

An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax

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Abbreviations and Sigla

Grammatical Terms

abs.	absolute
<i>bis</i>	twice
C	consonant
C	construct term
c.	common
coll.	collective
cstr.	construct
ENWS	Early Northwest Semitic
f(em).	feminine
Foc	focus marker
G	genitive term
impfv.	imperfective
inf. abs.	infinitive absolute
inf. cstr.	infinitive construct
m(asc).	masculine
non-pfv.	non-perfective
pf.	perfect
pfv.	perfective
pl.	plural
pleo	pleonastic pronoun
Pred	predicate
S	subject
s(ing).	singular
V	vowel
V	verb
*	unattested form
**	impossible form
□ / □	approximately equal to

Versions and Translations

AV	Authorized Version (1611)
LXX	Septaugint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible (1970)
NIV	New International Version (1973)
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society Version (1982)
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1952)
<i>Sam</i>	Samaritan Pentateuch

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BL	Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander. 1922. <i>Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testamentes</i> .
GAGH	Wolfgang Richter. 1978–80. <i>Grundlagen einer althebräischen Grammatik</i> .
GB	[Wilhem Gesenius-]Gotthelf Bergsträsser. 1918–29. <i>Hebräische Grammatik</i> .
GKC	[Wilhelm Gesenius-]Emil Kautzch, trans. A. E. Cowley. 1910. <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> .

Joüon	Paul Joüon. 1923. <i>Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique</i> .
LHS	Ernst Jenni. 1981. <i>Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testaments</i> .
MPD	P. Swiggers and W. Van Hoecke. 1986. <i>Mots et Parties du Discours</i> .
SA/THAT	Statistischer Anhang to Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann. 1971–76. <i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> .
UT	Cyrus H. Gordon. 1965. <i>Ugaritic Textbook</i> .

An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax

Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor

Preface

The Scope and Purpose of This Book

An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax is in two senses an intermediary grammar of the language of the Hebrew Bible. It is, first of all grammar designed for study by those who have mastered the fundamentals of the language and possess a good grasp of its phonology and morphology as well as a working vocabulary. Second, it is an intermediary between basic study and the vast array of research literature, a tool to prepare readers to take up that body of writing as they take up the great and difficult corpus of ancient Hebrew scriptures. This volume is presented both as a textbook and as a work of reference and study. There exists in English no up-to-date intermediate or advanced grammar of Biblical Hebrew and the lack has long been recognized. We have attempted to present both a body of knowledge (providing, as it were, the "right answers") and a sample of analytical and descriptive approaches (suggesting the "right questions"). Introductory Hebrew grammar is largely a matter of morphology, and the word-class or part-of-speech approach we have taken up should follow from such an introductory program. Word-class theory has a respectable antiquity and, as a result of recent research on the organization of the lexicon, a brightening future. The framework is, we hope, conservative enough to be broadly accessible but serious enough to allow us to escape some of the confusions of earlier grammars of Hebrew. New terminology has been introduced cautiously.

Reference grammars are available; every advanced student of the Hebrew text needs to have at hand the grammar of Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley to check a variety of details in ample and well-informed framework. This volume does not seek to replace GKC or comparable works available in other languages. We do not take account of every exception and anomaly. The book rather seeks to be used both before and alongside such works, pointing to the explorations of more recent generations of scholars, both in detail and in the structure of the overall framework and reconsidering the views of the older works in light of those exploration.

As a teaching grammar, this volume seeks not merely to describe the syntax of Biblical Hebrew; but to provide some explanatory depth to the description. Students emerge from an introductory course in Hebrew ready to begin to confront the text, and this volume stands among the books that can help them. Among these books, if consulted on the fly, tend to fragment a reader's view of problems. While commentaries tend to narrow the focus too closely. Specialized grammatical studies are sometimes forced to argue a thesis too closely or to cover all the data too briskly.

As a tool in reading and exegesis, this volume seeks to encourage attention to the difficulties of a text in a written language from the ancient world of a different culture. Too brief a program of study in Hebrew can be misleading or even dangerous; facile mastery can make students believe that they grasp a text when all they hold is a memory of a received translation. The distortions of using the Hebrew language as the key to an alien mindset are not part of our program; current scholarship has outgrown such views. But Hebrew remains a foreign language to native speakers of English and other European languages. This grammar seeks to help them realize the character of that foreignness, primarily with regard to the interaction of syntax and semantics. We are concerned with what the forms of Hebrew mean, how those meanings can be appropriated, and, incidentally, and chiefly by example, how those meanings can be rendered in English.

The great native-speaker tradition of Hebrew grammar associated with medieval Jewry is first basis of this study. This tradition has been passed on for centuries, and it fed into the modern European tradition canonized by Wilhelm Gesenius in first quarter of the nineteenth century. The second basis is modern linguistic study, its roots contemporary with Gesenius and its first flowers contemporary with the edition of Gesenius's grammar currently in print in English (1910). On these two bases this grammar stands, learning now more on one, now more on the other. The aim of this volume is not novelty; indeed, too much novelty would not be appropriate. Yet the enormous body of scholars concerned with Hebrew Bible has produced much that is new, and each new view or concept repositions and reshapes all other facets of the grammar, however slightly. It is safe to say, then, that any reader will find something new here, and safer to say that each reader will find something to disagree with.

Although this is not a comprehensive syntax of the Hebrew Bible, it provides a full overview of the topic and draws on a rich and diverse body of scholarship. Important studies by, for example, F. I. Andersen, Ernst Jenni, and Dennis Pardee are here for the first time brought into survey of Hebrew grammar; other studies are evaluated, still others cited only in passing. Like David Qimhi, we are often gleaners following reapers. Some of the distortions to be found in the literature are criticized. The bibliography will direct students not only to the works we have used here, but also to reference works and to studies on Hebrew phonology and morphology, topics not treated here. We have provided a basic bibliography of Biblical Hebrew studies because no such tool is currently available.

Though we aim to help students in evaluating and appraising the secondary literature, we are not directly concerned with such appraisals. We have not been able to use and cite as wide a range of materials as we would like, but the range is considerable. Much new literature has appeared during the years we have been at work. In cases where only details of our exposition were affected, we were better able to incorporate new findings and views. On larger issues we were often unable to revise and reshape as much as we would have liked, in response to a variety of recent introductory grammars as well as major scholarly contributions, for example, Shelomo Morag's paper on Qumran Hebrew, Jaakov Levi's essay on *Die Inkongruenz im biblischen Hebräisch*, and John Huchnergard's monograph on Ugaritic Issues of Hans-Peter Müers new journal *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* only reached us in the last stages of our work.

Some other bases of the volume need notice. Comparative semitic data has been drawn on to illuminate and provide perspectives, though we presuppose no knowledge of the other languages. Given our two primary bases, this use is inevitable. The earliest Hebrew grammarians spoke Arabic as well as Hebrew, so the tradition begins with a comparative bias. The decipherment of cuneiform and the development of modern grammars of Akkadian has affected the interpretation of every facet of the Hebrew verb. Alongside Arabic and Akkadian, the great languages originally spoken south and east of Hebrew, are the other languages of ancient Levant, Hebrew's closest relatives Moabite, Ammonite, and Phoenician-Punic as well as the older language of Ugarit and the more distantly related Aramaic languages. Citation of comparative Semitic data is restrained, but is always in our judgment crucial to the argument at hand. Similarly crucial is comparative data from English and other European languages. Contrastive analysis of languages is now commonplace in modern language teaching. Such information serves to remind students how their own and related languages work. Not all students have a broad and firm grounding in linguistics; this book presupposes no acquaintances with that subject — and English may be taken as a fixed and engaging point of reference. The use of English-language data serves, at least in part, to expose the preunderstandings of English readers. Indeed, in the light of an "exotic" language like Hebrew, English turns out to be an "exotic" language, too. In the labor of reading or translation, the target language is no more "natural" or "correct" than the source language.

The shape of the book is irregular—we have not sought to balance exactly the various aspects of Hebrew or to divide up the materials into equal portions. A proper grasp of the *Piel* stem or the prefix conjugation requires the use of concepts and notions that may seem overly theoretical. The chapter on the preposition, in contrast, may seem to largely be lexical. Certain topics are not treated fully: the adverbs, especially the negative particles, do not receive the focused attention they might, though there are relevant references throughout. The labor of the writing of each book must be limited or at least called to a halt.

The Use of This Book

The structure of this volume is largely topical and logical rather than pedagogical. Teachers and students are free to approach the material as they like and make adaptations appropriate to their own program and circumstances. After the opening section, any of the four remaining sections can be taken up; the various tables of contents and the topical index should facilitate cross-checking. In each of those sections, certain chapters require conceptual exposition, while others demand review and consideration of the examples in context. We have provided many, many examples in full or extended citation, with glosses (*not* translations). The examples are all from the Bible, with three or four exceptions, where it is clear that a modern imitation of Biblical Hebrew is being given. Students are urged to read the examples quoted here and eventually to check them (and the other examples cited in the notes) in the biblical context. Because examples are sometimes excerpted and abridged, they do not necessarily reflect the actual text. The renderings given here tend to present a dynamic equivalent, sometimes complemented by a more literal gloss reflecting the grammatical point at issue — though the term *lit.* is sometimes used loosely. A few Hebrew words are left unglossed, and renderings of a biblical excerpt may vary from section to section of the book. The English versions are not strictly a help or a trot — readers should try to explain (or improve on) our suggestions, often drawn from modern versions, and should consider possible alternatives. Interpretive additions are given in brackets, while other additions, including grammatical information, appear in parentheses. Final ellipses are generally not used in Hebrew text. Verse is set off in lines where such an arrangement would require no extra space. Single quotation mark (' / ') are used for glosses and renderings, double marks (" / ") for quotations and technical terms.

A one-year-long approach to teaching the work would involve devoting approximately one week to each of twenty-eight chapters or pairs of chapters, leaving for cursory review or study outside classes chapters 1–3, 5, 15–19 and combining 11 and 12, 24 and 25, and 27 and 28. Some teachers may prefer to skip individual sections and reshape the material in other ways. We anticipate preparing a shorter version of this grammar, perhaps equipped with exercises and key and more suitable for a brief course, and invite comments from users of this volume. Experienced teachers know that grammar becomes significant of students only as they are led to use it. In any format, intermediate or advanced grammatical study should accompany the reading of the masterpieces of biblical prose, such as the Joseph and Ruth stories, as well as some of the major biblical poems such as [Psalm 100](#) and the Song of Hannah. During such reading students should apply the principles outlined here and begin to use grammar both for reference and for extended study. The brief glossary covers chiefly grammatical terms, chiefly those liable to confusion and those unlikely to be found in other reference works; in no sense is it intended to compete with the text of the book.

The indexes cover four fields: topics, modern authorities cited, Hebrew words, and biblical passages. Used with chapter tables of contents the topical index should direct students to any relevant discussion here.

The biblical text is generally quoted from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), though in some cases we have preferred the evidence of the Masoretic margins (*Qere*) or other Masoretic manuscripts, or the Samaritan Pentateuch, or we have cited a text reflected in the ancient versions or an emendation. For the perpetual (*Qere*) readings, we use the long form of Jerusalem and the feminine third singular pronoun where appropriate; we leave the Tetragrammaton unpointed. Cases in which we vary from *BHS* are rare: this volume is no substitute for an introduction to text-critical problems. In quoting the Hebrew text some of the more anomalous readings of the Leningrad codex are retained (e.g., [1 Sam 9:21](#) and [Ruth 3:9](#), with *BHS* against the text of the earlier *Biblia Hebraica* of 1937 [*BH3*]; [Gen 32:18](#), with *BHS* and *BH3* against other editions), though some are silently replaced by a standard text (e.g., a *sop pasuq* missing from Leningrad but reported for other texts by *BHS*, as in [Exod 20:3](#)). (On the basis of his autopsy of the 1971 Makor facsimile edition of Leningrad, J. Alan Groves, of Westminster Theological Seminary, informs us that the [Gen 32:18](#) variant is probably a typographical error in both *BH3* and *BHS*.) The Masoretic accents are given in some cases, and the stress, where it is not final, is marked. *Athnach* and *sop pasuq* (but not *silluq*), major verse dividers, are given from the text, and stress is shown with the mark [˘]. The verse dividers give a sense of a verse's

overall shape and are given even where the stress mark is also found; this redundancy reflects the mixed phonological and syntactic bases of Masoretic accentuation. Stress is shown only as a feature of the word; only main stress is shown; and stress groups covering several words are thus not set off. In citing single items attested forms are usually given, rather than dictionary forms, in a few cases in lists *athnach* instead of *sop pasuq* is used to show that a form is pausal. Once or twice the verse divider of the MT is retained even though the gloss shows that we believe a transposition is necessary. *Methegh* is given either from *BHS* or as needed, though not all possible cases are supplied. Transliterations follow the now widely accepted systems of the major scholarly journals, except in two features: turned e (ê) is used for *shewa* and e with breve (ë) for *hateph seghol*; and the *matres lectionis* of plene short vowels are not written with parantheses. This standard system, based as it is on a dubious reconstruction of Hebrew phonology, is not perfect but it is workable and should be familiar to every student. In general, Hebrew is given in characters in the text and in transliteration in the notes, but some variation is to be found in both directions. We have been spare in using the single asterisk (to mark unattested or primitive linguistic forms; **yaqtul*) and the double asterisk (to mark forms that would be impossible in Hebrew; ***yaqtal*). Diacritics are, as often as possible while still preserving clarity, omitted from pattern words (Piel, not Pi‘ël).

Acknowledgements

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PHILADELPHIA

ANN ARBOR

Note to the Third, Corrected Printing

Typographical errors have been corrected and some garbled or badly written passages rectified as a result of the vigilance of reviewers and other colleagues, including David W. Baker (Ashland, Ohio), Adele Berlin (College Park, Maryland), Walter R. Bodine (Dallas), C. John Collins (Spokane), Edward L. Greenstein (New York City), Frederic C. Putnam (Hatfield, Pennsylvania), Leona Glidden Running (Berrien Springs, Michigan), and Mark F. Willson (Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, Brazil). Our thanks to them.

1 DECEMBER 1990

Note to the Fourth, Corrected Printing

We continue to be gratified by the generous reception accorded this book. Once again, we are happy to correct errors and amend infelicities pointed out by students at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) and Regent College (Vancouver), by reviewers, and by other colleagues and friends, including Ralph L. Bogle (Ann Arbor), James H. Charlesworth (Princeton), Terence Collins (Manchester), Peter T. Daniels (Chicago), John Heuhnergard (Cambridge, Massachusetts), and W. G. E. Watson (Edinburgh).

Vancouver

St. Paul

7 APRIL 1993

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1.1 Introduction

a

The Hebrew language has been in use from the time of Moses (the archeological era known as the Late Bronze Age II, 1400–1200 B.C.E.) to the present. The topic of this grammar, Biblical Hebrew—we use the term for the Hebrew used in the composition of scripture as well as in the Masoretic Text (abbreviated MT)—was in use from that time through the exilic, post-exilic, and Second Temple periods, a span corresponding in large part to the Imperial Age (Neo-Babylonian Empire, 625–540; Persian Empire, 540–330; Hellenistic, 330–60; Roman, 60 B.C.E. 330 C.E.). Over the course of more than three millennia the Hebrew language has experienced many changes; indeed, even over a period of several generations a language undergoes modification. The English we speak is not the language of Shakespeare or even Thomas Jefferson. The Middle English language of Chaucer and, even more so, the Old English of King Alfred the Great (9th century C.E.) are to us virtually foreign languages. The interval between the earliest biblical literature, such as the Song of Moses ([Exodus 15](#)) or the Song of Deborah ([Judges 5](#)), and the latest books of the Bible, such as Esther or Chronicles, is as long as the interval between Alfred the Great and us. In contrast to the history of most languages, the Hebrew language has exhibited a remarkable uniformity over time. A well educated Hebrew speaker can read and understand Hebrew literature from all stages, from the oldest portions of the Hebrew Scriptures to Modern Hebrew.¹

b

To understand the nature of Biblical Hebrew one needs to know both the family background and history of Hebrew in general (1.2-3) and the history of the biblical text in which it was recorded through the time of the Masoretes, who standardized all aspects of its transmission (1.5).² So fundamental is their work to the writing of a Hebrew grammar that it deserves separate treatment (1.6). An understanding of the text's history and the work of the Masoretes provides insight into some of the problems confronting a linguist attempting to write a grammar of

the Masoretic Text. It also helps to explain why variations are not as marked as we would expect in view of the geographical, political, and cultural diversity of the tribes in Israel's early history, its bifurcation into two kingdoms in its later history, and its later existence in dispersion and exile. Fundamental to the study of Biblical Hebrew is the tension between synchrony and diachrony (see also 3.4). A synchronic view considers a language at a single point in time. A synchronic view of present-day English would be based on the way the language is used by a variety of speakers, speakers from all those areas of the world where English is natively spoken or used as a common language of officials (cf. the role of Aramaic in [2 Kgs 18:26](#) and [Ezra 4:7](#)) or scholars or merchants. Such a study might also consider written uses of the language, newspapers, magazines (both popular and literary), and genre and serious fiction, as well as reports and documents. A diachronic study of English would necessarily rely on written sources more than speakers. As the sources grew less familiar, the study would need to devote more attention to characterizing them as well as their language. Ideally a linguistic analysis of Biblical Hebrew would represent the language diachronically by describing its various stages synchronically; we can only broadly analyze the Hebrew language in this way. In a separate section (1.4) we show the limitations of such an approach when applied to the Masoretic Text.

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1.2 Hebrew as a Semitic Language

a

Hebrew belongs to the Semitic language family, the historically predominant language group of southwestern Asia, the region usually known as the Near East or Middle East. The Semitic family is itself part of the Afroasiatic language phylum, the major language group that spans the continents of Africa and Asia.³

b

The Semitic family is attested primarily in the relatively compact area of the Near East; accounting for the family members is a complex task chiefly because of the enormous time span over which they are used and the multiplicity of influences on the region. The languages form a cohesive group linguistically, comparable to the Romance languages of Europe, the modern relatives of Latin: French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Italian, Roumanian, and others. There are two major branches of the family, East and West Semitic. Only one language belongs to the East Semitic subgroup, Akkadian, the language of the Babylonians and Assyrians of Mesopotamia; Akkadian records, in the cuneiform writing system, have historical and literary as well as linguistic relevance to biblical studies. The West Semitic group includes Northwest Semitic, Arabic, and South Semitic.⁴ (North) Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and the Islamic religion; the South Semitic group includes the various South Arabian languages and the Ethiopian languages. Classical Ethiopic or Geez is no longer spoken; the major Semitic languages of the land of Ethiopia are Amharic and Tigrinya. Northwest Semitic languages include the Canaanite languages, Biblical Hebrew and its immediate congeners, and the Aramaic languages, important in the biblical world.⁵ About two percent of the Hebrew Bible is written in Aramaic.⁶ The term "classical Semitic languages" is used to refer to the great, pre-modern literary languages, Hebrew, Syriac (an Aramaic tongue), Geez, Arabic,

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and sometimes also Akkadian; all these are well attested over significant periods of time.⁷ The major modern languages are Arabic (spoken in a variety of dialects as well as a commonly used standard form), Amharic, Tigrinya, and Modern Hebrew.

c

Texts from the third-millennium site of Tell Mardikh in Syria (ancient Ebla) are written in both Sumerian and a Semitic language. The affiliation of this language is unclear: some scholars claim that it is close to the earliest forms of Akkadian, while others view it as a primordial Northwest Semitic language. Still other scholars claim that Eblaic (or Eblaite) antedates the East-West split in Semitic. Because of the complexity of the ways in which the cuneiform writing system was used at Ebla, only prolonged study will resolve the debate.⁸

d

The similarities of the Semitic languages and various tongues of Africa have long been noted. The larger family or phylum was once called Hamito-Semitic, based on the idea that the phylum had two distinct parts; in fact, it has five (or six). The term Afroasiatic is now standard; also found are Afrasian, Lisramic, and Erythrean. Two Afroasiatic families are North African in location: Egyptian, the now extinct language of ancient Egypt (known in its

later stages as Coptic), and Berber, a group of languages used chiefly in Algeria and Morocco. Still disputed is the view that, within Afroasiatic, Egyptian and Semitic have a close relationship.⁹ In sub-Saharan Africa are found the Chadic family (in Nigeria, Chad, and neighboring countries; major language Hausa) and the Cushitic-Omoti family (in the Horn of Africa, i.e., Ethiopia and Somalia; major Cushitic languages are Oromo and Somali). Numerous aspects of the development of the Semitic languages can be illuminated by reference to the larger Afroasiatic context.

1.3 History of Hebrew

1.3.1 Prehistory

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a

It is one of the great ironies of Syro-Palestinian archeology that vastly more documentation for what may be called the prehistory of Biblical Hebrew has been found than for the history of the language at the time the Scriptures were being recorded. Use of this documentation is difficult, both because the sources are of various types and because they are scattered over the whole range of the ancient Near East. These materials are recorded in a variety of scripts; in some cases a single personal name contributes evidence of importance comparable to that of an entire literary text. A survey of these materials, best called Early Northwest Semitic (ENWS), is beyond the scope of this grammar, but a chronological review of major sources may be useful.¹⁰ Such a review makes it possible to sidestep the questions of exactly how many languages (or dialects) are involved and exactly how they are interrelated.

b

Late Third Millennium (2350–2000). Traces of ENWS are found in cuneiform Sumerian and Akkadian texts from a variety of sites, perhaps including Ebla.¹¹

c

Old Babylonian Period (2000–1600). Personal names in the Amorite language are found in texts from the Babylonian heartland, from the kingdom of Mari (in the Middle Euphrates valley), and from other Syrian sites. The texts from Mari, written in Akkadian, also show common vocabulary of Amorite origin. Amorite names also occur in a series of Execration Texts from Twelfth Dynasty Egypt (ca. 2000–1750).¹²

d

Late Middle Bronze-Early Late Bronze (1600–1400). The documentary evidence from this period is slender, confined to the so-called Proto-Sinaitic texts, written in the earliest form of the linear alphabet. These inscriptions, found on the walls of Serābīt el-Khādem, a turquoise-mining area of the Sinai, are usually dated around 1475, although some scholars have proposed a higher date. Alphabetic signs are found on jars from Gezer dated to the same period, and a few short texts have been found in Palestine.¹³

e

Late Bronze II (1400–1200). There are a small number of alphabetic inscriptions from Syria-Palestine in the Late Bronze II period, but pride of place for ENWS studies belongs to materials from Amarna and Ugarit. The Egyptian city of Amarna yielded correspondence sent to the pharaohs Amunhotpe III and his son Akhenaten between 1400 and 1350, largely from the latter half of the period. These letters are written in a form of Akkadian strongly influenced by the native Canaanite or ENWS languages of the scribes, employees of the minor kings of Syro-Palestinian city-states; the letters also contain Canaanite glosses.¹⁴ Among the larger of the petty kingdoms of the region was Ugarit. It has preserved not only texts written in Akkadian but also texts written in the native language, Ugaritic. The script for these is alphabetic in type but, unlike the writing of the Proto-Sinaitic texts and related texts ancestral to the European alphabets, the Ugaritic script is wedge-based. Texts written in an Ugaritic-type alphabet script have been found at Ras Ibn Hani, a site near Ugarit, and at other sites in Syria-Palestine.¹⁵

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1.3.2 Biblical Hebrew and Congeners

a

Biblical Hebrew is the language of the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁶ The history of that language is bound together in part with the history of textual transmission (1.5). Other factors skewing a diachronic analysis of the language deserve a separate treatment (1.4). A variety of related languages and dialects, more or less closely related to Hebrew, were recorded at the time the Hebrew Scriptures were being written. The Iron Age (1200–540 B.C.E.) forms a convenient watershed in the history of Syro-Palestinian languages, though the significance of the year 1200 should not be exaggerated: the earliest Biblical Hebrew had a great deal in common with Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite.

b

The extrabiblical linguistic material from the Iron Age is primarily epigraphic, that is, texts written on hard materials (pottery, stones, walls, etc.). The epigraphic texts from Israelite territory are written in Hebrew, in a form of the language which may be called Inscriptional Hebrew; this "dialect" is not strikingly different from the Hebrew preserved in the Masoretic text. Unfortunately, it is meagerly attested. Similarly limited are the epigraphic materials in the other South Canaanite dialects, Moabite and Ammonite; Edomite is so poorly attested that we are not sure that it is a South Canaanite dialect, though that seems likely.¹⁷ Of greater interest and bulk is the body of Central Canaanite inscriptions, those written in the Phoenician language of Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos, and in the offshoot Punic and Neo-Punic tongues of the Phoenician colonies in North Africa.¹⁸ An especially problematic body of material is the Deir Alla wall inscriptions referring to a prophet Balaam (ca. 700 B.C.E.); these texts have both Canaanite and Aramaic features.¹⁹ W. R. Garr has recently proposed that all the Iron Age Canaanite dialects be regarded as forming a chain that actually includes the oldest forms of Aramaic as well.

At one linguistic extreme of the dialect chain is standard Phoenician, and at the other end is Old Aramaic. Of the dialects known, Ammonite was most closely related to standard Phoenician. Edomite was related to Phoenician as well as to Hebrew. On this dialectal continuum, Hebrew lies closer to standard Phoenician than it does to Old Aramaic. Moabite was most closely related to Hebrew; it also possessed distinctive Aramaic features. The Deir Alla dialect shared some features with Hebrew (and Canaanite), but most of its phonological and morphological inventory was derived from Old Aramaic. Finally, Old Aramaic lies at the end of the continuum.²⁰

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Linguistic affiliation is a comparatively minor issue in relation to the Iron Age epigraphic remains. They are a rich source of information about Canaanite morphology, syntax, and literary usage whatever model of dialect structure is accepted.

1.3.3 Later History of Hebrew

a

The Hebrew Scriptures are profoundly united in themselves, and because of their focal role in the Jewish community they have served to unify that community. This use of scripture has preserved the language against forces encouraging diversity and drastic change. The entire range of the sources for the Hebrew language—extending from scripture through Mishnah, Midrashim, and medieval poetry—retains a degree of linguistic uniformity. The greatest influence has been the biblical text. Here is a sample of a relatively free use of biblical pastiche in a public letter written by the Renaissance rabbi, physician, and teacher Judah Messer Leon (in the translation the biblical references have been supplied):

I have heard that the cry is gone round about the borders [Isa 15:8] of Bologna, has broadened and wound about higher and higher [Ezek 41:7] in the full assemblies [Ps 68:27]. In your house of prayer [Isa 56:7] my glory has been put to shame [Ps 4:3] by men of blood and deceit that shall not live out half their days [Ps 55:24]. It is an enemy that taunts me [Ps 55:13], and all the people perceive the thunderings [Exod 20:15].

The author claims here that "an enemy's slanderous vilification ... has been spread throughout the whole of the Jewish community of Bologna. He has been held up to public obloquy even in the house of divine worship by destructive and deceitful persons, who accordingly are under the curse of a shortened life."²¹ This passage is one example of the style of *melisha* 'adornment'; there are other ways in which Hebrew authors of all ages have infused their writings with the language of scripture and the other sources.²²

b

The first stage in the post-biblical history of Hebrew is one unknown to the tradition. The scrolls and fragments of manuscripts found in the vicinity of the Dead Sea, mostly at the site of Qumran, include, in addition to biblical texts and anthologies, a great number of contemporary texts in Hebrew; the texts date from around 200 B.C.E. through 135 C.E., some of them antedating the founding of Qumran. Since the Qumran texts are often close in subject matter to the biblical text, dealing with cultic behavior, for example, and divine praise, the Hebrew of these texts is of special interest.²³

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c

The first major work in the post-biblical Jewish tradition, the Mishnah, deals with the discussion and resolution of problems involving the application of the religious law; it was compiled in the mid-second century C.E. Mishnaic Hebrew is the language of the Mishnah and various related contemporary documents. The two Talmuds, the Babylonian (בבלי) and the Palestinian (ירושלמי), supplement the Mishnah and contain Mishnaic Hebrew materials, as do the Tosefta and *halakhic* (legal) Midrashim.²⁴ Some of this material was recorded during or reflects the age when Mishnaic Hebrew was a language spoken in Palestine (up to 200 C.E.?), and some is later. Mishnaic Hebrew is not an offspring of Biblical Hebrew, but a distinct dialect, with its own, largely unknown prehistory.²⁵

d

During the period from the early third century C.E. to the late nineteenth century, Hebrew was in continuous use as a religious language, that is, as a language of prayer and worship as well as religious-legal and scientific discussion.²⁶ All educated Jews (viz., Jewish males) were familiar with it to some degree. The language was used only in limited speech situations but extensively in writing; its vocabulary was enlarged over earlier forms of the language, but its other resources tended to be stable.

e

This form of Medieval-Early Modern Hebrew was the basis for the modern language, the spoken tongue of the emigrant Jewish community in late nineteenth-century Palestine.²⁷ This language has grown steadily since and is the official language of the State of Israel. It is of interest to scholars of Biblical Hebrew as a research language and as a source of information about change in phonology and morphology. Many aspects of the syntax of the modern language show non-Semitic influence.²⁸ The complexity of the interaction of various phases of Hebrew in the modern tongue makes it attractive to students of historical linguistics in general.

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1.4 Synchronic/Diachronic

1.4.1 Literary Studies and Grammar

a

The study of Biblical Hebrew is neither synchronic, focused clearly on the language at one point in time, nor diachronic, directed to the language as it changes over time.²⁹ A number of factors impinge on the question of how to view the biblical corpus in relation to the time span during which it was written. Most broadly, two major factors concern us: uncertainty about the time of composition, and complicating factors in the production and transmission of the text. (A variety of other factors deserve study; there are signs that the speech of men differs from that of women; speech addressed to young or old may vary from a standard. Speech itself often differs from narrative prose, and there are traces of dialect variation based on region in both.)

b

If we consider the dating of only the prose sections of the Hebrew Scriptures, we can see the problems clearly. Much of the prose is anonymous and undated, and the extent of various alleged units within the mass of prose is unclear. To what extent should the three core books of the Pentateuch be taken together? And to what extent should they be taken with Genesis and Deuteronomy? The stories of Elijah and Elisha differ in important ways from the archival material that precedes and follows them—how do we account for those ways? These are

matters for introductory courses in scripture; what is important here is that we note that biblical critics regularly disagree about the dating, authorship, unity, and extent of biblical prose works.³⁰ These problems also obtain in the study of the verse, dated and undated, of the Psalter, the sapiential books, and in the prophetic corpus.

c

Judgments regarding these literary matters are precisely judgments, considered decisions based on assumptions and investigations. In relatively few matters are the judgments well enough grounded to carry conviction for the grammarian, especially in light of factors to be mentioned below. Most of the unquestionable judgments involve relative dating; for example, all scholars grant that Chronicles is later than (and in some sense based on) the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets.

d

There are three related skewing processes which are involved in text production and preservation: archaizing, modernizing, and smoothing. *Archaizing* involves writing a text or adjusting a text being copied or edited in such a way that it looks or sounds oldfashioned. Often archaizing betrays itself by using older forms or constructions in the wrong way. It is important to distinguish archaic usage from archaizing usage. The Authorized Version of the English Bible is full of archaisms, that is, words and structures no longer in use in English in the early seventeenth century, when it was written, but

Page 12

rather carried over from the first three quarters of the sixteenth century, when the AV's antecedents were written. There is an immense gap between Early Modern English, as the English of the AV and Shakespeare is called, and our own; a modern writer or preacher who wishes to sound like the AV is engaging in archaizing—such a modern will sometimes err in using the wrong form, for example, or in only using a few stylistic tics of AV English.

e

It is often difficult to distinguish archaisms and archaizings. The major recent study of archaizing in biblical prose is based in part on the kinds of literary judgments referred to earlier. Robert Polzin distinguishes Classical Biblical Hebrew (CBH), described on the basis of a corpus including parts of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets, from Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), the corpus of which includes Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther, and the Non-Synoptic parts of Chronicles. Esther, Polzin argues, is written in an archaizing form of LBH, and the nonbiblical Dead Sea Scrolls carry the archaizing process even further. Esther and the Dead Sea Scrolls are revealed as archaizing rather than archaic by the presence of LBH features, Aramaisms (Aramaic was more widely used than Hebrew after the Exile), and even proto-Mishnaic features.³¹

f

Modernizing is the opposite of archaizing, the tendency to replace older forms and constructions with those used in current speech. This tendency, too, was at work among the transmitters of scripture. Gillis Gerleman turned to Chronicles, as Polzin did, but Gerleman examined the synoptic sections of Chronicles. He found that the author/compiler used a modernized text type of the Pentateuch, one in which the outmoded constructions of the original were replaced by constructions current in the Chronicler's time.³² The textual tradition represented by the Samaritan Pentateuch reflects a further modernizing of the text.³³

g

The linguistic problems of archaizing and modernizing are complementary. An archaizing text records the work of author/compiler trying to use forms of speech not their own; the results of these efforts may confuse the linguist investigating those forms of speech. A modernizing text records the work of compiler/copyists trying to make an old-fashioned text look or sound current. If the linguist describes the updated text as if it were in pristine form, the description will err in not allowing for the very changes in the language that the compiler/copyists were most conscious of.

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h

In addition to archaizing and modernizing, the process of smoothing may overtake a text, leveling out unusual features and patterns. The transmitters of the received text of scripture tended to level the text to a more or less

common standard. This operation skews the evidence regarding the grammar of the literature as it was first written down. Some smoothing, especially of a phonological sort, would have been entirely unconscious; we shall discuss the reliability of the Masoretic Text below (1.6). Other aspects of smoothing are entirely conscious, for example, those involving word choice. Morphological smoothing falls between conscious and unconscious extremes. An example from American English may clarify this matter: linguistically untrained students will record spoken participles and gerunds as ending in -ing (*I*), whether or not the nasal is pronounced as velar (*o*) or dental (*n*). They write the -ing because they know the spelling conventions of the written language and because they know that "dropping the g" is an "improper" thing to do, even though the *g* is frequently dropped in the spoken language. Morphological leveling may have been similarly stimulated in the transmission of the text of the Hebrew Bible. The transmitters of the text type represented by the Samaritan Pentateuch smoothed the text to a greater extent than that represented by the MT.³⁴

i

The linguistic analysis of Hebrew is, as Chaim Rabin puts it, "rather a cross-section than a synchronic analysis." He goes on to write,

It is another problem whether ... a grammar distinguishing the different états de langue [states/stages of the language] could be written in practice. At present too many Biblical books still are of disputed date, quite apart from the debates as to which portions of datable books are later additions ... The undisputed corpus for each period is rather small for an effective structural analysis.³⁵

The processes of archaizing, modernizing, and smoothing have as much bearing on grammatical problems as do the more traditional literary questions.

j

If we consider poetry, the problem of dating becomes further complicated. Poetic traditions may transcend chronological, national, and dialect barriers. For that reason late Hebrew poetry may contain parallels with the Ugaritic texts not found in earlier Hebrew poetry. Cyrus Gordon put it this way: "The poetic tradition of Canaan cut across time and space in Canaan much as Homeric epic tradition cut across time and space among the Greeks, regardless of whether they were Ionian or Attic, early or late."³⁶

1.4.2 Recent Research

a

Despite the difficulties we have discussed, various scholars have sought to consider the problem of dating the biblical text on linguistic grounds. We shall briefly discuss as examples of such study three recent projects, one based on external sources compared to the biblical text and two dependent largely on inner-biblical comparisons. Such serious historical studies have been less common than more anecdotal reflections.³⁷

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b

W. J. Adams Jr. and L. LaMar Adams base their work on a limited number of grammatical elements and seek to determine how those elements changed over a period. They use as their control 470 lines drawn from twenty-seven nonbiblical texts in Hebrew and closely related documents, ranging from the Mesha Stone in Moabite (ca. 850 B.C.E.) to the Qumran Community Rule (1QS; ca. 200 B.C.E.). On the basis of the control sample the Adamses suggest that both Ruth and Obadiah should be assigned a preexilic date.³⁸

c

The work of Robert Polzin on Hebrew prose has already been mentioned (1.4.1). Polzin's two givens, as it were, are (a) Classical or Early Biblical Hebrew (CBH), based on the Yahwist and Elohist portions of the Pentateuch, the Court History of David ([2 Samuel 13-1 Kings 1](#)), and the framework of Deuteronomy, all of which show a "remarkable grammatical/syntactical homogeneity,"³⁹ and (b) Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), best shown in the Non-Synoptic parts of Chronicles. Polzin's project in hand is the dating of the so-called Priestly Document of the Pentateuch, including four major strands, P⁹ (the base text), P^s (the supplement), P^t (the principal law code), and P^h (the earlier law code known as the Holiness Code). Polzin focuses on the largest bodies of material, P⁹ and P^s. He finds that P⁹ exhibits some features of LBH but retains more features of CBH, while P^s shows more features of

LBH. He therefore proposes that typologically the major P sources are intermediate in date between CBH and LBH and that P⁹ is earlier than P^s.⁴⁰ The relationship between typological dating, which is necessarily relative dating ("A and B were written before C and D"), and absolute dating is a matter distinct from Polzin's major line of argumentation.

d

The third project we shall mention, that of David Robertson, concerns Hebrew poetry and is similar in design to the work of the Adamses.⁴¹ Robertson focuses on archaic versus archaizing verse and considers the so-called early poetry, the poetry of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets, as well as [Habakkuk 3](#) and the Book of Job. The body of characteristics to be expected in early poetry is established on the basis of Ugaritic poetry and the ENWS material in the Amarna correspondence (see 1.3.1e). Standard poetic Hebrew is described on the basis of prophetic material dated to the eighth century and later. On the basis of morphological and syntactic features a variety of poems resemble the early material: [Exodus 15](#), [Deuteronomy 32](#), [Judges 5](#), [2 Samuel 22](#) (= [Psalm 18](#)), [Habakkuk 3](#), and Job. All except the first show standard poetic forms

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and patterns, and each may therefore be the result of archaizing in the use of older forms or of composition during a transitional period of linguistic history.⁴²

e

Several points emerge from these studies. The first is that relative and absolute dating studies are different endeavors. Relative dating is logically prior to absolute dating; virtually any absolute date entails a relative date, while the converse is not true. In general, absolute dates cannot be derived from linguistic evidence. The second important point is that abundant material for dating studies exists, both within the biblical corpus and outside it.

f

The most important aspect of these studies is their statistical character. The Hebrew of the Bible is sufficiently homogeneous that differences must be tracked on a statistical basis. The sophistication of such study is not in the statistics; advanced statistical methodologies are generally designed to deal with bodies of evidence quite different from what the Bible presents. The sophistication is rather in the linguistic discrimination of what is counted and in the formulation of ensuing arguments.

g

The Hebrew of scripture, though far from uniform, is essentially a single language. In the oldest poetry, archaic forms, known from Ugarit, endure. Certain post-exilic materials differ from earlier texts. The bulk of the Hebrew Bible, later than [Exodus 15](#) and earlier than Esther, presents a single if changing grammar. The final, edited corpus of Hebrew scripture was prepared for and understood by a common audience.

1.5 History of the Biblical Text

1.5.1 Introduction

a

The amount of time that elapsed between the composition and editing of the Hebrew Scriptures and the medieval Masoretic manuscripts, the foundations of Biblical Hebrew grammar, has always attracted attention. Early in the modern period some scholars tended to dismiss the MT wholesale, sometimes on the unfortunate grounds that it was the work of Jews. Such scurrilous anti-Semitic attacks have long since disappeared, but suspicion of the MT has remained. Serious consideration of the text's history should help to dispel any deep distrust and lead to a cautious conservatism in using it.⁴³

b

The history of the text can be divided, on the bases of the kinds of evidence available and the text's fortunes, into four periods: from the time of composition to ca. 400 B.C.E., from 400 B.C.E. to ca. 100 C.E., from 100 C.E. to 1000, and from 1000 to the present. Since the text, and hence the basis for the grammar of Biblical Hebrew, was standardized during the third period, and the fourth pertains mostly to minor modifications within the Masoretic tradition and to the printing of the text, we limit our survey to the first three.⁴⁴

1.5.2 Earliest Period (to 400 B.C.E.)

a

No extant manuscript of the Hebrew Bible can be dated before 400 B.C.E. by the disciplines of paleography or archeology (even with the help of nuclear physics).⁴⁵ Scribal practices before this time must be inferred from evidence within the Bible itself and from known scribal practices in the ancient Near East at the time the books were recorded. These two sources suggest that scribes variously sought both to preserve and to revise the text.

b

Tendency to preserve the text. The very fact that the Scripture persistently survived the most deleterious conditions throughout its long history demonstrates that indefatigable scribes insisted on its preservation. The books were copied by hand for generations on highly perishable papyrus and animal skins in the relatively damp, hostile climate of Palestine; the dry climate of Egypt, so favorable to the preservation of such materials, provides a vivid contrast. Moreover, the prospects for the survival of texts were uncertain in a land that served as a bridge for armies in unceasing contention between the continents of Africa and Asia—a land whose people were the object of plunderers in their early history and of captors in their later history. That no other Israelite writings, such as the Book of Yashar (e.g., [2 Sam 1:18](#)) or the Diaries of the Kings (e.g., [2 Chr 16:11](#)), survive from this period indirectly suggests the determination of the scribes to preserve the books that became canonical. The foes of Hebrew Scripture sometimes included audiences who sought to kill its authors and destroy their works (cf. [Jeremiah 36](#)). From the time of their composition, however, they captured the hearts, minds, and loyalties of the faithful in Israel who kept them safe often at risk to themselves. Such people must have insisted on the accurate transmission of the text.

c

In addition, both the Bible itself (cf. [Deut 31:9ff.](#); [Josh 24:25, 26](#); [1 Sam 10:25](#); etc.) and the literature of the ancient Near East show that at the time of the earliest biblical compositions a mindset favoring canonicity existed. This mindset must have fostered a concern for care and accuracy in transmitting the sacred writings. For example, a Hittite treaty (of the Late Bronze Age), closely resembling parts of the Torah, contains this explicit threat: "Whoever ... breaks [this tablet] or causes anyone to change the wording of the tablet— ... may the gods, the lords of the oath, blot you out." Likewise, one of the Sefire Steles (ca. 750 B.C.E.) reads, "Whoever ... says: 'I shall efface some of [the treaty's words]' ... that man and his house and all that is in it shall be upset by the Gods, and he ... [shall] be turned upside down, and that (man) shall not acquire a name." Again, at the conclusion of the famous Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1750 B.C.E.) imprecations are hurled against those who would try to alter the Code.⁴⁶ Undoubtedly this psychology was a factor in inhibiting Israelite scribes from multiplying variants of the texts.

d

Moreover, scribal practices through the ancient Near East reflect a conservative attitude. W. F. Albright noted, "The prolonged and intimate study of the many scores of thousands of pertinent documents from the ancient Near East proves that sacred and profane documents were copied with greater care than is true of scribal copying in Graeco-Roman times."⁴⁷ To verify this statement one need only consider the care with which the Pyramid texts, the Coffin Texts, and the Book of the Dead were copied, even though they were never intended to be seen by other human eyes. K. A. Kitchen called attention to an Egyptian scribe's boast in a colophon of a text dated ca. 1400 B.C.E.: "[The book] is completed from its beginning to its end, having been copied, revised, compared and verified sign by sign."⁴⁸

e

Tendency to revise the text. On the other hand, scribes, aiming to teach the people by disseminating an understandable text, felt free to revise the script, orthography (i.e., spelling), and grammar, according to the conventions of their own times. Albright said, "A principle which must never be lost sight of in dealing with documents of the ancient Near East is that instead of leaving obvious archaisms in spelling and grammar, the scribes generally revised ancient literary and other documents periodically. This practice was followed with

particular regularity by cuneiform scribes."⁴⁹ The many differences between synoptic portions of the Hebrew Bible strongly suggest that those entrusted with the responsibility of teaching felt free to revise texts (cf. [2 Sam 22 = Ps 18](#); [2 Kgs 18:13–20:19 = Isa 36–39](#); [2 Kgs 24:18–25:30 = Jer 52](#); [Isa 2:2–4 = Mic 4:1–3](#); [Pss 14 = 53](#); [40:14–18 = 70](#); [57:8–12 = 108:2–6](#); [60:7–14 = 108:7–14](#); [Ps 96 = 1 Chr 16:23–33](#); [Ps 106:1, 47–48 = 1 Chr 16:34–36](#); and the parallels between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles). These variant forms are best taken as mutually dependent final texts, sometimes involving primary literary variants, as well as secondary, transmissional variants.

f

Language and script development. From the Amarna correspondence, Ugaritic texts, and other evidence, we can infer with reasonable confidence that before the Amarna period (ca. 1350 B.C.E.) Hebrew possessed final short vowels, which would have differentiated cases with nouns (see 8.1) and distinguished various prefix conjugations (see 29.4). The grammar preserved by the Masoretes, however, represents a later period, after these vowels had been dropped.

g

From the epigraphic evidence it appears that in its earliest stages the text was written in the Proto-Canaanite alphabet, such as is found at Serābīt el-Khādem. At a later stage it would have been recorded in the Hebrew script (a descendant of the Proto-Canaanite script) and still later in the form of the Aramaic script (another descendant of the Proto-Canaanite script, sometimes called the "square script") known as the Jewish script.

h

Epigraphy also enables us to reconstruct the history of the text's orthography.⁵⁰ Before 1000 B.C.E. the Phoenician practice of phonetic consonantism (that is,

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the representation of only consonants) was observed. Shortly after the Arameans borrowed the alphabet from the Phoenicians (ca. 11th-10th centuries B.C.E.), they began to indicate final vowels by using consonants which were homogeneous to them, namely, *yod* for final *ī*, *waw* for final *ū*, and *he* for the remaining signs. (In the MT *he* is sometimes used for *ō* as well as for *ā*; this archaic spelling has largely been replaced by *waw* for *ō*.) Consonants used for indicating vowels are known as *matres lectiones* ('mothers of reading'). The same system for the representation of final vowels was used in Moabite and Hebrew from the ninth century on. In Aramaic texts the system of vowel representation was extended sporadically to medial vowels after the ninth century. It was begun in Hebrew thereafter. The process coincided with diphthongal contractions in both Aramaic and Hebrew (e.g., **aw* > *ō* as **yawm* > *yōm*), and as a result *yod* and *waw* acquired new values: *yod* for *ê* < *ay*, and *waw* for *o* < *aw*; *he* later came to represent only the *ā* vowel. Eventually other medial long vowels came to be notated, with *yod* used for *-ī/ē-* and *waw* for *-ū/ō-* (the last from historical long *-ā-*).

1.5.3 From 400 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.

a

The same tendencies to preserve and revise the text, labeled by S. Talmon as centrifugal and centripetal,⁵¹ manifest themselves in the manuscripts and versions extant from the time of the formation of the canon and the final standardization of the consonantal text.⁵²

b

Tendency to preserve the text. The presence of a text type among the Qumran biblical texts (ca. 100 B.C.E. to 130 C.E.) similar to the one preserved by the Masoretes, whose earliest extant manuscript dates to ca. 1000 C.E., gives testimony to the achievement of the later scribes in faithfully preserving the text. This text type must have been in existence before the time of Qumran, and its many archaic forms give strong reason to believe that it was transmitted in a circle of scribes dedicated to the preservation of the text. M. Martin's studies show that the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal a conservative scribal tendency to follow the exemplar both in text and form.⁵³

c

According to rabbinic tradition, the scribes attempted to keep the text "correct."⁵⁴ The MT itself preserves some remnants of earlier scribal concern with preserving the text: (1) the fifteen extraordinary marks that either

condemn the Hebrew letters so marked as spurious or else simply draw attention to some peculiar text feature, (2) the four suspended letters that may indicate intentional scribal change or scribal error due to a faulty distinction of gutturals, and (3) perhaps the nine inverted nuns apparently marking verses thought to have been transposed.

d

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Tendency to revise the text. Some scribes, "authorized revisers of the text," some time after the return from the Babylonian captivity, altered the script.⁵⁵ The earlier Hebrew script was replaced by the Aramaic script, which aided the division of words by distinguishing five final letter forms; eventually a distinctively Jewish form of the Aramaic script evolved. It is often called the "square script." The process of inserting *matres lectionis* also continued. A few Qumran manuscripts are in an archaistic form of the Hebrew script known as Paleo-Hebrew, but the majority of biblical texts from Qumran and later are in the Jewish script.⁵⁶ There are three classes of script problems: (a) those arising from letters that resemble each other in the Hebrew script but not in the Jewish script, (b) those arising from the transition between the scripts, and (c) those arising from letters that resemble each other in the Jewish script. Problems of the *b* class are the direct result of script change, while those of the *a* class are a hidden by-product of it. We must add that the scripts have certain constant similarities (𐤀 and 𐤁 are liable to confusion in both scripts) and the scripts themselves assume different forms over time and in various media (e.g., stone, papyrus, clay).

e

More significantly, scribes altered the text for both philological and theological reasons. They modernized it by replacing archaic Hebrew forms and constructions with forms and constructions of a later age. They also smoothed out the text by replacing rare constructions with more frequently occurring constructions, and they supplemented and clarified the text by the insertion of additions and the interpolation of glosses from parallel passages. In addition, they substituted euphemisms for vulgarities, altered the names of false gods, removed the phrases that refer to cursing God, and safeguarded the sacred divine name or tetragrammaton (YHWH), occasionally by substituting forms in the consonantal text.

f

Conclusions. As a result of these intentional changes, along with unintentional changes (errors in the strict sense), varying recensions emerged. These are evidenced by the Samaritan Pentateuch and a similar text type at Qumran without its sectarian readings, by other varying text types among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and by the ancient versions—the Greek Septuagint (LXX) and recensions and surrecensions (R,⁵⁷ Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and Origen) based on it, the Peshitta in Syriac, the Vulgate in Latin, and others. The relationship of text types to actual texts is rarely simple: some

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books had more than one final form and recensions were followed by surrecensions. Tracking the types in translated texts can be especially tricky; the rendering of particles is often a basic diagnostic tool. The study of these materials is textual criticism.⁵⁸

1.5.4 From 100 to 1000 C.E.

a

Standardization of the text. Rabbinic testimony reflects a movement away from a plurality of recensions toward a stabilization of the text at about the beginning of the Common Era.⁵⁹ The seven rules of biblical hermeneutics, compiled by Hillel the Elder (fl. 1st century C.E.) at the time of Herod, demanded an inviolable, sacrosanct, and authoritative text. The exegetical comments and hermeneutical principles of *tannaim* (teachers of the first two centuries C.E.), notably Zechariah ben ha-Kazzav, Nahum Gimzo, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Ishmael, presuppose that in this period a single stabilized text had attained unimpeachable authority over all others.⁶⁰ Justin Martyr (fl. early 2d century) complained that the rabbis had altered the venerable LXX to remove an essential arm from the Christian propaganda, which also demonstrates that the rabbis desired an authoritative text. A recension of the Greek Old Testament (R) found at Nahal Hever in the Dead Sea region and dated by its editor, D. Barthélemy, to 70–100 C.E. confirms Justin's complaint in one sense. Barthélemy has demonstrated that this recension

witnesses to the text Justin used for debate. The recensional character of the text (also known as the *kaige* text) is evident from the fact that all the modifications of the traditional Greek text can be explained by a concern to model it more exactly after the Hebrew text that ultimately crystallized as Masoretic. (Justin's belief that the changes were made merely for the sake of controversy is to be dismissed.) Barthélemy also noted that, alongside hundreds of variants of this type, there are also readings in which the recension departs from both the LXX and the MT, suggesting that in these instances the Hebrew text on which the recension is based differed from the received Hebrew text.

b

Rabbinic testimony combined with the evidence of manuscripts bears witness to the existence of an official Hebrew text with binding authority at a time shortly after the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.), in the days of Rabbi Akiva. The dominance of a text like that used by the Masoretes is amply attested by the Hebrew biblical scrolls discovered at Masada (occupied 66–73 C.E.) and at Wadi Murabbaʿat, as well as by the text from Nahal Hever (occupied 132–35 C.E.). These scrolls largely lack even the minor variants found in the great recensions of the Greek Old Testament attributed by

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tradition to Aquila (based on R; ca. 120 C.E.), Symmachus (ca. 180 C.E.), and Theodotion (ca. 180 C.E.); these minor Greek versions were further attempts to bring the Greek translation of the Bible closer to the accepted Hebrew text during the second century C.E. Their variants, as well as most of those found in later rabbinic literature, in the Targums (Aramaic translations), and in Jerome (the Latin Vulgate), do not represent a living tradition but are either survivals predating the official recension or secondary corruptions after its acceptance. In effect, the combined evidence essentially supports Paul de Lagarde's nineteenth-century view that all Hebrew medieval manuscripts of the Bible were descended from a single master scroll dated no earlier than the first century of the Common Era.⁶¹

c

Thus in the course of the first century C.E. the scribal mentality had changed from one of preserving and clarifying the text to one of preserving and standardizing the text. By at least 100 C.E. the rabbis had settled on one recension, which, in the case of the Pentateuch, is conservative and disciplined.⁶² Its adoption as the official text in effect destroyed all variant lines of tradition in established Judaism. Possibly the need to stabilize Judaism by strong adherence to the Law after the fall of Jerusalem spurred these efforts. This text was not, as Paul Kahle theorized early in this century, the beginning of an attempt to standardize a canon that finally became fixed only in the time of Maimonides (12th century C.E.), after a long and bitter struggle among the rabbinical schools.

d

*The activity of the Masoretes (ca. 600 to 1000 C.E.).*⁶³ Between 600 and 1000 C.E. schools consisting of families of Jewish scholars arose in Babylon, in Palestine, and notably at Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee to safeguard the consonantal text and to record—through diacritical notations added to the consonantal text—the vowels,⁶⁴ liturgical cantillations, and other features of the text. Until these efforts such features had orally accompanied the text. These scholars are known as Masoretes or Massoretes, possibly from the (post-biblical) root *msr* 'to hand down.'⁶⁵ In their endeavor to conserve the text, they hedged it in by placing observations regarding its external form in the margins. In the side margins they used abbreviations (*Masorah parvum*), in the top and

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bottom margins they gave more detailed and continuous explanations (*Masorah magnum*), and at the end (*Masorah finalis*) provided alphabetical classification of the whole Masoretic material. In addition to these annotations made directly in the text, they compiled separate manuals. When the traditions they inherited differed, they preserved the relatively few variants within the consonantal tradition by inserting one reading in the text, called *Kethiv*, and the other in the margin, called *Qere*. Other alternative readings are indicated in the margin by *Sebir*, an Aramaic word meaning 'supposed.'

e

Sometimes the Masoretes may have used *daghes* in unexpected places to call attention to unusual readings. With the help of hints supplied by the ancient versions, the Masorah, and other codices, E. A. Knauf explained the Leningrad Codex's use of the *daghes* in קָזַיִר (Gen 45:6) as a way to call attention to the apparent contradiction

with [Gen 8:22](#), in אֲבִימֶלֶךְ ([Gen 26:1](#)) as a device to insinuate the idea, in view of the previous text, that we have to do here with another Abimelech, and in תִּאֲתָהּ ([Mic 4:8](#)) as a mark to signal that the punctuation was uncertain.⁶⁶

f

Of the three competing Masoretic schools, one in the East and two in the West, each with its own system of diacritical notations, the Tiberian school prevailed. The school's most important work is a model codex prepared by Aaron ben Asher around 1000 C.E.; this codex was preserved in the old synagogue of Aleppo until shortly after the Second World War, when it was removed to Jerusalem.⁶⁷ Contemporary study of the MT is based on a variety of texts slightly later than and similar to the Aleppo Codex, notably the Leningrad Codex.⁶⁸ Earlier modern study was based on late medieval manuscripts and early printed Bibles. A photographic reprint of the Aleppo Codex is available, and an edition of the Bible based on it is in preparation in Jerusalem. The commonly available editions of the MT differ from it only in certain minor phonological materials, involving some accents and some reduced vowels, and in the pointing of a few eccentric forms.

1.6 Masoretic Text

1.6.1 Character

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a

The history presented above places in bold relief two fundamental characteristics of the MT. First, it preserves one of several recensions that emerged in the post-exilic era. Second, it is a composite text consisting of (a) an original consonantal text, often originally written without *matres lectiones*, (b) the vowel letters, (c) the Masoretic additions of the vowel points, and (d) the accentual or cantillation marks. Let us look at each of these more closely.

1.6.2 Consonants

a

It cannot be overemphasized that, although the script preserving the consonants was evolving during the first two periods described above (1.5.2–3), the Masoretic consonantal record is archaic. The evidence of epigraphy, especially touching inscriptional Hebrew and the Iron Age congeners of Biblical Hebrew, puts the issue beyond doubt. Unless the text had been faithfully transmitted, the work of both comparative Semitic philologists and biblical scholars attempting to date the text (see 1.4.2) would be impossible.

b

Nevertheless, scribes changed not only the script (essentially, the shape of the consonants), but occasionally the consonants themselves. They did so both intentionally, by smoothing and modernizing it (1.4.1), and unintentionally. The unintended changes are of two kinds: errors in the strictest sense of the term and misunderstandings. We can classify the former as problems with the MT as recorded and the latter as problems with the MT as a record.

c

Problems with the MT as recorded. All text critics agree that the MT contains errors in all its composite layers.⁶⁹ True textual variants rarely involve matters of direct concern to the grammarian, and discriminating among such variants is a critical rather than a purely linguistic task. Errors of this sort are either visual or auricular. They are well known to anyone who has done much handcopying. A scribe may omit a word or group of words, sometimes for no reason and sometimes for visual reasons. A repeated sequence of letters (identical or nearly identical) may prompt the eye to jump from the first occurrence to the second (haplography); often in Hebrew the triggering repetitions involve words with similar final letters (homoioteleuton), though similar initial letters may have the same effect (homoiarkhton). Similarly, a scribe may repeat a word or group of words (dittography), another sort of visual error. Auricular errors are also of linguistic interest because they may reveal phonological changes, leading to, for example, the formation of homonyms within the language. Such lapses of the ear are, however,

difficult to study.

d

Problems with the MT as a record. We have already called attention to the tendency to modernize and smooth the text. Certain problems arise because the tradition did not keep pace with linguistic change. An example from English may clarify this group of problems. In late medieval English manuscripts, the letter *y* and the now obsolete letter *þ* ("thorn," for *th*) became similar, and the word 'the' was written in such a way that it might be mistaken for *ye* or *y^e*. This short form was retained in early printing faces, but readers of the manuscripts and early books knew that the article was 'the,' not 'ye.' Modern misunderstanding of this short form has led to the pseudo-archaic word 'ye'

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found in shop signs, for example, 'Ye Olde Junke Shoppe.' Thus hundreds of years after the letter *þ* disappeared from English orthography, many well-educated people believe that English once had an article pronounced 'ye.'

e

Such morphological complexities affect Hebrew also. The archaic grammatical formant called the enclitic *mem*, of uncertain function (see 9.8), was generally reinterpreted by later scribes as a plural marker; the orthography was revised to match, so **מְ**- became (among other things) **מִ**-, and the oral tradition was reshaped.

f

Vowel letters of the MT. We noted above that vowel letters were only later introduced into the oldest texts, at first only for final long vowels, and later for medial long vowels. These letters were added sporadically and inconsistently. The MT reflects all stages of this practice. F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman put it this way:

Although persistent efforts were made to standardize the orthography of the Bible, they were never completely successful, and clear evidence of the earlier stages of the development of Hebrew spelling has been preserved in the text. Thus the Hebrew Bible which tradition has delivered to us is in reality a palimpsest; underlying the visible text, the varied spelling customs of older ages have been recorded.⁷⁰

The lack of vowel letters, especially in the very early period of the text, was an undoubted source of ambiguity and may have contributed to textual error. For example, the sequence of letters in the MT of [Exod 15:3](#)

יהוה איש מלחמה

יהוה שמו

would originally have appeared as

יהוה שמו מלחמה

It is easy to appreciate that a scribe whose grasp of the oral tradition was weak might, for example, read **וְשֵׁמוֹ** for **וְשֵׁמוֹ** or misdivide the sequence **וְהוּא**, writing **וְהוּא** and assigning the **ו** to the previous word. (Word spacing or, more commonly, word dividers were not regularly used in early alphabetic writing.) In [Exod 15:1](#) the MT has the sequence **וְהוּא גִבּוֹר**, while the Samaritan Pentateuch reads **וְהוּא גִבּוֹר**; erroneous orthographic revision accounts in part for the Samaritan reading.

