

Of Syntax and Style in the “Late Biblical Hebrew”— “Old Canaanite” Connection

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Grammatical, syntactical, and lexical features, once widely considered to be characteristic of Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) idiom, and indicative of post-exilic composition, are increasingly being identified in early documents of northern origin: Phoenician, Ugaritic, the Akkadian of the El Amarna correspondence, and pre-exilic Israelean¹ Hebrew. Rightly or wrongly, they have come to be regarded as elements, for the most part, of northern dialect. The features that have been so recognized thus far include the relative particle *še-*,² the demonstrative pronoun *zô*,³ the infinitive absolute plus independent pronoun to express past time,⁴ the sequential ordering: substantive—numeral,⁵ and, less significantly perhaps, isolated formulaic structures,⁶ along with a variety of lexical items.⁷ Whether their presence in early northern dialects, their absence from pre-exilic Judaeen Hebrew, and their re-emergence in LBH is to be

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1 This term, here used as a surrogate for “North Israelite,” was coined by H. L. Ginsberg. See his *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* (New York, 1982), pp. 1f.

2 *BDB*, 979f.

3 E. Y. Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1982), p. 31, §44. Note, however, *kāzô w^ekāzé* (2 Sam. 11:25).

4 C. H. Gordon, *IEJ* 5 (1955), 85–88. Cf. W. L. Moran, *JCS* 4 (1950), 169–72; idem, *JCS* 6 (1952), 76–80.

5 G. Rendsburg, *JANES* 12 (1980), 71.

6 Cf., e.g., *Or.* 42 (1973), 172.

7 The following is a select list:

bêt hā^elōhîm “the temple” (for which earlier authors employ *bêt Yhwh*), occurring more than thirty times in Chronicles, some twenty times in Ezra–Nehemiah, and once in Daniel (in Judg. 17:5 and Qoh. 4:17 it has a more general sense), is otherwise found in Biblical Hebrew only in Judg. 18:31, where it refers to the northern sanctuary of Shiloh.

attributed to the "fusion" of Israelean and Judaeal exiles,⁸ to dialect orientation,⁹ to the conservative nature of the language owing to the relative isolation of speakers of Hebrew,¹⁰ or to an as yet untraceable inner Hebrew development, on present evidence cannot be determined; but the corpus of what have been perceived to be uniquely LBH traits is dwindling. Here I propose to extend the process, to examine two syntactical features that, though generally regarded as peculiarities of LBH, can be shown to occur in documents of early northern provenance: the so-called "*quivis* construction," and the "double plural" construct-chain formation. Evidence prompts the conclusion that their employment by biblical authors is significant more as a matter of style than of chronology.

1. *The quivis construction.*

Among the alleged idiosyncrasies of LBH syntax is repetition of a noun in singular number joined by the conjunction, *w-*, the syndetic construction, *X w-X*, that is said to signify "each and every *X*," or "every single *X*," and the like. For example, *yôm wā-yôm* "each and every day" (Est. 3:4), *ʿîr wā-ʿîr* "each and every city" (Ezr. 10:14), *ʾîš wā-ʾîš* "each and every man" (Est. 1:8). The formulation is considered to be both chronologically significant—i.e., suggestive of LBH—and distinct in meaning from the "earlier" pattern of noun repetition without the conjunction, the asyndetic construction, *X X*. The latter is said to signify "every *X*," or "*X* by *X*," or "*X* after *X*,"

hitnaddēb "to volunteer, donate (goods or services)" occurs eight times in Chronicles, four times in Ezra-Nehemiah, and otherwise only in Judg. 5:2, 9. The alleged difference in meaning between its employment in the manifestly late passages of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, on the one hand, and in the early and northern text of Judg. 5, on the other, which A. Hurvitz claims (*RB* 81 [1974], 29) is so slight as to be negligible. Cf. 2 Chron. 17:16.

