

LINGUISTIC VARIATION AND THE “FOREIGN” FACTOR IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

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I begin this article with a few basic statements, well-known to everyone, but which nonetheless must be stated in order to situate the material to be treated below. The Hebrew Bible is an anthology of ancient Israelite literature, spanning a period of about 800–1000 years.¹ The corpus is comprised of both prose and poetry; and within these two large literary types are numerous genres, such as narrative, law and cult, prophecy, psalmody, proverbial wisdom, secular love poetry, dirges, philosophizing musings, etc. The bulk of the material is written in Judah in general or in Jerusalem in particular, or by exiles from Judah; but large portions are written in northern Israel as well. The geographical setting of the literature spans most of the ancient world: stories are set in Egypt, Canaan, Aram, Babylon, Persia, etc. And not only Israelites but all sorts of foreigners appear in the stories. In short, the Bible is characterized by a great amount of variation.

In light of the above description of the *literature*, it is not surprising to find within the biblical corpus a wide variety of *language* usage. Differences over time, i.e., between Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) and Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH); differences over space, i.e., between Judahite Hebrew (JH) and Israelian Hebrew (IH); and differences of register, i.e., between written and spoken Hebrew, have been well studied in recent years.² In the present article I intend to focus on a different area of language variation,

¹ The earliest material (e.g., Exodus xv), according to most scholars, is from c. 1150 B.C.E. The bulk of the latest material (Chronicles, etc.) generally is from c. 350 B.C.E., but the book of Daniel dates to c. 165 B.C.E.

² Avi Hurvitz has been the most active scholar dealing with the first issue; I have devoted numerous studies to the second issue; and I also have written a monograph on the third issue. See most importantly A. Hurvitz, *Ben Lašon lē-Lašon* (Jerusalem 1972); A. Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship Between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel* (Paris 1982); G. A. Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms* (Atlanta 1990); and G. A. Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* (New Haven 1990).

one based on the “foreign” factor in biblical literature.³ Because the setting of various stories is in a foreign land, and because foreigners appear in the stories, and because entire prophetic addresses are directed at times to foreign nations, the Bible is rife with linguistic variation. Or to put it in the negative for a moment, if the Bible told only the story of the small nation of Judah, isolated from the greater world around it, with a population never exiled from its land, and with little or no contact with foreigners, then we would expect and no doubt would find a greater homogeneity of the language of the texts (differences between prose and poetry and among literary genres would remain, but little else, perhaps not even the chronological differences of SBH and LBH). But as stated above and as will be described below, such of course is not the case.

Naturally, the presence of the “foreign” factor in biblical literature is no guarantee that linguistic variation will arise. It would have been possible for biblical authors not to vary their language in such settings. But the remarkable originality and ingenuity of these authors led them to seek such variation and to mark foreignness in the language itself. Most likely there are sociological, anthropological, and even theological reasons for introducing such variation into language usage. I shall refer to such issues at the end of this article. For the bulk of this article, however, my task is to present the evidence and to describe the variation.

I organize the material below according to the three categories of foreignness delineated above: 1) instances where the setting of a particular story is in a foreign land, 2) instances where a foreigner appears in the story, even though the story itself is set in the land of Canaan, and 3) the prophetic addresses directed to the foreign nations. Each of these categories, we shall see, evokes variation in the Hebrew language indicative of the foreign element in the literature.

STORIES SET IN A FOREIGN LAND

The classic example of a biblical book set in a foreign land — and with the language reflecting this situation — is the book of Job. The story is set in the land of Uz, the homeland of Job; his friends are described as a Temanite, a Shuhite, and a Na‘amatite; Elihu is called a Buzite. These designations indicate that the setting is the general region of the Syrian Desert,⁴ an area which linguistically would fall on the border between Aramaic- and Arabian-speaking realms.⁵

³ I have dealt with this issue in a limited way in G. A. Rendsburg, “The Strata of Biblical Hebrew,” *JNSL* 17 (1991), pp. 81–99, especially 92–97.

⁴ For the larger picture, see I. Eph‘al, *The Ancient Arabs* (Jerusalem 1984).

⁵ I use the term “Arabian” to refer to North Arabian, Arabic, and South Arabian, even

The author of the long poem wrote in Hebrew, but he coloured his Hebrew with Aramaic and Arabian elements to indicate the foreign nature of the characters.⁶ Though I have not been able to isolate one scholar of earlier times who expressed this view, the following statement by N. H. Tur-Sinai is worthy of citation: "it has been suggested, *inter alia*, that the author deliberately put in the mouth of Job and his friends, natives of Aram and Edom, expressions from the language of the East — a view to which I, too, formerly adhered."⁷ As is well known, Tur-Sinai surrendered this view and in its place revived the theory of Abraham ibn 'Ezra that the book of Job is a translation from an Aramaic original.⁸ In like manner, others suggested that Job was translated from an Arabic original.⁹ Recently, S. A. Kaufman renewed the discussion: "we have not to do with late language or foreign authors, but rather with the intentional stylistic representations of Trans-Jordanian speech on the part of Hebrew authors within Hebrew texts"; and brought four examples of the phenomenon he called "style-switching": the book of Job, the Balaam oracles, the Massa material in Proverbs xxx–xxxii, and the Dumah oracles in Isa. xxi:11–12 (on these latter three examples, see more below).¹⁰ Kaufman is undoubtedly correct; his explanation of the extraordinary nature of the language of the book of Job is far more preferable to any theory of translation from either Aramaic or Arabic.

