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Composite Artistry in the Book of Numbers

A Study in Biblical Narrative Conventions



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Abstract

The present thesis discusses the coherence or lack of coherence in the book of Numbers, with special regard to its narrative features. The fragmented nature of Numbers is a well-known problem in research on the book, affecting how we approach and interpret it, but to date there has not been any thorough investigation of the narrative features of the work and how they might contribute to the coherence or the lack of coherence in the book. The discussion is pursued in light of narrative theory, and especially in connection to three parameters that are typically understood to be invoked in the interpretation of narratives: 1) a narrative paradigm, or 'story,' meaning events related to each other temporally, causally, and thematically, in a plot with a beginning, middle, and end; 2) discourse, being the expression plane of a narrative, or the devices that an author has at hand in constructing a narrative; 3) the situation or language-game of the narrative, prototypical examples being factual reports, which seeks to depict a state of affairs, and storytelling narratives, driven by a demand for tellability. In view of these parameters the present thesis argues that it is reasonable to form four groups to describe the narrative material of Numbers: genuine narratives (e.g. Num 12), independent narrative sequences (e.g. Num 5:1-4), instrumental scenes and situations (e.g. Num 27:1-5), and narrative fragments (e.g. Num 18:1). These groups are mixed throughout with non-narrative materials. Seen together, however, the narrative features of these groups can be understood to create an attenuated narrative sequence from beginning to end in Numbers, where one thing happens after another. This sequence, termed the 'larger story' of Numbers, concerns the wandering of Israel from Sinai to Moab. Furthermore, the larger story has a fragmented plot. The end-point is fixed on the promised land, Israel prepares for the wandering towards it (Num 1-10), rebels against wandering and the promise and is sent back into the wilderness (Num 13-14), returns again after forty years (Num 21ff.), and prepares for conquering the land (Num 22-36). Finally, themes of the promised land, generational succession, and obedience-disobedience, operate in this larger story. Purity is also a significant theme in the book, albeit not connected to plot in the larger story. All in all, sequence, plot, and theme in the larger story of Numbers can be understood to bring some coherence to the book. However, neither aspect entirely subsumes the whole book, and the four groups of narrative materials can also be understood to underscore the incoherence of the work in differentiating its variegated narrative contents. Numbers should therefore be described as an anthology of different materials that are loosely connected through its narrative features in the larger story, with the aim of informing Israelite identity by depicting a certain period in the early history of the people.

Keywords: book of Numbers, poetics, narrative theory, narratology, coherence, incoherence, narrativity, story, discourse, language-game, plot, theme, larger story, anthology.

Preface

Approaching the end of a rather longish but interesting section of my life's journey, in which I partly have had the privilege to determine where to go, I would like to take the opportunity to thank some of my fellow passengers for their support, advice, correction, and ultimate challenge, without which I had never reached the present station.

First of all, thanks are due to: My supervisor Prof. Antti Laato, for accepting me into the doctoral program cheerfully, and granting me the possibility and tools to pursue the project; My second supervisor, Doc. Åke Viberg of Stockholm School of Theology, who continuously asked about my progress, and was a valuable sounding board for my thinking.

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Finally, this research had not been possible without substantial grants from the Foundation for Åbo Akademi, together with the Stockholm School of Theology. My deepest gratitude for their financial support, that made this project come about. A warm thanks also to Lorna Koskela, for proof-reading the entire messed-up thesis, helping me to say what I really wanted to get through to you the readers. Last but not least, I would like to thank my friends Gabriel and Solveig Hammar, without whom this project would never even have started.

This thesis I dedicate to my family, Maria and Benjamin, who, I hope, will reap some benefit from it.

In closing, I would like to pause to give thanks to God for life and strength, courage and wit to continue the task.

Josef Forsling
Hägersten
September 2013

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Trouble with the Book of Numbers

The problem that this thesis sets out to discuss is the puzzling nature of the book of Numbers in the Hebrew bible. For those well-acquainted with Numbers, especially through academic studies, the problem is not new. The book is clearly a composite like many other books in the Hebrew bible. Such texts, however, are usually constructed on some principles. The characterisation of Numbers by the German Old Testament scholar Martin Noth is often cited in this regard: “From the point of view of its contents, the book lacks unity, and it is difficult to see any pattern in its construction.”¹ Similar judgments abound in the scholarly literature.² The problem is well captured by Welsh scholar Eryl W. Davies:

The structure of the book of Numbers has proved notoriously difficult to determine, for it appears to consist of a collection of unrelated fragments devoid of any unifying purpose of meaning. Laws are juxtaposed with narratives in a seemingly random fashion, confirming the impression that the various units were compiled without any logical or coherent plan. Moreover, the wide variety of material contained in Numbers (poetry, tribal lists, census lists, itineraries etc.) merely adds to the difficulty of finding the book’s inner cohesion.³

The puzzling nature of Numbers has led scholars either to try to isolate the different parts of the book and the historical stages of how they were put together in order to explain how this random collection came to be, or to try to find some kind of uniting principle in the work despite its diversity. In the latter group, suggestions on how to structure Numbers at large are numerous, conflicting, and

¹ Martin Noth, *Numbers, A Commentary* (Translated by Martin, James D. London: SCM Press, 1968), 1.

² See e.g. Olivier Artus, *Etudes sur le livre des Nombres: récit, histoire et loi en Nb 13,1 - 20,13* (OBO 157; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 1-3; Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, Ill.: Fortress, 1979), 192, 194-195; George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1903), xxii; Rolf P. Knierim and George W. Coats, *Numbers* (FOTL IV; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 6, 9-10; Antti Laato, *Inledning till Gamla Testamentet* (Religionsvetenskapliga Skrifter nr 54; Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 2002), 149; Won W. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness in Israel’s Migratory Campaign* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), xiv-xv; Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20* (The Anchor Bible 4A; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 48, 72; Dennis T. Olson, *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New: The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 31; Thomas Römer, “Israel’s Sojourn in the Wilderness and the Construction of the Book of Numbers,” in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (eds. Robert Rezetko, Thomas H. Lim and W. Bryan; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 427; Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 35; and Gordon Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Leicester: InterVarsity, 1981), 14.

³ Eryl W. Davies, *Numbers* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1995), li.

none really dominates the field, which only adds to the confusion on how to approach Numbers. So far, however, no one has made a thorough investigation of the narrative features of Numbers as a whole and their possible contribution to understanding the coherence or lack of coherence of the book. It is here, more particularly, that this thesis aims to contribute to research. Such an analysis would, moreover, contribute to the narratological project of investigating narratives and narration at large, specifically in analysing the narrative features and their effects in an ancient text.

Why is an investigation of the narrativity of Numbers in discussing its coherence or lack thereof an interesting exercise? First of all, Numbers clearly contains narrative features, so that such an investigation would not rest solely on scholarly ingenuity. To exemplify, we have the ‘ordinary’ narratives like the Spy-story in Num 13-14, as well as narrative elements among the non-narrative passages, such as short scenes displaying events (the gifts of the tribal leaders to the tabernacle introducing the list of the gifts, Num 7:1-10), comments introducing factual details such as on what occasion or by whom non-narrative material (law, lists etc.) were given (“Moses said to the leader of the tribes of Israel: This is what Yahweh has commanded...” Num 30:2), as well as other features.⁴ If these features are to be found in Numbers, what do they mean with regard to readers apprehending the coherence or lack thereof in it? Moreover, in light of the parallel but different account of the same period of wilderness wanderings in Deut 1-11, one may ask what the presentation of Numbers can be understood to contribute specifically, and how this comes about through the narrative features.

Furthermore, narratives commonly show a certain coherence in that they, simply stated by Aristotle, arrange material in a causal sequence of beginning – middle – end (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 54-57). If something of that sort could be perceived in Numbers building on its narrative features, it would be possible to point out and describe a certain coherence in the book that would help us to grasp more completely the book as a whole.

Finally, scholars often hint at the narrative character of Numbers as a way of conceptualising the work as a whole. Thus, Rolf P. Knierim and George W. Coats describe the book as belonging to the genre of Saga;⁵ Gordon J. Wenham remarks that Numbers “...records the early story of Israel and God’s dealings...” being “...prophetic or theological history...”; and one may also cite a scholar like David J. Clines who claims that the Pentateuch as a whole “...is essentially a *narrative*,”⁶ which would then also apply to Numbers. However, none of these

⁴ The narrative insertions in laws and lists in Numbers may be contrasted with the bare lists of names that open 1 Chronicles, for example, which do not have such features.

⁵ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 17-23.

⁶ David J.A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (2nd ed. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 108; cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 31ff. and John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical Theological Commentary* (LBI; Grand Rapids, Mich.:

scholars develop much concerning the meaning of the narrative character of Numbers, how it is worked out, or how its coherence or lack thereof is affected.⁷

To sum up then, the undeveloped narrative suggestions for Numbers together with the observations concerning narrative features in the book and the potential coherence of narratives, give us initial reasons to investigate the book of Numbers from a narrative perspective in order to address the question of the coherence or lack of coherence in the book. As this thesis will demonstrate this is not simply to say that Numbers is a narrative and then assume that its coherence has been demonstrated despite signals to the opposite. A few of the reasons as to why this is so are discussed in Theory and Method below, while the rest are borne out by the ensuing analysis.

1.2. Review of Earlier Research

Having introduced the problem and purpose of this thesis, we now turn to introduce the background in earlier research. It is found primarily in two areas of study on Numbers: on the one hand source-, form-, tradition-, and redaction-criticism, and on the other hand, what may be called macrostructural analyses. It is readily seen that these two approaches work with different questions: source-criticism etc. seeks to understand the historical causes as to how Numbers came to be the composite book it is, while macrostructural investigations have searched for literary reasons that justify Numbers as a separate entity.⁸ These are distinct questions but one does not necessarily exclude the other, since both approaches read the same text, look for anomalies in it and searches what unity might be found (or not).⁹ It is in this common reading that they both become the important background for the present analysis. We will now review the respective areas of research in two subsections, and additionally also briefly discuss the issue of Numbers as a book in a third subsection below.

1.2.1. History of Composition

The most extensive research involving Numbers to date concerns its history of composition, and we therefore need to discuss it here, even though this is not the approach chosen in this thesis. In a short overview Thomas Römer conveniently sorts the research into three groups or models, and we will follow his division in

Zondervan, 1992).

⁷ In passing one may note that few studies of biblical narrative set out to analyse blocks of material larger than a few chapters in any detail, as noted by David H. Richter, "Biblical Narrative," *RENT*:40-41.

⁸ Cf. Peter Lamarque, *The Philosophy of Literature* (FPA 3; Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 275, on historical causes and literary reasons in valuing literature.

⁹ Cf. the similar comments of Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987), 7-23, concerning what he calls 'source and discourse' approaches.

our presentation below.¹⁰ After the presentation of each model, some critique of the model is noted. This is not meant to deny the validity of the model and negate it as a defensible one in academic research. Neither is the critique meant to deny the validity of composition-historical research at large, implying that it should be replaced by modern narrative theory. Rather, the intention is to show the breadth of the debate and the pros and cons of each individual model, which hopefully will help the reader to grasp them and the debate better.

The first model is that of the documentary hypothesis.¹¹ The model has arguably the most venerable lineage of the three, beginning with observations made by the German pastor Henning B. Witter (1711) and French physician

¹⁰ Thomas Römer, “De la périphérie au centre: les livres du Lévitique et des Nombres dans le débat actuel sur le Pentateuque,” in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers* (ed. Thomas Römer; Betl Ccxv; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 28-32.

¹¹ In relationship to primarily Numbers, see e.g. Gray, *Numbers*; H Holzinger, *Numeri erklärt von H. Holzinger* (KHCAT 4; Tübingen: Mohr, 1903); Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der Historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (3 ed. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1899. Repr., 1963); and more recently Joel Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012); Philip J. Budd, *Numbers* (WBC 5; Nelson Reference and Electronics, 1984); Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (Translated by John Bowden. Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 2005); Levine, *Numbers 1-20*; Ludwig Schmidt, *Das 4. Buch Mose, Numeri* (ATD 7,2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004); Horst Seebass, *Numeri* (BK IV/1-3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993); and John Van Seters, *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers* (Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994). For more comprehensive analyses of the recent discussion concerning the history of composition of Numbers, see the articles in the volume Thomas Römer, ed. *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers* (BETL CCXV. Leuven: Peeters, 2008), which reflect different approaches. Separate mention could be made of Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), who builds on the school associated with Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978); Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (Translated by Moshe Greenberg. Abridged ed. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961.; and Moshe Weinfield, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomical School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972., who argue for the priority of P over Deuteronomy, and for the pre-exilic origin of P. Even so, the model is still that of interacting sources. Mention should also be made of Frank Morgan Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 293-325, viewing P as redactional layers, editing and complementing JE. P would then not be a source here, but JE would. There are also further and alternative ways of viewing Numbers and the Pentateuch composition-historically, as for example the tradition-historical approach of Ivan Engnell, *Gamla testamentet: en traditionshistorisk inledning* (I; Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag, 1945); and H.S. Nyberg, “Korah’s uppror (Num. 16f.). Ett bidrag till frågan om traditionshistorisk metod,” *SEÅ* 12 (1947):214-236, but here focus have been laid on the recently dominating models.

Jean Astruc (1756). This was developed by the German scholar Johann G. Eichhorn (1780) into a more comprehensive view, and given the ‘new,’ but since then classic, formulation by Julius Wellhausen (1876 and forwards), dominating Old testament scholarship in the 19th and 20th centuries, and continuously revised and modified thereafter.¹² Simply and generally said, it pictures Numbers as a combination of an earlier, pre-exilic source (JE, from before 586 B.C.E.) and a later, exilic/post-exilic source (P, from 586 B.C.E. onwards), from which further divisions can be made and redactional augmentations added (primarily J, E, Pg, and Ps). JE is roughly found in Num 11-12; and 21-24; as well as parts of Num 10; 13-14; 16; 20; and 25-32; while P is found in 1-9; 15; 17-19; 26-31; and 33-36; and is of sizeable influence in Num 10; 13-14; 16; 20; 25; 32.¹³ It is usually assumed that the compilation of the material originated in Jewish circles resettling in Palestine during the Persian period (539-332 B.C.E.), and mirrors the questions surrounding it of identity, leadership, religious rights and the like. One problem in this model is the possibility of reconstructing the ancient sources J and E, which has proved very difficult. Another is the question of the presence of the *Grundschrift* of P (Pg) in Numbers, as distinguished from supplements to it (Ps), which has also been questioned.¹⁴ If neither J, E, or Pg can be established in Numbers, what remains in the book are very late redactional layers and supplements, and this not only counts against seeing continuous sources in Numbers, but also against the documentary model as having explanatory value for the book.

The second model, therefore, envisions several late redactions as the model explaining the origin of Numbers. This has been suggested by Reinhard Achenbach, developing the work of Eckart Otto.¹⁵ In short, it means that Numbers went through three redactional stages together with the rest of the Pentateuch which can be tied to certain historical periods. There are pre-exilic material in Numbers (which do not belong to continuous sources), as, for example, parts of

¹² Childs, *Introduction*, 34-39, 112-114. For a more extensive review, see Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (3 erw. ed. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982). The documentary hypothesis was not the only suggestion on how to view the historical process behind Numbers and the Pentateuch during this long stretch of time, as will be seen when reviewing the other models.

¹³ Budd, *Numbers*, xviii-xix, xxii.

¹⁴ For both criticisms, see Römer, “De la périphérie au centre,” 29. Cf. also David M Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 111-17, on the implausibility of earlier and later versions of the documentary hypothesis.

¹⁵ See Reinhard Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Numeribuches im Kontext von Hexateuch und Pentateuch* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte 3; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003); and Eckart Otto, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte von Pentateuch und Hexateuch im Lichte des Deuteronomiumsrahmens* (FAT 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

the oracles of Balaam (Num 23-24), but the redactional stages adduce most of the material in the book. The first stage is the Hexateuchal Redaction (HexRed). To give some examples of what it involves, it focuses on the promise of land but widens the historical-theological horizon of Israel and opens the community for non-Israelites (cf. Num 12:1). At the centre of the community stands the prophet and intercessor Moses (cf. 14:11-25), acknowledged by Yahweh through different miracles. The redaction took place during the early 5th century against the background of the rebuilding of the temple. The second stage is the Pentateuchal Redaction (PentRed). It grounds everything in revelations to Moses (cf. 12:6-8), and the Covenant and Torah is of prime interest. Yahweh himself leads Israel through the desert (cf. 9:15-21). The high priest is sovereign (chaps. 16-17), and all legal material derives from this redaction. This stage relates to the late 5th century and more precisely the times of Ezra. The third stage, finally, is a Theocratic Revision (ThB)¹⁶ of the material. It is carried out during the 4th century and makes Numbers a legend of origin for the hierocratically ruled theocratic Israel.¹⁷ This is done by the Zadokites behind Ez 44. They import the ideas of eternal salt- and peace-covenants (18:20; 25:12-13), purity regulations (5, 15, 19) and gifts to the temple (28-29) among other things, which separates Israel from all others. When this is done the rewriting process of Numbers has reached its end, making the rewriting of the history in the books of Chronicles possible, and thereby the Torah completed. A problem in Achenbach's approach is that it does not seem to allow for punctual additions to Numbers, since these have to belong to comprehensive redactional revisions. The rules of Num 5-10 appear to be added successively, and the same can be said about layers in Num 22-24, which would then speak against comprehensive redactions.¹⁸

This takes us to the third model, which is that of *Fortschreibung* or *relecture*, and successive supplements.¹⁹ The recent formulations of the model originate in

¹⁶. B standing for the German noun 'Bearbeitung'.

¹⁷. On the late materials of the Pentateuch as promoting theocracy, see already Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel; with a Reprint of the Article 'Israel' from the Encyclopedia Britannica* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), repr. of *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (transl. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Enzies, with preface by W. Robertson Smith; Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885); trans. of *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (2nd ed.; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1883).

¹⁸. Römer, "De la périphérie au centre," 29-30. Cf. also the criticism of Ludwig Schmidt, "Die Kundschaftererzählung in Num 13-14 und Dtn 1,19-46: eine Kritik neuerer Pentateuchkritik," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 114 (2002):40-58, defending the documentary hypothesis.

¹⁹. See e.g. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*; Römer, "Israel's Sojourn." One may compare this model to the discussions in Erhard Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 189; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990); Rolf Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977); and Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Der sogenannte Jahwist: Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung* (Zürich: TVZ, 1976).

the work of Noth and his idea of a separate Tetrateuch (Gen-Num) and a deuteronomistic history (Deut-2 Kings), which were connected only very late-ly.²⁰ Noth did find traces of the ancient sources (JE) in Numbers, but leaned more towards a ‘fragment hypothesis’ with many late supplements.²¹ Similar hypotheses associated with the names of A. Geddes, J. S. Vater, W. M. L. de Wette, H. Ewald and F. Bleek had appeared already in the early to middle 19th century before the consensus around Wellhausen’s understanding developed.²² More recent investigations has seen Numbers as a bridge between priestly and deuteronomistic traditions, or between a ‘Triateuch’ and the deuteronomistic history, abandoning the idea of continuous sources still lingering with Noth.²³ Numbers was in part created to bridge these, but also gave the opportunity to adduce additional material that did not fit in elsewhere. Numbers is then like a ‘rolling corpus’ to which supplements were successively added, supplements that approximate midrashic commentary.²⁴ To exemplify how one conceptualises the growth of Numbers along this line of reasoning, we may cite Römer, who envisions the following process: the origin is Num 13-14 to which is added 11:4-35 and 20:1-13; then follows 12:2-9; 12:1, 10-15; and possibly 11:1-3 and 21:4-9; and finally 16-17, and probably 15, and 18-19.²⁵ Thus Num 11-20 is obtained, and this complex was then supposedly joined by Num 1-10 and 22-24, 25, 26, 27-36 with their respective histories of growth. All these stages of growth are understood to belong to the late Persian period, even though the passages themselves possibly contain reminiscences of pre-exilic traditions,²⁶ and the book can be said to negotiate Jewish identity under the idea of an ‘exilic’ situation, when the makers and the addressees of the book was not in possession of a land, as well as other questions relating to that situation.²⁷ One problem with this model is that it risks undervaluing the threads, including stylistic phenomena, that link different passages across the Pentateuch, and which originally gave

²⁰ Martin Noth, “Appendix: The ‘Priestly Writing’ and the Redaction of the Pentateuch,” in *The Chronicler’s History* (transl. H.G.M. Williamson. Jsotsup 50; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 107-148; and Noth, *Numbers*.

²¹ See the cautious comments in *Ibid.*, 4, for instance.

²² Childs, *Introduction*, 113; Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung*, 155-60; and R. J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law in a Century of Criticism since Graf* (VTSup 19; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 15-18, 24-30, 153f.

²³ Römer, “Israel’s Sojourn.”; cf. Félix García López, “La place du Lévitique et des Nombres dans la formation du Pentateuque,” in *Les dernières rédactions du Pentateuque, de l’Hexateuque and de l’Enneateuque* (eds. Thomas Römer and Konrad Schmid; Betl Cciii; Leuven: Peeters, 2007)..

²⁴ The picture of the growth of biblical literature as a ‘rolling corpus,’ successively adding layers as it ‘moves,’ comes from William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 1-lxxxviii.

²⁵ Römer, “Israel’s Sojourn,” 442.

²⁶ See the discussion in Römer, “De la périphérie au centre,” 31-32.

²⁷ Römer, “Israel’s Sojourn,” 442-43.

rise to the idea of continuous sources.²⁸ Furthermore, the tendency to date everything into the late Persian period is also problematic, since it creates quite a short time-span for the composition of a lot of material, including ferocious debate between different groups that need to reach a compromise, and this in a society that lack stable and competent institutions to perform such a work.²⁹ Finally, the view of successive supplementation often relies considerably on the possibility of demonstrating the relative dependence of certain supplements on others, proceeding from specific nodes that are understood to be securely established in history. However, the basis for the relationships between the different supplements are often quite modest, being single words or motifs (like the glory of Yahweh). Moreover, the longer the chain of supplements grow from the initial secure node, the weaker the argument for relating a certain passage as a supplement to the node grows, and thus also the overall argument on the process of composition.³⁰

Taking a step back from these models, it may be interesting to note what they have in common despite the differences: Numbers contains pre-exilic material (i.e. before 586 B.C.E.), but the substance of the book was composed during the Persian period (539-332 B.C.E.). This was done in priestly circles, reflecting theocratic ideas, for instance, even though some lay-interests also may be found in the book, as well as ideas from the diaspora, making a compromise-document of the book. Finally, the material at large mirrors the questions of the Persian period of identity, land and exile, leadership, religious rights, the Torah, sin and redemption, and the like. This is of course a very general view, but it might work to hint at the historical background of Numbers, which is not uninteresting for the present analysis.³¹

So far, what has been presented here on research on the history of composition of Numbers, very generally, are the dominating models on how we may understand the historical causes and the historical process behind the book of Numbers. The models have been presented so that the reader might get an overview of the alternative views on the process of composition lying behind the text that we are reading. The aim of the following analysis is not to polemicise

²⁸ Budd, *Numbers*, xviii-xxiv.

²⁹ Cf. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 222-23. See also Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 284, who argues that it is excessive to talk about highly organised groups behind the different layers of Numbers. Rather, the scenario is different interests and tendencies in the Jewish society of Persian times that influenced and are reflected in the work of the scribes.

³⁰ Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 137-44. For the last argument, see Thomas Krüger, "Anmerkungen zur Frage nach den Redaktionen der grossen Erzählwerke im alten Testament," in *Les dernières rédactions du Pentateuque, de l'Hexateuque et de l'Enneateuque* (eds. Thomas Römer and Konrad Schmid; BETL CCIII; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 66, footnote 47.

³¹ A significant dissenting voice is Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 247-48, who considers the dating of the sources of the Pentateuch as unimportant for source-criticism.

or take a stand for or against these models, however, since we are not pursuing an analysis of the history of composition of Numbers, but rather a literary or narrative interpretation of the book as it has come down to us, asking how the narrative features of the book contribute to its coherence or lack of coherence. Nevertheless, the models including their analyses are useful for us in that they discuss how one may interpret the details of the individual passages of Numbers, and in so doing they touch on what is done in this thesis. The details concern, for example, the beginnings and ends of passages, transitions from one passage to another, and in general observations about deviations in the passages, all being details that we need to reckon with in investigating the narrative dynamics of the passages in question. More generally, research on the history of composition of Numbers also serves to show the fragmentary nature of the book, and thus substantiate the problem we proceed from and want to address in this thesis, as well as indicating the historical location of the book, which enrich our understanding of it.

1.2.2. Macrostructural Proposals

Whereas the history of composition approach reveals the diversities in Numbers and asks questions about the coherence of the book that we need to deal with in the following analysis, and explains them as arising from historical causes, macrostructural proposals have tried to argue for how one might see unity in the book despite the diversity, using literary reasoning. The macrostructural proposals may be reduced to four alternatives.

First, the most common way of structuring Numbers as a whole is according to its geography.³² Usually, three divisions of the book are made: 1:1-10:11 (wilderness of Sinai); 10:11-22:1 (from Sinai to Kadesh); and 22:2-36:13 (the steppes of Moab).³³ The problem with this structure is that it is not as neat as it seems. Dennis T. Olson, who has surveyed 33 commentaries structuring Numbers geographically, concludes that he finds "...18 significantly different proposals..."³⁴ among these. The main reason for this diversity relates to the question of how to delimit the middle section of the scheme.³⁵ Many places are mentioned by the end of the unit (for instance, Paran, Kadesh, Edom, Mount Hor), making it difficult to know when and where we are to draw the line. It has proved difficult, in

^{32.} Examples of this are found in, e.g. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 15-18; Budd, *Numbers*, xvii; Gray, *Numbers*, xxii-xxiii; Milgrom, *Numbers*, xiii; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 1; Jules de Vaulx, *Les Nombres* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1972), 11-13; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 14-18.

^{33.} There are variations to this scheme, the most extensive being Wenham's insertion of two travelogues (10:11-12:16 and 20:1-22:1) between the stations Sinai, Kadesh, and Moab, *Ibid.*, 15-16, 54.

^{34.} Olson, *Death of the Old*, 35.

^{35.} *Ibid.*, 34-35; cf. Childs, *Introduction*, 195; and Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 44-45, 74-90.

other words, to point out a certain place as particularly important by the end of the middle section. For these reasons, the geographical suggestions typically break down at some point.

A second way of structuring Numbers was therefore presented by Olson, and it has been influential.³⁶ His suggestion is that Numbers can be sorted under the theme of 'the death of the old and the birth of the new,' granting a definitive literary and theological structure to the book. Numbers would thus fall into two sections marked by the two census lists in chapter 1 and 26, the sections being 1:1-25:19 and 26:1-36:13. These portray two generations of Israelites, respectively, one rebellious and condemned to die in the wilderness, and the other receiver of the promise of land and preparing to inhabit it.³⁷ The problem with this structure, however, is that the material found in Numbers is not so easily divided into two contrasting sections. For instance, Num 1-10 is not coloured by rebellions and doom while Num 22-24 in the same section, portrays the protection and blessing of Yahweh over his people, rather than the final death throes of the old, doomed generation as should be expected.³⁸

A third distinctive, but less influential, way of structuring Numbers comes from social anthropologist Mary Douglas, who sees a ring-structure in the book, based on the festival calendars in Num 28-29.³⁹ According to Douglas, Numbers draws "...our attention to a scheme for the calendar year..."⁴⁰ and thus divides Numbers into 12 sections (months), folding it so that the sections go round in a ring, where law and narrative alternate. Douglas' suggestion has received criticism for its definition of law as timeless principles and the rather uneven ring-structure that results, where passages related to each other would not seem to have much in common.⁴¹

Finally, a fourth suggestion on how to structure Numbers comes from Knierim and Coats, relying on the form-critical conceptual analysis of Won W. Lee. Lee only treats Num 10:11-36:13, arguing that the principle structuring this section is Israel's failed attempt to conquer the land from the south, as especially set out in the Spy-story of Num 13-14.⁴² Building on this, Knierim and Coats argue that the book at large comes in two parts depicting a preparation (1:1-10:10)

³⁶ His structure have been endorsed by Milgrom, *Numbers*, xiii and James S. Ackerman, "Numbers," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermod; Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), for instance, apart from being cited in most introductions to Numbers after the publication of Olson's work.

³⁷ Olson, *Death of the Old*, 83-125.

³⁸ Cf. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 34-35; and Gordon Wenham, *Numbers* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 18-21.

³⁹ Mary Douglas, *In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers* (JSOTSup 158; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993)..

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴¹ Cf. Wenham, *Numbers*, 21-23.

⁴² Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 217.

and (failed) execution (10:11-36:13) of a migratory campaign.⁴³ The problem with this structure is that the materials of Num 26-36 only very indirectly seem to have to do with a failed attempt to conquer the promised land, needing several stages of reasoning to connect them to this concept. The same could be said about the cultic rules of Num 15, 18-19.⁴⁴

We will have reason to come back to these suggestions later on in the analysis since they interrelate with the narrative features discussed there, and some of the suggestions will be presented in more detail then.⁴⁵ What this short presentation shows, however, is that there are many different suggestions on how to structure Numbers at large. None of these have achieved anything close to consensus, adding to the confusion about Numbers. Important for the present thesis is, moreover, that none of the suggestions engage Numbers closely from its narrative features, which means that we find a genuine gap in the research on the book. Finally, a related problem is that the suggestions above often are formulated to the exclusion of the other ones.⁴⁶ One may question the necessity of this approach, and ask what a narrative perspective on the different suggestions might yield in terms of identifying possible interrelations between them. We have now covered the background for the present thesis in earlier research, and pointed out the need for it. A final issue remains, however, concerning the slippery term ‘book’ and its connections to source-, redaction-, and textual criticism, which needs to be addressed to set the scene properly for the coming analysis.

1.2.3. Numbers as Book and Developing Text

So far we have referred without complication to Numbers as a ‘book.’ Such a notion of Numbers can of course be problematised. One such problem is that the notion of a book might bring with it ideas of Numbers as a separate and finished entity. But Numbers is part of the Pentateuch, and it continues the story of Israel wandering towards the promised land. This journey begins in the liberation from Egypt in Exodus (or the promise to the patriarchs in Genesis), and it also continues, as it were, the laws set out in Exodus and Leviticus. Deuteronomy, moreover, presupposes the setting of the steppes of Moab reached in Numbers, and concludes the wandering with Moses’ lengthy speeches, ending with his

⁴³ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 9-17. The structure has been taken up by Ska, *Introduction*, 35-38; and cf. also Horst Seebass, “‘Holy’ Land in the Old Testament: Numbers and Joshua,” *VT LVI* (2006): 92-95.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ludwig Schmidt, “Neuere Literatur zum Buch Numeri (1996-2003),” *TRu* 4 (2005):389-407.

⁴⁵ For a more extensive review of earlier views on Numbers as a whole in relationship to a macrostructural approach, see Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 7-46; and Olson, *Death of the Old*, 31-37.

⁴⁶ See primarily Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 213-218, 268; and Olson, *Death of the Old*, 1-2, 31-37, 125.

farewell speech and death. Thus, scholars have remarked that the divisions that create Numbers are partly arbitrary, and that other ones connecting the book to what precedes and follows it could equally well be made.⁴⁷ Furthermore, from a history of composition-perspective it might be remarked that the Pentateuch saw changes as late as the Hasmonean period (164-64 B.C.E.),⁴⁸ and that we can reckon with a stable textual transmission only from rabbinic times (ca. 100 C.E onwards). Therefore, the composition of Numbers during Persian times (539-332 B.C.E.) did not mean that Numbers was entirely finished. If so, we should perhaps broaden our focus to include at least the entire Pentateuch in our analysis, on the one hand, and to align ourselves with the methods of source-criticism etc. instead of narrative theory on the other hand, since drawing a line for the growth of Numbers is nothing but arbitrary if we assume the Persian period as the historical background of the book as a whole, and thus all that we can describe concerning Numbers is a process of growth and not a finished entity.⁴⁹

A few answers might be given to these problems. First of all, in the use of the term 'book' above and in what follows nothing more is intended than a variation on how Numbers is referred to, in line with common practice in both scholarly and non-professional discussion of biblical literary works. Thus, the term is not

⁴⁷. See e.g. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 45-47; Gray, *Numbers*, xxiii-xiv; Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament - An Introduction* (Translated by Peter R. Ackroyd. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 156-57; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 15-17.

⁴⁸. See Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 153-79. Such a late date for redactional changes in the biblical books somewhat dissolves the limits between source-criticism etc. and textual criticism, which is seen in this case by the differing dates in the Pentateuch found in the Masoretic text, the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Damascus Document from Qumran, Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 47-50. Such a fusion is, however, something we have to reckon with, and it is impossible to separate the two approaches entirely. Usually, a difference is made between a series of coherent changes, which would be assumed to belong to the history of composition, and minor unconnected changes, which would belong to the textual transmission. If so, the changes in dates, cohering throughout several biblical books, would seem to belong to the history of composition, a history that also happens to be manifested in the manuscript tradition. For these points, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd rev. ed.; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 313-50.

⁴⁹. The argument is here deliberately pointed to make it clear, but has been put to me orally by Christoph Berner (Göttingen). In essence the argument is that the boundaries between redactional history and textual history are fluid. One might compare the argument with the more general definition of Old testaments exegesis as an inquiry into the growth of the Old testament books and nothing else by Odil Hannes Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to the Methodology* (RBS 33; 2nd ed. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1998), especially pages 3-5 and 14-23 (Steck furthermore explicitly denies the validity of New Critical studies of the OT, that are not subsumed under and subsequent to historical-critical inquiries, p. 22). One may also compare Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 48, 72, who in light of the many traditions, sources, redactional layers etc. that we find in Numbers, considers the source-critical method the most appropriate one in approaching the work.

meant to conceal the fact that Numbers is part of the Pentateuch or that it has had a history of composition. All this is included already in the term ‘Numbers’ itself, and therefore also applies to other types of references to it. Moreover, all research means making a selection, so that in focusing on Numbers the larger literary and historical entities, of which Numbers are part, are not meant to be ignored by the use of the term ‘book,’ in the same manner that a thesis on Numbers 26:1-36:13 is not meant to ignore the larger literary and historical context that this passage relates to. On the other hand, the larger contexts cannot be made part of the analysis extensively if the analysis is to be at all feasible. In short, the literary and historical aspects are there and affect the analysis, but cannot be addressed at length, since some selection or other is necessary.

In order to defuse the problems introduced with reckoning with the Pentateuch and an ongoing history of composition in studying Numbers the following can be taken into account. Dennis T. Olson is probably the scholar who has argued most vigorously for the possibility of treating Numbers as a book or a separate entity, and his arguments for doing so deserve to be repeated.⁵⁰ First, one may simply observe with Olson that as far as manuscript evidence goes, both Hebrew and Greek, Numbers has always been a separate entity. According to rabbinic tradition, if different works were written on one scroll several blank lines were to be left between them so as to separate them, and this is the case with the earliest manuscripts from Qumran, for example.⁵¹ Moreover, rabbinic tradition and church fathers unanimously witness to the division of the Pentateuch into five separate books. Olson further remarks that if the division of the Pentateuch into five books was arbitrary it is surprising that the five books are not of similar length as if mechanically cut out of a larger whole. Instead, they differ significantly as if the divisions follow an internal rationality of the works themselves.⁵²

Secondly, Olson observes that the beginning and ending of Numbers are not qualitatively different from those of the other books of the Pentateuch. Rather, there seems to be reasons for Numbers beginning and ending where it does. Olson makes much of the argument that whereas Leviticus ends on *mount Sinai*, Numbers begin in the *wilderness* of Sinai. Of similar importance is his observation that Leviticus is not simply continued in Numbers: while Leviticus present enduring legal precepts, Numbers starts with one-time commands for per-

⁵⁰ See Olson, *Death of the Old*, 43-53; cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 15; Budd, *Numbers*, xix-xi; Christoph Levin, “On the Cohesion and Separation of Books Within the Enneateuch,” in *Pentateuch, Hexateuch or Enneateuch? Identifying Literary Works in Genesis through Kings* (eds. Thomas Dozeman, Thomas Römer and Konrad Schmid; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011); and Erich Zenger and Christian Frevel, “Die Bücher Levitikus und Numeri als Teile der Pentateuchkomposition,” in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers* (ed. Thomas Römer; BETL CXXV; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 55.

⁵¹ For the last point, see Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 217.

⁵² For numbers on the diverse lengths, see Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 46.

forming censuses (chaps. 1-4). Similar precepts as those in Leviticus are found also in Num 5-10, but by then we have already had four chapters of punctual material. Leviticus and Numbers are, in this respect, differentiated conceptually at their potential overlap. Olson, moreover, briefly discusses how Deuteronomy is set apart not only by vocabulary and style, but also by its structure concerning speeches by Moses that has its own rationale separating it from Numbers. A similar argument about structure could be made about Leviticus as well.⁵³

Thirdly and Olson apart, one may also remark that the argument about the continued history of composition of Numbers depends to a large degree on which model of composition one adopts. The second and third models above see Numbers as a bridge between Gen-Lev and Deut, either by means of comprehensive redactions or continued supplementation. Such a scenario goes fairly well with treating Numbers separately, even though very late supplements were made to it. It is increasingly said in this regard that the division of the Pentateuch into books need not be understood to be a late invention in the history of their composition.⁵⁴ It would only be in conjunction with the model of the documentary hypothesis that treating Numbers separately would be problematic, since that involves continuous sources which needs to be chopped off at a certain point in history to create a separate book of Numbers.

One should also note that those augmentations that were added down to Hasmonean times can be assumed to be minor. An example of this is the dates in the Pentateuch and beyond, those being found in the Masoretic text presumably being related to the rededication of the temple by the Maccabees in 164 B.C.E.⁵⁵ They are then used to make connections with the present time for the redactor, but they do neither alter the main thrust of the books, nor the individual passages that they are part of. Thus, the bulk of Numbers and its outline can be assumed to be in place in the late Persian times, as all the models on the history of composition related above assume. This then is the book we encounter in our analysis. It should also be said that the narrative theory used for analysis in this thesis does not require a (modern) conception of books as separate and finished enti-

^{53.} Further similar arguments for distinguishing Numbers are given by Zenger and Frevel, "Die Bücher Levitikus und Numeri," 46-55.

^{54.} See e.g. Römer, "Israel's Sojourn," 444; and more generally Levin, "On the Cohesion and Separation of Books."

^{55.} See Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 48-49. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 153-79, footnote 28, however, points out that such a connection to the Hasmoneans would seem to assume a knowledge about the historical chronology that would be too accurate. Furthermore, the differing dates do not apply to Numbers, however, but to Genesis and the books of Kings, see Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 337-38. They are cited here, however, to illustrate the kinds of additions and changes that can be expected to be made this late. For the literary activity more generally during this period, see Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 153-79.

ties for it to work.⁵⁶ That statement will have to be developed more, and this is the task of the next section.

Finally, in addressing issues that touch on textual criticism, it might be said here that the following analysis proceeds from the Masoretic text of Numbers as found in the BHS. Nothing of what has been said above is meant to rule out the need for textual criticism in what follows. Rather, such questions are bound to appear, and are expected have a possible effect on the narrative analysis conducted. Thus, it should be noted here that if text-critical issues arise that touch upon the narrative analysis, these will be handled with the standard tools of textual criticism in the diplomatic tradition, i.e. using the Masoretic text as the starting point or base text, while noting different readings of other texts and discussing their value, but not with the intention of creating or assuming a critical or eclectic version of the book of Numbers.⁵⁷

To sum up, the term ‘book’ used to designate Numbers in this thesis may be problematised extensively by the fact of Numbers is part of the Pentateuch and has a history of composition, but the term is here used merely to vary the references to Numbers. The larger entities of the Pentateuch and the history of composition are noted and accounted for in what follows, albeit not extensively since some limits need to be set to the research conducted here. Even so, as far as we have textual evidence, the entity called ‘the book of Numbers’ has always existed as a separate body of material, and seemingly not without reasons internal to the work. The analysis below sets out to investigate the narrative character of that entity. Before that, however, we need to introduce the theoretical framework for the analysis.

⁵⁶. The word ‘modern’ is here set in parenthesis, since the idea of a book as a separate and finished entity is not necessarily a feature of the modern western literary culture or the analysis of it, as seen from, for instance, in the influential textualist understanding of literature in Roland Barthes, “De l’oeuvre au texte,” *Revue d’esthétique* 3 (1971):225-232.

⁵⁷. Cf. Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 287-91 See further Joseph Bédier, “La tradition manuscrite du Lai du l’Ombre: réflexions sur l’art d’éditer les anciens textes,” *Romania* 54 (1929):161-196, 321-356; Tone Modalsli, “Utblick over forskjellige utgavetyper,” in *Læsemåder: udgavetyper og målgrupper: bidrag til en konference afholdt af Nordisk Netværk for Editionsfilologer 10.-12. oktober 2003* (eds. P. Dahl, J. Kondrup and K. Kynde; Kobenhavn: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 2005), 13-28; and Johan Svedjedal, “Åter till bastexten,” in *Vid texternas vägsål. Textkritiska uppsatser* (eds. L. Burman and B. Ståhle Sjönell; Stockholm: Svenska Vitterhetssamfundet, 1999), 22-32.

1.3. Theory and Method

À mon avis, il ne suffit pas de postuler que le texte biblique est simplement 'littérature'. Il faut encore dire quelles sont les méthodes adéquates pour analyser cette 'littérature'.

Thomas C. Römer, "Introduction," p. xxii.

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the coherence or lack thereof in the book of Numbers taking our cue from its narrative features. But what do we mean by 'narrative' and what does interpreting narratives involve? In what follows, I shall describe and clarify the theories that are invoked in this thesis and which constitute the framework for the analysis, in other words, the narrative perspective that has been hinted at from time to time above. The emphasis falls on describing the theories rather than lengthy argumentation for them, since this is not a methodological treatise. The reader is referred to the works cited for more detailed discussions. The relevance and explicatory value of the theories for the present task, however, will hopefully stand out clearly.

The analysis of this thesis can be described as narratological. Narratology is a vast field of research, which, in the words of narratologist Gerald Prince, has "diversified and developed... expansive (contextually engaged, interpretively oriented, methodologically varied) interests."⁵⁸ This is not the place to make an exhaustive presentation of it, to which there are many excellent introductions.⁵⁹ Instead, in line with the strategy of 'describing-to-explain' followed here, two general presuppositions for the narratological study performed are set forth, after which the specific approach to narrative adopted here is introduced.

1.3.1. Poetics and Interpretation

A first important presupposition for the study is that narratology can be understood as part of poetics – here taken as the attempt to describe systematically the conventions that build up and give meaning to literature.⁶⁰ Such a perspective

⁵⁸ Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology* (Rev. ed. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 66.

⁵⁹ See among others Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (3rd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Monika Fludernik, "Histories of Narrative Theory (Ii): From Structuralism to the Present," in *A Companion to Narrative Theory* (eds. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowits; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005); David Herman, "Structuralist Narratology," *RENT*:571-576; James Phelan, "Narrative Theory, 1966-2006: A Narrative," in *The Nature of Narrative: Revised and Expanded* (eds. Robert Scholes, James Phelan and Robert Kellogg; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Prince, *Dictionary*, 66; Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction - Contemporary Poetics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 134-49; and Lars-Åke Skalin, "Narratologi - Studiet av berättandets principer," in *Litteraturvetenskap - en inledning* (ed. Staffan Bergsten; Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2002), 173-188.

⁶⁰ A concise and instructive summary of what poetics (may) mean is found in Greger

implies that literary texts are written and read according to ‘rules’ that can be known and described. What is surprising about the conventions of narratives is that they are very consistent throughout times and cultures, which has led some scholars to talk about the universality of narratives.⁶¹ In trying to understand the abstruse book of Numbers, this characteristic of narratives seems to be an interesting resource for the interpreter, not least if narratives bring conventions of coherence as was hinted at the start of this chapter. At the same time, the same interpreter needs to be careful not to impose modern narrative conventions uncritically or anachronistically on the book, but rather to respect the ancient setting of the work in this respect.

Historically speaking, important precursors to narratology were formalism and structuralism, which in turn were very influenced by linguistics.⁶² An iconic example is the work of Jonathan Culler who explained poetics at large in his book *Structuralist Poetics* as the attempt to describe the ‘grammar’ of literature,⁶³ when he conceptualised the conventions, including narrative ones, that direct how literary texts are produced and read. Culler’s distinctive contribution was to argue that these ‘grammatical rules’ are accessible through the ‘literary competence’ that is needed for a reader to appreciate a work (and an author to produce it).⁶⁴ This entails, for example, the ability expected of the reader to fill in implications and gaps while reading. By means of this competence descriptions of the conventions of literature can be evaluated, since the conventions can be seen in actual readings and not only remain hypothetical.⁶⁵ For the book of

Andersson, *Untamable Texts: Literary Studies and Narrative Theory in the Books of Samuel* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 8. For a comprehensive treatment of different theories and histories of poetics, see T. F. V. Brogan and Earl Miner, “Poetics,” *NPEPP*:929-938. Apart from Andersson, Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 13-21; and Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 2, represent important theorists that have used the concept in connection with biblical studies.

^{61.} See e.g. Monika Fludernik, *Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 11; Prince, *Dictionary*, 59; and Marie-Laure Ryan, “The Modes of Narrativity and Their Visual Metaphors,” *Style* 26 no 3 (1992):371

^{62.} See Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 3-31

^{63.} *Ibid.*, 114

^{64.} *Ibid.*, 113-30 This was an adaptation of Noam Chomsky’s concept of ‘linguistic competence,’ the capability to understand a certain language, see *ibid.*, 9-10. Furthermore, the concepts of ‘author’ and ‘reader’ can of course be problematised considerably when applied to biblical literature. Here they simply stand for the sender and receiver elements of a text. See, moreover, the discussion on ‘narrator,’ in footnote 81 below.

^{65.} Culler’s reasoning and the concept of ‘literary competence’ have been used by John Barton to conceptualise what method is and does in biblical studies, John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament. Method in Biblical Study* (2nd ed. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1996), 8-19

Numbers this would point us to, for example, the informed readings of the commentaries.⁶⁶

In the same manner then, it was argued in structuralism that narratives rely on conventions and presuppose a ‘narrative competence’ on the part of their readers.⁶⁷ In 1966 a special issue of the French journal *Communications* was dedicated to research on narratives along these lines, and the approach was later called ‘narratology’ by Tzvetan Todorov, who also contributed to the 1966 issue.⁶⁸ As part of poetics, narratology was thus explained as a ‘science’ that understands narratives to rely on conventions, conventions which rely on a literary or narrative competence that can be described in terms of a theoretical model that represents the object, narrative. These terms then, conventions and narrative competence, make up the first general presupposition for our study.

Narratology’s structuralist heritage becomes problematic, however, in ways that affect how we make use of it. From the beginning, narratologists wanted to describe narratives and their conventions scientifically rather than interpret them. It was “...a relatively unified discipline with a fairly restricted interest in narrative *qua* narrative (text type rather than context, grammar rather than rhetoric, form rather than force)...”⁶⁹ This has changed since then and narratology has developed into post-structural or ‘post-classical’ directions. It is generally held that classic narratology made significant observations concerning narrative, but that “...scholarship along these lines draws a fuzzy rather than binarised distinction between narrative poetics [description] and narrative criticism [interpretation]...”⁷⁰ Simply said, there were no objective observations or descriptions of narratives above the hermeneutical debates. Even so, however, a more severe criticism would hold that the narratological project to describe “what all and only narratives have in common”⁷¹ has (partially) failed. One reason for this has to do with the issue of interpretation:

^{66.} This is not meant to imply that the interpretations of the commentaries are absolute in any way, that they cannot be discussed, or that a least common denominator can be synthesised from all readings, and which, then equals the competence. Rather, it is meant to say that a good starting point for trying to describe the literary and narrative competence needed to understand Numbers is to consult informed readings. It does imply, however, that in terms of poetics and what it tries to describe, texts cannot have *any* meaning, cf. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, viii, 118-119

^{67.} Prince, *Dictionary*, 61, 66; cf. Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), 53 and Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 8

^{68.} See *Communications* 8 no 1 (1966): and Tzvetan Todorov, *Grammaire du ‘Décameron’* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969). respectively.

^{69.} Prince, *Dictionary*, 66.

^{70.} Herman, “Structuralist Narratology,” , 575; cf. Bal, *Narratology*, 225-29; and Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 134-49.

^{71.} The formulation is Prince’s, see Prince, *Dictionary*, 66.

This failure is explained by the fact that the *object* [narrative] is not a ‘thing’ with a particular essence, but activities (narration). There are, according to this reasoning, an infinite number of such activities that share a ‘family resemblance,’ but it is not meaningful to search for a single defining property, or the essence of narratives. The object of narratology should therefore be these different activities that we tend to call narratives. ... But such a critique should not be taken to imply that there are no formal systems or conventions that are common to sets of narrative communication. The critics are instead skeptical toward classical and postclassical narratologists’ ambition to find a system (and thus to construct a model) that would be valid for all the different phenomena that are covered by the term ‘narrative.’”⁷²

In view of this critique, narratives in this work are not perceived as objects to be described, but rather as (communicative) acts to be interpreted. These acts share a family resemblance, and continuing in Wittgenstein’s terminology, they are understood as language-games, an understanding which also, it should be noted, assumes conventions or rules.⁷³ In short, narratives are here understood as communicative games played between author and reader, games to which interpretation and a search for meaning is a fundamental part.⁷⁴ We are therefore looking at acts of narration rather than narratives.

⁷² Andersson, *Untamable Texts*, 63. The first part of the quotation is taken from footnote 24, the second from the main body of the text. Cf. Lars-Åke Skalin, “Centres and Borders: On Defining Narrativity and Narratology,” in *Borderliners: Searching the Boundaries of Narrativity and Narratology* (ed. Per Krogh Hansen; Holte, Denmark: Medusa, 2009), 19-51.

⁷³ Greger Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives. A Critical Examination of some Synchronic Studies on the Book of Judges* (Örebro, Sweden: Universitetsbiblioteket, 2001), 19-20; Lars-Åke Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv: att tolka litterära gestalter i det mimetiska språkspelet* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis; Uppsala: Univ., 1991), 47; and Lars-Åke Skalin, “‘Telling a Story’: Reflections on Fictional and Non-Fictional Narratives,” in *Narrativity, Fictionality, and Literariness. The Narrative Turn and the Study of Literary Fiction* (ed. Lars-Åke Skalin; Örebro Studies in Literary History and Criticism 7; Örebro, Sweden: Örebro University, 2008), 212. Stein Haugom Olsen, *The Structure of Literary Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5-6, makes a concise statement on the difference between act-theories and object-theories of literature. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998), 202-203, 218-229, 244-246, 335-340, argues for a view on literary texts as communicative acts, or language games, and applies it to the biblical texts at large. For a more general reasoning about (literary) art as action, see Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), ix-xv, 1-32.

⁷⁴ Again, the concepts of ‘author’ and ‘reader’ can of course be problematised considerably when applied to biblical literature. Here they simply stand for the sender and receiver elements of a texts. See, moreover, the discussion on ‘narrator,’ in footnote 81 below. Furthermore, one could note that the notion of ‘game’ is not here understood to stand in opposition to seriousness, but is rather meant to say that acts of narration are somehow rule-governed.

Now, moving the focus from objective description to interpretation raises the question of what interpretation involves, and the answers to that question constitute the second general presupposition for this study. Again, and even more so than narrative, 'interpretation' is a fundamentally contested concept, and here I will confine myself to presenting two complementary models of interpretation that inform the following analysis.

The first model moves from letters to aesthetics at three levels.⁷⁵ Firstly, according to this model approaching a literary text means written or printed characters encountered on paper (or equivalent) which are taken together as a finished product in some sense.⁷⁶ Secondly, these squiggles are taken as signs with linguistic meaning. These can be grouped into larger entities as phrases, sentences and paragraphs. Thirdly, however, these linguistic units can also be seen to have a significance at a third level, producing aesthetic structures that are functional units in a pattern that we identify as a genre.⁷⁷ It is primarily this third level that is of interest in what follows, and it is here that the conventions and competence of literature discussed above are understood to operate.

The second model sees literary interpretation as involving three facets: explication, elucidation, and interpretation (proper).⁷⁸ Explication is the most fundamental aspect, having to do with the linguistic and grammatical understanding of a text, its 'local parts' of words, phrases, and sentences (e.g. the meaning of a certain metaphor or ambivalent syntax etc.). Elucidation, further, means under-

⁷⁵ Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 108-09. Cf. the two-part division of Olsen, *The Structure*, 4. From the point of view of biblical studies, the third step is similar to Robert Alter's description of the activity of the biblical writer in the books of Samuel as a 'literary art,' exploring what it means to live in history, and not only referring to what has happened in history, Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation and Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), xvii-xviii.

⁷⁶ Cf. Mats Furberg, *Säga, förstå, tolka: Till yttrandets och textens problem* (Bodafors, Sweden: Doxa, 1982), 167-68. For the text as a somehow finished product, see *ibid.*, 160-166. Furberg is here conscious of the special problems of several 'finishing lines' for traditional texts like folklore, liturgical texts, the works of Homeros etc., and aims to make room for them in his argument. Moreover, rather than interpreting what is said above as finding the one and only historical point at which Numbers is 'finished', emphasis should be put on the words 'taken as a finished product in some sense.' If text-critical issues arise in our analysis of Numbers, these will be handled, as was said in the section 1.2.3. above, with the standard tools of textual criticism in the diplomatic tradition, cf. Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 287-91. See further Bédier, "La tradition manuscrite."; Modalsli, "Utblick over forskjellige utgavetyper."; and Svedjedal, "Åter till bastexten."

⁷⁷ The concept of genre is treated more thoroughly in the following chapter.

⁷⁸ Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (2nd ed. Cambridge, Ind.: Hackett Publishing Company, 1981), 129ff., 242-243, 401ff.; cf. Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 18-19; and Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 40, who both make use of this model. See also the similar but more developed model of Lamarque, *Philosophy of Literature*, 132-73.

standing implications, drawing conclusions, filling in gaps etc. in literary texts (e.g. understanding which traits a character has even if this is not stated explicitly). Interpretation, finally, is to ask for the theme or thesis of the work that holds it together, connecting its different parts. It is at the level of the latter two facets the literary conventions and competence discussed above are analysed, and from which our interest in this thesis is directed.

The benefit of these two models is that they set the talk about narratives as involving conventions and competence in a larger interpretative framework, narrowing down, as it were, what is done in this thesis, and what kind of discussion is meant to be actualised. They complement each other in that they point out different dimensions of what it may mean to interpret literary texts. Now, with the more general presuppositions in terms of poetics and interpretation laid out, we turn to the specific approach to narrative adopted here.

1.3.2. Narrative

What a narrative is has been much debated in narratology, not least because of the enormous expansion of the field into new, non-literary directions.⁷⁹ In what follows, I simply present the view of narratives that undergirds this study and therefore needs to be introduced to explain its logic. If ‘narrative’ is not an object with essential properties, what is needed here is not an essentialist definition of narrative. Instead we will talk about what interpretation of narratives typically involves. This, I suggest together with Greger Andersson, consists of three parameters.⁸⁰ These three parameters may be said to represent three starting points or nodes in the interpretation of narratives that are characteristically invoked in trying to describe and understand narratives. They are not meant to constitute together an exhaustive definition of narrative interpretation, but should rather be seen as three fuzzy sets of descriptions that point out decisive and useful distinctions in the talk about narratives and narrative features, including those we find

^{79.} See among others, Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 134-37; Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 6-21; Fludernik, *Natural Narratology*, 26, 28-30; Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Translated by Lewin, Jane E. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), 25-32; Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1982), 1; Prince, *Dictionary*, 58-61; Marie-Laure Ryan, “Narrative,” *RENT*:344-348; Franz K. Stanzel, *A Theory of Narrative* (Translated by Charlotte Goedsche. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose* (Translated by Richard Howard. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977). For a good introduction to the widening of the field, see Martin Kreiswirth, “Narrative Turn in the Humanities,” *RENT*:377-382. In a sense, this study participates in this widening, since Numbers as a whole does not represent a typical narrative.

^{80.} The presentation that follows is mainly taken from Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 138-39, who makes the division into three. Andersson follows Skalin closely however, see primarily Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 124, 129-130.

in the book of Numbers. It is thus also important to note that even if what we find in Numbers may be described using those parameters, it need not be reducible to them, since we are talking about fuzzy rather than exact and exhaustive sets of description. Further refinements proceeding from these starting points in describing Numbers could therefore be expected. The first parameter invokes what we may term a narrative paradigm:

This can be described as a particular arrangement of events... In the typical example, the events are related temporally, causally and thematically in a plot with a beginning, a middle and an end. The plot gives the story a certain significance and genre.⁸¹

According to Paul Ricoeur, who takes his starting point in Aristotle, the plot is the crucial concept here. It makes a story out of a mere sequence of events, and allows a narrative to be summarised or expressed by a theme or point. Differently articulated this means that the story is seen as a whole with a conclusion towards which it moves.⁸² An interesting witness to this parameter is that readers

⁸¹. Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 138; cf. Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 137-38. Two things should be said about this paradigm: 1) Many theorists consider the presence of a narrator as essential for narrative, 'someone narrating something to someone,' see e.g. Stanzel, *Theory of Narrative*, and it is also common to combine such a notion with the features highlighted here, see for instance Bal, *Narratology*, 3-14; Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 31-35, 267; Prince, *Dictionary*, 58-61. Such an understanding often relies on an essentialist definition of narrative, however, stipulating that all narratives must be understood to have a narrator, which is the opposite of the approach taken here of narratives as language-games with family resemblances. In our perspective, a narrative might feature a narrator, but it need not. It is, moreover, questionable if the concept is more applicable to Numbers than to a few pericopes of 'ordinary' narratives, such as the Spy-story, for instance (Num 13-14), but such an estimate will of course have to rely on the attractiveness of the alternative analysis of the following chapters. Lastly, it should be noted that the concept of 'narrator' and its essential presence in narratives are not undisputed in narrative theory, see e.g. Johannes Anderegg, *Fiktion und Kommunikation: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie der Prosa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 77-91; Greger Andersson and Lars-Åke Skalin, eds., *Berättaren: en gäckande röst i texten* (Örebro studies in literary history and criticism 3; Örebro, Sweden: Univ.-bibl., 2003); Ann Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (Boston, Mass.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Ann Banfield, "No-Narrator Theory," *RENT*:396; Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); Käte Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung* (2, stark veränd. ed. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1968); and Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 107-200; 2) the paradigm also means that the concept of character is subsumed under plot, theme and genre, and we will not touch upon the characters and persons of Numbers more than incidentally in what follows. It should also be noted here, as of outmost importance, that the third parameter explained below affect the use of the terms character and person, cf. *Ibid.*, 19-103.

