GENESIS 1:1-2:3 AS A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE TEXT TYPE[1]

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The 'genre' of Genesis 1 has long been debated, with approaches centering largely on traditional form criticism. From a textlinguistic perspective—especially examining such elements as clause types, word order, grounding, lexical repetition, prose particles, and linear structuring—this study argues that the first periscope of the Hebrew Bible is better read as a historical narrative text type in its own right.

1. Introduction

Genesis 1:1-2:3 (hereafter Gen 1) is a fulcrum of biblical faith, though it has occasioned considerable scholarly discussions due to the interpretive enigmas it presents:

Interpreting Genesis 1 continues to be a controversial issue—and for all sorts of people. This is hardly surprising for at least two reasons. On one level, how one reads Genesis 1 has in some circles become a litmus test of Christian orthodoxy, whether conservative or liberal. Hold the 'wrong' view and one is either a dupe of secular critical theory or a troglodyte literalist. This hardly bodes well for the unity of that new humanity that God is forming in Christ. On another level, the importance of stories of origins cannot be overestimated. They define us.[2]

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[1] This article was originally intended to be published in the *Adventist Review*, though it could not be published there due to the popular character of its readership. Time constraints did not allow the author to deepen some of the arguments of this article. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the present article may contribute to our understanding of Gen 1.

[2] Rikk Watts, "Making Sense of Genesis 1," *Stimulus* 12 (2004): 2.

Despite the volume of studies on Gen 1,[3] major problem areas remain, namely historical (e.g., historicity), literary (e.g., genre and structure), and linguistic (e.g., syntactic and semantic). Hermeneutically, these problem areas seem to be intertwined in that (1) syntax and semantics inform genre and structure analysis of a text, and (2) structure and (especially) genre suggest to scholars whether to interpret a text as a historical fact or otherwise. In this article, I do not attempt to discuss these complex issues, but rather to indicate how textlinguistics may contribute to the delineation of the text type or genre of Gen 1.

2. Textlinguistics

Although the terms 'textlinguistics' and 'discourse linguistics/analysis' are not necessarily to be equated, the two may be used interchangeably to refer to the study of grammar beyond the level of the clause/sentence.[4] According to C. H. J. van der Merwe, there are two major approaches in biblical Hebrew linguistics, namely (1) form-to-function approaches (European linguistics, e.g., Eep Talstra) which use formal distributional criteria and "treat the formal data at the lower level exhaustively before any phenomenon is treated on a higher level" and (2) functional approaches (American linguistics, e.g., Robert E. Longacre) which often "commence with a hypothesis or theoretical frame of reference on specific linguistic notions and try to explain hitherto problematic Biblical Hebrew phenomena in terms of this hypothesis."[5] These approaches may roughly correspond to

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[3]   See Daniel Bediako, *Genesis 1:1-2:3: A Textlinguistic Analysis* (Saarbuecken, Germany: VDM, 2010); Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), xix-lii, 1-34; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 75-100; John W. Rogerson, "Genesis 1:11," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 5 (1997): 67-90; André Wénin, ed., *Studies in the Book of Genesis* (Leuven: University Press, 2001).

[4]   Cf. C. H. J. van der Merwe, "A Critical Analysis of Narrative Syntactic Approaches, with Special Attention to their Relationship to Discourse Analysis," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 133-156.

[5]   C. H. J. van der Merwe, "Discourse Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Grammar," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 16. See also idem, "Some Recent Trends in Biblical Hebrew Linguistics: A Few Pointers towards a More Comprehensive Model of Language Use," *Hebrew Studies* 44 (2003): 7-24; Jason Shane DeRouchie, "A Call to Covenant

the terms 'textlinguistics' (usually following a 'bottom-up' process) and 'discourse linguistics/analysis' (a 'top-down' approach) respectively. Such a polarization, however, begins to disintegrate when, for example, discourse analysts (e.g., Longacre and F. I. Andersen) use the term 'textlinguistics' or attempt a combination of the 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' processes.

Textlinguists or discourse analysts consider the *discourse* or *text*, rather than the clause/sentence, as the appropriate linguistic entity for a synchronic analysis.[6] Peter J. MacDonald has surveyed various approaches within discourse analysis: grammatical, sociolinguistic, ethnographic, pragmatic, psycholinguistic, cognitive, and others that are not explicitly linguistic (e.g., stylistics, poetics, and hermeneutics).[7] Unlike MacDonald, Kirk E. Lowery classifies discourse analysis into four: psycho-social, anthropological, cognitive, and grammatical.[8] While each of these approaches is appropriate in its own right, the grammatical plus pragmatic approaches seem to be more germane to biblical Hebrew studies. This is due, first, to the fact that biblical Hebrew is only a written language. Second, Susan Groom has correctly observed that biblical Hebrew "cannot be treated in exactly the same way as much of the data the theories were developed on."[9] For instance, the linguistic definition of a text as a communicative act meeting seven standards of textuality is not readily applicable to biblical Hebrew.[10]

MacDonald gives a general description of the grammatical approach:

Love: Text Grammar and Literary Structure in Deuteronomy 5-11" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), 29; Susan Anne Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2003).

