

Blessing and Cursing in Malachi

A Reader-Oriented Approach

Andy R. Espinoza



ISBN: 9789403748962

Doi: 10.26116/c1n3-2j69

Layout: Proefschrift-aio.nl | Annelies Lips

Cover design: Proefschrift-aio.nl | Guus Gijben

Print: Proefschrift-aio.nl

Publisher: Open Press TiU



©2024 Andy Rafael Espinoza Pereda, The Netherlands. All rights reserved. No parts of this thesis may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission of the author. Alle rechten voorbehouden. Niets uit deze uitgave mag worden vermenigvuldigd, in enige vorm of op enige wijze, zonder voorafgaande schriftelijke toestemming van de auteur.

Blessing and Cursing in Malachi

A Reader-Oriented Approach

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan Tilburg University

op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof. dr. W.B.H.J. van de Donk, in het openbaar
te verdedigen ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties aangewezen
commissie in de Aula van de Universiteit op maandag 24 juni 2024 om 16.30 uur

door

Andy Rafael Espinoza Pereda

geboren te Barcelona, Venezuela

Promotores:

prof. dr. A.L.H.M. van Wieringen (Tilburg University)

prof. dr. B.J. Koet (Tilburg University)

Leden promotiecommissie:

prof. dr. P.C. Beentjes (Tilburg University)

prof. dr. J. Eck (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich)

prof. dr. G. Kwakkel (Theologische Universiteit Utrecht)

prof. dr. C.H.C.M. Vander Stichele (Tilburg University)

Table of contents

PREFACE	8
SUMMARY	10
SAMENVATING	11
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	13
Statement of the Problem	14
Purpose of the Study	15
Justification and Importance of the Study	16
Delimitations	16
Review of Literature	20
Methodology	23
Syntactical Analysis	25
Semantic Analysis	29
Communication Analysis	31
Synopsis	39
CHAPTER 2 SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS	41
The Structure of Malachi in Scholarly Research	42
The Macro Structure of the Book of Malachi	46
Malachi 1:1a-b	47
Malachi 3:22a-24d	47
Malachi 1:2a-3:21d	47
Malachi 1:2a-2:17i	48
Malachi 1:2a-5c	48
Malachi 1:6a-2:9c	49
Malachi 2:10a-16f	49
Malachi 2:17a-i	50
Malachi 3:1a-21d	50
Malachi 3:16a-18d	51
Malachi 3:19a-21d	51
Malachi 3:1c-15d	51
Text-units in the Book of Malachi	52
Malachi 1:2a-5c	53
Malachi 1:6a-2:9c	55
Malachi 1:6a-8h	55
Malachi 1:9a-14g	57
Malachi 2:1a-9c	61
Malachi 2:10a-2:16f	65
Malachi 2:17a-h	67
Malachi 3:1a-b	67
Malachi 3:1c-4a	68

Malachi 3:5a-d	70
Malachi 3:6a-d	70
Malachi 3:7a-12c	71
Malachi 3:13a-15d	73
Malachi 3:16a-18d	74
Malachi 3:19a-21d	75
Malachi 3:22a-c	76
Malachi 3:23a-24d	76
Implications of a Structure Based on the Syntax of the Text	77

CHAPTER 3 | SEMANTIC ANALYSIS **81**

Love and Hate	85
Relationships	89
Brothers	89
Fathers and Sons	90
Fathers and Daughters	96
Husbands and Wives	97
Masters and Servants	100
Kings and Subordinates	102
Greatness of the Lord	103
Liturgy	106
Covenant	112
Covenant of Levi	112
Covenant of the Fathers	116
Covenant of Marriage	116
The Covenant	117
Messenger	120
Blessing and Cursing	125
Justice	136
The Day of the Lord	142
Blessing and Cursing as a Unifying Device	145
Love and Hate	145
Relationships	146
Greatness of the Lord	147
Liturgy	147
Covenant	147
Messenger	148
Justice	149
The Day of the Lord	149
Implications of a Semantic Analysis of Malachi	149

CHAPTER 4 | COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS **153**

Malachi 1:1a-b	154
Malachi 1:2a-5c	157
Malachi 1:6a-2:9c	161
Malachi 2:10a-2:16f	170
Malachi 2:17a-h	178

Malachi 3:1a-b	179
Malachi 3:1c-4a	180
Malachi 3:5a-d	187
Malachi 3:6a-d	188
Malachi 3:7a-12c	189
Malachi 3:13a-15d	194
Malachi 3:16a-18d	198
Malachi 3:19a-21d	202
Malachi 3:22a-c	204
Malachi 3:23a-24d	206
Notes on the Overall Communicative Dynamics in Malachi	210
Speakers and Addressees	211
Main Characters in the Text	211
The Communicative Role of the Lord	213
The Communicative Role of Malachi	213
Staged Dialogue	214
Blessing and Cursing	214
The Evolving Role of the TIR	215
The Concern for Proper Relationships	215
CHAPTER 5 COMMUNICATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF BLESSING AND CURSING IN MALACHI	217
Overview of High-Level Communication in Malachi	218
Communicational Use of Blessings and Curses	222
Communicational Impact of Blessing and Cursing	228
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION	233
A Reader-Oriented Method of Discourse Analysis	234
Blessing and Cursing in Malachi and Its Effect on the TIR	236
Testing the Reader-Oriented Methodology	238
A bias towards the text	238
A Systematic Approach to Analyzing the Text	243
Opinion	249
Further research	250
BIBLIOGRAPHY	253
APPENDIX	267

PREFACE

A passing comment by the late Dr. Kenneth Mulzac in a Hebrew class sparked an interest in the book of Malachi that has remained for the last two decades. This interest has grown to include other prophetic literature and the way authors use texts to persuade.

It was a “coincidence” which allowed this project to happen. Prof. Dr. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, who practiced a method of biblical exegesis which I found very appealing, would just happen to visit Caracas and was available and willing to discuss my research idea. The result of that meeting was a journey of learning and growing, in many areas of life, not just academics. I got to meet and work with a scholar, a perfectionist, someone very generous and hospitable, and the fastest email response time I have seen in my life, manuscript corrections included. I also got the privilege of working on this project with Prof. Dr. Bart J. Koet, who shared many of Archibald’s virtues and added an eye for consistency and correctness in methods, and connections to other disciplines. I was fortunate to have two perfectionists helping me pay attention to completely different sets of details. I am grateful for the insightful comments and remarks I received from the members of the PhD Committee, Prof. Dr. P. C. Beentjes, Prof. Dr. J. Eck, Prof. Dr. G. Kwakkel, and Prof. Dr. C. H. C. M. Vander Stichele. I was also fortunate to have Dr. Nancy Vyhmeister read my manuscript and help correct my English. Of course, any errors or omissions that remain are mine. The faculty and personnel of the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology have been very helpful and friendly. I am also grateful to have had a mentor and friend in the late Dr. Emmer Chacon who encouraged me to his last days.

