

Centripetal-centrifugal Forces in the Tower of Babel Narrative (Gen 11:1–9)

BOBBY KURNIA PUTRAWAN (STT MORIAH, TANGERANG),
LUDWIG BEETHOVEN J. NOYA (VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY, NASHVILLE)
AND ALISAID PRAWIRO NEGORO (STT INDONESIA, JAKARTA)

ABSTRACT

This article argues that the Tower of Babel's narrative (Gen 11:1–9) serves as a counter narrative against the universalisation of language, territory and peoplehood identity. In addition, it perfectly fits the politics of Israelite identity formation throughout the book of Genesis. The argument is anchored as follows: Firstly, the article surveys the earlier interpretations of scholars. Secondly, it examines the Tower of Babel narrative as a subversive narration for identity formation by analysing the interaction of language, territory and identity in the narrative. Lastly, Gen 11:1–11 text is read within the larger narrative in the book of Genesis utilising the concept of centripetal and centrifugal forces proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin. In so doing, this article shows that the Tower of Babel narrative employs such a force to subvert the imperial propaganda of unification and advances its own agenda of identity politics.

KEYWORDS: Language, Identity formation, Migration, Imperialism

A INTRODUCTION

This article argues that the Tower of Babel's narrative (Gen 11:1–9) serves as a counter narrative against the universalisation of language, territory and peoplehood identity. In addition, the narrative perfectly fits the politics of Israelite identity formation throughout the book of Genesis. Firstly, the article surveys some scholarly interpretations of Gen 11:1–19, particularly those that interpret this text as a narrative of divine punishment and those that take the statement "make a name for ourselves" as the primary reason for the punishment. Secondly, it examines the Tower of Babel narrative as a subversive narration for identity formation by analysing the interaction of language, territory and identity in the narrative. Lastly, Gen 11:1–11 is read within the larger narrative of the

* Submitted 17/01/2022; peer-reviewed: 30/04/2022; Accepted: 06/05/2022. Bobby Kurnia Putrawan, Ludwig Beethoven J. Noya, and Alisaid Prawiro Negoro, "Centripetal-centrifugal Forces in the Tower of Babel Narrative (Gen 11:1–9)," *Old Testament Essays* 35 no. 2 (2022): 192 – 210. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2022/v35n2a5>.

book of Genesis, utilising the concept of centripetal and centrifugal forces proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin.

B EARLIER INTERPRETATIONS

1 The Structure

In dealing with the structural interpretation of Gen 11:1–19, Hermann Gunkel's work requires brief mention. Gunkel's work questioned the unity of the narrative's composition and argued that the story is composed of two independent recensions.¹ Gunkel based his argument on what he considered inconsistencies in the passage—such as the double brick making, double descending of the deity and the shift between city-tower and language location. In his review of Gunkel's argument, Joel Baden compares Gunkel's two sources theory with Umberto Cassuto's synchronic reading.² For Cassuto, the Gen 11:1–19 text presents a beautiful "and harmonious structure of the story in its present form," which requires no partitioning of the text.³ Baden shows that Cassuto's argument is anchored on at least three elements: (1) the "constantly recurring melody" of *bet*, *lamed* and *nun*; (2) paronomasia and (3) the repetition of various words and phrases throughout the text.⁴ Cassuto's work influenced later scholars in dealing with the synchronic investigation. For instance, Wenham suggests two structural schemes of the story: (1) scenic parallelism, with each verse paralleling each other starting from verse 1 and verse 6; and (2) palistrophe, extended chiasm or concentric parallelism centring on verse 5.⁵

Ellen van Wolde finds Wenham's suggestion to be aligned with the works of other scholars, such as Isaac Kikawada, Jan P. Fokkelman and P. Auffret, as it views verse 5 as the centre of the narrative.⁶ She then proposes two things: first, the concentric structure is related to the *ziggurat* tower in Babylonia, and second, verse 6 is the centre of the structure.⁷ Furthermore, Van Wolde suggests that "stylistic investigation does not provide compelling arguments for a semantic clarification of the text"; hence, she supports the idea of bringing "a new world of meaning" through the language paradigm and the connotative

¹ Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), 94–102.

² Joel S. Baden, "The Tower of Babel: A Case Study in the Competing Methods of Historical and Modern Literary Criticism," *JBL* 128/2 (2009): 209–224.

³ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1989), 236; quoted on Baden, "The Tower of Babel," 211.

⁴ Baden, "The Tower of Babel," 211–212.

⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis: 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 235.

⁶ E. J. Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 86–87.

⁷ Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds*, 87–89.

elements of the text.⁸ Van Wolde's argument about going beyond the stylistic structure by examining the language paradigm is correct. However, the stylistic structure she suggests that renders verse 6 as the centre of the structure is problematic. The argument of verse 5 as the centre of the structure is more compelling considering that the sentence envelops mostly all elements required in the narrative: first, the locus of the conflict (the city and the tower); second, the identification of the two parties (YHWH and *bānê hā'ādām*) and third, the basic action of the two parties when other discourses are happening (seeing and building). Although Van Wolde's concern about the language paradigm requires consideration, this article prefers Wenham's scenic parallelism to accommodate both the narrative's stylistic structure and language.

2 The Themes

Most of the many perspectives on the themes of this narrative fall into two categories: first, it is about the divine action against humanity's hubris and rebellion and second, it is about the divine action against humanity's reluctance to disperse. Wenham and E. A. Speiser examine this hubris by humanity's attempt to reach heaven through tower building.⁹ Other scholars assess the hubris through the phrase "make a name for ourselves," which they argue means looking for fame and renown.¹⁰ The fame that the builders seek through the notion of *šēm*, they argue, is everlasting fame perpetuated through their descendants.¹¹ This name making is also seen as a rebellion against God because, as John T. Strong contends, such action means replacing the name of God.¹² This argument seems to be corroborated by Gerhard von Rad, who asserts that "name-giving in the ancient Orient was primarily an exercise of sovereignty, of command."¹³

Some scholars, however, focus on the dispersion issue instead of the hubris issue. Most interpretations relate the dispersion issue to the mandate of

⁸ Ibid., 91.

