

The Style of the Dialogue in Biblical Prose Narrative

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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., הנה בעל החלמות הלזה (בא) הלזה, "Here comes that dreamer," Gen. 37:19),⁹ זֶה as an indication of place (אל נא תמש מזה, "don't move from here," Judg. 6:18),¹⁰ and כיום as an adverb with the meaning "first" (מכרה כיום את בכרתך לי), "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, כיום הֵּזֶה, 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 Kuntilet 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., וְקוֹץ וְדוֹרֵדֵר תִּצְמַיֵּחַ לָךְ (“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: אֶת תָּמָר אֲבִשָּׁלֹם אָחִי אֲנִי אֹהֵב (“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. Ejkenbaum, "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

Josh. 8:32 ויכתב שם על האבנים את משנה תורת משה / אשר כתב לפני בני ישראל
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 / ככלתו / לדבר אתו בהר סיני / שני לוחת העדות
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 וככתב עליהן את כל דברי התורה הזאת / בעברך /
למען אשר תבא אל הארץ / אשר ה' אלהיך נתן לך / ארץ זבת חלב ודבש /
כאשר דבר ה' אלהי אבותיך 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 (אשר ה' אלהיך נתן לך, אשר כתב לפני בני ישראל) or participle (כתבים); as adverbial modifier (כאשר דבר ה' אלהי אבותיך לך; בעברך); and as indication of goal (למען אשר תבא אל הארץ). Some clauses are dependent on subordinated clauses (complicated hypotaxis: אשר ה' אלהיך נתן לך). *The number of constituents* is high. The verse on Joshua's writing on the altar contains (1) an adverbial modifier (שם), (2) a description of place (על האבנים), and (3) a direct object (את משנה תורת משה). In Moses' exhortation we note, apart from the predicate: (1) the adverbial modifier (עליהן), (2) the direct object (את כל דברי התורה הזאת), (3) a time indication (בעברך), (4) an indication of the goal (למען אשר . . .). The second verse contains: (1) an indirect object (אל משה), (2) a time indication (ככלתו לדבר אתו בהר סיני), (3) a direct object (כל דברי התורה הזאת). Some arguments consist of *long noun strings* (שני לוחת העדות, לוחת אבן; ארץ זבת חלב ודבש). Deictic particles do occur (עליהן; Deut. 27:3; שם, Josh. 8:32), but are mainly found in dependent clauses (אשר . . ., כאשר דבר . . ., אשר . . . נתן לך, Exod. 31:18; לדבר אתו).

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).

Gen. 42:2 הנה שמעתי / כי יש שבר במצרים / רדו שמה / ושברו לנו משם / ונחיה / ולא נמות
 “Now I hear that there are rations in Egypt. Go down and procure rations for us there, and let us live and not die.”

Gen. 26:27 מדוע באתם אלי / ואתם שנאתם אתי / ותשלחוני מאתכם
 “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 (כי יש שבר במצרים). Isaac’s questions contain *three clauses that consist of predicate and pronominal complement only* (e.g., ותשלחוני מאתכם; so also in Jacob’s proposal: רדו שמה / ושברו לנו משם). Only one clause contains nouns (כי יש שבר במצרים). 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 רמיתני / ותשלחי את איבי / וימלט . . .
 “Why did you deceive me this way / and let my enemy get away / and escape”

הוא אמר אלי / שלחני / למה אמיתך
 “He said to me / help me get away / why should I kill you”

Only one out of six clauses contains a noun (ותשלחי את איבי), three contain *one or two pronouns or simple adverbs* (למה ככה רמיתני, למה אמר אלי, למה אמיתך), and two consist of the *verbal predicate only* (or of *predicate with suffix*: שלחני, וימלט); reference by suffix is frequent (אמיתך, שלחני, רמיתני).

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 אזל מכלינו / ותשורה אין להביא לאיש האלהים / מה אתנו
 “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):

אן הלכתם
 “Where have you gone?”

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 (1 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 (פן יחול אבי מן האתונות).

