The language of Qoheleth (Part-3)

This article will examine the language and composition history of Qoheleth. The conservative scholar, Franz Delitzsch stated; "If *Koheleth* was written in Solomon's day, a history of the Hebrew language is impossible."[1] Robert Gordis goes so far as to declare: "The view that Solomon is the author has been universally abandoned today, with the growth of a truer recognition of the style, vocabulary and world-outlook of Koheleth".[2] Very few modern scholars would argue for authorship in the time of Solomon[3] as not only the language but the syntax is from a later era. In his study of *The Verb in Qoheleth*, John A. Cook states; "The longstanding view of a majority of scholars is that Qoheleth represents some of the latest biblical Hebrew."[4] Several conclusions of this study uphold this judgment on the basis that the verbal system in Qoheleth exhibits not simply dialectical differences but evidence of diachronic change away from the pattern of earlier Biblical Hebrew towards the grammar of post-biblical Hebrew (e.g., Qumran and/or Rabbinic Hebrew)".[5]

The complexity of the debate

The debate has followed scholarly understanding of the development of the Hebrew language. All languages develop over time; Anglo-Saxons no longer speak the English of Shakespeare (the English of the KJV) and over time the English language has incorporated many loan words from other languages. Theoretically it is possible to date a piece of writing from the language, however, difficulties exists when we introduce the concept of colloquialisms, dialect and style. For example, a Yorkshire man of the older generation might still use "thee" and "thou" in everyday speech. A poet could chose to use archaisms to make his writing look "old" - that is a question of style. Certain scholars believe that the Hebrew of Qoheleth is not late, but is simply due to a northern Israelite dialect or for reasons of style. The debate is not just about the use of different words or the introduction of loanwords, but about the actual construction of the language (syntax), which looks different from earlier periods. It is difficult for non linguists to assess such arguments. One of the problems is that we do not know the composition history of Qoheleth – is it possible that Qoheleth is both early *and* late? This might explain why we have evidence that points in both directions.

Before we can explore the possibility that Qoheleth is both early *and* late, it is important to understand the evidence and examine the "twists and turns" of the debate. This work has already been done by others; an excellent summary of the linguistic features is provided in layman's terms by Craig Davis and a brief summary of the recent historical debate is offered by Douglas Keyes Wilson. Both sections are reproduced here so that the reader can familiarise themselves with the issues.

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[1] Franz Delitzsch, Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes (1891), translated from the German by M. G. Easton, Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark,14 available@ www.wls.wels.net/sites/default/files/**KD_Ecclesiastes**.docx

[2] Robert Gordis, "Koheleth, the Man and His World",(Schocken, *1951,* 1955, 1968),5

[3] Archer is a notable exception, he places Qoheleth in the time of Solomon based on the Phoenician forms noted by Dahood and links this to Solomon's association with Hiram of Tyre from his temple building period. However, other explanations are available to account for Phoenicianisms and this theory does not explain the proliferation of later dialectical and diachronic features, especially developments in syntax. Gleason L. Archer, "The Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Ecclesiastes," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 12 (1969).

[4] See discussion and sources cited in John A. Cook "Hebrew Language," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings,* ed by T. Longman III and P. Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008) *265—66* as well as the standard commentaries and introductions.

[5] John A. Cook, *The Verb in Qoheleth* (corrected draft), Asbury Theological Seminary 19, p.46, (with footnote see above)

5.6.1 External Dependencies

There are connections between Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. A "fool" is mentioned 23 times in Ecclesiastes, 76 times in Proverbs, and 46 times elsewhere in the Bible — clearly a disproportionate percentage in these two books by Solomon. Things are compared with one "better" than the other 21 times in Proverbs, 21 times in Ecclesiastes, 2 times in Song of Solomon and 31 times in the rest of the Old Testament. This is also a prominent feature of Solomon's style. Most of the connections between Ecclesiastes and Proverbs are not linguistic, but connections in thought. Some of these are shown below.

