LINGUISTIC DATING OF BIBLICAL HEBREW TEXTS: THE CHRONOLOGY AND TYPOLOGY DEBATE

Article · December 2010

CITATIONS
4

READS
23

1 author:

Jacobus A Naudé
University of the Free State
209 PUBLICATIONS **203** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages 36/2 (2010), pp. 1-22

Jacobus A Naudé (University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa)

LINGUISTIC DATING OF BIBLICAL HEBREW TEXTS: THE CHRONOLOGY AND TYPOLOGY DEBATE[1]

ABSTRACT

Hurvitz (1997, 1999, 2000, 2006) argues that the language of Samuel-Kings represents a typologically older Hebrew than the language of Chronicles. To demonstrate that the typological difference reflects a genuine chronological difference, Hurvitz relies on externally dated evidence for the Hebrew language. Many scholars believe linguistic evidence precludes any attempt to date biblical literature to the Persian or later eras. In opposition, Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensward (2009) claim that data used to distinguish pre-exilic from post-exilic Hebrew are merely manifestations of synchronic styles available both to exilic and to post-exilic authors. This paper aims to further the debate in the light of functional and formal approaches to language change, e.g. Fischer (2007).

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades the role of language in assigning dates of origin to biblical books has come increasingly to the forefront. However, the matter has also become controversial. This is evident in a series of essays edited by Young (2003a), and in presentations at three sessions of the National Association for Professors of Hebrew at the Society of Biblical Literature (2004, 2005, 2007), subsequently published in the journal *Hebrew Studies*.[2] The chronology and typology debate receives new impetus by the book of Young, Rezetko & Ehrensvärd (2009).

For the past two hundred years, scholars have discussed the linguistic variation in Biblical Hebrew (BH) in terms of chronological

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Southern African Society of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Stellenbosch on 22 June 2009. The author wishes to express his thanks to Prof. Cynthia Miller-Naudé, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, for the valuable comments which greatly improved the quality of this article. All mistakes remain my responsibility.

2 Two sessions at the National Association of Professors of Hebrew (November 2009) and three future sessions at the same conference in 2010 further explore this issue; however, those papers have not yet been published.

development. Typologically, the language of books dated ‘later’ was contrasted with that of books dated ‘earlier’. Accordingly Hebrew is usually divided into chronological periods corresponding to the different linguistic corpora, namely pre-exilic (or, Early Biblical Hebrew), post-exilic (or, Late Biblical Hebrew), Qumran Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, etc. These periods serve as a framework for providing a diachronic view of the language. However, the peculiarities of the language of each corpus cannot be explained by chronology alone (Davies 2001, 2003; Ehrensvärd 2003; Naudé 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, Rezetko 2003, Talshir 2003; Young 1993, 1995, 1999, 2001a, 2001b). The concrete examples of language variation within the Qumran archive challenge the view that there was a swift and uniform transition from Biblical Hebrew to Qumran Hebrew. Different forms of Hebrew can be dated to the same period and perhaps even to the same community. The concept of a uniform kind of Hebrew at any one period does not accurately reflect the realities of Hebrew. Furthermore, this concept cannot describe any language at any given time.

This article aims to further the debate in the light of the newest perspectives from functional and formal approaches on language change, especially those of Fischer (2007). The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 deals with the traditional viewpoints on the transition from Early to Late Biblical Hebrew, as well as the relation of Biblical Hebrew to Qumran Hebrew. In Section 3 the arguments marshaled to challenge the traditional viewpoints on the relationship between Early and Late Biblical Hebrew as well as between Biblical Hebrew and Qumran Hebrew are discussed. In Section 4 the status quo of the debate as found in Young, Rezetko & Ehrensvärd (2009) is outlined. Section 5 assesses these views, and the newest perspectives from functional and formal approaches on language change (e.g. Fischer 2007) are presented to move the debate forward.

2. THE CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF BIBLICAL HEBREW

Following developments in comparative and historical linguistics and in relation to the foundations of modern biblical criticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scholars of the Hebrew Bible began to put more emphasis on language as an indication of the time of redaction. In the first diachronic study of Biblical Hebrew, Gesenius (1815) analysed the language of the biblical books while frequently drawing attention to late linguistic features and observed that Biblical Hebrew contained chronologically distinct linguistic layers. Driver (1898) noticed that books

such as Chronicles, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah were linguistically different from the earlier books of the Hebrew Bible.

2.1 The relationship between early and late Biblical Hebrew

One fundamental tenet of the current view on the history of the Hebrew language is that Biblical Hebrew falls into two successive stages, viz. pre-exilic (or, Early) Biblical Hebrew and post-exilic (or, Late) Biblical Hebrew (Sáenz-Badillos 1993; Waltke & O'Connor 1990). The languages of several corpora, such as the priestly work in the Pentateuch (Polzin 1976) and Ezekiel (Rooker 1990), were proposed to constitute the link between Early and Late Biblical Hebrew. At this point a word about terminology is in order. Kutscher suggests a tripartite division of Biblical Hebrew into Archaic Biblical Hebrew (ABH), Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) and Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH). According to Kutscher's original definitions, ABH is represented mainly by the poetry of the Pentateuch and the Early Prophets, SBH represents Biblical prose, and LBH appears in the Chronicles and other books (Kutscher 1982:12). Sometimes SBH is described as classical (biblical) Hebrew (CBH) as opposed to LBH, which is a representative of post-classical Hebrew (Hurvitz 1982:157). SBH could be considered to be 'early' Hebrew, i.e. Hebrew from the monarchic, or pre-exilic, period, which means earlier than c. 586 BCE. Hence the term Early Biblical Hebrew (EBH), which covers both SBH and ABH, is preferred in this article. LBH is comprised of those books whose contents show them to be written during the Second Temple period (after c. 515 BCE). Chronicles, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel would be a starting list. To these books others have been added which share linguistic features with them, such as the book of Qoheleth, or a number of Psalms (Hurvitz 1972).