לבקש את האתנות / ונראה כי אין / ונברא 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 (כי, כי נמצאו האתנות), most clauses are extremely simple. Three clauses contain no more than one noun (הגיד לנו, הגידה נא לי), pronominal reference is frequent (לכם, ונברא אל שמואל), and the uncle’s question *אין* is answered by an independent infinitive clause that forms a logical continuation to the implied answer “we went to,” לבקש את האתנות.⁴⁶ By the same token one notes Jonathan’s reproach: *למה יומת, מה עשה* (1 Sam. 20:32: “Why should he be killed? What has he done?”), and the question of Elisha’s servant: *מה אתן זה לפני מאה איש* (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, the suffixes) 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:

Gen. 12:13

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

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

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 וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ (v. 4, "wash your feet and recline under the tree"), וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם, וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ (v. 5, "And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on"), מִהֲרִי, שְׁלֹשׁ סָאִים קֹמַח סֶלֶת, לֹשִׁי, וְעָשִׂי עֲגוֹת (v. 6, "Quick, three seahs of choice flour! Knead and make cakes").⁵⁷ However, similar sequences are found in the event sequence, e.g., וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ וַיִּרְאוּ לְקִרְאָתָם . . . (vv. 2b–3a, he saw them, . . . bowed to the ground and said), וַיִּקַּח בֶּן בָּקָר (v. 7, he took a calf, tender and choice, and gave it to the servant).⁵⁸ Clauses with several arguments (e.g., וַיִּמְהַר אַבְרָהָם הָאֵהָלָה אֶל שָׂרָה, v. 6, 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 וַיִּמְהַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ (and he hastened to prepare it, v. 7), וַיִּתֵּן לַפְּנֵיהֶם וְהוּא עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם, (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 segun la Tradicion 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,

within the narrator's domain the style of expository 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 בני הגולה (להקבץ)	4 arg	-	2
	להקבץ ירושלם	1 arg	sub	-
v. 8	וכל (אשר לא־יבוא) יחרם כל־רכושו	2 arg	-	1
	אשר לא־יבוא לשלשת הימים כעצת השרים והזקנים	3 arg	attr	2+
	והוא יבדל מקהל הגולה	2 arg	-	1
v. 9	ויקבצו כל־אנשי־יהודה ובנימין ירושלם	4 arg	-	3+
	לשלשת הימים (הוא חדש) בעשרים בחדש			
	הוא חדש התשיעי	1 arg	-	1
	וישבו־כל העם ברחוב בית האלהים (מרעידים)	3 arg	-	2+
	מרעידים על־הדבר ומהגשמים	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 Muraoka (*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	כֵּן	-	-	-
	כדברִיךְ עלינו לעשות	2 arg	-	-
v. 13	אבל העם רב	1 arg	-	-
	והעת גשמים	1 arg	-	-
	ואין כח (לעמוד)	2 arg	-	-
	לעמוד בחוץ	1 arg	sub	-
	והמלאכה לא־ליום אחד	1 arg	-	1
	ולא לשנים	-	-	-
	כי־הרבינו (לפשע)	1 arg	-	-
	לפשע בדבר הזה	1 arg	sub	1
v. 14	יעמדו נא שרינו לכל הקהל (עד להשיב)	3 arg	-	1
	וכל אשר בערינו (ההשיב) יבא לעתים מזמנים	2 arg	-	2
	ההשיב נשים נכריות	1 arg	attr	1
	ועמהם זקני עיר ועיר ושפטיה	1 arg	-	2
	עד להשיב חרון אף אלהינו ממנו עד לדבר הזה	3 arg	sub	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).

