An Unrecognized Prophetic Ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza

Moise Isaac
University of California, Los Angeles

The uncertainty concerning the genre of the Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon 1 is problematized through the lens of linguistic anthropology. Although a denotative approach to the linguistic forms in this Hebrew ostracon is well attested, less attention has been paid to the indexical meaning of specific stylistic features and their semiotic register implications. Several linguistic-ideological concepts are drawn upon to examine how the act of inscription and specialized linguistic forms align the discursive genre of the ostracon with prophecy. I seek to determine what salient discourse forms in the ostracon index the employment of habitual utterance styles of prophecy that construct context, genre, and social identity.

Among the finds excavated from the fortress of Ḥorvat ʿUza between 1982 and 1988 was a fragment of a burnished bowl with a painted inscription. This ostracon was located in the eastern chamber of the city gate of the eastern Negev fortress, and found in Stratum IV, dating it to the second half of the seventh century BCE. On it were written thirteen lines in a script exhibiting the penmanship of a very skilled writer of epigraphic Hebrew (fig. 1). Portions of the inscription are either illegible or effaced, and although scholars have been publishing analyses of the ostracon since the early 1990s (e.g., Beit-Arieh 1993: 55–65; Cross 1993: 64–65),[1] so far there has been no consensus on its genre.

The ostracon, registered in 2007 as Ḥorvat ʿUza inscription 1 [henceforth HU-1], is generally understood to be a literary composition (Beit-Arieh 2007: 122–27; Cross 2000: 112; Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 521, 526). However, there is no agreement on the nature of its content, purpose, or genre. It has been suggested that the ostracon was part of a literary legal document (Beit-Arieh 2007: 127), a wisdom poem (Lemaire 1995: 221–22; Davies 2005: 137–38; Sasson 2005; Na'aman 2013: 231), a divorce case (Davies 2005: 138), and an incantation (Albertz 2008: 107 n. 29). In addition, some scholars have analyzed particular portions of the inscription as a prophecy (Cross 2000: 111–13; Davies 2002: 277–78; 2005: 158; Becking 2010: 39).[2] In this paper, I use the science of linguistic anthropology to bring new

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1. The first analysis of the ostracon was published by Itzhaq Beit-Arieh (1993). This analysis included suggested reconstructions, a commentary, a drawing by A. Yardeni based on infrared illumination, and an appendix with alternative readings by F. M. Cross.

2. However, these theories seem to have been proposed in passing, and are presented without either in-depth analysis or supporting argumentation. So far, the most comprehensive attempts to determine the genre of HU-1 have concluded that the ostracon is a sapiential text (Sasson 2005; Crowell 2008; Na'aman 2013). Unfortunately, the wisdom composition hypothesis has its limitations (Becking 2010). Cross (2000: 113) was the first scholar to point

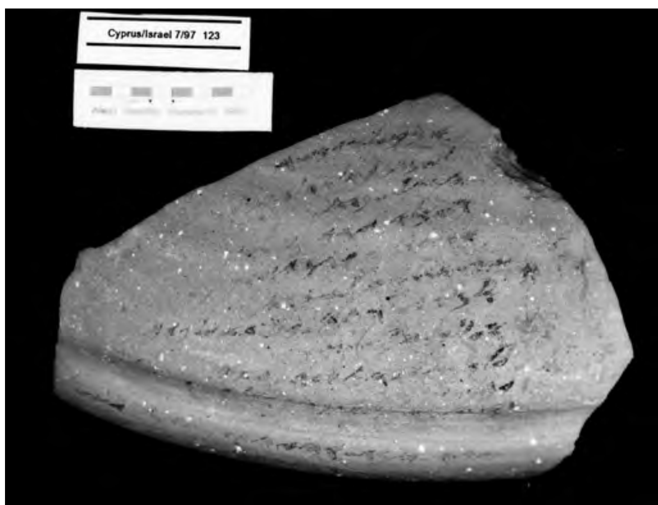

Fig. 1. Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon. Photograph courtesy of West Semitic Research and Israel Antiquities Authority

insights to the genre and register of the ostracon, and to give it the thorough and contextualized analysis that it deserves. My analysis will show that HU-1 is, in fact, a prophetic oracle.

The theories and methods of linguistic anthropology allow us to better describe the linguistic meaning of the ostracon's text, the social meaning of its discourse forms, and the relationship of these linguistic forms to the semiotics of register and identity. Previous studies of HU-1 have examined the denotative value of its words and expressions, that is, the literal, dictionary-type definitions. However, this approach has real limitations; in particular, it does not allow for the ways that language is a social practice. The tools of linguistic anthropology take into account both denotative meaning and social meaning, which help us understand the semiotic register of HU-1's linguistic forms and the ideologies that they reference. This semiotic analysis, when combined with a close philological analysis, brings us to the definitive generic classification of a prophetic oracle.

A LINGUISTIC-ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ANCIENT HEBREW TEXT-ARTIFACTS

I will begin with a brief description of linguistic anthropology and the fresh perspective it can bring to the analysis of ancient texts. Linguistic anthropology is a scientific method that argues that language is quintessentially semiotic, that is, it indexes or points to something "other" than itself (Peirce 1955: 102–3).[3] Due to this indexicality, language is therefore linked to social structure and culture. In the words of Edward Sapir, "language is a guide to social reality" (1949: 68). Language points to the political and ideological beliefs, norms,

out that this ostracon "is reminiscent of prophetic discourse." To the best of my knowledge, other scholars have merely echoed his sentiment. But until now, no one has devoted a definitive study to this topic.

3. Linguistic anthropology builds on the notion of signs as communicating between an object (such as the written word) and an interpretant. The theory of indexicality, one of the most important keys to an anthropological approach to language, has its origins in the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce's (1955) semiotic theories of the difference between three types of signs as markers of meaning: symbol, icon, and index. Indexicality refers to the ongoing relationship between language, cultural context, and social meaning (Hanks 1999; Silverstein 2003).

assumptions, values, and structures of society, whether or not its speakers are aware of it. In other words, a microanalysis of language at a particular moment can be linked to macro-social meaning, including political and cultural ideologies (Duranti 1997; Ahearn 2012; Enfield, Kockelman, and Sidnell 2014).

Words do not have inherent meaning, nor do they do anything in and of themselves. Words are instruments of communication whose meaning is socially motivated and constructed, and not autonomous. Members of a speech community are socialized into using language according to societal structures and institutional centers of power (Silverstein 2004). This means that some vernacular features achieve greater social salience over time; for example, the choice to use honorifics (such as the use of *usted* versus *tu* in Spanish) communicates social meaning far more than any kind of referential or denotational meaning.

There is a long tradition of theories in linguistic anthropology that try to account for the pragmatic salience of various linguistic forms and the relationship between linguistic structure and linguistic ideology (Silverstein 1979; Errington 1988; Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998; Kroskrity 2000; Woolard 2008).[4] Pragmatic salience refers to the level of social awareness and ideological activity—ranging from practical to discursive knowledge—associated with particular linguistic features or variants that are important to a specific sociocultural group.[5]

Hence, in order to truly analyze language, it is necessary to know more than just grammar; one also needs to know how language is being used, how it is encoding social meaning. It is important to understand language use in its social context, the high level of pragmatic salience associated with a particular variable, the interaction of language with identity formation, and its relation to language ideologies. In other words, the object of analysis is what people do with words, which words are saliently featured, what the words mean, how the words are used, what people are doing when they speak those words, and what the words say about the speakers' identity.

Linguistic anthropology also provides a framework by which the linguistic features of HU-1 can be analyzed in terms of its context, the markers of a speaker's/writer's identity, and semiotic registers. A semiotic register is an inventory of features (such as stereotypic verbal cues, a special vocabulary, and stylistic devices) that are utilized in different social circumstances and occasions, and that project social positional identities (Agha 2007: 80, 168).[6]

4. Michael Silverstein defines linguistic ideology as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein 1979: 193). A related definition, proffered by Judith Irvine, is "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (Irvine 1989: 255). Both definitions highlight the fact that language awareness and rationalizations are informed by both cultural values and politics.

5. In his work on Indonesian speech levels, Errington developed the concept of pragmatic salience to refer to speakers' "awareness of the social significance of different leveled linguistic alternates" (1988: 294–95). That is to say, certain classes of morphemes and lexemes—because of their continued salience—become more noticed, manipulated, and therefore more important in mediating social relations. Errington's concept has general implications for sociolinguistic and linguistic-anthropological methodology. For instance, Kiesling's (2004: 282, 294–95) analysis of the salience of the American English term *dude* provides a thorough consideration of its multiple levels of indexicality—as an exclamation, mitigator of conflict, marker of affiliation, and a stance of cool solidarity—that are often connected to masculinity and male speakers.

