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Text Segmentation in a Gideon Narrative: Reading with the Flow of the Hebrew Text

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Abstract The principles of text segmentation have often been overlooked in the analysis and translation of biblical narratives. In Hebrew discourse, text segmentation relies on elements of coherence, that is, informational features in and beyond a text to achieve unity. The analysis of Ancient Hebrew narratives can also look at individual constituents making up the plots and the way narrators use these elements to achieve their communicative purposes. Both approaches not only contribute to a proper reading of the Hebrew text but can help in translation to do justice to the discourse pattern of languages that display a different paragraphing pattern. This paper thus looks at some strategies for linguistic and literary analysis and their application to a sample Gideon narrative in the original Hebrew text.

Keywords Segmentation, reading flow, semantic unit, continuity, discontinuity, discourse grammar, narrative

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1. Introduction

In the field of linguistics, the term segmentation involves the overall process of dividing language components into meaningful units (Dubois & al: 2002). Depending on the unit of emphasis, one may talk about word segmentation, sentence segmentation, topic segmentation, or text segmentation when applied to larger written texts. Issues related to paragraph boundary or organization are part of text segmentation. Adam (2011) shows how segmenting texts with elements of typography and inner articulation of discourse may help with meaningful production and reading. The term applies not only to the mental processes humans use to understand language or discourse structure but also to the use of language software to process language components. Lai & Tetreault (2018) adopt the software-based approach to distinguish between coherent and incoherent writing, reflecting an automatic coherence-scoring model. One characteristic of automated treatment of text is the possibility of identifying missing transitions between topics or highlighting poorly organized passages. On their side, Morris and Hirst (1991) resort to a computer-based thesaurus for identifying lexical chains and accounting for the structure of general-interest texts.

There may be several reasons for segmenting texts, including retrieving information from various sources that discuss similar topics or summarizing long passages by exhibiting major topics or themes. However, one common reason for segmenting texts, either by computation or by human task, is to ensure their readability. In fact, a text without any section names, paragraphs, breaks, or one that is poorly organized with respect to composition rules can be hard for the reader to understand as they might lose track of its topics or major developments. Likewise, insufficient knowledge of a language system is also conducive to erroneous comprehension or misunderstanding, mainly when a reader applies the concepts of their own language to a foreign language, resulting in cases of linguistic interference.

2. Literature review

Of the two main trends in exploring text segmentation, the line of work related to the present study is that of human readers using their knowledge of a language system or text typology to make sense of their reading. In order to account for this, linguists may look at grammatical elements of coherence, which usually combine with semantic units to ensure textual unity.

According to Beaugrande (1980) and Halliday (1985), the materialization of textual coherence occurs through cohesion, which is achieved not only via observable cohesive devices (conjunctions, references) but also lexical relations (synonymy, repetitions, superordinate, subordinate, ellipsis) within a passage. Juillard (2005) further analyzes cohesion based on other variables, including implicit or shared information, verb tense, aspects, modality, and word order. Khedri & Ebrahimi (2012) develop a similar view to Adam (2011), emphasizing the contribution of thematic structure and progression in the organization of discourse as they enable the clear transmission and understanding of a message. The authors insist on revisiting thematic structure with a special focus on cohesive devices to help translators tackle the various issues they pose in cross-linguistic transfer.

Besides these features of discourse, a proper analysis of a text should consider its typology, as the various modes of expression and its central message are permeated therewith. Longacre (1968; 1996) identifies four broad categories of texts based on chronological linkage and logical linkage parameters. Chronological linkage lays special focus on the succession of events as they occur in the real or imagined world, whereas logical linkage reflects aspects of thematic units or organization. With respect to these parameters, the following functions were identified: procedural texts instruct people on how to do something, how it was done, or how it takes place; behavioral texts (including exhortation, eulogy, and political speeches) aim at influencing the reader's attitude through an active agent; expository texts focus on explaining facts through logical and thematic organization; narrative texts relate events in a real or imagined world and may display features of both chronological and logical linkage.

The above categories not only differ between genres but may also contain points of dissimilarity within a specific genre across languages. For instance, the purpose of rhetorical questions in expository discourse is to elicit attention and, hence, to teach, whereas in hortative texts, rhetorical questions serve to either teach or reprimand. These aspects of language influence not only how a text should be read but also how it should be translated. Authors like Sager (1997) and Trosborg (1997) emphasize the need for translators to understand text genres, showing how a good knowledge of cross-cultural differences and similarities regarding text typology may be a useful source for enlightening their practice. Zogbo (1988) looks to specific areas in the field of discourse that are of interest to translation, including genre, structuring, reference, as well as background and foreground. She points out that genres

expect specific discourse styles, which usually affect sentence length, the use of aspects, tense, conjunctions, and the prevalence of certain syntactic features. This echoes Dooley & Levinsohn (2000), who acknowledge that the ''scope of focus'' of a text helps determine how speakers structure their thinking and help understand the subtle nuances between individual sentences.

