Preface

What follows is in many respects an attempt to predict what I will do in my research. There are a lot of issues that are not taken up here, at least not in details, for instance the relationship to earlier research and what has been perceived to be the problem in the text of Num. Such things are rather presupposed.

What I am most interested in discussing are the feasibility of the project, if what I have done here is a possible project, so to speak. What in the attempted correlation of theory, method, material and problems holds, and what does not hold? It could also be interesting to discuss the presentation, is it clear, understandable etc? Do I make a fair representation of the different theoreticians? What dead angles have I not observed?

Looking forward to a stimulating discussion!

/Josef Forsling

Working Outline – A Narrative Analysis of the book of Num

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2. Theoretical Considerations

Given the situation for the research on Num sketched above in chapter 1, this chapter aims to address theory and method. As the research-question is formulated this are paramount for the thesis, since it is here that the tools needed to move the research forward is found. Some broader hermeneutical and theological issues affecting the study will also be treated.

2.1 Narrative Theory - A Short Orientation

Narrative theory encompasses a large field and has, in its broadest definition, permeated the humanities in most areas.[1] By way of introduction a distinction can be made between 'narrative theory' and 'narratology,' so far used almost interchangeably in this thesis, where 'narrative theory' stands for theories of narrative at large, while 'narratology' stands for theories with roots in structuralism. Such a distinction is argued by the history of the term narratology.

In 1966 a special issue of the French journal *Communications* was released that wanted to depict a new way to study narratives in the wake of the linguistic research of Ferdinand de Saussure and its more all-encompassing cousin structuralism.[2] Tzvetan Todorov later termed this study 'narratology.'[3] Apart from Todorov, the issue featured what became prominent scholars in the field like Claude Bremond and Roland Barthes. The aim of the research was to isolate and characterise the "model underlying people's intuitive knowledge of stories,"[4] i.e. to analyse narrative as such, instead of only different narratives, describe the 'grammar' of stories rather than interpret them, and pursue "narrative poetics, not narrative criticism."[5] Apart from Saussure's linguistics, Russian formalism was also an important source of inspiration.[6] The theory aimed at a detached, pure description of narrative as such, eschewing criticism.

However, narratology is not the only research interested in narratives. Theories and concepts developed in research on fiction, novels, short stories, drama etc. from the 19th century onwards, have heavily influenced research aimed at narrative as such. In this vein belongs scholars like E. M. Forster, Northrop Frye, and Wayne C. Booth,[7] who all have made substantial contributions to the understanding of narrative, and also influenced narratology, even though they never defined themselves as narratologists or structuralists. There is, thus, a broader discussion on the ontology and workings of narrative than narratology, and therefore, it makes sense to make a distinction between narrative theory at large and narratology.

To this can also be added that narratology is not fossilised in structuralism. On the contrary, as narratologist Gerald Prince says: what was "a relatively unified discipline with a fairly restricted interest in narrative *qua* narrative (text type rather than context, grammar rather

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1. Martin Kreiswirth, "Narrative Turn in the Humanities," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005): 377-82..
2. Lars-Åke Skalin, "Narratologi - Studiet Av Berättandets Principer," in Staffan Bergsten (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2002), 174-76..
3. David Herman, "Structuralist Narratology," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005): 571-76., see Tzvetan Todorov, *Grammaire Du 'Décameron'* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969)..
4. David Herman, "Structuralist Narratology," 572..
5. David Herman, "Structuralist Narratology," 575..
6. Most prominent is Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale,* trans. Laurence Scott, rev., Louis A. Wagner ed. (Tex., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969).. Cf. David Herman, "Structuralist Narratology," 572..
7. E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Arnold, 1927); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (N.J., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).; and Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961)..

than rhetoric, form rather than force) diversified and developed more expansive (contextually engaged, interpretively oriented, methodologically varied) interests."[8] There was no pure model that could be reached without interpretation, and, concludes narratologist David Herman: "scholarship along these lines draws [nowadays] a fuzzy rather than binarised distinction between narrative poetics and narrative criticism, using but not limiting itself to the tools of structuralist narratology."[9] In short, when approaching narrative theory we have a diversity of perspectives and schools, even though narratology is a quite dominating voice.