⁹ Wenham, *Genesis: 1-15*; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964).

¹⁰ John H. Walton, "The Tower of Babel" (Ph.D. Diss., Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Ohio, USA, 1981), 179; Christoph Uehlinger, *Weltreich Und "Eine Rede"* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).

¹¹ This is because a notion of one's name lives in one's descendants. Andrew Giorgetti, "The 'Mock Building Account' of Genesis 11:1-9: Polemic against Mesopotamian Royal Ideology," *VT* 64/1 (2014): 18-19; Priscilla Pope-Levison and John R. Levison, *Return to Babel: Global Perspectives on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 20-21.

¹² John T. Strong, "Shattering the Image of God: A Response to Theodore Hiebert's Interpretation of the Story of the Tower of Babel," *JBL* 127/4 (2008): 632-633; R. Mark Shipp, "'Let Us Make a Name for Ourselves': Human Technology and Innovation in Genesis 1-11," *CS* 17 (1998): 10-20.

¹³ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 83.

Gen 1:28, "to fill the earth." For instance, P. J. Harland argues that the "fault of Babel is horizontal rather than vertical. Refusing to fulfill the mandate for humanity to spread through the earth."¹⁴ Walter Brueggemann agrees with this view but brings Gen 10:32 to the foreground by saying that such spreading is "blessed, sanctioned, and willed by Yahweh."¹⁵ Allen P. Ross supports this reading and links the fame sought by the builders with the dispersion.¹⁶ Ross asserts that staying in one place is "the base of operations" in attaining fame;¹⁷ however, he adds that such a concept is against God's plan.¹⁸

The above arguments are not without challenges. The first challenge is about the hubris theme of the narrative. Theodore Hiebert points out that the conjunction *pen* between the name seeking and scattering means that the goal of this project is to prevent dispersion.¹⁹ Therefore, it is not about humanity's hubristic intent. Similarly, Donald Gowan points out that such an intention is not condemned compared to the wicked intentions of the antediluvian generation.²⁰ The second challenge is that the concept of "filling the earth" is different from dispersion. Carol Kaminski argues that "scattering" is not included in the *primaeval* command of filling the earth because "scattering is commonly associated with the divine punishment in the Old Testament."²¹ The next challenge concerns the notion of "name making." Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the goal of name establishment is regarded as usual and even honourable. For example, in 2 Sam 8:13 and 12:28, there is no disapproval when King David

¹⁴ P.J. Harland, "Vertical or Horizontal: The Sin of Babel," *VT* 48/4 (1998): 515–533; Sarna claims that by balking to fill the earth, humanity had fulfilled only part of the divine blessing; Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1966), 67.

¹⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 98.

¹⁶ Allen Ross, "The Dispersion of the Nations in Genesis 11:1-9," *BS* 138/550 (1981): 119–122.

¹⁷ Ross, "The Dispersion," 122; Van der Kooij supports this argument by saying that verse 4b is a concern that "spreadover the earth would not serve their purpose" of attaining fame; Arie van der Kooij, "The City of Babel and Assyrian Imperialism: Genesis 11:1-9 Interpreted in the Light of Mesopotamian Sources," in *Congress Volume Leiden 2004* (ed. André Lemaire; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 5.

¹⁸ Ross, "The Dispersion," 119.

¹⁹ The conjunction functions to express a prevention, which represents the goal of the previous clause; Theodore Hiebert, "The Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World's Cultures," *JBL* 126/1 (2007): 36.

²⁰ Donald E. Gowan, *When Man Becomes God: Humanism and Hybris in the Old Testament* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1975), 25–29.

²¹ Carol M. Kaminski, *From Noah to Israel: Realization of the Primaeval Blessing after the Flood* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 28–29; see also Hiebert, "The Tower of Babel," 56.

attempts to make a name for himself.²² The text of 2 Sam 23 also depicts David's warriors as earning names for themselves without any negative assessment (vv. 18, 22).

The survey mentioned above highlighted the complexities of the concept of name making. The concept may be interpreted as an indication of rebellion against God or as punishment for failed mandate fulfilment. However, in this article, the name making concept, as is argued in subsequent sections, refers to identity and thus, the Tower of Babel narrative is viewed as a meeting point of language, territory and identity.

C IDENTITY AND IMPERIALISM

In discussing the ancient idea of identity, it should be noted that we are not discussing an individual identity but a collective or group identity.²³ While it is common for scholars to use both "identity" and "ethnicity" interchangeably, "identity is a more encompassing category that embraces many elements, including ethnicity."²⁴ Therefore, this article prefers to use the term "identity," assuming that ethnicity is included therein.

John Edwards adequately describes how "name" relates to the group's identity by saying that while group names arise in many different ways, "such self-descriptions often suggest that those outside the group are qualitatively different."²⁵ Adopting such a name, in whatever forms, gives a group the ability to designate who is "other." At least in the primitive stages of culture, Edwards adds, many tribal names are not formal designations but merely equivalents with the pronoun "we." Such an appellation may develop into meaning "people" with the implication that those "of other groups are not human in the same sense as 'we.'"²⁶ This concept correlates with G. Emberling and N. Yoffee's view of identity as dealing with a group's perception of similarity and difference.²⁷ They claim that identity "is not any specific feature of a group of people, but the

²² Bell, "Re-constructing Babel," 548; Jacob Wright, "Making a Name for Oneself: Martial Valor, Heroic Death, and Procreation in the Hebrew Bible," *JSOT* 36/2 (2011): 131–162.