In the case of narratives, considered as the easiest genre in terms of reading and translating, McKnight (1978) identifies six prototypical elements that are applied to biblical narratives as reflected in works by Sweeney & al. (2002) and Fokkelman (1999). The common narrative pattern adopted includes items such as exposition, rising action, climax, resolution, and conclusion. Buedon (1999) rather presents the pattern in the Gideon narrative as a spiral, starting with Israel's apostasy, which causes God to sell them into the hands of the oppressors as a test of whether they obey Him. After the people cry for help, He raises up a judge, Gideon, to deliver them from their oppressors. Yet after the judge's death, the people fall into idolatry again, and the cycle starts anew. Hence, the flow of an ancient Hebrew narrative – which may contrast with modernist writings – is not only characterized by a classical and cyclical pattern but can also be described by applying the principles of discourse analysis. Longacre (1979) applies this to the Flood Narrative to distinguish between devices that are on the backbone or event line of the narrative from those on the backup or supportive line. Features conducive to the peak or high point of the narrative also differ from those of routine narration.

3. Problem

The various ways in which texts adhere to written language conventions are not always applicable to Hebrew texts. For instance, textual conventions such as paragraph division, indentation, titles, section headings, repetition of prompts, and obligatory punctuation (Bruthiaux & al.2005:173) will sound awkward if one tries to replicate the same rules in Hebrew texts. If translators of Hebrew texts would make sense of their reading and do their job more effectively, they should be exposed to specific aspects of the language, including verb forms (primary and secondary verb forms within a specific text type), transition signals, speakers' orientation or perspective, and the text type- expository, predictive, hortatory, dialog, or narrative.

The Gideon narrative recorded in chapters six to nine of the Book of Judges is a complex plot which embodies different structural units, rather than a straightforward plot evolving around a single unit. In line with this, Fokkelman (1999:74) distinguishes between ''the action'', which views the story only in its major developments, allowing the reader to trace the storyline easily, and ''the ''sub-actions'', which consists of several detours making up the larger narrative. The story understudy can be split into three episodes, representing three distinctive short stories highlighting different events in the hero's life.

This study aims to determine how the structure of Hebrew discourse in narrative may differ from other types of texts. It will further explore the linguistic or literary devices that come into play in the unfolding of the story. A good understanding of text typology and discourse features is likely to provide significant insight into the various ways translations may do justice to the rhetorical pattern of target languages.

4. Methods

The present analysis adopts a mixed approach to text analysis, combining methods of critical discourse studies and literary approach to text analysis with a special glace at narrative text structure. As is the case with may discourse descriptions, the study deals with entities larger than the sentences, laying focus on chunks ranging from single clauses or less up to larger texts. Unlike traditional grammatical descriptions that lend themselves to providing general rules, often containing a few exceptions, there are no hard and fast rules in discourse-based grammar, where descriptions reflect tendencies or regularities in available data (1988:2).

In Hebrew discourse, grammatical features which are assigned traditional, well-established syntactic roles are suspected to serve other pragmatic functions, which can only be discussed within the larger scope of discourse grammar. This approach looks at the organizing principle of Biblical Hebrew texts with a focus on the role syntactic features such as discontinuity play in larger specific contexts. Syntactic discontinuity leads to a change in structural forms inside a textual unit to signal a distance from the main flow of events or thoughts. It functions as a signpost to inform the reader that they are taking a new curve in the line of thought, and may comment on a fact, correct or add some information relevant to the flow of the overall narrative.

Besides verb Hebrew verb forms that may account for a temporal change of focus (Yoshinobou :1996), other linguistic features are considered: deixis and pronoun references, backward (anaphoric) referencing elements, forward (cataphoric) referencing elements, as well as opening, transition, and conclusion signals. The methodology adopted addresses the following questions: Where in a clause do specific discourse features occur? What triggers their appearance? How frequent are they? What specific functions do they serve in a paragraph unit or in the text as a whole? How do these elements combine with narrative patterns to provide a proper reading and structuring of a narrative move? Briefly, the Gideon narrative is analyzed based on critical discourse features and how these features agree with literary approaches to give the text its whole unity.

