

inspiration, and resultant unity of Scripture. Although many modern evangelical works on biblical theology highlight intertextuality, fuller-scale models for understanding the interconnectivity of the Old Testament that leverage intertextuality for understanding biblical authors, the composition of their books, and the meaning of these books are uncommon.² I first propose the following illustration of the model, with methodological issues explained later in this introduction.

My illustration for the interconnectivity of the Old Testament is that of a complex subway system or metro transit network. Such transit systems are found in many major cities across the world, including New York City, London, Paris, Tokyo, Beijing, and others. A mere glance at the maps of such transit systems reveals an incredible, even bewildering, amount of complexity: differently colored lines going every which way, these lines sometimes straight but often curving, angling, or intersecting with other lines, and hundreds of stations, each represented by a dot labeled with its own sometimes peculiar name.

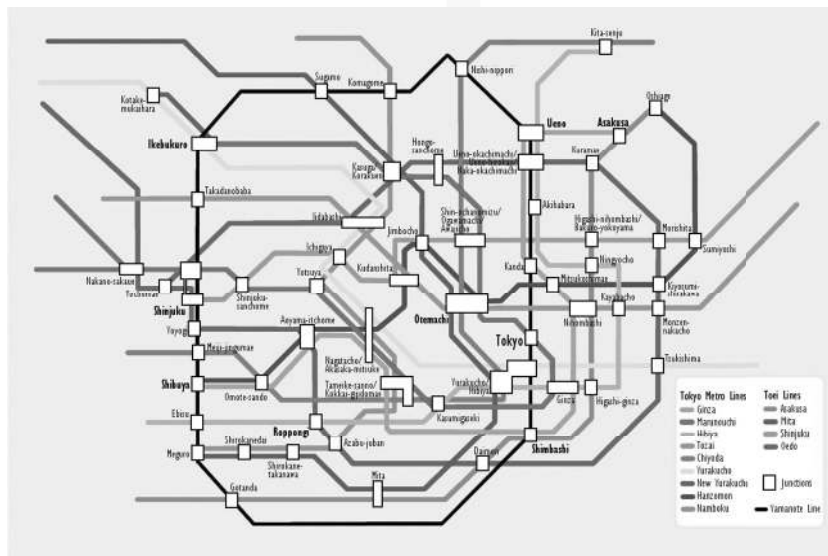


Figure I.1. Subway map with transfer stations

²The work of John Sailhamer is one exception.

act.³ In this case, the city planners who understood and designed this intricate, interconnected system are the authors of the Old Testament. Careful study of their work reveals that the books of the Old Testament and the Old Testament itself are not the tangled mess that they might appear to be at first glance but a beautifully constructed “web of words.”⁴

Sometimes transfer stations link more than two lines together. At the time of writing, Châtelet station in central Paris links five, King’s Cross/St. Pancras station in London six, and Times Square–42nd Street station in New York City twelve (these numbers do not even include transfers to buses and longer-distance trains).

Such major transfer stations are necessarily very large. Passengers who have used them before know that it can be a long walk to make a transfer in such a large station. Likewise, the nexus passages chosen for analysis in this book connect with multiple passages (sometimes including other nexus passages) and even multiple Old Testament books. It will accordingly take considerable effort to explore a nexus passage within the literary context of its own book and in relation to other books that it alludes to (or is alluded to by). By its very nature, a transfer station is part of two or more lines. Likewise, a nexus passage has its primary literary context in its own book but often also has significant relationships to other books with which it interconnects.

Nexus passages show that the Hebrew Bible is not a jumble of ancient religious documents but a literary, textual, and theological wonder. The Old Testament does not merely describe the wonders that God performed in history, such as during the exodus. Rather, the way in which the Hebrew

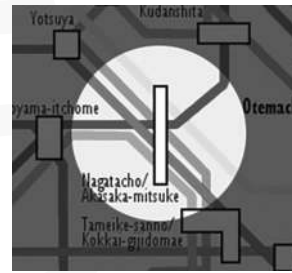


Figure I.2. Transfer station that links multiple lines

³For an argument for understanding *historical* not just in a historical-critical way but, even more importantly, in relation to the canonical text, see Christopher R. Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics: Toward a New Introduction to the Prophets*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 46, 70-72, 90-92.

⁴Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 141. For more on OT authors, see Kevin Chen, “Psalm 110: A Nexus for Old Testament Theology,” *CTR* 17, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 65.

pick up these two textual threads and deliberately braided them together to conclude Balaam's third oracle. Both Genesis 27:29 and Genesis 49:9 concern an individual king, suggesting the same for Numbers 24:9 (and Num 24:8).

