THE BIBLE AND CINEMA: ARTISTIC-LITERARY CONVERGENCES

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Introduction

The thematic proposal of this text covers two interrelated topics that have been attracting growing academic interest: the Bible as a literary work and the intersection between religion and cinema.[1] This essay analyzes these themes to identify methodological and narrative similarities between biblical narratives and film scripts. It implies a more careful look at the standard storytelling techniques of both universes. This perspective enriches the understanding of each field and deepens

[1] Regarding the Bible as literature, this essay is based on several studies, the main ones of which are cited throughout the introduction of this text. However, regarding the representation of the Bible in cinema (which is not the focus of this text specifically), it must be said that widespread good studies already address this relationship with a certain competence. However, regarding the comparative analysis between the artistic-literary methodologies of biblical narratives and film scripts, this essay presents itself as an original approach. However, such originality comes from insights arising from certain intuitive propositions raised by some scholars, such as: Robert Alter, who in his book "The Art of Biblical Narrative" established a comparison between the unfolding of the books of the Bible in ancient public readings with the unfolding of films in a cinema projection; David Bordwell, who in his book "Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema" talks about the correlation between biblical exegesis and film criticism, has as his main element of approximation the patterns of literary structure; Gary Yamasaki, who in his book "Insights from Filmmaking for Analyzing Biblical Narrative" presents an essayistic study that compares narrative elements between cinema and biblical narratives. (Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Harvard Film Studies) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Gary Yamasaki, *Insights from Filmmaking for Analyzing Biblical Narrative (Reading the Bible in the 21st Century – Insights)* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016).

https://doi.org/10.35469/poligrafi.2023.482 | Poligrafi, no. 115/116, vol. 29, 2024, pp. 165–182

the dialogue between biblical exegesis and literary criticism, allowing new theological interpretations to emerge from this methodological approach.

Northrop Frye stated that, despite its multiple functions, the Bible is undeniably a literary work.[2] Its importance in Western culture is such that it has shaped myths, beliefs, and ideologies that guide human cognition in the West.[3] Frye emphasizes that the Old Testament is not just a religious text but a complex narrative that permeates Western artistic and literary production. This recognition, as Erich Auerbach also noted,[4] transcends the philosophical wisdom of Ancient Israel, highlighting that the Bible offers a sophisticated narrative structure comparable to the great texts of world literature.

Furthermore, Vladimir Propp's analysis of the narrative structure of the Bible revealed similarities between the ethnopoetic narratives of the Old Testament and other mythical literature throughout history. By reinforcing Auerbach's conclusions, Propp showed that biblical narrative design applies to different literary genres.[5] Therefore, this focus on the literary form of the scriptures has impacted biblical exegesis. Since the 1940s, scholars such as Umberto Cassuto[6] have suggested that understanding the Scriptures can be enriched by a reading that values their literary dimension, promoting a dialogue between literature and theology.

In this way, the synchronic analysis of biblical texts, which contrasts with the traditional historical reading, highlights the thematic unity of the Scriptures, offering a new theological perspective.[7] This approach

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2 Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 97. cf. Karl-Josef Kuschel, *"Vielleicht hält Gott sich einige Dichter..."*: *Literarisch-theologische Porträts* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1991).

3 Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), xi-xxiii.

4 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*: *The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3-23.

5 Pamela J. Milne, *Vladimir Propp and the Study of Structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative* (Decatur / Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 263.

6 Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the composition of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Shalem Press, 2014), 6–17, 117–126.

