

The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative

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1. *The Oral and the Written*

The thesis of this study is that a number of features in the prose style of Biblical Hebrew relate to the differences between oral and written language, namely (a) the use of subordinate clauses (hypotaxis), (b) the length of the noun string, (c) the number of explicit syntactic constituents in the clause, and (d) the frequency of reference by means of pronouns and deictic particles. Systematic analysis of these features shows that texts from the Persian era typically contain many subordinated clauses (hypotaxis), long noun strings and explicit syntactic constituents. The same tendencies are revealed by texts that may be ascribed to the Babylonian era (e.g., the prose narratives about Jeremiah) or the seventh century (e.g., the Deuteronomistic history of the Judean kings in 2 Kings 11–22), but to a lesser extent. In contrast, most texts belonging to the tales of the Patriarchs, the rise of the monarchy (Samuel, Saul and David), the Omride dynasty and the northern prophets (Elijah and Elisha), and part of the Exodus narrative, consist of short clauses, containing only a small number of explicit syntactic constituents. In these texts hypotaxis and long noun strings are relatively rare, whereas reference by pronoun and deictic particles is frequent. Hence the distinction between these strata pertains to some of the most basic aspects of language usage. It is our thesis that these differences are rooted in syntactic preferences, which reflect different social and historical conditions. In view of sociolinguistic research, it seems likely that the more complicated style emerged in the scribal chancellery. As we shall try to show in the discussion of our findings, the more a text is rooted in the scribal context, the more complicated its language, in terms of hypotaxis, length of the noun string, and the number of explicit sentence constituents. In contrast, the closer a text is to spoken language and oral literature, the simpler it is, in terms of syntactic structure, reference, and clause length.¹ Narratives composed in such a style seem, then, to reflect a substratum of oral literature. Analysis of these issues can contribute much to our understanding of the development of the ancient Hebrew prose style.

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1. See J. Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge, 1987), 262–72, and the literature quoted in notes 9, 57–62 below.

Since Gunkel the distinction between oral and written literature is one of the commonplaces of biblical studies. Its basis, however, has always been of a general nature. Form criticism has always been preoccupied with the original folktale, often conceived of as *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, rather than with authentic oral literature. Hence its perception of the oral substratum of biblical narrative was mainly based on the identification of popular motifs and some basic forms of narrative design (Axel Olrik's laws).² However, since these forms and themes are found in large segments of world literature, they can hardly provide criteria for the identification of a presumed oral substratum.³ In modern literary research the study of oral literature has been much advanced by the investigations of oral epic poetry in Eastern Europe, and in particular in Serbia, Bosnia and Albania,⁴ and by the discoveries of anthropological research, in particular in Africa.⁵ In our field the results of these studies have mainly been used to construct an adequate model for the cultural background of biblical literature,⁶ and to describe some of its characteristic forms.⁷

The present study, by contrast, seeks to establish linguistic criteria by which to distinguish between strata that grew entirely in the scribal chancellery, and strata that are rich in features originating in oral literature. One feature indicating oral sources is the use of epic formulae, as found in Ugaritic poetry.⁸ Single features, however, are too weak to carry this burden. A wider framework is called for. The present study makes use of the characterization of the stylistic differences between oral and scribal texts, as conceived in modern linguistics,⁹ in order to describe these strata in biblical

2. A. Olrik, "The Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," in A. Dundes, ed., *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs, 1965), 131–41. The employment of these features as a criterion for oral composition has been criticized by P. G. Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study* (Sheffield, 1988), 55–64. However, Kirkpatrick does not pay sufficient attention to the particular character of oral language.

3. This principal weakness has been explicitly acknowledged by J. van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven, 1976), 158–60, but his endeavor to base the recognition on Olrik's 'Laws' (pp. 160–61) is no improvement. It has to be taken into account that such pieces of written literature as, e.g., Attic tragedy and Herodotean history are also based on oral literature.

4. These studies are linked to the names of Wilhelm Radloff, Matija Murko, Milman Parry, and Albert B. Lord. A history of scholarship in this field is offered by J. M. Foley, *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research: An Introduction and Annotated Bibliography* (New York-London, 1985).

5. See in particular, R. Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford, 1970); İlhan Başgöz, "The Tale-Singer and his Audience," in D. Ben Amos and K. R. Goldstein, eds., *Folklore: Performance and Communication* (The Hague-Paris, 1975), 142–203; D. Ben Amos, *Sweet Words: Storytelling Events in Benin* (Philadelphia, 1975).

6. S. Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville, 1996).

7. Some important insights into the formal nature of biblical narrative in light of the advances in the study of oral literature have been provided by H. Jason, "The Story of David and Goliath: A Folk Epic?," *Bib.* 60 (1979), 36–70; B. O. Long, "Recent Field Studies in Oral Literature and their Bearing on the Old Testament Criticism," *VT* 26 (1976), 187–98; R. C. Culley, "Oral Tradition and the Old Testament," in R. C. Culley, ed., *Oral Tradition and Old Testament Studies* (= *Semeia* 5; Missoula, 1976); idem, *Themes and Variations: A Study of Action in Biblical Narrative* (Atlanta, 1992); see also idem, ed., *Classical Hebrew Narrative* (= *Semeia* 3; Missoula, 1975); idem, ed., *Perspectives on Old Testament Narrative* (= *Semeia* 15; Chico, 1979).

8. See F. H. Polak, "Epic Formulas in Biblical Narrative: Frequency and Distribution," in R. F. Poswick et al., eds., *Actes du Second Colloque International «Bible et Informatique: Méthodes, Outils, Résultats» (Jérusalem 9–13 Juin 1988)* (Genève, 1989), 435–88, and n. 64 below.

9. See Goody, *Interface*, 262–72; W. L. Chafe, "Linguistic Differences Produced by Differences between Speaking and Writing," in D. R. Olson et al., eds., *Literacy, Language and Learning: The Nature*

narrative. The restriction to narrative is essential, since the stylistic character of poetry is conditioned by poetic prosody, and therefore not apt to change because of scribal background. At the present stage this restriction must also apply to the near-poetic "elevated" language of homiletic discourse, prophecy, and apocalyptic.¹⁰

The method of this study is based on a combination of syntactic analysis and statistical tools.¹¹ Statistical methods have been applied sparingly in biblical research.¹² Bee has used the frequency of nouns relative to verbs in order to distinguish between oral and written sources, e.g., in Deuteronomy,¹³ but since his study is based on one criterion only, and proceeds to diachronic analysis without creating any general stylistic framework, it is not of much use. Many parameters appear in Radday's attempt to analyze the sources of Genesis, but the author does not discuss the linguistic basis of these parameters nor their meaning in context.¹⁴ Linguistic analysis, then, must precede statistical analysis, in order to ascertain what is being studied, and which phenomena are relevant.¹⁵ Still, since any in-depth analysis is necessarily restricted to a limited number of pericopes, only statistical study can provide the necessary overview of the entire corpus. Moreover, basic statistical data obtained in pilot studies may indicate where to look for relevant phenomena.

Thus we will open with some primary statistical data in order to construct a general framework. The statistical data will be evaluated with the help of a basic syntactic analysis of a number of pericopes, which is intended to provide the parameters for an in-depth study of a larger number of samples. The latter analysis will allow us to proceed to some broad generalizations concerning the socio-linguistic conditions

and Consequences of Writing and Reading (Cambridge, 1985), 105–23, esp. 108–11; and the literature quoted in nn. 57–62 below.

10. On the preservation of ancient stylistic and prosodic patterns in late poetic texts, see F. H. Polak, "On Prose and Poetry in the Book of Job," *JANES* 24 (1996), 61–97, esp. 84–97. In view of these data we are not surprised by the remark of F. H. Cryer that the relative frequency of nouns and verbs in the apocalyptic vision of Daniel 8 is similar to that found in the David narratives: "The Problem of Dating Biblical Hebrew and the Hebrew of Daniel," in K. Jeppesen et al., eds., *In the Last Days: On Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic and its Period* (Aarhus, 1994), 185–98, esp. 192–98. Given the literary genre, the use of the poetic rhythm is only to be expected.

11. On the style of the Predeuteronomiac sources in the Pentateuch see H. Holzinger, *Einleitung in den Pentateuch* (Freiburg i.B.-Leipzig, 1893), 93–108, emphasizing the lexicon of J (terminology, 93–94; general lexicon, 94–106, and such phenomena as rhythm, 108–9, and the use of particles, 109–10). For a discussion of the characteristics of E, see 181–91. These discussions are too fragmentary to be satisfactory. Moreover, they fail to distinguish between the particular idiom of an individual author (the idiolect), and the register of a social group (the sociolect); for this distinction see, e.g., M. A. K. Halliday, "The Users and Uses of Language," in M. A. K. Halliday, A. McIntosh, and P. D. Stevens, *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (London, 1964), 75–110. The present study deals with the distinction among various sociolects in biblical narrative.

12. A critical survey is offered by A. D. Forbes, "Statistical Research on the Bible," *ADB* 6.185–206.

13. R. E. Bee, "The Use of Statistical Methods in Old Testament Studies," *VT* 23 (1973), 257–72; idem, "A Study of Deuteronomy Based on Statistical Properties of the Text," *VT* 29 (1979), 1–22; justly criticized by M. P. Weitzman, "Verb Frequency and Source Criticism," *VT* 31 (1981), 451–71.

14. Y. T. Radday and H. Shore, *Genesis, An Authorship Study* (Rome, 1985), criticized by Forbes, "Statistics," 199–200; E. Talstra, "Genesis Bit by Bit," *Bib.* 67 (1986), 557–64, esp. 559–62.

15. The relationship between statistics and philological analysis has been discussed by F. H. Polak, "Classifying the Minuses of the Septuagint on the Pentateuch," in R. F. Poswick et al., eds., *Proceedings of the Fifth International Colloquium Bible and Computer: Translation and Transmission* (Aix, 1–4 September 1997) (Paris, 1998), 241–60, esp. 241–42.

which gave rise to the stylistic differences between classical Hebrew narrative prose, prose from the end of the Judean kingdom and the exilic period, and prose from the Persian era.

With regard to the historical development of the Hebrew language, an excellent point of departure is provided by the insights into the nature of Hebrew from the Persian era (Late Biblical Hebrew) by Hurvitz' lexical analysis of this language stratum,¹⁶ and by the studies of Kropat, Kutscher, and Polzin of its morphosyntactic characteristics.¹⁷ A computer aided statistical study of Chronicles, Kings, and Samuel by Verheij shows that the language of Chronicles is characterized by the low frequency of *wayyiqtol* forms, as against a rising use of *qatal* forms as the narrative preterite.¹⁸ Hence a systemic difference exists between Late Biblical Hebrew (in short LBH) and the pre-exilic classical language (CBH).¹⁹ LBH forms a stratum *sui generis*, conditioned by the domination by the Babylonian and Persian administration and the lack of a royal chancellery in which a uniform lexical, morphological, syntactic and orthographic standard could be maintained.²⁰ Any theory of the history of Biblical literature that ascribes the extensive corpus composed in the classical language to the Babylonian and Persian eras, assumes not only that it would be possible for a postexilic/late exilic author to imitate the classical language

16. The methodological parameters of these distinctions have been established by A. Hurvitz, *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of Postexilic Hebrew and its Implications for the Dating of Psalms* (Jerusalem, 1972 [in Hebrew]). Hurvitz recognizes a given lexical element "L" as belonging to the Persian era if it fulfills the two following requirements (a) "L" occurs exclusively (or almost exclusively) in texts originating undoubtedly in the Persian era or in Mishnaic/Qumran Hebrew, (b) "L" has an equivalent counterpart in most parts of the Bible. Thus, the fact that a certain vocable is rare in Biblical Hebrew and occurs in rabbinic literature, in itself does not establish its attribution to the postexilic language. The word *אגרת*, "letter," is defined as typically late, because it is opposed to the standard word, *ספר* / *ספרים*; see now: A. Hurvitz, "The Historical Quest for 'Ancient Israel' and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations," *VT* 47 (1997), 301–15, esp. 311–14; idem, "Continuity and Change in Biblical Hebrew—The Case of 'Semantic Change' in Postexilic Writings," in T. Muraoka, ed., *Studies in Ancient Hebrew Semantics, Abr-Nahrain* Supp. 4 (Leuven, 1995), 1–10; as well as E. Y. Kutscher, "Aramaic Calque in Hebrew (1964)," in E. Y. Kutscher, *Hebrew and Aramaic Studies* (ed. Z. Ben-Hayyim et al.; Jerusalem, 1977), 374–406 (Hebrew Section); M. F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel*, *JSOT* Supp. 90 (Sheffield, 1990).

17. See S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York, 1956), 504–8; A. Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik verglichen mit der seiner Quellen*, *BZAW* 16 (Giessen, 1909); E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a)* (Leiden, 1974); R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward a Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula, 1976); see especially M. Eshkult, *Studies in Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Uppsala, 1990), 103–21.

18. 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 Numbers* (Assen, 1990), 37–38, 92–117, based on studies by Kropat. Verheij bases his conclusions mainly on the synoptic texts (1 Chronicles // 1–2 Samuel; 2 Chronicles // 1–2 Kings), but also makes mention of non-parallel texts. He regards the latter category as more decisive, for here the author was less exposed to the influence of his synoptic sources.

19. The term "Classical Biblical Hebrew" will be used as a general designation of pre-exilic Hebrew. The term "Standard Biblical Hebrew," which is often used at the present seems less appropriate since this term should also include "Basic Biblical Hebrew," which continued to exist in the Persian era, and even influenced the text of 1QIsa^a, as shown by Kutscher, *Language of the Isaiah Scroll*, 29–44.

20. See Hurvitz, "Historical Quest."

successfully,²¹ but also that successful imitation was the rule and that failure, such as in the tales of Job, Jonah, and Esther, was the exception.

2. *The Nominal and the Verbal Style: A First Characterization*

Books composed in LBH also differ from other literary strata of biblical narrative from a stylistic point of view. Verheij points to some specific differences between the style of Chronicles and Samuel, with the Book of Kings located midway between these poles:²²

(a) In Chronicles the frequency of nouns (including adjectives, common and proper nouns, numerals, and substantivized participles, e.g., שופט) vis-à-vis verbs (the Noun-Verb ratio, NV ratio) is higher than it is in Kings and far higher than it is in Samuel.²³

(b) The frequency of the nominal forms of the verb (participle and infinitive construct)²⁴ vis-à-vis the finite verb (perfect, imperfect, imperative, and infinitive absolute when used as finite verb, e.g., Esth. 2:3; 3:13; 8:8; Neh. 8:8; 9:8) is also higher in Chronicles than it is in Kings and Samuel (the Nominal-Finite ratio, NF ratio).²⁵ Thus a characteristic clause of Chronicles is rich in nouns and nominal forms of the verb, and contains relatively few finite verbs, while a typical clause in the books of Samuel and Kings contains a relatively large number of verbs and

21. E.g., P. R. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel," JSOT Supp.* 148; Sheffield, 1992), 102–4; Cryer, "The Problem of Dating" (n. 11 above), heavily criticized by M. Ehrens-vård, "Once Again: The Problem of Dating Biblical Hebrew," *SJOT* 11 (1997), 29–40.

22. Verheij, *Verbs and Numbers*, 32–37, 118–20. Verheij, however, does not distinguish between the late historians of Kings and such ancient units as the Elijah-Elisha cycles (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 10) or the story of Solomon's ascent to the throne (1 Kings 1–2). Our investigations indicate a decisive difference between these two classes, which, however, only strengthens Verheij's case. Thus we are able to confirm the basic feeling of Driver (*Introduction*, 505), who found "slight signs" of LBH in such compositions as "Jer., the latter part of Kings, Ezekiel, II Isaiah, Haggai . . . though not all in the same respects or in the same degree."

23. Verheij, *Verbs and Numbers*, 32–35. The relatively high incidence of participles is hardly related to the increased use of *pu^cal* and *hof^cal* participles (*maqūṭṭal* and *muqṭal*), a rare form in Chronicles (26 cases in the count by Accordance 3.0; Gramcord Institute, Vancouver, 1997). M. S. Smith suggests that the active participle was already turning into a narrative tense; *The Origins and the Development of the Waw-Consecutive: Northwest Semitic Evidence from Ugarit to Qumran* (Atlanta, 1991), 23, 28–29; so also Eshkult, *Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique*, 113–14. This analysis certainly holds true for the Nehemiah Memoirs, e.g., Neh. 2:4, 12, 16, 17, 19; 3:34–35; 4:10, 11, 12, 15, 17; 5:2–5, 7, 9–12; 6:2, 6, 8–10, 14, 17; 13:16, 17, 18, 21, 24; see also Esth. 3:2, 3, 5; 6:5; according to D. Marcus, Nehemiah's Memoirs constitute a Hebrew translation of an Aramaic source text; "Is the Book of Nehemiah a Translation from Aramaic?" in Meir Lubetski et al., eds., *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World. A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon* (Sheffield, 1998), 103–10. In the Aramaic Daniel tales the participle functions as a narrative past tense, similarly to the *praesens historicum* of Greek and Latin "vivid narration." In contrast, in Chronicles the participle often occurs in nominalized subordinate clauses, e.g., 1 Chr. 4:38, 40; 6:18; 26:16–28, while it is most frequently used for occupational terms such as משורר.

24. In the statistical survey לאמר does not count as an infinitive, when it serves as an introduction to direct speech. The words מחר and היום count as adverbs, לקראת as a preposition. In LBH as in Aramaic the periphrastic form of the verb היה with participle, e.g., ואהי צם ומתפלל, Neh. 1:4) is counted as a single form, indicating a special Aktionsart.

25. Verheij, *Verbs and Numbers*, 38, 76–83.

fewer nouns. In the following pages we will first of all illustrate these differences, and show that they are characteristic of entire strata in biblical narrative. The latter part of the argument will relate to statistical data.

