STYLE-SWITCHING: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE SPEECH OF FOREIGNERS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that the biblical writers stylistically represented the speech of Arameans and Trans-Jordanians in biblical prose. Although there are a few obvious examples of style-switching in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 31:47; Judg 12:6), this study argues that there are many other, though more subtle, examples of this technique embedded in biblical narratives. Until now, the research that has been done on this subject has been limited in scope and has tended to focus primarily on identifying style-switching forms. A significant contribution of this study is that it goes beyond this and also brings to light the literary techniques that the biblical writers used in their stylistic representations of foreign speech.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The Problem

In recent years much needed attention has been devoted to literary studies of the Hebrew Bible. Books like Robert Alter's, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, and David J. A. Clines', *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, are among those that have greatly enhanced our appreciation of the Hebrew Bible as literature.[1] However, because the concept of reading the Hebrew Bible as literature is a relatively recent phenomenon,[2] certain literary features have received insufficient attention from biblical scholars. Among these is a phenomenon that S. A. Kaufman has called "style-switching."[3]

Kaufman has observed that in a number of passages the speech of Trans-Jordanian characters is colored with unusual grammatical forms and rare lexemes. Modern scholarship has typically classified many of these features as Aramaisms and has used them as evidence to support a post-exilic date of composition for the texts in which they are found.[4] Kaufman has suggested an alternative explanation for their presence and has argued that in these texts "we have not to do with late language or foreign authors, but rather with intentional stylistic representations of Trans-Jordanian speech on the part

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[1]Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981); Clines, David J. A. *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

[2]See Tremper Longman III, "Literary Approaches to Old Testament Study" in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. D. Baker and Bill Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 97.

[3]S. A. Kaufman, "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Panel Sessions: Hebrew and Aramaic Languages; Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1988), 55.

[4]The book of Ruth is among the texts that have been classified as late on the basis of Aramaisms (Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *The Book of Ruth* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 24-25).

of Hebrew authors within Hebrew texts."[5] He then suggested that "we must devote increased attention to the dialects reflected in quoted speech in the Bible. The Biblical authors apparently did not hesitate to use 'style switching' to reflect differences in the speech of their characters."[6]

A clear example of this phenomenon is in Gen 31:47. In this verse, the biblical writer makes a clear distinction between Hebrew and Aramaic. Jacob, he writes, called the heap of stone גלעד, whereas Laban called it יגר שהדותא. Although this is an obvious example, recent research suggests that there are many other, though more subtle, examples of this phenomenon imbedded both in the speech of foreign characters and in the surrounding narratives. [7]

The objective of this study is to examine a limited number of prose texts within the Hebrew Bible that contain the direct speech of foreigners, whether the story is set in a foreign land or whether a foreigner comes to Canaan, and to mine them for lexical, grammatical or syntactical features that might suggest that the biblical writers stylistically represented the speech of foreigners. In some cases, the biblical writers may have known of and drawn from the lexical and syntactical inventories of their neighbors in order to represent the actual speech of their foreign characters. But in other cases, they may have colored the speech of their foreign characters with bizarre forms or rare lexemes in order to indicate the foreignness of their characters but without having

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[5]Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects," 55.

[6]Ibid., 55.

[7]Style-switching not only occurs in the direct speech of foreign characters, but apparently spills over into the narrative that surrounds the direct speech (see J. C. Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies and the Bible," in *Congress Volume Vienna 1980*. SVT 32. Ed. J. A. Emerton [Leiden: Brill, 1981], 130).

actually drawn from the actual indigenous languages that would have been spoken by such characters.[8]

As is well-known, the geographical setting of the Hebrew Bible covers much of the ancient world and various foreigners appear in the stories. Among them are Ammonites, Arameans, Edomites, Midianites, and Moabites. Did the biblical writers try to stylistically represent all of these languages within the speech of their foreigners, or only certain ones? If only certain ones, which ones and why these ones and not others? Is style-switching limited to the direct speech of foreigners, or does it also occur in the speech of those addressing them? Is style-switching limited to direct speech, or does it also occur in the course of a narrative? Was an abundance of style-switching forms required to convey foreignness, or was a single word or phrase sufficient to communicate this? Are there any literary cues of style-switching in the biblical text, such as instances where Hebrews and foreigners say the same thing in a given narrative, but with different vocabulary? Do style-switching forms always occur randomly, or do they sometimes occur at key points of a dialogue? These are among the questions that this study attempts to answer.

This study has certain limitations. First, it is limited to biblical prose.[9] Second, it is limited to those books of the Hebrew Bible that are most likely to contain

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[8]It is possible that, in some cases, style-switching may simply have been an *ad hoc* invention. The biblical writers who used this technique may not have always used authentic foreign words to represent the speech of their characters. It is also possible that they may have used one language (i.e. Aramaic) to mark the foreignness of a number of different language groups. This will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

[9]One reason for this limitation is that poetry often contains rare (often archaic) words and unusual forms (this is especially true of the B, C, and D words of parallel pairs in poetry) that could be susceptible to misinterpretation. The use of such words and forms in poetry may have more to do with

the direct speech of foreigners: Genesis-2 Kings, and Ruth. Third, it is limited to the study of foreigners who represent Aramaic and the Trans-Jordanian languages: Ammonite, Edomite, Midianite, and Moabite.[10]

Previous Work

As early as 1968, biblical scholarship had begun to comment on the possibility of stylistic representations of foreign speech in the Hebrew Bible. A. Hurvitz wrote: ". . . one cannot automatically ascribe to the later period Aramaisms which are connected with the description of the *foreign nations and foreign peoples*. The usage of what seems to be Aramaisms in such contexts may well reflect the use of peculiar expressions characteristic of foreign language. That is, in these cases we are not dealing with actual loanwords, or forms, but rather with unique stylistic devices of a particular author or composition."[11]

In an essay published in 1981 that dealt with the impact of Aramaic on biblical studies, J. C. Greenfield wrote that "our increased knowledge of Aramaic has enhanced our appreciation of the Aramaic *Vorlage* behind the words put into the mouths of Aramaic speakers or used in conversation with them."[12] He then noted that the

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poetic diction than with style-switching. It has been argued, however, that the prophets used a technique very similar to style-switching when addressing the foreign nations (see Gary Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation and the 'Foreign' Factor in the Hebrew Bible," *IOS* 15 (1996): 184-188). However, this technique goes beyond the scope of this study.

[10]Occasionally, comments may be made on features that appear in the speech of other foreigners. However, the languages listed here are the most important ones for this study since they have a lot of biblical representation and, in most cases, have extra-biblical representation as well. Amorite has been excluded because it is not clear that it represents a distinct ethnic designation (J. Van Seters, "The Terms 'Amorite' and 'Hittite' in the Old Testament" *VT* 22 [1972]: 78-81).

[11]Avi Hurvitz, "The Chronological Significance of 'Aramaisms' in Biblical Hebrew," *IEJ* 18 (1968): 236-237.

[12]Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies," 129.

speeches of both Laban and Jacob in Genesis 31, along with the surrounding narrative, are colored with Aramaisms.[13] He concluded that an early author was either particularly skillful in putting Aramaisms in the mouth of his principal characters, or that these stories were given their final addition at a later period when Aramaic was better known in Judah.[14]

In 1982 Kutscher, commenting on biblical passages in which the speech of foreigners appears, wrote: "the Bible puts in their [foreigners'] mouths roots and forms which were either rare or non-existent in BH, but which were supposed to be identical or at least close to the roots and forms employed in the language of the people alluded to."[15]

However, it was Kaufman who gave a name to this phenomenon and called it "style-switching."[16] In his article titled, "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects," he highlighted a number of passages that have a Trans-Jordanian setting and in which the direct speech of Trans-Jordanian characters is colored with unusual grammatical forms and rare lexemes.[17] The words of Lemuel's mother (Proverbs 31), the oracles of Balaam (Numbers 22-24), the poetic speeches in the book of Job (especially the Elihu speeches), and Isa 21:11-14 are among the texts cited by him.[18] He concluded that in all these Hebrew texts "we have not to do with late language or foreign

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[13]Greenfield's examples will be discussed in the following chapter.
[14]Ibid., 130.
[15]Edward Yechezkel Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), 72.
[16]Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects," 55.
[17]Ibid., 54-55.
[18]Ibid., 55.

authors, but rather with intentional stylistic representations of Trans-Jordanian speech on the part of Hebrew authors within Hebrew texts."[19]

Building upon the foundation laid by these scholars, Rendsburg has devoted several articles to the study of style-switching.[20] Among other texts, he has highlighted a number of examples of this technique in the oracles of Balaam (Numbers 22-24) and in Genesis 24, 30 and 31.[21] Based upon the work of these scholars, there appears to be mounting evidence of this literary strategy. Since no more than a few articles have been devoted to the study of style-switching, this subject is particularly ripe for research.

Methodology

In this dissertation, I will utilize the methodology advanced by Hurvitz for his study of late biblical Hebrew and adapted by Rendsburg for his study of Israelian Hebrew.[22] Hurvitz's criteria are: distribution, extra-biblical sources, opposition, and concentration. They have been adapted for the present study in the following ways.

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[19]Ibid., 55.

[20]Gary Rendsburg, "Kabbîr in Biblical Hebrew: Evidence for Style-Switching and Addressee-Switching in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 112, no. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 1992): 649-651; "Linguistic Variation and the 'Foreign' Factor in the Hebrew Bible," *IOS* 15 (1996): 177-190; "Aramaic-like Features in the Pentateuch," *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2006): 163-176; "Some False Leads in the Identification of Late Biblical Hebrew Texts: The Cases of Genesis 24 and 1 Samuel 2:27-36," *JBL* 121 (2002): 23-46.

[21]Gary Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 177-190; "Aramaic-like Features in the Pentateuch," *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2006): 163-176; "False Leads," 23-46. Rendsburg's examples of style-switching will be discussed in the ensuing chapters.

[22]Avi Hurvitz, "Ha-Lashon ha-'ivrit ba-Tequfa ha-Parsit," 222-223 and Hurvitz, *Beyn Lashon le-Lashon* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1972), 67-69, both cited in Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 15. See also Hurvitz, "Chronological Significance of Aramaisms," 234-240.

"Distribution" simply refers to where else within the biblical corpus a particular form occurs. When we encounter an unusual grammatical form or a rare lexeme within the speech of a foreign character and we suspect that it may be a stylistic representation of that character's language, the first step is to find out where else it occurs in the Hebrew Bible. The problem with this criterion for the present study is that an unusual or rare form, by definition, will not have much, if any, distribution throughout the Bible. However, even a limited distribution of a particular form may be of some value. For example, the root of the word הגמיאיני occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible, in Genesis 24 (vs. 17) which is set in Aram and in the book of Job (Job 39:24) where Aramaic-like language has long been recognized.[23] Thus, although minimal, its distribution is consistent with the suggestion that it is an Aramaic-like feature.[24]

"Extra-biblical sources" refers to the literature and inscriptions of all the languages examined in this study. When we encounter an unusual grammatical form or a rare lexeme within the speech of a foreign character and we suspect that it may be a stylistic representation of that character's language, the second step is to find out if it occurs in extra-biblical sources. This criterion could reinforce the argument that a particular form is a stylistic representation of a character's language if it is indeed known from the literature of that language. For example, if a word that is suspected of being an Aramaism is known from Aramaic inscriptions, or even from later Aramaic literature, it

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[23]Tur-Sinai represents this view (Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects, 55)." For a fuller discussion, see W. L. Michel, "Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic." Volume 1, *Biblica et Orientalia* 42 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1987).

[24]Brian Bompiani, "Is Genesis 24 a Problem for Source Criticism?" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 164 (2007): 413.

is all the more likely an example of style-switching. For example, although the word הגמיאיני (Gen 24:17) does not appear in Aramaic inscriptions, it does appear in later Aramaic, occurring several times in the Babylonian Talmud.[25]

Unfortunately, this criterion has varying degrees of usefulness for the present study since some languages have better extra-biblical representation than others. Ammonite, Aramaic, and Moabite have better representation than Edomite and Midianite.[26] Thus, although this criterion is useful for the former languages, it is not so useful for the latter two.[27]

Secondly, this criterion can only be used positively. It can strengthen the case that a particular word or form belongs to the lexical inventory of a certain language, but it cannot rule out the possibility even if a particular word is absent from such sources. After all, the vocabulary represented in extra-biblical sources represents only a small fraction of all the vocabulary that would have been available to speakers of these languages.

And finally, as suggested earlier, the biblical writers may have, at times, colored the speech of their foreign characters with unusual forms or rare lexemes that did

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[25]Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Co-published by Bar Ilan University Press of Israel and John Hopkins University Press of Baltimore, 2002), 290, cited in Bompiani, "Genesis 24," 413. Sokoloff cites the following examples: *Zev* 74b(17); *Šab* 109b(22); *AZ* 12b(12); *Pes* 74b(44); *Suk* 49b(14).

[26]Regarding Edomite, we are reliant on tiny or fragmentary texts (see Ian Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Biebeck], 1993], 64). Although very little is known about the Midianites, Mendenhall suggests that they would have spoken "a language that was an archaic ancestor of Arabic" (George E. Mendenhall, "Midian," *ABD* vol. 4, 817).

[27]However, Edomite and Midianite are Trans-Jordanian languages and thus we would expect them to have features consistent with other better known Trans-Jordanian languages, like Ammonite and Moabite.

not authentically represent the actual speech of their foreigners. Such "invented" forms would obviously not appear in extra-biblical sources.[28]

In this study, we will undoubtedly encounter rare forms in the speech of foreigners that lack both biblical and extra-biblical attestation. In such instances, the criterion of "opposition" may be of value. "Opposition," as used in this study, refers to a distinction which can be drawn between a conventional feature of Hebrew and an unusual feature that is found in the speech of a foreigner. It is of course always possible that rare words or unusual forms that occur only in the speech of foreigners are nothing more than rare Hebrew alternatives and that their absence elsewhere is only coincidental. But why would a Hebrew scribe have gone out of his way to put such unusual vocabulary in the speech of a foreigner when much more common vocabulary would have been available to him and would have been more familiar to his audience? The criterion of "opposition," although not full proof, attempts to make the case for style-switching on the grounds that much more common vocabulary was available to the biblical writer. Again, the form הגמיאיני in Gen 24:17 serves as an illustration.

First, the word "to drink" is an everyday-word. Second, the standard way to express the causative of "to drink" in biblical Hebrew is with the *hifil* of שקה, a form that occurs nearly sixty times in the Hebrew Bible. Third, in Gen 24:17 the biblical

[28]I am not trying to suggest that the biblical writers made up words for their foreigners. I am simply drawing a possible inference from my observation that the word אלה occurs only three times in Genesis, twice in an Aramean context and once in a Philistine context (see Bompiani, "Genesis 24," 413). Although it is possible that Philistine could have been influenced by Aramaic, it is also possible that this word may simply have been the stock word for "oath" that the biblical writer chose to put into the speech of foreigners. This is just a suggestion which may or may not be supported by further evidence.

writer chose not to use the conventional form, but rather the exceptional הגמיאיני.[29] The very fact that the biblical writer went out of his way to use such an unusual form over one that was much more commonly used in Hebrew makes it all the more likely that the form is a stylistic representation of that character's language.[30] Thus, the criterion of opposition, as used in this study, assumes that if a rare or unusual lexeme of an *everyday-word* occurs in the speech of a foreigner and a much more common Hebrew alternative was available, the rare word may be suspected of being a stylistic change.[31]

This may be especially so if the unusual form occurs at an early point in the dialogue. Alter has written: "In any given narrative event, and especially, at the beginning of any new story, the point at which dialogue first emerges will be worthy of special attention, and in most instances, the initial words spoken by a personage will be revelatory, perhaps more in manner than in matter, constituting an important moment in the exposition of character."[32] Although, Alter does not specifically refer to style-switching, there may be evidence that his insight applies to this phenomenon too. As already noted, the very first word spoken by the servant to Rebekah is the exceptional imperative, הגמיאיני (Gen 24:17). Similarly, Esau's very first word in the Hebrew Bible is the *hapax*, הלעיטני (Gen 25:30). Is it merely a coincidence that such unusual vocabulary is found at the very beginning of these two foreigners' dialogues, or is it

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[29]It would be difficult to argue that the writer may have been unfamiliar with the form השקיני since it occurs several times in this chapter (Gen 24:43, 45, et al.).

[30]It is this criterion that may help us to discern style-switching in the speech of Trans-Jordanians.

[31]Although Abraham's servant may or may not have been a foreigner, he was speaking to one when he used הגמיאיני. As Greenfield notes, style-switching may occur not only in the speech of foreigners but also in the speech of those addressing them (Greenfield, *Aramaic Studies*, 129).

[32]Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 74.

perhaps a clue that the biblical writers liked to introduce style-switching at an early point in a character's dialogue in order to remind the reader that, although much of what follows appears to be standard classical Hebrew, these foreigners were speaking in their own dialects? This hypothesis needs to be examined more thoroughly, but if enough evidence is found to support it, then this insight could be used to add further credibility to the criterion of "opposition."

The final criterion is "concentration." It was the concentration of unusual vocabulary in 2 Kgs 6:8-19—a passage that deals with a war between Israel and Aram—that led Hurvitz to conclude that the biblical writer added an Aramaic-like flavor to the passage.[33] Thus, a concentration of unusual grammatical elements or rare lexemes in a narrative that has a foreign setting may strengthen the case for style-switching in that narrative.

Because of the limited nature of these criteria, some examples of style-switching will be more convincing than others. However, in such cases, it is always due to a lack of evidence and not to contradictory evidence. Years ago Albright estimated that, excluding proper names, the vocabulary of the Hebrew Bible consists of approximately 3,000 words, a mere fraction of all the vocabulary that would have been available to Hebrew speakers in biblical times.[34] The same is true of course of the vocabulary of extra-biblical sources. Therefore, when there are examples of style-

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[33]Avi Hurvitz, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the Biblical Period: The Problem of 'Aramaisms' in Linguistic Research on the Hebrew Bible," in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology*, ed. Ian Young, JSOT Supplement Series 369 (NY: T & T Clark, 2003), 31-32.

[34]W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1968), 256.

switching that are less conclusive than others, it is only because of the limited data available. I assume that all these examples would be conclusive if we had a more thorough knowledge of the languages dealt with in this study.

Contributions to Scholarship

There are at least four ways that this dissertation may contribute to biblical scholarship. First, it may yield new insights into the literary techniques and practices of biblical scribes who used style-switching to reflect regional differences in the speech of foreigners. My initial research suggests that the biblical writers used a variety of literary techniques in their stylistic representation of foreign speech which may give us insight into certain details of these stories that the ancient listener would have been paying attention to. Second, it may have implications for the presence of Aramaisms in Hebrew texts. If style-switching occurs in biblical texts—as recent research suggests—we can no longer assume that Aramaisms are indicative of a post-exilic date of composition.[35] Third, it may offer alternative explanations for other phenomena observed in the Hebrew Bible, such as the use of synonymous word-pairs in biblical texts.[36] While such word-pairs have been considered evidence of diverse authorship, my initial research suggests that, in some instances, such word-pairs were used intentionally and creatively to highlight regional differences in the speech of biblical characters. Finally, this study may yield insight into the biblical writers' conception of Trans-Jordanian speech which, as we will see, is colored with Aramaisms.

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[35]Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects," 55; Rendsburg, "False Leads," 30-31.
[36]Bompiani, "Genesis 24," 403-415.

CHAPTER TWO: ARAMAIC LANGUAGE IN THE JACOB AND LABAN CYCLE

The majority of research done to date on the literary phenomenon of style-switching has been in the Jacob and Laban cycle of narratives in Genesis 24, 29, 30 and 31.[1] Therefore, it seems appropriate to begin with these passages in order to see what work has already been done and if any other examples of this literary device may be detected in these narratives. Not only is it important to see that Hebrew scribes used this technique, it is also important to see how they used it in their narratives.[2]

Genesis 31

In Gen 31:44-48, Laban speaks to Jacob saying:

44 וְעַתָּה לְכָה נִכְרְתָה בְרִית אֲנִי וָאַתָּה וְהָיָה לְעֵד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ
45 וַיִּקַּח יַעֲקֹב אֶבֶן וַיְרִימֵהָ מַצֵּבָה׃
46 וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְאֶחָיו לִקְטוּ אֲבָנִים וַיִּקְחוּ אֲבָנִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־גָל
וַיֹּאכְלוּ שָׁם עַל־הַגָּל׃
47 וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ לָבָן יְגַר שָׂהֲדוּתָא וְיַעֲקֹב קָרָא לוֹ גַּלְעֵד׃
48 וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן הַגַּל הַזֶּה עֵד בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ גַּלְעֵד׃

44) Let us make a covenant—you and I—and it will be as a witness (עד) between you and me. 45) Then Jacob took a stone and erected it as a pillar. 46) Then Jacob said to his brothers, "Gather stones!" So they took stones, made a heap, and ate there upon the heap. 47) Then Laban called it יגר שהדותא and Jacob called it גלעד. 48) Then Laban said, "This heap (גל) is a witness (עד) between you and me today." Therefore he called its name גלעד.

