The pragmatic-rhetorical function of temporal organization in Old Testament narratives: The case of the Chronicler's portrayal of King Josiah.¹

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ABSTRACT

In his text-pragmatic reading of Old Testament texts, Christof Hardmeier distinguishes between different types of temporal markers. He does, however, not provide a categorization of these markers. This paper not only briefly introduces this method, but also wants to contribute to the further development of certain distinctions made in this approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past two or three decades Biblical scholars have witnessed the rise of what could generally be called “rhetorical approaches” towards the reading of the Hebrew Bible². Generally speaking, one could say that these approaches want to study the literary features of texts, not merely for their aesthetical value, but primarily for their pragmatic-rhetorical value. I.e., various literary features are analyzed and evaluated in order to determine the effect that they have on an audience in the process of communication.

This shift is, however, not merely a methodological one. Behind this development lies a shift in perspective on what a text is. Whereas literary scholars would define Biblical texts as “literature”, and would analyze the different literary features in these texts synchronically in order to show how these features contribute to the development of a literary plot, rhetorical scholars would define texts as “communication” and would analyze the rhetorical features in order to show how these features contribute to the persuasion strategies by means of which an audience is influenced.

This shift of emphasis can be observed clearly in the way in which temporal indications in Hebrew narratives are treated. Although literary approaches also give consideration to temporal features in Hebrew narratives (such as “narrative time” vis a vis “narration time”, order, gaps, duration and frequency)³, these features are normally discussed to indicate how they contribute to the increasing and resolution of tension in the plot line. In pragmatic-rhetorical approaches temporal indications are treated as devices by means of which certain effects can be achieved, and by means of which an audience can be persuaded.

In this article, I will concentrate on how one such approach, namely the text-pragmatic approach practised by Christof Hardmeier⁴, treat temporal indications in Hebrew narratives. It will be shown that this approach regard temporal organization as one of the most important features for determining the
communicational thrust of a narrative. It will, however, also be indicated (with reference to the Chronicler’s portrayal of King Josiah’s history) how the categorization of temporal markers done in this approach can be supplemented with certain important distinctions.

2. A TEXT-PRAGMATICAL APPROACH TOWARDS TEMPORAL ORGANIZATION IN HEBREW BIBLE NARRATIVES.

This approach, which is a reaction against the overly analytical practices of certain historical-critical methods, takes as point of departure the comprehensiveness and complexity of textual units. Language is viewed in a pragmatic sense, namely that it primarily functions in textual communication that sets out to achieve something in specific contexts. Textual utterances are primarily communication acts that are determined by specific intentions. The aim of empirical narrative research according to this approach is therefore the description of the relationship between textual form ("Textgestalt") and textual/narrative function ("Erzählfunktion"). The assumption is that the unity construction of a text („Gesamtgestalt“), which always means more than the sum of the constituent parts, is a function of its pragmatic background. The description of the surface structure is therefore not an aim in itself, but is undertaken in order to uncover ("aufdecken") the intention or function of the text within a communication situation.

It should be noted that, although this approach takes its point of departure in the synchronic structures of textual communication, it does not mean that diachronic aspects do not receive attention. In order to determine the function of any textual communication, it is necessary to take into account that this communication is embedded in broader processes of social communication. Communicational function is thus determined by observing the interaction between communicational form and context.

Hardmeier indicates that there are certain general conventions according to which all narratives are structured. Apart from certain imperatives that should be present in all narratives to guide the hearer/reader through the narrative communication (such as “Kondenzierungszwang”, “Detaillierungszwang” and “Gestaltschliessungszwang”), narratives normally construct a frame of reference within which they should be understood. In this regard, a distinction is made between narrative texts ("Erzähltexte") and speech texts ("Redetexte"). The difference between these two text types can be summarized in the following way. Speech texts find their orientation directly in the specific communication situation of which they form part. These texts are structured according to the coordinate web of the speaker ("Sprecher-Origo": I/we – now – here – to you/them). The communication situation in speech texts is primarily organized by means of deiktika, i.e. indicator words which situate the speech in terms of time, place and persons associated with
the speaker. Communication partners are directly influenced by the speech act sequences ("Sprechhandlungssequenzen") that can be detected primarily in the sentence types and conjunctions. The object of description is a discussed world ("besprochene Welt"), i.e. the situation within which the speakerformulates his/her speech.