⁸². Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit 1. L'intrigue et le récit historique* (1; Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983), 125-35; cf. Prince, *Narratology*, 145-61. For the end of a story as decisive

tend to interpret traditional narratives as single unified utterances.⁸³ The story creates its own space, as it were, through its plot and theme.⁸⁴

The narrative paradigm is, on the whole, equivalent to what in narratology has been called ‘story.’⁸⁵ Many scholars understand such a paradigm as a cognitive category by which humans order and understand reality, together with metaphor, logic, analogy and the like.⁸⁶ If this was the only parameter consid-

for its interpretation, see Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 22ff., 92ff., 313ff. and Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending. Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

^{83.} Gérard Genette, “Vraisemblable et motivation,” *Communications* 11 (1968):18. Cf. also the following statement from Percy Lubbock: “[The] art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be *shown*, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself... The book is not a row of facts, it is a single image.” Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1921), 16.

^{84.} This has also been observed in historiography in relation to the possibility of using ‘narrative’ in historiography, Louis O. Mink, “Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument,” in *The Writing of History* (eds. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki; Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 142-43. On theme as uniting a literary work, see Boris Tomashevsky, “Thematics,” in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (eds. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis; Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 62-66.

^{85.} Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 138. For a short description of story, see Prince, *Dictionary*, 93; cf. Dan Shen, “Story-Discourse Distinction,” *RENT*:566-568.

^{86.} Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 138; Mink, “Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument,” 131; Ricoeur, *Temps et récit I*; and Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 129-130. For examples of this use of ‘narrative’ see, among others, Peter Brooks and Paul Gewirtz, *Law’s Stories: Narrative and Rhetoric in the Law* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996); Clarence Crafoord, *Människan är en berättelse: Tankar om samtalskonst* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1994); W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964); Melanie C. Green et al., *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002); Anthony Paul Kerby, “The Language of the Self,” *Philosophy Today* 30 (1986):210-223; Mink, “Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument.”; David Novitz, “Art, Narrative, and Human Nature,” *Philosophy and Literature* 13 (1989):57-74; Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative knowing and the human sciences* (SUNY Series in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences; Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988); Theodore R. Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (Praeger special studies. Praeger scientific; New York: Praeger, 1986); Roy Shafer, “Narration in the Psychoanalytic Dialogue,” in *On Narrative* (ed. W.J.T. Mitchell; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 25-49; Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore, Va.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); In the context of this thesis, theological undertakings in the same vein deserve separate mention: Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974); Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1991); Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, eds. *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.:

ered in interpreting narrative, very much of human activity could be described as narrative.

The second parameter invokes the actual verbal presentation of the story, in the case of Numbers the text, which in narratology has been called ‘discourse.’⁸⁷ It has been understood to be the only aspect of narratives that are “...directly available to the reader.”⁸⁸ Discourse in the meaning intended here, however, is more than the mere physical aspects of a certain text representing the book of Numbers, and is the “expression plane of narrative,”⁸⁹ the specific formulation or presentation of a story, including “...the variables that an author has at his or her disposal when he or she constructs a narrative.”⁹⁰ In short, it is usually said of discourse that it represents “...the ‘how’ of narrative as opposed to its ‘what...’”⁹¹ the latter being the ‘content’ of a narrative, or its story.

The third parameter invoked in interpreting narratives may be referred to as “...the situation – the language game – and hence the intention of the storyteller.”⁹² This parameter is closely connected to the inclusion of the aspect of interpretation in approaching narratives.⁹³ To reckon with this parameter is, simply put, to ask what kind of language game a specific narrative invites us into. As such, the parameter is not so much an additional aspect added next to the other two, but rather can be understood as an aspect that they both are imbued with,

Eerdman, 1989); James William McClendon, *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories can Remake Today's Theology* (New ed.; Philadelphia, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1990); Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (2nd ed. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); and George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology: Recovering the Gospel in the Church* (Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox Press, 1981).

⁸⁷ See Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 26-27; Prince, *Dictionary*, 21, esp. what is defined under ‘discourse 1;’ and Shen, “Story-Discourse,” 566-568; cf. Furberg, *Säga, förstå, tolka*, 160-66. Genette uses the terms ‘narrative’ or ‘narrative discourse,’ in the original French ‘récit’ and ‘discours du récit,’ instead of discourse. The parameter have been thoroughly researched by the branch called ‘discourse-narratology,’ which have been extremely influential in narratology at large and represents what scholars from different veins associate with narratology in general. For a description of discourse-narratology, see Prince, *Dictionary*, 66, in conjunction with ‘narratology, 2;’ cf. Skalin, “Narratologi,” 181-84. The towering figure in discourse-narratology is Gérard Genette and his book *Narrative Discourse* cited above.

⁸⁸ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 4; see Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 27. Rimmon-Kenan uses the word ‘text’ for discourse, see footnote 2 p. 3.

⁸⁹ Prince, *Dictionary*, 21.

⁹⁰ Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 138.

⁹¹ Prince, *Dictionary*, 21.

⁹² Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 138; cf. Skalin, “Centres and Borders,” 51-70.

⁹³ “Narratologists tend to focus on the text (discourse) since this is the only available object of study. Skalin’s focus on narratives as language games implies that he has side-stepped the text-centredness of structuralism in order to be able to do justice to the aspect of interpretation (or reading).” Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 154, footnote 34.

since as previously stated we are to understand narratives *in toto* as language games. This parameter is therefore of great importance in understanding and interpreting the other two parameters.

To exemplify and explain what the parameter of narrative language-games may involve, we will look at two important games, namely those of fiction and non-fiction, or, more to the point, factual narrative and storytelling.⁹⁴ We will explore these games at some length for the purpose of explanation, and since the parameter at large is such a crucial factor in the interpretation of narratives. Arguably, these are not the only language-games which concern narratives. They are, however, fundamental ones, and the presentation here is meant to form a starting-point for the analysis. It is readily admitted that we might have to take other language-games into consideration in understanding the narrative elements of Numbers. It should also be noted that the presentation of the two games chosen here involves some idealisation, which is due mainly to the purpose of clarity in presenting them.

⁹⁴ I borrow this terminology from Andersson, *Untamable Texts.*, see primarily chap. 3; cf. Skalin, “‘Telling a Story.’”; and Skalin, “Centres and Borders.” That the question of factual narrative vs. storytelling matters for the narratives of the Hebrew Bible is seen from, for example, the debate on how to characterise the book of Jonah (see, for instance, Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 440-42; Hans Walter Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 3: Obadja und Jona* (BK; Neukirchen-Vluy: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 58-64; cf. Greger Andersson, “What Fish Swallowed Jonah?,” in *Fact and Fiction in Narrative: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (ed. Lars-Åke Skalin; Örebro Studies in Literary History and Criticism 4; Örebro, Sweden: Örebro University, 2005).) and from the presence of stories like Jotham’s fabel in Judg 9:7ff. In biblical studies at large it is usually axiomatic that the narrative parables of Jesus in the NT are fictional – a fact that is hardly ever developed but nonetheless determines how they are approached and interpreted, cf. Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 116-17. Note also in this regard the comments of Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 32, on how to divide the narratives of the Hebrew bible, the identification of fictional novellas in the Hebrew bible by W. Lee Humphreys, “Novella,” in *Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable* (ed. George W. Coats; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 83-84, 86-88, and the classification of several books in the Hebrew bible as ‘belletristic’ by Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (2nd corr. ed. London: SCM Press, 1987), 121-22. Finally, George W. Coats has made a division of narratives that approximates what is said here, George W. Coats, “Tale,” in *Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable* (ed. George W. Coats; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 63-64. *Contra* Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 108-19, who in characterising narrative only draws on examples which are narrative fiction. It may also be noted, lastly, that the difference made here is not between fact and fiction, but between fiction and non-fiction. For the former cf. Stuart B. Beeson, “Historiography Ancient and Modern: Fact and Fiction,” in *Ancient and Modern Scriptural Historiography/L’Histrographie biblique, ancienne et moderne* (ed. G. A. Brooke and T. Römer; BETL CCVII; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 1-11.

A factual narrative is understood here to have an openness to it, since what is of interest is not so much the story in itself, as the reality it seeks to depict.⁹⁵ The typical example would be someone who when called to court to testify about a crime, uses a narrative to do this. Such a narrative has arbitrary limits and can go on forever, supplying new information endlessly.⁹⁶ It can be complemented in details and new altogether different perspectives may be added. It can be remodelled and integrated with ensuing questions, and thus grow and change in character.⁹⁷ Finally, any proposition in it may be questioned, both by the person narrating and the listener/reader, since it is reality and how that is to be interpreted, rather than the story itself that is attended to. Both the person narrating and listener/reader are here thought to stand in a direct relationship to the object of the story – in the example above a certain crime – and are actualising their own systems of reference to understand it.⁹⁸

The openness and plasticity of the factual narrative do not mean, however, that factual narratives do not have form or structure. The narrative paradigm related above often comes into play, and factual narratives can be more or less artistic, using plot, theme, point, and even depict the internal states of persons, the last feature often being thought to be a sure signpost of fictionality,⁹⁹ or sto-

⁹⁵ For this section on factual narratives, see Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 139-42; cf. Andersson, *Untamable Texts*, 129-30; Aristotle, *Poetics*, 58-63; Skalin, “‘Telling a Story.’”; and Skalin, “Centres and Borders,” 51-70. For an attempt to categorise different historical narratives (which should be factual games) in the Hebrew bible, see Philip R. Davies, “‘Another Country’? Biblical Texts and the Past” in *Ancient and Modern Scriptural Historiography/L’Histoires bibliques, ancienne et moderne* (ed. G. A. Brooke and T. Römer; BETL CCVII; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 13-24.

⁹⁶ Cf. Anderegg, *Fiktion und Kommunikation*, 95-96; and Robert Champigny, “Implicitness in Narrative Fiction,” *PMLA* 85 (1970):988.

⁹⁷ Cf. Mink, “Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument,” 142-43, who observes that narrative histories, which are good examples of factual narratives, are expected to be aggregative, implying that they are meant to be open to include new stories that fill out the picture of history – the reality to which the narratives are put to describe. See also Ricoeur, *Temps et récit 1*, 312-13; and Skalin, “Centres and Borders,” 57.

⁹⁸ Cf. Anderegg, *Fiktion und Kommunikation*, 17-24; see also Andersson, *Untamable Texts*, 75. An excellent example of a factual reading of Numbers is the use of the book in the middle ages by Rudolf von Ems in his ‘world-chronicle,’ see Ulrike Sals, “Kohärenz im Buch Numeri. Eine Perspektive aus der Weltchronik Rudolfs von Ems,” in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers* (ed. Thomas Römer; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 491-506. This reading gains in significance since it pre-dates any modern discussion of ‘fiction’ and ‘non-fiction,’ presupposes the historicity of the book, and interprets it according to the principles set out here. See also F. Gerald Downing, “Historical Explanation in Jewish and Christian Writers and Their Contemporaries, around the First Century,” in *Ancient and Modern Scriptural Historiography/L’Histoires bibliques, ancienne et moderne* (ed. G. A. Brooke and T. Römer; BETL CCVII; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 61-78, on the similarities of historical reasoning in ancient and modern historiography.

⁹⁹ See further Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore, Va.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Gérard Genette, *Fiction and Diction* (Translated by Catherine

rytelling. One could, for instance, imagine a witness in court beginning his testimony with the words: ‘On the horrible evening that the murder was committed, I was standing in the kitchen...’ the initial words signalling the theme of a tragic story. In interpreting a factual narrative, however, such use of the narrative paradigm will be taken as the interpretation of the one telling the story, his or her view of the significance of the story, or the different causal relations between actual events, since no-one can relate an absolute version of reality.

Encountering a storytelling narrative on the other hand, means that the communicative process is apprehended as closing.¹⁰⁰ The audience take its seats before the narrator and become silent when the performance starts.¹⁰¹ In Ricoeur’s terms this process is a ‘hooking off’, or differently expressed, an autonomisation or decontextualisation of the narrative.¹⁰² The ethic world becomes poetic. The story makes only one function permanent: i.e. to be a narrative structure. It is not information about something other that we are supposed to reconstruct, as in the case of a factual narrative, but rather the staging of a story, a verbal act. Like Aristotle we could say that the narrative does not refer to what is actual or specific, but presents what is possible (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 58-63).¹⁰³ This does not mean that storytelling narratives cannot refer to reality, but they do so as wholes

Porter. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); David Gorman, “Fiction, Theories of,” *RENT*:166-67; and Hamburger, *Die Logik*.

^{100.} For this section on fictional narratives or storytelling, see Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 143-47; cf. Andersson, *Untamable Texts*, 76-77, 79-80, 130-131, 135-137; Aristotle, *Poetics*, 59; Skalin, “‘Telling a Story.’”; Skalin, “Centres and Borders,” 51-70; and Peter Lamarque, *Fictional Points of View* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 199-220, the latter who uses the expression ‘literary point of view.’ For the fictional narrative as closing the communicative process, cf. also Anderegg, *Fiktion und Kommunikation*, 95-100. Furthermore, Albrecht Staffhorst, *Die Subjekt-Objekt-Struktur. Ein Beitrag zu Erzähltheorie* (SAG 63; Stuttgart, 1979), 109-15, has made similar observations. An interesting point of comparison is here Erich Auerbach characterisation of the Old Testament texts as saying only as much “...as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else left in obscurity; the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is nonexistent...” Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Translated by Trask, Willard R. Princeton Paperback ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968. Repr., 1991), 11 (my italics). Auerbach contends that such a narrative calls for interpretation, *Ibid.*, 15.

^{101.} For narrative/narrator as performance/performer, see Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event* (Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture 10; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3; Richard Bauman, “Performance,” *RENT*:419-421; Marie Maclean, *Narrative as Performance: The Baudelairean Experiment*, (London: Routledge, 1988); and Skalin, “Centres and Borders,” 51-57.

^{102.} Ricoeur, *Temps et récit 1*, 76. Cf. also Lamarque, *Fictional*, 21 who claims that literary texts are autonomous.

^{103.} Cf. Humphreys, “Novella,” 83-84.

in the form of trope.¹⁰⁴ George Orwell's *Animal Farm* as a comment on the state in the Soviet Union in his time, is a case in point.

What does it mean more specifically 'to be a narrative structure'? We make use of the Russian formalists here, who apprehended the different elements of a narrative as motifs in an aesthetic composition.¹⁰⁵ This means that the element "...acquires its significance primarily from its function in the literary construction that the individual narrative constitutes."¹⁰⁶ One could say that "In the terms of Gottlob Frege's semantics... [motifs] have sense (we can recognize their meaning) but not reference."¹⁰⁷ Instead of referring outwardly as in the factual narrative, the narrative elements make an 'internal reference' to a literary structure. This literary structure is the narrative paradigm, determined by plot and theme. Motifs in a story, then, gain their meaning and significance primarily from a narrative's plot and theme, and this is what it means to take a narrative as a closed structure.

From another viewpoint, one could say that what characterises the storytelling language game is that it can be understood to be determined by a situation where there is a demand for 'tellability,' which has become encoded in a 'narrative contract' between author and reader.¹⁰⁸ Simply said, this means that someone asks: 'why does no one tell us anything interesting?', and a second person answers with a narrative.¹⁰⁹ The narrative needs to be interesting enough for the contract to be fulfilled. In the case of a storytelling narrative, what is interesting is primarily motivated by aesthetic concerns rather than ethic ones, that is, by interest in a story well told rather than only remarkable or extraordinary events

¹⁰⁴ Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 112; cf. Wolterstorff, *Works*, 107. See also Mink, "Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument," 143-44, who has an interesting side view on the issue.

¹⁰⁵ See primarily Tomashevsky, "Thematics," esp. pp. 67-68.

¹⁰⁶ Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 221.

¹⁰⁷ Andersson, *Untamable Texts*, 76, see Gottlob Frege, "Über Sinn und Bedeutung," in *Funktion, Begriff, Bedeutung: Fünf logische Studien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966).

¹⁰⁸ Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 145-50. The term tellability comes from William Labov, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 370; cf. Berlin, *Poetics*, 104-06; Thomas M. Leitch, *What Stories Are: Narrative Theory and Interpretation* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 23-41; Prince, *Dictionary*, 83; and Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991). The term narrative contract stems from Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), 95-96, *passim*; cf. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 192-202; and see also Prince, *Dictionary*, 62. For these scholars the contract exists between narrator and narratee rather than author and reader, however. The concept of narrator is discussed in footnote 81 above.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Gary A. Herion, "Humor and Wit," *ABD* III:325 (for examples see Edward L. Greenstein, "Humor and Wit (Old Testament)," *ABD* III:330-333) and Humphreys, "Novella," 83-84, 94-96.

and situations. If a boy tells his mother that his sister is playing on the roof of the house, this probably makes the mother very interested in the story, even though it is only a one-sentence story told with stuttering excitement. But this would hardly be taken as a storytelling narrative. The extraordinary may be and often is part of storytelling narratives, but they are *characterised* by tellability, the ability to catch the interest of an audience by means of narration, rather than what we could call reportability, to simply refer to things that might be so to speak interesting in themselves, whether being a part of a story or not.¹¹⁰

In principle, and leaving the characterisation of the two language-games behind somewhat to discuss the implementation of games in relationship to actual stories, any narrative could be read in either the factual or storytelling language-game. In Culler's words: "Rather than say, for example, that literary texts are fictional, we might cite this as a convention of literary interpretation and say that to read a text as literature is to read it as fiction."¹¹¹ What is important to note is that the decision on which language game we adopt when encountering a certain narrative means a world of difference in *interpreting* it and its details – that is, in light of the two examples given here, as an open story where every proposition is referentially scrutinised, or as a closed story where the motifs are related to a narrative paradigm. Given this, however, the theories presented here still assume that certain texts are more easily read in one – or other – of the language games depicted above. There are degrees of tellability.¹¹² This means that a very artistic narrative with an elaborate plot and which is full of what has been called 'fictional signposts'¹¹³ is more easily read as a storytelling narrative, while a basic report with an unclear ending would be taken as a factual narrative. There is, in other words, a connection between aesthetic elaboration or literariness and the storytelling language-game,¹¹⁴ and other connections which come into play in other language-games. However, as has been indicated above, these two will form a reference-point in the thesis to discuss the issue of language-games in

¹¹⁰ See Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 41-42; Skalin, "Telling a Story," 119-21; and Skalin, "Centres and Borders," 80-81.

¹¹¹ Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 128; cf. Anderegg, *Fiktion und Kommunikation*, 27-28; Andersson, *Untamable Texts*, 130; Lamarque, *Fictional*, 211, 214-216. One of the benefits of such a definition is that it avoids the reference-theory of meaning; it is not the discrete propositions or names in a story that refers or not, but one must ask what is done with the story in the language game, cf. Wolterstorff, *Works*, 231-34. For the reference-theory of meaning and its drawbacks, see William P. Alston, *Philosophy of Language* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), 12-16.

¹¹² Leitch, *What Stories Are*, 23-31.

¹¹³ Skalin, "Telling a Story," 225-46; for fictional signposts, see Cohn, *Distinction*; Genette, *Fiction and Diction*; Gorman, "Fiction," 166-67; and Hamburger, *Die Logik*.

¹¹⁴ Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 40; cf. Skalin, "Telling a Story," 225-46. Pace David Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 32-36.

reading the book of Numbers, representing salient starting-points in talking about narratives.

To recapitulate what we have said thus far, to interpret narratives typically involves a recognition of three parameters: 1) a narrative paradigm with plot and theme etc.; 2) discourse (text); and 3) language-game or situation (for the narrative), where the choice between factual language-game or storytelling language-game have been used to explain and exemplify the notion of narrative games in interpretation. In all these it is assumed that conventions, which presuppose a certain competence, operate. It is from this view of the interpretation of narratives, then, that we will approach the narratives and narrative features of Numbers in discussing their outlook and functions and how they affect the question of the coherence or lack of coherence in the book.

1.3.3. Narrativity and Two Suggestive Models for Numbers

We have remarked above on the multifaceted nature of Numbers, which make it difficult to find a coherent model for the whole book, as was seen from the Review of Earlier Research (1.2.). However, a multifaceted understanding of narratives also lies at the heart of the theory of narrative and the three parameters that just have been presented, as the following quote from Andersson shows: “If we were to assume the existence of a correspondence between these parameters, then it would be possible to distinguish between different kinds of narratives.”¹¹⁵ Simply said, one particular narrative would relate differently to the parameters than the other one and the differences can be discussed in light of these parameters. The possibility to describe, distinguish, and compare different narratives is an important part of the theory and also crucial for the thesis in view of the diverse nature of Numbers, which make the theory and the object of the study fit.

Thus, the possibility to discuss different narratives has been formulated in narratology as analysing the *narrativity* of a work – meaning the degree to which a (portion of a) work can be said to be a narrative.¹¹⁶ We will in what follows use the term narrativity to talk about the degree to which both the whole book of Numbers and its smaller parts can be said to be narrative, in other words, to discuss the narrative character of the book and its components. This will be done by reference to the three parameters just presented, which in this thesis are used to elucidate the meaning of narrativity and how to talk about it in reference to Numbers. The goal of the forthcoming analysis is to demonstrate precisely how the theory presented applies to Numbers. Two suggestive and

¹¹⁵ Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 138.

¹¹⁶ The concept is discussed by and originates with Prince, *Narratology*, 148ff.; see also his short definition of the concept in Prince, *Dictionary*, 65. Cf. Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 135ff.; Ryan, “Modes of Narrativity.”; and Skalin, “Centres and Borders,” 19-51.

closely related models on how it might work and what we are about to encounter in looking at the narrativity of Numbers, may however be presented in advance.

The first comes from Robert Alter, who in view of the often multiple and fragmentary character of the biblical books, where different passages are not fused together into one whole, has suggested that we can understand the final redactors of these books to have worked as artists, putting together the different passages in a ‘montage of viewpoints,’ for the purpose of creating a certain outlook on life and history. According to Alter, in approaching the biblical books we are confronted with a ‘composite artistry,’ where the different passages are held together by similar motifs, *leitwörter*, formal symmetry etc., and thereby made to comment on each other, rising into a higher unity, as it were.¹¹⁷ Such a model may also apply to Numbers, conceptualising it as a montage or as exhibiting composite artistry, and asking how the individual passages relate to each other in the book as a whole. This we will do in this thesis, however, not only by looking at the motifs, *leitwörter*, formal symmetry etc. that emerge in the book, but also at a whole range of other features, including plot, theme, and how the discourse works, that are also suggested by the three parameters presented above. Moreover, it should be noted that we are not searching for the intentions of the final redactors in Numbers, as Alter possibly does, but rather the overall effect of the narrative features in the end-product. A potential question in understanding Numbers as a montage or as having composite artistry would be how the narratives and narrative features of Numbers contribute to or hinder a potential higher unity in the book, that is, the question of the coherence or lack thereof in the book that we are looking at in this thesis. Alter’s reasoning is one way to conceptualise the narrativity of Numbers and what is found in our investigation of it. This is the first model.

Second, Alter’s concept of composite artistry and the fragmentary character of the biblical books have a close analogy to a modern genre of prose fiction that

¹¹⁷ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 131-54. Cf. Bar-Efrat, who observes that “The individual narrative usually acquires additional significance when it serves as a constituent element of a wider whole.” Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Translated by Shefer-Vanson, Dorothea. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989; repr., Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 94. He mentions thematic parallels, reiteration of subject/words, use of the same principal character, keywords, style, and allusions, among other things, as important ways of connecting different narratives, pp. 132-140. Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, 299-307, is concerned about the use put to Alter’s concept of ‘composite artistry,’ but do not question the concept as such. Finally, one may note that Alter’s reasoning not necessarily presupposes that the different passages in a book become part of the same *narrative* paradigm, even though connected and interrelated somehow, Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 146.

has been called ‘short story cycles’ or ‘composite novels.’¹¹⁸ Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris describe the composite novel as:

...a literary work composed of shorter texts that – though individually complete and autonomous – are interrelated in a coherent whole according to one or more organizing principles.¹¹⁹

Susan Garland Mann has in the same vein identified the essential characteristic of this genre as being the “simultaneous self-sufficiency and interdependence” of the discrete stories.¹²⁰ Another way to say this is that composite novels have both a macro- and a micro-level, and that they pull in slightly different directions, while at the same time constituting a unity.¹²¹ The most common organizing principles that create interdependence between the shorter texts of these modern works are themes, motifs, recurring characters, chronology, point of view, setting, and imagery. Dunn and Morris explain the relationship between the principles in the following way:

Although a novel is usually structured by plot, a linear narration involving causation, it can be structured alternatively, or by association – that is, by juxtaposing events, images, themes, and/or characters in some sort of coherent pattern.¹²²

Greger Andersson has used this model in trying to understand the book of Judges as a whole, and concludes that:

...besides a linear meaning, the book also has a metaphorical meaning, and... the reader is not only reading for the plot but also for the ‘world’. The author has then portrayed this ‘world’ through a series of stories that are placed on each other like the writings on a palimpsest and thus have an emergent overall meaning. ...together they also portray a space (the period of the judges) and a collective protagonist (Israel during this period), and deal with certain common motifs and themes such as leadership and apostasy.¹²³

What is interesting with this modern model is that the genre also have been exemplified by composite novels that not only contain narratives, but also other materials such as lists, poems, and photos, which interact in different ways with the narrative passages, and which all contribute to the emergent meaning.¹²⁴ We have then a modern analogy to the book of Numbers in the composite novels,

¹¹⁸ See primarily Susan Garland Mann, *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Companion and Reference Guide* (New York: Greenwood, 1989); and Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris, *The Composite Novel: The Short Story Cycle in Transition* (New York: Twayne, 1995).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁰ Mann, *Short Story Cycle*, 15

¹²¹ Cf. Ryan, “Modes of Narrativity,” 383-84, who uses the opposition of micro- and macro-level to describe different narratives.

¹²² Dunn and Morris, *The Composite Novel*, 5.

¹²³ Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 148.

¹²⁴ Dunn and Morris, *The Composite Novel*, 100-15.

which can help us conceptualise what kind of book Numbers is and what it means to approach it by asking for the meaning of its narratives and narrative features for the book as a whole. Moreover, the analogy also shows that modern narrative theory does not necessarily have entirely coherent literary works as its object (as realistic novels or detective fiction usually are), but may also study quite fragmentary works, such as composite novels. Dunn and Morris are careful to point out that what makes for coherence in composite novels can be difficult to decide and that it is a matter of degree.¹²⁵ The degree to which these modern works cohere or not differs from book to book. Thus, using this model to conceptualise Numbers does not necessarily say anything about how much or little coherence is seen in it.

These two models, suggest that we may view Numbers as having a composite artistry with micro- and macro-levels, which may pull in different directions but still constitute one whole, where narratives play a role, and which in turn have a modern analogy in the genre of composite novels or short story cycles. Thus the title of this thesis, *Composite Artistry in the Book of Numbers: A Study in Biblical Narrative Conventions*. Such a view of Numbers gives us an image of how the book may be approached and works well with the theoretical framework on narrative presented above, since the framework also assumes that there are different degrees to which a certain text may be narrative, degrees that can be discussed in reference to the three parameters set out. To note the latter is important not least to negotiate the difference between modern theories and ancient literary works. If such a conceptualisation of Numbers is accepted, it goes without saying that focussing the narrative features of the book, as we do in this thesis, is not the only way of approaching it as a composite work. Apart from historical-compositional inquiries considered above (1.2.1.), one may also mention later Jewish interpretations of the Second Temple period and forward in the form of dialogic commentaries and rewritten bible, that may take hold of narrative features in their readings, but hardly being reduced to them.¹²⁶

^{125.} *Ibid.*, 13.

^{126.} For characterisations of such approaches, see e.g. M. Bernstein, "Interpretation of Scriptures," *EDSS* 1:376-383; Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic *Midrash* and Ancient Jewish Interpretation," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (ed. C. Elisheva Fonrobert and M. S. Jaffee; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 99-120; Erkki Koskeniemi and Pekka Lindqvist, eds., *Rewritten Biblical Figures* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010); Antti Laato and Jacques van Ruiten, eds., *Rewritten Bible Reconsidered: Proceedings of the Conference in Karkku, Finland, August 24-26 2006* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 2008); and Günther Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (trans. M. Bockmuehl, 2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 15-16, 233-240. For the origin of such approaches already in the Hebrew bible, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); and Timothy H. Lim, "Origins and Emergence of Midrash in Relation to the Hebrew Bible," *EM* 2:595-612.

Finally, to round off the theoretical presentation, what has been stated above about poetics, interpretation, and narrative forms a first set of fundamental terms for the discussion that follows. Each chapter also make use of additional concepts to describe different aspects of the narrativity of Numbers and their significance for the coherence or lack of coherence in the book. These will be presented at the beginning of each chapter, as relevant for the particular discussion pursued there, but are not discussed at length, since the analysis of Numbers is the primary task of each chapter. As with the theoretical framework presented above, these concepts should “be taken as metaphorical descriptions of intended functions in a certain kind of communication.”¹²⁷ The study is now briefly outlined and then the analysis to be undertaken may begin.

1.4. Outline and Limitations of the Study

In what follows an analysis of the book of Numbers is undertaken in three stages. Chapter 2 will look at the narrativity of Numbers, on both a micro-level and macro-level, to make an inventory of the narrative features of the book and what these might mean for the coherence of Numbers. This is done proceeding from the theoretical presentation made above, but the concept of genre will also be invoked to reckon with the non-narrative passages of Numbers. The driving questions in this chapter are: what types of narrative features emerge in the book? how do we describe and understand these? how do we do justice to the non-narrative parts of Numbers in looking at the narrative features? and how do we describe the book at large including its narrative and non-narrative features and their bearing on the question of coherence and incoherence? Chapter 3 focuses on the macro-level of Numbers, and asks whether it is possible to delineate a plot in the book as a whole, here primarily understood in terms of causality, and to what degree, given the inventory of its narrativity made in chapter 2. How micro- and macro-levels interact in view of the concept of plot are also investigated. Identifying a plot also addresses the question of coherence. Chapter 4 investigates for the themes of Numbers, especially as these relate to the findings on plot at the macro-level, and asks what they might mean for the consistency of the book. Finally, the insights gained in discussing the narrative features of Numbers and the question of coherence in the chapters of analysis are drawn together in the conclusions of chapter 5, so as to get a summarised view on the narrativity and coherence in the book and thus address the questions concerning the puzzling nature of Numbers, with which we began.

A few limitations to the study concerning the degree to which the literary context of the larger Pentateuch and the history of composition of the book is reckoned with were noted in 1.2.3. above. To these limitations can also be added that the scope of the material, an entire book in the Hebrew bible, means that the

¹²⁷ Andersson, *Untamable Texts*, 225; cf. Leitch, *What Stories Are*, 108; and Lubbock, *Craft of Fiction*, 11.

study will not present a detailed analysis of every verse of the text. Rather, passages that are representative and relevant for the problem under discussion, whose importance for understanding Numbers as a whole hopefully stand out clearly in the analysis, are analysed. It may be remarked here, lastly, that all translations in what follows are mine, if not otherwise noted.

2. Genre and Narrativity in Numbers

It is not too much to say that it is impossible to understand any text without at least an implicit recognition of the genre to which it belongs. All texts must be texts of some kind or type: no one can, or ever could, sit down to write simply 'a text.' John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, p. 16.

2.1. Introduction

The history of research on Numbers adumbrated and the theoretical issues about the perspective on narrative used here has already been presented and we now turn to the actual analysis of the book. A few things have been suggested above in the chapter on theory: Numbers may be understood to present us with a composite artistry where narrative features play a role. In a sense, what is done in this and the remaining of the chapters of analysis is to test that suggestion and look at it in more detail. In this particular chapter we will take up the observation made at the start of the introduction (1.1) that Numbers seems to contain certain narrative features. The questions to be addressed are: what types of narrative features emerge in the book? How do we describe and understand these? Moreover, in analysing them, how do we do justice to the non-narrative features? And finally, how should the book at large be described, including its narrative and non-narrative features, their interaction, and their relationship to the question of the coherence or lack thereof in the book?

The task of the present chapter is to answer these questions. We will attempt a survey of the book of Numbers in order to make a first inventory of its narrative features and how these interact with the other material of the book as well as the book as a whole. The ensuing chapters of the thesis proceed from this inventory and move on to discuss certain narrative aspects of it on a larger level.

To describe what materials we find in Numbers and how the narrative features of the book interrelate with it, we will make use of the concept of genre. Looking at the genre or genres of Numbers is, in a certain respect, an inquiry into *what Numbers is*, and in this chapter it is done with an emphasis on its narrativity. Using the concept of genre also allows us to align our discussion to previous research on what we find in Numbers.

What do we then make reference to in talking about the genre or genres of Numbers? As previously outlined in the passage on theory in the introduction in looking at narratives of different sorts it is usually the plot that induces a certain genre.¹²⁸ Ricoeur expresses this as the schematised meeting of the themes of the story and its course of events.¹²⁹ However, an additional formulation of genre is needed if we are to reckon with the non-narrative features of Numbers as well. On a more philosophical note, Ricoeur has elsewhere said that genre is that which

¹²⁸ Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 138.

¹²⁹ Ricoeur, *Temps et récit 1*, 130-31.

...mediate between speaker and hearer by establishing a common *dynamics* capable of ruling both the production of discourse as a work of a certain kind and its interpretation according to rules provided by the 'genre.'¹³⁰

If this formulation is heeded, genres are not taken as logical classes, which the dynamic aspect forbids, but rather as groups or historical families with certain resemblances that rely on conventions or rules. Such a reasoning infers the same logic as that assumed for poetics and narratives above.¹³¹ What is more, it is also understood that talk about genre is a means of interpretation – we infer genres in order to understand a particular text.¹³² On a more practical note, such a reasoning assumes that conventions form works in such a way that it is possible to group and differentiate them on the basis of combinations of, for example, con-

¹³⁰ Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," *Philosophy Today* 17 (1973):136; cf. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 147, who says: "The function of genre conventions is essentially to establish a contract between writer and reader so as to make certain relevant expectations operative and thus to permit both compliance with and deviation from accepted modes of intelligibility..." For the genre as directing reception, see further Hans Robert Jauss, "Theorie der Gattungen und Literatur des Mittelalters," in *Grundriss der romanischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 1 Generalites (eds. Hans Robert Jauss and Erich Köhler; Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1972), 110; and Wolf-Dieter Stempel, "Aspects génériques de la réception," *Poétique* 39 (1979):353-362.

¹³¹ For different expressions of this reasoning from both Biblical and genre studies, see Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 11-18; Erhard Blum, "Formgeschichte - a Misleading Category? Some Critical Remarks," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (eds. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 33-34 (who refers to Christof Hardmeier, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese: zur rhetorischen Funktion der Trauermetaphorik in der Prophetie* (BET 79; Munich: Kaiser, 1978)); Martin J. Buss, "The Study of Forms," in *Old Testament Form Criticism* (ed. John H. Hayes; San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University Press, 1974); Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 172-73; Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, 2; Alistair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 40-44; Jauss, "Theorie der Gattungen," 109-10; Tremper Longman III, "Israelite Genres in Their Ancient Near Eastern Context," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (eds. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 177-83; and Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 245-246, 337-338. This means also that genres are more than mere 'taxonomic inventions,' *Ibid.*, 336; cf. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 37; Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature Fantastique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), 21-24; contra Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible. A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005), 7. It can be assumed that the genres of antiquity was stable and not prone to change due to the systems of education and writing at work, Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 5, 21-22, 47; cf. Longman III, "Israelite Genres in Their Ancient Near Eastern Context," 180. Pace Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, 37-38.

¹³² Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 37-38; cf. Lamarque, *Fictional*, 199-220.

tent, theme, language, style, context (*Sitz im Leben*), function, form, structure, and tradition (of development), among other things.¹³³ Such aspects are then what we reckon with and refer to in discussing and naming different genres of texts or portions of texts, including those we find in Numbers in what follows. It may be noted, lastly, that ‘narrative’ here is not understood as a genre, since we are interested in the narrativity of the different passages of Numbers and the book as a whole, i.e. the degree to which these passages and the book as a whole in their respective genres can be said to be narrative (and how this affects the coherence or lack thereof in the book). Nevertheless, there are of course narrative genres in Numbers, and the large degree to which they are narrative is recognised in the labels used for them.¹³⁴

The analysis below comes in two parts, following the suggestion in 1.3.3. above that concerning how the narrative features appear it is probably reasonable to differentiate between a micro- and macro-level in Numbers. Consequently, we will first look at the narrativity of the individual passages of Numbers, whereafter we move on to the narrativity of the book as a whole. Such a division between micro- and macro-level is, moreover, usually made in the scholarly literature on Numbers, which make it easier for us to align our discussion with the one found there.

2.2. The Many Genres of Numbers and Narrativity

What genres do we have in Numbers? Only a few have discussed the question, but two studies stand out in exploring the issue thoroughly: Gordon Wenham’s introduction to the academic study of Numbers in the Old Testament Guides’ series;¹³⁵ and Rolf P. Knierim and George W. Coats’ volume on Numbers in the FOTL commentary-series.¹³⁶ These works have attempted to define all or most

¹³³ Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 12-21; but see also Ricoeur, *Temps et récit 1*, 131-35; Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text*, 335-50; and Karl Viëtor, “Den litterära genrehistoriens problem,” in *Genreteori* (transl. Tommy Andersson; eds. Eva Haettner Aurelius and Thomas Götselius; Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1997); 32 transl. of “Probleme der literarischen Gattungsgeschichte,” *Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* IX (1931):425-447.

¹³⁴ Another way of conceptualising ‘narrative’ which comes close to the talk about narrativity used here is to talk about text-types, as Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 6-21 does. This sets ‘narrative’ as text-type next to ‘description’ and ‘argumentation.’ In short, narrative is characterised by a double chronology (the time of the story and the time it takes to read it), argument by the attempt to persuade an audience of a proposition, and description by the attempt to render the properties of things (p. 9). These different types may be used and combined in different genres, as, for instance, a lawyer arguing a case in court may use a narrative to do this, or as in a typical European 19th-century novel may involve large parts of pure description to tell its story. It may be noted, moreover, that Chatman’s understanding of text-types is not (expressly) connected to text-linguistics.

¹³⁵ Wenham, *Numbers*, 26-67.

¹³⁶ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*.

of the passages of Numbers generically. On the following two pages I present their designations in two columns in order to give an overview of the their suggestions concerning the different genres in Numbers, which then in turn may form the starting point for our discussion of the narratives and narrative features in the book, and how these emerge. For the most part I have simply accepted Wenham's and Knierim and Coats' designations in the ensuing discussion, in order to focus on the question of the narrativity of Numbers, but divergences are also noted.¹³⁷ In a third column, moreover, I have added designations from the perspective of comparative literature. These are categorisations of mine made by means of Kenton L. Sparks' discussion of the major genres in ANE literature.¹³⁸ The main reason for the inclusion of this column is to give a broader literary-historical perspective on the genres of Numbers.

In a sense, the designations of both Wenham, Knierim and Coats, and Sparks, are all meant to hint at and pay heed to this broader historical-comparative perspective of the genres found in Numbers, and to reckon with, and adequately approach, the non-narrative passages in the book. It would be interesting to delve more deeply into the genres, their respective histories and significance in the larger Ancient Near Eastern environment, not least the non-narrative ones and their functions, and against this more detailed picture expound how the aspect of narrativity emerge in them. This, however, would take us too far in light of the main quest of this chapter and the thesis as a whole, and we need to move swiftly to be able to pursue it at all. Therefore, in what follows the genres and their larger setting are for the most part, but not always, stated and presupposed rather than discussed, to focus the analysis on narrativity.

A few remarks on the columns are in order before we start our discussion. It is only Knierim and Coats that have categorised the whole text of Numbers and Figure 1 should therefore be understood to follow their presentation, enlisting their rubrics of the passages including their division of the material in the starting left column. Wenham's account is meant to be exhaustive, but I cannot find references to all units of Numbers in his discussion. Moreover, some of the passages defined generically by Knierim and Coats are too short to find appropriate counterparts in Sparks' discussion. Therefore, the columns can be understood to

^{137.} It should also be noted that the theoretical underpinnings in regard to genre is different between the approach taken here and the ones of Knierim and Coats, Sparks, and (possibly) Wenham (the latter's theory is not outspoken in his book). A divergence towards Sparks was noted in footnote 131 above, and Knierim and Coats more essentialist direction throughout their commentary would seem to diverge from the approach taken here of genres rather as fleeting agreements in the form of language-games. Having said this, however, I still believe that their discussions and designations are usable as pointers to what we find in Numbers, and they may indeed form a starting-point for discussing the genre/s and narrativity of Numbers. At some points in what follows, divergences which originate in different theories on genre are noted, mainly in the footnotes.

^{138.} Sparks, *Ancient Texts*.

Figure 1: The Genres of Numbers

<u><i>Knierim/Coats</i></u>	<u><i>Wenham</i></u>	<u><i>Sparks</i></u>
1:1-54. Report of Military Conscription	List of Leaders (1:5-15)	List
2:1-34. Report of Mobilization of Militia	Census Return (1:20-46) Tribal Duty Roster (2:1-3:39)	List List
3:1-4:49. Report of Conscription and Mobilization	Census Return (3:34-49)	List
5:1-4. Report of Exclusion of Unclean	Purity Rule	
5:5-10. Legal Instruction about Restitution	Purity Rule	Law
5:11-31. Legal Instruction about Trial	Purity Rule	Ritual
6:1-21. Report of the Nazirite Law	Purity Rule	Ritual
6:22-24. Instruction about Aaronide Blessing	Priestly Blessing	Prayer
7:1-89. Report on Gifts from Tribal Leaders	Administrative Lists (7:5-15, 12-83, 84-88)	Lists
8:1-4. Report about the Lamps		Instruction
8:5-22. Report about the Levites' Installation	Dedication Record (8:5-26)	Ordination
8:23-26. Legal Instruction on Levitic Appointees		
9:1-14. Report about the Second Passover	Case Law Report	Instruction
9:15-23. Report about Theophanic March		
10:1-10. Instruction about the Two Trumpets		Instruction
10:11-36. Legend of Start of the Campaign		List
11:1-3. Story of Taberah	Complaint Story	
11:4-35. Story of Quail	Complaint Story	Legend
12:1-16. Story of Miriam and Aaron's Revolt	Complaint Story	Legend
13:1-14:45. Murmuring Story	Complaint Story	Legend
15:1-16. Ordinance Speech for Sacrifices	List of Leaders (13:4-16)	Instruction
15:17-31. Ordinance Speech for First Bread		Instruction
15:32--36. Anecdote of Wood-gathering	Case Law Report	
15:37-41. Ordinance Speech for Vestment		Instruction
16:1-17:5. Story of Dathan's etc. Rebellion	Complaint Story (16:1-40)	Legend
17:6-15. Plague Story	Complaint Story	Legend
17:16-26. Anecdote of Aaron's Rod	Primacy Story	Legend
17:27-18:32. Collection of Priesthood Ordinances		Instructions

19:1-22. Ordinance of Protective Cleansing	Purity Rule	Ritual
20:1-13. Story of Meribah	Complaint Story	Legend
20:14-21. Report of Negotiations	Obituary (20:1) Diplomatic Note (20:14-17)	Legend
20:22-29. Report of Aaron's Death	Battle Report (20:20-21) Obituary (20:23-29)	Legend
21:1-3. Etiology of Hormah		
21:4-9. Story of Serpents	Complaint Story	Legend
21:10-20. Wilderness Itinerary	Victory Song (21:14-15)	Itinerary
21:21-31. Battle Report	Diplomatic Note (21:22) Battle Reports (21:23-25, 33-35) Victory Song (21:27-30)	
21:32-35. Wilderness Itinerary		Itinerary
22:1-24:25. Legend of Balaam	Comic Tale Pagan Prophecy (23:7-10; 18-24; 24:3-9; 15-24)	Tale/Novella Prophecy
25:1-18. Anecdote of Baal Peor		Legend
25:19-26:65. Report of Conscription	Census Returns (26:5-51, 57-62)	List
27:1-11. Case Report : Zelophehad	Case Law Report	Law
27:12-23. Report of Commission	Obituary	Legend
28:1-30:1. Ritual Calendar	Cultic Calendar	Calendar
30:2-17. Judicial Tradition on Vows		Law
31:1-54. Battle Report	Battle Report	
32:1-42. Dialogue of Negotiations		Legend
33:1-35:34. Wilderness Itinerary ¹³⁹	Itinerary (33:3-49)	Itinerary
33:50-56. Instructions for Conquest	Command of Expulsion	
34:1-12. Definition of Boundaries	Boundary Definition	
34:13-15. Inheritance Explanation		
34:16-29. Administrative Lists	List of Leaders (34:17-29)	List
35:1-8. Tariff Levitical Cities	List of Levitical Cities	List
35:9-34. Tariff Cities of Refuge	Purity Rule	Law
36:1-12. Case Report : Zelophehad	Case Law Report	Law
36:13. Conclusion formula		

¹³⁹ Knierim and Coats see the units following 33:49 through 35:34 as dependent on the itinerary list in 33:1-49 and therefore subsume them into the same generic unit on the highest level of the text, but also treat them individually, Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 307-309.

indicate that the designations of Wenham and Sparks are secondarily related to those of Knierim and Coats. Finally, it is readily seen that I have made quite extensive use of the term ‘legend’ in applying Sparks’ designations for the longer stories of Numbers. Sparks defines legend as “...narratives that treat the lives of great heroes or the origins of important social or religious institutions. The genre therefore serves as society’s link to its ancient roots.”¹⁴⁰ This seemed to be more to the point of what is at work in the stories so designated above, rather than labelling them as tale or novella in Sparks’ terminology, which he simply defines as short stories, more or less elaborate or intricately plotted.¹⁴¹ With this said, we may now move on to the genre-designations listed, and from these discuss the generic character of the individual passages of Numbers, including their narrativity.

One can first note that Numbers is perhaps one of the most diverse books of the Hebrew bible generically and contains a vast number of genres.¹⁴² To get an overview over the book it might therefore be helpful to summarise the columns and their designations somewhat. Done in this way, the passages of Numbers arguably show up in primarily five genres: 1) administrative lists (1:1-4:49; 7:1-89; 10:11-28; 25:19-26:65; 34:1-35:34); 2) cultic rules and regulations (5:1-4; 5:11-6:24; 8:1-9:14; 10:1-10; 15:1-41; 17:27-19:22; 28:1-30:1); 3) stories of different sorts (10:29-14:45; 16:1-17:26; 20:1-21:9, 21:21-31; 22:1-25:18; 27:12-23; 31:1-34; 32:1-42); 4) laws¹⁴³ (5:5-10; 27:1-11; 30:2-17; 35:9-36:12); and 5) itineraries¹⁴⁴ (21:10-20, 32-35; 33:1-56). Numbers in this summarised account of its genres is a composite of lists, cultic rules, stories, laws, and itineraries, although the latter two do not come to the fore much. It is interesting to set this summary description in context by comparing Numbers briefly to the other books of the Pentateuch. The scant presence of laws differentiate Numbers from Exodus and Deuteronomy, making the dominance of P and its cultic regulations the more pertinent. Moreover, in contrast to the same books, treaty or covenant texts do not appear at all in Numbers.¹⁴⁵ If we broaden

¹⁴⁰ Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 271.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 252. How these definitions stand against the form-critical discussion of the same concepts are omitted. Again, Sparks is primarily referred to here to hint at the broader literary-historical context of the genres of Numbers. Cf., however, also John Van Seters critique of Coats’ use of the term *Saga*, preferring the term ‘legend,’ Van Seters, *The Life of Moses*, 4 footnote 8.

¹⁴² Wenham, *Numbers*, 26; cf. Milgrom, *Numbers*, xiii; and the discussion of Angela Roskopf, *The Wilderness Itineraries: Genre, Geography, and the Growth of Torah* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 1-13.

¹⁴³ A rough differentiation of cultic rules and law is also reflected in Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 144-147, 205-212, 417-419, 429-432.

¹⁴⁴ Itineraries come close to narratives, but lack a clear narrative paradigm and are therefore not put into the group of ‘stories of different sorts’ here, but rather are understood as a discrete genre. The issue will be discussed more thoroughly below.

¹⁴⁵ A possible exception is Num 25, where Phinehas is granted an ‘eternal covenant’ (vv.

the perspective to texts outside of the Pentateuch, one can note that we do not have historiographic texts resembling those in the books of Kings, but rather, in Numbers we encounter tales and legends.¹⁴⁶ In short, and using the terminology of source- and redaction-critical research, Numbers contains material typical of P (lists and cultic regulations), apart from a few stories that traditionally were assigned to JE, P and mixes of these.¹⁴⁷ This is, in a few words, the book we encounter, a summary description, however, that we need to return to and discuss in more detail in due course. At this point however, assuming that this is a correct description of the genres of Numbers, how the narrative features emerge in these materials in light of the three parameters of story, discourse, and language-game set out in the chapter on theory is now investigated. I think it reasonable to form four groups to discuss the issue, and discussing these will constitute the main part of our analysis of the genres of Numbers and their narrativity.

2.2.1. *Genuine Narratives*

The first group may be called genuine narratives. This group is primarily constituted by the ‘stories of different sorts’ noted above, although not all passages that are referred to there: 11:4-34 (Manna and Quails); 12:1-16 (Miriam and Aaron’s Revolt); 13:1-14:45 (Spy-story); 16:1-17:26 (Revolt by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, plus sequel); 20:1-13 (The Waters of Meribah); 20:14-21 (Edom Refuses Passage); 20:22-29 (Aaron’s Death); 21:4-9 (The Copper Snake); 21:21-35 (Victories over Sichon and Og); 22:1-24:25 (Balaam); 25:1-18 (Baal Peor); 27:12-23 (Joshua Appointed Successor of Moses); 31:1-54 (War against Midian); and 32:1-42 (Reuben and Gad’s land East of Jordan).¹⁴⁸ I refer to these as ‘genuine,’ largely because they represent what most readers intuitively would

12-13). However, in terms of genre the passage is rather a story than a treaty-document, in comparison to Ex 24; 34; and Deut.

¹⁴⁶ This does not rule out that the scribes behind Numbers might have collected and written the material for historical purposes. See further the discussion in conjunction with the analysis of the genre of the whole of Numbers below, and compare also what was said above on storytelling narratives as referring to reality in the chapter on theory. For this latter notion, cf. Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 112; Wolterstorff, *Works*, 107; and Mink, “Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument,” 143-44.

¹⁴⁷ As seen from the Review of Earlier Research (1.2.1.) above, many doubt the presence of JE in Numbers nowadays, see e.g. Römer, “De la périphérie au centre,” 4-6. However, Levine, *Numbers 1-20*; Schmidt, *Numeri*; and Seebass, *Numeri*, reckon with the presence of JE.

¹⁴⁸ One can note that this understanding of narrative comes close to Knierim and Coats’ definition of ‘story,’ see Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 360-61. The units so termed by them are almost equivalent to the passages I single out here, apart from the Balaam-unit, which they call ‘legend.’ Cf. also p. 231 where the genre of 20:14-21 is discussed and it is concluded that it is not a story, since it has no ‘plot-line’ – a reasoning that comes close to the one of Ricoeur, related above.

call narratives, in comparison to modern literary fiction such as short stories, for example.¹⁴⁹ What is distinctive about these narratives is that they share a certain similarity in terms of narrative paradigm and discourse.

When it comes to the first parameter, they all have a rather full narrative paradigm of a sequence of events related temporally, causally, and thematically in a plot with a beginning, middle, and end. Num 12:1-16 might serve as an example of this. The story starts with Miriam and Aaron's challenge to Moses,¹⁵⁰ concerning his Cushite wife and his unique prophetic status as prophet (12:1-2), the latter motif providing the backbone of the story and its central conflict.¹⁵¹ It sets the action of the story in motion, from the initial confrontation between Miriam and Aaron, and Moses respectively (vv. 1-2), through the answer of Yahweh affirming Moses' status (vv. 6-8), to the punishment of Miriam for the challenge (vv. 9-15), all parts leading up to the theme of Moses unique authority.

Knierim and Coats have argued that The Story of Miriam and Aaron's Revolt "...begins abruptly, with no exposition to set out the major conditions necessary for narrating the plot..."¹⁵² leaving us with only a complication (vv. 1-10) and resolution (vv. 11-15) in the story. Bypassing the question of what necessarily constitutes a plot for the moment, one might observe that the storyline found here may, in certain respects, be understood to be rather intricately arranged. For example, the opening formulation, 'spoke against' (וַתִּדְבֹר... בְּמֹשֶׁה) is a bit unusual, using דָּבַר as it does to introduce the object, Moses, rather than אָל. Nevertheless, all commentators agree that the expression connotes hostility, citing Num 21:5, 7; Job 19:18; Pss 50:20; 78:19, as additional instances of the expression.¹⁵³ If so, the conflict is signalled clearly from the outset and the reasons are given in the first two verses, which set the scene for the story, turning on the authority of Moses as it does. It is not impossible then, to see a trace of exposition in these verses.

¹⁴⁹ Skalin, "Centres and Borders," 19-20. The designation is not meant to convey anything peculiarly modern, however.

¹⁵⁰ Many have seen Aaron as an addition to the story, since the introductory verb, וַתִּדְבֹר, is feminine singular. Such a conclusion is of course possible, but we are not necessarily pushed to it by grammar, since it is not unusual to use singular verbs for plural subjects, and we may understand the gender to follow the first mentioned subject, Miriam, Budd, *Numbers*, 133; H.S. Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik* (2nd ed. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1952), 284 (who mentions, among others, Gen 33:7, as a similar case); and E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Translated by A. E. Cowley. 2nd rev. ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 468.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 134-135; Gray, *Numbers*, 120, 122; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 93; and Schmidt, *Numeri*, 34.

¹⁵² Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 180.

¹⁵³ See e.g. Budd, *Numbers*, 136; Gray, *Numbers*, 123; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 180; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 328; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, 93. Cf. however, the slightly different rendering of Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 111.

In v. 2 we encounter the expression again, only in this instance we need to understand it positively, since Miriam and Aaron are saying that Yahweh is surely speaking to them as well as Moses (הֲרַק אֶדְבַּמְשֶׁה דְבָר יְהוָה הֲלֹא גַם־בְּנִי דְבָר) “Does Yahweh only speak to Moses? Does he not speak also to us?”). It is also found in v. 8, where Yahweh affirms his special communication to Moses, by the same expression (פָּה אֶל־פִּי אֶדְבָּר־בּוֹ) “Face to face I speak to him...”), which therefore need to be taken positively also here. Gray explains this phenomena by saying that בָּ signals “...a closer and more intimate conversation...”¹⁵⁴ than אֶל, which would be suitable both for friendly and more hostile personal encounters. Budd also notes that the expression “...is used of divine communication to a prophet...” offering 2 Sam 23:2; 1 Kings 22:18; Hos 1:2; and Hab 2:1 as examples. In v. 2 then Miriam and Aaron say that Yahweh speaks to them in the same intimate/prophetic way as Yahweh speaks to Moses, and Yahweh affirms this way of speaking albeit exclusively for Moses in v. 8, while at the same time the expression may connote hostility, in a close conversation.

As seen from this discussion, there is a certain ambiguity to the expression as used in the story,¹⁵⁵ but this may be understood as an element that ties the plot together more tightly, by way of irony. As already stated, the central conflict is signalled from the outset in v. 1 by means of the expression and the sense of hostility it may carry. In v. 2, Miriam and Aaron claim that Yahweh speaks to them in the same intimate way as to Moses, by way of the same expression. This becomes ironic in vv. 4-8, when Yahweh actually does speak to them in such a way, singling out Miriam and Aaron as the direct addressees of the divine prophetic speech (v. 5), but not to affirm the claim of Miriam and Aaron, but rather to reject it and endorse the relationship with Moses instead, again with the same expression (v. 8). As we have argued, the question of Moses unique authority is the central conflict which the plot turns on, and the expression can be understood to tie all parts of the story together in quite an intricate way, and which seems to defuse a first impression of the story beginning abruptly.

All in all, the narrative paradigm, connecting events in terms of plot and theme, which sometimes affect the stories down to a rather detailed level as seen from The Story of Miriam and Aaron’s challenge, vouch a space for the stories of this group that makes them independent as narratives.¹⁵⁶ In other words, The Story of Miriam and Aaron’s Revolt does not take place within the same narrative paradigm as the stories of Manna and Quails and the Spy-story which precede and follow it, even though they touch the same themes and are connected sequentially. So far, then, an important characteristic of the passages that form the group of genuine narratives in light of the first parameter has been identified.

¹⁵⁴ Gray, *Numbers*, 123; cf. Nyberg, *Hebreisk Grammatik*, 327.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 328.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 122-23; and Mink, “Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument,” 142-43.

