Character evaluation in biblical Hebrew narrative:
Toward a literary and theological understanding
of the *'ăsher*-verb formula

by

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Declaration

I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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Abstract

Title: Character evaluation in biblical Hebrew narrative: Toward a

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The recently uncovered *'ăsher*-verb formula is so named because of its consistently repetitive structure of "*'ăsher* (the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר) + verb" combinations that function as the backbone of the unique linguistic technique. The formula is a conventionalized narratological feature in biblical Hebrew that occurs in twelve Old Testament pericopes, in the context of character evaluation, and it contributes to the careful reader's literary and theological understanding of the text, and the subject character, in multiple ways. Although a small number of scholars have loosely hinted at the presence of the repeated use of אֲשֶׁר in some of the texts, the existence of the specific literary formulaic technique has yet to be

either recognized or articulated in a comprehensive study.

The formula occurs within the following four text-types: Behavioural epitaph, Narrative historical, Behavioural judgment and Narrative future. Within each literary context, the presence of either single or multiple *'ăsher*-verb combinations provides a clearer understanding of the narrator's rationale for presenting a particular character as incomparable. The *'ăsher*-verb formula reflects a remarkably consistent literary structure, and as such, the careful reader of the pericope can begin to anticipate and discern its presence in the Hebrew text. After the initial identification of the subject, there is the placement of either a single or repeated subordinate אשר immediately followed by a verb (either perfective or imperfective, dependant upon the context) that qualifies or explains the narrator's observation about the subject character. In addition, the formula often employs one of the three formal textual indicators and/or further revision through the use of repeated prepositions. In essence, the entire *'ăsher*-verb formula, taken as an intrinsic literary unit, often functions adjectively in relationship to the previously identified subject.

The *'ăsher*-verb formula is a sophisticated linguistic tool that sheds additional light on the literary skill, artistry and narrative intention of the ancient biblical writers. Given the contexts in which is it used, it is logical to conclude that the

'ăsher-verb formula is integral to the identification of the "final word", from the narrator's point of view, of the subject at hand. More often than not, it is a linguistic and theological formula of definitiveness, in terms of character evaluation.

Key terms

'ăsher – the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר, often translated as "whom", "that", "which", or "whose".

Behavioural epitaph – the text-type in which the participant's life is given an overall final evaluation.

Behavioural judgment – the text-type in which the participant will experience particular events because of past actions.

Character evaluation / characterization – how the narrator portrays the motives, nature, and persona of a biblical character.

Final-text exegesis – reading a text "as it is", assuming that it has intentional and inherent literary unity.

Formula – a conventionalized technique, used in the context of the original writers and readers, of expressing character evaluation.

Incomparability – the identification of specific characteristics that suggest the uniqueness or distinctiveness of a particular character in a narrative.

Literary analysis – the observation and identification of the "story" elements of a narrative, such as plot changes, character development, speech types, and foreshadowing.

Narrative future – the text-type which portrays the participant's stated desire for a

future event or development.

Narrative historical – the text-type in which the participant is evaluated in light of a specific past action or actions.

Narrator – the literary story-teller behind any given text, also referred to as the "author".

Structural analysis – the observation and identification of specific syntactical and stylistic elements of a text, such as repetition, inclusion and, chiasm.

Text-linguistics – the analysis of a language in order to discern and describe the observable patterns at a text level, also known as "discourse analysis".

Theology – the reading of a text with the goal to better understand the nature and actions of God, achieve through the application of critical study.

Orthography

Hebrew	English		Hebrew	English
א	ʾ		ַ	a
ב	b		ָ	ā
ג	g		ֶ	e
ד	d		ֵ	ē
ה	h		ׇ	o
ו	w		ֻ	u
ז	z		ֹ	ō
ח	ch		ֲ	ă
ט	ṭ		ֳ	ŏ
י	y		ְ	ĕ
כ	k			
ל	l			
מ	m			
נ	n			
ס	ṣ			
ע	ʿ			
פ	p			
צ	ts			
ק	q			
ר	r			
שׂ	s			
שׁ	sh			
ת	t			

1   Introduction

1.1   Actuality and theological significance

Over the years, careful biblical scholarship has recognized and suggested many inherent literary techniques within the Hebrew Bible (such as parallelism, chiasm, and inclusio), that have provided a progressively clearer understanding of the biblical text. However, the *'ăsher*-verb formula, the subject of this present study, has been unnoticed to this point in the history and development of biblical research, specifically within the general disciplines of narrative and literary criticism.

The recently uncovered *'ăsher*-verb formula is so named because of its consistently repetitive structure of "*'ăsher* (the relative pronoun אשר) + verb" combinations that function as the backbone of the linguistic technique. As is seen throughout this study, although a handful of scholars have loosely hinted at the presence of the repeated use of אשר in some of the texts,[1] no published study has yet recognized or articulated the existence of the conventionalized literary and theological formulaic technique.   Through this study's analysis of the narratological formula and its subsequent addition to the critical toolbox of the

modern scholar, a deeper appreciation of biblical narrative will be gained, and the literary and theological richness of the biblical text will be better understood and applied.

1.1.1 Introduction by way of example – Deuteronomy 34:10-12

The existence of the *'ăsher*-verb formula was briefly encountered for the first time during a study of the literary characteristics of the Hebrew phrase פנים אל־פנים, as found in Deuteronomy 34:10 (and also four other Old Testament passages).[2] One of the outcomes of the structural analysis of the pericope (which was, for all intents and purposes, a secondary element of the exploration of פנים אל־פנים), was that a picture of the repeated use of *'ăsher*-verb combinations began to emerge. Subsequently, and in part through the development of an English translation, a structural presentation of the passage was then suggested based upon both the grammatical and stylistic elements of the text. The picture that came into focus was that the specific nature of the uniqueness of Moses as presented in the Deuteronomy 34:10-12 pericope was, in fact, quite evident in the underlying Hebrew text, and was presented to the reader through the three-fold presence of the *'ăsher*-verb formula.

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1. See Westermann (1985:385) and Holladay and Hanson (1986:271).

2. See Wessner (1998:57-71). The four other passages are Gn 32:31; Ex 33:11; Jdg 6:22; Ezk 20:35.

If the narrator's assessment within Deuteronomy 34:10-12 reflected an intentional *'ăsher*-verb literary structure, then perhaps the formula was also used elsewhere[3] in similar contexts of character evaluation, or characterization.[4] Within this study, the term "character" refers primarily to a literary character within a story (that is, a narrative consists of multiple characters, plot development, etc), although the term often has the secondary meaning of personality trait, moral character, etc. However, the dual meanings sometime overlap, as the character (nature) of a character (specific individual or group) is evaluated by means of the *'ăsher*-verb formula.

1.1.1.1 Literary analysis of English translations

Most, if not all, of the popularly available English translations of the Old Testament present Deuteronomy 34:10-12 as simple and continuous prose, with no discernable structure or organization, and therefore, no clear literary or theological rationale as to *why* the narrator could conclude that there was no other prophet like Moses. In other words, a casual reader of an English translation

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3. The possibility of other instances of the *'ăsher*-verb formula was informally noted for further reference, but was not pursued at that time, as the immediate task was the evaluation of פנים־אל פנים in Old Testament literature.

4. Brown (2005:324-325) suggests that characterization provides "information about the motives, attitudes, and moral nature of characters – characterization is also a means by which

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would have no reason to suspect that the intentional and precise literary structure inherent in the underlying Hebrew text is a significant aid to more fully understanding the narrator's evaluative conclusion. For example, some of the more common English translations present the passage as follows:

Structural presentation of Deuteronomy 34:10-12 in five major English translations	
TNIV	Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt — to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.
NIV	Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt-- to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.
KJV	And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.
NASB	Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

the narrator expresses his own point of view and shapes his readers' perspective".

NRSV	Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. He was unequaled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

As can be seen in the chart of selected English translations above, without an appreciation for the underlying '*ăsher*-verb formula, each translation appears to be limited to presenting the text as one or two run-on sentences, rather than as a carefully crafted narratological evaluation.

1.1.1.2   Identification of the '*ăsher*-verb formula

The brief literary analysis[5] of Deuteronomy 34:10-12 shown below suggests that, from the narrator's perspective, Moses was a unique prophet for three distinct reasons: he was known (אשר ידע) by the Lord, he was sent (אשר שלח) by the Lord, and he accomplished (אשר עשה) his mission. Each component, initiated by the relative pronoun אשר (functioning subordinately to the main clause) and immediately followed by a perfective verb, is further expanded upon in the text by means of another linguistic key - the repeated use of the preposition ל to start each subordinate and explanatory phrase. It is this specific structure that serves as the

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5.   The purpose here is introductory – the full analysis of Dt 34:10-12 is in 2.1.

literary key which unlocks the mystery of Moses' incomparability (that is, his evaluation by the narrator) – as portrayed in Deuteronomy 34:10-12, and presented in English below:

There has not arisen again a prophet in Israel like Moses:

    (אשר) Whom the Lord knew face to face

        (ל) in all the signs and wonders

    (אשר) Whom the Lord sent

        (ל) to do in the land of Egypt (to Pharaoh and all his servants and his land)

        (ל) in all the mighty power, and

        (ל) in all the great terror

    (אשר) Who accomplished it (Moses)

        (ל) in the sight of all Israel

Within the Deuteronomy 34:10-12 pericope, once the underlying *'āsher*-verb formula is recognized and understood, the text itself (whether Hebrew or an English translation) is read with a new level of clarity, in terms of the uniqueness of Moses' prophetic role.

1.1.1.3 Selection of specific *'āsher-v*erb occurrences

In order to discern the appropriate Old Testament occurrences of the *'āsher*-verb

formula, an analysis of over 3,600 possible references[6] was undertaken. Each reference was carefully reviewed to see if there was a character being evaluated in some way, and if a specific *'ăsher*-verb combination was present and functioned as an integral part of the narrator's evaluative perspective. This process resulted in the identification of twelve candidate pericopes[7] which each appeared to exhibit an intentional literary and structural use of the *'ăsher*-verb clause with varying degrees of sophistication.

The initial textual review above also suggested that there may be a small number of specific ways by which the *'ăsher*-verb formula is introduced by the narrator, so that the careful reader may suspect that the *'ăsher*-verb formula is about to be used in the text. The narrator uses three common Hebrew phrases to lead up to the use of the formula, with a few of the passages reflecting no apparent formal indicator, as described below.

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6. Accomplished by searching for the string "verb אשר" using the Groves-Wheeler Westminster Theological Seminary Hebrew Morphology database in Bibleworks 6.0 (Hermeneutika Software) and then reading each reference in its literary context.

7. The relatively low number of occurrences is not terribly surprising, given that "Biblical characters are usually depicted through word and action. Only rarely does a narrator employ statements of direct characterization" Brown (2005:327). See also Bar-Efrat (1989:53).

1.1.1.3.1 Formal indicator: לֹא־קָם

The phrase לֹא־קָם ("there has not arisen / will not arise") occurs 33 times in the Old Testament, and is used both figuratively[8] and literally.[9] For two of the twelve *'ăsher*-verb formula pericopes, the usage of the phrase is figurative, as it applies to both the prophet Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10-12) and the king Josiah (2 Kings 23:25). In both instances, the combination of לֹא־קָם and the *'ăsher*-verb formula is used by the narrator as a means of retrospectively evaluating the overall life of the biblical character in terms of their particular function – either a *prophet*, or a *king* – and their cultic significance.

1.1.1.3.2 Formal indicator: לֹא־הָיָה

The common phrase לֹא־הָיָה ("there has not been / will not be") occurs 227 times in the Old Testament, of which four instances are associated with the *'ăsher*-verb formula (1 Kings 14:8; 21:25; 2 Kings 23:25; 2 Chronicles 1:11-12). While לֹא־קָם functions in retrospective contexts alone, לֹא־הָיָה can function in either backward-looking or forward-looking literary settings. Interestingly, for each of

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8. Nm 23:19; 30:5,12; Dt 19:15; 27:26; 34:10; Jos 2:1; 1 Sm 13:14; 15:11; 2 Sm 22:39; 1 Ki 3:12; 23:25; Neh 5:13; Job 8:15; 15:29; 25:3; Ps 1:5; 89:43; Is 7:7; 8:10; 28:18; Jr 25:27; 34:18; 51:64; Am 8:14; Nah 1:9.

9. That is, referring to someone or something physically standing up or getting up, as in Ex 10:23; Lv 26:1; Dt 16:22; Es 5:9; Job 14:12; Is 27:9; Jr 8:4.

the four examples of the *'ăsher*-verb formula where לא־היה is the formal indicator, a king is the subject being evaluated, although not every king is evaluated on the basis of his royal role.

1.1.1.3.3 Formal indicator: מִי כָ

The phrase מִי כָ ("who is like?") occurs 17 times in the Old Testament, with the referent most often being the Lord.[10] The people of Israel are also a repeated subject (only in the context of their relationship with the Lord),[11] and there are a small number of isolated subjects who either ask or are asked the question.[12] The phrase מִי כָ occurs with the *'ăsher*-verb formula only once, a reference to the people of Israel in 2 Samuel 7:23.

1.1.1.3.4 Informal indicator: Implied observation

There are also a number of instances where the *'ăsher*-verb formula is neither introduced nor concluded by the use of one of the three formal indicators described above. In such cases, the formula is usually, but not exclusively, presented in the context of direct speech, and it is often not until the *'ăsher*-verb

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10. Ex 15:11; Job 36:22; Ps 35:10; 71:19; 89:8; 113:5; Is 44:7; Jr 49:19; 50:44.

11. Dt 33:29; 2 Sm 7:23; 1 Chr 17:21.

12. Abner (1 Sm 26:15), Nehemiah (Neh 6:11), a wise man (Ec 8:1) and Tyre (Ezk 27:32).

formula itself is encountered in the text that the reader is aware of the evaluative nature of the pericope.

The chart below summarizes each of the twelve *'ăsher*-verb pericopes and the type of indicator that is used.

Indicator	Who is being evaluated	Who is doing the evaluation	Reference
לֹא־קָם	Moses	Narrator	Deuteronomy 34:10-12
	Josiah	Narrator	2 Kings 23:25
לֹא־הָיָה	David	The Lord	1 Kings 14:8
	Ahab	Narrator	1 Kings 21:25
	Josiah[13]	Narrator	2 Kings 23:25
	Solomon	God	2 Chronicles 1:11-12
מִי כְ	The People	David	2 Samuel 7:23
Implied	The Lord	Abraham	Genesis 24:7
	The People	Narrator	Exodus 32:35
	Aaron and Miriam	Aaron	Numbers 12:11
	Moses' Successor	Moses	Numbers 27:16-17
	Jeroboam	The Lord	1 Kings 14:16
	All Jerusalem	The Lord	Jeremiah 8:2

1.1.2   Review of previous research

To date, there have been no comprehensive studies of either the identification or explanation of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula in any of the major Hebrew

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13.   Josiah appears twice on this chart as he is evaluated by means of both לֹא־קָם and לֹא־הָיָה within the same pericope.

lexicons or grammars.[14]   Throughout this study's new analysis of each of the

twelve individual pericopes, the reader will discover that, save for a handful of

loosely related (and subsequently noted) exceptions, the recognition of either the

presence or significance of the *'ăsher*-verb formula has been essentially unnoticed

by both ancient and modern scholarship.

1.1.3   Aims and objectives

Given the brief overview presented above, the goals of this study are first, to

accurately identify the presence of the *'ăsher*-verb formula throughout the text of

the Old Testament, second, to suggest the literary function of the formula, and

third, to propose a few initial theological observations of how the formula

enhances the reader's understanding of the subject characters.   Applying the

methodology described in the following pages, the twelve pericopes that contain

the *'ăsher*-verb formula are carefully analyzed within their narratological settings

in order to discern and describe the literary structure, narrative function, and the

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14.   For example, none of the following lexicons and grammars identify the possible use of the
      'ăsher-verb formula as an integral linguistic component of a larger syntactic unit: Brown et
      al. (1906:81-84), Clines (1993:419-436), Gesenius et al. (1910:§36, §138, §155), Joüon and
      Muraoka (1991:118-119, 536-537, 158-600), Köhler et al. (1994:§976), Martin (1993:47-48,
      111-112), Van der Merwe et al. (1999:259-260), Waltke and O'Connor (1990:330-335) and
      Weingreen (1959:135). Also, the relative pronoun אשר is not explored in Botterweck and
      Ringgren (1974:Vol 1), Jenni and Westermann (1997:Vol 1) or VanGemeren (1997:Vol 1).
      Holmstedt (2002:69-70) observes that repeated אשר's can occur in a single clause (he refers
      to it as a "stacked" headed relative clause), but he neither recognizes nor explores the
      structural or linguistic significance of either the formula or the pericopes.

specific context[15] in which the narrator employs the formula. Upon the completion of a careful analysis of each pericope, a new and clearer English translation of the text will be suggested to the reader, taking into account the structure and use of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula.

1.2 Assumptions and methodology

1.2.1 Hermeneutical point of departure

Every interpretation of a text, whether ancient or modern, is coloured by the tinted lens of the reader's foundational presuppositions, whether the reader is consciously aware of his subjectivity or not. Presuppositions, however, are not to be *removed* from the process of thoughtful reading and interpretation (which would be an impossible task), but instead, are to be both *understood* and *evaluated*. That is, the reader must ask "Why am I reading the text this way?", and perhaps more fundamentally, "Why am I reading this text at all?".

Although not part of formal biblical criticism *per se*, the foundational assumptions underlying the purpose and methodology of this study shed light on the

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15. As described in 1.2.3, there are four literary contexts, or "text-types", in which the *'ăsher*-verb formula is found.

theological motivation lying behind the critical exploration of the *'ăsher*-verb formula. Briefly, the three presuppositions are:

1. The Christian Bible, and in this specific instance, the Old Testament, is composed by the tradition of a variety of distinct literary works, and subsequently reflects many different literary styles. For reasons briefly expanded upon later, this study assumes that their collection into the Old Testament is not accidental, but is rather purposeful and logical.

2. The Bible is of divine origin and contains divine revelation (i.e., the words and thoughts of God presented through the writings and teachings of his various representatives).[16] To conclude that the Bible is of divine origin would then seem to logically suggest that the voice of God can somehow be discerned in the written words contained therein.

3. The Bible contains communication from God to humanity. That is, this study assumes that the intent of the biblical authors is not only to inform humanity of the divine message, but also to call humanity to respond to the divine message.

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16. A discussion about the nebulous concept of the Bible's (or any other sacred text) "divine inspiration" is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is assumed and believed by the author that the text of the Bible is more than mere human words of human origin. In fact, it is this starting point of "belief" that forms the impetus to explore the *'ăsher*-verb formula in the first place.

Of course, these three assumptions neither validate nor invalidate any of the methodological approaches employed in this study – they simply state the context, or worldview, within which all research and careful postulation (described below) takes place.

1.2.2 Synchrony and diachrony

As is evident by the identification and brief explanation of the specific critical exegetical methods described below, the underlying core methodologies of this study are essentially synchronic in nature. Of course, an accurate understanding of the history of the biblical text (that is, diachronic analysis) forms the basis for a canonical approach and is the essential first step in the careful study of any ancient text. As such, the history of the Old Testament text is explored in 1.2.4, and any significant text-critical concerns are appropriately identified and analyzed throughout the study. In summary, and as described below, the careful literary and narrative analysis of the twelve biblical *'ăsher*-verb formula pericopes is primarily concerned with the text as it is in its present form,[17] given this study's literary approach and emphasis on "final-text exegesis".[18]

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17. As discussed in 1.2.4 and 1.2.5. For example, although some grammarians have suggested that אשר may be a feature of late biblical Hebrew [see Joüon and Muraoka (1991:118) and Van der Merwe et al. (1999:259)], this study's primary concern is with *the text as we have it today,* not with the various theories of biblical Hebrew language and manuscript development.

18. See Groenewald (2004:552). He observes that "Texts are now read as texts, that is, as

1.2.3 Text linguistics / discourse analysis

Every critical method has a unique and definable set of goals, and a specific collection of methodological techniques. Despite its relative newness[19] to the study of biblical Hebrew, the discipline of text-linguistics[20] is no exception. In essence, the goal of every text-linguistic analysis is to discover the patterns and repetitive characteristics of a particular language and/or text, and then to state them as consistently and systematically as is reasonably possible.[21] The methodology then, in general terms, involves:

1. The observation of identifiable linguistic structures that are present at the paragraph level, and

2. The identification of the appropriate and distinct text-type of which the linguistic structure(s) are a part.

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literary entities and canonical wholes" Groenewald (2004:550). In a similar vein, while discussing the composite nature of the biblical text, Alter (1981:20) earlier noted that "we have seen ample evidence of how brilliantly it has been woven into a complex artistic whole".

19. Dawson (1994:21) writes "We are accustomed to analysing phrase-, clause-, and to some extent sentence structure, but paragraph- and text-structure are relatively new to us". See also Bodine (1995:1-7).

20. For the specific purposes of this study, the terms "discourse analysis", "text-linguistics", and "universal syntactic structures" are essentially equivalent. To that end, the term "text-linguistic" is preferred and is used throughout the study.

21. Here again, the perspective of Dawson (1994:45) is an appropriate reminder: "a goal of any linguistic description is 'elegance' – that is, a linguist seeks to describe data accurately and fully, yet as economically as possible" and his desire for a *"clear description of the patterns that occur at a 'text' level"* [Dawson (1994:77)]. Dooley and Levinsohn (2001:9-10) suggest that discerning the communicative intent of the writer is also a part of discourse analysis.

Borrowing from the proposed categories and matrixes of Dawson (1994:98) and Longacre (1996:8-13), a modified text-type matrix that reflects the particular linguistic structure of the *'āsher*-verb formula is as follows:

	+ Agent Orientation	- Agent Orientation	
+ CTS	NARRATIVE Future Historical	PROCEDURAL How to do it How it was done	+ Projection - Projection
- CTS	BEHAVIOURAL Judgment Epitaph	EXPOSITORY Proposal / Essay Scientific Paper	+ Projection - Projection

Agent Orientation refers to the participants: either who is doing it (+) or what is done (-).

Contingent Succession refers to whether or not the events are chronologically dependant upon prior events (+) or are logically dependant (-)

Projection refers to a viewpoint oriented toward the future (+) or not (-).

With regard to the specific verb forms that are employed within these literary contexts, it is beneficial to consider the observation of Dawson (1994:101) that "every distinctive text-type in a language has a clause type that it prefers". In the case of the *'āsher*-verb formula, the text-types of Behavioural epitaph, Narrative

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historical and Behavioural judgment are marked by the presence of perfective (suffix conjugation) verbs, and the Narrative future text-type reflects the usage of imperfective (prefix conjugation) verbs.

Within biblical Hebrew narrative, text-linguistic criticism suggests that narrative discourse may be marked by the *wayyiqtol* form, and predictive discourse may be marked by the *weqatal* form.[22] As well, the three commonly observable narrative distinctions of mainline, secondary line, and direct speech[23] appear to be evident in the twelve *'ăsher*-verb formula pericopes. However, as this study's focus is on the particular nuances of the specific *'ăsher*-verb combinations, the division of each pericope into specific sentence/clause breaks is limited to the stylistic presentation of each passage by means of a Hebrew/English translation (for example, see 2.1.3)

As is discovered through the conclusions of this study, the *'ăsher*-verb formula occurs exclusively within the four text-types of + Agent Orientation, which is not surprising, given the narrator's use of the formula in contexts of character / participant evaluation. Naturally, there is a degree of overlap, but in general, the

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22. See Longacre (1996:18-21) for a brief summary of the significance of the verb forms and their level of usefulness for a text-linguistic analysis.

