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The Double Use of the Locution ועתה as a Rhetorical Device in the Discourses of the Old Testament

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To Professor Jean-Louis Ska, SJ
with gratitude

Abstract: In biblical texts, repetition is very often seen by scholars as an indication of an addition or of different sources. In the Old Testament we find a group of speeches characterized by the double or triple use of the adverbial phrase ועתה within the same speech. The phenomenon of double ועתה appears in seventeen texts: Gen 44:18–34; 45:4b-13; Exod 3:7–10; Josh 22:2–5; Ruth 3:10–13; 1 Sam 24:18–22; 26:18–20; 2 Sam 2:5–7; 19:10–11; 1 Kgs 5:17–20 (cf. 2 Chr 2:2–9); 8:23–53 (cf. 2 Chr 6:14–42); 18:9–14; 1 Chr 29:10–19; 2 Chr 2:11–15; 28:9–11; Ezra 10:2–4; Dan 9:4–19. In four cases it has to do with a triple use of ועתה, namely in Josh 14:6–12; 1 Sam 25:24–31; 2 Sam 7:18–29 (cf. 1 Chr 17:16–27) and Ezra 9:6–15. This study analyses these texts and tries to answer the questions raised by the repetition of the particle ועתה: Why use the same locution twice? What are the common characteristics of these discourses? And what is the origin of this phenomenon? The first part of the research is dedicated to the presentation of the general characteristics of ועתה, while the second part concerns the persuasive character of these discourses. The third part consists in the analysis of the function of the double ועתה in the structure of the discourses, as compared with classical rhetoric. The fourth part identifies the context of the speeches with the double/triple ועתה. Finally, the fifth part is dedicated (1) to the importance of the argumentation introduced by the first ועתה in a specific discourse, as it is related to a request for forgiveness (*deprecatio*), and (2) to the origins of the use of the double ועתה as a rhetorical device.

Keywords: *we'attâ*, double ועתה, Hebrew rhetoric, persuasive speech, argumentation, request discourse, discourse structure, *dispositio*, *deprecatio*

Every literary work of art (whether prose or verse) is characterized by content (*res*) and form (*verba*).[1] In the Old Testament we find a group of discourses which, despite the diversity of content, have a very similar form. Among the more than two hundred occurrences of ועתה in the Old Testament, there are some in which this adverbial phrase occurs twice within the same discourse. This phenomenon concerns seventeen texts: Gen 44:18–34; 45:4b-13; Exod 3:7–10; Josh 22:2–5; Ruth 3:10–13; 1 Sam 24:18–22; 1 Sam 26:18–20; 2 Sam 2:5–7; 19:10–11; 1 Kgs 5:17–20 (cf. 2 Chr 2:2–9); 8:23–53 (cf. 2 Chr 6:14–42); 18:9–14; 1 Chr 29:10–19; 2 Chr 2:11–15; 28:9–11; Ezra 10:2–4; Dan 9:4–19. Furthermore, there are four other texts in which

1 Cf. Lausberg, *Handbook*, 26.

the particle ועתה is used three times: Josh 14:6–12; 1 Sam 25:24–31; 2 Sam 7:18–29 (cf. 1 Chr 17:16–27) and Ezra 9:6–15.

The use of this phrase in the Old Testament has not been studied very much, and research is especially lacking concerning the rhetorical double use of ועתה.[2] Furthermore, the double ועתה has often been considered to be a clue to an addition or to different sources, while following the path of literary criticism has not been encouraged. At the same time, this phenomenon raises some questions: are we dealing with discourses that have double conclusions? Why use the same locution twice, thereby dividing the speech into several parts? The fact that the use of the double ועתה appears in a limited number of texts also raises the question of the common characteristics of these discourses and their environment of origin.

This study is therefore dedicated to the rhetorical analysis of speeches with a double ועתה and consists of five distinct complementary parts: the first part of the research, which is of a preliminary nature, presents the general characteristics of this adverbial term; the second part concerns the persuasive character of these speeches; the third part consists in the analysis of the function of the double ועתה in the structure of the analysed discourses, in comparison with classical rhetoric; the fourth part identifies the context of the speeches having the double ועתה; and finally, the fifth part is dedicated to the importance of the argumentation introduced by the first ועתה in a specific kind of discourse, that of the request for forgiveness (*deprecatio*), and to the origins of the rhetorical strategy consisting of the use of the double ועתה.

1. The Characteristics of the Adverbial Phrase ועתה in the Texts of the Old Testament

Before moving on to the study of the double use of ועתה in Old Testament discourses, it is useful to consider some general characteristics and functions of this particle in biblical texts. The adverb עתה is commonly translated as *now, nevertheless, in the future, henceforth*,[3] but in different contexts it takes on various nuances of meaning,[4] even within discourses marked by the double use of ועתה, as for example in Exod 3:9–10:

2 Cf. Brongers, "Bemerkungen," 290; Laurentin, "We'attāh-kai nun," 168–197; Jenni, "Zur Verwendungen," 5–12. In studying the texts in which speeches occur with the double use of ועתה, several researchers simply note the double occurrence of this adverbial phrase. Only a few try to describe the phenomenon in some way, e.g., Greenberg ("Understanding," 73–78). The author, in studying the discourse of God in Exod 3:7–10, highlights the two verses (9 and 10) that begin with ועתה and compares the conclusive structure that they create with the conclusive structure of David's prayer in 2 Sam 7:28–29 where we find the same double use of ועתה. See also Fischer, *Jahwe*, 122–134.

3 Cf. Kronholm, "עת," 14.

4 Cf. Brongers, "Bemerkungen," 290.

"And now, behold (ועתה), the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, now therefore (ועתה), I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." One might say that in this passage the adverb has two somewhat different meanings. On the one hand, it is a temporal adverb (*now*, etc.) and, on the other, it introduces a logical nuance: *now therefore, therefore, for which*.

It is noteworthy that the phrase ועתה, although occurring frequently in the narrative texts[5] of the Old Testament, is never found in indirect discourse in the narrative sections, but always in direct discourse. We encounter it therefore in dialogues, speeches, oracles and prayers. It should also be noted that ועתה is never placed at the absolute beginning of the discourse, but always signals the moment of transition between some of its parts, thus bringing the discourse to its conclusion,[6] which is presented as its logical consequence.

In some cases, when the speech moves away from the primary discursive situation, the phrase ועתה is used to bring it back to its origin,[7] as for example in 2 Sam 7:18–29[8]: David uses the adverbial particle ועתה twice in his prayer, in vv. 25 and 28. After the first התעו, in v. 25, he brings the discourse back to its central topic, which is the "promise of God" (דבר) of which he had spoken at the beginning of his speech (vv. 19 and 21), but from which he had departed when he referred to the election of Israel and their relationship with God. To bring his discourse back to the central theme, David repeats the argumentation, with recurring uses of the root דבר: "And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word (דבר) that you have spoken (דבר) concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken (רבד)" (2 Sam 7:25).

Often ועתה is used to introduce a reaction to what was stated before and, in this case, it can have a consecutive meaning: "therefore, now, then, therefore," as for example in Gen 3:22: "Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. And now (ועתה), lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live for ever.'" It can also have an opposing meaning, such as *nevertheless, yet, but*, for example in Isa 64:6–7: "for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now (ועתה), O Lord, thou art our father."[9]

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5 Out of 272 occurrences in the Old Testament: 46 times in 1 Sam; 40 times in Gen; 30 times in 2 Sam; 39 times in 2 Chr; 23 times in 1 Kings; while the recurrences in prophetic and poetic books are more sporadic: 29 times in Isa; 13 times in Ps.

6 BDB, 774. The specific function of ועתה is seen by the authors in introducing the conclusion of a speech: "drawing a conclusion, especially a practical one, from what has been stated: Gen 3:22 *and now* (since man has once been disobedient), lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever."

7 Cf. Kronholm, "עת," 14.

8 Cf. Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, 377–378; Morrison, *2 Samuel*, 102–108.

9 Cf. Kronholm, "עת," 14; Jenni, "Zur Verwendungen," 10–12.

Bill T. Arnold[10] notes that the ועתה particle usually indicates a change in the flow of speech without, however, leading to a pause in the theme. Usually this change is also accompanied by a time shift, when the person speaking reflects on his past, but then turns his attention to the present or to the future, for example in 2 Kgs 12:7: "Therefore, King Jehoash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and said to them, 'Why are you not repairing the house? Now therefore (ועתה) take no more money from your donors, but hand it over for the repair of the house.'"[11] If the speech concerns the past or the future, the particle recalls it to an immediate moment in time, *now,* to the present time of the speaker or to his current situation, as for example in Josh 1:2: "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore (ועתה) arise, go over this Jordan."[12] In this case the particle ועתה can refer to present circumstances,[13] when it introduces an event that has happened, as for example in Mic 4:11: "Now (ועתה) many nations are assembled against you," or when it introduces an order given by a speaker in the present, as in 2 Sam 3:17–18: "And Abner conferred with the elders of Israel, saying, 'For some time past you have been seeking David as king over you. Now (ועתה) then bring it about.'" In some cases, ועתה appears together with הנה which doubles the affirmation of the present, for example in Exod 3:9: "And now (ועתה), behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me."

Similarly, the particle ועתה can introduce a turning point in the discourse, when it indicates the change of a situation with respect to the past, for example in Gen 32:11: "for with my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now (ועתה) I have become two camps." Another nuance of ועתה concerns situations in which a change that is introduced will extend into the future, for example in Gen 11:6: "They have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And now (ועתה) nothing that they propose to do will be impossible for them." As mentioned above, this adverbial phrase can also function as a causal conjunction, as for example in Exod 4:11–12: "Then the LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore (ועתה) go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.'"

