Variation in Biblical Hebrew Prose and Poetry[*]

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In our recently published co-authored monograph on the Song of Songs, Scott Noegel and I devoted a chapter to the literary device of "repetition with variation" (or *polyprosopon*, to use the neologism that we coined) within the exquisite poetry that characterizes that biblical book.[1] As we intimated in our discussion, the device is not limited to the Song of Songs alone, but rather appears throughout biblical literature—not only in poetry, but in prose as well; and within prose, not only in narratives but even within relatively unexciting texts such as Num 1, 7, and 29 (see further below). The present essay seeks to

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[*] It is my pleasure and privilege to dedicate this essay to our friend and colleague Adele Berlin, who has done so much to illuminate the literary character of the Bible (both prose and poetry) through her many important publications. It was my good fortune to have two of my sabbaticals intersect with Adele's, in Jerusalem in 1986–87 and in Philadelphia in 1997–98 (two cities dear to her heart!), thereby providing me with even further opportunities to learn more, via her wisdom and her generosity, about how to read an ancient text.

  I also take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Yarnton Manor for bestowing upon me Visiting Scholar status and for providing the perfect environment in which to conduct research. It was during my residency at Yarnton Manor for Michaelmas Term 2010 and a portion of Hilary Term 2011 that the present study was written, as part of my larger research project on stylistic devices in ancient Hebrew literature. During my stay in Oxford, I also was able to present a version of this paper to the University of Oxford Old Testament Seminar, on 7 February 2011, during which I received valuable feedback from colleagues.

[1] S. B. Noegel and G. A. Rendsburg, *Solomon's Vineyard: Literary and Linguistic Studies in the Song of Songs* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 107–27. See also M. V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 209–15. After our co-authored

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expand the discussion beyond the eight chapters of a single biblical book, in the direction of other biblical genres and compositions. First, though, some words of introduction are necessary, even if they repeat some of the remarks offered in the earlier volume.

I take it as a given that ancient Hebrew literature, like all ancient literature, was read aloud, indeed, performed. Given the literate nature of ancient Near Eastern cultures (stretching from Egypt to Mesopotamia), one can assume that literary texts were written down (and, of course, that is how we are acquainted with such texts) at an early stage, perhaps even at the compositional stage. But given the limited number of copies of a particular composition (due to a host of factors, not the least of which is the very time-consuming process of obtaining materials, preparing the writing surface, inscribing the text, etc.),[2] along with the low rate of literacy among the ancients (even those using an alphabet, which naturally is far less cumbersome than the hieroglyphic or cuneiform scripts),[3] clearly most people's familiarity with literary texts derived from having heard their words intoned.

Two points may be raised as demonstration of this. The first is the very simple notion that the Hebrew verb ק-ר-א *q-r-'* means both "call aloud" (its primary designation) and "read" (its derived connotation). The second is the statement in Isa 29:18 וְשָׁמְעוּ בַיּוֹם־הַהוּא הַחֵרְשִׁים דִּבְרֵי־סֵפֶר

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book was published, Jin Han (New York Theological Seminary) informed me that the term "polyprosopon" was used already by E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London, 1898), 898–99, though with a different sense, as the equivalent of "antimetathesis" or "dialogue."

[2] Recall that many ancient Near Eastern texts, such as the Shipwrecked Sailor (Egypt) and the Epic of Aqhat (Ugarit) are extant in only one copy. The situation in Mesopotamia is better, but even there the textual evidence is often limited. For instance, we possess only two copies of the Descent of Ishtar from the library of Ashurbanipal, along with one earlier variant text from Assur; see B. R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (3d ed.; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 2005), 498. Cases such as Sinuhe (Egypt, with about 20 copies) and Gilgamesh (Babylonia, with about 200 witnesses) are the exception to the norm, with the history of documentary evidence spanning centuries, even millennia in the latter case.

[3] Among the many articles on the subject, see I. M. Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence," *VT* 48 (1998): 239–53 (part I), 408–22 (part II). For more comprehensive treatment, see the recent book by C. A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

"and on that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book." In the topsy-turvy world that the prophet describes (vv. 17–20), the Lebanon will become choice farmland, the blind will see, tyrants will cease to dominate, and the poor will rejoice in YHWH—while the deaf will gain the ability to hear. In our contemporary society, where reading is mainly a visual activity, it is the blind who are handicapped and who require special assistance (through Braille mainly), while the deaf are able to read. In ancient Israel, by contrast, where reading was largely an aural activity, the blind could "read" by listening to an oral presentation, whereas the deaf could not.

In such a setting, in which people listened to a text, one can imagine how the performance could be enhanced through a variety of techniques, in order to keep the audience's ear attuned to the literature. One such device would be the variation of repeated lines, by which an author could engage a listener (that is, through the catena of author → text → reader/performer → listener/consumer) in a type of mental game, as it were. How much more delightful the composition would be if, instead of hearing the same line repeated verbatim, the words were distinguished by variation, even if ever so slightly. Thus one finds such basic examples as the following from the Song of Songs.[4]

1. Song 2:5 and Song 5:8

   Song 2:5   כִּי חוֹלַת אַהֲבָה אָנִי
   For I am sick with love.

   Song 5:8   שֶׁחוֹלַת אַהֲבָה אָנִי
   That I am sick with love.

2. Song 2:6 and Song 8:3

   Song 2:6   שְׂמֹאלוֹ תַּחַת לְרֹאשִׁי
   His left-hand is beneath my head.

   Song 8:3   שְׂמֹאלוֹ תַּחַת רֹאשִׁי
   His left-hand is under my head.

3. Song 2:16 and Song 6:3

   Song 2:16 דּוֹדִי לִי וַאֲנִי לוֹ הָרֹעֶה בַּשּׁוֹשַׁנִּים
   My beloved is mine, and I am his,
   Grazing among the lilies.

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⁴ For detailed discussion, see Noegel and Rendsburg, *Solomon's Vineyard*, 113, 117–18.

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Song 6:3   אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי הָרֹעֶה בַּשּׁוֹשַׁנִּים

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,
Grazing among the lilies.

The difference in (1) is minor and requires little comment. The difference in (2) is equally minor, but we may note the following. The preposition תַּחַת לְ- "beneath" is very rare in the Bible, appearing only one or two other times.[5] In light of the rarity of this preposition, one can imagine listeners to the Song of Songs noticing the linguistic oddity of תַּחַת לְ- "beneath" at 2:6, only to be treated to a smile when the reader/performer reaches 8:3 near poem's end, with the standard usage, simple תַּחַת "under," now in place.

In (3), a number of points are noteworthy. Both passages are spoken by the female lover, obviously, with their b-lines exactly the same and with the variation present in the respective a-lines. 2:16 reads דּוֹדִי לִי וַאֲנִי לוֹ "my beloved is mine, and I am his," while 6:3 reads אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Note how (a) the order of the two phrases is reversed: in the former the female voice leads with "my beloved," whereas in the latter she leads with "I"; and (b) the former uses the pronoun form in the phrase וַאֲנִי לוֹ "and I am his," while the latter utilizes the noun form in the wording אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי "I am my beloved's," thereby repeating the word דּוֹדִי "my beloved" in this line.

For the effects of the foregoing to be apprehended, one must assume that the listener was able to retain the wording of the first iteration upon hearing the second iteration, even at a distance of several chapters (assuming, for the nonce, a sustained performance of the entire Song of Songs). The question arises: To what extent would a listener to the Song of Songs realize that a verse in, say, chapter 6 repeats with variation a passage heard earlier in chapter 2 (example [3] above); or with even greater distance, that a verse in chapter 8 changes ever so slightly a passage heard in that same early chapter (example [2])? While we have no empirical evidence to judge this question, I am led to

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[5] The only true parallel occurs in 2 Chr 4:3, in the expression תַּחַת לוֹ "beneath it" (in place of the standard form תַּחְתָּיו), in addition to which note the more complex form אֶל תַּחַת לְ- in Ezek 10:2. The form מִתַּחַת לְ-, attested 13 times in the Bible (Gen 1:7, etc.) is a different preposition altogether, standard in its own right.

answer in the affirmative, if for no other reason than that the internal evidence itself implies such a prospect. That is to say, the very presence of these variations in a single composition (not only in the Song of Songs, but elsewhere as well) suggests that an ancient author could depend on a certain (if not a significant) percentage of those who listened to his text to appreciate what he was attempting to accomplish through such linguistic modifications.

The question of the memorability of biblical poetry was studied by Ziony Zevit, who was, however, more interested in the retention of words over a short span, in order to understand the listener's processing of parallelism and word pairs, for example.[6] Zevit quoted a well-known article by Eric Wanner, "The Parser's Window," which states,

> Although estimates of short term memory capacity disagree...there are no estimates of the capacity of immediate memory which would even remotely suggest that the human listener can hold in mind (say) the entire fifteen to twenty-five words of a modestly complicated spoken sentence. Perhaps the simplest way to appreciate this fact is to notice that there are many sentences which we understand without difficulty in ordinary conversation but which we could not possibly repeat back word for word upon hearing.[7]

No one can argue with this statement, based as it is on modern psycholinguistic studies, but we also note that the subjects of the studies cited by Wanner (along with other scientists summarized by Zevit) were by and large, if not all, individuals whose culture is characterized by the written word—Americans, Western Europeans, and the like—and who were listening, as Wanner implies, to ordinary conversation.

