

The Style of the Dialogue in Biblical Prose Narrative

FRANK H. POLAK

Tel Aviv University

This study seeks to describe the way that characters in biblical narrative speak, in comparison with the style of the exposition, the action sequence, and the narrator's remarks of evaluation. This subject is of major importance for our understanding of narrative in the Hebrew Bible, since many tales are actually dominated by character discourse.¹ Moreover, the way in which characters speak is indicative of their inner life, their point of view, their personality, and their status.²

1. *The Character's Voice*

This study deals with those utterances that are pronounced in a character's voice,³ by way of quoted discourse ("direct speech"),⁴ in interaction with the utter-

1. Various estimates concerning the incidence of quoted discourse in biblical narrative are more or less convergent. Analysis of five narrative sections (including Genesis 29–31 and Esther 6–8) leads G. Rendsburg to mention a mean percentage of 42.5: *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* (New Haven, 1990), 160–61. According to A. J. C. Verheij, the books of 1–2 Samuel consist of 43.33% of quoted discourse: *Verbs and Numbers: A Study of the Frequencies of the Hebrew Verbal Tense Forms in the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles* (Assen, 1990), 32–36. In Genesis Y. T. Radday and H. Shore find 42.71% spoken discourse (41 samples out of 96, each containing approximately 200 words): *Genesis, An Authorship Study* (Rome, 1985), 24–25. In 1–2 Kings and 1–2 Chronicles the mean is lower (34% and 21% respectively, according to Verheij, op. cit., 32–36). Actually, from section to section different data present themselves.

2. See, e.g., S. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield, 1989), 64–77; R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, 1981), 65–69; A. Berlin, *Poetics and the Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield, 1983), 38–39, 64–66; J. L. Ska, "Our Fathers Have Told Us." *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Rome, 1990), 89–90; H. C. Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics: Tales of the Prophets* (New York, 1992), 11, 18; G. W. Savran, *Telling and Retelling: Quotation in Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, 1988). M. Sternberg emphasizes that any quoted discourse is subject to the aesthetic function: *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, 1985), 11–16. This thesis implies that disregarding the role of the dialogue entails a misjudgment of the aesthetic function. For Bakhtin's view see note 3 below.

3. Few scholars have contributed so much toward the recognition of the many-faceted function of dialogue in literature (and in social life) as M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in M. Holquist, ed., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin, Texas, 1981), 256–422. In his view total domination of all language by the aesthetic function is only found in poetry, whereas prose narrative (and in particular the novel) is characterized by the variety of different language strata used (296–99).

4. This term has been coined by D. Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, 1978), 58, 99.

ances of other characters, with the action sequence as such—as a reaction to what has happened, is happening, or could happen—or as a starting point for action. In contrast, extensive discourses, such as Solomon's prayer (1 Kgs. 8:15–61) or Moses' speech in the Plains of Moab (Deut. 1:6–28:68) are preferably viewed as texts in their own right,⁵ with their own structure and dynamics. Our treatment of these matters will be based on the methods developed in a previous study concerning the style of written language and residues of the style of oral narrative in general.⁶

The existence of differences between the language of character discourse and that of the narrative sequence is indicated by Radday's statistical study of the Genesis narrative and Verheij's analysis of the language of the Book of Chronicles, in comparison with the Books of Samuel and Kings.⁷ According to Ch. Rabin, "the brevity of most of the turns of human speech causes sentences to be short, with few subordinate clauses, and therefore also comparatively few conjunctions. The rhythm of human speech is staccato while that of biblical narrative is flowing."⁸ Investigations by MacDonald and Levine point to a number of idioms, especially deictic particles, that occur only in quoted speech, e.g., הַלֹּזֶה (here comes that dreamer, Gen. 37:19),⁹ זֶה (as an indication of place), אל נָא תַמְשֵׁךְ (don't move from here, Judg. 6:18),¹⁰ and כִּיּוֹם (as an adverb with the meaning "first", First sell your birthright to me; Gen. 25:31).¹¹ Rendsburg indicates a number of non-standard phenomena in the biblical text, such as gender neutralization and lack of congruence, which can be explained as traces of colloquial language.¹²

Mali's linguistic analysis of quoted discourse in the books of Joshua–Kings indicates some general stylistic differences. One of his findings is that in quoted

5. This distinction is also urged by R. E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1996), 3.

6. F. H. Polak, "The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative," *JANES* 26 (1998), 59–105; for a statistical treatment of 40 samples of equal extent see now F. H. Polak, "Parameters for Stylistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew Prose," in J. Cook, ed., *Bible and Computer—The Stellenbosch AIBI-6 Conference: Proceedings of the Association Internationale Bible et Informatique: "From Alpha to Byte"* University of Stellenbosch 17–21 July, 2000 (Leiden, 2002), 261–84.

7. Radday and Shore, *Genesis* (n. 1 above), 162–67, 189–91, 204–11; Verheij, *Verbs and Numbers* (n. 1 above), 14–15, 35–39, 97–99, 118–19.

8. Ch. Rabin, "Linguistic Aspects," apud Radday and Shore, *Genesis* (n. 1 above), 218–24, esp. 220. As will be shown in the present discussion, Rabin's generalization is only valid for (a) casual discourse, or (b) late pre-exilic and (post-)exilic narrative.

9. See also Gen. 24:65; Ezek. 36:35; as analyzed by B. A. Levine, "Chapters in the History of Spoken Hebrew," *Eretz Israel* (H. L. Ginsberg Volume; Jerusalem, 1978), 155–60, esp. 159–60 (in Heb. with Eng. summary).

10. See J. MacDonald, "Some Distinctive Characteristics of Israelite Spoken Hebrew," *Bi.Or.* 32 (1975), 162–75, esp. 162–63, 173, and note Gen. 16:8; 37:17; 42:15; 50:25; Exod. 11:1; 13:3,19; 33:1; Deut. 9:12; Josh. 4:3; Judg. 13:6; 1 Sam. 25:11; 30:13; 2 Sam. 1:3, 13; 15:2; 1 Kgs. 17:3.

11. See MacDonald, 173; and note Gen. 25:33; 1 Sam. 2:16; 9:27; 1 Kgs. 22:5 (as against the usual indication of time, כִּיּוֹם הַוָּה, e.g., Gen. 50:20). However, this clause also has legal overtones (see below, p. 91).

12. Rendsburg, *Diglossia* (n. 1 above), 151–76. For some similarities between the formulation of blessings in Kuntillet Ajrud epigraphic texts and biblical narrative, see A. Wagner, "The Archeology of Oral Communication," *JNSL* 26 (2000), 117–26.

speech clauses are mostly shorter than in the narrative sequence.¹³ In this respect quoted discourse seems to reflect some features of the vernacular. Secondly, in quoted discourse Mali finds more clauses opened by a direct or indirect object, or another complement (fronting), e.g., וּקְוֹץ וּזְרֹעַר תְּצִמֵּח לְךָ ("Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you," Gen. 3:18).¹⁴ The speaking person's psychological involvement in the subject matter is illustrated by the word-order of Amnon's answer to Jonadab: את תמר אחות אבשלום אחוי אני אהב ("It is Tamar, the sister of Absalom, my brother, I love"; 2 Sam. 13:4).¹⁵

However, these studies are all based on a global analysis in which the sum total of the data for quoted discourse in the corpus (e.g., the Book of Genesis, or the books Joshua–2 Kings) is compared to those of the entire domain of the narrator in the given corpus. Hence, the data for tales in which character discourse is paramount, such as the Saul tales, or the David-Absalom narratives, are lumped together with those for tales of a quite different character. Even within the context of a single book such as Genesis, this method can only yield contaminated results. Thus, any comparison between the style of quoted speech and the language of the narrator's discourse must be based on detailed analysis within a specific context.

A second problem is the literary status of the speaker's utterance. In narrative all discourse as such belongs to the narrator, who depicts the situation, describes the action sequence and represents the discourse of the characters.¹⁶ Quoted discourse in a tale belongs to narrative, is embedded between the other elements of the story, and does not *eo ipso* differ from them. Hence Bar-Efrat can assert that the language of biblical narrative in general does not differ from that of spoken discourse, even though he is attentive to the representation of polite address and courtly style. In his view, careless, informal speech, such as is put in the mouth of Ahimaaz (2 Sam. 18:29), serves to suggest a character's state of mind in a given episode, but does not imply any interest in the imitation of colloquial language.¹⁷ In a discussion of the place of character speech in modern English fiction Page finds that "a

13. U. Mali, *The Language of Conversation in the Former Prophets* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University; Jerusalem, 1983 [in Heb. with Eng. summary]), xx; 204–7, 216–22. For his distinction between native and foreign speech (e.g., the Gibeonites) see xxiv; 199–200, 231–32, 237, 261.

14. Mali, *Language of Conversation*, xvii–xix, xx–xxii; 200–201, 209–13, 230–31, 235–37, 245, 251–52, 261; see also MacDonald, "Distinctive Characteristics," 164–65. On personal involvement in the conversation as a factor in the stylistic formulation of spoken discourse, see D. Tannen, *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue and Imagery in Conversational Discourse* (Cambridge, 1989), 9–97, 167–95; *Conversational Style: Analyzing Talk among Friends* (Norwood, N.J., 1984; reprint: 1991), 27–32, 80–87, 144–51.

15. On fronting as a way of achieving emphasis, see T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem, 1985), 11–17, 30–33, 37–59. Besides the emphatic effect M. Eskhult also recognizes the function of fronting for the organization of discourse (topicalization): *Studies in Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Uppsala, 1990), 39–41, 45–50; see also B. L. Bandstra, "Word Order and Emphasis in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: Syntactic Observations on Genesis 22 from a Discourse Perspective," in W. R. Bodine, ed., *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, 1992), 109–23. A theory of "communicative dynamism" that takes both aspects into account is offered by F. Polak, *Biblical Narrative: Aspects of Art and Design* (Jerusalem, 1994), 81–89 [in Hebrew].

16. Savran, *Telling and Retelling* (n. 2 above), 77–78.

17. S. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (n. 2 above), 65–66.

persuasive effect of colloquialism" often is dependent "upon only a very limited and selective observance of the features of actual speech."¹⁸ Within these limitations, however, the imitative suggestion of features of colloquial language must be recognized as a prominent stylistic device of narrative.¹⁹ In medieval literature, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which are narrated by a number of common people, stand out by virtue of a great number of colloquial features.²⁰

The data uncovered by the large-scale studies of Mali, Radday, and Verheij indicate that some of the conventions of this kind have also been used in biblical narrative. In fact, Licht argues that the girls' dialogue with Saul (1 Sam. 9:11–13) illustrates a certain pleasure in the imitation of their way of speaking.²¹ Uffenheimer points to the use of soldiers' language in the tale of Jehu's coup against Joram,²² which implies the imitation of a special stratum of language,²³ rather than the characterization of a given individual. However, evaluation of these and similar passages is possible only against the background of a general understanding of the nature of character discourse in biblical narrative.²⁴

Hence the present study will focus on the linguistic characterization of quoted discourse in terms of formality, colloquial character, and register. Such a characterization should provide the groundwork for the study of the inner life of the character in the light of his or her way of speaking. For this study we will distinguish between the field of character discourse (quoted speech) and the domain of the story teller,²⁵ which will include all utterances that are made by the voice of the narrator himself, that is, the action sequence, expository sections, and evaluative or generalizing comments.²⁶ For each clause we will establish the number of constituents that are directly dependent on the predicate (that is to say, the *arguments*, e.g., subject, direct

18. N. Page, *Speech in the English Novel* (London, 1973), 4, 6–22.

19. See R. Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford, 1970), 373–77; R. M. Dorson, "Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators," in T. A. Sebeok, ed., *Style in Language* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 27–51, esp. 43, 46–51; B. Ejkhenbaum, "Die Illusion des *Skaz*," in J. Striedter, ed., *Russischer Formalismus: Texte zur Allgemeinen Literaturtheorie und zur Theorie der Prosa* (München, repr., 1981), 161–67. V. Vinogradov narrows this concept down to the use of colloquial language in imitation of the art of oral narrative: "Das Problem des *Skaz* in der Stilistik," in *ibid.*, 170–207, esp. 171–75, 191–93.

20. See V. Salmon, "The Representation of Colloquial Speech in *The Canterbury Tales*," in H. Ringbom et al., eds., *Style and Text: Studies Presented to Nils Erik Enkvist* (Stockholm, 1975), 263–77.

21. See J. Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem, 1978), 10–11.

22. B. Uffenheimer, *Early Prophecy in Israel* (Jerusalem, 1999), 439–42. Uffenheimer indicates the low level of the halting style of the common man and the coarse language of the soldier, the high level of religious discourse, and the intermediate level of matter of fact information in the narrator's voice (440–41).

23. On such phenomena see Page, *Speech in the English Novel* (n. 18 above), 77–86.

24. Sternberg (*Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 16) warns the linguist not to "mistake the liberties taken by art for the encoded norms," but acknowledges the need for studying the linguistic code (pp. 11–12).

25. For this distinction see, e.g., H. C. White, *Narrative and Discourse in Genesis* (Cambridge, 1991), 42; Mali (*Language of Conversation*, 27 and introduction) speaks of "speaking frame" as against "action description," a term that hardly covers exposition and narrator's comment.

26. W. Labov has pointed to the special stylistic status of the action sequence vis à vis the other elements of narrative, including expository and evaluative sections: *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Philadelphia, 1972), 359–71, 375–78.

or indirect object, temporal and local modifier), and the number of expanded noun phrases. A distinction will be made between independent and subordinate clauses.²⁷

2. Discourse Spoken and Written: A Linguistic Characterization

a. The language of written discourse

Linguistic research points to a number of characteristic differences between the language of spoken discourse and of written texts.²⁸ Written discourse is formal and planned.²⁹ Hence the writer typically uses more complicated syntactic constructions: in written language the sentence contains more constituents, subordinated clauses,³⁰ and long noun phrases,³¹ and thus more nominal elements.³² In biblical narrative, the characteristics of written language are demonstrated by many a sentence on writing, as, e.g.,³³

יְכַתֵּב שֵׁם עַל הַאֲבָנִים אֶת מְשֻׁנָּה תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה / אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב לִפְנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
Josh. 8:32
And he inscribed there on the stones a copy of the teaching / that Moses had written for the Israelites.

27. For technical details of the analysis see Polak, "The Oral and the Written," 76–78.

28. In general see W. L. Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness and Time: The Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing* (Chicago, 1994), 41–50; J. Miller and R. Weinert, *Spontaneous Spoken Language: Syntax and Discourse* (Oxford, 1998); M. A. K. Halliday, *Spoken and Written Language* (Oxford, 1985); 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 and Consequences of Writing and Reading* (Cambridge, 1985), 105–23, esp. 108–11; idem, "Integration and Involvement in Speaking, Writing and Oral Literature," in D. Tannen, ed., *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy* (Norwood, N.J., 1982), 35–53; D. Hartmann, "Orality in Spoken German Standard and Substandard," in U. M. Quasthoff, ed., *Aspects of Oral Communication* (Berlin, 1995), 138–67. Some important studies have been gathered by M. Coulthard, ed., *Advances in Spoken Discourse Analysis* (London, 1992).

29. The formal status and cultivation of written discourse is highlighted by M. Stubbs, *Language and Literacy: The Sociolinguistics of Reading and Writing* (London, 1980), 15–18, 29–42, 97–115; D. Tannen, "Relative Focus on Involvement in Oral and Written Discourse," in Olson et al., eds., *Literacy* (n. 28 above), 124–47, esp. 131–32, 137; K. Perera, *Children's Writing and Reading: Analysing Classroom Language* (Oxford, 1984). Planning as such is discussed by E. Ochs, "Planned and Unplanned Discourse," in T. Givón, ed., *Discourse and Syntax* (New York, 1979), 51–80. Halliday (*Spoken and Written Language*, xv, 76–79, 92–93) describes spoken discourse as an activity, writing as a product. A number of important studies have been brought together by M. Coulthard, ed., *Advances in Written Discourse Analysis* (London, 1994). An analysis of the cultural assumptions underlying some of the positions in the literacy debate is presented by B. V. Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 1984).

30. See Perera, *Children's Writing and Reading*, 133–51, 231–41; K. Beaman, "Coordination and Subordination Revisited: Syntactic Complexity in Spoken and Written Narrative Discourse," in D. Tannen, ed., *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse* (Norwood, N.J., 1984), 45–80.

31. See Chafe, "Differences," 109–10; S. Eggins, *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Analysis* (London, 1994), 57–60, 63.

32. According to Halliday (*Spoken and Written Language*, 61–75, 92–93) the predominance of nouns vis à vis verbs is connected with the higher lexical density of written language, and in general with the character of written texts as static product. Halliday also highlights the predominance of hypotaxis.

33. The importance of these passages for the understanding of scribal culture has been underlined by S. Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville, 1996), 79–80, 86–88.

Exod. 31:18

ויתן אל משה / ככלהו / לדברו אותו בהר סיני / שני לחת העדת
לחת אבן / כתבים באצבע אלהים

Thus he gave Moses / when he finished / speaking with him on Mount Sinai / the two tablets of the Covenant, stone tablets / inscribed with the finger of God.

Deut. 27:3

וכחכת עליהן את כל דברי התורה הזהאת / בעברית /
למען אשר תבא אל הארץ / אשר ה' אלהיך נתן לך / ארץ זבת חלב ודבש /
כאשר דבר ה' אלהי אבתריך לך

And inscribe upon them all the words of this Teaching / when you cross over / in order that you may enter the land / that the Lord your God is giving you / a land flowing with milk and honey / as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you.

