The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures

Volume 5, Article 6
William M. Schniedewind, Prolegomena for the Sociolinguistics of Classical Hebrew

Prolegomena for the Sociolinguistics of Classical Hebrew

William M. Schniedewind

UCLA

(WilliamS@ucla.edu)

1.   Introduction

1.1.   The modern study of linguistics has at its heart the problem of defining *language*. Is *language* fundamentally a communicative act between people or is it an expression of individual thought? To be sure, there is both a social side to language and a psychological side to language. Language cannot be situated only in the community or only in the individual. Still, the modern field of linguistics has been largely dominated by practitioners of a cognitive and structural view that have relegated the social and community aspects of language to "sociolinguistics"— as though this were a field unrelated to the scientific study of language. Yet, as William Labov pointed out in his critique of the very label "sociolinguistics," all aspects of language must be seen through the prism of the society in which speakers live and function.[1] The present essay points out the inadequacy of the traditional and formalist approaches to our study of Classical Hebrew and suggests that we must integrate a sociolinguistic approach.

1.2.   In a few recent articles,[2] I have raised basic questions about the nature of language and about the approach to the study of ancient Hebrew. These basic questions in turn informed the way I analyzed the texts and their language. I suggested that we must begin by asking basic questions about the nature of language. The present essay is a

prolegomenon to a book that I am writing on the social history of Classical Hebrew. This seems like an appropriate forum to outline the importance of a sociolinguistic and anthropological linguistic approach to Classical Hebrew in the hopes that it will generate further reflection on methodology and help me in crafting the larger monograph.

1.3.   One of the basic problems in the scholarly study of Classical Hebrew has been its frequent reliance upon unstated linguistic assumptions. One virtue of an article in the *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* by Vincent de Caën was its explicit discussion of linguistic methodology as he laid out a bold new "minimalist" agenda for Hebrew linguistics. Although de Caën tried to make an analogy with the debates in biblical criticism (de Caën, §2), the real theoretical framework for his approach was Universal (or "Generative") Grammar based on the theories of Noam Chomsky (de Caën, §3.2). Chomskian linguistics have dominated American departments of linguistics for the past half century, while traditional historical linguistics along with sociolinguistics and functional linguistics have mostly prevailed in Europe.[3] Even if we could side with Chomsky in this debate (and I personally would not), Generative Grammar is not appropriate for the study of ancient *written* languages, and especially for a *specific* ancient language like Classical Hebrew, because the assumptions and methodology of Generative Grammar are based on *vernacular* and on the premise of linguistic *universals* in spoken languages. Since Classical Hebrew is known to us only as a written language, the traditional and formal linguistic approaches that underlie most modern studies of Classical Hebrew seem especially inappropriate. The linguistic anthropologist Alessandro Duranti criticizes this formal approach to linguistic analysis: "In general, phonologists, morphologists, and syntacticians are more interested in the relationship among different elements of the linguistic system (sounds, parts of words, phrases and sentences) than in the relationship between such elements and the 'world out there' that such a system is meant to represent."[4] This disconnect between Hebrew language and its speakers, I will

argue, takes the study of language out of context. Duranti continues, "It is hence a very abstract and removed *homo sapiens* that is being studied by most formal grammarians, not the kids in a Philadelphia neighborhood or the orators of Ghana."[5] Or, in the present case, the scribes, poets and singers of ancient Israel.

1.4.   Most linguists, including those in the field of Classical Hebrew, do not deal with social life at all.[6] As the British sociolinguist Suzanne Romaine notes, "Modern linguistics has generally taken for granted that grammars are unrelated to the social lives of their speakers"; at the same time, sociologists "have tended to treat society as if it could be constituted without language."[7] The term *sociolinguistics* itself was only coined in the 1950s, and the discipline is still young. More recently, the term "anthropological linguistics" has begun replacing sociolinguistics, especially among American scholars.[8] Sociolinguistics tends to address issues like language change, language choice, language and gender, and speech register. Anthropological linguistics incorporates theories of culture into the study of language. To be sure, these two fields are closely related and sometimes seem indistinguishable. Given the youth of these linguistic disciplines, it can hardly be surprising that sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics have yet to have an impact on the study of Classical Hebrew. Before turning to the academic study of Classical Hebrew, it will be helpful to place the study of Classical Hebrew in a more general linguistic context.

2.   The Study of Language

2.1.   Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), the acknowledged father of modern linguistics, began his *Course in General Linguistics* with the premise that language is a social institution.[9] Saussure argued that language had both an individual and social aspect and that one was not conceivable without the other.[10] For this reason, Saussure's Geneva school has been referred to as the "social" school of linguistics. De Saussure pointed out

that language is both socially conditioned and socially constrained. A language is constrained by its role as a communication device. We do not talk to ourselves—at least we are not supposed to. A language is conditioned by the ebb and flow of social life—the vicissitudes of war and peace, the inroads of nationalism and imperialism, the upheavals of urbanization and immigration, and the ebb and flow of economic tides. As such, the history of a language mirrors the history of the society that speaks it. Languages take their cues from the social life of peoples and nations. As Edward Sapir put it, "the history of language and the history of culture move along parallel lines."[11] They move along parallel lines because they are part of the same cultural system.[12] The history of Hebrew is no exception. The course of the Hebrew language tracks the life of the Jewish people. The view that language is a social phenomenon already was prominent in the English philosophers Hobbes and Locke and the French sociologist Emile Durkheim. The influence of Durkheim was particularly strong in Saussure's understanding of language as a social institution.[13]

2.2.   Saussure also called attention to the arbitrariness of linguistic signs and especially the written code. Such arbitrary linguistic signs are not the creations of the individual, but the agreed upon code of the community. He emphasized that a language is a social institution composed of a structured system. Saussure's structuralism was widely adopted in the humanities and social sciences influencing the work of such notable theorists as Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson. Saussure called attention to the primary nature of oral speech that underpins all verbal communication, while criticizing the tendency to approach language primarily through its written manifestation. According to Saussure, writing is the complement to oral speech. Along the guidelines set forth by Saussure, linguistics developed primarily according to oral categories as a study of phonemics. To some extent, Saussure may be indirectly responsible for the focus in Classical Hebrew studies on phonology and morphology. The preoccupation of historical Hebrew grammar with

phonology is particularly odd (and inappropriate) since phonology is the study of a

system of *speech sounds*, while Classical Hebrew is known entirely as system of *written*

symbols. Here is it important to keep in mind the distinction between *graphemes* (i.e., the

written symbols that represent sounds) and *phonemes* (i.e., the actual speech sounds

themselves). The phonemic ambiguities in all graphemic writing systems are well known

and can hardly be overstated when we are dealing with ancient languages .

