THE BOOKS OF ACTS AND *JUBILEES* IN DIALOGUE:
A LITERARY-INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF
THE NOAHIDE LAWS IN ACTS 15 AND 21

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### Introduction

It might seem a mundane observation that the precepts for Gentile believers to abstain from idolatry, sexual immorality, blood and things strangled occur three times, and in two different contexts in the book of Acts (15.21, 29 and 21.25). This observation, however, becomes interesting when one considers that the recurrence of these precepts, also referred to as the Noahide laws, creates a digression in the logical flow of the text in Acts 21.25. What might have been the motivation for this recurrent formation? Could there be some significance behind these repeated precepts, especially in the way they recur in Acts 21? It is these opening questions that serve as the entry point for this study of Luke's use of the Noahide laws in Acts.

In 1986 and 1990 Robert Tannehill's two-volume *Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts* was published, which made numerous literary connections within Luke's two-volume work.[1] In his literary analysis, Tannehill made use of a concept called 'echo-effect', whereby themes are 'developed, dropped, then presented again'.[2] The significance of this

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1. See Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986–1990). This work was the extension of an initial article that made use of 'echo-effect' in Acts; see *idem*, 'The Composition of Acts 3–5: Narrative Development and Echo Effect', *SBLSP* 23 (1984), pp. 217-40 (reprinted in Robert C. Tannehill, *The Shape of Luke's Story: Essays on Luke–Acts* [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2005], pp. 185-219).

2. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, I, p. 3. This concept should not be confused with the term 'echo' as used by Richard Hays and others. See Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.

device for Tannehill comes from the notion that 'characters and actions may echo characters and actions in another part of the story, as well as characters and actions of the scriptural story which preceded Luke–Acts', and 'these connections provide internal commentary on the story, clarifying meanings and suggesting additional nuances'.[3] Echo-effect is a concept in poetics that relates to the linguistic concept of redundancy, where redundancy is understood as the recurrence of elements in a text that disambiguates meaning and eliminates (mis)-interpretations.[4] These concepts, echo-effect and redundancy, are useful for interpreting New Testament narrative texts for at least two reasons. First, they have proven useful in linguistic models for literature that focus on realistic narrative.[5] This credential is especially promising for studying Luke–Acts due to Luke's two-volume work's conforming to the literary conventions of Greco-Roman historiography.[6] Secondly, Tannehill's work acknowledges the necessity of

14-21. For clear definitions of 'echo' used in Hays's sense, see also Stanley E. Porter, 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Methodology and Terminology', in Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (eds.), *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals* (JSNTSup, 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 79-96 (82-83); *idem*, 'Further Comments on the Use of the Old Testament', in Thomas L. Brodie, Dennis R. MacDonald and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *The Intertextuality of the Epistles: Explorations of Theory and Practice* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), pp. 98-110 (109).

3.  Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, I, p. 3.

4.  Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'Redundancy and the "Readable" Text', *Poetics Today* 1 (1980), pp. 119-42 (120).

5.  Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 122.

6.  Luke's concern with historicity has long been considered a distinguishing feature of his books, but this does not preclude his role as narrator and the literary liberties this entails. On the writing of ancient historiography, see David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (LEC, 8; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), pp. 77-156, who describes Luke–Acts as 'a popular "general history" written by an amateur Hellenistic historian' (p. 77), and who describes Greco-Roman historians as concerned with both the plausibility and persuasiveness of their writing, the latter resulting in 'depicting particular individuals as examples of virtue or vice' (p. 83). Additional clarification as to what kind of history Luke was writing has been offered by Andrew Pitts in his doctoral dissertation, *The Genre of the Third Gospel and Authoritative Citation* (PhD diss., McMaster Divinity College, 2014), where he argues against the thesis of Richard Burridge that Luke's gospel conforms to the genre of the Greco-Roman βίοι. Cf. Richard A. Burridge,

going outside the text to recover redundancies that entail between a text and its background. Although Tannehill refers specifically to the story of Scripture as the background of Luke's work, he helps to show how echo-effect and redundancy correspond to intertextuality, even though he has a limited view of intertextuality in mind.

The term 'intertextuality' is used in several ways in New Testament studies. Therefore, to be clear, I will use the theory of intertextuality developed by Jay L. Lemke, a systemic-functional linguist, and his model for intertextual thematic analysis, which has begun to be used productively in New Testament studies.[7] Because Tannehill's account of echo-effect includes content that precedes Luke–Acts, this account recognizes that redundancies can occur from outside the text itself, and we do not have to limit our scope to the story of Scripture, but we can look more immediately at the cultural context in which Luke wrote.[8] Thus, recurrent patterns in a text can be brought into dialogue with recurrent patterns in the culture, which can broaden the scope for

*What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (SNTSMS, 70; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). However, some have denied the historicity of Acts. For example, see Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 115-38, who focuses on the 'fictional' features of Acts and categorizes the book as a 'historical novel'. But see Aune, *Literary Environment*, p. 80, for a critique of Pervo's work.

7.   Xiaxia E. Xue, *Paul's Viewpoint on God, Israel, and the Gentiles in Romans 9–11: An Intertextual Thematic Analysis* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Monographs, 2015), pp. 25-45; *idem*, 'An Intertextual Discourse Analysis of Romans 9:30–10:13', in Stanley E. Porter, Gregory P. Fewster and Christopher D. Land (eds.), *Modeling Biblical Language: Selected Papers from the McMaster Divinity College Linguistics Circle* (LBS, 13; Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 277-308; *idem*, 'An Analysis of James 2:14–26, with Special Reference to the Intertextual Reading of Abraham and Ahab', in James D. Dvorak and Zachary K. Dawson (eds.), *Light from Linguistic Criticism on the Epistle of James: Whole Grains from "Straw"* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming).

8.   I understand that Luke–Acts is a so-called 'anonymous' text, and that with nearly every document in the New Testament the authorship has been questioned. However, I agree with Eckhard Schnabel that the anonymity of Luke's two-volume work is a characteristic ancient literary convention, and Luke's authorship, which would have been well known without his name, is already well documented by the second century (see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* [ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], pp. 21-22).

explaining how the New Testament creates value orientations and clarifies meaning in narrative texts.

In this article, one of the main questions that will be addressed is how Lemke's broader explanation of intertextuality can shed new light on the Noahide laws as a recurrent formation in Acts 15 and 21. While Tannehill offered new insights, he only accounted for how the repetitive abstentions in Acts 15 and 21 functioned to develop meaning within the text. No account of the patterns of discourse represented in contemporary Jewish literature was offered, which I argue is vital for ascertaining the meaning of the Noahide laws' use in Acts. Therefore, I propose a new way forward for investigating redundancies in narrative texts that also accounts for how recurrent patterns of texts used commonly in a community function to clarify meaning and promote social values. I will retain Tannehill's use of the literary notion of redundancy that he drew from Susan Suleiman because it addresses the social function that repetition plays in discourse.[9] However, I will situate this notion within the sociolinguistic orientation of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in such a way that the redundancies in Acts 15 and 21 are interpreted both in terms of how meaning is construed through literary texts and in terms of how meaning is shaped by intertextual relationships with other texts. For the literary analysis, I will adapt Ruqaiya Hasan's model of verbal art, which describes how meaning is made in literature by starting with concrete semantic criteria and then moving up toward the abstract concept of a work's theme. For the intertextual analysis, I will use Lemke's model of intertextuality to describe how the social values represented in Acts would have related to value positions of other texts present in the same culture. Together, these models facilitate a method for doing a literary-intertextual analysis that is both 'bottom-up', working from text to context, and 'top-down', working from context to text. These models can also mutually cooperate within the SFL paradigm to describe how repeated texts function within a narrative to orient an audience toward adopting certain values. Specifically, I will demonstrate that the Noahide laws are a recurrent pattern of text in the cultural context in which Luke wrote Acts, and these laws were used to promote the separation of Jews and Gentiles; however, Luke's narrative opposes this Jewish social value and establishes a new use for the Noahide laws within a Christian

9.    See Suleiman, 'Redundancy', pp. 119-42.

community to promote a pure ecumenism between Jewish and Gentile believers, which is clarified and nuanced through patterns of redundancy.

## *Methodology*

### *Suleiman's Theory of Redundancy*

Because the Noahide laws appear in Acts in different locations, I begin here with Suleiman's literary-linguistic model of redundancy, which will serve as a heuristic device to describe how meanings can be made by means of redundancy patterns in narrative discourse. Suleiman, who draws on several articles by Philippe Hamon, argues that 'the discourse of realistic narrative ... is characterized by multiple redundancies operating at the level of characters and their function, on the level of narrative sequences, of descriptions, of "knowledge" to be transmitted, in fact on just about every level of the narrative'.[10] According to Hamon, realistic narrative is characterized by redundancy to ensure cohesion and disambiguation of transmitted information.[11] Redundancy is also characteristic of other modes of discourse for this same purpose; in a text that spans longer than a few pages a writer might deem it necessary to reuse patterns of text to remind the audience of the stances previously established, but with a purpose of clarifying them with new situational variables.