Early in the twentieth century the division between EBH and LBH received a tremendous boost from Kropat's epoch-making study on the linguistic features of the Chronicler (1909). His *modus operandi* was to contrast the books of Chronicles with the parallel passages in Samuel/Kings and to discern the language of the Chronicler in cases where it differed.

In the 1970s and 1980s the diachronic study of Hebrew continued to flourish in Israel, particularly through the efforts of Hurvitz (1972, 1973, 1974, 1982). With his contributions he shaped the current discourse on the topic of diachronic variation in Biblical Hebrew. Hurvitz insists – as did Kropat before him – that parallel chapters in the Bible are the most important aids for diachronic research. Like Kropat, he affirms that the

differences between the parallel texts in Chronicles and Samuel/Kings are due to different languages rather than due to stylistic tendencies of different authors and that they provide a clear picture of the differences between pre-exilic and post-exilic Hebrew. His argument rests on the correlation between linguistic typology and chronology. Typology in this context refers to the idea that there are different types of Hebrew language in different biblical sources. Some of these are typologically older, that is, they represent an older stage within the historical development of the language. Within BH it is generally considered that the language of Samuel-Kings represents a typologically older type of Hebrew than the language of Chronicles. In order to demonstrate that the typological difference reflects a genuine chronological difference Hurvitz relies heavily on externally dated evidence for the Hebrew language. The language of the pre-exilic inscriptions demonstrates that Samuel-Kings (and texts in similar Hebrew) are pre-exilic; texts such as the Qumran scrolls show that Chronicles (and texts in similar Hebrew) are post-exilic.

Hurvitz's most important contribution to the diachronic study of BH has been his persistent effort to develop an objective methodology. In particular, the criteria of distribution, opposition and extra-biblical attestation are used to determine if a particular linguistic *feature* is late. A fourth criterion, accumulation, is used to establish whether or not a particular *text* is late. Hurvitz maintains these criteria in the face of the challenges described in section 3 below (Hurvitz 2006).

Polzin's research (1976), based on the selective use he made of Kropat's work, yielded no less than nineteen morpho-syntactic aspects, which he subsequently propounded as the distinguishing features of Late Biblical Hebrew. He argued that the Priestly source of the Pentateuch displays features from a subsequent period and may therefore constitute the link between Early and Late Biblical Hebrew. Note that Polzin considers P to be transitional between EBH and LBH, whereas Hurvitz (1982a) and Rooker (1990) consider Ezekiel the best example of transitional BH.

Methodologically, Polzin differs from Hurvitz in two major areas. Firstly, in his analysis of the Hebrew of Chronicles he shuns synoptic texts parallel to Samuel/Kings, in the belief that he will be able to penetrate to the actual language of the Chronicler. He wants to avoid suspicion that any differences in the Chronicler's synoptic text might be ascribed to the fact that the Chronicler used a text other than the proto-Massoretic Text of Samuel/Kings. Secondly, Polzin maintains that grammatical-syntactical distinctions provide more objective criteria than

lexicographical features and should be given more weight in discussions of typology. Hurvitz makes no such distinction and in fact the preponderance of his evidence for post-exilic Hebrew is of a lexicographical nature. A third distinction arising from Polzin's work relates to his evaluation of Aramaic influence. As indicated above, Hurvitz argues that many features of post-exilic Hebrew are due to the influence of Aramaic upon Hebrew. Polzin, on the other hand, minimises this influence by his insistence that the changes result from the natural evolution of the language.

Rooker (1990), a student of Hurvitz, used the criteria suggested by Polzin as a point of departure and analysed the language of Ezekiel to determine the relative status of the language of Ezekiel in the chronological continuum of Biblical Hebrew, as this book is virtually ignored in Polzin's study. His conclusion is that Ezekiel should be considered the transitional link between Early Biblical Hebrew and Late Biblical Hebrew, a position Polzin claims is best filled by the Priestly Work of the Pentateuch.

The dialectal research of Rendsburg and his students as well as the stylistic research undertaken by Polak can only be mentioned. Rendsburg has devoted most of his academic career to research on *non-diachronic* variation within BH: diglossia, regional dialects (especially Israelian Hebrew), style-switching, addressee-switching, etc. Nevertheless, Rendsburg follows Hurvitz's working principles and methodology closely. His linguistic analysis is based on the MT alone, and he makes careful use of the criteria of distribution, opposition, extra-biblical attestation and accumulation.

Polak has argued in about a dozen articles over the past twenty years or so (e.g. Polak 1998, 2006) that EBH and LBH books reflect different styles of writing which have their origins in successive historical contexts and social conditions. Polak argues for four main styles, classes or strata of BH which were written in four successive yet slightly overlapping historical periods: *Classical Style*; (linked to the pre-monarchic and early monarchical era); *Transitional Classical Style* (a subclass or intermediate style between Polak's classical and late pre-exilic/exilic styles); *Late Pre-exilic and Exilic Style* (linked to the late monarchy and the first stages of the Babylonian period); and, *Post-exilic Style* (linked to the later stages of the Babylonian period and the Persian era).

2.2 The relationship between Biblical Hebrew and Qumran Hebrew

By using the linguistic aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the discussion of the typologies of Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew, Bendavid (1967) and Kutscher (1974, 1982) re-introduced the diachronic study of the Bible into scholarly consciousness.

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls texts, it was commonly accepted that Hebrew was already a non-living language from 200 BCE to 68 CE and knowledge of it could only be acquired artificially through study (cf. Goodspeed 1944:59). The archaeological excavations at Khirbet Qumran refuted this view by relating the textual material of Qumran to the same group of users or speech community who occupied the buildings excavated (de Vaux 1973). As a result, this hitherto unknown variant of the Hebrew language, Qumran Hebrew, occupies a position between Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew. Emerging from a linguistic melting pot of at least three languages and several dialects, Qumran Hebrew provides a unique opportunity to observe a language in a stage of transition and to assess the impact of dialectical and other linguistic influences (Fitzmyer 1979:57-84).