Indeterminate Examples in view of the first Narrative Parameter. A few borderline-cases have been admitted into this group in regard to the first parameter, and which call for a more detailed discussion. First, The Story of the Revolt of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in chaps. 16-17 has a rather unclear ending. I have set the ending to 17:26, where Moses' obedience to Yahweh is noted in a concluding formula ("Moses did as Yahweh had commanded him – so he did"). The conflict in the form of the revolt seems to be finally settled when Aaron's authority is confirmed through the budding of his rod (17:23-25), and Moses puts the rod into the ark of the covenant in compliance with Yahweh's command (17:25-26).¹⁵⁷ However, the desperate cry of the people in vv. 27-28 ("We are expiring, we are perishing!... All who draw near to the dwelling of Yahweh will die!...") forms a sort of bridge between the Korah-story and the cultic rules on the privileges and responsibilities of the Aaronide priests that follow, which suggests that the story has not reached a complete end – and the ensuing rules may be seen as addressing the problem of priestly authority raised in the story. The outcry is, nevertheless, not easily ascribed entirely to the story or the ensuing rule.¹⁵⁸ It seems to be connected to the fact that people died in the Korah-story because they have approached Yahweh in an unauthorised manner or they rebelled against him (16:25-35; 17:6-14). However, as the story unfolds the plague stopped well before the outcry and the episode of Aaron's budding rod is related in-between the people dying and the outcry, which seems to make the outcry somewhat delayed in the story and detached from the actual dying of people. On the other hand, the rules that follow set out the priestly hierarchy and state that adherence to it will spare the Israelites from dying (18:5). The outcry, however, is not answered directly by the rules (as the words 'Yahweh said to Moses, no, you are not going to die, this is how you should approach me...' would do), but rather indirectly, and the rules also continue to set out the privileges of priests and Levites, which does not seem to be a response to the outcry. The outcry is thus truly a bridge-verse, and this is also a reason for not including it in the story. The alternative would be to regard the rules in chaps. 18-19 also as part of the narrative paradigm, but from 18:1 we clearly move into a rule-passage, the verse (together with the rest of the rule) generically marking a new section. Thus, the outcry in 17:27-28 has a bridge-function which makes the ending of

¹⁵⁷ *Contra* Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 160, who sees three stories in chaps. 16-17 and claims that it is only the theme of priestly organisation in Israel that unites them. However, nothing of what is said above is meant to deny the tensions in Num 16-17, but there is more to the unity of the two chapters than theme, primarily chronology and plot.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Gray, *Numbers*, 218; and Noth, *Numbers*, 133. Schmidt, *Numeri*, 65, 74, argues the secondary nature of vv. 27-28 in their present position. *Pace* Horst Seebass, *Numeri 10,11-22,1* (BK 2 Teilband; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 172-174, 208-209.

the Korah-story unclear in terms of narrative structure or paradigm, but not impossible.¹⁵⁹

The Baal Peor-incident (chap. 25) suffers a similar problem in that it ends with a command of Yahweh (v. 17, “Attack the Midianites, and strike them!”), but the obedient response to this is not depicted in chapter 25. What is more, the command can be understood to be obeyed much later on in chapter 31 (v. 7, “They fought against the Midianites as Yahweh had commanded...”), which could be interpreted to mean that the story continues in this chapter.¹⁶⁰ However, the main problem of The Story of Baal-Peor and the sin of the Israelites is resolved inside the limits of chapter 25 (see e.g. v. 8, “...and the plague was stayed from the Israelites”), and it is therefore possible to take Yahweh’s command in v. 17f. as a conclusion to what has just transpired. In light of what has just happened, the command relates Yahweh’s understanding of what should take place hereafter, and on this note the story ends and other passages follow. This is not to deny the connections between chapters 25 and 31, but rather merely to point out that the stories are not part of the same narrative paradigm or perhaps episode, and that the connections do not come in terms of narrative paradigm. Rather, we should say that the story in chapter 25 is *resumed* again in chapter 31. The stories are found separately in Numbers with their own beginnings, middles, and ends etc., even though they also have connections that suggest that interpretation at large in Numbers may benefit from seeing links between them. More will be said about these connections in the following chapter on the plot.

Third, in the story of the victories over king Sichon and king Og (21:21-35), the narrative paradigm is quite loose. However, the passage is not an itinerary like the preceding one in 21:10-20, simply enumerating camp-sites of Israel and noting the movement from the one to the other. Instead, it starts with a problem of passage (vv. 21-23), which finds its solution through a war (vv. 23-25), which in turn is prolonged into neighbouring territories (vv. 32-35), and ends with Israel safely settled east of Jordan (although noted in 22:1, bridging 21:21-35 and 22:1-24:25), which could be said to amount to a plot. The theme of the story which relates the different parts can be understood as ‘victories against neighbouring enemies.’ Nevertheless, the narrative paradigm should be described as loose, not least because of the insertion of the lengthy (in this context) victory

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 47, 50, 202, who also emphasises the bridging function of these verses. See moreover, Christian Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg durch die Wüste: Eine leserorientierte Exegese der Rebellionstexte in Exodus 15:22-17:7 und Numeri 11:1-20:13* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 196-97, on the function of vv. 27-28.

¹⁶⁰ The connection with chap. 31 is noted by most commentators, the more extended notes being found in Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 295-97; Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21-36* (The Anchor Bible 4B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 279 *passim*; Noth, *Numbers*, 229; and see also the more complicated interconnections seen by Gerhard von Rad, *Die Priesterschrift im Hexateuch: literarisch untersucht und theologisch gewertet* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1934), 130-34.

song (vv. 27-30), and the ending bridging this story and the Balaam-story which follows.¹⁶¹

Finally, the stories of the war against Midian and the question of land for Reuben and Gad (chaps. 31 and 32), which mix narrative and law as it were, are in an intermediate state which poses a problem for including them among ‘genuine narratives’ in the light of the first parameter. The problem is that these stories primarily relate dialogues that to a large extent can be taken as commands/laws/rules from Yahweh.¹⁶² If so, how then are we to understand the narrativity of these passages? I would argue that it makes sense to see a full narrative paradigm in both passages. These passages are best taken as laws and rules, but they come in the form of stories.

Chap. 31, first, seems to have a plot which begins with the problem of the unsought revenge on the Midianites, which causes the war against Midian (vv. 1-12), which in turn gives rise to the ensuing speech by Moses and Yahweh on how to divide the booty after the war, where the more technical language suggesting laws is found (vv. 13-45; cf. e.g., v. 28, תְּרִיבָה, “tribute;” v. 32, פְּלֹנְדָה, “plunder, spoil;” see also v. 21, זֶה הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת-מֹשֶׁה, “This is the statute of the law that Yahweh commanded Moses...,”¹⁶³). However, the connection between introductory story and ensuing law can be described as being more direct and interwoven with the preceding story, rather than how the rules in chaps. 18-19, for instance, follow on from 16-17. To exemplify, v. 13 has Moses, Eleazar, and the leaders of the community go out to meet the army returning with the spoils in v. 12, and the speech that follows in vv. 14ff. directly addresses what is to be done in turn with the spoils that the army brings and which has been enumerated roughly in vv. 9-12. Even the law ostensibly referred to in vv. 21-24 comes as a part of the trend of events, as one of the turns in what is to be done with the spoils, integrated into the action as it were, and it would, I think, be more difficult to read the passage as a law with story-illustration rather than the other way around.¹⁶⁴ Chap. 32, on the other hand, begins in-

¹⁶¹ Noth sees it as a story that has been formed from the song and dealing with occupation, Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (transl. Bernard M. Anderson. Prentice-Hall, N.J.: Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 73-74.

¹⁶² Cf. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 78-80. For chap. 31, see further the discussion of the third group below, which contains similar passages.

¹⁶³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 21-36, 454-463, 474; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 262-265; Noth, *Numbers*, 231-232; de Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 355-357; and also Gray, *Numbers*, 419, 422-425; pace Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 296-297, who do not treat the rule-aspect of the passage in discussing its structure and genre.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Wenham who, sensing the double character of chap. 31, says: “...it is right to say that the narrator is more concerned with the aftermath of the battle than with the battle itself” Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 211 See also Gray, *Numbers*, 418; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 185; and Baruch Levine’s comment that “The present priestly account of the Midianite war also provided the opportunity to promulgate a code of law...” Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 445.

stead with a lengthy dialogue between Moses, Reuben, and Gad on the possibility of having Transjordan as their inheritance (vv. 1-32), and ends with a summary of what took place after it as a consequence, where Reuben and Gad conquer the area (vv. 33-42). Even here we can quite easily outline a plot with a course of events stretching from the initial problem in Reuben and Gad's request, which is resolved in the dialogue since permission is negotiated on promises of fidelity to Israel despite settlement in Transjordan, but then is also followed by the consequential actions of conquest being told of at length. The themes of the two stories could be said to be "War and booty" and "Fidelity and Settlement," respectively.¹⁶⁵ They would thus constitute wholes in the form of narratives. Again, I do not mean to suggest that the passages have not been understood as laws or rules, or that they were not inserted in the book of Numbers for the reason of warranting such rules, but the argument here is that they do this by means of a full narrative paradigm, and therefore they would belong in the group I have called genuine narratives.

The Genuine Narratives and the Two Remaining Parameters. When it comes to the second parameter, discourse, the stories in the group of genuine narratives are all quite straightforward narratives, told in chronological order, mostly in a scenic mode with considerable dialogue, but also summarised narration.¹⁶⁶ There is usually also the typical variation between foreground and background in the storyline.¹⁶⁷ The discourse of the Balaam-story (22:1-24:25), however, stands out in that it – to a large extent – is built around a three-fold repetition that does not occur in the other stories: three encounters with the angel of Yahweh, three prophecies, three sacrifices and so on.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ *Contra* Horst Seebass, *Numeri 22,2-36,13* (BK 3 Teilband; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2007), 290, who concerning chap. 31 says that it has no overarching theme.

¹⁶⁶ For the narrative concepts 'summary' and 'scene,' see Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 93-99, 109-112; and Prince, *Dictionary*, 85-86, for 'scene,' and pp. 95-96 for 'summary.'

¹⁶⁷ Background and foreground are clearly marked grammatically in these stories. While foreground is related through verbal clauses, background is given in clauses begun by ׀, but also by means of noun-clauses and compound noun-clauses, cf. Mats Eskhult, *Studies in Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Studia Semitica Upsaliensia 12; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 17-43; and Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik*, 256-263; and see also Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 450-451, 455-456. The variation in the narrator's line between verbal clauses and noun clauses to mark foreground and background also occurs outside the genuine narratives, e.g. 1:16-17, 44-48 *passim*. The difference between these other occurrences of the variation and those of the genuine narratives is that the variation relates a story in a complete narrative paradigm in the genuine narratives, while this is not the case in the other passages of Numbers.

¹⁶⁸ See Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 165-66.

Finally, approaching this group with the third parameter in mind, the question of language-game, we relate the stories to the two games that served as examples in the chapter on theory above (1.3.2.), i.e. the factual and the storytelling language games. This is not to say that there are no other games to which the stories may be related and interpreted from, but these two language games will give us a starting-point and help us discuss the issue of games in interpreting the genuine narratives of Numbers. Additionally they also provide us with a point of reference for the ensuing analysis, albeit not exhaustively scrutinising all possibilities. From time to time we will note these other possibilities and how they affect interpretation.

My suggestion is that the following stories among the genuine narratives may be read profitably as storytelling ones: 11:4-34 (Manna and Quails), 11:35-12:16 (Miriam and Aaron's Revolt), 13:1-14:45 (Spy story), 16:1-17:26 (Revolt by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, plus sequel), 20:1-13 (The Waters of Meribah), 21:4-9 (The Copper Snake), 22:1-24:25 (Balaam), and 25:1-18 (Baal Peor).¹⁶⁹ The rest of the stories in this group would then be better read as factual narratives: 20:14-21 (Edom Refuses Passage), 20:22-29 (Aaron's Death), 21:21-22:1 (Victories over Sichon and Og), 27:12-23 (Joshua Appointed Successor of Moses), 31:1-54 (War against Midian), and 32:1-42 (Reuben and Gad's land East of Jordan). It may be reiterated that the question here is not whether these latter stories were understood to be historically true, but rather that if it is more or less meaningful to interpret them as closed narrative structures motivated by a demand for tellability. There is no question of this being an either-or categorisation. All stories could possibly be read in either language-game, but my argument is that there are degrees to this possibility, and the categorisation proposed is my suggestion for how to approach them in this thesis.

To exemplify and characterise this parameter, let us look at the difference for interpretation made by looking at the stories of Aaron's Death and The Copper Snake, stories which I have suggested should be read from different language-games. Approaching Aaron's Death (20:22-29) as a factual narrative presents the interpreter with certain problems. To simplify and radicalise, this means that

¹⁶⁹ In singling these out I have attempted to use the criteria set out in the chapter on theory. An indirect warrant for this division is given by Hans-Peter Mathys, who, asking for the similarities between Numbers and the books of Chronicles, observes that both "...enthalten sie phantastische, konstruiert, ja künstlich wirkende Geschichten..." and exemplifies with Num 16 and 22-24, Hans-Peter Mathys, "Numeri und Chronik. Nahe Verwandte," in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers* (ed. Thomas Römer; BETL CCXV; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 577 See also Nyberg, "Korah's uppror," who divides the story in Num 16-17 in scenes and talks about 'a drama' and 'dramatis personae.' One may also note the categorisations of Num 16:1-17:15; 22:21-35; and 21:4-9 as 'poetic narratives' by Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 32-47. He also, however, takes up the visions of Balaam (23:7-24:24) among 'historical narratives.' It is not clear, however, if he may be understood to view them as accurate witnesses to historical fact in connection to a factual language-game.

we take as give the priestly scribes' claim to be relating something that has happened in our actual world in the order and manner of the story.¹⁷⁰ Such an attitude towards the story means that we start asking questions such as: Where is Mount Hor situated (v. 22 etc., and how does it relate to the Moserah of Deut 10:6)? How and when did Moses and Aaron hand on what Yahweh instructed Moses to do with Aaron (v. 23), since this was only said to Moses and Aaron? Was Aaron buried on the mountain (v. 26b, 28b)? What is the meaning of the ordination ritual (v. 26a, 28a)? Why is it that the people mourn Aaron for exactly thirty days (v. 29)? Is it correct to understand Aaron's death and burial as 'mysterious and grand' as the author possibly does?¹⁷¹ etc. Some of these questions may seem silly or unanswerable to the experienced Biblical scholar, but they are fundamental to interpreting the story in a factual language-game where there is a claim to relate something that has happened.¹⁷² Moreover, it is from such questions that source-, tradition-, and redaction-criticism have evolved, even though scholars in this vein have arrived at much more refined and complicated answers than these simple questions would seem to assume. Answering them, *in some way*, is to read the story in a factual language-game. This is so, since what is under interpretation is not so much the story itself, but rather the reality to which it points. Therefore, for our interpretation of reality, it becomes important to know where Mount Hor is situated, what we might find if we start digging on its top, and how traditioning-processes went about in ancient Israel. My claim is that it makes sense to ask these questions while reading Num 20:22-29. In other words, the story may profitably be read in a factual language-game (and this would also pertain to the other stories related to this game above). It does not mean, however, that the questions are easily answered or that other questions could never be asked about the story.

Moreover, and adding a cautionary note, one should of course be aware of the difference between 'relating something that has happened' in antiquity and in modern times, an activity which seems to answer to different sets of standards depending on which historical period we are talking about. That is possibly one reason why it might seem simplistic to ask these questions of an ancient narrative reporting something but not to a modern one: the modern one is possibly more naturally aligned to those kinds of questions. I would hold, nevertheless, that the idea to relate something and claim it as such is still fundamental to the stories in Numbers I have suggested us to read from a factual game, and there-

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 235, who claim that the intention of the passage is to report the death of Aaron.

¹⁷¹ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 169; cf. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 153.

¹⁷² These and similar questions are asked and answered by Budd, *Numbers*, 228; Gray, *Numbers*, 270-71; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 235; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 494-95; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 171; Noth, *Numbers*, 153-54; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 153-54; all exemplifying factual readings of the passage.

fore also warrant the questions of the kind just asked.¹⁷³ Nonetheless, care must be taken in asking and answering such questions, and that other questions may come into play, such as priestly authority in the example discussed here, must be taken into account. Suggesting that we may profit from linking Aaron's Death to a factual language-game gives us a starting-point for discussing what is done in this narrative, not excluding other questions, the point being to illustrate what such a linking involves.

The story of the Copper Snake (21:4-9), on the other hand, I suggest needs to be read from the point of view of the storytelling language-game. This means that we approach the story to appreciate its narrative paradigm with plot and theme, understanding its events exclusively in relation to these, as motifs with sense but not reference. Such a reading means that we ask questions such as: What is the plot and theme/s of the story? What is the place and meaning of the complaint of the people in such a structure (v. 5)? How does their complaint ("Why have you¹⁷⁴ brought us up from Egypt to die in the wilderness? Surely, there is no food nor water, and our souls have grown weary of this miserable food!") relate to their confession in v. 7 ("We have sinned because we spoke against Yahweh and you. Pray for us unto Yahweh so that he removes the snakes from us!)? etc.

If I, to illustrate to illustrate the point, were to answer these kinds of questions in regard to The Copper Snake, it would move along the following lines: first of all, the plot moves in quite an uncomplicated fashion from rebellion, via punishment, to redemption. The theme could be understood to be 'rebellion in the wilderness.' The conflict that drives the plot is introduced with the note in v. 4 that the people became impatient, a complaint which is detailed and made explicit in v. 5, where the people speak against Yahweh and Moses, venturing their dislike for the food they get. An adumbrated exposition which might give a background for this complaint is found in the symbolically loaded words that the people had to go back towards the Sea of Reeds found at the start of the story (v. 4). Instead of getting to the promised land the people wander aimlessly in the wilderness, now having to go around Edom and even moving back towards the start of the journey. The mentioning of the Sea of Reeds is possibly doubly symbolic in that it also represents the great saving act of Yahweh for his people, which, however, is not mentioned by the people. The expression 'to speak

¹⁷³. Cf. Downing, *Historical Explanation*, 61.

¹⁷⁴. The Samaritan Pentateuch, the LXX, the Syriac version and the Vulgata here reads a singular instead of plural, and the Samaritan Pentateuch also אצ (hif. 'bring out') instead of עלה (hif. 'bring up'). Possibly, this reading should be adopted since it would be more difficult for the reason that the first part of v. 5 state that the people has spoken against both God and Moses, and it would then be strange to change to the singular in the actual complaint. Nevertheless, the difference in meaning is hardly important in the larger story, since it is repeated (by the people themselves) in v. 7 that they had spoken against both God and Moses, Gray, *Numbers*, 277; and Seebass, *Num 10,11-22,1*, 313.

against God' (v. 5, וַיִּדְבֹר הָעָם בְּאֵלֹהִים, cf. v. 7) using the preposition בְּ to connote hostility has been encountered in Num 12, but in having God as its object it is unprecedented, which underlines the seriousness of the complaint in this story – this is explicit rebellion against Yahweh himself. Moses is also included in the 'speaking against,' but emphasis falls on Yahweh, since, as Jacob Milgrom has argued, complaints against the leadership have been voiced several times previously in other stories (see e.g. Num 12:1; 16:13-14; 20:3-4).¹⁷⁵ As an answer to the complaint, Yahweh sends poisonous snakes among the people who bite them (v. 6). Again, using a symbolically loaded word, the narrator takes the opportunity to point out that complaint is disastrous for the chosen people, since many *of Israel* died because of it (v. 6b). The people now repent and in contrast to the rebellion just related, turn to Yahweh through Moses, to ask for mercy (v. 7). Very surprisingly, the remedy is not offerings or the like, but a sympathetic one: possibly with some irony, Yahweh commands Moses to erect a (copper) snake which one only has to look at to be cured from the snake-bites (v. 8). If there is more to this symbol in the story as such is hard to say, and even though the detail creates much of the significance and specificity of the whole story, it is not further developed.

Such a presentation of the story might seem partly redundant in that it apparently repeat much of the story. On the other hand, the story is not very complex and its meaning as a closed narrative structure would be tied to a presentation like this one. Note the interpretative glosses that I have inserted in it: 'rebellion,' 'answer,' 'contrast,' 'mercy,' and 'irony,' as well as the attempts at elucidating possible symbols in the story. These glosses are meant to be keys into the meaning of the story as a closed narrative structure that answer how the different motifs of the story relate to each other and what meaning is tied to them in relation to each other, and to theme and plot. In short, we could say that the story paints – in broad brushes – four contrasting parts of rebellion, punishment, repentance/prayer, and redemption, and read in a storytelling language-game thus the meaning of the story would lie very much in this pattern, flavoured with the intriguing motif of the copper snake, which endows it with an individuality as compared to the other rebellion-stories.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, if the story is understood in a storytelling language-game, we may nevertheless describe the priestly scribes comment on a certain period of the wilderness-wanderings, but the comments would then come by *the story as a whole*, and not through a correspondence between each detail of the story and their historical counterparts as in a factual lan-

¹⁷⁵ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 173; cf. Schmidt, *Numeri*, 102, 105.

¹⁷⁶ Similar, but also other and more detailed literary observations on the story are made by Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 237-38. Most commentators address factual issues in reading the text, evidencing the historical inclination and tradition of commentaries on Numbers. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 156-58, for instance, is a clear example of a factual reading of the story.

guage-game, in other words through the story as a settled whole, an image, or metaphor, that pronounces judgment on this particular period.

Therefore, in interpreting the story in the storytelling language-game, and in contrast to the factual language-game, it is not necessary to ask the reference-questions, for instance, where the road between mount Hor and the Sea of reeds is situated – which is merely taken as the scenery for the story; or how many were killed by the snakes – for the drama of the story it is enough to say that ‘many’ were killed; or what happened to the copper snake afterwards – in the story itself it would represent the means of redemption, although an unusual and interesting one that is also found in other texts outside Numbers (which can be both factual and storytelling), and of itself may stir imagination; etc. If we take the narrative structure to be ‘closed,’ we can say that the meaning is ‘inherent’ in the story, and to get to the bottom-line again, the claim made here is that it makes sense to read The Story of the Copper Snake from a storytelling language-game (as well as the other stories linked to this game above). Again, other questions put to the story are not hereby ruled out, but the claim is made that it may be profitable to link The Copper Snake to a storytelling game, and the discussion above is meant to show what it might mean to do this. To summarise, these are examples of what the two language-games mean for interpreting the genuine narratives of Numbers.

If the division of this group of narratives into different language-games is accepted, it would have consequences for the ‘borderliners’ discussed above. The loose narrative paradigm would not be a damaging problem for the interpretation of the three ‘borderliners’ Victories over Sichon and Og (21:21-35), War against Midian (31:1-54) and Reuben and Gad’s Land (32:1-42), since this is something we might expect in relating them to the factual language-game. Instead of seeing the narrative paradigm as all determinant in reading these stories, it becomes more important to interpret the references made in them to persons, laws, and customs etc. in order to understand them. Moreover, the case of the Victories over Sichon and Og, whose paradigm is the loosest, would rather serve to show the ease with which it is read in connection with a factual game, since the looseness may be related to the possibility of remodelling stories that pertains to factual language-games. This does not mean that well-constructed narratives cannot have seen changes, redactions, and insertions, only that it is here clearly seen in terms of a less unified narrative paradigm. In the case of the other two ‘borderliners’ discussed above, which here have been aligned to the storytelling language-game, The Revolt of Korah (16:1-17:26) and Baal Peor (25:1-18), it becomes a main task for the interpreter to understand how their peculiar endings relate to the other motifs of the story in a closed narrative structure.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ One final note on the issue of language-games: it is readily seen that most of the narratives in this group can be understood as legends in the definition of Sparks; i.e. as

In short, I have claimed that we may talk about a group of ‘genuine narratives’ in Numbers that have a rather full narrative paradigm granting them a certain narrative independence, the stories of which are presented mostly in straightforward, chronological discourse, about half of which could profitably be interpreted from a storytelling point of view. These stories with their characteristics will, I believe, be one important piece in trying to understand the composite nature of Numbers from a narrative perspective.

2.2.2. Narrative Sequences

The second group of narratives in Numbers may be called independent narrative sequences. These sequences are very short and not much is depicted in them, a few events at the most, which make them rather truncated in view of narrative paradigm, but despite this also have a certain narrative space and independence from surrounding passages. In discourse terms the sequences are told in summary form, borrowing, so to speak, a convention from more full-fledged or genuine narratives.¹⁷⁸

The group includes 5:1-4 (Expulsion of Unclean from the Camp), 11:1-3 (The Revolt and Fire at Taberah), and 21:1-3 (Victory at Hormah). Two of the passages feature dialogue apart from summary narration (5:1-4 and 21:1-3), which seems to give them a more scenic and extended character, somewhat challenging that they should be described as summary narratives. However, the trait is most readily explained in connection with the predilection in the narratives of the Hebrew bible to quote speech before referring to it indirectly, which may be understood to be carried into summarised accounts as well.¹⁷⁹

“...narratives that treat the lives of great heroes or the origins of important social or religious institutions,” Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 271. Among other things, this means that the stories are read as informing identity in the present of a believing reader. Such a definition cuts through the division of factual and storytelling language-games (which, it can be noted, seems to be a perennial problem in encountering legends, *Ibid.*, 271-72). If we hold fast to the classification made here, however, we might say that these stories are legends *by means of* a factual or storytelling language game. That is, in trying to understand these stories and what they say about present identity, the categories of factual and storytelling language-games may still have a role to play in pointing out other important aspects of them. Furthermore, we might note too that the emphasis in the discussion pursued here is meant to lie in what considering language-game means for understanding the stories at hand, whether legend or not, and not in classifying them beyond doubt.

¹⁷⁸. The summary, truncated form of the sequences, are quite well captured by Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 171; and Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg*, 85-86; both characterising 11:1-3.

¹⁷⁹. Cf. Alter, *The Art*, 65-68; Berlin, *Poetics*, 64; and Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: InterVarsity, 1987), 99-100; on the preponderance of direct speech in narratives of the Hebrew bible. The phenomenon is also tied to the evolution of the Hebrew language: we are here dealing with Classical Biblical Hebrew reporting speech directly, while in Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), indirect speech becomes more and more common, constructed with the infinitive + הָ, Rebecca

The first two sequences in 5:1-4 and 11:1-3 primarily seem to have a redactional purpose in their context. Num 5:1-4, Expulsion of Unclean from the Camp, narrate a principle of purity, introducing the purity rules that follow the passage, as it were.¹⁸⁰ Num 11:1-3, Revolt and Fire at Taberah, can also be said to narrate a principle in that it adumbrates the disobedience of Israel and the anger of Yahweh, which are themes in the stories that follow the passage in 11:4-14:45.¹⁸¹ Therefore, we can also understand it to have an introductory purpose similar to Num 5:1-4.¹⁸²

The etiology in 21:1-3, Victory at Hormah, is different. It strikes a new note after the many rebellions preceding it, showing Israel to be obedient towards Yahweh and victorious against enemies (cf. the promise to Yahweh and fulfilment of הָרָם by Israel in vv. 2-3). In this respect it is similar to 5:1-4 and 11:1-3, introducing new elements at a certain point in the book. The sequence, however, is not followed in the same way by passages which simply continue its themes. The passage coming immediately after, for instance, is The Story of the Copper Snake with its rebellion, contrasting the theme of obedience in the sequence. An additional fact that spills into our characterisation of the function of the passage is that the place Hormah has already been mentioned in 14:45, which make the

Corwin, *The Verb and the Sentence in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah* (The University of Chicago Dissertation; Borna near Leipzig: 1909; repr. Bibliolife, 2010), 29-32; cf. Arno Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik verglichen mit der seiner Quellen. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Syntax des Hebräischen* (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelman (formerly J. Ricker), 1909), 65. On LBH more generally, see Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 112-29.

^{180.} Cf. Achenbach, *Vollendung der Tora*, 501, who describes the passage as a “...Kompodium gedachter Text mit Beispielen für die katechetische Unterweisung des Volkes vorliegt...”; and Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 72-73, who say that the passage “...is interested in a typical picture...”. Furthermore, motifs of purity are also found in chaps. 1-4 in Numbers, but 5:1-4 still arguably turn the focus on purity. This is discussed more below in the chapter on theme.

^{181.} Cf. Achenbach, *Vollendung der Tora*, 203, 205-206; Erik Aurelius, *Der Fürbitter Israels. Eine Studie zum Mosebild im alten Testament* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988), 144-45; and Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg*, 89-90, but see also Van Seters who cites Volkmar Fritz, calling Num 11:1-3 a *Bispielstück* and compares the sequence with Judg. 3:7-11 (Othniel), Van Seters, *The Life of Moses*, 227. A characterisation similar to the one made above of Judg. 3:7-11 contrasting storytelling narratives is also made by Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 40-42.

^{182.} Cf. Aurelius, *Der Fürbitter Israels*, 144-45; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 172-73; Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg*, 89-90 and Römer, “Israel’s Sojourn,” 434. Num 11:1-3 is closely connected to what follows, as seen in that הָרָם in v. 2 is taken up by the suffix בְּקָרְבוֹ in v. 4, as noted by Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, 135. However, David Frankel, *The Murmuring Stories of the Priestly School: A Retrieval of Ancient Sacerdotal Lore* (VTSup LXXXIX; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 23, emphasises the separateness of the two passages, pointing וַיֵּשְׁבוּ (‘they continued’) in v. 4b as וַיֵּשְׁבוּ (‘they sat down’), with the LXX.

etiology in 21:1-3 rather belated. Taking these observations together one of the purposes of the passage seems to be to report history, apart from introducing new notes and themes: i.e. at this point in actual history, Israel gained a victory against the king of Arad, which resulted in the name Hormah, and after this other things happened that do not necessarily manifest the same notes or themes found in the sequence. Such a reasoning also seems to pertain to 5:1-4 and 11:1-3. An important purpose, if not the only one, of this group of ‘narratives’ is to report history, even though they also have a clear theme-introducing function.¹⁸³ Thus, it would seem reasonable to relate them to a factual language-game, albeit with strong thematic functions. In short, I suggest that these three short sequences form a small group in Numbers, because of the similar discourse and thematic function in connection to a factual language-game, sequences which are not instrumentally subsumed under non-narrative material. On this last note, the next group of narratives in Numbers can be differentiated from the present.

2.2.3. *Narrative Scenes and Situations*

I have termed the third group instrumental scenes and situations, since it comes close to texts that narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan has described as having ‘instrumental narrativity.’¹⁸⁴ Her description of the narrativity at work here is worth quoting at length:

Examples are a parable in a sermon, an anecdote told in the course of a debate in order to make a point, or a story used as example in a discourse primarily devoted to the exposition of abstract concepts, such as philosophy. Whereas in the previous modes narrativity appears on the highest level of textual organization (...), in this mode the narrative element is a self-enclosed micro level unit embedded in a nonnarrative macro structure. The story is not the focal point of the discourse, but an instrument subordinated to the global purpose of the text.¹⁸⁵

I believe this also could be said about sections of certain passages in Numbers. In our terminology of parameters, these sections have neither a full narrative paradigm, nor a truncated one (as the former group). One or two events are depicted at most, which serve to introduce a law or the like in the passage as a whole. What gives these passages a narrative character is primarily their discourse in that short scenes with dialogue are displayed, showing typical situations that a law, for instance, is meant to address. In this function it does not seem to matter much if the events that the scenes and situations depict have actually happened, since it is the typical features of the situation that is of interest. Still, there is a sense of report over the situations. The scenes are not presented

¹⁸³ Cf. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 74-78, who lists these passages under the title ‘historiography.’

He also makes a factual reading of Num 21:1-3 in Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 125-26.

¹⁸⁴ Ryan, “Modes of Narrativity,” 380-81.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

merely for the sake of telling. If we connect this reasoning to the two language-games we are comparing with here, the scenes and situations are pushed closer to a factual language-game than a storytelling one. However, there is still a need to emphasise the ideal and representative character of the scenes, being dependent upon their instrumentality.

I suggest the group is formed primarily from sections in Numbers which Wenham termed ‘case-law reports,’ namely: 9:1-14 (The Second Passover), 15:32-36 (The Wood-Gatherer), 27:1-11 (The Daughters of Zelophehad, First Entreatment) and 36:1-12 (The Daughters of Zelophehad, Second Entreatment).¹⁸⁶ Baruch Levine has characterised these reports in the following way:

A basic pattern in the priestly sections of Numbers is the introduction of a novel law through the medium of a story. In the story, a specific situation is presented as prompting the necessity, or as lending the justification, for the presented legislation.¹⁸⁷

Such a reasoning comes close to Ryan’s narratological formulation. The situations depicted are there to give background etc. for the rule or law that is laid down in the passage. These can be compared to illustrations in dictionaries, textbooks and similar things that support the main text in some way.¹⁸⁸ By means of this feature, they fulfil their purpose in their respective passages. Moreover, one may also observe how the narrative features are subsumed under the passage as a whole, and made to serve it. For example, in the first entreatment of the daughters of Zelophehad (27:1-11), the daughters are presented (v. 1), and they entreat Moses and Eleazar with a question concerning inheritance for women (v. 2-4), whereafter Moses asks Yahweh for advice, and Yahweh issues a law to regulate the situation. Here we find the few events that make up the scene or case, which the law is meant to address. Yet, the point of the passage is not those events that are retold, but the law that is issued, to which the scene is subordinated. This is seen, for instance, in the general formulation of the law, אִישׁ לֹא יָמָוֶת וְכֵן אֵין לוֹ, “If a man [or someone] dies, and there is no son...,” which

¹⁸⁶. Wenham, *Numbers*, 42-45. Wenham says about this group of laws that “It is often surmised that many of the laws found in the Pentateuch and other Near Eastern codes developed in this way [*being case law*], but there are only four cases where this is explicit in Numbers...” *ibid.*, 42. Such a reasoning seems to suggest that Wenham uses the ‘narrative component’ of these passages to distinguish them from other case laws – which is also shown in his designation of them as ‘case law reports.’ It also explains the difference towards Levine, who in discussing the same group also includes chaps. 31 and 32, discussed as borderline-cases of genuine narratives above, see Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 78-80. The ‘law-component’ is not as strong in these chapters as in Wenham’s selection. However, as is seen from 15:32-36, these divisions are not either-or characterisations, but rather an attempts to sort tendencies from the parameters set out. See furthermore the discussion of 15:32-36 by Douglas, *In the Wilderness*, 107-08.

¹⁸⁷. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 78-81.

¹⁸⁸. The analogy is Ryan’s, Ryan, “Modes of Narrativity,” 381.

means that the law addresses the question that daughters of Zelophehad brought up, but that it is clearly not tied to their circumstance only, although their case is seen as representative. It is also seen in the fact that the scene abruptly ends when Moses has put their case before Yahweh. It is not resumed by other events, but instead by law-text, the scene leading up to the law as it were, which is the focal point of the passage.¹⁸⁹

However, 15:32-36 could be termed a borderline-case in this group. One can note that most of the narrative situations in the case-law reports have a beginning, but hardly any middle or end, which depends on their being instrumental to the law or the rule they give background to. Num 15:32-36 is, in many respects, similar to chap. 31 discussed as a borderline-case of the genuine narratives. Both are laws and report a command from Yahweh, but come by means of story: they have a full narrative paradigm with beginning, middle, and end related in a plot, which assures them a narrative space and even independence. The primary difference to chap. 31 lies in Num 15:32-36 being short and that very little action is developed.¹⁹⁰

On the other hand, being short and independent it would be quite similar to the independent narrative sequences in the former group, especially 5:1-4 which also features a command of Yahweh.¹⁹¹ In terms of the parameters used here, 15:32-36 and 5:1-4 are very similar in regard to narrative paradigm and also discourse. Moreover, the other case-law reports set out at length the law in which the scene or situation is instrumental, whereas 15:32-36 only contains a short command (v. 35), a feature which heighten the similarity to the independent sequences. The main difference between 5:1-4 and 15:32-36, nonetheless, is that the latter starts with a situation that gives rise to a command of Yahweh, in similarity to the other case-law reports,¹⁹² while in 5:1-4 the command is given at the start of the narrative sequence, instigating it, but not coming as a conclusion to the trend of events or a case being presented. In this connection 15:32-36 is again similar to chap. 31, only that the plot is more developed in chap. 31.

What this discussion reiterates is that the lines between the different groups are not always easily drawn. Num 15:32-36 is not treated among the independent narrative sequences mainly because the command of the passage comes as a conclusion to it, instead of opening it, as in 5:1-4. This is a difference that we

¹⁸⁹ For this passage and its character as primarily law, see further Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 273-275; Levine, *Numbers 21-36*, 344-348; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 230; and Wenham, *Numbers*, 42.

¹⁹⁰ As noted in footnote 186, Levine counts chap. 31 to the case-law reports, Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 78-80. The discussion above is not meant to settle finally which genres these passages belong to, but rather to discuss tentatively the narrative character of the passages in light of the three parameters, and how we might conceptualise these.

¹⁹¹ Such similarities may explain why Wenham has chosen to term 5:1-4 a 'purity rule.'

¹⁹² Cf. also Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 259, who says that "...la dimension narrative du texte est entièrement ordonnée à la présentation d'une prescription légale."

may relate to narrative paradigm, although a small one. Nonetheless, the difference seems to be responsible for labelling the passage ‘case-law report,’ foregrounding the existence of a case that is responded to by Yahweh, rather than a command to be obeyed by Israel. The difference is thus seen in terms of a feature related to narrativity. Moreover, the ‘case-character’ of the passage also seems to make it instrumental to the command, in a way that is not a feature of the independent sequences. This purpose relates to the issue of language-games. We have related both groups to a factual game rather than a storytelling one, but another way to understand the situation for these groups is to say that while the narrative sequences are independent and thematic in Numbers, and therefore also seem to have a role in the book at large, the narrative scenes are instrumental and illustrative, subordinated in their function to their respective passages. The statement on function in the book at large is developed in the following chapters on plot and theme. Furthermore, 15:32-36 is not treated among the genuine narratives such as chap. 31, mainly because of the difference in length. Differently expressed, it is possible to differentiate the two passages (and groups) in relationship to discourse, and therefore 15:32-36 is treated in this group. Placing it here, however, does not downplay the similarities to other passages nor abolishes the borderline-character of the scene.

Apart from the case-law reports, I also count 7:1-89, where the tribal leaders bring gifts to the tabernacle, in this group. The passage does not deal with a regular law or cultic rule, even though surely a principle of support for the temple could be extracted from the passage. Rather, the main part of the passage is a list of the gifts that were given to the tabernacle (vv. 12-88), which in many respects is similar to administrative records of temples from the ancient Near East. As such, the list appears rather unadapted as ‘pasted,’ into Numbers.¹⁹³ If seen in this light, the short scene at the beginning of the passage turns out to be much introductory (vv. 1-11), giving a background for the list, and that warrants the passage being placed in this group. The same type of unfinished narrative paradigm appears, as in the case-law reports, in that the scene has a beginning, but hardly any middle and end, since the passage concludes with the list and not with a story. As a beginning, the scene is arguably instrumental to the list, in introducing it and giving it background.

The instrumentality of the scene in Num 7:1-89 is also underlined in view of discourse. At different places in the list it is stated three times that the list represents what was offered to the tabernacle after it had been anointed (vv. 10-11, 84, 88). This is also what the scene states (vv. 1-2), even though other offerings are envisioned here. The correspondence between the three remarks in the list and the scene thus underlines the instrumental function of the scene, as introducing the list, being subsumed to it. If such a reasoning is accepted, the scene may be relatable to a factual language-game, referring us to what was once given to

¹⁹³ Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 259-66.

the dedication of the tabernacle, even if this, as the scenes of the case-law reports, is a highly stylised account, that also may serve other purposes.

In short, the passages treated here suggest that we may talk about a group of passages in Numbers with a narrativity we might call ‘instrumental scenes and situations,’ where the subordination of narrative features into a non-narrative passage is evident. In terms of story, one or two events are depicted, which does not cohere into a narrative paradigm, the exception being 15:32-36. In terms of discourse, they are best described as scenes, and in terms of language game we may relate them to a factual one, but also as illustrative and instrumental.

2.2.4. Narrative Fragments

The fourth and final group of narrative features in Numbers is best termed narrative fragments, insertions, and embroiderings. These are found in the passages of Numbers that have not been dealt with so far. The passages they are found in are non-narrative, but the fragments, insertions, and embroiderings themselves may be said to have a narrative character. In other words, the features found in this group cannot be identified as proper narratives, like the genuine narratives, but they cannot be identified as truncated narratives either, like the sequences, scenes and situations, primarily for the reasons that we are looking at very short fragments. At the same time there is some quality in them that still makes us classify them as ‘narrative’ in some way, or allow us to see some kind of narrativity manifested in them. How then are we to describe them and their relationship to their non-narrative context?

Foregrounding or Backgrounding Fragments. A fruitful starting point in discussing this group, which will address most of the issues involved, is investigating a difference in the columns of the genres in Numbers related above between Knierim and Coats’ designations of the passages of Numbers and those of Wenham and Sparks. Knierim and Coats (almost) always foreground narrative features of the passages, and consequently give most of the passages narrative designations, primarily ‘report,’ while the designations of Wenham and Sparks are much more varied, putting narrative features in non-narrative passages in the background and assigning them non-narrative designations.¹⁹⁴ This prompts us to ask what Knierim and Coats mean by the designation ‘report,’ which has been so lavishly used in characterising the passages of Numbers. ‘Report’ is a narrative genre in the terms of Knierim and Coats.¹⁹⁵ This term does not make the weaker claim that these passages *can be taken as* reports or are perhaps witness

¹⁹⁴ It can be noted that on the terms set out above on the different groups of narratives in Numbers, Knierim and Coats narrative designations pertain to both the passages discussed above as independent narrative sequences and instrumental scenes and situations, as well as the more clearly non-narrative passages, including administrative lists, cultic rules and regulations, and laws.

¹⁹⁵ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 357.

to a certain situation or fact and are therefore a kind of ‘report’ of the situation or fact, but rather carries the much stronger claim that those passages are *generically* report-narratives.¹⁹⁶ As an example, we may look at Num 1:1-54, whose main parts consist of two lists (vv. 5-15, 20-42). The passage is not labelled ‘list,’ or ‘census’ by Knierim and Coats, but instead ‘report’ is used, since the lists in the passage have been framed by report-formulas relating two commands of Yahweh to Moses to draw up the lists (vv. 1-5, 48-53), and statements telling about the obedience/fulfilment of the commands (16-19, 44-47, 54).

Wenham and Sparks, on the other hand, have chosen to foreground the genre of the main part of the passage under discussion, and thus talk about ‘lists’ and ‘census’ as typical of 1:1-54 rather than narrative features (one can note that the commentaries follow Wenham and Sparks on this point).¹⁹⁷ Such a reasoning would seem to be more in line with the one propounded here, where narratives are found to emerge in Numbers in different groups, compared to that of Knierim and Coats, which seems to assume that almost all passages in Numbers are narratives generically, since there is always some narrative elements in them that can be foregrounded.¹⁹⁸ But is this a correct understanding of Knierim and Coats’ designations?

¹⁹⁶ One should note that Knierim and Coats do not label non-narrative passages such as 15:1-16 ‘narrative,’ in the sense of genuine narratives. This is so since, in their view, narrative is not a genre, but rather a grammatical category, defined by the use of (finite) verbs linked in a chain. Thus, ‘narrative’ is “...constitutive for the narrative character of all classes of narrative and their genres, but not for the character of those classes themselves and of their genres,” *Ibid.*, 351. Such an approach comes close to what was said at the start of this chapter that ‘narrative’ is not understood as a genre in this thesis. However, Knierim and Coats’ terms ‘report,’ ‘story,’ ‘account,’ etc. are nevertheless understood by them as “particular narrative genres” (*Ibid.*), i.e. which has been sorted into the category of genuine narratives in this chapter. This means that they give narrative genre-labels to what in my understanding are generically non-narrative passages (such as ‘report’ etc.), which in turn means that the difference outlined above between Knierim and Coats’ designations, and those of Wenham and Sparks (and myself who follow the latter ones below) holds. Therefore, I understand the discussion above to be held on the level of genre and aesthetic structures (with reference made to the three parameters for interpreting narratives) and not only grammar or perhaps narrative as a text-type, and that it is correct to assess the designations of Knierim and Coats, including ‘report,’ on this level. For another narrative understanding of law-texts (in Leviticus), cf. Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, 263-266, 278-289.

¹⁹⁷ That it is a correct use of Sparks to say that he foreground the non-narrative genre of similar texts is seen in his placement of laws-texts, rituals, prophecies etc. with narrative introductions and endings under the rubrics of law, ritual, prophecy etc. in his book, and not among the narrative genres of tales, novellas, epics, and legends e.g., Sparks, *Ancient Texts*.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. also Douglas, *In the Wilderness*, 102-03, who characterising law and narrative make a sharp distinction between them in Numbers, even though she makes a different division of the material than is proposed here. She also discusses how to understand narrative fragments as the one found in Num 29:40, p. 108.

Fortunately, their reasoning becomes explicit when Num 15:1-16 is discussed. According to Knierim and Coats, the narrative feature in this unit is the introductory formula **וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר** (“Yahweh said to Moses, saying...”) in 15:1, and it is commented that:

The Yahweh speech itself, vv. 2-16, is introduced by the, however, patterned, report formula [i.e. 15:1], which proves that the following speech is, so to say, quoted by the narrator. Without the transmission of the speech by the narrator the speech would – strictly speaking – not exist. ... To account for the identity of the text as a *report* – by a reporter/narrator – of a speech – by someone other than the narrator, or to account for the fact that the content of a speech, also a divine speech, is transmitted/communicated only through an intermediary reporter/narrator and not without such – in our case human – mediation, amounts to much more than technical remarks about redactors.¹⁹⁹

I take this to mean that since the passage is opened by a narrative fragment or insertion, or as Knierim and Coats label it, the report-formula, it is to be seen as a whole as a (certain kind of) narrative, a report. We would not have the painting without the frame, so to speak. The short fragment thus transforms the passage under scrutiny into a narrative generically speaking, and this is also the case, naturally, when we encounter more narrative insertions and embroiderings in the middle and at the end of passages, as in 1:1-54; 2:1-34; 3:1-4:49; and 7:1-89.

Knierim and Coats’ highlighting of even the smallest narrative fragments is, I think, interesting, and puts the search light on often-forgotten features in these texts. However, it is not clear to me exactly what is meant with regard to the in-

¹⁹⁹ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 196-97. A close reading of the commentary, however, reveals that this reasoning on genres and narrative is actually Knierim’s and not Coats’. Due to Coats’ bad health, Knierim was the one who finished the commentary, but he did not alter Coats’ original manuscript, which means that differences are left standing, *Ibid.*, xi, 196, cf. George W. Coats, *Exodus 1-18* (Forms of the Old Testament IIA; Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1999), ix-ix. Knierim wrote the introduction to the commentary, as well as the commentary-text on 1:1-10:36, while Coats wrote the commentary-text on 11:1-36:13, Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, xi. The difference on genre and narrative come to the fore exactly at this point in the commentary when Num 15:1-16 is discussed. Coats terms this passage “Ordinance Speech,” while Knierim in a supplement (from which the quotation above is taken) explains that this conflicts with the general development of the commentary-series, and that the passage should be termed ‘*report* of an ordinance speech,’ see *Ibid.*, 195-97. This correction does not apply only to Num 15:1-16, but to all passages in the commentary that Coats has not specified as ‘reports of...’ Knierim says, “In order to preserve as much as advisable the original text of Coats’ interpretation, the title of the unit Num 15:1-16 given by Coats as ‘Ordinance Speech’ and certain formulations in his discussion pertinent to his focus indicated by his definition of this title have not been altered editorially. ... What is said regarding the text-unit just discussed also applies to all other units defined by Coats without reference to their speech *report* nature.” *Ibid.*, 196-97. However, in what follows I have referred to this reasoning of genres and narratives as of ‘Knierim and Coats’ since both are authors of the commentary, being a short-hand reference to the ideas therein. But one should be aware of the difference.

terpretation of the different passages of Numbers. Does it mean, on the terms set up in this thesis, that almost all passages in Numbers can be understood to have a full narrative paradigm related thematically in a plot with beginning, middle, and end or that they have a discourse where typical narrative features as flashbacks operate? Is it worthwhile to ask whether the passage in question should be understood as a closed narrative structure or not? These are questions, as I argued in the chapter on theory, which are typically raised in the interpretation of narratives, but not raised or answered by Knierim and Coats. The question is not, in my view, whether Knierim and Coats can be made to support my theoretical formulations in every detail, but the much more primary one pertaining to whether or not all passages of Numbers should be interpreted in the same way since they are all narratives. If the answer is yes, this would clearly affect how we interpret the workings of narrative in the book and what it means for the book as a whole, and make the differentiation into several groups demanding varying interpretative approaches propounded above unnecessary. Knierim and Coats do not address this more primary question.

Attending to the issue from another angle, I argue that Knierim and Coats' designation of almost all passages of Numbers as narrative is counterintuitive for most readers, whether scholar or not. This does not necessarily have anything to do with redaction-critical training as Knierim and Coats seem to intimate in the quote above, but rather relies on the perceived function of the fragment. This also seems to be felt by Knierim and Coats, who in discussing the fragment of 15:1-16, state that "Well-meaning Bible readers may violate their claim of reading the Bible literally by neglecting these introductory formulae"²⁰⁰ i.e. by not seeing them as constituting whole passages as report-narratives. The quote seems to intimate that Knierim and Coats have experienced that ordinary readers tend to pay no attention to these formulae as inducing the genre of report. But how can it be that these insertions which according to Knierim and Coats so dominate the passages they are part of, that they determine the entire way they are read, in other words, constitute their genre, are simply missed in this function by readers? I think that the answer is that those formulae do not have the function Knierim and Coats ascribe to them, and that ordinary Bible readers, as well as scholars, have been knowledgeable readers who have 'decoded' the poetics of the passage correctly and read it according to its genre – a cultic rule, administrative list, etc, which as a consequence means that they have not paid much attention to formulae as the one in 15:1.²⁰¹ They have, in other words, inferred the proper literary competence needed to understand the passage.

^{200.} *Ibid.*, 197.

^{201.} Cf. Andersson, *Untamable Texts*, 228-30.

Function of the Fragments. What would the function of such fragments be, if we fail to pursue Knierim and Coats' interpretation? More specifically, how may we interpret Num 15:1 as part of 15:1-16? In my understanding, the fragment in 15:1 primarily introduces what follows, the cultic rule in 15:2-16. That is one reason for readers' tendency to disregard the fragment and read on to take part of the rule in 15:2-16 as the main point of the passage, after it has been introduced. Another way of putting this is to say that after the fragment is read, a kind of dissolving occurs as the reader leaves the introduction behind to take part of the main part of the passage. It is this function, I think, that has led Wenham and Sparks not to foreground them in non-narrative passages and thus designate these differently to Knierim and Coats.²⁰² However, and more importantly, the formula also shows that the rule is founded in Yahweh and his command, and implies that it is transmitted to the people through Moses. In this respect the fragment in 15:1 becomes critical in that it guarantees the authority of the rule following in 15:2-16, transmitted by the proper channel.²⁰³ But this has very little to do with it being a 'narrative.' Such a function is of course not unique for this passage, but pertains, I would say, to all occurrences of such fragments in Numbers, as well.

Other functions than introductory ones are also found in the fragments placed in this group. Apart from passages with introductory formulae such as the one in 15:1, the fourth group of 'narratives' in Numbers also feature very short insertions and embroiderings in the middle and at the end of passages, as exemplified above in 1:1-54. I suggest that these other fragments, insertions, and embroiderings, are also subordinated generically to their respective passages in the same way as the introductory formulae in 15:1. Moreover, the fragments also usually record the obedience of Moses, the people etc. to a command of Yahweh, which an initial fragment like the one in 15:1 has introduced, and therefore a good conclusion to them is made (see e.g. 1:54, יַעֲשׂוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה, "The Israelites did everything that Yahweh had commanded Moses...", cf. 2:34; 8:3; 30:1; *passim*). Such notes indirectly warrant the commands like the introductory ones in displaying the proper conduct before Yahweh's commands, but also achieve a framing function for the passages when they are

²⁰² Wenham actually makes statements similar to those of Knierim when discussing the genre of the book, Wenham, *Numbers*, 28, so the reference here should be to his labelling of the individual units, rather than his view on narrative in Numbers. Wenham is less categorical concerning the overall genre of Numbers, however, as will be discussed below in analysing the genre of Numbers.

²⁰³ Such a function of similar fragments is highlighted by the Temple Scroll from Qumran, "...recasting many of the third-person laws [in Ex 34 to Deut] as a direct command of God." *Ibid.*, 113. Cf. also Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 81-82, who observes a pattern in the ongoing use and formulation of ritual texts of moving from description to prescription. Such a function is also noted by Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 357.

connected to the introductory fragments as conclusions to introductions.²⁰⁴ These fractions of texts are then best understood as fragments in a larger generic whole. A frame undoubtedly upholds a painting, but it does not turn the painting into a frame.

Such a reasoning concerning the fragments may also be connected to the three parameters. The only aspect that remains in these fragments of a narrative paradigm is that an event is related, which on the discourse-level is put forward with finite verbs forming an introduction or conclusion.²⁰⁵ The latter notion is hardly unique for narratives, however.²⁰⁶ Therefore, it is rather the fact that we do not have mere enumeration (Num 21:18b-20; cf. 1 Chron 1:1-9), or mere law (Num 5:6-10; cf. Ex 22:5-6), poetry (Num 21:17b-18a; cf. Ps 1) or similar, but rather a few sentences with some kind of event framing the law etc., which makes us label these passages as somehow narrative. It can be understood as a labelling which compares these fragments with genuine narratives and how events are related in them thematically within a plot, and that they in light of genuine narratives are in fact just fragments of such larger structures. With that remark, we have come full circle to what we stated at the beginning in discussing this group: the fragments with their passages are not genuine narratives, narrative scenes or sequences, nor are they without any narrativity whatsoever. As with the former group of instrumental scenes and situations, moreover, the narrative elements are subordinated to the passages they belong to at large, and are therefore best connected to the node of a factual language-game that we may presume pertain to law-texts and the like, rather than a storytelling one. In some sense, the fragments refer to a point in time when, for instance, Yahweh commanded a certain law and Israel obeyed. However, the introductory, concluding, and warranting functions are strong, and the game could be said to be factual also in the sense of describing facts (as laws and rules) that possibly would pertain to the reality of the reader and not only give historical reference.

Given this, there are two additional phenomena in Numbers that we need to reckon with in understanding these fragments. The first is that we find introductory formulae and conclusion formulae like the ones treated here also in the other groups discussed above, as is seen from a few examples: 5:1, “Yahweh said to Moses, saying...;” 5:4, “The Israelites did thus...;” 9:1, “Yahweh said to Moses...;” 9:4, “They performed the Passover... as Yahweh had ordered Moses...;” 11:16, “Yahweh said to Moses...;” 11:24, “Moses went out and told the people the words of Yahweh...;” 36:13, “These are the commandments and judgments that Yahweh commanded Israel through Moses...” The formulae

²⁰⁴ A similar understanding of narrative fragments in ritual and administrative texts is presupposed by Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 81.

²⁰⁵ They may in this regard be compared to what has been called ‘minimal narratives,’ Prince, *Dictionary*, 53, but we then need to remember that such ‘narratives’ are not of the same type or function as the genuine narratives, for example.

²⁰⁶ *Contra* Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 350-51.

found in the other groups are similar in terms of paradigm and discourse, and have introductory, concluding, and other functions in their respective passages. This similarity invites linkage of the fragments and their respective passages found throughout Numbers.

Second, if we therefore raise ourselves above the individual passages in this group with their narrative fragments, and see them as part of a larger whole, the book of Numbers with different types of narratives as well as non-narrative passages, a new function may be seen. To begin with, Numbers presents us with blocks of largely non-narrative passages (Num 1-10; 18-19; 26-36), but when viewed as ‘put together,’ a thin narrative thread may be delineated from one non-narrative passage to another because of the framing function of the fragments. These fragments may be understood as working together to create an attenuated narrative *sequence* that binds the non-narrative passages together. All through the first ten chapter of Numbers, for example, the fragment “Yahweh said to Moses, saying...” is regularly repeated at the beginning of passages (1:1; 2:1; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; 8:1; 9:1; 10:1), always reminding the reader of Yahweh having said or commanded a particular rule or other to Moses in the desert of Sinai before the wandering began (cf. 1:1). A certain context and period is thereby given for the passages in Num 1-10, and they seem to allude to a larger story where one thing ‘happens’ after another, i.e. one law or rule is given after another. This function of the fragments seen as *put together* is one of the reasons, I believe, that Numbers as a whole may be analysed from a narrative perspective. If the non-narrative passages are connected in this way, and the passages from the narrative groups above are added to this string of events, a frame is created which seems to link all passages of Numbers sequentially. The interpreter of the book might then ask what meaning the created frame has for understanding the book as a whole. Additionally, if and how the frame affect the interpretation of the individual passages can be ascertained. Such comments, however, adumbrates the discussion of the narrativity of Numbers as a whole, and thus we will pursue it at the proper place below.

To round off the discussion of the present group of narrative features that started from Knierim and Coats, I understand the narrative fragments, insertions, and embroiderings that are distributed throughout Numbers as neither being dominating features in the passages where they occur, nor turning all passages of Numbers into narratives, but rather threading and patching that work to introduce, conclude, and warrant laws, lists, cultic rules etc. as well as genuine narratives.

Borderline Cases. Before moving on to the discussion of the narrativity of Numbers as a whole, there are three passages in Numbers that seem to fall out of the analysis so far. These can, however, can be understood as borderline-cases from the point of view of the present group, mainly in relationship to the first parameter, and they are therefore analysed here in some detail.

