Presentation of doctoral project and paper

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of the research is to analyse the book of Numbers using concepts established by narrative theory, primarily plot. The purpose can be divided into three:

1) to supplement research on Numbers, especially its structure, which has seen very little narratological research;
2) to heed new developments in narrative theory hitherto not noticed in any large measure by scholars of biblical narrative criticism and apply them to the book of Numbers; and
3) to see what this type of analysis contributes to the understanding of narratology at large.

The research-question will be: What can a narrative analysis of plot in the book of Numbers contribute to understand its peculiar structure?

Summary

The research is prompted by a lacuna in the research on Num, which has not seen narrative analyses to any great extent. Instead, the pre-history of the text (Gray, Noth, Levine), or the establishment of macrostructures in it by other means than narrative (de Vaulx, Wenham, Olson, Dougles, Lee) have caught the attention of scholars. By applying narrative theory we would be able to broaden the discussion on the book. Furthermore, narratology has seen new, and for Biblical Studies unattempted developments concerning plot, which we believe can benefit our analysis. However, our approach would not intend to bypass the unique features of Num as an ancient text with a long pre-history, but rather takes such facts as starting points for the analysis. In regard of this, it is important, on the one hand, to see that narratology is not bound to analyse only proper *narratives* (Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, 2005: 344-348) but also, on the other hand, that most biblical scholars understand Num to be some sort of narrative (cf. Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 2005). In all this, we need to define what kind of text Num is and how narrative theory applies. Through this procedure, we aim to fill the observed lacuna in the research on Num as well as address the peculiar structure of the book.

What follows in the paper is the inception of the research. We have begun with OT narratologist Shimon Bar-Efrat and applied what he says about plot on the book of Numbers (and there are still things left to be done here). What lies ahead is to broaden the discussion, first concerning other OT narratologists view on plot (Berlin, Fokkelman, Gunn and Fewell, Licht, and Sternberg), second, concerning post-structural developments in general narratology (P. Brooks, P. Ricoeur, J. Phelan, and M-L Ryan), and third, concerning research on the book in biblical studies, the last being pursued at least to some extent in the paper.

Our findings so far have resulted in structuring Num into seven different acts (1:1-10:10; 10:11-12:16; 13:1-14:45; 15:1-19:22; 20:1-22:1; 22:2-24:25; 25:1-36:13). Moreover, Bar-Efrat lists several different techniques for relating these, and we have found that the acts seem to be relate in terms of cause and effect; loose chronology; keywords; and beginning a new act with the same subject/word as the previous. Again, those findings do not exhaust the understanding of plot of Bar-Efrat, but more analysis awaits.

Working Outline – A Narrative Analysis of Num

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3. Analysis
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        - 3.1.1. Defining the Acts of Num
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4. Conclusion
    - 4.1. The Problem of the book of Numbers Revisited
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5. Summary

6. Bibliography