2.3.   An individualist theory of language received its impetus from the 19th century linguist,

Wilhelm von Humboldt. Von Humboldt emphasized the individuality of language, or the

innere Sprachform. Language arises from man's need to express himself. Language

objectifies the individual's thought. Undoubtedly reflecting the social currents of his day,

von Humboldt argued that differences and developments in languages involve the

speakers' understanding of their world (*Weltansicht*).[14] A modified individualist position

became prominent among the students of Noam Chomsky, who explicitly excluded social

variation from the subject matter of linguistics.[15]

2.4.   The studies of Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf added a social component

to the individualist approach.[16] In general, they argued that the grammar of a particular

language shapes the way we think about reality. Indeed, this approach received a boost

from the remarkable diversity of Native American languages. Boas, for instance,

suggested that languages classify experience and that these linguistic classifications

reflect rather than *dictate* culture. Sapir defined language as "*a purely human* and non-

instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of *a system*

of voluntarily produced symbols."[17] Whorf, although he acknowledged that culture might

influence language, emphasized that it was through individuals and their habitual worlds

that "language exerts pressure on the culture as a whole."[18] By way of digression, it

should be noted that the Biblical Theology movement laid hold of a rather simplistic and

theologically driven form of these early studies of linguistic anthropology. In 1961,

James Barr wrote his classic work, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, whose biting critique devastated the Biblical Theology movement and its misappropriation of biblical language. Barr's critique of this movement's theologically driven appropriation of linguistic anthropology was appropriate; however, it did not justify a complete rejection of linguistic anthropology. In fact, although the famous Sapir-Whorf "linguistic relativity hypothesis" had gone out of fashion for a while, it has recently experienced a revival in the field of linguistic anthropology.[19]

2.5.   The study of Hebrew language also has been shaped by the neogrammarian revolution of the late 19th century. Historical linguistics had been dominated until lately by this movement, and neogrammarian theory influenced Hebrew grammar in particular. Neogrammarians argued that the principles or laws of language change could be analyzed accurately and completely once all the assembled facts were known. This lure of the neogrammarian immutable "scientific" laws has exerted continuing influence. Again, it should be noted that neogrammarian rules apply to *spoken* language, not necessarily to *written* language.[20]

2.6.   Rigidly applying neogrammarian rules to a strictly written ancient language is problematic. We may illustrate some problems with the example of the Hebrew word *hykl* "palace, temple." It is universally acknowledged that this term derives from the Sumerian logogram É.GAL, literally "big house," and comes into Hebrew through the related Akkadian word *ekallu* "palace." A neogrammarian approach cannot adequately explain the spelling in Hebrew since neither Akkadian nor Sumerian apparently had a grapheme to represent *h*. This example highlights the problem of the simplified inventory of graphemes (written signs) used to represent phonemes (spoken sounds) or morphemes (larger units of sound). Indeed, in phoneme deletion experiments, untrained speakers could not separate the sounds forming a word like *fly* into individual phonemes; this certainly raises questions about the ability of ancient speakers and even scribes to

perform linguistic analyses upon their own language. Yet, most formal approaches use grammatical analyses that assume the ideal speaker (i.e., the average university professor).[21]

2.7. Another classic problem is the meaning of the grapheme *-w* (translated below as a dual) in the Gezer Calendar, a small Hebrew inscription dating to the tenth century BCE. We understand this grapheme as a pronominal suffix. But was it an attempt to faithfully represent the phonetic realization of a pronominal suffix of some type? Or, could the *-w* primarily a sign marking a dual or plural? It has even been suggested that this written sign was borrowed from Egyptian. Although the latter suggestion has been rejected on paleographic grounds, it does raise the issue of the relationship between written signs (letters or syllables) and their phonemic realization. Other near eastern writing systems, for example, often mark the plural with a linguistic marker that has no phonetic value. Akkadian, for instance, might write "gods" with the cuneiform signs AN.MEŠ = "god + *plural*," whose phonetic realization was something akin to /ilū/.

2.8. If a language is a code of arbitrary linguistic signs (as Saussure claimed), writing is all the more so. With this in mind, another messy problem may illustrate the situation: the Akkadian term *ḫāpiru* "social outcast" (sometimes transcribed as *ḫābiru* or *ʿāpiru*) mentioned in the El-Amarna letters and the Hebrew term "Hebrew," written consonantally in Hebrew as *ʿbry*, with the late (or ideologically contrived) etymological meaning "those who came from across (the river)" or the ethnic designation "the descendants of Eber" (see Genesis 10:21-25; 11:15-17). Scholars for generations have been tempted to identify the Akkadian word *ḫābiru* with *Hebrew* because it would give some insight into the early origins of the Israelite tribes. This enterprise, however, has been roundly criticized. To begin with, the Akkadian (*ḫābiru*) and Hebrew (*ʿibrî*) are not *written* as precise phonetic equivalents. This objection, however, assumes a strict correspondence between graphemes and phonemes. Such an assumption is quite

unfounded given the inherent flexibility of the syllabic cuneiform writing system, on the one hand, and the terse simplicity of the consonantal alphabetic Hebrew writing system, on the other. The different writing systems create difficulties; for instance, Akkadian does not have a grapheme to express the guttural ʿ (ʿayin), while Hebrew does not have a separate grapheme for ḫ (a velar fricative). A strictly phonological analysis also does not factor the ideological component of language change; in this case, the Hebrew could be re-etymologizing the negative social label into a geographically descriptive or neutral ethnic label. Since the early Hebrew writing system originally did not use vowels and these terms were likely used over a long period of time, it was easy for the phonology and meaning of a word to evolve for ideological or theological reasons. Moreover, pseudo-etymology is certainly an important form of commentary in the Hebrew Bible. This problem also highlights the chronological disjunction between the Late Bronze texts and the first Hebrew manuscripts a millennium later; and, manuscripts with vowel pointing are not known for yet another millennium. For these reasons, it is difficult to make judgments with certainty; and, such discussions cannot proceed based on graphemic transcriptions alone. The social context and content of language transmission plays a critical role. Linguistic change can be socially loaded.

2.9.   Language is a social marker. This truism can be readily illustrated by the well known biblical example from Judges 12:4-6:

> Then Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim; and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, "You are fugitives from Ephraim, you Gileadites—in the heart of Ephraim and Manasseh." Then the Gileadites took the fords of the Jordan against the Ephraimites. Whenever one of the fugitives of Ephraim said, "Let me go over," the men of Gilead would say to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" When he said, "No," they said to him, "Then say Shibboleth," and he said, "Sibboleth," for he could not pronounce it right. Then they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan.