Narrative texts, on the other hand, are in fact no more than a special mode of speech. Narrative texts differ from speech texts insofar as the communication situation is never the theme of narrative texts (as is the case with speech texts). Narrative texts are embedded in communication situations, but these situations do not feature as theme. Instead, narratives have a narrated world ("erzählte Welt") as theme. Narrative texts are therefore structured by the scenic performance of the narrated world ("Inszenierung einer erzählten Welt"). This scenic constitution of the narrated world usually deviates from the situation from which the narrative is told in time (the time of the narrative is not-now), place and persons. The narrative constructs an own time-place-persons frame of reference. Furthermore, narrative texts do not influence hearers/readers directly (such as speech texts do), but rather indirectly by means of mimesis or identification with characters in the narrative, as well as by using the imperatives described above.

In order then to come to grips with the communicational thrust of a narrative, it is necessary to systematically observe, inter alia, any indications of time. This observation, along with other indications in the text, may then provide certain clues as to the communicational function or intention of the narrative.

In his discussion of temporal indications in narratives, Hardmeier distinguishes merely between episode and iteration markers. Although he indicates that episode markers occur in different forms (such as indications of sequence “Nachfolgemerkmale”, e.g. h w h w b a y h t b, and temporal adverbial clauses, e.g. clauses introduced by k or b + Inf. Constr.), he does not provide any further categorization of temporal indications. However, when reading Hebrew narratives from a text-pragmatical perspective, the need arises to reflect more profoundly on the use of these markers.

The following discussion will analyze the Chronicler’s account of King Josiah’s reign as example text in order to determine whether a more nuanced categorization can be made.

3 TEMPORAL ORGANIZATION IN THE CHRONICLER’S JOSIAH NARRATIVE

3.1 Textual boundaries of the narrative

It is clear that the Chronicler is using the royal frames that are customary in the Deuteronomistic History. In the case of the Josiah narrative, the Chronicler’s account starts in 2C34:1 with the same introduction as the
Deuteronomistic account in 2K22:1. The age of the king at his coronation (יוֹמֵי נוּ; הָעַלְוָה בְּרָאָה, “8 years old”) is mentioned, as well as the length of his reign (יהוּדָה; הָעַלְוָה יִרְאֶה הָעַלְוָה “31 years long”).

The closing section of the Josiah narrative starts in 2C35:20 with the temporal marker תָּאוּסֵא ל הָעַלְוָה יִרְאֶה ("After all this …"), as well as the local indication that Josiah went to the valley of Megiddo (2C35:22) to fight against Pharaoh Necho. Everything that is narrated in 2C34:8-35:19 takes place in Jerusalem. The local indicator in conjunction with the temporal indication (marker of sequence) point to a new section. This closing section parallels the Deuteronomistic closing section in 2K23:28-30 in the issues that are addressed, but the contents are extensively reworked. There is little doubt that this section forms the second part of the so-called royal frame around the King Josiah-narrative (2C34:2-35:19).

3.2 Temporal markers

Different types of temporal markers can be distinguished in the Chronicler’s Josiah narrative:

3.2.1 Macro-structural temporal markers

As indicated above, narratives construct a narrated world which is structured by the introduction and definition of a time-place-persons constellation within the narrated time sphere. Within this constellation, some temporal markers have the function of determining the macro-structure of the narrative and of correlating the narrated world to some extra-narrative events (narrative-external referents). In the case of the Deuteronomistic and Chronicler’s descriptions of the Judean and Israelite history, these temporal markers are normally expressions linking the narrated world with the reign of some king or another. These markers place the narrative in the macro-context within which the narrated world is constructed.

In the Chronicler’s narrative of King Josiah's reign, there are a number of temporal markers that function on this level.