These clauses contain a *high number of clauses in hypotaxis*, as attribute clause with relative particle (אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֵיךְ נָתַן לְךָ, *אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב לְפָנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*) or participle (כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶבְחָרְךָ לְךָ; בְּעַבְרָךְ); and as adverbial modifier (כְּאַצְבָּע אֱלֹהִים) (לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר תָּבָא אֶל הָאָרֶץ); Some clauses are dependent on subordination of goal (לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר תָּבָא אֶל הָאָרֶץ / אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֵיךְ נָתַן / כְּכָלָתוֹ / לְדִבְרֵי אָתָּה בְּהָר סִינִי; לְעַלְיהָ). The number of constituents is high. The verse on Joshua's writing on the altar contains (1) an adverbial modifier (**שָׁם**), (2) a description of place (**עַל הַאֲבָנִים**), and (3) a direct object (**מִשְׁנָה תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה**). In Moses' exhortation we note, apart from the predicate: (1) the adverbial modifier (**עַלְיהָ**), (2) the direct object (**כְּדִבְרֵי תּוֹרַה הַזֹּאת**), (3) a time indication (**בְּעַבְרָךְ**), (4) an indication of the goal (לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר . . .). The second verse contains: (1) an indirect object (**כְּכָלָתוֹ לְדִבְרֵי אָתָּה בְּהָר סִינִי**), (2) a time indication (**אֶל מֹשֶׁה**), (3) a direct object (**שְׁנִי לְחַת הַעֲדָת**). Some arguments consist of *long noun strings* (**כָּל דִּבְרֵי תּוֹרַה הַזֹּאת**); **מִשְׁנָה תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה**; **שְׁנִי לְחַת הַעֲדָת**, **לְחַת אַבְנָן**; **אָרֶץ זֹתָה חַלְבָּן וְדַבְשָׁן** (**עַלְיהָן**; Deut. 27:3; **שָׁם**, Josh. 8:32), but are mainly found in dependent clauses occur (Exod. 31:18; **לְךָ אֲשֶׁר . . . נָתַן לְךָ**, Deut. 27:3).

b. Written discourse and the complex-nominal style

The texts just presented form a perfect illustration of the thesis that written language adheres to the complex-nominal style, also found, for example, in the Aramaic contracts from Elephantine.³⁴ This style is highly developed in literature from the Persian era and the end of the exilic period (the Book of Ezra; the Esther novella, Daniel 1; 1–2 Chronicles), and slightly less so in texts attributable to the exilic

Since the exhortation of Deut. 27:3 occurs in Moses' admonitory homily, it represents spoken discourse. But according to our definition, this lengthy speech is to be viewed as a text in itself, rather than as part of a dialogue.

34. Polak, "The Oral and the Written," 104. The place of scribal education in the Neo-Assyrian bureaucracy is discussed by R. Mattila, *The King's Magnates: A Study of the Highest Officials of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Helsinki, 2000), 134; S. Parpola, "The Assyrian Cabinet," in M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, eds., *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament; Festschrift Von Soden* (Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1995), 379–401. On literacy and bureaucracy in the Persian empire see J. Ray, "Literacy and Language in Egypt in the Late and Persian Periods," in A. K. Bowman and G. Woolf, eds., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1994), 51–66. On the Aramaic Ahiqar tale and its similarity to postexilic Hebrew narrative, see F. H. Polak, "On Prose and Poetry in the Book of Job," *JANES* 24 (1996), 61–97, esp. 82–83.

period (e.g., the prose narratives on Jeremiah) or the century preceding the exile (Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period, e.g., the Deuteronomistic history of the Judean kings in 2 Kings 11–22).

c. The style of spoken discourse

Spoken discourse is less formal than written language,³⁵ and is often casual,³⁶ in particular when used in the intimacy of the household and in a circle of friends and acquaintances (the conversational mood).³⁷ In spoken discourse one meets more paratactic constructions,³⁸ most sentences contain fewer constituents,³⁹ long noun phrases are rare,⁴⁰ while reference by means of deictic particles and pronouns is frequent.⁴¹ These parameters are characteristic of quoted discourse in biblical narrative as well, e.g., Jacob's proposal to his sons or Isaac's accusation of Abimelech, the king of Gerar:⁴²

35. Halliday (*Spoken and Written Language*, 87) speaks of two particular tendencies within one language. An elaborate analysis by means of a number of parameters enables D. Biber to prove the cross-cultural validity of the distinction in Korean, Somalian, English and Tuvulan, a language spoken in the Western Pacific: *Dimensions of Register Variation: a Cross-Linguistic Comparison* (Cambridge, 1995), 1–23, 27–37, 355–63.

36. For this distinction see P. Brown and C. Fraser, "Speech as a Marker of Situation," in K. R. Scherer and H. Giles, eds., *Social Markers in Speech* (Cambridge and Paris, 1979), 33–62, esp. 45–53; D. Crystal and D. Davy, *Investigating English Style* (London, 1969), 88–121.

37. On the opposition of intimacy versus status (the public life), see E. Haugen, *The Ecology of Language* (Stanford, 1972), 329–30. The term 'conversational mood' is used by M. A. K. Halliday, "The Users and Uses of Language," in M. A. K. Halliday, A. McIntosh and P. D. Strevens, *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (London, 1964), 75–110, esp. 92–94.

38. See Miller and Weinert, *Spontaneous Spoken Language*, 79–87, 89–104, 132; Crystal and Davy, *English Style*, 109–11. In Biblical Hebrew the distinction between simple, coordinated and compound sentences is less fruitful, since in verbal clauses the subject can be expressed implicitly by the verbal inflection itself (prefix/affix). Hence a sentence in which the first clause contains an explicit subject, while the second contains only a verbal predicate with implicit subject is to be viewed as consisting of two main clauses rather than as a case of subject deletion in a compound sentence.

39. Halliday (*Spoken and Written Language*, 76–87) describes the lexical sparsity of spoken language and the preference for parataxis, and underlines the high number of verbs, which he relates to his view of spoken language as process oriented, and hence based on verbal clauses with less dependencies than written language (67–75). He opposes the structured "clause complex" of spoken discourse to the "sentence" of written language.

40. Miller and Weinert (*Spontaneous Spoken Language*, 134–43, 182–89) establish this feature on the basis of English, German, and Russian, as well as, occasionally, non-Indo-European languages such as Turkish or Tamil; they also offer an analysis of noun phrases in English "spontaneous spoken" narrative and conversation (145–53). See also Crystal and Davy, *English Style*, 106, 112–13.

41. See Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness and Time* (n. 28 above), 44–45; B. Fox, *Discourse Structure and Anaphora: Written and Conversational English* (Cambridge, 1987), 45–62, 75, 139–43; Miller and Weinert, *Spontaneous Spoken Language*, 140–41, 194, 267–68; S. Eggins and D. Slade, *Analysing Casual Conversation* (London, 1997), 93–94; P. M. Clancy, "Referential Choice in English and Japanese Narrative Discourse," in W. L. Chafe, ed., *The Pear Stories: Cognitive, Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Narrative Production* (Norwood, N.J., 1980), 127–201, esp. 127–33, 167–75, 197–98; Perera, *Children's Writing and Reading*, 104–9; H. Hausendorf, "Deixis and Orality: Explaining Games in Face-to-Face Interaction," in Quasthoff, ed., *Aspects of Oral Communication* (n. 32 above), 181–97; Crystal and Davy, *English Style*, 102–3, 112.

42. So also the plea of David (1 Sam. 26:9–10), quoted below (p. 64), and the argument of the conjurer of spirits with Saul (1 Sam. 28:21).

הנה שמעתי / כי יש שבר למצרים / רדו שם / ושברו לנו משם / ונחיה / ולא נמוות
“Now I hear that there are rations in Egypt. Go down and procure rations for us there, and let us live and not die.”

מִדּוֹעַ בָּאתֶם אֶלָּי / וְאַתֶּם שְׁנָאַתֶּם אֹתִי / וְתַלְחוּנִי מִתְכֶם
“Why have you come to me / and you have been hostile to me / and have driven me away
from you?”

In these statements *all clauses are paratactic*, apart from one subordinated clause (כִּי יְשַׁבֵּר בְּמִצְרַיִם). Isaac's questions contain *three clauses that consist of predicate and pronominal complement only* (e.g., וְתַשְׁלַחֲנוּ מִתְכֶם; so also in Jacob's proposal (כִּי יְשַׁבֵּר שָׁמָה / וְשַׁבְּרוּ לְנוּ מִשְׁמָה). Only one clause contains nouns. In view of the serious mood of these statements, and the importance of the causes represented, their lack of formal cultivation is all the more remarkable.

The context of family life is represented by the discussion between Saul and his daughter Michal (1 Sam. 19:17):

למה ככה רמייני / ותשלח את איבי / וימלט ...
"Why did you deceive me this way / and let my enemy get away / and escape"

הוּא אָמַר אֵלִי / שְׁלַח-נִי / לִמְהֵא אָמִיתָךְ
“He said to me / help me get away / why should I kill you”

Only one out of six clauses contains a noun (**וְחַשְׁלָחֵי אֶת אַיִבִי**), three contain *one or two pronouns or simple adverbs* (**הָוָא אָמַר אֵלִי, לִמְהָ כָּכָה רַמִּיתָנִי**), and two consist of the *verbal predicate only* (or of *predicate with suffix*): (**וַיִּמְלֹט שְׁלָחָנִי**); reference by suffix is frequent (**אַיִתָּחֶךָ, שְׁלָחָנִי, רַמִּיתָנִי**).

One could argue that this style reflects the excitement of the quarrel rather than casual language in general.⁴³ But such an explanation cannot hold true for Saul's answer to his father's servant (1 Sam 9:7):⁴⁴

והנה נלך / ומה נביא לאיש / כי הלחם אול מכלנו / והשורה אין להביא לאיש האלים / מה אתה
“But here, we go / and what can we bring the man? / For the food in our bags is all gone / and there is nothing we can bring to the man of God as a present / What have we got?”

The same style dominates Saul's conversation with his uncle, who asks him (10:14):

“Where have you gone?” אאן הילכתם

Saul answers:

43. D. J. A. Clines regards the characteristic formulation of Michal's answer as an effort on her part to imitate David's soldier-like way of speaking: "The Story of Michal, Wife of David, in its Sequential Unfolding," in D. J. A. Clines and T. C. Eskenazi, eds., *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation*, JSOT Supp. 119 (Sheffield, 1991), 129–40, esp. 131; see also J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, Volume II: The Crossing Fates (I Sam. 13–21 & II Sam. 1)* (Assen, 1986), 270, 276.

44. The preceding conversation (vv. 5–6) is couched in the same language, as seven clauses out of eleven contain at most one argument (63.64%). Four verbal clauses contain one argument only; one clause consists of a verbal predicate only (**לכה**). In addition we note one clause with two arguments, two relative clauses, and one subordinate clause containing two noun arguments (**פָּנִים חִדּוֹל אָבִי מִן הַאֲתָנוֹת**).

לבקש את האתנות / ונראה כי אין / ונבווא אל שמואל
 “To look for the she-donkeys / but we saw that they were not there⁴⁵ / and turned to Samuel.”

The narrative continues with his uncle’s question (10:15):

הגידה נא לי / מה אמר לכם שמואל
 “Tell me / what did Samuel say to you?”

And Saul answers (v. 16)

הגד הגיד לנו / כי נמצאו האתנות
 “He told us / that the donkeys had been found.”

Even though this dialogue contains some subordinate clauses (אין, כי נמצאו האתנות), most clauses are extremely simple. Three clauses contain no more than one noun (הגיד לנו, הגידה נא לי), (ונבווא אל שמואל), and the uncle’s question **אן הלחכם** is answered by an independent infinitive clause that forms a logical continuation to the implied answer “we went to,”⁴⁶ (לבקש את האתנות). By the same token one notes Jonathan’s reproach: (1 Sam. 20:32: “Why should he be killed? What has he done?”), and the question of Elisha’s servant: (2 Kgs. 4:43: “How can I set this before a hundred men?”).

These dialogues exemplify the casual language of family life and informal communication with friends and acquaintances (the conversational mood). In such a context the use of pronominals (לכם, לי, היכה) and deictics (ככה) is self-evident, as the participants in the conversation can see one another, and know what their partner is referring to.⁴⁷

An additional characteristic is “fragmented syntax,” that is the juxtaposition of syntactic elements without explicit syntactic expression of their connection.⁴⁸ We encounter an obvious example in Abram’s request from Sarai:

אמרי נא / אחתי את “Please say, you are my sister.”

The clauselet **את אחתי** suggests indirect discourse, since Sarai is referred to as addressee (תְּךָ). In quoted discourse she would refer to herself as speaker (אנכִי).⁴⁹ On

45. In Biblical Hebrew syntax (e.g., *GK* §111d) the first imperfect consecutive in a chain of two is considered to be logically subordinate to the second one (“as equivalent to a temporal clause”). In our view, the decisive point is that this logical subordination is expressed by a paratactic construction.

46. This is a case of maximal deletion, i.e. deletion of the entire sequence that was in the question. Thus the answer, in its surface form, contains only one element of the underlying grammatical structure, e.g. “Where are you going?”, “Home,” that is (I am going) “home.” For Biblical Hebrew such structures have been analyzed by E. L. Greenstein, “The Syntax of Saying ‘Yes’ in Biblical Hebrew,” *JANES* 19 (1989), 51–59, esp. 53, 59. On Job 1:7 see Polak, “Prose and Poetry in Job” (n. 34 above), 69. This construction also fits the elliptical nature of face to face communication, as shown by Eggins and Slade, *Casual Conversation* (n. 41 above), 89–90.

47. For this tendency see in particular Hausendorf, “Deixis and Orality” (n. 41 above).

48. Miller and Weinert, *Spontaneous Spoken Language*, 22–27, 58–61; Eggins and Slade, *Casual Conversation* (n. 41 above), 94–95. On Uffenheimer’s analysis of the soldier’s language, see n. 22 above.

49. The semantic aspects of this construction are discussed by C. L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis* (Atlanta, 1996), 120–21.

the other hand, this clauselet lacks the introductory particle characteristic of indirect discourse, e.g., **כִּי**. In terms of discourse analysis this is a case of “that-deletion,” a feature that is considered typical for spontaneous spoken language.⁵⁰

One also notes, for instance, Jonadab's address of Amnon:

2 Sam. 13:4

“Why are you so depressed, prince, morning after morning? / Will you not tell me?”

מדוע אתה ככה דל בן המלך, בבקך בבקך / הלוֹא תגיד לִי

In this question one notes the high number of pronominal and adverbial forms (**אתה**, **מדוע**, **ככה**), the exceptional use of **ככה** before the nominal predicate,⁵¹ and the second question, **הלוֹא תגיד לִי**, without subordinate object clause. In biblical quoted discourse fragmented syntax is rarely met,⁵² but one often encounters the other characteristics of casual spoken language.

However, the characteristic style of spoken discourse can also be used to construct intricate arguments, e.g., David's rebuttal of Abishai's proposal to kill Saul (1 Sam. 26:9–10):

אל תשחיתתו / כי מי שלח ידו במשיח ה' / ונכח . . .

חי ה' / כי אם ה' יגפנו / אוריומו יבוֹא / ומת / או במלחמה יירד / ונספה

“Destroy him not / for who can put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed / and not be punished? . . .” “As the Lord lives / the Lord himself will strike him / or his time will come / and he will die / or he will go into battle / and perish.”

In spite of the seemingly plain style, this reproach contains a rhetorical question and the parallelism of **אוריומו יבוֹא** and **ומת**. By the same token one notes Abraham's proposal to Lot to separate their flocks (Gen. 13:8–9):

אל נא תהי מורייה ביני ובין רعي ובין רעיע / כי אונשים אחים אנחנו

הלא כל הארץ לפני / הפרד נא מעלי / אם המשאל ואימה / ואם הימין ואשMAILה

“Let there be no strife between you and me, between my herdsmen and yours / for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? / Break up from me / if you go north, I will go south / and if you go south, I will go north.”⁵³

d. Spoken discourse and the rhythmic-verbal style

A style that seems similar to the language of quoted discourse is found in a large number of narratives. Many tales, and even entire narrative cycles, are characterized by the *high number of clauses consisting of a predicate only, or of predicate with one single argument*,⁵⁴ the *low number of clauses in hypotaxis*, and the *low*

50. See Miller and Weinert, *Spontaneous Spoken Language*, 83–84; E. Finegan and D. Biber, “Register and Social Dialect Variation: An Integrated Approach,” in D. Biber and E. Finegan, eds., *Socio-linguistic Perspectives on Register* (Oxford, 1994), 315–47, esp. 330–33.

51. This syntactic connection is implied by the cantillation signs, as **ככה** carries a *münâh*. This is the only passage in which **ככה** is used to modify a nominal predicate. In all other passages it is linked to the verbal predicate.

