The Words of the Wise Are like Goads
Engaging Qohelet in the 21st Century

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The Grammar of שׁ and רָשׁ in Qohelet

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The language of the book of Qohelet has long been a source of some frustration. In this book, we are faced with a number of apparent neologisms, awkward phrases, and grammatical features, some of which seem to anticipate the Hebrew of the Mishnah while others are unique. Squarely in the middle of the discussion are the function words שׁ and רָשׁ—the latter the overwhelmingly typical nominalizer in the Hebrew Bible and the former used but rarely. Moreover, in no other biblical book is the distribution of שׁ and רָשׁ like the distribution in Qohelet (68× שׁ vs. 89× רָשׁ). Isaksson’s conclusion fairly represents the state of the issue: “the immense use of רָשׁ in the Book of Qohelet probably is due to the influence of a Northern dialect, if not a northern origin. The mixed use of two seemingly interchangeable relative particles remains unexplained. Possibly, we should also reckon with Aramaic influence.”1 Does שׁ reflect dialect, style, register, or diachrony? In this essay, I explain what has so far been left without satisfactory explanation.

Although there are about 5,500 רָשׁ clauses in the Hebrew Bible, there are only 139 occurrences of שׁ. Of these, 68 are in Qohelet, and 32 are in the Song of Songs.2 Twenty-one are in various psalms from Ps 122 onward, and the remaining 18 are scattered in the Hebrew Bible, literally, from beginning to end.3 The distribution of רָשׁ and שׁ in nonbiblical texts is somewhat similar. In epigraphic texts from the first millennium, there are 32 clear occurrences of רָשׁ and none

3. Psalms 122:3, 4; 123:2; 124:1, 2, 6; 129:6, 7; 133:2, 3; 135:2, 8, 10; 136:23; 137:8 (2×), 9; 144:15 (2×); 146:3, 5; Gen 6:3; Judg 5:7 (2×); 6:17; 7:12; 8:26; 2 Kgs 6:11; Jonah 1:7, 12; 4:10; Job 19:29; Lam 2:15, 16; 4:9; 5:18; Ezra 8:20; 1 Chr 5:20; 27:27.
of ש. 4 The Hebrew text of Ben Sira contains 29 cases of ש (and also 67 of רָאָשָׁה). 6 In the Qumran nonbiblical texts, ש (including לָשׁוֹן) appears 145 times, but 124 of these are in only two texts: 57 in the Copper Scroll [3Q15] 7 and 67 in 4QMMTB,C [4Q394–99]; the remaining 21 examples are spread out, and no one text uses

4. Excluding questionable readings, reconstructions, and unprovenanced texts, there are 22 epigraphic occurrences of רָאָשָׁה and none of ש (for the texts, see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp et al., Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005]): Arad 8:9; 18:6–8; 29:7; 40:4–5; 71:2; Kuntillet Ajrud 16:1; Lachish 2:5–6; 3:4–6, 10–12; 4:2–3, 3–4, 11–12, 9:4–9; 18:1; Yavnée Yam/ Mesad Ha-shavyahu 1:6–8, 8–9; Papyrus Murabba‘at 17a 1:2; Nahal Yishai 1:1; Samaria Basalt 1:1; Silwan 2:1, 2–3; 3:2. Additionally, there are 8 examples of רָאָשָׁה in unprovenanced texts, mostly seals, within private collections: Moussaieff Ostraca 1:1, 2:4–6 (see Dobbs-Allsopp et al. for the texts) and seals #1, 20, 403, 404, 405, 406 in N. Avigad and B. Sass, Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997). Finally, to this latter group, we may add ostracon 2 (lines 6 and 9) in the unprovenanced tests published in A. Lemaire and A. Yardeni, “New Hebrew Ostraca from the Shephelah,” in Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives (ed. S. E. Fassberg and A. Hurvitz; Jerusalem: Magnes / Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006) 197–245.

5. Ben Sira 3:22; 14:16, 18; 15:17; 16:3, 16; 17:15; 25:8; 26:17; 30:12, 19, 34, 36; 34:10, 15, 1614, 20, 27, 37:3; 44:9, 51:30. This includes one conjectured reconstruction (30:19) and two occurrences of לָשׁוֹן (13:5, 30:28). Additionally, the following cases exhibit alternation between the manuscripts: 3:22 (A = אֶל־נַח שְׁמוּר עָשָׂר; B = אֶל־נַח שְׁמוּר עָשָׂר; margin = בהקאת שְׁמוּר עָשָׂר; A = אֶל־נַח שְׁמוּר עָשָׂר; margin = בהקאת שְׁמוּר עָשָׂר; 34:15 (A = בּכָל שֶׁנַּא שָׁמֶא; margin = 메ִי־שֶׁנַּא שָׁמֶא; 44:9 (B = מֵאִי־שֶׁנַּא שָׁמֶא; margin = מֵאִי־שֶׁנַּא שָׁמֶא). And finally, the following is the one case of the two relative words used in the same verse: 16:14 A = לָתֵת לְבָנֵךُ לֶא הָעַרְדָּתָם מֵאֶלִּיוּ; B = לָתֵת לְבָנֵךְ לֶא הָעַרְדָּתָם מֵאֶלִּיוּ.


7. In the Copper Scroll, there are 32 occurrences of ש: 3Q15 1:1, 6; 2:1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13; 3:8, 11; 4:1, 6, 9, 11; 5:5, 12; 6:14; 7:8; 8:1, 2, 4, 9:1, 14, 16, 17; 10:3, 5, 9, 11, 17, 8, 12, 14; 12:10. There are also 25 cases of לָשׁוֹן: 3Q15 1:9, 10, 13; 2:11; 3:2; 4:13; 5:6, 8; 6:1, 7, 8; 7:3, 8, 10, 14; 8:8, 10, 14; 9:14; 10:8, 15; 12:4, 6, 7, 8.

8. In the B manuscript of 4QMMT, there are 43 occurrences of ש: 4Q394 frags. 3–7 i 4, 5, 9, 12 (2×), 13, 14, 15, 19; frags. 3–7 ii 14, 16; frag. 8 iv 2, 3, 5 (2×), 8, 11; 4Q395 frag. 1:6; 4Q396 frags. 1–2 i 3, 5; frags. 1–2 ii 1, 5, 7 (2×), 10; frags. 1–2 iii 1, 6 (2×), 10; frags. 1–2 iv 2 (2×), 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; 4Q397 frags. 1–2; frags. 6–13:11 (2×), 12, 13 (2×), 14. There are three cases of לָשׁוֹן: 4Q394 frags. 3–7 i 15, 19; 4Q395 frag. 1:10. In the C manuscript, there are 19 occurrences of ש: 4Q397 frags. 14–21:2, 10, 12, 15, 16; frag. 22:2; frag. 23:2; 4Q398 frags. 11–13:3, 4 (2×), 6, 7; frags. 14–17 i 5; frags. 14–17 ii 1, 3 (2×), 4, 6; 4Q399 frag. 1 i 11. There are 2 cases of לָשׁוֹן: 4Q397 frag. 23:2; 4Q398 frags. 14–17 ii 6.
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שׁ more than twice. The Bar Kokhba period texts from Nahal Hever and Wadi Murabba’at contain 118 occurrences of שׁ and none of אִשָּׂר. Finally, שׁ dominates in the Mishnah, where אִשָּׂר is used only 69 times—all in biblical quotations or allusions.

This distribution raises a host of questions regarding the status of שׁ in general and its use in Qohelet in particular. For example, was שׁ an item native to the grammar of the author of Qohelet (and Song of Songs, Ben Sira, etc.), whereas it was not for most biblical authors? If so, why did it not displace אִשָּׂר entirely (as in the Song of Songs and the Mishnah)? Did the author of Qohelet, for instance, borrow שׁ from another dialect of Hebrew, and if so, why? Is it a case of archaizing, perhaps to strengthen the Solomonic persona of the book’s primary voice? As the first step in the process of untangling this knotty issue, I consider what has been one of the majority explanations: that שׁ and אִשָּׂר reflect northern and southern Hebrew dialects, respectively.

A Dialectal Difference?