While the problem how exactly the dialects differed is still a matter of debate (in part because of the imprecision of the graphemes),[22] the commonplace sociolinguistic

observation that language and linguistic forms can index social groups is clearly played out in this text.[23] While traditional linguistic approaches have endlessly debated the precise pronunciation of the sibilants, the real linguistic import is sociolinguistic. It tells us, for instance, that language is a social boundary. Even among the Israelite tribes, linguistic distinctions were recognized and served as social markers. In the post-exilic times, Nehemiah suggests illustrates how highly charged language could be as a social marker: "In those days also I saw Jews who had married Ashdodite, Ammonite, and Moabite women; and half of their children spoke the Ashdodite, and the language of those various peoples, and did not know how to speak Judean" (Neh 13:23-24). The description of this foreign language as "Ashdodite" is socially loaded, especially since the language was probably some dialect of Aramaic. The condemnation is, simply put, that these "Judeans/Jews (יהודים)" couldn't speak Judean. How can you be a Jew, Nehemiah asks, if you can't speak the Jewish language (יהודית)? On the basis of language, we distinguish homelands, national and political affiliations, as well as social class. We also use language classification to cast aspersions. In the words of Henry Higgins, "An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him."[24] To change our classification, we try to change the way we speak. This is to say that language choice and language change can be socially loaded.

2.10.　Even those who emphasize the universality and innateness of language must admit that there is a social aspect to language. Chomskian linguists have emphasized that language is innate in the human brain. Consequently, they find language universals that generate linguistic phenomena across the whole spectrum of languages, although their work has tended to focus on a few European languages. This approach to linguistics, usually called *Generative Grammar*, has had limited application to Hebrew until recently. Undoubtedly this is due to the emphasis on language universals. If language systems are universal, what point is there in focusing on Hebrew in particular? But even Chomskian linguists

have to admit that language is both universal and particular. Steven Pinker, perhaps the most articulate defender of Chomsky's theory of language, argues at length in *The Language Instinct* that language (or more precisely grammar) is part of the circuitry of the human brain. Even if this were correct, Pinker also admits that language is partly social: "language inherently involves sharing a code with other people."[25] In his critique of generative grammar, William Labov argued that "one cannot make any major advance towards understanding the mechanism of linguistic change without serious study of the social factors which motivate linguistic evolution."[26]

2.11. The historical study of the Hebrew grammar, focusing as it should on the diachronic developments of one particular language, fundamentally falls outside the universe of Chomskian linguistics. One recent problem in the field of biblical criticism has been the dating of texts and this issue has spilled over into the field of Hebrew linguistics.[27] De Caën correctly notes that Chomskian linguistics would help us around the diachronic issues. A Chomskian approach would be synchronic and ahistorical. But is this what we want? Indeed, Chomskian linguistics probably get us out of the whole business of the ancient Hebrew language itself since it is an approach that studies living, spoken languages and denies this importance of the study of particular languages. It is hardly surprising then (and quite appropriate) that Chomsky has not been extensively employed for the study of Hebrew grammar. Exceptions appear to be J. Naude's study of Qumran Hebrew and the recent article by de Caën.[28] Neither justify the use of this methodology to study ancient Hebrew.[29]

2.12. Recent trends in linguistics have emphasized the functional aspects of language. Functional linguistics have blossomed over the past decades in an almost bewildering display of color and variety.[30] They have in common the premise that language arises from man's need to communicate (as opposed to the notion that language arises from

man's need to express himself). It is functional grammar that has most sharply been set against Chomskian Universal Grammar in the debate among linguistic circles.

2.13.   While functional grammar has begun to make its way into the field of biblical studies,[31] the related fields of sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics have not yet made headway into the study of Classical Hebrew. Sociolinguists argue that "*attitudes* to language clearly play an important role in preserving or removing dialect differences."[32] One of the fathers of the field of sociolinguistics, William Labov, objected to the term *sociolinguistics* because he argued that language is a social behavior and that the term *sociolinguistics* was therefore redundant and misleading.[33] Language is used in social contexts for communicating needs, ideas, and emotions to one another. Labov argued that the study of languages could never be separated from their social contexts. He suggested a different term, "the sociology of language," might be used to refer to the interaction of large scale social factors like dialect and language interaction, language planning, nationalism and language, or standardization of language.

2.14.   Orality-literacy studies suggest that developments in literacy and writing technologies have had a critical impact on the relationship between oral speech and written texts.[34] Whatever the value of Saussurian linguistics for the study of modern languages (and this is debated), it seems clear that Saussure's description of written language as merely the complement of oral speech is particularly inadequate for ancient societies that were primarily oral. Writing is a quite intentional act, much more so than oral speech. Indeed, writing is particularly artificial in primarily non-literate societies where writing is restricted to scribal schools and sponsored by state institutions.[35]

2.15.   The smaller phonetic and morphological issues have been a main focus of studies in the history of the Hebrew language, in spite of the fact that study of such linguistic phenomena normally depends on living oral speech. The conventions of writing often remain unchanged even after speech-forms have undergone profound linguistic changes.

As Bloomfield pointed out, "The inadequacy of the actual [writing] systems is due largely to the conservatism of the people who write."[36] As a result, we must view writing as much more than a complement to oral speech. It is socially defined by the scribal training sponsored by state institutions—temple and palace. Spellings are habitual, remaining long after speech-forms have changed as we readily observe in English words like *knight*, *gnat*, or *doubt*. Moreover, Bloomfield pointed out that "once a system of spelling has become antiquated in relation to the spoken sounds, learned scribes are likely to invent pseudo-archaic spellings."[37] So, for example, the *b* in loanwords like *debt*, *doubt*, and *subtle* comes not from Old French, but rather the spellings were created by learned scribes who knew the Latin antecedents *debtium*, *dubito*, *subtilis*. Similarly, Qumran Hebrew contains many pseudo-classicisms invented by learned scribes.[38]

2.16. The development of spelling tends to be ideologically driven. As sociolinguists have suggested, language "acts as an important symbol of group consciousness and solidarity."[39] For example, the division of Europe into nation-states during the last century was accompanied by the increase in "languages." One important way of distinguishing those closely related languages was the development of different orthographies. Once we realize this, we must question whether different graphemic realizations of hypothesized proto-semitic phonemes in languages like Hebrew and Aramaic reflect any actual significant differences in phonemic realization. What is really behind the different ways that Northwest Semitic languages appropriated the 22 letter Phoenician alphabet? It is certainly not to be assumed that it is merely an attempt to accurately assign graphemes to the phonemic inventory in the way that a modern linguist would. For example, why did Old Aramaic spell the Proto-Semitic word /*ʾarḍu/ "ground, land" as *ʾrq* and then change its spelling to *ʾrʿ* while Hebrew spelled it *ʾrṣ*? Surely, we cannot explain these differences as phonetic. At best, this reflects the inadequacy of the graphemic inventory. It also likely reflects linguistic ideologies of the respective lands.

