

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HEBREW LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Volume 3
P-Z

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BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2013

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semantic status (as the ending of nouns derived from roots III-y or as the feminine ending, respectively). A similar situation obtains in the case of the formation of infinitives from roots III-y. The standard form of such infinitives is לִבְנוֹת *libnot*. We have already seen above that in *piyyut* analogical forms such as לִבְנֶה *libne* are also possible. Furthermore, *piyyut* employs ‘bare-stem’ forms of III-y infinitives: לְנַקֵּי *lenaqqo* ‘to cleanse him,’ לְהַעֲלֵה *leha'al* ‘to raise’ (note the segholate structure). Such bare-stem forms are also attested in *piyyut* with the final element *-a*: לְהַעֲלֵהָ *leha'ala* ‘to raise’. (Alternatively, but less plausibly, such forms may be seen as analogical derivations from the Biblical Hebrew cohortative of III-y verbs of the type וְאַשְׁפֹּחַ *waš-ʿā* ‘so that I might regard’ [Ps. 119.117]). Taken together, such forms appear to imply free alternation in III-y infinitive endings: $\emptyset \sim -e \sim -a \sim -ot$.

The tentative conclusions reached above regarding the status of the various elements as free variants may be supported on the basis of other, albeit rare and isolated, cases in *piyyut*. Thus, we may find that a III-y imperfect form appears with the final element *-a* instead of the expected *-e*: יִרְצָה *yurša* ‘it will be desired’. Also, we may find a 3ms perfect form with the final element *-a* in place of the expected \emptyset : הִעֲרִידָהּ *he'ehida* ‘he caused to grasp’. Alternately, a 3ms perfect form of a III-y verb may be attested with the final element \emptyset instead of the expected *-a*: הִעֲלֵה *ha'al* ‘he raised’ (note the segholate structure). Finally, we may find an infinitive with the final element *-ot* in place of an expected \emptyset : לְכוֹנְנוֹת *lekonenot* ‘to establish’.

The data cited above converge in pointing to the same conclusion—in the language of *piyyut*, a number of terminal elements that, within the standard language, have a defined morphological or semantic status may be more or less freely interchanged within certain morphological environments. The implication of such a situation is that the elements are devoid of the power to signal morphological or semantic distinctions. In the terms suggested above, the variation may be seen as serving the purpose of deformation/flexibility. In *piyyut*, within the parameters outlined here, words can change their shape without changing their meaning. The fact that the majority of the innovative forms described here are found in rhyme position points to the most immediate practical

advantage of such a situation: a word can be re-shaped to satisfy formal rhyme requirements without undergoing any alteration in meaning. However, over the course of the development of *piyyut*, this practical aim resulted in deformation/flexibility becoming one of its most basic, immanent characteristics, the reforming of words eventually extending far beyond the necessities of line-final rhyme.

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Pentateuch, Linguistic Layers in the

In modern biblical scholarship the Torah (or Pentateuch) has typically been viewed as composed of four main sources: Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Priestly (P), and Deuteronomic (D), dated, respectively, to the 10th, 9th, 8th, and 7th centuries B.C.E. Although most scholars continue to date the Priestly source to the exilic (6th century B.C.E.) or even post-exilic (5th century B.C.E.) period, the linguistic evidence for the earlier date is compelling (Hurvitz 1974, 1982, and many others). Recently there have also been attempts to move the date of the Yahwist source to this late period, but here, again, the linguistic evidence militates against this view (Wright 2005). The simple fact is that there is

not a single indicator of Late Biblical Hebrew in either of these sources, both of considerable size, or in the Torah as a whole for that matter. In every instance where a linguistic opposition (of either lexical or grammatical elements) exists between Standard (pre-exilic) and Late Biblical Hebrew, the language of the Pentateuch squares firmly with the former.

An example of a lexical feature is the word for 'linen': the Torah uses **שֵׁשׁ** *šēš*, while Late Biblical Hebrew texts use **בִּוּשׁ** *būš*. An example of a grammatical feature is the 3mpl pronominal suffix attached to nouns ending in **תִּי** *-ōt*: Standard Biblical Hebrew forms such as **אֲבוֹתָם** *'ābōtām* 'their fathers', **דּוֹרוֹתָם** *dōrōtām* 'their generations', etc., with the shorter suffix *-ām*, dominate over Late Biblical Hebrew forms such as **אֲבוֹתֵהֶם** *'ābōtēhem*, **דּוֹרוֹתֵהֶם** *dōrōtēhem*, etc., with the longer suffix *-ēhem*. These and many more examples clearly demonstrate that P and J do not belong to the exilic and/or post-exilic periods. Rather, P is earlier than D (but see below), and J (if it is to be considered an independent source at all; again see below) is the earliest source of the Torah. Linguistically speaking, then, the Torah is written by and large in Standard Biblical Hebrew (for a different methodology, see Young 2005; Young-Rezetko-Ehrensverd 2009).