52. In this respect Bar-Efrat's position (see n. 17 above) is partly justified.

53. On the use of parallelism in Abraham's argument see pp. 82–83 below.

54. Mali (*Language of Conversation*, 204) shows that in Joshua–Kings clauses containing at most one argument are more frequent in quoted discourse than in the narrator's domain.

number of expanded noun chains.⁵⁵ In the tale of Abraham at the terebinths of Mamre (Gen. 18:1–15),⁵⁶ this characterization is as correct for the narrator's domain as it is for quoted speech. In character discourse we encounter sequences such as (וְרֹחֵץ וְגַלְכֶם, וְשָׁעַנוּ תְּחִתַּה עַצְמָתְךָ) (v. 4, “wash your feet and recline under the tree”), (וְאַקְחֵה פַת לְחֵם, וְסַעֲדוּ לְבָכֶם, אַחֲר תַּעֲבְרוּ מִהָּרִים, שְׁלַשׁ סָאִים קְמָה סָלָת, לֹוְשִׁי, וְעַשְׁיִ עֲגוֹת) (v. 5, “And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on”), (וְיַרְאָ וְיַרְצֵן לְקַרְאָתֶם . . . וַיַּשְׁתַחַוו וַיֹּאמֶר וַיַּקְרַב בֶּן בָּקָר אֶל שָׂוָה רָךְ וְטוֹב וַיַּתְן אֶל הַנֹּעֶר) (v. 6, “Quick, three seahs of choice flour! Knead and make cakes”).⁵⁷ However, similar sequences are found in the event sequence, e.g., (וַיַּרְא וַיַּרְצֵן לְקַרְאָתֶם . . . וַיַּשְׁתַחַוו וַיֹּאמֶר וַיַּקְרַב בֶּן בָּקָר אֶל שָׂוָה רָךְ וְטוֹב וַיַּתְן אֶל הַנֹּעֶר) (v. 7, he saw them, . . . bowed to the ground and said), (וַיַּתְן לִפְנֵיכֶם וְהוּא עַמְדָה עַל יָדֵיכֶם וַיֹּמֶר לְעֲשֹׂת אֶתְנוֹתָר תְּחִתַּה עַצְמָתְךָ) (v. 8, Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah) are far less numerous (six clauses out of 22, 27.27%) than the clauses that include at most one argument (thirteen cases, 59.09%). Expanded noun chains and clauses in hypotaxis are not often found. The scene of the meal contains a series of cases of pronominal reference and ellipsis (וַיַּתְן לִפְנֵיכֶם וְהוּא עַמְדָה עַל יָדֵיכֶם וַיֹּמֶר לְעֲשֹׂת אֶתְנוֹתָר תְּחִתַּה עַצְמָתְךָ) (and he hastened to prepare it, v. 7), (וַיֹּמֶר לְעֲשֹׂת אֶתְנוֹתָר תְּחִתַּה עַצְמָתְךָ) (and he set these before them; and he was waiting on them under the tree, and they ate, v. 8; also vv. 1–2).

A narrative style of this kind, then, is quite different from the complex-nominal style. It is best characterized as rhythmic-verbal, and seems close to character discourse; in consequence it may be assumed to reflect the norms of oral narrative.⁵⁹ This style is characteristic of such narrative cycles as, e.g., the tales of the Patriarchs, of Samuel, Saul and David, of Elijah and Elisha. In other words, *even though in their present form these cycles belong to written literature, they are based on a substrate of oral literature*. The authors who wrote them down, had a thorough knowledge of the literary norms of oral narrative, and adhered to them.⁶⁰

55. Polak, “The Oral and the Written,” 73–87, 100–105; R. Dauenhauer and N. M. Dauenhauer, “Oral Literature Embodied and Disembodied,” in Quasthoff, ed., *Aspects of Oral Communication* (n. 28 above), 91–111. “A fluent, paratactic style,” with no further specification, is advanced by E. Nielsen as a criterion for oral composition (or rather oral transmission): *Oral Tradition: A Modern Problem in Old Testament Introduction* (London, 1954), 36.

56. Attention is also due to the high number of epic formulae in this episode, for which see F. H. Polak, “Prose and Poetry in Job” (n. 34 above), 91–97; “Epic Formulas in Biblical Narrative and the Fountainheads of Ancient Hebrew Narrative,” *Te’udah* 7 (Tel Aviv, 1992), 9–53 (in Heb. with Eng. summary); Y. Avishur, *Studies in Biblical Narrative* (Tel Aviv-Jaffa, 1999), 57–74, 133–35, 199–238; G. del Olmo Lete, *Mitos y Leyendas de Canaan según la Tradición de Ugarit* (Madrid, 1981), 36–37, 54–58.

57. In Gen. 18:1–8 we encounter 16 clauses in character speech, of which 12 (75%) contain 0–1 argument, 2 (12.50%) 2–3 arguments, and 2 clauses in hypotaxis (12.50%); this domain includes 4 expanded noun chains (25%). Pronominal/adverbial reference is found in v. 5 (twice).

58. In Gen. 18:1–8 the narrator's domain includes 22 clauses, out of which 13 include 0–1 argument (59%), 6 contain 2–3 arguments (27.27%), and 3 are embedded in an independent clause (13.64%). The text contains 8 expanded noun chains (in 36.36% of the clauses).

59. For this characterization see the references in nn. 38–41 above.

60. The symbiosis of oral and written literature has been discussed by A. B. Lord, *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition* (Ithaca, 1991), 25–27, 170–95; J. M. Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song* (Berkeley, 1990), 1–51; R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1992), 35–51; S. Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word* (n. 37 above); J. Van Seters,

However, even in the tale of the terebinths at Mamre, the domain of the narrator includes a number of verses in which the language is more intricate than is usual in the rhythmic-verbal style:

Gen. 18:1

וירא אליו ה' באלני מمرا / והוא ישב פתח האهل כהם היום

The Lord appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre; and he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot.

v. 11

ואברהם ושרה זקנים, באים בימים / חדל להיות לשורה אורה נשים

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years; Sarah had stopped having the periods of women.

In the tale of Hagar's flight one notes a similar opening:

Gen. 16:1

ושרי אשת אברהם לא ילדה לו / וללה שפחה מצרית / ושםה הגר

Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had an Egyptian maidservant and her name was Hagar.

וهو ישב; וירא אליו ה' באלני מمرا) (long noun chains, (dependent clauses (לזיות לשורה אורה נשים; כהם היום). Accordingly, these clauses seem similar to the complex-nominal style. But their stylistic character suits their expositional function: since the narrator has to present the necessary data concerning the situation, he needs more arguments and longer noun chains to state the facts.⁶¹

The second place in which the style is more intricate than usual is the closure of the tale of Hagar:

Gen. 16:14

על כן קרא לבאר באר לחי ראי / הנה בין קדש ובין ברד

Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi. See, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

The aetiological element in this tale involves the narrator's authority vis-à-vis the audience, and is thus close to the evaluative function, embodied by such remarks as the conclusion of the first part of the Bath-sheba tale:

2 Sam. 11:27b

וירע הדבר אשר עשה דוד בעיני ה'

But the thing that David had done was bad in the eyes of the Lord.

In elements of this type the narrator often prefers clauses of a more complicated structure, such as clauses with three arguments, and subordinated clauses.⁶² Thus

The Pentateuch: A Social-Science Commentary (Sheffield, 1999), 74. However, contrary to Van Seters' presumptions, the data presented by Polak ("The Oral and the Written") point to a gradual shift in emphasis. Up to a certain point, probably the middle of the eighth century B.C.E., the prestige language of Hebrew literature is that of oral narrative, but from here on the dominant model for literary creation is scribal.

61. This tendency is evident in, e.g., Gen. 19:1; 2 Sam. 16:1, 5; 20:2; 1 Kgs. 1:1, 4–10; 11:26 (see also Crystal and Davy, *English Style*, 109). The expositional descriptions of the Esther tale occupy extensive sections of the narrative: Esth. 1:1–9; 2:5–8; 3:1–2.

62. So also, e.g., Gen 25:30b. In 2 Sam. 5:9αβ the aetiological note is presented by a clause that is embedded in the narrative sequence and contains two arguments: ויקרא לה עיר דוד.

within the narrator's domain the style of expositional and evaluative clauses (narrator's comment) is more intricate than that of the action sequence proper.⁶³

In the following discussion we will deal, first of all, with the place of character discourse in the style of complex-nominal language. Afterwards we will turn to the problems raised by its use in narratives that represent the rhythmic-verbal style.

3. The Complex-Nominal Style and Quoted Discourse

Prose narrative in the complex-nominal style tends to maintain a certain distinction between character discourse and the domain of the narrator, who adheres to the norms of written language.

a. The Ezra Memoirs

In the Ezra Memoirs this distinction is illustrated by the following example, in which we indicate, for every clause, (a) the number of arguments (as defined above), (b) status (subordination is indicated as "sub,"⁶⁴ complex subordination as "chyp," attributive clauses as "attr," conditional clauses as "cond";⁶⁵ verbal groups that are not to be split into a main and a subordinate clause are marked as "vg"), and (c) the number of expanded noun strings ("expand"). In the following excerpts not all verses analyzed will be quoted in full.⁶⁶

Ezra 10:7–14

a. Narrator

Unit	Ezra 10:7–9	Argument	Sub	Expand
v. 7	ויעבירו קול ביהודה וירושלם לכל הגולה (להקבץ) להקבץ ירושלם	4 arg	-	2
		1 arg	sub	-
v. 8	וכל (אשר לא-יבוא) יחרם כל-רכישו	2 arg	-	1
	אשר לא-יבוא לשלשת הימים עצת השרים והזקנים	3 arg	attr	2+
v. 9	וזוא יובל מקהל הגולה	2 arg	-	1
	ויקבצו כל-אנשי-יהודה ובנין ירושלם לששת הימים (הוא חדש) בעשרים בחודש	4 arg	-	3+
	הוא חדש התשיעי	1 arg	-	1
	וישבר כל העם ברוחב בית האלים (מרעדים) מרעדים על-הדבר ומהגשים	3 arg	-	2+
		1 arg	sub	1

63. A similar distinction has been established by Labov's analysis of oral narrative in the black vernacular of New York: *Language in the Inner City* (n. 26 above), 360–70, 393–96.

64. Motive and adversative clauses introduced by **כִּי** are analyzed as independent clauses, since in these cases the syntactic connection can be extremely loose, as shown by S. R. Driver (*BDB*, 473–74, esp. 474b). In this connection Muraoaka (*Emphatic Words*, 159–60, 164) points to the deictic force of **כִּי**.

65. In the analysis of narrative style, a conditional clause counts as hypotactic, but is not considered as an argument in the apodosis, if it is separated from the protasis by the *waw* marking parataxis. However, if the apodosis does not open with a paratactic marker, the protasis is viewed as an argument of the apodosis as main clause.

66. Vocatives and adverbial clauses are counted as arguments. So are object and subject clauses. In contrast, relative clauses are not regarded as arguments since they serve as attributes, and thus merely form an expansion of the noun phrase. But at the present stage of research we have not counted them as such.

b. Character Discourse

Unit	vv. 12–14	Argument	Sub	Expand
v. 12	כִּי־הָרְבִינוּ (לְשָׁא)	-	-	-
v. 13	כֹּדֶבֶיךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעַשֹּׂת אֲבָל הָעָם רַב וְהָעֵת גָּשָׁמִים וְאֵין כָּה (לְעַמּוֹד) לְעַמּוֹד בְּהַזָּעַן וְהַמְלָאָכָה לְאַלְיוֹם אֶחָד וְלֹא לְשָׁנִים	2 arg 1 arg 1 arg 2 arg 1 arg 1 arg	- - - - sub -	- - - - 1
v. 14	יַעֲמֹדוּ נָא שְׁרִינוּ לְכָל הַקְּהָל (עַד לְהַשִּׁיב) וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר בָּרְעִינוּ (הַהֲשִׁיב) יָבָא לְעַתִּים מִזְמְנִים הַהֲשִׁיב נְשִׁים נְכָרִיות וְעַמָּהֶם זְקִנִּי עִיר וְעִיר וְשָׁפְטִיה עַד לְהַשִּׁיב חָרוֹן אֶפְּאֶלְהִינוּ מְמֻנוּ עַד לְדָבָר הַזָּה	3 arg 2 arg 1 arg 1 arg 3 arg	- - attr - sub	1 2 1 2 2

The statistical survey presents the summation and percentage for (a) character discourse (Char), the domain of the story-teller (Narr), and (c) the whole unit. For each of these fields we will establish (a) the number of arguments in the independent short clauses only (0–1 arguments, including cases with two pronouns or deictic adverbs), for long independent clauses (2–5 arguments) and the percentage relative to the total number of clauses; (b) the number and percentage of hypotactic clauses, and (c) the number and percentage of expanded noun strings.⁶⁷ The last four lines of the summation give the figures for subordination (hypot), long clauses (2–5 arguments), short clauses (0–1 arguments), and expanded noun chains (expand).

Ezra 10:7–14	Char	%	Narr	%	Unit	%
clauses	15	64.00	9	36.00	24	
0–1 arg	7	46.67	1	11.11	8	33.33
2–5 arg	4	26.67	5	55.56	9	37.50
hypot	4	26.67	3	33.33	7	29.67
expand	11	73.33	15	166.67	26	108.33

Thus we see that the clauses in the narrator's domain are formulated in a highly complex-nominal style, whereas the language used by the speaking characters is far less formal and complex. The inference is warranted that this pericope tries to imitate the peculiarities of spoken language, although basic patterns of the complex-nominal style are also found in quoted discourse. Here, then, the complex style is mitigated and rendered more vivid by the imitation of the conversational mood, without thereby turning into rhythmic-verbal. In the pericope of the Torah reading (Ezra 8:1–18) one meets a similar style.

67. The percentage of expanded noun chains (relative to the number of clauses) indicates how many expanded chains are, on the average, found in each clause. Thus the indication 166.67%, given for the narrator's domain in Ezra 10, means that each clause in this domain contains 1.67 chains (or each ten clauses 16 expanded noun chains).

This constellation is far from unique. For instance, the Chronicler's account of Hezekiah's preparations for the Assyrian onslaught (2 Chron. 32:1–9) is dominated by the complex-nominal style.⁶⁸ However, the style of quoted speech is far less formal. The decision to stop up all the springs is motivated by two simple clauses, containing two arguments and one argument, respectively. Each clause includes one expanded noun chain:

2 Chron. 32:4

“Why should the kings of Assyria come / and find much water?”

למה יבואו מלכי אשור / ומצאו מים רבים

Hezekiah's exhortatory address in the sequel opens with three short clauses that consist only of a predicate, followed by a long clause with an expanded noun chain as argument:

v. 7a

חזק / ואמץ / אל תיראו / ואל תהתו מפני מלך אשור ומפני כל ההמון אשר עמו

“Be strong and courageous / do not be afraid / and do not fear the king of Assyria nor for all the multitude that is with him.”

This sequence is rounded off by a short nominal clause that is continued by two nominal clauses and two subordinate infinitive clauses:

v. 7b

v. 8

כי עמו רב מעמו

עמו זרוע בשר / ועמו ה' / אלהינו / לעוזנו / ולחלהם מלחמותנו

“For there is someone greater with us than with him / With him is an arm of flesh / but with us is the Lord our God / to help us / and to fight our battles.”

These nine clauses, then, include three clauses consisting of a single predicate (33.33%), two clauses containing one argument (22.22%), and the same number of clauses with two arguments. We note only two subordinate clauses (infinitive clauses; 22.22%), two noun phrases, and one extremely long noun chain.

b. *The Esther Scroll*

The differences between the style of the action sequence and quoted discourse are also noted in the Esther novella, as demonstrated by the following pericope, where we analyze 16 clauses in character discourse and in the narrator's domain. The first pericope contains a long sequence of narrated (indirect) speech.

Esther 4:6–8, 11b–13

a. Narrator

Unit	Esth. 4:4, 6–8, 12–13a (partial excerpt)	Argument	Sub	Expand
v. 4	ותבונינה נערות אסתר וסריסיה ויגידו לה ויתחלל המלכה מאך ותשלח בגדים (להלביש) להלביש את מרדכי	1 arg 1 pron 2 arg 2 arg 1 arg	- - - - sub	1+ - - - -

68. See Polak, “The Oral and the Written,” 98.

			Argument	Sub	Expand
	ולהסיר שׁׁקָן מְעַלִין ולא קְבָל		2 arg	sub	-
(...)			-	-	-
v. 6	וַיֵּצֵא הַתְּךָ אֶל מִרְדָּכַי אֶל רֹחֶוב הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר לְפִנֵּי שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ	3 arg	-	3	
(...)					
v. 8	וְאַת פָּתַשְׁגֵן כְּתָב הַדָּת (אֲשֶׁר) נָתַן לוֹ (לְהַרְאָה) אֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּשַׁוְשָׁן (לְהַשְׁמִידָם) לְהַשְׁמִידָם לְהַרְאָה אֶת אַסְטוֹר וְלְהַגִּיד לָהּ וְלְצֹוֹת עַלְיהָ (לְבּוֹא) לְבּוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַתְּחִנֵּן לוֹ וְלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְפְנֵיו עַל עַמָּה	3 arg 3 arg - 1 arg 1 pron 1 pron 1 arg 1 pron 2 arg	- attr chyp sub sub sub chyp chyp chyp	1 1 - - - - - - -	
(...)					
v. 12	וַיֹּגִידוּ לְמִרְדָּכָי אֶת דִּבְרֵי אַסְטוֹר	2 arg	-	1	
v. 13a	וַיֹּאמֶר מִרְדָּכָי (לְהַשְׁבָּבָה) לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל אַסְטוֹר	2 arg 1 arg	- sub	- -	

b. Character Discourse

Unit	Esth. 4:11, 13b–14, 16	Argument	Sub	Expand
v. 11	כָל עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם מִדְיָנוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יְוּדָעִים (אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר כָל אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה) אֲשֶׁר דָתוֹ (לְהַמִּתָּה) אֲשֶׁר יִבּוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל הַחֶזֶר הַפְּנִימִית (אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִקְרָא לְהַמִּתָּה לְכַד מָאֵשׁ יוֹשִׁיט לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת שְׂרִבֵּת הַחַבָּב וְהַיָּה וְאַנְיָה נָקְרָאֵת (לְבּוֹא) וְהַשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם לְבּוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ	2 arg 2 arg 3 arg - - - 3 arg 1 arg	- sub attr chyp sub - attr sub	3 1 1 - - - 1 -
(...)				
v. 13b	אַל-תְּדַמֵּי בְּנֶפֶשׁ (לְהַמְלֹט) לְהַמְלֹט בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכֶּל הַחוּזִים	2 arg 2 arg	- sub	- 2
v. 14	כִּי אִם הַחֲרֵשׁ תְּחִרְישׁ בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת רוֹחׁ וְחַצְלָה יִעְמֹד לְיְהוּדִים מִמֶּקְומָוֹת וְאֶת וּבֵית אַבְדּוֹ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ (אָם) אִם לְעֵת כֹּזֶאת הַגַּעַת לְמִלְכָות	1 arg 4 arg 1 arg 2 arg 2 arg	- - - - sub	1 2 1 - 1
(...)				
v. 16	לְךָ כְּנָס אֶת כָל הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאים (הַנִּמְצָאים) הַנִּמְצָאים בְּשַׁוְשָׁן וְצָוּמוֹ עַלִי וְאַל תְּאַכֵּל וְאַל תְּשַׁתּוּ שְׁלַשְׁת יְמִים לִילָה וּוּמָם גַּם אַנְיָה וְנָעָרָת אֲצָוָם כֵּן וּבְכֵן אֶבְרָא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא כָּרְתָה וְכָאָשֶׁר אַבְדָּתִי (וְכָאָשֶׁר) אַבְדָּתִי	1 arg 1 arg 1 pron - 2 arg 2 arg 3 arg - 1 arg	- attr - - - - - sub -	1 - - - 2 1 - - -