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[1] J. C. Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies and the Bible," in *Congress Volume Vienna 1980*. SVT 32. Ed. J. A. Emerton, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 110-130. Gary Rendsburg, "Aramaic-like Features in the Pentateuch," *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2006), pp. 163-176; Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation and the 'Foreign' Factor in the Hebrew Bible," *IOS* 15 (1996): 177-190; Rendsburg, "Some False Leads in the Identification of Late Biblical Hebrew Texts: The Cases of Genesis 24 and 1 Samuel 2:27-36," *JBL* 121 (2002), 23-46.

[2] Although it may seem strange, we will not cover these chapters chronologically. Rather we will begin with chapter 31 and move from the clearest example of this technique to more subtle ones.

There are at least three facts that we learn from this passage. First, biblical writers[3] could stylistically represent the speech of Aramean characters. Thus, it is not a question of if they used this technique in their narratives, but only of where and of how often.

Second, the narrative draws attention to Laban's Aramaic (יגר שהדותא) by contrasting it with Jacob's Hebrew (גלעד). As we will see a number of times in the narratives that follow, anytime an Aramaic, or Aramaic-like,[4] word is found in the speech of an Aramean, the standard biblical Hebrew equivalent of that word is almost always found in the same narrative and often in the speech of a Hebrew character.[5]

Third, in verse 47 the text explicitly states that Laban called the heap of stones יגר שהדותא, but in the very next verse (vs. 48) it states just as explicitly that he called it גלעד. In fact, excluding verse 47, every time that Laban uses the words "heap" and "witness" in this narrative, he uses only standard biblical Hebrew words (גל, vs. 48, עד, vss. 44, 48, and גלעד, vs. 48). Thus, the biblical writer did not have to consistently use Aramaic words within the speech of Laban in order to convey to readers that he spoke Aramaic. A single phrase was sufficient to communicate this.

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[3]The word "writer(s)" is used here and throughout the dissertation only in the most general sense. As used here, it could refer to an editor or redactor, as well as an author. The word "authorship" is the closest approximation to my use of the word "writer" and may be used from time to time in order to avoid redundancy.

[4]In this dissertation, Aramaic words are words indigenous to Aramaic (יגר שהדותא), while Aramaic-like words are words that are either calques on Aramaic words, or words that derive from Aramaic roots. An example of an Aramaic-like word is צעיר. It is not necessarily an Aramaic word, but a writer may have used it in the speech of an Aramean since it derives from the same root as Aramaic זעיר. An example of this will be offered later.

[5]The significance of this observation will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

In his essay published in 1981 that dealt with the impact of Aramaic on biblical studies, J. C. Greenfield discovered what he believed were additional Aramaisms in this chapter. He noted that the speeches of both Laban and Jacob, along with the surrounding narrative, are colored with Aramaisms.[6]

In Gen 31:28, Laban says to Jacob:

[28] וְלֹ֣א נְטַשְׁתַּ֗נִי לְנַשֵּׁק֙ לְבָנַ֣י וְלִבְנֹתָ֔י עַתָּ֥ה הִסְכַּ֖לְתָּ עֲשֽׂוֹ׃

"You have not let me (נטשתני) kiss my sons and my daughters. You have done foolishly!" Greenfield noted that the use of נטש with the meaning "to allow" is exceptional in this verse. In biblical Hebrew it ordinarily means "to leave, abandon, forsake," while נתן is the usual word for "to allow." He then argued that "the use of *nāṭaš* in this verse must be considered a calque on Aramaic *šbq*, which beside 'leave, abandon, forsake, release' also means 'to allow.'"[7]

Greenfield's proposed reading finds support from the larger context. In verse 7, when Jacob uses the word "to allow," he uses the expected biblical Hebrew word נתן.[8] Although more subtly than Gen 31:47, the text appears to be drawing another contrast between Jacob's Hebrew and Laban's Aramaic.[9]

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[6]Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies," 129-130.

[7]Greenfield notes that both *Targum* Onkelos and the Peshitta translate נטשתני with שבקתני in this passage (ibid., 129).

[8]The verse reads, "Your father deceived me and changed my wage ten times, but God did not allow (נתן) him to harm me."

[9]If this contrast between Jacob's נתן (Gen 31:7) and Laban's נטש (Gen 31:28) is intentional, it may have potential implications for the composition of the narrative. That is, its homogeneity may have to be taken more seriously.

Greenfield also noted that Aramaic language may occur not only in the speech of Arameans, but also in the speech of characters addressing them. He cited Jacob's speech to his wives in Gen 31:9 as an example. The verse reads:

[9] וַיַּצֵּל אֱלֹהִים אֶת־מִקְנֵה אֲבִיכֶם וַיִּתֶּן־לִי׃

"God has taken (ויצל) your father's goods and given (ויתן) them to me." Greenfield then noted that the phrase הנציל-נתן is a technical phrase found in a legal document from Elephantine.[10]

Finally, Greenfield noted that Aramaisms may be found not only in direct speech but also in the course of a narrative. In Genesis 31, two different but synonymous words are used by the narrator to describe Laban's "overtaking" of Jacob. In Gen 31:23, he used the *hapax* הדביק, but, in Gen 31:25, he used its standard biblical Hebrew equivalent הִשִּׂיג.[11] That the former is an Aramaism is clearly seen from *Targum* Onqelos which uses אדביק in both verses.[12] Greenfield concluded that an early author was either particularly skillful in putting Aramaisms in the mouth of his principal characters, or that these stories were given their final addition at a later period when Aramaic was better known in Judah.[13]

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[10]In this text (*CAP* 8, 19-19), "the donor asserts that he no longer has the right to convey (literally: take and give) the house to anyone else . . ." Greenfield also points out that a similar phrase (לקח־נתן) is found in *CAP* 9, the compliment to *CAP* 8. He writes: "That there can be no doubt about this use of *hnṣl* may be seen in the words of Hosea, a prophet whose language is replete with Aramaisms . . ." In Hosea 2:11, "the prophet skillfully uses both verbs, *lāqah* and *(h)nṣl*, together in this verse" (Ibid., 129-130).

[11]Again, an Aramaic-like form occurs alongside its standard biblical Hebrew equivalent.

[12]Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies," 130.

[13]Ibid., 130.

Greenfield is not the only scholar who has identified Aramaisms in this chapter. Rendsburg identified another in Gen 31:39 where the unusual form גנבתי (*gĕnŭbĕtî*) "I was robbed" occurs twice in the speech of Jacob. Gesenius suggests that the *hireq yod* ending is the remains of an early case ending appended to the feminine form.[14] But Rendsburg suggests that the form is an inflected passive participle that bears the 1st person perfect ending *–tî*, a form known elsewhere only from Aramaic.[15] His conclusion is: "that after twenty years in Aram, Jacob had become Aramaicized."[16]

Finally, a comment must be made regarding the use of the 1cs personal pronoun. As is well known, two forms are used in the Hebrew Bible. The longer, and apparently older, form אנכי is more Phoenician-like, while the shorter form אני is more Aramaic-like. Although it would be foolish to try to explain all the occurrences of these forms on the basis of dialect, an interesting distribution occurs in this chapter. When God and Jacob speak, the word אנכי is consistently employed.[17] However, when Laban speaks, the short, Aramaic-like, form is used.[18] What is most interesting about this distribution is that it occurs in the very chapter in which we find the clearest example of a writer's ability to distinguish between Hebrew and Aramaic (Gen 31:47).[19]

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[14]GKC, 253.
[15]Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 183.
[16]Ibid., 183.
[17]Gen 31:5, 13, 38, 39.
[18]Gen 31:44, 52.
[19]I do not want to make too much of this distribution because it could always be coincidental. Moreover, it is not carried out in the other Jacob and Laban narratives.

In summary, Greenfield has made two advancements in the study of style-switching. First, he has noted that Aramaic language may occur not only in the speech of Arameans, but also in the speech of characters addressing them. Second, he has noted that Aramaisms may be found not only in direct speech but also in the course of a narrative.[20]

Genesis 24

Genesis 24 is one of the longest chapters in the entire Torah. The narrative begins in Canaan, but quickly moves to Aram where Abraham's servant has been commissioned by his master to find a bride for his son, Isaac. Scholars have noted that this narrative is replete with unusual language.[21]

In an article titled "An Enquiry into the Betrothal of Rebekah," Alexander Rofé argues for a fifth century BCE date of this chapter on the basis of, among other things, the presence of language with parallels in Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew (MH).[22] He cites the following words and phrases as examples:

First, the epithet אלהי השמים, which occurs twice in this chapter (Gen 24:3 and 7), is found only here in the entire Torah. It is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible only in texts long recognized as late,[23] apparently under the influence of Aramaic

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[20]Rendsburg suggests that, in these cases, the writer wanted to give an Aramaic-like feel to the entire narrative (Rendsburg, "False Leads," 32).

[21]Alexander Rofé, "An Enquiry into the Betrothal of Rebekah," in *Die hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. E. Blum, C. Macholz, and E. W. Stegemann; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 27-39; Rendsburg, "False Leads," 23-46.

[22]Rofé, "Betrothal of Rebekah," 27-39, especially 27-31.

[23]Jon 1:9; Ezra 1:2; 2 Chr 36:23; Neh 1:4, 5; 2:4, 20.

אלה שמיא, a title encountered a number of times in the Aramaic sections of the books of Daniel and Ezra.[24] Outside of the Hebrew Bible, it is found in the Elephantine texts, in the Apocrypha, and in the Qumran literature.[25]

Second, the relative particle אשר in the phrase אשר לא תקח has a peculiar function in Gen 24:3 where it introduces an object clause, a function normally reserved for כי.[26] Rofé suggests that, in this verse, אשר may be a calque on Aramaic די, a particle which, unlike Hebrew אשר,[27] may be used to introduce object clauses. Support for Rofé's argument is found in *Targum* Onqelos where the אשר of the present verse is translated with די.[28]

Third, the peculiar verb גמא is found only twice in the biblical corpus, once in Gen 24:17 in the *hifil* stem with the meaning "to cause to drink" and once in the book of Job in the *piel* stem with the meaning "to swallow, dig into (the earth)."[29] Outside of the Hebrew Bible, it is found only in later Aramaic literature and in Rabbinic writings.[30]

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[24]Dan 2:18, 19, 37, 44; Ezra 5:11, 12; 6:9, 10; 7:12, 21, 23 (2x).

[25]For the textual evidence, see Rofé, "Betrothal of Rebekah," 28.

[26]Rofé, "Betrothal of Rebekah," 30.

[27]While די may be used to introduce object clauses in Aramaic, אשר rarely does so in Biblical Hebrew. For a few other examples, all from late prose, see Rofé, "Betrothal of Rebekah," 30.

[28]Rendsburg offers another example from *Targum* Pseudo-Jonathan (Rendsburg, "False Leads," 25).

[29]The imagery is of a horse ready for battle, digging his hoofs into the ground in anticipation of war (Job 39:24).

[30]Rofé, "Betrothal of Rebekah," 29. Rendsburg suggests that its presence in Tannaitic Hebrew is likely due to a borrowing from Aramaic (Rendsburg, "False Leads," 27). More will be said about this word below.

Fourth, the lexeme ערי occurs with an irregular meaning in Gen 24:20. While it normally means "to bare, lay bare,"[31] here it means "to empty," a meaning paralleled only in 2 Ch 24:11.[32] According to Rofé, this meaning of ערי is more typical of MH.[33]

Fifth, the exceptional participle משתאה (Gen 24:21) from the root שאי is, according to Rofé, to be explained as a by-form of שהי, a root common in Rabbinic Hebrew.[34]

Sixth, the use of אם־לא as an adversative in Gen 24:38 is almost without parallel in the Hebrew Bible.[35] The conventional way to express this would have been with the particles כי אם. Rofé relates the usage of אם־לא with adversative force to Mishnaic Hebrew אלא, a form which Rendsburg argues is of Aramaic origin.[36] Finally, Rofé notes that the word מגדנות occurs only here in Gen 24:53 and in post-exilic books.[37]

Although Rendsburg agrees with Rofé that there is a concentration of Aramaic elements in this chapter, he disagrees with his conclusion.[38] According to Rendsburg, Rofé made two mistakes. First, he failed to recognize that in some cases the

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[31]BDB, 788.

[32]The concept of "emptying, pouring out (liquid)" is usually expressed in the Hebrew Bible with either יצק or ריק. For examples, see BDB, 427, 937.

[33]Rendsburg attributes this meaning of ערי to Aramaic influence (Rendsburg, "False Leads," 27).

[34]Rofé, "Betrothal of Rebekah," 29.

[35]Rofé cites Psalm 131 as the only other example, a psalm which he argues is late (Ibid., 30).

[36]Rendsburg suggests that אם־לא in the present verse is a calque on Aramaic הן לא (later אן לא, which later became אלא) (Rendsburg, "False Leads," 28-29).

[37]Rendsburg calls this word "a glaring Aramaic feature," noting that it occurs much more frequently in Aramaic (Ibid., 30).

[38]Ibid., 30.

MH evidence is due to Aramaic influence. Second, he failed to take the literary setting of this narrative into consideration.[39] In Rendsburg's view, "the Aramaisms in this narrative are not evidence for a late date, but rather are to be explained as the author's desire to provide an Aramean coloring for a story set in Aram."[40] Although both views may seem equally plausible, Rendsburg's approach has at least two advantages. First, it is consistent with Greenfield's observations in Genesis 31, a chapter which also belongs to the Jacob and Laban cycle of narratives. Second, only Rendsburg's approach is consistent with and offers an explanation for another phenomenon observed in this narrative.

Genesis 24 contains two parallel accounts of Abraham's servant's encounter with Rebekah: the encounter itself narrated in Gen 24:1-27 and the servant's later reiteration of it to Laban, narrated in Gen 24:34-48. When these parallel accounts are compared, subtle changes of vocabulary come to light.[41] Are these subtle changes of vocabulary merely coincidental, or are they evidence of something more significant?

When Abraham's original command in Gen 24:8 is compared with the servant's later reiteration of it to Laban in Gen 24:41, a slight change of vocabulary is revealed.

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[39]Ibid., 31.

[40]Ibid., 31.

[41]Alter writes: "Now my rule of thumb about virtually all repetition in the Bible is that you look for the difference in what is repeated" (Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 23).

Gen 24:8

[8] וְאִם־לֹא תֹאבֶה הָאִשָּׁה לָלֶכֶת אַחֲרֶיךָ וְנִקֵּיתָ מִשְּׁבֻעָתִי
זֹאת רַק אֶת־בְּנִי לֹא תָשֵׁב שָׁמָּה׃

Gen 24:41

[41] אָז תִּנָּקֶה מֵאָלָתִי כִּי תָבוֹא אֶל־מִשְׁפַּחְתִּי וְאִם־לֹא יִתְּנוּ
לָךְ וְהָיִיתָ נָקִי מֵאָלָתִי׃

Gen 24:8 "If the woman is not willing to go with you, then you will be free from my oath (שבועה). Only do not return my son there."[42]

Gen 24:41 "Then you will be free from my oath (אלה), when you come to my family; and if they do not give her to you, then you will be free from my oath" (אלה).

In these parallel accounts, the writer uses two different but synonymous words for "oath." When Abraham originally commissioned the servant, he used the word שבועה ("oath"). However, when the servant recounted Abraham's command to Laban, he twice substituted the word אלה ("oath") for Abraham's שבועה.

When both accounts of the servant's prayer are compared (Gen 24:14 and Gen 24:43), another synonymous word-pair comes to light.

Gen 24:14

[14] וְהָיָה הַנַּעֲרָ אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַטִּי־נָא כַדֵּךְ וְאֶשְׁתֶּה
וְאָמְרָה שְׁתֵה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה אֹתָהּ הֹכַחְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ
לְיִצְחָק וּבָהּ אֵדַע כִּי־עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עִם־אֲדֹנִי׃

Gen 24:43

[43] הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי נִצָּב עַל־עֵין הַמָּיִם וְהָיָה הָעַלְמָה הַיֹּצֵאת
לִשְׁאֹב וְאָמַרְתִּי אֵלֶיהָ הַשְׁקִינִי־נָא מְעַט־מַיִם מִכַּדֵּךְ׃

[42] All translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

Gen 24:14 "Let it happen that the girl (נערה) to whom I say: 'extend your jar that I may drink,' and she says: 'drink and I will give your camels a drink too,' *let her be* the one you have appointed for you servant, for Isaac. And by this I shall know that you have been faithful with my master."

Gen 24:43 "Look I am standing by a well of water and may it happen that the girl (עלמה) who goes forth to draw water and I say to her: 'give me please a little water to drink from your jar . . ."

In these two passages, the servant uses two different but synonymous words for "girl." In his actual prayer, he referred to her as נערה, but when he recounted his prayer to Laban, he referred to her as עלמה.

Finally, in Gen 24:17 and Gen 24:45, the servant uses two different but synonymous imperatives, when asking Rebekah for a drink.

Gen 24:17

17 וַיָּרָץ הָעֶבֶד לִקְרָאתָהּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַגְמִיאִינִי נָא מְעַט־מַיִם
מִכַּדֵּךְ׃

Gen 24:45

45 אֲנִי טֶרֶם אֲכַלֶּה לְדַבֵּר אֶל־לִבִּי וְהִנֵּה רִבְקָה יֹצֵאת
וְכַדָּהּ עַל־שִׁכְמָהּ וַתֵּרֶד הָעַיְנָה וַתִּשְׁאָב וָאֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַשְׁקִינִי נָא׃

Gen 24:17 Then the servant ran to meet her and said: "Please give me a little drink (הגמיאיני) of water from your jar."

Gen 24:45 "Before I finished speaking to myself, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulders. Then she went down to the well and drew (water) and I said: 'Please give me a drink'" (השקיני).

In his actual encounter with Rebekah (Gen 24:17), the servant used the unusual imperative הגמיאיני. When, however, he recounted the words of his conversation to Laban (Gen 24:45), he used the more conventional השקיני. In a recent

article, I argued that these subtle changes of vocabulary are by no means accidental, but are evidence of the writer's literary skill and reflect his ability to incorporate regional differences in the speech of his characters.[43]

As we have seen, when the servant recounted the words of his prayer to Laban, he replaced his original word נערה with עלמה. In contrast with נערה, which occurs over sixty times in the Hebrew Bible and is the standard biblical Hebrew word for "girl," עלמה occurs just seven times in the Hebrew Bible and comes from the same root as the Aramaic word for "girl."[44]

Similarly, the servant used two different, but synonymous, words for "to give drink." He began his conversation with Rebekah by using the exceptional imperative הגמיאיני. When, however, he recounted the words of his actual conversation to Laban, he replaced this imperative with the much more common השקיני.[45] Because the verb הגמיא "to cause to drink" occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible and because Rebekah is a foreigner, there is reason to suspect that the use of this verb is an attempt to accommodate her Aramaic. The root occurs elsewhere only in the book of Job (Job

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[43]Brian Bompiani, "Is Genesis 24 a Problem for Source Criticism?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (2007), 412.

[44]In Genesis 24, the word נערה occurs six times. In each of these places *Targum* Onqelos has the word עולימה. The word עלים "boy" is found in line 22 of the Sefire Inscription (Sefire I, Face A). It is also found in the Deir 'Allā Inscription (line 4 of combination II).

[45]An interesting phenomenon occurs here. The Aramaic word is found in the servant's actual encounter, while the more conventional word is found in his reiteration of the encounter to Laban. The interchange is reversed. In the other two cases, the Hebrew words come first, then their Aramaic equivalents (שבועה/אלה, נערה/עלמה). Why did the writer, in this one case, use the Aramaic word first? Apparently, it was important for him to begin the servant's first conversation with an Aramean character, in this case Rebekah, with an Aramaic word. He then used השקיני in the parallel account in order to create another synonymous word-pair. More will be written on this below.

39:24) where Aramaic-like language and phraseology have long been acknowledged.[46] Moreover, this word occurs in later Aramaic, including several times in the Babylonian Talmud.[47] However, there are two other features of this verb that make this suggested reading even more likely.

First, the word "to cause/make drink" is an everyday-word. The conventional way to express this in biblical Hebrew is with the *hifil* of שקה, a form that occurs nearly sixty times in the Hebrew Bible. For a reason that must be explained, the writer chose not to use the conventional form in Gen 24:17, even though he had used it seven other times in the chapter.[48] Why in this one instance, when the servant is speaking to an Aramean, did the writer use such a peculiar word?

