Popeye Teaches Narrative Discourse Analysis:
A Sailor's Guide to Longacre

In earlier work, discourse analysis was regarded as an option open to the student of a language provided that he was interested, and provided that he had a good start on the structure of lower levels (word, phrase, clause). But . . . all work . . . on lower levels is lacking in perspective and meets inevitable frustration when the higher levels—especially discourse and paragraph—have not been analyzed. One can describe the verb morphology of a language but where does one *use* a given verb form? . . . One can describe linear permutations of predicate, subject, and object, but what factors control alternative word orderings? One can call the roster of sentence-initial conjunctions, but where does one use which? . . . to answer these and other problems one needs discourse perspective. In view of these considerations, discourse analysis emerges not as an option or as a luxury for the serious student of a language but as a necessity.[1]

This paper is geared more to be an explanation of how I have incorporated Robert Longacre's theory of discourse analysis to teach Hebrew grammar to first year students rather than a lengthy explanation of how his theory fits in the overall discussion and donnybrook that has been brewing lately over the Hebrew verbal system. The introduction will touch briefly on the Hebrew verb system in order to show the value of a theory that provides clarity to what has traditionally been one of the most confusing aspects of presenting what is found in the biblical text regarding the Hebrew verb forms.

That the Hebrew verb system has been confusing to all who have encountered it, I think, could be taken as a truth that has endured for millennia—I like to tell my students that from Jerome to today the Hebrew verb has driven people nuts. Any perusal of any Hebrew grammar, ancient or modern, will bear this out. Leslie McFall[2] dedicated a dissertation to describing the problem and even his work on the problem required an update by Yoshinobu Endo.[3]

Those familiar with the problem know that it stems from a lack of understanding about what is going on when the two (traditionally considered) primary Hebrew verb forms, perfect and

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[1] Robert Longacre, quoted by Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 53.

[2] Since published as Leslie McFall, *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1982). Aptly named!

[3] Yoshinobu Endo, The Verbal System of Classical Hebrew in the Joseph Story: an Approach from Discourse Analysis (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Comp., 1996).

imperfect, to use the most common and traditional designation,[4] come in close contact with each other and are joined, with varying degrees of proximity, by an energetic waw.[5]

Gesenius wrote that "One of the most striking peculiarities of the Hebrew *consecution* of tenses is the phenomenon that, in expressing a series of past events, only the first verb stands in the perfect, and the narration is continued in the imperfect. Conversely, the representation of a series of future events begins with the imperfect, and is continued in the perfect. . . . This progress in the sequence of time, is regularly indicated by a pregnant *and* (called *wāw consecutive*), which in itself is really only a variety of the ordinary *wāw copulative*, but which sometimes (in the imperf.) appears with a different vocalization."[6]

Weingreen illustrates the problem and question:

> Early grammarians thought that the connecting Waw (ו) had the strange effect of *converting* the tense of a verb into its opposite and they therefore called it 'Waw Conversive'. Though this seems, at first glance, to be the effect of this prefixed Waw, it does not seem reasonable to suppose that a conjunction could *convert* a completed action into an [sic] continuous one or vice versa. Later grammarians noted that this usage was confined to consecutive narratives and they therefore termed it 'Waw Consecutive'. Though the later observation is correct, it nevertheless does not account for this phenomenon, but modern scholarship traces it back to the earliest known Semitic languages and concludes that this type of prefixed Waw has *preserved* forms and uses of a Perfect and a Preterite which go far back into Semitic usage, whence is has been called *Waw Conservative*.[7]

Noting these difficulties of the Hebrew verb form and apparently suspecting that there had to be a logical explanation, Driver had earlier written that "some hidden link of connection must exist, some higher principle must be operative, the discovery of which will place us at the true centre of vision, and permit the confused and incoherent figures to fall into their proper perspective and become consistent and clear."[8]

