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Oral Platform and Language Usage in the Abraham Narrative

FRANK H. POLAK

This study argues that the tales of the patriarchs preserve residues of an underlying oral-epic substratum, an overarching platform that is situated in the tradition stream of the Northwest Semitic epic, narrative poetry, and in which the narrative in its present, written form is anchored. The orality of this substratum is indicated, in my view, by a number of stylistic features that are close to the characteristics of spoken language and by a series of formulaic phrases. By contrast, linguistic characteristics of the Deuteronomic/Priestly/post-exilic strata are far less frequent. By epic I don't mean a *Nationalepos* from a so-called "heroic age," but only an extended narrative in poetic form, concerning noble figures, such as great heroes or estimated ancestors, worthy of the "fame of women and men." This delineation is intended to be purely formal, without any essentialistic intentions or historic pretensions. The term "overarching platform" is to indicate a narrative complex that is known to and used by different narrators, "Singers of Tales," in different variations, but all around the same central theme. As I stated in a discussion of the Abraham-Jacob narrative: "What is traditional, and ultimately based on oral narrative/poetry, is the underlying unity of the overarching narrative, whereas the problems of repetition and contradiction originate with the activity of various different narrators, whether oral or writing, within this tradition."[1] I will focus on the Abraham narrative,[2] in view of the features matched by Ugaritic epic poetry, as representative of the

[1] See my study, "Oral Substratum, Stylistic-Syntactic Profile and Thematic Flow in the Abraham-Jacob Narrative," in *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writings: Ancient Literacy, Orality, and Literary Production* (ed. Brian Schmidt; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), 217-238.

[2] When viewing the various tales in Genesis 11:27–25:10 in a piecemeal perspective, I will speak of "tales" or "stories," whereas the term "narrative" will be reserved for the Abraham story as

Northwest Semitic epic tradition, and because of their coherent plot structure as analyzed by Heinrich Ewald.

The relationship in terms of theme and plot structure (1.1 and 1.2) will be sharpened by the syntactic-stylistic profile of the Abraham tales (1.3) and significant residues of oral-formulaic phraseology that stand out in some of the tales (2.1 and 2.2). An important part of this discussion will concern the methodological problems surrounding the role of linguistic characterization for literary stratification and periodization (2.3-4 and 3-4). In the end I will point to some phenomena which still may betray the narrator's voice and gesturing (5), and thus give the the *sōfēr* — both scribe and author, a place within the oral arena.

It is to be granted that it is impossible to reconstruct the oral traditions at the background of biblical texts as they were committed to writing and transmitted in written form.[3], It is, however, my intention to show that the oral background has affected the written form of the Abraham narrative to a very large extent.

1. From Ewald to Ilimilku: Plot Structure and Encompassing Epic

1.1. Plot Structure: Ancient and Modern

Here I invoke two names. I invoke the name of Ewald in honour of his insight that patriarchal narrative embodies a literary plan, a plot structure in my terms. Thus he characterizes the tale of Abraham:

> "Zuerst also ist Sarah unfruchtbar und das Versprechen ist umsonst gegeben. Aber je höher hier der Erzähler durch Schürzung des verworrenen Knoten alles spannt, und je absichtlicher er alles aufsucht, die Unmöglichkeit dieses Versprechens zu zeigen, und je weiter er die Erfüllung selbst hinaus schiebt, desto überraschender ist endlich das erfüllte Versprechen. Abrahams Treue soll durch den Verzug und das zwar oft versprochene aber noch immer ferne Ziel geprüft werden (15,6. וְהֶאֱמִן בַּיהוָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לּוֹ צְדָקָה), und je höher das alles durch das feierliche Hinhalten und Zögern gestellt wird, desto kräftiger ist der Erfolg."[4]

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an epic platform.

[3] Recently see A. SCHELLENBERG, "A 'Lying Pen of the Scribes" (Jer 8:8)? Orality and Writing in the Prophetic Books,"in *The Interface of Orality and Writing: Speaking, Seeing, Writing in the Shaping of New Genres* (ed. A. Weissenrieder and R.B. Coote; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 285-309, here 286.

[4] H.G.A. EWALD, *Die Komposition der Genesis kritisch untersucht* (Brunswick: Lucius,

In modern biblical criticism the view proposed by the youth work of this towering hebraist and orientalist must raise the question whether one has the right to postulate an encompassing plot structure of this type. Ever since the work of Gunkel precedence has been given to the small unit.[5] In this vista an encompassing plot structure necessarily is attributed to the redaction strata,[6] or to a late narrator, as proposed by John Van Seters and, in a sense, Roger Whybray.[7] David Carr recognizes the role of the overarching narrative, but places it in the framework of a later stage in the redaction-transmission process (Proto-Genesis, between 722-560).[8]

At this juncture I want to invoke the name of Ilimilku, who is mentioned as the copyist/author of the epics of Kirta, ʾAqhat and Baʿal.[9] Ilimilku's work exemplifies the form of a large scale epic text in a prosody that resembles the diction of Hebrew biblical poetry and a language that is cognate to Biblical Hebrew. These epics prove

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1823), 272; in modern biblical research see in particular L.R. HELYER, "The Separation of Abram and Lot: Its Significance in the Patriarchal Narratives," *JSOT* 26 (1983), 77-88, here 80-81; for the comments of Naomi STEINBERG, David CLINES, Joel BADEN, and David CARR see n. 18 below.

5 So even J. VAN SETERS, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1975), 158-164, 310-311; D.M. CARR, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, KT: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); both following H. GUNKEL, *Genesis* (HKAT I/1; 3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910; 1st ed., 1901).

6 See in particular J.L. SKA, "Essay on the Nature and the Meaning of the Abraham Cycle" (Gen 11:29–25:11)," in IDEM, *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 23-45. Ska (here, 27-29) highlights the redactional chronology, covering a hundred years from Abraham's migration until his death, but does not find "a single chain of events." He regards the posterity theme as one of two "narrative programmes" whereas Ewald presents it as the central issue *par excellence*. On the stylistic characterization of the introductory sections, 11:27–12:5, see sections 1.3; 2.1.

7 R.N. WHYBRAY, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study* (JSOTSup 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 232-242.

8 CARR, Fractures (see n. 5), 201-203, 226-229; IDEM, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Sacred Texts and Imperial Contexts of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 37-39. An aperçu of recent scholarship is offered by T.C. RÖMER, "Zwischen Urkunden, Fragmenten und Ergänzungen: Zum Stand der Pentateuchforschung," ZAW 125 (2013, 2-24, here 9-18; IDEM, "Recherches actuelles sur le cycle d'Abraham," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History* (ed. A. Wénin; BETL 155; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 179-211.

9 D. PARDEE, *The Ugaritic Texts and the Origins of West Semitic Literary Composition* (Schweich Lectures 2007; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 42-49; A. CURTIS, "Ilimilku of Ugarit: Copyist or Creator?," in *Writing the Bible* (ed. P.R. Davies and T.P. Römer; London: Acumen, 2013), 10-24; M.J. KORPEL, "Exegesis in the Work of Ilimilku of Ugarit," in

that in the context of the Levant an extended narrative is not necessarily the product of a late redaction.[10] So much has been argued by Frank M. Cross, Ronald Hendel and Simon Parker,[11] but their protestations have not been heeded in most recent scholarship.

However, the similarities between patriarchal narrative and the texts found in Ugarit do not suffer explaining away. Significantly, two Ugaritic epics, the tales of Kirta and Danʾilu-ʾAqhat, center on the the theme of the sonless/childless king and his prayer (Danʾilu) or lament (Kirta), a theme that is close to one of the the central themes of the narrative of Abraham and Sarah, who remained childless (Gen 11:30).[12] A further common feature is the divine blessing and promise of posterity. Two details merit particular attention. First, as noted by Claus Westermann, the dream (מַחֲזֶה, Gen 15:1)[13] in which Abram complains of the lack of a son (vv. 2–3) is matched by the dream in which Kirta gives vent to his despair to Ilu, his divine father. Secondly, the theme of the tale of Mamre, the divine visit to the human couple and the supper prepared for the guest is found in the Ugaritic epic of ʾAqhat:

Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel (ed. J.C. de Moor; OTS 40; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 86-111.

10 For epigraphic literary texts from the Southern Levant (Kuntillet ʿAjrud, and Tell Deir ʿAlla) see S. AHITUV, E. ESHEL and Z. MESHEL, "The Inscriptions," in Z. MESHEL, *Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Ḥorvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012), 73-142, here 108-113; P. K. MCCARTER, "Kuntillet ʿAjrud: Plaster Inscription (2.47D)," *COS* 2.47, 173; J.A. HACKET, *The Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984); B.A. LEVINE, "The Deir ʿAlla Plaster Inscriptions (2.27)," *COS* 2.27, 140-145.

11 F.M. CROSS, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), viii-ix; IDEM, "The Epic Traditions of Ancient Israel: Epic Narrative and the Reconstruction of Early Israelite Institutions," in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism* (ed. R.E. Friedmann; Chico, Scholars Press, 1983), 13-39, here 14-16; IDEM, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 22-52; followed by S.B. PARKER, *The Pre-biblical Narrative Tradition: Essays on the Ugaritic poems Keret and Aqhat* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988); R.S. HENDEL, *The Epic of the Patriarch. The Jacob Cycle and the Narrative Traditions of Canaan and Israel* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 26-32, 39-59.

12 K. KOCH, "Die Sohnesverheißung an den Ugaritischen Daniel," *ZA* 58 (1967), 211-221, here 221; C. WESTERMANN, *The Promises to the Fathers* (trans. D.E. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 132-134, 167-180 (with detailed comparison of the narrative patterns); HENDEL, *The Patriarch* (see n. 11), 39-59. The thematic details discussed by Westermann are entirely disregarded by Van Seters who considers child birth tales ubiquitous: J. VAN SETERS, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville, KT: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 247, 271-272, n. 20.

13 M. LICHTENSTEIN, "Dream Theophany and the E document," *JANES* 1 (1969), 45- 54.

the divine craftsman, Koṯar wa-ḫasis visits Danʾilu and his wife, in order to present the newborn ʾAqhat with a bow and arrows. This scene highlights, like in the tale of Mamre, the role of the woman in the preparation of the meal, and is likewise connected to the birth theme. If Sarah and Abraham are rewarded with the promise of a son, in the ʾAqhat tale the son receives his bow. This parallel has often been noted,[14] but is to be mentioned again because of the many epic formulae encountered in the tale of Mamre.[15]

1.2. The Abraham Narrative: the Growth of a Symbolic Household

In the epic vista, the plot of the Abraham narrative, episodic though it be, reveals a basic unity. All episodes are subordinate to the contrast between the promise to Abraham and the the fundamental problem indicated by Ewald: since Sarah was childless, the divine promise to Abraham seems pointless.

Since the promise to Abraham is often presented as a late theological motif,[16] some comments are called for. First, in view of the development of the narrative, the divine promise of "a great *ethnos*" (12:2), remains problematic, since the motif of childlessness lies at the basis of a number of narratives. This motif, made explicit by Abraham's complaint (15:2–3) is the motivation for the role of Hagar (16:1–2), is stated again in the tale of Mamre (18:11) and is implied by the reactions of Abraham and Sarah to the promise of a son (17:17; 18:12). The divine promise,

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[14] See particularly Y. AVISHUR, *Studies in Biblical Narrative. Style, Structure and the Ancient Near Eastern Literary Background* (Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Archeological Center Publication, 1999), 57-74. In view of the Orion myth presented in Ovid's *Fasti* (V 495-544) Thomas RÖMER places this tale in the Persian era that witnesses the meeting of Greek and Levantine culture: Th. RÖMER, "Quand les dieux rendent visite aux hommes (Gen 18–19)," in *Dans le laboratoire de l'historien des religions. Mélanges offerts à Philippe Borgeaud* (ed. F. Prescendi and Y. Volokhine; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2011), 615-626, here 617-620, 626. However, the ambiguity surrounding divine/angelic participation in a meal prepared and presented by humans hardly fits this period (contrast Judg 6:20–21; 13:16–20). The Greek and Levantine cultures meet in Anatolia, Crete and Cyprus in place, in time by the late Bronze period, and in writing by the Greek borrowing of the Phoenician alphabet.

[15] See my study, "Abraham-Jacob Narrative" (see n. 1), sections 3b; 5a.

[16] J.L. SKA, "The Call of Abraham and Israel's Birth-certificate," in IDEM, *Exegesis* (see n. 6), 47-66. The problems concerning the command/non-execution pattern, raised by SKA, were already solved by W. BAUMGARTNER "Ein Kapitel vom hebräischen Erzählungsstil," in *Eucharisterion: Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments Hermann Gunkel zum 60. Geburtstage*, Vol. 1 (ed. H. Schmidt; FRLANT 36; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923), 145-157, here 146-148. When a request, proposal or command is not followed by the mention of its execution, the execution is implied, such as, e.g., Gen 12:13.

then, augments the tension created by the note on Sarai (11:30), and should be viewed as classical case of literary prolepsis,[17] foreshadowing a future perspective but not that transparent that one may know what is going to happen. Only after the narration of the event itself, can the reader attain full comprehension of the meaning of the divine anticipation. Thus the opening of the Abraham narrative should not be viewed primarily as a theological statement. It is the indication of a perspective and at the same time a way to create an insuperable tension: when is the promise to come true?[18]

This is the problem of opening, closure and main stages of the Abraham narrative. As the exposition notes in a powerful bicolon:[19] "Now Sarai was barren; she had no child" (11:30).[20] The closure of the Abraham narrative signals the fundamental change in the fate of the patriarchal family: at this juncture their son, Isaac, lets his new bride, Rebecca, enter into his maternal tent (24:67). These developments introduce two of the central cornerstones of the Abraham narrative: *wife* and *son* (or in a wider vista, posterity). Two additional cornerstones are introduced by the episode of the divine promise and the trek: a *land* where Abraham is to move into (12:1), and the *property* he is taking with him (12:5).[21] These cornerstones define the "house" as a constitutive element of the symbolic universe of this tale, and thus as a *symbolic household*.[22]

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17 The role of the prolepsis as "Roter Faden" is discussed by E. LÄMMERT, *Bauformen des Erzählens* (3rd ed.; Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968), 139-143, 146-47); see also S. BAR-EFRAT, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 179-180.