This is particularly relevant in light of where this word occurs within the dialogue. Alter has written: "In any given narrative event, and especially, at the beginning of any new story, the point at which dialogue first emerges will be worthy of special attention, and in most instances, the initial words spoken by a personage will be revelatory, perhaps more in manner than in matter, constituting an important moment in the exposition of character."[49] What is most interesting about the word הגמיא is that it is

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[46]Tur-Sinai represents this view (Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects," 55). For a fuller discussion, see W. L. Michel, "Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic," vol. 1, *Biblica et Orientalia* 42, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1987).

[47]Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Co-published by Bar Ilan University Press of Israel and John Hopkins University Press of Baltimore, 2002), 290. He cites as evidence: *Zev* 74b(17); *Šab* 109b(22); *AZ* 12b(12); *Pes* 74b(44); *Suk* 49b(14). For additional occurrences of this verb, see Rendsburg, "False Leads," 26-27; and Rofé, "Betrothal of Rebekah," 29.

[48]Gen 24:14, 18, 19, 43, 45, 46 (2x).

[49]Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 74.

the very first word spoken by the servant to an Aramean in this narrative. The most reasonable explanation for this is that the writer wanted to remind readers from the inception of the dialogue that, although much of what follows appears to be in standard biblical Hebrew, this conversation was in Aramaic.[50]

With regard to the word אלה, this conclusion is less certain. It occurs with some frequency in the Hebrew Bible and is often found in parallelism with שבועה.[51] Nevertheless, we must ask why the writer switched from שבועה to אלה not once, but twice. Because other words within this narrative appear to have been changed for the purpose of highlighting regional differences, there is reason to suspect that this explains the change here as well. Although the Arslan Tash inscription may support this proposed reading,[52] the most convincing evidence comes from the book of Genesis where the word אלה is used only in the speech of foreigners, while שבועה is used only by native speakers of Hebrew and by God.[53]

In summary, although two explanations have been offered to account for the unusual language in Genesis 24, only Rendsburg's explanation is consistent with all

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[50]In my view, no point of a conversation would be more suited to convey this than the initial word or words spoken by a character. This is very similar to a technique used in modern films where the initial words of a foreign character are in the language that that character presumably would have spoken, while the reminder of that character's speech is in the language of the audience.

[51]See Num 5:21; Neh 10:30; Dan 9:11.

[52]See Gibson's translation of lines 9, 13-15 of this inscription (John C. L. Gibson *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* vol. III [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975], 78-91). He identifies the dialect of the Arslan Tash inscription as a mixed old Phoenician-Aramaic type. In this inscription, the word אלה occurs several times and, according to Gibson, should be translated as "oath," just as in Genesis 24.

[53]Besides the two examples here, אלה occurs elsewhere in Genesis only in Genesis 26. In Gen 26:28, the Philistines use this word for their "covenant" with Isaac, while, in Gen 26:3, God uses the word שבועה in reference to his covenant with Abraham.

the data. Not only is it consistent with Greenfield's observations in Genesis 31, but it is compatible with the observation that the servant uses different but synonymous vocabulary when addressing Hebrews and Arameans in parallel accounts of the same story.

There are some similarities between the use of style-switching in Genesis 24 and its use in Genesis 31. In both, the biblical writer colored not only the speech of Arameans with Aramaisms, but also the speech of those addressing them.[54] Aramaisms are found not only in direct speech, but also in the course of the narrative.[55] The only new insight regarding style-switching is that the placement of a style-switching form within a dialogue may also be significant.[56]

Genesis 29

Turning our attention to Genesis 29, it is now Jacob's turn to find a wife. He, like his father before him (Gen 24:3-4), is not to take a wife from the Canaanites, but from the family of Laban in Aram (Gen 28:1-2). Like Genesis 24 and 31, this chapter has an Aramean setting, Aramean characters, and noteworthy vocabulary.

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[54]The words הגמיאיני (Gen 24:17) and עלמה (Gen 24:43) are examples of this.

[55]The words ויער (Gen 24:20) and משתאה (Gen 24:21) are examples of this.

[56]As we have seen, this is particularly clear with the placement of הגמיא at the emerging point of the servant's dialogue with Rebekah. However, word placement may be significant in other cases too. One of the first Aramaisms encountered in the chapter is the epithet אלהי השמים which occurs twice in the speech of Abraham. Why did the biblical writer use this Aramaic title here in the speech of Abraham? We have already noted that Aramaisms may be found not only in the speech of Arameans, but also in the speech of those addressing them. Since Abraham is not an Aramean, the only reasonable conclusion is that Abraham's servant was himself an Aramean. Interestingly, *Targum* Pseudo-Jonathan links this servant with Eliezer of Damascus (Gen 15:2). Equally as interesting is that it occurs in the opening words of Abraham's charge to his servant (Gen 24:3).

In Gen 29:21, Jacob says to Laban:

הָבָה אֶת־אִשְׁתִּי כִּי מָלְאוּ יָמָי וְאָבוֹאָה אֵלֶיהָ׃

"Give (הבה) *me* my wife that I may cohabit with her for my days are complete." The use of the word יהב does not at first appear all that unusual.[57] It occurs over thirty times in the Hebrew Bible,[58] sixteen of which are found in two books, Genesis and Psalms.[59] Although it occurs in a variety of contexts with different nuances, it has two basic functions in biblical Hebrew narratives: as an interjection with the meaning "come" and as a verb with the meaning "give."[60] What is interesting about its use in Gen 29:21, however, is that the biblical writer chose to use it instead of the standard biblical Hebrew word for "give" (נתן) which occurs over 1,800 times in the Hebrew Bible, eight of which are found in this same chapter.[61] The question that must be asked is, why does יהב occur only in this verse, when נתן is used consistently throughout the narrative?

Although all the occurrences of יהב must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, there is a logical explanation for its use in Gen 29:21, consistent with what we have seen elsewhere. The use of יהב in this verse must be considered another reminder to readers that Jacob and Laban's conversation was in Aramaic. Not only is יהב the standard Aramaic word for "give," but the next occurrence of this word in the biblical

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[57]Kaufman cautions that we should not assume that just because a word occurs in the Hebrew Bible that it is Hebrew (Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects," 54-55).

[58]The Aramaic portions of the Bible are not included here.

[59]Gen 11:3, 4, 7; 29:21; 30:1; 38:16; 47:15, 16; Ps 29:1 (2x), 2; 60:13; 96:7 (2x), 8; 108:13. The remaining occurrences are scattered throughout other books of the Hebrew Bible. See Exod 1:10; Deut 1:13; 32:3; Josh 18:4; Judg 1:15; 20:7; Ruth 3:15; 1 Sam 14:41; 2 Sam 16:20; 1 Chr 16:28 (2x), 29; Job 6:22; Prov 30:15 (2x); Zech 11:12.

[60]BDB, 396.

[61]Gen 29:19 (2x), 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 33.

text is also found in the Jacob and Laban cycle and in the speech of an Aramean. In Gen 30:1, Rachel orders Jacob, "Give (הבה) me children, if not I will die."

In Gen 29:16, the narrator writes:

16 וּלְלָבָן שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת שֵׁם הַגְּדֹלָה לֵאָה וְשֵׁם הַקְּטַנָּה רָחֵל׃

"Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older one was Leah, while the name of the younger one was Rachel." The words for "older" and "younger" are קטנה and גדלה, both standard biblical Hebrew words. The word קטנה occurs again in the speech of Jacob (Gen 29:18), when he asks Laban for his "younger" daughter. However, in Gen 29:26, Laban refers to his younger daughter not with קטנה, but with צעירה. According to Alter, subtle shifts of vocabulary such as this must be explained.[62] In this case, the writer must have used צעירה in the speech of Laban because it derives from the same root as Aramaic זעירה.[63]

Genesis 30

The Jacob and Laban cycle of stories continues in Genesis 30. However, in this narrative, the focus is no longer on Jacob and Laban, but on Jacob's Aramean wives and the births of their children.

In Gen 30:1, Rachel says to Jacob:

הָבָה־לִּי בָנִים וְאִם־אַיִן מֵתָה אָנֹכִי׃

[62]"Now my rule of thumb about virtually all repetition in the Bible is that you look for the difference in what is repeated" (Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 23).

[63]The only difference between צעיר and Aramaic זעיר is that the proto-Semitic consonant became צ in Hebrew and ז in Aramaic.

"Give (הבה) me children, if not I'll die!" As we have already seen, יהב is the standard Aramaic word for "give." But what is noteworthy about this example is that יהב is the very first word spoken by Rachel in the biblical text. As noted earlier, the initial words spoken by foreign characters are particularly likely to be stylistic representations of foreign speech.[64]

Other examples of style-switching in this narrative occur in the speech of Leah. According to the *Qĕre* of Gen 30:11, Leah said: בא גד "fortune comes." Rendsburg notes that although this is the only occurrence of the noun גד "fortune" in the Hebrew Bible, it is common in Aramaic.[65] Later, when she gave birth to Zebulun, she twice used the root זבד, a root that occurs only in this verse in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 30:20), though again it is well-known from Aramaic.[66]

Regarding Gen 30:38, Rendsburg cites the unusual 3rd person feminine plural form ויחמנה (*wayyēhamnā*) "they mated" as another example of style-switching and makes the interesting observation that this verb follows the standard Aramaic paradigm which has a prefixed *y-* in place of the prefixed *t-* of standard biblical Hebrew.[67] The standard biblical Hebrew form would have been ותחמנה (*wattēhamnā*).[68]

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[64]Later when she speaks, Rachel uses the standard biblical word נתן (Gen 30:14). It should be recalled that Gen 31:47 states that Laban called the heap of stones יגר שהדותא, while the very next verse states that he called it גלעד (Gen 31:48). Once the biblical writers alluded to a character's Aramaic speech, they tended to revert back to standard biblical Hebrew.

[65]Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 182-183.

[66]Ibid., 183.

[67]Ibid., 182-183.

[68]Interestingly, the Aramaic paradigmatic form with prefixed *y-* occurs only two other times in the Hebrew Bible, one of which is a clear Aramaism (Dan 8:22) and one of which is in a Philistine context (1 Sam 6:12) (Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 182).

Summary

Using the criteria laid out in chapter 1, certain observations emerge from these stories that are consistent with the argument that biblical writers used style-switching to reflect regional differences in the speech of their characters. First, there are a number of rare words and atypical forms in these stories, many of which are found either in the speech of Arameans, or in the speech of those addressing them. Second, many of these are either best attested in Aramaic, or are explainable via Aramaic.[69] Third, many of these words represent everyday concepts, such as eating, drinking, giving, etc., and thus take the place of much more common biblical Hebrew vocabulary.[70] And finally, there is a concentration of such words and forms in these narratives. When these observations are combined with the fact that there is an obvious example of style-switching in these stories (Gen 31:47), the logical conclusion is that there are many other, though more subtle, examples of style-switching in these stories.

This conclusion is reinforced by other observations that emerged from these stories. First, there are instances in these stories where Hebrews and Arameans say the same thing in a particular narrative, but with different vocabulary. In all such instances, standard biblical Hebrew words are found in the mouths of Hebrews (or the narrator), while much rarer, Aramaic-like, semantic equivalents of those words are found in the mouths of Arameans.

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[69]Some can be explained as calques on Aramaic words, while others can be explained as derivations from Aramaic roots.

[70]The implication is that the biblical writers went out of their way to use these non-standard words and forms.

Second, there are instances in these stories where the speech of a character changes to conform to the speech of his audience. The most obvious example of this is in Genesis 24 where Abraham's servant uses different but synonymous vocabulary when addressing Hebrews and Arameans in parallel accounts of the same story. The only logical inference is that the servant used two different dialects when addressing Hebrews and Arameans.

And finally, there are instances in these stories where style-switching forms are found at certain points of a dialogue where we might expect such forms, particularly at the emerging point of foreign speech where these characters are introduced.

In summary, the following principles of style-switching can be inferred from these stories. First, the biblical writers did use this technique, at least in narratives that have Aramean settings. Second, although there is one obvious example of style-switching in these stories (Gen 31:47), the majority of examples are more subtle. Third, the biblical writers not only colored the speech of Arameans with Aramaisms, but also the speech of those addressing them. Fourth, they did not limit the use of Aramaic to direct speech, but occasionally used it in narrative.[71] Fifth, they were not required to consistently use Aramaic words in a character's speech in order to convey to readers that a particular character spoke Aramaic. A single Aramaism was sufficient to convey this.

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[71]"Not only do the characters in the story speak a Hebrew coloured by Aramaic, but the entire narrative is cast in an Aramaic light" (Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 182).

Sixth, they skillfully used Aramaic words alongside of their standard biblical Hebrew equivalents in order to underscore regional differences in the speech of their characters.[72] And finally, the placement of style-switching forms within a dialogue is sometimes significant.

In my article on Genesis 24, I made the following observation regarding the use of style-switching in that narrative:

> Because both Hebrew and Aramaic are Semitic languages and thus share many lexemes, style-switching is not entirely discernable on the lexeme level. That is, hard-and-fast lines of demarcation cannot always be drawn between Hebrew and Aramaic words. The words by themselves are not entirely conclusive evidence for style-switching. Instead, it is only on the larger discourse level, *where parallels may be drawn*, that this phenomenon is evident. For *only when the parallel accounts are compared* (Gen 24:1-27 and Gen 24:34-48), can one clearly see the subtle changes of vocabulary that reveal this phenomenon.[73]

The point of this observation is that, at least in Genesis 24, the narrative not only includes Aramaic-like words and forms, but it also does something to draw readers' attention to these forms. It changes vocabulary from one parallel account to the other, in each case substituting a more Aramaic-like word for a standard Hebrew one.[74] According to Alter, these differences in what is repeated are the things that readers should pay close attention to.[75]

However, most biblical narratives lack the kind of verbatim repetition that we find in Genesis 24. Therefore, I would argue that readers should also pay attention to the different ways in which Hebrews and foreigners say the same things, especially in the

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[72]More on this below.

[73]Bompiani, "Genesis 24," 414.

[74]The subtle shifts of vocabulary from אלה to שבועה, עלמה to נערה, and השקיני to הגמיאיני were my first clue that something noteworthy was taking place in this narrative.

[75]Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 23, 26, 27.

same narrative.[76] We saw significant examples of this in Genesis 29 and 31.[77] Similarly, readers should also pay attention to narratives in which rare forms occur alongside of their standard biblical Hebrew equivalents. We saw meaningful examples of this in Genesis 29, 30, and 31.[78] In either case, a careful reader could not help but ask why the writer switched vocabulary where he did.[79]

Whether by changing vocabulary between parallel accounts of the same story, or by directly contrasting the speech of Hebrews and Arameans, or by using Aramaic-like words alongside of their standard biblical Hebrew equivalents, the effect is the same. Subtle shifts of vocabulary within the same text from standard biblical Hebrew words to much rarer, and in each case more Aramaic-like, semantic equivalents, appear to be the biblical writers' way of not only highlighting regional differences in the speech of their characters but also drawing readers' attention to them.

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[76]A writer's decision not to color a character's speech, in some cases, was just as deliberate as his decision to color another character's speech. It seems to me that writers, in some cases, went out of their way to contrast the speech of Hebrew and Aramean characters.

[77]As we have seen, in Genesis 29, both the narrator and Jacob referred to Laban's "younger" daughter as הקטנה (Gen 29:16 and Gen 29:18), but Laban referred to her as הצעירה (Gen 29:26). In Genesis 31, Jacob used the standard Hebrew word נתן (Gen 31:7), but Laban used נשׂשׂ (Gen 31:28), both of which mean "to allow" in that narrative. In Gen 31:47, Jacob called the heap of stones גלעד, but Laban called it יגר שׂהדותא.

[78]As we have seen, in Gen 29, the word נתן occurs eight times with the meaning "to give" (Gen 29:19 (2x), 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 33), יהב occurs only once (Gen 29:21). In Genesis 30, נתן occurs twelve times (Gen 30:4, 6, 9, 14, 18 (2x), 26, 28, 31 (2x), 35, 40), while again יהב occurs only once (Gen 30:1). Similarly, the *hapax* הדביק (Gen 31:23) occurs alongside of its standard biblical Hebrew equivalent השׂיג (Gen 31:25). This phenomenon also occurs in Genesis 24. The standard biblical Hebrew word "to give drink," השׁקה, is found in Gen 24:14, 18, 19, 43, 45, 46 (2x), while the exceptional הגמיא is found only in Gen 24:17. Similarly, the conventional Hebrew word for "girl," נערה, is found in Gen 24:14, 16, 28, 55, 57, 61, while the word עלמה occurs only in Gen 24:43.

[79]"Where literary convention requires writers to make all their characters follow in their speech the decorum of normative literary Hebrew, allowing only the most fragmentary and oblique indications of a personal language, of individual tics and linguistic peculiarities, differentiation is brought out chiefly through contrast" (Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 72).

CHAPTER THREE: ARAMAIC LANGUAGE IN THE BOOKS OF NUMBERS AND KINGS

The previous chapter tried to show that Aramaic language occurs throughout the Jacob and Laban cycle of stories and is not limited to the obvious Aramaic phrase יגר שהדותא in Gen 31:47. The next question that must be asked is: Is the use of style-switching limited to those narratives, or does it also extend into other parts of the Hebrew Bible where Aramaic speakers are present?

The next passage chronologically in which an Aramean plays a prominent role is the oracles of Balaam (Numbers 22-24). In these oracles, Balak, king of Moab, sends for Balaam, an Aramean prophet (Num 23:7), that he might curse Israel. Scholars have noted the presence of Aramaic terminology in these oracles.[1] However, since these oracles are poetic literature and thus outside the scope of this study, I will comment upon only those Aramaic features already discussed in print.

The word מנע occurs twenty-nine times in the Hebrew Bible and means "to prevent, withhold." However, other verbs occur with this meaning in the Hebrew Bible, most notably חשׂך and חדל.[2] According to Rendsburg, מנע typically occurs in northern texts and in passages where style-switching is in view.[3] With regard to the

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[1]S. A. Kaufman, "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Panel Sessions: Hebrew and Aramaic Languages; Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1988), 54-55; Gary Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation and the 'Foreign' Factor in the Hebrew Bible," *IOS* 15 (1996): 183-184.

[2]Gary Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Books of Kings* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2002), 58.

[3]Among the texts cited by Rendsburg are: 1 Kgs 20:7 (in the speech of Ahab); Prov 1:15; 3:27; 11:26; 23:13; 30:7; Job 20:13; 22:7; 31:16; 38:15; Amos 4:7; Eccl 2:10 (Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 58).

extra-biblical evidence, Rendsburg writes: "The Aramaic evidence demonstrates that the root *mn'* is the common verb for 'prevent, withhold.' It is attested throughout Aramaic dialects: in Samalian (*KAI* 214:24), in the Ahiqar text (line 136), and in Galilean Aramaic, Babylonian Aramaic, and Mandaic. Most significant is the use of the root *mn'* in the Targumim to render the Hebrew roots *ḥdl* and *ḥśk*."[4] In light of this evidence, Rendsburg concludes that its use in Num 22:16 and 24:11 can be attributed to style-switching. In the former, Balak's messengers address the Aramean Balaam saying:

אַל־נָא תִמָּנַע מֵהֲלֹךְ אֵלָי׃

"Please do not be hindered (תמנע) from coming to me." In the latter, Balak himself addresses the Aramean and says:

[11] וְעַתָּה בְּרַח־לְךָ אֶל־מְקוֹמֶךָ אָמַרְתִּי כַּבֵּד אֲכַבֶּדְךָ וְהִנֵּה
מְנָעֲךָ יְהוָה מִכָּבוֹד׃

"And now flee to your place. I said that I would surely honor you, but the Lord has withheld (מנעך) you from honor."[5]

In Num 23:7, the reduplicated plural construct form הררי "mountains of" occurs in place of the standard form הרי.[6] Rendsburg attributes its presence in this passage to style-switching, arguing that the reduplicatory plural form is best attested in Aramaic.[7] According to him, the other eight occurrences of the reduplicatory plural form

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[4]Ibid., 59.

[5]The *Targumim* use only מנע in their translations of these two verses.

[6]The standard form occurs nearly thirty times, while the reduplicated form of this noun occurs only nine times (see footnote 10).

[7]Rendsburg cites: S. Segert, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Leipzig: VEB Verlag, 1975), pp. 537, 546 (Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 183).