In what follows I provide the types of redundancy that Suleiman maps that correspond to Acts 15 and 21. The schemes begin with an initial bifurcation between two levels of text: the level of story and the level of discourse. Suleiman explains this as follows:

> A story is constituted by *sequences* of events or actions ... which follow upon each other logically and chronologically and which are experienced or accomplished by *characters* in a *context*. The putting into discourse of the story is the way in which the story is presented to the reader or listener; more simply, it is the text as it appears or unfolds in a reading or listening experience. The three determinants of the process of putting into discourse are (1) *narration* or narrative instance

10. Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 122; Philippe Hamon, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une description?', *Poétique* 12 (1972), pp. 465-85; *idem*, 'Pour un statut sémiologique du personnage', *Littérature* 6 (1972), pp. 86-110; *idem*, 'Un discours contraint', *Poétique* 16 (1973), pp. 411-45.

11. Hamon, 'Un discours contraint', p. 423; Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 123.

(who is telling the story, to whom, under what circumstances?); (2) *focalization* (from whose perspective[s] is the story 'seen' or experienced?); and (3) *temporal organization* (the order, frequency and duration of events as they are recounted in the discourse, *versus* the order, frequency and duration of events as they occurred in the story).[12]

Figure 1 below depicts this explanation of narrative text with characters (C), context (Co) and events (E) accounting for story-level constituents and narration (N), focalization (FOC) and Temporal organization (T) accounting for the discourse-level constituents.
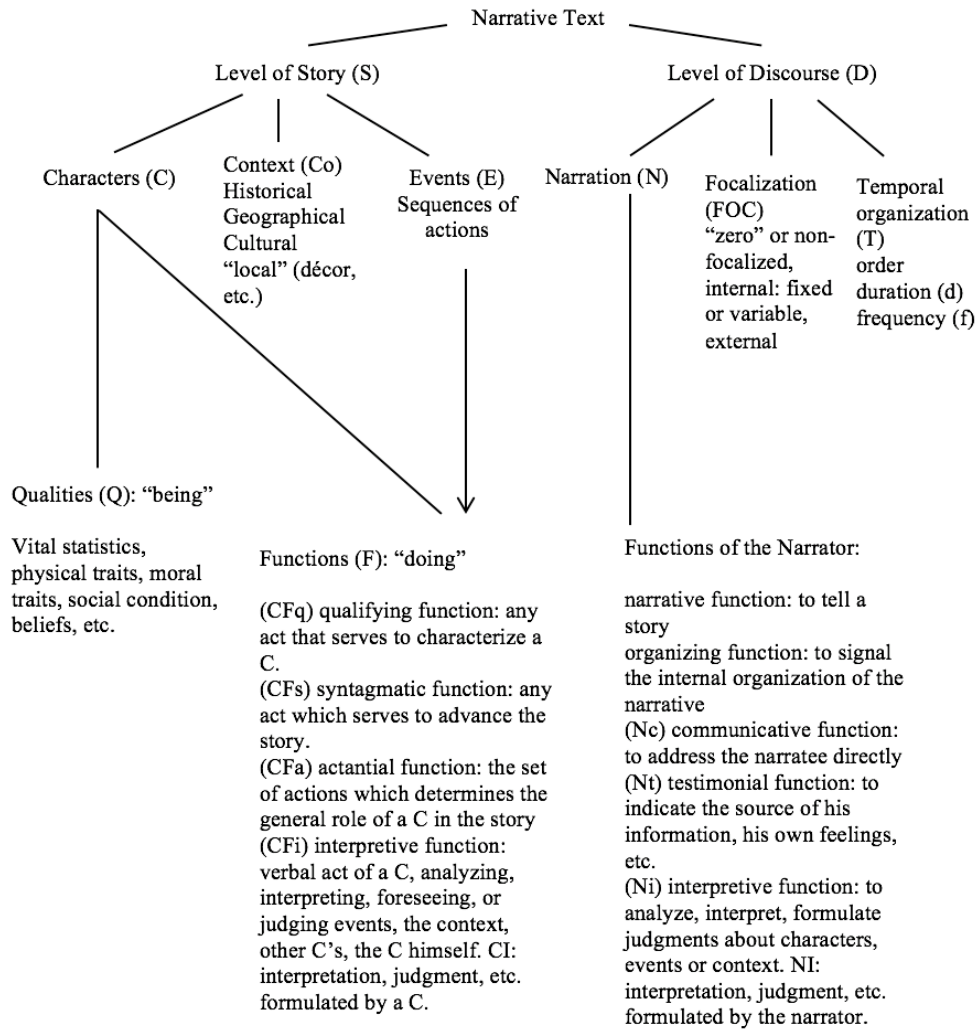


Narrative Text

Level of Story (S)

Level of Discourse (D)

Characters (C)

Context (Co)
Historical
Geographical
Cultural
"local" (décor, etc.)

Events (E)
Sequences of actions

Narration (N)

Focalization
(FOC)
"zero" or non-focalized,
internal: fixed or variable,
external

Temporal
organization
(T)
order
duration (d)
frequency (f)

Qualities (Q): "being"

Vital statistics, physical traits, moral traits, social condition, beliefs, etc.

Functions (F): "doing"

(CFq) qualifying function: any act that serves to characterize a C.
(CFs) syntagmatic function: any act which serves to advance the story.
(CFa) actantial function: the set of actions which determines the general role of a C in the story
(CFi) interpretive function: verbal act of a C, analyzing, interpreting, foreseeing, or judging events, the context, other C's, the C himself. CI: interpretation, judgment, etc. formulated by a C.

Functions of the Narrator:

narrative function: to tell a story
organizing function: to signal the internal organization of the narrative
(Nc) communicative function: to address the narratee directly
(Nt) testimonial function: to indicate the source of his information, his own feelings, etc.
(Ni) interpretive function: to analyze, interpret, formulate judgments about characters, events or context. NI: interpretation, judgment, etc. formulated by the narrator.

Figure 1: Constituents of Narrative Text[13]

12.  Suleiman, 'Redundancy', pp. 123, 125.

13.  This figure is directly adapted from Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 124. Note how some constituents are immediately irrelevant to the book of Acts. For example,

From this model, Suleiman maps various combinations of redundancy that get realized in realistic narrative and remarks on how they are recognized. Admittedly, Suleiman's inventory of realizations may not match genres from Greco-Roman culture or the various styles of Koine Greek one-to-one, so I have abbreviated the inventory to only include types of redundancy that match with Luke's style and with Acts 15 and 21 in particular, which I will account for in my analysis.

| Table 1: Types of Redundancies in Realistic Narrative | |
|---|---|
| **Redundancies on the Story Level** | |
| *Formula* | *Explanation* |
| $C_1E=C_2E=C_nE$ | The same event occurs *n* times to the same C, though the specific circumstances can vary.[14] |
| $CFs_1=CFs_2=CFs_n$ | One C accomplishes the same Fs multiple times.[15] |
| $CFi_1=CFi_2=CFi_n$ | The same commentary about an event, character or context is pronounced by one character multiple times. The words themselves can vary as long as meaning remains consistent.[16] |
| $E=CI$ | A similar event occurs more than once with a C offering interpretive comments about it. Suleiman remarks: 'Certain C's "are always right"—i.e., their commentaries (prognoses, analyses, judgments) are always confirmed by events. Such a C functions as a "correct interpreter", or as a spokesman for the values of the implied author. Once such a character C has been constituted, all of his commentaries will tend to function as authoritative commentaries in the work.'[17] |

since Acts would be characterized by the traditional category of the 'omniscient' narrator, there is zero focalization in the book.

14. Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 126.
15. Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 127.
16. Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 127.
17. Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 128.

| Redundancies on the Discourse Level | |
|---|---|
| *Formula* | *Explanation and Remarks* |
| $d(E_1)=d(E_2)=d(E_n)$ | The length of the time it takes to read/hear the event in the story roughly corresponds to the time it takes for the event to occur in real time.[18] |
| Redundancies between the Levels of Story and Discourse | |
| *Formula* | *Explanation and Remarks* |
| CI=NI | A C pronounces an interpretation concerning an event, context or character, which is redundant with the narrator's interpretation.[19] |

The analysis will retain this table format so that the redundancy patterns found in Acts 15 and 21 can be viewed side by side. The reader can refer back to Table 1 to review the significance of each formula. I will then summarize the significance of the redundancies that occur in the text so that this heuristic device can constrain the conclusion drawn from the linguistic evidence collected from the verbal art analysis.

