Fresco from the Via Latina Catacomb, Rome (cubiculum C), painted about 320 A.D. Abraham raises his sword to slay his son Isaac.

Genesis 22:1-19
וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְבָּרָּה אֱלֹהִים נָּא אֱלֹהִים אַבְרָהָם
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אָבְרָהָם
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֱבָרָהָם
וַיֹּאמֶר הַנָּא טָקְלָה אֱבָרָהָם
וַיַּשְׁכַּם אֹהוֵם בַּבֶּקֶר
וְזָכַר אֲבָרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר־לֹּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים:
In the morning, Abram said to his servants about his son:

Genesis 22:4-8
וַיַּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה יְהוָה | יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר יְאָמֵר הַזֶּה בֵּן בֵּית יְהוָה | יְהוָה.

וַיַּקְרָא מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה א ל־אַבְרָהָם שְּנֵיתָּם מְרַחַשְׁמוֹם:

לֹא אָמַר בּוֹ נֶשֶׁבֶתָּם אֶל־נִשְׁפָּה בְּחַלּוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂית אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה וְלֹא חָשָׁכָּה אֱלֹהִים אֲלִית בְּעָנָן אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂית הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֹא בְּבָרֵךְ אָבָרָךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא כְּכָוֵל אֲשֶׁר עַל־שָּפֶת הָיָם וְיַרְשׁ זְרַעְךָ אֶת־שָׁעָר אֵבֵי.

וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם א ל־נְעָרֵיו וַיָּקָםוּ וַיָּקֻמוּ יַחְדָּו א ל־בָּא שְׁבַע וַיָּשָּׁב אַבְרָהָם בּוֹ הָר שְׁבַע׃

וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵיהּ אַל־נֶשֶׁב כְּכָוֵל אֲשֶׁר עַל־שְׁפִּי הָיָם וְיַרְשׁ זְרַעְךָ אֶת־שָׁעָר אֵבֵה שְׁמַעְתֶּם בְּכָלָּם.

וַיְהָקְרִי אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יְהוָה אֶלְּעָלֶהְךָ לֹא כְּכָוֵל עָבָרְתָּ בַּחַלּוֹת שָׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂית הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְיַרְשׁ זְרַעְךָ אֶת־שָׁעָר אֵבֵה שְׁמַעְתֶּם בְּכָלָם.
What is a DISCOURSE?
DEFINITION:
A discourse is a group of expressions linked together
• from a beginning
• to an ending
so that they develop an idea in some orderly fashion.
We shall make Abraham our bondman.

Genesis 22:1-19

The Testing of Abraham

Genesis 22:1-3

The sacrifice of Isaac to Yahweh: Yahweh's test.

Genesis 22:4-8

Abraham's obedience to Yahweh's command.

Genesis 22:9-13

The supreme test of faith, the testing of Abraham's faith.

Genesis 22:14-19

The fulfillment of Yahweh's promise to Abraham.

The sacrifice of Isaac to Yahweh: Yahweh's test.

Abraham's obedience to Yahweh's command.

We shall make Abraham our bondman.

The supreme test of faith, the testing of Abraham's faith.

The fulfillment of Yahweh's promise to Abraham.

We shall make Abraham our bondman.
The Testing of Abraham

Gen 22:1-3

When Abraham was 100 years old, the Lord tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!"

Gen 22:3-4

Abraham said, "Here I am, Lord God. Do it to your servant as you have said.

Gen 22:5-8

Abraham took his son to the place of sacrifice, which he had prepared in the land of Moriah. And he said to his two young men who were with him, "Stay here with the young donkey."

Gen 22:9-12

Abraham took the wood of the sacrifice and laid it on his son's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. And they both went on their way.

Gen 22:13

Abraham said to his son, "My son!--Here, take the wood and go to the place I showed you, and build the altar there and sacrifice your son, your only son, Isaac, upon the altar."
This phrase marks or signals the beginning of a small, distinct discourse (the testing of Abraham) in the larger Historical Narrative discourse of Abraham’s life (Genesis 12-25).

