

# NARRATIVE ECOTOPICS IN ENGLISH BIBLICAL DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

## ECOTÓPICAS NARRATIVAS EN INGLÉS DISCURSO BÍBLICO: UN ESTUDIO DEL ANTIGUO Y NUEVO TESTAMENTO

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This paper addresses the Old and New Testaments viewed from the econarrative perspective in environmental and social contexts.

**Method:** The method applied combines the techniques of conceptual, semantic, thematic, and narrative analyses in the authors’ original interpretation.

**Results and discussion:** It examines biblical narrations via four discourse-forming concepts – GOD, NATURE, MAN, and SOCIETY, various combinations of which shape a set of narrative ecotopics focused on the concept of MAN. Such ecotopics as «Man and nature in their interaction», «Man and family relations», «Man in society», «Man’s path to God» reveal the relationships between man, nature, God, family, and society as well as man’s responsibility before God. Their ecological component is marked by verbocentric ecodescriptors actualized in narrative schemes.

**Material:** This study zeroes in on the narrative ecotopic «Man’s path to God» with its subtopic «the way through sacrifice», presented in the stories of Abraham in Genesis and Hannah in 1 Samuel from the Old Testament as compared to the story of Jesus in 1 Peter, 1 John, and the Gospel of John from the New Testament.

**Conclusions:** In the Old Testament the path to God through sacrifice in ecologically charged narrations reflects the readiness of man to sacrifice his/her most valuable thing to prove their faithfulness and faith. In the New Testament Jesus’ sacrifice involves the whole humankind, thanks to His sufferings for their sinless life.

**Keywords:** biblical discourse; ecological component; discourse-forming biblical concepts; ecodescriptor; narration; narrative ecotopic.

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## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Este artículo aborda el Antiguo y el Nuevo Testamento vistos desde la perspectiva narrativa ecológica en contextos ambientales y sociales.

**Método:** El método aplicado combina las técnicas de análisis conceptual, semántico, temático y narrativo en la interpretación original de los autores.

**Resultados y discusión:** Examina las narraciones bíblicas a través de cuatro conceptos que forman el discurso: DIOS, NATURALEZA, HOMBRE y SOCIEDAD, varias combinaciones de los cuales dan forma a un conjunto de ecotópicos narrativos centrados en el concepto de HOMBRE. Ecotópicos como «El hombre y la naturaleza en su interacción», «El hombre y las relaciones familiares», «El hombre en la sociedad», «El camino del hombre hacia Dios» revelan las relaciones entre el hombre, la naturaleza, Dios, la familia y la sociedad, así como la responsabilidad del hombre. ante Dios. Su componente ecológico está marcado por ecodescriptores verbocéntricos actualizados en esquemas narrativos. Material. Este estudio se centra en la narrativa ecotópica «El camino del hombre hacia Dios» con su subtema «El camino a través del sacrificio», presentado en las historias de Abraham en Génesis y Ana en 1 Samuel del Antiguo Testamento en comparación con la historia de Jesús en 1 Pedro, 1 Juan y el Evangelio de Juan del Nuevo Testamento.

**Conclusiones:** En el Antiguo Testamento, el camino hacia Dios a través del sacrificio en narraciones cargadas de ecología refleja la disposición del hombre a sacrificar su cosa más valiosa para demostrar su fidelidad y fe. En el Nuevo Testamento, el sacrificio de Jesús involucra a toda la humanidad, gracias a sus sufrimientos por su vida sin pecado.

**Palabras clave:** discurso bíblico; componente ecológico; conceptos bíblicos que forman el discurso; ecodescriptor; narración; ecotópico narrativo.

## INTRODUCTION

The increasing influence of social processes on natural and spiritual environment, the fact that language is, on the one hand, an integral part of nature, and on the other, a part of society and culture (Shakhovskiy and Solodovnikova, 2013, p. 54) account for the turn of contemporary Linguistics, and Humanities at large, towards ecological issues associated with language (Ionova, 2011; Rudelev, 2012) and discourse (Babyre, 2011; Kravchenko, 2018; Kravchenko, Pasternak, and Davydova, 2020; Rudenko, 2010; Shamne and Karyakin, 2011), whether modern or archaic. The above turn is marked by enriching the scope of ecological terminology by such terms as “ecology of culture”, “ecology of history”, “ecology of word”, “ecology of language”, etc. Against this background the study of ecological aspects of the Bible takes on a

special significance, particularly when regarded from the perspective of ecopoetics in its stylistic, cognitive, and narrative facets. Such perspective might concern biblical poetry (Cooper, 1976; Louder, 2005), with the emphasis on cognitive approach to biblical metaphors (Jindo, 2009; Orekhova and Shitikov, 2013), composition of biblical narrations (Alifanova, 2010; McKinion, 2006), and their figurative language (Weiss, 2004).

