The Narrative Structure of Exod 19–24

While a plethora of articles and books have been written in the last few years concerning the narrative art of the biblical writers, little has been written about biblical narratives which are connected with legal material. This is true particularly for the narrative account of the theophany of God at Mt. Sinai in Exod 19–24, which is but one part of the larger Sinaitic account which runs from Exod 19 to Num 10.

Scholars have found it difficult to interpret the Sinai Pericope on account of the many literary difficulties that prevail over the text: e.g. the repetition of the theophany in 20,18 (parallel to 19,16-19); the confusion which relates to Moses' frequent trips up and down the mountain; the awkward placement of the Decalogue and Covenant Code within the narrative, and so on. While source and tradition critics(1) have tried to account for the awkward narrative structure of the Sinai Pericope by appealing to different sources or traditions, other scholars(2) have attempted to demonstrate that the Sinai Pericope is a homogeneous literary work, although they have generally failed to explain the literary difficulties which have been discussed by source and tradition critics.


Biblica 68 (1987)
It has only been within the last ten years that the study of the poetics of the Bible has come to fruition. In the following discussion we will look first at some of the results of this important literary study which will form the methodological base of our analysis of the Sinai Pericope.

We will then examine the main surface and notional/deep (i.e. plot: characterization, perspective, etc.) structures that can be found in Exod 19–24 which may help to explain the aforementioned textual difficulties.

I. The Structure of Narrative Prose

Biblical scholars(3) who advocate a poetical approach to the study of biblical narrative note that modern literary techniques, such as characterization and point of view, are employed in various ancient texts including biblical narrative. In their pursuit to describe these literary techniques they have frequently employed the approaches advocated by various modern literary critics. In our discussion we will take a look at one such literary approach which defines the various narrative units which make up narrative prose and demonstrates the possible relationships that exist among these narrative units(4).

According to this approach narrative prose is composed of two narrative units: narrative proposition and sequence. The narrative proposition is the smallest narrative unit which is composed of a series of elementary propositions. For example, the statement, “the dragon abducts the king's daughter”, is a narrative proposition which contains the following series of elementary propositions(5):

\[
\begin{align*}
X & \text{ is a young girl} \\
Y & \text{ is a king}
\end{align*}
\]

(3) For example, see A. BERLIN, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Bible and Literature Series; Sheffield 1983) 37-43.

(4) This approach can be found in T. TODOROV, *Introduction to Poetics* (Brighton 1981) 48-53, who builds upon the work of the Russian Formalists Alexander Vesselovski and Vladimir Propp.

(5) This example is taken from one of the fairy tales found in the *Decameron* which is used by Todorov to explain his narrative model.
Y is X’s father
Z is a dragon
Z abducts X.

The narrative proposition contains two kinds of constituents; agents (i.e. X, Y, Z) and predicates (e.g. to abduct, to be a young girl, a dragon, etc.). In the elementary proposition “Z abducts X”, ‘Z’ is the subject and ‘X’ is the object. The relationship that exists between the two agents is called the syntactic function of the agents which illustrates the two main roles of agents/characters: “agent” (influencer and corruptor: dragon) and “patient” (beneficiary and victim: girl and king). What is particularly important to our study are the relations that can exist between these minimal units or propositions.

We can say at once that, from the point of view of their content, these relations are distributed among the different “order” of causality or of inclusion; temporal relations, of succession or of simultaneity; “spatial” relations, of repetition, opposition, and so on.(6)

The narrative propositions, or minimal narrative units, do not form infinite chains of events but are organized into cycles which a reader intuitively recognizes as a completed whole. The higher unit to which these cycles belong is called the sequence.(7) An “ideal” narrative sequence contains five propositions:

[the] narrative begins with a stable situation that some force will perturb. From which results in a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in a converse direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is quite similar to the first, but the two are not identical(6).

Although a single sequence may tell a “story”, a text (e.g. a novel, a tale, a play, a short story, etc.) almost always includes more than one sequence. In addition, in narrative prose certain proposi-

(6) TODOROV, Poetics, 51.

(8) TODOROV, Poetics, 51.
tions can be omitted (or added) without destroying the succession of the narrative, while there are propositions which cannot be omitted without damaging the link of causality that unites events or propositions.

Three types of combinations among sequences are possible, two of which are important for our analysis of the Sinai Pericope: 1) embedding, where the final proposition of a sequence is a narrative which forms a sequence in its turn; 2) linking, where sequences are placed one after the other. These "elementary" forms can also be further combined among themselves to create rather complex narratives.

While there are some texts within biblical narrative that can be categorized as an "ideal narrative", which displays some of the combinations among sequences illustrated above, many biblical narratives exhibit much more complex narrative structures. It must be noted, however, that the advantage of using narrative models to study OT narrative lies not in their analytic precision, but in the way they help us to think about the nature of narrative.

In the Sinai Pericope there are three principal characters or agents: Yahweh, Moses, and the people of Israel. In the development of the narrative other characters are introduced: priests in 19,22,24; Aaron in 19,24; 24,1.9.14; Nadab and Abihu in 24,1.9; the

(9) For example, see LICHT, Storytelling, 27, who analyses the story about Elisha and the "Floating Axehead" (2 Kgs 6,1-7). Like Todorov, Licht notes that this short miracle episode begins with a static situation which is disrupted (loss of the axehead) and then restored (by Elisha's miracle). This episode can be seen as one sequence within a larger narrative about the life of Elisha (cf. 2 Kgs 2,15-25; 3,1-20; 4,1-7, etc.) which is composed of a series of miracle episodes (i.e. "linking").

