**Modern Approaches to Order and Juxtaposition**

**S.D. Luzzatto (Shadal) 1800-1865**

In the introduction to his commentary on the Torah, Shadal wrote:[[1]](#footnote-1)

For creation is something not intelligible to the human mind and so will always be. . . . Likewise concerning the order in which He who gave the Torah arranged His stories, and likewise the reason for His many repetitions. It would be wonderful if we could find an explanation for these matters, if that could be done without damaging the true meaning of the verses. However, such explanation is not essential nor is it always within the possibility of human reason. It is best to leave these phenomena as they are, rather than offering explanations that are neither satisfying nor certain . . . .

Just as it is wrong to explain each clause or phrase in a verse independently, or to treat subordinate and coordinate sentences separately without regard for the whole pericope, so is it equally wrong to tie together two adjacent verses that are clearly not connected in meaning or nature, despite the fact that they stand near each other. Indeed, in the legal parts of the Torah, many laws come one after another, with no connection whatsoever. . . . Nor could it be otherwise in a book which includes laws of every sort. Two laws of disparate character that deal with different subjects should not be seen as tied to each other, even if they are juxtaposed. They should rather be seen as completely distinct and independent . . . .

To find an explanation for juxtaposition (*semikhut*) . . . is not a requirement, and sometimes it is beyond our capabilities. Therefore, in most cases it is pointless to spend time on this . . . it can actually do damage, for learning from the juxtaposition of two commandments may result in faulty explanations for either one of them. Hence, whenever we see the Talmudic rabbis establishing a *halakha* (ruling) which they derived *prima facie* from the juxtaposition of verses . . we must view this *halakha* as an ancient tradition that was passed down orally. The proof from juxtaposition should be considered as no more than *asmakhta* (supporting evidence; a scriptural hint to the ruling).

In support of his view, Luzzatto goes on to say that not all the Talmudic rabbis agree to derive laws from juxtaposition. He cited the following: “R. Judah did not expound from juxtaposition save for Deuteronomy” (BT *Yevamot* 4a). It is important to note that in most of the above quotations, Shadal was criticizing explanations of juxtaposition for the legal portions of the Pentateuch. However, when it came to narrative, he maintained that all parts of a story were related and had to explain one another.[[2]](#footnote-2) Hence there was room for literary interpretation of biblical stories, including meanings derived from juxtaposition.

**Moshe David (Umberto) Cassuto (1883-1951)**

Unlike Luzzatto, Cassuto had high regard for the question of biblical order; he saw in it a key to understanding the Bible and its formation in its ancient Near Eastern background. Further, he did not limit the discussion to one type of literature alone. The English volume of his papers, translated from articles in Hebrew, Italian, German and French, opens with “The Sequence and Arrangement of the Biblical Sections,” a paper delivered in 1947, followed by essays on the juxtaposition of chapter 38 in Genesis, the order of prophecies in Hosea, and the arrangement of chapters in Ezekiel.[[3]](#footnote-3) In his opening remarks, he noted that many biblical texts such as Latter Prophets, Psalms, and Canticles, which were originally in the nature of anthologies, seem to have no order at all:

Now the reader studying these books finds in them, particularly if he is accustomed to the methods of European literatures, features that appear to him surprising and strange in respect of the order of the subject-matter and the sequence of the sections. It seems to him that the arrangement of the original units within the book is incorrect, or that the book is without any order whatsoever.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Such conclusions, however, were invalid because the forms of arrangement in the Bible and in ancient Near Eastern literature might appear “natural and correct to the peoples of the ancient East, yet would never occur to a person accustomed to ways of Western thinking.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Apparently Cassuto agreed with Abravanel (1437-1508) that regarding the Bible, “one cannot impute to the Almighty … the flaws and failings of a disordered book.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

The order that Cassuto discovered was “that of association-- not just association of ideas but also, and primarily, association of words and expressions.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Cassuto demonstrated this understanding of juxtaposition in various lectures that he gave on sequence in Leviticus and Numbers before students at the Hebrew University in 1951 and in several entries that he wrote for *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (Hebrew). He compared the arrangement of the biblical text to the ordering of Mishnaic literature. The Mishnah has six units (*sedarim*) containing a total of 63 tractates that are topically arranged. Within each tractate, however, many individual mishnahs are sequenced in accord with similar words and formulae, sometimes resulting in the inclusion of subject matter unrelated to the tractate. Take for example Tractate Megillah chapter 1, in which seven mishnahs, totally unconnected in their subject matter, follow one another, because they all share the identical opening phrase, ‘*ein bein*,’ “There is no difference between [the following two items].” This mnemotechnic device served the original requirement to study the Mishnah by heart, rather than in written form. That is why rabbinic literature is called *Torah she-be’al peh*, “Oral Torah.” Cassuto maintained that a similar route was followed when writing down the Pentateuch, which “was also initially an oral tradition.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