6. Semiotic registers refer to the socio-historical processes of production and reproduction of a distinct form of speech that comes to be socially acknowledged "as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users" (Agha 2007: 55). Moreover, semiotic registers are a repertoire of discourse that function within a cultural paradigm of "rules of use" that is endowed by an institutional center of power. For this reason, style points to social categories and creates what Agha (2007: 67) calls a speech chain, and in this ostracon there are specialized forms

The study of semiotic registers evaluates the manner by which the continuing use and recycling of these styles in appropriate contexts become codified, distributed, naturalized, and materialized, take on special meaning, and become ideologically linked with situations, places, and people. Ultimately, HU-1 is a text-artifact that must be contextualized by noting which coeval practices are available for interpretation (Silverstein 2006), as well as what these practices reveal about the very nature of an inscription in a particular genre. This linguistic-anthropological approach is a means to understanding the kind of social context projected by the inscription, as well as the ways that its linguistic features function as an arrow pointing to the genre of the text and identity of the speaker/writer.

Select portions of the Hebrew Bible and inscriptions, as cultural documents from the Late Iron Age II period, provide more details regarding what audience members needed to know in order to detect and understand the performances and discourses found in the communities of ancient Israel and Judah. The Hebrew Bible is an invaluable tool for a cultural analysis of communication because it provides a window into understanding "who communicates in which ways to whom and on what occasions" (Silverstein 1997: 129) in the Judean speech community.

Admittedly, comparing discourses in Iron Age II inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible is not without its challenges. First, discourse salience (or linguistic forms that members recognize and employ in mediating social relations) in text-artifacts from ancient times is difficult to define, and the outcome is both enigmatic and more or less impossible to predict. It can also be challenging to understand why some variants come to be ignored, avoided, or absent, and others featured, marked, or privileged. Second, there are numerous problems involved with relying on data from the Hebrew Bible: There are a limited number of inscriptional sources to compare with the Hebrew Bible; the texts cover a vast time period; and there is no scholarly consensus on dating various texts in the Hebrew Bible (Schniedewind 2004; Carr 2011).

Additionally, many discourse forms, genres, and registers underwent a series of transformations, revalorizations, and losses of meaning over time, sometimes during periods about which we know little. Nevertheless, because inscriptional languages reflect the cultural present (that is, they point back to a pre-seventh-century BCE period, not forward to the Hellenistic period), linguistic forms shared by select biblical writers and inscriptions reflect a reciprocal cultural milieu of the late Iron Age II period. It is important to use all information available in the reconstruction of the "total linguistic fact" of cultural discourses (Silverstein 1985: 220).

Discursive forms in the Ḥorvat ʿUza inscription that are similar to those in the Hebrew Bible provide only a small window into the linguistic *habitus*[7] of forms accessible in ancient Judah; that is, parts of the Bible date to the same time and place, so they can be used to give insights into these inscriptions, and inscriptions can help give insights into biblical texts.

In the remainder of this article, I use the tools and theories of linguistic anthropology to uncover which institutional centers of authority gave license to the literary style of the ostracon; in other words, what institutions established the writer's orientation to a certain identity-relevant category such as prophecy? I will explore the ideological relationships between indexical and recycled discourse forms in this ostracon and in the Hebrew Bible,

that can be understood as distinguishing features that allow us to understand its context, genre, register, and the speaker's identity.

7. Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* refers to a set of dispositions to act in certain ways in social contexts. Linguistic *habitus* theory moves beyond grammar and style to the social conditions of language production, circulation, and "the markets" in which languages offer their linguistic products (Bourdieu 1991: 28).

and examine the ways that these discourse styles include pragmatically salient features that index register, genre, social identity, and power.

Correlating the forms in this ostracon with those in the Hebrew Bible allows us to understand how they became fixed with social meaning and ideologically associated with certain properties. These properties, I contend, align the literary ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza with the genre of prophecy (Cross 2000: 111; Davies 2005: 158; Becking 2010: 39).[8] Of course, there will be some who hold a strongly different view from my reading, interpretation, and method in this study. Nevertheless, whatever misgivings some may have about the approach, my hope is that they will still find my analysis of the text useful along with their own desired reconstructions.

TRANSCRIPTION

My transcription is based upon my direct inspection of the ostracon, several photographs, and Yardeni's hand-copied drawing of the ostracon from infra-red illumination.[9]

1. *ʾm bšl*[*m*] *bmšr*
2. *lšntkh ʾl gdly*[…]
3. *hnh lšn hg*[?]
4. *wʾm lʾ yrʾ mšlm*
5. […]*r dk yšqlk*[…]
6. *kṣr mn*[?]*ʾ ly*[? …]
7. *ʾl mlz*[…] *wysʿ bkyt šbtk*[*h*]

8. To be sure, text-artifacts of prophetic literary activity and identity in ancient Israel and Judah during the Iron Age II period are lacking, and the compatibility of reconstructing prophetic identity from biblical prophetic books at this temporal remove is a point of contention among scholars (Sharp 2016). The prophetic discourses in the Hebrew Bible are not co-present interaction but utterances documented in text-artifacts over several centuries. The production of these bureaucratic documents likely involved the typical institutional supporters such as witnesses, royal officials, and scribes.

Nevertheless, the presence of prophets in official circles (*hnbʾ* Lachish 16:5) and certain correlations between biblical and inscriptional representations of prophetic identity are evident. For instance, messages from court prophets to officials during wartime are evident from the Hebrew Bible and inscriptions (Jer. 29:1–21; 2 Chr. 21:12–15; Lachish 3:19–20). Prophetic discourses were sent and circulated with officials from the royal establishment (Barstad 1993; Parker 1994: 72). Lachish letter 3 mentions a prophet's oracle sent with Tobiah's letter and is summarized by the salient utterance "beware." The word "beware" *hiššāmer* (Niphal imperative) is a form of discourse that indexes a prophet's message and identity during times of a military crisis (2 Kings 6:9; Isa. 7:4).

Moreover, the stylistic feature: message + verb (*bʾw*/*hyh*) + *ʾl* + Name + *mʾt* + Name + *lʾmr* ("message that came to X from Y, saying …"), in Lachish 3:20–21 and the book of Jeremiah (7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 30:1; 34:1) is a stereotypical discourse style situated with cultural meaning in a social register (Barstad 1993). It was associated with the habitual practices of those who engaged in prophetic revelation and it was used to construct their message and identity.

Clearly, the discursive practices in the Lachish ostracon and the Hebrew Bible acquired pragmatic salience in the royal courts of ancient Israel and Judah and served as a tool for indexing communication from a prophet. It is evident, therefore, that a limited number of salient discourse features emerged and developed into semiotic markers of linguistic prophecy in the Hebrew Bible and in inscriptions during the late Iron Age II period.

Needless to say, the discovery of a prophetic Judean inscription at a military fortress at Ḥorvat Uza is not surprising given the relationship between prophecy and warfare. Perhaps this literary ostracon was an oracle that was to accompany another missive. This may help to explain why the opening of the ostracon is vague without any clear addressee.

9. The photographs are West Semitic Research nos. os_tau_hu1343-1_ow_p (fig. 1) and os_tau_hu1343-1_rw_p (fig. 2). When I examined the shard in the summer of 2014 it was badly faded in certain areas. Under these circumstances, consulting Beit-Arieh and Zuckerman's photographs taken closer to the time of its initial discovery was of great help.

8. *wʿllk ysʿ* […]
9. *ʿl pn[kh* …] *whtʿrʿrth* […]
10. *bdnt*
11. *ymḥṣ zrʿtykh* […]*bplṣ* […]
12. *ʾḥr ymt whyh qb*[*r*]*kh* [*b*]*ṣ*[*r*]
13. *wqbrkh ḥrb*

TRANSLATION

1. If by peace, by uprightness
2. your utterances are (agreeable) to the Great Ones[?]
3. Behold, the utterance[?]
4. And if not, then be afraid of retribution
5. […] crushed, he will weigh you […]
6. as an adversary […?]
7. toward perversity […] he will remove the mourning of your residence
8. and he will remove your child […]
9. before y[ou?] and you will be destitute […]
10. by judgments(?)
11. he will smash your arms […] in horror […]
12. after days. And your tom[b] will be in a roc[k]
13. but your tomb (will be) ruined

NOTES ON THE TEXT

Line 1: The HU-1 ostracon begins with the expression *ʾm* + *b*, but scholars have yet to arrive at a consensus of the reading of the word that follows (Davies 2004: 37.006–7). The word has been read as *šl*<*y*> or *šl*<*w*>, and has been variously translated (Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 522; Sasson 2005: 603; Beit-Arieh 2007: 124; Aḥituv 2008: 174; Becking 2010: 31). If one adopts the reading *šly,* then the following observations can be made. The nominal form *šly* appears once in the Hebrew Bible and is commonly translated "quietly" or "privately" (2 Sam. 3:27; Aḥituv 2008: 174).[10] A more convincing possibility is to render the final letter as a *mem*, with the reading *bšl*[*m*] (Lemaire 1995: 221). The faint vestige of the head of the *mem* is visible, but the vertical shaft has faded away.[11] The final word in l. 1 is *mšr* "level ground, plane," a singular abstract noun with the metaphorical meaning "rectitude, justice" (*HALOT* 2: 578); it is asyndetically related to *šlm*.