4.1 Plot structure

The first episode of the story occurs from chapter 6 through to the third verse of chapter 8 and recounts the life of the Israelites under the oppression of the Midianites. In this section, Gideon goes through some training to operate the first defeat of the Midianites, represented by their leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. The second episode starts from the fourth verse of chapter 8 with Gideon's encounter with the people of Sukkoth, proceeds with Gideon's second testing, and closes with the annihilation of Zebah and Zalmunna, the two Midianite kings. The third episode begins in the middle of chapter 8 (mainly verse 22) and portrays the events conducive to the death of Gideon and the events following his death, culminating with his son Abimelech's crime, which gradually brings the overall narrative back to the exposition. These three stories inside the general account display different structures, which lay the groundwork for their segmentation.

4.1.1 First episode

Chapters 6, 7, and the third three verses of chapter 8 may come together as one story recounting the exploit of the Israelite hero Gideon against the land's chief enemy, the Midianites. The story is organized according to the classical pediment structure so that from beginning to end, there are five main stages: exposition, rising action, climax, resolution, and conclusion.

The narrator sets the background to the narrative or the exposition (v.1-6) by introducing the general state of affairs, the main characters, and the setting. Because the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, they became subject to the domination (v1) of their enemies, the Midianites, and their allies (Amalekites and all the people of the eastern countries). The Israelites were so terrified by their enemies that they fled to mountain clefts, caves, and strongholds. They were oppressed for seven years and eventually cried out to their Lord.

The story rises as a prophet comes on stage with a particular message. (v7). In response to the Israelite's cry, the narrator gives the floor to the new participant, who reminds them of the cause of their suffering announced in the exposition.

This part not only provides a detailed view of the conditions which brought about their subjection but also serves as a transition for introducing the hero who will save the nation. Then, the angel of the Lord appears to Gideon in Ophrah, which marks the beginning of a successive series of tests.

The story gets complicated and arrives at its climax when Gideon destroys Baal's altar. Panic-stricken and fearing an eventual Midianite punishment, the townsmen seek to kill Gideon to appease the anger of their oppressor. They address Joash, Gideon's father, in the following terms: ''Bring out your son; he must die because he has broken down Baal's altar.'' A word of challenge comes from Joash, who wouldn't let his son die whatsoever: ''If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.''

The story unravels when the two parties summon their allies and get ready for battle. On one side, '' … all the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern people join forces to fight the Israelites. On the other side, Gideon summons Manasseh, Zebulon, and Naphtali. In preparation for the battle, Gideon goes through a series of tests with the angel who had appeared to him, making sure he can come out victorious over the land's enemies.

The story closes with the actual battle in which Gideon, under the guidance of the Lord, bitterly defeats the Midianites and their allies. The two Midianite leaders are captured and killed at Beth Bara, and the enemies' army runs away to Betshitah. The plot structure of the first episode can be schematized as follows.