Associative juxtaposition also explains the insertion of the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 between two parts of the Joseph story, chapters 37 and 39. All three chapters share a common verbal root, *YRD*. Gen 37:35 reads, in closing, “for I [Jacob] will go down (*ered* ) to Sheol;”, Just two verses later, 38:1 begins with “Judah went down (*vayered*) from amongst his brothers;" finally, 39:1 opens with “And Joseph was taken down (*hurad*) to Egypt.” “Going down” turns into a motif which not only determines the placement of the stories, but also influences their meaning.

Likewise, several stories in Exodus 16 – 17 were placed together because each one contained the root *NSH* (נסה) meaning ‘to test, to try’. In both cases, the word that heralds the juxtaposition becomes a *leitwort* or motif whose meaning greatly enhances our understanding of these stories.[[9]](#footnote-9) Some of these word associations were already noted by Midrash, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra, but Cassuto turned the phenomenon into an exegetical tool.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Cassuto’s insight enabled him to propose a novel answer to the classic rabbinic question, “Why was the law of the Nazirite (Num6:1-21) placed (*nismekha*) right after the law of the Sotah (Num5:11-31)?” In Western ways of thinking, in order to explain this adjacency, we might seek out similarities between a female Nazirite and a wayward wife, or perhaps parallels in the prescribed ritual for both (thematic association). Taking another approach, Ibn Ezra saw both women as contrasting figures.[[11]](#footnote-11) Cassuto saw the connection in the root *PRC* (*פרע*)*.* In the section on the Sotah we read: *(*וּפָרַע אֶת-רֹאשׁ הָאִשָּׁה) “the priest shall dishevel the woman’s hair” or “let the hair of the woman's head go loose.” In the law of the Nazirite we read (*(*גַּדֵּל פֶּרַע שְׂעַר רֹאשׁוֹ, “he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long.” Both unrelated passages speak of growing the hair or letting it out and both use the same root, *PRC*. This is associative juxtaposition: the two sections follow one another because of the linguistic similarity.

In addition, Cassuto also explained a second link between the guilt offering (*asham*) in Num.5:8-9 and the meal offering brought by the Sotah or wayward woman in Num5:12. Since the paragraph of the guilt offering includes the phrase “thus breaking faith with the Lord” (כי ימעול מעל), it is immediately followed by the pericope of the Sotah, which opens with “and [she has] broken faith with him” (ומעלה בו מעל ). Breaking faith in both pericopes is expressed by the identical word *ma’al*. Once again, we take an association of language to be an original mnemotechnical device that links two sections.

We have seen in an earlier chapter that several of Cassuto’s associative explanations were already found in the medieval commentary of Ibn Ezra. The latter pioneered in applying the rudiments of associative juxtaposition to biblical order, considering this to be the peshat, while Cassuto saw this method not only as a literary technique that explained juxtaposition, but also as a clue to the formation of biblical books.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Alexander Rofé (1932 -): The Arrangement of the Laws in Deuteronomy**

Alexander Rofé, Cassuto’s student, devoted a chapter with the above title to his teacher’s ideas on associative order.[[13]](#footnote-13) Before going into detail, it is worthwhile stating what Rofé felt was the significance of Cassuto’s work:

The argument that the books of the Bible were arranged according to a certain method challenges the theory that the books grew gradually round an original nucleus later augmented by additions and redaction. It suggests instead that the books were ‘expertly arranged’ by editors. Thus, it becomes evident that Cassuto’s hypothesis about the associative arrangement of biblical pericopes yielded a complete picture as to the history of Israelite literature from its very beginning in oral transmission until its final editing in written scrolls.[[14]](#footnote-14)

According to Rofé, Cassuto suggested using the same principle, connection by association, to explain the internal arrangement of biblical legal codices that contained diverse commandments. Cassuto brought the following example: the law of the Molekh in Lv18:21 is set in the midst of prohibitions against forbidden sexual relations. Those prohibitions have a common theme, which explains why they are found together, but the law of the Molekh lacks any topical connection to them. Why was it placed here? Cassuto saw the connecting link in the Hebrew word *zrc* (“seed,” “offspring”). Lev18:20 reads, “And thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife, to defile thyself with her.” The Hebrew for “Thou shalt not lie carnally” is, לא תתן שכבתך לזרע, literally, “do not impregnate her with your seed.” In the adjacent Molekh law, Lev18:21, we read: “And thou shalt not give any of thy seed to set them apart to Molech.” The Hebrew for “any of thy seed,” meaning “children,” is *mizarcaka* (וּמִזַּרְעֲךָ לֹא-תִתֵּן לְהַעֲבִיר לַמֹּלֶךְ)*.* The use of the noun *zrc* with the predicate לֹא-תִתֵּן in both verses, “you shall not give of your seed,” “do not impregnate her with your seed,” accounts for their juxtaposition.[[15]](#footnote-15) “Evidently, the theory regarding the associative arrangement serves as a basis or support for the argument that the bulk of the material was transmitted orally before being written down.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