Would the conclusions of the studies cited by Wanner be true if the subjects were stage actors, people attuned to presenting the written word in oral performance?[8] Would the conclusions of these studies be the same if the subjects were traditional Somalis (for example) engaged with literature, and not with mere conversation? I mention this group

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6   Z. Zevit, "Cognitive Theory and the Memorability of Biblical Poetry," in *Let Your Colleagues Praise You: Studies in Memory of Stanley Gevirtz* (ed. R. J. Ratner et al.) = *Maarav* 8 (1992): 199–212.

7   E. Wanner, "The Parser's Window," in *The Cognitive Representation of Speech* (ed. T. Myers, J. Laver, and J. Anderson; Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1981), 211 (cited in Zevit, "Cognitive Theory," 202).

8   For an example of such prowess, see B. Bryson, *Shakespeare* (London: Harper, 2007), 79.

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in particular for good reason. For as B. W. Andrzejewski and I. M. Lewis noted in their research into Somali poetry readings, the poets and reciters (who may be one and the same at times) are able to commit to memory exceedingly long compositions:

> Unaided by writing they learn long poems by heart and some have repertoires which are too great to be exhausted even by several evenings of continuous recitation. Moreover, some of them are endowed with such powers of memory that they can learn a poem by heart after hearing it only once, which is quite astonishing, even allowing for the fact that poems are chanted very slowly, and important lines are sometimes repeated. The reciters are not only capable of acquiring a wide repertoire but can store it in their memories for many years, sometimes for their lifetime. We have met poets who at a ripe age could still remember many poems which they learnt in their early youth.[9]

Furthermore, it is not only the poets/reciters who have this ability: in public gatherings the listeners to the poems often will correct the reciter if he makes a mistake. In the words of Andrzejewski and Lewis: "moreover, among the audience there are often people who already know by heart the particular poem, having learnt it from another source. Heated disputes sometimes arise between a reciter and his audience concerning the purity of his version."[10]

In like fashion, many of us personally know participants in cultures whose feats of memory are prodigious: Sephardic Jews who know all of the Song of Songs by heart (learned by its recitation every Friday night before the Qabbalat Shabbat service); Yemenite Jews who have committed the entire Torah to memory; Iranians who know large chunks of the Persian poetic corpus; Russians who can recite their Pushkin; and Irish their Yeats. In our own society the closest analogy may be young children, who know surprising numbers of books by memory and take note when their parents or baby-sitters have erred in reading them a bedtime story. We have no real empirical evidence on which to base our judgment concerning the consumption of literature in ancient Israel; nevertheless, I would aver that in a culture such as the one that produced the biblical books, which to my mind placed a pri-

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[9] B. W. Andrzejewski and I. M. Lewis, *Somali Poetry: An Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 45.

[10] Andrzejewski and Lewis, *Somali Poetry*, 46.

macy on its national literature, listeners to classical texts would appreciate the variation that one finds in these texts. Yes, they would realize that אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי הָרֹעֶה בַּשׁוֹשַׁנִּים "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine, grazing among the lilies" in 6:3 varies the earlier language of דוֹדִי לִי וַאֲנִי לוֹ הָרֹעֶה בַּשׁוֹשַׁנִּים "my beloved is mine, and I am his, grazing among the lilies" in 2:16.

Below we turn to further examples from other biblical books with detailed analyses. First, however, it is appropriate to address some more mundane texts, including census lists and the like in the book of Numbers. Space does not allow for a full presentation, so let us instead note several exceedingly minor changes in the wordings for each tribe (in Num 1 and 7) and for each day of Sukkot (in Num 29). Note, for example, the inclusion of the word פְּקֻדָיו between the words אֲבֹתָם and בְּמִסְפַּר in Num 1:22; the lack of a *lamed* in the expression בְּנֵי נַפְתָּלִי at the beginning of Num 1:42; the presence of the verb הִקְרִיב / הִקְרֵב in Num 7:18–19; and the uses of וְנִסְכֵּיהֶם in Num 29:19 and וּנְסָכֶיהָ in Num 29:31—all of which depart from the standard parallel wordings in these litanies. One can hardly imagine texts with such little literary character as these chapters (though that characterization may reflect a modern bias), and yet even here one notices the author's attempt to vary his language in order to engage his readers/listeners.[11]

In the space available in this essay, I can present only a small sampling of additional examples, accompanied by a detailed analysis of the working of polyprosopon. Ideally these passages, which represent only the proverbial tip of the iceberg, will provide the reader with a sense of both the prevalence of this device in the Bible and the many forms and shapes it may take. There is no better place to start than with Gen 1, where the following variations may be noted.

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[11] Variation occurs in many other ways as well, as documented by R. J. Ratner, "Morphological Variation in Biblical Hebrew Rhetoric," in Ratner, *Let Your Colleagues Praise You*, 143–59. Ratner's fine essay is devoted to smaller items revealing variation, whereas the present study focuses on larger matters of phraseology—though to be sure, some of the former serve the latter (e.g., see below on Gen 1:11–12 לְמִינֵהוּ ~ לְמִינוֹ). As such, one might say that the current study is Ratner writ large. Moreover, virtually everything that Ratner states in his essay, especially the concluding thoughts (157–59)—for example, the comment that "the authors considered them [sc. the variations in language] to be an enhancement of the reading and listening pleasure" (159)—applies to the current paper as well.

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4. Gen 1:11, 12, 29

Gen 1:11

תַּֽדְשֵׁא הָאָרֶץ דֶּשֶׁא עֵשֶׂב מַזְרִיעַ זֶרַע עֵץ פְּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינוֹ
אֲשֶׁר זַרְעוֹ־בוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ

Let the earth vegetate vegetation, plants that seed seed,
fruit trees that produce fruit (each) according to its kind,
with its seed in it, upon the earth.

Gen 1:12

וַתּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ דֶּשֶׁא עֵשֶׂב מַזְרִיעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה־פְּרִי
אֲשֶׁר זַרְעוֹ־בוֹ לְמִינֵהוּ

And the earth brought-forth vegetation, plants that
seed seed (each) according to its kind, and trees that
produce fruit with its seed in it, (each) according to its
kind.

Gen 1:29

אֶת־כָּל־עֵשֶׂב ׀ זֹרֵעַ זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ
וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ פְרִי־עֵץ זֹרֵעַ זָרַע

All the plants that seed seed that are on the face of all the
earth, and all trees that have in it the fruit of the tree that
seed seed.

In the first two verses, the reader is invited to note the variation in lan-
guage between the command line in v. 11 and the fulfillment line in
v. 12, with (a) different verbs serving as the predicate of the subject
הָאָרֶץ "the earth"; (b) the wording עֵץ פְּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְּרִי "fruit trees that pro-
duce fruit" in the former vs. the shorter וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה־פְּרִי "and trees that
produce fruit" in the latter, though this time preceded by conjunctive
וְ- "and"; (c) the placement of the single occurrence of לְמִינוֹ in v. 11
vs. the placement of the first לְמִינֵהוּ in v. 12, not to mention the use of
a second instance of לְמִינֵהוּ in v. 12; and (d) perhaps the most instantly
recognizable difference, namely, the variant forms לְמִינֵהוּ / לְמִינוֹ, both
meaning "according to its kind."[12] When the vegetation is referenced

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[12]   The mention of command and fulfillment verses here directs our attention to
Ugaritic poetry, much of which is characterized by long passages of this sort, with
occasional variation as well. For basic orientation, see S. B. Parker, *The Pre-
Biblical Narrative Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 26–59 (my thanks to
Mark Smith [New York University] for this reference). My general impression,

again in v. 29, we note still other variations, including (a) אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ פְרִי עֵץ "that have in it the fruit of the tree" instead of אֲשֶׁר זַרְעוֹ־בוֹ "with its seed in it" of vv. 11–12, and (b) the twofold use of זֹרֵעַ זֶרַע "seed seed," using the Qal participle, in place of the earlier מַזְרִיעַ זֶרַע "seed seed" in vv. 11–12, using the Hiph'il participle, with no apparent lexical distinction.[13]

> 5. Gen 2:2–3

> > Gen 2:2a מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
> > his work that he had made

> > Gen 2:2b מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
> > from all his work that he had made

> > Gen 2:3 מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת
> > from all his work that God created in making

The three phrases describe God's creative activity during the six days of creation. So as not to repeat the same words in v. 2, the author introduces the word כָּל "all" in the latter part of the verse, though this simple adjustment only sets the stage for his linguistic virtuosity in what follows. For after rehearsing the phrase מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר "all his work that," found in both v. 2b and v. 3, the author then (a) changes the verb from עָשָׂה "he made" to בָּרָא "he created"; (b) introduces the explicit nominal subject אֱלֹהִים "God"; and (c) ends the passage with the infinitive לַעֲשׂוֹת "to make," thereby constructing a peculiar syntagma.