7 John W. Rogerson. "Old Testament," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. John W Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6–10.

does not attempt to choose a superior methodology but proposes understanding the type of questions that each method seeks to answer.[8] By focusing on the interaction between the narrated world and the reader's world, literary analysis offers greater interpretative flexibility.[9] With this approach, the Bible begins to be seen not only as a religious text but as a narrative rich in meanings that invites the reader to reflect.[10]

In this sense, narrative analysis becomes a relevant exegetical methodology by inviting the reader to cooperate in the construction of theological meanings.[11] It creates a bond between the reader and the biblical text, which is fundamental to literary studies.[12] Thus, in a synchronous reading of the text, the meanings emerge from a network of textual components that reflect a pragmatic interaction with the listener.[13] This interaction allows for a more dynamic reading experience, where meaning is constructed jointly between the text and the reader.[14]

Robert Alter,[15] when studying the oral nature of biblical narratives, points out that they were designed to be recited. During public readings, the audience visualized the narrated scenes as if in a mental projection, similar to a cinematic experience.[16] For example, for Adele Berlin,[17] in biblical narratives, the form of expression is as vital as the content,

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8 David M. Gunn and Danna N. Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 5.

9 Jean L. Ska, "Sincronia: L'Analisi Narrativa," in *Metodologia Dell'Antico Testamento*, ed. Horacio Simian-Yofre (Bologna: Edizione Dehoniane Bologna, 2009), 139–145.

10 Danna N. Fewell, "The Work of Biblical Narrative," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna N. Fewell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3–4.

11 Elisabeth Parmentier, "Dieu a des histories: La dimension théologique de la narrativité," in *La Bible en Récits*: *L'exégèse biblique à l'heure du lecteur*, ed. Daniel Marguerat (Genève: Labor Et Fides, 2005), 112.

12 Pierre Bühler, "La ise en intrigue de l'interprète: Enjoux herméneutiques de la narrativité," in *La Bible en Récits*: *L'exégèse biblique à l'heure du lecteur*, ed. Daniel Marguerat (Genève: Labor Et Fides, 2005), 94-95.

13 Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 1-19.

14 Daniel Marguerat, "L'exégèse biblique à l'heure du lecteur," in *La Bible en Récits*: *L'exégèse biblique à l'heure du lecteur*, ed. Daniel Marguerat (Genève: Labor Et Fides, 2005), 15.

15 Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 113–114.

16 Gary Yamasaki, *Watching a Biblical Narrative*: *point of view in biblical exegesis* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 44–65.

17 Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 13–21.

which reflects a careful construction between form and meaning. This balance between content and form is essential to capture the author's intended point of view and to construct a message with interpretative richness.

Therefore, for David Bordwell,[18] film scripts, although they follow established narrative conventions, are peculiar in their construction. A film script is designed to guide several professionals in the construction of a shared vision, where each narrative element is intentional.[19] Gary Yamasaki,[20] for example, observes that, as in biblical narratives, film scripts need to maintain strict control between form and content, which creates a methodological convergence between the two narrative forms. This connection allows biblical and cinematographic stories to offer sensory and reflective experiences.

Bordwell further explains that, in the same way that Greek philosophical thought systematized Homeric literature, traditions of biblical interpretation sought to integrate the scriptures with philosophical thought.[21] From the Renaissance onwards, Western literature began to explore freer and more sensorial hermeneutics, connecting emotion and reason. As the "seventh art," cinema intensifies this experience, promoting a hermeneutics of the senses that balances rationality and emotion. This sensorial perspective brings cinematic narratives closer to biblical literature, expanding the possibilities of interpretation and understanding.[22]

Finally, this essay aims to briefly demonstrate the artistic-literary convergences announced here between biblical narratives and film scripts. This exercise will be carried out using the analysis of narrative excerpts from the films *Pulp Fiction* and *Braveheart*, as well as the series *Succession* and *Breaking Bad*, highlighting the points of narrative intersection with biblical stories such as the story of Joseph of Egypt,

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18 David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 3–15.

19 David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 21–26.

20 Yamasaki. *Insights from Filmmaking for Analyzing Biblical Narrative*, 35–37.

21 Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 86, 139, 140, 196, 215.

22 Frank Kermode, *The Art of Telling: Essays on Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 24.

Job and Jonah, and the speech of YHWH, a prelude to the legislation of Ancient Israel in the story of the Exodus. It should be clarified that the choice of these films and series, instead of so many other cinematographic products with direct biblical content, is due to the intention of making it clear that the artistic-literary convergences that we intend to demonstrate here are independent of thematic-religious aspects, but rather constitute universal narrative techniques.

