

# 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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb formula is so named because of its consistently repetitive structure of “*'āsher* (the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר) + 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 אֲשֶׁר in some of the texts,<sup>1</sup> 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 *'āsher*-verb formula was briefly encountered for the first time during a study of the literary characteristics of the Hebrew phrase פְּנִים אֶל־פְּנִים, as found in Deuteronomy 34:10 (and also four other Old Testament passages).<sup>2</sup> 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 פְּנִים אֶל־פְּנִים), was that a picture of the repeated use of *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb formula.

---

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 'āsher-verb literary structure, then perhaps the formula was also used elsewhere<sup>3</sup> in similar contexts of character evaluation, or characterization.<sup>4</sup> 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 'āsher-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

---

3. The possibility of other instances of the 'āsher-verb formula was informally noted for further reference, but was not pursued at that time, as the immediate task was the evaluation of פְּנִים אֶל פְּנִים 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

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:

<b>Structural presentation of Deuteronomy 34:10-12 in five major English translations</b>	
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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb formula

The brief literary analysis<sup>5</sup> 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 ירע) 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

---

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-verb* occurrences

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

formula, an analysis of over 3,600 possible references<sup>6</sup> was undertaken. Each reference was carefully reviewed to see if there was a character being evaluated in some way, and if a specific *'āsher*-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<sup>7</sup> which each appeared to exhibit an intentional literary and structural use of the *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb formula is introduced by the narrator, so that the careful reader may suspect that the *'āsher*-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.

- 
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).

616852126  
i18043057

#### 1.1.1.3.1 Formal indicator: לא־קום

The phrase לא־קום (“there has not arisen / will not arise”) occurs 33 times in the Old Testament, and is used both figuratively<sup>8</sup> and literally.<sup>9</sup> For two of the twelve *’āsher*-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 לא־קום and the *’āsher*-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: לא־היה

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

---

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 *'āsher*-verb formula where לֹא־הָיָה 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 כִּי

The phrase מִי כִּי (“who is like?”) occurs 17 times in the Old Testament, with the referent most often being the Lord.<sup>10</sup> The people of Israel are also a repeated subject (only in the context of their relationship with the Lord),<sup>11</sup> and there are a small number of isolated subjects who either ask or are asked the question.<sup>12</sup> The phrase מִי כִּי occurs with the *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb

---

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 *'āsher*-verb pericopes and the type of indicator that is used.

Indicator	Who is being evaluated	Who is doing the evaluation	Reference
לֹא-קִיָּם	Moses Josiah	Narrator Narrator	Deuteronomy 34:10-12 2 Kings 23:25
לֹא-הָיָה	David Ahab Josiah <sup>13</sup> Solomon	The Lord Narrator Narrator God	1 Kings 14:8 1 Kings 21:25 2 Kings 23:25 2 Chronicles 1:11-12
כִּי	The People	David	2 Samuel 7:23
Implied	The Lord The People Aaron and Miriam Moses' Successor Jeroboam All Jerusalem	Abraham Narrator Aaron Moses The Lord The Lord	Genesis 24:7 Exodus 32:35 Numbers 12:11 Numbers 27:16-17 1 Kings 14:16 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 *'āsher*-verb formula in any of the major Hebrew

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

lexicons or grammars.<sup>14</sup> 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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb formula are carefully analyzed within their narratological settings in order to discern and describe the literary structure, narrative function, and the

---

14. For example, none of the following lexicons and grammars identify the possible use of the *'āsher*-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 אֲשֶׁר 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 אֲשֶׁר'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<sup>15</sup> 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 *'āsher*-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

---

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

theological motivation lying behind the critical exploration of the *'āsher*-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).<sup>16</sup> 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.

---

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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb formula pericopes is primarily concerned with the text as it is in its present form,<sup>17</sup> given this study's literary approach and emphasis on "final-text exegesis".<sup>18</sup>

---

17. As discussed in 1.2.4 and 1.2.5. For example, although some grammarians have suggested that אֲשֶׁר 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<sup>19</sup> to the study of biblical Hebrew, the discipline of text-linguistics<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.