[6]   Walter R. Bodine, "Introduction: Discourse Analysis—What It Is and What It Offers," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995), 1-3; Ellen van Wolde, "A Text-Semantic Study of the Hebrew Bible: Illustrated with Noah and Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994): 19-35; C. H. J. van der Merwe, "An Overview of Hebrew Narrative Syntax," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1-20.

[7]   Peter J. MacDonald, "Discourse Analysis and Biblical Interpretation," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 153-175.

[8]   Kirk E. Lowery, "The Theoretical Foundations of Hebrew Discourse Grammar," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995), 103-129.

[9]   Groom, *Linguistic Analysis*, 160.

[10] Ibid., 135-137.

grammarians who do discourse analysis look at discourse as grammatical structures with internal cohesion created by the rule-governed use of grammatical structures, such as tenses, pro-forms, deictic terms, lexical collocation patterns, conjunctions, sentence types, etc. They describe the grammatical features of a discourse in terms of their function in the organization of the larger linguistic context. They identify each grammatical level of discourse—the phrase, the sentence, the paragraph, and the discourse—by its collection of functional parts. When discourse grammarians speak of 'context', they refer to the matrix of linguistic entities that makes up the discourse itself.[11]

Grammatical textlinguists thus study how a text is structured as an edifice of communication: "Any morphosyntactic form in a text represents the author's choice whether conscious or automatic. . . . Thus, as textlinguistic analysts, we try to discern the *whats* (what forms and constructions occur in text), the *hows* (how a form like the relative clause is constructed), and the *whys* (why—for what purpose, in what function—the form is used)."[12]

Pragmatics is a subfield closely related to textlinguistics. It is "the study of the information transmitted by an utterance that goes beyond the information that is carried by the grammatical and lexical patterns. It concerns such information as the speaker's beliefs, knowledge, commitments, social status, purpose for speaking, etc. These factors are part of the psychosocial context of the semantics of the forms themselves."[13] In other words, pragmatics is concerned with bridging the gap between text/sentence meaning and author's or speaker's meaning in each communicative act, thereby making the (pragmatic) context an integral aspect of interpretation. Grammatical textlinguistics/discourse linguistics and pragmatics have clearly advanced our knowledge of biblical Hebrew studies in such areas as clause structure, verb forms, word order, foregrounding/backgrounding, information structure (e.g., topic, focus), cohesion, and text typology.[14]

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[11]   MacDonald, "Discourse Analysis," 156.

[12]   Robert E. Longacre and Shin Ja J. Hwang, "A Textlinguistic Approach to the Biblical Hebrew Narrative of Jonah," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 337.

[13]   MacDonald, "Discourse Analysis," 162.

[14]   The reader is directed to such works as Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph —A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 5-205; Walter R. Bodine, ed., *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992); idem, ed., *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995); R. D. Bergen, *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse*

Although the grammatical approach in textlinguistics seems more applicable to biblical Hebrew studies, there seems to be no unity of method among linguists in this subfield.[15] The prevailing variety in method derives largely from the linguistic 'school' a particular linguist belongs to, so that a generative linguistic or a functional grammarian (to mention but two) would not undertake textlinguistics following the same method and procedure. The research interest of the individual linguist is also a contributing factor to the diversity. Despite this methodological variety, textlinguistics/discourse analysis certainly has several interpretive advantages, a few of which are mentioned here. First, Alviero Niccacci has demonstrated that "discourse analysis brings to the fore macrosyntactic, semantic, and pragmatic devices used by the author to convey his message

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Linguistics (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994); Ellen van Wolde, ed., *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 133-156; D. A. Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew,* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, no. 177 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1994); R. L. Heller, *Narrative Structure and Discourse Constellations: An Analysis of Clause Function in Biblical Hebrew Prose*, Harvard Semitic Studies 55 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003); van der Merwe, "Some Recent Trends in Biblical Hebrew Linguistics," 7-24; David O. Moomo, "The Meaning of the Biblical Hebrew Verbal Conjugation from a Crosslinguistic Perspective" (D. Litt. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2004), 49-66; Sebastiaan Jonathan Floor, "From Information Structure, Topic and Focus, to Theme in Biblical Hebrew Narrative" (D. Litt., diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2004), 9-11, 73-188; DeRouchie, "Text Grammar and Literary Structure," 26-277; Groom, *Linguistic Analysis*, 131-151.