The first is 9:15-23 (Theophanic March), which relates how Israel was led by the cloud and the fire during the wilderness wanderings. This is not a passage where narrative fragments are scattered into a mainly non-narrative text. We have both an introductory and a concluding formula (vv. 15a, “When the tabernacle had been erected...”,²⁰⁷ 23b, “...they kept the demand of Yahweh, according to Yahweh’s command through Moses.”²⁰⁸), but these are woven much more intimately into the passage as a whole in terms of content than the fragments of other non-narrative passages. The passage does not easily fit into the other groups delineated above either. In terms of narrative paradigm, it does not have a beginning, middle, or end related thematically in a plot, which would differentiate it from the genuine narratives and the independent narrative sequences. Moreover, it is different from the instrumental scenes on the level of discourse in how the scene or situation is related. In the instrumental scenes, the situation is presented as having occurred once even though something typical is depicted, but this is not the case with 9:15-23, which relates what repetitiously took place during the wanderings, and which is marked by the syntax of the passage, using imperfect indicative to represent this (vv. 15-17).²⁰⁹ Thus, we have here a clear difference in terms of discourse between 9:15-23 and the instrumental scenes.²¹⁰

Descriptions are of course not foreign to genuine narratives, but 9:15-23 is not part of a full narrative paradigm with a plot, which we have argued is representative of such narratives. Instead, we simply get a longer description on how the cloud and fire typically behaved. This is, naturally, understood to have taken place during the wanderings, but is not built into a story. Given this, the passage is treated here mainly because it as a whole is a non-narrative unit, like most of the passages analysed in this group, and because the introductory and concluding formula have affinities with the narrative fragments analysed here. As such, it is also more profitably understood in connection with the node of a factual language-game than a storytelling one, the primary purpose being of which is to describe or give a picture of how the wandering was conducted in Israel’s wilderness-period from the erection of the tabernacle and forwards.²¹¹

^{207.} For this translation of the verse, see footnote 292 below.

^{208.} Budd, *Numbers*, 101 translates מִשְׁמֶרֶת (‘demand’ above) as ‘service’ (of Yahweh), but it is better rendered here as ‘obligation,’ ‘ordinance,’ ‘charge,’ cf. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament II*: 649-50; Francis Brown et al., *The New Brown - Driver - Briggs - Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), 1038; repr. of *The New Brown - Driver - Briggs - Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906); and Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 295. Such a meaning for מִשְׁמֶרֶת is not noted in David J.A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew V*: 547, however.

^{209.} Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik*, 268.

^{210.} This function of the imperfect appear also in 7:9 among the instrumental scenes, but the form is not used here to characterise the whole scene, as in 9:15-23.

^{211.} Cf. Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 128-129.

The second passage is 10:11-36 (Start of the Campaign). Unlike the former passage, this one seems to be less unified, and possibly deconstructs into vv. 11-28 (Breaking the Camp), 29-33 (Moses and Hobab), and 34-36 (The Song of the Ark). Furthermore, these lesser units could be understood to be generically different: vv. 11-28 presents a list of how Israel decamped for the first time after Sinai with introductory and concluding fragments; vv. 29-33 is more readily understood as a sort of narrative scene (rather than sequence), which is not clearly instrumental to any larger passage, but rather independent; and vv. 34-36 is a song with two explanatory fragments.

However, a few observations show that such a division of 10:11-36 is not irrefutable. In terms of narrative paradigm, the passage in question can be understood to have a beginning in that Israel decamps, which leads on to a middle when Moses tries to persuade Hobab to join them on their journey while (or after) decamping, and an end when Israel then wanders three days out in the desert to the first stop, with the song of the ark as a supplement that nevertheless is related to the setting out for the wandering and its stopping (“whenever the ark broke up [for starting the wandering], Moses said... and whenever it rested he said...” vv. 35-36). Verses 29-33 with Moses and Hobab seem to follow quite naturally on the decampment in vv. 11-28, as a scene taking place during the decampment. What thematically holds these events together can be understood as ‘decampment and march in the wilderness.’²¹² Even so, there is a hardly a plot with a conflict and the song disturbs the ending.

It may be interesting to note in a short digression that the disturbing placement of the song is an observation that is as old as the manuscript evidence, shown by the para-textual signs called inverted *numim*, which frame the song. The meaning of such signs was to show that a section in the text was probably out of place or cited from an independent source, and the *numim* have their counterpart in greek sources in the signs *sigma* and *antisigma*. These signs eventually developed into the modern parenthesis.²¹³ Looking at the evidence of the manuscript tradition, it may be noted that LXX moves v. 34 (“...and the cloud of Yahweh was over them by day, in their breaking the camp”) after the song. In the rabbinic tradition, furthermore, the song is placed after Num 2:17 and 10:21, for example.²¹⁴ Few commentators follow such replacements, however, and since the signs may indicate meanings other than replacement, we retain the song in its position in the present analysis, noting the difficulty with this.

In terms of discourse, one can note that the list in vv. 11-28 follows the instructions for decampment in 1:48-2:31 closely, with the interesting difference

²¹² A much more in-depth discussion of the possible unity of 10:11-36 is given in Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 148-68, albeit on different terms than the ones assumed here.

²¹³ Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 317-18; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 375-76; Seebass, *Num 10, 11-22, I*, 5; and Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 54-55.

²¹⁴ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 375.

that while the manner of decampment is commanded in 1:48-2:31, it is here retold. The list would thus reach us in a kind of ‘narrational mode,’ relating successive events of decampment, which stand closer to the parameter of narrative paradigm than the instructions in 1:48-2:31. At the same time, if we compare the list in vv. 11-28 with the narrative scene with Moses and Hobab in vv. 29-32, for instance, the scene is much more easily understood as having a narrative paradigm than the list.

These observations, if valid, demonstrate that 10:11-36 wavers between the different groups formed here, and the passage is on the terms that undergird the groups, a true borderliner. One way of explaining that is also to relate it to the third parameter of language-game, and say that in light of a factual language-game, the passage can be described as having an openness which may have meant that the material had been put together to form the passage, but not closely enough to form a genuine narrative that might be understood from a story-telling point of view.

The third and last passage is the Wilderness Itinerary in 21:10-20. In many respects, it shares the same problems as the Start of the Campaign in 10:11-36. From the perspective of the first parameter it has a rather fragmented narrative paradigm, and two generic forms are incorporated into it: an epic fragment (vv. 14-15, possibly so)²¹⁵ and a song (vv. 17-18b α). There is some kind of movement from beginning to end in that Israel moves from Oboth to Pisgah in Moab, but we have hardly anything like a plot. Rather, it is best taken as an itinerary with two insertions, factually referring to Israel’s movement in the wilderness and incorporating material that is supposed to be from or deals with this time-period.²¹⁶ The itinerary is enumerative in comparison to the narrative paradigm rather than centred on a plot, and this comes to the fore especially by the end of the unit, where the different camp-places simply are listed without any verbs to describe the movement (vv. 18b β -20, “And from the wilderness to Mattanah, from Mattanah to Nahaliel...” etc.)²¹⁷, in contrast to the introductory verses (vv.

²¹⁵ Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 302; cf. Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 91

²¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*; and Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 209.

²¹⁷ In the MT the words *וּמִמֶּדְבָר מַתָּנָה* (‘from the wilderness to Mattanah...’), are part of the last line of the song, taking up the itinerary from v. 13. Such a placement is a bit strange, disrupting the parallelism of the song as well as the enumeration of camping-places that starts with these words and continues in vv. 19-20. One possible solution, however, is that *מַתָּנָה* (Mattanah), which also means ‘gift,’ is translated in this way, producing the line “...and from the wilderness a gift” (so Milgrom, *Numbers*, 178; and Schmidt, *Numeri*, 109-10), which would then fulfil the last parallelism of the song. However, such a rendering leaves the ‘Mattanah’ of v. 19 unexplained, since Israel is never said to have arrived at the place, but only to depart from it. The suggestion of the notes of BHS, among others, would therefore be to alter the Mattanah in v. 19 to *בְּאֵר* (‘well’, ‘Beer,’ so the LXX alters *וּמִמֶּדְבָר*, ‘and from wilderness,’ in v. 18b), but the words are too different in Hebrew (*בְּאֵר*, *מַתָּנָה*), for this to be probable. The rendering also understands v. 16a to be a

10-13, “The Israelites broke up and camped in Oboth, they broke up from Oboth and camped in Iye-abarim...” etc.). In this state, the passage is not easily fit into any of the groups above, but could be seen as a borderline-case in the fourth group. It starts with several narrative fragments linked to each other (vv. 10-13), which is of course typical of the itinerary. Verses 16a (“From there to a well,²¹⁸ the well about which Yahweh said to Moses...”), and 17a (“Then Israel sang this song...”) also contains such fragments. The epic fragment (vv. 14-15) and the song (vv. 17-18ba) are inserted into the itinerary structure, the first explaining why Arnon forms a border, the second relating an ‘interesting fact’ about what happened at Beer, having been made part of that structure and whatever narrative qualities we may see in it.²¹⁹

To sum up the argument concerning a fourth group of narrativity in Numbers, finally, the claim made here is that it is possible to talk about a group of narrative fragments, insertions, and embroiderings. The fragments are scattered throughout the non-narrative passages of Numbers but also found in the other narrative groups treated in this chapter. The function of the fragments in context is to introduce, conclude, warrant laws and the like, and often frame their respective passages. We call these fragments ‘narrative’ mainly because they picture an event, and events also occur in genuine narratives, which therefore might serve as a point of reference in describing the fragments, even though the fragments are not related in a full narrative paradigm with plot and theme, with a discourse consisting of scenes and summary etc. Finally, the framing function of the fragments in their respective passages means that when the narrative and non-narrative passages of Numbers are taken together, a thin narrative thread of sequentiality, binding the passages together, may be apparent. All passages

single itinerary note, Beer being taken as a proper name, which then is resumed in v. 19a. However, as Seebass, *Num 10,11-22,1*, 332, has argued, the explanation following Beer/a well in v. 16a is only necessary if Beer is not taken as a proper name, but simply mean ‘a well’ (in the wilderness). If so, v. 16a is not a (regular) itinerary note and we may understand the itinerary beginning in v. 18b with ‘from the wilderness,’ to pick up the one from v. 13, which ends with ‘to the wilderness.’ It is therefore better to follow the reading of MT, which is the case in the translation above. Schmidt, *Numeri*, 110, asserts that Beer and Mattanah were synonyms for the same place, but this we cannot know. A final argument for following MT is that its reading is the more difficult one, but not difficult enough to make sense. It would also be possible to emend וּמִן־בְּרַךְ (‘and from the wilderness’) in v. 18b to וּמִן־בְּרַךְ (‘and from Beer’) with the LXX, the words are very similar, and thus ‘from Beer’ forms a link between vv. 16 and 18, and gives a smooth transition from v. 13, 16, through 18b. However, it is possibly a harmonistic reading, and makes the explanation of Beer in v. 16 unnecessary. For these and similar arguments for following the MT-reading, see Budd, *Numbers*, 237; Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 82, 98; Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 240; Seebass, *Num 10,11-22,1*, 332; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 160.

²¹⁸. For this translation, see the previous footnote.

²¹⁹. Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 240.

treated in conjunction with the group of narrative fragments are more profitably related to the node of factual language-games rather than storytelling ones, referring to the facts of laws and rules, for instance, but also to points of command and obedience in the history of the wilderness wanderings as this is presented in Numbers.

Thus far our inventory of the narrativity of the individual passages of Numbers, which, we may remind ourselves, is made in order to understand the coherence of the book. I have claimed that we can form four groups to understand the emergence of narrative in Numbers: genuine narratives, independent narrative sequences, instrumental scenes and situations, and narrative insertions, fragments and embroiderings. They are differentiated and understood in light of the three parameters for the interpretation of narratives set out in the chapter on theory. In one sense, the groups in the order presented here, from genuine narratives to narrative fragments, represents a decreasing degree of narrativity, with less and less relationships to the three parameters. On the following two pages I have set out in columns the genre-designation from Knierim and Coats concerning Numbers. The four groups discussed above in a second column are related to these, primarily to give a general view of how we might understand the narrative features to emerge in Numbers. As is seen from the discussion above, however, designations and divisions are not always as neat as they might appear in column-format.

In conclusion, it is readily seen that the two middle groups are not very large, and that the first and last groups dominate Numbers from a narrative perspective. Furthermore, it is only in the first group that we find passages that are meaningful to read in connection to a storytelling language-game. Finally, the fragments of the last group put together can be understood to form a loose narrative network of sequentality throughout Numbers, a framework from which meanings additional to the individual passages may emerge. On these terms, then, the narrativity of Numbers unfold on the micro-level. Now, we move on to look at the book as a whole.

2.3. The Genre of Numbers and Narrativity

As noted above, Knierim and Coats together with Wenham are quite unique in dealing with the genres of Numbers. This also pertains to their suggestions concerning Numbers as a whole, and their discussions will therefore again form the starting point in looking at the genre and narrativity of Numbers at large. As regards the commentaries, scholars are mostly content with analysing the individual units of Numbers (source- and redaction-critically). If a genre-designation is made from such an investigation, it could possibly be suggested that Numbers represents a collection or interaction of sources, sometimes heavily

Figure 2: Genres and Narrativity in Numbers

<u><i>Knierim/Coats</i></u>	<u><i>Narrativity</i></u>
1:1-54. Report of Military Conscription	Narrative Fragments
2:1-34. Report of Mobilization of Militia	Narrative Fragments
3:1-4:49. Report of Conscription and Mobilization	Narrative Fragments
5:1-4. Report of Exclusion of Unclean	Independent Narrative Sequence
5:5-10. Legal Instruction about Restitution	Narrative Fragments
5:11-31. Legal Instruction about Trial	Narrative Fragments
6:1-21. Report of the Nazirite Law	Narrative Fragments
6:22-24. Instruction about Aaronide Blessing	Narrative Fragments
7:1-89. Report on Gifts from Tribal Leaders	Instrumental Scene/Situation
8:1-4. Report about the Lamps	Narrative Fragments
8:5-22. Report about the Levites' Installation	Narrative Fragments
8:23-26. Legal Instruction on Levitic Appointees	Narrative Fragments
9:1-14. Report about the Second Passover	Instrumental Scene/Situation
9:15-23. Report about Theophanic March	Borderline Narrativity
10:1-10. Instruction about the Two Trumpets	Narrative Fragments
10:11-36. Legend of Start of the Campaign	Borderline Narrativity
11:1-3. Story of Taberah	Independent Narrative Sequence
11:4-35. Story of Quail	Genuine Narrative
12:1-16. Story of Miriam and Aaron's Revolt	Genuine Narrative
13:1-14:45. Murmuring Story	Genuine Narrative
15:1-16. Ordinance Speech for Sacrifices	Narrative Fragments
15:17-31. Ordinance Speech for First Bread	Narrative Fragments
15:32--36. Anecdote of Wood-gathering	Instrumental Scene/Situation
15:37-41. Ordinance Speech for Vestment	Narrative Fragments
16:1-17:5. Story of Dathan's etc. Rebellion	Genuine Narrative
17:6-15. Plague Story	Genuine Narrative (cont'd)
17:16-26. Anecdote of Aaron's Rod	Genuine Narrative (cont'd)
17:27-18:32. Collection of Priesthood Ordinances	Narrative Fragments

19:1-22. Ordinance of Protective Cleansing	Narrative Fragments
20:1-13. Story of Meribah	Genuine Narrative
20:14-21. Report of Negotiations	Genuine Narrative
20:22-29. Report of Aaron's Death	Genuine Narrative
21:1-3. Etiology of Hormah	Independent Narrative Sequence
21:4-9. Story of Serpents	Genuine Narrative
21:10-20. Wilderness Itinerary	Borderline Narrativity
21:21-31. Battle Report	Borderline Narrativity
21:32-35. Wilderness Itinerary	Borderline Narrativity
22:1-24:25. Legend of Balaam	Genuine Narrative
25:1-18. Anecdote of Baal Peor Legend	Genuine Narrative
25:19-26:65. Report of Conscription	Narrative Fragments
27:1-11. Case Report : Zelophehad	Instrumental Scene/Situation
27:12-23. Report of Commission	Narrative Fragments
28:1-30:1. Ritual Calendar	Narrative Fragments
30:2-17. Judicial Tradition on Vows	Narrative Fragments
31:1-54. Battle Report	Borderline Narrativity
32:1-42. Dialogue of Negotiations	Borderline Narrativity
33:1-35:34. Wilderness Itinerary	Narrative Fragments
33:50-56. Instructions for Conquest	Narrative Fragments
34:1-12. Definition of Boundaries	Narrative Fragments
34:13-15. Inheritance Explanation	Narrative Fragments
34:16-29. Administrative Lists	Narrative Fragments
35:1-8. Tariff Levitical Cities	Narrative Fragments
35:9-34. Tariff Cities of Refuge	Narrative Fragments
36:1-12. Case Report : Zelophehad	Instrumental Scene/Situation
36:13. Conclusion formula	Narrative Fragment

redacted.²²⁰ Such a description is not uninteresting for the present discussion and we will come back to it.²²¹ But we will start with the main task of our investigation and discuss the narrativity of Numbers as a whole.

2.3.1. *The Narrativity of Numbers*

In the introduction to this thesis, I made reference to scholars who have suggested reading Numbers and even the whole Pentateuch as a narrative. In view of how narrative features appear in the individual passages above, such a possibility is problematised quite extensively. In line with such a problematisation is a statement by Mary Douglas that

We have to be wary to the very idea that the structure of the book [of Numbers] is provided by narrative. Even for our own literary genres it does not always apply: poetry is not necessarily narrative, nor is prayer, nor songs or sermons, though they all can be. Though this text seems to have some but not all the signs of a complete and edifying story, the interpretive effort is gravely subverted by supposing in advance that narrative is the genre. Even if we were to consider Numbers as a narrative, and ignore the rest, it still would not conform to our ideas of narrative unity.²²²

Given this warning, we will still start from the ‘narrative suggestions’ for Numbers in the works of Knierim and Coats, and Wenham, and work from these in light of both what has been said so far about the narrativity of the individual passages of Numbers as well as the three parameters of interpretation of narratives in relationship to the book at large.

Knierim and Coats choose to designate the genre of Numbers as a ‘Saga of a Migratory Campaign,’ and I understand this as a narrative genre-designation.²²³ It can be broken down into three parts and further elucidated: ‘Saga’ is meant to

²²⁰ Cf. e.g. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 48-50, who in view of the nature of Numbers find the source-critical method the most natural one.

²²¹ Source- and redaction-critical observations apart, one could also ask what kind of genre-designation of Numbers that could be gleaned from macrostructural studies on the book presented in the Review of Earlier Research above (1.2.2.). The macrostructural studies are not easily connected to the question of genre, but they will play an important part of the later analysis of this thesis. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, would possibly be the exception, coming from form-criticism as he does. However, his work concerns only Num 10:11-36:13, and it is nevertheless accounted for here in that in many respects it is a preliminary study for Knierim and Coats and their genre-discussion, see Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 135-44.

²²² Douglas, *In the Wilderness*, 87. Douglas would here seem to mix quite different terms that we have been careful to differentiate above: narrative, literary genres, complete and edifying story etc. However, she seems to say that Numbers as a whole is not a ‘complete and edifying story’ (a narrative genre, a genuine narrative), and with this warning we sympathise.

²²³ See Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 17-23, for their discussion of the genre of the book. Cf. Rolf P. Knierim, “The Book of Numbers,” in *The Task of Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995).

account for the length and the communal character of the book and to distinguish it from legends; ‘migratory’ is meant to capture the movement of the people in the book; and ‘campaign’ underlines the military aspect of that movement. Constitutive for this genre (but not only this genre) is a twofold structure of preparation and execution, dividing Numbers into 1:1-10:10 and 10:11-36:13, according to Knierim and Coats. Most of the terms in this designation are unproblematic, I think: many passages in Numbers deal with the movement of Israel and there are often military aspects to this. Perhaps it is even possible to understand the different passages in Numbers as preparation and execution of such a migration. It also seems self-evident that Numbers is not an individual but a communal read. Several of these terms will come into play when later on in the thesis we deepen our investigation of the narrativity of Numbers. However, the major problem of this genre-designation is, in my view, the term ‘Saga.’ This seems to be the principal genre under which the sub-genre ‘Saga of a Migratory Campaign’ is sorted.²²⁴ In light of the differentiation of narrative features in the individual passages of Numbers above, I find this genre-designation less than helpful. Knierim and Coats define Saga more precisely as

A long, prose, traditional... narrative having an episodic structure developed around stereotyped themes or objects. It may include narratives that represent distinct genres in themselves. The episodes narrate deeds or virtues from the past insofar as they contribute to the composition of the present narrator’s world.²²⁵

²²⁴ Knierim and Coats do not cite any comparative examples for the genre of ‘Saga of Migratory Campaign,’ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 17-23; cf. the criticism of Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 7. On the other hand, they do cite examples for the ‘literary form,’ as they call it, of preparation and execution, which is constitutive for the genre (albeit not only this genre): *ANET*, 232-257, 265-317; *ARE I*, 14-16; *ARE II*, 175-190, 240-245. I cannot see, however, that a process of preparation and execution is applicable to these texts, more than very generally, and for the most part only if they are read from that perspective. This is also the case with the examples cited from the Hebrew Bible: Ps 2:1-3, 4-9; Is 7:5-9; 40:3-5; Jer 23:18-22; Ez 40-48 (Knierim and Coats understand these to have only one of the aspects, i.e. preparation *or* execution). The comparative texts are better understood simply as ‘campaign records’ where a notion of preparation and execution plays little or no part. Moreover, Knierim and Coats make special reference in their discussion to the Egyptian literary genre ‘royal novella’ as exemplifying this literary form (first identified and discussed by Alfred Hermann, *Die ägyptische Königsnovelle* (LÄS 10; Glückstadt: J.J. Augustin, 1938)). Interesting to note is that this designation has been criticised for trying to encompass too many texts, making it applicable to almost any text, a critique that could also be put to Knierim and Coats’ use of the genre of ‘Saga of Migratory Campaign,’ see Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 253; and John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), 160-62. In the words of Van Seters: “...the genre allows for excessive variation and flexibility in form and content.” (p. 161) and “The so-called *Königsnovelle* simply represents a recognition of a wide range of storytelling motifs. The error was to try to make a specific genre out of them.” (p. 164)

²²⁵ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 358.

As examples of this genre, Knierim and Coats refer to the Yahwist versions of the primeval Saga (Gen 1-11), the Abraham Saga (Gen 12-26), and the Moses Saga, apart from the book of Numbers. My prime contention with Knierim and Coats labelling Numbers a Saga is that the genre seems to be so wide that it could include most types of narratives. If the label also included the traditional examples of Sagas in the Hebrew bible, as The Story of Sodom (Gen 14), The Wooing of Rebekah (Gen 24), The Birth of Moses (Ex 2:1-10), the Sagas of the judges (Judg 3ff.) etc.,²²⁶ we would have a very wide range of stories with quite different degrees of narrativity, all being sorted under the same concept. Many of the shorter Sagas would be what we have referred to above as genuine narratives, stories with a rather full narrative paradigm, for instance. But it is difficult from the perspective of the three parameters to say that these stories are of the same kind as the whole book of Numbers, which does not have an all-encompassing plot and is chopped up by non-narrative passages. Thus, there seems to be a difference in narrativity between Numbers and the shorter Sagas that is not accounted for in labelling both Sagas.

Knierim and Coats do make room in their definition that a Saga may contain other material ‘that represent distinct genres in themselves,’ and that the Sagas have an episodic structure and later on that one needs to distinguish between longer and shorter Sagas.²²⁷ Such remarks would seem point to a rather low degree of narrativity of the genre and to be made to accommodate the fact that Numbers (and other long Sagas) contains such a wide variety of materials outside of the narrative, and therefore, Numbers (and other long Sagas) could be labelled Saga as well as e.g. The Birth of Moses in Ex 2:1-10. Still, looking at the examples given for the genre, there does seem to be a difference in narrativity between the shorter and longer examples that is not accounted for in labelling them all as Sagas. Moreover, Knierim and Coats do not say *why* there is a need to distinguish between shorter and longer Sagas, or why such a distinction does not affect their belonging to a certain genre or as having a certain narrativity.

²²⁶ For these and other examples, see Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 38-42; Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis übersetzt und erklärt* (GHAT; 3 ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), vii-lvi; and Klaus Koch, *Was ist Formgeschichte? Methoden der Bibelexegese* (5 durchgesehene und ergänzte ed. Neukirchen-Vlyun: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 135-193.

²²⁷ They say that “...the long saga, often consisting of sagas combined as a sequence or cycle, needs to be distinguished from the short, local or migratory saga.” Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 359. Another point that need to be made here is that as seen from the quotation above, Knierim and Coats use the word narrative to refer to the other distinct genres that a Saga may include. Knierim and Coats’ definition of narrative was discussed in footnote 196 above, where it was said that it is of quite a different nature than the understanding established here in connection with the three parameters. Discussing the issue here again is too much of a digression, and therefore the word narrative is omitted above.

If Numbers is not to be called a Saga, this partly affects how we view the other terms Knierim and Coats use to describe Numbers, i.e. ‘migration,’ ‘campaign,’ ‘preparation,’ and ‘execution.’ Even though these are valid terms in describing much of Numbers, how they relate to each other in terms of narrativity is still an open question. For the moment, I think they are best seen as themes or motifs, which could be found in many types of narratives, apart from Sagas, or Sagas of Migratory Campaigns. Themes and motifs may of course come into play in describing different types of narratives, but they also need to be connected to other aspects of the three parameters.

Moving then to Wenham, his description of the genre of Numbers starts by stating that as part of the Pentateuch the book is properly called Torah, meaning ‘teaching, instruction.’²²⁸ As such, it includes laws and rules, but also lessons from the story of early Israel and her relationship to Yahweh. The overall character of the book is narrative, however, and “...the laws, poems, speeches, censuses and so on are included to illustrate and illuminate the story of Israel’s birth and growth.”²²⁹ A prime example of the narrative character, according to Wenham, is the introductory and concluding fragments of the laws etc., which put them in a narrative framework. Altogether, “Numbers is a prophetic or theological history in that it interprets Israel’s founding events...”²³⁰ for a present reading and believing Israel.

This genre-designation is more multifaceted than Knierim and Coats’, and therefore also, in my view, closer to the mark in describing Numbers. Wenham assumes that Numbers contains many very different materials which are not easily subsumed under one concept, and even when he uses such a concept, Torah is a more inclusive concept than Saga in view of the different materials in Numbers. Even so, might Torah in much the same way as Saga in Knierim and Coats’ definition be too general a concept, for what has not been taken as teaching in the Hebrew bible? One could ask if the term is fruitfully used as a generic designation.²³¹

If so and leaving Torah as too general a genre-designation, what nevertheless remains of Wenham’s description of Numbers is the conclusion that the book is ‘prophetic or theological history,’ with an emphasis on the narrative character of this, which takes us back to the question of the narrativity of Numbers. Wenham’s description comes close to what was said above in conjunction with the narrative fragments: there seems to be a narrative thread or frame to not only the non-narrative passages in Numbers, but also the narrative ones. Wenham’s discussion is not very long, however, and some of the issues of interest for us re-

²²⁸ For this and the following, see Wenham, *Numbers*, 26-29.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 29; cf. Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 8.

²³¹ On the wide semantic range of תּוֹרָה in the Hebrew bible, see F. Garcia Lopez and H.-J. Fabry, “תּוֹרָה,” *TDOT* XV:609-46.

main unaddressed. Wenham seems to stress the narrative unity of the material in Numbers, and retells the ‘story of Numbers’ in short, for instance. Does this mean that the non-narrative passages are worked into one narrative paradigm as in the genuine narratives? If so, how would we describe that paradigm? Nonetheless, Wenham’s description of the non-narrative material as ‘illustrating and illuminating’ the story of Israel does not necessarily imply that they, together with the four groups of narrative in Numbers, make up one narrative paradigm, and thus I think it an important intuition of Wenham not to designate the non-narrative material ‘story,’ but rather talk about ‘frame,’ ‘illustrating,’ and ‘illuminating,’ in working out the relationship between narrative and non-narrative material in Numbers. The latter would imply that if we have one narrative paradigm throughout Numbers it is a loose one. Even though emphasising that Numbers is a story or narrative, Wenham makes room for the diversity of the book. The question to be addressed is what we do with this diversity.

If we start with the narrative fragments of Numbers, which begin the book, we have noted already the invitation to link these together not only the fragments, but also the other groups of narrative found above. Delineating this linking it is possible to see a sequence being built up in Numbers by the addition of one passage with a short narrative insertion to another – in other words, we can understand the passages of Numbers as happening sequentially, one after the other, most of the time, as was suggested by the end of the section 2.2.4. above. Sometimes these fragments develop into scenes, that are then used to illustrate or explain a certain law, as in chapters 7 (gifts for the tabernacle) and 9 (the second passover). Further, genuine narratives are added to this narrative thread or sequence which depict longer events with problems and resolutions, which begin in chapter 11 (Manna and Quails). Lastly, these are sometimes thematically introduced by short narrative sequences, as in 21:1-3 (The Battle at Hormah). Metaphorically speaking, one may perhaps describe the result as a narrative thread in Numbers that differs in size from section to section, swelling and shrinking in a patched cloth of different fabrics.

If we compare this sequence with the first parameter, Numbers as a whole could possibly be described as having a fragmented narrative paradigm of sequentiality, and we may hypothesise that causality sometimes come into play between the passages, as when the resolution of the Spy-story in Num 13-14 means an additional 40 years in the desert, which is assumed in some later passages, shown by, for example, 26:64-65 (“Among these were none of the Israelites, having been counted by Moses and Aaron, the priest, that they had counted in the wilderness of Sinai, for Yahweh had said of them, ‘They shall indeed die in the wilderness...’”). To sequentiality and causality may probably also be added certain themes, such as Olson’s theme of generational succession (see 1.2.2. above). On the second parameter, discourse, Numbers would not have coherence, but be tied to the forms of expressions of the individual genres of Numbers. In terms of the third parameter of narrative interpretation, Numbers is most

fruitfully read in relationship to a factual language-game, depicting a certain period in the history of Israel, when the people wander in the wilderness from Sinai to Moab, but this is done by means of different materials and language-games on the micro-level of the book. This could also be expressed by saying that the narrative sequence that results from putting the different passages of Numbers together including their different narrativities, creates, or alludes to a larger story of Israel wandering in the wilderness, encompassing the passages. Such an understanding seems to partly lie behind Wenham's designation of Numbers as 'prophetic or theological history,'²³² apart from the proclamatory aspects of the history thereby signalled.

Thus, in view of the discussion above on the individual passages as well as the three parameters, I hold that Numbers is best described as a collection of different materials with a loose narrative frame of sequentiality, possibly causality and certain themes, which weave the materials together in a patched cloth of different fabrics. Together, the materials allude to a 'larger story,' but do not have a full narrative paradigm, or coherence on the discourse-level, and as a whole, finally, Numbers is better read from the node of a factual language-game than a storytelling one, remembering that other aspects may also come into play here as we shall see in the next section. It is on these terms, I claim, that one should speak of the narrativity of the book of Numbers as a whole. A similar insight also guides, I presume, source- and redaction-critical investigations of Numbers, where they understand the book as a redacted collection of different sources.²³³ In what follows the fragmented narrative paradigm hypothesised here is termed the 'larger story,' as has already been done. The term recognises the possible temporal, causal, and thematic aspects of the book of Numbers as a whole and that these are relatable to the first parameter of narrative interpretation, 'narrative paradigm' or 'story' (see 1.3.2. above). However, it should be noticed that the use of the term 'story' in the phrase 'larger story' is something different than when the genuine narratives found on the micro-level in the book are sometimes also termed stories in this thesis, as for instance, The Story of Manna and Quails in chapter 11. It is the task of the ensuing analysis to establish exactly what the term 'larger story' implies, but from the reasoning pursued here it may be presumed that the larger story of Numbers is a much looser structure than the discrete stories of the book on a micro-level.

²³² Wenham, *Numbers*, 29; cf. in this regard Christophe Nihan, "L'écrit sacerdotal entre mythe et histoire," in *Ancient and Modern Scriptural Historiography/L'Histoire biblique, ancienne et moderne* (ed. G. A. Brooke and T. Römer; BETL CCVII; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 151-190, who sees a historical intent in P, calling it 'historicising myth.'

²³³ Cf. e.g. Noth, *Numbers*, 1-2; and Wellhausen, *Die Composition*, 98, on the loose thread connecting the (narrative) material in Numbers.

2.3.2. *Numbers as Anthology*

What kind of genres can have such a loose and fragmented narrativity, alluding to a larger story? We have already talked about ‘collection’ in relationship to source- and redaction-critical research, but few scholars in this vein develop the notion much further. In the section on theory and method (1.3.2.) the genre of ‘composite novels’ was invoked, but there it is only a suggestive model for conceptualising Numbers from the point of view of narrative theory, and Numbers could at best be seen as a precursor to the modern genre.²³⁴ However, Sparks, relying on the work of John Van Seters, has described the Pentateuch as an “...anthological compendium of ancient Israelite tradition...”²³⁵ He compares the scribes of Hebrew history writing with the logographers of Greece, who

...produced a variety of prose narrative texts that covered mythological, legendary, genealogical, ethnographical, and historical topics... The logographers were in many respects antiquarianists (captivated with the traditions of the past)... [who] systematically collected and organized the earlier traditions...²³⁶

The designation used here, ‘anthology of tradition,’ seem to come close to a more refined description of the genre of Numbers, and the antiquarianist interest, in our case, for the purpose of informing Israelite identity,²³⁷ is a reasonable motivating factor for the book. As such and as seen from the Review of Earlier Research above, Numbers has been observed to be a compromise document, legitimising both priestly and lay-interest, theocracy and the diaspora-community, and working with questions of sin, redemption, exile, religious rights, identity, and leadership in hope for a land to be while adapting the old traditions for a new generation.²³⁸ These are then additional aspects to ponder concerning Num-

²³⁴ Moreover, the modern short-story cycles or composite novels are all works in the storytelling or fictional language-game in contrast to Numbers, see Dunn and Morris, *The Composite Novel*.; and Mann, *Short Story Cycle*.

²³⁵ Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 430.

²³⁶ Ibid., 402; cf. Van Seters, *In Search of History*; and Van Seters, *The Life of Moses*, 1-3; but also Nihan, “L’écrit sacerdotal,” 151-190; Noth, “Appendix: The ‘Priestly Writing’ and the Redaction of the Pentateuch,” 147; and Smith, *Palestinian Parties*, 130. The term ‘antiquarianist’ has also been used to describe law collections of the ANE, see Lisbeth S. Fried, “‘You Shall Appoint Judges’: Ezra’s Mission and the Rescript of Artaxerxes,” in *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (ed. James W. Watts; Symposium 17; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 81. See also, however, the cautionary notes about this comparison in Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 39-42.

²³⁷ Thus Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 8; and Wenham, *Numbers*, 27, 29; as have been referred to above.

²³⁸ For a selection of references to such an historical background to Numbers, see Achenbach, *Vollendung der Tora*; Olivier Artus, “Le Problème de l’unité littéraire et de la spécificité théologique du livre des Nombres,” in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers* (BETL CXXV ed. Thomas Römer; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 140-43; Budd, *Numbers*,

bers in relationship to the factual language-game to which as has been previously mentioned Numbers may be related.

All these aspects come about, in my estimation, through the portrayal of a certain period in the history of early Israel: an account of Israel wandering from Sinai to the steppes of Moab in the desert, and this argues in favour of our connecting the book to a factual language-game. Together the different passages in Numbers may be said to portray this period, either by telling about it, as the genuine narratives do, or by presenting ‘evidence’ for the period, as for example the list of gifts to the tabernacle in chap. 7 does, all passages together contributing to the emergent meaning portraying the period, what happened when, and sometimes how certain episodes cause others. Of course, the material is formed so as to present a certain interpretation of the period and lets that inform present Israelite identity, but the bottom line is still that the period is portrayed. This then is my hypothesis of the literary intentions of the scribes of Numbers.²³⁹ It could possibly be laid out in more detail, as is sometimes done in source- and redaction-criticism, but for our purposes in investigating the narrativity of Numbers in this thesis it is enough to assume this much for the analysis. All competent readers of Numbers through the ages have seen this literary purpose I believe and it is therefore not a very revolutionary conclusion, but the benefit of the discussion so far is that we see more clearly how it is that the portrayal comes about, and, not least in view of the purpose of this thesis, what role narrative plays in it.

To sum up, Numbers as a whole can be described as an anthology of traditions, which have a loose narrative framework determined primarily by sequentiality and possibly causality and certain themes, with a very varied discourse, portraying Israel’s forty-year wandering in the wilderness, which may be understood in relationship to a factual language-game. The purpose is to inform present Israelite identity. This narrativity of Numbers as a whole is investigated in more detail in the following chapters.

xviii-xix; Christophe Nihan, “Israel’s Festival Calendars in Leviticus 23, Numbers 28-29, and the Formation of ‘Priestly’ Literature,” in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers* (ed. Thomas Römer; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 231; Römer, “Israel’s Sojourn,” 443; Römer, “De la périphérie au centre,” 10-12, 34; and Horst Seebass, “Das Buch Numeri in der heutigen Pentateuchdiskussion,” in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers* (ed. Thomas Römer; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 258-59. More comprehensive bibliographical notes are given in 1.2.1. above. An important dissenting voice is Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, who claims that we can know “virtually nothing” (p. 228) about the redactor behind the Pentateuchal sources and that the questions of when, where, and why the sources were compiled are “fundamentally nonliterary questions” (p. 229).

²³⁹ For literary intention, see Olsen, *The Structure*, 118f.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter set out to try to understand what Numbers is, and in consequence, how the emergence of narrative features in it can be understood. It has been demonstrated that Numbers is a mixture of genres, including different kinds of narrative features, revealing that these are present in the book in quite different ways. On the level of the individual passages, the narrative features were assembled into four groups: genuine narratives, independent narrative sequences, instrumental scenes and situations, and narrative insertions, fragments and embroiderings. The first and last group are the largest ones. Moreover, the three latter groups are mixed in different ways with the many non-narrative passages of the book, and the reader may shift the language-game from passage to passage, even if we possibly benefit from inferring a factual language-game many times. All this taken together suggests that the book as a whole is probably best described as a collection of sources or an anthology of traditions, which is not a genuine narrative. However, when taken together, the different narrative features give rise to a narrative network of sequentiality, possibly causality, and certain themes, holding the traditions together somewhat, and which therefore can be described as a 'larger story,' a phenomenon that possibly is not far from part of the literary intentions of the scribes who collected and edited the book. This larger story portrays a certain definitional period in the history of Israel, when the people wander from Sinai to the steppes of Moab, a statement that is not meant to say anything about the historicity of the book. The purpose is rather theological in informing present Israelite identity. In the following chapters of analysis, a more detailed look at this larger story is offered along with analysis as to how it affects the coherence and meaning or lack thereof in Numbers overall.

3. Plotting a Way through the Wilderness

3.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter suggested that we may talk of a ‘larger story’ in Numbers that holds the material in the book together in a network of sequentiality and possibly causality. The present chapter aims to look at this network asking if it is right to assume that there is some sense of causality in it and if so to what degree. These questions formulated here ask whether there is a plot in the larger story of Numbers. In answering these questions we will also continually look at the relationship between the larger story in terms of the plot and the individual passages under scrutiny. Those questions will in turn address the larger one of the coherence or lack of coherence in the book at large, from the perspective of the concept of plot.

Above, in the chapter on theory, we associated ‘plot’ with the first parameter of narrative interpretation, the narrative paradigm. However, if Numbers is not a genuine narrative but rather an anthology of traditions, lacking a full narrative paradigm including a well-worked out plot, as was concluded in the foregoing chapter, in what way could we talk about a plot in the larger story of Numbers?

A first answer is that here a rather simple definition of plot, as primarily designating causality (rather than mere sequence) is used, together with the claim that this understanding of plot may apply in certain well-defined ways to texts that are not genuine narratives. Such a definition could be said to reflect a common sense-understanding of the concept, which is often found in literary theory,²⁴⁰ and also in biblical studies.²⁴¹ It is possible to be more detailed about how we understand plot than this, however, and by seeing a loose narrative network in Numbers in which causality possibly operates we are taken closer to another common understanding of plot as

The global dynamic (goal-oriented and forward-moving) organization of narrative con-

²⁴⁰ Chris Baldick, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2nd ed ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 195-96, ‘plot;’ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 45-48; Hillary P. Dannenberg, “Plot,” *RENT*:436; E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Edward Arnold, 1927; repr. Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), 93-94; Prince, *Dictionary*, 73, esp. what is defined under ‘plot 4;’ and Tomashevsky, “Thematics,” 66f.; cf. Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 132; and Aristotle, *Poetics*, 54-57. For a thorough discussion of the relationship between causality and narratives, see Brian Richardson, “Causality,” *RENT*: 48-52. What follows in this chapter can be connected primarily to what he says about causal connections between events and narrative units (pp. 48-49).

²⁴¹ See Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 93; David M Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 102; and Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 247. For more specialised formulations and uses of plot in conjunction with biblical studies, see Anne Pasquier et al., eds. *L'intrigue dans le récit biblique* (BETL CCXXXVII. Leuven: Peeters, 2010).

stituents which is responsible for the thematic interest (indeed, the very intelligibility) of a narrative...²⁴²

Plot in this definition is understood as the ‘logic’ behind a story in terms of causality. It has been argued that such an understanding of plot is also applicable to works in factual language-games, examples being Paul Ricoeur and Louis Mink’s use of the concept in conjunction with modern historiography. Plot in these cases, simply put, is understood as the historian’s claim regarding the causal significance of historical events and their relationships, claims that history as a science cannot do without, and that quite apart from what form (narrative or other) a particular historiographical work takes.²⁴³ Following this line of argumentation, the concept of plot is applicable to *Numbers*, since we use a broader definition and since we already have suspected that causality might be operative in the larger story of *Numbers*, even though it is not a genuine narrative. Nevertheless, the aim of the present chapter is still to investigate whether and to what degree this is the case, as the statement opening this chapter signalled, envisioning *Numbers* as a network of sequentiality and *possible* causality. The assumption that causality is operative in the larger story of *Numbers* is, of course, necessary for linking it to the concept of plot as we have defined it here. Moreover, it should also be noted that the use of the terms ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ in the definition of plot above are not meant to imply that *Numbers* is a genuine story or coherent narrative – they are simply needed to clarify the concept of plot.

This broad definition of plot may be contrasted with yet another common and more detailed understanding of plot that has its origin in Gustav Freytag’s attempt to present the typical structure of tragedy as a pyramid, as presented on the following page.²⁴⁴ This model is too tightly structured to fit what happens on a larger level in the anthology that is *Numbers* and it cannot account for the large amount of laws and rules in the book. However, what it does do is to point out that narratives often have a climax, or perhaps better, one or several turning-points, on the way from beginning to end. Another way to put it is to talk about events in a story as kernels or satellites, as Roland Barthes and Seymour Chatman have done.²⁴⁵ In view of a story taken as a whole with its causal relationships some events may be termed kernels, meaning that they advance “...the plot

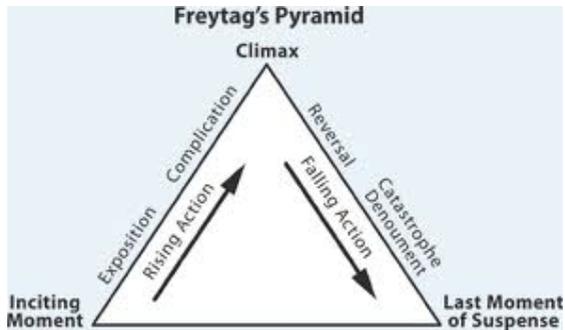
²⁴² Prince, *Dictionary*, 73; cf. Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 12; and Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative*, 101.

²⁴³ Mink, “Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument,” 130-133, 140, 144; and Ricoeur, *Temps et récit 1*, 166, 260-262, 328-329, 338-339, 354-356, 363-365, 378-381, 402-403; cf. Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 136-42.

²⁴⁴ Prince, *Dictionary*, 36; cf. Manfred Jahn, “Freytag’s Triangle,” *RENT*:189-190; and Longman III, *Literary Approaches*, 92-94.

²⁴⁵ For the concepts and the presentation that follows, Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 53-55, and Roland Barthes, “Introduction à l’analyse structurale des récits,” *Communications* 8 (1966):9-14.

Figure 3



by raising and satisfying questions,” being “...nodes or hinges in the structure...”²⁴⁶ on which the whole narrative rests. One cannot change a kernel in a story without changing the story itself. Satellites, on the other hand, are events that presuppose the kernels and are consecutive to them, whose “...function is that of filling in, elaborating, completing the kernel...”²⁴⁷ and fleshing them out as it were. Using this terminology one may say that some events in Freytag’s pyramid are more important than others, and this may also be the case in Numbers although it is not a genuine narrative or constructed upon a triangular scheme of climax. Such a way of reasoning about events in narratives, is here applied, then, to what happens in the larger story of Numbers. Everything that Barthes and Chatman presuppose about kernels and satellites is not applicable to Numbers, especially their understanding of ‘story,’ and the terms are used here primarily to talk about turning-points in the book, what precedes and follows them in a causal chain in a figurative sense. Thus, rounding off the first answer as to how we may talk about a plot in Numbers, a broad definition of the concept including the terms causality, kernels, and satellites, make such a talk possible.

A second answer on how to approach Numbers from the perspective of the plot has already been hinted at but should be spelled out clearly: the understanding of the concept of plot just laid out, however wide we take it, applies to Numbers to the degree that it respects and illuminates its character as an anthology. The concept of plot is obviously applicable to the genuine stories on the micro-level of the book, for example, but the question here is rather how those stories, interpreted from their language-games, contribute as such literary acts to the larger story in the book and its presumed larger plot. This means that the concepts of kernels and satellites are also applied to the macro-level in the book, i.e.

²⁴⁶. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 53.

²⁴⁷. *Ibid.*, 54.

to the individual genuine stories as single complex events set into a framework of sequentiality and causality, even though the concepts of kernels and satellites could also be used about the events that make up the genuine stories themselves. Such a summary and generalisation of events into larger ones is not uncommon in historiography for instance, and does not contradict the use of plot to understand the connections between them.²⁴⁸ It is not uncommon in discourse about plot in narrative fiction either.²⁴⁹ However, a special complication regarding Numbers is that such a summary of events cannot be made of the non-narrative passages for the simple reason that they are not narratives telling of events. Their contribution to the larger story and its plot, as understood here, relies instead on the interconnections with the narrative instrumental scenes and fragments with which they are mixed, as well as possibly connections between the content of the non-narrative passages and the narrative network of Numbers as a whole. Thus, sensitivity on how we identify kernels and satellites in the book, as well as how non-narrative passages relate to narrative ones is necessary in order to heed the character of Numbers as anthology with quite different kinds of materials and still a potential framing plot.

A third and last answer is that one of the more recent and influential attempts at describing Numbers as a whole can be said to rely on the idea of plot, and this will form the starting-point for our investigation in this chapter. The attempt is once again found in the suggestions of the commentary of Rolf P. Knierim and George W. Coats, who, as we have seen, rely to a large degree on the work of Won W. Lee in this regard.²⁵⁰ In short, their suggestion is that the motivating force in Numbers, which is responsible for the arrangement of the material in the book, is the *preparation and execution of a migratory campaign by Israel from Sinai to Moab, the execution being characterised as a failure to conquer the promised land from the south, including its consequences, and Yahweh's eventual forgiveness of Israel.*²⁵¹ The preparation is described in 1:1-10:10 and the execution in 10:11-36:13. Neither Lee nor Knierim and Coats use the word 'plot' to denote this motivating force of the book, but instead use the terms 'con-

²⁴⁸ Ricoeur, *Temps et récit 1*, 365-382, 402-404.

²⁴⁹ See e.g. Cohan and Shires, *Telling Stories*, 54-64.

²⁵⁰ See Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 135-44; and Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, viii. Lee is a student of Knierim.

²⁵¹ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 16; and Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 268, 283-284. That the aspect of preparation important in Numbers at large is also argued by Ackerman, "Numbers," 78.

ceptual aspect’ or ‘infrastructural concept.’²⁵² However, concerning conceptual aspects Knierim states that

...their typology is basically heterogenous. A concept governing a text may be, e.g., genre-, style-, or situation-specific; it may be a particular theme, *plot*, concern, or intention.²⁵³

Since the concept of a ‘preparation and execution of a migratory campaign’ seems to signal a causal relationship between two (summarised) events, I take it that the concept that is operative in the particular case of Numbers may be more precisely understood as ‘plot’ as defined above, and that such an understanding does not violate fundamentally the intentions of Lee, Knierim and Coats.²⁵⁴ The rest of the chapter will proceed from Lee’s and Knierim and Coats’ formulation of the plot of Numbers, starting with some problems noted by them and subsequently moving towards a better understanding.

To sum up shortly, in this chapter we investigate whether there is a sense of causality in the larger story of Numbers and if so to what degree, formulated here as looking for a plot in the book as a whole and what it might mean for understanding the coherence or lack thereof in the book. Such an investigation seems possible if we understand the concept of plot quite broadly, respect the character of Numbers as an anthology, and take our cue from observations witnessing to such a phenomenon in Numbers established in a broader exegetical context, in our case being found in the work of Lee, Knierim, and Coats.

²⁵² Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 16; and Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 47. The development of the method of ‘conceptual analysis,’ can be traced mainly in the work of Knierim, see Rolf P. Knierim, “Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered,” *Int* 27 (1973):435-468; Rolf P. Knierim, “Criticism of Literary Features, Form, Tradition, and Redaction,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* (eds. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 136-46; Rolf P. Knierim, *Text and Concept in Leviticus 1:1-9: A Case in Exegetical Method* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992); and Rolf P. Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Substance, Method, and Cases* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 351-399, 468-494. But see also Marvin A. Sweeney, “Form Criticism,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application* (eds. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999), esp. pp. 67-69.

²⁵³ Knierim, *Text and Concept in Lev*, 3 (my italics); cf. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 60.

²⁵⁴ This is also intimated by the following comment of Knierim and Coats concerning Numbers: “The geographical and topographical aspects are indeed important [in Numbers] because the references to them pervade the book and indicate the ongoing movement of the Israelites. They represent a sort of *plot* according to which many individual units are directly arranged.” Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 13 (my italics). From this initial observation they reason themselves towards the conceptual aspect of preparation and execution related above.

3.2. Initial problems

The first problem with Knierim and Coats' observations relating to the plot concerns the position of 5:1-10:10 under the description 'preparation for a military campaign' that is supposed to apply to the whole first section 1:1-10:10. Knierim and Coats divide the section into 1:1-4:45 and 5:1-10:10 and the first section is readily subsumed under the rubric of military preparations, although they observe that "The relationship of these units to one another is anything but self-evident."²⁵⁵ The three main reasons for this are, according to Knierim and Coats: 1) that the military understanding and division of the camp in chapters 1-4 is no longer in view in chapters 5-10;²⁵⁶ 2) that most of the passages in 5-10 are supplements to laws and rituals outside Numbers, and not to Num 1-4; and 3) that the only aspect the material in 5-10 has in common is the mention of priests, but this mentioning is not meant to promote the preparation for a campaign.²⁵⁷ Knierim and Coats thus conclude that "...it is a legitimate question whether Num 5:1-10:10 is not actually a supplement to the entire Sinai pericope rather than to Numbers 1-4 only."²⁵⁸ If so, it is also questionable whether it is meaningful to sort 5-10 under a rubric of military preparation, which in turn breaks up the plot or causal relationship that the rubric assumes. Knierim and Coats, however, hold

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 33-34, argue that the military division into 'outer' and 'inner' camp of chaps. 1-4 also applies to 5-10: 5:1-6:27 deals with the outer camp and 7:1-10:10 with the inner. However, this is simply not true; 9:1-14 deal with the outer camp, as Knierim and Coats also note, and 6:22-27 and 10:1-10 seem to transcend such division. The division might pertain to some passages within chaps. 5-6 and 7-10, but not to all of them and not in a coherent structure subsuming those which cannot be related to it.

²⁵⁷ For the three points, see *Ibid.*, 32-33, for the last point cf. Olivier Artus, "Les dernières rédactions du livre des Nombres et l'unité littéraire du livre," in *Les dernières rédactions du Pentateuque, de l'Hexateuque et de l'Enneateuque* (BETL CCI; eds. Thomas Römer and Konrad Schmid; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 137.

²⁵⁸ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 33. The section is so treated by many composition-historical scholars adhering to a form of the documentary hypothesis, see e.g. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 183-186, 217-220; Budd, *Numbers*, 53-108; Diether Kellermann, *Die Priesterschrift von Numeri 1:1 bis 10:10 literarkritisch und traditionsgeschichtlich untersucht*. (BZAW 120; Berlin: 1970), 147-55; Kratz, *Composition of the Narrative Books*, 106, 112; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 106-07; Noth, *Numbers*, 44; and Wellhausen, *Die Composition*, 81-98. Note, however, Israel Knohl, "The Guilt Offering Law of the Holiness School," *VT* 54 (2004):516-526. This is also one of the arguments for not regarding Numbers as a separate book, rehearsed above in the Review of Earlier Research (1.2.3.). However, there it was also argued that there are good reasons for seeing Numbers as a book; this is the line followed here and the reader is referred to section 1.2.3. for the arguments. Following such a line is not to deny the supplementary nature of many of the passages of Num 5-10 to rules primarily in Leviticus. However, at this specific place the main argument made is that all of Num 5-10 cannot be subsumed under a notion of 'preparations for a military campaign,' even though quite many can, as will be seen below.

that the concept of military preparation subsume all passages in Num 1-10 even after presenting these arguments.²⁵⁹

A similar problem is attached to the description of Num 10:11-36:13 as an ‘execution of a campaign.’ The description originates in the analysis of Lee, who grounds it in an extensive exposition of the Spy-story in Num 13-14, which has tremendous significance for the understanding of the whole of Num 10-36 according to Lee:

Israel’s failure to conquer the land of Canaan in chapters 13-14 is the final and constitutive vantage point to view the entire text of 10:11-36:13. In other words, Israel’s failure is the conceptual basis without which the thirty-six units of 10:11-36:13 would not exist as they do, nor be positioned where they are.²⁶⁰

Even more, Lee holds the Spy-story to be “...related to the substantive content of the thirty-six units...”²⁶¹ of Num 10-36. Several factors speak against such a firm connection between the Spy-story and the rest of the passages in Num 10-36 in my view. First, many laws and cultic rules that follow the Spy-story seem to have very little to do with a failed campaign and its consequences, especially those in chapters 15, 18-19, and 28-29. Lee argues that these laws presuppose settlement in the promised land and that it therefore is a connection between them and the Spy-story in that this is the land that Israel failed to conquer.²⁶² However, this is quite an indirect connection and does not explain why those laws and rules *necessarily* comes after chapters 13-14, as Lee argues. Second, a similar argument can be made for the passages that precede the Spy-story. We here encounter rebellion-stories, which of course can be understood to lead up to the fateful rebellion in chapters 13-14, as Lee says. But how does the Spy-story explain their necessary positioning before the decisive rebellion? If they are placed there because of the cumulative effect ending in the final, all-important rebellion, why do we have more stories about rebellions later on? Third, Lee’s understanding of the influence of the Spy-story on the rest of Num 10-36 involves him in some doubtful argumentation, which seems to infringe upon his overall description of Num 10-36 as being about the execution of a military campaign. For example, Lee understands the command by Yahweh to Israel after the rebellion in the Spy-story in 14:25b (“turn tomorrow and break up for the wilderness by the way of the Reed Sea”) to be determinative for several passages after chapters 13-14. Thus he says:

²⁵⁹ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 27, 33-34. Moreover, Knierim and Coats affirm that the concept of preparation is evident already in the earliest layers in the composition of Num 1-10, which are found in parts of Num 1, 2, and 4 (relying on Kellermann, *Die Priesterschrift*). It is interesting that these layers are not found in chaps. 5-10, adding to their supplementary nature.

²⁶⁰ Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 268. The Spy-story is analysed on pp. 213-279.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 216.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 215.

...20:14-21 [Edom refuses passage] as a whole reveals more than the reduced leadership role of Moses. The text strengthens the function of 20:2-13, that is, its provision for a reason why Moses is included in Yahweh's punishment of *all* the Exodus generation. First, by sending messengers to the king of Edom for passage through his territory, Moses disobeyed Yahweh's command to him regarding Israel's migration from Kadesh: 'turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea' (14:25b).²⁶³

The same argument is made later on, when Lee says that the note on the movement of the new generation in 21:4a ("They broke up from Mount Hor, by the way of the Reed Sea...") indicates that "...the people finally follow Yahweh's command (14:25b)..."²⁶⁴ However, that 14:25b would be operative at all in these latter passages seems highly questionable in my view, especially if we read the Spy-story from the point of view of a storytelling language-game, in which the command can be related to the punishment of the 40-years wandering related in the story (14:26-35) and also the disobedience of Israel pictured when they despite the command go up into the land to conquer it by the end of the story (14:39-45). Lee's reasoning seems to be that he understands the command in 14:25b to signal a new military strategy of Yahweh to conquer the promised land from the east instead of the south, now that Israel has failed to conquer it from the south. This stratagem is then understood to form a presupposition for what happens in the passages that follow the Spy-story, and it is after several recalcitrant setbacks finally obeyed by Israel in 21:4a.²⁶⁵ However, nothing of this

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 264. Cf. Schmidt, *Numeri*, 94-95, who takes this contradiction between 14:25b and 20:14-21 to substantiate that the scribes behind 20:14-21 (JE) did not know the Pentateuch-redaction, which presumably provided 14:25b.

²⁶⁴ Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 276.