*Hasan's Model of Verbal Art*
To my knowledge, Hasan's work in verbal art, which falls under the discipline of stylistics, has not been used in New Testament studies.[20]

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18.  Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 130.
19.  Suleiman, 'Redundancy', p. 131.
20.  This is not surprising given that in a couple of articles Stanley Porter has pointed out that stylistics is an untapped discipline in New Testament studies; see Stanley E. Porter, 'Why Hasn't Literary Stylistics Caught on in New Testament Studies?', in Steven E. Runge (ed.), *Discourse Studies and Biblical Interpretation: A Festschrift in Honor of Stephen H. Levinsohn* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2011), pp. 35-57; *idem*, 'Study of John's Gospel: New Directions or the Same Old Paths?', in *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament: Studies in Tools, Methods, and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), pp. 294-97. In these articles Porter identifies only two other stylistics analyses that have been published in New Testament studies: Stanley E. Porter, 'Verbal Aspect and Discourse Function in Mark 16:1–8: Three Significant Instances', in Jeremy Corley and Vincent Skemp (eds.), *Studies in the Greek Bible: Essays in Honor of Francis T. Gignac, S.J.* (CBQMS, 44; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 2008), pp. 123-37 and Aída B. Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style: A Stylistic and Historical Comparison of II Corinthians 11:16–12:13, Romans 8:9–39, and*

Nevertheless, Hasan's literary-linguistic model for analyzing verbal art is well-suited for the study of narrative texts in the New Testament because it is oriented to describe language in a *social* semiotic perspective. Hasan, who worked within the linguistic theory of SFL, understands language as inherently social, which means that an instance of language use, even such as a work of literature, is an instance of social action, an attempt, successful or not, to accomplish some form of social change.[21]

In her development of a theory of verbal art, Hasan proposes a tri-stratal model, which presupposes that the 'reception of verbal art almost always represent[s] a specific kind of meaning exchange'.[22] The three strata are: *theme*, *symbolic articulation* and *verbalization*. Hasan explains, 'The theme is *the* message of an instance of verbal art'.[23] It pertains to what a text is about when dissociated from the particu-larities of the text.[24] When we ask what a text is about, Hasan answers, 'there can be two, not mutually exclusive, answers'.[25] Hasan uses

*Philippians 3:2–4:13* (Jackson, MS: ETS, 1984). However, David Lamb also brushes over Hasan's model of verbal art in his register analysis of the Johannine corpus, though he does not employ any of her categories, and makes some use of Roger Fowler's linguistic criticism model, which uses stylistics; see David A. Lamb, *Text, Context and the Johannine Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings* (LNTS, 477; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2014), pp. 79-80, 116, 141. Cf. Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn, 1996); *idem*, *Linguistics and the Novel* (London: Methuen, 1977); and *idem*, *Literature as Social Discourse*: *The Practice of Linguistic Criticism* (London: Batsford, 1981).

21. This is consistent with Jay L. Lemke who states, 'the primary function of language, and of all semiosis, is to create, sustain and change social reality' ('Interpersonal Meaning in Discourse: Value Orientations', in Martin Davies and Louise Ravelli [eds.], *Advances in Systemic Linguistics: Recent Theory and Practice* [Open Linguistics Series; London: Pinter, 1992], pp. 82-104 [86]). Cf. Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), pp. 96-99.

22. Ruqaiya Hasan, 'Private Pleasure, Public Discourse: Reflections on Engaging with Literature', in Donna R. Miller and Monica Turci (eds.), *Language and Verbal Art Revisited: Linguistic Approaches to the Study of Literature* (London: Equinox, 2007), pp. 13-40 (23).

23. Hasan, 'Private Pleasure, Public Discourse', p. 24.

24. Ruqaiya Hasan, *Linguistics, Language, and Verbal Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 97.

25. Hasan, *Linguistics, Language, and Verbal Art*, p. 97.

Robert Frost's 'A Road Not Taken' for an example; she explains that one would be correct in saying that this poem 'is about someone choosing to go down one road in the hope of coming back to the other, but never being able to do so', but the poem's theme—what it is *really* about—is 'the limitations and immutability of human choices'.[26]

If the *theme* is the deepest level of verbal art, how does one then arrive at this most important, yet abstract meaning? The answer is by inferring 'on the basis of the *foregrounded* patterns of relations between events, characters and experiences that are presented in any instance of verbal art'.[27] The principal element of foregrounding is contrast; when contrast occurs against the established norm of a text, those elements are foregrounded.[28] In Hasan's model the configuration of foregrounding features makes up the stratum of symbolic articulation because it points to some element of the work's theme.[29] Symbolic articulation is tied to language because linguistic features are what create foregrounded language patterns, either repetitive or unexpected language selections. Thus, symbolic articulation is crafted by verbalization—'the act of producing linguistic structures which bear meaning(s) by virtue of being semiotic constructs'.[30] Put simply, when linguistic features are foregrounded, this cues the reader that some element of the theme is being symbolically articulated.

In establishing a set of criteria for analyzing foregrounding that works for New Testament Greek, I will rely on the works of Stanley Porter and Cynthia Westfall who have developed SFL prominence theory for New Testament studies.[31] However, foregrounding is

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26.  Hasan, *Linguistics, Language, and Verbal Art*, p. 97.
27.  Hasan, 'Private Pleasure, Public Discourse', p. 23, emphasis mine.
28.  Hasan, *Linguistics, Language, and Verbal Art*, p. 94.
29.  Hasan, 'Private Pleasure, Public Discourse', pp. 23-24.
30.  Hasan, 'Private Pleasure, Public Discourse', p. 24.
31.  Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (SBG, 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 92-93, 178-81, 245-51; *idem*, 'Prominence: An Overview', in Stanley E. Porter and Matthew Brook O'Donnell (eds.), *The Linguist as Pedagogue: Trends in the Teaching and Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (NTM, 11; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), pp. 45-74; Cynthia Long Westfall, 'A Method for the Analysis of Prominence in Hellenistic Greek', in Stanley E. Porter and Matthew Brook O'Donnell (eds.), *The Linguist as Pedagogue: Trends in the Teaching and Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (NTM, 11; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), pp. 75-94.

focused in stylistics for the specific questions it addresses, which calls for Porter's and Westfall's work to be focused in a particular way. Concerning this Fowler writes, 'As for the motives and functions of foregrounding, the perceptual salience it produces is not ... physical prominence of the expressive medium for its own sake, but extra discourse structure inviting *interpretation*. The significance is additional to the propositional meaning, and often at odds with [it].'[32] Thus, markers of prominence should be investigated in sections of text that have additional structures than what is necessary, a notion that also readily corresponds with the definition of redundancy.

Hasan provides two criteria for analyzing verbal art: *code-like regularity* and *stylistic shift*. Code-like regularity finds its significance in the ideational metafunction of language. This criterion does not mean that a writer is bound to use the same linguistic categories when symbolically articulating some aspect of the theme, 'but rather that some element of the semantic import is kept constant in language categories which symbolize those events that articulate some specifiable part of the theme'.[33] Evidence that satisfies this criterion is when identical or semantically related lexemes are used to articulate the same value positions in a text.

The second criterion, stylistic shift, finds its significance in the textual metafunction. According to this principle,

> any stylistic shift within a discourse is a signal that a move is being made to some other element of the theme. Such a pattern of shift becomes crucial to the understanding of the work in that it relates to some symbolic events which are themselves crucial to the perception of the theme.[34]

Linguistic prominence satisfies this criterion.

In short, the purpose of analyzing features of verbalization is to ascertain the theme that they construe, which is mediated through symbolic articulation. Therefore, when foregrounded material is identified, this indicates that further interpretation is needed—the text is

32. Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*, p. 97.
33. Ruqaiya Hasan, 'The Place of Stylistics in the Study of Verbal Art', in Håkan Ringbom (ed.), *Style and Text: Studies Presented to Nils Erik Enkvist* (Stockholm: Skriptor, 1975), pp. 49-62 (59).
34. Hasan, 'Place of Stylistics', p. 59.

communicating what it is about, not in an ideational sense, but on a raised metaphorical plane.