23. Niccacci (1994:176-179).

general characteristics of each text-type are:

Behavioural epitaph – the participant's life is given an overall final evaluation.

Narrative future – the participant's stated desire for a future event or development,

Narrative historical – the participant is evaluated in light of a specific past action or actions, and

Behavioural judgment – the participant will experience particular events because of past actions.

1.2.4   Textual criticism

As stated earlier, of the many critical approaches applied in the analysis of ancient texts, this study seeks to employ those which are primarily synchronic in nature. However, the Old Testament text cannot be responsibly studied "as is" until the question of *which text* is to be studied is first answered. As there are no existing autographs of any biblical manuscript (neither the Old Testament nor the New), the study of the ancient texts requires dependence upon numerous subsequent and varied manuscripts. For the purposes of this study, a brief and general overview of the development of the biblical Hebrew text is sufficient.

Pre 400 BCE – The composition of the first Old Testament texts occurred over the course of hundreds of years, and in the midst of an ever-changing religious and political climate. During this early period of textual transmission, the various texts were written and copied as individual scrolls, rather than as part of larger codices containing multiple books.[24] Within the biblical scrolls, it appears that spelling was predominantly consonantal, and individual words were divided.[25] Much of scholarly opinion of this period is tentative, as in essence, no direct manuscript evidence has yet been discovered.

400 BCE – 100 CE – As a result of the discoveries at Qumran and other biblically significant archaeological sites, the oldest extant manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures can now be dated to the middle of the third century BCE.[26] The scrolls show evidence of three distinct text families (or recensions) that were in circulation at this point: 1) proto-Masoretic, 2) pre-Samaritan and 3) pre-Septuagint.[27] However before the end of the 1st century CE, a standard

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24. As suggested in Brotzman (1994:39). However, as scribal practices developed, it is possible that some scrolls contained the entire *Torah*, and occasionally the entire Hebrew scriptures [see Tov (1992:204)].

25. Tov (1992:208-209) concludes that word division appears to have been indicated by spaces, small vertical lines, and dots. See also Korpel and Oesch (2000:26).

26. As concluded in Tov (1992:106), Tov and Abegg (2002:371) and Waltke and O'Connor (1990:16).

27. See Brotzman (1994:43), Tov (1992:190-192) and Waltke in VanGemeren (1997:51-67).

Palestinian proto-Masoretic text had emerged,[28] and the text itself did not change greatly after this point.

100 – 1000 CE – By the early second century, the standard proto-Masoretic text had also become the accepted and authoritative text within the rabbinic community.[29] From approximately 135 to 500 CE, and although there was a degree of regional variance (i.e., Babylonian versus Palestinian practices), verse and paragraph divisions, textual features (paseq, blank spaces, etc) and editorial changes (editing of objectionable words and pagan deities, etc) were introduced to the text.[30] The period of approximately 500 – 1000 CE was dominated by the scribal activities of the Masoretes. Although there were both Babylonian and Palestinian systems in use during this time, the Tiberian system of textual transmission and protection (Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali) prevailed.[31] The Tiberian Masorah contained: 1) the consonantal text, 2) vocalization, 3) para-

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28. See Brotzman (1994:44-46) and Tov (1992:187). The Old Testament canon also began to form during this period, as there is evidence that some scrolls contained more than one book [see Tov (1992:104)].

29. The text critical significance of the destruction of the Second Temple, ancient rabbinic testimony and the Nahal Hever and Wabi Murabbaat manuscripts are discussed in Waltke and O'Connor (1990:20-21), Tov (1992:33-35) and Wuerthwein (1979:15-16).

30. See Brotzman (1994:47-49).

31. See Brotzman (1994:50), Tov (1992:77) and Waltke and O'Connor (1990:22).

textual elements (verses, chapters, qere/kitib, etc), 4) accentuation, and 5) the apparatus (parva and magna).[32]

1000 CE – present – There are close to 3,000 extant dated Hebrew manuscripts currently available,[33] and it is generally accepted that the Masoretic manuscripts dated before 1100 CE are more reliable than later medieval manuscripts.[34] Due to their dates, their inclusion of all[35] biblical books, and their representation of the Tiberian system, the two most important Hebrew Bible manuscripts are the Aleppo Codex (dated cf. 925 CE, and pointed by Ben Asher) and the Leningrad Codex (dated cf. 1008 CE, and close to the Ben Asher tradition).[36] The key printed editions of the Hebrew Bible are the Second Rabbinic / Ben Hayyim Bible (1525, based upon 12th century manuscripts), Ginsburg (1894, based upon Ben Hayyim with earlier variants), Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (1st and 2nd editions based upon Ben Hayyim, 3rd edition based upon Leningrad), and *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (all editions based on Leningrad). Other eclectic and critical

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32. For a good introduction to the importance of the Masorah to the textual history of the biblical Hebrew text, refer to Tov (1992:23-79). Compare Brotzman (1994:50-53) and Waltke and O'Connor (1990:22-30).

33. Refer to Tov (1992:23) for a more detailed description.

34. Tov (1992:35).

35. Although the Aleppo Codex originally contained all of the Old Testament, most of the *Torah* was destroyed in a fire.

36. In addition, the following Hebrew manuscripts of this era are also important to the discipline of textual criticism: British Museum 4445, Cairo Codex, Sassoon 507 and others.

editions are currently under development, such as the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* and the Hebrew University Bible Project, among others.

1.2.5 Canonical[37] criticism

While recognizing the complex history of sources, forms, text types and redactors[38] involved in the process of transmission and development of the Hebrew text briefly described above in 1.2.4, this study is concerned with the final form[39] of the individual Old Testament books and their collection into a single volume (i.e., the Tanakh). By the time the proto-Masoretic text type became the accepted and authoritative Jewish text in the second century, the canonical book selection process was already complete and well recognized. Therefore, the Hebrew textual base used for this study is the Masoretic Text, specifically the Leningrad Codex, as it is likely the oldest and most reliable *complete manuscript*[40] currently available that best represents[41] the Hebrew text and canon deemed as "official" by the first century CE.

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37. A detailed exploration of the nuances of canonical criticism is beyond the scope of this study. For further information about the development and significance of the Old Testament canon, please refer to Steinmann (1999).

38. For the purposes of this study, the various rabbis and ancient councils that had a formative hand in the development and selection of the Old Testament are given just as much "inspirational" credence as are the original writers.

39. By "final form", this study refers to the collection of books that were accepted by the Jews in the late Persian period (ie, by 200 BCE), and as described in Steinmann (1999:186ff).

40. While it is commonly understood that the Aleppo Codex may be a better representation of the Masoretic Text than the Leningrad Codex, it is only Leningrad that contains all twelve

1.2.6 Delimitation criticism

The various techniques of delimitation criticism[42] can be employed to explore various and specific literary and organizational features, inherent in the ancient texts themselves, that seem to indicate logical and/or thematic breaks between textual units (often called "sense-units"). That is, unit delimitation is concerned with how, where and even why the text suggests that a particular pericope starts and stops. As the methodology of delimitation criticism is relatively fluid at this time, it is helpful to identify five preliminary steps and/or considerations[43] as a starting point:

1. The relative ages of the witnesses,

2. The spread of the testimony,

3. The structure of the immediate context,

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instances of the 'ăsher-verb structure.

41. While the Leningrad Codex as expressed in Ben-Asher and Dotan (2001) is the textual basis of this study, the Aleppo Codex of Breuer and Ofer (2000), critical editions (e.g., Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia) and other ancient versions (eg. Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch, Targums) are consulted where appropriate.

42. According to Korpel and Oesch (2000:21), the Pericope Project (www.pericope.net) is "an international programme [established in 1999] which aims at collecting as much data as possible about unit delimitation in ancient manuscripts of the Bible" Although *delimitation criticism* is in its infant stages, this critical approach assumes that "[there was] an integral process of writing both the text and its delimitations from the very beginning" and "the latest author or redactor of a work sought to safeguard the correct understanding of the text by dividing it into sense-units" [see Korpel and Oesch (2000:5)]. The project's preliminary conclusions about unit delimitation can be found on Korpel and Oesch (2000:22-23).

43. Essentially a summary of J.C. de Moor's conceptual steps in Korpel and Oesch (2000:158-160) and M.C.A Korpel's compositional observations in Korpel and Oesch (2000:23-50).

a. Delimitation of Feet (individual words, Masoretic accents[44]),

b. Delimitation of Cola (one or more feet, Masoretic accents),

c. Delimitation of Lines (one or more cola, Masoretic accents),

d. Delimitation of Strophes (a "verse", sof pasuq, emphasis, parallelism), and

e. Delimitation of Paragraphs (one or more strophes, major markers, strophes),

4. The structure of the wider context,

a. Delimitation of Macrostructural Units (one or more paragraphs), and

5. A plausible explanation for the origin of a "false" division.[45]

When applied in concert with the analysis of literary techniques such as chiasm, inclusion and progression, the results of delimitation criticism can sometimes suggest a clearer picture of the inherent literary structure of an individual pericope.

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44. See Lode (1994:155-172) for some helpful observations regarding the possible significance of the relationship between the Tiberian system of accentuation and the field of biblical Hebrew text-linguistics.

45. That is, a division that does not seem to be inherent in the "original" text, as suggested by the tools of delimitation criticism.

1.2.7 Structural analysis

Within this study, structural analysis refers to a primarily linguistic investigation that finds meaning in the particular way that an individual text is internally structured. When relevant to the particular text, the consistencies and contrasts between similar passages (which are often assumed to be intentional) are taken into account. In general terms, structural analysis[46] seeks to identify and articulate the literary rules by which written language is expressed,[47] and the primary focus of this analysis is on both the syntactical and stylistic elements of each of the twelve pericopes.[48] The central premise of this study is that the *'ăsher*-verb formula is an intentional structural technique which is selectively employed by the biblical narrators in specific evaluative circumstances.

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46. For a brief description of the differences between *structuralism, structural criticism* and *structural studies*, refer to Stuart (2001:126-127).

47. For example, while discussing the Structure of Repetition, Sternberg (1985:368) states that redundancy acts "as a counterbalance designed to ensure a full and unambiguous reception of the message ... syntactic rules, word order, ready-made phrases ... impose constraints on the speaker and proportionately heighten the predictability and follow-ability of his utterance to the receiver's advantage". In other words, the narrator (whether ancient or modern) utilizes a commonly known phrase-structure, often through repetition itself or an anomaly in the expected repetitive pattern, in order to clarify and stress the message (ie, a simple pedagogical technique).

48. Each instance of the *'ăsher*-verb formula is analyzed on its own terms, but in general, grammatical and stylistic characteristics are central (with the repetitive presence of the אשר-verb combination often forming the framework of each text). For example, one of the goals of this study is to suggest a clearer English translation of each text.

1.2.8 Narrative criticism

The inter-relationships between biblical characters and passages is often better understood by examining how the characters themselves develop, how the plot changes, how the narrator[49] presents the changes in the characters, etc.[50] Often overlapping with delimitation criticism and structuralism, the general assumptions of narrative criticism are useful in suggesting the themes and purposes of specific passages and how each particular passage may relate to the rest of the Old Testament.

This study carefully considers the methodology and results of a literary analysis, and therefore places a high level of importance upon the viewpoint and perspective of the narrator.[51] It is essential that the narrator's credibility be thoughtfully understood, since he is the "source" of our information, in literary terms. As suggested by Sternberg (1985:51), "On the one hand, the Bible always tells the truth in that its narrator is absolutely and straightforwardly reliable ...

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49. Throughout this study, the term "narrator" refers to the person(s) responsible for the final text and the person(s) who composed the various literary units.

50. The merit of defining narrative in terms of character, plot and word-play is also suggested, and this study places a heavy emphasis on "the *patterning play of words*" [see Gunn and Fewell (1993:3)].

51. Brown (2005:313) suggests that the narrator "establishes the ideological framework for the narrative. His comments also insure that the readers get the point of the story or the specific purpose of a given event. As a result attention to the narrator's 'voice' and his point of view are critical to interpret properly the message of the Bible's narratives". Also, Gunn and Fewell (1993:3) conclude that "Narrators can profoundly shape the terms by which we understand a character through repetition, even by so simple a device as the repeated use of a single epithet".

[but] on the other hand, the narrator does not tell the whole truth either".[52] Stated another way, in terms of the biblical text, this study assumes that the narrator's assessment of a character is reliable.[53] Considering the importance of the context of the narrator's evaluative capacity, Gunn and Fewell (1993:60) conclude that "clear examples of direct and unambiguous evaluation by the narrator are hard to find". However, given this study's identification of the evaluative role of the 'ăsher-verb formula, such clear examples are no longer hidden within the Hebrew text.

Regarding the plot and structure of any given narrative (whether an individual pericope, or the larger narrative context of which it is a part), it is good to consider the general progressive outline of Amit (2001:47) throughout the process of narrative analysis: Exposition, Complication, Change, Unravelling, and then Ending. The three central elements of Complication (the events that lead up to the main event), Change (the main event of the story), and Unravelling (the consequences of the main event), form the bulk of any narrative story. Although it is the "Change" component that normally functions as the climax to a narrative,

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52. Gunn and Fewell (1993:53) expand on Sternberg's assertion by suggesting that the narrator "does not make mistakes, give false or unintentional information, or deliberately deceive us". Further, Fokkelman (1999:56,58) suggests that: 1) the biblical text indicates "one of the main characteristics of the narrator: he is *omniscient* – but in a literary rather than a theological sense", and 2) the narrator is selective in his presentation of material.

53. See Heard (1996:36-37) for a brief discussion on the differences between the narrator's "omniscience" and "reliability".

it is within either the "Exposition" or "Ending" sections[54] that the *'ăsher*-verb formula occurs, dependant upon the temporal viewpoint of the evaluator. That is, it seems that the narrator's use of the *'ăsher*-verb formula is often not within the climax (or main descriptive story line) of a given narrative, but rather functions as a concluding evaluation of events that are described earlier in the text. As is shown throughout this study's analysis of the selected pericopes, the *'ăsher*-verb formula often provides an "outside of the narrative" perspective that reflects on events of the story presented elsewhere in the biblical text.

1.2.9 Synthesis and exegetical process

In light of the methodological tools and goals described above, three broad areas of interest emerge: the text itself, the literary context, and the analysis of the text. For each of the twelve pericopes, these three areas of concern are carefully explored throughout this study's literary-structural analysis. The process of identifying and articulating both the presence and significance of the *'ăsher*-verb formula can be summarized in the following five general, and sometimes overlapping, steps:

   1) Establish the limits of the text (Delimitation criticism)

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54. The "triple ring structure" of Fokkelman (1999:15) is not sufficient for the purposes of this study, in that the presence of the *'ăsher*-verb formula is within the "Exposition" and "Ending" elements of Amit's five-stage concentric structure.

2) Confirm the "indicator" and the "text-type" (Text-linguistic analysis)

3) Resolve textual inconsistencies (Textual criticism)

4) Articulate the presence of the *'ăsher*-verb structure (Structuralism)

5) Suggest the function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula (Narrative criticism)

1.3 Theological implication

Of course, as discussed elsewhere in this study, the goal of thoughtful and methodical Old Testament analysis is not only to discern and explain the literary significance of the text, but also to explore the possible theological implications of the findings. For example, in the Deuteronomy 34:10-12 pericope, the narrator refers to Moses as the incomparable prophet, and by means of the *'ăsher*-verb formula he identifies the three specific characteristics of Moses that support his conclusion. While the literary significance of the three-fold *'ăsher*-verb structure is clear, possible new theological questions also begin to emerge. That is, if Moses' prophetic role was distinguished by the fact that 1) he was known by God, 2) he was sent by God, and 3) he accomplished it, does the text therefore suggest a simple three-step pattern by which all subsequent prophets are identified? Is the model of knowing-sending-doing an expectation that God places on all of his prophets, or rather, is it a "measuring stick" by which true prophets are subsequently recognized and endorsed? Further, how much does the example of

Moses' character function as an example for all followers of God, regardless of their prophetic or non-prophetic role?

As can be seen by the initial questions above, the theological implications of recognizing and understanding a literary technique such as the *'ăsher*-verb formula can be profound, and can extend to almost endless limits. However, for the purposes of this study, the theological exploration of each of the twelve pericopes is restricted to the text of the Old Testament, and is achieved by looking at all instances in which other biblical characters are linked to the same *'ăsher*-verb characteristics as the subject character. Contemporary pastoral implications of the uniqueness of *Moses the prophet* or *Josiah the king*, for example, are left to the readers of this study and their own communities of faith. After all, there is no one better than the individual reader to take the literary and theological observations of this study and subsequently relate them to the unique cultural and spiritual environments of which he or she is an integral part.

1.4 Hypothesis

As is discovered throughout this study, the *'ăsher*-verb formula reflects a remarkably consistent literary structure, and as such, the careful reader can begin to anticipate and discern the presence of the formula in the Hebrew text. After the

initial identification of the subject, there is the placement of either a single or repeated subordinate אשׁר immediately followed by a verb (either perfective or imperfective, dependant upon the context) that qualifies or explains the narrator's observation about the subject. In fact, the evidence suggests that *the 'ăsher-verb formula is a specific and unique linguistic feature in biblical Hebrew that contributes to the reader's literary and theological understanding of both the text and the subject character in multiple ways,* and it occurs within the following four text-types (or literary contexts):

Behavioural epitaph – a concluding analysis of a character's life and influence,

Narrative future – an evaluation focussed on the future, spoken by someone other than the subject character,

Narrative historical – a general historical assessment, either of an individual or a national group, and

Behavioural judgment – the Lord's divine judgment on either an individual or an entire nation (as a result of an individual).

Within each literary context, the presence of either single or multiple *'ăsher*-verb combinations provides a clearer understanding of the narrator's rationale for presenting a particular character as incomparable. Often used in conjunction with one of the three formal textual indicators and/or further revision through the use

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of repeated prepositions,[55] the *'ăsher*-verb formula is a sophisticated linguistic tool that sheds additional light on the literary skill, artistry and narrative intention of the ancient biblical writers.

The twelve *'ăsher*-verb formula pericopes, grouped by text-type and presented in the same order as they are analyzed in this study, are:

Text-Type	Passage	Character	Evaluator	Indicator	1X	2X	3X	4X	5X
Epitaph	Dt 34:10-12	Moses	Narrator	לא־קום			אשר ידע אשר שלח אשר עשה		
Epitaph	2 Ki 23:25	Josiah	Narrator	לא־היה לא־קום	אשר שוב				
Future	Nm 27:16-17	Moses' Successor	Moses	Implied				אשר יצא אשר בוא אשר יצא אשר בוא	
Future	2 Chr 1:11-12	Solomon	God	(2x) לא־היה		אשר שפת אשר מלך אשר היה אשר פנה			
Historical	Gn 24:7	The Lord	Abraham	Implied			אשר לקח אשר דבר אשר שבע		
Historical	2 Sa 7:23 1 Chr 17:21	The People	David	מי כ		אשר הלך אשר פדה			
Historical	1 Ki 14:8	David	The Lord	לא־היה		אשר שמר אשר הלך			

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55. Although there are certainly other instances of character evaluation within the Old Testament (eg, Noah in Gn 6:9 and Saul in 1 Sa 15:10-11), the *'ăsher*-verb formula stands unique due to the multi-layer technique that is often used: layer 1 – formal indicator, layer 2 – *'ăsher*-verb combination(s), layer 3 – repetitive preposition(s). The relative complexity of each formula is explored within the appropriate sections of this study.

Text-Type	Passage	Character	Evaluator	Indicator	1X	2X	3X	4X	5X
Judgment	Ex 32:35	The People	Narrator	Implied		אשר עשה אשר עשה			
Judgment	Nm 12:11	Aaron and Miriam	Aaron	Implied		אשר יאל אשר חטא			
Judgment	1 Ki 14:16	Jeroboam	The Lord	Implied		אשר חטא אשר חטא			
Judgment	1 Ki 21:25	Ahab	Narrator	לא־היה		אשר מכר אשר סות			
Judgment	Jr 8:2	All Jerusalem	The Lord	Implied					אשר אהב אשר עבד אשר הלך אשר דרש אשר שחה

As is shown above, instances of the *'ăsher*-verb formula occur throughout the text of the Old Testament, and although there is a degree of variance in some of the peripheral characteristics (eg, character, evaluator), the structure and function of the formula is generally consistent.

Considering the existence of the four distinct text-types suggested by a text-linguistic analysis, each of the twelve *'ăsher*-verb pericopes is explored separately in the text that follows. For the sake of clarity and consistency, they are grouped together into the following four chapters: Chapter 2: Behavioural epitaph (Deuteronomy 34:10-12 and 2 Kings 23:25), Chapter 3: Narrative future (Numbers 27:16-17 and 2 Chronicles 1:11-12), Chapter 4: Narrative historical (Genesis 24:7, 2 Samuel 7:23 and 1 Kings 14:8), and Chapter 5: Behavioural judgment (Exodus 32:35, Numbers 12:11, 1 Kings 14:16, 1 Kings 21:25 and Jeremiah 8:2).

2 Text-type: Behavioural epitaph

By means of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within the Behavioural epitaph text-type pericopes of Deuteronomy 34:10-12 and 2 Kings 23:25, the narrator presents an overall final evaluation of the life of the subject character. Although the viewpoint is retrospective, the focal point is not primarily on a specific action of the character, but rather is on the overall nature of his life (characterised by a series of actions), and specifically his ministry as either a prophet (Moses) or a king (Josiah).

2.1 Deuteronomy 34:10-12 – Moses

2.1.1 Introduction

That the book of Deuteronomy, the fifth scroll of the *Torah*, plays a central role in the history and theology of the ancient people of Israel is virtually unquestioned.[56] The covenantal theology of the book seems to consistently and emphatically recur

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56. Wright (1996:1) aptly describes Deuteronomy as "the heartbeat" of the Old Testament. Van Seters (1999:88) suggests that "Deuteronomy is the key to understanding both the Pentateuch (Torah) and the historical books that follow". Braulik (1994:99) observes that the book of Deuteronomy's "theology ... was, from the beginning, interwoven with a Torah (2 Kgs 22:8), a social order, and a way of life".

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throughout the Old Testament historical writings (eg, the books of Kings)[57] and prophetic writings, and even the name of the book indicates the prophetic and covenantal nature of Deuteronomy (the Hebrew title of the book is "These are the words").[58]   It is in Deuteronomy that the appropriate nature of a loyal and committed relationship between God and his people is explained in detail, along with consequences for both faithfulness and unfaithfulness, through the words and instructions of Moses.   It is not surprising, therefore, that the book is often referred to elsewhere in the Old Testament when the narrators want to appeal to a "final authority".

The ongoing exploration of the precise literary structure of Deuteronomy has resulted in numerous thoughtful suggestions, ranging from an arrangement of speeches,[59] to an Ancient Near Eastern covenantal format,[60] to a traditional liturgical structure.[61]   If either the literary structure of three or four speeches or a typical covenantal structure is accepted, then chapter 34 is often treated as an appendix or even as unrelated to the rest of the book.[62]   However, if chapters 1-34

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57.   Refer to 2.2.1.

58.   Alexander and Baker (2003:182), Miller (1990:1-2) and Wright (1996:1). See also Rofe (2002:11) for a brief discussion about the possible relationship between covenant and belief.

59.   Alexander and Baker (2003:183-184), Miller (1990:10-12) and Wright (1996:2).

60.   Craigie (1976:22-24) and Merrill (1994:27-32).

61.   Christensen (2002:xiii) and Von Rad (1966:12).

62.   Craigie (1976:24).

are seen as having inherent literary unity (with a liturgical purpose) by means of concentric circles[63] (ie. chiasm), then Deuteronomy 34:10-12 is understood to be part of an intentional, and even key, element of the narrator's rhetorical presentation within the book. Given the high level of narratological skill displayed in 34:10-12, it is best to conclude that the final chapters are not peripheral to the book, but in fact form a profound literary and theological conclusion[64] to the *Torah*, as expanded upon below.

