HEBREW SYNTAX AND THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLE TEXT

A PESHER IN THE MT OF ISAIAH

M. H. GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN

1. Some students of the Bible are extremely fond of operating in their exegetical endeavours with the assumption of glosses, editorial additions, secondary intrusions, etc. Others, while recognizing on principle such categories, are rather reluctant to rob the biblical author of words or verses attributed to him by tradition. The present writer readily confesses that he prefers, in general, to err with the second group rather than with the first. To be sure, there are obvious instances of additions. But in the majority of cases the exegete uses his own subjective intuition in distinguishing between original and secondary. To put it differently: such claims only stand a chance to be more than subjective guesswork, if some additional corroborative evidence can be adduced. Unless some attempt at objectivization is made, we remain perforce in the realm of exegetical intuition — no mean accomplishment, in its own right — but do not cross the threshold of philological scholarship.

2. It is with this basic issue in mind that I submit the following observation on Is. 9:13–14. I believe that this is one of the cases which illustrate the difference between exegetical intuition and philological ‘proof’ — to the extent to which there is proof in this field. If my observation will turn out to be wrong, we would have to assume an extraordinary coincidence. If it is right, it would be of considerable consequence for our ideas on the history of the Bible text.

3. Is. 9:13–14 (MT) reads as follows: יִרְכָּ֣רָּה הָֽזֹּ֔א מֵי-שְׁרָ֖אֵל רָאָ֣שׁ וּנְבֵ֑י חָמָ֥שׁ וּאֱגָמ֓וֹן יִרְמָאֲ֣ה אָמֵ֔ן. קִדְמָוֶ֖הֶם הֹשֵׁ֥עַ וְרָאָ֖שׁ בּוֹרֶֽיֶתְךָ מָרַ֗דְיוֹן חָמֶֽשׁ וְנֹ֖ב. For the moment we need not speculate as to the possible meaning intended by the Prophet, and it is sufficient to state the following facts:

a. There can be no reasonable doubt that in MT, v. 14 is meant to ‘explain’ some details of v. 13. רָאָ֣שׁ וּנְבֵ֔י חָמָ֥שׁ וּאֱגָמ֓וֹן seemed in need of clarification, and v. 14 serves as an identificatory explanation.

b. This relationship between the two verses is not peculiar to MT. All the ancient versions bear witness to it — each one presenting its own particular problem (mainly as regards the unit הבש האָמֵת). The manuscript evidence proves that the relationship between the two verses must have antedated the
rendering of the LXX. This, then, is the *terminus ante quem* to which we shall return later on (§ 12).

4. Whereas the explanatory character of v. 14 is self-evident, different exegeses may have different ideas as to how the relationship is to be understood. It so happens that the suggestion to view Is. 9:14 as a ‘gloss’ belongs to the oldest stratum of the modern critical study of the Bible and has been often repeated throughout the past two centuries.\(^1\) We may even go further and claim that, in a way, the idea is as old as the beginnings of medieval philosophical exegesis.\(^2\) Perhaps the main reason for the almost general acceptance of the ‘gloss’ interpretation by modern scholars is the apparent dependence of our verse on Is. 3:2.\(^3\) Be this as it may, the case for ‘exegetical intuition’ being this time on the right track is as strong as any.\(^4\)

5. The discovery of the scrolls from the Judean desert (JDS) introduces a new factor into the discussion of the issue under review:\(^5\) the comparative analysis of Is. 9:14 and 3:2–3 shows that all the identificatory elements of 9:14 are present in 3:2–3, save one: מֵרוֹדֶה-שָׁפָק. Hardly less significant: the whole sequence consists of coordinated expressions, apart from the unique unit בְּבוּא מֵרוֹדֶה-שָׁפָק.\(^6\) Hence, one is tempted to add a new conjecture: the ‘glossator’ had a special interest in introducing the term מֵרוֹדֶה-שָׁפָק (Hab.