10. Many scholars base their interpretation of *šly* in the ostracon on the *hapax legomenon* in 2 Sam. 3:27 (Beit-Arieh 1993: 58; Sasson 2005: 603; Becking 2010: 31). Meir Malul (2003) proposed that the phrase *ldbr bšly* in 2 Sam. 3:27 is a technical expression denoting "to talk peace" in the sense of "to negotiate and seal a peace treaty" and is equivalent to the expression *ldbr šlm*, which means "to negotiate a peace agreement." It is tempting to connect Malul's proposal that *bšly* is a term for a peace treaty to the reading *bšl*[*y*] in this ostracon, but one must exercise caution in extrapolating to primary lexical status one word from one context to another and allow it to give the interpretation of the ostracon without further examples in the Hebrew Bible. To that end, importing any meaning from 2 Sam. 3:27 to this ostracon is tenuous at best and remains unresolved given the sources. I am indebted to Dennis Pardee for bringing this issue to my attention.

11. For similar exemplars of the *mem* written with the word *šlm*, see Arad 16:2; Arad 18: obv. 3, 8; Arad 21: 4; Lachish 9: obv. 2. A similar-shaped *mem* is attested with another word in Arad 88:2.

Line 2: Opinions vary considerably on the reading of the opening of this line.[12] The debate centers on the identification of the fourth and fifth letters, which I have identified as a *taw* and *kap* (the extension of the *taw* and a down stroke of a *kap* appear on the photo and in Yardeni's transcription). I follow Lemaire (1995: 22) in interpreting the nominal form *lšn* "tongue" as a metonym for "utterance, speech" (see Na'aman 2013: 226). The nominal plural (fem. ending *-t*) has the long form of the second person singular ending *-kh*.[13]

The last part of l. 2 is plausibly *ʾl gdly*.[14] The adjective *gdl* could be read as a singular *gdl y*[ ] "Great One of Y[…]" or plural *gdly*[*m*] "Great Ones" (Lemaire 1995: 222; Na'aman 2013: 226). In the Hebrew Bible, this adjective has a level of salience associated with divine titles (Deut. 10:17; Jer. 32:18; Psa. 95:3), and kings, high officials, and the upper class (2 Sam. 7:9 [oracle]; Is. 36:4; Ezek. 21:19; Jer. 5:5; cf. *mlk gdl* in *Nim.* 1:3 [Aḥituv 2008: 329]). Hence, it is likely that the addressee was to engage in dialog with an important third party: king, tribal leader, official, or noble.

Line 3: The particle *hnh* calls attention to a word or statement (Waltke and O'Connor 1990: 300; cf. Arad 21:3; 24:18; 40:9; Lachish 6:5). The particle *hnh* also points to a proposition in the discourse and its ability to act upon and transform the social relations of the parties involved.[15] After the word *lšn* "the utterance," the next letters are indecipherable.[16]

Line 4: The first few legible words of this line appear to be *wʾm lʾ yrʾ* (Lemaire 1995: 222; Cross 2000: 111; Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 524).[17] The identity of the final word is debatable. Several suggestions have been made (Davies 2005: 157; Sasson 2005: 604; Beit-Arieh 2007: 125; Aḥituv 2008: 176; Becking 2010: 33), but in my estimation Lemaire's (1995: 222) reading of *mšlm* "retribution" is preferable. In both the photograph and in Yardeni's drawing, the three head strokes and curved line of the *mem* are discernible, as well as the

12. Several scholars have proposed alternative readings for the opening of l. 2. Beit-Arieh (1993: 59) reads *lšnnh* "jeer" from the root *šnn* "to sharpen (tongue)." Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005: 522–23) propose the word *lšntkh* "to change you." Davies (2005: 157) reads *lšntnh* and derives the word from the Piel form of *lšn* "to slander, revile." Sasson (2005: 603) proposes the reading *lšnth* "to live to an old age" from *yšn* "to grow old." Aḥituv (2008: 175–76) reads *lšntnh* from the verb *šny* "to count, to repeat" with an otiose /n/. Na'aman (2013: 226) suggests the opening consists of two words: *lšn tnh* "an utterance he recounted" with the Piel form of the verb *tnh*.

13. The origin and usage of the long and short vowel of the second person pronominal and verbal suffix endings (pronominal suffix *-k* [āk] vs. *-kh* [kāh]; verbal suffix *-t* [āt] vs. *-th* [tāh]) in Hebrew inscriptions are still debated. For more details, see Gogel (1998: 81–88, 155–56) and Cross (2000: 112).

14. A few other suggestions on translating the last part of this line include "to magnify" (Cross 1993: 64) and "to become great" (Becking 2010: 31). Another proposition is to interpret the word *gdly* as the personal name Gedaliyah, which is attested at Ḥorvat ʿUza (nos. 18:7, 19:7; Beit-Arieh 1993: 59) or the gentilic "Giddelite," which is mentioned in two administrative ostraca from Ḥorvat ʿUza (nos. 23:3, 24:2; Beit-Arieh 2007: 160–68).

15. The particle *hnh* also serves as a deictic marker that points to a concrete entity or proposition in discourse (Miller-Naudé and van der Merwe 2011: 64–79).

16. For a likely reconstruction, see Lemaire 1995: 222. Davies (2005: 158) reads *lšntnh* as a Piel infinitive construct + energic *nun* + 3rd fem. sing. suffix. However, the energic *nun* in Biblical and Epigraphic Hebrew is attested before pronominal suffixes in the prefix conjugation and imperative, but not the infinitive (Jouon and Muraoka 1991: 172; Gogel 1998: 91, 99). (There is one possible example of an energic that is preceded by an infinitive absolute in Ammonite: *mt ymtn* "he will surely die" [Amman Citadel 2; Beyer 2012: 122]. But then again, this form could be a relic of the 3rd masc. pl. indicative prefix verb *yaqtulūna*. I thank an anonymous reviewer for directing my attention to the latter point.)

17. It is possible that *wʾm lʾ* negates *yrʾ* "if he will not fear retribution," but it is preferable to render the particles in ll. 1 and 4 (*ʾm* / *wʾm lʾ*) as either/or alternatives with positive and negative consequences (cf. Cross 2000: 111; Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 524). There are several other divergent suggestions for l. 4, but they are not convincing in light of my examination of the ostracon, photographs, and Yardeni's drawing (cf. Aḥituv 2008: 176; Becking 2010: 33; Na'aman 2013: 224).

shin, the down stroke of a *lamed*, and one head stroke and short shaft of the *mem* (though angled somewhat differently).

Unfortunately, the Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon contains many illegible letters, and we are not able to make out all the precise identifications of words in ll. 1–4. Nevertheless, we find that in these lines, the structure of the utterance is skillfully framed in an ABB'A' pattern: A *ʾm* ("if") B *lšn* ("utterance") B' *lšn* ("utterance") A' *ʾmlʾ* ("if not"). The architectural arrangement begins with "if" as a positive reinforcement, and "if not" for negative reinforcement.

Line 5: It appears from the photographs that in the beginning of this line, part of the tail and head of the *resh* are part of the previous word followed by the word *dk* (Cross 2000: 111). The verb *dwk* or *dkk* means "to crush" (*HALOT* 1: 216), and the adjective *dk* carries the same meaning (*HALOT* 1: 221). The next word, *yšqlk* (G impf. 3 ms + 2ms sf.), is from the root *šql,* meaning "to weigh" (*HALOT* 4: 1643). A final *-h* is not visible in the photographs (see Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 524). In ancient Israelite society, *šql* was the basic unit of weight or of currency and carried the idea of "payment"—hence the notion of judgment. In one of the prophet Jeremiah's sign-acts (communicating by the non-verbal means of symbolic action), the weighing (*šql*) of payment was performed to redeem family property as a message about the Babylonian exile (Jer. 32:9–10).

