

SUMMARY

LITERARY MODES AND METHODS IN THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE IN VIEW OF 2 SAMUEL 10-20 AND 1 KINGS 1-2*

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The use of the tools and categories that were developed in modern literary theory for the analysis of narrative literature in general, can be of great benefit also for a better and more profound understanding of the biblical narrative. With the help of these tools, aspects and phenomena can be discovered that have escaped attention up to now. Moreover, without the aid of the literary methods there is no possibility of penetrating into the innermost being of the biblical narrative. The main contribution of these methods lies, as can be expected, in clarifying issues of literary design and interpretation, but sometimes they also throw light upon philological and historical problems, such as those relating to text-criticism or literary-historical criticism.

Literary investigation of the biblical narrative has always been more or less of secondary importance in biblical scholarship. The main interest of biblical scholars has been directed more to genetical-historical questions than to purely literary ones. Even Gunkel's work has not brought about a major change in this trend. He himself has made important contributions to the literary understanding of the biblical narrative, but his followers occupied themselves almost exclusively with the history of forms, genres and traditions.

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To be sure, a certain amount of work has been done as regards literary phenomena and characteristics of the biblical narrative, but the subject is far from being exhausted. The employment of modern literary methods in particular has been very scanty.

In the present work the use of modern literary methods is demonstrated on the basis of a limited number of narratives, viz. 2 Sam. 10-20, 1 Kings 1-2. Mainly formal aspects of the narratives, techniques, modes of narration etc. are discussed but without ignoring their implications as to meaning and significance.

THE NARRATOR

The narrator is himself an integral part of the narrative, one of its structural constituents – even a most important one. His voice is heard continually, along with the voices of the acting characters, through his eyes we see and through his ears we hear whatever is happening in the narrative world. He also interprets for us the events of this world. The narrator can be grasped best by studying the point of view from which he observes the incidents and which expresses his attitude towards the facts narrated. The point of view, or rather the points of view, of the narrator determine to a large extent both the nature of the narrative and its effect on the reader.

The narrator's knowledge

Our narrator is without doubt omniscient. He knows everything and is present everywhere. Now he is with David in Jerusalem and the next moment he is with Joab besieging Rabbat-Ammon; now he is with Absalom in the royal palace and the next moment he is with David crossing the river Jordan. He enters into innermost chambers, he hears the intimate conversation between Amnon and Jonadab, he witnesses Amnon overpowering the resisting Tamar and he is aware that the old David did not “know” the fair Abishag. From time to time he informs the reader, by means of direct inside views, of the thoughts, feelings and intentions of the characters. In these cases he does not leave it to the reader to make deduction about the inner life of the characters from their actions and conversations; facts about the inner life are given the full weight of the narrator’s authority, instead of being mere supposition.

The most notable evidence of the narrator’s omniscience is to be found in what he tells us about God, His judgment (“But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord”), His feelings (“ . . . and the Lord loved him”) and His intentions (“For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom”) (2 Sam. 11:27; 12:24; 17:14).

Sometimes the narrator refrains from sharing his knowledge with the reader, one of the effects being the creation of suspense.

The narrator's manifestations

It is customary in literary theory to distinguish between editorial omniscience and neutral omniscience. In the first case, the omniscient narrator adds to the events of the story his explicit comments and explanations; he may even mention himself or address his reader. In the second case the narrator lets the story speak for itself. In the first case the narrator is, of course, much more manifest than in the second one.

In our narratives the narrator does not mention himself directly, but he does mention himself indirectly by referring to his own time: “. . . and it is called Absalom's memorial unto this day” (2 Sam. 18:18). This reference is to be understood as a device to substantiate the story rather than as evidence for its etiological character. Indirectly we become aware of the narrator by means of the expression “in those days” (2 Sam. 16:23), which refers to the time of the narrated events from the distant perspective of the narrator. This expression is part of a comment by the narrator concerning Ahithophel's great authority as a counsellor. This comment, together with the comment in 17:14, serves to bring into focus the unexpectedness and the improbability of Hushai's defeating Ahithophel's counsel, which cannot be explained save as a result of divine intervention. This divine intervention is not a matter of working miracles, nor does it manifest itself in ordinary human activity; in the case under discussion it consists of making the improbable come to pass.