---

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



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.<sup>22</sup> As well, the three commonly observable narrative distinctions of mainline, secondary line, and direct speech<sup>23</sup> appear to be evident in the twelve *'āsher*-verb formula pericopes. However, as this study's focus is on the particular nuances of the specific *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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

---

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.<sup>24</sup> Within the biblical scrolls, it appears that spelling was predominantly consonantal, and individual words were divided.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> However before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, a standard

---

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,<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> The Tiberian Masorah contained: 1) the consonantal text, 2) vocalization, 3) para-

---

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).<sup>32</sup>

*1000 CE – present* – There are close to 3,000 extant dated Hebrew manuscripts currently available,<sup>33</sup> and it is generally accepted that the Masoretic manuscripts dated before 1100 CE are more reliable than later medieval manuscripts.<sup>34</sup> Due to their dates, their inclusion of all<sup>35</sup> 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).<sup>36</sup> The key printed editions of the Hebrew Bible are the Second Rabbinic / Ben Hayyim Bible (1525, based upon 12<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts), Ginsburg (1894, based upon Ben Hayyim with earlier variants), Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> editions based upon Ben Hayyim, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition based upon Leningrad), and *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (all editions based on Leningrad). Other eclectic and critical

---

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<sup>37</sup> criticism

While recognizing the complex history of sources, forms, text types and redactors<sup>38</sup> 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<sup>39</sup> 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*<sup>40</sup> currently available that best represents<sup>41</sup> the Hebrew text and canon deemed as “official” by the first century CE.

---

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<sup>42</sup> 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<sup>43</sup> as a starting point:

1. The relative ages of the witnesses,
2. The spread of the testimony,
3. The structure of the immediate context,

---

instances of the 'asher-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](http://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<sup>44</sup>),
  - 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.<sup>45</sup>

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.

---

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<sup>46</sup> seeks to identify and articulate the literary rules by which written language is expressed,<sup>47</sup> and the primary focus of this analysis is on both the syntactical and stylistic elements of each of the twelve pericopes.<sup>48</sup> The central premise of this study is that the 'āsher-verb formula is an intentional structural technique which is selectively employed by the biblical narrators in specific evaluative circumstances.

---

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 'āsher-verb formula is analyzed on its own terms, but in general, grammatical and stylistic characteristics are central (with the repetitive presence of the אָשֶׁר-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<sup>49</sup> presents the changes in the characters, etc.<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup> 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 ...

---

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”.<sup>52</sup> Stated another way, in terms of the biblical text, this study assumes that the narrator’s assessment of a character is reliable.<sup>53</sup> 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 *’āsher-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,

---

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<sup>54</sup> that the *'āsher*-verb formula occurs, dependant upon the temporal viewpoint of the evaluator. That is, it seems that the narrator’s use of the *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb formula can be summarized in the following five general, and sometimes overlapping, steps:

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

---

54. The “triple ring structure” of Fokkelman (1999:15) is not sufficient for the purposes of this study, in that the presence of the *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb structure (Structuralism)
- 5) Suggest the function of the *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb formula he identifies the three specific characteristics of Moses that support his conclusion. While the literary significance of the three-fold *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 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. In fact, the evidence suggests that *the 'āsher-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 'āsher-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

of repeated prepositions,<sup>55</sup> the 'āsher-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 'āsher-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	לאִקוֹם			אֲשֶׁר יָדַע אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה		
Epitaph	2 Ki 23:25	Josiah	Narrator	לֵאדֹהֶיָה לֵאִקוֹם	אֲשֶׁר שׁוּב				
Future	Nm 27:16-17	Moses' Successor	Moses	Implied				אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא אֲשֶׁר בּוֹא אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא אֲשֶׁר בּוֹא	
Future	2 Chr 1:11-12	Solomon	God	לֵאדֹהֶיָה (2x)		אֲשֶׁר שָׁפַח אֲשֶׁר מָלַךְ			
						אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֲשֶׁר פָּנָה			
Historical	Gn 24:7	The Lord	Abraham	Implied			אֲשֶׁר לָקַח אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַע		
Historical	2 Sa 7:23 1 Chr 17:21	The People	David	מִי כִּי		אֲשֶׁר הִלְךְ אֲשֶׁר פָּדָה			
Historical	1 Ki 14:8	David	The Lord	לֵאדֹהֶיָה		אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַר אֲשֶׁר הִלְךְ			

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 'āsher-verb formula stands unique due to the multi-layer technique that is often used: layer 1 – formal indicator, layer 2 – 'āsher-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 נזכר אשר סות			
Judgment	Jr 8:2	All Jerusalem	The Lord	Implied					אשר אהב אשר עבר אשר הלך אשר דרש אשר שחה

