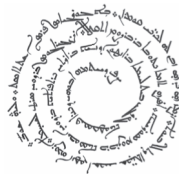


A Palimpsest: Rhetoric, Ideology, Stylistics, and Language Relating to Persian Israel



Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and its Contexts

5

The series Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and its Contexts publishes academic works dealing with study of the Hebrew Bible, ancient Israelite society and related ancient societies, biblical Hebrew and cognate languages, the reception of biblical texts through the centuries, and the history of the discipline. Volumes in the series include monographs, collective works, and the printed version of the contents of the important on-line

**A Palimpsest: Rhetoric, Ideology,
Stylistics, and Language Relating
to Persian Israel**

Edited by

**Ehud Ben Zvi
Diana V. Edelman
Frank Polak**



gorgias press

2009

Gorgias Press LLC, 180 Centennial Ave., Piscataway, NJ, 08854, USA

www.gorgiaspress.com

Copyright © 2009 by Gorgias Press LLC

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise without the prior written permission of Gorgias Press LLC.

2009



ISBN 978-1-60724-584-1

ISSN 1935-6897

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication
Data**

A palimpsest : rhetoric, ideology, stylistics,
and language relating to Persian Israel /
edited by Ehud Ben Zvi, Diana V. Edelman, Frank
Polak.

p. cm.

Includes index.

1. Bible. O.T.--Criticism, interpretation,
etc. 2. Bible. O.T.--Language, style. 3.
Judaism--History--Post-exilic period, 586
B.C.-210 A.D. 4. Jews--History--586 B.C.-70
A.D. 5. Hebrew language--Grammar. I. Ben Zvi,
Ehud, 1951- II. Edelman, Diana Vikander, 1954-
III. Polak, Frank.

BS1225.52.P35 2009

221.6'609014--dc22

2009039161

Printed in the United States of America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table of Contents..... | v |
| Acknowledgments | vii |
| Abbreviations | ix |
| Diana V. Edelman, Introduction | 1 |
| Dalit Rom-Shiloni, Group Identities in Jeremiah: Is It the Persian Period Conflict? | 11 |
| Diana V. Edelman, Ezra 1–6 as Idealized Past | 47 |
| Francesca Stavrakopoulou, Ancestor Ideologies and the Territoriality of the Dead in Genesis | 61 |
| Diana V. Edelman, God Rhetoric: Reconceptualizing YHWH Sebaot as YHWH Elohim in the Hebrew Bible | 89 |
| Jean-Daniel Macchi, The Book of Esther: A Persian story in Greek style | 109 |
| Philippe Guillaume, Nahum 1: Prophet, Senet, and Divination | 129 |
| Frank Polak, Verbs of Motion in Biblical Hebrew: Lexical Shifts and Syntactic Structure | 161 |
| Frank Polak, Parallelism and Noun Groups in Prophetic Poetry from the Persian Era | 199 |
| Robert Rezetko, What Happened to the Book of Samuel in the Persian Period and Beyond? | 237 |
| Ian Young, What is ‘Late Biblical Hebrew’? | 253 |
| Ehud Ben Zvi, The Communicative Message of Some Linguistic Choices | 269 |
| Author Index | 291 |
| References Index | 299 |

THE COMMUNICATIVE MESSAGE OF SOME LINGUISTIC CHOICES

EHUD BEN ZVI

There is an emphasis in present SBH/LBH research¹ on whether one may or may not date texts on linguistic grounds alone. Being a historian who deals in the main with texts and intellectual discourses, on what can be learned about the latter on the basis of reconstructions of readings of texts and the significance of their reading, my main contribution is probably to bring a slightly different set of questions to the present mix of SBH/LBH. Not surprisingly, my basic questions are, “What did it do to the ancient readers that a text was written in SBH or LBH, or Aramaic, for that matter? What did they learn about the text by the fact that it was written in one or another language? What can we learn about the socio-cultural ‘system’ out of which texts emerged in Yehud, and about its ideological matrix by examining, from a general overview, which texts were written, and read and reread in which language?”

Clearly, linguistic choices are never free of connoted meanings. Whether it is intentional or not, whether it is in ways that are known or unbeknownst to speakers or writers, linguistic choices convey meanings.² Linguistic choices are never completely free choices. Linguistic choices emerge out of a linguistic system that

¹ By “SBH” (standard biblical Hebrew), I am referring to what other contributors to this volume have called “EBH” (i.e. early biblical Hebrew). Both terms, namely SBH and EBH, are used in current research.

² And, one may say, provide important information to those who wish to understand the world of the participants in the communication, be it oral or written. The fact that users are often unaware of the choices they made may even facilitate research into the socio-cultural system that prefers or dis-prefers certain options in particular circumstances.

bears, among others, on social and ideological matters, constructions of self and other, and even symbolic power. It is from this starting point that the present chapter evolves.

The present study begins with two simple observations. The first one is that the basic core of texts, at least for the (ideologically) Jerusalem-centred literati, in Persian Yehud—and its continuation in early Hellenistic Yehud—consisted of three collections or, better, mental library shelves,³ namely, the pentateuchal books, the so-called deuteronomistic history, and the prophetic books. The books in this central “triad” informed each other and evolved together; for it is not separate books per se that evolve within a community, but the general discourse of the community. Members of that community (i.e., the literati) were not and could not have been single book centered, but repertoire centered. Moreover, it is only books as they were reread in the light of other authoritative books in their repertoire that became authoritative. For instance, it is reasonable to assume that the pentateuchal books as read in ways informed by the Jerusalem-centred prophetic and (dtr.) historical books stood at the core (and at the service) of the Jerusalemite temple, not as likely read in Samaria.⁴

The second observation is that despite all their stylistic differences, none of the books in the mentioned triad was written in LBH, or Aramaic, for that matter, a common language of the period. In fact, they were all inscribed in what may be labelled the

³ The metaphor of “mental shelves” in a library evokes and reflects better a situation in which even the same Yehudite readers at different times or circumstances may associate the same book with one or another set of books in their repertoire. Thus, for instance, Deuteronomy could be seen as both pentateuchal and as an integral part of the dtr. historical collection; the pentateuchal and the dtr. historical collection could be seen as both separate and as constituting a “primary history;” Ruth could be seen as both part of a historical collection and independent; depending on the context of the reading. Since “redactors” re-working the text were also readers, one may assume that these multiple perceptions were likely to affect their work as well. This issue, however, stands beyond the scope of this chapter.