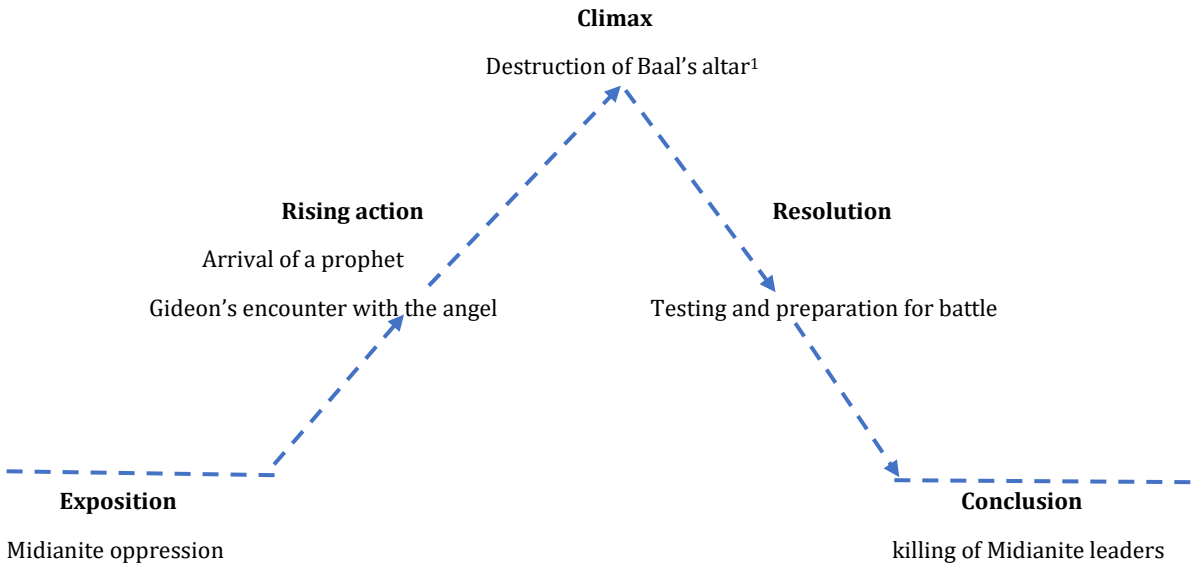

Figure 1: Text Charting of Episode 1

4.1.2 Second episode

Unlike the plot structure above, Judges 8 is organized around the hero's successive testing, the sine qua non for the hero to proceed with his mission. This story presents the hero in a three-step structure. In Gideon's pursuit of the two Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmuna, he and his men cross the Jordan. He is first challenged by the officials of Sukkoth and then by the people of Peniel as he requests them water and bread for his exhausted men. Denying his request, they seem to tell him that he is not strong enough to defeat his enemy. These successive denials can't but whip up the hero's pride and reinforce his intent to get to the end of his pursuit and take up his challenge. After capturing the two kings in Karkor, the hero returns to the officials of Sukkoth, kills them, and demolishes the tower of Peniel before terminating Zebah and Zalmouna. These indicate that the hero not only took up the main challenge concerning the Midianites kings but also dealt with the two peoples who defied him –representing the first two challenging steps of the plot – to demonstrate his bravery along the three steps.

4.1.3 Third episode

In addition to using the classical plot structure as exemplified earlier, this story includes a four-pattern argument by one of the participants. After the death of Jerubbaal, his son Abimelech sets out from Ophrah to persuade the citizens of Shechem to help him ascend to the throne. Convinced by Abimelech's plan, the inhabitants of Schechem give him seventy shekels of silver, which he uses to hire reckless scoundrels. He then returns to Ophrah and kills his seventy brothers - a parallel with the seventy shekels he received - to inherit the throne and avoid any rivalry.

Following Abimelech's crime, his younger brother Jotham rises on Mount Gerizim to reprove the people of Shechem for plotting with Abimelech. Jotham develops his argument in a four-pattern parable using four plants, including the olive tree, the fig tree, the vine, and eventually, the thorn bush. The first three trees all decline the offer to become leader over the rest, and as if there was no other alternative, the thorn bush will ultimately become the king.

This four-pattern analogy prepares the reader to see how the metaphor of the consuming thorn bush will determine the fate of Abimelech and his accomplices. Interestingly, after Abimelech has governed for three years, the story comes to an end, with the sad denouement of Abimelech and his accomplices who profaned the throne and the inheritance of Jerubbaal.

[1] In this segment of the narrative understudy (Judges6-7) which stands as a full story, the destruction of Baal's altar is the climatic stage where the storyline is intensified. Within a larger narration (see discssion on macro-plot), that is from chapter 8 onwards, this stage would be the first step toward the uprising against the Midianites, after which the climax only comes after the victory over them.

4.2 Linguistic Analysis and Episode 1 Segmentation

4.2.1 Exposition with the Midianite Oppression

1-2: The narrative begins with a default verb form with wayyiqtol (**וַיַּעֲשׂוּ**) at sentence-initial, and the story line evolves with the same pattern in verse 2 with wayyiqtol again at sentence-initial (**וַתָּעָז**). Verses 1 and 2 are part of the introductory paragraph with regard to the occurrence of the participants, an indication of their role in the story development. We also note a marked specification of the participants, either by name or nominal phrase. For instance, the name of the Lord (**יְהוָה**) occurs twice in verse 1 alone, though a reference pronoun or third person form of the verb **וַיִּתְּנֵם** (and he gave) would have been enough.

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיִּתְּנֵם יְהוָה בְּיַד־מִדְיָן שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים

6:1

The references to the Israelites **(בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל**) occur four times, three times with the phrase Ben Israel (sons of Israel) (verses 1 to 2), and one time with the name Israel (verse 2). The references to the Midianites (**מִדְיָן**) occur three times, twice with the phrase yad Midian (hand of Midian) and one time with the noun Midian.

3-6: Verse 3 marks a shift from the chain of wayyiqtols with the introduction of the weqatal form (**וְהָיָה**), indicating a paragraph boundary and a new line of thought. In addition to the Midianites, new participants come on stage, including the Midianites, Amalekites, and all the people of the eastern countries. The verb forms of ''go'' is repeated in a single clause, both in singular **(וְעָלָה)** and plural forms **(וְעָלוּ)**, the first time to refer to the Midianites, and the second time to the new participants and probably the Midianites. This repetition lays an emphasis on the Midianites as a major participant, whose role is key and representative of the other allied characters in the upcoming events.