2.1.2   The text

2.1.2.1   Limits of the passage

At first glance, determining the limits of the text for this pericope may seem like an easy task, due to verse 12's function as the end of the chapter, of the book of Deuteronomy and of the entire *Torah*. However, determining the beginning textual limit is slightly more complicated. Among modern scholars, there seems to be a division between those who suggest 34:1-12[65] as the textual limits, and

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63.   Christensen (2002:749-875) concludes that 31:1-34:12 is a distinct literary unit, containing the final three liturgical readings of Deuteronomy. He also provides a variety of astute observations regarding the possible liturgical and literary structures of the book.

64.   Many scholars suggest that, in fact, Deuteronomy fulfils the dual role of both the end of the *Torah* and the beginning of Old Testament history [for example, see Alexander and Baker (2003:182-183) and Mann (1995:167)]. Also, see Chapman (2003:121-145) for a detailed analysis of the canonical status of Dt 34:10-12, especially with reference to both the "*Torah*" and the "Prophets".

65.   See Mann (1995:166), Miller (1990:241) and Von Rad (1966:209).

those who conclude that it should rather be 34:10-12.[66] Olson (1994a:169), in his commentary focussing on the place and function of the account of Moses' death within the book of Deuteronomy, determines that 34:10-12 is the correct pericope because these three verses are "commonly thought to be one of the latest additions to the Pentateuch." In addition, verses 1-9 appear to function as an historical narrative portraying the course of events as they happened to Moses and the Israelites, whereas verses 10-12 function more as a summary analysis, or epitaph, of Moses' life and role in the many events described in the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the smaller unit of Deuteronomy 34:10-12 is satisfactory and is used as the appropriate pericope.

2.1.3 Translation

Taking into account the formal indicator לֹא־קָם and using the repetitive presence of אֲשֶׁר as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown below. Deuteronomy 34:10-12 reads:

There has not arisen again, a prophet in Israel like Moses;

וְלֹא־קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה

proper noun + preposition / proper noun + preposition / adverb / ms noun / Qal-p3ms / negative particle + conjunction

whom the Lord knew face to face

אֲשֶׁר יְדָעוֹ יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים

mp noun / preposition / mp noun / proper noun / Qp3ms verb + 3ms / relative pronoun

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66. See Craigie (1976:406), Tigay (1996a:339), Wright (1996:313), and also the Samaritan Pentateuch [Von Gall (1918:438)]. Note that Merrill (1994:454) suggests 34:9-12 as the correct unit delimitation and Christensen (2002:873) concludes that it should be 34:11-12.

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in all the signs and wonders,

לְכָל־הָאֹתוֹת וְהַמּוֹפְתִים ⁶⁷‎ ⁶⁸

mp noun (absolute) + article + conjunction / fp noun (absolute) + article / ms noun (construct) + preposition

whom the Lord sent

אֲשֶׁר שְׁלָחוֹ יְהוָה

proper noun / Qp3ms verb + 3ms / relative pronoun

to do in the land of Egypt

לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

proper noun / fs noun (absolute) + preposition / Qal-inf (construct) + preposition

(to Pharaoh

לְפַרְעֹה

proper noun + preposition

and to all his servants

וּלְכָל־עֲבָדָיו

mp noun + 3ms / ms noun + preposition + conjunction

and to all his land)

וּלְכָל־אַרְצוֹ

fp noun + 3ms / ms noun + preposition + conjunction

in all the mighty power

וּלְכֹל הַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה

fs adjective + article / fs noun / ms noun + preposition + conjunction

and in all the great terror,

וּלְכֹל הַמּוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל

ms adjective + article / ms noun + article / ms noun + preposition + conjunction

and who accomplished it, Moses,

אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה

proper noun / Qal-p3ms / relative pronoun

in the sight of all Israel.

לְעֵינֵי כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל

proper noun (absolute) / ms noun (construct) / md noun (construct) + preposition

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67. הָאֹתוֹת וְהַמּוֹפְתִים usually, but not exclusively, refers to the events of the Exodus (Ex 7:3; Dt 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 29:2; 34:11; Neh 9:10; Ps 78:43; 105:27; 135:9; Jr 32:20f). Compare also Ex 4:28.

68. See Joüon and Muraoka (1991:124o) regarding an infinitive with a ל after a verb (cf. possible instances in 1 Ki 14:8; 21:25; 2 Sm 7:23).

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of both a triple *'ăsher*-verb combination and one of the three formal indicators (לא־קום).

2.1.4   Structural and literary analysis

2.1.4.1   Literary style and narrative characteristics

That the book of Deuteronomy centers of the character of Moses is fairly self-evident, and therefore it is not surprising that the closing verses have special significance to the final evaluation of his life and ministry.   Olson (1994a:21) suggests that chapter 34 is the "culminating episode", and Craigie (1976:406) calls verses 10-12 "the literary epitaph of Moses; they form a fitting conclusion to the Pentateuch, of which the last four books contain an account of the life and work of Moses in Israel".[69]   The final three verses of the *Torah* take a retrospective and analytical look at the life of the key human character within the *Torah* narrative, and his relationship to the Lord. The Deuteronomistic narrator uses verses 10-12 to form a succinct summary and evaluation of the unparalleled life of the prophet Moses, as portrayed in the *Torah*.[70]

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69.   See also Otto (2000:228-229).

70.   As correctly noted in Tigay (1996b:137), the statement that Moses was an unequalled prophet has attracted little scholarly attention, and although this study and that of Tigay have different intended purposes, both conclude that Moses' evaluation is much richer than typical biblical epitaphs.   Van Seters (1999:108) concludes that Deuteronomy is "the special and

2.1.4.2 '*ăsher*-verb structure

As shown by means of the colour-coded translations, within Deuteronomy 34:10-12, there is a distinct structure[71] of sequential correspondence, evident in the three אשר clauses that follow the standard introductory indicator לא־קם. The three distinct אשר clauses (אשר ידע ,אשר שלח and אשר עשה) expand upon and give persuasive evidence for the narrator's appeal to the uniqueness of Moses, the Lord's prophet.[72] Note that each אשר is followed by a Qal perfective verb[73] and subject, then a series of subsequent statements that each start with the preposition ל.

The text sequentially and logically moves from "whom the Lord knew" to "whom the Lord sent" to "that which Moses did". After each of the three[74] אשר clauses, the narrator then goes on to indicate why, in fact, the clause is an accurate assessment. For example, the reader first asks, "*why* is no other prophet like Moses?" to which

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supreme revelation given by the deity to the greatest of all prophets, Moses". Also, it has been noted in more than one study that elsewhere in the Old Testament, the narrator may have presented other prophetic characters (eg, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) as being somewhat similar to Moses [eg O'Kane (1996:29-30,47,50)].

71. In contrast to the conclusion of Romer and Brettler (2000:403) that verses 10-12 are "not structured as tightly as the previous ones".

72. See Miller (1987:248-250) for a summary of Moses' role as a prophet. See also McConville (2002:577-478).

73. The first two Qal perfective verbs (ידע, שלח) have 3ms object suffixes because the Lord is the subject. However, the third verb (עשה) has no suffix as Moses is the subject.

74. Brueggemann's conclusion that Dt 34:10-12 identifies Moses as distinctive and definitional is accurate - Moses knew God face to face, and he did wonders - Brueggemann (2001:288-289), but incomplete.

the narrator replies with the three אשׁר clauses, because "the Lord knew him, the Lord sent him and Moses did it". In response to the first clause, the reader then asks, "*how*[75] did the Lord know him?" which is answered by, "face to face[76] in all the signs and wonders[77]". Then, "*why* did the LORD send him?", to which "to do in the land of Egypt ..." is the reply. Finally, "*where/how* did Moses do it?", which is answered by, "in the sight of all Israel". Therefore, it is evident that the *'ăsher*-verb formula is employed by the narrator in this three-verse pericope to indicate the unique and unparalleled life of Moses and the nature of his relationship with the Lord.

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75. The Lord was the one doing the "knowing", not Moses [for example, Coats (1977:37-38), Keil and Delitzsch (1866:516), Maxwell (1987:348-349), Tigay (1996a:340) and Wessner (1998:59)]. Christensen (2002:867) suggests that the "knowing" has legal overtones.

76. Ridderbos (1984:317-318) starts to identify the three statements about the uniqueness of Moses when he notices the significance of "face to face", but he does not recognize the other two *'ăsher*-verb statements. See also Thompson (1974:320), Cairns (1992:306), and Olson (1996:71-72).

77. Alexander and Baker (2003:570) suggest that Moses possessed superhuman traits, but this assertion does not seem to fit well with the pericope's emphasis on God's active role (also, the "supernatural" language of verse 11 reflects God's activity in the events of the Exodus).

2.1.5   Literary context

2.1.5.1   Deuteronomy 34:10-12 and the *'ǎsher*-verbs within the *Torah*

A review of all instances of מֹשֶׁה and ידע within a three verse range[78] reveals that

the only other explicit assertion that God knew Moses is found in Exodus 33:12,

as Moses reminded God that he had previously said "I know (ידע) you by name"

(subsequently confirmed by the Lord in v. 17).[79]   In addition, the Lord is also said

to have known the suffering (Exodus 3:7) and wandering (Deuteronomy 2:7) of

the people of Israel.

The idea of the "sending" of Moses occurs throughout both the *Torah* and the rest

of the Old Testament.   An analysis of all instances of מֹשֶׁה and שלח within a three

verse range[80] suggests that even though Moses was sent by God (Deuteronomy

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78.   The limit of a "three verse range" was arbitrarily chosen, as it seems that any larger literary
      separation between the two terms (ie, more than three verses) does not result in the
      identification of additional passages that are relevant to this study.   The references are: Ex
      2:11, 14f, 17; 3:1, 3f, 6; 4:14, 30; 5:1, 4; 6:1f, 9f; 7:6ff, 14, 19f; 8:4f, 8f, 16, 21; 9:11ff, 27,
      29, 33, 35; 10:1, 3, 8f, 24f, 29; 11:4, 9f; 14:1, 15, 21; 16:4, 6, 8f, 11, 15; 18:8, 12ff, 17;
      31:12, 18; 32:1, 19, 21, 23, 25f; 33:5, 7ff, 11f, 17; 34:27, 29ff; 36:2f; Lv 5:14, 20; 23:44;
      24:1; Nm 10:29; 11:16; 12:3f, 7f; 14:36; 16:2ff, 8, 25, 28; 20:11f, 14; 31:14f, 21; 32:20, 25;
      Dt 4:41; 28:69; 29:1; 31:10, 14, 16, 22, 24f, 30; 34:5, 7ff, 12; Jos 1:1; 3:7; 14:3, 5ff, 9; Jdg
      3:4; 1 Ki 2:3; Neh 8:14; 9:14; 10:30; Ps 77:21; 103:7; Jr 15:1; Mi 6:4.

79.   The four-fold nature of God's "face to face" knowledge of Moses as described in Dt 34:10-
      12 (and possibly alluded to in Ex 33:12) is explored in Wessner (1998:57-71).

80.   Ex 3:11, 13ff; 4:1, 3f, 10, 14, 18ff, 27ff; 5:1, 4, 20, 22; 6:1f, 9f, 12f, 29f; 7:1, 14, 19, 26; 8:1,
      4f, 16, 21f, 25ff; 9:1, 8, 10ff, 22, 27, 29, 33, 35; 10:1, 3, 8f, 12f, 21f, 24f, 29; 11:1, 3f, 9f;
      12:1, 31, 35; 13:19; 18:24ff; 19:3; 24:2ff, 6, 8f, 12f; 33:1, 5, 9, 11f; Nm 4:49; 5:1, 4f; 13:1,
      3, 16f, 26, 30; 14:36, 39; 16:12, 15, 25, 28; 20:11f, 14; 21:5, 7ff, 32, 34; 31:1, 3, 6f; 32:6; Dt
      34:8ff, 12; Jos 1:1f, 13ff, 17; 14:5ff, 9ff; 18:7; 22:4f, 7, 9; 24:5; 1 Sa 12:6, 8; 2 Sa 22:17; 1
      Ki 2:3; 2 Ki 14:6; 18:12; Neh 8:14; Ps 18:17; 105:26; 106:16; Jr 15:1; Mi 6:4; Ml 3:22.

34:10-12 and Exodus 3:10-15), Moses was somewhat hesitant about his "call".
For example, Moses tried to get out of being sent (Exodus 4:13), questioned being
sent (Exodus 5:22), and was unsure about being sent alone (Exodus 33:12).
Ultimately, however, when his authority and divine calling was questioned,
Moses confirmed that his "sending" was from the Lord and was not his own idea
(Numbers 16:28).

Throughout the Pentateuch, Moses often "does" certain activities as per the
Lord's commands (either explicit statements or implied), and a review of all
instances of מֹשֶׁה and עָשָׂה within a three verse range[81] reveals that the Lord
confirmed to Moses that he was to perform the deeds on the Lord's behalf
(Exodus 4:21), although occasionally it was Aaron who actually did it (Exodus
4:30). There were other instances when Moses and Aaron performed an action

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81. Ex 3:13ff; 4:1, 14, 18ff, 27ff; 5:1, 22; 6:1f; 7:6ff, 10, 14, 19f; 8:1, 4f, 8f, 12, 16, 21f, 25ff;
9:1, 8; 10:22, 24f; 11:9f; 12:1, 28, 31, 35, 50; 13:1; 14:1, 11, 13, 15, 31; 15:1, 24; 16:2, 15,
19f; 17:2ff, 9ff, 14f; 18:1f, 5ff, 12ff, 17, 24ff; 19:3, 7ff; 20:20ff; 24:1ff, 6, 8f; 30:17, 22, 34;
31:1, 12, 18; 32:1, 7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25f, 28ff, 33; 33:1, 5, 7f, 17; 34:8, 33ff; 35:1,
4, 29f; 36:2f, 5f; 38:21f; 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31ff, 42f; 40:1, 16, 18f; Lv 4:1; 5:14, 20; 6:1,
12, 17; 7:22; 8:1, 4ff, 31, 36; 9:1, 5ff, 10, 21, 23; 10:4ff; 14:33; 16:34; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1;
22:26; 23:1, 9, 23, 26, 33; 24:23; 25:1; Nm 1:54; 2:1, 33f; 3:1, 51; 4:1, 17, 21; 5:1, 4f; 6:1,
22; 7:89; 8:1, 3ff, 20, 22f; 9:1, 4ff, 8f, 23; 10:1; 11:10f, 16; 14:11, 13, 26, 36; 15:1, 17, 22f,
33, 35ff; 16:2ff, 8, 25, 28; 17:1, 5f, 23ff; 20:27f; 21:5, 7ff, 32, 34; 27:22f; 28:1; 30:1f; 31:31;
32:6, 20, 25, 28f, 33; 33:1f; 34:1; 36:10, 13; Dt 5:1; 15:2; 27:1, 9, 11; 28:69; 29:1; 31:1, 7,
9f, 14, 16, 22, 24, 30; 32:44f, 48; 34:7ff, 12; Jos 1:1ff, 5, 7, 13ff, 17; 3:7; 4:10; 8:35; 9:24;
11:12, 15, 20; 14:2f, 5ff; 22:2, 4f, 7; 23:6; 24:5; Jdg 3:4; 1 Sm 12:6, 8; 1 Ki 2:3; 8:56; 2 Ki
14:6; 18:4, 6, 12; 21:8; 23:25; 1 Chr 21:29; 22:13; 2 Chr 1:3; 24:6, 9; 25:4; 30:16; 33:8;
34:14; 35:6; Ezr 3:2; Neh 1:7f; 8:1, 14; 9:14; 10:30; Ps 99:6; 103:7; 106:16, 23; Is 63:11f; Jr
15:1; Dn 9:11, 13; Mi 6:4; Ml 3:22.

together as the Lord commanded[82] (Exodus 7:6, 10, 20; 11:10; Numbers 8:20) and they also promised to do what the Lord had spoken (Exodus 19:8; 24:3). In some instances, however, it was Moses alone who did as the Lord commanded[83] (Exodus 17:6; 40:16, 19; Leviticus 8:4; Numbers 17:11; 20:27; 21:9; 27:22; 31:31).

As shown above, the notion that Moses was known, sent and subsequently responsive to God's commands is not limited to Deuteronomy 34:10-12, but in fact is reiterated throughout the entire *Torah* narrative. Although Moses may have initially expressed uncertainly about his mission, the narrator of Deuteronomy 34:10-12 paints a clear picture that he ultimately did (עשׂה) what he was sent (שׁלח) to do on behalf of the Lord.

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82. There are also instances of the Israelites, as a whole, doing (עשׂה) what the Lord had commanded to Moses and Aaron (Ex 12:28, 35, 50; 36:5; Lv 24:23; Nm 1:54; 2:34; 5:4; 8:20; 9:5; Dt 34:9). With regard to the construction of the Tabernacle and its articles, both individuals (Bezalel) and groups of the people did (עשׂה) what the Lord had commanded to Moses (Ex 38:22; 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31, 32, 42, 43). In the context of the new priestly ministry, both Aaron and his sons did (עשׂה) what the Lord had commanded to Moses (Lv 8:36; 9:10, 21; 16:34; Nm 8:3, 4; 8:22). As did Eleazar (Nm 31:31) and Zelophehad's daughters (Nm 36:10).

83. There are examples of the Lord doing (עשׂה) something according to the word (דבר) of Moses (Ex 8:13, 27), and also committing to do something according to what Moses had spoken (דבר) (Ex 3:17).

2.1.5.2 Deuteronomy 34:10-12 and the Old Testament

Not surprisingly, outside of the *Torah*, the unique and influential actions of Moses are recounted by various leaders at critical times during the life of the people of Israel. For example, Joshua reminded the people that the Lord had previously sent Moses and Aaron (Joshua 24:5), Samuel did the same during his farewell speech (1 Samuel 12:8), Nehemiah concluded that signs and wonders were sent against Pharaoh (Nehemiah 9:10), the Psalmist concluded that Moses and Aaron were sent by the Lord (Psalm 105:26), and finally, Micah recounted that the Lord sent Moses (Micah 6:4).

2.1.6 Character evaluation - Synthesis

When reading the last chapter of Deuteronomy, it is often easy to wonder about what made Moses so special, and through an understanding of the narrator's use of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula within the Behavioural epitaph, we can begin to answer the question with more certainty, at least in the context of this pericope. As presented to the reader by means of the newly uncovered *'ăsher*-verb formula, the narrator presents a positive evaluation of Moses' unique prophetic nature due to three particular elements inherent in the text of Deuteronomy 34:10-12: he was known by the Lord (אשר ידע), he was sent by the Lord (אשר שלח) and he

performed the deeds on behalf of the Lord[84] (אשר עשה). In turn, each of the three

'*ăsher*-verbs is further expanded upon with a corresponding subordinate clause

(through the use of a repeated ל), providing a more detailed and thorough literary

and theological description of the unparalleled distinctiveness of Moses the

prophet.

An awareness of the presence and function of the '*ăsher*-verb formula within

Deuteronomy 34:10-12 suggests that an effective English translation of the text

could be:

"There has not arisen again in Israel, a prophet like Moses:

Whom the Lord knew face to face

in all the signs and wonders

Whom the Lord sent

to do in the land of Egypt (to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land)

in all the mighty power, and

in all the great terror

Who accomplished it (Moses)

in the sight of all Israel."

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84. Olson (1994a:170) concludes that Moses plays a "crucial role as the human agent of divine activity".

2.2   2 Kings 23:25[85] – Josiah

2.2.1   Introduction

As is true with all works of literature, whether ancient or modern, the writer(s) of the books of 1 and 2 Kings (also referred to as simply "Kings") have certain expectations of their readers, if they are to be thoughtfully and responsibly understood. For the books of Kings, first and foremost is the narrator's apparent assumption that the reader has both an intimate familiarity and deep appreciation of the *Torah*, as suggested by his frequent reference and appeal to the Law of Moses. The measuring rod by which many of the recorded events and characters are judged is the text of the *Torah* (especially Deuteronomy), as evidenced not only in 2 Kings 23:25, but throughout the books of Kings.[86]

In addition, the narrator's continual return to the many precepts of the *Torah* serves as a type of evaluative backbone to the books of Kings, in the same manner as does the loose chronological structure (successive kingships, etc)[87] and general

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85.   The corresponding passage in 2 Chr 35:20-27 contains neither the evaluation of 2 Ki 23:25 nor the *'ăsher*-verb formula.

86.   Some examples are 1 Ki 2:2-4; 9:6-9; 11:1-11 (also note the numerous references to commandments, laws, decrees, covenant, Egypt, etc throughout the books of Kings). See Brueggemann (2000:2-4) and Nelson (1987:6-7) for two good summaries of 1 and 2 Kings' reliance upon the *Torah*, especially Deuteronomy. In his commentary, Fretheim (1999:6-10) provides an excellent description of the meaning and significance of the books of Kings as a part of the larger Deuteronomistic History.

87.   The precise nature of the chronology of the books of Kings has been written about extensively, and for a good comparison and summary, refer to Provan (1995:6-10), House

theological structure (a cyclical pattern of reform and apostasy). It seems that 1 and 2 Kings are not primarily intended to be objective histories,[88] but rather are analytical histories of the various characters contained therein, as seen through the evaluative eye of the *Torah*.

Within the story of the books of Kings, the Josiah narrative of 2 Kings 22-23 takes place immediately after the brief reign (only two years) of his father Amon. Prior to king Amon's time in power was the relatively long reign (fifty-five years) of his father Manasseh, and both of them were known for the evil nature of their respective kingships.[89] King Josiah's reign started when he was only eight years old, and the first recorded event of his kingship was the discovery of the Book of the Law.[90] The biblical story then goes on to describe Josiah's response to the newly recovered Book of the Law and its teachings, with the narrator providing a unique evaluation of Josiah, with the aid of the *'ăsher*-verb formula, at the end of the narrative.

(1995:39-41), and Nelson (1987:8-10).

88. Of course, no description of history can be completely objective, as any time that history is relayed from one source to another source, interpretation inevitably takes place to some degree.

89. See 2 Ki 21:1-2 (Manasseh) and 21:19-20 (Amon).

90. See 2 Ki 22:3-10. Josiah was eighteen years old when he sent Shaphan to the temple, and it is Shaphan who seems to play a central role in first recognizing the significance of the discovery.

2.2.2   The text

2.2.2.1   Limits of the passage

Scholarly interest in the "Josiah Evaluation" of 2 Kings has resulted in many thoughtful attempts to describe the literary structure and thematic limits of the pericope[91], and Nelson (1987:254) carefully concludes that the kingly action within the Josiah narrative is structured around five royal initiatives by means of the two verbs "sent" and "commanded". Although his analysis is a good start at identifying the structural framework of the text, it is not complete,[92] as a closer look at the pericope suggests that, in fact, there may be six royal initiatives within the story, indicated by the alternating use of שלח (sent) and צוה (commanded):

1. Discovery of the book (22:3-11; "sent / שלח", v. 3)

2. Inquiry about the book (22:12-20; "commanded / צוה", v. 12)

3. Covenant and the book (23:1-3; "sent / שלח", v. 1)

4. Reforms from the book (23:4-15; "commanded / צוה", v. 4)

5. Re-enforcing the book (23:16-20; "sent / שלח", v. 16)

6. Passover from the book (23:21-24; "commanded / צוה", v. 21)

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91.   The most common approach seems to be to divide the chapter 23 pericope into the following verse sections 1-3, 4-14, 15-20, 21-23, 24-25. For example, see Brueggemann (2000:553-558), House (1995:387-391), and Provan (1995:272-274).