Rofé pointed out that there is a difference between the sequence of the Sotah followed by the Nazirite and the worship of Molekh as found with prohibited sexual relations. Although both cases illustrate associative connections, the case of the Molekh portrays the internal structure of a legal codex containing many laws, while Numbers 5 – 6 exemplifies the external arrangement of two adjacent chapters, what the rabbis called *semikhut parshiot*.[[17]](#footnote-17) Rofé writes that in his later lectures and articles, Cassuto spent more time on the juxtaposition of whole pericopes. Apparently, wrote Rofe, Cassuto’s thoughts on the subject of biblical order began with the association of individual verses, and proceeded to association as a literary device that could account for the arrangement of entire sections within a biblical book, determining the shape of the entire work.

To sum up: in Midrash and Talmud, adjacency (*semikhut*) functioned as a homiletical device, a means to derive a moral lesson over and above the message of the text itself. For the medieval commentators, the significance of adjacency moved from midrashic moralizing towards what would become the literary perception of the moderns, whose work I present in the current chapter.

Let us leave the adjacency of entire chapters or sections and return to the arrangement of details within a particular unit, which I will call internal juxtaposition. An interesting example is the list of princes (*nesi’im*) named for each tribe in Num.13:1-16. The tribal order given here is nowhere duplicated in the Pentateuch. In a lecture which Rofe attended as a student, Cassuto attempted to show that what appeared to be a helter skelter arrangement was in fact the result of several associative principles. In his opinion, the list began with four sons of Leah in chronological order: Reuben, Simon, Judah, and Issachar (no Levite was sent to spy the land). Next the list veered off into semantic association: *Yigal* *ben Yosef*, prince of the tribe of Issachar, led to *Hosea* *bin Nun* and *Palti ben Rafu*, because all three names (*Yigal, Hosea, Palti*) connote help and salvation. The list then returned to Leah’s sixth son, Zebulun, whose prince was *Gaddiel ben Sodi*. Similarity of sound for both father and son placed *Gaddi ben Susi* next, followed by *Amiel ben Gemali*, another semantic association: *susi* means "my horse" and *gemali* "my camel". The next prince is *Setur* son of *Michael* of the tribe of Asher; *Amiel* (*ben Gemali*) and *Michael* have similar sounding endings. The root of *setur, S-T-R,* means “to hide,” hence is followed by *Nahbi*, from the root *H-B-’*, “to hide.” The list ends with *Geuel ben Makhi*, perhaps because of the identical vowel in the final syllable of *Nahbi, Vophsi,* and *Makhi*.[[18]](#footnote-18) The internal structure of this list is the product of topical, semantic, and phonetic associations.

Lest one think, based on this example, that associative connections have rhyme but no reason, Cassuto maintained that association served a mnemonic function when the text was still an oral tradition. It enabled tradents to recite the material accurately until such time as it was written down.[[19]](#footnote-19)

While Rofé was right to distinguish between the internal arrangement of laws in a single unit and the external juxtaposition of two pericopes, Midrash itself did not differentiate between adjacent verses and adjacent chapters. Further, ibn Ezra gave many explanations for adjacent verses within legal codes, but he also considered a legal code to be a type of juxtaposed paragraph with a central uniting theme. Perhaps the term that he coined, *devekut haparshiot*, "pericopes that cling together," came to identify a unifying theme for the internal arrangement of independent laws found in a single pericope. External ties between two units, whether phonetically associative or based on similar content, were called by ibn Ezra *semikhut parshiot* or some other form of the root *S-M-KH.*

**בובר,** דרכו של מקרא, "סגנון המלה-המנחה בסיפורי התורה", 284-299. בהערה 4 משבח בובר את קסוטו שהלך בדרכו. יש קשר בין מילה מנחה , משחק מילילם, וקשר אסוסיאטיבי.

