2 The Issue of Methodology Regarding Inner- and Inter-Biblical Interpretation: Discourse Analysis (Text-Linguistics)

The scope of this chapter (and chapter three) is to look at the models of methodology that would be used in our inner- and inter-biblical interpretation. We propose to use discourse analysis (text-linguistics) and rhetorical criticism under the rubric of literary criticism in order to approach the texts of Melchizedek, with reasons and justification provided in the description of each methodology.

2.1 Methodology: Discourse Analysis

This project advocates the use of both linguistics and literary analysis as part of the methodology to study the inter- and inner-biblical interpretation, though neither approach is new to biblical scholarship. The presupposition of their application to biblical study is simple: both the OT and the NT Scriptures are products of language. The writers of the Scriptures would generally follow the norm and principle of literature or text production in the grammatical and linguistic rules of either Greek or Hebrew. While speaking to the study of the NT, Porter's comment remains true to the study of the whole Bible:

> The study of the New Testament is essentially a language-based discipline. That is, the primary body of data for examination is a text . . . written in the Hellenistic variety of the Greek language of the first century CE. Whatever else may be involved in the study of the New Testament – and there are many other factorsthat must be taken into account, such as archaeology, history, literary criticism (of various sorts), sociological criticism, and even theology – to remain a study of the New Testament it must always remain textually based, since the only direct access that we have into the world of the New Testament is through the text of the Greek New Testament.[44]

Concerning the OT Lowery echoes Porter: "since the biblical text was a product of language, it was natural that the theory and praxis of linguistics would be applied to the Hebrew Bible."[45] Therefore, the best approach to interpret the Scriptures is the combined use of text-linguistics (discourse analysis) and literary analysis[46] since both methodologies are textually based. We will treat text-linguistics (discourse analysis) first and treat literary analysis in the next chapter.

---

44 Stanley E. Porter, "Discourse Analysis and the New Testament Studies: An Introductory Survey," in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, JSNTSup 113 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 14.

45 Kirk E. Lowery, "The Theoretical Foundations of Hebrew Discourse Grammar," chap. in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers*, ed., Walter Bodine, SBLSS (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1995), 105.

46 Literary criticism or analysis has its historical aspect. For example, form criticism, as part of literary criticism, may produce historical data after being applied to a text. Nonetheless, we want to stress the text-oriented aspect of literary criticism at this point.

2.1.1 Discourse Analysis (Text-Linguistics)

In the discussion of discourse analysis[47] we will center on its application to our study without going into detailed narration of its methodological nature, history and other critical issues.[48]

---

47 There is a need to clarify the terms "discourse analysis" and "text-linguistics." The term "text-linguistics" was coined in Europe (see Walter R. Bodine, "Linguistics and Biblical Studies" in *ABD* 4: 330). Similar terms are: "text grammar" [*Textwissenschaft*], "text theory" [*Texttheorie*], "text studies", "text science" and "textology". See Jeffrey T. Reed, "Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal," *JETS* 39 (1996): 225. "Discourse analysis" as a term was coined in the United States, and is also called "discourse grammar" or "discourse studies." See Moisés Silva, *God, Language, and Scripture: Reading the Bible in the General Linguistics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990), 118. Reed, "New Testament Hermeneutic," *JETS* 39 (1996): 225. "Discourse studies" also comes from the same German term *Textwissenschaft* anglicized text-linguistics. See Teun A. van Dijk, "New Developments and Problems in Textlinguistics," in *Text vs Sentence: Basic Questions of Text Linguistics,* ed. János S. Petöfi (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 1979), 2: 512. Dijk categorizes text-linguistics as a subcomponent of discourse studies. Compare Joel Green, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 177. Such distinction is not necessary. In terms of medium, some linguists consider the "text" as a written form of communication in text-linguistics while others look at "discourse" as the communicative event. See Porter, "An Introductory Survey," 17 (footnote 16). For Sinclair, every reading of a text or even two readings by the same reader is a unique communicative event. J. McH. Sinclair, "On the Integration of Linguistic Description," in *Dimensions of Discourse,* ed. Teun A. van Dijk, vol. 2 of *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (London: Academic Press, 1985), 14. Though scholars on both sides of the Atlantic developed the theory and practice independently of one another, discourse analysis and text-linguistics should be considered as interchangeable (in this project, we will use both terms as such). It should be noted that the relationship between text-linguistics and discourse analysis is, in de Beaugrande's words, "diverse sometimes contrapuntal pattern. They were sometimes considered identical, sometimes unrelated, sometimes opposed." See Robert de Beaugrande, "Text Linguistics in Discourse Studies," in *Discipline of Discourse,* ed. Teun A. van Dijk, vol. 1 of *Handbook of Discourse Analysis,* 41. See Bodine, "Introduction: Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, 2.