92.   Somewhat surprisingly, Nelson's commentary does not explore verse 25 in either his

Additionally, there appears to be a chiastic structure of three "sent/commanded" pairs, with the central role being the story of the introduction and conclusion of Josiah's Judean kingship described in 2 Kings 23:1-15, and the *'ăsher*-verb formula occurring in the A' conclusion and evaluation section:

A   Introduction and evaluation (22:1-2)

B   Sent to repair the temple in Jerusalem (22:3-11; "שלח")

Commanded to inquire of the Lord (22:12-20; "צוה")

C   Sent for all Jerusalem to return to the Covenant (23:1-3; "שלח")

Commanded that all Jerusalem be purged of idolatry (23:4-15; "צוה")

B'   Sent to fulfil the word of the Lord (23:16-20; "שלח")

Commanded to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem (23:21-24; "צוה")

A'   Conclusion and evaluation (23:25)

As we turn to the observational techniques of delimitation criticism, we see that the use of a *samekh* marker in both the Leningrad and Aleppo Codices suggests that verse 25 functions as the start of a distinct unit,[93] which agrees nicely with

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proposed structure or the expository text that follows.

93.   See also Sweeney (2001:44) for a structural analysis of the Josiah narrative, which suggests that verse 25 is the start of a three verse unit that concludes Josiah's ministry.

both the royal initiative and chiastic structures identified above. Also, note that 22:3-23:25 may secondarily function as an expanded commentary within the main story line that flows directly from 22:2 to 23:26. That is, the narrative could theoretically read *"He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. However, the LORD did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger."*

2.2.2.2 Translation

Taking into account the presence of the formal indicator לֹא־הָיָה and using the single אֲשֶׁר and repeated בְּכָל's as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown below. 2 Kings 23:25 reads:

Before him, there was no king like him:

וְכָמֹהוּ לֹא־הָיָה[94] לְפָנָיו מֶלֶךְ

ms noun (absolute) / ms noun (construct) + 3ms + preposition / Qal-p3ms / negative particle / preposition + 3ms + conjunction

who turned to the Lord

אֲשֶׁר־שָׁב אֶל־יְהוָה

proper noun / preposition / Qal-p3ms / relative pronoun

with all of his heart,

בְּכָל־לְבָבוֹ

ms noun (construct) + 3ms / ms noun + preposition

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94. Compare 1 Ki 3:12 where both לֹא־הָיָה and לֹא־יָקוּם are also used to distinguish a king (Solomon) from his peers, with regard to his wise and discerning mind.

with all of his soul,

וּבְכָל־נַפְשׁוֹ

fs noun (construct) + 3ms / ms noun + preposition + conjunction

and with all of his strength,

וּבְכָל־מְאֹדוֹ[95]

adverb + 3ms / ms noun + preposition + conjunction

according to all the law of Moses.

כְּכֹל[96] תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה

proper noun (absolute) / fs noun (construct) / ms noun + preposition

And after him, there was no one like him.

וְאַחֲרָיו לֹא־קָם כָּמֹהוּ

preposition + 3ms / Qal-p3ms / negative particle / adverb + 3fs + conjunction

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of both a single *'ăsher*-verb combination and two of the three formal indicators (לֹא־הָיה and קוּם־ לֹא).

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95.   The term מאד is used over 300 times in the Hebrew Bible, and usually functions as an adverb.   However, in this text (and also in Dt 6:5) it likely occurs as the substantive "strength" or "force".

96.   At the beginning of the phrase כְּכֹל תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה, some manuscripts read either בְּכֹל or וּבְכֹל. At first glance, these alternative readings appear to fit nicely with the verse's repeated use of בכל, however, neither variant seems grammatically plausible, and neither of the two key manuscripts (Leningrad and Aleppo) reflect בכל (cf. 2K 23:32).   In addition, the Septuagint reflects κατὰ πάντα (which varies from the threefold use of ἐν ὅλῃ earlier in the verse). Therefore, it seems that ככל is the better reading.

2.2.3   Structural and literary analysis

2.2.3.1   Literary style and narrative characteristics

Although the books of Kings have been commonly understood to be either an historical or theological narrative, they can also be seen as a *prophetic narrative*,[97] which has the following five characteristics:

1. It assesses the past based on God's covenant with Israel,

2. It predicts the future by noting how God has blessed or punished Israel in the past,

3. It creates its plot to fulfil a prophetic view of the past and future,

4. It assesses characters based on how they influence God's blessing or judgments on Israel, and

5. It instructs its audience to turn to the Lord.

This model seems reasonable, and verse 25's evaluative focus on covenant fulfilment[98] as the means of royal assessment agrees with the prophetic nature (ie, a call to refocus on the *Torah*) of the books of Kings.

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97.   "Prophetic" here does not necessarily refer to prophetic authorship or message, but rather to prophetic characteristics [see House (1995:57-58)]. This idea is also explored briefly in Fretheim (1999:8-10).

98.   If the text is divided into slightly different sections than suggested above, an interesting pattern of word repetition (and non-repetition) emerges, highlighting the dramatic break that Josiah made from the previous kingship of Manasseh (and Amon):

The Josiah narrative starts and ends with the typical formulaic expressions found throughout the books of Kings, with a slight distinction between the Israelite and Judean kings. The formalized introduction includes the king's name, age at ascension, length of reign, name of mother, and evaluation of his kingship.[99] The corresponding conclusion of each royal narrative includes the king's name, references to other sources of information about his reign, and the occasional mention of his death and/or burial.[100] The "Josiah Evaluation" of verse 25 is found within the narrative just before the standard dismissal formula.

2.2.3.2   'ăsher-verb structure

The 'ăsher-verb formula within 2 Kings 23:25 is the only one of the twelve instances in which there is a single 'ăsher-verb – the eleven others have various combinations of multiple 'ăsher-verbs. Following the typical usage employed by

verses 19-20	במה	עיר	כעס	סור							
verses 21-25					פסח	כתב	ספר	שפט	קום	תורה	
verses 26-27		עיר	כעס	סור							
	high place	incite	provoke	turn aside	passover	write	book	judge	arise	law	

99.   For example, see 1 Ki 14:21; 15:1; 22:41; 2 Ki 8:16-17, etc.

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the narrator,[101] the אֲשֶׁר of verse 25 is 1) preceded by a formal evaluative indicator, in this case לֹא־הָיָה, and 2) immediately followed by a perfective verb:[102] אֲשֶׁר שָׁב. Unique to this instance of the 'ăsher-verb formula is the presence of a second indicator, which in this case, is the לֹא־קָם at the end of the verse.[103] Also, the repeated use of three subordinate prepositions (בְּכָל[104]) directly following the 'ăsher-verb clause further refines the narrator's understanding of what "turned to the Lord" (שָׁב אֶל־יהוה) encompassed – king Josiah turned with all of his heart, all of his soul, and all of his strength.

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100. For example, see 1 Ki 14:19-20; 15:7-8; 22:45-50; 2 Ki 8:23-24, etc.

101. Of course, for the purposes of this study, throughout the Deuteronomistic History, the narrator(s) can be assumed to be the Deuteronomist(s), and vice versa.

102. In general, the twelve pericopes reflect the common practice of using a perfective verb when the viewpoint of the narrator is looking back (ie, generalized as "past tense") and an imperfective verb when the viewpoint is looking forward (ie, generalized as "future tense"). However, given the sometimes "all-encompassing" nature of the 'ăsher-verb formula, verb-form usage is not necessarily universally consistent.

103. The king Josiah pericope is the only instance of the 'ăsher-verb formula in which the subject character is evaluated with both the cultic indicator and the royal indicator.

104. Other examples of multiple בְּכָל's used as a listing technique are Dt 6:5; Neh 9:10; Es 8:17; Is 7:19 and Jr 15:13.

2.2.4   Literary context

2.2.4.1   2 Kings 23:25 and the *'ăsher*-verb within 1 and 2 Kings

Both the relative pronoun אשר and שׁב occur together in 2 Kings 18:5, but the royal evaluation of the 2 Kings 23:25 pericope does not conflict with the narrator's similar observation of king Hezekiah, as some have suggested,[105] as the assessment in 2 Kings 18:5 is restricted to the kings of Judah. Also, and perhaps even more importantly, the usage of *'ăsher* in 2 Kings 18:5 is grammatically unconnected to the specific characteristics attributed to Hezekiah in the pericope.

The identification and review of all instances of יאשׁיהו and שׁוב within a three verse range[106] suggests that there are no other pericopes that directly indicate that king Josiah either did or would return to the Lord. However, in Jeremiah 3:6-10, the prophet recalls that the Lord, during the reign of king Josiah, had specifically desired that Judah return (שׁוב) to him, but in fact, the nation did not.

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105. For example, see Hobbs (1985:338) and Cohn et al. (2000:161).

106. Refer again to 2.1.5.1 for this study's rationale behind selecting a three verse range to explore. The references are: 1 Ki. 13:2; 2 Ki. 23:19, 23f, 28f; Jr. 3:6; 22:11; 25:3; 26:1; 35:1; 36:1f, 9; 45:1.

2.2.4.2   2 Kings 23:25 and the Old Testament

The 2 Kings 23:25 passage is the only Old Testament record of an individual fulfilling the triple command to love the Lord with all of one's heart (לבב), soul (נפש) and strength (מאד) as recorded in Deuteronomy 6:5.[107] By identifying these specific characteristics within the *'ăsher*-verb formula, the narrator of the books of Kings set Josiah apart as not only a unique[108] king, but also the superior king in terms of *Torah* requirements and faithfulness.[109]

2.2.5   Character evaluation - Synthesis

Answering the question of *why* was there no other king like Josiah, either before him or after him, has resulted in a large volume of scholarly debate, and most observation and speculation centers on the particular actions and activities of the king. Much has been written about the extent of Josiah's Passover celebration, his handling of the high places and altars, his reading of the scroll in public, etc (ie,

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107. Joshua issued a similar challenge to the people (Jos 22:5).

108. In addition to his unique character and actions, Josiah was also the only king to be prophesied about by name (cf 1 Ki 13:2).

109. Brueggemann (2000:559) refers to king Josiah as the "Quintessential Torah keeper", and also recognizes the link between 2 Ki 23:25 (Josiah) and Dt 34:10-12 (Moses), both of which are evaluated by means of the *'ăsher*-verb formula [see also Cogan and Tadmor (1988:291) and Fritz (2003:409)]. Braulik (1994:99) suggests that Josiah "made the Torah in its contemporary literary form the constitution of his kingdom".

his religious reform).[110] That is, most modern evaluations focus on the specific actions of king Josiah, rather than on his overall character.

The presence of the *'ăsher*-verb formula, with its identification of the specific characteristic (שוב further refined by a series of three בכל statements) of king Josiah, suggests that from the narrator's point of view, Josiah was unique because of his wholehearted commitment[111] to the Lord and his covenant relationship. However, the reader must be careful not to overstate the case and conclude that the *'ăsher*-verb formula *proves* the uniqueness of Josiah (that discussion is better left for a thorough analysis of the entire Josiah narrative), but rather than the narrator employed the specific *'ăsher*-verb literary technique within the 2 Kings 23:25 Behavioural epitaph as a means of highlighting the particular incomparability of king Josiah.

An awareness of the presence and function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within 2 Kings 23:25 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

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110. For example, see Cohn et al. (2000:158-162); Cogan and Tadmor (1988:293-299); Fretheim (1999:216-200) and Provan (1995:272-274).

111. Referring to the language of Dt 6:5, the tri-fold use of לבב, נפש and מאד seems to best indicate complete commitment with every element of one's being, not just an outward activity (ie, ritual action).

"Before him, there was no king like him:

> *who turned to the Lord* (with all of his heart, soul, and strength) according
> to the law of Moses.

And after him, there was no one like him."

2.3   Conclusion

Within the Behavioural epitaph text-type, each of the two subject characters is posthumously evaluated by the narrator, in terms of his cultic significance. Moses is described as the incomparable prophet because he was known-sent-successful, and Josiah is presented as the incomparable king (in terms of *Torah* faithfulness) because he turned to the Lord. In each pericope, it is the distinct *'ăsher*-verb formula that clearly identifies the subject character as unique, and also lists the specific characteristics that support the narrator's conclusion.

3 Text-type: Narrative future

Within the two examples of the Narrative future text-type pericopes of Numbers 27:16-17 and 2 Chronicles 1:11-12, the narrator employs the *'ăsher*-verb formula in the context of the participant looking to the future, specifically with regard to the current or upcoming leadership of the Israelites. The desired characteristics of the new leaders are articulated by means of the specific formula.

3.1   Numbers 27:16-17 – Moses' successor

3.1.1   Introduction

Among the five scrolls of the *Torah*, it is often the book of Numbers that seems to have its significance fall behind the shadows of the other four books, in part due to the more readily discernable literary style and message of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In fact, one commentator unfortunately referred to the book of Numbers as "the junk room of the Bible"[112] because of its apparent haphazard collection of laws and stories.

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112. The actual commentator who made this assertion appears to be anonymous, although he is referenced by other writers [eg Alexander and Baker (2003:612) and Olson (1996:4)].

However, when the text is carefully reviewed, it appears that there are two possible inherent literary structures to Numbers, one of which reflects a strong geographical influence, and the other of which is more content based. If the book is looked at from a spatial, or geographical, point of view,[113] the following structure emerges:

At Mt. Sinai (1:1-10:10)

At Kadesh-Barnea (10:11-19:22)

At the Plains of Moab (20:1-36:13)

If a more literary approach is taken,[114] a two-fold structure appears, which is built around the two censuses recorded in the book:

The Old Generation (1:1-25:18)

The New Generation (26:1-36:13)

As for the content of Numbers, the book presents the experiences of the people of God as they journey through the wilderness (the Hebrew name for the book is "In the Wilderness"), as they transition from one generation to another. The Numbers 27:16-17 pericope, within which the *'ăsher*-verb formula falls, is contained in the

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113. Traditional commentators such as Ashley (1992:2-3) prefer this structure.

114. This literary understanding tends to be preferred by recent commentators [eg Alexander and Baker (2003:612) and Olson (1996:4-7)].

latter of the two generational sections.[115] It provides a look forward to the new leader of the people of God, and presumably new experiences as well, as the Israelites seek to leave the wilderness and finally enter the long anticipated promised land.

3.1.2   The text

3.1.2.1 Limits of the passage

The story of the commissioning of Joshua as the successor to Moses is described in Numbers 27:12-23, and it is within this passage that Moses describes the key qualities and characteristics of the man who is to take his place in leadership over the people of Israel. The text contains a typical mixture of direct speech and narrative description, and the *'ăsher*-verb formula appears in verses 16-17. Although the formula itself appears in verse 17 alone, it is best to take the entire statement of Moses (previously introduced by verse 15),[116] and use 27:16-17 as the textual limits for the purposes of this study.

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115. The story of the Moses' transfer of leadership to Joshua is placed immediately subsequent to the second census, perhaps as a way of alerting the reader that a new generation required a new leader.

116. Both the Leningrad Codex [Ben-Asher and Dotan (2001:240)] and the reconstructed Aleppo Codex [Breuer and Ofer (2000:154)] indicate that verse 15 is the start of a new section. While the Samaritan Pentateuch does not reflect that verse 15 is the start of a new section, it does indicate that verse 17 is the end of one [Von Gall (1918:336)].

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3.1.2.2 Translation

Using the repetitive presence of the אשר clauses as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown below. Numbers 27:16-17 reads:

Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind,

יִפְקֹד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָרוּחֹת לְכָל־בָּשָׂר

ms noun / ms noun + preposition / mp noun + article / mp noun / proper noun / Qal-i3ms

appoint a man over the community

אִישׁ עַל־הָעֵדָה

fs noun + article / preposition / ms noun

who will go out in front of them,

אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא לִפְנֵיהֶם

mp noun + 3mp + preposition / Qal-i3ms / relative pronoun

who will come in in front of them,

וַאֲשֶׁר יָבֹא לִפְנֵיהֶם

mp noun + 3mp + preposition / Qal-i3ms / relative pronoun + conjunction

who will lead them out,

וַאֲשֶׁר יוֹצִיאֵם

Hiphil-i3ms + 3mp / relative pronoun + conjunction

and who will bring them in,

וַאֲשֶׁר יְבִיאֵם

Hiphil-i3ms + 3mp / relative pronoun + conjunction

so that the community of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd.

וְלֹא תִהְיֶה עֲדַת יְהוָה כַּצֹּאן אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לָהֶם רֹעֶה

Qal-participle-ms / prep + 3mp / adverb / relative pronoun / ms noun + article + prep / proper noun / fs noun / Qal-i3fs / neg part + conj

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of a quadruple *'ăsher*-verb combination.

3.1.3   Structural and literary analysis

3.1.3.1   Literary style and narrative characteristics

The story starts with the Lord telling Moses to go up on a mountain so he could
see with his own eyes the land that was being given to the Israelites, even though
he could not enter it due to his earlier disobedience with his brother Aaron, and
their failure to honour the Lord.[117]   The phrase "you will be gathered to your
people" is a typical formula for describing death, and in this case, it is functioning
as a prediction rather than as an historical observation.[118]

Regarding Moses' speech in verses 16-17, much has been written concerning the
meaning of the phrase "the God of the spirits of all mankind",[119] and it seems that
the basic intent of the phrase is simply to portray the Lord as the ruler of the
whole of creation, not just of the specific Israelite people.   The term spirit (רוח)
also plays an important role in the Lord's specific selection[120] of Joshua
(27:18),[121] and perhaps the narrator is suggesting an intentional connection

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117. Nm 20:1-13.

118. Within the *Torah*, examples of the "past tense" usage of the formula are Abraham (Gn 25:8),
Ishmael (Gn 25:17), Isaac (Gn 35:29) and Joseph (Gn 49:33), and instances of "future tense"
usage are Aaron (Nm 20:24) and Moses (Nm 31:2 and Dt 32:50).

119. For example, see Cole (2000:468) and Levine (2000:349).   The only other occurrence of this
phrase is in Nm 16:22.

120. Note that Joshua is not selected here by Moses, but rather he is chosen by the Lord.

121. The phrase איש אשר רוח [אלהים] בו is also occurs in Gn 41:38 to describe Joseph.

between the Lord and Joshua.[122]

3.1.3.2   *'ăsher*-verb structure

Insight into the anticipated nature and characteristics of the future leader of the Israelite people can be obtained by the reader through the recognition of the inherent four-fold *'ăsher*-verb formula in Numbers 27:16-17. Moses' words start with an appeal to the Lord's sovereignty (ie, may *the Lord* appoint a man over the community), but are immediately followed by his specific description of what he expects that the leader should be able to do. Rather than employ one of the three typical indicators commonly used in other *'ăsher*-verb occurrences, the narrator instead chose to list the four אשׁר and imperfect verb clauses directly – the man over the community is to go out (יצא) in front of the community, come in (בוא) in front of the community, lead them out (יצא) and lead them in (בוא). The double use of "go out" and "come in" is possibly the language of military conquest,[123] although nothing in the immediate context suggests that it should not refer to the general political leadership of Moses' successor (which would include military

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122. Alexander and Baker (2003:479) suggest that Joshua's identity as "a man in whom is the spirit" in combination with the presence of Eleazer the priest, results in the reader understanding that Joshua's military and political leadership is founded on the authority of the priesthood.

123. As suggested by Gray (1903:401) and Sakenfeld (1995:151-152). The "sheep without a shepherd" imagery may also have military connotations [see Ashley (1992:551) and Budd (1984:306)].

leadership as well).

3.1.4 Literary context

3.1.4.1 Numbers 27:16-17 and the '*ăsher*-verbs within the *Torah*

A review of all instances of יהושע and יצא within a three verse range[124] reveals that earlier in the *Torah* narrative, Moses had commanded Joshua to "go out" and fight the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16). Joshua did go out, and with the benefit of Moses' uplifted hands, he defeated the Amalekites. The Lord spoke to Moses and foretold that Joshua would go (בוא) into the land (Deuteronomy 1:38), and then the Lord told the same message to Joshua himself (Deuteronomy 31:23). As well, Moses commissioned Joshua to go with the people into the land that the Lord had promised to them (Deuteronomy 31:7).

3.1.4.2 Numbers 27:16-17 and the Old Testament

Of course, the book of Joshua presents a very detailed and lengthy narrative of Joshua and the people of Israel's experiences of "going into" and conquering the long awaited promised land, and the first record of their going (בוא) is in Joshua

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124. Ex 17:9f, 14; 33:11; Nm 11:28; 14:38; 27:18, 22; Dt 31:3; Jos 2:1; 5:2ff, 7, 9, 13ff; 6:2, 8, 10, 12, 22, 25f; 8:3, 9, 13, 15f, 18, 21, 23; 9:15; 10:20ff, 24ff; 11:6f; 14:13; 15:13; 18:8ff; 19:49; 21:1; 24:2; 2 Ki 23:8; Ezr 10:18; Neh 9:5; Hg 1:12, 14; 2:2, 4; Zch 6:11.

3:1 when they left Shittim and got ready to cross the Jordan River. Subsequently, Joshua and the people are said to have gone on to defeat Ai (Joshua 8:10-11), the five kings of the Amorites (Joshua 10:9), the northern kings at the Waters of Merom (Joshua 11:7) and the Anakites (Joshua 11:21).

3.1.5   Character evaluation - Synthesis

Within a Narrative future literary context, the Numbers 27:16-17 pericope plays a key literary and thematic role in the entire *Torah* narrative, as it looks forward to the first steps of the formal transfer in leadership[125] from Moses to Joshua. The first leader of the people of Israel had led them out of their captivity, but now a new leader was about to lead them into the land of promise. By identifying the presence of the four-fold *'ăsher*-verb formula within the text, the reader can now recognize and appreciate the narrator's presentation of Moses' desire that the new leader of the people of Israel be a man of active leadership, someone who would initially and continually go out (יצא) in front of the people and then bring them in (בוא) into the new land.

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125. Olson (1994b:63) described it as the "passing of the baton".

An awareness of the presence and function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within Number 27:16-17 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over the community:

> *who will go out* in front of them,
>
> *who will come in* in front of them,
>
> *who will lead them out*, and
>
> *who will bring them in,*

so that the community of the Lord will not be like a sheep without a shepherd."

3.2   2 Chronicles 1:11-12[126] – Solomon

3.2.1   Introduction

Both 1 and 2 Chronicles were originally a single literary work (also referred to as the books of Chronicles), and together they form the last books of the Hebrew

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126. While the corresponding pericope in 1 Ki 3:12-13 contains many of the same themes as does this pericope, the literary structure is not the same and it does not reflect the usage of the *'ăsher*-verb formula as does 2 Chr 1:11-12. Somewhat related to this study, Holmstedt (2001:14-15) suggests that 1 Ki 13 indicates the possible functions of אשר are limited to either relative or complementary roles, an observation which in many instances, agrees with this study's general conclusion that within the context of the *'ăsher*-verb formula, אשר initiates a relative clause (as opposed to a resultant, conditional, etc clause).