> 6. Gen 19:33, 35

> > Gen 19:33 וַתַּשְׁקֶיןָ אֶת־אֲבִיהֶן יַיִן בַּלַּיְלָה הוּא וַתָּבֹא הַבְּכִירָה
> > וַתִּשְׁכַּב אֶת־אָבִיהָ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָהּ וּבְקוּמָהּ

> > And they plied their father with wine that night, and
> > the elder came and she lay with her father, though he
> > did not know her lying down and her rising up.

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however, is that the Hebrew writers took this technique to a new level, utilizing much greater creativity and thus far surpassing anything accomplished by the Ugaritic poets—though naturally I recognize fully the subjective nature of my comment.

[13] The reader is invited to explore the same variety of stylistic changes with respect to animals, rather than plants, in vv. 20–21, 24–26, and 30, including, for example, the archaic phrase חַיְתוֹ־אֶרֶץ "animals of the earth" in v. 24, replaced by the standard expression חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ "animals of the earth" in v. 25.

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Gen 19:35   וַתַּשְׁקֶיןָ גַּם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא אֶת־אֲבִיהֶן יָיִן וַתָּקָם

הַצְּעִירָה וַתִּשְׁכַּב עִמּוֹ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָהּ וּבְקֻמָהּ

And they plied even that night their father with wine,
and the younger arose and she lay with him, though he
did not know her lying down and her rising up.

These two verses describe the events surrounding the acts of inter-
course between Lot and his two daughters. While they begin with the
same word וַתַּשְׁקֶיןָ "and they plied," the sentences quickly depart from
one another: (a) v. 33 follows immediately with אֶת־אֲבִיהֶן "their
father," whereas v. 35 places this expression slightly later; (b) the
former uses the more archaic בַּלַּיְלָה הוא "on that night," whereas the
latter uses the more standard בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא "on that night";[14] (c) v. 33
uses the verb ב-ו-א "come," whereas v. 35 uses the verb ק-ו-ם "arise";
and (d) in the first instance we read וַתִּשְׁכַּב אֶת־אָבִיהָ "and she lay with
her father," using the preposition אֶת "with" + noun אָב "father" as
object, whereas in the second case we read וַתִּשְׁכַּב עִמּוֹ "and she lay with
him," using the synonymous preposition עִם "with" + pronoun וֹ- "him"
as object. This last difference, moreover, offers a subtle adumbration of
the names of the two respective sons (see vv. 37–38), with the former
phrase anticipating מוֹאָב "Moab," the name of the first daughter's son
(note the common element אָב), and with the latter phrase anticipating
בֶּן־עַמִּי, lit. "son of my people," the second daughter's son and the
ancestor of עַמּוֹן "Ammon" (note the common element created by
'ayin-mem).[15] In sum, far from a simple "here we go again," the author
introduces variation at every possible turn in v. 35. In fact, in light of
these changes, I would further submit that the *defectiva* spelling וּבְקֻמָהּ
in v. 35 (the only case in the Bible with the infinitive construct of ק-ו-ם;
see the Masoretic note) represents another slight alteration, in contrast
with the expected *plene* spelling וּבְקוּמָהּ in v. 33.[16] Obviously, this
orthographic matter would be sensed only by the reader holding the
written text and not by the listener enjoying the recitation. And yet,

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[14] Incidentally, the Samaritan Pentateuch reads בלילה ההוא in both instances, a
clear effort at harmonization. See also below, nn. 16, 19.

[15] I am indebted to Roni Shweka (Hebrew University) for this very insightful
observation.

[16] Not surprisingly, once more the Samaritan Pentateuch harmonizes the spelling,
with ובקומה in both instances.

I would appeal to variation for the sake of variation here as well,[17] especially when one realizes that the final clause of both iterations is otherwise identical. Indeed, this most likely explains the supralinear dot over the *waw* in וּבְקוּמָה in v. 33, reminding the scribe to pay heed, to write the form in v. 33 with *waw* and then the form in v. 35 without.[18]

> 7. Lev 1:7–8

Lev 1:7	בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן
	"the sons of Aaron the priest"
Lev 1:8	בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים
	"the sons of Aaron, the priests"

The phrase בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים "the sons of Aaron, the priests" occurs 5 times in Lev 1–3 (1:5, 8, 11; 2:2; 3:2). Just to mix it up a bit, the author of this material uses the expression בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן "the sons of Aaron the priest" in 1:7, the only attestation of this wording in the Bible. The pattern, then, is: standard phrase first; the unusual (indeed, unique) phrase second; followed by a return to the standard phrase for the remainder.[19]

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[17] I thus accept the approach of Alfred Rahlfs and James Barr concerning variant spellings in the Bible. See A. Rahlfs, "Zur Setzung der Lesemütter im Alten Testament," *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen: Philologisch-historische Klasse* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1916), 315–47; and J. Barr, *The Variable Spellings of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), esp. 186–95.

[18] On the subject in general, see J. S. Diamond, *Scribal Secrets: Extraordinary Texts in the Torah and Their Implications* (manuscript).

[19] The Samaritan Pentateuch reads plural כהנים also in 1:7, and the LXX οἱ ἱερεῖς "the priests" implies a similar reading. But these efforts are a clear sign of harmonization, reflecting a lack of awareness of the device studied here (see also above, nn. 14–15). For various attempts to explain the wording of MT, see J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 157, though to my mind the far simpler explanation is variation for the sake of variation. Incidentally, Milgrom also referred to 4QLevᵇ with the reading הכהנים, but this must be an error, since the extant portion of this document commences only at Lev 1:11. 4QLevᶜ contains a fragmentary section of Lev 1:1–7, but only a poorly preserved *nun-yod* sequence at the beginning of v. 7, to be restored as בנ[י] with the following words wanting. For these Qumran texts, see, respectively, E. Ulrich, "4QLevᵇ," and E. Tov, "4QLevᶜ," in *Qumran Cave 4/VII: Genesis to Numbers* (DJD XII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 177–87 and 189–92.

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8. I Sam 27:3, 30:5

I Sam 27:3   אֲחִינֹעַם הַיִּזְרְעֵאלִית וַאֲבִיגַיִל אֵשֶׁת־נָבָל הַכַּרְמְלִית

        Ahinoam the Jezreelite (f.) and Abigail the wife
        of Nabal the Carmelite (f.)

I Sam 30:5   אֲחִינֹעַם הַיִּזְרְעֵלִית וַאֲבִיגַיִל אֵשֶׁת נָבָל הַכַּרְמְלִי

        Ahinoam the Jezreelite (f.) and Abigail the wife
        of Nabal the Carmelite (m.)

Twice during the narrative of David's rise to kingship we gain reference to his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail (never mind what has happened to Michal in these passages). Note the variation with reference to the latter: in 27:3, Abigail is the Carmelite (f.); while in 30:5, her late husband Nabal is the Carmelite (m.).[20] Presumably, the attentive listener would grasp the difference in wording, even at a distance of three chapters. We further note another scribal variation, for readers and performers to feast their eyes upon: in the first passage, the epithet of Ahinoam is written correctly, with (quiescent) *'aleph*, whereas in the second passage the *'aleph* is missing from the orthography.

9. Jer 16:16

הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ לְדַיָּגִים רַבִּים נְאֻם־יְהֹוָה וְדִיגוּם וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן
אֶשְׁלַח לְרַבִּים צַיָּדִים וְצָדוּם מֵעַל כָּל־הַר
וּמֵעַל כָּל־גִּבְעָה וּמִנְּקִיקֵי הַסְּלָעִים

     Behold, I am sending for many fisherman, utters YHWH,
     and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many
     hunters, and they shall hunt them on every mountain and
     on every hill and from the crags in the rocks.

I present here the full verse (with the Qeri for the third word), though the focus of our attention is on the two expressions לְדַיָּגִים רַבִּים "for many fisherman" and לְרַבִּים צַיָּדִים "for many hunters." The former represents proper Hebrew grammar, with the adjective following the noun, whereas the latter represents non-standard usage, with the adjective preceding the noun. While it is true that numerals may act differently from standard adjectives (for example, in normal Hebrew

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20   Note that the *ṭeʿamim* (along with the *maqqef*) work in conjunction with this distinction. There is certainly no reason for textual emendation here, as suggested by many scholars; see further P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel* (AB 8; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980), 412.

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usage, except for "1"), and while it is further true that the word "many" lies within the same semantic range as numerals and therefore may operate in similar syntactic environments, notwithstanding these points, the wording לְרַבִּים צַיָּדִים is most surprising. The prophet undoubtedly invoked this atypical usage merely to vary his phraseology, thereby enhancing the reading/listening pleasure.[21] In this particular case, the phrases are not separated from one another by any significant distance (as is the case in most of the examples presented thus far), and yet I include Jer 16:16 in this study as yet another illustration of polyprosopon, if only to demonstrate how many faces the technique of "many faces" may take.