3.   The Study of Classical Hebrew

3.1.   The historical boundaries of *Classical* Hebrew have been organized according to the
classical period of Jewish history as seen by Protestant scholars. That is, *Classical*
Hebrew is the Hebrew of the *Old Testament*. As the sociolinguists Judith Irvine and
Susan Gal observe,

> Linguistic ideologies are held not only by the immediate participants in a local
> sociolinguistic system. They are also held by other observers, such as the linguists
> and ethnographers who have mapped the boundaries of languages and peoples, and
> provided descriptive accounts of them.[40]

In the case of Classical Hebrew—often understood as synonymous with Biblical
Hebrew— it is mostly a construct of Protestant theologians.[41] It is circumscribed by the
corpus of the Old Testament, in spite of the linguistic diversity of that corpus. It is
separated from "Rabbinic Hebrew," in spite of the similarities between direct speech in
biblical literature and Rabbinic Hebrew. Thus, the rubric of "Classical Hebrew" is as
Christian as the "Old Testament." Classical Hebrew has usually excluded *Rabbinic* or
Mishnaic Hebrew, which belonged to the next era of Jewish history—the period after
Christianity's decisive break with Judaism. For my part, I would prefer to use Classical
Hebrew as a catch-all to refer to all Hebrew texts, both biblical and non-biblical, in the
pre-Rabbinic period. It could even include the early phase of Rabbinic Hebrew (=RH^1) if
we understood defined it as the period when Hebrew was a living language in Palestine.
This would include epigraphic Hebrew, Qumran Hebrew, RH^1 as well as the Hebrew of
the biblical corpus. *Biblical* Hebrew, in contrast, would describe the limited corpus of
biblical Hebrew literature.

3.2.   The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls muddied the distinction between Biblical and
Mishnaic Hebrew considerably.[42] Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it could
be argued that the break was as much a reflection of a gap in the sources as it was a

reflection of religious ideology. At least a half a millennium separated the later books of the Hebrew Bible from the codification of the Mishnah. The Dead Sea Scrolls have filled in this gap with a Hebrew language that is neither Biblical nor Mishnaic. It should force us to rethink categories like *Classical* Hebrew. One immediate consequence can be seen in the most recent dictionary project of "Classical Hebrew" carried out by Sheffield University, which tries not to privilege biblical texts.[43] The range of the dictionary ends at 200 CE, thereby excluding the Mishnah and later Jewish texts. Moreover, the approach of the dictionary is synchronic—a dubious methodology for a dictionary covering a millennium of the Hebrew language. The range of the dictionary, nevertheless, is a step in the right direction.

3.3.   Jewish scholars, in contrast, have long emphasized the continuity of the Hebrew language. For example, Segal's grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew begins by dividing Hebrew into roughly four periods with the first two defined as Biblical (ca. 1000-200 BCE) and Mishnaic (400 BCE-400 CE). Segal objected to the characterization of Mishnaic Hebrew as "new Hebrew" (e.g., in Brown-Driver-Briggs) because it obscured both the later phases of Hebrew and the relationship between Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew. Segal's categories of Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew overlap and he notes (to some extent correctly) that "BH continued to be used as a literary idiom long after the rise of MH."[44] No doubt this reflects in part the Jewish sense of the continuity in their own history. Although Hebrew ceased to be spoken as an everyday language sometime in the third or fourth centuries CE, it continued to be used as the language of sacred literature and even served as a trade language among Jews throughout the Diaspora who shared their knowledge of Hebrew religious texts.

3.4.   Even while there is an ideological undercurrent to the classification of Hebrew, there is also a measure of truth to these classifications. Thus, for example, substantive differences exist between the Hebrew of the Bible and that of the Mishnah and these differences

certainly justify a distinction between Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew. At the same time, some diachronic developments evident within Biblical Hebrew, especially Late Biblical Hebrew, find their linguistic realization in Rabbinic Hebrew. Thus, there is both continuity and distinction and this is hardly a surprising linguistic development. Linguistic ideology comes into play in the ways we often choose to highlight either continuity or distinction.

3.5.   It should hardly be surprising that the diachronic study of Classical Hebrew in its social context is relatively undeveloped territory. Indeed, a little more than two decades ago Labov described the study of language change in its social context as a virgin field.[45] Since then some scholars have begun to cultivate this field, but little work has been done specifically in Classical Hebrew. The tradition of the field of Semitic linguistics and Hebrew in particular has followed a descriptive and neogrammarian orientation with its emphasis on morphology and phonology. This is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that the classic grammar of Biblical Hebrew, Gesenius–Kautzsch–Cowley, gives almost no attention to syntax. The grammars of Joüon and Brockelmann are only slightly better.[46] The grammar by Waltke and O'Connor also focuses primarily on morphology and phonology in spite of its promising title, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*.[47] To be sure, the study of Hebrew has not been consciously neogrammarian. It has usually not been consciously anything. This is perhaps one of the problems in the study of Hebrew historical linguistics. A quick perusal of the main historical grammars and histories of the Hebrew language will not turn up anything like a prolegomena to the study of language. One exception to this might be the somewhat neglected study of Zelig Harris, *The Development of the Canaanite Dialects*.[48] The study of Hebrew, especially Classical Hebrew, has been quite conventional, but unconsciously so. And, conventional means that traditional grammars and histories of Hebrew have been neogrammarian and descriptive.

3.6.   As early as the 1950s, Chaim Rabin wrote an article on the social background of Qumran Hebrew.[49] In the 1970s he published a very short book entitled, *A Short History of the Hebrew Language*, which was expressly concerned with the relationship between language and Jewish social life.[50] And, his now standard article on the emergence of Classical Hebrew gives a decidedly sociological interpretation.[51] Rabin's work reflected his broad training in linguistics and his interest in practical fields like translation theory. While Rabin's articles on the emergence of Classical Hebrew and on Qumran Hebrew have been well received, his sociolinguistic history of Hebrew is practically unknown.

