The Linguistic Dating of the Joseph Story

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<24> The Joseph story (Gen 37, 39-48, 50)[1] is a coherent work of highly proficient narrative art.[2] It plays an important role in the economy of the Pentateuch as a whole, linking the patriarchal narratives to the account of the Exodus. Dating the story has proven to be difficult.[3] For redaction-critical reasons, a few contemporary exegetes would like to date it later than the Priestly source, in which, in their view, the patriarchal history and the tale **<25>** of the exodus were first combined.[4] Arndt Meinhold's idea that the story reflects concerns of

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[1] The Judah-Tamar story and the blessings of Jacob, Gen 38 and 49, will be bracketed out for methodological reasons. For more detailed reflections on which parts of Gen 37-50 belong to the Joseph story and which parts do not, see Erhard Blum and Kristin Weingart, "The Joseph Story: Diaspora Novella or North-Israelite Narrative?" *ZAW* 129 (2017): 501-521, in particular 504-510.

[2] Sternberg calls the Joseph narrative "the Bible's siren and sphinx rolled into one," Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: IUP, 1985), 285. The proficiency of the narrative art does not exclude that the story may be composite at least in parts. Baruch Schwartz and Joel Baden have recently argued rather persuasively that two sources, J and E, were woven together, see Joel Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch* (New Haven & London: YUP, 2012), 1-44, 72-74. Much less persuasive is Ede, who argues that the Joseph story is the result of an extensive and protracted process of *Fortschreibung,* see Franziska Ede, *Die Josefsgeschichte: Literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Entstehung von Gen 37–50* (BZAW 485; Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2016). For criticisms of Ede, see Blum and Weingart, "Joseph Story," 504, note 7.

[3] See e.g. Jan Alberto Soggin, "Dating the Joseph Story and other Remarks," in *Joseph: Bibel und Literatur, Symposion Helsinki/Lahti 1999* (ed. Friedemann W. Golka and Wolfgang Weiß; Oldenburg: Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg, 2000), 13–24.

[4] See e.g. Thomas Römer, "The Joseph Story in the Book of Genesis: Pre-P or Post-P?" in *The Post-Priestly Pentateuch: New Perspectives on Its Redactional Development and Theological Profiles* (ed. Frederico Giuntoli and Konrad Schmid; FAT 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 185–201.

the diaspora has also persuaded many scholars.[5] Both these recent approaches tend toward a date in the postexilic period.[6] Other exegetes prefer to date the text rather earlier, in the monarchic period, as was in fact common practice until about 40 years ago.[7] Criteria allowing one to decide between the competing approaches appear to be lacking.

A possible approach to dating is the linguistic one. Languages evolve through time and it is often possible to relate certain forms of language to specific epochs in history. If the "chronolect" of the Joseph story could be determined this might allow one to situate the text in the history of the Hebrew language, and in the history of biblical literature.

The diachronic approach to Biblical Hebrew

Linguistic dating of biblical texts builds upon the diachronic approach to ancient Hebrew. Historical linguists have striven to distinguish stages in the language of the bible and to relate those stages to epochs in the history of Israel. Since no part of the Hebrew Bible has come down to us in autograph and only dates *post quem* can claim absolute validity—e.g. the book of Nehemiah cannot have been written before the time of its protagonist—there is very little solid ground, and certainly no Archimedean point on which to rest the chronology. The diachronic approach was developed over a long process of trial and error, from the sixteenth century onward until today.[8] It remains rather approximate even today. But the twilight of well-founded approximation is preferable to the darkness of complete ignorance.

<26> The distinction between classical and late Biblical Hebrew

Central to the approach is the observation that two clearly demarcated sub-units can be distinguished within biblical prose: a "classical" sub-corpus, and a "late" sub-corpus. The

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[5] See Arndt Meinhold, "Die Gattung der Josephsgeschichte und des Estherbuches: Diasporanovelle I, II," *ZAW* 87, 88 (1975, 1976): 306–324, 72–93.

[6] Descending much lower than the end of the Persian period is ill-advised because the entire Pentateuch, including the Joseph story, was translated into Greek early in the third century BCE.

[7] See e.g. Blum and Weingart, "Joseph Story."

[8] The approach was set on a sure footing by Wilhelm Gesenius at the beginning of the nineteenth century, see Jan Joosten, "Wilhelm Gesenius and the history of Hebrew in the Biblical period," in *Biblische Exegese und hebräische Lexikographie. Das „Hebräisch-deutsche Handwörterbuch" von Wilhelm Gesenius als Spiegel und Quelle alttestamentlicher und hebräischer Forschung, 200 Jahre nach seiner ersten Auflage* (ed. Stefan Schorch, Ernst-Joachim Waschke ; BZAW 427; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 94-106.

language of the first unit differs systematically from that of the second. The most conspicuous differences are of a lexical nature. Certain Hebrew words occur only in the second group, while the first group uses a synonym in the same meaning. For instance, Esther, Nehemiah and Chronicles use the word אִגֶּרֶת for "letter, written missive" while the books of Samuel and Kings use only the word סֵפֶר in this meaning. A single example of course means little, but there are many other instances of this phenomenon:[9]

Meaning	Classical	Late
"appointed time"	מוֹעֵד	זְמָן
"end"	קֵץ	סוֹף
"plunder"	בַּז	בִּזָּה
"west"	יָם	מַעְרָב

On the basis of their vocabulary, certain texts can be assigned to the "classical" corpus, notably the bulk of the Enneateuch (Genesis to 2 Kings); other texts can be assigned to the "late corpus": Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles, Esther, Ecclesiastes and Daniel.

