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## Priestly source of the Pentateuch

Following the traditional division between Priestly (P) and non-P material (i.e., J[ahwistic], E[lohistic], D[euteronomy] and H[oliness Code] material) in the Pentateuch, there are grammatical and lexical usages distinctive of P in relation to non-P.

Linguistic studies of P have concentrated mainly on lexical and morphological features (for an extensive list of P features, see, e.g., Driver 1897:131–135). The most influential studies are those of Polzin (1976), who treats features found in the ‘P narrative’, and Hurvitz (1974; 1982) and Milgrom (1970; 1991), both of whom focus on the lexicon of the cultic material in P. These studies are primarily concerned with the linguistic profile of P in relation to the diachronic development of the Hebrew language, from Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) to Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), presenting evidence that P corresponds to SBH. An example from the lexicon is the word for ‘linen’: P (like SBH) uses *שש* *šēš*, whereas LBH employs *בִּיֵשׁ* *būš*. An example of a grammatical feature involves verbs derived from the root *ק-ו-מ* *q-w-m* employed with the meaning ‘establish, maintain, fulfill’: in P (and SBH) this meaning is found in the *hip’el* stem, *הקים* *hēqīm*, which in LBH is superseded by the new formation *קיימ* *qīyēm* in the *pi’el* stem. The pioneering study of the syntax and style in P by Paran (1989) demonstrates that syntactic features (typical of P in relation to non-P) appear in both the P narrative and the cultic sections. The most prominent and widespread distinguishing feature of P’s syntax is the predilection for the ‘chiastic pattern’, e.g.:

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים | לְאוֹר יוֹם  
וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה

*way-yiqrā ’ēlōhīm lā-’ōr yōm*  
*wə-la-ḥōšek qārā lāylā*

‘And God called the light day; and the darkness he called night’ (Gen. 1.5).

In this pattern, the verb used in the head clause (וַיִּקְרָא *way-yiqrā* ‘he called’) is repeated in the chiastic clause (קָרָא *qārā*), with an alternation of verb-form. This alternation is

due to the placement of the chiasmic elements, represented by the indirect objects לְאוֹר *lā-’ōr* ‘the light’ and לַחֹשֶׁךְ *wə-la-ḥōšek* ‘the darkness’ respectively (compare Gen. 1.10). In other words, the fronted chiasmic element in the second clause creates the chiasmic relationship to the head clause by reversing the word order: *wə-verb—x; wə-x—verb* (where x = the chiasmic element). The chiasmic pattern with repetition of the same verbal root is typical of P on account of both its frequency (there are some 190 examples) and variety of functions. To be sure, this chiasmic pattern is also found in non-P. However, according to Paran (1989:51–53), in non-P, its use is basically restricted to two functions: (a) contrasting two subjects, e.g., וַיְהִי וַיְהִי הַבֵּל רֹעֵה צֹאן וְוָיִן עֲבַד אָדָמָה *wa-yhī-ḥebel rō’ē šōn wə-qayin ḥāyā ’ōbēd ’ādāmā* ‘Abel was a keeper of sheep; and Cain was a tiller of the ground’ (Gen. 4.2), and (b) expanding the scope of a phenomenon or event, e.g., וַיְהָרוּ בָלְ-וַיְהָרוּ כָל-זָכָר וְאֶת-חָמוֹר וְאֶת-שֶׁכֶם בְּנוֹ הָרוּ *way-yaharū kāl-zākār wə-’et-ḥāmōr wə-’et-šəkem bənō ḥārḡū* ‘And they killed all the males; Hamor and Shechem his son they killed (with the edge of the sword)’ (Gen. 34.25–26). In addition to these two functions, which are common also in P, the Priestly writer uses the chiasmic pattern with repetition of the same verbal root in various combinations that are not attested in texts attributed to non-P. The following examples include the most frequent patterns distinctive of P in the Pentateuch.

(1) The action in the chiasmic clause is identical to the action in the preceding head clause, e.g.:

וַעֲשִׂיתָ מִזְבֵּחַ מִקְטָר קֹטֶרֶת  
וַעֲשִׂי שֵׁטִים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ

*wə-’āšitā mizbēaḥ miqtar qəṭōret*  
*’āšē šittīm ta’āše ’ōtō*

‘And you shall make an altar (for) burning incense; of acacia wood you shall make it’ (Exod. 30.1; compare Gen. 7.15–16; Lev. 6.3; Num. 9.2–3). The prefix-form in the chiasmic clause (תַּעֲשֶׂה *ta’āše* ‘you shall make’) does not indicate an action separate from that of the

*wə*-suffix-form (וַעֲשִׂיתָ *wə-‘āšītā*). In fact, the repetition of the verb is superfluous from the point of view of both meaning and syntax, as illustrated by, e.g., וַעֲשִׂיתָ שֻׁלְחָן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים *wə-‘āšītā šulḥān ‘ašē šittim* ‘And you shall make a table of acacia wood’ (Exod. 25.23; compare Exod. 26.4; 27.1; 28.13). Like the chiastic clause in type (b) in non-P (see Gen. 34.25–26 above), the chiastic clause in Exod. 30.1 adds a specification to the first clause. However, in contrast to the Priestly pattern, the information added in type (b) could not have been conveyed by simply omitting the verb of the chiastic clause.