3.7.   Several authors have addressed issues that would fall into the purview of sociolinguistics. The classic, but now almost forgotten, work of Zelig Harris was concerned with the "Linguistic Conditions in Syria-Palestine" as these shaped the structure of Canaanite. The important work of Randall Garr employs a thoroughgoing descriptive approach in mapping a dialect geography of Syria-Palestine.[52] This begins to build the foundation for sociolinguistic analysis. Likewise, the many studies by Avi Hurvitz develop and employ a careful diachronic method for distinguishing between historical strata of the Hebrew language, especially establishing the parameters of late Biblical Hebrew; this research furthers the foundation for sociolinguistic analysis.[53] Gary Rendsburg's revised dissertation published in 1990 under the title, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, points to twelve grammatical features that he considers colloquial. He points out that the appearance of these features becomes especially prominent in Late Biblical Hebrew, but that they also appear in Standard Biblical Hebrew. He reasons that "the dialect that later emerged as MH [=Mishnaic Hebrew] was already in use in the early Biblical period too."[54] Relying on Rabin's analysis of the emergence of Classical Hebrew, he notes recent trends in linguistics that emphasize "the effect that political and social change may have on a language."[55] The subject, unfortunately, is dropped there. Rendsburg's more

recent work focusing on dialect geography and the history of Hebrew is not explicitly sociolinguistic, yet his work nevertheless touches on sociolinguistic issues time and again.

3.8. Perhaps the most extensive foray into the social background of Hebrew is Ian Young's *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*.[56] Young eschews the traditional approach that tends to minimize linguistic diversity in order to create a standard Biblical grammar. Young argues that orthodox scholarship (as he terms it) relies too heavily on chronological explanations to account for the linguistic diversity in Biblical Hebrew. He describes the diversity of pre-exilic Hebrew that he argues begins with the social diversity of the Israelite tribes themselves. He points to the impact of social forces on the linguistic evolution of pre-exilic Hebrew. The United Monarchy, for example, becomes the catalyst for a standardization of Hebrew. Young's work is an important foray. He collects and analyzes many of the possible types of pre-exilic Hebrew and ascribes a variety of social settings to account for diversity. Young's work can be developed further in three important respects. First, there is little use of sociolinguistics or anthropological linguistics to inform Young's social analyses. As Labov argued, "the forces operating to produce linguistic change today are the same kind and order of magnitude as those which operated in the past five or ten thousand years."[57] This observation certainly invites broader interdisciplinary reflection on language diversity and change. Second, Young accepts quite superficial analyses of the historical forces that shaped the evolution of Classical Hebrew. Without a clear idea of the social forces at work, it is impossible to draw proper conclusions about the evolution of the Hebrew Language. Finally, Young relies on assumptions about linguistic diversity generated by spoken languages. Biblical Hebrew, however, is a literary language. Biblical literature and its written linguistic forms were generated largely in well-defined scribal schools. For all these reasons, Young's emphasis on synchronic linguistic diversity seems overstated.

3.9.   Another way to describe the field of Classical Hebrew scholarship might be "formalist."

By this, I mean that Classical Hebrew has often been treated as though the essential

nature of Hebrew is intrinsic. The Hebrew language has been studied in isolation from

other external forces, most notably sociological forces. We may further illustrate the

problem by analogy with the related field of literature. I. R. Titunik explains the formalist

position in literary theory:

> ... literature was an extrasocial phenomenon, or rather, that which constituted
> the "literariness" of literature—its specificity—was something self-valuable,
> self-contained, and self-perpetuating that should and must be isolated from the
> social surrounding in which it existed in order to be made an object of
> knowledge; that while social forces and events could, and did sometimes even
> drastically, affect literature *from the outside*, the real, intrinsic nature of
> literature remained immune, exclusively and forever true to itself alone; that,
> therefore proper and productive study of literature is possible only in
> "immanent" terms.[58]

Likewise, the traditional study of Classical Hebrew has eschewed social explanations.

One can scarcely find any mention of social forces in traditional grammars. Historical

linguistics has conceded only perfunctory that society might shape linguistic change. It is

recognized, for instance, that the enormous influence that Aramaic exerted on Hebrew

began with socio-historical factors.

4.   Methodological Problems

4.1   A significant obstacle to a sociolinguistic approach lies in the limited nature of the data.

This pertains to both language and social history. To begin with, the evidence of Classical

Hebrew comes only from sporadic written sources. There is little evidence for spoken

Hebrew. A main literary source, the Hebrew Bible, was known largely from medieval

manuscripts until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls provided witnesses as early as the

third century BCE.[59] Even the Dead Sea Scrolls come to us quite removed from the

autographs, and incorporate some changes in their transmission.[60] Epigraphic sources, as

well as the Dead Sea Scrolls, are primarily consonantal, although a restricted use of vowel letters does develop.

4.2 Unfortunately, the study of linguistic change in Classical Hebrew must be limited to the study of *written* language. In a way, however, this makes the task easier. Writing is a deliberate undertaking. It is *learned* in school settings. It follows conventions. It tends to be quite conservative. Innovations are usually prompted by strong social forces. Writing at first was entrenched in scribal schools, that is, in a social institution. Even when literacy begins to spread, it is socially marked. So, for example, when an Israelite junior officer writes to his commander he is insistent that he knows how to read *since being literate was expected*.[61] The paths of speech and writing tend to diverge because of the innovative nature of speech as against the conservative nature of writing.[62]

4.3 Although this attempts to summarize the major phases, it should be recognized that written and spoken languages never actually merge; that is, the lines of development never touch. As a rule, "we must be able to *measure* both linguistic and social phenomena so that we can correlate the two accurately."[63] It may be argued that we cannot sufficiently measure either. This is certainly true for the earliest stages in the development of Hebrew. Much of the social history of Israel, and especially those concerning early Israel, is the subject of some discussion by scholars in the field. Obviously, there are no native informants for Classical Hebrew. There is a relatively limited corpus of biblical and non-biblical literature. These problems certainly should give some pause, but they are not sufficient reason for paralysis. Rather, it only means that we must have an ongoing discussion about the relationship between language and society in ancient Palestine.

4.4. The aforementioned problem of studying linguistic change is well known. Indeed, it is one reason the science of linguistics has proceeded more along a synchronic rather than diachronic path. But the way forward is not hopelessly overgrown. William Labov took

note of the grave difficulties: "we have too little information on the state of society in which most linguistic changes took place. The accidents which govern historical records are not likely to yield the systematic explanations we need."[64] The problem of studying the sociolinguistics of Hebrew could not be more aptly put. Labov found a way through by positing his *Uniformitarian Principle*: "the forces operating to produce linguistic change today are the same kind and order of magnitude as those which operated in the past five or ten thousand years."[65] To be specific, the forces of social change, economic and political history, and physical environment tend to produce rather predictable linguistic changes. If we can adequately identify and assess the social forces that contributed to linguistic change in ancient Palestine, we should also be able to identify the impression these forces left on the Hebrew language.