Moving to biblical scholarship, narrative theory made an increasing impact during the 1970's onwards, even though there were important precursors like Herman Gunkel and Erich Auerbach.[10] Apart from developments in biblical research, different concepts and theories from the whole of narrative theory have been used, but the more important influences have come from narratology and new criticism.[11] However, biblical scholars are generally more interested in method and interpretation than theorising about narrative in general. Narrative *criticism* rather than narrative *theory* became the catch-word. Nevertheless, because of the influence from secular narrative theory, biblical narrative scholarship is perhaps best described as a subsection to narrative theory at large save for the material.

With this short presentation a preliminary question arises as to the applicability of narrative theory to Num. In my view, there are two important reasons for the usefulness of narrative, both grounded in the character of Num.

First, a cursory reading of Num reveals that despite the highly varying material, the different forms, sources, traditions, etc., are all set in a narrative frame, interspersed and introduced with narrative statements, with a geographical and chronological movement depicted. Even the laws are narrated to be spoken by Yahweh at a certain occasion. Thus, however minimal, Num has narrative patches and threads spread out in all its parts. This does not necessarily say anything about the coherence of Num. The question remains if there is some larger plan to the cloth that we could call plot and what this would look like. However, in approaching Num, we seem to be dealing with an object possibly sorting under the interest of narrative theory, from which insights can be gained in understanding the book and its problems.[12]

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8. Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology*, Rev Ed ed. (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 66..

9. David Herman, "Structuralist Narratology," 575..

10. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Israelitische Literatur* (Darmstadt: 1925).; Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History* (N.Y., New York: Schocken Books, 1964).; Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, 3e ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910).; Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature,* trans. Willard R. Trask, Princeton Paperbacks (N.J., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974)., cf. Anja Cornils, "Theology and Narrative," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005): 599-600..

11. Cf. John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament. Method in Biblical Study*, 2nd ed. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd, 1996), 104-236.; David M Gunn, "Narrative Criticism," in Steven L. McKenzie, and Stephen R. Haynes (Ky., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 201-02.; David M Gunn, "Narrative Criticism," 201-02.; *Beyond Form Criticism. Essays in Old Testament Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study (Ind., Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 3-22.; and Mark Allan Powell, *The Bible and Modern Literary Criticism. A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography* (N.Y., New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 5-15., who all treat the broader field of structuralism, and also see 'rhetorical criticism' and 'reader-response criticism' as important influences in biblical narrative studies. Cf. also Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Mich., Grand Rapids: Intervarsity Press, 1987), 27-35.. For examples, see Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible,* trans. Dorothea Shefer-Vanson (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989; reprint 2nd), 10-11.; Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 13-21.; David M Gunn, and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 208-10..

12. So far we have refrained from defining 'narrative'. This is so, since rather than burdening ourselves with the discussion of the essence of narrative, it is more important at the outset of our research to define plot. For

The second reason is that this observation has been confirmed by the research of biblical scholars, even those who view the coherence of Num negatively, like Gray and Noth.[13] For example, Noth (and after him the majority of scholars) have viewed the major source for Num, P, as essentially historiographic,[14] i.e. as having a narrative base. Noth can also say that Num "Seen as a whole... is a piece of narrative..."[15] The question again, seems not to be so much if Num is narrative or not, but if the narrative coherence hold or brake. Thus, seeing Num as having a narrative characteristic also remains valid for scholars who see an overall plan to Num holding it together, like de Vaulx, Wenham, Olson, Milgrom and Lee, who do so in terms not strange to narrative or narrative theory. We can especially note that recent form-criticism understands the book to be a *Saga*,[16] a designation that clearly belongs to the narrative field. In sum, a cursory reading of Num, which is substantiated by most research on the book, argues the applicability of narrative theory to Num.

With this short presentation of narrative theory we will now focus more specifically on one aspect of it, plot, and what resources the discussions surrounding it are brought into the analysis.[17] Thus, the analysis will make use of narrative theory, more precisely the discussion concerning plot, using but not limiting itself to narratology, in trying to understand the peculiar structure of Num.

2.2. The Concept of Plot

During the last 100 years or so, plot has been extensively discussed and is therefore not singularly understood in narrative theory. In what follows, an attempt at a description of the discussion and the different contributions to it is made, focusing what is put to use in the analysis and the initial reasons for this.[18] At the outset, we can note the ordinary meaning of plot as a plan thought out by someone, as the development of events in a story, or a measured area of land. The question here becomes in what respect such concepts like 'plan,' 'development of things,' or a certain 'measured area of land,' refined by academic discussion, can help in analysing and understanding Num and its structure better.

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definitions of narrative, of which none challenges our grasp of the field, see Chris Baldick, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2nd ed ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 165-66.; Gerald Prince, *Dictionary*, 58-61.; and Marie-Laure Ryan, "Narrative," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005): 344-48..