15   See Robert E. Longacre, "Building for the Worship of God: Exodus 25:1-30:10," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995), 21-49; Longacre and Hwang, "A Textlinguistic Approach," 337-358; Lowery, "Theoretical Foundations," 103-129; Randall Buth, "Functional Grammar, Hebrew and Aramaic: An Integrated, Textlinguistic Approach to Syntax," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995), 77-102; C. H. J. van der Merwe, "Workshop: Text Linguistics and the Structure of 1 Samuel 1," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 157-166; Groom, *Linguistic Analysis*, 131-160; Alviero Niccacci, "Analysis of Biblical Hebrew Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 175-197; Eep Talstra, "Workshop: Clause Types, Textual Hierarchy, Translation in Exodus 19, 20, and 24," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 119-132.

in a forcible way."[16] Textlinguistics also incorporates several aspects of other text-oriented studies. For example, it intersects with literary analysis in that it provides fresh parameters, beyond form criticism, for delineating text types (i.e., genre) and for analyzing the structure of a text.[17] Coupled with pragmatics which, among other things, focuses on information structure and communicative contexts, textlinguistics helps clarify a text's flow of thought and message. Further, because the analyst studies grammar beyond the clause level, he/she is able to investigate a biblical text as a synchronic whole without focusing on isolated problems within a given text.[18] Textlinguistics also enables the analyst/exegete to observe closely all textual features, thereby controlling the parameters for understanding a text.[19] In sum, textlinguistics does not only have interpretive advantage over atomistic linguistic studies, but also provides new perspectives to the study of biblical Hebrew.[20] The interpretive benefits of textlinguistics and its intersection with other text-oriented approaches call for its application to such difficult texts as Gen 1.

3. General Remarks on Gen 1:1-2:3

Due to space limitations, only few comments on the literary character of Gen 1 are noted here:

1. Gen 1 divides into eight paragraphs, giving rise to a linear structure: introduction (1:1-2), day one (1:3-5), day two (1:6-8), day three (1:9-13), day four (1:14-19), day five (1:20-23), day six (1:24-31), and day seven (2:1-3).

2. Despite the apparently chronological (linear) structure of Gen 1, other structures are observable in the text.[21] As an example, a six-day

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[16]   Alviero Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 118.

[17]   See e.g., Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York: Plenum, 1983); idem, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence*; Bo-Krister Ljungberg, "Genre and Form Criticism in Old Testament Exegesis," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 415-433; Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*; Heller, *Narrative Structure and Discourse Constellations*; DeRouchie, "Text Grammar and Literary Structure;" van der Merwe, "Discourse Linguistics."

[18]   Cf. Longacre and Hwang, "A Textlinguistic Approach," 337.

[19]   See Bodine, "Introduction," 10-11.

[20]   See also Groom, *Linguistic Analysis*, 159.

[21]   See C. Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation*, trans. Norman E. Wagner (Phila-

symmetric/thematic structure has long been observed in which the creational activities are grouped into two triads of days: in the first triad (i.e., days one-three) regions are created, while in the second (i.e., days four-six) inhabitants corresponding to the regions are created. This results in a thematic structure such as follows:

Day		**Day**	
1	Light (1:3-5)	4	Lights (1:14-19)
2	Firmament (1:6-8)	5	Inhabitants (1:20-23)
	sky		birds
	seas		fish
3	Dry land (1:9-10)	6	Land Animals (1:24-25)
	Vegetation (1:11-13)		Human beings (1:26-31)[22]

On the basis of this structure, a number of scholars argue that Gen 1 is to be read merely as a 'literary' or dischronologized, rather than a literal, account. Yet, it has been argued elsewhere that while this symmetry is not merely

delphia: Fortress, 1964); Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961; reprint, Jerusalem Magnes, 1978), 1-7; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 6; Lee Jin-Tae, "The Literary Structure of Genesis 1:1-2:3: A New Insight in the Light of the Ugaritic Parallels," *Acts Theological Journal* 1 (1984): 5-25; Bernhard W. Anderson, "A Stylistic Study of the Priestly Creation Story," in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology*, ed. George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 148-162.

22   Waltke, *Genesis*, 57. See also Cassuto, *Commentary*, 17; Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1-11* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1985), 74-80; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 46; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 6-7; David W. Cotter, *Genesis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003), 11; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 125; Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 115-116; Nahum M. Sarna, Genesis, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish, 1989), 4; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P. & R., 2005), 73; Jerome T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Narrative* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001), 37; David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 49; William P. Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology in the Hebrew and Greek Texts of Genesis 1:1-2:3*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 132 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1993), 92-94.

coincidental but results from careful divine design, the explicitly marked linear structure of the text, the temporal-logical progression within the account, and the incomplete nature of the symmetry (cf. 1:1-2, 6-8, 20-23; 2:1-3), among others, should advise us against taking the text simply as an artistic arrangement.[23]

3. Gen 1 contains several clause types. The most common of these is what we may call *waw*+imperfect (*wayyiqtol*) clause. The other clause types occur only a few times each, and even so most of them serve to continue the information initiated by a *waw*+imperfect clause. Interestingly, the divine activity on each of the six days of creation begins with the *waw*+imperfect clause *wayyomer Elohim* "and God said." However, *wayyomer Elohim* does not appear in the first and last paragraphs: Gen 1:1-2 (introduction) and 2:1-3 (day seven). This may imply that in these paragraphs divine creative activity, perhaps in the immediate interest of the author, has either not yet begun (1:1-2) or is already completed (2:1-3). As will be seen later, the *waw*+imperfect clause type is important in determining the 'genre' of a biblical Hebrew passage.