וְהָיָה אִם־זָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעָלָה מִדְיָן וְעֲמָלֵק וּבְנֵי־קֶדֶם וְעָלוּ עָלָיו:

6:3

The information introduced by the structure **וְהָיָה ...וְעָלָה** (whenever… on it) in verse 3 constitutes a ground on which to build a new line of thought. As this information is brief, it may play a transitional role and be bound to the same line of thought in 4 despite the use of a different aspect (shift from perfective to imperfective). By contrast, if that information constitutes a longer textual unit with a series of actions, it may be considered as a separate paragraph since a paragraph is ''The minimum unit in which a theme is developed within the same contextual situation'' (De Regt, 2013:30). For this reason, verse 3 as a sentence cannot stand alone as a paragraph. Still, it must be attached to the next idea which results from it. The paragraph ends with a concluding wayyiqtol,**וַיִּזְעֲקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה** (and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord), as a result of the suffering endured, altogether announcing the next step in the narrative.

4.2.2 Rising action with the arrival of two messengers

7-10: The story proceeds with a particle in the wayyiqtol form (**וַיְהִי**) and a resumption of the last information of the preceding paragraph. It then advances with the causes of their suffering with a direct quote, consisting of a verb describing an action plus a speech verb, both in the wayyiqtol form: **וַיִּשְׁלַח ... וַיֹּאמֶר** (He sent…and said), followed by the direct speech phrase **כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה** (So says the Lord). This prophetic discourse recalls some information to the reader (The Lord had warned them about foreign gods) and is a ground for the next step in the narrative.

11-14: Verse 11 announces a change of place (Ophrah) and new characters, the main ones being the angel of the Lord and Gideon. We arrive at an important step in the narrative as it prepares the events conducive to the problem-solving, with key participants coming on stage. There is a shift from second person singular (**עִמְּךָ**) to first person plural (**עִמָּנוּ**) further, evidenced by a series of pronominal suffixes, an indication that Gideon simply avoids the use of the first person to extend his concern and uncertainty to the whole Israelite community around which the storyline will develop.

וַיַּרְא אֵלָיו מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה עִמְּךָ גִּבּוֹר הֶחָיִל:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו גִּדְעוֹן בִּי אֲדֹנִי וְיֵשׁ יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ וְלָמָּה מְצָאַתְנוּ כָּל־זֹאת...

6:12-13

15-18: The narrative progresses with Gideon's gradual interest in his somewhat strange assignment. His question''? **בַּמֶּה אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל**'' (How can I save Israel…?) and the subsequent words of encouragement from the angel explore the feasibility of the new hero's call into his new commission to deliver his nation.

19-24: This paragraph starts with a reversed word order with the subject occurring at the beginning of the sentence ''**וְגִדְעוֹן בָּא** '' (and Gideon went…), indicating both an emphasis on the character and the subsequent events as crucial in the development of the narrative.

25-27: This signals a return to default word order with wayyiqtol and some additional time markers to give an adverbial phrase '' at night''. This drags the reader's attention to a specific moment of the day when a major event happens, that is, Gideon's receiving and implementation of specific strategies. This twofold event happens during the same night and will surely have some consequences on the following morning.

4.2.3 Climatic action with the destruction of the altar

28-29 a: There is a shift to another time **בַּבֹּקֶר** (in the morning) with a series of new significant events introduced by a particle and an independent wav **וְהִנֵּה** (and behold) as well as series of qatal verbs,**נָתַץ** (cut down) **כֹּרַתָה** (torn down), and **הָעֹלָה** (offered)**,** depicting events resulting from the character's plotting in the previous night. Thus, a sense of surprise is marked by an interrogative and deixis referring back to what the people had just discovered: **מִי עָשָׂה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה** ((But) who did this?). This sense of surprise marks a major step in the scene around the altar.

29 b-32: In order to find an answer to the question raised above, an investigation is started, continuing the narrative with wayyiqtol, then with an insertion of a dialogue between the people of the town and Joash, whose son was found guilty. The narrator redirects the focus of the story to the new issue as perceived by the participants, thus shifting from an outside to an inside view. The story should then be seen through the lenses of the participants.

33-35: All the participants presented at the beginning of the story (verses 1-6) are brought back on the stage, along with and a new participant, the Abiezrites. Only at this moment, and not earlier, the Abiezrites[2] are explicitly mentioned as participants because they come from Gideon's weak clan (v 15). This ''late specification''[3] is connected to the narrator's decision to ''gather'' all the participants only at this stage, signaling something crucial is about to happen. The role of the main protagonists, the Israelites and the Midianites, will be instrumental in the unfolding of the plot.