הרדי in the biblical corpus are found primarily in northern Hebrew texts, texts which share features with Aramaic.[8]

However, this example is not as convincing as some of his other ones. First, two examples from Segert's glossary (כדדן "jars" and עממא "peoples") are hardly enough evidence to conclude that the reduplicatory plural form is "best known from Aramaic."[9] Second, all the occurrences of the reduplicatory plural form of "mountains" in the Hebrew Bible are found in poetic texts. Thus, its presence in Num 23:7 may have more to do with poetic diction than with style-switching.[10]

A stronger case for style-switching can be made in Num 23:9 where the verb חשב occurs in the *hitpa'el* stem. Normally the passive of this verb is expressed with the *nifal* stem (30x). Only in this verse, in the speech of Balaam, is it found in the *hitpa'el* stem. Balaam says:

כִּי־מֵרֹאשׁ צֻרִים אֶרְאֶנּוּ וּמִגְּבָעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ הֶן־עָם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן וּבַגּוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשָּׁב׃ [9]

"For from the tops of the mountains I see them, and from the hills I gaze upon them, a people who dwells alone, who is not counted (יתחשב) among the nations." Rendsburg

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[8]Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 183.

[9]The reduplicatory plural form of עם "people" is also found in the Hebrew Bible (see Judg 5:14; Neh 9:24).

[10]The reduplicatory plural form of "mountains" occurs eight other times in the biblical corpus, always in poetry (Deut 33:15; Ps 36:7; 50:10; 76:5; 87:1; 133:3; Song 4:8; Hab 3:6). If it is not style-switching in these instances but merely a poetic form, it is difficult to see why it should be considered style-switching in Num 23:7.

argues that the *hitpa'el* is used in place of the expected *nifal* form in this verse "because Aramaic lacks an N-stem of the verb and instead utilizes the T-stem for the passive."[11]

Finally, in Num 24:7, Balaam uses the Aramaic word for "kingdom" (מלכות) rather than the standard biblical Hebrew word ממלכה.[12] The Aramean says:

וְיָרֹם מֵאֲגַג מַלְכּוֹ וְתִנַּשֵּׂא מַלְכֻתוֹ׃

"Their [Israel's] king will be more exalted than Agag; their kingdom (מלכות) will be exalted." Rendsburg concludes that all "these elements operate to portray the foreignness of Balaam, the Aramean prophet brought to curse Israel."[13]

1 Kings 20

The books of Kings record a number of battles between Israel and the Arameans. The first two of these are recounted in 1 Kings 20. In the first battle, the Arameans attack Samaria but are defeated by the Israelites (1 Kgs 20:1-12). Then, in the ensuing battle, Ben Hadad and his army meet the Israelites at Aphek only to be defeated again and to fall into the hands of Ahab (1 Kgs 20:13-34).

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[11]Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 183-184.

[12]Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 184. Although both words occur with some frequency in the Hebrew Bible (ממלכה, 113x and מלכות, 91x), the great majority of the occurrences of מלכות are found in the later books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel.

[13]Rendsburg, *Linguistic Variation*, 184. In addition to these words, Rendsburg argues that the noun רבע "dust-cloud" (Num 23:10) and the verb נטיו "stretch out" (Num 24:6) are additional examples of style-switching. However, the evidence in both cases is debatable. The word רבע is not a word that would occur commonly in everyday speech. Moreover, the translation "dust-cloud" is debatable. It is usually translated as "fourth part" in the English versions of the Bible (see KJV, NASB, NIV, and also BDB, 917). Regarding נטיו, IIIy verbs with retention of the letter *yod* are found with some regularity in poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible (see GKC, 212). Thus, נטיו could be explained as a poetic form in Num 24:6 and not necessarily as an example of style-switching.

In 1 Kgs 20:10, Ben Hadad says to Ahab:

כֹּה־יַעֲשׂוּן לִי אֱלֹהִים וְכֹה יוֹסִפוּ אִם־יִשְׁפֹּק עֲפַר שֹׁמְרוֹן
לִשְׁעָלִים לְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרַגְלָי׃

"Thus may the gods do to me and thus may they add if the dust of Samaria is enough (שׁפק) for handfuls for all the people who are at my feet." The word שׁפק "to be enough, sufficient" occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible, but is best attested in Aramaic.[14] Burney lists it as one of a few roots in Kings "which betray the influence of Aram" and suggests that it is an element of northern Hebrew.[15] But this conclusion fails to take seriously where this form occurs.[16] The one occurrence of this word in the Hebrew Bible is in the direct speech of Ben Hadad, king of Aram, and must be recognized as a stylistic representation of his Aramaic speech.[17]

In 1 Kgs 20:25, Ben Hadad says to his officials:

[25] וְאַתָּה תִמְנֶה־לְךָ חַיִל כַּחַיִל הַנֹּפֵל מֵאוֹתָךְ וְסוּס כַּסּוּס
וְרֶכֶב כָּרֶכֶב וְנִלָּחֲמָה אוֹתָם בַּמִישׁוֹר אִם־לֹא נֶחֱזַק מֵהֶם
וַיִּשְׁמַע לְקֹלָם וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן׃

"Number for yourself an army like the army that fell from you (מאותך) . . . and let us fight them (ונלחמה אותם) in the plain . . ." In this verse, Ben-Hadad twice uses

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[14]Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Co-published by Bar Ilan University Press of Israel and John Hopkins University Press of Baltimore, 2002), 386. Biblical Hebrew normally expresses the idea of "sufficiency, enough" with either the substantive די or the adjective רב. For a few examples see: Gen 24:25; 33:9; 45:28; Exod 9:28; 36:5; Prov 25:16; 27:27.

[15]C. F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 208-209. This verb also occurs in *Targum* Jonathan's rendering of this verse.

[16]Kutscher appears to have been the first scholar to identify שׁפק as a stylistic representation of Aramaic speech (Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982], 89).

[17]Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 60.

inflected forms of the accusative particle את (*'ôt*-forms) where one would normally expect inflected forms of the preposition את (*'itt*-forms).[18] In the first instance, the form מאותך (*mē'ôtāk*) occurs where one would normally expect the form מאתך (*mē'ittāk*).[19] In the second instance, the verb לחם is followed, not by the ususal prepositions ב "against" or את "with," but by the accusative marker את.[20]

If these were the only two examples of this phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible, it would be tempting to argue that they are additional examples of style-switching, but they are not. Gesenius notes that this phenomenon is particularly evident in later books, especially Kings, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.[21] Rendsburg explains its frequency in Kings by arguing that it was a feature of Israelian (northern) Hebrew (IH) as opposed to Judahite Hebrew (JH). According to him, this phenomenon typically occurs in Kings either in the annals of the northern kings or in the stories of the northern prophets.[22] However, in spite of this conclusion, when it is found in the speech of an Aramean, as in the present verse and in 2 Kgs 8:8, Rendsburg suggests "we also may have present additional examples of style-switching."[23] The problem with identifying this

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[18]Ibid., 61-65.

[19]Examples of the preposition מן followed by the preposition את are found throughout the Hebrew Bible. For a few clear examples, see: Gen 8:8; 26:27; 26:31; 42:24; 44:28; Exod 25:3; 35:5; Lev 25:36; 27:24; Num 7:5; 17:17; 18:26; 31:3, 51; Deut 2:6; 3:4; Judg 19:2; 1 Sam 8:10; 2 Sam 3:13; 1 Kgs 2:16; 2:20; 12:24; 18:12; 20:36; 22:24; 2 Kgs 2:10; 4:5; 5:19, 20; 1 Chr 2:23; 2 Chr 11:4; 18:23; Ps 22:26; 66:20; Prov 30:7; Isa 51:4; 54:10, 17; 57:8; Jer 3:1; 9:1; 13:25.

[20]The only other example of לחם followed by the accusative particle is in the speech of Joshua (Josh 10:25). In addition to the prepositions ב "against" and את "with," the prepositions עם "with" and על "against" may occasionally follow the verb לחם (BDB, 535).

[21]GKC, 300.

[22]The other occurrences of *'ôt*-forms where we would expect *'itt*-forms in Kings are in 1 Kgs 22:7, 8, 24; 2 Kgs 1:15 (2x); 3:11, 12, 26; 6:16; 8:8 (Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 64).

[23]Ibid., 65.

phenomenon with style-switching, however, is that it is not limited to the direct speech of Arameans in the books of Kings. In fact, it occurs in Kings more often in the speech of Hebrews than in the speech of Arameans.[24] If it is not style-switching when Hebrews employ it but simply evidence of a narrative's northern composition, why should it be considered style-switching in the two verses Arameans use it?[25] It seems better to take a more conservative approach and to argue that these are not examples of style-switching, but simply additional examples of a phenomenon that, for some reason, occurs with some frequency in the books of Kings, which, in these two instances, occurs coincidentally in the speech of Arameans.

A stronger case for style-switching can be made in 1 Kgs 20:14, 15, 17, and 19 where there are four occurrences of the word מדינה "province, district," an Aramaic loanword that is usually found in later biblical Hebrew texts.[26] In this chapter, it is found once in the speech of the prophet who addresses Ahab (1 Kgs 20:14), and three times in third person narrative (1 Kgs 20:15, 17, 19). In each of these places it occurs in the expression שׂרי מדינות "district governors."[27] Rendsburg explains its presence in this chapter by arguing that it was one of the lexemes that the language of the northern

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[24]It occurs in the speech of Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22:7; 2 Kgs 3:11; 2 Kgs 3:12), Ahab (1 Kgs 22:8), Zedekiah son of Kenaanah (1 Kgs 22:24), the Angel of the Lord (2 Kgs 1:15), and Elisha (2 Kgs 6:16).

[25]After all, according to Rendsburg, 1 Kgs 20 and 2 Kgs 8 are also northern compositions (Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 23, 58-69, 109-110).

[26]It is found in Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel. The great majority of occurrences are found in Esther (nearly 40x).

[27]Mettinger suggests that the title is the northern equivalent of נצבים and thus evidence of Aramaic influence "on the administrative terminology of the Northern Kingdom" (Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *Solomonic State Officials: A Study of the Civil Government Officials of the Israelite Monarchy* [Lund: CWK Gleerups Forlag, 1971], 124-125).

kingdom shared with Aramaic.[28] But this does not explain why all four occurrences of this word in Kings are in this one chapter that deals with Arameans, but not in any of the other northern narratives.[29] This suggests that it is best explained as another example of style-switching. The narrative is about Arameans and so Aramaic terminology is used throughout the narrative.[30]

After Israel's victory over the Arameans, 1 Kgs 20:33 records that the Arameans were looking for a sign (ינחשׁו) from Ahab that he would deal mercifully with Ben Hadad.[31] The verb נחשׁ occurs eleven times in the Hebrew Bible and always in the *piel* stem.[32] Outside of the Hebrew Bible, it occurs in Aramaic, Syriac, and Mandaic.[33] Rendsburg notes that the verb נחשׁ is used in a unique way in this verse. "In most of its occurrences in the corpus this verb has a pejorative meaning related to magic, a practice forbidden in ancient Israel."[34] However, in 1 Kgs 20:33 there are no pejorative connotations attached to the verb. It simply describes an action of the Arameans. The significance of this is that it is used here exactly as it would have been used in Aramaic,

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[28]Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 61.

[29]For a list of the chapters that Rendsburg identifies as northern, see Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 23-24, 144.

[30]This is also the position of Schniedewind and Sivan (W. Schniedewind and D. Sivan, "The Elijah-Elisha Narratives: A Test Case for the Northern Dialect of Hebrew," *JQR* 87 (1997): 323-324).

[31]Cogan translates the phrase: "The men were looking for an omen" (Mordecai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 10 [New York: Doubleday, 2001], 468).

[32]Gen 30:27; 44:5 (2x), 15 (2x); Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10; 1 Kgs 20:33; 2 Kgs 17:17; 2 Kgs 21:6; 2 Chr 33:6.

[33]H.-J. Fabry, "נחשׁ" in *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. IX (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 357. Rendsburg notes that the verbal form of נחשׁ occurs with some frequency in Aramaic texts and that the nominal form occurs in an Aramaic text from Hatra (Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 67).

[34]Gen 44:5 (2x), 15 (2x); Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 17:17; 21:6; 2 Chr 33:6 (Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 66).

without pejorative connotations. There is only one other non-pejorative occurrence of this verb in the Hebrew Bible and, interestingly, it too is in an Aramean context. In Gen 30:27, a narrative replete with style-switching forms, Laban learns through divination (נחשתי) that it is because of Jacob that the Lord has blessed him. Also significant are the two occurrences of the noun נחש "divination, enchantment" which occur only in Aramean contexts (Num 23:23 and 24:1).[35] Rendsburg concludes: "In all these cases we are dealing with the phenomenon of style-switching. Arameans are speaking and, thus, their language is colored by certain Aramaic lexical items that would be recognizable to an educated Israelite reader."[36]

In this same verse, immediately after the verb נחש, readers are confronted with the difficult phrase: ויחלטו המנו.[37] The verb חלט occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible.[38] It does occur in Mishnaic Hebrew in the *hifil* stem with the meaning "to pass judgment, validate," but as Cogan notes, this meaning is "inappropriate in the present instance."[39] Of more interest are the occurrences of the verb in Aramaic.[40] According to Sokoloff, its basic meanings in that language are "to confirm" and "to confiscate."[41] Although neither of these definitions is perfectly suited to the present context, the latter

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[35]Ibid., 67.

[36]Ibid., 67.

[37]Cogan has described the Hebrew here as "A crux, whose meaning can only be approximated from the context" (Cogan, *1 Kings*, 468).

[38]I would argue that in addition to paying close attention to the opening words of a character, readers should also pay close attention to very rare words that occur only in the speech of foreigners or in reference to them, especially *hapax legommena*.

[39]Cogan, *1 Kings*, 468.

[40]Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 202.

[41]It is used for the confiscation of property and children and as an adjective describing "a confirmed case of leprosy" (Ibid., 202).

definition is well within the semantic domain of the versions' "to snatch, catch, seize."[42] Assuming this is the meaning of חלט, the text should probably be re-divided so that the ה of המנו becomes the object of the verb חלט.[43] "Now the men were looking for a sign from Ahab and they quickly seized it from him . . ." The most significant observation for the present study, however, is that this meaning of חלט finds its closest parallel in Aramaic.

2 Kings 5

The next passage in which an Aramean plays a significant role is 2 Kings 5. In this chapter, the king of Aram sends Naaman, the commander of his army, to the prophet Elisha that he might cure his leprosy. Although the Aramean setting and the presence of Aramaic speakers make it an ideal narrative for style-switching, there is only one likely example of style-switching in this narrative.[44]

In 2 Kgs 5:18, Naaman says to Elisha:

18 לַדָּבָר הַזֶּה יִסְלַח יְהוָה לְעַבְדֶּךָ בְּבוֹא אֲדֹנִי בֵית־רִמּוֹן
לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת שָׁמָּה וְהוּא נִשָּׁעֵן עַל־יָדִי וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֵיתִי בֵּית רִמֹּן
בְּהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹתִי בֵּית רִמֹּן יִסְלַח־(נָא) יְהוָה לְעַבְדְּךָ בַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה׃

"For this one thing may the Lord forgive your servant: when my master enters the House of Rimmon to bow down there (להשתחות) and he leans upon my hand, and I bow down

[42]The *Targum* also uses a word with this meaning (חטף).

[43]This reading finds some support from the versions (Cogan, *1 Kings*, 468). The one exception to this may be the LXX which may be based on a different text. It translates: "Now the men looked for an omen and hastened and reckoned (αναλεγω) the word from his mouth . . ."

[44]There are three rare lexemes in this narrative, אחלי (2 Kgs 5:3), מתאנה, (2 Kgs 5:7) and חרטים (2 Kgs 5:23), but none of them are definitely to be seen as examples of style-switching. As I have argued, style-switching words are generally unusual words that take the place of commonly used everyday vocabulary.

in the House of Rimmon—when I bow down (בהשתחויתי) in the house of Rimmon—may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing."

The phrase "when I bow down (בהשתחויתי) in the house of Rimmon" is redundant. Various explanations have been offered to account for this.[45] Cogan and Tadmor argue that "the wordiness of Naaman's statement reflects his halting speech, as he apologizes for his continued worship of the god Rimmon, a custom which he perceives to be offensive to Israel's God."[46] However, the simplest solution is to attribute the entire phrase to dittography. The problem with all these solutions, however, is that they gloss over the peculiar form of the infinitive בהשתחויתי. Burney notes that the underlying form of the infinitive appears to be the Aramaic infinitive השתחויה (*hištaḥavāyāh*), not the biblical Hebrew infinitive השתחות (*hištaḥavōt*).[47] The significance of this observation becomes apparent only when one considers that the only occurrence of this form in the Hebrew Bible is in the direct speech of an Aramean ruler!

This example is interesting for another reason. The Aramaic-like form of the infinitive occurs alongside of the standard Hebrew form of the infinitive of the same verb. In fact, both forms (בהשתחויתי and להשתחות) occur in the same verse. The use of both forms suggests to Young "an intentional playing on standard and variant forms."[48] Several examples of the use of both standard and non-standard forms were

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[45]M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings*, AB 11 (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 65.
[46]Ibid., 65.
[47]Burney, *Kings*, 208.
[48]Ian Young, "The 'Northernisms' of the Israelite Narratives in Kings" *ZAH* 8 (1995), 65.

noted in the Jacob and Laban cycle.[49] But in those instances, the standard form was found in the mouth of a Hebrew, while the non-standard form was found in the mouth of an Aramean and the obvious conclusion was that these characters were speaking in their own dialects. Here, however, in 2 Kgs 5:18 both forms are found in the speech of the same character. Cohn suggests that in the present verse both forms are part of a chiasmus.

A For this thing

B may the LORD pardon your servant

C when my Lord comes to the house of Rimmon to worship there

X and he leans on my hand

C' and I worship in the house of Rimmon (in my worshipping in the house of Rimmon)

B' may the LORD pardon your servant

A' for this thing[50]

However, a chiasmus usually reaches a climax in the middle[51] and it is difficult to find anything significant about the phrase "and he leans on my hand."[52] Alternatively, it must

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[49]See pp. 33-34.

[50]Robert L. Cohn, *2 Kings* (The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, Minnesota, 2000), 39.

[51]S. E. Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: University Press, 1994), 27.

[52]Another problem with Cohn's argument for a chiasmus is that there is one occurrence of the verb השתחויה (*hištaḥavāyāh*) in C and two occurrences of this verb in C'. Since one would have been sufficient for the chiasmus, it is difficult to explain why there are two occurrences of the verb in C'. Cohn was obviously aware of this problem and dealt with it by putting one of the two occurrences of השתחויה (*hištaḥavāyāh*) in C' in parentheses.

be argued that the Aramaic form was the original reading and subsequently a non-Aramaic form was added and incorporated into the text.

2 Kings 6

2 Kgs 6:8-23 tells the story of how the prophet Elisha stopped the Arameans from raiding Israel. Among the unusual elements in this chapter are נחתים, *nĕḥittîm* (verse 9), נשלנו, *mišše llānû* (verse 11), איכה, *'êkôh* (verse 13), and זה, *zôh* (verse 19).

The word נחתים (verse 9) is a *hapax* in the Hebrew Bible and its derivation is uncertain. At first glance, it appears to derive from the root נחת "to go down, descend."[53] However, this derivation is complicated by the fact that נחת is a rare word in the Hebrew Bible that occurs elsewhere only in poetic texts, while ירד is the normal Hebrew word for "to go down, descend."[54] Another possibility is that it derives from the root חנה "to encamp." It is this derivation that apparently explains Hurvitz's translation "encampment."[55] Although this derivation is possible, it's only advantage over the previous one is that it derives from a more common biblical Hebrew root.[56]

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[53]Schniedewind and Sivan, "Elijah-Elisha Narratives," 325.

[54]The verb נחת occurs less than ten times (2 Sam 22:35; Job 17:16; 21:13; Ps 18:36; Ps 38:3 (2x); Ps 65:11; Prov 17:10; Joel 4:11), while ירד occurs nearly 400 times. In Job 17:16, we have a poetically parallel line in which ירד is the A word and נחת is the "B" word.

[55]Avi Hurvitz, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the Biblical Period: The Problem of 'Aramaisms' in Linguistic Research on the Hebrew Bible," in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology*, ed. Ian Young. JSOT Supplement Series 369, (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2003): 31-32.

[56]Although Hurvitz does not elaborate on his translation, his derivation may also be based on the assumption that נחתים (verse 9) must derive from the same root as the verb תחנתי in verse 8. However, the derivation of this form is also debatable. If it were from the root חנה "to encamp," it should have been pointed תחנו, *taḥanû* (see Exod 14:2).

Another possibility is that the MT is corrupt and instead of reading נחתים, it should read נחבאים "hidden." This reading is preferred by some scholars and is supported by the versions.[57] However, too much manipulation of the text is required for it to be given serious consideration, especially since the reading as it stands can be explained in relation to the context.[58]

The context is about Israel's battle with the Arameans and the word נחתים is used by the prophet to describe an action of the Arameans. In contrast with ירד, which occurs almost 400 times in the Hebrew Bible and is the normal Hebrew word for "to descend," נחת occurs less than ten times in the Hebrew Bible and is the normal Aramaic word for "to descend."[59] The logical inference is that the writer wanted to describe the "descending" of the Arameans with an Aramaic word.