Several opinions have been expressed concerning the classification of Qumran Hebrew. The *communis opinio* is that there were two major types of Hebrew, namely classical Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew, while all other variations (such as Qumran Hebrew) were hybrids of these two. The authors of the Qumran texts endeavoured to write Biblical Hebrew, but under the influence of the spoken language a type of Mishnaic Hebrew emerged, or alternatively, texts which were originally written in Mishnaic Hebrew were altered so as to render them more in consonance with Biblical Hebrew. Therefore, some scholars consider Qumran Hebrew as an artificial entity that developed in the course of an archaisation process, the product of an attempt to revive Biblical Hebrew by writing Qumran Hebrew in an archaic/old-fashioned style (Segal 1970:13; Rabin 1965:144-61; Kutscher 1974:8-9, 12; 1982:82, 99, 131). Accordingly Qumran Hebrew has been regarded not as spoken Hebrew, but as an imitation of Biblical Hebrew by speakers of Mishnaic Hebrew. However, others view Qumran Hebrew as a direct continuation of Late Biblical Hebrew (Hurvitz 1965:225; Young 1993:83).

Recently, the fairly standardised scholarly consensus on the classification was challenged by the view that Qumran Hebrew is independent in character and contains features which could only have evolved in a living spoken language (Morag 1988:148-164; Qimron

1992:349-361; Sáenz-Badillos 1993:132. See also Qimron 1986, Leahy 1960:135-157, Kutscher 1982:57-114, Polzin 1976 and Waltke & O'Connor 1990:9, 11-20). The Biblical Hebrew forms which occur in Qumran Hebrew side-by-side with Mishnaic Hebrew forms are not necessarily archaic forms, but may well have been part of the living spoken language (Qimron 1992:356). Two dialects co-existed: a more formal, literary dialect, which utilised a formal variety resembling Biblical Hebrew, and an informal, colloquial dialect or vernacular, which lacked some of the constructions of Biblical Hebrew (Kesterson 1984:172; Smith 1991a; Smith 1991b; Smith 1991c).

Two texts, namely 3Q15 and 4QMMT, are important in considering the classification of Qumran Hebrew. Some classify 3Q15 as belonging to classical Mishnaic Hebrew (Sharvit 1967:135; Wolters 1990). Others claim that it should be regarded as a distinct Mishnaic dialect: the Mishnaic dialect of the Jordan (Milik 1962:222-223) or Copper Scroll Hebrew (Morag 1988). Others are of the opinion that 4QMMT reflects the real spoken Qumran Hebrew (Qimron & Strugnell 1994:101-108). The outcome of such a view is that the other texts must then of necessity be imitations of Biblical Hebrew. However, a closer look at the data in recent studies (Muchowski 1994; Qimron & Strugnell 1994:101-108) shows that the language of 3Q15 and 4QMMT are not so far removed from Qumran Hebrew (as reflected in other Qumran texts) and Late Biblical Hebrew.

2.3 Summary of diachronic development

According to the chronological model (adapted from the general consensus as represented in Young, Rezetko & Ehrensvärd (2009:13-14)), the language development of Biblical Hebrew is as follows:

Archaic (pre-biblical) c. 1200–1000 BCE

Pre-exilic c. 1000–587/586 BCE
Genesis–Numbers (minus P), Deuteronomy–2 Kings 23, Isaiah 1–39, Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Micah–Zephaniah

Late pre-exilic to early post-exilic c. 600–500 BCE
2 Kings 24–25, Isaiah 40–55, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentations

Post-exilic c. 539/538–165 BCE
P in the Pentateuch, Isaiah 56–66, Haggai–Malachi, Qoheleth, Esther–Chronicles

Post-biblical c. 200 BCE–500 CE
Qumran Hebrew; Ben Sira; Rabbinic Hebrew

3. CHALLENGES TO THE CHRONOLOGICAL MODEL

3.1 Challenges to the dating of texts written in EBH

In recent years, the generally accepted view concerning the chronological division of the Hebrew Bible into EBH and LBH has been challenged. Indeed, the claim is made that all biblical literature has its origins in the Persian era or later. Davies (2003) defends his dating of texts written in EBH to the Persian period, against Hurvitz's claim that such a dating is linguistically impossible. Davies argues that different types of Hebrew were written by Persian-period scribes, and therefore it is conceivable that classical Hebrew was one of these. Ehrensvärd (2003) argues that LBH differs from EBH in a purely relative manner and that EBH was demonstrably written in the post-exilic period. In view of this a post-exilic date for the final linguistic form of all the biblical texts is likely, in his opinion.

The difference between EBH and LBH is largely one of different frequencies of the same linguistic features. Scholars routinely interpret the Hebrew Bible's typological variety in terms of chronological development, thus ABH is very early, EBH is early (pre-exilic), and LBH is late (post-exilic). However, the automatic conversion of typology into chronology is challenged by examples of early LBH features (stemming from what Young *et al*. (2009) may hypothesise as early LBH or proto-LBH) and late EBH. Scholars frequently promote linguistic dating of biblical texts as an objective discipline which should be privileged over non-linguistic dating criteria. However, there is no firm basis for favouring *a priori* one type of evidence over another. In addition, those who seek to date biblical texts on the basis of linguistic analysis overlook nearly without exception important aspects of those texts, namely, their literary complexity and textual fluidity.

3.2 Challenges to the consensus that Chronicles used Samuel-Kings as sources

Rezetko (2003:215-250) challenges some of the fundamental bases of the conventional chronology of BH by questioning the consensus that Chronicles used Samuel-Kings as sources. He discusses a series of supposedly 'late' Hebrew features for which, he suggests, a diachronic explanation is inadequate.