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[4] A side note on nomenclature. Within classical Hebrew there is generally recognized at least two verb forms, one with attached pronominals prefixed and one with them suffixed. The course of years has presented students of Hebrew with a constellation of nomenclatures for these forms ranging from the simple physical description to that of grammatical explanation—most of which are derived from other language grammars; the Perfect and the Imperfect, prefixed and suffixed, and, more recently, the qatal and yiqtol. Related or derived forms in recent grammars are labeled likewise, weqatal, wayyiqtol, etc. This naming problem shows the difficulty grammarians have had with the Hebrew verb system—difficulty in naming derives from a difficulty in understanding. For this paper, I will try to stick with the morphological descriptions, qatal, yiqtol, vayyiqtol etc. as that is a neutral means of identification that precludes other language designations that may not, and more than likely do not, reflect what we find in classical Hebrew and, as the histories show, have too often prejudiced people's thinking about what they are encountering and how to treat them in translation.

[5] Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew Part Three: Syntax*, trans. T. Muraoka (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2000), 386 uses this term to describe the ו appended to verbs used to express succession, usually found with a patach as its vowel rather than the expected shewa and with a dagesh forte in the following letter.

[6] E. Kautzch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2d. ed. (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1910), 132-133. *GKC* from here on.

[7] J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, 2d. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 91.

[8] S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some Other Syntactical Question*, with an introductory essay by W. Randall Garr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), xxvi.

Indeed, to me this seemed a strange concept when I first read it as a student—the idea that a verb form changed its tense.[9] But, one of the most recent grammars to emerge follows the older way of thinking. Concerning the waw and the prefixed Hebrew verb, Pratico and Van Pelt[10] wrote, "When used in the context of biblical narrative (though it also occurs in poetry), an Imperfect verb may be prefixed with a special form of the conjunction ו and translated with all the values of the Perfect. This special form of the conjunction ו is call the *Waw Conversive*. It is called 'conversive' because when the Waw Conversive is prefixed to an imperfect verb, the value of the verb is no longer Imperfect but Perfect." In the footnote for this information they wrote, "The following discussion of Waw Conversive and the narrative sequences hardly betrays the complexity of the topic or the range of scholarly opinion on these issues. The nomenclature that has been utilized in this grammar (Waw Conversive, 'converted' verbal forms; see also notes 3 and 10 below) will be regarded by some as archaic and a simplification of historical and linguistic realities. We agree on both accounts. Nevertheless, despite its inadequacies, the terminology is descriptive for the beginning student and represents a helpful point of departure for the study of these very important but complex concepts." This is an interesting approach, especially in that Gesenius wrote in the nineteenth century, "It is a merely superficial description to call the wāw consecutive by the old fashioned name *wāw conversive*, on the ground that it always converts the meaning of the respective tenses into its opposite, i.e. according to the old view, the future into the preterite, and vice versa."[11]

As I have noted, Longacre recognizes that the problem (exhibited by Weingreen and Pratico) comes by considering the text at only the clause and sentence level—a practice that could result in not recognizing the relationship between the "perfect" and the "imperfect" clauses. Goldfajn, in his introduction to his *Word Order and Time in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*, states that "The starting point is that, in order to investigate our object, namely the verb system as it appears in classical BH narrative, it is necessary to take as the unit of our analysis a unit bigger than the one normally considered, that is, the sentence." He adds that, "The realization that sentence meaning can be fully apprehended only as part of a larger context is likewise the central idea of discourse-based theories such as Textlinguistics and Discourse Representation theory." [12]

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[9] Writing in the eighteenth century Johann Simonis noted the philosophical problem with this approach, declaring that "God himself can not change a past into a future ("Ne quidem Deus tempus praeteritum in futurum convertere possit.") Johann Simonis, *Introductio grammatico-critica in linguae hebraeae*, 1753, Quoted in McFall, 13.

[10] Gary Pratico and Miles Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 192.

[11] *GKC*, § 49b, n.1.