4.2.5 Resolution with battle preparation through the hero's experiment

36-38: The narrator introduces the major character's twofold experiment, the first part being the opposite of the second. The repetition of the same structure at sentence-initial without the intervention of a co-speaker must catch one's attention. The first test begins with **וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים** (and Gideon said to the Lord), and requires a specific time for the character to see the result of his experiment only ''early in the next day''. This scene is over and constitutes a segment on its own.

39-40**:** The narrator then reintroduces the major character 's second test again with **וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים** (and Gideon said to the Lord), which requires a specific time for the character to see the result of his experiment only ''late that night''. Here, the character requests just the opposite of the previous experiment. The two tests required different time settings, and the second test happened to be the counterpart of the first, signaling a need to break the text at the end of the first test to introduce the second one.

Chapter 7 opens with a new setting (Spring of Harod), and the hero and his men come together. Gideon was negatively referred to earlier as Jerubbaal (6.32), which means ''let Baal contend with him'', his fate being left in the hands of the Midianites' god. However, at this point in the story, it is unnecessary to refer to Gideon as Jerubbaal since the curse did not affect him. Thus, the first sentence markedly uses both Gideon and Jerubbaal, suggesting that what seemed to be a curse is used ironically at the start of chapter 7 (verses 1-2) to emphasize Gideon's victory over his adversaries. One can say that Gideon is the one who contented with Baal, and the recall of the context in which the hero got his nickname lays the ground for the rest of the hero's adventure.

[2] The earlier mention of Abiezrites is in 6: 24 and denotes a place, not a reference to participants: To this day it (...) stands in *Ophrah of the Abizierites*.

[3] In this context the term ''late specification'' is preferred to ''delayed specification''. The former is applied to the Abiezrites as they are mentioned only toward the end of the narrative. The latter would have been applicable if before this full reference to the participants there were less specicifc references to them, in the form of affixes or pronouns.

3-4**:** A break is signaled by the particle **וְעַתָּה** (we'attah), indicating a change of perspective in the narrative. The particle is not isolated but connects pragmatically with a direct speech structure. The direct speech consists of two speech verbs, one in the yiqtol to perform a command and the other in the infinitive: **קְרָא … לֵאמֹר** (He cried and said).

וְעַתָּה קְרָא נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם לֵאמֹר מִי־יָרֵא וְחָרֵד יָשֹׁב וְיִצְפֹּר מֵהַר הַגִּלְעָד

7:3

5-6: A change to default word order is signaled by the occurrence of the direct object after the verb **וַיּוֹרֵד אֶת־הָעָם** (he took the men). The subject is not explicit in this sentence, but according to Hebrew syntactic rule, the active subject in the precedent sentence becomes the subject of the new sentence. Applying this rule, we see that Gideon took the men down to the water, and not any other subject in the environment.

7-8: The normal flow of the narrative resumes with the main verb form (wayyiqtol) and the regular direct speech marker (and the Lord says to Gideon), revealing that the character enters a new testing phase, receiving and applying some instructions. There is no conversation between the Lord and Gideon despite the use of the speech verb (say), which is another evidence that the narrator resumes with the storyline.

9-11: The sentence begins with a particle and a time marker **וַיְהִי בַּלַּיְלָה** (and behold at night). As in the precedent division, the text uses the default pattern for participant reference. The object of the verb is left implicit, **וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה** (The Lord said to **him**). Syntactically, the reference to ''him'' does not appear in the syntactic environment. In this case, the referent can only be known if we refer to the discourse active subject, and we know it's Gideon (verses 7 and 15).

וַיְהִי בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה קוּם רֵד בַּמַּחֲנֶה כִּי נְתַתִּיו בְיָדֶךָ׃

7 :9

12-14: An important part of the narrative is marked by listing new participants, an inversion of the normal syntactic order with the verb occurring after the subject, and a shift into a qotel verb form, **נֹפְלִים** ([were] lying). The narrator comments on a new situation that prepares the reader for a new curve in the development of the narrative.

5-18: The particle **כְּ** prefixed to the verb **שָׁמַע** in the clause **וַיְהִי כִּשְׁמֹעַ גִּדְעוֹן** (And when Gideon heard) in a fronting position plays a functional role. This signals that what the character hears will determine his next actions.

19-22: We note an over-specification of the participant (Gideon) in this verse. Knowing from the precedent verses who the discourse active subject is, normally, the narrator could have done without the explicit mention of his name here. It is clear from the immediate context that Gideon is the discourse active subject and can be understood as the subject of the verb in the following sentence without any explicit specification. Therefore, the repetition of the character's name is a marked feature of participant reference:

וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וּמֵאָה־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ בְּקֵצֵה הַמַּחֲנֶה רֹאשׁ הָאַשְׁמֹרֶת הַתִּיכוֹנָה.