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1. Only a thorough study of the literature can show whether the idea was really put forward for the first time in the commentary on Isaiah by J. B. Koppe I (1779), 173. It was apparently one of the many additions of Koppe to the enlarged German version of a commentary which R. Lowth had published the previous year. Later formulations are mainly based on the treatment in W. Gesenius, *Der Prophet Jesaia* I (1820), 376. H. Ewald, *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes* I (1840), 202, even printed the verse separately in order to stress the character of the text.

2. Of course, without the use of ‘gloss’ terminology. A cursory study of the exegetical habits of R. Sa’adiah suggests that his way of dealing with our verse is very unusual. He renders v. 14 very pointedly by prefixing an introductory: “the explanation of this is...”

3. Note, of course, also 19:15.

4. It should be mentioned, however, that the assumption of an ‘interpretative gloss’ may be understood in different ways. Thus, e.g., the position of Gesenius was no more than the admission of ‘secondary’ material; for him the ‘glossator’ was active not long after the time of the prophet himself. The reasoning is of interest. The identification of the ‘tail’ with בְּבוּא מֵרוֹדֶה-שָׁפָק was taken by some exeges to show that the fight against false prophets was still a live issue. Cp. §8.

5. To the best of my knowledge this point has not been made; but in matters of JDS bibliography one can never be sure.

6. The overall textual evidence on this point is decisive.
2:18) into the Is. text, in a way which reminds us of the employment of the term in the JDS. It is a small step from here to the formulation that Is. 9:14 is not just a 'gloss', but rather some kind of 'tendentious interpretation' or, typologically speaking, a *Pesher*.7
6. Thus a good case can be made for suggesting that Is. 9:14 is a secondary addition. It is at such a stage that exegetical procedure usually stops. As suggested above, it will depend on the possibility of finding corroborative evidence, whether the exegetical conjecture can be objectivized.
7. One of the pet subjects of Semitic syntax is the discussion of the 'true character' of what is usually termed *triptite nominal sentence*. For the purpose of this paper we need not enter into the details of the argument whether such sentences are both historically and synchronically *bipartite extraposition sentences*,8 nor do we have to contend with attempts to the contrary which view all Semitic nominal sentences as tripartite, some structured with 'expressed copula' and some with 'zero-copula'.9 In order to describe Is. 9:14, the traditional analysis which terms נון 'copula' is perfectly valid. But if someone

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7 See below, §11.
8 The traditional differentiation of Arab grammarians between *dámir al-faṣl* and *dámir al-taʾkid* has bedevilled the discussion for decades. Even when Broekelmann (*Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* II (1913), 103, expressed what amounted to a first possible differentiation between the Proto-Hebrew stage (equals Arabic, as it were) and the synchronic system of biblical Hebrew, he remained very hesitant as to the existence of a 'copula' (which for him was apparently a well-defined term of Indo-European syntax). He was slightly more positive in his *Hebräische Syntax* (1956), 26 f: "Doch verschwiet das Sprachgefühl das pron. schon in die Stellung eines Bindegliedes". In a way, E. König (*Syntax der hebr. Sprache* 1897, 424) seems to foreshadow later qualms by using the descriptive term *Coinzidenzpunkt*. On the other hand, Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley (1910), 453, accepted the 'compound sentence' theory, more or less as suggested in S. R. Driver's *Tenses*. M. Hartmann's study, subtitled "Zur Kopula im Hebräischen" *OTS* XIV (1965), 116, contributes nothing to our understanding. F. I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (1970), does not deal with tripartite sentences at all. Cf also Rosen, *Report 3rd World Congress of Jewish Studies* 1961 (1965) 169. For a theoretical discussion of the position in Arabic see also M. Bravmann, *Studies in Arabic and General Syntax* (1953), §11 f. All in all, this is one of the outstanding issues where the theory of Arab grammarians has deeply influenced the history of analysis of Hebrew syntax.
9 To the historian of Semitic linguistics it is of interest to realize how theories come, go, and reappear. Early European descriptions of Hebrew tried to press Semitic syntax into Indo-European categories — hence a 'pure' nominal sentence looked elliptical. Later on the Semitic nominal sentence was hailed as one of the basic features of difference between Semitic and Indo-European. Then — in the wake of modern attempts at simplification and unification of description — the zero-idea was found convenient to gloss over the basic differences. Again and again the distinction between history and synchronic description has been smoothed over for the sake of theory.
prefers to use a purely formal description of the type favoured by transformationists, the result will be the same: NP + לְכָּל + NP. Returning, then, to the relationship between v. 13 and v. 14 we may remark that לְכָּל and בָּנָי are the words ‘known’ at that point to the listener, but they stand in need of clarification. They reappear — with duly added article — in v. 14, and the new information is brought in by the expressions: סֹאָמ נבִי יִשְׁרָאֵל || נבִי אֲמִית יִשְׁרָאֵל. This is the kind of analysis conventionally used for deciding, in such a case, which is the ‘subject’ and which the ‘predicate’. V. 14 is not only a clearly analyzable sentence, but also its function in the context is beyond doubt. Its purpose is not classificatory predication but equation or identification: A is B.  