68. See Polak, "The Oral and the Written," 98.

	Argument	Sub	Expand	
ולהסיר שקן מעליו	2 arg	sub	-	
ולא קבל	-	-	-	
(. . .)				
v. 6 ויצא התך אל מרדכי אל רחוב העיר אשר לפני שער המלך	3 arg	-	3	
(. . .)				
v. 8 ואת פתשגן כתב הדת (אשר) נתן לו (להראות) אשר נתן בשושן (להשמידם) להשמידם	3 arg 3 arg -	- attr chyp	1 1 1	
להראות את אסתר	1 arg	sub	-	
ולהגיד לה	1 pron	sub	-	
ולצוות עליה (לבוא)	1 pron	sub	-	
לבוא אל המלך	1 arg	chyp	-	
להתחנן לו	1 pron	chyp	-	
ולבקש מלפניו על עמה	2 arg	chyp	-	
(. . .)				
v. 12 ויגידו למרדכי את דברי אסתר	2 arg	-	1	
v. 13a ויאמר מרדכי (להשיב) להשיב אל אסתר	2 arg 1 arg	- sub	- -	
b. Character Discourse				
Unit	Esth. 4:11, 13b–14, 16	Argument	Sub	Expand
v. 11	כל עבדי המלך ועם מדינות המלך יודעים (אשר) אשר כל איש ואשה (אשר) אחת דתו (להמית) אשר יבוא אל המלך אל החצר הפנימית (אשר) אשר לא יקרא להמית	2 arg 2 arg 3 arg -	- sub attr chyp	3 1 1 -
	לבד מאשר יושיט לו המלך את שרביט הזהב וחייה	3 arg -	attr -	1 -
	ואני לא נקראתי (לבוא) זה שלושים יום לבוא אל המלך	3 arg 1 arg	- sub	- -
(. . .)				
v. 13b	אל־תדמי בנפשך (להמלט) להמלט בית המלך מכל היהודים	2 arg 2 arg	- sub	- 2
v. 14	כי אם החרש תחרישי בעת הזאת רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר ואת ובית אביך תאבדו ומי יודע (אם) אם לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות	1 arg 4 arg 1 arg 2 arg 2 arg	- - - - sub	1 2 1 - 1
(. . .)				
v. 16	לך כנוס את כל היהודים הנמצאים (הנמצאים) הנמצאים בשושן וצומו עלי ואל תאכלו ואל תשתו שלשת ימים לילה ויום גם אני ונערתי אצום כן ובכן אבוא אל המלך אשר לא כדת וכאשר אבדתי (וכאשר) אבדתי	- 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, *יחי המלך* (v. 12), *קשר קשר* (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:

2 Kgs. 22:8 *ויאמר חלקיהו הכהן הגדול על שפן הספר / ספר התורה מצאתי בבית ה'*
Then Hilkiah, the high priest, said to Shaphan, the scribe, "I have found a scroll of the Teaching in the House of the Lord."

v. 10 *ויגד שפן הספר למלך לאמר / ספר נתן לי חלקיהו 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

Jer. 41:6⁷⁰ *ויאמר אליהם / באו אל גדליהו בן אחיקם*
He said to them, "Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam" (LXX Gedaliah)

v. 8 *ויאמר אל ישמעאל / אל תמתנו / כי יש לנו מטמנים בשדה / חטים ושערים ושמן ודבש*
But they said to Ishmael, "Don't kill us! We have stores hidden in a field—wheat, barley, oil, and honey."