1.6.3 Vocalization

a

The relative uniformity of Biblical Hebrew results primarily from two factors: the largely consonantal presentation of the language throughout its pre-Masoretic history and the unified representation of it by the Tiberian Masoretes. The consonantal representation, both with and without *matres lectiones*, effectively "covers up" vocal variations both on the synchronic and diachronic levels. The consonantal phonemes, those

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represented by most of the letters, are precisely those that are most stable and not given to change, whereas the vocalic phonemes, those most given to change, are not graphically represented apart from the limited use of vowel letters. Even more significantly the Tiberian tradition aimed to squelch variation in order to produce a normative text. Our expectation that the vowels changed within both the phonological and morphological systems can be verified. Nevertheless, the MT's vocalization essentially represents an ancient and reliable tradition. Here too we must exhibit the tension, which once again leads to the posture of cautious conservatism before the MT.

b

Evidence of change. The type of phonological changes that occurred in Biblical Hebrew before it was standardized in the MT may be illustrated from English. On historical grounds, the word 'wind' should be pronounced *walnd*, to rhyme with 'find' and 'bind,' but since the eighteenth century 'wind' has been pronounced *wlnd*, to rhyme with 'thinned' and 'sinned.' Because the older form occurs in poetry (and is in fact preserved in poetic usage long after it has disappeared from speech), readers can easily reconstruct its shape, even if they are ignorant of the historical development of the word.

c

Hebrew phonology shows two changes for which the MT provides late evidence. One affects original short a in word-initial closed syllables; in the MT a in such a position has shifted to i but at the time of the LXX the shift had not occurred. Thus we have in the LXX (and elsewhere) Sampson but in the MT שָׁמְשׁוֹן; in the LXX, Moses' sister is *Mariam* (whence *Maria*), but the MT calls her מִרְיָם. A second change involves anaptyxis, the insertion of a vowel to break up a consonant cluster; the vowel used in Hebrew is usually a *seghol*, and nouns that show this change are called *segholates*. The process took place after Aquila and Origen, who record the *segholates* in the shape CVCC, and before Jerome and the MT, who use the shape CVCVC. Thus Origen has *sethr* (σεθρ) for MT סֶתֶר, while Jerome has *aben* and *qedem*, more or less matching MT אֶבֶן and קֶדֶם.

d

The a > i shift in word-initial closed syllables and the *segholate anaptyxis* are fairly straightforward developments. Other evidence which indicates that the MT reflects post-biblical developments is complex. Some issues involve (a) the differentiation of *w«* and *wa* (Origen differs from the MT),⁷¹ (b) the double pronunciation of the "begadkephat" letters (external evidence is confused), and (c) the value or values of *qāmeṣ*. In these cases and other lesser matters, the treatment in the MT is open to scrutiny.

e

In addition to accidental changes in the transmission of the oral tradition, textual corruption of the consonantal text may prompt the accompanying oral tradition to adjust to the new reading. In [Ps 73:7](#), the MT reads יֵנֹמוּ, which seems to mean 'their eye goes out (or bulges?) from (i.e., because of?) fat'; this is sometimes taken as 'Fat shuts out their eyes' (so NJPS). The versions suggest, however, that the reading originally was עֲוֹנוֹמוּ, that is, עֲוֹנוֹמוּ, 'Their iniquity goes out of fatness,' namely, 'Their iniquity proceeds from fat (tened hearts).'⁷² The confusion of נ and י is commonplace;

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after such an error was made here, the oral tradition adjusted to it, yielding the MT reading with 'eye' as a subject with the verb יֵצֵא to come out.⁷³

f

During the more fluid stages of the text we might also expect confusion between forms such as *l-yod* verbs where the initial *yod* on the purely graphic level is ambiguous between the prefix and suffix conjugations. MT pairs like יִשָּׁב and יֵשֵׁב or יִדַּע and יֵדַע require careful attention. The "hidden" definite article with the inseparable preposition also illustrates the problem (cf. לְאָדָם in [Gen 2:20](#)).

g

The validity of the MT. The Masoretic tradition, including the vowel points, represents the overall grammatical systems current during the period when biblical literature was being created. We may say this, despite the problems we have reviewed, because of a considerable body of evidence indicating that the traditioning function was taken seriously and that the linguistic data of the MT could not be faked.⁷⁴

h

On the labors that culminated in the Tiberian manuscripts, consider a talmudic passage that evinces the concern for accuracy:

It is written: "For Joab and all Israel remained there until he had cut off every male in Edom [[1 Kings 11:16](#)]." When Joab came before David, David said to him, "Why have you acted thus?" He replied, "Because it is written, 'Thou shalt blot out the males [זִכֹּר] of Amalek [[Deut 25:19](#)]." David said, "But we read, 'the remembrance [זִכְרֹן, with MT] of Amalek.'" He replied, "I was taught to say זִכֹּר." He [Joab] then went to his teacher and asked, "How did you teach me to read?" He replied, "זִכֹּר." Thereupon Joab drew his sword and threatened to kill him. "Why are you doing that?," asked the teacher. He replied, "Because it is written, 'Cursed be he that does the work of the Law negligently.'" ⁷⁵

This anecdote suggests that teachers in Israel were expected to pass on faithfully the received vocalization.

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i

A complex body of evidence indicates that the MT could not, in any serious or systematic way, represent a reconstruction or faking of the data. The first clue that the Masoretes and their predecessors were preservers and not innovators lies in the history of Hebrew. By the time of the Qumran community, Biblical Hebrew was no longer a spoken language; Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic were the vernaculars of Palestine. The scribes were dealing with linguistic material they understood well but could use with no more spontaneity than we can speak English of the Tudor-Stuart period.

j

Some of the later ancient students of scripture are careful enough with the biblical text to preserve signs that they were dealing with a text close to the MT. Aquila's barbaric Greek reflects the Hebrew as closely as possible; in his farrago he often supplies Hebrew words and forms in a vocalization close to that of the MT (except for the *segholates*; see 1.6.3c); even rare words are given in forms close to those of the MT.

k

Jerome (346–420) is another careful student of the Hebrew text of his own time, not out of the pious textual conservatism of Aquila but rather out of philological zeal: "Almost from the very cradle," he tells us, "I have spent my time among grammarians and rhetoricians and philosophers."⁷⁶ Jerome's work, most of it carried out after he learned Hebrew, supports the MT. Most impressive here is the contrast between Jerome's earlier version of the Psalter, based on the LXX, and the later one, based on the Hebrew. Often the LXX represents the same consonantal text as the MT but not the same vocalization. Consider [Ps 102:24–25a](#).⁷⁷ The consonants of the MT are:

ענה בדרך־־ כחו [Qere כחן]
קצר ימי־־ אמר אלי

At [Ps 101:24](#), the LXX reads:

ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ ἐν ὀδῷ ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ
τὴν ὀλιγότητα τῶν ἡμερῶν μου ἀνάγγειλόν μοι

He replied to him in the way of his force:
The fewness of my days report to me.

which is rendered in the Gallican psalter,⁷⁸

Respondit ei in via virtutis suae:
Paucitatem dierum meorum nuntia mihi.

These two versions reflect a Hebrew text like this one, taking the last two words of the first line as a construct chain:

עָנֶהְנִי בְדֶרֶךְ כְּחוֹ
קֹצֵר יָמַי אֶמַר אֵלַי

In his later psalter, "Juxta Hebraeos," Jerome renders

²⁴Adflixit in via fortitudinem meam abbreviavit dies meos

²⁵Dicam, Deus meus ...

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He broke my strength on the way,
he cut short my days.
I said, My God ...

This version corresponds to the MT,

עָנֶה בְדֶרֶךְ כְּחוֹ²⁴
קֹצֵר יָמַי
אֶמַר אֵלַי²⁵ ...

The LXX text differs from the MT in (a) reading ʿnh (*Qal*) 'to answer,' rather than ʿnh (*Piel*) 'to humble,' (b) taking bdrk khy/w as a construct, (c) the vocalization of qsr, ʾmr/thebʿ, and ʾly, as well as in (d) the division of the poetic lines. Our point here is not that the MT and Jerome are correct, though they probably are, but that they agree. The erratic and often improbable LXX vocalization of the MT suggests that it was the Alexandrian Jews who did not possess an entirely fixed or reliable tradition of vocalization.

I

In addition to ancient evidence for the general validity of the MT, there is modern evidence, both systematic and incidental. On the whole the grammar of the MT admirably fits the framework of Semitic philology, and this fact certifies the work of the Masoretes. When in the 1930s Paul Kahle announced his theory that the Masoretes made massive innovations, Gotthelf Bergsträsser sarcastically observed that they must have read Carl Brockelmann's comparative Semitic grammar to have come up with forms so thoroughly in line with historical reconstructions.⁷⁹ Further, there are numerous individual patterns of deviation within the MT which reflect ancient phonological and morphological features of Hebrew known from other sources;⁸⁰ yet again, numerous isolated oddities in the MT have been confirmed by materials unearthed only in this century.

m

The evidence shows that the language of the MT represents the grammar of the Hebrew used during the biblical period. Our stance toward the MT is based on cautious confidence. It must be shown rather than assumed to be in error; the burden of proof rests on the critic.

1.6.4 Accentuation

a

Drawing on the oral tradition, the Masoretes added to the text accent signs giving directions for its performance. The chant, that is, the intoning of the text with appropriate pauses, adds dignity, solemnity, beauty, and clarity to the reading. Each sign represents groups of notes to which the words of the verse are chanted.⁸¹ The manner of

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reading the text can still be heard in the Jewish communities of our days; the ancient chant traditions of the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Syrian churches are related. All of them use a basic "recitation note" (and

related motifs or tropes) that carries the bulk of each clause. The accent system punctuates the text and is therefore a very important feature in its syntactic analysis; despite the term accent, the system does not primarily refer to the pitch or duration of the words. This feature of Hebrew grammar is so important for understanding that medieval Jewish sources paid more attention to it than to establishing the correct pronunciation of words.⁸²

b

Accents in the MT are of two kinds: disjunctives and conjunctives. Disjunctive accents, euphemistically dubbed "lords" by earlier scholars, mark the length of pauses from full stop to various shades of shorter pauses; conjunctives, dubbed "servants," control the text up to the disjunctive. According to W. Wickes's comprehensive study of the accents, the disjunctives mark a continuous "dichotomy" of the verse, that is, they divide larger units, beginning with the verse itself (marked off by *silluq* closing the verse), into successively smaller half-units on a syntactic (or logico-syntactic) basis. A unit ending with a disjunctive of one grade is divided into halves, and its halves in turn are divided into smaller units by other disjunctive signs until the whole verse is divided into single words, or groups of words joined by conjunctives.⁸³ Israel Yeivin groups the major disjunctive accents as follows: "Generally atnah divides the verse, *zaqef* the verse halves, *pashta* or *revia* the unit ending with *zaqef*, and so on."⁸⁴

c

The accent signs in the MT also preserve a tradition. The Talmud mentions **פסקי טעמים** 'the stops of the *te'amim*' which were learned as a normal part of learning the text.⁸⁵ According to S. Morag some punctuation signs were added to the text before vowel signs,⁸⁶ and E. J. Revell suggests that the punctuation was the first feature after the consonantal text to become stabilized in the Jewish biblical tradition.⁸⁷ Revell has found the oldest evidence for the Hebrew accent system in the spacing of an early Septuagint text (2d century B.C.E.), which corresponds almost exactly with the accents in the Hebrew Bible.⁸⁸ He postulates the existence of an early "Syro-Palestinian" accent system that marked the syntax of a text in a simplified way that mostly agrees with the more complex system of the MT; pausal forms of the MT represent one manifestation of the simpler system.⁸⁹ Morag's striking study of the reading traditions of the Yemenite Jewish

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community also reopens the question of the validity of the Masoretic system in intoning the text.⁹⁰ The variety of pronunciations among various Jewish communities signals that caution must be used in absolutizing any one accentual system, though the extreme neglect of traditional philology is not justified. At present it is best to consider the accents as an early and relatively reliable witness to a correct interpretation of the text.

Footnotes:

1. For a good survey, see Chaim Rabin, "Hebrew," *Current Trends in Linguistics*. 6. *Linguistics in South West Asia and North Africa*, ed. T. A. Sebeok et al. (The Hague: Mouton, 1970) 304–46; or William Chomsky's *Hebrew: The Eternal Language* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957). E. Y. Kutscher's *History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982) was unfortunately unfinished at the time of the author's death; his editor R. Kutscher has supplemented the manuscript, but the result is unbalanced though it remains valuable in parts; note the major review by P. Wexler, *Language* 62 (1986) 687–90. Still notable older studies include R. Meyer, "Probleme der hebräischen Grammatik." *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 63 (1951) 221–35; and Z. Ben-Hayyim, *Studies in the Traditions of the Hebrew Language* (Madrid: Instituto "Arias Montano," 1954).
2. In addition to materials cited below, see in general J. Barr, "The Nature of Linguistic Evidence in the Text of the Bible," *Languages and Texts: The Nature of Linguistic Evidence*, ed. H. H. Paper (Ann Arbor: Center for Coördination of Ancient and Modern Studies, University of Michigan, 1975) 35–57.
3. See G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983); M. L. Bender, ed., *The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia* (East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1976; esp. the paper by C. Hodge); M. Ruhlen, *A Guide to the World's Languages*. 1. Classification (Stanford, California: Stanford University, 1987); and the references in 2.5.
4. The controversies about subgroupings are considerable and relevant; see, e.g., J. Blau, "Hebrew and North West Semitic: Reflections on the Classification of the Semitic Languages," *Hebrew Annual Review* 2 (1978) 21–44, as well as the materials cited in 1.3.2, for an approach different from the one taken here.

5. The bulk and diversity of materials in the Aramaic languages are considerable. The earliest materials, from the tenth through the eighth or seventh centuries, are called Old Aramaic. During this phase of the language and the following period, dialect divergences are difficult to detect. The great age of Official or Imperial Aramaic is the Persian Empire, when Aramaic was a quasi-official or even official language, but the term is applied to materials from the eighth through the third centuries; the largest corpus of material is derived from Egypt (notably the Jewish military colony at Elephantine), and the term Egyptian Aramaic is sometimes used. In succeeding ages, there are (a) archeologically recovered bodies of materials, both epigraphic (from the Nabatean realm, Palmyra, and Hatra) and manuscript (from Qumran); (b) literary languages preserved in religious communities, Jewish (Jewish Palestinian Aramaic; Jewish Babylonian Aramaic), Christian (Syriac), and Mandaic; and (c) the modern languages, spoken in several small pockets in Syria and Iraq (as well as the American Midwest). See, e.g., J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions. 2. Aramaic Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975); Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* (Berkeley: University of California, 1968); J. A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979).
6. Of 305,441 words (graphic words, divided by spacing or *maqqufeh*), the Aramaic portions make up 4,828, chiefly in the Book of Daniel; a small portion of Ezra is in Aramaic, and by custom the Aramaic verse of Jeremiah ([10:11](#)) and two words of Genesis (in [31:47](#)) are also counted. See SA/THAT. Biblical Aramaic is a variety of Imperial Aramaic, but is often treated independently. See, e.g., F. Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961).
7. These are the languages treated in Bergsträsser's *Introduction* (along with a few modern forms).
8. The scholarly literature on Ebla is voluminous. After an introduction to the site (e.g., G. Pettinato, *The Archives of Ebla* [Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1981]; P. Matthiae, *Ebla: An Empire Rediscovered* [Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1981]), the student may turn to a variety of text publications and discoveries; both genres are represented in C. H. Gordon, G. A. Rendsburg, and N. H. Winter, eds., *Eblaïtica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaïte Language I* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987).
9. A leading proponent of this view has been C. H. Gordon; though his discussions are widely scattered, his *Ugaritic Textbook (UT)* provides a good sample of his suggestions.
10. There is unfortunately no up-to-date survey, but the range of illumination available from Amorite, Ugaritic, and the Amarna texts is well exemplified in the classic essay of W. L. Moran, "The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. E. Wright (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961; rpt. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1979) 54–72. No reliable popular introduction is available for the other materials treated here.
11. Syllabically written texts from the city of Byblos in the late third millennium may also witness an ENWS language; see G. E. Mendenhall, *The Syllabic Inscriptions from Byblos* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1985).
12. See, e.g., D. Pardee and J. T. Glass, "The Mari Archives," *Biblical Archaeologist* 47 (1984) 88–100; A. Lemaire, "Mari, the Bible, and the Northwest Semitic World," *Biblical Archaeologist* 47 (1984) 101–9.
13. For a recent survey, see E. Puech, "Origine de l'alphabet: Documents en alphabet linéaire et cunéiforme du II^e millénaire," *Revue biblique* 93 (1986) 161–213.
14. The character of the Canaanite materials in Amarna Akkadian is unclear. Most scholars believe that linguistic interference is involved: the scribes sought to write Akkadian but failed for lack of expertise in the language. This explanation does not, however, cover all the facts. On the matter of the linguistic diversity within the Amarna corpus (and in relation to Ugaritic), see J. Huehnergard, "Northwest Semitic Vocabulary in Akkadian Texts," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987) 713–25.
15. Though outdated in details, C. H. Gordon's *Ugaritic Textbook* remains standard.
16. The name of the language (or forms of it) is given as yəhūdīt 'Judean' ([2 Kgs 18:26](#)) and šəpāt kená'an 'Canaanite' ([Isa 19:18](#)); the term 'ibrit 'Hebrew' is earliest attested by the Greek adverb Hebraïsti (Ben Sira Prologue 22; cf. [John 19:20](#)). For a useful review of biblical allusions to Hebrew as a language, see W. Weinberg, "Language Consciousness in the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92 (1980) 185–204.
17. See, for an introduction, Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions. 1. Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971); D. Pardee et al., *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982).
18. See, e.g., Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions. 3. Phoenician Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982); Z. S. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language* (American Oriental Series 8; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1936); Y. Avishur, "Studies of Stylistic Features Common to the Phoenician Inscriptions and the

Bible," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 8 (1976) 1–22.

19. J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij et al., *Aramaic Texts from Deir 'Alla* (Leiden: Brill, 1976); J. Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir Alla* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 31; Chico: Scholars Press, 1984).

20. W. R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine. 1000–586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1985) 229. Note that Hackett treats the Deir Alla language as South Canaanite (*Balaam Text*, 8). Another approach to the dialectology, profiting from Garr's wave-theory or continuum model, would take Hebrew as central (on an east-west axis) with Phoenician as a western extreme and Ammonite as an eastern extreme.

21. Translation and summary from I. Rabinowitz, *The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow ... by Judah Messer Leon* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1983) xxxii–xxxiii.

22. The enormous role of the Luther Bible in German and the Authorized Version in English is not comparable, since there is no real Hebrew (real in the sense of contributing to the rhythm and lexis of the language) before, behind, or around Biblical Hebrew.

23. On the distinctive Hebrew of Qumran, see E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); S. A. Kaufman, "The Temple Scroll and Higher Criticism," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 53 (1982) 29–43. On the texts generally, see, e.g., T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (3d ed.; Garden City, New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1976); many scrolls remain to be published.

24. It may be possible to distinguish a midrashic form of the language which together with Mishnaic Hebrew proper would compose Tannaitic or Rabbinic Hebrew. A certain amount of traditional Jewish prayer is in Mishnaic (or Tannaitic) Hebrew.

25. See M. H. Segal, *Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), on the language. Some of the differences between Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew may reflect the differences in the genres that the languages are used for. On Mishnaic Hebrew and Late Biblical Hebrew, see R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 12; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 167–73; on Mishnaic features in the Song, see M. V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985) 187–90.

26. Some of the most interesting material is the poetry, well represented in T. Carmi's *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin, 1981).

27. Hebrew was spoken in Palestine with Sephardic pronunciation prior to the rise of Zionism; see T. V. Parfitt, "The Use of Hebrew in Palestine, 1800–1882," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 17 (1972) 237–52.

28. Modern Hebrew "syntax is no longer Semitic, but is closer to the syntax of Indo-German[ic] languages"; so N. Stern, "The Infinitive as a Complement of a Predicate of Incomplete Predication," *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986) 337–49, at 347, based on a review of infinitival use, much more frequent in Modern Hebrew than in any earlier form of the language. For discussion of a variety of facets of Modern (and not only Modern) Hebrew, see the papers in H. B. Rosén, *East and West: Selected Writings in Linguistics. 2. Hebrew and Semitic Linguistics* (Munich: Fink, 1984). On morphology, various papers by Ruth A. Berman are valuable: see, e.g., Eve V. Clark and Ruth A. Berman, "Structure and Use in the Acquisition of Word Formation," *Language* 60 (1984) 542–90.

29. The tension between a written (or dead) language as a synchronic or frozen record and as a record of variation over time (and region and social class and genre) takes on a different form for each written language. Canonicity is a far more important factor for Hebrew than for Classical Greek, Akkadian, or Egyptian; the Hebrew record is also shorter than for any of these.

30. See, e.g., R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); N. K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible—A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

31. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*; A. Hurvitz, "The Chronological Significance of Aramaisms in Biblical Hebrew," *Israel Exploration Journal* 18 (1968) 234–40; cf. Rabin, "Hebrew," 316.

32. G. Gerleman, *Synoptic Studies in the Old Testament* (Lunds Universitets Årsskrift 1144; Lund: Gleerup, 1948). Kenneth A. Kitchen has shown that modernizing can also be demonstrated in extrabiblical ancient Near Eastern sources. See his *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966) 142–43; "Egypt," *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 337–53, at 349–51.

33. B. K. Waltke, *Prolegomena to the Samaritan Pentateuch* (Harvard Dissertation, 1965) 285–94; summarized as "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament," *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Payne (Waco, Texas: Word, 1970) 212–39, on modernizing, 213–17; cf. J. E. Sanderson, *An Exodus Scroll from Qumran* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

34. Waltke, *Prolegomena*, 294–99; "Samaritan," 217–20.
35. Rabin, "Hebrew," 310 n. 30.
36. C. H. Gordon, "North Israelite Influence on Postexilic Hebrew," *Israel Exploration Journal* 5 (1955) 85–88, at 86. In the same article Gordon argues that the language of (northern) Israel influenced the Hebrew of postexilic books such as Esther, Chronicles, and, in his view, Qoheleth.
37. Note, e.g., W. F. Albright, *The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and Their Decipherment* (Harvard Theological Studies 22; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1966; 2d ed. in 1969) 12, 13. The overview of A. R. Guenter, *A Diachronic Study of Biblical Hebrew Prose Syntax* (Toronto Dissertation, 1977), remains unpublished.
38. W. J. Adams Jr. and L. LaMar Adams, "Language Drift and the Dating of Biblical Passages," *Hebrew Studies* 18 (1977) 160–64.
39. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 20.
40. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 112. See, for an extension of Polzin's method, A. E. Hill, "Dating the Book of Malachi: A Linguistic Reexamination," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 77–89. Other scholars using similar data argue for an earlier relative dating of putative P; see A. Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel* (Paris: Gabalda, 1982) 157–71; G. Rendsburg, "Late Biblical Hebrew and the Date of P," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 12 (1980) 65–80.
41. D. A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972).
42. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence*, 153–56.
43. On the subject of this section, see, in general, P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Bible. 1. From the Beginnings to Jerome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970); and F. M. Cross and S. Talmon, eds., *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1975).
44. The story of the printing of the Hebrew Bible is summarized by N. M. Sarna, "Bible Text," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 4. 816–36. The discussion that follows is based on B. K. Waltke, "Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. F. E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 1. 211–28, at 211–13; used by permission.
45. The oldest manuscripts from Qumran are dated by F. M. Cross on paleographic grounds broadly to between the late fourth century and the first half of the second century B.C.E.; Cross, "The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955) 147–72; more narrowly he would date the oldest manuscripts between 275 and 225.
46. See J. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969) 205–6, 660, 178–80.
47. W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1957) 78–79.
48. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 140.
49. Albright, *Stone Age*, 79.
50. For the basic statement of the orthographic development, see F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography: A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence* (American Oriental Series 36; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1952); on the linguistic background, see M. O'Connor, "Writing Systems, Native Speaker Analyses, and the Earliest Stages of Northwest Semitic Orthography," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 439–65.
51. See S. Talmon, "Aspects of the Textual Transmission of the Bible in Light of Qumran Manuscripts," *Textus* 4 (1964) 95–132, reprinted in Cross and Talmon, *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text*, 226–63.
52. Again, the discussion follows Waltke, "Textual Criticism," 213–16.
53. M. Martin, *The Scribal Character of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1958)
54. Babylonian Talmud, *Nedarim* 37b–38a.
55. On the scribes' work, see C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*, proleg. H. M. Orlinsky (New York: Ktav, 1966) 307; and M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 23–43. On Semitic alphabetic scripts, see Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), for abundant illustrations, and the still basic work of I. J. Gelb, *A Study of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), for theoretical and historical background.

56. See K. A. Mathews, "The Background of the Paleo-Hebrew Texts at Qumran," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 549–68. Medieval and modern Hebrew scripts (e.g., the Rashi script, the modern cursive) are derived from the square script. The Samaritan script is derived from the paleo-Hebrew script.

57. R is also known as the *kaige* recension. The fundamental studies are those of D. Barthélemy, "Redécouverte d'un chaînon manquant de l'histoire de la Septante," *Revue biblique* 60 (1953) 18–29; and *Les Devanciers d'Aquila* (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 10; Leiden: Brill, 1963). The first is fully reprinted and the second partially reprinted in Barthélemy's *Etudes d'histoire du texte d'Ancien Testament* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978).

58. See B. K. Waltke, "Aims of OT Textual Criticism," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51 (1989) 93–108. The range of textual criticism described here is much larger than that encompassed by H. F. D. Sparks's remark: "If it were not for the carelessness and waywardness of scribes there would be no need for text-critics at all" ("Jerome as Biblical Scholar," in Ackroyd and Evans, *Cambridge History of the Bible*, 1. 510–41, at 526. An important alternative approach to the categorization of ancient exemplars has been suggested by S. Talmon and E. Tov, who propose that at least in some cases texts were known from the beginning in a variety of forms, not easily or usefully classified as types. The texts are related "to each other in an intricate web of agreements, differences, and exclusive readings," Tov notes; see *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem Simor, 1981) 274.

59. Again, following Waltke, "Textual Criticism," 216–17.

60. Sarna, "Bible Text," 835.

61. Paul de Lagarde, *Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverbien* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1863). E. F. C. Rosenmueller's similar, late eighteenth-century formulation, that they all represent one recension, may be more correct.

62. F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (2d ed.; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961) 188–94. B. Albrektson has rejected the notion that the rabbis consciously produced a standard text, arguing that the MT emerged as a standard in the context of religious growth; see "Reflections on the Emergence of a Standard Text of the Hebrew Bible," *Congress Volume: Göttingen 1977* (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 29; Leiden: Brill, 1978) 79–85.

63. Again, following Waltke, "Textual Criticism," 217–18.

64. See S. Morag, *The Vocalization Systems of Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), for a comparative study of three related systems; E. J. Revell has written a number of papers on the development of the system—"Aristotle and the Accents," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 19 (1974) 19–35; "The Hebrew Accents and the Greek Ekphonic Neumes," *Studies in Eastern Chant* 4 (1974) 140–70; "The Diacritical Dots and the Development of the Arabic Alphabet," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 20 (1975) 178–90.

65. The reasons why the Masoretes undertook their work are not clear: recognition of the unavoidable decay in an oral tradition was partially responsible, but external stimuli, including models (from Syriac or Arabic; see n. 64) and theological controversies (notably the Qaraites; see 2. Id), were also involved. A critical point in the evaluation of their work may be the one thousand or so *Qere-Kethiv* variants; these have been associated with theories involving types of manuscript correction and manuscript collation. J. Barr has argued that the variants involved antedate the Masoretes; see "A New Look at *Kethibh-Qere*," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 (1981) 19–37, esp. 23–25.

66. E. A. Knauf, "Dagesh agrammaticum im Codex Leningradensis," *Biblische Notizen* 10 (1979) 23–35.

67. M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Aleppo Codex and the Rise of the Massoretic Bible Text," *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (1979) 145–63. Technically, the Aleppo Codex is "the oldest codex containing the entire Tiberian massoretic Bible" i.e., text and a full set of correct notes, except for the places where it is damaged (p. 148); due to the complexity of the Masoretic annotations, it stands out as "the only manuscript of the entire massoretic Bible in which the correspondence between text and massoretic notation is practically perfect" (p. 149).

68. The Leningrad Codex is the basis for both *Biblia Hebraica*³, ed. R. Kittel (originally 1937; New York: American Bible Society, 1972 and other reprints; abbreviated *BH3* or *BHK*), and *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ed. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977; abbreviated *BHS*). More and more scholars are turning to the computer to assist them in their research; E. Tov provides a succinct introduction to such methods in "Computers and the Bible," *Bible Review* 4 (1988) 38–43.

69. The statement of James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968; rpt. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 3437, is representative.

70. Cross and Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography*, 1. See also the fuller and more nuanced discussion of F. I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, *Spelling in the Hebrew Bible* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1986).
71. See C. Brockelmann, "Die 'Tempora' des Semitischen." *Zeitschrift für Phonetik und allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft* 5 (1951) 133–54, at 147; Alexander Sperber, *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1966) 192.
72. Cf. [Ps 17:10](#), [1–19:70](#).
73. A number of widespread emendations have recently been questioned. [Prov 26:23](#) reports that 'Burning lips and an evil mind (*leb*) are *ksp sygym* poured over earthenware,' where the MT has *kesep šigim* 'silver (of?) dross.' Some decades ago H. L. Ginsberg proposed reading *kspsg(y)m* 'like glaze,' citing Ugaritic *spsg*, a word not attested in Hebrew. The tradition that eventuated in the MT was influenced by the close association of *ksp* and *sygym* in several other passages ([Isa 1:22](#), [Ezek 22:18](#), and above all [Prov 25:4](#)) and so redivided and revocalized the phrase. This proposal is accepted by, e.g., Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 219–20, 331; Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 163; and, more recently, B. Margalit, "Lexicographical Notes on the *Aqht* Epic (Part 1)," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 15 (1983) 65–103; but it has been questioned on the basis of the external evidence by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín, "Die angebliche ug.-he. Parallele *spsg*//, *sps(j)g(jm)*," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 8 (1976) 37–40. For a similar case involving [2 Sam 1:21](#), see M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 231.
74. We lean heavily in what follows on Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 207–22.
75. Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 21a-b; cf. Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 213–14.
76. Quoted in Sparks, "Jerome," 510.
77. After Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 213.
78. The Gallican Psalter (ca. 385), based on the Vetus Latina and Origen's Hexapla, is the standard psalter of the Vulgate, but not Jerome's final effort; the "Juxta Hebraeos" (ca. 395), based on the MT, never received full acceptance.
79. Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 217; cf. Rabin, "Hebrew," 306. The apparent preservation of much apparently unrecoverable information must be handled with caution. Note, for example, the case of Chemosh. The MT nearly always has the form *kəmoš*, in agreement with the bulk of extrabiblical (mostly onomastic) evidence from the Iron Age, but the *Kethiv* of [Jer 48:7](#) has *kmyš* for *kəmiš*, apparently agreeing with the Ebla texts, which know this god as Kamish (*sup'd/sup'ka'sub'3'/sub'-mi-iš); see Pettinato, *Archives of Ebla*, 245, 291–92.
80. Compare the views of Bo Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt mit vorangegehendem w^e* (Lund: Gleerup, 1979) 23.
81. Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, ed. E. J. Revell (Masoretic Studies 5; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1980) 157–60.
82. E. J. Revell, "Biblical Punctuation and Chant in the Second Temple Period," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 7 (1976) 181–98, at 181.
83. W. Wickes, *Two Treatises on the Accentuation of the Old Testament: On Psalms, Proverbs, and Job; On the Twenty-one Prose Books*, proleg. A. Dotan (New York: Ktav, 1970), originally 1881, 1887.
84. Yeivin, *Tiberian Masorah*, 172.
85. Yeivin, *Tiberian Masorah*, 163–64, reviews the talmudic references. Note the mention of the use "of the right hand to indicate the *tmy trwh*, presumably referring to the practice known as 'cheironomy', still in use in some Jewish communities," the most antique practices probably being those of the great synagogue at Rome.
86. Morag cited by Revell, "Punctuation and Chant," 181.
87. Revell, "Punctuation and Chant," 181.
88. There are also important data from Qumran: see E. J. Revell, "The Oldest Evidence for the Hebrew Accent System," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 54 (1971–72) 214–22.
89. Revell, "Punctuation and Chant." Revell describes manifestations of the Syro-Palestinian system in (a) Syriac biblical texts, (b) Samaritan Hebrew biblical texts, (c) Jewish texts of the Mishnah, (d) a few early Greek manuscripts of the Bible, both of the Septuagint (a second-Century-B.C.E. text usually considered the oldest LXX manuscript) and of the R or *kaige* recension (the text published by Barthelemy and described in 1.5.4), and (e) most importantly for us, the pausal forms of the MT, which match the final disjunctive accents irregularly enough that they must reflect an early, independent system with its own significance.

90. S. Morag, "Pronunciations of Hebrew," *Encyclopædia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 13. 1120–45:cf. Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 217.

2 History of the Study of Hebrew Grammar

[2.1 Beginnings \(10th century C.E.\)](#)

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2.1 Beginnings (10th century C.E.)

a

Near the middle of the tenth century of the Common Era, Saadia ben Joseph (882–942) launched the linguistic study of Hebrew with two books written in Arabic.¹ This versatile Jewish scholar, usually known as Saadia Gaon, after his service as dean or gaon of the Jewish academy at Sura in Babylonia, is most famous for his translation of the Hebrew Bible into Arabic. His *Agron* (*Vocabulary*) deals with lexicography, and *Kutub al-Lugha* (*Books on the [Hebrew] Language*) treats grammar.² Saadia's works

were largely lost many centuries ago, but knowledge of them has come down through his successors, especially through the writings of Abraham ibn Ezra, who revered Saadia as the first grammarian of Hebrew and "chief spokesman everywhere" for such study. Profiat Duran tells us that Saadia wrote three grammatical works which did not survive in his own time. Saadia's works were read and studied during the brilliant creative period of Hebrew grammar and served to shift the attention of Jewish intellectuals from talmudic to linguistic studies. Modern scholars still regard him as the father of our discipline. Saadia's grammatical work presented various elements basic to any modern grammar, for example, paradigms for the *Qal* and *Hiphil* verbal stems and careful distinctions among various classes of sounds. What motivated Saadia to give birth to our discipline?

b

The prehistory of Hebrew grammatical study is meager. It is true that in talmudic and midrashic materials the rabbis make occasional grammatical observations, for example, that the ending הֶ- in such forms as מִצְרֵימָה and הוֹצֵה indicates direction and stands in place of a prefixed ל, as in שְׁלִמְצֵרִים and לְחֹיץ, and that כִּי has four different meanings: 'if,' 'lest,' 'indeed,' and 'because.'³ Further, considerable grammatical material is to be found in the *Sepher Yesirah*, an early medieval qabbalistic work. But these sporadic comments provided neither basis nor motivation for the work of Saadia and his successors. Rather, the impetus for describing the rules of the Hebrew language came from the following factors: (1) the argument that grammar is basic to understanding scriptural literature, (2) the threat of the Qaraite sect, (3) the foundational work of the Masoretes, (4) the example of Arabic grammars, and (5) the ongoing literary use of Hebrew, especially in devotional poetry. Let us consider each of these factors in detail.

c

The first Jewish grammarians defended their activity with the philosophical and theological argument that proper knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures depends on grammar; it is the basic exegetical tool. David Tene has observed:

Around the end of the first millennium C.E. writing about linguistic issues was a new phenomenon in Jewish literature, considered by many important people as a vain, senseless activity. Therefore, in their

introductions, the authors [of grammatical works] discuss the motivating factors which stimulated them to write their linguistic works. They seek to prove to their readers that it is incumbent upon Jews to take up the investigation of their language and their arguments include the following points: (1) language is the means for all discernment and linguistics is the means for all investigation and wisdom; (2) the fulfillment of the commandments depends upon the understanding of the written word, and in turn, the proper knowledge of the language is impossible without the aid of linguistics.⁴

Such arguments are still cogent and inescapable for any community that builds its faith on scripture.⁵

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d

The Qaraite sect, which appeared toward the end of the eighth century, rejected rabbinic traditions and insisted on the diligent study of the Scriptures themselves as the only basis for Judaism. This movement, which made serious inroads into the academies of Babylonian Jewry, spurred both friends and foes to a more searching study of the biblical text and its language. Saadia, as head of one of those academies, was directly involved and led the rabbinite counterattack. More specifically, Qaraism prompted him to write *Kitāb al-Sabʿin Lafẓa al-Mufrada* (*The Book of the Seventy Isolated Words*), a brief lexicographical essay in Arabic which treats some of the *hapax legomena* of the Bible.⁶

e

The Masoretes, whose work had culminated in the tenth century with the school of Ben Asher in Tiberias, were concerned not with describing the language but with recording the text. Nevertheless their activity in vocalizing the text and in commenting on it in the Masorah, both activities aimed at preserving an essentially oral body of tradition, formed the basis for early grammatical descriptions. Concerning the relevance of the pointed text, Tene writes:

It is rather astonishing that the initial emergence of the linguistic literature of the Jews had to be so late in time. There is, however, general agreement that in Semitic this kind of metalinguistic discourse could not have begun before the invention of the vowel points.⁷

Concerning the more specific contributions of the Masoretes to Hebrew grammar, Israel Yeivin notes:

Some of the terminology used in the Masorah was taken over by the grammarians. Terms such as masculine, feminine, singular, plural, the names of the letters, the vowel and accent signs, and other features of the pointing ... were all used by the Masoretes and taken over by the grammarians ... Since the Masoretes compared all the occurrences of particular words, their lists formed the basis for grammatical observations on changes in vowel patterns: either conditioned changes, such as changes in forms in contextual or pausal situations, changes in words with or without *maqṣef*, with or without the definite article, or *waw* simple and *waw* consecutive, etc., or unconditioned variation in the vowing of the word.⁸

The Masoretes had a sophisticated linguistic theory with an underdeveloped expression; the grammarians, in taking the step of making the theory explicit, were able to advance it because they could appreciate gaps and inconsistencies in it.⁹

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f

The Arabic grammars of Muslim scholars provided an immediate impetus and model for similar work on the Hebrew language. The influence of the Arab grammarians on Saadia Gaon, who wrote in Arabic, is plain. Like them, for example, he classifies the words of the language into three divisions, nouns, verbs, and particles. Although Hebrew was the focus of his study, Arabic was the language of science throughout the tenth century in the Near East, North Africa, and Spain. In the second half of this fruitful century, some Hebrew lexical studies produced in Spain were written in Hebrew, but most grammatical works over the next two centuries were in Arabic.

g

Finally, in the introduction to his *Agron*, Saadia informs his readers that, disturbed by the style of various contemporary religious poets, authors of *piyyūṭim*, and by the confusion of grammatical categories in their poems, he designed his work to guide the Hebrew writers of his day in the correct use of the language.¹⁰

h

Another pioneer in Hebrew linguistics is Menahem ibn Saruq (ca. 910-ca. 970), who read Saadia's commentaries. He wrote the *Maḥberet*, the first complete Hebrew dictionary and the first linguistic work to be written in Hebrew.¹¹ It was severely criticized in linguistic matters by Saadia's pupil, Dunash ben Labraṭ (ca. 920–990), whose family came from Baghdad, although he himself was born in Pez; he settled in Cordova. Dunash and Menahem mediated Saadia's learning, and other features of Babylonian Jewry, to Spain.¹² Leslie McFall cogently observes: "Jewish scholarship in Spain owed not only its pronunciation (Sephardic) but its beginnings to Babylonian Jewry."¹³

2.2 Medieval Jewish Studies (11th to 16th centuries)

2.2.1 Creative Period (1000–1150)

a

The period from the end of the tenth century to the middle of the twelfth century is designated by David Tene as "the creative period." Yehuda Ḥayyuj (ca. 940-ca. 1010), a disciple of Menahem, scientifically and systematically expounded the theory that all Hebrew words have a triradical root, a notion he adapted from the Arab grammarians. Grammarians were now in the heuristic position to understand phenomena such as the assimilated *nun* and the compensatory *daghesh*, as well as various features of the weak verbs, those with one or more of the letters ך ם ן ף ץ as a radical. It was Ḥayyuj who adopted from the Arabic grammars the burdensome פֿעַל as the paradigmatic verb and introduced the designation of the three radicals of the root by *Pe* (first radical), *Ayin* (second radical), and *Lamedh* (third radical).¹⁴

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b

The successors of Saadia pursued their studies with zeal and profundity, as illustrated by the famous literature of "objections" and "replies" between the brilliant grammarian Jonah ibn Janah (Abū al-Walīd Marwān ibn Janāh, ca. 990–1050), and the statesman, soldier, and poet Samuel ha-Nagid (993–1056). William Chomsky recapitulates the controversy:

Samuel ha-Nagid apparently aroused by Ibn Janah's criticism of some of the views of his teacher, Yehudah Ḥayyuj, sent a messenger from Granada to Saragossa, the place of Ibn Janah's residence, charged with the task of challenging Ibn Janah to a verbal duel on certain grammatical issues and of exposing publicly the "fallacy" of his theories. On his arrival in Saragossa, the messenger stayed at the home of ... a friend of Ibn Janah. A public reception was arranged in honor of the visitor, to which Ibn Janah was invited. The latter, without suspecting the chief purpose of the gathering, accepted the invitation. During the reception, the visitor began to inveigle Ibn Janah gradually and subtly into a discussion. Some of the questions raised by him were readily disposed of and adequately answered by Ibn Janah. But others followed, and Ibn Janah, unprepared for this barrage of questions, was befuddled, and he promised to reply at some future time.

He did so and sent his reply to the visitor. The latter, however, superciliously remarked that it would be wiser for Ibn Janah to withhold his reply until the Nagid's book was published, where he would find even more serious criticism leveled against him. This Ibn Janah refused to do. He issued his reply in book form and called it *Kuab at-Taswiya* [*The Book of Rebuke*]. After the publication of the Nagid's attack on him, Ibn Janah retorted with a violent counter-attack in a book, which he called *Kitab at-Tashwir* [*The Book of Shaming*].¹⁵

c

The sophistication of Hebrew grammar at this time can be seen in the issues being argued over: the *Qal* passive, a subject independently examined in modern times by Böttcher and Barth (see 22.6), the use of the term *Inphal* for transitive *Niphal* forms, etc. Of this literature Tene writes: "The study of the language never attained such fine and sharp distinctions as those in the controversy which developed around the works of Ḥayyuj in the generation of Ibn Janah and Samuel ha-Nagid."¹⁶ Of Ibn Janah's later works, written in Arabic as all his books were, the most important is *Kitāb al-Tanqīḥ* (Hebrew *Sepher ha-Diqḏaq*, *The Book of Detailed Investigation*). This consists of two parts, *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ* (grammar) and *Kitāb al-Uṣūl* (a dictionary). Tene rhapsodizes on the great *Kitāb*:

This two-part work, with the writings of Ḥayyuj and the shorter works of Ibn Janah ... , form[s] the first

complete description of biblical Hebrew, and no similar work—comparable in scope, depth, and precision—was written until modern times.

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This description constitutes the high point of linguistic thought in all [medieval grammatical] literature.¹⁷

He comments in summary, "The authors of this period are the great creators of Hebrew linguistics."¹⁸

2.2.2 Period of Dissemination (1150–1250)

a

The century following the middle of the twelfth century was a period of dissemination, directly stimulated by the political tribulations of 1148, brought on by the Almohade conquest of southern Spain. Jewish intellectuals, exiled to Italy and to southern France, brought with them the works of Ḥayyuj, Ibn Janāḥ, Samuel ha-Nagid, and others. These works were both adapted and translated. The traveling scholar Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164), through his copious writings, notably commentaries and grammatical works, popularized the ideas of the Spanish grammarians and in general brought the benefits of Arab science to European Jewish communities cut off from Spanish Jewry. In Rome around 1140 he produced his grammar in Hebrew, a first, based on Arabic sources.¹⁹

b

The labors of adaptation culminated in the works of the Qimḥi family: Joseph, the father (ca. 1105–1170), and his sons Moses and David (1160–1235).²⁰ In the introduction to the section of his *Sepher Mikhlol* (*Compendium*) dealing with Hebrew grammar, David likened himself to a "gleaner after the reaper," whose task it has been to compile and present succinctly and simply the voluminous findings of his predecessors. He selected his material so judiciously and presented it so effectively that his work eclipsed and eventually displaced the more original and profound work of Ibn Janāḥ and served as an authoritative standard until the nineteenth century. Posterity held his works in such high regard that a mishnaic dictum was adapted to them: **אם אין קמחי אין תורה**, 'If there were no Qimḥi, there would be no Torah.' We are indebted to Joseph and David Qimḥi for the now-standard formulation of the patterning of long and short vowels in closed and open syllables and of the relationship of these to silent and vocal *shewas*; the system of verbal stems (*binyanim*) as it is understood today was first elaborated by them.²¹

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c

David Tene appraised this period of dissemination as follows:

Although the works of adaptation and translation obviously made but a slight original contribution to linguistic thought, it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this literary activity. It was the translators and adaptors who saved Hebrew linguistics from oblivion and made it a permanent branch in the history of Jewish literature. They also translated into Hebrew the Arabic grammatical terms ... , and they fixed a mode of exposition for grammatical and lexicographical issues ... that has existed until today in the study and teaching of the Hebrew language and in Hebrew biblical exegesis.²²

2.2.3 Waning Period (1250–1550)

a

In the late Middle Ages, as the intellectual and demographic center of Jewry shifted away from the Near East, so too the study of Hebrew grammar took on a European cast.²³ Latin models replaced Arabic models. Though the grammatical works of this period are generally inferior,²⁴ they are not without interest. Arab grammarians treated the domain of language as dominant, including not only linguistics but also rhetoric (the science of persuasion) and poetics as part of grammar. The European schools, in contrast, grouped grammar, rhetoric, and logic as three co-equal language sciences (the *trivia*, as opposed to the natural and technical sciences, the *quadrivia*).²⁵

b

In the *Ma'aseh Ephod* (1403) of Profiat Duran (1360–1412), the philosophical shift is evident: Duran calls for a more theoretical basis for grammar, opposing the mechanical character of the *Mikhlol*.²⁶ The immediate model of the Latin language is important for Abraham de Balmes (ca. 1440–ca. 1523). His *Miqneh Abram* seeks to bridge the Arab and Latin grammatical traditions. It is the first work to divide Hebrew grammar into phonology, morphology, and syntax. It gathers together previous research regarding the pronoun's agreement in gender and number, and government of the verb, and introduces new topics such as the combination of nouns with verbs, the combination of nouns with other nouns, the agreement of noun (subject) and verb (predicate), and the combinations possible with the aid of particles. Of all the medieval works after Ibn Janāḥ, Balmes's may be considered the most original.²⁷ The medieval Jewish grammatical tradition died with Elijah Levita, who, as we shall see, passed this heritage to Christian hands.

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2.3 Christian Hebrew Studies (16th to mid-18th centuries)

2.3.1 Earliest Stages (1500–1550)

a

Linguistic literature on Hebrew from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries was an exclusively Jewish province.²⁸ With the shifts in European culture associated with the revival of classical learning and the reform of the Christian church, Hebrew grammar shifted to Christian scholars. The church's new interest in what it referred to as the Old Testament was one of the reasons Jews lost interest. Alleging that the *Mikhlol* marks the closing of the "Golden Era" of Hebrew medieval philology, William Chomsky writes:

Most of the Jewish scholars of the subsequent generations regarded the study of grammar as a waste of time, and some even considered such study heresy. Even the study of the Bible began to be regarded as of secondary importance and was gradually dwindling to such an extent that a German rabbi of the 17th century complained that there were certain rabbis in his generation "who had never in their lifetime seen a text of the Bible."²⁹

When Jews reentered the field of grammatical study, the context had changed vastly. The philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), "the greatest thinker ever to write a treatise on the Hebrew language,"³⁰ wrote his *Compendium grammatices linguae hebraeae* in Latin and with an awareness of biblical writing that would have been incomprehensible to his forebears.

b

Interest in Hebrew grammar developed among Christian scholars in the early part of the sixteenth century.³¹ The humanist Johann Reuchlin established the study of Hebrew grammar in the Christian European world through his book *Rudimenta linguae hebraicae* (1506), as well as through his immense personal reputation.³² The interest in scripture that mandated the study of Hebrew was new with Reuchlin's age and its concern for returning to ancient sources and reforming the church.

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c

Although the Schoolmen of the High and Late Middle Ages did not believe that scripture had one single simple meaning, as the Reformers did, some of them did hold that its fundamental sense must be everywhere ascertained in accordance with the principles of grammar and human discourse; only then could other senses be considered. Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349) took special pains to insist that all the senses presuppose the historical, grammatical sense as their fundamentum and norm. Following Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141) and other scholars of the Victorine school, Nicholas complained that the historical sense had become much obscured because of the all too common practice of ignoring it in favor of mystical exegesis. These Scholastics recaptured the thought of Augustine and especially Jerome—who almost a thousand years earlier had studied Hebrew with the rabbis in Israel—through the influence of the Jewish scholars, especially Rashi.³³ Although the study of Hebrew was often neglected, it is an unwarranted distortion to make Nicholas of Lyra a complete eccentric, out of place in the Middle Ages. Beryl Smalley has criticized the view that Lyra was the first to come under Jewish influence and was thus a proto-Reformer:

The Christian knowledge of rabbinics in the middle ages used to be underestimated. Rashi was thought to have made his first appearance in Latin commentaries with Nicholas of Lyre in the early fourteenth century. His influence on Lyre was classed not as typically medieval, as indeed it was, but as a factor in the Reformation:

Si Lyra non lyrasset
Lutherus non saltasset.
["If Lyra had not played.
Luther would not have danced."]

This *dicton absurde* ["silly ditty"] ... has been ... disproved.³⁴

d

In spite of various contacts between Jewish and Christian scholars during the medieval period, no single name stands out in the history of "Christian Hebrew studies between Jerome and Johann Reuchlin."³⁵ Reuchlin is a thoroughly humanistic figure. His brief *Rudimenta* is not so much based on David Qimḥi's *Mikhlol* as on Moses Qimḥi's elementary *Mahalakh Shebile ha-Da'at* (*The Journey on the Paths of Knowledge*), the first printed Hebrew grammar (Soncino, 1489).³⁶ Reuchlin's significance does not rest on the content of his simple grammar but rather on his pioneering efforts and tactical activity. Luther learned Hebrew using either Qimḥi's *Mikhlol* or Reuchlin's *Rudimenta*. Conrad Pellicanus (1478–1556), a Dominican monk who taught himself Hebrew under the most arduous circumstances, actually wrote the first Hebrew grammatical work in Latin (1503 or 1504).³⁷ Pellicanus taught the Swiss reformer Wolfgang Capito (1478–1541), who in turn instructed John Calvin.

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2.3.2 Development (1550–1750)

a

Among the factors that spurred on the work effectively begun by Reuchlin were the spread of printing and the controversies in the church. The itinerant Jewish scholar Elijah Levita (1468–1549) played a special role. His books include a commentary on the grammar of Moses Qimḥi (1504), his own grammar (1517), and his studies on the Masorah (1538). His personal contact with Christian scholars was also important; among his pupils was Sebastian Münster (1489–1552), professor at Basle from 1529 on, who translated his works into Latin. Levita transported the great fund of medieval Jewish philology with the Qimḥian stamp into the Christian universities.³⁸

b

The sixteenth century was the first great age of modern grammatical study. Near the end of the century John Udall produced the first Hebrew grammar in English (1593), a translation of Pierre Martinez's grammar written in Latin (1567). In time the humanistic pursuit of Hebrew gave way to theological interests; chairs came to be occupied by men with theological training.³⁹

c

In Chapter 29, discussing in more detail developments in the understanding of the Hebrew verbal system, we will again have occasion to look at the history of Hebrew grammatical studies. We need only note here that during the first two centuries of Christian Hebrew studies, from Reuchlin to the epoch-making *Institutiones* (1737) of Albert Schultens, the vast majority of Hebrew grammars did little to advance the scientific study of the language.

2.4 Comparative Method (mid-18th to mid-19th centuries)

a

At the brilliant beginning of Hebrew grammatical studies, creative lexicographers and grammarians compared Biblical Hebrew with the cognate languages with which they were familiar, as well as with later forms of Hebrew. For example, Yehuda ibn Quraysh (fl. 10th century), a contemporary of Saadia, attempted in his *Risāla* (Report) a systematic comparison of Biblical Hebrew words to Aramaic words, to Hebrew words used in the Mishnah, and to Arabic words; Dunash ibn Tamim (ca. 900–960) dealt with the close connections between Hebrew and Arabic vocabulary. With the shift of the centers of learning from the Arab world to Europe, where scholars communicated in Latin, these studies were largely lost.⁴⁰

b

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries Christian scholars independently resumed the study of "Oriental" languages other than Hebrew, languages we now call Semitic. To Arabic and Aramaic these scholars added Syriac and Classical Ethiopic. As Barr noted, "Material was being assembled for a comparative philological approach more comprehensive and wide-ranging than that which had been possible for the medieval Jewish philologists."⁴¹ These studies paved the way for the Dutch scholar Albert

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Schultens (1685–1750), who in his *Institutiones* (1737) laid Hebrew grammar on the new foundation of comparative Semitic philology. In this perspective Hebrew is no longer regarded as the first language, from which the other Oriental languages diverged, but as one Semitic language among the others. Barr evaluates Schultens's work thus:

Schultens emphasized with revolutionary exaggeration the extent of the change brought about by the new knowledge. Far from accepting the traditional view that Arabic (like other languages) was a degenerate form of Hebrew, Schultens maintained that Hebrew was only one Semitic dialect, while the purest and clearest such dialect was Arabic ... But in spite of the high value accorded to Arabic by Schultens, his use of it was infelicitous and far from commendable even from the point of view of an Arabist. He nevertheless marked the beginning of an epoch which continued into the mid-20th century, in which one of the main forms of learned linguistic study was the use of cognate languages for the elucidation of difficulties in Hebrew.⁴²

c

This new approach found further expression in N. W. Schröder (1721–1798) and more substantially in Johann David Michaelis, professor of Oriental languages and theology at Göttingen. The new approach also produced a new type of Hebraist. Barr comments:

The academic Hebraist was now expected to be an Orientalist; this meant not only knowledge of Arabic, but also an awareness of the new information brought by travelers from the East about customs, the physical surroundings of life, and now—in its first rudimentary form—archaeology.⁴³

d

The grammarian whose work enjoyed the widest currency and influence both in his own time and ever since is (Heinrich Friedrich) Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842), professor at Halle.⁴⁴ His lexicon, *Thesaurus linguae hebraicae* (published from 1829 to 1858), was successively revised and reached classic proportions in the seventeenth edition, edited by Frants Buhl (1921); an earlier edition was used as the basis for the English dictionary of Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (1907). Gesenius's grammar, *Hebräische Grammatik* (1813), went through many profound transformations. He produced thirteen editions, his pupil E. Rödiger did the fourteenth through the twenty-first editions, and Emil Kautzsch did the next seven. The latest English edition, by Arthur Ernest Cowley (Oxford, 1910), is based on Kautzsch's last edition. Later editors of Gesenius's work had to take into account the vast knowledge of ancient Near Eastern languages and literatures being uncovered by the spade of indefatigable archeologists and their decipherment and publication by brilliant linguists. None of them, however, attempted to write a truly comparative-historical grammar. Gesenius's grammar, with numerous amendments and revisions and in various editions, still remains a standard reference work today.

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2.5 Comparative-Historical Method (mid-19th to 20th centuries)

a

The impetus for a comparative-historical approach to Hebrew grammar came from the study of the Indo-European family of languages, which includes most of the languages of Europe and many languages of Asia. The discovery of regular correspondences between Greek, Latin and its Romance relatives (French, Spanish, Italian, and others), and the Germanic tongues, including English, was followed by work on Sanskrit. The tracking of correspondences by scholars was one of the principal factors in the development of comparative-historical philology. It became clear that two related languages may develop from a single earlier language and that the historical development from the earlier stage through its evolutionary changes into later stages could sometimes be stated. In sum, comparative philology was replaced by historical-comparative philology. This most significant

achievement of nineteenth-century linguistic scholarship was applied to the Semitic family.⁴⁵ The comparative-historical study of the Semitic languages reached monumental proportions in Carl Brockelmann's two-volume work, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (1908; Guide to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages) and in Gotthelf Bergsträsser's *Einführung in die semitischen Sprache* (1928; translation, Introduction to the Semitic Languages, 1983).⁴⁶

b

By comparing Hebrew with the other Semitic languages and by working with the internal evidence of Hebrew itself it became possible to penetrate back to earlier stages of the language and to trace various later developments—Mishnaic, Medieval, and eventually Modern Hebrew. This revolutionary approach to Hebrew first appeared in the grammars of Justus Olshausen (1861),⁴⁷ and Bernhard Stade (1879).⁴⁸ It reached classic proportions in Eduard König's syntax (1897)⁴⁹ and in the grammar of Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander (1922),⁵⁰ the twenty-ninth revision of Gesenius's grammar by Gotthelf Bergsträsser (1918),⁵¹ and the grammar of Rudolf Meyer (1966).⁵² Astonishingly, no complete comparative-historical grammar of Hebrew has ever appeared in English, be it an original or a translation!

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c

During the nineteenth century Jewish scholars rejoined the mainstream of Hebrew linguistic work, a reentry "facilitated by the fact that non-Jewish [Hebrew] studies became once again more humanistic and less definitely attached to theology."⁵³ A signal figure in this reentry was S. D. Luzzato (1800–1865), a scholar and (like Saadia Gaon and other medieval grammarians) a poet.⁵⁴ As our discipline has grown in the last hundred years it has brought together, albeit in a small way, Jews and all variety of Christians.⁵⁵

d

More recently, especially since the 1940s, the comparative-historical approach to Hebrew has been giving ground to the contribution of modern linguistics, which looks to the great Swiss scholar, Ferdinand de Saussure, as its father.⁵⁶ Descriptive and structural linguists have in this century clarified the methods by which language is studied and the ways in which its component parts interact. Biblical scholars have also had to reckon with ever-expanding horizons in comparative philology and with an ever-increasing number of ancient sources for Hebrew.