1. "Eye satisfied" (Ecc 1:8, 4:8 and Prov 27:20)
2. Laughter and joy (שמחה and שחוק) come to a bad end (Ecc 2:2 and Prov 14:13)
3. Inheritance concerns (Ecc 2:26 and Prov 13:22)
4. Hate as a virtue (Ecc 3:8 and Prov 13:5)
5. Sacrifice of wicked/fools (Ecc 5:1 and Prov 15:8)
6. Hasty before good (Ecc 5:2 and Prov 20:25)
7. Virtue of few words (Ecc 5:2 and Prov 10:19)
8. Many words of a fool (Ecc 5:3 and Prov 15:2)
9. Hasty vows (Ecc 5:5 and Prov 20:25)
10. Working for appetite (Ecc 6:7 and Prov 16:26)
11. Value of a "good name" (Ecc 7:1 and Prov 22:1)
12. Rebuke of the wise (Ecc 7:5, Prov 15:31-32 and 25:12)
13. Bribes (Ecc 7:7, Prov 17:8 and 17:23)
14. Be slow to anger (Ecc 7:9, Prov 14:29 and 16:32)
15. Moderation in good things (Ecc 7:16 and Prov 25:16)
16. Bitterness of being ensnared by an evil woman (Ecc 7:26 and Prov 22:14)
17. Wisdom better than strength (Ecc 9:16, 9:18 and Prov 21:22)
18. Persuading a ruler (Ecc 10:4 and Prov 25:15)
19. Slaves over princes (Ecc 10:7 and Prov 19:10)
20. He who digs a pit may fall into it (Ecc 10:8 and Prov 26:27)
21. Words/lips/mouth of righteous/wise/fools (Ecc 10:12-14, Prov 10:14, 10:31-32 and 18:6-7)

Overall, Ecclesiastes shows no major connection with Old Testament books other than Proverbs, and none show dependencies on it. Ecc 9:14-15, about a great king laying siege to a small city, may be an allusion to 2 Sam 20:16-22. However, the Samuel account, set in David's time, mentions a wise woman, while the Ecclesiastes reference is to a poor wise man. Likewise, Ecc 4:13-16 is reminiscent of the story of Joseph, but the details do not match. The phrase "under the sun," which occurs 27 times in Ecclesiastes only appears elsewhere in 2 Sam 12:12.

5.6.2 Linguistic Analysis

The linguistic characteristics of Ecclesiastes are quite different from Classical Biblical Hebrew. Some scholars suggest that the linguistics of Ecclesiastes are not necessarily late, but instead are just different from the rest of the Old Testament. Archer states, "The text of Ecclesiastes fits into no known period in the history of the Hebrew language."[7] Most writers, however, understand the linguistics of Ecclesiastes to support a late date of writing.

Ecclesiastes shares the two striking linguistic features of Song of Solomon: the non-use of waw + imperfect verbs and the frequent use of "shin" as a relative pronoun. In Ecclesiastes, there are only three occurrences of waw + imperfect verbs (1:17, 4:1 and 4:7). Instead, Ecclesiastes uses waw + perfect verbs

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[6] I have taken the liberty to reproduce the Hebrew as my version of the PDF did not reproduce the Hebrew fonts correctly. Any mistakes are therefore my own and not attributable to Davis.
[7] Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament Introduction,* p. 465

repeatedly to indicate past tense (1:13, 2:5, 2:9, 2:11, 2:12, etc.). This practice matches the later Talmud. Ecclesiastes uses "asher" 67 times and "shin" 51 times, so the replacement of "asher" with "shin" is only partial, unlike Song of Solomon. The name YHWH does not appear in Ecclesiastes.

There are no Greek words in Ecclesiastes. There are two Persian words: Pardes (פרדס) in 2:5 for "park" or "orchard," and pitgam (פתגם) in 8:11 for "sentence" in a legal sense. This argues for a date of writing in the Persian period (538-333 B.C.).

The older pronoun "anoki" is not used, while its companion "ani" appears 28 times. This may hint at a late date. However, the use of "ani" in Ecclesiastes is mostly unique, in that it is used repeatedly in places where it seems unnecessary. In Hebrew, the form of the verb can indicate a first person subject, so using a pronoun with a verb is usually only done for emphasis. Ecc 2:1, for instance, uses "ani" to say "I said..." (אמרתי אני). This use of "ani" would normally indicate that the subject is emphatic ("I myself said..."), but this does not seem to be the intent in Ecclesiastes.[8] The later word for kingdom, "malkut," is used once, in 4:14. Additional linguistic features exist in Ecclesiastes which are unusual, but do not necessarily have anything to say about its date of writing. These include "zoh" (זה) used as a feminine demonstrative pronoun rather than "zot" (זו) in 2:2, 2:24, 5:15, 5:18, 7:23 and 9:13. Also, masculine plural pronominal suffixes used for feminine nouns occasionally appear, as in 2:6 and 2:10.[9]

Ecclesiastes has many connections to late or post-biblical Hebrew. "Shel" (של), in 8:17 meaning "of the," appears elsewhere in the Bible only in Song of Solomon, but is common in post- biblical Hebrew. Expressions which are in the Bible only in Ecclesiastes, but are present in Aramaic or the Mishna include:

1. "iy" (אי) meaning "alas" in 10:16
2. "Batal" (בטל) meaning "stand idle" in 12:3
3. "Gumats" (גומץ) meaning "pit" in 10:8
4. "Ben khorim" (בן־חורים) meaning "of nobility" in 10:17
5. "Khush" (חוש) meaning "enjoy" in 2:25
6. "Khesron" (חסרון) meaning "what is lacking" in 1:15
7. "Yithron" (יתרון) meaning "advantage" or "profit" in 1:3,2:11, 2:13, 3:9, 5:8, 5:15, 7:12 and 10:10-11
8. "Cavar" (כבר) meaning "already" in 1:10, 2:12, 2:16, 3:15, 4:2, 6:10 and 9:6-7
9. "Milah" (מלא) meaning "pregnant" in 11:5
10. "Mashak" (משך) meaning "indulge" in 2:3
11. "Nisken" (יסכן) meaning "be endangered" in 10:9
12. "Ahdenah" (עדנה) meaning "still" in 4:2-3
13. "Ahnin" (ענין) meaning "task" in 2:23, 2:26, 3:10, 4:8, 5:2, 5:13 and 8:16
14. "Pesher" (פשר) meaning "interpretation" in 8:1 (פתרון is used in older Hebrew, as in Gen 40:5)
15. "Teqiph" (תקף) meaning "the one stronger" in 6:10
16. "Taqan" (תקן) meaning "be straightened" in 1:15, 7:13 and 12:9
Additional expressions in Ecclesiastes matching Late Biblical Hebrew include:
1. "Illu" (אלו) meaning *"if* even" in 6:6 and Esth 7:4
2. "Bihal" (בהל) meaning "be hasty" in 5:2, 7:9, Esth 2:9 and 2 Chron 35:21

[8] However, see Rendsburg, who notes the following early northern occurrences; "The 2fs independent pronoun אתי appears as the *Kethiv* in the following IH [Israelian Hebrew] passages (Rendsburg 2003a: 11–12), with the speaker indicated in parentheses: Judg 17:2K (Micah of Ephraim), 1 Kgs 14:2K (Jeroboam I), 2 Kgs 4:16K, 8:1K (Elisha), and 2 Kgs 4:23K (husband of the Shunammite woman). The presumed pronunciation of this form is אַתִּי, which corresponds well with the Samaritan pronunciation of the 2fs independent pronoun אתי (written thus, with *yod*) *åtti* (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000: 226). So, while we lack an explicit attestation of this form in an IH composition from the postmonarchic or Persian period, the tradition maintained by the Samaritans confirms the continuation of this feature into the fifth century b.c.e.(and beyond) in the territory that was once the heart of the Northern Kingdom of Israel". Gary A. Rendsburg, "Northern Hebrew through Time: From the Song of Deborah to the Mishnah" in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*, (eds., Miller-Naudé and Zevit, Eisenbrauns, 2012), 345.

[9] Rendsburg (*Ibid*) argues for early northern provenance; "The next relevant item is the fs demonstrative pronoun זו/זה, which appears in the following northern texts (Rendsburg 2003a:13): 2 Kgs 6:19 זה; Hos 7:16 זו; Ps 132:12 זו; Qoheleth (6×) זה. Once more, the attestations span centuries, in this case, from the early-monarchic-period Elisha narrative until the Persian-period book of Qoheleth, with two instances in the interval".

3. "Biken" (בכן) meaning "so then" or "in this" in 8:10 and Esth 4:16

4. "Zeman" (זמן) meaning "appointed time" in 3:1, Neh 2:6, Esth 9:27 and 9:31. Earlier Hebrew usage would have preferred "mo'ehd" (מועד)

5. "Shalat" (שלט) meaning "exercised authority over" or "empower" in 2:19, 5:18, 6:2, 8:9, Ezra 4:20 (Aramaic), 7:24 (Aramaic), Neh 5:15, Esth 9:1 and Ps 119:133 (although Psalm 119 may not be especially late). This word is linked with Aramaic legal documents of the Persian era.

6. "Shavakh" (שבח), meaning "laud" or "praise" is in 4:2, 8:15 and a number of later Psalms.

7. Usage of the qal stem of "ka'as" (כעס) meaning "be angry" in 5:16, 7:9, 2 Chron 16:10, Neh 3:33 and Ezek 16:42.

8. "Natan Lev" (נתן with לב) in 7:2, 8:16 and 9:1 is a Late Biblical Hebrew expression for the way a person sets his own heart (1 Chron 22:19, 2 Chron 11:16 and Dan 10:12).