*Lemke's Intertextual Thematic Formations*

According to Lemke, 'No utterance, no text means in isolation: *all meaning is intertextual.*'[35] Unlike other understandings of inter-textuality, Lemke explains this phenomenon within a system of social meaning-making, which is contextualized by the particular practices of a community. Lemke qualifies this notion by stating, 'Each community ... has its own system of intertextuality: its own habits of deciding which texts should be read in the context of which others, and why, and how.'[36] This view results in the context of culture being the stratum that constrains intertextual relations.[37]

Lemke defines intertextuality as 'the recurrent discourse and activity patterns of the community and how they are constituted by, instanced in, and interconnected or disjoined through particular texts'.[38] Intertextuality also entails 'social dynamics with diverse social interests and points-of-view [which] speak with distinct voices that proclaim different thematic propositions, assign differing valuations, and may even make use of different characteristic genres and speech activities'.[39] This description relies on the social theory of discourse of Mikhail Bakhtin who theorized the intertextual and interpersonal concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism. Heteroglossia refers to the multitude of other 'voices' in the world that express different ideo-logical points of view,[40] and dialogism explains that when language

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35. Jay L. Lemke, 'Discourses in Conflict: Heteroglossia and Text Semantics', in James D. Benson and William S. Greaves (eds.), *Systemic Functional Approaches to Discourse: Selected Papers from the 12th International Systemic Workshop* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988), pp. 29-50 (32), emphasis mine.

36. Jay L. Lemke, *Textual Politics: Discourse and Social Dynamics* (Critical Perspectives on Literacy and Education; London: Taylor & Francis, 1995), p. 9.

37. Jay L. Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', in Peter H. Fries and Michael Gregory (eds.), *Discourse in Society: Systemic Functional Perspectives: Meaning and Choice: Studies for Michael Halliday* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1995), pp. 85-114 (86).

38. Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', p. 86.

39. Lemke, 'Discourses in Conflict', p. 30.

40. See M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (ed. Michael Holquist; trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 289-90.

users speak or write, their words *mean* against this heteroglossic backdrop, and their utterances are a reaction to them, taking them into account to affirm, refute or otherwise engage them in some way.[41]

Lemke goes on to explain that 'lexical choices are always made against the background of their history of use in the community, they carry the "freight" of their associations with them'.[42] This quotation indicates that even single words can function dialogically to contextualize a text with other texts. Therefore, it is important to account for how words *mean*. Lemke divides word meaning into three categories: *lexical*, *use* and *thematic* meaning. *Lexical* meaning pertains to the meaning potential of a word in a network of lexicogrammatical options, and *use* meaning corresponds to the contextualized meaning made with a word in a text.[43] *Thematic* meaning situates between lexical and use meaning and refers to 'the meaning the word realizes in a recurrent discourse pattern that is familiar in many texts and which forms the basis of cothematic intertextual relations'.[44] When writers undergo the process of selecting words, they do not choose words according to their neutral 'dictionary' sense because the meanings of words 'depend *entirely* on a process of abstractions from the various discourses in which they commonly occur'.[45] In other words, when 'patterns of semantic relations among the same or closely related words and phrases are regularly repeated over and over again in many texts in a given community' they constitute *thematic formations*.[46] Further, when recurrent lexical choices occur in thematically related texts that correspond with social values, Lemke assigns to these choices the term *intertextual thematic formations* (ITFs),[47] formations that 'abstract

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41. M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; trans. Vern W. McGee; Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 91.

42. Lemke, 'Interpersonal Meaning', p. 85.

43. Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', p. 89.

44. Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', p. 89.

45. Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', p. 88. Lemke obtains this notion from Bakhtin. See Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 87. Also see Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 49.

46. Jay L. Lemke, 'Text Structure and Text Semantics', in Erich H. Steiner and Robert Veltman (eds.), *Pragmatics, Discourse and Text* (London: Pinter, 1988), pp. 158-70 (165). Cf. Xue, 'Intertextual Discourse Analysis', p. 281. See also Lemke, 'Discourses in Conflict', p. 30.

47. Lemke, 'Discourses in Conflict', p. 30.

from a set of thematically related texts their common semantic patterns insofar as these [matter] to a particular community for a particular set of social purposes'.[48] The social purposes of common semantic patterns are organized into two categories in Lemke's model according to how they become oriented to social stances and values; they function to either ally with or oppose them.[49]

This portion of the methodology will be used to analyze what kinds of intertextual relations are created in Acts 15 and 21 with other texts that have the thematic formation of the Noahide laws. By comparing the social values represented in multiple texts, ITFs concerning the Noahide laws can be identified. The way in which Acts relates to other texts, then, will demonstrate how Acts makes meaning against the heteroglossic voices of its social environment.

## Analysis of Acts 15 and 21

### Occasions of Redundancy in Acts 15 and 21

Below are three tables that illustrate how the patterns of redundancy of Suleiman's model are instanced in Acts 15 and 21. A synthesis of the tables' evidence is provided afterward.

| Table 2: Redundancies on the Story Level in Acts 15 and 21 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $C_1E = C_2E = C_nE$ | | | | |
| 1 | $C_1E$ Acts 15 | Paul (with others) goes to with apostles and elders Jerusalem to meet. | $C_2E$ Acts 21 | Paul (with others) goes to Jerusalem, meets with James and elders |
| 2 | | Paul meets Gentiles on the way who are brought great joy. Paul relates all God has done among the Gentiles. | | Paul relates all God has done among the Gentiles. Those who hear glorify God. |
| 3 | | Tension arises with | | Tension arises with |

48. Jay L. Lemke, 'Intertextuality and the Project of Text Linguistics: A Response to de Beaugrande', *Text* 20 (2000), pp. 221-25 (223).

49. See Jay L. Lemke, 'Semantics and Social Values', *Word* 40 (1989), pp. 40-45; *idem*, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', p. 99; *idem*, 'Discourses in Conflict', p. 48; Xue, 'Intertextual Discourse Analysis', pp. 282-308.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | believing Jews (Pharisees) over Mosaic Law. | | believing Jews over Mosaic Law. |
| **CFs₁=CFs₂=CFsₙ** | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **CFs₁** Acts 15 | James makes the judgment to write a letter to the Gentiles to abstain from the four precepts. | **CFs₂** Acts 21 | James (with the elders) directs Paul to undergo purification, acknowledges the letter he wrote to the Gentiles, and reiterates the four precepts. |

| **CFi₁=CFi₂=CFiₙ** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **CFi₁** Acts 15 | Paul (with Barnabas) told of all the signs and wonders they did among the Gentiles. | **CFi₂** Acts 21 | Paul relates what God had done among the Gentiles. |
| 2 | | James announces the Noahide Laws at the end of his speech. | | James (with the elders) announces the Noahide laws at the end of his speech. |

| **E=CI** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **E=CI** Acts 15 | James makes the judgment (κρίνω) that the Gentiles should not be troubled for turning to God, but that they should 'abstain' (ἀπέχεσθαι) from certain things. | **E=CI** Acts 21 | James and the elders tell Paul they have sent a letter with their judgment (κρίναντες) concerning those things Gentiles should 'guard against' (φυλάσσεσθαι). |

| **Table 3: Redundancies on the Discourse Level in Acts 15 and 21** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **d(E₁)=d(E₂)=d(Eₙ)** | | | |
| **d(E₁)** Acts 15 | Acts 15.13-21 constitutes extended discourse, which slows down the discourse to coincide with the length of the story, or time it would have taken to | **d(E₂)** Acts 21 | Acts 21.20-25 constitutes extended discourse, which slows down the discourse to coincide with the length of the story. |

| | transpire in real time.[50] | | |
|---|---|---|---|

| **Table 4: Redundancies between the Levels of Story and Discourse in Acts 15 and 21** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **CI=NI** | | | |
| **CI=NI** Acts 15 | The narrator's interpretation of the event of the Jerusalem council is consonant with Peter and James's announcements that believing Gentiles should be embraced, and that the Noahide precepts should be kept. This is supported by positive and graduated language in the letter with the Gentiles' joyous response to the decree (v. 31) and others' greatly encouraging them. | **CI=NI** Acts 21 | The narrator's interpretation is problematic and/or troublesome for modern interpreters because James and the elders place Paul, the primary character, in harm's way before restating the Noahide laws.[51] Nevertheless, the value position of guarding the four precepts is explicitly restated, and thus is promoted by the narrator. |

50.  For a further explanation on how 'duration' functions to draw an audience into closer proximity to characters by means of 'slowing down' the discourse, see Gary Yamasaki's work on the temporal plane of point of view and his principle of evaluative guidance in *Perspective Criticism: Point of View and Evaluative Guidance in Biblical Narrative* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), pp. 69-90. Cf. Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* (trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 65-80.

51.  Stanley E. Porter notes, 'the narrative does not make it clear that the leaders were convinced that the accusations were false. It appears that not only were possibly more conservative members of the Jerusalem church still suspicious of Paul, but the leaders of the church may well have been as well' ('Acts 21:17–26 and Paul, the Man for All Seasons, or the Man Betrayed by His Friends?', in *Paul of Acts: Essays in Literary Criticism, Rhetoric and Theology* [WUNT, 115; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999], pp. 173-86 [175]). Cf. Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, *Paul the Accused: His Portrait in the Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), pp. 68-69, who supports this claim.