48 Readers can consult works related to their specific areas of interest: for a general introduction, see John Lyons, *Language and Linguistics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and van Djik, ed., *Handbook of Discourse Analysis,* vol. 1, *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* and vol. 2, *Dimensions of Discourse* (London: Academic Press, 1985). Other helpful works include: Lyons, *Semantics*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; reprint, 1985); van Dijk, *Some Aspects of Text Grammars: A Study in Theoretical Linguistics and Poetics* (Hague: Mouton, 1972) and his *Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse* (New York: Longman, 1977); Wolfgang Dressler, *Einführung in die Textlinguistik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1973); W. Dressler, ed., *Current Trends in Textlinguistics,* Research in Text Theory/*Untersuchungen zur Texttheorie* 2 (Berlin: Watler de Gruyter, 1978); N. E. Collinge, ed., *An Encyclopaedia of Language* (London: Routledge, 1990). For the OT, in addition to Bodine, ed., *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature,* see also another volume edited by him: *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992); Robert D. Bergen, ed., *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994). For the NT, see David A. Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications*, with a foreword by Moisés Silva, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995); David A. Black, Katharine Barnwell and Stephen Levinsohn, eds., *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, with a foreword by Eugene A. Nida (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman, 1992).

2.2 One Major Issue Regarding Text-Linguistics

One inevitable issue in modern linguistics is the relationship between text versus sentence. In tracing the historical development of linguistics, phonology, morphology, and syntax were confined to sentence-based study until the rise of discourse analysis, which advocates text-based study. This gives rise to the inevitable question: should the locus of meaning be in the sentence or in the text? János S. Petöfi solidifies the debate in the form of questions:

> What constitutes a text (How can/must the terms 'text' and 'sentence' be explicated, as names for object-language elements or as names for theoretical constructs)? What are the properties of a text that can under no circumstances be properties of a sentence? What are the tasks of text linguistics? What text linguistic task can under no circumstances be handled by sentence linguistics? What is the most urgent task of text linguistics?[49]

In an attempt to answer these and other questions, at least three views emerged in terms of the relationship between sentence and text.[50] For some, text and sentence grammar should belong to two different systems;[51] for others, there are interconnections between these two systems.[52] The third opinion is to dissolve the binary opposition (text/sentence) into a tripartite hierarchy: text, sentence cluster, and sentence.[53]

In our opinion, such distinction and fusion are unnecessary. A text is built upon words and sentences,[54] plus some other non-textual items. They are inter-dependent though they may be governed by different sets of principles. For example, a poem (text) is regulated by poetic principles (e.g., parallelism) while its constituents (words, cola) by general syntax and grammar (e.g., a singular noun will normally have a singular verb, etc.). An analysis of this poem (text) will consider all of the following: phonemes, morphemes, sentences (cola), syntax, semantics, and the text as a discourse although the methodological approaches to each of these components may vary.

Furthermore, text or discourse grammar concerns itself with the descriptions of the macro-structure of a text – its global and overall structure – while phonology,

---

49 János S. Petöfi, ed., *Text vs Sentence: Basic Questions of Text Linguistics* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 1979), 1: vi.

50 The two volumes of *Text vs Sentence* serve as the forum for such discussions. In our opinion, the only regret is there is no definite answer or conclusion to this debate.