**Robert Alter**

Alter chose to begin his now-classic book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, with the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38. “I shall begin with the last five verses of Genesis 37 in order to make clear the links between frame-narrative and interpolation.”[[20]](#footnote-20) Alter explained the story of Judah and Tamar based on its ‘interpolation’ –his equivalent for our ‘juxtaposition’-- between parts of the larger story of Joseph in chapters 37 and 39. In his opinion this sequence gives us the context of the Judah – Tamar story and supplies important information for its literary analysis.

Alter knew that the Midrash proceeded along the same lines: “It is instructive that the two verbal cues indicating the connection between the story of the selling of Joseph and the story of Tamar and Judah were duly noted more than 1500 years ago in the Midrash”.[[21]](#footnote-21) However, Alter tries to distance his method from that of Midrash, claiming that he offered a literary reading of the entire textual sequence, while “Midrash provides exegesis of specific phrases or narrated actions but not continuous *readings* of the biblical narratives.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

Alter relates Buber’s concept of the leading-word (*leitwort*) to juxtaposition: “Word-motifs are more typically used, however, in larger narrative units, to sustain a thematic development and to establish instructive connections between seemingly disparate episodes.”[[23]](#footnote-23) He cites Michael Fishbane, who saw the keywords *berakha* and *bekhora*, “blessing” and “firstborn” in the cycle of Jacob stories, as creating “a formal structure of inclusions and order which stand in ironic contrast to the machinations of the content.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

**Yair Zakovitch**

Juxtaposition for Zakovitch is a form of inner-biblical interpretation.[[25]](#footnote-25) The meaning conveyed by juxtaposition did not begin with the Midrash of the Rabbis; it is already to be found in the Bible itself. However, within the Bible the sense of the juxtaposition is usually concealed and must be revealed by the reader. Nevertheless, there are places where the Bible itself understood the message of juxtaposition and indeed created it. We have seen above that Alter noted a connection between juxtaposition and the idea of the *leitwort* or leading word as explained by Buber. In the cycle of Abraham stories, Zakovitch identified connections between adjacent stories based on the identical leading word (*leitwort*) that appears in both.[[26]](#footnote-26) In addition, he relied on similar content, what Rofe called topical juxtaposition. Sometimes, Zakovitch read two neighboring stories as cause and result, a good reason to juxtapose.

In his commentary to the Song of Songs,[[27]](#footnote-27) Zakovitch cites an article by Cassuto that shows how associative juxtaposition between poems affects both their order and content.[[28]](#footnote-28) So, for example, two poems in Songs 4:1-7 and 4:8-11 are linked by word association. At the conclusion of the first song, 4:7, having praised the body of the beloved in the *wasf* tradition, the lover announces that he was off to the mountains ("I will betake me to the mount of myrrh, To the hill of frankincense"). Frankincense, a spice, is Hebrew *levonah*.

In the next song, beginning at 4:8, the lover does not go anywhere; instead, he begs his beloved to come down from the heights of Lebanon, Hebrew *levanon,* to be with him ("From Lebanon come with me"). For Cassuto, the wordplay *levonah* – *levanon* determined that these two poems should follow one another. So far as the meaning of the juxtaposition, the astute reader who has both poems in front of him may suddenly realize that the hills and dales being described are not panoramic views of the countryside but rather further references to the body of his beloved close at hand.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Zakovitch believes that the editors of the Bible intentionally arranged the pericopes so that additional messages could be conveyed by adjacency. He speculates that words in the text were changed by the editor in order to draw successive paragraphs even closer.[[30]](#footnote-30) This would make associative juxtaposition a textual feature and as such, the proper deciphering of its message may be considered *peshuto shel miqra*, the simple intended meaning. However, Zakovitch admits that “differentiating between substantive juxtaposition and that which has no meaning is not an easy call.”[[31]](#footnote-31) Unlike the meaning of a verse or story which is supported by the context, the grammar, and many other factors, there are few aids to the meaning of juxtaposition*.* Zakovitch attempts to distinguish between the “authentic” messages of juxtaposition and the midrashic homilies which try to explain it. It is best left to the judgment of the reader whether Zakovitch’s explanations of juxtaposition qualify as the simple meaning or are they rather modern Midrash.