These two texts, which share similar events, characters and contexts, mirror several of Suleiman's redundancy schemes. Acts 15 orients values concerning Jew–Gentile relations, and does so by stipulating behavioral regulations, which would allow them to cohabitate peaceably.[52] This value position is established by an authoritative figure whose judgment and interpretation of events coincide with the narrator's position. If the narrator is writing to a Gentile readership, then such a value position would be highly relevant and in need of clarification, which is offered through the use of redundancy in Acts 21, a text that has proved difficult to understand because James and the elders knowingly put Paul in a vulnerable situation. However, Paul's innocence is not the main concern of Luke's narrative. Luke chooses to highlight here the importance of keeping the Noahide laws through the situational irony of Paul's being accused, even though he is innocent.[53] Since the audience would have 'heard' the echo-effect of Acts 15 in ch. 21, in what way is the value position of keeping the Noahide laws clarified? What about these precepts is disambiguated? The answer may reside in the fact that the rumors about Paul in Acts 21 function to set up inverted situational variables with Acts 15. In Acts 15, James's decree announces what should be done for Gentiles to be included in fellowship with believing Jews; Gentiles do not have to 'judaize', but they must avoid certain things. In Acts 21, however, rumors were spreading that Paul was teaching Jews to forsake the Law of Moses and its customs—he was supposedly teaching Jews to 'gentile-ize', which serves to reveal a bi-directionality in the Noahide laws and how they were to function in mixed environments.

A possible objection to this claim is that the Noahide laws are never explicitly directed toward the Jews. Acts 21.25 reads περὶ δὲ τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἐθνῶν; it is only those who believe among the Gentiles who receive directions about the abstentions. However, Tannehill explains:

> The setting seems strange at first, but it may actually illuminate the purpose of these regulations ... Acts 21:21 shows that the problem is no longer the demands being made on Gentiles to become Jews but the pressure being felt by Jews to conform to a Gentile way of life ... The

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52. See Porter, 'Acts 21:17–26', pp. 183-84, who comes to a similar conclusion.

53. If any ambiguity remains, Acts 28.17 leaves no room for doubt of Paul's innocence.

Jerusalem meeting that guarantees the Gentiles' freedom from the law also anticipates the problem that will arise as the Gentile portion of the church grows, for James is proposing that Gentiles be asked to abstain from certain things especially offensive to a Jewish sense of cultic purity so that Jewish Christians may remain in the fellowship of the church without being forced to give up their way of life.[54]

Therefore, the abstentions in Acts 15.21 indicate how Gentiles are to be protected from Jewish customs, but Acts 21.25 shows how the same abstentions protect Jews in a predominantly Gentile environment. More on this will be discussed in the next section of analysis.

*An Analysis of Verbal Art in Acts 15 and 21*
The procedure of analyzing verbal art begins with the foregrounding features of code-like regularity and stylistic shift. The code-like regularity of Acts 15 and 21 is strikingly similar. First, the precepts appear in list form, and though they are ordered differently, they remain constant. The chart below displays the similarities in the co-text of the Noahide laws in both sections.

| Table 5: Code-like Regularity in Acts 15.12-29 and 21.18-26 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Acts 15* | *Participants* | *Acts 21* | *Participants* |
| vv. 12, 22, 25 | Παύλου, Παύλῳ | vv. 18, 26 | Παῦλος |
| vv. 12, 14 | θεός | vv. 19, 20 | θεός, θεόν |
| vv. 12, 14, 17, 19 | ἔθνεσιν, ἐθνῶν | vv. 19, 21, 25 | ἔθνεσιν, ἔθνη, ἐθνῶν |
| v. 13 | Ἰάκωβος | v. 18 | Ἰάκωβον |
| v. 13 | ἄνδρες | vv. 22, 23 | ἄνδρες |
| v. 13 | ἀδελφοί | v. 20 | ἀδελφέ |
| v. 20 | ἀλισγημάτων | v. 26 | ἁγνισθείς, ἁγνισμοῦ |
| vv. 20, 29 | εἰδώλων, εἰδωλοθύτων | v. 25 | εἰδωλόθυτον |
| vv. 20, 29 | πορνείας, πορνείας | v. 25 | πορνείαν |
| vv. 20, 29 | πνικτοῦ, πνικτῶν | v. 25 | πνικτόν |
| vv. 20, 29 | αἵματος | v. 25 | αἷμα |
| v. 21 | Μωϋσῆς | v. 21 | Μωϋσέως |
| v. 22 | πρεσβυτέροις, πρεσβύτεροι | v. 18 | πρεσβύτεροι |

54. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, II, p. 191.

|  | *Processes* |  | *Processes* |
|---|---|---|---|
| vv. 12, 13, 24 | ἤκουον, ἀκούσατε ἠκούσαμεν | vv. 20, 22 | ἀκούσαντες, ἀκούσονται |
| vv. 12 | ἐποίησεν | vv. 19, 22 | ἐποίησεν, ποίησον |
| v. 19 | κρίνω | v. 25 | κρίναντες |
| v. 21 | κηρύσσοντας | vv. 21, 24 | κατηχήθησαν, διδάσκεις, κατήχηνται |
| v. 23 | γράψαντες (διὰ χειρὸς αὐτῶν) | v. 25 | ἐπεστείλαμεν |
| v. 23 | χαίρειν | v. 19 | ἀσπασάμενος |

Many of the same lexemes are used to articulate the value position of abstaining from the four precepts, but semantically similar lexemes are used to accomplish this as well. Common actors are referred to in both sections such as Paul, James, God, Moses, the Gentiles and the elders. James announces the value position to be upheld with the Noahide laws in 15.21, which is repeated with the elders in 15.29 and 21.25. That the author's concern involves the Gentiles is indicated by several references in both sections, though the Jews are explicitly referenced only in Acts 21, which supports the ideational shift concerning the Jews' disposition to the law of Moses in ch. 21, rather than the Gentiles'.

Common processes also appear in both texts, where verbals pertaining to communication are foregrounded through clustering. These verbals refer to hearing, proclaiming, teaching, writing, greeting and other nuances of these meanings. It is significant that such a high volume of processes of communication would be shared in these sections because they also share the process of judging, where authoritative decisions are made by core actors, which correspond to the narrator's judgments or orientation to values that promote communion between Jews and Gentiles. The actors and processes collectively function to symbolically articulate elements of the theme, and when taken together they seem to point to some value position related to communication and cultic purity.

Acts 21 also displays several features of stylistic shift at multiple ranks of discourse. Pertinent to the clause rank in narrative discourse is the notion of mainline and supporting material.[55] In Greek, the default mainline in narrative refers to primary clauses that use the aorist tense-

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55. Porter, 'Prominence', p. 57.

form. In the case of Acts 21, the mainline in proximity to the Noahide laws leaves off at 21.20 after the clause εἶπόν τε αὐτῷ introducing direct speech; it then recommences in 21.26 after the direct speech ends. The material in between constitutes supporting material, where present/imperfect and perfect/pluperfect function to foreground and frontground material respectively.[56] This phenomenon is observable in 21.20-25 where 15 present tense-forms appear in the direct speech along with two perfect tense-forms, one at the beginning of the speech, and the other at the end, which happens to introduce the clause containing the Noahide laws.

Interruption to the linear organization of a narrative can also function to bring content into the foreground.[57] Because Hellenistic Greek documents would not have relied on formal indicators of shifts such as punctuation or paragraph breaks and indentation, stylistic shift is identified by some form of internal break in continuity. The adversative conjunction δέ at the beginning of 21.25, though un-marked,[58] functions textually to indicate discontinuity with the pre-ceding material.[59] The visual depiction provided in the OpenText.org model of Acts 21.24-25 makes this apparent;[60] the direct speech shifts from a pattern of several dependent clauses that direct Paul to undergo purification to a primary clause, which abruptly shifts the topic to the letter that was written to the Gentiles containing the Noahide laws.

This usage also functions interpersonally to indicate *counter-expectancy*, because the adversative value of δέ readjusts the au-dience's attention toward a value position.[61] The value position

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56.  Porter, 'Prominence', p. 57.

57.  Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* (LNTS, 297; London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), p. 37.

58.  See the hierarchical chart of inter-sentential conjunctions in Westfall, 'Analysis of Prominence', p. 85.

59.  Westfall helpfully notes that 'a conjunction indicates the status that a joined element has in relationship to the rest of the discourse ... they provide some of the best formal indications of how the author intended the discourse to be processed' ('Analysis of Prominence', p. 84).