Esther 4	Char	%	Narr	%	Unit	%
clauses	26	50.00	26	50.00	52	
0-1 arg	7	26.92	4	15.38	11	21.15
2-5 arg	8	30.77	8	30.77	16	30.77
hypot	11	42.31	14	53.85	25	48.08
expand	17	65.38	8+	32.69	25+	49.04

In this pericope the stylistic differences between spoken discourse and action sequence are obvious: in character discourse the number of clauses with no more than two arguments (0, 1, 2 arg) is higher than in the action sequence, whereas the number of subordinated clauses and clauses with 3 arguments is lower. We note only that the incidence of expanded noun strings is on the high side in character discourse, and on the low side in the action sequence.

c. Jeremiah and 1-2 Kings

Character discourse is rare in large narrative sections that are attributed to the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period. For instance, the account of Joash's enthronement by the priest Jehoiada contains only a few examples, mainly the long sequence of the priest's orders (2 Kgs. 11:5–8), two short exclamations, **קָשָׁר המלָך** (v. 12), **יְחִי המלָך** (v. 14), and two additional priestly orders (v. 15). A number of long royal instructions is found in the narrative on Josiah's Temple restoration (2 Kgs. 22:4–7, 13), followed by a long prophetic diatribe (vv. 15–20). Short stretches of quoted speech relate to the scroll which was found in the debris:

ויגד שפנ הscrbe למלך לאמור / ספר נתן לי חילקייה הכהן
The scribe Shaphan also told the king, "Hilkiah, the priest, has given me a scroll"

The account on Gedaliah's murder by Ishmael (Jer. 41:1–18) contains only two short stretches of quoted speech:⁶⁹

יִאָמֶר אֲלֵיכֶם / בָּאוּ אֵלָי גָּדְלֵיכֶם בֶּן אַחִיכֶם
Jer. 41:6⁷⁰
He said to them, "Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam" (LXX Gedaliah)

69. In contrast, the consultation of Jeremiah by Johanan ben Kareah centers on Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 42:9–22) and the preceding questions by the officers (vv. 2–6) rather than on narrative developments. In the tale of Johanan's flight to Egypt, the action sequence carries more weight, but the accusations of the prophet (43:2–3) and the prophecy itself (vv. 8–13) are still the main issue.

70. In this verse the LXX does not represent the patronymic. Thus in certain sections of the book of Jeremiah the LXX may reflect a text that contains fewer long noun chains. The difference, however, does not affect the typology of narrative discourse in this book.

On the other hand, character discourse plays an important role in the story of Gedaliah's efforts to establish his authority (Jeremiah 40; in the following excerpts character discourse is not separated from the narrator's voice, but is indicated as "char," whereas the narrator's domain is marked as "narr").

		Jer. 40:7–16		
Unit	Jeremiah 40	Argument	Sub	Expand
40:7	וישמעו כל שמי החילים אשר בשודה המה ואנשיהם (כ')	2 arg	-	3
	כי הפקיד מלך בכל את גודליו בן אחיקם בארץ	3 arg	sub	2
	וכי הפקיד אותו אנסים וטף ומדלת הארץ	2 arg	sub	2+
	מאשר לא הגיעו בבליה	2 arg	chyp	-
v. 8	ויבאו אל גודליה ומצפתה	2 arg	-	8+
	וישמעאל בן נתניהו ויהונתן בני קrho ושוריה בן תנחמתה ובני עייף הנטפי ויזניהו בן המעתמי המה ואנשיהם			
v. 9	וישבע להם גודליה בן אחיקם בן שפן ולאנשיהם (לאמר) לאמר	2 arg	-	3
char	אל תיראו מעבודך (מעבודך) מעבודה הכהדים	1 arg	-	-
	שבו בארץ	1 arg	sub	-
	ועבדו את מלך בכל	1 arg	-	-
	ויטיב לכם	1 arg	-	1
v. 10	ואני הנני ישב במצפה (לעמד)	1 pron	-	-
	לעמד לפניהם הכהדים	3 arg	-	-
	אשר יבואו אלינו	1 arg	attr	1
	ואתם אספו יין וקץ' ושםן	2 arg	-	1+
	ושמו בכליכם	1 arg	-	-
	ושבו בעיריכם	1 arg	-	-
	אשר חפשתם	1 arg	attr	-
v. 11	וגם כל היהודים אשר במאוב וביבון ומון ובארות (כ')	2 arg	-	5
	ואשר בכל הארץות שמעו (כ')			
	כי נתן מלך בכל שארית ליהודה	2 arg	sub	1
	וכי הפקיד עליהם את גודליהו בן אחיקם בן שפן (.)	2 arg	sub	2
v. 12 ⁷¹	ויבאו ארץ יehודah אל גודליהו מצפהה ויאספו יין וקץ' הרבה מאד	3 arg	-	1
v. 13	ויהונתן בן קrho וכל שמי החילים אשר בשודה באו אל גודליהו מצפהה	2 arg	-	2
char	ויאמרו אלו הירעד תרע (כ')	3 arg	-	3+
	כי בעליס מלך בני עמון שלח את ישמעאל בן נתניה (להכתף) להכתף נש'	1 arg	chyp	-
narr	ולא האמין להם גודליהו בן אחיקם	2 arg	-	1
v. 15	ויהונתן בן קrho אמר אל גודליהו בטרם מצפה (לאמר) לאמר	5 arg	-	1
char	אלכה נא ואכה את ישמעאל בן נתניה	-	sub	-
	ויאש לא ידע	1 arg	-	-
	למה ייכחה נש'	2 arg	-	-
	ונפצצו כל יהודה (הנקבצים)	1 arg	-	-
	הנקבצים אליך	1 pron	attr	-

71. In v. 12 the LXX does not reflect the entire first clause (וישבו-שם).

				Argument	Sub	Expand
		ואבדה שאירית יהודה		1 arg	-	1
v. 16		ויאמר גודליחו בן איזקם אל יוחנן בן קרח		2 arg	-	3
char		אל תעשה את הדבר הזה		1 arg	-	1
		כי שקר אתה דבר אל שמעאל		2 arg	-	-

Jer. 40:7–16	Char	%	Narr	%	Unit	%
clauses	24	57.14	18	42.86	42	
0–1 arg	13	54.17	1	5.56	14	33.33
2–5 arg	4	16.67	10	55.56	14	33.33
hypot	7	29.16	7	38.89	14	33.33
expand	10	41.67	38	211.11	48	114.29

In this pericope the distinction between character speech and narrator's discourse is indicated by (a) the high number of independent clauses with 0–1 arguments (54% as against 5.56% in the narrator's domain); (b) the low number of clauses containing 2–5 arguments (16.67%; in the narrator's domain: 55.56%); (c) the percentage of subordinated clauses (29.16% as against 38.89% in the narrator's domain); (d) the low percentage of expanded noun chains (41.67% as against 211% in the narrator's domain). In the account of Jehoiakim's persecution of Jeremiah and Baruch the situation is similar, even though the differences between the domains are less clear cut.⁷²

Jer. 36:13–15	Char	%	Narr	%	Unit	%
clauses	5	35.72	8	64.29	13	
0–1 arg	3	60.00	2	22.22	5	38.46
2–5 arg	1	20.00	3	33.33	4	30.77
hypot	1	20.00	3	33.33	4	30.77
expand	1	20.00	7	87.50	8	61.54

The tale of the Queen of Sheba contains a long appreciation of Solomon's court and wisdom, which could almost be regarded as a formal speech in itself. However, since it forms a reaction to the narrative events, it still belongs to character discourse. The language proves less formal than the style of the narrator's domain.

1 Kgs. 10:2–10, 13 (quoted: vv. 6–10, 13)			Argument	Sub	Expand
Unit	1 Kings 10				
v. 6	וְתֹאמֶר אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ		1 arg	-	-
char	אָמַת הַיּוֹם הַדָּבָר		1 arg	-	-
	אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתִּי בָּאָרֶץ עַל דְּבָרֵיךְ וְעַל כְּמַתְךָ		3 arg	attr	1
v. 7	וְלֹא אָמַנְתִּי לְדִבְרָם (עַד אָשָׁר)		2 arg	-	-
	עַד אָשָׁר בָּאתִי		-	sub	-
	וְתֹאכֵל עַנְיִנִי		1 arg	sub	-
	וְהַנֵּה לֹא הָגֶד לִי הַחִזֵּי		2 arg	-	-
	הַרְסֵת חִכְמָה וְטוֹב אֶל הַשְׁמֹועָה		2 arg	-	1
	אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתִּי		1 pron	attr	-
v. 8	אֲשֶׁר יָנַשְׁךְ		1 arg	-	-

72. For the analysis of this pericope see F. H. Polak, "The Style of the Dialogue in Biblical Narrative," *Te'udah* 17–18 (2001), 47–102, esp. 59–60 (in Heb. with Eng. summary); "The Oral and the Written," 94–95.

			Argument	Sub	Expand
	אשרי עבדיך אלה		1 arg	-	1
	העמדורים לפניך תמיד		2 arg	attr	-
	הشمיעים את חכמתך		1 arg	attr	-
v. 9	יהי ה' אלהיך בירך		1 arg	-	1
	אשר חפץ בך (לחתך)		3 arg	attr	-
	לחתך על כס יושואל (כabhängig)		3 arg	chyp	1
	באהבתך ה' את יושואל לעלם		3 arg	chyp	-
	וישימך למלך (לעשותה)		2 arg	-	-
	לעשות מושפט וצדקה		1 arg	sub	1
v. 10	ויתן למלך מאה ועשרים ככר זהב ובשanim		2 arg	-	4+
	הרביה מאור ואבן יקירה				
	לא בא כבשם ההוא עוד לרוב		3 arg	-	1
	אשר נתנה מלכת שבא למלך שלמה		3 arg	-	2
(...)					
v. 13	והמלך שלמה נתן למלכת שבא את כל חפצא (אשר) (מלך)		4 arg	-	3
	אשר שאלה		1 pron	attr	-
	מלבד אשר נתן לה כיד המלך שלמה		3 arg	sub	1+
	ותפין		-	-	-
	ותלך לארציה היא ועובדיה		2 arg	-	1

1 Kgs. 10:2– 10,13	Char	%	Narr	%	Unit	%
clauses	18	45.00	22	55.00	40	
0–1 arg	4	22.22	4	18.18	8	20.00
2–5 arg	4	22.22	10	45.45	14	35.00
hypot	10	55.56	8	36.36	18	45.00
expand	6	33.33	28	127.27	34	85.00

In this pericope, the Queen of Sheba delivers a sophisticated encomium of Solomon's wisdom in a highly formal style. The most obvious indication of this formality is the double praise of Solomon's courtiers, in two parallel clauses, **אשרי אנשיך אלה**, **אשרי עבדיך אלה** (v. 8). In general one notes the high incidence of subordinate clauses (10 out of 18 clauses, 55%). As a matter of fact, in this cultivated discourse the percentage of subordinate clauses is far higher than in the narrator's domain (8 clauses out of 22, 36%). Nevertheless, in other respects the style of this encomium is less formal than the language of the action sequence, in which the percentage of clauses with two arguments or more is higher than in character speech. Of particular interest are the long noun chains used to describe the caravan of the queen and the gifts which she presented to Solomon. That is to say, even in cultivated, "elevated" quoted discourse the narrator may prefer a style that is less formal than the style of the pericopes in the narrator's domain.

Thus, narrative prose in the complex-nominal style (Persian era and the Late Pre-exilic/Exilic period) tends to maintain a distinction between the complex, intricate style of the narrator's discourse and the less formal language of character speech.⁷³ Since the complex-nominal style reflects the habits of the scribal desk, the authors using it seem to be aware of the special status of spoken discourse vis-à-vis written language.

73. Of course, this is no more than a tendency. In Jeremiah 38 the style of discourse is more intricate and cultivated than that of the narrative sequence.

4. Character Speech in the Rhythmic-Verbal Style

In the narrative cycles in the rhythmic-verbal style, subordinate clauses and expanded noun chains are rare, while most clauses contain less than two arguments. In this respect, the rhythmic style is closely related to the style of character discourse, in so far as it imitates the spoken language. What, then, is the place of quoted speech within a tale in the rhythmic-verbal style? Rabin has already pointed out that quoted discourse contains more than one register, and more than one stylistic level.⁷⁴ In certain situations the narrator allows the characters to speak in the cultivated, intricate style, while in other episodes plain diction is preferred, as is found in the conversational mood. The following paragraphs will bear out the distinction between these levels. The functions of the intricate style in tales that are dominated by the rhythmic-verbal style will be analyzed in the ensuing sections.

a. Stylistic similarity between quoted speech and the narrator's domain

In the first part of the tale of Abraham at the terebinths of Mamre (Gen. 18:1–8), the style of quoted speech is highly informal, and thus, as we have already shown, closely resembles the rhythmic style of the narrative sequence, as indicated by the following table:

Gen. 18:2–8	Char	%	Narr	%	Unit	%
clauses	16	42.11	22	57.89	38	
0–1 arg	12	75.00	13	59.09	25	65.79
2–5 arg	2	12.50	6	27.27	8	21.05
hypot	2	12.50	3	13.64	5	13.16
expand	4	25.00	8	36.36	12	31.57

In character discourse the only long sentence **אם נא מצאתך חן בעיניך** (v. 3) consists of a fixed formula of respectful language, and thus represents the polite address of worthy guests. On the other hand, Abraham's discourse to Sarah is couched in characteristically casual language, including two clauses without argument and two with one argument (מְהֻרִי, שָׁלַשׁ סָעִים קָמָח סְלָת, לֹוְשִׁי, וְעַשֵּׂי עֲגֹת); v. 6: “Quick, three seahs of choice flour! Knead and make cakes!”⁷⁵ It is hardly possible to explain this style as a matter of excitement only, since Abraham's visitors also address him in casual language (v. 5: **כִּי תַעֲשֶׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָתָה**, “Do so, as you have said”).

A similar constellation is found in the tale of Hagar's flight (Gen. 16:1–12).⁷⁶

74. Rabin, “Linguistic Aspects” (n. 8 above), esp. 218, 224. But Rabin does not pursue the subject any further. Mali only mentions the problem of the foreigner's language: *Language of Conversation*, xxiv; 199–200, 231–32, 237, 261.

75. In view of the thesis that in the rhythmic-verbal style the language of the action sequence tends to be less complicated than that of the dialogue, it is to be noted that even in the present tale the percentage of clauses with no explicit argument is slightly lower in dialogue than it is in the action sequence. The difference, however, is not significant.

76. For the present analysis Gen. 16:13 has not been taken into account because of the well-known textual difficulties. As indicated above, the style of vv. 14–15 is quite different from that of the preceding episodes.

		Gen. 16:1-2, 4-12 (quoted vv. 2, 4-8)			Argument	Sub	Expand
Unit	Genesis 16						
v. 2	וְתַאֲמֹר שָׂרֵי אֶל אֶבְרֹם			2 arg	-	-	
char	הַנָּה נָא עַצְרָנִי הִ (מִלְתָּה)			2 arg	-	-	
	מִלְתָּה			-	1	-	
	בָּא נָא אֶל שְׁפָחָתִי			1 arg	-	-	
	אָוְלִי אָבְנָה מִמְּנָה			2 pron	-	-	
narr	וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶבְרֹם לְקֹל שָׂרֵי			2 arg	-	1	
v. 4	וַיַּבְאֵל הָגָר			1 arg	-	-	
	וְתָהָר			-	-	-	
	וְתָרָא (כִּי)			1 arg	-	-	
	כִּי וְהַרְתָּה			-	1	-	
	וְתָקַל גִּבְرָתָה בְּעִנִּיה			2 arg	-	-	
v. 5	וְתַאֲמֹר שָׂרֵי אֶל אֶבְרֹם			2 arg	-	-	
char	חַמְסִי עַלְקָן			1 arg	-	-	
	אָנָכִי נָתָתִי שְׁפָחָתִי בְּחִיקָן			3 arg	-	-	
	וְתָרָא (כִּי)			1 arg	-	-	
	כִּי וְהַרְתָּה			-	1	-	
	וְאָקַל בְּעִנִּיה			1 arg	-	-	
	יְשֻׁפְט הָבֵין וּבִינֵךְ			2 pron	-	-	
v. 6	וַיֹּאמֶר אֶבְרֹם אֶל שָׂרֵי			2 arg	-	-	
	הַנָּה שְׁפָחָתְךָ בִּידֶךָ			1 arg	-	-	
	עֲשֵׂי לְהַטּוֹב בְּעִנֵּךְ			2 arg	-	1	
narr	וְתַעֲנֵה שָׂרֵי			1 arg	-	-	
	וְתִבְרַח מִפְנִיה			1 arg	-	-	
v. 7	וַיִּמְצָא מֶלֶךְ הָעָלָה עַל עַזְנֵי הַמִּדְבָּר			3 arg	-	4+	
	עַל הַעַזְנִין בְּדַרְךָ שָׂוֹר						
v. 8	וַיֹּאמֶר			-	-	-	
char	הָגָר שְׁפָחָת שָׂרֵי אֵי מֹזֵה בְּאַת			2 arg	-	1+	
	וְאַנְהָתֵלְכִי			1 pron	-	-	
narr	וְתַאֲמֵר			-	-	-	
char	מִפְנֵי שָׂרֵי גִּבְרָתִי אָנָכִי בְּרַחַת			2 arg	-	1	

16:1-12	Char.	%	Narr.	%	Unit	%
clauses	27	57.45	20	42.55	47	
0-1 arg	18	66.67	9	45.00	27	57.45
2-5 arg	7	25.93	10	50.00	17	36.17
hypot	2	7.41	1	5.00	3	6.38
expand	7	25.93	11	55.00	18	38.30

In this tale one notes a number of clauses in plain language, such as Sarai's proposal **בָּא נָא אֶל שְׁפָחָתִי / אָוְלִי אָבְנָה מִמְּנָה** (v. 2: "Consort with my maid; perhaps I shall have a son through her"), the angel's counsel **שׁוּבֵי אֶל גִּבְרָתִךְ / וְהַתְעַנֵּי תְּהַת יְדֵיה** (v. 9: "Go back to your mistress, and let yourself be maltreated by her hands"). The casual style stands out all the more, as the tale also contains some instances of quoted discourse in the intricate style, such as Sarai's argument (v. 5: **אָנָכִי נָתָתִי שְׁפָחָתִי בְּחִיקָן** "It is me who put my maid in your bosom").

b. Varieties of character discourse

By contrast, in many tales the language of character discourse is more complex than the style of the action sequence. This situation prevails even in stories that

seem to epitomize the art of oral narrative, such as the Samson tale.⁷⁷ (In the following excerpts “cond” indicates conditional clauses,⁷⁸ “vg” a verbal group that is not to be separated into finite verb and infinitive.)