Generally, various aspects of biblical narrative (Alter, 2001; Berlin, 1994; Funk, 1988; Sternberg, 1988), encompassing the Old and New Testaments, came into scholarly focus in 1981 (Nazarov, 2015), after the publication of Robert Alter’s “The Art of Biblical Narrative” in 1980 (2011/1980). The book addresses the role of repetitions, syntactic features of biblical narrations and type-scenes that make

up biblical episodes with motifs and themes as their components (Alter, 2011, p. 47–62). The study of the Bible as well as biblical narrative from the ecological angle date back to the early 1980s (Bauckham, 2010; Bernstein, 2005; Bredin, 2010; Khribar, 2003; Wright, 1983; Zebre, 1992), focusing on ecological theology, ecological ethics etc. in the books of New and Old Testaments.

Being in line with biblical approach to ecology, this paper aims to identify the key narrative ecotopics in the Old and New Testaments of King James Bible (The Holy Bible, 1991), relying upon narrative descriptors as their markers, with a special emphasis on the ecotopic «Man's path to God» in the variety of its narrative schemes.

## METHODOLOGY

This research addresses five ecologically charged biblical narrations taken from the Old and New Testaments of King James Bible (The Holy Bible, 1991), in which the concept of MAN is made salient. The stories of Abraham in Genesis (op.cit., p. 3–54) and Hannah in 1 Samuel (op.cit., p. 270–302) compared to the story of Jesus in 1 Peter (op.cit., p. 1083–1086), 1 John (op.cit., p. 1090–1093), and the Gospel of John (op.cit., p. 940–965) were chosen for analysis to reveal the narrative organization of ecologically charged biblical stories and interpret their ecological constituent, which is particularly opaque in the stories under examination.

The method applied combines the techniques of conceptual (Alefirenko, 2010; Boldyrev and Alpatov, 2008; Langacker, 2008; Nikonova, 2008; Zhabotynskaya, 2009), semantic (Boldyrev, 2016; Bolotnova, 2009; Zolotova, 1982), thematic (Bondarenko, 2014; Funk, 1988; Izotova, 2009; Kolesnyk, 2013; Propp, 1968), and narrative (Alifanova, 2010; Leshchenko, 2017; Kostyushkina, 2005; Vorobyova, 1993) analyses in the authors' original interpretation.

The procedure of analysis embraces six consecutive stages.

The first stage is aimed to identify ecologically charged narrations among other biblical stories. Here we relied upon three principles: that of eventfulness, which involves an explicit conflict of values, that of solving existential man-in-the-environment issue, and that of story coherence.

The second stage zeroes in on reconstructing, by way of conceptual analysis, the key discourse-forming concepts GOD, NATURE, MAN, and SOCIETY (Zhykharieva, 2018) as well as the concept PATH via their lexico-semantic markers in the narratives. Their integration results in the emergence of the narrative ecotopic «Man's path to God» which, in its turn, gives rise to the concept of SACRIFICE.

The third stage of analysis aims to elicit text motifs and key narrative statements (Funk, 1988, p. 62), marked by actional or nonactional verbs (Boldyrev, 2016, p. 43), which are essential for construing the respective narrative subtopics within the story's unfolding (Izotova, 2009, p. 50). At this stage procedures of thematic, semantic, and narrative analyses are involved.

The fourth stage, by way of generalizing key narrative statements, gives access to narrative descriptors, which further, at the next stage, facilitate the explication of narrative schemes embodying this or that ecologically charged motif related to the ecotopic «Man's path to God». The latter embraces respective subtopics revealing one or several ecological issues brought up in biblical narrations, being characterized by explicit or hidden ecological senses.