Footnotes:

1. In this chapter we follow closely the survey of "Hebrew Linguistic Literature" in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 16. 1352–1401; the first part, on pre-sixteenth-century literature, is by David Tene, and the second by James Barr. (The attributions are, unfortunately, somewhat garbled.) On the intellectual context of medieval grammatical study, see the essays in B. W. Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (New York: Summit, 1984), especially those of E. L. Greenstein, "Medieval Bible Commentaries" (pp. 213–59), and N. M. Samuelson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy" (pp. 261–303). For an orientation to the earlier stages of medieval grammatical study, the long introduction to William Chomsky, *David Kimhi's Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol)* (New York: Bloch, 1952), is useful, although the work is not suitable for study because the parts of Kimbi's grammar are rearranged and the terminology misleadingly (if carefully) modernized (see pp. xxix–xxxii); the material in the introduction is summarized in Chomsky, *Hebrew: The Eternal Language* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957) 117–38. Note also the survey of early grammatical work by Leslie McFall in *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982) 1–16. C. H. J. van der Merwe presents a helpful study of the recent history of the discipline in "A Short History of Major Contributions to the Grammatical Description of Old Hebrew since 1800 A.D.," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 13 (1987) 161–90. On both medieval comparative Semitic studies and early modern work (where textual criticism provided a model for comparative linguistics), see P. Swiggers, "Comparison des langues et grammaire comparée," *Linguistica* 27 (1987) 3–10.

2. On Saadia's work, see S. L. Skoss, *Saadia Gaon, the Earliest Hebrew Grammarian* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1955); Tene, "Literature," 1367–69; Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, xii.

3. Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamoth* 13b; *Gittin* 90a. Cf. S. Rosenblatt, "Materials toward a Biblical Grammar in the Bible Exegesis of the Tosefta," *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry*, ed. A. Kort and S.

Morschauer (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1985) 219–26.

4. Tene, "Literature," 1360–61. Hebrew was also regarded as the primordial language.

5. The medieval Jewish grammarians, like most grammarians of Hebrew since, concentrated on the language of the Bible and neglected later developments; cf. Tene, "Literature," 1361–62.

6. On the role of the Qaraite, see Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, xiii. On the *Book of the Seventy*, see Tene, "Literature," 1356, 1362. The Qaraite (Karaite) sect has an uncertain early history. Some scholars link the canonization of Masoretic study to the earliest stages of the movement, suggesting that the Masoretes were either arch-anti-Qaraite or Qaraite themselves. The Qaraite sect survives in modern times as a tiny remnant located in both the Soviet Union and Israel. In late medieval and Renaissance times, Jewish controversy with Christians played a role in the development of linguistic science.

7. Tene, "Literature," 1353.

8. Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, ed. E. J. Revell (Masoretic Studies 5; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1980) 153.

9. Cf. Tene, "Literature," 1354.

10. See Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, xix. The history of payṭanic verse can be conveniently traced in T. Carmi's *Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin, 1981); he includes works (not all devotional) of Saadia Gaon, Menaḥem ibn Saruq, Dunash ben Labraṭ, Samuel ha-Nagid, Moses ibn Ezra, and Abraham ibn Ezra. On Saadia as grammarian and writer, see Y. Tobi, "Saadia's Biblical Exegesis and His Poetic Practice," *Hebrew Annual Review* 8(1984) 241–57.

11. Tene, "Literature," 1356.

12. Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, xiii.

13. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 4.

14. Tene, "Literature," 1356, 1369–70; Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, xiv, xxiv.

15. Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, xvi–xvii, cf. xix; see also Tene, "Literature," 1356–57, 1370–71. On Ibn Janāḥ, see E. A. Coffin, *Ibn Janāḥ's Kitāb al-Luma': A Critique of Medieval Grammatical Tradition* (University of Michigan Dissertation, 1968), and her summary, "Ibn Janāḥ's Kitāb al-Luma': An Integration of Medieval Grammatical Approaches," *Michigan Oriental Studies in Honor of George G. Cameron*, ed. L. L. Orlin et al. (Ann Arbor: Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan, 1976) 65–79. On Samuel's varied career, see S. Stroumsa, "From Muslim Heresy to Jewish-Muslim Polemics," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987) 767–72, and references.

16. Tene, "Literature," 1357; cf. Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, xix.

17. Tene, "Literature," 1357.

18. Tene, "Literature," 1358.

19. According to C. Rabin, *The Evolution of the Syntax of Post-Biblical Hebrew* (Oxford Dissertation, 1943) 91, his Hebrew is more mishnaic than Rashi's; see more generally F. Greenspahn, "Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Origin of Some Medieval Grammatical Terms," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 76 (1985–86) 217–27. Joseph Qimḥi (see below in text) fled to Provence during the persecutions in southern Spain and probably met Abraham ibn Ezra in 1160. Abraham ibn Ezra, best known as a biblical commentator (and the speaker of Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra"), should not be confused with his contemporary, the poet Moses ibn Ezra (1055–1135), also a distinguished reader of Biblical Hebrew—see N. Roth, "'Seeing the Bible through a Poet's Eyes': Some Difficult Biblical Words Interpreted by Moses ibn Ezra," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982) 111–14.

20. Tene, "Literature," 1372–73; David Qimḥi is also known as RaDaQ (Rabbi David Qimḥi).

21. See Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, xx–xxi. The ten-vowel, quantitative/qualitative system of Joseph Qimḥi is a radical reconceptualization of the seven-vowel qualitative Tiberian or Masoretic system. Its accuracy and usefulness have been questioned; also open to question is whether the Qimḥi's meant vowel length as (what we now call) phonemic. (Vowel quantity refers to shortness/length; quality refers to the character of the sound.)

22. Tene, "Literature," 1359.

23. A general decrease in interest in grammatical studies is sometimes said to be a by-product of the work of Maimonides (1135–1204), the greatest of medieval Jewish intellectuals. This supposed relationship should not be exaggerated. "Tension and antipathy between grammarians and Talmudists [such as Maimonides] seem to have been rather common, a particular embodiment of a general rivalry between protagonists of various disciplines

who viewed other disciplines as competing and diversionary rather than complementary and supportive." So I. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven: Yale University, 1980) 204.

24. Thus Tene evaluates this period as one of stasis, showing "almost a complete lack of progress"; "Literature," 1359.

25. Tene, "Literature," 1374. Judah Messer Leon (1.3.3a) wrote a grammar (1454) and a rhetoric (1475) based on the Bible, the latter among the earliest printed Hebrew books (Tene, "Literature," 1375, 1389), translated by I. Rabinowitz, *The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1983); on the *trivia*, see pp. l-iv, lxi. Messer Leon claims that his "rules of grammar ... are sweeter than honey [Ps. 19:11]" (p. xii).

26. Tene, "Literature," 1373–74.

27. Tene, "Literature," 1374–75.

28. Tene, "Literature," 1355. On the phenomenon of the Bible as achieving its existence only or chiefly in Hebrew, see E. L. Greenstein, "Theories of Modern Bible Translation," *Prooftexts* 3 (1983) 9–41. On Christian Hebraic studies, see M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "Humanism and the Rise of Hebraic Studies: From Christian to Jewish Renaissance," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 691–96; G. L. Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1983); J. Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens: Ohio University, 1983); P. Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); P. Swiggers, "L'Histoire de la grammaire hébraïque jusqu'au xvi^e siècle," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 10 (1979) 183–93.

29. Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, xxviii.

30. Barr, "Literature," 1393; cf. J. Gruntfest, "Spinoza as a Linguist," *Israel Oriental Studies* 9 (1979) 103–28.

31. For general background, see S. L. Greenslade, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible. 3. The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1963), especially B. Hall, "Biblical Scholarship" (pp. 38–93). On Reuchlin's grammar, see Tene, "Literature," 1389.

32. The title is given in various forms: *Rudimenta linguae hebraicae* (so, e.g., Tene, "Literature," 1360) and *Rudimentis Linguae Hebraicae* (so Hall, "Biblical Scholarship," 44).

33. See the superb study of Herman Hailperin, *Rashi and the Christian Scholars* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1963).

34. Beryl Smalley, *Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952; rpt. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1964) xvi.

35. Barr, "Literature," 1391.

36. Hermann Greive, "Die hebräische Grammatik Johannes Reuchlins *De rudimentis hebraicis*," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90 (1978) 395–409. On early Hebrew printing, associated with Italy and with the Soncino family, see Hall, "Biblical Scholarship," 48–50; Goshen-Gottstein, "Hebraic Studies," 692–93; and n. 25 above.

37. On Pellicanus's preliminary work, *De modo legendi et intelligendi Hebraeum*, little more than a squib on reading, see Barr, "Literature," 1391; Hall, "Biblical Scholarship," 45.

38. On Levita and Münster, see Tene, "Literature," 1360, 1390; Barr, "Literature," 1392; Hall, "Biblical Scholarship," 45–46.

39. Barr, "Literature," 1391.

40. Tene, "Literature," 1356, 1362–64.

41. Barr, "Literature," 1394; note also Barr's comments on the contrasting roles of textual and "higher" criticism, p. 1393.

42. Barr, "Literature," 1394–95.

43. Barr, "Literature," 1395.

44. Barr, "Literature," 1395–96. He was also the decipherer of Phoenician.

45. On the development of historical philology and linguistics and applications to Semitic, see Merritt Ruhlen, *A Guide to the World's Languages. 1. Classification* (Stanford, California: Stanford University, 1987) 4–22 (method), 25–35, 38–56 (Indo-European), 87–89 (Semitic and Afroasiatic). See also Barr, "Literature," 1396–97.

46. Carl Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuther und

Reichard, 1908–13; rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1961); Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Einführung in die semitischen Sprachen* (Munich: Hueber, 1928); *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983); cf. S. Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964).

47. Justus Olshausen, *Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache*, 2 vols. (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1861). For the list of grammarians given here, see Barr, "Literature," 1397, and note also the valuable surveys in C. Rabin, "Hebrew," *Current Trends in Linguistics. 6. Linguistics in South West Asia and North Africa*, ed. T. A. Sebeok et al. (The Hague: Mouton, 1970) 304–46; and N. M. Waldman, "The Hebrew Tradition," *Current Trends ... 13. Historiography of Linguistics* (1975) 1285–1330.

48. B. Stade, *Lehrbuch der hebräischen Grammatik* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1879).

49. Fr. Eduard König, *Historisch-Comparative Syntax der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1897).

50. Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des alten Testamentes* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1918–22; rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1962).

51. G. Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1918–29; rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1986).

52. Rudolf Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik*, 4 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966–72), the first grammar to take account of Ugarit and Qumran.

53. Barr, "Literature," 1399 Cf. Goshen-Gottstein, "Hebraic Studies," on the parallels between Renaissance Humanism and the nineteenth-century Wissenschaft des Judentums ("Science of Jewry").

54. On Luzzato's role, see Barr, "Literature," 1399. For a recent reconsideration of Luzzato's views on [Isa 6:3](#), see B. A. Levine, "The Language of Holiness," *Backgrounds for the Bible*, ed. M. O'Connor and D. N. Freedman (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 241–55, at 253.

55. Barr, "Literature," 1399.

56. His lectures (reconstructed from the notes of his students after his death) were published in 1915 as *Cours de linguistique générale*. See the edition of Rudolf Engler (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967); English translation, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

3 Basic Concepts

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3.1 Introduction

a

Just as Schultens's *Institutiones* (1737) set the grammatical study of Hebrew on the foundation of comparative Semitic philology, so the Swiss scholar Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) set the study of language in general on the foundation of linguistics, which takes all language as its object of study. The character of any one Semitic language stands out more clearly when it is studied in the light of all the Semitic languages, and the character of any language becomes more apparent in the light of languages in general. A linguist scientifically observes patterns and proposes theories pertaining to language in general, enabling the specialist in any given language to interpret the data better. Nowadays the scholarly Hebraist must be both a Semitist and a linguist. In this chapter we attempt to set forth some fundamental linguistic notions. In the chapters that follow we occasionally relate linguistic theories to the various points of Hebrew grammar being discussed.

b

Linguistics is a discipline in itself, and, as in any dynamic and developing science, scholars often do not agree about the best way to systematize the data. Our aim here is practical, and we restrict ourselves to points of theory that enjoy a broad consensus among linguists and that are most pertinent to our study. Three great themes of linguistic study are touched on. The first involves language in relation to the world; language has certain properties that enable it to describe and refer to the real world. The second theme is the structure of language in itself and the various levels used in analyzing it; the levels and units relevant to syntactic study in particular are treated further in Chapter 4. The third theme is variation, difference and change within a single language or a group of related dialects; variation can be tied to many different facets of language and may reflect many different aspects of language use. In conclusion we return to the question of the language and the world and reflect on the process of understanding.

3.2 Signification

3.2.1 Semiotics and Semantics

a

Language is a medium whereby a speaker communicates something in the world of experience or thought to a listener.¹ Saussure referred to that which is to be communicated as the signified (French *signifié*) and the part of

the communication system that relates it as the signifier (French *signifiant*). Similarly, the French linguist Emile Benveniste suggests that language relies on two kinds of entities: the semiotic entities (that is, the signs) and the semantic entities (the bearers of meaning).² Signs are distinctive and combinative units within a specific system: sounds (phonemes) within the phonological system, words and parts of words (morphemes) within the lexical systems, and grammatical patterns (syntagms) within the syntactical system. The signs become semantic entities when they are attached to meaning. In fact, signs and meanings are two aspects of language like two sides of one coin: they cannot be separated in the exercise of language, for language is meaningful sound. The elements of language make up a code consisting of signs that point to meaning: using psychological terms, we may say that language involves images and concepts, so long as we bear in mind that the images and concepts are mediated by words.

b

Linguists use other terms to describe this dual character of double articulation of language besides *signifiant/signifié* and semiotic entities/semantic entities. Louis Hjelmslev formulated the difference as involving expression and content.³ Other relevant paired correlates include sense versus reference and (intra-linguistic) system versus (extralinguistic) referent. No matter how the two aspects of language are viewed, Saussure's

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insight that there are two aspects is basic. Similarly basic is his observation that the relationship of the two aspects is largely arbitrary:⁴ there is nothing about the substance honey which leads to its being called or honey or (in French) *miel* or (in Chinese) *mi-t'ang*. In fact, Saussure believed that the tie between signifier and signified was entirely arbitrary, but this view is probably too extreme.⁵

3.2.2 Grammar and Words

a

Language can be analyzed into the broad categories of words (lexis) and their relations (grammar). Grammar involves the closed set of determined systems realized by intra-linguistic signs, the code; words are often signs pointing to extra-linguistic reality. A language's code, or grammar, consists of at least three systems: sounds, forms, and syntagms (i.e., relationships of words to one another in the flow of utterance). The set of words, in contrast, is not "closed" but "open," though not infinite. New words may be coined, and new meanings emerge, according to more or less established patterns. In general, speakers are not free to reconstruct the grammar, but they are free to choose the words representing their experience. M. A. K. Halliday refers to grammar as deterministic, in contrast to vocabulary, which is probabilistic.⁶

b

One way to view the grammar/lexis opposition is based on word types. On this view, there are two classes of words, the large, open class of words with extra-linguistic reference versus the small, closed class of "grammatical words"; these are sometimes called "full words" versus "form words."⁷ Full words include nouns, such as 'trees,' 'uncles,' 'teeth,' 'animals'; verbs, such as 'grow,' 'run,' 'bite,' 'roam'; qualifiers, such as 'large,' 'good,' 'healthy,' 'dangerous'; and relators, such as 'up,' 'down,' 'over,' 'through.' So, for example, the sentences 'The cow jumped over the moon' and 'The sow stomped through the room' share the same grammar: the same meaningful forms (e.g., the definite article, the -ed for past tense) and the same meaningful syntax (subject + predicate + adverbial phrase), but the words point to altogether different experiences. Intra-linguistic code words or form words may be illustrated by 'to' in the sentence 'He wanted to run,' and 'did' in 'I did not go.' The speaker does not freely choose such words; they belong to the code. The distinction between form words and full words is not absolute; for some purposes 'not' in the last sentence may be considered a form word, while for others it

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may better be viewed as a full word.⁸ In Hebrew, words such as **הָ**, **אֲשֶׁר** and **אֵת** belong to the system and are better treated in a grammar than in a lexicon.

c

Linguists disagree as to the extent to which grammar and lexis are truly distinct. The argument that they are

distinct can be encapsulated in an example from Noam Chomsky, 'Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.' The intra-linguistic sense or grammar is impeccable (nominal subject 'ideas,' with qualifying adjectives 'colorless' and 'green,' plural predicate 'sleep,' adverb 'furiously'), but its reference to the extra-linguistic world is nonexistent, so the sentence is gibberish.⁹ Chomsky argues that if a sentence can be grammatical and still be semantically deviant, then semantical and syntactical components of a language are separate. The terms sense and reference aid in explaining what is wrong with Chomsky's example. Reference involves the relationship between linguistic elements and the non-linguistic sphere. Sense involves the relationships that hold between linguistic elements; it is concerned only with the linguistic sphere.¹⁰ In these terms, the Chomsky sentence makes sense but is non-referential. Whether or not this argument is accepted, it remains the case that the grammatical system of a language can profitably be studied on its own terms.

3.2.3 Polysemy and Context

a

"Language is an infinite use of finite means," said the German thinker Wilhelm von Humboldt.¹¹ The material that can be "put into" language is unending—it is impossible to name a finite number that cannot be topped—but the code used to communicate that material is finite. The code of language is by no means simple; it is much more sophisticated than most other semiotic systems, for example, facial gestures or clothing. Despite this sophistication language uses a small number of resources.

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b

Since the code of language is finite, the elements of the code must be used in a variety of ways. Often one sign has more than one meaning; such a sign is called polysemous. In spoken English /tu/ is polysemous; three major meanings are distinguished in spelling—to, two, and too. Consider the following sentences, each using the word 'with.'¹²

1. I ate ice cream with my friend.
2. I ate ice cream with my pie.
3. I ate ice cream with my spoon.

In the first two sentences the preposition means 'together with,' in one case meaning 'in the company of' and in the other 'in association with'; in the third case it signifies 'by means of.' The same phenomenon occurs with other kinds of grammatical entities. For example, Beekman and Callow have analyzed over thirty meanings for the Greek genitive.¹³

c

A lexicon attempts to uncover a word's polysemy by pointing out its possible meanings in a language, while a grammar aims to reveal the polysemy of the grammatical forms and patterns by citing their potential meanings. There is no absolute separation between lexicon and grammar, and readers need to learn where most efficiently to locate the kinds of information they need. Our grammar focuses on the Hebrew Scriptures, and the following chapters offer a paradigm by which the reader can test the possible meanings of a grammatical form in the same way a lexicon enables the reader to survey various meanings of a word.

d

While polysemy satisfies an elementary requirement of language, namely economy, it exacts a price. Language may be ambiguous (i.e., an utterance may be open to several interpretations), or equivocal (i.e., the listener may be forced to hesitate over intended meanings), or even misunderstood (i.e., the listener may come to a wrong conclusion about the speaker's intended meaning). Even utterances that the speaker regards as perfectly clear can be problematic, as each of us knows from daily experience. Such utterances demand interpretation, the process whereby the listener comes to know the speaker's meaning. In everyday life, interpretation often involves simply looking around at the environment, but as the distance between speaker/writer and listener/reader increases, so does the complexity of the interpretive process. At base, however, the interpretive process always involves what Paul Ricoeur has called "sensitivity to context."¹⁴ Context includes not only the linguistic environment of the actual words, but also the speaker's and the hearer's behavior, the situation common to both, and finally the horizon of reality surrounding the speech situation. Since we are writing a grammar of literary texts,

we are restricted in our knowledge of these broader facets of context; our primary resort is to the formal features of language, though we are obliged to bear in mind as much of the rest of the context as we can reconstruct.

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e

The need to determine the meaning of linguistic forms through contextual considerations is an essential by-product of a polysemous semiotic system. Language itself does much of the work of interpretation for us, in that language use presupposes a "law of semantic pertinence," which requires that semantic entities harmonize in such a way as to make sense together. As the elements of an utterance follow one another in a temporal string, they screen out unintended meanings; only by their harmonious meanings do the elements "make sense." For example, the word 'before' may have temporal or spatial value in the sentence 'I sang before Queen Elizabeth.' In the sentence, 'I sang before Queen Elizabeth in Buckingham Palace,' 'before' refers to space; in the sentence, 'I sang before Queen Elizabeth addressed parliament,' 'before' refers to time, as it does in the sentence, 'I sang before Queen Elizabeth, and after we both had sung we sat down together for tea.' Since polysemy and context are essential constituents of language we assume that contextual determinants are normally available. In the paradigmatic presentation of a form's possible meanings, we assume that the meaning in a given case is clear from other semantic entities in the context.¹⁵

3.3 Levels of Analysis

a

Language is made up of a hierarchy of levels. Sounds, words and word elements, and phrases and clauses are successively more complex levels. The interactions and structures within each level are different in kind and extent from those on the other levels. A vowel reduction, for example, is distinct in character from the formation of a construct phrase. The three levels mentioned are those traditionally recognized in Western grammar and its successor, modern linguistics. Sounds are studied under the headings of phonetics and phonology. Morphology treats word elements and words as grammatical units, in formation ('ride' versus 'rode'), derivation ('rider' < ride + er), and inflection ('riders' < rider + s). Syntax is the study of higher levels, those of phrases, clauses, sentences, and beyond. The elements or units are larger on each successive level.¹⁶

b

This tripartite division, though traditional, is not ideal either from a linguist's point of view or a Semitist's. The general linguist has two objections. First, the building blocks or units of phonology are arbitrary: sounds in themselves have no meaning, and this fact separates the study of sound systems from the study of other linguistic realities. Second, the analysis of the syntactic domain is difficult: should primary attention be given to phrases or to clauses and sentences or to larger chunks of material (i.e., discourses or texts)? Only study of larger chunks allows us to explain, for example, aspects of time reference and narration or rhetorical functions (e.g., linguistic expressions of subservience or sarcasm).

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c

The Semitist's objections point to the same problem areas as the general linguist's do, but for different reasons. First, the traditional understanding of morphology is based on combining sequences of word elements, as in English 'bridesmaids' < [[[bride + POSSESSIVE] + maid] + PLURAL]. Hebrew, like the other Semitic languages, uses vowel patterns as much as sequential combinations, and therefore its morphology is more diverse. In particular, its morphology is often closely intertwined with the phonology, in ways that the traditional account does not allow for. Second, the Semitist notes, the domain of language above the phrase level is much harder to subdivide in Hebrew and the other Semitic languages than the traditional formula recognizes. The sentence, for example, is difficult to isolate and define, and thus Semitic grammars tend to treat clauses at great length, with some reference to a few clear types of complex sentences.

d

Despite these two sets of objections, the tripartite division is a useful scheme, still recognized by all grammarians as a convenient and sometimes revealing framework. We discuss the three basic levels mentioned and then turn briefly to work done on a discourse or text level. At the end of this review we take up some approaches that cut

across linguistic levels and reveal their commonality.

3.3.1 Sounds

a

The most basic system of the linguistic code involves the sounds themselves. A sound produced by the vocal tract may be called a phone, and the sounds are studied in themselves in the science of phonetics. Of greater interest to the linguist is the set of sounds actually used in a given language, the set of phonemes, and the ways in which they are used; the set of these usage patterns is called the phonology of a language, as is the study of the patterns.

b

A phoneme is a sound or speech unit that makes a difference, that is, it can distinguish one word from another. The English words 'pit' and 'pin' differ only in the final sounds, the *t* and *n*; thus, we say *t* and *n* are phonemes in English. The word pair 'bit' and 'pit' shows that *b* and *p* are phonemes of English; such a pair is called a minimal pair. For many speakers of American English 'pen' and 'pin' are distinct, and for those speakers the two vowels are phonemic. For many others, however, 'pen' and 'pin' sound alike, and only the vowel is used. Note that these speakers use the vowel in words such as 'rent,' 'sent,' and 'went,' where the first group of speakers uses the vowel of 'pen'; there is no problem with these words, as there sometimes is with the 'pen'/'pin' pair, because there are no words minimally contrasting 'rent,' 'sent,' and 'went.'

c

The phoneme is not a sound as it is produced in the throats and mouths of a speaker, but rather an abstraction based on how speakers use the sound in the words of a language. Phonemes, the minimal meaningful sounds in a language, do not exist as such; they are the set of sounds we make and hear in our language, irrespective of such obstacles as background noise or personal idiosyncrasy. Speakers of a language may vary tremendously and yet manage to understand each other, because each intuitively knows the sound system of the language and interprets the stream of speech in terms of that system.

d

We have mentioned some sources of sound variations, such as personal speech variations and dialect variations (the *pen/pin* dialect of American English, and the *pen* □

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pin/pin dialect). There is another source of variation, the linguistic environment of the sound; such variation is said to be conditioned, and the variants are called allophones. For example, most speakers of English think of their language as having a single *k* sound. But in fact the *k* in 'key' and 'kin' differs from the *k* in 'ski,' 'skin,' 'sick,' and 'sock.' (Put your finger in front of your mouth to feel the difference in aspiration, which your ear is not trained to detect, and note that only the first set is followed by a small puff of air, the result of aspiration.) Though the two kinds of *k* are phonetically different, English speakers consider them to be "the same sound," because in the system of the English language *k* initiating a syllable is always aspirated whereas *k* after *s* or at the end of a syllable is always unaspirated; this phonetic difference is never associated with a contrast in meaning, that is, it is never phonemic.¹⁷ In contrast, for example, Turkish does distinguish aspirated *k* (written *k'*) and unaspirated *k*, and thus *k'alb* 'dog' is distinguished from *kalb* 'heart.'

e

Similarly, the variation of the "begadkepat letters" of Hebrew (so-called "hard" and "soft" sounds) may be analyzed as allophones, on the view that the form that occurs in a given context is predictable from the phonetic environment, specifically whether a vowel or consonant precedes. On this view, the begadkepat letters never lead to a contrast in meaning; note that *b/v* (~Hebrew ב/ב), *d/ð* (ד/ד), *p/f* (פ/פ), and *t/th* (ת/ת) are all contrasting pairs of phonemes in English.

f

The greatest complexities of Hebrew phonology involve the vowels of the language. A complex set of rules reduces vowels in some environments and lengthens them in others; some rules insert vowels (anaptyxis) and

others delete vowels (syncope). The fullest form of this set of rules belongs to the Tiberian Masoretic form of Biblical Hebrew, but many of the rules reflect processes much older. The phonology of Hebrew is not dealt with at any length in this grammar; it is a subject of largely secondary importance to the exegete, who should not, however, neglect the proper reading aloud of the text.¹⁸

3.3.2 Morphemes

a

A phoneme is a sound that serves to contrast meanings, and the phonemic level of analysis is the most basic; the next highest level is the morphemic. A morpheme is a minimal unit of speech that is recurrent and meaningful. It may be a word ('ant,' 'rhinoceros') or an affix to a word (e.g., the negative prefix *un-*, as in 'unfriendly,' 'unavailable,' or the plural suffix *-s*, as in 'hats,' 'caps'). A free morpheme can stand alone, for example, 'friend,' 'hat'; a bound morpheme cannot be used by itself, as in the case of

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affixes. Some morphemes have various forms, and these are called allomorphs or, less often, simply morphs. When a word can be segmented into parts, these segments may also be referred to as morphs. For example, the word 'bigger' contains two morphs, *big* and the comparative suffix *-er*.

b

Allomorphs of a single morpheme may be quite distinct phonetically, for example, the regular English plural suffix consists of *-s* (as in 'hats'), *-z* (as in 'lids'), *-es* (as in 'forces'). The allomorphs may be conditioned by a specific environment: the plural suffix is unvoiced *-s* after unvoiced phonemes, as in 'caps,' 'bits,' 'wicks,' etc.; voiced *-z* after voiced phonemes, as in 'scabs,' 'bids,' 'wags,' etc.; and *-es* after a sibilant or *s*-sound, as in 'senses,' 'censuses,' 'lances,' etc. (There are also a few historical allomorphs, such as *-en* in 'oxen,' 'brethren,' and *-e-* in 'men,' 'women.') The prefixal morpheme *in-* meaning 'not' appears as *in-* in 'innumerable,' *il-* in 'illiterate,' *im-* in 'improper,' and *ir-* in 'irrelevant.' Similarly, in Hebrew the allomorphs of the plural morpheme are *-im*, *-ê*, *-ôt*, etc.; the morpheme of the *Qal* perfective consists of several allomorphs with vocalic infix patterns: *CāCaC*, *CāCəC* + vocalic suffix, *CəCaC* + consonantal suffix, as in קָטַל, קָטְלָהּ, קָטְלָתָם.

c

Just as sounds are the reality and phonemes the linguistically functional units, forming an inseparable complex, so are allomorphs and morphemes inseparable. Saussure expressed the distinction between morphemes and allomorphs in terms of form and substance. Like all grammatical units, the morpheme is an element of "form," necessarily related to its "substantial" realization.

d

The morphemes signifying the grammatical code are bound forms more often in Hebrew than in English. For example, the morphemes signifying definiteness, the infinitive, the genitive relation, etc., are all bound forms in Hebrew, whereas in English the article is the separate word 'the,' and the infinitive and the possessive relation are shown by the prepositions 'to' and 'of.'

3.3.3 Syntagms

a

A syntagm is an ordered and unified arrangement of words or word elements in the linear flow of speech. When two or more elements in word, phrase, or idiomatic construction co-occur in a distinctive way, as in the verb + particle phrase 'run away' or in the adjective + noun combination 'poor Nathan,' they may be called a syntagm. Phrasal syntagms may be used in building up clauses, sentences, and higher units. Higher syntagm structures may be seen as involving slots, the positions occupied by a word, phrase, or clause in a structure. The slots which elements occupy with respect to each other in syntagms may be significant.¹⁹ Contrast, for example, the English sentences 'The dog bit

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the man' and 'The man bit the dog.' In Hebrew the predicate and attributive adjectives are distinguished by whether they precede or follow the modified noun. The word order of English tends to be more fixed than that of Hebrew. The key to Hebrew word order involves one basic relation, requiring that the governing element (*regens*) generally precede the governed (*rectum*). Thus, in Hebrew generally the relational particle precedes (and is thus called a preposition) the object (בְּשָׂרִי מוֹאֵב), the possessed precedes the possessor (שֵׁם הָאִישׁ), the noun precedes the attributive adjectives (נָשִׁים מְאֻבָּיוֹת), and the verb precedes the subject (קִינְתָּ אֶלְיָמְלִךְ).

3.3.4 Discourse and Text

a

Most linguists take as the upper boundary of their field of study the sentence, consigning consideration of larger units to folklorists or literary critics. Semitists, as noted earlier, have tended to focus on the clause. Thus the study of syntax is taken as the study of the use of individual words, phrases, and clauses. Relatively recently, however, a number of theorists have expressed dissatisfaction with this limitation. In part they have been prompted by a desire to study systematically certain facets of language use that philosophers, anthropologists, and literary critics have observed. These scholars have seen that contextual or enunciative determination of a clause's meaning follows certain patterns. Politeness, for example, has distinct linguistic consequences and, it is argued, linguistics should be able to describe them. In part, those who would reject the standard limits on linguistics are motivated by a desire to clarify problems of reference: the system of pronouns, for example, cannot be examined properly in isolated sentences, but only over a series of sentences.

b

Discourse analysis or text linguistics is a relatively new field of study based on these efforts to go beyond the sentence. Robert Longacre states the case for discourse grammar forcefully:

In earlier work, discourse analysis was regarded as an option open to the student of a language provided that he was interested, and provided that he had a good start on the structure of lower levels (word, phrase, clause). But ... all work ... on lower levels is lacking in perspective and meets inevitable frustration when the higher levels—especially discourse and paragraph—have not been analyzed. One can describe the verb morphology of a language but where does one use a given verb form? ... One can describe linear permutations of predicate, subject, and object, but what factors control alternative word orderings? One can call the roster of sentence-initial conjunctions, but where does one use which? ... To answer these and other problems one needs discourse perspective.

In view of these considerations, discourse analysis emerges not as an option or as a luxury for the serious student of a language but as a necessity.²⁰

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In light of these claims, we must cautiously defend the more traditional path followed in this grammar. Unquestionably a phrase or sentence is but a part of a larger discourse, bound together by grammatical elements giving it unity and cohesiveness and determining the grammatical shape of its phrases and its sentences. A comprehensive grammar would lay out the systems whereby the whole discourse makes sense. Nevertheless, we have contented ourselves here with writing a more modest grammar for both logical and practical reasons. The principal reason is that phrases and clauses comprehend within themselves most of the elements of a language's grammatical systems.

c

If we took discourse analysis to its final conclusion, we could "accurately" write a grammar of only an entire literary text; in the biblical context, that would mean an entire book. The hierarchical constituent elements of the grammar would be, in descending order of rank: book, pericope or section, paragraph, sentence, clause, phrase, word, morpheme.²¹ For our purposes a grammar of this magnitude is not prudent.

d

The clause or sentence is a logical breaking place in the rank of hierarchies because the elements involved in systems that relate semantic entities above that level are qualitatively different from those involved in writing a more traditional grammar. For example, Wilbur Pickering in his discourse analysis investigates hierarchy (outline

perspective), cohesion (linear perspective), prominence (thematic perspective), style (social perspective), and strategy (pragmatic perspective). These elements of discourse deserve separate treatment, but it is not yet clear that a strictly linguistic account would be an improvement over a more prosaic and less formal treatment, such as might be found in an advanced commentary on a biblical text.²² In one of the most engaging text-grammatical studies of Biblical Hebrew, Wolfgang Schneider aims to describe the language not on the basis of the sentence, but on the basis of texts (which he takes to be coherent structures of sentences).²³ He emphasizes those linguistic phenomena that embody textual relations, analyzing them into three different groups: (1) forms that refer to other words (e.g., pronominal suffixes), (2) forms that refer to a relationship between clauses (conjunctions), and (3) forms that refer to relations between segments of text (he calls these macro-syntactic signs; e.g., discourse-initial **וַיְהִי**).²⁴ As E. Talstra notes, Schneider's

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observations are not in themselves new; what is new is the way the phenomena are organized, according to function in the text. Schneider distinguishes anaphoric signs (those that refer backwards, e.g., most personal pronouns in Hebrew), cataphoric signs (those that refer forwards, e.g., interrogative pronouns), and deictic signs (those that refer to the situation of communication, pointing outside the discourse, e.g., demonstrative pronouns). All these signs are treated in the present grammar in a more traditional framework; it is the merit of Schneider's work to bring them together in their common pointing function and distinguish among them on the basis of orientation (pointing back, pointing forward, pointing out), in ways not possible in traditional grammar.

e

We have resisted the strong claims of discourse grammarians in part for the theoretical and practical reasons mentioned earlier: most syntax can be and has been described on the basis of the phrase, clause, and sentence. Further, it is evident that the grammatical analysis of Hebrew discourse is in its infancy. As an infant, it offers little help for the many problems of grammar which have not been well understood. Most translators, we think it fair to say, fly by the seat of their pants in interpreting the Hebrew conjugations. Hebrew grammarians have only recently come to appreciate morphemes as diverse as the "object marker" **אֵת** and the enclitic *mem*. No modern grammar, further, has begun to gather together the wealth of individual studies that have been carried out in a more traditional framework; thus it is not surprising that some students know little about the case functions and some commentators make egregious errors in their interpretations of prepositions. For our purposes, therefore, we are content to stay with more traditional bases than those of discourse grammar.

3.3.5 Analytical Approaches

a

Each of the linguistic levels involves units or elements. To analyze how a given level works, the type of units must be isolated. In phonology, sounds are recognized and major features that go with them—tone, pitch, or stress—are described. Morphology studies word classes and the formative processes associated with them. Syntax takes up phrase, clause, and sentence types.

b

Once the type of units on a given level is established in a preliminary way, the next stage of analysis can be undertaken. In the work of grammarians and linguists before the nineteenth century, this stage tended to be comparative, at least implicitly. One language (in Europe, most often Latin) served as a model and other languages were described as deviations from that model. By the end of the nineteenth century the inadequacies of such an approach were obvious, as a result of work on a variety of languages. In the work of Saussure, an alternative to earlier comparative and historical study emerged. Linguistic structuralism is based on the idea that a language can be described on its own terms: without its history and apart from comparisons to languages, related or unrelated. In a structuralist view the units on a given grammatical level are considered as a system, in relation to each other.

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c

The years after Saussure's death were great years for linguistics, and structuralist methodologies were elaborated in various settings and with different emphases. The Geneva school of Saussure's students thus takes up a set of

problems distinct from the literarily oriented Prague school or the anthropologically dominated American school.²⁵ The diversification of linguistic structuralism led to structuralist methodologies in other fields, and for a time in the sixties and early seventies structuralism seemed a likely model for the master "human science," capable of unifying anthropology, psychology, and criticism. Claude Lévi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, studied myths and systems of myths from a linguistically informed base; various mythic characters and actions are seen as units making up a "language of myth."

d

The role of structuralism has altered in recent years. In the "human sciences" structuralism is seen, somewhat unfairly, as outmoded, and newer approaches are called "post-structuralist." Linguists, in contrast, have come to see structuralist methods as tools that may enable us to return to an earlier approach with a vastly increased fund of data. It is now possible to use a comparative base in evaluating a given language, where the base is not merely Latin or a few languages but a broadly representative sample of all language. Not all languages have been studied, to be sure, but enough have been described in detail that few surprises are expected. Studies in language universals and language typologies, pioneered by Joseph H. Greenberg, have recently assumed a major role in linguistics.²⁶

e

The essence of structuralist method is, as noted earlier, a systematic approach to a level or other domain. Thus we ask questions such as: how do the units differ?, how do contrasts operate?, and how are oppositions used? The ways in which answers are elaborated are the ways the various structuralisms are differentiated. One major concept is markedness: in a paired opposition, one member of the pair is considered unmarked (i.e., simpler, shorter, more "obvious," more "natural"), while the other member is considered marked. In the sound system of English, there is a voiceless:voiced contrast for consonants, and each of the pairs p:b, t:d, k:g has an unmarked, voiceless member (p, t, k) and a marked, voiced member (b, d, g). The voicing (vibration of the vocal cords) is the "mark" of the marked members.²⁷ English morphology contrasts singular and plural, and each of the pairs door:doors, book:books, fiche:fiches has an unmarked, singular member (door, etc.) and a marked, plural member (doors, etc.); the plural ending is the "mark" of the marked members. In cases in which the usual meaning of that mark is irrelevant, the mark can take on other meanings. The plural form 'waters' does not have an ordinary plural sense; rather, it usually has the sense of referring to great quantity of water in a natural setting ('the waters of the Nile,' 'the waters of Baden-Baden'). The marked plural forms are longer in physical terms and more complex in semantic terms,

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usually (though not always) with the meaning "plural." Hebrew has a double set of markedness contrasts for number. Singular is unmarked in opposition to plural, and singular and plural together are unmarked in opposition to dual. This double scheme can have a straightforward representation: singular **יָם** is one syllable, plural **יָמִים** is two syllables, dual **יָמַיִם** is three syllables. Markedness is not always so simple, and the mark is not always so clearly an added feature or element.²⁸ In terms of higher linguistic units, the structure of a marked opposition is often difficult to work out. The medieval Hebrew grammarians saw the stem system as divided between *Qal* 'light' and the derived or 'heavy' stems. This is a markedness opposition, since all the derived stems have some additional mark. It is not, however, obvious what linguistic conclusions follow from this conception.²⁹

f

One of the bases of markedness theory is found in the lexicon. The unmarked form of a word that can be inflected is the dictionary or citation form. In a lexicon of English one turns to 'day' to investigate the forms days and day's, and to 'daze' for dazed and dazes. In word-based lexicons of Hebrew (those in the Koehler-Baumgartner mold), the citation form of the word is basic, while in traditional Semitic lexicons (including the Gesenius dictionaries of Hebrew) the words are further categorized by the citation forms of the roots. It is important not to mistake the forms used in lexicons for actual unmarked forms, since lexicons must make a variety of compromises between the most economical representation of the words and the practical needs of users. Rather, we can say that the idea of the unmarked form of a word grew out of the idea of the citation form; spelling conventions also played a role in shaping the concept of markedness.³⁰

3.4 Variation

a

Language varies along the same parameters as other aspects of human culture, that is, it varies through time, according to geographical, social, and political context, and in conjunction with the age, gender, and relationship of the users.³¹ Historical variation is the most obvious sort: our English is not Shakespeare's, and Modern Hebrew is not the language of Ezekiel. We have discussed some features of the history of Hebrew in Chapter 1, and there we alluded to the opposition synchronic:diachronic. In Saussure's view, the study of a given state of a language at a given time (synchronic study) is an endeavor different from the study of the relationship of various states of a language (diachronic study). As we argued earlier, a variety of problems makes a strictly synchronic or diachronic study of Biblical Hebrew difficult.³² Despite the standardization and homogeneity reflected in the biblical text, it is possible to appreciate aspects of historical change within it. Since the Second World War, linguists have come to appreciate many other kinds of variation in language use, and these, too, may be relevant to the study of Hebrew.

b

Change over time and variation due to other circumstances reflect diversities in a community of speakers. Some changes, called "free variations," reflect spontaneous or Non-Systematic variations that arise as speakers utter a language. All other forms of change ultimately reflect either linguistically or culturally conditioned variation. Some changes reflect analogies within the system: if the plural of 'rat' is 'rats,' a child might pluralize 'mouse' as 'mouses.' The form 'rooves,' on analogy to 'loaves,' has acquired some currency in American English, and 'have went' sometimes replaces 'have gone.'³³ In cultural terms, words disappear from use as the things they name become unimportant; English 'jesses' is usually seen in Shakespeare rather than heard in reference to hawks and falcons. Contrariwise, new things bring new words: a German institution led to the borrowing of 'kindergarten,' and the musical vocabulary of English is largely Italian in origin ('soprano, piano, pianissimo'). Social change is reflected in new uses such as 'gay' and coinages such as 'house husband' and 'latchkey child.' technology is ever changing: the old vocabulary of hydrology ('milldam, millstream, waterwheel') has disappeared; a new vocabulary of fabrics ('nylon, cotton-poly blend, permanent press') has appeared. Commerce is also a factor: 'muslin' (cf. Mosul) and 'scallion' (cf. Ashqelon) came to Europe from the Near East.³⁴

c

Poetic traditions (and to a lesser extent all literary traditions) preserve older vocabulary and grammatical forms that have been lost from ordinary speech and plain prose. The lexical and morphological resources thus tend to be larger. These linguistic facts interact in complex ways with other structural features of Hebrew verse. It is important to see the grammar in poetry in the context of Hebrew grammar. Loose notions of a special vocabulary and grammar of poetry are linguistically uninformed.³⁵

d

A major source of variation is geography, although geographical variation is frequently also determined by other factors as well. It is customary to call geographically distinct language systems dialects, and to speak of a language as a group of mutually intelligible dialects. This terminological distinction should not be taken too seriously: languages and dialects overlap and interlock in various ways. Some types of English are not intelligible to one another, but a common tradition of writing and culture binds them together. A priori we would expect that the geographical area of southern Palestine would have been linguistically diverse in ancient times, particularly since social instruments of standardization were not well developed. Some of the inscriptional evidence supports this expectation, as does the biblical text to a slight degree. Most of Biblical Hebrew is, in fact, in the dialect of Jerusalem, and little material remains to fill in the dialect geography of the surrounding areas.

e

The Bible does itself bear witness to regional linguistic differences among the Israelites, in [Judges 12](#). The Ephraimites in Cisjordan could not pronounce šibbolet in the same way as the Gileadites in Transjordan. The Ephraimite variant, sibbolet, was used as a linguistic marker: a Gileadite, suspecting someone of being Ephraimite, would test that person by pointing to an ear of corn (or perhaps a stream; šibbolet means both) and asking what he called it. Using the Ephraimite s would cost the speaker's life.³⁶ There is evidence of a north-south split as well (cf. 1.4.1). Traces of non-Jerusalemite Hebrew can be found in biblical passages associated with the northern kingdom; such passages may refer to northerners (the Elijah stories) or even Phoenicians ([Psalm 45](#)),

they may quote northerners (Amos), or they may be attributed to northerners (Hosea). Linguistic study of such passages is aided by epigraphic remains from both Israel and Phoenicia.

f

Other sources of linguistic variation seem to have left even fewer traces in the Bible, but further study may be fruitful. Some factors may be mentioned. First, urban versus rural: non-urban speech is often more conservative than that of city dwellers, especially elite or educated groups. Second, male versus female and subordinate versus master: the different social situations of the genders and classes may affect their speech. Third, young versus old: the historical development of language is enacted bit by bit in the speech of all speakers as they master a language and mature in it. The study of these and other linguistic types of variations in the Bible is complicated by questions of genre and literary usage.

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g

We speak of Biblical Hebrew grammar as a single system because variations and dialects seem to exist within a single language, and no feature of the diversity of that language is surprising in light of our knowledge of modern languages. Speakers of the American English dialects that distinguish the vowels of 'pin' and 'pen' have little trouble understanding speakers who do not, those from the Appalachians, the Ozarks, and much of the Deep South. The lines dividing variation, dialect, and language are fuzzy, because accumulated variations lead to dialects, and divergent dialects lead to languages. Other cultural factors play a role in the real-world situation. Ephraimites and Gileadites, in spite of their different pronunciations, communicated with one another in a common language. Speakers of American English display rich variations in their linguistic utterances and in their literary expression; nevertheless they communicate their thoughts and experiences through a common language. So also the speakers encountered in the Hebrew Scriptures communicated their messages to a common audience in spite of variations. Those who share a common culture and politic tend to keep a common linguistic structure. We aim in this grammar to focus not on variations within Biblical Hebrew but on the common systems; we do not doubt that the grammar of any given body of material or author would be revealing.

3.5 Understanding

a

In the course of this chapter we have reviewed a number of the basic concepts of modern linguists. Here we consider two pairs of concepts and briefly touch on a question behind grammar and exegesis, the question of how people understand one another across the "barrier" of different languages. This question is at the juncture of all the human sciences.

b

A Saussurian pairing developed for linguistic analysis is syntagm and paradigm. The term syntagm is introduced above. The word paradigm is familiar in its ordinary sense of an ordered list of inflectional forms; the Saussurian usage is slightly different. In his terms, relations between the linguistic elements in the linear flow of speech (i.e., the ordered arrangement of phonemes and morphemes as they occur in the speech act) are syntagmatic; relations between linguistic items not present in this ordered arrangement in the act of speaking are paradigmatic. The two categories represent two basically different modes of organizing linguistic material. For example, we can distinguish a linear sequence or syntagmatic relation such as "noun + attributive adjective" in Hebrew. The paradigmatic categories involved here are the class of nouns and the class of attributive adjectives. Consider these groups:

nouns	attributive adjectives
אִישׁ	עֲבָרִי
בֵּת	טוֹב
גִּמְלָה	נָבֵל
דָּבָר	רָאשׁוֹן

Each group is a sample of the paradigmatic classes, and since the classes are those specified in the syntagmatic relation "noun + attributive adjective," all sixteen possible combinations would be syntagmatically available. The phrases with **בַּת** would require that the adjective be in the feminine gender. We cannot be sure that phrases not actually attested would be good Hebrew; **נָבֵל נִמְלָה** might have seemed redundant—are not all camels foolish? Such a judgment would be a matter of semantics.

c

Scholars have long suspected that a sentence may have structural features which, though not apparent in the surface form, are basic to it. Noam Chomsky distinguished between "surface structure" and "deep structure." He defined the surface structure of a sentence as the linear sequence of elements; the deep structure, which need not be identical with the surface structure, is seen as a more abstract representation of grammatical relations. The distinction between these two levels of language has been responsible for the enormous amount of linguistic thinking carried out under the heading of generativetransformational grammar and various more recent developments.

d

M. A. K. Halliday has observed that the two sets of distinctions we have just reviewed are similar. The syntagmatic side of language use is revealed in the surface structure, what Halliday calls "chain"; in fact, Halliday has proposed that all structure is surface, and all "choice," systematic consideration of the paradigmatic, is deep. Language structure, then, would be the device for realizing in physical, sequential representation the choices made in Non-Sequential, abstract deep grammar.³⁷

e

These oppositions—syntagmatic/paradigmatic, surface structure/deep structure, chain/choice—are parts of larger and more sophisticated theories of how language works. They allow us to sketch a view of the transcultural problem, the problem of how communication gets across the language divide. Let us take one formulation of the problem.³⁸ The British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski's fieldwork in Polynesia led him to think that the "translating" of terms and texts from the language of one culture to the language of another is impossible. Speaking absolutely this is true, because both extralinguistic reality and the intra-linguistic expression of it are socio-culturally conditioned. Nevertheless, on the deeper level of language there seems to be a common bond among people enabling them to communicate adequately with one another and to objectify their socio-cultural differences. This bond is based in part on the commonalities of deep structural grammar. Malinowski himself was not anti-universalistic. He wrote: "It would be both preposterous and intellectually pusillanimous to give up at the outset any search for deeper forces which must have produced [the] common, universally human features of language."³⁹ More recently, Chomsky has been even more pointed in his advocacy of the study of universal grammar. John Lyons explains:

A few years ago the majority of linguists would have rejected the possibility of constructing a universal theory of grammatical categories. This is no longer so. As Chomsky has pointed out: "modern work ... has shown a great diversity in the surface structures of languages", but "the deep structures for which universality is claimed may be quite distinct from the surface structures of sentences as they actually appear". It follows that "the findings of modern linguistics ... are not inconsistent with the hypotheses of universal grammarians". Once again Roger Bacon's famous statement about universal grammar is being quoted with approval by linguists: "Grammar is substantially the same in all languages, even though it may vary accidentally."⁴⁰

Since there are many things and experiences in the extra-linguistic realm that people share universally, Bacon's medieval view is perhaps not surprising.⁴¹ Thus in part because of the universal properties of language in its deeper, abstract, non-physical dimension, we, as speakers and readers of English, are able to understand Hebrew.

Footnotes:

1. Eugene Nida addressed himself to the relationship between linguistics and biblical studies in "Implications of

Contemporary Linguistics for Biblical Scholarship," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972) 73–89. In preparing this chapter, we have relied heavily on Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart, eds., *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Works* (Boston: Beacon, 1978); and J. H. Greenberg, *A New Invitation to Linguistics* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977). For a survey of contemporary linguistics in relation to the study of Biblical Hebrew, see Richter, GANG 1. 8–39. References here to speech as a medium for language are used for convenience; other media are possible, and much sign language reflects a fully developed system. For a complete glossary of linguistic terminology, see Mario A. Pei, *Glossary of Linguistic Terminology* (New York: Columbia University, 1966); Mario A. Pei and Frank Gaynor, *A Dictionary of Linguistics* (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, 1969); or, with more detail, David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

2. See Emile Benveniste, *Essays on General Linguistics* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami, 1971).
3. Louis Hjelmslev, *Language: An Introduction*. trans. F. J. Whitfield (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1970) 32–35. Hjelmslev was a major influence on the French structuralist Roland Barthes.
4. The view that words are arbitrarily associated with their referents derives in the Western tradition from Aristotle; one formulation of the contrary view is found in Plato's *Cratylus*.
5. See the discussion in Roman Jakobson and Linda R. Waugh, *The Sound Shape of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University. 1979) 177–215, for example: defenses of Saussure's position are given in the anthology of Robert Godel, *A Geneva School Reader in Linguistics* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969).
6. See G. R. Kress, ed., *Halliday: System and Function in Language* (London: Oxford University. 1976) 85. The term grammar is sometimes used to cover all linguistic phenomena, sometimes (as here) all except for the lexicon, and sometimes simply morphology and syntax (and sometimes needlessly avoided as old-fashioned).
7. See Eugene A. Nida, *Componential Analysis Of Meaning: An Introduction to Semantic Structures* (Paris: Mouton, 1976) 25. The closed:open contrast can be applied elsewhere in language. For example, we can say that English verbs comprise a closed class of models ('will, would, shall, should, can, could,'etc.) and much larger open class of main verbs ('walk, talk, weep, sleep, budge, nudge,' etc.).
8. The study of "semantics," in the sense of the study of individual words and groups of words as a key to modes of thought, requires a brief note. The exaggeration and wrongheadedness of such study have often been criticized, most cogently and frequently by James Barr; see his *Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1961) and, for the ensuing debate, M. Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983; most of the examples are from Christian Scriptures); J. F. A. Sawyer, "Root Meanings in Hebrew," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 12 (1967) 37–50; Barr, "Semantics and Biblical Theology—A Contribution to the Discussion," *Congress Volume: Uppsala 1971* (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 22; Leiden: Brill: 1972) 11–19; E. A. Nida, "Problems of Cultural Differences in Translating the Old Testament," *Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy*, ed. P. Casetti, O. Keel, and A. Schenker (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981) 297–307. This restricted sense of semantics needs to be replaced by a model distinguishing four levels: (1) extra-linguistic reality, (2) non-language-particular concepts, (3) language-particular meanings, and (4) expression. The idea of family-particular concepts, i.e., Semitic or ancient Semitic, also deserves rigorous review. See B. Kedar, *Biblische Semantik: Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1981).
9. See F. R. Palmer, *Semantics: A New Outline* (London: Cambridge University, 1976) 30.
10. Cf. John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 404–5, 424–28. The term "signification" is also used for reference or situational meaning.
11. Quoted in Reagan and Stewart, *Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, 127. On this topic, see A. Martinet, "Que faire du 'mot'?", *MPD* 75–84.
12. Examples after D. G. Frantz, "Translation and Underlying Structure. 1. Relations," *Notes on Translation* (Santa Ana, California: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1968) 22–23. The example involves the simplest kind of polyseme, the homonym: actual homonyms are rare in Hebrew.
13. John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 266.
14. See Reagan and Stewart, *Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, 125. The term "co-text" can be used to indicate the literary environment in distinction from "context," which refers to the world environment; see C. Butler, *Interpretation, Deconstruction, and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984) 4.
15. See further R. Meyer, "Gegensinn und Mehrdeutigkeit in der althebräischen Wort- und Begriffsbildung," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 11 (1979) 601–12.
16. The grammarian and linguist tend to follow an ascending order; a schema based on notional conceptions of language, based on thoughts and ideas rather than perceptible material, would tend to go in a descending order.

17. Actually English has a further contrast: the *k* in 'skin' is unaspirated and released, while the *k* in 'sock' is unaspirated and nonreleased.

18. C.-A. Keller, in "Probleme des hebräischen Sprachunterrichts," *Vetus Testamentum* 20 (1970) 278–86, argues that the teaching of Classical Hebrew has been too lopsided in favor of the text and that one should start from the principle that the language is a phonetic system, not a graphic one, and should therefore be learned orally. J. H. Hospers rightly countered, however, by observing that the practical problem is severe: "We are dealing with a fairly limited linguistic corpus, concerning which it is no longer possible to obtain any direct phonetic information"; "Some Observations about the Teaching of Old Testament Hebrew," *Symbolae biblicae et Mesopotamicae Francisco Mario Theodoro de Liagre Böhl dedicatae*, ed. M. A. Beek et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1973) 188–98, at 190.

19. The concept of the tagmeme, developed by Kenneth L. Pike, is another approach to this complex area of study. A tagmeme is "the correlation of a grammatical function or slot with a class of mutually substitutable items occurring in that slot"; B. Elson and V. B. Pickett, *An Introduction to Morphology and Syntax* (Santa Ana, California: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1964) 57. For example, a noun and a noun clause can both fill the first slot in '_____ is good,' e.g., 'Water is good,' 'Drinking water is good,' 'To wash one's face is good,' etc. In tagmemic theory, a syntagm is a grammatical relationship between tagmemes; see F. I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970) 25–27.

20. Quoted in Wilbur Pickering, *A Framework for Discourse Analysis* (SIL Publications in Linguistics 64; Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics and the University of Texas at Arlington, 1980) 4. See also R. E. Longacre, ed., *Theory and Application in Processing Texts in Non-Indoeuropean Languages* (Papiere zur Textlinguistik 43; Hamburg: Buske, 1984); and Longacre's own analysis of Hebrew, Joseph, *A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39–48* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1989).

21. A variety of higher units (clauses, verses, paragraphs, chapters, etc.) have a place in the Masoretic system and in earlier manuscripts; see E. J. Revell, "Biblical Punctuation and Chant in the Second Temple Period," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 7 (1976) 181–98.

22. For an example of the convergence of genre study and discourse grammar, see D. W. Baker, "Leviticus 1–7 and the Punic Tariffs," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 99 (1987) 188–97.

23. See Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammatik des biblischen Hebräisch* (Munich: Claudius, 1974); note the major review by E. Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible. I. Elements of a Theory," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 35 (1978) 169–74. Earlier, D. Vetter and J. Walter, in "Sprachtheorie und Sprachvermittlung: Erwägungen zur Situation des hebräischen Sprachstudiums," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 83 (1971) 73–96, had advocated the level of discourse as the starting point for the teaching of Hebrew. J. H. Hospers comments, in a practical response, "Although I am ready to agree to much, yet I wonder if all this is so easily applicable to the teaching of Classical Hebrew" ("Teaching of Old Testament Hebrew." 195). A related problem, as Hospers notes, involves the difficulty of Hebrew. Henri Fleisch has said that Hebrew is not a difficult language but one where one finds some difficulties; *Introduction à l'étude des langues sémitiques* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1947) 55. James Barr has also said that it is not an extremely difficult language; "The Ancient Semitic Languages—The Conflict between Philology and Linguistics," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1968: 37–55, at 52.

24. For another treatment of macro-syntactic signs, see Richter, *GAHG* 3. 205–6; they are there called text-deictics (e.g., 'attā, wayhī, wəhāyā).

25. One element of American structuralist methodology that retains a special allure is the "discovery procedure," a series of well-described steps that begins with a body of language material and yields a precise and determinate description of it. In reality, a discovery procedure is usually an inductive extension of a definition. Any linguistic analysis results from much more than mechanical application of fully specifiable technique; discovery-procedure linguistics tends to be a form of empiricist extremism.

26. J. H. Greenberg, ed., *Universals of Language* (Cambridge: MIT, 1966) is the still engaging preliminary survey; cf. B. Comrie, *Language Universals and Language Typology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981).

27. For the psychological correlates of this distinction, see Greenberg, *New Invitation to Linguistics*, 109–14.

28. Multiple-markedness systems can take various forms, often involving a notion of neutralization. For example, we might oppose English 'man' and 'women' as unmarked: marked, with 'human' as neutral (i.e., for the 'mark' of gender). On the relation between unmarked forms and the zero (German Null) morpheme, see Richter, *GAHG* 1. 104–30.

29. A related and still more difficult matter is the fact that languages differ in the extent to which they mark phenomena: "The practical workings of language also require such minimal grammatical meanings as the past tense. And they require a minimal logical symbolism that has to include, for instance, negation, class inclusion,

conjunction, and various kinds of levels of non-contradiction within discourse. The logical and syntactic operations ... differ greatly from one language to the next in their status and frequency. For example, Homeric Greek has more overt logical operators and they are more frequent than is the case in Classical Hebrew. Similarly, we find enormous differences between speakers of the same language when it comes to the frequency and status of minimal grammatical and logical meanings"; Paul Friedrich, *The Language Parallax* (Austin: University of Texas, 1986) 125.

30. The application of markedness within the lexicon is most successful in dealing with well-bounded semantic fields, e.g., kinship terms (Greenberg, *New Invitation to Linguistics*, 79–80) and color terms (pp. 82–83). On color terms in Hebrew (in all phases of the language, despite the title), see A. Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982). For a model study in precision, again related to *realia* (readily identified elements of the ordinary world) of meat, fish, and bread, see P. Swiggers, "The Meaning of the Root LHM 'Food' in the Semitic Languages," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 13 (1981) 307–8.