In summary, the adverbial expression ועתה can have different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. When it appears in direct speech, it reveals its transitive and conclusive character, signalling a transition from one part of the discourse to another and bringing it to an end. Because of its temporal value, it can shift the story from a past moment towards the present situation of the speaker. The particle ועתה is therefore an effective and versatile rhetorical tool.[14]

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10 Cf. Arnold – Choi, *A Guide*, 140.

11 See also other examples reported by the author: Gen 3:22; Exod 32:30.

12 Cf. Jenni, "Zur Verwendungen," 7–8.

13 Cf. Brongers, "Bemerkungen," 291–299.

14 Cf. Laurentin, "We'attāh-kai nun," 171; Brongers, "Bemerkungen," 290–291.

2. The Persuasive Character of Speeches with the Double ועתה

The goal of every speaker is to induce others to adopt his point of view, but each culture develops its own rhetorical tools, namely, techniques of persuasion, figures of style and thought processes suited for this purpose. In fact, one of the definitions of rhetoric is the *art of persuading*,[15] that is, a method of presenting each subject in a convincing manner.[16] In fact, in every speech with the double ועתה we can see that the speaker chooses the most persuasive ideas, those which will legitimize his request and orient the listener in a positive direction, so that his request is accepted. At this point we might ask why the speaker is looking for the most effective, persuasive strategies. What is his difficulty in submitting his request? Is he in a lower position, so that there is a distance between him and his interlocutor, or does the difficulty come from the nature of the request or from the circumstances in which he finds himself?

Furthermore, the person to be convinced is not only the hearer of the discourse, but also the reader, to whom the whole story is "really" addressed.[17] The question therefore becomes: "What is the effect of these discourses on the reader?" What is the message for the reader? To answer these questions, it is worth looking at all the texts studied:

1) In Gen 44:18–34, Judah uses two strong juridical arguments to persuade Pharaoh's vizier to have Benjamin return home with his brothers and to leave him, Judah, as a slave in place of his younger brother (vv. 33–34). His father will die if he does not see Benjamin return; he had sworn to his father that he would be the guarantor[18] of Benjamin's return (vv. 30–32); and he doesn't want to see his father's pain at the loss of a son a second time. Let us remember, however, that only Joseph and the reader "know" that the Egyptian vizier is really Joseph. Judah, the Hebrew shepherd, is not aware of this and therefore addresses the Egyptian vizier in a courtly language, well aware of the distance that separates him from his interlocutor. Furthermore, Judah is one of the brothers accused of the theft. In this discourse, Joseph first learns what happened when the brothers returned home after selling him and how his father reacted. What then is the message of this story for the reader? What values does the author want to emphasize for the reader by means of Judah's speech? Judah defends the value of brotherhood, which the reader should recognize as essential. The speech of Judah is in fact a heartfelt plea in favoured of brotherhood, centred on respect for the father figure.[19]

15 Cf. Aletti *et al.*, *Lessico*, 85.
16 Cf. Lausberg, *Handbook*, §33.
17 Cf. Ska, "Sincronia," 163.
18 Cf. Lipiński, "ערב," 1006–1012.
19 Cf. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 426–427; Ska, "Judah," 27–39; Pawłowski, "Od więzów krwi," 35–70; Bonora, *Giuseppe*, 48–49; Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 291–297.

2) Also in Joseph's discourse, in Gen 45:1–13, the narrator wants to confirm in the eyes of the reader the value of brotherhood and family solidarity, already expressed by Judah. In fact, Joseph uses a theological argument to persuade his brothers to bring his father Jacob and his family to Egypt: namely, that according to his interpretation, it was not his brothers who had sold him into Egypt, but rather that it was God himself who had sent him before them in order to save the lives of the whole family. The difficulty that Joseph encounters in putting this request to his brothers derives both from the fact that the brothers are surprised by the true identity of the Egyptian vizier, and from the "crime" that weighs on their relationship.
3) In Exod 3:7–10, God makes known to Moses the sufferings of his people in Egypt in entrusting him with his mission: "Come now therefore (ועתה), I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (v. 10). God wants to convince Moses to accept the mission, but ultimately it is the narrator who wants to convince the reader that Moses' mission derives not from his own initiative, but actually comes from God, who, in order to convince Moses, emphasizes the cries for help of the oppressed Israelites, to which he cannot remain indifferent without serious consequences. Furthermore, God asks Moses to carry out a particularly important and delicate mission (cf. Exod 5–14). God will address this difficulty with a persuasive argument.
4) In Caleb's discourse in Josh 14:6–12, the narrator wants to convince the reader of the legitimacy of the presence of Caleb's descendants in the kingdom of Judah. For this reason, Caleb, in order to obtain from Joshua the land that belongs to him, presents as an argument the irrevocable promise of God himself.
5) Likewise, in Josh 22:2–5, Joshua tries to have some tribes return home by pointing out that the Lord himself has given them peace.
6) In Ruth 3:10–13, Boaz wants to convince Ruth to lie down at his feet at night, meaning that she will be under the cloak of his protection, and thereby reassures her that the next day he will intervene as the "redeemer" in her cause. The author, in fact, intends to persuade the reader that Ruth, a Moabite, is a worthy wife for an Israelite.
7) In 1 Sam 24:18–22, Saul wants to convince David to swear that he will spare his descendants, and he supports this request by affirming that David will surely become king. The enmity that has created distance between the interlocutors makes it difficult for Saul to ask David for clemency for his family. In the story of David's accession to the throne, this episode has a particular value, because Saul himself confirms the validity of the "candidate" David. Who, if not Saul, would have thought of legitimizing David? Ultimately, the narrator tries to convince the reader of David's legitimacy as king of Israel.
8) In 1 Sam 25:24–31, Abigail tries to persuade David to abandon his plan of revenge against Nabal. Her discourse of mediation is made more persuasive by

the gifts she has brought to David and by her prostration before him. The distant relationship makes it difficult for Abigail to ask for forgiveness; that is why she tries to plead for it with her gestures as well.

9) In 1 Sam 26:18–20, David wants to persuade Saul to stop pursuing him; otherwise, he warns him, he will risk dying in a foreign land and serving other gods. Saul would have condemned him to die in a foreign land.
10) 2 Sam 2:5–7 contains the message of David to the men of Jabesh-gilead in which, while praising their charity towards Saul by giving him a proper burial, he presents himself as Saul's legitimate heir. We can also deduce that Saul's "tomb" has an important role in the culture of the time: the reader, together with the "guardians of the tomb," is called to recognize David as the legitimate heir, while Abner chooses a son of Saul.
11) In 2 Sam 7:18–29 David wants to obtain divine protection for his dynasty; for this reason, he praises God for his promise ("I will build you a house") and emphasizes God's faithfulness. David's prayer to God is extremely important, but actually the narrator wants to show to what extent the request is fundamental for the reader.[20]
12) In 2 Sam 19:10–15 the people discuss the political crisis after the death of Absalom and, remembering the merits of King David, convince themselves to return David to the throne.
13) In 1 Kgs 5:17–20, Solomon, in his message to the king of Tyre, uses a convincing political-religious argument (God has given him peace and his promise) to support his request for cedars from Lebanon for the construction of the temple. Furthermore, in making the request, Solomon uses formal language in order to appear courteous.
14) In 1 Kgs 8:23–53, Solomon, emphasizing the fidelity of God, wants to obtain a blessing for the temple he has built. The request is important not only for him, but for all the people of Israel and the narrator is looking for persuasive strategies to convince the reader.
15) In 1 Kgs 18:9–14, Obadiah tries to persuade Elijah not to send him to the king, insisting that Ahab will kill him.
16) In 1 Chr 29:10–19 David, praising God and recognizing his power and greatness, seeks to obtain divine protection for the people and for his heir, Solomon. Also in this case, the difficulty in making the request comes from the distance between the two interlocutors, that is, between God and man, and in the importance of the request itself, which concerns not only David, but also his heir, Solomon, and all the people of Israel.
17) In 2 Chr 2:11–15 the king of Tyre, in replying to Solomon, praises the God of Israel and the intelligence of the king, thus supporting his request to be sent

20 Cf. Eslinger, *House of God*, 20.

the promised goods. In addition, he supports his very courteous words with a concrete gesture, namely the sending of an expert craftsman.

18) In 2 Chr 28:9–11 the prophet Oded, wanting to obtain the release of prisoners, denounces the guilt of the army soldiers of Israel, who had taken prisoners and booty from their brothers in Judah and Jerusalem, and he threatens them with the unleashing of God's wrath.

19) In Ezra 9:7–15, Ezra, confessing before God the contamination of the people with other peoples, and recalling the punishment and destruction they have suffered, wants to obtain God's benevolence towards the small part of Israel that remains Ultimately, Ezra's discourse is aimed at convincing the reader of the importance of the Law, in particular of the prohibition of mixed marriages. It is also about convincing the readers both of their faults and of the merits of Ezra. In fact, Ezra's prayer addressed to God is intended to show how important this request is for the people of Israel.

20) In Ezra 10:2–4, Shecaniah wants to persuade Ezra to make a radical choice, that is, to get rid of all foreign wives and their children. The radical nature of this choice is difficult for the narrator to present. He therefore looks for persuasive strategies to convince his readers to give up mixed marriages.

21) In Dan 9:4–19, Daniel tries to convince God to accept his plea in which he asks for the reconciliation of the people with God.