Since Gotthelf Bergsträsser’s “Das hebräische Präfix שׁ,” the scholarly consensus has been to trace the etymology of Hebrew שׁ from the Akkadian ša. The "separate etymology" view has rarely been questioned since Bergsträsser’s article, with the notable exceptions of I. Eitan (“Hebrew and Semitic Particles: Comparative Studies in Semitic Philology,” AJSL 44 [1928] 177–205), C. Brockelmann (Hebraische Syntax [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956]), and J. Huehnergard (“On the Etymology of the Hebrew Relative še,” in Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives [ed. S. E. Fassberg et al.])

9. There is 1 case of שׁל (4Q385 frag. 6:9) and there are 20 occurrences of שׁ (CD 15:11; 20:4; 4Q222 frag. 1:7; 4Q266 frag. 10 i 1; frag. 10 ii 2; 4Q302 frag. 8:3; 4Q322 frag. 1:3; 4Q322a frag. 1:9; 4Q324 frag. 1:6; 4Q332 frag. 2:3; 4Q333 frag. 1:3; 4Q448 frag. 3:5; 4Q468 frag. 1:2; 4Q521 frag. 2 ii + 4:11; 4Q522 frag. 9 i + 10:10; 11Q5 28:13; 11Q20 12:14; KhQ3 1:1 [2×], 4).

10. From Nahal Hever, there are 51 occurrences of שׁ in the texts collected in Y . The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters ([Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2002] 44.5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 [2×], 13 [2×], 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 26; 45.7, 8, 10, 15, 16, 18 [2×], 19; 46.3 [3×], 4, 5 [3×], 7 [3×], 9, 11; 49.5, 6, 7 [3×], 8 [3×], 11, 13; 51.5; 64.1) and twelve שׁל (44.7, 10, 11; 45.7, 12, 20, 21; 46.7 [2×], 8; 51.6) and, from the Nahal Še‘elim we may add 7 שׁ (8.9 [2×], 8e–k.9, 30.7, 49.8 [2×], 12) and a single occurrence of שׁל (8.9; see H. M. Cotton and A. Yardeni, Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek Documentary Texts from Nahal Hever and Other Sites, with an Appendix Containing Alleged Qumran Texts (the Seiyâl Collection I) [DJD 27; Oxford: Clarendon, 1997]). From Wadi Murabba’at, there are 39 occurrences of ש (22.5–6; 22h.1; 24b.4, 11, 12, 15; 24c.4, 7, 9; 24d.4; 24e.3, 6, 9; 30.3, 15, 19 [2×], 23 [3×], 36; 42.2, 3 [2×], 4 [2×], 5, 6; 43.5, 6; 44.2, 9; 45.3; 46.3, 4, 7, 8, 9; 47.5) and 8 of שׁל (30.26; 22 frags. 2, 5–6; 24.6; 42.1, 4; 46.7; 47.3; see A. Yardeni, דאכט הוצᠬאר מצורפ, עכיירים וזכויות וממצאים שונים [2 vols.; Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Ben-Zion Dinur Center for Research in Jewish History, 2000]).


pathway for this etymological connection, from Akkadian to the biblical data, is generally taken to include two intermediaries: northern Canaanite (for example, Phoenician) and northern Hebrew. This seems plausible: *ʼšš* became the relative word of choice, by change and diffusion, in some of the Hebrew grammar of the north, from which it influenced parts of the southern Hebrew grammar, particularly after 722 B.C.E. Thus, it eventually replaced *ʾāšer*, the process and final result of which we see in Qohelet and the Song of Songs, respectively. One problem with a simple northern-to-southern dialectal explanation, however, is the complete absence of *šš* from any epigraphic text with a northern provenance. A second problem with this explanation, as Rendsburg notes, is that *ʾāšer* is used in biblical texts often identified as northern in origin (for example, Judges 5–8, Hosea). For these two reasons, the simple northern-to-southern explanation is inadequate.

Another dialectal approach is social instead of geographical. As Waltke and O’Connor state concerning the Biblical Hebrew data, “[T]here are signs that the speech of men differs from that of women; speech addressed to young or old may vary from a standard. Speech itself often differs from narrative prose, and there are traces of dialect variation based on region in both.” In this vein, some have identified *šš* as the colloquial Hebrew relative word and *ʾāšer* as the literary choice. Taking this a step farther, Rendsburg has argued that the biblical texts contain evidence of diglossia in the biblical period. Diglossia is, following Ferguson’s classic definition,

13. Within Northwest Semitic, we have evidence of a relative *šš* in the alphabetic cuneiform text from Tanaach, an Ammonite amulet/seal (ca. 600 B.C.E.), and a Philistine text. Additionally, the determinative pronoun/genitive marker in Punic and a few late colonial Phoenician inscriptions is often considered to be cognate, and I take the view that the relative *šš* in Phoenician (Standard though late Neo-Punic) and Ammonite are also cognate. See my “Etymologies” (ibid.) for discussion of this topic.


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a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written or formal spoken purposes, but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.  

In the application of diglossia to Biblical Hebrew, שׁ represents the “low,” colloquial register and אַשׁר the “high,” literary register. How the colloquial form made its way into literary products (that is, Qohelet, Song of Songs) is explained by Rendsburg as follows:

During the period of the monarchy, 1000–586 B.C.E., a standard literary Hebrew was utilized in which אַשׁר was the sole relative pronoun. The colloquial form, which existed side-by-side with the classical form, was שׁ, which in a very few instances infiltrated literary composition. The upheaval of 586 B.C.E., with the resultant exile and restoration, effected changes in the Hebrew language, and one of these was the further penetration of שׁ into written records.  

Clearly, a straightforward diglossic explanation is perceived to be inadequate, since Rendsburg, following Segal and Rabin before him, combines the diglossia analysis with a geographical and diachronic analysis. Thus, for him, the full story is that שׁ was the relative in the north and אַשׁר in the south; during the monarchy and after, northern and southern Hebrew influenced each other, and thus we see שׁ in both supposedly northern and southern texts; and שׁ continued in colloquial Hebrew, but אַשׁר maintained its preferred status in the literary register.

Before evaluating this diglossic-geographical-diachronic complex proposal, we should note here that the continued study of diglossic situations has brought to light a number of common features that are relevant for the ancient Hebrew discussion. First, the high variety is quite often associated with sacred writings and small priestly groups. Second, the decline of diglossia is often connected with social change, such as a move toward nationalism; the decline of existing class structures (which would include the literary elite); greater literacy; or catastrophic

20. Ibid., 118. Rendsburg’s study is particularly relevant to an analysis of the language of Qohelet: he asserts that from the exile onward “the loss of political independence brought an end to the heyday of classical Hebrew. It continued to be used during the Exilic and post-Exilic periods, but the decay is evident from the greater number of spoken forms which appear in literary compositions” (ibid., 168). Of all the books that contain features that Rendsburg identifies as colloquial, Qohelet has by far the greatest percentage (14%).
political and social events (such as the Babylonian Exile or Maccabean revolt). Third, if a change occurs regarding high and low varieties, it is always high that loses ground and low that becomes the new standard, which is essentially what is proposed for the shift from Biblical to Rabbinic Hebrew. Fourth, it is possible that some high varieties represent early forms of their low counterparts, and thus low is a later stage on an expected path of grammatical development; the high is “frozen” by social convention, whereas the low continues to change. Each one of these observations fits what we know of the biblical books and the history of Israel at various points and make it very likely that diglossia did exist in ancient Israel. However, the fact remains that the evidence we have at our disposal is all literary, which for obvious methodological reasons makes it difficult to argue confidently for the diglossic proposal.

One important principle underlying the diglossic analysis—as well as the geographical and diachronic views—concerns language usage: the use of שׁ versus אشׁ was dictated by location, time, or social context; it was not open to free manipulation by the language user. As Kaye notes, users in a diglossic situation do not mix the high and low varieties; rather, “[N]ative speakers possess an overall ‘communicative competence’ rather than a mere ‘grammatical competence.’” Thus, if the variation between שׁ and אשׁ reflects intentionality (so Young and Davila), then the salient linguistic distinction is not dialect but style.