13. George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1903).; Martin Noth, *Numbers, a Commentary,* trans. James D. Martin (London: SCM Press, 1968)..

14. J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* trans. John Bowden, 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1989; reprint 4th), 157., cf. Otto Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in Das Alte Testaments*, 3, neubearbeitete ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1964), 272, 274-75.. From another perspective, see James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Penn., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 4.; and more recently Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament,* trans. John Bowden (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 2005), 244-46..

15. Martin Noth, *Numbers*, 1..

16. Rolf P. Knierim, and George W. Coats, *Numbers*, vol. IV, The Forms of the Old Testament (Mich., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005)..

17. See Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 11-12.; Seymour Chatman, *Reading Narrative Fiction* (N.Y., New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 20.; *Oxford Dictionary of English*), 1353; cf. Chris Baldick, *Literary Terms*, 128..

18. Narrative theory has come up with a wealth of concepts to describe what narrative are, and in the ensuing analysis we will make use of other concepts than plot. However, it would be impossible for the purposes of this thesis to introduce narrative theory in any detail. When needed, concepts will be explained in footnotes using primarily Chris Baldick, *Literary Terms*.; *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (N.Y., New York: Routledge, 2005).; and Gerald Prince, *Dictionary*., when a specialised use is not at issue.

2.2.1. The Story-Discourse Distinction

A basic presupposition for the concept of plot in narrative theory is the story-discourse distinction. The distinction is easily explained looking at the simple statement that 'a narrative tells a story.' In this statement, story is something that we 'get' through listening to a narrative, and something that the teller wants to 'provide' through his telling. Detailing this a bit from the listeners side, it becomes more precise to say that story is the abstract entity that the listener constructs upon hearing the narrative. This is story in the distinction, rudimentary defined. Discourse, on the other hand, signifies the actual telling, the narrative or the form the story takes in the act of telling. An important part of the distinction is that in story all events are envisioned in chronological order, while in discourse, the story-teller may rearrange these events and for effect insert some as flashbacks e.g. Apart from temporal relations, logical ones of comparability and causality also pertains to the events of story,[19] and can presumably be overturned by discourse. The terms story and discourse can be traced to Seymour Chatman,[20] but are fairly equivalent to the Russian terms *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, which are also very much used in the discussion.[21]

If this is a basic distinction in narrative, a framework for understanding plot becomes visible: "we can generally understand plot to be an aspect of *sjuzhet* in that it belongs to the narrative discourse, as its active shaping force, but that it makes sense... as it is used to reflect on *fabula*, as our understanding of story."[22] Thus, the scene is set for the discussion of plot in narrative theory, to which we turn now. The discussion can be divided in two parts, historically and conceptually: one earlier, focusing the structure of plot, the other later, focusing the dynamic operation inherent in the schemes of plot.

2.2.2. Plot as Structure

The first one to talk about plot was Aristotle in his *Poetics*, in conjunction with tragedy. He saw plot as "the conversion of the bare bones of story into a tightly structured aesthetic unit with a beginning, middle and end."[23] Looking at the discussion on plot from the late 19th century well into the 20th, scholars rather took hold of what Aristotle's simple structure of "beginning, middle, and end," defining those in more detail, than exploring the dynamic inherent in the conversion of the bare bones. A good example is Gustav Freytag's diagram for the typical dramatic tragedy, which many have used and modified to explain and understand the movement in narrative. In the form of a pyramid it included the stages: Inciting moment, Exposition, Complication, Climax, Reversal, Catastrophe, and Moment of Last Suspense, all stages depicting a rising and falling action.[24] Some sort of conflict is often understood to drive

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19. Steven Cohan, and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), 58.; *pace* E. M. Forster, *Aspects*, 93.. See the discussion of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction - Contemporary Poetics* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2002), 17-18..

20. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978).

21. See Dan Shen, "Story-Dicsourse Distinction," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005): 566-68.. Everyone would not agree on story equalling fabula and discourse sjuzhet, see the discussions in Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Steven Cohan, and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories*, 1-3; Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 1-5.. However, for our purposes, it is enough with this rather simple definition of the story-discourse distinction being roughly equivalent to fabula and sjuzhet.

22. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 13..

