Northern Hebrew through Time:
From the Song of Deborah to the Mishnah

GARY A. RENDSBURG

1. Introduction

Over the course of the past 25 years, I have devoted a series of books and articles to the subject of the northern dialect of ancient Hebrew. The majority of these studies have been concerned with the portions of the Bible written in Israelian Hebrew (IH), while several studies have treated Mishnaic Hebrew (MH). The latter represents not only a colloquial variety of ancient Hebrew (Rendsburg 1990) but also a northern dialect, in keeping with the location of Sepphoris and Tiberias, the major centers of Tannaitic activity (Rendsburg 1992; 2003b).[1]

This essay addresses the question whether any diachronic change is discernible within the approximately 1300-year span of IH–MH. This period stretches from ca. 1100 B.C.E., an oft-suggested date for the Song of Deborah in Judges 5, to ca. 200 C.E., the approximate date of the redaction of the Mishnah and related texts.[2] Given that a great amount of diachronic change is discernible for texts emanating from Judah, reflected in the major features that distinguish Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) from Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), one would assume *prima facie* that discernible diachronic change is reflected in the IH–MH continuum as well.

1. For a general sense of the role played by these two cities, one may consult a standard reference work such as Stemberger 1996: 76–81, with sketches of individual rabbis such as R. Meir at Tiberias, R. Yose ben Halafta at Sepphoris, R. Nehorai at Sephoris, and of course R. Judah ha-Nasi at Bet Sheʿarim and Sepphoris. Note as well already R. Yose ha-Gelili (a second-generation Tanna), plus the location of the Sanhedrin in Usha and Shefarʿam, before it relocated to Bet Sheʿarim, then Sepphoris, and finally Tiberias.

2. I do not engage here the question of priority between the Mishnah and Tosefta (or of individual passages or tractates in the Tosefta and Mishnah), nor are we able to pinpoint the date of the equally important *Midreshe Halaka* texts (*Mekhilta*, *Sipra*, *Sipre BeMidbar*, *Sipre Devarim*, etc.). For the purposes of the present study, one must accede to the view that the corpus of Tannaitic texts arises ca. 200 C.E., with some material presumably composed before this date, even if all or most of the redactional activity takes place after this date.

Two factors arise, however, that make our task more complicated. First, the amount of data at our disposal for IH is limited. The corpus of Israelian texts in the Bible is smaller than the Judahite corpus, with the former comprising 149 chapters out of a total of 920 (Hebrew) chapters in the Bible, or approximately 16% of the canon (Rendsburg 2003a: 8). Perhaps more importantly, the vast majority of northern texts date to a more limited timeframe, ca. 1000–720 B.C.E. (see §2 below), thus making diachronic analysis more challenging. True, we have a very large corpus of Tannaitic literature from almost a millennium later, but the nature of MH, notwithstanding its northern provenance, is quite different from IH (see further below).

Coincidentally (or perhaps not so), the quantitative difference between IH and Judahite Hebrew (JH) is also true of the epigraphic remains from ancient Israel. As witness thereto, note that Shmuel Aḥituv's standard textbook on ancient Hebrew inscriptions (Aḥituv 2008) devotes 232 pages to Judah (with more than 20 sites represented: Siloam, Arad, Lachish, Meṣad Ḥashavyahu, Ḥurvat ʿUzza, etc.), with, by contrast, only 84 pages devoted to Israel (with only 7 sites represented: ʿIzbet Sartah, Gezer, Kuntillet ʿAjrud, Samaria, Kalah, Hazor, Kinneret). Of these, note that Gezer is on the border of northern Israel and southern Judah, Kuntillet ʿAjrud is far into the Sinai Desert, Kalah is in Mesopotamia—and the ʿIzbet Sartah epigraph is an abecedary. This leaves only Samaria, Hazor, and Kinneret in true northern Israel—though for Hazor we have extremely little, while for Kinneret we have only a single two-word inscription (fortunately, however, we are able to avail ourselves of this very limited evidence; see below, §5).

This leaves only the Samaria ostraca as a sizable corpus of texts from a northern site, indeed, from the capital of the Northern Kingdom—and yet even these texts reveal so little, given their very formulaic nature. Apart from numerals and personal names, we have perhaps only 6 lexemes (ישׁ, יִן, נבל, שׁת, רחץ, שׁמן, כרם) in the main corpus. Only in Samaria ostracon 111 do we gain more than the usual formulas, with 5 other lexemes present (the verbs שׁלם, מנה, קשׁב; the nouns רעם 'shepherds' and שׁערם 'barley'). From all of this, we learn very little about northern Hebrew, notwithstanding the use of the noun שׁת 'year' and the monophthongization represented by יִן 'wine', both well discussed in the literature.

The second complicating issue is the Aramaic factor. While it is true that many LBH developments are internal to Hebrew, with no connection to Aramaic influence, the fact remains that the shadow of the latter looms ever-present, with many LBH features resulting from the status of Aramaic as the *lingua franca* of the Near East, especially during the Persian period. Thus, to cite just 2 examples (1 lexical, 1 grammatical) from among dozens: (a) the verb קבל 'take, receive' appears 10 times in Job 1–2, Esther, Ezra, and Chron-

icles (and only 1 time elsewhere, namely, Prov 19:20, though note that Proverbs constitutes an IH composition, as per §2 below); and (b) the abstract suffix ‏ות‎- becomes more common in postexilic texts—for example, ‏עַבְדוּת‎ 'slavery' 3 times in Ezra–Nehemiah (replacing SBH ‏בֵּית עֲבָדִים‎ 'house of slavery' most of the time).

The problem for our treatment of IH arises from recognition of the fact that Aramaic influence is felt on northern Hebrew throughout its history. To be more specific, the imprint of the former on the latter is not quite "Aramaic influence" per se, in the sense of the effect that Aramaic would have on all Hebrew beginning in the 6th century B.C.E. but, rather, influence that arose due to consistent language contact across the Aram-Israel border (an amorphous border, to be sure) for centuries. This contact was similar to the contact that existed between IH and Phoenician in the northern reaches of Israel, and between IH and Ammonite and Moabite in the Transjordanian portions of Israelite settlement.

From the data available to us—and here I anticipate one of my conclusions—generally speaking, at least for the biblical period, there is no perceptible diachronic development within IH *qua* IH.[3] Which is to say, IH features that occur in the earliest texts (including Judges 5) are still present in the latest texts (namely, Nehemiah 9 and Qoheleth). Change does occur, though as we shall see, the modifications across time are the same modifications that occurred throughout the Hebrew language, so that IH simply followed JH in this regard, as the latter morphed from SBH into LBH.

2. The Sources of Israelian Hebrew

Before proceeding to specific documentation that will serve to substantiate the general deductions presented in the previous paragraph, let us first review the sources of IH, with an attempt at a general dating schema.