In 2 Kgs 6:11, the king of Aram asks his servants:

הֲלוֹא תַּגִּידוּ לִי מִי מִשֶּׁלָּנוּ אֶל־מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

"Will you not tell me who from among us (משלנו, *mišše*llānû) is on the side of the king of Israel?" The expression משלנו is found only here in the Hebrew Bible where it occurs in place of the standard expression מי מאשר לנו.[60] A number of different readings and

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[57]Burney, *Kings*, 285 and BDB, 639.

[58]Joüon ignores the pointing of the MT and reads נחתים as a *Qal* active participle. See P. Joüon, "Notes de critique textuelle (AT) 2 Rois 6, 8-10," *MUSJ* 5 (1911-12) 477, cited in Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 101.

[59]Burney has called נחת "a very pronounced Aramaism" (Burney, *Kings*, 285). Moreover, the *Targumim* consistently render Hebrew ירד with נחת. Gray noted the appropriateness of an Aramaism in this passage but then emended the text to a different verb in his actual translation (John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970], 514, fn. c.).

[60]Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 72. A similar expression occurs in 2 Kgs 9:5 where Jehu asks the prophet sent to anoint him מי מכלנו ("who from all of us?").

pointings have been proposed but none of them are very convincing.[61] According to Rendsburg, the form *mišše*llānû includes both the relative pronoun *še* and the independent possessive pronoun *šel*.[62] Young notes that this is the only occurrence of the relative pronoun *še* in this chapter, while *'ăšer* is used consistently everywhere else (8x).[63] Is it significant that the one occurrence of *še-* in this chapter is in the direct speech of the king of Aram?

Although it is tempting to attribute this usage to style-switching, there is at least one reason to be cautious. Although the relative *še-* occurs regularly in some Semitic languages, it does not occur in Aramaic.[64] If the biblical writer were attempting to stylistically represent the speech of an Aramean, it seems logical that he would have used an appropriate Aramaic form. This leads Young to suggest that we must consider the possibility that, besides using authentic foreign words to represent the speech of foreigners, biblical writers may also have drawn "on a body of clichéd 'non-standard' forms" in order to achieve the same effect.[65] He writes: "The appearance of e.g. *š* in a text may thus not directly be evidence of local dialectal variation at all. On the contrary, it may itself be a literary expression, a cliché recognized by the intended audience as a

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[61]Gray, *I & II Kings*, 514, fn. d.

[62]Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 103.

[63]Young, "Northernisms," 65.

[64]The relative 𐤔 or 𐤔𐤀 is known from later Byblian, Phoenician, and Ammonite (W. R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria Palestine 1000-586 B.C.E.* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985], 85). However, it is not found in a single Aramaic source (Young, "Northernisms," 65).

[65]Ibid., 65.

marker of 'foreign speech.'"[66] Although it is true that *še-* is not an Aramaic form, it still may be possible to explain מִשֶּׁלָּנוּ via Aramaic.

As noted above, the form מִשֶּׁלָּנוּ includes not only the relative pronoun שׁ but also the independent possessive pronoun שֶׁל.[67] Rendsburg argues that the existence in Aramaic of the independent possessive pronoun דִּיל/זִיל suggests that שֶׁל is a northern form.[68] Alternatively, Hurvitz interprets it as a calque on Aramaic דִּיל/זִיל and, thus, as another instance of style-switching.[69] However, these two views are not necessarily mutually exclusive. An Aramean who knew the northern Hebrew dialect—certainly not the Judean dialect at this time—would have to use this form as the equivalent of his own!

In 2 Kgs 6:13, the king of Aram addresses his servants saying:

לְכוּ וּרְאוּ אֵיכֹה הוּא וְאֶשְׁלַח וְאֶקָּחֵהוּ

"Go and see where (אֵיכֹה, *'êkôh*) he [Elisha] is that I may send and take him." The word אֵיכֹה with the meaning "where" occurs only here and twice in the Song of Songs.[70] Biblical Hebrew normally expresses the meaning "where" with one of the particles אַי, אַיֵּה, or אֵיפֹה. The use of such a rare word to express an everyday concept calls for an explanation. The simplest solution is to assume that the text is corrupt and to emend it to the more familiar אֵיפֹה. However, as we have seen, facile recourses to textual

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[66]Ibid., 66.

[67]Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 103.

[68]Ibid., 103.

[69]See Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* (New Haven, Ct: American Oriental Society, 1990), 123, fn. 29; and Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 103-104, fn. 31. See also Hurvitz, "Hebrew and Aramaic," 31-32.

[70]Song 1:7, but with a slightly different vocalization.

emendation often overlook alternative explanations for such forms. In this case, the writer must have used איכה with the meaning "where" because it resembles Aramaic איכא (*'êkā'*) which means "where."[71]

In verse 19, Elisha speaks to the Arameans saying:

לֹא זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ וְלֹא זֹה הָעִיר לְכוּ אַחֲרַי וְאוֹלִיכָה אֶתְכֶם
אֶל־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר תְּבַקְּשׁוּן

"This (זה, *zeh*) is not the way and this (זה, *zôh*) is not the city. Come follow me and I will lead you to the man whom you are looking for." In this verse, the feminine singular demonstrative זה (*zôh*) is used in place of the standard form זאת.[72] The form זה (*zôh*) occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible only in Ezek 40:45 and in the book of Ecclesiastes.[73] Rendsburg argues that it is the northern Hebrew equivalent of standard biblical Hebrew זאת.[74] However, its appearance in Ezekiel is difficult to reconcile with this view.[75] Alternatively, it should be compared to the Aramaic feminine demonstrative דא and thus be considered additional evidence of style-switching.[76] Hurvitz concluded that the concentration of such unusual vocabulary—נחתים, *nĕḥittîm* (verse 9), נשלנו, *mišše*llānû (verse 11), איכה, *'êkôh* (verse 13), and זה, *zôh* (verse 19)—in a narrative

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[71]The form איכא with the meaning "where" occurs in *Targum* Jonathan's translation of this verse.

[72]The standard feminine form זאת occurs later in the chapter (vs. 28).

[73]Eccl 2:2, 24; 5:15, 18; 7:23; 9:13. BDB notes that the form זאת does not occur in Eccl (262).

[74]Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 105.

[75]Rendsburg argues that this "could be explained by the reunion of northern and southern exiles in the sixth century BCE" (Ibid., 105). The problem with this argument, however, is that it allows almost any form in the Bible to be considered northern even if found in non-northern texts.

[76]Burney was apparently the first to compare the form זה (*zôh*) with Aramaic דא (Burney, *Kings*, 287).

about Aram is evidence that these words were chosen to add an Aramaic flavor to the narrative.[77]

2 Kings 8

2 Kgs 8:7-15 is a short narrative that describes how Hazael came to succeed Ben-Hadad as king of Aram. There are three rare words in this narrative, מכבר "a type of cloth" (vs. 15), רטשׁ "to dash in pieces" (vs. 12), and עוללים "children"(vs. 12).[78] All three of these words *could* be examples of style-switching. In addition to their low frequency in the Hebrew Bible, they occur here in an Aramean context and derive from roots attested in Aramaic.[79] However, when we consider the meanings of מכבר "cloth" and רטשׁ "to dash in pieces," it is not at all surprising that they are rare words in the Hebrew Bible.[80] They are not the kind words that would be expected to occur much either in biblical literature, or in everyday speech. The word עוללים "children" (vs. 12) is a better candidate for style-switching because it does occur with an everyday meaning and takes the place of much more common biblical Hebrew words, including both ילדים and טף. However, the problem with identifying עוללים as an example of style-switching in this passage is that it is often used in the Hebrew Bible in combination with the verb

[77]Hurvitz, "Hebrew and Aramaic," 32.

[78]The word מכבר is a *hapax* in the Hebrew Bible. The verb רטשׁ occurs only six times (here in 2 Kgs 8:12; Isa 13:16, 18; Hos 10:14; 14:1; Nah 3:10).

[79]BDB, 460, 760, and 936.

[80]There are many reasons why words are rare in the Hebrew Bible. Some words have very specific meanings and can only be used in certain contexts. As I have argued throughout this study, the words and forms that are most likely to be examples of style-switching are those rare words and atypical forms that occur in place of commonly used—everyday—biblical Hebrew vocabulary.

רטש.[81] In light of this and the absence of any other evidence of style-switching in this narrative—such as the contextual markers of style-switching that came to light in the preceding chapter—it is best to take a conservative approach and to argue that these are possible, but not definitive, examples of style-switching.

Summary

When we compare the use of style-switching in the books of Kings with its employment in the Jacob and Laban cycle, a few similarities arise. First, style-switching is found both in the speech of foreigners and in the speech of those addressing them.[82] Second, style-switching is not limited to direct speech, but is also found in third person narrative.[83] Third, only one Aramaism was required to properly mark a character as an Aramean speaker (2 Kgs 5:18). However, in spite of these similarities, there are also some differences.

First, in none of these narratives is there an overt example of style-switching as there is in Gen 31:47. Second, examples of style-switching are less consistent in Kings than in the Jacob and Laban cycle. While multiple examples of this technique were found in each of the chapters Genesis 24, 29, 30, and 31, only one example was found in 2 Kings 5 (vs. 18). Third, the contextual markers of style-switching that emerged from my analysis of the Jacob and Laban cycle of stories are

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[81]In addition to 2 Kgs 8:12, see: Isa 13:16; Hos 14:1; Nah 3:10. In Ps 137:9, עוללים occurs with נפץ, a synonym of רטש.

[82]The words שפק (1 Kgs 20:10), בהשתחויתי (2 Kgs 5:18), איכה (2 Kgs 6:13) are examples of the former, while זה (2 Kgs 6:19) is an example of the latter.

[83]The words מדינה (1 Kgs 20:15, 17, and 19), נחש (1 Kgs 20:33), חלט (1 Kgs 20:33), and נחת (2 Kgs 6:9) are plausible examples of this.

largely absent from Kings where there does not appear to be any concern with placing style-switching forms at the emerging point of foreign speech, nor any concern with using different but synonymous words in the mouths of Hebrews and Arameans.

Before moving on, a possible objection to the argument for style-switching in the books of Kings should be considered. Many years ago, C. F. Burney listed a number of non-standard forms in Kings that he suggested were evidence of a northern dialect of Hebrew.[84] A more thorough treatment of this subject has been taken up recently by Rendsburg who has greatly expanded the number of northern forms in Kings.[85] Is it possible that the unusual forms encountered in these chapters in Kings have nothing to do with style-switching but are simply evidence of a northern Hebrew dialect?

Although it is possible that the unusual forms highlighted in the present study are simply evidence of a northern Hebrew dialect which shared features with Aramaic, this conclusion is not without its difficulties. First, Young argues that the idea that there was a northern Hebrew dialect and a southern Hebrew dialect is too simplistic.[86] According to him, there were probably many northern and southern dialects in ancient Israel.[87] Second, some have questioned the usefulness of Rendsburg's criteria for identifying northern Hebrew forms.[88] Third, varying conclusions have been reached

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[84]Burney, *Kings*, 208. See also S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridan Library, 1956), 188-189.

[85]Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 17-150.

[86]Young, "Northernisms," 69. To cite one example, he notes that, "There was no clear-cut distinction between standard Hebrew in the north and south in the matter of relative pronouns (Young, "Northernisms," 67). He points out that the northern prophets, Hosea and Amos, use only the relative אשר.

[87]Ibid., 69.

[88]Schniedewind and Sivan, "Elijah-Elisha," 304-314.

regarding the number of northern forms in the books of Kings which underscores the subjectivity involved.[89] The present study makes no attempt to challenge the theory of a northern Hebrew dialect in Kings as a whole, but only as it relates to those Aramaic words and forms found in those narratives examined in the present study.[90]

According to Rendsburg's study, there are twenty-five chapters (or portions thereof) in the books of Kings that can be identified as northern, eleven in 1 Kings and fourteen in 2 Kings.[91] In contrast, there are only five chapters in Kings in which Arameans play a prominent role.[92] Is it merely a coincidence that all of the Aramaic forms highlighted in this study occur only in one of the five chapters in Kings that deal with Arameans but not in any of the other northern narratives? For example, the word מדינה—one of the most obvious Aramaisms in Kings—occurs four times in a single narrative about Arameans (1 Kgs 20:14, 15, 17, 19), but not in any of the other alleged northern narratives. This same observation applies to other forms encountered in this study, including both שפק (1 Kgs 20:10) and בהשתחויתי (2 Kgs 5:18). If these really were northern forms, they would certainly not be limited in use to the few narratives in Kings that deal with Arameans, but would be found in other northern

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[89]While Rendsburg has devoted an entire book to northern forms in Kings, Schniedewind and Sivan are able to offer only a handful of examples and freely admit that in many of these instances the evidence is tenuous (Ibid., 325-334).

[90]Rendsburg himself suggests that some of these words may be examples of style-switching (Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 60, 65, 66, 68, 96).

[91]He cites: 1 Kgs 12:25-35; 13:1-34; 14:1-20; 15:25-34; 16:1-34; 17:1-24; 18:1-46; 19:1-21; 20:1-43; 21:1-29; 22:1-40, 52-54; 2 Kgs 1:1-18; 2:1-25; 3:1-27; 4:1-44; 5:1-27; 6:1-33; 7:1-20; 8:1-15, 28-29; 9:1-28, 30-37; 10:1-35; 13:1-25; 14:11-16, 23-29; 15:8-31; 17:1-41 (Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 23-24, 144).

[92]1 Kgs 20, 2 Kgs 5-8. Although Arameans are mentioned briefly in other chapters (1 Kgs 22 and 2 Kgs 7), they do not play as significant a role in them as they do in these five chapters.

narratives as well. When this observation is combined with the fact that there is a concentration of such forms in these chapters that deal with Aram—many of which are found only in the direct speech of Aramean rulers—the evidence overwhelming suggests that in all these instances we are dealing with the stylistic representation of Aramean speech.

CHAPTER FOUR: TRANS-JORDANIAN SPEECH IN BIBLICAL PROSE

The preceding chapters have argued that biblical writers colored the speech of Aramean characters with Aramaic language. The next step logically is to ask whether the use of style-switching is limited to the speech of Arameans, or if it also occurs in the speech of Ammonites, Edomites, Moabites, and Midianites?

This line of inquiry immediately encounters a significant problem. In the previous two chapters, the task of discerning stylistic features of Aramaic was facilitated due to the existence of a large corpus of ancient Aramaic literature. The Trans-Jordanian languages, on the other hand, have varying degrees of representation, with none of them as well-represented as Aramaic.[1] This obviously makes the task of identifying stylistic features of these languages more challenging. However, what we lack in terms of literature for these languages may be compensated for with the contextual markers of style-switching that came to light in the preceding chapters.[2]

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[1]For a brief discussion of these languages, see: Ian Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1993), 39-43; for fuller treatments, see: Kent P. Jackson, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age*, Harvard Semitic Monographs. No. 27 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983); Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes From the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008); Andrew Dearman, *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989). Although very little is known about the Midianites, Mendenhall posits that they would have spoken "a language that was an archaic ancestor of Arabic" (George E. Mendenhall, "Midian," *ABD* vol. 4, 817).

[2]This should not be taken to mean that authentic Trans-Jordanian vocabulary and syntactical forms can be culled from the biblical text itself. The biblical writers could have used a pseudo-language to mimic foreign speech, or even Aramaic. What is suggested here is that the literary evidence of style-switching that came to light in the preceding chapters can be used to make an informed decision as to which elements in the direct speech of a foreigner were intended to mark that speaker as a foreigner.

First, style-switching forms have tended to be extremely rare words (often *hapax legomena*) that take the place of everyday vocabulary.[3] Second, style-switching forms have been found at key junctures in narratives, especially at the emerging point of foreign speech.[4] Third, at times, the biblical writers skillfully and deliberately placed different but synonymous forms in the mouths of two different characters—one a foreigner and the other a Hebrew or even the narrator—in order to make it more apparent to readers that they were drawing a contrast between Hebrew and foreign speech.[5] And finally, while style-switching forms have been found in isolation (2 Kgs 5:18), a concentration of unusual forms in the mouth of a foreigner may also be evidence of style-switching.[6] It is contextual markers such as these that should be looked for in the speech-samples that follow.

Before delving into the first narrative, it may be beneficial to list a few reasons to suspect that style-switching might occur in Trans-Jordanian speech in the Hebrew Bible. First, as the preceding chapters have shown, biblical writers colored the speech of Aramean characters with Aramaic language. Thus, it is only reasonable to

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[3]Examples include הגמיא "to give drink" instead of השקה (Gen 24:17), עלמה "girl" instead of נערה (Gen 24:43), צעירה "young" instead of קטנה (Gen 29:26), יהב "to give" in place of נתן (Gen 30:1), and נטש "to allow" in place of נתן (Gen 31:28).

[4]For example, the form הגמיאיני (Gen 24:17) occurs at the emerging point of the servant's dialogue with Rebekah instead of the standard השקיני. Similarly, the first word spoken by Rachel in the Hebrew Bible is יהב (Gen 30:1), not the more regularly occurring נתן.

[5]For example, in Genesis 29 both the narrator and Jacob used the word קטנה in reference to Laban's "younger" daughter (Gen 29:16 and 18), while Laban used the more Aramaic-like צעירה (Gen 29:26).

[6]Avi Hurvitz, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the Biblical Period: The Problem of 'Aramaisms' in Linguistic Research on the Hebrew Bible," in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology*, ed. Ian Young. JSOT Supplement Series 369, (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2003): 31-32.

suspect that they might also have colored the speech of Trans-Jordanians. Second, there are a couple of verses in the Hebrew Bible that imply that biblical writers had some familiarity with Trans-Jordanian speech. Deut 2:11 and 20 state that the Moabites called the Rephaites Emites (אמים) and that the Ammonites called them Zamzummites (זמזמים).[7] Third, a clear example of the stylistic representation of Trans-Jordanian speech occurs in Isa 21:11-14 in the speech of Edomite-Arabs.[8]

11 מַשָּׂא דוּמָה אֵלַי קֹרֵא מִשֵּׂעִיר שֹׁמֵר מַה־מִּלַּיְלָה שֹׁמֵר
מַה־מִּלָּיְל׃
12 אָמַר שֹׁמֵר אָתָה בֹקֶר וְגַם־לָיְלָה אִם־תִּבְעָיוּן בְּעָיוּ שֻׁבוּ
אֵתָיוּ׃
13 מַשָּׂא בַּעְרָב בַּיַּעַר בָּעַרְבָ תָּלִינוּ אָרְחוֹת דְּדָנִים׃
14 לִקְרַאת צָמֵא הֵתָיוּ מֵיִם יֹשְׁבֵי אֶרֶץ תֵּימָא בְּלַחְמוֹ קִדְּמוּ
נֹדֵד׃

(vs. 11) An oracle regarding Dumah: One calls to me from Seir, "What is of the night? Watchman, What is of the night?"[9]
(vs. 12) The watchman answered: "The morning has come (אתה) and also night. If you would seek (תבעיון), then seek (בעיו), Return, Come (אתיו)."
(vss. 13-14) An oracle on Arabia: In the wilderness in Arabia you lodge. O caravans of the Dedanites, bring (התיו) water to the thirsty. O inhabitants of the land of Tema, present the refugee with his bread.

Mention should also be made here of the dialogues in the book of Job which, according to Kaufman, are Aramaic-like in spite of the fact that the characters are not Arameans but

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[7]The word אמים is from אימה "terror, dread" and זמזמים is from Arabic *zumzama* "distant confused sound" (Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11* [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 164).

[8]Kaufman, "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Panel Sessions: Hebrew and Aramaic Languages; Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1988), 55. See also: Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 72.

[9]The phrase מה־מליל is an obvious word-play on the common Aramaic word מלל "to speak, say." The phrase מה־מלל would mean "What did he say?"

rather some nebulous Arabians.[10] Since the biblical writers colored the speech of Trans-Jordanians in these poetic passages, there is reason to suspect that they might also have colored the speech of Trans-Jordanians in biblical prose.