Judg. 14:11–20 (vv. 12–16)				Argument	Sub	Expand
Unit	Judges 14					
v. 12	וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֶם שָׁמְשׁוּם			2 arg	-	-
char	אַחֲרֶה נָא לְכֶם חִידָה			2 arg	-	-
	אִם הָגַד תַּגִּידוּ אֹתוֹתָה לִי שְׁבַעַת יְמִי הַמִּשְׁתָּה וּמִצְאָתָם			3 arg	cond	1
	וְנַחֲתִי לְכֶם שֶׁלְשִׁים סְדִינִים וּשְׁלִשִּׁים חַלְפָתִים בְּגִידִים			-	cond	-
v. 13	וְאִם לֹא תַּכְלִלוּ לְהַגִּיד לִי וְנַחֲתָם אֶתְכֶם לִי שֶׁלְשִׁים סְדִינִים וּשְׁלִשִּׁים חַלְפָתִים בְּגִידִים			2 arg	-	2+
char	וַיֹּאמֶר לְזַה חִידָה חִידָה			1 arg	cond/vg	-
	וְנַשְׁמַעַנָּה			3 arg	-	2+
v. 14	וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֶם מִהְאָכֵל (יֵצֵא מִאָכֵל)			1 pron	-	-
char	(מִהְאָכֵל) יֵצֵא מִאָכֵל וּמְעוֹן יֵצֵא מִתוּךְ			-	sub	-
	וְלֹא יִכְלֹו לְהַגִּיד הַחִידָה שֶׁלְשָׁת יְמִים			2 arg	-	-
v. 15	וַיֹּהַי בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁבִּיעִי וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאֶשְׁת שְׁמֹשֹׁן			2 arg	vg	1
char	פְּתִי אֶת אִישׁ פָּנִים וַיַּדַּר לְנוּ אֶת הַחִידָה			1 arg	-	1
	פָּנִים נְשָׂרֶף אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת בֵּית אֶבְיךָ בְּאַש הַלִּרְשָׁנוֹ			2 arg	sub	1+
	(הַלִּרְשָׁנוֹ) קָרָאתֶם לְנוּ הַלָּא			-	sub	-
v. 16	וַיַּבְךְ אֶשְׁת שְׁמֹשֹׁן עָלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר			3 arg	-	-
char	רַק שְׁנָאתִי וְלֹא אַהֲבָתִי			2 arg	-	1
	הַחִידָה חָדַת לְבָנֵי עַמִּי וְלֹא תַּגְדִּתָה			-	-	-
narr	וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַנָּה לְאֶבְיךָ וְלְאֶמְתַּי לְאֶהָּדָתִי וְלֹא אָגִיד			2 arg	-	-
				-	-	-

Judg. 14:11–20	Char	%	Narr	%	Unit	%
clauses	26	45.61	31	54.39	57	
0–1 arg	7	26.92	18	58.06	25	43.86
2–5 arg	12	46.15	9	29.03	21	36.84
hypot	7	26.92	4	12.90	11	19.30
expand	9+	36.54	14	45.16	25+	44.74

77. See, e.g., S. Niditch, “Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster and Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak,” *CBQ* 52 (1990), 608–24; H. Gressmann, *Die Anfänge Israels* (Göttingen, 1914), 24.

78. As noted above (n. 65), in conditionals that are introduced by a particle (e.g., **כִּי** or **כִּי**) the apodosis is analyzed as a subordinate clause that counts as an argument in the apodosis. The only exception to this rule is the case in which the apodosis is separated from the protasis by *waw*, and thus in parataxis. In such a case the protasis is still viewed as hypotactic, but it does not count as an argument in the apodosis. If the condition is expressed by two asyndetic clauses in parataxis, these clauses are considered independent, since the logical connection is not expressed by morphological means.

This tale, popular though it be, contains a variety of levels of discourse. The casual style characteristic of informal situations presents itself in such utterances as Samson's quarrel with his wife (Judg. 14:16), or his demand to give him the Timnite woman אָוֹתָה קָהָל (i), with two pronominal arguments; 14:3). However, in other contexts one notes a slightly more formal style. The reaction of Samson's parents to his demand to marry the woman from Timnah is couched in complex, formal language (Judg. 14:3):

הָאֵין בְּבָנֹת אָחִיךְ וּבְכָל עַמִּי אָשָׁה / כִּי אַתָּה הַוָּלֶךְ / לְקַחַת אָשָׁה מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים הָעָרְלִים
 "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your own kinsmen and among all my people, that you must go and take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?"

The cultivated style of this question, which includes a number of long noun chains and two subordinate clauses, seems to reflect quite a different attitude from Samson's plain demand. Since Samson's parents endeavor to persuade Samson not to take a wife from foreign Timnah, it seems that the intricate style of this utterance reflects the dignity of parental authority.⁷⁹

The voice of parental persuasion also makes itself heard in Naomi's desperate counsel to her daughters-in-law:⁸⁰

לְכָנָה / שְׁבֹנָה אָשָׁה לְבִתְּ אַמָּה /
 יְעַשֵּׂה הָעָמָךְ חָסָד / כִּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂוְתֶם עִם הַמֹּתִים וְעַמְּדֵי /
 יִתְּהַנֵּן הָלֶכֶם / וּמְצָאֵן מִנוּחָה אָשָׁה בֵּית אִישָׁה
 v. 9a
 "Turn back, each of you, to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me! May the Lord grant that each of you find security in the house of her husband!"

The elaborate style of Naomi's plea contrasts sharply with the plain language which Orpah and Ruth use for rejection:

כִּי אָתָּךְ נִשְׁׁוֹב לְעַמְּךְ
 v. 10
 "But we will return with you to your people"

A second source of stylistic variation is the use of cultivated, rhetorical language, e.g., in Samson's challenge to and accusation of his Philistine guests. These speeches are characterized by parallelism and intricate conditionals:

לֹא לָא חִרְשָׁתְּמָם בְּעֲגָלָתִי / לֹא מִצְאָתָם חִידָתִי
 Judg. 14:18
 "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle"

79. The use of prestige language to boost parental authority is most evident in bilingual communities. R. Fasold mentions that in a farmers village with one language as household language (Hungarian or Mexican Spanish) and a second language as prestige language (German or English), parental orders may be given in the prestige language when a child does not obey: *The Sociolinguistics of Society* (Oxford, 1987), 203–6.

80. So also Ruth 1:11–13, 15; 2:22; 3:1–4, 18. The other voice of authority is Boaz: 2:8–9, 11–12; 3:10–13. The simple style of casual speech is reflected in 3:5; 4:4b, 6.

81. According to Rendsburg (*Diglossia* [n. 1 above], 41–43) the final *mem* in the suffix סָמַךְ- and the verbal affix סָמַת- reflects the neutralization of the gender distinction (epicene suffix) which he views as characteristic of colloquial language.

v. 12

אם חגד תגידו אזהה לי שבעת ימי המשתה / ומצאתם
ונתתי לכם שלשים סדרנים ושלשים חליפות בגדים

"If you can tell it to me within the seven days of the feast, and solve it, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment"

This tale, then, simple and popular as it may seem, contains various levels of quoted speech, from casual to rhetorical and cultivated. The latter style, elevated as it is, is far more intricate than casual language, and thus in some respects is similar to the formal style.

Elements of the cultivated style are also found in some of the stories on Eli-sa,⁸² e.g., the tale of Gehazi's curse.

2 Kgs 5:20–27 (vv. 23–27)

Unit	2 Kings 5	Argument	Sub	Expand
v. 23	ויאמר נuman האָלָה	1 arg	-	-
char	קח ככרים ייפרץ בו	-	-	-
narr	ויצר ככרים כסף בשני חוטים ושתה חליפות בגדים ויתן אל שני נעריו וישאו לפניו	1 arg 1 prn 2 arg 1 arg	- - - -	3 1
v. 24	ויבא אל העפל ויקח מירם ויפקד בבית וישלח את האנשים וילכו	1 arg 1 arg 1 arg 1 arg	- - - -	-
v. 25	והוא בא ויעמד אל אדניו ויאמר אליו אלישע מאין גוזי ויאמר	1 prn 1 arg 2 arg 1 arg	- - - -	-
char	לא הלאך עבדך אנה ואנה	-	-	-
narr	ויאמר אליו לא לא לבי הלאך (כאשר)	2 arg 1 prn	- -	1
v. 26	כאשר הפק איש מעיל מרכבתו לקראתך העת לקחת את הכסף ולקחת בגדים וזריטים ורומים וצאן ובקר ועבדים ושבורות	3 arg 2 arg 1 arg	sub - -	-
v. 27	וצרעת נעמן תדברך בר ובזורך לעולות ויצא מלפניו (מצרע) מצרע כשלג	3 arg 2 arg 1 arg	- - sub	2 - -

vv. 20–27	Char	%	Narr	%	Unit	%
clauses	22	46.81	24	53.19	46	
0–1 arg	10	45.45	16	68.00	27	57.45
2–5 arg	8	36.36	6	24.00	14	29.78
embedd	4	18.18	2	8.00	6	12.77
expand	11	50.00	7	28.00	18	38.30

82. H. Gressmann, *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1921), 269–70; A. Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories* (Jerusalem, 1988), 13–18.

The casual style characteristic of informal situations presents itself in such utterances as Elisha's question, מַיִן גֵּחֹזִי (v. 25), that seems a typical example of the prophet's way of speaking to common people (so also, e.g., וְקַחְוּ קָמָחּ, 2 Kgs. 4:41). However, in other contexts one notes a slightly more cultivated style. The casual language of Elisha's question, מַיִן גֵּחֹזִי, "Where is Gehazi (coming) from?" contrasts sharply with the polite style of his servant's denial, לא הָלַךְ עַבְדָךְ, אַנְהָ וְאַנְהָ, "Your servant has gone neither there nor there," including two arguments and one repetitive expression, אַנְהָ וְאַנְהָ. The self-reference to "your servant" strengthens the formal character of the answer. Finally, the style of Elisha's indictment of Gehazi is couched in highly intricate language, with a number of subordinate clauses, a long noun chain, and a clause that includes three arguments:

ו. 26 לא לב הילך / כאשר הפק איש מעל מרכובתו לקראתך /
העה לך את הכספי / ולקחת בגדים וזיטים וכורמים וצאן ובקר ועבדים ושפחות /

"Did not my spirit go along, when a man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to receive money, and to obtain garments, and olive orchards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants?"

Elisha's answer demonstrates his mastery. He refutes Gehazi's evasive answers, establishes his guilt, and pronounces the punishment. Thus the rhetorical level of his indictment is a sign of his authority.⁸³

The cultivated style is also found in other sections of the Elisha tales, e.g., his declaration to Joash (2 Kgs. 13:17, 19):

Unit	2 Kings 13	Argument	Sub	Expand
v. 17	וַיֹּאמֶר	-	-	-
char	פָתַח הַחַלּוֹן קְרֻמָה	2 arg	-	-
narr	וַיִּפְתַּח	-	-	-
	וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיכָם	1 arg	-	-
char	יְרֵה	2 arg	-	-
narr	וַיֹּורֶה	-	-	-
	וַיֹּאמֶר	-	-	-
char	חַז תָשׁׁוּעָה לְהָ	1 arg	-	1
	וְחַז תָשׁׁוּעָה בְּאַרְם	1 arg	-	1
	וְהַכִּית אֶת אֶרְם בְּאֶפְקָן (עַד כֶּלֶה)	3 arg	-	-
	עַד כֶּלֶה	-	sub	-
(...)				
v. 19	וַיַּקְצַּפְתִּי עַל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	2 arg	-	1
	וַיֹּאמֶר	-	-	-
v. 19 ⁸⁴	לְהַכּוֹת חַמְלָשׁ אוֹ שֶׁשׁ פָּעָמִים	1 arg	-	2

83. E. L. Greenstein discusses rhetorical language as a sign of authority: "Jethro's Wit: An Interpretation of Wordplay in Exodus 18," in S. L. Cook and S. C. Winter, eds., *On the Way to Nineveh: Studies in Honor of George M. Landes* (Atlanta, 1999), 155–71; and see n. 92 below.

84. In v. 19 the LXX reads εἰ ἐπτάταξ for להכות, and thus seems to reflect ל. The use of אָז in the apodosis following לִי is found in Joab's speech in 2 Sam. 19:7. If one accepts the reading להבות of MT, it may be regarded as a feature of casual language.

	Argument	Sub	Expand
או הכתית את ארם (עד כליה)	3 arg	-	-
עד כליה	-	sub	-
ועתה שלש פעמים תכה את ארם	3 arg	-	1

In these prophetic proclamations the opening clauses manifest the casual style of informal discourse, but the concluding clauses are couched in a far more formal style. Since these statements embody the main content of the prophetic declaration, the formal style might be related to the religious register of discourse. This surmise is confirmed by other pronouncements by the prophet, e.g.,

2 Kgs. 2:21
3:16

כה אמר ה' / רפאתי למיים האלה / לא יהיה שם עוד מות ומשכלה
כה אמר ה' / עשה הנחל הזה גבים גבים

The formality of religious discourse is also evidenced by Samson's prayer at En Hakkore (Judg. 15:18):

char	אתה נתת ביד עבדך את התשועה הגדלה הזאת ועתה אמות בצמא ונפלתי ביד הערלים	3 arg	-	2 expand
		2 arg	-	-
		1 arg	-	1 expand

Thus we see that even in narratives of a pronounced rhythmic-verbal character prayer and prophetic discourse can be far more intricate than other pieces of discourse. On some levels of discourse, then, such as religious discourse and authoritative talk, these narrators know to use formal and cultivated language. That is to say, in narratives dominated by the rhythmic-verbal style the diction of discourse is characterized by its immense variety. In this respect, then, Bakhtin's characterization of prose in general holds true for biblical narrative:

The novelist working in prose (and almost any prose writer) . . . welcomes the heteroglossia and language diversity of the literary and extraliterary language into his own work not only not weakening them but even intensifying them (for he interacts with their particular self-consciousness).⁸⁵

c. Character discourse and rhetorical figures

In many cases formal, cultivated discourse also manifests obvious rhetorical features, such as, e.g., parallelism.⁸⁶ A characteristic example is found in Abram's address to Sarai (Gen. 12:11b–13):

85. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 298 (n. 2 above); see also his discussion of the discourse of the speaking person 315–20, 331–66.

86. The use of parallelism in quoted discourse is discussed by F. I. Andersen, "What Biblical Scholars Might Learn from Emily Dickinson," in J. Davies, G. Harvey, W. G. E. Watson, eds., *Words Remembered, Texts Renewed: Essays in Honor of J. F. A. Sawyer* (Sheffield, 1995), 52–74; E. Z. Melamed, "The Conversation of the Patriarchs in Genesis," in S. Asaf et al., eds., *J. N. Epstein Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1950), 8–28, reprinted in E. Z. Melamed, *Biblical Studies in Texts, Translations and Commentators* (Jerusalem, 1984), 11–32 [Hebrew]. In view of the significant differences between parallelistic forms in poetry and in prose it seems preferable to speak of "balanced coupling" in character speech: Polak, "Prose and Poetry in Job," (n. 34 above), 66–71. U. Simon speaks of "quasi-poetic phrasing" in 1 Sam. 1:11–12: *Reading Prophetic Narratives* (Bloomington, 1997), 15–16 (see also 17–18, 205). On Greenstein's view see n. 88 below.

הנה נא ידעתו / כי אשה יפת מראה את / והיה כי יראו אתך המצריים /
ואמרו / אשטו זאת / והרגו אתי / ואתך יחיו /
אמרו נא / אחתי את / למן ייטב לי בעבורך / והיתה נפשי בגללך

“I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘She is his wife,’ and kill me and let you live. Please say, you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may remain alive thanks to you.”

