Alliteration in the Book of Genesis

GARY A. RENDSBURG

Rutgers University

In a series of studies over the last decade or so, I have attempted to demonstrate the extent to which alliteration echoes within both biblical prose and poetry.[1] Previous scholars have devoted essays to the same subject,[2] though I believe that the literary device of alliteration remains underappreciated in the world of Hebrew Bible scholarship. This picture is even more acute in research on biblical narrative prose; note, for example, that the studies mentioned in n. 2 are all devoted to poetic texts.

As I hope to have shown in prior studies, and as I hope to demonstrate here again, the desire to elicit alliteration governs the word choice made by ancient Israelite authors—no less in prose than in poetry. Atypical usages are often present in the text *alliterationis causa*.

While I have discussed the connotation of the term *alliteration* in previous publications, it seems appropriate to do so again on this occasion. The dictionary

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1. The most significant investigations are: Gary 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. Chaim Cohen et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 83–100; and Scott B. Noegel and Gary A. Rendsburg, *Solomon's Vineyard: Literary and Linguistic Studies in the Song of Songs*, AIL 1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 63–106.

2. Oliver S. Rankin, "Alliteration in Hebrew Poetry," *JTS* 31 (1930): 285–91; Lawrence Boadt, "Intentional Alliteration in Second Isaiah," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 353–63; and Thomas P. McCreesh, *Biblical Sound and Sense: Sound Patterns in Proverbs 10–29*, JSOTSup 128 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

definition of *alliteration* refers to the initial consonants of words. Thus, for example, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "The commencing of two or more words in close connection, with the same letter, or rather the same sound."[3] Or the Wikipedia entry: "The repetition of the same sounds or of the same kinds of sounds at the beginning of words."[4] And this is exactly how alliteration operates in Old English poetry (e.g., *Beowulf, Battle of Maldon*, etc.) and indeed in other Old Germanic verse (e.g., the Old High German *Das Hildebrandslied*, the Old Norse [Icelandic] *Eddas*, etc.).

In fact, alliteration is so pervasive in these early medieval poems, it is no exaggeration to state that the device is a *requirement* of the writing style. This is not the case with biblical literature—neither in poetry nor in prose—and yet the ancient Hebrew bards made effective use of the technique, peppering their compositions with alliteration when so desired, in an effort to enhance the reading (or better: listening) pleasure further.

Yes, the listening pleasure—for, clearly, the effects of alliteration are better sensed and better appreciated when one hears a string of the same or similar consonants in quick succession. An example from American history demonstrates the point nicely. Perhaps the most famous speech in the annals of American oratory is Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, which begins, "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."[5] Here, one notes the use of "fourscore," "fathers," and "forth" in the opening phrase, followed by the two words "continent" and "conceived" beginning with the same syllable. American schoolchildren, who typically are asked to memorize this line at some point in their elementary school education, never stop to ask, "Why 'fourscore and seven years ago'? Why not the simpler 'eighty-seven years ago'?"—which does not require the listener to engage in arithmetic calculations at the outset of the speech. One can similarly imagine other word choices, such as "created" for "brought forth." If these substitutions were made, the passage would read, "Eighty-seven years ago our fathers created," a phrase devoid of the alliterative ring used by Lincoln in the words that continue to resonate in the ears of Americans young and old a century and a half after they were uttered. The brilliance of Lincoln's address, I submit, is not only its stirring content but the manner of elocution, which captures the audience from the start.

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3. *OED*, s.v. "alliteration."

4. "Alliteration," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliteration.

5. All five manuscripts of the Gettysburg Address commence with this same line, with only punctuation differences between and among them. For convenient access to the documents, go to "Gettysburg Address," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gettysburg_Address.

And so it is (or was) with the ancient Israelite consumers of (what would be-come) biblical literature, with its sounds and resonances echoing in the ears of the listeners. But back to our definition of alliteration.

As indicated above, most consider alliteration to refer to the repetition of sounds at the *beginning* of a series of words. As we shall see below, however, the Hebrew writers enjoyed greater freedom and flexibility in creating the acoustic effect. First, given the root structure of Hebrew (and Semitic generally), the re-peated sounds are not found at the beginning of words necessarily but, rather, (a) may appear anywhere in a given word or words,[6] and (b) may be accompanied by other like-sounding consonants. Second, the alliteration was heard not neces-sarily within consecutive words, but, rather, in words also further apart—some-times in proximity, sometimes at a greater distance. As such, given all the possible permutations and combinations, alliteration in ancient Hebrew texts occurs with two or three identical consonants, two or three similar consonants, or any com-bination thereof; with the evocative sounds presented either in the same order or in scrambled fashion; with the sound effect placed either in the same verse or in adjacent verses; with the options either of highlighting just two crucial words in the text or of creating a veritable cluster of alliterative words; and so on.[7]

The above description of alliteration in Biblical Hebrew literature is best dem-onstrated by a typical example. Of the literally hundreds of passages that could be selected, I present the following stich from Ps 55:9:

Psalm 55:9: מֵרוּחַ סֹעָה מִסָּעַר
mērûaḥ sōʿâ missāʿar
From the wind, sweeping from the storm.

The panoply of permutations and combinations noted in the previous paragraph may be illustrated by these three Hebrew words. Identical sounds are naturally

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6. As such, some may prefer to use the more general term *consonance* for this device, of which alliteration (with initial consonance) is a specific type. But since the term *allitera-tion* is so much better known and since, specifically, "initial consonance" is actually quite rare in Hebrew and thus not germane to our subject, I have elected to use alliteration as the favored term here.