(10) Cf. TODOROV, Poetics, xv. In addition, there has recently been an increased interest in the works of Propp and other formalists as demonstrated by the works of J. M. SASSON, Ruth; A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation (Baltimore 1979), and H. JASON, "The Story of David and Goliath: A Folk Epic", Bib 60 (1979) 36-70, who analyzes the plot structure in the story of David and Goliath. However, while there has been some criticism levelled against those who use "genre specific" models to discuss biblical narrative, particularly P. J. MILNE, "Folktales and Fairy Tales: An Evaluation of Two Proppian Analyses of Biblical Narrative", JSOT 34 (1986) 35-60, who criticizes Sasson's application of Propp's narrative model of fairy tales to the book of Ruth, the advantage of Todorov's model is that it is not genre specific.
elders of Israel in 24,1.9.14; Joshua in 24,13; and Hur in 24,14. The three principal agents occur throughout the narrative and they also interact with each other in a similar manner: Moses speaks to God, who tells Moses what he should say to the Israelites, who then respond to God's proposition(s). Yahweh is the influencer, and the people are the beneficiaries. However, while Moses is among the beneficiaries of Yahweh's covenant, he must also be seen as an influencer since he mediates for the people (cf. 20,18-21). The interaction between the characters in the narrative can be broken down into five propositions or rhetorical elements which form the pattern:

- **MU**- Moses goes up to the mountain
- **YM**- Yahweh addresses Moses
- **MD**- Moses comes down from the mountain
- **MP**- Moses addresses the people
- **PM**- the People answer/address Moses

Based on this rhetorical pattern we have isolated three sequences or episodes within the Sinai Pericope, which are shown in detail in Diagram 1: 1) Exodus 19,3-8b; 2) Exodus 19,8c-20b; 20,18-21; 3) Exodus 19,20c-25; 24,1-8. These three sequences appear to have identical or parallel structures which are placed one after the other (i.e. "linking"). However, in the second and third sequences the fifth proposition is isolated from their main sequences which results in a distorted temporal and logical succession. These two propositions form a sequence in their turn (i.e. "embedding") which reiterates, and expands upon actions which have taken place within the initial sequences (cf. Exodus 20,18ff.; 24,1ff.). In the following discussion we will take a closer look at the surface and notional structure of these three sequences.

II. The First Sequence: Exodus 19,3-8b

In the introductory material in Exodus 19,1-2, which is composed of two waw-imperfect clauses, the narrator sets the stage for the following narrative by telling the reader that Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai in the third month after they had escaped from Egypt. The circumstantial clause in 19,3 — והלך משה "And Moses went up" — marks
## Diagram 1a

### First Sequence

1. האלוהים עלה והורה אל משה: "-rated א"ד - זה דברי אלוהים".
2. את האלוהים אשר שמעה לכל ישראל.
3. מרѦ 10 ויהיlinky ויקדש Моושתָה וינצִבקו. מי
4. למסער את מסע המכבר עַיִן ויהיlinky יהוֹורָה
5. למסער את מסע המסורה עַיִן ויהוֹורָה
6. למסער את מסע המסורה עַיִן ויהוֹורָה

### Second Sequence

1. האלוהים אמר אל אֲדָמוֹע: "This is the Second Sequence"
2. האלוהים אמר אל אֲדָמוֹע: "This is the Second Sequence"
3. האלוהים אמר אל אֲדָמוֹע: "This is the Second Sequence"
4. האלוהים אמר אל אֲדָמוֹע: "This is the Second Sequence"
5. האלוהים אמר אל אֲדָמוֹע: "This is the Second Sequence"
6. האלוהים אמר אל אֲדָמוֹע: "This is the Second Sequence"
7. האלוהים אמר אל אֲדָמוֹע: "This is the Second Sequence"
Diagram 1:  

Third Sequence Resumed  
(Resumptive Repetition)  

Second Sequence Resumed  
(Resumptive Repetition)  

Third Sequence
the beginning of a new episode which is then characteristically followed by a string of waw-imperfect clauses\(^{(1)}\).

In 19.3-8a the narrator quickly averts the reader’s attention to the mountain, where Moses ascends and God descends. On the mountain Yahweh tells Moses about His proposal to the sons of Israel to enter into a covenant, and then Moses brings Yahweh’s proposal back to the people and they verbally accept the principles of the covenant. While scholars have already noted that this first sequence serves as a topical summary and interpretation of the Sinai pericope\(^{(12)}\), they have generally overlooked the significance of the rhetorical pattern that we have discerned within this and the other two sequences of the Sinai Pericope.

This rhetorical pattern, which emphasizes the communication between Moses and Yahweh, is somewhat similar to the rhetorical pattern discerned by Vater\(^{(13)}\) in her analysis of the story of the Plagues in Exod 7-11. According to Vater, the communication which is depicted in the story of the Plagues is an example of one of several patterns used for narrating message and oracle communication in the OT. The particular pattern used in the story of the Plagues emphasizes the privileged communication between God and Moses, and is introduced by the formula: “and Yahweh spoke to Moses”. This formula is also found in Exod 19.3b, except that in Exod 19-24 the rhetorical element \( \text{M U} \) marks the beginning of the pattern. The difference between the two patterns can be attributed to the special nature of the event in Exod 19, whereby God appears to both Moses and the people from Mount Sinai.

