The Art of (Hebrew) Biblical Argumentation*

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This paper presents the Hebrew Bible as a rhetorical discourse which seeks to persuade. The Biblical scribes do not take for granted the authoritative nature of the text but seek to explain and motivate the religious lesson in human terms. The article explores the rhetorical means of persuasion employed by the Biblical scribes with special attention to the employment of the metaphor as a persuasive tool.

This paper presents the question whether the Hebrew Bible is an authoritative religious text which is persuasive (compare Nader, 1997). Or, we may ask, is the Hebrew Bible, still a religious discourse essentially, designed to appeal to the audience (readers) as an argumentative discourse rather than to be perceived as an authoritative proclamation? The issue at stake is that the Hebrew Bible conveys a struggle between human 'free will' and God's determination. This struggle, which presents the Hebrew Bible as an argumentative discourse, raises a significant rhetorical challenge regarding the tension between aim and means. The aim of the discourse is to deliver a religious message that transcends reasoning, while the means of persuasion employ a technique of human reasoning. The following prophetic speech demonstrates the case:

> Can two walk together except they are agreed?
> Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?
> Will a young lion cry out of his den if he has taken nothing?
> Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him?
> ...
> Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not are afraid?
> Does disaster befall a city, unless the Lord has done it? (Amos 3:3-6).

This is a speech which seeks to persuade. Obviously, the goal is not to teach the audience a chapter on animal behaviour. The target of the speech is found in the last verse: "Does disaster befall on the city unless the Lord has done it"? The disaster (military defeat, natural catastrophe), which is the aim of the speech, is not presented as an accident, but as a planned event, caused by God as a punishment; that is, a causal link is established between deeds and sequences. Nevertheless, the aim of this prophetic utterance is not proclaimed straightforwardly. A chain of illustrations precedes the concluding verse. Hence, God's involvement in a disastrous event, as a matter of causal link, is not understood by the audience as self-evident, but requires a rhetorical endeavour. The rhetorical technique employed by the prophet is an appeal to common sense through a series of rhetorical questions taken from the realm of nature, illustrating the rule of causal link which prevails in nature and human relationship. The prophet demonstrates that the link between cause and effect is irrefutable. Therefore, the audience is led to conclude that if nature operates on the principle of fixed rules of cause and effect—and nothing is accidental—surely the political-military disasters have not taken place in a vacuum.

There is a cause for the disaster, as the remainder of the speech reveals: "For they (the people of Israel) know not to do right, says God" (verse 10). Consequently, God punishes them: "the Lord has done it".

The conclusion to be drawn is that - in spite of the fact that the speaker is God's messenger, who speaks in God's name - when he performs on God's behalf, he is actually performing a linguistic act which seeks to persuade in human terms. The prophetic message is enveloped in a specific literary dress, which reflects a tendency to regard the audience as an object of persuasion rather than merely perceiving the prophetic or God's Word as an absolute. Therefore, the prophetic speech is linguistically couched in a specific form that is a function of the audience's conditioning and modes of reasoning. In other words, the prophetic speech is a product of a specific stylistic-argumentative choice, which under the circumstance has been selected as the appropriate mode of appeal. In short, the Biblical discourse, as pedagogical literature, intends to teach a lesson through speeches that seek to capture the mind of the audience rather than imposing the issues upon them.

Nevertheless, the study of Biblical argumentation presents certain methodological problems. The issue revolves around the fact that our data is limited to the Biblical text itself, as we lack direct information regarding the speech situation. But we are able to determine that the prophetic speech, given Amos's example, is polemical, as the prophet argues with the audience. However, an argument constitutes at least two partners who are engaged in the debate. Nevertheless, the voices of the audience are hardly heard while the voice of the prophet (orator) is sound. We learn about the audience's positions indirectly through the prophet's argument, as a coherent narrative of the audience is

concealed. Biblical rhetoric, the art of Biblical argumentation depends, however, on the act of retrieving the speech situation - that is, the argumentative situation that gave birth to the utterance - only on the narrative of the addresser.