(a) The sole text from the premonarchic period (ca. 1100–1000 B.C.E.) is Judges 5. (b) Texts from the early monarchic period (ca. 1000–860 B.C.E.) include the blessings to the northern tribes in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33; Deuteronomy 32; Lev 25:13–24; select stories in Judges (especially Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah); and 2 Sam 23:1–7. (c) Works from the middle monarchic period (ca. 860–720 B.C.E.) include the Elijah and Elisha cycles; material concerning the kings of Israel; Amos; Hosea; Micah 6–7; and Proverbs. (d) Next come the northern psalms, dated to the post-kingdom period of Israel

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3. By "perceptible," I mean issues from the realms of morphology, syntax, and lexicon, which may be discerned in the written form of our texts. Slight changes in pronunciation, for example, are less likely to be detected within the literary shape of our compositions.

(ca. 720–550 B.C.E.).[4] (e) Finally, Nehemiah 9 and Qoheleth represent the late period (ca. 550–400 B.C.E.).[5]

Implied in the above schema is the assumption that, even after the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C.E., the northern dialect of Hebrew persisted. Notwithstanding the archaeological evidence, which reveals a greatly reduced population in the areas of Samaria and the Galilee—a reduction that arose from (a) deportations by the Assyrians, and (b) migrations southward to Judah—clearly some speakers of Hebrew remained in the region (see, for example, Japhet 1983: 104–5). With no evidence to the contrary, the patois of these Israelites must have remained the northern dialect.

As is well known, major social and political upheavals (such as the events of 745–721 B.C.E.) typically cause major changes in language,[6] so it is only natural to expect IH to have undergone certain transformations during this period. Changes of this sort may have included the end of the literary standard and the adaptation of a formerly colloquial register for literary purposes. This would explain, for example, the language of Qoheleth, a book that is both late and northern (for the former, see Seow 1996; for the latter, see Davila 1990), and the eventual emergence of MH, even if our evidence for MH derives from centuries later. At the same time, however, one must note that Nehemiah 9, also dated to the Persian period, is more literary in style (that is, when compared with Qoheleth), though, to be sure, it reflects LBH developments (see further below, §§9.1.2, 9.1.3, 9.2).

In addition to the works listed above, the Song of Songs also needs to be incorporated in some fashion. This work is replete with IH features (see Noegel and Rendsburg 2010: 3–62), though the date of this composition remains elusive. Most scholars would assign its authorship to the later end of the spectrum, though in our recent coauthored monograph, Scott Noegel and I proposed an early-monarchic setting for the poem (Noegel and Rendsburg 2010), based chiefly on the anti-Solomonic tenor that we find therein. For our present purposes, I remain agnostic on this matter; in any case, we have sufficient material in the IH corpus aside from the Song of Songs to proceed with our analysis.

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4. Any number of the northern psalms may belong to the previous period as well, though for our present purposes I am content to classify these poems as post–Kingdom of Israel.

5. Within the limited space of this article, I cannot substantiate the dates of each composition, though I trust that the reader will accede to these broad categorizations (except, perhaps, for those who subscribe to the approach of Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd 2008).

6. The best example in the history of the English language is the Norman Conquest of 1066, which marks the transition from Old English to Middle English. As for the next major transition, note that the beginning of Early Modern English corresponds more or less to the end of the Plantagenets and the rise of the House of Tudor in 1485, aided by the introduction of the printing press into England by William Caxton in 1476, which served to spread the London standard into other parts of England.

3. Grammatical Features Appearing in Judges 5 and Beyond

The main point to be made here is that the same IH features tend to appear throughout the IH corpus, from the earliest attestation of this dialect (even if Judges 5 is its sole representation) through the larger middle three groups delineated above, and into the two Persian-period works.

3.1. Reduplicated Plural of Geminate Nouns

A parade example is the reduplicated plural form of geminate nouns, known from Aramaic and attested in IH from Judges 5 through Nehemiah 9, including an array of texts between them. Examples in relative chronological order, based on the above dating schema, include (Rendsburg 2003a: 14–15):[7] Judg 5:14 עֲמָמֶיךָ 'your people'; Judg 5:15 חִקְקֵי 'decisions of'; Deut 33:15 הַרְרֵי 'mountains of'; Prov 29:13 תְּכָכִים 'oppressions'; Ps 36:7, 50:10, 76:5, 87:1, 133:3 הַרְרֵי 'mountains of'; Ps 77:18 חֲצָצֶיךָ 'your arrows'; Neh 9:22 עֲמָמִים 'peoples'; Neh 9:24 עַמְמֵי 'peoples of' (see also Song 2:17, 4:6 צְלָלִים 'shadows'; Song 4:8 הַרְרֵי 'mountains of'). In SBH, by contrast, the forms are עַמִּים 'peoples', הָרֵי 'mountains of', etc.

3.2. Feminine-Singular Nominal Ending וֹת-

A second example of an IH feature attested in Judges 5 and then for centuries afterward is the fs nominal ending וֹת-, witnessed in the following forms (Rendsburg 2003a: 14): Judg 5:29 חַכְמוֹת 'wise lady'; 2 Kgs 6:8 תַּחֲנֹתִי 'my camp'; Ps 45:1 יְדִידֹת 'love'; Ps 45:16 שְׂמָחֹת 'joy'; Ps 53:7 יְשֻׁעוֹת 'salvation'; Ps 73:22 בְּהֵמוֹת 'beast'; Ps 132:12 עֵדֹתִי 'my testimony'; Prov 1:20, 9:1, 24:7 חָכְמוֹת 'wisdom'; Prov 14:1 חַכְמוֹת 'wise lady'; Prov 24:7 רָאמוֹת 'high' (adj.), Prov 28:20 אֱמוּנוֹת 'faith'; Qoh 1:17, 2:12, 7:25, 9:3 הוֹלֵלוֹת 'madness'. In these forms, not only has /-at/ been retained in the absolute state (see, for example, 2 Kgs 9:17 שִׁפְעַת 'multitude'; Hos 7:5 חֲמַת, Ps 16:6 נַחֲלָת 'inheritance') without shifting to /-ā/, as occurs in SBH, but the short /a/ vowel has shifted to /o:/, exactly as obtains in Phoenician.

3.3. Relative Pronoun -שֶׁ

A third grammatical element attested in northern compositions stretching from the Song of Deborah to Qoheleth is the use of the relative pronoun -שֶׁ (with alternative pronunciation -שַׁ/-שְׁ), attested as follows (Rendsburg 2003a: 12–13): Judg 5:7 (2×) שַׁקַּמְתִּי; Judg 6:17 שָׁאַתָּה; Judg 7:12, 8:26 שֶׁעַל; 2 Kgs 6:11 מִשֶּׁלָּנוּ; Ps 133:2, 133:3 שֶׁיֹּרֵד. And then, of course, the morpheme -שֶׁ appears 67 times in Qoheleth (2× with the vocalization -שַׁ) and every time (except for the superscription) a relative pronoun of this sort is needed in the

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7. Here and below, I cite only Rendsburg 2003a, which (a) presents the clearest summary of my research into IH, and (b) directs the reader to additional works on the subject. For more recent publications, see Rendsburg 2008; 2009; and Noegel and Rendsburg 2010: 3–62.