The general profile of the chronistic style stands out in the detailed opening of the account of Josiah's reform (2 Chr. 34:8):

ובשנת שמונה עשרה למלכו/ לטהר הארץ והבית/
שלח את שפן בן אצליהו ואת מעשיהו שר העיר ואת יואח בן יואחז המזכיר/
לחזק את בית יהוה אלהיו

Now in the eighteenth year of his reign,/ when he had purged the land and the house/ he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joab the son of Joahaz the recorder/ to repair the house of the Lord his God.

This sentence contains one verbal predicate in the main clause (שלח), three subordinate clauses with an infinitive as predicate (לטהר, למלכו, לחזק), and a large number of nouns, all of them organized in long strings (הארץ והבית, ובשנת שמונה עשרה למלכו, את שפן בן אצליהו, בית ה' אלהיו, יואח בן יואחז המזכיר).

The corresponding sentence in Kings is much less complicated, since it contains shorter noun strings and less subordinate clauses (2 Kgs. 22:3):

ויהי בשמנה עשרה שנה למלך יאשיהו /
שלח המלך את שפן בן אצליהו בן משלם הספר בית יהוה לאמר

In happened in the eighteenth year of king Josiah/ that the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the Lord, saying. . . .

We count two predicates (שלח and ויהי, the latter serving to introduce the temporal adverb, which in Chronicles is included in the main clause), one infinitive (לאמר, hardly a subordinate clause in the same sense as found in the three clauses in Chronicles), and a number of noun strings that are not as long as those found in the excerpt from Chronicles (בשמנה עשרה שנה למלך יאשיהו).

These phenomena occur too often to be explained as a special stylistic trope. They are rooted in the Chronicler's style in general. In many cases this author brings long noun strings in his own additions to the text as represented by the book of Samuel, e.g.,

1 Chr. 15:27

ודוד מכרכב במעיל בוך
וכל הלויים הנשאים את הארון והמשררים וכנניה השר המשא המשררים
ועל דוד אפוד בד

And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bore the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers; and David had upon him an ephod of linen.

2 Sam. 6:14

ודוד מכרכב בכל עז לפני ה' ודוד חגור אפוד בד

And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.

1 Chr. 16:4-6

ויתן לפני ארון ה' מן הלויים משרתים
ולחזכיר ולהודות ולהלל לה' אלהי ישראל
אסף הראש ומשנהו זכריה יעאל ושמירמות ויחזאל ומתניה ואליאב ובניהו
ועבד אדום ויעאל בכלי נבלים ובכנרת ואסף במצלתיים משמיע
ובניהו ויחזאל הכהנים בחצצרות תמיד לפני ארון ברית האלהים

1 Chr. 16:4–6: And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to celebrate and to thank and praise the Lord, the God of Israel: Asaph the chief, and second to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, with psalteries and with harps; and Asaph with cymbals, sounding aloud; and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually, before the ark of the covenant of God.²⁶

A third point of interest is that in Chronicles we find a number of subordinate infinitives where the source text has a finite verb:

2 Samuel 5	1 Chronicles 14
v. 11 יבנו בית לדוד	v. 1 לבנות לו בית
2 Samuel 24	1 Chronicles 21
v. 11 ויסת את דוד בהם לאמר	v. 1 ויסת את דוד
לך מנה את ישראל	למנות את ישראל
v. 18 ויאמר לו עלה הקם לה' מזבח	לאמר לדוד כי יעלה דוד להקים מזבח לה'
v. 18 הנה אנכי חטאתי	הלא אני אמרתי למנות בעם ואני הוא אשר חטאתי

The stylistic features found in these examples show that the Chronistic style is not only rich in nouns. One notes a strong preference for (a) long noun strings, and at times extremely long strings; (b) complex sentences in which a single predicate governs a high number of arguments; (c) subordinated clauses.

3. *The Extent of the Contrasts: Samples and Statistical Survey*

At this juncture additional data seem called for in order to ascertain that we are not dealing with free variation that is simply a matter of chance, or with literary design according to context or *ad hoc* preferences. A more thorough description of these stylistic profiles requires some typical samples of contrastive texts in a similar literary genre, or involving similar motifs.²⁷ Thus we will first of all analyze a number of samples exemplifying (1) the battle account, (2) action narrative in a more general sense, and (3) dialogues within narrative. Each postexilic sample, including other books as well, e.g., the Ezra account and the Esther novella, will be compared with a text from the David narrative or similar tales. Samples from the Book of Kings will be analyzed in paragraph (b), while paragraph (c) will present a general statistical survey.

a. *Sample passages*

For each example we will establish the following statistical data: (a) the ratio of nouns (including common and proper nouns, as well as adjectives and numerals) relative to the number of verbal forms, in short the Noun-Verb ratio (NV); (b) the ratio

26. The fact that this pericope contains a list, does not affect its syntactical character as a clause with a long noun string as direct object.

27. This is the method recommended by N. E. Enkvist, *Linguistic Stylistics* (The Hague-Paris, 1973), 20–25, 52–66. For instance, the characteristic features of the Chronicler's language stand out in particular in the homiletic speeches, which should not be compared with simple narrative, but rather with the homilies of Deuteronomy 4–11; 30–31.

of nominal verbal forms (participle and infinitive construct) vis-à-vis the finite forms (perfect, imperfect, imperative, as well as the infinitive absolute), in short the Nominal-Finite ratio (NF). These are the data to be used for the general statistical survey. In the course of the discussion the samples will be represented by a few typical clauses, while the figures are given for the complete pericope.

(1) Battle Account

2 Chr. 20:23–30 (23–24, 27)	nouns	verbs	fin	nom
23 ויעמדו בני עמון ומואב על ישיבי הר שעיר להחרים ולהשמיר וככלותם ביושבי שעיר עזרו איש ברעהו למשחית	6 4	3 4	1 1	2 3
24 ויהודה בא על המצפה למדבר ויפנו אל ההמון והנם פגרים נפלים ארצה ואין פליטה	3 4	1 2	1 1	- 1
27 וישבו כל איש יהודה וירושלם ויהושפט בראשם לשוב אל ירושלם בשמחה כי שמחם יהוה מאויביהם ויבאו ירושלם בנבלים ובכנורות ובחצצרות אל בית יהוה	6 4 6	1 2 1	1 1 1	- 1 -
Total vv. 23–30	70	27	17	10
Per 100	72.16	27.84	62.96	37.04
2 Sam. 5:17–25 (18–19, 24–25)	nouns	verbs	fin	nom
18 ופלשתים באו וינטשו בעמק רפאים וישמע דוד וירד אל המצודה	3 2	2 2	2 2	- -
19 וישאל דוד ביהוה לאמר האעלה אל פלשתים התתנם בידי ויאמר יהוה אל דוד עלה כי נתן אתן את הפלשתים בידך	4 3	3 3	3 3	- -
24 ויהי כשמעך את קול צעדה בראשי הבכאים אז תחרץ כי אז יצא יהוה לפניך להכות במחנה פלשתים	4 4	3 2	2 1	1 1
25 ויעש דוד כן כאשר צוהו יהוה ויך את פלשתים מגבע עד באך גזר	5	4	3	1
Total vv. 17–25	52	38	33	5
Per 100	57.78	42.22	86.84	13.18

(2) Action Narrative

Esth. 3:12–15	nouns	verbs	fin	nom
12 ויקראו ספרי המלך בחדש הראשון בשלושה עשר יום בו יכתב ככל אשר צוה המן אל אחשדרפני המלך ואל הפחות אשר על מדינה ומדינה	6 7	1 2	1 2	- -
13 ונשלוח ספרים ביד הרצים אל כל מדינות המלך להשמיד להרג ולאבד את כל היהודים מנער ועד זקן טף ונשים ביום אחד	6 8	1 3	1 -	- 3
14 בשלושה עשר שנים עשר הוא חרש אדר ושללם לבז פתשגן הכתב להנתן דת בכל מדינה ומדינה גלוי לכל העמים להיות עתדים ליום הזה	6 8 2	1 2 1	- -	1 2 1
15 הרצים יצאו דחופים בדבר המלך והדת נתנה בשושן הבירה והמלך והמן ישבו לשותות והעיר שושן נבוכה	6 4	3 3	2 2	1 1
Total vv. 12–15	53	17	8	9
Per 100	75.71	24.29	47.06	52.94
2 Sam. 14:23–24, 28–33 (23–24, 31–32)	nouns	verbs	fin	nom
23 ויקם יואב וילך גשורה ויבא את אבשלום וירושלם	4	3	3	-
24 ויאמר המלך יסב אל ביתו ופני לא יראה ויסב אבשלום אל ביתו ופני המלך לא ראה	3 4	3 2	3 2	- -

31 ויקם יואב ויבא אל אבשלום הביתה	3	2	2	-
ויאמר אליו למה הציתו עבדך את החלקה אשר לי באש	3	2	2	-
32 ויאמר אבשלום אל יואב הנה שלחתי אליך	2	2	2	-
לאמר בא הנה ואשלחה אתך אל המלך לאמר למה באתי מגשור	2	3	3	-
טוב לי עד אני שם ועתה אראה פני המלך ואם יש בי עון והמתני	4	2	2	-
Total vv. 23–24, 28–33	54	39	36	3
Per 100	58.06	41.94	92.31	7.69

(3) Dialogue

Ezra 10:7–15 (8–10)	nouns	verbs	fin	nom
8 וכל אשר לא יבוא לשלשת הימים כעצת השרים והזקנים	6	1	1	-
יחרם כל רכושו והוא יבדל מקהל הגולה	4	2	2	-
9 ויקבצו כל אנשי יהודה ובנימן ירושלם לשלשת הימים	11	1	1	-
הוא חדש התשיעי בעשרים בחודש				
וישבו כל העם ברחוב בית האלהים מרעידים על הדבר ומהגשמים	7	2	1	1
10 ויקם עזרא הכהן ויאמר אלהם	2	2	2	-
אתם מעלתם ותשיבו נשים נכריות להוסיף על אשמת ישראל	4	3	2	1
Total vv. 7–15	91	29	21	8
Per 100	75.83	24.17	72.41	27.59
2 Sam. 13:3–7, 10–14 (5, 10–12)	nouns	verbs	fin	nom
5 ויאמר לו יהונדב שכב על משכבך והתחל	2	3	3	-
ובא אביך לראותך ואמרת אליו תבא נא תמר אחותי ותברני לחם	4	5	4	1
ועשתה לעיני את הבריה למען אשר אראה ואכלתי מידה	3	3	3	-
10 ויאמר אמנון אל תמר הביאי הבריה החדר ואברה מידך	5	3	3	-
ותקח תמר את הלבבות אשר עשתה ותבא לאמנון אחיה החדרה	5	3	3	-
11 ותגש אליו לאכל ויחזק בה ויאמר לה בואי שכבי עמי אחותי	1	6	5	1
12 ותאמר לו אל אחי אל תענני כי לא יעשה כן בישראל	2	3	3	-
אל תעשה את הנבלה הזאת	1	1	1	-
Total vv. 3–7, 10–14	67	51	47	4
Per 100	56.78	43.22	92.16	7.84

Thus, the differences between the nominal style of postexilic narrative and the verbal style of the David tales tend to be consistent in all samples, whether found in Chronicles or in other books from the Persian era, whether representing battle accounts, action narrative, or dialogue. In all kinds of postexilic narrative the Noun-Verb ratio ranges between .70-.75, and the Nominal-Finite ratio between .20 and .50. In the David tales, and similar narratives, the Noun-Verb ratio ranges between .54 and .60, while the Nominal-Finite ratio hardly exceeds .15.

b. The Book of Kings

The stylistic profile of the Book of Kings (from 1 Kings 3 onwards) is partly similar to that of postexilic narrative, as shown in many narrative sections, e.g., the tales concerning Solomon and Josiah:

1 Kgs. 10:1–7 (2, 5–6)	nouns	verbs	fin	nom
2 ותבא ירושלימה בחיל כבד מאד	3	1	1	-
וגמלים נשאים בשמים וזהב רב מאד ואבן יקרה	6	1	-	1
ותבא אל שלמה ותדבר אליו את כל אשר היה עם לבבה	3	3	3	-

5	ומאכל שלחנו ומושב עבדיו ומעמד משרתיו ומלבשיהם ומשקיו	8	-	-	-
	ועלתו אשר יעלה בית ה' ולא היה בה עוד רוח	4	2	2	-
6	ותאמר אל המלך אמת היה הדבר	6	3	3	-
	אשר שמעתי בארצי על דבריך ועל חכמתך				
Total vv. 1-7		56	25	22	3
Per 100		69.14	30.86	88.00	12.00
2 Kgs. 22:3-11 (3-4, 8-9)		nouns	verbs	fin	nom
3	ויהי בשמנה עשרה שנה למלך יאשיהו	4	1	1	-
	שלח המלך את שפן בן אצליו בן משלם הספר בית יהוה לאמר	9	1	1	-
4	עלה אל חלקיו הכהן הגדול ויתם את הכסף המובא בית יהוה	6	3	2	1
	אשר אספו שמרי הסף מאת העם	3	1	1	-
8	ויאמר חלקיו הכהן הגדול על שפן הספר	9	2	2	-
	ספר התורה מצאתי בבית יהוה				
	ויתן חלקיו את הספר אל שפן ויקראהו	3	2	2	-
9	ויבא שפן הספר אל המלך וישב את המלך דבר	5	2	2	-
	ויאמר התיכו עבדיך את הכסף הנמצא בבית	3	3	2	1
	ויתנהו על יד עשי המלאכה המפקדים בית יהוה	4	3	1	2
Total vv. 3-11		79	35	22	13
per 100		69.30	30.70	62.86	37.14

In both pericopes the Noun-Verb rate is slightly higher than .690. However, in the tale of the Queen of Sheba the number of nominal forms of the verb is far smaller, proportionally, than it is in the Josiah narrative. These and similar findings situate the Book of Kings midway between the nominal style of the Persian period and the verbal style of the David cycle and its congeners. The following table presents a statistical overview, including those of the passages that will be analyzed in the following pages.

<i>Battle Account</i>	Noun	Verb	NV Ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF Ratio
2 Sam. 5:17-25	52	38	.578	33	5	.158
Persian Era						
2 Chr. 20:23-30	70	27	.722	17	10	.370
<i>Action Narrative</i>						
Judg. 14:9-20	84	70	.545	61	9	.129
2 Sam. 14:23-24, 28-33	54	39	.581	36	3	.077
Persian Era						
2 Chr. 32:1-6, 9, 16-23	144	48	.750	38	10	.208
Esth. 3:12-15	53	17	.757	8	9	.529
<i>Dialogue</i>						
Gen. 30:1-3, 6, 14-18	60	41	.594	39	2	.049
2 Sam. 13:3-7, 10-14	67	51	.568	47	4	.078
Persian Era						
Esth. 7:2-10	94	39	.707	31	8	.205
Ezra 10:7-15	91	29	.758	21	8	.276
1-2 Kings						
1 Kgs. 10:1-7	56	25	.691	22	3	.120
2 Kgs. 22:3-12	79	35	.693	22	13	.371

These data indicate that the threefold contrast between Chronicles, Kings, and Samuel pertains to broad strata of biblical literature. Biblical narrative can be di-

vided into three main categories: (1) prose from the Persian era, largely characterized by the complex, nominal style; (2) a corpus that is characterized by a brisk, rhythmic verbal style, by and large the opposite of the style of the first category; and (3) a transitional category, related to the redaction of Kings, and characterized by a mixture of nominal and verbal tendencies.

These findings suggest historical development, since the Book of Kings, at least in large sections of it, originates in the last quarter of the seventh century and the exilic period,²⁸ and thus is anterior to postexilic narrative. Such narratives as the David tales are related to the ancient sources used by the late redaction of biblical historiography (e.g., the corpora used by the Deuteronomistic redaction).²⁹ It is the language of this stratum which is mostly contrasted with Late Biblical Hebrew, and is thus best viewed as the classical component of biblical narrative. The three categories which were noted above, seem, thus, to indicate a gradual development from classical biblical narrative to postexilic prose.

c. *A statistical survey*

Further discussion, to deepen these findings, is dependent first of all on statistical analysis, in order to establish the approximate extent of the different sections.³⁰ Our analysis is based on the following samples:

- (1) Persian era: Ezra 1:1–4:5; 8:1–10:19; Neh. 7:72–10:1; 10:29–11:3; Dan. 1:1–2:3; Esth. 1–10; 2 Chronicles 29–36 (Neh. 1–2; 4:1–7:5; 12:27–43; 13:4–31; Job 1:1–3:1; 42:7–17);
- (2) Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period: Joshua 22–24; 1 Kings 9; 11; 15; 2 Kings 11–16; 20–25; Jeremiah 26–28; 32; 36:1–43:7;
- (3) Classical narrative: Abraham tales (Genesis 12–13; 15–16; 18–22; 24); Jacob tales (Genesis 27–33); Exodus cycle (Exod. 2:1–6:1; 7:14–11:10; 14; 15:22–27; 17–19; 24; 32–33); Samson cycle (Judges 13–16); David-Saul narrative (1 Samuel 16–30); David's court narrative (2 Samuel 7; 11–15; 17–19); Elijah tales (1 Kings 17–22); Elisha tales (2 Kings 2–10).
- (4) Some data suggest an additional subclass between the classical and the transitional strata, including at least Genesis 2–4; the Joseph narrative (Genesis 40–45); the heroic tales of the Saviors (Judges 4; 9; 3; 6–8; 11–12); the account of the Danite expedition (Judges 17–18); and parts of Joshua 2–11. In this category the style is more intricate than in the main category of classical narrative, but less so than in the transitional period.

28. This generalization is true for all divergent theories on the composition and provenance of 1–2 Kings.

29. That is to say, according to the “traditional” analysis as proposed by Wellhausen, Driver, and Noth. The various revisionistic models, seeking to relegate extensive parts of this corpus to the Babylonian and the Persian era, cannot hold out against the data provided by diachronic linguistic analysis, which largely confirm the outline of the Driver-Wellhausen model.