4. Several formulaic expressions are found in the passage, particularly in the second through seventh paragraphs (1:3-31). The recurrent, somehow rhythmic, expressions yield a stylistic structure that is widely noted by scholars: (1) announcement ("and God said . . ."), (2) command ("let there be . . ."), (3) report ("and it was so"), (4) evaluation ("and God saw that it was good"), and (5) temporal framework ("and there was evening and there was morning . . .").[24]

5. Apart from 1:1-2 and 2:1-3, each of the remaining paragraphs exhibits three communicative domains. These levels of narrative perspective include the author's (1) report of divine speeches/commands, (2) report of divine activities following the speech, and (3) further closing remarks (usually structural expressions). Gen 1:1-2 somewhat belongs with both domains two and three, while 2:1-3 goes with domain two.

[23]   See Bediako, *Genesis 1:1-2:3*, 266-300, 316.

[24]   Westermann, *Genesis Accounts of Creation*, 6-10; idem, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984), 84; Bruce Vawter, "Genesis," *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. Reginald C. Fuller, rev. and updated (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1975), 173.

4. Debate over the Genre of Gen 1:1-2:3

What is the literary genre of Gen 1? Scholars have given various answers to this question, with a consensus being far from conceivable.[25] Yet, the issue of genre is integral to the interpretation of this passage. For example, those who consider Gen 1 as a poetic text would generally not interpret it as a factual, historical-chronological account of creation within six literal days. Of the many views relating to the genre of Gen 1, two seem to be pivotal: poetry and prose/narrative. On the one hand, the passage may be read as poetry due to such features as numerical structuring, repetitions, formulaic expressions, poetic/archaic expressions, parallelisms, alliteration, inclusio, and symmetry.[26] In this light, Gen 1 is "an artistic arrangement, a modest example of anthropomorphism that is not to be taken literally. The author's intention is not to supply us with a chronology of origins."[27] On the other hand, the prose/narrative interpretation of the passage is supported by the flow of the account, its placement and function in the early chapters of the book, its dissimilarity with other poetic texts in OT, its less complete symmetry, lack of metrical balance, and the presence of narratological features (e.g., character and characterization, point of view, narrator, series of events that take place over a period of time, beginning and end of activity, and plot structure).[28] Such features would

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[25] For a list of these views, see Bediako, *Genesis 1:1-2:3*, 65-68, 240-251; Gerhard F. Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or Figurative 'Periods/Epochs' of Time?" *Origins* 21 (1994): 15-21; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 80, 90-91; Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 220-229; Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 167-182; Bruce K. Waltke, "The Literary Genre of Genesis Chapter One," *Crux* 27 (1991): 2-10.

[26] See e.g., Sarna, *Genesis*, 4; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 6, 91; Vawter, "Genesis," 173; Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1984), 51; Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 114-115; Cotter, *Genesis*, 11; Cassuto, *Commentary*, 10-15, 40-43, 54, 61; John S. Kselman, "The Recovery of Poetic Fragments from the Pentateuchal Priestly Source," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978): 161-173.

[27] Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 50. So also Waltke, "The Literary Genre of Genesis Chapter One," 9; idem, *Genesis*, 78; Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 41, 71-74; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 40; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 55-56; Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 109.

[28] Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 1:37; Hasel, "The Days of Creation in Genesis 1," 5-38; William H. Shea, "The Unity of the Creation Account," *Origins* 5 (1978): 9-38; John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 150; David P. Scaer, "The Problem of Inerrancy and Historicity in Connection with Genesis 1-3," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 41 (1977): 21-25; Noel

lead one to interpret the passage as a unit of historical narrative.[29] In recognition of the bifurcation of textual-comparative support for either a poetic or a prosaic categorization, some scholars argue that Gen 1 is neither complete poetry nor complete prose/narrative but a composite (e.g., poetic-prose or prose-genealogy), if not unique, genre.[30]

It becomes apparent from the foregoing overview that determining the genre of Gen 1 based on traditional scholarly approaches (e.g., form criticism) would not be very helpful.[31] I believe that the textlinguistic concept of *text types* may contribute fruitfully to the discussion. The terms 'text type' and 'genre' may not be equated, though the former is close to the general understanding of genre as a heuristic device.[32]