Most linguistic features which are deemed 'late'—both lexical and grammatical—will not hold up to close scrutiny when examined exhaustively and in all books of the Hebrew Bible. It is important to point

out that many ‘late’ features not only fail to meet the criterion of EBH vs. LBH opposition but these ‘late’ features cannot even be considered LBH since they are often attested in only a couple LBH sources. It is common for Chronicles vs. EBH plus other LBH books to count as ‘LBH usage’ but this is often an invalid deduction. It is unavoidable that the core LBH books of Esther–Chronicles should have a higher accumulation of LBH features when compared to EBH books, since in the history of research, ‘early’ vs. ‘late’ language was discovered in the first place by contrasting the language of books known beforehand to date to the pre-exilic or post-exilic period. In other words, it is an issue of literary-linguistic circularity.

Furthermore, if LBH features are really late, then all BH texts are late. If they are not late, then in principle there is no reason to suppose that a pre-exilic author could not have written in a style with an accumulation of LBH features. Recent efforts to date biblical texts linguistically are flawed in their principles and methodology. This approach argues that whatever the date of biblical books, their current linguistic forms are fully at home in the post-exilic period. There is no sharp linguistic contrast between EBH and LBH. All EBH books have LBH features, just not the concentration found in core LBH books Likewise, EBH continued in the post-exilic period, as demonstrated by the EBH language of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, but also Second and Third Isaiah, Joel, and some late Psalms. Furthermore, despite dating to the second and first centuries BCE, respectively, Ben Sira and the Qumran Pesher Habakkuk are in EBH. They do not share the accumulation of LBH forms which characterises core LBH books. Additionally, Pesher Habakkuk in particular exhibits a large number of cases where it prefers EBH forms against their LBH equivalents. Thus, instead of two chronological eras with a transition between them, there are two basic authorial/editorial/scribal approaches to language use—conservative and non-conservative. Conservative EBH authors/editors/scribes mainly rely on a limited core of linguistic forms, while non-conservative LBH authors/editors/scribes are more open to using a variety of linguistic forms. Between these poles there is a continuum of openness to linguistic variety. In short, EBH and LBH are co-existing styles of Hebrew instead of successive chronological periods in the history of ancient Hebrew.

3.3 Challenges to the evidence of the Hebrew inscriptions of the monarchic period

The argument that, since EBH is identical with the language of the Hebrew inscriptions of the monarchic period, it cannot be dated to the

Persian or later periods is challenged by Young (2003c:276-311). Young argues that, even if EBH is identical to inscriptional Hebrew, this fails to prove that EBH was not also used in the Persian period. He shows that they in fact represent an independent linguistic corpus rather than being identical with EBH.

3.4 The challenge from the viewpoint of a theory of language change and diffusion

Drawing upon modern linguistic research in language change, Naudé (2000a, 2000b, 2000c:61-65) first defines the concept 'language' and subsequently the concept 'change'. Language is best seen as idiolect, the output of a single speaker, because language as a socio-political concept has proved to be of little value in linguistic research. Regarding the concept 'change', Naudé stresses the importance of distinguishing between the concept of 'change' and that of 'diffusion'. 'Change' is the imperfect transmission of language from parents to child, giving rise to hitherto unknown forms, whereas 'diffusion' is the spread of such forms. Within this theoretical framework, no change within the domain of syntax occurred between EBH and LBH – what happened was a diffusion of changes in LBH that had already taken place in EBH. QH does not show many changes from LBH, but rather a large diffusion of forms which changed in the transition of Hebrew towards Late Biblical Hebrew (Naudé 2000b:128). Diffusion also involves the parameter of time. Qumran Hebrew represents a situation where different grammars [i.e. idiolects] co-existed next to one another in the author's/speaker's mind (Naudé 2000b:116).

4. AN OUTLINE OF THE NEW AGENDA FOR THE DEBATE ON THE CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology (2003)

The assumption that the language of a particular text has a direct relationship with the language used at the time of the composition of that text has now been refuted. It is accepted that language was subject to constant revision at the hands of the scribes who passed the material down through the generations (Young 2003d:312).

Young (2003c:276-311) shows that LBH elements could have been used before the exile. The inscriptions reveal that at least some LBH forms already existed in varieties of monarchic-era Hebrew. The same impression is created by the EBH texts, which contain a considerable sprinkling of LBH forms. Therefore the existence of dialects in pre-exilic

Hebrew can be expected (Young 1993; 1997) and these are characterised by 'proto-LBH' linguistic features.

Based on Talshir (2003:251-275), Young (2003d:314-317) provides the outline of a new theory on the origins of LBH and Mishnaic Hebrew. The assumptions of Talshir (2003:251-275) are as follows: a) EBH continued to be the language of Yehud until the Persian period, especially in those sources without an eastern bias, such as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi; b) LBH is connected with the eastern diaspora; proto-LBH features first began to make their presence felt strongly in literary Hebrew associated with the exiles in the eastern diaspora (Ezekiel being the first example); c) in the days of the Second Temple period, political separation saw the development of a separate dialect, Tannaitic (Mishnaic) Hebrew in the lowlands, while in Yehud proper, (LBH and Qumran) Hebrew remained more conservative. Although neither Qumran Hebrew nor Mishnaic Hebrew is identical to LBH, there are important isoglosses which they share with LBH in opposition to EBH.

4.2 The Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts (2009)

4.2.1 Late dating is problematic

The conventional point of departure for the linguistic dating of biblical texts is the discernment of late linguistic elements in some books of the Hebrew Bible but the absence of these features in other biblical books. The significant development in the latter part of the twentieth century was the view that much or perhaps all of Genesis to Kings, that is, more than P and the final chapters of Kings, were written in the post-exilic period. The tendency to lower dating, strongly in evidence in recent scholarship, is not without its problems. To an uncomfortable extent it has to rely on an *argumentum e silentio* or, as Whybray (1994 [1987]:108) puts it, on the principle that what is not positively known to be early must be late. Additionally, those who deny the existence of early sources are obligated to fill the vacuum left in the pre-exilic period by their displacement, in other words, they must provide an alternative account of the development of the tradition in either oral or written form or both. Few of the proponents of late dating have as yet addressed this issue (Blenkinsopp 1992:26).