Line 6: The beginning of this line is difficult to decipher. The upper part of the shaft of the *kap* and the two oblique strokes on top are visible. This is the only letter found outside of the right margin, which suggests that the *kap* was mistakenly left out but later added as a correction. The next letter is a *ṣade*, and its horizontal line can be made out (similar to the two forms of the *ṣade* in l. 11). Lastly, the head and vertical shaft of a *resh* are visible. I read the beginning of the line as *kṣr* "as an adversary." The word *ṣrr* "to treat with hostility" is attested in a variety of broader social registers, such as prophecy, wisdom, and the Psalms, with the meaning of a military attack and personal enemy (*HALOT* 3: 1059). The next letters are poorly preserved and mainly indecipherable, and no plausible reconstruction has been proposed.[18]

Line 7: The letters after the *ʾl* appear to be a *mem* and then the downward stroke of a *lamed* faintly preserved above the preceding *mem* (see Yardeni's drawing in Beit-Arieh 1993) and finally what appears to be a *zayin* with two horizontal bars and one vertical bar. I take *ʾl* as the preposition "toward" (*HALOT* 1: 50) followed by the *maqtal* noun form of *mlz* "perverse, crookedness" from the root *lwz* "turning aside" *(HALOT* 2: 522). This root is recycled often in the genre of wisdom literature (Prov. 2:15; 3:21, 32; 4:21; 14:2), but reproduced once in prophecy (Isa. 30:12). See the discussion on wisdom influence in the next section.

After *mlz,* we find the verb *wysʿ* "and he removed" (Cross 1993: 64; Cross 2000: 112; Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 525; contra *rqʾ* "to spread out," Davies 2005: 158). This word is from the root *nsʿ* and means "to tear out, uproot" and the object of this verb is consistently dwelling places (such as tents), objects, or people (*HALOT* 2: 704). The next words are *bkyt* (cf. Gen. 50:4 from *bkh* "weep") and *šbtk*[*h*].[19] The form *šbt* "dwelling place, residence"

18. Sasson's (2005) suggested reading [ ] *lʾly* "to my God" is probable. A *lamed, yod, waw*, and final *heh* are traceable in this line (*ly*[*?*]*w?h?*). But in the middle of the word only the stance of the top stroke of a *heh* is visible. It is possible to reconstruct the name *Yhwh*, but this reconstruction is highly conjectural.

19. Aḥituv (2008: 176) reads *bšʿt* instead of *bky* (from the root *sʿh* "moment," a word familiar in Aramaic but alien to Biblical Hebrew). However, the tip of two oblique strokes and shaft of the *kap* are visible in the photographs. Furthermore, the stance of the *ayin* is different here and the sign must be read as a *yod*. Na'aman (2013: 227) reads the last word as *šptk* "you set fire" instead of *šbtkh*, but the shape and open head of the second letter is too wide to be a *pe.*

could be either an infinitive from the verb *yšb* "to sit" (Becking 2010: 34), or a verbal noun from the root *šbt* "place" (*HALOT* 4: 1409).

Line 8: The ink is faded and the final letter of the first word has been interpreted as either a *-k* (Beit-Arieh 1993: 61) or a *-t* (Cross 1993: 64). The last letter appears to be a *kap* and the word *ʿllk* is the preferred reading. There are several suggestions for the root *ʿll*, and each is connected to a different social action. The most convincing meaning of *ʿwll* is "infant, child" (Beit-Arieh 1993: 61; Davies 2005: 158; Aḥituv 2008: 175–76; Becking 2010: 34; Na'aman 2013: 227).

Line 9: This line begins with the words: *ʿl pn*[*kh*] "before you" (Cross 1993: 64). Na'aman's (2013: 224) reading of *ʿl pt ṣr*[ ] is unconvincing, because there is a letter between the /*p*/ and /*t*/ that he does not account for and the /*ṣ*/ is not visible. The verb *whtʿrʿrth* is legible and the use of the long form of the second person pronominal suffix *-th* is certain. The Hitpalpel verb derives from the root *ʿrr* "to strip" (Aḥituv 2008: 176).

Line 10: The reading of the preposition *b* + the nominal form *dn* has been accepted by other scholars (Beit-Arieh 1993: 61; Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 525; Becking 2010: 34; Na'aman 2013: 224). However, scholars do not agree on the reading of the final letter of this word. Some read the final letter as an *-h* (*bdnh*: Beit-Arieh 1993: 61; Davies 2005: 158; Beit-Arieh 2007: 126), others as a *-t* (*bdnt*: Lemaire 1995: 222; Cross 1993: 64; Cross 2000: 111; Sasson 2005: 607; Aḥituv 2008: 176; Becking 2010: 30), and another as an *-n* (Na'aman 2013: 224). Neither the first nor the last suggestion can be corroborated from the photographs. The end of this word appears to be the bottom-left and right strokes of a *taw*. Be that as it may, it is important to point out that l. 10 is a one-word line (Sasson 2005: 607). Perhaps it has semiotic value in that the choice of a one-word line emphasizes the word.

Line 11: The letters in this line are not very legible, and in some spots are difficult to decipher.[20] The first letter is definitely a *yod* and is more visible in personal examination than in the photographs. Although the accumulation of dirt hampers the visibility of the second letter, the head and tail make it appear to be a *mem.* The top cross bar of the *ḥet* appears clearly in the photographs. The top line of the *ṣade* appears more vertical than expected. The word would therefore read *ymḥṣ,* from the root *mḥṣ* "to smash, strike, or wound" (*HALOT* 2: 571). The best way to make sense of the next letters is the word *zrʿtykh* "your arms" (Cross 2000: 111).[21]

Line 12: I take the first word to be *ʾḥr* rather than *ʾṣr* (Lemaire 1995: 222; Aḥituv 2008: 174, but contra Cross 1993: 64; Davies 2005: 158; Sasson 2005: 608; Beit-Arieh 2007: 126; Becking 2010: 34*).* The enhanced photographs (and Yardeni's drawing) show a crossbar in the middle of the second letter. The next word "day" from *ywm* (masc.) is spelled *ymt* "days" with the final feminine ending *-t.* The final *-t* ending is unexpected on a masculine noun, as the standard plural masculine ending is *-m* in Biblical Hebrew and Hebrew inscriptions (Gogel 1998: 187). However, *ymt* is a permitted spelling variation that is indexical of a poetic register (Cross 1993: 64; Jouon and Muraoka 1998: 271). It is noteworthy that there are four nouns on the ostracon that are masculine but are pluralized with a feminine ending (*zrʿtykh*; *dnt*).

20. Cross (2000: 111) finds *y*(?)*mḥṣ zrʿtykh* [ ]*bplṣ*, but he also acknowledges that the *yod* and *zayin* are not clear. Most follow Cross's reading (Davies 2005: 158; Sasson 2005: 607; Becking 2010: 33).

21. Note that the *-t* affix on the nominal plural + pronominal suffix is only attested with *zrʿ* "arm" (Deut. 33:27; 2 Sam. 22:35; Psa. 37:17; Hos. 7:15, etc.; *HALOT* 1: 282); hence, the meaning "seed" is precluded here. I thank Dennis Pardee for bringing this point to my attention.

Fig. 2. Rim shot of the Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon. Photograph courtesy of West Semitic Research and Israel Antiquities Authority

Fig. 3. The end of line 12 of the Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon. Photograph by M. Isaac

After the opening words of l. 12, the rest is not very legible (fig. 2). Only the last two letters of l. 12 are visible: perhaps the faint traces of the top head of a /*b*/ followed by a /*ṣ*/.[22] Lemaire (1995: 222), followed by Aḥituv (2008: 176–77), interpreted this line as reading *ʾḥr ymt whyh qb*[*r*]*kh bṣ*[*r?*] "After days, and your tom[b] will be in the ro[ck]." The head

22. Cross's (2000: 111) reconstruction of the last word in this line as [*rʿ*]*ṣ* "tearing" (*rʿṣ* "to destroy"; cf. Exod. 15:6; *HALOT* 3: 1271) is speculative and inconclusive, and many verbs that end in *ṣade* can be supplied in place of *rʿṣ*.

and tail of the *qop* is clear (see also Davies 2005: 158), as are traces of the down stroke of the *bet* and the final *heh*. The reconstruction *qb*[*r*]*kh,* first suggested by Naveh (Beit-Arieh 1993: 62; 2007: 126), makes the most sense in this context, as it flows with what precedes this word in the beginning of l. 12 as well as what follows in l. 13. There also appears to be enough space for reading *qbrkh*.

Finally, the last word in this line could be reconstructed as *bṣ*[*r*]. In Beit-Arieh's and Zuckerman's photographs provided to me, the head of *bet* and *ṣade* are clear, but the final *resh* is only faintly represented. However, when I examined the ostracon in person, the diamond head of the *resh* was conspicuous (fig. 3). A more substantive analysis of this line and the next one will be discussed in the next section.

Line 13: The beginning letters are legible and read *wqbrkh* "and your tomb," with the long 2nd person pronominal suffix form -*kh* (Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 537). The last word is *ḥrb* "to be in ruins, to lay waste" (*HALOT* 1: 349).

LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The tools of linguistic anthropology bring a new richness to analysis of the ostracon, and allow us to better understand the relationship between the words chosen, how they marked the speaker's identity, and what they were designed to do. Especially useful is the concept of semiotic register, which helps us understand that the writer of the ostracon used the register of prophecy—along with some appropriations from wisdom literature—as a form of persuasion that was familiar to the intended publics.