Ammonite

There are six Ammonites mentioned by name in the Hebrew Bible.[11] However, direct speech is recorded for only two of them, Nahash the enemy of Saul (1 Sam 11) and Tobiah (Neh 3:35).[12] Since it is unclear whether Ammonite refers to Tobiah's ancestry or to his role as an official among the Ammonites,[13] the only certain Ammonite for whom direct speech is recorded is Nahash (1 Sam 11:2).[14] Nahash is mentioned only twice in the narrative (1 Sam 11:1 and 2) and the words attributed to him are extremely brief. His only recorded words are:

בְּזֹאת אֶכְרֹת לָכֶם בִּנְקֹור לָכֶם כָּל־עַיִן יָמִין וְשַׂמְתִּיהָ
חֶרְפָּה עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

"With this will I cut for you (a covenant): The boring out for you every right eye so I can set it as a reproach over all Israel" (1 Sam 11:2). There is nothing definitively stylistic about his speech in this verse. The word "right" (ימין) is used here in a construct

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[10]Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects," 55-56. The implications of this will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

[11]Nahash (1 Sam 11:1 and 2), Hanun (2 Sam 10:3), Zelek (2 Sam 23:37; 1 Chr 11:39), Naamah, the mother of Rehoboam (1 Kgs 14:21, 31), Shimath, an Ammonite woman (2 Chr 24:26), and Tobiah (Neh 2:10, 19; 3:35; 4:1, etc.).

[12]Direct speech is also recorded for some unnamed Ammonites (see below).

[13]F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 164. See also Tamara C. Eskenazi, "Tobiah" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 584.

[14]The one speech directly attributed to Tobiah is very brief (Neh 3:35) and there is nothing definitively stylistic about it. Elsewhere he speaks as part of a group (Neh 2:19; 4:5, etc.).

relationship with the body part as it normally is in biblical Hebrew (rather than as an adjective).[15] The use of שׂים rather than נתן should also be considered but it occurs quite frequently in the Hebrew Bible (over 500 times) and often in the speech of Hebrews.[16] One feature that stands out, however, is the elision of the word "covenant" which may be an intentional literary device but not an example of style-switching. The Israelites ask Nahash to "cut a covenant" with them. He responds that he will do some cutting, but not in relation to a covenant![17]

Direct speech is also recorded for some unnamed Ammonites: a king of Ammon (Judg 11:13) and some Ammonite princes (2 Sam 10:3 and 1 Chr 19:3). However, there is nothing definitively stylistic about these speeches either. They appear to be standard biblical Hebrew and there is no literary evidence to support an appeal to style-switching. On the basis of the limited instances of reported Ammonite speech in biblical prose, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about whether or not biblical writers colored the speech of Trans-Jordanians. Fortunately, this query can be tested by examining the speech of other Trans-Jordanians in the Hebrew Bible.

Edomite

The first, and arguably best-known, Edomite encountered in the Hebrew Bible is Esau who is introduced in Gen 25:19-26 with a story about his birth. This is followed by a short episode regarding his selling of his birthright to Jacob in exchange

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[15]See Gen 48:17; Exod 29:22; Lev 7:32, 33; 8:25, 26; 9:21; Judg 3:15, 16, etc.
[16]See Gen 24:2; Isa 14:23; 51:23, etc.
[17]This interpretation was suggested to me by Carl Pace, a graduate student at Hebrew Union College.

for a pot of stew (Gen 25:29-32). It is in this account that the initial words describing his character are found.

The narrative reads:

29 וַיָּזֶד יַעֲקֹב נָזִיד וַיָּבֹא עֵשָׂו מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה וְהוּא עָיֵף:
30 וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הַלְעִיטֵנִי נָא מִן־הָאָדֹם הָאָדֹם הַזֶּה
כִּי עָיֵף אָנֹכִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ אֱדוֹם:
31 וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב מִכְרָה כַיּוֹם אֶת־בְּכֹרָתְךָ לִי:
32 וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת וְלָמָּה־זֶּה לִי בְּכֹרָה:

> Next Jacob boiled stew. Then Esau came in from the field. He was weary (from hunger). Then Esau said to Jacob, "Give me to eat (הלעיטני), please, some of this red stuff because I am weary." Therefore, he is called Edom. Then Jacob said, "Sell to me today your birthright." Then Esau said, "Look, I am going to die, what is this birthright to me?"

From the inception of Esau's speech, we are immediately confronted with a difficult word, the *hapax* הלעיטני. Possible cognates of this verb include Akkadian *la'ātu* "to swallow," Arabic *lāsa* "to taste," and Syriac *lu'āṭā'* "jaw."[18] The context of Gen 25:30 requires the meaning "to feed," a concept almost always expressed with the *hifil* of אכל. The question is, why did the biblical writer use such a rare word to express an everyday phenomenon?

One possibility is that the verb הלעיט had a slightly different nuance than the verb האכיל. This is suggested by Benno Jacob who argues that "The Hebrew expression is taken from the feeding of animals and characterizes the uncontrolled

[18]Robert H. O'Connell, "לעט" in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 2, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 807. BDB relates it to the Arabic verb *laġata* "to speak confusedly, utter indistinct sounds," but this derivation is rejected by O'Connell (807).

gluttony as well as the vulgar language of Esau."[19] More recently, Alter has defended a similar interpretation of this verb.[20] However, there is a problem with this interpretation. Nowhere in the Hebrew Bible is הלעיט used for the feeding of animals. Rather, it is only in later Hebrew where it has this meaning.[21] Thus, this interpretation is based entirely on the assumption that the meaning of הלעיט in Gen 25:30 is the same as its meaning in later Hebrew literature. However, the assumption that MH has accurately preserved the meanings of rare words in the Hebrew Bible is not without difficulty. Barr writes: "the continuity of Hebrew from the biblical down to the Mishnaic period does not in itself provide a clear basis for the preservation of the meanings of rare words in biblical texts."[22] Although not all the examples of הלעיט in rabbinic literature are directly related to this unique biblical passage,[23] it is difficult to use Mishnaic references in order to establish a meaning for הלעיט in Gen 25:30 since those Mishnaic references may have depended on rabbinic interpretation of Gen 25:30.[24] The Arabic and Aramaic cognates listed above do not offer much assistance in the interpretation of this passage.

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[19]Benno Jacob, *The First Book of the Bible Genesis* (New York: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1974), 168.

[20]Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981), 44.

[21]For examples, see: Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 714.

[22]James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 42-43.

[23]"One may not fatten up a camel *on the Sabbath* but one may put food (מלעיטין) into its mouth" (Sabb. 155b).

[24]"When a word used in biblical Hebrew appears also in post-biblical material, this may mean that a continuity of general usage existed throughout both periods. It may, however, also mean that a word found in the biblical text has been taken up and renewed in later literature, on the basis not of continuity in general usage but of reference solely to the limited biblical texts where the word occurs. The word is thus one quoted, and from this quotation it enters into a new lease of life. The sense which it now has, however, is not necessarily identical with that meant by the author in the original biblical milieu. On the contrary, it may be a sense attached solely to an occurrence in the biblical text as it was later read and understood" (Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 227).

There are two observations about the verb הלעיט in this passage that suggest an alternative interpretation. First, as we have seen, it is a *hapax* in the Hebrew Bible that, from the context, means "to feed," a concept almost always expressed with the *hifil* of אכל. The latter verb occurs over 800 times in the Hebrew Bible in the *qal*, *nifal*, *pual*, and *hifil* stems and is used to describe both the eating and the feeding of all kinds of food.[25] Humans and animals, as well as inanimate objects, are the subject of this verb.[26] There is no reason to believe that it could not have been used in the context of Gen 25:30.[27] The use of such a rare word to describe an everyday concept is very consistent with what we have seen in the preceding chapters where style-switching forms have tended to be extremely rare words that take the place of everyday vocabulary. Second, and even more significant, is where this verb occurs within Esau's speech. It happens to be the very first word spoken by Esau in the Hebrew Bible and thus another example of an extremely rare word occurring at the emerging point of foreign speech.[28] On the basis of these observations, it must be concluded that the verb הלעיט is a stylistic representation of Esau's Trans-Jordanian speech.

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[25]It is used to describe the eating of both edible and non-edible items—even a scroll (Ezek 3:3)! It occurs twenty times in the *hifil* with the meaning "to feed."

[26]The verb אכל takes humans as subjects (Gen 3:11, 18, etc.), animals and bugs as subjects (Gen 37:20, 33; Deut 28:39; Job 13:28; Ps 78:45, etc.), and inanimate objects (Gen 31:40; Ezek 7:15, etc.).

[27]The verb אכל is even used in Gen 37:33 where Jacob believes that a wild animal devoured Joseph.

[28]Cf. Gen 24:17; 30:1.

Speeches are also recorded for Esau in Genesis 27 and 33. However, at this time, there is no definitive evidence of style-switching in either chapter.[29] The same must be said regarding the recorded speech of two other Edomites in the Hebrew Bible, Doeg (1 Sam 22:9-10) and Hadad (1 Kgs 11:21-22),[30] the former a servant of Saul and the latter an enemy of Solomon.[31] However, in these two instances, the apparent lack of stylistic features may be due to the minor role that they play in these narratives and also to the brevity of their speeches.

Midianite

The only Midianite who plays a significant role in the Hebrew Bible is Jethro (or Reuel), the father-in-law of Moses. Speeches are recorded for him in Exod 2:18, 20; 4:18; 18:6, 10-11, 14, and 17-23.[32] Since his recorded words are extremely brief in chapters 2 and 4, I will concentrate on chapter 18 where Jethro confronts Moses about his handling of judicial matters. Benno Jacob has highlighted a number of unusual

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[29]The apparent absence of additional stylistic features from Esau's speech is not a significant problem for my thesis. Gen 31:47-48 makes it very clear that biblical writers could color the speech of a foreigner and then switch to standard biblical Hebrew for the remainder of that character's dialogue. In Gen 31:47 the text explicitly states that Laban called the heap of stones יגר שהדותא, but in the very next verse (vs. 48) it states just as explicitly that he called it גלעד. In fact, excluding Gen 31:47, every time that Laban uses the words "heap" and "witness" in this narrative, he uses only standard biblical Hebrew words (גל, vs. 48, עד, vss. 44, 48, and גלעד, vs. 48).

[30]One possible example of style-switching in 1 Kgs 11:22 is pharaoh's use of עמי "with me" instead of עמדי in the phrase "what are you lacking with me . . ." But both עמי and עמדי occur about the same number of times in the Hebrew Bible (about 50x).

[31]In Num 20:18 and 20, Edom tells Israel that she is not permitted to pass through Edomite territory. The words attributed to Edom are very brief and there does not appear to be any definitive evidence of style-switching.

[32]Direct speech is also recorded for Hobab (Num 10:30) and the Midianite kings, Zeba and Zalmunna (Judg 8:18, 21). Each of these speech samples is very brief and there does not appear to be any definitive evidence of style-switching in them. In Judg 7:14 a brief speech is recorded for a man who is among the Midianites, Amalekites, and Kedemites (see Judg 7:12). There is no definitive evidence of style-switching in his speech either.

forms in this chapter: ויחד (18:9), זדו (18:11), נבל (18:18), עשׂהו (18:18), מול האלהים (18:19), והזהרתה (18:20), אתהם (18:20), and תחזה (18:21).[33] Although not all of them are found in direct speech, the question immediately arises as to whether or not any of them are examples of style-switching.

Verse 9 states that Jethro rejoiced (ויחד) after having heard all that the Lord had done to pharaoh and to Egypt for the sake of Israel. The concept of "rejoicing" is usually expressed in the Hebrew Bible with שׂמח, a verb that occurs over 150 times, or גיל a verb that occurs fifty times. The verb שׂוש also occurs with some frequency but mainly in poetic texts.[34] The verb חדה, on the other hand, is more typical of Aramaic.[35] Excluding the present verse, it occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible with the meaning "to rejoice" only in two poetic passages, Ps 21:7 and possibly Job 3:6.[36]

That this rare word does not occur in speech does not prove that it is not a style-switching form.[37] However, in my view, style-switching forms should be expected initially in direct speech and then in the course of a narrative. If there is strong evidence of style-switching in the direct speech of Jethro, then there is reason to suspect that חדה might also be an example of this technique.[38] Nevertheless, there are three additional

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[33]Benno Jacob, "The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus" (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1992), 507.

[34]It occurs twenty-four times, typically in Psalms, Job, and Isaiah.

[35]See Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 188. Both Neofiti and Onqelos use חדא in their renderings of Exod 18:9.

[36]There is some question about the meaning of the verb in Job 3:6 (John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 90).

[37]Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies," 130.

[38]A good example of style-switching in the course of narrative is the verb הדביק "to overtake" in Gen 31:23. As noted earlier, *Targum* Onqelos uses אדביק to translate both הדביק (Gen 31:23) and the more usual השׂיג (Gen 31:25).

details about the verb חדה that are consistent with such an interpretation. First, even though חדה is not found in Jethro's speech, it is used by the narrator to describe the Midianite's response to Moses. Perhaps the point is that whereas an excited Israelite would "שׂמח" an excited Midianite would "חדה."[39] Second, it may be significant that this verb occurs at the very point in the narrative where there is a shift from the character of Moses to Jethro. Immediately after Moses is done speaking, and all of the attention is on Jethro's anticipated response, the text uses the irregular חדה to describe Jethro's response to Moses.[40] And finally, it is certainly no coincidence that from this point of the narrative onward we find a lengthy speech of Jethro replete with rare words and unusual forms.

A difficult phrase occurs at the end of verse 11. The verse reads:

11 עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־גָדוֹל יְהוָה מִכָּל־הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי בַּדָּבָר
אֲשֶׁר זָדוּ עֲלֵיהֶם׃

"Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods for in the matter which they have acted arrogantly over them." The difficulty concerns the interpretation of the phrase כי בדבר אשר זדו עליהם. The individual words present little difficulty. The only one that does not occur frequently in the Hebrew Bible is זוד which occurs only ten times.[41]

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[39]A similar example of this technique was referred to in the previous chapter where in 2 Kgs 6:9 the author described the "descending" of the Arameans with the Aramaic verb נחת.

[40]Exod 18:8-9a: "Then Moses recounted to his father-in-law all which the Lord had done to pharaoh and to Egypt for the sake of Israel, all the trouble which met them along the way and how the Lord delivered them. Then Jethro rejoiced (ויחד) over all the good which the Lord had done for Israel . . ."

[41]Gen 25:29; Exod 18:11; 21:14; Deut 1:43; 17:13; 18:20; Neh 9:10, 16, 29; Jer 50:29. It occurs twice in the *qal* and elsewhere in the *hifil* but with "no discernable difference in meaning" (J. Scharbert, "זוד" in *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* vol. IV, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 47).

However, it is difficult to attribute this word to style-switching since it occurs elsewhere in the speech of Hebrews.[42] There are two main problems with the phrase. The subject of the verb זדו is ambiguous—is it the Egyptians or the gods of Egypt?[43] Second, something seems to be missing from the phrase. The best explanation is that the text is corrupt. If we look at this phrase closely, it looks remarkably similar to the preceding clause which also begins with כי and ends not with עליהם but with the nearly homophonic אלהים. This suggests that the entire phrase is an example of dittography.[44]

A stronger case for style-switching can be made in Exod 18:18 with regard to the verb נבל. The verse reads:

18 נָבֵל תִּבֹּל גַּם־אַתָּה גַּם־הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עִמָּךְ כִּי־כָבֵד
מִמְּךָ הַדָּבָר לֹא־תוּכַל עֲשֵׂהוּ לְבַדֶּךָּ׃

"You will surely wear yourself out (נבל תבל), both you and the people who are with you, for this thing is too heavy for you. You cannot do it (עשׂהו, *'ăśōhû*) alone." There are two verbs that derive from the root נבל in the Hebrew Bible, one of which means "to

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[42]For example, Yahweh (Exod 21:14), Moses (Deut 1:43), and Levites (Neh 9:10, 16, 29).

[43]*Targum* Onqelos reads: "For with the thing that Egypt thought to judge Israel, he judged them with it." See also B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 497-498; Ronald E. Clements, *Exodus*, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 105; W. H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, AB (NY: Doubleday, 1999), 630. Others argue that the gods of Egypt are the subject (see John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC vol. 3 [Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1987], 239, 244).

[44]Alternatively, though less likely in my view, it might be suggested that what we have here is the intentional use of confused language in order to stylize Jethro as a foreigner. This approach to the text finds parallels in the work of Hurvitz and Rendsburg both of whom have argued that some textually suspect passages are better explained on "*stylistic-literary*" grounds (Avi Hurvitz, "Ruth 2:7—'A Midrashic Gloss'?" *ZAW* 95 (1983):121-123; Gary Rendsburg, "Confused Language as a Deliberate Literary Device in Biblical Hebrew Narrative," *JHS* 2:1-20, electronic version, on the web at http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article_12.pdf. A problem with this view, however, is that Hurvitz offers only two examples of this technique (Ruth 2:7 and 1 Sam 9:12-13). Rendsburg offers a few more, but they are all debatable.

be foolish" and one of which means "to drop down, wither, fade." The context makes it clear that the latter is intended in Exod 18:18 where Jethro is concerned that Moses will "wear himself out" physically if he attends to all the judicial matters alone. This meaning of נבל occurs approximately twenty times in the biblical corpus, usually in reference to the fading or withering of grass, leaves, and flowers.[45] However, Exod 18:18 is the only verse in the Hebrew Bible where נבל refers to physical exhaustion. The concept of physical exhaustion is normally expressed in the Hebrew Bible with words from the roots עיף, יעף, and יגע.[46] Is it significant that the author used נבל here in the speech of Jethro instead of any of these other more commonly used roots? There are of course no Midianite texts with which to compare Jethro's speech. Nevertheless, the concentration of unusual elements in Jethro's speech strongly suggests that what we have here is the use of atypical language to mark Jethro's foreignness and not necessarily a genuine representation of Midianite speech.

This interpretation is strengthened by the observation that Jethro also uses an unusual form of the infinitive construct of עשׂה in this verse. The *qal* infinitive construct of this verb occurs approximately 290 times in the Hebrew Bible and is normally of the form עשׂות. When it occurs with a 3ms suffix, as in the present verse, it

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[45]For example, Isa 40:8 reads: "The grass dries up, the flower withers away (נבל), but the word of the Lord remains forever." For similar usages see: Ps 1:3; 37:2; Isa 1:30; 24:4; 28:1, 4; 34:4 (3x); 40:7; 64:6; Jer 8:13; Ezek 47:12.

[46]For examples from the root עיף, see Gen 25:29, 30; Deut 25:18; Judg 4:21; 8:4, 5; 2 Sam 16:14. For examples from the root יעף, see Jer 2:24; 51:58, 64; Isa 40:28, 30, 31; 44:12, Hab 2:13; Dan 9:21. For examples from the root יגע, see Josh 7:3; 24:13; 2 Sam 23:10; Isa 40:28, 30, 31.

is either written with an independent suffix of the form לעשות אתו,[47] or with an attached suffix of the form לעשותו.[48] It is only here in the Hebrew Bible, in the speech of Jethro, that the peculiar form עשהו (*'ăśōhû*) is found.[49] One could argue that the form עשהו is a textual error for עשתו. However, the accumulation of rare words and unusual forms in the speech of Jethro arouses the suspicion that the writer deliberately manipulated this form in order to convey something about Jethro's speech.

In Exod 18:19, Jethro tells Moses "to be for the people before God" (היה אתה לעם מול האלהים). This expression is generally interpreted in one of two ways.[50] Either Jethro was telling Moses to be as god for the people (that is, in God's place), or he was telling him to be God's representative to the people.[51] There are a number of places in the Hebrew Bible where God promises to be his people's God or where he tells someone else to be as god to or for someone else (as his representative). In all these instances, "to be as God" is expressed with the verb "to be" (היה) followed by לאלהים.[52] For example, when God promises to be Abraham's God in Gen 17:7 the expression is להיות לך לאלהים. Similarly, when God tells Moses that he will be as

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[47]See Gen 18:7; Exod 35:1; 36:2, 3, 5, 7; Lev 17:9; Deut 4:14; 27:26; Esth 9:22; Ezek 20:21.

[48]See Gen 41:32; Exod 12:48; Deut 30:14; 2 Chr 30:3; Job 23:9; 28:26; Jer 1:12; 30:24; 23:20.

[49]The infinitive construct of עשה is usually of the form עשות. However, in three passages (Gen 50:20; Ps 101:3; Prov 21:3) it is of the form עשה (*ăśōh*). Atypical forms of the infinitive construct of other III-y verbs are found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (see Gen 48:11; Prov 16:16; Isa 49:7).

[50]Jacob, *Exodus*, 506.

[51]Ibid., 506.

[52]For some discussion related to this, see: August Dillman, *Exodus und Leviticus* (Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum alten Testament) (Leipzig: Verlag Von S. Hirzel, 1880), 187.