The last stage of analysis presupposes comparing biblical narrations, related to the Old and New Testaments, where the concept SACRIFICE is actualized as the primary focus within the narrative ecotopic «Man's path to God».

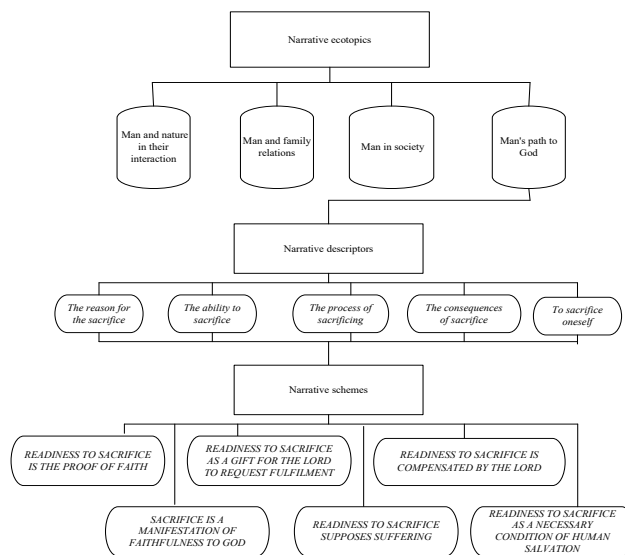
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Biblical ecoconcepts and ecotopics: The narrative dimension

Given the ecological nature of biblical narrative as such, oriented towards revealing the significance of man's harmonious coexistence with nature and other people or society at large in the world that God created, we introduce the notion of **biblical ecoconcept** defined as a complex mental entity (Zhykharieva, 2018, p. 113) realized in biblical narrations, which has stable associative connections with a particular ecotopic or a set of ecotopics and fulfils a discourse-forming function or functions. The key biblical ecoconcepts GOD, NATURE, MAN, and SOCIETY are actualized in biblical discourse as components of the narrative formula "GOD creates the world of NATURE and MAN (the creator of SOCIETY) and prescribes MAN to follow the laws of harmonious coexistence in the world created by GOD", which confirms their discourse-forming status.

The discourse-forming ecoconcept MAN as a constituent of the respective narrative ecotopics is inferred from the presumption that the Bible was given to man as a revelation of God. Thus, it discloses the essence of man with regard to his attitude to nature, family, society, and God. Narrative ecotopics summarize the content of ecologically charged biblical narrations, connecting two or more related ecoconcepts in their specific configurations. The relationship between these ecoconcepts determines the vector of narrative ecotopics, grounded in the ecoconcept MAN as oriented towards his relations with God, nature, society, or family, thus highlighting particular ecological values. Relying upon the above vectors, we distinguish four MAN-focused narrative ecotopics concretized by respective subtopics: (i) «Man and nature in their interaction» – «the relationship of all human and non-human things», (ii) «Man and family relations» – «husband and wife», «parents and children», «brothers and sisters»,

(iii) «Man in society» – «social inequality», «moral and ethical regulations», «legislative regulations», and (iv) «Man's path to God» – «the way to faith», «the way of righteousness», «the way through sacrifice» (see Fig. 1):



**Figure 1:** The MAN-focused narrative ecotopics in King James Bible  
Source: Author's Survey

The ecological component of narrative ecotopics is made explicit via *narrative descriptors*. According to our research data, the total of 52 narrative descriptors related to the MAN-focused ecotopics can be identified in Bible: five of them represent the subtopic «Man and nature in their interaction», 22 – «Man and family relations», 15 – «Man in society», and 10 – «Man's path to God». Narrative descriptors (e.g., *The reason for sacrifice*, *The ability to sacrifice*, *The process of sacrificing*, *The consequences of sacrifice*, *To sacrifice oneself*, etc.) are further concretized by (narrative) schemes, in Vladimir Propp's parlance (1968, p. 6) as generalized descriptive formulas that embody a particular ecologically charged motif. Such motifs are represented by key narrative statements – phrases or utterances used to explicate and unfold an ecological subtopic, such as *offer him to a burnt offering*, *she vowed a vow*, marked by verbs or verbal phrases related to the respective narrative ecotopic.