5. Text Typology

Robert E. Longacre offers a perspective for analyzing biblical Hebrew text/discourse types that is more comprehensive than those offered by other biblical Hebrew linguists (e.g., Wolfgang Schneider, Eep Talstra, Alviero Niccacci).[33] He observes that three etic parameters are integral to the delineation of text types: agent orientation, contingent temporal succession, and projection (future orientation).[34] The application of such parameters has

Weeks, "The Hermeneutical Problem of Genesis 1-11," *Themelios* 4 (1978): 17-19; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 10, 37; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, rev. by John Bowden, Old Testament Library (Bloomsbury, London: SCM, 1972), 47-48; Donald E. Gowan, *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11: From Eden to Babel*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 12.

[29]   John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 10.

[30]   E.g., Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 90; Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story*, 171; Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 52; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 10; Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 43-44, 71; Shea, "The Unity of the Creation Account," 17; Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 109.

[31]   So also Ljungberg, "Genre and Form Criticism," 426. See also Edward L. Smith Jr., "Text Type and Discourse Framework," *Text* 5 (1985): 229-247.

[32]   'Text type' (also 'discourse type') is used instead of 'genre' which has traditional form-critical connotations.

[33]   Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammatik des Biblischen Hebräisch* (München: Claudius, 1982); Talstra, "Workshop: Clause Types," 126-127; Niccacci, "Analysis of Biblical Hebrew Narrative," 176-178; idem, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 120-121, 131.

[34]   Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 2d. ed., 9-10; idem, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Provi-*

yielded several matrix text/discourse types, namely narrative (+agent; +succession; +/-projection), procedural (-agent; +succession; +/-projection), behavioural (+agent; -succession; +/-projection), and expository (-agent; -succession; +/-projection). Predictive and hortatory text types are broadly similar to procedural and behavioural text types respectively, though predictive discourse also shares similarities with narrative. Other text types which have not yet been extensively developed are instructional and juridical text types.

The matrix discourse types may further be subdivided, particularly due to the presence or absence of the projection parameter. For example, a narrative text may either be a story/history (-projection) or a prophecy (+projection); procedural may be 'how to do' (+ projection) or 'how it was done' (-projection); behavioural may be hortatory (+projection) or eulogy (-projection); and expository may be proposal (+projection) or explanatory (-projection). It is also to be noted that one or more text types may be embedded in another text type. The matrix text types have distinct features of foregrounding and backgrounding, as well as other features. To highlight the distinguishing features of the matrix text types, Longacre has developed a band structure or salience scheme that is used as a template for determining the relative hierarchy of clauses within a given text type. In narrative, for example, (1) foreground information is signalled emically by *waw*+imperfect clauses, (2) background actions are conveyed by perfect or noun (focus) plus perfect constructions, (3) background activities are presented through participial clauses (*hinnēh* ["see!"] + participle, participle, or noun + participle), and (4) setting is indicated by descriptive constructions (preterite of *hāyâ* ["to be"], perfect of *hāyâ*, verbless clauses, and existential clauses).

In sum, Longacre suggests that the delineation of text types is fundamental to textlinguistic analysis, for without it the structure of a text may not be fully understood. The individual text type determines the use of certain linguistic forms and constructions within it. For this reason, the

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dence, 59, 81, 106-107, 121; idem, "Building for the Worship of God," 21-48; idem, "Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb: Affirmation and Restatement," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 179-189; idem, "Weqatal Forms in Biblical Hebrew Prose: A Discourse-Modular Approach," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 50-95; Longacre and Hwang, "A Textlinguistic Approach," 338. Cf. Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 90-150, 213; DeRouchie, "Text Grammar and Literary Structure," 30-35, 80-86, 94-95; Bodine, "Introduction," 11.

classification of text types takes into account verb forms, tense/aspect, word order, and clause patterns. Some linguists (e.g., Niccacci) would criticize the complexity of Longacre's tagmemic model of text typology, yet this model has contributed immensely to the understanding of 'genre' in biblical Hebrew studies.[35]

6. Gen 1:1-2:3 as a Historical Narrative

When read from the viewpoint of textlinguistics—particularly in light of Longacre's text typological theory—Gen 1 may be interpreted as a historical narrative text type. Several arguments buttress this conclusion.

First, the verb forms in Gen 1 correspond to Longacre's narrative band structure, whereby the main storyline is conveyed by *waw*+imperfect clauses, background actions by perfect or noun (focus) plus perfect constructions and participial clauses, and story setting by stative-descriptive constructions. This narrative band structure is given in the table below.[36]

Table 1.—Biblical Hebrew Narrative Text Type

Band 1: Storyline	1. Preterite: primary
Band 2: Backgrounded Actions	2.1. Perfect 2.2. Noun + perfect: (with noun in focus)
Band 3: Backgrounded Activities	3.1. *hinnēh* + participle 3.2. Participle 3.3. Noun + participle
Band 4: Setting	4.1. Preterite of *hāyâ*, 'be' 4.2. Perfect of *hāyâ*, 'be' 4.3. Nominal clause (verbless) 4.4. Existential clause with *yēš*
Band 5:	5. Negation of verb clause: irrealis (any band)

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[35]   Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 119. Cf. Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 28-39.