In this article, however, a slightly different approach is taken. P and D are considered as distinct sources, each expounding the legal and cultic material in ancient Israel, with the former incorporating Exod. 25–40, all of Leviticus, and much of Numbers, and the latter comprising most of the book of Deuteronomy. (The question of a separate H source, or the Holiness Code [Lev. 17–25], is not addressed here.) There is no need, however, to claim that one source antedates the other; it is quite possible that P and D coexisted throughout the monarchic period as competing approaches on how the God of Israel should be worshipped (compare the coexisting Sadducee and Pharisee systems attested in the late Second Temple period). More importantly, one should not extend P to include narrative material, as in the predominant 'documentary hypothesis'; nor are J and E to be distinguished. Instead, we posit a single narrative tradition, stretching from Gen. 1 (the creation of the world) to Deut. 34 (the death of Moses). Into this single narrative tradition the final redactor of the Torah inserted the P and

D sources at their appropriate places (Mt. Sinai for the former, and the Moabite Plateau for the latter), along with a series of ancient poems (see below). While occasional doublets (for example, the two stories of creation in Gen. 1–2) and contradictions (for example, the different lists of Esau's wives and fathers-in-law; compare Gen. 26.34, 28.9 with Gen. 36.2–3) remained, these do not detract from the validity of the single narrative tradition hypothesis. This unified narrative approach follows upon recent literary and stylistic investigations into the Torah (see, for example, Alter 1981:131–154).

In addition to the more traditional arguments presented by Hurvitz and Wright (see above) for dating the Torah to the pre-exilic period, we now have several new approaches developed by Frank Polak. He notes that Standard Biblical Hebrew shows a greater propensity for the verbs **הָלַךְ** *hālāk* 'go', **רָאָה** *rā'ā* 'see', and **לָקַח** *lāqah* 'take', in contrast to the more frequent attestations, respectively, of the verbs **בָּוֹא** *bō* (i.e., the *qal* of the root **בֹּ** *b-w-*) 'come', **שָׁמַע** *šāma'* 'hear', and **הֵבִיא** (the *hif'il* of **בֹּ** *b-w-*) 'bring' in Late Biblical Hebrew (Polak 1997–98:158–160; note that the respective verbs correspond to related semantic fields). Polak thus distinguishes between an 'oral' style of language and literature, utilized by a storyteller who 'went', 'saw' the action, and then 'took' the details home in order to weave them into a story, and a 'written' style of language and literature, utilized by a chronicler who remained in the chancery and thus by necessity created his texts out of information 'heard' from the one who 'came' and 'brought' reports to the court. The narrative texts of the Torah reflect the earlier 'oral' style. This does not mean that they were created orally and then transmitted orally for generations before being committed to writing at a later time, but rather that the texts were created in writing from the outset (the ancient Near East had a very long tradition of writing), though in a style that replicated the manner of the oral narrator.

Polak also discovered that the earlier 'oral' or classical style has a higher ratio of verbs to nouns than the later 'written' style (Polak 1998). It is no surprise, therefore, that the longest verse in the Bible is Esth. 8.9, dated to the Persian period, with 3 verbs and 31 nouns (out of a total of 43 words). In comparison, two verses of approximately the same length in

the Abraham story, Gen. 22.2–3, have 13 verbs and 19 nouns (out of a total of 50 words). In this respect, too, all narrative texts of the Torah (primeval history, patriarchal narratives, the Joseph story, the Exodus, etc.) surveyed by Polak reflect the earlier, classical style. This method was applied to narrative texts only, not to the legal and cultic texts of P and D, but the overall conclusion is that the Torah is written in the ‘oral’ classical style, that is, Standard Biblical Hebrew (with no signs of the later ‘written’ style characteristic of post-exilic books [= Late Biblical Hebrew]).

Yet a third distinguishing feature identified by Polak is the simpler syntax of Standard Biblical Hebrew, characterized by short clauses with parataxis and few noun groups, versus the more complex syntax of Late Biblical Hebrew, which has sentences with two, three, or even more arguments, greater use of hypotaxis, and frequent employment of noun groups (Polak 2006). As an example of the latter, one need only consider Neh. 4.1, with several subordinate clauses and a string of five nouns, representing a writing style that is not encountered in Standard Biblical Hebrew.

There are, to be sure, certain chapters of the Torah with a heavy dose of Aramaic-like features, which at first glance might suggest Late Biblical Hebrew (note the increased influence of Aramaic over Hebrew during the Persian period and beyond), but which, upon closer inspection, may all be given a different explanation. The relevant chapters are Gen. 24 and Gen. 30–31 (the former recounts the tale of Abraham’s servant who traveled to Aram in order to obtain a bride for Isaac; the latter describe the twenty years that Jacob spent with Laban in Aram) and Num. 22–24 (the story of Balaam, the Aramean prophet brought by Balaq, king of Moab, to curse the Israelites). In the first two cases, the narrative carries the reader to Aram and describes the events in Hebrew peppered by Aramaic-like features. In Num. 22–24 the words spoken by Balaam contain numerous lexical and grammatical features better known from Aramaic. These chapters, then, are not late texts (though some scholars, to be sure, have made this claim), but rather cases of style-switching brilliantly employed by the biblical writer(s) (Rendsburg 2006; → Foreigner Speech: Biblical Hebrew; Style-Switching).