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 שרי החילים אשר בשדה המה ואנשיהם (כי) כי הפקיד מלך בבל את גדליהו בן אחיקם בארץ וכי הפקיד אתו אנשים ונשים וטף ומדלת הארץ מאשר לא הגלו בבבלה	2 arg 3 arg 2 arg 2 arg	- sub sub chyp	3 2 2+ -
v. 8	ויבאו אל גדליה המצפתה וישמעאל בן נתניהו ויוחנן ויונתן בני קרח ושריה בן תנחמת ובני עיפי הנטפתי ויוזניהו בן המעכתי המה ואנשיהם	2 arg	-	8+
v. 9	וישבע להם גדליהו בן אחיקם בן שפן ולאנשיהם (לאמר) לאמר	2 arg -	- sub	3 -
char	אל תיראו מעבוד (מעבוד) מעבוד הכשדים שבו בארץ ועבדו את מלך בבל וייטב לכם	1 arg 1 arg 1 arg 1 arg 1 pron	- sub - - -	- - - 1 -
v. 10	ואני הנני יושב במצפה (לעמד) לעמד לפני הכשדים אשר יבאו אלינו ואתם אספו יין וקיץ ושמן ושמו בכליכם ושבו בעריכם אשר תפשתם	3 arg 1 arg 2 pron 2 arg 1 arg 1 arg 1 arg	- attr chyp - - - attr	- 1 - 1+ - - -
v. 11	וגם כל היהודים אשר במואב ובבני עמון ובאדום ואשר בכל הארצות שמעו (כי) כי נתן מלך בבל שארית ליהודה וכי הפקיד עליהם את גדליהו בן אחיקם בן שפן	2 arg 2 arg 2 arg	- sub sub	5 1 2
v. 12 ⁷¹	(...) ויבאו ארץ יהודה אל גדליהו המצפתה ויאספו יין וקיץ הרבה מאד	3 arg 2 arg	- -	1 2
v. 13	ויוחנן בן קרח וכל שרי החילים אשר בשדה באו אל גדליהו המצפתה	3 arg	-	3+
v. 14	ויאמרו אליו הידע תדע (כי)	1 pron 1 arg	- -	- -
char	כי בעלים מלך בני עמון שלח את ישמעאל בן נתניה (להכתך) להכתך נפש	3 arg 1 arg	sub chyp	3+ -
narr	ולא האמין להם גדליהו בן אחיקם	2 arg	-	1
v. 15	ויוחנן בן קרח אמר אל גדליהו בן שפן במצפה (לאמר) לאמר	5 arg -	- sub	1 -
char	אלכה נא ואכה את ישמעאל בן נתניה ואיש לא ידע למה יכנה נפש ונפצו כל יהודה (הנקבצים) הנקבצים אליך	- 1 arg 1 arg 2 arg 1 arg 1 pron	- - - - attr	- 1 - - - -

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

					Argument	Sub	Expand
					1 arg	-	1
v. 16	ואבדה שארית יהודה				2 arg	-	3
char	ויאמר גדליהו בן יוחנן בן כרח				1 arg	-	1
	אל תעשה את הדבר הזה				2 arg	-	-
	כי שקר אתה דבר אל ישמעאל						
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)