In most of such cases, the discourse reveals a certain urgency, coming from the particular difficulty or threat in which the speaker finds himself. For example, in Gen 44:18–34 the life of an elderly father, namely Jacob, is at stake. In Gen 45:4–13, Joseph's request is urgent, in order to save the life of the family from starvation. In Exod 3:7–10, God's intervention is urgently awaited to free Israel. In Ruth 3:10–13 there is an urgent need for a *go'ēl* to save a family from dying out. In 1 Sam 24:18–23, Saul anxiously seeks protection for his descendants. In 1 Sam 25:24–31, Abigail urgently asks David's forgiveness in order to avoid bloodshed. In 1 Sam 26:18–20, David, pursued by Saul, tries to get out immediately from the danger of idolatry and, above all, he tries to save his own skin (cf. v. 20). In 1 Kgs 18:9–14, Obadiah's life is in danger. In Ezra 10:2–4, the salvation of the men who have taken foreign wives and the success of Ezra's reform are at stake.

In other cases, perhaps less urgent, the object of the request is nevertheless of extreme importance, as in 1 Kgs 5:17–20 and 2 Chr 2:11–15, where the purpose is the building of the temple. In 2 Sam 19:10–15, the text speaks of the crisis affecting the monarchy in Judah. In some cases, the prayer becomes more solemn, as in the following prayers: in 2 Sam 7:18–29, the intercession concerns the fate of the dynasty of David; in 1 Kgs 8:23–53, the reason for prayer is the flourishing of the temple; in 1 Chr 29:10–19, the intercession deals with the future of the kingdom of David; in Ezra 9:7–15 there is concern for the fate of the people of Israel; in Dan 9:4–19 the prophet wants to obtain reconciliation of the guilty people with God. Even in discourses

where there is negotiation without particular urgency, the speaker never addresses the request without a preamble to his interlocutor, but always precedes it with some justification: in Josh 14:6–12 Caleb wants to get the land that belongs to him; in chapter 22:2–5, Joshua exhorts the tribes to be faithful to God and his commandments; in 2 Sam 2:5–7 there is an exhortation addressed to the men of Jabesh-gilead.

Examination of the passages leaves no doubt that the goal of discourses with the double ועתה is always to convince the interlocutor to accept the request for forgiveness, permission or protection, regardless of the subject, its extent or the urgency of the situation. We can therefore conclude that within the narrative, the speeches with the double ועתה have a persuasive character with regard both to the interlocutor of the discourse and to the reader. In addition to the discourse, the speaker too is very important. His authority adds persuasive force to the speech, as in Saul's speech to David, the future king (1 Sam 24:18–22). According to Aristotle, there are three elements in persuasive discourses that contribute to their success: "The first depends on the personal character of the speaker, the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind, the third on the proof or apparent proof provided by the words of the speech itself."[21] As we have observed in the above passages, all three persuasive components are very important.

In our research, however, rather than analysing all the persuasive elements in the selected discourses, we shall focus only on the function of the double use of ועתה as a persuasive element in the structural organization of the discourses. For this purpose, we shall compare these selections with the structure of persuasive discourses in classical rhetoric, in which the organization of the speech (*dispositio*) is one of the tools giving convincing force to prayer. Since the elements that make up the persuasive speech are not equivalent, their organization becomes a key factor in our analysis. In the case of the texts analysed here, the creative use of the word is very important. From this fact emerges a fundamental question: "What is the rhetorical function of ועתה in these passages, and why did the authors use the double or triple ועתה rather than a simpler and more economical construction with a single conclusive ועתה?" We shall try to answer these questions later.

3. The Function of the Double use of the Particle ועתה in the Structure of the Discourses

The speeches with double ועתה, regardless of their length, all have the same characteristics, observable at first glance: they are the prose discourses ending with a request introduced by the second ועתה. The request can take different forms: petition,

21 Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetorica* I, 2, 147.

request, invitation, order, prayer, invocation or supplication. In order better to understand these discourses, discover the convergences between them and describe this phenomenon, we need to analyze the function of the particle ועתה in the structure of the discourses where it occurs twice.

3.1. The Double ועתה in the Composition of the Discourse

The fact that the same element is used twice in the rhetorical composition of these discourses suggests a very specific function. Given that the phenomenon is present in all the cases cited, we need to assess whether it is the expression of a convention, that is, of a common rhetorical technique. To answer this question, it seems useful to start with the fundamental question: what are the functions of the first and second ועתה?

3.1.1. The Function of the First ועתה

As we have already observed, the locution ועתה is never used at the very beginning of a discourse. Also, in the speeches under consideration, the first ועתה signals the transition from the initial part of the speech to the part that seems to be its first conclusion. Any attentive reader, however, realizes that after the first ועתה the discourse does not end, but continues, and only after the second ועתה does the prayer come to an end. In fact, after the first ועתה the discourse usually continues with new argumentations, as in Abigail's discourse in 1 Sam 25:24–31. After the first ועתה Abigail introduces her reflection, namely that God himself prevented David from shedding blood and executing justice on the house of Nabal with his own hand. The presence of a new argumentation after the first ועתה is also found in the following discourses: Josh 22:2–5; 1 Sam 24:18–23; 1 Kgs 5:17–20; 2 Chr 2:10–15; 1 Sam 26:18–20; 2 Sam 2:5–7.

In some discourses, after the first ועתה an element already presented in the preceding narrative is simply resumed. This way of proceeding is found in Exod 3:7–10; Ruth 3:10–13 and in 2 Sam 7:18–29. From analysis of the texts, it is clear that the past facts, presented in the narrative preceding the first ועתה, do not all have the same importance or are not even the subject of the request, but rather explain its context. Only after the first ועתה does the speaker present the real argumentation, that is, the main reason for the request.[22]

22 Among the discourses with the double ועתה, only in the prayer of Solomon, in 1 Kings 8:23–30, do both the first and the second ועתה, introduce the request: the first presents a particular request, that is to keep (imperative of שׁמר) the promise made to his father David, always to assure him a descendant faithful to God. The second ועתה, on the other hand, introduces the conclusion with the request for the blessing of the newly built temple and the more general plea, that is to say that his prayer be heard. It should be noted, however, that the multiple repetitions and the lack of a clear linearity in the flow of speech constitute a particular trait of the literary genre which is prayer.

In still other discourses, after the first ועתה, previously mentioned facts are combined with new argumentations, as for example in Josh 14:6–12. In the first conclusion, Caleb summarizes the story of the promise of the land made to him by the Lord (through the oath of Moses), but also adds an entirely new element, namely, that despite his advanced age he is still in good shape and sufficiently fit to take charge of the good management of the land. We find the same way of proceeding in Gen 44:18–34. Thus, in formulating the argumentation, Judah's discourse takes up the most important facts of the narrative before the first ועתה in v. 30, while the discourse following ועתה in v. 33 combines the elements already mentioned with new ones.

Furthermore, the temporal character of the first ועתה shifts the discourse from the narration of past events to the present moment of the speaker or to the present point of the discourse, which may also include a reference to an immediate future. For this reason, when one of the facts already mentioned in the narrative is repeated in the argumentation, it acquires a different weight and a new role in the rhetorical composition of the speech. In fact, while in the narrative it was part of the historical background of an introductory nature, now, after the first ועתה, it acquires the strength of the central argumentation, that is to say it becomes the key element supporting the request that the speaker will express in the conclusion of the speech. An example of this function of ועתה is the discourse in Exod 3:7–10,[23] which begins with the narration of the facts (vv. 7–8):

God's discourse in Exod 3:7–10 is part of his dialogue with Moses that began in verse 4 and goes directly to the heart of a very urgent problem. God tells Moses about the situation in Egypt (with verbs in the *past tense*): "I have surely seen (ראה ראיתי את־עני) the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters (ואת־צעקתם שמעתי); for I know their sorrows" (v. 7). The narrative focuses on the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt, on God as their eyewitness and on his decision to free them and take them from the land of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey (vv. 7–8).

Argumentation – after the first ועתה (v. 9)

The argumentation is introduced by ועתה together with הנה, which reinforces the statement in the present tense. In fact, the discussion no longer focuses on

23 Some scholars who support the presence of two sources in the story of Moses' vocation see the duplication in the discourse of God (Exod 3:7–10), that is, the parallelism between vv. 7–8 on the one hand and 9–10 on the other. Cf. Noth, *Esodo*, 49–56; Childs, *Esodo*, 69. Other authors do not accept the hypothesis of the two sources, but still argue that vv. 7–8 and 9–10 are not of the same hand and consider as editorial vv. 9–10 (exactly the same verses that Martin Noth attributed to the source E). Cf. Gertz, *Tradition*, 289–291. Martin Buber (*Mosè*, 34) defends the unity of this story. He is of the opinion that the apparent tensions come from a poor understanding of the text, and in terms of composition and style, he considers these chapters to be of a high level of narrative art. Thomas Römer ("Exodus 3–4," 65–79) instead attributes Exod 3:7–10 to one "Grunderzählung" of Exod 3–4.

the past, but on the present situation of the speaker, that is, God. It should be noted, however, that in v. 9 the author does not exactly repeat all of v. 7, but instead uses another choice of words.[24] Of v. 7 only the two key words that indicate the essential elements of the content are repeated[25]: *cry* (צעקה) and *I have seen* (ראה). The differences between the *narration* of the situation in Egypt in v. 7 and the *argumentation* in v. 9 are represented in the following diagram:

Table 1. Verses 7 and 9 compared

v. 7	v. 9
ראה ראיתי את־עני עמי אשר במצרים *I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt*	וגם־**ראיתי** את־**הלחץ** אשר מצרים **לחצים** אתם *and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them*
ואת־צעקתם **שמעתי** מפני **נגשיו** *and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters*	ועתה הנה צעקת **בני־ישראל באה אלי** *Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me*

Note that v. 9, which begins with ועתה הנה, does not say that God *has heard* (שמע) the cry, but that *it has come to me* (באה אלי). The second essential element is linked to *seeing*: in v. 7 the root ראה is an *infinitive absolute* emphasizing the *perfect* (ראה ראיתי), while v. 9 has the *simple perfect* ראיתי and uses different words: God no longer speaks of *affliction* (עני, v. 7), but of the *oppression* (הלחץ) with which *the Egyptians oppress* (לחצים, participle) *them*. Furthermore, the *cry* and the *affliction* in v. 7 refer to *my people* (עמי) *who are in Egypt*, while in v. 9 *the cry* and *oppression* concern *the children of Israel* (בני־ישראל). The critical situation of the people, which God saw, becomes very urgent and requires an immediate solution, precisely because of the cry for help of the oppressed which [...] *is come unto me*. At this point, God's intervention is not simply decided calmly and on the basis of mere seeing (v. 8), but is based on the fact that *now*, that is, just as God speaks, the cry of the oppressed reaches him and *therefore now* he needs urgently to intervene.