Discourses are often arranged in a hierarchy in which one large discourse is made of several smaller, embedded discourses.
The testing of Abraham is finished in verse 12, but there is still the resolution to follow.
The Resolution

• An important part of many stories takes place immediately after the story’s climax, after the tension within a story is released.

• This is especially evident in the Gospel of John where events are often followed by commentary making more explicit the message (theology) of the narrative.
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- This is especially evident in the Gospel of John where events are often followed by commentary making more explicit the message (theology) of the narrative.

In verses 16–18, the angel of YHWH speaks to Abraham, informing Abraham of the promises that belong to him as a result of passing the test.

In verse 19, Abraham returns to his servants and his home. Verse 19 brings the resolution and hence, the story to a close.
The next verse (v 20) reads just like verse 1. Here we have, once again, a faithful marker of another episode in the story of Abraham’s life, confirming that verse 19 is indeed the end of the “Abraham is Tested” story.
The Testing of Abraham

Genesis 22:1-19

The text provides a historical and theological perspective on the story of Abraham, focusing on the events of the sacrifice of Isaac. It traces the mainline of the narrative, highlighting key verses and themes such as faith, obedience, and the promise of descendants. The visual representation includes a diagram to illustrate the sequence of events and a text box with selected verse numbers to guide the reader through the story.
The *wayyiqtols* form the “skeleton” upon which the details of the story hang.
This is evidence that much of the detail in Biblical Hebrew narrative is carried by dialogue.
Definite Article on Elohim

- It is very common for אֱלֹהִים to have the definite article in Hebrew.
- The Canaanites worshipped other gods, some of which required child sacrifice. The use of the definite article in this and succeeding verses may be to clarify that this test did not originate with any of the child-sacrifice demanding Canaanite gods.
בְּלִי אָם הָבָרִים הָאָלֶה
והָבָרִים נָשֶׁת אֶתָבָרִים
וַיֹּאמֶר אָלֶיה
אֶבָרִים
וַיֹּאמֶר
והָבָרִים
וַיּוֹסֵפֶה אֶבָרִים
וַיֹּאמֶר
וַיֵּאָכֵל אֶבָרִים
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v6: 22:1-3
What construction do we have here?
and it was Elohim who was a tester of Abraham

X-Qatal
- Topicalization
- “and it was Elohim who was a tester of Abraham”
and it was Elohim who was a tester of Abraham

X-Qatal

- Topicalization
- “and it was Elohim who was a tester of Abraham”

X-Qatal as Summary Statement

- We can further specify the function of the X-qatal in this passage because it precedes the beginning of the episode’s wayyiqtol string. In such a case the X-qatal often summarizes, like a headline, what is to follow.

- Note that, though the יִהְיָֽה in v 1 is a wayyiqtol, its function is Transition Marker not Historical Narrative Mainline.
Let’s look at another example:
**Genesis 1:1-3**
- Where is the first H.N. Mainline wayyiqtol?
- What constructions precede it?
בראשית בְּרָא אלֹהִים את השמים ואת הארץ:

וְהָאֵָֽרֶץ הָיְתָֹ֥ה תֹּהוּ וּבֹהוּ וַיִּשְׁכַּנּוּ בַּכָּמָם אֱלֹהִים מְרַחְפֶּֽת עַל־פְּנֵי הַיָּֽם׃

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אַוֶּר וַיִּהְיוּ אֵוֹר׃

 WAYYIQTOL → נִנָּמָר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אַוֶּר וְיִהְיוּ אֵוֹר.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topicalization / Summary</th>
<th>X-Qatal</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>בְּרָאָשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמְיוֹן אֶת הָאֵר׃</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topicalization</td>
<td>X-Qatal</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>וַיְהִי תָהוֹן בַּעֲבוֹדָה</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene setting</td>
<td>Verbless clause</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>והשָׁמְיוֹן מְרַחְּפָּה עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backgrounded activities</td>
<td>Participle</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>והַאֲלֹהִים מְרַחְּפָּה עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.N. Mainline</td>
<td>Wayyiqtol</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֲוֹר וַיָּהָיָּה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Genesis 1:1-3
The first X-Qatal fits well as a summary statement for the following narrative.
The first X-Qatal fits well as a summary statement for the following narrative.