⁴ I elaborated on this matter, in E. Ben Zvi, “Towards an Integrative Study of the Production of Authoritative Books in Ancient Israel,” Diana V. Edelman and E. Ben Zvi (eds), *The Production of Prophecy. Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud* (London: Equinox, 2009), 15–28.

SBH range.⁵ Such a selection of language could not but influence the communicative meaning of these works, as perceived by their historical readerships in the Persian and early Hellenistic period.⁶

⁵ This is not to deny that there are differences within these books. The language of Ezekiel is not the same as that of Isaiah or Amos. I am aware of the debate concerning Haggai and particularly Zechariah and Malachi. See I. Young, R. Rezetko, and M. Ehrensverd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* vol. 2 [London: Equinox, 2008], 46–48; 67–68; A. Hurvitz, “The Recent Debate on Late Biblical Hebrew: Solid Data, Experts’ Opinions, and Inconclusive Arguments,” *HS* 47 (2006), 191–210 (206–07) and bibliography cited there; cf. I. Young, “Late Biblical Hebrew and Hebrew Inscriptions,” I. Young (ed.), *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology* (JSOTSup, 369; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2003), 276–311 (279, 285, *passim*). It is clear, however, that LBH features in Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are not as prominent as in LBH books such as Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, or Esther, and as importantly, as in Ezekiel. For the present purposes, and given the emphasis here on the communicative message that ancient readerships developed through their interaction with the text, it is worth stressing that the ancient Yehudite literati, although highly sophisticated readers, were not linguistic experts who have undergone a rigorous academic training. From their perspective, the language of the books of Isaiah (1–66), Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi more likely seemed to belong to the general ‘SBH tent,’ as it were and as the other prophetic books in their repertoire, than to the LBH tent—which not incidentally, contains no prophetic books; on the matter, see below.

I am also aware that the ancient literati did not have a term for what we may label “the SBH tent.” But people may have concepts for which they have no clear term; a point I have made elsewhere several times. See my “On the term ‘Deuteronomistic’ in Relation to Joshua-Kings in the Persian Period” (forthcoming in a FS)—obviously, the current term ‘deuteronomistic’ did not exist in the discourse of Yehud. For a good examination of the general question as exemplified in a case that has nothing to do with ancient Israelite history; see G. Prudovsky, “Can We Ascribe to Past Thinkers Concepts They Had No Linguistic Means to Express?,” *History and Theory* 36 (1997), 15–31.

The differentiation between what I call the SBH tent and LBH has a long history in Hebrew Bible research. Cf. but note as well the strong evaluative comments and, one may say, common prejudices of a bygone era:

In order properly to estimate the *Hebrew* of Daniel, it must be borne in mind that the great turning-point in Hebrew style falls in the age of *Nebe-*

The basic evidence that from the perspective of the readership all the books in the “triad” were inscribed in a language that is distinguishable from ‘classical’ LBH and Aramaic, but shared in the large ‘SBH tent’ conveyed to the literati a sense of boundaries and of texts that belong to one kind of corpus. This is to be expected, given the historical considerations mentioned above. To explore further the communicative meaning of these (systemic) choices one has to deal not only with what is included inside the created

miah. The purest and best Hebrew prose style is that of JE and the earlier narratives incorporated in Jud. Sam. Kings: Dt. (though of a different type) is also thoroughly classical: Jer., the *latter* part of Kings, Ezekiel, II Isaiah, Haggai, show (though not all in the same respects or in the same degree) *slight* signs of being later than the writings first mentioned; but in the “memoirs” of Ezra and Nehemiah (i.e. the parts of Ezra and Neh. which are the work of these reformers themselves ...), and (in a less degree) in the contemporary prophecy of Malachi, a more marked change is beginning to show itself, which is still more palpable in the Chronicles (c. 300 B.C.), Esther, and Ecclesiastes... [Chronicles] may be said to show the greatest uncouthness of style... (S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* [13th ed.; New York: Scribner’s, 1908], 504–05; available for open access at <http://www.archive.org/details/introductiontoli1908driv>; italics in the original).

It may be mentioned already that the logic of the argument advanced here tends to create an anticipation for some degree of difference between Ezekiel, and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi on the one hand and the other prophetic books on the other; and between Ezekiel and the other three. The fact that the differences between Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi and the other prophetic books are relatively muted raises an interesting issue that is addressed below.

⁶ To state the obvious, it might be claimed that there was never a systemic choice between SBH and LBH in Persian (or early Hellenistic) Yehud, because the two never co-existed, in temporal terms. Such a claim is very unlikely given, among others, the usual dates given to the production *and re-working* of books written in SBH (including those in the ‘triad’), the presence of LBH features in SBH texts, and the date of a clearly LBH text such as Chronicles (late Persian Period, at the latest, early Hellenistic period). In addition, even if for the sake of the argument, one would accept such a claim, it would still have to deal with the matter that the literati certainly knew, understood, and read and reread works in SBH at the time in which only LBH would be existing. Such a situation would only make the significance of linguistic profiles of books even more poignant.

boundaries, but also outside them, and, as well, with potential subdivisions within the ‘insiders.’

To begin exploring the former, a general overview of the linguistic situation in Yehud is necessary. But a potential counterargument must be dealt with first. There is a tradition in scholarship that maintains that the (or most of the) books in the mentioned ‘triad’ show SBH simply because their forerunners or their sources were written in monarchic Judah and SBH was the language of monarchic Judah. This tradition has led to a tendency to consider the linguistic situation in Yehud as basically irrelevant for the study of the books involved in this claim. This is not the place to discuss the linguistic situation in monarchic Judah, but suffices to say that even if for the sake of the argument one were to grant the validity of the position advanced by this research tradition, it would explain only, and for that matter, only partially, the genesis of the mentioned feature (i.e., that no book in the triad belongs to the LBH tent). The mentioned position will certainly not explain the meaning that the feature conveyed in postmonarchic and in particular Yehud times. To understand the meaning communicated by the use of SBH in books read and reread in Yehud, one would have to consider the linguistic situation in Yehud. One should keep in mind that the use of a particular language in a certain type of document is a socio-cultural endeavour that takes place within a general socio-cultural setting, and that shared choices of languages create linguistic communities and imply a process of linguistic socialization. Linguistic choices may legitimize certain ways of writing but not others; evoke some texts, but not others. These choices are involved in processes in which social, religious, and cultural power is negotiated and worlds imagined.