10. Leviticus 23

Lev 23:3 – Shabbat   שַׁבָּת הוּא לַיהוָה בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם
It is a Sabbath unto YHWH, in all your dwellings.

Lev 23:14 – Pesaḥ   חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל מֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם
An eternal statute for your generations, in all your dwellings.

Lev 23:21 – Shavu'ot   חֻקַּת עוֹלָם בְּכָל־מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם
An eternal statute in all your dwellings, for your generations.

[Lev 23:24–25   no statement]

Lev 23:31 – Yom Kippur   חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל מֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם
An eternal statute for your generations, in all your dwellings.

Lev 23:41 – Sukkot   חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם
An eternal statute for your generations.

Leviticus 23 lays out the ancient Israelite calendar, with the various (non-verbatim) phrases presented above. The standard expression (insofar as it occurs twice) appears in vv. 14 and 31, concerning Pesaḥ and Yom Kippur, respectively (see also Lev 3:17; Num 35:29). In v.

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[21] Many scholars have elected to emend לְרַבִּים צַיָּדִים to לְצַיָּדִים רַבִּים, in conformity with standard Hebrew grammar. See, e.g., B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1901), 141; and A. Condamin, *Le livre de Jérémie* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1936), 140. The approach taken in the present study, however, obviates the need for such tampering with MT; see also W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1* (Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 478.

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21, regarding Shavuʻot, the text reverses the two key phrases, with בְּכָל־מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם "for your generations" occurring after לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם "in all your dwellings" (plus note the *maqqef* in the latter phrase). In v. 41, concerning Sukkot, the phrase בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם "in all your dwellings" is omitted altogether, presumably because the three-fold use of the verbal root י-שׁ-ב "sit, dwell" in the following two verses (vv. 42–43; twice Qal, once Hiphʻil) renders the term unnecessary in the author's mind. Perhaps to balance this deletion toward the end of the chapter, the author omits the other term לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם "for your generations" in the description of Shabbat at the beginning of the chapter. We further may note that the connection between Shabbat and "the generations" is built into the system, as indicated by the two-fold use of the term in Exod 31:13, 16. If we may evoke Abraham Joshua Heschel here,[22] Sukkot is the most "place"-defined holiday and therefore does not require "in all your dwellings," whereas Shabbat is the most "time"-defined holiday and therefore does not require "for your generations," at least as conceived and formulated by the author of Lev 23. Finally, the greatest divergence occurs in vv. 24–25, pertaining to the festival that occurs on month 7, day 1 (to emerge eventually as Rosh ha-Shana). Since Lev 23 provides only the most minimal information concerning this holiday, quite appropriately the non-verbatim refrain is omitted altogether in these two verses.

     11. Jonah 1:2; 3:2

         Jonah 1:2   קוּם לֵךְ אֶל־נִינְוֵה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה
                               וּקְרָא עָלֶיהָ כִּי־עָלְתָה רָעָתָם לְפָנָי

            Arise, go to Nineveh the great city,
               and call upon it, for their evil has arisen before me.

         Jonah 3:2   קוּם לֵךְ אֶל־נִינְוֵה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה
                              וּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ אֶת־הַקְּרִיאָה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי דֹּבֵר אֵלֶיךָ

            Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and call to it
            this call, which I speak to you.

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[22]   A. J. Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951). For some qualifying remarks, however, see D. Kraemer, "The Sabbath as a Sanctuary in Space," in *Tifʼeret le-Yisraʼel: Jubilee Volume in Honor of Israel Francus* (ed. J. Roth, et al.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 2010), 79–91.

Much has been written about the alternation between וּקְרָא עָלֶיהָ "and call upon it," as part of God's original command to Jonah, and וּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ "and call to it," as part of God's repetition of the command. On the one hand, Athalya Brenner has claimed that this vacillation originates "ווּדאי ברצון לגוון את נוסחת הפתיחה של פרק ג' שהיא כמעט זהה כמעט מילולית לנוסחת הפתיחה בפרק א'" (which would be in line with the present study);[23] whereas, on the other hand, Jack Sasson has contended that the change in preposition reflects a different semantic nuance.[24] George Landes, meanwhile, considered both positions, calling the usage in 3:2 "simply a stylistic variant" of the usage in 1:2, while at the same time noting that possibly "the author intended a somewhat stronger expression with על in 1:2 than with אל in 3:2, because of the different content that follows each of the constructions."[25] While I tend to agree with Brenner (and Landes' first suggestion), the question need not be decided here, for even if Sasson (in line with Landes' second suggestion) is correct, from a purely stylistic viewpoint, polyprosopon is operative in these two comparable verses regardless.[26] Which is to say, while some readers may have intuited a semantic difference between 1:2 and 3:2, all discerning readers would have grasped the slight change from וּקְרָא עָלֶיהָ in the former to וּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ in the latter—in addition to the larger shifts in wording toward the end of the two verses.

12. Job 1–2

a. Job 1:1   תָּם וְיָשָׁר וִירֵא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מֵרָע
   Perfect and just, and fearing God, and turning from evil.

   Job 1:8   תָּם וְיָשָׁר יְרֵא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מֵרָע
   Perfect and just, fearing God, and turning from evil.

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[23] A. Brenner, "Lešono šel Sefer Yona ke-Maddad li-Qvi'at Zeman Ḥibburo," *Beth Mikra* 79 (1979): 396–405 (400).

[24] J. M. Sasson, "On Jonah's Two Missions," *Henoch* 6 (1984): 23–30; and J. M. Sasson, *Jonah* (AB 24B; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1990), 72–75.

[25] G. M. Landes, "Linguistic Criteria and the Date of the Book of Jonah," *Eretz-Israel* 16 (Harry Orlinsky Volume; Jerusalem: ha-Ḥevra le-Ḥaqirat Ereṣ-Yisra'el ve-'Atiqoteha, 1982), 147*–170* (158*).

[26] Other scholars also have found meaning in the varied language of biblical prose. See, perhaps most prominently, E. J. Revell, *The Designation of the Individual: Expressive Usage in Biblical Narrative* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996). See also below, n. 31.

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Job 2:3   תָּם וְיָשָׁר יְרֵא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מֵרָע

Perfect and just, fearing God, and turning from evil.

b. Job 1:12   וַיֵּצֵא הַשָּׂטָן מֵעִם פְּנֵי יְהֹוָה

And the Satan went out from before YHWH.

Job 2:7   וַיֵּצֵא הַשָּׂטָן מֵאֵת פְּנֵי יְהֹוָה

And the Satan went out from before YHWH.

c. Job 1:16   עוֹד | זֶה מְדַבֵּר וְזֶה בָּא וַיֹּאמַר

This one still was speaking, and this one came and said.

Job 1:17   עוֹד | זֶה מְדַבֵּר וְזֶה בָּא וַיֹּאמַר

This one still was speaking, and this one came and said.

Job 1:18   עַד זֶה מְדַבֵּר וְזֶה בָּא וַיֹּאמַר

This one yet was speaking, and this one came and said.

d. Job 1:6   וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיָּבֹאוּ בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים לְהִתְיַצֵּב עַל־יְהֹוָה
וַיָּבוֹא גַם־הַשָּׂטָן בְּתוֹכָם

And it was on the day, and the *bene ʾelohim* came to present themselves before YHWH, and also the Satan came in their midst.

Job 2:1   וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיָּבֹאוּ בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים לְהִתְיַצֵּב עַל־יְהֹוָה
וַיָּבוֹא גַם הַשָּׂטָן בְּתֹכָם לְהִתְיַצֵּב עַל־יְהֹוָה

And it was on the day, and the *bene ʾelohim* came to present themselves before YHWH, and also the Satan came in their midst to present himself before YHWH.

e. Job 1:7   וַיֹּאמֶר יְהֹוָה אֶל־הַשָּׂטָן מֵאַיִן תָּבֹא וַיַּעַן הַשָּׂטָן אֶת־יְהֹוָה
וַיֹּאמַר מִשּׁוּט בָּאָרֶץ וּמֵהִתְהַלֵּךְ בָּהּ

And YHWH said to the Satan, "From where have you come?" And the Satan answered YHWH, and he said, "From traversing the earth and going to-and-fro on it."

Job 2:2   וַיֹּאמֶר יְהֹוָה אֶל־הַשָּׂטָן אֵי מִזֶּה תָּבֹא וַיַּעַן הַשָּׂטָן אֶת־יְהֹוָה
וַיֹּאמַר מִשֻּׁט בָּאָרֶץ וּמֵהִתְהַלֵּךְ בָּהּ

And YHWH said to the Satan, "Whence have you come?" And the Satan answered YHWH, and he said, "From traversing the earth and going to-and-fro on it."

f. Job 1:11   וְאוּלָם שְׁלַח־נָא יָדְךָ וְגַע בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ
אִם־לֹא עַל־פָּנֶיךָ יְבָרֲכֶךָּ

But however, send forth your hand and harm all that is his— [and see] if he will not "bless" your face.