The second X-Qatal doesn’t summarize the following narrative but if a wayyiqtol were used here it would make this the first ‘event’ in the narrative and be translated something like “the earth became formless and void” which means something quite different than “now it was the earth that was formless and void”.

The use of an X-Qatal here rather than a wayyiqtol makes it less likely that the author had in mind some sort of ‘gap theory’, where verse 1 refers to a previous creation and verse 2 the destruction of that creation.

Also, verse 1 functioning as a summary statement argues against a ‘gap theory’. In the text as it stands the first action comes with the wayyiqtol in verse 3.
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• Also, verse 1 functioning as a summary statement argues against a ‘gap theory’. In the text as it stands the first action comes with the wayyiqtol in verse 3.

• The first 2 X-Qatals, the verbless clause in 2b, and the participle in 2c, provide 4 lines of summary and background material for the beginning of the narrative action in verse 3.
What discourse genre is this?
What discourse genre is this?

Unmitigated Hortatory Discourse

- 3 imperatives
- 0 weqatals
וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְבָרִים הָאֱלֹהִים
וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אָהֵן אֲשֶׁר בְּנֵךְ נֶשֶׁת עַל הַאֱלֹהִים
וַיַּשְׁכָּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֶּקְרָה
וַיִּקָּחֵהּ אַבְרָהָם שָׂם לְעֵלָה תֵּימָן אַחִיתוֹ וְעַל אַחִד הָהֵרָן סָּלָה אַבְרָהָם
וַיַּחֲבִיב שֶׁרַע אֲשֶׁר בָּא תֵּימָן
וַיְבַקַּע עֲצֵי עָלָה וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלְךָ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הָאֱלֹהִים׃

What is the syntax, function and translation of this qatal?
What is the syntax, function and translation of this qatal?

- Qatal in dependent clause
- Relative past background
- “which you love”
  not “which you had loved” or “which you have loved”

(Note that roots like אָהַב that refer to emotional and mental activity usually require present tense translations.)
To the extent that qatal can be viewed as an atributizer, both main actors in this narrative are labelled within the first 2 verses.

- **Elohim the tester** (X-Qatal in v 1)
- **Abraham the lover** (Qatal in dep. clause in v 2)

The tester will test the love of the lover.
What construction is this?
And the L ORD said unto Abraham, Take thy son, thy only son, Isaac, and go unto the land of the plain of Moriah, unto the mountain of the L ORD's ascent, and offer him there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.

Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass; and taking two of his3 sons, and Isaac his son, and two of his kinsmen, he told the sons of his kinsmen, 'I am going to worship the L ORD.' Then he loaded his ass with bread and meat, and set out for the L ORD's ascension, which is on Moriah.

When they had come to the place that God had told him of, Abraham built an altar there, hewed wood for the burnt offering, and laid Isaac upon the altar on the wood. Abraham reached out his hand, took the knife, and was about to lay his son Isaac upon the altar. But the L ORD said to Abraham, 'Now take your son, your only son, Isaac, and go to the land of the plain of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.'

Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass; and taking two of his3 sons, and Isaac his son, and two of his kinsmen, he told the sons of his kinsmen, 'I am going to worship the L ORD.' Then he loaded his ass with bread and meat, and set out for the L ORD's ascension, which is on Moriah.
What construction is this?

- Yiqtol in dependent clause (not participle or qatal)
- Relative non-past background
- “which I will tell you” or “which I tell you”
What construction is this?

- Qatal in dependent clause (not yiqtol)
- Relative past background
- “which God had told him”

What construction is this?

- Yiqtol in dependent clause (not participle or qatal)
- Relative non-past background
- “which I will tell you” or “which I tell you”
By this point Abraham knows at least the place, even if he doesn’t know which mountain yet.

What construction is this?