7. For insights into native appreciation of what constitutes alliteration in ancient He-brew, see Mic 1:10–16, in which the sounds of many of the place-names listed are echoed in like-sounding words. Note, for example, the alliterations produced between the follow-ing sets of words: (a) שָׁפִיר *šāpîr* 'Shapir' and עֶרְיָה־בֹשֶׁת *ʿeryâ bōšet* 'nakedness (in) shame' in v. 11; (b) צַאֲנָן *ṣaʾănān* 'Zaanan' and לֹא יָצְאָה *lōʾ yāṣʾâ* 'do not come out' (see also הָאֵצֶל *hā-ʾēṣel* 'the Ezel') in v. 11; and (c) לָכִישׁ *lākîš* 'Lachish' and רֶכֶשׁ *rekeš* 'steed' in v. 13. For discussion, see Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Micah*, AB 24E (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 212–14; and Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Mid-rashic Derivations* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 109.

easy to identify. The *mem* and *reš* that occur in מֵרוּחַ *mērûaḥ* and מִסַּעַר *missāʿar* represent, of course, the same sounds. The *samek* and *ʿayin* that occur in סֹעָה *sōʿâ* and מִסַּעַר *missāʿar* are again the same sounds. Like-sounding consonants aid the alliteration in the following ways: The *ḥet* in רוּחַ *rûaḥ* and the *ʿayin* in the two words סֹעָה *sōʿâ* and סָעַר *sāʿar* also alliterate, because both /ḥ/ and /ʿ/ are pharyngeal fricatives.[8] Moreover, when we realize that סֹעָה *sōʿâ* 'sweeping' in Ps 55:9 is a hapax legomenon, we understand the conscious lexical choice made by the ancient Israelite poet. Indeed, as adumbrated above and as we shall see below, rare words, including hapax legomena, were specifically chosen by the writers to create or enhance sound play.[9] And finally, in this particular case, we may note that the two instances of *samek* in the three-word string create an onomatopoetic effect as the reader hears the sound of the wind whistling in these words.[10] In short, I hope to have shown through this single illustration exactly how much thought goes into the creation of a single passage—indeed, in this case, a three-word poetic stich. Multiply this example by hundreds, and one gains a greater appreciation of how the ancient Hebrew texts were composed, with conscious word choices made at every turn.

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8. For general introduction to the sounds of ancient Hebrew, see my "Ancient Hebrew Phonology," in *Phonologies of Asia and Africa,* ed. Alan S. Kaye (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 65–83; and my "Phonology: Biblical Hebrew," *EHLL* 3.100–109. In this particular case, we must contend with the fact that both ח (*ḥet*) and ע (*ʿayin*) represent two distinct sounds in ancient Hebrew, on which, see Joshua Blau, *On Polyphony in Biblical Hebrew,* Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities 6/2 (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982). Cognates from Arabic and Ugaritic inform us that all three sounds, the /ḥ/ in the first word and the /ʿ/ in the second and third words, are indeed pharyngeal fricatives.

9. For the notion that hapax legomena are actually rare words in the language and not coincidentally attested only once in the corpus, see Frederick E. Greenspahn, *Hapax Legomena in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of the Phenomenon and Its Treatment since Antiquity with Special Reference to Verbal Forms,* SBLDS 74 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 31–46.

10. For a parallel to this effect in an Egyptian text, note Pyramid Text, Utterance 253, §275: *šw sšw sw šw sšw sw* 'O Shu, lift him up! O Shu, lift him up!' with its invocation of Shu, the god of air. See Carleton T. Hodge, "Ritual and Writing: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Egyptian Script," in *Linguistics and Anthropology: In Honor of C. F. Voegelin*, ed. Marvin D. Kinkade, Kenneth L. Hale, and Oswald Werner (Lisse: de Ridder, 1975), 331–50, esp. p. 343. Reprinted in *Afroasiatic Linguistics, Semitics, and Egyptology: Selected Writings of Carleton T. Hodge,* ed. Scott B. Noegel and Alan S. Kaye (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2004), 199–220, esp. p. 215. The standard English translations are Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 63; and James P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 2nd ed., WAW (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 46.

With the foregoing as an introduction to our subject, let us proceed, then, to instances of alliteration in the first book of the Bible as representative of standard Hebrew narrative prose. My examples advance through the book in narrative order, with several exceptions (see nos. 7, 11, 12), for the reasons stated.

(1) Genesis 2:25–3:1

וַיִּהְיוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עֲרוּמִּים הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא יִתְבֹּשָׁשׁוּ׃
וְהַנָּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מִכֹּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים . . .

²:²⁵And the two of them were naked—the human and his wife—but they were not embarrassed.
³:¹And the snake was (more) cunning than all the animals of the field that Yʜᴡʜ God had made . . .

We begin with one of the best-known—albeit most simple and most glaring and thus to my mind less sophisticated (as we shall see)—examples of alliteration at work. The last verse of ch. 2 portrays the first human couple as עֲרוּמִּים *ʿărûmmîm* 'naked', while the first verse of ch. 3 describes the snake as עָרוּם *ʿărûm* 'cunning'. The sound correspondences here are plain and obvious.[11]

(2) Genesis 6:14

עֲשֵׂה לְךָ תֵּבַת עֲצֵי־גֹפֶר קִנִּים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַתֵּבָה וְכָפַרְתָּ אֹתָהּ מִבַּיִת וּמִחוּץ בַּכֹּפֶר׃
Make for yourself an ark of gopher-wood; (from) reeds you shall make the ark; and you shall cover it inside and outside with pitch-cover.

Two unique usages are present in this verse. The first is the noun גֹּפֶר *gōper*, which occurs only here in the Bible: the word refers to a type of wood, typically translated (since scholars are unsure of which tree) 'gopher-wood', though almost undoubtedly to be identified with cypress. This identification is based on (a) the similarity between the Hebrew form גֹּפֶר *gōper* and the Greek word κυπάρισσος, whence Latin *cupressus* and eventually English *cypress*;[12] and (b) the fact that cypress wood was used in ancient ship building,[13] since (i) long planks could be made from

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11. Again, Arabic cognates inform us that the ע *ʿayin* in both of these words represents the pharyngeal fricative /ʿ/.