5.   Mechanisms of Language Change and Its Motivations

5.1.   Language change is shaped by both nature and society. As such, language is part of the nature versus nurture debate. This debate, at least in part, is a matter of semantics and emphasis. A well-known example from the history of English can illustrate. The transition to early Modern English was ushered in by the Great Vowel Shift. The great debate among linguists is how to account for such changes. Following a model of unconscious natural development, some argue that perhaps long vowels sounded too similar to short vowels that were present in English due to influence of Latin on Anglo-Saxon; the Great Shift compensated for this. A more conscious sociolinguistic approach, on the other hand, might explain the differences as resulting from the elite classes attempting to create linguistic distinction after Norman French became obsolete.[66] Both these explanations, however, involve sociolinguistics. In the former explanation, the Great Shift still results from the migrations of Anglo-Saxons and the vestiges of Latin in the British Isles. To be sure, language change under this model was natural and

unconscious, but it was conditioned nevertheless by social factors. The latter explanation, on the other hand, might be construed as unnatural by some grammarians—but they are only so if language is viewed primarily as part of nature rather than equally a product of human interaction.

5.2.   Social class distinction is a part of human culture—utopian social experimentation not withstanding. Although some understanding of the innate cognitive and physical aspects of speech form the foundation for a study of language change, it is impossible to fully appreciate language change without attention to the social forces at work.

5.3.   Changes in social life are important leading indicators of linguistic change. As the eminent sociolinguist Peter Trudgill pointed out, "Linguistic changes follow social changes very readily, but it is not always a simple matter to make them *precede* them."[67] For practical as well as methodological reasons then, the study of historical Hebrew linguistics must begin with social changes in ancient Palestine. Mikail Bakhtin writes,

5.4.   What is important about the word in this regard is not so much its sign purity as its *social ubiquity*. The word is implicated in literally each and every act or contact between people—in collaboration on the job, in ideological exchanges, in the chance contacts of ordinary life, in political relationships, and so on. Countless ideological threads running through all areas of social intercourse register effect in the word. It stands to reason, then, that the word is the most sensitive *index of social changes*, and what is more, of changes still in the process of growth, still without definitive shape and not as yet accommodated into already regularized and fully defined ideological systems.[68]

5.5.   In this respect, there is a symbiotic relationship between language and social history. On the one hand, social history provides clues for identifying periods when we might expect seminal changes in the Hebrew language. On the other hand, language change points to changes in the social life of ancient Israel and early Judaism.

5.6.   Following Bakhtin's supposition that the historical explanation of language change must directly follow changes in social life, the study of Biblical Hebrew grammar would have to be organized by the fundamental social changes in the history of the Jewish people over the course of nearly two millennia. The way we see the world religiously, culturally, socially, and politically determines how we learn language. How one sees the world socially colors the way we learn and use language. Thus, seminal religious, cultural, social, and political changes are antecedents for language change.

5.7.   What were the major social contexts that shaped changes in Classical Hebrew? To the chagrin of those studying language, this messy question would have to be an important foundation. Some of the major social contexts that have been suggested (or should be addressed) would include the following. First, to what extent did the administrative structures of the Late Bronze City-States frame the learning of writing systems in the early Iron Age? Was there really a David-Solomonic state that shaped the origins of the Classical Hebrew language? Or, perhaps more plausibly, did the rise of petty nationalisms in Syria-Palestine during the ninth and eighth shape an individualization of the Northwest Semitic Languages? To what extent did the urbanization of the late Judean monarchy impact the Hebrew language? What about the *pax Assyrica*? Archaeologists generally posit a substantial growth in literacy (especially mundane literacy) during the late monarchy. To what extent would this spread of writing in the late Judean monarchy help shape the Hebrew language? The importance of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, Judah and, more generally, the Levant certainly impacted the development of language. More importantly, the Persian Empire's use of an Aramaic administrative language left a palpable impact on the subsequent changes in the Hebrew language. Reacting perhaps to the linguistic imperialism of Aramaic and then Greek, Jewish nationalism in the Hasmonean and Roman periods would be accompanied by the ideological use of Hebrew as a symbol of the Jewish nation. To what extent did religious

sectarianism and social class distinctions would work themselves out in Qumran Hebrew and the emergence of Mishnaic Hebrew? These are just a few of the messy questions that to some extent shape the historical development of the Hebrew language

5.8. Many of the questions raised by sociolinguistics are beyond our reach. We are limited by both historical and linguistic data. Our knowledge of ancient Jewish society is also limited. The historical sources include archaeological evidence, ancient inscriptions, and biblical narratives. Each offers something, but all have their limitations. Archaeological data is perhaps the most significant, offering insight into the social and historical processes at work in ancient Israel. The limitations of the data mean that the sociolinguistic study of Classical Hebrew must remain an ongoing discourse refined both by new data and new perspectives.

6. Language and Changes in Social Life

6.1. Social history provides clues for periods when we might expect seminal changes in the Hebrew language. Conversely, significant changes in script and spelling point to seminal transitions in the social history of Syria-Palestine. Changes in social life are most readily measured in script and spelling. Immigration or conquest, for example, brings language contact and even new scripts. (For example, when Aramaic replaces Hebrew script). Social changes also are registered in lexicon and phonology. It is hardly surprising that Akkadian loanwords seem to appear in Classical Hebrew in the late 8th century, that is, in the context of the Assyrian conquests of Galilee, Samaria, and Lachish. Likewise, it is hardly surprising that Aramaic reshaped the Hebrew language when Aramaic was adopted as the *lingua franca* of the Persian Empire. Nor is it surprising that the use of Hebrew in Palestine finds a renaissance during the nationalism of the Hasmonean dynasty.

6.2. It is difficult to assess the relationship between social changes and syntax or verbal structure. Undoubtedly, the difficulty results from the slower rate of change in these

structures of language. Language change in spoken language is measured more easily in phonology and morphology. In contrast, it is often difficult to quantify language change in syntax or verbal structure. For example, there is a seminal shift in the morphological structure of the verbal system from Classical Hebrew to Rabbinic Hebrew.[69] This change did not take place overnight. How can we quantify the change? When did this change take place (in spoken versus literary registers)? The linguistic interpretation of the Hebrew verbal system has been the subject of considerable debate. How does our understanding if these changes differ if we adopt a functionalist (i.e., discourse) approach as opposed to sentence grammar that often ignores genre?[70] Unlike a loanword that might be adopted over the course of just a few years, the changes in syntax or verbal structure undergo relatively slow evolution. They will be difficult to measure. And, they will be hard to isolate chronologically.