Up to this point, the method is based merely on patterns of distribution: words are considered late because they occur in the late sub-corpus, or early because they are used in the early sub-corpus. Consequently, the method has at times been criticized for circular reasoning. However, a closer look at the words characteristic of the "late" corpus shows that such criticism misses the mark. The noun אִגֶּרֶת is a loanword from Aramaic, while סֵפֶר is a genuine Hebrew noun well integrated into the language system (cf. סֹפֵר "scribe"); סֵפֶר is also the word for letter in pre-exilic Hebrew inscriptions.[10] The linguistic data make it likely that Hebrew אִגֶּרֶת is an innovation reflecting influence from Official Aramaic, the administrative language throughout the Ancient Near East in the Persian period. Texts using this word are therefore likely to have originated in that period. Again, a single example **<27>** proves little,

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[9] In his recent Lexicon of Late Biblical Hebrew, Hurvitz provides 80 examples of words used exclusively, or nearly so, in the "late" corpus and for which a synonym can be found in the "classical" corpus. See Avi Hurvitz, *A Concise Lexicon of Late Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Innovations in the Writings of the Second Temple Period* (VTSup 160; Brill: Leiden, 2014).

[10] See e.g. Lachish 3:9-11. Hebrew inscriptions will be quoted from Johannes Renz and Wolfgang Röllig. *Handbuch der althebraïschen Epigraphik.* 3 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).

but evaluation of the special vocabulary of the "late" corpus confirms that most items are due to lexical innovation in exilic-postexilic times. The two criteria, the distributional and the typological, converge. Words that are identified as late Hebrew on the basis of distribution turn out to be typologically late as well.

Scholars have pointed out that linguistic variation may be due to many factors other than the diachronic one.[11] If text X uses word A in a given meaning, and text Y uses word B in the same meaning this does not necessarily indicate that the two texts were written in different periods. Perhaps Esther, Nehemiah and Chronicles use אִגֶּרֶת because their authors were open to the use of foreign loanwords, while the authors of Samuel-Kings prefer סֵפֶר out of linguistic conservatism. Local dialects, stylistic registers, scribal peculiarities and textual deterioration can all account for the use of different forms. The observation of multiple sources of linguistic variation is correct. But it does not justify rejecting the diachronic approach. As was pointed out above, the contrast between early and late Hebrew is not based on a single opposition, but on a long series of oppositions. The alignment of distribution and typology across tens of examples shows that classical Biblical Hebrew (CBH) and late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) are distinct chronolects. Explanations from dialects, registers, or textual deteriorations cannot account for the data as efficiently as the diachronic approach.

An important corollary is that the diachronic method should always be established on the basis of a multiplicity of features. The approach is cumulative. A single example, or even two or three, may reflect non-diachronic sources of linguistic variation. A certain density of diagnostic features is needed before a given passage can be assigned to a specific chronolect.[12]

Grammatical evidence of diachronic development

Other evidence exists of the systematic difference between CBH and LBH. Some Hebrew words change their meaning over the biblical period. For instance, the word תּוֹרָה most often means something like "teaching, instruction, direction" in the classical corpus, but always "divine law (as codified in the Pentateuch)" in the late corpus. Also significant is that all books in the LBH corpus have multiple Persian loanwords, while such words are **<28>**

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[11] See e.g. Ian Young and Robert Rezetko, with the assistance of Martin Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*, 2 vols. (London: Equinox, 2008).

[12] Avi Hurvitz formulated this as his criterion of accumulation, Hurvitz, *Concise Lexicon,* 13.

conspiciously absent from the classical corpus.[13] Finally, much Hebrew grammar also manifests systematic variation in diachronic perspective.[14]

Grammatical examples of diachronic development tend to be more difficult to grasp than lexical ones. This is true, unfortunately, for modern students of the Hebrew Bible. But it was true also—and this is more felicitous—in the biblical period. The latter circumstance makes grammatical features more effective than words in the demonstration of diachronic developments. Lexical evidence is often asymmetrical: the innovative usage is limited to the late sub-corpus, but the earlier usage occurs in early texts as well as late ones. The word אִגֶּרֶת is found only in LBH, but סֵפֶר "letter" is found in both sub-corpora, including books such as Esther that use אִגֶּרֶת. The lopsided distribution shows that languages change slowly: new words do not supplant old ones at once, there is a period of overlap—particularly so in written language, which is relatively conservative. As a result of this imbalance, it is sometimes said that only the lateness of LBH can be demonstrated, while the early date of CBH cannot be positively established.[15] At this point grammatical evidence becomes particularly valuable. Several grammatical features typical of CBH disappear completely from later stages of the language, with LBH using a different construction in the same function. A good example is the iterative-habitual use of *weqatal* in past-tense contexts, occurring around 150 times in CBH but virtually unattested in LBH or post-biblical Hebrew.[16] In LBH, this function is expressed either with *yiqtol*, a usage attested also in CBH, or with the participle, a usage that is very rare in CBH. Constellations like this provide positive evidence for CBH. They show that while it was relatively easy for later authors to pick up classical vocabulary, classical grammar was much harder to decode and follow.

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[13] See e.g. Mats Eskhult, "The Importance of Loanwords for Dating Biblical Hebrew Texts," in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology* (ed. Ian Young; JSOTSup 369; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 8–23.

[14] For illustrations, see below.

[15] So Gesenius, *Geschichte,* 26.

[16] See Jan Joosten, "The Disappearance of Iterative WEQATAL in the Biblical Hebrew Verbal System," *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting. Typological and Historical Perspectives* (ed. Steven E. Fassberg, Avi Hurvitz; Jerusalem: Magnes / Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 135-147.