51 Ursula Oomen, "Texts and Sentences," in *Text vs Sentence,* 1: 272.

52 Robert de Beaugrande, "Text and Sentence in Discourse Planning," in *Text vs Sentence,* 2: 467-69.

53 Maria M. Langleben, "On the Triple Opposition of a Text to a Sentence," in *Text vs Sentence,* 1: 246-57.

54 We use the word "sentence" in an undefined sense, i.e., it includes sentoid, simple and complex sentence, and sentence cluster. See ibid., 250.

morphology, syntax and semantics, the micro-structure of a text. Their relationship could best be described as follows:

> [A] text grammar cannot exist without integrating parts of sentence grammar. Thus genuine research into text linguistics starts where sentence grammar fails to provide adequate explanations for linguistic phenomena.[55]

Such rigid dichotomy of sentence/text has ignored the contribution of the sentence in text-linguistics. In our opinion, the "functional sentence perspective" (abbreviated as FSP),[56] as part of linguistic theory, can contribute to a better appreciation of a text. Scholars have raised the issue of whether FSP stimulated the development of text grammar to a certain extent since FSP is an older discipline, and since they both share the same interest. The role of FSP in discourse analysis is not clear but[57] it is useful since FSP describes the "sentence from the point of view of its . . . use in a message (framed in a text or a situation)."[58]

At this point, we will leave the historical survey of FSP to others[59] while we focus on the methodology of FSP. The key thrust of FSP is to look at the communicative function of the sentence in the organization of a text. In analyzing a sentence, the theme-rheme textual structure is discerned.

Let us illustrate by looking at the first two verses of Genesis: in Gen 1:1, וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם the word, הָאָרֶץ is part of the rheme according to FSP, but in Gen 1:2, וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ, the word הָאָרֶץ becomes the theme and the phrase תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ הָיְתָה becomes the rheme. The theme is the known or given information, while the rheme is the new information in the context of a sentence. Building upon Halliday's definition, František Daneš argues that

> there are two simultaneous structures of text: (1) 'information focus' (given-new), and (2) 'thematization' (theme-rheme). The former determines the organization of the text into discourse units, the latter frames each clause into the form of a message about one of its constituents.[60]

---

55 Hannes Rieser, "On the development of Text Grammar," in *Current Trends in Textlinguistics,* 9.

56 FSP is referred to by various names: "aktuelle Satzgliederung, funktionale Satzperspektive, Mitteilungs- perspektive, contextual segmentation of the sentence, the thematic organization of the utterance, Thema-Rhema-Gliederung, topic-comment structure." See František Daneš, "Foreword," in *Papers on Functional Sentence Perspective,* ed. František Daneš (Prague: Academia, 1974), 9.

57 Zdena Palkova and Bohumil Palek, "Functional Sentence Perspective and Textlinguistics," in *Current Trends in Textlinguistics,* 212.

58 Ibid.

59 See Jan Firbas, "Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Approach to the Problems of FSP," in *Papers on Functional Sentence Perspective,* 11-18.

60 František Daneš, "FSP and the Text Organization," in *Papers on Functional Sentence Perspective,* 107, as a summary statement of M. A. K. Halliday's.

Such theme-rheme analysis is also called "topic and comment"[61] in the discussion of "semantic relations between sentences" in discourse analysis.[62] The topic (*thema*) and comment (*rhema*) structure is assigned to a sentence on top of its syntactic and semantic structures. The question is how can one assign the theme and rheme correctly, especially if there is a complex sentence structure involved?[63] Several principles could serve as a general guide: first, the topic/comment structure sometimes coincides with the subject/predicate although it also depends on the framework of the preceding sentence. Second, in the dynamic of a conversation, the topic is usually the given information (already known by the hearer) while the comment is the new information (unknown but now asserted to the hearer).[64] Third, various semantic functions and linguistic devices are present: passivization, stress, pronominalization, emphasis, and definitivization. It has been pointed out, though, that when FSP is applied, analysts may come across certain contradictions or uncertainties of how the theme-rheme have been assigned and at times, may have to impose their subjectivity. Admittedly, not *all* sentences could be analyzed by FSP. [65]

Among biblical interpreters a theme-rheme sentence analysis is not unfamiliar. Jeanrond, in his treatment of the philosophical hermeneutics of the Gadamar-Ricoeur

61 The distinction between the notions of theme-rheme and topic-comment can be seen as a geographical difference. The Prague school prefers using the former while American linguists the latter. See Jean-Marc Heimerdinger, *Topics, Focus and Foreground in Ancient Hebrew Narrative*, JSOTSup 295 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 102 (footnote 2).