18 D.J.A. CLINES, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (JSOTSup 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1978), 45; HELYER, "Separation" (see n. 4); WESTERMANN, *Promises* (see n. 12), 132-134; N. STEINBERG, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 36, 45-8; CARR, *Fractures* (see n. 5), 184-185; J.S. BADEN, *The Promise to the Patriarchs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 14.

19 On this note's linguistic features and parallelism see below, section 2.1.

20 For the attribution of 11:30 the Priestly genealogical framework see SKA, "The Call of Abraham" (see n. 16), 48-49; J. WÖHRLE, *Fremdlinge im eigenen Land: Zur Enstehung und Intention der priestlichen Passagen der Vätergeschichte* (FRLANT 246; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 25-38; as against this view see J.A. EMERTON, "The Source Analysis of Genesis xi 27–32," *VT* 42 (1992), 37-46, here 44-45. The stylistic shaping and narrative patterns of 11:29–30, discussed in section 2.1 below, do not have a match in this framework.

21 D. STEINMETZ, *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict and Continuity in Genesis* (Louisville, KT: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 5-7, 10-11, 15-30; R. POLZIN, "'The Ancestress of Israel in Danger' in Danger," *Semeia* 3 (1975), 81-98, here 83-85.

22 For this vista see STEINBERG, *Kinship and Marriage* (see n. 18).

In biblical scholarship these issues are subsumed under the themes of the promise of land and posterity. However, in patriarchal narrative these matters are fully integrated in and dependent on the developments of the tale and should not be taken as separate entities. The divine promise near the terebinth of Moreh, and the ensuing construction of the altar are dependent on and subservient to Abraham's arrival (12:7).[23] The promise of land and posterity following Lot's departure (13:14–17) is related to the isolation caused by the break up. The double promise in Gen 15 is the response to Abraham's questions and doubts concerning the divine assurances (15:3–5, 8). These doubts, which, as already noted, are matched by Kirta's complaints in the Ugaritic texts, are an expression of the patriarch's abandonment, and as such are to be viewed as an essential part of a large scale narrative.[24] The formulation of the double promise in the Lot narrative (13:14–17) may have served to answer these doubts in advance, on a redactional level.

The narrative in all its stages is related to gain and loss in terms of these cornerstones, in accordance with David CLINES' insight that in the Pentateuch the promise is never realized in full, and is still awaited with Moses' death.[25] Gain made in one element, leads to a loss in another corner, and *vice versa*. Thus, when Abraham arrives in Canaan, a famine compels him to move to Egypt (loss of land), where his wife is taken to Pharaoh's court (endangering his wife), but he receives compensation in terms of property (12:16). With his returns to Canaan as a wealthy man, the household seems complete, but now his nephew, who symbolizes posterity, abandons him. The final promise of a son, at the terebinths of Mamre

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[23] A similar view is urged by BADEN, *Promise* (see n. 18), 57-58. Since Shechem is the "first-visited" place in the Abraham narrative, one has to assume that this narrative was primarily contemplated and composed in the North (see also 12:8), although its present form centers on Judean Hebron/Beer-sheba.

[24] Against R.G. KRATZ, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 263-264. The example from the Kirta narrative shows conclusively that the raising and answering of doubts are constitutive elements of narrative, and should not be discarded in the way proposed by SKA, "Some Groundwork on Genesis 15," in IDEM *Exegesis* (see n. 6), 67-81, here 71-72; M. KÖCKERT, "Gen 15: vom ››Urgestein‹‹ der Väterüberlieferung zum ››theologischen Programmtext‹‹ der späten Perserzeit," *ZAW* 125 (2013), 25-48, here 28-30. The ceremonies described in 15:9–10, 17 contain a series of elements that are foreign to pentateuchal ritual; the male calf of Jer 34:18 is quite unlike the "heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old a turtledove, and a young pigeon" of Gen 15:9.

[25] CLINES, *Theme* (see n. 18), 45-47, 106-112, 117. CLINES' thesis has been taken up again by

(18:9–15; contrasted by the destruction of Sodom and Ghomorrah and Lot's flight) is offset by the famine which sends Abraham's household to Gerar (ch. 20), but the his losses are counterbalanced by the gain in property in the form of the compensation Sarah receives. This narrative forms a parallel to the tale of the stay in Egypt (12:10–20), and thus demonstrates the absorption of doublets and narrative expansions within the overall structure. By the same dynamics, the achievement signaled by the birth of Isaac is offset by the expulsion of Hagar and her son, and an even greater threat in the form of the divine command to sacrifice Isaac as an "offering-up" (22:3), which would put an end to all hope.[26] The perpetual balancing of gain and loss in the symbolic household, until the final success when the son marries a woman of valour who belongs to Abraham's family in Upper Mesopotamia, suggests an overarching framework rather than the mere accumulation of independent tales or their creative redaction. This is the structure of the basic epic platform that was common to many story-tellers who recounted the narrative in different ways. In my view, then, this platform is anchored in the oral performance by the "Singer of Tales," or at least the artist of oral literature.[27] Important residues of orality are revealed by a number of syntactic and stylistic features that dominate most episodes of the Abraham tale.

1.3. Narrative Style, Scribal Desk and Spoken Discourse: a Typology

The Abraham narrative contains episodes in two different styles that can be

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BADEN, *Promise* (see n. 18), 17-22.

[26] See STEINMETZ, *Kinship* (see n. 21), 82-85; CLINES, *Theme* (see n. 18), 45; E. BLUM, "Abraham," in *Religion in Past and Present* (ed. H.D. Betz *et al*.; 14 Vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2007-2013), 1.11-13, here 12a.

[27] The artistry of oral narrative is demonstrated by a number of important studies, e.g., L. DÉGH, *Folktales & Society: Story-Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 165-285; R. FINNEGAN, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 2-22, 82-108, 243-269; G. HENßEN, *Überlieferung und Persönlichkeit: Die Erzählungen und Lieder des Egbert Gerrits* (Münster, Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1951), 9-42; I. OKPEWHO, *The Epic in Africa: Toward a Poetics of the Oral Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 135-239; W. DERKS, *The Feast of Storytelling: On Malay Oral Tradition* (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa and Leiden University, 1994), 583-613; W.S. WALKER, *A Turkish Folktale: The Art of Behçet Mahir* (New York: Garland, 1996), xviii-xxvi. Thus in non-literate societies, or in societies with restricted literacy, oral narrative is a form of art, not to be separated from the activity of the poet; against GUNKEL, *Genesis* (see n. 5), XXX.

diagnosed by means of syntactic analysis.[28] One group of tales is characterized by long noun groups, a relatively large number of subordinate clauses and in general, elaborate sentence structure which establishes not only subject and object, but also, for instance, beneficiary (or addressee), and/or coordinates of place or time. For example:

Gen 23:9b בְּכֶסֶף מָלֵא יִתְּנֶנָּה לִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לַאֲחֻזַּת־קָבֶר

For the full silver worth let him give me it in your midst for a burial holding.

This elaborate clause includes an indirect object, indicating the price (בְּכֶסֶף מָלֵא), an indication of the beneficiary (לִי), of the place (בְּתוֹכְכֶם), and of the aim (לַאֲחֻזַּת־קָבֶר). We note two noun groups: בְּכֶסֶף מָלֵא, and לַאֲחֻזַּת־קָבֶר. An example for a subordinate clause:

25:10 הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר־קָנָה אַבְרָהָם מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־חֵת שָׁמָּה קֻבַּר אַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ

The field *that Abraham had purchased from the Hittites*, there Abraham was buried, with his wife Sarah.

These examples instance the intricate, elaborate style (the IES), with around a third (or slightly less) subordinate clauses, with as many long clauses (for instance, containing both explicit subject and explicit object), and with a noun pair in almost every clause (in the mean around 80-90 % of all clauses).[29]

The intricacies of the IES fit the typology of written language. The complexities of the syntactic constructions indicate an environment that facilitates detailed planning, rereading and correction, while the frequency of long noun phrases indicates a predilection for exhaustive precision. These features place the IES on the desk of the learned scribe, educated in the methods and norms of the offical bureaucracy, who has acquired the know-how to plan contracts and governmental correspondance and to devise and to understand complex sentences. Significantly, this style appears in the epigraphic remains of ancient Hebrew, such as the short narrative of the Siloam inscription and the ostraca of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, Lachish, and

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[28] For a short description of this method see my study, "Story Telling and Redaction: Varieties of Language Usage in the Exodus Narrative" (in the present volume), sections 1.1, 1.2; and more in detail: "Sociolinguistics, a Key to the Typology and the Social Background of Biblical Hebrew," *HS* 47 (2006), 115-162, here 128-136, 141-151.

[29] For statistical details I refer to my studies "The Book of Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Syntactic-Stylistic Analysis," in *The Books of Samuel and the Deuteronomists* (ed. C. Schäfer-Lichtenberger; BWANT 188; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 34-73, here, 54-60; "Sociolinguistics as Key" (see n. 28), 136-148.

Arad.[30] It dominates the deuteronomic and priestly corpora (the Judean corpus), as well as the the texts that place themselves in the Persian era (the Achaemenid corpus).

In the Abraham narrative the following tales reveal an intricate style:[31] the tales of Abraham's separation from Lot (13:1–17), the war against the four kings (14:1–24), Isaac's birth (21:3–5) and the agreement with Abimelech (21:22–32); the opening of the tale of Abraham's servant (24:1–21; vv. 22–67 represent the VoLB); and some priestly passages (17:7–14, 23–27; 21:3–5; 23; 25:1-12).

A second group of narratives is characterized by the low frequency of subordinate clauses (around a tenth of the text) and noun groups (mostly half of all clauses or less), and the high frequency of extremely short clauses in parataxis (predicate with implicit subject, or with one complement), often amounting to a half of all clauses. In the following examples the slash indicates the clause boundaries:

19:3 וַיִּפְצַר־בָּם מְאֹד/ וַיָּסֻרוּ אֵלָיו/ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ/ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתֶּה/ וּמַצּוֹת אָפָה/ וַיֹּאכֵלוּ

But he urged them strongly, so they turned in to him, and came into his house; he made them a supper, and baked flat-cakes, and they ate.

This sequence contains five short clauses, consisting of predicate (with implied subject), וַיֹּאכֵלוּ, or of predicate with one complement, וַיָּסֻרוּ אֵלָיו, וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ, וּמַצּוֹת אָפָה. One clause includes a pronominal and an adverbial phrase: וַיִּפְצַר־בָּם מְאֹד. Only one clause is slightly longer: וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתֶּה. An example for a sequence of short clauses in a divine promise:

12:2–3 וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל /וַאֲבָרֶכְךָ /וַאֲגַדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ /וְהְיֵה בְּרָכָה

וַאֲבָרֲכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ /וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר /וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה

I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."

This blessing contains six short clauses in parataxis, in which the subject is mostly implied in the verbal predicate (וַאֲגַדְּלָה). The object is often expressed by the object

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30 See my study, "The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative," *JANES* 26 (1998), 59-105, here 103-105. For the complex style of the petition from Yabneh Yam/Metzad Hashavyahu (*KAI* 200) see my study, "Style is More than the Person: Sociolinguistics, Literary Culture and the Distinction between Written and Oral Narrative', in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology* (ed. I. Young; JSOTSup 369; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 38-103, here 47-48.

31 For more details see my study "Abraham-Jacob Narrative" (see n. 1), section 3b.

suffix (וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ, וַאֲבָרֶכְךָ). The sequence is closed by a longer clause, with subject, כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה, and indirect object, בְּךָ. We note two two noun groups: לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל, and כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה, and two short subordinate clauses, מְבָרְכֶיךָ and וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ.

These passages exemplify *the voiced, lean, brisk style* (VoLB), which presents the information in short chunks and thus is close to the syntax of spontaneous spoken discourse. In its close resemblance to spoken language the VoLB shows its affinity to the oral arena. It is the style of the performance of the "Singer of Tales." If this style is used in written narratives, the implication is that the writing authors recognize oral narrative as worthy literature, and adhere to its stylistic habits and preferences rather than to the norms of the scribal chancery. Their narrative is "oral-derived."[32] The VoLB dominates the narratives of the patriarchs and the exodus, the Samuel–Saul–David Narratives, and the prophetic cycle in 1 Kings 17–2 Kings 10 (13).[33]

The VoLB is found in the following episodes in the Abraham narrative: the tale of Abraham's migration (12:1–9), the two tales of the endangerment of Sarah (Gen 12:10–20; 20:1–18), the story of the covenant between the pieces (15:1–12, 17–18), the tales of Hagar's flight and expulsion (ch. 16; 21:6–21); the stories of the terebinths at Mamre (18:1–15) and Abraham's expostulation (vv. 16–33); the Sodom tale (19:1–22); large sections of the tale of Abraham's servant (24:22–67; unlike vv.1–21, IES); and the story of the divine promise to Abraham and Sara (17:1–6,[34] 15–22; the sections on the circumcision represent IES).