Besides comments by the narrator we find explanations, which are introduced by the word “for” and which do not allude to the deeper significance of the events, but simply make clear some details mentioned in the course of the story. For instance: “And she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled” (2 Sam. 13:18). This explanation serves to underline the utter disgrace that Tamar is subject to by Amnon and his servant.

Comments and explanations involve creation of distance and lessening of emotional involvement on the part of the reader. In consequence the reader will be able to reflect on the significance of the events. But on the other hand comments and explanations are detrimental to the illusion of reality. They divert attention from the facts of the narrative to the narrator and the act of narration. However, in our narratives the narrator's intrusions are few and short, without distracting from the stories' vivid and dramatic character.

What is the practice of our narrator, when he is not commenting but simply narrating? How can his activity and attitude be detected in those parts of the narrative which ostensibly record only the factual events? The biblical narrator has often been praised for his objectivity. But one cannot say that he is wholly impartial. His attitude is revealed in characterizing expressions, such as “And there happened to be there *a worthless man*, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri” (2 Sam. 20:1), or in words having denunciatory connotations, like “. . . he *forced* her and lay with her” (2 Sam. 13:14).

As a rule the narrator stays more or less aloof from his history. A high degree of aloofness is conveyed by irony. However, the question is whether verbal irony is to be found in our narratives. This question cannot be answered with certainty. On the other hand, there is no doubt that our narratives contain many instances of dramatic irony. A few examples must suffice. It is, of course deeply ironical that David unwittingly pronounces judgment upon himself after hearing Nathan's parable of the poor man's ewe-lamb; that Absalom finds his death by means of his hair, of which he was so inordinately proud; that Uriah, simply because of his faithfulness to his principles and to his master, brings disaster upon himself; and especially, that Uriah, again unwittingly, is the carrier of his own death sentence. Often the irony serves to express criticism of the characters concerned in an implicit and indirect way.

Narrative Methods

Two main roads are open to the narrator wishing to convey to us the developments of the story. The one consists in reporting what has happened in a summary fashion, and from a distant (optic) point of view, so as to unfold a wide panorama. The other consists in showing in detail what is happening from close at hand, thus creating the illusion that we are watching the scene ourselves. Both ways have their merit and must be used alternately, but it appears that in our narratives the method of scenic presentation is preferred to that of summary survey (for instance, in the account of David's retreat from Jerusalem, which is made up of a series of close-up views). Summary survey, necessitating as it does a high degree of selection, abstraction and compression, produces a greater awareness of the narrator's activity than scenic presentation.

Sometimes the narrator's way of looking at the events matches that of one of the characters. In such cases the narrator's point of view coincides with that of the character, and he himself passes, as it were, out of sight. This is often the case when the word "behold" is used by the narrator. In the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11) we are made to meet and see the characters as David meets and sees them. Designations by the narrator of one of the characters often reflect the attitude of one of the other characters toward the designated one. Thus it appears that the narrator's use of the name "David" as opposed to the designation "the King," or "Jerusalem" versus "the city", is often related to the attitude of the character mentioned in the immediate context.

Direct speech of the characters, which is very frequent in our narratives, excludes the narrator's speech. Even so, he is not wholly absent from the narrative when the characters are talking, since it is he, as opposed to the dramatist, who introduces the characters, informs us who is talking to whom and sometimes also defines the nature of the talk ("he said", "he called", "he commanded", etc.). By means of repeating "he said", referring to the talk of one and the same character without anyone else's speech or any action interrupting, the narrator is able to indicate a pause in the speech of that character (cf., for example, 1 Kings 2:42-44, where the pause is intended to give the respondent the opportunity of replying to the speaker).