62 Van Dijk, *Some Aspects*, 109. Dijk devotes an entire section to further discussion, see pp. 109-120.

63 Van Dijk has posed six questions concerning assignment. Among the six, the first three are relevant to our discussions: "(i) is the topic-comment distinction to be defined in syntactic, semantic or pragmatic terms . . . ? (ii) do all sentences have such a structure, and by what explicit rules and procedures can topic and comment be assigned? (iii) do sentences have a topic-comment structure independent of text structure and/or of their use in communicative contexts? In other words: can the 'same' sentence have different topic-comment structure in different (con-)texts?" See van Dijk, *Text and Context*, 114-15.

64 Ibid., 116. Put another way, "the definition of 'new' is thereby the communicative purpose of the speaker. 'Given' is defined primarily in reference to the preceding context." See Palkova and Palek, "Functional Sentence," 216.

65 The theme-rheme structure, for some scholars, is too simplistic. Thus they modify it in various ways. See Firbas, "Some Aspects," 23-26. In addition to theme and rheme, "basis" and "transition" are suggested to further refine the sentence analysis. In the study of FSP, scholars discern three types of thematic progression (abbreviated as TP). For details about their methodological criteria and how each type looks in diagram format, see Daneš, "Text Organization," 114-23. What follows is a summary of his essay: first, a simple linear is the most basic TP in which every rheme of an utterance will become the theme in the following utterance (as in Gen 1:1-2). A second TP has a continuous (constant) theme: "one and the same theme appears in a series of utterances (to be sure, in not fully identical wording), to which different rhemes are linked up" (p. 119). A third TP contains derived themes: in this type, the themes are derived from a "hypertheme" with the combination of type 1 and type 2 (p. 120).

discussions, modifies FSP from sentence-level to text-level.[66] As a tool, FSP helps biblical interpretation in at least two ways: first, it is a device to discern text coherence or text connexity since the theme-rheme, in the organization of a text, plays a constructive role that moves the communication forward. Second, FSP is sensitive to context-dependent structure in view of a text. While the Scriptures contain sixty-six books, mostly independently composed, FSP helps discern theme/rheme not only on a sentence-level but also on a text-(book-)level. On a text-(book-)level, one biblical book may serve as "context" for another, and the theme of that book may become the rheme of another at this level.

2.3 Applications of Text-Linguistics to Biblical Studies

Though text-linguistics is a young discipline, its application to biblical studies has been slowly and gradually recognized and utilized in biblical studies.[67] In this project, we will selectively apply the elements of text-linguistics in our thesis, and in our judgment, we will perform a "Lexical Semantic Analysis." We will now briefly describe the presuppositions, theories of word-meaning, and some practical procedures.

When we talk about lexical semantics, we tend to focus on the meaning of a word (lexeme); however, text-linguistics would advocate that the cotext[68] in which the word occurs is essential to determine the lexical meaning of a word. Therefore, this lexical semantics should be cast in the cotext of a discourse: the sentence, paragraph, and the text as a whole. In our case, biblical writers pay much attention to the lexical item found in a previous writing by another author (inner- or inter-biblical interpretation

66 Werner G. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking,* trans. Thomas J. Wilson (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 170, note 41; 85-90. Jeanrond also talks about the three types (he calls them "models") of theme-rheme structure in collaboration with Daneš (see above footnote) in pp. 86-88.

67 The early use of textlinguistics applied to Bible studies is in Bible translation, as pointed out by William A. Beardslee, "Recent Literary Criticism," chap. in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, eds. Eldon Jay Epp and George W. MacRae (Philadelphia and Atlanta: Fortress and Scholars, 1989), 188. See questions raised by linguists on both a theoretical and practical level concerning Bible translation in William Johnstone, "Biblical Study and Linguistics," chap. in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John Barton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 129.