It is important to reiterate what I wrote above at the start of the previous paragraph. The language of Job is still Hebrew and is recognizable as such. If it were pure Aramaic or pure Arabian or a mixed Aramaic-Arabian, the author would lose his Israelite readers. As a parallel from modern American literature, we may turn to Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), one of the first and most important works to portray American blacks through their distinct dialect. In her study of this literary device, Lynda Hungerford wrote as follows: "From a linguistic perspective, art is

though the last of these three belongs more properly to a different subgroup of Semitic, namely, South Semitic, and in full recognition of the fact that Arabic is not attested until more than a millennium after the period under discussion.

⁶ I made some initial steps in this direction in G. A. Rendsburg, "Sabaic Notes to Hebrew Grammar," *Abr-Nahrain* 27 (1989), pp. 110, 112.

⁷ N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job* (Jerusalem 1957), p. 111 (Hebrew original: 1954).

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. xxx–li.

⁹ F. H. Foster, "Is the Book of Job a Translation from an Arabic Original?" *AJSL* 49 (1932–33), pp. 21–45; see also A. Guillaume, "The Arabic Background of the Book of Job," in F. F. Bruce, ed., *Promise and Fulfilment: Essays Presented to S. H. Hooke* (London 1963), pp. 106–127; and A. Guillaume, *Studies in the Book of Job* (Leiden 1968).

¹⁰ S. A. Kaufman, "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Panel Sessions: Hebrew and Aramaic Languages* (Jerusalem 1988), pp. 54–55.

no substitute for life. Although an author may use actual features of a dialect when he is representing it, he must be selective if he is to stay within the reader's tolerance for distraction. Thus, to represent a dialect in fiction an author selects features he believes the reader will recognize as being typical of the dialect and uses them systematically in the speech of his characters."¹¹ And so it is with the author of Job: linguistic markers which identify the characters as Transjordanians were utilized to convey to the reader the foreignness of Job and his interlocutors. But they are not so prevalent as to "get in the way" of the reader's comprehension.

In actuality, Hungerford's description of Wright's technique is not totally accurate for the Jobian poet's technique: she implied that Wright latched on to specific linguistic traits of black dialect and used them "systematically"; such is not the case in Job where the "foreign" forms are used alongside the "native" forms, for example, note the interchange between the masculine plural nominal endings *-în* and *-îm*, even in the same word, e.g., *millîn* (13x) and *millîm* (10x). But here we are dealing with a larger phenomenon of Hebrew style, namely, "the use of paired synonymous variants from the same root [as] one rhetorical device by which the biblical writers introduced variety into the repetition of a thought or phrase within a given context."¹² So, this issue aside, I find Hungerford's analysis of dialect representation in *Native Son* quite appropriate for the above analysis of language representation in Job.¹³

Incidentally, it is worth suggesting that style-switching in the book of

¹¹ L. Hungerford, "Dialect Representation in *Native Son*," *Language and Style* 20 (1987), pp. 3-15, in particular p. 5.

¹² See now R. J. Ratner, "Morphological Variation in Biblical Hebrew Rhetoric," in R. J. Ratner, L. M. Barth, M. L. Gevirtz, and B. Zuckerman, eds., *Let Your Colleagues Praise You: Studies in Memory of Stanley Gevirtz* (Part 2) = *Maarav* 8 (1992), pp. 143-159, in particular p. 159. Ratner's study should be considered within the larger framework of biblical literary style, which throughout is characterized by repetition. But the repetition seldom is verbatim. The authors typically change their wording and these changes are signals to the reader to pay attention and to grasp their importance. See, e.g., J. Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem 1978), pp. 51-95; and M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, Ind., 1985), pp. 365-440.

¹³ My wording of this sentence raises another distinction between *Native Son* and the book of Job. In the former case we are dealing with representing a different dialect of English; in the latter case we are dealing with representing a different language altogether.

Since it is a commonplace to bemoan the lack of a precise distinction between "dialect" and "language," I add the following. As I use the terms in this article (and indeed in all my writings), "language" refers to a speech entity which is not intelligible to speakers of another language, whereas "dialect" refers to a speech entity which is slightly different but still intelligible to speakers of other dialects of the same language. Although there are exceptions to this distinction (for example, I, and many others, consider Iraqi Arabic and Moroccan Arabic to be different dialects of the Arabic language, even though the degree of mutual intelligibility between these two is not very high), I still contend that the above definitions of dialect and language are serviceable.