Song of Songs.[8] This contrasts with the standard relative pronoun in the Bible, namely, אֲשֶׁר, which appears not only in JH but in IH as well (suggesting that -שֶׁ is limited to certain subdialects within IH).

3.4. מִן 'from' before an Anarthrous Noun

One final illustration of a feature attested in Judges 5 and then long afterward is the use of מִן 'from' before an anarthrous noun, which also appears in Aramaic and in Deir ʿAlla (I 3).[9] Examples of this feature in IH sources are the following (Rendsburg 2003a: 23): Judg 5:20 מִן־שָׁמַיִם 'from heaven'; Judg 7:23 מִן־אָשֵׁר 'from Asher'; Judg 7:23 מִן־כָּל־מְנַשֶּׁה 'from all of Manasseh'; Judg 10:11 מִן־פְּלִשְׁתִּים 'from the Philistines'; Judg 10:11 מִן־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן 'from the Ammonites'; 2 Kgs 15:28 מִן־חַטֹּאות 'from the sins of'; Prov 27:8 מִן־קִנָּהּ 'from its nest'; Ps 45:9 מִן־הֵיכְלֵי 'from the palaces of'; Ps 73:19 מִן־בַּלָּהוֹת 'from terrors'; Ps 116:8 מִן־דִּמְעָה 'from tears' (see also Song 4:15 מִן־לְבָנוֹן 'from Lebanon').

This feature eventually penetrated Judahite Hebrew in a major way, so that it emerges as an LBH trait as well, as demonstrated primarily by the 51 instances of מִן before an anarthrous noun in Chronicles (21 cases of מִן־בְּנֵי 'of/from the sons of' [1 Chr 4:42, 5:18, 9:3, etc.]; a disproportionate number of examples with proper names, such as 1 Chr 11:22 מִן־קַבְצְאֵל 'from Kabzeel'; and select other instances, for example, 2 Chr 31:3 מִן־רְכוּשׁוֹ 'from his property'). For an example derived from parallel passages, compare 2 Sam 6:12 מִבֵּית עֹבֵד אֱדֹם 'from the house of Obed-edom' with 1 Chr 15:25 מִן־בֵּית עֹבֵד־אֱדֹם 'from the house of Obed-edom'.

The SBH form is exemplified by מִשָּׁמַיִם 'from heaven' (Isa 14:12, Ps 12:2, etc.), with the *nun* of מִן assimilated to the following consonant.

3.5. An Interim Summary

The first three features (§§3.1–3) span about 700 years of literary composition, from ca. 1100 B.C.E. to ca. 400 B.C.E., that is, from the approximate date of the Song of Deborah to the time of either Nehemiah 9 or Qoheleth. For the fourth feature, we cannot reach into the Persian period in Israelian texts (since this trait is not attested in either Nehemiah 9 or Qoheleth), though clearly the use of מִן 'from' before an anarthrous noun continued throughout this epoch, as witnessed by the 51 occurrences in Chronicles.

More importantly for the present enterprise, these four elements may serve as testimony to the general state of affairs. IH features that appear in our earliest composition, the Song of Deborah, continue to appear for centuries later, at about the same pace, scattered here and there in narratives about the northern judges, annalistic material concerning the kings of Israel, northern psalms,

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8. On the history of -שֶׁ, see Holmstedt in the present volume (see pp. 113–119).

9. On the identification of Deir ʿAlla as a Canaanite dialect with specific links to IH (or to be more specific, with Gileadite, an IH subdialect used in Transjordan), see Rendsburg 1993.

Proverbs, Qoheleth, the Song of Songs, etc. This pattern suggests that IH *qua* IH reflects little in the way of perceptible diachronic change with regard to the features that I have investigated.[10]

4. Additional Grammatical Features, Attested from the Early Monarchic Period Onward

The general standpoint presented in §3.5 is confirmed by a host of other illustrations, though for what follows, the chronological span begins not with the Song of Deborah (which is, after all, a relatively short text with only limited data) but with compositions emanating from the early monarchic period. Serviceable features for analysis include the following.

4.1. Second-Feminine-Singular Independent Pronoun אתי

The 2fs independent pronoun אתי appears as the *Kethiv* in the following IH passages (Rendsburg 2003a: 11–12), with the speaker indicated in parentheses: Judg 17:2K (Micah of Ephraim), 1 Kgs 14:2K (Jeroboam I), 2 Kgs 4:16K, 8:1K (Elisha), and 2 Kgs 4:23K (husband of the Shunammite woman).

The presumed pronunciation of this form is אַתִּי, which corresponds well with the Samaritan pronunciation of the 2fs independent pronoun אתי (written thus, with *yod*) *ătti* (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000: 226). So, while we lack an explicit attestation of this form in an IH composition from the postmonarchic or Persian period, the tradition maintained by the Samaritans confirms the continuation of this feature into the fifth century B.C.E. (and beyond) in the territory that was once the heart of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

4.2. Feminine-Singular Demonstrative Pronoun זה/ זו

The next relevant item is the fs demonstrative pronoun זה/ זו , which appears in the following northern texts (Rendsburg 2003a:13): 2 Kgs 6:19 זה; Hos 7:16 זו; Ps 132:12 זו; Qoheleth (6×) זה. Once more, the attestations span centuries, in this case, from the early-monarchic-period Elisha narrative until the Persian-period book of Qoheleth, with two instances in the interval.

4.3. Infinitive Absolute in Place of the Finite Verb

The use of infinitive absolute in place of the finite verb is attested as early as Byblos Amarna and Ugaritic (both fourteenth century B.C.E.), as well as in Phoenician (especially the Karatepe inscription, eighth century). One may, accordingly, assume an early appearance in northern Hebrew as well, even if this usage is not attested until IH texts dating to the early monarchic period (and not in Judges 5, for example). The relevant cases are the following (Rendsburg 2003a: 22): Lev 25:14 אֹו קָנֹה מִיַּד עֲמִיתֶךָ 'or buy from the hand of your friend'; Judg 7:19 וְנָפֹוץ הַכַּדִּים 'and they shattered the jugs'; 1 Kgs 22:30

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10. See above, n. 3.