God to Aaron, the expression is תהיה־לו לאלהים (Exod 4:16).[53] Jethro's language not only deviates from the way this is normally expressed in biblical Hebrew, but he uses a phrase that occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible (מול האלהים).[54]

The word זהר "to warn" occurs twenty-two times in the Hebrew Bible, predominantly in Ezekiel, Qoheleth, and Chronicles.[55] The only place it occurs in the Pentateuch is in the speech of Jethro (Exod 18:20) where it occurs not with its usual meaning "to warn" but with the meaning "to instruct." Jethro tells Moses:

[20] וְהִזְהַרְתָּה אֹתָם אֶת־הַחֻקִּים וְאֶת־הַתּוֹרֹת

"You shall teach (והזהרתה) them the statutes (את־החקים) and the instructions (ואת־התורת)." Although this is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where זהר means "to teach/instruct," the *afel* of זהר means "to teach" in Syriac.[56] However, Jethro's use of הזהיר must be compared with Moses' use of a different verb in Exod 18:16. When Moses tells Jethro that he teaches the people the statutes and instructions, he does not use the same peculiar verb as his father-in-law, but the more regularly occurring *hifil* of ידע (Exod 18:16).

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[53]See Gen 17:7, 8; 28:21; Exod 4:16; 6:7; 29:45; Lev 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:12, 45; Num 15:41; Deut 26:17; 29:12; 2 Sam 7:24; 1 Chr 17:22; Jer 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 34:24; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech 8:8.

[54]Unlike the phrase מול האלהים, the expression לפני האלהים occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (see Num 10:10; 1 Chr 13:10; 2 Chr 33:12; 34:27; Ezra 8:21; Neh 1:4; Ps 42:3; 56:14; 61:8; Qoh 8:13; Dan 10:12). The prophets Elijah and Elisha speak of "standing before God" אשר עמדתי לפניו (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:15; 2 Kgs 3:14; 5:16). Similarly, while the phrase לפני יהוה occurs with some frequency (over 200x), the phrase מול יהוה occurs nowhere in the biblical corpus.

[55]The majority of its occurrences are in the book of Ezekiel where it occurs fifteen times (see Ezek 3:17, 18 [2x], 19, 20, 21 [2x]; 33:3, 4, 5 [2x], 6, 7, 8, 9).

[56]Michael Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann's Lxicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns and Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2009), 368.

In this same verse (Exod 18:20), the very rare alternative 3mp form אתהם (*'ĕthĕm*) is found in Jethro's speech in place of the much more common 3mp form אתם (*'ōtām*). The form אתם (*'ōtām*) occurs nearly 500 times in the Hebrew Bible, while אתהם (*'ĕthĕm*) occurs only five times.[57] The disparity in the distribution of these two forms is all the more noteworthy when one realizes that אתהם occurs only here in Exodus—in the speech of Jethro—while the standard אתם (*'ōtām*) occurs everywhere else in the book (nearly 60x).

The verb חזה occurs over fifty times in the Hebrew Bible, almost always in poetic texts, and means "to see."[58] The only non-poetic occurrence of this word is found in Exod 18:21 in the speech of Jethro where it has an irregular meaning:

וְאַתָּה תֶחֱזֶה מִכָּל־הָעָם אַנְשֵׁי־חַיִל יִרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים אַנְשֵׁי
אֱמֶת שֹׂנְאֵי בָצַע וְשַׂמְתָּ עֲלֵהֶם שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שָׂרֵי
חֲמִשִּׁים וְשָׂרֵי עֲשָׂרֹת:

"Now you, see (תחזה) from among all the people men of ability, fearers of God, men of truth who hate bribery and appoint them as leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens." Here חזה does not mean "to see" as much as it does "to choose."[59] This becomes especially clear in verse 25 where, after Jethro is done speaking, the narrator records that Moses listened to his father-in-law and *chose* (ויבחר) men of ability.[60] It is certainly no

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[57]Gen 32:1; Exod 18:20; Num 21:3; 1 Chr 6:50; Ezek 34:12.

[58]BDB, 302.

[59]It likely also has the connotation of selection through divine inspiration (A. Jepsen, "חזה" in *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. IV, ed. Botterweck and Ringgren [Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1980], 283-290).

[60]The verb בחר occurs over 170 times in the biblical corpus and is the most commonly used word meaning "to choose, select." Although חזה occurs nowhere else in the biblical corpus with this meaning, the verb ראה occurs with this meaning once (Gen 41:33).

coincidence that Jethro's peculiar use of the verb חזה (Exod 18:21) is replaced with the standard biblical Hebrew word בחר in the voice of the narrator (Exod 18:25).

Years ago, Benno Jacob highlighted the irregularity of these forms and, without any elaboration, speculated that: "Perhaps, Jethro spoke stilted Hebrew or the *Torah* imitated the Midianites."[61] The following facts support this conclusion. First, there is a concentration of unusual forms in this chapter. Second, every one of these forms—with one exception—is found in the speech of Jethro.[62] And third, in two instances, Jethro's speech is contrasted with that of the narrator and Moses, a literary cue intended to convey that Jethro did not speak the Hebrew of Moses, the narrator, and his audience.

Before moving on, there is one additional feature of this passage stands out and requires comment. Although Jethro is a Midianite, some of the atypical vocabulary in this passage is best attested in Aramaic.[63] This is particularly interesting in light of Kaufman's observation that the speech of other Trans-Jordanians in the Hebrew Bible is also Aramaic-like.[64] This may have important implications for our writers' conception of Trans-Jordanian speech. This will be discussed in more detail in the concluding chapter.

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[61]B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 507.

[62]Only חדה occurs outside of Jethro's speech, but it is nevertheless used to describe his response to Moses.

[63]The best examples are the verbs חדה "to rejoice" (Exod 18:9) and חזה "to see, choose" (Exod 18:21). The verb זהר with the meaning "to teach" should also be mentioned even though this is a rare meaning of the verb in Syriac (Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, 368).

[64]Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects," 55.

Moabite

Although Moabites are well-known as an enemy of Israel in the Hebrew Bible, there are only a handful of Moabites mentioned by name in the Hebrew Bible: Ithmah, one of David's warriors (1 Chr 11:46), Balak and Mesha, kings of Moab (Num 22:4 and 2 Kgs 4:3), Shimrith (2 Chr 24:26), and Ruth (Ruth 1:22). Of these, direct speech is recorded for only Balak and Ruth.[65] Since the speech of Balak is found in poetry and is thus outside the scope of this study, I will devote my attention to the direct speech recorded in the book of Ruth.

The book of Ruth tells the story about a Hebrew family that left Bethlehem to sojourn in Moab. Chief among the central characters of the story is the Moabite Ruth. Her status as a Moabite was obviously considered important for it is mentioned a number of times throughout the book.[66] If style-switching occurs in the book of Ruth, the most logical place to look would be in the speech of Ruth. Yet, Rendsburg has concluded that there is no evidence of this technique in her speech.[67] However, this does not settle the matter because style-switching forms have been found not only in the speech of foreigners but also in the speech of those addressing them.[68] This means that style-switching should be looked for not only in the speech of Ruth but

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[65]Direct speech is also recorded for some unnamed Moabites. These will be referenced below.

[66]Ruth 1:22; 2:2; 2:21; 4:5.

[67]Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 184, fn. 30.

[68]Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies," 129-130.

also in the speech of Boaz and Naomi.[69] Campbell has made an interesting observation about their speeches. "Boaz and Naomi talk like older people. Their speeches contain archaic morphology and syntax."[70] The question is, are any of these features consistent with style-switching?

In a recent monograph, Holmstedt highlights seven examples of what he calls "style-shifting" in the book of Ruth.[71] The first example cited by him is the apparent confusion of grammatical gender.[72] Campbell notes: "There are seven places in the Ruth text where what appears to be a masculine plural suffix is used with a feminine plural antecedent."[73] Interestingly, the first example of this is in Naomi's opening address to her Moabite daughters-in-law.

[8] וַתֹּאמֶר נָעֳמִי לִשְׁתֵּי כַלֹּתֶיהָ לֵכְנָה שֹּׁבְנָה אִשָּׁה לְבֵית
אִמָּהּ (יַעֲשֶׂה) [יַעַשׂ] יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם חֶסֶד כַּאֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם
עִם־הַמֵּתִים וְעִמָּדִי׃
[9] יִתֵּן יְהוָה לָכֶם וּמְצֶאןָ מְנוּחָה אִשָּׁה בֵּית אִישָׁהּ וַתִּשַּׁק
לָהֶן וַתִּשֶּׂאנָה קוֹלָן וַתִּבְכֶּינָה׃

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[69]Another reason to consider this proposal is that, according to the narrative, Naomi lived in Moab for ten years (Ruth 1:4).

[70]Edward F. Campbell, Jr., *Ruth*, AB 7 (NY: Doubleday, 1975), 17.

[71]Robert D. Holmstedt, *Ruth: A Handbook of the Hebrew Text* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010), 47. Not all of his examples are equally convincing. I have excluded from the discussion three of his seven examples of style-shifting: The collocation לקט ב (Ruth 2:2), the *ketiv* forms of the 2fs verbs וירדתי (Ruth 3:3) and ושכבתי (Ruth 3:4), and the apparent confused speech of the overseer (Ruth 2:7). The collocation לקט ב (which normally requires an accusative compliment, not the preposition ב) can be excluded because there are other possible explanations of the form (see Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 107). The 2fs verbs with *yod* can be excluded because analogous forms show up in a number of biblical books and in the speech of Hebrews (see GKC, 121). I have excluded the speech of the overseer (Ruth 2:7) because the Hebrew is not as much of a problem as some have suggested. Moreover, as far as we know, the overseer is neither a foreigner, nor is he addressing one.

[72]Ibid., 47.

[73]Campbell, *Ruth*, 24. The verses are: 1:8 (2x), 9, 11, 13, 19; 4:11.

8) "Go! Return each to the house of her mother. May the Lord deal kindly with you (עמכם) just as you have done (עשיתם) with the dead and with me. 9) May the Lord allow each of you (לכם) to find a resting place in the house of her husband" (Ruth 1:8-9a).

A few explanations have been proposed to explain this phenomenon in the book of Ruth. GKC argues that it was likely a feature of the colloquial language that made its way into literature.[74] Myers suggests that it was probably a "relatively early dialectical peculiarity, submerged by the later spread of standard grammatical forms."[75] And Campbell argues that these forms are early Hebrew feminine dual suffixes, based on the observation that in all seven places the form refers back to two women.[76]

Campbell's argument has gained some acceptance.[77] However, since the antecedents are always two women in the book of Ruth, it is unclear whether or not a different form of the suffix would have been used had multiple women been the antecedents. Another problem for his argument is that the expected feminine suffix forms with ן- also occur in the book and in reference to two women.[78] If the ם- suffix forms are feminine dual forms, why are ן- suffix forms also used in reference to two women?[79]

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[74]GKC, 440.

[75]Jacob M. Myers, *The Linguistic and Literary Form of the Book of Ruth* (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 20.

[76]Campbell, *Ruth*, 65.

[77] Kirsten Nielsen, *Ruth: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 33. Gary Rendsburg, "Dual Personal Pronouns and Dual Verbs in Hebrew," *JQR* 73 (1982): 42-43. Hubbard considers them as common dual forms, not feminine (Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *The Book of Ruth* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 4).

[78]Ruth 1:9 and 19 (3x).

[79]Campbell never adequately explains this. Although he notes that the book of Ruth "is quite scrupulous in its correct use of gender," he considers the ם- suffix forms as relics that "must be regarded as a distinct mark of archaic composition or at least of composition in a dialect retaining an otherwise lost grammatical feature" (Campbell, *Ruth*, 65).

Holmstedt's explanation is preferable. "The narrator has used marginal—but understandable—language to give the book a foreign (Moabit-ish?) or perhaps archaic (i.e. 'back in those days they talked funny') coloring."[80] He notes that most of the confused forms of grammatical gender occur in Naomi's speech and in the first chapter where "the setting for the entire story is established."[81] In my view, this is also significant because this is the point of the story where Naomi and Ruth are introduced. As we have seen a number of times now, biblical writers liked to use style-switching at the emerging point of foreign speech. However, Holmstedt has overlooked the most obvious reason to consider his proposal. A careful reading of Ruth 1:8-9 reveals what can only be explained as a deliberate contrast of the speech of Naomi and that of the narrator.

> "Go! Return each to the house of her mother. May the Lord deal kindly with you (עמכם) just as you have done (עשיתם) with the dead and with me. 9) May the Lord allow each of you (לכם) to find a resting place in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them (להן) and they lifted up their voices (קולן) and wept."

As is clear from the text above, the grammatical forms used to refer to Naomi's two daughters-in-law abruptly change from those in ם- to those with ן-. The only reasonable explanation for this is that the writer wanted to convey to his audience that Naomi spoke differently (ם- suffix forms) than the narrator (ן- suffix forms).[82] The obvious conclusion

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[80]Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 47.

[81]Ibid., 47.

[82]All that we know about the narrator is that he tells his story in Hebrew. Therefore, the contrast that is drawn here between Naomi's speech and that of the narrator can only be explained on the grounds that they spoke different dialects. More on this below.

is that, after 10 years in Moab (Ruth 1:4), Naomi uses the Moabite dialect when speaking with Moabites!

Holmstedt's next example of style-shifting in the book of Ruth is the form הלהן which occurs twice in verse 13. On the basis of Dan 2:6, 9, and 4:24, some have suggested that it is an Aramaism meaning "therefore."[83] However, as Bush points out, "the evidence for the Aramaic origin of להן could hardly be more tenuous."[84] More likely, it is a compound form comprised of the interrogative ה, the preposition ל, and the third person feminine plural suffix הן.[85] The only problem with this interpretation is that the antecedents are Naomi's postulated sons (v. 12). Thus, we would have expected the suffix הם, not הן.[86] However, in light of the previous example, Holmstedt's argument that this is another example of the deliberate manipulation of language in the book of Ruth in order to mark Naomi's speech as different from the audience's is convincing.[87]

Rare words and unusual forms are not limited to the speech of Naomi in the book of Ruth, but are also found in the speech of Boaz. In Ruth 2:8, Boaz uses the unusually long form תעבורי (*tă'ăvûrî*) rather than the expected form תעברי (*tă'ăvrî*). The long *û* in the penultimate syllable of תעבורי is unusual. Ignoring the vowels, it looks like a pausal form, but pausal forms should occur with an *ô* in the stressed penultimate

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[83]For some discussion about this see: Frederic W. Bush, *Ruth and Esther*, Word Biblical Commentary, v. 9, (Dallas: Word Books, 1996), 29-30; Campbell, *Ruth*, 68-69.

[84]Bush, *Ruth*, 30.

[85]This reading has the support of the LXX, the Syriac, the Targum, and the Vulgate.

[86]Not only is הן an Aramaic suffix, it is late since in Old Aramaic we have only הם.

[87]The fact that this manipulation of language happens in both directions—feminine forms where masculine forms are expected and vice versa—brings us back to the question of whether style-switching has anything to do with an accurate representation of foreign speech. This confusion of grammatical gender may be nothing more than an artificial way of simulating foreign speech.

syllable.[88] There are two other instances in the Hebrew Bible where analogous forms occur.[89] However, since the one in Prov 14:3 is textually questionable,[90] the only other clear example is the form ישפוטו in Exod 18:26. This example is particularly interesting because both it and the standard form of the same verb (ישפטו) occur in the same chapter and within verses of each other (Exod 18:23 and 26). However, it is difficult in this instance to make a case for style-switching since the unusually long form is found in the speech of the narrator, while the standard form is found in the speech of Jethro. Nevertheless, Holmstedt suggests that the unexpected long vowel in the form תעבורי in Ruth 2:8 was deliberately added in order "to set off Boaz' speech from the audience's."[91] In his view, it is a sign of Boaz' senior status.[92]

Holmstedt draws the same conclusion regarding Boaz' use of דבק עם instead of the more usual collocation דבק ב.[93] The collocation דבק עם occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible, once in the speech of Boaz (Ruth 2:8) and once in Ruth's report of Boaz' speech (Ruth 2:21). Interestingly, there are also two occurrences of the more typical collocation דבק ב in the book of Ruth and in both cases it is the narrator who is speaking (Ruth 1:14 and 2:23). The only conclusion that can be drawn is that this

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[88]Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 48.

[89]GKC, 127.

[90]Ibid., 127.

[91]Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 48 and 119. Meyers argues that it is an archaic form written out as it was heard (Meyers, *Ruth*, 10).

[92]This possibility will be discussed in more detail below.

[93]Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 48-49. For examples with ב see: Gen 2:24; 34:3; Num 36:7, 9; Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:5, 18; 28:21, 60; 30:20; Josh 22:5; 23:8, 12; Ruth 1:14; 2:23; 2 Sam 20:2; 1 Kgs 11:2; 2 Kgs 5:27; 18:6; Job 19:20; 31:7; 41:9; Ps 101:3; 119:31. This verb also occurs with the prepositions אל (2 Sam 23:10; Jer 13:11), אחרי (1 Chr 10:2), and ל (Ps 102:6; 119:25).

is a deliberate contrast of Boaz' speech (Ruth 2:21, 28) and the narrator's (Ruth 1:14; 2:23). The use of both forms in close proximity (Ruth 2:21, 23) is not accidental but the writer's way of making the contrast more obvious to readers.

Holmstedt notes that there are five occasions in the book of Ruth where a *yiqtol* verb occurs with a paragogic נ.[94] Three of them are in the speech of Boaz (Ruth 2:8, 9 (2x), 21 [Ruth quotes Boaz]) and two of them are in the speech of Naomi (3:4, 18). Holmstedt concludes that "the use of a known but rare (and possibly no-longer-used) verbal form in the mouth of the two "older" characters is not likely a mistake or coincidence."[95] However, this example is not entirely convincing since he has failed to see that these paragogic *nuns* occur in Ruth in places where we might expect them, in pause or in forms that are followed by non-assimilating consonants (א, ה, ח, ע).[96]

To these examples of style-shifting in the book of Ruth should be added the verbs תשברנה (*teśăbbērnāh*) and תענגה (*tē'āgēnāh*) (Ruth 1:13). The verb תשברנה "to wait" has been regarded by some as an Aramaism and also as evidence of the book of Ruth's late date of composition.[97] However, the conclusion that שבר is an Aramaism is by no means certain.[98] A few facts must be considered in order to arrive at an accurate understanding of this verb. First, "to wait" is one of those verbs that occurs commonly in

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[94]Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 49.

[95]Ibid., 49.

[96]See S. A. Kaufman, "Paragogic *nun* in Biblical Hebrew: Hypercorrection as a Clue to a Lost Scribal Practice" in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (Winona Lake, In: Eisenbraus, 1995), 95-99.

[97]Max Wagner, *Die lexicalischen und grammatikalischen Aramaismen im alttestamentlichen Hebräisch* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1966), 108; Bush, *Ruth*, 29.

[98]Campbell, *Ruth*, 69.

everyday speech and biblical Hebrew normally expresses this with either קוה in the *piel* or יחל in the *nifal* or *piel*.[99] The verb שׂבר, on the other hand, occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible almost exclusively in poetic texts.[100] The important observation for the present study is that here we find a word that occurs elsewhere primarily in poetic texts in the everyday vernacular of Naomi.

The form תעגנה (Ruth 1:13) has also been regarded as an Aramaism.[101] However, this word is particularly problematic because it occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible and its root is uncertain. Is it from the root עגה (עגי) or the root עגן? If from the former, the expected pointing would have been *tē'āgênāh*. If from the latter, the expected pointing would have been *tē'āgănnāh*.[102] Either way, the vocalization preserved in the MT is peculiar. Campbell finds evidence for a root *'gw* in Ugaritic in a personal name *bn 'gw*.[103] However, as Sasson argues, the name may not even be Semitic since it occurs in a list with non-Semitic names.[104] Moreover, the root עגי/ו does not occur in any of the cognate languages.[105] In support of taking it from the root עגן, some point to Syriac and Mishnaic cognates.[106] The problem here, as noted by Campbell, is

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[99]Both of these verbs occur roughly forty times in the Hebrew Bible. They occur in parallelism in Mic 5:6; Isa 51:5; Job 30:26. The word חכה is a less common alternative that occurs only fourteen times in the biblical corpus.

[100]The only other non-poetic occurrence of the verb is in Esth 9:1 where it describes what the enimies of the Jews had "hoped" to do to them. The other occurrences are in Isa 38:18; Ps 104:27; 119:166; 145:15. The derivative noun occurs only in Ps 119:116; 146:5.

[101]For some discussion about this see: Bush, *Ruth*, 29-30, 79-80; Campbell, *Ruth*, 70; Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 38-39.

[102]GKC, 139; Bush, *Ruth*, 79.

[103]Campbell, *Ruth*, 70.

[104]Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 25.

[105]Ibid., 25.