12. See John Pairman Brown, *Israel and Hellas*, 3 vols., BZAW 231, 276, 299 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995–2001), 1.329–30, 2.302, 3.283.

13. See Lionel Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 196, 212–13. A key ancient source is Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris* (~ *De re militaris*), 4.34, available online at http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/

the tall tree, and (ii) the wood is relatively impervious to rot from moisture. But Hebrew has a word for 'cypress'—namely, בְּרוֹשׁ *bərôš*, which appears 20 times in the Bible—which raises the question: why did the author of Gen 6 use an atypical word in v. 14 and not the usual word?

The answer is forthcoming from a look at the second unique usage (actually, a two-part usage) in the verse: (a) the verb וְכָפַרְתָּ *wəkāpartā* 'and you shall cover', derived from the root *kpr*; and (b) the noun כֹּפֶר *kōper* 'pitch' (rendered above as 'pitch-cover' to show the connection between the verb and the noun). This verb is common in the Bible in other patterns, especially in the *piel* with the connotation 'atone'. But only here in the Bible does the verb occur in the *qal*, with the meaning 'cover'. The noun is a true hapax legomenon;[14] it is used here instead of other potential options, such as חֵמָר *ḥēmār* 'loam' and זֶפֶת *zepet* 'bitumen' (see Exod 2:2, Isa 34:9).[15]

Clearly, the author of our text reached deep into the Hebrew lexicon purposefully to select these words, one with the consonants גפר *gpr* and two with the consonants כפר *kpr*, to alliterate with each other. Note that the only distinction between the two is the voiced velar stop /g/ in the former and the voiceless velar stop /k/ in the latter.

(3) Genesis 21:4, 7–8

וַיָּמָל אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בֶּן־שְׁמֹנַת יָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים:

. . .

וַתֹּאמֶר מִי מִלֵּל לְאַבְרָהָם הֵינִיקָה בָנִים שָׂרָה כִּי־יָלַדְתִּי בֵן לִזְקֻנָיו:

וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּגָּמַל וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מִשְׁתֶּה גָדוֹל בְּיוֹם הִגָּמֵל אֶת־יִצְחָק:

[4]And Abraham circumcised Isaac his son at eight days old, as God had commanded him.

. . .

[7]And she said, "Who would declare to Abraham (that) Sarah would nurse sons, that I would bear a son in his old-age."
[8]And the child grew, and he was weaned; and Abraham made a big party on the day of the weaning of Isaac.

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vegetius4.html. (The reference in Brown [see n. 12] to Vegetius 3.34, should be corrected to 4.34.)

14. Though notably כֹּפֶר *kōper* is cognate with the Akkadian word *kupru* 'pitch', which occurs in the Babylonian flood story preserved both in *Atra-ḫasis* 3.2.51 and in *Gilgamesh* 11.55. See Harold R. (Chaim) Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic,* SBLDS 37 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 33–34.

15. The different English glosses 'pitch', 'loam', and 'bitumen' are used simply to distinguish the different words, without necessarily aligning one specific gloss with one specific word.

The attentive reader/listener to this text will realize that the verb מִלֵּל *millēl* 'declare' in v. 7 is a rare verb that is entirely unexpected in the mouth of Sarah within the larger narrative. Apart from Gen 21:7, the verb is limited to poetry in the Bible, the other attestations being in Ps 106:2; Job 8:2, 33:3[16]—and here one should note that poetry, not only in ancient Hebrew[17] but in many world literatures (such as ancient Greek and ancient Latin), possesses a richer vocabulary (both words and phrases) employed by the poets to express their passions and emotions.[18] Given the scant distribution of the verb מִלֵּל *millēl* 'declare' in the Bible,[19] we are led to ask: why, then, did the writer of Gen 21 place the word in Sarah's mouth in v. 7? Why did he not, for example, use any number of verbs for speech, much more common in the Bible, especially in prose texts, such as אָמַר *ʾāmar* 'say'; דִּבֶּר *dibber* 'speak'; הִגִּיד *higgîd* 'tell'; etc.? The answer lies in the author's desire to produce alliteration. I refer here not only to the string of /m/ and /l/ sounds produced in the expression מִי מִלֵּל לְ- *mî millēl lə-* 'who would declare to' (which is, after all, a rather simplistic example of alliteration given the ordinariness of both the interrogative pronoun מִי *mî* 'who' and the preposition לְ- *lə-* 'to'), but more importantly, to the presence of two other verbs in this pericope with the same two sounds, to wit, וַיָּמָל *wayyāmol* 'and he circumcised' in v. 4, and וַיִּגָּמַל *wayyiggāmal* 'and he was weaned' / הִגָּמֵל *higgāmēl* 'weaning' in v. 8.

The unusual nature of the key word מִלֵּל *millēl* 'declare' in Gen 22:7 is revealed by the comment by Rashi (1040–1105 CE). He noted, quite cleverly, that the *gematria* of *mem-lamed-lamed* equals 100,[20] the age of Abraham at the birth of Isaac (see Gen 21:5). Obviously, this is *not* the reason that the author of Gen 21 selected this verb in our story (especially since the *gematria* device is a postbiblical development). But, as so often happens when we read the medieval exegetes, the benefit gained is not the answer that a particular commentator provides but

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16. The root מלל *mll* also produces two other (unrelated) verbs in ancient Hebrew, one with the meaning 'rub, scrape' (Prov 6:13) and one with the meaning 'languish, wither, fade' (Psalms twice, Job four times). Note that these verbs are also limited to the domain of poetry.

17. The standard work remains G. R. Driver, "Hebrew Poetic Diction," in *Congress Volume: Copenhagen 1953*, ed. George W. Anderson, VTSup 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 26–39.

18. This was the case in English as well until the Romantics (led by William Wordsworth) and even more so the Modernists challenged the notion of a special poetic diction so that the lexis of prose and poetry has merged to a great extent.