The questions facing language scholars who seek to date books and sections of the Hebrew Bible on the basis of linguistic analysis alone are: (1) Can diachronic linguistic analysis work effectively with composite literature? and (2) Can diachronic linguistic analysis demonstrate that some biblical literature must have been written early? Young *et al.*

(2009)'s argument has been that both answers are negative. Consequently, attempts to date the origins of biblical literature must rely on a multi-faceted approach rather than primarily or solely on linguistic analysis.

4.2.2 Nature of Aramaisms and Mishnaisms

To date the books of the Hebrew Bible, early scholarship was heavily dependent on the detection of Aramaisms and Mishnaisms. By Aramaisms they meant the detection of the influence of Aramaic on late Hebrew. By Mishnaisms they meant the detection of the linguistic developments that they believed distinguished BH from MH. However, Aramaic-like elements were part of the fabric of Hebrew dialects from the very beginning. Likewise MH is an independent Hebrew dialect of great antiquity. Both 'Aramaisms' and Mishnaisms', far from being markers of a late date, were available in all periods of Hebrew (Young *et al*. 2009:152-188). However, some authors were more open to utilising these features than others.

4.2.3 EBH and LBH are styles of BH

Young *et al*. (2009) argue that a better model sees LBH as merely one style of Hebrew in the Second Temple period and quite possibly in the First Temple period. Both EBH and LBH are styles with roots in pre-exilic Hebrew and both styles continue throughout the post-exilic period. 'Early' BH and 'Late' BH, therefore, do not represent different chronological periods in the history of BH, but instead represent coexisting styles of literary Hebrew throughout the biblical period.

These two general language types, EBH and LBH, are best taken as representing two tendencies among scribes of the biblical period: conservative and non-conservative. The authors and scribes who composed and transmitted works in EBH exhibit a tendency to 'conservatism' in their linguistic choices, in the sense that they only rarely use forms outside a narrow core of what they considered literary forms. At the other extreme, the LBH authors and scribes exhibited a much less conservative attitude, freely adopting a variety of linguistic forms in addition to (not generally instead of) those favoured by the EBH scribes. Between extreme conservatism (e.g. Zechariah 1–8) and extreme openness to variety (e.g. Ezra), there was a continuum into which other writings may be placed (e.g. Ezekiel, the Temple Scroll). LBH is therefore one style of BH. It is best attested in the post-exilic period since it is best exemplified by the core LBH books of Esther, Daniel, Ezra,

Nehemiah, and Chronicles. EBH was also written in the post-exilic period. Texts like Ezekiel are much closer to EBH

At Qumran too, the Damascus Document and the Temple Scroll fall somewhere in the middle between EBH and LBH yet they still are some distance away from an LBH accumulation. The other samples of Qumran and Ben Sira studied by Young *et al*. (2009) fall in the mid to high end of the EBH scale, even further from the core LBH books.

4.2.4 Styles are not geographical but intellectual or ideological

Young's first attempt (Young 2003d) to explain what LBH is was geographical. He noticed that four out of the five core LBH books have heroes who operate in the eastern diaspora. Both Esther and Daniel are set entirely in the eastern diaspora, but the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah are set in both east and west. He suggested therefore that LBH could be the style of BH favoured in the eastern diaspora during the post-exilic period, whereas EBH continued as the style favoured in the west (Young 2003d:314–317).

While there are strengths to Young's early theory concerning geography, he subsequently determined that neither geography nor chronology is essential to explain LBH (Young forthcoming). There is no need to posit chronological or geographical distance to explain the use of different styles of language. The important factor was the perceived audience or purpose of the document. Thus, there was a conscious attempt to distance this style of literature from literature produced in the EBH style. Rather than geographical or chronological distance, there would be intellectual or ideological distance.

4.2.5 Nature of Transmission

Dating a book by linguistic means depends upon the assumptions that a book must have been written at a particular time, and that the language gives scholars clues to discover what the time of composition actually was. These assumptions, however, are in conflict with the scholarly consensus in the fields of textual and literary criticism. According to scholarly consensus, ancient books, did not maintain a static form, but developed over time.

Despite the extremely fragmentary nature of textual evidence, the Qumran scrolls, the LXX, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, when placed alongside the MT provide us with abundant evidence of textual variety. Thus, only a very small percentage of Qumran biblical texts have a very close relationship with the MT (Young 2005a:104). For the parallel text 2

Samuel 22//Psalm 18, Clines (2001) shows that one in every two words has an attested variant. Leading text critics agree that the biblical texts evolved through the production of successive literary editions, as evidenced by the fact that *most* biblical books have an attested variant edition (Ulrich 1999; Tov 2001:313–350).

The text-critical evidence, therefore, puts a question mark over the whole enterprise of linguistic dating before it has begun (Young 2005b:349–351; 2007:173–176, 181–183). The text-critical evidence indicates that the current linguistic profiles of the biblical books are not only the result of choices made by their authors, but also by later scribes. The conservative (EBH) and non-conservative (LBH) tendencies are evidenced in different ways and differing degrees to each individual textual version of each biblical book.

4.2.6 Methodology

Within the new model, Young *et al*. (2009) have pointed out that most of Hurvitz's methodology is still sound and provides the basis for future research. The criteria of contrast, distribution, and accumulation are still valuable ways of describing linguistic relationships. It is still worthwhile to map the linguistic relationships of the biblical books to one other. Thus it is a significant result that MT Ezekiel has a higher number of links to core LBH books than any other prophetic book. The new model simply does not correlate such findings to chronology. A person cannot simply start with a chronological presupposition such as that Chronicles, Esther and other texts whose contents place them in the postexilic period are necessarily going to be linguistically similar. So, for example, when Polzin assumed on the basis of non-linguistic expectations that Chronicles was typical of LBH, he did not create a chronology, he just charted how close various texts are to the language of MT Chronicles.