60.  See 'OpenText.org', online: http://opentext.org/texts/NT/Acts/view/clause-ch21.v0.html.

61. Zachary K. Dawson, 'Language as Negotiation: Toward a Systemic Functional Model for Ideological Criticism with Application to James 2:1–13', in Stanley E. Porter, Gregory P. Fewster and Christopher D. Land (eds.), *Modeling*

pertains to the recurrent Noahide laws, which are further clarified by new contextual variables. This shift is additionally brought to the fore by means of the perfect participle πεπιστευκότων mentioned above, and when all of this linguistic evidence is taken into account, one gets the sense that the writer is symbolically articulating something about the theme. The theme here seems to pertain to Jew–Gentile relations, the Mosaic Law and the value orientation that motivates the use of the Noahide laws.

Now I will briefly revisit my earlier mention of the bi-directionality of the Noahide laws. The motivation for foregrounding Acts 21.25 seems to be at odds with the propositional meaning when the inverted contextual variables are brought into play. The text preceding the logical break in continuity contains irony and unfair circumstances for Paul, and so when the break is introduced it may be used to speak generally about the situation. Because Paul is being accused of teaching Jews to forsake Moses (ἀποστασίαν, Acts 21.21) and not to walk (περιπατεῖν, 21.21) according to the customs, James and the elders speak into this situation to show that the Noahide laws function to protect Jews who wish to maintain their Jewish identity from Gentile believers who otherwise would pressure them to conform. Therefore, the Noahide laws in Acts promote the social value of communion by protecting the legitimacy of both cultures; Gentiles can go on being Gentiles and Jews can go on being Jews, but they must be able to come together. No social obligations should be established that go beyond the Noahide laws.

*Biblical Language: Selected Papers from the McMaster Divinity College Linguistics Circle* (LBS, 13; Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 381. See also J.R. Martin and David Rose, *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause* (New York: Continuum, 2nd edn, 2010), pp. 56-57; M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (English Language Series; London: Longman, 1976), pp. 238-71, who distinguish types of internal conjunctions depending on how they perform in text. Cf. Zachary K. Dawson, 'Rules of "The Rules of Engagement": Assessing the Function of the Diatribe in James 2:14–26 Using Critical Discourse Analysis', in James D. Dvorak and Zachary K. Dawson (eds.), *Light from Linguistic Criticism on the Epistle of James: Whole Grains from "Straw"* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming). Counter-expectancy is not a criterion that Hasan discusses in her verbal art model, but I have included it here because it demonstrates that stylistic shift does not only find significance in the textual metafunction; it finds significance in the interpersonal metafunction as well.

*Intertextual Thematic Formations*

In an article published in 2015, Todd Hanneken argued that the precepts in Acts 15 and 21 are based on the tradition found in *Jubilees*.[62] This study is important for reasons I discuss below, but it should be noted that Hanneken's argument is one among many in the current scholarly discussion on where the abstentions first given at the Jerusalem council originate.[63] In the following discussion I will demonstrate that Hanneken was moving this discussion in the right direction, though he mislabels the relationship that Acts shares with *Jubilees*.

Lemke states that a thematic formation is constituted by the 'recurrent pattern of semantic relations used in talking about a specific topic from text to text'.[64] When speaking specifically of thematic formations, the phrase 'from text to text' refers to sections of text within a single text or 'text-specific' formations.[65] According to this definition, the recurrent articulation of the Noahide laws in Acts constitutes a thematic formation; this formation is displayed in Table 6 below.

| Table 6: Thematic Formations in Acts 15.20, 29; 21.25 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Acts 15.20 | ἀλλὰ ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ | but we should write to them to abstain only from |

62. Todd R. Hanneken, 'Moses Has His Interpreters: Understanding the Legal Exegesis in Acts 15 from the Precedent in *Jubilees*', *CBQ* 77 (2015), pp. 686-706.

63. A brief survey of recent commentators shows a striking lack of consensus regarding the background of the four precepts James gives in the Jerusalem decree in Acts 15.20, which are repeated in 15.29 and 21.25. Craig S. Keener gives four options, favoring the Noahide laws as the most likely background (*Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* [4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014], III, pp. 2260-69). Keener qualifies his statement by saying that he does not refer to the later rabbinic form of the Noahide laws, but instead refers to a range of early Jewish traditions that attest to what God required from Gentiles based on retellings of the covenant made with Noah, which are found in *Jubilees* as well as Josephus and Philo (III, pp. 2263-65). Schnabel gives six options, favoring an Old Testament polemic against idolatry and a reliance on Lev. 17–18 (*Acts*, pp. 644-45). David G. Peterson mentions five views, but opts for a strictly 'scriptural' background denying any other contemporary influences (*The Acts of the Apostles* [PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], pp. 434-36). Richard I. Pervo simply argues that the precepts are inspired by Lev. 17–18 without further consideration of other views (*Acts: A Commentary* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009], pp. 376-78).

64. Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', p. 91.

65. See Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', pp. 91-92.

| | (1) τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων | (1) things polluted by idols |
|---|---|---|
| | (2) καὶ τῆς πορνεία | (2) and from fornication |
| | (3) καὶ τοῦ πνικτοῦ | (3) and from whatever has been strangled |
| | (4) καὶ τοῦ αἵματος | (4) and from blood[66] |
| Acts 15.29 | ἀπέχεσθαι | that you abstain |
| | (1) εἰδωλοθύτων | (1) from what has been sacrificed to idols |
| | (4) καὶ αἵματος | (4) and from blood |
| | (3) καὶ πνικτοῦ | (3) and from what is strangled |
| | (2) καὶ πορνείας | (2) and from fornication |
| Acts 21.25 | περὶ δὲ τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἐθνῶν ἡμεῖς ἐπεστείλαμεν, κρίναντες μηδὲν τοιοῦτον τηρεῖν αὐτούς, εἰ μὴ φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς | But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain |
| | (1) τό τε εἰδωλόθυτον | (1) from what has been sacrificed to idols |
| | (4) καὶ τὸ αἷμα | (4) and from blood |
| | (3) καὶ πνικτὸν | (3) and from what is strangled |
| | (2) καὶ πορνείαν | (2) and from fornication |

The four topics of εἴδωλον/εἰδωλόθυτος, πορνεία, πνικτός and αἷμα are joined together with the connector καί, and each time they are introduced by identical or semantically equivalent infinitives. These lexico-grammatical and semantic similarities in this *thematic formation* form the basis from which to find and compare other co-thematic texts that belong to the same kinds of actions and discourse patterns of a community.[67] Lemke's acknowledgment that lexemes do not have to match up precisely for texts to be thematically related is an important qualifier for this discussion because Richard Bauckham has found that 'there is, in fact, no known Jewish parallel to the selection of precisely these four commandments from the Law of Moses as those which are

66.   All translations are taken from the NRSV.
67.   Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', p. 92.

binding on Gentiles or a category of Gentiles'.[68] However, Hanneken points out that though *Jubilees* has been considered as a potential background text, it has not been appropriately considered: 'Somehow one verse from *Jubilees* made the list of what many scholars feel obliged to mention, but it is the wrong verse'.[69] Hanneken is referring to *Jub.* 7.20 where 'fornication and uncleanliness and all iniquity' is mentioned. Therefore, in keeping with Bauckham's claim, there remains no *perfect* match; however, looking more closely at *Jubilees*, Hanneken finds that chs. 6–7 contain all the precepts in James's decree. This is helpful because *Jub.* 7.20 and Acts 15.20 share the same semantic relations between thematic objects; both texts join their lists of activities that must be avoided with coordinating connectors. Since all of the same thematic ideas are recoverable in the immediate co-text of *Jub.* 7.20, these two texts apparently share a stronger intertextual tie than has previously been recognized.[70]

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68. Richard Bauckham, 'James and the Gentiles (Acts 15:13–21)', in Ben Witherington III (ed.), *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 154-84 (174).

69. Hanneken, 'Moses Has His Interpreters', p. 697.

70. Prohibitions concerning eating blood can be found in *Jub.* 6.7-8, 12-13, 38; 7.29-32. The lexeme for blood is also used with regard to shedding blood, which is referenced in 6.8; 7.23, 25-26 and 29. Since the shedding of blood is collocated with iniquity in 7.23, this might indicate that violence is presumed in 'all iniquity' in 7.20. Scholars debate over whether αἷμα refers to the consumption of blood, the shedding of blood or both in the precepts in Acts, but most believe that only eating blood is in view. However, if *Jubilees* is a text residing in the cultural context of Acts, then a hypernymic use of αἷμα becomes more plausible, which would subsume multiple issues pertaining to blood in the context, encompassing both eating blood and shedding it (i.e. murder). Further research needs to be done with this possibility in mind. References to sexual immorality are found explicitly in 7.20, 21 and perhaps in Ham's act of seeing his father naked in 7.8. No explicit mention of idolatry is found in chs. 6–7, but Hanneken finds an implicit reference to idolatry in *Jub.* 7.27, which announces that demons have begun their seductions, because *Jubilees* connects demon worship with idolatry in 1.11 and 22.17-18 ('Moses Has His Interpreters', p. 689); cf. Todd R. Hanneken, 'Angels and Demons in the Book of Jubilees and Contemporary Apocalypses', *Henoch* 28 (2006), pp. 11-25; Annette Y. Reed, 'Enochic and Mosaic Traditions in Jubilees: The Evidence of Angelology and Demonology', in Gabriele Boccaccini and Giovanni Ibba (eds.), *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: The Evidence of Jubilees* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 353-68.