This project came to fruition, thanks to the flexibility allowed by the Adventist Theological Seminary in Venezuela, the Gulf Field of Seventh-day Adventists, and the East Mediterranean Region of Seventh-day Adventists. The writing of this work, much longer and more accented than expected, started in Venezuela, flourished in the United Arab Emirates, and came to completion in Lebanon, with a few hugely productive stints in the Netherlands.

Daily, I am done. Now is your turn.

Esther and Sarai, I did it. Thanks for encouraging me and reminding me that I had worked on this project for too long.

Mum, I am sorry dad is not around to celebrate this milestone. I know he would be proud. I know you are.

The text in your hands is the result of years of work, too many if you ask my daughters! This text has been a part of my life as I taught, pastored, and coordinated projects. Now I hope that this text will help you listen to the Text-Internal Author of the Book of Malachi as he uses syntactic, semantic, and communicational tools to get the Text-Internal Reader to trust in God and return to him. Will you also do that?

Andy R. Espinoza.

Beirut, April 2024.

SUMMARY

The book of Malachi is very seldom referenced in Christian devotion or worship. A rare exception may be as an offering appeal during public worship. But is there more to Malachi than an offering appeal? Furthermore, what is the point of such a strong curse at the end of the text that many Jewish people to this day refuse to end the reading of the book with its last verse?

In this study, a reader-oriented approach is applied to the text of Malachi seeking to uncover fresh insights, especially as it relates to blessing and cursing in the book.

This reader-oriented approach is a three-step process that allows the researcher to analyze a text from complementing perspectives. The first step of the analysis is the study of the syntax of the text. Here the internal structure of the text is described revealing its organization and flow. The second step is the study of semantics. Here main themes in the text and their relationship come to the fore. The last step is the analysis of the communication between the Text-Internal Author and the Text-Internal Reader. These are literary constructs that facilitate the study of a text unincumbered by historical issues, issues which are many times virtually impossible to determine with regard to biblical texts.

The syntax of Malachi reveals that it is formed by fifteen textual units, organized in a heading, two main sections, and a conclusion. There are six main semantic themes in the text of Malachi: relationships, covenant, messenger, blessings and curses, justice, and the day of the Lord. Notably, liturgical aspects are not a main semantic element in the text. The communication in the text reveals that the Text-Internal Author uses blessing and cursing as a tool to move the characters and the Text-Internal Reader to proper relationship with God and among themselves.

The reader-oriented approach proved an effective tool in revealing fresh insights into the text of Malachi. Such a tool can surely be profitably employed to study other prophetic texts.

SAMENVATTING

In de christelijke liturgie en devotie wordt zeer zelden naar het boek Maleachi verwezen. Een sporadische uitzondering is een offeroproep tijdens de openbare eredienst. Maar houdt Maleachi meer in dan een oproep tot offergave? Wat is bovendien het nut van zo'n sterke vloek aan het einde van de tekst zodat veel joodse mensen tot op de dag van vandaag weigeren het lezen van het boek te beëindigen met het laatste vers?

In deze studie wordt een lezer-georiënteerde benadering toegepast op de tekst van Maleachi, waarbij geprobeerd wordt nieuwe inzichten te ontdekken, vooral met betrekking tot zegeningen en vloeken in dit Bijbelboek.

Deze lezer-georiënteerde benadering bestaat uit drie stappen waarmee de onderzoeker een tekst vanuit complementaire perspectieven kan analyseren. De eerste stap van de analyse is de studie van de syntaxis van de tekst. Hiermee wordt de interne structuur van de tekst beschreven, waardoor de organisatie en samenhang ervan zichtbaar wordt. De tweede stap is de studie van de semantiek. Hier komen de belangrijkste thema's uit de tekst en hun cohesie naar voren. De laatste stap is de analyse van de communicatie tussen de tekst-interne auteur en de tekst-interne lezer. Deze zijn literaire constructies die de studie van een tekst faciliteren, niet gehinderd door historische kwesties, kwesties die vaak vrijwel onmogelijk te bepalen zijn met betrekking tot Bijbelteksten.

De syntaxis van Maleachi laat zien dat deze tekst uit vijftien tekstuele eenheden bestaat, georganiseerd in een opschrift, twee hoofdsecties en een conclusie. Er zijn zes belangrijke semantische thema's in de tekst van Maleachi: relaties, verbond, boodschapper, zegen en vloek, gerechtigheid en de dag des Heren. Opvallend is dat liturgische aspecten geen afzonderlijk semantisch thema vormen in de tekst. Uit de communicatie in de tekst blijkt dat de tekst-interne auteur zegen en vloek gebruikt als instrument om de personages en de tekst-interne lezer naar een juiste relatie met God en met elkaar te bewegen.

De lezer-georiënteerde benadering is gebleken een effectief instrument te zijn om nieuwe inzichten in de tekst van Maleachi te onthullen. Een dergelijk instrument kan zeker op vruchtbare wijze worden gebruikt om andere profetische teksten te bestuderen.



Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the past, the academic study of the books in the collection of the Twelve, and the collection itself as a whole, had been largely neglected. Particularly, the book of Malachi had suffered neglect. The last decades, however, have seen a marked increase on the research being produced with regards to the Twelve, and the book of Malachi in particular. The book of Malachi has recently received excellent treatments, including analyses using a range of literary methods. Nonetheless, the blessings and curses of the book of Malachi have not yet been studied using the methods of discourse analysis focusing on the internal communication in the text.

This study, entitled *Blessing and Cursing in Malachi: A Reader-Oriented Approach*, analyses the communication between the Text-Internal Author (TIA) and the Text-Internal Reader (TIR) in the book of Malachi. Special attention is given to the use of blessing and cursing and how this is used to impact the characters and the TIR.