19. Even the noun מִלָּה *millâ* 'word' derived from this verb, although more common in the Bible, is also limited to poetry: 2 Sam 23:2; Ps 19:5, 139:4; Prov 23:9; and 34 times in the book of Job. Note that both the verb and the noun belong more properly to the Aramaic lexicon.

20. The letter *mem* = 40, and the letter *lamed* = 30 (× 2 = 60, in this particular case), thus yielding 100.

the question that underlies his remark. In this case, Rashi's sensitivity to the text was such that he understood that מִלֵּל *millēl* represented a most unusual usage, necessitating comment. Had the author of Gen 21 used any of the aforementioned (near-)synonyms, each a much more common verb in Biblical Hebrew prose, one can be certain that Rashi would not have taken the time to comment.

(4) Genesis 21:14–16

וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אַבְרָהָם ׀ בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקַּח־לֶחֶם וְחֵמַת מַיִם וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הָגָר שָׂם עַל־שִׁכְמָהּ וְאֶת־הַיֶּלֶד
וַיְשַׁלְּחֶהָ וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּתַע בְּמִדְבַּר בְּאֵר שָׁבַע:
וַיִּכְלוּ הַמַּיִם מִן־הַחֵמֶת וַתַּשְׁלֵךְ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד תַּחַת אַחַד הַשִּׂיחִם:
וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּשֶׁב לָהּ מִנֶּגֶד הַרְחֵק כִּמְטַחֲוֵי קֶשֶׁת כִּי אָמְרָה אַל־אֶרְאֶה בְּמוֹת הַיָּלֶד וַתֵּשֶׁב
מִנֶּגֶד וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת־קֹלָהּ וַתֵּבְךְּ:

[14]And Abraham arose-early in the morning, and he took bread and a bottle-skin of water, and he gave (them) to Hagar, put (them) on her shoulder—and the child—and he sent her forth; and she went, and she wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.
[15]And the water from the bottle-skin was finished; and she cast the child under one of the bushes.
[16]And she went and she sat herself opposite (him), at a distance of a bow-shot, for she said, "Let me not see the death of the child"; and she sat opposite, and she lifted her voice and cried.

This passage includes two unique usages: (a) the pure hapax legomenon מְטַחֲוֵי *maṭaḥăwê*, within the expression כִּמְטַחֲוֵי קֶשֶׁת *kimṭaḥăwê qešet*, lit., 'like the shooters of a bow' > 'bowshot'; and (b) the quasi hapax חֵמֶת *ḥēmet* (cstr. חֵמַת *ḥēmat*) 'bottle-skin'. The former is a pure hapax because the noun and indeed the root (presumably טחה *ṭḥh* 'shoot') occurs only here in the Bible. The latter is classified as a quasi hapax because the noun appears twice in our passage, and then again a few lines farther down in v. 19—though nowhere else in the Bible.

Most important for our present concern is the manner in which the two forms incorporate the same sounds (or very similar ones in the case of /t/ and /ṭ/). The words were intentionally chosen *alliterationis causa*. Moreover, additional words aid in the aural effect: (a) תַּחַת *taḥat* 'under' and אַחַד *ʾaḥad* 'one' both have /ḥ/ + /dental/; and (b) לֶחֶם *leḥem* 'bread' and שִׂיחִם *śîḥīm* 'bushes' both have /ḥ/ + /m/. The first three of these words are common, but the fourth is another rare word: שִׂיחַ *śîaḥ* 'bush' occurs elsewhere in the Bible only in Gen 2:5; Job 30:4, and 30:7.[21]

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21. In all of these cases, Ugaritic and Arabic cognates inform us that the consonant represented by ח *ḥet* is the pharyngeal fricative /ḥ/ throughout. This includes the noun מְטַחֲוֵי *maṭaḥăwê* 'bowshot', on the assumption that it is related to Arabic *ṯḥy* 'spread, extend'

(5) Genesis 24:18–22

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וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁתֵה אֲדֹנִי וַתְּמַהֵר וַתֹּרֶד כַּדָּהּ עַל־יָדָהּ וַתַּשְׁקֵהוּ:
וַתְּכַל לְהַשְׁקֹתוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר גַּם לִגְמַלֶּיךָ אֶשְׁאָב עַד אִם־כִּלּוּ לִשְׁתֹּת:
וַתְּמַהֵר וַתְּעַר כַּדָּהּ אֶל־הַשֹּׁקֶת וַתָּרָץ עוֹד אֶל־הַבְּאֵר לִשְׁאֹב וַתִּשְׁאַב לְכָל־גְּמַלָּיו:
וְהָאִישׁ מִשְׁתָּאֵה לָהּ מַחֲרִישׁ לָדַעַת הַהִצְלִיחַ יְהוָה דַּרְכּוֹ אִם־לֹא:
וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כִּלּוּ הַגְּמַלִּים לִשְׁתּוֹת וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ נֶזֶם זָהָב בֶּקַע מִשְׁקָלוֹ וּשְׁנֵי צְמִידִים עַל־
יָדֶיהָ עֲשָׂרָה זָהָב מִשְׁקָלָם:

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[18]And she said, "Drink, my lord"; and she hurried, and she lowered her jug from her hand, and she gave-drink to him.
[19]And she finished to give-drink to him; and she said, "Also for your camels I will draw, until they have finished to drink."
[20]And she hurried, and she emptied her jug into the trough, and she ran again to the well to draw; and she drew for all his camels.
[21]And the man is gazing at her, being-silent, to know whether or not Yнwн had made his way successful.
[22]And it was, after the camels had finished to drink, and the man took a golden nose-ring, a *beqaʿ* its weight; and two bracelets on her hand, ten (shekels) of gold their weight.