In the following sections of this study I will discuss further aspects of the oral-epic background of the Abraham narrative.

2. The Epic Diction in the Abraham Tales

2.1. Residues of Epic Wording

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[32] See n. 77 below and J.M. FOLEY, *Traditional-Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf and the Serbo-Croation Return Song* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 3-19.

[33] Further details are presented in my studies "Story Telling and Redaction" (see n. 28), sections 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4.

[34] On a pre-Priestly stratum in Gen 17:1–4a, 6 see: P. WEIMAR, "Gen 17 und die priesterschriftliche Abrahamgeschichte," *ZAW* 100 (1988), 22-60, here 36-37.

Biblical narrative contains many residues of poetic prosody.[35] A case in point is the exposition of the Abraham tales:

Gen 11:29–30 וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם וְנָחוֹר לָהֶם נָשִׁים

שֵׁם אֵשֶׁת־אַבְרָם שָׂרָי/ וְשֵׁם אֵשֶׁת־נָחוֹר מִלְכָּה בַּת־הָרָן אֲבִי־מִלְכָּה וַאֲבִי יִסְכָּה

וַתְּהִי שָׂרַי עֲקָרָה // אֵין לָהּ וָלָד

Abram and Nahor, now, took to themselves wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. And Sarai remained barren, she had no child.

The introduction of the two women follows a well-known pattern, as evidenced by the opening of Samuel's birth tale:

1 Sam 1: 2 וְלוֹ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים

שֵׁם אַחַת חַנָּה // וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פְּנִנָּה

וַיְהִי חַנָּה אֵין יְלָדִים/לִפְנִנָּה יְלָדִים // וּלְ

He had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah, now, had children, but Hannah had no children.

In both cases the first clause mentions the husband(s) as antecedent for the introduction of two wives in the first bicolon,[36] whereas the second bicolon specifies the status of the women in terms of offspring. The introduction of Sarai contains a number of noteworthy elements. The coupling of עקרה and אין לה ולד is based on an associative pair, ילד // עקרה, such as וְאִשְׁתּוֹ עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יָלָדָה "and his wife was *childless*, *not* having *given birth*" (Judg 13:2; and without negation, 1 Sam 2:5).[37] An additional issue is the form וָלָד, which preserves the initial *w*-, although in Northwest Semitic languages word initial *w*- generally shifts to *y*-.[38]

One also notes cases of repetitive parallelism:[39]

Gen 12:10 וַיְהִי רָעָב בָּאָרֶץ // וַיֵּרֶד אַבְרָם מִצְרַיְמָה לָגוּר שָׁם // כִּי־כָבֵד הָרָעָב בָּאָרֶץ

Now a famine arose in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to find shelter there, for the

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35 See section 3.3 in my study "Story Telling and Redaction" (see n. 28); C.A. BRIGGS, "The Hebrew Poem of the Creation," *The Old Testament Student* 3 (1883-1884), 273-288.

36 A similar pattern is used to introduce the father's daughters: Gen 29:16–17; 1 Sam 14:49, with a later variant in Job 42:13–14.

37 So also Judg 13:3; Isa 54:1; Job 24:21.

38 So also 2 Sam 6:23 (Kethib according to *Madinḥa'e*); see *GVG* 1.139 (§ 49.f); Th. NÖLDEKE, *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (trans. J.A. Crighton; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 26 (§40A). In the Ugaritic graph *wld* (CAT 1.14 III:48) the survival of this *waw* may be explained by assimilation to following /u/: **wullad*; see J. TROPPER, *Ugaritische Grammatik. Zweite, stark überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage* (AOAT 273; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 153, 564.

39 So also Gen 31:25, and similarly 37:34.

severe was the famine in the land.

13:6 וְלֹא־נָשָׂא אֹתָם הָאָרֶץ לָשֶׁבֶת יַחְדָּו // כִּי־הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רָב // וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לָשֶׁבֶת יַחְדָּו

Thus the land could not support them to dwell together; for their possessions were great, and they were unable to dwell together.

13:12 אַבְרָם יָשַׁב בְּאֶרֶץ־כְּנָעַן // וְלוֹט יָשַׁב בְּעָרֵי הַכִּכָּר / וַיֶּאֱהַל עַד־סְדֹם

Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt among the cities of the plain, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.

A case of repetitive parallelism between two lines is preserved in the tale of Abraham at the terebinths of Mamre:

18:7 וַיִּקַּח בֶּן־בָּקָר רַךְ וָטוֹב / וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הַנַּעַר / וַיְמַהֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ

v. 8 וַיִּקַּח חֶמְאָה וְחָלָב וּבֶן־הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה / וַיִּתֵּן לִפְנֵיהֶם / וְהוּא־עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ / וַיֹּאכֵלוּ

Thus Abraham run to the herd, fetched a calf tender and choice, and gave it to the servant; and he hastened to prepare it. And he took curds and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

Since these cases, though not numerous, keep occurring in different narratives they probably represent a traditional style.

2.2. Epic Formulae and Patterns

An important feature that permeates the tales of the patriarchs is the use of epic formulae, frequently repeated,[40] traditional phrases that are opposed to simple expressions with similar meaning, are matched by or cognate with fixed phrases in Ugaritic/ Akkadian epic poetry, and are related to the poetic structure of parallelism.[41] A case in point is the phrase "raising the eyes and see," וישׂא עיניו וירא, in its various grammatical forms. This phrase is matched by the Ugaritic phrases *wyšu ʿnh wyʿn*, "he raised his eyes and saw"or *bnši ʿnh wyphn*, "raising his eyes he

[40] I define frequency by the number of occurrences of the phrase at hand, relative to the number of occurrences of the lexemes of which the formula consists.

[41] See U.M. CASSUTO, "Biblical and Canaanite Literatures," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (2 vols.; trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973-1975), 2.16-59, here 16-26; AVISHUR, *Studies in Biblical Narrative* (see n. 14), 225-238; R.C. CULLEY, *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 10; and my studies, "Linguistic and Stylistic Aspects of Epic Formulae in Ancient Semitic Poetry and Biblical Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew in its Northwest Semitic Setting* (ed. S. Fassberg and A. Hurvitz; Jerusalem: Magnes Press & Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 285-304, with further references; "Formulaic Style," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (3 vols.; ed. G. Khan; Leiden: Brill), 1.906-11. The relationship to parallelism means that the clause embodying the formula fills up a complete colon, or that the formula is spread over two consecutive cola. On VAN SETERS' neglect of the data assembled by CASSUTO see below, n. 73.

saw." In the Old Babylonian version of the Gilgamesh epic one encounters the bicolon: *iššīma īnīšu, ītamar awīlam*, "he — i.e. Enkidu — lifted his eyes and saw the man" (Pennsylvania Tablet iv: 137).[42] A phrase of this kind is divided over two cola, and thus forms a parallelistic structure, underlined by the semantic connection between "eye" and "see." In the Abraham narrative we encounter this phrase with direct object:

22:4 בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם מֵרָחֹק

On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place from afar.

So also 13:10, 14; 24:64. In other passages this formula is used with הנה:

24:63 וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עָרֶב וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה גְמַלִּים בָּאִים

And Isaac went out to walk in the field toward evening and, he lifted up his eyes and saw, here, camels approaching.

So also 18:2; 22:13. The frequency of this phrase is shown by comparison with the simple phrase and variants. The entire narrative includes 23 instances of *rā'ā* (Qal),[43] of which the formulaic phrase forms almost a third (30.43 %). When we count the cases in the chapters that contain instances of the formulaic phrases, the picture is even sharper. In chapter 13 we note two instances of the formula (13:10, 14) and one simple verb (13:15). The Mamre tale and the tale of Isaac's offering include the formulaic phrase only (18:2; 22:4, 13).[44] The tale of Abraham's servant contains two formulaic phrases (24:63, 64) and one example of the simple verb (22:30). In these chapters, then, the frequency of the formulaic phrase relative to *rā'ā* is extremely significant.

The verb *nāśā'* has 13 instances, 7 of them in the formulaic phrase at hand. This verb appears once in the meaning "to carry" (21:8), and a few times in figurative and thus irrelevant usage (13:6; 18:24, 26; 19:21). The only other instance is a second formulaic phrase, וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת־קֹלָהּ וַתֵּבְךְּ ("she lifted her voice and wept," 21:16). Disregarding the cases of figurative usage, one arrives at 7 cases out of 9 instances or more than 3/4 of the relevant cases (77.78 %). Thus the phrase וישׂא עיניו וירא

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42 A.R. GEORGE, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic. Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1.176. For details see my study, "Linguistic and Stylistic Aspects" (see n. 41), 286-288.

43 I have not counted the forms רֹאִי (16:13), יִרְאֶה ("he will provide," 22:8, 14).

44 אֲרַדֶּה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה, (18:21) does not belong to the tale of Mamre. In 22:8, 13 the verb *rā'ā* is used in the meaning "to provide," "to see to."

must indeed count as highly frequent.[45]

For the second formulaic phrase, וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת־קוֹלָהּ וַתֵּבְךְּ (21:16), frequency seems less well established. However, this is the only instance of *bākā*, in the meaning "to weep," in the Abraham narrative.[46] This passage is of particular interest since this tale includes the phrase וַיִּפְקַח אֱלֹהִים אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרֶא בְּאֵר מָיִם, "Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water" (21:19). This phrase represents a causative transformation of the formula, matched by the Old Aramaic phrase in the Sefire treaty: […] פקחו עיניכם לחזיה עדי בר גאיה, "open your eyes to see the treaty of Bar Ga'yah […]" (*KAI* 222 A 1:13).[47]

In addition we note such compound phrases as ויקרא-ויאמר, "call and say,"[48] ויען-ויאמר, "speak up and say,"[49] ותהר-ותלד, "conceive and give birth,"[50] ויקם-וילך, "rise up and go,"[51] ויקח-וילך, "take and go,"[52] ויקח-וישם, "take and put,"[53] ויקח-ויתן,

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[45] The noun עין, in the meaning "eye" (21 instances) and not in figurative usage (16:4–6; 18:3; 19:8, 14, 19; 20:15, 16; 21:11, 12), appears only in 23:11, 18 and in the formulaic phrases.

[46] In Gen 23:12 the verb appears in the meaning "to mourn." In the Jacob tale we count three cases of *bākā*, two of them in the formula וישא קלו ויבך (27:38; 29:11) and one free (33:4).

[47] See J.A. FITZMYER, "The Inscriptions of Bar-Gaʾyah and Matiʿʾel from Sefire," *CoS* 2.82, 213. Note also the variant וַתִּפָּקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ (Gen 3:7).

[48] ויקרא-ויאמר: Gen 12:18; 16:13; 19:5; 20:9; 21:17; 22:11, 15–16; 24:58 (8 instances). In Akkadian this phrase is matched by the phrase *šasû-zakāru* In Ugaritic the verb *ṣḥ* frequently serves to frame direct discourse.

[49] ויען-ויאמר: Gen 18:27; 24:50. Vis-à-vis *ʾāmar* this phrase is not significant at all, but the verb *ʿānā* has only 3 additional instances: Gen 23:5, 10, 14 (always Ephron responding to Abraham), with לֵאמֹר rather than a finite form of *ʾāmar*. In Ugaritic *ʿn* is the regular framing of spoken discourse (matched in Hebrew by Job 3:2 and *passim)*. In Aramaic this phrase is found in two fables included in the Ahiqar proverbs (*CAP* 216, 100, 118–119).

[50] ותהר-ותלד: Gen 16:11; 19:36–37, 38; 21:2. In Akkadian one notes the use of *erû-alādu*, and in Ugaritic the stretch *bm.nšq.whr.bḥbq.ḥmḥmt.tqt*[*nṣn.w*]*tldn* ("in kissing, conception; in embracing, mating/passion (?); they crouch and give birth; CAT 1.23:51, 56–58; 1.17 I: 39-41); see T.J. LEWIS, "The Birth of the gracious Gods," in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (ed. S.B. Parker; SBLWAW 9; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997), 212; M.S. SMITH, *The Rituals and Myths of the Fest of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2006), 96, 103-104.

[51] ויקם-וילך: Gen 13:17; 22:3, 19; 24:10, 61; 5 cases as against 22 instances of *qūm* Qal (22.73 %), and 45 cases of *hālaḵ* (11.11 %). In Akkadian one notes the collocation *tebû-alāku*, matched in Ugaritic by single *tbʿ*. If one adds the 10 instances of ויקח-וילך (see n. 52), one arrives at 15 formulaic phrases, exactly a third of the number of occurrences of *hālaḵ*.

[52] ויקח-וילך: Gen 12:19; 14:11, 12; 22:2, 6; 24:10, 51, 61;ויקח-ויצא ללכת : Gen 11:31; 12:5 (10 cases). In Ugaritic one notes *qḥ ... lk* (CAT 1.16 II:41–43), *qḥ ... ẓi* (CAT 1.12 I:17–19), *qḥ ... idk pnk al ttn* (CAT 1.5:6–13). The verb *lāqaḥ* has 48 instances in the Abraham narrative, 10 of them in the present phrase (20.83 %). In total 15 instances of *hālaḵ are* formulaic (33.33 %; see n. 51).