The Reader-Oriented Approach is a three-step process that allows the researcher to analyze a text from complementing perspectives. The first step of this study is a syntactic analysis of the text, resulting in its division into units and the establishing of relations between those units. The second step of the study involves the analysis of semantic themes, especially the theme of blessing and cursing, and a discussion of how this theme unites and shapes the message of the book. The third and last section of the study centers on the pragmatics of communication between the TIA and the TIR, noting the communicational implications of blessing and cursing in the book.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the comparative recent abundance of studies on the book of Malachi, it remains a fairly unexplored book of the Hebrew Scriptures. About a decade ago it was still very accurate to say that “little importance has been attributed to the book of Malachi by scholars.”¹ Nonetheless, the book has received more attention recently. But that attention has not always been positive. The perceived heavy emphasis on liturgical aspects, emptying the book of ethical weight; the diachronic speculations about the composition of the book,² turning it into little more than an afterthought to complete the collection of the Twelve; and the supposed anonymous character of the work, disconnecting it from other prophetic books with clearly identifiable narrators

-
1. John T. Day, *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 531 (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 354.
 2. The use of the term “speculation” may seem pejorative and/or condescending. The way I use it in this work denotes conclusions that cannot be objectively proven or disproven given the absence of external evidence.

or protagonists, have resulted to lowering the value of the book in the eyes of some so that “the book of Malachi has often been disparaged in modern scholarship.”³

Besides the poor image of the book in the eyes of some scholars, there is limited awareness of the presence and function of blessing and cursing in the book. This should concern the biblical scholar, since blessing and cursing are very relevant and pervasive elements of the Hebrew Scriptures, so much so that they have been used to explore its theology as a whole.⁴ The study of blessing and cursing in the last book of the section of the Prophets in the Hebrew canon and the entire Old Testament in the Christian canon should be both a focus of attention and a source of valuable insights for the interpretation of the book, the Prophets, and the Old Testament in general.

Given the preceding, there is need for a study that takes Malachi as a literary composition and studies the communicational impact of the use of blessing and cursing in the text.

Purpose of the Study

This literary study seeks to analyze how blessing and cursing is used in the book of Malachi and what is their communicational impact. The focus of study is the communication between the TIA and the TIR in the book of Malachi. Of particular interest is the use of blessing and cursing by the TIA as a communicational tool to influence the TIR.

Blessing and cursing are about communication, and this form of communication is complex. On the one hand, the characters in the text speak about and to other characters using blessing and cursing. On the other hand, blessing and cursing also have a function towards the TIR. So, at least, a double communication arises: one on the level of the characters and another on the level of the TIA and TIR. Communication-oriented exegesis has eye for both levels.

In this context, the following questions arise: how do the methods of discourse analysis, focusing on the TIA and TIR, help us understand the blessing and cursing present in the book of Malachi? How is the TIR presented in Malachi? How is blessing

3. R. J. Coggins and Jin Hee. Han, *Six Minor Prophets through the Centuries: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries 29 (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 187.

4. See, Jeff S. Anderson, *The Blessing and the Curse: Trajectories in the Theology of the Old Testament* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014).

and cursing designed to affect him?⁵ How do these insights help in understanding the book of Malachi as a whole?

Justification and Importance of the Study

This study intends to contribute to several areas of knowledge. First, it is relevant for literary scholarship in general and Biblical scholarship in particular, because it will contribute to the development of the reader-oriented approach within discourse analysis. The application of the methods of discourse analysis focusing on the TIA and TIR will serve to further test the methodology and the results of its application to prophetic texts.

Second, this study is relevant for biblical exegesis, since it will contribute to the knowledge of the book of Malachi and the genre of blessing and cursing. Although many studies have recently been undertaken, the book has not been analyzed from a reader-oriented approach, particularly the function and effect of blessing and cursing in the book towards the TIR and how that affects the overall message of the book. Similarly, there are genre-critical and sociological studies on blessings and curses, but no reader-oriented studies on the genre.⁶

Third, for society, especially for Christians, this study is relevant because Malachi is very seldom a center of attention in communities of faith, and when it is, it is usually in connection to tithes and offerings.⁷ This, despite the fact that the book is relatively frequently alluded to in the New Testament, even by Jesus himself. This investigation will deal with rarely explored aspects of the book of Malachi and so will surely unveil a distinct message, a message that may prove highly relevant for believers today. For these reasons I hope that the present study will prove an important contribution.

-
5. I use masculine pronouns, instead of neutral ones, when discussing the theoretical entities TIA and TIR. When using the term “reader”, I endeavor to mention whether I am referring to a real or a theoretical reader.
 6. Kit Barker, *Imprecation as Divine Discourse: Speech Act Theory, Dual Authorship, and Theological Interpretation*, *Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplements* 16 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016); Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, *Overtures to Biblical Theology* 3 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Delbert R. Hillers, “Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets” (Rome, Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964).
 7. See, Andreas J. Köstenberger and David A. Croteau, “‘Will a Man Rob God?’ (Malachi 3:8): A Study of Tithing in the Old and New Testaments,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16 (2006): 53.

Delimitations

In this study, I will focus on the text with the aim of understanding what it does and how it does it.⁸ I will limit myself to a synchronic analysis of the final form of the text of Malachi as present in the Leningrad Codex and rendered in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.⁹ Furthermore, I will not deal with the relationship between Malachi and other books in the collection of the Twelve, issues regarding the supposed evolution of oral sayings or written texts,¹⁰ nor with speculations about psychological aspects such as emotional estates or motivations of real authors and readers.

The choice to focus exclusively on the book of Malachi, without regard to the rest of the books in the Twelve, is based primarily on considerations of practicality and interest rather than on a conviction regarding the nature of this textual collection. It must be noted, nonetheless, that despite the trend in the last decades to study the books that compose the Twelve as a unit,¹¹ the discussion regarding the existence of such textual unity, i.e., a book of the Twelve as opposed to a collection of the Twelve,¹² is still a matter of debate.¹³ One thing appears certain, whether by original intent of the historical author or by redactional additions, the book of Malachi does seem to contain links to other books in the collection of the Twelve, the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. But these connections and their implications fall outside of the scope and methodology of this research.¹⁴

I have chosen a literary approach completely detached from historical issues over diachronic source-critical methods, given their tendency to have an evolutionary

8. Walter Ray Bodine, *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers [Essays Delivered Orally at the 1988 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature to the Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Unit]* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 110, 120.

9. The complete text of the Hebrew Scriptures is yet to be published in the new *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*. Nonetheless, the section of the Twelve has already been published. See, Anthony Gelston, ed., *Biblia Hebraica Quinta: The Twelve Minor Prophets* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010).

10. For a recent collection of studies which analyze the books of the Twelve from the perspective of identifying the supposed sayings of the prophets or the redactional reworking of their sayings by scribes, see, Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, eds., *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, Ancient Near East Monographs 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015).

11. Mark Leuchter, "Another Look at the Hosea/Malachi Framework in The Twelve," *Vetus Testamentum* 64 (2014): 249.

12. Nogalski has been a prolific and influential voice for the concept of a Book of the Twelve. For an anthology of his work on the concept of the Twelve, see, James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve and Beyond: Collected Essays of James D. Nogalski*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 29 (Williston: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017).