The respective plot structures surrounding Genesis 27:29 and Genesis 49:9 increase the likelihood of intentional braiding, or citation of or allusion to multiple texts within the same text.³⁵

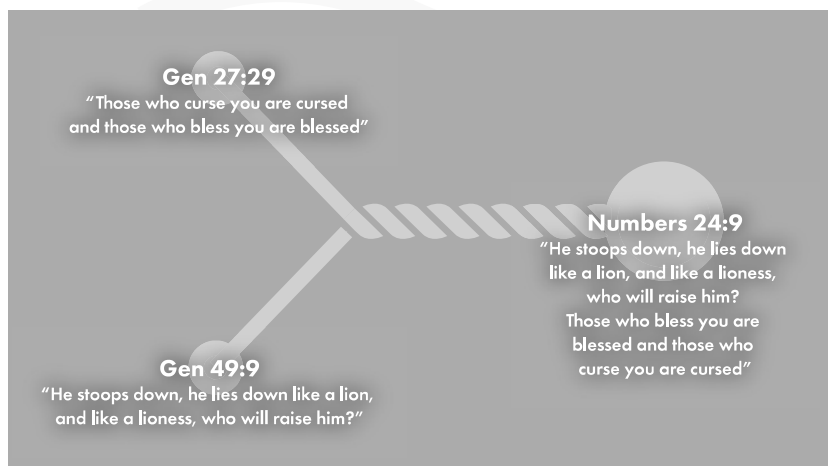


Figure 4.1. Genesis 27:29 and Genesis 49:9 braided in Numbers 24:9

Both texts are found at high points in the narrative in which a patriarch blesses his son(s). In Genesis 27:27-29, Isaac blesses Jacob, and in Genesis 49:1-27, Jacob blesses his twelve sons. Within the story line, these fatherly blessings are not merely family affairs but solemn moments in which the Abrahamic covenant promises and blessings are passed down to the next generation. The aforementioned ongoing allusions to Abrahamic covenant texts in the Balaam narrative suggest that the use of Genesis 27:29 and Genesis 49:9 in Numbers 24:9 is intended to evoke the Abrahamic

³⁵This is similar to what is called an "interpretive blend" in Gary Edward Schnittjer, *Old Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), xxxiii. See the passing use of "braiding" in Ron Haydon, "The Law and the Prophets" in MT Daniel 9:3-19," *BBR* 24, no. 1 (2014): 20, unbeknownst to me when I started using the term. He nevertheless deserves credit for using it earlier than I did.

messianic use in Numbers 24:19 is likely coordinated with God's original charge to humanity in Genesis 1:26, 28. Thus Numbers 24:17-19 probably braids Genesis 1:26-28 as well.

Numbers 24:17-19 serves as a fitting climax to Balaam's four main proverbs and the Balaam narrative, while at the same time being a remarkable example of braiding. While predicting the coming of an eschatological Messiah who will defeat all of his and Israel's enemies and rule the earth, Numbers 24:17-19 braids Genesis 1:26-28; 3:15; 22:17; 24:60; 37:6-10; 49:10.

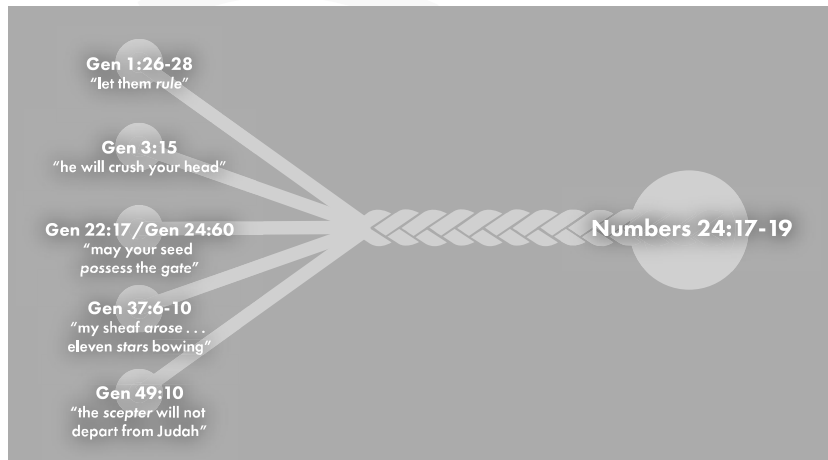


Figure 4.3. Braiding in Numbers 24:17-19

Though Alexander focused on only Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 49:8-12, it is as though what he calls “the messianic ideology of Genesis” has been fleshed out and sharpened in the poetry of Numbers 24 in condensed form.⁴⁸ Sailhamer also strongly advocates for close attention to the Pentateuch's poems and their interrelationship, including Genesis 3:15; 27:27-29; 49:8-12; those in Numbers 24; and others. Recall that Numbers 24:17-19 interconnects with Numbers 24:9, which itself braids Genesis 27:29 and

⁴⁸T. Desmond Alexander, “Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis,” in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 19-39.

a prior allusion in Judges 5:26-27 specifically to Balaam's oracles in Numbers 24. Jael's victory over Sisera thus is presented as a foretaste of the eschatological victory of the seed of the woman.