Moreover, for reasons I developed elsewhere, I locate the development of the concept of prophetic book and most (if not all) of the prophetic books in the Persian period.⁷ This does not mean that I deny the possibility that the text of some of these books (e.g., Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Zechariah) although originating in the Persian period, may have continued to evolve after the collapse of the rule

⁷ See, E. Ben Zvi, “The Concept of Prophetic Books and Its Historical Setting,” Diana V. Edelman and E. Ben Zvi (eds), *The Production of Prophecy. Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud* (London: Equinox, 2009), 73–95, and my previous works on Jonah, Micah, Hosea, Obadiah, and Zephaniah.

of Darius III, and reached eventually their present masoretic form in the Hellenistic period (cf. the present debate about some texts within Genesis, even as most scholars agree that the Pentateuch emerged in a Persian context). Likewise, the position that the pentateuchal and (dtr.) historical books in their present compositional form go back to the Persian period is widely accepted.⁸ I date Chronicles to the late Persian period, though admittedly it could have been composed in the early Hellenistic period.⁹

We can now proceed to a general, and relatively brief overview of the linguistic situation in Yehud that suffices to provide the necessary background to the present endeavours. There is no doubt that Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the area, and the language of the administration. Even the name of the province, Yehud, points

⁸ See, for instance, T. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005).

It is worth stressing that some scholars locate the production of prophetic, historical, or pentateuchal books/texts outside Yehud, mainly in Babylonia. It is impossible to address these matter here; it suffices for the present purposes that whether some precursors of the present books originated in Babylonia or not, the versions we have are all fully Jerusalemized, that is, they are part and parcel of the “authoritative” repertoire of a Jerusalem-centred group and its ideological discourse—in the case of pentateuchal texts, due to their reading in the light of the dtr. historical collection and the prophetic books; the matter is beyond the scope of this essay.

⁹ This is consistent with current tendency to date it either to the late Persian or the very beginning of the Hellenistic period (i.e., in the 4th century BCE). See, among many others, H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (NCBC, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 15–17; S. J. De Vries, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (FOTL, 11; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), 16–17; S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.; Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 23–28; J. E. Dyck, *Theocratic Ideology* (Biblical Interpretation Series, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1998), 31–33; I. Kalimi, *Ancient Israelite Historian*, 41–65; G. N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9* (AB, 12; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2004), 101–17; R. W. Klein, *1 Chronicles*, (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 13–17. One may note that there is no direct or indirect reference to the Diadochi wars, which certainly impacted Palestine at the time. (Should readers of this essay wish to shift the literati community whose reading I am reconstructing away from Persian Yehud and into the early Hellenistic period—after all, it must be pre-Maccabean—the main argument I am advancing will remain unaffected.)

to that linguistic situation. Scribes in Yehud, most likely used ‘official Aramaic,’ as did their counterparts in Samaria,¹⁰ when they wrote documents as part of their administrative duties. There is no doubt also that the literati in Yehud knew also how to write and read (what we may call ‘religious texts’) in SBH and it is likely that SBH was used in the cultic sphere.¹¹

¹⁰ In fact, “the language of the Samaria Papyri is even more consistently conservative in its conformity to the norm of Official Aramaic than the language of the other two corpora [Elephantine legal papyri and the Arsames correspondence].” See D. M. Gropp, “The Samaria Papyri from Wadi Daliyeh,” D. M. Gropp, J. C. VanderKam, and M. Brady (eds), *Wadi Daliyeh II and Qumran Cave 4, XXV/III. The Samaria Papyri from Wadi Daliyeh and Miscellanea, part 2* (DJD, 28; Clarendon: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), citation from p. 4.

¹¹ W. M. Schniedewind seems to argue that written Hebrew (referring to SBH) died in the Persian period, that Aramaic scribal training completely overtook the Hebrew tradition and that Hebrew was revived in the Hellenistic period, a time in which it becomes important as religious language. See Schniedewind, “Aramaic, the Death of Written Hebrew, and Language Shift in the Persian Period, S. L. Sanders (ed.), *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures* (Oriental Institute Seminars, 2; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006), 137–47. Such an argument is highly problematic. First, it requires not only that no substantial text was written in Hebrew during the entire Persian period—in itself a very unlikely possibility given books such as Zechariah, Haggai, Isaiah and for that matter Chronicles, and the dating of much of biblical literature to that period by many scholars, though not necessarily Schniedewind—but also that no one read, reread, edited (?), or interpreted any Hebrew text or book till the Hellenistic period. If so, how was continuity maintained? In relation to spoken Hebrew and non-elite or non-scribal groups, Schniedewind explicitly maintains that “Hebrew was not widely spoken even among the rural populations in Persian Yehud.” Reconstructions of the spoken language of rural areas are difficult (see below), but his thesis raises the question why would the people of Benjamin who remained in the land after 586 BCE and those in the areas of Bethlehem and Beth-Zur cease speaking their own language in a relatively short period of about three generations and particularly in the realm of home, family, and local matters? Schniedewind seems to emphasize rural settlement discontinuity. This is true in the area of Jerusalem, but a significant level of population continuity holds true for most of the areas in which most of the population of (neo-Babylonian Judah and) Yehud lived, that is, Benjamin.