One clear gain from focusing on the linguistic profile of each individual book is an appreciation of the scribal art of each text. Scholars have long been accustomed to appreciating the artistry of Hebrew poetry or narrative devices. Given the variety of linguistic options ('oppositions') available to the biblical authors and scribes, the aesthetic 'feel' of the current forms of texts is created by the cumulative effect of many small features. By insisting on the necessity of finding linguistic oppositions, Hurvitz's methodology has provided a basis for discerning more clearly yet another aspect of the literary artistry of the biblical books.

5. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEW AGENDA

It must be acknowledged that Young *et al*. (2009) contribute much to demolish the simple linear model of ABH, EHB, LBH, MH, etc. by suggesting a more complex model of language development. Unfortunately the model that they employ exhibits a long list of shortcomings. It is based exclusively on (author) style, while denying chronology and language variation based on idiolects and dialectology. The data are based mainly on the distribution of lexical items, phonology, morphology, and morphosyntax. No instances of syntactic change and pragmatic-semantic change form part of the core of their analyses, nor do these linguistic features play a role in their debate. The interpretation of data is based on frequency and does not explore the developmental history of grammatical constructions. Furthermore, their work has excluded nearly all theoretical developments in mainstream historical and diachronic linguistics concerning the nature of language change and the diffusion of changes through a language system.

To further the debate the following needs to happen: First, the best practices concerning the objectives and methods in diachronic study, as well as clear definitions of the nature of evidence in historical linguistics will have to be considered. This pertains to what data are used as the basis for comparison – the source and nature of the linguistic elements to be compared – as well as the role of internal and external factors in language change, such as the role played by the development of a written standard variety of the language. A proper understanding of change should also lead to a better notion of the contours of the theory of grammar in the sense that it is generally believed that a better knowledge of the kinds of mechanisms, principles, and constraints that play a role in one linguistic domain should help us to get a better grip on the form and content of the theory of grammar.

Second, there are at present two main theoretical frameworks that offer explanations for linguistic change: the general formalist approach (Lightfoot 1979, 1991, 1999, 2002) and the functionalist approach (Traugott & Heine 1991; Labov 1994; Hopper & Traugott 2003). However, form and function are equally important and both approaches offer opportunities for a better understanding of linguistic structure and language change. The formal approach is interested in how change in language output is caused by change in the formal grammar system (the top-down approach), while the functionalist approach concentrates on how linguistic utterances are used in communication, and how this leads

to grammar change (the bottom-up approach). The two approaches need to be combined in order to reach a fuller understanding of the causes and mechanism of language change, and ultimately of the system underlying language.

Third, it is necessary to critically refine the claims of Young *et al.* (2009) that data used to distinguish pre-exilic from post-exilic Hebrew are no more than manifestations of synchronic styles available to exilic and post-exilic authors in order to accommodate the newest perspectives from functional and formal approaches to language change, e.g., Fischer (2007). This refinement will have to occur in the context of the four questions set forth by Fischer (2007) to understand human linguistic behaviour:

i) What is it that produces language or what are the principles underlying the generation (including comprehension and production) of linguistic utterances (this relates to the question of 'cause' as well as of 'structure')?
ii) How is language used within society (this relates to the question of 'function')?
iii) How does language develop within the individual (the ontogenetic aspect)?
iv) How does language develop over time (the phylogenetic aspect)?

Fourth, the following aspects need to be considered: a) the individual dimension: language change (the creation of an idiolect); b) the sociological dimension: diffusion of language change; c) the time dimension: diachronic/chronological development; and d) the nature of the written language.

Language change starts in an individual and diffuses in a speech community, a group or network of people whose language is more or less the same because they learn and influence one another in all sorts of behaviour including language. Speech communities are based on factors including geography, religion, age and gender, and may be more or less cohesive (depending on the level of standardisation), and recognisable by their characteristics of language use. Speech is also influenced by the speech-situation, which determines the style and register of utterances (for example intimate, casual, consultative, formal and frozen). Along the time dimension languages are constantly, pervasively and systematically changing. The result is linguistic variation, different ways of saying the same thing. Another factor involves the differences between speech and writing. Writing is secondary to speech and employs special forms of

language for its unique purposes, for example, the utilisation of devices for the organisation of discourse (Hale 1997; McMahon 1994).

The idea of a uniform kind of Hebrew in any one period is problematic, an idea which has now been refuted in the new debate. As indicated, the distinction between EBH and LBH does not reflect the reality of the chronological framework of Biblical Hebrew. All features of the biblical text were also subject to extensive editorial revision during the Second Temple period. Language variation of the various grammars of BH as reflected in styles, registers, idiolects, dialects, etc. shows that the language of every book of the Hebrew Bible simply has its own linguistic profile. (Presumably some books have more than one linguistic profile, if they have a composite textual history.) Each grammar should be looked at separately. Such a close analysis of individual idiolects is particularly required because of the particular character of the biblical text and because of the pitfalls into which the debate has fallen. The differences among the varieties of Hebrew actually show to what extent a certain language change of a certain Biblical Hebrew speaker had already become diffused. The process of change and diffusion is a continuous process. Each variety is a continuation of the grammars of an earlier phase, but is in certain respects distinct from the other grammars of Biblical Hebrew. Only a few (syntactic) changes are expected in these varieties (if change is the imperfect transmission of the architecture of language). However, these varieties already show a large diffusion of forms that changed in the transmission of Hebrew from mother to child. The variation in a specific variety may be explained as the existence of more than one grammar among the speakers of the language of that variety.