Thus, *narrative schemes* are patterns formed by

specific combinations of narrative descriptors that highlight a particular facet of the ecotopic. Thus, the narrative descriptor *The consequences of sacrifice* in the Abraham's story (The Holy Bible, 1991, p. 21) is specified in the narrative scheme *READINESS TO SACRIFICE IS COMPENSATED BY THE LORD*, highlighting the idea that Abraham was ready to sacrifice his only son to God as a proof of his faith. Such narrative descriptors as *The ability to sacrifice*, *The process of sacrificing*, which combine to give rise to the narrative scheme *READINESS TO SACRIFICE IS THE PROOF OF FAITH*, highlight, as a compensation by the Lord, the reward given to Abraham – God's blessing in multiplying his seed. Such schemes constitute the basic format of narrative ecotopics' unfolding, being linked to respective ecoconcepts (here the concept MAN).

As to their structure, ecologically charged biblical narrations under study are characterized by conventional composition, having a clear-cut beginning and end, developing within a well-defined time lapse and location, with the main persona or personae and their actions in focus.

The analysis that follows addresses the narrative ecotopic «Man's path to God», which is viewed through the lens of its subtopic «*the way through sacrifice*», exemplified in the stories of Abraham and Hannah in the Old Testament as correlative with the stories of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The main motif in the stories under examination is: for man to meet God's requirements, it is important to choose the right path, that of «knowing the Lord», «his actions», and «walking in the way of the Lord» (Wright, 2010, p. 30–33). This motif is related to the idea of sacrifice as a mediator in the relations of man and the Lord.

#### «Man's path to God» as a narrative ecotopic

Taking into account cognitive operations of prominence, profiling, trajector and landmark alignment (Langacker, 2008, p. 55) and according

to the definition of ecotopic as an ecologically significant narrative message which condenses the content of the story related to ecological issues, conceptual ecotopics are defined as ecologically charged configurations of key discourse-forming biblical concepts. Their integration related to the concept of MAN determines the range of MAN-focused narrative ecotopics (see Fig. 1), where from we focus on the biblical stories centered on the narrative ecotopic «Man's path to God» with the concept of SACRIFICE being highlighted.

#### SACRIFICE as a focal concept of the narrative ecotopic «Man's path to God»

Though the concept of SACRIFICE is not verbalized in the narrative ecotopic under study, it is definitely implied there, due to its contextual actualization, as a proof of man's faithfulness to God through attaining faith, through readiness to fulfil God's commandments and<sup>o</sup> covenants. Basically, the lexeme «sacrifice» may be defined in its broad and narrow meanings. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE, 2009), Cambridge English Online Dictionary (CEOD, n.pag.) as well as Usborne Illustrated Dictionary and Thesaurus (UIDT, 2007) the word «sacrifice» in its broad sense means the act of offering something to god(s) or the act of giving something or somebody that is valuable to you: “the act of offering something to a god” (LDCE, 2009, p. 1538), “1. the act of giving up something that is valuable to you in order to help someone else; 2. the act of killing an animal or person and offering them to a god or gods” (CEOD, n.pag.). In its narrow meaning “sacrifice” denotes giving up something to help other people or for helping somebody: “to willingly stop having something you want or doing something you like get something more important” (LDCE, 2009, p. 1538), “to give up something important or enjoyable for a good reason” (UIDT, 2007, p. 212). Thus, in its broad sense, the lexeme “concentrates on the value of the victim offered by the person to the chosen object – real or virtual” (Pankov, 2010, n.pag.) and in the narrow one it focuses on “a voluntary self-

sacrifice when a person rejects from privileges in favour of the chosen object” (ibid.). In the context of this paper we tend to approach sacrifice both in its narrow and broad meanings to show the difference of use in ecologically charged biblical narrations describing ecological unification of man and God. Let us compare biblical narrations from the Old and New Testaments, where the concept SACRIFICE is made salient as a focus of the narrative ecotopic “Man’s path to God”.

### «Man’s path to God» in the Old Testament narrations

Two narrations taken from the Old Testament, those of Genesis (The Holy Bible, 1991, p. 3–54) and 1 Samuel (op.cit., p. 270–302), highlight the concept of SACRIFICE via four narrative descriptors: *The reason for sacrifice*, *The ability to sacrifice*, *The process of sacrificing*, *The consequences of sacrifice*, where the details of sacrificing might be explicated, implied, or missing.