²⁶⁵ See *Ibid.*, 232-233, 266-279. A similar reasoning is also present in Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 55, who states "It was the brief report of the Israelite defeat at Hormah in Num 14:40-45 that led to the decision to approach Canaan via Transjordan, a strategy that the Israelites begin to implement in Num 20:21 and 21:4b." However, it should be noted that Levine here speaks as a historian in contrast to the literary conceptualist Lee. As such Levine is reading these passages as factual language-games with the aim to understand the historical reference of the passages, wanting to reconstruct what actually happened, more than elucidating exclusively textual structures and what these together mean, as Lee does. His claim is therefore not that the entire text of Numbers pictures a military stratagem that is ordered (14:25b), disobeyed (20:14-21), and then obeyed (21:4a), as Lee does, but that the passages give us clues to reconstruct the military strategy of the historical pre-settlement Israel in that period, which followed the scheme Levine describes. I have suggested above, however, that the command of Yahweh in 14:25b does not have an effect beyond the Spy-story read as storytelling in connecting several stories in Numbers. See moreover Noth, *A History*, 47, 54, footnotes 157 and 174 respectively, on the tenuous connection of 14:25b and what follows. It is of course possible, as Levine also assumes as a source-critic, that 14:25b had a more dominant position in a composition preceding the canonical text of Numbers (like those assumed for and designated by the sigla J, JE, KD etc.), but we, and presumably Lee, are looking at the 'final form' of the book, and

is explicit in the passages under consideration, and if we are to understand it as implied in them, Lee does not provide the reasons.²⁶⁶ The command in 14:25b is more readily understood, in my view, to reach its full meaning within the limits of the Spy-story alone read in connection to a storytelling language game, as simply Yahweh's concluding word on what to do after the rebellion, and is better connected to the punishment in the story than to a new military strategy (14:32-33). This is argued not the least by the word מָחָר – 'tomorrow' – in the command ("Turn *tomorrow* and break up for the wilderness...), indicating that the command is meant to be carried out the following day, and not whenever Israel was ready to obey, a matter of course when Yahweh is directing Israel during the wanderings. The command is disobeyed the following day with disastrous consequences (vv. 39-45), but that does not mean that the command can only be understood to have been carried out in the book of Numbers until it is explicitly so described.²⁶⁷ The stories of wandering in the wilderness that precede the note on the direction taken in 21:4a could be taken to indirectly assume that after the defeat at Hormah Israel wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, that is, followed Yahweh's direction and 'turned and journeyed into the wilderness.'

To sum up the problems indicated above, one could say that the description concerning a plot of Numbers that Knierim and Coats give does not seem to be able to subsume or explain all the passages of the book as it is meant to do. Neither does Lee succeed in finding such a description for chapters 10-36. The reason for this, I think, is not only that Numbers awaits a better and more exact formulation of its plot, but the more problematic one that Numbers does not seem to have the coherence required to support such a plot. Their formulation seems to apprehend Numbers more as a genuine story than an anthology, and assumes a very tight structure that is not easily reconciled with the actual text. Again, as in the former chapter on genre, we run across the different conceptions of text and narrative between the approach adopted here and the one of Knierim, Coats and Lee. While they tend to view the entire text of Numbers as one coherent whole, where by necessity higher level descriptions determine the details of the

considering that form, I would argue that Lee's description and argument is not to the point. For a clear exposition of source-critical results against the background of the present text of Num 21:4-9, see Schmidt, *Numeri*, 102; cf. also Gray, *Numbers*, 274.

^{266.} Lee possibly intimates that the reason for seeing the command as implied here is that Israel is organised as a military body in chaps. 1-4, and that this organisational outlook of the people is to receive precedence in any interpretation of the entity 'Israel' throughout the book. This should mean that when Israel receives 'orders' from their 'general' these should be understood to be everywhere valid and operative in the book. The problem with this understanding, however, is that the conception of Israel in chaps. 1-4 does not seem to be at work in chaps. 13-14, 20, or 21, and thus mean very little for their interpretation of the text as it stands.

^{267.} Cf. Schmidt, *Numeri*, 41-42.

whole text, the approach taken here is to view Numbers as a collection of different materials between which there are possibly certain connections that produce a fractured frame. This frame awaits description, and certain aspects of it may be understood in conjunction with the concept of plot (but not the whole of it).

Thus, more can and will be said about these issues in what follows. Here we have tried to highlight the problems of a plot in Numbers as formulated by Lee, Knierim and Coats. The highlighting, however, is not meant to reject their description entirely. I think that most readers of Numbers would intuitively agree with their formulation, since it captures much of the essence of Numbers: Israel moving from Sinai to Moab, instigating rebellions to the point of forfeiting the promised land, causing the forty year wandering, and eventually coming back to the borders of the promised land. Similar, if not identical, formulations concerning this period in the history of Israel are at least found in other biblical traditions, Deut 1:6-3:29; Neh 9:9-23, and Ps 106:13-33 being a few examples. But such descriptions of Numbers and the period it portrays are much more loose than the one of Knierim, Coats and Lee, and do not necessarily lead to their exact formulation. Instead, such a loose description might form a starting point as an important observation concerning a potential plot of Numbers. And with this said, the investigation proper of this chapter begins.

3.3. Wandering from Sinai to Moab

In the introduction to this chapter it was said that we are looking for the plot in the ‘larger story’ of Numbers, the network resulting from viewing the different narrative features of the book together, not the least the narrative fragments. In what way can such a search in the network be related to the initial observation that Numbers seems to relate a wandering in the wilderness from Sinai to Moab? The answer lies, I think, in what has been called itinerary notes that are scattered throughout Numbers.²⁶⁸

The Itinerary Notes. If a united reading of the narrative fragments of Numbers is one of the causes for the larger story in the book it is interesting to consider that several of these fragments are itinerary notes mostly in the form of ‘*Israel broke up from... and they encamped at...*’²⁶⁹ The notes are not limited to Numbers but occur in Exodus 13-19 as well. In Numbers, however, they are found at 10:12, 33a; 11:35; 12:16; 20:1, 22; 21:4a; and 22:1.²⁷⁰ A few characteristics can be ob-

^{268.} G. I. Davies, “The Wilderness Itineraries and the Composition of the Pentateuch,” *VT* 33 (1983):1-13; cf. George W. Coats, “The Wilderness Itinerary,” *CBQ* 34 (1972):135-152.

^{269.} Cf. *Ibid.*, 135-38; and Davies, “Itineraries and Composition,” 1.

^{270.} Cf. Coats, “The Wilderness Itinerary,” 135; G. I. Davies, “The Wilderness Itineraries: A Comparative Study,” *TynBul* 25 (1974):48; and Davies, “Itineraries and Composition,” 1. Davies also counts 25:1 among the itinerary notes (in contrast to Coats). It is not taken up here, however, since it does not seem to contribute anything to the sense of movement in Numbers as the structurally similar notes in 10:11 and 10:33a (Coats leaves these out), but

served. Most of them begin or end genuine narratives,²⁷¹ but they are seldom “...related closely to the development of the narration.”²⁷² This then is an argument for putting them in the group of narrative fragments. This does not mean that they do not interact with the narratives they head or end, for instance, the name Kibroth-hattaavah in the etiology that ends the story Manna and Quails in 11:34 is taken up in the itinerary note of 11:35.²⁷³ However, the narratives themselves are not primarily about wandering.²⁷⁴ As such, they function to make transitions between the stories, marking the movement of Israel between the passages they begin or end. Since the same place-names are taken up from note to note, if not always very logically, and part of the problem is how the same period of wandering is portrayed in Deuteronomy,²⁷⁵ a chain of movement from place to place appears when they are read together, which functions to hold the material in-between together,²⁷⁶ in addition to referring to geographical sites in

rather reinforces the idea of having arrived at the steppes of Moab from 22:1 onwards. See further the discussion of the geography of Numbers below.

²⁷¹ There are three exceptions: 10:12, 33a; and 21:4a. The first two do not appear in genuine narratives, however, but the passage they are part of has been described above as a borderline-case in terms of narrativity in Numbers as compared to the four groups discussed. This would leave us with only one exception to the pattern of ‘fragments introducing/ending genuine narratives,’ i.e. 21:4a.

²⁷² Coats, “The Wilderness Itinerary,” 135.

²⁷³ Similar interactions are found between 12:16 and 13:3, 26; as well as 20:22 and 20:23.

²⁷⁴ *Contra* Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 16-17, 103, 148, who terms the sections 10:11-12:16 and 20:1-22:1 travelogues.

²⁷⁵ The problem concerns primarily the relationship between the notes in 10:12; 11:35; and 12:16, Coats, “The Wilderness Itinerary,” 139-40, but including other geographical notes the geography set out in chaps. 20-21 is also problematic, Budd, *Numbers*, 215-47; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 52-57; Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 112-25; Noth, *Numbers*, 150-155, 158-166; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 151-56. How the itinerary notes comply with the itinerary chap. 33 is discussed in Budd, *Numbers*, 350-53; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 497-99; Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 56-59; Noth, *Numbers*, 241-46; Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 139-144, 223-232; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 202-08; Van Seters, *The Life of Moses*, 153-64; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 216-30. An interesting source-analysis to explain the divergencies is given by Davies, “Itineraries and Composition,” 2-5. Finally, an additional aspect of the problematic sequence given by 10:12; 11:35; and 12:16 is that Deuteronomy have a different sequence. Thus for instance, Deut 9:22, which seemingly summarises the same period, intersperses the details from Ex 17:1-17 between the places found in Num 10:12; 11:3 on the one hand, and 11:35 on the other.

²⁷⁶ Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 15, 135 (“Les données topographiques constituent certainement l’une des clés de l’organisation de livre de Nombres... Elles peuvent donc être utilisées comme point de départ d’une recherche concernant la structure de ce livre.” [p. 15]); Coats, “The Wilderness Itinerary,” 147; Davies, “Wilderness Itineraries,” 47-48; and Davies, “Itineraries and Composition,” 8; and see also the discussion of Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 13-15; and Noth, *A History*, 220ff. Such a function for itinerary notes are not unique for Numbers or the Hebrew bible, but have been observed also in comparative texts from the ANE, Coats, “The Wilderness Itinerary,” 147; and Davies, “Wilderness

connection to a factual language-game.²⁷⁷ These notes, then, grant a sense of movement to the larger story or the sequential network of Numbers.²⁷⁸

As well as the itinerary notes, there are also fuller itineraries in Numbers in 21:10-20 and 33:1-49, and these may be highlighted. The first is put into the chain created by the notes, while the second is rather a passage of its own, retrospective of the wandering at its end, and therefore does not contribute to the movement in the larger story of Numbers.²⁷⁹

As seen from the references above, the itinerary notes are not equally distributed between the passages in Numbers in such a way that they mark the wandering between them evenly at every transition. Instead, they occur in chapters 10-22, or more precisely, 10-14 and 20-22. The passages surrounding these chapters, Num 1-10 and 22-36, are located in the wilderness of Sinai (1:1; repeated at 1:19; 3:14; 9:1, 5; cf. 10:12) and the steppes of Moab (22:1, repeated in 25:1; 26:63; 31:12; 33:50; 35:1; 36:13), while to a large extent the passages in-between, Num 15-19, are undefined geographically.²⁸⁰ An overview of the geography in Numbers from beginning to end would thus seem to produce the following scheme: Sinai – Wandering – Unknown location/s – Wandering – Moab.²⁸¹ A few things can be said about this scheme, which all have to do with

Itineraries,” 52-78.

²⁷⁷ For such a function of the notes, cf. G. I. Davies, *The Way of the Wilderness: A Geographical Study of the Wilderness Itineraries in the Old Testament* (The Society for Old Testament study: Monograph series 5; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1-2; *pace* Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 5-6, 11-12.

²⁷⁸ Apart from geographical movement, the idea of chronology, or that one passage may be assumed to happen after the preceding one, underlying the ordering of the book, grants a sense of sequentiality to the book, as was stated in the previous chapter. Cf. *Ibid.*, 95-100, 127-128, 145, and see further the excursus at the end of the chapter.

²⁷⁹ Several stations that are mentioned in chap. 33, primarily in vv. 18-30, are not found among the itinerary notes, which have occasioned many suggestions as to the sources and settings of the notes and itinerary respectively, ranging from the itinerary in chap. 33 being the source for the notes (Davies, “Itineraries and Composition,” 5-8), to the Pentateuchal narrative with the notes being the source for the itinerary together with another document (Noth, *Numbers*, 242-46; cf. more recently Achenbach, *Vollendung der Torā*, 622-28).

²⁸⁰ But see 15:32; 16:13, referring to מִדְבָּר (‘the wilderness’), and 19:3, 7, 9 referring to מַחֲנֶה (‘the camp’).

²⁸¹ Similar structures have quite often been suggested as the structure for the book of Numbers as seen from the Review of Earlier Research above (1.2.2.), see e.g. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 15-18; Gray, *Numbers*, xxvi-ix; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 1; Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 11-13; Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 14-18; and Zenger and Frevel, “Die Bücher Levitikus und Numeri,” 55-57. However, since the itinerary notes are not evenly distributed, sometimes confused, and other geographical hints only impartially suggested by many passages, such structures often break down at certain points, as was also said in the review above. See further the criticisms of Olson, *Death of the Old*, 34-35; and Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 8-15, 36-37.

how or to what extent the idea of wandering emerges in the different parts of Numbers. First of all, the idea of a wandering or movement is not restricted to the parts that are labelled ‘wandering’ in the scheme. The ‘stationary places’ in the scheme, Sinai and Moab, are taken up in the notes and made part of the itinerary-chain (10:12; 22:1), and can therefore also be understood to be part of the wandering. Moreover, the wandering begins as noted in Egypt as recounted in Exodus, meaning that the wandering creates a larger context in the Pentateuch of which Numbers is one part. In this larger context however, there are differences from section to section concerning how the wandering appears. Ex 19:2 and Num 10:12 create a frame for the material in-between by placing Israel at Sinai, and stopping at Sinai is one part of the wandering from Egypt to the promised land. But in several places the idea of wandering is quite distant from the material in Ex 19-Num 10, not the least because the stay there takes a year. This also seems true about Num 22-36. In 22:1 the last itinerary note is given and the wandering stops since the end-station has been reached. Num 22-36 is then part of the wandering primarily through being set at its end. The idea of wandering seems to arise more easily from reading the passages Ex 13-18, or Num 10-14; 20-21. Thus, if we want to characterise how the idea of wandering interrelates with Numbers at large, we can at most say that the material in Numbers (or Ex-Num) is framed by the wandering. Recognising this means we also need to make room for the fact that the idea of wandering is sometimes quite distant from the material, and that not all passages in the book can be related to it. For example, in the scheme above Num 15-19 is simply referred to as ‘unknown locations.’ With these qualifications, the larger story of Numbers nevertheless does rely to a large extent on a wandering from Sinai to Moab by means of the itinerary notes, introducing a certain sense of movement in the book, even though the wandering is not present everywhere.²⁸²

²⁸² Olson has argued against seeing the itinerary notes as a basic structure in Numbers, Olson, *Death of the Old*, 97-118, supplanting them instead with his understanding of the succession of generations. Apart from the more general arguments against Olson’s structure made in the Review of Earlier Research above (1.2.2.), one can note the following: 1) Olson argues that the toledot-chain from Genesis is continued by the toledot-note in Num 3:1 and here performs the same function as in Genesis of demarcating larger structures by noting generations. Moreover, he holds this to be supported by the connections between the censuses in Num 1 and 26, the tribal genealogies of Genesis, and the toledot-formulas. However, even though there probably is a connection between Num 3:1 and the toledot-formulas in Genesis, this does not mean that the formula performs the same function in Numbers as in Genesis. I would argue that the function of demarcating larger sections in Genesis is a function of the toledot-formulas when they are part of a larger chain as in Genesis, but that such a chain is not present in Numbers and cannot be established in the book by the one formula in Num 3:1, which is too far removed textually from Genesis to link up to the chain given there. תולדות is better taken to mean simply ‘generations’ or ‘lineage’ in Num 3:1 in my view. As a marker of a larger section it would, furthermore, be strange that the formula comes at 3:1 and not 1:1.

If this is the outlook and function of the itinerary notes in Numbers, and these can be said to be an essential part of the narrative network that results from reading the narrative features of the book together, not the least the fragments, we still do not have much of a plot as we have defined it. One has to ask whether there is some causal significance added to the sequence of the notes of departure and arrival for a plot to appear. Are there additional aspects to the wandering as, for example, suggested by Lee, Knierim and Coats' terms 'preparation' and 'execution' and their relationship? Moreover, do certain passages stand out as kernels in the larger story, and how do they affect our understanding of the progression of Numbers at the macro-level? In the next section we will go through the book from beginning to end to see if such aspects are present, to what degree, and how they are related.

Causality in Numbers. If we ask what is understood to have caused the wandering in the larger story of Numbers we have to look outside the book for answers since it seemingly begins in the middle of the wandering through an introductory narrative fragment that is not an itinerary note but that refers to one of the stations on the journey without any elaboration of its causal significance (1:1). As we have already noted, the idea of wandering including its start and cause, is presented elsewhere in the Pentateuch. The best treatment of the cause for the wandering is possibly found in David Clines' observation that much of what happens in the Pentateuch can be understood in light of the patriarchal promises – of land, posterity, and a divine-human relationship – and the theme of their fulfilment and non-fulfilment, which are given in Genesis and repeated several times afterwards throughout the Pentateuch.²⁸³ More specifically, a close reading of Numbers shows, according to Clines, that the promise of land is everywhere present in the book.²⁸⁴ Proceeding from this observation, I hold that the wander-

This is even stranger since Olson argues for seeing 1:1 as a clear beginning of the book; 2) Olson argues that the itinerary notes are secondary in structuring Numbers in view of the succession of generations, and compares them to itinerary notes in Genesis that have a secondary function. However, the wanderings in Genesis are not of the same kind as the one in Ex-Num. The main difference being that the Genesis-itineraries are much shorter than the one in Ex-Num, and mostly restricted to individual passages. Moreover, very few of the examples of itinerary notes that Olson presents for Genesis (p. 223, footnote 65), are actually such notes in my view. There would thus seem to be reason to conclude with F. M. Cross that while toledot-formulas structure the priestly material in Genesis, itinerary notes structure it in Ex-Num, Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 301-21.

²⁸³ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, esp. p. 30. Noth's discussion of the fundamental and original themes of the Pentateuch is of course also interesting in this regard, Noth, *A History*, 46-62, esp. pp. 54-58.

²⁸⁴ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 37-43, 57-62, 92-93. For the importance of the theme of land in P, which dominates Numbers, see Walter Brueggemann, "The Kerygma of the Priestly Writers," in *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (eds. Walter Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff; Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox, 1975).

ing perceived in Numbers is caused by the earlier promise of land, literarily speaking, which is probably not a very controversial statement. An example of the connection is Ex 33:1 where Yahweh at mount Sinai issues a command to Moses: “Go, go up from here, you and the people that you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land I have sworn to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, to your offspring I will give it” (cf. e.g. also Gen 12:1, 7; 15:13-15; 26:2-4; 28:13-15; Ex 3:8).²⁸⁵ Stating it, however, gives us a starting point for analysing the causes for the wandering seen in Numbers, from which a more detailed and in-depth analysis of the plot may follow.

3.3.1. Preparations for Wandering

Coming to the first chapters of Numbers, one can note that the narrative fragments of the first four chapters of Numbers relate commandments of Yahweh to Israel to organise themselves militarily together with notes on the obedience of Israel (see e.g. 1:2-3, 44-45, “Count the whole assembly of the Israelites... all in Israel going out to war...,” “these were the ones counted that was counted by Moses and Aaron...”), as has been observed also by Lee, Knierim and Coats. This is an organisation not primarily for battle, but for protection, marching and encampment (cf. 1:50-51; 2:2, “The Israelites shall camp each by their regiments, by the sign of their fathers’ houses...”).²⁸⁶ The census lists and descriptions of the camp framed by the narrative fragments can be understood as evidence to the organisation thus conducted. Together with Knierim and Coats what is related here can be described as ‘preparations for a military campaign.’²⁸⁷ Such a summary description of Num 1-4 assumes that the narrative fragments and scenes refer directly to these preparations, while such reference is supposed indirectly, or perhaps better, understood to be attested to, by the census lists etc. In other words we are reading these passages in connection with a factual language-game meant to refer to historical reality and the events referred to can be summarised as one larger event of military preparations. Such an event may in turn be understood as part of a plot in the larger story of Numbers.

²⁸⁵ The question of when exactly during Moses’ forty days stay at Mount Sinai Yahweh said this to Moses, does not hinder us in seeing a connection between the wandering and the promise of land, and saying that it preceded the events of Numbers, see Brevard Childs, *Exodus* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1974), 586-88.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (JSOTSup 106; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 137-38; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 142-44; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, 3; *contra* Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 57. The different tasks of the Levites in comparison to the ordinary Israelites depicted here, and noted by Kellermann, *Die Priesterschrift*, 149, underwrite such a conclusion. Further, reading the plural ‘their regiments’ instead of singular ‘his regiment’ (יָבֵדָה), follows the Samaritan Pentateuch, see note in BHS.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg*, 263-65.

If we understand the patriarchal promises to cause the preparations, the preparations are given reason and specificity: it is a particular campaign that is being prepared for because of the promise of Yahweh, which puts the preparations in a causal chain from promise to fulfilment marked by the itinerary notes. In short, Israel prepares for the march towards the promised land caused by the promise. The meaning of the individual passages of Num 1-4 are not thereby exhausted, however, and these other aspects also add to the issue of language-games, going beyond a mere factual referring one. As an example, chapters 3-4 on the duties of the Levites may be read as much, and probably much more, for the details they give on the role and valuation of the Levites as for their place in military preparations.²⁸⁸ Subsuming the lists and descriptions etc. under the notion of an event of preparations is in contrast to the approach of Lee, Knierim, and Coats and is not meant to entail that their meanings are restricted to the idea of military preparations. Such a reasoning applies, I would say, to all individual passages of Numbers concerning their relationship to the larger story of the book and their potential meaning and purposes, and is assumed throughout the analysis.²⁸⁹

What is interesting for the network of Numbers and its potential plot, moreover, is that the military preparations are explicitly connected to the itinerary notes and their notion of wandering. The first itinerary note in Numbers comes in 10:12 and records Israel's movement from Sinai and out into the wilderness ("The Israelites broke up for their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai and the cloud settled in the wilderness of Paran"). The note is interwoven into a description of the breaking of the Israelite military camp in 10:11-36, which includes a list of the order of the break-up (vv. 11-28) that corresponds exactly to the instructions for breaking camp laid out in Num 2. Thus, an inclusion of military preparations for the wandering is created for Numbers 1-10.²⁹⁰ Such a description of Num 1-10 would seem to have two consequences. First, the connection between the itinerary notes and the military preparations means that the first 'event' of preparations in Numbers is connected to the wandering in the larger story of Numbers, the latter framing much of the book as we have said. The event of preparations is thus 'hooked on' the idea of wandering, and made part of it. An interesting background in this connection is that the typical context for itineraries in ANE-texts are descriptions of military campaigns found in royal annals.²⁹¹ However, there is also a complicating factor in the connection of itin-

²⁸⁸ Examples of such readings are, among others, Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 150-151, 171ff.; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 341-44; and Risto Nurmela, *The Levites: Their Emergence as a Second-Class Priesthood* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1998), 112ff. See also Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 160, on the military dimension of the Levites at this place in Numbers.

²⁸⁹ An observation similar to this claim but from a different angle is made by Artus, "Le problème de l'unité littéraire," 123.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Artus, "Les dernières rédactions," 137; and Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 144, 303.

²⁹¹ Davies, "Wilderness Itineraries," 78-81; and Davies, "Itineraries and Composition," 9.

erary notes and military preparations in that the military understanding of the wandering introduced here does not seem to be very important in the passages that follow later on in Numbers. This is an observation that we will come back to.

Second, the inclusion of military preparations encompassing Num 1-10 suggests that we may also extend the description of preparations to cover chapters 5-10. However, such a description of what is found here is not easily done, as was seen above in connection with Knierim and Coats' attempt to do so. Therefore, what we will do here is to go through the passages of Num 5-10 in more detail than above to see to what extent it is possible to connect the passages to an event of military preparations. As a start, one may note that many have singled out 1:1-10:10 as a first major division in Numbers, argued by the coherent geographical setting (wilderness of Sinai) and clear chronology (encompassing nineteen days of the second month in the second year after the Exodus, cf. 1:1 and 10:11).²⁹² To this demarcation may then also be added the taking up of the instructions for breaking the camp in 10:11-28 from Num 2 (and more generally

See also Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 148.

²⁹² Apart from Lee, Knierim and Coats, examples of scholars who also reflect this division, mainly on the basis of geography, are: Ackerman, "Numbers," 78; Davies, *Numbers*, li-liii; Gray, *Numbers*, xxvi-xxvii; Kellermann, *Die Priesterschrift*, 3; Milgrom, *Numbers*, xi, xiii; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 1-2; Ska, *Introduction*, 35-38; Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 12; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 54-55. In terms of chronology, the notations in 1:1 and 10:10 seem to create a time-frame that encompasses the section. The chronological notices in 7:1; 9:1; and 9:15 have been understood to break this frame, however. But a few observations mitigate these disruptions. First, the phrase *ביום ההוא* in 7:1 and 9:15 should not be taken to mean 'on the exact day' (of the erection of the tabernacle), but rather 'when' (Moses/they had erected the tabernacle), a rendering which would resolve the contrast with 1:1, Milgrom, *Numbers*, 53, 362-364; Koehler and Baumgartner, II: 401 and Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik*, 296. See also Gray, *Numbers*, 74-75, 85-86, who notes this possibility, denies it for 7:1 but affirms it for 9:15. Second, the subject of 9:1-14 is the second (delayed) passover, which is supposed to be celebrated one month after the regular one by Israelites who for different reasons could not participate in the regular one. Now, the presentation of this subject starts by referring to the regular passover to give background for the new regulations, and more specifically a reference is made to the first regular passover that was celebrated after the exodus (9:1-7). These first celebrations happen to occur one month before the time noted in Num 1:1, so that a sort of flashback is created. However, since the second passover is supposed to be celebrated one month *after* the regular one (9:11), there is some logic that the instructions for its celebration occur at this point in Num, whose time has been set to one month after the first regular passover (Num 1:1). I.e., at the time for the second passover, the instructions for its celebration are given. Thus, the chronological contrast of 9:1 with 1:1 is not so much a contrast as a flashback that introduces the cultic rule, cf. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 67; but also Gray, *Numbers*, 1, calling 7:1ff. and 9:1-14 'retrospective.' *Contra* David J.A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew IV*: 166; Budd, *Numbers*, 96-97; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 295; Noth, *Numbers*, 63; and Wellhausen, *Die Composition*, 179. For more on the chronology of Numbers, see the excursus below.

the organisation of the camp in Num 1-4). If correct to see a unit in Num 1-10, does Num 5-10 relate to a frame of military preparations at all?

If we begin at the end and move backwards, the two last passages of 1:1-10:10 it seems to be quite easy to assimilate them to the idea of military preparations: Num 9:15-23 is a description that relates how Israel was typically guided by the cloud during the wandering/campaign, while 10:1-10 gives instructions concerning the silver trumpets that are to be made and used for breaking camp during the campaign, apart from being used later on at time of war in the land. It is when we come to the passages in 5:1-9:14 that things become more complicated.

Conceivably, the narrative sequence of 5:1-4 can be related to the campaign. The sequence concerns the camp and its purity, and could thus be understood to connect to the organisation of the camp in Num 1-4 and introduce the idea of the importance of the purity of the camp for the coming campaign.²⁹³ In a similar manner, 7:1-8:26 (7:1-39, Gifts to the tabernacle; 8:1-4, Setting up the seven lamps; and 8:5-26, Consecrating the Levites) could also be connected to a frame of military preparations in that the passages found here features preparations of the tabernacle, and that the tabernacle in turn can be connected both to the organisation of the camp, standing at its centre as it does, as well as to the instructions for the campaign, since carrying the tabernacle during the march is part of the duties of the Levites (Num 1:50-41; 4:2-4, 18-33). Both the tabernacle and the Levites are finally prepared here, after which the march may begin. The tabernacle also contains the ark, which is carried together with the other furniture of the tabernacle (Num 4:1-6, 15), and which is connected to the tradition of holy war.²⁹⁴ Such a connection appears most clearly later on in 10:33-36 (The Song of the ark). On the whole, the campaign that is prepared in Num 1-10 is best understood as a 'military-cultic' or 'sanctuary' campaign, as Knierim and Coats put it,²⁹⁵ relying on the tradition of holy war. This is not only argued by the presence of the tabernacle and ark, but also by the instructions for the silver-trumpets (10:1-10), and the idea of the necessary purity of such a camp, as ex-

²⁹³ Cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 54; Gray, *Numbers*, 39-40; Milgrom, *Numbers*, xiv; Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 89-90; and David P. Wright, "Unclean and Clean (Ot)," *ABD VI*: 730; *contra* Noth, *Numbers*, 44.

²⁹⁴ Theodore Hiebert, "Warrior, Divine," *ABD VI*:: Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 35, 37; Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (HSM 5; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 145-147, 155-165; Richard D. Nelson, "Holy War," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible 2*:: Gerhard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (Translated by Marva J. Dawn. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991). Miller argues that Israel's wilderness wanderings were seen as holy war very early on in Israel's history, citing Deut 33:2-3; Judg 5:4-5; Ps 68:8-9; and Ex 15:13-15 as evidence, *ibid.*, 160-161, cf. the discussion *ibid.*, 74-117.

²⁹⁵ Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 34-35, 40, 142; cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 26; Knierim, "The Book of Numbers," 385-86; and Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 215.

pressed by 5:1-4, is not foreign to the idea of holy war.²⁹⁶ We would thus in the passages 5:1-4; 7:1-8:26 have a cluster of ideas that would connect quite easily to the notion of preparations for a military campaign.²⁹⁷

However, it does not seem to be possible to relate the rest of the passages of 5-10 (5:5-6:27; 9:1-14) to either the camp or the march in a military campaign. The tabernacle, which stands in the middle of the camp is mentioned in the rule concerning an unfaithful wife (5:11-31, see v. 17), but the rule does not in this case concern the tabernacle itself or its preparation, as in the passages in 7:1-8:26, but simply presuppose the tabernacle as the setting for the rite. Wenham, furthermore, has suggested that the rules and laws in Numbers function as promises of the land, since many times their execution presuppose a settled life in the land.²⁹⁸ Such a reasoning if accepted would apply to 9:1-14 (The second passover), where unleavened bread and bitter herbs are mentioned together with an allusion to the paschal lamb (9:11-12), and also to the vow of the Nazirite (6:1-21), which takes pains to enumerate all possible variants of vine-products (6:3-4), together with corn-offerings (6:15, 17, 19).²⁹⁹ However, the purity rules in 5:5-31 and the priestly benediction (6:22-27) cannot be connected to such a hint of the promise of land. Moreover, such implicit hints of the land still fail to link the passages referred here to the frame of military preparations.³⁰⁰

Nevertheless, another dimension of the vow of the Nazirite may argue its place among military preparations: its possible connection with the holy war tradition as mentioned above.³⁰¹ In two biblical texts, long hair is associated with dedication and war, Judg 5:2 and Deut 32:42, and to these texts we may also add the stories about Samson, who has long hair, waged war against the Philistines (Judg 13-16), and was called a Nazir (13:5, 7 etc). Thus, Patrick D. Miller has argued that the Nazirite vow may be understood in conjunction with "...a type or group of warriors who consecrated themselves to fight the holy wars on Yah-

²⁹⁶ Cf. Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 157; and Rad, *Holy War*, 42. Miller cites 1 Sam 21:6; 2 Sam 11:11; Deut 23:13-15; Josh 3:5; 7:13, as examples of this practice.

²⁹⁷ It would not rely then on a more specific structuring of Num 1-10 into 'outer' (1-4) and 'inner' (5-10) camp, as Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 33 argue, but rather on more general ideas that can be connected to the notion of preparations.

²⁹⁸ Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 15, 78. The difference to the much more specific argument of Lee that the laws and cultic rules of 10:11-36:13 is related to the failure to conquer the promised land and its consequences, and not simply to the promised land, should be noted.

²⁹⁹ Some have seen a nomadic symbolism in the abstinence of vine-products, which attaches the rule somehow to the idea of wilderness life as appropriate here in Numbers, see Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 234; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, 356. If so, it still comes about in a wholly anticipatory meaning, since the rule could only be followed in a more settled life. And again, this link would not connect the rule to the military preparations.

³⁰⁰ This would differentiate 9:1-14 from 15:1-41, but make it similar to 28:1-30:1.

³⁰¹ For the presentation that follows, see Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 229-35; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 355-58; and Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 87-89.

weh.”³⁰² Such a connection between Nazirite and holy war has been questioned however, on the grounds that the Nazirite is a late insertion in the Samson-stories and similar texts (cf. primarily Am 2:10-11).³⁰³ But the lateness of the connection of Nazirite and holy war does not nullify a connection in the rule on the Nazirite in Num 6, which is seen by most as a late text, accommodating earlier Nazirite traditions under priestly supervision.³⁰⁴ The argument would then be that there are associations between the Nazirite vow in Num 6 and the holy war traditions, and that these associations make a connection between the rule and the military preparations in Num 1-10 possible, which in turn argues in favour of the place of the rule here in Numbers. Saying that, there are also other connections with the surrounding passages, such as the theme of purity from 5:1 onwards, nonetheless in terms of plot and a possible first event of military preparations, 6:1-21 may be connected because of the associations with holy war.

In light of these observations we may conclude that among the problematic passages of Num 5-10 it is possible to connect 5:1-4; 6:1-21; and 7:1-8:26 to a summarised event of military preparations, while 5:5-31; 6:22-27; and 9:1-14 seem to be unrelated to such an event. In other words, assuming that the first event in the larger story of Numbers can be described as ‘military preparations for a march’ and that this event in turn is connected to a plot in the larger story of wandering in the book caused by the promise of land, these latter passages would break out of the event and in turn the plot. This does not mean that there are no connections between 5:5-31; 6:22-27; and 9:1-14 and the surrounding passages or the book at large. At the very least there seems to be sequential relationships and possibly thematic ones. However, the point here is that the connections do not come in terms of a plot.³⁰⁵

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁰³ G. Mayer, “גזר,” *TDOT* IX:306-11. Mayer does not discuss Judg 5:2 and Deut 32:42, however.

³⁰⁴ Budd, *Numbers*, 69; Kellermann, *Die Priesterschrift*, 94-95; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 91; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 229; and Noth, *Numbers*, 53, 55. Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 88-89, however, states that the connection between Nazirite vow and holy war was lost by the time of P. If there indeed is a connection between holy war and Nazirite, the placement of the rule on the vow among other texts easily related to the holy war-tradition seems to argue against such a conclusion.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Noth, *A History*, 223-24, who makes a similar observation on the diverse means used to connect the, in his view, earliest narrative traditions of the Pentateuch. Wenham has argued that the priestly benediction is linked “...with the regulations designed to purify the camp (5:1ff., 5ff., 11ff.; 6:1ff.), and thereby to prepare the people for the great act of worship, the march towards the promised land” Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 89; cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 76; and Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 90, 103. However, the camp is not in view in 6:22-27, as it is in 5:1-4 for example, which connect 5:1-4 to the preparations, but it is rather more generally ‘the Israelites’ (v. 23) that are in view, which shows that 6:22-27 is not specifically related to the march. It could only be related to the

Thus, to sum up so far, we seem to have reason to say that most passages in Num 1-10 can be summarised as reflecting a first ‘event’ of military preparations, which can be understood to be caused by the promise of land and therefore related to a plot in the larger story of wandering in Numbers. Certain passages, however, cannot be subsumed under such a description and hence are not related to the event of preparations including its connection to a plot in the larger story. Right at the start of Numbers then, the first event in the larger story is fractured, and so in its turn is the plot.

Preparation as a Kernel Event. If the military preparations can be said to be the first ‘event’ in the book, are we to understand it as a kernel-event in the larger story of Numbers? Assuming a military character to the itinerary notes in the light of ANE-texts noted above, it is possible to see Israel’s wandering throughout the book of Numbers as the conduct of a certain campaign, and thus the initial preparatory passages would seem to have a kernel-function, raising the ‘questions’ or setting the scene, so to speak, for the rest of the book. Such an interpretation of the military preparations seems to underwrite Lee, Knierim and Coats’ understanding of Numbers as depicting the ‘preparation and *execution* of a military campaign,’ where the preparations may be understood as a kernel-event that sets the stage for the execution of the campaign.

However, as stated above, the idea of a military campaign does not seem to be very important in the passages that follow in Numbers, which in the main deal with other themes and issues.³⁰⁶ We have the direct effect of the preparations in 10:11-36 as noted, where the start of the campaign is related in the terms defined in 1-4. After this, however, the evidence of a military campaign is meagre and in most passages non-existent. Therefore, in the continuation of the analysis the promise of land is taken to be the primary cause for what happens in Numbers at large, until a kernel-event presents itself in the book. Nevertheless, allusions to the military preparations surface in the details and as a general background for certain passages in what follows after chapters 1-10 in Numbers, and thus we need to account for these allusions as well as explain why they do not establish the preparations in Num 1-10 as a kernel-event, before we proceed.

To start with, a first allusion is found in 11:4-35, Manna and Quails, in that the large numbers of Israel (600 000) are noted, a round number coming close to the sum calculated in 1:46, and the term *פְּדָיִים* (foot-men/soldiers, at 11:21) is used of the people, a term found many times in military contexts.³⁰⁷ But the sto-

march as ‘the great act of worship,’ but such an understanding seems to neglect the military dimension of the preparations.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 152; *contra* Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 73-282 and Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 142.

³⁰⁷ Brown et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 920; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *HALOT* III: 1186; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 325; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, 88.

ry as a whole is not about a campaign executed, and one could note that the reference to the large numbers serves to underline the power of Yahweh to support his people rather than to elaborate on the army of Israel and its campaign performance. Possibly, far in the background, one might understand the story as a digression from the larger story of a military campaign, but this is very far back indeed, and such a background applies to only very few stories in Numbers, meaning that they all would be digressions to such a campaign, or even redundant to such an overarching story. Moreover, a second allusion is found in 26:63-65, in that the first census (1:1-54) is referred to here as part of the second census of Numbers (26:1-65). However, the allusion does not assume a campaign executed on the terms of the first census, but rather promotes the themes of disobedience and succession of generations. Finally, it is quite clear that military connotations operate in the general background of 21:1-3, 21-35, and 31:1-54, which may be connected to the preparations at the start of Numbers. But the character of these military notions does not take on the grandeur of the earlier chapters and there are no explicit references to the preparations in these passages. Many times other events seem to be more important for understanding the passages that come after Num 1-10 in terms of the plot in the book at large, for example, the rebellion-stories as explaining the cause of the prolonged wandering in the desert. All in all only seven passages after Num 1-10 deal with events that could somehow be understood to be executions of the preparations, apart from the itinerary notes (10:11-36; 13:1-14:49; 21:1-3, 10-20, 21-35; 31:1-54; and 33:1-49),³⁰⁸ so that it is difficult to argue that the whole of Num 11-36 can be sorted under the concept of an execution of a military campaign.

The Spy-story (Num 13-14) is a special case when noting allusions to the military preparations, however, not least since in 14:29 there is a reference to the military census of the people which echoes the preparations and census in Num 1:2-3 (cf. 1:2-3, "Count the sum of the assembly of the Israelites, according to their families... from twenty years and upwards...;" and 14:29, "...all of you who were counted, according to all of your number, from twenty years and upwards..." cf. 1:3). In the Spy-story Israel has come close to the promised land and is about to conquer it, and thus we come close to an idea of executing a military campaign in the land. Even so, I would not say that the story concerns the (failure of) the execution of a campaign corresponding to the preparations in Num 1-10 as Lee has it. First of all, the reference to the census is not made at the start of the story to introduce the execution of a campaign or the like. In-

³⁰⁸: Cf. Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 152; *contra* Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 235-55. Lee argues that there are 'indirect accounts of military encounters' to support his view that in all aspects 10:11-36:13 relates an execution of a campaign. These indirect accounts would be 10:11-36; 21:10-20; 22:1-24:25; 25:19-26:65; 32:1-42; and 33:50-56. These passages do feature military motifs and details, but it is hard for me to see that they would picture military *encounters* as part of the execution of a campaign, even if indirectly.

stead, the reference comes later on in Yahweh's speech of punishment over Israel, and the primary point seems to be to refer to the first generation of Israelites, which were numbered in the census of Num 1. That is to say, the reference does not link the story into a causal chain of preparation and execution, even though there clearly is an allusion to Num 1:2-3. Second, other issues seems to be as – or even more – important in the story, which connects it to the wandering and promise of land rather than to military preparations: the spying out of the fertile land (13:1-24), where the emphasis falls on the goodness of the promised land; the disbelief, sin, and rebellion of the people (13:30-14:4), emphasising the rebelliousness of Israel; Moses' intercession (14:13-25), marking his unique role, etc. Third, Israel do attempt to conquer the land in 14:39-45, but since this is done on their own initiative, in contrast to the Yahweh-lead instructions in Num 1-10, it is hardly to be understood as the execution of the preparations in 1-10, as the notion of the Spy-story being about a prepared but *failed* campaign appears to signal.

Thus, the first event of military preparations in Numbers does not seem to function as a kernel in the book. The itinerary notes could perhaps be understood to carry on the military aspect in the book of Numbers, but this would then not mean much for interpreting the individual passages that they are part of.³⁰⁹ The purpose or perhaps intention of the preparations in Num 1-10 seem to lie elsewhere, as, for instance, witnesses to the grandeur of Israel because of their enormous numbers in the censuses, or as setting out the duties and privileges of priests and Levites, etc. The preparations as a first event can be made part of a plot of wandering, but the primary cause instigating the continuing wandering in Numbers is still the promise of land, a feature which underscores the connections with the larger Pentateuch, and not the least the exodus from Egypt where the wandering starts.³¹⁰ Thus, having the promise as our point of reference in trying to delineate a plot in Numbers remains the starting point for our analysis. With these observations on the plot-significance of the first ten chapters of Numbers, we move on to what follows in the book.

3.3.2. *Rebellion in the Wilderness*

The next set of passages, Num 11-14, following upon the breaking of camp in 10:11-36, are the first genuine narratives in Numbers. The events in these may be summarised under the rubric of rebellion, as the short introductory sequence to the stories makes clear (11:1-3). The theme of rebellion is a new element in Numbers, and it is seemingly unrelated to the preceding military preparations. A

³⁰⁹ Cf. again Davies, "Itineraries and Composition," 9, who says that the function of introducing such notes into older traditions "...was to give them something of the character of royal annals; and the events framed by it took on a military *flavour* even when this was not demanded by their essential character." (my italics)

³¹⁰ The analysis of the exact connections to the Exodus goes beyond the scope of this thesis, however.

contrast is obviously achieved against the obedience noted throughout the chapters on preparations (1:19, 45, 54; 2:34, 3:51; 4:49; 5:4; 8:3, 20; 9:5), and in the context of the whole Pentateuch the contrast is heightened still further since the stories that come here have been understood to be more severe than the rebellions related in Exodus (15-18).³¹¹ However, the contrast comes in terms of theme rather than plot: the events of rebellion are not contrasted with the event of military preparations, rather the theme of rebellion is contrasted with the theme of obedience, accompanying the preparations.³¹² Nevertheless, even though the rebellions in the stories that come here are not to be summarised as one event of rebellion and are as such connected to the plot in the larger story of Numbers, they are connected individually. An explanation of this now follows.

If the first short narrative sequence is set aside as a thematic introduction to the ensuing rebellion-stories, it is interesting to note that the problem of plain food that instigates the first genuine story in Numbers (11:4-35, Manna and Quails), is connected to the wandering and the promise of land, in that the wandering and its hardships are the cause for the complaint (11:4-6, “Who will give us meat to eat?! We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt... but now our soul is dried up...”). The promise of land is also alluded to in the story (11:12, “...to the land that you swore to their ancestors.”).³¹³ It can therefore be said to be connected to the larger story of wandering that is motivated by the promise and, what is more, to problematise it. This connection between the larger story and individual passage is worked well into the plot of Manna and Quails, since the complaint is the reason for the train of events in the story. At the same time, the motifs of elders and prophecy show that the connection to the larger story does not exhaust the meaning of the story. On the whole, one could say that on a higher level in Numbers we move from military preparations for the wandering to a questioning of the wandering (but in terms of sustenance rather than in a military framework). The questioning is, however, resolved by the end of Manna and Quails, and the concluding itinerary pictures Israel once more on the way towards the promised land. Given this, the story is better understood as a satellite in the plot of wandering of the larger story, developing the theme of rebellion, but not constituting a turning-point in it.

³¹¹ See Childs, *Exodus*, 258, 260; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 148.

³¹² More will be said about this in the next chapter on the themes in Numbers.

³¹³ לָ (‘to, towards’) may be adopted instead of לְ (‘upon, against,’ among other meanings, but also ‘to, towards’) together with the Samaritan Pentateuch, the LXX, Peshitta, and Targum Jonathan, see BHS footnote and Budd, *Numbers*, 123. However, לָ meaning ‘to’ as well, and the two prepositions being interchanged not infrequently, this is unnecessary, cf. Brown et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 39-41, 752-759; Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2nd ed. Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2008), 456-57; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 323; Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik*, 328; and Seebass, *Num 10,11-22,1*, 30.

The next story of Mirjam and Aaron's Revolt (12:1-16) is also connected to the wandering and the promise, but rather more faintly than Manna and Quails. The story is framed by the wandering and thus situated sequentially in it (cf. the itinerary notes in 11:35 and 12:16). The conclusion on Miriam's punishment is worked into the framing made by the itinerary notes, delaying the wandering as it were (12:15, "Miriam was shut up outside of the camp for seven days; while the people on the other hand did not break up until Miriam had been gathered to them."). The time given here, however, is probably motivated primarily by purity concerns. In a very general sense, the wandering and the promise of land are the reasons for Miriam, Aaron, and Moses being found in the wilderness at all. However, in contrast to the preceding story, the rebellion in Miriam and Aaron's complaint, which is at the heart of the story, has little to do with the wandering and promise, revolving around leadership-questions as it does (cf. 12:1-2, "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses... they said: Has Yahweh spoken only through Moses?"). Thematic connections of rebellion seem to be more important for the placement of the Miriam/Aaron-story at this position in the book.³¹⁴ Thus, in terms of sequence, the story is 'hinged' upon the wandering, but it does little to connect causally to what precedes and follows or to the promise of land, and is definitely best be understood as a satellite.

In contrast, the Spy-story (13:1-14:45) is very well-connected to the plot in the larger story, and the military associations also resurface as we have seen. As with the story Manna and Quails the motifs of wandering and promise are well-worked into the story and its plot. An allusion to the promise introduces the story and sets the stage for it (13:2, "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites..."), and the military associations are clear in 13:2, 17-20 (reconnoitring the land's strength), even though the verses cannot be read from an exclusively military context,³¹⁵ as was also remarked above. Hav-

³¹⁴ A similar observation is made by Van Seters, *The Life of Moses*, 363-65, who separates Num 13-14 from the other wilderness stories on the account of its connection to conquering the promised land (in J). Such connections in the other stories in Numbers would then have to be seen as later insertions, or the like.

³¹⁵ Milgrom has pointed out that the word תור used to designate the mission of the spies (found in 13:2, 16-17, 21, 25, 32; 14:6, 34, 36, 38) means 'scout, seek out,' which makes a contrast to the more military רגל, 'spy out,' which is used on similar occasions elsewhere (21:32; Josh 7:2; Judg. 18:2), and also by Deut about this mission (Deut 1:24). Hence, Milgrom argues that the mission of the spies is not primarily militaristic, but rather is a presentation of the land to encourage the people in face of the conquest, Milgrom, *Numbers*, 100; cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 91-92, 249 (who makes the use of תור one of the grounds for identifying the P-narrative in Num 13-14). Lee opposes this interpretation and points to the military associations in vv. 17-20, Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 221-22. However, in my view he overstates the case: the notes on the fruitfulness of the land in these verses can hardly be called 'military,' and together with the more general meaning of תור (see R. Liwak, "תור," *TDOT* 15:604-08, for an overview) suggests a broader description of the mission of the spies than a mere military one.

ing introduced these motifs, however, the rebellion of the Spy-story turns them all on the head, most significantly the promise of land (14:1-4, “...let us choose a leader and return to Egypt!”³¹⁶ See also vv. 16, 20-35, 39-45). What is interesting in this is that it also means that the plot of wandering in the larger story of Numbers is turned on its head, since in contrast to The Story of Manna and Quails, where the wandering continues as before when the end is reached, the complication in the Spy-story is not resolved at the end. The Spy-story would thus form the first turning point in the plot in the larger story of Numbers, and consequently be a kernel-event in it. The passages that follow in Numbers should then also be affected to the degree that they are connected causally to the plot of wandering.³¹⁷

However, not only are the following passages possibly affected by this turning-point, but the preceding rebellion-stories may also be seen in a new light as if preparing the decisive rebellion in the Spy-story. There is a cumulative effect throughout Num 11-14, a causal chain where rebellion leads to more rebellion and eventually to defiance towards the whole project of wandering in the direction of the land promised, including a rejection of Yahweh’s promise, an effect which is often assumed by scholars.³¹⁸ If so, even The Story of Miriam and Aaron’s Revolt contributes in this effect since it is a rebellion-story, and thus is connected more clearly to the plot in the larger story of Numbers. Thus, the Spy-story may be understood as a kernel-event in the larger story of Numbers, turning its plot of wandering on the head, while the preceding rebellion-stories rather are satellites filling out the wandering to the promised land and anticipating the fateful rebellion at its borders.

To summarise so far, the plot of wandering in light of the promise of land in the larger story of Numbers starts with the promise of land, moves through military preparations, via initial questioning of it, to a radical denial and turn-about,

³¹⁶ Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 363, translates גָּתַנְהוּ רֹאשׁ ‘let us head back,’ refers to Neh 9:17, and claims that this is an idiomatic phrase in biblical Hebrew. However, in Neh 9:17 the verbal phrase is followed by the adverbial לְשׁוֹב, making such a translation possible, and the only other instance of the verbal phrase is Jer 8:23, where it should be translated ‘(Oh that) my head were (a spring of waters)...’ מִיִּיתָן רֹאשִׁי מַיִם, so also NRSV). It is therefore better translated in Num 14:4 as above, cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 148, 155-156; Gray, *Numbers*, 152; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 36, 46; and Seebass, *Num 10, 11-22, 1*, 80, 83.

³¹⁷ Cf. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 235. See also Aurelius, *Der Fürbitter Israels*, 140, who notes that the punishment seems to overshadow the forgiveness in the story (14:17-21).

³¹⁸ See e.g. Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 230; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 193; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 42; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 103. For more on Yahweh’s project with Israel in the wandering and counter-projects (rebellions) to this, cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 64-78, 81 and David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Three Structural Analyses (1 Samuel 13-31, Numbers 11-12, 1 Kings 17-18)* (JSOT Supplement Series 7, Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), 33-35.

unto which Num 5:5-6:21 and 9:1-14 are not subsumed, and 12:1-16 more faintly connected.

3.3.3. *Rules and Revolts*

As noted above, the itinerary-chain is broken with Num 15-19 and not resumed until chapter 20. The section could in this respect be similar to how 5:5-31; 6:22-27; and 9:1-14 are placed in Num 1-10, possibly put here by means of sequence and theme, but not connected causally to the wandering and thus breaking the plot. However, a few details in the passages found here complicate the issue.

First, the two opening cultic rules of chapter 15 (found in 15:1-16 and 15:17-21) start similarly, roughly stating ‘When you come into the land which I give you...’³¹⁹ This makes a glaring contrast to what just preceded in the Spy-story, and seemingly affirms the promise of land in view of the catastrophe related there.³²⁰ Such an affirmation can also be understood to be hinted at by the repeated mention of grain, oil, and wine in the first two rules, presupposing settlement in the land.³²¹ Through these remarks, there seems to be a comment on the turning-point of the plot in the larger story of Numbers depicted in the Spy-story. The following two sections in chapter 15 (vv. 22-31 and 32-36) have no such remarks, but the theme of intentional and unintentional sins found here is quite easily connected to the sin of the Spy-story.³²² A similar connection is, moreover, found in the final rule of the chapter 15. Here the word תּוֹר is used to denote the unfaithfulness of Israel (v. 39b, “...not seek [תּוֹר] after your heart...”), which according to the rule is to be mitigated by the wearing of tassels (v. 39a). As is often noted by scholars, that word is also used in the Spy-story to designate the mission of the spies (13:2, 16-17, 21, 25, 32; 14:6, 34, 36, 38),³²³ thus the rule seems to imply the additional meaning that tassels are given to Israel to pro-

³¹⁹ The exact wording differs: בְּבֹאֵכֶם בְּכִי תְּבֹאוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ מוֹשְׁבֵי תְּיָכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם, v. 2, and אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְבִיא אֲתֶכֶם שָׁמָּה, v. 18, respectively.

³²⁰ Cf. Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg*, 265; and Olson, *Death of the Old*, 171-72. Similar notices are found elsewhere, in Num 34:2, but also Lev 14:34; 19:23; 23:10; 25:2; Deut 12:1; 18:9; and 19:1, as noted by Gray, *Numbers*, 172. Such recurrences of the phrase witnessing to it being almost a set formula need not bespeak the proposed function at this exact place in Numbers, however, but could have such a function as precisely such a phrase. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 389, take it to “...express the future orientation of priestly historiography...”

³²¹ Similar observations on the connections between Num 13-14 and 15 are made by Ashley, *Numbers*, 277; Budd, *Numbers*, 168; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 54-55; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 126-27.

³²² Cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 265-266, 269; Olson, *Death of the Old*, 171-73 and Schmidt, *Numeri*, 54, and see further below in the chapter on theme.

³²³ See primarily Budd, *Numbers*, 178; Davies, *Numbers*, 162; Liwak, *TDOT* 15, 607; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 127; Olson, *Death of the Old*, 171; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 126.

tect the people against catastrophes such as the one the mission of the spies eventually led to. Moreover, the rule concludes by a reference to the exodus, affirming Yahweh's goodness towards Israel ("I am Yahweh, your God, who have brought you out of the land of Egypt," v. 41).³²⁴ The statement is not unusual as motivation for rules and laws in the Pentateuch (cf. e.g. Ex 29:46; Lev 25:38; Deut 5:6, 15 *passim*), but the mention of Egypt also implies the start of the wandering and Yahweh's purpose in taking Israel out from there, which also is hinted at in the Spy-story (cf. 14:13, 22-23).

Thus, drawing these details together, chapter 15 contains a few remarks on the land and about preventing Israel's unfaithfulness that seem to make implicit comment on the sin and punishment of the Spy-story, affirming the promise of land and Yahweh's original goodness towards Israel, which all have to do with the plot of wandering and the reversal that has just taken place in the larger story of Numbers. However, nothing happens in the rules of chapter 15 that connects it causally to the wandering or the promise of land in terms of events, the only event in the rules found here is their being given. It is not said, for instance, that Yahweh gave Israel these rules because of the rebellion in the Spy-story. Instead, they are put here sequentially, merely following on from the Spy-story (this also applies to the narrative scene of 15:32-36). Furthermore, as with the rules and laws of Num 1-10, the purpose of the rules in chapter 15 is not restricted to their eventual connection to the plot, but their more primary meanings rely on their subject-matter: setting out various food and drink-offerings, the offering of the first bread, etc. It is in doing this that the rules also feature some details that seem to comment upon the reversal of the larger story. These details are thus better understood as thematic connections to what precedes it, in my view, since nothing happens here that would affect the plot of the larger story of Numbers. To summarise, the rules of chapter 15 are not connected to the plot in the larger story of Numbers, but certain details in them are used to comment on the kernel-event of the Spy-story.

Second, The Story of the Rebellion of Korah (16:1-17:26) is, in contrast to the rules of chapter 15, related to the plot of wandering in the larger story, much in the same way as The Story of Manna and Quails: the problem that instigates the Korah-story and its plot is set against the wandering and the promise of land. This is most clearly seen in the complaint of Dathan and Abiram (16:12-14, "...surely, to a land flowing with milk and honey, you have not brought us..."), but can also be seen in the complaint of Korah concerning Israel's hierarchy (16:3, cf. 16:5-10), since it is a protest against the organisation of Israel in Num 3-4,³²⁵ which, in turn, is made for the march, and thus, the wandering and how it

³²⁴ Cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 54; Olson, *Death of the Old*, 172 and Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 142.

³²⁵ Cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 48, 57; and Budd, *Numbers*, 188.

is conducted is implicitly questioned.³²⁶ The problem instigating the story is, however, again resolved inside the story as in Manna and Quails, and the wandering could also be understood to be resumed. This connection to the plot in the larger story is somewhat problematic in that the Korah-story seemingly shows no knowledge of the Spy-story, which we have defined as a kernel in Numbers, or a turning-point in the larger story.³²⁷ It is as if the turning-point of the Spy-story does not affect the Korah-story, other than very generally in that the story assumes that Israel is still in the wilderness, and to which they would return to it by the end of the Spy-story. Even so, since the Korah-story can be linked to a time after the turning-point when Israel is still in the wilderness, even if very generally, and since the Korah-story does not contradict the turning-point, we may understand the Korah-story as a satellite in the larger story of Numbers, connected to the plot of wandering, if only very generally.

Third, the rules following the Korah-rebellion in chapter 18 are arguably related causally to the Korah-rebellion, and therefore also to the plot: they are given as an answer to the outcry of the people in 17:27-28. In light of the rebellion of the Levite Korah it is not strange that we have rules in Num 18 that set out the rights and responsibilities of priests and Levites respectively.³²⁸ The Korah-story ends in 17:27-28 whereafter rules follow in the subsequent chapter. The rules, however, are not simply added to the story, but vv. 27-28 also have a bridging function, as has been noted, connecting the rules to the story. It may be noted that the rules of chapter 18 are related to the Korah-story in a different way in comparison to how the rules of chapter 15 are connected to the Spy-story. In terms of events, the only thing that happens in these chapters is that rules

³²⁶ Discussing the separate complaints of Dathan-Abiram and of Korah above is not to deny the three-partite division of the story that is often made by source- and redaction-critics. Moreover, it may be observed that such three-part divisions do not put the connection between the story and the overarching plot in Numbers into question, which is the subject for our discussion at this point. Given this, an interesting parallel between the complaints of Korah and Dathan and Abiram, respectively, may be pointed out. The idea in ‘raising oneself over’ (תִּתְנַשֵּׂא) and ‘lording over’ (תִּשְׁתָּר) in v. 3 and 13 seems to be very similar, and one can also note the similarity in the form of these verbs by the use of hithpael. The implicit divergencies in the different expressions of complaint of the story, however, should not be glossed over, and lead naturally into the question of earlier versions.