Bible. Much of the material found within the books of Chronicles is focused on either David or Solomon, and as is also the case with the books of Kings, the narratological perspective contained therein is often a mix of history and evaluative opinion.[127] For the purposes of this study, perhaps the most effective literary structure of Chronicles can be presented by using the following three general divisions:[128]

1) The Tribes of Israel (1 Chronicles 1:1 – 9:44)

2) The Kingdom of David and Solomon (1 Chronicles 10:1 – 2 Chronicles 9:31)

3) The Kingdom of Judah (2 Chronicles 10:1 – 36:23)

The two 'āsher-verb formulas of 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 are found within the second section, at the very beginning of the presentation of king Solomon's reign as he was praying and preparing for building the temple for the Lord. While much of Chronicles seems to be concerned with the religious and political significance of the city of Jerusalem, the 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 pericope instead takes place outside of Jerusalem at the high place at Gibeon, where the Tent of Meeting was located at that time.

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127. Dillard (1987:2) writes that the Chronicler "presents us not only the David and Solomon of history, but also the David and Solomon of his messianic expectation". See also Curtis and Madsen (1910:316).

128. As suggested in Selman (1994:276-284).

3.2.2 The text

3.2.2.1 Limits of the passage

The story of the night time conversation between God and king Solomon is recorded by the narrator in the larger 2 Chronicles 1:7-12 passage, and it follows a very simple and logical format: God asked an initial question (verse 7), Solomon replied (verses 8-10) and God subsequently responded (verses 11-12). As the two *'ăsher*-verb formulas occur within God's brief response to Solomon's answer, it can naturally be assumed that the textual limits of the pericope are verses 11-12, notwithstanding the possible alternative Masoretic indications reflected within the two major manuscripts.[129]

3.2.2.2 Translation

Taking into account both the basic grammar of the text and the two sets of repetitive אשר's as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown below. 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 reads:

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129. Both the Leningrad Codex [Ben-Asher and Dotan (2001:1174)] and Aleppo Codex [Breuer and Ofer (2000:839)] indicate that there are textual breaks before verse 11 and also after verse 13. Verse 13 is likely a parenthetical observation that does not closely link with the following text, but neither does it appear to have an inherent literary relationship to verses 11-12. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, it is best that verse 13 be left to "stand alone" in the narrative, as background information for the reader.

God said to Solomon,

וַיֹּאמֶר־אֱלֹהִים לִשְׁלֹמֹה

proper noun + preposition / mp noun / Qal-i3ms + conjunction

"Because this was in your heart:

יַעַן אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה זֹאת עִם־לְבָבְךָ

ms noun + 2ms / preposition / fs adjective / Qal-p3fs / relative pronoun / adverb

and you did not ask for

וְלֹא־שָׁאַלְתָּ

Qal-p2ms / negative article + conjunction

wealth, riches or honour,

עֹשֶׁר נְכָסִים וְכָבוֹד

ms noun + conjunction / mp noun / ms noun

the life of those who hate you,

וְאֵת נֶפֶשׁ שֹׂנְאֶיךָ

Qal-participle-mp + 2ms / fs noun / particle + conjunction

and you did not even ask for long life,

וְגַם־יָמִים רַבִּים לֹא שָׁאָלְתָּ

Qal-p2ms / negative particle / mp adjective / mp noun / conjunction + conjunction

I will give to you wisdom and knowledge

וַתִּשְׁאַל־לְךָ חָכְמָה וּמַדָּע

ms noun + conjunction / fs noun / preposition + 2ms / Qal-i2ms / conjunction

by which you will judge my people

אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁפּוֹט אֶת־עַמִּי

ms noun + 1cs / particle / Qal-i2ms / relative pronoun

and by which I will have you rule over them.

אֲשֶׁר הִמְלַכְתִּיךָ עָלָיו

preposition + 3ms / Hiphil-p1cs + 2ms / relative pronoun

Wisdom and knowledge I will give to you,

הַחָכְמָה וְהַמַּדָּע נָתוּן לָךְ

preposition + 2fs / Qal-participle-ms / ms noun + article + conjunction / fs noun + article

and wealth, riches and glory I will give to you;

וְעֹשֶׁר וּנְכָסִים וְכָבוֹד אֶתֶּן־לָךְ

preposition + 2fs / Qal-i1ms / ms noun + conjunction / mp noun + conjunction / ms noun + conjunction

so that there are no kings like you

אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָיָה כֵן לַמְּלָכִים

mp noun + article + preposition / adverb / Qal-p3ms / negative article / relative pronoun

and there will be none before you or after you.

אֲשֶׁר לְפָנֶיךָ וְאַחֲרֶיךָ לֹא יִהְיֶה־כֵּן

adverb / Qal-i3ms / negative article / adverb + 2ms + conjunction / preposition + 2ms / relative pronoun

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The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of two double *'āsher*-verb combinations and one of the three formal indicators (לא־היה).

3.2.3 Structural and literary analysis

3.2.3.1 Literary style and narrative characteristics

As is described elsewhere in the book of Chronicles,[130] Solomon's "divine conversation" presented to the reader in verses 7-12 took place at night, and God was the initiator of the experience, regardless of whether it took place in a dream or by some other means.[131] While the nocturnal timing of the experience may not have been unusual, the open-ended question posed by God (שאל מה אתן־לך) certainly was unique, as there is no other biblical record of such an unqualified offer.[132]

In terms of structure, the Solomon narrative of chapters 1-9 has a chiastic

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130. See 1 Chr 17:3 and 2 Chr 7:12.

131. The passage in 1 Ki 3:5 identifies Solomon's experience as a dream, and some scholars have suggested that the Chronicler removed the reference to a dream either innocently [see Selman (1994:292)] or because dreams had fallen into disrepute at that time [see Coggins (1976:148), Dillard (1987:12) and Japhet (1993:530)].

132. See Thompson (1994:204-205) for additional observations on the uniqueness of God's offer.

format,[133] and not surprisingly, the 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 pericope is within the first section that focuses on king Solomon's great wisdom and wealth.[134] The corresponding passage is found in the colourful stories of chapter 9 – the visit from the Queen of Sheba, and the description of Solomon's wealth and grandeur. The chiastic layout is shown below:

A   Solomon's wisdom, wealth and fame (1:1-17)

B   Solomon prepares for the temple (2:1-18)

C   Construction of the temple (3:1-5:1)

C'   Dedication of the temple (5:2-7:22)

B'   Solomon completes the temple (8:1-16)

A'   Solomon's wisdom, wealth and fame (8:17-9:28)

3.2.3.2   *'ăsher*-verb structure

Unique among instances of the *'ăsher*-verb formula that occur with one of the three formal indicators, 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 has the marker (the dual use of הָיָה לֹא) at the end of the evaluation, rather than at the beginning. Within the pericope, God's initial response of appreciation for what Solomon did *not* ask for is

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133. See various suggestions in Dillard (1987:5-6), Pratt (1998:207-208) and Selman (1994:285-286).

134. Japhet (1993:532) suggests that "God's choicest gift [to Solomon was] his wealth – a feature

followed by his commitment to provide Solomon with wisdom and knowledge for two specific reasons, highlighted by the use of the *'ăsher*-verb formula: "by which you will judge" (אשר תשפוט) my people, and "by which I will have you rule" (אשר המלכתיך) over them. Then, after a second divine commitment to give wisdom and knowledge (with the addition of wealth, riches and glory), the final evaluation is provided, again, by the use of the two-fold *'ăsher*-verb[135] formula: "so that there are no kings like you" (אשר לא־היה כן למלכים),[136] and "there will be none before you or after you" (אשר לפניך ואחריך לא יהיה־כן).[137]

3.2.4   Literary context

3.2.4.1   2 Chronicles 1:11-12 and the *'ăsher*-verbs within the Old Testament

Within the Old Testament, there are two other instances, outside of the 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 pericope, that specifically link king Solomon with justice or judgement (שפט), and one of them is the parallel passage in 1 Kings 3:5-15.

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which characterizes all of the narrative that follows".

135. In this instance the verb performs double-duty, as it is part of both the *'ăsher*-verb clause and also the לא־היה formulaic indicator.

136. See 1 Chr 29:25 for a similar use of the same language, although the evaluation is limited to Solomon's "royal splendor", and only in relationship to previous kings.

137. In reference to the related 1 Ki 3:12 pericope, Van der Merwe et al. (1999:297) note that אשר can rarely introduce a result (subordinating conjunction). Of course, the repeated linguistic function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula is not identified in his observation, as the formula is present only in the 1 Chr 1:11-12 pericope.

However, in the 1 Kings 3 narrative and immediately subsequent to Solomon's dream, is the second instance: the well-known episode of the two prostitutes who argued over the identity and "ownership" of a single infant. After the royal verdict had been delivered, the narrator notes that the people were in awe of king Solomon because of his judgement (שָׁפַט).[138]

The rulership (מלך) of king Solomon is well attested throughout the Old Testament. At various times, Solomon's mother Bathsheba, king David and Jonathan each made reference to Solomon's reign,[139] and there are numerous examples of general historical reference to his kingly rule.[140] Finally, David and the whole assembly anointed Solomon as king together, just before king David passed away and Solomon took his place.[141]

3.2.5   Character evaluation - Synthesis

The narrator's particular use of the *'āsher*-verb formula in 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 is unique in that it is employed twice in the same pericope, and also that the typical

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138. 1 Ki 3:28.

139. Solomon's mother was an advocate for her son's royal ascension (1 Ki 1:13, 17), David promised Bathsheba that Solomon would be king (1 Ki 1:30), and Jonathan shared his "bad news" of Solomon's kingship (1 Ki 1:43).

140. 1 Ki 6:1; 11:42; 1 Chr 23:1; 29:28 and 2 Chr 9:30.

141. 1 Chr 29:22.

introductory indicator (לא־היה 2x) is placed at the end of the formula, rather than at the beginning. Other than these two unique qualities, however, the *'ăsher*-verb formula functions in the expected manner of the now familiar inherent linguistic technique – as an intentional literary tool to draw the reader's attention to the unique qualities of the character being evaluated by the narrator. In the 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 pericope, king Solomon has both a two-fold command and a future assessment: he was to judge (אשר שפט) and rule over (אשר מלך) the people, and the result would be that there are (אשר לא־היה 2x) no kings like him, either before him or after him.

An awareness of the presence and function of the two *'ăsher*-verb formulas within 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 Narrative future text-type suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"God said to Solomon,

    'Because this was in your heart and you did not ask for

        wealth, riches or honour,

        the life of those who hate you, and

        you did not even ask for a long life,

    I will give to you wisdom and knowledge

        by which you will judge my people, and

> *by which I will have you rule over them.*
>
> Wisdom and knowledge I will give to you, and
>
> wealth, riches and glory I will give to you:
>
> > *so that there are no kings like you, and*
> >
> > *so that there will be no one like you, either before you or after*
> >
> > *you.'"*

3.3 Conclusion

Within the Narrative future text-type, each of the two subject characters is described by the narrator, in terms of his current or impending leadership of the Israelites. The desired characteristics of Moses' successor (who, of course, turns out to be Joshua) are that he be someone who will "go out" and "come in" in front of the people. In the second passage, king Solomon, near the beginning of his reign, is given the responsibility to judge and rule the people, and is also given the promise that his kingship will be unparalleled. In each pericope, it is the distinct *'āsher*-verb formula that clearly identifies the subject character as unique, and also lists the specific characteristics that support the narrator's conclusion.

4 Text-type: Narrative historical

Three of the twelve *'ăsher*-verb formula instances occur within the distinctive

Narrative historical text type pericopes of Genesis 24:7, 2 Samuel 7:23 and 1

Kings 14:8, and as such, the viewpoint of each text is also chronologically

historical (that is, it is a retrospective review of previously occurring actions and

events). Within each of the three passages, the biblical narrator's evaluation of

the character(s) is supported by either two or three definitive statements, with

each one initiated by a specific *'ăsher*-verb combination.

4.1 Genesis 24:7 – The Lord

4.1.1 Introduction

The book of Genesis is rich in literary style, theology and interpretation, and as

such there is a wealth of scholarship to draw on for the book in general, but a

surprising scarcity of material that explores the Genesis 24:7 pericope.[142] Of

course, Genesis deals with "beginnings", not only of the *Torah* and the Old

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142. Cotter (2003:165) acknowledges that "Genesis 24 does not ordinarily excite much comment or interest in those commenting on the book", and he summarily follows suit by not addressing verse 7.

Testament, but also about God's presentation of himself to humanity. The format

of the presentation, as portrayed by the narrator, can be understood in multiple

ways, such as a book of four narratives[143] or a story of ten books.[144]

Regardless of the structural or literary model chosen, the Genesis 24:7 passage is

placed near the end of the relatively large Abraham narrative, and the text is

concerned with the transition from Abraham to Isaac. Throughout the book of

Genesis, in relation to the other Patriarchs, Isaac receives comparatively less

attention by the narrator. Also, in the small number of passages in which Isaac

appears, it sometimes seems as if he functions only as a secondary character, and

not as the central figure.[145] Within the Genesis 24 narrative, the narrator presents

the reader with a conversation between Abraham and his unnamed servant, as

they discuss the process and feasibility of obtaining a wife for Abraham's son,

Isaac. As the reader of Genesis is aware, the finding of a wife, and presumably

the subsequent birth of children for Isaac, is essential if Abraham's line is to

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143. Pre-History – Gn 1:1-11:29, the Abraham Narrative – Gn 11:30-25:18, the Jacob Narrative – Gn 25:19-36:43 and the Joseph Narrative – Gn 37:1-50:26 [see Brueggemann (1982:8-10)]. Alexander and Baker (2003:351-355) suggest a similar model where the verse numbers vary slightly.

144. Prologue – Gn 1:1-2:3, Book 1 – Gn 2:4-4:26, Book 2 – Gn 5:1-6:8, Book 3 – Gn 6:9-9:29, Book 4 – Gn 10:1-11-9, Book 5 – Gn 11:10-26, Book 6 – Gn 11:27-25:11, Book 7 – Gn 25:12-18, Book 8 – Gn 25:19-35:29, Book 9 – Gn 36:1-37:1, Book 10 – Gn 37:2-50:26 [see Waltke and Fredricks (2001:17-18)].

145. For example, in the story of the selection of Isaac's wife, Isaac himself only makes a brief appearance at the very end of the narrative, and in the story of Isaac's blessing, he is portrayed as passive and somewhat "out of touch" with his environment. See also Teugels (1994:60) for a brief description of the "passive patriarch".

become "a great nation" and not surprisingly, the words of Genesis 24:7 reflect the covenantal language of the earlier promises that Abraham received from God in Genesis 12.[146]

4.1.2   The text

4.1.2.1   Limits of the passage

Within the storyline of Genesis 24, there are numerous episodes of direct speech (within the four main "scenes"),[147] and it is within the first conversation between Abraham and his chief servant that the *'āsher*-verb formula occurs. The pericope itself starts in verse 1 and continues until verse 9,[148] but the direct speech of Abraham is limited to verses 6 to 8, and it is this smaller section that is sufficient for our exploration of this instance of the *'āsher*-verb formula. In fact, the opening and closing statements by Abraham form an inclusio around the 24:6-8 pericope – twice he warns "do not take my son back there".

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146. See Alter (1996:113) and Wenham (1994:142).

147. See Brueggemann (1982:197-200), Waltke and Fredricks (2001:326-333) and Wenham (1994:138).

148. These textual limits are confirmed by the Leningrad Codex [Ben-Asher and Dotan (2001:33)], the reconstructed Aleppo Codex [Breuer and Ofer (2000:19-20)] and the Samaritan Pentateuch [Von Gall (1918:39)].

4.1.2.2   Translation

Taking into account both the basic grammar of the text and the three repetitive

אֲשֶׁר's as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is

shown below. Genesis 24:7 reads:

The Lord, the God of heaven,

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם[149]

mp noun + article / mp noun / proper noun

who took me

אֲשֶׁר לְקָחַנִי

Qal-p3ms + 1cs / relative pronoun

from my father's house

מִבֵּית אָבִי

ms noun + 1cs / ms noun + preposition

and from the land of my birth,

וּמֵאֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתִּי[150]

fs noun + 1cs / fs noun + preposition + conjunction

who spoke to me

וַאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־לִי

preposition + 1cs / Piel-p3ms / relative pronoun + conjunction

and who swore to me,

וַאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע־לִי

preposition + 1cs / Niphal-p3ms / relative pronoun + conjunction

saying, "to your descendants I will give this land",

לֵאמֹר לְזַרְעֲךָ אֶתֵּן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת

fs adjective + article / fs noun + article / particle / Qal-i1cs / ms noun + 2ms + preposition / Qal-inf + preposition

he will send his angel in front of you,

הוּא יִשְׁלַח מַלְאָכוֹ לְפָנֶיךָ

fp noun + 2ms + preposition / ms noun + 3ms / Qal-i3ms / 3ms pronoun

and you can take a wife for my son from there.

וְלָקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לִבְנִי מִשָּׁם

adverb + preposition / ms noun + 1cs + preposition / fs noun / Qal-p2ms + conjunction

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149. Septuagint reflects ὑριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς γῆς and several Hebrew manuscripts add ואלהי הארץ (compare Gn 24:3).

150. Several manuscripts reflect מביתי ומארצי (compare the usage of ארץ מולדתה in Gn 11:28, 31:13; Jr 22:10; Ezk 23:15; Rt 2:11).

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of a triple *'ăsher-*verb combination.

4.1.3   Structural and literary analysis

4.1.3.1   Literary style and narrative characteristics

The conversation between Abraham and his servant in verses 2-8 is prefaced by an introductory statement that sounds strikingly familiar to the epitaphs used elsewhere in the Old Testament.[151]   The remainder of the pericope consists of Abraham's commission to the loyal servant[152] to find a wife for Isaac, the servant's subsequent clarification of the assignment, and Abraham's final reassurance based upon the character of God.

Abraham's use of "place your hand under my thigh" highlights the solemnity[153] of the situation, and his commandment to take a wife from his own people and not from the local Canaanites reflects his commitment to obey the Lord's commands

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151. Compare Gn 35:29; Jos 13:1, 23:1; 1 Ki 1:1.

152. Note that this was not just an ordinary servant, but according to verse 2, he was in charge of all of Abraham's possessions (compare the role of Joseph in Gn 39:5). See also Teugels (1995:14) for an analysis of the servant's significance.

153. See Speiser (1964:178-179) and Von Rad (1961:249-250).

and his belief that the "great nation" will come from him and his family alone. Also, Abraham gave his servant the final instruction that even though Isaac's new wife was to come from their "homeland", under no circumstance was he to return Isaac to Mesopotamia,[154] even if his potential wife refused to return[155] to Canaan with Abraham's servant.

4.1.3.2 '*ăsher*-verb structure

The particular '*ăsher*-verb formula found within the Genesis 24:7 pericope is not prefaced by one of the three formal indicators, likely as it seems that Abraham's concern is not that his servant see the Lord as inherently unique (ie, there is no one else like him), but rather as distinctively consistent in character and action. After the initial identification of the subject (ie, the Lord), there are three subsequent אֲשֶׁר and perfective verb clauses[156] that seem to function adjectively[157]

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154. Likely due to Abraham's understanding of God's command to "leave his country" (and not return) so that a new, Abrahamic nation could be created (Gn 12:1-3). See also Hartley (2000:223).

155. See Hamilton (1994:141). Gunkel notes that "this culture places supreme value on the fact that the wife be a relative" [Gunkel and Biddle (1997:250)]. A wife for Isaac must agree to be "taken" from her home land, as was Abram [see also Van Wolde (1995:235)].

156. The lone commentator who appears to have recognized the intentional and repeated use of אֲשֶׁר is Westermann (1985:385), who writes that Abraham's answer comprises "two (or three) relative sentences with אֲשֶׁר", although unfortunately, he does not expand upon his initial observation. See also Gesenius et al. (1910:§138b).

157. As is often the case with the '*ăsher*-verbs, the entire formula seems to function as a single adjective that modifies the subject noun (eg, the character being evaluated – in this case, the Lord).

within the sentence as the means of modifying (or describing) the Lord. The first *'ăsher*-verb (אשר לקח) is further qualified by the use of two subordinate מִן clauses ("from my house" and "from the land of my birth"), and the third *'ăsher*-verb (אשר שבע[158]) is immediately followed by the words of the oath ("to your descendants I will give this land"). Therefore, in Genesis 24:7, Abraham's tri-fold understanding of the Lord (as presented by the narrator) is that the Lord *took* him, *spoke* to him, and *swore* to him.

4.1.4   Literary context

Chapter 24 of Genesis is structured around the following four scenes, with the middle two scenes providing most of the "story":

> Abraham and his servant (1-9)
>
> Rebekah and the servant (10-27)
>
> The servant at Rebekah's house (28-61)
>
> Isaac meets Rebekah (62-67)

The first scene not only functions as the introduction to the entire pericope, but it also has the notable distinction of containing the last recorded words of

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158. See Warning (2002:62) for a brief exploration of the possible structural use (inclusio) of שבע in Gn 24.

Abraham.[159] With this feature in mind, Waltke and Fredricks (2001:324) write

that "the narrator clearly intends this scene to mark the movement from

Abraham's patriarchy to Isaac's. The prayerful and godly servant functions as the

agent of transition". In other words, the Genesis 24:1-9 pericope plays a key

literary and theological role in bridging the previous promises of Genesis 12 with

the future descendants of Abraham and their subsequent experiences of the divine

promises being fulfilled.

4.1.4.1   Genesis 24:7 and the 'ăsher-verbs within the *Torah*

Within the many narratives of the *Torah*, the Lord not only took (לקח) the

patriarch Abraham from the land of Mesopotamia, but he also took Adam, the

people of Israel, and the Levites, each instance of which happened in the context

of separation, either geographically or functionally.[160]   As well, the Lord

occasionally commanded others to take people on his behalf, for a variety of

reasons.[161]

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159. See Janzen (1993:87), Sarna (1989:163) and Wenham (1994:140).

160. The Lord placed Adam into the garden (Gn 2:15) and took him out of the garden (3:23), took
the Israelites from among the Egyptians (Ex 6:6, Dt 4:20), and took the Levites from among
the Israelites (Nm 3:12; 8:16,18; 18:6).

161. Aaron/Eleazer (Nm 20:25), the leaders of Israel (Nm 25:4), Joshua (Nm 27:18), and the
Levites (Nm 3:41,45; 8:6).

The second of the three *'ăsher*-verbs (דבר) is of course very common, and the Lord is said to have spoken to numerous individuals and nations countless times throughout the entire Old Testament.

It is recorded in various narratives that the Lord swore (שבע) an oath to a large number of people, not just to Abraham (Genesis 22:16; 26:3). Almost without exception, the context of the Lord swearing an oath is that of either initiating or re-affirming a previous covenantal relationship with his people. For example, he swore an oath to the fathers of Israel, to the Israelites who were not allowed to cross the Jordan, to Moses when he was not allowed to cross the Jordan, to the house of Eli, to David, to Assyria, and to all of Jerusalem.[162] In some instances, the Lord's words were a reminder of his commitment to the people, and other times they were a message of judgement.

4.1.4.2   Genesis 24:7 and the Old Testament

Throughout the Old Testament, and outside of the *Torah*, the Lord is said to have taken (לקח) many people. For example, he "took" Abraham (Joshua 24:3), David

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162. To the fathers of Israel (Ex 13:5,11; 32:13; 33:1; Nm 14:23; Dt 1:8; 4:31; 6:10,18,23; 7:8,12,13; 8:1,18; 9:15; 10:11; 13:17; 19:8; 26:15; 28:9; 29:13; 30:20; Jos 1:6; 21:43; Jdg 2:1; Jr 11:5; 32:22; Mi 7:20), to the Israelites who were not allowed to cross the Jordan (Nm 32:10; Dt 1:34; 2:14; Jos 5:6; Ps 95:11), to Moses when he was restricted from crossing the Jordan (Dt 4:21), to the house of Eli (1 Sm 3:14), to David (Ps 88:4; 132:11), to the nation of Assyria (Is 14:24), and to Jerusalem (Is 45:23; 62:8; Jr 22:5; Am 6:8).