Qumran Hebrew is a practical term to designate the language of the linguistic corpus of Qumran in general, but from the viewpoint of language change and diffusion this distinction does not reflect the reality of the language variation of the various grammars of Qumran Hebrew as reflected in styles, registers, idiolects, dialects, etc. The same pertains to Mishnaic Hebrew. Each grammar of Qumran Hebrew should be viewed separately. Some of the grammars show diffusion of features of the languages/dialects of EBH in traditional terms. Others show diffusion of features of the languages/dialects of the languages/dialects of LBH in traditional terms. The differences among the varieties of Qumran Hebrew actually show to what extent a certain language change had already become diffused. The language changes reflected by 3Q15 and 4QMMT had not yet spread, but reflect a certain idiolect.

The extensive editorial revision during the Second Temple period by the scribes are mentioned in the agenda, but the role of the Masoretes in the transmission of the BH texts and their subsequent influence on the standardisation of BH as language are neglected in the agenda of the new debate.

6. CONCLUSION

Descriptions and explanations of language phenomena must be psychologically real, i.e. they must be consistent with what is known about human mental processes (Halle *et al*. 1978). The traditional division of Biblical Hebrew into chronological periods corresponding to the different linguistic corpora, namely pre-exilic or Early Biblical Hebrew, post-exilic or Late Biblical Hebrew, Qumran Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, etc. assumes a single homogenous spoken and written Hebrew at any one time with sudden changes into another variety and that there is no distinction necessary between the written and the spoken language. These assumptions are not psychologically feasible. The same pertains to Young *et al*. (2009), who focus only on author styles and do not allow for language change.

The new agenda promoted by Young *et al.* (2009) must be adjusted to recognise the irrefutable and unstoppable fact of language change and diffusion over time, as well as language variation which has its basis in geography or in the ideolect of a single speaker. More research and refinement are necessary to further the developmental picture of Hebrew.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bendavid, A 1967. *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*. Tel Aviv: Hebrew University. [in Hebrew]

Blenkinsopp, J 1992. *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible.* ABRL. New York: Doubleday.

Clines, D J A 2001. What Remains of the Hebrew Bible? Its Text and Language in a Postmodern Age. *ST* 54: 76-95.

Davies, P 2001. *Biblical Hebrew and the History of Ancient Judah: Challenging Some Simplistic Scholarship*. Ms: University of Sheffield.

Davies, P 2003. Biblical Hebrew and the History of Ancient Judah: Typology, Chronology and Common Sense, in: Young 2003a (ed.), 150-163.

De Vaux, R 1973. *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. London: Oxford University Press.

Driver, S R 1898. *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. Seventh Edition. Edinburgh: Clark.

Ehrensvärd, M 2003. Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts, in: Young 2003a (ed.), 164–188.

Fischer, O 2007. *Morphosyntactic Change. Functional and Formal Perspectives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fitzmyer, J A 1979. *A Wandering Aramean. Collected Aramaic Essays.* Missoula: Scholars Press.

Gesenius, W 1815. *Geschichte der hebräischen Sprache und Schrift: Eine philologisch-historische Einleitung in die Sprachlehren und Wörterbücher der hebräischen Sprache*. Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel.

Goodspeed, E 1944. The original Language of the Gospels, in: Kepler, T S (ed.) *Contemporary Thinking about Jesus: An Anthology*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 58-63.

Hale, M 1997. *Theory and Method in Historical Linguistics*. Ms: Concordia University.

Halle, M, Bresnan, J W & Miller, G A 1978. *Linguistic Theory and Psychological Reality*. Cambridge, M A: MIT Press.

Hopper P J & Traugott E C 2003 [1993]. *Grammaticalization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hurvitz, A 1965. Observations on the Language of the Third Apocryphal Psalm from Qumran. *RevQ* 5/2, 225-232.

Hurvitz, A 1972. *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew: A Study in Post-Exilic Hebrew and its Implications for the Dating of the Psalms*. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute.

Hurvitz, A 1973. Linguistic Criteria for Dating Problematic Biblical Texts, *Hebrew Abstracts* 14, 74–79.

Hurvitz, A 1974. The Evidence of Language in Dating the Priestly Code: A Linguistic Study in Technical Idioms and Terminology, *RB* 81, 24–56.

Hurvitz, A 1982. *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel*. *A New Approach to an Old Problem.* Paris: Gabalda.

Hurvitz, A 1997. The Historical Quest for "Ancient Israel" and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations. *VT* 47, 301–15.

Hurvitz, A 1999. Further Comments on the Linguistic Profile of Ben Sira: Syntactic Affinities with Late Biblical Hebrew, in: Muraoka, T and Elwolde, J F (eds) 1999. *Sirach, Scrolls and Sages: Proceedings of a Second International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, and the Mishnah,*

held at Leiden University, 15-17 December1995 (STDJ 26). Leiden: Brill, 132–145.

Hurvitz, A 2000. Can Biblical Texts be Dated Linguistically? Chronological Perspectives in the Historical Study of Biblical Hebrew, in: A. Lemaire & M. Saebø (eds.), *Congress Volume: Oslo 1998* (VTS 80). Leiden: Brill, 143–60.

Hurvitz, A 2006. The Recent Debate on Late Biblical Hebrew: Solid Data, Experts' Opinions, and Inconclusive Arguments. *HS* 47, 191–210.

Kesterson, J C 1984. Tense Usage and Verbal Syntax in Selected Qumran Documents. Ph.D. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

Kropat, A 1909. *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik*. Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann.

Kutscher, E Y 1974. *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll.* Leiden: Brill.

Kutscher, E Y 1982. *A History of the Hebrew Language*. Leiden: Brill.

Labov W 1994. *Principles of Linguistic Change*. *Internal Factors.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Leahy, T 1960. Studies in the Syntax of 1QS. *Biblica* 41, 135-157.