• **Qatal** in dependent clause (not yiqtol)
• **Relative** past background
• “which God had told him”
What is this?
Not a clause (no subject and predicate)

It’s a “hanging fragment”
What is this?

Genesis 22:4-8

• Not a clause (no subject and predicate)
• It’s a “hanging fragment”

Rocine says it interrupts the flow of the wayyiqtol string, and thereby creates suspense. We might translate it “It was on the third day.”
בָּיָם הַשְלִישִׁי
וַיָּשָּׁא אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵי אָבִיו
וַיָּרָא אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵי הַמָּקוֹם מִרְחָקָּה.
וַיְאִמֵּר אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵי נְעָרִיו
שָׁבֻּלָכָם עִם הַחֲמָוֹר
וְאָנֵי וְהַנֵּעַר נָלָכָה עַד כַּה
וְנָשָׁבָה אֲלֵיהֶם:
וַיָּקָח אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵי נְעָרִי
עַל יְצְחָק בָּנֵוֹ
וַיָּקָח בְּיָדוֹ אֲלֵי הָאֲשָׁתוֹ
וַיְלֹו שְנִיָּם יַחְדֵּו:
וַיָּאִמֵּר יְצָחָק אֲלֵי אַבְרָחָם
אָבֵי וַיָּאִמֵּר אַבְרָהָם
וַיָּאִמֵּר הַנֵּי בְנֵי
וַיָּאִמֵּר הָא שְׁמה לַעֲלָה:
וַיָּאִמֵּר אַבְרָהָם
אֶלָּמִי וּרְאָהֵלוּ הַשָּׁה לַעֲלָה בֵּן
וַיְלֹו שְׁנִיָּם יַחְדֵּו:
וַיָּאִמֵּר אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵי אֱלֹהָיו
יָרְא הַשָּׁה לַעֲלָה בֵּן
וַיְלֵו שְנִיָּם יַחְדֵּו:
וַיָּאִמֵּר אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵי נְעָרִי
לָא עָרָה אֱלֹהָיו אֲלֵיהֶם הַעֲלָה
לָשָׁמַע עִלָּיְהָ בּוֹ
וַיָּאִמֵּר אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵי נְעָרִי
לָא עָרָה אֱלֹהָיו אֲלֵיהֶם הַעֲלָה
לָשָׁמַע עִלָּיְהָ בּוֹ:
וַיָּאִמֵּר אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵי נְעָרִי
לָא עָרָה אֱלֹהָיו אֲלֵיהֶם הַעֲלָה
לָשָׁמַע עִלָּיְהָ בּוֹ:
What genre?
And he said to Abraham, "Go to your sons and your household and all that you have, and offer yourselves up before the Lord as an offering by fire.

Abraham said to the servants who were with him, "Stay here with the donkeys, and I and the boy will go over there and worship and come back to you.

Abraham said to the servant in charge of his households, "Take the young donkey and the bread and supplies, and go to the boy's place.

I will go to live by the wayside of the Lord, and the Lord will lead me by the way. And I will offer the boy up as an offering by fire to the Lord, as He has ordered me." And they went on the way.
What genre?
X-CoHortative
• “As for me and the lad, let us go...” or “As for me and the lad, we will go...”
• The topicalization of the X-CoHortative switches the focus from the two servants to Abraham and his son: “you two stay here, I and the lad will go up there”
The 3 cohortatives are evidence of Abraham’s faith in God.

- He is a lover of his son. He already knows what God has called him to do.
  And he expects (or at a minimum wishes) to return with his son alive.
The 3 cohortatives are evidence of Abraham’s faith in God.

- He is a lover of his son. He already knows what God has called him to do. And he expects (or at a minimum wishes) to return with his son alive.

- But Abraham is also a lover of God.

- He does not begrudge God. He characterizes what will happen on the mountain as worship. Also note he says “we” will worship, not “I” will worship.

The narrator has already tipped his hat regarding the outcome of the test.
There is a conspicuous similarity between this word and verse two’s יandise.