Unit	1 Kings 10	Argument	Sub	Expand
v. 6	ותאמר אל המלך	1 arg	-	-
char	אמת היה הדבר	1 arg	-	-
	אשר שמעתי בארצי על דברך ועל חכמתך	3 arg	attr	1
v. 7	ולא האמנתי לדברים (עד אשר)	2 arg	-	-
	עד אשר באתי	-	sub	-
	ותראינה עיני	1 arg	sub	-
	והנה לא הגד לי החצי	2 arg	-	-
	הוספת חכמה וטוב אל השמועה	2 arg	-	1
	אשר שמעתי	1 pron	attr	-
v. 8	אשרי אנשיך	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
v. 9	אשרי עבדיך אלה	1 arg	-	1
	העמדים לפניך תמיד	2 arg	attr	-
	השמעים את חכמתך	1 arg	attr	-
	יהי ה' אלהיך ברוך	1 arg	-	1
	אשר חפץ בך (לתתך)	3 arg	attr	-
	לתתך על כסא ישראל (באהבת)	3 arg	chyp	1
	באהבת ה' את ישראל לעלם	3 arg	chyp	-
v. 10	וישימך למלך (לעשות)	2 arg	-	-
	לעשות משפט וצדקה	1 arg	sub	1
	ותתן למלך מאה ועשרים ככר זהב ובשמים	2 arg	-	4+
	הרבה מאד ואבן יקרה			
	לא בא כבשם ההוא עוד לרב	3 arg	-	1
	אשר נתנה מלכת שבא למלך שלמה	3 arg	-	2
	(...)			
v. 13	והמלך שלמה נתן למלכת שבא את כל חפצה (אשר) (מלבד)	4 arg	-	3
	אשר שאלה	1 pron	attr	-
	מלבד אשר נתן לה כיד המלך שלמה	3 arg	sub	1+
	ותפן	-	-	-
	ותלך לארצה היא ועבדיה	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**, **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 מצאתה 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 (מהרי, שלש סאים קמח סלת, לושי, ועשי עגות; 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: כן תעשה כאשר דברת, "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)						
Unit	Genesis 16	Argument	Sub	Expand		
v. 2	ותאמר שרי אל אברם	2 arg	-	-		
char	הנה נא עצרני ה' (מלדת)	2 arg	-	-		
	מלדת	-	1	-		
	בא נא אל שפחתי	1 arg	-	-		
	אולי אבנה ממנה	2 pron	-	-		
narr	וישמע אברם לקול שרי	2 arg	-	1		
v. 4	ויבא אל הגר	1 arg	-	-		
	ותהר	-	-	-		
	ותרא (כי)	1 arg	-	-		
	כי והרתה	-	1	-		
	ותקל גברתה בעיניה	2 arg	-	-		
v. 5	ותאמר שרי אל אברם	2 arg	-	-		
char	חמסי עליך	1 arg	-	-		
	אנכי נתתי שפחתי בחיקך	3 arg	-	-		
	ותרא (כי)	1 arg	-	-		
	כי והרתה	-	1	-		
	ואקל בעיניה	1 arg	-	-		
	ישפט ה' ביני וביניך	2 pron	-	-		
v. 6	ויאמר אברם אל שרי	2 arg	-	-		
	הנה שפחתך בידך	1 arg	-	-		
	עשי לה הטוב בעיניך	2 arg	-	1		
narr	ותענה שרי	1 arg	-	-		
	ותברח מפניה	1 arg	-	-		
v. 7	וימצאה מלאך ה' על עין המים במדבר	3 arg	-	4+		
	על העין בדרך שור					
v. 8	ויאמר	-	-	-		
char	הגר שפחת שרי אי מזה באת	2 arg	-	1+		
	ואנה תלכי	1 pron	-	-		
narr	ותאמר	-	-	-		
char	מפני שרי גברתי אנכי ברחת	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 (v. 2: "Consort with my maid; perhaps I shall have a son through her"), the angel's counsel (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: "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)						
Unit	Judges 14	Argument	Sub	Expand		
v. 12 char	ויאמר להם שמשום	2 arg	-	-		
	אחורה נא לכם חידה	2 arg	-	-		
	אם הגד תגידו אותה לי שבעת ימי המשתה	3 arg	cond	1		
	ומצאתם	-	cond	-		
v. 13 narr	ונתתי לכם שלשים סדינים ושלשים חלפת בגדים	2 arg	-	2+		
	ואם לא תוכלו להגיד לי	1 arg	cond/vg	-		
	ונתתם אתם לי שלשים סדינים ושלשים חלפות בגדים	3 arg	-	2+		
	ויאמרו לו	1 pron	-	-		
v. 14 char	חודה חידתך	1 arg	-	-		
	ונשמענה	-	-	-		
	ויאמר להם	1 pron	-	-		
	מהאכל (יצא מאכל)	-	sub	-		
narr	(מהאכל) יצא מאכל	2 arg	-	-		
	ומעז יצא מתוק	2 arg	-	-		
	ולא יכלו להגיד החידה שלשת ימים	2 arg	vg	1		
	ויהי ביום השביעי	1 arg	-	1		
v. 15 char	ויאמרו לאשת שמשון	1 arg	-	1		
	פתי את אישך (פן)	2 arg	-	-		
	ויגד לנו את החידה	2 arg	-	-		
	פן נשרף אותך ואת בית איבך באש	2 arg	sub	1+		
v. 16 char	הלירשנו	-	sub	-		
	(הלירשנו) קראתם לנו הלא	3 arg	-	-		
	ותבך אשת שמשון עליו	2 arg	-	1		
	ותאמר	-	-	-		
narr	רק שנאתני	-	-	-		
	ולא אהבתי	-	-	-		
	החידה חדת לבני עמי	2 arg	-	1		
	ולי לא הגדתה	1 pron	-	-		
	ויאמר לה	1 pron	-	-		
	הנה לאבי ולאמי לא הגדתי	1 arg	-	1		
	ולך אידי	1 pron	-	-		
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., אם or כי) 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 (אותה קח לי, 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):