The spelling in Ecclesiastes is, along with Song of Solomon and Esther, among the most modern in the Bible, though not as modern as the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls.[10] Going against the trend, Ecc 1:1 spells David's name in the older form used primarily in pre-exilic texts. Also, the dual form noun for "two times" is used in 6:6. *These are perhaps vestiges of an earlier text of Ecclesiastes* (my emphasis).

Douglas Keyes Wilson, Jr., An Investigation into the Linguistic Evidence and Classification of Dialect Variation in Biblical Hebrew (Dissertation, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996), pages 95-99 including my footnotes (my numbering):

One of the most linguistically intriguing books in the Old Testament is Ecclesiastes. Commonly known by scholars as Qoheleth [קֹהֶלֶת], it bears the name of the writer who introduces his message: "The words of Qoheleth the son of David king in Jerusalem" (1:1). Dialectal features are clearly evident in the text, but attempts to categorize them have been less than satisfactory. Daniel Frederick's 1988 volume, Qoheleth's Language, gives readers an in depth analysis of the language.[11]

Relating the issues of dialect and foreign loan words to his overall theme, his intent was to date the book by linguistic evidence. Gleason Archer used a similar, albeit more brief, approach.[12] Other scholars whose Qoheleth research relates to dialect studies are Robert Gordis[13] and James Davila. [14]

Dialectal Features
Three significant dialect variations found in Qoheleth are the relative pronoun- שֶׁ, contracted diphthongs, and the feminine demonstrative זוֹ. Since the first two have been discussed earlier, attention will be given to the demonstrative pronoun זוֹ. Scholars often assume that this form is based on the Aramaic demonstrative pronoun דָא.[15] Epigraphic evidence indicates that forms of the demonstrative ז were prevalent in Phoenician inscriptions. The Azitawaddu inscriptions at Karatepe, for example, are replete with usages of ז.[16]

Evidence from the Hebrew text shows that the feminine form זֹאת was employed occasionally in the Hebrew Bible. In contrast, the form זוֹ is relatively rare. This fact has convinced some that זוֹ is a North Israelite dialectal form. Fredericks disagreed. The זוֹ demonstrative is notably absent from all extant Hebrew inscriptions from the northern regions.[17] Though employed six times in Qoheleth and other suggested Israelite passages, the form is not exclusive to northern biblical texts:

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[10] Anderson and Forbes, *Spelling in the Hebrew Bible, p.* 316

[11] Daniel C. Fredericks, Qoheleth's Language: Re-evaluating Its Nature and Date, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies, no. 3 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1988).

[12] Gleason L. Archer, "The Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Ecclesiastes," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 12 (1969): 167-81.

[13] See Robert Gordis, *The Word and the Book: Studies in Biblical Language and Literature* (New York: Ktav, 1976), 231-307. This section is a collection of several previously published articles on the style and language of Qoheleth.

[14] James R. Davila, "Qoheleth and Northern Hebrew," *MAARAV* 5-6 (Spring 1990): 69-87.

[15] Burney, 2: 208.

[16] H[erbert] Donner and W. Röllig, Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften, 3 vol, 2d ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962-67), #26. Also see François Bron, Recherches de les Inscriptiones Pheniciennes sur Karatepe (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1979).

[17] See Gibson, Syrian Inscriptions, vol. 1, Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 5-20

The demonstrative pronoun זוֹ is a common entry in many lists of North Israelite forms.... But what of three idiomatic instances in Judges 18:4; 2 Samuel 11:25; and 1 Kings 14:5? These uses show that זוֹ was equally available for use in the vocabulary of the southern sections of Judges and Kings as it was in the alleged northern sections of Judges and Kings.[18]

This challenge from Fredericks has yet to be answered in published form.

Dialectal Framework
Both Davila and Fredericks discussed the older theories regarding the outside linguistic influence which flavored Qoheleth's dialect: Phoenician influence, Aramaic origin, and Mishnaic influence.