30. For a former effort at a (preliminary) analysis, see F. H. Polak, “New Means . . . New Ends: Biblical Scholarship and Computer Data,” in R. F. Poswick et al., eds., *Proceedings of the Fourth International Colloquium Bible and Computer: Desk and Discipline—The Impact of Computers on Bible Studies (Amsterdam 15–18 August, 1994)* (Paris, 1995), 282–312; idem, “Development and Periodization of Biblical Prose Narrative,” *Beit Mikra* 43 (1997), 30–52, 142–60 [Hebrew with English summary]. This analysis also takes into account a number of shifts in the usage of הָלַךְ, לָקַח, and רָאָה (frequent in classical narrative), as against בּוֹרָא, הִבְיָא, and שָׁמַע (predominant in the Persian era).

Thus we obtain the following figures:³¹

1. The Persian Era

Unit	Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
Ezra	957	282	.772	174	108	.383
2 Chronicles 29–36	2074	778	.727	526	232	.306
Esther	1611	647	.714	406	221	.352
Nehemiah 8–10	772	283	.731	192	91	.322
Dan. 1:1–2:3	215	72	.749	52	19	.268
Total/Mean	5629	2062	.739	1350	671	.326

2. The Late Pre-exilic/Exilic Period

Unit	Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
2 Kings 22–25	1119	366	.736	281	81	.224
2 Kings 11–16	1464	526	.736	415	97	.190
1 Kings 9; 11; 15	822	299	.733	274	57	.172
Jeremiah <i>Vita</i>	2518	1044	.707	773	271	.260
Joshua 22–24	784	322	.709	252	58	.187
Total/Mean	6707	2457	.724	1995	564	.207

3. The Classical Stratum

Unit	Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
Samson	677	488	.581	409	68	.143
Elisha	1962	1371	.589	1127	195	.148
Elijah	1405	937	.600	788	121	.133
Abraham	1727	1084	.614	900	159	.150
Jacob	1450	910	.614	743	100	.119
David-Saul	3139	1842	.630	1453	317	.181
David court	2382	1386	.632	1101	238	.178
Exodus	2781	1613	.633	1453	323	.182
Total/Mean	15,523	9631	.612	7974	1521	.154

4. Transitional Subclass: Intricate Classical Narrative

Unit	Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
Joseph	1341	754	.640	617	110	.151
Dan Tale (Judges 17–18)	337	185	.646	141	43	.234
Genesis 2–4	463	253	.647	196	55	.212
Judges 4; 9	639	327	.662	282	38	.119
Judges 3; 6–8; 11–12	1509	739	.671	621	97	.128
Joshua 2–11	2243	1104	.670	841	216	.204
Total/Mean	6532	3362	.656	2698	559	.175

d. Analysis

Statistical analysis of these sections confirms the general division of narrative prose. Both for postexilic and for classical narrative the Noun-Verb ratio (NV) and

31. The row of "Total/Mean" states the total number of cases in the given table, and the mean of the various rates.

the Nominal-Finite ratio (NF) are to a large extent homogeneous. In postexilic prose the NV ratio typically ranges between .71 and .76, with an interval of approximately 0.05 (5%), whereas the NF ratio in general ranges from .30 to .40. Two narratives in which the NV ratio is far higher (Nehemiah's Memoirs and the Job tale), are still characterized by a high NF ratio, though smaller than in the other books from this period:

Unit	Noun	Verb	NV Ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF Ratio
Nehemiah	1285	738	.635	512	212	.293
Job	255	159	.616	165	52	.240

In the classical stratum (group 3) the NV ratio ranges between .581 and .633, with an interval of approximately 0.05 (5%). The NF ratio is less stable, as it ranges between .11 and .19, with an interval of approximately 10%, like the Persian era.

These two groups are separated from one another by an interval of approximately 8% in the NV ratio, and 15% in the NF ratio. This interval is covered by the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic class (Group 2), which forms the transition between the two main groups. The character of this transition is shown by the NV ratio of this group, which is rather close to that of postexilic prose, ranging as it does between .69 and .73, an area covered for the most part by the group representing the Persian era (Group 1). The NF ratio, on the other hand, seems closer to that of the Classical stratum, as it ranges from .172 to .224. It is a notable fact that the *Jeremiah Vita* (Jeremiah 26–28; 32; 36:1–43:7), in which the NF ratio exceeds this limit (.251), has a lower NV ratio (.690). Such shifting similarities are consistent with the transitional character of this class.

The transition from the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic to the Classical stratum is marked by another group of narratives, in which the classical style appears in a slightly more intricate form (Group 4). In this group the NV ratio is slightly higher than in the classical stratum, as it ranges from .64 to .67, thus covering the interval between Group 3 (.58–.63) and Group 2 (.69–.73). The NF ratio is partly similar to that of Group 3 (.119, in Judges 4; 9, like the Jacob narratives), and partly higher (.204 in Joshua 2–11; .234 in the tale of the Conquest of Dan, Judges 17–18). The Joseph tale is closer to some of the tales in this group than to the classical stratum, even though its statistical profile is close to that of the David tales.

4. *The Nominal versus the Verbal: Some Characteristic Parameters*

The statistical data, however important, cannot present a full analysis of the narratives at hand, and do not indicate the conditions that occasioned the large-scale shifts in the style of biblical narrative. Obviously, the only way to overcome these limitations is by a systematic syntactic analysis. But what are the parameters for such an analysis? In order to answer this question we will now briefly examine the character of the narratives that have been sampled previously. Postexilic narrative stands out because of a number of obvious tendencies.

(a) As we saw above, in the Persian era the narrator tends to use long noun strings, e.g., *בנבלים ובכנורות ובחצצרות* (2 Chr. 20:27), *כל ממלכות הארצות* (v. 29). Ezra exhorts the Judeans: *והבדלו מעמי הארץ ומן הנשים הנכריות* (Ezra 10:11). Many

phrases consist of three or four elements, e.g., כעצת השרים והזקנים (Ezra 10:8), ליהוה אלהי אבותיכם (v. 11), זקני עיר ועיר ושפטיה (v. 14). In the Esther tale we note such sequences as: אל אחשדרפני המלך ואל הפחות אשר על מדינה ומדינה (Esth. 3:12); איש צר ואויב המן (7:9) Haman is rhetorically characterized as חרבונה אחד מן הסריסים (7:6). The account of the war between Jehoshaphat and the Ammonite-Moabite coalition contains an exhaustive description of the booty: וימצאו בהם לרב ורכוש ופגרים וכלי חמדות [LXX: κτήνη = ? בהמה] (2 Chr. 20:25), including no less than six nouns in a row.

In contrast, in the David tale a comparable description contains only one element, i.e., עצביהם (2 Sam. 5:21). Where the David tale offers a noun string it is short, e.g., the description of the king and his company: וישאם דוד ואנשיו (2 Sam. 5:21), or the simile of the victory: כפרץ מים (v. 20), the divine march, קול צעדה, and the reference to the enemy encampment, במחנה פלשתים (v. 24). In 2 Samuel 14 one notes, e.g., חלקת יואב (2 Sam. 14:30). In the Samson tale most noun phrases are limited in the same way, but one notes two extended strings in Samson's address: שלשים סדינים ושלשים חלפת בגדים, שבעת ימי המשתה (Judg. 14:12, 13). The structure of these strings seems related to the rhetorical qualities of the heroic challenge, viz., Samson's attempt at verbal grandiosity. In the samples from the David tales the only instance is אחי תמר אחות אבשלם (2 Sam. 13:4, in the exposition).

Thus one of the main components of the nominal style is the length of the noun string. In the ensuing stylistic analysis we note all cases of noun strings comprising more than one element. All cases of expansion of the nominal expression into a construct state, an apposition structure, an attribute structure, and a syndetic or asyndetic noun string will be counted as expanded strings.

(b) Prose from the Persian era tends to express the various arguments of the predicate explicitly. Thus one verbal predicate may govern a long series of nominals.³² The following clauses taken from scenes from the Esther tale include three explicit arguments: ונשלוח ספרים ביד הרצים אל כל מדינות המלך (Esth. 3:13), הרצים (Esth. 7:8) והמלך שב מגנת הביתן אל בית משתה היין, יצאו דחופים בדבר המלך (v. 17), In the excerpts from the Ezra account we note the following clauses: ויקבצו כל אנשי וישבו כל העם ברחוב בית האלהים (Ezra 10:9); יהודה ובנימין ירושלם לשלשת הימים (v. 9b). Four arguments are found in the following clauses: ויאמר המלך לאסתר גם ביום השני במשתה היין (Esth. 7:2), והמלך קם בחמתו (v. 7).

In such tales as the David narrative, sequences of this kind are rare, but do exist, e.g., the royal proclamation פרץ יהוה את איבי לפני כפרץ מים (2 Sam. 5:20). And similarly: ויצתו עבדי אבשלום את החלקה באש (14:28); וישב אבשלום בירושלם שנתיים ימים (v. 30); וישתחו לו על אפיו ארצה לפני (v. 31); למה הציתו עבדך את החלקה אשר לי באש, המלך (v. 33). In the Jacob tale one notes ויבא יעקב מן השדה בערב (Gen. 30:16). These constituents, however, consist mostly of one to two words, whereas those found in postexilic narrative are for the most part composed of expanded noun strings.

32. See also Eshkult, *Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique*, 117–18.

In such tales as the David narrative reference by pronoun is frequent, in particular when the clause contains more than one argument, e.g., **לכן** in the clause **לכן ישכב עמך הלילה תחת דודאי בנך** (Gen. 30:15).³³ Also, additional verbal predicates are used to split up the clause, e.g. (Gen. 30:14):

וילך ראובן בימי קציר חטים / וימצא דודאים בשדה

And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest / and found mandrakes in the field (King James Version)

The first clause presents the agent (Reuben) and the temporal modifier (in the days of wheat harvest), and the second one the object found (the mandrakes) and the locative modifier (in the field). An unified sequence, using one verbal predicate, is actually found in one of the modern translations: "Once, at the time of the wheat harvest, Reuben came upon some mandrakes in the field."³⁴ We also find: **ויקם יואב** ותקח תמר (2 Sam. 14:23); **תבא נא תמר אחותי ותברני להם** (2 Sam. 13:5); **וילך אל אביו ואל אמו ויתן** את הלבבות אשר עשתה ותבא לאמנון אחיה החדרה (v. 10); **וירד אשקלון ויך מהם שלשים איש** (Judg. 14:9); **ויקח את חליצותם** (v. 19a); **וינתשו בעמק רפאים** (v. 19b); **ויתן החליפות למגידי החידה** (2 Sam. 5:18).

By a similar method the narrator may use the verbal form **ויהי** in order to mark the prominent modifier more distinctly, e.g., **ויהי ביום השביעי / ויאמרו לאשת שמשון** (Judg. 14:15),³⁵ as against the use of the temporal adverb as additional argument within the clause, e.g., **ויאמרו לו אנשי העיר ביום השביעי בטרם יבא החרסה** (v. 18).

(c) Postexilic prose is also characterized by the low frequency of verbal predicates that are not accompanied by nominal arguments such as the subject or the direct object. In the account of the cult purification we find one example only: **והאשרים והפסלים והמסכות שבר והדק** (2 Chr. 34:4), contrasting with the characteristic sequence of v. 7, with the infinitive construct: **והאשרים והפסלים כתת להדק**. A few examples are found in the scene in the Esther Scroll, such as **ולעבדים ולשפחות נמכרנו** (Esth. 7:4); **ותלהו עליו** (v. 9). In the Ezra account we meet the phrase **ויאמר אלהם** (Ezra 10:10). In contrast, a characteristic sequence of postexilic prose is the string of

33. As shown by F. J. Golbaum, "Two Hebrew Quasi-Adverbs: **לכן** and **אכן**," *JNES* 23 (1964), 132–35, **לכן** must count as an emphatic particle, rather than as a causal adverb. Thus it is not a syntactic constituent in the formal sense of the word. The same treatment is applied to **ועתה**, indicating a transition in the argument.

34. The reduced rendering is offered according to the New JPS. The temporal adverb "once" apparently serves as the functional equivalent for the Hebrew verb. Actually, this rendering would be adequate for the following sentence structure: **ויהי בימי קציר חטים וימצא ראובן דודאים בשדה***, a structure to be discussed below.

35. For a linguistic and functional analysis of such structures see Eshkult, *Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique*, 30–31; A. Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, *JSOT* Supp. 86 (Sheffield, 1990), 152, 156–61; and also F. Polak, *Biblical Narrative: Aspects of Art and Design* (Jerusalem, 1994), 81–89 [in Hebrew]. In LBH this structure fades away, as shown by Kropat, *Die Syntax der Chronik*, 22–23; A. Hurvitz, "The Date of the Prose Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered," *HTR* 67 (1974), 17–34; Eshkult, *Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique*, 115–16. Passages in IQIsa^a in which the present morpheme has caused problems have been analyzed by Kutscher, *Language of the Isaiah Scroll*, 354–55.

construct infinitives, e.g., להשמיד להרג ולאבד את כל (Esth. 7:4); היהודים מנער ועד זקן (v. 13).

On the other hand, clauses consisting of a verbal predicate only, or of a verbal predicate and a pronominal phrase, are characteristic of such narratives as the David tales, e.g., לא ימנעני ממך, ותאמר לו אל אחי אל תענני (2 Sam. 13:12); ויגד לה כי (Judg. 14:9); ויתן להם ויאכלו, וילך הלוך ואכל (v. 14); ויענה וישכב אתה (v. 17). In dialogue one notes such clauses as הסב אל אחריהם (2 Sam. 5:23); ותאמר רק שנאתני ולא אהבתני, ולך אגיד, ולי לא הגדתה (Gen. 30:16); אלי תבוא (Judg. 14:16). Hence, special note should be taken of clauses with the predicate as single constituent, and clauses in which the arguments are expressed by prepositional or adverbial phrases.

(d) The prose of the Persian era is also characterized by a clear predilection for subordination of clauses (embedding, hypotaxis). One notes the frequent use of complicated relative clauses, e.g. (Esth. 7:9):³⁶

גם הנה העץ אשר עשה המן למרדכי אשר דבר טוב על המלך עמד בבית המן
Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had
spoken good for the king, stands in the house of Haman (King James Version).

The awkwardness of the doubly nested relative clause is eased by the alternative rendering: "What is more, a stake is standing at Haman's house . . . which Haman made for Mordecai—the man whose words saved the king" (NJPS). A relative clause may also occur as casus pendens, e.g., וכל אשר לא יבוא לשלשת הימים כעצת (Ezra 10:8).

The formulation of the popular response to Ezra's demands includes a double relative clause (וכל אשר בערינו ההשיב נשים נכריות), and an infinitive clause (Ezra 10:14):

יעמדו נא שרינו לכל הקהל וכל אשר בערינו ההשיב נשים נכריות יבא לעתים מזמנים
ועמהם יקני עיר ועיר ושפטיה עד להשיב חרון אף אלהינו ממנו עד לרברב הזה

An additional way of embedding clauses is by nominalization, in particular by means of participles and infinitive clauses. For instance, the idea that the surrounding nations heard of Jehoshaphat's victory is expressed in a temporal clause with an infinitive construct בשמעם. Hence this clause fulfills a task in the sentence (indicating time), but also governs its own object, namely the clause כי נלחם יהוה עם אויבי ישראל (2 Chr. 20:29):

ויהי פחד אלהים על כל ממלכות הארצות בשמעם כי נלחם יהוה עם אויבי ישראל
The terror of God seized all the kingdoms of the lands when they heard that the LORD had
fought the enemies of Israel (NJPS).

This construction is also used to indicate the content of an announcement or order by way of indirect speech, e.g., קול ביהודה וירושלם לכל בני הגולה להקבץ

36. Complex relative clauses as found in Esther are common in Deuteronomy, e.g., על האדמה אשר נשבע (Deut. 11:9, 21; 12; and similarly 7:13; 10:11; 26:3; 28:11; 31:7; cf. 2:16; 4:5; 6:1; 9:19; 12:1, 11, 21; 13:6; 14:24; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2; 27:26; 28:69; 34:11. In the Joseph narrative one notes Gen. 45:27; 46:5.

ירושלם (Ezra 10:7). In the pericopes excerpted from postexilic narrative embedded clauses are extremely frequent. One notes, e.g., such complicated sentences as the opening of Jehoshaphat's battle account (2 Chr. 20:23):

ויעמדו בני עמון ומואב על ישיבי הר שעיר להחרים ולהשמיד / וככלותם ביושבי שעיר
עזרו איש ברעהו למשחית

And similarly in other verses: ויבא יהושפט ועמו לבז את שללם (v. 25); וישבו כל איש (v. 27). In the Esther narrative this construction is not less frequent: להשמיד להרג ולאבד את . . . ונשלוח ספרים (7:4). כי נמכרנו אני ועמי להשמיד להרוג ולאבד (Esth. 3:13); כל היהודים . . . ושללם לבז ותשיבו נשים נכריות להוסיף על אשמת ישראל (Ezra 10:10).

The participle may also be used in order to nominalize embedded clauses. On the face of it such forms could be counted as an attribute, but from a logical point of view they still embody clauses. This syntagm is found in the narrative of Jehoshaphat's victory: ויפנו אל ההמון והנם פגרים נפלים ארצה (2 Chr. 20:24), that is to say, "they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth" (KJV), or, perhaps more elegantly, "they saw them *lying on the ground as corpses*" (New JPS). In the account of Ezra's performance the participle serves to introduce a circumstantial clause (Ezra 10:9): וישבו כל העם ברחוב בית האלהים מרעידים על הדבר ומהגשמים. A similar structure occurs in the Esther tale (Esth. 3:14): פתשגן הכתב להנתן דת בכל . . . מדינה ומדינה גלוי לכל העמים. Thus embedding is an additional factor to be taken into account for stylistic analysis.