\(^{(1)}\) For a discussion of the use of the circumstantial clause in marking episode “boundaries”, see E. I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague 1974) 79; and Berlin, *Poetics*, 57, who remarks, “Often a story opens with a narrated summary, or background, and then proceeds to the scenic section, generally marked by the beginning of dialogue”.


The Narrative Structure of Exod 19–24

In 19,3–8b both Yahweh’s speech and the people’s reply are presented in direct discourse. The primacy of direct discourse over summary is characteristic of biblical narrative\(^{(14)}\). In this case, the speech of Yahweh and the people’s reply focus the reader’s attention upon the covenant. This is made even more evident by the presence of two similar clauses in v. 3 and v. 6 in Yahweh’s speech which form an *inclusio*\(^{(15)}\):

\[v. 3c\]

הָאָמָר לְבָנִי יַעַקֹב לְוני יִשְׂרָאֵל

Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel

\[v. 6c\]

אֲלֵהוֹדְבִּים אָשֶׁר חֲבֹרָבָּא לְנוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל

These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

Finally, the first sequence is composed of a rather short scene which moves the reader rapidly along the story line\(^{(16)}\). A state of equilibrium is presented, although Yahweh’s offer to Israel is contingent upon their acceptance and obedience which are important elements in the development of the notional (or plot) structure of the Sinai Pericope.

III. The Second Sequence: Exod 19,8c–20b; 20,18–21

In the first sequence (19,3–8b) the initial proposition is *MU* (“Moses goes up the mountain”). According to our narrative model the second sequence should also begin with the proposition *MU*, or something similar which does not destroy the succession of the narrative. However, the opening clause in 19,8c “And Moses brought back [‘下一篇] the words of the people to Yahweh”, which does indicate that Moses goes back up the mountain, is repeated in 19,9e: “And Moses recounted [‘ UIImageView] the words of the people to Yahweh”. This


parallelism has often been regarded by source critics as a gloss since both clauses can be interpreted to mean the same thing — that Moses told the words of the people to Yahweh. However, a similar surface structure appears in Reuben's speech which is found in Gen 37,21,22. In this speech the repetition of the expression יָמַר, when the speaker (i.e. Reuben) does not change, appears to indicate a pause or change in tone which results in a shift in Reuben's speech(17). In Exod 19,8c,9e the repetition of the two similar clauses also acts as a pause which indicates that Moses first brought back the reply of the people to Yahweh (MU: 19,8c), but that he could not actually report the words of the people to Him (MY: 19,9c) until Yahweh had finished speaking to Moses(18). In terms of sequence structure, the narrator may have decided to use this subtle method of expressing Moses' ascent to the mountain, by referring to the reply which was to be brought back to Yahweh, instead of using the phrase "And Moses went up" (note a similar use in 19,20c: נשא מעון), in order to accentuate the idea that what Yahweh said to Moses in 19,9 was contingent on the people's acceptance of the covenant proposal.

The second sequence thus begins with Moses returning up the mountain to Yahweh with the people's reply (19,8c: MU), after which Yahweh speaks to Moses about His approaching theophany (19,9: YM). Moses then recounts the words of the people to Yahweh (19,9e: MY), and Yahweh tells Moses what to do in order to prepare the people for the theophany (YM: 19,10-13). At this point the narrator states that Moses came down from the mountain to the people (19,14: MD) and prepared them for the theophany as Yahweh had commanded (19,15: MP). The narrator then describes the scene on the morning of the third day when Moses brings the people out to meet God(19) (19,16-18). Then, as the trumpet grows louder,

(17) This surface structure is discussed by BERLIN, Poetics, 118; cf. also S. BAR-ERAT, The Art of the Biblical Story [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv 1979) 69-71.

(18) This particular interpretation is also advocated by U. CASSUTO, Commentary on Exodus (Jerusalem 1967) 228-229; and W. H. GISPEN, Exodus (Bible Student's Commentary; Grand Rapids 1982) 181.

(19) Note that the term יהוה is found in 19,3b.7.8.9.11.13.18.20.21.22.23.24; 24.1.3.4.5.7.8, while the term אֱלֹהִים is found in 19,3a. 17.19; 20,19.20. The term אֱלֹהִים is used when Moses first approaches the mountain, when the people come out to meet God, and when they ask Moses to listen to God.
Moses calls out and God answers with a sound (thunder?) (19,19). In these verses the rhetorical pattern which we discerned in the first sequence is repeated except for the final element, \( PM \), which can be found in the section 20,18-21 where the people ask Moses to listen to God because they are afraid. While the proposition \( MY \) (19,9e) is not included in the first sequence, its addition does not disrupt the succession of the narrative. However, before we discuss the rhetorical element \( PM \) in 20,18-21, we will take a closer look at the structure of the second sequence.