31. See Greenberg, *New Invitation to Linguistics*, 61–96, and some of the essays in E. Haugen and M. Bloomfield, eds., *Language as a Human Problem* (New York: Norton, 1974), esp. Dell Hymes, "Speech and Language" (pp. 45–71). On the work of Antoine Meillet, a major theorist of language as a social fact, see P. Swiggers, "La Conception du changement linguistique chez Antoine Meillet," *Folia Linguistica Historica* 7 (1986) 21–30. Meillet distinguishes three types of variation: dialectal, stylistic (reflecting special contexts and uses), and externally conditioned (reflecting language contact and borrowing; here bilingualism plays a major role).

32. See further Hospers, "Teaching of Old Testament Hebrew," 192–93. The problem cited here is of a pragmatic order; there is also the problem of where language change comes from. It must, in some sense, be built into the language as an object of synchronic study.

33. Greenberg, *New Invitation to Linguistics*, 64.

34. There is no up-to-date study of loanwords in Biblical Hebrew. M. Ellenbogen, *Foreign Words in the Old Testament* (London: Luzac, 1962), is badly outdated. A model treatment of loans and their context is S. A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Assyriological Studies 19; Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1974); cf. M. O'Connor, "The Arabic Loanwords in Nabatean Aramaic," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45 (1986) 213–29.

35. See D. A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 3; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972); M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980); A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1985); E. L. Greenstein, "Aspects of Biblical Poetry," *Jewish Book Annual* 44 (1986–87) 33–42.

36. The point about how the test was carried out was made by W. J. Martin in discussions with us. On the linguistic change involved, see the views of E. A. Speiser summarized in R. G. Boling, *Judges* (Anchor Bible 6A; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975) 212–13.

37. On Halliday's association of surface structure with chain (or syntagmatic relations) and deep structure with choice (or paradigmatic relations), see Kress, *Halliday*, 84–87.

38. Another formulation of linguistic determinism is associated with the Americans Benjamin Lee Whorf and Edward Sapir (who was acquainted with Hebrew); see the discussion of Greenberg, *New Invitation to Linguistics*, 80–83.

39. Quoted in Kress, *Halliday*, xx.

40. Lyons, *Theoretical Linguistics*, 333. The exact history of the idea of general grammar as distinct from particular grammar is much disputed. The respective roles of the Port Royal grammarians (17th century) and the French Encyclopedists (18th century) are discussed by S. F. D. Hughes, "Salutary Lessons from the History of Linguistics," *The Real-World Linguist*, ed. P. C. Bjorkman and V. Raskin (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1986) 306–22; and P. Swiggers, "L'Encyclopédie et la grammaire," *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia* 20 (1987) 119–56, esp. 127–31.

41. Since languages are codes for a message, there is in theory (but only in theory) no reason why sentences in different languages cannot be semantic equivalents: "For two sentences of different languages to be exact translations of each other they must be semantically related to other sentences of their respective languages in exactly the same way"; E. L. Keenan, "Logic and Language," *Language as a Human Problem*, ed. E. Haugen and M. Bloomfield (New York: Norton, 1974) 187–96, at 193.

4 Grammatical Units

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4.1 Introduction

a

Traditional grammatical theory operates with two fundamental units: the word and the sentence. Linguists associate the word with minimal units of meaning called morphemes (see 3.3.2). Intermediate between the word and the sentence, grammarians commonly recognize phrases and clauses. These five units are related by way of composition. A unit has a "higher rank" if it is composed of other units; the units stand in order of descending rank: sentence, clause, phrase, word, morpheme. A particular linguistic form may stand in several ranks: frequently a morpheme is a word, that is, words are often monomorphemic. A word may even be a clause or sentence. In [2 Kings 4](#), Elisha instructs Gehazi to approach the Shunammite and say,

הַשָּׁלוֹם לָךְ הַשָּׁלוֹם לְאִשְׁךָ הַשָּׁלוֹם לְיָלֶדְךָ	Are you well? Is your husband well? Is the boy well? 2 Kgs 4:26
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The woman replies with the single word,

שָׁלוֹם	(We are all) well. 2 Kgs 4:26
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This reply may be considered a word, a clause (of a reduced type treated below), and a simple sentence. This element of overlap among the units is often useful in analysis. Since higher units depend on lower units, we shall present them in ascending order. Having already clarified the notion of morpheme, we begin in this chapter with the word.

4.2 Word

4.2.1 Definition

a

The word is a unit of language consisting of one or more spoken sounds (or their written representation) that can

stand as a complete utterance or can be separated from the elements that accompany it in an utterance by other such units; words are composed of one morpheme or several morphemes.¹ In the latter case the morphemes are often combined into a word by linking conditions, for example, in English the loss of primary accent that distinguishes bláckbird from bláck bírd. Some morphemes are always linked or bound and never occur in isolation: this is true of affixes in Hebrew—for example, in שִׁבְרָה 'she broke' the suffix הָ- 'she' is bound to a form of a verbal root. In other cases the morpheme may occur in isolation. Some morphemes are joined by the loss of accentuation or proclisis (leaning forward, viz., of one word on another); the word that loses its accent is said to be proclitic. Proclisis is marked in the MT by *maqeph*, as in עַל־פָּנָי 'upon the face of' (Gen 1:2). Proclisis is common with the monosyllabic prepositions and particles, for example, אֶל, עַל, עִם, מִן, בֵּין, and the negative אֵין. Words are distinguished in speaking by stress, accent, or tone and in writing by spaces. Words are typically thought of as representing an indivisible concept, action, or feeling; such a notional definition is too imprecise to be useful.

b

Words can be defined phonologically or grammatically. For example, down is phonologically the same word in the sentences 'He ran down the hill' and 'She stroked the soft down on his cheek'; grammatically the occurrences involve two words which have different meanings (i.e., representing a spatial relationship and an entity, respectively) and enter into different contrastive and combinatorial functions in the language; the two downs cannot be syntactically interchanged with each other. The homophony of the two words is largely incidental to basic grammatical study. Grammatically, words function by referring to an extra-linguistic reality or by serving as part of the intralinguistic code (3.2.2).

4.2.2 Parts of Speech

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a

Words can be classified according to the way they function (i.e., according to their distribution) in the higher units, phrase, clause, and sentence. This classification refers to the syntagmatic relations among the various types of words and the various word orders possible in higher units. In English, 'black dog' is an acceptable phrase, 'dog black' is not. Similarly, the combining of words in the following English sentences is acceptable:

The black dog bites cruelly.

The brown chimpanzee eats heartily.

The strong wind blew furiously.

On the other hand one never finds the sentences,

Dog the bites black.

The heartily chimpanzee eats brown.

The strong blew wind furiously.

Bit ate opened.

'The' occurs with some words and not with others, and the same sort of restrictions are found for the other words. By noting words that can occur in comparable environments we can group words into classes. On formal grounds we can group the words in these sentences as

T class: the

W class: black, brown, strong

X class: dog, chimpanzee, wind

Y class: bites, eats, blew

Z class: cruelly, heartily, furiously

b

Traditionally, grammarians call the T class "the article," the W class "the adjective," the X class "the noun," the Y class "the verb," the Z class "the adverb." Such a formal system of categorization yields parts-of-speech groups. Words belonging to a part-of-speech class can be analyzed into semantic subclasses. For example, 'dog' and 'chimpanzee' can occur with the verbs 'bite' and 'eat' but not with 'blew,' whereas 'wind' can occur with 'blew' and not with 'bite' and 'eat' (except metaphorically). On the basis of distribution we can analyze Noun class into Noun (a) class and Noun (b) class. We aim here not to exhaust the possible classes into which words can be categorized but to explain how such categorization is done on both formal and semantic grounds.

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c

Grammarians have abstracted notional values for these classes; for example, the noun class, it is said, typically signifies persons, places, and things; the adjective class attributes a quality to the noun; etc. Semantic subclasses are also described according to notional values. Members of the Noun (a) class cited above belong to the class of "animate nouns," while the example of the Noun (b) class is an "inanimate noun." The way in which word classes are notionally labeled is a matter distinct from the linguistic procedures used to isolate the classes; the labels may be in themselves misleading. By "parts of speech" we mean both the classes to which words belong on formal distributional grounds and the abstract, common notion belonging to the class. In Hebrew, the principal parts of speech are noun and verb; adjectives belong to the class of nouns, along with substantives; adverbs are a small class. The categories of preposition and conjunction overlap; these two, along with some adverbs, are often simply called particles. The class of exclamations and interjections, for example, הוֹי 'woe,' הֲלֵי לָהּ 'far be it!,' נָא 'I pray,' is of lesser importance.²

d

The parts of speech have mixed definitions, in part based on semantic or referential factors and in part based on various formal features. There is no single universal scheme of the parts of speech, and no universal set of matchings between the parts of speech and syntagms more complicated than phrases. Since syntax, as we are presenting it here, is the systematic study of how words are used, some aspects of the history of word classification are worth mentioning. The word-class system goes back to Hellenistic times (its continuity with earlier, Near Eastern models remains unexplored), and, although grammatical papyri from Egypt show that the system assumed many different forms, tradition assigns it to Dionysius Thrax (ca. 100 B.C.E.). The whole scheme reflects both classical and later Stoic philosophical thought, but Dionysius and the papyri authors are properly grammarians rather than philosophers.³ There is a threefold base: Greek onoma 'the naming,' rhēma 'the speaking,' and syndesmos 'the binding'; under these three headings we can arrange the eight categories of Dionysius:

class	part of speech
the naming	1. name (i.e., noun)
	2. interjection
	3. adverb ⁴
the speaking	4. speaking (i.e., verb)
	5. participle
the binding ⁵	6. preposition
	7. conjunction
	8. pronoun

The first category includes both nouns and adjectives, while # 8 covers articles as well as pronouns. If noun and adjective are separated, and verb and participle combined, this scheme, of the Hellenistic age, comes close to those still in use in many teaching grammars of the European languages.⁶

e

The medieval grammarians of Arabic and Hebrew used only three parts of speech, corresponding to the three general headings above: Arabic ism 'name; noun'; fiʿl 'act;

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verb'; and ḥarf (plural ḥurūf) 'motion; particle.'⁷ This simpler scheme should not be taken to indicate that the

Semitic languages lack the problem areas of the European classical languages, but simply that their grammarians erected a foundation lower to the ground. Some of the problem areas as they are reflected in Hebrew can be mentioned. First, proper nouns (names) seem different in character from other nouns (Latin nomina), and, among these, substantives are different from adjectives (though less different than in most European languages); numbers, further, seem a special sort of adjective. Second, some verb forms are used as nouns (verbal nouns, i.e., the two infinitives and participles). In some respects adjectives are more like verbs than nouns: nouns (and pronouns) are determined in themselves while verbs and adjectives are only determined in relation to nouns or noun equivalents; they refer to accidents (in the philosophical sense). Third, most of the particles are unchanging in form, but some vary, and a few nomina and verbs are unvarying. Some particles refer to the immediate context (e.g., adverbs), while others refer to a larger, discourse context (e.g., conjunctions). If we bear these considerations in mind, it is easy to see how the traditional European list developed and easy, too, to appreciate Wolfgang Richter's classification for Hebrew:⁸

- verb
- verbal noun (infinitive; participle)
- nomen (substantive; adjective; numeral)
- proper name
- pronoun
- particle (adverb; preposition; conjunction; modal word, e.g., negative; article; interjection)

f

It is not our purpose to defend a particular list, however, but rather to point to the usefulness of a word-class approach, despite its mixed origins. These origins could be covered up or transcended, if strictly formal indicators were found to replace the referential factors. We have not done so because the weight of the traditional witness is part of our assurance that the word classes facilitate the mapping and understanding of syntax. Because the referential background of terms like "nouns" and "verbs" remains, the difficulty of moving from word class to syntagm arises again and again. The alternative, we believe, is a grammar in which the elements combine smoothly into syntagms, but the elements are themselves not recognizable to readers without special preparation in a narrow and (usually) new theoretical framework. A strictly syntagmatic (or strictly paradigmatic) framework would be less accessible and, we suspect, less amenable to "working with no data" (in T. O. Lambdin's phrase).

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g

One drawback of a conservative, part-of-speech approach to syntax is that it may lead to fragmentation of organization (we have tried to avoid this as much as possible) and to the loss of overarching generalizations and regularities. The approach tends to separate and isolate syntactic phenomena, in some ways the opposite of a discourse grammar. Certain phenomena that cut across the various categories are not given their due. Congruence or agreement is the feature that holds phrases and clauses together, the basis of all syntagmatic patterns. Inflection is the feature that creates the diversity of verbal and (to a lesser extent) nominal forms, the basis of paradigmatic patterns. A grammar of Hebrew that began with congruence and inflection would be a quite different grammar than we have written.

4.3 Phrase and Clause

a

A phrase is, in one sense, a group of words used as an equivalent of a single word class.⁹ Consider the earlier example sentence, 'The brown chimpanzee eats heartily,' alongside the sentence, 'The brown chimpanzee eats with zeal'; 'with zeal,' a group of words, follows the same distribution pattern and has the same grammatical value as 'heartily,' in the sense that both modify a verb. Thus, just as 'heartily' is an adverb, 'with zeal' is an "adverbial phrase." In the sentence, 'The dog with shaggy hair bites cruelly,' the group of words 'with shaggy hair' functions like the adjective 'black' in the sentence, 'The black dog bites cruelly.' We call a group of words that function like an adjective an "adjectival phrase." There are similarly nominal phrases, verbal phrases, etc.

b

Another, distinct sense of phrase is also useful. In this sense a phrase includes a governing word and all it governs. A prepositional phrase is a preposition and its object; a participial phrase is a participle and the words it governs, whether in construct or through a preposition; and a construct phrase includes all the nouns in a construct chain.

c

We noted in Chapter 3 that language serves as a medium or code by which a speaker communicates thoughts or experiences to an audience. A clause designates an utterance in which the speaker makes a comment on a topic. The topic is called "the subject" and the comment "the predicate."¹⁰ The subject is expressed by a noun or an equivalent; the predicate of a verbal clause is a verb or an equivalent, while that of a verbless clause is a complementing noun.

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d

A clause is the syntactic combination of a subject and predicate. The subject or predicate may be compound, as in, 'The dog and the chimpanzee bit cruelly' (compound subject) or 'The dog bit and ate its victim cruelly' (compound predicate) or 'The dog and the chimpanzee bit and ate their victims cruelly' (compound subject, compound predicate). Each of these utterances consists of a single topic and a single comment about it. In contrast, the sentence, 'The dog was eating its victim when the chimpanzee arrived,' consists of two clauses; the utterance contains two separate topics (subjects), each with its own comment (predicates). The two clauses together constitute a sentence, a term we discuss below. When a sentence consists of only one clause it is called a "simple sentence"; when it consists of more than one clause it is called a "compound" or "complex" sentence, depending on how the clauses within the sentence are joined (38.1).

e

In addition to subject and predicate the clause may include modifiers of either of these elements, and conjunctions may show a clause's relationship to other clauses or sentences. Modifiers or complements may be either necessary (nuclear) or omissible (peripheral); they may be adjectival or adverbial.

4.4 Subject

4.4.1 Expressions of the Subject

a

A noun, noun equivalent, or complex nominal construction may express the topic. A part of speech other than a noun that functions in a clause as a noun is called a noun equivalent. Here are examples of a substantive or noun equivalent functioning as a grammatical subject.

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(1) Substantive (8.3)

1. וְהַנָּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם Now the serpent was crafty.

[Gen 3:1](#)

(2) Pronoun (16.3.2)

2. וְהוּא יִמְשֹׁל-בָךְ He will rule over you.

[Gen 3:16](#)

(3) Adjective (14.3.3)

3. חָכָם יִרָא וְסָר מֵרָע (The) wise (one) fears and turns from evil.

[Prov 14:16](#)

(4) Participle (37.2)

4. הַיֹּמֶת תָּמוּת The dying (one) will die.

[Zech 11:9](#)

(5) Infinitive absolute (35.3.3)

5. אֲכַל דְּבַשׁ הַרְבּוֹת לֹא-טוֹב To eat too much honey is not good.

[Prov 25:27](#)

(6) Infinitive construct (36.2)

6. הַמַּעַט קָחָתָךְ אֶת־אִישִׁי Was it a small matter that you stole my husband? (lit., Was your stealing of my husband ... ?)
[Gen 30:15](#)

7. וְאִם רָע בְּעֵינֵיכֶם לַעֲבֹד אֶת־יְהוָה If serving YHWH seems bad to you ...
[Josh 24:15](#)

(7) Adverb

8. הָרַבָּה נָפַל מִן־הָעָם Many fell from the troops.
[2 Sam 1:4](#)

b

Complex nominal constructions—noun phrase, prepositional phrase, clause—may also express the subject. (1) In noun phrases two or more nouns are bound together in one of the following ways:

(a) apposition, the asyndetic juxtaposition of two or more nouns with a single extralinguistic referent

9. וַיְהִי אִישׁ לְוִי גֵר בִּירְכָתִי הַר־אֶפְרַיִם There was a man, a Levite, a sojourning (one) in the flanks of the Ephraimite hill country.
[Judg 19:1](#)

(b) *hendiadys*, the juxtaposition of two nouns with a single referent, with or without the conjunction; compare with # 10 English 'assault and battery.'

10. חֲמָס וְשֹׁד יִשָּׁמַע בָּהּ Violence and destruction resound in her.
[Jer 6:7](#)

(c) coordination (a compound subject), the coordination of several nouns with different referents

11. וַיִּתְחַבֵּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ The man and his wife hid themselves.
[Gen 3:8](#)

(d) construct relationship

12. וַתִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם The eyes of both of them were opened.
[Gen 3:7](#)

(2) A prepositional phrase used as a subject is usually a partitive phrase, introduced by מִן 'from,' either in such phrases as '(some) from' or, after a negative, '(not even one) from.'¹¹

13. וַיִּזּ מִדָּמָהּ אֶל־הַקִּיר And some of her blood spattered on the wall.
[2 Kgs 9:33](#)

(3) A clause often occurs as a subject of a verb of telling, knowing, or other mental activity.

14. וְלִשְׂאוּל הַגֵּר כִּי־נָמָלַט דָּוִד That David had escaped was told to Saul.
[1 Sam 23:13](#)

4.4.2 Indefinite Subject

a

Sometimes no particular person(s) is (are) in view as the topic of the sentence. In such cases of indefinite subject, English idiom, demanding in its surface structure that a noun or its equivalent express the subject, supplies a "dummy" subject, be it a noun (e.g., 'men,' 'people'), a pronoun ('they,' 'your'), or an adjective ('one'); none of these has a distinct extra-linguistic referent in view.

Men fight and die for freedom.
They told me you had an accident.
You can only hope and wait.
One looks for rain.

In Hebrew, indefinite subjects can be expressed by the bound form of the third-person pronoun with a finite verb; if a participle is used in such a construction, it is usually plural. The finite verb may be singular or plural, active (cf. 22.7) or passive; the plural active construction is the most common.

(1) Third-person singular pronoun, active verbal form

1. עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ בָּבֶל Therefore one calls its name Babel (or, men or people call it Babel).
[Gen 11:9](#)

(2) Third-person singular pronoun, passive verbal form

2. וְלֹא יוּכַל לִרְאוֹת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ One is unable to see the land.
[Exod 10:5](#)
3. אָז הוּחַל לְקַרֵּא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה At that time people began to call on the name of YHWH.
[Gen 4:26](#)

(3) Third-person plural pronoun, active verbal form

4. כִּי מִן־הַבְּאֵר הָיָא יִשְׁקוּ הָעֶדְרִים because they watered the flocks from that well
[Gen 29:2](#)

(4) Plural participle

5. וְאֵת־כָּל־נָשִׁיךְ וְאֵת־בָּנֶיךָ מוֹצֵאִים אֶל־הַכַּשְׂדִּים They are bringing all your wives and children out to the Babylonians.
[Jer 38:23](#)

The impersonal construction (in which the condition expressed by the predicate is the topic) is treated in 22.7a.

4.5 Predicate

a

The predicate is that part of the utterance making a comment about the subject. The term may be used broadly for the entire comment, including both the verb or equivalent, or alternatively the copula 'to be' (expressed or unexpressed) with a complement (a noun or adjective) plus modifying words; or it may be used more narrowly to exclude modifying words. Let us consider the possible types of predication without reference to modifying words.

b

In a verbal clause the predicate is a verb.

(1) Finite verb

And God said ...

1. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים

[Gen 1:3](#)

(2) Infinitive absolute (35.5.2)

2. זָרַעְתָּם הַרְבֵּה וְהָבֵא מְעַט

You have sown much and brought in little.

[Hag 1:6](#)

(3) Infinitive construct (36.3.2)

3. יָעַן הַכֹּאֲוֹת לִב־צְדִיק ... וּלְחֹזֶק יְדֵי רָשָׁע

because you have disheartened (lit., struck the heart of) the righteous ... and encouraged (lit., strengthened the hands of) the wicked

[Ezek 13:22](#)

Quasi-verbal indicators are particles denoting existence.

4. יֵשׁ גֹּאֵל קָרוֹב מִמֶּנִּי

There is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I.

[Ruth 3:1–2](#)

C

In a verbless (or nominal) clause there is no verbal marker of predication. Hebrew, like many other languages, including Latin and Classical Greek, may predicate an adjective or noun directly, without a copula (i.e., some form of הִיָּה, which corresponds to English 'to be'). In languages where the copula may be optional, it is usually required if the comment is set in past or future time in contrast to present time (or in some mood other than indicative), or if the situation is highlighted. The principal function of the copula is thus to mark in the surface structure tense, mood, or aspect. John Lyons notes:

[Any verb equivalent to] "to be" is not itself a constituent of deep structure, but a semantically-empty "dummy verb" generated by the grammatical rules of [certain languages] for the specification of certain distinctions (usually "carried" by the verb) when there is no other verbal element to carry these distinctions. Sentences that are temporally, modally and aspectually "unmarked" ... do not need the "dummy" carrier.¹²

The verbless clause is common in Hebrew. The following grammatical units may serve as predicates in the deep structure of a sentence; they are said to "complement the subject" of a verbless clause.

(1) Noun ("predicate nominative"; 8.4)

S

5. עֵד הַגֵּל הַזֶּה

This heap is a witness.

[Gen 31:52](#)

6. מְרַגְלִים אַתֶּם

You are spies.

[Gen 42:9](#)

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(2) Indefinite adjective ("predicate adjective"; 14.3.2)

7. צְדִיק אַתָּה

You are righteous.

[Jer 12:1](#)

(3) Pronoun (16.3.3, 17.4.1)

8. וְנַחֲנוּ מָה

Who are we?

[Exod 16:7](#)

(4) Adverb

9. כִּי זִבַּח הַיָּמִים שָׁם The annual sacrifice is there.
[1 Sam 20:6](#)

(5) Adverbial prepositional phrase

10. לָנוּ הַמַּיִם The water is ours (lit., the water is to us).
[Gen 26:20](#)
11. לֹא בְרָעַשׁ יְהוָה YHWH was not in the earthquake.
[1 Kgs 19:11](#)

4.6 Modifiers

4.6.1 Adjectival Modifiers

a

An adjectival modifier is a construction that qualifies a noun or its equivalent. Such a construction is "adnominal" ("to the noun"), in contrast to a construction that modifies a verb (ad-verbial, "to the verb"). There are many ways in which nominal forms may be qualified in the surface structure. Consider, for example, these phrases, all with shapes attested in Hebrew (though not all the equivalents are attested).

adjective:	<i>foreign gods</i>
construct:	<i>gods of foreignness</i>
adjectival apposition:	<i>gods, the foreigners</i>
<i>hendiadys</i> :	<i>gods and foreigners</i>
prepositional phrase:	<i>gods in foreignness</i>
adverbial apposition:	<i>gods (with reference to) foreignness</i>
relative clause:	<i>gods that are foreign</i>
relative clause:	<i>gods belonging to foreigners</i>

The favored expression among these in Hebrew is a construct, אֱלֹהֵי הַנֹּכַר ([Gen 35:2](#), etc.). One of these shapes or constructions may be chosen either for reasons of style or emphasis, or because of linguistic factors. Here are some examples of adjectival constructions:

(1) Adjective

1. וְהִלַּכְתָּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים ... and (if) you follow other gods
 אַחֲרֵיהֶם
[Deut 8:19](#)

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(2) Participle

2. יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵשׁ אוֹכֵלָה YHWH your God is a consuming fire.
[Deut 4:24](#)

(3) Pronominal suffix

3. וּבְנֵיךָ וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וְנִשְׁי־בְנֵיךָ your sons and your wife and the wives of your sons
[Gen 6:1–8](#)

(4) Construct state

4. בְּנֵאוֹת רֶשֶׁא יִרְבִּיצָנִי He makes me lie down in pastures of grass.
[Ps 23:2](#)

(5) Adverbial apposition ("accusative of limitation"; 10.2.2)

5. הַכְּרֻבִּים זָהָב the golden cherubim (lit., the cherubim with reference to gold)
[1 Chr 28:18](#)

(6) Apposition

6. וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל-הָבֶל אָחִיו Cain said to Abel his brother ...
[Gen 4:8](#)

(7) Hendiadys

7. בְּאֹהֶל וּבְמִשְׁכָּן with a tent as my dwelling (lit., a tent and dwelling)
[2 Sam 7:6](#)

(8) Relative Clause (with or without relative pronoun)

8. וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר בְּאֹהֶל יִטְמָא And everyone who is in the tent is unclean.
[Num 19:14](#)
9. וַתִּתֵּן גַּם-לְאִישָׁהּ עִמָּהּ And she also gave (some) to her husband (who was) with her.
[Gen 3:6](#)
10. וְאִישׁ לֹא-אֲכָרִית לָךְ every one of you that I do not cut off (lit., a man [that] I do not cut off belonging to you)
[1 Sam 2:33](#)

4.6.2 Adverbial Modifiers

a

An adverbial modifier is a construction that modifies a verb or its equivalent. There are various kinds of adverbial constructions.

b

When a noun modifies a verb, it is said to be in "the accusative function," a construction treated in Chapter 10. Suffice it here to note that there are two principal types of accusative: direct object and adverbial.

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1. וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם God created hā'ādām (direct object).
[Gen 1:27](#)
2. רַק הַכִּסֵּא אֲנִידֵל מִמֶּךָ Only with respect to the throne (adverbial) will I be greater than you.
[Gen 41:40](#)

An infinitive construct (36.2.1) may be used as a direct object, as a verbal complement, or in a prepositional phrase.

3. לֹא אֵדַע צֵאת וָבֹא I do not know (how) to go out and come in (objects).
[1 Kgs 3:7](#)
4. אִילִּי אוֹכֵל נִפְה־בוֹ Perhaps I will be able to defeat them (complement).
[Num 22:6](#)
5. בְּפָגַעוּ-בוֹ הוּא יִמּוּתֶנּוּ When he meets him (prepositional phrase), he shall be put to death.

[Num 35:19](#)

An infinitive absolute (35.3.3) may be used as a direct object or as an adverb.

6. לְמַדּוֹ הַיָּטִב Learn to do well (object).
[Isa 1:17](#)
7. קְבוּרַת חֲמֹר יִקָּבֵר סָחוּב וְהִשָּׁלַךְ He will have the burial of a donkey—
 dragged away and cast off (adverbs).
[Jer 22:19](#)

C

Other types of adverbial modifiers are these.

(1) Adverbs (Chap. 39)

8. לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ You must not eat from it.
[Gen 2:17](#)

(2) Particles (Chap. 40)

9. גַּם־בָּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה Indeed he will be blessed.
[Gen 27:33](#)

(3) Prepositional phrases (Chap. 11)

10. עַל־גֻּחְנֶךָ תֵּלֵךְ You will crawl on your belly.
[Gen 3:14](#)

(4) Subordinate clauses (Chap. 38)

11. אֲשֶׁר אִם־צִדְקָתִי לֹא אֶעֱנֶה Though I were innocent, I could not
 answer (him).
[Job 9:15](#)

In some cases a verb may modify another verb without being in a subordinate clause; the verb **שׁוּב** is often used in this quasi-auxiliary function (39.3.1).

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12. וַיָּשָׁב יִצְחָק וַיַּחֲפֹר אֶת־בְּאֵרֹת
 And Isaac reopened the wells (lit., Isaac
 returned and opened ...).
[Gen 26:18](#)

4.7 Nominative Absolute and Vocative

a

In the clauses we have considered so far, the subject and the predicate have divided the clause between them. Some simple clauses contain other elements, the nominative absolute, which has no regular English equivalent, or the vocative.

b

The nominative absolute construction serves to highlight or focus one element of the main clause; it may serve in context to contrast this element to a comparable item in another clause. This construction (or family of constructions) has many names; it is called the *casus pendens* construction, the focus construction, and the topic-comment construction (the terms "topic" and "comment" are used here in a way slightly different than we have been using them).¹³ Consider the clause הָאֵל הַרְךָ תָּמִים, 'The way of God is perfect'; here the subject is

הָאֵל and the predicate תָּמִים, in a verbless clause. The role of הָאֵל in the clause is not as prominent as it is in the similar clause with a nominative absolute, הָאֵל תָּמִים דְּרָכּוֹ, 'As for God, his way is perfect' ([Ps 18:31](#)).¹⁴ Here the subject is דְּרָכּוֹ, and the predicate תָּמִים; the nominative absolute, הָאֵל, stands outside the clause, as an absolute entity. The relationship between the absolute and the clause is signaled by the initial position of the absolute and by the pronoun in the clause which refers back to it (in this example the ו of דְּרָכּוֹ); this pronoun, called the resumptive pronoun, is optional.

c

The absolute may be associated as possessor with the subject of the clause, as in [Ps 18:31](#), where הָאֵל is the "possessor" of דְּרָכּוֹ, or in the following case:

1. שָׁכֶם בְּנִי חֲשָׁקָה נִפְשׁוֹ
בְּבִתְכֶם As for my son Shechem, his soul clings
to your daughter.

[Gen 34:8](#)

The absolute may also be associated as possessor with the direct object of the clause.

2. שָׂרִי אֲשֶׁתְּךָ לֹא-תִקְרָא
אֶת-שְׁמָהּ שָׂרִי As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call
her name Sarai.

[Gen 17:15](#)

The absolute may refer to the direct object of the clause or the object of a prepositional phrase in the clause.

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3. אֲנֹכִי בַדֶּרֶךְ נִחַנִּי יְהוָה As for me, YHWH led me (object) in the
way.
[Gen 24:27](#)
4. שָׂרֵשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר עֲמֹד לָנֶס As for the root of Jesse which stands as
עַמִּים אֵלָיו גּוֹיִם יִדְרָשׁוּ a banner for the people—the nations will
rally to it (prepositional object).
[Isa 11:10](#)
5. הַמִּטָּה אֲשֶׁר-עָלִיתָ שָׁם As for the bed into which you climbed up,
לֹא-תֵרֵד מִמֶּנָּה you shall not come down from it
(prepositional object).
[2 Kgs 1:4](#)

In # 5 the אֲשֶׁר clause includes a resumptive adverb, שָׁם. One reason other than emphasis for the use of the absolute construction is suggested by ## 4–5: it allows a grammatically complex part of the clause to stand on its own, thus increasing clarity. For similar reasons a complex subject may be shifted or displaced to precede the clause, sometimes being separated from it by a conjunction, as in # 6.

6. כִּי מֵעַט אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה לְךָ With respect to the little you had before I
לְפָנַי וַיִּפְרֹץ לְרֹב came, (it) has increased greatly.

[Gen 30:30](#)

d

The vocative construction, familiar from English, is similar to the nominative absolute in being an element of the clause other than subject and predicate. Vocatives stand in apposition to the second-person pronoun, expressed or unexpressed, and may occur with either verbless or verbal clauses.

7. צְדִיק אַתָּה יְהוָה You are righteous, YHWH.

8. **אֲדֹנִי אַתָּה נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ** [Jer 12:1](#)
My lord, you swore ...
9. **הוֹשֶׁעַה הַמֶּלֶךְ** [1 Kgs 1:17](#)
Save (me), O king.
[2 Sam 14:4](#)

After a vocative, a modifying phrase or clause regularly uses the third-person pronoun (as also in Classical Arabic) and not the second-person pronoun as in English and other languages.¹⁵

10. **שִׁמְעוּ עַמִּים כֻּלָּם** [Mic 1:2](#)
Hear, O peoples, all of you (lit., all of them)!

4.8 Sentence

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a

The sentence has traditionally been defined as "a complete thought expressed in words." Such a definition fails in two ways. First, it defines the sentence only in notional terms and not in descriptive terms, that is, one is not able to decide from the surface structure when a thought has been completed. Second, it does not distinguish a sentence from the extended discourse of which it is a part; one could say that an entire discourse is a "complete thought expressed in words." Linguists have experienced as much difficulty as traditional grammarians in approaching this problem: "It must be admitted," writes F. I. Andersen, "that, in spite of constant discussion, no foolproof definition of sentence has been achieved in theoretical linguistics."¹⁶

b

One way of developing descriptive criteria for defining the sentence relies on the melodies and tonal stresses that accompany its words. A declarative sentence in English is marked by dropping the tone at the end; the tone is raised at the end of an interrogative sentence. Melodic signals are expressed in writing by punctuation marks (periods, question marks, exclamation points, etc.). Such an approach is of limited use in Biblical Hebrew because the Masoretic accentuation system—though intended to mark off relationships of words in a chant—does not coincide precisely with the grammatical units.¹⁷

c

In his work on Hebrew, Andersen settled on the definition, "A sentence is a grammatically self-contained construction," that is, "The grammatical functions of all constituents in a sentence may be described in terms of relationships to other constituents in the same sentence."¹⁸ This definition is similar to our notion of the sentence as the unit having the "highest rank" in compositional analysis. It is not clear that Andersen's definition is theoretically adequate; he himself later acknowledged: "Grammatical completeness ... may prove as hard to establish as completeness of thought."¹⁹

d

The American linguist Leonard Bloomfield offered a similar definition with some arresting illustrations. He defined a sentence as "an independent linguistic form, not included by virtue of any grammatical construction in any larger linguistic form." He exemplified this definition with the following utterance: 'How are you? It's a fine day. Are you going to play tennis this afternoon?,' commenting "Whatever practical connection there may be between these three forms, there is no grammatical arrangement uniting them into one larger form: the utterance consists of three sentences."²⁰ However, defining the sentence as the largest unit of grammatical description fails because in fact the sentence is a grammatical constituent of the discourse, a larger grammatical form.²¹

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e

Such definitions as these do have the advantage of defining the sentence as a linguistic unit composed of

identifiable, lesser linguistic units. More particularly, we can define a sentence as a linguistic form composed of one or more clauses. If there are multiple clauses, they are bound together by conjunctions signifying that together they compose one grammatical unit, although we must allow that the discourse is bound together by patterns of "macrosyntactic conjunctions," just as patterns of "microsyntactic conjunctions" bind clauses within a sentence (Chap. 38). A full definition of the sentence, which we shall not undertake to offer, would include a statement of how it differs from the macrosyntactic utterance of discourse.

f

We define a sentence as a linguistic unit not as large as a discourse but larger than those grammatical elements that cannot exist independently but are syntactically dependent on one another within this larger linguistic unit; namely, the clause, the phrase, the word, the morpheme.

g

Sentences may be incomplete. Some of the smaller units comprising a larger one are left to be inferred from context; in the surface structure of an utterance, words that need "to be supplied" to make it into a typical construction are said to be elided. The words are readily supplied from the surrounding context (in the utterance or in the situation) and from the grammatical systems known to characterize the language. Sometimes the conjunction binding either clauses or sentences together is elided; at other times one of the other elements of a clause is elided, such as the subject or the predicate.

h

A sentence may be coextensive with a single clause, in which case it is a simple sentence, or it may consist of two or more clauses, in which case it is either compound or complex.²² Consider, for example, the utterance,

1. וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ
מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפֶרֶךְ: Egypt made the Israelites serve with harshness.

[Exod 1:13](#)

This is a simple sentence consisting of grammatical elements that cannot exist apart from their syntactical connection with each other and that together constitute a unified utterance. Its smaller dependent constituents are (leaving aside the initial waw):

מִצְרַיִם the noun expressing the subject

וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ the verb expressing the predicate

יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־בְּנֵי the noun phrase modifying the verb (direct object)

בְּפֶרֶךְ an adverbial prepositional phrase

The last of these is a prepositional phrase, the third a noun phrase; the other two are single words.

i

The following is a compound sentence.

2. וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פְּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ
וַיִּרְבּוּ וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ בְּמֵאדָּ מְאֹד The Israelites were powerfully fruitful and prolific and grew numerous and became strong.

[Exod 1:7](#)

In this sentence the four verbs, with the single subject and the single adverbial modifier, follow each other with only the conjunctions to join them. The following sentence is complex.

3. וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ־חָדָשׁ
עַל־מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַע A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

אֶתְיוֹסֶף

[Exod 1:8](#)

The second clause, **אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַע אֶתְיוֹסֶף**, is subordinate to the first; it is a relative clause modifying the subject of the main clause, **מֶלֶךְ־חָדָשׁ**.

Footnotes:

1. On the problem of defining "word," see P. Swiggers, "Le Mot: Unité d'intégration," *Études de linguistique générale et de linguistique latine ... Guy Serbat* (Paris: Société pour l'Information Grammaticale, 1987) 57–66. The definition must refer to morphology (one or more morphemes), syntax (a syntactic function), and phonology (cannot be broken down). There is no workable basis for strictly notional or semantic definitions. Notwithstanding the definitions given, there are linguists who seek to drop the term "word" completely (notably André Martinet) and many others avoid it (Swiggers, "Le Mot." 57–58); the terms "syllable" and "sentence" are similarly difficult.
2. If we distinguish "content" and "function" words (3.2.2), nouns and verbs are roughly equivalent to "content" words and particles are "function" words. H. Irsigler takes nouns and verbs as *Hauptwörter* ('principal words') and conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, adverbs, and interjections as *Funktionswörter* ('function words'); see *Einführung in das biblische Hebräisch* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1978), 1. 49. For further preliminaries to Hebrew word classification, see Richter, *GAHG* 1, esp. 43–45, 64–65; for a technical survey (notably good on particles and pronouns), pp. 80–91; see further below on Richter's word-class scheme.
3. See *MPD* 9–12 (R. H. Robins).
4. The term "adverb" here refers to content-full adverbs; see, on the various possible definitions of the category, *MPD* 44, 54, 67 (P. Swiggers); 80 (A. Martinet); 93, 96 (W. P. Schmid).
5. Dionysius listed these and only these as closed categories; see *MPD* 29–30 (Robins).
6. See Robins in *MPD* 9–37; and P. Swiggers, "L'Encyclopédie et la grammaire," *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia* 20 (1987) 119–56, esp. 134–36; "Le mot comme unité linguistique dans la théorie grammaticale au dix-huitième siècle," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 91 (1986) 1–26.
7. See the references in Chapter 1 as well as M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 68. The three-way division is also found in the Latin grammatical tradition.
8. From Richter, *GAHG* 1. 156–94. For a modern scheme based on a broad base of languages and a vigorous defense of the approach, see W. P. Schmid in *MPD* 85–99.
9. On word combinations and phrases (Wortgruppe), see Richter, *GAHG* 2. 3–4; on phrase types and agreement with them, *GAHG* 2. 9–69, 3. 14–34.
10. The distinction of subject/predicate/nomina/rhematopic/comment goes back to Plato's Sophist. The various sets of terms are not always mutually equivalent. Some authors take subject/predicate as properly terms of logic. Some take topic/comment as properly referring to a larger discourse structure (cf. 4.8). The functions involved in this set of oppositions can, if taken from an extralinguistic perspective, be seen as variously distributed in the parts of a given utterance. It is sometimes argued that the subject/predicate relation can involve predication or determination (or even coordination); see 8.4 on verbless clauses. Cf. on this topic Swiggers, "L'Encyclopédie," 133–34, 138–43.
11. Cf. [Exod 16:27](#); [2 Sam 11:17](#); negative, [2 Kgs 10:10](#).
12. John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 322–23.
13. *Casus pendens* is a term from Latin grammar; topic-comment is the term favored by European Arabists for a comparable construction in Arabic. The term nominative absolute corresponds to the genitive absolute of Greek and the ablative absolute of Latin; all three constructions are distinct. For the term focus, and on the grammar of vocatives and focus-marked clauses, as well as displacements, see O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 78–86. A full study is W. Gross, *Die Pendenskonstruktion im biblischen Hebräisch* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987); reviewed by F.I. Andersen, *Biblica* 69 (1988) 436–39.
14. Linguists use the term copying to refer to the displacement of a nominal constituent from its basic position in the clause, accompanied by the replacement of it by a pronominal constituent; see P. M. Postal, *Cross-Over Phenomena* (New York: Harcourt, Brace. 1971) 135–37.

15. D. R. Hillers, *Micah* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 16. He cites also [Isa 44:23](#), [54:1](#); [Ezek 21:30](#).
16. F.I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph 14; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970) 20. Some linguists drop the term altogether. M. A. K. Halliday, for example, treats a sentence as a unit of writing (and of information); a clause complex, in contrast, is a unit of grammar (and of syntax); see *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985) Cf. n. 1 above on the definition of "word."
17. Cf. M. B. Cohen, "Masoretic Accents as a Biblical Commentary," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 4 (1972) 2–11.
18. Andersen, *Hebrew Verbless Clause*, 20.
19. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 22.
20. Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Holt, 1933) 170.
21. Lyons, *Theoretical Linguistics*, 172.
22. For a full typology, see Richter, *GAHG* 3. 50–64.

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5 Noun Patterns

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[5.8 Excursus: Interchange of Consonants](#)

5.1 Root, Affix, Pattern

a

Most words in Hebrew include a root, a sequence of consonants associated with a meaning or group of meanings. Most roots are triconsonantal (or triradical); middle-weak roots (and sometimes other weak roots) are considered biconsonantal.¹ The root is an abstraction, based on the forms and words that actually occur, and its meaning is also an abstraction, based on the semantic field of the words as they are used. The system of roots is part of the speaker's knowledge of the language, but the resulting abstractions should not be pressed too hard, especially on semantic grounds. Words that actually occur always have priority over such abstractions. Only the pronouns and some particles fall entirely outside the root system.

b

The root may be modified to form a word with an affix; it may be a prefix (before the root), a suffix (after the root), an infix (within the root), or some combination of these. The affixes form various verbal and nominal patterns, and each word is a representative of a formative pattern. The term stem is sometimes used to describe a form of the consonantal root with an affix, from which other words can be derived.

c

The root **חבר** 'to unite, join' can be used in illustrating these points. Here are a dozen words.

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|---|
| 1. | חֲבֵרוֹ | they (were) joined |
| 2. | חֵבֶר | associate |
| 3. | חֵבֶר | company |
| 4. | חֵבֶר | he joined (something to something else) |
| 5. | חֵבֶר | partner |
| 6. | חֵבֶרֶת | consort |
| 7. | חֵבֶרֶה | association |
| 8. | חֵבֶרֶת | joined thing |
| 9. | מִחְבֵּרֶת | joining |
| 10. | מִחְבֵּרֶה | clamp |
| 11. | חֵבְרוֹן | Hebron |

12. חֶבְרוֹנִי Hebronite

In the first three forms, the root is complemented by infixed (and in # 1 suffixed) vowels; in the next two, the medial consonant of the root is also lengthened (or doubled). Forms ## 6–10 bear a feminine suffix; ## 9–10 have in addition a prefixed mem. Forms ## 11–12 have an -ôn suffix, and the last form has a further -î suffix. There are other forms that derive from the root ḥbr. The root never occurs in isolation from an affix pattern; the meaning 'to unite, join' is derived from the attested vocabulary.

d

Some of the patterns used in these dozen words are verb patterns; such patterns tend to be consistent and regular to a much greater degree than those used to form nouns (substantives and adjectives). The verbal pattern CāCaC (or C^{sub}1^{sub}/sub^āC^{sub}2^{sub}/sub^aC^{sub}3^{sub}/sub^ʿ or קָטַל) denotes a complete or perfective situation, for example, שָׁבַר 'he broke,' שָׁמַר 'he guarded,' גָּנַב 'he stole,' אָזַל 'it is gone'; thus חֶבְרוּ 'they (were) joined.' The verbal pattern C^{sub}1^{sub}/subⁱC^{sub}2^{sub}/sub^CC^{sub}2^{sub}/sub^ēC^{sub}3^{sub}/sub^ʿ works in a similar way, for example, כִּבְדָּ 'he honored,' סִפֵּר 'he recounted,' גִּדַּל 'he caused to grow'; thus חִבֵּר 'he joined (something).' (The relationship between the first, *Qal*, pattern and the second, *Piel*, pattern is discussed below, 24.1.)

e

Individual nouns are composed of vowels and consonants in a less divisible unity, and so noun patterns are less predictable in meaning. Nouns are created afresh much less often than are verbs, and the meanings of such patterns are thus a less active part of a speaker's knowledge of the language. In some cases, one pattern in Biblical Hebrew may be the result of several patterns from earlier stages of the language, which have assumed the same shape because of phonological changes. Some noun patterns can be correlated with specific meanings or ranges of meanings on a regular basis; these patterns are the subject of this chapter.²

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f

The root and affix system is the heart of Hebrew morphology. The root morpheme is a constant in that system; the verbal affix morphemes are also consistent elements. The morphemes or patterns used to form nouns are much more variable, but they are nonetheless an important part of the grammar. Combined with a knowledge of the four hundred or so roots used frequently in the Hebrew Bible, these patterns can contribute to vocabulary building. "If we know the meaning of a root and the rules of inflexion and morphology," writes G. B. Caird, "it is usually possible to work out for ourselves the meaning of cognate forms [that is, forms from the same root]."³ Geographical and personal names, like # 11 above, and derived forms, like # 12, constitute a special area of the lexicon.

g

The nominal morphemes are subject to all the laws of Hebrew phonology. Thus the pattern CōCēC, usually associated with the *Qal* active participle, has the form CōCēC if no suffix follows, but the form CōCəC before a vocalic suffix, for example, קוֹטֵל masculine singular, קוֹטְלָה feminine singular, קוֹטְלִים masculine plural. In a few cases, the masculine and feminine forms of what appears to be one pattern are best taken separately.

5.2 Pattern Diversity

a

The richness and complexity of the semantic associations of Hebrew noun patterns can be illustrated by considering the important CōCēC pattern in its manifestations other than the simple participial use. Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein proposed an elaborate schema to classify the senses of this pattern; we consider only a portion of his findings.⁴

b

There is a class of substantives in which, Kedar-Kopfstein alleges, the ô-ē pattern "lacks any morphemic value" (#

1) or "denotes objects" (## 2–4).⁵

- | | | |
|----|--------|------------------------|
| 1. | עֵרֵב | raven |
| 2. | חוֹמָה | wall (fem.; root: ḥmy) |
| 3. | יֹבֵל | ram's horn |
| 4. | שֵׁרֶק | vine |

c

Several groups of nouns using this pattern have no link to a verbal root in the *Qal*. Indeed, in some nouns, where the pattern "indicates the holder of an office or profession," no cognate verb root is used (## 5–6).⁶

- | | | |
|----|----------|--------------|
| 5. | כֹּהֵן | priest |
| 6. | נִקְדָּר | sheep-raiser |

In another group of nouns, also largely professional, each noun is denominative in origin, that is, it is derived from another noun; in this case, the qôṭēl form "denotes a person who occupies himself with the object indicated by" the base noun (## 7–8).⁷

- | | | | | |
|----|--------|--------|----------|--------|
| 7. | בֹּקֵר | herder | < בָּקָר | cattle |
| 8. | חֵבֶל | sailor | < חָבַל | rope |

Another class of CōCēC forms, also including some profession terms, is derived from roots attested as verbs but not used in the *Qal* (## 9–10).

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------|---------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 9. | נוֹקֵשׁ | fowler | < נִקַּשׁ | <i>Niphal, Piel, Hithpael</i> |
| 10. | סֹכֵן | steward | < סָכַן | <i>Hiphil</i> |

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d

Another major category of qôṭēl nouns includes those which can be associated with verbs used in the *Qal*. These nouns are not, however, simply *Qal* participles, for "they no longer describe the actual exercise of an activity but have become fixed denotations labeling a subject on the basis of one distinctive feature which is durable and objectively observable."⁸ Some of these are, as above, the names of occupations (## 11–16), while others describe an individual's social role (## 17–20). One related subgroup is used for abstractions (## 21–22).

- | | | | | |
|-----|----------|----------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| 11. | אַרְגָּן | weaver | < אָרַג | to weave |
| 12. | בִּנְיָה | builder, stonecutter | < בָּנָה | to build |
| 13. | גִּדְרָן | mason | < גָּדַר | to wall up |
| 14. | זֹנָה | prostitute (fem.) | < זָנָה | to whore |
| 15. | חֹבֵר | diviner (joiner of spells) | < חָבַר | to join, be joined |
| 16. | חֹזֶה | seer | < חָזָה | to see |
| 17. | נִאֵל | redeemer, family protector | < גָּאֵל | to redeem |
| 18. | יֹלֵד | father, begetter | < יָלַד | to (bear,) beget |
| 19. | יוֹנֵק | suckling | < יָנַק | to suck |
| 20. | יוֹשֵׁב | inhabitant, ruler | < יָשַׁב | to dwell |

21.	אַבֵּד	destruction	< אָבַד	to perish
22.	רָאָה	vision ⁹	< רָאָה	to see

e

Kedar-Kopfstein notes two other groups related to this major category. The nouns of one group "denote a permanent feature of the subject in character or behavior"¹⁰ (## 23–26), while those of the other denote a clearly temporary feature, for example, a seasonal occupation (## 27–30).

23.	אֹיֵב	enemy	< אֵיֵב	to be hostile
24.	בֵּטַח	(over)confident	< בָּטַח	to trust
25.	בֵּעַר	brutish ¹¹	< בָּעַר	to be brutish
26.	בּוֹצֵעַ	covetous	< בָּצַע	to rob
27.	בּוֹצֵר	gatherer (of grapes)	< בָּצַר	to cut off
28.	זֹרַע	sower	< זָרַע	to sow
29.	חֲרֹשׁ	plower	< חָרַשׁ	to plow
30.	קָטַף	plucker	< קָטַף	to pluck

f

This summary of one effort to describe one major pattern (and the forms could be considered in other perspectives) should make it clear how intricate the nominal system of Hebrew can be. Yet, it is also plain that most of these non-participial uses of the qōtēl form are close to the basic participial sense: only six of the thirty examples cited (## 1–4, 21–22) depart drastically from the 'doer' sense. At the same time, the agentive sense is often semantically inappropriate—a yōšēb 'inhabitant' is not simply one who performs

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the act of dwelling (yāšab)—or morphologically impossible—there is no verb *ḥābal 'to handle ropes,' to yield ḥōbēl '(rope-handler,) sailor.'

g

In this chapter, the goal is more modest than in Kedar-Kopfstein's survey and others like it. The qōtēl pattern can be said to form nouns referring to professions, whether or not the root exists (cf. # 5) or occurs as a verb (cf. # 7) or in the *Qal* (cf. # 9). The distinction between permanent and temporary occupations can similarly be passed over. Eccentric uses (## 1–4) can also be omitted. The presentation here is thus at a high level of abstraction. The general shapes and meanings of noun patterns is the focus, rather than a taxonomy of all attested patterns.

h

The nominal patterns listed in this chapter are categorized as substantival or adjectival; the noun class in Hebrew does not rigidly distinguish adjectives from substantives.¹² The term substantive is used to refer to an approximate semantic class of nouns, namely, words referring to persons, places, or things; the term nominal is unfortunately ambiguous.¹³ Adjectival words are roughly those that describe a state or condition; Hebrew more often than English uses verbs to describe conditions. On syntactic grounds, substantives and adjectives function comparably (see 4.4.1).¹⁴ Not all the patterns are equally common. The reduplicating patterns, for example, are rare, but they may be usefully studied because of their distinctiveness. Major patterns are semantically more diverse as well as more common.

5.3 Simple Patterns

a

The qātēl pattern is generally adjectival (## 1–3; see also 22.3-4); it also occurs with substantives, especially body

parts (## 4–5).

- | | | |
|----|---------|---------------|
| 1. | יָבֵשׁ | dry |
| 2. | עֵיֶף | exhausted |
| 3. | שָׁלֹו | unconcerned |
| 4. | יָרֵךְ | (upper) thigh |
| 5. | כַּתֵּף | upper arm |

b

The qôṭel/qôṭel pattern is used for substantives referring to professions or occupations (for examples see 5.2). An English counterpart is the -er/-or suffix, for example, 'fisher, overseer, actor, counselor.' Other active participles than the *Qal* can designate a profession. This is most common with the participles of the *Piel* (## 6–7; cf. 24.5c) and *Poel* (# 8).

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- | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------|
| 6. | מֵלֵמֵד | teacher |
| 7. | מַרְגִּיל | spy |
| 8. | מַחֲקֵק | commander |

c

The qāṭil pattern¹⁵ shapes adjectives (## 9–11) as well as substantives. The pattern is used for professional terms, some passive in sense (## 12–14), some stative or active (## 15–17),¹⁶ although the distinctions should not be pressed. The words for certain agricultural activities also employ this pattern (## 18–22).

- | | | |
|-----|----------|------------------------|
| 9. | צָעִיר | little |
| 10. | נָקִי | pure ¹⁷ |
| 11. | עָנִי | poor |
| 12. | אֶסִיר | prisoner (= one bound) |
| 13. | מְשִׁיחַ | anointed |
| 14. | פָּלִיט | refugee |
| 15. | פֶּקִיד | overseer |
| 16. | נָגִיד | leader |
| 17. | נָבִיא | prophet |
| 18. | עֹסֵף | ingathering |
| 19. | בְּצִיר | vintage |
| 20. | חֲרִישׁ | vine pruning |
| 21. | חֲרִישׁ | plowing |
| 22. | קִצִּיר | grain harvest |

d

The qātūl/qātūl pattern is, like the qôṭel, a participial form, designating the object of the verbal action, for example, כְּתֻב 'what is written'; like the qôṭel, the qātūl has many other uses, many lacking a passive sense. The pattern

is used for both adjectives (## 23–25) and substantives (## 26–28). The feminine may show doubling in the final radical (# 26; cf. 5.5b). Abstract nouns with this pattern are frequently plural (7.4.2).

23.	בְּצוּר	inaccessible
24.	עָצוּם	strong
25.	עָרוּם	crafty
26.	אֲחֻזָּה	possession (fem.)
27.	חֲרוּץ	decision
28.	יָקוּשׁ	fowler

e

The qātōl/qātōl form is used for adjectives (## 29–35).

29.	אִים	terrible
30.	מְתוּק	sweet
31.	נֶקֶד	speckled
32.	עָגוּל	round
33.	עָמוֹק	deep
34.	עָקֵב	hilly; deceitful
35.	צָהָב	golden

f

The feminine pattern qetālā commonly designates sounds and noises (## 36–41).

36.	אֲנֻזָּה	sigh
37.	אֲנָקָה	moan
38.	יִלְלָה	howl
39.	נֶאֱקָה	groan
40.	צֶאֱקָה	cry
41.	שֶׁאֲנָה	roar

5.4 Patterns with Medial Lengthening

a

The qattāl form, with medial lengthening or doubling, is another that often signifies occupation, profession, or even repeated action (## 1–6).¹⁸

1.	גֵּנֵב	thief
2.	דִּין	judge
3.	חַטָּא	sinner
4.	חֲרָשׁ	artificer

5. פָּרָשׁ equestrian
6. צִיד hunter

b

Adjectives referring to defects, physical or mental, use the qittēl pattern (## 7–14).

7. אֵטָר disabled
8. אֵלֵם mute
9. גִּבֵּן hump-backed
10. חֵרֵשׁ deaf
11. עֵוֵר blind
12. עֵקֵשׁ perverse
13. פֵּסֵחַ lame
14. קֵרֵחַ bald

Three of these terms occur together in [Exod 4:11](#) (## 8, 10, 11).

c

Qatfil words (like those in other patterns with medial lengthening and a long second vowel) are often said to indicate possession of a quality in an "intensive" way.¹⁹ This is unlikely because it is based on the dubious notion that the doubling "sharpens" the root in a semantically straightforward way (24.1). Suffice it to say that qatfil is both adjectival (## 15–17) and a byform of substantival qāfil (## 18–19; for # 18, cf. 5.3 # 12).

15. אָבִיר strong
16. עָרִיץ terrifying
17. צָדִיק righteous
18. אָסִיר prisoner
19. סָרִיס eunuch

5.5 Patterns with Reduplication**a**

Both of the common reduplicating patterns are used for adjectives. The reduplication may involve only C₃, as in qatlāl (## 1–2). Both second and third radicals are reduplicated in the qəṭaltāl form, used for various adjectives (## 3–5), but especially common with color words (## 6–8).²⁰

1. רֵעֵן luxuriant, green
2. שֵׁאֵן secure
3. הֶפְכָּךְ crooked
4. חֶלְכָּלוֹת slipperiness (fem. pl.)
5. פְּתִילָה tortuous
6. אֶדְמָדָם reddish
7. יֶכְרֵק greenish

8. שְׁחֹרְחֹרֶת blackish (fem.)

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b

According to T. N. D. Mettinger, thirty-six nouns display the feminine reduplicated C₃ pattern qəṭullā.²¹ He analyzes the group as showing three subgroups. The concrete nouns denote the result or product of an act (## 9–11). The abstracts include legal terms (## 12–14; cf. 5.3 # 2b) and terms for "values" in a broad sense (## 15–17). Finally, the collectives are terms for corporations of persons (## 18–20).

- | | | |
|-----|-----------|-------------------------|
| 9. | אֵלֶמָה | sheaf |
| 10. | אִסְפָּה | collection |
| 11. | קִנְצוֹת | curls, locks |
| 12. | בְּכֹרָה | right of the first-born |
| 13. | גְּאֻלָּה | right of redemption |
| 14. | יְרֵשָׁה | possession |
| 15. | סִגְלָה | private purse |
| 16. | עֲרֻבָּה | security, pledge |
| 17. | פְּעֻלָּה | wages, reward |
| 18. | אֲגֻדָּה | band, troop |
| 19. | עֲבָדָה | (a body of) slaves |
| 20. | פְּקֻדָּה | governing authorities |

5.6 Patterns with Prefixing

a

Biblical Hebrew employs a variety of prefixes that serve to modify the meaning of the roots. Most of the prefixes are elements used in both nominal and verbal patterns, including ׀, *h*, *y*, *m*, *t*, and ׀. Stanley Gevirtz has argued that "what these appear to have in common with each other is a deictic, demonstrative, defining or specifying force."²² Not all the prefixes are equally common or important.

b

The most common prefix is *m*, used in substantives of location (## 1–3), instrument terms (## 4–5), and abstractions (## 6–9).

- | | | |
|----|-----------|------------------|
| 1. | מִדְבָּר | range, steppe |
| 2. | מָקוֹם | place |
| 3. | מוֹשֵׁב | assembly (< yšb) |
| 4. | מִפְתֵּחַ | key |
| 5. | מַאֲכָלָת | knife (fem.) |
| 6. | מִשְׁפָּט | judgment |
| 7. | מִרְאָה | appearance |
| 8. | מִרְאָה | vision (fem.) |

9. מַמְלָכָה kingdom, reign (fem.)