In short, postexilic narrative is characterized by a strong preference for long noun strings, for clauses with a relatively large number of explicit arguments, and for hypotaxis in the form of relative and object clauses, infinitive clauses, and attributively used participles. Pending further analysis, this style can be described as complex-nominal.³⁷ The style of the classical group may be characterized by the opposite tendency, a preference for short clauses with relatively few explicit arguments, for short noun strings, for reference by pronouns and deictic particles, and for paratactic junction of independent clauses. These preferences result in a crisp, rhythmic style, which is best described as the "rhythmic-verbal" style.

In this style nominal clauses stand out in the exposition, e.g., in the opening of the tales of David's sons (2 Sam. 13:1, 3):³⁸

ויהי אחרי כן ולאבשלום בן דוד אחות יפה ושמה תמר ויאהבה אמנון בן דוד
ולאמנון רע ושמעו יונדב בן שמעה אחי דוד ויונדב איש חכם מאד

37. It would be tempting to describe the difference between the complex-nominal style and the rhythmic-verbal style as a matter of "delicacy" in the sense in which this term is used by M. A. K. Halliday, *System and Function in Language*, in G. R. Kress, ed. (Oxford, 1976), 52–87, esp. 62–63, namely "depth of detail" within the unit. However, the rhythmic, verbal style has its own delicacy: the details are distributed over a framework that is situated between "sentence" and "paragraph."

38. One could also point to such expository pericopes as Gen. 11:1; 12:10; 13:2; 14:1–4; 16:1; 20:1; 25:27; 1 Sam. 1:1–3; 9:1–2; 2 Sam. 20:1; 1 Kgs. 10:1; 20:1; 21:1; 22:1–2; 2 Kgs. 2:1; 5:1; 18:17; 22:3.

In this pericope the nominal element prevails, because that the narrator has to convey static information, that is not yet integrated into action sequence or dialogue.³⁹ Within the narrative additional information is given in independent clauses, paratactically joined, but logically subordinate, e.g. (1 Sam 9:22): ויתן להם מקום בראש והמה כשלשים איש הקרואים. In such a context, the nominal component is subject to the same preference for short, crisp, rhythmic clauses in parataxis as the verbal element.

5. Stylistic Analysis: A New Method

In order to broaden the basis of these descriptions we will now proceed to a comprehensive and systematic analysis of a large number of pericopes. In view of the previous findings such analysis should contain: (a) a division of the independent clauses into clause types; (b) an indication of expanded noun phrases; (c) of embedded clauses vis-à-vis independent clauses; and (d) of independent clauses in which the additional constituents are expressed by deictic reference only. In the ensuing analysis all clauses will carry a special notation in three columns.

- (a) The first column will state the number of explicit arguments, e.g., ויקם יואב, 1 arg; ויראכל—(no argument). If all (or most) arguments in the clause consist of pronouns or deictic adverbs, this will be marked as “pron,” e.g., למה חרה לך (Gen. 4:6), 2 pron; but ולמה נפלו פניך (ibidem), 2 arg.
- (b) The second column will mark embedding, e.g., בשמעם, emb.; cases of embedding within a subordinate clause (complicated embedding) will be indicated as “cem,” e.g., כי בלחם יהיה עם אויבי ישראל, cem.
- (c) The third column will state the number of expanded noun strings, e.g., בשמים וזהב רב, 2 expansions).

In our analysis the summation of expanded noun strings counts noun phrases rather than single nouns. For instance, the string יפה אחרות counts as a single phrase. The long string מימי אסרחדון מלך אשור is considered to consist of two phrases, מימי אסרחדון and מלך אשור. In consequence, if one noun is expanded by two words, the case is ambiguous. In some cases one of the additional nouns is too small to count, e.g., כל מדינות, and thus should not be allowed to influence the count: the phrase כל המלך counts as one expanded string. If the phrase consists of long words, it is counted as 1+. For the statistics two such cases add up to three expanded strings. In Ezra 4:1 the construct string צרי יהודה ובנימן is a case in point.

Pronominal suffixes appended to the noun are not counted, and in consequence we do not count object suffixes of the verb either, since these elements do not carry enough weight from a prosodic point of view. Thus, the verb with an object suffix counts as a verbal predicate only.

The following verse will illustrate the resulting analysis (1 Kgs. 18:1):

לך הראה אל אחאב ואתנה מטר על פני האדמה

In this verse we note a number of clauses: לך (single predicate), הראה אל אחאב (one argument), ואתנה מטר על פני האדמה (two arguments), and one expanded noun

39. Sometimes expository information is embedded in object clauses dependent on a verb of perception, e.g., Gen. 6:5; 18:1.

string, על פני האדמה (construct state). In the analytical format these data are represented as follows:

Unit	1 Kgs. 18:1	Arg	Emb	Exp
v. 1	לך	-	-	-
	הראה אל אחאב	1 arg	-	-
	ואתנה מטר על פני האדמה	2 arg	-	1

Embedded elements are counted twice.⁴⁰ First, they appear as such in the column of subordinate clauses. Secondly, they are viewed as arguments in the clause in which they are embedded, and are indicated in parenthesis, e.g. (2 Kgs. 3:26),

v. 26	ורא מלך מואב (כי)	2 arg	-	1
	כי חזק ממנו המלחמה	2 arg	1	-

If the embedded clause is continued by a coordinate clause, which also is embedded, the second clause will count as embedded in itself, even if the embedding is not indicated by a special marking.

Relative clauses will count as subordinated clauses but not as a sentence constituent. The same notation will also be used for participle clauses and infinitives that are dependent on noun strings. The relative particle אשר will count as a constituent in the subordinated clause, e.g., אשר שם, unless its syntactic function is covered by an additional referent (the $^c\bar{a}id$).⁴¹ Thus we obtain the following analysis of the account of Isaac's birth:

Unit	Gen. 21:1–5	Arg	Emb	Exp
v. 1	ויהוה פקד את שרה (כאשר)	3 arg	-	-
	כאשר אמר	1 pron	1	-
	ויעש יהוה לשרה (כאשר)	3 arg	-	-
	כאשר דבר	1 pron	1	-
v. 2	ותהר	-	-	-
	ותלד שרה לאברהם בן לוקניו למועד	5 arg	-	-
	אשר דבר אתו אלהים	2 arg	1	-
v. 3	ויקרא אברהם את שם בנו (הנולד לו אשר) יצחק	3 arg	-	1
	הנולד לו	1 pron	1	-
	אשר ילדה לו שרה	2 pron	1	-
v. 4	וימל אברהם את יצחק בנו בן שמונת ימים (כאשר)	4 arg	-	2
	כאשר צוה אתו אלהים	3 arg	1	-
v. 5	ואברהם בן מאת שנה (בהולד)	2 arg	-	1
	בהולד לו את יצחק בנו	2 arg	1	1

For statistical purposes the data in the various columns are summarized in two columns, independent clauses (0–4 arguments), embedded clauses (emb), and expanded

40. In conditionals the protasis is regarded as an embedded clause if it is marked by אם, כי, or a similar particle. So are circumstantial clauses introduced by כי.

41. In most syntactic details our decisions turned out to be quite similar to those of F. I. Andersen and A. D. Forbes, "On Marking Clause Boundaries," in R. F. Poswick et al., eds., *Actes du Troisième Colloque International «Bible et Informatique: Interprétation, Herméneutique, Compétence Informatique»* (Tübingen, 26–30 Août, 1991) (Genève, 1992), 181–202, esp. 185–93. However, in our notation time indications marked by ויהי are always counted as independent clauses, in contrast to Andersen's distinctions (p. 187). Only if the time indication consists of a circumstantial clause with finite verb, the form ויהי and the circumstantial clause are counted as two, separate clauses.

noun strings (expand). In addition we offer the percentage of each category in relation to the total number of clauses. In the present study the number of arguments within the embedded clause is not counted, but when necessary it is always possible to take these data into account as well.

Unit	Gen. 21:1-5	%	clauses	14	%
0 arg	1	7.14	2 arg	1	7.14
1 arg	-	-	3 arg	3	21.43
pron	-	-	4-5 arg	2	14.29
0-1 arg	1	7.14	2-5 arg	6	42.86
emb	7	50.00	expand	5	35.71
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
28	13	0.683	11	2	0.154

For the statistical summary the data have been concentrated into a few categories, indicating (a) the number of cases in independent clauses containing a predicate and at most one additional constituent, or pronominal constituents only (0-1 arg); (b) two or more constituents (2-5 arg); (c) the number of embedded clauses; (d) the number of expanded noun strings (expand). The second column (%) presents the percentages for each category. The statistical data concerning the NV and the NF ratio indicate where the present unit would fit in from the point of view of the statistical survey.

The data indicate that the sample from Genesis 21 is close to the complex style; it tends to the nominal pole, but expanded noun strings are not as frequent as they are in the complex-nominal style. These findings explain the relatively low NV ratio (.683), and suggest attribution to the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period.

6. *Four Strata of Narrative Style*

This method leads to a more sensitive and balanced description of the textual units, and thus enables us to arrive at a more adequate characterization of the different periods. The following paragraphs present a stylistic analysis of a number of units from the categories established in the above statistical survey and a statistical discussion on the basis of these findings. In each category we present a small number of samples, which will be represented by a few clauses, with the statistical analysis for the whole pericope. Data for additional pericopes are given in outline only.

a. *The Classical stratum: the rhythmic-verbal style*

The discussion of the Classical stratum will be opened by some samples from the Samson tales and the Elisha narratives, since their popular character, and therefore their close connection with oral narrative, is well established in biblical studies.⁴² These excerpts will be followed by samples from the patriarchal narratives and the Book of Samuel.

42. H. Gressmann, *Die Anfänge Israels* (Göttingen, 1914), 249; idem, *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1921), 269-70; A. Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories* (Jerusalem, 1988), 13-18.

2 Kgs. 13:14–19

v. 14	ואלישע חלה את חליו	2 arg	-	-	
	אשר ימות בו	1 arg	emb	-	
	וירד אליו יואש מלך ישראל	2 arg	-	1+	
	ויבך על פניו	1 arg	-	-	
	ויאמר	-	-	-	
	אבי, אבי, רכב ישראל ופרשיו	1 arg	-	2+	
v. 15	ויאמר לו אלישע	2 arg	-	-	
	קח קשת וחצים	1 arg	-	1	
	ויקח אליו קשת וחצים	2 arg	-	1	
v. 16	ויאמר למלך ישראל	2 arg	-	1	
	הרכב ידך על הקשת	2 arg	-	-	
	וירכב ידו	1 arg	-	-	
	וישם אלישע ידו על ידי המלך	3 arg	-	1	
v. 17	ויאמר	-	-	-	
	פתח החלון קדמה	2 arg	-	-	
	ויפתח	-	-	-	
	ויאמר אלישע	1 arg	-	-	
	ירה	-	-	-	
	וויר	-	-	-	
	ויאמר	-	-	-	
	חץ תשועה לה'	1 arg	-	1	
	וחץ תשועה בארם	1 arg	-	1	
	והכית את ארם באפק (עד כלה)	3 arg	-	-	
	עד כלה	-	emb	-	
v. 18	ויאמר	-	-	-	
	קח החצים	1 arg	-	-	
	ויקח	-	-	-	
	ויאמר למלך ישראל	1 arg	-	1	
	הך ארצה	1 arg	-	-	
	ויך שלש פעמים	1 arg	-	1	
	ויעמד	-	-	-	
v. 19	ויקצף עליו איש האלהים	2 arg	-	1	
	ויאמר	-	-	-	
	להכות חמש או שש פעמים	1 arg	-	2	
	אז הכית את ארם (עד כלה)	2 arg	-	-	
	עד כלה	-	emb	-	
	ועתה שלש פעמים תכה את ארם	3 arg	-	1	
Unit	2 Kgs. 13:14–19	%	clauses	37	%
0 arg	10	27.03	2 arg	9	21.62
1 arg	12	29.73	3 arg	3	8.11
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	22	56.6	2–5 arg	12	32.43
emb	3	8.11	expand	16	43.24
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
50	34	0.595	31	3	0.082

2 Kgs. 6:1–7 (vv. 1–2, 6–7)

v. 1	ויאמרו בני הנביאים אל אלישע	2 arg	-	1
	הנה נא המקום (אשר) צר ממנו	2 arg	-	-
	אשר אנחנו יושבים שם לפניך	3 pron	emb	-
v. 2	נלכה נא עד הירדן	1 arg	-	-
	ונקחה משם איש קורה אחת	3 arg	-	1
	ונעשה לנו שם מקום (לשבת)	2 pron	-	-
	לשבת שם	1 pron	emb	-

v. 6	ויאמר איש האלהים		1 arg	-	1
	אנה נפל		1 pron	-	-
	ויראהו את המקום		1 arg	-	-
	ויקצב עץ		1 arg	-	-
	וישלך שמה		1 pron	-	-
	ויצף הברזל		1 arg	-	-
v. 7	ויאמר		-	-	-
	הרם לך		1 pron	-	-
	וישלח ידו		1 arg	-	-
	ויקחהו		-	-	-
Unit	2 Kgs. 6:1-7	%	clauses	34	%
0 arg	9	26.47	2 arg	3	8.82
1 arg	11	32.35	3 arg	2	5.88
pron	7	20.59	4-5 arg	-	-
0-1 arg	27	79.41	2-5 arg	5	14.71
emb	2	5.88	expand	3	8.82
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
26	32	0.448	28	4	0.125

In these two short tales the characteristic features of the rhythmic-verbal style stand out most clearly. Short clauses contain around 60% of all clauses: clauses consisting of a predicate with implied subject cover 26–29% of all clauses, and clauses consisting of a predicate and single argument cover 35–36% of the text. In the tale of Elisha and the axe clauses containing pronominal arguments only (7 cases) include 20% of all clauses. In this tale expanded noun strings (3 instances) occur in less than 10% of all clauses, while in the tale of Joash and the prophet such strings (16 cases) are found in 40% of the clauses. Embedding is extremely rare in both tales.

Judg. 15:9–13 (vv. 9–10, 13)

v. 9	ויעלו פלשתים		1 arg	-	-
	וינטשו בלחי		1 arg	-	-
v. 10	ויאמרו איש יהודה		1 arg	-	1
	למה עליהם עלינו		2 pron	-	-
	ויאמרו		-	-	-
	לאסור את שמשון		1 arg	emb	-
	(לאסור) עלינו		1 arg	-	-
	לעשות לו (כאשר)		2 arg	emb	-
	כאשר עשה לנו		2 pron	emb	-
v. 13	ויאמרו לו (לאמר)		2 arg	-	-
	לאמר		-	emb	-
	לא		-	-	-
	כי אסר נאסרך		-	-	-
	ונתנוך בידם		1 arg	-	-
	והמת לא נמתך		-	-	-
	ויאסרהו בשנים עבתיים חדשים		1 arg	-	1+
	ויעלוהו מן הסלע		1 arg	-	-
Unit	Judg. 15:9-13	%	clauses	33	%
0 arg	4	12.12	2 arg	5	15.15
1 arg	10	30.30	3 arg	-	-
pron	5	6.06	4-5 arg	-	-
0-1 arg	19	57.58	2-5 arg	5	15.15
emb	9	27.27	expand	7	21.12
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
23	34	0.404	26	5	0.161

In this narrative the rhythmical, verbal style is almost as outstanding as it is in the Elisha tales. Almost 80% of the independent clauses are extremely short (0–1 argument), while expanded noun strings occur in only 15% of the clauses. This impression is confirmed by the NV and NF ratio. Thus the relatively high number of embedded clauses (27%) is surprising, all the more so as we find one case of complex subordination (לעשות לו כאשר עשה לנו, v. 10), and one compound embedded clause (לתתך ביד פלשתים, v. 12).⁴³ These data, however, are hardly decisive for the embedded clauses themselves are extremely short and simple, and mainly consist of pronouns, e.g., לעשות לו כאשר עשה לנו (v. 10); פן תפגעון בי אתם (v. 12).

In the patriarchal narratives the style is slightly more complicated than it is in the Elisha tales. The present analysis does not indicate notable differences between episodes attributed to J or E, although differences within the “sources” themselves do exist.