ḥešbôn "reckoning, account" (Qoh. 7:25, 9:10), considered a LBH lexical item (R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* [Harvard Semitic Monographs, 12; Missoula, 1976], 139) appears as *ḥṭbn* in Ugaritic (*UT* 1127:2; 2101:1; *RIH*, 78/2:7). Cf. Ch. Vrololeaud, *PRU* V, p. 125; O. Loretz, *UF* 12 (1980), 275–78, 40ff. On the phonological relationship of Ugaritic *ḥṭbn*, Hebrew *ḥešbôn*, and Aramaic *ḥšbn*, see particularly J. Blau, *HAR* 1 (1977), 73–75.

mēšiltayim "cymbals," considered an "appar. later equiv. of *šēš-ʿlīm*" (*BDB*, 853; Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 144) appears as *mšlm* in Ugaritic (*UT* ʿnt i:19; *Ugaritica* V, pp. 551–52, No. 2:4). Cf. W. G. E. Watson, *Biblica* 53 (1972), 195.

ʿašrē ʿāsār and *ʿašrē ʿešrē* "eleven," in place of which earlier biblical authors employ *ʾaḥad ʿāsār* and *ʾaḥad ʿešrē*, had long been considered a late feature (S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* [9th ed.; Edinburgh, 1913], 156n.) and even a loanword from Akkadian (H. Zimmern, *Akkadische Fremdwörter als Beweis für babylonischen Kultureinfluss* [2te Aufl.; Leipzig, 1917], 65). As noted, e.g., by S. E. Loewenstamm (*Proceedings of the International Conference on Semitic Studies* [Jerusalem, 1965], 177), it occurs in Ugaritic as *ʿšt ʿšr* (*UT* 1024 rev. 7; 2103:7) and *ʿšt ʿšrh* (*UT* 1083:4; 2011 [le. ed.] 2). Even if the forms are nevertheless borrowings from Akkadian, as maintained by R. Hetzron (*JSS* 22 [1977], 178), as he indicates, the loan will have had to have occurred in the pre-historic period (loc. cit.).

8 C. H. Gordon, *IEJ* 5 (1955), 85–88; idem, *UT*, p. 99, n. 1.

9 Cf. the comments of J. Blau on *šḥq* in *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 6/2 (1982), 108.

10 G. Rendsburg, *JANES* 12 (1980), 73.

as in כָּל־יֹמִים "every man" (Num. 4:19), יּוֹם־יּוֹם "day after day" (Gen. 39:10), שָׁנָה־שָׁנָה "year by year" (Deut. 14:22).¹¹

To account for the early attestation of the syndeton, dôr wā-dôr "each and every generation," it was at one time suggested that the construction came into use first with this phrase, and thus (but by implication only) may have served as model for the others.¹² More recently it has been argued that dôr wā-dôr "differs" from the others, that it is "a stock poetic phrase," that rather than bearing the nuance, "each and every generation," it means simply "forever," etc., and that, in consequence, its resemblance to the other, "later," examples of this construction is merely "superficial."¹³ The evidence adduced in support of this interpretation is that dôr wā-dôr is regularly found in parallel with $(l^e)\text{ôlām}$, with lā-neṣaḥ , or with the negative, bal , implying "never."

This, however, is to ignore two pertinent details. First, just as syndetic $\text{l}^e\text{dôr wā-dôr}$ occurs in parallel with $\text{l}^e\text{ôlām}$, so also does asyndetic $\text{l}^e\text{dôr dôr}$ in Exod. 3:15— $\text{zeh-ššēmî l}^e\text{ôlām w}^e\text{zeh zikrî l}^e\text{dôr dôr}$ "this is my name forever, and this my appellation for (each and) every generation." From this observation one may, at least tentatively, infer that, on the basis of the identical parallelism shared by the two constructions, there is no essential difference in meaning between them. To a verification of this we shall return shortly.