An illustrative example of sacrifice through faith in Genesis is the widely known story of Abraham’s readiness to sacrifice his son Isaac for God’s sake (op.cit., p. 21). The composition of this narration, being dynamic, is organized in two consequent narrative stages: “*preparation for sacrifice*” and “*committing the act of sacrificing*”. The dynamism of the biblical story is exemplified, among other parameters, by widening the range and scope of its characters. Thus, the path to God through man’s sacrifice is initially set on by three characters: father, son, and God who commanded to do a sacrifice, and then involves four characters: father – son – Angel – lamb as a substitute for Abraham’s son, which points to certain transformations of the narrative event.

The narrative event of Abraham’s sacrifice starts with disclosing *the reason for sacrifice*, marked by the respective narrative descriptor related to the first narrative stage: “1. *God did tempt Abraham [...]. 2. Offer him there for a burnt*

*offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of*” (Gen 22: 1–2). God put Abraham in a quandary for him to display his personal commitment and faithfulness to God, whose request to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham’s only son, he was supposed to meet (*take now thy son, thy only son Isaac, offer him a burnt offering*). For this Abraham had to take his son to the mountains, where the sacrifice should be committed, and stay there for three days. The depiction of their way up the mountains is marked by the verbs of motion “go” and “come” (*went unto, go yonder, come again, went, came to*) and transportation (*get somebody somewhere*), mainly used in the chain of isotopic phrases, indicating movement across land: *get thee into the land of Moriah; went unto the place; come again to you; they went both of them together; they came to the place*. The reason for sacrifice is Abraham’s temptation by God, which was necessary to prove Abraham’s faith.

Another narrative descriptor *The ability to sacrifice* characterizing the first stage of the narration generalizes upon those of Abraham’s deeds that show his obedience to God, while testifying to his readiness to give up the most valuable possession he has. He accomplished everything necessary for doing sacrifice: he brought his son (*the burnt offering*) to the place of sacrifice, gathered firewood (*the wood, the fire*), and took a sharp instrument for cutting (*a knife*), thus, completely giving himself to God.

Similarly, the second narrative stage, that of “*committing the act of sacrificing*”, is also marked by two narrative descriptors: *The process of sacrificing* and *The consequences of sacrifice*. The former relates to the event that seems to be rather peculiar, as there was no conventional offer (victim) for the ritual, instead God himself suggested choosing a lamb for sacrifice: “8. *God will provide a lamb for a burnt offering*” (Gen 22: 8). The moment Abraham was ready to fulfil the will of God, i.e. to sacrifice his own son for God’s sake: “10. *And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son*” (Gen

22: 10), an Angel appeared and stopped him. The Angel's words (*fearest God; not withheld thy son; thine only son*) confirmed the true nature of Abraham's unconditional faith: "12. Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me» (Gen 22: 12), which might be specified by the narrative scheme: *READINESS TO SACRIFICE IS THE PROOF OF FAITH*.

The final narrative descriptor *The consequences of sacrifice* came into play when Abraham communicated with the Angel, who had given him the word of the Lord about His reward (His blessing in multiplying his seed) for Abraham's obedience. Therefore, this narrative statement gives rise to the narrative scheme *READINESS TO SACRIFICE IS COMPENSATED BY THE LORD*.

The story of Hannah in 1 Samuel (The Holy Bible, 1991, p. 270–271) of the Old Testament also demonstrates sacrifice as an ability to give the Lord the most valuable (one's child). The story unfolds gradually, unlike that of Abraham. The way to God through sacrifice is marked here by three narrative descriptors: *The reason for sacrifice, The ability to sacrifice, The consequences of sacrifice*, with the description of committing a sacrifice missing.

*The reason for sacrifice* is disclosed at the very start of the narration. Elkanah's wife Hannah had no children: «5. the LORD had shut up her womb» (1 Sam 1: 5), so she suffered from his second wife's abuses: «6. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut her womb» (1 Sam 1: 6). The occurrence of the metaphorical phrase *shut up her womb*, in combination with the name of the Lord, explicates Hannah's deficiency as the Lord's special will. Dynamicity of the narrative, highlighted by the verbs of motion (*go up*), of physical (*weep, eat*) and speech actions (*pray*), testifies to Hannah's despair. Every year she went to the house of the Lord without eating, she

cried, prayed, begged for children, because they were considered to be the Lord's blessings: «10. And she was in bitterness of the soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore» (1 Sam 1: 10).