23. Hillary P. Dannenberg, "Plot," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005), 436..

24. Gerald Prince, *Dictionary*, 36., see Gustav Freytag, *Technique of the Drama* (Chicago: Scott, 1894).. Cf. Claes-Göran Holmberg, and Anders Ohlsson, *Epikanalys - En Introduktion* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1999),

the action forward. This understanding of plot is the most common one among biblical narrative critics.[25] Other influential structures include Vladimir Propp's analysis of the story-functions of Russian folktales,[26] Algirdas J. Greimas' actantial model building on oppositional roles in the story,[27] Gérard Genette's understanding of order and anachrony between story-time and discourse-time in narratives,[28] and Claude Bremond's understanding of plot as a network of possibilities.[29] The structures were used to outline and get a holistic grasp of the movement in narratives.

However, the 1980's saw increasing criticism against these models.[30] Thus, critic Peter Brooks complained about "the failure to engage the movement and dynamic of narrative,"[31] and philosopher Paul Ricoeur contended that "L'intrigue est un mouvement; les rôles sont des postes, des positions tenues au cours de l'action. Connaître tous les postes susceptibles d'être tenus - connaître tous les rôles - , *ce n'est encore connaître aucune intrigue*."[32] Good as they were in mapping the stories, the theories seemed to mistake the forest for the trees.

Plot-structures do not seem to address the problem of Num either. Freytag's pyramid and Propp's story-functions clearly cannot capture the complex structure of Num, and the very

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9-30. an introduction to the subject, presenting but not limiting itself to such a structure.

25. See e.g. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 111-32.; Adele Berlin, *Poetics*, 101ff..; Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide,* trans. Ineke Smit (Leiderdorp: Deo Publishing, 1999), 76-77.; Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches*, 92-94.; David M Gunn, and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative*, 102-04.; Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1978), 122.; Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism* (Minn., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 35-50.; and Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative. Ideological Narrative and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985), 172-75.. Sternberg talks about "patterns of conflict" (173), possibly hinting at a genre-theory of plot, cf. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*.. The influence of genre on plot will be treated below in conjunction with the section on Paul Ricoeur, as well as under the section on broader hermeneutical issues.

26. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology*.. Cf. Pamela J. Milne, *Vladimir Propp and the Study of Structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988)..

27. Algirdas J. Greimas, *Sémantique Structurale: Recherche De Méthode* (Paris: Larousse, 1966).. Greimas' model is in many respects a more abstract variant of Propp, as is also Claude Bremond's important model of plot as a 'network of possibilities' (Claude Bremond, *Logique Du Récit* (1973: Èdition du Seuil, 1973).), Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 2. La Configuration Dans Le Récit De Fiction*, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984), 78-114..

28. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method,* trans. Jane E. Lewin (N.Y., Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).. Cf. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 141-84.; and Jacob Licht, *Storytelling*, 96-120..

29. Claude Bremond, *Logique Du Récit*.. Bremond's model is also in certain respects a more abstract variant of Propp, Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récti 2*, 78-114.. His model has been radically extended in light of possible worlds theory and artificial intelligence by Marie-Laure Ryan, Hillary P. Dannenberg, "Plot," 438., see Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Ind., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991)., who, nevertheless, rest content with the structural aspects of plot.

30. Hillary P. Dannenberg, "Plot," 436.. A reaction that is not taken up here is the feminist one, who has criticised "the (stereotypical) allocation and limitation of roles in narrative fiction due to a protagonist's gender" and the "gender discrimination" inherent in this, Hillary P. Dannenberg, "Plot," 437., cf. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).; Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daugther Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).; and Nancy K. Miller, *The Heroine's Text: Readings in the French and English Novel, 1722-1782* (N.Y., New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).. These kind of studies are very important, but none have so far investigated plot as a dynamic configuration, which will be the interest of this thesis, and are therefore left out.

31. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 20..

32. Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récti 2*, 86..

vague and sparse use of time in Num would be an obstacle for Genette's analysis.[33] Possibly Greimas' and Bremond's structures could be used. But the problem in understanding Num is not so much to designate parts as to understand how they are drawn together, and the dynamic operative in this. Therefore, we will turn to Brooks and Ricoeur to see how they understand plot and what we could bring from them into the analysis.