**Historical-Critical Scholarship**

Classic historical-critical scholarship of the Bible views instances of non-chronological order as “corruptions” that came about during the editing process and gives itself license to “correct” them. The intent of the Bible is to render all its events chronologically and any diversion from this rule is suspect as error. Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn (1857-1935), in his book *Seder Lamikra* (*Order in the Bible*) also sought to rearrange biblical events and place them in chronological order.[[32]](#footnote-32) Hirschensohn believed that the Bible was originally arranged in this way, but was corrupted during the exile that followed the destruction of the First Temple.[[33]](#footnote-33) Despite extreme differences in approach—Hirschensohn was out to prove that the historical-critical method was in error—both the critics and Hirschensohn argued that the Bible was meant to reflect the order of the events it relates. Professor Moshe Greenberg criticized their underlying assumption:

It is observed in the Midrash that ‘Scripture disregards chronological order’; modern criticism has also noted that, and proceeds to rearrange text-material according to chronology. But if native Hebrew narrative (or editing) valued historical order less than we do, such a procedure only highlights the gap in values between us and them, without shedding light on their values.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Greenberg added that “a corollary of the above-mentioned midrashic observation, for example, is the legitimacy of inference from juxtaposition.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

**The Literary Approach**

Greenberg’s contention is supported by advocates of the “Bible as literature” school, who maintain that the order of the Bible is, above all, a literary issue rather than an historical one.[[36]](#footnote-36) Even if the Bible is perceived to be historical, the very fact that it is a written work means that it follows its own rules of order. We have seen in earlier chapters that a literary interpretation of “There is no ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ in the Torah” is already implied in *Mekhilta* for poetic and prophetic compositions; they need not be in chronological order. Similarly, we have seen how Ibn Ezra offered literary explanations for adjacent portions in his commentaries. We therefore cannot attribute only the simple understanding of this rule (that indeed there is no order to Scripture) to ancient times and relegate the “literary” use of the rule to modern exegesis. The straightforward meaning of the expression, as stated in *Sifre* *Numbers* 64, is indeed a negative one—there is no chronological order in the Torah. However, the more complex literary understandings for this principle as found in *Mekhilta* may be just as ancient.[[37]](#footnote-37)

**Elhanan Samet**

Rabbi Elhanan Samet’s essays on the weekly Torah portion combine rabbinic and medieval interpretations together with original analyses of a literary nature. In several studies Samet deals with issues of biblical order, particularly with Nahmanides’ understanding of the principle, “There is no earlier or later in the Torah.” I was not familiar with any of Samet’s essays when first formulating my ideas about biblical chronology. I was therefore pleased to find that some of my observations about Nahmanides as expressed in Chapter Five of this volume were quite similar to his explanations.[[38]](#footnote-38) Here is what he has to say about Nahmanides and chronology:

Nahmanides made heroic efforts to explain all of Scripture as being in chronological order. As much as possible, he avoided citing the rule that “there is no earlier or later in the Torah” and argued the point with other exegetes, in particular with Ibn Ezra, who often cited that expression.[[39]](#footnote-39)

As against this brief statement of Nahmanides’ view, Samet was often expansive and detailed when it came to explaining individual cases. So, for example, in an essay called, “The Story of the Death of the Firstborn and the Section ‘This Month’ included within It,” he actually treated 83 verses, Exodus 11:1 – 13:22, as a composite of various pericopes or sections, some narrative in nature, others legal or halakhic. These pericopes he divided into two subjects, the Tenth Plague and the Exodus from Egypt. The difference between narrative units and legal-halakhic ones was of major significance for Samet. He also shows concern for when and where each pericope was transmitted, and whether by the Lord to Moses or by Moses to the people. The entire essay is twenty pages long and includes Samet’s understanding of Ramban regarding chronology.

I have chosen a less complicated essay which illustrates Samet’s understanding of biblical order according to Nahmanides. command of rabbinic and medieval interpretation as regards a question of biblical order and his own. Israel arrived at a place called Marah after the Exodus from Egypt, thirsting for water that was, alas, not potable (Ex15:22 – 26). Once the bitter waters at Marah were sweetened by Moses as per the Lord’s instruction, we read: “There He made for them a fixed rule and there He put them to the test” (Ex 15:25). The Hebrew for “fixed rule” is the hendiadys *hok umishpat*.[[40]](#footnote-40) It is the way of Midrash to break up such a phrase: *hok* refers to laws with no stated reason, *mishpat* refers to rational commandments. According to the Midrash, Israel received at Marah, in advance of the Torah given at Sinai, three commandments (*mitzvot*), part ritual and part rational: the Sabbath, the Red Heifer, and Civil law or torts (BT Sanhedrin 56b).[[41]](#footnote-41)

Rashi adopted this interpretation in his comment on the verse (15:25):

Here He made for them a statute and an ordinance”—At Marah He gave them a few sections of the Torah in order that they might engage in the study thereof; *viz*., the sections containing the command regarding the Sabbath, the red heifer and the administration of justice (BT Sanhedrin 56b).[[42]](#footnote-42)