6.3.   The most easily assessable written measure of changes in social life will be changes in orthography and paleography (i.e., spelling and script). In the words of Christina Eira, "the basis for orthography selection is fundamentally a question of the location of authority, which is in turn a function of the prevailing discourse."[71] As the location of authority changes, orthographies change. The change from syllabic cuneiform to alphabetic writing, for instance, follows on the heels of changes that marked the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. The developments in local scripts, *mater lectionis*, the adoption of Aramaic script, and then the reappearance of the Hebrew script all correlate with social life in ancient Israel. Developments in orthography reflect "the religious, political, and intellectual discourses."[72] It should hardly be surprising that other important developments in Hebrew language correlate with paleographic and orthographic changes.

6.4.   Another gauge by which we may evaluate the impact of literacy on language is syntactical complexity. As Christopher Eyre and John Baines have pointed out,

> In principle 'literate' language can develop greater range and complexity of prosodic patterns and types of subordinate clause. For written communication [*sic!*] these need explicit grammatical or lexical marking and must follow set patterns if they are to form part of a clear sentence structure, since intonation and gesture cannot provide support.[73]

In Hebrew the developing use of more complex syntax has been analyzed by Frank Polak.[74] Polak shows how the Patriarchal tales, the story of the Rise of the Monarchy, and the Elijah-Elisha narrative tend to use short clauses, limited noun strings, and frequently employ deitic particles. In contrast, texts that are usually ascribed to the Persian period use many subordinated clauses (hypotaxis), long noun strings and explicit syntactic constituents. This type of study provides important and objective tools for analysis for the study of Hebrew that can be socially contextualized.

6.5.   Sociolinguistics will not completely replace traditional linguistics. However, sociolinguistics can help provide a more sophisticated approach to the synchronic and diachronic description of the Classical Hebrew. Hebrew linguists have often been content to work as if language were not part of a cultural system, as if the history of Hebrew were not part of the social history of the Jewish people. In conclusion, I might recast the observations of the noted British sociolinguist Suzanne Romaine cited earlier specifically for Hebrew. On the one hand, the modern study of Classical Hebrew has taken for granted that grammars are unrelated to the social lives of their speakers. On the other hand, biblical scholars—especially (and ironically) those taking seriously social scientific models—have treated society as if it could be constituted without language. We can no longer study Classical Hebrew as if it were spoken by abstract *homo sapiens*. We need to integrate sociolinguistics into the study of biblical literature and Classical Hebrew.

7.   ENDNOTES

1   See W. Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972) xiii; also note the introductory essay in the volume, *When Languages Collide: Perspectives on Language Conflict, Language Competition, and Language Coexistence* (eds. B. Joseph, J. DeStafano, N. Jacobs, and I. Lehiste; Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003) vii-ix.

2   W. M. Schniedewind, "Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage," *JBL* 118 (1999), pp. 235-52; "Linguistic Ideology in Qumran Hebrew," in *Diggers At the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, (eds. T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde; Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 245-55; "Sociolinguistic Reflections on the Letter of a 'Literate' Soldier (Lachish 3)," *ZAH* 13 (2000), pp. 157-67; "Orality and Literacy in Ancient Israel," *RSR* 26/4 (2000), pp. 327-32. This research actually was responsible for generating my recent book, *How the Bible Became a Book: the Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

3   For a critique of Chomskian linguistics see R. Botha, *Challenging Chomsky* (Oxford/New York: Blackwell, 1989).

4   A. Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 162.

5   A. Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology*, p. 7.

6   See the observations of Labov, "The Study of Language in its Social Context," in *Advances in the Sociology of Language*, volume 1, ed. J. Fishman (The Hauge: Mouton and Company, 1971), pp. 152-156.

7   S. Romaine, *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. vii.

8   Cf. Duranti's *Anthropological Linguistics* with P. Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society* (3rd ed; (New York: Penguin, 1995).

9   F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (3rd ed.; trans. R. Harris; eds. C. Bally and A. Sechehaye; New York, 1983 [1972]), p. 33 [citation of page numbers in Saussure follows the standard pagination of the second edition].

10 Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 9.

11 E. Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York: Harcourt & Brace,1921), p. 219.

12 On cultural systems see the classic work of C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1973).

13 See G. Sampson, *Schools of Linguistics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 43-48.

14 W. von Humboldt, *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues* (Darmstadt, 1949), p. 26.

15 N. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, MA, 1965), p. 3.

16 A summary of their contributions may be found in J. Lucy, *Language Diversity and Thought: A Reformulation of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 11-68.

17 Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*, p. 8.

18 Lucy, *Language Diversity and Thought*, p. 66.

19 Lucy, *Language Diversity and Thought*, pp. 127-187.

20 As Leonard Bloomfield remarked, "Writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks" (*Language* [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1933], p. 21).

21 Linguistics has shown that the psychological reality of the phoneme is dependent on the linguistic training of the speaker (see Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology*, pp. 126). This means that the ability to separate syllables into individual sounds such as consonants or vowels is dependent on the training of the person. It is not something that is recognized intuitively, which is one reason the alphabet is such an important linguistic innovation.

22 For the latest attempt to unravel the phonemics of these passage, see R. Woodhouse, "The Biblical Shibboleth Story in the Light of Late Egyptian Perceptions of Semitic Sibilants: Reconciling Divergent Views," *JAOS* 123 (2003), pp. 271-90.

23 See Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics*, pp. 1-21.

24 Taken from the screen adaptation, *My Fair Lady*, of George Bernard Shaw's play, *Pygmalion*.

[25] S. Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language* (New York: Morrow and Company, 1994), p. 243.

[26] Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, p. 252.

[27] For example, E. Knauf, "War "Biblisch-Hebräisch" eine Sprache?," *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 1 (1990), pp. 11-23; A. Hurvitz, "The Historical Quest for "Ancient Israel" and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations," *VT* 47 (1997), pp. 310-315.

[28] J. A. Naudé, "Towards a Typology of Qumran Hebrew," *JNWSL* 20/2 (1994), pp. 61-78; V. de Caën, "Hebrew Linguistics and Biblical Criticism: A Minimalist Programme," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 3/6 (2001) [http://www.jhsonline.org and http://purl.org/jhs].

[29] For a general critique of Chomskian linguistics see R. Botha, *Challenging Chomsky*.

[30] See J. Nichols, "Functional Theories of Grammar," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 13 (1984), pp. 97-117.