Job is restricted to the speeches of the human characters and that it does not carry over to God's speeches in chapters xxxviii–xli. I have not conducted a detailed study to test this hypothesis, but a superficial reading suggests it. One example to which I may point: in Job ix:9 the title character refers to a certain constellation (probably Ursa Major) as 'āš, reflecting monophthongization of *ay* > *ā*, a feature more widely documented in Aramaic; in Job xxxviii:32 the author places the standard Hebrew form 'ayiš in God's mouth.¹⁴

Briefly I should comment on two of Kaufman's other examples of style-switching or language representation (I am content to use the terms interchangeably¹⁵). The Massa material in Proverbs xxx–xxxii is not technically a story set in a foreign land — instead we merely have proverbial wisdom emanating from Massa in the Syrian Desert — but the effect is similar.¹⁶ Here we may point to several atypical linguistic usages that colour the composition as foreign. The clearest are the noun *bar* "son" in Prov. xxxii:2 (3x) and the aforementioned masculine plural nominal ending *-în* in the word *mēlākîn* "kings" in Prov. xxxii:3 (note, however, that the next verse presents the standard form *mēlākîm*; see above on this kind of variation as an aspect of Hebrew stylistics); these two usages are more closely identified with Aramaic than with Hebrew. Elsewhere I have treated two other examples: the use of *nē'ûm* with a human subject in Prov. xxx:1,¹⁷ and the use of *me* before a non-laryngeal consonant.¹⁸ Neither of these features can be labelled specifically Aramaic, but they are identifiable as IH traits; and IH, of course, shared many more isoglosses with Aramaic than did JH.

Similarly, Isa. xxi:12 is not an extended story like the book of Job, but we do have a snippet of poetry presenting for us the speech of two individuals (the questioner and the watchman) from Dumah, also to be located in the Syrian Desert.¹⁹ This example, incidentally, was pointed out earlier by Tur-Sinai; so while he ultimately rejected this explanation for Job, he at least countenanced it for the Dumah snippet and for other sections of the Bible.²⁰ In this short passage, once more the language is

¹⁴ I discussed this example and the entire phonological issue in G. A. Rendsburg, "Monophthongization of *aw/ay* > *ā* in Eblaite and in Northwest Semitic," *Eblaitica* 2 (1990), pp. 91–126 (see pp. 105–106 for treatment of Job ix:9, xxxviii:32).

¹⁵ See Rendsburg, "The Strata of Biblical Hebrew," pp. 92–93, n. 63.

¹⁶ On the location of Massa, see Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs*, pp. 218–219.

¹⁷ G. A. Rendsburg, "The Northern Origin of 'The Last Words of David' (2 Sam 23,1–7)," *Biblica* 69 (1988), pp. 115–116.

¹⁸ G. A. Rendsburg, "Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects of Ancient Hebrew," in W. R. Bodine, ed., *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, Ind., 1992), p. 71.

¹⁹ See Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs*, pp. 116–125.

²⁰ N. H. Tur-Sinai, "Aramit: Hašpa'at ha-Aramit 'al ha-Ivrit šel ha-Miqra'," *Enšiqlopedya Miqra'it* 1 (1965), col. 594.

tainted with Aramaisms and/or Arabisms to present the foreignness of the speakers. Lexical examples are the verbs *mll* “speak” (thus I explain *ma millēl* [written plene] “what do you say?” punning on *ma millaylā* “what of the night?”), *ʾty* “come,” and *bʿy* “seek,” all more common in Aramaic and/or Arabic than in Hebrew (the latter, in fact, means “seek” only here in the Bible). A grammatical example is the morphology of the IIIy verbs *tibʿāyûn*, *bēʿāyû*, and *ʾētāyû*, all of which retain the *yod*, as in ancient Aramaic and in some cases in ancient West Arabian.²¹

One additional example of a story set in a foreign land, not put forward by Kaufman, is the case of Jacob and Laban in the land of Aram. In this case, the biblical author has gone one step further. Not only do the characters in the story speak a Hebrew coloured by Aramaic, but the entire narrative is cast in an Aramaic light. J. C. Greenfield was the first to take notice of this stylistic change.²² One of his examples is the use of *wayyadbēq* in Gen. xxxi:23, predicated of Laban when he overtook Jacob. This usage, unique in the Bible, is attested in Aramaic (e.g., the Targumim typically use the root *dbq* when rendering Hebrew *hiššîg*). Here I put forward several other examples. Instead of using the Hebrew word for “almond” in Gen. xxx:37, the author opted to use the Aramaic term *lûz*, a *hapax legomenon* (as a common noun) in the Bible. In Gen. xxx:38 we encounter the rare 3rd person feminine plural form *wayyēḥamnā* “they mated” presenting the Aramaic paradigm (also true of Semitic in general) with prefixed *y-* (standard Hebrew would have *wattēḥamnā*).²³