Gen. 19:1–10 (vv. 1–3, 8–10; mostly attributed to J)

v. 1	ויבאו שני המלאכים סדמה בערב	3 arg	-	1
	ולוט ישב בשער סדם	2 arg	-	1
	וירא לוט	1 arg	-	-
	ויקם לקראתם	1 pron	-	-
	וישתחו אפים ארצה	2 arg	-	-
v. 2	ויאמר	-	-	-
	הנה נא אדני סורו נא אל בית עבדכם	2 arg	-	1
	ולינו	-	-	-
	ורחצו רגליכם	1 arg	-	-
	והשכמתם	-	-	-
	והלכתם לדרככם	1 arg	-	-
	ויאמרו	-	-	-
	לא	-	-	-
	כי ברחוב נלין	1 arg	-	-
v. 3	ויפצרו במ מאד	2 pron	-	-
	ויסרו אליו	1 pron	-	-
	ויבאו אל ביתו	1 arg	-	-
	ויעש להם משתה	2 arg	-	-
	ומצות אפה	1 arg	-	-
	ויאכלו	1 arg	-	-
v. 8	הנה נא לי שתי בנות	1 arg	-	1
	אשר לא ידעו איש	2 arg	emb	-
	אוציאה נא אתהן אליכם	2 pron	-	-
	ועשו להן כטוב בעיניכם	2 arg	-	1
	רק לאנשים האל אל תעשו דבר	2 arg	-	-
	כי על כן באו בצל קרתי	2 arg	-	1
v. 9	ויאמרו	-	-	-
	גש הלאה	1 pron	-	-
	ויאמרו	1 arg	-	-
	האחד בא (לגור)	2 arg	-	-
	לגור	-	emb	-
	וישפט שפוט	1 arg	-	-
	עתה נרע לך מהם	3 pron	-	-
	ויפצרו באיש בלוט מאד	2 arg	-	1

43. Regarding the syntactic complexity of subordinate clauses, see below on Genesis 4 (p. 89).

	ויגשו (לשבר)		1 arg	-	-
	לשבר הדלת		-	emb	-
v. 10	וישלחו האנשים את ידם		2 arg	-	-
	ויביאו את לוט אליהם הביתה		3 arg	-	-
	ואת הדלת סגרו		1 arg	-	-
Unit	Gen. 19:1–10	%	clauses	51	%
0 arg	10	19.61	2 arg	11	21.57
1 arg	12	29.53	3 arg	4	7.84
pron	10	19.61	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	32	62.74	2–5 arg	15	29.41
emb	4	7.84	expand	13	25.49
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
54	48	0.529	45	3	0.625

Gen. 21:15–21 (vv. 15–18; typically attributed to E)

v. 15	ויכלו המים מן החמת		2 arg	-	-
	ותשלך את הילד תחת אחד השיחים		2 arg	-	1
v. 16	ותלך		-	-	-
	ותשב לה מנגד הרחק		3 arg	-	-
	כמטחוי קשת		1 arg	emb	-
	כי אמרה		-	-	-
	אל אראה (במות)		1 arg	-	-
	במות הילד		1 arg	emb	-
	ותשב מנגד		1 pron	-	-
	ותשא את קלה		1 arg	-	-
	ותבך		-	-	-
v. 17	וישמע אלהים את קול הנער		2 arg	-	1
	ויקרא מלאך אלהים אל הגר מן השמים		3 arg	-	1
	ויאמר לה		1 pron	-	-
	מה לך הגר		1 arg	-	1
	אל תיראי		-	-	-
	כי שמע אלהים אל קול הנער (באשר)		3 arg	-	1
	באשר הוא שם		2 pron	emb	-
v. 18	קמי		-	-	-
	שאי את הנער		1 arg	-	-
	והחזיקי את ירך בו		2 arg	-	-
	כי לגוי גדול אשימנו		1 arg	-	1
Unit	Gen. 21:15–21	%	clauses	32	%
0 arg	8	25.00	2 arg	7	21.88
1 arg	8	25.00	3 arg	3	9.38
pron	2	6.25	4–5 arg	1	3.13
0–1 arg	18	56.25	2–5 arg	11	34.38
emb	3	9.38	expand	10	31.25
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
42	30	0.583	29	1	0.033

Gen. 25:29–34 (vv. 29–30, 33–34; mostly assigned to J)

v. 29	ויזד יעקב נזיד		2 arg	-	-
	ויבא עשו מן השדה		2 arg	-	-
	והוא עיף		1 pron	-	-
v. 30	ויאמר עשו אל יעקב		2 arg	-	-
	הלעיטני נא מן האדם הזה		1 arg	-	1
	כי עיף אנכי		1 pron	-	-
	על כן קרא שמו אדום		3 arg	-	-

v. 33	ויאמר יעקב		1 arg	-	-
	השבעה לי כיום		2 pron ⁴⁴	-	-
	וישבע לו		1 pron	-	-
	וימכר את בכרתו ליעקב		2 arg	-	-
	ויעקב נתן לעשו לחם ונוזיד עדשים		3 arg	-	1+
v. 34	ויאכל		-	-	-
	וישת		-	-	-
	ויקם		-	-	-
	וילך		-	-	-
	ויבז עשו את הבכרה		2 arg	-	-
Unit	Gen. 25:29–34	%	clauses	23	%
0 arg	4	17.39	2 arg	7	34.78
1 arg	7	30.43	3 arg	3	13.04
pron	1	4.35	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	12	52.17	2–5 arg	10	43.48
emb	1	4.35	expand	3	13.04
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
29	21	0.58	19	2	0.095

Gen. 29:2–14, 26, 31–35 (vv. 2–11, 31–33 typically attributed to J)⁴⁵

v. 2	וירא	-	-	-
	והנה באר בשדה	1 arg	-	-
	והנה שם שלשה עדרי צאן רבצים עליה	3 arg	-	1+
	כי מן הבאר ההוא ישקו העדרים	1 arg	-	1
	והאבן גדלה על פי הבאר	1 arg	-	2
v. 3	ונאספו שמה כל העדרים	2 arg	-	1
	וגללו את האבן מעל פי הבאר	2 arg	-	1
	והשקו את הצאן	1 arg	-	-
	והשיבו את האבן על פי הבאר למקמה	2 arg	-	2
v. 4	ויאמר להם יעקב	2 arg	-	-
	אחי מאין אתם	1 arg	-	1
	ויאמרו	-	-	-
	מחרן אנחנו	1 arg	-	-
v. 5	ויאמר להם	1 arg	-	-
	הידעתם את לבן בן נחור	1 arg	-	1
	ויאמרו	-	-	-
	ידענו	-	-	-
v. 9	עודנו מדבר עמם	2 pron	-	-
	ורחל באה עם הצאן אשר לאביה	2 arg	-	1
	כי רעה הוא	1 arg	-	-
v. 10	ויהי כאשר ראה יעקב את רחל בת לבן אחי אמו	2 arg	-	4
	ואת צאן לבן אחי אמו	-	-	-
	ויגש יעקב	1 arg	-	-
	ויגל את האבן מעל פי הבאר	2 arg	-	1
	וישק את צאן לבן אחי אמו	1 arg	-	2
v. 11	וישק יעקב לרחל	2 arg	-	-

44. In Gen. 25:33 the adverb **כיום** is used in the apparently colloquial meaning “first,” as, e.g., 1 Kgs. 1:51; see J. McDonald, “Some Distinctive Characteristics of Israelite Spoken Hebrew,” *Bi.Or.* 32 (1975), 162–75, esp. 173.

45. See H. Holzinger, *Genesis* (Freiburg-Leipzig-Tübingen, 1898), xxvi; B. W. Anderson, “Translator’s Supplement,” in M. Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 264–65; A. F. Campbell and M. O’Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch* (Minneapolis, 1993), 112–13.

v. 31	וישא את קלון	1 arg	-	-	
	ויבך	1 arg	-	-	
	וירא יהוה (כי)	2 arg	-	-	
	כי שנואה לאה	1 arg	emb	-	
v. 32	ויפתח את רחמה	1 arg	-	-	
	ורחל עקרה	1 arg	-	-	
	ותהר לאה	1 arg	-	-	
	ותלד בן	1 arg	-	-	
v. 33	ותקרא שמו ראובן	2 arg	-	-	
	כי אמרה	-	-	-	
	כי ראה יהוה בעניי	2 arg	-	-	
	כי עתה יאהבני אישי	2 arg	-	-	
	ותהר עוד	1 arg	-	-	
	ותלד בן	1 arg	-	-	
	ותאמר	-	-	-	
	כי שמע יהוה (כי)	2 arg	-	-	
	כי שנואה אנכי	1 arg	emb	-	
	ויתן לי גם את זה	2 pron	-	-	
	ותקרא שמו שמעון	2 arg	-	-	
Unit	Gen. 29:2–35	%	clauses	88	%
0 arg	16	18.18	2 arg	25	28.41
1 arg	35	39.77	3 arg	5	5.68
pron	2	2.27	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	53	60.23	2–5 arg	30	34.09
emb	5	5.68	expand	30	34.09
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
124	82	0.602	71	9	0.113

Similar results are obtained for Gen. 31:4–16; 28–45 (mostly attributed to E)⁴⁶ and the tale of Abraham and Pharaoh (Gen. 12:10–20; typically listed as J):

Unit	Gen. 31:4–16	%	clauses	51	%
0 arg	5	9.80	2 arg	8	15.69
1 arg	26	50.98	3 arg	3	5.88
pron	1	1.96	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	32	62.74	2–5 arg	11	21.57
emb	8	15.69	expand	20	39.22
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
76	46	0.623	40	6	0.130
Unit	Gen. 31:28–45	%	clauses	66	%
0 arg	4	6.06	2 arg	17	25.76
1 arg	31	46.97	3 arg	1	1.52
pron	1	1.52	4–5 arg	1	1.52
0–1 arg	36	54.55	2–5 arg	19	28.79
emb	11	16.67	expand	25	37.88
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
170	100	0.630	88	12	0.120

46. The attribution to E is according to the joint overlap of the division by Holzinger, *Genesis*, xxvi (Gen. 31:4–16*, 19–21a, 22–24, 26, 28–43, 44a, 45; 44b is considered questionable, J?) and Noth, *Pentateuchal Traditions*, 264–65 (Gen. 31:4–16, 19b, 24–25a, 26, 28–29, 30b, 32–25, 36b–37, 41–45).

Unit	Gen. 12:10–20	%	clauses	39	%
0 arg	4	9.75	2 arg	8	20.51
1 arg	13	33.33	3 arg	5	12.82
pron	1	2.56	4–5 arg	1	2.56
0–1 arg	18	46.15	2–5 arg	14	35.90
emb	7	17.95	expand	14	35.90
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
55	35	0.611	32	3	0.086

According to the findings for these samples, the patriarchal narratives are characterized by a relatively high number of simple clauses (0–1 argument), between 50% and 70%; clauses containing 3 arguments or more are exceedingly rare (between 3% and 13%). Embedded clauses typically account for less than 10% of all clauses (apart from Gen. 12:10–20; 31:28–45). Expanded noun strings occur in less than 40% of all clauses, and are mostly of limited extent. Such variation as may be noted, is not dependent on source distinctions.

The stylistic profile of the samples from the Book of Samuel is slightly more intricate.

1 Sam. 4:1b–7, 10–18a (vv. 1b–3, 10–12, 14)

v. 1b	ויצא ישראל לקראת פלשתים למלחמה	3 arg	-	-
	ויחנו על האבן העזר	1 arg	-	-
	ופלשתים חנו באפק	2 arg	-	-
v. 2	ויערכו פלשתים לקראת ישראל	3 arg	-	-
	ותטש המלחמה	1 arg	-	-
	וינגף ישראל לפני פלשתים	2 arg	-	1
	ויכו במערכה בשדה כארבעת אלפים איש	3 arg	-	1+
v. 3	ויבא העם אל המחנה	2 arg	-	-
	ויאמרו זקני ישראל	1 arg	-	1
	למה נגפנו יהוה היום לפני פלשתים	3 arg	-	1
	נקחה אלינו משלה את ארון ברית יהוה	3 arg	-	1+
	ויבא בקרבנו	1 arg	-	-
	וישענו מכף איבינו	1 arg	-	1
v. 10	וילחמו פלשתים	1 arg	-	-
	וינגף ישראל	1 arg	-	-
	וינסו איש לאהלו	2 arg	-	-
	ותהי המכה גדולה מאד	1 arg	-	1
	ויפל מישראל שלשים אלף רגלי	2 arg	-	1+
v. 11	וארון אלהים נלקח	1 arg	-	1
	ושני בני עלי מתו חפני ופינחס	1 arg	-	2
v. 12	וירץ איש בנימן מהמערכה	2 arg	-	1
	ויבא שלה ביום ההוא	2 arg	-	1
	ומדיו קרעים	1 arg	-	-
	ואדמה על ראשו	1 arg	-	-
v. 14	וישמע עלי את קול הצעקה	2 arg	-	1
	ויאמר	-	-	-
	מה קול ההמון הזה	1 arg	-	1+
	והאיש מהר	1 arg	-	-
	ויבא	-	-	-
	ויגד לעלי	1 arg	-	-
	ועלי בן תשעים ושמונה שנה	1 arg	-	2
	ועניו קמה	1 arg	-	-
	ולא יכול (לראות)	1 arg	-	-
	לראות	-	emb	-

Unit	1 Sam. 4:1b–7, 10–18a	%	clauses	74	%
0 arg	10	13.52	2 arg	27	36.49
1 arg	26	35.14	3 arg	6	8.11
pron	1	1.35	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	37	50.00	2–5 arg	33	44.59
emb	4	5.41	expand	38	51.35
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
152	72	0.679	61	11	0.153

A similar result is obtained for Samuel's birth tale:

Unit	1 Sam 1:4–18	%	clauses	59	%
0 arg	10	16.95	2 arg	22	37.29
1 arg	18	30.51	3 arg	6	10.17
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	28	47.46	2–5 arg	28	47.46
emb	3	5.09	expand	22	37.29
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
97	61	0.638	52	9	0.148

In the narrative on the message of Absalom's death (2 Sam. 18:20–19:1) the frequency of short clauses is far higher:

Unit	2 Sam. 18:20–19:1	%	clauses	85	%
0 arg	15	17.65	2 arg	19	22.36
1 arg	38	44.71	3 arg	2	2.36
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	53	62.35	2–5 arg	21	24.71
emb	11	12.94	expand	29	34.12
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
125	76	0.62.2	63	13	0.171

In these tales short clauses form the majority (approximately 50%); about 10% of the clauses contain more than two explicit constituents, and embedding is rare (less than 10% of the clauses). Expanded nouns strings are slightly more frequent than may be found in the samples from the patriarchal narratives, but most nominals are short. In the opening of the tale of Saul's anointment embedding is somewhat more frequent, but all other data are quite similar to those found in the previous samples:

Unit	1 Sam. 9:3–17	%	clauses	86	%
0 arg	17	19.76	2 arg	25	29.07
1 arg	23	26.74	3 arg	5	5.81
pron	1	1.16	4–5 arg	2	2.33
0–1 arg	41	47.76	2–5 arg	32	37.21
emb	13	15.12	expand	24	27.91
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
113	80	0.585	64	16	0.20

These data confirm our characterization of the rhythmic-verbal style.

(a) All these narratives contain a high number of short clauses, including a single predicate only, or at most one explicit argument (additional constituent), or pronominal and deictic arguments only (0–1 arg). This class forms almost 80% of all

clauses in 2 Kgs. 6:1–7, 60% or more in Gen. 19:1–10; 29:2–14, 31–35; 31:4–16; 2 Sam. 18:20–19:1; and at least 50% in Gen. 21:15–21; 25:29–34; 31:28–45; Judg. 15:9–13 (but in this pericope short clauses form more than 80% of the independent clauses); 1 Sam. 4:1b–7, 10–18; 2 Kgs. 13:14–19. In a few samples short clauses cover less than 50% of the text: Gen. 12:10–20; 1 Sam. 1:4–18; 9:3–17 (but in these sections short clauses form more than 50% of the independent clauses).

(b) In the sample from the Samson tales clauses containing two explicit arguments cover 15% of the text, and clauses presenting more than two such arguments are not found. Similar figures are found for 2 Kgs. 6:1–7 (9 and 6%); and Gen. 31:4–16 (16 and 6%). In the samples from Genesis 12; 19; 21; 2 Samuel 18; and 2 Kings 13 clauses containing two arguments account for around 20% of all clauses, while clauses containing more arguments cover *circa* 10% of the text; similar data are found in Gen. 31:28–45 (25% and 1.5% respectively), and Genesis 29 (28.4% and 5.6%). In Gen. 25:29–34 clauses containing two arguments account for more than 30% of the text, while clauses containing more than two arguments cover more than 10% of the clauses. In the samples from 1 Samuel 1; 4; and 9 the data for two arguments are in the same range (35%, 36%, and 29% respectively), but clauses of three arguments or more account for less than 10%.

(c) Embedded clauses are relatively rare. Such clauses cover less than 5% of all clauses in Gen. 25:29–34. In most samples (7 out of 14), they account for 5–9% of the text: Gen. 19:1–10; 21:15–21; 29:2–35; 1 Sam. 1:4–18; 4:1–18; 2 Kgs. 6:1–7; 13:14–19. In one case they include between 10–15% of the clauses (2 Samuel 18). One notes four samples in which subordinate clauses cover 15–19% of the clauses (Gen. 12:10–20; 31:4–16, 28–45; 1 Sam. 9:3–17). In Judg. 15:9–13, where embedded clauses occupy 27% of the text, almost half of them consist mainly of pronouns.

(d) Expanded noun strings are rare relative to the number of clauses. In the samples from 2 Kings 6 and Genesis 25 such strings are found in less than 15% of the clauses, while in Judges 15 15% of all clauses contain such strings. In Gen. 19:1–10; 1 Sam. 9:3–17 between 25% and 30% of all clauses contain expanded noun strings. In most sections (8 out of 14) such strings are found in less than 40% of all clauses (Gen. 12:10–20; 21:15–21; 29:2–35; 31:4–16, 28–45; 2 Sam. 18:20–19:1; 1 Sam. 1:4–18; 2 Kgs. 13:14–19). Only in the sample from 1 Samuel 4 do expanded noun strings occur in more than 50% of the clauses. Even in these tales, however, most such strings do not contain more than two elements.

(e) Independent pronouns and deictic particles play a minor role in the present analysis. For instance, the use of deictics sets the clause ונעשה לנו שם מקום (2 Kgs. 6:2) apart from the category of clauses containing three explicit arguments. By the same token one notes the clause למה עליהם עלינו (Judg. 15:10). From a formal point of view the sentence לעשות לי כאשר עשה לנו should count as complex, but the pronouns create a sense of informality.

The style of tales in this class, then, is full of variation with regard to all parameters. However, when a certain narrative is characterized by a relatively high score in one field, this feature is for the most part compensated for by a low score for another feature, e.g., the number of embedded clauses in Judges 15, or the number of long clauses in Genesis 25. Only in the tale of Abraham and Pharaoh (Gen. 12:10–20) and in the samples from 1 Samuel 4 and 9 are a number of scores on the high side.

b. Classical prose: the intricate style

Some narratives preserve the character of the classical style, but go beyond it in a number of respects. For instance, in the Cain and Abel tale (Gen. 4:1–16) most features are in accordance with the classical style, apart from the high NF ratio (0.276). The percentage of short clauses (0–1 arguments) is on the low side (43%), while the frequency of long clauses is on the high side (40%), but these data do not seem critical. Nevertheless, detailed stylistic analysis indicates a number of phenomena that do not fit the classical style.