(2) In a variation of the pattern above, the use of pronominal suffixes is particularly conspicuous; in the one clause, the pronoun is suffixed to the accusative marker אֵת *’et* and in the other clause to the verb, e.g.:

וַצִּפִּיתָ אֹתוֹ זָהָב טָהוֹר  
מִבַּיִת וּמִחוּץ תַּצְפֵּנּוּ

*wə-šippītā ’ōtō zāhāb ṭāhōr*  
*mib-bayit u-mi-hūš tāsappennū*

‘And you shall overlay it with pure gold; inside and out you shall overlay it’ (Exod. 25.11). There are some 25 examples of this usage in P (compare Gen. 23.9; Lev. 23.11; Num. 6.9). It is significant that the object is suffixed to the verb in the chiastic clause (וּתַצְפֵּנּוּ *tāsappennū* ‘you shall overlay-it’), since in P in general there is a preference for אֵת *’et*+suffix (like אֹתוֹ *’ōtō* ‘it’ in the first clause). The distribution of אֵת *’et*+suffix vs. verb+suffix in P is markedly different from that in non-P in the Pentateuch (which prefers verb+suffix; cf. Polzin 1976:100).

(3) Another usage that is exclusive of P is the ‘three member’ chiastic pattern (attested some twenty times), e.g.:

וַעֲשִׂיתָ חֹשֶׁן מִשְׁפָּט מְעֻשָׂה חֹשֶׁב  
כְּמַעֲשֵׂה אֶפֶד תַּעֲשֶׂנּוּ  
זָהָב תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְשֵׁשׁ מְשֻׁרָר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ  
*wə-‘āšītā ḥōšen mišpāt ma‘āšē ḥōšēb*  
*ka-ma‘āšē ‘ēḥod ta‘āšennū*  
*zāhāb təkēlet wə-‘argāmān wə-ṭōla‘at šānī wə-šēš*  
*māšzār ta‘āše ’ōtō*

‘And you shall make the breastplate of judgment, artistically woven; according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it; of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine woven linen, you shall make it’ (Exod. 28.15; compare Gen. 1.27; Lev. 6.9; Num. 5.2–3). The syntax

of the third ‘member’ is parallel to that of the second (chiastic) clause, i.e., x—verb (תַּעֲשֶׂנּוּ *ta‘āšennū* and וְתַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ *ta‘āše ’ōtō* ‘you shall make it’, respectively).

(4) In P, the chiastic pattern is not limited to clause combinations in which there is an alternation between the prefix and suffix-conjugations (although this pattern is the most frequent). Commonly, the repeated verb appears in the prefix-conjugation in both clauses (ca. 35 examples), e.g.:

הוּא יָמִית אֶת־הַרָצֹחַ  
בְּפָגְעוֹ-בּוֹ הוּא יָמִיתֵנּוּ

*hū’ yāmīt ’et-hā-rōšēaḥ*  
*ba-ḥīg’ō-bō hū’ yamītennū*

‘He shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death’ (Num. 35.19; compare Gen. 9.5; Exod. 28.21; Lev. 14.9).

In addition to P’s frequent use of the chiastic patterns exemplified above, there are numerous examples of other types of chiastic constructions in P that are also commonly used in non-P in the Pentateuch (see Andersen 1974:119–140). In this connection, it should be noticed that the chiastic pattern is not attested in the few verses attributed to P in Deuteronomy. Likewise, the chiastic pattern is virtually absent from the non-P sections in Deuteronomy, in contrast to non-P in Genesis–Numbers.

Finally, there is another syntactic pattern that must be considered typical of P in relation to non-P (and indeed to the rest of the Hebrew Bible), although it is by no means as common and widespread as the use of chiasmus. In this pattern, an imperative form of a verb of speech or command is followed by the jussive form of the prefix-conjugation+*waw*, e.g., אֲל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ *dabbēr ’el-bənē-yisrā’el wə-yissā’ū* ‘Tell the children of Israel to go forward’ (Exod. 14.15). As illustrated by this example, the construction is most commonly introduced by the imperative דַּבֵּר *dabbēr* ‘speak, tell’ (see Exod. 6.11; 12.3; 14.2; 25.2; Lev. 22.2; Num. 19.2). In one instance the jussive clause is negated by אַל *’al* ‘not’: אֲל־הִקְדִּישׁ אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ וְאַל־יָבֹא בְכָל־עֵת אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ *dabbēr ’el-ahārōn ’āḥikā wə-’al-yābō ba-kāl-’et ’el-haqqōdeš* ‘Tell Aaron your brother not to enter at any time into the holy (place)’ (Lev 16.2). There are three examples introduced by the

verb צַוָּה *šiwwā* ‘command’, e.g., צַוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׁלְחוּ מִן־הַמַּחֲנֶה כָּל־צָרוּעַ *šaw ’et-bānē yisrāēl wī-šallḥū min-ham-mahānē kâl-šārūa* ‘Command the children of Israel to send away every leper from the camp’ (Num. 5.2; compare Lev. 24.2). Notably, in one case a verb in the prefix-conjugation is used instead of the imperative: וְאַתָּה תְצַוֶּהָ | אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָקִיחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת *wā-’attā tašawwe ’et-bānē yisrāēl wā-yiqḥū ’ēlekā šemen zayit* ‘And you shall command the children of Israel to bring you olive oil’ (Exod. 27.20). In addition, there is one example introduced by the imperative אָמַר אֶל־אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־אַהֲרֹן: אָמַר אֶת־הַמַּחֲתֹת הַכֹּהֵן וְיִרָם אֶת־הַמַּחֲתֹת *’ēmōr ’el-’el-’āzār ben-abārōn hak-kōhēn wā-yārēm ’et-ham-maḥtōt* ‘Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers’ (Num. 17.2 [Eng. 16.37]). Against these 12 examples found in P, there is one possible instance in the non-P sections of the Pentateuch (Exod. 11.2), and three comparable examples in the SBH corpus (Josh. 4.16; 1 Sam. 9.27; 1 Kgs. 5.20 [Eng. 5.6]).

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