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Job 2:5   אוּלָם שְׁלַח־נָא יָדְךָ וְגַע אֶל־עַצְמוֹ וְאֶל־בְּשָׂרוֹ
אִם־לֹא אֶל־פָּנֶיךָ יְבָרֲכֶךָּ

However, send forth your hand and harm his bone and his flesh—[and see] if he will not "bless" your face.

The author of Job 1–2 treats his readers/listeners to a series of repeated phrases, each with requisite variation. In (12a) it is simply the presence or absence of the conjunction -וְ "and": the author includes the conjunction in the narratorial voice (1:1), then deletes it when God addresses the Satan (1:8; 2:3). In (12b) we note the change from מֵעִם to מֵאֵת, both meaning "from" (and thus I have rendered the two passages the same way). In (12c) the first two iterations use the standard Hebrew adverb עוֹד "still"; whereas in the third passage the author elects to employ עַד "yet" (in order to distinguish the two usages in my renderings, I opt for "yet" here). In standard Biblical Hebrew, עַד is a preposition meaning "until"; in Late Biblical Hebrew, this particle takes on the adverbial usage "still, yet, while."[27] The author of Job 1–2 took full advantage of this fact in his selection of עַד in 1:18.

The two passages in (12d) begin in like fashion (in fact, the first eight words match each other letter for letter, vowel for vowel, *ṭaʿam* for *ṭaʿam*), and continue as such—until the author plays with the reader's/listener's expectations with the surprise inclusion of a second לְהִתְיַצֵּב עַל יְהוָה "to present himself before YHWH" at the end of 2:1. Here we also note another scribal/visual distinction, between the *plene* writing בְּתוֹכָם in 1:6 and the *defectiva* orthography בְּתֹכָם in 2:1 (the latter noted by the Masoretes as a unique form in the Bible). In (12e) we observe the change from the more common (17 times in the Bible) interrogative מֵאַיִן "from where" in 1:7 to the less common (7 times in the Bible) interrogative אֵי מִזֶּה "whence" in 2:2 (again using different

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[27] For initial treatment, see A. Hurvitz, "The Date of the Prose-Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered," *HTR* 67 (1974): 17–34; note that Hurvitz discusses the specific combination of עַד + participle (26–28). For further discussion, see G. A. Rendsburg, "Late Biblical Hebrew in the Book of Haggai," in *Language and Nature: Papers Presented to John Huehnergard on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday* (ed. R. Hasselbach and N. Pat-El; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2012), 329–44 (331, nn. 8–9).. For adverbial עַד "still, while, yet" as an Israelian Hebrew feature, see G. A. Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 2002), 116–17. For a challenge to the Hurvitz position concerning the prose narrative of Job, see I. Young, "Is the Prose Tale of Job in Late Biblical Hebrew?" *VT* 59 (2009): 606–29, with particular attention to עַד (615–17); I side with Hurvitz against Young on this issue.

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English terms to reflect the distinctions in Hebrew). And once more we recognize different orthography in these two verses, with the standard מִשּׁוּט in 1:7 and the unusual מִשֻּׁט in 2:2 (again, see the Masoretic note).[28] Finally, in (12f) a series of small changes appears: (a) again, the use or non-use of the conjunction -וְ (rendered "but" here) at the start; (b) the use of either -בְּ or אֶל following the verb נ-ג-ע "touch, harm";[29] and (c) the use of either עַל or אֶל in the last phrase.

The result of all these slight changes is obvious. With the scenes repeating throughout Job 1–2 (the *bene 'elohim* presenting themselves before God twice; God's two conversations with the Satan; messengers arriving in quick succession to relay devastating news to Job; etc.), a less creative writer might simply have repeated the same words verbatim. Ancient Hebrew literary style, however, called for a much more imaginative use of language, one that the consumers of these texts no doubt appreciated with pleasure.

13. 1 Kings 19

a. 1 Kgs 19:5   וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ קוּם אֱכוֹל
And he said to him, "Arise, eat."

1 Kgs 19:7   וַיֹּאמֶר קוּם אֱכֹל
And he said, "Arise, eat."

b. 1 Kgs 19:6   וַיֹּאכַל וַיֵּשְׁתְּ
And he ate and he drank.

1 Kgs 19:8   וַיָּקָם וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׁתֶּה
And he arose and he ate and he drunk.

c. 1 Kgs 19:9   וְהִנֵּה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַה־לְּךָ פֹה אֵלִיָּהוּ
And behold, the word of YHWH unto him, and he said to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

1 Kgs 19:13   וְהִנֵּה אֵלָיו קוֹל וַיֹּאמֶר מַה־לְּךָ פֹה אֵלִיָּהוּ
And behold unto him a voice, and he said, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

As with Job 1–2, so here in 1 Kings 19: Scenes repeat (made most explicit by the use of the word שֵׁנִית "a second time" in v. 7), though once again the author has skillfully fashioned alternative phraseology

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[28] This parallels the difference noted above for the infinitive construct forms in Gen 19:33, 35.

[29] For examples of both usages in the Bible, see *DCH* 5.608–9.

to enliven his prose.[30] In (13a) the author first uses וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ "and he said to him" and then the simpler וַיֹּאמֶר "and he said";[31] he also introduces variable spelling with both אֱכוֹל and אֱכָל. Regarding (13b): God had commanded Elijah קוּם אֱכוֹל "arise, eat" in v. 5, though the narrative describes the prophet's response as וַיֹּאכַל וַיֵּשְׁתְּ "he ate and he drank" in v. 6. In the second instance, the command is the same (v. 7), but the narrative then states וַיָּקָם וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׁתֶּה "and he arose and he ate and he drunk" (v. 8), including both an appropriate response to the "arise" command and a non-standard *wayyiqtol* form וַיִּשְׁתֶּה.[32] The latter point is crucial here: the author is willing to go to any extreme to vary his language, even to the point of employing a non-standard

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[30]   The word שֵׁנִית "a second time" serves as an indicator of "build-up and climax" in ancient Hebrew prose texts; cf. C. H. Gordon, "Build-up and Climax," in *Studies in the Bible and Ancient Near East presented to Samuel E. Loewenstamm* (ed. Y. Avishur and J. Blau; Jerusalem: E. Rubinstein, 1978), 29–34 (in the non-Hebrew volume); and E. H. Roshwalb, "Build-up and Climax in Jeremiah's Visions and Laments," in *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon* (ed. M. Lubetski, et al.; JSOTSup 273; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 111–35. As another indication of repetition with variation in a text surveyed by the latter author, note Jer 1:11 מָה־אַתָּה רֹאֶה יִרְמְיָהוּ "What do you see, Jeremiah?" and Jer 1:13 מָה אַתָּה רֹאֶה "What do you see?"

[31]   On such formulae, see R. E. Longacre, "Variations in Formulas of Quotation," in *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 158–84. Longacre's method revealed different shades of meaning in the various formulae that he studied, a point to which I would accede for examples such as Gen 44:15 וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יוֹסֵף "and Joseph said to them" vs. Gen 45:3 וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל אֶחָיו "and Joseph said to his brothers." But I doubt that such an approach could explain the difference noted here for 1 Kgs 19:5, 7, where variation simply for the sake of variation is at play. I also would resist the criticism of S. E. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* (VTSup 46; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 16–17, who noted that the "nominal and pronominal constituents that accompany the verb are among the most unstable elements in the textual tradition" (16). My approach, like that of Longacre, is to take the Masoretic Text seriously on such matters. Regardless of how one judges MT, it remains a significant textual witness (or perhaps reflects a group of relatively uniform textual witnesses) to the ancient Hebrew compositions included in the canon. Notwithstanding our contrary opinions, I am grateful to Samuel Meier (Ohio State University) for directing me both to Longacre's book (cited here) and to Revell's book (cited above, n. 26).

[32]   On such forms, see P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2 vols.; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996), 208, §79m. Note their comment, "The long forms are particularly frequent in the books of Kings."

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usage. I have attempted to reflect this variation in my translation by
means of the use of "drunk," a sub-standard past tense of "drink" in
English.[33]

In (13c) God's question to Elijah מַה־לְּךָ פֹה אֵלִיָּהוּ "Why are you
here, Elijah?" is repeated verbatim. Accordingly, to ensure variation
the author introduces the question through different means: (a)
through diverse וְהִנֵּה *wəhinnē* "and behold" clauses; and (b) with the
alternation of וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ "and he said to him" and וַיֹּאמֶר "and he said,"
as we saw above in (13a) as well. Conversely, Elijah's long (25-word!)
answer to God's question appears verbatim in vv. 10, 14 (once more,
letter for letter, vowel for vowel, *ṭaʿam* for *ṭaʿam*). Presumably, the fact
that God's question was repeated word for word paves the way for his
prophet's response to be stated verbatim. In addition, given all the oth-
er variable phraseology inherent in this text (and throughout the
Bible), the lack of such variation in Elijah's retort may provide the
reader/listener with some insight into the prophet's character, as one
who does not stray, unlike those Israelites about whom he says כִּי עָזְבוּ
בְרִיתְךָ "for they have forsaken your covenant."