**A Stylistic Difference?**

Whereas dialectal differences in the textual evidence represent a linguistic accident—the differences reflect the separate origins of the contrasting linguistic forms—stylistic differences are not accidental. That is, characters are often distinguished by their speech in a range of genre, from plays to novels and other types

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22. Ibid, 32–34.
23. Ibid, 8, 30.
24. Ibid, 18–19, 22.
of narrated literature (for example, James Joyce’s works). Speech may color the characters as old or young, educated or not, wealthy or poor, respectful or rude, local or foreign.\(^{28}\) Coloring the characters’ speech achieves two related ends for the storyteller. First, it allows the storyteller to stay out of the story, because an intrusive narrator (for example, “He said, in a Cockney accent, ‘...’”) is a cumbersome device, disrupts the flow of the story itself, and is mostly reserved for subjective asides or background information (for example, “He was a nasty sort of fellow” or “This was the way it was done back then”). Second, it allows a character continually to be distinguished from other characters with different speech patterns, thus subtly keeping the differences in the audience’s mind without being explicit. This literary technique is not simply esthetic, however: the differences are used to engage the reader and encourage the construction of a reader identity vis-à-vis the characters’ identities. The specific type of language use I have been describing is called style-shifting.\(^{29}\)

Style-shifting is a form of the linguistic phenomenon of code-switching. *Code-switching* is typically associated with “the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode,” whereas style-shifting is used to refer to the presence of more than one register within the same dialect, such as formal versus informal.\(^{30}\) Importantly, Gordon and Williams argue that “when we look at code-switching in literature we are looking at a very conscious language use, unlike some instances of code-switching in speech.”\(^{31}\) In their study, they identify three primary functions of literary code-switching: extrinsic, organic, and political.\(^{32}\) The extrinsic type of code-switching simply supplies local color in the text, whereas the organic type intends to avoid alienating the reader by translations or explanatory glosses. Political usage has the opposite goal: it is intended to

\(^{28}\) For biblical examples, see G. A. Rendsburg, “Linguistic Variation and the ‘Foreign’ Factor in the Hebrew Bible,” in Language and Culture in the Near East (ed. S. Izre’el and R. Drory; IOS 15; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Faculty of Humanities, 1996) 177–90.

\(^{29}\) To my knowledge, S. Kaufman (“The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof,” in Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Panel Sessions: Hebrew and Aramaic Languages [ed. Moshe Bar-Asher; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988] 55) was the first to use the term *style-switching* in the context of ancient Hebrew studies, and it has since been adopted and developed by G. Rendsburg in a number of articles (see, for example, “Linguistic Variation”; “Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew,” in Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew [ed. W. R. Bodine; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992] 65–88; “Kabbir in Biblical Hebrew: Evidence for Style-Switching and Addressee-Switching in the Hebrew Bible,” JAOS 112 [1992] 649–51); however, this general concept is not new and has long been noticed in Hebrew studies—for example, in discussions about intentional “archaizing” (albeit not from an explicitly linguistic framework).


\(^{31}\) Ibid, 70.

\(^{32}\) Ibid, 80–81.
discomfort the reader by creating a cultural boundary. Literary code-switching in the organic and political categories works to establish group membership between some characters and some readers; that is, in-groups and out-groups are created with parts of the audience.33

I have argued elsewhere that linguistic forms are used to create an in-group between the characters of Jonah and Ruth and the audience.34 But is this what the author of Qohelet was doing with ש and אֲשֶׁר? That is precisely what Davila has suggested: “[T]he impression we get of [the author of Qohelet] is that he was a proud iconoclast, and it is not hard to imagine him as a sage who insisted on talking like real folks and not the highbrows in Jerusalem.”35 In other words, there were social registers of Hebrew in ancient Israel (note that this is not the same phenomenon as diglossia), and Qohelet intentionally used a lower-class variety to identify with his intended audience.36

The critical problem with the stylistic variation argument, at least for ש and אֲשֶׁר, is the lack of a clear pattern. If ש did represent the lower social register, then why not use it exclusively (as in the Song of Songs)? What sort of group membership or reader identity can the ש and אֲשֶׁר variation help to establish? It is entirely unclear to me that it helps do this at all. Additionally, the random variation between ש and אֲשֶׁר is not explained by the “lowbrow-highbrow” proposal.37 Studies of style-switching and code-switching (whether literary or spoken) have observed distinct patterns of usage, which do not match the case of ש and אֲשֶׁר in Qohelet.

33. Similarly, D. Herman (“Style-Shifting in Edith Wharton’s The House of Mirth,” Language and Literature 10 [2001] 62) argues that style-switching “functions to mark aspects of participants’ identity, thereby reinforcing patterns of co-operation and conflict encoded at other levels of narrative structure as well.”


36. Young, Diversity, 157; see also idem, “Biblical Texts Cannot Be Dated Linguistically,” HS 46 (2005) 347–48. Y. Shlesinger (“מַעְקִירָם בָּלשָׁם: ר’ אָשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר: מְסֹמְכָה קְשָׁת” in מַעְקִירָם בָּלשָׁם: ר’ אָשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר: מְסֹמְכָה קְשָׁת [ed. S. Sharvit; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1999] 91–109) makes a similar argument—that the author varied the forms for style—but does not explain the motivation or impact of this choice. Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvard (Linguistic Dating, 2.65) take the stylistic analysis a step farther: the use of ש is identified as “sub-standard” Hebrew in the service of the “unconventional writing” of an “unconventional thinker” and denied any diachronic relevance (ibid., 1.214, 227, 247).

37. The variation occurs indiscriminately, sometimes in the same verse and in adjacent and parallel clauses: 1:10; 2:12; 3:14, 15, 22; 4:2; 5:4, 14, 17; 6:10; 8:7, 14; 10:14; 12:7. Note that ש אֲשֶׁר does not appear in Qohelet but does appear in the Song of Songs (3:1, 2, 3, 4).
As with the dialectal hypothesis, there is little compelling about the stylistic variation hypothesis when it is teased apart. The next possible distinction to investigate is grammar itself.

**A Grammatical Difference?**

Both שׁ and אשׁר serve primarily as nominalizing function words; that is, they are both subordinators that recategorize clauses to fill the syntactic roles typically filled by noun phrases.³⁸ This recategorization produces relative clauses, verb-complement clauses, and noun-complement clauses. By far, the most common use of שׁ and אַשׁר is as relative elements, either (1) with or (2) without an overt relative head.

1. **Overtly-Headed Relative Clause**
   
   (a) נַעֲשׂוּ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ שֶׁרָאִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים
   
   “I have seen all the deeds that have happened under the sun.” (1:14)³⁹

   (b) נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר אֶת־כָּל־זֶה רָאִיתִי וְנָתוֹן אֶת־לִבִּי לְכָֽל־מַעֲשֶׂה
   
   “I have seen all of this while setting my לב to every deed that happens under the sun.” (8:9)⁴⁰

2. **Covertly-Headed Relative Clause**
   
   (a) לַאֲרִיקוֹת לָהֶם בָּרֹכֹת עָשִׂי לְאַחֲרֹנָה
   
   “(They) will not have a memory with (those) that come later.” (1:11)⁴¹

   (b) מָה־יִתְרוֹן הָעוֹשֶׂה בַּ_מַּעֲשֶׂה
   
   “What is the profit for the worker in exchange for (the toil) that he does?” (3:9)⁴²

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³⁸. In Waltke and O’Connor (Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §38.4), these functions are discussed as “constituent noun clauses”; in Joüon and Muraoka (P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew [rev. ed.; SubBi 27; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006] §157) under the heading “substantival clause.”

³⁹. Qohelet 1:3, 7, 10, 11a, 14; 2:11 (2×), 12, 17, 18 (3×), 19 (2×), 20, 21 (2×), 24, 26; 3:13; 4:2, 10; 5:14, 15b, 17; 7:14; 8:14; 9:12a; 10:5, 16, 17; 11:3; 12:3, 9. For the use of the interrogative as a relative head, producing the indefinite pronoun, for example, “whatever,” see Qoh 1:9aa, ba; 3:15, 22; 6:10a; 7:24; 8:7; 10:14.