V 2a
וַיִּקְחֶ֑נָּא אַבְרָהָּם אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבָּה אֱלֹהֶ֔ים אֵֽלֵּ֗בַּה הַשָּׁ֣ה לְעֵֽלַּה׃

וַיִּשְׁלַֽחְנָּא אַבְרָהָּם אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבָּה אֱלֹהֶ֔ים אֵֽלֵ֗בַּה הַשָּׁ֣ה לְעֵֽלַּה׃
In the Hebrew.

Genesis 22:4-8

Notice the character switching.
• First speaker and addressee are clearly identified (Isaac and Abraham).
• Then speakers alternate with minimal encoding.
When there is over-encoding we should ask why.

Genesis 22:4-8

When there is over-encoding we should ask why.
When there is over-encoding we should ask why.

Clearly this is a poignant dialog and so narrative time slows to almost a crawl.
When there is over-encoding we should ask why.

Clearly this is a poignant dialog and so narrative time slows to almost a crawl.

Narrative slows leading up to a critical question

Extra encoding.
Strictly speaking Abraham would not have to be named here.
בָּיָם הַשְלִישִּים
וַיֶּאֱבֶרֶם אֶרֶץ יָהּ
וַיֶּאֱבֶרֶם אֵל
וַיָּאָמְר אַבְרָהָם אֶל־עֲצַי הָאָבִי
וַיִּאָמְר אַבְרָהָם אֲנִי וַּאֲנִי וַאֲנִי
וַיִּאָמְר אַבְרָהָם אֶל צְחָק אֵל
וַיִּאָמְר צְחָק אֵל לַאַבְרָהָם
וַיִּאָמְר אַבְרָהָם אֵל
וַיִּאָמְר אַבְרָהָם אֵל
וַיִּאָמְר אַבְרָהָם אֵל
וַיֵּלֶכֶנָּה וְנָשׁוּבָה אֵלָה אֲלָהָיו
וַיִּקְח אַבְרָהָם אֲלָה אֹתוֹ אֵל
וַיִּקְח בְּיָדוֹ אֲלָה אֹתוֹ אֵל וְאָמָה אֲלָה אֹתוֹ אֵל
וַיֵּלֶכֶנָּה שְנָה יָחַד וְנָשָׁוָה אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֲלָהָיו
וַיְרַא אַבְרָהָם אֶל חֲנָנָאָה הָאָבִי
וַיֵּלֶכֶנָּה שְנָה יָחַד וְנָשָׁוָה אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֲלָהָיו
וַיִּקְח צְחָק אֵל לַאַבְרָהָם
וַיִּקְח אַבְרָהָם אֲלָה אֹתוֹ אֵל
וַיִּקְח אַבְרָהָם אֲלָה אֹתוֹ אֵל
What construction is this?

- X-Yiqtol
- Topicalization in ‘Direct Speech’ genres.
- “It is Elohim who will ..."
Genesis 22:4-8

What construction is this?

- X-Yiqtol
- Topicalization in ‘Direct Speech’ genres.
- “It is Elohim who will …"

What role does topicalization play here?
What construction is this?

Focus
- Elohim will be the provider... not Abraham, not Isaac or any other human.
- This is the point of the whole passage. God has set the redemption price (horrifically high) and it is God himself who will provide the redemption payment (horrifically costly).

What role does topicalization play here?

- X-Yiqtol
- Topicalization in ‘Direct Speech’ genres.
- “It is Elohim who will ..."
So... so far we have seen 3 “functions” for the Topicalization function.
- I.e. the “X-something” syntax which topicalizes the “X” has performed
  3 roles in Genesis 22 so far.

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<td>Topicalization</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>A summary statement that precedes the first wayyiqtol of the narrative. &quot;Elohim tested Abraham&quot; or &quot;it was Elohim who was a tester of Abraham&quot;</td>
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<td>ואֵנִּי וְהַנֵַעַר נָלַבֶּהָ עִדֶּכָּה X-Cohort</td>
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<td>אֱלֹהִים רְאָהוֹתָהּ מֵהַשָּׁה X-Yiqtol</td>
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