Hoping against hope, Hannah kept on praying despite her suffering, which makes the key narrative statement of the biblical story: «11. she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look for the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thy handmaid, but wilt give to thy servant a man child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life» (1 Sam 1: 11). The vow that Hannah gave was: if she had a child, she would give this child to the Lord, which proved her ability for sacrifice. She had the capacity and courage to give her son to minister unto God if He were merciful to her. Thus, the narrative descriptor *The ability to sacrifice*, explicated in the phrase *give him unto the LORD* and embodied in the narrative scheme *READINESS TO SACRIFICE AS A GIFT FOR THE LORD TO REQUEST FULFILMENT* shows how kind and patronizing God is. He expects the same attitude from other people as an act of sacrifice.

The last of the narrative descriptors, i.e. *The consequences of sacrifice*, traced in this biblical story, points to the narrative scheme *SACRIFICE IS A MANIFESTATION OF FAITHFULNESS TO GOD*. After a while, Hannah gave birth to her son named Samuel: "20. called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord" (1 Sam 1: 20). The Lord gave her the child she had begged for, on her promising to give him back to God: "27. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him" (1 Sam. 1: 27), "28. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshiped the LORD there" (1 Sam 1: 27–28). The correlation between Hannah's prayer, the birth of her child, and dedication to God is marked in different ways: syntactically, by the conjunction *therefore* and its contextual synonym *and*; lexically and semantically, while revealing the cause-effect

relationship between events and actions: *prayed – LORD hath given me my petition – asked*. Moreover, polytemporality, indicated by the simultaneous use of Past Simple, Present Perfect, and again Past Simple as well as the phrase as long as, show that there are no temporal limits for a person devoted to God to achieve his/her goal. And finally, the phrases *lent him to the LORD* and *worshiped the Lord* accentuate dedication and faithfulness to God, significant for this narration as well as for the Old Testament at large.

### «Man's path to God» in the New Testament narrations

The ecological subtopic «*the way through sacrifice*», related to Jesus Christ and humanity, acquires a new meaning in the New Testament, that of sacrifice redemption. Thus, the narrative descriptors *The reason for sacrifice*, *The ability to sacrifice*, *To sacrifice oneself* and *The consequences of sacrifice* occur in several books of the New Testament, namely 1 Peter (The Holy Bible, 1991, p. 1083–1086), 1 John (op. cit., p. 1090–1093), and the Gospel of John (op. cit., 940–965), being based on the opposition of innocent Jesus and sinful society, explaining Jesus Christ's redeeming sacrifice. People have committed sins, and *the consequence of sacrifice* is *the remission of sins* through the resurrection of Jesus for our justification (*raised again for our justification*): «25. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God» (Rom 3: 25), «25. Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification» (Rom 4: 25).

The first narrative descriptor *The reason for sacrifice* is traced in the New Testament books 1 Peter and 1 John, which claim that Jesus was sinless (*no sin*) as opposed to the sinful society (*bare our sins in his own body; the sins of the whole world*), therefore he was able to offer himself as a sacrifice, according to the Lord's wish (*to take away our sins*): «5. And ye know

*that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin»* (1 Jn 3: 5), «22. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth» (1 Pet 2: 22), «24. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness» (1 Pet 2: 24), «2. and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world» (1 Jn 2: 2). For the whole of mankind, one person suffered, as the key narrative statement of the biblical story says (*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins*). His sacrifice reconciled people to God, which is generalized by the narrative descriptor *The ability to sacrifice*: «18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh» (1 Pet 3: 18). Being called the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ in his sacrifice was our purification from sins, giving himself as a ransom for all. He is compared to a lamb as an immaculate, pure, sacrificial animal: «18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot» (1 Pet 1: 18–19). As an innocent lamb, which was to be sacrificed to redeem people from the state of sin (*lamb without blemish and without spot, precious blood of Christ*), Christ was a mediator between God and men.