For the most part Abram’s address seems casual.⁸⁷ Out of eleven clauses of quoted discourse, seven contain either one argument or none. However, a more formal level of language is indicated by the relatively high percentage of clauses in hypotaxis (three out of eleven, 27.27%). This aspect of Abram’s discourse is enhanced by its rhetorical power. The dangers threatening the patriarch are described in two antithetic, chiastic clauses, **זהרgeo אתי / ואתך יחיו**. One also notes the balancing of the two final clauses **למן ייטב לי בעבורך / והיתה נפשי בгалלך** that close both with a reference to Sarai (**בגלאך, בעבורך**). Stylistic structure raises these clauses above the level of casual language.⁸⁸ By the same token Pharaoh’s rebuke of Abram reveals a fusion of parallelism and anaphora (vv. 18b–19):

מה זאת עשית לי / למה לא הגדת לי / כי אשתק הוא /
למה אמרת / אחתי הוא / ואקח אותה לי לאשה / ותהה הנה אשתק / קח וולך

“What have you done to me! Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife; take her and be gone!”

Pharaoh’s accusation consists of nine clauselets with an extremely simple syntactic structure. The single clause that contains more than two pronominal arguments dominates a clause in hypotaxis (**למה לא הגדת לי כי אשתק הוא**). On the other hand, this discourse stands out by its rhetorical power, as the general opening question (**מה זאת**) is followed by two accusations (**למה לא הגדת לי כי אשתק הוא**), that are characterized by the anaphoric repetition of **למה** and the semantic-syntactic congruity of the two clauselets **כי אשתק הוא** and **אחותי הוא**. No less impressive are the rhetorical means used in the episode of the separation from Lot (Genesis 13):

87. On “that-deletion” in v. 13 as a feature of spoken language, see n. 50 above.

88. According to E. L. Greenstein parallelism is a common stylistic convention of quoted speech in biblical literature (including the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, and Deuteronomy as well as the poetic discourses in Job) with roots in Northwest Semitic epic literature: “Direct Discourse and Parallelism,” in S. Vargon et al., eds., *Studies in Bible and Exegesis 5, Presented to Uriel Simon* (Ramat Gan, 2000), 33–40 (in Heb. with Eng. summary). In his view biblical prose narrative preserved this convention in quoted speech because of its dramatic qualities. Although this is not the place to discuss the problem of the origin of parallelism, two points are worthy of notice. D. Tannen highlights the frequent use of parallelism in contemporary Greek and English spoken discourse: “Relative Focus on Involvement in Oral and Written Discourse,” in Olson et al., eds., *Literacy* (n. 28 above), 124–47. But since she describes parallelism as one of the features of “the style of involvement,” it seems that the frequent use of parallelism for quoted speech constitutes a further extension of the natural rhetoric of spoken discourse, rather than a dramatic convention or an inheritance of ancient epic. On the other hand, J. Huizinga interprets the “game” of poetry as the ceremonial of earnest play: *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London, 1949), 119–27, 129–35. Huizinga (127–29) shows that ancient Frisian law even contains a poetic description of the hardships of winter.

v. 8 אל נא תהי מורייה בינוי ובניך רועי ובין רעיך / כי אנסים אחים אנחנו
v. 9 הלה כל הארץ לפניך / הפרד נא מעלי / אם השמאל ואימנה / ואם הימין ואשמאליה
“Let there be no strife between you and me, between my herdsmen and yours / for we are
kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? / Break up from me. / If you go north, I will go
south / and if you go south, I will go north.”

This proposal opens with two balanced stretches, and, **ביני וביניך ובין רעיך ובין רעיך**, and closes with two parallel clauses in chiastic order, **אם השמאל ואמינה / ואם הימין, ואשMAILה** (v. 9).

The impressive rhetorical means that stand at the narrator's disposal, form another aspect of the cultivated style, as they enrich the formal syntactic aspects. These qualities justify the use of the term "elevated style."

Clearly, then, quoted discourse in narrative is far from uniform. On the contrary, in classical biblical narrative character speech stands out by the large variety of registers. In the following section an attempt will be made to sketch some of these registers.

5. The Cultivated Style in Character Discourse

In public life the distinction between the casual and the cultivated, elevated style is of the utmost importance.⁸⁹ In Jotham's parable, the trees of the wood use the casual style to address the candidates for kingship:

הַלּוּ קָרְבָּן הַעֲצִים / לְמַשְׁחָה עַלְלֵם מֶלֶךְ / וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְזִית / מֶלֶכהּ עַלְיוֹן
Once the trees went to anoint a king over themselves. They said to the olive tree, "Reign over us."

ו. 10 **דַיָּמְרוּ הַעֲצִים לְתַחַנָּה / לְכִי אֶת / מֶלֶכֶת עַלְנוּ**
Then the trees said to the fig tree, "You come, reign over us."

But the reply of the magnates of the wood uses an elevated, formal style, e.g.,

v. 9 וְיִאָמֶר לְהָמִין הַזִּבְחָתִי אֶת דְּשַׁנִּי / אֲשֶׁר בַּיּוֹכְדָו אֱלֹהִים וְאָנָשִׁים /
הַהֲלֹכָתִי לְנוֹזָע עַל הָעָצָם

But the olive tree said: "Have I stopped yielding my rich oil, by which gods and men are honored, and should I go and wave above the trees?"

v. 13 וְיֹאמֶר לְהֶם הַגֶּפֶן / הַחֲדֹלִית אֶת תִּרְוֹשִׁי / הַמְשֻׁמָּה אֲלֵהֶם וְאֲנָשִׁים /
וְהַלְכַּתְיכֶם תִּנוֹעַ עַל הַעֲצִים

But the vine said, "Have I stopped yielding my new wine, which gladdens gods and men, and should I go and wave above the trees?"

The style of these rebuttals is highly cultivated, as evidenced by the fixed pair אֲלֹהִים וְאַנְשִׁים / אלהים ואנשימים, where each clause includes an embedding: **בִּי יִכְבְּדוּ אֲלֹהִים וְאַנְשִׁים**.⁹⁰ Each clause includes an embedding:

89. In Haugen's terms (n. 37 above), public life is dominated by the language of status rather than by the language of intimacy.

90. See Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures*, *AOAT* 210 (Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1984), 124, 548–49; note Gen. 32:29; Isa. 7:13; Ps. 55:24 (in prose also Gen. 6:4, 9; 30:20; 31:50); and with אָדָם: Gen. 6:2, 4; 9:6; Num 23:19; 2 Kgs. 19:18 (= Isa. 37:19); Ezek. 28:2, 9; Ps. 14:2 (= 53:3); 36:8; Prov. 3:4; Qoh. 3:13; 5:18; 7:29; 8:17; 9:1. In Phoenician note צָנָן לְמִזְבֵּחַ וְלַעֲמֹד אַלְמָנָם וּבְנֵי אָדָם [קַיִן] (KAI 48:4).

(v. 10) **המשמה אליהם ואנשיהם**, (v. 13) **והלכתי לנוע על העצים** (v. 10, 13).⁹¹ In this parable, then, the elevated style accentuates the status of the important personages, as is often found in traditional societies.⁹²

On the other hand, a person enjoying high status may address a lowly person in the casual style,⁹³ whereas he himself is addressed in the elevated register of respectful language.⁹⁴ Thus Esau addresses Jacob in the plain style, e.g., **מי אלה לך**, “Who are these to you?” (Gen. 33:5:);⁹⁵ “What is this entire camp of yours that I have encountered?” (v. 8).⁹⁵ Jacob, on the other hand, persuades his brother by the use of cultivated and respectful language, e.g.,⁹⁶

Gen. 33:10

אל נא / אם נא מצאת חן בעיניך / ולקחת מנוחתי מידי /
כי על כן ראייתי פניך / כראת פניהם ותורצני

v. 11

קח נא את ברכתך / אשר הבאת לך / כי חנני אליהם / וכי יש לי כל

“No, I pray you; if you would do me this favor, accept from me this gift; for to see your face is like seeing the face of God, and you have received me favorably. Please accept my present which has been brought to you, for God has favored me and I have plenty.”

a. The register of authority

In biblical narrative, then, status and authority are related to various ways of using language. It all depends on the ranking of the persons speaking and being addressed:

(1) If persons who do not enjoy formal power are to manifest authority, they often use the formal, cultivated style, as in the cases of Manoah and his wife displaying parental authority, or the high-born trees refusing to serve as monarch. By the

91. The fig's reply (v. 11) contains the noun chain **את מתקי ואת תנובתי הטובה**.

92. The connections between rhetoric and authority have been established by M. Bloch, ed., *Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society* (New York, 1975), 5–28; J. Comaroff, “Talking Politics; Oratory and Authority in a Tswana Chiefdom,” *ibid.*, 141–61. For biblical narrative this connection has been indicated by Greenstein (“Jethro's Wit,” 157–64, n. 81 above), who also refers to the speech by the wise woman from Tekoa (2 Samuel 14). The social ranking of oral poetry, and its function in political life in a nomadic society is described by B. W. Andrzejewski, “Poetry in Somali Society,” in J. B. Pride and J. Holmes, eds., *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings* (Middlesex, 1972), 252–59, esp. 256, 254–55. The oratorical capacities of chiefs in Africa are noted by W. H. Whiteley, ed., *A Selection of African Prose. Vol. I: Traditional Oral Texts* (Oxford, 1964), 166–67; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Essays in Social Anthropology* (London, 1962), 111. The role of oratory in West-African political palavers and legal proceedings is commented upon by Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*, 444–56 (for the function of proverbs in such context see pp. 407–13).

93. The dialectic of respect and status in the multi-leveled Javanese language has been discussed by C. Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (London, 1960), 248–60, esp. 255–59. Javanese has a complicated hierarchy of language levels, ranking from the plain language of the household (*ngoko inggil*) to the most elevated language which is used to address the high ranking members of the ancient aristocracy (*krama inggil*). Yong-Jin Kim and D. Biber point to the morphosyntax of multiple levels of respectful language in Korean: “A Corpus-Based Analysis of Register Variation in Korean,” in Biber and Finegan, eds., *Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, 157–81, esp. 158, 176–78.

94. On diverse patterns of respectful language (polite address of persons with high status by persons of lower status) see G. Brin, “Polite Speech in the Bible,” *Issues in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Tel Aviv, 1994), 78–96 [Hebrew].

95. So also Esau's discourse in vv. 9, 12, 15.

96. So also Jacob's discourse in Gen. 33:13–15, but in vv. 5, 8 he uses clauses of less intricate structure.

same token, Naomi uses the cultivated style when addressing her daughters-in-law, in order to convince them to leave (Ruth 1:8–9).⁹⁷

(2) The dignity of the court requires the formal, and even elevated language. This is the style used by the royal servants, when addressing the king, even in the alarming news of Absalom's mutiny:⁹⁸

2 Sam. 15:13

“The heart of the men of Israel is after Absalom.”

v. 15

“Whatever our lord the king decides, see, your servants.”

1 Kgs. 1:2

“Let one seek a young virgin for my lord the king, and let her serve the king.”

היה לב יישרָאֵל אַחֲרֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם

כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר אֲדֹנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַנֶּה עֲבֹדֵךְ

יִקְשֹׁא לְאֲדֹנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ נָעָרָה בְּתֻולָה / וְעַמְדָה לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

In the Goliath tale, David's answer to the question whose son he is, is well-formed and dignified: “**בֶּן עֲבֹדֵךְ יִשְׁיָהוּ בֵּית הַלְּחָמִי**” (“The son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite,” 1 Sam. 17:58b).⁹⁹ Thus the young shepherd boy already knows how to speak the language of the court, as already announced by Saul's courtiers (16:18).

(3) Different rules obtain for the king's speaking style. On formal occasions the king's speech is cultivated, and even elevated, such as, for instance, when Saul accuses his servants of lack in loyalty:¹⁰⁰

1 Sam. 22:7–8:

שָׁמַעוּ נָא בְּנֵי יִמְנָי / גַּם לְכָלְכָם יִתְןּ בֶּן יִשְׁיָהוּ שְׂדוֹת וּכְרָמִים /
לְכָלְכָם שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים וּשְׂרֵי מְאוֹתָה / כִּי קְשָׁרָתָם כָּלְכָם עַלִי /
וְאַזְנָתָה אַתָּ אָזְנִי / בְּכָרְתָה בְּנֵי עַם בֶּן יִשְׁיָהוּ / וְאַזְנָתָה אַתָּ אָזְנִי /
כִּי הַקְּםָם בְּנֵי אַת עֲבֹדֵי עַלִי לְאַרְבָּא [לְאַבָּא?]
[LXX εἰς ἔχθρον = כִּי כִּים הוּא]

“Listen, men of Benjamin! Will the son of Jesse give fields and vineyards to every one of you / and will he appoint all of you captains of thousands or captains of hundreds, that all of you have conspired against me / and no one informs me when my own son makes a pact with the son of Jesse; / no one is concerned for me and no one informs me when my own son has set my servant in ambush against me, as at this day?”

The formal opening, “Listen, men of Benjamin,”¹⁰¹ is continued by two clauses of which the one contains three arguments (גַּם לְכָלְכָם יִתְןּ בֶּן יִשְׁיָהוּ שְׂדוֹת וּכְרָמִים) and two expanded noun chains (שְׂדוֹת וּכְרָמִים, בֶּן יִשְׁיָהוּ), and the second two arguments (לְכָלְכָם, שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים וּשְׂרֵי מְאוֹתָה) and one expanded noun chain (כִּי קְשָׁרָתָם כָּלְכָם עַלִי), to be followed, in v. 8, by a series of clauses in hypotaxis (וְאַזְנָתָה מְכֻמָּה עַלִי / וְאַזְנָתָה אַת אָזְנִי, וְאַזְנָתָה אַת אָזְנִי). The real content of the

97. See above, p. 78. So also Ruth 1:11–13; 3:1–4; also when Boaz speaks: 2:8–9; 3:10–13; 4:3–4, 9–10; and when Ruth takes the initiative: 1:16–17; 2:2.

98. This style is found in a large variety of passages, e.g., 1 Sam. 22:9, 14–15; 2 Sam. 15:15, and Nathan's addresses Bathsheba's and David (vv. 11–14; in vv. 24–27 one notes the double question). One also notes the way in which the Aramean officers address their king (2 Kgs. 6:12).

99. The subject **אַגְּכִי** is deleted in the wake of the preceding question, in accordance with the findings of Greenstein, “The Syntax of Saying ‘Yes’” (n. 46 above).

100. So also in the accusation of Ahimelech (1 Sam. 22:13).

101. This formula is discussed by S. E. Loewenstamm, “The Address ‘Listen’ in the Ugaritic Epic and the Bible,” in G. Rendsburg et al., eds., *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon* (New York, 1980), 123–31. Its forensic use is noted by Y. Hoffman, “Two Opening Formulae in Biblical Style,” *Tarbiz* 46 (1977), 157–80, esp. 158–69 (in Heb. with Eng. summary).

accusation is expressed in intricate clauses that are subordinated to these clauses (כִּי הַקִּים בְּנֵי אֶת עָבֵדִי עַל לְאַרְכְּ כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה, בְּכָרֶת בְּנֵי עַם בְּן יְשִׁי), five arguments).

By the same token, David addresses the priests in cultivated, dignified language (2 Sam. 15:27–28):

הַרְוָא אַתָּה / שָׁבַה הָעִיר בְּשָׁלוֹם / וְאַחִימָעָץ בָּנֵךְ וַיְהִוָּתָן בֶּן אֲבִיתָר שְׁנִי בְּנֵיכֶם אַתֶּכְם /
רָאוּ / אֲנִי מַתְהַמֵּה בְּעַרְבָּתְהַ מְדָבֵר / עַד בָּאָ דָּבָר מַעֲמָכֶם / לְהִגִּיד לְיַ

“Do you see? You return to the safety of the city with your two sons, your own son Ahimaaz and Abiathar’s son Jonathan. Look, I shall linger in the steppes of the wilderness / until word comes from you / to inform me.”

A number of clauses in these instructions include two arguments or more (שְׁבָה), (עד בָּאָ דָּבָר), (אֲנִי מַתְהַמֵּה בְּעַרְבָּתְהַ מְדָבֵר [עד בָּאָ]), (הָעִיר בְּשָׁלוֹם), (וְאַחִימָעָץ בָּנֵךְ וַיְהִוָּתָן בֶּן אֲבִיתָר; בְּעַרְבָּתְהַ מְדָבֵר; מַעֲמָכֶם / לְהִגִּיד לְיַ), (שְׁנִי בְּנֵיכֶם).¹⁰²

On the other hand, the king often addresses his subjects in short, simple, clauses:

קְרָמו וּנְבָרָחוּ / כִּי لֹא תָהִיה לְנוּ פְלִיטָה מִפְנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם
מְהֻרוּ לְלַכְתָּ / פְּנֵי יְמָהָר / וּוְשָׁנוּנוּ / הַדָּרִיה עַלְיָנוּ אֶת הָרָעה / וְהַכָּה הָעִיר לְפִי חָרֶב
“Arise, and let us flee; for else none of us shall escape from Absalom / make speed to depart, lest he will haste and overtake us, and bring down evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.”

In the present context the sequence of short clauses can be related to the excitation and the urgency of the moment.¹⁰³ A similar style, however, is found in a large number of passages, e.g., when Saul asks David for his father’s name:

בֶּן מַיִּ אַתָּה הַנְּעָר / “Whose son are you, boy?”

Saul is often represented as using extremely simple language. In a number of cases this stylistic choice seems to suit the intimacy of the family circle and other close relationships, e.g., when addressing Abner:

בֶּן מַיִּ זֶה הַנְּעָר אֶבְנֵר / Whose son is that boy, Abner?

The army-leader and nephew of the king is allowed to answer in the same vein:

חִי נְפָשָׁךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ אִם יִדְעַתִּי / “By your life, the king, if I do know.”