Furthermore, in line with the sections of the Bible discussed above, there are examples of style-switching in the direct speech of the characters living in Aram. Several of the birth-naming statements may be so explained. When Zilpah gives birth to her first son, Leah states, according to the Qere of Gen. xxx:11, *bāʾ gād* “fortune comes.” This is the only instance of the common noun *gād* “fortune” in the Bible (Isa. lxxv:11 is the

²¹ For Aramaic, note the form *yḥywn* “they will live” in line 8 of the inscription published by A. Caquot, “Une inscription araméenne d’époque assyrienne,” in *Homages to André Dupont-Sommer* (Paris 1971), pp. 9–16. Note also that the *yod* retains consonantal force in some forms in Biblical Aramaic; see F. Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden 1974), pp. 51, 66. For the Arabic evidence see C. Rabin, *Ancient West-Arabian* (London 1951), pp. 160–161.

²² J. C. Greenfield, “Aramaic Studies and the Bible,” in J. A. Emerton, ed., *Congress Volume Vienna 1980* (SVT 32; Leiden 1981), pp. 129–130.

²³ Elsewhere in the Bible the form occurs only in 1 Sam. vi:12 *wayyišarnā* and Dan. viii:22 *yaʾāmōdnā*. The latter is clearly a true Aramaism. The former is a bit more difficult to explain, unless the Philistine context triggered the use of the form with *y-*. Would that we knew more of the Philistine language/dialect! On these forms, see E. Y. Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem 1982), p. 41 (though his discussion should be altered in light of my treatment).

name of a deity), though the word is common in Aramaic.²⁴ A bit later, when Leah gives birth to Zebulun, she says in Gen. xxx:20 *zēbādānī ʿēlōhīm ʾōtī zēbed tōb* "God has provided me with a good provision." These are the only two uses of the root *zbd* "provide" in the Bible, though once more the word is well-known from Aramaic.²⁵ Finally, the best explanation for the unusual form *gēnūbētī* "I was robbed," spoken by Jacob in Gen. xxxi:39 (2x), is to parse the form as an inflected participle (in this case a passive participle bearing the 1st person perfect ending *-tī*), a usage known elsewhere only from Aramaic.²⁶ It is striking that Jacob utilizes this form. The author's point, not missed by his ancient readers, was that after twenty years in Aram, Jacob had become Aramaicized; it truly was time to return to Canaan.

A FOREIGNER IN CANAAN

The classic example of a foreigner in the land of Canaan (at least greater Canaan) is Balaam. The biblical tradition holds that he hailed from Pethor on the Euphrates (Numb. xxii:5, Deut. xxiii:5), that is, Aramaic-speaking territory, and that he was brought to Moab by king Balak to curse Israel. As Kaufman already noted (see above), the oracles attributed to Balaam are laced with Aramaic features. I present here a listing of the most obvious examples.

The form *harērê* "mountains of" in Numb. xxiii:7 is a reduplicatory plural (i.e., the final consonant of a geminate noun is repeated) best known from Aramaic²⁷ (other examples in the Bible are in IH texts mainly²⁸). The unique Hitpa^cel *yithaššāb* "reckoned" in Numb. xxiii:9 is utilized, as

²⁴ I recognize that the word remained productive in Hebrew for proper names; cf. *gaddīʿel*, *gaddī*, *gādī*.

²⁵ Again, I recognize that this root remained productive (in fact, exceedingly productive) in the creation of proper names in Hebrew; cf. *zābād*, *zabdī*, *zabdīʿel*, *zēbadyā*, *ʿelzābād*, *yēhōzābād*, etc.

²⁶ For the Aramaic evidence see G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch* (Leipzig 1905), p. 284. For further details on the Hebrew form, with additional examples from the Bible, see Rendsburg, "Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew," pp. 82–84. I am well aware that the Aramaic evidence for participles inflected with the perfect ending is relatively late; still I feel that the connection may be made. One must keep in mind that our sources for Ancient Aramaic (=Old and Official Aramaic) are meager compared to our sources for Middle Aramaic, but that new discoveries continue to demonstrate the continuity between these two stages of the language.

²⁷ Examples may be found in S. Segert, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Leipzig 1975), pp. 537, 546.