From relative to absolute chronology

CBH and LBH are distinct chronolects, and the latter reflects a later period than the former. Because of the numerous and profound differences, some **<29>** time must have gone by between the composition of the CBH corpus and the LBH one. To translate this relative chronology into absolute terms, external pegs are needed. The Persian words in LBH are useful: they show that the books in question were composed no earlier than the Persian period. This conclusion tallies with the content of some of these books: Ezra-Nehemia, Esther and Chronicles relate to events and historical figures from this period and require to be dated in the fourth century or later.[17] But how shall we determine the historical horizon of CBH? The most important peg is the correspondence between CBH and the language of Judahite inscriptions from the monarchic age. A modest amount of epigraphic material from the eighth to the early sixth century BCE—letters, tomb and building inscriptions—show what Hebrew looked like when it was a national language. Several features characteristic of CBH, unattested in LBH, also occur in these epigraphic texts, indicating that CBH was in use during a period overlapping that of the inscriptions.[18]

LBH for its part shows much proximity to Qumran Hebrew (QH). Although in this case, the epigraphic texts are probably somewhat later than the biblical ones, the similarity between LBH and QH is striking enough to confirm the diachronic approach. Several features showing up for the first time in the LBH corpus then continue or develop further in the Dead Sea scrolls.[19]

From the period between the latest Arad and Lachish letters and the earliest Dead Sea scrolls very little epigraphic material in Hebrew has come down to us.[20] This means that there is no external evidence to establish when CBH went out of use, nor when LBH first emerged. It stands to reason, however, that the language changed when the literate elite were forcibly

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[17] The earliest manifestation of full-blown LBH may be found in the Nehemiah memoir. According to Talshir LBH is essentially literary Hebrew as it developed in the Babylonian diaspora, see David Talshir, "The Habitat and History of Hebrew during the Second Temple Period," *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology* (ed. Ian Young; JSOTSup 369; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 251–75.

[18] See below for examples.

[19] See e.g. Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (HSS 29; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 116.

[20] For the meager remains from this period, see Gordon J. Hamilton, "Paleo-Hebrew Texts and Scripts of the Persian Period," *"An Eye for Form": Epigraphic Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. Jo Ann Hackett and Walter E. Aufrecht; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 253–90.

removed from their home country and settled among other populations in Babylonia. Some form of confirmation of this change may be found in biblical literature itself. The Hebrew of books situated in the exilic period—Jeremiah (partly), **<30>** Ezekiel, Lamentations, Haggai and Zechariah—clearly differs from CBH along diachronic lines without reflecting the thorough transformation attested in LBH. Hebraists have termed the language of these books "Transitional Biblical Hebrew" or TBH.[21] TBH has few if any distinctive features, it is characterized rather by a mix of CBH and LBH elements: classical features that will later fall from use set TBH apart from LBH, and innovations that become more common in LBH set it apart from CBH. Although it cannot be accepted as a given that these books were written in the time they relate to, the fact that TBH comes between CBH and LBH is surely significant.

In conclusion, although we cannot set demarcation lines in too definitive a manner, the data suggest that CBH is at home in the monarchic period and LBH in the late Persian period, with TBH coming between the two. This rough chronology is a matter of consensus among knowledgeable Hebraists.[22]

Linguistic dating

Linguistic dating exploits the diachronic analysis of Hebrew in order to date textual units or layers. Scholars try to relate writings that are not part of the core-set of CBH or LBH texts to either corpus. Hurvitz showed in his doctoral thesis that a number of Psalms exhibit such a density of LBH features that they have to be considered to reflect the Persian period.[23] Dobbs-Allsopp did something similar for Song of Songs.[24]

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[21] See e.g. on Jeremiah, Aaron Hornkohl, *Ancient Hebrew Periodization and the Language of the Book of Jeremiah. The Case for a Sixth-Century Date of Composition* (SSLL 74; Leiden: Brill, 2013); on Ezekiel, Mark Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition. The Language of the Book of Ezekiel* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1990); on Lamentations, F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Lamentations," *JANES* 26 (1998): 1-36.

[22] See e.g. A. Hornkohl, "Biblical Hebrew: Periodization," *EHLL* 1, 315-325. See also the recent collection of studies: *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew* (ed. Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé, Ziony Zevit; Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

[23] Avi Hurvitz, *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew: A Study in Post-Exilic Hebrew and its Implications for the Dating of Psalms* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1972).

[24] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Late Linguistic Features in the Song of Songs," in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs / Perspektiven der Hoheliedauslegung* (ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn; BZAW 346; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 27–77.

Textual units within the CBH and LBH corpora are dated to the time of the respective chronolects by default.[25] All other things being equal, a section of the Enneateuch will be pre-exilic or at most early exilic; any part of **<31>** the LBH corpus will be from the fifth century BCE or later. But there could be exceptions. Certain sections, or certain strata, in either corpus may have been composed at a different date than the surrounding context. Some linguistically literate scholars nevertheless argue that parts of the CBH corpus are not really written in CBH, or—more rarely—parts of the LBH corpus not in LBH. Alexander Rofé argued that Gen 24 is much later than most of the rest of the Abraham story and buttressed his demonstration with linguistic arguments.[26] Gili Kugler tried to show that Neh 9 could be much earlier than the rest of the book, and that the language of the chapter would allow such a dating.[27]

Consequently, the options with regard to the linguistic dating of the Joseph story are the following: does the story fully belong to CBH, continuing its typical features and eschewing any typical LBH features? Or does the language of the story differ from the rest of the CBH corpus and align with LBH to a significant extent?[28]

The language of the Joseph story

The language of the Joseph story is CBH as can be established with a wealth of arguments. Nevertheless, there are some complications: a small amount of late words do not fit the linguistic cast of the story, and one chapter exhibits puzzling instances of late syntax. The discussion will proceed from vocabulary to syntax and address the difficult points as they arise.

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[25] Richard Wright, *Linguistic Evidence for the Pre-Exilic Date of the Yahwistic Source* (LHBOTS 419; London: T&T Clark, 2005).

[26] Alexander Rofé, "An Enquiry into the Betrothal of Rebekah," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Erhard Blum, Christian Macholz, and Ekkehard W. Stegemann; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 27–39.

[27] Gili Kugler, "Present Affliction Affects the Representation of the Past: An Alternative Dating of the Levitical Prayer in Nehemiah 9," *VT* 63 (2013): 605-626.

[28] Linguistic arguments played a role in Redford's late dating of the Joseph story, see Donald Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph* (VTSup, 20; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 54-65, 187-253. For criticism of his methodology, see Wright, *Linguistic Evidence,* 3.