In v. 9 Yahweh tells Moses that He will appear in a thick cloud in order that the people may hear God (הַאֲלָהִי) speaking and that they may believe in Moses forever. Yahweh’s speech serves as a summary for the events that will take place just as it did in the first sequence. The narrator has little comment to make concerning the preparation or purpose of the theophany. Instead, the reader’s point of view of the theophany is fashioned by what Yahweh tells Moses. In Yahweh’s second speech, in vv. 10-13, Moses is told how to prepare the people for the theophany, and in v. 14 Moses goes down from the mountain and carries out the preparations. Structurally, the section in vv. 10-15 forms the parallel concentric pattern ABCD-XA'B'C'D', where Yahweh’s commands parallel Moses’ execution\(^{20}\), and where Yahweh’s warning not to touch the border of the mountain is the middle element (Cf. Diagram 1).

\[\begin{align*}
A & \quad \text{Go to the people (10b)} \\
B & \quad \text{consecrate them today and tomorrow (10c)} \\
C & \quad \text{let them wash their garments (10d)} \\
D & \quad \text{let them be ready for the third day (11)} \\
X & \quad \text{set bounds for the mountain (12-13)} \\
A' & \quad \text{Moses descended from the mountain to the people (14a)} \\
B' & \quad \text{he consecrated the people (14b)} \\
C' & \quad \text{they washed their garments (14c)} \\
D' & \quad \text{Be ready for the third day (15b)}
\end{align*}\]

\(^{20}\) Cf. M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana Literary Biblical Series; Bloomington 1985) 107-109, who observes that God’s speech is often repeated through actions: e.g. God creates by His word: Gen 1; and Moses is often the mediator of God’s speech in which he accomplishes certain acts.
In the section vv. 16-20, the narrator describes the actions which take place on the third day. Structurally, this section forms the variant parallel concentric pattern ABCDXA'B'D'C', where the two scenic descriptions of the mountain are parallel, and where the account of Moses bringing the people out to meet God at the lower part of the mountain is the middle element (cf. Diagram 1)(21).

- A there were thunder and lightning flashes (16b)
- B thick cloud on the mountain (16c)
- C a very loud trumpet sound (16d)
- D ... all the people in the camp trembled (16e)
- X Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God (17)
- A' Lord descended upon Mt. Sinai in fire (18a)
- B' smoke ascended from it (18b)
- D' the whole mountain trembled (18c)
- C' the sound of the trumpet grew louder (19)

These two parallel patterns demonstrate the skill of the author/redactor who, by virtue of isolating vv. 12-13.17, emphasized two important themes: the bounding of the mountain (vv. 12-13) and Moses bringing out the people to meet God (v. 17). The significance of these two themes will be discussed in more detail below.

It has already been noted above that the section 19,8c-20b does not include the rhetorical element PM, which we have suggested is found in 20,18-21. V. 18a reads:

השמית והשמת והשמית
And all the people saw the thunder and lightning flashes...

The circumstantial clause in 20,18 is an example of the literary device called resumptive repetition(22). Biblical authors frequently used this literary (poetical) device to present simultaneous or contemporaneous events which either run parallel to each other or overlap other events(23). For example, resumptive repetition occurs in

(22) This view is also advocated by ANDERSEN, Sentence, 128; and BERLIN, Poetics, 128; cf. also GKC, § 156d.
the story of Joseph which is interrupted in Gen 37,36 by the story of Judah and Tamar and is resumed again in 39,1. In this example the temporary ending of the story of Joseph in Gen 37,36 is repeated in Gen 39,1, which is linked back to the temporary ending in 37,36. While the two linking verses are not completely identical they are within the acceptable limits of "stylistic-textual" variation.

In the second sequence the resumptive clause in Exod 20,18 refers back to the temporary ending found in 19,16-20b, which contains the two parallel scenic descriptions of the theophany (cf Diagram 1). The events depicted in 19,16-20b are contemporaneous to the events in 20,18-21. While it is generally accepted that the giving of the Covenant Code (20,22-23,33) follows the request for mediation in 20,19f., it is more difficult to clarify the temporal relationship that exists between the people's request for mediation and the giving of the Decalogue. Scholars have generally opted for one of two possible sequences: 1) the request for mediation occurred before the giving of the Decalogue (24); 2) the request for mediation occurred after the giving of the Decalogue (25). However, there are conceptual problems with both of these options (26). Firstly, if the

also Sternberg, Poetics, 245, 414-415, 439. Literary critics such as M. Sternberg, Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction (Baltimore 1978); Todorov, Poetics; and P. Ricoeur, "Narrative Time", Critical Inquiry 7 (1980) 41-46, have noted the complex ways in which narrative represents temporal ordering. All three note that some models of narrative do not take into account the temporal ordering of narrative and the models therefore reconstruct narrative plot along a linear causal line which gives the impression that the temporal ordering of the causal events are also linear. Todorov notes on p. 42 that "if almost every causal narrative possesses a temporal order, we only rarely manage to perceive the latter". While we may understand a novel by its causal links we often read narratives which do not follow a linear temporal succession. We must not confuse the temporal consequitiveness (what-comes-after) with the causal consequence (what-is-caused-by).


(26) Cf. R. A. Cole, Exodus. An Introduction and Commentary (TOTC; Downers Grove 1973) 162, who acknowledges that it is difficult to decide whether 20,18-21 is intended as a retrospect and summary of the past (19,16-25), or whether it looks forward to the following section (20,22ff.).
giving of the Decalogue occurred before the request for mediation why is this not mentioned more explicitly in the people's request for mediation in 20,18-21? In addition, if the people heard the Decalogue why does Moses recount all the words and judgements of the Lord when Moses returns from the mountain (cf. 24,3)? Secondly, if the giving of the Decalogue occurred after the request for mediation why does the Decalogue occur before the request for mediation?