[53] ויקח-וישם: Gen 21:14; 22:6; 2 cases as against 7 non-figurative occurrences of *śym* (25.57 %; disregarding 13:16; 21:13, 18). In Ugaritic we note the phrases *tšu ... tštnn* and *tqḥ ... tštn* (CAT

"take and give,"[54] ויקד-וישתחו, "to kneel and bow down,"[55] ויקם-וישתחו, "to rise up and bow down,"[56] וישתחו ארצה, "to bow down to the ground,"[57] וישתחו אפים ארצה, "to bow down with the face to the ground."[58] Notably, *hištaḥʷwā* does not have a clear derivation in Hebrew, but is matched by the Ugaritic verb *hštḥwy*, representing the reflective of the shaphel which is a productive form in Ugaritic but not in Biblical Hebrew.[59]

In total the Abraham narrative includes 13 different types of formulaic phrases with 52 instances.[60] An analysis of the class of these phrases indicates the

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1.18 IV: 27-28; 1.19 II: 10; similarly Judg 9:48).

[54] ויקח-ויתן: Gen 15:10; 16:3; 18:7–8; 20:14; 21:14, 27; 7 cases as against 41 instances of *nātan* (17.07 %), and 48 occurrences of *lāqaḥ* (14.58 %). In total we count 19 cases of bound phrases opening with the latter verb, or 39.58 % of its 48 occurrences. This phrase is matched by the legal formula *leqû-nadānu*, used in the Akkadian contracts from Ugarit to indicate the transfer of property; see J.C. GREENFIELD, "Našû-Nadānu and its Congeners," in *ʿAl Kanfei Yonah: Collected Studies of Jonas C. Greenfield on Semitic Philology* (ed. S.M. Paul, M.E. Stone and A. Pinnick; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2.720-724; IDEM, "Aramaic HNṢL and Some Biblical Passages," here, 1.214-216; and my study, "The *Lāqaḥ-Nātan* Formula: Some Additional Comments," *Shnaton, Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 7-8 (1984), xii-xiii, 179-186 (Hebrew with English Summary).

[55] ויקד-וישתחו: Gen 24:26, 48 (so also 43:28; Exod 4:31; 12:27; 34:8; Num 22:31; 1 Sam 24:8; 28:14; 1 Kgs 1: 16, 31; Neh 8:6; 1 Chr 29:20; 2 Chr 29:30; and cf. 2 Chr 14:18). This phrase is cognate with the Ugaritic formula *lpʿn il thbr wtql/ tštḥwy wtkbdh* (CAT 1.4 IV 25–26; similarly 1.3 III 9–10; 1.4 VIII 26–29; 1.6 I 36–38; 1.17 IV 50–51; 1.1 II 15–16; III 2–3, 24–25; 1.2 III 5–6). In Akkadian, *qadādu* indicates bending down or prostration: *appašu liqdud, ina erṣete lippalsiḫ*, "let him bow his head/nose, squat on the ground," in E. EBELING, *Leben und Tod nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier. I. Texte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1931), 71-72 (Text 18 ii:13).

[56] ויקם-וישתחו: Gen 19:1; 23:7 (so also Exod 33:10; 1 Sam 25:41; 1 Kgs 2:19). In Ugaritic this phrase is matched by *lpnnh.ydd.wyqm, lpʿnh.ykrʿ.wyql* (CAT 1.10 II:18–19), and in Akkadian by *izzizū iknušū* (Enuma Elish V 88).

[57] וישתחו ארצה: Gen 18:2; 24:52 (so also 33:3; 37:10; 43:26; 2 Kgs 2:15).

[58] וישתחו אפים ארצה: Gen 19:1(so also 42:6; 25:41; Neh 8:6; 1 Chr 21:21); and with כרע or קדד only: 2 Chr 7:3; 20:18).

[59] D. PARDEE, "Review of Josef Tropper. *Ugaritische Grammatik*," *AfO* 50 (2003-2004), 294; C. COHEN, "The Saga of a Unique Verb in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic," in *Textures and Meanings. Thirty Years of Judaic Studies at University of Massachusets, Amherst*, 323-342 (ed. L.H. Ehrich *et al*.; published electronically, 2004; hyperlink: http:// www. umass.edu /judaic/ anniversaryvolume/articles/24-E1-CCohen.pdf, accessed 30. 12. 2014); M.S. SMITH, *The Ugaritic Baʿal Cycle, Vol. I: Introduction with Text and Commentary of KTU 1.1–1.2* (VTSup 55; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 168, n. 95; as against J. A. EMERTON, "The Etymology of *hištaḥʷwāh*," *OTS* 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 41-55; S. KREUZER, "Zur Bedeuting und Etymologie von *hištaḥʷwāh*/ *yštḥwy*," *VT* 35 (1985), 39-70.

[60] A slightly different result is presented in my study, "Epic Formulas in Biblical Narrative: Frequency and Distribution," in *Les actes du second colloque internationale Bible et Informatique: mèthodes, outils, résultats (Jerusalem, 9-13 Juin 1988)* (Genève: Champion-Slatkine), 435-488, here

frequency of formulaic language relative to the size of a number of pericopes.[61] In chapters 12, 13, 16, 21, and 24 the frequency hovers around 3-4 %, whereas the incidence of such phrases is lower in ch. 19–20 (1.5-2 %) and far lower in ch. 14–15, 17, 23. On the other hand, in 18:1–15 and 22:1–19 the frequency of formulaic phrases is far higher (around 7-8 %).[62] For the sake of comparison: in the Jacob tale (Gen 25:29–34; 27:1–33:17) we find 15 types of formulaic phrases with 40 instances.[63] In Judges one encounters 11 phrase types with 33 instances, and in the Samuel-Saul-David narratives 17 different phrases with 130 examples (1 Sam 1–1 Kgs 2), but in view of the size of those texts these figures are far less impressive than they may seem.[64]

In addition, oral poetry uses thematic patterns, as "compositional themes,"[65] such as the call pattern. The initiator utters the name (or title) of the addressee, who responds with "here I am."[66] In the narrative of Isaac's offering, which as discussed above, is rich in formulaic language, this pattern appears twice:

22:1–2 ... וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו/ אַבְרָהָם/ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי/ וַיֹּאמֶר

He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

453-459. In this paper I included the phrases וישת- ויאכל (in the Abraham narrative only Gen 24:54), and שׁמע with vocative as opening formula (4 instances: 23:6, 11, 13, 15).

61 The size of a pericope is established by the number of nouns, verbs, adjectives (excluding numerals) and adverbs (content words, excluding particles, prepositions and pronouns).

62 If one would include recurring phrases that do not have parallels in Ugaritic or Akkadian texts, the figures would be even higher: ויתן-ויאכל (18:8), וישכם-בבקר (19:27; 20:8; 21:14; 22:3); וישלח ידו ויקח (22:10). In view of the limited size of the biblical narrative corpus and our scant knowledge of Ugaritic or Akkadian narrative poetry it is possible that the actual incidence of formulaic language in patriarchal narrative is far more significant, but only new discoveries in ancient Near Eastern literature could enlighten us.

63 See n. 60 above. For the Jacob tale I have added the phrase וינשק ... ויחבק, "embrace and kiss" (29:13; 33:4; 48:10), cognate with the Ugaritic formula *bm.nšq.whr./ bḥbq.ḥmḥmt./ tqt*[*nṣn.w*]*tldn* (see n. 50). With 2596 content words the frequency of formulaic phraseology stands at 1.5%. In the first section of Exodus (Exod 1:1–6:1; 7:8–11:10; 12:29–39) we encounter 17 instances (6 types) for 2852 content words, with frequency 0.60 %, and 13 (8 types) in the second section (14:1–31; 15:22–20:21; 24:1–14; 32–34; 8 types) for 2950 content words, and a frequency of 0.44 %.

64 The book of Judges contains 4.750 content words; thus the overall frequency of formulaic phrases is 0.69 %. For the book of Samuel we find 19.884 content words, with a formulaic frequency of 0.65 %.

65 See A.B. LORD, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 68-92; M.P. COOTE, "The Singer's Themes in Serbocroatian Heroic Song," *California Slavic Studies* 11 (1980), 201-236, here 201-202.

66 So also Gen 46:2; Exod 3:4–5; and with variants: 1 Sam 3:4, 8, 10 (all with doubling of the

v. 7 וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי/ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֶּנִּי בְנִי/ וַיֹּאמֶר...

Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son."

These data provide ample justification for the conclusion that the Abraham narrative contains residues of a stratum that is close to the formulaic tradition of the Northwest Semitic epic diction, as represented by the Ugaritic poetic narratives. Actually, the Ugaritic texts, in particular in the Baʿal cycle and the tale of Danʾilu and ʾAqhat, are far richer in formulaic language.[67] This issue is of great weight in view of the research of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, who found that Serbo-Croatian oral poetry is almost entirely built of traditional formulae, and thus argued that high incidence of formulaic language, such as in the Homeric Iliad and Odyssea, or early Medieval Old English poetry, indicates oral composition by the "Singer of Tales."[68] In accordance with this approach Frank Cross and Kenneth Aitken conclude that Ugaritic narrative poetry originates in the oral performance.[69] Admittedly, the issue of formulaic langugae is problematic. First, Ruth Finnegan has shown that not all oral literature is based on traditional formulae.[70] Secondly, formulaic language is also found in written discourse, such as Old English translations of Latin texts, and even in Vergil's Aeneid.[71] In view of this criticism

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name).

67 K.T. AITKEN, "Oral Formulaic Composition and Themes in the Aqhat Narrative," *UF* 21 (1989), 1-16.

68 See M. PARRY, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (ed. A. Parry; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); A.B. LORD, *The Singer of Tales* (see n. 65); G.S. KIRK, "The Making of the Iliad: Preliminary Considerations," in *The Iliad: A Commentary* (ed. G.S. Kirk; 6 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985-1993), 1.1-37; IDEM, "Typical Motifs and Themes," here, 2.15-27; B. HAINSWORTH, "Introduction," here, 3.1-53; R. JANKO, "The Origins and Evolution of the Epic Diction," here, 4.8-19; M.W. EDWARDS, "Composition by Theme," here, 5.11-23; J. RUSSO, "The Formula," in *A New Companion to Homer* (ed. I Morris and B. Powell; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 238-260. For the view the Homeric text came into being in writing within a formulaic, oral framework see: M.L. WEST, *The Making of the Iliad: Disquisition and Analytical Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-7, 10-14, 28-37, 48-51, 67-70; J. LATACZ, "Formelhaftigkeit und Mündlichkeit," in *Homers Ilias. Gesamtkommentar. Prolegomena* (ed. J. Latacz; München: Saur, 2000), 39-60.

69 See CROSS, "The Epic Traditions of Ancient Israel" (see n. 11), 14-16; AITKEN, "Oral Formulaic Composition" (see n. 67).

70 R. FINNEGAN, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 73-87.

71 L.D. BENSON, "The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry," *PMLA* 81 (1966), 334-341; M. SALE, "Virgil's Formularity and *Pius Aeneas*," in *Signs of Orality: The Oral Tradition and its Influence in the Greek and Roman World* (ed. E.A. MacKay; Mnemosyne Supplementum 188; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 199-220.

Patricia Kirkpatrick and John Van Seters reject Cross' theory regarding the oral-epic background of pentateuchal narrative.[72]

However, many scholars have recognized that the rejection of all connection between orality and formulaic language goes too far.[73] When Rosalind Thomas argues that formulaic language is traditional in a more general sense,[74] one may ask where to posit the origins of the formulaic tradition. The assumption that this phraseology originates in the written tradition, crumbles in the face of a severe problem: no ancient Near Eastern text contains formulaic phraseology in the frequency encountered in the Ugaritic texts analyzed by Aitken. In this respect, then, the formulaic Ugaritic texts are highly exceptional. Thus, it seems best to accept the hypothesis that the formulaic character of the Ugaritic texts connects those texts to the oral tradition.[75] The force behind the tradition is the oral background of the ancient Northwest Semitic epic tradition. Hence, the frequent use of formulaic language in patriarchal narrative indicates an underlying oral, poetic tradition. The text as transmitted in writing was composed by the *sōfēr*, but this text is heavily indebted to the artists of oral literature whose norms, habitus and linguistic register served as example. A text of this type is as a *tertium quid* rather

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72 J. VAN SETERS, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 19-22, 30, 220-226; P.G. KIRKPATRICK, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study* (JSOTSup 62; Sheffffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 53-64; R.D. MILLER, *Oral Tradition in Ancient Israel* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 13-39. However, these discussions consider neither the formulaic phrases themselves, nor their distribution in Ugaritic and biblical texts. For Cassuto's contribution Van Seters (here, 226, n. 62) refers the reader to the discussion of C. CONROY, "Hebrew Epic: Historical Notes and Critical Reflections," *Bib* 61 (1980), 1-30, here 9-11; the latter mentions the stylistic features biblical narrative shares with the Ugaritic texts, but does not discuss their import. Thus Van Seters (here, 227) is able to refer to the epic formulae as "folkloristic" elements, although they are attested *en masse* in Ugaritic written texts.

73 M.S. JENSEN, *Writing Homer* (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2011), 194-256; M. SALE, "The Oral-Formulaic Theory Today," in *Speaking Volumes. Orality and Literacy in the Greek and Roman World* (ed. J. Watson; Mnemosyne Supplementum 218; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 53-80; R. THOMAS, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 35-36, 41; M. FINKELBERG, "Formulaic and Nonformulaic Elements in Homer," *Classical Philology* 84 (1989), 179-197.