14. 1 Kgs 11:31, 35

1 Kgs 11:31   הִנְנִי קֹרֵעַ אֶת־הַמַּמְלָכָה מִיַּד שְׁלֹמֹה
                וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ אֵת עֲשָׂרָה הַשְּׁבָטִים

And behold I am tearing the kingdom from the hand of
Solomon, and I will give to you the ten tribes.

1 Kgs 11:35   וְלָקַחְתִּי הַמְּלוּכָה מִיַּד בְּנוֹ
                וּנְתַתִּיהָ לְךָ אֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת הַשְּׁבָטִים

And I will take the kingship from the hand of his son, and I will
give it to you, the ten tribes.

In these two verses the prophet Ahijah states and restates God's inten-
tion to wrest the ten tribes from the Davidic dynasty and to present
them to Jeroboam. Variable phraseology is used throughout: (a) v. 31
begins with a הִנֵּה *hinnē* "behold" clause, while v. 35 commences with
a *wəqatal* form; (b) v. 31 uses the verb ק-ר-ע "tear," while v. 35 uses
ל-ק-ח "take"; (c) the former uses the noun הַמַּמְלָכָה "the kingdom,"
with אֶת before it, whereas the latter uses the noun הַמְּלוּכָה "the king-
ship," without *nota accusativi*; (d) in the first iteration the kingdom will

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See *American Heritage Dictionary*, available at http://dictionary.reference.com/
browse/drink, s.v. "Usage Note."

be torn מִיַּד שְׁלֹמֹה "from the hand of Solomon," while in the second instance the kingship will be taken מִיַּד בְּנוֹ "from the hand of his [sc. Solomon's] son"; (e) v. 31 reads וְנָתַתִּי לָךְ "and I will give to you," while v. 35 states וּנְתַתִּיהָ לָךְ "and I will give it to you"; and finally (f) we note the variation between עֲשָׂרָה "ten" (in the absolute form) and עֲשֶׂרֶת "ten" (in the construct form).

This last fluctuation, not surprisingly, occurs elsewhere in the Bible, as authors took advantage of the different manners of expressing numerals. Here I simply present several examples: Lev 27:5 וְלַנְּקֵבָה ~ Lev 27:7 וְלַנְּקֵבָה עֲשָׂרָה שְׁקָלִים עֲשֶׂרֶת שְׁקָלִים, both "and for a female, ten sheqels"; Judg 11:38 שְׁנַיִם חֳדָשִׁים ~ Judg 11:39 שְׁנֵי חֳדָשִׁים, both "two months"; and Dan 10:2 שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבֻעִים יָמִים ~ Dan 10:3 שְׁלֹשֶׁת שָׁבֻעִים יָמִים, both "three weeks time" (even if the latter may suggest definiteness in this context, viz., "the three weeks time").

15. 1 Kgs 3:26–27

1 Kgs 3:26   תְּנוּ־לָהּ אֶת־הַיָּלוּד הַחַי וְהָמֵת אַל־תְּמִיתֻהוּ
"Give her the living newborn, only do not put him to death!"

1 Kgs 3:27   תְּנוּ־לָהּ אֶת־הַיָּלוּד הַחַי וְהָמֵת לֹא תְמִיתֻהוּ
"Give her the living newborn, only you shall not put him to death."

As Yoo-Ki Kim has observed, v. 26 represents the only instance in the entire Bible in which an infinitive absolute is negated by אַל.[34] The standard usage, of course, is negation by לֹא, as in v. 27. Naturally, one can appreciate the wording in v. 26, as the mother of the living child invokes the particle אַל, used typically with prefix-conjugation verbs for a negative one-time command.[35] In this crucial point in the narrative, one imagines her uttering any set of words, regardless of grammatical correctness, given her passion and the excitement of the moment.[36] Solomon, by contrast, notwithstanding his intense interest

[34] Y.-K. Kim, *The Function of the Tautological Infinitive in Classical Biblical Hebrew* (HSS 60; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 51.

[35] Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 377, §114i.

[36] As such, one may wish to consider these words as an additional example of intentionally confused language as a literary device. See further G. A. Rendsburg, "Confused Language as a Deliberate Literary Device in Biblical Hebrew Narrative," *JHS* 2 (1998–99), on the web at http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/; and G. A. Rendsburg, "Lashon Mebulbelet ke-Taksis Sifruti ba-Sippur ha-Miqra'i," in *'Iyyune Miqra' u-Faršanut* 9 (5769) = *Menaḥot, Yedidut, ve-Ḥoqra le-Moshe Garsiel* (ed. S. Vargon et al.; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2009), 27–43.

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in the matter, is able to speak dispassionately, thus employing proper grammar with the negative particle לֹא. This example, accordingly, may not be simply variation for the sake of variation, but it once again demonstrates the extent to which ancient Hebrew authors would vary their language, even to the point of fashioning a unique or highly abnormal (shall we say, ungrammatical) syntagma. Finally, note that while the first five words of the parallel phrases are identical, the author utilizes these verbatim sentences most artfully: with the former (in the mouth of the mother of the living child) pointing to Woman A of the story, and with the latter (in the mouth of Solomon) pointing to Woman B in the story.[37]

16. Jer 6:15; 8:12

Jer 6:15   הֹבִישׁוּ כִּי תוֹעֵבָה עָשׂוּ גַּם־בּוֹשׁ לֹא־יֵבוֹשׁוּ גַּם־הַכְלִים לֹא יָדָעוּ
לָכֵן יִפְּלוּ בַנֹּפְלִים בְּעֵת־פְּקַדְתִּים יִכָּשְׁלוּ אָמַר יְהוָֹה

They acted-shamefully, indeed they committed abomination; yet they indeed are not ashamed, even to humiliate they do not know, therefore they shall fall among those who fall, at the time (when) I punish them they shall stumble—says YHWH.

Jer 8:12   הֹבִשׁוּ כִּי תוֹעֵבָה עָשׂוּ גַּם־בּוֹשׁ לֹא־יֵבֹשׁוּ וְהִכָּלֵם לֹא יָדָעוּ
לָכֵן יִפְּלוּ בַנֹּפְלִים בְּעֵת פְּקֻדָּתָם יִכָּשְׁלוּ אָמַר יְהוָֹה

They acted-shamefully, indeed they committed abomination; yet they indeed are not ashamed, and to be humiliated they do not know, therefore they shall fall among those who fall, at the time of their punishment they shall stumble—says YHWH.

These passages are selected from two larger chunks of text, which parallel each other (6:13–15 // 8:10–12), though with numerous minor divergences.[38] In the verses presented here, two main differences

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[37] For the designations "Woman A" and "Woman B," along with my literary analysis of 1 Kgs 3:16–28, see G. A. Rendsburg, "The Guilty Party in 1 Kings iii 16–28," *VT* 48 (1998): 534–41; and G. A. Rendsburg, "The Literary Approach to the Bible and Finding a Good Translation," in *Biblical Translation in Context* (ed. F. W. Knobloch; Bethesda, Md.: University Press of Maryland, 2002), 179–94 (190–93), with my English translation of the entire episode (194).

[38] See the treatments by Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 274–75 (though he would follow the LXX and omit 8:10–12), and W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 1.187–88. A more thorough study is G. H. Parke-Taylor, *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah: Doublets and Recurring Phrases* (SBLMS 51; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature,

occur: (a) the first one uses גַּם־הַכְלִים "even to humiliate," with an
emphasizing particle and the root כ־ל־ם in the Hiphʿil; while the sec-
ond one reads וְהִכָּלֵם "and to be humiliated," with the simpler con-
junction -וְ "and" and the root כ־ל־ם in the Niphʿal; and (b) 6:15 uses
the expression בְּעֵת־פְּקַדְתִּים "at the time (when) I punish them" (an
unusual syntagma, with a finite verb serving as *nomen rectum* of a con-
struct chain),[39] whereas 8:12 employs the more standard grammatical
structure בְּעֵת פְּקֻדָּתָם "at the time of their punishment."