<center>Vocabulary and phraseology</center>

The vocabulary of the Joseph story is mostly representative of CBH. Many words in the story are paralleled in CBH and prophetic texts, but unattested in LBH, e.g. זְקֻנִים "old age," פַּסִּים "coloured (?)," בָּר "grain," שבר II "to sell grain." In some cases it is possible to establish a precise opposition: "end" is קֵץ in Gen 41:1, as generally in CBH, and not סוֹף as it is four times in LBH; a "male goat" is שְׂעִיר עִזִּים in Gen 37:31, as it is throughout CBH, while **<32>** in LBH, this animal is usually referred to with the noun צָפִיר: צְפִיר־הָעִזִּים, Dan 8:5, 8 (cf. also Ezra 8:35; 2 Chron 29:21); and "fine linen" is שֵׁשׁ in Gen 41:42 as elsewhere in the CBH corpus, while in LBH the same meaning is expressed with בּוּץ.[29] Admittedly, the last two examples lean heavily on the idea that the language of the Priestly Source, P, is CBH.[30] The Joseph story has a rich vocabulary and uses several words that are not found elsewhere in the bible: e.g. נְכֹאת and לֹט, both designating types of spices, בֵּית־הַסֹּהַר "prison," פָּתַר and פִּתָּרוֹן "to interpret" and "interpretation" and אַמְתַּחַת "sack," as well as a number of *hapax legomena*: e.g. שׂחט "to squeeze," חֹרִי "white bread," and the expression עַל־פִּיךָ יִשַּׁק whose precise meaning is not clear.

The Phraseology of the Joseph story, too, is redolent of CBH. The expression חֵי פַרְעֹה "by the life of Pharaoh" (Gen 42:15, 16) corresponds to classical models. Oaths by the life of a human being (חֵי) or God (חַי) are frequent in CBH and in some prophetic books, occurring in all over 50 times. The oath by the life of YHWH is also attested, four times, in Judean inscriptions (e.g. Lachish 3:9 חיהוה; 6:12 חי·יהוה). In contrast, the phrase "by the life of X" is attested only once in LBH, in 2 Chron 18:13, where it was taken over from the parallel in 1 Kgs 22:14. The polite formula of address בִּי אֲדֹנִי "please my lord" (Gen 43:20; 44:18) is found 12 times in CBH (בִּי אֲדֹנִי when addressed to humans, בִּי אֲדֹנָי when addressed to God),

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[29] This is a classic example of lexical differences between CBH and LBH, see Avi Hurvitz, "The Usage of שׁשׁ and בוץ in the Bible and Its Implication for the Date of P," *HTR* 60 (1967): 117–21. The variation was already noted by Gesenius.

[30] See Frederick W. Knobloch, "Linen and the Linguistic Dating of P," in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay* (ed. Nili S. Fox et al.; Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 459-474.

but nowhere else.[31] And the phrase הַפַּעַם "this time, now" (Gen 46:30) is attested 12 times in CBH, but nowhere else.

Nevertheless, the Joseph story notoriously contains a few late words, notably שַׁלִּיט "ruling, ruler" (Gen 42:6), and מָזוֹן "food" (Gen 45:23).

- The root שלט "to govern, be in power" is well known from Aramaic, but in the bible, apart from Gen 42:6, it occurs exclusively in the LBH corpus: Eccl, Esth, Neh, and Ps 119, one of the Psalms Hurvitz dated to the LBH period.[32] Although a noun *šlyṭ* is attested in Ugaritic, in Hebrew it must be considered a late loanword from Aramaic. **<33>** In CBH, "to govern, be in power" is משל. The meaning required in Gen 42:6 would in CBH be expressed with the active participle מֹשֵׁל.

- Although מָזוֹן is rare in the Hebrew Bible, there is little doubt that it represents LBH. The only other biblical occurrence is in 2 Chron 11:23. The word is found also in QH (4Q521 f5i+6:7) and very often in Mishnaic Hebrew (e.g. Ber. 3:3, 4). It is a loanword from Aramaic (cf. Dan 4:9, 18). The equivalent in CBH is אֹכֶל or simply לֶחֶם.

Other possibly late words are צְנֻמוֹת "withered" in Gen 41:23 and the verb טען "to load (a donkey)" in Gen 45:17. Both are *hapax legomena* in Biblical Hebrew, and both are better-known from Aramaic.[33] They may therefore be late loanwords in Biblical Hebrew.[34] But they may equally well be rare CBH words that happen to have a cognate in Aramaic. Because the distributional criterion is inoperative one cannot be certain.

Two LBH words, each used once only, do not suffice to overturn the impression that the vocabulary of the Joseph story is CBH. The criterion of accumulation is not met. How then shall we deal with the few instances of late words? The most probably suggestion is that they reflect *ad hoc* updating or modernization by Persian-period scribes. Such occasional updating of the vocabulary is known particularly from the Samaritan Pentateuch and the great

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[31] See Mats Eskhult, "Markers of Text Type in Biblical Hebrew from a Diachronic Perspective," in *Hamlet on a Hill. Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. M. F. J. Baasten and W. Th. Van Peursen; OLA 118; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 153-164, on 158.

[32] Hurvitz, *Transition Period*, 130-152.

[33] The Hebrew cognate of טען may be צען Isa 33:20. But there are other cases where both the Aramaizing root and the expected Hebrew root co-exist in the Hebrew lexicon (e.g. נטר and נצר).

[34] Note that טען is attested in Mishnaic Hebrew.

Isaiah Scroll, but there are some cases in the Masoretic Text too. Thus in 1 Sam 20:31, the LBH word מַלְכוּת "kingdom" is revealed as a secondary modernization when one compares it to the text of 4QSam^b, which has the expected CBH equivalent ממלכה. In Gen 42:6 and 45:23 there is no solid textual evidence of this kind. But the literary context of these verses does give support to the idea that שַׁלִּיט and מָזוֹן are secondary:

— As was remarked above, the CBH equivalent of שַׁלִּיט is מֹשֵׁל "ruling, ruler." While the root שלט occurs only once, the root משׁל recurs several times in the Joseph story:

וְיוֹסֵף הוּא הַשַּׁלִּיט עַל־הָאָרֶץ 42:6
Now Joseph was governor over the land.