7.19

4.2.5 Conclusion with confrontation and victory on battlefield

23-25: The narrator ''summons'' all the participants to the battleground. On one side, Israel is represented by Nephtali, Asher, Manasseh, and Ephraim, and on the other side, the opponents are represented by their Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. At this important stage of the narrative, one should wonder why the narrator omits the tribe of Zebulon from his new listing (They were introduced earlier in 6:34-35). Were they part of those who returned (7:3-8) and therefore did not take part in the battle? In addition, at the end of this first story, the narrator refers only to the Midianites as the defeated ones, without mentioning the Amalekites and the other people from the eastern countries. As commented earlier in the exposition, the two main opposing forces here are Israel and Midian; the other allies are treated as secondary characters who contribute to the unfolding of the narrative. The killing of the two Midianite leaders marks the end of the first episode and connects to the second and third episodes to make the overall narrative a macro-plot.

4.3 DISCUSSION ON READING AND TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

4.3.1 Literary and linguistic features

The results indicate that the structure of Hebrew discourse in narrative calls on a variety of linguistic and literary features. The main literary and linguistic features making up the whole discourse pattern of the narrative are represented in the chart with a description of their main pragmatic functions. Though they reflect the main patterns and approaches in the field of Hebrew discourse study, it is important to look closely at the specific text understudy to make sense out of the various functions described. The first column presents the main features described, the second column the textual items used as evidence of those features, and the first column provides an explanation of these textual items in their respective contexts. Overall, we have identified six principal features, including time indicator, particles, verb forms, word order, participants' role, and direct and indirect speech. The interpretation of these elements is related to all aspects of the narrative.

Features	**Textual evidence**	**Function in context**
Time indicators	**בַּבֹּקֶר** (i) **וַיְהִי בַלַּיְלָה** (ii) **וַיְהִי בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא** (iii)	Setting of time in narrative Change of time in narrative Fronting: Emphasis on period
Particles	**יְעַתָּה** (i) **וְהִנֵּה** (ii) **וְהָיָה** (iii) **וַיְהִי** (iv)	Bound to direct quote Presenting a new fact Recall of unknown information Recall of old information
Change of verb forms	Wayiqtol to qatal :**נַתָּץ** (cut down)**כָּרַתָּה** (torn down), and **הֹעֲלָה** (offered) (i) Wayiqtol to qotel : **נֹפְלִים** ([were] lying) (ii)	Resultative: A consequence of Gideon's plotting Inceptive: Initial position before the battle
Marked word order	**וְגִדְעוֹן בָּא** (i) **וְעָלוּ וְעָלָה** (ii)	Signal of crucial action Emphatic resumption of verb
Participant over-specification	**יְהוָה וַיִּתְּנֵם יְהוָה**...(i) **יָד- מִדְיָן מִדְיָן** (ii)	Repetition of participant Shift from general to specific
Characterization	Major: Gideon, Israelite, Midianite (i) Minor: Prophet, angel of the Lord, Midian, Baal (ii)	At mainline of narrative Sequential role in narrative
Direct speech markers	**עִמָּנוּ ...עִמָּךְ** (i) **וַיֹּאמֶר... גִּדְעוֹן** (ii) **וַיִּשְׁלַח ... וַיֹּאמֶר** (ii) **קְרָא ...לֵאמֹר** (ii)	Avoidance of 1st person Default quote Mission Command

Figure 2: Discourse Pattern in a Gideon Narrative

Time indicators

Time is usually indicated by a single word or phrase when it occurs at the beginning of a specific event. The particle וַיְהִי and the specific time indicator as shown in (ii) will then introduce a change in the narrated time. Evidence (iii) lays emphasis on the moment by calling the verb to the front.

Particles

All four particles (i-iv) share a common prefix - vaw (ו). The first three of these particles have the same pointing sheva (;), whereas the last one bears a patach (-). The change in accents is only due to phonological constraints and

does not affect meaning. The particles have context-bound functions, including signaling a direct quote, introducing new events, or recalling an information.

Verb forms

On the one hand, the change of verb forms from wayyiqtol to weqal introduces a succession of resultative events, the latter form presenting the new state of affairs. On the other hand, the shift from wayiqtol to qotel sets the initial state of affairs, preparing the reader to anticipate some new facts in the subsequent paragraphs.

Word order

The default word order being verb + subject, a reverse word order as indicated in (i) signals some new, crucial events is about to happen. Besides, (ii) shows a verb repletion, which lays some emphasis on the action described. The change of verb form here is due to a change of pronoun reference (from third-person plural to third-person feminine singular.