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לָעַלְוָה יִרְאֶה וְהָעַלְוָה בְּרָאָה (2C34:3a) “For in the 8th year of his reign …”

This states that Josiah began "to seek" (וַיִּשְׁאָלָה) the God of his father, David, in the eighth year of his reign. This marker is connected to the royal frame in vs. 1 where the age of Josiah at the time of his appointment as king, as well as the length of his reign, is indicated. The 3 m s sf of וַיֹּאמֶר לָעַלְוָה יִרְאֶה also refers to the explicit mentioning of Josiah in vs. 1. A certain structuring is imposed on the narrative starting in the eighth year of the king's reign.
The second temporal marker of this type also occurs in vs. 3. Whereas the previous marker indicates the commencement of King Josiah's seeking the God of his father, the second marker places the beginning of the cultic reformations in the twelfth year of his reign. The same verbal construction is used here as in the previous instance, namely the Hiphil of the verb יַעֲמֹד + inf abs introduced by the preposition ל.

The progress of the narrative is marked by the next macro-structural temporal marker in vs. 8. The next point of time is the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. In this year Josiah commands the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem. During the restoration the Book of the Law is found which prompts the king's renewal of the covenant and the celebration of the Passover.

The narrative is concluded in 35:19 with the indication that the Passover was celebrated in the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign. The renominalization of Josiah (in comparison to the sf in 34:3a) also gives the impression of a conclusion. This marker locates everything that was narrated between 2C34:8 and 2C35:19 in the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign. This is strengthened by the local indications. At the end of 2C34:8 (thus before the first indication of the eighteenth year) is said that Josiah returns to Jerusalem (after his cultic purification measures in the north). From there on everything happens in Jerusalem or in the Temple of JHWH. The local and temporal markers therefore combine to focus the attention of the hearer/reader on what happened in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign in Jerusalem.

The four temporal markers determine the progress and focus of the narrative. It starts in the eighth year, progresses to the twelfth year, and eventually focuses on the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign.

3.2.2 Sub-structural temporal markers

"Sub-structural" is an indication here of further levels of structuring in the narrative. Markers of this type do not close or open a section on a macro-structural level. They operate in various ways on a sub-structural level to organize and synchronize the time within the macro-structure. This sub-structural organization therefore provides indications of smaller communicative units within the macro-structure.

Two markers in the narrative function on the level of progress and synchronization. They point to specific events, and synchronize other events with them.
While they were bringing out the money …

When the king heard the words of the law …

These two markers are formed by typical syntactic constructions (b + Inf. / yhw + k + Inf.). In the case of 34:14 the finding of the Book of the Law of JHWH is synchronized with the presentation of the money that was brought in for the House of JHWH. In the case of 34:19 the king's tearing his clothes is synchronized with his hearing of the words of the Law. Each of these synchronizations marks the next stage in the narrative about the eighteenth year of King Josiah.

Another marker that has the function of indicating progress in the narrative is rj'aw (2C35:14) “Afterward …”. Within the smaller subsection 35:10-16, this marker structures the narrative in such a way that the Passover preparations for the officials are distinguished clearly from the actual celebration by the people narrated in vss. 10-13.

Two other markers (that operate in conjunction with one another) introduce another level of structuring in the narrative. These markers accomplish a temporal structuring of the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign. Within this year, one specific date is highlighted, namely the fourteenth of the first month.

On the 14th of the 1st month

on that day

As was mentioned above, everything that is narrated between 34:8 and 35:19 is situated in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. However, the temporal marker in 35:1 indicates the exact point of time within the macro-structure at which the Passover celebrations commenced. The indication "on the fourteenth of the first month" is significant in many ways. According to the stipulations of the Torah (Ex. 12:6; Lev. 23:5 and Num. 9:3,5; 28:16) this was the appointed day for the slaughtering of the Passover lamb. This shows that the temporal marker not only has a structuring function, but also a focusing and contextualizing function8. It functions as sub-structural marker in the sense that it introduces a second narrative level in the story. However, the additional focusing function of this marker emphasises the following narrative section so much that it takes on greater importance than the previous sections.