הִתְחַפֵּשׂ וָבֹא בַמִּלְחָמָה 'I will disguise myself and go into the battle'; 2 Kgs 3:16 עָשֹׂה הַנַּחַל הַזֶּה גֵּבִים גֵּבִים אָכֹל 'I will make this wadi full of pools'; 2 Kgs 4:43 וְהוֹתֵר 'they shall eat and have some left over'; Amos 4:5 וְקַטֵּר מֵחָמֵץ תּוֹדָה 'and burn a *todah*-offering from leaven'; Prov 12:7 הָפוֹךְ רְשָׁעִים 'the wicked are overthrown'; Prov 15:22 הָפֵר מַחֲשָׁבוֹת 'plans are undone'; Prov 17:12 פָּגוֹשׁ דֹּב שַׁכּוּל בְּאִישׁ '(better) that a man meet a bereaved bear . . .'; Neh 9:8 וְכָרוֹת עִמּוֹ הַבְּרִית 'and you made a covenant with him'; Neh 9:13 וְדַבֵּר עִמָּהֶם מִשָּׁמָיִם 'and you spoke with them from heaven'.

Again, observe how a particular IH feature is attested during a time span that bridges early texts, such as Leviticus 25 and Judges 7, and late texts, such as Nehemiah 9, with ample attestations from Kings, Amos, and Proverbs in the interval.

4.4. Interrogative Series הֲ- . . . אוֹ

The syntagma הֲ- . . . אוֹ used to mark two successive questions occurs in the following passages (Rendsburg 2003a: 24): Judg 18:19 הֲטוֹב הֱיוֹתְךָ כֹהֵן לְבֵית אִישׁ אֶחָד אוֹ הֱיוֹתְךָ כֹהֵן לְשֵׁבֶט וּלְמִשְׁפָּחָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל 'Is it better for you to be a priest to the house of one person, or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?' (Danites to Micah of Ephraim); 2 Kgs 4:13 הֲיֵשׁ לְדַבֶּר־לָךְ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אוֹ אֶל־שַׂר הַצָּבָא 'Can someone speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?' (Elisha to Shunammite woman); 2 Kgs 6:27 הֲמִן־הַגֹּרֶן אוֹ מִן־הַיָּקֶב 'From the threshing floor or from the wine press?' (Jehoram, king of Israel, to woman of Samaria); Qoh 2:19 הֶחָכָם יִהְיֶה אוֹ סָכָל '. . . whether he will be a wise man or a fool?'; Qoh 11:6 הֲזֶה אוֹ־זֶה '. . . whether this-one or that-one?'.

In this instance, the same usage is attested from the period of the early monarchy (Judges, Elisha) through the late period (Qoheleth)—as well as in the Deir ʿAlla inscription (II 9), which is situated chronologically more or less in the middle of these two extremes.

4.5. T-Stem to Express Passive Voice

The use of the T-stem verb to express the passive voice occurs widely in Aramaic (especially since the N-stem is lacking in all dialects and varieties of the language). The parallel use of the Hithpael (and related verbal patterns) in Hebrew is a feature of IH; hence, this grammatical trait constitutes an excellent example of an isogloss shared by IH and Aramaic. Note the following examples (Rendsburg 2003a: 18–19):[11] Mic 6:16 וְיִשְׁתַּמֵּר חֻקּוֹת עָמְרִי 'and the laws of Omri are observed'; Prov 31:30 הִיא תִתְהַלָּל 'she is to be praised'; Qoh 8:10 וְיִשְׁתַּכְּחוּ בָעִיר 'and they are forgotten in the city'.

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11. For some additional examples, including examples that are not necessarily in IH texts, see Talshir 2003: 275. However, see the response and further explication by Moyer 2009: 103–5.

An additional relevant example appears in the Balaam oracles, with their heavy Aramaic tinge: Num 23:9 וּבַגּוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשָּׁב 'and among the nations is not to be reckoned'.[12]

If one includes the Numbers passage, then the feature treated here spans the early monarchic period, the middle monarchic period, and the Persian era, demonstrating once more how an IH trait persists over the course of centuries. In JH, by contrast, the T-stem serves only for the reflexive and the reciprocal.

5. Lexical Items

There are also numerous lexical items that bridge the centuries of IH compositions. Three examples, from among many,[13] will suffice: (a) יֶרַח 'month' (Deut 33:14, 2 Kgs 15:13; contrast JH חֹדֶשׁ); (b) כַּד 'jug' (Judges 7 [4×]; 1 Kgs 17:12, 17:14, 17:16; 1 Kgs 18:34; Qoh 12:6; perhaps contrast other JH terms for vessels of wine, water, etc.,[14] such as גָּבִיעַ and בַּקְבֻּק (see also Genesis 24 [9×], where כַּד serves to enhance the style-switching technique in a story set in Aram)—in addition to the Tel Kinneret jar fragment inscription: כד השער; and (c) מַתַּת 'gift' (1 Kgs 13:7; Prov 25:14; Qoh 3:13, 5:18; contrast JH מַתָּנָה).

6. Mishnaic Hebrew Grammatical Features

Until this point, I have concentrated solely on the biblical evidence. As noted at the outset, however, the northern dialect of ancient Hebrew endured into Roman times, in the form known as Mishnaic Hebrew (after the foundational text) or Tannaitic Hebrew (after the individuals who created the corpus; for the major texts, see above, n. 2). Accordingly, I now turn our attention to this variety of ancient Hebrew, with a special focus on the features that span both the earlier IH and the later MH. Of the IH features canvassed thus far, four are characteristic of MH as well: (a) the relative pronoun -שֶׁ (§3.3); (b) the fs demonstrative pronoun זֹה/זֹו (with the spelling זֹו used in MH) (§4.2); (c) the T-stem to express the passive (§4.5); and (d) the lexeme כַּד 'jug' (one of dozens that could be cited; see §5).

Many more traits that link IH and MH augment the picture. In the remainder of this section (§6) I present four additional grammatical features, with each subsection presenting first the IH data and then the MH examples; in the following section (§7), I offer a sampling of relevant lexical items.

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12. The many Aramaic-like features in Numbers 22–24 serve collectively as part of the overall style-switching technique. See briefly Rendsburg 2006, and in much greater detail Moyer 2009: 77–192.

13. See the long list collected in Rendsburg 2003a: 25–31.

14. Note the comment by Davila (1990: 86): "It [that is, כַּד 'jug'] may be a word peculiar to the northern dialect, although I cannot suggest a southern synonym for it."

6.1. The זֶה הַיּוֹם 'This Day' Construction

In this syntagma (attested also in Phoenician and Aramaic), the demonstrative pronoun appears before the noun, though the sense is not 'this is the day' but simply 'this day'. Examples in IH texts are as follows (Rendsburg 2003a: 21): 1 Kgs 14:14 זֶה הַיּוֹם 'this day'; 2 Kgs 6:33 זֹאת הָרָעָה 'this evil'; Song 7:8 זֹאת קוֹמָתֵךְ 'this your stature'.