Discursive Pragmatics, the Quinary Scheme, and the Five Fables

While all literary narratives invite the reader to imagine the narrated world, biblical stories and film scripts stand out for their minimalist but practical descriptive approach. Like in a film script, where each page represents one minute on screen,[23] biblical narratives use carefully selected words to bring the plot to life. This style not only builds the narrated world with precision but also organizes the layers of the plot and defines the narrative arcs of the characters.[24] By immersing themselves in this universe, the reader allows themselves to be guided by the rhetorical structure of the narrative, gradually discovering the profound themes that support each story.[25]

The journey of the characters in the Bible serves as a bridge between the narrator and the reader, facilitating the communication of central themes.[26] As pointed out by Cynthia L. Miller,[27] in his speech, biblical characters contribute to constructing meaning, functioning as an essential interpretative key. The fusion between the characters' speeches and the narrative pragmatics makes the character arc a supporting com-

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[23] Syd Field, *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting* (New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 15–24.

[24] Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 197.

[25] Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: an introductory guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 20–45.

[26] Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 74–82.

[27] Cynthia L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: a linguistic analysis*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 55 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 399–407.

ponent that supports the plot.[28] This dynamic brings biblical narratives closer to the structure of films, where dialogue and character actions also construct the plot, guiding the viewer in understanding the underlying messages.[29]

In the classical literary tradition, as described by Aristotle in "Poetics," narratives are structured by six main elements, the most important of which are the plot and the characters.[30] The sequence of actions shapes the plot, so any change in this order affects the message and the story's impact. Aristotle outlined a three-act structure – First, Second, and Third Act – essential in classical literary works and formats the narrative discourse. This classical structure provides a basis for the development of stories in literature and cinema, facilitating the unfolding of actions with clarity and intensity.

Within this three-act model, Paul J. Gulino[31] describes a dramatic curve divided into five points: (1) *misbehavior* (introduction of the characters and their preparation for the adventure); (2) *set up* (call to adventure); (3) *midpoint* (development of misbehavior); (4) *low point* (fall or failure); and (5) *moralizing correction* (correction and conclusion). Marguerat and Bourquin,[32] when analyzing biblical narratives, propose a very similar quinary scheme, with the following stages: (1) *initial situation*, (2) *node*, (3) *transformative action*, (4) *denouement*, and (5) *final situation*. This organization reveals a profound structural similarity between biblical narratives and the classical model, facilitating the analysis and interpretation of both.[33]

These narrative models can be superimposed and applied to various biblical narratives and hero's journey films, such as the stories of Jacob

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[28] George W. Savran, *Telling and Retelling: Quotation in Biblical Narrative* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), ix.

[29] Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (New York: Regan Books, 1997), 100–109.

[30] Aristóteles, 384-322 a.C. *Poética – Περὶ ποιητικῆς* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2017), 34–217.

[31] Paul J. Gulino, *Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 1–14.

[32] Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *Pour Lire les Récits Bibliques: initiation à l'analyse narrative* (Paris: Les Éditions Du CERF; Genève: Labor Et Fides, 2009), 58–66.

[33] Petterson Brey, "As narrativas da Bíblia Hebraica e os roteiros cinematográficos: convergências literário-metodológicas," in *A arte e a cultura e a formação humana*, ed. Fabiano E. A. Batista (Ponta Grossa: Editora Atena, 2022), 5–6.

and Esau[34] or Joseph of Egypt.[35] In such narratives, discursive pragmatics is guided by the sequence of actions, making the characters exist primarily to move the plot forward. The classical narrative structure applies to these stories to make the plot the center of the experience, while the characters serve the progression of events, as occurs in film scripts. This parallel between the Bible and cinema illustrates the narrative power of Scripture and its influence on modern visual storytelling.