In most of these examples the vowel of the first, prefixed syllable is a (## 2–5, 7–9); in the others it is i. The first syllable of # 3, mō-, is contracted from maw-; the ô is also seen in *Niphal*, *Hiphil*, and *Hophal* forms of yšb and various other initial-waw verbs. In the feminine examples cited, the corresponding masculine form either does not occur (## 5, 9) or has a different sense (# 8, cf. # 7).

c

A *t*-prefix noun usually designates the action of the verb it is derived from (## 10–12). Many such nouns, including the examples, are derived from initial-waw roots.

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- | | | |
|-----|----------|----------------------------|
| 10. | תוֹחֶלֶת | expectation (fem.; < yhl) |
| 11. | תוֹכַחַת | argument (fem.; < ykh) |
| 12. | תוֹדָה | thanksgiving (fem.; < ydy) |

d

Nouns with prefix *m*, *t*, and *y* often seem closely related in meaning. Jacob Barth argued, in his classic study of noun formation,²³ that certain *m* and *t* pairs of nouns (## 13–15) and even a *y* and *t* pair (# 16) and an *m* and *y* pair (# 17) had no significantly different senses.

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 13. | מְרִבִּית | תְּרִבִּית | interest, increase (< rby) |
| 14. | מִקְוָה | תִּקְוָה | hope (< qwy) |
| 15. | מַחֲלִיִּים | תַּחֲלָאִים | illness (< hly ²³) |
| 16. | יְשׁוּעָה | תְּשׁוּעָה | salvation (< yš ²³) |
| 17. | מֵעַן | יַעַן | on account of, because |

Gevirtz cautions against this kind of semantic blurring, both on the sound general grounds that where there is difference in form, there is a difference in meaning, and on the grounds of his study of the words.

The terms יַעַן and מֵעַן both mean 'purpose, intention', ... ; but the former most often conveys a sense of causation, whereas the latter does not. The terms מַחֲלִיִּים and תַּחֲלָאִים, deriving from HL²³/Y, mean 'illness(es), disease(s)', but the mqtl form has reference to illness resulting from the effects of wounds (2 Ch. 24:25), whereas the tqtl form refers to illness resulting from the ravages of hunger (Jer. 14:18; 2 Ch. 21:19). תַּאֲוָה and מַאֲוָה both mean 'desire', but the tqtl form often signifies physical appetite' (Num. 11:4; Ps. 78:29–30; 106:14; Job 33:20), whereas the mqtl form, in the expression, מַאֲוֵי רָשָׁע 'the desires of (the) wicked man', in parallel with זַמְמוֹ 'his plan, device', would appear to signify 'schemes, plots, machinations', having reference to 'mental appetite'.²⁴

e

A prefixed glottal stop is used in various adjectives (## 18–20),²⁵ as well as in certain substantival forms (## 21–22).

- | | | |
|-----|-----------|--------------------|
| 18. | אֲכֹזֵב | deceptive |
| 19. | אֲכֹזֵר | cruel |
| 20. | אֵיתָן | perennial (< ytn?) |
| 21. | אֲזְרוֹעַ | arm |

22. אֶצְבַּע finger

The **א** used in nouns such as ## 21 and 22 seems to reflect an effort to reshape the stem, perhaps in part because of the initial sibilant; the word 'arm,' for example, also occurs in the more common form זְרוּעַ. This **א** prefix is therefore called either prothetic (i.e., prefixed) or prosthetic (i.e., giving additional power).²⁶

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f

Gevirtz has suggested that **ע** indicates specification or forcefulness as a root element.²⁷ He compares similar roots with and without **ע**: gnn 'to cover' and 'gn 'to shut oneself off,' qwr 'to dig' and 'qr 'to dig up,' rwy 'to be saturated' and 'ry 'to pour out' ('ry 'to be naked'). Particularly striking are roots that occur with both **א** and **ע**, 'gm 'to be sad' and 'gm 'to grieve,' and 'tr 'to close' and 'tr 'to surround.' Relevant noun pairs include

23.	אֹלֶת	fool	עוֹל	injustice
24.	אֶזוּר	waistcloth	עֶזְרָה	enclosure, outer court
25.	אַרְבֵּה	locust	עֶרֶב	fly-swarm

The 'aleph/ayin element in these cases is part of the root as it exists in Biblical Hebrew. The 'ayin element is also found in some quadrilaterals designating animals, in which it may function as a prefix like the others treated here (## 26–30).

26.	עֹטֶלֶךְ	bat
27.	עֶכְבֵּר	mouse
28.	עֶכְבִּישׁ	spider
29.	עֶכְשׁוּב	viper
30.	עֶכְרֵב	scorpion

5.7 Patterns with Suffixing

a

The suffixing patterns to be presented here are usually denominatives, that is, they form nouns from other nouns, rather than from verbal roots.

b

The most common suffix is -ôn ~ -ān. It may be used for adjectives (## 1–3), abstract substantives (## 4–6), and diminutives (## 7–8).

1.	קִדְמוֹן	eastern	קֶדֶם <	east
2.	חִיצוֹן	exterior	חוּץ <	outside
3.	רִאשׁוֹן	first	רֹאשׁ <	head
4.	פְּתָרוֹן	solution		
5.	זִכְרוֹן	memorial		
6.	קֶרְבֵּן	offering		
7.	אִישׁוֹן	pupil (of the eye)	אִישׁ <	person
8.	צַוְרוֹן	necklace	צֵוָאָר <	neck

The 'pupil' or 'apple' of the eye is named for the little person seen reflected in it, both in Hebrew and in Latin (pupillus, whence the English term 'pupil'). The -ûn ending is common in place names (e.g., תְּחֻנִּין), and the -ûn ending of Yeshurun (יֵשׁוּרֻן), a poetic term for Israel (cf. יָשָׁר 'upright'), and Zebulun (זְבֻלֻן) is related.

c

The -î suffix has established itself in English usage in forms like 'Israeli,' 'Saudi,' and 'Farsi.' In Hebrew, it serves to make adjectives from substantives (## 9–11), including names (## 12–14). Names with the -î suffix are called gentilics or ethnica.²⁸

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9.	רַגְלִי	foot(-soldier)	< רַגֵּל	foot
10.	נֹכְרִי	strange	< נֹכַר	strangeness
11.	תַּחְתִּי	lower	< תַּחַת	below
12.	עִבְרִי	Hebrew	< עֵבֶר	Eber
13.	מוֹאבִי	Moabite	< מוֹאָב	Moab
14.	גִּילּוֹנִי	Gilonite	< גִּלְהָ	Giloh

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d

Denominative abstract nouns are formed with the suffix -ût and, less often, -ît.

15.	יְלֻדוֹת	childhood	< יֶלֶד	child
16.	מַלְכוּת	royalty, kingdom	< מֶלֶךְ	king
17.	שְׁאֵרִית	remnant	< שָׁרָה	residue

e

The suffix -ām is used to form adverbials (## 18–20; 39.3.1h).²⁹

18.	יוֹמָם	by day	< יוֹם	day
19.	חִנָּם	gratuitously	< חֵן	grace
20.	רִיקָם	in vain	< רִיק	empty

5.8 Excursus: Interchange of Consonants

a

The phonological structure of Biblical Hebrew is outside our purview, but one facet of it deserves mention in connection with the study of patterns. Consonants occasionally interchange in Hebrew word formation, and so closely related forms may actually take on slightly different shapes. There are three groups of interchanges important for Biblical Hebrew: the gutturals, the liquids (l and r) and nasals (m and n), and other consonants.

b

The interchange of initial ʾaleph and yod is attested in יָ for standard יֵ (2 Sam 14:19) and יָרִי for standard יֵרִי (1 Chr 25:2, cf. v 14). Note also the alternate form of the divine name אֱהְיָה (Hos 1:9; cf. Exod 3:12, 14).³⁰ Other interchanges of gutturals, though common in later forms of the language, are rare in Biblical Hebrew.³¹

c

The liquid-nasal commutations are best known through the two forms of the name Nebuchadnezzar (e.g., [Jer 29:1](#)) and Nebuchadrezzar (e.g., [Jer 21:2](#)). The three sounds *l*, *n*, and *r* occasionally show up in closely related forms, for example, *liškā* and *niškā*, 'room'; *mazzālôt* and *mazzārôt*, 'constellations'; *lḥṣ* and *nḥṣ*, 'to press, urge.' Aloysius Fitzgerald has collected examples of other such variants in poetic texts; he alleges that in such cases the poet "is using a dialectal form that fits better the sound-patterning of his line" than the standard would.³²

d

Other interchanges are attested for sibilants (ʿlš, ʿls, ʿlz, 'to exult'; šḥq and śḥq, 'to laugh'), velars (sgr and skr, 'to close'), and bilabials (plṭ and mlṭ, 'to escape').

e

Metathesis, that is, the transposition of elements of a word, is part of the regular morphology of the *Hithpael* (see 26.1.1b). It also affects a few roots, which show up in two forms: the common שֶׁלִּמָּה 'mantle,' and the etymologically correct שְׁמִלָּה, with the same meaning; the common (and etymologically correct) כֶּבֶשׂ 'young ram' and כֶּבֶשֶׁה 'ewe-lamb,' alongside כֶּשֶׁב 'young ram' and כֶּשֶׁבָה 'lamb.'

Footnotes:

1. At various levels of abstraction, some classes of verbs can be considered biconsonantal. In addition to middle-weak roots, final-weak and geminate roots are often so treated. Some words (sometimes called "primitive" nouns) may be said to have monoconsonantal roots, e.g., *peh* 'mouth' (compare Ugaritic *p* and Akkadian *pū*); "primitive" biconsonantals include *bēn* 'son' and *šēm* 'name.' Longer, quadriconsonantal and quinqiconsonantal, roots are rare in Biblical Hebrew (though not in later forms of the language). In a triradical root, only the second and third consonants can have the same point of articulation, and if they do, they must be identical; see J. H. Greenberg, "The Patterning of Root Morphemes in Semitic," *Word* 6 (1950) 162–81. There are a few exceptions, notably the numbers 'three' (Hebrew *šālôš*) and 'six' (Hebrew *šēš*, *šiššim*; Arabic *sādisa*).
2. For a complete list of patterns, see BL § 61 / pp. 448–506. See also K. Beyer, *Althebräische Grammatik: Lautund Formenlehre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1969) 42–51; Richter, *GAHG* 1. 66–69. On the pattern (CVCC >) CVCCeC, see W. R. Garr, "The Seghol and Seghulation in Hebrew," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 48 (1989) 109–16.
3. G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 86.
4. Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein, "Semantic Aspects of the Pattern Qôṭel," *Hebrew Annual Review* 1 (1977) 155–76. Cf. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Die Stammbildung qôṭel als Übersetzungsproblem," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 (1981) 254–79.
5. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Semantic Aspects," 161. For another treatment of ʿrb 'raven' from ʿrb 'to be dark,' see A. Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982) 97, 158, 168, 172–74.
6. Kedar-Kopfstein. "Semantic Aspects." 161.
7. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Semantic Aspects," 162.
8. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Semantic Aspects," 164.
9. The same noun occurs with the meaning 'seer.'
10. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Semantic Aspects," 166.
11. It may be that this should be derived from the noun *bəʿir* 'cattle' (cf. examples ## 7–8), from which *bāʿar* is a denominative verb.
12. In the counts of SA/THAT, about half the Biblical Hebrew vocabulary is made up of nomina, ca. 4,050 words, of which there are 3,640 substantives, 360 adjectives, 20 pronouns, and 30 numbers. For a different, more restricted used of "substantive," see G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 10.
13. In a strictly syntactic framework, nouns would be defined as nominals (or noun equivalents or the like) that can take the definite article or pronominal suffixes. It is possible for prepositional phrases and various types of

clauses to be used as nouns. Such use as clausal subjects has been mentioned (4.4.1). These nominalizations are found in slots other than subject. Thus, for example, we find a prepositional phrase as the object of a verb ([1 Sam 9:24](#), [2 Sam 2:23](#)) or as the second term (*rectum*) of a construct phrase ([Judg 8:11](#), [Isa 32:20](#)). A verbless clause may occur as a prepositional object ([2 Chr 16:9](#)). For a discussion and examples, see Daniel Grossberg, "Nominalizations in Biblical Hebrew," *Hebrew Studies* 20–21 (1979–80) 29–33.

14. The patterns are described in more or less their actual shape, rather than in an underlying or historical form, as in many grammars.

15. This pattern is similar to that of various passive participles in Aramaic dialects.

16. See K. D. Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hēsed in the Hebrew Bible* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977) 241–45.

17. The root of ## 10–11 is a final *-he* or *-yod* root, and the last radical shows up in these forms as a *yod*.

18. This pattern is called the *nomen occupationis*. The *r*, which cannot be doubled, is said to be "virtually doubled" in such forms as ## 4, 5, 10, 14, 16, 19. The term lengthening "is preferred to 'doubling' and 'gemination' because a long consonant does not last twice the duration of a short one"; Daniels apud Bergsträsser, *Introduction*. 5.

19. S. Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964) 78–79.

20. On color words, see Brenner, *Colour Terms*.

21. T. N. D. Mettinger, "The Nominal Pattern 'qəṭulla' in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 16 (1972) 2–14.

22. S. Gevirtz, "Formative 𐤊 in Biblical Hebrew," *Eretz-Israel* 16 (1982) 57*–66*, at 62*. This group of elements may be called the affixional subset of the sounds of the language; see M. O'Connor, "The Rhetoric of the Kilamuwa Inscription," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 226 (1977) 15–29, at 16–17, in a discussion of alliteration. For a treatment of this class of sounds in Classical Greek, see E. D. Floyd, "Levels of Phonological Restriction in Greek Affixes," *Bono Homini Donum: Essays in Historical Linguistics in Memory of J. Alexander Kerns*, ed. Y. L. Arbeitman and A. R. Bomhard (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981), 1. 87–106; a comparable study for Hebrew is needed.

23. Jacob Barth, *Die Nominalbildung in den semitischen Sprachen* (2d ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1894) 228.

24. Gevirtz, "Formative 𐤊," 60*–61*, and references.

25. The comparable Arabic form is called the elative, but the resemblance may be superficial.

26. In some nouns, the *r* is part of the root, e.g., 'arnēbet 'hare' (the *r* is sometimes judged an intrusive or secondary element in this word).

27. Gevirtz, "Formative 𐤊."

28. The ending 𐤁 is cognate to Arabic *-iy-* and Akkadian *-ayy-* (Arabic Yahudiyun 'Jew'; Akkadian Ya'udayyu 'Judahite'); this ending is used most often for forming place-of-origin names and is called the *nisbe*-ending (Arabic *nisbatun* 'affinity, relationship').

29. The evidence of the El-Amarna letters suggests that this suffix is etymologically composed of an accusative ending *-a-* followed by an enclitic *m* (9.8).

30. See C. D. Isbell, "Initial 'alef-yod Interchange and Selected Biblical Passages," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 37 (1978) 227–36; D. N. Freedman and M. O'Connor, "YHWH," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 5. 500–21; cf. E. L. Greenstein, "Another Attestation of Initial *h* > ' in West Semitic," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 5 (1973) 157–64.

31. See, e.g., E. Qimron, *The Hebrew Of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 24–26; M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 26–28.

32. A. Fitzgerald, "The Interchange of L, N, and R in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978) 481–88, at 481.

6 Gender

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Introduction 6.1

a

Gender is a feature of many languages and plays an important role in the structure of Hebrew.¹ As an aspect of morphology, gender affects both syntax and the lexicon; through the lexicon, gender is a facet of semantics, that is, of the way the world around us is represented in words. Like the other Semitic languages, Hebrew formally distinguishes two genders, masculine and feminine; the distinction is used for nouns (both substantives and adjectives), pronouns, and verbs. The formal system in nouns involves an unmarked class of masculine forms and a largely marked class of feminine forms.

b

In linguistic theory an opposition involves marking if one member has something extra or unusual about it to distinguish it from the other (3.3.5e). For example, in the opposition מֶלֶךְ: מַלְכָּה, the gender of מֶלֶךְ is not shown by any evident device, while the gender of מַלְכָּה is shown by the ending הָ; מֶלֶךְ is the unmarked or zero (Ø)-marked member of the pair, while מַלְכָּה is the marked member. In general in Hebrew the masculine gender is unmarked, while the feminine is marked. The unmarked member may have the same value as its opposite, and thus unmarked masculine nouns may refer to females. The marked member of a linguistic pair attracts more attention than the unmarked, and so in studying gender it may seem we are dealing with the "problem" of the feminine, but in reality we are concerned with the grammatical system of masculine : feminine.

c

Feminine singular nouns in Hebrew can have a variety of endings: -ā (# 1) is most common, with -at (# 2) its construct, and -t (# 3) and -et (# 4) are also used. Some nouns with female referents are zero-marked (# 5).

1. מַלְכָּה queen (abs.)
 queen (cstr.)

2. מִלְכָּת
3. בְּרִית covenant (abs., cstr.)
4. גִּדְרָת wall (abs., cstr.)
5. אִם mother (abs., cstr.)

The -ā ending (the *he* is a *mater lectionis*) and the endings with *t* are all at base related.² The -ā arose as a pausal variant of -at;³ -t and -et are morphological variants of -at. We refer to all these endings as the -at suffix, contrasting it to the Ø suffix or marker of אֵם, אִם, and similar nouns.

d

Gender-marking has long attracted the interest of students of language. We survey the views of some ancient, medieval, and modern commentators before turning to a comparative study of gender as a linguistic phenomenon. Having established that gender and sex are distinct phenomena and that the -ā/-at form originally signaled modification of an opposed Ø-form, we will be better able to look at the actual workings of the Hebrew gender system.

6.2 Study of Gender

6.2.1 Ancient and Medieval Views

a

The Western grammatical tradition, beginning with the Greeks, has speculated on gender.⁴ Protagoras, an influential Sophist of the fifth century B.C.E., is credited with

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being the first to classify the three Greek genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter.⁵ Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) went on to list the typical endings for each gender, thus classifying nouns according to their inflection or accident.⁶ The innovative and creative grammarians of the Sophist school anticipated the findings of modern linguistics by noting two principles in the field of gender: (1) gender formally marks the agreement between words in some kinds of phrases and other syntactic groups, and (2) the correspondence between (linguistic) gender and (natural) sex is only partial.⁷ After the early Sophists, Greek grammarians concerned themselves largely with taxonomies. The Roman additions to Greek linguistics were slight; it is of some interest that Sextus Empiricus (late 2d century C.E.) observed that the gender of some nouns differed from one dialect to another.⁸

b

The true heirs of the Greek grammarians were the Arabs.⁹ The earliest Arab grammarians, in the eighth and ninth centuries C.E., were strictly descriptive and taxonomic. They demarcated gender into masculine and feminine forms, recognizing that the feminine is the marked member of the pair. They essentially classified feminine nouns into the following groups:

- (1) the true feminine: animate nouns that denote females, with or without the feminine ending (e.g., baqarat-¹⁰ 'cow' and 'um 'mother')
- (2) the metaphorical feminine: inanimate nouns, with or without the feminine ending (e.g., dawlat- 'state, government' and yad 'hand')
- (3) the morphological feminine: nouns used exclusively to refer to males and treated as masculine but possessing a feminine ending (e.g., khalifat- 'caliph')

Similar categories can be established for Biblical Hebrew.

6.2.2 Modern Views

a

In contrast to the strictly descriptive approaches of the early Greek and Arab grammarians, eighteenth- and

nineteenth-century linguists were long on speculation and short on descriptive analysis.¹¹ The Germans Herder and Adelung sought to explain the origin and function of gender, focusing on the genders assigned inanimate objects.¹² These scholars thought that so-called primitive peoples individualized objects, sorting them into one of two sex-based genders according to the characteristics of the object. Objects perceived to be strong, large, active, etc., were made masculine, and objects felt

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to be susceptible, delicate, passive, etc., became feminine. This groundless approach was commonly accepted among successive generations of linguists,¹³ passing from late eighteenth-century tomes into many scholarly books of the nineteenth century. One scholar thus wrote of "primitive" people as children and remarks:

From this source [i.e., imagination] is derived the whole system of genders for inanimate things, which was perhaps inevitable at that early childish stage of the human intelligence ...¹⁴

b

An outstanding authority on Arabic grammar, W. Wright, similarly remarked:

The vivid imagination of the Semite conceived all objects, even those that are apparently lifeless, as endowed with life and personality. Hence for him there are but two genders, as there exist in nature but two sexes.¹⁵

Such notions lay behind the presentation of gender in most of the great Hebrew grammars, those of Gesenius, Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, Joüon, and others. Paul Joüon, for example, remarks:

Apart from living beings gender is metaphorical: certain nouns are masculine, by analogy with male beings; others are feminine, by analogy with female beings.¹⁶

So inadequate is this view that he adds directly:

It is necessary to confess, for the rest, that the reason which determined the gender often escapes us.¹⁷

The issue of the gender of inanimates was not the only stimulus for bad theorizing among these scholars. Carl Brockelmann, for instance, having shown, he believed, that there was no overt feminine ending in early Semitic, went on to conclude that females were highly regarded in that culture, which may indeed have had a matriarchal organization.¹⁸

c

M. H. Ibrahim, deploring the heavy dependence of these scholars on fanciful extralinguistic speculation, concludes:

Those grammarians who have written about primitive peoples and their primitive languages were like the "armchair" anthropologists of the nineteenth-century, who wrote about these peoples without any contacts with them or their culture.¹⁹

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Anthropologists helped to reform the European ideas of pre-industrial ("primitive" or "savage") peoples and to remove them from easy stereotyping. At the same time modern linguistics has returned to its proper starting point, language, in considering gender phenomena.²⁰

d

Modern linguists agree that grammatical gender serves only in part to denote sexual differences among animate beings.²¹ The primary function of various systems of gender is syntactic; gender is one of the concord systems that connect related words within a sentence. It is of secondary importance that the so-called "feminine" formatives designate natural gender in living beings.

6.3 Comparative Perspectives

6.3.1 Gender in Language

a

A description of gender as it is used across a variety of languages suggests that grammatical gender does not primarily denote sex in animate beings and "analogous" features of inanimates. Rather, gender is primarily a matter of syntax. The relevant linguistic arguments are diverse; taken together, they point toward a properly linguistic notion of gender.

b

Typologically, languages may be divided into those having noun classes and those that lack them. The most common noun classes are the genders, which may number three (masculine, feminine, neuter) or two (masculine or feminine). Other noun-class systems distinguish animates from inanimates, or count nouns (like 'book,' 'woman,' 'tree') from mass nouns (like 'people,' 'water,' 'salt'). The languages that use gender include most of the Indo-European and Semitic languages; among those that do not are Turkish, Chinese, and Basque. Thus, Turkish nowhere—not even in its pronouns—grammatically distinguishes genders, whereas French, like Hebrew, presses all nouns into either the masculine or feminine genders. Noting this contrast, James Barr points out that it would be nonsensical to suppose that the Turks were unaware of sexual differences or that grammar proves the "legendary erotic interests" of the French!²² It is not true that speakers of a language with a two-gender system think of all objects as male or female; rather, as F. R. Palmer argues, "it is simply that the grammar of their language divides all nouns into two classes."²³

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c

The error of the idea that gender is attached to an object according to certain perceived qualities is further illustrated by comparing the genders of words in one language with those in another. For example, in the Romance languages 'sun' is masculine and 'moon' feminine, but in German the situation is reversed. Indeed, even for animate nouns the referential feature can be weakened or absent. Thus there are nouns in French that, though feminine in form, refer to men, for example, *la sentinelle* 'the sentinel,' *la vigi* 'the night watchman.' In French, most occupational terms are feminine, even if the person referred to by the terms is generally a male. On the other hand, some nouns designating professions are masculine (*le professeur*, *le médecin*) even when referring to a female; thus, the following sentence is possible in French: *Le professeur est enceinte*, 'The professor is pregnant.'

d

In German similar clashes of sex and gender are found. Amused that Rübe 'turnip' is feminine, while Mädchen 'girl' is neuter, Mark Twain concocted this dialogue in *A Tramp Abroad*:

Gretchen: Wilhelm, where is the turnip?

Wilhelm: She has gone to the kitchen.

Gretchen: Where is the accomplished and beautiful English maiden?

Wilhelm: It has gone to the opera.²⁴

In truth the neuter gender of Mädchen is determined by the suffix -chen; the base noun is feminine, *die Magd*. Another sort of sex-gender clash arises when adjectives indicating sex occur with nouns of the "opposite" gender. In French, 'the mouse' is *la souris*, and 'the *he*-mouse' is *la souris mâle*, that is, 'the male (feminine) mouse'!

e

It was Karl Brugmann, at the end of the last century, who most drastically revised his predecessors' views on gender. In fact he completely reversed the priority of grammatical gender and sex from that of earlier linguists. He argued that the grammatical gender, which originally had nothing to do with sex, guided the poetic imagination in mythic personifications.

In all cases that come into consideration here [the historical period of the Indo-European languages] the grammatical gender of the word, so far as we can judge, is the earlier [i.e., earlier than personifications]. The imagination used this gender and allowed itself to be led by it ... When either [primitive people or poets] personified a lifeless concept into a living being, it was the grammatical form of the noun that, through the psychological impulse of analogy, ... decided the definite direction of the gender—whether it should be masculine or feminine ...²⁵

His studies find limited confirmation in some areas. For example, the Russians personify the days of the week as male or female on the basis of the day's grammatical gender.²⁶ Likewise, Hebrew poets sometimes personified

non-animates according to gender, for example, חֵכְמָה is Lady Wisdom, hostess ([Prov 9:1–6](#)), sister ([7:4](#)), mediatrix ([1:20–33](#)). On balance, however, it is best to see grammatical gender and the natural sex of animate beings as coordinate systems, neither controlling the other.

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f

A larger view of gender systems derives from the study of languages with other noun-class systems; these include the Bantu languages, some Sudanic languages, and some languages of the Caucasus and Australia. The noun classes in these languages have no simple connection to natural sex. For example, in Swahili, there are classes of animates, of small, round things, of long, thin things, and so on; each class is formally indicated by a prefix and stands in concord with its modifying adjectives and verbs. Since there is only a limited correspondence between the formal classes and their "meanings," linguists classify them merely by their accident.²⁷ Gender in the Indo-European and Semitic languages appears to be a special case of noun classification; as C. F. Hockett says, "Genders are classes of nouns reflected in the behavior of associated words."²⁸ From these comparative remarks we can see that grammatical gender does not "attribute" sex to inanimate objects and only imperfectly designates it in animate objects; it is chiefly a syntactic feature, whether the noun be animate or inanimate, not a strictly referential-semantic one.

6.3.2 Gender in Semitic and Hebrew

a

The basic facts of Hebrew gender may be reviewed before we try to discuss the workings of the system. The grammatical genders are part of the system of Hebrew accident, that is, gender-markings show that certain parts of speech agree with other parts of speech.

b

A feminine being can be grammatically marked only in the area of animate objects (e.g., פָּרָה 'cow' and פָּרָה 'bull'). Lexically opposed "gender nouns" may be used to designate each member of a male-female dyad (e.g., אָב 'father' and אִמָּה 'mother'). Feminine plural formatives are found with nouns denoting male beings (e.g., אֲבוֹת 'forebears, fathers'). On the other hand, masculine plural formatives appear with nouns denoting female beings (e.g., נָשִׁים 'women').²⁹

c

There is no "reason" why inanimate nouns are in a particular grammatical gender. Contrast הָרַר 'hill' and גִּבְעָה 'hill.' Some inanimate nouns show two genders (e.g., דֶּרֶךְ 'way,' אֲרוֹן 'chest').³⁰ The same meaning may be associated with two non-animate nouns that differ only in gender (e.g., נִקְמָה and נִקְמָה, 'dominion, vengeance'). Non-animate feminine nouns may designate a collective (e.g., גּוֹלָה 'exile'), or a single component of a collective (e.g., אֲנִיָּה 'ship,' contrast אֲנִי 'fleet,' both masculine and feminine).

d

The feminine formative is used to form numbers used with masculine nouns (e.g., שְׁלֹשָׁה בָּנִים 'three sons').

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e

Comparative study reveals certain patterns of gender. Hebrew (like the Semitic languages generally) conforms to these patterns. If gender primarily serves the syntactic function of concord, how did it acquire any semantic value in the Semitic languages? Did it have an "original meaning"? C. Brockelmann, because of some of the data about noun class systems presented above, thought that grammatical genders in the Semitic languages originally had

nothing to do with natural sex.³¹ He associated Semitic gender systems with class systems in other languages and suggested that the feminine ending, along with other minor terminations, reflects a trace of an older noun-class system in Semitic. A number of scholars have theorized that the noun classes represented by the genders were simply classes of basic (now masculine) and derived (now feminine) forms.

f

E. A. Speiser thought that what is now the feminine formative in Semitic began as an accusative element in the larger Semito-Hamitic or Afroasiatic language family.³² This idea has been dismissed; the abiding value of his study of the problem remains in his contention that the "feminine" originally signified derivative words with some special modifications of the base stem. He observes that in all the Semitic languages *-(a)t* had not one but at least four semantic values: (1) to form an abstract from an adjective, numeral, or verb (e.g., רָעָה 'evil' from רָע 'bad'); (2) to make a collective out of a participle (e.g., אֲרֻחָה 'caravan' from אָרַח 'traveler'); (3) to build a singulative (nomen unitatis) from a collective (e.g., שֵׁעָרָה '[a single] hair' from שָׁעַר 'hair'); (4) to construct a diminutive or the like (e.g., יִזְנִיקָה 'shoot' from יִזְנֵק 'young plant'; cf. 6.4.2f). The "remarkable versatility" of a formative that could mark either a collective noun or a nomen unitatis led Speiser to conclude:

It is this seeming inconsistency that furnishes the necessary clue for the appreciation of the principal function of *-(a)t*. This was not to mark inferior classification, or to form abstracts, collectives, diminutives, or the like, but plainly to construct derivative stems with some special modification of the original meaning.³³

In time *-at* came to have the ultimate specialization of the feminine with animate objects. Other features, such as form, tradition, and associations with other words, contributed to the assignment of a noun's gender.³⁴

6.4 Gender of Inanimates and Non-Animates

a

There is no "natural" gender for inanimates (objects) and non-animate (abstracts).

The earlier grammarians who sought to explain grammatical gender on such a basis were

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misled in their correlation of linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena. We analyze these nouns according to whether they have a \emptyset or *-at* formative.

6.4.1 Zero-marked Gender Nouns

a

Nouns with a \emptyset -gender formative may be treated in Hebrew as either masculine or feminine, though most are masculine. With few exceptions no semantically homogeneous value can be attached to the gender assignment. There are, however, three semantic fields where the gender pattern deserves study: nouns referring to body parts, place names, and figurative terms.

b

Nouns referring to parts of the body tend to be feminine (## 1–17).

- | | | |
|----|----------|--------|
| 1. | אֹזֶן | ear |
| 2. | אֶצְבָּע | finger |
| 3. | בֶּטֶן | belly |
| 4. | בִּרְךָ | knee |
| 5. | זְרוּעַ | arm |
| 6. | יָד | hand |

7.	יָרֵךְ	thigh
8.	כַּנָּף	wing
9.	כַּף	palm
10.	לֶחִי	jaw
11.	לָשׁוֹן	tongue
12.	עֵין	eye
13.	צִלְעַ	side
14.	קֶרֶן	horn
15.	רֶגֶל	foot
16.	שׁוֹק	leg
17.	שֵׁן	tooth

c

A notable exception is שֶׁד (masc.) 'breast' (see [Hos 9:14](#)).

The gender of place names is complicated by the fact that place-name terms frequently lose their head nouns (the grammatical process of "beheading"), while the head noun continues to control the gender of the phrase. Beheading is common in English—we say 'California' for 'the state of California,' 'Mexico' for 'the United States of Mexico.' In languages with grammatical gender-systems, beheading almost invariably affects those systems. The early Arab grammarians noted that a generic term (such as 'city of ...', 'kingdom of ...', 'river of ...', 'mountain ...') in construct with a place name determines the gender of the phrase and that even if the generic was not expressed, its gender still controls the term, for example, dijlāt 'Tigris' is feminine in form but is treated as masculine, since the full expression is nahr dijlāt 'river of Tigris' and nahr is masculine.³⁵ The omission of the noun in the construct (the beheading) is common in Arabic. Thus, most city names are feminine because madīnatu 'city' is feminine.

d

The Hebrew situation is similar. Like Arabic nahr, Hebrew נָהָר is masculine, as can be seen in # 18; although נְהַר־פָּרַת seems to be feminine, the pronoun in # 19 is masculine, following (נְהַר־פָּרַת).

18.	הַנְּהָר הַגָּדוֹל נְהַר־פָּרַת:	the great river, the River Euphrates Gen 15:18
19.	וְהַנְּהָר הַרְבִּיעִי הוּא פָּרַת:	the fourth river was the Euphrates Gen 2:14

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Again, אַמְנָה, though feminine in form, stands in agreement with masculine modifiers because the omitted נָהָר is masculine.

20.	הֲלֹא טוֹב אַמְנָה	Is not Amana better? 2 Kgs 5:12 Qere
-----	--------------------	---

Another masculine head noun is בֵּית־לָחֶם; thus בֵּית־לָחֶם in [Mic 5:1](#) and בֵּית־אֵל in [Amos 5:5](#) are both masculine. Feminine heads include מְמַלְכֶת and אֶרֶץ and either could explain the treatment of בָּבֶל as feminine in [Gen 11:9](#) and [Isa 21:9](#), since בָּבֶל is called both a מְמַלְכָה ([Gen 10:10](#)) and an אֶרֶץ ([Jer 50:28](#)). Similarly, אֲשׁוּר is

feminine in [Ezek 32:22](#) (cf. [Isa 7:18](#)). Note the feminines in [Exod 12:33](#); [1 Sam 17:21](#); [2 Sam 8:2](#), [24:9](#). In some cases a place name seems to vary in gender; this is probably a sign that the underlying head varies. Thus [יהודה](#) is masculine in [Isa 3:8](#), perhaps due to the head [בית](#), but feminine in [Isa 7:6](#), due to the head [אֶרֶץ](#). Similarly, [אֲדָוֶה](#) is masculine in [Num 20:20](#) (due to [בית](#)), but feminine in [Jer 49:17](#) (due to [אֶרֶץ](#)). In some cases the usage is not entirely clear: [יהודה](#) is probably feminine in [Lam 1:3](#) because of [עיר](#) rather than [אֶרֶץ](#), or the place name there may refer by metonymy to the inhabitants of the place. Since [עיר](#) is feminine and therefore names of cities are regarded as feminine, Israel's poets were led to personify cities as women, for example, [בֶּת־בָּבֶל](#) 'Daughter Babylon' ([Isa 47:1](#)) and [בֶּת־יְרוּשָׁלַיִם](#) 'Daughter Jerusalem' ([Isa 37:22](#); see 6.3.1, 9.5.3h). Concerning this method of gender assignment, Ibrahim comments: "It explains in a simple way why thousands of names of countries, rivers, cities, mountains, etc. are assigned one gender or another."³⁶ There are exceptions to this pattern, in which the place name determines the gender of the phrase; for example, [גֵן](#) is usually masculine, but the phrase [גֵן־עֵדֶן](#) is feminine ([Gen 2:15](#)); [גִּפֶן](#) is probably masculine in [Hos 10:1](#) because of the reference there to [יִשְׂרָאֵל](#).³⁷

e

A third semantic area where there is a clear pattern for Ø-marked nouns involves figurative usage, an area also important for feminine nouns in *-at*. Where the literal sense of a term is feminine, the figurative may be masculine: [עֵיִן](#), feminine 'eye' but masculine 'engraving surface, facet' ([Zech 3:9](#), [4:10](#)); [שֵׁן](#), feminine 'tooth' but masculine 'prong (of a fork)' ([1 Sam 2:13](#)), 'point (of a rock)' ([1 Sam 14:4](#), [5](#)).

6.4.2 Feminine Gender-marked Nouns

a

Several important groups of non-animate and inanimate nouns are morphologically feminine. These include abstracts, collectives, and singulatives, as well as infinitives and certain figurative nouns. (On the feminine "dummy" pronoun, see 6.6d.)

b

Abstract nouns may be feminine singular (## 1–8) or plural (## 9–11). Singular and more often plural abstracts may be used adverbially (10.2.2e), for example, [וַיִּדְבֹר קָשׁוֹת](#), 'he spoke harsh things (i.e., he spoke harshly)' ([Gen 42:7](#); cf. [Isa 32:4](#) for # 10; cf. 39.3.1).

1.	אִמּוּנָה	firmness
2.	נֶאֱמָנָה	a sure thing
3.	גְּבוּרָה	strength
4.	טוֹבָה	goodness
5.	יִשְׁרָה	uprightness
6.	נִכּוֹנָה	steadfastness
7.	תְּכוּנָה	arrangement
8.	רָעָה	evil
9.	נְדִיבוּת	noble things
10.	צָחוּת	clear things
11.	קָשׁוֹת	harsh things

Not all abstract nouns are feminine (e.g., חֵיל 'power,' כְּבוֹד 'glory,' וָרָע 'good and evil' [Gen 2:9]).

c

Collectives, comprehensive designations of a number of things or persons, often display the *-at* suffix (## 12–14).³⁸ Sometimes it is uncertain whether a form is personification or a collective (## 15–16).

12.	אַרְחָה	caravan
13.	גּוֹלָה	exile
14.	רָלָה	poor people
15.	אִיבָת	enemy
16.	יוֹשְׁבֵת	inhabitant

d

Single components of a collective unit often appear with *-at* suffix; such a form is called a *nomen unitatis* or singulative.

17.	אֲנִיָּה	vessel	אֲנִי	fleet
18.	נִצָּחָה, צִיָּצָה	flower	צִיץ, נֵץ	blossoms
19.	שַׁעֲרָה	(a) hair	שֵׁעַר	hair
20.	שִׁירָה	(a) song	שִׁיר	song, singing

On the other hand, one finds דָּגָה 'fish (coil.)' but דָּג ' (a) fish.' Some forms, for example, לִבְנֵה שׁוֹשְׁנָה 'lily brick,' etc., are singulatives for which the collective is not attested. (The masculine שׁוֹשֵׁן is a metaphorical 'lily,' an architectural decoration.)

e

The infinitive may be treated as feminine.

21.	הֲנִקְלָה בְּעֵינֶיכֶם הַתְּחַתֵּן בַּמֶּלֶךְ	Do you think it a small matter to become the king's son-in-law?
		1 Sam 18:23

In some cases it is treated as masculine.

22.	כִּי־רָע וָמָר עָזַבְדָּ פֶלֶלֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ	How evil and bitter it is that you abandoned ... your God.
		Jer 2:19

f

A figurative sense may also be denoted by *-at*.

23.	יוֹנֵק	suckling/child (masc.)	יוֹנֵקָת	sucker, shoot
24.	יָרֵךְ	hip (fem.)	יֵרֵכְתִּים	sides (of a building, etc.)
25.	מִצְחָה	forehead	מִצְחָה	legging, greave

6.4.3 Gender Doublets

a

Some non-animate nouns have both masculine and feminine forms. Although these so-called doublets may have different connotations, it is best not to rely too heavily on their gender distinctions; both forms mean essentially the same thing. Mordechai Ben Asher has surveyed 117 non-animate nouns having both masculine and feminine forms, including five collective/nomen unitatis pairs (6.4.2d). (He excludes cases where there is no connection between similar forms, e.g., *tôrâ/tôr*, or where a connection is dubious, e.g., *'adâmâ/'adâm*.) Of these, 61 are abstract nouns and 56 are concrete. These pairs include all kinds of meanings: abstract nouns (## 1–2), parts of body (## 3–4), agricultural terms (## 5–6), words connected with clothing (## 7–8); and pairs of words with initial *ma-/mi-* (## 9–12; see 5.6), seven of which are from medial-*waw* roots (## 11–12). He finds no positive difference in meaning between the pairs, apart from the few cases of collectives/nomina unitatis (# 6 and perhaps # 3).

1.	אָשָׁמָה	/ אָשָׁם	guilt
2.	נִקְמָה	/ נִקָּם	dominion, vengeance
3.	אֶבְרָה	/ אֶבֶר	pinion
4.	גֵּרָה	/ גֵּר	back
5.	חִלְקָה	/ חִלְקָן	territory
6.	צִיָּצָה	/ צִיץ	blossom
7.	אֶפְדָּה	/ אֶפֹּד	ephod
8.	חֲגוּרָה	/ חֲגוּר	loin-covering
9.	מִתְנָה	/ מִתָּן	gift
10.	מִמְכָּרָה	/ מִמְכָּר	ware
11.	מִגּוּרָה	/ מִגּוּר	terror
12.	מַחֲוּלָה	/ מַחֲוּל	dance

In five cases he found that one of the forms occurs in a poetic or elevated style, and the other mainly in an ordinary prosaic style (## 13–17).³⁹

	prosaic	elevated	
13.	אֶפְלָה	אֶפֶל	gloom
14.	גֵּן	גִּנָּה	garden
15.	חֹשֶׁךְ	חֲשִׁכָה / חֲשִׁכָה	darkness
16.	צִדְקָה	צִדֵּק	righteousness
17.	שָׂבַע / שִׁבְעָה	שִׁבְעָה / שִׁבְעָה	satiety

The doublet *מִשְׁעָן וּמִשְׁעָנָה* is used as a *hendiadys* for 'every kind of support' ([Isa 3:1](#)).

6.5 Gender of Animates

6.5.1 Natural Dyads

a

Some natural male-female dyads are designated by unrelated words, neither of which is marked for gender.

1.	אִישׁ	man	אִשָּׁה	woman ⁴⁰
2.	אָב	father	אִמָּה	mother. ⁴¹
3.	תֵּישׁ	he-goat	עֵז	she-goat
4.	חֲמֹר	he-ass	אֲתוֹן	she-ass
5.	אֲרִי, אֲרִיָּה	he-lion	לְבִיָּא	she-lion

The nouns in other dyads are designated by word pairs marked Ø: -at.

6.	אֵיל	hart	אֵילָה, אֵילָת	hind
7.	עֵגֶל	calf	עֵגְלָה	heifer
8.	עֶלָם	young man	עֶלְמָה	young woman
9.	פָּר	bull, ox	פָּרָה	cow

6.5.2 Epicene Nouns

a

Nouns used for a male or female animate, or for a mixed group, are called epicene.⁴² For example, in the phrase **שָׁבִיבָה** 'a bear robbed of her whelps' ([Hos 13:8](#)), though both noun and adjective are masculine in form, a she-bear is in view (cf. also [Isa 49:15](#)). Epicene nouns in English include 'sheep' (in contrast to 'ewe/ram'), 'secretary' (in contrast to 'male secretary/female secretary'), 'dog' (in contrast to 'bitch, female dog/male dog'). In Hebrew an epicene may be of either gender; an epicene feminine singular may form an epicene masculine plural.

masculine			feminine		
1.	אֶלֶף	cattle (coll.)	5.	אֲרֻנָּה	hare
2.	דָּב	bear	6.	חֲסִידָה	stork
3.	זָאֵב	wolf	7.	יוֹנָה	dove
4.	כָּלָב	dog	8.	נְמִלָּה	ant

Sometimes grammatically masculine epicene nouns are modified according to sense with feminine forms, for example, **גִּמְלִים מְיֻנֵּקוֹת** 'nursing camels' ([Gen 32:16](#)), in contrast to **גִּמְלִים בָּאִים** 'camels were approaching' ([Gen 24:63](#)). Similarly **וְהַצֹּאן וְהַבָּקָר עֹלֹת** 'the small cattle [i.e., sheep and goats] and the cattle which are nursing' ([Gen 33:13](#); cf. [1 Kgs 5:3](#) for **בָּקָר**, [Gen 30:39](#) for **צֹאן**). The most remarkable epicene noun is **אֱלֹהִים** —Hebrew (like some other Canaanite dialects) has no distinct word for 'goddess.'

9.	וַיֵּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה אַחֲרֵי עֲשֹׁתֶרֶת אֱלֹהֵי צִדְנִים	And Solomon followed Ashtoreth, the godhead of the Sidonians. 1 Kgs 11:5
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6.5.3 Priority of the Masculine

a

Grammarians speak of the masculine gender as "the prior gender" because its form sometimes refers to female beings.

1. זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם: Male and female he created them (masc.).
[Gen 1:27](#)
2. וַיִּנָּשֶׁק לְבָנָיו וּלְבָתָּיו וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם: He kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them (masc.).
[Gen 32:1](#)
3. וְאִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה כִּי־יִהְיֶה בּוֹ נֹגַע: As for a man or a woman, when a sore be on him ...
[Lev 13:29](#)
4. לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל־מְלָאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ־וּבִתְךָ: You (masc.) will do no work, neither you (masc.) nor your son or daughter.
[Exod 20:10](#)

This priority of the masculine gender is due in part to the intensely androcentric character of the world of the Hebrew Bible. As Clarence Vos shows, this milieu must be called a "man's world."⁴³ The priority of the masculine gender in these examples is due not only to the linguistic precedence of the unmarked (masculine) over the marked (feminine); it is also due in part to Israel's religion, which, though it allows or recognizes both *nābī* and *nēbī'ā*, has place only for a priest, not a priestess, in contrast to other religions of the region.

b

The grammatical forms for God are masculine and the representations of God are mostly masculine. Although God does use a comparison to a woman in childbirth ([Isa 42:14](#)), nonetheless there is a strong scholarly consensus that God is regarded as nonsexual. "If sex must be applied to Israel's deity, it would be monosex, and this is either an incompleteness or a contradiction in terms."⁴⁴ This consensus finds explicit support in [Deut 4:15–16](#):

You saw no form of any kind the day YHWH spoke to you at Horeb ... so that you do not ... make for yourselves an idol, an image in any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman.

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One fact providing inferential support is the use of both sexes of a sacrificial victim as offerings to God. In the ancient Near East it was customary to sacrifice male animals to (male) gods and females to goddesses.⁴⁵ In Israel's cultus both males and females of a species were sacrificed to God (cf. [Lev 3:1](#); [4:23](#), [28](#)). One cannot change or remove the masculine figurative representations of God without distorting the text of the Bible.

6.6 Concord

a

Grammatical gender involves three distinct systems: morphology, meaning with reference to an extra-linguistic reality, and syntax.⁴⁶ In Hebrew the basic morphology opposes Ø-marked masculine to the feminine in *-at*, though there are many Ø-marked nouns with female reference. In semantic terms, the *-at* suffix essentially marks derivative words, words with some special modification of the unmarked alternative, though the suffix also serves as the designation of the natural female of animates. The primary function of gender marking is to bind parts of speech together by concord in the same sentence or discourse.

b

Sometimes the grammatical form of a noun differs from its semantic significance, for example, a collective noun such as מוֹלְדֹת 'descendants' (fem.) or an abstract noun such as קְהֵלִית 'teacher' (fem.) may have a male referent. When such clashes arise in a language, concord can follow grammatical gender (as it does, e.g., in Italian or French), or it can follow the semantic orientation of the noun; Hebrew prefers the latter course, sometimes called the *constructio ad sensum* ("construction according to the sense").⁴⁷ Thus we find

קְהֵלִית הָיָה חָכָם, 'The Teacher was wise' ([Qoh 12:9](#)). Moreover, a feminine singular collective noun may be

construed with a plural verb because the noun's referent is plural; in the second example 'land' is used for 'inhabitants' by metonymy.⁴⁸

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | וְאַבְרֹי שְׂאִרִית פִּלְשֹׁתִים | And the remnant of the Philistines will perish.
Amos 1:8 |
| 2. | וְכָל-הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ מִצְרַיִם | And all the land came to Egypt.
Gen 41:57 |
| 3. | וּמִוֹלְדֹתָי אֲשֶׁר-הוֹלֵדְתָּ
אֲחֵרֵיהֶם לְךָ יִהְיוּ | And your descendants whom you begot after them will be yours. Gen 48:6 |

C

Gender agreement may also lapse when (as is often the case) the verb precedes the subject; the subject may be feminine singular or plural, and the verb may be masculine singular.⁴⁹

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- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|--|
| 4. | נִעְתָּם אֶרֶץ | The land is scorched.
Isa 9:18 |
| 5. | תַּחְתִּיךְ יֵצַע רֶמָּה | Beneath you worms (fem., coil.) are laid.
Isa 14:11 |
| 6. | וַיַּעֲבֵר הָרָנָה בַּמַּחֲנֶה | A cry spread through the army.
1 Kgs 22:36 |
| 7. | וַחֲשׂ עֲתֹדֶת לָמוֹ: | And doom (lit., prepared things) rushes on them.
Deut 32:35 |
| 8. | יִתְנַגְּפוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם | Your feet stumble.
Jer 13:16 |

The preceding verb may also be a masculine plural, as in # 9; since there are cases of a masculine plural verb following a feminine plural noun, as in # 10, it has been suggested that both types of discord reflect an avoidance of feminine plural verbs.⁵⁰

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|
| 9. | אִם-יֵצְאוּ בָנוֹת-שִׁילֹה | If the daughters of Shiloh come forth ...
Judg 21:21 |
| 10. | וְעָרֵיכֶם יִהְיוּ חֲרָבָה: | Judg 21:21 Your cities will become a desolation.
Lev 26:33 |

Examples like # 10 are far less common than cases of grammatical discord where the verb precedes the subject.

d

Finally we may mention cases in which there is no true antecedent for a pronoun—what, so to speak, is the gender of a situation or an action? Such a dummy or impersonal pronoun is usually feminine (cf. 4.4.2).

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--|
| 11. | כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת | Because you have done this ...
Gen 3:14 ; cf. 3:13 , 2:23 |
| 12. | וּבִהּ אֶדְעֶה | By this I shall know.
Gen 24:14 |

For other examples, see [Exod 10:11](#), [Num 14:41](#), and [Isa 43:13](#); cf. [1 Chr 21:10](#). Such a vague pronoun can be masculine, as in the stock phrase וְכִזָּה וְכִזָּה 'such and such' ([1 Kgs 14:5](#) and often) and in the following example.

13.

וְזֶה-לָּךְ הָאוֹת

And this will be the sign to you.

[Exod 3:12](#)**Footnotes:**

1. For a basic introduction and an extensive and comprehensive bibliography on gender, see Muhammad Hasan Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender: Its Origin and Development* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973) 105–9. In this chapter we follow Ibrahim's study closely. The most significant older works on Hebrew are Heimann Rosenberg, "Zum Geschlecht der hebräischen Hauptwörter," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 25 (1905) 325–39; and Karl Albrecht, "Des Geschlecht der hebräischen Hauptwörter," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 15 (1895) 313–25; 16 (1896) 41–121. Among recent studies, note D. Michel, *Grundlegung einer hebräischen Syntax* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 1.25-81.
2. C. Brockelmann, *Die Femininendung t im Semitischen* (Breslau: G. P. Aderholz, 1903); cf. G. Janssens, "The Feminine Ending -(a)t in Semitic," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 6–7 (1975–76) 277–84.
3. As in Classical Arabic. Some Semitic languages exhibit the tendency to drop the historical *-at* of the feminine in the absolute state leading to the morphological alternation: *-ā* in the absolute state and *-at* in the construct. Although, as a rule, exceptional morphological facts like this one most strongly attest to inherited features, this alternation in the various Semitic languages has to be interpreted as the result of parallel development because it arose at different times in different places and because of many differences in detail. See Joshua Blau, "The Parallel Development of the Feminine Ending *-at* in Semitic Languages," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 51 (1980) 17–28. In contrast, M. Palmaitis has attempted to demonstrate that "the real Semitic marker of feminine, i.e., *-ā* (and not *-[a]t!*), is in fact the fossilized ending of the inertive case." The widespread ending *-at* was derived secondarily from the bare stem inertive in *-ā*, and both forms became fossilized in the course of the development of the ending for the morphologically marked "weak" gender class. See Palmaitis, "On the Origin of the Semitic Marker of the Feminine," *Archiv Orientalní* 49 (1981) 263–69. Cf. n. 29.
4. See Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*. 14–15.
5. John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 10. Things neither "masculine" nor "feminine" were called "neither"; the Latin term for this yielded "neuter" (p. 11)
6. R. H. Robins, *Ancient and Mediaeval Grammatical Theory in Europe* (London: Bell, 1951) 23–24, and *A Short History of Linguistics* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1967) 27.
7. Robins, *Ancient and Mediaeval Grammatical Theory*, 15.
8. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 21.
9. See Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 46–48, 22–23.
10. A hyphen is placed after *-at*, the feminine marker in Classical Arabic, because a case marker must follow.
11. Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 16–22.
12. See Karl Brugmann, *The Nature and Origin of the Noun Genders in the Indo-European Languages* (New York: Scribner, 1897) 7–8. Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) was one of the great Romantic students of myth and an early appreciator of Hebrew verse. His contemporary Johann Christoph Adelung (1732–1806) was a grammarian.
13. Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 16.
14. Frederic W. Farrar, *Chapters on Language* (London: Longmans, Green, 1865) 212; quoted by Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 16.
15. William Wright, *Lectures on the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1890) 131; quoted by Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 20 (incorrectly attributed to Wright's *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* [3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1896], 1. 131).
16. Joüon § 134e / p. 410.
17. Joüon §134e / p. 410.
18. C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1908), 1. 417.
19. Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 21.

20. Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 22.
21. See especially Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 25–29.
22. James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1961) 39.
23. F. R. Palmer, *Grammar* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971) 35.
24. The French example is from Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 100, citing D. T. Langendoen, *The Study of Syntax* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969) 40; the German example from *Mark Twain, A Tramp Abroad*, vol. 2, appendix D: "The Awful German Language."
25. Brugmann, *Noun Genders*, 17; cited by Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 93.
26. Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," *On Translation*, ed. R. A. Brower (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1959) 232–39, at 237.
27. E. A. Gregersen, *Prefix and Pronoun in Bantu* (International Journal of American Linguistics, Memoir 21; Bloomington: Indiana University, 1967) 1, 15–16.
28. C. F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics* (New York: Macmillan, 1958) 231. See Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 63–76, on the rationale behind the definition.
29. The use of feminine plural forms of nouns referring to males is found more commonly in other Semitic languages than in Hebrew. The feminine-singular absolute ending in Hebrew is not uniformly -ā; there are cases of -at as an absolute singular form (presumably lengthened from -at; see, e.g., [Gen 49:22](#), [Exod 15:2](#), [Ps 16:6](#)) and some cases of -ôt should probably be taken as singular (e.g., [Judg 5:29](#), [Ps 78:15](#)).
30. A survey of the use of *derek* yields an unusual pattern: "The substantive *derek* governs either masculine or feminine agreements in independent clauses and in some dependent clauses, but only feminine agreements in relative clauses." See R. Ratner, "Derek: Morpho-Syntactical Considerations," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987) 471–73, at 473.
31. C. Brockelmann, *Précis de linguistique sémitique* (Paris: Geuthner, 1910) 126: cf. n. 18 above.
32. E. A. Speiser, "Studies in Semitic Formatives," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56 (1936) 22–46; reprinted in J. J. Finkelstein and Moshe Greenberg, eds., *Oriental and Biblical Studies: Collected Writings of E. A. Speiser* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1967) 403–32; on the "feminine" ending see pp. 33–46, esp. pp. 37–46 (rpt. pp. 416–32, 422–32). Speiser favored the simple -t as the original form of the formative (p. 45 / rpt. p. 430).
33. Speiser, "Studies in Semitic Formatives," 39 (rpt. pp. 424–25).
34. Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 77–90. The terms "autonomous" and "non-autonomous" are sometimes used for the "masculine" and "feminine" genders.
35. Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 59–60.
36. Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 60.
37. Similarly, רִיחַ is usually feminine but רִיחַ יְהוָה in [2 Kgs 2:16](#) is masculine in gender, as יְהוָה is. There are a few other analogous gender exceptions (נֶפֶץ as masculine in [2 Kgs 4:39](#); כֶּרֶם as feminine in [Isa 27:2](#); cf. פְּנִי as feminine in [Ezek 21:21](#)). It is on the basis of these cases that Brockelmann notes that "the gender of the *regens* is sometimes determined by that of the *rectum*"; *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 14.
38. In Greek, collective neuter plurals, like Hebrew collective feminine singulars, take a singular verb. See 6, 6c.
39. M. Ben-Asher, "The Gender of Nouns in Biblical Hebrew," *Semitics* 6 (1978) 1–14. For differences in connotation between *šedeq* and *šedāqā*, e.g., see J. J. Scullion, "Šedeq-šedaqah in Isaiah cc. 40–66," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 3 (1971) 335–48. Related to the style contrast is the interesting material discussed by W. G. E. Watson, "Gender-Matched Synonymous Parallelism in the Old Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980) 321–41. Watson notes that in groups (usually pairs) of associated lines, nouns may be arranged by gender like with like to suggest a global picture (e.g., masc. + masc., gwym + qlwn; fem. + fem., šwḥh + ʾrs, in [Jer 42:12](#); cf. [Isa 19:2](#)). Nouns may also be paired like and unlike to suggest contrast (e.g., masc. + fem., zbḥ + twʾbh; fem. + masc., tplh + ršwn, in [Prov 15:8](#)) or inversion (e.g., fem. + masc., ḥrph + šknym; masc. + fem., lʾg wqls + sbymbwt, in [Ps 44:14](#)).
40. Despite similarities, ʾiš, pl. ʾānāšim (rarely ʾīšim), and the related word ʾenōš 'humanity,' are from a root different

from that of *ʾiššâ*, pl. *nāšim* (*ʾiššôt* occurs once).

41. The 'mother : father' pair is associated in many languages with an *m* : b/p/f contrast; English *mama* : *papa*, Greek *mētēr* : *patēr*, Latin *mater* : *pater*, English *mother* : *father*, Chinese *mu* : *fu*, etc.

42. The term refers to 'common' gender, cf. Greek koine dialektos 'the common tongue.' The interaction of gender and names is complex. Hebrew certainly had epicene names; Gomer is a female name in Hosea, but a male name in a Samaria Ostrakon; see N. Avigad, "A Hebrew Seal Depicting a Sailing Ship," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 246 (1982) 59–62, at 60.

43. Clarence Vos, *Woman in Old Testament Worship* (Delft: Judels en Brinkman, 1968) 32–50. The classification of animate versus inanimate may originally have enjoyed some priority, as Speiser argues from the isolated character of the *mī* 'who' : *mā* 'what' opposition.

44. Vos, *Woman in Old Testament Worship*, 39. Cf. also Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Peter T. Daniels, "Virtuous Housewife or Woman of Valor? On Sexist Language in the Hebrew Bible," *Proceedings [of the] Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 4 (1984) 99–106; Elizabeth Achtemeier, "The Impossible Possibility: Evaluating the Feminist Approach to Bible and Theology," *Interpretation* 42 (1988) 45–57; R. M. Frye, "Language for God and Feminist Language: A Literary and Rhetorical Analysis," *Interpretation* 43 (1989) 45–57.

45. Watson, "Gender-Matched Synonymous Parallelism," 338. Note Watson's discussion of [Isa 24:21](#). We need to keep in mind, however, Speiser's remark, "Too much mystery seems to be made of our feminine ending" ("Studies in Semitic Formatives," 37 [rpt. p. 422]).

46. Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 97.

47. Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 34.