The construction appears in MH as well (Segal 1936: 51; Pérez Fernández 1999: 23), though at times the definite article is omitted.[15] Thus, for example:[16] *m. Ketub.* 4:8 זֶה מִדְרָשׁ 'this midrash'; *m. Naz.* 3:7 (2×) אֵלּוּ מְעִידִים 'these testifiers';[17] *m. Naz.* 7:2 אִילּוּ הַטֻּמְאוֹת 'these impurities'.

6.2. Third-Person Feminine-Singular Suffix-Conjugation III-y Verbs Ending in *-at*

In contrast to 3fs forms of III-y verbs in SBH, such as בָּנְתָה (to use a paradigm verb), IH attests forms that end in *-at*, as follows (Rendsburg 2003a: 16): Lev 25:21 וְעָשָׂת 'and it [i.e., the land] shall do [i.e., produce]'; 2 Kgs 9:37 *Kethiv* והית 'and it [i.e., the carcass] shall be'. An additional example is ~~to~~ found in the Siloam Tunnel inscription (line 3), written by a recent émigré from the region of southern Samaria to Jerusalem (Rendsburg and Schniedewind 2010): הית 'it [i.e., the fissure] was'.

This trait is one of the defining characteristics of MH (Kutscher 1982:128), with the following passages serving as illustrative examples only (see further Segal 1936: 152; and Haneman 1980: 342–43): *m. Ketub.* 5:4 עָשָׂת שִׁשָּׁה חֳדָשִׁים לִפְנֵי הַבַּעַל 'she did [i.e., lived] six months with the husband'; *m. Qidd.* 2:7 (2×) מִשֶּׁלָּהֶן הָיָת וּשְׁבִיעִית הָיָת ['it', i.e., the basket of figs] was [i.e., belonged] to them, and it was seventh-year produce'; *m. Nid.* 1:4 כָּל שֶׁלֹּא רָאַת דָּם מִיָּמֶיהָ 'she who has not seen blood in her days'.

6.3. The Double Plural Construction

Whereas in SBH, a plural construct chain is comprised of a plural *nomen regens* and a singular *nomen rectum* (such as Exod 19:8–9 דִּבְרֵי הָעָם 'the words of the people'), both IH and MH also employ the double plural construction, in which both nouns appear in the plural. IH examples include (Rendsburg

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15. The lack of the definite article in two of these examples is part of a general tendency in MH for less frequent use of the definite article, in comparison with BH (see, for example, the constructions cited in Segal 1927: 201, e.g., *m. Šebu.* 3:7 כְּכַר זֹו 'this loaf'; *m. Menaḥ.* 13:9 שׁוֹר זֶה 'this bull'). I attribute this phenomenon to influence from the spoken dialect, though an isogloss with Phoenician may also be at play.

16. Here and below, readings and numerations follow MS Kaufmann A50 (Budapest), except that for the sake of simplicity, I have elected to omit the *rafe* mark even where the manuscript includes it.

17. To be completely accurate, on the first occasion, the demonstrative pronoun is written *plene* as אֵילוּ, as in *m. Naz.* 7:2.

2003a: 21): 2 Kgs 15:25 בְּנֵי גִלְעָדִים 'children of the Gileadites' > 'the people of Gilead'; Ps 47:10 נְדִיבֵי עַמִּים 'nobles of the peoples' > 'nobles of the people'; Ps 74:13 רָאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים 'heads of the Tanninim' > 'heads of the Tannin'.

MH examples include (see Kutscher 1982: 129): *m. Roš Haš.* 1:1 רָאשֵׁי שָׁנִים 'heads of the years' > 'heads of the year' (i.e., New Year festivals); *m. Ter.* 11:10 בְּבָתֵּי כְנֵסִיּוֹת 'in the houses of assemblies' > 'in the houses of assembly' (i.e., synagogues); *m. Ter.* 11:10 וּבְבָתֵּי מִדְרָשׁוֹת 'and in the houses of studies' > 'and in the houses of study' (i.e., academies).

6.4. Passive Participle with Active Voice

On two occasions in the Bible, the passive participle is used with active voice; both of these passages occur in IH texts (Rendsburg 2003a: 22): 2 Kgs 6:9 נְחִתִּים 'descending'; Song 3:8 אֲחֻזֵי חֶרֶב 'grasping the sword'.

This usage is more widespread in MH (Segal 1927: 160–61; 1936: 133–34; Pérez Fernández 1999: 139–40), as indicated by the following illustrative passages (for the most detailed treatment, see Blau 1953): *m. Peʾah* 2:6 מְקוּבָּל אֲנִי זָכוּר אֲנִי בְאֶשֶׁת מֵרַבִּי מְיָישָׁא 'I received (it) from Rabbi Meyasha'; *m. Ketub.* 2:10 זָכוּר אֲנִי בְאֶשֶׁת פְּלוֹנִי 'I recall (a woman), wife of so-and-so' [18]; *m. B. Meṣiʿa* 1:3 הָיָה רָוכֵב עַל גַּבֵּי בְהֵמָה 'he was riding on the back of the beast'; [19] *m. Kelim* 1:14 שֶׁאֵין נִיכְנָס לַשָּׁם אֶלָּא רְחוּץ יָדַיִים וְרַגְלַיִם 'that one does not enter there unless he has washed (his) hands and feet'.

7. Mishnaic Hebrew Lexical Traits

There are also many lexical links shared by IH and MH, with the following list (with first nouns and then verbs) merely illustrative (Rendsburg 2003a: 25–31; 2003b). The mishnaic references represent the first attestation in the canonical order of the tractates. In some cases, the lexical items listed here are quite common; צְלוֹחִית 'dish', for example, occurs 43 times in the Tannaitic corpus. (a) סֵפֶל 'bowl' (Judg 5:25, 6:38; *m. Sukkah* 4:9); (b) עַיָר 'village' (Judg 10:4; *m. Demai* 5:7 עֲיָירוֹת);[20] (c) פַּקּוּעוֹת 'wild gourds' (2 Kgs 4:39; *m. Šabb.* 2:2); (d) צְבֻּרִים 'piles, heaps' (2 Kgs 10:8; *m. Ber.* 5:5);[21] (e) צְלוֹחִית 'dish' (2 Kgs 2:20; *m. Šabb.* 8:2); (f) צִנָּה 'cold' (Prov 25:13; *m. Yoma* 3:5); (g) קַב 'qab (unit of measurement)' (2 Kgs 6:25; *m. Peʾah* 6:1); (h) א-ר-ה 'pluck'

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18. In this case, I cite the reading of MS Parma A (de Rossi 138), which is clearer and well executed. In MS Kaufmann, this passage is written in the margin by the vocalizer—and thus the reading is imperfect: זָכוּר {הי} הַיִיתִי בְאֶשֶׁת אִישׁ פלוני.

19. The vocalization as passive participle, notwithstanding the *Kethiv* in MS Kaufmann, is confirmed by the (unvocalized) reading היה רכוב על גבי בהמה in MS Parma A (de Rossi 138).