8. If the foregoing analysis seems obvious or pedantic, it is necessary for our argument: Is. 9:14 has a syntactic structure unequalled in the entire prophetic literature! There is not one additional example of a pure NP + לְכָּל + NP sentence. It stands to reason that exegetes who declared this verse a gloss, were aware of its ‘style’. But the decisive fact now emerges that in the entire corpus of prophetic writing there is not one further example of a tripartite

10 NP stands for noun-phrase, which allows in that terminology for the addition of secondaries to the ‘head’.  
11 Today it need not be pointed out anymore that the differences between structures of the types S-C-P (P-C-S) and S-P-C is partly functional (see below, n. 14). I have not gone into the question of who first noticed this problem of Semitic syntax. For the moment I quote F. Praetorius, _Grammatica Aethiopica_ (1886), §171: “Praedicatum non verbale... cum subiecto... per pronomen personale coniungi potest, quod, si praedicato subjecti descriptio vel explicatio continetur... post praedicatum poni solet... Sin autem praedicati additio eae quae est outarum rerum duarum, pronomen personale pro copula usitatim ad praedicatum converti et huic praemittis solet...”. The late E. Y. Kutscher has remarked in passing on this phenomenon in Hebrew and Aramaic (Lešonenu 26 (1962), 156), but unfortunately did not live to give the matter a full-scale treatment. Such a division is one of the subgroups in Bendavid’s discussion (see below, n. 18). König (loc. cit.) may have had an inkling, but — as he puts it — “daraüber habe ich keine systematische Untersuchung angestellt”. By the way, the treatment of Praetorius suggests that he was among those who viewed bipartite sentences as having ‘omitted’ the copula.  
12 Is. 37:16 is not part of the prophetic corpus as understood in this context. Anyhow, its structure is materially different (see below §9).  
13 Gesenius (loc. cit.) expressed this by saying: “der Vers hat ganz eigentlich den Styl der Glosseme, wofür das סֹאָמ... im Hebräischen und Arabischen charakteristisch ist. Dergleichen Erklärungen haben allerdings prosaische Schriftsteller zuweilen selbst eingeschoben...” (Gesenius assumed that the addition was still made in prophetic times; see n. 4). I am aware of only one attempt in the opposite direction. S. D. Luzzatto was one of those exegetes who fought the idea of ‘additions’. In his commentary (ad loc.) he accepted the curious contention of one of his students, that had this verse been an added explanation, the places of subject and predicate would have had to be interchanged. Hence, the wording of the verse proves its originality.
nominal identificatory (equational) sentence. Hence, exegetical intuition can be borne out by syntactical analysis. It is hardly conceivable that the syntactical uniqueness of Is. 9:14 is coincidental. Moreover, if early exegetes (e.g. Koppe, Gesenius, Ewald) stressed that the addition was ‘ancient’, the syntactical analysis casts doubt on any suggestion which connects our verse with the prophetic period.