Isaiah 63:1-3. The book of Isaiah may also be added to this lengthy list of Old Testament books that allude to Balaam's oracles in Numbers 24. Sailhamer argues that the figure in Isaiah 63:1-3 who comes from Edom with bloodstained clothes has been intentionally presented in terms of Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 49:11-12. He believes that Isaiah has begun with the image of the king whose clothes are stained by grapes in Genesis 49:11. Sailhamer also believes that Isaiah draws on Genesis 3:15 (presumably the crushing of the serpent's head) to fill out the picture from Genesis 49:11 "into one of a warrior treading in the wine presses of divine wrath."⁷⁷ Isaiah 63:2 asks, "Why is your garment red and your clothes *like one who treads the winepress?*" Previously, I further argued that the bruising of the seed's heel in Genesis 3:15 and an allusion in Genesis 49:11 to Joseph's bloodstained robe in Genesis 37:31-33 suggest that the blood on the king's garments may also include his own.⁷⁸

There appears to be yet another intertextual layer to Isaiah 63:1-3. This text clearly concerns the judgment of "Edom" (Is 63:1), cast as "treading [תַּדְּרֵךְ] the winepress" (Is 63:2). In Numbers 24:17, the "star treads [תַּדְּרֵךְ] from Jacob," and it possesses "Edom" in Numbers 24:18. The collocation of "Edom"/"tread" is rare (see Amos 9:12-13), and this suggests that Isaiah 63:1-3 has drawn on not only

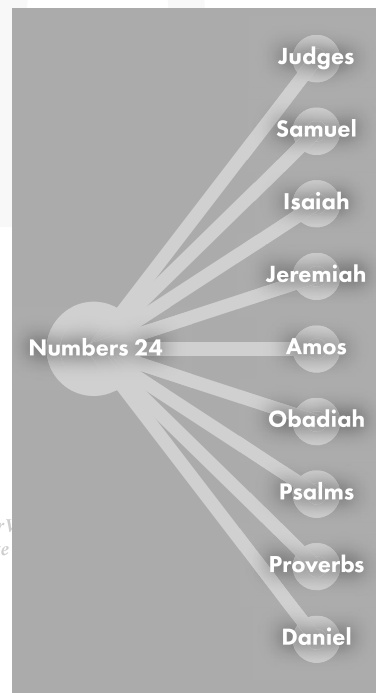


Figure 4.4. Nexus connections from Numbers 24 to other Old Testament books

⁷⁷Sailhamer, *Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 239.

⁷⁸Chen, *Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch*, 136-37.

By bringing out these features, nexus passages show that the Hebrew Bible is itself a literary, textual, and theological wonder. Like a carefully designed, extensive subway system, key texts and their interrelationships are depicted in the simplified diagram below, which includes all ten nexus passages in this book and several other key passages but even so shows only a few connections for each text. More links and more passages could easily be added for the sake of accuracy, but at a certain point the (heuristic) diagram becomes very difficult to draw.

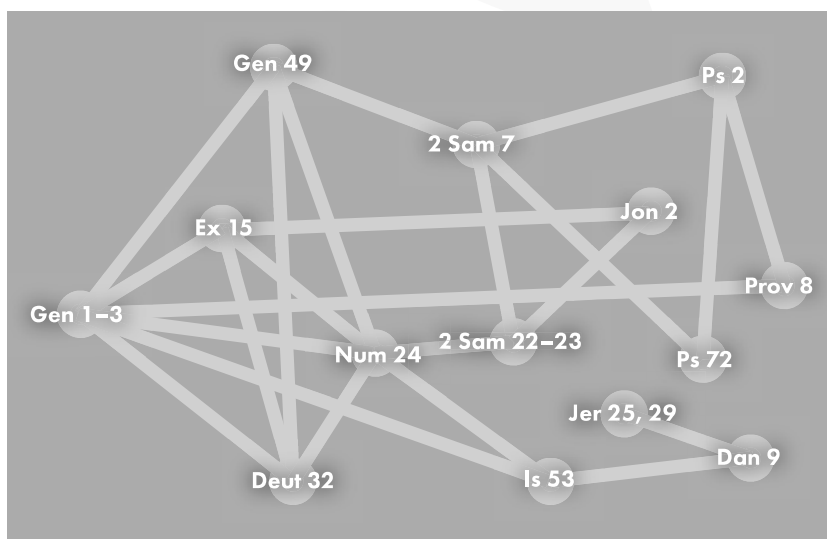


Figure 12.1. Simplified diagram of nexus passages and the interconnectivity of the Old Testament

Those today who do not believe in a thoroughly textual unity of the Old Testament may feel that they have tried everything and see no way forward. Gerhard von Rad, for example, questions whether “understand[ing] the Old Testament as a unity” is a “legitimate demand,” declaring, “I very much doubt whether the main task of an Old Testament theology is the understanding of Israel’s literary legacy as a unity.”⁴ With all due respect to such giants as von Rad and Wellhausen, Rothstein pertinently points

⁴Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 2:427.