Contrary to Davila's account, Cyrus Gordon,[19] not Dahood, was the first to suggest that Qoheleth was influenced by Phoenician. Dahood was, however, the scholar to suggest that Qoheleth "employs Phoenician orthography and betrays strong Canaanite-Phoenician literary influence and that he was a resident of a Phoenician city."[20] Robert Gordis[21] concurred with Davila on at least two points. First, they agreed that the Aramaic translation theory was untenable. This theory, proposed by Frank Zimmerman, suggested that Qoheleth was originally composed in Aramaic and then, sometime later, was translated into Hebrew.[22] As a translation, any Aramaic influences could be explained as carryover from the original writing. The other point of agreement between Davila and Gordis was the late composition of the book. Both seem to point to a form of Hebrew similar to Mishnaic. Gordis unashamedly suggested the writing to have taken place in the early third century.[23] Davila explained that

> the close relationship between Qoheleth and Mishnaic Hebrew is certainly due to the fact that they are both late .... We have evidence for a great mixture of dialects in the post-exilic period in the environs of Jerusalem (Neh 13:23-27). There are good indications that the dialect of Qoheleth was influenced by northern Hebrew, and we can only hope that further discoveries will give more information in this regard.[24]

Unfortunately, Davila was not clear whether the book was written in or influenced by a northern dialect, or a postexilic southern dialect, for that matter. Only recently has he clarified his position, stating that "Qoheleth may have been a postexilic native speaker of a late North Hebrew dialect," but even then he could make a conclusive statement on the matter.[25]

Although there are parallels in Phoenician, Aramaic, and Mishnaic literature with forms in Qoheleth, Davila has presented a convincing argument for the dialectal explanation. He is less convincing, however, in his dating of the book to the fifth century.[26] After a lengthy discussion of Dahood's work, Archer concluded that the data,

> "..shows a close relationship to the Ugaritic literature of Moses' time, and so there is every reason to deduce from this the suitability of the language of

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[18] Fredericks, Panel Discussion.

[19] Cyrus H. Gordon, Ugaritic Literature (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1947), 123.

[20] Mitchell Dahood, "The Language of Qoheleth," Catholic Quarterly Review 14 (1952): 302-18.

[21] Robert Gordis, "Was Koheleth a Phoenician?" Journal of Biblical Literature 74 (1955): 105. This article was in response to Dahood's initial article (cited above).

[22] Frank Zimmerman, "The Aramaic Provenance of Qoheleth," Jewish Quarterly Review 36 (1945-46): 17-45.

[23] Robert Gordis, The Word and the Book: Studies in Biblical Language and Literature (New York: Ktav, 1976), 307.

[24] Davila, "Qoheleth," 87.

[25] Davila, Panel Discussion: "Biblical Hebrew Dialectology: A North Israelite Dialect?" National Association of Professors of Hebrew. Chicago: 20 November 1994, unpublished.

[26] Davila, Panel Discussion.

> Ecclesiastes to a genre cultivated among the Phoenician-speaking peoples and adopted from them by a gifted tenth century Hebrew author".[27]

Rather than arguing for a postexilic composition, he simply suggested that the traditional position of Solomonic author cannot be excluded for linguistic reasons.

Discussion

Archer's position regarding a Solomonic date deviates from the consensus which regards Qoheleth as post-exilic. The problem is not only different kinds of words (Phoenician/Aaramaisms etc) but different types of sentence construction (different grammar/syntax); a style found in later Hebrew. A Solomonic date can be ruled out on those grounds. At this point we refer to Young's dictum[28] (and our own conclusion) that language alone is not sufficient to establish dating, it must be supported by intertextual evidence. In a previous article we noted that Qoheleth was aware of Daniel and Esther and this would naturally point to a late date of composition – *but that is not the whole story* as Qoheleth also demonstrates a biographic awareness of Uzziah's reign that can only be attributed **to a first-hand account**; memoirs recorded by the royal scribes.

Rendsburg has proposed that the northern anomalies noted by other scholars are due to a distinct northern dialect (Israelian Hebrew) and are therefore not "Late Hebrew" as they are also found in early Hebrew texts identified as originating from northern Israel. The many thematic connections with Proverbs indicate that both Qoheleth and Proverbs originated from the same scribal provenance (the Hezekiah period cf. Prov 25:1). Elsewhere we presented the argument that these scribes were refugees from northern Israel, recruited during the last decades of instability before Israel disintegrated.