48. Cf. GKC § 145e / p. 463.

49. Cf. GKC § 1450 / p. 465.

50. Cf. GKC § 145p / p. 465.

7 Number

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Introduction

a

The patterns of number use seem to reflect so closely the real world that discrepancies among various languages may seem bewildering. In English we refer to the aggregate of flying creatures with a plural, 'birds,' but Hebrew uses the singular עוֹף; contrariwise, English uses a singular to refer to the human 'face,' but Hebrew uses a plural, פְּנִים. Such discrepancies exist because no facet of language mirrors the world directly. Number is a grammatical category, as gender is, and is thus part of the greater system of a given language's grammatical and lexical structure. Further, number usage reveals even more plainly than gender the fact that a language is part of a culture and is thus shaped by that culture. Let us consider this second point further, for it is crucial to the process of understanding a language.

b

Cultures express collective perceptions of reality differently and therefore represent the world in diverse ways. Hebrew, for example, represents the body part variously labeled in English 'hand' or 'arm' by יָד, a term that denotes that stretch of the appendage from the elbow to the tips of the fingers; further, it subdivides that portion and refers to the lower subdivision as כַּף, the portion from the wrist to the fingertips. English has no word corresponding precisely to Hebrew יָד; Hebrew has no word corresponding to English 'forearm.' Words in one language rarely coincide precisely in scope and in content with "corresponding" words in another. The cultural heritage of speakers causes them to perceive reality in a way somewhat different from that of speakers in another

culture. Linguistic studies cannot be divorced from anthropology and sociology. It is a cultural and linguistic fact that the English speaker, conceiving of 'face' as a countable noun, manifests that perception by the singular, while the speaker of Classical Hebrew probably perceived it as a mass and represented it by a plural.

c

Languages may also differ in their use of grammatical number because of differing perceptions of what counts as "one object" and what counts as "more than one object" (i.e., a countable), what counts as a coherent "group of objects" (i.e., a collective), or as an undifferentiated "mass of material" (i.e., a mass, e.g., 'butter'); these perceptions help to shape a language's lexical structure. For example, English treats 'grape' as a countable ('Will you have some grapes?'), but 'fruit' as a collective ('Will you have some fruit?'); Russian treats them in exactly the opposite way.¹ So also English treats 'birds' as countable but Hebrew refers to them with a collective.

d

Furthermore, a noun's grammatical number is determined by the language's lexical structure, and thus it does not represent the speaker's thought or experience directly. For example, English lexical structure demands that 'oats' be represented as a plural ('The oats are in the field') but 'wheat' as a singular ('The wheat is in the barn'). We cannot argue that speakers of English think of 'oats' as plural and 'wheat' as singular; this is simply false. An old joke plays on this lack of correspondence:

Teacher: Is 'trousers' singular or plural?

Johnny: Please, sir, singular at the top and plural at the bottom.

'Trousers' is in fact a plural-invariable noun, like other garment terms ('pants, pajamas') as well as tool names ('pliers, scissors, glasses') in English. Hebrew also has plural-invariable nouns.²

e

The most striking culturally determined difference between Hebrew and English number usage involves honorifics. Many European languages (e.g., French, Italian, Russian, German) systematically use plural forms with singular referents to express honor to the referent. For example, in the second-person singular, German uses both Sie, grammatical plural to express respect, and du, grammatical singular for intimacy. English, lacking this linguistic and cultural pattern, uses the singular.³

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f

Grammatical number thus does not directly and necessarily represent "thought." It is rather a language- and cultural-specific system. It should be no surprise that Hebrew grammatical number cannot always be represented straightforwardly in English. Since number may be used in many different ways within a language and since it is determined in part by the meaning of the word, our discussion will touch on many facets of syntax and lexicon.

g

Hebrew, like other Semitic languages, uses three numbers: singular, dual, and plural. In the following sections we analyze and display the uses of these numbers.⁴

7.2 Singular

a

Hebrew uses the grammatical singular for countables, for collectives, and for class nouns. Singular nouns may be repeated in various constructions.

7.2.1 Countables and Collectives

a

With countables the singular serves to enumerate one object. With entities that Hebrew counts as "one object" or "more than one object," the singular usually enumerates the referent as an individual. Countable nouns are the most common.

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. | הָבָה אֶת־אִשְׁתִּי | Give (me) my wife.
Gen 29:21 |
| 2. | וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ | And the earth was waste-and-void.
Gen 1:2 |
| 3. | וַיִּמְצֵאֵהוּ אִישׁ | A man found him.
Gen 37:15 |

b

With collectives the singular designates a group. Some words in Hebrew, like 'fish,' 'sheep,' and 'fruit' in English, are treated as collectives and represented by the singular. As noted above, English and Hebrew differ in their distribution of countables and collectives. Collectives occur in both grammatical genders. A collective singular

may not agree in number with other words in the sentence syntactically related to it (cf. English 'the sheep are in the field' versus 'the wheat is ...'; 6.6); thus a singular collective noun can govern a plural verb. We distinguish between words in Hebrew that are conventionally collective (i.e., words almost always represented in the singular) and those that are nonconventionally collective (i.e., words that are often represented by the plural but for contextual reasons may be represented by a collective).

c

Conventional collectives are frequently natural; note the three collectives in this example.

4. תִּדְרֹשׁ הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׁא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זֶרַע Let the earth bring forth vegetation, plants yielding seed.

[Gen 1:11](#)

Another vegetable collective is פֶּרִי 'fruit.' animal collectives include עוֹף 'birds, the winged kind,' רֶמֶשׂ 'creepy-crawlies, the running-with-the-little-steps kind,' שָׂרִץ 'swarmers, the

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wriggling kind,' בְּהֵמָה 'livestock,' רֶמָה 'worms.' A human collectivity is טֵף 'children.' Inanimate collectives include רֶכֶב 'chariotry,' דִּמְעָה 'tears,' צִיצִית 'tassels, fringes.'

d

Non-conventional collectives are often human, for example, נָפֶשׁ in [Gen 12:5](#).

5. וַיִּשַׁח אָדָם וַיִּשְׁפֹּל-אִישׁ וְאֶל-תַּשָּׂא לָהֶם: So mankind will be brought low and men humbled—but do not forgive them.
[Isa 2:9](#)
6. מִה־נַּעֲשֶׂה לַנּוֹתָרִים לְנָשִׁים כִּי־נִשְׁמְדָה מִבְּנֵימִן אִשָּׁה: How shall we provide wives for the men who are left? for womankind have been annihilated from Benjamin.
[Judg 21:16](#)
7. טַפְכֶּם נְשִׁיכֶם וְגֵרְךָ your little children, your wives, and your aliens
[Deut 29:10](#)
8. וַיְהִי־לִי שׁוֹר וַחֲמֹר צֹאן וְעֶבֶד וְשִׁפְחָה I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants.
[Gen 32:6](#)

Non-human cases include אֶבֶן (in [Job 28:3](#)) and עֵץ (in [Gen 3:8](#)).

7.2.2 Class Nouns

a

Like English, Hebrew may use the article with a singular noun to indicate a particular class or group; cf. 'The lion is king of the beasts.' Such a singular noun has a broad referent, each member of the group. Hebrew may use the singular with this meaning even without the article, especially in poetry. This use of the singular is found in enumerations, after כָּל and other terms of quantity, with gentilics, and in various expressions.⁵

b

In enumerations singular nouns follow the numeral.

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|---|
| 1. | ושלשים ושנים מלך | 32 kings
1 Kgs 20:1 |
| 2. | אלף גפן | 1,000 vines
Isa 7:23 |
| 3. | שלשת אלפים משל | 3,000 proverbs
1 Kgs 5:12 |
| 4. | ושתיים עשרה מצבה | 12 pillars
Exod 24:4 |
| 5. | ארבע מאות נערה בתולה | 400 young women
Judg 21:12 |
| 6. | שמנה מאות חלל | 800 wounded
2 Sam 23:8 |

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The noun of kind is also frequent with כל 'all, every.'

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 7. | כל-זכורך | all your males
Exod 34:23 |
| 8. | אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני יהוה אלהיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם כל איש ישראל: | All of you are standing today in the presence of YHWH your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and every (other) person of Israel.
Deut 29:9 |
| 9. | ויצו פרעה לכל-עמו לאמר כל-הבן תילוד היארה תשליכהו וכל-הבת תחיון: | Then Pharaoh gave orders to all his people: "All the sons that are born you must throw into the river, but let all the daughters live."
Exod 1:22 |

Other terms of quantity may govern a singular.

- | | | |
|-----|---------|--|
| 10. | רב יועץ | an abundance of counselors
Prov 11:14 |
|-----|---------|--|

Gentilic nouns (see 5.7c) are conventionally represented in the singular (see [Gen 15:19–21](#) for nine examples).

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 11. | ולראובני ולגדי ולחצי שבט המנשה אמר יהושע | But to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said
Josh 1:12 |
|-----|--|---|

The singular noun of class is also found in a variety of other expressions.

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|--|
| 12. | רעה צאן עבדיך | Your servants are shepherds.
Gen 47:3 |
| 13. | כשל כח הסבל והעפר הרבה | The strength of the burden bearers fails, the rubbish is much. |

[Neh 4:4](#)

14. כִּי־גָמַר חֲסִיד The godly fail.

[Ps 12:2](#)

These sentences are analogous to English generic statements.

7.2.3 Repetition

a

Singular nouns may be repeated within a short span for a variety of purposes, to express distribution, diversity, or emphasis. The general reference of such expressions is plural, though English does not always use the plural for comparable phrases.

b

A singular may be repeated for a distributive sense, whether asyndetically (## 1–2) or syndetically with וְ (## 3–5) or a preposition (## 6–8); in such a phrase the members composing the aggregate are singled out. Such constructions may be represented in

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English with 'each' or 'every'.⁶ With temporal words a distributive repetition singles out the members diachronically (cf. 15.6).

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | שָׁנָה שָׁנָה: | year by year
Deut 14:22 |
| 2. | וַיְהִי כִּדְבָרָהּ אֶל־יוֹסֵף יוֹם יוֹם | She spoke to Joseph day after day (or, every day).
Gen 39:10 |
| 3. | דּוֹר־דּוֹר | all generations
Deut 32:7 |
| 4. | לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ־אִישׁ: | to do according to the desire of each man
Esth 1:8 |
| 5. | יוֹם וַיּוֹם | day after day
Esth 3:4 |
| 6. | שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה | year by year
Deut 15:20 |
| 7. | וּלְבָקֶר לְבָקֶר | every morning
Exod 16:21 |
| 8. | וּלְבָקֶר לְבָקֶר: | every morning
1 Chr 9:27 |

c

A singular noun may be repeated syndetically to form a phrase indicating diversity.⁷

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 9. | לֹא־יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֶבֶן וָאֶבֶן
גְּדוּלָּה וְקִטְנָה: | Do not have two differing weights in your bag—one heavy and one light. ⁸
Deut 25:13 |
| 10. | בְּלֵב וּלְבַב יִדְבְּרוּ: | They speak with a double heart (i.e., with deception). |

11. וְלִעֲדֹר בְּלֹא-לֵב וְלֵב: [Ps 12:3](#)
to help without a double-dealing heart
[1 Chr 12:34](#)

Similar expressions can be used for emphasis (cf. 7.4.1).

12. זָהָב וְזָהָב פֶּלֶל־כֶּסֶף כֶּסֶף pure gold ... pure silver.
[2 Kgs 25:15](#)
13. בַּדֶּרֶךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ אֵלַי I will stay constantly on the main road.
[Deut 2:27](#)

The stock expression מֵעֵט מֵעֵט 'little by little' is similar (see [Exod 23:30](#), [Deut 7:22](#)).

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7.3 Dual

a

Hebrew like other languages (e.g., Classical Greek, Sanskrit, and certain Slavic languages) has a morphological dual, used chiefly to refer to two paired objects.⁹ Not all dual forms have only dual reference; some serve as plural forms. The nearest English equivalent to the Hebrew dual is provided by expressions like 'a pair of' (e.g., 'a pair of socks') or 'both' (e.g., 'both hands'). As with these English equivalents, the Hebrew dual is used to refer to certain objects that occur in pairs (e.g., 'a pair of clubs,' 'a pair of earrings') and even to refer to objects that are in fact singular (e.g., 'a pair of trousers,' 'a pair of scissors,' etc.). Hebrew also uses its dual to refer to phenomena distinct from those comparably marked in other languages. The uses of dual can be analyzed according to the referents of the terms: natural pairs and set expressions of time and measurement. A few words, morphologically dual, show no semantic or syntactic features of the dual.

b

Natural pairs in the dual usually involve paired human or animal body parts, although not all such occur in the dual.¹⁰

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|----------|
| 1. | אָזְנִים | 2 ears |
| 2. | יָדַיִם | 2 hands |
| 3. | כַּנְפֵּי | 2 wings |
| 4. | כַּפַּיִם | 2 palms |
| 5. | לְחַיִּים | 2 cheeks |
| 6. | מִתְנִים | loins |
| 7. | עֵינַיִם | 2 eyes |
| 8. | קַרְנֵי, קַרְנֵי | 2 horns |
| 9. | רַגְלַיִם | 2 feet |
| 10. | שִׁפְתַּיִם | 2 lips |

Objects that occur in pairs associated with paired body parts may be referred to with a dual, for example, נְעָלַיִם '(a pair of) sandals.' The plural of a word that forms a natural-pair dual is often the morphological dual.

11. וְכָל-בִּרְכָּיִם every knee
[Ezek 7:17](#), [21:12](#)
12. כָּל-יָדַיִם every hand

13. **שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפִים** [Isa 13:7 Ezek 21:12](#) six wings
[Isa 6:2](#)
14. **שִׁבְעָה עֵינַיִם** [Zech 3:9](#) seven eyes (viz., carving facets)

As the last example shows, the metaphorical sense of a natural-pair term can be pluralized with a dual. Often, however, such a metaphorical use will show a regular morphological plural.

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- | | | | | |
|-----|------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 15. | יָדַיִם | 2 hands | יָדוֹת | handles |
| 16. | כַּפָּיִם | 2 palms | כַּפּוֹת | soles; pans |
| 17. | עֵינַיִם | 2 eyes | עֵינֹת | fountains |
| 18. | קַרְנִים | 2 horns (of an animal) | קַרְנוֹת | horns (of an altar) |
| 19. | רַגְלַיִם | 2 feet | רַגְלִים | times |

c

The dual form of certain countable units of measurement and time occurs; the relevant nouns present in most cases a full singular-dual-plural paradigm.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|-------------------|----------|------------------|
| 20. | אַמָּה | אַמָּתַיִם | 2 cubits | אַמּוֹת |
| 21. | יוֹם | יוֹמַיִם | 2 days | יָמִים |
| 22. | מֵאָה | מֵאָתַיִם | 200 | מֵאוֹת |
| 23. | פַּעַם | פַּעַמַיִם | twice | פְּעָמִים |
| 24. | שָׁנָה | שְׁנַתַיִם | 2 years | שָׁנִים |

d

For complex historical reasons, a few nouns have dual morphology, but behave in no way as duals. The two most common are plurals: **מַיִם** 'water' and **שָׁמַיִם** 'heavens'; both words have final-weak roots (**מִי**, **שָׁמַי**), and their plural shapes fall together with the usual dual. Some other terms have been given fanciful "dual" etymologies: **נְחֹשֶׁתַיִם** '(double?) fetters of bronze', **צֶהָרַיִם** 'noon (time of the double shadow?)', **עֶרְבַּיִם** 'evening (time between day and night?)', and **מִצְרַיִם** 'Egypt (composed of Upper and Lower Egypt)'. A handful of toponyms have dual forms of no obvious significance: **אֶפְרַיִם** 'Ephraim', **קִרְיַתַיִם** 'Kiryathaim', and the *Qere* of 'Jerusalem', **יְרוּשָׁלַיִם** (the Kethiv is apparently **יְרוּשָׁלַם**).

7.4 Plural

a

Whereas English largely restricts its use of the plural to enumerate countables, the Hebrew plural is used with many different significations. It has a variety of basic uses, chiefly with countable and collective nouns, and a special set of senses with abstract nouns. The honorific plurals are important for theological and literary reasons.

b

Some points of morphology are worth noting. The standard plural ending *-im* has overtaken many of the occurrences of the enclitic *mem* (see 9.8); thus some cases in which a plural form seems difficult may, in fact, be in error. The Hebrew plural ending *-im* (also found in Phoenician) is rarely replaced by *-in* (standard in Aramaic

and Moabite). This occurs in several poetic passages as well as in later books, for example, אַחֲרֵי 'other' ([Job 31:10](#)), אִי 'islands' ([Ezek 26:18](#)), חֲטִיין 'wheat' ([Ezek 4:9](#)), חַיִּין 'life' ([Job 24:22](#)), יָמִין 'days' ([Dan 12:13](#)), מְדִיין 'garments' ([Judg 5:10](#)), מִלִּין 'words' ([Job 4:2](#)), מְלָכִין 'kings' ([Prov 31:3](#)), עִיין 'rubble' ([Mic 3:12](#)), צִדְנִין 'Sidonians' ([1 Kgs 11:33](#)), רָצִין 'runners' ([2 Kgs 11:13](#)), שׁוֹמְמִין 'desolate' ([Lam 1:4](#)). The Hebrew plural endings are almost always external to the singular form, but there are some signs of the use of changes in the base to form plurals, as in other Semitic languages. These include (1) the base-stretching -ōh- syllable found in the plural of biradical nouns (sing. אֵל 'god,'

pl. אֱלֹהִים; the rare, alternative singular, אֱלֹה, is probably a secondary formation; sing. אַמָּה 'maid,' pl. אֲמָהוֹת); (2) perhaps a variant base in the plurals of *segholate* nouns (sing. מֶלֶךְ 'king,' pl. מְלָכִים); and (3) the geminating plurals of nouns from geminate roots (הַר 'hill,' regular pl. הָרִים, geminating pl. הַרְרִי, only in poetry; חֵץ 'arrow,' pl. חֲצִיִּים but חֲצִצִּיִּים; חֹק 'decree,' pl. חֻקִּים but חֻקֵּי; עָם 'people,' pl. עַמִּים but also עַמִּי, עַמִּיִּים; two rare nouns show only geminating plurals: צֶלַח 'shadow' yields צִלְלִים and תֵּדַע 'injury' yields תִּדְכָּכִים).¹¹

7.4.1 Countables, Collectives, and Extensions

a

The most common use of the plural is to refer to more than one or two of a countable noun.

1. כְּדָרְלָעֹמֶר וְהַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר
אִתּוֹ Chedorlaomer and the kings allied with him
[Gen 14:5](#)
2. הָיוּ שָׂרֶיהָ כְּאַיִלִּים Her princes are like harts.
[Lam 1:6](#)
3. וְאֵת כָּל-קִירוֹת הַבַּיִת מִסָּב
קָלַע פְּתוּחֵי מְקֻלָּעוֹת
כְּרוּבִים וְתַמְרוֹת וּפְטוּרֵי
צִצִּים All the walls of the house round about he
carved with engravings of carvings of
cherubs and palms and openings of
blossoms. [1 Kgs 6:29](#)

Such plurals may be repeated for emphasis (cf. 7.2.3c).¹²

4. וַיִּצְבְּרוּ אֹתָם חֲמָרִם חֲמָרִם They piled them into heaps.
[Exod 8:10](#)
5. עָשָׂה הַנַּחֲלָה הַזֶּה גְּבִים
גְּבִים: I will make this (dry) wadi into pools.
[2 Kgs 3:16](#)
6. הַמִּוֹנִים הַמִּוֹנִים בְּעֵמֶק
הַחֲרוּץ Multitudes, multitudes in the Valley of
Decision!
[Joel 4:14](#)

b

The plural of a singular collective noun can indicate composition, that is, that the collectivity has been broken

apart (cf. 6.3.2f). Thus for the following vegetable nouns the singular refers to the product in its natural state, while the plural refers to the gathered, measured, cooked or sewn material. (On the theory that vegetables are for eating, etc., this is sometimes called the plural of result.)

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- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 7. | חֹטֶה | חֹטִים | wheat |
| 8. | כֶּסֶם | כֶּסִּים | spelt |
| 9. | פֶּשֶׁת | פֶּשְׁתִּים | flax |
| 10. | שְׂעָרָה | שְׂעָרִים | barley |
| 11. | בְּיָמֵי קְצִיר־חֹטִים | | during wheat harvest |
- [Gen 30:14](#)

Generally human blood in its natural state in the body is called דָּם; after it has been spilled, the plural form is used.

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 12. | קוֹל דְּמִי אָחִיךָ צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי | Your brother's blood cries out to me. |
|-----|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
- [Gen 4:10](#)

Animal blood is always referred to in the singular.

c

Plurals of extension indicate that the referent of the noun is inherently large or complex; the plural quality is the result not of a countable multiplicity, but of a multiplicity that is nonetheless perceived as real. The plural may be variable; English 'water' designates most quantities from the smallest up to the very great, but truly enormous quantities take the plural: 'the waters of the Great Lakes.' Many plurals of extension are invariable; some English examples refer to body parts, literal ('guts') or metaphorical ('brains, wits, looks,'), while others refer to complex non-animate entities ('ashes, contents, dregs, stairs'), some abstract ('thanks, amends, auspices'). In Hebrew, some body parts are always plural, for example, פָּנִים 'face' and אַחֲרָיִם 'back'; צְנָאָרִים 'neck' is much more common than the singular. Also pluralia tantum are two words referring to areas around a person while reclining, מְרִאשׁוֹת 'area around the head,' and מְרִגְלוֹת 'area around the feet.'

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 13. | וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֲרָי וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרָאוּ | You will see my back, but my face must not be seen. |
|-----|---|---|
- [Exod 33:23](#)

d

Just as English contrasts 'water : waters,' so Hebrew contrasts יָם '(a) sea' and יַמִּים 'sea(s), surface of the sea, etc.'; the related term מַעְמָקִים 'depths' is always plural. A region across a nearby boundary or body of water is עֵבֶר, while נָהָר עֵבֶרִי (Isa 7:20) is the 'region across the (Great) River,' Trans-Euphratia. This pattern should not be looked for everywhere; both מִרְחָק and מִרְחָקִים refer to 'distance.'

e

Complex inanimate nouns are referred to sometimes with plural forms, for example, אֹהֶלִים means 'dwelling, encampment' (as well as 'tents'), as do both מִשְׁכָּנִים and מִשְׁכָּנוֹת; the singulars of both tend to be reserved for a special religious sense, namely, אֹהֶל for the Tent (of Meeting) and מִשְׁכָּן for the Tabernacle. Compare also מִשְׁכָּבִים for 'bed,' alongside מִשְׁכָּב 'bed' (but also 'the act of lying down').

7.4.2 Abstracts and the Like

a

An abstract noun is frequently expressed by a plural, which may have originally signified the diverse concrete manifestations of a quality or state. These plurals are frequently built on the adjectival qātūl and qittūl patterns (see 5.3d, 5.4). The singular of abstract plurals is rarely attested. Such plurals may refer to qualities.

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1. אִישׁ מְדַבֵּר תְּהַפְּכוֹת: men whose speaking is perverse (lit., men speaking perverse things)
[Prov 2:12](#)
2. אִישׁ אֱמוּנָה רַב־בְּרָכוֹת A faithful man will be richly blessed.¹³
[Prov 28:20](#)
3. כִּי לֹא עִם־בִּינֹת הוּא For this is a people without understanding.
[Isa 27:11](#)

Other abstract nouns specifying qualities include אֹנִים 'strength' ([Isa 40:26](#)), בִּטְחוֹת 'security' ([Job 12:6](#)), מְבִטָּחִים 'security' ([Isa 32:18](#), [Jer 2:37](#); sing. frequent), הָוִוֹת 'evil, destruction' ([Ps 5:10](#)), חֲמוּדוֹת 'excellence' ([Dan 9:23](#)), מַחְמוּדִים 'charm' ([Cant 5:16](#)), חֲקָפוֹת 'shame' ([Dan 12:2](#)), דְּעוֹת 'knowledge' ([1 Sam 2:3](#), [Job 36:4](#); sing. דָּעָה four times), יְשׁוּעָה 'salvation' ([Isa 26:18](#); [Ps 18:51](#), [28:8](#), [42:6](#), [44:5](#); sing. frequent), מִיִּשְׁרִים 'uprightness' ([Isa 33:15](#)), מִמְרָרִים 'bitterness' ([Job 9:18](#)), מִמְתָּקִים 'sweetness' ([Cant 5:16](#)), שִׂעֲשׂוּעִים 'delight' ([Prov 8:30](#)).

b

Abstract nouns may also refer to states or conditions.

4. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון מִשָּׁרֵת מֹשֶׁה מִבְּחָרָיו Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since his youth
[Num 11:28](#)
5. וְהוּא אִשָּׁה בְּתוּלִיָּה יָקָח: The woman he marries must be a virgin.
[Lev 21:13](#)
6. בֶּן־זִקְנִים הוּא לוֹ a son born to him in his old age
[Gen 37:3](#)

Other nouns of state include כְּלוּלָה 'engagement' ([Jer 2:2](#)), נְעוּרִים 'youth' ([Isa 54:6](#)), סִנְיָרִים 'dimsightedness' ([Gen 19:11](#)), עֲלוּמִים 'youth' ([Ps 89:46](#)), שִׁכְלִים 'childlessness' ([Isa 49:20](#)).

c

A repeated series of actions or a habitual behavior can be designated by a plural, and that term can have an abstract sense: the תַּנְחֻמִּים [\(Jer 16:7\)](#) is 'a cup' not of repeated acts of comfort, but 'a cup of consolation,' a cup that itself gives 'consolation' by the drinking of it.

7. קַח־לָךְ אִשָּׁת זָנוֹנִים Take to yourself an adulterous wife.
[Hos 1:2](#)
8. כִּי יוֹם נָקָם לִיהוָה שָׁנָה שְׁלוֹמִים לְרִיב צִיּוֹן: For YHWH has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution to uphold Zion's cause.

Other abstracts based on actions include אֶהְיֶה 'fornication,' חֲנֻטִים 'embalming,' כְּפָרִים 'atonement,' מִלֵּאִים 'installation,' פְּתוּחִים 'engraving.'

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7.4.3 Honorifics and the Like

a

1.	<p>אַתָּה רָצַצְתָּ רֹאשֵׁי לוֹיֹתָיִם תִּתְּנֵנוּ מֵאֲכָל לָעָם לְצִיִּים: שִׁבַּרְתָּ רֹאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים עַל־הַמַּיִם:</p>	<p>You broke the heads of the monster in the water.</p>
2.	<p>הוּא רֹאשִׁית דְּרָכֵי־אֵל הִנֵּה־נָא לְחוֹ בִמְתָּנָיו ... הִנֵּה־נָא בְּהַמוֹת ...</p>	<p>Behold Behemoth ...</p> <p>Behold his strength in his loins ...</p> <p>He is the first of God's ways(?).</p>

[Ps 74:13–14](#)
[Job 40:15, 16, 19](#)

Related to this intensification is a kind of generalization whereby a whole species of animal is designated by a plural form.¹⁵

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 3. | וְעַל־עֵיר בֶּן־אַתְנֹות: | on a colt, the foal of a donkey
Zech 9:9 |
| 4. | דוֹמָה דּוֹרֵי לְצִבִּי אוֹ
לְעֶפֶר הָאֵילִים | My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag.
Cant 2:9 |

b

These animal uses are overshadowed by similar plurals used in reference or address to humans or to God, the honorific uses. Most honorific plurals in the Bible involve the God of Israel, and the most common of these is אֱלֹהִים, used about twenty-five hundred times. When used of the God of Israel, this term usually takes singular agreement (אֱלֹהִים צַדִּיק 'a just God,' [Ps 7:10](#));¹⁶ when used of various gods, it takes plural agreement (אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים 'other gods,' [Exod 20:3](#); cf. [Exod 12:12](#)).

5. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים
בְּחֶלֶם גַּם אֲנִכִּי יִרְעֶתִי
- God said to him in a dream, 'Yes, I know ...
- Gen 20:6

Other honorific plurals used for the God of Israel include קדושים 'Holy One' and אדנים 'Lord.'

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6. וְדַעַת קְדָשִׁים בִּינָה: Knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
[Prov 9:10](#)
7. יְהוָה פֶּלֶל־הָהוּא אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים YHWH ... is God of gods and Lord of lords.
[Deut 10:17](#)
8. אֲדֹנָינוּ YHWH is our Lord.
[Ps 8:2, 10](#)
9. הוֹדוּ לַאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים Give praise to the Lord of lords.
[Ps 136:3](#)

The singular אֲדֹנִי is used of God only in the phrase כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אֲדֹנִי ([Josh 3:11](#), [13](#), etc.).

c

Humans may be referred to with honorific plurals, chiefly בָּעָלִים 'master' (not 'husband') and אֲדֹנִים 'lord.' Both these plurals occur generally with suffixes, the first only with third-singular suffixes.

10. יָדַע שׁוֹר קִנְהוֹ וַחֲמֹר אָבוֹס בָּעָלָיו The ox knows its owner, the donkey its master's manger.
[Isa 1:3](#)
11. הַחֲכָמָה תַּחֲיֶה בָּעָלֶיהָ: Wisdom preserves the life of its possessor.
[Qoh 7:12](#)
12. אֲדֹנֵינוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ־דָּוִד הַמְּלִיךְ אֶת־שְׁלֹמֹה: Our lord, King David, has made Solomon king.
[1 Kgs 1:43](#)

d

A related use of the honorific plural involves participles used to refer to God (## 13–15) or humans (## 16–17). The divine references favor the verb עָשָׂה (see # 13 below and [Isa 22:11](#), [54:5](#); [Ps 149:2](#)).

13. אֵיךְ אֱלֹהֵי עָשִׂי Where is God my Maker?
[Job 35:10](#)
14. יְהוָה לִי בְּעֹזִי YHWH is with me as my helper.
[Ps 118:7](#)
15. בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטִיָּהֶם he who created the heavens and stretched them out
[Isa 42:5](#)
16. כְּחִנֵּף שֶׁבֶט וְאֶת־מְרִימֹו as if a rod were to wield him who lifts it up
[Isa 10:15](#)
17. וְאַתָּה הֵייתָ בְּעֹכְרִי You are my troubler.
[Judg 11:35](#)

e

The word אֲדֹנִי 'lord' may be used in the singular or the plural to refer to a divine or human lord; like other honorific terms, אֲדֹנִי can be used with a first-person pronominal suffix, אֲדֹנָי, plural אֲדֹנָיִם. How is this last form

related to the similar form אֲדֹנִי, used over four hundred times of the God of Israel? What is the -ay ending? The debate has been

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considerable.¹⁷ Some scholars think that the title is a first-person singular suffixed form of the plural noun אֲדֹנִים; as such the form is an honorific plural, a plural of majesty meaning 'my Lord.' This interpretation makes excellent sense in passages where YHWH's servants and worshipers address him. It also finds support in the fact that the first-person suffixed forms, both singular and plural (אֲדֹנִי, אֲדֹנֵינוּ), are used only with reference to people (cf. [Gen 23:6](#), [19:2](#)). Others contend that the -ay is a substantival affirmative denoting emphasis by reinforcing the root and the term means 'Lord par excellence. Lord of all.' A number of arguments support this view. אֲדֹנִי occurs in passages where God speaks of himself and where accordingly the reference to 'my Lord' is unlikely (e.g., [Ezek 13:9](#), [23:49](#); [Job 28:28](#)). It also occurs in passages in which the human speaker is plural, making a singular suffix seem incongruous. ([Ps 44:24](#)).

f

The sense 'Lord of all' fits all texts. There is Ugaritic data to support the existence of a -y (= āy?) affirmative, with an emphatic or intensifying sense. The earliest biblical translators did not render the term with a pronoun; the Septuagint, for example, has *kyrios* 'lord,' not *kyrios mou* 'my lord.' אֲדֹנִי appears to be a divine epithet when used in conjunction with YHWH or as a parallel to it.

18. מִכּוֹן לְשִׁבְתֶּךָ פָּעִלְתָּ יְהוָה
מִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנִי כוֹנֵן יָדֶיךָ:
YHWH, you made a place for your
dwelling, a sanctuary, O Lord, your
hands established.
[Exod 15:17](#)

We conclude therefore that although אֲדֹנִי may mean 'my Lord' in some passages where God is being addressed (e.g., [Gen 15:2](#)), it more probably means 'O Lord of all' everywhere.

Footnotes:

1. John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 282.
2. They are sometimes called by the Latin term *plurale tantum* (pl. *pluralia tantum*).
3. English used to distinguish second-person singular pronouns (thou, thee, thy, thine) and plural (ye, you, your, yours), but the plural forms have taken over completely now. In Early Modern English translations of the Bible God was addressed in the singular ("Heare thou then in heaven, in thy dwelling place," [1 Kgs 8:39](#), *Geneva Bible*, 1560); in some modern translations the archaic singular is preserved only in addresses to God ("Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place," RSV, 1952). In most European languages with honorifics it is the intimate form that is used for addresses to God ("Toi, écoute au ciel, où tu résides," *Bible de Jérusalem*).
4. On number in Hebrew generally, see, e.g., D. Michel, *Grundlegung einer hebräischen Syntax* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener. 1977), 1.83-89.
5. Such uses of the singular exist also in some European languages, but they are not as common as in Hebrew; note that the Latin phrase 'homo est mortalis' is equivalent to 'homines sunt mortales.'
6. For the distributive use of number words, see [Gen 7:2](#), [Josh 3:12](#); for the distributive use of the self-imprecation ḥāllā, see [2 Sam 21:20](#).
7. Note also the use in [Ps 87:5](#) and a variety of late prose texts ([Esth 1:22](#); [Ezra 10:14](#); [Neh 13:24](#); [1 Chr 26:13](#), [28:14–15](#); [2 Chr 8:14](#), [11:12](#), [19:5](#)).
8. Cf. [Prov 20:10](#) for the same expression in a similar context.
9. Dual forms are confined to substantives; adjectives, pronouns, and verbs are inflected for singular and plural forms only. More productive systems of the dual are found in Arabic, Akkadian, and Ugaritic.
10. The noun זָרוּעַ has both a masculine plural, זָרְעִים, and a feminine plural, זָרְעוֹת, but no dual.

11. The chief base-changing plural pattern in Semitic is the Arabic broken plural. On pattern-replacement plurals in Semitic generally and in Akkadian in particular, see J. Huehnergard, "Three Notes on Akkadian Morphology," *Working with No Data*. *Semitic and Egyptian Studies Presented to Thomas O. Lambdin*, ed. D. M. Golomb and S. T. Hollis (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 181–93. He also discusses the first two points about Hebrew plurals.

12. Note also [Num 3:9](#) = [8:16](#); [Gen 32:17](#); [Isa 6:2](#).

13. The singular אִמּוֹנָה is used frequently; the masculine אִמּוֹן occurs once in the singular and five times in the plural.

14. For תַּנִּינִים as a true plural see [Gen 1:21](#); for בְּהֵמוֹת as a true plural see [Ps 8:8](#) (note כָּלָם with the preceding combination of collective and plural). It may be that תַּרְפִּים is a plural of this sort, though in [1 Sam 19:13](#) one object seems to be referred to with that term.

15. A related pattern may be the use of the plural form to indicate that any one of several choices is acceptable. Thus in [Deut 17:5](#) a person is to be sent out אֶל־שַׁעְרֶיךָ, where the sense suggests the gloss 'to (any one of) your (various city) gates.'

16. There are a few exceptions, concentrated curiously in the Pentateuch. The agreement is mixed in, e.g., [Josh 24:19](#), which has plural predicate adjectives and a singular verb.

17. For a review, see O. Eissfeldt, "ʾadhôn," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 1. 59–72; we follow Eissfeldt for the most part.

8 Nominative Function and Verbless Clauses

[8.1 Case/Function](#)

[8.2 Remnants of the Case System](#)

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[8.4 Word Order in Verbless Clauses](#)

[4.1 Clauses of Identification](#)

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8.1 Case/Function

a

The systems of inflection or accidence in a language serve to indicate the ways in which words in phrases, clauses, and sentences are related to each other. Nominal inflection in many languages includes the categories of number and gender, and we have seen some of the ways these categories work in the lexicon and syntax of Biblical Hebrew. Another system of nominal inflection, case, is found in related languages and was used in earlier forms of Hebrew; although Biblical Hebrew does not use case, this system provides a convenient framework for studying the use of nouns in Hebrew.¹

b

A system of cases is a system of nominal functions; words in the same case have the same nominal function. Moderately elaborate case systems distinguish five or six functions; such systems are found in Greek, Latin, and Turkish. Some languages, notably Finnish, have vastly more complex systems.² English has a simple case system, differentiating for the noun a common case ('tiger') and a genitive or possessive case ('tiger's'). Some English pronouns have two cases, but a number have three.³

subjective (nominative)	I	he	she	we	they	who
objective (accusative)	me	him	her	us	them	who (m)
possessive (genitive)	my	his	her	our	their	whose

The Classical Semitic case system is like English in distinguishing sometimes two and sometimes three cases. This system is found in Akkadian and Classical Arabic; it has largely died out in modern Arabic dialects. There is abundant evidence for the case system in Early Northwest Semitic (1.3.1), in Ugaritic and the Canaanite glosses in the Amarna letters.

c

In the Classical Semitic system there are usually three case endings in the singular (thus called triptote) and two in the plural and dual (thus called diptote).⁴

	singular	plural	dual
nominative	-u	-ū	-ā
genitive	-i	-ī	-ay
accusative	-a		

Thus Early Hebrew **malk-* 'king' (later *mélek*) would be inflected in approximately this way:

	singular	plural	dual
nominative	malku	mal(a)kū	malkā
genitive	malki	mal(a)kī	malkay
accusative	malka		

During the last centuries of the second millennium, the case system disappeared. The final short vowels of the singular case inflection were lost, and the ending of the dual and plural genitive-accusative (or oblique) became

associated with a final -m, yielding the Classical Hebrew endings, dual -aym >-áyim and plural -im. There are various remnants of the case system to be found in the Bible, largely in names (8.2).

d

Biblical Hebrew is a language without a case system, though it is often helpful to look at various aspects of its nominal use in a case framework. In a formal descriptive analysis of Biblical Hebrew we cannot properly speak of cases. Nevertheless, from a historical, comparative, and syntactic viewpoint we can differentiate three distinct "cases," that is, sets of syntactic functions, of the noun: nominative, genitive, and accusative. It is in this latter sense that we employ the terms "case" and "function."

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8.2 Remnants of the Case System

a

A few remnants of early case endings still survive in the Hebrew Bible.

b

The old nominative plural ending -ū can be seen in the place name פְּנֵי־אֵל 'face of God' (Gen 32:32); the byform פְּנֵי־אֵל (Gen 32:31) may contain the old ending of the genitive-accusative plural. The meanings of the similarly shaped names בְּתוּאֵל (Gen 22:22), לְמוּאֵל (Prov 31:1), and נְמוּאֵל (Num 26:9) are unknown, as is that of חֲמוּטָל (2 Kgs 23:31)~חֲמוּטָל (2 Kgs 24:18 Kethiv).

c

The old genitive singular ending is preserved and lengthened in the suffixed forms of some monosyllabic words for family members: אָב 'father,' but אָבִיךָ 'your father'; אָח 'brother,' but אָחִיךָ 'your brother'; חָם 'father-in-law,' but חָמִידָה 'her father-in-law'.⁵ אָבִי and אָחִי also serve as the first element in a great many compound personal names; there the ¹ may be a case vowel or the first-person singular pronoun: אָבִי־מֶלֶךְ 'the/my father is king' and so also אָבִי־נָדָב, אָחִי־מַעֲזִי, אָחִי־מַעֲזִי; cf. מֶלֶךְ־כִּי־צָדִיק 'my king is righteous' and גִּבְרִי־אֵל 'the/my man is God'.⁶

d

It is possible that the old accusative ending may still be seen in a few forms, for example, לַיְלָה 'night' and אֶרֶץ 'land.' These are probably rather faded survivors of the directional he suffix (10.5). Grammarians used to derive that suffix from the old accusative ending, but evidence from Ugarit now rules out this explanation.⁷

e

An obscure phenomenon often associated with the case system is presented by the suffixes of connection (*litterae compaginis*), otherwise debated and unexplained -ī and -ō endings usually found on a noun in construct (see 9.2).⁸ The second of these is rather rare, but the hireq compaginis occurs in a variety of passages, almost all poetic. If these endings were to be treated as case endings, the -ī would be genitive and the -ō either accusative (< a) or nominative (< u). No such patterns emerge from the data; if anything, the hireq compaginis is most common on nouns serving a nominative function, and similar forms in Amarna suggest that the ¹ is not a genitive ending.⁹ The hireq occurs on both masculine (## 1–3) and feminine (## 4–6) forms in construct.

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1.

בְּנֵי־אֶתְנָן

his ass's colt

Gen 49:11

that leaves the flock

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 2. | צֵאן | Zech 11:17 |
| 3. | שֹׁכֵנִי סִנֶּה | the dweller in the bush
Deut 33:16 |
| 4. | גָּנַבְתִּי יוֹם וּגְנַבְתִּי לַיְלָה: | that which was stolen by day or stolen by night
Gen 31:39 |
| 5. | עַל־דְּבָרְתִי מֶלְכִי־צֶדֶק: | after the order of Melchizedek
Ps 110:4 |
| 6. | מִלְאָתִי מִשְׁפָּט | she that was full of justice
Isa 1:21 |

The ending also occurs before closely bound phrases, prepositional (## 7–10) and adverbial (# 11).

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|---|
| 7. | נִאֲדָרִי בַכֹּחַ | glorious in power
Exod 15:6 |
| 8. | רַבָּתִי בַגּוֹיִם | she that was great among the nations ¹⁰
Lam 1:1 |
| 9. | שָׂרָתִי בַמְּדִינוֹת | a princess among the provinces
Lam 1:1 |
| 10. | אָסְרִי לַגֶּפֶן עִירָה | binding his foal to a vine
Gen 49:11 |
| 11. | חֲצָבִי מְרוֹם קָבְרוֹ | who hews his tomb on the height
Isa 22:16 |

Even in poetic texts, these forms are erratically distributed; note the two instances in [Gen 49:11](#) and three instances in the opening verse of Lamentations.

8.3 Nominative Function

a

The nominative function comprehends four roles: the subject (of both verbal and verbless clauses; see 4.4), the predicate nominative (of verbless clauses), the nominative absolute, and the vocative (in any sort of clause; see 4.7).¹¹ A noun or noun equivalent may fill these roles.

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | הַנָּחָשׁ הַשִּׂיאָנִי | The serpent (SUBJECT) deceived me.
Gen 3:13 |
| 2. | יְהוָה הַצַּדִּיק | YHWH (SUBJECT) is the one in the right (PREDICATE NOMINATIVE). Exod 9:27 |
| 3. | הוֹשֶׁעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ: | Save (me), O king (VOCATIVE).
2 Sam 14:4 |
| 4. | הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי
הִיא נָתַתָּה־לִּי מִן־הָעֵץ | The woman (NOMINATIVE ABSOLUTE) whom you put with me—she (SUBJECT) gave me from the tree.
Gen 3:12 |

b

For verbal clauses the basic Hebrew word order is verb + subject (VS). This verb-first word order usually obtains where a clause has no introductory material (# 5), where a clause begins with a waw-relative (traditionally "waw-

consecutive") construction (# 6), or where a clause begins with adverbial materials (# 7).

5. דְּבַקָּה נַפְשִׁי אַחֲרֶיךָ My soul clings to you.
[Ps 63:9](#)
6. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים And God said ...
[Gen 1:3](#)
7. אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה
דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם After these things, the word of YHWH
came to Abram. [Gen 15:1](#)

After a *waw*-disjunctive (39.2.3) the word order is normally *waw* + noun (or its equivalent) + verb.

8. (בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ:)
וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֶּהוֹ וּבָהוּ (God created the heavens and the earth.)
Now the earth was without form and
devoid of life.
[Gen 1:1–2](#)
9. וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת־חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ Now hā'ādām knew Eve, his wife.
[Gen 4:1](#)

When two clauses in contrast are joined by a *waw*-adversative, a species of *waw*-disjunctive, the subject often comes first in both.

10. הוּא יְשׁוּפֵךְ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה
תְּשׁוּפֵנּוּ עָקֵב: He will crush your head, and you will
strike his heel.
[Gen 3:15](#)
11. אַבְרָם יָשַׁב בְּאֶרֶץ־כְּנָעַן
וְלוֹט יָשַׁב בְּעָרֵי הַכְּפָר Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, but
Lot dwelt in the cities of the valley.
[Gen 13:12](#)

c

In verbless (or nominal) clauses a noun or its equivalent is juxtaposed with the subject to indicate a predication.

12. שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָלָה בְּנֵי־נֹחַ These three (SUBJECT) are the sons of
Noah (PREDICATE).
[Gen 9:19](#)

The rules governing the sequence of the subject and predicate deserve separate treatment (8.4).

d

The vocative (or nominative of address) designates the one to whom the speaker is addressing a statement. It is most clearly identifiable where the speaker places a definite noun in apposition to a second-person pronoun (# 13) or an imperative (# 14).

13. בֶּן־מִי אַתָּה הַנָּעַר Whose son are you, young man?
[1 Sam 17:50](#)
14. הִתְרַשִּׁים שְׁמַעוּ וְהַעֲוִרִים
הַבֵּיטוּ Hear, you deaf; look, you blind.
[Isa 42:18](#)

8.4 Word Order in Verbless Clauses

a

The order of subject (S) and predicate (Pred) in verbless clauses varies tremendously. In investigating the major patterns, we follow the study of Francis I. Andersen.¹² An understanding of the various clausal patterns depends on a variety of factors. The first is the definiteness of predicate and subject. If the predicate is definite, it identifies a definite subject (total overlap of S and Pred); if it is indefinite, it classifies a definite subject (partial overlap). Roughly speaking, an identifying clause has the order S-Pred and a classifying clause the reverse, although if the predicate is a noun with a suffix, the order is less predictable. The other factors relate to the grammatical context: first, is the clause independent (and if so, is it in contrast to what precedes, i.e., disjunctive, or not) or subordinate to another clause; and second, is the clause declarative (making a statement), interrogative (asking a question), or precative (expressing a wish). The word order in subordinate clauses is much less predictable than in independent clauses, as is the word order in precative clauses. Interrogatives tend, on the whole, to follow the same patterns as declaratives. Most of the syntactic structures treated here are those of independent declarative clauses.¹³

8.4.1 Clauses of Identification**a**

In a verbless clause of identification ("Who or what is the subject?"), the two parts of the clause usually occur in the order subject-predicate.

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- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | הִיא־צֶ'עַר: | It is Zoar.
Gen 14:2 |
| 2. | אֲנִי יְהוָה: | I am YHWH.
Exod 6:2 |
| 3. | הוּא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן: | That is Moses and Aaron.
Exod 6:27 |
| 4. | אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת הָאָנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר | These are the names of the men who ...
Num 13:16 |
| 5. | שֵׁם הָאֶחָד פִּישׁוֹן | The name of the first (river) is Pishon.
Gen 2:11 |

Although suffixed nouns occasionally present exceptions to this order, they often show it. (Example # 7 is an interrogative, also with the order S-Pred.)

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|---|
| 6. | הוּא אֲדֹנִי | He is my master.
Gen 24:65 |
| 7. | הֲזֶה אֶחֱיִיכֶם הַקָּטָן | Is this your youngest brother?
Gen 43:29 |

As the examples suggest, a pronoun is often the subject of such clauses.¹⁴

b

It is possible for a verbless clause to contain three rather than two parts; the relationship between subject and predicate may be effected through what is often called a pleonastic or dummy pronoun (pleo), personal or demonstrative.

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|--|
| 8. | עֵשָׂו הוּא אֲדוֹם: | Esau (, he) is Edom.
Gen 36:8 |
|----|---------------------|--|

The pronoun is here called pleonastic (i.e., redundant) since the clause עֵשָׂו אֲדוֹם is grammatical. On this view,

the clause is structured S-pleo-Pred. On another view, the predication can be associated with **הוא אֶדוֹם**, as S-Pred, while **עֵשָׂו** is taken as a nominative absolute (sentential topic or focus marker; Foc; cf. 4.7 and 16.3.3).¹⁵ This analysis would suggest the gloss 'As for Esau, he is Edom'; the structure would then be Foc S-Pred.¹⁶

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- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 9. | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא פֶּעֶבֶר
לִפְנֶיךָ | YHWH your God (, he) is the one passing before you.

Deut 31:3 |
| 10. | בְּנֵנוּ זֶה סוֹרֵר וּמָרָה | As for our son, he is stubborn and rebellious.
Deut 21:20 |
| 11. | אַתָּה זֶה בְּנִי עֵשָׂו | You are my son Esau.
Gen 27:24 |

8.4.2 Clauses of Classification

a

In a verbless clause of classification in which the predicate refers to a general class of which the subject is a member, the two parts of the clause generally occur in the order predicate-subject.¹⁷ Clauses of classification answer the question, "What is the subject like?" (Example # 6 contains a partitive phrase, min + a plural, meaning 'one of' the object or individuals named; cf. 4.4.1b.)

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | כִּנִּים אֲנַחְנוּ | We are honest.
Gen 42:11 |
| 2. | טָמֵא הוּא: | He is unclean.
Lev 13:36 |
| 3. | טוֹב-הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּרְתָּ
לַעֲשׂוֹת: | What you propose to do is good (lit., Good is the thing which ...).

Deut 1:14 |
| 4. | מְעֻנָּה אֱלֹהֵי קָדֶם | The eternal God is a dwelling place.
Deut 33:27 |
| 5. | עֲגוּר אַרְיֵה יְהוּדָה | Judah is a lion cub. ¹⁸
Gen 49:9 |
| 6. | מִיִּלְדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה: | This is one of the Hebrew children.
Exod 2:6 |

If the predicate contains a suffixed form, this order may also be used.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|
| 7. | אָחִי הוּא | He is a brother of mine.
Gen 20:5 |
| 8. | אִשְׁתּוֹ בְּנִךְ הִיא | She is a wife of your son.
Lev 18:15 |

The predicate-subject order is also favored if the subject is an infinitive.

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- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 9. | לֹא-טוֹב הֵיטָּת הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ | It is not good for the man to be alone (lit., The man's being by himself is not good). |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|

10. הָלוֹא טוֹב לָנוּ שׁוּב מִצְרָיִמָּה:
Gen 2:18
Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?
11. רַב-לָכֶם שָׁבַת בְּהָר הַזֶּה:
Num 14:3
You have stayed at this mountain long enough.
Deut 1:6

b

If a so-called pleonastic pronoun is used in a classifying clause, the subject precedes the predicate and the pronoun follows it (i.e., S-Pred-pleo). On this analysis it seems that the pleonastic pronoun reverses the usual clause structure. If, however, we take the apparent "subject" as a nominative absolute or focus marker and the so-called pleonastic pronoun as the true subject, the basic order of classifying clauses is preserved: Foc-Pred - S.

12. אִישׁ רֹאשׁ לְבֵית-אָבִתּוֹ הוּא:
As for each man (FOCUS), he (SUBJECT) is head of his ancestral family (PREDICATE) or Each man is head of his ancestral family.
Num 1:4
13. וְכָל-הַשָּׂרֵץ הַשָּׂרֵץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ שֶׁקֵץ הוּא:
And as for every swarming thing that swarms on the earth (FOCUS), it (SUBJECT) is an abomination (PREDICATE) or Every swarming thing that swarms on the earth is an abomination.
Lev 11:41

The nominative absolute construction serves here, as often, to clarify potentially complex constructions (see 4.7).

c

The basic order of classifying verbless clauses is, then, Pred-S. A variety of factors can reverse this pattern, notably contrast with preceding material and the use of a participle in the predicate.

d

If a clause of classification stands in contrast to (# 14) or in disjunction with (# 15) what precedes, then the order is S Pred.

14. הוֹאֲלֹתִי לַדְּבָר אֶל-אֲדָנִי וְאֲנֹכִי עָפָר וָאֶפֶר:
I presume to speak to the Lord, but I am dust and ashes!
Gen 10:27
15. וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וַיִּגְבַּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַאֲשֶׁר יָנִיחַ יָדוֹ וַיִּגְבַּר עַמְלֵק: וַיְדִי מֹשֶׁה כְּבִדִּים
It was the case that when Moses raised his hand Israel grew strong, while when he rested his hand Amaleq grew strong. Now Moses' hands were heavy!
Exod 17:11-12

e

The word order S-Pred is also found if the clause is declarative and the predicate contains a participle that, though it modifies the subject, is used in an essentially verbal way (37.6).

16. קוֹל דָּמִי אֲחִיךָ צֹעֲקִים
Your brother's blood is crying to me

אֱלִי מִן־הָאָדָמָה:

from the ground.

[Gen 4:10](#)

17. עֲמֶלֶק יוֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב

Amaleq lives in the Negev land.

[Num 13:29](#)

This rule does not apply if the clause is precative (the passive participle is common, ## 18–20) or if the participle is agentive (# 21, cf. 5.2; cf. [Num 35:16](#)).

18. אָרוּר כְּנָעַן

Cursed be Canaan.

[Gen 9:25](#)

19. אָרוּר הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר
יַעֲשֶׂה פֶסֶל

Cursed be the man who makes a
carved or cast image.

[Deut 27:15](#)

20. בֹּדֶךְ טֵנָאֵךְ וּמִשְׁאֲרֶתְךָ:

May your basket and your kneading
trough be blessed.

[Deut 28:5](#)

21. מְרַגְלִים אַתֶּם

You are spies.

[Gen 42:9](#)

In the following example, the pattern of S-Pred is used for both the contrasting clauses; this exception probably reflects the need to point up the contrast.

22. אֲרָרְךָ אָרוּר וּמְבָרְכְךָ
בָּרוּךְ:

May those who curse you be cursed,
and may those who bless you be
blessed.

[Gen 27:29](#)

f

In addition to these exceptions to the Pred-S pattern for classifying clauses, there are some kinds of predicates that seem to neutralize the word-order patterns.¹⁹ Either order may be expected if the predicate is a numeral (## 23–25), an adverb (## 26–27), or a prepositional phrase (## 28–33).²⁰

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23. עֲמֻדֵיהֶם עֶשְׂרֵה

Their posts are ten.

[Exod 27:12](#); cf. [Exod 27:14](#), [15](#), [16](#);
[38:10](#), [11](#), [12](#)

24. עֶשְׂרִים גֵּרָה הוּא:

It is twenty gerahs.

[Num 18:16](#)

25. תֵּשֵׂא אַמּוֹת אֶרְכָּהּ

Its length is nine cubits.

[Deut 3:11](#); cf. [Gen 6:15](#), [24:22](#); [Exod 25:10](#)

26. וּפְנֵיהֶם אַחֲרָנִית

And their faces were backward (i.e.,
they were facing backward).

[Gen 9:23](#)

27. וְשֵׁם אַחִימָן שֶׁשַׁי וְתַלְמִי

And Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai were
there.

[Num 13:22](#)

28. וְאַרְבַּע־מֵאוֹת אִישׁ עִמּוֹ:

And there are four hundred men with
him.

[Gen 32:7](#)

29. וַיהוָה אִתָּנוּ

And YHWH is with us.

30. הַנְּסִתָּרִת לַיהוָה [Num 14:9](#)
The secrets belong to YHWH.
31. וְעִמּוֹ אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ [Deut 29:20](#)
And there were four hundred men with him.
32. וְאִתּוֹ אֹהֲלִיאָב [Gen 33:1](#)
And Oholiab is with him.
33. בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן שָׁבֶתוֹן וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי שָׁבֶתוֹן: [Exod 38:23](#)
On the first day there shall be a rest, and on the eighth day there shall be a rest.
- [Lev 23:39](#)

9

The problems posed by the Shema ([Deut 6:4](#)) are numerous.²¹ After the initial imperative and vocative, **יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמַע** 'Hear, O Israel,' there follow four words. However they are construed, it is agreed that no closely comparable passage occurs. The simplest solution is to recognize two juxtaposed verbless clauses: (a) **לֵהֱיִנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ** 'YHWH is our God' (identifying clause, S-Pred); (b) **אֶחָד יְהוָה** 'YHWH is one' (classifying clause, S-Pred, with a numeral; cf. # 23). Few scholars favor such a parsing. Andersen takes ... **יְהוָה יְהוָה** as a discontinuous predicate, with the other two words as a discontinuous subject, 'Our one God is YHWH, YHWH.'²² Other proposed parsings take the first two words as subject (viz., 'YHWH our God is one YHWH')²³ or the first three words (viz., 'YHWH, our God, YHWH is one') or even the first word alone. It is hard to say if **אֶחָד** can serve as an adjective modifying **יְהוָה**. It is even less clear what the predicate **אֶחָד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ** would mean, though some scholars take it adverbially ('YHWH is our God, YHWH alone'). As Gerald Janzen observes, "the Shema does not conform exactly to any standard nominal sentence pattern," and further discussion falls outside the sphere of grammar.²⁴

Footnotes:

1. The traditional use of the case system as a component of advanced Hebrew grammatical study has come in for some justified criticism lately, but its usefulness as a tool of pedagogy and comparative study cannot be denied. For examples of the criticism, see J. Hoftijzer, "Remarks Concerning the Use of the Particle ־ in Classical Hebrew," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 14 (1965) 1–99, at 2–9; Harald Schweizer, "Was ist ein Akkusativ?—Ein Beitrag zur Grammatiktheorie," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 87 (1975) 133–45; J. Barr, "The Ancient Semitic Languages," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1968: 37–55, at 39–40; Richter, *GAHG* 1. 38; cf. A. Ungnad, *Hebräische Grammatik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1912) 52–54.
2. On case systems in general, see John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 289–302.
3. The Latinate case names are commonly used in Semitic studies: 'nominative' comes from *nominare* 'to name'; accusative from *accusare* 'to call to account'; genitive from *genere* 'to bear.' Some of the functions of the other Latin cases are usually handled in Hebrew with prepositions (dative, from *dare* 'to give'; ablative from *auferre* 'to remove') or other syntactic devices (vocative, from *vocare* 'to call').
4. Some singular nouns, belonging to well-defined groups, show diptotic inflection. On the system in general, see Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 16–17, 168–70. Cf. C. Rabin, "The Structure of the Semitic System of Case Endings," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Semitic Studies Held in Jerusalem, 19–23 July 1965* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1969) 190–204.
5. Note also the linking vowels on forms of *kōl* in which "the case-endings [have] the same vowel as that of the suffix," e.g., *kullāk* ([Mic 2:12](#)) and *kullah* (he with mappiq; [Isa 48:6](#)), with an accusative source for the *a* vowels;

kullēk ([Isa 14:29](#)), with a genitive source (-i-) for ē; and kullōh ([Isa 15:3](#)), with a nominative source (-u-) for ō; T. O. Lambdin apud J. Huehnergard, "Three Notes on Akkadian Morphology," *Working with No Data: Semitic and Egyptian Studies Presented to Thomas O. Lambdin*, ed. D. M. Golomb and S. T. Hollis (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 181–93, at 189 n. 47.

6. On the debate, see BL § 65g/ p. 524, who believe that the vowel is a pronominal suffix. The name of Melchisedeq is spelled on both occasions it is used ([Gen 14:18](#), [Ps 110:4](#)) with the elements of the name separated by a *maqṣep*, an unusual usage for Hebrew compound names.