²³ See Carol L. Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 118–121.

²⁴ Sharon R. Steadman and Jennifer C. Ross, *Agency and Identity in the Ancient Near East: New Paths Forward* (Oakville: Equinox, 2010), 194.

²⁵ John Edwards, *Language and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 36.

²⁶ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 36.

²⁷ Geoff Emberling and Normann Yoffee, "Thinking about Ethnicity in Mesopotamian Archaeology and Distory," in *Fluchtpunkt Uruk: Archäologische Einheit aus methodischer Vielfalt* (ed. Hartmut Kühne and Reinhard Bernbeck; Rahden: Leidorf, 1999).

recognition of the difference between its members and outsiders that distinguishes it as a group separate from others."²⁸ Nevertheless, Jonathan Z. Smith cautions that the "otherness" itself must be understood not as "a descriptive category or as an artifact of perception of difference or commonality. Rather, a political and linguistic project, a matter of rhetoric and judgment."²⁹

Some scholars see that the essence of identity is the similarity, something identical, whose meaning is derived from the stem, *idem*.³⁰ However, Jean-Luc Nancy also points out that *idem* itself is absolute, not the same as this or that other, but "separated from everything: *ab-solutum*."³¹ Identity, then, is not only dealing with the similarity but also with separation or differentiation.

1 Language, Territory and Identity

Daniel I. Block points out that "language as a vehicle of tradition is one of the strongest foundations of a people. As an outward expression, language becomes a symbol with which a person is most easily identified."³² Block adds that giving up a language for the sake of another typically means "the renunciation of its own ethnic identity."³³ This concept is corroborated by Edwards, who says that "most discussions of what could be termed 'the social life of language' are, in their essence, not really about language at all. They are about identity."³⁴ However, one should not take for granted that language determined identity. While language is 'a key element' of identity, Timothy Matney warns that "in a multi-lingual and largely non-literate society... it seems unlikely that language could have determined one's identity."³⁵ Seth Schwartz also gives the same caution about such a "simple relationship" and how one should be aware of the complexity of the imperial domination effects on the ruling.³⁶ The concern of

²⁸ Emberling and Yoffee, "Thinking about Ethnicity," 273.

²⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, "What a Difference a Difference Makes," in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, Others in Late Antiquity* (Chico: California Scholars Press, 1985), 46.

³⁰ George Orwell, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (London: VGollancz Ltd., 1940), 64; quoted in Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 19.

³¹ Nancy Jean-Luc, *Identity: Fragments, Frankness* (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2015), 19.

³² Daniel I. Block, "The Role of Language in Ancient Israelite Perceptions of National Identity," *JBL* 103/3 (1984): 259.

³³ Block, "The Role of Language," 259.

³⁴ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 63.

³⁵ Timothy Matney, "Material Culture and Identity: Assyrians, Arameans, and the Indigenous Peoples of Iron Age Southeastern Anatolia," in *Agency and Identity in the Ancient Near East: New Paths Forward* (ed. Sharon R. Steadman and Jennifer C. Ross; London: Equinox, 2010), 131.

³⁶ Seth Schwartz, "Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine," *Past and Present* 148 (1995): 46.

Matney and Schwartz is addressed as the discussion progresses. So far it should be noted that language plays a significant, yet not an absolutely determining, role in shaping identity.

What is also important about the role of language in understanding the identity construction is its centripetal-centrifugal forces. Mikhail Bakhtin presents a concept of centripetal-centrifugal forces in a language that fits the discussion of identity.³⁷ Bakhtin states that "alongside centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces... carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside ... centralization and unification, the uninterrupted process of decentralization and 'disunification' go forward."³⁸ As Bakhtin observes, language has both a centrifugal force and a centripetal force; it can function as unifying and dis-unifying.³⁹ Reading these forces back to the concept of identity construction, the dynamic of centripetal-centrifugal forces in language are parallel to the separation and similarising process of identity construction.

Antony D. Smith emphasises the role of territory in the group definition in addition to the ancestry myths. While a belief in ancestry myths is primary, it is followed "with a specific territory which they regard as their 'homeland.'"⁴⁰ A community as a whole, then, is associated with the land and its members are connected to it by "the myth of ethnic election."⁴¹ The territory might not be as fluid as the language in its relation to the group's identity because the land means more than just a place to dwell. It is also the means of subsistence and a way of life.⁴² Therefore, a forced migration, a scattering, a dispersion and a relocation cause social transformation including the break up of communities.⁴³ Territory, then, is similar to language in terms of the centripetal-centrifugal performances. The dynamic of centripetal-centrifugal forces in territoriality that includes forced migration are parallel to the separation and similarising process of identity construction.

Language and territory hold a crucial value in the group's identity but are not the only determining factors of identity. Unfortunately, such a crucial value tends to be manipulated by certain people to gain power and domination over

³⁷ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 271–273.

³⁸ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 272.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁴¹ Elisabeth Robertson Kennedy, *Seeking a Homeland: Sojourn and Ethnic Identity in the Ancestral Narratives of Genesis* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 37.

⁴² Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 108–109.

⁴³ Stephen Castles, "Towards a Sociology of Forced Migration and Social Transformation," *Sociology* 37/1 (2003): 19.

others. Language and territory are used either centripetally or centrifugally towards an imperial purpose of unification.