²⁸ E. Y. Kutscher, "Ha-Šafa ha-ʿIvrit u-Venot Liwyata be-Mešek ha-Dorot," *Ha-Doʿar* 47 (1968–69), pp. 507–509 (reprinted in E. Y. Kutscher, *Hebrew and Aramaic Studies* [Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1977], p. 17); and Rendsburg, *Psalms*, pp. 40–42.

opposed to the expected Niph^cal form, because Aramaic lacks an N-stem of the verb and instead utilizes the T-stem for the passive. The word *rōba^c* “dust-cloud” in Numb. xxiii:10 is a *hapax legomenon*, but it is used more commonly in Aramaic (Akkadian and Arabic too).²⁹ Similarly, the word *naḥaš* “omen” in Numb. xxiii:23 (see also the plural form in Numb. xxiv:1) is better attested in Aramaic. The form *niṭṭāyû* “stretch out” in Numb. xxiv:6 is another example of the retention of the *yod* in a IIIy verb (see above on the Dumah passage). The word *malkūt* “kingdom” in Numb. xxiv:7 is the Aramaic equivalent of standard Hebrew *mamlākā*. The use of *nē^ʔûm* to introduce human speech occurs in Numb. xxiv:3–4 (3x), xxiv:15–16 (3x) (see above on the Massa material). Together, then, these elements operate to portray the foreignness of Balaam, the Aramean prophet brought to curse Israel.³⁰

PROPHETIC ADDRESSES DIRECTED TO THE FOREIGN NATIONS

Kaufman introduced the word “style-switching” to refer to the first of the techniques described above. I have modelled the term “addressee-switching” after his term, to refer to the technique of foreign language elements imbedded in the prophetic addresses to the foreign nations.³¹ (In most cases the foreign nations are addressed directly in the second person, though in some cases they are spoken about in the third person; I do not see the need to distinguish between these two types [thus also Rabin in the quotation below]). This rhetorical device has been noted by previous scholars, for example, Chaim Rabin, who wrote as follows: “It is a feature of First Isaiah’s style that, when speaking of or addressing a foreign nation, he creates ‘atmosphere’ by using some word or words in that nation’s language. Of course such phrases must not be expected to be correct expressions in the foreign language in all respects. Over-correctness in such ‘stage’ use of a foreign language would defeat its purpose. The point is to give the listener some feature which strongly suggests the other language, but which is sufficiently familiar to be understood.”³² But

²⁹ For the most recent discussion, see S. Morag, “Rovde Qadmut,” *Tarbiz* 50 (1980–81), pp. 9–10.

³⁰ Do other examples of this phenomenon occur? I am not sure. A good test case would be the example of Ruth, a Moabite woman who emigrated to Judah. But in the words attributed to Ruth in the book of Ruth, I see no evidence for linguistic variation. For discussion see below.

³¹ I first used the term “addressee-switching” in Rendsburg, “The Strata of Biblical Hebrew,” pp. 96–97.

³² C. Rabin, “An Arabic Phrase in Isaiah,” *Studi sull’Oriente e la Bibbia offerti al P.*

notwithstanding such a clear description of this technique, even a cursory review of the secondary literature reveals that most commentators on the prophetic books have not noticed the device.³³ Accordingly, I take the opportunity to present here a goodly number of examples. This presentation, I hope, will demonstrate not only the existence of this device, but also its extensive use by the ancient Israelite prophets.

We begin with several examples from Isaiah. The form *yehēmāyûn* “roar” and the word *kabbîrîm* “mighty” both appear in Isa. xvii:12 in a chapter devoted to the oracle delivered to Damascus (though admittedly it is not clear where the oracle ends). The former accords with the Aramaic retention of the *yod* in IIIy verbs (mentioned above on two occasions) and the latter is a characteristic lexeme of Aramaic (though not of Hebrew).³⁴ Isa. xxiii:13 appears in a chapter addressed to Phoenicia and refers to Chaldea (here not the Neo-Babylonian empire but an Aramean group) and Assyria. The verse uses the abnormal syntagma *ze hā’ām* “this people” (not “this is the people” as often translated), a usage known from both Phoenician and Aramaic.³⁵ In Isa. xxxiii:12 the prophet addresses Assyria and thus we can explain the presence of the verb *ksh* “cut down,” which is common in Aramaic (though rare in Hebrew).³⁶ Recall that during the Neo-Assyrian period, Aramaic was used more and more widely by the Assyrians.³⁷

Jeremiah also employs addressee-switching. The form *yitrat* “abundance” in Jer. xlvi:36 appears in a speech aimed at Moab; the form reflects the feminine nominal ending *-at* known from Moabite. Similarly, *tēhillāt* “praise” in Jer. xlix:25Q occurs in the speech directed at Damascus. While the Aramaic at our disposal reflects the shift of *-at* > *ā* generally, a few examples of the older ending *-at* remain; thus one can assume that

Giovanni Rinaldi (Genoa 1967), pp. 304–305. Rabin understood the Dumah oracle in Isa. xxi:11–12 as an example of addressee-switching, but I have treated it above under the rubric of style-switching. Note that Dumah is not so much addressed in this passage, as is the speech of individuals from Dumah presented; note especially *’ēlay qôre’ miššē’ir* “calling to me from Seir” in v. 11a, after which the exchange between the questioner and the watchman occurs.