9. For the purpose of our argument it suffices to show that the structure is unique in the corpus of prophetic literature. Because of our familiarity with similar structures of tripartite nominal sentences occurring in other corpuses of Hebrew we may tend to assume, at first blush, that whereas the specific structure under discussion is not prophetic, it is at least biblical. At present I shall say this much: only a full-scale investigation can show in what way types of tripartite nominal sentences should be subdivided. I suspect that if the subdivision will, indeed, isolate a ‘pure’ NP + נְפֶל + NP construction — as opposed to constructions with an introductory (subordinative, presentative)

14 In the light of n. 11 above this description may suffice. The term ‘identificatory’ hints at the question of the position of נְפֶל and is meant to dissociate our view from the formulation of Brockelmann (Grundriss II, 104): “Wie diese Beispiele zeigen, kann das Pron. dem Prädikat vorangehen oder folgen, je nachdem in dem zugrunde liegenden 2. Satze das Subjekt oder das Prädikat den Ton trägt”. Cp. also the lack of differentiation in the treatment of C. Albrecht, ZAW 8 (1888), 251. On the other hand, the importance of different structures has been stressed in Chapter IV of T. Muraoka’s recent dissertation, Emphasis in Biblical Hebrew (Jerusalem 1969). The reasons for the order P-C-S remain a matter of conjecture. While it may be a question of contents and emphasis, the length of the units may be of importance.

15 The usage of a version has, of course, no bearing on our analysis of the original text. The Peshitta is, e.g., fully aware of the function and uses הֵבע. But that usage is not restricted to Hebrew sentences of the said structure.

16 Note that Is. 63:16 יִזְרָא אֶל הָאָדָם reads in 1Q Is-a: יִזְרָא אֶל הָאָדָם. This linguistic usage should not be attributed to the prophet.

17 For rabbinic Hebrew cp. Segal’s Grammar (1936), §332. For examples in medieval Hebrew cp. my Medieval Hebrew Syntax (1951), §241 (Hebrew). The structure is widely used in modern Hebrew; cp. especially E. Rubenstein, The Nominal Sentence — a Study in the Syntax of Contemporary Hebrew (1968), 60f; 116 f. (Hebrew). Some of the arguments advanced there to prove the existence of a ‘copula’ proper in contemporary Hebrew, hold good for biblical Hebrew as well. For the problem in modern Hebrew — and for an attempt to differentiate between the term ‘copula’ and its suggested Hebrew counter-term ᵃᵍᵉᵈ — cp. also the preliminary summary of U. Ornan’s lectures on modern Hebrew Syntax (available to me in the 1968 edition), 105 f. All this goes to show that the discussion of the phenomenon in other strata of Hebrew is yet afoot.

18 The most comprehensive attempt of sub-classification with a view to comparing structures in biblical and rabbinic Hebrew is chapter 46 in the recent treatise of Abba Bendavid, Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew II (1971), 692–769 (Hebrew).
element and to those which substitute for NP a pronoun, a proper name or a numeral — then Is. 9:14 will emerge as unique in the whole biblical corpus. The initial exegetical suggestion with regard to Is. 9:14 has so far been verified in one respect: the syntactical analysis makes it extremely unlikely that the verse belongs to the prophetic corpus. Moreover, if exact criteria are applied, it turns out to be probably unique in the entire Bible. It lies in the nature of things that evidence for positive identification of origin can hardly be expected — or else the problem would have been solved during these decades of intensive work on the JDS. Initially, the introduction of the מַדְּרֶשֶׂךְ unit reminded us of the terminology of the scrolls. Hence our preliminary remark that Is. 9:14 may be, typologically speaking, a Pesher (cp. n. 22 below).