THE CHARACTERS

Not only do the characters of the narrative express the ideas and sentiments of the author in their conversation, but in their entire lives and fates they embody the conception of life contained in the narrative. Which of the characters' qualities are illuminated and which obscured, which details of their conversations, actions and life histories are communicated to the reader and which concealed — these facts disclose a great deal of the narratives' norms and values. The characters also attract the reader's interest — more than any other component of the narrative — and succeed as a rule in making him emotionally involved in their vicissitudes.

The direct way of shaping the characters

Instances of direct characterization by the narrator are not numerous. All of them are accompanied by indirect display of the same characteristics. Amnon's friends Jonadab, the woman from Tekoah and the woman from Abel Beth-Maachah, are all designated by the narrator as being wise or clever (2 Sam. 13:3; 14:2; 20:16); their wisdom or cleverness is fully borne out by their talk and it plays an important part in the development of the plot.

Direct characterization of one of the characters may be delegated by the author to one of the other characters. In this case, however, there are difficulties involved: firstly, we cannot know for certain whether or when the author agrees with the character's opinion; and secondly, it appears that more often than not characterization by one of the figures does not at all express his real opinion of his companion, but serves as a manipulative means of furthering his own interests. This is especially evident when the "characterization" takes the form of simile or metaphor, for instance when David is likened (four times) to an angel of God. The general purpose of this simile is only to flatter.

Not only direct statements about (more or less constant) traits, but also direct statements about (transient) mental states contribute to the shaping of the characters. But putting together several statements about mental states there emerges a picture of the character or at least of some significant aspects of the character, especially in those instances where mental states of the same kind recur more than once, as in the case of Amnon. Direct statements about mental states may be pronounced by the narrator, by other characters or by the character in question himself.

The indirect way of shaping the characters

Whereas the importance of the direct means lies in their quality (their being definite and unequivocal), the importance of the indirect means lies in their quantity. In fact, the burden of framing the characters falls first and foremost on indirect means, such as speeches and actions. A person's speech always provides us with information about the speaker and sometimes also about the respondent. There are no examples in our narratives of a style of speaking peculiar to just one of the characters, but

there is one (doubtful) instance of a singular form of speech which could be indicative of an exceptional state of mind (2 Sam. 18:29), and there are a number of cases where the form of speech reflects the occupation of the speaker or his rank and status in life (e.g. 2 Sam. 14).

Passing from form to content, we find examples of speech that serve to express the feelings of the speaker (2 Sam. 19:1 ff.) or to arouse certain feelings in the respondent (2 Sam. 16:16 ff.). But most of the speeches in our narratives aim at conveying to the respondent requests or commands. This kind of speech discloses not only the volitional aspect of the speaker's personality, but other features of his nature as well (2 Sam. 15:19 f., 25 f.). A great deal can be learned also from the (verbal) reactions of the persons to whom the requests or commands (or other kinds of speech) are directed (e.g. 2 Sam. 12:5, 12:13; 16:11; 19:39).

No less important than their words are the characters' acts. Man's nature reveals itself in his deeds; his inner qualities are realized in his outward behaviour. Therefore he can be characterized by presenting him in action, the only drawback being that the motives for his acts can be no more than surmised. Some of the steps taken by David, for instance, raise the very grave question of his real motives. Our narratives do not, as a rule, tell about the ordinary, everyday behaviour of the characters, but about their unusual and singular exploits. In short narratives such as those dealt with here, these must be as characteristic of their performers: Amnon is characterized by his rape of Tamar, that being the only thing which is told about him.

Not only man's doings, but also his abstaining from action bear witness to his personality traits. David's inaction and passivity in respect to his children may serve as an example: "And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" (1 Kings 1:6).

A combination of the two indirect means of shaping characters mentioned above — speech and action — may be found in the *judgment* of acts which are pronounced either by the acting character himself or by one of the other characters. Nathan the prophet denounces David's behaviour concerning Bathsheba and Uriah, and David himself confesses his guilt (2 Sam. 12). His confession demonstrates, for all his misdemeanour, his moral greatness.