> "As is well known, major social and political upheavals (such as the events of 745–721 b.c.e.) typically cause major changes in language, so it is only natural to expect IH [Israelian Hebrew][29] to have undergone certain transformations during this period. Changes of this sort may have included the end of the literary standard and the adaptation of a formerly colloquial register for literary purposes. This would explain, for example, the language of Qoheleth, a book that is both late and northern (for the former, see Seow 1996; for the latter, see Davila 1990), and the eventual emergence of MH, [Mishnaic Hebrew][30] even if our evidence for MH derives from centuries later".[31]

This may also account for the Persian loanwords. Ian Young contends that Persian loanwords employed in Qoheleth cannot be used to date the book to the Persian period, as "Persianisms" also occur in pre-exilic books.[32] Young suggests that a probable route for such words was *Assyrian deportations* of Iranians to the vicinity of Judah in the late eighth century BCE. Moreover, it is certainly not coincidence that the Persian word Pardes (פרדס) in Ecc. 2:5 for "park" also occurs in Song of Songs 4:13 (which we have placed in the Hezekiah era). It may well be an "update" from the Persian era (cf. Neh 2:8 for the keeper of the king's park) but it is more likely that the concept of botanical parks and royal gardens was copied from Persian royalty and that the idea (along with the word) was transmitted either via trade routes or by returning deportees. In any case it seems that Solomon imported exotic flora and fauna for just such a

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[27] Archer, "Linguistic Evidence," 181.

[28] Young concludes that, "linguistic evidence cannot be decisive". Ian Young, Biblical Texts Cannot be Dated Linguistically, (Hebrew Studies, Volume 46, 2005: 341-351), 349-50 ; See also, pp. 284-285 with references for deportations in "Late Biblical Hebrew and Hebrew Inscriptions," in: Ian Young (ed.),Biblical Hebrew: Chronology and Typology, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 369, (T&T Clark, London, 2003:276-311)

[29] IH [Israelian Hebrew] is a northern Hebrew dialect [PW]

[30] MH [Mishnaic Hebrew] is Hebrew from the 1st to the 3rd or 4th century CE, corresponding to the Roman Period -example Talmud[PW]

[31]*Ibid*, 342

[32]Young gives פלדות "steel" (Nah 2:4) and פרורים ("precincts" 2 Kgs 23:11) as examples of Persianisms in pre-exilic books.

purpose and his trading may have extended as far as the rich Mogul kingdoms of India and Persia but the fact that the same word is used (along with common dialectical features) in both Qoheleth and Songs suggests related scribal practices from approximately the same era (Uzziah /Hezekiah). However, when we place this against the thematic connections between Qoheleth and Persian era books (Daniel, Esther) the option still remains open for a Persian era revision. Nevertheless, it seems more likely (to me) that in the case of Pardes (פרדס) we are dealing with a word that was already absorbed into Hebrew around the eighth century – the foreign word was necessary because it described an imported foreign practice – the creation of a "paradise" for royal enjoyment.

Qoheleth shares other linguistic features with Song of Songs (and with the Songs of Degrees). Predominantly this is the substitution of *'ăšer* (רשׁא) with *še* (שׁ); of which 68 replacements are found in Qoheleth, and 32 in Song of Songs. The problem of linguistic dating has been examined in previous articles[33] in which we concluded that linguistic anomalies can be accounted for by the *sudden introduction* (as Rendsburg has noted) of dialect or colloquialisms (such as northern Israelite Hebrew) rather than by gradual dispersion and replacement.

Young (et al) argue in *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (LDBT) that only a very small number of well-attested LBH[34] features are not also found in EBH[35] books. Thus it is a reasonable suggestion that even in the preexilic period LBH could have been a co-existing style of Hebrew with EBH. Rather than a model suggesting that EBH and LBH are successive chronological phases of the language, which is incompatible with the evidence, a better model sees LBH as merely one style of Hebrew in the Second Temple period and quite possibly First Temple period. They produce a comparison table of LBH features and find that every sample includes LBH features (even EBH texts); "One fact that is evident from the table is that Hurvitz and other proponents of the chronological approach have underestimated the amount of LBH features in EBH texts. His argument for linguistically dating texts like the Prose Tale of Job to a late period leads, in fact, to the conclusion that all the biblical texts are postexilic".[36]

However, recently Dresher has offered a critique of the methodology employed in LDBT using the example of word variation between several forms for 'kingdom', in particular *mamlākâ* and *malkût* (in his summary, Davis also noted the later word for kingdom, *malkût* in Qoheleth). Dresher believes that LDBT ignores differences *in proportions*, and considers only presence versus absence of forms, so for example, if variations are present in both early *and* late texts it is argued that it cannot be used for dating purposes (Young et al) – but what if we only have a few variations in the early texts and an increasing number in late texts? In that case the increasing trend can be used to chronologically date texts – unless, of course we have a reason to suspect that the trend has been accelerated by a war or by adoption of a new style or due to different standards. Young (et al) draw on the example of two *co-existing* styles of Aaramaic; one more conservative (for legal documents etc) and the other more innovative and both dialects separated geographically. However, Dresher adds the caveat; ".......without history or geography, or even a clear idea of who the two groups were, we have none of the elements that make the Elephantine[37] analysis so compelling"[38]