But this style also has other aspects. Saul is extremely curt when giving orders:¹⁰⁴ סֵב אַתָּה / וּפְגַע בְּכָהִים (“You, move, and kill the priests,” 1 Sam. 22:18).¹⁰⁵ Saul’s

102. The formal style is found in David’s address of Hushai (2 Sam. 15:33–35), the priests (19:12–14), and the supporters of Solomon (1 Kgs. 1:29–30, 32–35), and to a lesser extent in 2 Sam. 15:19–20; 16:10–12; 19:30, 34, 39; 1 Kgs. 2:22–24, 26, 31–33, 36–37, 42–44). In the Elijah-Elisha cycles one notes Obadiah’s plea to the prophet (1 Kgs. 18:9–10, 12–13), Ahab’s explanations to Izebel (1 Kgs. 21:6), Naaman’s address to Elisha (2 Kgs. 5:15, 17–18), and Gehazi’s discourse (*ibid.*, vv. 20, 22). Also note Saul’s accusation of Ahimelech (1 Sam. 22:13).

103. So, e.g., the two short clauses of the cry (1 Sam. 28:12); see also 2 Kgs. 11:14 קְשַׁר קְשַׁר.

104. So also his threats to Ahimelech and Jonathan (1 Sam. 22:16; 14:44).

105. M. Eskhult points to the use of the verb סֵבֶב as introduction to the main action: “The Verb *sbb*, as a Marker of Inception in Biblical Hebrew,” *Orientalia Suecana* 47 (1998), 21–26.

manner of speaking is hardly less brusque when he witnesses the reaction of the people to the Ammonite threat: (*מה לעם כי יבכו* 1 Sam. 11:5, “What happened to the people that they weep?”). This scene implicitly endows Saul with lordly authority, even though he is not represented as king before the outcome of the battle (vv. 12–15).

In some cases one could argue that the king addresses his subjects in a condescending style, such as in David’s question to Ziba: (*מה אלה לך* “What are you doing with these,” 2 Sam. 16:2), (*ואיה בן אדנייך* v. 3: “And where is your master’s son?”). It is quite possible that he is treating Ahimaaz roughly as the latter does not know to bring news concerning Absalom: (*סב החיצב כה* “Move, stand over there,” 18:30).¹⁰⁶

At times the informal manner of speaking indicates that the king does not speak from a position of authority, such as in the scene before the fateful battle with Absalom, when David addresses his veterans in the informal style:

2 Sam. 18:2	“ <i>יצא אצָא גַם אַנְי עַמְכֶם</i> / “I will also march out with you”
v. 4	“ <i>אשר ייט ביעניכם עעשה</i> / “What seems you best I will do”
v. 5	“ <i>לאט לי לנער לאבשלום</i> / “Gently, please, ¹⁰⁷ with my boy, with Absalom”

The informal tone strengthens the impression that David is uttering a wish rather than issuing full-blown commands.¹⁰⁸

The connection between authority and speaking style is amply illustrated in the tale of the wise woman from Tekoa.¹⁰⁹ As the woman approaches the king, in the guise of a widow in deep mourning, she establishes contact by her prostration (2 Sam. 14:4),¹¹⁰ and initiates the proceedings by demanding the king’s intervention (*הושעה המליך*).¹¹¹ As befits the subject’s request from the king, her plea is couched in formal language (so also 2 Kgs. 6:26). In contrast, the king’s condescending response uses the most casual style possible: *מה לך* (v. 5: “What ails you?”).¹¹² The

106. So also 2 Sam. 14:24; 1 Kgs. 20:12; 2 Kgs. 6:27–28.

107. The particle *לי* functions as a *dativus ethicus* rather than as a *dativus commodi*. It hardly is strong enough to justify the rendering “for my sake” (ASV, NJPS).

108. A similar effect is to be noted in Saul’s plea with the Ziphites (1 Sam. 23:21–23).

109. The high adroitness with which the wise woman from Tekoa succeeds in persuading the king is described by J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, Volume I: King David (II Sam. 9–20 & 1 Kings 1–2)* (Assen, 1981), 128–42; J. Hoftijzer, “David and the Tekoite Woman,” *VT* 20 (1970), 419–44, esp. 428–31, 442–44; Greenstein, “Jethro’s Wit” (n. 81 above), 157–59. From the point of view of conversation analysis the performance of the Tekoite is a transaction initiated by the wise woman, and concluded to her full satisfaction.

110. In this case the prostration serves to open the communication between the subject and her king, as a “*paralinguistic act*,” that is an act which does not use language elements, but belongs to the communication framework, as shown by, e.g., W. Edmondson, *Spoken Discourse: A Model for Analysis* (London, 1981), 34–37.

111. The importance of initiative, which puts restraints on the expectations for the continuation and to a large extent establishes dominance, is discussed by M. Coulthard, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, 2nd ed. (London, 1985), 134–35; Edmondson, *Spoken Discourse*, 86–91; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (n. 5 above), 127–29, 150.

112. This formula is used in a large number of passages that indicate its colloquial character: Gen. 21:17 (in a friendly way); Josh. 15:18; Judg. 1:14; 18:23, 24; 1 Kgs. 1:16; 2 Kgs. 6:28; Ps. 114:5. In a number of cases the tone could hardly be described as friendly: Jon. 1:6; Ps. 50:16; Isa. 22:1, 16.

wise woman uses a similar style for the opening of her plea, which consists of a series of simple clauses with hardly more than one argument (vv. 5–6):

אבל / אשה אלמנה אני / וימת אישי / ולשפתך שני בנים /
וינצו שנייהם בשודה / ואן מצל בינויהם / ויכו האחד את האחד / וימתו אחות
"Alas, I am a widow, my husband is dead, and your servant had two sons. The two of them came to blows out in the field, and there was no one to stop them, and one of them struck the other and killed him."

A similar style dominates her description of the agitation around the punishment of the fratricide, even though the use of the participles seems suitable to the legal register (v. 7a: **היוֹרֵשׁ**, **מִכֶּה אָחִין**). A sharp change in style, however, occurs when he states her evaluation of the case:

וכבו את גחלתי / אשר נשארה / לבתיו שום לאיישי שם ושארית על פני האדמה
"Thus they would quench the last ember / remaining to me / leaving my husband without name or remnant upon the earth."

The metaphor is accompanied by the use of a relative clause and a complicated infinitive clause with three arguments (**על פני האדמה**, **שם** ו**שארית לאיישי**). Thus the cultivated style indicates the status of the wise woman.¹¹³

But in spite of the woman's mastery of language, David continues to treat her as a plain commoner (v. 8):

לכי לביתך / ואני אצווה לך עליך /
"Go home / I will issue an order in your behalf"¹¹⁴

The curtness of this answer contrasts sharply with David's cordial response to Abigail's request:¹¹⁵

על לי לשלום לביתך / ראי / שמעתי בקולך / ואשא פניך
"Go home safely. See, I have heeded your plea and respected your wish."

However, the woman from Tekoa is not satisfied with this subterfuge. In order to obtain an explicit decision, she assumes full responsibility for the outcome, thus cleaning the royal house in advance from all liability for the clemency concerning the fratricide. However, the very mention of liability, raises the eventuality of divine retribution (2 Sam. 14:9: "עליך אדני המלך העון"; "My lord the king, may the guilt be on me"). Thus David can only express his readiness to intervene:

המדובר לך אליך / והבאתו אליך / ולא ספיק עוד לגעתו בך
"Anyone troubling you, have him brought to me, and he will not continue to harass you."

The language level of this declaration is higher than that of David's previous answers, and thus seems to imply a certain recognition of the status of the woman. The wise woman uses the concessions in order to press the king even more:

113. Bar-Efrat (*Narrative Art*, 66; n. 2 above) discusses the rhetorical skills of the Tekoite woman, and also indicates her polite address of the king, but does not note how she gradually starts to dominate the discourse, as she turns from petitioner to advisor.

114. In this case, as in many like it, even the modern English rendering fails to do justice to the Hebrew.

115. The Abigail tale endows David with royal authority and magnanimity, even though he is not yet king.

v. 11a

יזכר נא המלך את ה' אלהיך /

מהרבית [מהרבות] πληθυνθῆναι = גאל הדם / לשחת / ולא ישמידו את בני

“Let the king be mindful of the Lord your God, that the blood avenger destroy not any more, and let my son not be killed.”

In this petition the second infinitive clause, *לשחת*, is dependent on the first infinitive clause, *גאל הדם*. The practical explanation is only given in the independent third clause: *ולא ישמידו את בני*. The king responds to this richness of style in a metaphor that is designed to convince the other party:

v. 11b

חי ה' אם יפל משערת בנק ארצה

“As the Lord lives, not a hair of your son shall fall to the ground.”

This language level implies a full appraisal of the status of the wise woman. From this moment on she is in full control. She now formally requests consideration of her argument:

v. 12

תדבר נא שפחתך אל אדני המלך דבר

“Let your servant speak a word to my lord the king”

As this request is granted tersely: *דברי* (v. 12b, “speak”), she proceeds to admonish the king in a highly elevated style by which her authority is highlighted even more. In the end it is the king who asks for permission to speak:

v. 18a

אל נא חכדי ממי דבר אשר אני שאל אותך

“Do not withhold from me anything I ask you!”

In response the wise woman gives the king permission to speak, politely, but decisively:

v. 18b

דבר נא אדני המלך / Let my lord the king speak.”

And when the king asks her whether she was coached by Joab, she immediately confirms the assumption in rich and persuasive language. By highlighting Joab’s way of concealing the real purpose of her intervention, she indicates the authority behind her performance. In addition she acknowledges the infinite wisdom of the king who in the end realized what was at stake.¹¹⁶ These words of praise clinch the case: David is now virtually obliged to accept the implications of his decision. In the end, then, it is the king who has to obey the woman. Calling for Joab is the logical consequence of this dialogue.

b. Discourse and the legal register

The various genres of legal literature, such as law and obligation by contract, reflect specialized activities that are dominated by experts. They are characterized

116. In a sense this part of the performance of the wise woman serves as the confirmation of the outcome, for which see Coulthard, *Discourse Analysis* (n. 111 above), 123–29; Edmondson, *Spoken Discourse*, 101–2; M. Coulthard and D. Brazil, “Exchange Structure,” in Coulthard, ed., *Advances in Spoken Discourse* (n. 28 above), 50–78, esp. 72–73. The logic of biblical episodes, in which the dialogue implies a transaction, is discussed by F. Polak, “On Dialogue and Speaker Status in the Book of Ruth,” *Beit Mikra* 46 (2001), 193–218 (in Heb. with Eng. summary).

by a particular terminology and a traditional repertory of language patterns,¹¹⁷ such as, in casuistic law, “Now if a man sells his daughter as a servant,” Exod. 21:7), patterns in which biblical law reflects traditional constructions of Old Babylonian law,¹¹⁸ that are, in their turn, reproduced by Deuteronomic law (e.g., Deut. 22:23, 25), and Holiness Code (Lev. 25:2, 25, 28). In public ceremonies of a legal character, then, the cultivated style seems obligatory. Thus Abimelech imposes an oath on Abraham (Gen. 21:23):¹¹⁹

ועתה השבעה לי באלhim / הנה אם תשקר לי ולני ולנכדי /
כך אשר עשית עמך / תשעה עמדי עם האז / אשר גורתה בה
“Therefore swear to me by God, here, you will not deal falsely with me or with my kith and kin; you will deal with me and with the land, in which you have enjoyed hospitality, as loyally as I have dealt with you.”

This declaration contains two relative clauses (אשר גורתה בה), and two clauses with two arguments (אשר עשית עמך תשעה עמדי). The single clause with one argument contains a long noun chain (לי ולני ולנכדי), not unlike the long list of future parties to the Sefire treaty (Sf I. A, 5–6).¹²⁰

עם ארם כליה ועם מצר ועם בנווי זי יסקן באשר[ה] ועם מלכי] כל עלי ארם ותחתה
ועם כל עיל ביה מלך

With all Aram and with Muṣr and with his sons who will come after [him] and [with the kings of] all Upper-Aram and Lower Aram and with all who enter the royal palace.

Many episodes contain an admixture of casual and formal language. Abimelech’s rebuttal of Abraham’s argument (Gen. 21:26) contains one clause with pronominal reference (וגם אתה לא הגדת לי), whereas the conclusion sounds formal: ¹²¹ (וגם לא שמעתי בלתה היום) (“and also I have not of it until today”). Apart from the two arguments, one also notes the use of the negation particle **בלתי**.¹²²

117. Crystal and Davy, *English Style*, 193–217. Rendsburg (*Diglossia* [n. 1 above], 157) finds less colloquialisms in “legalese” than in narrative prose.

118. See, e.g., R. Haase, *Einleitung in das Studium keilschriftlicher Rechtsquellen* (Wiesbaden, 1965), 19–24; R. Yaron, *The Laws of Eshnunna* (Jerusalem, 1969), 55–68; as well as D. Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law* (Cambridge, 1947), 74–77, 86–99.

119. In Abimelech’s oath one notes the legal overtones of the condition **אם תשקר לי** (v. 23), similar to the Sefire treaties, according to J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Treaties of Sefire* (Rome, 1967), 12–15: שקרתם והן ישקר מתעהל בר עתרטך מלך כתרך והן ישקר עקר מתעהל לככל אללה[ן] עדי (Sf II. B, 9; Fitzmyer, *Sefire*, 80–81).

120. Fitzmyer, *Sefire*, 12–13. The Akkadian parallels of this sequence mention sons and grandsons of both parties, e.g., the treaty between Muršili II and Niqmepa, RS 17.338, ll. 7–9, 8–9’, and RS 17.353, ll. 7–9, 15’–16’; J. Nougayrol, *Textes Accadiens des Archives Sud* (*Archives internationales*), PRU IV (Paris, 1956), 85–90; for a mention of sons and grandsons of the vassal see, e.g., the treaty between Supiluliuma and Niqmaddu (RS 17.340, ll. 9’–11’, ibid., 51); the Esarhaddon Succession Treaty, col. ll. 4, 288–89, according to S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (Helsinki, 1988), 28, 40.

121. The same style prevails in the negotiations between Abimelech and Isaac after Isaac’s first reprimand (Gen 26:28–29; on the casual style of Isaac’s first reaction in v. 27 see p. 62 above).

122. The formal overtones of the particle **בלתי** are indicated (a) by its use as the negation of the embedded infinitive construct (e.g., Gen. 3:11; 4:15; 19:21); (b) its use in authoritative proclamations in legal

A mixture of this kind is often found in the Jacob tales.¹²³ When Jacob starts negotiating the birthright with Esau, he mixes the casual language of the household with some formal features: **מִכֶּרֶת כִּיּוֹם אֶת בְּכֶרֶת לִי** ("First sell your birthright to me," 25:31). This clause contains three arguments, while the personal pronoun is placed in the end, in a highly emphatic position.¹²⁴ The lexeme "birthright" situates this demand firmly in the legal register. The negotiations concerning Jacob's marriages are mostly couched in the casual style, such as his demand, which consists of three short clauses with one argument each:

Gen. 29:21

"Give me my wife, for my time is full, that I may cohabit with her."

Jacob asks for his wife as a household member, rather than demanding her as future son-in-law. The casual style is also used in Jacob's agitated complaint on the replacement of Rachel by Leah:

v. 25

מה זאת עשית לי / הלא ברוחך עבדתי עמך / ולמה רמייתני

"What have you done to me? Did not I serve with you for Rachel? Why have you deceived me?"

Laban's answer, however, is couched in formal language, and thus accentuates both the legal position and patriarchal authority:

v. 26

לא יעשה כן במקומו / לחתת הצעריה לפני הבכירה /

v. 27

מלא שבע זאת / וונתנה לך גם את זאת בעבדה / אשר תעבד עמדיך עוד שבע שנים אחרות
"It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the older. Fulfill the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me yet seven other years."

The formal character of this statement is most obvious in the long relative clause at the end of the decision (**אשר תעבד עמדיך עוד שבע שנים אחרות**). One also notes the embedded infinitive clause (**לחתת הצעריה לפני הבכירה**), the use of three arguments (**וונתנה לך גם את זאת בעבדה**). The legal register, then, has an important role to fulfill in classical Hebrew narrative.

c. The Language of Religious Discourse

Since discourse of a religious character, e.g., prayer, hymnody, and prophetic vision, is ceremonial by its very nature, its preferred style is the elevated one.¹²⁵ In

or administrative contexts, e.g., Joseph's decree (Gen. 43:3, 5), official petitions (Gen. 47:18; Num. 11:6); dream interpretation (Judg. 7:14), and also Exod. 20:20; 22:19; Num. 32:12.

123. The legal aspects of the negotiations between Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:26–30, 31–32, 36–44) have been highlighted by C. Westermann, *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis, 1985), 489–95; C. Mabee, "Jacob and Laban: The Structure of Judicial Proceedings (Genesis xxxi 25–42)," *VT* 30 (1980), 192–207. These negotiations are opened by statements in the casual style (31:26–27), but in the sequel the style is more intricate (e.g., vv. 29–30), notwithstanding sporadic elements in the verbal style (e.g., v. 40). Rachel addresses her father in respectful language (v. 35).

124. For this exceptional construction one may compare Gen. 34:16; Deut. 12:1; Ps. 18:48; 28:4; Prov. 23:26; Cant. 8:1.

125. Crystal and Davy, *English Style*, 147–72; D. Crystal, *Linguistics, Language and Religion* (London, 1965), 133–37, 149–56.

bilingual communities this tendency is extremely clear-cut, as shown by, e.g., the use of Latin in medieval Christianity and the Roman Catholic church, the use of Hebrew in traditional Jewish communities where the vernacular is Yiddish, Arabic, or Ladino, and the use of French in the religious services of the Creolic-speaking Protestant communities of Haiti.¹²⁶ That the situation in the ancient Near East was no different, is indicated by the use in Babylonia and Assyria of the hymnal-epic dialect and Sumerian for prayer and royal inscriptions, when Sumerian was no longer in use as a spoken language,¹²⁷ as well as by the well-known archaisms of hymnic and prophetic poetry in the Hebrew Bible.¹²⁸

Small wonder, then, that in biblical narrative prayer and prophetic utterances are for the most part couched in cultivated, elevated language, though not necessarily in poetic parallelism. Samuel's prophetic indictment of Saul opens with a number of clauses in the casual style of prose narrative, e.g.,

1 Sam. 15:16

"Stop! Let me tell you what the Lord said to me this night!"