Ramban rejected this line of interpretation. For him, the phrase *hok umishpat* was not a reference to three specific commandments to be found later on in the Torah. He understood the term in its present context to mean customs and practices necessary for people about to embark on a journey through the desert. The sojourners must learn to withstand hunger and thirst; to appeal to the Lord for their needs, rather than to complain; to love their fellow man; to take advice from the elders; to conduct themselves with modesty within their tents. This behavior was termed *hok umishpat*.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Why did Nahmanides disagree with both Midrash and Rashi? Ramban did not explain himself, but Samet did. He noted that the three laws given at Marah-- the Sabbath, the Red Heifer, and tort law-- were all to be found in different places within the Pentateuch.[[44]](#footnote-44) Therefore, to maintain that they were given at Marah meant that they were not recorded in the Torah in their proper place, for there is no mention of them in the narrative about Marah. This would have compelled Nahmanides to say that the three laws were to be found in the Torah far from their chronologically correct place at Marah. To do so would mean that Nahmanides was admitting that “there is no earlier or later in the Torah,” meaning no proper chronology. This is something, says Samet, that Ramban studiously avoided.[[45]](#footnote-45)

However, rather than objecting outright to the approach of Midrash and Rashi, and out of respect for these earlier authorities,[[46]](#footnote-46) Ramban offered a modified version of the Midrash to make it palatable. The three enumerated subjects-- Sabbath, Red Heifer, and torts-- were not really “commanded” at Marah; they were merely told to the people at that spot in order to serve as an introduction to the system of positive and negative commandments (*mitzvot*).[[47]](#footnote-47) These would soon be given at Mount Sinai and at several later points in history.[[48]](#footnote-48) Here is Samet’s understanding of Ramban’s position:

The main reason Ramban explained the midrash and Rashi as he did was his constant attempt to maintain the chronological framework of the Torah. In his view, this framework included the halakhic pericopae as well, whose placement within the ongoing narrative reflects the time these pericopae were given. If we take the words of the rabbis [midrash and Rashi] literally, to mean that several commandments were given to Israel at Marah, we must admit an exception to the chronological frame of the Torah: these three commandments that were given to Israel at this early stage in its history were destined to be recorded in the Torah in different places much later within the biblical story, at a point which was not their true place. It was such an understanding that Ramban wanted to avoid.[[49]](#footnote-49)

However, Samet distinguishes between narrative and law (*halakha*) in Ramban’s comments. When speaking of story sections, it is Ramban’s way to refrain from using the rule “There is no earlier or later in the Torah” as much as possible. However, when it comes to determining when an independent legal or halakhic section was said, he has no difficulty applying this rule more flexibly. There are many factors which determine the placement of an halakhic paragraph in the Torah; the time when such a paragraph was announced to the people was not the most important consideration.[[50]](#footnote-50)

An example of a freer attitude towards legal pericopae and their place in the Torah can be seen in the rabbinic treatment of the biblical prohibition against eating the sciatic nerve of an animal, Hebrew *gid hanasheh*. According to both Mishna and Talmud in tractate Hullin, the prohibition or negative commandment was taught at Sinai, together with all the other commandments. However, it was inscribed in the Torah in Genesis as part of the narrative of Jacob struggling with the Angel, who crippled Jacob by injuring his sciatic nerve.[[51]](#footnote-51) Since this story was the reason for the prohibition, the prohibition was incorporated into the story. Of interest is Rashi’s explanation of the Mishnaic phrase, “it was said at Sinai but was written in its place.” After the commandments were given at Sinai, Moses wrote down this law within the narrative about Jacob, for the sake of future generations, so that they might know what the reason for the prohibition of *gid hanasheh* was.

**Hermann Gunkel**

*No internal ordering principle for the individual psalms has been transmitted for the whole*. To be sure, sometimes related psalms stand together in the collection of the psalter: ‘complaints of the individual’, ‘hymns’ (103-105), ‘thanksgiving psalms’ (40f), ‘royal psalms’ (20f) … thus no certainty exists in questionable cases, whether a psalm should be understood with its neighbor. …*The particular task of psalm studies should be to rediscover the relationships between the individual songs* that did not occur with the transmission, or that occurred only in part.[[52]](#footnote-52)

**Mordecai Zer Kavod: Da’at Miqra**

As we have seen above, the book [of Zechariah] is composed of five parts . . . these units are tied to each other through juxtaposition of motif and subject. With all that, chapter 9 teaches us that chronological order is not maintained here, and it is quite possible that the unit 12-14 or part of it was said before chapter 11 or even earlier, because “there is no earlier or later in the Torah.”[[53]](#footnote-53)

מרדכי ברויאר, לימוד התורה בשיטת הבחינות, הוצאת קרן המסורה, ירושלים תשס"ה. יחס האמונה למדע המקרא,9 - 29; שיטת הבחינות, 31 – 71.