[33]For a fuller discussion see, P. Wyns, "Songs" (part 1) *Vol. 7, No. 3, Jul 2013* : P. Wyns, "Using Biblical Hebrew to date the OT" *Vol. 8, No. 3, Jul 2014* and P. Wyns, "Songs of Degrees" (part 2) *Vol. 8, No. 4, Oct 2014* in *The Christadelphian eJournal of Biblical Interpretation*,(eds., A. Perry, T. Gaston, P. Wyns).
online **@** www.christadelphian-ejbi.org [cited May 2014]
[34] LBH is Late Biblical Hebrew
[35] EBH is Early Biblical Hebrew
[36] See the summary provided of; Ian Young, Robert Rezetko and Martin Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*, Volume 1: An Introduction to Approaches and Problems. Volume 2: A Survey of Scholarship, a New Synthesis and a Comprehensive Bibliography, (Bible World, London: Equinox Publishing, 2008). Summary available online as a PDF (citation and table pp.4-5)@ https://archive.org/details/LinguisticDatingOfTheHebrewBible
[37] Of the different Aaramaic styles [PW], so we cannot take the case of co-existing Aaramaic styles and suppose that Hebrew also had co-existing "styles" unless we have more socio-historic evidence.
[38] This article presents a good overview of the issues involved; B. Elan Dresher, Dating the Hebrew Bible: Can Linguistics Help? Paper from the flʌut and Spring Reunion (2010),15

Towards a solution

The debate is complex and requires specialist linguistic knowledge, no doubt, as better methodologies are developed the dating of texts using language will become more accurate but perhaps it will never be able to tell us the full story; certainly not without supporting intertextual and socio-historical evidence. This much we can say about the language of Qoheleth with some confidence; (1) It contains northern dialectical forms many of them early (2) It contains words found nowhere else[39] (3) It has the odd Persian loanword (4) It has the sentence structure and syntax of later Hebrew[40] (4) It contains later Hebrew forms perhaps transitional to MH

The results of linguistic analysis point to both early *and* late provenance. Our intertextual evidence also points to both early *and* late provenance. What can we do with this evidence? The only solution is to propose a composition history that *begins* with the actual memoirs of Uzziah and were *finalised* in the Persian era. We propose the following developments;

1. Uzziah has his memoirs recorded by the royal scribes. This "school" of scribes had a particular remit to collect and arrange wisdom literature, sometimes this literature was dramatized, at other times parabolic, but it was always based on Israel's covenant history.[41]

2. The royal scribes who recorded Uzziah's memoirs had been infused with a contingent of scribes from northern Israel. The assassinations, instability and looming Assyrian threat in the north of Israel towards the end of Uzziah's reign saw many of these scribes move to the royal court of Judah.

3. These same scribes were still employed some 25-30 years later; they were instructed by Hezekiah to collect and arrange the Proverbs (25:1) and their numbers were further swelled with more northern scribes caused by the reformations and centralization initiated by Hezekiah and by northern refugees when Samaria fell (721/722). This period became a "golden age" for the flowering of the literary arts with the (draft) formation of Qoheleth (proto- Qoheleth), the writing of Songs of Songs[42], the arrangement of Proverbs and Psalms[43], the production of Job[44] not to mention the prolific compilation of prophetic literature (both in Israel and Judah). Hezekiah should receive due recognition for being a significant patron of Biblical literature.

4. Proto- Qoheleth is finalised in the Persian era around about the same time as proto- Daniel and Esther appear. It is possible that the same school of scribes (their descendants) are involved as they would have been exiled along with the royal princes.

5. Possible pre-canonization revision of morphology/syntax but no change to the content this occurred before the translation of the LXX

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[39] *Hapax legomena*

[40] On this see John A. Cook.

[41] The Proverbs are often thought of as pithy "maxims" – instructions, sayings and advice on how to live life – however all of these sayings are intertextualy linked to past events in Israel's covenant history. For example Proverbs 31 is based on Ruth (the virtuous woman). The argument can be made that all the Proverbs have a similar basis but are poorly understood (this requires further research).