Conclusion – following the second ועתה (v. 10)

The request, which appears in the conclusion after the second ועתה, is the logical consequence of the argumentation and must be accepted immediately (ועתה, *and now come,* v. 10). God sends Moses, ordering him to go to Egypt and liberate his people. In both cases the imperative is used: *go!* (לכה) *and bring forth!* (והוצא). The answer to

24 The relationship between v. 8 and v. 10, according to some scholars, is marked by an important difference: in v. 8 we find God's decision declared in a generic way, while, in v. 10, God addresses a concrete order to Moses: "Come, now therefore (ועתה), I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Cf. Blum, *Studien*, 23.

25 Cf. Fischer, *Jahwe*, 127.

the cry for help cannot be postponed, but requires an immediate response, *now*, in the *present*. It is also worth noting in conclusion that the "oppressed" are referred to as both *my people* and *the children of Israel*.

The narrative taken up after the first ועתה, in this case with expressions צעקתם and ראיתי, is not, therefore, a simple repetition; not only does the vocabulary change, but also its rhetorical function: we pass from the historical background of the narration to actual argumentation, from the past to the present, or, in some cases, to the future of the speaker. This temporal passage is also underscored by the change in verb forms, as for example in the first part of Judah's discourse in Gen 44:18–34. Up to v. 29 the verb forms are in the past tense (e.g. שׁאל [v. 19]; ונאמר [v. 20]; מת ויותר [v. 20]; ונגד [v. 24]; ויהי כי עלינו [v. 24], while in the second part introduced in v. 30 by the first ועתה, the verbs are mostly in the future כבאי [v. 30]; … והיה כ [v. 31]; ומת והורידו [v. 31]).[26]

We can therefore conclude that the first ועתה does not function simply as a conclusion to the preceding narrative. In fact, the first ועתה serves above all to introduce the real reason for the request, signalling the transition from narration to argumentation. With the first ועתה, then, the speaker brings the discourse not to a conclusion, but to its central point, that is, to the argumentation that constitutes the heart of the whole speech. The particle ועתה, because of both its transitive and consecutive character and meaning, also functions in this case as a hinge connecting the two parts of the discourse, signaling the logical passage from the initial part to the argumentation. In some speeches the introductory part is quite developed and in others it is more concise. It is clear that from the point of view of the organization of the discourse, everything that precedes the first ועתה functions as an introduction to the argumentation on which the final request rests.

3.1.2. The Function of the Second ועתה

The common element in the discourses we have analysed is the final request. The particle ועתה reveals in this second use its unmistakable conclusive character, bringing the whole discourse to a close. In the vast majority of cases, the request is formulated explicitly through exhortation using the *imperative*, *cohortative* or even *lō'* or *'al* plus *yiqtol*.[27] The use of verb forms in the conclusion introduced with the second ועתה is shown in the following table:

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26 Other examples: in Ruth 3:10–13, in the first part of Boaz's very short speech, in v. 10, he refers to the past of Ruth (לבלתי־לכת), while after the first ועתה, in v. 11, the verbs indicate the future, when Boaz declares that he will do what Ruth asked (אעשׂה־לך); and in 1 Sam 24:18–23, in the first part, vv. 18–20, where Saul refers to the fact that David spared his life (גמלתני; ולא הרגתני), the verb forms refer to the past tense, while in the second part, introduced by the first ועתה, the verbs indicate the future (תמלוך וקמה, v. 21), when Saul predicts that David will become king and his kingdom will be stable.

27 Cf. Ska, *I nostri padri*, 15.

Table 2. Use of verb forms after the second ועתה

Nº	CONCLUSION	*imperative*	*jussive*	*cohortative, weqatal, lō' + imperfect*
1.	Gen 44:33–34 Speech of Judah to the vizier of Egypt		*remain* יֵשֶׁב־נא *go up* יעל	
2.	Gen 45:8–13 Speech of Joseph to his brothers	*hurry and go up* מהרו ועלו		weqatal following imperative, *say* ואמרתם
3.	Exod 3:10 God's speech to Moses	*come* לכה *bring out* והוצא		cohortative, *I will send you* ואשלחך
4.	Josh 14:12 Caleb's speech to Joshua	*give me* תנה־לי		
5.	Josh 22:4b-5 Speech of Joshua to the tribes of Israel	*come back and go!* פנו ולכו		
6.	Ruth 3:12–13 Boaz's speech to Ruth	*spend the night* ליני *lie down* שׁכבי		
7.	1 Sam 24:22 Speech of Saul to David	*swear to me* השׁבעה לי		
8.	1 Sam 25:27–31 Abigail's speech to David	*forgive* שׂא נא		
9.	1 Sam 26:20 David's speech to Saul		*does not fall* אל־יפל	
10.	2 Sam 2:7 David's speech to the men of Jabesh-gilead	*be strong* והיו	*be reinforced* תחזקנה	
11.	2 Sam 7:29 David's prayer	*deign to bless* הואל וברך		
12.	2 Sam 19:11b Speech of the people	*why do you say nothing?* חרשׁ *participle*		
13.	1 Kgs 5:20 Solomon's message to Hiram	*order* צוה	*cut down* ויכרתו־לי	
14.	1 Kgs 8:26–29 Solomon's Prayer		*came true* יאמן נא	weqatal following jussive*:* *and regard* ופנית
15.	1 Kgs 18:14 Obadiah's speech to the prophet Elijah	*go and say* לך אמר		

Nº	CONCLUSION	*imperative*	*jussive*	*cohortative, weqatal, lō' + imperfect*
16.	1 Chr 29:17b-19 David's prayer	*keep* שׁמרה, *direct* והכן and *give* תן		
17.	2 Chr 2:14–15 Hiram's response to Solomon		*send* ישׁלח	
18.	2 Chr 28:11 Oracle of Oded	*hear me* שׁמעוני *return the captives* והשׁיבו		
19.	Ezra 9:12–15 Ezra's Prayer			lō' + imperfect *do not give* אל־תתנו *do not take* אל־תשׂאו *do not seek* ולא־תדרשׁו
20.	Ezra 10:3–4 Speech by Shecaniah	*arise* קום *Be brave and take action* חזק ועשׂה	*let it be done* יעשׂה	cohortative, *let us make a covenant* נכרת־ברית
21.	Dan 9:17–19 Daniel's prayer	imperative, 10 times: 3 times *hear* (שׁמע), *to make light shine* (אחר), *incline* (נטה), *open* (פקח), *see* (ראה), *forgive* (סלח), *listen* (קשׁב) *and act* (עשׂה)	ʿal + jussive, *do not be angry any more* אל־תאחר	

The second ועתה thus signals the transition of the discourse from the argumentation to the final request. This transition is also emphasized by the change in verb forms: while in the argumentation we see mostly verbs in the *indicative*, the request, by contrast, is expressed with the *imperative* or in an equivalent way.[28] Only in 2 Sam 19:10–11 and 1 Kgs 18:9–14 is the final request not expressed explicitly using one of the verb forms indicated above, but rather through rhetorical means:

1) In 2 Sam 19:10–11, the discourse ends with the question, "Now why are you not doing anything to get the king back?" (the *participle* מחרשׁים is used: *do nothing*). In fact, the question is an urgent request to bring the king back;

28 Other examples: in the discourse of Judah in Gen 44:18–34, after the first ועתה, we note the use of the *indicative* (וחטאתי; וערב; ומת; והורידו; קשׁורה) which changes to the *jussive* (ישׁב־נא and יעל) after the second ועתה, which introduces the request; in Exod 3:7–10 in the discourse of God, in v. 9 introduced by the first ועתה, we find the verbs in the *indicative* (באה; ראיתי), while after the second ועתה we note the use of the *jussive* (והוצא; לכה); similarly in Josh 14:6–12 after the first ועתה the indicative verbs are used (דבר; החיה), while after the second ועתה we find the *imperative* (תנה); in Josh 22:2–5 in Joshua's admonition we find the *perfect* (הניח), while in the concluding request the *imperative* (פנו ולכו).

