

## **אשר and -ש in the Book of Ecclesiastes**

American Oriental Series Essays 14

by W. Randall Garr

In this work, W. Randall Garr provides an exhaustive discussion of *ʾašer* and *-š* in the book of Ecclesiastes. Unlike earlier studies, he argues that the alternation between *ʾašer* and *-š* reflects semantic and pragmatic factors in each of the three clause types in which these relativizers appear: relative clauses, complement clauses, and adverbial clauses. In relative clauses, each represents a different relativization strategy. *ʾAšer* is the stronger nominalizer, aligning with definite, topical, and referential heads; its dependent clause is the more complex and carries a heavier informational load. *-š* is the weaker nominalizer, aligning with indefinite, generic, and nonreferential heads; its dependent clause is simpler and shorter, with only secondary discourse importance and nil-to-low informational content. In complement clauses, *ʾašer* and *-š* serve different functions: *ʾašer* signals an assertive factive clause whose content is presupposed, true, and real, while *-š* favors evaluation, personal, and idiosyncratic content, and no new information. In adverbial clauses, *ʾašer* marks foregrounded, important, assertive, and topical information; its dependent clause tends to be in the foreground, whereas *-š* gravitates to backgrounded, nonassertive, and peripheral information; only *-š* marks true adverbial clauses.

The distribution of *ʾašer* and *-š* in the book of Ecclesiastes is therefore linguistically and exegetically meaningful. The work closes with comparisons to three other texts—Judges 5, Song of Songs, and Jonah—that also show this alternation between relativizers.

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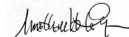
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