As is shown above, instances of the 'āsher-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 'āsher-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 *'āsher*-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.<sup>56</sup>

The covenantal theology of the book seems to consistently and emphatically recur

---

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”.

throughout the Old Testament historical writings (eg, the books of Kings)<sup>57</sup> 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”).<sup>58</sup> 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,<sup>59</sup> to an Ancient Near Eastern covenantal format,<sup>60</sup> to a traditional liturgical structure.<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup> However, if chapters 1-34

---

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<sup>63</sup> (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<sup>64</sup> 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<sup>65</sup> as the textual limits, and

---

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.<sup>66</sup> 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-קִוּם 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-קִוּם 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 יָדָעוּ יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים  
 mp noun / preposition / mp noun / proper noun / Qp3ms verb + 3ms / relative pronoun

66. See Craigie (1976:406), Tigay (1996a:339), Wright (1996:313), and also the Samaritan Pentateuch [Vost Gali (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.

in all the signs and wonders,  
<sup>67</sup> לְכֹל-הָאֵתוֹת וְהַמוֹפְתִים <sup>68</sup>  
 mp noun (absolute) + article + conjunction / fp noun (absolute) + article / ms noun (construct) + preposition  
 whom the Lord sent  
 אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחַו יְהוָה  
 proper noun / Qp3ms verb + 3ms / relative pronoun  
 to do in the land of Egypt  
 לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם  
 proper noun / fs noun (absolute) + preposition / Qal-inf (construct) + preposition  
 (to Pharaoh  
 לְפָרְעֹה  
 proper noun + preposition  
 and to all his servants  
 וְלְכָל-עַבְדָּיו  
 mp noun + 3ms / ms noun + preposition + conjunction  
 and to all his land)  
 וְלְכָל-אֶרְצוֹ  
 fp noun + 3ms / ms noun + preposition + conjunction  
 in all the mighty power  
 וְלְכָל הַחֲזָקָה  
 fs adjective + article / fs noun / ms noun + preposition + conjunction  
 and in all the great terror,  
 וְלְכָל הַמִּוִּרָא 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 כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 proper noun (absolute) / ms noun (construct) / md noun (construct) + preposition

67. לְכֹל-הָאֵתוֹת וְהַמוֹפְתִים 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 Muracka (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 'āsher-verb combination and one of the three formal indicators (לֹא-קוּם).

## 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”.<sup>69</sup> 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*.<sup>70</sup>

---

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 'āsher-verb structure

As shown by means of the colour-coded translations, within Deuteronomy 34:10-12, there is a distinct structure<sup>71</sup> of sequential correspondence, evident in the three אשר clauses that follow the standard introductory indicator לֹא-יָקוּם. 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.<sup>72</sup> Note that each אשר is followed by a Qal perfective verb<sup>73</sup> and subject, then a series of subsequent statements that each start with the preposition לְ.

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<sup>74</sup> 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

---

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 אשר 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*<sup>75</sup> did the Lord know him?” which is answered by, “face to face<sup>76</sup> in all the signs and wonders<sup>77</sup>”. 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 *’āsher*-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.

---

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 *’āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verbs within the *Torah*

A review of all instances of מִשָּׁה and יָדַע within a three verse range<sup>78</sup> 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 (יָדַע) you by name” (subsequently confirmed by the Lord in v. 17).<sup>79</sup> 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 מִשָּׁה and שְׁלַח within a three verse range<sup>80</sup> suggests that even though Moses was sent by God (Deuteronomy

---

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 *משה* and *עשה* within a three verse range<sup>81</sup> 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

---

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<sup>82</sup> (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<sup>83</sup> (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 uncertainty about his mission, the narrator of Deuteronomy 34:10-12 paints a clear picture that he ultimately did (עשה) what he was sent (שלח) to do on behalf of the Lord.

---

82. There are also instances of the Israelites, as a whole, doing (עשה) 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 (עשה) 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 (עשה) 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 (עשה) 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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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<sup>84</sup> (אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה). In turn, each of the three 'āsher-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 'āsher-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.”