74 THOMAS, *Literacy and Orality* (see n. 73), 43-44. The argument that formulaic language is used by Virgil is countered by important deviations in the use of the Homeric register by the poets in the post-Homeric tradition, such as Virgil and Quintus Smyrnaeus; see SALE, "The Oral-Formulaic Theory Today" (see n. 73), 71-73, 78-80; IDEM, "Virgil's Formularity" (see n. 71), 218-220.

75 The oral background of Ilimilku's literary work is highlighted by PARDEE, *Ugaritic Texts*

than a written artefact.[76] In the terms of John Foley and Albert Lord it is an oral-derived, transitional text, a view which is in keeping with the analysis of Rosalind Thomas.[77]

In the final section of this study I will point to some of the literary effects that are particular to the oral background of patriarchal narrative, and classical biblical narrative in general. But first I have to discuss some problems pertaining to the historical background of the Abraham narrative.

2.3. The Formula in Exilic/Persian Era Prophetic Literature

Can we presume that the formulaic phraseology of the Abraham narrative, and of patriarchal narrative in general, derives from other branches of biblical literature? A theory along these lines is not supported by the state of biblical literature as it is known to us. First, one must note the variety in the use of these formulae in the Abraham tales. Formulaic phraseology appears in many different contexts, representing different themes and different expressivity. The phrase וישׂא וירא עיניו, "to lift the eyes and see," is used for such diverse events as Abraham's perception of the travellers approaching (Gen 18:2), for his perception of the mount Moriah (22:4), and of the ram (22:13), but also in Jacob's account of his dream vision (31:10), the episode of Jacob seeing Esau approaching and of Esau viewing Jacob's camp (33:1, 5).[78] The occurrence of the very same idiom in so many different contexts must raise the question which conditions motivate different narrators to use this phrase. Of course, one could answer that this is just the way to formulate a

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(see n. 9), 47-49, in view of the (partially preserved) colophon of RS 92.2016.

[76] P. ZUMTHOR, "The Text and the Voice," *New Literary History* 16 (1984), 67-92; F. BÄUML, "Medieval Texts and the Two Theories of Oral-Formulaic Composition: A Proposal for a Third Theory," *ibidem*, 31-49; IDEM, "Autorität und Performanz. Gesehene Leser, gehörte Bilder, geschriebener Text," in *Verschriftung und Verschriftlichung. Aspekte des Medienwechsels in verschiedenen Kulturen und Epochen* (ed. C. Ehler and U. Schaefer; Scriptoralia 94; Tübingen: Narr, 1998), 248-273, here 248-249; U. SCHAEFER, *Vokalität. Altenglische Dichting zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit* (Scriptoralia 53. Tübingen: Narr, 1993).

[77] A.B. LORD, *The Singer Resumes the Tale* (ed. M.L. Lord; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 222-237; FOLEY, *Oral Epic-Traditional* (see n. 32), 3-19; THOMAS, *Literacy and Orality* (see n. 73), 45-50. For biblical narrative this framework has been adopted by S. NIDITCH, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville, KT: John Knox Press, 1996), 9-13, 113-120; R.C. CULLEY, "Orality and Writtenness," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (ed. E. Ben Zvi and M.H. Floyd; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2000), 45-64, here 55-56.

visual perception event. However, outside patriarchal narrative this idiom is only encountered a few times in the Joseph narrative (Gen 37:23; 43:29),[79] the Bileam tale (Num 24:2), the deuteronomic speech (Deut 3:27; 4:19), Joshua's meeting with the angel (Josh 5:13); the Gibeah tale (Judg 19:17); and the Samuel-Saul-David tales (1 Sam 6:13; 2 Sam 13:34; 18:24).[80]

Should we posit the source of this phraseology be found in prophetic texts such as the framing of Zechariah's visions (Zech 2:1, 5; 5:1, 5, 9; 6:1; so also Dan 8:3; 10:5), twice in Jeremiah (3:2; 13:20), and four times in Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah (Isa 40:26; 49:18; 52:8; 60:4)? These data may suggest that this formula originated in prophetic discourse rather than in epic narrative. But the way this formula is used indicates fundamental differences. First, in Zechariah and Daniel its use is limited to the framing of the vision. This limitation contrasts sharply with the variety of usage in biblical narrative, where the dream vision (Gen 31:10, 12) is only one of the contexts in which the formula is attested. Thus it seems by far preferable to explain the use of the formula in this specific context as a special case, dependent on its use in biblical narrative.

Second, in those texts the formula is phrased in a different way. In narrative this formula is characterized by its two clause structure. The first clause indicates the inception of the perception event, and mostly the viewing subject, and the second clause the action itself and the object of the perception:

18:2 וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו

And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, here, three men stood near him.

The first clause, וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו, indicates that Abraham "activated" his eyes and thus started perceiving something, whereas the following clauses, וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים, indicate that he saw three wayfarers. In this verse Abraham's name is not mentioned, but his name is stated in the second instance:

22:13 וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה־אַיִל אַחַר נֶאֱחַז בַּסְּבַךְ

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78 For the statistics see section 2.2, above.

79 Two instances in the Joseph tale, as against 44 cases of *rāʾā* (4.54 %), in sharp contrast with the 30.43 % of uses of this verb in the Abraham tales (see section 2.2).

80 Three instances in the Samuel-Saul-David tales, as against 118 cases of *rāʾā* (2.54 %). in addition we have to mention the variant in Job 2:12, in which the phrase וְלֹא הִכִּירֻהוּ replaces the *rāʾā* clause; for the next clause pair uses the second *nāśāʾ* formula: וַיִּשְׂאוּ קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ. Two cases involve textual variants: Exod 14:10 (Samaritan Pentateuch/LXX); 2 Sam 24:16 (4QSam[a]/4Q51 and 1 Chr

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and here, a ram (איל אחד), caught in the thicket.

These cases are structurally different from the examples in Deuteronomy and Isaiah.

Deut 4:19 וּפֶן־תִּשָּׂא עֵינֶיךָ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְאֶת־הַיָּרֵחַ וְאֶת־הַכּוֹכָבִים

Lest you lift up your eyes unto heaven, and will see the sun and the moon and the stars...

In this case the first clause mentions, in addition to the "activation of the eyes," the direction, הַשָּׁמַיְמָה, which does not appear in this position in Genesis–Numbers. In the divine instruction to Abraham the direction is indicated in the second clause, in the position of the object perceived:

13:14 שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה מִן־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה שָׁם צָפֹנָה וָנֶגְבָּה וָקֵדְמָה וָיָמָּה

Lift up your eyes and look out from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west.

This distinction is not only structural. When the indication of the direction is linked to *nāśāʾ,* this verb indicates the maneuvering of the face in a certain direction, and thus assumes a full semantic meaning, much like the phrase וַיִּשָּׂא פָנָיו אֶל־הַחַלּוֹן, "He looked up toward the window" (2 Kgs 9:32) By contrast, in the formula as used in Genesis–Numbers (and in the Ugaritic texts) the meaning of the verb is bleached. It looses the sense of causative upward movement, and is reduced to the meaning "activation."

A similar structure appears in the divine command to Moses:

Deut 3:27 עֲלֵה רֹאשׁ הַפִּסְגָּה וְשָׂא עֵינֶיךָ יָמָּה וְצָפֹנָה וְתֵימָנָה וּמִזְרָחָה וּרְאֵה בְעֵינֶיךָ

Go up unto the top of Pisgah, and lift up your eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and look with your eyes.

Here the first clause indicates the direction, יָמָּה וְצָפֹנָה וְתֵימָנָה וּמִזְרָחָה. whereas the second clause contains the instrument of perception, בְעֵינֶיךָ, which in Genesis–Numbers appears in the first clause only. The repetition indicates that the term "eye" has its status reduced to that of an element in a fixed structure.[81]

Similar constellations are found in prophetic literature:

Jer 3:2 שְׂאִי־עֵינַיִךְ עַל־שְׁפָיִם וּרְאִי אֵיפֹה לֹא שֻׁגלת (שֻׁכַּבְתְּ)

Lift up your eyes to the bare heights, and see: Where have they not lain with you?

The direction, עַל־שְׁפָיִם, is indicated in the opening clause. The verb וּרְאִי doesn't

21:16).

[81] See also Num 6:26 (יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ). In the phrase אֵשׁ אֵל־יוֹסֵף וְתִשָּׂא אֵת־עֵינֶיהָ אֶת־אֲדֹנָיו (Gen 39:7) the term עֵינֶיהָ occupies the slot of פנים in the former idiom.

have an object attached to it: the question אַיפֹה לֹא שׁגלת forms an independent clause.[82] The very same structure is revealed by the Isaianic saying:

Isa 40:26 שְׂאוּ־מָרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם וּרְאוּ: מִי־בָרָא אֵלֶּה

Lift up your eyes and see: Who created these?

The direction, מָרוֹם, is indicated in the opening clause. The second clause lacks a proper object. The question "מִי־בָרָא אֵלֶּה" forms an independent clause: "Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?" (NRSV).[83] The same use of *rāʾā* appears in the second instance:

Isa 49:18[84] שְׂאִי־סָבִיב עֵינַיִךְ וּרְאִי כֻּלָּם נִקְבְּצוּ בָאוּ־לָךְ

Lift up your eyes around and see: They are all assembled, have come to you!

Once again, the stretch following *rāʾā* is not dependent on the verb.[85] The first clause indicates where to look, and thus reveals the same structure as 40:26. Interestingly, this section includes a phrase that is similar to the formula and contains a direct object. But in this instance the place of *rāʾā* is taken by *hibbīṭ*:

51:6 שְׂאוּ לַשָּׁמַיִם עֵינֵיכֶם וְהַבִּיטוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת

Raise your eyes to the heavens, And look upon the earth beneath.

The only saying that adheres to the formulaic structure of patriarchal narrative is found in the Jeremianic diatribe[86]:

Jer 13:20 שְׂאוּ נֵיכֶם וּרְאוּ הַבָּאִים מִצָּפוֹנָעִי

Lift up your eyes and see those coming from the north.

A group formulae that is matched by recurrent phrases in Isaiah 40–66 contains the verb *hištaḥᵃwā* (see 2.2 above), with eight instances in Deutero-and Trito-Isaiah. In some cases the verb serves as a predicate in an independent clause (44:15; 45:14) or in a final clause (66:23). Two places contain a two clause pattern:

44:17 וּשְׁאֵרִיתוֹ לְאֵל עָשָׂה לְפִסְלוֹ יִסְגָּד־לוֹ וְיִשְׁתַּחוּ

The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows down to it and worships.

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82 However, the Vulgate (*ubi non prostrata sis*, in the conjunctive) considers this question as a subordinate clause, in indirect discourse.

83 Tg. Neb. creates a connection by the addition of a verb: דִּבְרָא אִלֵּין (!) וַחֲזוֹ לְמִדְחַל קֳדָם מַן. The Peshitta construes מי as the direct object of וראו (similarly KIMCHI).

84 This stretch appears again in Isa 60:4.

85 In the LXX πάντας/ כֻּלָּם is attached to καὶ ἴδε, and separated from the next clause (ἰδοὺ συνήχθησαν καὶ ἦλθοσαν πρὸς σέ), whereas the Peshitta subordinates the clause to וּרְאִי. The Tg. Neb. and the Vulgate follow the MT. The LXX to 60:4 reveals a similar structuring in a different wording.

86 The LXX reading of Jer 13:20 implies the plus ירושלים, in the vocative, as found in Jer 13:27; 4:14; 6:18; 15:5.

46:6 וְיַעֲשֵׂהוּ אֵל, יִסְגְּדוּ אַף־יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ

He makes it into a god; they bow down and worship.

Here the verb preceding *hištaḥʿwā* is *sāgad*, a loanword borrowed from Aramaic. This phrase, then, is quite unlike the epic formulae of patriarchal narrative.

In other places the prophetic *logos* uses parallelism where the narrative has a consecutive formula:

44:15 אַף־יִפְעַל־אֵל וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ, עָשָׂהוּ פֶסֶל וַיִּסְגָּד־לָמוֹ

Then he makes a god of it and worships it, Fashions an idol and bows down to it!

Thus we note the parallel with *qūm* ,as in the formula קום - השתחוה:

49:7 מְלָכִים יִרְאוּ וָקָמוּ, שָׂרִים וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ

Kings shall see and stand up; nobles, and they shall bow down

In this case וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ parallels וָקָמוּ, unlike the formulaic pattern in which it continues the first verb (Gen 19:1; 23:7; 1 Sam 25:41).

One also encounters a fully formulaic colon in parallelism with another formulaic phrase, known from poetic contexts:[87]

49:23 אַפַּיִם אֶרֶץ יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָךְ, וַעֲפַר רַגְלַיִךְ יְלַחֵכוּ

With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and the dust of your feet they will lick.

The first colon instances the formula וישתחו אפים ארצה (Gen 19:1; 42:6).[88] It should, however, be noted that the Isaianic phrase differs from the narrative formula regarding morphology and word order. In the prophetic saying אפים ארץ opens the colon, whereas the formulaic phrase always opens with the verb. The phrase אפים ארצה is marked by the directional suffix- *h* ,which is lacking in the prophetic saying.[89] Thus the Isaianic phrase derives from the formulaic register, but deviates from its usage. The deviation is noteworthy, since a significant decline in the use of the directional- *h* is one of the characteristics of Late Biblical Hebrew.[90]

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87 See Mic 7:17; Ps 72:9.