³³ One of the few exceptions is S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Minneapolis 1991), who identified an example in Zech. ix:3 (on which see below) and wrote, “This literary device of employing native vocabulary when addressing foreign nations demands a thorough study” (pp. 52–53, n. 94).

³⁴ G. A. Rendsburg, “*Kabbîr* in Biblical Hebrew: Evidence for Style-Switching and Addressee-Switching in the Hebrew Bible,” *JAOS* 112 (1992), pp. 649–651.

³⁵ G. A. Rendsburg, “Šimuš Bilti Ragil šel Kinnuy ha-Remez ba-Miqra’: ‘Edut Nosefet le-’Ivrit Šefonit bi-Tqufat ha-Miqra’,” *Shnaton* (forthcoming).

³⁶ It occurs again only in Ps. lxxx:17, an Israelian composition.

³⁷ For recent discussion, see H. Tadmor, “Al Meqomah šel ha-’Aramit be-Mamleket ’Ašur: Šaloš He’arot ‘al Tavlit šel Sargon,” *Eretz-Israel* 20 (1989) (Yigael Yadin Volume), pp. 249–252.

Jeremiah's use of *tēhillāt* in the oracle against Damascus is intentionally used to add the Aramaic colour to his speech.

Ezekiel, too, employs the technique, especially in chapters xxvi–xxviii devoted to Tyre. Many of the technical words from the realms of commerce and maritime life in these chapters may have been associated by Hebrew speakers with Phoenician. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the Phoenician lexicon is limited in comparison to our knowledge of the Hebrew lexicon, so we must proceed cautiously. On the other hand, a grammatical usage is very clear. In Ezek. xxvi:11 we read *maššēbōt* 'uzzēk *lā'āreš tērēd* "your pillar of strength will fall to the earth." Various textual emendations have been proposed to solve the apparent incongruence between a presumed plural noun *maššēbōt* and the singular verb *tērēd*. In Phoenician, however, short accented *a* shifts to *ō* (the length of which cannot be established, short or long, and thus I use the macron to indicate the vowel length in *ō* as a compromise between the short *o* and long *ō*). Accordingly, while the proto-Canaanite feminine singular noun **maššibat* "pillar" becomes *maššēbā* in Hebrew, it shifts to something approximating Masoretic *maššēbōt* in Phoenician.³⁸ Thus, Ezekiel used specifically Phoenician phonology in pronouncing this word to his Phoenician audience (in reality, a Judean audience believing that Phoenicians were being addressed; see further below).³⁹

From the minor prophets I present two lexical examples. The word *hēkāl*, with the meaning "temple," is relatively well documented in JH; but with the meaning "palace" (which it bears in Ugaritic and Phoenician), it is limited in the Bible to specific contexts. One of these is Joel iv:5, where it occurs in the prophet's message to Tyre and Sidon.⁴⁰ In like manner, in Zech. ix:3, the prophet employs the Phoenician word *hārûš* "gold" (instead of standard Hebrew *zāhāb*) when speaking about Tyre and Sidon.⁴¹

I end this section with one suggestion that cannot be proved, but which nicely illustrates the methodology involved, and with the presentation of an extremely interesting and unique example of our phenomenon. The former case concerns the sole use of a 3rd person feminine plural imperfect

³⁸ On this shift and other attestations of it in the Bible, see Rendsburg, *Psalms*, p. 32; and Rendsburg, "Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew," pp. 79–80.

³⁹ This example of addressee-switching was pointed out by my graduate student Richard C. Dietrich; his doctoral research centres on this device in the prophetic oracles to Tyre and Sidon.

⁴⁰ The other cases of *hēkāl* 'palace' are (with a single exception) in IH texts or in similar code-switching contexts; see Rendsburg, *Psalms*, pp. 47–48.

⁴¹ Other instances of *hārûš* "gold" in the Bible are in the northern composition Proverbs (5x) and in the archaic poem Psalm lxviii (v. 14). This example of addressee-switching in Zech. ix:3 was adduced independently by Paul, *Amos*, p. 53, n. 94. On Proverbs as a northern book, see the sources cited in Rendsburg, *Psalms*, p. 10, nn. 39–40.

tiqtēlû form in the Bible, specifically Jer. xlix:11 *'almēnôtekā 'ālay tibāhû* "let your widows rely on me," addressed to Edom.⁴² Now, we know precious little about the Edomite dialect of Canaanite (and we certainly lack information on the 3rd person feminine plural imperfect in Edomite!), but I am willing to wager that the prophet utilized the *tiqtēlû* form here because it represented Edomite morphology.⁴³ I repeat: this suggestion cannot be proved or disproved, but it illustrates well the methodology employed. A unique grammatical usage in the Bible appears specifically in a prophetic address to a foreign nation; this usage is invoked intentionally as an example of addressee-switching.