2) In 1 Kgs 18:9–14, Obadiah tells the prophet Elijah that by ordering him to go and say to Ahab, "Elijah is here," he is putting his (Obadiah's) life in danger, because if he returns to King Ahab, Ahab will kill him. He then concludes the speech by exclaiming: "And now you say to me: 'Go and tell your lord: here is Elijah!' He will kill me!" Obadiah quotes Elijah's order by way of asking for the reverse, namely that Elijah not send him to Ahab.

In summary, we can say that the function of the first ועתה in the discourses we have analysed is linked to its transitional and temporal character, with a consecutive meaning: it signals the transition from the introductory part of the discourse to the argumentation that constitutes the centre of the discourse. The second ועתה, on the other hand, takes the consecutive meaning to its conclusion and brings the whole discussion to an end, by introducing a request that follows logically from the preceding argumentation. In fact, it is the reaction of the speaker to the argumentation that pushes him to address his interlocutor with a specific request.

3.2. The General Structure of Discourses with the Double ועתה

The above analysis of the functions of the first and second ועתה showed that in discourses with the double ועתה we do not have two conclusions; rather, the first introduces the argumentation and the second the conclusion containing the request, namely the end point of the discourse. In fact, in a first reading of the texts we already can see that the speeches with the double ועתה reach their *climax* with the final request, the goal towards which the whole prayer tends.

At this point we shall address the question of the recurring structure of these discourses and the organization of their contents. Some reveal a more complex structure, while others are simpler. In the more well-structured cases, found in Gen 44:18–34; Ruth 3:10–13; 1 Sam 24:18–22; 2 Sam 2:5–7; 1 Kgs 8:23–30; 1 Kgs 18:9–14; and Dan 9:4–19, the general structure of the discourses with the double ועתה is composed of four parts:

A. Brief introduction
B. Narration of past facts
C. Argumentation – after the first ועתה
D. Conclusion – after the second ועתה

The brief introduction sets the tone for the plea, establishes contact with the hearer(s), in the hope of making them attentive and benevolent, or simply and briefly announces the topic.[29] Often the discourse begins with a request to listen, accompa-

29 Cf. Aletti *et al*, *Lessico*, 93.

nied by good wishes or praise, in a declamatory tone or a simple *captatio benevolentiae*. Then follows the narration of the facts, in which the speaker usually explains the circumstances of his request. As noted above, the narration of past events does not constitute the real argumentation and does not have adequate persuasive force. Very often it strays from the main theme and provides historical background for the request occurring in the present time of the speaker. To make the transition from the past to the present, the speaker uses ועתה followed by the explicit argumentation, in which the request is gradually prepared and introduced with the second and concluding ועתה.

In addition to the presence of the double ועתה, the main element supporting this structure is the change in verb forms. In the introductory part, namely in the narration of the facts (B), the verbs are in the *indicative,* referring to the *past*, while in the argumentation (C) they are generally expressed in the *present* or in the *future*. The verb forms used in these two parts of the speech are: *wayyiqtol, qatal, weqatal, yiqtol*. The conclusion (D), on the other hand, is marked by the use of exhortative verb forms: *imperative, cohortative, jussive*, or *lō'* with the *imperfect*.

In other discourses with the double ועתה the structure is less clear. The brief introduction (A) is missing and the author begins with the narration of past events. We can see this way of proceeding in: Exod 3:7–10[30]; Josh 22:1–5; 2 Sam 19:10–11; 1 Kgs 5:17–20; 2 Chr 28:9–11; and Ezra 10:2–4. The common structure of these discourses is tripartite:

A. -------
B. Narration of the facts of the past
C. Argumentation – after the first ועתה
D. Conclusion – after the second ועתה

In still other discourses, surprisingly, the narration of the facts (B) is lacking: cf. Gen 45:4–16; 1 Sam 26:18–20; 1 Chr 29:10–19; 2 Chr 2:11–15. After a brief introduction, the discourse immediately proceeds to the argumentation and then to the conclusion, without any narration of previous facts. The structure of these discourses is therefore as follows:

A. Brief introduction
B. ----------
C. Argumentation – after the first ועתה
D. Conclusion – after the second ועתה

30 It should be noted that in Exod 3:7–10 we are dealing with a divine discourse. In this case, a *captatio benevolentiae* on the part of God seems rather useless or simply superfluous.

In summary, the speaker introduces the discourse by trying to enter into a relationship with his interlocutor (part A). He then presents a situation, circumstances or events that occurred in the past, thus forming a narrative within the narrative (B); however, one of these two elements, i.e., the introduction or the narration of past events, may be missing. The elements of the discourse that are always present are: the argumentation (C) and the conclusion (D), each introduced by ועתה.

3.3. The Structure of Discourses with the Double ועתה and the *dispositio*[31] in Classical Rhetoric

At this point we continue our analysis of the double use of ועתה in Old Testament discourses by comparing their structure to the composition of persuasive discourses in classical rhetoric. According to the principles of classical rhetoric, persuasive discourse is divided into four main parts: *exordium*, *narratio*, *argumentatio* and *peroratio*.[32] Surprisingly, the structure of the biblical discourses with the double ועתה corresponds exactly to the composition (*dispositio*) of the persuasive discourses, as described by the classical authors.

Table 3. Structure of the speeches compared

Structure of the speeches with the double ועתה	Dispositio in persuasive speeches according to classical rhetoric
A. Introduction	*Exordium*
B. Narration of the facts	*Narratio*
C. Argumentation	*Argumentatio*
D. Conclusion	*Peroratio*

In the vast majority of cases with the double ועתה we find all four elements to be present in the structure of the discourses: cf. Gen 44:18–34; Ruth 3:10–13; 1 Sam 24:18–22; 1 Sam 25:24–31; 1 Sam 24:18–23; 2 Sam 2:5–7; 2 Sam 7:18–29; 1 Kgs 8:23–30; 1 Kgs 18:9–14; Ezra 9:6–15; and Dan 9:4–19.

The analysis of the structure of the speeches with the double ועתה has already been presented in detail (point 3.2.). For this reason we will now analyse the *dispositio* in a discourse with the double ועתה to the first example that appears in the Bible, namely the discourse in Gen 44:18–34:

1) *Exordium*: in v. 18, Judah begins his speech by asking Pharaoh's vizier for permission to speak, thus recognizing his dignity: you and Pharaoh are one. Judah uses

31 Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetorica* III, 13, 10.

32 Cf. Garavelli Mortara, *Manuale*, 60–61.

the *captatio benevolentiae*, trying to establish contact with his interlocutor so that he will become attentive and benevolent, exactly as the exordium or first part is foreseen in classical rhetoric.[33]

2) *Narratio*: in vv. 19–29, Judah exposes the facts of the past: he recalls the first meeting with the Egyptian vizier and recounts the reaction of his father Jacob when he asks permission to take Benjamin to Egypt, emphasizing the close relationship between father and son. This section corresponds exactly to the *narratio*, which informs the listener of the subject of the dispute.[34]
3) *Argumentatio*: in vv. 30–32, introduced by the first ועתה, Judah builds his argument by referring a second time to his conversation with Jacob: "Your servants will have brought down our father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave" (Gen 42:38; 44:29). With this argument based on pathos, Judah tries to evoke emotion and feeling in the Egyptian vizier.[35] The second argument is the crucial element of Judah's personal involvement (*ethos*), appearing for the first time in the discourse, namely that he has vouched for his brother's return to his father. Again, Judah uses a quote, this time citing his oath to his father: "If I do not bring him back to you, you can blame me for it all my life." This part of Judah's speech corresponds to the argumentation in persuasive speech according to the principles of classical rhetoric. In fact, Judah, in presenting the two arguments, is hoping to find a solution, which he will propose to the Egyptian vizier in the request that follows.
4) *Peroratio*: vv. 33–34, introduced by the second ועתה, conclude Judah's discourse with a request that follows from the argumentation. In fact, he wants to do everything to be faithful to his oath and not witness the pain of his father Jacob. The conclusion of the speech, as in classical rhetoric, consists of two phases: Judah first asks the Egyptian vizier to remain as his slave in place of Benjamin and then appeals to the vizier's feelings: "I could not bear to see the misery which my father would suffer" (v. 34).

According to the principles of classical rhetoric, the first two parts of the discourse, the *exordium* and the *narratio*, may be missing. The *exordium* could be missing if the speech were brief or if the urgency of a situation prompted the speaker to a sudden attack, inducing him to enter *in medias res* without delay.[36] In fact, even in discourses with the double ועתה one of the initial parts is sometimes omitted, i.e. the brief introduction (A) or the narration of the events of the past (B). Thus, among the discourses we have analysed, some are without the brief introduction (A), but begin directly with the narration (B): cf. Gen 45:4–16; Exod 3:7–10;

33 Cf. Aletti *et al.*, *Lessico*, 93; Joosten, "Biblical Rhetoric," 22.
34 Cf. Garavelli Mortara, *Manuale*, 66; Joosten, "Biblical Rhetoric," 22.
35 Cf. Joosten, "Biblical Rhetoric," 21; Giuntoli, *Genesi 11,27–50,26*, 294.
36 Cf. Garavelli Mortara, *Manuale*, 63.

Josh 22:1–5; 2 Sam 19:10–11; 1 Kgs 5:17–20; 2 Chr 28:9–11; and Ezra 10:2–4. Another example is found in Solomon's short message to Hiram, king of Tyre, in 1 Kgs 5:17–20:

1) *Narratio*: Solomon, addressing Hiram, begins his message directly by recalling the past, during the time of his father David. He remembers that David could not build the temple because of the enemies surrounding him on all sides.
2) *Argumentatio*: with the first ועתה the discourse moves on to the argumentation, in which Solomon acknowledges that it is the Lord his God who has given him a time of peace, without enemies or threat of danger. He therefore declares his intention to build the temple, according to the word of the Lord given to his father David.
3) *Peroratio*: Solomon concludes the message with a request for material for the construction of the temple, namely the cedars of Lebanon, and he also asks for the help of the Sidonians, who are skilled in felling trees.