2 Language, Territory and Mesopotamian Empires

For Mesopotamian imperial powers, both Babylonian and Assyrian, Kenton L. Sparks argues that "identity was political and cultural, not ethnic, and linked with kingship."⁴⁴ This identity, S. Parpola states, consisted of a "common unifying language and a common religion, culture, and value system and included among other elements..."⁴⁵ The concept of the unified language appears in the Sumerian epic "Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta." In agreement with R. Alster, Wenham argues that the text is "looking forward to a time when all mankind would speak the same language."⁴⁶ The idea of 'primordial language,' therefore, functions as "a cultural yardstick of different cultural identities."⁴⁷ The epic thereby declare its superiority by claiming the Sumerian language as the primordial language. Similar phenomena can be seen in other languages like Persian, Aramaic, Celtic, Spanish, etcetera.⁴⁸

In the Assyrian era, such a phenomenon is visible. An expression, *pû ištēn* (one mouth), appears in several royal texts from Mesopotamia, particularly from Tukulti-Ninurta I up to Sargon II.⁴⁹ Ostler further argues that at different times, Assyria has issued "a policy of enforced monolingualism, as a part of Assyrian kings' ideology and rhetoric of domination."⁵⁰ The Assyrian empire abolished the multiplicity of languages and brought people under one language and one rule, which in the royal texts is described as under the "yoke" of "one people."⁵¹

⁴⁴ Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 91–92.

⁴⁵ S. Parpola, "Desperately Trying to Talk Sense: A Letter of Assurbanipal Concerning His Brother Šamaš-šumu-ukin," in *From the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea: Studies on the History of Assyria and Babylonia in Honour of A.K. Grayson* (eds. Grant Frame and Linda S. Wilding; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2004), 5.

⁴⁶ For Wenham, it will be in alignment with Zeph 3:9, Wenham, *Genesis*, 236; R. Alster, "An Aspect of 'Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta'" *RA* 67 (1973): 101–109.

⁴⁷ Milka Levy-Rubin, "The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language: A Case of Cultural Polemics in Antiquity," *JJS* 49/2 (1998): 308–309.

⁴⁸ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 105–107.

⁴⁹ Van der Kooij, "The City of Babel," 8.

⁵⁰ Nicholas Ostler, *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), 35; Harland, "Vertical or Horizontal," 517.

⁵¹ Harland, "Vertical or Horizontal," 517; Uehlinger, *Weltreich und "eine Rede,"* 445–514.

Uehlinger argues that it is "not only 'monolingualism' in a linguistic sense but also 'unanimity' in the sense of a united, common intent."⁵²

Furthermore, Bustenay Oded states that the Near East saw mass deportations of many people to Assyrian's four main royal cities under the three successive Assyrian kings.⁵³ Among its several aims, this imperial deportation weakened the centres of resistance, strengthened the empire through military expansion and enhanced culturally by collecting skilled craftsmen.⁵⁴ It is also meant to impose loyalty towards the empire.⁵⁵

Language and territory played a role in the centripetal force of the empire as the centre in the Babylonian and Assyrian empires. The unity of the empire became the focus and the principal factor of the performance.

D TOWER OF BABEL—A SUBVERSIVE NARRATIVE AGAINST THE IMPERIAL ATTEMPT OF UNIFICATION?

1 Name and Identity in the Narrative

Now that we have established connection between language and identity, the narrative can be more productively read with these concepts in mind. In Wenham's scenic parallelism structure, we find the first parallelism in the word *'eḥād* in verse 1 and verse 6, attached with language (lit. tongue), speeches (lit. words) and people(hood).⁵⁶ The Hebrew Bible records similar formula which pairs language and peoplehood, as in Gen 10:5; Deut 28:49; Ezek 3:5-6; Esth 1:22. Block argues that the very same connection is observable in Gen 11:6.⁵⁷ Power also corroborates this concept by surveying the references to linguistic diversity in the Hebrew Bible, which demonstrates "this imbuing difference in language with social significance, be it in distinguishing tribes (Judg 12:6)... or communities of worship (19:18), in conveying loyalty or disloyalty (Neh 13:24); or in many other ways."⁵⁸ In referring to the Tower of Babel narrative, Power perceives it as a sign of peoplehood. However, one might ask, what kind of peoplehood are we talking about? Is it ethnicity, nationality or something else?

⁵² Uehlinger, *Weltreich und "eine Rede,"* 349.

⁵³ Bustenay Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979), 98.

⁵⁴ Oded, *Mass Deportations*, 43–54.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁶ Wenham, *Genesis*, 235.

⁵⁷ Daniel I. Block, "The Foundations of National Identity: A Study in Ancient Northwest Semitic Perceptions (Syria; Hebrew)" (Ph.D. Diss., The University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom), 328.

⁵⁸ Cian Joseph Power, "Many Peoples of Obscure Speech and Difficult Language: Attitudes towards Linguistic Diversity in the Hebrew Bible" (Ph.D. Diss., Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, 2015), 11.

While we have discussed earlier the fluidity of ethnicity, Mbuvi makes a good point that the word 'am that is used here designates Israel's distinctive mode of commonality.⁵⁹ The term 'am emphasises the unity of the group, as opposed to *gôy*, which refers to the particularity of a group in distinguishing itself from another group.⁶⁰ In other words, the former is a centripetal notion of a group designation, while the latter is a centrifugal one. Thus, Bakhtin's concept of the centripetal aspect of language is matched by the centripetal notion of peoplehood in the word 'am.

How do we perceive the phrase "let us make a name for ourselves"? One thing to note first is how the "name" uses a singular form that is applicable to a plural object. Van Wolde contends that "if relating to the hubris, then *šēm* means 'fame,' but if related to the desire for unity of place and language, *šēm* expresses the name or title by which this group wishes to be known."⁶¹ The names we attribute to some things are essential signifiers of the values we attach to these things. It is more than an indicator of difference but it also entails an essence projected to the named entity.⁶² How the tower builders intend to signify themselves is unclear in the passage. Nonetheless, the concept of name making, which serves as an identity formation, is noticeably visible. Moreover, a single name is applied to the plural objects—a single identity.