[36]   Longacre, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence*, 81.

Second, it is a consensus that in narrative texts the dominant verbal form is *waw*+imperfect, and that this form presents mainline or foreground information. There are about ninety-six clauses in Gen 1, forty-nine (representing 51%) of which are of the *waw*+imperfect type. Out of these forty-nine clauses, ten are quotative frames while the remaining clauses convey divine actions of creation and the narrator's comments in a linear fashion. Further, most of the remaining clause types—the ninety-six clauses represent fourteen clause types —are embedded in *waw*+imperfect clauses, implying that the bulk of the material in Gen 1 stands on the primary storyline. This formal feature of high foregrounding through *waw*+imperfect clauses in a linear (as opposed to a segmented) fashion suggests that the pericope is a narrative.[37] Stated differently, Gen 1 contains a large percentage of *waw*+imperfect verbs because the narrative text type requires such a verbal configuration.[38] This predominance of *waw*+imperfect clauses in 1:1-2:3 has as its corollary a dominant verb-first word order which is itself a distinguishing mark of prose/narrative texts.[39]

Third, in Gen 1, the etic parameters of agent orientation (as well as action orientation) and contingent temporal succession seem to be present, but the projection parameter is lacking. In other words, while the sole actant, God, is found in almost every sentence in Gen 1 and there is clear

[37] See also Alviero Niccacci, "The Biblical Hebrew Verbal System in Poetry," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006), 266; idem, "Analyzing Biblical Hebrew Poetry," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 74 (1997): 77-93; J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: A Practical Guide*, trans. Ineke Smit (Leiden: Deo, 1999), 171.

[38] See Longacre, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence*, 59; Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 213; Robert D. Bergen, *Verb Structural Profiles of the Narrative Framework of the Pentateuch* (N.p., 1984), x.

[39] See also Walter Gross, "Is There Really a Compound Nominal Clause in Biblical Hebrew?" in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches*, ed. Cynthia L. Miller (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 45; Stephen Graham Dempster, "Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative: A Discourse Analysis of Narrative from the Classical Period" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, Canada, 1985), 264, 271; DeRouchie, "Text Grammar and Literary Structure," 42-46; Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOTSup, no. 26 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 49; Terence Collins, *Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry: A Grammatical Approach to the Stylistic Study of the Hebrew Prophets* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978), 77, 202-206; Michael P. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 2d ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 342-355.

progression both temporally and logically in the creation events,[40] there is no future orientation in the passage. This lack of projection is typical of historical narrative or story (i.e., +agent; +succession; -projection). Moreover, if a fourth parameter, namely tension, is added, Gen 1 may possibly be considered as episodic (-tension), as opposed to climactic (+tension), story.[41]

Fourth, the events of Gen 1 seem to be presented in a chrono-sequential order, a feature that is extremely rare in poetry. Apart from the numerical chronology of the passage (i.e., enumeration of days one through seven) and the contingent temporal succession parameter that effects linear progression, the consistent use of *waw*+imperfect verb forms to convey the primary storyline would suggest that the author intends to present a sequential chain of completed events.[42] Generally speaking, *waw*+imperfect clauses "typically represent punctiliar sequential happenings"[43] or express "sequentiality and subject or topic continuity, and thus functions cataphorically and anaphorically at the same time."[44] The idea of sequentiality in Gen 1 seems further suggested by the seemingly redundant reiteration of the grammatical subject, 'God'. Francis I. Andersen has noted that "a seemingly redundant unnecessarily repeated subject noun serves to highlight the distinctiveness of an event, to mark that event as sequential in time more clearly."[45] In relation to Gen 1, he observes that "throughout the narrative the seemingly needless repetition of the unchanged subject (always 'God') marks off the distinct actions, successive in time."[46]

Fifth, as mentioned already, three communicative perspectives are present in Gen 1: quotation (domain one), action report (domain two), and

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[40] Lexical repetition within the text demonstrably reveals logical connection and progression in the linear sequence of the creation days—accounts of subsequent days pick up elements from those of the preceding days.

[41] Longacre and Hwang, "A Textlinguistic Approach," 338.

[42] See Buth, "Functional Grammar," 88; Longacre, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence*, 80-82; Floor, "Information Structure," 308, 318; van der Merwe, "Critical Analysis of Narrative," 143; idem, "Discourse Linguistics," 29-34; DeRouchie, "Text Grammar and Literary Structure," 141.