The narrative of Joseph of Egypt exemplifies a narrative design structured in five parts that outline the protagonist's development and conflict. Initially, Joseph is introduced with distinct characteristics, such as his ability to interpret dreams and his potential leadership, which arouses the jealousy of his brothers. It is the first stage, in which the protagonist and the conflict are introduced. Next, Joseph is taken to Egypt, where he begins his journey and must hone these skills, symbolizing a point of no return in his adventure. From this point on, the story develops with dramatic parallels, such as the episode of Judah and Tamar, which adds a dimension of contrast and rhetoric to the plot.

Robert Alter[36] notes a structural parallel between Judah's discovery of Tamar and Jacob's news of Joseph's "death." This contrast helps to highlight underlying themes of deception and revelation. Inspired by this analysis, we can see the similarity in Jennifer Van Sijll's[37] interpretation when she points out a similar resource in the film *Pulp Fiction*,[38] where Quentin Tarantino uses juxtaposed scenes to create tension and dramatic complexity. These scenes involving Vincent (John Travolta), Mia (Uma Thurman), and Lance (Erich Stoltz) function in a similar way to the juxtaposition between Jacob, Judah, and Tamar, developing a layer of expectation and shock that allows the audience to grasp the thematic importance. This parallelism between the works reveals a technique shared between biblical and cinematic narratives.

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[34] Jan P. Fokkelman, "Genesis," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 36–55.

[35] Christoph Uehlinger, "Genèse 37-50," in *Introduction à L'Ancien Testament*, ed. Thomas Römer, Jean-Daniel Macchi and Christophe Nihan (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2009), 239–255.

[36] Alter. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 1–24.

[37] Jennifer V. Sijll, *Narrativa cinematográfica: contando histórias com imagem em movimento* (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2019), 100–103.

[38] Pulp Fiction, Quentin Tarantino, USA, Miramax Films, 1994.

As demonstrated in a previous publication,[39] in the structure of *Pulp Fiction*, the contrasting scenes create a psychological condition in the audience, favoring the understanding of the importance of the relationship between the characters and their actions. This type of construction is also identifiable in Joseph's narrative, where the opposition between deception and redemption shapes the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation. In both narratives, dramatic parallelism reinforces the emotional connection between the characters and the audience and allows for a deeper interpretation of the central theme. Thus, Joseph's narrative structure is multifaceted and oriented towards a more sensitive and psychological understanding.

The Protagonist's Direct Speech

In biblical narratives and films, characters play a fundamental role in conveying thematic ideas and values. In biblical stories, characters are constructed to reflect the narrative arc through characterization techniques. As Berlin states,[40] these representation techniques are standard in biblical narratives and other forms of literature. In the case of the Scripture, the actions and speech of the characters, in their various conflicts and challenges, help to convey the central theme, offering the narrator a powerful tool to communicate his narrative discourse in an indirect but very impactful way.[41]

The direct speeches of biblical characters are particularly important for understanding the narrative. Miller[42] emphasizes that the speeches of the main characters are crucial to understanding the discourse and intention of the narrator. Savran[43] complements this idea by stating that, when speaking, the characters rhetorically evoke the past, updating previous events and giving them new meanings. As Field[44] points out, dialogue also plays a similar role in cinema, as it helps to maintain

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39 Brey, *As narrativas da Bíblia Hebraica e os roteiros cinematográficos,* 5–6.
40 Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 33.
41 Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 74–82.
42 Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*, 399–407.
43 Savran, *Telling and Retelling*, ix.
44 Field, *Screenplay*, 23–24.

the cohesion of the plot and connect the past, present, and future, creating a narrative progression that engages the audience and reinforces the film's message.