---

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

## 2.2 2 Kings 23:25<sup>85</sup> – 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.<sup>86</sup>

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)<sup>87</sup> and general

---

85. The corresponding passage in 2 Chr 35:20-27 contains neither the evaluation of 2 Ki 23:25 nor the *’āsher*-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,<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup> 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 *'āsher*-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<sup>91</sup>, 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,<sup>92</sup> 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)

---

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 chiasmic 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 *’āsher*-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,<sup>93</sup> which agrees nicely with

---

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 לא־היה and using the single אשר and repeated בכל’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:  
 וְכִמּוֹהוּ לֹא־הָיָה<sup>94</sup> 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־לִבּוֹ  
 ms noun (construct) + 3ms / ms noun + preposition

94. Compare 1 Ki 3:12 where both לא־היה and לא־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,  
<sup>95</sup>**וּבְכָל-מְאֹדוֹ**  
 adverb + 3ms / ms noun + preposition + conjunction  
 according to all the law of Moses.  
**כָּכֵל** <sup>96</sup>**תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה**  
 proper noun (absolute) / fs noun (construct) / ms noun + preposition  
 And after him, there was no one like him.  
**וְאַחֲרָיו לֹא-קָם כְּמֹהוּ**  
 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 'asher-verb combination and two of the three formal indicators (היה-לא and קום-לא).

95. The term **מֹאֵד** 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 **כָּכֵל תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה**, some manuscripts read either **כָּכֵל** or **בְּכָל**. At first glance, these alternative readings appear to fit nicely with the verse’s repeated use of **בְּכָל**, however, neither variant seems grammatically plausible, and neither of the two key manuscripts (Leningrad and Aleppo) reflect **בְּכָל** (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 **כָּכֵל** 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*,<sup>97</sup> 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<sup>98</sup> as the means of royal assessment agrees with the prophetic nature (ie, a call to refocus on the *Torah*) of the books of Kings.

---

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.<sup>99</sup> 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.<sup>100</sup> The "Josiah Evaluation" of verse 25 is found within the narrative just before the standard dismissal formula.

### 2.2.3.2 'āsher-verb structure

The 'āsher-verb formula within 2 Kings 23:25 is the only one of the twelve instances in which there is a single 'āsher-verb – the eleven others have various combinations of multiple 'āsher-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	incite	provoke	turn	passover	write	book	judge	arise	law
	place			aside						

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

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

---

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 'āsher-verb formula, verb-form usage is not necessarily universally consistent.

103. The king Josiah pericope is the only instance of the 'āsher-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 *'āsher*-verb within 1 and 2 Kings

Both the relative pronoun אשר and שב 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,<sup>105</sup> as the assessment in 2 Kings 18:5 is restricted to the kings of Judah. Also, and perhaps even more importantly, the usage of *'āsher* 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 יאשיהו and שוב within a three verse range<sup>106</sup> 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 (שוב) to him, but in fact, the nation did not.

---

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 (לֵבָב), soul (נַפְשׁ) and strength (בְּמֶאֶדָה) as recorded in Deuteronomy 6:5.<sup>107</sup> By identifying these specific characteristics within the 'āsher-verb formula, the narrator of the books of Kings set Josiah apart as not only a unique<sup>108</sup> king, but also the superior king in terms of *Torah* requirements and faithfulness.<sup>109</sup>

#### 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,

---

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 'āsher-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).<sup>110</sup> That is, most modern evaluations focus on the specific actions of king Josiah, rather than on his overall character.

The presence of the *'āsher-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<sup>111</sup> to the Lord and his covenant relationship. However, the reader must be careful not to overstate the case and conclude that the *'āsher-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 *'āsher-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 *'āsher-verb* formula within 2 Kings 23:25 suggests that an effective English translation of the text could be:

---

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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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”<sup>112</sup> because of its apparent haphazard collection of laws and stories.

---

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,<sup>113</sup> 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,<sup>114</sup> 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 *’āsher*-verb formula falls, is contained in the

---

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.<sup>115</sup> 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 *'āsher*-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),<sup>116</sup> and use 27:16-17 as the textual limits for the purposes of this study.

---

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)].