In addition, I note the different orthographies present, to allow the
oral reader, holding the written text in his or her hand, an additional
delight: הֹבִישׁוּ and יֵבוֹשׁוּ in the first instance (with *matres lectionis*), and
הֹבִשׁוּ and יֵבֹשׁוּ in the second (without *matres lectionis*). Finally, also
present is a scribal device introduced by the Masoretes, but one that
presumably harks back to the ancient oral reading tradition. I refer to
the presence of *maqqef* in בְּעֵת־פְּקַדְתִּים in 6:15 and the absence thereof
in בְּעֵת פְּקֻדָּתָם in 8:12. This represents the finest distinction possible in
the performance of a text (with concomitant accent on בְּעֵת in 8:12, in
contrast with the lack of one on בְּעֵת in 6:15), and yet even this most
minute divergence participates in the overall effect of polyprosopon.
All of this at a distance of two chapters, with the assumption that some-
one listening to a sustained recitation of Jeremiah's oracles would
recall the wording of 6:15 upon reaching 8:12.[40]

2000), 93–98. Note that Parke-Taylor is more interested, as his title suggests, in
how the dozens of doublets and recurring phrases in Jeremiah (all conveniently
presented in his monograph) inform the redactional formation of the book, with
some passages seen as earlier and others as later—though in the present instance
he concludes only that the doublet "is part of the Jeremiah tradition which re-
dactors have felt free to insert in appropriate contexts" (98), without being able
to place either or both iterations in a chronological continuum. In general, I am
very suspicious about such approaches, considering them more to be רְעוּת רוּחַ
"a pursuit of the wind," since I highly doubt that we can reconstruct the re-
dactional formation of most biblical books. My interest, as this article illustrates,
is in how these repetitions with variation serve the oral-aural reading process,
including both the performance of the text and its consumption.

39 See D. Grossberg, "Nominalization in Biblical Hebrew," *HS* 20–21 (1979–80):
29–33.

40 For these reasons and more, one concurs with McKane, *Jeremiah*, 187–88, in his
criticism of J. G. Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: Harvard
University Press, 1973), 95–96, who believes that elements in 6:15 and 8:12 are
no more than orthographic variants. As McKane pointed out, "they were not

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17. Gen 25:24; 38:27

Gen 25:24 וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ לָלֶדֶת וְהִנֵּה תוֹמִם בְּבִטְנָהּ

And her days to give birth were fulfilled, and behold, twins in her womb.

Gen 38:27 וַיְהִי בְּעֵת לִדְתָּהּ וְהִנֵּה תְאוֹמִים בְּבִטְנָהּ

And it was, at the time of her giving birth, and behold, twins in her womb.

The word for "twins" in Hebrew is clearly one of the most unstable vocables in the language.[41] Going back to the beginning of this essay, and the Song of Songs, we find another instance of polyprosopon that relates to this word, in fact, in the most minor of details. Song 4:5 and 7:4 present the same line, likening the breasts of the female lover to twin fawns, with only the slightest deviation from each other: תָּאוֹמֵי in 4:5, תָּאֳמֵי in 7:4 (both in construct). In other words, the Masora has preserved different pronunciations for this word, a remarkable feat when one considers that these divergent forms must have been transmitted in such fashion for more than a millennium.

This information serves as background for the two similar lines from Genesis, recording the two occasions of the birthing of twins in the Bible. The wordings are parallel, save for the use of different forms of the key noun: תוֹמִם in 25:24 (Rebekah) and תְאוֹמִים in 38:27 (Tamar). Are we to imagine an ancient Israelite audience entertained by a single continuous reading of the book of Genesis (or perhaps just the ancestor narratives), which would recognize the different forms of the key word used at a distance of 13 chapters from one another? In light of the present study, I would answer that question in the affirmative. Note further that the earlier form תוֹמִם is presumably the less standard one (with *'aleph* elided), with the more proper form תְאוֹמִים (with *'aleph* in place) reserved for the second encounter.

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regarded as orthographical variants by the Massoretes, whose pointing imposes morphological distinctions, and הִכָּלִים would be an unusual spelling of the Niphal infinitive construct in Biblical Hebrew as would פָּקְדְתָּם of a 1st person sing. verb + suffix."

[41] For some factors that may have led to this instability, see S. Levin, *Semitic and Indo-European: The Principal Etymologies* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 44–51; and S. Levin, *Semitic and Indo-European II: Comparative Morphology, Syntax and Phonetics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), 532–33.

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18. Ps 49:13, 21

Ps 49:13 וְאָדָם בִּיקָר בַּל־יָלִין נִמְשַׁל כַּבְּהֵמוֹת נִדְמוּ

And man in (his) honor does not abide;

he is like the beasts that perish.

Ps 49:21 אָדָם בִּיקָר וְלֹא יָבִין נִמְשַׁל כַּבְּהֵמוֹת נִדְמוּ

Man in (his) honor, and he does not understand;

he is like the beasts that perish.

Refrains in ancient Hebrew poetry are not refrains in the generally understood sense of that term, that is, verbatim repetition of a line at regular (or at times irregular) intervals. Rather, as this example and the next one demonstrate, the language is varied (and almost always without regular distance between the lines). In these two lines from Ps 49, we note the following divergences:[42] (a) v. 13 begins with conjunctive -וְ "and," while v. 21 does not; (b) the former uses the rarer negative particle בַּל,[43] whereas the latter uses the more standard negative particle לֹא; (c) the first iteration reads simply בַּל, while the second one reads וְלֹא, with the conjunction; and (d) v. 13 employs the verb ל-י-ן "lodge, abide," while v. 21 opts for the verb ב-י-ן "understand." This last alternation, the most substantive among the four, actually generates different meanings for the two lines, as I have tried to reflect in my English translations.

19. Psalm 107

Ps 107:6 וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בַּצַּר לָהֶם מִמְּצוּקוֹתֵיהֶם יַצִּילֵם

And they cried to YHWH in their trouble,

from their straits he delivers them.

Ps 107:13 וַיִּזְעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בַּצַּר לָהֶם מִמְּצֻקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם

And they cried to YHWH in their trouble,

from their straits he saves them.

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42 For brief mention of these verses, see J. Goldingay, "Repetition and Variation in the Psalms," *JQR* 68 (1977): 148. I owe this reference to Knut Heim (Trinity College, Bristol).

43 The particle בַּל, typically an Israelian Hebrew feature, was available to the author of this psalm due to its origin in northern Israel; see G. A. Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms* (SBLMS 43; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 24–25, 57.

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Ps 107:19 וַיִּזְעֲק֣וּ אֶל־יְ֭הוָה בַּצַּ֣ר לָהֶ֑ם מִ֝מְּצֻֽקוֹתֵיהֶ֗ם יוֹשִׁיעֵֽם

And they cried to YHWH in their trouble,

from their straits he saves them.

Ps 107:28 וַיִּצְעֲק֣וּ אֶל־יְ֭הוָה בַּצַּ֣ר לָהֶ֑ם וּֽ֝מִמְּצֽוּקֹתֵיהֶ֗ם יוֹצִיאֵֽם

And they cried to YHWH in their trouble,

and from their straits he extracts them.

Psalm 107 presents the relevant line four times, twice (vv. 13, 19) ver-
batim, twice (vv. 6, 28) with variation. If we consider vv. 13 and 19 to
be the base wording, we note the following deviations in vv. 6 and 28:
(a) both use the root צ-ע-ק "call, cry out," rather than the root ז-ע-ק,
which bears the same meaning (and thus my translations do not differ
on this point); (b) v. 6 uses the Hiph'il of the root נ-צ-ל "deliver,"
whereas v. 28 uses the Hiph'il of the root י-צ-א "take out, bring out,
extract"—in contrast with the Hiph'il of the root י-שׁ-ע "save" in vv.
13 and 19;[44] and (c) the final iteration prefixes the conjunction -וְ "and"
to מִמְּצוּקֹתֵיהֶם "from their straits" to create the unique form וּמִמְּצוּקֹתֵיהֶם
"and from their straits." In addition, there are orthographic differences
in מִמְּצֻקוֹתֵיהֶם (thus vv. 13, 19), with the form in v. 6 employing *waw*
(i.e., *šureq*) to represent /ū/, and with the form in v. 28 representing
/ō/ without employing waw (i.e., *ḥōlem mālēʾ*). As a result, there is
delight here both for the listener to the poem and for the oral reciter
with the written text in his or her hand.

   20. Ezek 37:16

וְאַתָּ֣ה בֶן־אָדָ֗ם קַח־לְךָ֙ עֵ֣ץ אֶחָ֔ד

וּכְתֹ֤ב עָלָיו֙ לִֽיהוּדָ֔ה וְלִבְנֵ֥י יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל חֲבֵרָ֑יו

וּלְקַח֙ עֵ֣ץ אֶחָ֔ד וּכְת֣וֹב עָלָ֗יו לְיוֹסֵף֙ עֵ֣ץ אֶפְרַ֔יִם

וְכָל־בֵּ֥ית יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל חֲבֵרָֽיו

And you, son of man,

Take for you a wood, and write on it "for Judah and for the
children of Israel his comrades";

And tak (sic) a wood, and write on it "for Joseph—the wood
of Ephraim—and all the house of Israel his comrades."

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[44] My use of "deliver" for נ-צ-ל (Hiph'il) and "save" for י-שׁ-ע (Hiph'il) is simply
for the sake of convenience. As far as I can determine, the meanings of the two
verbs are essentially equivalent.

We end our survey of polyprosopon with a stellar example, Ezek 37:16 (reproduced here with the Qeri חֲבֵרָיו [twice]). In this well-known passage, God instructs the prophet to take two pieces of wood, to inscribe each of them (one for Judah and one for Israel), and then to bring them together to create a diptych (in v. 17),[45] thereby symbolizing the promise for a reunited single kingdom of Israel (see v. 22). The set of double instructions to Ezekiel allows the reader to compare the language between v. 16a and v. 16b.