Sociologists have pointed out that a collective name "is one of the primary markers of a common cultural tradition."⁶³ Hence, reading the statement, "let us make a name for ourselves," in such a way prevents us from seeing defiance in the narrative but an impulse toward cultural homogeneity instead.⁶⁴ The name obtained through this architectural work functions as a cohesive force against dispersion, something that binds together and possesses a centripetal power.⁶⁵ Thus, a "name," along with language and the notion of peoplehood in the word 'am, operates centripetally in the narrative to emphasise the unification attempt of identity.

⁵⁹ Amanda Beckenstein Mbuvi, *Belonging in Genesis: Biblical Israel and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 100.

⁶⁰ G. Johannes Botterweck, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 2:426-427; Bruce K. Waltke et al., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:676.

⁶¹ Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds*, 99.

⁶² Johannes Fichtner, "Die etymologische Ätiologie in den Namengebungen der geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments," *VT* 6/1 (1956): 327.

⁶³ Hiebert, "The Tower of Babel," 40.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ J. Severino Croatto, "A Reading of the Story of the Tower of Babel from a Perspective of Non-identity: Gen. 11:1-9 in the Context of Its Production," in *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 210-211.

Moreover, the words *šēm* and *šām* (lit. there) share the same consonant and only differ in the vowel. *Šām* is also put in pairs in the narrative (vv. 2, 7). Along with the city building and the reluctance of dispersion, *šām* links the territorial unity with the notion of identity in the word *šēm* in the narrative. Van Wolde notes these vital connections; that "the unity of language evidently leads to a desire for a single spot (*šām*) and to a desire for a single name (*šēm*). The one place is represented by the one name."⁶⁶ While the order is arguable, Van Wolde correctly describes the crucial linkages of these three elements—language, territory and identity.

The narrative concludes with an aetiological formula, which interweaves language, territory, name and identity. It is a language that is multiplied, mixed or confused (*bālal*); a territory that is named (given an identity) (*qārā' šāmāh*) and in which a centrifugal force of language (*šām bālal*) and the centrifugal force of territory (*miššām hēpīšām*) arises and a name that identifies the 'essence of the named entity' (*bābel*) expresses multiplicity and confusion.⁶⁷ With exquisite irony, those who wanted to make a name for themselves do indeed receive a name, Babel. They had wanted to make a name for themselves so that they might be in one place with one language but the name that they received reversed their expectation.

2 Against the Imperial Propaganda

When comparing the Genesis narrative with other similar stories of linguistic diversity in the Mesopotamian account, biblical scholars highlight the fundamental differences between them. Some point out the divine moral element against humanity's intention that appears in Genesis as opposed to the polytheistic competition in the Enmerkar epic.⁶⁸ Other scholars, like Speiser, note the mocking intention and counter myth function of the Genesis narrative against the Babylonian myth of Esagil's building account.⁶⁹ The Genesis narrative also contained a misleading etymology of the name Babel. In Akkadian, Babel means "gate of the gods" but in Genesis, it is associated with the verb *bālal*, which means "to confuse."⁷⁰ This, Bell considers, is a "subversive etymology from the conquered nation of Israel."⁷¹

Nevertheless, this subversive intention does not address only the Babylonian kingdom. Ross points out appropriately that "Babylon was the prototype of all nations, cities, and empire... represented man's megalomaniacal

⁶⁶ Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds*, 99.

⁶⁷ Fichtner, "Die etymologische," 372; Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds*, 99.

⁶⁸ Wenham, *Genesis*, 237, 244; Block, "The Role of Language," 336.

⁶⁹ Wenham, *Genesis*, 244; Speiser, *Genesis*, 75; Power, "Many Peoples," 116.

⁷⁰ Bernhard Anderson, "The Babel Story: Paradigm of Human Unity and Diversity," *Concilium* 101 (1977): 63-70.

⁷¹ Bell, "Re-constructing Babel," 541.

attempt to achieve world peace and unity by domestic exploitation and power."⁷² Giorgetti corroborates this concept, claiming that the term "Babylon" in the Hebrew Bible can also be applied to designate any other imperialistic important cities such as Nineveh or Calah.⁷³ It is, therefore, not inappropriate to compare the narrative to Assyrian propaganda.

The discussion above has shown that the Assyrians employed a policy to unify all the vassals through forced migration and unification of language. Therefore, Strong's argument of an attempt to erase and replace the 'image of God' in the name making activity⁷⁴ will seem plausible if it is seen as the replacement of identity by the Assyrian empire. Sparks argues that the domination of peripheral society by powerful, imperialistic societies will transform that social group's identity.⁷⁵ In response to the domination of a core imperialist power, the sentiments towards the empire appear and intensify among members of the peripheral society.⁷⁶ Therefore, as Carly L. Crouch argues, "it would be unsurprising to observe the advent of Assyrian influence provoking the identity formation processes in parts of the southern Levant."⁷⁷ As the Assyrians imposed the universal identity on other nations, it is easy to see that the Jerusalem scribal elites regarded it as an attempt to replace "the name of God" or "the image of God." That view provoked their interpretation of the "death of Sargon II as a punishment by YHWH for not having respected the world order as set by God."⁷⁸ The dispersion that followed also can be perceived as a desire to return to their homeland for those who had been deported to Assyria.⁷⁹

E 'TOWER OF BABEL' IN THE BROADER GENESIS NARRATIVE

When the Tower of Babel narrative is placed in the context of the Primeval History (Gen 1-11), its perspective stretches the landscape of those eleven chapters before the readers.⁸⁰ As the book of Genesis presents stories about the increasing particularity, Gen 11 "serves more as an interlude, bridging the gap between those primeval events that have shaped and continue to shape the

⁷² Ross, "The Dispersion," 126; Pope-Levison and Levison, *Return to Babel*, 15.