האין בבנות אחיך ובכל עמי אשה / כי אתה הולך / לקחת אשה מפלשתים הערלים
 "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

Ruth 1:8⁸¹ לכנה / שבנה אשה לבית אמה /
 יעש ה' עמכם חסד / כאשר עשיתם עם המתים ועמדי /
 v. 9a יתן ה' לכם / ומצאן מנוחה אשה בית אישה
 "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:

v. 10 כי אתך נשוב לעמך
 "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:

Judg. 14:18 לולא חרשתם בעגלתי / לא מצאתם חידתי
 "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 כם- and the verbal affix תם- reflects the neutralization of the gender distinction (epicene suffix) which he views as characteristic of colloquial language.

v. 12

אם הגד תגידו אותה לי שבעת ימי המשתה / ומצאתם
ונתתי לכם שלשים סדינים חלפת 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-sha,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 נעמן	1 arg	-				-
char	הואל	-	-				-
	קח ככרים	1 arg	-				-
narr	ויפרץ בו	1 prn	-				-
	ויצר ככרים כסף בשני חרטים ושתי חלפות בגדים	2 arg	-				3
	ויתן אל שני נערי	1 arg	-				1
	וישאו לפניו	1 arg	-				-
v. 24	ויבא אל העפל	1 arg	-				-
	ויקח מידם	1 arg	-				-
	ויפקד בבית	1 arg	-				-
	וישלח את האנשים	1 arg	-				-
	וילכו	-	-				-
v. 25	והוא בא	1 prn	-				-
	ויעמד אל אדניו	1 arg	-				-
	ויאמר אליו אלישע	2 arg	-				-
char	מאין גחזי	1 arg	-				-
narr	ויאמר	-	-				-
char	לא הלך עבדך אנה ואנה	2 arg	-				1
v. 26	ויאמר אליו	1 prn	-				-
char	לא לבי הלך (כאשר)	2 arg	-				-
	כאשר הפך איש מעל מרכבתו לקראתך	3 arg	sub				-
	העת לקחת את הכסף	2 arg	-				-
	ולקחת בגדים וזיתים וכרמים וצאן ובקר	1 arg	-				4
	ועבדים ושפחות						
v. 27	וצרעת נעמן תדבק בך ובוזרך לעולם	3 arg	-				2
narr	ויצא מלפניו (מצרע)	2 arg	-				-
	מצרע כשלג	1 arg	sub				-
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. Rōfé, *The Prophetic Stories* (Jerusalem, 1988), 13–18.

v. 26 לא לבי הליך / כאשר הפך איש מעל מרכבתו לקראתך /
העת לקחת את הכסף / ולקחת בגדים וזיתים וכרמים 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?”

v. 27 וצרעת נעמן תדבק בך ובזרעך לעולם
“But the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.”

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	ויאמר		-	-	-
char	פתח החלון קדמה		2 arg	-	-
narr	ויפתח		-	-	-
	ויאמר אלישע		1 arg	-	-
char	ירה		2 arg	-	-
narr	ויור		-	-	-
	ויאמר		-	-	-
char	חץ תשועה לה'		1 arg	-	1
	וחץ תשועה בארם		1 arg	-	1
	והכית את ארם באפק (עד כלה)		3 arg	-	-
	עד כלה		-	sub	-
(. . .)					
v. 19	ויקצף עליו איש האלהים		2 arg	-	1
	ויאמר		-	-	-
v. 19 ⁸⁴	להכות חמל או שש פעמים		1 arg	-	2

84. In v. 19 the LXX reads $\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\pi\acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha\chi\tau\alpha\varsigma$ for להכות, and thus seems to reflect לֹהֶכֶת. The use of או in the apodosis following לֹהֶכֶת is found in Joab's speech in 2 Sam. 19:7. If one accepts the reading להכות of MT, it may be regarded as a feature of casual language.