Another difficulty regarding the study of Biblical rhetoric is the lack of a theoretical framework. Thus, in contrast to classical rhetoric, which has been preserved in textbooks as well as speeches, enabling, therefore, a balanced reconstruction of Greek rhetoric, the Biblical heritage has been preserved only in the speeches. Therefore, we are confronted with speeches that establish, as a whole, a tradition of (Hebrew) Biblical argumentation. However, this tradition needs to be written by the modern critics who must systemize, as the present paper exemplifies, a theoretical textbook, on the basis of the Biblical speeches only (also consult Gitay 1981, 1991, 2001a, 2001b, and compare Trible 1994).

This is, in fact, the dilemma of the study of Biblical rhetoric. Specifically argumentative speeches such as the prophetic utterance requires a reconstruction of the speech situation. Nevertheless, there is no need to give up, as a careful rhetorical analysis of the speeches may shed light on their thematic target, which indicates the audience's argumentative position. Thus, in the case of Amos 3, a speech that emphasizes the causal link between a disaster, God's involvement, and the people's deeds, we may conclude that the issue is the audience's disbelief that God might punish them. This is a popular belief that is revealed through another speech of Amos. We read:

> Alas for you who desire the day of the Lord!
> Why do you want the day of the Lord?
> It is darkness not light! (5:18).

The implication is that the audience held a 'popular' belief that God is their shelter, their protector, and that by no means would He visit a disaster upon them. This clarification of the audience's position sheds light on the argumentative situation of the speech of Amos 3. The prophet is engaged in a debate with his audience regarding the matter of God's punishment as a reaction to the people's deeds. The specific stylistic formulation of Amos's speech is designed, therefore, to argue his case and to dispute his audience's position.

Let us look closer at Amos 3. The argument for the causal link between the people's sin and the disaster (as the proclamation of God's punishment) is based on the rhetorical principle of "arguments based on the structure of reality" (Perelman 1982:81). Perelman explains this argument as follows:

> As soon as elements of reality are associated with each other in a liaison, it is possible to use this liaison as the basis for an argumentation which allows us to pass from

> what is accepted to what we wish to have accepted...Most arguments that are based on reality appeal to liaisons of succession, such as cause to effect, or liaisons of existence, such as relation between the person and his acts (1982:81).

This is the argumentative case of Amos. We need only to replace "the relation between the person and his (her) acts" with "God and His acts" and we see Amos's argument. That is to say, an argument taken from the realm of nature is applicable to the world of meta-nature as well. Thus, 'secular' argumentation is applied to a religious theme.

The conclusion that Amos employs the argument of cause and effect in human terms, leads us to the fundamental question of the particular nature of Biblical argumentation. Amos avoids an appeal to God's authority, and given his free choice in selecting his argument, he employs one which is concerned with a major religious concept while the argument itself has no particular religious character. Hence, the argument "of the structure of reality" presupposes an earlier agreement on the possibility of reaching a generalization from a particular case (compare Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:350). This 'early agreement' is, in Amos's case, the fundamental belief in God. Amos's debate is hermeneutic in nature. Both parties believe in God and the dispute revolves around God's intention: punishing (the orator - the prophet) versus the opposite, protecting (the audience), as the speech implied.

The 'structure of reality' as an argument is often employed in other areas of religious rhetoric in the Biblical texts. It is employed when the Bible seeks to present a fundamental religious concept which is not self-evident to the audience. Psalm 1 is an illuminating example. The Psalm's thesis is as follows:

> Blessed are the persons that walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. But their delight is in the law of God... Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment ... for God knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

The religious concept conveyed in this psalm may be summarized through the popular statement: "The righteous prosper while the wicked suffer". Nevertheless, this habitual theme of the reward of the righteous versus the fate of the wicked is not conveyed in Psalm 1 as such. Rather, Psalm 1 employs figurative language, which indicates a need to provide a concrete form of the affirmative view. We read:

> They (the righteous) are like a tree planted by streams of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, its leaf also

> shall not wither, and whatever they do shall prosper.
> The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind drives away (verses 3-4).

The employment of the metaphor is in concert with "the argument of the structure of reality", as Psalm 1 demonstrates. The psalmist uses the images of the tree and the chaff in order to deliver to the audience the notion of the successful righteous versus the collapsed wicked.