⁷³ Andrew Giorgetti, "Can Babylon Be in Assyria? Genesis 11:9, Babel, and Dur-Sarrukin Revisited" (SBL Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, 2017).

⁷⁴ Strong, "Shattering the Image of God."

⁷⁵ Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 221.

⁷⁶ Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-economy: Essays* (Studies in Modern Capitalism Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); quoted in Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 328.

⁷⁷ Carly L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 98.

⁷⁸ Van der Kooij, "The City of Babel," 17.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Wolde, *Words Become Worlds*, 109.

destiny of every man and the patriarchal history."⁸¹ In J materials, a theme of cultural differentiation started already after Noah's flood ended. Both are linked by the vocabulary of *npš* (Gen 9:19), which is closely related to *pûš* (Gen 11:4, 8, 9).⁸² The Babel narrative concludes the Primeval History.

Furthermore, it should be noted that along with the Creation and Flood accounts constituting the Primeval History, the Tower of Babel narrative has its counterpart narrative in the Mesopotamian account. It is then followed by Abram's story, which began in Mesopotamia. F. V. Greifenhagen views Abram's movements as "proto-exodus," which for him is "concerned with the establishment of Israel's origins in Mesopotamia."⁸³ Other scholars, like Kennedy, see it as a notion of the birthplace of Israel, while Thompson claims it as a *Grundzug* of the patriarchal narratives that they came from outside of Palestine⁸⁴ and it functions perfectly in sustaining the later rhetoric of the ethnic sentiments (again, an identity issue) against Canaan. It then easily confuses the reader of any narrative of Primeval History as the earth's original situation, as Van Wolde suggests.⁸⁵ It is better to understand it as a variant of the concept of "reality" in different cultures while it also functioned as Israel's counter myth against the Mesopotamian culture.

It is also important to read the narrative diachronically. The Tower of Babel narrative as J material in Gen 11 also finds its parallel in the P material of Gen 10's Table of Nations.⁸⁶ While P introduces the story in typical tabular genealogical form, J presents it in narrative form with setting, character and plot.⁸⁷ Further, Gen 10 presents the result of humanity's dispersion but Gen 11 recounts the cause.⁸⁸ This P-J's order of accounts resembles the Creation account in which the P tabular-*toledot* form appears first and follows J's narrative account. It should be noted also that P's Table of Nations uses *gôy* several times to designate the notion of peoplehood (vv. 5, 20, 32). As discussed above, the centrifugal nature of *gôy* fits perfectly with the Priestly notion of God's intention of "filling the earth." In this concept, the connection with Gen1 is plausible. While J's explanation of the centripetal background of the attempt at imperial unification uses the word '*am*', the Table of Nations emphasises the dispersion

⁸¹ Hiebert, "The Tower of Babel," 53; Wenham, *Genesis*, 245.

⁸² Hiebert, "The Tower of Babel," 54.

⁸³ F. V. Greifenhagen, "Ethnicity in, with, or under the Pentateuch," *JRS* 3 (2001): 10–11, 30.

⁸⁴ Kennedy, *Seeking a Homeland*, 234; Thomas L. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 34.

⁸⁵ Wolde, *Words Become Worlds*, 98.

⁸⁶ Claus Westermann, *Genesis: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 1:499, 536–7; Anderson, "The Babel Story."

⁸⁷ Anderson, "The Babel Story."

⁸⁸ Power, "Many Peoples," 127.

with the word *gôy*. It might seem not to follow a chronological order but Kaminski argues that such a 'dischronology' is common in Egyptian and Assyrian texts.⁸⁹

The Table of Nations, being categorised as a segmented genealogy as opposed to a linear genealogy, functions as "a social critique and a means of nourishing a countercultural sensibility within the family [and] obstructing an imperial monopoly on defining identity."⁹⁰ While readers are tempted to disregard such a segmented genealogy, Thomas argues that it acts "as preservatives, allowing the story to continue while preserving and honoring the memory and identity of these secondary characters of Israel's world."⁹¹ Paired with J's Babel episode, the narrative points to more than just an elucidation of the counter centripetal dispersion, "it is an explanation of the problems due to the existence of nations" after the centrifugal force of language, identity and dispersion.⁹² Lastly, as Danna N. Fewell and R. Christopher Heard note, "the Babel story serves as a narrative hinge, providing a funnelling conduit for collective humanity to move and differentiate into particular groups and faces."⁹³ From the universal, imperially constrained region of Babel comes a certain Abram and his family, doing their part to "fill the earth" with a divine promise to become a great *gôy* (Gen 12:2), another continuation of the centrifugal force of identity.

1 Identity Politics of Ancestral Narratives

The link between Gen 11 and the patriarchal narratives must not be ignored. As Hepner argues, the primary rationale of the Tower of Babel narrative is part of the program of identity politics that permeates the book of Genesis.⁹⁴ Gen 11: 1-9 provides the foundational narrative about the thematic prominence of the dispersion of humanity and its cultural differentiation. In the Tower of Babel narrative, the role of language is diminished and the role of the territory is still significant but ambiguously so due to several sojourning narratives.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Kaminski, *From Noah to Israel*, 85.

⁹⁰ Mbuvi, *Belonging in Genesis*, 46. For the difference between linear and segmented genealogies, see Matthew A. Thomas, *These Are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the Toledot Formula* (London: T&T Clark International, 2011).