מֹשֵׁל בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם 45:8
(God has made me…) ruler over all the land of Egypt

מֹשֵׁל בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם 45:26
(And they told Jacob, "Joseph is still alive! He is even) ruler over all the land of Egypt."

<34> The motif of Joseph's rule in these verses can further be connected to the explanation of one of his dreams:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו הֲמָלֹךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם־מָשׁוֹל תִּמְשֹׁל בָּנוּ Gen 37:8
His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to rule over us?"

Joseph's unexpected dominion is an overarching theme in the story. As is habitual in biblical narrative, it is expressed with a *Leitwort.* In light of all this, one expects the root משׁל in 42:6. — Similarly, the verse using the word מָזוֹן follows up on two verses that use a good CBH word in the same meaning. In 42:25 and 45:21 Joseph gives his brothers "provisions for the journey (צֵדָה לַדָּרֶךְ)," while in 45:23 he sends his father "ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and *provision for his father on the journey* (מָזוֹן לְאָבִיו לַדָּרֶךְ)."[35] One expects the same word in v. 23 as in v. 21.

Other solutions could be imagined: perhaps the verses or the sections in which the LBH words occur are later additions to the story. Or perhaps the use of these words is due to a textual error.[36] Whatever explanation one adopts, the notion that two LBH words indicate a late date for the entire story is implausible.

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[35] Note that the NRSV actually uses the same equivalent to translate the two words.

[36] Note that מָזוֹן is not represented in the Septuagint of Gen 45:23.

<center>Grammar</center>

The grammar of the Joseph story establishes its CBH character even more strongly than the vocabulary. The evidence is diverse and plentiful. It will be presented here in condensed form.

a) Morphology

1. אָנֹכִי (37:16; 43:9; 46:3, 4; 47:30; 48:21; 50:5, 21, 24)

CBH uses both אֲנִי and אָנֹכִי for "I." Both forms are attested also in Judean inscriptions. The longer form gradually falls from use in later phases of the language. In the LBH corpus, אָנֹכִי occurs only three times.[37]

2. Paragogic nun (43:32; 44:1 יוּכְלוּן; 44:23 תֹּסְפוּן)

Paragogic *nun* attached to forms of the prefix conjugation that end on a long vowel occur over 120 times in CBH but hardly ever in LBH.[38]

<35> b) Morphosyntax

3. Iterative-habitual *weqatal* (37:3;[39] 47:22)

As was stated above, iterative *weqatal* in past-tense contexts occurs some 150 times in CBH, but virtually never in LBH, where the participle and *yiqtol* are used instead.[40]

4. Infinitive construct without *lamed* in object clauses (37:4, 5, 8; 44:1; 48:11)

In BH of all periods, the infinitive construct is used often in direct dependence on another verb. Most often such an infinitive is prefixed with the preposition לְ. In CBH, the preposition may also be lacking, but in LBH this type of syntax is not attested.[41] A clause like וַיּוֹסִפוּ עוֹד

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[37] In Qumran Hebrew, the long form is rare as well, in Mishnaic Hebrew it is not attested.

[38] Twice in Chronicles taken from parallel in Kings: 2 Chr 6:26; 7:19. Twice in a non-parallel passages 2 Chr 19:9, 10 (both times כֹּה תַעֲשׂוּן).

[39] The iterative nuance in this verse is not entirely certain, but it seems probable when one compares 1 Sam 2:19.

[40] Joosten, "Iterative WEQATAL."

[41] See Takamitsu Muraoka, "An Approach to the Morphosyntax and Syntax of Qumran Hebrew," in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Se Scrolls and Ben Sira.*

שָׂנֹא אֹתוֹ (Gen 37:5) would in LBH always be constructed with לִשְׂנֹא. The infinitive without *lamed* is attested once in the Judean inscriptions (Lach 3:8-9 לא·ידעתה·קרא "you can't read").

5. Paronomastic infinitive (37:8, 10, 33; 40:15; 43:7, 7, 20; 44:5, 15, 28; 46:4; 50:24-25)
The combination of an infinitive absolute with a finite form of the same verb is typical for CBH, being attested almost 300 times. The usage is found also in Judean inscriptions.[42] In LBH, this feature has not disappeared completely: the Chronicler adopted it a few times from his source text: 1 Chron 1:17, 24;[43] 2 Chron 18:27, and it is used freely in 1 Chron 4:10; 2 Chron 32:13 (but cf. 2 Kgs 18:33); Esth 4:14; 6:13. There is nevertheless a huge statistic disparity. In the thirteen chapters of the Joseph story alone this feature occurs twice as often as in the entire LBH corpus.

6. Imperative continued with *weqatal* (44:4; 45:9; 47:29; 50:25)
Composite commands consisting of an imperative and a second person *weqatal* form occur some 200 times in CBH, and are attested also in Judean inscriptions (Arad 17:1-4). But they are rare in LBH.[44]

<36> 7. *He locale* with a construct state (42:29; 43:17, 24; 44:14; 45:17; 46:1; 46:28; 47:14; 50:13)
The use of the *he locale* with a construct state is found nine times in the Joseph story, e.g.:

Gen 43:17 וַיָּבֵא הָאִישׁ אֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף
The man brought the men to Joseph's house.

This feature occurs some thirty times in CBH.[45] The feature is also found in Judahite inscriptions:

Arad 17:1-2 [ו]עת בא ביתה·אלישב

(ed. Takamitsu Muraoka and John F. Elwolde; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 193–214, in particular 194-195 (with references to earlier studies).

[42] Mur 1:1 [ש]לֹח·שלחת "sending I have sent."

[43] In 2 Sam 24:17 the MT does not have an infinitive absolute, but see 4QSamᵃ and the Septuagint.