הַרְף וְאָגִידָה לְךָ אֲתָּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר הָאֱלֹהִים בְּלִילָה

The confrontation of prophet and king ends with two indictments, of which the second is entirely in the poetic style:

1 Sam. 15:22

חַחְפֵּן לְהָ בְּעֵלוֹת וּזְבָחִים / כִּשְׁמַע בְּקוּל הָיָה
הַנָּה שָׁמַע מִזְבֵּחַ טָוב / לְהַקְשִׁיב מִחְלָב אִילִים

v. 23

כִּי חָטָאת קְסָם מְרִי / וְאַזְן וּתְרִפְפִים הַפְּצִיר
עַינָּן מַאֲסָת אֶת דָּבָר הָיָה / רַיְמָאַסְק מַלְךָ

"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices / as much as in obedience to the Lord's command? Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice / compliance than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination / defiance, like the iniquity of teraphim. Because you rejected the Lord's command, He has rejected you as king."

These verses stand out by their intricate syntactic structure (e.g., the use of the infinitive clause as subject in the main clause in v. 22, and the inversion of subject and predicate in v. 23a), as well as by their parallelism (e.g., in v. 23a, **הַפְּצִיר** matches **מְרִי**, **חָטָאת קְסָם** and **וְאַזְן וּתְרִפְפִים** balances **מַאֲסָת**).¹²⁹

126. Extensive description of these phenomena is offered by W. J. Samarin, "The Language of Religion," in *idem, ed., Language in Religious Practice* (Rowley, Mass., 1976), 3–13; R. Fasold, *The Sociolinguistics of Society* (Oxford, 1987), 62–66, 77–78, 165–68, 193–94. In addition to the sociolinguistic aspect, Samarin points to the use of language for purposes of magic.

127. The use of Sumerian in the Old-Babylonian period is discussed by W. H. Ph. Römer, *Die Sumerologie: Einführung in die Forschung und Bibliographie in Auswahl, AOAT 262* (Münster, 1999), 196–97; *idem, Sumerische "Königshymnen" der Isin-Zeit* (Leiden, 1965), 1–3, 5; A. Falkenstein, *Das Sumerische* (Handbuch der Orientalistik I,2,1 (Leiden, 1964), 16–17; H. Steible, *Rimsin, mein König* (Wiesbaden, 1975); E. Sollberger, *Inscriptions Royales sumériennes et accadiennes* (Paris, 1971), 171–207; on Sumerian and bilingual inscriptions of Hammurapi and his successors see *ibid.*, 212–14, 218–29. The archaisms of the hymnal-epic register in Akkadian, e.g., in *Enuma Elish*, the *Gilgamesh* epic, and the prologue and epilogue of Hammurapi's law, have been analyzed by W. von Soden, "Der hymnisch-epische Dialekt des Akkadischen," *ZA* 40 (1931), 163–227, esp. 163–65; *ZA* 41 (1933), 90–183, esp. 160–81.

128. On archaic elements and other lexical and morphological particularities of poetic language, see W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques, JSOT Supp. 26* (Sheffield, 1984), 49, 51.

129. Note also, e.g., 1 Sam. 10:1–2, 7–8; 15:28–29; Num. 23:18–19.

Other narrators also prefer the poetic style for the prophetic utterances in their tales, e.g., Zedekiah's prophecy before the battle over Ramoth Gilead, which uses two arguments and the infinitive clause עַד כָּלֹתָם:¹³⁰

1 Kgs. 22:11

“With these you shall gore the Arameans until their destruction.”

בָּאֵלָה תְּנַגֵּח אֶת אָרָם עַד כָּלֹתָם

One also notes, e.g., the structure of Elijah's proclamation of the coming drought:¹³¹

1 Kgs. 17:1

חַי ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל / אֲשֶׁר עַמְּדָתִי לִפְנֵי
אָם יִהְיָה הַשְׁנִים הָאֲלָה טָל וּמָטָר / כִּי אִם לִפְנֵי דְבָרִי

“As true as the Lord lives, the God of Israel whom I serve, there will be no dew nor rain these years, except at my bidding.”

So also his declaration to the widow from Sarepta:

v. 14

כִּד הַקְמָה לֹא תִּכְלֶה / וְצַפְתָּה הַשְׁמָן לֹא תִּחְסֹר /
עַד יוֹם תַּה' גַּשְׁמָ עַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָם

“The jar of flour shall not give out and the jug of oil shall not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the ground.”

The first two clauses balance one another exactly: both of them open with a subject in the construct state, followed by the predicate. The third colon consists of temporal modifier that includes an embedded infinitive clause with three arguments. This proclamation, then, instances the elevated style of prophetic discourse in narrative.¹³²

Elevated diction is not restricted to prophetic utterances, however. The widow acknowledges Elijah's truthfulness in the same cultivated style:

v. 24

עַתָּה זוּ יָדַעַתִּי / כִּי אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה / וְדֹבֶר ה' בְּפִיךְ אִמְתָּח

“Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord is truly in your mouth.”

The inference is warranted, then, that the use of the cultivated style is not only related to the prophetic style of speech, but to the elevated character of religious discourse.

Indeed, we encounter this style in other types of context as well. Hannah's prayer consists for the most part of clauses with two arguments (1 Sam. 1:11):

ה' צָבָאֹת אָם רָאָה תְּרָאָה בְּעַנִּי אִמְתָּח /
וְנַתְּתָה לְאִמְתָּח וְזַעֲנַתָּח וְעַנִּשָּׂמֵח / וְלֹא תְשַׁכַּח אֶת אַמְתָּח /

“Lord of Hosts, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember me and not forget Your maidservant, and if You will grant Your maidservant a male child, I will dedicate him to the Lord for all the days of his life; and no razor shall ever touch his head.”

130. A similar expression is found in Elisha's address of Joash (2 Kgs. 13:19), on which see above, pp. 80–81.

131. The pair טָל-מָטָר represents the poetic style, as evidenced by Deut. 32:2; 2 Sam. 1:21; Job 38:28. In addition one notes the play with this pair in Job 29:19 (טָל-מִים) and 29:23 (מָטָר-מִלְקָשָׁם).

132. See Andersen, “What Biblical Scholars Might Learn” (see n. 86 above), 59; Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative*, 205.

In this prayer four clauses out of six contain two arguments, and four expanded noun chains,¹³³ giving it a decidedly formal character. The priest's rebuke in the same pericope (v. 14) is closer to the verbal style:

עד מתי תשתכרין / הַסִּירֵי אֶת יִין מָעֵילֵךְ

"How long will you be drunken? Keep the wine far from you."

However, this rebuke also stands out by its prosodic regularity. It consists of two balanced clauses, that contain the poetic pair יין / שבר¹³⁴ and the antithesis of עד מתי and הַסִּירֵי . . . מָעֵילֵךְ. Parallelism also exists in Hannah's prayer, though in a less conspicuous form. The only two simple clauses (וּזְכָרָתַנִי / וְלֹא תִשְׁכַּח אֶת אַמְתָּךְ), form a pair of antithetic cola.¹³⁵ In addition one notes the sequence of identical verbs (וְנִתְחַתָּה לְאַמְתָּךְ זָרָע אָנָשִׁים / וְנִתְחַתָּה לְיְהוָה כָּל יִמִּחְיוֹן) v. 14).¹³⁶ Hannah's answer to the priest contains two balanced junctions (וַיַּזְכֵּר וְשָׁכָר) v. 15; מְרֻב שִׁיחִי וְכַעַשִּׁי) v. 16). Finally, the priest's blessing stands out by its elevated style:

v. 17

לְכִי לְשִׁלּוֹם / וְאֱלֹהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתְּן אֶת שְׁלֹתָךְ / אֲשֶׁר שְׁאָלָת מְעַמָּד

"Go in peace and may the God of Israel¹³⁷ grant you the request that you have requested of Him."

On the formal level one notes the use of two arguments in the main clause, the relative clause, and the paronomasia of שאלת מעמו and שלתך. The construction ואֱלֹהִי שְׁאָלָת מְעַמָּד יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתְּן אֶת שְׁלֹתָךְ / אֲשֶׁר שְׁאָלָת מְעַמָּד is balanced by (a) the repetition of the root שאל in the phrase שלתך אֲשֶׁר שְׁאָלָת (noun/verb interchange);¹³⁸ and (b) the contrast between the wish for the divine favor conveyed in the main clause ואֱלֹהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתְּן (אֶת שְׁלֹתָךְ) and the request from God that is expressed by the relative clause אֲשֶׁר שְׁאָלָת מְעַמָּד.

Words spoken by the deity also represent the register of religion, and thus are often couched in the elevated style. This tendency may be illustrated by the proclamations of Abram's destination:

133. Hannah's answer to Eli's rebuke (vv. 15–16) opens with three simple clauses, but its continuation contains three clauses with two arguments each. Four clauses contain an expanded noun chain.

134. This pair occurs in poetry with the noun שבר: Isa. 24:9; 28:7; 29:9; 56:12; Mic. 2:11; Prov. 20:1; 31:4, 6; and with the verbal root שבר: Jer. 51:7; Cant. 5:1; and in prose: Gen. 9:21. In prose the noun pair is found in Lev. 10:9; Num. 6:3; Deut. 14:26; 29:5; Judg. 13:4, 7, 14. On the parallelism of škrn and šb^c yn in Ugaritic epic poetry see Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word Pairs* (n. 90 above), 441, n. 1.

135. These cola also represent an action-result sequence, a construction that has been recognized as parallelism by S. A. Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (Missoula, Montana, 1979), 31–37.

136. On parallelism of identical verbs in biblical and Ugaritic poetry see principally M. Held, "The YQTL-QTL (QTL-YQTL) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and in Ugaritic," in M. Ben-Horin, ed., *Essays Presented to A. A. Neuman* (Leiden, 1962), 281–90. The occurrence on this pattern in so-called Priestly prose has been noted by M. Paran, *Forms of the Priestly Style in the Pentateuch: Patterns, Linguistic Usages, Syntactic Structures* (Jerusalem, 1989), 40–61, 98–136 (in Heb. with Eng. summary). For its use in narrative prose see F. H. Polak, "The Structure of the Book of Samuel and its Place in Ancient Israelite Historiography," *Shnaton* (Jerusalem, 2000), 13–47, esp. 38–39 (in Heb. with Eng. summary).

137. This compound epithet is found in a number of verses without preceding tetragrammaton: (a) in poetic context: 2 Sam. 23:3; Isa. 29:23; 45:15; Ezek. 8:4; 9:3; 10:20; 11:22; (b) in prose: Exod. 24:10; 1 Kgs. 8:26; and in the phrase אַרְוֹן אֱלֹהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 1 Sam. 5:7, 8, 10, 11; 6:3, 5; (c) in (post-)exilic prose: Ezek. 43:2; Ezra 3:2; 9:4; 1 Chr. 4:10; 5:26; 2 Chr. 29:7; (d) in conjunction with אל: אלְהִים or אלְהִים: Gen. 33:20; Ps. 68:9.

138. This construction is found twice in Gen. 26:18.

Gen. 12:1

לְךָ מִאָרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלֶדֶתךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָרַצָּה אֶרְאָךְ . . .

v. 3

וְאַבְרָהָם מִבְּרָכֵךְ / וְמִקְלָלֵךְ אָאָר / וְנוּבָרָכוּ בָּךְ כָּל מִשְׁפָּחָת הָאָדָמָה

“Go forth from your country, and from your family and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you. . . . I will bless those who bless you, and curse him that curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.”

מִאָרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלֶדֶתךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ (v. 1), by the two participles that serve as object to the two short cola in the last verse (v. 3), and by the long noun chain in the last clause (הָאָדָמָה), that also contains two arguments. This colon carries all the more weight, as Abram’s blessing by all the families of the earth balances his departure from his family and his country in the opening clause.

The cultivated style also stands out in the divine announcement to Samuel of Saul’s kingship:

1 Sam. 9:16

כְּעַת מִחרָא אֲשֶׁלָח אֶלְךָ אִישׁ מִאָרֶץ בְּיַמִּין /

וּמְשֹׁחַתּוּ לְנִגְדֵךְ עַל עַמִּי שִׁזְׁרָאֵל / וְהַרְשֵׁעַ אֶת עַמִּי מִיד פְּלִשְׁתִּים /

כִּי רָאִיתִי אֶת [בְּעַנִּי + ἐπὶ τὰ πείνωσιν =] עַמִּי / כִּי בָּאָה צַעַקְתּוּ אַלְיִ (. . .)

v. 17

הַנָּה אַיִשׁ אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֶלְךָ / זֶה יִצְּרָר בְּעַמִּי

“At this time tomorrow, I will send a man to you from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him ruler of my people Israel. He will deliver my people from the hands of the Philistines; for I have taken note of (LXX + the suffering of) my people, their outcry has come to me. (. . .) This is the man of whom I told you; he will rule over my people.”

The first of these divine proclamations to the prophet consists of a series complex clauses that contain two or three arguments. Only one clause is less intricate (כִּי), but here the LXX could reflect a reading with a construct state (e.g., בְּעַנִּי עַמִּי). The cultivated style is also evidenced by other declarations of designation (e.g., Gen. 13:14–17; 21:12–13; 22:2, 12, 16–19; 25:23–24; 26:2–5; 28:13–15; 32:29;¹³⁹ 46:2–4.¹⁴⁰

These data, however, do not permit the generalized thesis that all divine speech is cultivated or formal. The tale of Abraham and the three wayfarers contains, apart from two intricate utterances (the promise concerning Sarah and the comment on her laughter, Gen. 18:9, 13–14) a number of short clauses, that seem entirely casual: (כִּן תַּעֲשֵׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר דָּבָרָת) (“Do as you have spoken,” v. 5); (אִיָּה שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְךָ) (“Where is your wife, Sarah?” v. 9).¹⁴¹ This is not only a matter of ironic concealment of the divine speaker. In the Gideon tale a number of divine instructions represent the formal style (Judg. 7:2–3, 4, 5), but the narrative also includes a military instruction in casual language:

Judg. 7:9

קֹם / רֹד בַּמְחַנָּה / כִּי נִתְחַיו בִּידֶךָ

“Come, attack the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand.”

139. The cultivated style in the angelic announcement of the change of Jacob’s name (Gen. 32:28) stands out all the more against the background of the obvious verbal style of the tale itself.

140. In Gen. 17:1 the opening of the divine promise consists of three short clauses (1 arg. each), but the diction of the next verses is more intricate (v. 2), and often even extremely formal (vv. 4–8, 15–16, 19–21). Signs of the elevated style are also found in, e.g., Gen. 3:11, 14–19, 22; 4:7, 11–12, as against the more casual style in Gen. 3:9, 13; 4:9, 10, 15.

141. In 18:17–21, 23–33 the style of spoken discourse is entirely formal.

This way of speaking suits the register of the military rather than that of religion. Of course, in the present context this style is only to be expected, unlike the previous instructions, that are permeated by religious notions. However, less formal speech is also found in other divine instructions, e.g., the orders to Moses, Aaron and Miriam: צאו שלשתיכם אל האל מועד (Num. 12:4; “Come out, you three, to the Tent of Meeting.”)¹⁴²

Thus, we do not perceive any intrinsic difference in language use between divine and human discourse.¹⁴³ In general, however, divine speech belongs to the register of religion, and represents its language use. Divine discourse, that does not belong to this register, does not necessarily use the cultivated style, and may even be as casual as any human quoted speech.¹⁴⁴

6. The Style of Character Speech and the Narrator's Art

These data are indicative of the great stylistic variety of character speech in those narratives that are dominated by the rhythmic-verbal style. The reader must be attentive to the different nuances in order to perceive the tone of speaking, the relation to the social context and setting, and thus also the shades of meaning, and the relation to the character's inner life. It appears that this great variety in style is related to the nature of oral narrative and the special gifts and techniques developed by the story-tellers over the generations. In oral narrative quoted discourse is an essential element. As Richard Dorson has put it:

One point that had escaped me until they were placed on the dissection table is their plentiful use of dialogue. The tale becomes fresher, livelier, and clearer when natural conversation is introduced.¹⁴⁵

Anthropologists who study these phenomena in their proper setting often highlight the theatrical talents of the oral narrator,¹⁴⁶ who turns a character's discourse into an actor's performance, and the narrative, at least partly, into a play on stage.

More than that, in Bakhtin's view, the presence of various different speaking voices warrants “speech diversity and language stratification,”¹⁴⁷ and thereby con-

142. And similarly Num. 12:14. But the declaration concerning Moses' prophetic position instances the elevated style (12:6–8), including parallelism (6b $\beta\gamma$).

143. In this respect, our data do not support Radday's perception of a general difference between divine discourse, on the one hand, and character speech and the narrator's voice, on the other; see Radday-Shore, *Genesis* (n. 1 above), 212–14; Rabin, “Linguistic Aspects” (n. 8 above), 221.

144. Frank Andersen was kind enough to inform me that in an unpublished paper he notes that “God talks to humans more casually, humans to God more formally.” In his view the point is that the deity addresses human beings in human language, as asserted by the Talmudic maxim (TB *Makkoth* 12a; *Qiddushin* 17b).

145. R. M. Dorson, “Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators” (n. 19 above), 43, 46–51. For additional references see n. 19 above.

146. Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (n. 19 above), 373–77; İlhan Basgöz, “The Tale-Singer and his Audience,” in D. Ben-Amos & K. R. Goldstein, eds., *Folklore: Performance and Communication* (The Hague-Paris, 1975), 142–203.

147. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 315.

tributes to the embedding of the narrative in a broad social framework that supports “a dialogue of languages.”¹⁴⁸ Thus the diversity of speech ultimately serves to emulate the variety of social life and thought.

148. Ibid., 314.