[43] Longacre, "Building for the Worship of God," 22.

[44] Ellen van Wolde, "Linguistic Motivation and Biblical Exegesis," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 41-42.

[45] Francis I. Andersen, "Salience, Implicature, Ambiguity, and Redundancy in Clause-Clause Relationships in Biblical Hebrew," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 170.

[46] Ibid.

author's comments (domain three). These communicative perspectives seem to be more characteristic of narrative but less of poetry. Similarly, evaluations/interactions such as found in Gen 1:28-29 are rare in poetry.

Finally, though not resulting directly from textlinguistics, the contribution of prose particle counting method in determining prose and poetic texts is worth noting. David Noel Freedman observes that "the prose particle count, overall, is an excellent indicator and discriminator in separating prose from poetry, and also in indicating the possible middle category, especially for the prophetic corpus."[47] F. I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes define "particle frequency" as "the number of consonantal articles, relatives, and *notae accusativi* divided by the number of words in the chapter."[48] Based on this definition, Freedman gives the following prose particle count percentages and the corresponding genre categorization: 5% or less (poetry), 15% or more (prose), 5-10% (probably poetry), and 10-15% (likely poetic).[49] A rough count of these particles indicates that in Gen 1, the direct object marker (*et*) occurs twenty eight times, the relative particle (*asher*) appears twelve times, and the consonantal article (*ha*), seventy-four times. Together, these particles make up 114 of the 468 words in the pericope, representing 24.4%. According to the prose particle counting method, therefore, Gen 1 is a prose/narrative text.[50]

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[47] David Noel Freedman, "Another Look at Hebrew Poetry," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis, JSOTSup, no. 40 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 16. See also idem, " Pottery, Poetry, and Prophesy: An Essay on Biblical Poetry," *Jouranal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977): 5-26.

[48] Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, "Prose Particle Counts of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Festschrift for David Noel Freedman*, ed. Carol L. Meyes and Michael P. O'Connor (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 170 (italics theirs).

[49] Freedman, "Another Look at Hebrew Poetry," 17.

[50] It has also been noticed that the *waw*-conjunction does not frequently occur in poetry as it does in prose (see James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981], 87-94; V. Philips Long, "Reading the Old Testament As Literature," in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis*, ed. Craig C. Broyles [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001], 114; Ernst R. Wendland, "The Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry: A Procedural Outline," in *Discourse Perspectives on Hebrew Poetry in the Scriptures*, ed. Ernst R. Wendland, United Bible Societies Monograph Series, no. 7 (Reading, UK: United Bible Societies, 1994, 4). In Gen 1:1-2:3, however, the conjunction occurs about 110 times and appears at least two times in every verse (except vv.1,17 where it occurs once each). Such a recurrence of the conjunction is in agreement with its use in narrative texts.

When the above linguistic features in Gen 1 are added to the traditional arguments raised by other scholars (e.g., the placement and function of Gen 1; its dissimilarity with other poetic texts in OT; its less complete symmetry; lack of metrical balance; and the presence of character and characterization, point of view, and a narrator, a series of events that take place over a period of time, beginning and end of activity, and plot structure), we may soundly interpret the passage as a historical narrative text type. It should quickly be added, however, that Gen 1 is not readily comparable to other historical narrative passages in the OT, particularly because of the nature of its subject matter. Gen 1 records the very beginning of life on earth; hence this text should not be expected to have the same narratological features as, for example, in the accounts of 1 and 2 Kings which record the lives and deeds of human kings. Yet, the linguistic features noted above strongly suggest that the passage be read as a narrative rather than poetry. Note the following from G. F. Hasel: "Does this mean, however, that it [Gen 1] is *sui generis* in the sense that it should not be understood to be literal in its intention? Surely as creation itself is unique so the creation account is of necessity unique. But it is hardly *sui generis* in an exclusive literary sense which will remove it from communication on a factual, accurate and historical level."[51]

If Gen 1 is to be considered as a narrative, how do we account for the seemingly poetic features in the text (i.e., numerical/heptadic structuring, repetitions, formulaic expressions, poetic/archaic expressions, parallelisms, alliteration, inclusio, and symmetry)? First, it is to be noted that there is no sustained numeric structuring in the text as one would expect in parallel cola in poetic texts.[52] While Gen 1 is formulaic in that uniform phrases recur in paragraphs two through seven (1:3-31), it is to be recalled that the text recounts events that took place in a space of seven days. Consequently, it

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[51]   Hasel, "The Days of Creation in Genesis 1," 20. Hasel adds, "The creation account of Genesis 1 is a historical prose-record, written in rhythmic style, recording factually and accurately what took place in the creation of the heavens and the earth, depicting the time when it took place, describing the processes of how it was done and identifying the divine Being who brought it forth. . . . This historical prose-record of creation reports correctly in specific sequences the creation events within chronological, sequential, and literal days"(ibid., 20-21).