13. Boda, Floyd, and Toffelmire, *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, 2.

14. For a discussion of these possible connections and the resulting implications, see, S. D. Snyman, "Malachi 4:4-6 (Heb 3:22-24) as a Point of Convergence in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible: A Consideration of the Intra and Intertextual Relationships," *HTS Theological Studies* 68 (2012): 28–33.

approach,¹⁵ their arguably subjective and speculative nature dependent on presuppositions,¹⁶ and the incongruent results they tend to produce.¹⁷ The text can be studied on its own, without concerns for its supposed development through history. The reality is that much is unknown about the historical circumstances of virtually all

-
15. In the absence of any other form of the text, there is lack of hard evidence of any development, and it is therefore virtually impossible to prove or disprove whether editorial additions were actually made. In other words, without external control, i.e., a manuscript, it is simply not possible to tell if any redactional theory is correct or whether they are all wrong. See, E. Ray Clendenen, "Textlinguistics and Prophecy in the Book of the Twelve," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46 (2003): 398. Douglas K. Stuart, "Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," in *Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 1246.
 16. Presuppositions play a major role in diachronic models. One such assumption frequently present in analyses of the evolution of oral sayings and textual layers is that prophets were capable of addressing only one issue in one fixed style and terminology in their speeches or texts. Any deviation from that one issue and style would imply a different author or redactor. In other words, prophets are seen as incapable of knowing and using synonyms or parallel structures. These assumption are both simplistic and unreasonable. See for example Joachim Schaper, who instinctively presumes a redactor as a suitable explanation for an unexpected structure in the text. See, Joachim Schaper, "The Priests in the Book of Malachi and Their Opponents," *The Priests in the Prophets*, 2004, 177. Aaron Scharf argues for the existence of at least four textual layers in Malachi based on the way different terms are used, though many of these terms appear in parallel structures thus implying that they function as synonyms. Even when dealing with words which he considers are actual synonyms, and not just suspected synonyms as in a parallel structure, he advocates for different textual layers since "the terminological difference is better explained, if the passage stems from a different hand." See, Aaron Scharf, "Cult and Priests in Malachi 1:6-2:9," in *Priests and Cults in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, Ancient Near East Monographs 14 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 222. For an example of the role of assumptions in diachronic work on the Twelve, consider Boda, who transparently points out that the scholarly consensus about Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 forming an earlier textual unit that eventually became part of the Twelve is nothing more than an assumption. He then goes on to lists many studies and their competing redactional theories and finally moves on to defend his own take on the matter. See, Mark J. Boda, "Messengers of Hope in Haggai-Malachi," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32 (2007): 114. See also, Raymond C. van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston. Wiseman (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 48.
 17. Similar reservations are espoused by Jennifer Dines while studying the Twelve as a whole. She provides an interesting overview of recent treatments on the Twelve from diachronic and synchronic perspectives. While espousing the overall usefulness of reading the book as a whole, she finds fault with diachronic approaches that have resulted in more than a dozen theories of textual growth, because they are usually based on historical and textual presuppositions with no clear evidence. She also finds fault with synchronic approaches that have resulted in disparate lists of themes uniting the Twelve, because presuppositions and methodologies are not always clearly specified. See, Jennifer Dines, "What Are They Saying About the Minor Prophets?," *Scripture Bulletin* 62 (2012): 2-12. In a similar way Kirk E. Lowery expresses dissatisfaction with source criticism and its identification of sources, form criticism and its identification of the social use of units, and tradition history and its pursue of the development of units. In his view, these methods provide no biblical data to support their claims. Since hypotheses are commonly based on individual speculation, the conclusions reached by scholars do not match. See, Kirk E. Lowery, "The Theoretical Foundations of Hebrew Discourse Grammar," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers [Essays Delivered Orally at the 1988 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature to the Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Unit]*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 104.

of the authors of the Hebrew Bible. Biblical exegesis should therefore concern itself with the issue at hand: the biblical text.¹⁸

There are certainly some textual difficulties in Malachi. These difficulties are most frequently recognized regarding the title (1:1) and the two concluding units of the book (3:22, 23-24), which many regard as editorial additions.¹⁹ Some allege that the use of the term מִשְׁחָ in Malachi 1:1, Zechariah 9:1 and 12:1 shows that Malachi was originally part of Zechariah. But even a casual reading can suffice to notice that Malachi is very different in form and substance from Zechariah. It constitutes a מִשְׁחָ, but a different kind of מִשְׁחָ.²⁰ In the case of the conclusion, Alviero Niccacci mentions several reasons why 3:22a-24d should be considered an integral part of the text and not a later addition.²¹ Sheree Lear also argues that 3:24 is one of a series of allusions in Malachi to passages in Genesis 31-33 and so, 3:24 should be seen as an integral part of the original text and not as a redactional addition.²² This goes to show how different methods can lead to different conclusions.²³ In this literary study, I take the text of Malachi as it stands and look for ways to understand rather than explain its present shape.

This study will not deal with mental estates, emotions, or motivations of real authors or audiences. Ultimately, neither diachronic nor synchronic methods can ascertain the thoughts or intentions of the real author or the real reader of any text.²⁴ These ends

18. Cf. Eep Talstra, "Exegesis and the Computer Science: Questions for the Text and Questions for the Computer," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 37 (1980): 123-24; Eep Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible I: Elements of a Theory," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 35 (1978): 169.

19. Innocent Himbaza, "Masoretic Text and Septuagint as Witnesses to Malachi 1:1 and 3:22-24," in *Making the Biblical Text: Textual Studies in the Hebrew and the Greek Bible*, ed. Innocent Himbaza and Mary-Gabrielle Roth-Mouthon, 2015; Ehud Ben Zvi, "Have We Not All One Father? Has Not One God Created Us?," in *Partners with God*, ed. Shelley L. Birdsong and Serge Frolov, vol. 2, Theological and Critical Readings of the Bible in Honor of Marvin A. Sweeney (Claremont, CA: Claremont Press, 2017), 275-96. Bob Wielenga, "'Remember the Law of Moses': Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with a Missional Postscript," *In Die Skriflig* 53 (2019): 1.

20. Michael H. Floyd, "The מִשְׁחָ (Maššā') as a Type of Prophetic Book," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 416.

21. Alviero Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," *Liber Annuus* 51 (2001): 100-101.

22. Sheree E. Lear, "The Relationship of Scriptural Reuse to the Redaction of Malachi: Genesis 31-33 and Malachi 3.24," *Vetus Testamentum* 69 (2019): 649-69.

23. For example, Fanie Snyman lists the historical critical considerations to see 3:22-24 as a redactional addition. He also lists the ways in which this passage naturally flows from the previous text of the book, but nonetheless affirms its character as a redactional addition. Assis also demonstrates how Malachi 3:22-24 is closely connected to the previous oracles. He maintains, nonetheless, that the passage was purposefully added to conclude the book. Snyman, "Malachi 4," 2-3. Elie Assis, "Moses, Elijah and the Messianic Hope. A New Reading of Malachi 3:22-24," *Zeitschrift Fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 123 (2011): 208.

24. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity of the Book Isaiah*, Amsterdamse Cahiers Voor de Exegese van de Bijbel En Zijn Tradities Supplement Series 6 (Vught: Skandalon, 2006), 2.

align better with the field of psychology, and possibly necromancy, rather than Biblical exegesis.²⁵

Finally, since this study focusses on describing the text-immanent communication, theological implications for real readers are usually not explored. Insights for believers are present in seminal form but are not explored or expounded.

I conclude this section by granting that diachronic methods can throw light on the development of texts. But since the objective of this research is to examine the meaning of the text, literary methods are used. Furthermore, while both methods are useful, literary methods should take precedence and color later diachronic pursuits.²⁶ Since so little is known about the historical aspects of Malachi and the supposed textual development of the text, it seems best to base the research on the facts of the present text rather than on speculations about its formation.

Review of Literature

From the start of this work, I have referred to pertinent works as the subject at hand requires and will continue to do so. Consequently, instead of providing an exhaustive survey of works on the book of Malachi, in this section I will provide a selective sample of recent work on Malachi, specially work that touches on literary aspects. This selectiveness stems from the purpose of this research, which is to describe the

25. For a brief discussion of psycholinguistics, see, Peter J. MacDonald, "Discourse Analysis and Biblical Interpretation," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 159.

26. Eep Talstra, "Texts for Recitation: Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19," in *Unless Some One Guide Me... Festschrift for Karel A Deurloo* (Maastricht, 2000), 7. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "A Tale of Two Worlds? A Synchronic Reading of Isaiah 7:1–17 and Its Diachronic Consequences for the Book," in *The History of Isaiah: The Formation of the Book and Its Presentation of the Past*, vol. 150, *Forschungen Zum Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 179–95. Alphonso Groenewald takes a similar approach when he presents an overview of the diachronic/synchronic debate, particularly as it relates to the South African biblical scholarship. He notes the advantages of synchronic methods, particularly taking the text as text and working within the canonical structure of the Hebrew Bible. Nonetheless, he also defends the usefulness of diachronic methods as these are the tools that explain the existence of the text. Alphonso Groenewald, "Synchrony and/or Diachrony: Is There a Way out of the Methodological Labyrinth?," in *A Critical Study of the Pentateuch: An Encounter between Europe and Africa*, ed. Eckart Otto and Jurie Hendrik Le Roux, *Altes Testament Und Moderne* 20 (Münster: Lit, 2005). Van Wieringen is an example of how reader oriented strategies can be used to discern the elements that give coherence to texts such as Isa 1-39 and 40-66 which have marked textual differences. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen and Annemarieke van der Woude, "The Diseased King and the Diseased City (Isaiah 36-39) as a Reader-Oriented Link between Isaiah 1-39 and Isaiah 40-66," in *Initiation and Mystagogy in the Christian Tradition*, *Oudtestamentische Studiën* (Brill, 2011), 81–93.

application and the results of a reader-oriented method to the book of Malachi, and not to list or describe the results of previous research.²⁷

The two most prolific authors on Malachi currently are Bob Wielenga²⁸ and Blessing Onoriode Boloje.²⁹ Wielenga generally focusses on eschatological aspects in Malachi, while Boloje has interests across the book. Both make casual use of insights from historical critical approaches, but tend to prefer literary methods, especially semantics.

Some noteworthy recent commentaries include those by James D. Nogalski,³⁰ R. J. Coggins and Jin Hee Han,³¹ David W. Baker,³² Douglas Stuart,³³ and Anthony R. Petterson. The latter includes a brief but illuminating review and critique of recent studies cataloguing them by their exegetical approach. Commenting on historical-critical approaches, he notes that a major weakness of this approach is that “it is

27. Assis offers a summary of the many ways in which the contents of Malachi have been described. Elie Assis, “Mutual Recriminations: God and Israel in the Book of Malachi,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 26 (2012): 212–14.

28. Bob Wielenga, “The God Who Hates: The Significance of Esau/Edom in the Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology According to Malachi 1:2–5 with a Systematic Theological Postscript,” *In Die Skriflig* 56 (2022): 1–9; Bob Wielenga, “The Deuteronomic Roots of Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology in Malachi,” *In Die Skriflig* 55 (2021): 1–9; Bob Wielenga, “The Gēr [Immigrant] in Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology: The Perspectives of Ezekiel 47:22–23 and Malachi 3:5,” *In Die Skriflig* 54 (2020): 1–9; Wielenga, “‘Remember the Law of Moses’: Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with a Missional Postscript”; Wielenga; Bob Wielenga, “The Delay of the Day of the Lord in Malachi: A Missional Reading,” *In Die Skriflig* 52 (2018): 1–9; Bob Wielenga, “Eschatology in Malachi: The Emergence of a Doctrine,” *In Die Skriflig* 50 (2016): 1–10.

29. Blessing Onoriode Boloje, “Returning to Yahweh and Yahweh’s Return: Aspects of שׁוּב in the Book of Malachi,” *Old Testament Essays* 33 (2020): 143–61; Blessing Onoriode Boloje, “Malachi’s Use of תּוֹרָה in Dialogue with the Wisdom Tradition of Proverbs,” *Old Testament Essays* 31 (2018): 243–63; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, “Antithesis between יְרֵאָה יְהוָה and רִשְׁעִים: Malachi 3:13–21 [MT] as a Reconciliation of Yahweh’s Justice with Life’s Inequalities,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36 (2015): 1–8; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, “Literary Analysis of Covenant Themes in the Book of Malachi,” *Old Testament Essays* 28 (2015): 257–82; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, “Malachi’s Concept of a Torah-Compliant Community (Mi 3:22 [MT]) and Its Associated Implications,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 71 (2015): 1–9; Alphonso Groenewald and Blessing Onoriode Boloje, “Prophetic Criticism of Temple Rituals: A Reflection on Malachi’s Idea about Yahweh and Ethics for Faith Communities,” *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa* 114 (2015): 1–18; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, “Malachi’s Vision of the Temple: An Emblem of Eschatological Hope (Malachi 3:1–5) and an Economic Centre of the Community (Malachi 3:10–12),” *Journal for Semitics* 23 (2014): 354–81; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, “Perspectives on Priests’ Cultic and Pedagogical Malpractices in Malachi 1:6–2:9 and Their Consequent Acts of Negligence,” *Journal for Semitics* 22 (2013): 376–408.

