E\omega A\mu \mid H\Box\psi\text{--}\tau\epsilon\epsilon \leq \Box A\eta \downarrow$ $\rho \mid \beta\alpha\epsilon \xi\Box\Box\Box \angle \theta \Box X\psi\mathfrak{R}\omega 23$ $\rho\Box A\kappa \wp \zeta\text{--}\lambda A \angle \kappa \mid \Box K\pi \mid \sigma\alpha \angle \kappa \tau\Box\Box\Box \mathfrak{R}v \wedge \theta i\mu\text{--}\lambda A \angle$	23 Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male
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κ □□□τΕαεω □□□ | τψΕβ ψ ◊δψιλϙψ-λαΖκ
 ≤ΥΑη↓ρ | βαε τψ□□□ΕΖβ ψ□ΕΗϙναε | Ζβ
 η↓∅•ζαη ≤ | □□□Χψαη □□□≤εχεω | Ζβ ≤□ΑτΑλλ
 ρΑπ ρ□□□□αΩ | Ζβ-τεε λαμΜ ϕΧψϑω
 :≤ψ□ιη∪λ | ε | □Γτιε ρ□□□εΖβ / Ζδ ρ□□□εΗ(εαΖκ
 ρ□□□αΩ) Ζβ | ΨΛΟΓμιη | Ζβ ηΥ ϕναΗ παΗ□Ετ
 ϕω ≤ψ□ιω | ΗιΓτ-εΖβ ≤□Αη↓ρ | β□αεεω 24
 : | τΑλλ ρΑπ
 | □ΛΟΓμ□ιη | Ζβ ηΥ ϕναΗ ηΨ□ρ | Ωεω ΗΒ∪λ | Η
 -εΖβ | ↓ν | Ζβ λα□□□ΕπΑμ | Ηρψεω 25
 : | τΑλλ ρΑπ ρ□□□αΩ | Ζβ τ□Εε
 λα□ΕπΑμ | Ηρψεω ≤ΥΑη↓ρ | βαε λ | □Γμρν η↓∅
 •ζαη ≤ | □□□Χψαη □□□≤εχεω | Ζβ 26
 : | | ν | Ζβ
 τ□□□Εεμ ∞εσ□εΖκ-τϑν∧θιμ | τρψ□ΑΖβ δψ□□
 □ιλϙψ □□□ | τψΕβ ψ□ΕΗϙναε-λακκω 27
 : | □Γτιε | λΨΟΓμρν | ρ□□ΥΑκ⊕ν-εΖβ

in the household of **Abraham**,
 and circumcised them on that same day,
 as **God** told him.
 24 **Abraham** was ninety-nine years old when he
 was circumcised,
 25 and Ishmael his son was thirteen when he was
 circumcised;
 26 On that same day **Abraham** and his son
 Ishmael were both circumcised.
 27 And every male in his household, including
 those born in his household or bought from a
 foreigner, was circumcised with him.
 (author's translation)

Step 2: determining the information structure and information structure strategy of the theme traces

Abraham as active and continuous topic is promoted to primary topic status again, with a topic-comment sentence and Abraham relexicalized. Abraham is again relexicalized in verse 23b “household of Abraham” as well as “God” in 23c. The topic framework is still maintained.

In verses 24 and 25 there are theme-supporting background sentences commenting on the ages of Abraham and Ishmael at the time of their circumcision. Abraham is still discourse-active, but Ishmael as topic, fully relexicalized, is promoted from discourse inactive to active status.

Verse 26 is an argument focus structure identifying the fact that both Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on the very same day. This is a further theme-supporting background information sentence. Both Abraham and Ishmael are again fully relexicalized, in spite of being relexicalized in verses 24-25.

The marked word-order construction in verse 27, in an argument focus structure, confirms the identity of all who have been circumcised with him and confirms the fulfillment of the command in verse 13. This fact contributes to the solemnity and comprehensiveness of the covenant-accepting event.

Step 3: determining the boundaries of the section

The scene begins with Abraham's subsequent action after God has ended their exchange in verse 22. The "99 years" statement of Abraham's age provides an inclusion structure with a similar temporal adjunct in verse 1. The next chapter, Genesis 18, begins a new episode and a new scene. The participants remain the same, but the time, place, and event differ.

Step 4: discovering the theme of the thematic unit:

The scene is a theme closing one, characterized by the execution of the order given by God, and by various background comments and summaries about the event in terms of Abraham's and Ishmael's ages at the time of their circumcision. A local theme statement could be *Abraham's obedience in applying circumcision, the sign of the covenant.*

The seven speech and comment scenes of Genesis 17 form one episode with a global theme with its own topic framework and focus content. The global theme of Genesis 17 can be stated in the following terms: *in one conversational interaction, God confirms his covenant with Abraham by stating the covenant promises and the covenant sign required from Abraham. In response to Abraham's concerns, the issues of direct descendants and of the true heir, Isaac instead of Ishmael, are confirmed. The episode ends with Abraham fulfilling the requirement of the covenant sign, circumcision.*

This section has shown how the tracing of theme traces in Biblical narrative will assist the exegete to arrive at a responsible and verifiable statement of the macrostructure and theme of the text. It shows how theme traces help to indicate the transitions between the thematic units, and how continuous topics and macrowords are cognitively strengthened throughout the thematic units. Much more can be said about themes, particularly how all the clauses are related to each other and fit into a coherent whole. Information structure theme traces are only a part of the whole picture, but evidence from this study indicates the prominent role of the information structure in the theme development.