The marker in 2C35:16 (aWhh'! wBB') refers pronominaly to the marker in 2C35:1 (@warh;vdj'B'rC'h[BrB]), and it still focuses on that specific day of the Passover. This pronominalization of the date is used here to accomplish a "Gestaltschliessung"9.

The function of the next marker ayhih't (2C35:17) “on that time” differs significantly from the one just mentioned. The focus changes from vs. 16 to vs. 17. The temporal marker in 2C35:17 eyh't (B)
generalizes by referring to "that time". The focus is no longer on a specific day, but on "those days". The focus change indicates that a sub-section ends with vs. 16, and that a new sub-section starts in vs. 17.

3.2.3 Non-structuring markers

Not all temporal indications in the narrative have a structuring function. They perform different functions in the narrative.

(2C34:3) “And he was still a lad …”

This indication provides background information to the narrative, namely that Josiah was still a young boy when he started seeking the God of his ancestor, David. Although this fact could have been deduced from the other temporal markers, the explicit information emphasises his youth, characterizing the king as young.

(2C34:33) “all his days”

(2C35:18) “from the days of Samuel the prophet”

These markers also do not influence the structuring of the narrative, but relate the narrative to a broader temporal context. In the first instance (2C34:33), the piousness of the Israelites is related to the duration of Josiah's life. In the second instance (2C35:18), the celebration of the Passover in Josiah's days is compared to the whole period since the days of Samuel the prophet. These indications establish this relationship not only to provide information, but (as in the previous example) as a means of characterization.

3.3 Macro-structure of the narrative

From the above discussion it is clear that temporal organization plays a very prominent role in the structuring of this narrative. The macro-structural markers divide the narrative into three sections, namely (i) 34:2; (ii) 34:3-7; and (iii) 34:8-35:19. The boundaries of these units are determined by the temporal markers in 34:3a and 34:3b, 34:8 and 35:19. The first unit, as indicated above, contains a positive evaluation of the king in the style of the Deuteronomistic Vorlage. The second and the third sections are linked by the temporal marker in 34:3a which opens the time span from the eighth year of the king's reign to the eighteenth. The section from 34:3b-7 narrates the first stage in this period, namely during the twelfth year, while the section from 34:8ff. continues the story in the eighteenth year. The temporal indicator in 35:19 therefore has a double function. It not only closes the section from 34:8-35:1910, but also the section that was introduced by the temporal marker in 34:3a.
Within the third section (34:8-35:19) a further subdivision is possible because of the sub-structural temporal markers in 34:14, 34:19 and 35:1. This subdivision results in four subsections, namely (i) the administration of the restoration activities at the temple (34:8-13); (ii) the finding of the Book of the Law of JHWH (34:14-18); (iii) the king's reaction, the Hulda oracle, and the renewing of the covenant (34:19-33); and (iv) the Passover celebrations (35:1-19). These four subsections are all situated in the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign (cf. the macro-temporal marker in 34:8). The fourth of these subsections is clearly the climax of the narrative, since the temporal marker in 35:1 focuses the reader's attention on a specific day in the eighteenth year, the day on which the Passover was celebrated.

Cf. Appendix A for a schematic illustration of the structure of the narrative.

3.4 Focus of narrative

The communicative structure of the narrative provides clear indications of its pragmatic intention. The narrative aims to draw attention to the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign as the year in which the significance of this king has become apparent. The eighteenth year of his reign is (from the perspective of the Chronicler) the year that epitomises and summarizes the deeds of King Josiah.

The structural organization of the narrative supports this focus in several ways. The narrative starts with a general statement in 34:2 about the king's righteous ways. He did what was right in the eyes of JHWH, and he followed in the paths of his father, David, not deviating to the right or the left from this direction. This positive evaluation of the king is then elaborated in the narrative that follows.

The temporal organization of the narrative is used explicitly to build up to the climax of the eighteenth year. The narrative starts in the eighth year, continues with the events of the twelfth year, and climaxes in the events of the eighteenth year that are elaborately narrated. The first two steps in this "building up" process, namely the comment on Josiah starting "to seek" the God of his father David, as well as the description of the cultic purification activities, do not belong to the climax of the narrative, but are rather presented as pre-stages to the climax in the eighteenth year.