### 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 הָרוּחַת 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 לְפָנֵיהֶם  
mp noun + 3mp + preposition / Qal-i3ms / relative pronoun  
 who will come in in front of them,  
 וְאֲשֶׁר יָבֵא לְפָנֵיהֶם  
mp noun + 3mp + preposition / Qal-i3ms / relative pronoun + conjunction  
 who will lead them out,  
 וְאֲשֶׁר יוֹצִיאֵם  
Hiphil-i3ms + 3mp / relative pronoun + conjunction  
 and who will bring them in,  
 וְאֲשֶׁר יְבִיאֵם  
Hiphil-i3ms + 3mp / relative pronoun + conjunction  
 so that the community of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd.  
 וְלֹא תִהְיֶה עֵדַת יְהוָה כְּצֹאן 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 'asher-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.<sup>117</sup> 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.<sup>118</sup>

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”,<sup>119</sup> 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 (רוּחַ) also plays an important role in the Lord’s specific selection<sup>120</sup> of Joshua (27:18),<sup>121</sup> and perhaps the narrator is suggesting an intentional connection

---

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 *יש אִישׁ אֶשֶׁר רוּחַ [אֱלֹהִים] בּוֹ* is also occurs in Gn 41:38 to describe Joseph.



between the Lord and Joshua.<sup>122</sup>

### 3.1.3.2 'āsher-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 'āsher-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 'āsher-verb occurrences, the narrator instead chose to list the four אשר and imperfect verb clauses directly – the man over the community is to go out (יֵצֵא) in front of the community, come in (בֹּיֵא) in front of the community, lead them out (יֵצֵא) and lead them in (בֹּיֵא). The double use of “go out” and “come in” is possibly the language of military conquest,<sup>123</sup> although nothing in the immediate context suggests that it should not refer to the general political leadership of Moses' successor (which would include military

---

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 *'āsher*-verbs within the *Torah*

A review of all instances of יהושע and יצא within a three verse range<sup>124</sup> 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

---

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<sup>125</sup> 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 *'āsher*-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 (אצ"י) in front of the people and then bring them in (בוא) into the new land.

---

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

An awareness of the presence and function of the *'āsher-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<sup>126</sup> – 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

---

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 *'āsher-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 אֲשֶׁר 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 *'āsher-verb* formula, אֲשֶׁר 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.<sup>127</sup> For the purposes of this study, perhaps the most effective literary structure of Chronicles can be presented by using the following three general divisions:<sup>128</sup>

- 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.

---

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 'āsher-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.<sup>129</sup>

#### 3.2.2.2 Translation

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

---

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 לְשִׁלְמֹה

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

“Because this was in your heart:

יַעַן אֲשֶׁר הִיְתָה זֹאת עִם-לִבְבְּךָ

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,

עֶשֶׂר נִכְסִים וְכָבוֹד

ms noun + conjunction / mp noun / ms noun

the life of those who hate you,

וְאֵת נַפְשׁ שְׂנֵאִיךָ

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

and you did not even ask for long life,

וְגַם-יָמִים רַבִּים לֹא שָׁאַלְתָּ

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

I will give to you wisdom and knowledge

וְהִשְׁאֵל-לְךָ חֲכָמָה וּמִדָּע

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

by which you will judge my people

אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁפֹּט 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,

הַחֲכָמָה וְהַמִּדָּע נְתוּן לְךָ

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

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

וְעֶשֶׂר וְנִכְסִים וְכָבוֹד אֶתֶן-לְךָ

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

so that there are no kings like you

אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הָיָה כֵּן לְמַלְכִּים

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

and there will be none before you or after you.

אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵיךָ וְאַחֲרֶיךָ לֹא יִהְיֶה-כֵּן

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

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,<sup>130</sup> 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.<sup>131</sup> 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.<sup>132</sup>

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

---

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,<sup>133</sup> 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.<sup>134</sup> 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 chiasmic 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 'āsher-verb structure

Unique among instances of the 'āsher-verb formula that occur with one of the three formal indicators, 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 has the marker (the dual use of  $\text{וְאֵלֹהִים}$   $\text{וְאֵלֹהִים}$ ) 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

---

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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-verb<sup>135</sup> formula: “so that there are no kings like you” (אשר לא־היה כן למלכים),<sup>136</sup> and “there will be none before you or after you” (אשר לפניך ואחריך לא יהיה־כן).<sup>137</sup>

### 3.2.4 Literary context

#### 3.2.4.1 2 Chronicles 1:11-12 and the *'āsher*-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.

---

which characterizes all of the narrative that follows”.