⁴⁰. Qohelet 1:10, 13, 16; 2:3, 10; 3:10, 11, 14; 4:1, 2, 3, 9, 13, 15, 16; 5:17, 18; 6:1, 2 (2×); 7:19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 28; 8:3, 9 (2×), 10, 11, 12ac, 13, 14 (3×), 15b, 16, 17; 9:3, 4, 6, 9 (2×), 10 (2×); 10:15; 11:5; 12:1, 7.

⁴¹. Qohelet 1:9αβ, ββ, 11b; 2:7, 9, 16; 5:4, 14, 15a; 6:10b; 8:17; 9:12b; 10:3; 11:8; 12:7. Note that I do not consider the quantifier כל (“all, every”) to be a relative head; instead, I take it to quantify a null head, which is itself defined by the necessarily restrictive relative clause following.

⁴². Qohelet 2:3, 12; 3:9; 15; 4:3 (2×), 17; 5:3 (2×), 14, 17; 6:10; 7:2, 13; 8:4, 7, 16; 9:2 (3×); 10:14; 11:5; 12:1, 2, 6.
Both of the relative clauses in (1) and (2) contain finite verbs, but שׁ and אשׁ clauses also allow participial clauses and null copula (“verbless”) clauses.

Given that the essential function of a relative word such as שׁ or אשׁ is to recategorize a clause to fill a syntactic role normally occupied by a noun phrase, it is not surprising that relative words are also used to nominalize clauses in non-relative contexts (analogous to English that). The words שׁ and אשׁ also nominalize clauses to serve as (3) complements of verbs as well as (4) complements of prepositions.

(3) Verbal Complement

(a) לשון שבעים זה רעיוון רוח
“I knew that this also was chasing the wind.” (1:17)

(b) כי ימריודתי אני אשמיעו口头 לירא הנlanması
“Yet I also know that it will be well for those who fear God.” (8:12)

(4) Prepositional Complement

(a)וֹתוֹ אָדָם מְשַׁתַּד יָדוּקְתֵּי אֲשֶׁר
“That you do not vow is better than that you do vow and don’t fulfill it.” (5:4)

(b)הַמַּעֲשֶׂה אֲשֶׁר מַעְשָׂה
“Look, (the thing) that I saw is good—that it is fitting”;

43. For a שׁ-relative followed by a participle, see Qoh 1:7, 9αβ; 2:16, 18; 8:14a; 9:12a; 10:3, 5. For אשׁ, see 4:1; 8:12, 14; 9:2, 10; 11:5.
44. For a שׁ-relative followed by a null copula clause, see Qoh 2:21, 26; 10:16, 17. For אשׁ, see 3:15; 4:2, 9; 5:17; 6:10; 7:2, 26; 8:4, 13, 14, 15; 9:1.
45. Qohelet 1:17; 2:13, 14, 15; 3:18; 7:10; 8:14b; 9:5. I also include 6:3, following the emendation proposed by Seow of רָב to רַב (third-person masculine-singular perfect √ריב,”to complain”). C.-L. Seow, Ecclesiastes (AB 18C; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1997) 211.
46. Qohelet 5:4 (the subject clause of a null copula and predicate adjective); 5:17 (the second אשׁ in a complement clause in apposition to the null head of the previous אשׁ clause, “Look, (the thing) that I saw is good—that it is fitting”); 7:18, 29 (appositional to מַלּוּ); 8:12b, 15a (appositional to the NP complement “I commended happiness, that is, that there is no good thing”); 9:1 (appositional to מַלּוּ).
47. Although I have listed them above in n. 41 as covertly-headed relatives, 5:4 above in (4a) and מַשַּׁתַּד in 2:16 (“because that already”) seem to fit in this category better.
48. The sequence לא אשׁר מבל is without parallel in the Hebrew Bible. Both מבל and לא אשים are not mean “without” but also function simply as negatives for finite verbs (HALOT, s.v.; see also M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature [repr. New York: Judaic, 1996 (1903)] s.v.). But “without that man can/does/should not grasp the deed that God has done” is nonsensical in translation. The solution to this little knot is twofold: (1) to recognize that the אשׁ simply nominalizes the finite verbal clause so that it can function as the complement to מבל; and (2) Hebrew allows double negation as a strategy to
“without [lit. without that] man’s ability to ‘find out’ the work that God has done from beginning to end” (3:11) 49

Clausal complements of prepositions such as those given in (4) seem to be related to covertly-headed relative clauses illustrated in (2). It is possible that the latter type reflects a reanalysis of the Preposition + Null Head + יִשַׁר/אַשְׁר sequence so that the null head was omitted, leaving the nominalized clauses to satisfy the selectional features of the preposition by itself rather than requiring a null head (which the יִשַׁר/אַשְׁר clause modifies as a relative). 50 This is a plausible explanation for both the syntax and the origin of constructions such as above in (4) and below in (5).

(5) Reanalysis → Prepositional Complement 51

גַּם אַתִּיוּד הַלֶּם מֵעֵדֶן עַל־דוּרְבָּה יָשָׂה לְעֻמַּת־זֶה עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־דִּבְרַת מְאוּמָה

“Indeed–God has made this (day of prosperity) corresponding to that (day of adversity). (I have concluded this) because [lit., because that] man does not find anything after him.” (7:14) 52

intensify the negative polarity of the statement. That is, in Hebrew, unlike English but like many of the world’s languages, two negatives do not cancel each other out and thus reverse the polarity of the clause. The word מבלי includes negative semantics in that it comments on the “lack” of something, and the לא with the finite verb in the אַשְׁר clause reinforces the negative and makes it clear what the author intends. This analysis supports the translation of M. V. Fox (A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999] 192) but stands counter to many others. See, for example, C. F. Whitley (Koheleth: His Language and Thought [New York: de Gruyter, 1979] 33), R. Murphy (Ecclesiastes [WBC 23A; Dallas: Word, 1992] 29), and Seow (Ecclesiastes, 163); see also A. Schoors (The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words: A Study of the Language of Qoheleth, Part I: Grammar [OLA 41; Leuven: Peeters, 1992] 147–48) for a brief discussion of past proposals.

49. Although I have listed them above in n. 42 as covertly-headed relatives, לֹא יִמְצָא הָאָדָם אַחֲרָיו in 7:2 and 8:4 (“because that”) seem to fit in this category better.


51. A nominalizer such as שׁ is expected in constructions like 12:9: יִרָה שֶׁהָאֱלֹהִים יִשַׁר כֵּסָה “in addition to Qohelet’s being wise [lit., in addition that Q. was wise], he also taught the people knowledge.” The nominalizer allows the finite verbal clause to exist in the position normally taken by a noun phrase (compare the unattested but grammatical “besides his wisdom [NP], he was . . .”). See also אִרְיָבָךְ בַּעֲדֵי שֶׁכָּל עֻמַּת in 2:24 (“there is nothing better among man (than) that . . .”) and כָּל הָעָם שֶׁכָּל יְשֵׁם in 5:15 (“like that he came; so he will go”; see Schoors, Pleasing Words, 146–47).

52. Most commentators take כֵּסָה as a purpose or result construction, as do the standard lexica and grammars (for example, Seow, Ecclesiastes, 230, 240; T. Longman III, The Book of Ecclesiastes [NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998] 181; Fox, A Time, 257; HALOT, s.v. דבר; DCH, s.v. דבר; GKC §165b). Although I suggest that the causal analysis reflected in
It is better to walk to the house of mourning than to walk to the house of feasting, because [lit., because that] it is the end of every man.” (7:2)

In each case, one may compare the corresponding constructions with noun phrases (6) to the nominalized clauses with שׁ or אֲשֶׁר above in (5).