Traditionally, the metaphor is considered a vivid stylistic figure, ornamentation. However, since the work of Richards (1965: 89-112), we have perceived the metaphor as a unit of thought. For the sake of demonstration let me present a current example given by the literary critic and researcher of Rhetoric, Wayne Booth, who has illustrated the function of the metaphor in the course of an argumentative discourse. A lawyer friend of Booth, and a resident of a major city, was hired to defend a large Southern American Utility against a lawsuit by a small one. The lawyer traveled to the small town where the trial took place. Sure of himself, he thought at first that he was doing fine in the courtroom; he felt that he presented his case well. Then the lawyer from the small Utility, approaching the local jury said:

> So now we see how it is. They got us where they want us. They are holding us up with one hand, their good sharp fishin' knife in the other, and they sayin', you jes set still, little catfish, we're jes going to gut ya.
> At that moment, Booth's friend reports, he knew that he had lost the case. "I was in the hands of a genius of metaphor" (Booth 1978:52).

Indeed, it was already Aristotle who realized that:

> it is not enough to know what we ought to say; we must also say it as we ought (*Rhetoric* 1403b).

Aristotle's claim is that reason alone, in the course of public argumentation, will not win the case. An idea, being reasonable for the addresser, is not in itself self-evident to the mind of the addressees (See Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:1-4). In accordance, Psalm 1 seeks to present the righteous as successful, and vice versa.

The case is argued through metaphors. The metaphor is a means, which corresponds with Aristotle's insistence on the matter of 'how' to address the audience. Clarifying that question, ("how"), Aristotle made a distinction between pure logic ("what to say") and rhetoric ("how to say"). More recently, the

distinction was elaborated by Perelman, who defined it as the distinction between analytical reasoning and dialectical reasoning. Perelman's point is that analytical reasoning is demonstrative and impersonal, while dialectical reasoning presupposes premises, which are constituted as generally-accepted opinions. Dialectical reasoning begins from theses that are generally accepted, with the purpose of gaining the acceptance of other theses that could be controversial. Thus it *aims* to persuade. Unlike the processes of analytical reasoning, dialectical reasoning cannot be impersonal (Perelman 1982:1-8). The metaphor is the means for "constituting the generally accepted". The argument which took place between the two lawyers in the American courtroom was not a matter of analytical reasoning, as Booth's friend wrongly presupposed. Rather, the argument was based on dialectical reasoning, which is personal, employing the metaphor, as the local lawyer knew well and as the psalmist also understood.

Having said that rhetoric (that is, dialectical reasoning) is based on personal presuppositions, we pay attention to our understanding of the linguistic process of communication which takes place in both the prophetic speech and the psalm. Actually, 'speech' implies a selection of certain linguistic entities and their combinations. At the lexical level this is readily apparent; the speakers select words and combine them into sentences according to the syntactical system of the language which they are using. But the speakers are by no means completely free agents in their choice of words; their selection must be made from the lexical storehouse which they and their addressees possess in common (Jakobson 1956:58-59). The small Utility's lawyer used the lexical storehouse of his own and his addressees' through a skillful employment of the catfish metaphor. The psalmist employed demonstrative language belonging to his audience's lexical experience:

> He is *like* a tree planted by streams of water ...
> *Like* chaff that the wind drives away (verses 3-5)

Coming back to Psalm 1, the persuasive goal is to establish a relationship between the reward in the future of the righteous, and the destructive end of the wicked. In seeking to persuade, this sort of opposition must be factually presented. However, the matter under discussion (the future of the righteous versus the fate of the wicked) does not entail sterilised facts that are mathematically provable. Consequently, such a discourse must use quasi-logical argumentation, that is, rhetoric. The issue at stake is the manner of arguing a case: the opinionative versus the reasoning of the 'scientific' discourse. This matter already occupied the attention of early rhetoricians such as the Sophist Gorgias, who made the distinction between *logos* and *doxa* (opinion), as D.L. Sullivan has pointed out:

> Persuasion from *doxa* depends on rational arguments in which one opinion seeks to contradict or abolish the other one (1992: 319).

And Gorgias himself explained thus:

> To understand that persuasion ... is to impress the soul as it wishes. One must study the words of the astronomers who, substituting opinion for opinion ... make what is incredible and unclear seem true to the eye of opinion (Sprague 1972:53).