³²⁷ Cf. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 405, 425; Noth, *Numbers*, 126; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 134. Artus understands the words of Dathan and Abiram in 16:13, “...you have brought us up... to kill us in the wilderness...” to refer to 14:2 where the Israelites wish for death, Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 178-79. However, the only similarity is the word מוֹת since both subject and stem differ, and it would here take more than vocabulary to establish a relationship in terms of plot.

³²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 56, 59; Budd, *Numbers*, 204, 207; Frankel, *Murmuring Stories*, 203, 258-261; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 217; Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 189; and Wellhausen, *Die Composition*, 179.

are given. However, while there is no clear relationship between the giving of the rules in chapter 15 and the Spy-story, the rules in chapter 18 are clearly given as a direct answer to the outcry in 17:27-28. The chain of causes that relates the rules in chapter 18 to the plot of the larger story would thus be: promise of land – wandering – Korah's etc. rebellion – resolution affirming Moses and Aaron's status vis-à-vis others – rules detailing this status. The rules together with the Korah-story may be sorted under an event of clarifying the hierarchy of Israel during the wandering, but they do not change anything fundamentally for the plot, however, and should therefore be understood as satellite-passages.

If this description of the different passages of Num 15-19 in relation to the plot is correct, it should also be noted that it is not possible to subsume Num 15-19 under a single summary action, in the same way as Num 1-10, which gives us the chance to relate the whole complex to the larger story in Numbers. Moreover, Num 15 is not connected to 16-18 in terms of plot, and the same goes for chapter 19, which is disconnected causally from both 16-18 and 20.³²⁹ At a more basic level, all passages are set in the wilderness (cf. 15:32; 16:13 etc. and the mention of 'the camp' in 19:3, 9), and follow each other in sequence. One connection in detail is the mention of Eleazar, which might link chapter 19 to 16-18 (see 17:1-5; 19:3-4) – but not chapter 15, where the name is not found.³³⁰ Moreover, such connections do not concern the plot, and further, the loss of geographical connections through the itinerary-notes makes all these passages somewhat detached from the rest of Numbers.

To sum up, after detailing preparations, rebellions, and forfeiture of the land, Numbers continues with several passages that break out of the plot in the larger story (chaps. 15, 19) and are only put here sequentially. There are also a few passages that can be related causally to plot as satellites (chaps. 16-18), relating a rebellion-story and cultic rules, which may be sorted under an event of clarifying the hierarchy of Israel during the wandering.

3.3.4. *Drawing Close to the Land*

Chapter 20 returns to the geographical indications of the wandering by means of the itinerary note in its introduction, which also introduces the Meribah-story by relating the death of Mirjam (20:1-13). The death of Miriam, presumably an ordinary death is understood, is interesting for our analysis of plot in the larger story, since the event may suggest that considerable time has passed since last she was mentioned, reminding the reader of the long punishment set out in the Spy-story, and intimating that it is coming to a close.³³¹ Such an understanding

³²⁹ Contra Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg*, 201; and Olson, *Death of the Old*, 173.

³³⁰ See Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 462; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, 157. Wellhausen, *Die Composition*, 173, suggests that the mention of Eleazar in chap. 19 might foreshadow his succeeding Aaron in 20:14-21, and that the passage therefore might be placed here for chronological reasons.

³³¹ Cf. Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg*, 203. A primary connection with Num 13-14 in the

of the mentioning of Miriam would connect the Meribah-story to the Spy-story and contribute to the kernel-character of the latter, showing that the punishment was indeed set out and is now about to end.

This is not the only connection to plot in the larger story to be found in The Story of Meribah, however. There are several other ones, which make the relationship of the Meribah-story to the plot in the larger story intricate. First, the people again complain in the story, and the cause of their complaint, instigating the course of events in the story, is again found in the wandering and its hardships, which is protested against, as in Manna and Quails and the Korah-story (see 20:4-5, “Why have you brought the assembly of Yahweh to this wilderness... why have you brought us up from Egypt...”). There is thus a fundamental connection to the wandering and the promise of land, which is resolved by the end of the story with the miracle of water from the rock (20:11).

Second, there is more than a general reference to the wandering, since the complaint of the people explicitly mentions “...when our brothers expired before Yahweh...” (20:3). This reference could perhaps relate to the Golden calf-story in Ex 32:25-29, but the more immediate literary context is of course the rebellion-stories in Numbers where people have died (Manna and Quails, 11:33-34; the Spy-story, 14:36-37), and especially The Story of Korah (16:31-33, 35; 17:12-15). Moreover, since among the Rebellion-stories of the Pentateuch, in a link often noted by scholars, the terminology for dying used in 20:3, נָגַח (‘expire, perish, die’),³³² is only found here and in the Korah-story (17:27).³³³ The mention of Israelites having died in the wilderness seems to as-

book at larger is also argued on other grounds by Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 226.

³³² Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* I: 184; Brown et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 157; and David J.A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* II: 335.

³³³ See e.g. Achenbach, *Vollendung der Tora*, 311; Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 224; Budd, *Numbers*, 216, 218; Gray, *Numbers*, 261; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 488; and Noth, *Numbers*, 145. The term is also found in Num 20:29 about Aaron’s death. Moreover, Blum has made the intriguing suggestion concerning the relationship of the Korah-story and the Meribah-story that the staff that Yahweh exhorts Moses to bring in 20:8 is Aaron’s staff of warning from 17:25, reminding the people not to rebel. Thus, Moses’ fault would be more complex than not speaking to the rock, in that he deliberately misuses the staff, Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, 273-75. Such an understanding possibly answers the old problem of why the staff is termed ‘דָּבָר’ (“your staff”) in Ex 17:5, but only ‘הַמַּטֵּה’ (“the staff”) in Num 20:8. Aaron’s staff is put in the tent of meeting according to Num 17:19 (cf. v. 25), and Moses and Aaron are called to the tent in Num 20:6. While there, it is enough for Yahweh to say ‘the staff’ to indicate Aaron’s staff in the tent of meeting, since the definite article often is used about things that can be supposed to be at hand or generally known in the situation even if not mentioned earlier in the passage under question, cf. Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik*, 235. The latter grammatical argument is not made by Blum, however, and may also count against him in that the definite article simply designates the staff that Moses supposedly had. Be that as it may, however, since the relationship of the Meribah-story to the Korah-story, in terms of the

sume the preceding rebellion-stories of Numbers, and more particularly the Korah-story, which causes the complaint of the people thus formulated in the Meribah-story. Thereby, we have a more precise connection between the wandering in the larger story of Numbers and its development, relating to the placement of the Meribah-story.

Third, the Meribah-story cannot really be said to be very interested in the rebellion of the people. Instead, it is the 'rebellion' of Moses and Aaron that eventually takes centre-stage in the story.³³⁴ The people's complaint only gives the background to this.³³⁵ Several things can be said about this rebellion and its relationship to the plot in the larger story of Numbers. It seems to mean, first of all, that Moses and Aaron, so to speak, partake in the sin of the old generation that is about to perish in the wilderness. Such an understanding is argued by the motifs in 20:12 that Moses and Aaron are said to have not trusted (אִמָּן) Yahweh to hold him holy, and that the punishment is the loss of the promised land. These motifs echo the Spy-story (14:11, where we find אִמָּן, and 14:27-35, the punishment of losing the land), and they are not found in the other rebellion-stories in the Pentateuch either, which establishes a certain affinity between the Spy-story and the Meribah-story. What this means for the plot in the larger story of Numbers is that while the rebellion in the Spy-story does not cause the rebellion of Moses and Aaron, the rebellion of Moses and Aaron seems to make them part of the generation that is condemned to die in the wilderness, and in this way makes a connection to the kernel-event of rebellion and punishment in the Spy-story, underlining the kernel-character of the Spy-story. Moreover, while the rebellion of the people in the Meribah-story finds a final resolution in the flowing of water from the rock (v. 11b), a punishment is pronounced for the rebellion or sin of Moses and Aaron (v. 12, "You shall not bring this assembly into the land..."), but it is not implemented, and the wandering continues afterwards. This makes the ending of the Meribah-story somewhat open, so to speak. Part of the reason for this is the character of the punishment: since the wandering has not reached its end, the punishment cannot be implemented immediately. The main purpose of the motif of the sin of Moses and Aaron and its punishment would then seem to be to explain why Moses and Aaron did not enter the promised land. But when the punishment is given, the wandering can still continue, albeit with certain expectations raised concerning its end and the role of Moses and Aaron in this.

staff does not affect the causal connection in the plot between the two stories, even though this may be important for interpretation in many other ways.

³³⁴ For such a notion of what Moses and Aaron do here, see Num 27:14, which uses מָרָה to describe their action.

³³⁵ For an enumeration of the different solutions proposed to understand the nature of what happens here, see Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 216-17.

Given the intricate connections to the plot, the Meribah-story does not fundamentally change anything in the larger story of Numbers. The complaint/rebellion of the people is resolved by the end and the connection to the Korah-story is a simple reference that does not adjust anything in the larger story. Moreover, the connections to the Spy-story and its rebellion and punishment are not reversed either but rather prolonged and extended to include Moses and Aaron. The Meribah-story is then best understood as a satellite in the larger story in Numbers, albeit with many connections to it.

The following story of Edom Refusing Passage (20:14-21) does not start with an itinerary note but is connected to the sequence of wandering through the setting in Kadesh (20:14), mentioned in the previous itinerary note (20:1).³³⁶ Connections to the plot in the larger story are thus understood. The request given to Edom to pass through their land presupposes the promise of land (20:15-16, "...we cried to Yahweh and he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out from Egypt..."), and furthermore, the arrival in Edom means a closing in geographically on the land, which in light of the Spy-story signals that the wandering and punishment are coming to an end.³³⁷ In this regard, the story resonates with the hint of the death of Miriam in the previous passage. Similar things can be said about the report on the death of Aaron (20:22-29). It is related sequentially through the introductory itinerary note,³³⁸ while the motif of the death of Aaron, in the light of the Meribah-story together with the Spy-story, connects to the larger plot of punishment of the old generation, signalling its end. The openness of the end of the Meribah-story is partially closed at this point, implementing the punishment set out in the narrating of the death and succession of Aaron.

³³⁶ Cf. Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 230.

³³⁷ Such a coupling of coming to Edom and ending the wandering is also found in Deut 2:1-8.

³³⁸ A different tradition on the place of Aaron's death is given in Deut 10:6, which places it after the incident with the golden calf and just before the division of the Levites (see Deut 9:7-10:5 and 10:8-9). If so, the separation of the Levites possibly witnesses to the necessary division of priestly tasks, occasioned by the death of Aaron, S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (ICC; 3rd ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 120. However, Deut 10:6-9 as we now have it is not generally held by scholars to be in chronological order, Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1976), 200; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 118-21; Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (OTL; Translated by Dorothea M. Barton. London: SCM Press, 1966), 79; and Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 404, 419-420. The order of the verses might indicate thematic interests instead, e.g. that Aaron was indeed punished for his sin in conjunction with the golden calf, so Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 105. Lastly, the Levites are here not the second-class priesthood of Num 3-4, but simply 'the priests,' 'serving Yahweh and blessing in his name' instead of only carrying the ark, Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 122-23.

It can be noted again, that as with earlier rules and laws, the meaning of these stories is not exhausted by the connection to the plot. The refusal of Edom to allow Israel to walk through their territory, for instance, may have the additional meaning of informing the later relationship of Israel to Edom through this early and foundational encounter as nations.³³⁹ However, that this is not the only way to construct that relationship is shown by Deut 2:1-8, where Israel is granted passage through Edom. Nevertheless, nothing in the stories of Edom Refusing Passage and Aaron's Death changes the overall plot significantly, and both the story concerning Edom and the story of Aaron's death are best understood as satellites in the larger story, elaborating on the wandering as it moves on in the light of promise and punishment.

A more radical change is introduced by the following short sequence in 21:1-3, the Battle at Hormah, which seems to mark a second turning point in the plot of the larger story of Numbers.³⁴⁰ First, one can simply observe that it is connected sequentially to the wandering by 21:1aβ ("Israel came by the way of Atharim"³⁴¹), even though this is not an itinerary note as these have been defined above. Second, in the sequence Israel makes a vow to Yahweh, which he answers favourably, whereby Israel is said to win a crushing victory against the king of Arad (21:1a, 3). The vow and the victory strike a different chord as compared to the earlier (rebellion-) stories in Numbers, and therefore stand out as something new in the book at large: Yahweh and Israel working together for the good. Third, no battles have been depicted in Numbers after the shameful one at precisely Hormah in the Spy-story (14:39-45).³⁴² That battle is replayed backwards, as it were, in this sequence, when Israel again fights, wins a crushing victory, this time at Hormah. Finally, Israel is not hereafter reported to be defeated again militarily in Numbers. All together these four points signal a reversal of the fortunes when compared to the Spy-story, and the short sequence is therefore a kernel-event in the larger story of Numbers. From this point, most passages are positive and encroaching upon the promised land. However, because the se-

³³⁹ As discussed (and assessed differently) by Budd, *Numbers*, 225; and Noth, *A History*, 206-07, for instance.

³⁴⁰ Cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 231; Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 266-68; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 62; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, 172, 466-467; *contra* Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 194-95.

³⁴¹ The place or road Atharim is a unique geographical location. Several versions (e.g. Aquila, Symmachus, Targums, the Peshitta, the Vulgata) has 'road of the spies,' the word 'spies' (הַתְּרִים) being similar to Atharim (הַתְּרִים) in Hebrew. The idea is probably to connect more closely to the Spy-story and the Hormah mentioned there, and therefore, MT being the more difficult reading, should be preferred, Gray, *Numbers*, 274; Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 84; and Seebass, *Num 10,11-22,1*, 306.

³⁴² No battle is depicted in 20:14-21, but Israel simply 'turned away' from Edom (וַיִּשְׁאַל מִן־עֵדוֹם, cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 225; and Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 231; *contra* Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 240.

quence is very short and easily overlooked, it would be presumptuous to say that the sequence accomplishes this reversal on its own. Rather, it is when put in relationship to the following positive passages, primarily the positive battle reports of 21:10ff. and the Balaam-story of 22:1-24:25, that the reversal is accomplished in full. These latter passages contribute to the turn around, which is the kernel-event, introduced here by the short report. Moreover, it is not explicitly stated in the sequence that the punishment is now over and that the people may enter the promised land, so that the reversal in the larger story is noted clearly. This is better described as being presupposed in the sequence, and the points noted above seem to build upon such an understanding rather than setting it forth explicitly. Nonetheless, it is the sequence of the Battle at Hormah that first marks this reversal in the plot of the larger story.

It should also be remarked that the etiology of Hormah found in the sequence is belated in Numbers, in that the name already has been used in the Spy-story (14:45; cf. Deut 1:19-46). It is of course possible that the Spy-story had no name other than Hormah to refer to the place, even though it was not given this name until later, but since the name is simply used in the Spy-story without further explanation, a certain awkwardness results when the Spy-story and the etiology in the Battle at Hormah is read in the order they are found in Numbers.³⁴³ However, at the same time this awkwardness highlights the thematic character of the sequence that was discussed above in the chapter on Genre and Narrativity, including its thematic connection with the Spy-story. In this regard the case for seeing the sequence on Hormah as primarily forming a turning point in the plot of Numbers is strengthened.³⁴⁴

One of the exceptions to the positive turn which immediately follows upon the Hormah-sequence is The Story of the Copper-snake (21:4-9). Israel rebels for the penultimate time in Numbers. The story is connected sequentially to the wandering through the itinerary note which is worked into the story (v. 4, "From Mount Hor they broke up by the way of the Reed Sea to go around the land of Edom, but the people became impatient on the way"). This sequential connection can also be understood to have causal significance in that the geographical connection once again signals that Israel is drawing close to the promised land and the end of the punishment, and more specifically it presupposes the refusal of passage by Edom. More generally, the complaint of Israel is again set against the wandering (v. 5, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness..."), the wandering thus is questioned once more, but yet again the problem is resolved by the end of the story. The Copper-snake is therefore a satellite in the larger story.

³⁴³ Cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 229-30; Levine, *Numbers* 21-35, 77; and Wellhausen, *Die Composition*, 108..

³⁴⁴ Cf. Schmidt, *Numeri*, 101; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 154.

However, the Battle at Hormah is understood as signalling a turning-point in the larger story of Numbers, among other things, because there Yahweh and Israel work together for the good, and Israel is being obedient and victorious, it might be problematic that Israel is now being portrayed as rebellious once again. Certainly, the rebellion is dealt with inside the story, and the wandering and promise of land is not questioned in Numbers after this, but nonetheless the rebellion still seems to question Hormah as a turning-point in the larger story of Numbers. A few things may be said to uphold our designation of Hormah as signalling a turning-point: 1) even though Yahweh has ended his punishment upon Israel for what happened in the Spy-story, the people have not necessarily changed much, and they continue to sin. Indeed, this may be one of the main purposes in placing the Copper-snake just after the turning-point signalled by the Battle at Hormah – the punishment is over and Israel may victoriously march towards the promised land, but they still have the capacity to sin; 2) as stated above, the sequence of the Battle of Hormah does not in itself constitute the turning-point, but needs the rest of the positive passages following in Num 21-36 to be understood in this way. Thus, the kernel-character of the sequence is not established in the same way as the Spy-story, but rather cautiously grows in Numbers rather than being directly indicated. Such an understanding of the turning-point opens up the possibility of also having negative episodes introduced after the turning-point; 3) we have also said that Numbers as a whole is probably best understood in connection with a factual language-game, which means that plot may be more fragmented, since historical-referential interests and ideas about what happened (‘this is the order of the historical events’) come into play in the composition. Insights from the history of composition, therefore, may help our understanding of the resulting text. A more general argument in the same vein is that Numbers is the work that we have, and that it is our task to understand it as it presents itself, even though we might wish it to be different plot-wise; 4) as also has been argued above, there is usually more to the meaning of the individual passages than their connection to the plot in the larger story, and thus the abrupt change from turning point to rebellion may direct us to such meanings. This can be seen in the etiological function of Hormah in the previous story and in the intriguing motif of the copper-snake in the present one, developed elsewhere. Possibly, there is also a thematic connection in placing The Story of the Copper-snake here in that it underlines the sinfulness of the second generation of Israel and that in this regard not everything is settled by the victory in 21:1-3.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁵ Cf. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 274-75. It is interesting to note that Deut 2:14 states that by the time of the crossing of Wadi Zered, the old generation had died. Numbers places the crossing after The Story of the Copper-snake (21:12). Levine has argued that the scribes behind the Numbers-passage accepted this notion from Deuteronomy, Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 90-91. If so, Num 21 can be read to indicate that the old generation were part of the rebellion of the Copper-snake, and it was not

The passage following The Story of the Copper-snake is an itinerary that quite naturally continues the idea of wandering by reporting the move towards the land (21:10-20).³⁴⁶ It also functions to introduce the surroundings for the following battle-reports (21:21-35), through which the reports are also linked to the wandering and its end. Again, the geographical proximity of the itinerary and the reports to the promised land provides a connection to the plot in the larger story. Moreover, as has been noted, the victories in these passages link up with the note of victory and the turning point introduced in 21:1-3, substantiating it as a positive turn and anticipating the fulfilment of the promise of land. All this suggests a close link between the reports and the plot in the larger story, which underlines the change in fortune and takes us nearer the end of the wandering. The passages found in 21:4-35 represent satellite-events in that they continue the turn at Hormah, while at the same time the turn at Hormah needs the emphasis given here in order to stand forth as a kernel. Finally, by the end of the battle-reports Israel's movement is slowed down (21:31) and the people reach the end of the journey before the entrance of the promised land (22:1). However, the songs and quotations in these passages (21:14-15, 17, 27-30), if taken as part of the larger reports and itinerary, demonstrate once more that there is more to the meaning of the passages than simply being a part of the plot of the larger story of Numbers.

To summarise: in the plot in the larger story from the Spy-story and forwards, there is a pause in the wandering in a few chapters (15-19) in that the geographical movement is broken, but a few satellite passages (16:1-18:32) are connected causally to the plot of wandering and the promise of land. Num 15:1-41 and 19:1-22, however, completely disrupt the plot. The wandering then reemerges in chapter 20, together with allusions to the punishment in the deaths of Miriam and Aaron, and by Israel coming near the promised land. The stories and reports of chapters 20-21 all connect to the plot in the larger story through the geographical setting near the promised land, signalling the end of the wandering and the punishment as set out in the Spy-story. Moreover, the punishment of Moses and Aaron in the Meribah-story also underlines the Spy-story as a kernel-event. The second turning point of the larger story of Numbers is subsequently in-

exclusively relating to the new generation and its sinfulness. However, such a reading should not be pressed upon the material since Deut 2:14 does not state that the last members of the old generation died at the crossing of Wade Zered, only that they were dead by that time. Moreover, the crossing must, in Numbers, be read together with the notes on the death of Miriam and Aaron, which in themselves also signal the passing of the old generation, meaning that the new generation also participates in the rebellion of the Copper-snake and that the episode therefore can be taken to indicate their sinfulness.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries*, 205.

roduced in the sequence depicting the victory at Hormah, whereafter Israel moves continuously closer to the land, winning victories on the way, altogether substantiating the turning-point. The story of the Copper-snake is an exception, however, relating to the plot in the larger story but not participating in the positive turn. Finally, the meaning of the individual passages are not circumscribed entirely by the plot in the larger story. Rather, the plot is a frame into which the individual passages are placed and related, and the meaning and influence of the connection to this plot varies from passage to passage.

3.3.5. Preparations for Conquest

The end of the wandering marks the final chapters (22-36) of Numbers. Three observations about the connections to plot in the section of Num 22-36 can be offered to begin with. First of all, and very simply, the final station of the wandering, the steppes of Moab (עֲרֵבַת מוֹאָב), is presupposed as the setting for the passages in Num 22-36, as this is continuously repeated (22:1; 26:63; 31:12; 33:50; 35:1; 36:13). The setting of the passages is thus constantly connected to the end of the wandering including the promise of land, being the presupposition or cause for the setting.

Second, even though the wandering is coming to a close, the promise of land is not yet fulfilled here, and is still operative for the last passages. Much of what is related in Num 26-36, disregarding 22-25 for the moment, can be summarised as a preparational event for conquering and inhabiting the land in light of the promise, as seen in some of the narrative fragments found here (26:52-56; 34:2; 35:10-11, “When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall...”), and the content of the passages, summarised below, which is quite easily related to this idea.³⁴⁷ The preparations are thus part of a causal chain, necessitated by the fact that the wandering is coming to an end and that the land lies before Israel, as promised. Moreover, the aspect of conquest has already been anticipated from the Battle of Hormah and since then through the battle-reports of Num 21. The chapters in Num 26-36 are a natural consequence of the positive turn-about achieved in the sequence on the Battle of Hormah. Thus, more generally, preparing for conquering the land connect Num 26-36 to the promise of land once given as the cause for these preparations, and more specifically they follow upon the turning-point in the Hormah-story. This again underscores the kernel-character introduced by the Battle at Hormah. Furthermore, Num 26-36 are in many respects similar to Num 1-10, containing primarily non-narrative passages with narrative fragments, scenes, and sequences. The connections be-

³⁴⁷ Cf. Ackerman, “Numbers,” 89; Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 17, 26-28; Milgrom, *Numbers*, xv, 219; Olson, *Death of the Old*, 123; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 155; and Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 13, 429. Pace A. Graeme Auld, *Joshua, Moses and the Land: Tetrateuch-Pentateuch-Hexateuch in a Generation since 1938* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 72-73, who see no trace of the theme of land in 26:52-33:49.

tween the passages found here and their relationship to the plot in the larger story once again come about mostly through the appropriateness of understanding them as witnessing an historical situation or an event, which, in this case, by the end of Numbers, is the event of preparations for conquering/inhabiting the promised land.

Third, however, with reference to the first chapters of the section, Num 22-25 is not obviously to be subsumed under the notion of preparations for the land. Nevertheless, in the two stories found here, there are connections to the plot in the larger story of Numbers, and we will now turn to them.

The story of Balaam first, is specifically related to the preceding battle-reports. The story begins by telling how Balak, the king of Moab, presumably in light of the victories of Israel related in 21:11-35, fearfully reacts to their encroachment upon his territory (22:2). Moreover, the itinerary note in 22:1 marks the geographical transition from the movements of the battle-reports to the setting of the Balaam-story. In this way the story is related causally to the larger story of wandering.³⁴⁸ Second, what is interesting with The Story of Balaam and part of its beauty, is that there is a more intricate connection to the plot of Numbers. An important theme in the story is the patriarchal promises, alluded to already at the beginning (22:6) and providing a background for what happens.³⁴⁹ In short, the Balaam-story may be read as a struggle in which king Balak wants to reverse the promises for Israel by hiring Balaam to curse them, but where the promises end up being affirmed for Israel, as seen in the oracles of Balaam (see esp. 23:8-10, 19-20; 24:5-6, 9). This chain of events has plot-significance for Numbers at large. If 21:1-3 implies a turning point in Numbers in regard of the disastrous rebellion in the Spy-story and its punishment, this reversal is accomplished through the reaffirmation of the patriarchal promises for Israel. The continued validity of the patriarchal promises has thus far not been dealt with in Numbers and seems to be a question that needs to be settled before Israel can move on to prepare for and conquer the land in Num 26-36. We have assumed from the outset the importance of the promises and especially the promise of land for the plot in the larger story of Numbers, and have noticed that they were negated in the Spy-story. Now that they are affirmed again the promises become 'validated' for the future and the new generation, providing a firm foundation for what is to come and the preparations for it.³⁵⁰ In that regard, there is also a

³⁴⁸. This is the case even though they are only redactional notes, see e.g. Levine, *Numbers* 21-35, 137; Noth, *Numbers*, 171; and Schmidt, *Numeri*, 122.

³⁴⁹. Cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 271; Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 60-61; Levine, *Numbers* 21-35, 138; Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 168-69; and see also Van Seters, *The Life of Moses*, 428-31, who highlights the promise of blessing. Thus, the only connection to the larger context is not the note that Balak sees what Israel has done so far (v. 2), *contra* Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, 117.

³⁵⁰. Cf. Artus, "Les dernières rédactions," 138; Olson, *Death of the Old*, 158-159, 161; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 168-69.

connection to the idea of preparations for the conquest that follow in Num 26-36. The Story of Balaam is thus quite well connected to the plot in the larger story of Numbers, fulfilling the reversal in 21:1-3, and validating the promises to the patriarchs for the future.

The Story of Baal-Peor, however, has other and more complicated connections to the plot in the larger story of Numbers. The setting is still the steppes of Moab, more precisely Shittim, made explicit in the half itinerary-note of 25:1. We could thus understand the story's setting to be caused by promise and wandering, being situated as a satellite at its end. However, in contrast to many of the stories and reports of Num 20-21, in which geography is the primary means of connecting it to the plot in the larger story, geography is not very important for what happens in the Baal-Peor-story. Moreover, read just as it comes after the Balaam-story, it follows rather abruptly, an impression which is enhanced by the stark contrast of the sin of apostasy in the story as compared to the blessings and reaffirmed relationship between Yahweh and Israel in the preceding Balaam-story, but also as compared to the positive turn in the Battle at Hormah. In line with this impression is Wenham's comment that the main reason for the placement of the Baal-Peor story in Numbers is chronology,³⁵¹ indicating the importance of sequence over plot in situating the story. Such observations seem to indicate a need for something more integral in The Story of Baal-Peor for us to connect it to the larger story in Numbers by means of plot. However, such a need can be understood to be met in several ways in the story.

First, one can note that the covenant granted to Phinehas (25:11-13) is the direct result of the resolution of the problem of apostasy, and thus firmly worked into the high-point of the story. This covenant is said to concern a 'perpetual priesthood' (בְּרִית כֹּהֲנֵת עֹלָם), v. 13), and this notion thus envisions a future where, through the covenant, Phinehas and his descendants are part of the nation and land to be. From such a notion it is a small step to the idea of preparations for inhabiting the promised land, including priestly institutions, that follow in Num 26-36. Here then is a point in the story, well-worked into it and its resolution, which may connect the story to the preparations.³⁵² Since the Balaam-story can also be connected to the preparations there is an affinity between the two stories, even though they only follow sequentially upon each other.

Second, however, that the Balaam-story and The Story of Baal-Peor follow only sequentially upon each other is problematised by a notice further on in

^{351.} *Ibid.*, 184.

^{352.} Artus has argued that the story is connected to the preparations in that it deals with the attitude of the Israelites towards those who are to be their neighbouring peoples including their gods. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 34. However, such an understanding of the story seems to neglect the issue of apostasy as the express problem dealt with. Moreover, such a motif might be seen in several passages of Numbers, like 9:14; 11:4; 12:1; 20:14-21; 21:1-3; 21:21-35; 22:2-24:25, and is not uniquely tied to the preparations for inhabiting the land in the latter part of the book.

Numbers, which informs us that the mastermind behind the invitation to idolatry in the Baal-Peor story was Balaam (30:16). The inference which might be drawn from this is that the two stories have more intricate connections, suggesting that Balaam changed his strategy from cursing the Israelites in the Balaam-story to seducing them to idolatry in the Baal-Peor story. In this way the failure of the first story causes the new attempt in the one which follows. The mixed Moabite-Midianite origin of those threatening Israel in both the Balaam-story and the Baal-Peor story (22:3-4, 7; and 25:1, 6, 14-18), and the mentioning of Peor as a site for worship (23:28-30; and 25:3, 5, 18),³⁵³ to which Balaam is associated (23:28 and 31:16) can be added to this connection. Nonetheless, taking these connections at face value, what we have are connections in terms of character (Balaam, Moabites/Midianites), and setting (Peor), but saying that the failure of the Balaam-story causes the idolatry of the Baal-Peor story is to speculate about the psychological motives of the characters, and such a statement on the motives of Balaam is not made explicit in any text in Numbers or elsewhere. Furthermore, if we affirm a causal connection of Balaam's motives between the two stories, this is not a connection that aligns the two stories to the plot in the larger story of Numbers, which is our interest here. A link to the larger story is provided in terms of preparations for conquest and inhabiting the land. Nonetheless, the connections between chapters 22-24, 25, and 31 are there, and to accommodate for their presence in the book, we may talk about a sub-plot to the plot in the larger story of Numbers extending throughout the stories of these chapters.

Third and finally, as with The Story of the Copper-snake, one may ask how the very negative story of Baal-Peor can be found after the positive turn from Hormah in 21:1-3 and forwards. Again, an important answer seems to be thematic concerns in Numbers rather than plot-concerns: the theme of the sin of the people, or the second generation, in the Baal-Peor story underlines the continued capacity of the people to sin, despite the positive affirmations of the Battle at Hormah or the Balaam-story.³⁵⁴ In contrast to The Story of the Copper-snake, however, The Story of Baal-Peor is less problematic in relationship to the positive turn of the Battle of Hormah, since the sin or rebellion does not concern the wandering or the promise of land. That is, Israel clearly sins at Baal-Peor, but they do not rebel against Yahweh's plan to bring them into the promised land, which is fundamental for the wandering. The contrast thus comes more towards the Balaam-story and its blessings, rather than towards the turning-point for the wandering at the Battle at Hormah, a connection that can be understood to be underlined by the remark on the presence of Balaam at Baal-Peor made in 31:16. All this points us to, again, is that there is more to the meaning of the individual passages of Numbers than the connections to the plot of the larger sto-

³⁵³. Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 279.

³⁵⁴. Cf. again Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 274-75.

ry, and more will be said about thematic connections of the Baal-Peor-story in the following chapter.

To conclude, The Story of Baal-Peor follows the Balaam-story sequentially and possibly in terms of plot and furthermore makes stark contrast thematically to it. In the larger story of Numbers it is connected to the plot and to the preparations for the land via the covenant with Phinehas, and as such is best understood as a satellite in the larger story, not the least since the problem that gives rise to the story is solved inside the limits of the story.

The End of Numbers. Having reached the end-station of the wandering, the patriarchal promises are reaffirmed and the sin of the people is still a reality, the rest of Numbers more properly and directly deals with preparations for inhabiting and conquering the promised land, even though the two preceding stories anticipate and connect to such a notion. The second census in chapter 26 seems to signal the definitive start of preparations, not least in comparison to the preparations introduced by the census in chapter 1. As preparations, the passages found here are best understood as satellites in the plot of Numbers, fleshing out the stay at Moab in the light of the positive turn at Hormah and the affirmation of the patriarchal promises in The Story of Balaam. Moreover, considering the preparations in Num 1-10, it should be noted that the ones found here are of a different kind: they do not concern a wandering or campaign, but rather the conquering and inhabiting of the promised land, as seen, for example, from the conclusion to the census in chapter 26, which is an exhortation to divide the land according to the tribes just counted (vv. 53-56),³⁵⁵ but also in that many passages in Num 25-36 have to do with dividing and ordering the actual land and not wandering towards it.

Taking a quick glance at the passages found here and how they relate to the idea of preparations for the land, we see that in 26:1-65 the Israelites are mustered to conquer the land and divide it; 27:1-11 together with 36:1-13 which deal with land-inheritance for women; 27:12-23 records how a successor to Moses is appointed, dealing with the question of leadership for the future conquest;³⁵⁶

³⁵⁵ Cf. e.g. Levine, *Numbers* 21-35, 307-08; and Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 144.

³⁵⁶ The succession of Moses also connects to the punishment of the old generation in the Spystory, as established by the Meribah-story in 20:1-13 and discussed above. This is seen from 27:13-14: "...you also shall be gathered to your people... because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin..." As in several other stories of Numbers, The Story of the Succession of Moses thus has multiple connections to the plot in the larger story of the book, and these should be noted. Apart from connecting to the event of preparations, these connections to plot underline again the kernel-character of the Spystory, and a partial closure is once again found for the more open character of the punishment of Moses and Aaron in the Meribah-story, in that a successor is appointed. However, unlike Aaron, Moses does not die at this point, so complete closure is not yet achieved.

31:1-54 features a war against Midian, but also lays down rules on the division of booty in war;³⁵⁷ 32:1-42 presents the conquest of Transjordan and the relationship of the tribes found here to the rest of Israel; 34:1-29 relates the borders for the land; and 35:1-34 lays out the levitical cities and the cities of refuge. However, as seen, certain passages from Num 26-36 are missing from this survey.

First, and most clearly, chapters 28-29, which specify the offerings for the public cult, seem to break out completely from its context at this place in Numbers. On a very basic level we can understand the rules as part of the ‘commandments and ordinances’ (הַמִּצְוֹת וְהַמְשָׁפְטִים) that Yahweh gave to Moses at the steppes of Moab, as the summary note in 36:13, which presumably is meant to encompass the laws and rules in 22:1-36:13,³⁵⁸ has it. We may understand this note also to state that what primarily happened at the steppes of Moab was that the laws and commandments were given. If so, the giving of rules and laws would constitute part of the preparations for the land. However, there seems to be very little in the rules of Num 28-29 themselves that would make them ‘preparatory.’ That is, while we may readily accept that they are presented as being given on the steppes of Moab before entering the land and that they presumably are to be used in the public cult of the land, it is hard to see why they were given at this precise moment, among the other laws and rules found here, that more readily can be attached to the idea of preparations for inhabiting and conquering the land. One can note that as with the Nazirite law in chapter 6 and the rules on various offerings in chapter 15, a sedentary life is presupposed through the repeated mention of grain, oil, and wine. However, there are no other features, as the dimension of holy war in Num 6, for instance, to connect these rules more specifically to the larger event of preparations. Instead, they are similar to the purity rules of Num 5 or the second Passover in 9:1-14, framed by the preparations, but however are not connected to them in terms of plot. Again, Num 28-29 is not unrelated to the passages that precede and follow, but the connections come in terms of sequence, geography, and a general genre of ‘laws and commandments,’ rather than the plot in the larger story of Numbers.

Another problematic passage is chapter 30 on women’s vows, which does not seem to have much to do with preparations for conquest and inhabiting the land. Wenham has suggested that among other reasons this law is placed here for because of the issue of women’s vows made in the absence of their husbands, whom have been mustered in chapter 26 and are about to go to war for the con-

³⁵⁷ Cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 329, 334; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 210; *contra* Milgrom, *Numbers*, 260; and Schmidt, *Numeri*, 189, who do not think that the law is meant to relate to the future.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Ashley, *Numbers*, 659; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 281; Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 579; and Schmidt, *Numeri*, 1, 224; but *pace* Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 205; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 331; Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 239; and Zenger and Frevel, “Die Bücher Levitikus und Numeri,” 53.

quest, which also happens partially in the following two chapters, 31 and 32.³⁵⁹ Thus, the conquest of the land implies the separation of men from their women, which would argue the need to deal with the question of the status of women's vows in such a situation, and this in turn could be understood as a law preparing Israel for the conquest. There would then be a connection to the idea of preparations even here. Moreover, the immediately following passage on a war against the Midianites also treats other questions related to war, apart from presenting a situation where the law on women's vows may be significant. Again, however, such a connection to the plot cannot exhaust the meaning or application of the law, which goes beyond such a situation. The law is general and is meant to be applicable at any time and not only during the conquest of Canaan, which is seen, for instance, in one of the rare references to time in the passage, the general technical term *בְּיָמָיו שָׁמָעוּ* ('at the time of his hearing') is used throughout the passage to regulate the application of the law (vv. 6, 8, 13).³⁶⁰

A final possibly problematic passage is the itinerary in 33:1-49. The passage clearly relates to the wandering but it is not obvious that it has something to do with preparations for conquest and inhabiting the land. Very generally speaking, it seems to fit quite well at this place in Numbers as a summary and retrospect of the wandering, now that the end has been reached. The passage following the itinerary, 33:50-56, appears to follow upon this retrospectively, featuring a speech by Yahweh to conquer the land now arrived at and avoid apostasy. Such a connection between the itinerary and the command to conquest is argued by the repetition of the location 'steppes of Moab' on which the itinerary ends (33:49) and where the command starts (33:50). The itinerary functions as an introduction, tracing the path through the wilderness leading up to the present position of Israel, to the exhortation that clearly deals with conquering and inhabiting the land, and preparing for this. This connection between retrospect and exhortation may then connect the itinerary to the preparations. On the other hand, however, there is more to the meaning of the itinerary than this connection to the plot in the larger story of Numbers.

The retrospective function is not limited to chapter 33, furthermore, but found at several places in Num 26-36. Thus, the new census in 26:1-65 concludes with a reference to the Spy-story and its punishment, stating that none of the old generation was counted into the new census (vv. 63-65); the advance of the daughters of Zelophehad in 27:1-11 mentions the Korah-rebellion and more generally alludes to the idea of a generation having died in the wilderness (vv. 3-4), and also refers to the immediately preceding census (cf. 26:33); the appointment of Joshua in 27:12-22 recalls the sin of Moses at Meribah and the punishment of

³⁵⁹ Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 207

³⁶⁰ *יָמָיו* should then again, as in 7:1 and 9:15, be translated more generally as 'time' rather than 'day,' Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 431-32; and Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik*, 296; contra Budd, *Numbers*, 320; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 181; and Seebass, *Numeri 22,2-36,13*, 266.

the old generation (v. 14); The Story of the War of Midian in chapter 31 comments that it was Balaam who incited the Midianite women to lead Israel into sin, thus harking back to both the Balaam-story and Baal-Peor as we have seen (v. 15, cf. v. 8); the division of Transjordan (32:1-42) makes reference to the Spy-story and its punishment, but also calls to mind the military victories in chapter 21, which made Transjordan an Israelite possession (vv. 1-3, 8-15, 33; cf. also Deut 2:26-3:22, underlining the connection by putting the division of Transjordan directly after the military victories); and finally, the itinerary in chapter 33 makes a pause to recall the death of Aaron and give additional information about it (vv. 38-39). It can be noted that such express summary-notations and connections to what has passed is made nowhere else in Numbers, which grants a concluding dimension to many of the passages in Num 26-36 in the middle of the preparations for what is to come. This phenomenon makes the placement of the retrospective itinerary in chapter 33 among these passages less strange. Numbers does not have an ending as in a genuine story, but rather the plot of wandering is coming to a close, preparations for the land to be are made at the end of the wandering, and this scenario is also signalled by the retrospective notes including the itinerary in chapter 33.

Having discussed the passages of Num 26-36 which seem to break out of the plot, and thus marking an end in the delineation of the plot in the larger story of Numbers, it should lastly be remarked on that the connections between the different passages of Numbers discussed here are not the only ones to be found in the book. This has been stated a few times already, and it has also been intimated that there might be connections between the passages on other terms than plot, as theme, for example. Nonetheless, connections other than narrative ones, as defined in the chapter on theory, also exist in the book. One example of this is the inclusion at the end of Numbers created by the laws featuring the daughters of Zelophehad (27:1-11; 36:1-12).³⁶¹ Our analysis, however, has focused on a potential plot of the larger story in Numbers, defined in terms of causality, kernels and satellites, rather than formal means, which has meant that additional non-narrative connections have been left out to a large extent.

To sum up, the plot of wandering in the larger story of Numbers reaches its end with the itinerary note in 22:1. The Story of Balaam accomplishes the turning point in 21:1-3 by affirming the patriarchal promises for Israel (Num 22-24). Most of the passages that follows The Story of Balaam can be understood as witnesses to an event of preparation for conquering and inhabiting the promised land. This is a natural conclusion to the plot of wandering with the promised land as its goal having come to an end and the promise to the patriarch

³⁶¹ Cf. Milgrom, *Numbers*, xiii. For further formal means of connection in Numbers, see Artus, "Le problème de l'unité littéraire," 132-34; and Jonathan Grossman, "Divine Command and Human Initiative: A Literary View on Numbers 25-31," *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007):54-79.

reaffirmed for a new generation. As in the first ten chapters of Numbers, we primarily encounter non-narrative passages, that nevertheless may be related to this event. Again, the meaning of the individual passages goes beyond such a connection. Num 28:1-30:1 break out of this plot, however, in that it is not subsumable under the event of preparations, which is related to the plot in the larger story. Still, this is not to deny the sequential ordering of the passages or thematic connections between them.

3.4. Conclusion

We started this chapter by asking if there is some sense of causality to the ‘larger story’ of Numbers and if so to what degree. The question was formulated by looking at the plot of the larger story of Numbers, to see if something of the sort of plot could fruitfully be seen in the whole of the anthology-like Numbers and if so, what that would mean for understanding the coherence or lack of coherence in the book.

First of all, we suggested that an important part of the narrative network or larger story of Numbers is a geographical ordering depicting a wandering from Sinai to Moab, which is established by the itinerary notes that are scattered throughout the book, primarily in its narrative fragments. More specifically, 1:1-10:10 is situated in the wilderness of Sinai; 10:11-14:45 during the wandering through the wilderness; 15:1-19:22 is undefined geographically and falls out of the scheme; 20:1-21:35 is set during wandering in the wilderness; and 22:1-36:13 is situated at Moab.

Second, the causal connections or plot-significance found in this geographical scheme have been argued to be the following: the motivation for the wandering is found in Yahweh’s promise of land to Israel, which instigates military preparations for wandering towards it in 1:1-10:10. The wandering then starts (10:11-36), but is problematised directly and indirectly through the rebellion-stories (11:1-12:16), which culminates in the Spy-story that turns the whole project on its head and sends Israel out on an additional 40-years wandering into the wilderness. What happens during those years is presumably that a few rules are given plus the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram take place, since passages transmitting these follow upon the Spy-story (15:1-19:22). These are not explicitly connected to those years, however. But from chapter 20, geographical and chronological signals imply that the punishment is coming to an end, Israel is again closing in on the land (20:1-29). The victory at Hormah (21:1-3) introduces a second turning point in the larger story, whereafter Israel wanders without forfeiting the land once again and is victorious in their battles, if not sinless, in the rest of Numbers (21:4-35). The turning-point is more cautiously established at this point when compared to the Spy-story, however, being affirmed by most passages that follow, apart from The Story of the Copper-snake. Arriving finally as the final station of the wandering at the steppes of Moab, Yahweh confirms his promises to Israel (22:1-24:25), which completes the reversal be-

gun at the Victory at Hormah. After this Israel prepares to conquer and inhabit the land, partly with a view to what has passed (25:1-36:13), and with this, the book is concluded. In this outline of the plot in the larger story of Numbers, the Spy-story (13:1-14:45), and the Battle at Hormah (21:1-3, amplified by the battle-reports of 22:21-35, and the Balaam-story in 22:1-24:25), can be understood to be kernel-events without which the larger story in Numbers would be fundamentally different. Together with the promise of land they motivate what happens in Numbers, being nodes in a causal network in its overall story.

Third, however, as has been anticipated, it can be noted that we are dealing with a fractured plot that is integrated to a varying degree with the individual passages. Thus, Num 5:5-31; 6:22-27; 9:1-14; 15:1-41; 19:1-22; and 28:1-30:1 are not integrated in the plot of the larger story. At best, these passages can be seen as being framed by the plot but without causal connections to it. Furthermore, if the plot is fractured, the meanings of the individual passages related to it are never exhausted by their place in the plot, but rather more to them remains, as has been hinted at a several times. This is particularly true about the non-narrative passages, which can only be secondarily associated – mostly through their contents – to the overarching story and its plot. Moreover, there are degrees to which the individual passages can be integrated into the plot, also among the genuine stories, indicated above. Thus, 1:1-4:49; 9:15-11:35; 13:1-14:45; 20:1-24:25; 26:1-27:23; 32:1-42; 34:1-36:13 feature passages that to a high degree are integrated into it, even though there are differences among these passages too, not the least in terms of genre. It should also be remembered that we have understood the plot in the larger story to be used with reference to a factual language-game to relate the history of Israel's wandering through the wilderness and what happened along the way, where 'happen' also can mean the giving of laws and cultic rules. This purpose in relationship to the material presented can be understood to be an overriding concern in relation to obtaining a coherent plot in the presentation. Part of the explanation of the fractured plot presented here may thus also be the openness of the factual language game having been inferred.

In many respects this chapter has consisted of a mapping of plot in Numbers to understand the ordering of the passages of the book – or in other words, the coherence or lack thereof in the book. We have presupposed throughout that Numbers is best understood as an anthology, and this presupposition seems to fit the findings relating to plot made here. Plot is – to a certain degree – a useful tool for describing how the passages of Numbers are ordered, with several clear limitations and exceptions that should not be forced into a preformed concept. It may then be said that there is a fractured plot in Numbers as a whole that to a certain extent makes the book cohere in a network of causality, but far from entirely. To what degree, at what stage, and how conscious this ordering (that we call the plot of the larger story of Numbers) has been used in the history of the composition of the book are intriguing questions that, however, fall outside

the scope of this thesis. Instead, we will now turn to the question of the role of the themes for the coherence of the same book, a question which is not unrelated to plot as we shall see.

Excursus on the Chronology of Numbers

The reasoning above on the itinerary notes and the sequential relationship assumed between the individual passages of Numbers touches on what might be called the setting (or geography) and chronology of the book. Both possibly create the sense of sequence throughout Numbers, in that events can be understood to happen one after the other (chronology) and at one distinct place after another (setting/geography). Setting in conjunction with the question of the coherence of Numbers was already discussed above in the Review of Earlier Research, where approaches which try to divide Numbers according to its geographical notices were presented in brief, and reasons were given there for not considering geographical ordering (exclusively) as the uniting device of Numbers. Not much has been said on chronology and the reasons that it does not feature much in the analysis above, however, and this excursus will shortly provide the reasons.

In contrast to geographical divisions of Numbers, chronological ones are sparse, and so are attempts to structure Numbers chronologically. One exception is a suggestion made by Milgrom:

The Chronology. The tradition that Israel spent forty years in the wilderness following its Exodus from Egypt is demonstrably old (Deut. 1:46; Amos 2:10; 5:25). Yet the chronology within that forty year period is marred... The events of 1:1-10:11 cover nineteen days from the first to the nineteenth of the second month of the second year. Those of the final chapters 21:10-36:13 occur within five months of the fortieth year (see 20:28 = 33:38; 20:29; Deut 1:3). The material in between, 10:12-21:9, is undated but must fall in the intervening thirty-eight years. Even then the first part of this middle block, 10:12-14:45, occurs at the very beginning of this period (to judge by 14:34) and the last part, 20:1-21:10, at the end of this period (...). This would leave the events of the Korahite rebellions (chaps. 16-17) and several laws (chaps. 15, 18-19) as all that can be attributed to the intervening thirty-eight of the forty years spent in the wilderness. At present there is no satisfactory solution to this puzzle. All that can be said is that the wilderness traditions survived, in the main, without fixed dates, and they were clustered at the beginning and at the end of the wilderness sojourn.³⁶²

However imperfect, there is some sort of chronology in Numbers, relying on certain dates found throughout the book. Even so, relying on the dates of Numbers to structure it chronologically is precarious. Wenham has noted that

Compared with the cluster of explicit dates in 1.1; 7.1, 12; 9.1, 5, 11, 15; 10:11, the vague dating of later events is striking. It hardly suggests that chronology is the primary means of

³⁶² Milgrom, *Numbers*, xi.

marking the units of material in the book... The biblical narrators draw our attention to the significance of these events by dating each stage within them with extraordinary precision. However, for this very reason, the dates in Numbers offer little insight into the structure of the book itself.³⁶³

Moreover, Mark S. Smith has shown that the significance of the dates that Wenham relates is primarily to mark points in the liturgical year, so that certain events in Numbers are related to festivals, for instance.³⁶⁴ The meaning of the dates then lies primarily elsewhere rather than in marking linear time in Numbers. We might of course have a secondary meaning in the dates in marking chronology, but such a presupposition does not say much about the chronology in Numbers, since the dates are found in such a piecemeal fashion.

Finally, in his construction Milgrom seems to take the dating from Deuteronomy for granted and applies it to Numbers, a move that can be questioned in light of the suspicion voiced above, namely that Numbers and Deuteronomy seem to present the same period differently, using different traditions.

Thus, the problems with finding a coherent chronology throughout Numbers has lead us to assume a more general sense of time for the larger story of the book instead, understanding the individual passages roughly follow each other sequentially but not according to an exact dating.

³⁶³ Wenham, *Numbers*, 15-16; cf. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 91-91; and Olson, *Death of the Old*, 33-34. Wenham refers to Jan P. Fokkelman, "Time and the Structure of the Abrahamitic Cycle," *OTS* (1989):96-109, for this function of dates. Cf. also more generally Sean E. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1971), 56-59.

³⁶⁴ Mark S. Smith and Elizabeth M. Bloch-Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus* (JSOTSup 239; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 293-98; and Mark S. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2004), 81-82.

4. Themes in Numbers

What is most important in this book for us is the testing and the many sins of the people and the punishments and commandments, which God let follow upon these... The whole book contributes much to present and confirm Scripture's teaching about the holiness, righteousness, truth, goodness, and charity of God in contrast to the unbelief, defiance, ungratefulness, and disobedience of the people. P. Fjellstedt, *Bibeln med förklaringar*, p. 240 (my translation)

4.1. Introduction

In the two preceding chapters it has been stated that Numbers is best understood as an anthology or collection and that a fragmented plot of wandering is operative in the larger story arising from the individual passages of this anthology, which is motivated by the promise of land and moves from military preparations via rebellion against Yahweh's promise and punishment, to reaffirmed promise and renewed preparations. In both chapters it was also argued, on the one hand, that the stories in Numbers feature different themes (related to their individual plots), and on the other hand, that where the plot of wandering breaks down in the larger story of the book, thematic connections between the passages might come into play in joining them to each other. It has, finally, also been stated that 'theme' is one of those features that we typically look for when interpreting narratives (in this thesis related to the first parameter of narrative interpretation), and more particularly that in reading narratives we ask for the thematic interest raised by the plot of a particular story.³⁶⁵ Now the time has come to bring these observations together and to analyse the themes of Numbers in more detail from the narrative perspective chosen as well as in relationship to the question of the coherence of the book. The primary questions in this chapter will be what themes we exist in Numbers in regard to the larger story of wandering and how their outworking in the book affects our understanding of the coherence or lack thereof in the book. To answer these questions we will, as has been customary so far in this thesis, begin with a short statement on the understanding of theme that is assumed in this chapter, and then look at some major thematic interpretations of Numbers in the history of research that would betray the reading competence concerning themes assumed in the book. We start our analysis from these points in an attempt to address the coherence or lack thereof in the book with regard to the workings of themes in the larger story of Numbers, including possible thematic connections in those instances where the plot breaks down in the book.

In what follows, we adhere the following typical definition of 'theme':

"theme, a salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work's treatment of its subject-

³⁶⁵ See the definition of plot quoted in the preceding chapter, taken from Prince, *Dictionary*, 73; cf. Claes-Göran Holmberg and Anders Ohlsson, *Epikanalys - En introduktion* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1999), 30.

matter... While the subject of a work is described concretely in terms of its action (e.g. ‘the adventures of a newcomer in the big city’) its theme or themes will be described in more abstract terms (e.g. love, war, revenge, betrayal, fate etc.).³⁶⁶

A few things can be said about this formulation. First, a theme is not the same as a one-sentence summary of the action in a narrative.³⁶⁷ In this respect theme can be differentiated from plot and thus also what is done in this chapter from the preceding one. Second, the idea of theme as a ‘salient abstract idea’ relating to the ‘subject-matter’ of a work is taken here to apply to narratives both in factual and storytelling language-games as well as to the non-narrative passages of Numbers, all being parts of the larger story in the book. It should be noted, however, that the language-games in question affect our interpretation of the theme in the individual passages according to the parameters set out in the chapter on theory above.³⁶⁸ Third, on occasion a differentiation between ‘theme,’ ‘motif,’ and ‘thesis’ will be made below. ‘Motif,’ first, stands for “a situation, incident, idea, image, or character-type... or any element of a work that is elaborated into a more general theme.”³⁶⁹ Motifs thus work to develop and inform the major themes of a work. While motifs are found as details on a more ‘local level’ of a work, themes have more to do with wider ranging ideas on a ‘broader level’ of the same work. ‘Thesis,’ on the other hand, is “a proposition for which it [a literary work] argues.”³⁷⁰ In other words, it can be said to be the message of a work, and in contrast to theme, a thesis “promotes an answer instead of raising ques-

³⁶⁶ Baldick, *Literary Terms*, 258; cf. Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 19-20; Lamarque, *Philosophy of Literature*, 150-51; and Prince, *Dictionary*, 99. Baldick also relates the understanding of theme as something designating topics recurring in many literary works, but this is not essential to the analysis made here. Moreover, in this chapter, we move more clearly into the third facet of interpretation set out above in the section on theory (1.3.1.), see primarily Beardsley, *Aesthetics*, 401-09.

³⁶⁷ Cf. Seymour Chatman, *Reading Narrative Fiction* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 273.

³⁶⁸ See particularly Skalin, *Karaktär och perspektiv*, 136-45, for a discussion of and examples on how theme is interpreted differently in storytelling and factual narrative language-games. A similar discussion is also pursued in chapter 2 on genre and narrativity in this thesis, concerning the stories of Aaron’s death and The Copper Snake in Numbers. For a more general account on the distinction between language-games, see Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives*, 138-39; Andersson, *Untamable Texts*, 129-37; Lars-Åke Skalin, ed. *Narrativity, Fictionality, and Literariness. The Narrative Turn and the Study of Literary Fiction* (Örebro SLHC 7. Örebro, Sweden: Örebro University, 2008); and Skalin, “Centres and Borders,” 51-70.

³⁶⁹ Baldick, *Literary Terms*, 162; cf. Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 21-22; Prince, *Dictionary*, 55 for ‘motif,’ and p. 99 for ‘theme.’ Motif in this sense should not be confused with the internal reference of the elements of a storytelling narrative as formulated by the Russian formalists, which have also been termed ‘motifs,’ see the section on theory above (1.3.2.), and primarily Tomashevsky, “Thematics,” 67-68.

³⁷⁰ Baldick, *Literary Terms*, 258, cf. Greger Andersson et. al., eds., *Berättarna: en guide till Gamla testamentets böcker* (Örebro: Libris, 2006), 37; Beardsley, *Aesthetics*, 401-411; and Prince, *Dictionary*, 99.

tions...”³⁷¹ To exemplify “...the theme of a given novel might be the decline of Southern aristocracy whereas its thesis might be that this decline was most regrettable.”³⁷² Using this formulation of theme, motif and thesis, we will commence the analysis of theme in Numbers, starting with suggestions from earlier research.

4.2. Initial suggestions

The most influential formulation on theme in Numbers is arguably that of Dennis T. Olson, found in his book *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New* (1985). His ideas on a macrostructure in Numbers has already been briefly discussed above in the Review of Earlier Research (1.2.2.). Here we will focus upon his contribution in order to understand the theme of Numbers, discussing it at some length. In his book Olson suggests that the theme of generational succession, as witnessed by the two censuses in chapters 1 and 26 of Numbers, is the theme into which all the material of the book has been set. In a condensed statement, Olson says that:

We have attempted to describe and substantiate the important role of the census lists in Numbers 1 and 26 as the unifying literary and theological framework of the book. The book's structure may best be summarized under the theme of 'the death of the old and the birth of the new.' The old generation who experienced the exodus and the revelation at Mount Sinai is condemned to die in the wilderness (Numbers 1-25). A new generation arises, signaled by the new census in Numbers 26. This generation stands on the edge of the promised land and recalls the warnings and promises of the past as it looks forward to its own destiny (Numbers 26-36). This unifying generational framework and theme is indicated by a number of formal and thematic indicators throughout the book.³⁷³

That the succession of generations is an important theme in Numbers is beyond doubt. It is also tied to the plot of wandering from Sinai to Moab since the succession is the direct consequence of the turning-point of the plot in the Spy-story (Num 13-14). Several passages witness to the theme: the censuses in Num 1 and 26 together with remarks in Num 13:1-14:45 (Spy-story); 15:37-41 (tassels on garments); 20:1-13, 22-29 (waters of Meribah, and Aaron's death); 27:1-23 (daughters of Zelophehad, and Moses' successor); 33:1-49 (wilderness-itinerary); and 36:1-13 (daughters of Zelophehad). Moreover, several significant motifs are also connected to the theme in Numbers, such as the faithfulness of Joshua and Caleb in the midst of an unfaithful and wicked generation, repeated

³⁷¹. Prince, *Dictionary*, 99; cf. Beardsley, *Aesthetics*, 404.