20. The MH form is always feminine and plural, though clearly we are dealing with the same word; see Rendsburg 2000: 38–41.

21. In this case, the connotation of the word has shifted, because in MH the basic meaning is 'public, gathering'.

(Ps 80:13; Song 5:1; *m. Šeb.* 1:2); (i) שׁ-ל-ג 'flow' (Song 4:1, 6:5; *b. Pesaḥ.* 37b 'boil');[22] (j) ה-ב-ה-ב 'singe, roast' (Hos 8:13; *m. Šabb.* 2:3); (k) ח-ר-ך 'roast, singe' (Prov 12:27; *m. Šabb.* 16:5); (l) ט-נ-ף 'soil, make dirty' (Song 5:3; *m. Makš.* 4:5); (m) י-ב-ב 'whine, shrill' (Judg 5:28; *m. Roš Haš.* 4:9 יַבָּבוֹת 'blasts, shrills');[23] (n) מ-ל-ל 'crush, squeeze, rub' (Prov 6:13; *m. Maʿaś.* 4:5); (o) ק-צ-ב 'cut' (2 Kgs 6:6, Song 4:2; *m. ʿArak.* 1:3); (p) שׂ-נ-ס 'gird' (1 Kgs 18:46; *m. Kelim* 26:1 שְׂנָץ 'strap, lace, thong').[24]

8. Constancy within the IH–MH Continuum

The larger picture that emerges from all these interlocking data is the following. Throughout the history of northern Hebrew, even if our sources are at times limited and with centuries intervening, the same lexical and grammatical features are employed consistently and repeatedly. These traits must have served to distinguish the northern and southern dialects of Hebrew throughout antiquity, during both the biblical and the postbiblical periods.[25]

A stellar example is afforded by the noun סֵפֶל 'bowl', attested in Judg 5:25 (our oldest IH text) and Judg 6:38 (another early text), and then not again until it appears 18 times in the Tannaitic corpus.[26] Clearly, this lexeme must have been in use in northern Israel during the millennium or more that separates the 2 biblical occurrences and the 18 Tannaitic appearances, even if the sources at our disposal do not happen to use the word. The same is true for a much rarer word, the verbal root יבב 'whine, shrill', which appears in Judg 5:28 as a hapax legomenon, and its nominal derivative יַבָּבוֹת 'blasts, shrills', ~~and is~~ limited to a single attestation in *m. Roš Haš.* 4:9.[27]

The aggregate data presented in the preceding sections reveal a rather consistent northern dialect of Hebrew (the IH–MH continuum) spanning about 1,300 years. To repeat the statement adumbrated above, there appears to be little or no diachronic change reflected in the numerous lexical and grammati-

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22. Normally, I cite only Tannaitic material (MH¹) in my research into MH, though on this occasion, quite strikingly, the key source for the continuation of גׁ-ל-ש 'flow' into MH is an Amoraic (MH²) compilation. Note further that the root *g-l-ṯ* 'swell, flow' appears in Ugaritic. For full documentation, see Tuell 1993.

23. While the root occurs as a verb in Judg 5:28, in the cited Mishnah passage, the related form is a plural noun.

24. As per the information conveyed in n. 23, while the root occurs as a verb in 1 Kgs 18:46, in the Mishnah the lexeme occurs as a noun, with interchange between /s/ and /ṣ/ as well. Note that the verb occurs already in Ugaritic.

25. This may be the appropriate time to recall the evidence of Matt 26:73 // Mark 14:70, which indicates that Peter's λαλιά 'speech' revealed him to be a Galilean.

26. Note also the presence of *spl* in Ugaritic: *KTU* 1.104:8, 4.123:17, 4.385:3 (del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2003: 766). Indeed, some Ugaritic lexemes "skip" the Bible altogether, only to emerge about a millennium and a half later in MH (see Levine 1962), representing yet another sign of the northern dialect cluster.

27. The verb appears again in an Amoraic source, *y. Yebam.* 16.5 (15d).

cal traits specific to this regional variety of ancient Hebrew. The traits that are attested early on, even as early as Judges 5, are still present in the northern dialect of ancient Hebrew more than a millennium later. This in itself is a remarkable conclusion of our investigation, even if this volume is about diachronic change and not about diachronic stability.

9. Diachronic Change

We are led to ask, then: Can it be that the northern Hebrew dialect remained constant for such a long period of time? Especially given the upheavals of 745–721 B.C.E., followed by the presence of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Ptolemies, Seleucids, and Romans in the land?[28] The answer is clearly no. For as anyone who knows the primary sources will readily realize, notwithstanding all that I have presented, MH is not the same as IH—and even a chapter such as Nehemiah 9 (not to mention Qoheleth) is not the same as the earlier prose material in Kings or Judges. It is to these matters that I now turn.

9.1. Methods Developed by Frank Polak Applied to IH Texts

The most important diagnostic tool (or actually set of tools) for the dating of biblical texts is the tool(s) developed by Frank Polak. Beginning with several groundbreaking studies during the 1990s and continuing to the present day (including in the present volume), Polak has created a typology of biblical prose texts that permits one to observe the development from the more "oral, verbal, simple, rhythmic" style of early narratives (that is, dated to the early monarchy) to the more "written, nominal, complex, annalistic" style of later narratives (that is, dated to the Persian period)—with several transition points between them.[29] Polak has not provided data specific to IH texts, but from within his extended analyses one may nevertheless extract, or at least extrapolate, the relevant IH data.

9.1.1. Noun-Verb Ratios and Nominal-Finite Ratios

While in his more recent studies, Polak has developed more sophisticated methods with an eye to more-detailed analysis, for our present purposes, it will be convenient merely to present the summary information conveyed in Polak 1998: 70 regarding Noun-Verb and Nominal-Finite ratios.[30]

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28. This second question is crucial, for in truth a language or dialect can remain essentially the same over the course of one millennium. The most well-known example is Icelandic, which has evolved very little since its earliest written attestation in ca. 1100 C.E. However, in this case the speakers of the language were largely isolated on an island in the North Atlantic Ocean, albeit with periodic contact with their close cousins on the Scandinavian mainland.

29. For the simplest statement, see Polak 1998: 69. For his latest contribution to the subject, see pp. 307–315 in the present volume.

30. As the term implies, Noun-Verb ratio expresses the proportion of nouns and verbs in a given text. Nominal-Finite ratio takes the number of verbs and then subdivides them

The Elijah and Elisha cycles (all IH) are among the most "oral, verbal" of all biblical narratives, with both having exceedingly low Noun-Verb ratios of 0.600 and 0.589, respectively, and very low Nominal-Finite ratios of 0.133 and 0.148, respectively. These figures indicate that the chapters about Elijah/Elisha are among the earliest prose texts in the Bible.