Gen. 4:1–6, 8–16 (vv. 1–3, 10–12, 14–15; assigned to J)

v. 1	והאדם ידע את חווה אשתו ותהר ותלד את קין ותאמר קניתי איש את יהוה ותסף (ללדת)	2 arg - 1 arg - 2 arg 1 arg	- - - - - -	1 - - - - -	
v. 2	ללדת את אחיו את הבל ויהי הבל רעה צאן וקין היה עבד אדמה ויהי מקץ ימים ויבא קין מפרי האדמה מנחה ליהוה ויאמר מה עשית קול דמי אחיך צעקים אלי מן האדמה	1 arg 1 arg 1 arg 1 arg 4 arg - 1 pron 3 arg	emb - - - - - - -	1+ 1 1 1 1 - - 1	
v. 11	ועתה ארור אתה מן האדמה אשר פצתה את פיה (לקחת) לקחת את דמי אחיך מידך	2 arg 3 arg 2 arg	- emb cem	- - 1	
v. 12	כי תעבד את האדמה לא תסף (תת) תת כחה לך נע ונד תהיה בארץ	1 arg 2 arg 2 arg 1 arg	emb - emb -	- - - 1	
v. 14 ⁴⁷	הן גרשת אתי היום מעל פני האדמה ומפניך אסתר והייתי נע ונד בארץ והיה כל (מצאי) מצאי יהרגני	3 arg 1 arg 1 arg 1 arg - - -	- - - - emb - -	1 - 1 1 - - -	
v. 15	ויאמר לו יהוה לכן כל (הרג) שבעתים יקם הרג קין וישם יהוה לקין אות (לבלתי) לבלתי הכות אתו כל (מצאו) מצאו	2 arg 2 arg 1 arg 4 arg 2 arg -	- - emb - emb cem	- 1 - - - -	
Unit	Gen. 4:1–16	%	clauses	55	%
0 arg	6	10.91	2 arg	19	34.55
1 arg	15	27.27	3 arg	2	3.64
pron	1	1.82	4–5 arg	2	3.64
0–1 arg	22	0.00	2–5 arg	23	41.82
emb	10	18.18	expand	21	38.18

47. This clause could also be regarded as the protasis of a conditional sentence.

Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
84	58	.592	42	16	.276

First, one notes the high percentage of subordinated clauses in the classes of two and three arguments (four out of ten). In the class of three arguments two clauses are independent while one is embedded. Further analysis of some of these clauses suggests a higher degree of syntactical complication than found in the other samples. The indication of divine protection for Cain (Gen. 4:15) contains two subordinate clauses of which one, “anyone who met him” (participle with object), is embedded in the infinitive clause, which is also subordinated:

וישם יהוה לקין אות לבלתי הכות אתו כל מצאו

(1) *lest* (2) *anyone who met him* (1) *should kill him* (NJPS)

The subject of the infinitive clause consists of a participle with suffixed pronoun, indicating its object,⁴⁸ in secondary subordination. The participle with suffixed pronoun as subject is also encountered in other clauses concerning the dangers faced by Cain: “whosoever finds me” (כל מצאי, v. 14), “whosoever slays Cain” (כל הרג קין, v. 15). The curse laid on Cain is motivated by a complex relative clause (4:11):

ועתה ארור אתה מן האדמה אשר פצתה את פיה לקחת את דמי אחיך מידך

And now cursed art thou from the ground, (1) *which hath opened its mouth* (2) *to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand*

In this sentence the relative clause (אשר פצתה את פיה, “which hath opened its mouth”) is continued by an infinitive clause, indicating the goal of the action (לקחת את דמי אחיך מידך, “to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand”). An infinitive clause is also used in order to set the scene for the murder (v. 8):

ויהי בהיותם בשדה ויקם קין אל הבל אחיו

And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother

In such cases the classical Hebrew style tends to use a simple nominal clause in parataxis, as found in the Saul tale (1 Samuel 9: e.g., ויהי המה בשדה). The hypotactic construction of Genesis 4 is more intricate than customary in the classical style.⁴⁹

48. Although the Latin has the means to render this sentence by the same syntagms, even the Vulgate uses finite verbs in order to render this sentence: *posuitque Dominus Cain signum* (1) *ut non eum interficeret* (2) *omnis qui invenisset eum*.

49. The degree of syntactic complexity of subordinate clauses as an indication for the level of written language is discussed by K. Perera, *Children's Writing and Reading: Analysing Classroom Language* (Oxford, 1984), 237–39. The examples in Genesis 4 are far more complicated than the case found in the Samson tale, mentioned above (p. 81) since there the embedded clauses do not use the participle, while the infinitive clauses themselves are extremely simple. K. Beaman shows that complex sentences as such are not too rare in spoken language: “Coordination and Subordination Revisited: Syntactic Complexity in Spoken and Written Narrative Discourse,” in Deborah Tannen, ed., *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse* (Norwood, NJ, 1984), 45–80. Analysis of spoken discourse in biblical narrative shows that in the classical stratum the language of spoken discourse is slightly more complex than that of the action sequence: F. Polak, “Narrator’s Language and Dialogue in Biblical Narrative: An Attempt at Stylistic Analysis,” *Te’uda* 15 (in press; Hebrew with English summary).

The intricate style is also characteristic of the paradise tale (Gen. 2:4b–3:24; attributed to J). The pericope concerning the seduction by the serpent (3:1–7) includes a striking number of subordinated clauses,⁵⁰ including three clauses in complicated embedding.

Gen. 3:1–7 (vv. 1–4, 6)

v. 1	והנחש היה ערום מכל חית השדה	2 arg	-	1+	
	אשר עשה יהוה	2 arg	emb	-	
	ויאמר אל האשה	1 arg	-	-	
	אף כי אמר אלהים	1 arg	-	-	
	לא תאכלו נכל עץ הגן	1 arg	-	1	
v. 2	ותאמר האשה אל הנחש	2 arg	-	-	
	מפרי עץ הגן נאכל	1 arg	-	1+	
v. 3	ומפרי העץ אשר בתוך הגן (אמר) לא תכלו ממנו	1 arg	-	3	
	אמר אלהים	1 arg	-	-	
	ולא תגעו בו	1 pron	-	-	
	פן תמתון	-	emb	-	
v. 4	ויאמר הנחש אל האשה	2 arg	-	-	
	לא מות תמתון	-	-	-	
	כי ידע אלהים (כי)	2 arg	-	-	
	כי ביום (אכלכם) ונפקחו עיניכם	2 arg	emb	-	
	אכלכם ממנו	1 pron	cem	-	
	ונפקחו עיניכם	1 arg	emb	-	
	והייתם כאלהים	1 arg	emb	-	
	ידעי טוב ורע	1 arg	cem	-	
v. 6	ותרא האשה (כי)	2 arg	-	-	
	כי טוב העץ למאכל	2 arg	emb	-	
	וכי תאווה הוא לעינים	2 arg	emb	-	
	ונחמד העץ (להשכיל)	2 arg	emb	-	
	להשכיל	-	cem	-	
	ותקח מפריו	1 arg	-	-	
	ותתן גם לאישה עמה	1 arg	-	1	
	ויאכל	-	-	-	
Unit	Gen. 3:1–7	%	clauses	32	%
0 arg	3	9.38	2 arg	9	28.13
1 arg	10	31.25	3 arg	-	-
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	13	40.63	2–5 arg	9	28.13
emb	10	31.25	expand	10	31.25
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
84	58	0.592	42	16	0.276

If the frequency of expanded noun strings had been higher, it would have been easier to assign this pericope to the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period. The intricate style with its complex syntactic structures appears again in the pericope of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, e.g.,⁵¹

Gen. 3:24	ויגרש את האדם	1 arg	-	1
	וישכן מקדם לגן עדן את הכרבים	3 arg	-	3

50. In this pericope the embedded clauses are divided as follows: five clauses contain two arguments, three clauses one argument, and two clauses consist of a predicate only.

51. These findings fail to confirm the analysis of 3:22–24 into two sources of which one would be closer to the ancient folktale and the other of more literary character, as cautiously proposed by H. Gunkel, *Genesis*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen, 1910), 25–26.

וְאֵת לֵהֵט הַחֶרֶב (לְשֹׁמֵר)

הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת

לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים

- emb
1 arg emb 1

Among the narratives in the intricate style, the Joseph tale seems most close to the classical style. In fact, this tale contains many pericopes in the rhythmic-verbal style, but in some chapters the style is more intricate.

Gen. 40:4–21 (vv. 4–6, 11–14; assigned to E)

v. 4	ויפקד שר הטבחים את יוסף אתם	3 arg	-	1	
	וישרת אתם	1 pron	-	-	
	ויהיו ימים במשמר	1 arg	-	-	
v. 5	ויחלמו חלום שניהם	2 arg	-	-	
	איש חלמו בלילה אחד	3 arg	-	1	
	איש כפתרון חלמו	2 arg	-	5	
	המשקה והאפה אשר למלך מצרים אשר אסורים בבית הסהר				
v. 6	ויבא אליהם יוסף בבקר	3 arg	-	-	
	וירא אתם	1 pron	-	-	
	והנם זעפים	1 arg	-	-	
v. 11	וכוס פרעה בידו	1 arg	-	1	
	ואקח את הענבים	1 arg	-	-	
	ואשחט אתם אל כוס פרעה	2 arg	-	1	
	ואתן את הכוס על כף פרעה	2 arg	-	1	
v. 12	ויאמר לו יוסף	2 arg	-	-	
	זה פתרנו	1 arg	-	-	
	שלשת השרגים שלשת ימים הם	1 arg	-	2	
v. 13	בעוד שלשת ימים ישא פרעה את ראשוך	3 arg	-	1	
	והשיבך על כנך	1 arg	-	-	
	ונתת כוס פרעה בידו כמשפט הראשון	3 arg	-	2	
	אשר היית משקהו	1 arg	-	-	
v. 14	כי אם זכרתי אתך (כאשר)	2 arg	emb	-	
	כאשר ייטב לך	1 pron	-	-	
	(אם) ועשית נא עמדי חסד	3 arg	-	-	
	והזכרתי אל פרעה	1 arg	-	-	
Unit	Gen. 40:4–21	%	clauses	63	%
0 arg	1	1.05	2 arg	18	28.57
1 arg	22	34.92	3 arg	8	12.70
pron	5	7.94	4–5 arg	3	4.76
0–1 arg	28	44.44	2–5 arg	29	43.94
emb	6	9.52	expand	34	53.97
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
119	57	0.676	44	13	0.228

The profile of this pericope fits the intricate style, as the clauses with 0–1 arguments cover less than 45% of the text, while the class of three arguments and more includes almost 16% of all clauses. Expanded noun strings are frequent (almost 54%). On the other hand, the percentage of embedded clauses would fit the classical style (less than 10%).

A similar profile is found in the Joshua narrative (Joshua 2–10). Deuteronomistic influence, then, may be assumed for certain parts of these tales, but can hardly be regarded as the main characteristic.

Josh. 9:2–15 (vv. 2–4, 8–9)

v. 2	וַיִּתְקַבְּצוּ יָחִיד (לְהִלָּחֵם) פֶּה אֶחָד	3 arg	-	1
	לְהִלָּחֵם עִם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְעִם יִשְׂרָאֵל	1 arg	emb	1

v. 3	וישבי גבעון שמעו (את אשר)	2 arg	-	1	
	אשר עשה יהושע ליריחו ולעי	3 arg	emb	1	
v. 4	ויעשו גם המה בערמה	2 arg	-	-	
	וילכו	-	-	-	
	ויצטירו	-	-	-	
	ויקחו שקים בלים לחמוריהם ונאדות יין בלים	2 arg	-	3+	
	ומבקעים ומצררים				
	ושמלות בלות עליהם	1 arg	-	-	
v. 8	ויאמרו אל יהושע	1 arg	-	-	
	עבדיך אנחנו	1 pron	-	-	
	ויאמר אליהם יהושע	2 arg	-	-	
	מי אתם	1 pron	-	-	
	ומאין תבאו	1 pron	-	-	
v. 9	ויאמר אליו	1 pron	-	-	
	מארץ רחוקה מאד באו עבדיך לשם יהוה אלהיך	3 arg	-	2+	
	כי שמענו את שמעו ואת כל	1 arg	-	1	
	אשר עשה במצרים	2 arg	-	-	
Unit	Josh. 9:2-15	%	clauses	50	%
0 arg	3	6.00	2 arg	11	22.00
1 arg	18	36.00	3 arg	8	16.00
pron	-	-	4-5 arg	1	2.00
0-1 arg	21	42.00	2-5 arg	20	40.00
emb	9	18.00	expand	31	62.00
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
96	49	0.662	41	8	0.163

In this pericope, as in the other samples belonging to this category, the deviations from the crisp, rhythmic, style of classical prose are relatively subtle. The percentage of short clauses is slightly smaller than in classical prose (between 40 and 50%), while one notes a certain preference for explicit arguments (in many cases approximately 40%), embedded clauses, and longer noun strings. In general, then, the stylistic norms are more intricate than found for the samples for classical narrative. The style of the narratives in this group, then, is best characterized as an intricate variant of the classical style.

c. *The Transitional period: the complex-nominal style*

A different profile is characteristic of the narratives that must be attributed to the Transitional period. In texts belonging to this category less than 40% of the clauses consist of a single predicate, or a predicate with one argument. At times more than 70% of the clauses contains an expanded noun string. The number of embedded clauses is likewise higher than in the previous categories. We will demonstrate these phenomena by means of samples from the Book of Kings, the *Jeremiah Vita*, and sections from the second part of the Book of Joshua.

2 Kgs. 16:5-9

v. 5	אז יעלה רצין מלך ארם ופקח בן רמליהו מלך ישראל	4 arg	-	4
	ירושלים למלחמה			
	ויצרו על אחז	1 arg	-	-
	ולא יכלו (להלחם)	1 arg	-	-
	להלחם	-	emb	-
v. 6	בעת ההיא השיב רצין מלך ארם את אילת לארם	4 arg	-	2+

	וינשל את היהודים מאילות	2 arg	-	-	
	ואדומים באו אילת	2 arg	-	-	
	וישבו בה עד היום הזה	2 arg	-	1	
v. 7	וישלח אחז מלאכים אל תגלת פלאסר (לאמר)	4 arg	-	-	
	לאמר	-	emb	-	
	עבדך ובנך אני	1 arg	-	1	
	עלה	-	-	-	
	והושעני מכף מלך ארם ומכף מלך ישראל	1 arg	-	3	
v. 8	הקומים עלי	1 pron	emb	-	
	ויקח אחז את הכסף ואת הזהב	2arg	-	1	
	הנמצא בית יהוה ובאצרות בית המלך	1 arg	emb	2+	
	וישלח למלך אשור שחד	2 arg	-	1	
v. 9	וישמע אליו מלך אשור	1 arg	-	1	
	ויעל מלך אשור אל דמשק	2 arg	-	1	
	ויתפשה	-	-	-	
v. 14	ויגלה קירה	1 arg	-	-	
	ואת רצין המית	1 arg	-	-	
Unit	2 Kgs. 16:5–9	%	clauses	22	%
0 arg	2	9.09	2 arg	6	27.27
1 arg	7	31.82	3 arg	-	-
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	3	13.64
0–1 arg	9	40.91	2–5 arg	9	40.91
emb	4	18.18	expand	18	81.82
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
53	21	.716	17	4	0.190

In this pericope the percentage of short clauses (0–1 arguments) is only slightly above 40%, exactly like the percentage of clauses including two arguments or more. What is particularly important is the percentage of clauses including four arguments or more (13%). In addition, the percentage of expanded noun strings is on the high side (81.82%).

Similar data are obtained for the account of Joash's enthronement in the Temple (2 Kings 11), although the embedding rate is slightly lower (14%). This profile seems to fit all passages attributable to the transitional period.

2 Kgs. 11:3–20 (vv. 3–4, 9–13)

v. 3	ויהי אתה בית יהוה (מתחבא)	3 arg	-	-
	מתחבא שש שנים	1 arg	emb	1
	ועתליה מלכת על הארץ	2 arg	-	-
v. 4	ובשנה השביעית שלח יהוידע	2 arg	-	1
	ויקח את שרי המאות לכרי ולרצים	1 arg	-	2
	ויבא אתם אליו בית יהוה	2 pron	-	1
	ויכרת להם ברית	2 arg	-	-
	וישבע אתם בבית יהוה	2 arg	-	1
	וירא אתם את בן המלך	2 arg	-	1
v. 9	ויעשו שרי המאות ככל	2 arg	-	1
	אשר צוה יהוידע הכהן	2 arg	emb	1
	ויקחו איש את אנשיו באי השבת עם יצאי השבת	1 arg	-	2+
	ויבאו אל יהוידע הכהן	1 arg	-	1
v. 10	ויתן הכהן לשרי המאות את החנית ואת השלטים	3 arg	-	4
	אשר למלך דוד אשר בבית יהוה	-	-	-
v. 11	ויעמדו הרצים (איש) מכתף הבית הימנית עד כתף	4 arg	-	4
	הבית השמאלית למזבח ולבית על המלך סביב	-	-	-
	איש וכליו בידו	2 arg	-	-

v. 12	ויוצא את בן המלך	1 arg	-	1	
	ויתן עליו את הנזר ואת העדות	2 arg	-	1	
	וימלכו אתו	1 pron	-	-	
	וימשחוהו	-	-	-	
	ויכו כף	1 arg	-	-	
	ויאמרו	-	-	-	
v. 13	יחי המלך	1 arg	-	-	
	ותשמע עתליה את קול הרצין העם	2 arg	-	1+	
	ותבא אל העם בית יהוה	2 arg	-	1	
Unit	2 Kgs. 11:3–20	%	clauses	74	%
0 arg	6	8.11	2 arg	26	35.13
1 arg	22	29.72	3 arg	6	8.11
pron	1	1.35	4–5 arg	2	2.70
0–1 arg	29	39.19	2–5 arg	34	45.94
emb	11	14.86	expand	59	79.73
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
179	68	0.725	55	13	0.191

The samples from the Jeremiah *Vita* reveal a different profile.