Poems occasionally punctuate the Torah’s very lengthy prose narrative. Two long poems, Exod. 15 and Deut. 32, are replete with archaic Hebrew forms (e.g., Exod. 15.2 זִמְרָתִי *zimirāṭī* ‘song’, with the fs nominal ending *-āṭ* preserved; and Deut. 32.36 אֲזַלַּת *’āzlat* ‘(she) went’, with the 3fs ending *-at* of the suffix-conjugation form preserved) (Robertson 1972; for a contrary view see Vern 2011). Snippets of poems also appear in Num. 21, and in a few places the language is virtually incomprehensible. In one instance we are even told the source of the poem, סֵפֶר מִלְחַמַּת יְהוָה *sēḫer milḥāmōt YHWH* ‘the book of the wars of YHWH’ (Num. 21.14). From this reference and the archaic nature of the poems in general, we conclude that they hark back to an older poetic tradition. In fact, some scholars have reconstructed an early poetic epic tradition (on par with the Ugaritic material; compare also Homer) which narrated Israel’s earliest history (crossing of the Sea of Reeds [Exod. 15], wandering in the desert [Deut. 32], etc.). At some point (during the early monarchy?) the poetic epic was replaced by the prose narrative, though certain material was preserved and later incorporated into the Torah’s narrative (note especially Exod. 15 celebrating a singular event in Israel’s epic tradition). This development is also reflected in several books that follow the Torah; both Josh. 10.13 and 2 Sam. 1.19–27 are poems that interrupt a long prose narrative and in both cases the source is given as סֵפֶר הַיֵּשָׁר *sēḫer hay-yašār* ‘the book of Yashar [= upright]’ (Josh. 10.13; 2 Sam. 1.18).

Finally, we note the poetic material incorporated into the blessings transmitted by Jacob to his sons (representative of the later tribes) in Gen. 49 and by Moses to the tribes of Israel in Deut. 33. The blessings concerning the northern tribes are characterized by dialectal features representative of Israelian Hebrew, e.g., גָּרֵם *gārem* ‘bone’ (Gen. 49.14) in the blessing to Issachar, and שְׂפָעַת *šepā’* ‘bounty, abundance’ (Deut. 33.19) in the joint blessing to Issachar and Zebulun. This suggests that these short poems originated in the tribal territories themselves, and were only later incorporated into the Torah by a redactor (Rendsburg 1992, 2009).

In sum, the main body of the Torah is written in Standard Biblical Hebrew, which represents the language of Judah during the monarchy

(both early and late). A few chapters employ the technique known as style-switching, in order to create an Aramean environment. Some poems within the prose text reflect an older stratum of Hebrew and may hark back to a poetic epic tradition. And a few passages, especially those concerning the northern tribes, contain elements of Israelian Hebrew. Most importantly, there are no indications of Late Biblical Hebrew in the Pentateuch.

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Performative: Biblical Hebrew

A performative statement is one whose articulation in the appropriate context performs the

action to which the statement refers. Thus, two single individuals are considered to be married after they have heard a duly authorized official say "I now pronounce you man and wife". The speaker accomplishes the social transformation simply by making this statement.

Erwin Koschmieder coined the terminology in the context of general linguistics and established the basic semantic contours of the phenomenon beginning in 1929. He used the term *Koinzidenzfall* to describe the coinciding of speech and action in this particular context. Prior to this development, biblical grammarians had recognized the phenomenon, but accounted for it merely as a subcategory of the perfective semantics of the verb. In other words, since the perfect tense can depict actions completed in the past with continuing influence in the present, it seemed appropriate for speakers in Biblical Hebrew dialogue to use the verb form associated with the perfect to express a speaker's actions in process but understood by the speaker as already accomplished (e.g., GKC §106i). But the work of linguists and philosophers, such as Koschmieder (1929), Austin (1946), and Benveniste (1958) laid the foundation for a new category of grammar, which was soon applied systematically to Biblical Hebrew. In particular, Austin's *How to Do Things With Words* (1976) became the landmark classic articulation of the subject, and to him one is indebted for the term 'performative utterance'.

This innovation in the semantics of speech acts is traceable to some degree in Bible translations that appeared before and after the middle of the 20th century. One may observe in traditional English translations of Deut. 2.24, for example, a focus upon the perfect tense of the verb, a focus that many translations continue to maintain: 'I have given into your hand Sihon... and his country' (NIV; cf. KJV, RSV), following as a precedent the Greek perfect of the LXX. The suffix-form of the Hebrew verb in this passage (נָתַתִּי *nāṭattī*) seems to encourage this understanding, particularly if one interprets this form as having the function of a perfect. This temporal dimension, however, is modified by modern translations of Deut. 2.24 that take into account this recent development in linguistics, such as the simple present tense of the NJPS ('I give'), the continuous present tense of the NCV ('I am giving you his land'), and the