³⁷². Prince, *Dictionary*, 99; cf. Beardsley, *Aesthetics*, 404.

³⁷³. Olson, *Death of the Old*, 125. Olson does not define what he means by 'theme,' and uses 'theme' and 'content' interchangeably, which seems to conflict with our usage of the term in this thesis. However, in his actual analysis his use of 'theme' comes close to our definition, and he also uses 'motif' to talk about things furthering the theme. See primarily, *Ibid.*, 90-97.

throughout Numbers (14:24; 30, 38; 26:65; 32:12), and the appointing of Joshua and Eleazar in the new generation to replace Moses and Aaron in the old generation (20:22-29 and 27:12-23).³⁷⁴ A theme of generational succession is also understood to apply to the period in the wilderness by other biblical texts (cf. e.g. Deut 1:34-40; 2:14-16; Ps 95:10-11; Neh 9:23, with all but the last also ascribing the succession to the sinfulness of the people).

However, the problem with Olson's proposal is to make it *the* theme of Numbers, being present in or connecting all passages throughout the book, subsuming them as it were. Olson's statement should certainly not be taken to mean that the theme dominates or is found expressly in every passage of Numbers. For example, the rebellion-stories preceding the Spy-story could be taken to show the rebelliousness of the first generation and to explain why they died and was succeeded in the wilderness even though they do not refer to a generational succession, and several of the laws and rules of Num 26-36 concern settlement in the promised land, something that only the emerging second generation will experience. This being the case it is, however, hard to see how generational succession is implied in several passages of the book, including: 5:1-8:26 (purity rules, concerning all generations); 9:15-10:10, 35-36 (preparations for the whole march, including both generations); 18:1-19:22 (the prerogatives of priests and Levites, including purity rules, for all generations of Israel); 20:14-21 (passage refused by Edom); 21:1-3 (victory at Hormah); 22:1-24:25 (the Balaam-story); 28:1-30:1 (the cultic calendar); and 30:2-17 (women's vows). Without going into detail, it is not clear to me how these passages relate to the first or second generation exclusively, or witness to them and characterise them specifically. Moreover, Olson's bipartite division has been criticised by scholars like Gordon Wenham and Won W. Lee for seemingly implying that everything is sin, judgment, and doom in Num 1-25, while Num 26-36 is characterised by obedience, light, and hope. It is difficult to subsume Num 1-10 (obedient preparations for the march) and 22-24 (the Balaam-story, where Balaam blesses Israel), for instance, under notions of judgment and sin.³⁷⁵

A second influential suggestion that has also been touched upon above in the former chapter in conjunction with plot is David J.A. Clines' theme of the promised land, as part of the theme of the patriarchal promises and their fulfilment and non-fulfilment in the Pentateuch.³⁷⁶ In contrast to Olson, Clines does not say that everything in Numbers is determined by the theme of land, but rather that the promise of land is the "...promise most in evidence" of the patriarchal promises in Numbers.³⁷⁷ This means that he gives room for the fact that

³⁷⁴ Cf. Artus, "Les dernières rédactions," 139-40.

³⁷⁵ Wenham, *Numbers*, 20-21; and Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 25-36. See also Davies, *Numbers*, lii-liiii.

³⁷⁶ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 57-65. For the importance of the theme of land in P, which dominates Numbers, see Brueggemann, "The Kerygma of the Priestly Writers."

³⁷⁷ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 57.

the different passages of Numbers relate to this theme in different ways, sometimes being explicit or prominent in the passages (as in Num 32 on the conquest of Transjordan), and sometimes aligned rather tangentially to a passage in that the idea of land is somehow presupposed in it (1:1-4:45, census and Levites; 5:1-4, purity of the camp; 6:1-21, the nazirite; 7:1-89, gifts for the tabernacle; 8:1-26, the seven lamps and dedication of Levites; 18:1-32, prerogatives of priests and Levites; and 31:1-54, war against Midian). Such an understanding of the workings of the theme of land in Numbers seems to do more justice to the anthology-character of Numbers than Olson's formulation, and the theme of land appears to encompass more passages than generational succession (examples being 20:14-21, Edom refuses passage; 21:1-3; victory at Hormah; 22:1-24:25, the Balaam-story).³⁷⁸

However, Clines' presentation still suggests that the theme of land is the one dominant theme of the book. The presence of passages that are difficult to relate to the theme speak against its dominant position and raise the question of other prominent themes in Numbers. A few examples illustrate the point. First, Clines does not discuss Num 6:22-27; 9:1-14; 28:1-30:1; and 30:2-17 in his exposition of the theme, which indicates that it is difficult to relate them to it.³⁷⁹ Another aspect is that it is questionable that 5:5-31; 19:1-22; 25:1-18 can be related to the theme of the land as Clines holds. Clines states that the first passage (5:5-31) concerns the purity of the camp, which is necessary for departing to conquer the land.³⁸⁰ But neither the camp, nor the wandering or the land, come into view in the two purity rules given here. Instead, they concern specific purity-issues that appear to be generally applicable regarding both time and space. It is only the larger context of the preparations for departure towards the land that suggests a penultimate link to the land, but this is not worked into the rules (as is done at other times, e.g. in 26:1-65, esp. vv. 53-56). Instead, purity is the dominant idea in the rules. The second passage, 19:1-22, is connected to the land theme by Clines through a chain of associations. He argues that 19:1-22, together with 17:12-18:32, concerns "...the fear, constantly recurring throughout the wilderness material, of death..."³⁸¹ which is resolved by the duty of the Levites as set out in these passages. The subject-matter of Num 19:1-22 are the set of instructions for making purifying water from a red heifer, for the sake of purifying people from death-impurity. The argument from Clines seems to be that since fear of death is a recurring motif in the wilderness material, and since the wilderness

³⁷⁸. For the differences between Numbers and Joshua on how the theme of land is treated, see Seebass, "'Holy' Land in the Old Testament."

³⁷⁹. Indeed, among the list of allusions to 'the promised land' in Numbers, no references are noted for Num 1:1-10:10; 11:1-12:16; 19:1-22; 27:1-31:54; 35:1-36:13, Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 41-43. But Clines is aware of this, saying that many times, the promise is only implicit, *ibid.* 31-32. Even so, I cannot find it everywhere in Numbers.

³⁸⁰. *Ibid.*, 57-58.

³⁸¹. *Ibid.*, 60.

material on the whole is set in a wandering towards the promised land, there is a connection to the theme of land in Num 19:1-22, dealing with *death*-impurity as it does. However, this is a very distant connection between Num 19:1-22 and the theme of land, going through several levels of associations as it does. Moreover, the fear of death that is settled by the guard duty of priests and Levites in 18:1-32 has to do with approaching the tabernacle, while death in 19:1-22 concerns ‘normal death’ as a social fact needed to be dealt with. The passages are associated with each other in general terms of death, but not by ‘the fear of death’ which is peculiar for 18:1-32, meaning that 19:1-22 is not connected to wandering and land through the idea of death on the terms set up by Clines.³⁸² Death is the dominant idea in Num 19:1-22 rather than the land. Finally, the third passage, the Baal-Peor incident in 25:1-18, is seen by Clines in conjunction with the census in chapter 26 (with 25:19 as a bridge-verse), meaning that since the land is in view in Num 26, it is also in view in Num 25 as a negative counterpart.³⁸³ However, the land is still far removed from what happens in the Baal-Peor incident,³⁸⁴ and if it is to be related to any patriarchal promise, it constitutes a “...calling into question the promise of Yahweh’s exclusive relation with Israel,”³⁸⁵ as Clines also notes. The story starts with rebellion, which is then punished, and punishment and rebellion are the major concepts used in the story rather than land.

Nothing stated here is meant to deny that the promise of land is an important theme in the book of Numbers, not least since we have argued that it is a prime motivating factor for the plot. But it is not present everywhere, and the plot, being dependent on the theme of land, breaks down at certain points as demonstrated in the former chapter. Moreover, other themes come to the fore in the book, which are not accounted for by Clines. The same could be said about Olson’s theme of generational succession. Both analyses target important themes in Numbers, but none of them can subsume the whole book, creating a thematic coherence for it as it were, but without leaving several passages out. This leads to the question as to whether there are other themes in those passages that we need to reckon with in looking at the themes in the larger story of Numbers, and also how these themes relate to the themes of generational succession and land in the larger story, and what this means for the coherence or lack thereof in the book. To these questions we now turn.

³⁸² All this is sensed by Clines, who starts the following paragraph by saying: “The land comes back into focus as the goal in ch. 20...” *Ibid.*

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁸⁴ Cf. Noth who says about the stories of Balaam and Baal-Peor that “These narratives are not really occupation stories,” Noth, *A History*, 74, which indirectly supports my reading of Baal-Peor as not having much to do with the promised land.

³⁸⁵ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 61.

4.3. Obedience and Disobedience

Obedient Israel. In his short guide to Numbers, Wenham says, “Enthusiastic total obedience is the hallmark of chs. 1-10”³⁸⁶ and I agree with this formulation. But how does that impression arise? As already stated, in conjunction with plot, these chapters refer mainly to the event of military preparation for marching through the wilderness. In what way, therefore, does a theme of obedience become evident in the passages relating to this event? Primarily, it comes about through the several short narrative fragments that end laws and rules or sections thereof in this part of Numbers, which have the motif of Moses or the Israelites doing what Yahweh has just commanded in conjunction with the law or rule. Yahweh initiates the preparations and Israel follows suit. Thus, for instance, 1:54: “The Israelites did so; they did just as Yahweh commanded Moses.” The same motif, similarly formulated, is also found in 1:17-19, 44-47; 2:33-34; 3:16, 39, 41-42, 51; 4:37, 45, 49; 5:4; 7:5-6; 8:3, 20, 22; 9:4-5, 15-23; 10:13. After chapter ten the motif almost disappears in Numbers, but extending Wenham’s observation beyond Num 1-10, one can note that it resurfaces by the end of the book, when Israel has reached the steppes of Moab and prepares to inhabit and conquer the promised land (26:3-4; 27:22; 30:1; 31:7, 31, 41, 47; 33:2, 38; 36:5, 10 [cf. 27:11]).³⁸⁷

However, motifs of obedient fulfilment are also found at places other than the beginning or end of laws and rules in Num 1-10 and 26-36, even though these instances are less strikingly formulated than in the references above. Thus, 7:11-83 reports that the tribal leaders obediently brought their gifts to the tabernacle as Yahweh had commanded, even though this obedience is not noted expressly. Similarly, 10:11-36 notes how Israel break camp according to Yahweh’s instructions in 2:1-34, and 31:4-7 notes how Israel goes to war as commanded in 25:17-18.³⁸⁸ Two passages, 32:1-42 and 33:50-56, finally, do not note an obedient act of Israel, but have speeches which strongly assert or exhort obedience, so that the idea stands out. In the first, we have the tribes of Reuben and Gad wanting land in Transjordan and promising to follow the order of conquering the promised land as set out between them and Moses (32:20-27,

³⁸⁶ Wenham, *Numbers*, 20; cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 35; Ashley, *Numbers*, 8; and Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg*, 85.

³⁸⁷ McEvenue identifies this motif as a ‘word-fulfilment structure,’ typical of P, McEvenue, *Narrative Style*, 17 *passim*. More generally, the repetitious character of P has been duly noted from the beginning of its study, see e.g. Samuel R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897; repr., New York, N.Y.: Meridian Books, 1956), 129-30; Theodor Nöldeke, *Untersuchungen zur Kritik des Alten Testaments* (Kiel: Schwers’sche Buchhandlung, 1869), 7, 133; and Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 350-51. See also Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 99-101.

³⁸⁸ These two passages have clear formulations noting obedience similar to 1:54 as well, see 10:13 and 31:7.

31-32).³⁸⁹ In the second, 33:50-56, a large part of the passage is devoted to an exhortation of Moses to Israel to obey the command to drive out the Canaanites, warning them of the dire consequences of disobedience.³⁹⁰

The passages found here do not probe into obedience and its logic, however. Most of the passages related are non-narrative, and apart from a few narrative scenes and sequences the obedient acts depicted coincide for the most part with the form of narrativity we have called narrative fragments. We encounter laws and rules the point of which lies in the subject matter of their respective rules and laws. However, throughout these passages motifs of obedient fulfilment concerning Moses, the Israelites, and others are repeatedly found. To exemplify, the subject-matter of 8:5-26 is the consecration of the Levites, whereas the acts of obedience of Moses, Aaron, Levites and Israelites (8:20, 22) work to accentuate aspects additional to the instructions, pointing out that the consecration was carried out faithfully. Thus, for the most part the motifs of obedient fulfilment occur in narrative fragments that are primarily framing devices, with the additional function of accentuating obedience. As such, they also acquire a sort of thesis-character, in that we may understand them to picture and promote the proper conduct before the laws and rules of Yahweh.

Obedient acts are rare outside Num 1-10 and 26-36 but are also found here. Thus, in the genuine narrative of Aaron's death (20:22-29), Moses undresses Aaron and dresses Eleazar according to Yahweh's command, and in the narrative sequence on the victory at Hormah (21:1-3), Israel acts according to the promise of חָרַם ("ban, destruction") to Yahweh. These are the only stories outside Num 1-10 and 26-36 where obedience could be said to dominate the passage in question, however. Other obedient acts are found in the rebellion-stories, as for example in 13:2-3; 17:26; and 20:9, where Moses and others are said to obey commands of Yahweh. But in these stories the rebellion and disobedience dominate so much that the obedience of Moses and others become isolated instances which serve to contrast and picture the disobedience of Israel. Therefore, we may say that the motifs of obedience are rare outside Num 1-10 and 26-36,

³⁸⁹ Knierim and Coats label the passage a 'negotiations dialogue' and note that the land granted to Reuben and Gad is conditional on them fulfilling their promise, Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 298-302. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 265-266, 271-273, 488, moreover, interprets the negotiations more specifically to mean that Reuben and Gad make a pledge in the form of an oath since the name of God is invoked (the exchange is not formulated in language typical of oaths and asseverations, however, see Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik*, 315-16). Lastly, Ashley, *Numbers*, 612-14, interprets the negotiations as a covenant made. All in all, irrespective of the exact interpretation of the exchange between Moses and Reuben and Gad, the obedience of Reuben and Gad is a *sine qua non* for getting the Transjordanian lands. Cf. further Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 215, on the necessity of obedience for Reuben and Gad.

³⁹⁰ Cf. Ashley, *Numbers*, 635, 637; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 212-13; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 231. The language of the passage is reminiscent of Lev 26 and exhortations in Deut.

and are only very seldomly found outside these chapters. Yet, if we understand these motifs to build up a theme, obedience and disobedience, as two sides of the same coin, seems to be the proper way to term this theme. Nevertheless, since the occurrences of obedience and disobedience are found quite separately in Numbers, they are here treated in the same manner.

Having said this, however, it should also be stated that a few passages in Num 1-10 and 26-36 do not feature acts of obedience or strong exhortations or assertions to it that suggest a theme of obedience (and disobedience): 5:5-6:27 (purity rules); 10:1-10 (silver trumpets); 27:1-11 (daughters of Zelophehad); 30:2-17 (women vows); 34:1-29 (boarders of Canaan); and 35:1-34 (levitical towns and cities of refuge). Part of the reason that 30:2-17; 34:1-29; and 35:1-34 do not feature obedient acts is that they cannot. The commandments found here concern the future in the promised land and thus can only be fulfilled when Israel is actually there (cf. Deut 4:5, where it is said that the law is taught by Moses at the steppes of Moab so that it can be observed in the future land). This contrasts with the commandments found in Num 1-10, which concern the wandering and can be set into motion with immediate effect, since the march is about to start. The absence of the motif in the latter part of Numbers can then for some passages be explained in terms of plot – that Israel is about to reach the promised land. Nonetheless, such a reasoning does not account for them thematically, and the other passages noted here can be added to them. The passages do not necessarily contradict the theme of obedience (and disobedience), and saying that they do not have the theme does not imply that the laws and rules featured here do not command obedience. Rather, they neither further nor impede the theme.

What this discussion shows is that we have reason to say that obedience together with disobedience is a major theme in Numbers along with the themes of land and generational succession. Motifs of obedience are most prominent in the introductory and concluding parts of Num 1-10 and 26-36, and have to be reckoned with by looking at the question of the themes in the larger story of Numbers and the coherence of the book.

Disobedient Israel. If ‘enthusiastic total obedience’ is the hallmark of Num 1-10, the stories from Num 11 and forwards present a very different picture of Israel’s wanderings. To a large extent they thematise the disobedience of Israel, and tell of the rebellions of the people. In other biblical texts portraying the same period in the history of Israel this aspect comes to the fore rather than obedience (see e.g. Deut 1:43; 9:7, 22-24; Ps 78:17-18, 32, 40-41; 95:8-11; 106:13-33; Ezek 20:10-24). This is not to deny the positive traditions about Israel’s period in the wilderness that are also found in texts outside Numbers (see e.g. Deut 8:4, 14-18; 29:5-6; Ps 105:39-45; 136:16ff.; Jer 32:19-23; and Hos 2:14-15). However, it should be noted that the period is portrayed positively in

these passages because of Yahweh's care for Israel, rather than Israel's obedience (the exception possibly being Jer 2:2).³⁹¹

The aspect of disobedience is introduced by the short narrative sequence of 11:1-3 (The Fire at Taberah), which does not have much more than a rebellion, punishment, intercession, and aetiology, and therefore offers a good introduction to this side of the theme.³⁹² The motif instigating the plot of most of the stories in Num 11-25 is a rebellion or insurrection against Yahweh's plans and orders, and because of this we can say that the stories feature the theme of disobedience (and obedience). Such a theme is then arguably present in the stories found in 11:1-14:45; 16:1-17:28; 20:1-13; 21:4-9; 25:1-18. Thus, as we have seen in the chapter on plot, in nearly all of these stories the people revolt against Yahweh's promise of land through protesting against the wandering towards it, as in 11:4-35 (Manna and Quails); 13:1-14:45 (the Spy-story); 16:1-17:28 (Korah, Dathan, and Abiram); 20:1-13 (Waters of Meribah); and 21:4-9 (the Copper-snake).³⁹³ Explicitly in these stories it is noted on occasion that Israel has rebelled or is rebellious, see 14:9; 17:25; and 20:10 (מרה, מְרִי, מֵרֵד, respectively). For the last passage cf. 20:24; 27:14, מרה). Two stories, however, do not feature a complaint against the wandering. The first is The Story of Miriam and Aaron's Revolt (12:1-16), which features an act of defiance against Moses instead. It is, however, as are the former stories, also a rebellion against Yahweh who supports Moses' unique authority. Thus, it can clearly be sorted under the aspect of disobedience (12:6-8; cf. 16:11).³⁹⁴ A similar insurrection is found in the Korah-story, where questions of leadership are prominent and the protest against the desert-wandering found in the story is really a pretext for questioning Moses and Aaron and their leadership rather than the actual reason for the revolt (cf. 16:3-11, 28; 17:5, 16-28).³⁹⁵ The second story is The Story of Baal-Peor, where

³⁹¹ Cf. the cautious comments by Frankel, *Murmuring Stories*, 12, and the literature cited there.

³⁹² Cf. Ashley, *Numbers*, 201; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 106.

³⁹³ The story cannot of course be reduced to a theme of obedience-disobedience, and more is said concerning it in the sections 2.2.1. and 3.3.4. above.

³⁹⁴ Cf. George W. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness: The Murmuring Motif in the Wilderness Traditions of the Old Testament* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1968), 261-64; George W. Coats, *Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God* (JSOTSup 57; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 123, 127; and Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative*, 46.

³⁹⁵ Cf. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness*, 39-40; Coats, *Moses*, 110; and Nyberg, "Korah's upproh," 237, 241. That the underlying question of the Korah-story is leadership and rivalry among priests and Levites is generally acknowledged, see e.g. Budd, *Numbers*, 188-91; Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness*, 184; Aelred Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 172-73; Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, *Levitens und Priester: Hauptlinien der Traditionsbildung und Geschichte des israelitisch-jüdischen Kultpersonals* (FRLANT N.F. 89; Göttingen: 1965), 171-84; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 209-10; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 428-32; and Nurmela, *The*

the defiance against Yahweh comes in terms of apostasy and sexual misconduct, and is not set against the wandering.³⁹⁶

Most of the genuine stories of Numbers found in chapters 11-25, feature the motifs of disobedience of Israel or individuals of the people as the original cause in their plots. Read together, it may be said that the stories show how at all levels the people of Israel are disobedient.³⁹⁷ However, as with the motifs of obedience in Num 1-10 and 26-36, there are some passages in Num 11-25 that do not feature disobedience. Some of these are cultic rules, e.g. those found in 18:1-19:22 (but the motif of obedient fulfilment is not found here either). Some are also narratives of the different groups, including Edom Refuses Passage (20:14-21), the Wilderness Itinerary (21:10-20), and Victories over Sichon and Og (21:21-35). In noting exceptions to the rule, one might also call attention to a few passages that mainly feature obedience but also have notes that recall earlier disobediences. Thus, the sin of Nadab and Abihu is referred to in 3:4 and 26:61, the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram in 27:3, the sin of Moses and Aaron in 20:24 and 27:14, and the sin of Israel in 32:8-15 respectively. These notes, however, are recapitulations of past disobediences in a context which mainly establishes the aspect of obedience (for references to obedience in the same passages, see e.g. 3:16; 20:27; 27:22; 32:31), in much the same way as the obedient acts of Moses and others in the rebellion-stories do not change the general character of them being about disobedience and rebellion. Noting these exceptions, the motifs of disobedience, as are the motifs of obedience, can be said to coincide with a certain part of Numbers (chaps. 11-25) and also a certain type of narrativity (genuine stories), if not always, which, we might remind ourselves is the reason for our treating it separately here from obedience. Disobedience is then, together with obedience, one of the recurring, major themes of Numbers that when researching coherence of the book needs to be reckoned with. Mapping the theme of obedience and disobedience in Numbers thus far, two passages stand out in treating the theme, and therefore deserve separate discussion. To these we now turn.

The Story of Balaam and Chapter 15. Apart from the theme of patriarchal promises, The Story of Balaam frequently comes back to the question of obedience. How one should interpret obedience in the story is a moot question, and

Levites, 124-34.

³⁹⁶ For seeing sexual misconduct in this particular episode, cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 274; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 212; Noth, *Numbers*, 196; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 149; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 185; *contra* Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 282-283, 295-296, who interprets זנה ('commit fornication,' 'be unfaithful') strictly figuratively, indicating paganism, cf. Seth Erlandsson, "זנה," *TDOT* IV, 99-102; and Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 264.

³⁹⁷ Cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 53; Budd, *Numbers*, 219; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 106.

has to do with how the character of Balaam is understood. Generally, scholars interested in the history of composition of the story have held that it relies on at least two traditions.³⁹⁸ One shows Balaam to be a good person and obedient, not swerving in the least from the will of Yahweh. Balaam's words to Balak's emissaries and to Balak himself that he cannot 'depart from the word of Yahweh,' are used to point to this fact (22:13, 38; 23:12, 26; 24:12-13; cf. Mika 6:5). The other tradition shows Balaam to be evil, threatening, and potentially disobedient towards Yahweh's command. This tradition is thought to be evident primarily in the episode with the jenny (22:21-35),³⁹⁹ but is also found later on in Numbers in a remark in the story about the war against Midian (31:8, 15-16). This is also the tradition that prevails elsewhere in the Hebrew bible, as well as in the reception history of the figure of Balaam (see e.g. Deut 23:4-5; Josh 24:9-10; 2 Pet 2:15-16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14). The two traditions, it is assumed, were linked awkwardly in 22:20-22, where Yahweh seemingly contradicts himself in first letting Balaam go with Balak's emissaries, but then opposes him as he does this.⁴⁰⁰ Such an understanding of the historical growth of the Balaam-story is of course entirely possible and will not be disputed here. Nonetheless, another reading of the story in the form we now have it and in connection to a story-telling language game is also possible.

Balaam is never characterised explicitly in the story, which means that we have to read any characterisation of him from his actions. In this it is not necessary to read Balaam's answer to the emissaries in 22:13 ('Yahweh has refused to let me go with you') as a sign of his obedience to Yahweh, even though he is repeating Yahweh's refusal to let him go (22:12). Rather, it is interesting to observe the repeated reference to rewards for Balaam in 22:7, 17, as well as the conclusion of the emissaries of 22:14: "Balaam refuses to come with us." That conclusion is not necessarily read as a misunderstanding from their side: i.e. that it is not Balaam who refuses to come as they say, but rather Yahweh who denies Balaam's coming. An equally possible reading of the conclusion together with the repeated mention of reward is that Balaam is depicted here as negotiating with Balak. One argument for such a reading is that Balak accepts the conven-

³⁹⁸ See e.g. Gray, *Numbers*, 309; John T. Greene, *Balaam and His Interpreters: A Hermeneutical History of the Balaam Traditions* (BJS 244; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1992), 16-68; Walter Gross, *Bileam: literar- und formkritische Untersuchung der Prosa in Num 22-24* (SANT 38; Munich: 1974); Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 154-155, 238-240; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 469-71; Noth, *A History*, 76-78; Hedwige Rouillard, *La péricope de Balaam (Nombres 22-24): la prose et les 'oracles'* (Paris: Gabalda, 1985), 483ff.; Seebass, *Numeri 22,2-36,13*, 65-66, 105-107; Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 254-65.

³⁹⁹ Not so Budd, *Numbers*, 264, however.

⁴⁰⁰ Achenbach, *Vollendung der Tora*, 403; Budd, *Numbers*, 256-57; Gross, *Bileam*, 121-22; Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 154; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 468; Noth, *Numbers*, 178; Rouillard, *La péricope de Balaam*, 108, 115; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 123; and Wellhausen, *Die Composition*, 109.

tion of negotiation and sends more numerous and distinguished emissaries to Balaam (22:15; cf. 22:37; and also 2 Pet 2:15; Jude 11).⁴⁰¹ If this is the case, Balaam's words in 22:18, where he says that he will not come even for all the gold in Balak's palace, and which most have taken to demonstrate Balaam's obedience clearly, is better read as Balaam's final offer in the negotiation (cf. Gen 23:12-16).⁴⁰² It should be noted that this offer comes before Balaam consults Yahweh the second time, which means that the negotiation would have been finished before Balaam entreated the deity who lets him go. We could, however, understand Yahweh as letting Balaam go on the premises of the deal, only to teach him a lesson in the episode with the jenny.

Second, most interpreters have understood the fact that Yahweh shows himself to Balaam and that he receives Yahweh's word and spirit etc. as signs of Balaam's acceptance by Yahweh and as a sign of him being presented as a good character here (23:5, 16; 24:2).⁴⁰³ Such an interpretation, however, is not the only possible one. The episode with the jenny, which may have a more symbolic meaning in the story at large, can be used to argue for a different interpretation. Apart from ridiculing Balaam the famous diviner who cannot even interpret the signs of his own animal,⁴⁰⁴ the episode also shows that Yahweh can use anyone he wants to speak and tell the truth, without assuming anything about the moral standing of that person, or animal.⁴⁰⁵ Thus, it is not too far-fetched to assume that Yahweh can use a jenny, so too can he also use a foreign diviner to bless Israel.⁴⁰⁶ Such an analogy between Balaam and the jenny is further underlined through a three-fold repetition in the story: the jenny avoids the angel of Yah-

⁴⁰¹ Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 167; cf. Douglas, *In the Wilderness*, 220. *Contra* George W. Coats, "Balaam: Sinner Or Saint?," in *Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable* (ed. George W. Coats; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 59; and Gray, *Numbers*, 330-31.

⁴⁰² We need not read the offer literally, but can retain a metaphoric understanding of it, albeit reading it as a real offer and a real negotiation.

⁴⁰³ See e.g. Budd, *Numbers*, 264; Coats, "Balaam: Sinner Or Saint?"; Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 234-37; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 469-71; Noth, *A History*, 76-78; Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 255-98. See also the more cautious conclusions made by Gray, *Numbers*, 318-19.

⁴⁰⁴ Alter, *The Art*, 104-06; Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 154f.; David Marcus, *From Balaam to Jonah: Anti-Prophetic Satire in the Hebrew Bible* (BJS 31; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 29-41; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 468-69; and Michael S. Moore, *The Balaam Traditions: Their Character and Development* (Dissertation series / Society of Biblical Literature 113; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholar Press, 1990), 101-03.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Olson, *Death of the Old*, 161; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 168. Moreover, Greene, *Balaam and His Interpreters*, 2-5, 165, has shown that in terms of moral, Balaam has been negatively evaluated in the history of interpretation, whereas in terms of type, a prophet, there are positive evaluations. Such a separation is then not unthinkable.

⁴⁰⁶ Wenham compares this to the note in Deut 13:1-5 that false prophets may accurately foretell the future, and still be false prophets, Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 168, cf. also p. 167 and Schmidt, *Numeri*, 127.

weh three times, and Balaam blesses Israel three times. As Yahweh opens the mouth of the jenny to speak, Yahweh puts his word in Balaam's mouth.⁴⁰⁷ Understanding the encounters of the emissaries and Balaam as negotiating a deal and seeing an analogy between Balaam and his jenny implies that Yahweh can use anyone he wants for his purposes, and thus the character of Balaam is not necessarily presented as unequivocally good and obedient in the story.

The discussion shows that obedience is indeed an important question in the Balaam-story, circling around the necessity of obedience before Yahweh and the potential disobedience of Balaam as it does.⁴⁰⁸ If so, the story would deal with the theme of obedience and disobedience in a very elaborate way, when compared to the other passages of Numbers featuring the theme. The Story of Balaam would in this case then be a passage that intertwines the two aspects of the theme in Numbers, rising to a reflection on it, and pointing us to the importance of it in the book. However, it is obvious that The Story of Balaam cannot be reduced to this theme, as was shown in the section 3.3.5. above in conjunction with the plot, and even more can be said concerning the story and its meanings. Once again, we focus the narrative features in relationship to a larger story of Numbers. This is not meant to deny other levels of meaning of this, or any other, passage in the book, albeit I do hold that they are fundamental to The Story of Balaam.

One tangential remark is that the theme of obedience and disobedience may bridge the Balaam-story in 22-24 and the Baal-Peor story in 25 thematically, and more strongly than in terms of plot as discussed in the former chapter. This connection primarily comes in the form of contrast: if Yahweh sees to it that Balaam obediently follows his command and blesses Israel in the Balaam-story, Yahweh cannot protect Israel from their own disobedience, as shown by the Baal-Peor story which follows.⁴⁰⁹

A similar treatment to the theme as in the Balaam-story also occurs in chapter 15, containing various cultic rules. Three sections relating in different ways to obedience and disobedience are found after the first two rules. Thus, the first is a rule which is introduced with the words: "But if you unintentionally fail to observe all these commandments that Yahweh has spoken to Moses..." (v. 22). The rule goes on to set out what applies in the case of someone unintentionally being

⁴⁰⁷ Alter, *The Art*, 106; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 165.

⁴⁰⁸ The presence of the theme in the story are not negated by the understanding that Balaam as an ANE-prophet and at the end of the story did not have much of a choice to bless or curse, see Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 215-17; and more generally Anitra Bingham Kolenkow, "Persons of Power and Their Communities," in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (eds. Leda Ciruolo and Jonathan Seidel; Leiden: Brill Styx, 2002), 133-144. Furthermore, Rouillard sees obedience as a major theme in the Balaam-story, but denies that it is present in the rest of Numbers, Rouillard, *La péripécie de Balaam*, 476, a conclusion that would seem to be contradicted by the analysis above.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Olson, *Death of the Old*, 159.

disobedient towards Yahweh, as well as detailing the consequences of intentional trespass. The second section features a case-law which issue from a situation with a man intentionally breaking the Sabbath and how this is to be dealt with (vv. 32-36). The third section, lastly, stipulates that the Israelites are to wear tassels on garments in order for them to “...remember all the commandments of Yahweh and do them, and not follow your hearts and your eyes, which you lustfully follow.” (v. 39).⁴¹⁰ These three sections seem to address three different aspects of obedience and disobedience: what to do with unintentional disobedience, intentional disobedience,⁴¹¹ and how to avoid being disobedient respectively.⁴¹² In other words, obedience and disobedience seem to be an important theme in these three sections, and different aspects of it are treated together in chapter 15. As with The Story of Balaam, we here have a passage that explores the theme of obedience and disobedience, almost rises to a reflection or even thesis on the terms for the two aspects, and again points us to the importance of the theme in the book.

There is more, however, to the theme of obedience and disobedience in this chapter, and this has to do with its connections to the immediately preceding Spy-story. We have already said in the chapter on plot above that the introductory verse of Num 15 makes a glaring contrast to the Spy-story and the loss of land for the old generation pictured here, beginning as it does with the remark “when you come into the land” (v. 2, repeated in v. 17). Indirectly, the promise of land is addressed and affirmed in view of the catastrophic loss of it in the Spy-story.⁴¹³ There would thus seem to be a conscious placing of chapter 15 after 13-14. This also applies to the theme of obedience and disobedience in that one could read chapter 15 as reflecting on different aspects of disobedience in light of the fatal disobedience of the Spy-story: what if disobedience is unintentional (and not intentional as in the Spy-story)? what are the consequences of de-

⁴¹⁰ Gray, *Numbers*, 185, deems the last phrase to be corrupted since it is, in a sense, a repetition of what has just been said. But here it is kept as it is, the word זָיִים (‘lustfully’) probably linking intentionally to 14:33, and there are no variants in the versions, cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 177-78; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 401; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 54, 59; and Seebass, *Num 10,11-22,1*, 158.

⁴¹¹ Cf. Achenbach, *Vollendung der Tora*, 521. The case-law in 15:32-36 also features a note on obedience in v. 36, the only one in the block of cultic rules in chapter 15, 18-19 in the middle of Numbers. However, in contrast to the other laws and rules in Numbers, the subject-matter of the rule is the intentional violation of Yahweh’s commandments, so that the note makes a contrast and is subsumed under the aspect of disobedience, which the sequence turns on. Even so, the function of the note however, seems to be primarily underscoring Israel’s acceptance of Yahweh’s decision concerning the Sabbath-breaker.

⁴¹² Cf. *Ibid.*, 522-23; Budd, *Numbers*, 178; and Olson, *Death of the Old*, 167, 173-174.

⁴¹³ Similar observations on the connections between Num 13-14 and 15 are made by Ashley, *Numbers*, 277; Budd, *Numbers*, 168; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 117; Olson, *Death of the Old*, 171-72; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 54-55; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 126-27. *Contra* Noth, *Numbers*, 114.

liberate disobedience (as in the Spy-story)? what can one do to avoid disobedience and be obedient (so as not to suffer consequences such as those of the Spy-story)?⁴¹⁴

Such a reading of chapter 13-14 and 15 is supported in two ways: first, the rule on unintentional sin could be read to encompass all the stories of sin and rebellion including the Spy-story that followed on from the law-giving at Sinai and to point out that the disobediences recorded here were not unintentional and thus do not fall under the rule. Such a reading is suggested by the introduction which states “But if you unintentionally fail to observe all these commandments that Yahweh has spoken to Moses, everything that Yahweh has commanded you by Moses, from the day Yahweh gave commandment and thereafter, throughout your generations...” (v. 22-23).⁴¹⁵ Second, it has often been noted by scholars that Num 15 establishes a connection to the Spy-story in Num 13-14 specifically by the unusual formulation found in the last passage of tassels in 15:39-41 quoted in the former chapter above, “not follow your hearts...” (v. 39).⁴¹⁶ What is unusual here is the use of the word that has been translated by the rather general ‘follow,’ תּוֹר, but the more typical meaning of which is ‘spy out’ or ‘seek out.’ This word is found several times in the Spy-story (13:2, 16, 25 etc), suggesting that its unusual use in 15:39 is intentional and meant to comment upon the Spy-story. Moreover, 15:39 also speaks about the ‘unfaithfulness’ (זָנִים) of the hearts and eyes of the people, a verb whose stem is only found here and in 14:33 (the noun, זִנוּת) and 25:1 (the verb, זָנָה) in Numbers, the first passage denoting the rebellion of Israel in the Spy-story. Thus, זָנָה also seems to establish a connection between Num 15 and Num 13-14 and thus Num 15 seems to comment upon the Spy-story. Altogether, we might render the two connections in the vocabulary in the following way: the spying out (תּוֹר) of the land in Num 13-14 led to the forfeiture of it because of the unfaithfulness (זָנָה) of the people, but Israel is commanded in chapter 15 to henceforth wear tassels so that they remember Yahweh and do not seek out (תּוֹר) this unfaithfulness (זָנָה) of their hearts and eyes.⁴¹⁷ There would thus seem to be more than chance that has put chapter 13-14 and 15 together, and moreover, that the theme of obedience and disobedience play into the connections.

In the chapter on plot above it has been stated that the Spy-story marks a turning point in that the promise of land, which has been driving the plot so far,

⁴¹⁴. Cf. Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 266, 269; Ashley, *Numbers*, 291-93; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 58-59; and Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 187-88. For the last remark, cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 178, who sees 15:37-41 as a ‘fitting conclusion’ to Num 11-14 in terms of obedience/disobedience.

⁴¹⁵. Cf. Ashley, *Numbers*, 286; Budd, *Numbers*, 173-74; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, 123.

⁴¹⁶. See primarily Budd, *Numbers*, 178; Liwak, “תּוֹר,” *TDOT* 15:607; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 127; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 126.

⁴¹⁷. On these terms, see further Erlandsson, *TDOT* IV:101-02; and Liwak, *TDOT* 15:606-07.

is thwarted by Israel's rebellion. It is therefore very interesting that chapter 15 seemingly provides a thematic interlude or perhaps thesis which reflects on the conditions of obedience and disobedience connected to the Spy-story. Together, chapters 13-14 and 15 thus seem to mark a central section in the book of Numbers, as witnessed to by the turn in the plot and the treatment of the theme of obedience and disobedience.⁴¹⁸

Both The Story of Balaam and the rules of chapter 15 emphasise the importance of the theme of obedience and disobedience in Numbers and they treat it in a far more extensive way than any other passage of the book. While the Balaam-story elaborates on the theme in the form of an entertaining story, chapter 15 gives a cultic treatment of the theme, setting out cultic remedies for different kinds of disobedience and measures to safeguard obedience for Israel.

The Themes in the Larger Story and Relationships to Other Themes. So far, we have established obedience and disobedience as an important theme in Numbers. Can something more generally be said about the theme in view of Numbers being an anthology with a larger story of wandering through the wilderness? We can notice how Numbers as a whole moves thematically as it were from obedience (1-10), through disobedience (11-25), and back to obedience (26-36).⁴¹⁹ This is always the obedience or disobedience of Israel or its representatives. It is interesting that Israel is said to be obedient in the passages with laws and rules, but disobedient as soon as there is a return to the stories of the wandering in the book. Why this is so is elusive, however. On a more detailed note, it is also interesting to observe that theme and plot interrelate at two places: first, in chapter 15, which can be read as a thematic exposition of the catastrophic turn the plot takes in the Spy-story (Num 13-14); second, in 21:1-3 (The Victory at Hormah), where the new things introduced in the narrative sequence, primarily the motif of obedience and the military victories over enemies, serve the end of turning the plot in Numbers once again. On a more general level, the non-narrative and narrative passages seem to complement each other: the genuine stories show the need for the laws, but also what happens when Israel is disobedient and deviate from the will of Yahweh, a will, furthermore, that is also expressed in the laws and rules.

The more general questions of how the themes of obedience and disobedience work in Numbers also have to do with how the themes interrelate with the other major themes as seen by Olson and Clines. The theme of generational succession, first, is arguably subsumed under the theme of obedience and disobedience, and could as such even be talked about in terms of motif rather than

⁴¹⁸. Cf. Artus, "Les dernières rédactions," 142-43.

⁴¹⁹. Ackerman says about Numbers that "The Wilderness period is depicted as an ordeal in which the Exodus generation was found wanting," Ackerman, "Numbers," 78, but this would then only apply to Num 11-25.

theme, even though we will use the term theme in this thesis. Olson notes that the exodus-generation forfeits the promised land because of their sin and disobedience (see e.g. 14:20-33),⁴²⁰ which seems to assume that disobedience is the cause for the generational succession in Numbers and not the opposite. Several other arguments can also be made for such a view, challenging the view of Olson. First, if we take the deaths of Miriam and Aaron in 20:1, 22-29 and the drawing close to the promised land in chapters 20-21 to suggest that the old generation is dying out (cf. 33:38),⁴²¹ the rebellions in the story The Copper Snake (21:4-9) and the Baal-Peor story (25:1-18) should be ascribed to the second generation, and not the first as Olson argues.⁴²² They would then also show that even the second generation is disobedient. Second, the cases of Caleb and Joshua, belonging to the first generations, show how members of the first generation through their obedience may be promised inheritance in the land, as Olson also notes.⁴²³ These passages show that the division of Numbers into two parts, portraying one generation as obedient (Num 1-25) and the other as disobedient (Num 26:36) is too strict. Generational succession does happen in the wilderness, but the aspects of obedience and disobedience are not separated by and subordinate to a portrayal of the generations.⁴²⁴ Expressed differently, Numbers does not stop at moving from disobedience to obedience, and the portrayal of the generations are more nuanced than Olson's proposal suggests, even though the old generation is clearly succeeded by the new because of the disobedience of the old. In view of narrativity one may observe that the non-narrative passages of Numbers note the obedience of Israel, irrespective of the generation, while the genuine narratives show Israel as almost incurably rebellious, also across the generations. Finally, it may also be noted that the theme of obedience and disobedience is found more often in Numbers than the theme of generational succession.⁴²⁵

Differently, however, is the theme of the promise of land, which occurs in large parts of Numbers and to which the theme of obedience and disobedience is often parallel rather than hierarchically related. However, the themes are also tied to each other several times. First, as we have seen, the disobedience in the genuine stories often emerges against the plan of Yahweh to bring Israel into the

⁴²⁰ Olson, *Death of the Old*, 138-144, 148-149.

⁴²¹ See again the former chapter on plot. Cf. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 68, 483, 488; Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 292; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, xi.

⁴²² Olson, *Death of the Old*, 123. For the view that Num 25:1-18 shows that even the new generation is sinful and disobedient, cf. Levine, *Numbers 21-35*, 279, 292 and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 185.

⁴²³ Olson, *Death of the Old*, 94.

⁴²⁴ *Pace Ibid.*, 96.

⁴²⁵ Generational succession at: 1:1-47; 13:1-14:45; 15:37-41; 20:1-13, 22-29; 26:1-65; 27:1-23; 33:1-49; 36:1-13; obedience at: 1:1-4:45; 7:1-9:23; 10:11-36; 26:1-61; 28:1-30:1; 31:1-33:56; 36:1-13; and disobedience at: 11:1-17:28; 21:4-9; 22:1-25:18.

promised land, the prime example being the Spy-story where disobedience means forfeiture of the land. The disobedience here allows a prolongation of the period in the wilderness, which delays the fulfilment of the promise of land. Second, by the end of the book (Num 26-36), when the theme of the land strengthens in the many passages relating to the preparations for conquering the land, the aspect of obedience is also found many times. The two themes taken together in this latter section of Numbers might be understood to implicate the thesis that obedience is important in conquering the land. Such a connection is at least present in 33:50-56, where Moses exhorts Israel to obediently conquer the land, and it is also found in those sections of Deuteronomy, which deal with the same period in the life of Israel (see Deut 4:5).

Connections between the themes of obedience, disobedience, and land apart, it may also be noted that in the few passages that lack the theme of the promised land (presented in the introduction to this chapter), the theme of obedience and disobedience comes to the fore much more clearly instead. Thus, 9:1-14 (v. 4, the Second Passover) and 28:1-30:1 (30:1, the Cultic Calendar) feature the motif of obedient fulfilment, building up the theme, while the plot of the Baal-Peor incident (25:1-18) starts from the issue of sin, rebellion, and disobedience, contributing to the theme in the book as well. The theme of land only very indirectly plays into these passages and at most the passages can be said to presuppose the land, while the theme of obedience and disobedience ties the passages more closely to a thematic complex or structure in the book. To close the discussion, the themes of land, obedience, and disobedience are many times parallel in the passages of Numbers, sometimes closely tied to each other, and occasionally when the land is not in view, the theme of obedience and disobedience is accentuated instead.

Summarising so far, we seem to have reason to say that a theme of the obedience and disobedience of Israel is important in Numbers. The aspect of obedience come about mainly through a formulaic motif of obedient acts of Moses, the Israelites, and others in the non-narrative passages, while the aspect of disobedience come about through the motif of the rebellions of Israel or individuals in Israel as the cause for the trend of events in most of the genuine narratives. Finally, the thorough treatment of the theme in the Balaam-story in Num 22-24 and in the cultic rules of chapter 15 also brings the theme to the fore in Numbers. In my understanding, it is this side to Numbers, at times approaching a thesis, which lead Olivier Artus to term the book ‘a short theological treatise on intentional faults’ – a characterisation he later refuted, however.⁴²⁶ On a more

⁴²⁶ Artus, “Le problème de l’unité littéraire,” 140; cf. Artus, “Les dernières rédactions,” 140-43. The understanding is rescinded in his later work Artus, “Le problème de l’unité

general level, we can see how Numbers moves from obedience (1-10) through disobedience (11-25) back to obedience again (26-36), and how the theme of obedience and disobedience is clearly related to the two turning points in the plot via chapter 15 and 21:1-3 (Victory at Hormah). Moreover, the theme subsumes that of generational succession, since obedience and disobedience are the concepts on which the succession turns, and it is also more clearly represented throughout the book than generational succession. In relationship to the theme of the promise of land the two themes are rather parallel. Sometimes they are interrelated, as when disobedience delays the fulfilment of the promise of land (e.g. in the Spy-story), or as when obedience to the preparations for conquering the land is understood as necessary by the end of Numbers, but often the two themes are simply coexistent.

4.4. Purity in Numbers

Purity Rules and Motifs. The observant reader has noticed that certain passages have not been aligned to the themes discussed so far: these are found in Num 5:5-6:27; 18:1-19:22; 30:2-17; and 34:1-35:34. We have already stated that the themes of land, generational succession, obedience and disobedience are operative in the larger story of Numbers moving from Sinai to Moab, but these passages seem to disrupt things, as the plot is also – from time to time – interrupted in the book. However, before simply noting the incoherent nature of Numbers once again, one may observe that several of these passages are often labelled purity rules by scholars: 5:5-10; 5:11-21; 6:1-21; 18:1-19:22; and 35:1-34.⁴²⁷ To

littéraire,” 140, stating that such an understanding of Numbers overlooks the third part (Num 22-36), the preparations for conquest do not go well with the theme of intentional sins. However, the notes on obedience in Num 22-36 (26:3-4; 27:22; 30:1; 31:7, 31, 41, 47; 33:2, 38; 36:5, 10 [cf. 27:11]) make such a connection possible, as much as it is there for the first ten chapters of Numbers.

⁴²⁷ See primarily Wenham, *Numbers*, 34-35. Wenham do not count 18:1-22; and 35:1-8 among the purity rules of Numbers. However, the concern for purity is clear in the passages, for chap. 18, see Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 435; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, 423-24. The Levitical towns in 35:1-8 can also be understood to relate to purity-thinking in that they support the Levites in their separation from the rest of Israel to handle the holiness of Yahweh in Israel. There is also a close connection to the cities of refuge, which Wenham count among the purity rules, noted by Auld, *Joshua, Moses and the Land*, 79. See also Ludwig Schmidt, “Levitent- und Asylstädte in Num xxxv und Jos. xx; xxi 1-42,” *VT* LII (2002):103-131, on the intricate connection of the Levitical cities and the cities of refuge, as set out in Num 35 and Josh 20; 21. Furthermore, the system of the 48 levitical city has been deemed to be an artificial creation, which underscores its theological purpose, grounded in the separation of the Levites for purity reasons, see already Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 159-64; cf. John R. Spencer, “Levitical Cities,” *ABD* 4:310-11; and Jeremy M. Hutton, “The Levitical Diaspora (Ii): Modern Perspectives on the Levitical Cities Lists (a Review of Opinions),” in *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition* (eds. Mark Leuchter and Jeremy M. Hutton; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011). Menahem Haran, however, sees both utopian and realistic elements in the texts about the

these can also be added 8:5-22,⁴²⁸ which, however, also features the motif of obedience (vv. 20, 22). All of these passages are permeated by purity-thinking and this can also be said to be their theme, i.e. the more abstract idea that emerges from the treatment of the subject-matter in these rules is best conceptualised as ‘purity.’ A brief overview of the different passages may substantiate such a conclusion. The rule in 5:5-10 deals with the complication of how to become pure when the original victim of a wrong perpetrated has died and cannot accept restitution, which would have purified the perpetrator (cf. Lev 5:14-16, 20-26); 5:11-31 concerns the impurity of adultery (cf. Lev. 20:10); 6:1-21 deals with the holiness of the Nazirite; 18:1-32 outlines the guarding of the holiness of the tabernacle and the privileges of priests and Levites; 19:1-22 establishes measures to deal with the impurity of death, as we have seen above in the chapter on plot; and 35:1-34 sets out the Levitical towns and the defilement of murder, the latter being dealt with through the cities of refuge.⁴²⁹ Purity is then clearly a theme in these passages and the theme of purity is established by them for the book of Numbers. The theme of purity can be said to permeate these passages, and may in this respect be contrasted with how the aspect of obedience is established in the theme of disobedience and obedience, which is found primarily in narrative fragments that do not touch upon the subject-matter of the passages they enclose.

The theme of purity would be a minor and isolated theme in Numbers if only these passages are taken into account, and thus would not seem to have much to do with the larger story of the book and its movement. However, motifs of purity are also found in many passages in Numbers over and above the purity rules related above, and this may indicate that purity could be a major theme in the book, counting both the rules and the motifs. This fact is, however, seldom recognised by scholars interested in the themes of Numbers, including the analyses of Olson and Clines.⁴³⁰ Therefore, investigating how the theme of purity

48 Levitical cities in his Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 112-31.

⁴²⁸ Thus e.g. Budd, *Numbers*, 93-94; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 61; and Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 139. However, the passage is not enlisted by Wenham, *Numbers*, 35.

⁴²⁹ The idea that murder polluted the land is not restricted to P or even Israel, Raymond Westbrook, *Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Law* (CahRB 26; Paris: Gabalda, 1988), 81.

⁴³⁰ In chapter eight of his monograph Olson discusses legal material in Numbers and how it relates to the theme of generational succession, but he does not address the theme of purity, even though analysing Num 15 with its clear purity motifs, Olson, *Death of the Old*, 165-77. Neither is the theme of purity addressed elsewhere in his book nor how it relates to generational succession. Clines, on the other hand, notes in passing that Num 5-6 concern the purity of the camp, that the Baal-Peor story has to do with a ‘purging’ of Israel, and that the presupposition in 35:9-28 is that blood ‘pollutes’ the land, Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 57-62. However, his focus on the theme of land means that these observations are not developed. An exception to the lack of interest in purity is found in the analyses of Artus, who repeatedly notes the importance of purity, Artus,

emerges in Numbers, how it interrelates with the other major themes, and how it affects our understanding of the coherence of Numbers becomes an important question for us. A first step in doing this is to make a short survey of the passages containing purity motifs in Numbers apart from the purity rules, to see where the theme is present, and after this we may analyse the relationships of the theme to the book at large and the other themes.

Among the non-narrative passages, chapters 1-4 not only picture Israel as obedient and preparing themselves for the march, but an important aspect the preparation is also that the camp with Yahweh in its midst is to be kept holy and pure. The Levites are commissioned to do this by being separated from the rest of the people (see e.g. 1:51, 53), the separation in itself indicating the necessity of purity for the Levites in their service.⁴³¹ Similar motifs concerned with the holiness and purity of Israel and the camp are spread out through Numbers among the laws and rules: 3:6-10, 38; 4:15, 18-20 (guarding duty of Levites); 3:4; 26:61 (Nadab and Abihu offering unholy fire); 7:1, 10 (sanctification of the tabernacle and altar); 9:6, 10-13 (purity in conjunction with Passover); 15:40-41 (Israel meant to be holy to Yahweh); 26:62 (separation of the Levites); 28:1-30:1 (the sacrifices of the public cult),⁴³² and 33:50-56 (expulsion of the impure Canaanites).⁴³³ Such motifs also appear throughout the genuine narratives, where the clearest examples are Miriam's punishment of leprosy in 12:10-15, which make her unclean and requires seven days of purification, and The Story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whose conflict revolves around the priestly hierarchy and who may approach Yahweh, which can be understood as a question of purity, involving bronze censers and incense (16:3-11; 17:1-5, 11-13).⁴³⁴ But one should also note the sanctification for theophany in The Story of Manna and Quails (11:18),⁴³⁵ that Yahweh is said to not have been held holy by Moses and Aaron in the Waters at Meribah (20:12-13),⁴³⁶ the vow of הָרָם in the Victory at Hormah (21:2-3); the holy separateness of Israel noted in the Balaam-story (23:9),⁴³⁷ the impure apostasy and sexual misconduct at Baal-Peor (25:1-13);

Etudes sur Nombres, 15-35, 41-82, 244-286; Artus, "Les dernières rédactions," 136-44; and Artus, "Le problème de l'unité littéraire," 132-43. Artus is, however, more interested in how key-words, framing, and chiasmus work in the book rather than in a systematic exposition of its themes.

⁴³¹ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 187-88; and Wenham, *Numbers*, 36.

⁴³² For this passage being connected to purity thinking, see Budd, *Numbers*, 318-19.

⁴³³ Cf. Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 383.

⁴³⁴ Cf. Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 109-111, 115-135; and Jobling, *Sense of Biblical Narrative*, 41.

⁴³⁵ Understood to relate to purity thinking by Milgrom, *Numbers*, 384-86; and Jobling, *Sense of Biblical Narrative*, 41.

⁴³⁶ Cf. Frank H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly theology* (JSOTSup 91; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 79; Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 151 and Wright, "Unclean," VI: 238.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 277 and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*,

and holy war against Midian including purification of war-booty (31:6, 13-47).⁴³⁸ All in all, this is where we find purity motifs in Numbers. Taken together, the passages featuring purity rules and motifs indicating purity give us reason to say that purity is a major theme in Numbers, being found in a large part of the book: 1:1-9:14; 11:4-20:13; 21:1-13; 22:1-26:65; 28:1-30:1; 31:1-54; 33:50-56; and 35:1-34.

One can note the decreasing occurrence of the theme the further one is in the book, and also that non-narrative passages note regulations for purity, while narrative ones for the most part depict impurity and how this is dealt with. Moreover, rules and regulations concerning purity also interrelate with specific narratives. Thus, in the Korah-story (Num 16-17), the hierarchy of priests and Levites as set out in Num 1, 3-4 and 18, which is underwritten by purity-concerns, is the subject of the narrative or its instigating problem, as many have observed.⁴³⁹ But we also have more loose associations between rules and narratives. The purity-rule concerning death in Num 19 is associated with the deaths depicted in the preceding rebellion-stories, as was noted above in the chapter on plot. Furthermore, the motif of חָרָם, is found both as a cultic rule and as part of a narrative sequence (18:14, regulations for priests and Levites; 21:2, the Victory at Hormah), and although not necessarily connecting the two passages to each other, the idea gives them a common background. The theme of purity thus creates a certain coherence for Numbers both as a common frame of reference for several narrative and non-narrative passages, and in a few cases on a more detailed level gives a more close connection when a specific rule noted elsewhere in Numbers has a role to play in a narrative.

However, in all those passages with motifs on purity the other themes discussed above are also found. How then do they interrelate and how does this affect our view of the larger story of Numbers? Those questions will concern us for the rest of this section on purity in Numbers. As we will see, we primarily have connections of purity to the theme of obedience and disobedience, which then make up the lion's share of what follows.

Obedience, Disobedience, and Purity. An important starting point for the connection between obedience, disobedience, and purity in Numbers lies in the theology of purity. To repeat the fundamentals of purity in the Hebrew bible (primarily as found in the P-material), purity can be said to operate along two

174 There is therefore more than politics and geography to the designation of Israel found here, *pace* Levine, *Numbers* 21-35, 174-75

⁴³⁸ Cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 332-34; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 296-97; Levine, *Numbers* 21-35, 470-72; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 260; Schmidt, *Numeri*, 185-86; and Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 211.

⁴³⁹ See e.g. Ashley, *Numbers*, 295-97; Budd, *Numbers*, 188-91; Gunneweg, *Leviten und Priester*, 178-81; and Levine, *Numbers* 1-20, 431-32. Cf. also Aurelius, *Der Fürbitter Israels*, 188.

axes with the nodes pure – impure, and holy – common (see Lev 10:10).⁴⁴⁰ These are not the same, while at the same time impurity and holiness are the extreme opposites that cannot come into contact under any circumstance.⁴⁴¹ The source of holiness lies with Yahweh and is contagious (see e.g. Lev 19:2 cf. 1 Sam 2:2; Is 6:3),⁴⁴² while the threat looming behind the likewise contagious impure seems to be death or what is considered un-whole and abnormal.⁴⁴³ Therefore, sin is also understood to give rise to impurity. A distinction can be made between moral and ritual faults, but it is not absolute (cf. e.g. the intermingling of them in Lev 5:1-6; 19:1-37), so that impurity arising from the natural function of the body, for example, is also termed ‘sin.’⁴⁴⁴ ‘Pure’ and ‘common’ are kinds of intermediate states. While ‘common’ here simply signifies what is not holy, and is not a negative term, ‘purity’ is required for man to approach Yahweh, in view of the opportunities to acquire impurity in life. This means that Israel, as Yahweh’s chosen people, is holy and is meant to maintain that holiness (see again e.g. Lev 19:2),⁴⁴⁵ as well as coping with the impurities created by the life

⁴⁴⁰. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1721; Gordon Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), 19; and David P. Wright, “Holiness (Ot),” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* III: 246; cf. Jacob Milgrom, “Holy, Holiness, Ot,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* 2: 855. For the possibility of treating the P-material as a whole, see Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 19-26.