[42] Song of Songs is a dramatization of Hezekiah's courtship of northern Israel and the absence of the "beloved" is his sickness but "many waters" (the Assyrian flood) could not drown covenant love. See, P. Wyns, "Song of Songs" (Part 1-2), *CEJBI,* July &Oct 2014

[43] See, P. Wyns, "Songs of Degrees" (Part 1-3),*CEJBI*

[44] A. Perry demonstrates convincingly that Job is a dramatization of Hezekiah's reign (the suffering servant of Isaiah). This book offers a chapter by chapter commentary on the Book of Job using the KJV, RSV and NASB versions of the Bible. It compares Job with the Book of Isaiah and argues that Job, in addition to being a story about a patriarch, is also a prophetic and political commentary about Hezekiah and Judah during the days of the Assyrian Crisis. This prophetic and political discourse is set within the parabolic framework of the prologue and epilogue, in which the details of the patriarch Job's experience have been chosen in such a way so as to represent Hezekiah and Judah. A. Perry, Job,(Willow Publications, 2009)

6. Canonization; no more changes (with the exception of the Masoretic vowel pointing)

It is possible that the final shape of the book was the work of the same 'wise' who worked on proto-Daniel (Dan. 12:3, 10…*"they that understand"*; Dan. 11:33, 35), who were the natural heirs and guardians of earlier Danielic traditions and who were also the descendants of Hezekiah's guild of scribes.[45] Similar to Daniel the "wise" (*maskilim*) did not believe in *active* resistance (unlike the Maccabees) but in *passive* resistance and endurance, if necessary, to the point of martyrdom– knowing that ultimate vindication would come from God. Scholarship generally recognises a connection between the "wise" (*maskilim*) and the suffering servant (Hezekiah) of Isaiah 53:11 (cf. Dan. 12:3).[46] The fact that Daniel chs.7-12 is not partisan to the Hasmonean cause speaks of the independence of the revelation. The term *maskilm* is also employed in the para-biblical Daniel material. Koch argues persuasively that the way in which the term Maskil is used in Daniel 11-12 gives the impression that the term was "an established term for the authors of Daniel [...] not their invention."[47] Charlotte Hempel notes…"Both groups, though they emerged sometime in the second century BCE, lay claim to having ideological or historical (or conceivably both) roots in the exile…"[48]

Conclusion

Qoheleth was Uzziah's biographer who under inspiration faithfully crafted the draft version of his memoirs. These memoirs were transported to Babylon along with the royal scribes where they were preserved along with other writings until proto- Qoheleth was finalised in the Persian era by the same "school" of scribes who drafted proto-Daniel (based on Daniel's experiences). Qoheleth possibly underwent a pre-canonization "refreshing" and updating of the language before the translation of the LXX. All these factors taken together would account for both the early *and* late linguistic features and ensure the relevance, historicity and authority of Qoheleth when relaying the thoughts of Uzziah.

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[45] Perhaps this has analogies with the Apostles being the natural heirs of 'Jesus traditions' which they employed freely under guidance of the Spirit to produce the four Gospels. The Gospels all draw on a common pool of traditions that are employed differently for theological/didactic/polemical purposes in order to address the concerns of specific communities. The Gospels differ not only in the traditions they select but in the traditions that they deliberately omit – and also in their structuring of those traditions (i.e., chronologically, thematically… etc).

[46] H. L. Ginsberg, "The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant", VT 3 (1953) 400-404 Martin Hengel comments; "……Ginsberg therefore wants to see Daniel 11:33-12:10 as "the oldest interpretation of the suffering servant," a view Lacocque follows in his Commentary (p.92)…….. The resurrection from the "dust of the earth" in Daniel 12:2 would correspond to the overcoming of the grave in Isaiah 53:9" (p.98). Martin Hengel, Traces of Isaiah 53 in the book of Daniel in The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources, (ed., Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, translation Daniel P. Bailey Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004, 90-98), 92, 98

[47] K. Koch, "Stages in the Canonization of the Book of Daniel", in The Book of Daniel, (eds. J. J. Collins and P. W. Flint; 2 vols; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 2:421-426(429)

[48] On these "groups" (the writers of Daniel and the Qumran covenanters) Hempel concludes (2006:156); "Whereas Matthias Henze has stated rather eloquently that "The covenanters have made Daniel's language their own", [Henze, Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar, p. 242] I have tried to suggest that, to some extent, it was their own. In other words the overlap can just as well be accounted for by the shared roots of these movements than by the influence of Daniel upon Qumran. Charlotte Hempel, Maskil(im) and Rabbim: from Daniel to Qumran. In: Biblical traditions in transmission,(Brill, Leiden ; Boston, 133-156, 2006),133 online: http://eprints.bham.ac.uk/291/ [cited July 2010] See there for further references on the social setting of the Book of Daniel