While 20,18 does not explicitly mention the words of God it is likely that the people did hear the voice of God when He spoke to Moses in 19,19. In this verse God answers Moses with a sound (thunder? בקול) which is what the people hear coming from the mountain in 19,16 which reads “there were sounds [תנגן] and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain...”. It is likely, then, that the people heard the voice of God, but it is doubtful that they could distinguish God’s voice from the sounds associated with the lightning flashes and thick cloud which hung over the mountain (cf. 19,16)(7). Therefore, the people may have heard the Decalogue in the ensuing speech of God (cf. 19,19)(28) but were unable to listen to Him because of their fear, and/or they did not understand what God was saying because of their inability to distinguish His words from the sounds coming from the mountain (cf. 19,19)(29). In either case the awesome nature of the event was too much for the people to take, which thus led to their request for mediation.

However, rather than locating the request for mediation after the giving of the Decalogue it is more sensible to suggest that the request came during the giving of the Decalogue. That is, while the people were listening to the voice of God (i.e. indiscernible sounds) they approached Moses to ask that he mediate for them. Although the Decalogue is placed before the request for mediation in the text, it actually was heard during the time depicted in the resumptive nar-

(7) Cf. DRIVER, Deuteronomy, 84; J. REIDER, Deuteronomy (Philadelphia 1937) 62; Ber. 45a.

(28) For the use of the imperfect to indicate reiteration in Exod 19,19 (“Moses kept speaking, and God kept answering...”), see S. R. DRIVER, Exodus (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; Cambridge 1911) 173-174.

(29) Cf. DRIVER, Exodus, 177; and F. DELITZSCH, New Commentary on Genesis I (Minneapolis 1978 [reprint of Edinburgh 1888]) 29, who suggest that the people heard the voice of God as thunder and that the human words in which the Decalogue is cast are the words of Moses.
The Narrative Structure of Exod 19-24

The Narrative Structure of Exod 19-24, which points back to the events depicted in 19,16-20b. After the request for mediation Moses then goes up the mountain where God continues to give Moses His regulations (i.e. the Covenant Code; 20,22-23,33). The reason why we cannot be more specific about the temporal ordering of these events is because they overlap each other, which accounts for the intricate parallelism found in these sections(30).

However, while we have explained how the literary device resumptive repetition is used in the second sequence we have not really explained why the narrative is interrupted in 19,16-20b and is resumed again in 20,18. Although the two narratives in 19,16-20b and 20,18-21 present parallel events which are contemporaneous, each narrative also presents a different point of view(31). In the section 19,16-19 the narrator simply gives his account of the events and tells the reader that the people trembled, without offering the reader any insight into why they were afraid. From this point the account of the theophany proceeds without any reference to the fear of the people. In 20,18-21 the narrator presents an expanded version of the same events that occurred in 19,16ff., but this time the events are presented from the point of view of the people. The repetition found in 19,16-19 and 20,18-21 represents a change in viewpoint from narrator to character. However, there is a more significant change in viewpoint from that of God in chapter 19 to that of the

(30) Cp. Ramban, ad. loc., who proposes the following order of events: 20,18 refers back to the events depicted in 19,16 which occurred before the giving of the Decalogue; 20,19 refers to events which occurred after the giving of the Decalogue; cp. also Cassuto, Exodus, 252-253; and Childs, Exodus, 371-372. The earliest exposition of the request for mediation in Exod 20,18-21 can be found in Deut 5,4-33. Here the request for mediation is referred to twice: in Deut 5,4-5 (summary), before the Decalogue, and in Deut 5,22-33, after the Decalogue. The account in Deut 5,22-33 should be understood as a resumptive narrative (note the use of the circumstantial clause in 5,23[20]) which refers back to the mediation which is briefly described in Deut 5,4-5. The fact that similar events are described in Deut 5,4-5 and Deut 5,22-23 ("Yahweh spoke to you... from the midst of the fire") suggests that the narrator reconstructed the events of the theophany in a similar fashion as the narrator in Exod 19-24.

(31) For a discussion of how repetition (or redundancy) can indicate a shift in point of view in biblical narrative, see Sternberg, Poetics, 438-439; Berlin, Poetics, 73-82; Licht, Storytelling, 75-86; and B. Uspensky, A Poetics of Composition (Berkeley 1983) 171.
people in 20,18-21. In 20,18-21 the people ask Moses to speak for them, for they believe if God spoke to them directly they will die. Moses then replies in 20,20 that they should not be afraid for God had come to test them in order that they may fear God and not sin (cf. Exod 15,25). The repetition of the phrase "and the people stood at a distance", in v. 18 and v. 21, forms an *inclusio* and isolates the request for mediation from the description of the mountain and the subsequent approach of Moses to the thick cloud where God was in v. 21. These two clauses suggest that the people stood away from the mountain even after Moses comforted them(32). In contrast, in chapter 19 Yahweh makes it clear that the boundary of the mountain must not be violated. This is elegantly expressed within the parallel structure in 19,10-13 and in the speech of Yahweh in the third sequence in 19,21-22, which states that Yahweh tells Moses to warn the people and the priests that they should not come near the mountain. However, this speech seems to ignore the response of the people found in 20,18-21 which clearly states that they stood at a distance because they were afraid to listen to God (cf. 19,23 where Moses tells God that the people have already been warned not to come up to the mountain).

In order to address the problems associated with the presentation of different points of view in this narrative, we suggest that there are two reasons why the account of the fear of the people is isolated from the main narrative of the second sequence. First, as a result of the use of resumptive repetition not only has the account concerning the fear of the people been isolated from the main discussion, but the legal discussions found in the Decalogue and the Covenant Code have also been isolated(33). We have already sug-

---

(32) According to the expanded version of the narrative concerning the fear of the people in Deut 5,30, after the people asked Moses to intercede for them Yahweh told Moses to send the people to their tents, which suggests that when the people stood at a distance in Exod 20,21 they went back to their tents.