[106]Ibid., 25.

that it is difficult to use Mishnaic references in order to establish a meaning for תעגנה in Ruth 1:13 since those Mishnaic references may have depended on rabbinic interpretation of Ruth 1:13.[107] The meaning of this verb can only be determined from the context and the translations of the versions. Both the LXX and the Old Latin translated תעגנה with verbs meaning "to hold back."[108] Biblical Hebrew normally expresses "to hold back" with either חשׂך in the *qal* or מנע in the *nifal*.[109] This suggests that the biblical writer went out of his to use the verb עגן in this verse.[110] When we consider that both תשברנה and תעגנה are found in Naomi's opening address to her Moabite daughters-in-law in a speech in which there is a concentration of unusual words and forms, both verbs must be considered stylistic representations of Trans-Jordanian speech.

One could challenge this conclusion on the grounds that it does not explain the peculiar features of Boaz' speech in Ruth 2:8-9. Boaz is not a foreigner and, unlike Naomi, there is no evidence in the text that he ever lived in Moab. Campbell argues that the reason Naomi and Boaz talk differently is because of their senior status. They are older characters and thus talk like older people.[111] Sociolinguistic studies have indeed shown that speech shifts among generations.[112] However, there are a few

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[107]Campbell, *Ruth*, 69; Sasson, *Ruth*, 25.

[108]The LXX uses *κατέχω* and the Old Latin uses *detineo*.

[109]Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 38-39.

[110]Ibid., 38-39.

[111]Campbell, *Ruth*, 17 and 25. Although Holmstedt is not entirely clear, he also seems to attribute the peculiarities of their speech to their senior status (Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 49).

[112]For example, adolescent speech is much more susceptible to change, while the speech of older generations tends to be more conservative. "As people grow older, their speech becomes less dialectal and converges toward the standard" (Florian Coulmas, *Sociolinguistics: The Study of Speakers' Choices* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 61). For a fuller discussion, see pp. 54-64.

problems with Campbell's interpretation. First, Campbell assumes that the Hebrew Bible differentiates between the speech of older and younger characters, but the only evidence he offers to support this is the speech of Naomi and Boaz.[113] Without other examples of this phenomenon from the Hebrew Bible, Campbell's explanation is reduced to an *ad hoc* argument. Second, his conclusion hinges on the soundness of his argument that the confused forms of grammatical gender in the book of Ruth are really relics of an archaic feminine dual form.[114] If they are archaic feminine dual forms, it is easy to see how they might be interpreted as an element of older speech. However, if they are not archaic feminine dual forms but simply confused forms of grammatical gender as I have argued above, it becomes difficult to see how they can be interpreted as an element of older speech. And third, the five occurrences of paragogic *nun* are not necessarily representative of older speech since they always occur in Ruth in places where we might expect them, either in pause, or in forms that are followed by non-assimilating consonants (א, ה, ח, ע).[115] In the end, the argument for style-switching is much less problematic. We have already seen that style-switching occurs not only in the speech of foreigners but also in the speech of those addressing them.[116] But what is really significant to me is *where* all of the unusual features of Naomi and Boaz' speech occur. Nearly all of the unusual elements of Naomi's speech are found in chapter 1 where she

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[113]Campbell, *Ruth*, 17 and 25. As far as I have been able to determine, no one has done a detailed study on the different registers of generational speech in the Hebrew Bible.

[114]Ibid., 24 and 65.

[115]See Kaufman, "Paragogic *nun*," 95-99.

[116]Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies," 29-30.

addresses Ruth (and Orpah) for the first time (Ruth 1:8-9, 11, 13) and all the unusual features of Boaz' speech are found in the two verses in which he addresses Ruth for the very first time (Ruth 2:8-9). When we combine this evidence with the observation that Naomi and Boaz' speech is contrasted with the narrator's (Ruth 1:8-9; 2:8, 21, 23), not a younger character's,[117] the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the peculiar elements of Naomi and Boaz' speech are best explained on the grounds that they used a Trans-Jordanian dialect when addressing Ruth.

Moabites in Other Narratives

There are a few more narratives in which Moabites play a role. Judges 3 tells the story about how the Lord raised up Ehud to deliver the Israelites from Eglon, king of Moab (Judg 3:12-30). 2 Kings 3 tells a story about Mesha king of Moab and his rebellion against the king of Israel. Although rare words occur in both narratives, at this time, there is no definitive evidence of style-switching in either narrative.[118] In both narratives, the kings of Moab play minor roles. Eglon speaks only one word in Judg 3:19

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[117]It is important to remember that the only thing we know about the narrator is that he tells his story in Hebrew. Therefore, the only explanation for the contrasts of speech that are drawn between the speech of the narrator and the speech of Naomi and Boaz is that they spoke different dialects. Since we know nothing about the narrator's age, the unusual elements of Naomi and Boaz' speech cannot be explained on the basis of their "senior status."

[118]The following words from Judges 3 occur infrequently elsewhere in biblical Hebrew: אטר "shut up, bound" (Judg 3:15), גמד "short cubit" (Judg 3:16), הס "secrecy" (Judg 3:19), מקרה "coolness" (Judg 3:20), נעל "lock" (Judg 3:23; 24), פרשדנה (Judg 3:22) and מסדרונה "porch, colonnade" (Judg 3:23). However, although these words are rare in the Hebrew Bible, there is reason to suspect that most of them would have been a part of any ancient Hebrew speaker's lexical inventory. The reason that they are rare in the Hebrew Bible is best explained on the grounds that they are not the kinds of words that would occur much in everyday speech. The vocabulary of the Hebrew Bible is a mere fraction of all the vocabulary that would have been available to Hebrew speakers in biblical times (W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of two Contrasting Faiths* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1968], 256).

(הס "hush")[119] and Mesha does not speak at all in 2 Kgs 3. There is, however, one sentence in 2 Kgs 3 where direct speech is recorded for Moabites. In 2 Kgs 3:23, the Moabites, thinking that the sun shining upon the water is their enemies' blood, say:

דָּם זֶה הַחָרֶב נֶחֱרְבוּ הַמְּלָכִים וַיַּכּוּ אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְעַתָּה
לַשָּׁלָל מוֹאָב׃

"This is blood! The kings have certainly been destroyed (נחרבו החרב) and have smitten one another. Now to the plunder, Moab!" It may seem peculiar that a *hofal* infinitive is used with a *nifal* verb, but this phenomenon occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.[120] On the other hand, in a consonantal text the *hofal* and *nifal* infinitive absolute forms would be identical. Thus, some argue that the *hofal* infinitive should be read as a *nifal* in 2 Kgs 3:23.[121] Whether or not the form should be re-pointed, one ambiguous example in the speech of a foreigner is not sufficient evidence of style-switching.

Summary

In summary, there is evidence that biblical writers stylistically represented the speech of Trans-Jordanians. Examples of this technique were found in the speech of Esau, Jethro, Naomi, and Boaz. One could challenge this conclusion by arguing that too little is known about the Trans-Jordanian languages to test this hypothesis. However, when we look at the examples highlighted in this chapter, we see many of the same

[119]There does not appear to be any reason to suspect that this is a stylistic form. Its rarity in the Hebrew Bible is best explained by the fact that not only is it not an everyday word, it is not the kind of word that would be expected to occur much in a book that prefers religious and political vocabulary. The few other times it occurs in the Hebrew Bible it is always found in the speech of Hebrews (Neh 8:11; Amos 6:10; 8:3; Hab 2:20; Zep 1:7; Zech 2:17).

[120]GKC, 344.

[121]GKC cites Driver and makes the same argument about the *hofal* infinitive in Lev 19:20 (Ibid., 344).

contextual markers of style-switching that came to light in the preceding chapters: Rare words replacing everyday vocabulary in the speech of foreigners; contrasts between the speech of foreigners and the speech of Hebrews (or the narrator); unusual vocabulary occurring at the emerging point of foreign speech; and, finally, concentrations of unusual words in the mouths of foreigners. The presence of these contextual markers makes it clear that the biblical writers stylistically represented the speech of their Trans-Jordanian characters.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study has tried to show that biblical writers stylistically represented the speech of Arameans and Trans-Jordanians in biblical prose. Although there are a few obvious examples of this literary technique in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 31:47), this study has argued that many other, though more subtle, examples can be found not only in the Jacob and Laban cycle of stories, but also in other narratives which accommodate Aramean and Trans-Jordanian speech. Until now, the research that has been done on this subject has been limited in scope and has tended to focus mainly on identifying style-switching forms. A significant contribution of this study is that it goes beyond that research and also brings to light the literary techniques that biblical writers used in their stylistic representations of foreign speech.

This study began in chapter 2 with the Jacob and Laban cycle of stories in Genesis 24, 29, 30 and 31. Using the criteria laid out in chapter 1, certain observations emerged from these narratives that proved consistent with the argument that biblical writers used style-switching to reflect regional differences in the speech of their characters. First, there are a number of rare words and unusual forms in these stories, the great majority of which are found either in the speech of Arameans, or in the speech of those addressing them. Many of these are either *hapax legomena*, or occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible only in poetry. Second, many of these words are either best attested in Aramaic, or are explainable via Aramaic, whether as calques on Aramaic words or as derivations from Aramaic roots. Third, many of these words represent everyday concepts

such as eating, drinking, feeding, giving, etc., and thus take the place of very common biblical Hebrew vocabulary. And fourth, concentrations of such words and forms center on the speech of particular characters, primarily Laban and his family. When these observations are combined with the fact that there is an obvious example of style-switching in Gen 31:47, the conclusion is obvious: There are many other though more subtle examples of this literary technique embedded in these stories.

Certain contextual markers of style-switching also came to light in these narratives that reinforce this conclusion. First, there are instances in these narratives where Hebrews and Arameans say the same thing in a given narrative, but with different vocabulary. In all such instances, standard biblical Hebrew words are found in the speech of Hebrews (or the narrator), while much rarer, Aramaic-like, semantic equivalents of those words are found in the speech of Arameans. The only logical explanation for such contrasts of Hebrew and Aramean speech is that these characters would have spoken in their own dialects.

Second, there are instances in these stories where the speech of a character changes to conform to the speech of his audience. The best example of this is in Genesis 24 where Abraham's servant uses different but synonymous vocabulary when addressing Hebrews and Arameans in parallel accounts of the same story (Gen 24:1-27 and Gen 24:34-48). The only reasonable explanation for this is that the servant used two different dialects when addressing Hebrews and Arameans.

Third, in other instances, rare words are simply found alongside of their standard biblical Hebrew equivalents, whether in direct speech or in the course of a narrative.[1] Chapter 2 concluded that in all these cases, the effect is the same. Subtle changes of vocabulary within the same text from standard biblical Hebrew words to much rarer, and in each case more Aramaic-like, semantic equivalents, must be recognized as the biblical writers' way of not only highlighting regional differences in the speech of their characters, but also drawing readers' attention to them.

Finally, some of the alleged style-switching forms occur at certain points of a dialogue where we might expect such forms, particularly at the emerging point of foreign speech where these characters are introduced![2] Apparently, the biblical writers wanted to remind readers from the inception of foreign speech that these characters would have spoken in their own dialects.

The conclusion that biblical writers used style-switching to reflect regional differences in the speech of their characters applies not only to the Jacob and Laban cycle of stories but also to other narratives that accommodate foreign speech. The same observations that came to light in the Jacob and Laban cycle of stories are present in these stories as well. Chapter 3 showed that, in addition to the oracles of Balaam (Numbers 22-24), style-switching also occurs in the books of Kings (1 Kings 20 and 2 Kings 5-8)

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[1]Usually in close proximity.

[2]We also saw examples where style-switching forms occur in places where there is a transition from a Hebrew character to a foreigner (e.g. Exod 18:9).

where the presence of Aramaic vocabulary and forms has long been acknowledged.[3] Chapter 3 challenged the argument that the presence of such language in Kings is evidence that these stories were composed in northern Israel where a northern dialect of Hebrew (Israelian Hebrew) shared features with Aramaic by pointing out that some of the most obvious Aramaisms in Kings (שִׁפֹּק, מְדִינָה, etc.) occur only in one of the five chapters that deal with Arameans (1 Kings 20; 2 Kings 5-8) but not in any of the other alleged northern narratives. Chapter 3 contended that if these really were northern forms, they would not be limited to the few narratives in Kings that deal with Aram, but would be found in other northern narratives as well.

Finally, chapter 4 argued that style-switching is not limited to the speech of Arameans, but also occurs in the speech of Trans-Jordanians. Furthermore, the contextual markers of style-switching that came to light in the Jacob and Laban cycle of stories could compensate for the lack of extra-biblical sources for the Trans-Jordanian languages. Evidence of style-switching was found not only in the speech of Esau (Gen 25:30) and Jethro (Exod 18:9-21), but also in the speech of Naomi and Boaz in their dialogues with Ruth (Ruth 1:8-9, 11-13; 2:8-9). This chapter challenged the argument that the unusual elements of Naomi and Boaz' speech were due to their senior status by pointing out that nearly all of the unusual elements of Naomi's speech are found in chapter 1 where she addresses Ruth for the first time (Ruth 1:8-9, 11, 13) and all the

[3]Burney, *Kings*, 208; S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridan Library, 1956), 188-189.

unusual features of Boaz' speech are found in the two verses in which he addresses Ruth for the first time (Ruth 2:8-9). This implies that the unusual elements of their speech are best explained on the grounds that they used the Moabite dialect when addressing Ruth. Moreover, the contrast of Naomi and Boaz' speech with that of the narrator (Ruth 1:8-9; 2:8, 21, 23) makes no sense as a contrast of older and younger speech, but can only be interpreted as a contrast of Hebrew and foreign speech, a phenomenon observed in other style-switching narratives.[4]

In summary, the following principles of style-switching can be inferred from this study. First, the biblical writers used style-switching in narratives that have Aramean and Trans-Jordanian settings. Second, although there are a few obvious examples of this technique in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 31:47; Judg 12:6), the majority of examples are much more subtle.[5] Third, style-switching is not limited to the direct speech of Arameans and Trans-Jordanians, but also occurs in the speech of those addressing them. Fourth, style-switching is not limited to direct speech, but occasionally occurs in the course of a narrative.[6] "Not only do the characters in the story speak a Hebrew coloured by Aramaic, but the entire narrative is cast in an Aramaic light."[7] Fifth, the biblical writers were not required to consistently use Aramaic words in a character's speech in order to convey to readers that a particular character spoke Aramaic. A single

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[4]E.g. Jethro's speech is contrasted with the narrator's (Exod 18:21, 25).

[5]This explains why the biblical writers used a variety of literary techniques to draw readers' attention to such forms.

[6]Sometimes the narrative describes the actions of a character with a word from that character's lexicon (e.g. 2 Kgs 6:9).

[7]Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation," 182.

word or phrase was sufficient to communicate this.[8] Sixth, the biblical writers skillfully and creatively used subtle changes of vocabulary within the same text not only to highlight regional differences in the speech of characters but also to draw readers' attention them. And finally, the biblical writers sometimes carefully placed style-switching words at points of a narrative where we might expect such forms, especially at the emerging point of foreign speech where these characters are introduced.

Implications

This study has several important implications for biblical scholarship. First, it underscores the literary genius of the biblical authors who used style-switching to reflect regional differences in the speech of their characters. The concept of capturing regional differences in the speech of characters did not become popular in literature until the second half of the nineteenth century when, in American literature, a genre called regionalism or local color developed among post-Civil war writers.[9] Not only were the biblical writers already capturing regional differences in the speech of their characters, but they were doing so with great sophistication using a variety of literary techniques to make these regional differences more obvious to readers.[10]

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[8]The best example of this, as we have seen, is Laban's dialogue with Jacob in Gen 31:44-48. In vs. 47 the biblical text explicitly states that Laban called the heap of stones יגר שהדותא, but in the very next verse (vs. 48) it states just as explicitly that he called it גלעד. In fact, excluding verse 47, every time that Laban uses the words "heap" and "witness" in this narrative, he uses only standard biblical Hebrew vocabulary (גל, vs. 48, עד, vss. 44, 48, and גלעד, vs. 48).

[9]Richard H. Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 115-121.

[10]Some of these techniques are similar to those used in modern films. For example, the observation that biblical writers liked to use style-switching at the emerging point of foreign speech where their characters are introduced is very similar to the technique used in modern films where the initial words

Second, this study has implications for how we read biblical texts and helps us to attend to these texts the way the ancient listeners would have attended to them. Alter writes: ". . . these stories were composed almost three thousand years ago, in a different culture and a different language from our own. Over the course of time, the conventions for presenting narrative evolve and change. Earlier conventions that would have been second nature to people growing up in Hebrew culture, say in the eighth century before the Common Era, have been forgotten. We forget how to attend to certain significant details in the stories that the ancient listeners—and of course, they would have been *listening* rather than reading since it was a manuscript culture in which the story was read to its audience from a scroll—would have attended to."[11] This study has brought to light some of the conventions used by biblical writers in their stylistic representation of foreign speech and these give us insight into some of the details in these stories that the ancient listeners would have been paying attention to. The initial words spoken by foreigners, subtle changes of vocabulary between parallel accounts of the same story, and the different ways that Hebrews and foreigners say the same thing in a given narrative are details in these stories that we can no longer afford to overlook.

Third, this study has implications for the presence of Aramaisms in biblical texts. The following quotation from E. Kautzsch represents the usual approach to such texts: "Abgesehen von einigen wenigen Beispielen . . . ist ein zweifelloser

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of a character are in the language that that character presumably would have spoken, while the remainder of that character's words are in the language of the target audience.

[11]Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 17-18.

Aramaismus immer eine starke Instanz für die Ansetzung des betr. Abschnitts in exilischer oder nachexilischer Zeit."[12] However, as already noted by both Kaufman and Rendsburg, style-switching offers an alternative explanation for their presence.[13] No longer must we assume that Aramaisms are evidence of a post-exilic date of composition.[14]

Fourth, this study offers an alternative explanation for the presence of synonymous word-pairs in biblical texts. No longer must we assume that the presence of such word-pairs in a given text is evidence of diverse authorship, an assumption long held by source critics.[15] This study has shown that the biblical writers, at times, intentionally and creatively used such word-pairs to highlight regional differences in the speech of their characters.

Finally, this study has implications for the biblical writers' conception of Trans-Jordanian speech which can only be described as "Aramaic-like" rather than an accurate representation of Trans-Jordanian speech.[16] This observation is particularly relevant in light of Kaufman's observation that the words of Lemuel's mother (Prov 31),

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[12]E. Kautzsch, *Die Aramaismen im Alten Testament*, Halle, 1902, p. 104, cited in Avi Hurvitz, "The Chronological Significance of 'Aramaisms' in Biblical Hebrew," *IEJ* 18 (1968): 234, fn. 5.

[13]Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects," 55; Rendsburg, "False Leads," 30-31; see also: Hurvitz, "Chronological Significance of 'Aramaisms,'" 236-237.

[14]"No longer must an 'Aramaizing' text have been written after the exile; nor must it be a translation from 'Aramaic.' It could simply have been written in a Trans-Jordanian pre-exilic dialect to start with!" (Kaufman, "North West Semitic Dialects," 55).

[15]In his book *The Making of the Pentateuch*, Whybray raised a number of objections challenging the validity of this criterion for discerning sources (Whybray, *Pentateuch*, 56-58). See also Bompiani, "Is Genesis 24 a Problem for Source Criticism?" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 164 (2007): 403-415.

[16]As we have seen, much of the vocabulary found in Trans-Jordanian passages in the Hebrew Bible is best attested in Aramaic. The verbs אתה and בעה (Isa 21:12), חדה "to rejoice" (Exod 18:9), חזה "to see/choose" (Exod 18:21), and שׂבר (Ruth 1:13) are among the examples highlighted in chapter 4.

the dialogues in the book of Job, and the speech of the watchman (Isa 21:11-14) are all "Aramaic-like" even though the characters are not Aramean but rather some nebulous Arabians.[17] All this suggests that the biblical writers, who likely wrote at a much later period than the timeframe of the stories, did not have any real awareness of Trans-Jordanian speech and so used Aramaic—a language they were familiar with—in their stylistic representation of Trans-Jordanian speech, as well as Aramean speech.

Future Research

Finally, this study yields new opportunities for further research. First, one could expand on this study by seeing if biblical writers used style-switching in the speech of foreigners not included in this study, Egyptians, Hittites, etc. The contextual markers of style-switching that emerged from this study may help identify style-switching in such narratives. Second, one could expand on this study by looking for style-switching in extra-biblical literature. Again, the literary techniques identified in this study may facilitate the identification of style-switching in other literature. Third, it is possible that this study may yield new insights into other biblical passages, such as the Aramaic portions of Daniel and Ezra. Finally it may be possible to one day use the information gleaned from this study—in combination with other evidence—to identify passages of scripture likely to have been written by the same author. My assumption is that not every biblical writer was equally skilled in the style-switching technique.

[17]Kaufman, "North West Semitic dialects," 55.

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