[52]   Although Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 133, thinks that a heptadic structuring is a concern for the MT, the list of all the verses in Gen 1:1-2:3 and their word counts (totaling 469 7x67) shows that apart from 1:1-2,24,30,2:2 (as well as the heptadic wording of clauses 2:2a,2b,3a), there are no multiples of sevens in the remaining verses.

would be anticipated that the formulas (which enclose each day's activity) would naturally recur just as the days are themselves recurrent. In fact, apart from the phrase "and God saw," no other formula in Gen 1 recurs exactly seven times. Thus, the author might not particularly be interested in a heptadic understanding of Gen 1, except that the creation week itself comprises seven days. Second, rhetorical features such as chiasms/parallelisms, assonance, inclusio as well as repetitions are not solely poetic features, but often occur in prose texts.[53] Jerome T. Walsh has noted that "repetition is the most common formal device for organizing a literary unit in biblical Hebrew prose."[54] He further remarks that "at particularly significant junctures, however, Hebrew narrative prose may take on more properly prosodic characteristics such as balance, parallelism, rhythm, and sound patterning. Phonemic repetition, then, does occur in prose, but as an organizing device it is relatively rare."[55] Third, the presence of symmetry in a text does not discount its historicity, nor does this demand a poetic interpretation—the historical books contain symmetric structures (e.g., 1 Kgs 11:1-8; 11:31-39; 2 Chron 25:1-28). Again, Walsh has shown that symmetry is a more common feature in Hebrew narrative, be it reverse symmetry (e.g., Gen 2:4b-3:24; 2 Chron 25:1-28), forward symmetry (e.g., Gen 1:1-2:3; 2:18-25; 1 Kgs 11:1-8; 11:31-39) or partial symmetry (e.g., the formulaic paragraph structure within Gen 1:3-31).[56] In Gen 1 it seems that only v. 27 stands out clearly as poetry; it is possible that the poetic structure of v. 27 serves to highlight the climax of the creative acts. In sum, the seemingly poetic features in Gen 1, while not necessarily sufficient indicator of text type/genre, may possibly point to the antiquity of the narrative as well as the significance of the subject matter. In relation to the latter point, Cassuto puts it this way: "It is simple to suppose . . . the special importance of the subject led to an exaltation of style approaching the level of poetry."[57] If correct, this would account for the archaic, semi-poetic terms and the carefulness with which the author constructs this narrative that sets the remainder of the biblical record on its proper footing.

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[53]   For the rhetorical features in the Bible, see E[thelbert] W[illiam] Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968).

[54]   Walsh, *Style and Structure*, 7. See also Cassuto, *Commentary*, 16, 55-57.

[55]   Walsh, *Style and Structure*, 8.

[56]   Ibid., 8-11, 20-22, 39, 41, 74.

[57]   Cassuto, *Commentary*, 11.

7. Concluding Remarks

The categorization of Gen 1 as a historical narrative accords well with the straightforward, linear structure of the passage. Such a structure is both explicitly and formally marked and thus has priority over the symmetric arrangement of the creation elements. It has been argued that the forward symmetric structure in Gen 1 witnesses to the planned execution of God's creation and that the presence of chrono-sequentiality and logical progression in the passage somewhat disrupts the symmetry, so that it is not to be interpreted merely as an artistic presentation, but rather the sequenced narration of creation as it probably occurred. In addition to other linguistic features (e.g., clause types, grounding, lexical repetition, narrative setting features), the linear structure of Gen 1 may underscore the possibility that 1:1-2 provide what we may call *antecedent information* (i.e., a self-contained account of an initial creation activity) upon which the remainder of the narrative (1:3-2:3) is based. Verse 2 further shows that the earth is as yet not readied for the flourishing of life, and vv. 3-31 are concerned with the preparation of the earth—which is itself creation—for human existence. The creation in vv. 3-31 takes shape in two phases: in phase one (days one-three) God prepares regions and in phase two (days four-six) creates elements to populate these regions. Gen 2:1-3 both summarizes the creative acts of days one-six and indicates that God rested on day seven, following his activities throughout days one-six. In this way, 2:1-3 reinforces a chronological understanding of 1:1-2:3. The divine activities in days four-six are not repetitions of those in days one-three; hence the symmetry may reside in the divine design as opposed to literary imagination.

To conclude, the formal features of Gen 1 seem to indicate that the author intends to recount the creation of the heavens and the earth not just for the sake of narration, but to provide the basis for understanding the relationship between God and humanity in the rest of the book and beyond. This makes the placement of Gen 1 at the beginning of the Bible both chronologically and logically appropriate. To read Gen 1 as a non-historical account, therefore, would mean to ignore the explicit linguistic and pragmatic features that point to the contrary.