[44] The LBH evidence is limited to six cases in Chronicles, three of which are adopted from Samuel-Kings. Not dependent on the parallel: 1 Chr 14:10; 15:12; 2 Chr 18:33; dependent on the parallel: 1 Chr 14:14 (2 Sam 5:23); 1 Chr 17:4 (2 Sam 7:5); 1 Chr 21:10 (2 Sam 24:12).

[45] See e.g. Gen 11:31; 28:2, 5; Exod 8:20. The feature is not attested in Transitional BH.

And now, go into the house of Elyashiv.

The feature is never found in LBH, where the *he locale* is generally somewhat rare.

The occurrence in the Arad letter establishes that the *he locale* could be used with a construct state in the official Hebrew of the early sixth century BCE. The lack of the feature in LBH shows that at the latest by the late Persian period it had disappeared from the language.

8. The particle נָא attached to other particles (אִם 47:29, 50:4; אַל 47:29)

In CBH the particle נָא is both frequent, occurring 272 times, and flexible. Notably it can follow other particles, and even once a noun. The combination אִם־נָא is found nine times in CBH—always in the locution אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ "please"—but nowhere else; אַל־נָא is attested 18 times in CBH, and once each in Jeremiah, Jonah and Job. Neither combination is found in LBH. In LBH נָא is attached only to volitive verbal forms (18 times).

c) Particles

Many particles of CBH, simple and composite, disappear from the later history of the language. The data will be presented in the form of a table indicating only the main evidence: occurrences in the Joseph story, number of occurrences in the Bible as a whole (BH),[46] in CBH, LBH, and attestations in Judean inscriptions: **<37>**

	Joseph story	BH	CBH	LBH	Inscriptions
טֶרֶם	37:18; 41:50; 45:28	56	27	0	Arad 5:12
מֵאָז	39:5	19	6	0	Lach 3:7
בלעדי	41:16, 44	17	8	0	–
פֶּן	42:4; 44:34	125	85	1[47]	Arad 24:16
לִקְרַאת	46:29	121	103	5[48]	Siloam 1:4
אוּלָם	48:19	19	8	0	–
בְּעוֹד	48:7; 40:13, 19	20	8	0	Siloam 1:2

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[46] This number includes instances in books that do not belong to either CBH or LBH. Some of these are difficult to date (e.g. Psalms), some of them are transitional (see above, note 21).

[47] 1 Chr 10:4, a parallel passage.

[48] All in Chronicles and adopted from the parallel in Samuel-Kings: 1 Chr 19:5, 10, 11, 17; 2 Chr 35:20.

בִּגְלַל	39:5	10	7	0	–

It is not always easy to define the LBH equivalent of these CBH particles. Consequently, the claim may be made that some of them are missing in LBH simply because the need to use them didn't arise. However, such a claim could not be made for all these particles at once. In aggregate, their attestation in CBH and absence in LBH is eloquent testimony to a momentous transformation in literary Hebrew. Between the CBH period and the time the LBH books were written the language system changed in crucial ways.

<div align="center">*</div>

The grammatical evidence leaves no doubt that the bulk of the Joseph story is written in pure CBH. In line with what was said above, this indicates a date in the monarchic period or shortly after.

The language of the Joseph story exhibits several features that are absent from LBH, but attested in Judean inscriptions of the sixth to eighth centuries BCE. As was pointed out above, the main linguistic evidence for the monarchic date of CBH is provided by such isoglosses with inscriptional Hebrew. Even if there were no CBH corpus beyond the Joseph story, these features by themselves would suggest a monarchic date for the story.

Excursus: Grammatical features that are typologically late but not limited to LBH

> Gen 41:11 וַנַּחַלְמָה חֲלוֹם בְּלַיְלָה אֶחָד אֲנִי וָהוּא
> We dreamed on the same night, he and I.

A "pseudo-cohortative" combines with strong *waw* to express the preterit also in 43:21. As has often been observed, such forms are typologically late. *Wayyiqtol* forms in principle incorporate the short form of the prefix conjugation.[49] The expected form for the first person is represented by third <38> weak forms such as וָאֵרֶא and וַנֵּפֶן . The addition of the cohortative ending is due to assimilation of the *wayyiqtol* paradigm to the volitive paradigm. Consequently, it has sometimes been argued that the occurrence of such forms in the Joseph

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[49] See Wright, *Linguistic Evidence*, 22-26. Wright presents the evidence well but in building his argument he ignores the cases of the pseudo-cohortative in CBH: he prefers simply to point out that there are no instances in J.

story indicates a date in the LBH period. In LBH, pseudo-cohortative *wayyiqtol* forms are indeed relatively frequent (47 occurrences). The inference is nevertheless unsound because the feature is also fairly well attested in the CBH corpus: Gen 32:6; Num 8:19; Josh 24:8; Jud 6:9, 10; 10:12; 12:3; 1 Sam 2:28; 2 Sam 4:10; 7:9; 12:8.[50] One might argue that all these verses are late, but historical linguistics could not be invoked to strengthen that view. Based on its distribution, the form seems to have been already coming into the language in the CBH period. With regard to linguistic typology, innovations of this type can occur at any time, they are not due to influence from Aramaic or other datable factors.

The special case of Genesis 39

The Joseph story is written in pure CBH. This conclusion formulated at the end of the previous section applies to the entire story, except one chapter. As we will see presently, Gen 39 exhibits features of later language.

a) The syntax of the participle

In two or three verses of the Joseph story, the predicative participle is used in a way that is untypical of CBH:

Gen 39:22-23

וַיִּתֵּן שַׂר בֵּית־הַסֹּהַר בְּיַד־יוֹסֵף אֵת כָּל־הָאֲסִירִם אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית הַסֹּהַר וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עֹשִׂים שָׁם הוּא הָיָה עֹשֶׂה:
אֵין שַׂר בֵּית־הַסֹּהַר רֹאֶה אֶת־כָּל־מְאוּמָה בְּיָדוֹ בַּאֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אִתּוֹ וַאֲשֶׁר־הוּא עֹשֶׂה יְהוָה מַצְלִיחַ:

[22]The chief jailer committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. [23]The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.[51]

<39> In CBH the predicative participle is an integral part of the verbal system, but its real home is in direct speech.[52] In CBH narrative the predicative participle is practically limited to

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[50] Some of these verses may indeed be late. Num 8:19 is a late priestly text and Jud 6:9-10 are not reflected in 4QJudgᵃ. But some of the other verses are *bona fide* CBH: Jacob story, Jephtah, Saul-David story. The form is attested mostly in speeches of different kinds, but this simply reflects the fact that first person forms are not expected in straight narrative.