In the Exodus narrative, for example, YHWH's speech on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:4-6) is loaded with historical and future meanings. At this point in the plot, YHWH evokes past actions to justify and reinforce his sovereignty and alliance with the Hebrew people. As Brey[45] points out, the appeal to YHWH's reputation–consolidated in the actions carried out in Egypt–serves as the rhetorical foundation of his speech, legitimizing the pact with Israel and projecting the promise of a sacred nation. This epic and persuasive speech exemplifies the use of past events as a guarantee of credibility for what is proposed in the present, something familiar in both the Bible and in cinematic narratives.[46]

The technique of evoking the past to give meaning to the present and project the future, used in YHWH's speech (Ex 19:4-6), is also employed in constructing heroic speeches in films. In *Braveheart*,[47] William Wallace (Mel Gibson) uses his fame and reputation to persuade his countrymen to fight for freedom. As Bordwell[48] notes, Wallace declared, "I am William Wallace!"[49] and uses the weight of his reputation to inspire courage and determination, just as YHWH invokes his history of protecting the Hebrew people to consolidate his authority and commitment. This rhetorical structure between past and future reinforces the legitimacy and thematic cohesion of the discourse in both narratives.

Thus, protagonists in biblical narratives and cinema are often portrayed in decisive moments of confrontation and collective motivation. In *Braveheart*, Wallace challenges the Scottish soldiers to fight against oppression, and in Exodus, YHWH encourages the Hebrews to em-

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[45] Petterson Brey, "O SENHOR evoca o passado para reiterar o presente e anunciar o futuro: a retórica da configuração literária do discurso do SENHOR no Sinai (Ex 19,4-6a)," *Pesquisas em Teologia* v. 3, n. 6 (2020): 246, https://doi.org/10.46859/PUCRio.Acad.PqTeo.2595-9409.2020v3n6p228.

[46] McKee, *Story*, 100–109.

[47] Braveheart, Mel Gibson, USA, Paramount; 20th Century Fox, 1995.

[48] Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 121–-124.

[49] Several of YHWH's speeches in the Pentateuch are introduced or concluded by the phrase, "I am the LORD!"

brace their role as the chosen people, elevating them from enslaved people to a nation of priests (Ex 19:6). Both scenes follow a similar rhetorical scheme, in which the character appeals to his reputation and past actions as justification for his speech.[50] This parallelism between the narratives shows the power of direct discourse in forming an emotional connection with listeners and validating the values presented.

This type of discursive structure reinforces the narrator's point of view, shaping the thematic unity of the narrative. In speeches like that of YHWH at Mount Sinai, the fusion between the narrator's and the character's voices is a resource for engaging the reader in the narrative context and directing them to understand the central themes. This technique of "giving voice" to the past connects the listener to the values of the narrative, effectively conveying a message of authority and belonging, strengthening both the biblical and the cinematic plot.

In addition, narrative construction and "impression points" are critical devices for anchoring the viewer's or reader's perception. Bordwell[51] and Kermode[52] point out that these structural points in the plot direct the audience's experience, providing milestones for the audience to understand the narrative's evolution and the characters' development. By establishing these impression points, the narrator controls the story's pace and gradually reveals thematic unity, allowing the audience to connect emotionally with the dilemmas and values presented.

These impression points also help to highlight essential themes, such as redemption and reconciliation, present in biblical stories such as Joseph of Egypt. In biblical narratives, this narrative technique allows the audience to identify with the characters' challenges and triumphs, perceiving the moral and spiritual themes that run through the story. Similarly, in cinematic narratives, these impression points give the audi-

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[50] This is one of the categories of rhetorical appeal for speeches, referenced by the Greek word ETHOS, where the speaker bases his argument on his own reputation. There is also the PATHOS rhetorical appeal, in which the speaker uses some type of emotional element, and also the LOGOS rhetorical appeal, where the speaker bases his argument on the very logic that arises from his statements in reference to his premises.

[51] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 208.

[52] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 16.

ence a deeper understanding of the character's arc and journey, creating an engaging and emotionally rich narrative experience.

Therefore, analyzing the narrative structure and direct speeches reveals how biblical and cinematic narratives use similar techniques to reinforce their central themes and engage the audience. Solid characters and well-structured speeches in both the Bible and film provide a powerful window into understanding the values and message being conveyed, showing that, even in different mediums, stories share a narrative architecture that enriches the experience of listeners and readers.