⁹¹ Thomas, *These Are the Generations*, 95.

⁹² Ross, "The Dispersion," 128–129.

⁹³ Danna N. Fewell and R. Christopher Heard, "The Genesis of Identity in the Biblical World," in *the Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 109.

⁹⁴ Gershon Hepner, *Legal Friction: Law, Narrative, and Identity Politics in Biblical Israel* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 958.

⁹⁵ On the surface level the sojourning is a problem for identity-making but Kennedy, *Seeking a Homeland*, argues that "if it serves to buttress its election myth, then its overall contribution to the ethnic myth is positive."

Nonetheless, in the figure of Abraham, the kinship factor of identity is highlighted. Abrahamic kinship sets the tone of Israelite's socio-cultural integration and delimitation. Just at the beginning of Abraham's call narrative, many elements from J's Babel episode and P's Table of Nations rise to the foreground but in the sense of a reversal.⁹⁶ First, the gift of land appears as a counterpoint of dispersion from the previous passage. Second, the promise of a great nation (*gôy*) implies its continuity with Gen 10 and contrasts with peoplehood in Gen 11. Third, the grant of a great "name" reverses the name searching of Babel's episode.⁹⁷ The call of Abram starts with a centrifugal force away from Abram's previous identity (12:1) and follows with a centripetal force in identity making (v.2). Genesis is about a deity and his distinct people among the divinely intended diversity of cultures.⁹⁸ The 'outsiderhood' concept in Genesis functions as "a badge of distinction" to support being the divinely chosen people. Therefore, before the "election" is performed, the narrative employs a centrifugal force away from any centripetal force. The centripetal force might be seen as the "original situation" as part of the imperial propaganda. The Tower of Babel narrative, then, fits perfectly into Genesis' centrifugal-centripetal forces in Israelite identity formation. In the narrative, centrifugal-centripetal forces are portrayed in the interaction of language, territory and identity.

F EPILOGUE

As Fewell and Heard note, more and more scholars date Genesis to the post-exilic period in its final form.⁹⁹ The post-exilic communities engaged in a dialogue about their circumstances—in traumas of forced deportation and return and subsequent questions of identity and theological veracity.¹⁰⁰ Language seems to play a more significant role as an identity marker in the post-exilic context, as shown in Neh 13:24.¹⁰¹ However, the difference is that the policies of the Achaemenid seem to favour the survival of the native languages. In other words, they seem to support the differentiation of cultural identity.¹⁰² In that era, the tension is felt more towards the adjacent neighbours than toward the empires. While pursuing those questions will require a separate study, the notion is aligned with the thesis of this article. The Tower of Babel narrative functions as

⁹⁶ Jon Douglas Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 19–20.

⁹⁷ Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham*, 20.

⁹⁸ Frank Crüsemann, "Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity: Israel's Self-definition in the Genealogical System of Genesis," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 72.

⁹⁹ See Fewell and Heard, "The Genesis of Identity," 110.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Block, "The Role of Language," 330.

¹⁰² Schwartz, "Language, Power and Identity," 44.

a counter narrative against any other imperial unification attempt. It counters the pan-identity that is imposed by the empire. The narrative displays the centripetal-centrifugal forces at play in portraying the role of language and territory in the conflict of particular identity and imperial unification. Finally, the centripetal-centrifugal performance in Babel's episode, along with the similar performance across the Primeval History and the Patriarchal Narratives in the book of Genesis, works together in constituting the politics of Israelite identity formation in light of the particular divine election.

G BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Bernhard. "The Babel Story: Paradigm of Human Unity and Diversity." *Concilium* 101 (1977): 63-70.
- Baden, Joel S. "The Tower of Babel: A Case Study in the Competing Methods of Historical and Modern Literary Criticism." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128/2 (2009): 209-224.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Bell, Allan. "Re-constructing Babel: Discourse Analysis, Hermeneutics and the Interpretive Arc." *Discourse Studies* 13/5 (2011): 519-568.
- Block, Daniel I. "The Role of Language in Ancient Israelite Perceptions of National Identity." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103/3 (1984): 321-340.
- _____. "The Foundations of National Identity: A Study in Ancient Northwest Semitic Perceptions." Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Liverpool, 1982.
- Botterweck, G. Johannes. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Volume 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Genesis*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982.
- Cassuto, Umberto. *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1989.
- Castles, Stephen. "Towards a Sociology of Forced Migration and Social Transformation." *Sociology* 37/1 (2003): 13-34.
- Croatto, J. Severino. "A Reading of the Story of the Tower of Babel from a Perspective of Non-identity: Gen. 11:1-9 in the Context of Its Production." Pages 203-223 in *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*. Edited by Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998.
- Crouch, Carly L. *The Making of Israel*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Crüsemann, Frank. "Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity: Israel's Self-definition in the Genealogical System of Genesis." Pages 57-76 in *Ethnicity and the Bible*. Edited by Mark G. Brett. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- Edwards, John. *Language and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Emberling, Geoff and Normann Yoffee. "Thinking about Ethnicity in Mesopotamian Archaeology and History." Pages 272-28 in *Fluchtpunkt Uruk: Archäologische Einheit aus methodischer Vielfalt; Schriften für Hans Jörg Nissen*. Edited by Hartmut Kühne and Reinhard Bernbeck. Rahden: Leidorf, 1999.
- Fewell, Danna N. and R. Christopher Heard, "The Genesis of Identity in the Biblical World." Pages 109-124 in *the Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*. Edited by Danna N. Fewell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