On the population and population distribution in Yehud in general

This said, it is a matter of debate whether Aramaic or some dialect of Hebrew—whose character is in itself also a matter of

and Benjamin in particular see, for instance, O. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005); idem, "The History of the Benjamin Region Under Babylonian Rule," *TA* 26 (1999), 155–90; idem, "Demographic Changes in Judah between the 7th and the 5th Centuries BCE.," O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 323–376; C. E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yebud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup, 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); idem, "Ideology and Archaeology in the neo-Babylonian Period: Excavating Text and Tell," *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 301–22; E. Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, II: The Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian Periods (732–332) B.C.E.* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 321–26. On the general issue of the Benjaminite area during the neo-Babylonian period see also, among others, J. Zorn, "Tell en-Naşbeh and the Problem of the Material Culture of the 6th Century," *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 413–447; idem, "Estimating the Population Size of Ancient Settlements: Methods, Problems, Solutions and a Case Study," *BAJOR* 295 (1994), 31–48; J. Zorn, J. Yellin, and J. Hayes, "The M(W)SH Stamp Impressions and the Neo-Babylonian Period," *IEJ* 44 (1994), 161–183 and the survey and bibliography in L. L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Volume 1 Yebud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah* (LSTS, 47; London: T & T Clark, 2004), 22–30. In addition to Benjamin, the Bethlehem-Tekoa and, perhaps, the Beth Zur areas, are often mentioned among the regions in which a settlement remained. See O. Lipschits, "The Rural Settlement in Judah in The Sixth Century B.C.E.: A Rejoinder "Demographic Changes in Judah," *PEQ* 136 (2004), 99–107 and bibliography cited. It should be mentioned that there is considerable debate about the archaeology of the Persian period—Lipschits's article itself was a rejoinder to A. Faust, "Judah in the Sixth century B.C.E.: A Rural Perspective," *PEQ* 135 (2003), 37–53. There is a substantial debate concerning particular sites such as Beth Zur, Gibeon, and in general about the extent of settlement in the Persian period and its total population. Among recent works on these matters, see I. Finkelstein, "Archaeology and the List of Returnees in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah," *PEQ* 140 (2008), 1–10; and idem "Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah," *JSOT* 32 (2008), 501–520. It is worth noting that the main gist of the arguments advanced here would not be affected if the position argued by Finkelstein is accepted.

debate—was the most common spoken language in private settings, and if this was the case, the question becomes, for whom?

A well-known summary of a common position on these matters is Rabin's,

[t]he Jewish community in the Persian period was thus, it appears, trilingual, using Aramaic for purposes outside communication and for limited literary genres for internal consumption, Biblical Hebrew for normal literary composition; and in all probability, an older form of Mishnaic Hebrew as a purely spoken vernacular.¹²

Schaper modifies Rabin's position. According to him,

“[t]wo languages were in constant use in Achaemenid Judah: Aramaic and Hebrew... [w]hereas Aramaic was used both in speaking and in writing, contemporary Hebrew seems to have existed only as a spoken vernacular of the lower classes... I say ‘contemporary Hebrew’ because there was another form of Hebrew which was indeed used in writing, i.e., the somewhat artificial language commonly referred to as Late Biblical Hebrew.”¹³

Since Schaper grounds his discussion on texts such as Neh 8:8, it is clear that he is actually referring to the late Persian period.¹⁴ Kottsieper has recently discussed the use or lack thereof of Hebrew in Yehud. He explicitly and carefully refers only to the late Persian period as he concludes that the commonly spoken language was a vernacular dialect of Aramaic (which he associates with ‘the language of Ashdod’),¹⁵ and that Hebrew was not anymore a com-

¹² Ch. Rabin, “The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew,” Ch. Rabin and Y. Yadin (eds), *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Scripta Hierosolymitana, IV; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1958), 144–61; citation from p. 152.

¹³ J. Schaper, “Hebrew and Its Study in the Persian Period,” W. Horbury (ed.), *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* (T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 1999), 15–26; the quote is from p. 17.

¹⁴ I bracket, for the present purposes, the question of the ‘historicity’ of Neh 8:8.

¹⁵ But see also A. Lemaire, “Ashdodien et Judéen à l’époque perse: Ne 13,24,” K. van Lerberghe and A. Schoors (eds), *Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East. Festschrift E. Lipiński* (OLA, 65; Leu-

monly spoken language, even as it was used as a religious language in the relevant circles, and as such had its own development.¹⁶ Significantly, his analysis leads to the clear conclusion that in the early Persian period, Hebrew was spoken and that the process that led to its replacement with the language of Ashdod was a lengthy one that was beginning to become complete only by the time referred to in Neh 13:24.

Of course, one may raise the question of whether the process that led to the rise of the Jerusalem temple, and the achievement of significant prestige by its leadership¹⁷ impacted the linguistic scenario of Yehud, in particular in terms of written ‘religious’ language. Moreover, in this regard, the opposition between written and oral Hebrew might be a bit overstated. Written texts using ‘written’ Hebrew were read aloud and meant to be read aloud,¹⁸

ven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1995), 153–163. For the position that “the language of Ashdod” is a Hebrew dialect spoken in the lowlands that “later became the language of the sages who lived in the same area: Gizmo, Lod, Emmaus, and Yavneh” see D. Talshir, “The Habitat and History of Hebrew During the Second Temple Period,” *Biblical Hebrew. Studies in Chronology and Typology*, 251–75; citation from p. 263.

¹⁶ See I. Kottsieper, “‘And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit’: On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era,” O. Lipschits, G. N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* (Winona Lake, Ind., Eisenbrauns, 2007), 95–124.

The strength of the argument for the disappearance of spoken Hebrew, even in the setting of family life, depends to some extent on the strength (or weakness) of the argument for historical continuity between the Hebrew languages of the early Persian period and later forms of Hebrew such as Qumranic and Mishnaic Hebrew. The matter is, however, not directly relevant to the discussion here.

¹⁷ See Elephantine Papyri, B19 = TAD A4.7 = Cowley 30; B20 = TAD A.4.8 = Cowley 31. TAD refers to B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* (4 vols.; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1986–99). The “B” numbers refer to B. Porten, *The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

¹⁸ At the very least in addition to a possible silent reading. On these matters, see E. Ben Zvi, “Introduction: Writings, Speeches, and the Prophetic Books-Setting an Agenda,” E. Ben Zvi and M. H. Floyd (eds), *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (SBLSymS, 10 Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 1–29, esp. pp. 16–18, 21–24).

and at least some of them were read aloud to the public. They played a role in oral and aural circumstances, and moreover, since they were written in a society in which communication was for the most part oral, often reflect oral dictions and forms of communication.