7. For the outmoded view, see GKC § 90a / p. 249; for the Ugaritic evidence, see *UT* § 8.56. Note also ʾābī-milkā in [Gen 11:29](#), probably not another name for Haran, but an epithet, 'father of Milcah.'

8. This construction is not to be confused with the construction where the pronominal suffix anticipates the noun, for example, bəbōʾam hakkōhānīm 'at their entrance, the priests(') ([Ezek 42:14](#)) and perhaps bənō šippōr 'his son, Zippor('s)' ([Num 23:18](#)).

9. W. L. Moran, "The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. E. Wright (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961; rpt. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1979) 54–72, at 60.

10. This form may reflect the preceding rabbāfīʾam.

11. Note in particular that a vocative is not a (clausal) subject.

12. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 14; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970). Most of the examples treated here are independent verbless clauses, and thus our treatment avoids some of the more complex areas touched on by Andersen. For a rigorous review of Andersen's book, see J. Hoftijzer, "The Nominal Clause Reconsidered," *Vetus Testamentum* 23 (1973) 446–510; the comments of both Andersen and Hoftijzer are discussed in T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1985) 1–28, and in Richter, *GAHG* 3. 70–89. Other schemes for verbless clauses have been proposed, involving, in addition to identifying clauses, existential clauses, and in addition to classifying clauses, attributive, qualificational, and situational clauses. The older treatment of K. Oberhuber is still engaging: "Zur Syntax des Richterbuches: Der einfache Nominalsatz und die soy. Nominale Apposition," *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953) 2–45. Earlier stages of the Semitic languages probably did not use verbal morphemes for the predicative copula: see A. F. L. Beeston, "Reflections on Verbs 'To Be'," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29 (1984) 7–13.

13. The predicate may be discontinuous, i.e., part of it may precede the subject and part of it (often a prepositional phrase) may follow; the patterns created by such discontinuity are not treated here.

14. For some of the complexities associated with the use of specific words in the predicate, notably kōl and šēm, see Andersen, *Hebrew Verbless Clause*, 41.

15. This general class of constructions is discussed extensively by Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 67–77 (in verbless clauses, esp. 72–73), 93–99 (in general); cf. M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 78–86; and W. Gross, *Die Pendenskonstruktion im biblischen Hebräisch* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987) 105–46, esp. 128, 132–44. In verbless clauses the linking pronoun (hûʾ, hēm, zōʾt, etc.) is often called a copula or binder; this sense of *copula* should not be confused with the more regular description of hāyâ as a copula(r verb).

16. For a similar sentence with *hyy* see [Num 16:7](#). The order Pred-pleo-S is virtually nonexistent in identifying clauses in Biblical Hebrew, suggesting that the Foc-S-Pred analysis is correct for that form of the language. The only examples of identifying Pred-pleo-S are found in [Isa 9:14](#), zāqēn ū nešû-pānīm hūʾ hārōʾš. wenābīʾ-ššéqer hūʾ hazzānāb, 'The elder and honored one that one is the "head" [described in [Isa 9:13](#)]. The prophethood teacher—that one is the "tail" [described in [Isa 9:13](#)]. The grammar, as well as the peskier-type interpretation involved, are discussed by M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "Hebrew Syntax and the History of the Bible Text," *Textus* 8 (1973) 100–106; on the role of hūʾ/hīʾ as the sign of a gloss, Goshen-Gottstein's treatment may be contrasted with that proposed by M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 44–48, 461.

17. In addition to the groups of exceptions noted below, there are other exceptions; see, e.g., [Num 28:14](#) and [Ezek 27:3](#) (the subject in each case is pronoun), [Deut 3:5](#) (the predicate contains kol), [Gen 18:20](#) (subject and predicate are separated by kī).

18. The similar clause in [Deut 33:22](#) with different word order is probably a precative. Both clauses occur in archaic poems.

19. For examples of the order S-Pred in dependent clauses, see [Gen 13:14](#), [21:17](#); [Exod 12:13](#); [1 Sam 19:3](#) (all

with šām).

20. For examples of the order S-Pred, see [Gen 36:30](#), [Deut 33:8](#). For the opposite order, see [Lev 23:5](#), [Deut 32:35](#). In two neighboring dependent clauses, identical except for word order, both orders are used; see [Lev 13:45–46](#) (ʾāšer-bô hannégaʿ, ʾāšer hannégaʿbô).

21. See the discussion of J. G. Janzen, "On the Most Important Word in the Shema (Deuteronomy VI 4–5)," *Vetus Testamentum* 37 (1987) 280–300.

22. Andersen, *Hebrew Verbless Clause*, 47.

23. So, e.g., A. Niccacci and G. Begrich in reviews of this grammar on its first publication, *Liber Annuus* 39 (1989) 310–27, at 316, and *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 115 (1990) 734; Niccacci takes the predicate as *yhwh*, to which ʾhd is an apposition, roughly 'YHWH our God is YHWH, who is unique' or, 'Only YHWH our God is YHWH'; Begrich renders roughly 'YHWH is our God, YHWH alone.'

24. Though not beyond it. Cf. Janzen, "Shema," 296.

9 Genitive Function

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9.1 Modification Functions of the Noun

a

A noun in the nominative in a verbal clause may be a subject (related to the verb) or a vocative (related to the clause as a whole); all major roles in a verbless clause are nominative. It is possible to form a complete clause using nouns only in the nominative.

1. יְהוָה דִּבֶּר YHWH (SUBJECT) has spoken.
[Isa 1:2](#)
2. שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם Hear, O heavens (VOCATIVE).
[Isa 1:2](#)

Many phrasal and clausal structures require nouns (or pronouns) to stand in other functions. One group of these functions involves nouns that have a direct relation to the verb; this ad-verbial group is called the accusative.

3. בָּנִים גָּדְלֵתִי I (SUBJECT) have raised children (ACCUSATIVE).
[Isa 1:2](#)

In English grammar the accusative role shown in [Isa 1:2](#) is called the direct object, that is, the accusative is the object of the verb's action, and its status is not mediated (by, e.g., a preposition).

b

The other group of modifications covers other nouns, those which are neither the subject nor the modifiers of the verb; this (largely) ad-nominal group is called the genitive.¹ This is most often the case of a noun related to another noun.

4. נֶאֱצְרוּ אֶת־קֹדֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל They (SUBJECT) spurn the Holy One (OBJECT) of Israel (GENITIVE).
[Isa 1:4](#)
5. שָׂבַעְתִּי עֲלוֹת אֵילִים I (SUBJECT) am fed up with 'olôt (OBJECT) of rams (GENITIVE).
[Isa 1:11](#)

A pronoun may also fill the genitive slot in a clause.

An ox (SUBJECT) knows its (GENITIVE)

6. יָדַע שׁוֹר קִנְהוֹ owner (OBJECT).

[Isa 1:3](#)

The object of a preposition is also in the genitive; it is the preposition(al phrase) that is directly related to the verb.

7. וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי: And they (SUBJECT) rebel against (PREPOSITION) me (GENITIVE).

[Isa 1:2](#)

c

Thus beyond the nominative role, a noun may fit one of two roles (or groups of roles): it may modify the verb (accusative) or another noun (genitive). There is an important similarity these and other relations share: the modified element (or head) usually precedes the modifier (or dependent).² Thus in קִנְהוֹ ... יָדַע, the verb precedes the object modifying it; in קִדּוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'the Holy One' is qualified by 'of Israel.' This relation affects other areas of Hebrew syntax as well, for example, a noun (the modified) usually precedes an attributive adjective (the modifier): עִיר נִצְוֶרֶת 'a city, a besieged one' > 'a besieged city' ([Isa 1:8](#)). The modified-modifier (or defined-defining) relation is sometimes described with the Latin terms *regens* ('governor, ruler, head') for the modified element and *rectum* ('ruled thing') for the modifier.³ English often uses *regens-rectum* order (verb before object; the possessed-possessor genitive, e.g., 'the Holy One of Israel'); it may also use a modifier-modified sequence (e.g., 'besieged city,' 'Gabriel's horn'). Other languages display a syntax similar to Hebrew (cf. French 'une ville assiégée,' LXX Greek 'pólis poliorkouménē,' Arabic 'madīnatin muḥāsaratīn').

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9.2 Construct State

a

In the language antecedent to Biblical Hebrew, the genitive relation was indicated by a final vowel marker, -i in the singular and -ī in the plural. After the loss of the case system (8.1), the noun in the genitive was left unmarked. If a noun preceded a noun in the genitive, however, that noun often came to be marked; such a "pregenitive" noun stands in the construct state. Formation of the construct is a matter of sound and rhythm: in order to bind the pregenitive to the genitive, the pregenitive may be shortened.

b

The construct state is a form of the noun or a nominal equivalent that may serve any syntactic function or case.

1. וַיִּהְיֶה הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא טוֹב And the gold (CONSTRUCT:NOMINATIVE) of that land is good.
[Gen 2:12](#)
2. בְּתוֹךְ הַגֶּן in the middle (CONSTRUCT:GENITIVE) of the garden
[Gen 2:9](#)
3. לְשׂוּמַר אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים: to guard the way (CONSTRUCT:ACCUSATIVE) of [i.e., leading to] the tree (CONSTRUCT:GENITIVE) of life
[Gen 3:24](#)

c

The construct state is often indicated by a weakening of the accent on the word. This may lead to vocalic changes (e.g., דְּבָר 'word,' but דְּבַר־אֱלֹהִים 'word of God'). The construct may be marked by a conjunctive accent (e.g., רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים 'the spirit of God,' [Gen 1:2](#)) or more rarely by a methegh + maqqeph⁴ (e.g., מֶלֶךְ־צֹר 'king of Tyre,' [2 Sam 5:11](#)). In some instances a distinctive ending marks the form (cf. 8.2e).

		singular	dual	plural
masculine	absolute	Ø	-áyim	-ím
	construct	Ø	-ê	-ê
feminine	absolute	-â, -t, or Ø	-ātáyim, -táyim	-ôt
	construct	-at, -t	-(«t)ê, -tê	-ôt

9.3 Syntax of the Construct-Genitive Relation

a

The genitive function comprehends two roles: the object of a preposition and a noun governed by another noun; pronominal suffixes can fill both roles. The workings of the prepositional system of Hebrew are considered in Chapter 11. The class of noun-noun relations is the major subject of this chapter (9.5). We also discuss several related constructions, in which prepositional phrases (## 1–2) and whole clauses (## 3–4) stand in the genitive role and are thus preceded by construct forms (9.6).⁵

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1. חֲסִי בּוֹ: those seek refuge in him
[Nah 1:7](#)
2. כְּאַחַד מִזִּמּוֹנֵי like one of us
[Gen 3:22](#)
3. מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יוֹסֵף אֲסוּר שָׁם: the place where Joseph was imprisoned
[Gen 40:3](#)
4. קִרְיַת חֲנָה דָּוִד the city where David encamped
[Isa 29:1](#)

b

Most of the construct chains in Biblical Hebrew involve two items, construct or head (C), and genitive or absolute (G). If the head involves two or more nouns rather than one, all but the first come after the genitive, often linked to the head with a pronominal suffix.

5. וּפְנִיָּתְךָ אֶל-תַּפִּלַּת עַבְדְּךָ וְאֶל-תַּחֲנִתוֹ And turn to the prayer and supplication of your servant (lit., the prayer of your servant and his supplication).
[1 Kgs 8:28](#)

There are exceptions to this rule; such construct overrides usually occur in verse or elevated prose.⁶

6. מִבְּחַר וְטוֹב-לְבָנוֹן the choice and best of Lebanon
[Ezek 31:16](#)

If the *rectum* or modifier involves two or more nouns, the construct is often repeated with each genitive.

7. יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ YHWH, God of heaven and earth (lit., God of heaven and God of earth)
[Gen 24:3](#)

However, the construct may govern a coordinate noun phrase. The more closely related the genitives are, the more likely they are to form such a phrase.

8. בְּהִנּוֹת יָדָיו וְרַגְלָיו: his thumbs and big toes (lit., the major digits of his hands and his feet)
[Judg 1:6](#), cf. [1:7](#)
creator of heaven and earth

9. קָנָה שָׂמִים וְאֶרֶץ: [Gen 14:19](#)
10. נַפְשׁ בְּנֵיךְ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ וְנַפְשׁ
נָשֶׁיךָ וְנַפְשׁ פְּלִגְשֵׁיךָ: [2 Sam 19:6](#)

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c

It is possible for the dependency to extend beyond two (sets of) entities; the genitive of one construct may be the construct of another noun, etc.

11. לֵב רָאשֵׁי עַם-הָאָרֶץ the heart of the heads of the people of
the land [Job 12:24](#)

In this example there are three construct-genitive relations, *לב ראשי עם*, *עם-הארץ*, and *עם-הארץ*, fused in a single chain. Such chains are not common, and periphrastic constructions are preferred (9.7). The relation between construct and accompanying absolute is strong, and ordinarily nothing intervenes.

d

When a grammatical element such as a preposition (9.6b), an enclitic *mem* (9.8), or a directional *he* (10.5) intrudes between the construct and the genitive, the result is called a broken construct chain.⁷ Other intrusive elements found in Hebrew poetry include construct -*k*⁸ (# 12), *את* (# 13), pronominal suffixes (# 14), and verbal forms (# 15).

12. בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנִי in your eyes, lord (so MT; better: in the
lord's eyes)⁹ [Exod 34:9](#)
13. לְיִשַׁע אֶת-מְשִׁיחָךְ for the salvation of your anointed
[Hab 3:13](#)
14. כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל-סוּסֶיךָ When you rode upon your horses, your
chariots of victory ...
[Hab 3:8](#)
15. דָּרָךְ יִרְצְחוּ-שֹׁכְנָה They commit murder on the road to
Shechem (lit., On the road, they commit
murder, to Shechem).¹⁰ [Hos 6:9](#)

F. I. Andersen rejects the MT of # 12, which parses *אֲדֹנִי* as a vocative, because "this is not the way Moses usually addresses Yahweh," and "the following sentence shows that speech proceeds in the respectful third person, not the second."¹¹ D. N. Freedman suggests that the basis of the phrase in # 14 is "probably to be found in the association of *mrkbt* and the preceding *swsyk*, as coordinate elements in the compound phrase introduced by *ו* and controlled by *yšw'h*."¹²

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9.4 Uses of the Construct-Genitive Relation

a

Two nouns juxtaposed can form a construct phrase in Hebrew. In the structure construct + genitive, the genitive modifies the construct, just as in substantive + attributive adjective, the adjective modifies the substantive. There are three English constructions, apparently similar to the Hebrew construct phrase, that it may be useful to review:

(a) noun-noun compounds ('windmill, ashtray, figtree, pigpen'), (b) 's-genitives ('Moses' brother, Isaiah's sign'), (c) periphrastic genitives ('word of God, length of years'). In the first case, the similarity is superficial: the relationship in Hebrew of construct + genitive is a major inflectional link, while the English process is much less productive. The two English genitives are the proper analogues, and of the two the periphrastic genitive is more similar, for in it the head word comes first; in the 's-genitive (as in noun-noun compounds) the head word comes second. English periphrastic genitives, in fact, show some of the same complexity of meaning characteristic of Hebrew construct chains. The phrase 'love of God' (אֱהָבַת אֱלֹהִים) is ambiguous in both languages; it may mean either 'God's love (for someone)' or '(someone's) love for God.' This example illustrates the importance of establishing the possible meanings of the genitive case, sometimes called the "species of the genitive."¹³

b

In the next several sections we set forth a traditional classification of the species, by which we mean the various notions signified by this polysemic construction (see 3.2.3). By what procedure do grammarians come up with these classes of meanings? And how can a reader identify the workings of a genitive in a specific text? Our analysis of the procedure for identifying and classifying the genitive (and other grammatical constructions) falls into three parts.

c

To explain the procedure, we turn first to the distinction between surface structure and underlying structure (see 3.5). Possible deep structures are grammatical options aligning elements of a situation. In certain circumstances, one might speak of the idea that God loves people with the prosaic sentence 'God loves people'; in others one might use a genitive phrase, 'the love of God for people' or even 'the love of God.' The three surface structures are quite distinct, but they share a common alignment. It is possible to relieve ambiguity in the surface structure by analysis; ambiguous surface constructions, that is, can be associated with deep structures, which are more explicit. In the case of the genitive, this can be done by rephrasing the genitive construction into a sentence or an adjectival construction. So, for example, the 'love of God' can be rephrased by sentences with God as the subject ('God loves [someone or something]') or as the object ('[Someone or something] loves God') or by an adjectival phrase ('God[-like] love'). Similarly, 'the word of YHWH' can be rephrased as either 'the word spoken by YHWH' or 'YHWH spoke the word'; in either case YHWH is the agent. 'Your vows' (cf. [Ps 56:13](#)) is equivalent to 'vows made to you,' a construction that makes it clear that 'you' qualifies the

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implicit 'made.' thus can the ambiguous genitive of the surface structure be transformed into unambiguous grammatical analogues. Often, once the structure of a Hebrew phrase has been found by analysis, the ambiguous genitive can be better rendered in English by a construction that does not rely on the frequently wooden and ambiguous 'of'; such renderings are well used in the NIV, which is therefore quoted in what follows.

d

Such analysis presupposes that the analyst knows both the grammatical options available to replace the ambiguous surface structure and their uses. The options are learned in essentially the same way one learns the meaning(s) of a word, namely, by inference from usage. In the case of a written language with a long tradition of study, the grammarian can make critical use of a venerable heritage. Readers of a written language must constantly be on guard against inadvertently applying categories of usage known from their own language to the language they are studying.

e

We continue the process of analysis by assigning an abstract (and somewhat arbitrary) semantic label to the various types of genitive, for example, "genitive of authorship," "objective genitive," "attributive genitive." We also assign them a grammatical label. A genitive can be analyzed as either a subject (or agent), or as a modifier, either adverbial or adjectival.

f

Let us illustrate the procedure for identifying a genitive phrase's use by contrasting the uses of the English phrase 'love of God' in these sentences: 'As the love of Romeo won Juliet, so the love of God woos sinners' and 'As the love of money inspires some, so the love of God inspires others.' As speakers of English, we know that 'love of someone' can signify either 'someone loved [somebody]' or '[somebody] loved someone.' Here the 'love of Romeo' is a genitive of agent (or a subjective genitive), while in the second sentence 'love of money' must be an

objective (or adverbial) genitive. The comparative conjunctions 'as ... so' show that 'love of' is being used in the same way in both halves of each sentence; therefore, in the first sentence 'love of God' is a genitive of agent (or subjective genitive) and in the second an objective (or adverbial) genitive.

9

Let us now consider the same phrase in another sentence: 'Romeo loved Juliet with the coals of burning, with the love of God, with the grave of grasping.' Here semantic pertinence suggests that 'love of God' means 'God-like love,' an attributive (or adjectival) genitive. As this sentence suggests, creativity plays a role in introducing new uses and meanings of forms. Creativity is not absolute, however, since all speakers are controlled by what Otto Jespersen has called a "latitude of correctness." To communicate, that is, a speaker must be governed by the established and public meanings of lexemes, morphemes, and grammatical structures. Lewis Carroll imaginatively depicted the tension between the public meaning of words and morphemes versus the private use of them.

"There's glory for you!" "I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'" "But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected. "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The

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question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

The grammarian and lexicographer are on Alice's side.¹⁴

9.5 Species of the Genitive

a

The noun-noun genitive phrase or construct chain is "immensely versatile and hardworked."¹⁵ Three major kinds of construct chain can be distinguished: subjective, ad-verbial, and adjectival.¹⁶ In what follows, C designates the construct, head, or first term of the chain and G the genitive, absolute, or second term.¹⁷

9.5.1 Subjective Genitive

a

In the various types of subjective genitive phrases, the genitive term has an underlying subject role, as in English 'the boy's leaving,' implying 'The boy left.' In Hebrew a subjective genitive can have a basically verbal or possessive/qualitative structure.

b

In a genitive of agency G does the action described by C (active, ## 1–3; passive, # 4).

1. לָתֵת נִקְמַת־יְהוָה בְּמִדְיָן to carry out YHWH's *niqmā* against Midian
[Num 31:3](#)
2. בְּשִׂנְאָת יְהוָה אֲתָנּוּ because YHWH hates us
[Deut 1:27](#)
3. בְּאַהֲבַת יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל because of YHWH's love for Israel
[1 Kgs 10:9](#)
4. מִכָּה אֱלֹהִים stricken by God
[Isa 53:4](#)

c

A particular form of agency is involved in speaking and writing, and the genitive of authorship denotes that G wrote, spoke, or otherwise originated C.

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|---|
| 5. | דִּבַּרְתִּי דְבָרִי | I have told my words.
Gen 24:33 |
| 6. | הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו | The word of YHWH came to him
Jer 1:2 |
| 7. | דְּבָרֵי לִמְוֵאל | the words by Lemuel
Prov 31:1 |
| 8. | מִשְׁאֵת מֹשֶׁה | the tax imposed by Moses
2 Chr 24:6 |

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d

An agent or author is animate; the inanimate analogue to the agent role is that of instrument. A genitive of instrument involves the relationship G is the instrument of C. (See 9.5.2d.)

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 9. | לֹא חָלַל־חֶרֶב וְלֹא מָתִי
מִלְחָמָה: | not slain by the sword nor dead through war
Isa 22:2 |
| 10. | מִחְלִיק פִּטִּישׁ | he who polishes with a hammer
Isa 41:7 |
| 11. | עָרֵיכֶם שָׂרָפוֹת אֵשׁ | your cities are burned with fire
Isa 1:7 |
| 12. | טָמֵא־נֶפֶשׁ | impure by (reason of contact with) a corpse
Lev 22:4 |

e

A subjective genitive may involve neither agent nor instrument, but rather a motivation or intention. In an abstract subjective genitive G denotes a verbal action affecting C. (The phrase מִלְחָמָה מָתִי in # 9 may belong here.)

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|
| 13. | שָׁלַחַת אֶת־אִישׁ־חֲרָמִי מִיָּד | You have set free the man I had determined should die (lit., man of my devoting to a consecrated death).
1 Kgs 20:42 |
| 14. | וְעַל־עַם עִבְרָתִי אֶצְוֶנּוּ | I dispatch them against a people who incur my wrath (lit., a people of my wrath).
Isa 10:6 |
| 15. | נֶחֱשָׁבֵנוּ כְּצֹאן טִבְחָה: | We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered (lit., as sheep of slaughtering).
Ps 44:23 |
| 16. | וַיְנַחֵם אֶל־מִחוּז חֶפְצָם: | And he guided them to their desired haven (lit., to the port of their desiring).
Ps 107:30 |

The sense of the abstract may be passive, in which case G is affected by C.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 17. | מִכְּרָתְיָךְ וּמִלְדָּתְיָךְ מֵאֲרָץ
הַפְּנִיעִי | Your ancestry and your birth were from the land of Canaan.
Ezek 16:3 |
|-----|--|---|

f

A temporal genitive involves a verbal action G associated with a time C (often מִלְחָמָה מוֹתִי).

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18. יוֹם מְהוּמָה וּמְבוֹסָה
וּמְבוֹכָה לְאֹדְנֵי יְהוָה
צָבָאוֹת
The Lord YHWH Šb'wt has a day of
tumult and trampling and terror (i.e.,
The Lord ... will bring tumult, etc., on a
given day).¹⁸
[Isa 22:5](#)
19. וַתִּקְדָּשֵׁם לְיוֹם הַהֲנֶה:
Set them apart for a day of slaughter
(i.e., they will be slaughtered on a given
day).
[Jer 12:3](#)

g

In contrast to the basically verbal character of the types of genitive just outlined is the nonverbal quality of other subjective genitives. In a possessive genitive, G owns or has C; the relationships involved may be quite various.

20. בֵּית יְהוָה וְ... בֵּית
הַמֶּלֶךְ:
the temple of YHWH and the king's
house
[1 Kgs 9:10](#)
21. וַיֵּהָב הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא טוֹב
The gold of that land is good.
[Gen 2:12](#)
22. חֲכָמַת שְׁלֹמֹה
the wisdom of Solomon
[1 Kgs 5:10](#)

h

A genitive of inalienable possession refers to something intrinsically proper to its possessor, chiefly body parts. (Example # 22 may belong here.)

23. דַּמִּי אֲחִיךָ
the blood of your brother
[Gen 4:10](#)
24. לְרַחֵץ ... רַגְלֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים
to wash ... the feet of the men
[Gen 24:32](#)

i

If human relationships are involved, the genitive is one of relation proper; such links could involve either kinship or other social structures.¹⁹

25. יָאֵזֶבֶת-אִישׁ אֶת-אָבִיו
וְאֶת-אִמּוֹ וַדָּבֵק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ
A man shall leave his father and his
mother and be united to his wife.
[Gen 2:24](#)
26. בְּנִי אַתָּה
You are my son.
[Ps 2:7](#)
27. מֹשֶׁה עֶבְד־יְהוָה
Moses, the servant of YHWH
[Josh 12:6](#)
28. יִשְׁכִּיל עַבְדִּי
My servant will act wisely.

29. נִאֲצוּ אֶת־קֹדֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל [Isa 52:1–3](#)
They have spurned the Holy One of Israel.
[Isa 1:4](#)

j

The genitive of quality denotes that G has the quality of C; such phrases usually involve people.

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30. וַיְהִי כִנְהָר שְׁלוֹמֶךָ
וַצִּדְקָתְךָ כְּגִלֵּי הַיָּם: [Isa 48:1–8](#)
Your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

k

The usually inanimate reference of a partitive genitive is a substance that can be divided up: G is divided into (parts, including) C.

31. וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה חֲצִי הַדָּם [Exod 24:6](#)
Moses took half of the blood.

9.5.2 Adverbial Genitive

a

The various types of adverbial genitive involve the object, direct or mediated, of the underlying verbal action, as in English 'the king's capture,' implying 'Someone captured the king.' In Hebrew, adverbial genitives can be classified according to the relationship of the verb to the basic object.

b

In the objective genitive, the genitive is the (direct) object of the essential verbal action, that is, roughly, C does G.²⁰

1. מִשְׁכֵּי הָעוֹן [Isa 5:18](#)
those who draw iniquity
2. מִצְדִּיקֵי רָשָׁע [Isa 5:23](#)
those who acquit the guilty

c

In a genitive of effect the relationship of C and G is a directly causal one, that is, roughly, C causes G.²¹

3. רוּחַ חָכְמָה וּבִינָה [Isa 11:2](#)
the spirit of wisdom and understanding (i.e., the spirit that causes wisdom ...)
4. קַבְעָת ... הַתַּרְעֵלָה [Isa 51:17](#)
the bowl that causes staggering
5. מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ [Isa 53:5](#)
the punishment that brought us peace

d

The relationship of the genitive and implicit verb may be of the sort usually mediated by a preposition; the genitive of a mediated object involves the relation C does to/by/with G.²²

6. שְׁבַעַת יְהוָה the oath to YHWH
[1 Kgs 2:43](#)
7. עָלַי אֱלֹהִים נִדְרֶיךָ I am under vows to you, O God.
[Ps 56:13](#)
8. חֲמָסִי עָלֶיךָ May the wrong done me be upon you.
[Gen 16:5](#)
9. לֹא תִהְיֶה תִפְאָרְתְּךָ Glory will not be yours (i.e., given you).
[Judg 4:9](#)
10. עַד־מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכִלְמָה How long will the glory [bestowed] on me serve as a reproach?
[Ps 4:3](#)
11. אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ a land flowing with milk and honey
[Deut 6:3](#)

e

A special genitive of this sort is the genitive of advantage (or disadvantage), in which G is the recipient or beneficiary of a favorable (or unfavorable) action denoted by C.²³

12. נִקְמַת הַיְכָלוֹ: niqmâ for his temple
[Jer 50:28](#)
13. אֲבֵל יָחִיד mourning for an only son
[Amos 8:10](#)
14. אֲבֵל יָחִיד violence against your brother
[Obad 10](#)
15. אֵימַת מֶלֶךְ fear due a king
[Prov 20:2](#)
16. לֶחֶם הַפָּחָה the bread due the governor
[Neh 5:14](#)
17. כִּי־אִישׁ מִלְחָמוֹת תָּעִי הָיָה הַדָּדֵעֶזֶר Hadadezer was experienced in battles against Toi (i.e., A man of wars that had been fought against Toi was Hadadezer).
[2 Sam 8:10](#)

f

The genitive of location designates that G is the location or goal of C; such genitives are alternatives to various prepositional constructions. If the phrase refers to a location, the basic prepositional construction is usually that of בְּ and there is no implicit verb of motion.

18. יֹשְׁבֵי גִבְעוֹן those living in Gibeon
[Josh 9:3](#)
19. גִּבְעַת בִּנְיָמִין Gibeah in Benjamin
[1 Sam 13:2](#)
20. אָכַלִי שֻׁלְחַן עֵיזֶבֶל eating at the table of Jezebel

21. לְ-עֹשֵׂי־שֹׂכֶר אֲנִי־נָפֶשׁ: [1 Kgs 18:19](#)
All the wage earners will be sick in spirit.
[Isa 19:10](#)
- If the phrase refers to a goal, there is a verb of motion, either explicit or implicit.²⁴
22. בָּאִי שַׁעַר-עִירוֹ who go in at the gate of his city
[Gen 23:10](#)
23. קָרְבִּי those who come near to me
[Lev 10:3](#)
24. בָּאִי מוֹעֵד who come to the feast
[Lam 1:4](#)
25. שֹׁכְבֵי קֶבֶר lain in the tomb
[Ps 88:6](#)
26. לְשׁוֹבֵי פָשַׁע those returning from sin
[Isa 59:20](#)
27. דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים: the way to the tree of life
[Gen 3:24](#)
28. יוֹרְדֵי־בֹר those who go down to the pit²⁵
[Isa 38:18](#)

It is difficult to insist on a rigid distinction between goal and location.²⁶

9.5.3 Adjectival Genitive

a

In adjectival genitive phrases, the construct and genitive modify each other, one specifying features of the other. In English, comparable semantic structures often involve adjectives or, less often, noun compounds; genitives are not usually used. Examples are not rare, however: 'a man of many talents,' cf. a 'a multi-talented woman'; 'a coat of wool,' cf. 'a cotton shirt'; 'the city of Lachish,' cf. 'the Beth-Shean area.' Hebrew expressions of attribution, substance, and class-membership often use constructs.

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The largest group of adjectival genitives refers to a feature or quality of something.

The most common type of these is the attributive genitive, in which C is characterized by G; in English such phrases are often rendered with G as an adjective of C.

1. וּבְגָדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ holy garments
[Exod 29:29](#)
2. גִּבּוֹר חַיִּל valiant warrior
[Judg 11:1](#)
3. מַלְכֵי חֶסֶד merciful kings
[1 Kgs 20:31](#)
4. אֵילַת אֲהָבִים beloved hind
[Prov 5:19](#)
5. וְנָתַתִּי לָךְ ... אֶת כָּל־אֶרֶץ
כְּנָעַן לְאֻחֲזַת עוֹלָם I will give to you ... all the land of Canaan
as a possession of perpetuity (i.e., as an
perpetual possession).

6. מאֲזֵנֵי צֶדֶק אֲבִנֵי-קַצֶּדֶק ...
יִהְיֶה לָכֶם
[Gen 17:8](#)
Balances of righteousness, stones of righteousness ... you will have (i.e., use honest scales).
7. בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ הֶרֶקְדָּשׁוֹ:
[Lev 19:36](#)
in the city of our God, his holy mountain
[Ps 48:2](#)

Closely related to this attributive genitive is the use of the genitive in conventional idioms consisting of construct forms of אִישׁ 'man' (## 8–9), בֹּעַל 'master, possessor' (## 10–12), בֶּן 'son of' (## 13–14), or their feminine or plural equivalents, with some noun in the genitive case to represent the nature, quality, character, or condition of (a) person (s). These locutions supplement the meager stock of adjectives in Hebrew. English idiom prefers these constructions be rendered by an adjective.²⁷

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8. אִישׁ הַדָּמִים וְאִישׁ
הַבְּלִיעַל:
[2 Sam 16:7](#)
blood-spattered man, you scoundrel (lit., man of blood, man of Belial)
9. לֹא אִישׁ דְּבָרִים אָנֹכִי
[Exod 4:10](#)
I have never been an eloquent man (lit., a man of words).²⁸
10. הִנֵּה בֹעַל הַחֲלֻמוֹת הַלְזָה
בָּא:
[Gen 37:19](#)
Here comes that dreamer (lit., possessor of dreams).
11. בְּכִשּׁוּלִי אִשֶּׁת בֹּעַל־תֹּאבֹב
[1 Sam 28:7](#)
Find me a woman, a possessor of a spirit (or, a woman who is a medium).
12. וְהֵם בֹּעַלֵי בְרִית־אַבְרָם:
[Gen 14:13](#)
They were allies with Abram (lit., possessors of a covenant of Abram).
13. ; כִּי בֶן־מָוֶת הוּא
[1 Sam 20:31](#), cf. [1 Kgs 2:26](#)
He is a son of death (i.e., He must die).
14. אִם יִהְיֶה לְבֶן־חַיִּל
[1 Kgs 1:52](#)
If he will be a son of virtue (i.e., If he shows himself a worthy man) ...

More specifically בֶּן is used in expressions of age.

15. וְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן־מֵאָת שָׁנָה
[Gen 21:5](#)
Now Abraham was a hundred years old.
16. שֶׁהָ ... זָכָר בֶּן־שָׁנָה יִהְיֶה
לָכֶם
[Exod 12:5](#)
The animal you choose must be a ... year-old male.

Similar expressions indicate the relationship of an individual to a class of beings.

17. בֶּן־אָדָם
[Ezek 2:1](#), etc.
O, Son of man (i.e., O, Human)²⁹
18. בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים
[Job 1:6](#)
sons of God (i.e., divine beings)

19. וְקָרַבְתָּ מוֹל בְּנֵי אַמּוֹן When you come opposite the sons of Ammon (i.e., the Ammonites) ...
[Deut 2:19](#)

In an attributive genitive, a pronominal suffix is attached to the genitive but usually modifies the whole chain.³⁰

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20. הַר־קֹדֶשׁי my holy hill
[Ps 2:6](#)
21. אֱלֹהֵי צְדִיקי my righteous God
[Ps 4:2](#)
22. וַתִּתֵּן־לִי מָגֵן יִשְׁעֶךָ You have given me your shield of victory (not the shield of thy salvation, AV).
[Ps 18:36](#)
23. תְּפִלָּה לְאֵל חַיִּי a prayer to my living God (not the God of my life)
[Ps 42:9](#)

C

In an attributive genitive, C is characterized by G; the opposite relation is also found, in the epexegetical genitive, wherein G is characterized by C.³¹ Many epexegetical phrases can be rendered by English of-genitives; note the phrase 'hard of heart,' cf. 'hard-hearted.' The sense can also be conveyed by the gloss 'as to' or 'with regard to,' for example, 'stiff with regard to their necks'; this is the meaning of the term "epexegetical."

24. עַם־קִשְׁיָה־עֵרֶךְ a stiff-necked (lit., stiff-of-neck) people
[Exod 32:9](#)
25. וַהֲנַעֲרָה טַבַּת מִרְאָה מְאֹד The girl was very pretty (lit., good of appearance).
[Gen 24:16](#) *Qere*
26. וַיְהִי יוֹסֵף יָפֵה־תֶּאֱרַר Joseph was fair of form (or, well built).
[Gen 39:6](#)
27. הַפָּרוֹת רָעוֹת הַמִּרְאָה the cows that were ugly (lit., bad as to appearance)
[Gen 41:4](#)
28. וְהָאִשָּׁה טוֹבַת־שֵׁכֶל וַיִּפְתַּח־אֶרֶץ וְהָאִישׁ ... רַע מַעַלְלִים The woman was great as to discretion and beautiful as to form, but the man was ... evil as to his doings.
[1 Sam 25:3](#)
29. טָמֵא־שִׁפְתָּיִם unclean of lips
[Isa 6:5](#)
30. אָרֶךְ אַפִּים patient (lit., long as to the nostrils, the source of anger)
[Exod 34:6](#)

This symmetrical representation of attributive and epexegetical genitives should not obscure the fact that attributives are much more common.

d

The remaining types of adjectival genitive involve a wide variety of relationships. Three of them may be called genitives of substance, namely, of material, topic, and measure. The genitive of material indicates material of which something is made or with which it is filled, namely, C is made of G.

31. מִזְבֵּחַ אֲדָמָה an earthen altar
[Exod 20:24](#)
32. כֶּלִי-חֶרֶשׁ a clay jar
[Num 5:17](#)
33. שֵׁבֶט בַּרְזֶל an iron sceptre
[Ps 2:9](#)
34. כֶּלִי כֶסֶף silver vessels
[1 Kgs 10:25](#)
35. לְשׁוֹן זָהָב a golden tongue
[Josh 7:21](#)
36. וַיִּקַּח יֵשׁוּעַ חֲמֹר לֶחֶם וְנָאֵד
יָיִן So Jesse took a donkey loaded with
food and a skin of wine.
[1 Sam 16:20](#)

e

The similar topical genitive specifies the topic of a discourse or the like, namely, C is about G.

37. מִשָּׂא בָבֶל oracle about Babylon
[Isa 13:1](#)
38. תִּשְׁמַעְצֹר the report about Tyre
[Isa 23:5](#)
39. זַעֲקַת סֹדֶם וְעִמּוֹרָה the outcry against Sodom and
Gomorrah
[Gen 18:20](#)

f

In a genitive of measure, a counting is specified along with the counted term, namely, G is measured in C. In addition to numbers, general quantifiers such as כָּל 'all' and רַב 'multitude' are frequent in such genitives, as are actual measures.

40. שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים three days
[Gen 40:18](#)
41. מַיִם עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ There was water upon all (the surface)
of the earth.
[Gen 8:9](#)
42. אֵל ... רַב-חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת: a God ... abounding in unfailing love
and truth
[Exod 34:6](#)
43. לֹג הַשֶּׁמֶן the (single) log of oil
[Lev 14:12](#)

g

Four further types of genitives involve classes and the interrelationship of either a class and an individual or a class (the superordinate) and a subclass (the subordinate). In the genitive of species, the class designated by the construct (C) is narrowed down to a subclass (i.e., "species") indicated by G. Thus, in # 45 the construct includes all workers and the genitive serves to mark out an individual group of workers, 'those who work in wood.'

44. עֵצִי-נֹפֶר gopher-wood
[Gen 6:14](#)
45. חֲרָשֵׁי עֵץ workers in wood
[2 Sam 5:11](#)
46. תְּאֵנֵי הַבְּכֻרוֹת figs of the first fruits (i.e., early figs)
[Jer 24:2](#)
47. עֲגֹת רֻצָּפִים cakes baked on hot stones
[1 Kgs 19:6](#)
48. אֶחָזֶת-קֶבֶר burial site
[Gen 23:4](#)
49. זֶרַע מְרַעִים a brood of evildoers
[Isa 1:4](#)

h

In the genitive of association, the individual G belongs to the class of C; though 'of' is well established in translations of such phrases, it is not needed in English.³²

50. נְהַר-פָּרָת River Euphrates
[Gen 15:18](#)
51. אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם the land [of] Egypt
[Exod 7:19](#)
52. גֶּן-עֵדֶן the Garden [of] Eden
[Gen 2:15](#)
53. בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל the virgin [of] Israel
[Amos 5:2](#)
54. מְקוֹם כָּל-כָּדָר אֶל-מוֹנֵי: such-and-such a place
[1 Sam 21:3](#)

i

In other genitives of class, the subordinate element (C) precedes the superordinate element (G). In the genitive of genus and the superlative genitive, the individual is in the construct and the broader class to which it belongs is the genitive. In the genitive of genus, C belongs to the class of G.

55. כַּף-רִגְלָהּ the sole of its foot
[Gen 8:9](#)
56. צֹאן אָדָם flocks of men
[Ezek 36:38](#)
57. אֹהֶל בֵּיתִי my tent house
[Ps 132:3](#)
58. וַיְבָסִיל אָדָם בִּזְוֵה אִמּוֹ: A fool of a man (i.e., a foolish man)
despises his mother.
[Prov 15:20](#)
59. עֲלִילַת דְּבָרִים plot involving words (i.e., any slander)
[Deut 22:14](#)

60. וְלֹא־יִרְאֶה בְּךָ עֲרוֹת דָּבָר ... so that he not see among you the indecency of something (i.e., anything indecent)
[Deut 23:15](#)

j

Similar is the construction used for the superlative genitive.³³ A superlative may involve two instances of a single noun, the first a singular construct and the second a plural genitive; or two different nouns may be used.

61. קָדֵשׁ קְדָשִׁים most holy
[Exod 29:37](#)
62. עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים a slave of slaves (i.e., an abject slave)
[Gen 9:25](#)
63. שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים the Song of Songs (i.e., the Choicest Song)
[Cant 1:1](#)
64. אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֱדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים the Highest God and the Supreme Lord
[Deut 10:17](#)
65. מִבְּחַר קְבָרֵינוּ the choicest of our sepulchers
[Gen 23:6](#)
66. קָטָן בָּנָיו the youngest of his sons
[2 Chr 21:17](#)

k

This discussion may be summarized by dividing adjectival genitives into two classes.

In the first group the construct is the modified element and the genitive the modifier:

attributive	C is characterized by G	הַר־קָדְשׁוֹ	## 7, 20
material	C is made of G	שֶׁבֶט בְּרִזָּל	# 33
topical	C is about G	מִשָּׂא בִבְלָה	# 37
species	C is specified by G	חֲרָשֵׁי עֵץ	# 45
association	C is associated with G	אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם	# 51

The construct is the modifier and the genitive the modified element in the second group:

epexegetical	G is characterized by C	קִשְׁת־עֹרֹף	# 24
measure	G is measured in C	שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים	# 40
genus	G is specified by C	כֶּסֶל אָדָם	# 58
superlative	G is specified by the best (or most) of C	קָטָן בָּנָיו	# 66

9.6 Construct State before Phrases and Clauses

a

The genitive case is ordinarily a property of a single noun or pronoun, but, as mentioned earlier, two nouns can stand for one in the genitive slot, after a construct (9.3b). It is also possible for prepositional phrases and even

entire clauses to stand after a construct; these constituents are thus treated as a single noun (cf. 4.4.1).

b

A prepositional phrase most often stands after a construct participle, a usage similar to the genitive of a mediated object; in the usual phrase the preposition is omitted (9.5.2), while in these constructions it is retained.³⁴

1. כָּל־חֹסֵי בּוֹ: all who take refuge in him
[Ps 2:12](#)
2. יֹשְׁבֵי בְּאֶרֶץ צִלְמוֹת those living in the land of the shadow of death
[Isa 9:1](#)
3. גְּמוּלֵי מִחֶלֶב עֵתִיקִי those weaned from milk, those removed from the breast
[Isa 28:9](#)

Other nouns can stand in construct before a prepositional phrase; אַחֲרֵי regularly governs a partitive phrase in ׀ ³⁵מִן.

4. שְׂמֵחַת בִּקְצִיר rejoicing at harvest-time
[Isa 9:2](#)
5. הֲאֵלֹהִי מִקְרֵב אֲנִי ... וְלֹא אֱלֹהִי מֵרָחֵק: Am I a god from nearby ... and not a god from far-off?
[Jer 23:23](#)
6. קַח־נָא אִתָּךְ אֶת־אֶחָד מֵהַנְּעָרִים Take with you one of the servants.
[1 Sam 9:3](#)

c

A clause may also stand after a construct noun.³⁶ Sometimes the construct has some prepositional force. For example, אַחֲרֵי is a noun meaning 'hinder part' but occurs most often in the plural construct, as a preposition alone (אַחֲרַי 'after'; 11.2.1), or with other prepositions (מֵאַחֲרַי 'after, from behind'; 11.3.3), or as a conjunction (אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר, see, e.g., [Deut 24:4](#); cf. Chap. 38.7); thus, אַחֲרֵי is well established as a preposition. Similarly, בֵּיךְ in the phrase בֵּיךְ, though a construct noun, may be considered part of a complex preposition. In clausal cases in which the construct noun cannot be considered a preposition or part of a preposition, relative clauses are most common, though other types of subordinate clauses do occur.

d

Relative clauses after prepositionally used constructs are found; in these three examples the relative clause is asyndetic (or headless, i.e., lacks a relative pronoun).

7. וְאַחֲרֵי לֹא־יִוָּעְלוּ הֶלְכוּ: They followed after (those who) cannot act.
[Jer 2:8](#)
8. שְׁלַח־נָא בְיַד־תְּשֻׁלָּח: Send (your message) in the hand of (him whom) you will send.
[Exod 4:13](#)

The relative clause may be used after a construct noun with no prepositional force; # 10 uses a relative pronoun.

9. קְרִית חֲנָה דָּוִד the city (where) David settled
[Isa 29:1](#)
10. וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ אֶל-בֵּית הַסֹּהַר
מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-אֲסִירֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲסוּרִים
[Gen 39:20](#) Qere

e

The construct may also be used before non-relative clauses, if it is prepositional (אֲחֵרִי) or quasi-prepositional (כָּל-יָמַי).³⁷

11. אֲחֵרִי נִמְכָּר After he is sold ...
[Lev 25:48](#)
12. וְלֹא-פָקַדְנוּ מְאוּמָה כָּל-יָמַי
הַתְּהַלֵּכְנוּ אִתָּם בְּהִיּוֹתֵנוּ
בַּשָּׂדֶה:
[1 Sam 25:15](#)

It is also possible for a construct of no prepositional force to stand before a non-relative clause. This construction is extremely rare.³⁸

13. תְּחִלַּת דְּבַר-יְהוָה בְּהוֹשֵׁעַ The beginning of YHWH-spoke through
Hosea
[Hos 1:2](#)

9.7 Determination and Periphrasis

a

The subject of determination (definiteness/indefiniteness) will be treated in detail in Chapter 13, but one aspect of it must be mentioned here. In Hebrew the definiteness of a noun and that of its modifiers are in agreement. With attributive and demonstrative adjectives this is shown by using the article on both substantive and adjective:

הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה 'this day,' הַשְּׁמִנִי הַיּוֹם 'eighth day,' In a construct chain, the construct can never be

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prefixed with the article. The definiteness of the genitive specifies the definiteness of the phrase.³⁹ If the genitive is indefinite, the phrase is indefinite.

1. אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה a soldier (lit., a man of war[fare])
[Josh 17:1](#)
2. דְּבַר-שָׁקֶר a lie (lit., a word of falsehood)
[Prov 29:12](#)
3. בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ sons of the king (or, the sons of the king
or roughly, the king's sons)
[2 Sam 9:11](#)
4. אִשְׁת־אָבִיד wife of your father (or roughly, your
father's wife)
[Lev 18:8](#)

5. גִּבְעַת בְּנִימִין Gibeah in Benjamin
[1 Sam 13:2](#)
6. אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל God of Israel (or roughly, the God of Israel)
[1 Kgs 8:15](#)

The ambiguity of English 'the son of the king' could also theoretically obtain for the comparable Hebrew phrase: is the referent unique or one among others? If the referent is non-unique (i.e., if the king has other sons) and this must be made clear, English uses a phrase like 'e son of the king.' Hebrew cannot use a construct with a definite article in such circumstances but rather resorts to a periphrastic genitive with *lamed* (for the construction in verbless clauses, see 8.4.2).

7. רָאִיתִי בֶן לְיִשִּׁי I have seen a son of Jesse.
[1 Sam 16:18](#)
8. מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד a psalm of David
[Ps 3:1](#)

b

Periphrasis may be used in genitive expressions under other circumstances. It may be used where a construct phrase would also be acceptable.

9. הַצָּפִים לְשָׁאוּל Saul's watchmen
[1 Sam 14:16](#)

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Periphrastic / is also used in cases in which a construct chain needs to be qualified (notably because of the need for clarity about definiteness, as in # 7 above and # 10 below) or kept brief.

10. חֶלֶקֶת הַשָּׂדֶה לְבֹעַז the portion of a field belonging to Boaz
[Ruth 2:3](#)
11. עַל-סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים
לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: in the Book of the Annals of the Israelite kings⁴¹
[1 Kgs 14:19](#)

In counting expressions the construct chain includes the unit and the thing counted; if the latter is qualified, this must be done by a periphrastic genitive in / . Most such expressions involve dates.

12. בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ on the fifteenth day of the month
[Lev 23:6](#)

The periphrastic genitive is used in dates even if the word יוֹם is omitted.

13. בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ on the fourteenth day of the month
[Lev 23:5](#)

c

Another form of the periphrastic genitive involves לִּ-אֲשֶׁר 'which/that belongs to.'

14. אֵין מִרְעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר
לְעִבְדֶּיךָ There is no pasturage for the small livestock which belong to your servants (i.e., our small livestock).
[Gen 47:4](#)

A comparable construction involves the rare relative pronoun **שֶׁל** and yields the combination **שֶׁל־**, the genitive particle of post-biblical Hebrew.⁴² A form of the particle is used twice in the Bible.

15. הִנֵּה מִשְׁתּוֹ שֶׁל־שְׁלֹמֹה behold, Solomon's couch (lit., his couch which belongs to Solomon)
[Cant 3:7](#)
16. בְּרַמִּי שְׁלִי לֹא נִטְרָתִי: I did not guard my vineyard (lit., my vineyard which belongs to me).
[Cant 1:6](#)

9.8 Enclitic *Mem*

a

A variety of external evidence has led scholars to recognize in the biblical text a particle *m*, often associated with the genitive.⁴³ Whatever shape the particle took (perhaps

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-*m* after a vowel; or -*mi* or -*ma* in all cases), it seems to have been used at the end of a word, and so it is assumed to have been enclitic on (i.e., to have leaned on) that word.⁴⁴ Only the consonantal *mem* is preserved; since its meaning was lost in the course of the text's long transmission, the *mem* became confounded with other common morphemes formed with *mem* such as the masculine plural suffix -*im*, the pronominal suffix -*ām*, the inseparable preposition *min*, etc. As a result it must be detected behind the Masoretic Text by irregularities and anomalies associated with final or initial *mem*.

b

Enclitic *mem* is used in sufficiently varied ways in cognate languages to make it certain that the earliest forms of Semitic must have known more than one form of this construction. In Hebrew it sometimes has an emphatic force, while at other times it serves as a morpheme for indetermination. It is seen in connection with almost every part of speech, including verbs, nouns, pronominal suffixes, adverbs, etc. Most common are its uses in the middle of the construct chain.⁴⁵ The enclitic *mem* is common in poetry.

c

The examples most easily seen are those involving external evidence. Here are two forms of one line of verse from [Psalm 18](#) and [2 Samuel 22](#), parallel texts.

- 1a. [2 Sam 22:16](#) וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶפְקֵי יָם
 1b. [Ps 10:16](#) וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶפְקֵי מַיִם

The first text has lost the enclitic *mem*, while the second has attached it to **ים**, yielding a different (and not implausible) reading. The line is best read:

- 1c. וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶפְקֵי־יָם The depths of the sea were seen.⁴⁶

The Pentateuch is preserved not only in various ancient translations but also in a Samaritan text; let us examine a phrase from a prose narrative.⁴⁷

- 2a. [Gen 14:6](#)/MT וְאַתְּ-הַחֲרִי בְּהַרְרֵם שְׁעִיר
 2b. [Gen 14:6](#)/Sam וְאַתְּ-הַחֲרִי בַּהֲרֵי שְׁעִיר

The proper reading is neither the MT, with the odd suffix -*ām* 'their,' nor the Samaritan, with the simplified reading omitting the *m* (a reading also found in the LXX, Vulgate, and Peshitta). Rather, we should read:

- 2c. וְאַתְּ-הַחֲרִי בְּהַרְרֵי־שְׁעִיר and the Horite, in the hills of Seir

- In other cases, Hebrew usage in general provides a reliable guide in detecting the enclitic *mem*.⁴⁹

- ### Footnotes:

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12. Freedman, "Broken Construct Chain," 535 (rpt. p. 340); cf. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 234 (on this text), 371–90 (on this type of phrase).
13. Paul Friedrich mentions a total of seventy-eight subtypes of the genitive in Homeric Greek; see *Proto-Indo-European Syntax: The Order of Meaningful Elements* (Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph 1; Butte: Montana College of Mineral Science and Technology, 1975) 13.
14. For both Jespersen and Carroll, see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 38, 40.
15. To borrow C. F. D. Moule's phrase for the Greek genitive; *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1959) 37.
16. That is, roughly, nominative, accusative, and genitive.
17. We have drawn on a variety of resources for the tradition, and we have also profited from John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 249–66. Note also the discussion of a variety of both syntactic and semantic points in Sperber, *Historical Grammar*, 600–622; and Richter, *GAHG* 2. 16–21.
18. On a single construct governing a coordinate noun phrase see 9.3b; for other examples see [Isa 11:2](#) and 9.5.3 # 39.
19. For the naming formulas (e.g., 'Abner son of Ner' is more common than 'Abner'), see D. J. A. Clines, "X, X ben Y, ben Y: Personal Names in Hebrew Narrative Style," *Vetus Testamentum* 22 (1972) 266–87.
20. The classic ambiguity between subjective and objective genitives is illustrated by the phrase in [Job 8:8](#), ḥēqer ʾābôtām 'the investigation of their fathers' is this 'an investigation undertaken by their fathers' (subjective) or 'an investigation about their fathers' (objective)? The underlying passive sense included under 9.5.1 (e.g., # 17) may belong under 9.5.2.
21. The term "causational" as used here is not to be confused with the "causativity" attributed to the *Hiphil*; see 27.1.
22. It could be argued that the instrumental genitives included under 9.5.1 actually belong here, because Hebrew usually does not allow an inanimate to serve as a clausal subject; an instrument in Hebrew is thus virtually always the object of a preposition or an accusative of means (10.2.3d).
23. This usage is comparable to the Greek dative of advantage, e.g., erchomai soi 'I am coming on your behalf,' [Rev 2:16](#); see 23.2.1. On some related Hebrew constructions with *l*, see T. Muraoka, "On the So-called *Dativus Ethicus* in Hebrew," *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978) 495–98.
24. Compare mēqômī in [Judg 11:19](#), where the sense is 'the place I am going to.'
25. The same phrase is used often in [Ezekiel 26](#) and [32](#); cf. the phrase ywrdy ʾl-ʾbny-bwr in [Isa 14:19](#).
26. In [Job 3:10](#) the expression bīṭnī 'my belly' refers to the womb in which the speaker was gestating at the time he is describing, from which he eventually and to his regret emerged.
27. For other phrases with ʾyś see [Gen 9:20](#), [2 Sam 18:20](#); with bʾl see [Isa 41:15](#), [50:8](#); [Jer 37:13](#); [Nah 1:2](#); with *bn* see [Num 17:25](#), [2 Sam 3:34](#), [2 Kgs 14:14](#). For the feminine bt blyʾl see [1 Sam 1:16](#). Note that *bn* is, after *yhw*, the most common noun in the Hebrew Bible; SA/THAT mentions 4,929 occurrences.
28. For similar phrases involving mastery over speech and talkativeness in ʾyś see [Job 11:2](#), [Ps 140:12](#); in ʾšt see [Prov 25:24](#); in bʾl see [Exod 24:14](#).
29. The phrase indicates the mere humanness and insignificance of Ezekiel in contrast to God; see Clines, "X, X ben Y." 287.
30. See the discussion in J. Weingreen, "The Construct-Genitive Relation in Hebrew Syntax," *Vetus Testamentum* 4 (1954) 50–59.
31. Also called the improper annexation; it is grammatically proper, but it is a minority pattern. M. Greenberg calls it a "common enough phenomenon" and cites [Isa 2:11](#) and [Ps 65:5bis](#); *Ezekiel, 1–20* (Anchor Bible 22; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983) 375.
32. Compare English 'no earthly good,' 'every mother's son' On bt yrwślm and the like see A. Fitzgerald, "BTWLT and BT as Titles for Capital Cities," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975) 167–83; and the spirited polemic of W. F. Stinespring, "Daughter of Zion," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*, ed. K. R. Crim et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976) 985.

33. Cf. 14.5. There are other ways of expressing the superlative in Hebrew, notably the use of terms such as 'ēl, 'ēlōhīm, māwet, še'ōl, nēṣaḥ as genitive (compare English 'god-awful,' 'scared to death,' 'like to died,' 'no end of trouble'). See D. Winton Thomas, "A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953) 209–24; P. P. Saydon, "Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew and Maltese," *Vetus Testamentum* 4 (1954) 432–33.
34. Examples similar to [Ps 2:12](#) are [Isa 30:18](#), [64:3](#). Other cases of the phenomenon include [Judg 5:10](#); [Isa 5:11](#), [9:1](#), [56:10](#); [Ezek 38:11](#); [Ps 84:7](#); [Job 24:5](#); cf. [Jer 33:22](#).
35. For ḥd see also [Gen 3:22](#), [Judg 17:11](#); cf. [Hos 7:5](#).
36. On similar clause types elsewhere in Semitic see M. O'Connor, "The Arabic Loanwords in Nabatean Aramaic," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45 (1986) 213–29, at 223–24.
37. Cf. [Jer 50:46](#) bis!
38. On the example from Hosea, see F.I. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, *Hosea* (Anchor Bible 24; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980) 153–54. This construction is sometimes associated with [Gen 1:1](#); see, e.g., the discussion in B. K. Waltke, "The Creation Account in [Genesis 1:1–3](#)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975) 216–28.
39. The situation in verse is more complicated.
40. On the required definiteness of the epexegetical genitive in Arabic, a difficult passage in Phoenician, and related matters, see M. O'Connor, "The Grammar of Getting Blessed in Tyrian-Sidonian Phoenician," *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 5 (1977) 5–11, at 6–11.
41. It may be that terms like *dbry hymym* were "fixed," as suggested in GKC § 129d / p. 420, on this passage.
42. The Aramaic relative pronoun *d«* / *dī* serves as genitive particle. On the later Hebrew usage, see M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 43–44, 199–200.
43. There is evidence from ENWS (Ugaritic, El-Amarna), as well as other areas of Semitic. Enclitic *mem* differs from Akkadian mimation in both form and function. Mimation is almost never found on nouns in construct (the exception furnished by such cases as *damqam inim* 'good of eyes, clear-sighted').
44. Compare the Latin ending *que* 'and,' as in *arma virumque* 'arms and the man.'
45. The classic study is Horace D. Hummel, "Enclitic *Mem* in Early Northwest Semitic," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76 (1957) 85–107; see also D. N. Freedman, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980); M. Dahood, *Psalms III: 101–150* (Anchor Bible 17A; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970); and O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*. On enclitic *mem* with *waw* see the essays in C. H. Gordon, G. A. Rendsburg, and N. H. Winter, eds., *Eblaitica* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 1. 29–41.
46. F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, "A Royal Song of Thanksgiving: [II Samuel 22](#) = [Psalm 18](#)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 72 (1953) 15–34, at 26.
47. See Bruce K. Waltke, "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament," *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco, Texas: Word, 1970) 212–39; on enclitic *mem*, p. 217.
48. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 212, and references.
49. On the Psalms passages, see Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51–100*, 68–69, 204, 320, and references.