Selected chapters from the book of Judges (almost all of them with northern settings) fall into the transitional subclass; that is, the data reveal slightly higher Noun-Verb ratios, though in both cases, quite remarkably, extraordinarily low Nominal-Finite ratios. For reasons that I have not been able to ascertain, Polak lumped the Deborah-Barak and Abimelekh accounts (Judges 4, 9) together as one group, and the Ehud, Gideon, and Jephthah material (Judges 3, 6–8, 11–12) as another group. Of these, note that only Ehud is not in a purely northern (including Transjordanian) setting, so that by and large the figures for these eight chapters from Judges provide information relevant to the investigation of IH. The Noun-Verb ratios for the two groups are 0.662 and 0.671, respectively, while the Nominal-Finite ratios are 0.119 and 0.128, respectively.

Representative of the next phase, pertaining to the late pre-exilic and exilic periods, is 2 Kings 11–16, about 40% of which concerns the Northern Kingdom of Israel (13:1–25, 14:11–16, 14:23–29, 15:8–31). For this material, the Noun-Verb ratio is 0.736, while the Nominal-Finite ratio is 0.190. Observe that both ratios are higher than the previously cited figures for earlier compositions.

Finally, we may consider the data presented by Polak for Nehemiah 8–10, with the IH prose of Neh 9:6–37 representing about 45% of these chapters.[31] Again we observe a high Noun-Verb ratio of 0.731, this time coupled with an extremely high Nominal-Finite ratio of 0.322.

Table 1 summarizes all these figures conveniently (though again, one needs to bear in mind that some of these corpora include some Judahite material).

9.1.2. Hypotaxis in Nehemiah 9

We remain with Nehemiah 9 here to present several passages that reflect the more complex prose style, which includes the greater use of hypotaxis (that is, subordination, as indicated by particles such as כִּי and relative markers such as אֲשֶׁר, or their English equivalents 'for', 'because', 'that', 'which', etc.). Consider these passages, for example, each of which includes double subordination:

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into nominal verbs (participles and infinitives) and finite verbs (suffix-conjugation, prefix-conjugation, and imperatives).

31. Polak (1998: 69) listed the following verses for his Nehemiah 8–10 pericope: Neh 7:72–10:1, 10:29–11:3 (he obviously excluded Neh 10:2–28 because these verses are all very short and are composed mainly of personal names). The IH material is Neh 9:6–37 (even though I have used the term "Nehamiah 9" above for simplicity's sake)—that is, 32 out of the total 71 verses, or 45%.

Table 1

	Noun-Verb Ratio	*Nominal-Finite Ratio*
Elijah	.600	.133
Elisha	.589	.148
Judges 4, 9	.662	.119
Judges 3, 6–8, 11–12	.671	.128
2 Kings 11–16	.736	.190
Nehemiah 8–10	.731	.322

(1) וַתִּתֵּן אֹתֹת וּמֹפְתִים בְּפַרְעֹה וּבְכָל־עֲבָדָיו וּבְכָל־עַם אַרְצוֹ כִּי יָדַעְתָּ כִּי הֵזִידוּ עֲלֵיהֶם

and you gave signs and wonders against Pharaoh and against all his servants and against all the people of his land, for you knew that they were-insolent against you. (Neh 9:10)

(2) וְאֶת־נְבִיאֶיךָ הָרָגוּ אֲשֶׁר־הֵעִידוּ בָם לַהֲשִׁיבָם אֵלֶיךָ

and they killed your prophets, who admonished them in order to return them to you. (Neh 9:26)

9.1.3. Extended Noun Groups in Nehemiah 9

Polak (2006: 128–29; 2009) has also observed the manner in which extended noun groups characterize LBH texts. In contrast to SBH, where typically even just one noun may stand alone, in LBH nouns are strung together, in imitation of the chancellery style characteristic of Persian-era administrative documents. Examples from our chapter include:

(3) עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם שְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל־צְבָאָם הָאָרֶץ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיהָ הַיַּמִּים וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶם

And you made the heavens, and the heavens of the heavens, and all their host; the land and all that is upon it; the seas and all that is in them. (Neh 9:6)

(4) בְּפַרְעֹה וּבְכָל־עֲבָדָיו וּבְכָל־עַם אַרְצוֹ

against Pharaoh and against all his servants and against all the people of his land. (Neh 9:10)

(5)   וַתִּתֵּן לָהֶם מִשְׁפָּטִים יְשָׁרִים וְתוֹרוֹת אֱמֶת חֻקִּים וּמִצְוֺת טוֹבִים

And you gave them just laws and true instructions, rules and good
commandments. (Neh 9:13)

(6)   וּמִצְוֺת וְחֻקִּים וְתוֹרָה צִוִּיתָ לָהֶם

And commandments and laws and instruction you commanded them.
(Neh 9:14)

(7) וַיִּלְכְּדוּ עָרִים בְּצֻרוֹת וַאֲדָמָה שְׁמֵנָה וַיִּירְשׁוּ בָתִּים מְלֵאִים־כָּל־טוּב בֹּרוֹת
חֲצוּבִים כְּרָמִים וְזֵיתִים וְעֵץ מַאֲכָל לָרֹב

And they captured fortified cities and rich land; and they inherited
houses full of all goods, quarried cisterns, vineyards and olive groves,
and trees for eating in abundance. (Neh 9:25)

(8) אֶת כָּל־הַתְּלָאָה אֲשֶׁר־מְצָאַתְנוּ לִמְלָכֵינוּ לְשָׂרֵינוּ וּלְכֹהֲנֵינוּ וְלִנְבִיאֵנוּ וְלַאֲבֹתֵינוּ
וּלְכָל־עַמֶּךָ

all the suffering that has come upon us—upon our kings, our offi-
cers, and our priests and our prophets and our fathers, and all of your
people. (Neh 9:32)

(9)   וְאֶת־מְלָכֵינוּ שָׂרֵינוּ כֹּהֲנֵינוּ וַאֲבֹתֵינוּ לֹא עָשׂוּ תּוֹרָתֶךָ

and our kings, our officers, our priests, and our fathers have not fol-
lowed your Torah. (Neh 9:34)

9.2. Additional LBH Features in Nehemiah 9

In addition, there are other LBH features present in Nehemiah 9 (Rendsburg
1991a: 363), such as the following:

1. The form חָיָה 'live' (v. 29) in contrast to SBH חַי (Hurvitz 1982: 47).
2. חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם 'gracious and compassionate' (vv. 17, 31) in contrast to the reverse
   order of this word pair in SBH (Hurvitz 1972: 104–6).
3. עַד־הָעוֹלָם 'until eternity' (v. 5) as opposed to the SBH form without the definite
   article: עַד־עוֹלָם (Hurvitz 1972: 158–59).
4. Radically reduced use of *nota accusativi* את- + pronominal suffix, with an at-
   tendant increase in the pronominal suffix attached directly to the verb—the data
   for Nehemiah 9 are 0 of the former versus 23 of the latter (Polzin 1976: 30).
5. Use of various plural nouns in place of their SBH singular equivalents, for
   example, עִתִּים 'times' (v. 28) instead of עֵת 'time' (Polzin 1976: 42).