All in all, it seems that more or less a general consensus develops regarding the existence of at least three languages (Aramaic, spoken Hebrew, and written SBH) in the general milieu of the early Persian period—despite the meagre population in Yehud—and thus, necessarily of a system of linguistic choices, that is, a process of socialization that enabled at least the multilingual members of the community (including its elite and scribes) to discern which language to use for which purpose. In other words, there was a system in which meaning was encoded in a socially agreed upon way by means of language and in which the very same people could partake in and even constitute diverse linguistic communities.

Although these considerations hold true for even a situation involving only three linguistic choices, more were likely to have been available within the early Yehudite milieu. There was official written Aramaic but likely some spoken Aramaic, particularly in the Western areas of the province, which incidentally was not identical with the dialect of the few who returned to Yehud from Babylonia. The spoken Hebrew of Benjamin may have been some kind of proto-Mishnaic Hebrew (influenced by Israelian Hebrew) or (proto) LBH.¹⁹ Given the known linguistic cantonization of Palestine in antiquity, one cannot simply assume that the spoken Hebrew in Benjamin had to be identical with the Judahite Hebrew that likely survived in the rural areas in the environs of Bethlehem or Beth Zur areas, at least, during the early Persian period. Moreover, since several groups (including former Benjaminites [e.g., the

¹⁹ See, for instance, E. A. Knauf, "Bethel: The Israelite Impact on Judean Language and Literature," O. Lipschits and M. Oeming (eds) *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 291–349 (309–18); cf. F. H. Polak, "Sociolinguistics and the Judean Speech Community in the Achaemenid Empire," *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, 589–628; G. A. Rendsburg, "The Galilean Background of Mishnaic Hebrew," L. I. Levine, *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York/Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 225–40. (Most of the important sociolinguistic insights advanced by Polak do not depend on the validity of his dating of key texts.)

Aaronides?], some returnees, etc.) may have settled in Jerusalem, it is difficult to assess the spoken linguistic profile of the community there during the early Persian period.

To complicate matters further, some kind of written Hebrew (often called, transitional) that showed a substantial number of LBH features (e.g., Lamentations²⁰) seems to have been used among postmonarchic literati and co-existed at least for a while with SBH as a written (and read aloud, see below) Hebrew.²¹

In sum, these considerations lead us to the conclusion that multiple linguistic entities and identities co-existed in early Persian Yehud, despite its low population.²² This observation is already meaningful in terms of historical reconstruction. It attests to a lack of a totalizing thrust aimed at bringing together all linguistic expressions, from family setting to administration, from contracts to religious literature into one single, ‘authorized’ linguistic form.²³

This observation is particularly consistent with the background information provided by some features of the core repertoire of the intellectual elite in Yehud. A society ideologically shaped by and around books that ubiquitously and systematically carried multiple images and ideas and by doing so contributed to increased social cohesion, is a society that is likely to live comfortably with multiple linguistic profiles, rather than one single ‘authorized’ linguistic form for all use.

²⁰ See F. W. Dobbs-Allsop, “Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Lamentations,” *JANES* 26 (1998), 1–36 and cf. I. Young, R. Rezetko, and M. Ehrensverd, *Linguistic Dating*, vol. 2, esp. pp. 65–66, 91. There is continuous debate about the date of Lamentations. It is possible and even perhaps likely that it was written and perhaps publicly read close to the actual, even if very low-scale, rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the city itself.

²¹ On Ezekiel, see below.

²² Of course, some of these multiple, linguistic identities co-existed within the same person. For instance, a scribe may have expressed himself (less likely, herself) differently depending on the context of his linguistic interaction; a literate person may have written a (or in, i.e. reworked a) “religious” and “authoritative” text in a language different from the one in which he would speak at home and different from the written language he would use for administrative documents; the same person could use a more local “dialect” in one context but not in another.

²³ Contrast with Neh 13:23–25.

Further, in a society in which its literati wrote varied texts, including Psalms, historical books (some of which carried a Mosaic-like voice), prophetic books, each with its own voice, and Proverbs, as well as simply administrative texts, language is used to shape a contingent speaker/author 'identity mode' that varies according to the case.²⁴

At the same time, there were limits. Just as there were clear limits to multivocality concerning central ideological tenets (e.g., those associated with Jerusalem, Zion, and the Temple; or YHWH's basic relationship with Israel) there were limits to linguistic choices. The community's key ideological books, be them pentateuchal, prophetic, or historical, all—and despite their differences—conveyed a sense of belonging to the linguistic tent (or range) of SBH, which thus becomes to be construed as a representation of the authoritative, religious language.

Of course, on the one hand, this tent contains the written language used by the Yehudite literati when they turn themselves into, or one may say 'officiated themselves as' the linguistic and theological community that shaped, read, and reread these texts. But on the other, and much more importantly from their perspective, this tent contains the language of YHWH's central instructions and words to Israel, and by extension and from the literati's ideological viewpoint, a godly, divine language shared by themselves and YHWH, and binding them together. From this perspective, it is particularly important that this is not a *lingua franca*, even among literati. It is certainly not a language used by non-Israelite sages or literati. It is a local and unique language, like their temple and the ideological world centered on it (and its traditions), that they espoused. The 'nations' do not know SBH, just as they do not know YHWH, or for that matter, the deity's ways and the grounding of their own experienced world in the divine economy and will. Only those who can master SBH and therefore can read the core texts in the repertoire of the Jerusalemite literati can begin to understand these matters.