This passage provides a paradigmatic example of the employment of a hapax legomenon in order to produce alliteration. The unique word is מִשְׁתָּאֵה *mištāʾēh* 'is gazing' in v. 21, a *hithpael* masculine-singular participle from the root שאה *šʾh* 'gaze, watch'. Two common roots appear in the surrounding verses: (a) שתה *šth* 'drink', occurring in vv. 18, 19, and 22 (plus four other times in the chapter); and (b) שאב *šʾb* 'draw (water)', occurring in vv. 19 and 20 (plus five other times in the chapter). Note especially the form וַתִּשְׁאַב *wattišʾab* 'and she drew' in v. 20, which alliterates most closely with מִשְׁתָּאֵה *mišta'ēh* 'is gazing' in v. 21, with only three words intervening. These two words have the most pronounced aural effect, due to the presence of the third feminine-singular preformative *t-* in the former and the characteristic infix *-t-* of the *hithpael* form in the latter, with the alliteration completed by the corresponding labial consonants *bet* and *mem* in these two words.

(6) Genesis 25:23–24

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וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לָהּ שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם* בְּבִטְנֵךְ וּשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים מִמֵּעַיִךְ יִפָּרֵדוּ
וּלְאֹם מִלְאֹם יֶאֱמָץ וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צָעִיר:
וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ לָלֶדֶת וְהִנֵּה תוֹמִם בְּבִטְנָהּ:

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and even 'throw', for which, see Edward W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863–93), 5.1832.

²³And Yнwн said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from your innards will divide; and (one) people will be stronger than the (other) people, and the greater shall serve the younger."
²⁴And her days of bearing were fulfilled; and behold, twins in her womb.

The ancient Israelite listener to this text immediately would have recognized that לְאֹם *ləʾōm* 'people' (used here three times) is an unusual lexeme to encounter in a narrative prose text. Indeed, of the word's 31 occurrences in the Bible, 27 appear in poetry (11 in Isaiah, 1 in Jeremiah, 1 in Habakkuk, 10 in Psalms, and 4 in Proverbs). Of the remaining four instances, three occur in the present passage, Gen 25:23, with the one remaining attestation in Gen 27:29, used there in order to evoke the verse interpreted here.[22] The expected word in Hebrew prose is the exceedingly common עַם *ʿam* 'people'.

This survey of the noun לְאֹם *ləʾōm* 'people' leads one to inquire: why, then, does the author of Gen 25 use the word three times in v. 23? Now, it is true that the divine word (because we have here an oracle from Yahweh to Rebekah)—even when embedded into narrative prose—often includes elevated (indeed, poetic) language. So this fact partially answers our question, but I believe that there is more at work here. A more complete answer is forthcoming from a look at the first word in v. 24: וַיִּמְלְאוּ *wayyimləʾû* 'and were fulfilled' in the expression "and her days of bearing were fulfilled." The root of this common verb, מלא *mlʾ* 'fill', constitutes an anagram of the noun לְאֹם *ləʾōm* 'people' with the alliteration heard clearly.

(7) Genesis 48:19

וַיְמָאֵן אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר יָדַעְתִּי בְנִי יָדַעְתִּי גַּם־הוּא יִהְיֶה־לְּעָם וְגַם־הוּא יִגְדָּל
וְאוּלָם אָחִיו הַקָּטֹן יִגְדַּל מִמֶּנּוּ וְזַרְעוֹ יִהְיֶה מְלֹא־הַגּוֹיִם:

And his father declined, and he said, "I know, my son, I know—he also will become a people, and he also will grow; however, his younger brother will grow greater than he, and his seed will be the fullness of nations."

As indicated above, my general approach in this article is to proceed via the narrative order of the book of Genesis. In the present instance, however, I elect to treat Gen 48:19 out of order because, once more, it involves the root מלא *mlʾ* 'fill'. Jacob's words to Joseph concerning Ephraim, the younger who will supersede his older brother Manasseh, are on a par with similar expressions in similar situations in the book of Genesis (see especially Gen 17:18–21 regarding Isaac and Ishmael and Gen 25:23–24 regarding Jacob and Esau [treated above]). Yet the verse con-

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22. For another echo of Gen 25:23, see below, no. (7), regarding Gen 48:19.

cludes with a most enigmatic locution: מְלֹא־הַגּוֹיִם *məlōʾ haggôyīm* 'the fullness of nations'. This two-word phrase is encountered only here in the Bible,[23] and while the sense is clear (especially in light of the parallel texts just cited), the expression is puzzling nonetheless.

By now the reader will have discerned my approach, which I would summarize as follows: "Hark! An unusual word (or phrase)! Look for alliteration nearby!" Once more, our search yields the successful result, for in this verse we are able to identify the relatively rare term וְאוּלָם *wəʾûlām* 'however', which appears only 4 times in the Torah.[24]

Our verse also includes another alliterative word, namely, וַיְמָאֵן *waymāʾēn* 'and he declined'. This is a standard verb in Biblical Hebrew, so there is nothing unusual about its presence at the head of the verse—and yet it also serves to enhance the auditory effect. Of the consonants that do not match perfectly between and among the three terms, note that the *nun* of the root מאן *mʾn* 'refuse, decline' and the *lamed* of the other two key words in this verse fall under the general category of sonorants (comprising liquids and nasals).

There is another reason for the use of מְלֹא־הַגּוֹיִם *məlōʾ haggôyīm* 'the fullness of nations' in Gen 48:19. As intimated above, there is a relationship between the scene in which this verse occurs and the earlier scene in which Rebekah receives the divine word. As we saw in our treatment of Gen 25:23–24, the noun גוֹיִם *gôyīm* 'nations' and the verbal root מלא *mlʾ* 'fill' appear there, with the latter alliterating with the noun לְאֹם *ləʾōm* 'people'. I suggest that the author of Gen 48:19 intentionally alludes to the earlier scene by using similar language. In fact, מְלֹא *məlōʾ* and לְאֹם *ləʾōm* also evoke one another through assonance—a literary device that uses vowel patterns, in much the same way that alliteration operates with consonants. As such, through these various sound plays, an allusive or intertextual linkage between the two passages is created.