88 See notes 56-60 above. The use of וַעֲפַר רַגְלַיִךְ is reminiscent of the formula וְתִפֹּל עַל־רַגְלָיו, discussed above.

89 The phrase without- *h* is also found in 1 Kgs 1:31, but the LXX has ἐπὶ πρόσωπον ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν.

90 In Isa 40–66 one notes the directional -*h* in 43:14 (בָּבֶלָה); 55:10; 65:9 (שָׁמָּה, twice). The decline in the use of this form, followed by virtual disappearance in Qumran and Rabbinic Hebrew, is analyzed by J. JOOSTEN, "The Distinction Between Classical and Late Biblical Hebrew as Reflected in Syntax," *HS* 46 (2005), 327-339, here 337-338; see also E.Y. KUTSCHER, *The*

One also notes a striking case of parallelism:

60:14 וְהָלְכוּ אֵלַיִךְ שְׁחוֹחַ בְּנֵי מְעַנַּיִךְ, וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ עַל־כַּפּוֹת רַגְלַיִךְ כָּל־מְנַאֲצָיִךְ

Bending low before you, they shall come, the children of those who tormented you; prostrate at the soles of your feet they shall be, all those who reviled you.

The phrase וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ עַל־כַּפּוֹת רַגְלַיִךְ is preceded by the parallel colon וְהָלְכוּ אֵלַיִךְ שְׁחוֹחַ (paronomasia). Notably, the phrase כַּפּוֹת רַגְלַיִךְ bears a certain affinity to the Ugaritic formula *lpʿn il thbr wtql* ("at the feet of Ilu she bowed down and fell," *CAT* 1.4 IV 25–26), and a related Hebrew phrase, וַתִּפֹּל עַל־רַגְלָיו ("She fell at his feet" (1 Sam 25:24; 2 Kgs 4:37). But the prophetic saying includes the ballast variant כַּפּוֹת, not used in the narrative formula. The prophetic use of formulaic language, then, is based on the traditional formulaic register as instanced by patriarchal narrative.

The Abraham narrative, then, shares many features with the Northwest Semitic epic tradition as represented by the texts found in Ugarit. In other words, the Abraham narrative stands in the tradition stream of the Northwest Semitic epic. According to its stylistic-syntactic profile its substratum is at home in the oral arena. Thus the sociocultural context in which this narrative came into being is significantly different from the circumstances in which the Priestly and Deuteronomic literature was created, since these corpora bear the imprint of the scribal desk.

2.4. Sociocultural Background and Periodization

It is often assumed that the scribal style of the Deuteronomic, the Priestly and the Persian era corpora always coexisted side by side with the lean, brisk style of the oral-written corpus. Susan Niditch posits an oral-written continuum, in which the writing author may imitate the style of oral literature,[91] whereas Young, Rezetko and Ehrensvärd describe the distinction between various styles as a matter of

Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1Q Isa[a]) (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 414; I. YOUNG *et al*., *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts: An Introduction to Approaches and Problems* (2 vols.; London: Equinox, 2008), 1.42, 273. YOUNG *et al*. (here, 80-81) demur that this is "a matter of statistical divergence or accumulation," but this divergence is exactly the point: frequency is of interest because of its implications for structure.

91 S. NIDITCH, "Epic and History in the Hebrew Bible: Definitions, 'Ethnic Genres', and the Challenges of Cultural Identity in the Biblical Book of Judges," in *Epic and History* (ed. D. Konstan

stylistic choice.[92] In a different vein, David Carr views orality as an element in the scribal education, and his presumption that texts were composed in writing, and were promulgated among the non-literate population by word of mouth. In his view, in ancient Near Eastern context literary composition always centers at the scribal school; the oral channel is subservient to the scribal institutions.[93] These presumptions, however, are too strong. Particular attention is due to the Ḫurro-Hittite "Song of Release," a large scale epic narrative with connections to a historical context: the 17th century conquest of Ebla by the Hittites. The colophons of two tablets of this text refer to a singer (NAR).[94] Since the colophon is the place where the copyist establishes the authority of the transmitted text, the mention of the singer is highly significant, even though both colophons are incomplete. Here, then, we have a rare indication of the oral roots of an ancient Near Eastern written text. I have already pointed to the oral-formulaic background of the Ugaritic texts of Baʿal and ʾAqhat. Thus, the oral arena can hold its own, and is not of necessity subservient to the scribal desk. How, then, to describe the relation between these

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and K.A. Raaflaub; Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 86-102, here 91.

92 YOUNG *et al., Linguistic Dating* (see n. 90), 1.96; 2.81-83. Some of their criticism seems misleading. I am incorrectly represented as arguing against the thesis of an oral-written symbiosis. However, in my view the problem is how to explain the fact that the *sōfərīm* of a certain corpus adopt a style that is close to orality, whereas the literati responsible for three other corpuses do not adopt a style of this kind. Thus the problem is how to explain why a certain symbiosis is not found in the Judean/Achaemenid corpora. Another element of the discussion is the transition from written to oral, which they posit (here, 1.96-97) in view of a similar transition in Somali. Unfortunately, their description of Somali evidence omits a few crucial points. Analysis of the newspapers during the third stage of the transition period (1987-1989) revealed a certain decline in the production of written texts, as newspapers became shorter and less professional (*including the printing itself*), because of the difficult socio-economic conditions during the civil war; see D. BIBER and M. HARED, "Linguistic Correlates of the Transition to Literacy in Somali: Language Adaptation in Six Press Registers," in *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Register* (ed. D. Biber and E. Finegan; New-York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 182-216, here 193-194. Since this process occurred during a transition period, because of specific conditions, it does not imply universal reversibility of stylistic transitions.

93 D.M. CARR, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9-20.

94 E. NEU, *Das Hurritische Epos der Freilassung*, I (SBOT 32; Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1996), 227, 272. An evaluation of this text is offered by M.R. BACHVAROVA, "The Eastern Mediterranean Epic Tradition from Bilgames and Akka to the Song of Release to Homer's Iliad," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 45 (2005), 131–153, here 132-138; see also A. ARCHI, "Transmission of Recitative Literature by the Hittites," *AoF* 34 (2007), 185-203; IDEM, "Orality, Direct Speech and the Kumarbi Cycle," *AoF* 36 (2009), 209-229.

two orbits?

In my view the crucial point is the social institution. The social context of the scribal IES is the royal chancery with its status, prestige and authority.[95] The intricate, elaborate scribal style highlights the scribe's habitus and expertise, and thereby his position within the royal bureaucracy and the society it governs.[96] By contrast, in its close resemblance to spoken discourse the lean, brisk style implies quite a different social context and social position. The social context is the arena of the" Singer of Tales." Use of the IES positions the writing author in the context of the oral performance. The author thereby recognizes the prestige of a branch of literature for which not literacy and scribal know how are determinant, but the artistry of the performer, whether literate or not. This feature is in keeping with the literary motifs: formal steps such as an international agreement, the acquisition of real estate and marriage are performed by such gestures as a common meal and the presentation of gifts rather than by written contract (Gen 21:22–34; 24:53–54; 26:26–31; 29:18–29; 31:44–54).[97] The reluctance to represent the honoured

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[95] See in general K. VAN DER TOORN, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 51-82; and in post-biblical context: C.A. ROLLSTON, "Ben Sira 38:24–39:11 and the 'Egyptian Satire of the Trades': A Reconsideration," *JBL* 120 (2001), 131-139. The status of the chief scribe at Emar is indicated by his prominent participation in the state cult and the meat cuts he received; see Y. COHEN, *The Scribes and Scholars of Emar: Ancient Scribal Education in a Late Bronze Age City* (HSS 59; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 41-42, and in general, 26-42, 89-91, 117-119, 147-158. COHEN (here 90, 118) emphasizes that the role of the scribes was not limited to the royal administration: they worked in various social contexts. The role of the scribes in Ugarit is studied by I.MÁRQUEZ ROWE, *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Diplomatics* (AOAT 335; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2006), 99-137. The status of (or rather, claimed by) the royal scribes in the Neo-Assyrian empire has been established by S. PARPOLA, "The Assyrian Cabinet," in *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament. Festschrift für Wolfram Freiherrn von Soden zum 85. Geburtstag* (ed. M. Dietrich and O. Loretz; AOAT 240; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1995), 379-401. On literacy and bureaucracy in the Persian empire see J. RAY, "Literacy and Language in Egypt in the Late and Persian Periods," in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 51-66.

[96] The role of scribal culture in Deuteronomy has been highlighted again by VAN DER TOORN , *Scribal Culture* (see n. 95), 143-149, 162-172, 182-194; J.P. SONNET, *The Book Within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy* (Biblical Interpretation Series 14; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[97] S. GANDZ, "Oral Tradition in the Bible," in *Jewish Studies in Memory of George A. Kohut* (ed. S.W. Baron and A. Marx; New York: The Alexander Kohut Memorial, 1953), 249-269, here 249-250. On the early medieval habit to use symbolic objects as proof for a title or a deed see M.T. CLANCHY, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 35-42; IDEM, "Reading the Signs at Durham Cathedral," in *Literacy and Society* (ed. K.

ancestors as writing points to a difference in social context rather than merely in literary taste. This is a society in which the grandees and magnates are not necessarily fully literate, and in which the written text does not enjoy the prestige it has in a society that is dominated by a developed bureaucracy. On the other hand, in such context the oral literacy of the king's men is of greatest weight: as shown by large sections in the royal correspondence from Mari Zimri-Lim's leading envoys and army commanders formulate their reports of the contacts with other leaders, such as Ḫammurapi, as narrative, including even dialogues. In my view this is the social background presupposed by the oral-written corpus.[98] These considerations are in keeping with the magic-mythic, dynamistic and sometimes almost animistic themes found in many of the tales concerning Abraham and Jacob, such as the tale of the oaks at Mamre (Gen 18:1–15),[99] the oath performed by Abraham's servant (24:2–3, 9), the confirmation of Isaac's blessing in spite of Jacob's trickery (27:25–35), and Jacob's agreement with Laban (31:46–51, 53).[100] Many of these motifs are central to the divine promises to the patriarchs, which thus contain clear residues of the ancient domestic cult. These consideration form ample justification for the thesis that the the oral-written corpus, and in particular the main strata of patriarchal narrative, came into being before the formation of the Judean corpus.

3. Questions concerning the Power of Linguistic Data

3.1. Linguistic Analysis and Textual Transmission

Many scholars have expressed doubts concerning the validity of the use of linguistic features as indications for literary-historical periodization.[101] Carr argues

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Schousboe and M.T. Larsen; Copenhagen: Akademisk Verlag, 1989), 171-182, here 174-178, 181.

98 See my studies ,"Sociolinguistics as Key" (see n. 28),156 -159; "Negotiating with Ḫammu-rāpi: A Case Study," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul* (ed. Ch. Cohen et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 643-665, here 652-661, 665.

99 See n. 14 above.

100 Important comments are offered by R. ALBERTZ, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit* (2 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 1.52-54. For additional details see my studies, "Style is More than the Person" (see n. 33), 67-79; "Abraham-Jacob Narrative" (see n. 1), section 5a.

101 YOUNG *et al.*, *Linguistic Dating* (see n. 90), 1.95-102; 2.81-83; E. BEN ZVI, "The

that the transmission process of the text naturally entails the steady intrusion of elements that reflect the language state of period of copying rather than the primary composition.[102] However, this argument, though valid for textual detail, fails to account for the large scale differentiation between the various corpora as a whole. A case in point is the use of the object suffix. An analysis of the use of this morph, attached to the finite verb (e.g., וַיְנַחֲהוּ), as against the object particle with suffix (e.g., אֹתָם), indicates systematic contrasts between large corpora. In the Judean corpus both forms appear in the same quantity (1:1 ratio), but in the Achaemenid corpus the object particle with suffix is extremely rare (1:9 ratio).[103] A similar ratio is found for a number of long texts from the Judean Desert. Thus the findings for Qumran Hebrew dovetail with Late Biblical Hebrew rather than with the Deuteronomic or Priestly tradition. This correspondence does not suffer explanation by textual transmission which does not affect the Qumran texts in the same way as it affects the biblical text. Thus the vagaries of the textual transmission do not obliterate the systematic contrast between the different syntactic-stylistic profiles of the various corpora.[104]

3.2. The Validity of Linguistic Distinctions

Young, Rezetko and Ehrensvärd argue that the distinction between Classical Hebrew (EBH) and the language of the texts composed in the late

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Communicative Message of Some Linguistic Choices," in *A Palimpsest: Rhetoric, Ideology, Stylistics and Language Relating to Persian Israel* (ed. E. Ben-Zvi *et al*.; Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2009), 269-290, here 289-290; D.H. AARON, "Reflections on a Cognitive Theory of Culture and a Theory of Formalized Language for late Biblical Studies," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (ed. E. Ben-Zvi and D.V. Edelman; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 451-473. However, the recognition of Classical Biblical Hebrew as "cultural capital," or as shared representation of cultural memory/identity, relates to high level abstraction, whereas language usage, even when it is fed by the aspirations involved in this "cultural capital," is affected no less by the concrete social situation, which in the present case means the sociological status of the chancery, the power it imparts and the language usage it promotes. These matters are glossed over by BEN-ZVI, here, 279; AARON, here, 465-467 (in spite of his references to social conditions; here, 463-465).

102 D.M. CARR, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible. A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 126-127.