Lightfoot, D 1979. *Principles of Diachronic Syntax.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Lightfoot, D 1991. *How to Set Parameters. Arguments from Language Change.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Lightfoot, D 1999. *The Development of Language: Acquisition, Change, and Evolution*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Lightfoot, D (ed.) 2002. *Syntactic Effects of Morphological Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McMahon, A M S. 1994. *Understanding Language Change*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Milik, J T 1962. Le Rouleau de Cuivre Provenant de la Grotte 3Q (3Q15). Commentaire et Texte, in: Baillet M, Milik J T & de Vaux R (eds). *Les 'Petites Grottes' de Qumran* (DJD 3). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 211-302.

Morag, S 1988. Qumran Hebrew: Some Typological Observations. *VT* 8, 148-164.

Muchowski, P 1994. Language of the Copper Scroll in the Light of the Phrases Denoting the Directions of the World, in: Wise M O, Collins J J & Pardee D G 1994 (eds). *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site. Present Realities and Future Prospects.* New York: The New York Academy of Sciences, 319-327.

Naudé, J A 2000a. Diachronic Syntax and Language Change: The Case of Qumran Hebrew. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 18, 1-14.

Naudé, J A 2000b. Qumran Hebrew Syntax in the Perspective of a Theory of Language Change and Diffusion. *JNSL* 26(1), 105-132.

Naudé J A 2000c. The Language of the Book of Ezekiel. Biblical Hebrew in Transition? *OTE* 13(1), 46-71.

Polak, F H1998. The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics, and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative. *JANES* 26, 59-105.

Polak, F H2006. Linguistic and Stylistic Aspects of Epic Formulae in Ancient Semitic Poetry and Biblical Narrative, in: Fassberg, S E & Hurvitz, A (eds). *Biblical Hebrew in its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives.* Jerusalem: Magnes, and Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 285-304.

Polzin, R 1976. *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose.* Missoula: Scholars Press.

Qimron, E 1986. *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls.* Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Qimron, E 1992. Observations on the History of Early Hebrew (1000 B.C.E.-200 C.E.) in the Light of the Dead Sea Documents, in: Dimant, E & Rappaport, U (eds). *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Forty Years of Research.* Leiden: Brill, 349-361.

Qimron, E & Strugnell, J 1994. *Qumran Cave 4. V* (DJD 10). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Rabin, C 1965. Qumran Hebrew: Some Typological Observations: *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 4, 144-161.

Rezetko, R 2003. Dating Biblical Hebrew: Evidence from Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, in: Young 2003a (ed.), 215-250.

Rooker, M F 1990. *Biblical Hebrew in Transition.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Sáenz-Badillos, A 1993. *A History of the Hebrew Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Segal, M H 1970. *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sharvit, S 1967. Investigations concerning the Lexicon of the Copper Scroll. *Beth Mikra* 31, 127-135. [in Hebrew].

Smith, M S 1991a. *The Origins and Development of the Waw-Consecutive. Northwest Semitic Evidence from Ugarit to Qumran.* Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press.

Smith, M S 1991b. Converted and Unconverted Perfect and Imperfect Forms in the Literature of Qumran. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 284, 1-16.

Smith, M S 1991c. The Waw-Consecutive at Qumran. *ZAH* 3, 161-164.

Talshir, D 2003. The Habitat and History of Hebrew during the Second Temple Period, in: Young 2003a (ed.), 251-275.

Tov, E 2001. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress; Assen: Van Gorcum.

Traugott, E C & Heine, B (eds) 1991. *Approaches to Grammaticalization, Vol. 1: Focus on Theoretial and Methodological Issues, Vol. 2: Focus on Types of Grammatical Markers:* Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Ulrich, E 1999. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Waltke, B K & O'Connor, M 1990. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax.* Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

Whybray, R N 1994 [1987]. *The Making of the Pentateuch*: *A Methodological Study.* (JSOT Supplement 53). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic.

Wolters, A 1990. The *Copper Scroll* and the Vocabulary of Mishnaic Hebrew. *Revue de Qumran* 55/14, 483-495.

Young, I 1993. *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.

Young, I 1995. The "Northernisms" of the Israelite Narratives in Kings. *ZAH* 8, 63-70.

Young, I 1997. Evidence of Diversity in Pre-Exilic Judahite Hebrew. *HS* 38, 7-20.

Young, I 1999. '*Am* Construed as Singular and Plural in Hebrew Biblical Texts: Diachronic and Textual Perspectives. *ZAH* 12, 48-82.

Young, I 2001a. The Problem of Ezekiel. A Discussion Paper. Ms: University of Sydney.

Young, I 2001b. *Edah* and *Qahal* as Collective Nouns in Hebrew Biblical Texts. *ZAH* 14/1, 68-78.

Young, I (ed.) 2003a. Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology (*JSOT Supplement* 369). London: T & T Clark.

Young, I 2003b. Introduction: The Origin of the Problem, in: Young 2003a (ed.), 1-7.

Young, I 2003c. Late Biblical Hebrew and Hebrew Inscriptions, in: Young 2003a (ed.), 276-311.

Young, I 2003d. Concluding Reflections, in: Young 2003a (ed.), 312-317.

Young, I 2005a. The Biblical Scrolls from Qumran and the Masoretic Text: A Statistical Approach, in Dacy, M., Dowling, J, and Faigan, S (eds) 2005. *Feasts and Fasts: A Festschrift in Honour of Alan David Crown* (Mandelbaum Studies in Judaica 11). Sydney: University of Sydney, Mandelbaum Publishing, 81–139.

Young, I 2005b. 'Biblical Texts Cannot Be Dated Linguisticallym' *HS* 46,341–51.

Young, I 2007. Textual Stability in Gilgamesh and the Dead Sea Scrolls', in Azize, J and Weeks, N (eds) 2007. *Gilgamesh and the World of Assyria: Proceedings of the Conference Held at Mandelbaum House, The University of Sidney, 21-23 July 2004* (ANES Supplement 21). Leuven: Peeters, 173–84.

Young, I, Rezetko, R & Ehrensward, M 2009. *The Linguistic dating of Biblical Texts*. London: Equinox.

Young, I forthcoming What is Late Biblical Hebrew?