(2 Samuel 7:8 and 1 Chronicles 17:7), the priests and Levites (Isaiah 66:21), Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 43:10), the remnant of Judah (Jeremiah 44:12) and the Israelites (Ezekiel 37:21).

4.1.5 Character evaluation - Synthesis

The conversation between Abraham and his unnamed chief servant contains not only Abraham's specific instructions for the situation at hand, but also provides a glimpse into Abraham's well established understanding of his Lord, as presented by the narrator. By means of the three-fold use of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within this Narrative historical literary context, the reader is made aware that at the end of his life, Abraham's evaluation of the Lord was essentially relationship based – the Lord took (לקח) him, spoke (דבר) to him, and swore (שבע) to him. The message that the narrator appears to be trying to convey is that it was because of Abraham's understanding of and historical experience with the Lord, that he was willing and able to trust his loyal servant to find the right wife for his son Isaac. Without the benefit of recognizing the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula in Genesis 24:7, the reader of the text may struggle in identifying the three precise reasons why Abraham evaluated (via the narrator's written presentation) the Lord as he did.

An awareness of the presence and function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within

Genesis 24:7 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"The Lord, the God of heaven,

> *Who took me*

>> from my father's house, and

>> from the land of my birth,

> *Who spoke to me*, and

> *Who swore to me*,

>> saying 'To your descendants I will give this land',

he will send his angel in front of you,

and you can take a wife for my son from there."

4.2   2 Samuel 7:23 / 1 Chronicles 17:21[163] – The people

4.2.1   Introduction

As with the biblical books of Kings and Chronicles, 1 and 2 Samuel were

originally arranged as a single piece of literature, and it is best to treat them that

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163. The literary context and *'ăsher*-verb formula of 2 Sm 7:23 and 1 Chr 17:21 are virtually identical (other than a few grammatical variances). As such, only the 2 Sm 7:23 pericope is studied, as the *'ăsher*-verb formula observations and conclusions arising out of an analysis of this passage are immediately applicable to 1 Chr 17:21, and it is neither efficient nor effective to present duplicate information in this study.

way today (ie, the book of Samuel). In the same vein, the book of Samuel is likely thematically and literarily closely connected with the Deuteronomistic History strand of the Old Testament. As well, as part of the Former Prophets division of the *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible), Samuel is best read in concert with the books of Joshua, Judges and Kings.

The precise literary structure of the book of Samuel is difficult to determine with certainty, although it is relatively straightforward to discern the three main characters of Samuel (1 Samuel 1 – 8), Saul (1 Samuel 9 – 15) and David (1 Samuel 16 – 2 Samuel 24). According to 2 Samuel 7:1, the active military component of David's career was drawing to a close, and he was beginning to settle into royal life in Jerusalem. The prophet Nathan had just relayed the word of the Lord regarding the future construction of the temple, to which David responded by sitting before the Lord and praying the prayer described in 2 Samuel 7:18-29 – the passage in which the *'ăsher*-verb formula is found.

4.2.2   The text

4.2.2.1   Limits of the passage

The traditional delimitational approach to this passage has been to suggest that the

textual limits are 2 Samuel 7:18-29,[164] although both the Leningrad and Aleppo Codices indicate a significant break at the end of verse 25.[165] Within the prayer of David, there appears to be a thematic structure of the three sequential elements of deference (18-21), doxology (22-24), and demand (25-29),[166] with the central section of verses 22-24 being the hymnic[167] text which contains the *'ăsher*-verb formula, and therefore the best limits of the pericope.

4.2.2.2   Translation

Taking into account both the formal indicator מִי כְ and the repetitive אֲשֶׁר's as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown below. 2 Samuel 7:23 reads:

Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on the earth

וּמִי כְעַמְּךָ כְיִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בָּאָרֶץ

fs noun + preposition / ms adjective / ms noun / proper noun + preposition / ms noun + 2ms + preposition / interrogative + conjunction

whom God took out

אֲשֶׁר הָלְכוּ־אֱלֹהִים

mp noun / Qal-p3cp / relative pronoun

redeeming his people to himself,

לִפְדּוֹת־לוֹ לְעָם

ms noun + preposition / preposition + 3ms / Qal infinitive + preposition

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164. For example, see Anderson (1989:124-125), Hertzberg (1964:287-288) and Smith (1899:302-303).

165. See Ben-Asher and Dotan (2001:458) and Breuer and Ofer (2000:295).

166. Brueggemann (1990:259).

167. As suggested in Ackroyd (1977:82).

making a name for himself,

וְלָשׂוּם לוֹ שֵׁם

ms noun / preposition + 3ms / Qal-inf + preposition + conjunction

and doing for them great and fearful things in your land

וְלַעֲשׂוֹת לָכֶם הַגְּדוּקָה וְנֹרָאוֹת לְאַרְצֶךָ

fs noun + 2ms + preposition / Niphal-participle-fp + conj / fs noun + article / prep + 2mp / Qal-inf + preposition + conjunction

in front of your people,

מִפְּנֵי עַמְּךָ

ms noun + 2ms / fp noun + preposition

whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt,

אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ קְךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם

proper noun + preposition / preposition + 2ms / Qal-p2ms / relative pronoun

from nations and their gods?

גּוֹיִם וֵאלֹהָיו

mp noun + 3ms + conjunction / mp noun

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of both a double *'ăsher*-verb combination and one of the three formal indicators (מִי־כְ).

4.2.3   Structural and literary analysis

4.2.3.1   Literary style and narrative characteristics

King David's prayer, when he sat down[168] before the Lord in 2 Samuel 7:18-29, contains a number of oft-repeated terms - עבד ("servant" 10x), אדני יהוה ("sovereign Lord" 7x)[169], בית ("house" 7x) and עולם ("forever" 5x) – highlighting

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168. For an analysis of the significance of David's "sitting", see Peterson (1999:168-170).

169. This title occurs nowhere else in Samuel.

the key thematic elements of his prayer. As well, verse 24 is distinctively covenantal in nature,[170] as is the language of verse 23 which reflects the supernatural events of the Exodus. Not surprisingly, all of these terms and themes are brought together in the last sentence of David's prayer (verse 29), as he concluded his request before his Lord.

4.2.3.2 *'ăsher*-verb structure

In sharp contrast to a few scholars who conclude that the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 7:23 is awkward or clumsy,[171] the presence of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula highlights the narrative intentionality and literary coherence of the text. The formula is uniquely introduced by מִי כְ and then followed by two אשר and perfective verb clauses: אשר הלכו־אלהים ("whom God took out") and פדית אשר ("whom you redeemed"). The first *'ăsher*-verb clause is immediately followed and refined by a series of three statements prefixed with the preposition ל.[172] The multi-layered structure within David's prayer indicates that, from the narrator's point of view, the people of Israel were unique for two reasons: God took them out for himself, and he redeemed them from Egypt.

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170. Anderson (1989:127), Bergen (1996:344), Evans (2000:169), and McCarter (1984:238).

171. See Ackroyd (1977:82), Anderson (1989:127) and Hertzberg (1964:303).

172. Refer to Dt 34:10-12 (2.1.4.2) for another example of the repetitive use of ל.

4.2.4 Literary context

4.2.4.1 2 Samuel 7:23 and the Old Testament

Although there are no other recorded instances of the Lord taking (הלך) a distinct

people for himself, the redemption of the people of Israel is referred to elsewhere

in other Old Testament writings. For example, in the book of Deuteronomy the

people were redeemed from Egypt (Deuteronomy 8:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 21:8), in

Nehemiah's prayer he remembered the people's redemption (Nehemiah 1:10),

both Jeremiah's and Zechariah's prophecies proclaim the coming redemption of

the people (Jeremiah 31:11; Zechariah 10:8) and Micah remembered Israel's

previous redemption (Micah 6:4).

4.2.5 Character evaluation - Synthesis

Given the covenantal nature of the relationship between the Lord and his people,

it seems fitting that the identity and uniqueness of the people of Israel, as

presented in David's Narrative historical prayer, are also linked to God. That is,

by means of the *ăsher*-verb formula, the narrator concludes that there are no

people like God's people not because of their own merit, but because God

uniquely took them (אשר הלך) for himself, and he redeemed them (אשר פדה)

from Egypt. Again, as has been the case in the previous pericopes, the reader's

ability to now recognize the presence of the *ăsher*-verb formula in the text is

often a key that helps to further clarify both the literary and theological characteristics of the text.

An awareness of the presence and function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within 2 Samuel 7:23 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on the earth:

whom God took out

redeeming his people to himself,

making a name for himself, and

doing for them great and fearful things in your land, in front of

your people, and

whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, and

from nations and their gods?"

4.3   1 Kings 14:8 – David

4.3.1   Introduction

As with each of the *'ăsher*-verb formula pericopes that occur within the books of Kings, the "David Evaluation" of 1 Kings 14:8 cannot be adequately understood apart from the context of the Deuteronomistic History, as described in 2.1.1 and

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2.2.1 of this study.[173] Again, the narrator's (the Deuteronomist's) assumption that the reader knows and appreciates the *Torah*, appears to be evident in this passage. The immediate context of this story is that Solomon's kingdom has just been split between Jeroboam in the Northern kingdom of Israel and Rehoboam in the Southern kingdom of Judah. Jeroboam's son, Abijah, is gravely ill and the king has sent his wife to see the prophet Ahijah in the hope of finding out if and when his son will recover. It is the Lord's evaluative response, spoken through the words of the prophet and focussed on king David, rather than on king Jeroboam or his son, that contains the *'ăsher*-verb formula.[174]

4.3.2   The text

4.3.2.1   Limits of the passage

Determining the limits of this particular pericope presents somewhat of a challenge as there is a combination of narrative prose, direct speech, and also the quotation of direct speech.[175] Perhaps this is why many scholars have treated the entire passage (verses 1-20) as one large unit, rather than a series of smaller

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173. See also McKenzie in Knoppers and McConville (2000:398-400).

174. Surprisingly, there seems to be only superficial treatment of verse 8 by many commentators, such as Brueggemann (2000:177-180), House (1995:191-192), Nelson (1987:90-97) and Provan (1995:117-118).

175. For example, Ahijah's speech is from 14:6b-16, but the divine quotation is in 14:7b-11.

sections.[176]   For the purposes of this study, however, the analysis of such a large unit is not productive, and the unit delimitation can, in fact, be further refined with some certainty.   As our interest is not concerned primarily with the narrative exegesis of the entire passage, but rather is concentrated on the existence and function of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula found within verse 8, it is best to limit our exploration to the divine quotation that starts in the last half of verse 7, and continues until verse 9.[177]

4.3.2.2   Translation

Taking into account the formal indicator לֹא־הָיָה and the two repetitive אֲשֶׁר clauses as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown below. 1 Kings 14:8 reads:

I tore the kingdom from the house of David and I gave it to you,

וָאֶקְרַע אֶת־הַמַּמְלָכָה מִבֵּית דָּוִד וָאֶתְּנֶהָ לָךְ

preposition + 2fs / Qal-i1ms + 3cs + conjunction / proper noun / ms noun + preposition / fs noun + article / particle / Qal-i1cs + conjunction

but you have not been like my servant David:

וְלֹא־הָיִיתָ כְּעַבְדִּי דָוִד

proper noun / ms noun + 1cs + preposition / Qal-p2ms / negative particle + conjunction

who kept my commands

אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַר מִצְוֹתַי

fp noun + 1cs / Qal-p3ms / relative pronoun

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176. See Brueggemann (2000:177-180), Cogan (2001:376-383), De Vries (1985:175-179) and Fretheim (1999:82-87).

177. The beginning of God's quoted speech is a natural place to start, and as verse 10 starts with a לָכֵן ("therefore") and the Leningrad Codex indicates a break in thought at the end of first 9, it would appear that 7b-9 functions as the best literary unit for the purposes of this study.

and who walked after me with all of his heart,

178וַאֲשֶׁר־הָלַךְ אַחֲרַי בְּכָל־לְבָבוֹ

ms noun + 3ms / ms noun + preposition / adverb + 1cs / Qal-p3ms / relative pronoun + conjunction

doing only that which was right in my eyes.

לַעֲשׂוֹת רַק הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינָי

fd noun + 1cs + preposition / ms adjective + article / adverb / Qal-inf + preposition

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of both a double *ʾăsher*-verb combination and one of the three formal indicators (לֹא־הָיָה).

4.3.3 Structural and literary analysis

4.3.3.1 Literary style and narrative characteristics

The entire divine proclamation in 1 Kings 14:7b-11, within which the *ʾăsher*-verb formula is contained, reflects a particular structure marked by a change in God's direct speech (via Ahijah) from first-person to second-person, and then back to first-person:

I raised you up (רום) – 14:7

I made you (נתן) – 14:7

I tore the kingdom (קרע) – 14:8

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178. Compare 2 Ki 23:25.

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I gave the kingdom (נתן) – 14:8

> You did evil (עשׂה) – 14:9

> You walked (הלך) – 14:9

> You made other gods (עשׂה) – 14:9

> You provoked (כעס[179]) – 14:9

> You have cast me behind (שׁלך) – 14:9

I will bring disaster (בוא) – 14:10

I will cut off (כרת) – 14:10

I will burn up (בער) – 14:10

The *'ăsher*-verb evaluation formula appears between the first and second sections of the chiastic structure, and in essence, the middle section of five second-person statements functions as the "background information" to support the negative assessment and the subsequent proclamation of judgment.[180] However, even though the prophecy (and the entire narrative) is concerned with the coming destruction of Jeroboam's kingship due to his actions and attitude, the presence of the *'ăsher*-verb formula highlights the fact that it is king David who is

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179. A first-person verb form, but it is Hiphil so it could be translated "you caused me to be provoked".

180. Matthews (1988:517) notes that "there is no instance in the text in which the king is brought before the court or charged with a crime by any person other than a representative (prophet, man of God, wise woman) of Yahweh".

retroactively evaluated by the Lord in a positive light.[181] That is, king Jeroboam is seen by the narrator in comparison to king David.

4.3.3.2 '*ăsher*-verb structure

Within the speech of divine evaluation, the Lord first makes an observation about the past – it was he who gave David's[182] kingdom to Jeroboam (and presumably he who can also take it away, as Jeroboam will soon discover).[183] Then, the divine assessment is issued by the narrator's use of one of the three typical initial indicators of the '*ăsher*-verb formula – לא־היה. The formal indicator is then immediately followed by two אשר and perfective verb clauses (אשר שמר and הלך אשר), the two of which, when taken together, refine and explain the initial evaluative statement.[184]

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181. That is, it is David and not Jeroboam who is the subject of the '*ăsher*-verb evaluation. Holder (1988:30) suggests that not only are the two individual kings being evaluated, but also their entire dynasties. Also, De Vries (2003:178-179) is of the opinion that the narrator "goes a bit overboard in Jeroboam with his predecessors".

182. Even though it was actually Solomon's kingdom that was given to Jeroboam, the kingdom is still referred to as "David's kingdom".

183. Other examples of the Lord קרע (tearing) and נתן (giving) the kingdom are found in 1 Sm 15:28; 28:17 (torn from Saul and given to David) and 1 Ki 11:11, 13, 31 (reference to the future "tearing away" of the kingdom from Jeroboam).

184. Even though, at first glance, this pericope appears to an assessment of *limited incomparability* (ie. Jeroboam and David are compared and contrasted alone, with no reference to any other kings), it is in fact another example of *universal incomparability* (as in Dt 34:10-12 or 2 Ki 23:25), as the subject being evaluated – king David – is set apart as the incomparable servant.

4.3.4   Literary context

4.3.4.1   1 Kings 14:8 and the *'ăsher*-verbs within 1 and 2 Kings

In 1 Kings 11:38, the prophet Ahijah tells Jeroboam, before he is king, that if he follows the Lord as did David, his new dynasty would endure. The terms used in Ahijah's first spoken words to Jeroboam – צוה (command), הלך (walk) and בעיני ישר (right in my eyes) – are the same as in Ahijah's last words to Jeroboam (spoken through the king's wife),[185] and in both instances the comparative referent is the Lord's servant David.

The identification and review of all instances in the books of Kings where either דוד and שמר or דוד and הלך are within a three verse range,[186] reveals that David

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185. Jeroboam's communication with the Lord, rare as it was, was remarkably passive – he did not go to the prophet on behalf of his own son, but instead he sent his wife. Interestingly, as noted by Cohn (1985:606), the nameless woman's "talking" was not done with her mouth, but with her feet.

186. דוד and שמר are in Lv 20:22; 1 Sm 17:20, 22; 19:2, 11; 21:5; 25:21; 26:15f; 28:2; 30:23; 2 Sm 11:16; 15:16; 16:21; 18:12; 20:3, 10; 23:5; 1 Ki 2:3f, 43; 3:6, 14; 6:12; 8:23ff; 9:4, 6; 11:10f, 34, 38; 14:8; 2 Ki 11:7; 12:22; 17:19; 18:6; 21:8; 22:4; 1 Chr 9:19; 10:13; 12:30; 23:32; 28:8; 29:18f; 2 Chr 6:14ff; 7:17; 13:11; 23:6; 33:8; Neh 12:25, 45; Es 2:8, 14f; Ps 12:8; 16:1; 17:4; 25:20; 34:21; 39:2; 41:3; 59:1; 86:2; 107:43; 121:7f; 130:6; 132:12; 141:9; Ec 12:13; Can 3:3; 5:7; Is 7:4; Ezk 37:24. דוד and הלך are in Lv 20:20; 1 Sm 2:14; 10:14ff; 16:13; 17:12, 14f, 17, 20, 22f, 29, 31ff, 37ff, 41ff, 48ff; 18:24ff; 19:9ff, 14f, 18ff, 22; 20:1, 10ff, 15f, 24f, 39, 41f; 21:2f; 22:1, 3ff, 22; 23:1ff, 10, 12ff, 18f, 24ff, 28; 24:1ff, 8ff, 23; 25:1, 12ff, 39f, 42ff; 26:1, 8ff, 12ff, 17, 21f, 25; 27:1ff; 29:2f, 5f, 8f, 11; 30:1, 3ff, 18ff, 31; 2 Sm 1:1f; 2:17, 30f; 3:1f, 14, 17ff, 26, 28, 31; 4:8f; 5:3f, 6ff, 25; 6:1f, 5, 9f, 12, 14ff, 20f; 7:5, 8, 20, 26; 8:1ff, 11, 13ff; 10:18; 11:1ff, 22f, 25; 12:1, 5, 7, 13, 15f, 18, 20, 24, 27, 29ff; 13:1, 7, 21, 32, 39; 15:12ff, 22, 30ff; 16:10f, 13, 16; 17:16f, 21f, 24; 18:24; 19:17, 23; 20:2f, 6, 21; 21:11f, 15; 23:14ff; 24:1, 10ff; 1 Ki 1:11, 13, 37f, 47; 2:1, 10f, 24, 26, 32, 44f; 3:1, 3, 6f, 14; 6:12; 8:20, 24ff, 66; 9:4f; 11:4, 6, 12f, 21, 24, 27, 32ff, 36, 38f, 43; 12:16, 19, 26; 14:8, 31; 15:3ff, 24; 22:51; 2 Ki 8:19, 24; 12:22; 15:38; 16:2; 17:21; 19:34; 20:5f; 22:2; 24:17; 1 Chr

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was frequently referred to as the one who kept God's laws and commands, walked in God's ways, and/or did what was right in God's eyes.[187] Not surprisingly, when looking forward to the coming kingship of his son, David charged Solomon[188] to observe God's laws, walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands (1 Kings 2:2-3), thereby ensuring the royal and national prosperity described in the Law of Moses.

4.3.5 Character evaluation - Synthesis

The presence of the *'āsher*-verb formula in 1 Kings 14:8 appears to be unique in that the character being evaluated (David) is not a significant character in the larger Narrative historical context of which the formula itself is a part – the narrative is primarily concerned with king Jeroboam. Nevertheless, the evaluative statement is clearly evident with the use of double *'āsher*-verb combinations, and it serves to not only draw a sharp contrast between the two kings, but also to

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11:1, 3ff, 9ff; 12:18ff; 22ff; 15:25, 27; 16:43; 17:1f, 4, 7, 18, 24; 18:1ff, 13f; 19:2ff, 8; 20:7f; 21:1f, 5, 8ff, 13, 28, 30; 22:1ff; 2 Chr 1:1, 4; 6:15ff; 7:17f; 8:14; 9:31; 10:16, 19; 11:17f; 16:14; 17:3; 21:1, 7, 12, 20; 24:25; 27:9; 28:1; 33:14; 34:2f; Neh 12:36f; Job 41:12; Ps 13:1; 15:1; 23:1; 24:1; 26:1; 27:1; 34:1; 40:1; 57:1; 86:1; 101:1; 122:1; 131:1; 132:1; 139:1; 142:1; Pr 7:18; Ec 1:1; Can 2:8ff, 16; 4:4; 5:16; 6:1ff; 7:10ff; Is 37:35; 38:5; 55:3; Jr 13:13; 32:7f; 33:26; Ezk 37:24f; Am 6:5.

187. The narrator of Kings compares David and Solomon (1 Ki 11:4,6,33-34), forewarns Jeroboam by way of comparison (1 Ki 11:38), compares David and Abijah (1 Ki 15:3), compares David and Baasha (1 Ki 16:2), and compares David and Hekekiah (2 Ki 18:3). Within Kings, the only blemish on David's record is noted in 1 Ki 15:5.

188. Solomon recognized his father's faithfulness (1 Ki 3:6) as did God (1 Ki 3:14; 9:4).

uncover and articulate the narrator's picture of David's incomparable servant (עבד) nature, in terms of *Torah* faithfulness, due to his keeping of the Lord's commands (אשר שמר) and his walking after the Lord (אשר הלך) with all of his heart.

An awareness of the presence and function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within 1 Kings 14:8 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"I tore the kingdom from the house of David and I gave it to you, but you have not been like my servant David:

> *who kept my commands*, and
>
> *who walked after me* with all of his heart, doing only that which was right in my eyes."

4.4   Conclusion

Within the Narrative historical text-type, each of the three subject characters is retrospectively evaluated by the narrator. The patriarch Abraham, while talking to his faithful servant, described the incomparable nature of his Lord as one who took him, spoke to him, and swore an oath to him. David's prayer, spoken near the end of his life, highlights his understanding of the uniqueness of God's

people: they were taken out by God and they were redeemed by God. Finally, through the spoken words of the prophet Ahijah, the Lord evaluated his servant David as one who kept his commands and walked after him. In each pericope, it is the distinct *'ăsher*-verb formula that clearly identifies the subject character as unique, and also lists the specific characteristics that support the narrator's conclusion.

5 Text-type: Behavioural judgment

The last of the four text-types in which the unique *'ăsher*-verb formula is present is the Behavioural judgment literary context. In the five passages of Exodus 32:35, Numbers 12:11, 1 Kings 14:16, 1 Kings 21:25 and Jeremiah 8:2, the subject character(s) are evaluated in light of their specific past actions, by means of the inherent linguistic formula. Also described in each of the pericopes, although not part of the *'ăsher*-verb formula *per se*, are the logical consequences of the subject's previous actions.

5.1 Exodus 32:35 – The people

5.1.1 Introduction

The second scroll of the Five Books of Moses starts with a story of oppression and ends with a picture of divine glory. In between, the Exodus narrative tells an amazing and detailed story of how God interacted with his people, and in turn, how they responded to his leading. Exodus is a book so full of foundational teaching to the ancient Israelite community (both religiously and politically), that

it has been called the first book of the Bible.[189]

The literary structure of this profound story can be seen a number of ways,[190] but the general outline below will suffice for a study of the *'ăsher*-verb formula, with the Exodus 32:35 pericope occurring in the eighth section of the structure.