[12] Tal Goldfajn, *Word Order and Time in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 4. Unfortunately, one of the latest intermediate Hebrew grammars sets this theory aside. Waltke and O'Connor write, "We have resisted the strong claims of discourse grammarians in part for the theoretical and practical reasons mentioned earlier: most syntax can be and has been described on the basis of the phrase, clause and sentence. Further, it is evident that the grammatical analysis of Hebrew discourse is in its infancy. As an infant, it offers little help for the many problems of grammar which have not been well understood. Most translators, we think it fair to say, fly by the seat of their pants in interpreting the Hebrew conjugations. Hebrew grammarians have only recently come to appreciate morphemes as diverse as the "object marker" את and the enclitic *mem*. No modern grammar, further, has begun to gather together the wealth of individual studies that have been carried out in a more traditional framework; thus it is not surprising that some students know little about the case functions and some commentators make egregious errors in their interpretations of prepositions. For our purposes, therefore, we are content to stay with more traditional bases than those of discourse grammar." Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 55. See especially the critique of this work in David A. Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 24-28.

This recognition of the shortcomings of the works that deal with Hebrew from a more traditional clause sentence level is dealt with rather well in David Allan Dawson's *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew.*[13] In this work he evaluates several recent works that claim to deal with Hebrew syntax. He ends his review with a look at Robert Longacre's work in Hebrew discourse analysis.

Robert Longacre, field linguist, missionary, and professor of linguistics is most noted for his developed work in discourse analysis/text linguistics.[14] Discourse analysis is distinguished from the more traditional methods of looking at and analyzing a piece of text in that it goes beyond the bounds of the clause and sentence and attempts to view the text within a larger context, that of the whole pericope within a defined genre. It argues that only from that perspective might the use of grammatical forms and their relationship to each other be best understood. Longacre notes that "A piece of text, especially a literary text . . . cannot be understood by myopically inspecting it verse-by-verse without the study of the whole informing the study of the parts."[15] In his dissertation, Ray Clendenen notes that "Discourse typology has been a major emphasis of Longacre, who argues that it is an essential step in any linguistic analysis of a discourse, 'Characteristics of individual discourses can be neither described, predicted, nor analyzed without resort to a classification of discourse types. It is pointless to look in a discourse for a feature which is not characteristic of the type to which that discourse belongs. So determinative of detail is the general design of a discourse type that the linguist [or student!] who ignores discourse typology can only come to grief.'"[16] Clendenen notes that those who recognize this as a necessity have identified various discourse types using different methods. "Beekman, Callow, and Kopesec use the parameters ±prescription (i.e. instruction) and ±chronological framework to arrive at" four types: Narrative, Procedural, Expository, and Hortatory. He notes that "Larson[17] distinguishes six types on the basis of purpose and kind of 'groupings' or constituents" and "Nida[18] has five types."[19] Longacre, however, is more extensive. Longacre "classifies discourse on the basis of four pairs of parameters: ±agent orientation, ±contingent temporal succession, ±projection (i.e. future orientation), and ±tension." He notes that within this schema Longacre's approach potentially could yield sixteen discourse types.

John Sailhamer, following the lead of Wolfgang Schneider,[20] in a slightly different perspective comes to a similar conclusion and utilizes a similar methodology. He identifies two sets of tenses [not temporal but speaker oriented], primary and secondary. The primary tenses are "yiqtol, used when the speaker is directly addressing the listener" and "wayyiqtol, used when the speaker is recounting events for the listener."[21] He additionally identifies a secondary tense as qatal and notes

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[13] Dawson, 11-51.

[14] Another nomenclature problem.

[15] Longacre, x.

[16] E. Ray Clendenen, "The Interpretation of Biblical Hebrew Hortatory Texts: A Textlinguistic Approach to the Book of Malachi" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Arlington, 1989), 45.

[17] M. L. Larson, *Meaning-based Translation: a Guide to Cross-language Equivalence* (Lanham, MA: University Press of America, 1984), 365-366.

[18] Eugene Nida, *Signs, Sense, Translation* (Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa, 1984), 29-30.

[19] Ibid., 45-46.

[20] Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammatik des Biblischen Hebräisch* (München: Claus Verlag, 1993). He "categorized the BH verb forms according to two groups with two distinct discourse registers/functions (*Sprechhaltung*) which he named 'discursive' and 'narrative' speeches." Goldfajn, 73.