135. In this instance the verb performs double-duty, as it is part of both the *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 (טפֿשׁ).<sup>138</sup>

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,<sup>139</sup> and there are numerous examples of general historical reference to his kingly rule.<sup>140</sup> Finally, David and the whole assembly anointed Solomon as king together, just before king David passed away and Solomon took his place.<sup>141</sup>

### 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

---

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 (לֹא־הָיָה 2x) is placed at the end of the formula, rather than at the beginning. Other than these two unique qualities, however, the 'āsher-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 (אֲשֶׁר שֹׁפֵט) and rule over (אֲשֶׁר מֹלֵךְ) the people, and the result would be that there are (אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָיָה 2x) no kings like him, either before him or after him.

An awareness of the presence and function of the two 'āsher-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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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.<sup>142</sup> Of course, Genesis deals with “beginnings”, not only of the *Torah* and the Old

---

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<sup>143</sup> or a story of ten books.<sup>144</sup>

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.<sup>145</sup> 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

---

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.<sup>146</sup>

#### 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”),<sup>147</sup> 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,<sup>148</sup> 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”.

---

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,  
<sup>149</sup> יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם  
 mp noun + article / mp noun / proper noun  
 who took me  
 אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְנִי  
 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,  
<sup>150</sup> וּמֵאֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתִּי  
 fs noun + 1cs / fs noun + preposition + conjunction  
 who spoke to me  
 וְאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר-לִי  
 preposition + 1cs / Piel-p3ms / relative pronoun + conjunction  
 and who swore to me,  
 וְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע-לִי  
 preposition + 1cs / Niphal-p3ms / relative pronoun + conjunction  
 saying, "to your descendants I will give this land",  
 לֵאמֹר לְיִרְעֶךָ אֶתְּנֶן 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 מַלְאָכּוֹ 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 לְבְנִי מִשָּׁם  
 adverb + preposition / ms noun + 1cs + preposition / fs noun / Qal-p2ms + conjunction

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

150. Several manuscripts reflect מביה ומארצי (compare the usage of מולדהו 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 *'āsher-*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.<sup>151</sup> The remainder of the pericope consists of Abraham's commission to the loyal servant<sup>152</sup> 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<sup>153</sup> 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

---

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,<sup>154</sup> even if his potential wife refused to return<sup>155</sup> to Canaan with Abraham’s servant.

#### 4.1.3.2 *'āsher-verb structure*

The particular *'āsher-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 *אשר* and perfective verb clauses<sup>156</sup> that seem to function adjectively<sup>157</sup>

---

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 *אשר* is Westermann (1985:385), who writes that Abraham’s answer comprises “two (or three) relative sentences with *אשר*”, 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 *'āsher-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 'āsher-verb (אֲשֶׁר לִקַּח) is further qualified by the use of two subordinate מִן clauses (“from my house” and “from the land of my birth”), and the third 'āsher-verb (אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַע<sup>158</sup>) 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

---

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

Abraham.<sup>159</sup> 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 *’āsher*-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.<sup>160</sup> As well, the Lord occasionally commanded others to take people on his behalf, for a variety of reasons.<sup>161</sup>

---

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 *'āsher*-verbs (אֲשֶׁר) 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 (שָׁבַע) 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.<sup>162</sup> 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 (לָקַח) many people. For example, he “took” Abraham (Joshua 24:3), David

---

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 *'āsher*-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 (שבט) 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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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<sup>163</sup> – 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

---

163. The literary context and *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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,<sup>164</sup> although both the Leningrad and Aleppo Codices indicate a significant break at the end of verse 25.<sup>165</sup> 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),<sup>166</sup> with the central section of verses 22-24 being the hymnic<sup>167</sup> text which contains the 'āsher-verb formula, and therefore the best limits of the pericope.