But as the language of the books within the 'triad' became so central to the discourse of the community (or at least its literati),

²⁴ To be sure, this holds true for everyone who changes his diction according to circumstances in which s/he utters or writes her/his words, but one has to keep in mind that it seems that the linguistic choices open to people in ancient Yehud were quite abundant.

their level of ‘sacrality’ (i.e., of difference from the rest) emerged and boundaries began to set around them.²⁵ By the late Persian period (or early Hellenistic at the latest), from the perspective of the Jerusalemite center the books in the ‘triad’ either turn into scripture to be interpreted or ‘classical’ texts to be imitated, or books written in a genre so ‘sacred’ that no new books can be composed in it,²⁶ or a combination of the above. Chronicles, a product of that time, attests to many of these features concerning pentateuchal and now ‘classical’ historical books.²⁷ Admittedly, less can be learned about the prophetic corpus from Chronicles, but clearly around the late Persian (or early Hellenistic) the writing of new prophetic books ceases.²⁸

A discourse that disallows the creation of new sacred pentateuchal, prophetic, or (dtr.) historical books is also a discourse that calls for closure in the production of new books in SBH, because the latter came to be directly and closely associated with that core repertoire and its claims for centrality and ideological authority. But

²⁵ Cf. the case of the genre of “gospel.” Even the writing of literature in the “traditional/sacred” genre of gospel ceased at some point. The process was, of course, far faster and easier in the case of a small community around an undersized temple in a minute province (i.e., Yehud) than in the case of multiple and quite independent Christian communities all over the eastern Roman empire. The center has far more control over the production of works in Yehudite Jerusalem.

²⁶ It is important to stress that editing and slightly reworking existing works—some of which may have already appeared in more than one form/version—could continue. After all, this was likely perceived as an activity that reflected the spirit of the book’s voice. Cf. N. G. Cohen, “From ‘Nabi’ to ‘Mal’ak’ to ‘Ancient Figure,’” *JSS* 36 (1985), 12–24.

²⁷ Cf., among others, J. Van Seters, “Creative Imitation in the Hebrew Bible,” *JR* 29 (2000), 395–409; E. Ben Zvi, “Revisiting ‘Boiling in Fire’ in 2 Chr 35.13 and Related Passover Questions Text, Exegetical Needs, Concerns, and General Implications” I. Kalimi and P. J. Haas (eds), *Biblical Interpretation in Judaism and Christianity* (LHBOTS, 439; London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 238–50.

²⁸ In the restrictive sense of books that follow the genre that characterizes the fifteen prophetic books (Isaiah–Malachi); but clearly *not* in the sense of books associated in society with a ‘prophetic spirit.’ The latter continues. It is worth stressing also that the present discussion is limited to the Persian period and its likely continuation in the *early* Hellenistic period.

the literati continued to write, so there was a need for an alternative written Hebrew. It is not by chance then that Chronicles was written in LBH, even if much of it goes back to sources written in SBH. The use of LBH in Chronicles conveys a claim that the book is less authoritative (and secondary) to those in the 'triad.'²⁹

The usage of SBH as the language of the most authoritative/classical texts likely carried a secondary, but related connotation. The use of SBH evoked associations with Judah, its monarchic past, and by extension Israel's Mosaic past within the discourse of Yehud. LBH carried associations with a later period, with postmonarchic Israel. As corollary of the ideological centrality of the concept of (full) exile and (partial) return in Yehud, all Yehudites come to be construed as 'returnees,' and in fact, returnees from Babylonia.³⁰

It is not surprising therefore that whether it was a linguistic outcome of an inner Judahite development or not, LBH likely conveyed or reflected an (implicit) ideologically construed, *connoted* connection between not only post-monarchic times, but also with exilic and particularly, Babylonian Israel.³¹ Key books in this regard

²⁹ To be sure, paradoxically, the claim to be secondary to the triad allows the book to re-signify the authoritative corpus according to the Chronicles' own ideological viewpoint, which at times contradicted either the plain language of some text or its basic ideological assumptions (e.g., the role of kings in Deuteronomy). In other words, Chronicles, by virtue of being secondary, is able to present an authoritative reading of the (authoritative) texts of "the triad." This is not the place to expand on how Chronicles dealt with authoritative texts. The matter is being discussed in the EABS research group out of which this volume evolved. My own position on the matter is elaborated in my "How Did Chronicles Deal with Authoritative Literature of its Time," paper presented at the 2008 meetings of the EABS and the SBL. This matter is being presently discussed by the EABS research program and a volume on this subject is in the works.

³⁰ I expanded on these matters in E. Ben Zvi, "Total Exile, Empty Land and the General Intellectual Discourse in Yehud," E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin (eds), *Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel & its Historical Contexts* (Berlin, de Gruyter; forthcoming).

³¹ As it is well-known, D. Talshir has proposed that LBH replaced SBH as the (main) language of Yehud by mid-fifth century, when Ezra and his group came to Judah. According to him, LBH is not the result of a local Yehudite development based on some spoken form of proto-

are not only Ezra-Nehemiah—which is to state the obvious, but also Lamentations and Ezekiel, which although written in SBH, show a clear increase in the occurrence of LBH features.³²

Given the characterization of Ezekiel, it is not so difficult to understand the rhetorical value of an ‘eastern flavour’ in that book. This said, the matter has some significant implications. The presence of some ‘eastern flavour’ in the voice of Ezekiel created by the increased use of LHB features is another instance in which the voices of the individual prophetic characters are (partially) shaped according to the ‘stories’ about them advanced in the prophetic books.³³ This consideration serves to explain why Ezekiel but not

mishanic Hebrew that in turn was influenced by Israelian Hebrew, nor a dialect that evolved in Judah out of SBH under the influence of Aramaic. Instead, he maintains, LBH is a dialect that evolved out of SBH in Babylonia and was brought to Judah by the Ezra returnees. According to him, LBH became the dominant language in Yehud/Judah, because of the influence of these returnees. The influence, however, did not reach to the lowlands, in which a different dialect of Hebrew, and significantly the one that eventually led to Mishnaic Hebrew, was spoken. He proposes that this dialect increasingly encroached on LBH within the borders of Judah from the time of the Maccabees on. See D. Talshir, “Habitat and History of Hebrew.” For a different position, see, for instance, G. A. Rendsburg, “The Galilean Background of Mishnaic Hebrew,” L. I. Levine, *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York/Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 225–40.

³² This is the reason that scholars who support a diachronic model of shift from SBH to LBH refer to their Hebrew as transitional Hebrew.