In other discourses the *narratio* (B) is missing, so that the introduction immediately proceeds to the *argumentatio* (C), introduced by the first ועתה 1 Sam 26:18–20; 1 Chr 29:10–19; 2 Chr 2:11–15. An example is David's prayer in 1 Chr 29:10–19:

1) *Exordium*: David begins his prayer to God in a tone of praise, recognizing *his greatness, power, glory, eternity, splendour*, but especially *his royal sovereignty* and *dominion* over all. (vv. 10–12) With this introductory eulogy, David hopes to enter into a relationship with God as sovereign and to elicit his benevolence.
2) *Argumentatio*: in this part of the discourse (vv. 13–17), introduced by the first ועתה, David acknowledges his own misery and that of his people, as well as the fact that everything that David has prepared for the construction of the temple is a gift from God. Then the important argumentation is introduced, which is that God loves uprightness and that David is presenting his offering with a sincere heart.
3) *Peroratio*: after the second ועתה, which brings the speech to its conclusion (vv. 17b–19), David precedes his request with the observation that all the people also brought their offering spontaneously and with joy. For this reason, David asks God to direct their hearts towards him and keep his son Solomon in faithful observance of God's commandments, precepts and statutes, so that he may construct the building for which he has made preparations.

It must be emphasized that in persuasive discourse, according to the principles of classical rhetoric, there are two fixed and mandatory elements, namely the *argumentatio* and the *peroratio*. As we can see, these two elements correspond to the *argumentatio* (C) and the *peroratio* (D) in the speeches with the double ועתה. In fact, they are never lacking and moreover are highlighted by the double ועתה. The comparison between the structure of speeches with the double ועתה and the *dispositio* in persuasive speeches according to classical rhetoric can be summarized in the following table:

Table 4. Speeches with the double ועתה according to classical rhetoric

Nº	Text	*Exordium*	*Narratio*	*Argumentatio*	*Peroratio*
		Brief introduction	**Narration of the facts** (*indicative* of the past tense)	**Argumentation ועתה** (usually *indicative* of the present or future)	**Conclusion ועתה** (*imperative, cohortative*, *jussive*, lō' + *imperfect*)
1.	Gen 44:18–34	v. 18	vv. 19–29	vv. 30–32	vv. 33–34
2.	Gen 45:4b-13	–	4b	5–7	8–13
3.	Exod 3:7–10	–	7–8	9	10
4.	Josh 22:2–5[37]	–	2–3	4a	4b–5
5.	Ruth 3:10–13	10a	10b	11	12–13
6.	1 Sam 24:18–22	18	19–20	21	22–23
7.	1 Sam 26:18–20	18–19a	–	19b	20
8.	2 Sam 2:5–7	5a	5b	6	7
9.	2 Sam 19:10–11	–	10a	10b–11a	11b
10.	1 Kgs 5:17–20	–	17	18–19	20
11.	1 Kgs 8:23–29	23	24	25	26–29
12.	1 Kgs 18:9–14	9	10	11–13	14
13.	1 Chr 29:10–19	10–12	–	13–17	17b–19
14.	2 Chr 2:11–15	11	–	12–13	14–15
15.	2 Chr 28:9–11	–	9	10	11
16.	Ezra 10:2–4	–	2a	2b	3–4
17.	Dan 9:4–19	4	5–14	15–16	17–19

In conclusion, the structure of the speeches with the double ועתה generally corresponds to the *dispositio* of the persuasive discourses of classical rhetoric. The comparison confirms that even in persuasive discourses involving a request with the double ועתה, the argumentation, introduced by the first ועתה, not only constitutes the central and essential part of the speech, which prepares and justifies the request, but also becomes the main persuasive element of the whole rhetorical composition. Moreover, thanks to the very particular characteristics of the particle ועתה, a structural

37 In some texts the discourse is constructed with the triple use of ועתה: Josh 14:6–12; 1 Sam 25:24–31; 2 Sam 7:18–29; Ezra 9:6–15.

link is created between the introductory part (A and/or B), the argumentation (C) and the request (D).

3.4. Discourses with the Triple Use of the Phrase ועתה

Of the twenty or so discourses in our study, in four cases we find ועתה used not twice but three times: Josh 14:6–12; 1 Sam 25:24–31[38]; 2 Sam 7:18–29[39] (repeated in 1 Chr 17:16–27) and Ezra 9:6–15.[40] For example, in Caleb's discourse, in Josh 14:6–12, the triple use of ועתה occurs in vv. 10–12, and the argumentation takes place in two stages: Caleb relates to Joshua the facts of the past (B, vv. 6–9) regarding the exploration of the land and cites the oath Moses made to Caleb, who was forty years old at the time. The first ועתה introduces the important argumentation, that is, that the Lord kept his promise and kept him alive for forty-five years (C1, v. 10a). The second ועתה adds an update of the facts to Caleb's argumentation: now, as he speaks, he is eighty-five years old and is still able to fight. (C2, v. 10b) Only the third ועתה concludes the whole discourse with the request for the land (D, v. 12): "Now give me then this mountain." From the analysis, it is clear that the author, before

38 In 1 Sam 25:24–31, the triple ועתה appears in vv. 26a, 26b and 27, and allows the author to present a more structured, two-part argumentation: God's action that preserves David from the sin of shedding blood (C1, v. 26a) and Abigail's wish that the enemies of David be like Nabal, repentant and submissive (C2, v. 26b). Cf. Brueggemann, *I e II Samuele*, 185.

39 The point of David's prayer is his request for God's blessing, expressed in the conclusion (D) and introduced by the third ועתה. Note that David's discourse departs from its central theme twice, indicated by the root דבר and returns to it twice with the use of the locution ועתה (C1, v. 25 and C2, v. 28). David's only argumentation for asking God's blessing is his confidence that God will fulfil his *promise* (דבר). Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, 377; Morrison, *2 Samuel*, 105; Brueggemann, *I e II Samuele*, 271–272; Auld, *I and II Samuel*, 424–426; Eslinger, *House of God*, 82–88.

40 Note that Ezra's prayer is actually a confession: it begins with the exposition of Israel's guilt in not remaining separate from the pagans, but in mixing with them by allowing mixed marriages (B, vv. 6–7). As a consequence of these sins, Israel suffered the drama of deportation. The prayer is dominated by penitential vocabulary: עונתינו רבו; אשמתנו גדלה. The second part, introduced by the first ועתה in v. 8 (C1), brings the discourse to the current situation, in which Ezra acknowledges God's clemency in leaving a remnant of Israel and in assuring them of the favour of the king of Persia. At this point, we would expect a second ועתה and a conclusion with a request for forgiveness; instead, the second ועתה again introduces a confession of sins: "We have abandoned your commandments" (C2, v. 10). Ezra's prayer is transformed into an oracle which ends with the request (D) introduced by the third ועתה. Surprisingly, however, the request is not addressed to God, but on the contrary, it is God, quoted by Ezra, who addresses the following precept to his people: "Therefore, do not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters for your children." The discourse then returns to the problem of the people's guilt, which the "remnant of Israel" recognizes before God. A question then emerges: why does Ezra's confession not end with a request for forgiveness addressed to God? The answer is simple: Ezra recognizes from the beginning that God has already shown mercy towards his people (vv. 8–9) and his concern is rather that the people desist from their illicit conduct. Ezra introduces this topic using the phrase ועתה a second time, taking up the theme of guilt and introducing the oracle consisting of two parts: 1) the presentation of the impurity of the local population, which constitutes the reason for not allowing mixed marriages; and 2) the request itself, in the form of God's commandment quoted by Ezra and introduced by the third ועתה.

concluding the speech with his request for the land due to him, uses ועתה twice, not only to specify the facts that emerge, but also to bring the argumentation back to the present moment (after a rather general sentence stating how the Lord has kept him alive, he points out that God has also kept him in excellent form). The structure of these discourses is shown in the following table:

Table 5. The structure of discourses with triple ועתה

Nº	Text	A/B	C1	C2	D
		Brief introduction / narrative (*indicative*)	**Argumentation I ועתה** (*indicative*)	**Argumentation II ועתה** (*indicative*)	**Conclusion III ועתה** (*imperative*, *cohortative*, *jussive*, *lō'* + *imperfect*)
1.	Josh 14:6–12	6–9	10a	10b	12
2.	1 Sam 25:24–31	24–25	26a	26b	27–31
3.	2 Sam 7:18–29	18–24	25	28	29
4.	Ezra 9:6–15	6–7	8–9	10–11	12–15

In summary, we can see that the last ועתה always introduces the final request, while the first two ועתה reveal their transitory character and are used to better articulate the argumentation. In such cases, the second ועתה can take on different functions: it can introduce a further clarification of the argumentation already presented after the first ועתה (cf. Josh 14:6–12); it can articulate the argumentation with more emphasis, distinguishing two different topics (cf. 1 Sam 25:24–31); it can bring the argumentation up to the present moment of the speaker, or bring the discourse back to the main topic, from which the speaker has departed (cf. 2 Sam 7:18–29 and Ezra 9:6–15), before presenting the request in the final conclusion. The triple use of ועתה occurs in only four speeches, but a study of these speeches confirms the conclusions of the previous investigations, namely that only the last ועתה has a truly conclusive character, while the first and the second serve to bring or retrace the speech back to its central topic.