Secondary characters figuring in the narratives sometimes accentuate, by contrast or by analogy, the qualities of the main characters. Thus we find that the sons of Zeruah are contrasted to David (2 Sam. 16:10; 19:23), and so is Uriah (2 Sam. 11).

We may say that the technique of shaping the characters prevalent in our narratives, that is, by indirect means, is close to reality. In real life, also, we come to know people through their way of talking and acting. This technique is dynamic, because the qualities of the characters are gradually built up from their appearance, utterances and performances. Each new appearance may bring about a change in our impression. Furthermore, the characters themselves, at least the main ones, are prone

to change. The figure of David is without doubt portrayed in three dimensions (round), both in the sense of developing and in the sense of being complex. The other characters display different degrees of roundness or flatness. Though individualized, they are also the bearers of universal human qualities.

TIME

Time is essential to the narrative in a double sense: it takes a certain amount of time for the narrative to be taken in by the reader (external time), and it is in time that all the events of the narrative happen and all the characters move and act (internal time). Narrative is similar to musical composition – and differs from painting and sculpture – insofar as both proceed in time, but contrary to musical composition, which is able to produce several melodic lines simultaneously, narrative is unsuited to the presentation of more than one event at a time. This drawback gives rise to technical difficulties, which must be overcome by the author.

Time within the narrative diverges from external (physical) time in being subjective, in expanding or contracting as the occasion requires, in not flowing continuously and evenly, in being reversible, and in not proceeding in straight line and in fixed order from the past through the present to the future.

The length of time

Examination of the (changing) relations between external and internal time—or as we shall say henceforward, between narration time and narrated time – has proved in literary research to be very fruitful for exploring the structure of the narrative, its culminating points and consequently its significance.

Narration time can be measured readily. But how is narrated time to be measured? Language provides us with a number of time-words, such as: day, year, morning, evening, now, yesterday, until. These time-words all occur in our narratives, sometimes even with specifying numerals, e.g. “after two full years”, “and was there three years” (2 Sam. 13:23, 38), and they are certainly useful for determining the time system of the narrative. Yet they do not set up a complete time-system and they do not create a sense of real, ever-present time.

In narrative a comprehensive time-scheme evolves from the narrated events themselves, which all take up a more or less defined stretch of time. Sometimes narrated time elapses more slowly than narration time, sometimes it elapses more quickly, and sometimes the two pass at about the same rate.

Narrated time stands still completely in two cases: when we find comments, explanations, etc.; and when we find descriptions. Comments and explanations have been dealt with in the chapter on the narrator. When descriptions occur in our narratives they refer mainly to the appearance of the characters, which is mentioned

only if it plays a role in the initiation or development of the plot (e.g. 2 Sam. 11:2; 13:1). Comments, explanations and descriptions being few and short, stoppages of time in our narratives are also few and short, so that their dynamic character is not materially affected.

Conversations, on the other hand, take up a large part of the narratives. Here narration time and narrated time are almost congruent, but not quite, because of the fact that the biblical conversations are always condensed, as can be seen, for instance, from the conversation between Absalom and the man coming to the king for judgment (2 Sam. 15:2 f.), and from expressions such as: “*Thus and thus* did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and *thus and thus* have I counselled” (2 Sam. 17:15). Conversation is the main component of scene. In scenic presentation narrated time runs much more slowly (rather near to the velocity of narration time) than in summary. So degrees of density in narrative texture can be detected. Examination of the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11) reveals that the author lingers on the passages concerning Uriah, whereas the passages on Bathsheba are hurried over quickly in summary. This may be taken as hinting that David’s sins against Uriah are of greater weight than those against Bathsheba.

The highest degree of velocity is found in the “empty” stretches of time, when nothing happens. These are sometimes indicated explicitly, e.g. “And it came to pass after two full years” (2 Sam. 13:23), suggesting that after all something did happen in them. All the different time-values mentioned above may occur “on the second floor” within the speech of one of the characters (cf. 2 Sam. 14:5-7). The technique of *retardation* enables the author to slow down the tempo of time as grasped by the readers. By means of this technique suspense may be heightened.