³³ For instance, the language of Hosea carries some ‘odd’ features that the intended readership of the book was likely supposed to understand as pointing at an Israelian Hebrew flavor. See E. Ben Zvi, *Hosea* (FOTL 21A/1; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 16–17 and bibliography. Of course, the literary (and ideological) characterization of personages according to the way in which they speak is attested also in books other than the prophetic. For instance, some texts chose to convey the foreign origin of a speaker by the association of his/her speech with (actual or ‘fictional’) ethnolects. See, for instance, M. Cheney, *Dust, Wind and Agony: Character, Speech and Genre in Job* (ConBOT, 36; Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994), 203–75. See also Isa 21:11–12 and cf. I. Young, “The diphthong *ay in Edomite,” *JSS* 37 (1992), 27–30. Conversely, some texts wish to convey an Israelitized image of a foreigner by associating her/him with ‘typical’ Israelite speech, as construed through the voices of Israelite characters in the book (see E. Ben Zvi, *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of*

Deutero-Isaiah carries an increased number of LBH features; that is, in the case of the latter the association of the text with the character Isaiah of Jerusalem, as his linguistic profile as understood by the relevant literati, trumped any consideration aimed at communicating a Babylonian atmosphere.

These considerations help to explain also why no prophetic (or pentateuchal or so-called dtr. historical) books were written in LBH, and more importantly, why the linguistic profile associated with the prototype of prophetic book remained consistently SBH during the Persian period and thereafter.

In the case of Lamentations, the linguistic selection of some eastern diasporic flavour may have reinforced, in a subtle, connoted way, the sense of deep chasm between the present and the monarchical past construed by Lamentations and conveyed by the book to its intended readership, as they remember, re-enact, as it were, and cope with their loss through their reading (and hearing) of this text. In both cases, the LBH/eastern flavour set and evoked images of continuity and discontinuity. It communicated a sense of a bridge between the old and new, which calls attention to that which has to be bridged, the chasm of 587 BCE, or as seen within the usual discourse of the Jerusalemite centered literati of Yehud, the chasm created by exile.

To sum up, the shift from SBH to LBH as the language of writing religious texts conveyed at some point in the late Persian period an ideological image of conceptual clusters and boundaries. On the one hand, texts associated with 'Judahite' language and characters (including, by extension and appropriation the figure of Moses, but certainly not that of Ezra). These texts appeared in the mentioned triad of collections (or mental shelves) and stood at the ideological core of the 'text-centered' community construed (and imagined) by the literati in the late Persian period. These books were associated with earlier times, from an era preceding the settlement in the land to the loss of the land and exile. On the other hand, texts associated with LBH were considered to be less central to the community,³⁴ outside the triad mentioned above, later, and

Chronicles [London: Equinox, 2006], 270–88).

³⁴ Even as they try to co-opt and control the meaning of the core texts.

as all postmonarchic Israel within this discourse,³⁵ as carrying a strong Babylonian returnee voice.

Lamentations and Ezekiel belong to the first group, but their increased number of LBH features likely carried an eastern flavour, and especially so in the case of Ezekiel. The latter, however, as a prophetic book could not end up in the LBH tent; it had to remain within that of SBH.³⁶

This genre restriction explains why Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, although containing some LBH features, had also to end up conveying a sense of linguistic consistency with the other prophetic books, that is, to remain in the SBH tent. In the case of these books, and from an overview perspective on communal (or systemic) preferences and messages conveyed by linguistic choices, the central issue is about where the balance was struck between messages of continuity and discontinuity, between a tendency to emphasize the chasm of the exile on the one hand, and to bridge it on the other. If the balance would have followed the well-known trend in some rabbinic literature to construe a marked caesura between first and second temple periods, then Jeremiah would have been construed as the last prophet (see *Pesiq. Rab. Qah.* 13.14),³⁷ and, accordingly the book of Jeremiah as the last prophetic book. Then at least in principle, books like Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi could have developed an unequivocal LBH sense. Yet, this would have set them apart from the other prophetic books, something which the very contents of these books clearly stood against, and imbued them with less authority.

³⁵ See E. Ben Zvi, "Total Exile, Empty Land and the General Intellectual Discourse in Yehud," and previously, "Inclusion in and Exclusion from Israel as Conveyed by the Use of the Term 'Israel' in Postmonarchic Biblical Texts," S. W. Holloway and L. K. Handy (eds), *The Pitcher is Broken. Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ablström* (JSOTSup 190, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1995), 95–149.

³⁶ One may consider the case of Ezekiel as a demonstration of the farthest a prophetic book could go towards LBH, given the constraints of the genre of prophetic book.

³⁷ See A. A. Wieder, "Josiah and Jeremiah: Their Relationship According to Aggadic Sources," M. A. Fishbane and P. R. Mendes-Flohr (eds) *Texts and Responses: Studies presented to Nabum N. Glatzer on the Occasion of his Seventieth birthday by his Students* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 60–72.

Chronicles presents itself as later than the so called deuteronomistic history (and the primary history for that matter). Its LBH profile conveys a sense that Chronicles is a post-monarchic history (see 2 Chr 36:23), and as such—in the context of the intellectual discourse within which it emerged—it could only be imagined as a history written by returnees (see 2 Chr 36:20, and the general topos of the total exile). Although Chronicles did not emphasize the exile, it still comes out as a book of ‘returnees’ and therefore, of ‘easterns.’³⁸

In sum, the preceding considerations point out that linguistic choice between LBH and SBH carried important messages about, among others, distinctions of textual authority, related associations or disassociations with earlier periods and ‘the land,’ or the land that led to the land (e.g., Sinai) as opposed to ‘the land’ that represents the loss of ‘the land.’ The texts in SBH are lionized and connected to Mosaic and Judahite/Yehudite voices rather than Babylonian, and the latter are marginalized. Even if Ezra, the newcomer from the East, is construed and lionized as the one who restores ‘Torah,’ his ‘Torah’ would not carry an Eastern, but a Mosaic/Judahite/Yehudite flavour.³⁹

Some potential counter-arguments should be addressed at this point. For instance, it might be argued that we are not facing a matter of linguistic choices between SBH and LBH and that SBH is simply the Hebrew of books written in Yehud and LBH of those in the Eastern diaspora. To be sure, Esther, even if it comes from a period likely later than the Achaemenid, provides a good example of a book in which an eastern diasporic situation stands at its very center. In fact, it is difficult to imagine that a text such as Esther be written in Jerusalem, by and for its literati.⁴⁰ But Chronicles, a text

³⁸ In addition, Chronicles could not compete for the same slot as the “classical” history, and therefore, SBH, authoritative history that served as its source.