The final example occurs not in an address to or about a foreign nation *per se*, but in a famous section of Ezekiel concerning the wishful reunion of the former two halves of united Israel. In Ezek. xxxvii:16 we read *qah lēkā 'ēš 'ehād ûkētōb 'ālāw lîhūdā . . . ûlēqah 'ēš 'ehād ûkētōb 'ālāw lēyôsēp . . .* "take for you one wood and write on it for Judah . . . and take one wood and write on it for Joseph." In the first instance the divine instruction uses the standard Judahite imperative form *qah* "take," but in the second instance the abnormal form *lēqah* "take" is employed. The latter is the Israelian form, as the distribution of *lēqah* and its feminine counterpart *liqhî* demonstrates. In 1 Kgs. xvii:11 the Gileadite prophet Elijah utilizes *liqhî* while addressing the woman of Zarepath,⁴⁴ and in the northern source Prov. xx:16 we encounter *lēqah*. This leaves only *lēqah* in Exod. xxix:1 to explain. I admit that this case does not fit my argument, for clearly there is no concentration of northern features in the Tabernacle account or in other sections of the Torah dealing with priestly matters. Thus I am inclined to explain *lēqah* in Exod. xxix:1 along stylistic grounds: the author employed this irregular form to elicit the alliteration with the preceding words *lēqaddēš* "to consecrate" and *lēkahēn* "to serve." So, this example aside, the internal biblical evidence points to the retention of the *lamed* in the imperative form of *lqh* "take" as a feature of IH.

The Aramaic evidence supports this conclusion. We do not possess any examples of the imperative of *lqh* in Old Aramaic, but since the imperative and the imperfect are intimately related in Semitic morphology, we may

⁴² This is the sole instance of a 3rd person feminine plural *tiqtēlû* in the Bible, but there are several cases of this form used for the 3rd person masculine plural (Deut. v:20–21, xxxiii:3, Ezek. xxxvii:7, Job xix:15). See C. H. Gordon, "The New Amarna Tablets," *Orientalia* 16 (1947), p. 10; and C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome 1965), p. 74. For the related Amarna evidence see S. Izre'el, "Early Northwest Semitic 3rd Pl. M. Prefix: The Evidence of the Amarna Letters," *UF* 19 (1987), pp. 79–90.

⁴³ Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, p. 41, called this a "mixed form"; I disagree. Elsewhere in Northwest Semitic this form occurs in Ugaritic.

⁴⁴ S. J. DeVries, *1 Kings* (Waco, Tex., 1985), p. 213, also suggested that "perhaps [1 Kgs. xvii:11] preserves an authentic North-Israelite form."

use attestations of the latter as a guide. The evidence is split, with some cases of the imperfect of *lqh* indicating assimilation of the *l* to the following *q*, but with the majority of cases showing retention of the *l*.⁴⁵ Most likely we should follow the opinion of S. Segert: "so zeigt es sich, dass im Altaramäischen das Verbum *lqh* nicht assimiliert wurde."⁴⁶ If this is so, probably the imperative forms of *lqh* in Old Aramaic also retained the *l*, positive proof notwithstanding. Thus, although we lack all the evidence necessary to reach an unqualified conclusion, the picture suggests that both IH and Aramaic retained the *lamed* in the imperative forms of the verb *lqh* "take," thus representing another isogloss linking these two speech communities.

In short, the author of Ezek. xxxvii:16 has placed into God's mouth the morphological variation representative of JH and IH in discussing the two pieces of wood representative of Judah and Israel.⁴⁷ The linguistic and literary approaches merge here, for this variation is in keeping with the more general use of variation as a feature of biblical style discussed earlier (see above regarding *millîn* and *millîm* in Job, and *mēlakîn* and *mēlakîm* in Proverbs xxxi).

SUMMARY

We have seen that the foreign factor in biblical literature is reflected in the language of the Bible as well. In various environments, ancient Israelite authors manipulated the Hebrew language to portray the foreignness of scenes, characters, and audiences. In such settings, grammatical and lexical features associated with Aramaic, Phoenician, etc., are introduced into the Hebrew text purposefully. The resultant techniques are style-switching and addressee-switching, part of the repertoire of rhetorical devices available to Israelite literati.

At the outset I intimated that various factors may have led these authors

⁴⁵ See C.-F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'ouest* (Leiden 1965), p. 139. Even in the same set of closely related texts, e.g., the Sefire inscriptions, there is no consistency; see J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Rome 1967), p. 67.

⁴⁶ S. Segert, "Noch zu den assimilierenden Verba im Hebräischen," *ArOr* 24 (1956), p. 133.

⁴⁷ In addition, note that the use of the form *lēqah* in v. 16, with all three root consonants present, serves to heighten the connection with the participle *lôqēah* in v. 21. See also F. Hossfeld, *Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Theologie des Ezechielbuches* (Würzburg 1977), p. 312; and D. Baltzer, "Literarkritische und literarhistorische Anmerkungen zur Heilsprophetie im Ezechiel-Buch," in J. Lust, ed., *Ezekiel and His Book* (Leuven 1986), p. 178.

to utilize the technique described above in their literary creations. Very briefly we may discuss these factors.