[21] Sailhamer unpublished student notes.

that it is used to "express actions which lie in the background . . ."[22] Godlfajn notes that Alviero Niccacci "proposed to develop further the distinction put forward by Schneider between narrative and discursive categories in biblical prose."[23] Niccacci notes further that "Narrative is generally defined (1990:33) as a 'detached (historical) account of events', whereas discourse is 'when the text addresses the listener directly'. Furthermore, 'it is appropriate to preserve this distinction in terminology because it goes hand in hand with a distinction in syntax' (1990:33). The same BH forms, Niccacci claims, may acquire different temporal values within these two discourse categories."[24] Goldfajn goes on to note "the most significant contribution of both Schneider and Niccacci is the recognition that the classical BH narrative text is a complex hierarchial structure which includes a number of subtexts, and that the use of the BH verb forms in these subtexts can be quite divergent."[25] As these systems are similar in their approach, with only slight methodological applications, and because I am most familiar with Longacre's system, it has been my main point of entry to the Hebrew verbal systems and its utilization in the Massoretic text.

To cut to the chase of Longacre's position and theory, he begins part 2 of his *Joseph* with a note toward the doing of Hebrew grammar. "Traditionally, within a grammar of a given language all the uses of each tense/aspect or mode of a language are listed and described en bloc in the same section of the grammar."[26] He presents "a challenge to this time-honored way of describing the functions of the verb forms of a verb system within a language" by positing that "*(a)* every language has a system of discourse types (e.g., narrative, predictive, hortatory, procedural, expository, and others); *(b)* each discourse type has its own characteristic constellation of verb forms that figure in that type; *(c)* the uses of a given tense/aspect/mood form are most surely and concretely described in relation to a given discourse type."[27]

The discourse that he first evaluates is the narrative. It is one of the most abundant (if not the most abundant) genres in the confines of the Hebrew Bible and thus warrants the closest attention. Moreover it is consistent enough to serve as an introduction of the concept to first year students. Regarding the verb forms and the discourse type in which they are found, Longacre points out that "one or more privileged forms constitute the mainline or backbone of each type, while other forms can be shown to encode progressive degrees of departure from the mainline."[28] For narrative discourse "the *waw*-consecutive imperfect is seen to be mainline in that it is punctiliar and sequential in function; the perfect is found to be (as a whole) a non-punctiliar and non-sequential kind of past tense in narrative; the imperfect and participles are, respectively, implicitly and explicitly durative in the framework of the story; *hāyâ* clauses and verbless clauses represent static elements toward the bottom of the scheme; and negated clauses rank lowest."[29] Developing this further and providing more specificity, Longacre notes that "A chain of (necessarily verb-initial) clauses that contain

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Goldfajn, 74. A good overview and look at Niccacci's system may be found in his "Analysis of Biblical Narrative" in Robert T. Bergen, *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linquistics, 1994), 175-198.

[24] Goldfajn, 74.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Longacre, 59.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Longacre, 59.

[29] Ibid.

preterites[30] is the backbone of any Old Testament story; all other clause types contribute various kinds of supportive, descriptive, and depictive materials. In the cases of clauses that begin with a noun (and therefore cannot contain a verb in the preterite), such background material serves to introduce or highlight something about the noun in question, whether it refers to a participant or to a prop in the story. Clauses that begin with a non-preterite (perfect) verb portray secondary actions; for example, actions what are in some sense subsidiary to the main action, which is described by a following preterite. On occasion, a verb in the perfect (whether or not [the clause] begins with a noun) is repetition or paraphrase of some action already reported as a preterite on the storyline."

He also notes "The special status of hāyâ *'be'*" by writing that "It is immediately necessary, however, to qualify the above hypothesis in one important particular. The verb *haya*, 'be', even in its preterite form *wahi* 'and it happened', does not function on the storyline of a narrative. In this respect, the behavior of Hebrew is similar to that of a great many contemporary languages around the world. . . . This is simple [sic] a peculiarity of the verb *be* in many languages past and present."[31]

From this he produced a chart illustrating the concept of verb ranking in Hebrew narrative:

Longacre's Verb Rank in Narrative Discourse[32]	
Band Levels	Hebrew Clausal Elements
Band 1: Storyline	1. Preterite: primary*a*
Band 2: Secondary	2.1. Perfect 2.2. Noun + perfect (with noun in focus)
Band 3: Background Activities	3.1. הִנֵּה + participle 3.2. Participle 3.3. Noun + participle
Band 4: Setting+terminus	4.1. Preterite of היה, 'be' 4.2. Perfect of היה, 'be' 4.3. Nominal clause (verbless) 4.4. Existential clause with יֵשׁ
Band 5:▢	5. Negation of verb clause: irrealis (any band)*b*
*a*1. demotes to 2.2. by preposing a noun. 1. demotes to 5. by preposing לֹא 'not' [Preterite > Perfect]. *b* "Momentous negation" promotes 5. to 2.1./2.2.	

Each of the verb and clausal forms found in Hebrew narrative are ranked according to their function in the text. Surprisingly (at least to me) is that he takes many of his hints in this direction from Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley's 1910 Hebrew grammar that has its origins in Gesenius's work of 1813! He notes that GKC had already identified "the so-called *waw*-consecutive [as] a special narrative tense (326). . . Discourse grammarians are coming to recognize more and more that in the telling of a story in any language, one particular tense is favored as the carrier of the backbone
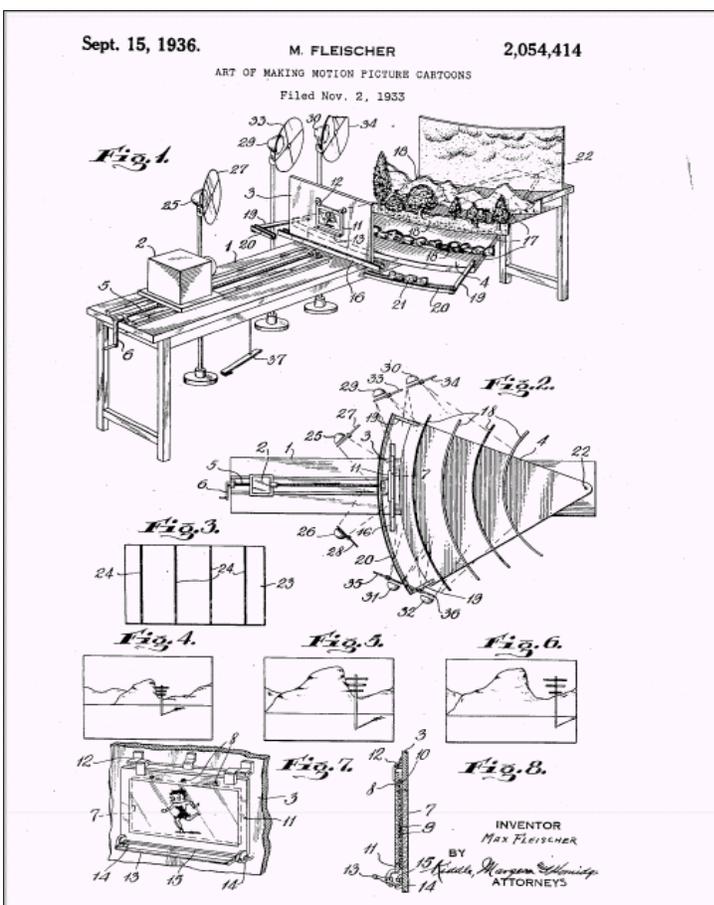
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[30]Longacre calls what has been traditionally labeled the imperfect with waw consecutive the *preterite*. He notes that "Comparative Semitic studies reveal, however, that the preterite [the imperfect with waw consecutive] is *not* a historical development from the imperfect, but is a separate tense form that has come by convergence to resemble the imperfect." Longacre, 65.

[31]Longacre, 66.

[32]Ibid., 81, diagram 3.

or storyline of the story while other tenses serve to present the background, supportive, and depictive material in the story."[33] This observation should have made short work of the idea that one verb form would convert another in any way. If one form is mainline and others are background or supportive then they function independently and force nothing on each other.