Israel in Egypt	Exodus 1:1-2:25
	Exodus 3:1-7:7
	Exodus 7:8-11:10
	Exodus 12:1-15:21
Israel in the Wilderness	Exodus 15:22- 18:27
Israel at Sinai	Exodus 19:1-24:18
	Exodus 25:1-31:18
	Exodus 32:1-34:35
	Exodus 35:1-40:38

Within the eighth section describing the fall and restoration of the people of Israel

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189. See Durham (1987:xiv) for his rationale for making this claim.

190. For example, it has been suggested that Exodus has a three-fold structure (see Alexander and Baker (2003:250-251) and Durham (1987:xxx) for two different opinions), and alternatively, Fretheim (1991:Contents) suggests that it is made up of nine parts.

at Sinai (Exodus 32:1-34:35), there is a chiastic structure shown below[191] in 32:1-33:6 that highlights both the Lord's judgement of the people and their opportunity for repentance. The assessment in verse 35 - the *'ăsher*-verb formula, contains the narrator's perspective of *why* the Lord judged the people as he did.

A   People act, Aaron reacts (32:1-6)

B   the Lord's two utterances (32:7-10)

C   Moses intercedes (32:11-14)

D   Moses goes down the mountain (32:15-20)

E   Judgement: investigative phase (32:21-25)

F   Opportunity for repentance (32:26a)

E'   Judgement: executive phase (32:26b-29)

D'   Moses goes up the mountain (32:30)

C'   Moses intercedes (32:31-32)

B'   the Lord's two utterances (32:33-33:3)

A'   The Lord acts, the people react (33:4-6)

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191. See Hendrix (1990:212).

5.1.2   The text

5.1.2.1   Limits of the passage

At first glance, that the pericope ends in verse 35 would seem to be fairly self-evident,[192] but determining the precise delimitation of the beginning and end of the passage is somewhat more challenging, given the complex interaction between direct speech and historical prose. If Hendrix's proposed literary structure is taken into account, not only is the entire narrative structure of 32:1-33:6 clearly identified, but the smaller textual limits of 32:33-33:3 also become apparent, as the focus of the pericope is on the direct speech of the Lord. In this context, the *'ăsher*-verb formula of verse 35 functions as type of isolated parenthetical observation, which is explored in more detail below.

5.1.2.2   Translation

Taking into account both the basic grammar of the text and the repetitive אשר's as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown below. Exodus 32:35 reads:

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192. The majority of commentators conclude that verses 30-35 are the textual limits of the pericope [for example, Childs (1974:571-572), Janzen (2000:391) and Janzen (1997:241-242)].

The Lord sent a plague on the people

וַיִּגֹּף יְהוָה אֶת־הָעָם

ms noun + article / particle / proper noun / Qal-i3ms + conjunction

because

עַל

preposition

they made the calf, and

אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ אֶת־הָעֵגֶל

ms noun + article / particle / Qal-p3cp / relative pronoun

Aaron did it.

אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אַהֲרֹן

proper noun / Qal-p3ms / relative pronoun

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of a double *'āsher-*verb combination.

5.1.3   Structural and literary analysis

5.1.3.1   Literary style and narrative characteristics

Exodus 32:33-33:3 contains the words of the Lord spoken to Moses in his judgment against the people for their sin in making and worshipping the golden calf. In his judgment, the Lord concluded that even though he would continue to provide his angel[193] to guide the people, he himself would no longer go with them as he may destroy them due to their "stiff necks". Also, the people would be held accountable for their sin, and this time Moses was not able to negotiate with the

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193. The only other references in Exodus to מלאך are in the earlier context of the Lord's angel

Lord on behalf of the people.[194]

The speech of the Lord is bisected in the middle by the narrator's observation that the Lord struck[195] the people due to Aaron's and the people's actions. This sentence appears to function parenthetically, and the narrative would have a logical and literary flow even with its absence from the story. The observational statement is terse and to the point – no detailed description of the plague[196] is given to the reader, either in its nature (skin disease, infestation of insects, etc?) or extent (all of the people, or just some?).

5.1.3.2 *'ǎsher*-verb structure

The statement that the Lord struck the people with a plague is immediately followed by the preposition על and two אשר and perfective verb clauses which serve to describe *why* the people were struck. The rationale is not singular as some have suggested, [197] but is, in fact, twofold: the people made the calf (עשׂו

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guiding the people to the promised land (Ex 14:19, 23:20,23).

194. See Childs (1974:571-572), Fretheim (1991:290-291) and Newing (1993:25-26).

195. The term נגף can refer to an individual simply hitting someone/something else, or can be used to describe God's judgment on a national scale (as in the Exodus, the Israelites, etc).

196. Cassuto (1967:424) notes that even the timing of the plague cannot be assumed by the reader.

197. See Durham (1987:426).

אשר) *and* Aaron did it (אשר עשה). The message from the narrator's perspective is that the Lord would hold both parties accountable for the golden calf – neither one could hide behind the other and hope to not get caught.

5.1.4   Literary context

5.1.4.1   Exodus 32:35 and the Old Testament

Outside of Exodus 32, there are only three references to Aaron and the people's golden calf (עגל) episode.[198] In Deuteronomy 9, Moses reminded the Israelites of the event, as part of his message to the people that their long-awaited entrance into the promised land was not due to their own righteousness, but rather because of the Lord's previous covenant with their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses also noted that the Lord's anger was directed to *both* the people and Aaron separately, and that he had to pray to the Lord on behalf of them both.   In Nehemiah 9, the Levites recounted and confessed the history of the Israelites, including the creation and worship of the image of the calf, as did the Psalmist in Psalm 106:19.

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198. Jeroboam acted similarly in 1 Ki 12:25-33.

5.1.5 Character evaluation - Synthesis

The parenthetical statement in the midst of the direct speech of Exodus 32:33-33:3 achieves added significance by means of the narrator's employment of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula in 32:35. Not only is the Lord said to have struck the people of Israel because of their "stiff necks", but as is uniquely presented by means of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula, also because of their making of the golden calf (אשר עשׁו) and Aaron's participation (אשׁר עשׂה) in its creation (despite his unsuccessful claim of innocence).[199] By the presence of verse 35 within the Behavioural judgment pericope, it seems that the message the narrator may have wanted his readers to understand is that the Lord's jealousy and judgment is comprehensive and final.

An awareness of the presence and function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within Exodus 32:35 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"The Lord sent a plague on the people because:

they made the calf, and

Aaron did it."

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199. See Ex 32:24.

5.2   Numbers 12:11 – Aaron and Miriam

5.2.1   Introduction

As previously described in 3.1.1 of this study, the book of Numbers reflects a literary structure based upon a distinction (by means of two separate censuses)[200] between the Old Generation of the people of Israel who were characterized by rebellion (1:1-25:18) and the New Generation who were characterized by hope (26:1-36:13). It is within the first of the two sections that the Numbers 12:11 pericope falls.

5.2.2   The text

5.2.2.1   Limits of the passage

Numbers 12 is the story of Aaron and Miriam's questioning of Moses' divinely ordained leadership, and as such, the chapter contains a mixture of direct speech and narrative description of the particular events. Verses 4-13 form the broader limits[201] of the text within which the *'ăsher*-verb formula of verse 11 falls, and the

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200. The first census in the Desert of Sinai is described in Nm 1:1-46, and the second census on the Plains of Moab is recorded in Nm 26:1-62. The number of men, excluding Levites, remained essentially unchanged (603,550 to 601,730).

201. As represented in the Leningrad Codex [Ben-Asher and Dotan (2001:215)], the reconstructed Aleppo Codex [Breuer and Ofer (2000:138)] and Samaritan Pentateuch [Von Gall (1918:296)].

immediate context of Aaron's speech in verses 11 and 12 forms the textual limits for the purposes of this study.

5.2.2.2 Translation

Taking into account both the basic grammar of the text and the repetitive אשר's as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown below. Numbers 12:11 reads:

<div align="center">

Aaron said to Moses,

וַיֹּאמֶר אַהֲרֹן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה

proper noun / preposition / proper noun / Qal-i3ms + conjunction

My lord, do not place this sin on us,

בִּי אֲדֹנִי אַל־נָא תָשֵׁת עָלֵינוּ חַטָּאת

fs noun / preposition + 1cp / Qal-i2ms / interjection / preposition / ms noun + 1cs / preposition + 1cs

in which we have been foolish

אֲשֶׁר נוֹאַלְנוּ

Niphal-p1cp / relative pronoun

and by which we have sinned.

וַאֲשֶׁר חָטָאנוּ

Qal-p1cp / relative pronoun + conjunction

</div>

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of a double *'ăsher-*verb combination.

5.2.3 Structural and literary analysis

5.2.3.1 Literary style and narrative characteristics

The overwhelming majority of scholarly analysis of this pericope has focussed on a variety of elements other than the nature of Aaron's confession.[202] However, this study is instead concerned with how the *'ăsher*-verb formula helps the reader understand how Aaron saw the nature of his and Miriam's sin, as he described it to his brother Moses, and as it is skilfully presented to the reader of Numbers 12:11-12. Of course, there is great irony in that Aaron, one who claimed to be a prophet of the Lord, could not intercede directly with the Lord, but instead had to appeal to his brother for help – the brother whose prophetic uniqueness he had just been questioning.[203] Also note the use of the particle נא, stressing the urgency and formality in Aaron's request.

The phrase "we have sinned" (חטאנו) occurs 24 times[204] in the Old Testament, but it is only mentioned in connection with two other incidents in the *Torah*. Moses

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202. For example, the identification of Moses' Cushite wife [eg Ashley (1992:223-224) and Budd (1984:137)], the legitimacy of Aaron's and Miriam's claim to a prophetic calling [eg Alexander and Baker (2003:2), Olson (1996:69-70) and Phillips (1998:78-88)], the nature of Miriam's leprosy [eg Cole (2000:207), Harrison (1990:197); Sherwood (2002:156) and Wenham (1981:113)], and why Aaron was not afflicted with the skin disease [eg Olson (1996:74); Sakenfeld (1995:82-84) and White (1990:157)] are discussed extensively, but there is remarkably little exploration as to the nature of Aaron and Miriam's sin.

203. See Anderson (1994:16) and Ashley (1992:227).

204. Nm 12:11; 14:40; 21:7; Dt 1:41; Jdg. 10:10, 15; 1 Sm 7:6; 12:10; 1 Ki 8:47; 2 Chr 6:37; Neh 1:6; Ps. 106:6; Is 42:24; Jr 3:25; 8:14; 14:7, 20; 16:10; Lm 5:16; Dn 9:5, 8, 11, 15.

was involved with both events – the people's recognition that they had sinned by not fighting for possession of the promised land as God had previously commanded,[205] and the people's complaint against God and Moses that required the creation of a bronze snake for them to be healed.[206]

5.2.3.2 '*ăsher*-verb structure

As is often true with the '*ăsher*-verb formula in instances where a specific character is not being set apart as inherently unequalled, the Numbers 12:11 pericope does not employ any of the three formal indicators to give the reader a reason to anticipate the upcoming use of the formula. In fact, this occurrence of the '*ăsher*-verb formula appears at the end of Aaron's first statement and at first glance, it appears almost redundant and unnecessary in the text. Upon closer inspection, however, the identification of the two אשר and perfective verb clauses is seen to be crucial to a deeper understanding of Aaron and Miriam's mistake. First, they were foolish (יאל),[207] and second, their foolishness caused them to sin (חטא).[208]

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205. The event is described in Nm 14:40, and Moses later reminded the people in Dt 1:41.

206. Nm 21:7. In this story, as in Nm 12:11, Moses had to intercede with the Lord as a result of someone else's sin. In this case it was the entire people who rebelled, but again, note that the recognition of sin did not come until after the experience of judgement.

207. Compare Jr 50:36 where false prophets and fools are linked.

208. Ashley (1992:221) suggests that the two verbs combine to express one idea, and while that

5.2.4 Literary context

5.2.4.1 Numbers 12:11 and the *'ăsher*-verbs within the *Torah*

The story of Numbers 12:11 is the only recorded instance in the *Torah* where either Aaron or Miriam act foolishly (יאל) or sin (חטא). However, later on in the Numbers narrative,[209] Aaron (along with his brother Moses) interceded on the behalf of the entire people of Israel (because of the sins of a few men) before the Lord. Perhaps the events of Numbers 12 had a positive impact on Aaron, and he learned the value of respecting divinely ordained leadership.

5.2.5 Character evaluation - Synthesis

The *'ăsher*-verb formula in the Numbers 12:11 Behavioural judgement pericope serves to draw the reader's attention to the comprehensive nature of Aaron and Miriam's sin. The narrator uses verses 1 and 2 to describe the words and attitudes of both Aaron and Miriam - their questioning of Moses' choice of wife, and the unique nature of Moses' prophetic role. However, it is not until the reader comes to the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula at the end of verse 11 that he can recognize

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idea may have merit, to blur the two verbs together loses the nuances between the two concepts, and also hides the breadth of Aaron and Miriam's rebellion (ie, that they were foolish *and* sinful).

209. The story of Korah's rebellion is presented in Nm 16. In the narrative, Aaron is the one who is shown to be set apart by the Lord, rather than the one who challenged someone else's uniqueness (as he did in Nm 12).

Aaron's own[210] acknowledgement of *why* their particular actions and attitudes were perceived as being so sinful – they were foolish (אֲשֶׁר נוֹאַלְנוּ) and they sinned (אֲשֶׁר חָטָאנוּ).

An awareness of the presence and function of the particular *'ăsher*-verb formula within Numbers 12:11 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"Aaron said to Moses,

My lord, do not place this sin on us

in which we have been foolish, and

by which we have sinned."

5.3   1 Kings 14:16 – Jeroboam

5.3.1   Introduction

As part of the same Jeroboam and Ahijah narrative that is explored in 4.3 (therefore much of the introductory information does not need to be repeated here), 1 Kings 14:6 shares much of the same background and context as does 1

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210. Note that it is Aaron himself, not the Lord or Moses, who is the one who explicitly identifies their words and attitude as sin.

Kings 14:8, and the reader of this study would be well served to refer to that section.[211] Further to the introductory comments made in 4.3, verse 16 is the final sentence of Ahijah's prophetic pronouncement as he explains the full extent of the Lord's impending judgment on Jeroboam's family and kingdom, as described to the king's wife.

5.3.2   The text

5.3.2.1   Limits of the passage

The prophet Ahijah's utterance starts in 1 Kings 14:6 and continues through to verse 16, and forms a natural textual unit of direct speech.   As noted earlier, within the message from Ahijah there is a distinct unit that contains a divine quotation, spoken on behalf of the Lord (verses 7b-11), but as the quotation is contained entirely within Ahijah's speech, we can conclude that verse 16 functions as the end of the direct speech unit.

5.3.2.2   Translation

Taking into account both the basic grammar of the text and the repetitive אשר's as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown

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211. Also refer to 2.2.1 for a brief introduction to the books of Kings.

below. 1 Kings 14:16 reads:

<div align="right">

and he will abandon Israel

וְיִתֵּן אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל

proper noun / particle / Qal-i3ms + conjunction

because of the sins of Jeroboam

בִּגְלַל חַטֹּאות יָרָבְעָם

proper noun / fp noun / preposition

by which he sinned,

אֲשֶׁר חָטָא

Qal-p3ms / relative pronoun

and by which he caused Israel to sin.

וַאֲשֶׁר הֶחֱטִיא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל[212]

proper noun / particle / Hiphil-p3ms / relative pronoun + conjunction

</div>

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of a double *'ăsher-*verb combination.

5.3.3 Structural and literary analysis

5.3.3.1 Literary style and narrative characteristics

Ahijah's speech is a self contained unit, and other than a small part of the divine quotation in verse 7-11,[213] Jeroboam is spoken about only in the third person. The immediate reason for this, of course, is that the prophet is speaking to Jeroboam's

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212. אֲשֶׁר חָטָא וַאֲשֶׁר הֶחֱטִיא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל also occurs in 1Ki 15:30 and 1Ki 16:13.

213. Refer to 4.3.3.1.

wife and not the king himself, but the usage of the third person[214] may also send an implied message to the reader about the relational "distance" between king Jeroboam and the Lord.

Further, the non-participation of Jeroboam is also seen in the irony of the king sending his wife on a mission to understand the future of the king-to-be, his son (1 Kings 14:2-3). Instead, however, she ended up being a messenger of judgment against both the royal family and the kingdom (assuming, of course, that she relayed the prophet's words to the king).

5.3.3.2 *'ăsher*-verb structure

The *'ăsher*-verb formula appears at the end of Ahijah's prophetic speech, and is not predicated by any of the three formal indicators,[215] but instead is simply introduced by the statement that the Lord will destroy the house of Jeroboam (and by implication, all of Israel) because of the sins of king Jeroboam. Even though the narrative is looking ahead to the coming judgment and destruction of the kingdom, the *'ăsher*-verb formula is employed as an historical assessment by means of double אשר and perfective verb clauses. The first *'ăsher*-verb clause

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214. See Fretheim (1999:84) and Brueggemann (2000:179-180) for observations not only about the third person perspective, but also the crude language of judgment.

refers to Jeroboam's sins (חטא) and the second refers to the sins (חטא) that he caused the people to commit.

5.3.4 Literary context

5.3.4.1 1 Kings 14:16 and the 'ăsher-verb within 1 and 2 Kings

An analysis of all instances of ירבעם and חטא within a three verse range[216] throughout the books of Kings shows that both Jeroboam's own sin and the sins that he caused the people to commit, are frequently referred to by the narrator[217] when other kings were being evaluated. Jeroboam's many sins are also given as the reason for the divine judgment experienced by others, especially as the fulfilment of Ahijah's prophecy.[218]

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215. מי כ and לא־היה, לא־קום.

216. 1 Ki 14:13f, 16f, 19f; 15:25, 29f, 34; 16:2f, 19, 26; 21:22; 22:53; 2 Ki 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 6, 11, 13; 14:23f, 27; 15:8f, 18, 24, 28; 17:21f; 23:15.

217. The following kings are associated with the sinful impact of Jeroboam: Nadab (1 Ki 15:25), Baasha (1 Ki 15:34), Zimri (1 Ki 16:18-19), Omri (1 Ki 16:26), Ahab (1 Ki 21:22), Ahaziah (1 Ki 22:52-53), Joram (2 Ki 3:3), Jehu (2 Ki 10:29-31), Jehoahaz (2 Ki 13:2,6), Jehoash (2 Ki 13:11), Jeroboam II (2 Ki 14:24), Zch (2 Ki 15:9), Menahem (2 Ki 15:18), Pekahiah (2 Ki 15:24), Pekah (2 Ki 15:28), and Josiah (2 Ki 23:15 – the only king who reversed the actions of Jeroboam). The same phrase – אשר חטא את־ישראל – is used in almost every instance.

218. For example, Baasha's destruction of the remaining family of Jeroboam (1 Ki 15:29-30), and the exile of the people (2 Ki 17:21-23).

5.3.5 Character evaluation - Synthesis

Within the prophetic announcement by Ahijah, which in turn is part of both the Jeroboam narrative and the books of Kings as a whole, the question of *why* God abandoned his people is critical from both literary and theological points of view. The answer found within the 1 Kings 14:16 Behavioural judgment text, is that from the narrator's point of view and by means of his use of the specific *'ăsher-*verb formula, Jeroboam's sins were so profound that they could not be compensated for or ignored. By recognizing the inherent *'ăsher-*verb formula in the text, the careful reader can now move toward identifying the precise two-fold nature of Jeroboam's incomparable sin: 1) he was personally involved in the sin (אשר חטא), and 2) he was personally responsible for causing the nation to sin (אשר החטיא).

An awareness of the presence and function of the *'ăsher-*verb formula within 1 Kings 14:16 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"And he will abandon Israel, because of the sins of Jeroboam:

>   *which he has committed,* and

>   *which he has caused Israel to commit.*"

5.4   1 Kings 21:25 – Ahab

5.4.1   Introduction

The presentation of the Ahab narrative[219] starts with an amazingly sharp and negative observation[220] – there was no king of Israel who did more evil than king Ahab.   Not even king Jeroboam, who often functioned as the religious and political plumb line by which the future "evil kingships" of Israel were measured,[221]   seems to have surpassed the all-encompassing wicked nature of king Ahab's reign.

As is the case with each of the narratives in the books of Kings that contains the *'äsher*-verb formula, the language and events of the *Torah* (especially Deuteronomy) rise to the surface and the Mosaic law's theological principles are the unwavering standard through which all royal actions are viewed and evaluated.   Consequently, as part of the Old Testament's Deuteronomistic History, the books of Kings often serve as an interpretive analysis[222] of the people of God and how they measured up against the standards established during the lifetime of Moses.

219. 1 Ki 16:29 – 22:40 is the largest narrative devoted to a single king, other than the Solomon narrative.

220. 1 Ki 16:30-33 is also an especially damning assessment of the kingship of Ahab.

221. Refer to 5.3.4.1.

5.4.2 The text

5.4.2.1 Limits of the passage

The Ahab narrative of 1 Kings 21 can be divided into two distinct literary sections: the royal narrative of verses 1-16, and the prophetic narrative of verses 17-29.[223] The latter section of prophetic activity, within which the *'ăsher*-verb formula occurs, consists of direct speech interaction between king Ahab and the prophet Elijah, and it is within this section that the editorial assessment[224] of verses 25-26 is inserted. Due to the break in direct speech and the markings in the text itself,[225] for the purposes of this study, the textual limits of this pericope should be seen as 1 Kings 21:25-26.

5.4.2.2 Translation

Taking into account the formal indicator לא־היה and the repetitive אשר clauses as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown on the next page. 1 Kings 21:25 reads:

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222. Refer to 2.2.1 for more information on the relationship between Kings and Deuteronomy.

223. This division is followed by most, but not all, commentators: see Brueggemann (2000:257-263), House (1995:231-233) and Nelson (1987:140-143), for example.

224. That is, the main story line of the narrative continues from verse 24 to verse 27, and verses 25-26 stand apart as discussed in 5.4.3.1.

There was no one else like Ahab,

רַק לֹא־הָיָה כְאַחְאָב

proper noun + preposition / Qal-p3ms / negative particle / adverb

who sold himself

אֲשֶׁר הִתְמַכֵּר

Hithpael-p3ms / relative pronoun

to do evil in the eyes of the Lord,

לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה

proper noun / md noun + preposition / ms adjective + article / Qal-inf + preposition

and who was enticed by his wife Jezebel.

אֲשֶׁר־הֵסַתָּה[226] אֹתוֹ אִיזֶבֶל אִשְׁתּוֹ

fs noun + 3ms / proper noun / particle + 3ms / Hiphil-p3ms / relative pronoun

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of both a double *'āsher*-verb combination and one of the three formal indicators (לֹא־הָיָה).

5.4.3 Structural and literary analysis

5.4.3.1 Literary style and narrative characteristics

Within the larger narrative section[227] of the passionate interaction between the king and the prophet, verses 25-26 function as parenthetical background information which effectively supplement the main story line. That is, the verses explain *why* Ahab received such a devastating judgment from the Lord (of course,

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225. By the use of open spaces and/or a *samekh*.

226. Compare Dt 13:6 (13:7 in the Hebrew text). Also, possibly a derivative of הסתה.

227. Walsh (1992:195) concludes that verses 17-29 consists of six subunits, and he also suggests various literary structures of the pericope.

the insertion of historical and/or editorial details into the main story line is a common feature in biblical narrative).