2.2.3. Plot as the Dynamic Operation of Narrative

Perhaps the most comprehensive attempt at describing plot as such comes in Paul Ricoeur's three-volume work *Temps et Récit*, where the concept is analysed philosophically.[34] The main goal for Ricoeur in this work, however, is not to address narrative theory and solve problems therein, but to address the philosophical problem of time. Nevertheless, he does this by looking at how time is narratively represented in works of historiography and fiction. And that representation, he contends, is a creative imagination put into play by plot, wherefore he needs to define it. An initial observation is that plot is, then, something held in common by historiography and fiction. This does not mean that there are no differences between historiography and fiction, only that they have a common denominator in plot.[35] Thus, plot would initially be applicable to Num according to Ricoeur, however we view the book. In what follows, we will outline in short how Ricoeur understands plot, what it is and what it implies, whereupon our use of the concept is summarised.

Ricoeur[36] divides his analysis of plot into three parts, called Mimesis I, Mimesis II, and Mimesis III, where the second represents plot proper. Mimesis I stands for the raw-material out of which narratives are constructed, or in Ricoeur's term, concepts of action, their symbolic mediation, temporal structures, and a practical understanding of these.[37] This is what most narrative theorists have been trying to identify and define in delineating plot. Mimesis III stands for the act of reading, where the the story is actualised, and questions pertaining to genre, gaps, referentiality, and the effect of narrative reside. Between these stand Mimesis II in a *mediating* function, vouching for its dynamic character. Mimesis II designates plot as a dynamic *configurating* operation, drawing I and III together. It is here the conversion of the bare bones, in Aristotle's terms, happen. Thus, Ricoeur speaks of plot as emplotment, i.e. as verb rather than noun. In the following summary of Mimesis II, we shall first look at what this mediation involves, and then turn to how it comes about.

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33. Cf. Dennis T. Olson, *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New: The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch* (Cal, Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 33-34.; Gordon Wenham, *Numbers* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 15-16..

34. Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 1. L'intrigue Et Le Recit Historique*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983).; Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récti 2.*; and Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 3. Le Temps Raconté*, vol. 3 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1985)..

35. Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récti 2*, 12, 292-96.; and Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 3*, 228., cf. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 86-115.. Cf. also theorists of historiography Louis O Mink, "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding," *History and Theory* 5 (1965): 24-47.; Louis O Mink, "Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument," in Robert H Canary, and Henry Kozicki (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).; and Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Va., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973)., on the necessary narrative character of historiography, centring on plot. For the distinction of fiction, see Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Va., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999)..

36. For this presentation of plot in Ricoeur, see Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 1*, 105-62..

37. Ricoeur compares this to what Wolfgand Iser has called "repertoire," Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 1*, 125., see Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt Des Lesens. Theorie Aesthetischer Wirkung* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1976)., chap. 3.

Plot involves a mediation in three ways according to Ricoeur. First of all, plot means a mediation between single individual events in a series and the story taken as a whole. Mere succession is configured into story. This dimension of plot is what lies in the background when story is transformed into discourse in the story-discourse distinction, even though Ricoeur uses the words events and story rather than story and discourse.[38] Second, plot is a mediation between the heterogeneous factors of a narrative like agents, aims, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results, etc.[39] Third, plot is a mediation between the temporal aspects of a narrative, its chronological and non-chronological features, meaning its discrete episodes and the unity of them as one temporal whole.

If this is what is plot involves in mediating things in narrative, how does it come about? Ricoeur starts from the fundamental fact that when a 'narrative tells a story' it does so in retrospect, as if what is told *has* happened, which makes it possible to follow.[40] This retrospective glance takes its stand somewhere, a somewhere that Ricoeur calls 'conclusion.' All the individual events together with the bits and pieces of narrative, are told in regard of a final end-point, towards which the story moves, and in light of which it is told, even its beginning.[41] Thus, while hearing the story, one can always ask: what happened next? and event after event is retold, but not (entirely) arbitrarily. Part of this is that the story allows itself to be translated into a 'thought,' its point or theme. Those terms, however, Ricoeur is quick to point out, are not to be understood apart from the time of the narrative. It is here then, finally, that we arrive at the tools to be used in analysing the peculiar structure of Num: to ask about its conclusion and the theme(s) related to it.