(33) This intricate juxtaposition of law and narrative is not only confined to the Decalogue and Covenant Code. For example, the narrative in 24,9-18 functions as an introduction to the legal material found in chapters 25-31, which is immediately followed by the episode of the Golden Calf in chapters 32-34. However, this legal section is bridged by an *inclusio* between 24,12, where Yahweh tells Moses to come up to the mountain in order to receive the ten commandments, and 31,18, where the narrator reports Yahweh giving
gested above that the proposition $PM$ forms a sequence in its turn (i.e. "embedding") which reiterates, and expands upon actions which have taken place within the initial sequence. Furthermore, we suggest that the narrative concerning the fear of the people is isolated from the second sequence in order to preface or introduce the legal discussions of both the Decalogue and the Covenant Code\(^{(34)}\). Thus the "new" sequence goes on to discuss how the "law" is an integral part of the covenant: i.e. to show the proper response to the fear of God — that the people should not sin (cf. 20,20)\(^{(35)}\). That obe-

the ten commandments to Moses. Although this *inclusio* is not an example of resumptive repetition, it is similar to the way in which the Decalogue and Covenant Code are juxtaposed with the surrounding narrative. The resultant structure, which is illustrated below, suggests that there is a subtle attempt by the compiler to juxtapose legal material and narrative in the Sinai Pericope. For a discussion of a similar juxtaposition of law and narrative in the book of Numbers refer to G. J. Wenham, *Numbers* (TOTC; Downers Grove 1981) 14-18.

\[(\text{Seq. 2(a)} 19,8-19) \rightarrow \text{Decalogue} \rightarrow \text{Seq. 2(b)} 20,18-21a) \rightarrow \text{Covenant Code} \rightarrow \text{Seq. 3(b)} 24,1-8) \rightarrow 24,12) \rightarrow \text{Laws} 25-31) \rightarrow 31,18)\]

\(^{(34)}\) For a discussion of the relationship between the Decalogue and the Covenant Code, see A. Phillips, *Israel's Criminal Law* (Oxford 1970), who has suggested that the ten commandments should be interpreted as a type of group of premises placed behind the criminal laws of the Covenant Code; and A. Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic. A Preliminary Analysis* (Oxford 1981) 230-231 and n. 40, who suggests that the "internal systematic interrelations; e.g. the conditional markers $\rightarrow$ (21,2.7.14.18.20.22.26.28.33.35-37; 22,4-6.10.14.16.27) and $\Rightarrow$ (21,3-5.8-11.19.23.27.29.30.32; 22,1-3.6-7.10-12.14.16.22.24-25) (excepting oath formulae) appear on occasions to be functionally substitution instances of one another where consequences are drawn from antecedents. This reflects a degree of organization and systematic integration of values, a product absent from paralleled Akkadian law codes". Cp. W. F. Albright, *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism* (New York 1964) 97, who thinks that the criminal law of the Covenant Code is to be separated from the empirical logic of the ten commandments.

\(^{(35)}\) While modern critical methods have generally ignored the possible poetic explanations for the juxtaposition of law and narrative in the Sinai Pericope, several scholars have suggested some possible explanations for this literary difficulty. For example, Jackson, "The Ceremonial and the Judicial", 40-44, who advocates the Semiotic approach, has suggested that the Covenant Code should be understood in relation to the Covenant expressed
diocese is an integral part of the covenant can be demonstrated in the closing comments of the Covenant Code in 23,20-33, where it states that if the people obey God’s commandments then God will give

in Exod 19. While Jackson notes that the Semiotic approach is not the only relevant approach for understanding the surface meaning of the Covenant Code he proposes four methodological suggestions which are relevant to the discussion of the relationship between law and narrative:

1) we must pay attention to what the texts tell us about the nature of the message: e.g. Jackson recognizes the peculiarity of the introductory sentence to the Covenant Code in 21,1, which is very different from other ANE law codes, and traces this to the offer of the Covenant before the people (19,6.7). Based on this and other semiotic observations, Jackson concludes that, “Biblical law probably provides us with a richer range of acts of enunciation of norms than the legal literature of any other people of antiquity” (pp. 41-42);

2) we must look more systematically at the evidence the Bible provides of the manner of use of biblical norms: e.g. Jackson suggests that the laws concerning the theft of animals in 22,1-4 can be used in Nathan’s parable; cf. also the studies of C. Carmichael, Laws of Deuteronomy (Ithaca 1974); The Ten Commandments. The Ninth Sacks Lecture delivered on 25th May 1982 (Oxford 1983).

3) we should pay particular attention to all semiotic choices made by the text, both terminology and arrangement of rules; e.g. Jackson notes the unusual use of the term אסון in 21,21-22, and he also notes the occurrence of the slave laws at the beginning of the code and in subsequent discussions. Refer also to the use of the verb סקל “to stone” in 21,28-29, which is used in the penalty given to an ox who gores a human. The same verb is also found in 19,12-13, which is the penalty enacted upon anyone who violates the “divine” boundary of the mountain. It is possible that the author of the Covenant Code attempted to compare the sanctity of the mountain, or God’s sphere, with the sanctity of man by using the same penalty formula; where the ox has transgressed man’s sacred sphere (Cf. J. J. Finkelstein, “The Ox that Gored”, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 71/2 (1981) 108-152);

4) we must pay more attention to the nature of the communities within which biblical law was designed to be communicated.