The ultimate success of the argument regarding matters of opinion (and beliefs) depends on the speaker's skill in presenting the contrasting view as meaningless. The Biblical poets, the prophets and the psalmists, employ various modes of appeal when utilising quasi-logical arguments in order to persuade their audience. For instance, the prophet of the Babylonian exile, the so-called 'Deutero-Isaiah', uses the quasi-logical argument, depicting the foreign gods as worthless:

> An idol? – A workman casts it ... as a gift one chooses mulberry wood – wood that will not rot – then seeks out a skilled artisan to set up an image that will not topple (Isaiah 40:19-20) (compare North 1964:82-83).

The prophet avoids the philosophical-theological argument or analytical reasoning regarding the merit of the gods, as there is no end to such a debate. Instead, the argument is based on probabilities, which can distort and magnify (see Plato, *Phaedrus* 267a6, Kennedy 1963: 62-63). Indeed, how can a piece of wood be the real god?!

Psalm 1, however, employs through metaphors, the strategy of the quasi-logical argument, in order to persuade its readers (or listeners) to adopt the psalmist's religious view of the bright future of the righteous. We have seen that the analogy (or metaphor) is a useful method for drawing conclusions regarding matters of opinion. In the first place, the metaphor portrays the argumentative matter in terms that are conceived by our senses. Cicero explained it thus:

> When something that can scarcely be conveyed by the proper term is expressed metaphorically, this meaning we desire to convey is made clear by the resemblance of the thing that we have expressed by the word that does not belong ... every metaphor ... has a direct appeal to the senses, especially the sense of sight, which is the keenest (*De Oratore* 3:155-161).

Nevertheless, a metaphor, in terms of Aristotle's classical definition, is as follows:

> The application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species to another or else by analogy...Metaphor by analogy means this: when B is to A as D is to C (*Poetics* 21:7-12).

So, if B is to A not as B is to D then the analogy is not mathematical. The genus and the species are not identical. In fact, the two elements stand in isolation to one another rather than as analogy in the same context, each of which is different: A differs from C. And still Aristotle insists that metaphor "gives style clearness, charm, and distinction as nothing else can" (*Rhetoric* 1405a).

Consequently, many believe that they can go along perfectly well without a metaphor. Actually, this is not the case, as Lakoff and Johnson point out:

> Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of how we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The concepts that govern our thought are not matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning...Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities...the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor (1980:3).

The metaphor is not merely one object which resembles another one, 'an extra trick with words.' The metaphor is not disconnected from the message itself. Thus, Riffaterre explains the issue:

> When the reader assumes that figurative description is there to duplicate and confirm literal description, he is rationalizing ... he read wrongly ... in fact, the image should be seen not as referring to an object but as a different discourse. The image will be interpreting it ... Its primary purpose is not to offer a representation, but to dictate an interpretation (1981:108, 25).

The context of the poem of Psalm 1, which is structured mainly by the two metaphors of the tree and the chaff, dominates the reading of the metaphor not

as a depiction of an external reality, but as the poem's theme. Thus the relationship between the two components of the analogy, the *phoros* ('the bearer' or 'the servant') and the theme is a "resemblance of relationship" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:372-373). In other words, the image of the blossoming tree, the *phoros* of Psalm 1, is not merely an illustration, but is the argument itself, which is the religious reality. Thus, the metaphor of the tree is not conceived anymore as the tool for illustration. The blossoming tree *is* the reality, which is the fate of the rewarded righteous. The image of the blossoming tree is the undeniable existence of the cosmological reality, rather than a matter of opinion or belief.

In short, Psalm 1 portrays a world of reality through metaphor. We do not anymore perceive the religious notion of retribution as an abstract notion, but perceive it as the surrounding reality. The psalm, referring to the spiritual sphere of religious belief, seeks to transfer the world of belief to the seen world of nature. The religious world is not merely the visionary world of the believer, but reality as it is. The tree, in the context of Psalm 1, is not a simple botanical phenomenon; rather, it is the righteous as they are. The metaphor is therefore the vehicle employed by the religious poet of Psalm 1, who transfers the unseen and unprovable onto the undeniable reality. The metaphor used in the psalm happens to be the reality itself rather than a stylistic decoration. Psalm 1 demonstrates, therefore, how a religious subject uses secular descriptive language in metaphor as a rhetorical tool to force the reality of existence to concur with the religious idea.