The first reason derives from a sociological and anthropological perspective. I refer to the notion of Israel's self-awareness of its special character in the ancient world. It is true that almost every people in the world sees itself as unique and special (thus the view of many anthropologists). Still, there can be no doubt that ancient Israel emphasized its uniqueness among the peoples of the ancient world more than any of its contemporaries (at least those who left us the written record by which to weigh such a claim). Peter Machinist demonstrated this in a recent essay, in which he referred to the Bible's "preoccupation with distinctiveness," as evidenced by a list of "approximately 433 distinctiveness passages in the Hebrew Bible," statements ranging through the various genres of biblical literatures (Song of Songs and wisdom texts excepted) and covering all periods thereof.⁴⁸ Here, then, we find an explanation for the consistent use of style-switching and addressee-switching in the Bible. The Israelites were so aware of their distinctiveness, especially in the realms of society and religion, that all efforts were made to mark the foreignness of non-Israelites. Even language was brought into this picture, as I hope to have demonstrated with the above cumulation of evidence. Scholars of other ancient literatures (Akkadian, Egyptian, Greek, etc.) may wish to investigate whether other texts utilize language in this fashion. My hunch is that while occasional examples might be identified, no consistent employment of the technique herein described will be found in these corpora.⁴⁹ By contrast, the twin devices of "style-switching" and "addressee-switching" represent a distinctive feature of ancient Israelite literary style.

Here I think we can explain why the language of a non-Israelite character such as Balaam is represented as foreign, whereas the language of a non-Israelite such as Ruth is not. On the one hand, the Moabite and Judahite dialects more closely resembled each other than did Aramaic and Judahite, so it is possible that the author was unable to reproduce dialectal

⁴⁸ P. Machinist, "The Question of Distinctiveness in Ancient Israel: An Essay," in M. Cogan and I. Eph'al, eds., *Ah, Assyria . . . : Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (Scripta Hierosolymitana 33; Jerusalem 1991), pp. 196–212 (see pp. 212 and 203 for the respective quotations, and pp. 203–204, n. 22, for the list).

⁴⁹ For an excellent example of style-switching in Old English literature (though I make no judgment on the purpose behind the technique), note that the anonymous author of "The Battle of Maldon" poem (c. 1000 C.E.; the battle occurred in 991 C.E.) utilized numerous Scandinavianisms (features from Old Norse) in the speech of the Viking opponents. See F. C. Robinson, "Some Aspects of *Maldon* Poet's Artistry," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 75 (1976), pp. 25–28. I am indebted to my former student Anne Krook (now of the University of Michigan) for bringing this example and this article to my attention.

differences in the handful of sentences placed in Ruth's mouth. On the other hand, the intent in Numbers was to portray the foreignness of Balaam, and the prophet's language is invoked in this regard; whereas the intent in Ruth is to portray the heroine as joining the people of Israel, and this is accomplished through the use of language as well; her speech is assimilated to that of the other characters (Naomi, Boaz, etc.), so that she no longer is distinguishable.⁵⁰ Linguistic style and literary content merge in these two stories to portray the characters: in the one case the foreigner who remains at a distance, in the other case the foreigner who merges with Israel.⁵¹

The second factor which lies behind the use of language to indicate foreignness is the theological one. This is especially the case in the oracles addressed to the foreign nations, the technique which I called addressee-switching above. First we must admit the rather obvious point that there is a certain fictiveness about the whole scenario underlying these addresses. These speeches are portrayed as if they were heard by the foreign nations, but this portrayal is only dramatic, it is not real. The *real* audience is the people of Israel/Judah. But these hearers/readers understand that God is speaking to the foreign nations. When this real audience grasps the grammatical and lexical markers of the neighbouring dialects/languages, the response is: indeed Yahweh does address these peoples, for see, He speaks to them in their language. Thus I see in the device of addressee-switching not only the juncture of language and literature (see above), but in actuality the threefold union of language, literature, and theology.

⁵⁰ If any distinction is made, it might be that Boaz and Naomi often use what appear to be archaic forms; "our story-teller employs them to indicate the senior status of the two" vis-à-vis the younger Ruth. For a list of such forms and for this explanation, see E. F. Campbell, *Ruth* (Garden City, NY, 1975), p. 25.

⁵¹ This is not to deny that the book of Ruth displays "an underlying tension — an opposition in the story between foreignness and familiarity" indicated in the main by the designation *rûṯ hammô'ābiyyā* "Ruth the Moabitess" (ii:2, ii:21, iv:5, iv:10; see also ii:6). On this point, and for the quotation, see A. Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield 1983), p. 88.

ISRAEL ORIENTAL STUDIES

XV

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE NEAR EAST

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