68 A distinction should be made between cotext and context. Simply put, cotext is the literary environment in which a word is written; the preceding and subsequent words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, the text (book), and to a greater extent (as in the Bible), the other books. As commonly referred to in linguistics, context is the social milieu in which the word (of an utterance or text) is written. See Peter Cotterell, "Semantics, Interpretation, and Theology," 1: 136. See also Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*, JSNTSup 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 42.

depending on which Testament the lexical item is found), and that relationship merits linguistic analysis in terms of syntagmatic and paradigmatic perspectives.

To begin with, the stock presupposition of lexical semantics is that a word by itself has no meaning at all,[69] and most likely, the form and/or the sound of the word applied to its 'meaning' is arbitrary and conventional. The question remains: from where does a word get its meaning or sense?

To answer that, we can appeal to two major theories that attempt to determine word-meaning: the ideational and the referential theories. The former argues that the meaning of a word is formed by the image or concept associated with it; while the latter argues that the meaning of a word is determined by its referent.[70] Furthermore, there is a tendency among many scholars to take the "concept-oriented approach" to delineate word-meaning.[71] Unfortunately, this approach is problematic when applied to biblical studies working with an ancient language such as Hebrew. Without a living speaker of a particular language, it could be hard to pinpoint the concept of a particular Hebrew word.

We now turn to another approach called the "field-oriented approach," which is a product of the insights fostered by modern linguistics. Its basic premise is that words are better comprehended in their relation to other possible words, and thus involves the study of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of a particular word in a sentence or a discourse as crucial to discovering a word's meaning.[72]

Before elaborating on the two dimensions (types) of a word, two emphatic comments are in order. First, we have deliberately noted how lexical semantics must be viewed from the context of a sentence or a text. Barr is critical of a theological

---

69 Cotterell, "Semantics, Interpretation, and Theology," 1: 147.

70 The third approach is to define word-meaning in behavioral terms. All three approaches have their weaknesses. See the third approach and the critique by D. A. Cruse, "Language, Meaning and Sense: Semantics," in *An Encyclopaedia of Language*, 145-47.

71 Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1989), 146.

72 It is profitable to categorize words in the context of a sentence into "close-set" and "open-set" elements. To illustrate, let us use Heb 7: 17 as an example: μαρτυρεῖται γὰρ ὅτι σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ. The words γάρ, ὅτι, σύ, εἰς, τόν, κατά, and τήν are close-set elements belonging to "grammatical classes with few members and whose membership changes so slowly that for most purposes it can be regarded as fixed" (Cruse, "Semantics," 144); the remainder, that is, the "open-set" elements "belong to classes with typically large numbers of members, and a relatively large turn-over (both gain and loss) in membership" (ibid.). While the close-set elements are commonly referred to as grammatical elements (or structural signal) and thus their function is to articulate the grammatical structure of the sentence, it is the open-set elements, often referred to as the lexical (or content) elements, which convey the meaning of the sentence. By no means does this suggest that the closed-set elements never carry any meaning (e.g., γάρ), though admittedly the conveyed meaning tends to be general. The open-set elements normally have richer and more complex meanings (e.g., ἱερεύς), and not surprisingly, the closed-set elements usually capture a grammarian's interest; the open-set elements, conversely, are studied by a linguist as part of semantics.

dictionary approach based only on "words," and proposes that examining the word in its cotext – be it a sentence or a text, and even in its context – would resolve this tendency.[73] Biblical scholars tend to focus attention on the primacy of word-meaning over sentence-meaning because of their training. Unless they are a native Hebrew or Greek speaker, they typically learn their biblical languages starting with words (vocabulary). Cruse is right that

> the study of a word's meaning is best grounded in the use of the word in sentences, and the meaning itself is best derived, directly and indirectly, from the meaning of sentences containing the word.[74]

For example, the word αἰῶνα (from αἰών) in Heb 7:17 can be glossed as "a very long time, a segment of time, age, world order, the Aeon as person, and eternity." Yet the word-meaning is best grounded by the sentence in which it appears; therefore, the word makes the most sense as "forever or for eternity."[75] Cruse's thesis in his monograph on lexical semantics crystallizes this point: the semantics of a lexeme should be understood "from its relations with actual and potential linguistic contexts."[76]

Second – and related to what was previously mentioned – we will not ignore how traditional grammar contributes to the study of syntax in a sentence; furthermore, as a clarification, when a sentence is analyzed, we will pay attention to the theme-rheme (topic-comment) dynamic as discussed in FSP. Having addressed these points, we now resume discussing the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of a word.