Nevertheless, Psalm 1 is more than just a great poem. The psalm is designed as a well-planned rhetorical endeavour. Thus, the metaphors employed by the psalmists call attention to their dispute with their opponents, and only after the psalmists have formulated their presentation of the righteous way of life. The psalm's strong opinionative orientation is then followed by the metaphor, and the reader's interpretation has been determined. Its rhetorical design might explain why this psalm starts the canonical lyrical, religious poetry of ancient Israel. We might be reminded of its superb rhetorical design and its remarkable stylistic mixture of the sphere of religious belief and the realm of natural reality for introducing the happy future of the truly righteous.

Given the argumentative power of the metaphors, the Biblical scribes did not confine their use to the lyrical corpus of psalms. The Biblical narrative also employs the metaphor as a useful argumentative means, as the following example demonstrates through a famous debate which takes place in the books of Samuel. King David had to flee from Jerusalem given the rebellion of his son Absalom. The father king is old, exhausted and desperate. In Jerusalem, Absalom's chief counsel, Ahitophel, who had formerly advised David, now advises Absalom to take advantage of the situation and to attack David at once; and hence to establish, for good, Absalom's new regime. The chief advisor's address to Absalom is coherent, brief and precise, as follows:

> Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will set out and pursue David tonight. I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged, and throw him into a panic; and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king, and I will bring all the people back to you as every one returns back –the man whom you seek— and all the people will be at peace (2 Samuel 17:1-3).

This is shrewd and practical advice. However, David had his own trusted man in Absalom's circle, Hushai, whose initial mission was to turn the bright advice of Ahitophel upside-down into foolishness (15:31). How did he do it? Let us listen to Hushai's speech of refutation, in response to Ahitophel:

> This time the counsel that Ahitophel has given is not good...You know that your father and his men are warriors, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is an expert in war; he will not spend the night with the troops. Even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits, or in some other place. And when some of our troops fall at the first attack, who ever hears it will say, there has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom. Then even the valiant warrior, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear; for all Israel knows that your father is a warrior and those who are with him are valiant warriors. But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beer Sheba, like the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. So we shall come upon him in whatever place he may be found, and we shall light upon him as the dew falls on the ground; and he will not survive, nor will any of those with him. If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there. Absalom and all the men of Israel said: "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahitophel (17:7-13).

Which is the best advice? The Biblical narrator knows. Ahitophel's advice is the logical (17:14). However, the winner is Hushai. We read: "Absalom and all the men of Israel said: The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahitophel" (ibid).

How did this happen? A distinction has been made between the logical

counsel and the winning counsel. Both Ahitophel and the city lawyer made a good case; however, they both failed. Their opponents did not respond to their analytical reasoning, but to their specific depiction of the reality that corresponded to their audience situation respectively. Both Hushai and the small-town lawyer employed linguistic codes of the daily storehouse of their audience through figurative language. This language, based on the addressees' linguistic code, appears to be an effective communicative tool. The "mad bear robbed of her cubs" in the field, the strength of the powerful "lion", the gathering troops "like the sand by the sea" is irreplaceable. That is, the cited biblical metaphors are not merely dresses of thought, stylistic coverage for straight ideas, camouflage of the real things; or, as metaphors had been treated in the past, fancy language used by poets, politicians, or people otherwise mentally unbalanced (compare Steen 1994:3). The metaphor of the "bear robbed of her cubs," and "the lion" etc. happen to be 'the real thing'. The real act of communication takes place through the metaphor. As the speakers are only word users, not word coiners (Jakobson 1956:58-59), the metaphor is much more than a pictorial language. The metaphor wins effective communication because it is taken from the linguistic common stock, which does not require further elaboration. It is self-evident.