In short, there are several motivations for the presence of the unusual expression מְלֹא־הַגּוֹיִם *məlōʾ haggôyīm* 'the fullness of nations' in Gen 48:19.[25] Not only

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23. The closest parallel is Isa 31:4: מְלֹא רֹעִים *məlōʾ rōʿîm*, lit., 'fullness of shepherds', meaning (most likely) 'a large band of shepherds' (or something on that order).

24. In one of these four instances, viz., Num 14:21, the same alliteration occurs, with both וְאוּלָם *wəʾûlām* 'however' and the root מלא *mlʾ* 'fill' present in this verse as well.

25. As another key to the unusual nature of the two-word phrase, note that Tg. Onqelos departs from its usual word-for-word rendering with either שלטין בעממיא 'rulers over peoples' (thus ᴍꜱ British Library Or. 2363) or מלכין דשליטין בעממיא 'kings who rule over peoples' (as well as similar wordings in early printed editions). See Alexander Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic* (Leiden: Brill, 2004 [repr. of the original 1959–68 four-volume set]), 84.

does the first part of the phrase alliterate with other words in the verse; the entire phrase brings the listener back to the parallel scene in Gen 25:23–24.

(8) Genesis 27:12

אוּלַי יְמֻשֵּׁנִי אָבִי וְהָיִיתִי בְעֵינָיו כִּמְתַעְתֵּעַ וְהֵבֵאתִי עָלַי קְלָלָה וְלֹא בְרָכָה:

Perhaps my father will feel me, and I will be in his eyes as a mocker; and I will bring upon myself a curse, and not a blessing.
(Notice מַטְעַמִּים 'dainties, delicacies', used 6 times [vv. 4, 7, 9, 14, 17, 31].)

Two rare words are collocated in these verses. The noun מְתַעְתֵּעַ *mətaʿtēaʿ* 'mocker' (actually the masculine-singular participle of the verb תעע *tʿ* 'mock' in the *pilpel* pattern) occurs only here and in 2 Chr 36:16, while the related noun תַּעְתֻּעִים *taʿtuʿîm* 'mockery' appears only in Jer 10:15 and 51:18. The noun מַטְעַמִּים *maṭʿammîm* 'dainties, delicacies' occurs six times in Gen 27, as indicated in the parentheses above, and again only in Prov 23:3 and 23:6 (albeit in slightly different form, with the וֹת- nominal plural ending). In light of the approach taken thus far, I submit that the author of Gen 27 selected these two words intentionally, in order to enhance the oral-aural process through the similar sounds: /m/, /ʿ/,[26] and voiceless dental (either /t/ or /ṭ/).

While I have not attempted to capture the alliterations in the verses surveyed thus far in my English renderings, in this case I take the opportunity to do so. Instead of the more standard 'mocker', one could imagine an English translation using either 'derider' or 'disdainer' for מְתַעְתֵּעַ *mətaʿtēaʿ*, paired with either 'dainties' or 'delicacies' for מַטְעַמִּים *maṭʿammîm*.

(9) Genesis 38:21–23

וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת־אַנְשֵׁי מְקֹמָהּ לֵאמֹר אַיֵּה הַקְּדֵשָׁה הִוא בָעֵינַיִם עַל־הַדָּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא־הָיְתָה בָזֶה קְדֵשָׁה:
וַיָּשָׁב אֶל־יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא מְצָאתִיהָ וְגַם אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם אָמְרוּ לֹא־הָיְתָה בָזֶה קְדֵשָׁה:
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה תִּקַּח־לָהּ פֶּן נִהְיֶה לָבוּז הִנֵּה שָׁלַחְתִּי הַגְּדִי הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא מְצָאתָהּ:

[21]And he asked the men of her place, saying, "Where is the *qədēšâ* who (was) in Enayim on the roadway?" And they said, "There has not been a *qədēšâ* in this [sc. 'here']."
[22]And he returned to Judah, and he said, "I did not find her, and even the men of the place said, 'There has not been a *qədēšâ* in this [sc. 'here'].'"
[23]And Judah said, "Let her take (it) for herself, lest we become a ridicule; behold, I sent her this kid, but you could not find her."

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26. Once more, Arabic cognates of the two vocables demonstrate that the ע *ʿayin* represents the pharyngeal fricative /ʿ/ in both cases.

Quite strikingly in this passage, the precise words that Judah's friend Hirah heard from the townspeople of Enayim (in v. 21) are used in his report to Judah (in v. 22): לֹא־הָיְתָה בָזֶה קְדֵשָׁה *lōʾ hāytâ bāzeh qədēšâ* 'there has not been a *qədēšâ* in this [sc. "here"]'. As is well known, the norm in biblical literature is repetition with variation.[27] Verbatim repetition is extremely rare in the Bible, including when direct speech is reported, as we have here in Gen 38:21–22.[28]

Another rarity occurs in these verses, the root בוז *bwz* 'scorn, ridicule', in the form לָבוּז *lābûz* '(become) a ridicule'. This is the only appearance of this verbal root in the entire biblical narrative prose corpus. The lexeme is relatively common in poetic texts (e.g., Psalms 4×, Proverbs 10×, Job 3×, etc.) but, as noted, only in Gen 38:23 does the word occur within prose.

The sounds of these words evoke one another, with the sound play operating with the *bet-zayin* combination: בָזֶה *bāzeh* 'in this' / לָבוּז *lābûz* '(become) a ridicule'. To enhance the alliteration, the author has Hirah repeat the same words that he heard from the townsfolk.