Semiotic registers are dynamic speech styles that can be invoked in different social circumstances to impart particular attributes to the speaker. A major difference between the notion of register and semiotic register is that the former is a static collection of elements in a society associated with a fixed social category and setting, while the latter is the fluid inventory of linguistic features that actors can activate at different moments and places in everyday life (Agha 2007: 55).

Genre compartmentalization and register flexibility are key concepts in evaluating the genre of the HU-1 ostracon. When evaluating a genre—for example, the genre of prophecy—it is also essential to track the statistical constellation of distinguishing forms. When a number of attestations are found in a particular register that is aligned with a social context, event, status, and identity, then genre compartmentalization has taken place (Kroskrity 1998: 109).[23] For example, the phrase *ʾḥr hymym* in l. 12 of HU-1:12 resembles the phrase *ʾaḥărê hay-yāmîm hā-hēm* employed in the oracles of Jeremiah regarding a new covenant with Israel (Jer. 31:33) and is not found elsewhere in any other genre. At the same time, HU-1 is a text-artifact that exhibits register flexibility within a genre by utilizing stylistic varieties analogous with wisdom literature (i.e., *lwz*, *dwk*, and *šql*). For example, the construction *hnh* followed by *lšn* in l. 3 of the ostracon is recycled in the genres of prophecy and wisdom (Isa. 30:27; Jer. 5:15; 23:31; Job 33:2; but note that the construction in these verses does not occur contiguously as in HU-1). This is unsurprising, given that in ancient Israel prophets

23. A speaker uses a register from a society's oral/written inventory that acts upon certain identities by imparting particular attributes or qualities to the speaking participants. Semiotic registers (i.e., rules of language use in a particular circumstance or occasion that is transformative in nature) often display an ideology that Kroskrity (1998: 109) calls "strict compartmentalization," that is, an ideology that restricts ritual forms exclusively to ritual contexts. Strict compartmentalization describes the ideological restriction of language forms to certain ceremonial contexts and not in everyday speech. While strict compartmentalization is not a universal ideology, it is applicable in this particular context of assigning a genre to the HU-1 ostracon. As will be argued below, some aspects of prophetic identity in the Hebrew Bible are strictly compartmentalized to specific language forms, events, and ritual contexts.

drew on a variety of forms for verbal art in their conflict with the royal court.[24] In this regard, the practice of reallocation—where a variant previously associated with a specific genre develops a different sociolinguistic function—requires a reappraisal of wisdom discourse as a socio-stylistic marker of prophecy; it establishes HU-1 as a permutation of a wisdom-influenced prophecy.[25]

I will now go through specific language of the HU-1 ostracon and show how certain discursive features are indexical of the genre of prophecy. In the beginning of the HU-1 ostracon, the conditional clause *ʾm* + *bšl*[*m*] appears. Lemaire (1995: 222) reads the line as *ʾm bšl<m> wbmšr*, a phrase reminiscent of the prophetic oracle in Malachi 2:6 (*bšlwm wmyšwr*) concerning fidelity to Yahweh's covenant. If this reconstruction is taken seriously, then a familiar discursive pattern emerges, linking this word with the image of a prophetic discourse concerning a covenant of peace.[26] This notion is buttressed by the level of semantic salience associated with the particular stylistic formulation of *ʾm* + preposition + *šlm*, meaning "to enter into a peace agreement" (Deut. 20:10–12; 1 Kings 20:18; 1Chr. 12:18; *HALOT* 4: 1508).

In examining the contextualized usage of this syntax, based on the actions built over time and across interactions by the individuals using this stylistic form in the text, *šlm* indexes the inquiry into a peace agreement with another party, in contrast to war and hostility. Moreover, among the multiple indexical meanings of the phrase *bšlm* "in peace" are the ideas of mitigating conflict and marking political and personal solidarity (*HALOT* 4: 1509). This specific form and its social meaning are also communicated in the prophetic missive of Jer. 29:7. The contextual knowledge in these references that is rooted in habitual practices enables participants to recognize and correctly interpret the indexical meaning of *šlm* as a marker of personal and political cohesion.

Lastly, one of the roles of prophets was to proclaim oracles of peace as well as to warn and criticize kings and tribal leaders when they violated their covenant obligations (Elgavish 2008). As such, the word *šlm* became loaded with the sociolinguistic meaning of the practice of prophets providing an optimistic response to an oracular inquiry (Mic. 3:5; Jer. 6:14).[27] If

24. Some scholars have attempted to account for register flexibility within the genre of prophecy. For instance, many scholars contend that Judean prophets in the Hebrew Bible appropriated and subverted wisdom material and speech forms (ethical, proverbial, and allegorical language) in their oracles against rulers, elders, officials, and royal counselors (see McKane 1965; McKane 1995; Whedbee 1971; Van Leeuwen 1990; Van Leeuwen 1993; Williamson 1995). I thank André Lemaire for bringing to my attention the question regarding a prophetic oracle using wisdom literature.

25. From a discourse agency perspective, register flexibility within the genre of prophecy is exhibited in the Balaam oracle from Deir Alla by the use of stylistic devices well attested in wisdom literature (*šmʿw mwsr* "give heed to instruction" *KAI* 312 1:10; *ḥkmn* "the wise" *KAI* 312 1:11; *ʿṣh* "counsel, plan" and *mlk* "advice" *KAI* 312 B:9; the futility of life and the realm of the dead *KAI* 312 B:6–8, 11–13). Pragmatically speaking, register flexibility is exemplified by the reallocation of the wisdom phrase *šmʿw mwsr* "give heed to instruction" (Prov. 1:8; 4:1; 13:1; 19:20) in the Balaam oracle and the oracles of Jeremiah (Jer. 17:23; 35:13).

26. Generally, *šlm* "peace" is a word with an extremely wide distribution of associated meanings in almost all instances (*HALOT* 4: 1507; there is an extensive literature concerning this word). The nominal form can also mean the process toward peace in which the parties form a covenant or an agreement (Deut. 20:10; Josh. 9:15; Isa. 27:5; 59:8).

27. Another aspect of cultural importance of the word *šlm* is its salience in the genre of prophecy in ancient Judean society. The idea of peacemaking or utopian visions of peace became even more prominent over time in Judean oracles (Cohen and Westbrook 2008). At the same time, there was also the problematic practice of a prophetic response of "peace" to an inquiry when there was no peace but war, implying that it was a false prophecy and that Yahweh did not give them an oracle at all (1 Kings 22:28; Jer. 6:14; 14:13; 23:17; Ezek. 13:10, 16). In particular, the word "peace" attracted overt stigmatization in the register of prophecy, and became iconic for the test

the reading *šl*[*m*] in l. 1 is accepted, then it can be interpreted to index an oracular proposition concerning peace.

The metaphorical use of *mšr* “rectitude, justice” is associated with the register of prophecy. It is important to establish how this word signifies a link between itself and the semiotic register to which it belongs, and how it relates to an action that is being called for. The singular noun *mšr* is used metaphorically four times (Ps. 45:6[7]; 67:5; Isa. 11:4; Mal. 2:6), and three of the four instances refer to ruling with equity and divine justice.[28] The configuration with the preposition (*b* + *mšr*) is attested only twice in the Hebrew Bible, and both occur in the genre of prophecy. In both examples, the phrase is employed in concert with *ph* “mouth” and *šph* “lip.”

In the royal oracle of Isa. 11:4, the word describes the charismatic endowments of a future ideal Davidic king who will judge with equity, rule against the wicked with his mouth, and utter a truthful verdict. Most importantly, Mal. 2:6 uses this same construction in an oracle concerning loyalty, the speaking of truth, and not perversity. This distinct domain of meaning is attested also with the plural *mšrm* with verbs of utterance in the genre of prophecy, viz., to speak what is true and right (Isa. 33:15; 45:19). It can be argued, therefore, that the metaphorical meaning of *mšr* with *lšn* can be linked to a certain pragmatic-relevant category: prophetic concern with speaking justice and truth, as opposed to deceit.

In l. 2, the metonymical association of the word *lšn* “utterance” appears to signal a positive connotation with the words *šlm* and *mšr* (as opposed to a negative one of falsehood and mendacity recycled in prophetic oracles and wisdom literature [*HALOT* 2: 536]). The distribution of the positive metonymical nuance of *lšn* in the Hebrew Bible is encountered in the genre of prophecy; for example, it is associated with educated speech (Isa. 50:4; cf. *lšn* Deir Alla *KAI* 312 B:17) and swearing loyalty (Isa. 45:23). At the same time, the combination *lšn* + *šlm* can indicate the idea of giving lip service to genuine friendship (Jer. 9:8). It is tempting to speculate that the degree of import associated with *lšn* with the intent to speak truth and loyalty is shared here in l. 2.