[51] The same type of syntax is found in Gen 39:3.

[52] See Jan Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew: A New Synthesis Elaborated on the Basis of Classical Prose* (JBS 10; Jerusalem: Simor, 2012), 229-260.

various types of readily recognizable subordinate clause: circumstantial, relative, object clause. In contrast, in the verses quoted the participle occurs in main clauses in narrative. In addition, it refers to recurrent processes, and in v. 23a it occurs in a negated clause in a past-tense time frame. All these uses are vanishingly rare in CBH.[53] In pure CBH, these verses would presumably have been formulated with *yiqtol* and *weqatal.* In LBH, however, these uses of the participle are normal.[54]

b) Relative אֲשֶׁר followed by יֵשׁ

The combination of אֲשֶׁר and יֵשׁ is found in Gen 39:5 (twice), 8:

Gen 39:8 וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יֶשׁ־לֹו נָתַן בְּיָדִי
and he has put everything that he has in my hand

This type of syntax is not found elsewhere in CBH. It is attested, however, one time each in Jonah and Qoheleth:[55]

Jon 4:11 נִינְוֵה הָעִיר הַגְּדֹולָה אֲשֶׁר יֶשׁ־בָּהּ הַרְבֵּה מִשְׁתֵּים־עֶשְׂרֵה רִבֹּו
…Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand…

Although Jonah is not generally considered to be part of the LBH corpus, it exhibits many LBH features.[56] The syntagm אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ also occurs in Eccl 4:9, and then more frequently in QH (e.g. 1QS 6:12; 4Q266 f6 i:8; 4Q 274 f3 ii:3; 11QT 49:15; 52:17; 58:3). With שֶׁ instead of אֲשֶׁר, it is widely attested in Mishnaic Hebrew (e.g. Peah 8:9). Since a similar combination of the relative and existential particles is known from Aramaic (e.g. Dan 2:30), the Hebrew syntagm may well be a "calque" from that language.

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[53] Joosten, *Verbal System,* 127 note 6; 247; 394-396.

[54] Joosten, *Verbal System,* 394-396, participle in main clause in narrative: Esth 9:3-4; Dan 8:3; 9:21; Ezr 3:12-13; Neh 8:7, 11; 2 Chr 30:16; iterative processes: Esth 2:11, 14; 4:3; 8:17; 9:19; Neh 4:10, 11, 12, 15; 5:2-4; 6:9, 17; 9:3; 12:47; 1 Chr 12:40-41; 15:24; 16:5; 23:5; 2 Chr 3:11-12; 4:3; 9:14, 24, 28; 17:11; 30:21; 32:23; 33:17; negated: Esth 2:20; Neh 4:17; 13:24.

[55] Martin F. J.Baasten, "Existential Clauses in Qumran Hebrew," in *Diggers at the Well* (above note 41), 1-11, on 3.

[56] Although Gesenius classified Jonah with LBH, he has not been followed in this by most other Hebraists. Nevertheless, Jonah has many late linguistic features. See George M. Landes, "Linguistic Criteria and the Date of the Book of Jonah," *ErIsr* 16 (1982): *147–*170.

In CBH, nominal clauses introduced by the relative particle are never, except in the two verses in Gen 39, constructed with שֶׁ. In CBH, "everything **<40>** that he has" is always כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לֹו (Gen 12:20; 13:1; 24:2 and 15 more times in CBH). The syntax of Gen 39:5, 8 clearly aligns with LBH. It is interesting to note that the normal CBH syntax is attested several times within the Joseph story, once in Gen 39 itself (v. 6) and five more times in later chapters: 45:10, 11; 46: 1, 32; 47:1.

c) Relative מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר "where"

Gen 39:20 וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ אֶל־בֵּית הַסֹּהַר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אֲסִירֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲסוּרִים
And he put him into prison where the king's prisoners were confined.

The syntagm מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר functions here in way that is uncommon in BH.[57] The syntax exhibited in this verse finds a precise parallel only in the book of Esther:

Esth 4:3 וּבְכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מַגִּיעַ אֵבֶל גָּדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים

Scholars have proposed to view these cases as calques of Aramaic אֲתַר דִּי (see e.g. Ezra 6:3). If this analysis is correct, the late character of the syntagm would be established. However, since the nature and the development of the relative clause in Biblical Hebrew is not entirely understood, it is hard to be certain.

These late features cannot be explained as punctual modernizations in the same way as the late word שַׁלִּיט and מָזוֹן discussed above. The concentration in a single chapter is hardly due to chance. Note that the first two features are used several times, in multiple verses. It would be preferable to find a scenario that accounts for the occurrence of these features in this precise chapter.

A possible way to go would be to postulate that Gen 39 was added to the Joseph story secondarily and at a later date. Several exegetes have suggested that Gen 39 as a whole is a late supplement.[58] The linguistic evidence could be seen as supporting that suggestion. It is to be noted, however, that Gen 39 also contains some marked CBH features. Above, the composite particles מֵאָז and בִּגְלַל in v. 5 were mentioned, and as was seen in the present

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[57] Note that שם is lacking in the relative clause (unlike Gen 40:3).

[58] See references in Blum and Weingart, "Joseph Story," 510 note 35.

section, Gen 39 uses both כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לֹו and וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יֶשׁ־לֹו. The mixture of CBH and LBH elements may be indicative of Transitional BH. The chapter could then be a late supplement composed during the Babylonian or early Persian period.