30. James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2011).

31. Coggins and Han, *Six Minor Prophets through the Centuries: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*.

32. David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

33. Stuart asserts and defends that Malachi knew and used the Torah, especially the book of Deuteronomy. See, Stuart, “Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi,” 1257.

inherently subjective and any results must remain hypothetical. There is simply no external evidence of earlier stages of the books of Haggai, Zechariah, or Malachi circulating in any other form.”³⁴ The same could be said of most other historical-critical studies in other books of the Hebrew Bible. Karl William Weyde does not attempt to offer a commentary but does cover the whole text from the perspective of how Malachi uses sources.³⁵

Sometimes the distinction between synchronic and diachronic methods is lost, due to misappropriation of labels. An interesting case is Paul L. Redditt. In a section entitled “Literary Analysis of the Book of Malachi,” he ignores the text as it stands and proceeds to rearrange the text, based on seemingly arbitrary criteria to determine which texts best match each other. No evidence is given for the supposed earlier layers in the texts, other than the author’s opinion of what constitutes a proper flow for an argument.³⁶ An example of an apparent blend between diachronic and synchronic approaches is a very recent study by Julian V. Bacon. He deals with text development in Malachi 1:2-5, but does so from the final form of the text.³⁷

In the last few decades discourse analysis has established itself as a valid and useful tool for exploring the Hebrew Scriptures as a finished text, as opposed to textual layers or remnants of oral communication.³⁸ This method has been applied to Malachi by Ernst R. Wendland, who argues passionately for the artistry, organization, and rhetorical prowess of the book.³⁹ Niccacci’s syntactical analysis of Malachi is also noteworthy. He does not discuss in detail the macro structure of the text, but he does analyze the text closely and, therefore, offers refreshingly nuanced translations.⁴⁰ Although not agreeing with all his choices, I applaud the close attention to the syntax in the text. Other studies worth mentioning are those by Gerrie Snyman, where he

34. Anthony Robert Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, Apollos Old Testament (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015), 36. However, there is definite evidence for different sequential arrangements of books, as demonstrated by the LXX and 4Q76 (4QXII^a). See, Mika S. Pajunen and Hanne von Weissenberg, “The Book of Malachi, Manuscript 4Q76 (4QXII^a), and the Formation of the ‘Book of the Twelve,’” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134 (2015): 731–51.

35. Karl William Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching: Prophetic Authority, Form Problems and the Use of Traditions in the Book of Malachi* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000).

36. Paul L. Redditt, “The Book of Malachi in Its Social Setting,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994): 244–49.

37. Julian V. Bacon, “‘I Loved Jacob, but Esau I Hated’ Textual Relationships and Development in Malachi 1:2–5” (PhD Dissertation, Wake Forest, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021).

38. Bodine, *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, 5–6.

39. Ernst R. Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric: Case Studies in Text Analysis and Translation*, 2nd ed., SIL International Publications in Translation and Textlinguistics 7 (Dallas: SIL International Publications, 2014), 353–83.

40. Niccacci, “Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi.”

offers a fresh perspective on an often-discussed passage,⁴¹ and the contribution by E. Ray Clendenen, who approaches the text from the perspective of emotions.⁴² As for the methodology to be used in this work, there are no studies on Malachi from a reader-oriented approach focused on the TIR.⁴³

The use of blessing and cursing in Malachi has been previously noted. Opinions range from those who see it as a side feature in the text, to those who see a blessing or a curse behind virtually every verse in the book.⁴⁴ Such range of opinions warrants a fresh look into the issue. This study seeks to do that by even-handedly analyzing the use of blessing and cursing in Malachi on the levels of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

Methodology

There are numerous synchronic approaches to explore biblical texts. Nonetheless, at its core blessing and cursing are about communication and the impact of that communication. It is for this reason that a reader-oriented approach is used here to explore the text-internal communication in the book of Malachi and the impact of blessing and cursing on the characters and the TIR.

There is not necessarily a one-to-one correlation between the world of a text and the outside world, the real world.⁴⁵ The text presents a reality that may or may not align with reality in the real world, but it is a reality that needs to be analyzed and understood within its own world. When the distinction between the world of the text and the real world is not acknowledged, many questions but few answers come to light, since those questions are irrelevant in the world of the text, the only world to which we have full access in the case of biblical texts.

41. Gerrie F. Snyman, "A Hermeneutic of Vulnerability: Edom in Malachi 1:2-5," *Journal for Semitics* 25 (2016): 595–629.

42. E. Ray Clendenen, "A Passionate Prophet: Reading Emotions in the Book of Malachi," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23 (2013): 207–21.

43. Clendenen does hold to the notion of an "ideal reader" or an "ideal audience" as an important interpretative element to consider, in order to expound prophetic texts, but he does not fully expand on what he means by those terms. See, Clendenen, "Textlinguistics and Prophecy in the Book of the Twelve."

44. For an overview of opinions regarding the presence of blessing and cursing in Malachi see Andy R. Espinoza, "Malachi's Blessings and Curses in Relation to the Covenantal Blessings and Curses of Deuteronomy 27-30" (Silang, Cavite, Philippines, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2004), 3–7; Stuart, "Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," 1261–62.

45. A text is understood as "any form of expression in which a message is communicated from a sender-entity to a receiver-entity." Frank G. Bosman and Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, *Video Games as Art: A Communication-Oriented Perspective on the Relationship between Gaming and the Art*, vol. 12, Video Games and the Humanities (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), 12.

The realization of the distinction between the world of the author and the world of the text has meant that historically the methodologies applied in biblical exegesis have successively focused on the historical author, then the text, and lastly on the reader.⁴⁶ The basic methodology to be applied in this study will be that of discourse analysis with special focus on the communication between the TIA and the TIR.⁴⁷ Analysis of rhetorical aspects, as well as issues of innertextuality and intertextuality, will also be employed as aids to discourse analysis. This means that semantic and thematic relations between texts are embedded in the textual communication structures.

The method of discourse analysis, as applied here, follows the line of Harald Weinrich, Wolfgang Schneider, and Eep Talstra, as practiced at the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology.⁴⁸ It involves a three-step approach to the text: a syntactic analysis exposing the structure of the text, a semantic analysis exploring the semantic themes in the text, and a communication analysis exploring how the TIA manipulates the text to impact and possibly involve the TIR.⁴⁹

Clearly distinguishing between syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects leads to a more scientific approach to the text.⁵⁰ Similarly, approaching these steps sequentially

46. For a discussion of the evolution of methodologies for Biblical exegesis, see Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," *Наукоев Записки ВКУ: Богослов'я* 7 (2020): 27–46.

47. The method of discourse analysis, together with text-linguistics, has been considered as an application of pragmatic analyses. Marco di Giulio, "Pragmatics: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

48. As did R. E. Longacre, I became familiar with the work of Wolfgang Schneider through the work of Eep Talstra. I later learned that Schneider based much of his work on that of Harald Weinrich. See, Robert Edmondson Longacre, "Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb: Affirmation and Restatement," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 177; Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. Randall L. McKinion, *Studies in Biblical Hebrew* 1 (New York: Peter Lang, 2016); Harald Weinrich, *Tempus: Besprochene und Erzählte Welt*, *Sprache und Literatur* 16 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1964). This kind of discourse analysis is also identified as text-linguistics, involving the steps of text-syntax, text-semantics, and text-pragmatics. See, Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 7. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Notes on Isaiah 38-39," *Biblische Notizen* 102 (2000): 28–32. A similar methodology is that of semiotics, involving the steps of semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Baker Academic, 2005), s.v. Semiotics.