With respect to the word *mšlm* in l. 3, prophetic identities drew on existing mainstream stances of this feature in discourses describing the vengeance against Yahweh’s enemies (Isa. 66:6). This particular style is a feature of oracles of Jeremiah regarding the divine visitation (Piel ptc. masc. sing.) against fathers who violate the covenant (Jer. 32:18) and Yahweh’s enemy Babylon (Jer. 51:6). Hence, the discourse of *mšlm* as divine visitation is familiar in the linguistic register of prophecy.

Register flexibility in the genre of prophecy is exhibited by the use of two wisdom forms in l. 5: *dk* “to crush” and *šql* “to weigh.” In the Hebrew Bible, the adjective *dk* is common in the genre of wisdom literature and refers to the consequence of a lying tongue (Prov. 26:28). Conversely, the by-form *dkʾ* occurs in the Psalms and prophetic texts with Yahweh as the subject and the enemies of Israel as the object (*HALOT* 1: 221). The metaphorical use of *šql* in conjunction with divine judgment is used in the genre of wisdom literature (Job 6:2; 31:6; cf. Dan. 5:27). The reallocation of wisdom forms in this line conveys the idea of the addressee being crushed as an enemy and weighed on the divine scales of justice.

In l. 7, the employment of the noun *mlz* “perverseness,” from the root *lwz*, indexes an orientation toward register flexibility in the genre of prophecy. This root is well attested in

of true or false prophet: “The prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet shall happen, then shall the prophet be known, that Yahweh has truly sent him” (Jer. 28:9; cf. 1 Kings 22:28).

28. In Biblical Hebrew, the plural form is more common than the singular. The plural form *myšrym* conveys the same idea in the book of Isaiah and the Psalms: divine justice (Isa. 26:7; Pss. 9:8; 96:10; 98:9).

wisdom literature, in the sense of going astray from counsel or ignoring wisdom (Prov. 2:15; 3:21, 32; 14:2), but it is encountered once in a prophetic text (Isa. 30:12). Indeed, there is a special ideological motivation for the reallocation of the indexical value of the wisdom-aligned root *lwz* in Isa. 30:12 and in this ostracon: It is used in response to political leaders who accept the bad counsel of forging an alliance with another party and rejecting the advice of the prophet. One can speculate, therefore, that the beginning of l. 7 conveys the idea that if the addressee rejects or ignores the terms of the peace agreement, this would constitute an act of *mlz*.

The expression for mourning in line 7, *bkyt,* may also have important indexical associations and implications that evoke sociocultural meaning. In the Hebrew Bible, the root *bkh* is generally used for public and private weeping (*HALOT* 1: 129–30). In particular, the word is employed for weeping for the dead (Gen. 50:4; Jer. 9:1; 22:10; 31:15; Ezek. 8:14). This word can also signify specific dwelling places for mourning for the dead, such as a tomb (2 Sam. 3:32; Isa. 15: 2–3).

In divine oracles, prophets drew on established generalizations about the features of mourning in their discourses of doom against local and foreign kingdoms (Isa. 16:9; Jer. 9:1; Ezek. 24:16; Joel 1:5; Mic. 1:10). At the same time, several prophetic discourses of judgment addressed to the Judean elite deny them the honor and respect of a mourning ritual for the dead (Jer. 16:5). More importantly, the term *bkh* is reserved for divine prohibitions against impending mourning for the deceased, and this type of discourse is strictly compartmentalized to the genre of prophecy (Jer. 16:5; 22:10; Ezek. 24:16, 23; cf. Jer. 22:18; Job 27:15).

What does the writer want the addressee to think and feel in response to this language? Mourning is indexical of honor and respect during periods of loss and death. The central meaning behind the phrase *wysʿ bkyt šbtk*[*h*] is that the divine retribution for rejecting the peace agreement is the elimination of mourning for the addressee. The eradication of mourning ritual for the deceased is a stance of shame that affects afterlife expectations.

Equally important for understanding the semiotic register of the ostracon is the use of the word *ʿwll* in l. 8. The term is encountered frequently in the register of prophetic oracles of doom (1 Sam. 15:3; 2 Kings 8:12; Isa. 13:16; Hos. 13:16; Nah. 3:10). The level of significant association of *ʿwll* with prophetic identity is evident from its recurrent employment in the oracles of Jeremiah regarding the exiled Judean population (Jer. 6:11; 9:21; 44:7). The language of a child suffering fits well with *bkh* "mourning" in l. 7 (cf. Jer. 31:15). The verb *ysʿ* "he (will) remove" conveys the idea of the removal of persons, and potentially this verb acquires particular significance as a divine threat against the addressee's child. The peril of taking away the addressee's offspring is designed to strongly encourage loyalty to the peace agreement.

The word *htʿrʿrth* in l. 9 requires special comment in that it establishes the writer's orientation to a certain genre-relevant category. In the Hebrew Bible, the verb *ʿrr* "to strip" is often attested as a permutation of divine retribution in the prophetic oracles (*HALOT* 2: 889). The verb is strictly compartmentalized to the genre of doom oracles and refers to stripping someone bare and demolishing buildings (Isa. 23:13; 32:11; Jer. 51:58). The Hitpalpel is documented once in an oracle against Babylon (Jer. 51:58). The verb *ʿrr* represents, in my view, a distinct register and identity-level lexeme: the literary repertoire of prophetic doom oracles that are employed in performances to gain the expected outcome of shame and divine punishment.

The noun *dn* /*dyn* "judgment" in l. 10 is recycled in many social registers in the Hebrew Bible. Beyond a denotative use of this word, the discourse agency of *dn* is invoked in several genres pertaining to pleas and verbal disputes that involve the request for divine adjudica-

tion and empowerment in situations of powerlessness (*HALOT* 1: 220). The pleas for divine adjudication are also registered in prophetic discourses to attract hearers to causes of justice (Isa. 10:2; Jer. 5:28).

Of particular interest is the prophet Jeremiah's call for divine arbitration on behalf of other social groups (Jer. 21:12). In the Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon, the word *dyn* promotes a similar type of ideology: the stance of a person seeking empowerment by laying claim to divine arbitration in peace talks with the addressee. Consequently, the word *dyn* is indexical of a speaker invoking divine justice to negotiate authority, and bring relief and restoration to broken social relations.

In l. 11, scholars have primarily focused on a referential analysis of *mḥṣ* (Davies 2005: 158; Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 525–26; Sasson 2005: 607; Becking 2010: 33), but what has not been considered is its role in social context. That is, what is the function of *mḥṣ* in social registers and in which type of social setting, and what type of social action is called for? The word *mḥṣ* is recycled in archaic Hebrew poetry of tribal kings, prophets, and poets (*HALOT* 2: 571). The high number of attestations in this particular register suggests that this lexeme is registered in the genre of ancestral poetry of the elite.

Tribal leaders and prophets invoked the word *mḥṣ* in social settings of human and divine war in ancient Israel. In almost every occurrence in the Hebrew Bible, either Yahweh or Israel is the subject of *mḥṣ* and Israel's enemies are the object (Deut. 32:39; 33:11; Judg. 5:26). In divine oracles, prophets extended the strictly compartmentalized poetic use of *mḥṣ* in declarations of Yahweh's defeat and doom for Israel's enemies (Num. 24:8, 17; Isa. 30:26; Hab. 3:13). Applied to the context of the ostracon, the semiotic properties of *mḥṣ*-type discourses generate an unambiguous social category for the addressee or target group: they are antagonists of Yahweh and his people.

There are several indexical claims and identity projections invoked by the use of the archaic word *mḥṣ* that require special comment. Keane (1997: 52–53), following Du Bois, observes that certain common characteristics of ritual registers include the use of "archaistic elements (including words and grammatical forms that speakers believe to be archaic)." In replicating how ancestors spoke, speakers tend to "to shift apparent control over speech from the individual proximate speaker, who is bodily present at the moment of speaking, to some spatially, temporally, or ontologically more distant agent" to historically ground their words with power.

Moreover, the indexical use of an archaic word creates a certain perception about the speaker's context. By employing the archaic term *mḥṣ* in the section of divine curses, the author of this Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon shows an awareness of Israel's poetic and prophetic lexicon as well as its indexical association with power. Using certain verbs brings the author respect, and animating the words of ancestors helps to resolve conflict. These indexes could shape the projection of the speaker's identity as an authority and an educated religious expert. The author laid claim to a religious authority index from authoritative figures in Israelite culture to confer power upon himself and employed animated ancestral poetry to stabilize the moral order of the present.