The main argument of Hanneken's article is based on the proposition that *Jubilees* is subsumed in the phrase 'those who taught Moses in the synagogues in every town on every Sabbath' in Acts 15.21 because 'Jubilees itself was a citable legal source for many in the first century C.E.'.[71] Hanneken's claim is supported by the link these precepts have with Genesis 9; the Noahide laws appear in the context of rewriting the unconditional covenant made with Noah in Genesis 9 into a conditional covenant 'complete with obligations, blessings, curses, and oaths',[72] and so they display at least one way in which Moses was being interpreted in Jewish communities at the time Acts was written.[73] If *Jubilees* was indeed a frequently used source in the first century, or if it belonged to a tradition of how to interpret Moses, then the content within it becomes an intertext for Acts because it was known within the culture of the day.

Because Acts and *Jubilees* share strong co-thematic ties, the Noahide laws can be assumed to be an ITF that functions sociologically within the community of these two texts. It is necessary then to try to reconstruct the context in which this thematic formation was commonly used. The Noahide laws get their name from their inclusion in the rewritten Noahic covenant, a tradition that rewrote God's covenant with Noah as a conditional covenant, and *Jubilees* is one of the texts that recounts this event. In prior research, Hanneken acknowledged that the tradition found in *Jubilees* traces back to a Book of Noah.[74] Though no such document is known to be intact, other early Jewish sources

71. Hanneken, 'Moses Has His Interpreters', pp. 686-87.

72. Hanneken, 'Moses Has His Interpreters', p. 699.

73. It is at this point that Hanneken acknowledges the related texts of Deut. 12 and Lev. 17 that prohibit the consumption of blood—texts that many have seen as the background of Acts 15.20. However, Hanneken sees them within a particular interpretive tradition of Moses in line with *Jubilees*: 'When Acts 15 reads universal law from Genesis 9 to include the related commandments in Leviticus 17 and Deuteronomy 12 it follows the precedent of *Jubilees* in reading laws from Sinai as implicit in the narratives of Genesis in general and reading them into a universal covenant made through Noah in particular' ('Moses Has His Interpreters', pp. 702-703). Thus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy are only in the background insofar as they are incorporated into how Gen. 9 was interpreted at the time when Luke wrote Acts. This actually solves a number of the objections other scholars have had in response to seeing Lev. 17–18 as the background for Acts 15.

74. Todd R. Hanneken, *The Subversion of the Apocalypses in the Book of Jubilees* (Early Judaism and its Literature, 34; Atlanta: SBL, 2012), p. 288.

such as apGen 5.29 and *T. Levi* ar 10.10 make reference to it, and their content supports the claims in *Jub.* 1.29, 33.16 and 50.13 that Noah taught the same laws as Moses.[75] Therefore, if a Book of Noah existed in the first century, then it follows that the Noahide laws were an established ITF in Jewish communities at the time Acts would have been written, which means that it becomes more likely that Luke is intentionally engaging this ITF in some way.

Also, given that the rewriting of the Noahic covenant took place within Judaism and because *Jubilees* recounts this, it is most probable that the thematic formation of the Noahide laws in *Jubilees* allies with an ITF that promotes the social value of Jewish purity. It is in fact the notion of pollution that prompted God to cleanse the earth in the flood to begin with, and the condition added to the Noahic covenant makes such an action a possibility again. Other scholars have made the point that *Jubilees* places emphasis on purity and pollution, especially with regard to how Jews come into contact with Gentiles. Lutz Doering, for example, remarks that *Jub.* 22.16-18 'is a *comprehensive* call for the separation from the nations, entailing prohibitions against eating with them, behaving as they do, and becoming their companion ... While one of the concerns is idolatry, "eating" with Gentiles may include dietary and perhaps "ritual" issues.'[76] This observation by itself calls into question Hanneken's view that Acts follows the tradition of interpreting

75.  Hanneken, *Subversion of the Apocalypses*, pp. 288-89. Hanneken notes that the *Genesis Apocryphon* and *Aramaic Levi* are difficult to date, and so they may depend on *Jubilees*, or they may all three depend on the Book of Noah (p. 288 n. 60). For more on the dating of these documents, see Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1 (1Q20): A Commentary* (Biblica et Orientalia, 18B; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 3rd edn, 2004), pp. 26-28; Jonas C. Greenfield, Michael E. Stone and Esther Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha, 19; Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 180; Esther Eshel, 'The Noah Cycle in the Genesis Apocryphon', in Michael E. Stone, Aryeh Amihay and Vered Hillel (ed.), *Noah and His Book(s)* (Early Judaism and its Literature, 28; Atlanta: SBL, 2010), pp. 77-95. James C. VanderKam goes so far as to say, '*Jubilees* is dependent on *Aramaic Levi* or the tradition that lies behind it' (*The Book of Jubilees* [Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], p. 138).

76.  Lutz Doering, 'Purity and Impurity in the Book of Jubilees', in Gabriele Boccaccini and Giovanni Ibba (eds.), *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: The Evidence of Jubilees* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 261-75 (272).

Moses as found in *Jubilees*.[77] However, whereas *Jubilees* uses a tradition to promote radical separation from the nations where idolatry and impurity abound lest God's people be judged,[78] one finds a radically different praxis with regards to Gentiles in Acts where the narrative repeatedly promotes their inclusion with Jewish Christians.[79] It is more appropriate then to conclude, contrary to Hanneken's view, that Acts is opposed to *Jubilees* and the ITF it allies with. Further, having given consideration to Lemke's intertextual thematic analysis, Luke's narrative in fact rejects the value-orientation associated with the Noahide laws in Jewish culture by reorienting this thematic formation to promote a new ecumenical program.

There are more texts to be considered, however. Hanneken, like other commentators, argues for a single background text over against other potential background texts, which follows a trend in biblical scholarship that does not grasp a robust understanding of intertextuality. In my view, the competing proposals for the background of the Jerusalem decree actually have some complementary insights, but they have not been brought into proper harmony with one another. One proposal argues for the influence of Jewish traditions on James's decree, which continue to be developed into the form they eventually take in the Tannaitic rabbinic literature.[80] I believe that this proposal has merit in its own right, but it needs to be brought into conversation with what Hanneken has brought to light.

Important for intertextual analyses of ancient texts is to admit that we only have representative texts of a community, which do not paint a complete picture of the context of culture at any given point in time. Lemke's model is still usable despite this limitation because we do not have to limit our search to previous or concurrent texts. This is because negotiations over points of struggle are established over time, and so later texts can give indications of ideological progress that previous texts contributed to. Supporting this notion, Hanneken explains that although some argue that the rabbinic evidence originated later than Acts,

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77. Hanneken, 'Moses Has His Interpreters', p. 705.
78. See VanderKam, *Book of Jubilees*, pp. 133-34.
79. See Stephen G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke–Acts* (SNTSMS, 23; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 239-49.
80. Keener, *Acts*, III, pp. 2263-64.

If we are looking for *core concepts* rather than lists, we can easily fill in the gaps for an idea first developed by the middle of the second century B.C.E. and widely assumed and taken in creative directions in the second century C.E. There is no chronological reason to doubt that in the first century C.E. the concept of Noachide laws would have made the 'curriculum' of how Moses was taught in the synagogues on every Sabbath in every town (Acts 15:21).[81]

Moving forward with this, we probably should not assume that the teaching of Moses in the synagogues was monolithic in the first century. The strength in examining the later body of literature that contains the Noahide laws is that it reports from the teachings of prominent rabbis who were rough contemporaries of the New Testament authors, and their words can be compared and brought into conversation with the text of Acts. The two texts from the Babylonian Talmud[82] that are routinely cited in commentaries on Acts with regard to the Noahide laws are *'Abod. Zar.* 8.4 and *Sanh.* 56a–b. These texts are useful, not only because they contain the Noahide laws in a later, more developed form, but also because they quote from particular rabbis on the content of these laws who were active as early as the late first century. I will therefore consider the themes of these tractates to situate the Noahide laws within a wider heteroglossic backdrop.

By situating the two texts from the Talmud mentioned above within their contexts, their thematic formations and value orientations can be compared with those found in Acts.[83] Following is an excerpt from *Sanh.* 56a-b: 'Our Rabbis taught: Seven precepts were the sons of Noah commanded: social laws; to refrain from blasphemy; idolatry;

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81. Hanneken, 'Moses Has His Interpreters', pp. 696-97. See Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), p. 159, who argues that the Noahide doctrine probably originated in the first half of the second century.