Ricoeur adds to his discussion of plot two important features that affects the joining of Mimesis II and III: schematisation and traditionality.[42] Schematisation stands for the meeting of the theme(s) of the narrative with the narrative particulars of action etc. that make up the denouement. This meeting is *schematised* somehow, and often in a typical way, producing genres like comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony/satire.[43] Genres, moreover, are products of a tradition, where forces of sedimentation and innovation operates, which then is what *traditionality* stands for. All in all, genres in their tradition governs the story's capacity of being followed by guiding the reader. This means for our purposes, that we need to heed to the genre of Num and what it could mean for plot. In short, two general insights about the genre of Num seem to be of importance: 1) Num is (part of the) *Torah*, meaning teaching, instruction. Thus, the material in Num, with all its sub-genres of laws, poems, speeches, religious history etc. have been taken to instruct somehow.[44] 2) Knierim and Coats designate Num as a *Saga of a Migratory Campaign*. As *Saga* Num can be expected to show "an episodic structure developed around stereotyped themes or objects... The episodes narrate deeds or virtues from the past insofar as they contribute to the composition of the present narrator's world."[45] As a

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38. For the equivalence of Ricoeur's events/story and story/discourse, see Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 13-14.
39. Cf. Steven Cohan, and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories*, 9-72., on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic features involved in narrative.
40. Ricoeur here makes use of W. B. Gallie's concept of 'followability,' Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 1*, 66 n. 17., see Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (N.Y., New York: Schocken Books, 1964)..
41. Ricoeur here refers to Frank Kermod, *The Sense of an Ending. Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966)., Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 1*, 131..
42. Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 1*, 131-135, 144-146..
43. The genre-designations come from Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 158-239., whom Ricoeur refers to here.
44. Gordon Wenham, *Numbers*, 26-29.; *contra* Rolf P. Knierim, and George W. Coats, *Numbers*, 18..
45. Rolf P. Knierim, and George W. Coats, *Numbers*, 358..

migratory campaign more specifically, a twofold structure of preparation and execution is to be assumed.[46] Thus, these insights into the genre of Num will be brought to bear on the analysis.

2.2.4. Additional Aspects of Plot

Despite the comprehensiveness of Ricoeur, there are still some components important for plot and the analysis envisioned that have been addressed by other theorists, and which we wish to bring into the analysis, to complement the picture and deepen our understanding of some concepts. To these we now move.

First, James Phelan has helpfully made a distinction when discussing ends between closure and completeness, that will be taken into the analysis. Phelan defines these as follows:

> "Closure, as I use the term, refers to the way in which a narrative signals its end, whereas completeness refers to the degree of resolution accompanying the closure. Closure need not be tied to the resolution of instabilities and tensions but completeness always is. For example, in a narrative entitled 'Diary of Disastrous December," which has 31 chapters, each of which is headed by the date and which follow each other in chronological order, the very inscription of 31 December at the head of the last chapter will be a strong signal of closure. Whether the narrative will have completeness will depend on how the instabilities and tensions are worked out in that (and of course previous) chapters.[47]

This distinction, I believe, will help us sort things out when looking at the end of Num, which is not a self-evident one.

Second, there is no end without a beginning, and how story might move from beginning to end, must also be addressed. Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires have in their introductory book on narrative theory, outlined this relationship succinctly:

> "...what initiates a story is the *placement* of an event in a sequence to mark a beginning; what ends a story is the *replacement* of the initial event by another one to mark an ending. ...however, what keeps the story going as a sequence of eventualities are *displacements* of both the initial and the closing events."[48]

Through this movement the story is directed "towards a particular goal,"[49] which is here understood in terms of Ricoeur's conclusion. Thus, the end is where we start looking to understand plot in Num, however, the end itself is a replacement of the beginning event, a relationship being fundamental for understanding the end to start with.[50] Moreover, this understanding of a story's movement builds on Tzvetan Todorov's depiction of narrative transformations, and it should be noted with him that "narrative is constituted in the tension

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46. Rolf P. Knierim, and George W. Coats, *Numbers*, 22-23..
47. James Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots. Character, Progression, and the Interpretation of Narrative* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 17-18..
48. Steven Cohan, and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories*, 65-66..
49. Steven Cohan, and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories*, 124.; cf. Roland Barthes, *S/Z,* trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 76..
50. See also James Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*, 111-12..

of... difference and resemblance..."[51] meaning that the beginning and end can be supposed to be similar but not identical.

Third, in light of the many understandings of 'theme' it is appropriate to outline the stance taken here. To not be idiosyncratic, the following typical definition will be adhered:

> "theme, a salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work's treatment of its subject-matter... While the subject of a work is described concretely in terms of its action... its theme or themes will be described in more abstract terms..."[52]

Thus, theme is not the same as a one-sentence summary of the action in a narrative.[53] However, it should be emphasised again that with Ricoeur's understanding of plot, theme cannot be divorced from the time of a narrative, with which it always interacts and by which it is affected.[54] On the other hand, a distinction will be made between theme and 'point' and 'motif.' The first differentiation is not made by Ricoeur, but does not contradict his argument. Point is taken to refer to the reason for the story being told (its *raîson d'être*), to be found (hopefully) in the story itself, while theme is to be connected to ideas referring outside the textual world.[55] As for motif, it is taken to mean "a situation, incident, idea, image, or character-type... or any element of a work that is elaborated into a more general theme."[56] Motifs thus work to develop and inform a text's major themes. Those three terms, theme, motif, and point, as defined above, are helpful, I believe, in utilising Ricoeur's understanding of plot on Num.