	Argument	Sub	Expand
אז הכית את ארם (עד כלה)	3 arg	-	-
עד כלה	-	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	כה אמר ה' / רפאתי למים האלה / לא יהיה משם עוד מות ומשכלת
3:16	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	3 arg	-	2 expand
	ועתה אמות בצמא	2 arg	-	-
	ונפילתי ביד הערלים	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 ידעתי / כי אשה יפת מראה את / והיה כי יראו אתך המצרים /
ואמרו / אשתו זאת / והרגו אתי / ואתך יחיו /

אמרי נא / אחתי את / למען ייטב לי בעבורך / וחיתה 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, chiasmic clauses, *והרגו אתי / ואתך יחיו*. One also notes the balancing of the two final clauses *למען ייטב לי בעבורך / וחיתה נפשי בגללך* that close both with a reference to Sarai (בעבורך, בגללך). 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 אשתך הוא /

למה אמרת / אחתי הוא / ואקח אתה לי לאשה / ועתה הנה אשתך / קח / ולך

"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 אשתך הוא*). On the other hand, this discourse stands out by its rhetorical power, as the general opening question (*מה זאת עשית לי*) is followed by two accusations (*למה לא הגדת לי כי אשתך הוא*, and *למה אמרת אחתי הוא*), that are characterized by the anaphoric repetition of *למה* and the semantic-syntactic congruity of the two clauselets *הוא אשתך הוא* and *אחתי 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 מריבה ביני וביניך ובין רעי ובין רעיך / כי אנשים אחים אנחנו
 v. 9 הלא כל הארץ לפניך / הפרד נא מעלי / אם השמאל ואימנה / ואם הימין ואשמאילה
 "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, **ביני וביניך ובין רעי ובין רעיך**, and closes with two parallel clauses in chiasmic order, **אם השמאל ואימנה / ואם הימין ואשמאילה** (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:

- Judg. 9:8 הלוח הלכו העצים / למשח עליהם מלך / ויאמרו לזית / מלכה עלינו
 Once the trees went to anoint a king over themselves. They said to the olive tree, "Reign over us."

- v. 10 ויאמרו העצים לתאנה / לכי את / מלכי עלינו
 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 ויאמר להם הזית / החדלתי את דשני / אשר בי יכבדו אלהים ואנשים
 והלכתי לנוע על העצים

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 ויאמר להם הגפן / החדלתי את תירושי / המשמח אלהים ואנשים
 והלכתי לנוע על העצים

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 **אשר בי יכבדו אלהים ואנשים**.⁹⁰ Each clause includes an embedding: **אלהים / ואנשים**.

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 **אדם**: 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 **לם חן וחים לענ אלנם ובני אדם** [י] (KAI 48:4).

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	היה לב ישראל אחרי אבשלום
"The heart of the men of Israel is after Absalom."	
v. 15	ככל אשר יבחר אדני המלך הנה עבדיך
"Whatever our lord the king decides, see, your servants."	
1 Kgs. 1:2	יבקשו לאדני המלך נערה בתולה / ועמדה לפני המלך
"Let one seek a young virgin for my lord the king, and let her serve the king."	

In the Goliath tale, David's answer to the question whose son he is, is well-formed and dignified: **בן עבדך ישי בית הלחמי** ("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:	שמעו נא בני ימיני / גם לכלכם יתן בן ישי שדות וכרמים / לכלכם ישים שרי אלפים ושרי מאות / כי קשרתם כלכם עלי / ואין גלה את אזני / בכרת בני עם בן ישי / ואין חלה מכם עלי / וגלה את אזני / כי הקים בני את עבדי עלי לארב [לאיב?] [LXX εις ἐχθρόν = כיום הזה
"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 (**גם לכלכם יתן בן ישי שדות וכרמים**) and two expanded noun chains (**בן ישי**), and the second two arguments (**לכלכם**, **שרי אלפים ושרי מאות**) and one expanded noun chain (**שרי אלפים ושרי מאות**), to be followed, in v. 8, by a series of clauses in hypotaxis (**כי קשרתם כלכם עלי**) and coordination (**ואין חלה מכם עלי / וגלה את אזני**). 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 **אנכי** 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 (five arguments). כי הקים בני את עבדי עלי לארב כיום הזה, בכרת בני עם בן ישי