In addition, there is another approach which suggests that the Decalogue and Covenant Code are intrinsically connected to the surrounding narrative. Discourse Analysis, in its broadest sense, is the study of discourse which covers two areas of linguistic concern: the analysis of dialogue (especially of live conversation), and the analysis of monologue. According to R. E. Longacre, The Grammar of Discourse: National and Surface Structures (Topics in Language and Linguistics; New York 1983) 3-6, monologue discourse can be
them their promised land according to His covenant with them, but if they fail to obey Him then it will be a snare to them (cf. 23,33; cp. Josh 23,12-13).

Second, the request for mediation in 20,18-21 can also be understood as a narrative proposition which introduces disequilibrium into the narrative. The disequilibrium is the fear of the people, although we learn from Moses' reply to the people in 20,20 that fear is a natural and healthy response to God's theophany (cf. also Deut 5,28-29; cp. Exod 14,13.31). However, this fear is supposed to result in obedience, something which the people frequently failed to do in their journey from Egypt (cf. Exod 14,10-15; 15,22-26; 16,2-21; 17,1-7). The reader will also be aware of this disequilibrium which manifests itself again in the episode of the Golden Calf in Exod 32-34. In this narrative it is clear that the people again failed to realize the importance of obedience. Therefore, not only does the fear of the people add conflict to the plot(^), it also acts as a causal link (or a "subliminal intuition of things to come"(^)) between the fear of the people at the theophany and their sinful acts in Exod 32-34.

IV. The Third Sequence: Exod 19,20c-25; 24,1-8

The third sequence begins with the account of Yahweh calling Moses to the top of the mountain (19,20c: MU) where He and

divided into 4 types: 1) Narrative discourse; 2) Procedural discourse; 3) Behavioral discourse; and 4) Expository discourse. Narrative discourse, such as biblical narrative, belongs to a contingent temporal succession in which events are contingent on previous events or doings. Procedural and behavioral discourse, which biblical legal stipulations belong to, are not contingent on temporal successions. However, references to historical situations, such as the motivation clauses in the Decalogue and Covenant Code which refer to Israel's enslavement in Egypt (20,2; 22,20[21]; 23,9.15), link the procedural and behavioral discourse to the Exodus event which is also emphasized in the Sinai pericope.

(^) Cf. ALTER, Narrative, 100-101, who notes that variation in repetition — in this case resumptive repetition — is sometimes used to adumbrate a development of plot.

(^) ALTER, Narrative, 101, suggests that varied repetition can be used as a foreshadowing device; cf. also Y. ZAKOVITCH, "Foreshadowing in Biblical Narrative", [Hebrew] Beer-Sheva 2 (1985) 85-105.
Moses speak to each other (19,21-24: YM/MY/YM). This dialogue emphasizes Yahweh’s concern for the people to honour the boundary set around the mountain. We have already noted above that the emphasis on maintaining the boundary between the people and Yahweh is found in the middle elements of the two concentric patterns in the second sequence. We have also noted that Yahweh’s viewpoint in the second and beginning of the third sequence appears to ignore the response of the people to the theophany in 19,16 and 20,18-21, which suggests that the narrator has emphasized the holiness of God in chapter 19. The concern for holiness is also expressed in the theophany in Exod 3 where Moses was warned not to come near Yahweh and was asked to remove his sandals, for the ground he was standing on was holy ground (v. 5). In this respect, the theophany in Exod 3 may be seen as a biblical analogy to the theophany here in Exod 19(38).

Structurally, the dialogue between Moses and Yahweh in 19,21-22 forms the parallel concentric pattern ABCB’A’, where the middle element C contains Moses’ reply to Yahweh which reads, “The people cannot come up to Mt. Sinai, for you warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds about the mountain and consecrate it’”. The chapter ends with the narrator’s account which states that Moses went down (19,25a: MD) and spoke to the people (19,25b: MP). However, what Moses said to the people is not recounted, which results in the awkward transition between chapters 19 and 20. In this section all the relevant rhetorical elements are included except for the proposition PM, which was also missing in the second sequence.

The repetition of the request by Yahweh for Moses to come up with Aaron to the mountain in 19,24 (וָאֵלְכָּנָה imperfect) and 24,1 (circumstantial clause: אמר ואל־משה) is another example of the literary device called resumptive repetition(39). Even though Yahweh’s request in 24,1 contains the additional characters Nadab and Abihu and the seventy elders, these additions do not seriously damage the argument that 24,1 is an example of resumptive repetition since we have already noted that a resumptive clause does not have to be exactly the same as the clause which marks the temporary ending of the narrative.

(38) Cf. Alter, Narrative, 88-113, who calls this analogy a type scene.
(39) Cf. also Rashi, ad. loc.
Furthermore, a similar problem is found in the speech of Yahweh in the episode of the Golden Calf in Exod 32,7-8, where Yahweh tells Moses to go down to the people because of their sin, which is different from Yahweh's speech in 32,9-14, where Yahweh threatens to annihilate Israel for worshiping the golden calf. This is an example of a narrative technique in which one incident is told in two "episodic" versions, which is very similar to our explanation of the use of resumptive repetition in Exod 21,18-21. The first episode (Exod 32,7-8) is brief and synoptic while the second is resumptive and expansive (Exod 32,9-14). The first episode relates the circumstances and the denouement while the second episode goes back in time and tells how the denouement was arrived at.