With respect to *zrʿtykh* "your arms" in l. 11, an indexical meaning must be sought in context in order to understand its use in this ostracon. The word *zrʿ* "arm" alone means nothing of significance; it is an anatomical word that was part of everyday life. The use of the word is situated in so many literary genres and social registers—such as poetry, narrative, and prophecy (*HALOT* 1: 281–82)—that seeking to understand the rationale for its inclusion in the ostracon remains unproductive. Hence, unless this word is analyzed within a given social context and register, one is faced with the methodological challenge of establishing its salience and the type of social action that is called for.

If, for example, the decisive factor for inclusion is confined to the theme of judgment, then this idea of striking the "arms" is an expression that means to cut off one's "power" and is a highlight in various genres (Deut. 33:20; Job 22:9; Psa. 10:15), but more so in prophetic oracles. This form of discourse is employed in the social context of a prophetic curse against the House of Eli with the expression "I will cut off your arm, and the arm of your father's house …" (1 Sam. 2:31). In particular, the term—coupled with the verb *šbr* "to break"—is situated within discursive contexts of prophets contesting hegemonic actions of other nations (Jer. 48:25; Ezek. 30:21, 22, 24 "will break his [i.e., Pharaoh's] arms"). In these contexts, the semantic meaning is "military forces" (*HALOT* 1: 281).[29] Applying these meanings to the milieu of judgment in this ostracon, the salience of the contextual use of *zrʿ* and the action being called for in relation to a specific class in society conveys the idea of the future destruction of a ruler's power and his military forces.

The next word in l. 11, *plṣ* "to shudder," with its nominal meaning "horror," is interesting in that it is employed in the performance of prophecy as a reaction to military destruction (Isa. 21:4; Ezek. 7:18; *HALOT* 3: 935). One particular discursive use is found in the oracle of Jeremiah in which the leaders of Edom play down the terror of death that awaits them after their defeat (Jer. 49:16–17). Together with the removal of a mourning ritual, the horror (*plṣ*) that is to be experienced as a consequence of military (*zrʿ*) defeat (*mḥṣ*) is a threat made to persuade the addressee with matters of symbolic value and political importance.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of the ostracon is the reference to the curse on the rock-cut tomb in ll. 12–13. The idea expressed is this: Even though this individual will be buried in a rock-cut tomb (*qbr*, l. 12), this tomb will be reduced to ruins (*ḥrb*, l. 13). The indexical significance of the word *qbr* is that it is aligned with the royal elite and upper class of Judean society.[30] This distinction is critical in addressing the publics the writer of this ostracon has in mind (note the use of *gdly*[*m*] in l. 1 of the ostracon and in Jer. 5:5). The family tomb was symbolic of ancestral and generational continuity, permanence, and identity (Faust 2012).

The social meaning of an improper burial and an ancestral tomb that is in ruins and not cared for is that it was tantamount to a person and his lineage group being put to shame, humiliation, and divine punishment (Neh. 2:3; Isa. 14:19; Jer. 36:30); this act also disrupted a family's social cohesion and had implications for the afterlife. The ancient Judean urban bourgeoisie was acutely aware of this type of discourse and the seriousness of this curse. Moreover, the assumption here is that the writer/performer is anxious to achieve this act and, by speaking, to bring it about. Now that we have motivated this reading of the text, we can use it to answer one key question: who can curse a tomb?

29. For example, in Arad 88:2—an inscription announcing the new rule of a king—the phrase *ʾmṣ zrʿ* "strengthen the arm" means to muster forces or troops for battle (Aḥituv 2008: 153). In a late prophetic text (Dan. 11:6), the construction *mšrm* "uprightness/rectitude" occurs with word *zrʿ* "arm, strength" to convey the meaning of establishing an agreement to bolster one's military forces. In modern times, the English word "arms" means more than the upper limbs of the body, but is used metaphorically for weapons: armaments, firearms, small arms, etc.

30. During the late eighth–seventh centuries BCE, there was a sudden introduction of numerous cave and rock-cut bench tombs that indexed social stratification; they were reserved for kings and wealthy groups (Faust 2012: 32, 71–72). The word *qbr* is attested also in a late eighth-century BCE tomb inscription from Silwan village in the Jerusalem area. This inscription iconically aligns *qbr* as the term for the rock-cut tomb used by the upper class (Silwan 3:1; Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 508; Aḥituv 2008: 46). In Biblical Hebrew, the noun *qbr* can carry also the meaning of individual burial chambers (*HALOT* 3: 1065). Another form, *qbwrh,* however, is socially reserved for the tombs of eponymous ancestors (Gen. 35:20; 47:30; Deut. 34:6; 1 Sam. 10:2) and kings (2 Kings 9:28; 21:26; 23:30; Isa. 14:20; 2 Chr. 26:23).

It is my contention that the authority to proclaim and perform a curse of tomb desecration corresponds to a significant genre and identity distinction. In ancient Israel and Judah, anyone could utter a curse, as is true today. That is, profession or status did not restrict this ability (cf. BLei 1–4; EnGd 2; Silwan 2:2; Aḥituv 2008: 44–47, 236–39). However, the invoking of a curse by a common person is very different from the same action performed by a person the community believes is invested with the supernatural power to enact it. A curse uttered by a bystander on a street corner is not invested with the same power as one spoken by a seer or prophet.

That is, there are culturally appropriate manners, contexts, circumstances, and persons to invoke a specific curse and make it effective. Furthermore, the curse of tomb desecration, one of the most severe types of curses, is invoked relatively rarely. A cursory investigation reveals that this type of curse is absent from all discursive genres aside from prophecy. The virtual absence of this category of invectives in the biblical genres of law, cult, covenant, psalms, and wisdom literature points to the issue of performativity and competence in declaring and bringing it into existence.

In ancient Israel and Judah, prophets were the appropriate persons invested with the legitimacy to pronounce the curse of tomb desecration and make it effective.[31] Several texts are illustrative of this premise: In a conversation between Shebna, a senior officer in Judah, and the prophet Isaiah, the former is criticized for his elite rock-cut *qbr* "tomb" (22:16). A prophetic oracle of doom is announced and concludes with Shebna's removal from office, his corpse left uninterred, and dishonor heaped upon his family (vv. 17–19). Elsewhere in this scroll, an oracle of tomb desecration is declared against the king of Babylon: He will be cast forth from his tomb and not joined with his ancestors in burial (Isa. 14:18–20).

These examples in the book of Isaiah demonstrate that speech acts in the world of ancient Israel that declare this action are stereotypically associated with a particular register and identity. In another Judean oracle of doom, this time in the book of Jeremiah, the curse of desecrating family tombs is proclaimed against the urban elites of Jerusalem. The bones of the kings, princes, priests, prophets, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be brought "out of their tombs" (*qbryhm* Jer. 8:1).[32] The ruin of extended family tombs in Judah (*qbrwt* + *ḥrb*) was fulfilled during the Babylon invasion (Neh. 2:3).[33]

The Book of Kings provides us with two more examples: In the first, a Judean prophet declares an oracle of doom against King Jeroboam I concerning the desecration of the graves of priests in Bethel (1 Kings 13:1–2). According to 2 Kings 23:16, King Josiah fulfilled this oracular pronouncement when he cleared the bones of deceased families out of the tombs (*hqbrym*) at Bethel and burned them on the altar. In another oracle, the prophetess Hulda reverses the ancestral tomb curse and declares that King Josiah will be gathered to his fathers and laid in his royal tomb (*qbrtyk*) in peace (2 Kings 22:20).

31. It should be noted that in Combination II of the Balaam oracle from Deir Alla, curses are directed against this community affecting the tomb, grave, sarcophagus, and possibly a corpse (*byt ʿlmn*, *gdš*, *škb*, *šqy*, and *nqr*), but the inscription is very fragmentary (*KAI* 312 B: 6–11; Aḥituv 2008: 459–62).

32. Many prophets over the course of Israel's history invoked the curse of an unburied body, but none do so more frequently than the prophet Jeremiah (Hillers 1964). There is a high level of salience associated with the theme of an improper burial in the oracles of Jeremiah (8:2; 16:4, 6; 22:19; 25:33; 34:20). Moreover, a referential survey of the word *ḥrb* and other verbs of desecration reveals that the threat of an unburied corpse as punishment recurs numerous times in Judean prophetic oracles (1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; Isa. 5:25; Jer. 34:20; Ezek. 29:17–20).

33. The juxtaposition of the words *qbr* and *ḥrb* occurs only in the non-prophetic text of Neh. 2:3, where it refers to the consequences of the Babylonian invasion. Nevertheless, there is an indexical alignment of the word *ḥrb* with doom oracles regarding the Babylonian invasion and the total devastation of the city of Jerusalem, including intramural tomb burials (Jer. 26:9; Ezek. 6:6; 19:7).