“Ancient Libraries and the Ordering of the Biblical Books”, *Studies in Biblical Interpretation*, JPS: Philadelphia, 2000, 53-66.

Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis, *Studies*, 377-394.

U. Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, trans. Israel Abrahams, vol. I: Bible, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973.

U. Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, trans. Israel Abrahams, vol. II: Bible and Ancient Oriental Texts, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975.

Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 1-22.

Judah story is interpolated into the Joseph story. There are intimate connections of theme and motif (4). For Speiser, it is an entirely independent unit having no connection with the drama of Joseph, which it interrupts.

Verbal clues that connect pericopes.

What is the difference between the literary approach and Midrash interpretation? Kugel thinks that there is none.

*אלכסנדר רופא*, מבוא לספר דברים: חלק ראשון ופרקי המשך*, ירושלים, אקדמון, תשמ"ח. 1988.*

*פרק י"ז = "סידורם של החוקים בספר דברים", ספר זיכרון למ"ד קאסוטו, ירושלים, מאגנס, תשמ"ו, 217-235.*

Nahum Sarna, ‘Psalm 89’, *Biblical and Other Studies*, Alexander

1. Translated from the second Hebrew edition of the commentary on the Pentateuch (Dvir: Tel Aviv, 1965), p.21-22. The Hebrew introduction is based on an original Italian article which appeared in 1829 and was later republished in Italian together with the first edition of the Hebrew commentary on the Torah (Padua, 1871). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Luzzato, Introduction to Commentary, p.22. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. U. Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, trans. Israel Abrahams, vol. I: Bible, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cassuto, *Studies*, vol.1, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Abravanel’s Torah Commentary, Exodus, chapter 21, Horev: Jerusalem, 1987, p.339 (Heb.). See also Gersonides’ study of the order of precepts in Exodus 22 – 24 (*parashat Mishpatim*--Heb). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cassuto, *Studies*, ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid., p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. There is a clear connection between Martin Buber’s *leitwort* or leading word, as well as between associative juxtaposition and biblical wordplay. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Connection by association is by no means self-understood. For E.A. Speiser, Genesis, *Anchor Bible*, 299, chapter 38 is “a completely independent unit” having “no connection with the drama of Joseph, which it interrupts.” See Alter’s critique of classic critical interpretation in *Biblical Narrative*, 3-4ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See above, Chapter Four, Two Sorts of Juxtaposition, example 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. As explained by Rofé, see next paragraph. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The chapter appeared in Alexander Rofé, *Deuteronomy: Issues and Interpretation* (*OTS*) T&T Clark: London, 2002, 55 – 77; =*Studies in Bible Dedicated to the Memory of U. Cassuto*, Jerusalem: 1987, 217-235 (Heb.); =*Introduction to Deuteronomy*, Akademon: Jerusalem, 1988, 159-177 (Heb.). The English chapter also appeared in *ETL* 64,4 (1988): 265-87, available online. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Rofé, Deuteronomy, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. In fact, this phrase does not appear in classic rabbinic literature (Midrash and Talmud), which uses the word *nismekha*, “placed next to,” to talk about juxtaposition. Rofé, *Deuteronomy*, p. 57, n.10, points out that Rashi used the expression *semikhut haparshiot* in his Torah commentary at Deut.21:22. However, I found that he used it only once. On the whole it is a late phrase, found mainly from the 14th century onward. Cassuto himself preferred to call juxtaposition by association “*associatzia;*” in his commentary on Exodus he used the phrase *semikhut ha-ketuvim* for the internal arrangement of verses, see Rofe, *Introduction*, p.159, n.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Rofe, Introduction, 159, offers another explanation: Geuel ben Makhi had no associative connection with the preceding name, but was remembered as the name that closed the list. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The cantillation signs used until this day for Torah reading serve the same function, enabling the reader to accurately recall lengthy texts and their pronunciation without actually having committed them to memory. This works through an association of the words with the melody. Apparently, it is easier to memorize the cantillation signs and their respective sounds (the signs are not present in the Torah scroll and must be learned beforehand) than it is to memorize the text. Likewise, it must have been easier in the biblical period to remember topical, semantic, and phonetic associations than to memorize the entire text itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, Basic Books, New York: 1981, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid., 10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid., 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid., 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, New York: 1979, 40-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Yair Zakovitch, “Juxtaposition in Narrative as a Tool for Interpretation,” *An Introduction to Inner-Biblical Interpretation*, Reches Publishing House, Even- Yehuda: 1992, 35-41 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Yair Zakovitch, ‘Juxtaposition in the Abraham Cycle’, *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, D.P. Wright, D.N. Freedman, Avi Hurvitz (eds.) Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1995, 509–524. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Yair Zakovitch, The Song of Songs: *Introduction and Commentary*, Mikra Leyisrael, Am Oved-Magnes Press: 1992, 20 (Heb.); idem, *The Song of Songs: Riddle of Riddles,* trans. and ed. Valerie Carr Zakovitch, T&T Clark: Great Britain, 2019 is not a translation of the original Hebrew volume, but rather eight essays on major subjects in the Song. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. U. Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, trans. Israel Abrahams, vol. I: Bible, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973, 203-206. For some reason, Zakovitch treats only the first two poems in chapter 4, while Cassuto extends the associational links to the third poem as well, 4:12 - 5:3, which contains the word *levanon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Zakovitch, Song, 89 (Heb.). However, despite Cassuto and Zakovitch, perhaps the language associations between all three poems are evidence for reading all of chapter 4 as an original single composition containing multiple wordplays on the letters *LBN*. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. So, for example, “Midianite women” in Num25:1 was changed to “Moabite women” to bring this story about seducing Israel to idolatry in closer relation with the previous story of Balaam and the king of Moab (*Introduction*, p. 36). The message conveyed is that Balaam was responsible for the ensnarement story as well, as can be learned from Num31:8, 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. *Inner-Biblical Interpretation,* p.41. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Chayim Hirschenson, *Seder Lamikra: The Chronological Order of the Scriptures*, Palestine: Haibri Press, 5695 [the Hebrew title page carries the date “5693”] (Heb.). The following description appears on the title page: “In agreement with the Talmud, which repeatedly states that the Bible does not observe strict chronological sequence, this volume re-arranges passages and sections of the Holy Book, so as to create such chronological sequence.” [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. This view was also expounded by David Weiss-Halivni, *Revelation Restored*, 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Moshe Greenberg, *Studies in the Bible and Jewish Thought*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995, p. 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Greenberg, ibid. A similar critique is voiced by Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge, 1997, p. 3: “The results of the [Church] Fathers’ exegetical methods have often been dismissed because of their so-called disregard of history. . . . The shift in biblical studies has helped us to recognise that concern about ‘history’ has a very modern ring.” [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. This principle is expressed in Uriel Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997: “A literary reading deals with the story and not with the event related. … its goal is to listen to what the narrator has to say, not to reconstruct what actually happened” (xiv). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Mekhilta* is regarded as one of the earliest works of rabbinic literature. However, the fact that *Mekhilta* applies a principle worded “there is no ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ in the Torah” to texts in Prophets and Writings may indicate the secondary nature of this usage, as against the primary meaning of the principle in *Sifre Numbers*—to indicate the lack of chronological order in the Pentateuch alone. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Samet has published three series of studies on the weekly portion in Hebrew, *Studies in the Weekly Parasha*, First series, 2 vols., 2009; Second series, 2 vols., 2009; Third series, vol. 1, 2012; vol. 2, 2015. My study in Hebrew on rabbinic and medieval views of biblical order, *Yesh Seder Lamikra*, (English title: *Order in the Bible*) came out in 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Samet, Studies, Third Series, vol. 1, 323. He argued with Ibn Ezra’s writings, as they were not contemporaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The closest English equivalent would be “law and order.” [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The law of the red heifer is referred to in the Torah as a *hok* (Num19:2). However, the heifer does not appear in several midrashic sources as one of the three commandments, see remarks in Rashi, vol. 1, Appendix, 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. The text of Rashi follows Rashi, Silberman and Rosenblum. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Samet, Studies, Third Series, vol. 1, 342. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. The Sabbath appears in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) as well as in Ex23:12 and 31:12-17; torts appear in Exodus 21-23; the law of the red heifer is found in Num19:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. On Ramban’s understanding of that maxim, see Chapter Five, p.3, “There is no earlier or later in the Torah.” [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See Chapter Five, note 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Samet, Studies, Third Series, vol. 1, 343. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The traditional view is that commandments were given at Mount Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, and on the Plains of Moab. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Samet, *Studies,* third series, Genesis-Exodus, vol. 1, 343-344. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid., 342 – 344. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Mishna *Hullin* 7, 6; BT *Hullin* 101b. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, completed by J. Begrich, trans. J.D. Nogalski, Georgia:1998, p. 2-3.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Mordecai Zer -Kavod, *Introduction to Zachariah*, Da’at Miqra, The Twelve, 1990, p.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)