(a) The Judah portion begins with קַח־לְךָ "take for you," using the standard imperative form, followed by the emphasizing dative form. The Israel section commences with the non-standard imperative לְקַח "tak" (sic), without the emphasizing dative form, though with conjunctive -וּ "and" (admittedly a near necessity here). This form לְקַח, with *lamed* retained, is a feature of Israelian Hebrew, as can be determined from its presence in 1 Kgs 17:11 (in the feminine) and Prov 20:16.[46] In the former, Elijah addresses the woman of Zarepath; while the latter appears in a book replete with IH features.[47] In short, the author of Ezek 37 took advantage of the two available forms for the imperative "take," one Judahite (in v. 16a), one Israelian (in v. 16b). Finally, note that I have attempted to replicate this distinction by using the regional dialectal English form "tak" (not a misprint above) in my translation; this form occurs chiefly in Scotland and was used, for example, by Walter Scott in his novel *Old Mortality* (1816).[48]

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[45] See further C. H. Gordon, "אחדים = *iltênêtu* 'pair,'" in *Sefer Segal: Studies in the Bible Presented to Professor M. H. Segal* (ed. J. M. Grintz and J. Liver; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1964), 5★–9★.

[46] Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 46–47.

[47] See H. L. Ginsberg, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1982), 34–36; and Y. Chen, "Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 2000). In the rehearsal of this maxim in Prov 27:13, note that the standard form קַח occurs, a fact that fits nicely into the overall theme of the present essay. The one remaining example of the imperative of ל-ק-ה "take" with the *lamed* retained is Exod 29:1, which the presumably Judahite author employed *alliterationis causa*; see G. A. Rendsburg, "Alliteration in the Exodus Narrative," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. C. Cohen et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 83–100 (95).

[48] Cf. *OED*, s.v. "take."

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(b) Ezekiel is instructed to write on the first stick as follows: לִיהוּדָה
וְלִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרָיו "for Judah and for the children of Israel his com-
rades"; the parallel line regarding the second stick reads: לְיוֹסֵף עֵץ אֶפְרַיִם
וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרָיו "for Joseph—the wood of Ephraim—and all the
house of Israel his comrades." The variable language here consists of
several components: (i) v. 16b incorporates an additional phrase עֵץ
אֶפְרַיִם "the wood of Ephraim," unparalleled in v. 16a. (ii) v. 16a uses
the expression בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל "children of Israel," whereas v. 16b opts for
the phrase בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל "house of Israel." (iii) v. 16b includes the word
כָּל "all," which is lacking in v. 16a. (iv) By contrast, v. 16a includes an
additional preposition לְ- "for" (in the phrase וְלִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל "and for the
children of Israel"), which is wanting in v. 16b (in the phrase וְכָל־בֵּית
יִשְׂרָאֵל "and all the house of Israel"). The total effect, incidentally, cre-
ates a Joseph line that is longer than its corresponding Judah line—an
outcome that may be intentional, given the greater size of northern
Israel in comparison to southern Judah.

Finally, once more we may observe an orthographic difference,
with the first line reading וּכְתֹב (*defectiva*) and the second line reading
וּכְתוֹב (*plene*). The author of this passage clearly was a master of the lit-
erary device under discussion here, as he introduced a panoply of
(mainly minor) variations within the 10 and 12 words comprising the
lines of vv. 16a and 16b, respectively.

As noted earlier, the examples presented herein, numbering but a
score, represent merely the tip of the iceberg. As I hope to have dem-
onstrated, the use of repetition with variation (or polyprosopon, to use
our neologism) is pervasive in biblical literature, both prose and poet-
ry. Nor am I the first to recognize this phenomenon. Shamir Yona, for
one, has dedicated several articles to the subject, with the apt conclu-
sion that the variations within repeated lines are not the result of scribal
error, but rather "are motivated by a stylistic principle in which the
monotony of mechanical repetition is alleviated through the intro-
duction of slight changes."[49] In addition, I already have cited the study
by John Goldingay, "Repetition and Variation in the Psalms," which

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[49] S. Yona, "Repetition and Variation in Biblical Texts," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 37
(2005): 729–40 (739–40). A Hebrew version of this article appeared as S. Yona,
"Givvunim Signoniyim u-Taḥbiriyim be-Ṭeqsṭim Ḥozrim ba-Miqra'," in
*Tᵉshûrôt LaAvishur: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East, in Hebrew and
Semitic Languages; Festschrift Presented to Prof. Yitzhak Avishur on the Occasion of his*

presents some ten examples within the largest book of the Bible. Here I note his happy conclusion that this trend occurs in Hebrew poetry because "the psalmists simply liked it that way" (in contrast to alternative explanations about corrupt texts or conflated texts).[50] And while she does not approach the question via the same lens as the one employed here, our honoree also has contributed to the subject. Adele Berlin collected the 29 verses in the book of Psalms that "employ at least one of several verbs meaning 'to hear' and/or the noun 'prayer' or one of its synonyms." Strikingly, as she observed,

> This is such a common theme in Psalms that one might expect the expression of it to have become a standardized formula, but surprisingly, it did not. Not only is the wording of 'God, hear my prayer' varied extensively, but in all of the twenty-nine cases that I have found, no two parallelisms are identical.[51]

Notwithstanding such observations, by and large the device studied herein has not been fully appreciated in biblical scholarship. For example, in Burke Long's fine survey of "Framing Repetitions in Biblical Historiography," the author presented a dozen pairs of relevant verses, though only on one occasion did he explicitly observe the variable language in a particular text, namely, the alternation between 2 Kgs 4:12 וַיִּקְרָא לָהּ וַתַּעֲמֹד לְפָנָיו "and he called her, and she stood before him," and 2 Kgs 4:15 וַיִּקְרָא לָהּ וַתַּעֲמֹד בַּפָּתַח "and he called her, and she stood in the doorway."[52] Similarly, in his very helpful monograph on "twice-told proverbs," Daniel Snell collected dozens of examples of such passages in the canonical book of Proverbs, almost all of which occur with variation,[53] though he did not take the next logical step of interpreting the amassed data to reflect a specific literary technique.

65th Birthday (ed. M. Heltzer and M. Malul; Tel-Aviv: Archaeological Center, 2004), 225–32.

[50] Goldingay, "Repetition and Variation in the Psalms," 150. As I have remarked above, textual emendation is unnecessary once the polyproposon technique is recognized and appreciated.

[51] A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 127.

[52] B. O. Long, "Framing Repetitions in Biblical Historiography," *JBL* 106 (1987): 385–99 (390).

[53] D. C. Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993). Examples of non-verbatim parallel maxims include 1:8 // 6:20; 2:16 // 7:5; 20:16 // 27:13; and 21:9 // 25:24.

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Happily, Knut Heim now has taken this step in his recent monograph, *Poetic Imagination in Proverbs*,[54] with full realization of the poetics inherent in "variant repetitions" (his term).

In sum, I will conclude with the thought that the ancient Hebrew bards took pure delight in varying their language simply for the sake of variation. Alfred Rahlfs may have overstated the point (or not) almost a century ago, but it is worth repeating his words nonetheless: "Diese Freude liegt ja den Hebräern sozusagen im Blute."[55] To be sure, we may add polyprosopon to the host of literary devices that the ancient Israelite authors utilized in crafting their exquisite compositions.[56]

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[54] K. M. Heim, *Poetic Imagination in Proverbs: Variant Repetitions and the Nature of Poetry* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013). See also K. Heim, "Prov 26:1–12: A Crash Course on the Hermeneutics of Proverb Reception and a Case Study in Proverb Performance Response," *Welt des Orients* 40 (2010): 34–53. An earlier relevant study is S. Yona, "Exegetical and Stylistic Analysis of a Number of Aphorisms in the Book of Proverbs: Mitigation of Monotony in Repetitions in Parallel Texts," in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. R. L. Troxel, K. G. Friebel, and D. R. Magary; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 155–65.

[55] Rahlfs, "Zur Setzung der Lesemütter im Alten Testament," 345. Following in his footsteps is Barr, *The Variable Spellings of the Hebrew Bible*, 195.

[56] Also relevant, for bibliographic completeness, is variation between and among different compositions; see D. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and R. F. Person, *The Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles: Scribal Works in an Oral World* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), among other works by these two scholars. Carr refers to "memory variants" to explain why, for example, 2 Kgs 18–19 and Isa 36–37 present the same narrative with different words and phrases; Person engages in a more detailed study along the same lines regarding Samuel-Kings and Chronicles. These scholars consider variation of a different sort than the one I imagine in the present study, which deals with variation within a single composition as a stylistic device. One should consult Person's citation of work emanating from the research of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, with the finding, "For Mujo, the oral poet, both 'Vino pije licki Mustajbeze' and 'Pije vino licki Mustajbeze' are not only one 'word' but the *same* 'word'" (48).