49. For examples of such a studies, see, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Isaiah 24:21-25:12: A Communicative Analysis: Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24-27," in *Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24-27* (Atlanta, 2013), 77–97. Bincy Thumpanathu, "Communication and the Role of the Lord in Amos: Their Development and Their Implications for the Text-Immanent Reader" (Doctoral Thesis, Utrecht, Eburon, 2019). Pratheesh Michael Pulickal, *Exploring Kenosis Spirituality: The Implications for the CMI's Spiritual Formation: A Communication-Oriented Analysis* (LIT Verlag Münster, 2022). For a similar approach involving a text-linguistic analysis, a subjective domain analysis, and communication analysis, see, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

50. Christo H. J. van der Merwe, "Some Recent Trends in Biblical Hebrew Linguistics: A Few Pointers Towards a More Comprehensive Model of Language Use," *Hebrew Studies* 44 (2003): 14.

allows for better use of insights. In a synchronic analysis, syntactical observations have priority over semantic ones, which in turn have priority over pragmatic ones.⁵¹ This does not mean that semantic or pragmatic observations are invalid. Rather, different observations should proceed in a particular order to provide the best results.

Syntax provides the general framework in which semantic elements can be analyzed.⁵² Syntactic and semantic analyses are useful to bring out meaningful exegetical information, as well as to inform about the constituent parts of texts and how they function together.⁵³ After these two previous steps are accomplished, we can access the communicative effect of text-pragmatics.⁵⁴ All these methods are text-bound and do not pretend to discover supposed historical situations or psychological motivations on the part of the real author(s) or reader(s).⁵⁵

Syntactical Analysis

Texts are composed of morphemes, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs.⁵⁶ In consequence, discourse analysis assumes that texts are not linear sequences of clauses but are hierarchical in nature.⁵⁷ In the syntactical analysis, I examined the text to see how clauses relate to each other hierarchically to reveal the structure of the text. These relationships are then used to interpret grammatical features, considering the textual level in which they appear.⁵⁸ The proper identification of clauses and the relationship between them is important as this will determine the identification of textual units and the relationship between those units. This in turn will affect the outcome of exegesis.⁵⁹

51. Eep Talstra, "Deuteronomy 8 and 9 Synchronic and Diachronic Observations," in *Synchronic or Diachronic: A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* [Papers Read at the Ninth Joint Meeting of Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap En Nederland En België and the Society for Old Testament Study, Held at Kampen, 1994], ed. Johannes Cornelis de Moor, Oudtestamentische Studiën 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 193.

52. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 2. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Psalm 122: Syntax and the Position of the I-Figure and the Text-Immanent Reader: Composition of the Book of Psalms," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (Leuven, 2010), 748.

53. See for example, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The 'I'-Figure's Relations in the Poem in Isa 38,10-20," *Biblica* 96 (2015): 481–97.

54. Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 7; Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible I: Elements of a Theory," 169; Eep Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible II: Syntax and Semantics," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 39 (1982): 35.

55. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The Reader in Genesis 22:1-19: Textsyntax - Textsemantics - Textpragmatics," *Estudios Bíblicos* 53 (1995): 290.

56. Eep Talstra, "Text Linguistics: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

57. Robert D. Bergen, "Discourse Analysis: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

58. Talstra, "Text Linguistics: Biblical Hebrew."

59. S. D. Snyman, "Rethinking the Demarcation of Malachi 2:17-3:5," *Acta Theologica* 31 (2011): 156.

The first step in the syntactical analysis is to divide the Hebrew text into clauses. In the hierarchical model followed here, morphemes form phrases, phrases form clauses, clauses form sentences, sentences form paragraphs, and paragraphs form the text. A clause is formed by a series of words having a subject, implicit or explicit, and a predicate.⁶⁰ For the purposes of this research, I consider a clause any textual structure that has a predicate.⁶¹ Also, for practical reasons, I consider vocatives as clauses, so it is clear who is addressed where in the text, and I focus on clauses and paragraphs in the syntactical analysis.

The second step in the process is to connect clauses using a binary system of text hierarchy.⁶² This hook system is used to indicate the relation between clauses. A single line is used to indicate default or unmarked narrative or discursive texts. Double lines are used to indicate the presence of a speech.⁶³ No more than two clauses are connected to each other in this system.⁶⁴ This binary system forces the researcher to carefully consider markers inside the clauses themselves in order to discern how to hierarchically connect them.⁶⁵

The third step is to identify textual units and the hierarchical connections between those units. This is accomplished by noting syntactical, morphological, and lexical elements.⁶⁶ Paying attention to these signs results in a text hierarchy that guides the implied reader through the text.⁶⁷ Syntactical and morphological elements include discourse markers or macro syntactical markers, asyndetic clauses, disjunctive particles, conjunctive particles, interrogative particles, introductory formulas, emphatic particles, emphatic constructions, inclusions, changes in person, number and gender—possibly signaling a change in speaker or addressee, pronominalization, renominalization, etc.⁶⁸ Macro syntactical signs usually mark the connection between larger units and are thus used to discern the structure of the text.⁶⁹ Lexical elements

60. Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jacobus A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), sec. 12.1.

61. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 8.

62. Van Wieringen, 10.

63. Speeches can be direct or indirect. Furthermore, speeches can be embedded inside other speeches. Cf. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Isaiah 12,1-6: A Domain and Communication Analysis," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, 1997, 150.

64. Van Wieringen, 9–12.

65. See the appendix for my clause division and working translation of the text of Malachi.

66. Talstra, "Deuteronomy 8 and 9 Synchronic and Diachronic Observations," 194.

67. Eep Talstra and E. J. van Wolde, "Workshop: Clause Types, Textual Hierarchy, Translation in Exodus 19, 20 and 24," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible. Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996* (Brill, 1997), 5.

68. See, Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible I: Elements of a Theory," 173. See also Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 40.1.4.

69. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 9.

include lexical repetitions, use of synonyms, antonyms, isotopes, etc. Syntactical elements, especially macro syntactical elements should be given priority over semantic ones.⁷⁰

Other syntactic and morphological signs pertain to changes in word order and the use of verbal forms. Languages combine words, functioning as subject, verb, objects, and adjuncts, to convey meaning. Authors signal their message and the internal structure of their message through the words they intentionally choose and the way they arrange those words.⁷¹ Furthermore, languages have usual or unmarked patterns which are pragmatically neutral,⁷² and when speakers deviate from those patterns they do so for particular reasons,⁷³ usually to signal a change in topic or focus.⁷⁴ It is only reasonable to assume that in biblical Hebrew, as is the case in other languages, when a writer chose to use a particular verbal form, or a combination of verbal forms, he intended to signal particular temporal and aspectual elements.⁷⁵

This issue of verbal forms is an important element I used in the syntactic analysis of Malachi. This pertains to an approach to the biblical Hebrew verbal system including the elements of orientation, relief, and perspective, as proposed by Schneider and refined by Talstra and others.⁷⁶ This approach was used to produce the working translation and, more importantly for this section, these elements also influenced the way clauses were connected to each other resulting in a hierarchy of textual units. Noting the use of verbal forms also reveals the structure of the text.⁷⁷

Different verbal forms or combinations of verbal forms are considered to be used to express the three main oppositions of the biblical Hebrew verbal system: orientation

70. Cf. Eep Talstra, "Clause Types and Textual Structure: An Experiment in Narrative Syntax," in *Narrative and Comment: Contributions to Discourse Grammar and Biblical Hebrew Presented to Wolfgang Schneider on the Occasion of His Retirement as a Lecturer of Biblical Hebrew at the Theologische Hochschule in Wuppertal*, ed. Eep Talstra (Amsterdam: Societas Hebraica Amstelodamensis, 1995), 170–71.

71. Gerda de Villiers, "Interpreting Texts and the Matter of Context: Examples from the Book of Ruth," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40 (2019): 2.

72. In Biblical Hebrew, the unmarked word order is considered to be verb + subject + object and any modifiers. Constructions with an element preceding the verb are usually considered marked. See, Adina Moshavi, "Word Order: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan, Shmuel Bolozky, Steven Fassberg, Gary A. Rendsburg, Aaron D. Rubin, Ora R. Schwarzwald, and Tamar Zewi (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

73. MacDonald, "Discourse Analysis and Biblical Interpretation," 17.

74. See, Christo H. J. van der Merwe and Ernst R. Wendland, "Marked Word Order in the Book of Joel," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 36 (January 2010): 109–30.

75. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 59.

76. See, Eep Talstra, "Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew: The Viewpoint of Walter Schneider," *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 5 (1992): 269–97.

77. Van Wieringen, "The Reader in Genesis 22:1-19: Textsyntax - Textsemantics - Textpragmatics," 291–96.

or communication type, indicating whether a text is narrative or discourse; relief, indicating whether a verbal form is part of the foreground or the background of the text; and perspective, indicating whether the action is to be located before, during, or after the now moment in the text.⁷⁸

The *wayyiqtol* is the characteristic form of narrative texts, while the *yiqtol* and *q^etol* are the characteristic forms of discursive texts.⁷⁹ These verbal forms can also be used to signal a change in the speakers' orientation. A *yiqtol* can be used to insert a brief speech in a narrative text, and a *wayyiqtol* can be used to insert a brief narration in a discursive text.⁸⁰

Wayyiqtols are also used to indicate the foreground actions in narrative texts, while *yiqtols* and *q^etols* indicate the foreground actions in discursive texts.⁸¹ Typically, both in narrative and discursive texts, *qatal* forms provide background information and have a negative or past perspective. *Qatals* can also on occasion have zero perspective, and thus convey the idea of a now moment in the text. *w^eqatals* typically convey a positive or future perspective.⁸² In general, non-verbal clauses belong to the now moment in the text.⁸³

This approach to biblical Hebrew verbal system is not universally accepted, however. For some scholars the morphology of Hebrew verbs simply has nothing to do with signaling information such as foreground or background.⁸⁴ Other scholars do take verbal forms to signal such elements, but interpret them in a different way. R. E. Longacre follows the same basic line as Schneider and Talstra in the analysis of verbal forms according to the discourse type and exploring the function of those verbal forms in each discourse type. But he identifies several more text types beyond narration and discursion. He proposes texts such as narrative, predictive, procedural/ instructional, hortatory, expository, and judicial discourse.⁸⁵ Similarly, David Allan Dawson advocates for different text types, each with its own prevalent mainline verbal forms.

78. Talstra and Wolde, "Workshop: Clause Types, Textual Hierarchy, Translation in Exodus 19, 20 and 24," 8. See also, Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 2–11.

79. Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible I: Elements of a Theory," 170–72.

80. Talstra, "Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew: The Viewpoint of Walter Schneider," 280–81.

81. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 6.

82. For a more detailed discussion, see, Van Wieringen, 2–7. For a practical example of how these kind of syntactical observations are applied to make exegetical choices, see, Van Wieringen, "Psalm 122."

83. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 55.

84. Elizabeth Robar, "Grounding: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

85. See, Longacre, "Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb: Affirmation and Restatement."

Texts are labelled as narrative, predictive, hortatory, and expository.⁸⁶ Niccacci takes a slightly different route. For him, several verbal forms relating to the past, present, and future, can signify the foreground in texts. Furthermore, some forms could either mark the foreground or background.⁸⁷ The ambiguities in his model seem to shift the analysis from syntax to semantics. Despite the criticisms to this approach to the biblical Hebrew verbal system based on orientation, relief, and perspective, it has proven useful in the analysis of biblical texts. This study seeks to continue exploring the usefulness of the approach.

The result of combining clauses considering the syntactic, morphemic, and semantic information they contain is that the underlying syntactical structure of the text was revealed. The data collected served to identify the start and end of textual units, identify direct and embedded speeches in units, and finally to identify the relationship between units. The division of the text into clauses and the hierarchical connection of clauses is my own work. Computer databases that attempt to accomplish a similar goal have been and continue to be developed.⁸⁸

Semantic Analysis

The field of semantics deals with elements of history, anthropology, cognitive studies, linguistics, and literary studies in its search to understand how words are used to convey meaning.⁸⁹ In the present semantic analysis, I identify semantic techniques in the text, then determine what semantic lines or themes are expressed through those semantic techniques, and finally, analyze how semantic lines relate to each other. Special note is made of how the theme of blessing and cursing brings coherence to the text.

The exploration of semantics in the text of Malachi revealed the use of several techniques. These are listed below, ranked from those deemed more objective and therefore more readily identifiable, to those deemed more subjective and therefore harder to perceive. I assume that the more objective techniques are more useful, since

86. See, David Allan. Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 177 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 115–16. Note specially chapter 3 where the author attempts to propose a cohesive method for textual analysis.

87. Niccacci, “Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi,” 58.

88. Cf. Eep Talstra, “Computer-Assisted Linguistic Analysis the Hebrew Database Used in Quest.2,” *Bible and Computer*, 2002, 3–22; A. J. C. Verheij and Eep Talstra, “Crunching Participles: An Aspect of Computer Assisted Syntactical Analysis Demonstrated on Isaiah 1-12,” in *A Prophet on the Screen: Computerized Description and Literary Interpretation of Isaianic Texts*, ed. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen and Eep Talstra (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992).

89. Ingrid Faro, “Semantics,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016).