#### 4.2.2.2 Translation

Taking into account both the formal indicator **מִי כִּי** 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 כְּעַמֶּךָ כִּי־יִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ**  
fs noun + preposition / ms adjective / ms noun / proper noun + preposition / ms noun + 2ms + preposition / interrogative + conjunction

whom God took out  
**אֲשֶׁר הִלְכוּ־אֱלֹהִים**  
mp noun / Qal-p3cp / relative pronoun  
 redeeming his people to himself,  
**לְפָדוֹת־לוֹ לְעַם**  
ms noun + preposition / preposition + 3ms / Qal infinitive + preposition

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,  
וְלָשָׂם לוֹ שֵׁם  
ms noun / preposition + 3ms / Qal-inf + preposition + conjunction  
and doing for them great and fearful things in your land  
וְלַעֲשׂוֹת לָכֶם הַגְּדוֹקָה וְהַנְּרָאוֹת לְאַרְצְךָ  
fs noun + 2ms + preposition / Niphal-participle-fp + conj / fs noun + article / prep + 2mp / Qal-inf +  
preposition + conjunction  
in front of your people,  
מִפְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ  
ms noun + 2ms / fp noun + preposition  
whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt,  
אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ קָדְךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם  
proper noun + preposition / preposition + 2ms / Qal-p2ms / relative pronoun  
from nations and their gods?  
גּוֹיִם וְאֱלֹהֵיהֶן  
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 'āsher-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<sup>168</sup> before the Lord in 2 Samuel 7:18-29, contains a number of oft-repeated terms - עַבְדִּי ("servant" 10x), אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה ("sovereign Lord" 7x)<sup>169</sup>, בַּיִת ("house" 7x) and עוֹלָם ("forever" 5x) – highlighting

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,<sup>170</sup> 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 'āsher-verb structure

In sharp contrast to a few scholars who conclude that the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 7:23 is awkward or clumsy,<sup>171</sup> the presence of the specific 'āsher-verb formula highlights the narrative intentionality and literary coherence of the text. The formula is uniquely introduced by **מִי כִּי** and then followed by two **אֲשֶׁר** and perfective verb clauses: **אֲשֶׁר הִלְכוּ-אֱלֹהִים** (“whom God took out”) and **אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ** (“whom you redeemed”). The first 'āsher-verb clause is immediately followed and refined by a series of three statements prefixed with the preposition **לְ**.<sup>172</sup> 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.

---

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 **לְ**.

#### 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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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 *'āsher*-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

2.2.1 of this study.<sup>173</sup> 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 'āsher-verb formula.<sup>174</sup>

#### 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.<sup>175</sup> Perhaps this is why many scholars have treated the entire passage (verses 1-20) as one large unit, rather than a series of smaller

---

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.<sup>176</sup> 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 *'āsher*-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.<sup>177</sup>

#### 4.3.2.2 Translation

Taking into account the formal indicator *לֹא־הִיָּה* 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,  
 וְאֶקְרַע אֶת־הַמְּמַלְכָּה מִבֵּית דָּוִד וְאֶתַּנַּתְּהָ לָּךְ  
 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־הִיָּיתָ כְּעַבְדֵי 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

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 *לְכֵן* ("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,

<sup>178</sup>וְאֲשֶׁר-הֵלֵךְ אַחֲרַי בְּכֹל-לִבּוֹ

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

doing only that which was right in my eyes.

לְעֵשׂוֹת רַק הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינַי

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 'āsher-verb combination and one of the three formal indicators (לא־היה).

### 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 'āsher-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 (רָם) – 14:7

I made you (נָתַן) – 14:7

I tore the kingdom (קָרַע) – 14:8

---

178. Compare 2 Ki 23:25.

I gave the kingdom (נתן) – 14:8

You did evil (עשה) – 14:9

You walked (הלך) – 14:9

You made other gods (עשה) – 14:9

You provoked (בעט<sup>179</sup>) – 14:9

You have cast me behind (שלך) – 14:9

I will bring disaster (בוא) – 14:10

I will cut off (כרת) – 14:10

I will burn up (בער) – 14:10

The *'āsher*-verb evaluation formula appears between the first and second sections of the chiasmic 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.<sup>180</sup> 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 *'āsher*-verb formula highlights the fact that it is king David who is

---

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.<sup>181</sup> That is, king Jeroboam is seen by the narrator in comparison to king David.

#### 4.3.3.2 'āsher-verb structure

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

---

181. That is, it is David and not Jeroboam who is the subject of the 'āsher-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 'āsher-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),<sup>185</sup> 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,<sup>186</sup> reveals that David

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

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.<sup>187</sup> Not surprisingly, when looking forward to the coming kingship of his son, David charged Solomon<sup>188</sup> 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

---

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 Hezekiah (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 'āsher-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 *'āsher*-verb formula that clearly identifies the subject character as unique, and also lists the specific characteristics that support the narrator's conclusion.