The next narrative stage in the story of Jesus Christ's sacrifice was predetermined by his obedience and readiness for suffering and torment (*scourged, smote, crucified*), which was foregrounded in the Gospel of John and generalized by the narrative descriptor *To sacrifice oneself*: «1. Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him» (Jn 19: 1), «3. they smote him with their hands» (Jn 19: 3), «18. Where they crucified him» (Jn 19: 18). Having been tortured innocent, which Pilate confirmed thrice: «38. I find in him no fault at all» (Jn 18: 38), he redeemed us from our sins, quite in line with the narrative scheme *READINESS TO SACRIFICE SUPPOSES SUFFERING*.



Jesus presented a sinless self-sacrifice to show the whole of mankind that sacrifice requires sufferings. People's cruel attitude to Jesus was a proof how they behave towards one another.

The next stage reveals that not only people but also God is ready to sacrifice His son to save mankind – clean from sins. The narrative descriptor *The consequences of sacrifice* indicates that Jesus' death brought mankind a remission of sins in the following oppositions of key narrative statements: *lay down my life – take it again, power to lay it down – power to take it again*: «17. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father» (Jn 10: 17–18). Accepting voluntary sacrifice, Jesus provided purification for humanity from sin through his blood (*cleanseth us from all sin*): «7. the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin» (1 Jn 1: 7) and unrighteousness (*to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*): «9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness» (1 Jn 1: 9). The contrast of key narrative statements reveals how kind and positive Jesus deeds are and as a result people will be given sinless life which is marked by the repetition of the verb *to cleanse*. Due to Christ's sacrifice people got a prospect for eternal life: «28. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand» (Jn 10: 28). For saving people the Lord gave his most valuable possession – His son (*gave his only begotten Son*): «17. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son» (Jn 3: 17), the gist of which might be specified in the narrative scheme *READINESS TO SACRIFICE AS A NECESSARY CONDITION OF HUMAN SALVATION*.

## CONCLUSION

Biblical discourse in its ecological perspective is

punctuated by four narrative ecotopics based on the key discourse-forming biblical ecoconcept MAN: «Man and nature in their interaction», «Man and family relations», «Man in society», «Man's path to God». Each of them might be identified through a number of narrative descriptors that actualize a set of verbocentric narrative schemes grounded in respective ecoconcepts as conceptual peaks in people's ecological reasoning. Narrative ecotopics are mutually interconnected through common ecoconcepts as systemic, discourse-forming, and story-building factors, thus revealing ecological issues of biblical stories.

The narrative ecotopic «Man's path to God» with its subtopic “*the way through sacrifice*”, which constitutes the focus of analysis in this paper, was identified in the Old Testament narrations via four narrative descriptors: *The reason for sacrifice, The ability to sacrifice, The process of sacrificing, The consequences of sacrifice* that gave rise to the following narrative schemes: *READINESS TO SACRIFICE SERVES THE PROOF OF FAITH, READINESS TO SACRIFICE IS COMPENSATED BY THE LORD, READINESS TO SACRIFICE AS A GIFT FOR THE LORD TO REQUEST FULFILMENT, SACRIFICE IS A MANIFESTATION OF FAITHFULNESS TO GOD*.

In the New Testament narrations under study sacrifice acquired a new meaning, being viewed as a sacrifice of redemption, which we owe to Jesus Christ. Similar narrative descriptors *The reason for sacrifice, The ability to sacrifice, To sacrifice oneself, The consequences of sacrifice*, with less emphasis upon the very process of sacrificing, evoke the following narrative schemes *READINESS TO SACRIFICE SUPPOSES SUFFERING* and *READINESS TO SACRIFICE AS A NECESSARY CONDITION OF HUMAN SALVATION*.

Having compared ecologically charged narrations in the two Testaments we can infer that the focal concept SACRIFICE implied in

the narrative ecotopic “Man’s path to God” in both Testaments addresses the process of the ecological unification of man and God. In the Old Testament the path to God through sacrifice reflects the readiness of man to sacrifice his/her

most valuable thing to prove their faithfulness and faith. In the New Testament Jesus’ sacrifice involves the whole humankind, thanks to His sufferings for their sinless life.

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