(6a) אֲמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְּלִבִּי לְבָרָם הָאֱלֹהִים וְלִרְאוֹת שְׁהֶם־בְּהֵמָה עַל־דִּבְרַת אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְּלִבִּי

“I said, I with my לֵב, 53 concerning man, ‘God should test them and show that they are beasts, they themselves.’” (3:18)

(6b) וֹחָכָם בְּוּחָכָם בָּאָשֶׁר אָשֶׁר בָּאָשֶׁר אָשֶׁר אָשֶׁר כָּל־בֵּית־אֵבֶל מִלֶּכֶת אֶל־בֵּית מִשְׁתֶּה בַּקְּרֵם

“But he finds a poor, wise man in it, and he spares the city because of his wisdom.” (9:15) 54

The comparison between the examples given in (4) and (5) on one hand and (6) on the other illustrates that it is not the nominalizers שׁ and אֲשֶׁר that serve a causal, result, temporal, or other sort of function. 55 Rather, the prepositions or subordinating conjunctions preceding שׁ and אֲשֶׁר establish the semantic nature of the clause, while the שׁ or אֲשֶׁר properly categorizes the clausal complement of the preposition or subordinating conjunction. 56

In summary, שׁ operates in Qohelet no differently from אֲשֶׁר. 57 That is, שׁ exhibits no unique syntactic features that would suggest a motivation for the au-

53. On the syntax and rhetorical function of the “I-and-my-לֵב” construction, see my article “וְלִבִּי אֲנִי: The Syntactic Encoding.”

54. On the causal use of ב, see Waltke and O’Connor (Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §11.2.5e).

55. For further discussion, see my “Story of Ancient Hebrew ʾăśĕr” and “Etymologies of Hebrew ʾăśĕr and ʾăšĕ.” Most identifications of this sort in Qohelet have arisen from a misunderstanding of the nominalizer role of שׁ or from the preferences of the target language in translation (literary English, for example, prefers other types of subordination to many of the nominalized constructions in Qohelet). Seow’s (Ecclesiastes, 17) position is representative of the inaccurate approach to שׁ: “It may be observed, too, that ʾăše- is used in Ecclesiastes in a variety of ways, including as a conjunction introducing a subject of an object clause, or even a purpose clause. . . . This wide and varied use of ʾăše- is characteristic of Late Biblical Hebrew; ʾăše- is used as a relative particle in the older texts but not to introduce an object or a purpose clause.”

56. See the appendix (p. 300) for a discussion of the few difficult occurrences of שׁ or אֲשֶׁר that do not immediately appear to fit this analysis.

57. So also Shlesinger, “קהלת בפסוקים בעם אֲשֶׁר וְאַשָּׁר.” While many of the syntactical contexts illustrate the path by which שׁ came to be used in non-nominalizing subordinate contexts in the Mishnah, there are no convincing arguments for such an analysis of the vast majority of
The Grammar of ה and עַשָּׁר in Qohelet

295

A Diachronic Difference

Given that the bulk of the Hebrew Bible witnesses the use of עַשָּׁר to the exclusion of ה and also given that the Mishnah exhibits nearly the opposite case (the use of ה and the relegation of עַשָּׁר to biblical quotations and allusions), it seems logical on the surface that the book of Qohelet represents a middle point on this continuum of language change. Similarly, the many Aramaic-like features and mishnaic-like features in the book have been adduced to support this relative placement of Qohelet. And since I have shown the grammatical, dialectal, and stylistic analyses to be inadequate, a diachronic explanation becomes the last best option.

It is likely that the diachronic story, if it is correct, unfolded this way: the admission of ה into the lexicon became diffuse, and at a later point another change occurred, the marginalization of עַשָּׁר, which also became diffuse by the compositional period of the Mishnah. The nearly equal usage of ה and עַשָּׁר in Qohelet indicates that the grammar of its author existed right in the middle of the diffusion of these two changes. We could include in this story the Song of Songs, the Copper Scroll, and 4QMMT as examples of the diffusion of the change whereby ה replaced עַשָּׁר even before the Mishnah. This explanation would also be congruous with the data from Ben Sira, which is grammatically similar to Qohelet, in that both ה and עַשָּׁר are used freely in the same syntactical contexts, presumably preceding the stage witnessed by the texts that use only ה.

To make sense of this sketch, we need to recognize a few features of language change. First, it is only the formal grammar represented in the output of an individual, the I-language represented by an idiolect, that is a discrete object of scientific study. From an I-language perspective, “change results when transmission is flawed with respect to some features. When transmission is not flawed (with examples in premishnaic texts. For instance, of all the occurrences of ה, only two suggest that the move toward adding other subordinating functions (as in the Mishnah) had begun by the very end of the biblical period. A possible causal use of ה is Song 1:7c, שֶׁלֶלָה אָנהּ כְּעֹטְיָהּ עַל כְּעֹטַיָּה עַל כְּעֹטַיָּה חֲבֵרֶיךָ, “because why should I be like (one who) wraps (herself) beside the flocks of your companions?” (see also Song 6:5). A possible result use of ה is Song 5:9, וּהִשְׁבַּעְתָּנָה שֶׁכָּכָה מִדּוֹד מַה־דּוֹדֵךְ, “How is your beloved (better) than (another) beloved, so that you made us swear so?”

58. This section has been condensed from my “Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew,” in Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew (ed. C. L. Miller-Naudé and Z. Zevit; Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012) 97–124.

respect to some feature), there has been no change in the strict sense.” 60 This feature, the product of imperfect transmission in the acquisition process, spreads or becomes 

\textit{diffuse} when it is accurately acquired by another speaker.

The change-and-diffusion approach has a number of implications for how we may even talk about the history of Hebrew. First, each I-language, represented by the idiolect that is itself represented in the language of the philologically reconstructed texts of the biblical books, is its own “stage,” as it were. 61 Another way to approach this same issue is to borrow and modify the dialectological dictum slightly: \textit{every change and the resulting diffusion (if it becomes diffuse) has its own history}. It is unlikely that any two change-and-diffusion features will have the same origin. It is also unlikely that any two I-languages will reflect the same cluster of change-and-diffusion features, which means that the relative order of texts may vary for each feature analyzed. But no single feature set can be determinative for a relative order, since the texts (or, the I-languages represented within the texts) do not stand in a two-dimensional line; rather, since each I-language is a unique constellation of features, some will stand to the “left” or to the “right” of any two-dimensional line of descent. 62

Second, it necessarily follows from the acquisition-related change-and-diffusion framework that a new form will coexist with the corresponding older form within the speech community, perhaps for many generations. 63 Indeed, this precise pattern that has been observed many times over follows a \textit{Sigmoid}, or “S”-shaped curve. Charles-James Bailey describes this pattern succinctly:

\begin{quote}
A given change begins quite gradually; after reaching a certain point (say, twenty per cent), it picks up momentum and proceeds at a much faster rate; and finally tails off slowly before reaching completion. The result is an S-curve: the statisti-
\end{quote}

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60. Hale, \textit{Historical Linguistics}, 36.

61. So also Naudé, “Transitions.”

62. For a discussion of statistical modeling on biblical texts and grammar, see F. I. Andersen and A. D. Forbes, \textit{Spelling in the Hebrew Bible} (BibOr 41; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1986).

63. A commonly cited syntactical example is the development of “do”-support in Middle English, in which “do” appears as an auxiliary verb (or better, as the finite verb carrying the bundle of inflectional features) in questions (“Do you want?”), clauses with an initial adverb (“Rarely did they want”), and other restricted environments. This development began in a restricted environment and then spread to other contexts. Moreover, non-“do”-support clauses coexisted with the newer construction for over 300 years, until finally being replaced entirely by the “do”-support construction. See D. W. Lightfoot, \textit{Principles of Diachronic Syntax} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); A. Kroch, “Reflexes of Grammar in Patterns of Language Change,” \textit{Language Variation and Change} 1 (1989) 199–244; idem, “Syntactic Change,” in \textit{The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory} (ed. M. Baltin and C. Collins; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001) 699–729.
cal differences among isolects in the middle relative times of the change will be
greater than the statistical differences among the early and late isolects.64

In light of a change-and-diffusion framework and with the S-curve in mind, we
see that it is absolutely normal and expected that “corresponding [Early Biblical
Hebrew] and [Late Biblical Hebrew] features coexist in both Early Biblical Hebrew
and Late Biblical Hebrew books” and that “the principal difference between EBH
and LBH is the frequency of certain features.”65

The question now becomes how we might analyze שׁ and אָשׁ in light of the
three features of language change that I have presented. Table 1 (p. 298) is based on
the raw data provided in the first section of this essay and presents the occurrences
of אָשׁ and שׁ by increasing frequency of שׁ.66 If the order by increasing frequency
of שׁ is on the right diachronic track, the results can then be plotted on an idealized
S-curve, as in fig. 1.67