(10) Genesis 38:22–23, 25

וַיָּשָׁב אֶל־יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא מְצָאתִיהָ וְגַם אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם אָמְרוּ לֹא־הָיְתָה בָזֶה קְדֵשָׁה:
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה תִּקַּח־לָהּ פֶּן נִהְיֶה לָבוּז הִנֵּה שָׁלַחְתִּי הַגְּדִי הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא מְצָאתָהּ:
. . .
הוא מוּצֵאת וְהִיא שָׁלְחָה אֶל־חָמִיהָ לֵאמֹר לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אֵלֶּה לּוֹ אָנֹכִי הָרָה
וַתֹּאמֶר הַכֶּר־נָא לְמִי הַחֹתֶמֶת וְהַפְּתִילִים וְהַמַּטֶּה הָאֵלֶּה:

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27. See, for example, Shamir Yona, "Stylistic and Syntactic Variants in Repeated Texts in the Bible," in *Tᵉšûrôt 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 65th Birthday*, ed. Michael Heltzer and Meir Malul (Tel-Aviv: Archaeological Center, 2004), 225–32 [Heb.]; idem, "Repetition and Variation in Biblical Texts," *UF* 37 (2005): 729–40; Gary A. Rendsburg, "Variation in Biblical Hebrew Prose and Poetry," in *Built by Wisdom, Established by Understanding: Essays on Biblical and Near Eastern Literature in Honor of Adele Berlin*, ed. Maxine L. Grossman (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2013), 197–226; and idem, "Repetition with Variation in Legal-Cultic Texts of the Torah," in *Marbeh Ḥokmah: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East in Loving Memory of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz*, ed. Shamir Yona et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 435–63.

28. In fact, there are only ten such instances of verbatim repetition of the original speech in the narrative corpus stretching from Genesis through Kings (five in Genesis–Exodus; five in Samuel–Kings); see George W. Savran, *Telling and Retelling: Quotation in Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 29. One will admit that in a short speech of only four words, as here in Gen 38:21–22, the opportunity for variation is less. Nevertheless, even short speeches occasionally are varied by the biblical author, as seen, for example, in the comparison between Num 20:17 and Judg 11:17 (even though these two occur at great distance from one another).

²²And he returned to Judah, and he said, "I did not find her, and even the men of the place said, 'There has not been a *qədēšâ* in this [sc. 'here'].'"
²³And Judah said, "Let her take (it) for herself, lest we become a ridicule; behold, I sent her this kid, but you could not find her."
. . .
²⁵She is brought-out—and she had sent to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man to whom these (belong), I am pregnant"; and she said, "Recognize, please, to whom (belong) these: the seal and the cords and the staff."

The odd usage here is the *hophal* feminine-singular passive participle form מוּצֵאת *mûṣēʾt* '(she) is brought-out'.²⁹ The reader of biblical prose would expect to find here a suffix-conjugation form indicating the past tense. The author used the unexpected form, however, because the participle allows the *mem* to be prefixed to the root יצא *yṣʾ* 'go out' (*hiphil* 'bring out', with the passive expressed by the *hophal*), thereby creating a string of consonants: *mem-ṣade-ʾalep-taw*. This unusual form is employed *alliterationis causa*, to invoke the sounds of the earlier words מְצָאתִיהָ *məṣāʾtîha* 'I did (not) find her' (v. 22) and מְצָאתָהּ *məṣāʾtāh* 'you did (not) find her' (v. 23), both of which contain the same *mem-ṣade-ʾalep-taw* series.

(11) Genesis 2:15–16, 18

> וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיַּנִּחֵהוּ בְגַן־עֵדֶן לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ׃
> וַיְצַו יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכֹּל עֵץ־הַגָּן אָכֹל תֹּאכֵל׃
> . . .
> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֹא־טוֹב הֱיוֹת הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה־לּוֹ עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ׃

¹⁵And Yнwн Elohim took the man, and he placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and to guard it.
¹⁶And Yнwн Elohim commanded the man, saying, "From every tree of the garden you indeed may eat."
. . .
¹⁸And Yнwн Elohim said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make for him a lady as his opposite."

My next example brings us back to the beginning of the book of Genesis, so that once more I have elected to treat a passage out of canonical order. I do so given the very thorny issues involved with the phrase עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ *ʿēzer kənegdô*,³⁰ a two-word combination that has confounded scholars for millennia. Had we proceeded in

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29. The oddity has been noticed by many scholars: e.g., Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 9: "a rare present passive participle."

30. The phrase occurs not only in v. 18, reproduced above, but in v. 20 as well.

canonical order, these words would have come at the beginning of our explorations (since they appear in the second creation account). I felt it more prudent, however, to set the stage with examples such as Gen 2:25–3:1; 6:14; 21:4, 7–8, etc., given the simpler wording in these verses. Only now toward the essay's end, with the device of alliteration exemplified and our method of interpretation revealed, may we proceed to this illustration.

The famous rendering of the King James Version (1611), "an help meet for him," [31] became ensconced in the English language, eventually yielding "help-meet" (with hyphen, used by John Dryden, for example) and then either "helpmeet" (without hyphen, common from the 19th century onward) or "helpmate" (used by Daniel Defoe, for example). [32] The first element, "help," is a suitable rendering of the Hebrew noun עֵזֶר *ʿēzer*, which appears about 12 times elsewhere in the Bible (e.g., Deut 33:7); while the second element, "meet," meaning "equal" (though it would have been archaic even in 1611), is an attempt to render the Hebrew prepositional phrase כְּנֶגְדּוֹ *kənegdô*. In truth, however, this compound preposition (formed by כְּ- *kə-* + נֶגֶד *neged*) appears only in Gen 2:18 and 2:20, so we cannot be so certain about its meaning, especially since the simple preposition נֶגֶד *neged* nowhere else has the meaning 'equal' but rather typically means 'opposite, in front of' in a spatial sense.

The problem, then, is this: does "help meet" suitably capture the essence of this phrase? Have we, and readers for centuries before us, been misled not only by the KJV (and almost all English translations influenced thereby since 1611) but also by the presence of עֵזֶר *ʿēzer* 'help' (along with the verbal root עזר *ʿzr* 'help') in the Hebrew lexicon? My even raising the question naturally directs our answer: yes, we have been misled—for there is nothing further in the text that suggests that the woman is to be a helper to the man.