Moreover, Phelan has made another helpful distinction between the thematic, mimetic, and synthetic aspects of narrative, the last two signifying the imitating and constructive aspects of narrative. All narratives are built from those aspects, "and the mimetic and thematic components may be more or less developed, whereas the synthetic component, though always present, may be more or less foregrounded."[57] This puts some restrictions on thematising narratives in that the mimetic and synthetic components need to be taken account of as well, and this also includes plot, or progression, as Phelan calls it.[58] Themes are thus circumscribed by these other aspects, and different narratives treats the thematic component in different ways.

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51. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose,* trans. Richard Howard (N.Y., Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 233.. Ricoeur cites Todorov's treatment with approval, Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récti 2*, 85, 93-94.. Brooks, however, have criticised Todorov for neglecting the 'displacements' of the story, where he contends the dynamic of plot to reside, something he understands in terms of psychoanalysis, Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 27.. But Brooks understanding is not fully consistent: he understands the 'displacements' to be determined in "meaning and status" (p. 29) by placement - replacement, and if so, why not its dynamic? Moreover, Brooks psychoanalytic analysis rather looks at how phenomena of psychoanalysis are depicted in novels than analysing novels as such in terms of the phenomena, meaning that interpretation of plot in terms of psychoanalysis is never really demonstrated; cf. James Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*, 116, 119-20..

52. Chris Baldick, *Literary Terms*, 258.; cf. Gerald Prince, *Dictionary*, 99.. Baldick also understands theme as possibly designating topics recurring in many literary works, an understanding not intended here. Moreover, Prince separates theme and thesis, the latter meaning a doctrine or the ideological context for the text, which is not in view in the understanding of theme taken here either.

53. Cf. Seymour Chatman, *Reading*, 273..

54. Cf. James Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*, 75-76..

55. Seymour Chatman, *Reading*, 11, 273.; cf. Gerald Prince, *Dictionary*, 74..

56. Chris Baldick, *Literary Terms*, 162.; cf. Gerald Prince, *Dictionary*, 55.. Again, more universal understandings of motif are here bypassed.

57. James Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*, 3.. Phelan looks specifically at how characters display the mimetic, thematic, and synthetic components, but this does not preclude their presence in narratives as such, cf. p. 74.

58. James Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*, 14, 61-62, 75-76, 78, 104-105..

An adjacent question is if by theme in fact theology is meant, similar to the approach held to characterise Eichrodt's *Theology of the Old Testament*.[59] Suffice it here to say that they are not meant to be understood as equivalents; rather, theme, together with point, motif, action, characters etc. may be seen to inform and be affected by the religious convictions that comes into play in the theology of Num,[60] however, without exhausting it.

With this said, the exploration into narrative theory and the concept of plot come to an end. However, before outlining method and moving into analysis, there are still some other issues that we need to address briefly.

2.3. Further Hermeneutical Dimensions

As indicated by the Review of Earlier Research (1.2.), many different aspects of Num have been studied; its history of composition, its relationship to archaeological material, the text as a witness to institutions and historical development in the Jewish community, its macrostructure, textual history, history of reception, theology, etc. To these aspects can be added also the modern reader's and/or critic's apprehension of the text.[61] Since no research is conducted in isolation, what follows below is an attempt to outline the relationship of the present study to those other dimensions of the text.

Analysing plot in Num means that a synchronic study is performed, in that the final form of the book is investigated. This does not cut it away from diachronic insights, however: first of all, Ricoeur's Mimesis III shows the influence of background questions (material and referentiality), and Mimesis I-III is meant to form an organic whole; second Phelan's synthetic component of narrative holds a door open to traditional historical-critical research, and what findings here might mean for the plot of Num.[62]

Performing a synchronic analysis, however, also raises the question of which text is used. This will be the Masoretic text as represented in the BHS. However, to not close the study to text-critical issues pertaining to the Masoretic text, the text to be used is better termed the canonical text of Num, the last stage of the formation of the book.[63] This, among other things, includes its being part of the Torah and separated from the Former prophets - an aspects not unimportant for the present study.[64]