Participants

It is a common feature of the narrative to repeat the names of participants, which may sound redundant or awkward in other languages that simply avoid such repetition or use some pronoun reference strategy. The over-specification of participants does not only play a pragmatic function; it is part of the narrative ''acoustic'' taste.

Direct speech

Direct speech quote is not marked by conventions like inverted commas or other observable sign. This makes it hard for readers to discriminate when the speaker is quoting someone or assuming the speech. Yet, a direct quote can still be identified by the occurrence of the verb לֵאמֹר (say) which is associated with a verb describing a command, resulting in the structure ''sent and said'', ''go and say'', which are specific verbs classified as mission or command verbs.

4.3.2 Suggestions for reading and translating

With respect to the translation, two major things are worth taking into account. On the one hand, very few non-natives can actually read the Hebrew language, and those who do may lack the proper ability to analyze written discourse. On the other hand, transferring the text into a different language and culture may still pose serious challenges. The levels of complexity vary, ranging from linguistic problems to types of texts, not forgetting the textual problems that arise from the alleged inconsistencies existing within texts. On the face of these, it is worth adopting a sound method in order to do justice to target communities and their language.

It is always helpful to have some training sessions or discussions with translators to discuss some technical aspects of problems likely to arise during the translation. Good training may help translators understand that they do not have to reproduce the pattern of the ''source'' language. Instead, they must feel free to express things in a way that will sound natural and accurate in their language. Research has shown that even the structural and thematic progression of a text may vary from one language to another (Khedri & Ebrahimi, 2012:40).

Moreover, translators need to understand that all languages embody the principles of creativity and that any concept can be translated in their language if they investigate the language enough to use its own resources. It is always good to read the available literature in the language and take time to do some research whenever possible. Before working with a translation team, translators should be ready to read some of the available materials in that language or listen to some native speakers to see the general discourse features in that language.

Furthermore, there is a need to develop a strong reading tradition in target languages. The challenge translators may have, is to produce a language that reflects the natural oral discourse in their language. However, writing sometimes understood as ''crafted language'', though it contains important aspects of the oral language. It follows some well-established writing methodology that does not necessarily reflect spoken language. For this reason, literacy programs in mother tongue education should not be restricted to basic reading and writing but should seek to come up with more elaborated patterns for dealing with different text types and teach people about how different texts are structured in their language. Because languages influence patterns of thinking Beaugrande (1994), these patterns may be reflected in how paragraphs are structured.

Further research is required to statistically establish the occurrence of the main verb forms used in this narrative, for example, which verb form is dominant or less used, and how the number of verb form occurrences may account for major characteristics of the narrative. Also, it is beyond the scope of this study to assess in an individual textual segments – words, sentences – automatically, which would be the proper ground for computer linguistics. The present study nevertheless points to significant discourse and literary features to consider for a proper textual division and interpretation, which might guide translators of the Hebrew text to deal with their job in a more comprehensive way, with due diligence to both source and target languages.

4.4 Concluding remarks

The first story of Gideon exhibits a wealth of discourse features, many of which may sound illogical to a foreign reader whose language displays a different system. It is striking that only a short narrative can mobilize various analytical tools, ranging from literary devices to discourse features. Despite the challenges one may face in reading original Hebrew texts (not their translation), most lend themselves to a sound analysis and offer various angles from which a translator may apply the pragmatic functions of the Hebrew language features to understand how the writers structure their thought and gain a comprehensive view of narration in that language.

The study provides a basis for reading and understanding Biblical Hebrew narratives and offers significant tips that translators may use to take a closer look at how their own language works. They may ask, what are the available resources in their language to deal with paragraph organization, how does the language deal with tense and aspects, how are stories narrated, what devices are used to signal a timid beginning, to highlight a peak, or how are characters introduced. All these will help make their own translation reflect the discourse pattern of the target language. For instance, Zogbo (1988:7) shows that in Kru languages spoken in Ivory Coast and Liberia, temporal and relative clauses play an organizing function so that a temporal clause referring back to the previous clause is typically used to set off one episode from another. In addition, the length of sentences is significantly affected by genre; a narrative expects the reader to keep track of the storyline and usually requires longer structures than procedural text, where structures are usually short.

However similar two structures may be, a careful study of their ''scope of focus'' will reveal how speakers structure their thinking and help understand the subtle nuances between individual sentences (Dooley & Levinsohn 2000:31). Likewise, a good understanding of discourse features in Hebrew may help readers keep a distance from their own language and lay focus on how the language operates within a larger discourse perspective.

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