Based upon these texts from the Judean community, there was a tacit ideology that the curse of tomb desecration was not to be employed outside of the ritual register of prophetic oracles. Prophets engaged in this brand of speech in particular circumstances that were transformative in nature. Prophets had the power of utterance to transform common words into words of power, which the community believed made a curse socially effective. Especially under circumstances of divine retribution against kings, tribal leaders, and the urban elite, their word power was vested in their ability to bring violence, dishonor, and shame upon the unruly and their families. Hence, the curse of tomb desecration in the Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon was a severe invective that was strictly compartmentalized to a specific sociolinguistic register—prophetic curses.

Taken together, the linguistic elements examined in this study offer a detailed characterization of style that allows us to conclude that there is a pervasive employment of forms that ideologically link the ostracon with the genre of prophecy. In Table 1 I demonstrate the significant elements of a shared linguistic *habitus* and speech chain between the ostracon and the discourses in the book of Jeremiah.

Table 1. Comparison of Ostracon Forms and Attestations in the Book of Jeremiah

Appearance in HU-1	*Attestation in Jeremiah*
Line 1 *ʾm + b*	*ʾm + b* (5:9, 29; 9:8; 14:19; 48:27)
Line 1 *b + šlm*	*b + šlm* (29:7; 43:12), *šlm* (6:14; 14:13; 23:17; 28:9), or *šlw* (12:1)
Line 1 *mšr*	*yšr* (34:15)
Line 2 *lšn*	*lšn*—metonym/metaphor (9:2–7; 18:18; 23:31)
Line 2 *gdl*, *gdly[m]*	*gdl* (32:18), *gdlym* (5:5)
Line 3 *hnh + lšn*	*hnh + lšn* (23:31; cf. 5:15)
Line 4 *ʾm lʾ*	*ʾm lʾ* (12:17; 13:17; 17:27; 22:5–6; 26:4; 38:18)
Line 4 *yrʿ*	*yrʿ* (1:8; 3:8; 5:22; 10:5; 17:8; 23:4; 26:19)
Line 5 *dk*	*dkʾ* (44:10)
Line 5 *šql*	*šql* vb. in a sign-act (32:9–10)
Line 6 *mšlm*	*mšlm* (32:18; 51:6)
Line 7 *bkh*	*bkh* (8:23; 9:1; 13:17; 22:10; 31:15; 41:6; 48:32); *bky* (31:15)
Line 7 *šbtk[h]*	*šbtk* (9:5); *šbt* (16:8); *yšbty* (10:17)
Line 7 *nsʿ*	*nsʿ* (4:7; 31:24)
Line 8 *ʿll*	*ʿwll* (6:11; 9:21; 44:7)
Line 9 *htʿrʿrth*	*ʿrr* (51:58; *ttʿrʿr*)
Line 10 *dn*	*dyn* (5:28, 21:12; 22:16, 30:13)
Line 11 *zrʿ*	*zrʿ*—metaphor (48:25)
Line 11 *plṣ*	*plṣ* (49:16–17)
Line 12 *ʾḥr ymt*	*ʾḥr hymym* (31:33)
Line 13 *qbr*-curse	*qbr*—curse (8:1)
Line 13 *ḥrb*	*ḥrb* (26:9; 33:10, 12)
prophecy in the city gate of Ḥorvat ʿUza	prophecy in the city gates of Judah (7:2)[34]

34. The last example in Table 1 documents the possible parallel between the prophetic discursive practices performed at the city gate of Ḥorvat Uza and in the city gates of Judah in the book of Jeremiah (7:2; 17:19; 19:2; 36:10). Social space, social roles, and language norms relative to that space are interwoven phenomena. Discourse

The similarities of style, metaphors, and themes between the Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon and the book of Jeremiah illuminate several facets of language use. First, they are indexical of the prophetic discourse style and scribal education in centers of power in Judah in the pre-exilic period. The writer has employed salient elements of the prophetic sociolinguistic register, including iconic lexical and grammatical structures, which created a chain of indexical associations and gave the writer the facility to engage in semiotically meaningful action with the addressee and the audience. Second, the constellations of parallels are a form of circulation of symbolic capital. That is, the circulation of discourse forms aligned with Jeremiah (and other ancient Judean prophets) demonstrates the performer's communicative competence in prophetic themes, which was essential to establish his prophetic identity and authority. To be successful in persuading the audience or public (i.e., tribal leaders, royal counselors, and officials) to respond in a certain way or to gain hegemonic consent, the prophet's discourse strategy included an appropriation and reworking of Judah's elitist lexicon.

Based upon the analysis above, it is evident that verbal art and curses were a semiotic resource at a prophet's disposal and that these features are found in the HU-1 ostracon. The culturally conceived means for a prophet to attain power in ancient Judah was by verbal art (poetic metaphors, archaisms, metonyms, and the reallocation of wisdom discourse) and the persuasion of curses. The writer of HU-1 *constructs* his social position *through* language choice.

Words play a great role in mediating social relationships between god and people, and the power of the curse of tomb desecration may have been the most potent resource available to a prophet in addressing the violation of divine covenants and political agreements, resolving conflict, avoiding feuds, and building relationships. Poetic oracles of peace and consent that were convincing and therefore powerful could resolve territorial and other disputes and mitigate tribal wars.[35]

But if the oracle's persuasion failed, it was held that the power of the curse would prevail. According to the curse, the recipient would be labeled with shame because of the failure to obey or to achieve peace, which is to agree or settle a dispute without recourse to physical violence. Physical force was not ideally a tool of governance; rather, recourse to the medium of power through verbal persuasion was certainly the most favorable path to peace (cf. Caton 1990). Hence, it was in the best interest of prophets to build up their power and ability to convince, and language—in particular, the skillful use of semiotics and register—was a major part of that.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have used linguistic anthropology as a heuristic tool to inform analysis of the literary genre of the ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza. The science of linguistic anthropology

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structure can change based upon social space as well as the recycled norms of discourse licensed by the power centers relative to that space. If we assume that the text-artifact was inscribed where it was discovered, then the linguistic forms of the Ḥorvat ʿUza ostracon index the social role of prophets within the social space of the city gate. The city gate, a center of religious and legal power (where city officials, kings, elders, judges, and governors conducted business), shaped not only the social roles to be performed but also the type of discourse forms used to persuade the assembled audience.

35. The expanding and shifting settlement patterns within the Judean frontier zones of the eastern Negev region during the seventh century BCE may reflect ongoing political struggles between local tribal polities and the monarchy in Jerusalem (Thareani 2014: 238–42). It is tempting to postulate that the discovery of a prophetic ostracon at the military fortress of Ḥorvat ʿUza documents an attempt to mediate the ongoing struggles within the monarchy concerning local sedentary tribes and semi-nomadic groups in the Negev.

allows us to be more systematic in our understanding of the ways that language is more than just denotative, dictionary-style meaning. Concepts such as semiotics, register, and pragmatic salience demonstrate the principal ways that language can index social relationships and the beliefs, norms, and assumptions of society. This is particularly useful when moving to a more contextualized analysis of the ostracon's language, meaning, and purpose.

Linguistic anthropology provides an analytical framework for exploring links between stylistic varieties, discursive activities within social place, and constructions of identities. This framework enables us to capture a set of interrelated phenomena usually analyzed separately in the field of Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic—namely, the interactions between language, culture, social identity, and institutions of power. Although a denotative approach to the linguistic forms in this ostracon is well attested, less attention has been paid to the discursive ways in which indexicality takes place within the inscription. Most scholars working to determine the genre of the ostracon have evaluated referential terminology only, while particular lexical and grammatical styles and their indexical meanings have been overlooked.

I have shown that the literary ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza aligns with the genre of prophecy by discovering a link between a social order and a discursive formation within a socially dominant institution. The semiotics of register, in particular, modes of prophetic authoritative expression found in both the ostracon and in the Hebrew Bible, relate the ostracon's text with the genre of prophecy. I traced the connections between the literary forms within the constitution of prophetic authority in texts, the flexibility of the semiotic register of prophecy, and the social processes involved in articulating the authority of this genre of texts. Prophetic authority in texts is constituted in the deployment of the semiotic forms: *šlm* + *mšr* in combination with *lšn* for the speaking of truth; *bkh* for mourning for the dead; *ʿrr* "to strip" for shaming one's enemy; *zrʿ* with a verb of destruction for military defeat; and *qbr* + *ḥrb* for the curse of the desecration of a rock-cut tomb.

Finally, the semiotic register of prophecy is flexible, as seen in employment of the terms *lwz, dwk*, and *šql* in wisdom discourse and also in the ostracon. The social location of the city-gate was a factor in determining how the performer or author of this ostracon was framed in relation to that space. The textual discourse of this ostracon was seen to intersect with a specific dimension of authority and with the relations of a specific mode of production, namely, prophets and the scribal genre of prophecy.

While the tools of linguistic anthropology cannot help us better decipher the physical inscription, with its faded and illegible words, they can help us decipher its social meaning and the power of a curse in an epigraphic prophetic text in ancient Judah.

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