Nevertheless, the study is channelled through the Masoretic text. Should text-critical questions arise during the analysis, those will be handled as outlined by Emmanuel Tov in his *Textual Criticism*, who also starts with the Masoretic text as the *textus receptus*, while recognising that "this decision does not imply any particular preference for its contents."[65]

Lastly, a word about myself as scholar and interpreter. The last 40 years or so of biblical studies has meant an increasing awareness of the influence of the scholar in research. This is not the place for an extensive discussion of these issues, but I do believe that there is a justi-

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59. Gordon Wenham, *Numbers*, 92.; see Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament,* trans. John Baker, vol. I (London: SCM Press, 1961)..

60. Cf. James Wm. McClendon, and Smith James M., *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, rev. ed. ed. (Penn., Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994), 4-13, 148-196..

61. Cf. John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*.; and Anders Palm, "Att Tolka Texten," in Staffan Bergsten (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2002)., on the dimensions involved in interpreting texts.

62. Cf. also the critique of Saussure's synchronic notion for being a 'closed system' Steven Cohan, and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories*, 16-17..

63. Reinhard G. Kratz, *Composition of the Narrative Books*, 220-21..

64. See again Reinhard G. Kratz, *Composition of the Narrative Books*., but also James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon*, ix-x, 25-30, 36-45..

65. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 291..

fied question of where I stand. The answer, I believe, is to say that I understand myself as scholar and interpreter in this thesis in terms of Hans-George Gadamer's hermeneutical notion of tradition and reading, including his concept of the classic text and 'fusion of horizons,' Num being a classic text mediated through tradition, and me being the reader standing at one end of the tradition, between whom a fusion occurs. I do not subscribe to Gadamer's idealistic ontology, however, which is not a necessary part of his treatment.[66] One advantage of Gadamer's stance on these matters is that it is fairly equivalent to Ricoeur's concept of Mimesis III, which is confirmed by Ricoeur, meaning that we have a neat connection to the understanding of plot put to use here.[67] Thus, I content myself with referring to the interpretative framework put up by Gadamer and Ricoeur in addressing the question of the role of the scholar, contending that it is sufficient for the present thesis.

With the history, text and reader involved in this research addressed somewhat, it has become time to look at more specifically how the analysis is to be conducted.

2.4 Method

Having sketched the contexts brought in for our analysis of Num, we now need to clarify how they are to be engaged more specifically. If it is worthwhile to look for the dynamics of plot in Num, how is the research to be conducted? In short, the theoretical discussion has put us in the position to formulate precise questions concerning Num (including its structure) and plot, explaining what we are to look for in interpreting the text, and therefore, being our method. It is important to recall at this point that narrative theory is not a *method* to follow in interpreting texts, but rather a description of what (usually) happens in narrative texts (i.e. a *theory* about narrative). However, as such it can function as a guide in trying to understand a specific text, in our case Num. Formulating questions means that the theory is put to use, which will help us to find and describe plot in Num. It should be fairly easy to see how the questions issue from what has been highlighted to be brought into the analysis from Ricoeur and from the additional insights included with his theory.

In performing an analysis of plot in Num, the following questions will be asked:

- First, is there a conclusion to Num in view of which Num as narrative is retold, that organises the material? What does it look like and how does it affect the book? What roles are played by themes, motifs, and point? Does the distinction of closure and completeness bear on the end, and how?

- Second, how does the end relate to the beginning in a placement - displacement(s) - replacement dynamic? Is a narrative transformation brought about, and what does it look like?

- Third, in both question above, what role does the genre of Num and the overarching context of the Pentateuch play?

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66. Charles J. Scalise, *Hermeneutics as Theological Prolegomena: A Canonical Approach*, vol. 8, Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics (Gea., Macon: Mercer University Press, 1994), 24-28, 67-68., cf. Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics. Development and Significance*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1994), 64-70.. See Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (N.Y., New York: Seabury Press, 1975)..

67. Paul Ricoeur, *Temps Et Récit 1*, 136, 144-55.. Ricoeur also makes use of Wolfgang Iser, *Akt Des Lesens*. and H. Robert Jauss, *Aesthetische Erfahrung Und Literarische Hermeneutik*, 4th ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984). apart from Gadamer in discussing these matters.

- Fourth, what are the implications of the analysis for the relationship between law and narrative in Num?

In the ensuing analysis, question 1, 2, and 4 form separate chapters, after which the results are summarised and discussed in the Conclusion.

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