Therefore, Exod 19,24-25 can be understood as a synoptic account of what Yahweh said to Moses on the mountain and Moses coming down from the mountain to speak to the people, which is retold and expanded in Exod 24,1-8. Furthermore, the section 19,16-24, which is the peak or climax of the narrative, represents the synoptic account of the theophany (according to God's viewpoint), which is retold and expanded in the two resumptive narratives in 20,18-21 (including 20,1-17,22-23,33) and 24,1-8 (including 24,9-18). Therefore, the entire theophany experience is synoptically recorded in Exod 19, which is mainly told from the perspective of God, and retold and expanded in two resumptive narratives which discuss the fear of the people and the ratification of the covenant, both of which are told from the viewpoint of the people. Finally, the linking of the two narratives in 19,24-25 and 24,1ff. suggests that what Yahweh said to Moses in the third sequence, particularly the request for Moses to come up again with Aaron, occurred at the end of Moses' stay on the mountain, and also suggests that the revelation

---

(40) This literary technique is discussed by H. B. BRICHTO, "The Worship of the Golden Calf: A Literary Analysis of a Fable on Idolatry", *HUCA* 54 (1983) 6-8.; cf also STERNBERG, *Poetics*, 438-440; and R. W. L. MOBERLY, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exod 32-34* (JSOTS 22; Sheffield 1983) 49, who explains that the difference between the two speeches in Exod 32,7-8 and vv. 9-14 signals a shift in content.

(41) Cf. LONGACRE, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 26, who notes that the surface structure *parallelism* often highlights important points in a story such as the Climax or Denouement, which are part of the plot or notional structure of the story.
of both the Decalogue and the Covenant Code occurred before the events described in 19,21-25.

Turning to the events depicted in chapter 24, the rhetorical elements YM-MD-MP, which are also found in 19,24-25, are repeated, and the missing element PM is found in 24,3. We are told by the narrator in 24,3 that when Moses came to the people he recounted (נָסַר) all the words of Yahweh and all the ordinances. This recounting refers back to the incomplete sentence found in 19,25(42). Structurally, the section 24,1-9 forms the concentric pattern ABCDxdaC'B'A', and isolates the ritual acceptance of the covenant. In addition, the people accept the conditions of the covenant twice: in 24,3, after Moses recounts the words of Yahweh; and in 24,7, after Moses performs the blood ritual and reads the book of the covenant. Note that the people’s response in v. 7 parallels the words of Yahweh in 19,5, which clearly demonstrates that Yahweh’s covenant is conditioned by the people’s obedience:

19,5 Now then if you will indeed obey My voice and keep my covenant

24,7c All Yahweh has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!

V. Conclusion

In the above discussion we have demonstrated that the Sinai Pericope represents a coherent account of the theophany. We have argued that the awkward surface structure of the narrative, which results in the non-linear temporal ordering of events, can be explained when one takes into account the sequence structure of the

(42) This construction is very rare, appearing elsewhere only in Gen 4,8; cp. S. R. DRIVER, Genesis (Westminster Commentaries; London 1904) 65, who suggests that the original speech had dropped out of the MT; and U. CASSUTO, Genesis. Part I (Jerusalem 1961) 213-216, who argues that the expression should be understood in connection with the Arabic words ‘ama-run, ‘amârun, ‘imâratun, “sign or token”, and should be translated: “Cain appointed a place where to meet” (p. 213).
narrative, particularly the use of the literary device called resumptive repetition. As a result of the use of this literary device, we have demonstrated that the narrative contains two different perspectives of the theophany. First, there is the perspective of Yahweh which emphasizes the preparation and execution of the covenant as well as highlighting the holiness of God, which is a key to understanding the relationship that exists between Yahweh and His people. Second, there is the perspective of the people, which is elaborated upon in the two resumptive narratives in 20,18-21 and 24,1-8. The first resumptive narrative in 20,18-21, which elaborates in detail the fear of the people, serves as a preface and introduction to the Decalogue and Covenant Code. In addition, it also acts as a causal link between the fear of the people and their sinful acts below the mountain in Exod 32. The second resumptive narrative in 24,1-8 elaborates in detail the ratification of the covenant and also leads into the subsequent ascent of Moses to the mountain where he receives the rest of God’s regulations.

College of St. Paul and St. Mary
The Park
Cheltenham, GL50 2RH
England

G. C. CHIRICHIGNO

SOMMAIRE

Le récit de la théophanie en Ex 19-24 est traditionnellement considéré comme un ensemble de sources et de traditions assemblées de manière lâche dans une unique narration. Le présent article suggère de reconnaître dans la péricope du Sinaï un récit complexe et cohérent de la théophanie, divisé en trois séquences narratives, chacune d’elles étant délimitée par la récurrence d’un modèle rhétorique (i.e. 19,3-8b; 19,8c-20b et 20,18-21; 19,20c-25 et 24,1-8). Alors que la structure de la première séquence se présente de manière assez simple, les deux dernières séquences sont interrompues et font ensuite l’objet de deux reprises narratives (i.e. 20,18-21 et 24,1-8).

Ainsi que le manifeste cette structure, la théophanie est racontée de manière synoptique au chapitre 19 selon le point de vue de Dieu: l’accent est mis alors sur l’offre d’alliance et la sainteté divine. Le récit est ensuite reconté à nouveau et développé dans les deux reprises narratives selon le point de vue du peuple: la crainte de Dieu (20,18-21) et la ratification de l’offre d’alliance (24,1-8) sont alors soulignées.
Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)’ express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.