Jer. 36:4–7, 10–18 (vv. 4–7, 17–18)

v. 4	ויקרא ירמיהו את ברוך בן נריה	2 arg	-	1	
	ויכתב ברוך מפי ירמיהו את כל דברי יהוה (אשר)	4 arg	-	3	
v. 5	על מגלת ספר				
	אשר דבר אליו	2 pron	emb	-	
	ויצוה ירמיהו את ברוך (לאמר)	3 arg	-	-	
	לאמר	-	emb	-	
	אני עצור	1 arg	-	-	
v. 6	לא אוכל (לבוא)	1 arg	-	-	
	לבוא בית יהוה	1 arg	emb	1	
	ובאת אתה	1 arg	-	-	
	וקראת במגלה (אשר) את דברי יהוה באזני העם	5 arg	-	4	
	בית יהוה ביום צום				
v. 7	אשר כתבת מפי	2 arg	emb	-	
	וגם באזני כל יהודה (הבאים) תקראם	1 arg	-	1	
	הבאים מעריהם	1 arg	emb	-	
	אולי תפל תחנתם לפני יהוה	3 arg	-	1	
	וישבו איש מדרכו הרעה	2 arg	-	1	
v. 17	כי גדול האף והחמה	1 arg	-	1	
	אשר דבר יהוה אל העם הזה	3 arg	emb	1	
	ואת ברוך שאלו (לאמר)	2 arg	-	-	
	לאמר	-	emb	-	
	הגד נא לנו	1 pron	-	-	
v. 18	איך כתבת את כל הדברים האלה מפיו	3 arg	-	1+	
	ויאמר להם ברוך	1 arg	-	-	
	מפיו יקרא אלי את כל הדברים האלה	3 arg	-	1+	
	ואני כתב על הספר בדין	3 arg	-	-	
Unit	Jer 36:4–18	%	clauses	46	%
0 arg	2	4.35	2 arg	10	23.91
1 arg	10	21.74	3 arg	7	15.22
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	4	8.70
0–1 arg	12	26.09	2–5 arg	22	47.83
emb	12	26.09	expand	45	97.83
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
163	75	0.685	63	12	0.160

In this pericope the percentage of short clauses is lower than in the other samples in this class, while the percentage of expanded noun phrases is on the high side. Nevertheless, the profile of this tale does not match the findings for the Persian era, for in the samples from that period the figures for embedding are higher. In the tale of Jeremiah in the court of the guard (38:4–16, 19–21) the findings are closer to those for the Book of Kings:

Unit	Jer. 38:4–21	%	clauses	75	%
0 arg	4	5.33	2 arg	25	33.33
1 arg	19	5.33	3 arg	11	14.67
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	1	1.33
0–1 arg	23	30.66	2–5 arg	37	49.33
emb	15	20.00	expand	36	48.00
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
141	64	0.688	53	11	0.172

The style of the concluding pericopes in Joshua (chaps. 22–24) is far from uniform. In some passages the profile is close to that of classical prose:

Josh. 24:16–28 (vv. 16–17, 25–28)

v. 16	ויען העם ויאמר חלילה לנו (מעזב) מעזב את יהוה (לעבד) לעבד אלהים אחרים כי יהוה אלהינו הוא (המעלה)	1 arg - 2 arg 2 arg 1 arg 1 arg	- - - emb cem -	- - - - -	-
v. 17	המעלה אתנו ואת אבותינו מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים ואשר עשה לעינינו את האתות הגדולות האלה וישמרנו בכל הדרך (אשר) ובכל העמים אשר הלכנו בה אשר עברנו בקרבם	2 arg 3 arg 1 arg 2 pron 2 arg	emb emb emb cem cem	2+ 1+ 2 - -	
v. 25	ויכרת יהושע ברית לעם ביום בבוא וישם לו חק ומשפט בשכם	4 arg 3 arg	- -	1 1	
v. 26	ויכתב יהושע את הדברים האלה בספר תורת אלהים ויקח אבן גדולה ויקימה שם תחת האלה אשר במקדש יהוה	3 arg 1 arg 2 arg	- - -	2+ 1 1	
v. 27	ויאמר יהושע אל כל העם הנה האבן הזאת תהיה בנו לעדה כי היא שמעה את כל אמרי יהוה אשר דבר עמנו והיתה בכם לעדה (פן) פן תכחשון באלהיכם	2 arg 2 arg 2 arg 2 pron 2 arg 1 arg 4 arg	- - - emb - emb -	1 1 1 - - -	
v. 28	וישלח יהושע את העם איש לנחלתו	4 arg	-	-	
Unit	Josh. 24:16–28	%	clauses	52	%
0 arg	5	9.62	2 arg	11	21.15
1 arg	19	36.54	3 arg	3	5.77
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	2	3.85
0–1 arg	24	46.15	2–5 arg	16	30.77
emb	12	23.08	expand	28	53.84
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
92	45	0.672	39	6	0.133

In this pericope it is possible to detect some similarity to the intricate classical style, in particular because of the high percentage of short clauses (46.15%). But the percentage of embedded clauses is on the high side (23%); two of these clauses contain

four arguments, and many clauses occur in complex subordination. Since the percentage of expanded noun strings also seems on the high side for the intricate style, this unit is best viewed as marking the shift from the intricate classical style to that of the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period.

The findings for the tale of the memorial site near the Jordan are of a different character:

Josh. 22:6–15, 21–26, 31–34 (vv. 11–14)

v. 11	וישמעו בני ישראל (לאמר) לאמר	2 arg	-	1	
	הנה בנו בני ראובן ובני גד וחצי שבט מנשה את המזבח אל מול ארץ כנען אל גלילות הירדן אל עבר בני ישראל	-	emb	-	
		3 arg	-	7+	
v. 12	וישמעו בני ישראל ויקהלו כל עדת בני ישראל שלה (לעלות)	1 arg	-	-	
	לעלות עליהם לצבא	3 arg	-	2	
		2 arg	emb	-	
v. 13	וישלחו בני ישראל אל בני ראובן ואל בני גד וחצי שבט מנשה אל ארץ הגלעד את פינחס בן אלעזר הכהן	4 arg	-	5+	
v. 14	ועשרה נשיאים עמו, נשיא אחד, נשיא אחד לבית אב לכל מטות ישראל	1 arg	-	5+	
	ואיש ראש בית אבותם המה לאלפי ישראל	1 arg	-	-	
		1 arg	-	2	
Unit	Josh. 22:6–34	%	clauses	72	%
0 arg	4	5.56	2 arg	21	29.17
1 arg	14	19.44	3 arg	8	11.11
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	5	6.94
0–1 arg	18	30.55	2–5 arg	34	47.22
emb	20	27.78	expand	79	109.72
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
240	55	0.814	43	12	0.218

The findings for this pericope are similar to those for the Jeremiah tale (Jer. 36:4–18): in both samples expanded noun strings are extremely frequent. Short clauses (0–1 argument) occupy 30% of the clauses, while embedded causes cover above 20%. Thus the style of these samples is close to prose from the Persian era, even though the percentage for embedding is lower than found in postexilic narrative. Hence these pericopes may serve to mark the transition to the postexilic style, while the tale of the covenant at Shechem (Joshua 24) marks the transition from the intricate classical style to the late pre-exilic/exilic period.

d. The Persian era

Samples from postexilic literature have been culled from the Zerubbabel chronicle (Ezra 1:1–6:23), from Ezra's memoirs (7:1–10:44), and from the Hezekiah account (2 Chronicles 32). These samples, each embodying a different style deriving from a different source,⁵² are to provide the basic characterization, while additional samples have been taken from the Scroll of Esther.

52. In view of the studies by Sara Japhet and others, the probability that the Chronicler composed the Zerubbabel chronicle is too low to be taken into account. A survey of recent literature is offered by S. Japhet, *I–II Chronicles, OTL* (London, 1993), 3–7; 41–43; idem, "The Relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah," in J. A. Emerton, ed., *VT Supp.* 43 (Leiden, 1991), 298–313. The unity of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah has been defended unconvincingly by K.-F. Pohlmann, "Zur Frage von Korrespondenzen zwischen den Chronikbüchern und dem Ezra/Nehemia-Buch," *ibid.*, 314–30. A skeptical, but

Ezra 4:1–5 (vv. 1–3)

v. 1	וישמעו צרי יהודה ובנימן (כי)	2 arg	-	1+	
	בני הגולה בונים היכל ליהוה אלהי ישראל	3 arg	emb	2+	
v. 2	ויגשו אל זרובבל ואל ראשי האבות	1 arg	-	1+	
	ויאמרו להם	1 pron	-	-	
	נבנה עמכם	1 pron	-	-	
	כי ככם נדרוש לאלהיכם	2 arg	-	-	
	ולו אנחנו זבחים מימי אסרחדון מלך אשור	3 arg	-	2	
	המעלה אתנו פה	2 pron	emb	-	
v. 3	ויאמר להם זרובבל וישוע ושאר ראשי האבות לישראל	2 arg	-	3	
	לא לכם ולנו (לבנות)	2 arg	-	-	
	לבנות בית לאלהינו	2 arg	emb	-	
	כי אנחנו יחד נבנה ליהוה אלהי ישראל (כאשר)	4 arg	-	1+	
	כאשר צונו המלך כרש מלך פרס	2 arg	emb	2	
Unit	Ezra 4:1–5	%	clauses	18	%
0 arg	-	-	2 arg	6	33.33
1 arg	3	16.67	3 arg	1	5.56
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	2	11.11
0–1 arg	3	16.67	2–5 arg	9	0.50
emb	6	33.33	expand	18	100.00
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
49	18	0.731	9	9	0.50

In this sample the class of embedded clauses is one of the most important categories. Extended noun strings are found in almost every clause. The stylistic profile of the Ezra Memoirs is quite similar.

Ezra 9:1–5; 10:1 (9:2–4; 10:1)

v. 2	כי נשאו מבנותיהם להם ולבניהם	2 arg	-	1
	והתערבו זרע הקדש בעמי הארצות	2 arg	-	2
	ויד השרים והסגנים היתה במעל הזה ראשונה	2 arg	-	2+
v. 3	וכשמעי את הדבר הזה	1 arg	emb	1
	(וכשמעי) קרעתי את בגדי ומעילי	2 arg	-	1
	ואמרטה משער ראשי וזקני	1 arg	-	1+
	ואשבה (משומם)	1 arg	-	-
	משומם	-	emb	-
v. 4	ואלי יאספו כל (חרד) על מעל הגולה	3 arg	-	1
	חרד בדברי אלהי ישראל	1 arg	emb	1+
	ואני ישב (משומם) עד למנחת הערב	3 arg	-	1
	משומם	-	emb	-
10:1	וכהתפלל עזרא	1 arg	emb	-
	וכהתודתו (בכה)	1 arg	emb	-
	בכה	-	cem	-
	ומתנפל לפני בית האלהים	1 arg	cem	1
	(וכהתפלל) נקבצו אליו מישראל קהל רב מאד	4 arg	-	2+
	אנשים ונשים וילדים			
	כי בכו העם הרבה בכה	2 arg	-	1

inconclusive reappraisal of the linguistic analysis has been offered by D. Talshir, "A Reinvestigation of the Linguistic Relationship Between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah," *VT* 38 (1988), 165–93. But such a striking phenomenon as the use of three infinitives in succession is found in the scroll of Esther (Esth. 3:13, 7:4, 8:11) and in Chronicles (2 Chr. 5:13, 31:2), but not in the Book of Ezra, not even in descriptions that are similar to Chronicles (Ezra 3:12 as against 2 Chr. 5:13); but note Neh. 8:12.

Unit	Ezra 9	%	clauses	26	%
0 arg	-	-	2 arg	10	38.46
1 arg	2	7.69	3 arg	1	3.85
pron	-	-	4-5 arg	2	7.69
0-1 arg	2	7.69	2-5 arg	13	0.50
emb	11	42.31	expand	27	103.85
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
63	25	0.720	16	9	0.360

2 Chr. 32:1-6, 9, 16-23 (vv. 3-5, 18-21)

v. 3	ויועץ עם שריו וגבריו (לסתום) לסתום את מימי העינות אשר מחוץ לעיר ועזורהו	2 arg 1 arg -	- emb -	1 2 -	
v. 4	ויקבצו עם רב ויסתמו את כל המעינות ואת הנחל (השוטף) (לאמר) השוטף בתוך הארץ לאמר למה יבואו מלכי אשור ומצאו מים רבים	1 arg 2 arg 1 arg - 2 arg 1 arg	- - emb emb - -	1 1 1 - 1 1	
v. 5	ויתחזק ויבן את כל החומה הפרוצה ויעל על המגדלות ולחוצה החומה אחרת ויחזק את המלוא עיר דוד ויעש שלח לרב ומגנים	- 1 arg 1 arg 2 arg 2 arg 1 arg	- - - - - -	- 1 - 1 1 1	
v. 18	ויקראו בקול גדול יהודית על עם ירושלים אשר על החומה (ליראם) ליראם ולבהלם (למען) למען ילכדו את העיר	4 arg - - 1 arg 1 arg	- emb emb emb cem	- - - - -	
v. 19	וידברו אל אלהי ירושלים כעל אלהי עמי הארץ מעשה ידי אדם	2 arg	-	4	
v. 20	ויתפלל יחזקיהו המלך וישעיהו בן אמוץ הנביא על זאת ויועקו השמים	2 arg 1 arg	- -	2+ -	
v. 21	וישלח יהוה מלאך ויכחד כל גבור חיל ונגיד ושר במחנה מלך אשור וישב בבשת פנים לארצו ויבא בית אלהיו ומיציאי מעיו שם הפילוהו בחרב	2 arg 2 arg 2 arg 1 arg 3 arg	- - - - -	- 3 1 1 1	
Unit	2 Chronicles 32	%	clauses	55	%
0 arg	3	5.45	2 arg	18	32.72
1 arg	13	23.64	3 arg	3	5.45
pron	-	-	4-5 arg	4	7.27
0-1 arg	16	29.09	2-5 arg	25	45.45
emb	14	25.45	expand	49	89.09
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
144	48	0.750	38	10	0.208

For a sample from the Josiah account (2 Chr. 34:3-8) the results are similar:

Unit	2 Chronicles 34	%	clauses	22	%
0 arg	1	4.55	2 arg	7	31.82
1 arg	6	27.27	3 arg	1	4.55

pron	-	-	4–5 arg	-	-
0–1 arg	7	31.82	2–5 arg	8	36.36
emb	7	31.82	expand	27	122.73
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
61	22	0.735	14	8	0.364

Thus we conclude that postexilic narrative prose is typically characterized not only by a high NV ratio (0.70 or higher) and a high NF ratio (mostly above 0.30, although a rate of 0.20 may also occur, e.g., in 2 Chronicles 32), but also by a strong tendency to use expanded noun strings (around 100% relative to the total number of clauses),⁵³ and embedded clauses (in most cases above 30% of all clauses, and, at least equalling the number of short clauses [0–1 argument]).⁵⁴ Even though the narrators do not refrain from using clauses consisting of a single predicate, there is a clear preference for complex clauses containing at least two additional constituents (more than 50% of all clauses). In the samples analyzed above these tendencies are found all together, even though in some pericopes they are more outstanding than in others.

In the Esther tale the results are slightly different, even though the NV ratio is as high as it is in the other samples from this period (0.707, with a slightly lower NF ratio, 0.205).

Esth. 8:1–11,14–17 (vv. 8–9, 14–16)

v. 7	ויאמר המלך אחשורש לאסתר המלכה ולמרדכי היהודי	2 arg	-	3	
	הנה בית המן נתתי לאסתר	2 arg	-	1	
	ואתו תלוי על העץ (על אשר)	3 arg	-	-	
	על אשר שלח ידו ביהודים	2 arg	emb	-	
v. 8	ואתם כתבו על היהודים כטוב בעיניכם בשם המלך	4 arg	-	2	
	וחתמו בטבעת המלך	1 arg	-	1	
	כי כתב (אשר) אין להשיב	1 arg	-	-	
	אשר נכתב בשם המלך	2 arg	emb	1	
v. 14	הרצים רכבי הרכש האחשתרנים יצאו מבהלים	3 arg	-	4	
	ודחופים בדבר המלך				
	והדת נתנה בשושן הבירה	2 arg	-	1	
v. 15	ומרדכי יצא מלפני המלך בלבוש מלכות תכלת	3 arg	-	5+	
	וארגמן וחור ועטרת זהב גדולה ותכריך בוך וארגמן				
	והעיר שושן צהלה	1 arg	-	1	
	ושמחה	-	-	-	
v. 16	ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר	1 arg	-	2	
Unit	Esth. 8	%	clauses	66	%
0 arg	3	4.55	2 arg	11	16.67
1 arg	22	33.33	3 arg	5	7.58
pron	-	-	4–5 arg	2	3.03
0–1 arg	25	37.88	2–5 arg	18	27.27
emb	23	34.85	expand	69	104.55
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
191	67	0.740	48	19	0.284

53. In Nehemiah 12 the rate for expanded noun strings amounts to 145%, while in chap. 8 the rate is 87%.

54. Embedded clauses cover 28% of all clauses in Nehemiah 8, but in chap. 12 they are extremely rare (2 out of 22).

The picture arising from these data generally fits the profile of postexilic prose as found in the samples from 2 Chronicles and Ezra. The data for embedding (34%) and expanded noun strings (104%) are similar to those found in the previous samples. Even though short clauses (0–1 argument) are slightly more frequent, (37% of all clauses), the character of this tale is unmistakable. 35% of the embedded clauses contain two or three additional constituents apart from the predicate (8 cases out of 23); these clauses form more than 40% of all examples of clauses with two or three arguments).