Furthermore, a metaphor represents a known fact, which is irrefutable to the audience. That is why the metaphors mentioned above are taken from the familiar world of nature: 'bear' and 'lion' for instance, apply to the situation of people who fight for their lives. The context dictates the employment of the specific metaphor or set of metaphors. David compared to a bear robbed of her cubs or an attacking lion, in his other image of the poet and the musician, the composer of the psalms, is nonsense. But these metaphors, in the context of the powerful hero and the bitter warrior, are very communicative and very effective under their concrete situations. Thus, given these metaphors, the battle between Absalom and David is not perceived anymore as a fight between two warriors or two troops, one old and weak and the other fresh and determined, as Ahitophel had presented it. Now, thanks to Hushai the perception is different: the perception is of a poor human being fighting against a mad bear or a powerful lion; a fight which is not only extremely dangerous, but is lost in advance. Not surprisingly, Hushai won the argument.

In the final analysis, the present paper argues that the Biblical discourse is argumentative. The discourse appeals to the audience, seeking to deliver the religious message in a persuasive manner which is not based on religious authority, but on human perception. The paper focuses on the particular relationship between strategy and techniques, which distinguishes the Biblical discourse in terms of delivering a religious message through the human devices of persuasion. Hence, the study of Biblical rhetoric is actually a study of human reasoning. The paper introduces the Biblical art of argumentation through analyses of

selected Biblical texts of poetry and prose. Through these texts the paper discusses the Biblical strategy of appeal, which might be defined as dialectical reasoning rather than analytical reasoning. The rhetorical strategy is to approach the audience mainly through the employment of the "structure of reality", the establishment of the generally accepted, and the employment of a familiar lexical storehouse. The universal, accepted reality of nature and the generally-accepted is integrated—mainly through metaphors— into the religious lesson. Hence, religious issues, such as a God who punishes, or the fate of the righteous, are argued as an integral structure of the surrounding reality. Nature and religion are argued as one component. The task of Biblical rhetoric is therefore to analyse the means of persuasion in each particular case, and the ways that they are integrated into the main theme, as the Biblical canon contains speeches and debates in the format of a pedagogical discourse, which seeks to educate through persuasion.

The Biblical rhetorical techniques employ various methods of persuasion. The examples are numerous, and the present paper focuses on "the argument from the structure of the reality" in terms of rhetorical questions, but mainly through figuration. Obviously, the goal is to teach the religious message and the structure of reality is transferred to meta- nature in order to gain the transcendent Biblical perspective. The Biblical scribes appealing to human acceptance reveal their deep understanding of human nature and perception.

Biblical rhetoric is the presentation of the world in human terms - human reasoning rather than the world of religious magic or mystique. Biblical rhetoric reflects the world of reality that is shared by every human, making this magnificent literature universal.

In this regard, Biblical rhetoric is a reflection of the Biblical pedagogical lesson. God's Will is determined, but the people have their own will, which is their "free will". Hence, they behave as they choose to behave. The Biblical response is punishment for misbehaviour. However, the punishment is usually not proclaimed merely as a verdict. Rather, the punishment is motivated, argued in human terms. This explains why fundamental principles of human reasoning are applicable regarding Biblical Rhetoric.

This is an important religious lesson. The Biblical authors take the notion of human free will as a rhetorical challenge. God's Will is not taken for granted. Nevertheless, the Biblical authors explain to their audience why God's Way is the only way for them. This explanation is the core of Biblical rhetoric, specifically as the argument takes place **not** in God's terms. Hence, the study of Biblical rhetoric is also a means of studying the modes of reasoning and argumentation of the Biblical audience - the people who took part in the great events that constitute the Hebrew Bible. The discourse is polemical, and Biblical rhetoric is the art of penetrating into the Biblical mind, the Biblical mind of reasoning.

Biblical argumentation utilises techniques such as debates, the employment of figurative language, analogy, and rhetorical questions, which partially compose the Biblical art of argumentation. Naturally, the present paper contains only a few examples and techniques of persuasion. However, the field is rich and the systemization of Biblical rhetoric is gradually established (see Gitay 1981, 1991, 2001a, 2001b, Trible 1994). The issue is that the Hebrew Bible seeks to argue through rhetorical means which are actually universal. Hence, the techniques employed by, say, Aristotle of ancient Greece or Perelman of the modern period, are actually the Biblical argumentative techniques as well, as all of them are designed to appeal to human beings.

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