⁴⁴¹. Milgrom, “Holy, Holiness, Ot,” 2:855-56; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 21-22; and Wright, “Holiness (Ot),” III: 247.

⁴⁴². Milgrom, “Holy, Holiness, Ot,” 2:850, 855; Diether Kellermann, “Heiligkeit Ii. Altes Testament,” *TRE* XIV: 698-702; Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1711-12; Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 132-133, 136; and Wenham, *Leviticus*, 22. Pace Thomas Podella, “Reinheit Ii. Altes Testament,” *TRE* XXVIII: 478

⁴⁴³. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (2nd impr. w. corr. ed. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 4-6, 35-57; Hanna K. Harrington, “Clean and Unclean,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* 1: 688; Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 75-83; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 766-68; Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 134; Wenham, *Numbers*, 36-37; and Wright, “Unclean,” VI: 739-40. *Contra* Gray, *Numbers*, 209-11, who refers to the idea of ‘taboo’ to explain holiness and uncleanness.

⁴⁴⁴. Harold W. Attridge, “Sin, Sinners,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* 5: 263, 267; Robin C. Cover, “Sin, Sinner (Ot),” *ABD* VI: 32, 34-35; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 767; Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 151-53; Jay Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions* (HBM 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 139-59; and Wright, “Unclean,” VI: 731-35. Cf. Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 158-60. Pace Harrington, “Clean and Unclean,” 1: 681. *Contra* Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21-42.

⁴⁴⁵. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 41-57; Harrington, “Clean and Unclean,” 1: 687; Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 49; Kellermann, “Heiligkeit (At),” 14: 700-01; Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 140; Podella, “Reinheit Ii. At,” XXVIII: 482; and Wenham, *Leviticus*, 23.

of man and sin.⁴⁴⁶ The reason for repeating this is that such thinking underwrites the purity-theme in Numbers and therefore constitutes the starting point for looking for connections between purity, obedience, and disobedience in the book. In short, obedience to the regulations set out to guard the holiness of Yahweh and people is a *sine qua non*, while disobedience, on the other hand, results in sin, which creates impurity. The themes of obedience/disobedience and purity are therefore intrinsically associated with each other, and moreover, such an intermingling is found in Numbers many times. To see how this happens in Numbers, we will once again go through the passages containing purity motifs, and after that discuss the relationship of the theme of purity to the larger story of the book.

Starting with a connection between the aspect of obedience in the theme of obedience/disobedience and purity, since obedience and disobedience are often separated in Numbers, such a connection is primarily found in the non-narrative passages of Numbers, as the aspect of obedience is predominantly found there. We have already noted the necessity of guarding the holiness of the tabernacle and camp presupposed in Num 1-4, a necessity which required obedience, and which is accentuated by motifs of obedient fulfilment in the same passages (1:17-19, 44-47; 2:33-34; 3:16, 39, 41-42, 51; 4:37, 45, 49). However, obedience and purity paralleled in Num 1-4, are connected in the narrative sequence following Num 1-4: in 5:1-4 Yahweh commands the Israelites to purify the camp (vv. 2-3), and this is also obeyed, marked by the formulaic motif of obedient fulfilment (v. 4). What is more, the explicit connection between obedience and purity makes a transition between chapters 1-4 and 5-6, which bridges the break in the plot between 5:1-4 and 5:5ff. Both obedience and purity are found in Num 1-4, they are explicitly connected in 5:1-4, and then the theme of purity takes centre-stage in the rest of Num 5-6.⁴⁴⁷ Thus this is, once again, one of the places in Numbers where we arguably find a transition between passages in terms of theme instead of plot, comparable to the transition from the Balaam-story (22-24) to Baal-Peor (25). Moreover, it can be noted that the transition is made by means of an independent narrative sequence, whose thematic functions were discussed above in the chapter on genre (cf. in this regard 11:1-3, The Fire at Taberah).

Moving on to chapter 7, obedience and purity are also connected here, albeit rather implicitly. First, it is made explicit in v. 6 that Moses is obedient to Yahweh's command in v. 5 in receiving the gifts for the tabernacle, and this is of

⁴⁴⁶ As set out in the purity-rules, apart from the rules from Numbers cited above, see esp. Lev 5:1-13; 11:1-22:33. Cf. Attridge, "Sin, Sinners," 5: 267; Harrington, "Clean and Unclean," 1: 684; Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 122, 140, 148-150; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 21-23; Wright, "Unclean," VI: 737-38; and Wright, "Holiness (Ot)," III: 244-56.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 54; Gray, *Numbers*, 39-40; Milgrom, *Numbers*, xiv; Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 89-90; and Wright, "Unclean," VI: 730; *contra* Noth, *Numbers*, 44.

course part of the act of establishing the tabernacle, a building standing at the centre of purity thinking. However, there is a more intimate and implicit connection between purity and obedience in this passage if the larger context of the Pentateuch is taken into account. Moses' act of purity of sanctifying and anointing the tabernacle and altar is namely a carrying out of Yahweh's command to do so in Ex 40:9-11. The sanctification and anointing in Num 7 thus implies obedience to the command of purity in Ex 40.

The regulation for the celebration of the delayed passover in Num 9 has again an explicit connection between obedience and purity in that it starts from the case of a few men that wanted to be obedient in celebrating passover but could not do so because of their impurity. From this situation the rule then follows (9:5-6, see also 10-13). The weakest connection between obedience and purity probably comes in 28:1-30:1 where an act of obedience is hinged merely upon the regulations for sacrifices in 30:1, which states in a concluding narrative fragment that the instructions for sacrifices were faithfully transmitted by Moses to Israel. More implicitly, purity is an important explanatory background for the admonition to Israel to expel the Canaanites in obedience to Yahweh in 33:50-56, in that the idea that this is done is to guard the holiness of the people.

Obedience and purity are then often connected in Numbers to show the obedience of Israel to purity-norms or the necessity of obedience to such norms, and this happens mainly in the non-narrative passages of the book, and primarily at its beginning. An exception to the connection being found in non-narrative passages is the connection found in the short narrative sequence Victory at Hormah (21:1-3), where Israel's vow of הָרָם – the motif of purity in the sequence – is faithfully or obediently carried out by them.

Coming then, secondly, to connections between purity and disobedience, these are naturally found in the genuine narratives of Num 11-25 where the aspect of disobedience is present. The Story of Miriam and Aaron's Revolt (12:1-16) shows how disobedience towards Yahweh's order results in impurity in Miriam's leprosy. In The Story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (16:1-17:28), the revolt is against the ordering of Israel in terms of purity and holiness as we have noted, where priests are separated from the rest (v. 3, 5), so that one could say that there is disobedience against purity-regulations. But purity also comes as a remedy for disobedience in the story, as when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram are annihilated for their disobedience (16:20-34), and when incense is used to stop the plague of Yahweh (17:6-15). To this understanding of purity measures as a remedy for disobedience we may also reckon the use of the bronze censers of Korah and his men as covering for the altar (17:1-5). The censers become holy because of Yahweh's annihilation of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (17:2-3), but subsequently serve as a sign for Israel to be obedient and not draw near to Yahweh and offer incense, as Korah and his men did (17:3). The censers on the altar are, in this respect, similar to Aaron's staff later on (17:16ff.) but also the

tassels on the garments in 15:37-41. In The Story of the Waters of Meribah, furthermore, the disobedience of Moses and Aaron is said to consist of not holding Yahweh holy (20:12), and The Story of Baal-Peor revolves around the impurities of apostasy and sexual misconduct committed by Israel, which also constitutes the disobedience in this story (25:1-18). Lastly, two non-narrative passages connect purity and disobedience, as well: 3:4 and 26:61. Here the sin of Nadab and Abihu related in Leviticus is recalled, which represent a breach of purity-regulations (cf. Lev 10:1-5).

We have now exhausted the connections of disobedience and purity in Numbers. In the rest of the genuine stories where disobedience and purity coincide, these are rather parallel and not connected. In The Story of Manna and Quails it is not said whether the exhortation to purify for theophany in 11:18 is carried out obediently or not – and knowing this is not part of understanding the story in connection to a storytelling language-game as we have done. Instead the motif of purity becomes part of what the exhortation necessarily must imply, that meeting Yahweh requires purity.⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, the note on the separateness of Israel in the Balaam-story (23:9) is similarly simply part of a description of the special status of Israel, but not connected to the theme of obedience or disobedience.

To sum up, the interrelations of disobedience and purity are primarily found in the genuine stories of Num 11-25, since this is where we find the aspect of disobedience. Here, disobedience is talked about in terms of purity or as resulting in impurity several times. Sometimes, however, disobedience and purity are merely parallel.

Two passages that stand out somewhat from the others considered here remain, and both are important for the discussion pertaining to connections between the themes of obedience/disobedience and purity. First, in 15:40-41 Israel is urged to “...remember all my commandments... and be holy...” (cf. Lev 19:2). The consecutive perfect of *וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים* shows that here holiness is understood to follow upon obeying the command to remember (*תִּזְכְּרוּ*), and the themes of obedience and purity thus seem to be clearly connected. Moreover, the command to holiness is also related to the negative command not to ‘follow... unfaithfulness’ (v. 39, *וְלֹא-תִתְּרוּ אַחֲרָי... זָנִים*), the verb lying behind ‘unfaithfulness’ presumably relates to impurity because of its connections to sexual and religious fornication.⁴⁴⁹ We argued above, in conjunction with the aspect of disobedience, that the command can be understood to refer to the fateful rebellion of Num 13-14. Thus, the theme of purity also seems to be connected to the discussion of voluntary/involuntary sin, obedience, and disobedience against the background of the Spy-story. In contrast to the disobedience and sin of the Spy-story, re-

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 384-86.

⁴⁴⁹ For *זָנָה* meaning ‘fornication’ (literally) and ‘apostasy’ (figuratively), see Erlandsson, *TDOT* IV, 99-102.

membering and being obedient to Yahweh's commands also means that Israel observes purity rules and in this way preserves its holy status – i.e. the positive end of purity-theology. Again, the thematic importance of Num 15 in the book is underlined, adding purity to the themes that are taken up in this chapter.

Second, in The Story of the War against Midian (chap. 31) purity somehow stands in between notions on obedience and disobedience. To begin with, Moses chastises the army for their handling of prisoners in purity terms (31:14-20). But rules are also set out that are supposed to purify booty from the war, and these are obediently followed by Israel (31:21-54). Purity is thus connected here to both obedience and disobedience, even though obedience to the purity rules carries the day in the story.

Land, Generational Succession, and Purity. Finally, in our analysis of how the theme of purity interconnects with other themes of the book, we shall also turn shortly to the themes of generational succession and land. The theme of generational succession always seems to be parallel to the theme of purity. Purity issues are not the reason for the generational succession and neither does generational succession affect how the theme of purity is presented. Rather, similarly to obedience and disobedience, purity is something that applies to both generations in similar measure. As the first is instructed in purity (e.g. 5:5-10) so is the second (e.g. 35:9-34). And as the first acquires impurity (e.g. 12:1-16) so also the second (e.g. 31:1-54). What is interesting about Olson's proposal is that he does not deal at all with the theme of purity in Numbers. That observation may go two ways: first, it may be natural, since the themes do not touch; second, however, if they do not interrelate, the theme of generational succession does not subsume the theme of purity either and this is not accounted for in Olson's presentation of the theme of generational succession as the theme of Numbers.

In relationship to the theme of land, however, there are more connections to purity. Thus, in 6:1-4, the idea of the Nazirite and the possibility of fulfilling it presupposes the land; 18:8-32 deals with the tithe of the future land's produce, which make possible the existence of priests and Levites handling the presence of Yahweh in Israel, which is a purity issue; in the same vein 26:62 notes that the status of the Levites means that they are to have no possession in the land; in 28:1-30:1 many sacrifices presuppose a settled life in the land; 33:50-56 demands the expulsion of Canaanites in the land because of impure idolatry; 35:1-8 sets out the Levitical towns in the land (partly in contradiction to 18:20-24 and 26:62), while 35:9-34 sets out the cities of refuge in the land to deal with the impurity of murder. To these can perhaps be added the genuine stories in which disobedience is connected to impurity and also means the forfeiture of the land, as in the Waters of Meribah (20:1-13, repeated differently in 20:24) and possibly the revolt of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (16:1-17:28). In this way, the theme of purity partakes in the forward-looking stance in the theme of land, concerning the possibility of coming into the land and the necessity or

opportunity of purity once there. Purity is, in these connections, primarily something that concerns the future in the land, towards which Israel is wandering. Often, however, the themes of land and purity are simply parallel, as in 1:1-5:4; 7:1-8:26; 11:4-17:28; 21:1-3; 22:1-24:25; and 31:1-54, and purity becomes more of a background for the passages. One can also note that in most of the passages which lack the theme of land, it is primarily the theme of purity that takes centre stage: 9:1-14; 5:5-31; 19:1-22; 25:1-18 and 28:1-30:1. Finally, like Olson, Clines does not make much of the theme of purity and how it relates to the theme of land, as we have seen.

The Theme in the Larger Story of Numbers. As seen from the presentation above, purity is mainly a theme in the background of the larger story of Numbers, creating a common frame of reference for certain passages as it were, rather than a theme driven by the movement of the plot in the book and developing together with the plot as one reads the book, as the other themes do (this is of course not to deny that different aspects of purity are addressed in the individual occurrences of the theme). Its importance for understanding the coherence of Numbers lies primarily in that it associates different narrative and non-narrative passages to each other. In a few cases this is done on a detailed level in that purity rules presented in Numbers are played out in the narrative material, as the distinctions between priests and Levites (Num 1, 3-4, and 18) which are important for reading the Korah-story (Num 16-17). The theme is also important for understanding the coherence of Numbers in the respect that it ‘fills out’ those blank spaces in the book where the other themes, related to plot, are not found (5:5-6:21; 18:1-19:22; 34:1-35:34). In one respect, however, the theme of purity participates in the plot in that in connection with the theme of land it points towards the possession of the land, the possibility of coming into it, and the necessity of purity once there, and thus, together with the theme of land, is made part of the larger story of wandering in the book of Numbers.

To conclude the section, it has been argued that purity is an important theme in Numbers. It is established, on the one hand, by certain passages with purity rules that do not feature the themes of obedience and disobedience, land or generational succession (apart from one or two exceptions), and on the other, by motifs indicating purity spread out in both the narrative and non-narrative passages of the book. Taken together, the rules and motifs constitute the theme of purity in Numbers. The theme of purity is found in Num 1-9; 11-20; 22-25; 28-29; 31; and 35. For the most part, non-narrative passages (1-9, 15, 18-19, 28-29, and 35) set out regulations for purity, while narrative ones (11-14, 22-25, and 31) depict impurity and how it is handled. The theme primarily becomes a common frame of reference to the passages involved, and affects our under-

standing of the coherence of Numbers mainly through the drawing together of both narrative and non-narrative passages of Numbers in this frame. Outside the purity rules, the theme of purity is often intermingled with the themes of obedience, disobedience, and land, while it is parallel to the theme of generational succession. Thus, the purity rules demands obedience, disobedience often results in impurity, and certain purity regulations can only be fulfilled in the land, while impurity may mean the forfeiture of it. In relationship to the theme of land it becomes part of the plot of Numbers in that the purity-regulations connected to the theme of land are all forward-looking, anticipating the future, which Israel is wandering towards in the larger story of Numbers.

4.5. Themes, Plot, and Coherence in Numbers

Plot and Theme. In all the details that have been analysed above we have tried to come back to the question of the coherence of Numbers and what we have called its ‘larger story.’ This has involved some simplification to get at the big picture, or this larger story in the book. Arguably, there are themes and motifs in Numbers that have not been treated above, and Artus makes a good summary of these in talking about the themes and motifs of sin, punishment, forgiveness, belief and un-belief and the like as important in Numbers.⁴⁵⁰ However, these are all quite easily aligned to the theme of obedience and disobedience, and perhaps it is more appropriate to talk about them as different aspects of the same theme, or better, as a cluster of themes and motifs that are easily associated with each other. The other aspects that Artus names are not meant to be ignored by the analysis above, rather they can perhaps be seen as included in the theme of obedience and disobedience, and as providing an invitation to a still deeper analysis of that theme or cluster of themes and motifs than the one conducted here. A concrete result of this limitation of the analysis is that 30:2-17 on women’s vows has not been treated above, since it does not feature any of the themes analysed here, as they have been formulated. On the other hand, the repeated phrase “Yahweh will forgive” (vv. 6, 9, 13) might seem to connect it to a theme of forgiveness, which is also found in the Spy-story for instance (14:18-20), and in this respect is not disconnected thematically from the rest of Numbers.

Focussing on the larger story of Numbers it is an interesting question for us to ask how plot and theme interrelate in this story, important not least for us to be able to call it a story in some sense, with temporal, causal, and thematic aspects, or in view of what we have identified as the first parameter in narrative interpretation. Taking a step back somewhat from the detailed analysis of themes above, how do plot and theme interrelate in the larger story of Numbers? We have already said in the chapter on plot that the promise of land is the original cause for the wandering and the aim of the larger story – and here the theme of purity also

⁴⁵⁰ See Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 15-35, 41-82, 244-286; Artus, “Les dernières rédactions,” 136-44; and Artus, “Le problème de l’unité littéraire,” 132-43.

comes into play in certain passages, even if for the most part it is not connected to the plot. But the other themes treated above also have their connections to the plot. The plot directs the reader to these themes as it were, while a theme such as purity, stands as side-scenes throughout the book. Thus, the plot of Numbers start with the preparations for the march in Num 1-10, but these preparations also build up the theme of obedience and disobedience, through the motif of obedient fulfilment. Next, the rebellion-stories in Num 11-20 introduce the aspect of disobedience. The rebellions climax in the turning point in the Spy-story (13-14), whereby the generational succession is affected. In light of the Spy-story one may see the censuses of Num 1 and 26 as indicating two generations, and thus the theme is established through the Spy-story. It is furthermore built up by the significant motifs of the faithfulness of Joshua and Caleb (14:24; 30, 38; 26:65; 32:12) and the appointments of Joshua and Eleazar as leaders (20, 27).⁴⁵¹ Further on, the second turning point, coming in the narrative sequence on the Victory at Hormah (21:1-3), is established by means of the obedience of the people, which is also a theme in the sequence, so that theme and plot are intertwined here, as well. Finally, the end of Numbers has Israel preparing for conquering the promised land (Num 26-36) and these preparations once again actualise the aspect of obedience in the theme of obedience and disobedience. In this way then, plot and theme are interrelated in Numbers.

This is clearly a general scenario and should not be pressed onto everything in Numbers. However, the connections between plot and the themes of land, obedience, disobedience, and generational succession are there and marked in this way. During the wandering Israel draws ever closer to the land, two generations succeed each other, and Israel's conduct turns from obedience, to disobedience, and back to obedience once again.

When discussing the plot and themes in the larger story of Numbers, there are also thematic connections on a yet higher level in Numbers than the one focussed on here, and one of them should be noted in passing. The punishments of the rebellion-stories in Numbers, for instance, can be seen not only in relationship to the book of Numbers and its theme of disobedience (and purity) but also in relationship to the rebellion-stories found in Exodus, which presuppose a development of a larger story of the Pentateuch from Exodus to Numbers. In the stories of Exodus Israel is not punished, a contrast that Brevard Childs and Jacob Milgrom have highlighted, for instance.⁴⁵² What comes between these

⁴⁵¹. Cf. Artus, "Les dernières rédactions," 139-40.

⁴⁵². Childs, *Exodus*, 258-63; and Milgrom, *Numbers*, xvi. Cf. also Budd, *Numbers*, 118; Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative*, 58-59; and Kupfer, *Mit Israel auf dem Weg*, 268. Childs seems to argue that the punishment in Num 20:1-13 is added secondarily by P, and for this and other reasons reckon the story among a tradition of more positive stories. However, as we now have the story, the punishment is there, and together with the other rebellion-stories of Numbers make a contrast to the similar stories of Exodus. For an overview of the scholarly opinions concerning the development of these stories in regard

blocks of rebellion-stories in Exodus and Numbers is the law given at Sinai, including the organisation of the camp and its purity. Therefore, it is as if after the law has been given, Israel can no longer claim ignorance as a reason for sin and rebellion, and thus with Yahweh in the middle of the camp sin and rebellion have dire consequences. The example of punishment in Numbers shows again that there is more going on thematically in the book than what is reckoned with in the analysis above. It should be reiterated that the analysis above is not meant to ignore such thematic aspects. Our focus has been on Numbers, however, and what can be said about the coherence of the material found within its limits. Therefore, we content ourselves with noting in brief other thematic connections and possibilities in the book.

Thematic Transitions. In the introduction to this chapter it was suggested that at those places where the plot breaks down, themes might come in to serve as bridges between passages. A few of these transitions have already been discussed above in conjunction with the major themes of Numbers. These were, in short, the bridging effect of the theme of purity between chapters 1-4 and 5-6, and the thematic interconnections between chapter 13-14 and 15 in terms of land, obedience, disobedience, and purity. A few more thematic transitions may also be observed in Numbers where the plot breaks down. These are found in conjunction with the Korah-story (Num 16-17) and the Calendar for the public cult (28-29).

In this chapter we have noted how the Spy-story in Num 13-14 and the rules of Num 15 are bridged in terms of themes, even though the plot breaks down between the passages. There is also a break in plot between chapters 15 and 16-18, and it may be asked if it is possible to see thematic connections between 15 and 16-18 as well, as in the case of 13-14 and 15. The answer seems to be yes.⁴⁵³ First it can simply be noted that the Korah-story is one of the rebellion stories and features the themes disobedience/obedience and purity (16:3, 11, 26, 30; 17:1-3, 6, 11-12, 20, 25). Since these themes are found also in Num 15, we may understand the themes to continue between the passages. More specifically, the example of the wood-gatherer in Num 15, who performs his act in conscious defiance of the Sabbath (15:32-36) is not far from what Korah, Dathan, and Abiram do in their insurrection, consciously revolting towards the priestly hierarchy (16:3). Num 15:21-31 discussing voluntary and involuntary faults can, in this regard, be seen not only as an extended reflection of the parameters for disobedience in the Spy-story, but also as setting the scene for the Korah-story. Thematic

to punishment, among other things, see Frankel, *Murmuring Stories*, 11-14.

⁴⁵³ For the following thematic connections, compare the discussions of motifs and themes in chaps. 15 and 16-17 in Artus, *Etudes sur Nombres*, 265-66; and Olson, *Death of the Old*, 173-74. Pace Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 202-03, who sees no connections whatsoever between 15:37-41 and the larger literary context.

connections between Num 15 and the Korah-story are further established by the fact that the sins presented in the Korah-story move in the realm of purity and that purity-thinking also permeates Num 15. A few motifs that connect to the theme of purity may even be understood as bridges between the passages, centring on the function of reminding the Israelites of the holiness of Yahweh. In Num 15:37-41 Israel is commanded to wear tassels to remember all commandments and to be holy towards Yahweh, while in the Korah-story the censers Korah, Dathan, and Abiram are put on the altar as a warning to the Israelites not to encroach upon the altar but rather to respect the separation of the priests (17:1-5). The same function seems to pertain also to the rod of Aaron put in the ark of the covenant (17:25). These motifs on remembering what Yahweh commanded and particularly remembering what has to do with purity regulations, can be taken to hold the passages together thematically.

Looking ahead from the Korah-story, we have already said that in terms of plot chapter 18 can be understood to follow on the Korah-story, but with chapter 19 the plot again breaks down. Num 19 is a purity rule on purification in the case of death. Also chapter 18 concerns purity issues in that the responsibilities and privileges of priests and Levites are set out. Since the purity theme also features in the Korah-story, as well as Num 15, it can be said to hold Num 15-19 together. It is as part of this theme that the notion of death comes, moreover, and is not connected to the theme of land as Clines holds.⁴⁵⁴ The motif of death, which is a fundamental purity issue, connects the Korah-story with chapter 18 and 19, but the different passages connected by the motif, approach death from different angles. Thus, at the end of the Korah-story, the people exclaim “Everyone who approaches the tabernacle of Yahweh will die! Shall we all perish?” (17:28), after which chapter 18 comes as an answer in setting out how the duties of priests and Levites will help Israel to cope with a holy god. There is a clear connection here between those who have died in the Korah-story and the measures taken in chapter 18 to prevent this. Chapter 19, on the other hand, moves to another level of abstraction as we have seen, in dealing with death in general, as ‘natural death,’ and not in relation to being struck down by Yahweh. Even so, however, we may see a connection to the Korah-story, since it leaves us with not so few people having died, which creates the question of how to deal with death-impurity in the camp (or at all).⁴⁵⁵ Nevertheless, it should be said that chapter 18 and 19 still approach the question of death from different perspectives,⁴⁵⁶ and it is only on a more general level of abstraction that they are bridged in terms of this motif.

⁴⁵⁴ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 24.

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Achenbach, *Vollendung der Tora*, 525.

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 526.

The last break in the plot that comes in conjunction with the Korah-story is found between Num 19 and 20 (The Waters of Meribah).⁴⁵⁷ Num 20 resumes the plot of wandering and indicates Miriam's death (20:1), suggesting that the wandering is coming to a close. The motif of death is then held in common by the two chapters. Miriam's death, however, is merely noted and not worked into the following story – instead it is geography that connects Miriam's death to story of The Waters of Meribah. The connection between Num 19 and 20 in terms of death does not extend over the initial verse of chapter 20. There is, however, also a second motif that holds the passages together, namely the motif of water, as noted by James Ackerman.⁴⁵⁸ The cleansing water of Num 19 and the lack and miraculous provision of water in the Waters of Meribah strike a note of resemblance. However, the water-motif is conceived very differently in the two passages, making the connection between them tenuous. In comparison to the transitions in terms of purity between Num 1-4 and 5-6 and obedience/disobedience between Num 20-22 and 25, the connection is loose and general, so that it is questionable to see a thematic connection here.

Turning then to the second cluster of thematic transitions, we have the Calendar for the sacrifices in the public cult (28:1-30:1), which breaks out of the plot of preparations for conquering the promised land entirely. There are, however, thematic connections to both what precedes and follows. The appointment of Joshua in the immediately preceding passage (27:12-23) has the theme of obedience and disobedience, as does the calendar on sacrifices (30:1). It should be noted, nonetheless, as was stated above, that the motif of obedient fulfilment is quite loosely attached to the passage on sacrifices. In contrast to 27:12-23, where Moses obediently appoints Joshua (v.22), the motif of obedient fulfilment in 30:1 does not concern the sacrifices directly. Instead, it is the obedient transmission of the calendar by Moses to Israel that is noted. However, the theme of obedience is typically noted in narrative fragments loosely attached to the passages, and there is still a possible thematic connection between the appointment of Joshua in 27:12-23 that precedes the calendar, and the calendar itself.

In relationship to the following passage, 30:2-17 on women vows, we may first note the themes of forgiveness (30:6, 9, 13), and sin (30:16) that are found here. These two themes are also possibly found in the calendar in sacrifices, which concern sin and atonement (e.g. 28:22, 30; 29:5, 11, 16), and the themes would thus link the passages to each other as well as to the themes of sin and forgiveness in Numbers at large.⁴⁵⁹ A more direct connection between the Calen-

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Artus, *Études sur Nombres*, 217; and Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 226.

⁴⁵⁸ Ackerman, "Numbers," 85.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Gordon Wenham, "The Theology of Old Testament Sacrifice," in *Sacrifice in the Bible* (eds. Roger T. Beckwith and Martin J. Selman; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 81-83. See more generally, Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement.. Contra Jacob Milgrom, Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (SJLA 36; Leiden: Brill, 1983), 67-95. Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 156-60 notes the intertwining of the concepts of purity and sin

dar of sacrifices and the Law on women vows has also been noted by Wenham who observes that the motif of votive offerings at the end of the calendar may serve as a bridge between the passages in bringing together the ideas of sacrifice and vow as it were (29:39).⁴⁶⁰ This bridging also spills into the themes of sin and forgiveness, since sacrifices and vows are connected to sin and forgiveness in both 28:1-30:1 and 30:2-17. Another direct connection between the passages that may have thematic significance is the verbal repetition *יְהוָה צִוָּה* (“...what/that Yahweh has commanded”) between 30:1 and 30:2. Since the words in 30:1 are part of the motif of obedient fulfilment, we could perhaps talk about a reminiscence of the theme of obedience (and disobedience) also in the repetition of the words in 30:2, introducing the law on women vows. If so, the theme of obedience and disobedience would be found in 30:2-17, and then encompass the whole of Num 28:1-30:17, and also the whole of Num 26-33. The connection is, however, fragile.

In view of the bridging themes where the plot breaks down in Numbers, we can finally note that the opposite also happens in the book, i.e. that the theme breaks down and the plot bridges passages, so to speak. The following passages are an example of this. The promise of land is a theme in 10:1-10 (the Silver trumpets); 20:14-21 (Passage refused by Edom), 21:21-35 (Victories over Sichon and Og), and 34:1-29 (The borders of Canaan). In the first passage, the trumpets are to be used in the land at times of war, in the following two, Israel is drawing close to the land, and in the third, the boarder of the promised land is set out. However, if we ask why these passages are placed here in Numbers, the answer is likely to come more in terms of plot than theme. In the first passage, the trumpets are first said to be used to gather the people and break camp (10:2), which is essential for the impending march. In the following two Israel is drawing close to the land, and in the third prepares to settle in it. In this trend of events, these passages fit, and thus the plot explains their presence here. The connection to theme would seem to be of less importance in answering the question of position, even though the passages also promote and are connected to the theme of land. Reading through Numbers there are therefore certain transitions in which the plot dominates and others where the theme dominates. In light of this, it may be said that the present chapter together with the preceding one

in the *הִטָּאת*-sacrifice. He also discusses the possibilities of sin and atonement interpretations of the *הִטָּאת*- and *כִּפָּר*-sacrifices in Philip Peter Jensen, “The Levitical Sacrificial System,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible* (eds. Roger T. Beckwith and Martin J. Selman; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 28-30, as does Gary A. Anderson, “Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (Old Testament),” *ABD* 5: 879-80, as well. Koch moreover connects *הִטָּאת* with *כִּפָּר* and *סָלַח*, Klaus Koch, “הִטָּאת,” *TDOT* IV, 316. Lastly, the exilic/postexilic trend to associate all sacrifice with atonement may be noted, Bernard Lang, “כִּפָּר,” *TDOT* VII, 299.

⁴⁶⁰ Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 206-07; cf. Levine, *Numbers* 21-35, 51.

have, among other things, attempted to set out where plot is functional for the larger story of the book, and conversely where theme is functional for it. The thrust forward to the land in the book is created by plot, but broken from time to time. However, at these instances themes are used for the most part to bridge the passages, and at those junctures, themes become the dominating transitional device. At other times the plot dominates. A special position in this regard is taken by chapter 15, to which there are plot connections to the preceding Spy-story, but also thematic connections including all major themes in Numbers.

To summarise what has been said here on thematic transitions, in all the places where the plot breaks down in Numbers, except one, themes can be said to bridge between passages. The exception is the transition between chapter 19 on the purification from death and chapter 20 featuring The Story of the Waters of Meribah. In conclusion one can also note that in all instances of thematic bridging of Numbers the transitions come by means of major themes in the book.

4.7. Conclusion

We began this chapter by asking for the themes of Numbers and how they relate to the question of the coherence or lack of coherence in the book. The preceding chapters have argued that Numbers has a larger story with a fragmented plot and in the narrative perspective presupposed here theme is understood to be one of the things we typically look for in interpreting narratives. We started the investigation by looking at earlier formulations of theme in Numbers, witnessing to the reading competence assumed for the book, where the themes of generational succession and promise of land as formulated by Dennis T. Olson and David J.A. Clines have been the dominating ones in research. One problem with these studies is that they try to subsume the whole of Numbers under one theme, which is not possible. Thus, the theme of land is found in most parts of Numbers, albeit not always so prominently. On several occasions the theme only very tangentially connects to passages in the book, however, and in 5:5-31; 6:22-27; 9:1-14; 19:1-22; 25:1-18; 28:1-30:1; and 30:1-17 the theme is not found at all. The theme of generational succession, on the other hand, is not found as often as the theme of land, but rather at certain important points in the book. It is marked by the censuses in Num 1 and 26 and expounded in the Spy-story (13-14), while also hinted at in chapters 15, 20, 33, 27 and 36.

Proceeding from these observations it was argued that the themes of obedience, disobedience, and purity are important in analysing the larger story of Numbers and the coherence of the book. In terms of occurrences, the theme of obedience and disobedience is found throughout the book, the aspect of obedience primarily in the opening and closing non-narrative parts of Numbers (1-10 and 26-36), and the aspect of disobedience mostly in the genuine narratives of the middle section of the book (Num 11-25). The theme of purity is spread out through Numbers similarly to the theme of land and it is easier to enumerate the

instances where it is not found (9:15-10:36; 20:14-21; 21:4-35; 26:1-27:23; 30:1-17; 32:1-33:49; 34:1-29; and 36:1-13), than those where does occur. It is decreasingly found by the end of the book and while non-narrative passages set out rules on purity, the genuine narratives deals with instances of impurity.

In view of the question of the coherence or lack of coherence in Numbers it also became interesting to ask whether and how these themes are interrelated. Two major interrelationships were found. First, in relationship to the previous research of Olson it has been argued that the theme of generational succession is less dominant than he suggests, but rather is parallel or subsumed under the other themes, particularly disobedience and disobedience. Therefore, it is not impossible to talk about it in terms of motif, building up the theme of obedience and disobedience, rather than theme. Generational succession in Numbers is caused by disobedient acts, but neither disobedience nor the other themes are characteristic of one generation over and against the other.

Second, it was argued that the theme of purity is related to the other themes so that the purity rules of Numbers demand obedience, disobedience often result in impurity, and certain purity regulations are uniquely tied to the land to be inhabited. In relationship to generational succession the themes are simply parallel. Moreover, the connections between disobedience and purity are only found in the genuine narratives, and the connections to land are sporadic throughout the book.

Having delineated the themes of Numbers and how they interrelate we may ask about the relationship of the fragmentary plot of wandering in Numbers to the themes in the book. Such a relationship puts the themes more clearly into the narrative perspective chosen where the plot and theme are important for interpreting narratives, here applied to the larger story of Numbers. Moreover, such a relationship also addresses the question of the coherence of the book. Two things can be said. First, it was suggested already in the chapter on plot that where the plot of wandering breaks down thematic transitions are made between passages. This also happens in the following transitions, the bridging themes being noted in parenthesis: 1-4 and 5-6 (purity); 15 and 16-18 (purity, disobedience); 16-18 and 19 (purity, death); 27 and 28-29 (obedience); and 28-29 and 30 (sin, forgiveness, obedience). As demonstrated, the thematic transitions come primarily in terms of the major themes of Numbers. The suggestion from the chapter on plot is thus substantiated. However, it was also noted that there are certain transitions in Numbers where the plot is the dominant positioning factor for the passages involved rather than the theme. For example, the following passages feature the theme of land, but it is their relationship to events in the plot, noted in parenthesis, that is responsible for their position in Numbers: 10:1-10 (preparations for wandering); and 20:14-21; 21:21-35; 34:1-29 (drawing close to the land and preparations for conquering it). Finally, it was also seen that in one instance, the transition between passages is simply additive and does not come in terms of plot or theme: Num 19 and 20.

Second, in line with the focus on the larger story of Numbers, the themes treated here, apart from purity, are all somehow tied to the wandering. How these emerge together with the plot is therefore important for understanding the coherence of Numbers from the narrative perspective chosen. In the chapter on plot it was already argued that the promise of land was the cause and aim for the wandering. But the plot also directs, so to speak, the reader to the themes of obedience, disobedience, and generational succession. When the plot begins with the preparations for the march it also depicts the obedience of Israel (Num 1-10). The rebellion-stories introduce the aspect of disobedience (Num 11-20), which lead to the turning point in the Spy-story (Num 13-14), whereby the theme of generational succession is established. The plot turns again in the Victory at Hormah (21:1-3) by means of the motif of obedient fulfilment, building up the theme of obedience and disobedience. Lastly, Numbers ends with Israel preparing for conquering the promised land, preparations which once again actualise the aspect of obedience. This is a general scenario and should not be pressed into the details of the individual passages, but it is nonetheless there in the book at large.

As seen above, purity occupies a special place in our discussion, in that it is not connected to the fragmentary plot. However, it is still treated here since purity is the theme found in those passages which cannot be related to the other themes, and so work to 'fill out' the thematic picture of Numbers. Moreover, since the theme is found in both narrative and non-narrative passages, it affects the coherence of Numbers by creating a common background for them as it were, making them associated to each other, even if the theme is not developed throughout the book in conjunction with the plot. Finally, in those instances where there is a connection between the themes of land and purity, the theme of purity seems to partake in the forward-looking thrust of the theme of land, in that the purity regulations set out here can only be fulfilled in the land.

Apart from these larger questions on theme and coherence in Numbers, a few lesser observations can also be made. First, since the focus has been on the larger story in Numbers, the finer distinctions concerning the themes and motifs of the book have been omitted to a large extent. Olivier Artus has shown that sin, punishment, forgiveness, belief, and un-belief and the like seem to be important themes and motifs in Numbers as well as the themes and motifs treated here. However, most of these themes and motifs can be connected to the theme of obedience and disobedience, and we may perhaps talk about a cluster of themes and motifs in this regard, which in turn may function as an invitation to more a in-depth analysis.

Second, it is notable that the two major studies on theme in Numbers by Olson and Clines do not address the question of purity much, dominant as it is in the book. This is hopefully remedied in this study.

Third, throughout the study we have noted the special status of Num 15 thematically. In this chapter all of the themes treated here come together and are

addressed in cultic terms. Saying this one should also note how most, but not all, of the themes also appear in the Spy-story and Korah-story preceding and following chapter 15. The block of Num 13-17 thus treat major themes of the book extensively, and this delimitation of Numbers can be compared to the one made by Artus, of Num 13-20, in his monograph.

Finally, the major themes of Numbers are also found in the other books of the Pentateuch. The unique contributions of Numbers would therefore seem to lie in the nuances and details of how the themes are treated in the book and not in their mere presence. What these finer distinctions are has been touched upon in the analysis above, but the focus has been on the presence of the themes and how they address the question of the coherence of Numbers. Two things stand out thematically in Numbers, however, as compared to the other books of the Pentateuch. Artus has noted that the individual and communal consequences of voluntary faults, as formulated by chapter 15 and exemplified by many of the rebellion-stories, is unique to Numbers when compared to the other Pentateuchal books.⁴⁶¹ In view of the themes above this is a question that relates to the themes of obedience, disobedience, and purity, and this particular nuance in the emergence of these themes in Numbers then sets the book apart from the rest of the Pentateuch, possibly arising to a thesis in the book.

Second, the theme of generational succession is in many respects unique to Numbers in the Pentateuch. This may explain why Olson gives it such a prominent position in his analysis. However, that fact does not mean that the theme is the one responsible for structuring the whole book subsuming all of it. The position of the theme in the book among the other themes remains, even if it were to be unique to the book.

Lastly, we may also note one theme that seems to have left only a slight imprint in Numbers: Yahweh's care during the wilderness-wanderings. Such a theme surfaces explicitly in material outside Numbers dealing with the same period in Israel's history, as in Deut 1:31-33; 2:7; 4:37-38; and 8:2-6, 14-18 (cf. Ps 78; 105; and Neh 9:9-23). Of course, Yahweh makes miracles in Numbers by giving Israel water and food and they are sustained throughout the wanderings, but the themes of disobedience and punishment seem to dominate the stories where Yahweh does those things, in comparison to the explicit mentions of Yahweh's care in the passages just referred to. Explicit references of Yahweh's care are conspicuously absent in Numbers. It is easier to see the theme in the wilderness-stories of Ex 15-18 even though it is not made explicit there either, largely due to the lack of the theme of punishment in comparison to Numbers, but also in view of the Song of the Sea (esp. 15:13, 16). Thus, Numbers brings forward and give a certain treatment of the themes of land, generational succession, obedience, disobedience, and purity, and in this lies part of the beauty of the book and contributes to its coherence somewhat.

⁴⁶¹ Artus, "Les dernières rédactions," 142-43.

5. Conclusion

We started the thesis with the perennial question of the coherence or lack of coherence in the book of Numbers, perennial since presumably no scholar so far has been able to elucidate it convincingly. Thus, there exists a large amount of what have been called macrostructural research that has made different suggestions as to the one structure of the book, or the key to its organisation, apart from more historically oriented research analysing the historical growth of the book. Here we find geographical suggestions for ordering Numbers, Dennis T. Olson's thematic structure based on generational succession, and Won W. Lee, Rolf P. Knierim and George W. Coats' structure based on the preparation and execution of a migratory campaign throughout the book (see 1.2.2. above). However, it was shown that these suggestions all break down at certain points, and that none can account entirely for the elusive book of Numbers. Moreover, what none of these have done is to have a close look at the narrative features of the book as a whole and what they might yield for understanding the coherence or lack thereof in the book, and this became the task of the present investigation. Narrative features initially meant phenomena such as stories, for example, the episode about Manna and Quails (Num 11), but also the narrative introductions and conclusions to laws ('Yahweh said to Moses...' Num 5:1) spread throughout the book. A more refined understanding developed during the course of the thesis.

This study has shown that the narrative features of Numbers give us an entirely new and alternative way to grasp Numbers as a whole. The new grasp involves four conclusions. First, on the level of the individual passages of Numbers, we find four different kinds of narrative material, having different degrees of narrativity: 1) genuine narratives like the Spy-story in Num 13-14; 2) independent narrative sequences such as the Taberah-etiology of Num 11:1-3; 3) instrumental scenes and situations like the question about the second passover in 9:6-8; and 4) narrative fragments, insertions, and embroiderings, such as the very common introductory phrase 'Yahweh said to Moses' (e.g. Num 1:1). The narrative materials do not appear in these neat groups in the book, however, apart from some of the genuine narratives, but throughout the book are mixed with non-narrative material to a larger or smaller extent. From one end of the spectrum, certain passages in Numbers, such as the cultic rules in Num 28-29, can be said to have a minimal narrativity, merely introduced with a narrative fragment. From the other end, many genuine narratives, such as the list of spies in the Spy-story (Num 13:4-16), also contain and subsume non-narrative material. Such differing features add to the puzzling nature of Numbers, by the mere fact of their being different, but elucidating what types of narrative features are found in Numbers is a first step towards understanding it as a whole from a narrative perspective.

Second, the study showed that reading the passages of Numbers together, including both the different narrative and non-narrative materials, means that a sequence throughout the book, where one thing can be understood to happen after another, can be outlined. Thus, after the initial censuses in chapters 1-4, Yahweh instructs Moses on purity rules in chapters 5-6, after which other passages follow, and so on (with the exceptions of 7:1-89 and 9:1-14, which are inserted as flashbacks in the general chronology). That sequence, however, is not to be described as a narrative of the same sort as the genuine stories of Numbers, for example, or any of the other narrativities just related. Rather, it is a narrativity that might be described as a ‘larger story’ in the book, larger, i.e., than the individual passages and as going beyond them. This emerges from reading the individual passages of Numbers together, holding the material of the book together in a loose sequence. Such a sequence does not assume anything more concerning the coherence of Numbers than that one thing happened sequentially, and that everything else in the passages of the book may pull them apart. Furthermore, assuming that the passages of Numbers cohere sequentially into a larger story fits well with describing the genre of Numbers as an anthology of traditions, similar to how Kenton L. Sparks and John Van Seters have described (parts of) the Pentateuch (see 2.3.2 above).

Third, the analysis also showed that we can assume more about the coherence of this larger story of Numbers than mere sequence. After mapping the narrativities of Numbers, it was asked whether causality, or plot, can also be understood to operate in the larger story. We found that it can, albeit fragmentally, since Numbers can be understood to relate a larger story of Israel wandering from the wilderness of Sinai to the steppes of Moab because of the promise of land to the patriarchs. In this wandering causality operates to a certain degree, as follows. Israel prepares for the march in Num 1-10, sets out but continuously rebels in Num 11-14, rebellions which culminate in the Spy-story (Num 13-14), sends Israel out on an additional 40-years wandering in the wilderness as punishment for the rebellion, and which therefore constitute the first turning-point in the larger story. After suffering the punishment, Israel closes in on the promised land again by the end of the 40 years in Num 20ff., and the victory at Hormah marks a second turning point (21:1-3), whereafter Israel is victorious in all its battles, if not sinless. The positive turn is established more clearly when, at the end of the book, Israel once again prepares itself, but this time not for march but rather for conquering and inhabiting the land (Num 26-36). This short outline of the larger story of Numbers presents the hinges or nodes of the sequence, which are causally related to each other, or in other words, are built together into a plot. If they were rearranged, a different story would result.

However, this network of causality just described does not subsume all passages of Numbers, in the same way that all can be said to be related sequentially. Most obviously, Num 5:5-31; 6:22-27; 9:1-14; 15:1-41; 19:1-22; and 28:1-30:1 fall outside of the plot of the larger story. At best, these passages can be seen as

being framed by the plot but without causal connections to it. It was also noted throughout that the meaning of the passages of Numbers are at no instance exhausted by its connections to the plot in the larger story, but that there is always more to them.

Fourth and finally, it was also shown that certain themes can be understood to operate together with the plot in the larger story and contribute to the coherence of Numbers. Thus, three themes were found to be important in Numbers together with plot: the promise of land, generational succession, and obedience/disobedience. Of these the theme of generational succession sets Numbers apart from most books in the Hebrew bible. The theme of purity should also be added to the important themes in Numbers, but it is not connected to the plot, and more shall be said about the theme of purity below.

The first three themes mentioned here can be seen to emerge in the following way in the book together with the plot. Since Numbers generally relates a story of a wandering from Sinai and Moab, the theme of land is hinted at from time to time, Israel drawing progressively closer to it through setbacks and success. However, during this wandering we also find how one generation is replaced by another and for what reasons, and key notions in this replacement is the theme of obedience and disobedience thus interlocking with the theme of generational succession. Israel sets out preparing obediently, rebels as soon as the wandering starts, and is eventually punished, but then again the aspect of obedience grows strong at the end of the book in the preparations for the land to be. None of these themes are found in all passages of Numbers, but rather work together, and in conjunction with the plot, as the larger story moves progressively forward. Most prominently, the themes of disobedience/obedience and generational succession interlock in that the disobediences depicted are the cause for the succession.

It was demonstrated furthermore that all the themes, can also be understood to bridge different passages where the plot breaks down in the larger story. Looking at the transitions relating to the passages cited above that fall out of the plot, the following ones are bridged by themes: 1-4 and 5-6 (purity); 15 and 16-18 (purity, disobedience); 16-18 and 19 (purity, death); 27 and 28-29 (obedience); and 28-29 and 30 (sin, forgiveness, obedience). It was also noted that in some passages, the plot seemed to be more prominent in positioning a certain passage than the theme, as in 10:1-10 (preparations for wandering); and 20:14-21; 21:21-35; 34:1-29 (drawing close to the land and preparations for conquering it). At one instance, however, neither the plot nor the theme were used to make a transition, but instead simple sequence operated: Num 19 and 20.

Paying attention to the unnoticed narrative features of Numbers thus gives a new way of understanding the book as a whole, seeing that it has sequence, a certain limited causality, a few dominating themes, and four kinds of narrative material mixed with the non-narrative material. Such a view on Numbers also integrates and subsumes earlier research on the book as a whole, a fact we will come back to below.

First, however, having summarised the findings on the narrative character of the book of the study, we may approach the question of the coherence or lack of coherence in Numbers. It can be concluded that the narrativity of Numbers bring *some* coherence to the book at large. Numbers contains passages with different degrees of narrativity but they are all set sequentially into a larger story. To a certain degree causality, or plot, is operative in this larger story, providing a beginning (preparations) and end (the promised land), and two turning points (the rebellion in the Spy-story and punishment of 40 years wandering, and the victory at Hormah). Still, this is a fragmented plot to which not all passages of Numbers are related. No single theme subsumes all of Numbers, but three themes are operative in the larger story in conjunction with plot, and these are interrelated so as to highlight certain critical facets of the wandering. None of the aspects of the larger story, whether sequence, plot, or theme, exhaust the meaning of the individual passages of the book, but the story is rather a frame into which they are set, or better, a surplus of meaning arises from them being read together. This is as far as the coherence of the composite Numbers goes, proceeding from its narrative features. It may be noted here that this restriction to narrative features in approaching Numbers is not meant to rule out other approaches proceeding from its composite nature, as may be exemplified by research into the history of composition of Numbers mentioned above, but also by later Jewish approaches from the Second Temple period and forwards in the form of dialogic commentary and rewritten bible.

An additional question to this description of the narrativity of Numbers is to ask how the analysis above relates more explicitly to the three parameters of narrative interpretation presented in the chapter on theory and assumed throughout: narrative paradigm (the story told), discourse (the actual presentation), and language-game (for instance factual games and story-telling games). Much of what has been recapitulated above can be related to the first two parameters, as for example the questions concerning to what degree we find plot and theme in Numbers at large, and how this is presented. The analysis has demonstrated, however, that Numbers at large is best apprehended primarily in connection to a factual language-game, meaning that an important purpose in the book is to depict a certain period in the early history of Israel through the differing materials collected in the book. These either tell of what happened during the period, and can be understood to include stories that are more readily related to story-telling language-games (e.g. the Balaam-story), or witness to it through their being assumed to be 'artefacts' of the period in question (e.g. the census lists of Num 1-4). This is not to assume the historical veracity of Numbers, but rather only indicates the approach with which we are invited to view the materials, which in turn may affect our interpretation of it. Furthermore, Numbers can also be seen to have other purposes, including informing present Israelite identity, and as such legitimising priestly and lay-interests, theocracy and diaspora-community, and working with questions of sin, redemption, exile, religious rights,

identity, and leadership in hope for a land to be and the like, purposes which many scholars have seen and argued for in the book. These purposes come about, however, I would hold, through a particular portrayal of a certain period in the history of early Israel, which in turn argue our connecting the book to a factual language-game.

In sum, if we were to relate Numbers as a whole to the three parameters above, it would come along the following lines. In light of the first two, Numbers is described here, as was done in the preceding paragraphs summarising the narrative features and larger story of the book, while in light of the third parameter, Numbers is best elucidated from the view-point of a historically oriented factual language-game, subsuming but not eliminating other types of games. It may finally be noted that in such a description of Numbers lies also the contribution of this thesis to contemporary narrative theory, investigating different kinds of narratives and narration as it does.

In the latter part of this conclusion let us turn to how the description of the narrativity of Numbers summarised above develops earlier research, having said that the study integrates and subsumes it. First, in relationship to composition-historical research the main interlocking area arguably concerns the criteria for separating sources, layers of redaction, and the like. On a general level in Numbers the research carried out here confirm the possibility of dividing the book into many different parts, as for example 9:1-14; 12:1-16; 19:1-22; and 22:1-24:25. These different parts do not make up one single (genuine) story, as was argued above, but rather a larger, fragmented story, creating a limited coherence for the book. From the perspective of this thesis, this is one of the reasons that Numbers yields at all to composition-historical research, i.e. there are visible joints and seams that can be explained in terms of the history of composition of the book.

On a detailed level, however, focusing on the individual passages themselves, more contentious issues seem to arise in conjunction with composition-historical research. We have assumed that most of the genuine stories of Numbers work quite well as stories, having a few anomalies, but which are not being severely contradictory or unreadable, for example. This seems to have to do primarily with the different understandings of what is understood to create coherence or not in the genuine stories that is found in composition-historical research and the approach developed here, respectively. We have in this thesis, in regard to the first parameter, focused on how plot and theme emerge in different passages, and which make the Korah-story, for instance, work well in general, since we may sketch a trend of events from initial rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, to the resolution with the staff of Aaron, as it does. Composition-historical research, on the other hand, would focus on the several reasons that are given for the rebellion in the Korah-story, and the fact that the different characters relate differently to the rebellion, for example, to argue its incoherence. So what makes for coherence (or not) in the Korah-story? This is partly a question of

looking at different aspects of the passages. Proceeding from the three parameters described in this thesis, the stories would seem to work quite well, but in terms of the details of the stories not everything adds up in the end, and such details may be taken as signs of the growth of the story.

Another area that may be used to exemplify interactions with composition-historical research on a detailed level, is that in the study above we have separated the narrative components from the non-narrative ones in several passages of Numbers, talking about ‘instrumental scenes and situations’ and ‘narrative fragments, insertions, and embroiderings’ subsumed under non-narrative material. This is not meant to suggest that on composition-historical grounds we can term the scenes or fragments as additional layers and cut them out from the non-narrative material. They may be, but the fragments, for example, always have a function in context as well, usually of introducing and concluding, which tie them to the non-narrative material, and this function is what holds the narrative and non-narrative material together on the terms set up in this thesis. Thus, we may use the narrative parameters to identify different narrativities in Numbers (and elsewhere), but that does not necessarily have as a corollary that a certain narrativity is contradictory or foreign to the passage in question, even though it can be. Here a continued dialogue on how to understand Numbers as we now have it and what directions this would point to for both literary research and composition-historical research on Numbers is desirable.

Second, in relationship to macrostructural research on Numbers, one first important advancement is that we need not understand the different macrostructural proposals for Numbers to be mutually contradictory, as has often been argued by scholars in this vein. Instead, many of the earlier proposals can be easily related to each other through the narrative features of the book. Thus, to begin with, the geographical macrostructures can be understood to establish much of the sequence that holds the passages of Numbers together, apart from a very general sense of chronology. Israel moving from Sinai to Moab is the foundational structure that much in the book can be understood to rest on. This geographical movement is not, however, present in all parts of the book and it is not always logically conceived, as the research of Olson and Lee has shown. It creates a sense of movement in the book, but gives way to other material, and thus it is not possible to make complete sense of the relationships between the stations.

Moving on to other macrostructural proposals, on top of this sequential structure we can place the suggestion of Knierim, Coats, and Lee, that a plot of preparation and execution of a migratory campaign operates to hold the material together causally in the sequence. It was found, however, that instead of a bipart structure of preparation and execution (Num 1:1-10:10 and 10:11-36:13), we must talk about a wandering being caused by the promise of land, with two turning-points, to which not all passages of Numbers relate, if we are to talk about a plot in Numbers as a whole at all.

Finally, the thematic suggestions of Olson and Clines of generational succession and the promise of land respectively, can also be related to this plot in the larger story. However, our study shows that these are not the only ones found in Numbers, but to them the theme of disobedience and obedience must be added as of fundamental importance in reading Numbers. In contrast to Olson and Clines, their suggestions are not the only or exclusive themes in Numbers subsuming all of the book. Rather, Numbers presents us with a 'spectrum of themes' interacting at a larger level in the book.

Thus, the different suggestions of earlier macrostructural research can easily be related to the different narrative features discussed in this thesis such as sequence, plot, and themes that interact in the loose larger story of Numbers, disregarding lesser criticisms and additions to the suggestions that have been ventured here and there in the thesis.

A final major contribution of this thesis that expands earlier research is the discovery of the importance of the theme of purity throughout Numbers as mentioned above, which has not been observed to any large extent in research dealing with the book as a whole. It cannot be connected to the larger story and its plot, however, but works rather as a background, a side-scene being used every now and then and decisively colouring many passages of the book. It is not found in all passages, and many times the other three themes discussed here of generational succession, obedience/disobedience, and the promise of land are found together with, and often intermingled with the theme of purity. On the other hand, several passages in Numbers only feature the theme of purity, so that they could not be reckoned with thematically in the book at large apart from their connection to purity. The theme of purity thus both pulls Numbers apart thematically by the passages that only feature this theme in contrast to the other themes in the book, but also draws it together by being connected to the other themes in many passages of the book.

We started the thesis with the question of the coherence or lack of coherence in Numbers. The analysis has shown that the narrative features are prominent in Numbers, if not the only ones, and that they create a limited coherence in the book through the loose larger story of wandering from Sinai to Moab that holds the individual passages together. In this function the narrative features cannot be ignored if we are not to misread the book seriously. Talking about a larger story in Numbers is an attempt to describe the narrative conventions operative in the book, which are fundamental to the work and to which we must make reference in order to understand it properly.

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7. Abbreviations

The abbreviations follow in general Alexander, Patrick H., John F. Kutsko, James D. Ernest, Shirley A. Decker-Lucke, David L. Petersen, eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999, see pages 68-152.

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ANET Pritchard, James B. ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

ARE Breasted, James H. *Ancient Records of Egypt*. 5 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1905-1907. Reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1962.

Lastly, some abbreviations concerning journals, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and works in series in the footnotes are not found in the *SBL Handbook of Style*. However, as a rule all bibliographical abbreviations in the footnotes are specified in the bibliography.

Josef Forsling

Composite Artistry in the Book of Numbers

A Study in Biblical Narrative Conventions

Is the book of Numbers an unreadable text? What readers of the book encounter is a huge amount of immensely variegated materials. These are seemingly mixed without an overarching plan, which has rendered the judgment that Numbers may be apprehended as the 'junk room of the priestly code.'

The present thesis takes a firm grasp of the narrative features of the book, and ask how these contribute to, and disrupt, the coherence of the work. The aim is to describe the features and to evaluate their effects, which constitutes a unique contribution to the discussion on Numbers.



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