11. Since our early comparative material is as meagre as it is, we must be content with stating that the syntactic structure of Is. 9:14 is indeed characteristic of the Pesher style. Cp. e.g. 1Q Hab XII:2 כְּאִם חוֹלַךְ אֶל הַדָּבָר מִי אֲשֶׁר חָוָה וְתָמַם הָעַצָּמָה תִּשְׁחָד יְהוָה or, slightly differently, (XII:7): מִשְׁמַרְתִּי אֲשֶׁר אֲתָא מַדְּרֶשֶׂךְ וְהָעַצָּמָה תִּשְׁחָד. יְהוָה. It should be stressed that this structure can be shown to exist not only in a Pesher proper, but also in exegetical contexts within other literary frameworks in JDS. E.g. CDam III:21–IV:3 shows this construction: המַדְּרֶשֶׂךְ בְּרֵיחַ אַחֲרֵי שָׁמַר אֲשֶׁר מַזְּמַר אֲשֶׁר מַדְּרֶשֶׂךְ ... וְמַדְּרֶשֶׂךְ. Similarly ib. VI:3–4 בְּרֵיחַ אַחֲרֵי אֶת מַדְּרֶשֶׂךְ. נְבֵן עָצֹמָה ... וּבְרֵיחַ אַחֲרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. שָׁמַר... נְבֵן אֹי אֲשֶׁר מַדְּרֶשֶׂךְ שָׁמַר יִשְׂרָאֵל.

19 Such constructions are quite common. The passage under consideration is unique precisely because of the fact that the two common nouns appear first without article and then reappear with article in the NP + אֹי + NP construction.

20 I have reasons to assume this suspicion to be correct. But it is not based on a full scale independent recheck of the whole Bible. Job 28:28 is different. Should it turn out that Dan 8:21 presents the most similar structure, it would be of interest from the point of view of literary genre and the history of Hebrew.

21 In other instances מִשְׁמַר sums up part of the verse and serves as NP in the following nominal sentence. An investigation of the various possibilities lies outside the scope of this study.

22 Cp. outside IQpHab, e.g. מַדְּרֶשֶׂךְ in 4 Q 169 col. II, 1 (the so called pesher on Nahum, DJD V, 1968, 38). It should be stressed that in the present context the term Pesher is used with regard to an individual exegetical unit without necessarily implying authorship by a JD writer. This constitutes a terminological ambiguity, since Pesher is sometimes used with respect to the type of literary composition as a whole which was first encountered in pHab.

23 The structure may appear in different forms. E.g., in the mutilated text 4Q Hal a 5 (DJD III, 1962, 300) we find an indirect framework of exegetical identification: [הָעַצָּמָה] מֵאֲשֶׁר אֲנָשָׁת הָמָלְאָכִים וְזָכָרֹת הָזִית הָדָּמָא [לִולַח] בָּכָרֹת הָזִית הָזָכָר.
12. Summing up, we may claim to have adduced evidence on two points:
a. the syntactic structure of Is. 9:14 proves the secondary character of the
verse — over and beyond all previous considerations — and excludes it, at
least, from the corpus of prophetic literature;
b. the structure is strongly reminiscent of the Pesher technique — over and
beyond the considerations arising from the use of מַרְדְּכַי. So much for
the facts. Beyond these we enter the realm of speculation. We should refrain,
for the present, from assuming a direct connection between Is. 9:14 and the
JDS, if only because the presence of v. 14 in LXX hardly favours such an
assumption. We rather prefer to think that MT Is. 9:14 preserves a pheno-
menon which is typologically akin to but antedates the scrolls, in spite of the
tantalizing מַרְדְּכַי. In other words, the phenomenon of exegetical identifi-
cation can be observed here in a state which precedes the JD Pesher at least
typologically and is akin, though different, to the ‘vision exegesis’ of Daniel.
Perhaps additional biblical verses may turn out to be of a similar character,
or a more exact identification can be suggested. One result seems certain: this
is the first instance where it can actually be shown that a Pesher-type exegesis
has, indeed, penetrated into a prophetic text. The importance of this observa-
tion for our understanding of the history of the transmission of the Bible
text may be far reaching.

24 The text of MT may already have been the basis for a further pesher; unfortunately
4Q 163 (DJD V, 1968, 18) is too fragmentary to derive any evidence from it.