82. The Babylonian Talmud is a fifth-century CE collection of rabbinic writings on the second-century CE Mishnah.

83. I understand that there are several centuries between the completion of the Babylonian Talmud and when Acts would have first been published, and so there could be concern for making anachronistic judgments concerning how these texts compare. However, I think it is perfectly reasonable to assume that the co-thematic material associated with the Noahide laws were used relatively consistently, though perhaps with some variation and development especially after 70 CE, throughout the rabbinic tradition. This is supported by the Talmud's practice in the Gemara to cite and repeat the teaching of prior rabbis.

adultery; bloodshed; robbery; and eating flesh cut from a living animal. R. Hanania b. Gamaliel said: Also not to partake of the blood drawn from a living animal. R. Hidka added emasculation. R. Simeon added sorcery.'[84] This quotation cites the seven precepts that comprise the fully developed list of the Noahide laws along with additions from rabbis from the second century CE. This text contains each element mentioned in Acts, where 'strangled' and 'blood' are understood as conceptually related to 'eating flesh cut from a living animal' and 'blood drawn from a living animal' (cf. Acts 15.20, 29; 21.25). This list is situated within a broader context concerned with actions warranting execution and discussions on the different forms of execution such as stoning, burning, decapitation and strangulation. The activities described in the co-text of the Noahide laws are blasphemy and the forms of sexual immorality prohibited in Leviticus 18, all of which warrant execution. While some commentators would deny that Leviticus 18 is a background text of Acts 15 and 21,[85] this rabbinic tradition would suggest otherwise if it can be linked to Acts 15 or 21, which further demonstrates the complexity of all that should be considered when analyzing a text's background. Interestingly, the context of Acts 21 tells of the Jews' acting in accordance with this tradition because they have responded to the rumors about Paul forsaking the Law of Moses with attempts to have him executed. James's words and actions then offer, at least to a Jew, something of a contradiction. He announces his decree again to keep the Noahide laws, where violations would warrant execution in Jewish life (Lev. 17.10-11), but he directs Paul to undergo purification, even though there was no purification process sufficient for these abominations except for 'cutting off'—that is executing—the polluted subject.[86]

84. *Sanh.* 56a-b, quoted from Isidore Epstein (ed.), *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Nezikin* (4 vols.; trans. Jacob Shachter and H. Freedman; London: Soncino, 1935), III. I have retained the exact wording and style of Freedman's translation even though it is phrased and formatted somewhat awkwardly.

85. See Beverly Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), p. 222. See also Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 464-65.

86. David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 268-69.

*Sanhedrin* 56a-b introduces the Noahide laws in a larger discussion of the sexually immoral abominations of Leviticus 18, which further reinforces the proposal that Leviticus 17–18 and Genesis 9 were used together in traditions of interpretation. Thus, the tradition evinced in *Sanhedrin* explains more forcefully the events that take place in Acts 21 because the background is more fully furnished with the motivations for why the Jews in Acts 21 behaved as they did. Given that a qualification is offered in the commentary by citing R. Hanania b. Gamaliel in particular, who was active from 70–135 CE, the consumption of blood was further emphasized as a prohibited practice toward the end of the first century, a notion emphasized twice in James's decree.

Acts shares thematic formations with this rabbinic tradition, which emphasizes the relationship the Noahide laws had with practices of execution. The ITF here pairs the Noahide laws with the social process of maintaining purity. Acts' relationship to this ITF would be viewed as conflicted, yet *complementizing*[87]—allied through James's words that these activities should be guarded against, but understanding that each thematic formation needs to be kept within its proper sphere because James's attempt to find a way to deliver Paul from the rumors about his activities with Gentiles abroad speaks to the distinction of viewpoints between Christian value-orientations and Jewish ones.[88]

Another excerpt from the Talmud commonly referenced, *'Abodah Zarah*, reads,

> Against this is quoted: Who is a *ger toshab?* Any [Gentile] who takes upon himself in the presence of three *haberim* not to worship idols. Such is the statement of R. Meir; but the Sages declare: Any [Gentile] who takes upon himself the seven precepts which the sons of Noah undertook; and still others maintain: These do not come within the category of a *ger toshab*; but who is a *ger toshab?* A proselyte who eats of animals not ritually slaughtered, i.e., he took upon himself to observe

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87. The term *complementizing* is borrowed from Lemke, who categorizes different kinds of allying relationships that texts can create with ITFs. According to Lemke ('Discourses in Conflict', p. 48), *complementary* texts refer to ITFs that have different ways of talking about the same thing, 'which then cannot be directly opposed'.

88. See Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', p. 100.

all the precepts mentioned in the Torah apart from the prohibition of [eating the flesh of] animals not ritually slaughtered.[89]

The point in this excerpt, which mentions the Noahide laws, is that no form of idolatry or activities associated with it are to be practiced by Jews or allowed into Jewish communities by a sojourner (*ger toshab*), and only once idolatry is properly renounced can a Gentile become a 'resident alien' and live in the land of Israel.[90] The entirety of *'Abodah Zarah*, which means 'strange worship', is compiled to warn against any form of damages to Jewish purity that pertains to idolatry. Although the Noahide laws do not appear in their list form, the thematic material associates them but forefronts idolatry as the main precept. This emphasis is in keeping with Acts 15.20, 29 and 21.25 because idolatry is the first lexical item in all three lists, whereas the other three lexical items vary in arrangement. This relationship indicates another *complementizing* (i.e. allied) intertextual relationship between *'Abodah Zarah* and Acts because both texts consider how Gentiles and Jews are able to live amongst each other. Further, Shaye Cohen notes that the 'very idea of "Noahide laws" shows a remarkable tendency toward recognizing the validity of cultures other than one's own', which is in keeping with James's earlier use of Amos in Acts 15 to legitimate the inclusion of Gentiles in the rebuilt 'tabernacle of David' (vv. 16-18).[91]

This analysis of the relationships between the thematic formations present in Acts 15 and 21 and the texts discussed above has demonstrated that the use of Noahide laws in Acts opposes the social value in *Jubilees* that Jews must maintain complete separation from Gentiles, but allies with the traditions found in the Babylonian Talmud that allow association between Jews and Gentiles within certain stipulations. While caution needs to be taken in assuming too much from late sources, the use of the Noahide laws in conjunction with Leviticus 17–18 in the Tannaitic literature to instruct on proselytization suggests that

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89. *'Abod. Zar.* 64b, quoted from Isidore Epstein (ed.), *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Nezikin* (4 vols.; trans. A. Mishcon and A. Cohen; London: Soncino, 1935), IV.

90. Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Hellenistic Culture and Society, 31; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), p. 152. Rabbinic tradition went as far as to say that any Gentile that denied idolatry became a Jew. See *b. Meg.* 13a.

91. Shaye J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2nd edn, 2006), p. 209.

the abstentions belonged to two different ITFs because they are used to promote two sets of social values, even though they are linked in their concern of avoiding pollution for idols, sexual immorality and the like. As used in Acts, the Noahide laws are concerned with safeguarding against idolatry and pollution and facilitating ecumenism between Jews and Gentiles, and so Luke does not follow the tradition in *Jubilees*; he opposes it, while probably allying with another tradition consonant with the later rabbinic writings.

## Conclusion

This study goes beyond Tannehill's literary work mentioned in the introduction because he only considered the intra-textual 'echo effects' in Luke–Acts and those that preceded Luke's narrative in the biblical story. This study has shown the importance of looking into the contemporary culture in which Acts was composed to see how the Noahide laws are dis/aligned with other voices that share recurrent patterns of textual formations. While I retained Suleiman's redundancy theory as a heuristic device, the use of ITFs and verbal art share a common linguistic theoretical basis, which speaks to their mutual compatibility for describing how redundant formations and ITFs in Acts 15 and 21 function to promote unity between Jews and Gentiles in cultic purity. However, the reason for this is clarified through redundancy and verbal art, where the Noahide laws are foregrounded in Acts 21.25 in a context where situational variables have been inverted to contrast with Acts 15.

This study has also identified two main elements of the theme that is symbolically articulated by the Noahide laws. First, the purpose of the Noahide laws in Acts is to oppose a contemporary Jewish isolationism that is rationalized by the Noahide laws, and more generally in their contexts of the rewritten, conditional Noahic covenant. Instead, the precepts in Acts ally with the purpose Cohen identifies in the later rabbinic literature, a means to recognize the legitimacy of different cultures and to facilitate their integration. Second, the Noahide laws in Acts carry the message that Gentiles are to honor certain Jewish customs so that Jews will not be forced out of believing communities.