Happily, a relatively recent but generally overlooked suggestion points the way and, to my mind, provides an elegant solution to the phrase עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ *ʿēzer kə-negdô*. The remarkable Zeʾev Ben-Ḥayyim (1907–2013), leading Hebraist of the Hebrew University, who continued to produce scholarship well into his nineties, suggested in 1998 that the word עֵזֶר *ʿēzer* indeed does not mean 'help' but, rather, is cognate with Arabic عذراء *ʿaḏrā* 'virgin, young woman' (the phonetics match perfectly, since Arabic /ḏ/ corresponds to Hebrew /z/). [33] Which is to say, ancient Hebrew had a word עֵזֶר *ʿēzer* that meant 'woman' (in some fashion)—a meaning

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31. Note the earlier renderings by John Wycliffe (1331–84) "an help lijk to hym silf" and William Tyndale (1494–1536) "an helper to beare him company."

32. *OED*, s.v., "helpmeet, helpmate."

33. Zeʾev Ben-Ḥayyim, "עזר כנגדו: הצעה," *Lešonénu* 63/1–2 (1998/5758): 45–50. Note that the Arabic word is used by Christian Arabs to refer to the Virgin Mary.

that fits the context of Gen 2:18 (and 2:20). I have translated the word 'lady' above only in order to evoke a different and rarer usage in keeping with the exceptional nature of עֵזֶר ʿēzer.[34] This word, accordingly, is a homonym of עֵזֶר ʿēzer 'help', but the two are to be sharply distinguished, especially here in Gen 2.

We thus are led to ask: why did the author choose this phrase, עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ ʿēzer kənegdô 'a lady as his opposite'? By this point, the reader will not be surprised to learn that the answer lies in noticing the sounds at play. The phrases heard earlier, בְגַן־עֵדֶן bəgan ʿēden 'in the garden of Eden' (v. 15) and עֵץ־הַגָּן ʿēṣ haggān 'the trees of the garden' (v. 16), incorporate the same or similar consonants as the expression עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ ʿēzer kənegdô 'a lady as his opposite' (v. 18). Note that /ʿ/, /n/, and /g/ appear in all three combinations; /d/ appears in two of them; the /ṣ/ in the second one evokes the /z/ of the third one; the /r/ of the last one shares the sonorant qualities of the /n/ in the other two; and the /k/ in the third one is the voiceless velar stop corresponding to the voiced velar stop /g/ that appears in all three. The result is an interweaving of sounds in the three expressions—an effect produced by our author's reaching deep into the Hebrew lexicon to pluck the word עֵזֶר ʿēzer 'lady', which then works in tandem with the unique compound preposition כְּנֶגֶד kəneged 'as opposite' (or whatever its precise nuance may be).

(12) Genesis 12:8, 22:9

וַיַּעְתֵּק מִשָּׁם הָהָרָה מִקֶּדֶם לְבֵית־אֵל וַיֵּט אָהֳלֹה׃
וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיָּשֶׂם אֹתוֹ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִמַּעַל לָעֵצִים׃

¹²:⁸And he proceeded from there to the mountains, to the east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent.
²²:⁹And he bound Isaac his son, and he placed him on the altar, atop the wood.

Previous scholars have observed the many lexical and thematic links that serve to unite the two lēk ləkā chapters, Gen 12 and Gen 22.[35] This long series of interconnections, which collectively serve to conjoin the two key episodes in the life of Abraham, allows one to espy yet another nexus: the long-range alliteration created

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34. I thus reserve 'woman' for אִשָּׁה ʾiššâ; 'female' for נְקֵבָה nəqēbâ, etc.

35. See Benno Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis* (Berlin: Schocken, 1934), 493; Umberto Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964), 296; Robert Davidson, *Genesis 12–50* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 94; and most importantly Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken, 1966), 160–61. For a summary of these observations, along with my own contribution to the topic, see my book *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986; repr. 2014), 30–35.

by two rare verbs in these parallel accounts, וַיַּעְתֵּק *wayyaʿtēq* 'and he proceeded' in 12:8 and וַיַּעֲקֹד *wayyăʿqōd* 'and he bound' in 22:9.[36]

The former occurs only here in Gen 12:8 and (as a clear echo) in 26:33. The root עתק *ʿtq* occurs 12 other times in the Bible, with a range of meanings, among which are three additional instances of the *hiphil* stem (Prov 25:1; Job 9:5, 32:15), though with different connotations. The latter verb, from the root עקד *ʿqd*, is a hapax legomenon in the Bible, used here instead of the common root קשר *qšr* 'tie, bind' (see, e.g., Gen 38:28; Josh 2:18, 2:21; Job 39:10; etc.).[37] To my mind, the author of these two stories selected these rare lexemes deliberately, as one additional long-range nexus to solidify the association of the two pericopes.[38]

As noted above, alliteration does not occur on a regular basis in Biblical Hebrew literature, whether prose or poetry, a point now confirmed by our survey of but 12 instances in the book of Genesis. Yet, when this literary device is employed by the authors of ancient Hebrew literature, the reader—which is to say, the listener—is invited to take note and delight in the pleasure of the text.

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36. For my earlier treatment, see ibid., xix–xx (of the book's 2nd edition only).

37. I cite here only passages that entail actual tying or binding, not metaphorical acts. See also Deut 6:8, 11:18, as per rabbinic and other (e.g., Qumran) Jewish interpretation.

38. *Nota bene*: "the author" (or at least the single narrative voice present in the Abraham Cycle, if not the book of Genesis as a whole) and not two or more authors (as proposed by devotees of the Documentary Hypothesis, who would assign Gen 12 to so-called J and Gen 22 to so-called E).