The sequence of time

No author is obliged to narrate the events of his story in the same order as they occurred. Yet the biblical author as a rule organizes the facts of his plot in such a manner that the order of narrated time does not diverge from the order of narration time. The *vav consecutivum* enables him to join the items of the plot like beads on a chain, one after the other, creating a strong feeling of continuity.

But the question arises how the biblical author solves the problem of the plot with two parallel, simultaneous lines of action. Does he follow up first one line and then shift time back in order to trace in its turn the second line? It appears that our narrator in dealing with synchronous lines of action does not make time revert; he first pursues a section of the first line, then delineates a section of the second line *from the point of time where he left the first line*, then returns to the first line and continues it *again from the point of time where he left the second one* and so on. The feeling of simultaneousness is achieved not by the manipulation of time, but by means of the technique of *reflection*. While being occupied with one line of action, images from the other line continually present themselves to us, because characters of the one line think and talk of the characters of the other line constantly. More-

over, the happenings of one line are instigated and promoted by the happenings of the other one, messengers carrying information to and fro.

Nevertheless, some cases of time-shifts are to be found in our narratives and these have expressive value. Cf. 2 Sam. 17:25; 18:18; 1 Kings 1:6, where retrospections by the narrator involve turning the clock back. Retrospections or anticipations by the characters cannot be regarded as true shifts of time, since they are mental phenomena only; but they are of considerable importance, either for determining the significance of the events (e.g. 2 Sam. 12:10 f., 14) or for the portrayal of the characters (e.g. 2 Sam. 14:32; 15:8; 1 Kings 2:5 ff.). As a matter of fact, all reports delivered by messengers constitute some sort of retrospection, referring as they do to past events. Of particular interest are those cases where the same facts are told three or four times by the narrator and by some of the characters (e.g. 1 Kings 1:9 f.; 11:5; 18f.; 24 ff.).

The action of time

Time in literature is not merely a formal-quantitative category. It has its qualitative aspects as well. It often influences the course of events and it constitutes a potent factor in the lives of the characters. In the story of Absalom's rebellion, for instance, it is time which determines the outcome of the contest between father and son, as is clearly realized by David, who makes great haste to get away from Absalom; by Ahithophel, who advises pursuing the fleeing king without delay, and by Hushai, who makes every effort to gain as much time for David as possible. Time also plays a part in the story of David and Bathsheba, as is clearly borne out by the many time-indications occurring in this story. Time-indications found in 2 Sam. 13:38 and in 14:28 allude to the effect of time on David and on Absalom. Absalom's attitude towards time emerges clearly from 2 Sam. 13:23 and 16:7. It is not unlikely that his tendency to bide his time, in addition to Hushai's brilliant rhetoric and psychological insight, caused him to adopt the latter's plan (2 Sam. 17:7 ff.).

SPACE

Each incident in the story is defined and accorded uniqueness by being placed on the coordinates of space and time. There is no relationship concerning space corresponding to the relationship between narrated time and narration time, narrated space being realized not in narration space, but in narration time.

The shaping of space

Space is created in our narratives by two means, usually acting together: movement of people and mentioning of place-names. Place-names are mentioned for expressive purposes: they hint at meanings not explicitly stated, as is illustrated by the stations David went through on his way from Jerusalem to Mahanaim and back again. Places sometimes fulfill a purely literary task by functioning as the main ingredient in styl-

istic phenomena such as key-word (2 Sam. 11:2; 16:22) or metaphor (2 Sam. 18:8). Both the story of Absalom's rebellion and the story of Sheba's rebellion can be understood entirely in terms of movement, that is of passing through space.

A distinction should be made between mentioning places and describing them. In our narratives places are mentioned only and not pictured vividly and concretely. Space exists as a background, but we are not shown its forms and its scenery. Contrary to time, which is wholly abstract, the elements of space in reality are perceived by the senses, and therefore in literature they have to be depicted distinctly in order to become tangible.