Second, the pattern "X and X" occurs in 14th century B.C.E. letters from Tyre and Alashia, and perhaps, though less certainly, in Ugaritic also. Three times in EA 147, a missive of Abimilki of Tyre to the Egyptian king, there is found the expression (*ina*) ūmi u ūmima "daily, each and every day," with which one may compare Hebrew yôm wā-yôm . In lines 5–7 we read "my lord is the sun (-god) who rises over the lands daily (*i-na u₄-mi ū u₄-mi-ma*)"; lines 27–28 have "I was very happy, and [gloss:] *a-ru-ū* daily (*i-na u₄-mi u u₄-mi-ma*)"; and lines 66–69 may be rendered, "Moreover, Zimrida, the ruler of Sidon, has written (or: sent) daily (*i-na u₄-mi u u₄-mi-[m]a*) to the traitor, Aziru, son of Abdiašratum."

The single instance of syndetic structure that I have been able to cull from the Ugaritic corpus is, unfortunately, unclear, and even, perhaps, uncertain: kd w kd (UT 1086:1).

That syndetic and asyndetic patterns constituted nothing more than stylistic variants of one another, however, and were essentially interchangeable, is suggested not only by the parallelisms cited above, $\text{l}^e\text{ôlām}||\text{dôr wā-dôr}$ and $\text{l}^e\text{ôlām}||\text{dôr dôr}$, but also by the immediate juxtaposition of these formations in a letter of the ruler of Alashia to the king of Egypt. EA 33:27–32 reads: "And yearly (*u šatta u šat[amma]*) = $\text{ū MU.KAM ū MU.KA[M-ma]}$) let my messenger come [before you], and you, let your messenger come yearly (*šatta šattamma* = MU.KAM MU.KAM-ma) to me." Attention

11 Driver, *Introduction*, 538; Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 47–51. For a somewhat different but nevertheless chronological explanation, see Rendsburg, *JANES* 12 (1980), 68f.

12 Driver, *Introduction*, 538.

13 Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 50–51. Note Rendsburg's apt criticism that "[t]his is a distinction without a difference, for it is a translational problem that we have. Synthetically, the forms are alike, and it is incorrect to separate them because of the vagaries of the English language" (*JANES* 12 [1980], 68).

may also be drawn to the syndeton *batta u batta* appearing in a 13th century B.C.E. Middle Assyrian letter from Nippur,¹⁴ and to the Neo-Babylonian expression, (*adi*) *tuppi u tuppi*, which, it is said, exhibits no appreciable difference in meaning from *tuppi tuppi*.¹⁵ In addition, if the feature does indeed include such syndetic numeral structures as Hebrew *šēš wā-šēš* (2 Sam. 21:20),¹⁶ then the pattern may be noted repeatedly (albeit in the same formula) in the letters of Abimilki of Tyre: *7 u 7*.¹⁷

2. The double plural construct-chain formation.

So also the genitival construction in which the *nomen rectum* as well as the *nomen regens* is cast in plural number—e.g., *ḥārāšē ʿēšim* “wood workers” (1 Chron. 14:1) in contrast with its prototype, *ḥārāšē ʿēš* (2 Sam. 5:11)—is considered by many scholars to be characteristic of LBH.¹⁸ Yet it too finds reflection not only in Biblical Hebrew passages of northern provenance and early date, but in Phoenician, Ugaritic, and Amarna letters from Byblos. That is to say, double plural construct-chain formations occur in early northern texts. Thus, Judg. 5:6*b* witnesses to (*w^e*) *hōl^ekē n^etībōt* “travellers of by-ways.” In the Phoenician inscription of Azatiwada from Karatepe, in apposition with the adjectival phrase, ³šm r^cm “evil men,” occurs the construct chain, b^cl ³gddm “leaders of gangs” (*KAI* 26, A i:15). Ugaritic attests to *ḥrš bhtm* “builders of houses” (*UT* 114:10; 81:6; 80 rev. 16) and *mri ilm* “fatlings of rams” (*UT* 124:13; contrast *mria il* [*UT* 51:VI:41–42]). And in an Amarna letter from Byblos we find *iš[ē] bītāti* (= GĪŠ.[MEŠ] É.MEŠ) “the furnishing[s] of the houses” (*EA* 75:12) with which we may compare [*i*]šē *bītātišunu* (= [GĪ]Š.MEŠ É.MEŠ-šu-nu) “the furnishings of their houses” (*EA* 81:39), for in each of these the *nomen rectum* appears in plural number, while in a virtually identical context, *EA* 85:13, we find *išē bītīšunu* (= GĪŠ.MEŠ É-šu-nu) “the furnishings of their house,” with the *nomen rectum* in singular number. These suggest that we are again faced with nothing more significant than stylistic variation.