However, within the description of the eighteenth year (34:8-35:19) the narrative also builds up to a climax. The sub-structure of this bigger communicative unit divides the unit into four sub-units (as has been indicated above) that, on account of their contents, present a sequence of events. It all starts with the restoration of the temple of JHWH in Jerusalem. During this restoration ("As the money … was presented …" 34:14) the Book of the Law of JHWH is found and read to the king. The king reacts to the contents of
this book ("As the king heard the words of the Law …" 34:19) by tearing his clothes and sending a
delegation to the prophetess Hulda "to seek" JHWH. This results in the king and people making the
covenant "before JHWH", as well as the celebration of the Passover in a way that has not been done "since
the days of the prophet Samuel". It is thus clear that the climax of the eighteenth year (35:19) is the
celebration of the Passover. The righteousness of the king (34:2) is, according to the Chronicler’s narrative,
best illustrated by his correct celebration of the Passover on "the fourteenth of the first month" (35:1). The
main focus of the narrative is therefore the Passover that is described so elaborately in the last nineteen
verses.

This clearly illustrates how significant the temporal organization of this narrative is for establishing its main
thrust. The temporal markers are the primary indicators in the narrative that focus the reader’s attention on
the Passover celebrations that start on the fourteenth day of the first month during the eighteenth year of
King Josiah's reign.

4 SUMMARY: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The following concluding remarks can now be made:

(i) Temporal markers constitute different temporal levels in a narrative. All temporal indications may
therefore not be treated without differentiation.

(ii) Temporal markers open the temporal space on which the focus should fall (cf. Appendix A).

(iii) Although it is possible to distinguish certain categories of temporal indications in Hebrew Bible
narratives, the functions of these markers can only be determined and described contextually for each
particular narrative.

(iv) In the description of temporal markers it is particularly important to note for each marker whether it has
a narrative-internal or –external referent. This may help the exegete to distinguish the different temporal
levels constituted by the markers.

(v) The following functions of temporal markers have been identified in the Chronicler’s Josiah narrative
(cf. Appendix B):
- Correlation
- Narrative Progress
- Opening/Closing of time period
• Narrative Focus
• Synchronization
• Opening/Closing of specification
• Opening/Closing of generalization
• Broadening of temporal context
# Appendix A

## 34:1 FRAME: Introduction
Josiah’s age at coronation: 8 years / Length of his reign: 31 years

## 34:2 Positive evaluation of King Josiah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>34:3a</th>
<th>&quot;In the eighth year of his reign ...&quot; (34:3a)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34:3b-7</td>
<td>&quot;In the twelfth year ...&quot; (34:3b)</td>
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Cultic purification measures

| 34:8-13 | "In the eighteenth year of his reign ..." (34:8) |

The administration of the restoration activities at the temple

| 34:14-18 | "As the money ... was presented ..." (34:14) |

The finding of the Book of Law of JHWH

| 34:19-33 | "As the king heard the words of the Law ..." (34:19) |

The king’s reaction, the Hulda oracle, and the renewing of the covenant

| 35:1-19 | "On the fourteenth of the first month ..." (35:1) |

The celebration of the Passover

| 35:20-36:1 | "After all these things ..." (35:20) |

FRAME: Conclusion
Appendix B

2 Chron. 34:1-36:1

Royal frame: 34:1 and 35:20-36:1

Length of reign: 31 years

8th year
34:3a

12th year
34:3b-7

18th year
34:8 34:14 34:19

14th of 1st month
35:1 35:14 35:16 35:17 35:19

35:19
## Appendix C

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<td>wk l ml † ynv h nwm v b w</td>
<td>• Correlation</td>
<td>Royal frame (Narrative-external)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2C34:3b</td>
<td>h n v h rc l † y tv b w</td>
<td>• Correlation</td>
<td>Royal frame (Narrative-external)</td>
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<td>2C34:8</td>
<td>wk l ml h rc l h nwm t n v b w</td>
<td>• Correlation</td>
<td>Royal frame (Narrative-external)</td>
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<td>2C35:19</td>
<td>wy y a t wk l ml h n v h rc l h n v b</td>
<td>• Correlation</td>
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<td># sk hAt a † a yx w n b w</td>
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<td>h r t h y r b d t a ^ l m h ] m v k y h y w</td>
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<td>2C35:1</td>
<td>w a v r h v d j l rc l h br a b</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