103 See section 3.2.

104 See my study, "Samuel and the Deuteronomists," (see n. 29), 69-70.

Babylonian/Persian era (LBH) is merely a matter of stylistic choice.[105] However, their discussion of linguistic differentiation is not unproblematic.[106] A prooftext for the revisionistic view is Pesher Habakkuk (1QpHab). This text includes a number of terms that are definitely tied to texts from the Persian are and later, such as גמר הקץ, "the end of the period" (1QpHab 7:2). The noun *g^{e}mār*, "end", common in Aramaic, rabbinic Hebrew and Qumran Hebrew, is unattested in Biblical Hebrew (unlike the verb *gāmar*, Ps 12:2; 77:9). The second noun is *qēṣ,* which in the Qumran texts has the meaning "aeon, period."[107] However, since this usage is not found in the texts which define LBH as language state (in spite of קֵץ הַפְּלָאוֹת, "the period of horrors," Dan 12:6), Young does not view the phrase גמר הקץ as a post-classical feature.[108] Likewise, no count is taken of the phrase עושי התורה (1QpHab 7:11; 8:1; 12:5).[109] This phrase is not biblical, but the use of *tōrā* as object of *ʿāśā* is balanced by perfect LBH texts (Neh 9:34 ;2 Chr 14:3; and in a different sense Num 5:30).

Other details in the revisionistic thesis are similarly problematic. For instance, since in Ezekiel forms of the object particle with the suffix (OPS) are far more frequent than object suffixes, whereas in LBH object suffixes with the verb (VOS) are frequent, the high frequency of object suffixes has been viewed as a hallmark of LBH.[110] The revisionistic analysis adopts this view and counts the high frequency of the object suffix everywhere as a LBH feature.[111] However, the preference for

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105 I. YOUNG, "Late Biblical Hebrew and the Qumran Pesher Habakkuk," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8 (2008), Article 25; hyperlink :http://jhsonline.org/articles (accessed 29.12.2014); YOUNG *et al*., *Linguistic Dating* (see n. 90), 1.139,141.

106 For methodological criticism see J. JOOSTEN, "review of I. Young, R. Rezetko, with the assistance of M. Ehrensvärd. Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts," in *Babel und Bible 6. Annual of Ancient Near Eastern, Old Testament, and Semitic Studies* (Russian State University for the Humanities and Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 535-542; A.D. HORNKOHL, *Ancient Hebrew Periodization and the Language of the Book of Jeremiah: The Case of a Sixth-Century Date of Composition* (Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 74; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 27-50.

107 See J.J. COLLINS, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, (Hermeneia 27; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 338.

108 1QpHab 5:7–8; 7:7–8, 12–13; see YOUNG, "Pesher Habakkuk" (see n. 105), 36; YOUNG *et al*., *Linguistic Dating* (see n. 90), 1.260-261.

109 So also 4 Q171 f1 2ii:14, 22; and cp. 4Q470 f1:4. Similarly: לעשות דבר מן התורה; לעשות כפרוש התורה ;ועשו את כול התורה.

110 YOUNG *et al*., *Linguistic* Dating (see n. 90), 1.261.

111 YOUNG *et al*., *Linguistic Dating* (see n. 90), 1.134, n. 59, 1.135, n. 71, 1.262. This preference is also classified as LBH in such a poetic text as Ps 18 (here, 1.135, n. 74).

the VOS is not limited to LBH. It is true that in the Achaemenid corpus the ratio is 9:1, with similar figures for two of the lengthy Qumran texts,[112] but object suffixes are the norm in the Ugaritic texts and in Biblical poetry.[113] In epigraphic Hebrew texts we encounter 27 instances, as against 6 cases of the OPS (ratio 4.5:1). In narrative prose in the Oral/Written corpus the ratio of the VOS as against the OPS equals 2:1 or even 2.5:1. For texts in the Judean corpus I noted a ratio of 1:1. These complex findings need careful analysis. Indeed, our understanding of the different varieties of biblical Hebrew will be advanced by heedful analysis of the complex data rather than by easy rejection of the distinction between the various strata.

3.3. Deutero-Isaiah and the Transition to the Style of the Persian Era

Thus I want to state once again that global differences in language usage indicate large scale differences in the social context in which language is used, and thus in the society to which the language users belong.[114] The development of a dominant bureaucracy has a profound impact on the syntactic-stylistic profile of the writings of the Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic school and the priestly circles (the Judean corpus). The Babylonian conquest and the Persian domination involve the use of Aramaic as the official language and thus as the language of the scribal education (and of all contacts with the administration), resulting in a bilingual society, in which Hebrew writing, as found in the Achaemenid corpus, is profoundly influenced by Aramaic, and by the Hebrew vernacular. The new conditions already

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[112] I have checked the data for the Community Rule (1QS; 41 VOS / 2 OPS; with the overlapping parallel texts, 4Q255–264: VOS 33/ 0 OPS), the Damascus Covenant (45 VOS/ 7 OPS), with the overlapping parallel texts 4Q266–4Q273 (68 VOS/ 9 OPS), the War Scroll (1QM; 13VOS/2 OPS), with the overlapping texts 4Q285, 4Q491, 4Q492, 4Q493, 4Q494, 4Q495, 4Q496, 11Q14 (8 VOS/1 OPS); and the Temple Scroll (11Q19–21; 71 VOS/ 26 OPS; the data for this scroll are to a large extent conditioned by the quotations from pentateuchal literature).

[113] The OPS is not found in archaic poetry (with 21 cases of the object particle with noun, apart from Num 23:10), whereas VOS is frequent. The statistical details are included in my study "Discourse Profile and 'Priestly Documents'," to be published in a volume of essays, edited by F. Greenspahn and G. Rendsburg.

[114] I mean the supra-regional and literary spheres of language usage rather than regional/local language.

shine through in the language used in Lamentations,[115] which thus marks the inception of the transition to the literary language of the Babylonian/Persian era. Do we have the right to posit a period in which the knowledge of the classical language was still strong enough to enable the narrator to adhere to this language stratum?

The possibility that a classical language stratum maintained itself, even among the exiles in Babylonia, seem viable in the light of the stylistic nature of the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah, in which the classical usage still seems strongly developed. Nevertheless one also notes a certain weakening of this tradition. Shalom Paul points to a number of Aramaisms and deviations from classical usage, such as, for example, מִדָּה, in the meaning "tax" (Isa 45:14), וְהִתְאַשָּׁשׁוּ ("be strong," 46:8), סבל ("to carry," 46:4, 7; 53:4, 11; see Eccl 12:5; Lam 5:7), סגד ("to bow down, Isa 44:15, 17, 19 ;46:6 ;see above), בחר in the meaning "to test" (Isa 48:10, see Sir 4:17 and Tg Neb.to Judg 7:4; Jer 17:10), מערב ("West," Isa 43:5; 45:6, as against classical ים), the plural עולמים ("eternity," 45:17;51:9 ; Ps 145:13; Eccl 1:10; and in Aramaic Dan 2:4), שָׁרָב ("parched ground," 49:12).[116] Deutero-Isaiah, then, represents a transition from classical to late biblical Hebrew. Seoung YUN-SIN reaches a similar conclusion for the books Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.[117]

A transition is also suggested by the use of verbs indicating motion. A study of the use of these verbs in the books of Haggai–Malachi shows a decrease in the use of the verbs *hālaḵ* (Qal) and *lāqaḥ*, and an increasing frequency of *yāṣāʾ* (Qal), and *bōʾ* (Qal and Hifil), all like in narrative from the Persian era.[118] A similar tendency can be noticed in Isaiah 40–48; 49–55. In Isa 40–48 *hālaḵ* does not appear, with merely 2 instances in ch. 49, as against a significant number of

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115 See F.W. DOBBS-ALLSOP, "Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Lamentations," *JANES* 26 (1998), 1-36; and my study, "Sociolinguistics and the Judean Speech Community in the Achaemenid Empire," in *Judah and Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. O. Lipschits and M. Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 589-628, here 596-606, 614-617.

116 See S.M. PAUL, "Signs of Late Biblical Hebrew in Isaiah 40–66," in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew* (ed. C.L. Miller-Naudé and Z. Zevit; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 293-299.

117 Seoung YUN-SIN, *A Lexical Study on the Language of Haggai–Zechariah–Malachi and its Place in the History of Biblical Hebrew* (Ph.D. thesis; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007).

118 See my study, "Verbs of Motion in Biblical Hebrew: Lexical Shifts and Syntactic Structure," in BEN-ZVI *et al., A Palimpsest* (see n. 101), 161-197, here 168-174. The sample of the pre-exilic prophetic texts includes: Amos; Hosea; Isa 1–11; 14; 17–22; 28–32; Micah; Zephaniah; Nahum; Habakkuk.

occurrences of *yāṣā* and *bōʾ*. For *lāqaḥ* one notes a similar decrease in Isa 40–48, but not in ch. 49–55. These figures indicate that the diction of Isa 40–55 stands midway between the classical style and Persian era language usage.[119] Hence I conclude that a discussion of various doubts concerning the value of linguistic analysis only underscores the validity of this approach.

Additional problems relate to the sociohistorical background presupposed by the Abraham narratives. This will be the subject of the ensuing paragraphs.

4. The Abraham Tradition in Exilic Prophetic Literature

The Abraham narrative is not mentioned in prophetic literature before two prophetic speeches from the Babylonian or early Persian era.[120] This fact has convinced John Van Seters, and many scholars with him,[121] that the Abraham narrative was not known before the Babylonian period. However, this inference is highly problematic: narrators or poets do not introduce themes and characters in order to demonstrate their acquaintance with a given theme or character, but only because it fits their tale or poem, and only then.[122] Hence we have to ask ourselves what the great anonymous achieves by means of the allusions to the Abraham narrative: "But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took (אֲשֶׁר הֶחֱזַקְתִּיךָ) from the ends of the earth,

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119 For reasons of space the statistical details for Isaiah 40–55; 56–66 will be published elsewhere. Let me only note that the language of Isa 56–66 is even closer to the style of Persian era prophetic texts.

120 I disregard Mic 7:20 (a late addition), Jer 33:20 (not represented in the LXX), and Isa 29:22.

121 VAN SETERS, *Abraham* (see n. 5), 310-311; IDEM, *Prologue to History* (see n. 12), 215-216, 239-242; M. KÖCKERT, "Die Geschichte der Abrahamüberlieferung," in *Congres Volume Leiden 2004* (ed. A. Lemaire; VTSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 103-128, here 123-128 (with an ancient kernel of the Abraham narrative in Gen 13; 16; 18–19, there, 120-122); less unequivocal: E. BLUM, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 358-359. This view is often based on the analysis of K. GALLING, *Die Erwählungstraditionen Israels* (BZAW 48; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1928), 52-53, 56. But one should not disregard GALLING'S discussion of the prophetic rejection of the ancestor tradition an attitude which was broken by the exile and the separation of the leading parts of the people from its land (here, 67).

122 R. WELLEK and A. WARREN, *Theory of Literature* (3rd ed.; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 258-259. Imagine the number of allusions in modern literature if narrators/poets would be obliged to allude to a significant number of known characters or works known to them.

and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off" (Isa 41:8–9).[123] The phrase that presents the exiled Judeans as "the offspring of Abraham, my friend" is continued by an allusion to Abraham's call "from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners." The phraseology has been explained in different ways. The most common exegesis views the "ends of the earth" as an allusion to Haran, in the far North of Mesoptamia, the place where the tradition located Abraham's call. On the other hand, KIMCHI regards the entire relative clause (v. 9) as a prophetic description of the divine call to the exiles, who will be brought from the ends of the earth (Isa 43:6; 49:6). He relates the suffixes of הֶחֱזַקְתִּיךָ and the other verbs to the community addressed, and interpreting the *qatal* forms as prophetic perfect. An interpretation along these lines (possibly as a performative) points to a fusion of the past call to Abraham and the present call to the exiles, much like the overlay in the address to "worm Jacob, men of Israel" in the continuation of this *logos* (41:14) and the fusion of the trek from Egypt and the flight from Babylon in the vision of the new Exodus (41:18–19; 42:15–26; 43:19–20). A fusion of this kind would be extremely enigmatic if the narrative were not well-known to the community. Its use in prophetic discourse implies the assumption that the audience would readily understand it and, moreover, respond to it well. Another case in point is the allusion to Abraham and Sarah: "Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many" (Isa 51:2). This overt allusion is the introductory note of a speech that is to convince the exiles of the coming salvation: "The triumph I grant is near, the success I give has gone forth. My arms shall provide for the peoples; the coastlands shall trust in me, they shall look to my arm" (51:5, NJPSV). The reference to Abraham and Sarah is a rhetorical argument for the truth of the prophet's message. Thus the audience must be acquainted with the story, and, what is more, the argument must be strong enough to move the listeners from utter despair to hope and confidence. Therefore, the narrative alluded to cannot be new. If it is to overcome despair and distrust it has to be sufficiently well established in order to fulfill its task.[124] Moreover, the

123 See KÖCKERT, "Die Geschichte der Abrahamüberlieferung" (see n. 121), 103-113.

124 Similarly BLUM, *Vätergeschichte* (see n. 121), 296. BLUM (here, 297) finds the roots for the

mention of "Sarah who brought you forth" is only effective, if the audience is aware of the story of the promise to the childless couple.[125] The point of the prophetic reference is the overturning of Sarah's despair and her giving birth against all odds (a theme that is closely allied to the complaint "quoted" in 49:21). The prophet doesn't explain the reference to make it work. *This way of speaking is only possible if the tale is well-known and highly regarded*. Notably, the phrase "Raise your eyes to the heavens, And look upon the earth beneath" (Isa 51: 6) is based on the formula, וישא עיניו וירא, "raising the eyes and see." The imperative is used in the encouragement to Abraham: "Raise your eyes now, and look (שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה) ... northward and southward and eastward and westward (Gen 13:14; and see 2.1). This pericope, then, has definite associations with the Abraham narrative, in a wording not unlike the present text.