[31] See, for example, M. Rosenbaum, *Word-Order Variation in Isaiah 40-55: A Functional Perspective* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1997); R. Buth, "Word order in the verbless clause: A generative-functional approach," in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew. Linguistic Approaches*, (ed. C. Miller; *Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic*, 1; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 79-108; R. Buth, "Functional grammar, Hebrew and Aramaic: an integrated, textlinguistic approach to syntax," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What it is and What it Offers* (ed. W. Bodine; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), pp. 77-102; J. Winther-Nielsen, *A Functional Discourse Grammar of Joshua. AComputer-Assisted Rhetorical Structure Analysis* (*Coniectanea Biblica. Old Testament series*, 40; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995).

[32] Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics*, p. 23.

[33] Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, p. 183.

[34] See J. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (Padstow, Cornwall: T. J. Press, 1982); "Writing is a Technology That Restructures

Thought," in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition* (ed. Gerd Baumann; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 23-50.

35 For the distinction between illiterate and non-literate see B. Holbek, "What the Illiterate Think of Writing," in *Literacy and Society* (eds. K. Schousboe and M. Larsen; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1989), pp. 183-96.

36 Bloomfield, *Language*, p. 291.

37 Bloomfield, *Language*, p. 292.

38 Schniedewind, "Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage," *JBL* 118 (1999), pp. 235-252; and, "Linguistic Ideology in Qumran Hebrew," in *Diggers At the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira* (ed. T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde; Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 245-255. Also see J. Joosten, "PseudoClassicisms in Late Biblical Hebrew, in Ben Sira, and in Qumran Hebrew," in *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages: Proceedings of a Second International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, and the Mishnah, held at Leiden University, 15-17 December 1997* (eds. T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde; Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 146-159.

39 Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics*, p. 128.

40 J. Irvine and S. Gal, "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation," in *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Polities and Identities* (ed. P. Kroskrity; Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2000), pp. 35-36.

41 For an account of the study of Classical Hebrew see S. Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue: Hebrew & the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); P. Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church: the Foundations of Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (trans. E. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

42 See, for example, the different approaches reflected in three symposium volumes: *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira: Proceedings of a Symposium Held at Leiden University, 11-14 December 1995* (eds. T. Muraoka and J. Elwolde; Leiden: Brill, 1997); *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages: Proceedings of a Second International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, and the Mishnah, held at Leiden University, 15-17*

December 1997; and, *Diggers At the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*.

[43] D. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew. Volume I,* א (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 7.

[44] M. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 1, n. 1. In contrast, the more recent book by the non-Jewish scholar M. Fernández begins by emphasizing the disconcerting and striking differences between Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew (*An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew* [trans. J. Elwolde; Leiden: Brill, 1997], p. 1).

[45] Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, p. 260.

[46] Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (trans. and rev. T. Muraoka; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991); Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag, 1956).

[47] Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN, 1990).

[48] Z. Harris, *Development of the Canaanite Dialects: An investigation in linguistic history* (AOS, 16; New Haven, 1939).

[49] Ch. Rabin, "The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew," *ScrHier* 4 (1958), pp. 144-61.

[50] Rabin describes it as follows: "The tendency of this book is sociological, and approaches somewhat the methods of the science of sociolinguistics, without any pretence at either sociological profundity or the scientific evaluation of detailed facts as practiced by that science" (*A Short History of the Hebrew Language* [Jerusalem: Jewish Agency, 1973], p. 5).

[51] Ch. Rabin, "The Emergence of Classical Hebrew," in *The Age of the Monarchies: Culture and Society* (ed. Abraham Malamat; Jerusalem: Massada, 1979), pp. 71-78.

[52] W. R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine: 1000-586 B.C.* (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

[53] Some of the more important studies by Hurvitz include *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1972) [Hebrew]; *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between*

the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel (Paris: Gabalda, 1981); "Originals and Imitations in Biblical Poetry: A Comparative Examination of 1 Sam 2:1-10 and Ps 113:5-9," in *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986), pp. 115-21; "Continuity and Innovation in Biblical Hebrew. The Case of "Semantic Change" in Post-exilic Writings," in *Studies in Ancient Hebrew Semantics* (ed. T. Muraoka; Louvain: Peeters, 1995), pp. 1-10; Hurvitz, "The Historical Quest for 'Ancient Israel' and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations," *VT* 47 (1997), pp. 310-315.

54   G. Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* (*AOS*, 72; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1990), p. 166.

55   Rendsburg, *Diglossia*, pp. 166-167. Rendsburg points here to the work of Saussure, though Saussure is by no means the main proponent of sociolinguistic analysis.

56   I. Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1993).

57   Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, p. 275.

58   I. R. Titunik, "The Formal Method and the Sociological Method (M.M. Baxtin, P. N. Medvedev, V.N. Vološinov) in Russian Theory and the Study of Literature," in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (trans. L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik; Cambridge, MA, 1973), p. 181.

59   See F. M. Cross, "The History of the Biblical Text in Light of Discoveries in the Judaean Desert," in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (eds. F. M. Cross and S. Talmon; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 177-195.

60   E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (IQ Is^a)* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

61   See Schniedewind, "Sociolinguistic Reflections on the Letter of a 'Literate' Soldier (Lachish 3)."

62   Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, p. 184.

63   Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics*, p. 31.

64   Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, p. 274.

65   Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, p. 275. Labov details these principles in his monumental three volume work, *Principles of Linguistic Change*. The first two volumes are published and the third is forthcoming; see *Principles of Linguistic Change: Internal Factors*, volume 1 (Language in Society, 20; Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) and *Principles of Linguistic Change: Social Factors*, volume 2 (Language in Society, 29; Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

66   Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, p. 250.

67   Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics*, p. 83.

68   Voloßinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 19.

69   See, for example, L. McFall, *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System: Solutions from Ewald to the Present Day* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982); M. Eskhult, *Studies in Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990); V. DeCaën, "Ewald and Driver on Biblical 'Aspect': Anteriority and the Orientalist Framework," *ZAH* 9 (1996), pp. 129-151.

70   See M. Rosenbaum's review of Y. Endo, *The Verbal System of Classical Hebrew in the Joseph Story: An Approach from Discourse Analysis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996), in *Hebrew Studies* 38 (1997), p. 113-114. Also see Christo H.J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé and H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 141-44; T. Goldfajn, *Word Order and Time in Biblical Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

71   Eira, "Authority and Discourse: Towards a Model for Orthography Selection," *Written Language and Literacy* 1 (1998), p. 172.

72   Eira, "Authority and Discourse: Towards a Model for Orthography Selection," p. 221.

73   C. Eyre and J. Baines, "Orality and Literacy in Ancient Egypt," in *Literacy and Society* (K. Schouboe and M. Treolle Larsen, eds.; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1989), p. 104.

74   See the recent attempt by F. Polak, "Oral and Written: Syntax, Stylistics and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 26 (1999), pp. 59-105.