³⁹ Cf. the rabbinic traditions that associate the end of prophecy with Ezra, or the return and establishment of the “torah” with him. Even when these texts are associated with a “lionized” Ezra, by necessity they point back to pre-Ezra times and the voices that populated them.

⁴⁰ See, as mentioned above, the lack of any mention of Jerusalem and the fate of its temple even as it relates a planned mass extermination of all the Jews in the entire Persian Empire—contrast with Judith, and see also the ref. to the temple in the LXX additions to Esther. Contrast with the

written in LBH, is not only a Jerusalem centered book, but also one that was most likely written in Yehud and Jerusalem. There is no reason to associate it with an eastern diasporic group actually living in Babylonia or anywhere except Yehud. In fact, although it construes all non-Yehudite Israel as Israel, it also construes them as marginal Israel.⁴¹ The conclusion from these two examples is: from the presence of, or better the selection of LBH as the language of a book one cannot learn about its historical composition in the Eastern diaspora.

Alternatively, it might be argued that choices of either SBH or LBH as the language of a text were grounded on sociological settings and that the latter was used by an originally diasporic, separate social group settled in Jerusalem that shaped and communicated to others (embodied as it were) its own separate character within its society by selecting LBH as the language of their writing (cf. the use of Qumranic Hebrew as a written language). Such a position is theoretically possible. But sectarian models that might work in a very large city as Late Second Temple Jerusalem do not work in a very small Jerusalem of the early Persian period. Models of social integration between the newcomers (which in any case were never many) and the local population are far more likely to reflect the long term historical processes in Yehud. To be sure, one can imagine that some recently arrived immigrant might have had some problems, but the tendency in such a small society would have been towards integration. In fact, the tendency to integration worked out even stronger differences, and integrated Benjaminites not only into Yehud, but led it to assume a cultural memory of total exile that stood against their own memory.⁴²

Additional considerations undermine this potential approach. For instance, Haggai never separates the community between those who remained and those who came back, and Ezra-Nehemiah is more likely to be the exception, than the rule—and even there the matter is far more complex, since the book construes all Yehudites (including Benjaminites) as returnees. All in all, if it is not reason-

Jerusalem centredness of the books composed by and for Jerusalemite literati.

⁴¹ I expanded on this matter, in my *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles*, 195–209.

⁴² I expanded on this particular matter elsewhere (E. Ben Zvi, “Total Exile, Empty Land and the General Intellectual Discourse in Yehud?”).

able to assume the existence of multiple, longstanding, socially separate groups of literati in Yehud, each with their own characterizing language, this would apply to claims of separate deuteronomic or Isaianic schools as much as it applies to claims of an enduring socially separate Eastern diasporic group in Jerusalem.⁴³

One may add that if there was such a group, and if as usually assumed this group exercised power in Yehud—because it was either sent or supported or both by the imperial Persian centre—then how can one explain that SBH was selected and maintained as the most authoritative books? One may counter, of course, by assuming that this group did not exist in the early Persian period or was powerless then, but became important only after the historical mission of Ezra-Nehemiah, but if one does so, not only does one enter into all the difficulties associated with reconstructing history from Ezra-Nehemiah, but one would have to explain why Chronicles—which in my opinion is earlier than Ezra-Nehemiah—was written in LBH given that it is so diametrically opposed to Ezra-Nehemiah on central issues.⁴⁴

Moreover, such a proposal would have to take into consideration a book such as Ezekiel and to some extent Lamentations. Should we assume that it was written by a separate, earlier group of returnees who kept themselves socially separate in early Persian Yehud and whose particular selection of linguistic flavour was taken up, and fully developed as the central linguistic selection for writing books by a second, much later and unrelated wave of immigrants who came from diasporic communities that remained in Babylon, and lived in at least some isolation from those in Yehud? In addition, how to explain the LBH features in other texts?

To conclude, this study has explored some of the likely communicative messages of the selection of the ‘SBH tent’ for the books in the core triad, and of LBH for other texts. It has shown that of all the potential linguistic choices that existed for the Jerusa-

⁴³ More developed arguments for the integrative character of the discourse of Yehud, and the integrative character of its society, appear in E. Ben Zvi, “Towards an Integrative Study,” and cf. “On the term ‘Deuteronomic.’” The considerations made in this chapter suffice, at least in my opinion, for the present purposes.

⁴⁴ To be sure, one may maintain that the linguistic profile of CHR was changed (as was the case with 1QIsa^a). Although this is possible, there is no proof that such is the case.

lem-centred literati when the present prophetic, pentateuchal, and the so-called *dtr* history emerged—and which involved more than one dialect of Hebrew and Aramaic—there was a clear systemic preference for SBH when it came to core texts. SBH was not simply another linguistic profile to be selected among many others in Persian Yehud. It was, from the perspective of these literati and likely those who accepted their ideological tenets, a prestige language that stood as an alternate to everyday language, both written and spoken. As such, it was a language ideologically marked by closeness with YHWH, through interaction with their godly texts.⁴⁵ As SBH involved and evoked a sense of closeness with YHWH, it also involved identification with a concept of (transtemporal) Israel, its relationship with YHWH, its constitutive memories, hard lessons and hopes for an utopian future (see prophetic books). This systemic preference both reflected and contributed to the shaping of the intellectual discourse of the period and a formal hierarchization of books within the repertoire of the community, just as LBH texts such as Chronicles, contributed to the production of “the meaning” of the authoritative texts, by re-shaping their readings as it informed them.

The present study neither addresses nor is meant to address the real origin of, or the basic generative processes that led to LBH linguistic features (Palestine—if so which region, and when; Babylon, both?) and its relation to other variants of Hebrew remains open. It shows, however, the potential of asking questions somewhat different from that usually asked in the field, and the possible contribution of intellectual historians to this area.

⁴⁵ Cf. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (rev. ed.; London/New York: Verso, 2006), esp. pp. 12–15. Anderson discusses “sacredness of language” and its role in shaping pre-modern communities.