What do we do with the information in table 1 and fig. 1? For instance, must it
reflect only diachronic change? Not necessarily. One or two, or even a few cases in
which a borrowed word is used for style do not undermine its overall diachronic
story. Consider the use of אָשׁ in the majority of the Qumran texts but the use
of שׁ in the Copper Scroll (3Q15) and the Halakic Letter (4QMMT). It is reason-
able, given the ancient writers’ stance toward “Scripture,” to posit that the use of
אָשׁ reflects a religiously-oriented archaizing—a very specific stylistic choice. This
parallels the Mishnah’s use of אָשׁ only in biblical quotations or allusions. In con-
trast, the use of שׁ, then, in 3Q15, 4QMMT, and the Mishnah represents the “real”
picture of diffusion: שׁ replaced אָשׁ. The same explanation can apply to books that
other feature analyses suggest belong later on the scale, such as Daniel; the lack of
שׁ in the Hebrew of Daniel does not necessarily mean that the book is early but
simply that the feature had not yet become diffuse in the Hebrew author’s idiolect,

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64. C.-J. N. Bailey, Variation and Linguistic Theory (Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Lin-
guistics, 1973) 77; see also Kroch, “Reflexes of Grammar”; S. Pintzuk, “Variationist Approaches
to Syntactic Change,” in The Handbook of Historical Linguistics (ed. B. D. Joseph and R. D. Janda;

65. Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd, Linguistic Dating, 1.57 (italics theirs). It is not without
irony that I quote Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd’s work, since both statements given above
were intended as a criticism of the conventional model of Hebrew diachrony. The irony lies in
the fact that what they give as criticism actually reflects the facts of language change!

66. That is, the ratio of new forms to the sum of the old and new forms. Note that sound
methodology does not allow any preconceived ordering of the texts used for the statistical study.
In this case, the ordering by increasing frequency of שׁ reflects a third step in the analysis. Once
the data are compiled using canonical order (for the Bible) as the default, the texts can be ar-
ranged by increasing frequency of שׁ, by increasing frequency of אָשׁ, and by decreasing fre-
quency of each. Then, if we take the epigraphic texts and the Mishnah as the two historically-
grounded end points, the frequency-by-שׁ order emerges as the most likely.

67. The books in parentheses are those for which the שׁ and אָשׁ data more likely reflect the
influence of intentional stylistics; see further the subsequent discussion in the main text.
Table 1. אשׁ and י in Ancient Hebrew

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Frequency</th>
<th>אשׁ (Old)</th>
<th>י (New)</th>
<th>% New</th>
<th>By Frequency</th>
<th>אשׁ (New)</th>
<th>% New</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Kgs</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Gen</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obad</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Ben Sira</td>
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<td>Mic</td>
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<td>Lam</td>
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<td>Mishnah</td>
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<td>11690</td>
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<td>Ps C (122–24, 129, 133, 136–37)</td>
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<td>Wadi Murabbaʿat</td>
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a. As A. Jones (“The Relative Clause in Ancient Hebrew Texts: A Quantitative and Comparative Analysis” [unpublished ms, 2010] 5) points out, “[I]n order for groups of texts to be useful in statistical analysis as a random sample, it is not permitted to organize the groups ahead of time to match the conclusions being sought by the research. Any groups of texts need to be formed for reasons independent of the distribution of the grammatical forms at hand, such as dating that is based on historical considerations.”

b. The frequency in the table is for all of Chronicles. However, if only nonparallel passages are considered, there are only 36 case of י in the same passages, for a 5% frequency of י. For an argument against the validity of taking the nonparallel passages as indicative of the Chronicler’s language (versus the language of the Samuel–Kings source), see Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd (Linguistic Dating, 2.78–79).
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or the author was intentionally mimicking the “scriptural” use of רשׁ, just as in the majority of the Qumran texts.

In addition to stylistic archaizing, there also appear to be examples of ו used as a literary device to portray a character as “non-Hebrew.” Note the isolated example in 2 Kgs 6:11, the three examples in Jonah, and possibly the five examples in Judges. If this analysis is accurate, it implies first that ו was perceived by the author and intended audience as “foreign” (though intelligible) and second that, as a borrowing for a literary need, these examples may have contributed to the actuation of change and diffusion but do not represent the process of diffusion itself. Thus, they do not sit on the S-curve of change in the position that corresponds to the frequency of the new item. In fact, it is my view that ו more likely reflects the borrowing (followed by the change-and-diffusion) of ša from Late Babylonian by the exilic population than it reflects use of earlier Akkadian through northern Cannanite. This, of course, fits a primarily diachronic explanation for the ו and רשׁ variation in both Qohelet specifically and the Hebrew Bible as a whole.

68. See my “Issues in the Linguistic Analysis of a Dead Language, with Particular Reference to Ancient Hebrew,” JHS 6 (2006) 16–17, http://www.jhsonline.org; see also Young, “The ‘Northernsisms.’” In 2 Kgs 6, ו is placed in the mouth of an Aramean king, even though ו is not used in Aramaic. In Jonah, ו is placed once in the mouth of the sailors; this establishes in the narrative world that ו is non-Israelite speech. The fact that God uses ו and רשׁ in proximity at the end of the book may be a clever linguistic cue regarding one of the author’s theological points: that Yhwh is the God of non-Israelites as well as Israelites.


Figure 1. The Diffusion of ו on an Idealized S-Curve.
Conclusion

After considering the various ways to analyze the ש and רָשׁ data—dialectal, stylistic, grammatical, and diachronic, I conclude that the likeliest reading of the data is primarily diachronic, although I also acknowledge the probable place of dialect and style (all of which reflect the complexity of real language). To summarize, the rarity of ש in early texts (for example, Judg 5:7, 6:17, 7:12, 8:26; 2 Kgs 6:11; Jonah 1:7, 12; 4:10) reflects a literary strategy of borrowing an intelligible form from a close dialect (for example, northern Hebrew) in order to color characters’ speech; later examples (that is, Gen 6:3; Job 19:29; Lam 2:15, 16; 4:9; 5:18; Ezra 8:20; 1 Chr 5:20; 27:27, and its appearances in Qohelet and the Song of Songs as well as in Ben Sira and 3Q15, 4QMMT, and the Mishnah) reflect a change-and-diffusion process in the exilic or postexilic period.

Appendix: Difficult ש and רָשׁ Clauses in Qohelet

The standard lexicons and reference grammars list only 12 examples of ש (out of 139 total) and 59 examples of רָשׁ (out of 5,495 total) introducing causal, purpose, result, conditional, comparative, or temporal clauses. Table 2 provides a quick reference to the most commonly used grammars.

However, I have previously argued that analyses of this sort are flawed—that is, that רָשׁ in particular (but also ש) was not used as anything more than a nominalizer—as I have also argued in this essay. The examples of ש and רָשׁ in Qohelet present the greatest challenges to the legitimacy of this position for all stages of Biblical Hebrew. In other words, although ש and רָשׁ may have been only nominalizers in the majority of the biblical books, it is possible that in Qohelet and the Song of Songs (as well as Ben Sira) through the process of reanalysis the two nominalizers took on broader subordinating functions that were retained in later Hebrew (for example, Rabbinic Hebrew). In this appendix, I discuss a number of challenging ש and רָשׁ examples in Qohelet and offer what I consider (in light of my analysis of ש and רָשׁ as being nominalizers) to be the most linguistically and exegetically likely analyses.

between Late Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew due the mixed use of ש and רָשׁ in Qohelet. Although his study focuses on methodology, it does not reflect the statistically based historical linguistic analysis that I have presented above.