10.2 CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, some of the research results have been summarized, and a list of prospects for future research, arising from this study, presented.

10.2.1 Research results

This study has achieved what it set out to do in the following two areas, namely 1) information structure in Biblical Hebrew, and 2) the interface between information structure and theme in Biblical Hebrew.

Research on marked Biblical Hebrew word-order and other marked constructions, the identification of the information structure strategies, and the interface between information structure and the cognitive macrostructure or theme, were concluded with an application of the proposed theme-tracing model on Genesis 17, a chapter from the corpus selected for this study.

In practical terms,

- this study reviewed and reinterpreted current research on topic and focus, and provided a cognitive-pragmatic model for information structure analysis that could be used not only for Biblical Hebrew, but other languages as well.
- this study contributed to the research and understanding of Biblical Hebrew word-order. In particular the wide-ranging uses of fronting and left-dislocation have been explained. The different uses of fronting have been laid out, and left-dislocation, right-dislocation, and end-weight explained and illustrated.
- this study indicated how information structure helps in identifying the theme at different levels, by showing how theme traces like marked word-orders, relexicalisation, focus particles, and full pronouns, appear at theme shifts and theme boundaries or strengthen the theme cognitively.

10.2.2 Prospects

This rather wide study on information structure and theme has highlighted several areas that need further investigation. These fields of study are classified in five areas: wider application of the theory, topic issues, focus issues, issues related to pragmatic operations associated with topic and focus, and theme and thematics issues.

Wider data application

1. Investigate to what extent the conclusions of this study apply in other narratives in the Biblical Hebrew Old Testament.

2. The application of information structure analysis to Biblical Hebrew poetry.

Topic

3. Topic fronting and topic left-dislocation need further investigation. In what way are the functions of left-dislocated primary topics and fronted primary topics different?
4. Not all primary topics have the same degree of thematic prominence. Sometimes their range is very short, maybe one or two clauses. It is expected that there are other rules that determine the relative importance of each, one of which would be recurrence and the quantity of cognitive strengthening it attracts. For example, topics strengthened by means of elaborate attributions like adjectival phrases and relative clauses, as well as by contrasting, will be more prominent than those without the additional cognitive strength.
5. Find more examples of topic frames, or otherwise, redefine the concept and its criteria in the light of more Biblical Hebrew data.

Focus

6. Develop more accurate criteria for focus peaking and its one manifestation in end-weight constructions.
7. Investigate whether all cases of end-weight are thematic. It may be that there are cases where such constructions are not thematic.
8. The concept of narrow predicate focus in Biblical Hebrew has not been sufficiently developed in this study.
9. The difference between verbal object suffixes and pronominal object prefixes and their relationship to information structure needs to be studied.
10. Could it be that Biblical Hebrew predicates, in topic-comment articulations, have conjoint and disjoint constructions – as attested in many African languages – where disjoint constructions are narrow predicate focus structures and conjoint constructions broad predicate focus structures?

11. The relation between quantification (all, very, many, etc.) and focus structures needs further clarification.
12. I have found no evidence of double fronting in Genesis 1-25 for simultaneous theme closure and theme shift. This is not to say that in the rest of the Old Testament such cases are not found.
13. The argument focus strategy of announcing macrowords (also called focus theme frames) needs to be tested on a larger corpus. This focus strategy can have implications for theme studies in Biblical Hebrew.

Associated pragmatic operations

14. The notion of contrastiveness need to be developed more, and its exact relation to information structure clarified. Many issues about contrastiveness remain unclear.
15. The notion of intensification of predicates needs to be developed more.

Thematics

16. The exact nature of theme needs further study.
17. The concept of *focus content* needs to be developed further, especially how the macrostructure rules of Kintsch and Van Dijk can be harmonized with it. Better definitions, criteria, and procedures to determine focus content need to be found.
18. The question whether all cases of argument focus and sentence focus structures are always a theme trace, and thematic, begs for an answer. There is also a degree of thematicity involved in these theme traces, but criteria for determining those are still lacking.
19. The thematicity of naming of people and places in Biblical Hebrew, as they appear in theme introductions and theme closures, needs to be explored.
20. The relationship between syntactic and semantic grounding (foregrounding versus backgrounding) and theme needs to be investigated more thoroughly.

21. This study investigated the link from information structure to theme, in that the information structure categories and strategies give us clues about the thematic development of a discourse. The reverse process would also be illuminating: in what way can a top-down theme-first analysis shed light on difficult and ambiguous information structures?

Other languages

22. The application and testing of the topic and focus accounts on other languages will be interesting. New Testament Greek, for example, still has many unresolved questions in relation to subject and object fronting. Bantu languages also call for fresh approaches in the study of the interface between word-order and information structure.

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