Narrative Design: Plot-Driven and Character-Driven

For centuries, the narratives in the collective memory were shaped by the plot, focusing on a sequence of actions and events. Biblical narratives, for example, show this prevalence of the plot, reflecting traditional structures that align with elements of classical literature.[53] With the development of cinema, especially Hollywood, these structures were adapted under the influence of the rules of Aristotelian poetics, establishing a rigid and efficient standard of quality.[54] However, after the Second World War, Hollywood cinema began to incorporate modern drama, influenced by European narratives, which brought greater complexity to the characters, giving them prominence over the plot.[55]

In modern drama, the protagonist gains a more complex and prominent role, being not just someone who reacts to the events of the plot but a figure who brings psychological depth to the plot. This model is similar to some biblical narratives that, while maintaining the classical structure, reflect a complexity that approaches that of modern literature.[56] The harmony between biblical narrative and modern cinema is remarkable, as both begin to treat characters as vehicles of a human

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[53] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: ideological literature and the drama of reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 41–57.

[54] Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 21–26.

[55] Tom Stempel, *Framework: A History of Screenwriting in the American Film* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 186–196.

[56] Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 10.

depth that transcends mere action.[57] Biblical stories, such as those of Job and Jonah, exemplify literary characteristics found in contemporary storytelling techniques.

In classic narrative design, centered on the plot (plot-driven), the story is driven by the events and actions of the protagonist. Joseph of Egypt is an example of a plot-driven narrative, where the character's trajectory is defined by successive events that force him to react and adapt. Despite being the protagonist, Joseph does not have the freedom to narrate or comment on the events to which he is subjected. External situations transform his life, and he only responds to these challenges. This linear narrative style, where each action triggers another, reflects the classic structure in which the protagonist submits to the course of events.[58]

An example of a contemporary plot-driven narrative is the series *Breaking Bad*,[59] where the protagonist Walter White (Bryan Cranston) decides to enter the drug trade to secure his family's financial future after discovering he has cancer. In each episode, Walter finds himself in more dangerous and complex situations, facing moral dilemmas that intensify as the plot unfolds. Just like Joseph, Walter reacts to the plot's events, dealing with the consequences of his previous actions, which creates an effect of continuous action that keeps the viewer attentive to the sequence of events that make up the plot.

However, in character-driven narratives, the focus shifts to the psychological and emotional development of the characters. These stories prioritize the internal nuances of the characters, offering the reader or viewer a deeper understanding of who they are. Digressions about the protagonist's emotional state are as important as the plot events, creating a narrative where what matters is not what happens but how the characters feel about these events. It can be seen in the biblical narra-

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[57] Jean-Pierre Sarrazac, *Poética do drama moderno: de Ibsen a Koltès* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2017), 41–78.

[58] Pamela Douglas, *Writing the TV Drama Series* (Los Angeles: Michael Wiese Productions, 2011), 31–34.

[59] Breaking Bad, Vince Gilligan, USA, NETFLIX, 2013.

tives of Job[60] and Jonah,[61] which, unlike the stories of Joseph or Jacob, focus more on exploring the characters and feelings of the protagonists.

In character-driven narratives, the interest is less in the action and more in the internal reflections of the characters. Paul J. Gulino[62] states that commentary scenes are inserted between the action scenes in this type of narrative, allowing the characters to reflect on their feelings and internal dilemmas. These pauses for introspection deepen the viewer's understanding of the character's emotional complexity. In the Bible, Job's story exemplifies this structure, as there are several passages where Job reflects on his suffering, questioning his faith and the meaning of his life. This psychological depth is central to understanding the narrative.

A contemporary example of a character-driven narrative is the series *Succession*,[63] where the protagonist, Kendall Roy (Jeremy Strong), faces internal dilemmas while seeking his father's approval and the security of his position in the family. The series explores Kendall's psychological tension and his power struggle without the business succession promised in the first episode happening over the seasons. This narrative style allows the audience to engage with Kendall's emotional complexity, making him a multifaceted character who carries the weight of the plot without necessarily advancing it directly and constantly.