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

הרואה אתה / שבה העיר בשלום / ואחימעץ בנך ויהונתן בן אביתר שני בניכם אתכם /
ראו / אנכי מתמהמה בערבות המדבר / עד בוא דבר מעמכם / להגיד לי
“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 (שבה) עד בוא דבר (אנכי מתמהמה בערבות המדבר [עד בוא], העיר בשלום ואחימעץ בנך ויהונתן בן אביתר; בערבות המדבר) (מעמכם) / להגיד לי (שני בניכם).¹⁰²

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

2 Sam. 15:14 קמו ונברחה / כי לא תהיה לנו פליטה מפני אבשלום
מהרו ללכת / פן ימהר / והשגנו / והדיח עלינו את הרעה / והכה העיר לפי חרב
“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:

1 Sam. 17:58a: “Whose son are you, boy?” בן מי אתה הנער /

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:

v. 55a: בן מי זה הנער אבנר? / Whose son is that boy, Abner?

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

v. 55b: חי נפשך המלך אם ידעתי / “By your life, the king, if I do know.”

But this style also has other aspects. Saul is extremely curt when giving orders:¹⁰⁴ But this style also has other aspects. Saul is extremely curt when giving orders:¹⁰⁴ סב אתה / ופגע בכהנים (“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 למען רימתי ואתה שאול (1 Sam. 28:12); see also 2 Kgs. 11:14 (קשר קשר).

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 סבב as introduction to the main action: “The Verb *sbb*, as a Marker of Inception in Biblical Hebrew,” *Orientalia Suecana* 47 (1998), 21–26.

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 / ולשפחתך שני בנים /
 וינצו שניהם בשדה / ואין מציל ביניהם / ויכו האחד את האחר / וימת אתו
 “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: מכה אחיו, הירוש). A sharp change in style, however, occurs when he states her evaluation of the case:

14:7b ויכבו את גחלתי / אשר נשארה / לבלתי שום לאישי 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 (שם ושארית, לאישי, על פני האדמה). 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 אצוה 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

1 Sam. 25:35 עלי 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: עלי אדני המלך העון; “My lord the king, may the guilt be on me”). Thus David can only express his readiness to intervene:

2 Sam. 14:10 המדבר אליך / והבאתו אלי / ולא יסף עוד לגעת 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.

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).

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

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 / הסירי את יינך מעליך

"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 שכר / יין,¹³⁴ and the antithesis of עד מתי and מעליך . . . הסירי. Parallelism also exists in Hannah's prayer, though in a less conspicuous form. The only two simple clauses (ולא תשכח את אמתך) (וזכרתני / וזכרתני), form a pair of antithetic cola.¹³⁵ In addition one notes the sequence of identical verbs (ונתתיו ליהוה כל ימי חייו) / ונתתה לאמתך זרע אנשים (v. 14).¹³⁶ Hannah's answer to the priest contains two balanced junctions (ויין ושכר) (v. 15; מרב שיחי וכעסי) (v. 16). Finally, the priest's blessing stands out by its elevated style:

v. 17

לכי לשלום / ואלהי ישראל יתן את שلتך / אשר שאלת מעמו

"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 שאלת מעמו. The construction ואלהי ישראל יתן את שלתך / אשר שאלת מעמו is balanced by (a) the repetition of the root שאל in the phrase שלתך אשר שאלת (noun/verb interchange);¹³⁸ and (b) the contrast between the wish for the divine favor conveyed in the main clause (ואלהי ישראל יתן) and the request from God that is expressed by the relative clause (אשר שאלת מעמו).

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 שכר: Isa. 24:9; 28:7; 29:9; 56:12; Mic. 2:11; Prov. 20:1; 31:4, 6; and with the verbal root שכר: 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' 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 ארון אלהי ישראל: 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 אלהים: Gen. 33:20; Ps. 68:9.

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

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 שלשתכם אל אהל 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 (6bβγ).

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 **דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם** (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 Başgöz, "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.