Other chapters in the Esther tale are characterized by a similar constellation, even though expanded noun strings and embedded clauses may be less frequent than in Esther 8. For instance, in the sample from Esther 7 (vv. 2–10) the percentages for embedding and expanded noun strings are on the low side (21.74% and 52.17%, respectively).⁵⁵ But an analysis of the embedded clause indicates the distinction: the column of clauses with three additional arguments contains six independent as against four embedded clauses (40% subordinate). Out of ten embedded clauses no less than 40% contain three additional constituents. The level of complication of the embedded clauses stands out in such sequence as *מִי הוּא זֶה וְאִי זֶה הוּא אֲשֶׁר מְלָא לָבוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן* (7:5), in which the infinitive clause *לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן* is embedded in the relative clause *אֲשֶׁר מְלָא לָבוֹ*. These features indicate a strong tendency toward complicated subordination, which is expressed indirectly by the NV and the NF ratio.⁵⁶

7. *The Oral and the Written Style: Scribe and Story-teller*

What is the background of these differences? Are we dealing with free variation, or should we look for social and historical conditions which could have occasioned such distinctions? The latter alternative is certainly suggested by chronological considerations, since the postexilic narratives and the narratives attributed to the Transitional period are later. Narratives in the classical style can be attributed to a variety of different periods. The David tales, for instance, may be placed in the Exilic period, but when only the subject matter is taken into account, a far earlier date is possible as well, or, at least, cannot be rejected a priori. For the Jeremiah *Vita*, or the account of Josiah's cultic reform, no such attribution is feasible. From a logical point of view, then, these narratives do not belong to the same category as the David stories, the tales of Elijah and Elisha, or, indeed, any other narrative in the classical style.

Furthermore, comparison of the stylistic features characteristic of the Persian era with those for the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period shows that postexilic narrative contains more subordinated clauses, more clauses including three, four, or more arguments, and more expanded noun strings. *That is to say, comparison between postexilic prose and narrative from the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period points to an increase in*

55. However, in Esther 7 the NV ratio (0.707) and NF ratio (0.205) match the data for chap. 8.

56. An obvious example, developed even more than in Haman's orders (3:13) presents itself in Mordecai's proclamation in name of the king (8:11–12). The NJPS returns the proclamation to direct speech: "to this effect: The king has permitted the Jews of every city to assemble and fight for their lives."

those elements in which the contrasts between the periods in general are most striking. This finding certainly suggests diachronic development. *Moreover, those stylistic categories that are less frequent in exilic prose than in postexilic narrative, are even rarer in classical narrative.* Hence the assumption of diachronic development may also be valid for the relation between classical prose and narrative from the Late Pre-Exilic/exilic period. In view of these considerations, any explanation of the stylistic differences among the various classes on the basis of free variation would be too arbitrary.

From a linguistic point of view, the specific features by which the three main classes differ from one another, are connected to the characterization of written language as against oral discourse. The differences between these two types of language pertain, according to studies by W. L. Chafe and others, to a variety of phenomena, such as syndetic noun pairs and long noun strings; nominalization (use of nouns instead of verbs); increased use of attributes, present participles, and participle clauses; prepositional phrases; object clauses (either as that-clause or in the form of an infinitive); and indirect discourse.⁵⁷ The preference for complex syntactic structure and formality is also indicated by other investigations.⁵⁸ These characteristics belong to the same categories as do the specific differences which set the language of the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period and the Persian era apart from the style of the classical language.

In our study the use of syndetic noun pairs and long noun strings is represented by the category of expanded noun strings, a category which also includes the increased use of attributes. The increased use of participles, object clauses, and indirect discourse all pertain to hypotaxis and embedding, while the high frequency of prepositional phrases leads to an increase in the number of explicit arguments. Hence the characteristics of narrative prose from the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period and the Persian era belong to the specific features of written language. In contrast, the paratactic usage of short clauses, which was found to be characteristic of classical narrative, is connected to the basic features of spoken language, in which idea units are not integrated into well-structured wholes.⁵⁹ One of the characteristics found is the increased use of personal pronouns for reference.⁶⁰ Parallelism and rhythmic language are typical as well.⁶¹ Hence the characteristic style of classical biblical narrative is

57. Chafe, "Linguistic Differences" (see n. 9 above); idem, "Integration and Involvement in Speaking, Writing and Oral Literature," in Deborah Tannen, ed., *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy* (Norwood, NJ, 1982), 35–53.

58. Perera, *Children's Writing and Reading*, 127–66, 182–202, 223–71; Goody, *Interface between the Written and the Oral*, 263–64. Formality is highlighted by M. Stubbs, "Written Language and Society: Some Particular Cases and General Observations," in M. Nystrand, ed., *What Writers Know: The Language, Structure and Use of Written Discourse* (New York, 1982), 31–55.

59. Chafe, "Linguistic Differences," 111–13; "Integration and Involvement," 42, 52–53; the frequent use of compound sentences in the writing of children is discussed by Perera, *Children's Writing and Reading*, 230–31, 241–47; see also 127–33.

60. Perera, *Children's Writing and Reading*, 104–8, 152–53. Goody, *Interface between the Written and the Oral*, 262, referring to R. C. Gruner et al., "A Quantitative Analysis of Selected Characteristics of Oral and Written Vocabularies," *Journal of Communication* 17 (1967), 152–58.

61. D. Tannen, "Relative Focus on Involvement in Oral and Written Discourse," in Olson, Torrance, and Hildyard, ed., *Literacy*, 124–47, esp. 138–39.

close to the spoken language, and, by implication, to oral literature.⁶² In view of the popular nature of such narratives as the Samson tale and the Elisha narratives, in many respects the most eloquent representatives of the, crisp, rhythmic, verbal style of the classical stratum, this inference is highly plausible. The high extent of structuring of classical biblical narrative, also supports this conclusion.⁶³

We conclude, then, that classical narrative in the main adheres to the norms of oral narrative. This thesis is not intended to mean that this corpus itself was oral, only that these narratives were written in the style of oral literature by narrators for whom the norms of literary design were those of oral narrative. Among those norms mention must be made of the frequent use of fixed formulae, as found also in Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Hittite epic poetry.⁶⁴ A. B. Lord points to oral poets who also compose written texts.⁶⁵ Thus it appears that the gradual increase in the degree of syntactic complication indicates the transition from oral norms to written norms. This transition is gradual, as syntactic complication increases from the last stages of classical narrative, found in the tales of Samuel, Saul and David,⁶⁶ through the Joseph tales and the intricate classical style, to the written style of the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period, and to the characteristic style of the Persian era. With the increased role of the scribe in his urban environment,⁶⁷ the oral story-teller presumably turns into a representative of the illiterate subculture. As scribal language becomes prestige language, the scribe gradually turns into the primary exponent of literary culture.⁶⁸ By the same token, scribal norms start dictating the literary standard. Our model for a literary person in the time of Josiah is Shaphan the scribe.

It would seem that in the Persian era the awareness of the oral style had almost disappeared.⁶⁹ In this period ordinary scribes would write Aramaic. Writing Hebrew

62. For some subcorpora of ancient Greek literature similar conclusions impose themselves, as shown by S. Lilja, *On the Style of Earliest Greek Prose*, Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum, Societas Scientiarum Fennica 41 (Helsinki, 1968). S. Trenkner shows that the paratactic "Kai style" is characteristic of sections representing oral discourse, e.g., the litigant's speech in legal proceedings, or comic dialogue, and of literature that is close to the folktale: *Le style kai dans le récit attique oral* (Assen, 1960).

63. For structuring as a criterion, see Niditch, *Oral World*, 8–38.

64. The use of such formulae is mentioned but not described by Niditch, *ibid.*, 14–18. For preliminary discussions of these matters see the present author's "Epic Formulas in Biblical Narrative: Frequency and Distribution," in *Les actes du second colloque international Bible et Informatique: methodes, outils, resultats* (Jerusalem 9–13 Juin 1988) (Geneva, 1989), 435–88; "Epic Formulas in Biblical Narrative and the Fountainheads of Ancient Hebrew Narrative," *Te'uda* 7 (Tel Aviv, 1992), 9–53 [Heb. with Eng. summary]; "On Prose and Poetry" (n. 10 above), 61–97, esp. 91–97.

65. A. B. Lord, *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition* (Ithaca, 1991), 25–27.

66. Analysis of 2 Samuel 18 (see above, p. 86) indicates that the narrator is a master of complex narrative as well as of the simple structures of oral stories.

67. See, e.g., A. R. Millard, "An Assessment of the Evidence for Writing in Ancient Israel," in J. Abiram et al., eds., *Biblical Archeology Today* (Jerusalem, 1985), 301–12; on literacy among "the upper echelons of society" in Israel and Judea, see I. M. Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence", *VT* 48 (1998), 239–53, 408–22, esp. 419–20; on the symbiosis of oral and scribal culture in Athens see R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1989), 1–94.

68. The influence of such changes on language usage in a non-Western society has been studied by D. Biber and M. Hared, "Linguistic Correlates of the Transition to Literacy in Somali: Language Adaptation in Six Press Registers," in D. Biber and E. Finegan, eds., *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Register* (New York and Oxford, 1994), 182–216.

69. Polak ("Prose and Poetry in Job," 82–84) points to the long noun strings in the Aramaic Ahiqar tale.

had become a prerogative of the most learned scribes, such as, e.g., Ben Sira or the anonymous author of Qoheleth. Narrative literature of this period is also characterized by complex plot structure: the Esther scroll has two protagonists, Esther and Mordechai.⁷⁰

This thesis is supported by the epigraphic remains from the seventh century B.C.E., that constitute the main representatives of ancient written Hebrew.⁷¹ These documents, as far as they are preserved, all use the complicated scribal language that was found to be characteristic of the Transitional period.⁷² The Siloam inscription contains some intricate clauses:

וילכו המים מן המוצא אל הברכה במאתים ואלף אמה;
כי הית זדה בצר מימן;
וביום הנקבה הכו החצבם אש לקרת רעו גרון על גרון

And the water streamed from the source to the pond in 1200 cubits,
for there was an upsurge in the rock to the right (the south?);
now, on the day of the breakthrough the stone masons struck one to another, axe on axe.

The last clause contains one predicate with five arguments. In simple letters we also encounter complicated syntactic structures, e.g.,⁷³

יירד שר הצבא כניהו בן אלנתן לבא מצרימה

The commander of the host, Koniahu son of Elnathan has come down in order to go to Egypt (Lachish 3:14–16; a long noun string referring to an official).

[ו]עת בא ביתה אלישב בן אשיהו ולקחת משם 1 שמן

[And] now, go to the house of Eliashib son of Josiah and take from there 1 oil (Arad 17:41; the sentence seems simple, as it is broken up into two clauses, but the second clause contains two arguments, while the first one includes a long noun string).

וצוך חנניהו על באר שבע עם משא צמד חמרים

And Hananiah has ordered you to Beersheba with a burden of a span of donkeys (Arad 3:2–5; three arguments and one long noun string).

ושלחתם אתם רמת נג[ב] [ב]יד מלכיהו בן קרבאור

So you must send them to Ramoth Nege[b] [under the respons]ibility of Malkiah son of Qarabor (Arad 24:13–14; three arguments).

והבקידם על יד אלישב בן ירמיהו ברמת נגב פן יקרה את העיר דבר

So you must place them under the orders of Elisha son of Jeremiah in Ramoth Negeb, lest something happen to the town (Arad 24:14–17; three arguments, one expanded noun string, one subordinated clause).

These findings indicate that the style of the Transitional period is not only exilic. It is the style of the Judean officials, and many of the biblical narratives in this style obviously represent the scribal culture of this milieu, e.g., the narrative of Joash's

70. Cf., e.g., E. Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible*, 171–72. It is quite possible, however, that the Nehemiah memoirs preserve the tone of oral narrative. One indication favoring this possibility is the increased use of the active participle as predicate, as it were a present tense, as discussed in note 23 above.

71. On external controls for the analysis of Biblical Hebrew see Hurvitz, "The Historical Quest" (n. 16 above), 307–10.

72. On the distinction between narrative language and the "official language" of ancient Israel, see I. M. Young, *Diversity in Pre-exilic Hebrew* (Tübingen, 1993), 104–9, 168.

73. Quoted according to Sh. Ahituv, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions from the Period of the First Commonwealth and the Beginning of the Second Commonwealth* (Jerusalem, 1992) [in Heb.]; translations according to ANET³ with small modifications.

enthronement by the priests, and the discovery of Deuteronomy during the reconstruction of the Temple (2 Kings 11; 22). Such a scribe as Baruch learned his trade under the late monarchy, but continued to write under the Babylonians, during the exile. The same statement seems to hold for Ezekiel: thirty years old in 592, he must have been quite literate when he went into exile under Jehoiachin.

As an illustration of the scribal style in the Persian era we point to the complicated sentences opening the contracts from Elephantine, e.g.,⁷⁴

ב25 לחשרי, הו יום 25 לירח אפף, שנת 31 ארתחששש מלכא, אמר ענניה בר
עזריה, לחן זי יהו אלהא ביב בירתא, לנשן תמת אנתתה לאמר
אנה יהבת לכי פלג תרי רבתא ותונה זי ביתא זי זבנת מן אוביל ברט שתיבר
ומן בגזושט כספין זי יב בירתא

On the 25th of Tishrê, that is the 25th of the month of Epiphi, year 31 of Artaxerxes the King, said Ananiah, son of Azariah, priest of Yahu the God in Yeb the fortress, to woman Tamut, his wife, saying:

"I give you the half of the large hall and its room, of the house which I have bought from Ubil the daughter of Satibara and from Bagazushta, Caspians in Yeb the fortress."

This pericope, which consists of 46 words (including three numbers), contains four clauses, of which two are in hypotaxis (indicated by italics), and a series of expanded noun strings. Admittedly, the legal language of the contract is in no way comparable with the narrative style, but in the present case the comparison is helpful, because it highlights the social and linguistic distinction between the storyteller who is close to oral narrative, and the scribe in his chancellery.

The style of the Moabite stone is in many respects close to the intricate classical style, as indicated by the following summation:⁷⁵

Unit	Mesha	%	clauses	74	%
0 arg	6	8.11	2 arg	33	44.59
1 arg	24	32.43	3 arg	7	9.46
pron	-	-	4-5 arg	2	2.70
0-1 arg	30	40.54	2-4 arg	42	56.76
emb	2	2.70	expand	40	54.05
Noun	Verb	NV ratio	Finite	Nominal	NF ratio
154	69	0.691	65	4	0.058

This inscription contains many clauses that include more than one argument, e.g., *אבי מלך על מאב שלשן שנת ואנך מלכתי אחר אבי* ("my father reigned thirty years over Moab, and I reigned after my father," lines 2-3), *ואעש הבמת זאת לכמש בקרחה*

74. E. G. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri* (New Haven, 1955), 168-69 (4:1-4); for the understanding of *תרי רבתא* as the "salle commune sise au rez-de-chaussée," see P. Grelot, *Documents Araméens d'Égypte* (Paris, 1972), 221, n. a; J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Leiden, 1995), 2.1230. Similar openings are found in Kraeling, 5, 8-12; CAP 5-8, 10, 13-14, 20, 25, 28.

75. The value of the Mesha inscription for understanding the style of classical Hebrew has been underscored by S. R. Driver, *Notes on . . . Samuel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1913), xciii-xciv, lxxxviii; E. L. Greenstein, "The Formation of the Biblical Narrative Corpus," *AJS Review* 15 (1990), 151-78, esp. 162. A philological study of this text is offered by K. P. Jackson, "The Language of the Mesha inscription," in A. Dearman, ed., *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab* (Atlanta, 1989), 96-121; for a syntactic analysis see F. I. Andersen, "Moabite Syntax," *Or.* 35 (1966), 81-120; Eshkult, *Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique*, 45-50.

(“and I built this *bamah* to Chemosh in *Qrhh*,” line 3). Long noun strings are also found, e.g., ימיה וחצי ימי בנה ארבעין שת (“his days and half the days of his son,” line 8), את אש שרן ואת אש מחרת (“the people of Sharon and the people of *Mhrt*,” lines 13–14). On the other hand, one notes a number of short clauses that seem entirely characteristic of the classical style, e.g., ואלתחם בקר ואחזה (“and I fought against the town and I captured it,” l. 11); כי לעשתר כמש החרמתה (“For I had devoted it to Ashtar-Chemosh,” l. 17). The text contains only two subordinated clauses, וישב בה (“And he held it under his occupation while he waged war against me,” l. 19); ואחזה לספת על דיבן (“and I conquered it in order to annex it to Dibon,” lines 20–21), both infinitive clauses. The large number of clauses containing two arguments is probably slightly misleading, since many of these clauses include the redundant subject אנך, e.g., אנך בנתי ערער ואנך עשתי המסלת בארנן (“it was I who built Aroer and it was I who made the highway in the Arnon region,” l. 26). In biblical style in general such emphasis on the speaking person is unparalleled, but in royal inscriptions it is conventional. The norms of the classical style are better represented by one of the preceding sentences, ובר אן בקרב הקר בקרחה ואמר לכל העם עשו לכם אש בר בביתה (“Now, there was no cistern inside the city in *Qrhh*, so I said to all the people: make yourselves each a cistern in house,” lines 24–25). The use of the introductory circumstantial, nominal clause and the use of direct speech match the classical style of biblical narrative completely.

Thus the style of the Mesha inscription indicates the transition from oral narrative to written language: the norms are those of oral literature, but the competence is scribal. Therefore the inscription is an excellent representative of the intricate classical style. Classical biblical narrative for the most precedes this period. Stylistic analysis does not enable us to assign precise dates to such narratives as the Abraham cycle, the Jacob tales, and the narratives of the establishment of the monarchy. It does, however, plausibly show that most of these tales antedate the Mesha inscription, or, alternatively, that the stylistic norms they represent are older than this stele. Classical biblical narrative was transmitted by the redactors of the seventh and sixth centuries, but it was formulated much earlier.