In *Succession*, the conflict of power and the search for acceptance are the center of the narrative, and this is sustained by the constant suspension of the action, which generates psychological and emotional tension in the viewer. The succession in the company is the plot that drives the series, but the narrative stasis that prevents it from happening is what deepens the exploration of the characters' characters. Each episode presents dialogues and situations that reveal new layers of the protagonist and the other characters, establishing a narrative that prioritizes internal development over direct action.

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60 Moshe Greenberg, "Job," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 283–304.

61 Ernest A Knauf, "Jonas," in *Introduction à L'Ancien Testament*, ed. Thomas Römer, Jean-Daniel Macchi and Christophe Nihan (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2009), 502–508.

62 Gulino, *Screenwriting*, 1–19.

63 Succession, Jesse Armstrong, USA, HBO, 2018.

Kendall's journey in *Succession* finds an echo in Job's suffering, where the stagnation in the development of the plot allows the depth of the protagonists' characters to be explored. The doubt about personal value and the search for redemption unites these stories, highlighting how psychological deepening becomes the main driving force of the narrative. This suspension of the action, paradoxically, makes the plot more engaging, as the audience becomes interested not in the outcome but in the process of the characters' self-discovery.

Thus, analyzing the differences between plot-driven and character-driven narratives shows how the narrative approach changes how the audience connects with the story and the characters. While plot-driven stories keep the audience attentive to the unfolding of the plot, character-driven stories involve the viewer in an emotional and psychological immersion. Biblical narratives and contemporary cinema exemplify these two approaches, showing that, throughout the centuries, stories continue to explore new ways of expressing the complexities of the human experience.

These approaches reveal that, by blending aspects of classical narratives with renowned modern drama, the Bible and contemporary cinema offer rich and varied experiences. Whether through the nonstop action of plot-driven plots or the introspective exploration of character-driven narratives, both narrative forms capture the audience's attention in different ways, proving that there are many ways to engage and move the audience. This narrative plurality is what makes literature, the Bible, and cinema timeless and universally impactful.

Conclusion

This paper sought to explore the technical convergence between biblical narratives and film scripts, proposing a dialogue between two narrative forms that, although separated by distinct historical and cultural contexts, share a literary and artistic basis. Although the discussion remained at an introductory level, it was possible to glimpse how these narrative forms complement each other. Future research could deepen this analysis, exploring specific examples that highlight the shared narrative techniques. The relationship between the Bible and cinema offers

a fertile field for a comparative analysis that reveals new layers of meaning in both expressions.

The central provocation of this work lies in the suggestion of a theological reflection that considers biblical texts not only as religious documents but also as works of literary art. Based on Vilém Flusser's thinking,[64] it is argued that the aesthetic experience of the Scriptures, in interaction with cinema, can reveal theological levels that transcend the traditional scope of religions. Flusser suggests that the artistic enjoyment of biblical texts allows for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding that goes beyond a strictly rational or dogmatic approach.

This perspective invites the reader to consider that biblical narratives have an artistic character. Biblical narratives were composed to engage the listener-reader in an experience that goes beyond the simple absorption of information.[65] By highlighting the role of narrative form, the text suggested that the aesthetic experience of biblical content is essential for fully understanding its message. Thus, biblical hermeneutics can benefit from approaches considering form and content inseparable elements of a single message.

The comparative analysis between Scripture and cinema broadens the technical understanding of narratives and enriches the aesthetic experience of biblical texts. The convergence between these two art forms offers a unique opportunity to explore how the biblical message can be understood more deeply. In this way, the text proposes an interdisciplinary approach that studies the Bible as literature or religion and as an aesthetic experience that dialogues with other artistic manifestations, such as cinema.

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[64] Vilém Flusser, *Vom Stand der Dinge: Eine kleine Philosophie des Designs* (Gottingen: STEIDL, 2019), 26–31.

[65] Petterson Brey, "Experiência de Deus no Pentateuco: existe mística na lei?," in *Diálogos sobre a Experiência de Deus – volume II: questões sobre mística*, ed. André Anéas (São Paulo: Editora Recriar, 2022), 193–195.

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