At the beginning of this section, dedicated to the function of the double use of ועתה in the structural organization of discourses, we asked why the double or triple ועתה is used, rather than a simpler construction with only a final ועתה. From a rhetorical point of view, all the analysis of the discourses we have studied and their comparison with classical rhetoric reveal that the double or even the triple use of the phrase ועתה is used above all for stylistic reasons, to give the discourse persuasive force, thanks to the argumentation introduced with the first ועתה. When this particle

is used only once, it only allows the speaker to bring the speech to its conclusion. The dual use, by contrast, allows the speaker to bring the discourse to the "therefore" in the argumentation, which, as we have seen, is the decisive element in a persuasive discourse. In the speeches studied, this strategy is always used regardless of the complexity or urgency of the situation, the person to whom the speech is addressed, or the distance between the speaker and the interlocutor. The main reason for the use of the double ועתה lies in the persuasive force that the speech acquires because of the argumentation that precedes the request. The speaker would not have been able to produce this effect using the simpler construction with only one ועתה.

4. The Range of Speeches with the Double ועתה

The subject of our study so far has been the formal aspect of persuasive speeches with the double ועתה, their structure and the function of the locution ועתה in their rhetorical composition. Next, we intend to deal specifically with their content and literary context. Each discourse merits a separate rhetorical analysis, but this is beyond the scope of our study, which is limited to the double use of the phrase ועתה. We therefore intend to focus on analysing the context of speeches with double ועתה and classifying them according to situations and speakers.

4.1. Divine Discourses

Among the discourses with the double ועתה, there is only one divine discourse, found in Exod 3:7–10, and which has a juridical connotation. It begins with the *notitia criminis*, that is, the news of the oppression of the people of Israel in Egypt. This crime report reaches God through the cry of the oppressed: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings" (Exod 3:7). The cry for help from the oppressed in Egypt is addressed to God, who is the God of Israel. God then acts as a judge to restore justice, sending Moses to Egypt to free the oppressed.

4.2. Prayers and Conversations with God

The invocation of God as protector and defender of the people of Israel occurs in various discourses with the double ועתה, in which the person praying tries to obtain protection from God: 2 Sam 7:18–29 (cf. 1 Chr 17:16–27); 1 Chr 29:10–19; 1 Kgs 8:23–53 (2 Chr 6:14–42). It is significant that in all three texts the person praying is the king, who, in ancient Israel, was the defender, protector and judge of the people – and the mediator *par excellence* between God and his people. For example,

in 2 Sam 7:18–29 (cf. 1 Chr 17:16–27), King David seeks God's protection for his dynasty which, according to God's promise, should last forever. In the biblical world, a promise meant an irrevocable commitment. David recognizes and invokes the sovereignty of God, so that God will fulfil his promise.

Among the discourses studied, some concern the *rîḇ* between God and his people and express the sinners' search for reconciliation: Dan 9:4–19; Ezra 9:6–15; 10:2–4. These discourses belong to the broader semantic field of prayer, but they have a precise place and a precise function in the juridical dynamics of the controversy (*rîḇ*), that is, they try to lead the parties involved to reconciliation. These prayers are *supplications* and *intercessions* made up of two elements, namely an admission of guilt and a plea for forgiveness or reconciliation, as for example in Dan 9:4–19. Daniel confesses the sins of the people: *We have sinned, we have committed sins* (חטאנו ועוינו, vv. 5.15, in the indicative). The list of infidelities is very long and constitutes the narration of the facts, from which emerges the contrast between God's fidelity to the covenant and the sins of the people. Daniel's prayer ends with the people's plea for reconciliation with God, expressed with eight different imperatives: *listen* (occurring three times) (שׁמע), *make it shine* (אחר), *fold* (נטה), *open* (פקח), *look* (ראה), *forgive* (סלח), *turn around* (קשׁב) and *intervene* (עשׂה). Note that what prompts Daniel to ask God for reconciliation in the name of the people is God's power as liberator: "And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly" (v. 15). Perhaps here too the plea is addressed to the people of Israel to convince them on the one hand that they have sinned, and on the other, to help them understand how they can hope for a better future. The God of the past is also the God of the present and the future, because he is a faithful God and a God who forgives.

4.3. Discourses Involving Sovereigns

There are several discourses involving rulers, especially kings Saul, David, and Solomon. Some take the form of a legal controversy (*rîḇ*), in which the final request of the speaker is a plea for forgiveness. The request made by the guilty party, or by a defender in his place, essentially involves two elements: 1) the declaration of one's own fault, expressed in the *indicative*; and 2) the explicit request for forgiveness or a similar plea, expressed in the *imperative*, *jussive* or an equivalent form. The link between these two elements is emphasized by the particle ועתה, which indicates the logical correlation between confession and request.[41] The passages involving this kind of situation are: 1 Sam 24:18–22; 1 Sam 25:24–31; 1 Sam 26:18–20. The confession of guilt is symmetrical to the plea of innocence, which can be expressed in the form of

41 Cf. Bovati, *Ristabilire*, 110.

a question.[42] In the controversy between Saul and David, in 1 Sam 26:18–20, David declares that he is innocent of Saul's unjust accusation and begs him to stop pursuing him, to the end that he would be "banished to serve other gods." The innocent David asks Saul, who pursues him unjustly, the reason for his guilt: "What have I done?" (כי מה עשׂיתי, v. 18, *indicative*). In the concluding question, David implores Saul not to allow his blood to fall to the ground far from the presence of the Lord (אל־יפל, v. 20, *jussive*).

Other discourses involving sovereigns have to do with political and commercial life. For example, in 1 Kgs 5:17–20 King Solomon writes a message to the king of Tyre, in which he uses a convincing political-religious argumentation (God has given peace and his promise) to support his request for the cedars of Lebanon for the building of the temple. In his reply to Solomon in 2 Chr 2:11–15, the king of Tyre praises the God of Israel and the intelligence of the king, thus yielding to Solomon's request to send the promised goods. In addition, the king of Tyre supports his words with a concrete gesture, namely by sending an expert craftsman. By contrast, the following discourses present a different aspect of the political sphere: in 2 Sam 2:5–7 David tries to persuade the men of Jabesh-Gilead to accept him as their new king. In 2 Sam 19:10–15 the people discuss the political crisis created by the revolt and death of Absalom, and remembering the merits of King David, they convince themselves to have David return to the throne.

4.4. Discourses in a Military Setting

Among the speeches with the double ועתה, two occur in a military context. In Josh 22:2–5, Joshua exhorts the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh to return to their homes and continue to serve the Lord faithfully, using a military type of diplomatic argumentation, namely that the Lord has fulfilled his promise and has given them peace. It is assumed that the Lord has thus created the conditions for a peaceful life dedicated to the faithful observance of the commandments. We find another context of war in 2 Chr 28:9–11, in which the prophet Oded denounces the guilt of the Israeli army for taking booty and for taking captive their kinsmen from Judah and Jerusalem. His speech is aimed at the release of the prisoners of war.

4.5. Discourses between Individuals in a Family

In Boaz's speech, in Ruth 3:10–13, Ruth says to Boaz: "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer" (כי גאל אתה, Ruth 3:9). Boaz acknowledges that he is a *goʾēl* of Ruth (גאל אנכי), but says that there is a closer

42 Cf. Bovati, *Ristabilire*, 94–95.

relative who can take on this role in his place (Ruth 3:12).[43] In his short speech, Boaz responds to Ruth by twice asking her to remain under his protection until the meeting with her closest relative. Another family context involves the reunion of Joseph and his brothers, in which we have the discourse of Judah in Gen 44:18–34 and that of Joseph in Gen 45:4b–13.

In summary, we can say that the scope of speeches with the double ועתה is varied, involving a variety of situations and speakers. Some discourses are of a legal nature, dealing with reconciliation in legal disputes (*rîḇ*) and the law of family solidarity, in which the closest relative is obliged to intervene as a "redeemer" (*goʾēl*) in difficult situations. It seems significant that many of the discourses we have studied concern the realm of the royal court and have a sovereign as the speaker or recipient. An analogous scenario is that of the relationship between God and his people. In this context we find various supplications and requests for forgiveness (*rîḇ*). Some texts present the political-diplomatic background, often exemplified in the events of kings Saul, David, and Solomon involving the military (war, peace, prisoners of war), commerce (exchange of goods) and politics (accepting David as king).

5. The Request for Forgiveness and the Origins of the Double Use of ועתה in Hebrew Rhetoric

In our analysis, we observed that the first instance of ועתה is used in persuasive discourses of request to introduce the argumentation, that is, the most convincing element of the speech. In fact, both the structure of the speech using the double ועתה and the concepts used by the speaker in the argumentation have persuasive value. They are used to convince the recipient to grant the request. We have noted that this strategy is used in simple situations, in complex, urgent, and less urgent situations, and between different types of interlocutors. We have, however, one more question: what is the origin of this rhetorical strategy in persuasive speeches?

We noted that in the request for forgiveness, the argumentation acquires a particular importance, because it no longer concerns the speaker or the circumstances, but the judge. In the last phase of our analysis, we shall therefore focus on the importance of the argumentation, introduced by the first ועתה in the request for forgiveness (*deprecatio*), which might reveal the origin of the rhetorical strategy of the double use of ועתה.