The second passage that demands our attention is the allusion which Ezekiel put in the mouth of the people who remained in Judea: "Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land; but we are many; the land is surely given us to possess" (Ezek 33:24).[126] The allusion is all the more important since Ezekiel imagines its use by the remaining Judeans. Thus the Abraham tradition is strong enough to allow him to suppose that it is sufficiently well-known in Judea to underscore claims to real estate. This argument would enable the imagined Judeans to support their argument as against the exiles who previously were partners in the ownership of the land. There is a second presupposition. The tale must be sufficiently known among the exiles addressed to make them feel the sting. Thus

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primary promise stratum in Judea between 721 and 586.

[125] See D. ROM-SHILONI, *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts between the Exiles and the People who Remained (6th-5th centuries* BCE*)* (LHBOTS 543; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 118-119; J. MUILENBURG, "The Book of Isaiah 40–66," *IB* 5.404, 591; B. DUHM, *Das Buch Jesaia übersetzt und erklärt* (3rd ed.; HKAT III/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914), 354. This point is duly acknowledged by Th. RÖMER, "Abraham Traditions in the Hebrew Bible outside the Book of Genesis," in *The Book of Genesis. Composition, Reception and Interpretation* (ed. C.A. Evans *et al*.; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 159-180, here 163-167; for a redaction-historical discussion see O.H. STECK, "Zions Tröstung: Beobachtungen und Fragen zu Jesaja 51:1–11," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte. Festschrift fur Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. E. Blum and C. Macholz; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 257–276, here 271-275.

[126] See RÖMER, "Abraham Traditions" (see n. 125), 164, 167-168; ROM-SHILONI, *Exclusive Inclusivity* (see n. 125), 146-148.

the Abraham tale must have been well-known and much esteemed among the exiles and in the Judean fatherland. The corollary is that this tale already was well established in the Judean tradition before the first exile, that is to say before 597. If that were not the case, the prophet would hardly have been able to use it as an argument concerning real estate.

Another point that demands our attention concerns the number of prophetic allusions to patriarchal narrative. In this context it would be a mistake to count every instance of the name "Jacob", for this is no more than a synonym for "Israel," and thus would not have implications for the attestation of the Jacob narrative. We need references that point specifically to the narrative. Such specific references are found in two texts. We have the Jeremianic allusion כָּל־אָח עָקוֹב יַעְקֹב (Jer 9:3, "for every brother will utterly supplant," ASV), and the Hoseanic pointers to Jacob's flight to the "field of Aram," his service there for the sake of a wife, and his struggle with the divine being (Hos 12:4, 13). When such allusions are that scarce, the "law of small numbers" must apply:[127] it is only a matter of chance that other texts are not alluded to. Thus the fact that we do not find allusions to Abraham in prophetic texts other than the books of Ezechiel and Deutero-Isaiah, definitely does not entail that the Abraham narrative was unknown before the exilic period. On the contrary, these texts indicate that in the exilic period the knowledge of this narrative was spread to such an extent that even veiled implications would be comprehensible to the exilic community. The Abraham narrative was part and parcel of the cultural memory of both the exilic and the Judean community.[128]

5. The Art of Biblical Narrative and the Oral Performance

These considerations return me to the oral-epic platform of the Abraham narrative. Many features of biblical narrative have to be viewed in the light of the

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127 A. TVERSKY and D. KAHNEMAN, "Belief in the Law of Small Numbers," *Psychological Bulletin* 76 (1971), 105-110.

128 RÖMER ("Abraham Traditions," see n. 125) theorizes that these allusions may hark back to oral tradition. However, the narrative alluded to must have included the migration theme, the inheritance of the land, the theme of the childless couple, the divine promise and the overcoming of childlessness, and some traditional wording; in short, the quintessence of the Abraham narrative as it

performer's art. In the oral-derived corpus the dialogue covers more than forty percent of the text,[129] only slightly less than in Homeric poetry, where the part of the dialogue is said to range between 40 and 50 %.[130] When we think in terms of performance, the dialogue is of particular weight for the narrator-performer, since it enables him to give his figures different voices, according to their role, character and mood. In her classical book on *Oral Literature in Africa* Ruth Finnegan comments more than once on the histrionic capabilities of the oral performers.[131] In biblical narrative the sensitivity to the role of the voice has been demonstrated by Robert Alter, who points to a feature of particular importance: the appearance of two different characters using two contrasting speaking styles.[132] For example, Isaac uses uncomplicated syntax in his question, "Here are the fire and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" (Gen 22:7, הִנֵּה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וְאַיֵּה הַשֶּׂה לְעֹלָה). By contrast, Abraham's sophisticated, but evasive, answer is formulated in an elaborate sentence pattern: "God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son" (v. 8, אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה־לּוֹ הַשֶּׂה לְעֹלָה בְּנִי). In an oral performance the narrator can use intonation, mimic and poise to bring out the innocent wondering, and the troubled but grave answer. Thus in the oral vista the dialogue in biblical narrative is to be viewed as an opportunity for the performer, and even as a residue of the performer's voice. In a written text it is an inheritance of the performer's art.

But then, biblical narrative also confronts us with some severe difficulties that would not be felt at all in oral performance. The tale of Abraham's complaint preceding the Covenant between the Pieces provides many opportunities for the performing artist. The divine assurance concerning his innumerable offspring is underscored by the countless stars: "He brought him outside and said

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is transmitted in the Pentateuch.

129 A.J.C. VERHEIJ, *Verbs and Numbers: A Study of the Frequencies of the Hebrew Verbal Tense Forms in the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles* (SSN 28; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), 32-36; Y.T. RADDAY and H. SHORE, *Genesis: An Authorship Study in computer-Assisted Statistical Linguistics* (AnOr 103; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1985), 24-25.

130 I.J.F. DE JONG, 'Convention versus Realism in the Homeric Epics', *Mnemosyne* 58 (2005), 1-22, here 12.

131 FINNEGAN, *Oral Literature in Africa* (see n. 27), 382-388, 501-505; see also WALKER, *Turkish Folktale* (see n. 27), xviii-xix.

132 R. ALTER, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 72-74: Jacob and Esau in Gen 25:30–31; Joseph and Potiphar's wife in Gen 39; Saul and David in 1 Sam 24.

(וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר), "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him (וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ), "So shall your posterity be." The divine suggestion to go out and count the stars is followed by the promise "So shall your offspring be." What happened between the divine suggestion to count the stars and the promise is not told, but the singer of tales can show by gesture and poise how Abraham went out, looked at the sky and wondered. Thus the dialogue involves performance.

Some performance is also implied when the utterance of a given speaker is immediately followed by a second utterance that is attributed to the same speaker. Such cases imply a pause, and even a silent reaction on the part of the addressee.[133] This is the case in Abraham's questions that occasioned the divine response (vv. 2a, 3): "But Abram said (וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם), 'O Lord God, what will you give me? For I am to die childless [...]'. And Abram said (וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם), 'You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir'."

Abram's second argument, though often viewed as a doublet,[134] is more than a mere reiteration.[135] The saying "you have given me no offspring" returns to the theme of "giving" in the first saying, applies it to the notion of dying childless (עֲרִירִי), and thus augments the previous complaint. The repetition of the quotation formula indicates a pause between the two complaints, and even more than that, a lack of response. The divine answer was triggered by the second complaint. In the

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133 M. SHILOAH, "And he said ... and he said," in *Sefer Korngrin* (ed. A. Weiser and B. Luria; Tel-Aviv: Niv and The Society for Bible Research, 1964), 251-276; C.L. MILLER, "Silence as a Response in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: Strategies of Speakers and Narrators," *JNSL* 32 (2006), 23-43; L.J. DE REGT, *Participants in Old Testament Texts and the Translator: Reference Devices and their Rhetorical Impact* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999), 13. Pauses between different stages in the argumentation are common in human intercourse, as shown by, e.g., I. HUTCHBY and R. WOOFFITT, *Conversation Analysis. Principles, Practices and Applications* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1998), 81. For the doubling of the speaking formula in texts from Mari see M. ANBAR, "Formule d'introduction du discours direct au mileu du discours à Mari et dans la Bible," *VT* 47 (1997), 530-536.

134 C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 12–36. A Commentary* (trans. J.J. Scullion, S.J.; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 219-220; J.C. GERTZ, "Abraham, Mose und der Exodus: Beobachtungen zur Redaktionsgeschichte von Gen 15," in *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jungsten Diskussion* (ed. J.C. Gertz et al.; BZAW 315; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2002), 67-81, here 70.

135 KÖCKERT, "Gen 15" (see n. 24), 38. WENHAM notes that the repeated use of הן and הנה does not fit the hypothesis that v. 3 reiterates v. 2 as a gloss: G.J. WENHAM, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Waxo, TX: Word, 1987), 327.

text this constellation is only indicated by the technicality of the repetition of the quotation formula, which is to be opened up by interpretation.[136] But the story-teller can signify what happened by means of tone, poise, gesture and facial expression.

By the same token, a number of passages present a change in speaking or acting subject without any indication on the part of the narrator.[137] A case in point is the final verse of this episode:

Gen 15:6 וְהֶאֱמַן בַּיהוָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לּוֹ צְדָקָה

And he believed in YHWH; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness.

The interpretation that the second clause indicates the divine response to Abraham's trust in his overlord is commonplace.[138] Nevertheless, the early medieval commentator R. Josef Bechor Shor construes וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ as Abraham's act.[139] Once again, it is the performing artist who can clarify the situation by means of tone and gesture.

An additional issue, well-known since the work of Meir Weiss, Robert Alter and Meir Sternberg, is the repetition-deviation pattern, a figure according to which (a) one of the characters formulates a plan or an advice or issues an order, worded in certain terms; whereas (b) its execution is worded in slightly different terms in the narrator's domain; or (a) an event is described in the narrator's domain, and (b) is afterwards recounted by one of the characters in different wording. In literary studies such deviations are considered significant since they reflect the narrator's stance, or the point of view of the speaker or addressee. But it takes all one's

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136 See also Gen 20:9–10; 29:14–15; 30:27–28; 37:21–22.

137 J. WELLHAUSEN, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1871), 22-23; R.E. LONGACRE, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence. A Text Theoretical and textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39–48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 144-148, 155-169, 174-183; DE REGT, *Participants* (see n. 133), 28-84; H. RECKENDORF, *Die syntaktischen Verhältnisse des Arabischen* (Leiden: Brill, 1898), 371-372. Some pragmatic-rhetoric aspects are discussed in my study "Speaker, Addressee and Positioning: Dialogue Structure and Pragmatics in Biblical Narrative," in *Interested Readers: Essays on the Bible in Honor of David J. A. Clines* (ed. J.K. Aitken *et al*.; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2013), 359-372.

138 So, following the *Mek. d'Rabbi Ishma'el, Bešallaḥ* 6 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 114-115), Rashi, Kimchi and Nachmanides, and see WESTERMANN, *Genesis* (see n. 134), 222-223. If this clause would have been introduced at a later stage as a redactional explanation, the interpolator would have clarified who reckoned what to whom, like the NRSV ("and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness," the NJPSV ("And because he put his trust in the Lord, He reckoned it to his merit"), the LXX (καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην, cf. Ps 106:31), the Vulgate, Tg. Neof., the Peshitta and Luther).

semiotic, semantic and syntactic insight to reveal the meaning of such repetition-deviation; and, in many cases lack of deviation is no less meaningful. Can we presume that the ancient reader is that conscious of the text and the complex games the narrator is playing? When we think of the performer this issue looks totally different. The narrator can use intonation, gesture and face in order to make the audience experience these nuances.[140] In a living performance such modulations come to life, and turn into a game between narrator and audience.

Let us consider Abraham's proposal to his guests: "Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant" (Gen 18:4–5, NRSV). This modest suggestion is followed by a rich regale: "Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate" (18:8). The contrast between modesty and rich entertainment could be underlined by appropriate gestures and a happy smile.

Thus it is not the scribal desk which forms the background for the literary milieu of biblical narrative. It is the three-dimensional art of the performing Singer of Tales.[141] The written text is a reflection of the narrator's art of voice and gesture in the two dimensions of ink and papyrus.

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139 In the Abraham tale one encounters a similar problem in Gen 18:28–32; 24:32–33.

140 The differences between the art of the performer and the writing author are touched upon by Y. ZAKOVITCH, "From Oral Tale to Written Narrative in the Bible," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 1 (1981), 9-43 (Hebrew, with summary in English), here 33-34.

141 For recent attention to the performance see, e.g., T. GILES and W.J. DOAN, *Twice Used Songs: Performance Criticism of the Songs of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009); R.D. MILLER II, "Orality and Performance in Ancient Israel," *RevScRel* 86 (2012), 181-192; and with a focus on theatre: S. LEVY, *The Bible as Theatre* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2002); H. UTZSCHNEIDER, "Is there a Universal Genre of Drama," in *Literary Fiction and the Construction of Identity in Ancient Literatures* (ed. H. Liss and M. Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 63-79; one notes the comments by FINNEGAN, *Oral Literature in Africa* (see n. 27), 501-505.