- Fichtner, Johannes. “Die etymologische Ätiologie in den Namengebungen der geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments.” *Vetus Testamentum* 6/1 (1956): 372–396.
- Giorgetti, Andrew. “Can Babylon Be in Assyria? Genesis 11:9, Babel, and Dur-Sarrukin Revisited.” Unpublished Paper Presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, 2017.
- . “The ‘Mock Building Account’ of Genesis 11:1-9: Polemic against Mesopotamian Royal Ideology.” *Vetus Testamentum* 64/1 (2014): 1–20.
- Gowan, Donald E. *When Man Becomes God: Humanism and Hybris in the Old Testament*. Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1975.
- Greifenhagen, F. V. “Ethnicity in, with, or under the Pentateuch.” *Journal of Religion and Society* 3 (2001): 1-17.
- Gunkel, Hermann. *Genesis*. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997.
- Harland, P. J. “Vertical or Horizontal: The Sin of Babel.” *Vetus Testamentum* 48/4 (1998): 515–533.
- Hepner, Gershon. *Legal Friction: Law, Narrative, and Identity Politics in Biblical Israel*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010.
- Hiebert, Theodore. “The Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World’s Cultures.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 1 (2007): 29–58.
- Jean-Luc, Nancy. *Identity: Fragments, Frankness*. Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2015.
- Kaminski, Carol M. *From Noah to Israel: Realization of the Primaeval Blessing after the Flood*. London: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Kennedy, Elisabeth Robertson. *Seeking a Homeland: Sojourn and Ethnic Identity in the Ancestral Narratives of Genesis*. Boston: Brill, 2011.
- Levenson, Jon Douglas. *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Levin, Jeff. “‘And Let Us Make Us a Name’: Reflections on the Future of the Religion and Health Field.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 48/2 (2009): 125–145.
- Levy-Rubin, Milka. “The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language: A Case of Cultural Polemics in Antiquity.” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49/2 (1998): 306–333.
- Matney, Timothy. “Material Culture and Identity: Assyrians, Arameans, and the Indigenous Peoples of Iron Age Southeastern Anatolia.” Pages 129–147 in *Agency and Identity in the Ancient Near East: New Paths Forward*. Edited by Sharon R. Steadman and Jennifer C. Ross. London: Equinox, 2010.
- Mbuvi, Amanda Beckenstein. *Belonging in Genesis: Biblical Israel and the Politics of Identity Formation*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016.
- Meyers, Carol L. *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Oded, Bustenay. *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979.
- Orwell, George. *Inside the Whale, and Other Essays*. London: VGollancz Ltd, 1940.
- Ostler, Nicholas. *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World*. London: Harper Collins, 2005.
- Parpola, S. “Desperately Trying to Talk Sense: A Letter of Assurbanipal Concerning His Brother Šamaš-šumu-ukin.” Pages 227–234 in *From the Upper Sea to the*

- Lower Sea: Studies on the History of Assyria and Babylonia in Honour of A.K. Grayson*. Edited by Grant Frame and Linda S. Wilding. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2004.
- Pope-Levison, Priscilla and John R. Levison. *Return to Babel: Global Perspectives on the Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- Power, Cian Joseph. "Many Peoples of Obscure Speech and Difficult Language: Attitudes towards Linguistic Diversity in the Hebrew Bible." Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2015.
- Ricœur, Paul. *On Translation*. Thinking in Action. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Ross, Allen. "The Dispersion of the Nations in Genesis 11:1-9: Part 4 of Studies in the Book of Genesis." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138/550 (1981): 119–138.
- Sarna, Nahum M. *Understanding Genesis*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1966.
- Schwartz, Seth. "Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine." *Past and Present* 148 (1995): 3-47.
- Shipp, R. Mark. "'Let Us Make a Name for Ourselves': Human Technology and Innovation in Genesis 1-11." *Christian Studies* 17 (1998): 10–20.
- Sparks, Kenton L. *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998.
- Speiser, E. A. *Genesis*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1964.
- Steadman, Sharon R. and Jennifer C. Ross. *Agency and Identity in the Ancient Near East: New Paths Forward*. London: Equinox, 2010.
- Strong, John T. "Shattering the Image of God: A Response to Theodore Hiebert's Interpretation of the Story of the Tower of Babel." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127/4 (2008): 625–634.
- Thomas, Matthew A. *These Are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the Toledot Formula*. London: T&T Clark International, 2011.
- Thompson, Thomas L. *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987.
- Uehlinger, Christoph. *Weltreich und "eine Rede"*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990.
- Van der Kooij, Arie. "The City of Babel and Assyrian Imperialism: Genesis 11:1-9 Interpreted in the Light of Mesopotamian Sources." Pages 1–17 in *Congress Volume Leiden 2004*. Edited by André Lemaire. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Van Wolde, E. J. *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel Maurice. *The Capitalist World-Economy: Essays*. Studies in Modern Capitalism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Waltke, Bruce K., Gleason Leonard Archer and R. Laird Harris. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
- Walton, John H. "The Tower of Babel." Ph.D. Dissertation, Hebrew Union College. Jewish Institute of Religion, 1981.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis: 1-15*. Waco: Word Books, 1981.
- Westermann, Claus. *Genesis: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- Wright, Jacob. "Making a Name for Oneself: Martial Valor, Heroic Death, and Procreation in the Hebrew Bible." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36/2 (2011): 131–162.

Bobby Kurnia Putrawan is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Theological Studies at Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Moriah, Tangerang City, Indonesia.

E-mail: bkputrawan@gmail.com ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1651-7883

Ludwig Beethoven J. Noya is a Ph.D. Candidate in Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, USA. E-mail: Ludwig.noya@vanderbilt.edu
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9390-7116

Alisaid Prawiro Negoro is a Lecturer of Practical Theology at Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia. Email: alisaidps@moriah.ac.id. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1909-3062