We observed that the confession of guilt in a judicial controversy (*rîḇ*) serves not only to admit the truth of the accusation, but is also intricately linked to the request

43 Cf. de Vaux, *Le istituzioni*, 47.

for forgiveness. In fact, the guilty party takes the initiative and uses all his energy to get what he wants. Pietro Bovati further observes that:

> The supplicant interposes an account of the history that lies between the two parties who now find themselves in dispute; this calling to mind of the past has the effect of laying bare the nature of each as revealed in the acts each has committed. With regard to the innocent partner, this shows that it is characteristic of that person to want a relationship and to remain committed, without yielding, to upholding it.[44]

The guilty party in telling the story of this broken relationship, tells his listener that he (the listener) is "just," that it is in his nature to remain faithful to what he himself began. Regarding this relationship between the innocent and the guilty, Bovati states:

> The accuser's *rîb* brought into play a series of reasons to convince the other that the inevitable prospect was a just punishment; the supplication for pardon seeks reason for the opposite solution, which is that of just clemency. Whereas the accusation concerns the criminal, the request for pardon concerns the innocent (Num. 14.9; Ps. 51.3; Neh. 9.32; 2 Chron. 30.18 etc.) and tends to summarize all the arguments into a simple: forgive because you are just, forgive for the sake of your name, forgive because you are you (cf. Isa. 43.25), so that the justice which belongs to your being may be fully carried out (Jer. 14.7,21; Pss. 25.11; 79.9; Dan. 9.19).[45]

The petitioner often presents the request in the imperative. Bovati observes, however that the use of this verb form does not imply an order, because by confessing his guilt, the petitioner recognizes that the basis for the imperative contained in the petition lies in the accuser, who is recognized as truth and justice (cf. Dan 9:16.18; Ezra 9:15).

It should be noted that even in judicial discourse, according to classical rhetoric, both Cicero (*De inventione*, I, 11, 15) and Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria*, VII, 4, 17) recognize in the request for forgiveness, *deprecatio*, a form of judicial defence.[46] They consider it to be the lowest level of defence, because the accused acknowledges having committed an action contrary to the law. However, Quintilian writes that the last form of defence is justification: "Ultima est *deprecatio*" (*Institutio oratoria*, VII, 4, 17). Cicero instead adds an interesting observation, namely that the *deprecatio* or prayer does not consist of a defence of the act committed, but of a request for forgiveness of the act; he therefore concludes that this type of defense is usually not

44 Bovati, *Re-Establishing*, 130.
45 Bovati, *Re-Establishing*, 131.
46 Cf. Lausberg, *Handbook*, §192.

exercised in court: "Deprecatio est in qua non defensio facti, sed ignoscendi postulatio continetur, hoc genus vix in iuducio probari potest" (*De inventione*, II, 34, 104). Even in the Jewish *rîḇ* the breach of justice can be re-established through the process of reconciliation between the two parties. In fact, the guilty party asks for clemency from his judge, the accuser, through the *deprecatio* or prayer for forgiveness. The judge, for his part, in a way embodies the judicial institution, so arguments are used in an appeal for leniency.[47]

Among the discourses studied above, the request for forgiveness as a form of defence by a guilty party is found in the following passages: in Abigail's discourse (1 Sam 25:24–31); in the request of Saul, who asks David for clemency for his descendants (1 Sam 24:18–22); in David's request when he is unjustly accused (1 Sam 26:18–20); in the speech of Shecaniah in which he suggests that the people can change their behaviour (Ezra 10:2–4); and above all in the supplications that Daniel and Ezra raise to God on behalf of the people (Dan 9:4–19) and (Ezra 9:6–15). The *deprecatio* uttered by the guilty, when composed only of the two elements, namely the declaration of his own fault and the request for forgiveness, is not sufficient in the face of the judge, who is also the sovereign or God. The admission of guilt (in the *narrative*) and the request for forgiveness (in the *conclusion*) must be accompanied by an argument that can convince the judge to grant leniency. Indeed, in this group of discourses, the argumentation following the first ועתה introduces this essential element, which no longer focuses on the guilty party, but appeals to the judge, to his responsibility, integrity and moral qualities, as well as his mercy and clemency. For example:

1) Abigail (1 Sam 25:24–31) in her argumentation refers to the integrity of David, whom God himself preserved from shedding blood with his own hand (v. 26).
2) In 1 Sam 24:18–22, Saul asks David for clemency for his descendants, appealing to the fact that David will surely become king and therefore ruler and judge in Israel.[48]
3) In 1 Sam 26:18–20, David, on the other hand, appeals to Saul's discernment and sense of justice.
4) In Dan 9:4–19, Daniel appeals to the power of God, revealed in the Exodus, when with a "strong hand" he brought Israel out of Egypt.
5) Ezra refers directly to the grace of God in the saving of a small "remnant of Israel" (Ezra 9:6–15).

In these discourses a guilty person asks for forgiveness. First, however, he confesses his guilt and appeals to the clemency, responsibility, sovereignty or justice of the judge, because only the judge will determine whether the guilty party will be acquitted or not. In fact, in a judicial context, it is absolutely necessary to appeal to

47 Cf. Lausberg, *Handbook*, §192–194.
48 Cf. de Vaux, *Le istituzioni*, 157–159.

the one who has the power to decide on the matter. Thus, the need for an appeal to the judge could be at the origin of the double use of the phrase ועתה; it should not, however, be confused either with the narration of the facts or with the admission of guilt of the accused one. In the discourses we have analysed, this appeal is introduced by the first ועתה, which brings the discourse to the "therefore" of the argumentation. One can assume that later this strategy was also used in other persuasive speeches of request. It must be remembered that in most cases these speeches involve rulers and relate to the context of a royal court. This common denominator of the discourses analysed here points to their very precise literary basis, the trademark of the royal court or similar contexts, such as one's relationship with God, which did not allow a request to be addressed without appropriate argumentation, because of the distance between the speaker and the interlocutor.

Conclusion

The subject of our study has been a large group of Old Testament discourses that have a common feature, namely the double presence of the adverbial phrase ועתה. We began with questions raised by this double use of ועתה that we can now summarize: are we dealing with double-ended speeches? Why is the same phrase used twice, dividing the speech into several parts, and what is the origin of this stylistic construction?

Our investigation began with the presentation of the characteristics of the particle ועתה and the persuasive character of the speeches with its double use. We observed that the use of persuasive strategies in the various speeches studied is motivated by a particular difficulty in presenting the request, arising from the distance between the speaker and the interlocutor or from the particular nature of the request. Subsequently, the analysis of the rhetorical function of ועתה in the speeches studied led us to discover the differences between the first and second use of this particle in a discourse and to conclude that the first ועתה serves to signal the passage from the introductory part of the speech or the narration of past events to its central part, that is to say to the argumentation. Only the second ועתה leads the discourse to its conclusion, which is the point of the entire discourse, the real objective of the speaker, who presents his request at the end. This, then, is the common characteristic of all discourses with the double ועתה.

At this point we asked how a speaker organised his discourse toward the goal of delivering his final request. The analysis of the texts, the common points of the structure of the discourses and a comparison with the structure of persuasive speeches according to classical rhetoric allow us to conclude that the double use of the phrase

ועתה is an effective rhetorical device in clear and convincing speech. These texts, rather than being double-ended discourses, are persuasive rhetorical constructions in which the argumentation, introduced by the first ועתה, is the central, essential and obligatory part leading to the speaker's final request. In fact, the double ועתה allows the speaker to construct a rhetorical discourse composed of several internally connected parts, in which the concluding request (after the second ועתה) is supported by the argumentation (introduced with the first ועתה), which in turn had been prepared by a short introduction and/or a more or less developed narration of past events. The main elements therefore "hang" on the hinges of the two particles ועתה, and are merged into a logical unit, thanks to the consecutive meaning of this adverbial term.

This rhetorical strategy underscores the argumentation of the request, giving the speech greater persuasive force. In fact, a simple discourse with only one ועתה does not have the same persuasive force, because a single ועתה can introduce only the conclusion. A discourse with the double ועתה has greater persuasive power, because it allows the speaker to organize the argumentation in a precise, compact way, logically correlated with the request and aimed at achieving the desired effect, not only on the interlocutor within the narrative, but also on the reader, who is the "real" recipient of the story. In highly developed speeches, especially in prayers to God, which reflect complex situations of the person praying, even the third ועתה is used to bring the argumentation back to the "therefore," making the speech even more incisive. The double use of the phrase ועתה cannot, therefore, be attributed to the work of editors, but to an ordinary way of developing a persuasive discourse in classical Hebrew rhetoric, which has many points in common with the strategies developed by classical Greco-Latin rhetoric.

The "juridical" background,[49] present in some of the discourses analysed, can conclusively be considered to be their original literary context. In fact, in the *deprecatio*, in which the speaker hopes to be acquitted, the request could not be simply a claim, introduced only by the narration of the facts and repentance; rather, it required also the clemency of the judge. In this stylistic construction the double ועתה plays the technical role of creating the passages necessary for articulating the speech in a clear and convincing way. The double use of the particle ועתה thus proves to be an effective stylistic device in the persuasive speeches of Hebrew rhetoric, which are also found in contexts other than those of the settlement of disputes before a judge.

Translated by Debora Rienzi

49 Several scholars assert that the model for the organization of persuasive discourse in classical rhetoric should be sought in the judicial genre. Cf. Garavelli Mortara, *Manuale*, 60–61. Similarly, Heinrich Lausberg (*Handbook*, §27) also believes that the exemplary model of rhetoric is the presentation of the question during the court trial.

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