Alternatively, the late syntax may reflect later rewriting of an early text. The entire Joseph story is close to wisdom literature, as has been remarked **<41>** by many. The story on Joseph and Potiphar's wife is particularly close to sections in Prov 1-9 warning against the "foreign woman." Perhaps then Gen 39, although it was an original part of the Joseph story, also led a life independently as an *exemplum* used in wisdom teaching. This independent use, which would have been mostly in oral form, could have affected the language of the chapter. In a later stage, the oral innovations would have been incorporated to some extent into the written version. This scenario may seem excessively speculative, but it has the advantage of explaining the facts well. The LBH features in Gen 39 would not be due to punctual updating at the hand of scribes, as in the case of שַׁלִּיט and מָזֹון, but to a more organic process of modernization in oral transmission.

Conclusions

The diachronic approach to biblical Hebrew may seem like so much alchemy to the uninitiated. It reposes nevertheless on over two hundred years of patient research and discussion. Some of the most prominent Hebraists in modern history—Wilhelm Gesenius, Samuel R. Driver, E.Y. Kutscher—have been among its champions, and it is today accepted by a large majority of specialists of biblical Hebrew. Nor are its basic principles hard to grasp. The narrative prose of the Enneateuch differs in obvious and measurable ways from the narrative prose of Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel 1. Two corpora, each representing a distinct chronolect, clearly stand out. Moreover, the linguistic "pegging" of the earlier corpus to the pre-exilic period and that of the later corpus to Second Temple times is straightforward. The chronological implications for the contents of these corpora are self-evident. Linguistic dating is practised in other disciplines dealing with undated texts.[59] And it corresponds to a reality—languages evolve—that surrounds biblical scholars at every step in

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[59] See e.g. on the importance of linguistic arguments in dating Beowulf: *The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment* (ed. Leonard Neidorf; Anglo-Saxon Studies 24 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014).

their research: William Robertson Smith does not write the same kind of English as John Barton, and Bernd Janowski's German differs from that of Julius Wellhausen.[60]

<42> The alignment of the language of the Joseph story with Classical Biblical Hebrew is confirmed by many distinctive features used in a large amount of passages throughout the story. There are indeed a handful of later features, but they do not change the global picture: they are too rare to make a difference, and they stand isolated within the Joseph story itself. The late features are to be attributed to the vicissitudes of oral/written transmission. But the classical features indicate that the Joseph story was created in the monarchic period. If the story had been created out of whole cloth in the Babylonian, Persian, or Hellenistic period, its language would have looked very different. If it had been wholly or partly rewritten, or extensively supplemented, or if scribes had modernized its language in these later periods, these processes should have left traces in the language—as, arguably, they do in the few passages where late elements are found (Gen 42:6; 45:23; 39:3, 5, 8, 20, 22-23).

Against the linguistic approach to dating, several biblical scholars have recently invoked the possibility of archaising composition: can one not imagine that a later author, during the exilic or postexilic period, was nevertheless capable of producing perfect or near-perfect classical prose?[61] The claim is a mere postulate. No biblical writing that is shown by its subject matter to belong to the sixth century or later is free of substantial amounts of late linguistic elements. The claim is also much less likely than one imagines.[62] Language does not spring from the creative genius of an author, but from the speech community to which the author belongs; it is, in Ferdinand de Saussure's words, a social contract. The only way an

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[60] A stray example: Julius Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci übersetzt und erklärt* (second edition; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1909), 72 (on Mark 9:14): "Nachdem der Meister sich weggegeben, versuchen sich seine Jünger am Geisterbannen, aber vergeblich. Sie kommen an einander darüber, woran die Schuld des Miserfolges (*sic*) liege und wer die Schuld trage." There are several features here that one will look for in vain in German writing of the early 2000s. The phrase "sie kommen an einander" gets three hits on Google, one to a book from 1817, another to a book of 1827 and a third one to the present passage of Wellhausen.

[61] See e.g. Shimon Gesundheit, "Introduction: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Linguistic Dating," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch. Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America* (ed. by Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, and Konrad Schmid; FAT 111; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 295–302.

[62] See Frank H. Polak, "Storytelling and Redaction. Varieties of Language Usage in the Exodus Narrative," *Formation of the Pentateuch*, 449–454.

author from the sixth century or later would have been able to write classical Hebrew is through imitation of classical models. Historical instances of such artificial imitation of literature of a different age are indeed attested, but they are almost never successful. At the heyday of Atticism, when a whole school of Greek writers had made it their business to write in the pure Attic of the classical period, Lucian mocks his contemporaries for the details they get wrong.[63] Today **<43>** too archaising writing is very popular. In his series *Fortune de France* written between 1977 and 2003, the author Robert Merle purports to recreate the language of sixteenth-century France. This mostly comes down to using a number of rarefied words, however, such as "dextre" instead of "droite" ("right hand"). No Romanist would ever mistake a page of one of Merle's novels for a piece of authentic early modern literature. There are similar examples in other modern languages. The notion that the author of the Joseph story was able to write twelve long chapters, using all the right forms and particles of classical Hebrew (and avoiding all late elements) in the Persian period is far-fetched in the extreme.

As was mentioned in the first part of this paper, linguistic dating is approximate. The date *ad quem* of the story is hard to define. Historical linguistics cannot prove that the Joseph story was written before 587. The literary language practiced in the Judean state did not all of a sudden die out at the beginning of the sixth century. If there were strong other reasons to date the story to the first half of the sixth century, the linguistic approach could not be fielded against this. But the data can only be stretched so far. The further one strays from the monarchic period, the less likely the dating becomes.

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[63] "What is most ridiculous of all is that although you want to be more than Attic and have meticulously shaped your diction after the most antiquated pattern, some (or rather, most) of the expressions which you intermingle with what you say are such that even a boy just beginning school would not fail to know them." *Lexiphanes* in A. M. Harmon, ed. and transl., *Lucian* V (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 325; (Greek text 324). I thank Eleanor Dickey for helping me find this passage in Lucian.