CHAPTER FOUR

A SPEECH ACT READING OF JOHN 4:1-42

1. Units of analysis

In order to obtain some insight into the structure of the text (which is also a stylistically determined feature), and to have manageable units which can adequately be analyzed, the text of John 4:1-42 will be divided into smaller units of analysis. The following observations are relevant here:

First, following the dialogue structure one can perhaps start by considering the different dialogues as units, that is, the start of the conversation between Jesus and the woman in 4:7b, as the beginning of a unit. The unit ends with the words of Jesus in 4:26, since the introduction of the character of the disciples heralds a new subsection. This means that 4:7b-26 can be considered a coherent whole.

Secondly, the narrative transition 4:27 where the change in dialogue partners is described, which also starts with a temporal indication ἐκλητέοι τοὺς, clearly ends with 4:30, since 4:31 similarly begins with a temporal indication and contains the dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. We can thus conclude that 4:27-30 is also a separate unit which can be analyzed as a coherent section of narrative.

Thirdly, as we have already indicated, a new section starts with 4:31. This subsection ends when the narrator again takes up the story after the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples and where the direct speech by Jesus ends in 4:38. In 4:39 there is a reference to the townspeople discussed in 4:27-30, and the whole of this subsection deals with different subject material from 4:31-38. Therefore 4:31-38 can also be considered a unit.

Fourthly, it is clear that a whole new sequence is introduced in 4:43 because of the shift in both temporal and spatial setting. This serves to indicate that 4:39-42 is also a separate unit. The majority of commentaries and studies on this pericope agree that verse 42 is indeed the end of this specific narrative.

In the fifth place, we must return to the beginning of the pericope to the verses preceding the actual dialogue which begins in 4:7b. We can agree with Boers (1988:2) that 4:1-4 forms a transition from the preceding chapter and serves as a general introduction to this narrative.

Sixthly, 4:5-7a forms a more specific introduction to the story in identifying the specific setting and participants of the subsequent dialogue.

We can therefore conclude by stating that the following will be considered as coherent units which will be discussed as such in our detailed analysis of the pericope: 4:1-4, 4:5-7a, 4:7b-26, 4:27-30, 4:31-38 and 4:39-42. Before we start a
detailed reading it should be again stressed that, since the language medium of this book is English, we have used English quotations as far as possible. Where there are quotations from foreign languages, and the relevant works have been translated adequately, I have given the official translation, but also referred to the original language copies. Where no recognized translation exists, I have given the original, but translated more unfamiliar languages such as Dutch and Afrikaans myself.

2. The incident in Samaria analyzed

2.1 4:1-4 General introduction to the story

Text: 
<4> Ὁς οὖν ἔγνω ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἤκουσαν οἱ Φαρισαίοι ὅτι Ἰησοῦς πληέονας μαθητὰς ποιεῖ καὶ βαπτίζει ἢ Ἰωάννης 2 - καί τοι γε Ἰησοῦς αὐτὸς οὐκ ἐβάπτιζεν ἀλλ' οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ - 3 ἄφηκεν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν καὶ ἀπήλθεν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. 4 ἔδει δὲ αὐτόν διέρχεσθαι διὰ τῆς Σαμαρείας.

Before we begin the analysis it should be noted that, as we indicated in Chapter III, whenever there is mention of author or readers the implied author and implied readers are meant. The reference is never to the real author or readers.

Our text opens in 4:1 with the mentioning of the large number of converts Jesus is making, which is mediated to the reader together with the mention of the party of the Pharisees. The mention of the large number of converts as well as the mention of the Pharisees is significant here.

The reference to the converts serves to relate this specific pericope to 3:22ff. The necessity and significance of this indication that the information in 3:22ff is important for interpreting events in this piece of narrative will only become apparent later. Thus, the content of this opening utterance is clearly not chosen at random. It is an indication that this episode can be related to the preceding section and forms part of a more comprehensive whole. The episode which follows should, therefore, not be interpreted in isolation but as part of the whole, and thus contributing to the understanding of the whole of the Gospel. The way in which the links between parts of the whole discourse are established is also indicative of the style of the Gospel. However, the total picture of how different parts relate and communicate will only be clear and attainable once the whole of the Gospel narrative is read and analyzed on a macro level. Here we can only show how this episode is linked to the preceding, and indicate items which may possibly be reintroduced later.

With reference to the Pharisees, it is the third time they have been mentioned in the Gospel (see also 1:24; 3:1), and each time they are involved with questions on authority. They are introduced in all these cases without further ado so that it would seem that the author expects his/her readers to know what