This conclusion gains a measure of confirmation in the observation that, in Biblical Hebrew, both formations may find employment in the same narrative. In 1 Chr. 7 the double plural construct-chain, *gibbôrê ḥ^ayālīm* “mighty warriors,” occurs in verses 5, 7, 11, and 40, while *gibbôrê ḥayil*, with the *nomen rectum* in singular number, occurs in verses 2 and 9. Again, in 2 Chr. 32 the double plural construct-chain, *ʿammê ḥā^arāšôt* “the peoples of the lands,” appears in verse 13, while *ʿammê ḥā^areš* is found in verse 19.

Even more significant, perhaps, is the fact that Biblical authors may juxtapose the two constructions within a single verse. For example, *b^enê ʿanāqīm* “the sons of (the)

14 *BE* 17 (1908), No. 91:5. Cf. W. von Soden, *Afo* 18 (1957–1958), 368.

15 For references and discussion see M. B. Rowton, *JNES* 10 (1951), esp. 186, 204.

16 Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 47, 49.

17 *EA* 147:3; 148:3; 149:3; 150:3; 151:3; 153:3; 154:3; 155:3. (For other elements of Canaanite rhetoric in the correspondence of Abimilki of Tyre, see *Or.* 42 [1973], 162–77.) The variants, *7-šu u 7-šu*, *7-šu 7-tān*, etc., occur *passim* in *EA*; cf. Ugaritic *šb^cd w šb^cid* (*UT* 89:8–9). For discussion and comparison of these formulae in *EA*, Ugaritic Akkadian, and Ugaritic, see A. L. Kristensen, *UF* 9 (1977), 149–50.

18 A. Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik* (*BZAW* 16; Giessen, 1909), 8–11; A. Hurvitz, *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem, 1972), 37–38 [in Hebrew]; Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 42; Kutscher, *History*, 82, §122; Rendsburg, *JANES* 12 (1980), 67, sub A.5. See, however, the more general and careful remarks of P. Joüon, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique* (Rome, 1947), §136 m, o.

Anaqim," at the beginning of Deut. 9:2 is balanced by *b^enê ʿānāq* "the sons of Anaq" at its end. In 1 Kings 9:27 the two constructions appear in apposition, *ʾanšê ʾoniyyôt yôd^eʿê hayyām* "men of ships, pundits of the sea." In Ps. 123:2 the two are set in parallelism: *k^eʿênê ʿabādîm . . . // k^eʿênê šiphā* "like the eyes of slaves . . . // like the eyes of a maid." And several more times.¹⁹

The evidence adduced here, I submit, demonstrates that, of the two so-called "late" syntactical features we have examined, the "*quivis* construction" and the "double plural" construct-chain formation, neither is peculiar to the idiom of LBH, but each finds precise counterparts in "Old Canaanite" dialects. The evidence furthermore suggests—rather forcefully, I believe—that each of these features constitutes no more than a free variant of what has come to be regarded as the standard syntactical construction.

19 Judg. 5:22 (unless, with the Septuagint and the Vulgate, *two* double plural construct-chain formations are to be read!); Isa. 2:19; 26:6; 45:3; 51:9; Ezek. 19:11; Ps. 59:3; 95:4; 1 Chron. 14:1.