9.3. Toward a Conclusion

The upshot of the two preceding sections (§§9.1–9.2)—one section drawing
on Polak's research, the other using earlier investigations into the nature of

LBH—is the following. IH does indeed change over time, but it does so in the same manner as the changes that affect the Judahite variety of LBH. In other words, whatever forces generated the shift from SBH to LBH in the larger Judahite corpus at our disposal were also at work in the northern dialect of ancient Hebrew. On the whole, however, these changes had little or no effect on the identifiable IH traits in Persian-period northern texts such as Nehemiah 9 and Qoheleth. For as we have seen above, features such as the reduplicated plural of geminate nouns (§3.1), the fs demonstrative pronoun זֹה/זֹו (§4.2), the use of the infinitive absolute in place of the finite verb (§4.3), the interrogative series הֲ- . . . אוֹ (§4.4), the lexeme כַּד 'jug' (§5), and many more are still present in these two representatives of late IH.

One of the main forces alluded to in the previous paragraph was the major impact of Aramaic during the period of Achaemenid rule, the results of which are seen at every turn in LBH. But since, as we noted at the outset of this essay, connections with Aramaic are seen throughout the history of IH, it is more difficult to judge explicit Aramaic influence on Persian-period IH. The sources, as noted above, are limited, with Nehemiah 9 and Qoheleth being the only two texts.[32] There appears to be little or no Aramaic influence over Nehemiah 9 (note that we have referred to none in our discussion above). The question of Qoheleth, of course, is much thornier.

9.4. Qoheleth

On the one hand, any single Aramaism in Qoheleth could be attributed to the provenance of the book in northern Israel. This is undoubtedly the case with examples such as חוֹרִים 'freemen' (10:17); כַּד 'jug' (12:6); מְדִינָה 'province' (2:8, 5:7); and שׁוּק 'street' (12:4–5), all of which are attested in earlier IH sources (1 Kings 17–18, 20–21; Judges 7; Proverbs; Song of Songs). On the other hand, the frequency of Aramaisms in Qoheleth far outstrips the incidence of IH-Aramaic isoglosses in other Israelian sources—even if this statement is not validated by statistical analysis here (for the same judgment, see Seow 1996: 650–54). In light of the increased frequency of Aramaisms in Qoheleth, especially given the overlap between many of these usages and the Aramaisms found in Imperial Aramaic sources (again, see Seow 1996: 650–54), one is fully justified in dating the book to the Persian period.

Naturally, not every linguistic peculiarity in the book of Qoheleth is to be ascribed to late usage. Any number of grammatical traits may be due to the idiolect of the writer, who may have chosen to write in a (chatty?) personal style to convey to his readership his personal musings. Nonetheless, LBH influence plainly is present, and in this way Qoheleth reflects diachronic change, especially in contrast to earlier northern compositions.

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32. Though some, to be sure, would add the Song of Songs here; see above, §2.

9.5. Mishnaic Hebrew

Finally, we return to the issue of MH. As we have seen above, the language of the Tannaitic sources reflects a continuation of the IH dialect used during the Iron Age and the Persian period. There are, as I have demonstrated, sufficient lexical and grammatical continuities between the two corpora (IH texts and MH sources) to justify this claim. At the same time, however, MH represents a sharp break with the earlier literature. For, while the biblical IH texts are written in the literary standard (with the exception of Qoheleth), the rabbis elected to fashion their compilations in a more colloquial Hebrew. Features of MH—such as (a) gender neutralization, via the use of epicene forms for 2p and 3p pronouns and verbs; (b) the expression of the adjectival clause without the definite article on the noun, for example, נֶפֶשׁ הַיָּפָה 'the good appetite' (*m. Ḥul.* 4:7); (c) the use of the independent possessive pronoun שֶׁל 'of' (even if it is prefixed frequently, especially in the manuscripts—see the next example); and (d) the anticipatory pronominal suffix, as in יָדוֹ שֶׁלְּעָנִי 'the hand of (him) the poor man' (*m. Šabb.* 1:1)—are attested in other spoken varieties of Semitic. These features thus point the way toward our considering MH to be a colloquial dialect (Rendsburg 1991b). Presumably, this register was used out of convenience and expediency, since the contents of the Mishnah, Tosefta, and related texts emerged from oral discussions held by the rabbis in the *yeshivot*, discussions that no doubt took place in a spoken variety of Hebrew. [33]

10. Conclusion

In this article, I have dealt with a series of texts bridging approximately 1,300 years. We have seen a remarkable amount of constancy in the IH–MH continuum, with certain lexical and grammatical features attested at both extremes of the chronological range. This finding may at first seem surprising, though parallels are known from other languages. Of the hundreds of regional words in English that have persisted for centuries, I cite here but one.

The word *mistal* 'cow shed' is first attested in the *Depositions of the Castle of York* (1673) in the following context: "Henry Cordingley, of Tonge, saith, that . . . he saw the said Mary Sikes riding upon the backe of one of his cowes. And he endeavouring to strike att her stumbled and soe the said Mary flewe out of his mistall window." The word continues to be used 300 years later in Yorkshire, as exemplified by its occurrence in the crime novel *Night Is a Time to Die* (1972), written by John Wainwright, a native of Leeds who served 20 years as a police officer in the West Riding Constabulary, Yorkshire: "The cows were waiting in the mistal" (p. 7). [34] But notwithstanding the use of

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33. One should note that the variety of Hebrew present in other texts, such as 3Q15, 4QMMT, and the Bar Kokhba letters, is quite close to MH.

34. Citations from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *mistal*. For the complete text of the former citation, see also http://www.archive.org/stream/depositionsfromc00grea/depositionsfromc00grea_djvu.txt.

mistal in both texts, no one would argue that late seventeenth-century English is the same as contemporary English. Indeed, the same changes that affected English throughout Great Britain and beyond (for example, the shift from *saith* to *says*) occured in Yorkshire English, notwithstanding its very identifiable dialect, even as *mistal* has endured and still may be heard in the county.

And so it is with IH: certain features, both lexical and grammatical, persisted for centuries, even for more than a millennium when one introduces MH into the picture; nonetheless, profound changes occurred.

These linguistic changes, to summarize the above exposition, result from two main thrusts: (a) the influence of LBH (that is, more or less the same LBH witnessed in Judean sources) evident in Nehemiah 9 and Qoheleth, both dated to the Persian period; and (b) the major shift in mode of expression among the rabbis, with the result that MH reflects a colloquial variety that was used even in writing.

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