As I read through his work in an effort to understand his presentation of discourse analysis and as I studied his chart I was reminded of some reruns of Popeye cartoons that I grew up with. The cartoons I have in mind are two that came out in the 1930s. In these cartoons the producers used a technique that they had developed that turned a two dimensional art form into three dimensions. Previous standard practice was to photograph the various cells that made up any one scene one on top of the other. In that method all of the elements of that scene were in focus, something not very reflective of reality with its varieties of depth and variations of focus and movement. The introduction of the multiplane camera filming technique by Max Fleischer's studios (later adopted by Disney studios) changed that. In several of the films, most notable to my memory those being *Popeye Meets Sinbad the Sailor* and *Popeye Meets Ali Babba and the Forty Thieves*, this change in technique is very obvious—foregrounds and backgrounds (to various levels) move at different speeds and are in different degrees of focus. It made more obvious and realistic the different levels of focus and importance of the action depicted in a scene. Using the Sinbad movie, most of its scenes consisted of a *setting* that had either the ocean or Sinbad's island as the backdrop. The next forward scene was usually comprised of some sort of *background activity* such as birds flying or volcanoes erupting. Moving closer to the foreground was found *background actions*, typically in a Popeye scenario this was either Wimpy chomping on a hamburger or Olive biting her nails. The *mainline action* of course was Popeye duking it out with Bluto-Brutus, saving the day with steroid-laced spinach.

When Longacre's scheme is seen this way there appears a three dimensional aspect of the text that lays it out not unlike a play or a movie. Elements are presented in various layers of foregrounding and backgrounding, using clause types and verb forms to bring some items to the fore as the mainline (and, it could be argued, most theologically important) and retreat others to the background as supplemental information. Longacre's

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[33] Ibid., 64.

chart provided a beginning of how to illustrate this to both myself and my students. I am of one of the few people groups that Dr. Longacre missed in his vast missionary travels—old, retired Marines. We tend to be quadraliteral, monosyllabic, and highly visual. His theory of course fits right into our culture. If it could be illustrative to old salts then I reasoned it could be useful to fresh students.

I had used various forms of indenting to show clausal relationships when handling texts on my own before (more intuitive than reasoned) and this suggested a way of presenting Longacre's scheme to students that would make the concept, and thus the text, hopefully, more coherent, understandable, and perhaps even theologically revealing—which, of course, ought to be the goal. Several others have used similar methods (Nicacci in Bergen's *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* for instance) and it seemed like a good practice. What I came up with was a simple spreadsheet that treated each clause separately and indented them to show the dimensional aspect of Longacre's scheme. Remember that this is a first year Hebrew student exercise and does not take into account the deeper structural concepts that are the meatier aspects of the full theory. It does, however, give a basis and grounding for later, more in depth studies and work. It is merely a method of introducing students to the idea that there do exist genres within a corpus, that those genres treat verbs differently, that these relationships can be presented visually so as to depict the relationship between clauses, particularly those that are mainline and fronted and those that serve a background function, and, that, with this, we can move a step or two closer to understanding and accurately translating (with some rational!) the beast called the Hebrew verb that has been plaguing grammarians since Jerome!

I divided the verses into clauses, gave them each their own row and then indented them according to their rank in Longacre's scheme. From here it is easy to see how the clauses relate to each other in the text and how the identification of the wayyiqtol as the mainline of the narrative genre provides a rational for identifying the mainline of the story. I additionally note their band function in a separate column. I do this mainly for embedded discourse so that I can identify and rank it within the larger corpus.

	Longacre's Narrative Discourse	
	Band 1 (storyline)	
	Band 2 (Background Actions)	
	Band 3 (Background Activities)	
	Band 4 (Setting)	
ch.vs.cl		
1.1.1	בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ:	N2
1.2.1	וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ	N4
1.2.2	וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם	N4
1.2.3	וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם:	N3
1.3.1	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	N1
1.3.2	יְהִי אוֹר	ED H1

1.3.3	וַיְהִי־אֹֽור׃	N4
1.4.1	וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹור כִּי־טֹֽוב	N1
1.4.2	וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹור וּבֵין הַחֹֽשֶׁךְ׃	N1
1.5.1	וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים ׀ לָאֹור יֹום	N1
1.5.2	וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לָיְלָה	N2
1.5.3	וַֽיְהִי־עֶרֶב	N4
1.5.4	וַֽיְהִי־בֹקֶר	N4
1.5.5	יֹום אֶחָֽד׃	N4