Grasping the dynamic of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of a lexeme is crucial in discourse study.[77] One can think of the syntagmatic relations of a word as collocational and paradigmatic as substitutional.[78] The syntagmatic dimension is perhaps best understood as how a word is used in relation to other words in a sentence or a discourse. For example, John is a priest; "John" and "a priest" makes a collocational sense in the sentence but "this dog" is "a priest" does not. In our case, the statement "Melchizedek was priest of God Most High" (Gen 14:18) makes collocational sense.

The paradigmatic dimension is perhaps best understood as how and why a word is chosen over other similar choices of words that could possibly perform the same semantic and grammatical functions in the sentence. In our case, the psalmist in

---

73 See James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

74 Cruse, "Semantics," 144.

75 The presence of these words εἰς τόν in the phrasal construction also helps convey that sense.

76 D. A. Cruse, *Lexical Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1. See his chap. 1, in which he calls "a contextual approach to lexical semantics."

77 The syntagmatic and paradigmatic relation is discussed as one of four distinctions or dichotomies in the context of Saussure's structuralism. See John Lyons, *Semantics*, 1: 240-43.

78 Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics*, 155-59.

Ps 110:1 could have used other terms (say אמר) to replace נאם, leading us to question if there is anything significant about using this term instead of others.

In the framework of sentence and text, carefully analyzing the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of a biblical word in its cotext and context, one may arrive at the discourse meaning of a word rather than at its lexical meaning. While this principle is not new, it appears in a recent publication of *NIDOTTE*,[79] as VanGemeren comments:

> The meaning of a word as a symbol of communication is to be determined in its relation to other words . . . , in its place within the sentence or verse, and at the level of a literary unit or discourse. . . . The goal of interpretation is to understand the more precise meaning of a word at the level of the discourse, i.e., a literary unit (in contrast to the level of word or sentence).[80]

Since the Bible is a text that holds theological significance, each word (particularly with the open-set element) may have its own "specialized" sense, confined in its usage within Scripture.[81] Thus our theory is grounded on the shared semantic feature that a stock of words has been favorably used by the biblical writers.[82] These biblical writers look at what was previously written and made use of this stock of lexemes to interpret or to expound upon antecedent Scripture. Discourse analysis, therefore, is the appropriate tool to discern such usage by looking at words at a discourse or text level. The text level (in comparison to word or sentence level) could happen in two (or more) texts within a book (for example, Psalms 2, 110 and 132); in two (or more) texts in two books within the same Testament (inner-biblical interpretation, for example, Genesis 14 and Psalm 110); or, in two (or more) texts in two books in the two Testaments (inter-biblical interpretation, for example, Genesis 14, Psalm 110 and Hebrews 5-7). The third example is precisely our focus of interest in this study.

We will now turn our attention to practical steps. When analyzing a word in a given passage, we will examine its syntagmatic aspect in the sentence where lexeme occurs. Then the lexeme's cotext will be studied; this could include the paragraph, section, and book level context. Then when necessary, we will examine its paradigmatic aspect. Theoretically, the lexeme could be treated as the theme as well as the rheme in the sentence analysis. This will be taken into account in analyzing the sentence. The theme-rheme approach will not be limited to between the sentences but will extend to a larger cotext.

---

79 Willem A. VanGemeren, "Introduction," in *NIDOTTE*, 1: 6.

80 Ibid.

81 See Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics*, 164-67.

82 Robert Alter argues that the Hebrew Bible has "reflected a specialized or elevated vocabulary." Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004). Note: part of his book was previously published in *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996).

Our next task, following the above discussion of discourse analysis, is to examine literary analysis, especially rhetorical criticism, as a methodological approach to the study of the Melchizedek passages. This is our focus in chapter three.