The fact that space, as opposed to time, remains vague and amorphous cannot be explained as the result of literature being a time-art (whereas painting and sculpture are space-arts). Rather is it to be seen as fitting in with the dynamic and dramatic character of the biblical narratives. Descriptions of places necessarily introduce a static element into the narrative, because, as we have seen, narrated time is brought to a stop while narration time continues. In the dramatic narrative "Space is more or less given, and the action is built up in Time" (E. Muir).

STYLE

For the stylistic analysis of the semantic definition of style is adopted, according to which style is not to be regarded as something apart from content or meaning, but as expressing secondary or peripheral or connotative meaning. As for the controversy about the question, whether style consists in choice (from the linguistic alternatives) or in deviation (from the linguistic norm), it is contended here that no linguistic utterance is devoid of style (which implies the conception of choice), but that the stylistic devices (which constitute deviations from the norm) are of special importance, because of their power of emphasis. Consequently, in stylistic analysis attention is to be paid to every word and to every linguistic construction, but particularly so to the exceptional ones. One has, however, to make the reservation that when dealing with biblical language one can, of course, never hope to obtain a complete knowledge of the precise shades of meaning or of the full range of the language, which serves as norm. In these respects, therefore, we must limit ourselves less to whatever can be learned from the Bible itself.

Phonological aspects can be included in the investigation of biblical narrative style to a limited extent only; rhythm cannot be considered at all, apart from the rhythm based on the length of sentences and their dynamics.

Analysis of a narrative unit

Two narrative units, namely Hushai's speech (2 Sam. 17:7-13) and the story of Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-22) are subjected to a close examination of their stylistic features. By way of illustration of this section there follows the beginning of the analysis of Hushai's speech.

The structure of the speech shows a distinct division in two parts. The first part (8-10) is devoted to revealing the weak points in Ahithophel's advice (which are in fact the strong ones, but Hushai is interested in presenting them as the weak points). The second part (11-13), opening with the words "Therefore, I counsel," presents an alternative plan, which is supposedly better.

The first part is divided again into two sections. At first, Hushai shows why Ahithophel's plan has no chance of succeeding. Afterwards, he explains that not only will this plan fail in achieving the desired aim, but it will furthermore harm Absalom and bring about his destruction.

"For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, that they be chafed in their minds as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field; and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with people."

In the beginning of Hushai's speech, the stress on the pronoun "Thou" in the Hebrew text is prominent: "*Thou* knowest." Previously, this pronoun was stressed by Absalom when he said to Hushai: "Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? If not; speak *thou*." The last two words used by Absalom convey in Hebrew a blunt and impolite command, and portray him as desiring to act as the person in authority, who gives orders to his subjects. Along with this, these words express Absalom's wish that Hushai be the one to give his opinion, he and no one else, since Hushai, as David's friend, knows the king and his habits well. To this Hushai replies, by means of stressing the word "thou," that there is no need to depend on him, Hushai, for Absalom himself also knows David well. In other words, what Hushai is about to say is well known to Absalom, because naturally, a son is acquainted with his father's qualities. This is hinted also in the recurring use of the designation "thy father" – twice in this verse, and once again in the tenth verse.

When Ahithophel delivered his counsel to Absalom he didn't use the designation "thy father," but used once the name "David" (1), another time the designation "the king" (2), and again the periphrasis "the man who thou seekest" (3). This means that Ahithophel did not take special care to phrase his words so that they would suit the listener's point of view, while Hushai, with his highly developed psychological sensitivity, purposely uses the designation "thy father", in order to make his words fit Absalom's point of view. Furthermore, had Hushai used the first name "David", he could have reminded the listener of the great closeness between Hushai and David, a fact that Hushai wants to be disregarded and forgotten. The use of the expression "the king" could have aroused the suspicion that Hushai is still loyal to David.