There are at least two unusual literary characteristics of this passage, one of which is that the narrator's assessment of king Ahab is directly connected to (and possibly even dependant upon) a secondary character – his wife Jezebel.[228] To some degree, she is the source of his wickedness. The other distinguishing element of this particular use of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within the books of Kings is that Ahab's uniqueness is not limited to his role as king (or any other authoritarian position),[229] but rather it seems to extend to his negative incomparability as a person.

5.4.3.2 *'ăsher*-verb structure

The presence of the *'ăsher*-verb formula in the "Ahab Evaluation" is evident in the narrator's standard use of the formal לֹא־הָיָה statement at the beginning of verse 25, thereby setting king Ahab apart from everyone else. The king's

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228. The only other *'ăsher*-verb assessments of a king that are linked to a secondary character are found in 1 Ki 14:8 and 14:16, but in both instances the king's wife is simply the messenger and she has no discernable affect on king Jeroboam's negative evaluation.

229. For example, there is no other (לֹא־הָיָה) *king* like Josiah in 2 Ki 23:25 (although the לֹא־קָם at the end of the verse suggests that there may have been no other person like him), *prophet* like Moses in Dt 34:10-12, or *servant* like David in 1 Ki 14:8.

negative assessment is then further clarified by the use of the two subsequent אשר

and perfective verb clauses (מכר אשר and סות אשר), both of which together

articulate exactly why it is that the narrator can conclude that there was no one

like Ahab – he sold himself to do evil, and he was enticed by his wife.

The use of specific verb forms within the *'ăsher*-verb formula can also be

understood as an additional rhetorical tool used by the narrator. That is, both

perfective verbs may be reflective/passive[230] in nature, thereby adding further

emphasis to the passivity of king Ahab (ie, it is his wife Jezebel who seems to be

the driving force behind many of his actions, especially within the Naboth

narrative).[231]

5.4.4 Literary context

5.4.4.1 1 Kings 21:25 and the *'ăsher*-verbs within 1 and 2 Kings

A review and analysis of all instances of אחאב and מכר, and אחאב and סות within

a three verse range[232] reveals there are no other references to Ahab's divine

assessment in the books of Kings or elsewhere in the Old Testament (other than 1

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230. For the significance of specific verb forms, refer to Joüon and Muraoka (1991:124) and Waltke and O'Connor (1990:358).

231. See 1 Ki 19:2; 21:7-8, 11, 15, and also Schniedewind (1993:654).

Kings 21:20, which is part of the same pericope). Although they do not refer to either of the specific *'ăsher*-verbs, there are two other references to the generally wicked nature of Ahab's reign in 1 Kings 16:30, 33.

5.4.5 Character evaluation - Synthesis

Once again, the narrator's use of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula, this time in the 1 Kings 21:25 Behavioural judgment pericope, proves to be an effective literary technique to highlight to the careful reader the exact nature of king Ahab's incomparability, as seen from the narrator's perspective. Not only does the formal indicator לֹא־הָיָה notify the reader of Ahab's general uniqueness, but the specific inclusion of the two *'ăsher*-verb combination clauses (אֲשֶׁר מָכַר and סוּת אֲשֶׁר) articulates the precise nature of king Ahab's unfortunate and unenviable notoriety.

An awareness of the presence and function of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula within 1 Kings 21:25 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"There was no one else like Ahab:

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232. אחאב and מכר are in 1 Ki 21:20, 25. אחאב and סוּת are in 1 Ki 21:25; 2 Chr 18:2.

who sold himself (to do evil in the eyes of the Lord), and

who was enticed by his wife Jezebel."

5.5   Jeremiah 8:2 – Judah / Jerusalem

5.5.1   Introduction

The first question that must be asked as part of any attempt to responsibly study the biblical book of Jeremiah, is *"which book* of Jeremiah is the correct one?"*, as the Masoretic Text and Septuagint versions of Jeremiah are markedly different.[233] However, as has been discussed in the introductory sections of this study, our focus here is on a specific Hebrew narratological technique, and naturally therefore it is concerned with the Masoretic Text.

The largest of the Old Testament prophetic writings, the book of Jeremiah is rich in literary complexity and theological distinctiveness, both of which elements are strongly influenced by the chaotic political and religious context of the book, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem.[234] Jeremiah is a mixture of poetry

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233. See Petersen (2002:97-103) for a good summary of the current debate. Also refer to Craigie et al. (1991:xli-xlv).

234. "The dominant and shaping event of the entire [Old Testament]", according to Brueggemann (1998:1).

and prose, and contains many themes, such as Mosaic law,[235] judgement,[236] and the new covenant.[237] Not surprisingly, the structure of the book is also somewhat ambiguous, although two possibilities are most probable.

Thematically, Jeremiah can be divided into three parts:

> Prophetic oracles and prose speeches (chapters 1 – 25)
>
> Prose narratives about Jeremiah (chapters 26 – 45)
>
> Oracles against the nations (chapters 46-52)

Alternatively, Jeremiah could be bisected into two separate books:

> A book of judgement (chapters 1-25)
>
> A book of new beginnings (chapters 26-52)

Regardless of the structural approach selected, the Jeremiah 8:2 pericope falls within the first section of the book, and it forms an integral part of Jeremiah's initial prophetic oracles, spoken in, and to, Jerusalem.

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235. Jr 2:8; 6:19; 8:8; 9:12; 16:11; 18:18; 26:4; 31:33; 32:23; 44:10, 23.

236. For example, judgment against Judah (Jr 25-29) and against the nations (Jr 46-51).

5.5.2 The text

5.5.2.1 Limits of the passage

Jeremiah's prophetic monologue is initiated at the start of chapter 7 and continues until chapter 10, and it consists of a number of smaller oracles often introduced by the phrase "say to them" (ואמרת) or a similar introduction. The manuscript evidence indicates that the smaller pericope of which the *'āsher*-verb formula is an integral part, begins with 7:32 and ends with 8:3,[238] but this literary unit can be refined even more. The description of the Lord's final judgment is both initiated and concluded by the phrase "declares the Lord" (נאם יהוה), and for the purposes of this study, textual limits of Jeremiah 8:1-3 are sufficient.

5.5.2.2 Translation

Taking into account the basic grammar of the text, the five repetitive אשר clauses and the repeated ל prepositions as a structural framework, a translation of the text can look like what is shown below. Jeremiah 8:2 reads:

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237. For example, Jr 11:1-17; 31:31-40; 33:19-26.

238. Ben-Asher and Dotan (2001:661-662) and Breuer and Ofer (2000:432).

They will be spread out before the sun, the moon and all the stars of heaven,

וּשְׁטָחוּם לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְלַיָּרֵחַ וּלְכֹל צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם

mp noun + article / ms noun / ms noun + article + preposition + conj / ms noun + article + preposition / Qal-3cp + 3mp + conj

which they have loved,

אֲשֶׁר אֲהֵבוּם

Qal-p3mp + 3mp / relative pronoun

which they have served,

וַאֲשֶׁר עֲבָדוּם

Qal-p3cp + 3mp / relative pronoun + conjunction

which they have followed,

וַאֲשֶׁר הָלְכוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם

adverb + 3mp / Qal-p3cp / relative pronoun + conjunction

which they have consulted,

וַאֲשֶׁר דְּרָשׁוּם

Qal-p3cp + 3mp / relative pronoun + conjunction

and which they have worshipped.

וַאֲשֶׁר הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָהֶם

preposition + 3mp / Hishtaphel-p3cp / relative pronoun + conjunction

They will not be gathered

לֹא יֵאָסְפוּ

Niphal-i3mp / negative article

and they will not be buried;

וְלֹא יִקָּבֵרוּ

Niphal-i3mp / negative article + conjunction

they will be like dung lying on the ground.

לְדֹמֶן עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה יִהְיוּ

Qal-i3mp / fs noun + article / fp noun / preposition / ms noun + preposition

The visual presentation (ie, the appropriately indented phrases) and the colour-themed text help the reader to quickly recognize the presence of a quintuple *'ăsher*-verb combination.

5.5.3 Structural and literary analysis

5.5.3.1 Literary style and narrative characteristics

Within the Jeremiah 8:1-3 pericope, the noun "bones" (עצם) is used five times (all in verse one, referring to literal human bones), whereas it is used only two times throughout the rest of book of Jeremiah. In both instances outside of the Jeremiah 8:1-3 passage,[239] Jeremiah uses the term metaphorically, in reference to the strong emotion that he is feeling at the time.

Another peculiar term used in Jeremiah's speech against astral worship[240] is "dung" (רמן), which occurs only five times in the Hebrew Bible, always in the context of divine judgement.[241] The curse of being like dung is usually expanded by the inclusion of "lying on the ground" for all to see (including the sun, the moon and the hosts of heaven)[242], perhaps as a way of describing complete judgement and abandonment.[243] Given the language and tone of the passage, perhaps it is not surprising that Ryken (2001:139) referred to this pericope as one of the low points in Jeremiah's book.

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239. Jr 20:9; 23:9.

240. See Holladay and Hanson (1986:272), Nicholson (1973:83) and Thompson (1980:295).

241. Jezebel (2 Ki 9:37), Midian, Sisera and Jabin (Ps 83:10), people of Jerusalem (Jr 9:22; 16:4) and those who will experience God's wrath (Jr 25:33).

242. Brueggemann (1998:84) rightly concludes that "the punishment fits the sin".

243. See Bracke (2000:85), Carroll (1986:224-225) and Huey (1993:111).

5.5.3.2 'ăsher-verb structure

The particular 'ăsher-verb formula found in Jeremiah 8:2 is quite distinctive, in that there is a unique five-fold repetition[244] of the 'ăsher-verb clause. In the pericope, the bones of the people (and by extension, the people themselves) of Judah are posthumously cursed[245] by being exhumed, for five interrelated reasons, each of which is identified by a separate אשר and perfective verb clause. The people are judged because of "the sun, the moon and all the hosts of heaven" which they have loved (אשר אהבום), which they have served (אשר עבדום), which they have followed (אשר הלכו אחריהם), which they have consulted (אשר דרשום) and which they have worshipped (אשר השתחוו להם). Immediately following the five-fold unit of 'ăsher-verb clauses, an additional curse is indicated by the repeated use of the preposition ל[246] - their bones would not be gathered or buried, but in fact, they would be like dung lying on the ground.

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244. The fivefold repetition of אשר is noted by Holladay and Hanson (1986:271), but is not explored.

245. See Craigie et al. (1991:126-127) and McKane et al. (1986:181).

246. Refer to 2.1 (Dt 34:10-12) and 4.2 (2 Sm 7:23) for other examples of the repetitive use of ל within the 'ăsher-verb formula.

5.5.4   Literary context

5.5.4.1   Jeremiah 8:2 and the *'ăsher*-verbs within the Old Testament

The five verbs used in the Jeremiah 8:2 *'ăsher*-verb formula do not occur together anywhere else in the Old Testament. However, Jeremiah (and presumably his original hearers and readers) must have been aware that the Mosaic law clearly forbade the people of Israel to engage in (חוה and עבד) any form of astral worship,[247] with the consequence for disobedience being the death penalty.[248] Despite the strong warning, the biblical narrative presents other examples of both the leaders and the people worshipping and serving celestial objects,[249] although there is also a glimpse of hope during the reign of king Josiah.[250]

5.5.5   Character evaluation - Synthesis

The language, imagery and function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula within the Jeremiah 8:1-3 Behavioural judgment text paints a vivid picture of the disobedient

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247. Dt 4:19. Note also Gn 37:9, where Joseph informs his brothers of a dream in which the sun, moon and stars all bow down *to him*.

248. Dt 17:2-7.

249. King Manasseh initiated astral worship (2 Ki 21:3,5; 2 Chr 33:3,5) and the people openly participated as well (2 Ki 17:16).

250. King Josiah removed the objects of astral worship (2 Ki 23:4-5), perhaps as part of his response to the renewal of the covenant (2 Ki 23:1-3) or in response to Zephaniah's prophecy (Zph 1:4-5). Ultimately, however, Lundbom (1999:500) notes that "Bar 2:24-25 records the sacrilege as having taken place".

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actions of both the leaders and the people of Israel, and the resultant divine judgment. Jeremiah's prophetic words contain an assessment that is damning and all-encompassing, highlighted by the unique five-fold use of the *'ăsher*-verb formula, as it relates to the sun, moon and hosts of heaven which the people loved (אשר אהבום), served (אשר עבדום), followed (אשר הלכו אחריהם), consulted (דרשום אשר) and worshipped (אשר השתחוו להם). As can be recognized by the careful reader who has now become familiar with the typical function of the *'ăsher*-verb formula, repetitive characteristics of the text not only add a distinct literary element to the pericope, but also add a powerful theological reminder and impact as well.

An awareness of the presence and function of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula within Jeremiah 8:2 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

"They will be spread out before the sun, the moon and all the stars of heaven,

which they have loved,

which they have served,

which they have followed,

which they have consulted, and

which they have worshipped.

They will not be gathered, and they will not be buried;

They will be like dung lying on the ground."

5.6   Conclusion

Within the Behavioural judgment text-type, each of the five subject characters is evaluated by the narrator, in light of their specific past actions. According to the narrator, the people experienced a plague because both they and Aaron made the calf. Later, Aaron and Miriam experienced the judgement of the Lord because they were foolish and they sinned. Within Ahijah's prophetic speech, king Jeroboam is condemned because of his own sin and also the sin that he caused Israel to commit. Another king, Ahab, was also negatively evaluated by the narrator because he sold himself to do evil and he allowed himself to be enticed by his wife Jezebel. Finally, the people of Jerusalem were devastatingly judged through Jeremiah's prophetic assessment of the people's love, service, following, consultation and worship of the sun, moon and stars of heaven. In each pericope, it is the distinct *'āsher*-verb formula that clearly identifies the subject character and/or their action(s) as unique, and also lists the specific characteristics that support the narrator's conclusion.

6 Conclusion and synthesis

6.1 Function

6.1.1 Introduction and Characteristics

Returning to the introductory comments, the goals of this study are first, to accurately identify the presence of the *'ăsher*-verb formula throughout the text of the Old Testament, second, to suggest the literary function of the formula, and third, to propose a few initial theological observations of how the formula enhances the reader's understanding of the subject characters. To that end, the results of the methodology[251] employed through this study indicate that the *'ăsher*-verb formula is a sophisticated linguistic tool that sheds additional light on the literary skill, artistry and narrative intention of the ancient biblical writers. The evidence suggests that *the 'ăsher-verb formula is a specific and unique linguistic feature in biblical Hebrew that contributes to the reader's literary and theological understanding of both the text and the subject character in multiple ways.* Given the contexts in which is it used, it is logical to conclude that the *'ăsher*-verb formula is integral to the identification of the "final word", from the

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251. As a summary of 1.2, the five general methods are: Step 1 - Delimitation criticism, Step 2 - Text-linguistic analysis, Step 3 - Textual criticism, Step 4 - Structuralism, and Step 5 -

narrator's point of view, of the subject at hand. More often than not, it is a linguistic and theological formula of definitiveness, in terms of character evaluation.

The twelve pericopes that contain the *'ăsher*-verb formula have been linguistically and theologically analyzed within their unique text-type and narratological setting in order to discern and describe the structure, narrative function, theological significance and specific literary contexts in which the narrator employs the formula. In addition to the careful analysis of each pericope, a new and clearer English translation of each text has also been suggested to the reader, taking into account the structure, use and narratological function of the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula.

As has been readily seen throughout this study, the *'ăsher*-verb formula reflects a remarkably consistent literary structure, and as such, the careful reader of the Bible can begin to anticipate and discern the presence of the formula in the Hebrew text. After the initial identification of the subject, there is the placement of either a single or repeated subordinate אשר immediately followed by a verb (either perfective or imperfective, dependant upon the context) that qualifies or

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Narrative criticism.

explains the narrator's observation about the subject. In six of the *'ăsher*-verb formula occurrences, there is the inclusion of one of the three formal indicators,[252] and in five of the pericopes, the *'ăsher*-verb clause is further refined by the presence of a specifically repeated preposition.[253] Although there are certainly other instances of character evaluation within the Old Testament,[254] the *'ăsher*-verb formula stands unique due to the multi-layer technique that is often used: layer 1 – formal indicator, layer 2 – *'ăsher*-verb combination(s), layer 3 – repetitive preposition(s). Finally, in essence, the entire *'ăsher*-verb formula, taken as an intrinsic literary unit, often functions adjectively in relationship to the previously identified subject.

6.1.2 Context

The particular literary contexts, or text-types, in which the specific evaluative *'ăsher*-verb formula is used by the narrator can be categorized into four general areas. As summarized below in the following chart, the formula is employed 1) at the end of a biblical character's life, 2) in contexts of looking forward to the future, 3) as a general historical assessment, and 4) in times of judgement for

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252. מִי כְ or לֹא־הָיָה, לֹא־קָם.

253. בְּכֹל (2 Ki 23:25), לְ (Dt 34:10-12; 2 Sm 7:23, Jr 8:2) or מִן (Gn 24:7).

254. For example, Noah (Gn 6:9) and Saul (1 Sa 15:10-11).

wrong doing.

Text-Type	Passage	Character	Evaluator	Indicator	1X	2X	3X	4X	5X
Epitaph	Dt 34:10-12	Moses	Narrator	לא־קום			אשר ידע אשר שלח אשר עשה		
Epitaph	2 Ki 23:25	Josiah	Narrator	לא־היה לא־קום	אשר שוב				
Future	Nm 27:16-17	Moses' Successor	Moses	Implied				אשר יצא אשר בוא אשר יצא אשר בוא	
Future	2 Chr 1:11-12	Solomon	God	לא־היה (2x)		אשר שפת אשר מלך אשר היה אשר פנה			
Historical	Gn 24:7	The Lord	Abraham	Implied			אשר לקח אשר דבר אשר שבע		
Historical	2 Sa 7:23 1 Chr 17:21	The People	David	מי כ		אשר הלך אשר פדה			
Historical	1 Ki 14:8	David	The Lord	לא־היה		אשר שמר אשר הלך			
Judgment	Ex 32:35	The People	Narrator	Implied		אשר עשה אשר עשה			
Judgment	Nm 12:11	Aaron and Miriam	Aaron	Implied		אשר יאל אשר חטא			
Judgment	1 Ki 14:16	Jeroboam	The Lord	Implied		אשר חטא אשר חטא			
Judgment	1 Ki 21:25	Ahab	Narrator	לא־היה		אשר מכר אשר סות			
Judgment	Jr 8:2	All Jerusalem	The Lord	Implied					אשר אהב אשר עבד אשר הלך אשר דרש אשר שחה

6.1.2.1 Behavioural epitaph

Twice in the Old Testament, the *'ăsher*-verb formula is used by the narrator as part of his overall and concluding analysis of a character's life. In Deuteronomy

34:10-12, the specific three-fold use of the *'ăsher*-verb formula increases the clarity of an otherwise unrecognizable picture of Moses' uniqueness as a *prophet* – he was known by God, he was sent, and he responded. Canonically later in the biblical text, in 2 Kings 23:25, the narrator states his case for the incomparable *kingly* role of Josiah, using the language of the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:5) to provide the rationale for his conclusion. In both cases, the *'ăsher*-verb formula assessment is markedly positive, it is used in a cultic context, and the character is set apart as being incomparable for all time.

6.1.2.2 Narrative future

Of the twelve occurrences of the *'ăsher*-verb formula, two are focussed on the future, and both times the words containing the formula are spoken by someone other than the subject character. As part of the divine conversation between Moses and the Lord presented to the reader in Numbers 27:11-12, Moses identified the four specific characteristics of his ideal replacement as the leader of Israel by using the *'ăsher*-verb formula's repeated "going" and "coming" terminology. Also, during another human-divine conversation, the Lord responded to king Solomon's request by promising that he would be enabled to judge the people of God, and that his wealth and honour would be unequalled (2 Chronicles 1:11-12).

6.1.2.3   Narrative historical

Three of the *'ăsher*-verb formula pericopes reflect a literary context of general historical assessment, either of an individual or of a national group. The patriarch Abraham's last recorded words contain his evaluation of the Lord, based upon his previous experiences. By recognizing of the *'ăsher*-verb formula, the reader becomes aware that Abraham concluded that the Lord was unique for three inter-related reasons: the Lord took him, spoke to him and swore to him (Genesis 24:7). The Lord also plays a crucial role in king David's evaluation of the people of Israel (2 Samuel 7:23), when he stated that the people's incomparability was based on the Lord's taking and redeeming of them, presented via the two-fold use of the *'ăsher*-verb formula. Finally, through the words of the prophet Ahijah, the Lord again is central as he stated that David's unequalled servant nature was evidenced by the fact that David kept his commands and walked after him (1 Kings 14:8).

6.1.2.4   Behavioural judgement

In five of the twelve *'ăsher*-verb formula pericopes, the literary context is the Lord's divine judgement of the subject based upon the subject's previous actions. Two kings – Jeroboam and Ahab – are given strongly worded negative assessments that describe their reigns as being either "sinful" or "wicked" (1

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Kings 14:16 and 1 Kings 21:25, respectively). Also, during the events of the Exodus from Egypt, the entire Israelite people are judged for making the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:35) and Aaron and Miriam are judged for questioning Moses' divinely appointed authority (Numbers 12:11). Finally, during the chaotic years near the end of the Israelite kingdom, all of Jerusalem is judged for their participation in forbidden astral worship (Jeremiah 8:2). In each pericope, the specific *'ăsher*-verb formula is employed by the narrator, and once the reader has become adept and identifying and understanding the formula, the precise reasons *why* divine judgment was being executed on the particular subject (ie, the nature of their "evaluation") becomes significantly clearer.

Clearly, the *'ăsher*-verb formula is intentionally employed by the narrator in a specific range of literary contexts, and each usage seems to fall into one of the four linguistic text-types identified above. Given the contexts in which is it used, it is logical to conclude that the *'ăsher*-verb formula is integral to the formation, and subsequent identification, of the "final word", from the narrator's point of view, of the subject at hand. More often than not, it is a linguistic and theological formula of definitiveness, in terms of character evaluation.

6.2 Concluding analysis

As has been discovered throughout this study's literary and theological exploration and analysis of the twelve identified Old Testament texts, the *'ăsher*-verb formula is indeed a specific linguistic technique used by the various biblical narrators. Employed in one of the four literary contexts[255] of character[256] evaluation (primarily either retrospective or anticipatory), the intentional and structured use of either single or multiple *'ăsher*-verb combination clauses provides the careful reader with a clearer understanding of the narrator's specific rationale for presenting a particular character as incomparable. Often used in conjunction with either a formal or informal textual indicator and/or further revision through the use of repeated prepositions, the *'ăsher*-verb formula is a sophisticated literary tool that sheds additional light on the narrative skill, artistry and rhetorical intention of the ancient biblical writers. As such, like the formation of a base camp on a long journey to a mountain's summit, this study represents only the first step of hopefully many more in the further exploration and refinement of the *'ăsher*-verb formula, as it becomes an additional tool used by

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255. As initially described in 1.2.3, the four text-types are Behavioural epitaph, Narrative future, Narrative historical and Behavioural judgement.

256. As stated in the introduction, the term "character" refers primarily to a literary character (that is, a narrative story consists of multiple characters, plot development, etc), although the term often has the secondary meaning of personality trait, moral character, etc. Throughout this study, however, the dual meanings sometime overlap, as the character (nature) of a character (specific individual or group) is evaluated by means of the *'ăsher*-verb formula.

students of Old Testament literature and theology.

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