Embedded discourse is easily separated by adding rows that separate it from the surrounding texts. They can then be evaluated separately, indenting them in accordance with their genre scheme. For my first year students we merely separate them and note that they are embedded discourse of direct speech (nomenclature problems plague us everywhere!).[34]

Looking at this method as I have applied it to Genesis 1 several things may be seen. First, the mainline of the narration comes to the front, observed by the far right aligned wayyiqtols. According to Longacre, here is found the primary emphasis of the writer shown by his employment of the primary verb form of narration. The other clause fall into the slots of various degrees of background and supportive material. The first main focus in this text is the speaking into existence the light, found in verse 3. The previous verses are setups to that first act. If looked at from the perspective of the setting of a play or a movie the set is built and laid out in the first two verses. First the overall, general act of creation is initiated but in such a way as to remove it from the mainline of the narration and make it part of the background, in this case the background action.[35] So too the description of the earth/land and the darkness. They are settings, and the hovering of the Spirit of God, because a participle is employed, is part of the background activities. This is all a setup for the mainline action, for the great act of speaking light into existence. As with a play where one can watch the stage hands set up the stage. In verse one the action begins with the creation of the scene. In verse two the setting of the scene is made by describing the state of the earth-land and the darkness, not unlike as if the stagehands had painted the scene before our eyes. Next the background activity of the Spirit hovering is presented, much like if there were a character germane to the story that was toward the back of the stage engaged in some activity. It is all a setup for the speaking into existence of the light.

The actual speaking verse is embedded discourse, which, according to Longacre, is evaluated within its own genre. In the case of 1.3.2 it is hortatory discourse. The existence of the light is

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[34] Various explanatory phrases have been suggested by many people when dealing in this area: Discourse Analysis, Discourse linguistics, Text Linguistics, direct speech, embedded speech, etc. We need a conference to set down some agreed upon names for these things. Perhaps after the conference on mapping Hebrew fonts consistently!

[35] This is a bit simplified and the whole of the discussion of the creation act is not going to be answered here. Suffice it to say that that discussion is enhanced with what discourse analysis can show about the intent of the author based on his use of verb tenses. The discussion on this issue is immense, even if it is restricted to only evangelical author. John Sailhamer's contribution to the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* is a good beginning.

depicted as setting in 1.3.3. This follows Longacre's scheme where all cases of the use of היה fall under the category of setting for narrative discourse.

What then follows in the text is a string of wayyiqtols related to the new existence of light in on the stage. Interestingly the naming of the light and the naming of the darkness is distinguished—the naming of the light taking center stage and the naming of the darkness relegated to a background action.[36]

I haven't seen (but haven't looked real hard either) any books that use this method to a great extent on Genesis chapter 1 but I suspect that this type of analysis coupled with other studies would make for a very serious and very good theological study.

This method has proven to be popular with my students. For our future preachers it helps to set out their sermon points based on the mainline clauses with the wayyiqtol verbs. For theologians it heads them in the right direction in determining the main theological points and issues and helping to distinguish that which is more theologically significant from lesser issues. I teach my students to let the grammar of the text drive their theology. Grammatically it aids them in seeing the text in clausal chunks rather than a plethora of words that end up getting translated word for word without regard to syntax and with verbs translated by the seat of their pants![37] So often I have heard myself and others, when asked how to translate a particular Hebrew verb form, say, "it depends on context" without really being able to define that nebulous 'context' to which we refer. This theory provides the rational for identifying that context and for helping to determine what English language verb tense to translate a particular Hebrew verb form with.

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[36] Alviero Niccacci notes the same thing in his "Analysis of Biblical Narrative" in Robert Bergen, ed., *Biblical Hebrew adn Discourse Linguistics* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc., 1994), 183.

[37] Waltke and O'Connor actually used that phrase in their *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (55) in their statement of why they reject the use of text-linguistic studies in their work.