70. For ש, see Judg 5:7 (2×), 6:17; Jonah 4:10; Song 1:6 (2×), 5:2; Qoh 2:16, 18; 3:14; 8:17; 10:16. For רָשׁ, see note 71.
For Qoh 2:18 (A1), many commentators simply translate or assert without discussion that the ש in שַׁנֵאתִי אֲנִי אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִי שֶׁאֲנִי עָמֵל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ שֶׁאַנִּיחֶנּוּ לָאָדָם שֶׁיִּהְיֶה אַחֲרָי is causal.72

(A1) שַׁנֵאתִי אֲנִי אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִי שֶׁאֲנִי עָמֵל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ שֶׁאַנִּיחֶנּוּ לָאָדָם שֶׁיִּהְיֶה אַחֲרָי

“I hate, I, all my acquisition(s) that I exerted myself for under the sun, which I shall leave it to the man who comes after me.” (2:18)

Schoors at least tries to provide a logical reason for the causal instead of relative analysis: “[T]he absence of a connecting waw before שַׁנֵאתִי אֲנִי renders [the relative analysis] quite improbable.”73 However, this is not a compelling reason for a non-relative analysis. I take it as a second, stacked, relative clause modifying the

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72. Whitley, Koheleth, 26; Murphy, Ecclesiastes, 24; Seow, Ecclesiastes, 136; Longman, The Book of Ecclesiastes, 102; Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 185. E. Delitzsch (Biblischer Commentar über das Alte Testament: Hoheslied und Koheleth [Leipzig: Dörfling & Franke, 1875] 253) seems to take it as a purpose clause.

73. Schoors, Pleasing Words, 140.
head NP עמל; in contrast to the first (restrictive) relative, the second relative is nonrestrictive. Within the relative, the clitic object pronoun נא resumed the relative head and is present to disambiguate the intended relative head: the head is עמל, not the closer candidate, שמש. That is, although the noun שמש is masculine in 1:5, it is feminine in 12:2, and, given the gender ambiguity of שמש, here (in 2:18) the third masculine-singular pronoun would more strongly point to the further עמל.

On מבלי אחר in 3:11, see above, example (4b), and the discussion in n. 48.

For 3:14 (A2), Whitley asserts simply that ש can introduce a purpose clause and does so here in this verse.74

(A2)

"God did (this); who [they] should fear him." (3:14)

Fox interprets and explains the construction similarly: “God intends for people to fear him (thus se-introduces a purpose clause), but he does not impose that fear. By enforcing human ignorance and helplessness, God occasions fear but does not directly cause or ‘make’ it.”75 There are three legitimate grammatical options. First, the relative clause may be extraposed—that is, moved from its normal position following its head, האלהים in this case—to a lower position, after the verb עשה in this case. Relative clause extraposition is common when the relative clause is “heavier” than the remainder of the clause (that is, the single word עשה here). As such, it is related to the well-known phenomenon “heavy noun phrase shift.”76 If we move it back to its original place, we can see the good sense of the construction: האלהים עשה משיראו "God, whom they fear, did (it)."

The second option is to take the ש clause as an overtly-headed relative clause that is an appositive to האלהים (similar to the first explanation: the appositive placed after the verb reflects a heavy noun phrase shift). A literal gloss reflecting this syntactic analysis is “God did it, (he) whom they fear.” The first and second analyses, although syntactically distinct, do not differ much from each other in meaning but provide a very different meaning for the clause in the verse. In the relative analysis, one cannot infer that God intends that people fear him; rather, they simply do. That is, the relative clause is descriptive of the situation but says nothing about God’s character or plans.

However, the third grammatical option for the clause includes intentionality: the ש is a nominalizer for למשלי, which has been omitted. The result is an under-


75. Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 213 (italics original).

stood purpose, “(for the purpose) that…” In this analysis, the שׁ is technically still a nominalizer, but one can see how שׁ might have been reanalyzed in cases of abbreviation like this so that, by the time of Mishnaic Hebrew, it seems to have introduced just about any subordinate clause. If this third option is at all correct, it must be the path by which שׁ and also just a few cases of אַשׁ (for example, Deut 4:40, Qoh 7:21) came to be associated (by ancient speakers as well as modern grammarians) with causal, purpose, result, or temporal meanings. (For further discussion, see below on 7:21.)

In 4:9 (A3), the causal analysis and translation of the אַשׁ follows from the logic of the statement: it makes good sense that “the second half of the verse gives the reason for the idea expressed in the first half.”

(A3)

Two are better than one, who have a good wage in exchange for their toil.” (4:9)

However, there is no reason for a relative analysis not to work equally well. The key is recognizing the phenomenon of relative clause extraposition (see above, in the discussion of 3:14). Here in 4:9, the relative head is השׁ and the relative clause has been moved lower than the comparative prepositional phrase. In this way, instead of providing an explicit reason motivating the preceding comparison, the אַשׁ clause describes the salient quality of השׁ for the purpose of the comparison. The logical difference between the two analyses is negligible, although the relative analysis is grammatically preferable due to the principle of parsimony (that is, אַשׁ is clearly associated with relative clauses).

This same methodology also applies to 5:15b (וּמְעַלְּתוֹ שֶׁיַּעֲמֹל לוֹ וּמַה־יִּתְרוֹן “what is profit to him who exerts himself for wind?”) and 10:15 (אֲשֶׁר תְּיַגְּעֵנּוּ הַכְּסִילִים עֲמַל אֶל־עִיר לָלֶכֶת לֹא־יָדַע “the toil of fools tires him, who does not even know the way to town!”). In both cases, a causal analysis is taken by many scholars due to the logical relationship of the propositions in both halves. However, the descriptive nature of the relative clause in each can be understood to imply that the activity in 5:15 and state of knowledge in 10:15 contribute—causally—to the proposition in the main clause.

The אַשׁ clauses in 6:12 (A4) and 8:13 (A5) present two of the more difficult occurrences in Qohelet.

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77. Schoors, Pleasing Words, 140; so also Murphy, Ecclesiastes, 41; Seow, Ecclesiastes, 182; Longman, The Book of Ecclesiastes, 141; Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 222.
78. So also Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 372; D. Michel, Qohelet (EdF 258; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 244; Schoors, Pleasing Words, 74.
79. For other examples of a relative clause modifying a clitic pronoun, as in 10:15, see my Relative Clause, 67.
Because who knows what is good for man in life (during) the number of the days of his absurd life (and he spends like a shadow)? Because who can tell man what will be after him under the sun? (6:12)

And wellness will not belong to the wicked person, and he will not lengthen days as (in) a shadow—(he) who does not have fear before God! (8:13)

Fox takes כצל in (A4), the two words preceding the אשר, as a parenthesis, “(which he passes like a shadow)” and then asserts that the אשר "motivates the negation implicit in the rhetorical question of v. 12α”, 80 thus, the אשר clause is a causal/motive clause, “for who can tell . . . ?” He does not discuss the construction in 8:13 but translates it “because he does not fear God.” 81 Schoors simply asserts that the אשר in 8:13 is causal and then uses it to support a causal analysis of the clause in 8:12 but does not explain his causal analysis of v. 13. 82 Although Seow acknowledges that the function of אשר in 6:12 is unclear, he suggests that it functions like the כי at the beginning of v. 12, “for who knows.” 83 Murphy translates the construction as causal (“for who can tell . . . ?” and Longman translates “so who can tell . . . ?”; neither discusses the construction). 84 Schoors is also tentative: “The אשר of Qoh 6,12 seems to have causal force: ‘for who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?’ (RSV).” 85 But, following Lauha, he allows that it may also be a result clause, which “gives good sense to the verse” and is favored because “the verse already opens with a causal clause, introduced by כי.” 86 Clearly both verses give scholars trouble.

Michael Wise submits an innovative proposal based on the bilingualism of Hellenistic Judea. 87 He argues the כצל in 6:12 (A4) and 8:13 (A5; and also in 7:14, although there is no אשר in that occurrence) is a calque on Aramaic כטלל, which, unlike the Hebrew phrase, went through a series of semantic shifts: “in the shadow (of)” > “with the help (of)” > ‘because (of).” For 6:12 and 8:13, Wise suggests that the calque is of כי כטלל and means “because, for.” He divides the

80. Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 248.
81. Ibid., 282; so also Seow, Ecclesiastes, 276; Longman, The Book of Ecclesiastes, 217.
82. Schoors, Pleasing Words, 141.
83. Seow, Ecclesiastes, 234.
84. Murphy, Ecclesiastes, 57; Longman, The Book of Ecclesiastes, 176.
85. Schoors, Pleasing Words, 142; see also Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 308.
86. Ibid., 142.
verse against the (note the on כָּכֶל מִתְנַחְתָּא and translates the clause beginning with כָּכֶל, “For who is able to tell a man what will happen under the sun after him?” Although Schoors does not refer to Wise’s argument, he does interact with Ginsburg’s similar proposal, that כָּכֶל אַתְנַחְתָא is a translation of Aramaic כָּכֶל די. Although a translational understanding (Ginsburg) is different from a calque proposal (Wise), Schoors’s conclusion remains valid: “[T]his explanation is tainted with too many suppositions,” and “there is no reason to abandon the traditional understanding of כָּכֶל as ‘like a shadow.’” Note also the criticism leveled by Longman, who argues that Wise “appears to misunderstand this verse as applying to the wicked in contrast to the righteous and also the force of the image, leading to his assertion of an Aramaic calque.”

