

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HEBREW LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

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A–F

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addresses his servant Gehazi before charging him with wrongly accepting a gift in 2 Kgs 5.25, and when the king uses the personal name in reference to an addressee who is actually or potentially under sentence in 1 Sam. 22.16; 2 Sam. 19.26.

Excluding the few cases where an utterance contains no other words, a vocative most commonly stands at or near the end of its clause (79/153 cases, fifty-two percent). However, position at or near the beginning is almost equally common (69/153, forty-five percent). A vocative placed in this latter position commonly addresses a superior (over eighty-five percent). Where the addressee is not the speaker's superior, a clause-initial vocative is a kinship term or a personal name. Where this occurs, the clause expresses polite or affectionate concern, as in 1 Sam. 1.8; 2 Sam. 13.25; etc.; or else a desperate attempt to persuade the addressee not to commit serious violence, as in Judg. 19.23; 2 Sam. 13.12. A vocative used in initial position thus appears to express the speaker's attitude, either as polite and deferential, or else as urgent and desperate. In 1 Kgs 22.15, the king's use of an initial vocative in addressing the prophet Micaiah, whom he distrusts, is presumably ironic.

The end of the clause appears to be the default position for a vocative, implying ordinary speech, with no strong need either to attract the attention of the addressee, or to express politeness or urgency. The addressee is the speaker's superior in less than forty percent of these cases. However, a vocative denoting a superior addressee is characteristically placed at the end of the clause where the content of the speech is of special importance. Also, the use of a vocative is largely conventional in prayers, as 2 Sam. 7.19, appeals, as 2 Sam. 14.4, important announcements, as Judg. 3.19, or urgent warnings, as *מִנְתַּ בְּסִיר אֵישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים* *māwet bas-sir 'iš hā-ēlōhīm* 'there is death in the pot, man of God' (2 Kgs 4.40), etc.

The precise form of address chosen, including a vocative and its placement, is determined by the relative status of speaker and addressee, the content of the speech, the speaker's attitude toward it, and its expected effect on the addressee. Attempts to decode the information implied by this choice, such as those above, can only be general suggestions. The precise interpretation of the usage must depend on the

individual reader's understanding of the passage, just as with similar variation in the use of a singular or plural second-person pronoun where either may be used to address an individual (see Wales 1983).

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## Addressee-Switching

Addressee-switching refers to the literary-linguistic device in the Bible whereby prophets included foreign elements in oracles (ostensibly) directed at foreign nations. To be sure, these texts were heard only by the Israelite consumers of ancient Hebrew literature, but the addition of such foreign elements no doubt added a hint of reality and authenticity to the speeches.

The first to identify this device appears to have been Chaim Rabin (1967:304–305): "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". Rabin's parade example was Isa. 21.11–12, the oracle to Dumah, which includes (in v. 12) the phrase *אִם-תִּבְעֵינָן בְּעֵי* *'im-tib'āyūn bə'āyū* 'if you would inquire, inquire' and the words *אָתָּה* *'āṭā* '(morning) came' and *אָתָּי* *'ēṭāyū* '(they) came', reflecting roots ("בע" *b-ʿ-y* 'inquire' and "את" *ʿ-t-y* 'come') and grammatical forms (with retention of the *yod* in the ל"י [final *yod*] 3mpl suffix-conjugation forms [three out of

four occurrences]) better known from Arabic and Aramaic. Though this passage reflects the speech of the watchman from Dumah and thus falls more into the realm of → Style-Switching than addressee-switching (see Kaufman 1988:55).

Nonetheless, Rabin pointed the way, which has led other scholars to identify many examples of foreign elements in the oracles to the nations. Examples include (see, chiefly, Rendsburg 1991:96–97; 1996:184–187):

- (a) **יְהֵמְיֹון** *yehēmāyūn* ‘they roar’ and **כְּבִירִים** *kabbīrīm* ‘great, mighty’ (Isa. 17.12) (the former once more with *yod* retained; the latter using an Aramaic lexeme) in the oracle to Damascus;
- (b) **זֶה הָעַם** *ze hā-‘ām* ‘this people’ (Isa. 23.13) (the word order of which reflects the syntax of both Phoenician and Aramaic) in the prophesy to Phoenicia with reference to Chaldea;
- (c) **יִיתְרַת** *yīṯrat* ‘riches, abundance’ (Jer. 48.36) (with use of the fs nominal ending *-at*) in the oracle to Moab;
- (d) **אַשְׂיֹוֹתֶיהָ** *‘āšyōtehā* ‘her towers’ (Jer. 50.15 *qere*), a *hapax legomenon* used in the address to Babylon (cf. Akkadian *asītu* ‘tower’);
- (e) **וּמַצְבֹּת עֲזָדְךָ לְאַרְץ תִּרְדָּ** *u-maššabōt ‘uzzēk lā-‘āreš tērēd* ‘your pillar of strength to the ground will fall’ (Ezek. 26.11) (with use of the Phoenician fs nominal ending *-ot*; note the 3fs verb demonstrating that the noun **מַצְבֹּת** *maššabōt* ‘pillar’ is singular) in the proclamation directed at Tyre;
- (f) **וְתוֹמֵךְ שִׁבְטֵךְ** *wā-tōmēk šēbet* ‘and he who holds the sceptre’ (Amos 1.5) (very subtly in this case, since the Hebrew phrase is the interdialectal equivalent of Aramaic **יאחז חטר** *y’ḥz ḥṯr* ‘he who holds the sceptre’, attested in the Panammu inscription) as an epithet for the ruler of Aram in the declaration directed at that nation; and
- (g) **חָרוֹץ** *ḥārūš* ‘gold’ (Zech. 9.3) (using the Phoenician word for ‘gold’ instead of standard Hebrew **זָהָב** *zāhāb*) with reference to Tyre and Sidon (for these last two items, see Paul 1991:52–53 and n. 94).

Presumably, if the Canaanite dialects spoken by the surrounding nations were better known, scholars would be able to identify additional examples. A promising passage is **וְאֶלְמִנְתִּיךָ עָלַי**

**וַתְּבַטְחוּ** *wā-‘almānōtekā ‘ālay tibṭāḥū* ‘and let your widows trust in me’ (Jer. 49.11) within the prophet’s address to Edom. The verb in this phrase represents the only 3fpl *tiqtālū* form in the Bible and may reflect Edomite morphology, though naturally we know precious little about this subject and can make no definitive statement.

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## Adjective

## 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The English term ‘adjective’ is derived from the Latin *adiectivum*, a translation of the Greek *epitheton* meaning ‘that which is added’. Morphologically, the Hebrew adjective is a part of speech inflected for number (§3.1), gender (§3.1), and definiteness (§3.3); syntactically, it has attributive (§4.1), predicative (§4.2), and adverbial functions (§4.3); it is also used to denote degrees of comparison (§4.4).

In Hebrew a **שם תואר** *šem to’ar* ‘adjective’ is not marked as such by any unequivocally distinctive morphological markers, so that this word class is not distinguishable from that of nouns. As a result, the adjective—similar to the noun—is often labeled a **שם שם** *šem šem* ‘nominal’, though such terminology is used primarily to refer to a **שם עצם** *šem ešem* ‘noun’. Because the boundary between ‘noun’ and ‘adjective’ in Hebrew is blurred (Blau 1974:642), the Academy of the Hebrew