Ahithophel called David's followers "the people that are with him" (2), while Hushai refers to them as "his men." By using these words he hints first, that those who followed David are not merely "people" (a crowd), but that they are "men"

(persons), and secondly, that they are with him not by coincidence, but are “his men,” that is, they are close and loyal to him. The implication is that they will fight for him with all their might, and furthermore, that it will not be so easy to bring them to Absalom’s side as Ahithophel suggested: “And I will bring back all the people unto thee” (3).

Hushai mentions the characteristics of David and his men in a subordinate clause, while David and his men themselves appear as the direct object: “thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds.” He could have constructed the sentence in this manner: thou knowest that thy father and his men be mighty men and that they be chafed in their minds. Both these syntactical constructions occur in the Bible, for instance: “And God saw the light that it was good” (Genesis 1:4), or “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Genesis 6:5).

The syntactical construction of the first type hints that the subject conceives of the object (sees it, knows it) as a whole, and through this comprehensive understanding he grasps its essence and characteristic qualities. On the other hand, the second type of syntactical construction hints that the subject conceives of one quality from among all the qualities of the object, most probably, that quality which is important to him at the particular moment. This means that in the first case the mentioned quality would be the most central and essential one of the object, while in the second case it would be the quality to which the subject, for reasons of his own, pays special attention to.

Thus, for example, the verse “That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair” (Genesis 6:2), as opposed to the verse “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food” (Genesis 3:6) – the first verse suggests that the sons of God saw the daughters of men and conceived their essential characteristic, while the second verse suggests that the woman noticed one quality from among the many qualities of the tree. (As the verse continues, she notices two more qualities: “and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.”) The first syntactical construction serves in the Bible for different purposes. Here it is used by Hushai as a means of persuasion. The persuasive power of this construction is based on an unexpressed assumption, just like a rhetorical question. In the case of a rhetorical question the unexpressed assumption is that there is only one possible answer to the question, an answer which is undoubtedly true and well known to all. In the case of the syntactical construction under discussion, the assumption is that knowing the object necessarily entails understanding that the mentioned quality expresses the essence of the object. That is to say, the implication of Hushai’s words is that since Absalom knows his father and his men, he also knows that they are mighty men and chafed in their minds, and that these are not just some of their qualities, but their most characteristic and essential ones.

The pronoun “they” is repeated twice by Hushai in this verse. This repetition does not stress the pronoun itself, but the adjectives “mighty” and “chafed in their

minds”. The first pronoun “they” is redundant, but it is used in order to separate the two characteristics, and as a result, each one receives weight and importance of its own. If Hushai had said “that they be mighty men and chafed in their minds,” each characteristic would not have stood out separately and distinctly, as it does now.

This does not mean, however, that there is no connection between the two characteristics, or that they do not act together. On the contrary, what makes David and his men such dangerous enemies is the fact that they are not only mighty men, and not only chafed in their minds, but that they are both mighty men and chafed in their minds at the same time. Each one of these characteristics is highly dangerous, and the combination of the two is apt to be fatal.

Special stress on these characteristics is achieved by the use of the simile “as a bear of her whelps in the field.” This simile pictures the mentioned characteristics so vividly and impressively, that it leaves listeners fainthearted and frightened. The word “bear” in the simile illustrates and accentuates mainly the characteristic “mighty,” and the words “robbed of its whelps” strengthen “chafed in their minds.”

Hushai thus stressed the characteristics of David and his men in different ways. His aim is to counteract the basic assumption on which Ahithophel’s plan was founded. Ahithophel had based his plan on David’s condition – his being “weary and weak handed” (2). Owing to this condition, Ahithophel thought he could make him afraid, and all the people that were with David would flee, and he would smite the king only (*ibid.*). Hushai is not able to refute this basic assumption of Ahithophel’s, since it is highly probable (Compare 16:14: “And the king and all the people that were with him, came *weary* and refreshed themselves there”). Therefore, against the argument concerning David’s *condition*, Hushai brings up the argument concerning David’s *character*, since a man’s behaviour is determined by his character no less than by his condition.