Although a relative analysis of 8:13, illustrated by my translation in (A5), is acceptable, the אַתְנַחְתָא in 6:12 remains problematic: Michel’s explicative “i.e.,” notwithstanding, this אַתְנַחְתָא seems to be causal. As I suggested in my comments above on 3:14, it is possible if not likely that שׁ and אַתְנַחְתָא were moving along the grammaticalization path toward becoming less-restricted function words—that is, more-general subordinators. This shift may have begun taking place in the postexilic period but was not finished until the early rabbinic period, as witnessed by the Hebrew of the Mishnah. For אַתְנַחְתָא, the process was interrupted by the fact that this word was replaced by שׁ; thus, while there are a few arguable cases in the Hebrew Bible and a few more among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the use of אַתְנַחְתָא in the Mishnah, in biblical quotes and allusions, is restricted to relative clauses. The relative שׁ, in contrast, continued in the grammaticalization process and is used in a variety of subordinating contexts in the Mishnah that are unattested in earlier texts.

For אַתְנַחְתָא, the example in 7:21 (A6) illustrates the means by which the grammaticalization process probably worked.

(A6)

מְקַלְלֶךָ אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ לֹא־תִשְׁמַע אֲשֶׁר לִבֶּךָ אַל־תִּתֵּן יְדַבֵּרוּ אֲשֶׁר לְכָל־הַדְּבָרִים גַּם.

“Indeed, don’t pay attention to any of the words that they speak, (in order) that you don’t hear your servant cursing you.” (7:21)

Like the three other “purpose” cases (Gen 11:7; Deut 4:40, 6:3), the one “conditional” case (Deut 11:27), and the one “temporal” case (Neh 2:3), the example in 7:21 reflects the nominalizer role of אַתְנַחְתָא with a crucial twist: the actual subordinator is missing. That is, the function word or phrase that establishes the semantics of the subordinate clause, such as לַמַּעֵן or וּנְכָנָה, has been omitted. To understand

88. Ibid., 257.
89. Schoors, Pleasing Words, 148.
91. See also Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 342; Michel, Qohelet, 223.
92. Ibid., 224.
93. See my “Story of Ancient Hebrew ʾāšer.”
this proposal, it is first necessary to compare the לְמַעֲנִי + infinitive construct with לְמַעֲנִי + yiqtol (see Gen 18:19, Deut 20:18, 2 Sam 13:5, Jer 42:6). The difference is that the infinitive clause is already categorized so that it may fill a nominal slot; in contrast, a verbal clause (for example, a yiqtol clause) must be nominalized by the אֲשֶׁר. However, the nominalizer אֲשֶׁר need not be overt, since we have examples with just לְמַעֲנִי + yiqtol. Similarly, in Gen 11:7; Deut 4:40, 6:3; and Qoh 7:21, the nominalizer is overt, but the initial subordinator is missing. For any learners who acquired this covert subordinator/overt nominalizer pattern, the next step of re-analysis would have been natural: אֲשֶׁר itself would have been understood as the semantically determinative subordinator.94

The two אֲשֶׁר clauses that begin 8:11 (A7) and 8:12 (A8) have been analyzed in quite a number of ways.

(A7) אֲשֶׁר אָרַעְרֵינָהּ פָּתָחָהּ מְלַעֲמָה מִתָּמֵאָה יְהוָהּ בִּלְקָנָהּ לְבֵית הָאָדָם מִלְּפָנָהּ קָנָה
“... that a decision is not made quickly (regarding) the deed of evil; therefore, the mind of humans is full of them to do evil.” (8:11)

(A8) אֲשֶׁר חָטָא עָשָׂה וְנַעֲשָׂה לְיִרְאֵי יִהְיֶה—טּוֹב אֲשֶׁר גַּם יָדֶעֶת אָנֵי כִּי לוֹ וְעוֹשָׂה רָע שֵׁר הָאֱלֹהִים.
“... that a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs himself. Yet I also know that it will be well for those who fear God— of whom they should be afraid!” (8:12)

Schoors argues that both cases are causal.95 Seow takes the אֲשֶׁר in v. 11 as causal but the אֲשֶׁר beginning v. 12 as a covertly-headed relative, “one who errs.”96 Although Fox seems to take the second אֲשֶׁר, beginning v. 12, as causal (he translates “For an offender . . .”), he analyzes the first אֲשֶׁר quite differently: “ʾAsher here is best translated ‘namely,’ ‘the fact that,’ or represented by a colon. Syntactically, it is a noun-equivalent . . . in apposition to a preceding substantive (in this case, hebel).”97

Of all the proposals, I think only Fox is correct and he only partly so. Schoors correctly points out thatengeance never introduces a statement but concludes it,” and the הָאֱלֹהִים of 8:10 is no exception—it concludes the observation made

94. Whitley (Koheleth, 68) translates the לא as “lest” and compares it with Gen 11:7; so also Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 323; Schoors, Pleasing Words, 143; Seow, Ecclesiastes, 258; Longman, The Book of Ecclesiastes, 193; contra Michel, Qohelet, 240.
96. Seow, Ecclesiastes, 276, 287.
97. Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 285; see p. 282 for his translation.
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in that verse. However, this does not mean that זה may not be further modified by an appositional clause, as Fox essentially suggests (although he is wrong to connect the apposition toホテル rather than זה). Additional examples of אֲשֶׁר clauses in apposition to זה appear in 7:29 and 9:1. In each case, the appositional clause provides an additional example (related, of course, to the initial example in each context) of what isホテル. This analysis does not fit only 8:11, however, but also 8:12: both אֲשֶׁר clauses provide additionalホテル examples related to what was described in 8:10.

Finally, the odd sequence בכל אֲשֶׁר in 8:17 (A9) is probably a legitimate calque on a late Aramaic phrase, דビル.

(A9) 
נֵעָשֶׂה בָּשָׁלֶת הָאָדָם בַּתַּחַת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לִמְצוֹא מַעֲשֶׂה. אֲשֶׁר בְּשֶׁל יֵיַעֲמֹל לְבַקֵּשׁ וְגַם יִמְצָא לֹא לָדַעַת הֶחָכָם.

“I saw the whole work of God, that man is not able to “find out” the deed that happens under the sun, in order that man toils to seek but does not find. Even if the wise man intended to understand, he could not ‘find (it) out.’” (8:17)

Whitley notes the similarity of בכל אֲשֶׁר in 8:17 to בכל שָׁלֵמי “on account of who” and בכל Sh in Jonah 1:7 and 12. Schoors notes that בכל is in the Qumran text 4QMMT (4Q394 frags. 3–7 i 15, 19; 4Q397 frag. 23:2; 4Q398 frags. 14–17 ii 6) and once in a Bar Kokhba letter (Mur 46.7), and he suggests the translation “so that.” Seow notes that “the expression corresponds to Targumic Aramaic bdyl d, which is used to translate Hebrew lmʿn ‘so that’ or ‘in order that.’” Fox asserts that the final/result meaning does not fit this context and that大酒店 can also indicate cause, which he takes as the appropriate nuance here in 8:17 as well. Note Longman's translation, which nicely illustrates how the大酒店 and אֲשֶׁר are nominalizers: “on account of which he toils.”

98. Schoors, Pleasing Words, 141.
100. Schoors, Pleasing Words, 146.
101. Seow, Ecclesiastes, 290; see also Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 345.
102. Jastrow, Dictionary, 140.
103. Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 289.
104. Longman, The Book of Ecclesiastes, 222; also Murphy, Ecclesiastes, 81; Seow, Ecclesiastes, 289.