NOTES

1 This article (that was also delivered as a paper at the SBL International Meeting in Cambridge, UK in July 2003) forms part of research that will be published as a monograph (Josiah in the Chronicler's mirror. Late stages of the Josiah reception in II Chr 34f. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag) in 2003. The financial support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation towards this research and the publication of the monograph is gratefully acknowledged here. The opinions expressed here are that of the author, and not necessarily that of the Humboldt Foundation.


3 Cf. Ska (1990, 7-15) and Jonker (1996, 215-216) for a summary of how literary scholars treat time in their approaches.


5 This temporal marker functions as "Nachfolgemarkmal" (cf. Hardmeier, 1990c, 84). The expression probably refers to all the events from the 8th to the 18th year of King Josiah's reign that were told in 34:3 to 35:19. The temporal marker in 35:20 therefore starts a new (indefinite) temporal period which breaks out of the dated scheme of the previous narrative.

6 Dillard is one of the few commentators who explicitly discusses the significance of the temporal markers. Cf. Dillard (1987, 276): "The Chronicler uses one of his most characteristic compositional techniques in his account of Josiah. He introduces chronological notes that provide the structure of his narrative." Cf. also Dillard (1980).

7 The temporal organization of the narrated world should be distinguished from the historical sequence of events. Dillard (1987, 276) discusses the wide range of opinion provoked by the temporal notices in this narrative. Some scholars accept them at face value (thus interpreting them as indications of the actual chronological sequence of real events), whereas other scholars, such as Cogan (1985, 203-205), regard them as theological fabrications on the part of the Chronicler.

8 It is significant that this indication does not occur in the Deuteronomic account in 2K23:21-23. The Chronicler's indication that the Passover celebrated by King Hezekiah (2C30:15) commenced on the fourteenth day of the second month (after deliberations – vs. 2-4 – and just as is stipulated in Num. 9:11 for unclean people) is also significant. Chs. 5 and 6 of this study will deal extensively with these differences.

9 De Vries (1975, 72-73), in agreement with Galling’s diachronic argument, interprets this expression as a concluding formula to a secondary insertion in the original narrative.

10 Thompson (1994, 384) also notes the "inclusio with 34:8" indicating that the eighteenth year of Josiah was an eventful year. Cf. also De Vries (1989, 407).

11 Japhet (1993, 1021) divides the section 2C34:8-33 into four subsections: (i) 8-13; (ii) 14-21; (iii) 22-28; and (iv) 29-33. Her division between subsections (ii) and (iii) does, however, not take into account the temporal marker in vs. 19. Because of this temporal marker, the break between these subsections should be between vs. 18 and 19 (similar in Ackroyd, 1973, 201ff.). The substructural temporal marker in vs. 19 (with the following marker in 2C35:1) suggests that three actions took place as the king's reaction to the hearing of the Book of the Law, namely the kings tearing of his clothes (vs. 19), his commanding Hilkia and others to go to Hulda (vs. 20), and his ordering of the people to convene for the making of the covenant (vs. 29). Japhet's division of the fourth subsection at vs. 29 is understandable, because a subject change takes place in this verse ("The king"). Cf. also Thompson's (1994, 377ff.) division, as well as that of De Vries (1989, 4040ff.) and Dillard (1987, 276ff.), who also ignore the temporal marker in 2C34:19.

12 The temporal organization of this narrative suggests another structural division from that indicated by the paragraph markers of the MT. Johnstone (1997) uses the last-mentioned markers as his structural indicators. However, the communicative intent of the narrative can be determined more adequately from the structural organization of the narrative itself, than from the Masoretic markers that were added at a later stage.