10 Accusative Function and Related Matters

[10.1 Accusative Function](#)

[10.2 Species of the Accusative](#)

[2.1 Objective Accusative](#)

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[10.3 Particle את](#)

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[10.4 Aspects of the Use of ל](#)

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10.1 Accusative Function

a

Like the genitive, the accusative is a function of modification or dependency: nouns used with other nouns or with prepositions are in the genitive, while nouns modifying verbs are in the accusative. This ad-verbal function can involve recipients or objects of verbal action, sometimes where definite marked with the particle את.

1. בָּנִים גָּדַלְתִּי I have raised children (ACCUSATIVE).
[Isa 1:2](#)
2. עָזְבוּ אֶת־יְהוָה They have forsaken YHWH (ACCUSATIVE).
[Isa 1:4](#)

The function can also involve other specifications of verbal action.

3. נָזְרוּ אַחֲוָרָה They have turned-away backward (ACCUSATIVE).
[Isa 1:4](#)

b

Whereas the genitive case can be identified by its bracketing with a preposition or a noun in the construct state, the accusative case cannot regularly be distinguished by form. Even the distinction between transitive verbs (which may be qualified by a direct object accusative) and intransitive verbs (which usually are not) is not particularly helpful; adverbial accusatives may be bracketed with both kinds of verbs. The particle את is

often used with the definite accusative; even this helpful particle is of limited value in identifying the accusative for three reasons: it is used only with substantives that are definite, it can be used with the nominative, and it is rarely used in poetry.¹

c

Further difficulties are created by Hebrew's relatively free word order, especially in verse. Whereas English distinguishes the subject of a verb from its object by fixed word order (contrast 'John hit Bill' with 'Bill hit John'), the Hebrew accusative is not consistently ordered with regard to the verb. For example, דָּרְמִים וּמְרִמָּה יִתְעַב

אִישׁ

יְהוָה (Ps 5:7) may mean either 'a bloodthirsty and treacherous man abhors YHWH' or 'YHWH abhors a bloodthirsty and treacherous man.' Exegetes cannot decide on the sense using any strictly grammatical signs within the clause.² In this example the preceding line of the poem points decisively toward the second meaning.

d

In spite of this essential lack of formal indicators, the accusative's presence, meaning, and uses can still be identified by considering Hebrew in the context of the other Semitic languages that mark the accusative case with the ending -a (8.1c), and by considering the patterns of Hebrew itself. The Semitic accusative is both historically and descriptively the ad-verbial (to the verb) case; it brackets a noun or its equivalent with a verb in order to modify it according to the substantive's sense.³ It is, as always, problematic to abstract "the meaning" of a construction from its many particular uses. Nevertheless, abstractions are helpful and even necessary in making sense of language phenomena. In the light of its many uses displayed in the next section, we can make better sense of the Hebrew accusative by framing the generalization that it is the ad-verbial function.

10.2 Species of the Accusative

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a

In the preceding chapter we described some aspects of the process by which the uses of a grammatical form are classified (9.4). Essentially, grammarians attempt to classify the uses most broadly by syntactic considerations and more particularly by semantic considerations. No strict delimitation between syntax and semantics can be set up; for example, the use of a direct-object accusative reflects a verb's transitive meaning, whereas the distinction between adverbial accusatives of place and time is largely but not entirely lexical.⁴ Grammarians sometimes distinguish between adjuncts and complements, the former signifying an optional constituent of a sentence, the latter an obligatory constituent.⁵ The direct-object accusative is called a complement, and the adverbial accusative an adjunct. For example, in the sentence 'God planted a garden,' 'garden' is an obligatory constituent because 'God planted' is incomplete. By contrast, 'for Adam' in the sentence 'Did you come for Adam?' is an adjunct, an optional constituent. Again, a strict delimitation is not possible.⁶

b

In the following sections the uses of the accusative as a verbal object or recipient of action (10.2.1) are distinguished from the adverbial accusatives (10.2.2). The double-accusative constructions are treated last (10.2.3).

10.2.1 Objective Accusative

a

Verbs can govern a variety of kinds of objects, and the range of objects associated with a particular verb is at base a feature of the verb. Classification of objective accusatives is therefore based on various categorizations of verbs. Most verbs that govern an objective accusative are both (a) fientive (i.e., they describe actions rather than states) and (b) transitive (i.e., the effect of the verb passes over to something). The objects of such verbs may be acted on (direct objects; cf. 'He planted tomatoes') or created (effected objects; cf. 'He raised tomatoes'). Some objects are virtually implied in the verb used (cf. 'He cried tears')—these are internal objects—while some objects are complementary to the verb (cf. 'He wore clothes').

b

The proper categorization of Hebrew verbs is a more complex task than hinted at here, for two reasons. First, transitivity is only one aspect of a verb's governing scheme; modifiers other than objective accusatives are relevant. Second, transitivity is variably expressed; direct and prepositional objects may be similarly used in different clause types. Consider, in connection with these points, the following English sentences.

1. She gave at home.
2. She gave up.
3. She gave some pages.

4. She gave the book to them.
5. She gave him the books.
6. She gave away the books.

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The verb 'to give' can be simply transitive, alone (# 3), with a particle (# 6), or with a prepositional ("indirect") object (# 4). But it can also be used with no expressed object (# 1) or with two (# 5) or with a particle (# 2). Such complexities as these, combined with Biblical Hebrew's status as a written language, make it difficult to draft a full scheme of Hebrew accusative types. Both similarities and differences in verbal government between Biblical Hebrew and English also complicate our task, and we will devote attention to insisting on some of the distinctions between the two languages.

C

The direct-object accusative is the recipient of a transitive verb's action.

7. וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֶת־אָדָם
And YHWH God took Adam.

[Gen 2:15](#)

8. הֵבִיאֲנִי
It brought me.

[Ezek 40:2](#)

Both Hebrew לקח and הביא are transitive, as are both English 'to take' and 'to bring.' In prose, the direct object, if definite, may be governed by את. Contrast # 9 and # 10.

9. וַיִּסַּךְ אֶת־נִסְכּוֹ
And he poured out his libation.

[2 Kgs 16:13](#)

10. בַּל־אֶסִּיךְ נִסְכֵיהֶם
I will not pour out their libations.

[Ps 16:4](#)

Often a Hebrew transitive verb does not correspond to an English transitive that can appropriately be used in glossing or translating it.⁷

11. וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־קַיִן
She gave birth to Cain.⁸

[Gen 4:1](#)

12. וּפִי־מִרְמָה עָלַי פָּתְחוּ
They have spoken against me with lying
tongues (lit., opened ... a mouth of
lying).

[Ps 109:2](#)

Contrariwise, many English transitive verbs have no corresponding Hebrew transitives.

13. וַנִּגַּע בְּכַף־יָרֵךְ יַעֲקֹב
He touched the socket of Jacob's hip.

[Gen 32:33](#)

14. וַיִּבְחַר בְּזֶרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו
And he chose his offspring after him.

[Deut 4:37](#)

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d

Within the Hebrew syntactic system, a single verb may vary. Some verbs may govern either direct-object accusatives (nouns, # 15; or pronouns, # 16) or prepositional objects (# 17), with no appreciable difference in meaning.⁹

15. as God commanded Noah

כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נֹחַ:

16. כָּל אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּהוּ יְהוָה:

[Gen 7:9](#)

all that YHWH commanded him

[Gen 7:5](#)

17. וַיִּצַּו יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
עַל־הָאָדָם

And YHWH God commanded Adam ...

[Gen 2:16](#)

Thus *šwy Piel* can govern (1) a direct object whether (a) a noun (# 15) or (b) a pronoun (# 16), or (2) an object through the preposition *עַל* (# 17). The verb *yd* 'to know' can govern a direct object (# 18) or an object with *l* (# 19), as can *hrg* 'to kill' (## 20–21) and *rk* *Hiphil* 'to lengthen' (## 22–23).¹⁰

18. יָדַע שׁוֹר קִנְהוֹ

An ox knows its owner.

[Isa 1:3](#)

19. אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ לְאוֹלָתִי

You know my folly.

[Ps 69:6](#)

20. כִּי בָאָפָם הָרְגוּ אִישׁ

In their anger they slew a man.

[Gen 49:6](#)

21. לְאוֹיִל יַהֲרֹג־כָּעַשׂ

Resentment kills a fool.

[Job 5:2](#)

22. עַל־מִי ... תִּאָּרִיכוּ לְשׁוֹן

At whom ... do you stick out (lit., lengthen) (your) tongue?

[Isa 57:4](#)

23. עַל־נָבִי ... הָאָרִיכוּ
לְמַעַנֵיהֶם:

On my back ... they lengthen their furrows.

[Ps 129:3](#) *Qere*

Niphal forms sometimes govern a direct object (cf. 23.2, 4).

24. בְּנִי־בְלִיעַל נָסְבוּ אֶת־הַבַּיִת

The wicked men surrounded the house.

[Judg 19:22](#)

25. וַיִּלְחַמוּנִי חֲנָם:

They attack me without cause.

[Ps 109:3](#)

e

For some verbs, for example, *ng* 'to touch,' *ykl* 'to overcome,' a pronoun may stand as a prepositional object (## 26, 28), or as a suffixed (i.e., direct) object (## 27, 29), with no appreciable difference in meaning.¹¹

26. לְנַעַת בָּדָךְ:

to harm you

[2 Sam 14:10](#)

27. לֹא נִגַּעְנוּדָךְ

We did not harm you.

[Gen 26:29](#)

28. לֹא יָכַל לוֹ

He could not overpower him.

[Gen 32:26](#)

29. יָכַלְתִּיו

I have overcome him.

[Ps 13:5](#)

When a verb has different meanings or nuances according to the attached prepositional phrase, use of a suffixed pronoun can result in ambiguity. For example, **אָחַז** 'to lay hold of, to grasp' (# 30) contrasts with **בְּאָחַז** 'to hold firmly' (# 31); # 32 is ambiguous.

30. **וַיֹּאחֲזוּ אֹתוֹ** They seized him.
[Judg 1:6](#)
31. **וַיְדֹרֶם אֶחָזֶת בְּעֶקֶב עֶשָׂו** his hand holding on to Esau's heel
[Gen 25:26](#)
32. **וַיֹּאחֲזוּהוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּנְקְרוּ אֶת־עֵינָיו** Then the Philistines seized him(?)/held on to him(?) and gouged out his eyes.
[Judg 16:21](#)

f

The effected-object accusative is the result or effect of a transitive verb's action.

33. **תִּדְשֵׂא הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׂא** Let the earth produce vegetation.
[Gen 1:11](#)

The 'vegetation' is not acted on by the verb's action (contrast **אֶת־זֶרַעַךְ** 'You sow your seed,' [Deut 11:10](#)); it rather results from the actions the verb describes. The verb and the effected object are often derived from the same root; such an object is called a cognate effected accusative. (As the example from [Deut 11:10](#) makes clear, not all cognate accusatives describe an effected object.)

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34. **וְהָיָה בְּעַנְנֵי עָנָן עַל־הָאָרֶץ** Whenever I form clouds over the earth ...
[Gen 9:14](#)
35. **חֲלֹמוֹת יַחֲלֹמוֹן** They will have dreams.
[Joel 3:1](#)
36. **בְּרוֹק בָּרָק** [O God,] flash forth lightning.
[Ps 144:6](#)

g

An internal accusative is an expression of the verb's action; it is usually anarthrous (i.e., without the article) and may follow or precede the verb. It resembles in sense both the infinitive absolute (35.3.1) and various adverbial accusatives (10.2.2). An internal accusative may be a cognate accusative.

37. **הִתְאַוּ תַּאֲוָה** They craved with a craving (or, greedily).¹²
[Num 11:4](#)
38. **פָּרַח תִּפְרַחֲתִגֵּל אֶף גִּילָת** It will sprout sprouts and rejoice with rejoicing (i.e., bloom luxuriantly and rejoice greatly).
[Isa 35:2](#)
39. **פָּחַדוּ פָּחַד** They dreaded with dread (i.e., were overwhelmed with dread).
[Ps 14:5](#)

A cognate internal accusative may be used in a comparison.

40. **קְבוּרַת חֲמֹר יִקָּבֵר** He will be buried as an ass (lit., with the burial of an ass).
[Jer 22:19](#)

41. אִם-כָּמוֹת כָּל-הָאָדָם יָמָתוּן
אֱלֹה וּפְקַדַת כָּל-הָאָדָם
יִפְקַד עֲלֵיהֶם
If these people die a natural death (lit., like the death of all people) or if they experience a natural punishment (lit., there is punished upon them a punishment of all people) ...
[Num 16:29](#)

A non-cognate internal accusative carries with it a qualifier (cf. English 'She writes a good hand'). Such an accusative frequently involves a verb of expression where the organ of expression is mentioned.

42. וְקָרְאוּ ... קוֹל גָּדוֹל
And they cry out ... with a loud voice.
[Ezek 8:18](#)
43. וְכָל-הָאָרֶץ בּוֹכִים קוֹל
גָּדוֹל
The whole countryside was weeping aloud.
[2 Sam 15:23](#)

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h

A complement accusative specifies the noun associated with an intransitive verb under certain conditions. Several classes of verbs take a complement accusative. Verbs of fullness and want can be transitive as well as intransitive, for example, מָלֵא can mean 'to fill (transitive)' in the *Qal* as well as 'to be full (intransitive)' in both the *Qal* and *Niphal*.

44. יְדֵיכֶם מְלֵאוּ
Your hands are full of blood.
[Isa 1:15](#)
45. וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם:
And the earth was full of them.
[Exod 1:7](#)
46. אוֹלֵי יַחֲסִדוֹן חֲמִשִּׁים
הַצַּדִּיקִים חֲמִשָּׁה
Perhaps the fifty righteous are lacking five.
[Gen 18:28](#)
47. וְשָׂרֵץ הַיָּאֵר צִפְרֹדָעִים
The Nile will teem with frogs.
[Exod 7:28](#)
48. שֶׁבַעֲתֵי עֹלֹת
I have more than enough 'olôt.
[Isa 1:11](#)

Verbs of wearing, donning, or doffing clothes can take a complement.

49. לְבָשׁוּ כָרִים הַצֹּאן
The meadows are covered with flocks.
[Ps 65:14](#)
50. לְבַשְׁבְּגֶיךָ
Put on your robes.
[1 Kgs 22:30](#)
51. וַנִּכְשְׁלִים אֲזָרוּ חֵיל:
Those who stumbled are armed with strength.
[1 Sam 2:4](#)
52. וַיַּעַט כַּמְעִיל
And he is wearing a robe.
[1 Sam 28:14](#)
53. וַיַּעַט כַּמְעִיל קִנְאָה:
And he wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.
[Isa 59:17](#)
And he, too, stripped off his robes.

54. וַיִּפְשֹׁט גַם־הוּא בְּגָדָיו
1 Sam 19:24
55. פָּשַׁטְתִּי אֶת־כִּתְנֹתַי
I have stripped off my robe.
Cant 5:3

i

The so-called "dative accusative" involves a pronominal direct object where a prepositional object (viz., a "dative") would be expected.¹³ Several instances are mentioned above in the treatment of direct-object accusatives; the pattern cited there for *ykl* and

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ng' (## 26–29) also obtains for other verbs. The verb *ntn* takes the preposition *l* for nouns indicating the donee (the person to whom the object is given; # 56) and sometimes pronouns (# 57), but a pronoun indicating the donee can be suffixed directly to the verb (# 58).

56. וְנָתַתָּה אֶת־הַלֵּוִיִּם לְאַהֲרֹן
וּלְבָנָיו
And you shall give the Levites to Aaron
and to his offspring.
Num 3:9
57. וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ לְשָׁלָל
Jer 45:5
I'll give to you your life as booty.
58. מִי־יִתְּנֵנִי שָׁמִיר שִׁית
בְּמַלְחָמָה
Oh, that he (indefinite) would give me
(i.e., Oh that I had) thorns and briers to
battle!
Isa 27:4

The verb *z'q* normally takes the preposition *ʔel* before the noun or pronoun indicating the addressee (## 59–60), but a pronoun indicating the addressee can be expressed with a suffixed pronoun (# 61).

59. וַיִּזְעַק שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה
And Samuel cried to YHWH.
1 Sam 7:9
60. וַנִּזְעַק אֵלֶיךָ מִצָּרֵתָנוּ
And we will cry to you from our troubles.
2 Chr 20:9
61. וַיִּזְעַקְוּ
They cried to you.
Neh 9:28

Other "dative accusatives" occur with less well documented verbs.

62. לֹא תִשְׁכַּחַנִּי
You will not be forgotten by me.
Isa 44:21
63. חָצוֹם צִמְתָּנִי אָנִי
Did you fast for me!?
64. בְּעוֹתֵי אֱלֹהִים יַעֲלֶרְכוּנִי
The horrors of God are ranged against
me.
Job 6:4

10.2.2 Adverbial Accusative

a

In addition to the objective accusatives, verbs may govern various adverbial accusatives; these detail features of the verbal action (and the like), including time, place, condition, manner, and specification. Broadly speaking, these accusatives are adjuncts rather than complements to the verb (10.2).

b

The accusative of place specifies a location. Ordinarily location without movement is specified by a prepositional phrase with *b* or *l*, but an accusative may be used. The verbs *yšb* 'to dwell' (## 1–2), *gwr* 'to reside' (## 3–4), and *škb* 'to live' (# 5) are found with accusatives of place, as are verbs without specifically locational reference (## 6–7).

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- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֵהָל | while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent ¹⁴
Gen 18:1 |
| 2. | לְשֹׁכֶת בַּיִת: | that it may dwell in a shrine ¹⁵
Isa 44:13 |
| 3. | מִי יִכּוּרְלָנוּ אֵשׁ אוֹכֶלֶת | Who of us can dwell in the consuming fire?
Isa 33:14 |
| 4. | לֹא יִגְרֹךְ רָע: | Evil cannot dwell with you.
Ps 5:5 |
| 5. | וַהֲנִה אִשָּׁה שֹׁכֶכֶת
מִרְגְּלֹתָיו: | And behold, a woman lying at his feet!
Ruth 3:0 |
| 6. | וְאַתָּה תִּשְׁמָע הַשָּׁמַיִם | Then hear [O God] from (i.e., in) heaven. ¹⁶
1 Kgs 8:32 |
| 7. | הֲיֵשׁ בֵּית־אָבִיךָ מָקוֹם | Is there room in your father's house?
Gen 24:23 |

The goal of movement (or directed activity) toward is usually marked with a preposition but may stand as an accusative of place.

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|
| 8. | וִצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה | Go out to the open country.
Gen 27:3 |
| 9. | וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן | And they came to the land of Canaan.
Gen 45:25 |
| 10. | אוֹצֵר יְהוָה יָבוֹא: | It must come into YHWH's treasury.
Josh 6:19 |

By analogy, the accusative is also used for the place from which one departs.¹⁷

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---|
| 11. | הֵם יִצְאוּ אֶת־הָעִיר | They having left the city ...
Gen 44:4 |
|-----|------------------------|---|

The constructions with local accusative (## 12, 14) and directive -āh (## 12, 13) are sometimes interchangeable.

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- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 12. | וַיֵּלֶךְ שִׁמְעִי ... וַיֵּגֵד לְשֹׁלֹמֹה
כִּי־הָלַךְ שִׁמְעִי ... גַּת | And he (Shimei) went to Gath ... and it was told to Solomon that Shimei had gone ... to Gath.
1 Kgs 2:40–41 |
| 13. | וְהוֹרַדְתָּם אֶת־שִׁיבְתִּי בִּיגּוֹן
שְׂאוּלָה: | You will bring my gray head down to Sheol in sorrow. |

14. וְהוֹרַדְתָּ אֶת־שֵׁיבֹתוֹ בְּדָם
שֶׁאוֹל:
Gen 42:38
You will bring his gray head down to
Sheol in blood.

[1 Kgs 2:9](#)

The local extent of a verbal action can also stand as an accusative of place.

15. חֲמֵשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה אַמָּה מִלְמַעְלָה
גָּבְרוּ הַמַּיִם
And the waters rose to a depth of fifteen
cubits.

[Gen 7:20](#)

16. וַיִּפֹּל מִלֹּא־קוֹמָתוֹ אֶרֶץ
He fell full length on the ground.

[1 Sam 28:20](#)

17. וְהוּא־הֵלֵךְ בַּמִּדְבָּר הָרֶחֶק
יוֹם
He went into the desert a day's journey.

[1 Kgs 19:4](#)

C

The accusative of time specifies a time. It may refer to the time at which an action takes place.

18. עֲתָה אֶסְפָּה יוֹם־אָחָד
בְּיַד־שָׂאוֹל
Now, one day I will perish at Saul's
hands.
[1 Sam 27:1](#)
19. הַשָּׁנָה אַתָּה מוֹת
This year you are going to die.
[Jer 28:16](#)
20. עֶרֶב וּבֹקֶר וְצָהָרִים אֲשִׁיחָה
Evening, morning, and noon I cry out in
distress.
[Ps 55:18](#)

It may also refer to the duration of an action.

21. וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל כָּל־יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:
You will eat dust all the days of your
life.
[Gen 3:14](#)
22. שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד
During six days you shall labor.
[Exod 20:9](#)
23. יָמִים רַבִּים יֵשְׁבוּ
They will live many days.
[Hos 3:4](#)

d

The accusative of state specifies a feature of the verb's subject or object at the time of the verbal action or in relation to that action. Such an accusative, be it substantive, adjective, or participle, is indefinite. It may refer to the subject of the clause.¹⁸

24. וַיֵּצֵא הָרִאשׁוֹן אֲדָמוֹנִי
And the first one came out red.
[Gen 25:25](#)
25. בָּאתִי הַיּוֹם רִאשׁוֹן
I have come today as the first one.
[2 Sam 19:21](#)
26. הֵלֵךְ עֲבָדִי יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ עָרוֹם
My servant Isaiah went about nude and

ויַחַף־

barefoot.

[Isa 20:3](#)

27. וּבֶן־שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים יִמּוּל לָכֶם
כָּל־זָכָר

Every male among you, when he is eight days old, will be circumcised.

[Gen 17:12](#)

It may refer to the object of the clause.¹⁹

28. וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַזֵּרַע
בַּשִּׁלָּה

And the priest shall take the shoulder when it is boiled.

[Num 6:19](#)

29. חֹם הַצִּטִּיָּדְנוּ אֹתוֹ

We packed it while it was still hot.

[Josh 9:12](#)

30. הוּא יְשׁוּפֶךָ רֹאשׁ

He will crush you on the head.

[Gen 3:15](#)

31. הִרְאֵנִי יְהוָה אֶתְךָ מֶלֶךְ
עַל־אַרְם:

YHWH has pointed you out to me as king over Aram.

[2 Kgs 8:13](#)

32. וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הָעָם בֹּכֶה

Moses heard the people wailing.

[Num 11:10](#)

e

The accusative of state may disagree with its referent in gender or number.

33. הִכִּיתָ אֶת־כָּל־אֹיְבֵי לִחֵי

Strike all my enemies on the jaw.

[Ps 3:8](#)

The accusative of manner describes the way in which an action is performed; it, too, is anarthrous.

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34. וְלֹא תֵלְכוּ רוֹמָה

You will no longer walk proudly.

[Mic 2:3](#)

35. לְאַבְדּוֹ שָׁכֶם אֶחָד:

to serve him with one accord

[Zeph 3:9](#)

36. מִיִּשְׁרִים תִּשְׁפֹּטוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם:

Do you judge uprightly among people?

[Ps 58:2](#)

37. נִוְרָאוֹת נִפְלִיתִי

I am made wonderful fearfully.

[Ps 139:14](#)

The accusative of limitation specifies the extent to which an action is performed.

38. עָרַף יָפְנוּ לִפְנֵי יְבִיחֵם

They turn as far as the neck (i.e., turn their backs) before their enemies.

[Josh 7:12](#)

The accusative of specification describes a feature of a noun in the absolute state; the accusative is indefinite. This accusative usage is similar to certain genitive patterns.

39. וּמִשְׁקַל לְמִנְרוֹת הַזָּהָב

and the weight of the lampstands of gold (GENITIVE) and their lamps of

40. וְנִרְתִּיָּהֶם זָהָב gold (ACCUSATIVE)
 1 Chr 28:15
 וְאַתָּה מִנְחָסִי-עֹז: You are my refuge as to strength.
 Ps 71:7

The accusative of specification may be used in a comparison.

41. כְּבִיר מֵאַבְיָד יָמִים: more powerful than your father with
 regard to days (i.e., men even older
 than your father)
 Job 15:10

Frequently the Hebrew does not permit one to decide whether the specifying substantive is an accusative, a genitive, or an appositive.

42. אֶטֶר יְד־יְמִינִי hindered of/in his right hand
 (ACCUSATIVE or GENITIVE) (i.e., left
 handed)
 Judg 3:15
 43. שְׁלֹשׁ סָאִים קֶמַח three measures of flour (ACCUSATIVE
 or APPOSITION)²⁰
 Gen 18:6

10.2.3 Double Accusative

a

Some verbs are doubly or complexly transitive and may have more than one object associated with them. Such verbs are much more common in Hebrew than in English, but consider these sentences:

1. They made him (OBJECT1) king (OBJECT2).
2. They thought her (OBJECT1) a prophet (OBJECT2).
3. They proved him (OBJECT1) a fool (OBJECT2).

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As these examples suggest, complex transitivity is often associated with notions of causation and judgment, notions tied in Hebrew to the *Piel* and *Hiphil* stems. Many of the examples here use verbs in those stems, while others reflect other differences between the Hebrew and English lexica.

b

Let us begin with double accusatives not associated with *Piel-Hiphil* forms. A double accusative of direct object + "datival" object is found with verbs of speaking (šl, 'ny, šwy, ## 4–8) as well as with verbs of giving (*ntn*, *zbd*, ## 9–10). The "datival" object is usually a pronoun. (In the examples below, | is used to separate the two accusatives when they are adjacent in the English gloss.)

4. יִשְׁאַלֻּנִי מִשְׁפָּטֵי-צֶדֶק They ask me | for just decisions.
 Isa 58:2
 5. כִּי שָׁם שְׁאֵלוֹנוּ שׁוֹבֵינֵנוּ דְּבַר־שִׁיר For there our captors required of us |
 songs.
 Ps 137:3
 6. וַיַּעַן הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־הָעָם קָשָׁה And the king answered the people |
 harshly (lit., a harsh thing).
 1 Kgs 12:13
 7. וַיִּצְוֶם אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר And he commanded them | all that
 יהוה אָמַר YHWH spoke to him.²¹

8. מִצְוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּךָ [Exod 34:32](#)
his commandments which I have
commanded you
9. אֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב נָתַתָּנִי [Deut 6:2](#)
You gave me | the land of the Negev.
10. זָבַדְנִי אֱלֹהִים אֶתִּי זָבָד
טוֹב [Josh 15:19](#)
God has presented me | with a precious
gift.
- [Gen 30:20](#)

C

Verbs of creation and appointment often govern two accusatives.²² These may be thing made + materials.

11. וַיִּצְרֵה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
אֶת־הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה [Gen 2:7](#)
And YHWH God formed the man | from
the dust of the ground.
12. כָּל־כֵּלָיו עָשָׂה נְחֹשֶׁת: [Exod 38:3](#)
All its vessels he made of brass.
13. עָמוּדָיו עָשָׂה כֶּסֶף [Cant 3:10](#)
He made its posts | of silver.
14. אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת תִּבְנֶה
אֶת־מִזְבַּח יְהוָה [Deut 27:6](#)
Build the altar of YHWH with
fieldstones.

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The accusatives may also be thing made + thing remade.

15. וַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עֲגֹת [Num 11:8](#)
They made it (manna) | into cakes.
16. וַיַּעֲשֵׂהוּ פֶסֶל [Judg 17:4](#)
And he made it (the stolen silver) | into
an image.
17. וַיִּבְנֶה אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים מִזְבֵּחַ [1 Kgs 18:32](#)
He built the stones | into an altar.

This pair may involve abstract terms.

18. וַיַּחֲשִׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה: [Gen 15:6](#)
He credited it (Abraham's belief) to him
as righteousness.

Verbs of appointment govern as accusatives person appointed + rank.

19. וַיַּשֵּׂם אֶת־בָּנָיו שְׁפָטִים [1 Sam 8:1](#)
He made his sons | judges.
20. לֹא תַשִּׁימָנִי קָצִין עָם: [Isa 3:7](#)
Do not make me | the leader of the
people.
21. וָאֶתֵּן אֹתָם רָאשִׁים [Deut 1:15](#)
And I appointed them | heads.

Similarly, verbs of naming govern person named + name.

22. וַיִּקְרָאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו: And they called his name | Esau.
[Gen 25:25](#)

d

Some verbs govern a double accusative of direct object + means, be it instrument (## 23–25) or medium (# 26).

23. אִישׁ אֶת־אֶחָיו יִצְוֹדוּ חָרֶם: Each hunts his brother | with a net.
[Mic 7:2](#)
24. וְהִכֵּיתִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ חָרֶם: I smite the earth | with a curse.
[Mal 3:24](#)
25. וַיִּרֶם אֱלֹהִים חֵץ God shoots at them | with arrows.
[Ps 64:8](#)
26. מִשְׁחָךְ אֱלֹהִים ... שָׁמֶן God anointed you ... | with oil.
[Ps 45:8](#)

With verbs of planting, the direct object is the area planted and the means is the crop.

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27. וַיִּטְעֵהוּ שֵׂרֶק He planted it | with choice vines.
[Isa 5:2](#)
28. וַיִּזְרְעֵהָ מֶלַח: He sowed it | with salt.
[Judg 9:45](#)

e

The double accusatives used with *Piel-Hiphil* verbs follow similar patterns (24.1, 27.1). In a number of cases, the accusatives involve the object of the causation predicate, the person acted on (by the primary subject) + the object of the other verbal predicate, the object acted on (by the undersubject, the person acted on).

29. וַיַּאֲכִלְךָ אֶת־הַמָּן He fed you | manna (lit., he caused you to eat manna).
[Deut 8:3](#)
30. הַשְׁקִינִי־נָא מֵעֵט־מַיִם Give me | a little water to drink.²³
[Judg 4:19](#)
31. הִרְאָנוּ ... אֶת־כְּבוֹדוֹ He showed us ... his glory.
[Deut 5:21](#)
32. וְאֵרָאֶךְ אֶת־הָאִישׁ I will show you | the man.
[Judg 4:22](#)
33. וְנִוְדִיעָה אֶתְכֶם דָּבָר And we'll teach you | a lesson.
[1 Sam 14:12](#)
34. וְהוּא יִנְחִיל אוֹתָם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ He will cause them to inherit the land.²⁴
[Deut 3:28](#)

The double accusatives can refer to the object of the causation predicate (person or thing) + the means or complement of the other verbal predicate.

35. וַיִּמְלְאוּ אֶת־כְּלִיָּהֶם בָּר They filled their bags | with grain.
[Gen 42:25](#)
36. וַיַּכְלִלָם לֶחֶם וָמַיִם: I supplied them | with food and water.
[1 Kgs 18:13](#)
37. אֲבִיוֹנָהָ אֲשַׁבֵּיעַ לֶחֶם: Her poor | I will satisfy with food.
[Ps 132:15](#)
38. וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תַּעֲטֶרְהוּ: You crowned him | with glory and honor.
[Ps 8:6](#)
39. אֲרִירֶךְ דִּמְעָתִי I drench you | with my tears.
[Isa 16:9](#)

Verbs of clothing (or stripping) can govern a personal direct object + complement object.²⁵

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40. וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ שָׂאוֹל אֶת־דָּוִד
מָדִיו Saul clothed David | with his garments.
[1 Sam 17:38](#)
41. וַיַּפְשִׁטוּ אֶת־כִּתְנֹתָיו They stripped Joseph | of his coat.
[Gen 37:23](#)

10.3 Particle אֵת

a

The particle אֵת is one of the most difficult grammatical morphemes in Biblical Hebrew. One set of difficulties is morphological: the particle אֵת /-אֵת- is homonymous with אֵת /-אֵת-, the preposition 'with,' except with pronominal suffixes.²⁶ With these the particle base is ʾōt-/ʾet- (אֵתִי, אֵתְךָ, אֵתּוֹ, אֵתְכֶם, אֵתָם/once אֵתָהֶם/rarely אֵתָהֶם, etc.), while the prepositional base is ʾitt- (אֵתִי, אֵתְכֶם, etc.).²⁷ As a result of this similarity, the two words are sometimes confused.

b

The other set of difficulties is syntactic. There are two approaches to descriptions of the particle's function. (1) The tradition calls it the nota accusativi or "sign of the accusative" and essentially explains away the occurrences that do not fit this rubric.²⁸ (2) More recent grammarians regard it as a marker of emphasis used most often with definite nouns in the accusative role. The apparent occurrences with the nominative are most problematic—are they to be denied, emended away or the like,²⁹ or are they to be explained? The last course seems best, though the difficulty of the problem cannot be denied: "No single particle has given rise to more widespread and also mutually more contradictory discussion than this so-called nota accusativi."³⁰ A. M. Wilson late in the nineteenth century concluded from his exhaustive study of all the occurrences of this

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debated particle that it had an intensive or reflective force in some of its occurrences.³¹ Many grammarians have followed his lead.³² On such a view, אֵת is a weakened emphatic particle, corresponding to the English pronoun 'self' in locutions such as 'He, himself (NOMINATIVE), kept the law and He kept the law itself (ACCUSATIVE). It resembles Greek *autos* and Latin *ipse*, both sometimes used for emphasis, and like them it can be omitted from the text without obscuring the grammar. This explanation of the particle's meaning harmonizes well with the facts that the particle is used in Mishnaic Hebrew as a demonstrative³³ and is found almost exclusively with determinate nouns.

c

One could argue that **את** was originally a sign of the accusative with active verbs and that in the historical development of the language it was reinterpreted as the subject of an equivalent passive construction. So, for example, **וַיֵּלֶד לְחֲנוּךְ אֶת־עִירָד** 'Enoch begat Irad,' is equivalent to **וַיֵּלֶד לְחֲנוּךְ אֶת־עִירָד**, 'To Enoch was born Irad' ([Gen 4:18](#)). This gave rise, the argument would continue, to the kind of construction known as ergative, in which the morphological marking of the subject of an intransitive verb is the same as the direct object of a transitive verb. Thus a hypothetical ergative English paraphrase of 'John moved her' would be 'her moved by John.' The final step, one could conclude the argument, is that even this trace of the original passive construction became lost. Such a development is attested in the movement from early Indo-Iranian to Hindi and Modern Persian.³⁴ The reconstruction would also find support in the cognate Semitic languages,

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where the accusative case ending is sometimes found with the subject of passive verbs, and from the lack of grammatical agreement between the plural subject and the singular verb. The ergative theory should be rejected because it does not account for the wide use of **את** in other constructions in Biblical Hebrew.

10.3.1 With the Accusative

a

The emphatic particle is used most often to mark the definite direct object of a transitive verb.

1. **וַיֵּטַע יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים גֶּן ... וַיִּשֶׁם שָׁם אֶת־הָאָדָם** And YHWH God planted a garden ... and placed Adam there.
[Gen 2:8](#)
2. **וְלֹא־יָכֹל יוֹד לְהָשִׁיב אֶת־אֲבִנֵּי דָבָר** He was not able to answer Abner.
[2 Sam 3:11](#)
3. **וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־חַיֵּי הָאָרֶץ** God made the wild animals.
[Gen 1:25](#)

In a series of definite direct objects, if the particle is used on one member Of the series it is ordinarily used on each (# 4); occasionally the initial **את** in a series overrides the later objects (# 5).

4. **וַיִּכּוּ אֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת־הַפְּרִזִּי:** They smote the Canaanites and the Perizzites.
[Judg 1:5](#)
5. **וַיֵּתֶן יְהוָה אֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי בְיָדָם** YHWH gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their power.
[Judg 1:4](#)

Pronouns with **את** are definite.

6. **גַּם־אֲתָכָה הֲרַגְתִּי וְאֹתָהּ הִחַיִּיתִי:** I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her.
[Num 22:33](#)
7. **וְלִקְחָתָם גַּם־אֶת־זֶה מֵעַם** And if you also take this one from me ...

פָּנִי

[Gen 44:29](#)

8. אֶת־מִי אֶשְׁלַח Whom shall I send?
[Isa 6:8](#)

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Constructions with 'all' and numbers also involve a logical determination.

9. וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַתַּנִּינִים
הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֵת כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ
הַחַיָּה הַרְמִשֶׁת And God created the great creatures of
the sea and every living and moving
thing.
[Gen 1:21](#)
10. קַח־נָא אִתְּךָ אֶת־אֶחָד
מֵהַנְּעָרִים Take one of the servants with you.
[1 Sam 9:3](#)
11. אֶת־שִׁבְעַת כְּבָשֶׁת תִּקַּח מִיָּדִי
אֶת־שִׁבְעַת כְּבָשֶׁת תִּקַּח מִיָּדִי Accept these seven lambs from my
hand.
[Gen 21:30](#)

The relative marker אֲשֶׁר is governed by אֵת both when it is used as a pronoun (## 12–13) and when it is used to introduce a 'that' clause (## 14–15).

12. וּמָשַׁחְתָּ לִּי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־אֹמַר
אֵלַיךְ: And you shall on my behalf anoint the
one of whom I will speak to you.
[1 Sam 16:3](#)
13. וַיָּדַע אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה־לּוֹ בְּנוֹ
הַקָּטָן: And he knew that which his youngest
son had done to him.
[Gen 9:24](#)
14. אַל־תִּשְׁכַּח אֵת
אֲשֶׁר־הִקְצַפְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה Do not forget that you angered YHWH.
[Deut 9:7](#)
15. שָׁמָעְנוּ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־הוֹבִישׁ
יְהוָה אֶת־מִי יַם־סוּף We have heard that YHWH dried up the
water of the Yam Suf.
[Josh 2:10](#)

T. Muraoka has noted that there is a statistically higher use of אֵת in [1 Samuel 1–8](#) (only 8 of 116 occurrences of the definite direct object lack it) than in [Genesis 12–20](#) (22 out of 86 instances lack it).³⁵ He could often find no reason for its omission; compare these examples.

16. וַהֲדָלַת סָגֵר אַחֲרָיו: He shut the door behind him.
[Gen 19:6](#)
17. וְאֶת־הַדָּלַת סָגְרוּ: They shut the door.
[Gen 19:10](#)

b

The particle אֵת is rarely prefixed to an indefinite direct-object accusative. This anomalous use may be explained

as due to an attempt to set off accusative function.

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18. וְהָשִׁיג לָכֶם דִּישׁ אֶת־בָּצִיר
וּבָצִיר יִשִּׁיג אֶת־זֶרַע
Your threshing will overtake (i.e., last until or overlap) grape harvest, and grape harvest will overtake planting.
[Lev 26:5](#)
19. וְהָיָה אִם־נָשָׁךְ הַנָּחָשׁ
אֶת־אִישׁ
And if the snake (i.e., a snake) bit anyone ...
[Num 21:9](#)
20. וְאֶת־קֹשׁ יִבֶּשׁ תִּרְדֹּף:
Do you pursue dry chaff?
[Job 13:25](#)

C

The particle is used far less often with other accusative nouns. Of the other objective accusatives, **את** tends not to occur with internal accusatives but is found with complement accusatives (## 21–22) and "datival accusatives" (## 23–26).

21. וּמָלְאוּ בָתֵּי מִצְרַיִם
אֶת־הָעָרֹב
And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with flies.
[Exod 8:17](#)
22. וַיִּמָּלֵא אֶת־הַחֲכָמָה
And he was filled with wisdom.
[1 Kgs 7:14](#)
23. וְאֵיבֹתַי אֶת־אֵיבֵיךָ
I shall be an enemy to your enemies.
[Exod 23:22](#)
24. הֲדַבֵּר דְּבָרָתִי אֶת־אַחַד
שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
Have I spoken to any of the tribes of Israel?
[2 Sam 7:7](#)
25. וְדַבֵּרְתִּי מִשְׁפָּטֵי אוֹתָם
I will speak my judgments to them.
[Jer 1:16](#)
26. אֲדַבֵּר אוֹתְךָ:
I will speak to you.
[Ezek 3:22](#)

The particle is used sporadically with adverbial accusatives, of place (## 27–28), of time (## 29–30), and of limitation (## 31–33).

27. יֵדַע לְכַתֵּךְ אֶת־הַמִּדְבָּר
הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה
He has watched over your journey through this vast steppe.
[Deut 2:7](#)
28. הֵם יֵצְאוּ אֶת־הָעִיר
They having left the city ...
[Gen 44:4](#)
29. מִצּוֹת יֵאָכֵל אֶת שִׁבְעַת
הַיָּמִים
Unleavened bread must be eaten for seven days.
[Exod 13:7](#)
30. וְאֶתְנַפַּל לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֶת
אַרְבָּעִים הַיּוֹם
I lay prostrate before YHWH forty days.

31. וְנִמְלַחְתֶּם אֶת בָּשָׂר
עֲרֹלְתְּכֶם
[Deut 9:25](#)
You will circumcise yourselves with
regard to the flesh of your foreskin.
32. וְהָיָא שָׁכַב אֶת מִשְׁכָּב
הַצֹּהֲרִים:
[Gen 17:11](#)
And he was lying down for the midday
rest.
33. חָלָה אֶת־רַגְלָיו:
[2 Sam 4:5](#)
He became sick in his feet.
[1 Kgs 15:23](#)

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10.3.2 Elsewhere

a

The particle **אֵת** is prefixed to nouns in the nominative function in both verbal and verbless clauses, usually in cases involving enumerations or appositions (12.1). It is also rarely used in a few other constructions.

b

In verbal clauses **אֵת** can mark the subject of transitive (# 1) and intransitive active (## 2–5) verbs and passive verbs (## 6–8). The use with transitives is extremely rare; the other two usages are more common.

1. וְאֵת־מֶלְכֵינוּ ... לֹא עָשׂוּ
תֹרָתָךְ
Our kings ... did not follow (TRANSITIVE)
your laws.
[Neh 9:34](#)
2. וּבָא הָאֵרִי וְאֵת־הָדֹב וְנָשָׂא
שֶׁה
When a lion came (INTRANSITIVE) or a
bear and carried off a sheep ...
[1 Sam 17:34](#)
3. וַיִּפְּלוּ מִבְּנֵי־מִן שְׁמֹנֶה־עָשָׂר
אֶלֶף אִישׁ אֶת־כָּל־אֱלֹהֵי
אֲנָשֵׁי־חַיִּל:
And there fell (INTRANSITIVE) from
Benjamin eighteen thousand men, all of
them men of war.³⁶
[Judg 20:44](#)
4. וְאֵת־הַבְּרֹזֶל נָפַל אֶל־הַמַּיִם
The iron (axhead) fell (INTRANSITIVE)
into the water.
[2 Kgs 6:5](#)
5. אֶת־עַמּוּד הָעָנָן לֹא־סָר
The column of cloud did not depart
(INTRANSITIVE).
[Neh 9:19](#)
6. וַיּוֹלֵד לְחֲנוּךְ אֶת־עִירָד
And Irad was born (PASSIVE) to
Henoch.
[Gen 4:18](#)
7. בְּהוֹלֵד לוֹ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ:
When his son Isaac was born (PASSIVE)
to him ...
[Gen 21:5](#)
8. וַיִּגַּד לְרֵבְקָה אֶת־דְּבָרֵי
עָשׂוּ
The words of Esau were told (PASSIVE)
to Rebekah.
[Gen 27:42](#)

The existential verb הָיָה 'to be' and the two existential particles יֵשׁ 'there is' and אֵין 'there is not' take ordinary verbal government, with a nominative subject. The verb הָיָה (with לֹ 'to belong to'; ## 9–10) and both particles (## 11–12) have subjects, or nouns in apposition to subjects, marked with אֵת.

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- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 9. | וְאִישׁ אֶת־קִדְשׁוֹ לֹ הָיָה | As for every person, his offerings belong to him.
Num 5:10 |
| 10. | אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַגּוֹיִם וְאֶת־שְׁתֵּי הָאֲרָצוֹת לִי תְהִינָה | The two nations and the two lands will be mine.
Ezek 35:10 |
| 11. | הֲיֵשׁ אֶת־לִבְבְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל | Is your heart right?
2 Kgs 10:15 |
| 12. | וְאִין־אַתְּכֶם אֵלַי | You, yourselves, did not turn to me.
Hag 2:17 |

c

With verbless clauses אֵת can be used to mark the subject (# 13) or the predicate (# 15) or both (# 17), or a noun in apposition to them (## 14, 16).

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 13. | הַמַּעַשׂ־לָנוּ אֶת־עוֹן פְּעוֹר | Is the crime of Peor (SUBJECT) a little thing to us?
Josh 22:17 |
| 14. | וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תֹאכְלוּ מֵהֶם ... אֵת כָּל־עֶרֶב לְמִינוֹ: | But these are those [birds] you may not eat of ... any kind of raven (SUBJECT APPOSITION).
Deut 14:12, 14 |
| 15. | כָּל־הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּנוּ לְלוֹיִם אַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה עִיר אֶתְהֶן וְאֶת־מִגְרִישֵׁיהֶן: | All the cities you give to the Levites shall be forty-eight cities, them and their pasturelands (PREDICATE).
Num 35:7 |
| 16. | הֵמָּה הַפָּנִים אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר מִרְאִיהֶם וְאוֹתָם | They were the faces which I had seen near the river Chebar, their appearances and they themselves (PREDICATE APPOSITION).
Ezek 10:22 |
| 17. | וְאֵת הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּנוּ לְלוֹיִם אֵת שֵׁשׁ־עָרֵי הַמִּקְלָט | The towns (SUBJECT) you give the Levites will be the six cities of refuge (PREDICATE).
Num 35:6 |

d

The two remaining uses of אֵת are rare. It may be used to mark a nominative absolute (sentential topic or focus marker; see 4.7, 8.3).

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|
| 18. | אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה | As for all the land which you see, I will |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|

רָאָה לְךָ אֶת־נָנָה

give it to you.

[Gen 13:15](#)

19. וְגַם אֶת־מַעֲכָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּסְרָהּ
מִגְבִּירָה

And as for his mother Maacah, he even
deposed her as queen mother.

[1 Kgs 15:13](#)

20. וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַי לֹא־הִלְכוּ בָהֶם

And as for my decrees, they did not
follow them.

[Ezek 20:16](#)

As several examples have shown, **את** can mark a noun in apposition (12.1) to a nominative; it is used at least once before a noun in apposition to a prepositional object.

21. וַיִּמְרְרוּ אֶת־חַיֵּיהֶם בְּעִבְדָּהּ
קָשָׁה ... אֵת כָּל־עֲבָדָתָם

They made their lives bitter in hard
labor ... in all their labors.

[Exod 1:14](#)

10.4 Aspects of the Use of ל

a

The preposition *l*, like the other monographic prepositions *b* and *k*, serves a wide variety of functions (cf. 11.2.10). It marks location 'to, toward,' and 'at, near,' as well as

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analogous time references; it is the preposition of transformation 'into' and belonging 'to,' and it marks purpose clauses ('in order to'). It can also be used in ways analogous to **את**, prefixed to nouns that do not fall within its usual prepositional range, often nouns in enumerations or in apposition.³⁷

b

Like **את**, **ל** is used to mark the definite direct object of a transitive verb (cf. 11.2.10, ## 58–60).

1. זָכֹר לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק
וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדֶיךָ

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel,
your servants.³⁸

[Exod 32:13](#)

2. רַפָּא נָא לָהּ:

Heal her, I pray.³⁹

[Num 12:13](#)

3. לְשַׁחַת לְעִיר

to destroy the town⁴⁰

[1 Sam 23:10](#)

4. כַּמַּיִם לַיָּם מְכַסִּים:

as the waters cover the sea⁴¹

[Isa 11:9](#)

It is rarely used to mark an indefinite direct object.

5. לְאוִיל יִהְרֶג־כָּעֵשׂ

Resentment kills a fool.

[Job 5:2](#)

c

The subject of a verb can be marked with *l*; the verb may be intransitive or passive.

6. All who pass by it will be appalled

לְכָל-עֶבֶר עָלָיו יִשָּׁם

(INTRANSITIVE).⁴²

[2 Chr 7:21](#)

7.

פֶּן יִבְלַע לַמֶּלֶךְ
וּלְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ:

lest the king and all the people with him
be swallowed up (PASSIVE)⁴³

[2 Sam 17:16](#)

A related use of / is on the last phrase in a complex noun. In # 8 the noun phrase with / is the last part of the subject, while in # 9 the / phrase is in apposition to a prepositional object (cf. 11.2.10, ## 62–64).

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8.

וַיִּתְּנוּ שָׂרֵי הָאֲבוֹת וְשָׂרֵי
שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשָׂרֵי
הָאֲלָפִים וְהַמְּאוֹת וְלִשְׂרֵי
מִלְּאֲכַת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

And there gave freely the heads of
households and the heads of the tribes of
Israel and the heads of the thousands
and hundreds and the heads of the royal
labor force.

[1 Chr 29:6](#)

9.

וַיַּוְעֶץ דָּוִיד עִם-שָׂרֵי
הָאֲלָפִים וְהַמְּאוֹת
לְכָל-נָגִיד:

And David conferred with the heads of
thousands and hundreds, with each
leader.

[1 Chr 13:1](#)

10.5 Directional ה

a

Before the decipherment of the Ugaritic texts (1.3.1) grammarians supposed that the unaccented Hebrew suffix -ah, signifying "direction," represented a survival of the original accusative case ending -a. Ugaritic, however, was found to have both an accusative case ending -a and an adverbial suffix -h like the Hebrew so-called "*he*-locale" or "directional-*he*" suffix.⁴⁴ From this evidence it is certain that Hebrew directional *he* is not a survival of the old accusative,⁴⁵ but a distinct adverbial suffix. Roughly equivalent to the English adverbial suffix '-ward,' this suffix denotes some meanings similar to those designated by the accusative case; it differs from that case in that it may occur with nouns governed by a preposition and it distinctively emphasizes the notion of direction.⁴⁶

b

The directional *he* may indicate the direction toward which an action is aimed. The simplest such case of directional *he* is the word הֵנָּה.

1.

הִבֵּא אֶת-הָאֲנָשִׁים הַבָּיְתָה

Take these men to (my) house.

[Gen 43:16](#)

2.

הַבְּטֵנָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה

Look at the heavens.

[Gen 15:5](#)

Directional *he* may break up a construct chain (9.3d).

3.

וַיִּבֶּא הָאִישׁ אֶת-הָאֲנָשִׁים
בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף:

The man took the men to Joseph's
house.

[Gen 43:17](#)

Less often, *he* occurs on a prepositional phrase indicating the direction away from which an action is directed.

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4. כְּלֵי בֵּית־יְהוָה מוֹשְׁבִים
מִבָּבֶלָה The vessels of YHWH's house are about
to be brought back from Babylon.
[Jer 27:16](#)

The *he* suffix is also used on prepositional phrases referring to a locale.

5. וְדָוִד בַּמִּדְבַּר־זִיף בְּחֹרֶשׁ: And David was in the Steppe of Zif, at
Horesh.
[1 Sam 23:15](#)
6. וְכָל־בֵּית שֵׁאֵן אֲשֶׁר אֶצֶל
צָרְתָנָה and all of Beth-Shean which is near
Zarethan
[1 Kgs 4:12](#)

C

Finally, the particle can mark forward progression through time.⁴⁷

7. וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת־הַחֻקָּה הַזֹּאת
לְמוֹעֲדָהּ מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה: You must keep this ordinance at the
appointed time from year to year.
[Exod 13:10](#)

Footnotes:

1. On the use in poetry see, for example, D. N. Freedman, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 2, 310; for data on the occurrences see Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, "'Prose Particle' Counts of the Hebrew Bible," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 165–83. On the use of *et* in non-accusative functions see 10.3.2. On the supposed accusative use of independent pronouns in Hebrew (as in Ugaritic, cf. *UT* § 6.4), see Mitchell Dahood, "The Independent Personal Pronoun in the Oblique Case in Hebrew," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970) 86–90; "Northwest Semitic Notes on [Dt. 32,20](#)," *Biblica* 54 (1973) 405–6; [Jeremiah 5](#), 31 and *UT* 127:32, " *Biblica* 57 (1976) 106–8.
2. There are large-scale patterns of word order in Hebrew verse; see M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980).
3. The Semitic case/function system does not line up in a straightforward way with other case systems. Consider the example of Koine Greek. In contrast to early Semitic, which had three cases, early Indo-European had at least eight cases. In Koine Greek, only four of these survive: the genitive case serves for earlier genitive and ablative; the dative case for earlier dative, locative, and instrumental; the nominative and accusative continue older patterns. Thus, Semitic accusatives, which would variously correspond to some Greek genitives, some accusatives, and some datives, cannot be understood in terms of oblique cases of Koine Greek.
4. Harald Schweizer criticizes traditional grammars for alternating the principles of classification between expression and content; see "Was ist ein Akkusativ? Ein Beitrag zur Grammatiktheorie," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 87 (1975) 133–45. It is worth noting that the structural sense of the accusative category plays a conceptual role even in studies where the term itself is eschewed, e.g., W. Gross, *Die Pendenskonstruktion im biblischen Hebräisch* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987); the study begins with direct objects and proceeds directly to time and place expressions and then other adverbial accusatives (under the awkward designation, "Phrases that function in the accompanying sentence as obligatory syntagms or as free circumstantial indications," p. 88). Perhaps such carryover is unavoidable.
5. See John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 343–50.
6. On this hotly debated issue see T. Muraoka, "On Verb Complementation in Biblical Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 29 (1979) 425–35.
7. This fact should be borne in mind in evaluating the frequently made claims that it is somehow "better" to translate a Hebrew transitive with an English, and so on; such claims are hogwash and are frequently used to distort the work of translation.

8. This clause illustrates clearly that there is no rigid barrier between transitive verbs and verbs that govern a prepositional object. The gloss given corresponds to the translation of the NIV; AV renders, 'She ... bare Cain.' The difference between the translations is a function of the difference between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English and twentieth-century English; it is not a matter of Hebrew at all. It must be admitted, however, that the verb *yld*, with its several quite distinct referents, presents special difficulties of its own; see 10.3.2, ## 6–7.
9. For more examples see Muraoka, "Verb Complementation," 429. He notes that "as opposed to *qinnē' ʾēt* 'to be jealous (of somebody), to resent (humiliation brought about by somebody),' *qinnē' bə* and *qinnē' lə* signify 'to envy (somebody's success)' and 'to be zealous for (some body or some cause),' respectively."
10. Aramaic and the Ethiopic languages often use / to mark a "direct object"; see 10.4 for more on the phenomenon in Hebrew as well as the treatment in Khan's paper cited in n. 26.
11. Muraoka, "Verb Complementation," 426–27, lists the following as the more important verbs to which a pronominal complement may be attached either directly (as an unmodified object) or "analytically" (that is, by means of a particle other than *ʾt*, that is, a preposition): *bāqaʿb* 'to break into (a city and conquer it),' *gāmal l* 'to requite, deal out to,' *dābaq b* 'to cling to,' *dālaq ʾaḥārē* 'to chase hotly,' *yākōl l* 'to prevail,' *hōʿil l* 'to avail,' *niḥam b/ʿim* 'to fight,' *nagaʿ b* 'to touch,' *hēʿid b* 'to testify concerning,' *pāgaʿ b* 'to meet (with hostile intent),' *hešiq l* 'to harass,' *rāb ʾel/ʾēt* 'to contend,' *hirpā min* 'to let go.'
12. Nearly the same expression is used in [Prov 21:26](#).
13. Since the West Semitic languages do not regularly use a dative function, the term "dative" (derived from Latin grammar) is more objectionable than other case vocabulary; it has nonetheless become established among grammarians. On this class of suffixes see M. Bogaert, "Les suffixes verbaux non accusatifs dans le sémitique nord-occidental et particulièrement en hébreu," *Biblica* 45 (1964) 220–47.
14. Cf. *lpth ʾhlw* in [Num 11:10](#). It is frequently suggested that the preposition *b* is omitted before the words *pth* 'entrance' and *byt* 'house' by haplology, i.e., the tendency to avoid two similar sounds (here, bilabial stops) or syllables next to one another; see, e.g., Joüon § 126h / p. 380. (Haplology, a phonological process, should not be confused with haplography, a scribal process, though they may have the same effect in a written text. Haplology is best exemplified in English by the avoidance of 'lily' words, e.g., there is no adverb from 'friendly' of the form 'friendlily.') S. R. Driver explains the phenomenon syntactically: "by custom the use of the accus[ative] to express rest in a place is restricted to cases in which a noun in the genitive follows"; see *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913) 37 n. 2; cf., however, ## 2–3.
15. Cf. *bbyt ʾbyh* in [Num 30:4](#); the *b* is omitted before *byt lhm* in [Ruth 1:22](#); cf. n. 14 above.
16. So also in [1 Kgs 8:34](#), [36](#), [39](#), [43](#), [45](#), [49](#). in the parallel text in [2 Chronicles 6](#), *mn* is supplied (vv [23](#), [25](#), [30](#), [33](#), [35](#), [39](#); v [27](#) lacks *mn* and thus agrees with Kings). See 11.2.11 b.
17. For other examples, see [Exod 9:29](#), [33](#); [Deut 14:22](#), cf. [Jer 10:20](#).
18. For the grammatical argument showing that such accusatives are not in fact appositional, see GKC § 1180 / p. 375. For other adjectival examples see [Gen 25:8](#) ('old and full'), [37:35](#) ('mourning'); [Deut 3:18](#) ('armed'); [Josh 1:14](#) ('organized for battle'). For participial examples see [Num 10:25](#) ('serving as rearguard'); [1 Sam 19:20](#) ('presiding'); [1 Kgs 14:15](#) ('provoking to anger and anxiety'), [22:10](#) ('dressed'); [Ezra 9:3](#) ('appalled').
19. For other examples with objects see [Gen 21:9](#) (participle, 'laughing'), [27:6](#) (participle, 'talking'); [1 Kgs 11:8](#) (participles, 'burning incense and sacrificing'); [Isa 20:4](#) (adjectives, 'naked and barefoot'); [Ps 124:3](#) (adjective, 'alive'). For an example with the genitive of a construct chain that is the object of a verb, see [Gen 3:8](#) (participle, 'walking').
20. Carl Brockelmann at one point identifies this example as an apposition and at another as an accusative; see *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1913), 2. 214, 267.
21. Cf. 10.2.1d on *šwy*.
22. With these verbs, the role of the second accusative may be played by the object of a prepositional phrase with *l*; note the two cases in [Amos 5:8](#); see further 11.2.10d.
23. The English verbs 'to feed' and 'to wafer' have interesting distributional differences from the corresponding Hebrew verbs; in English, the latter is used only of animals, while the former can be used of humans, but only with an intimation of condescension.
24. Cf. *nhl Hophal* in [Job 7:3](#).
25. For other acts of dressing see [Gen 41:42](#); [Isa 22:21](#); [Ps 132:16](#), [18](#); for both dressing and stripping see [Num](#)

[20:26](#), [28](#). The reflexive *Hithpael* of these verbs governs only one object (e.g., *ytpšt* in [1 Sam 18:4](#)).

26. The particle occurs ca. 10,900 times (SA/THAT). The preposition and particle are also homographic. For a review of object markers across the Semitic family see G. A. Khan, "Object Markers and Agreement Pronouns in Semitic Languages," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (1984) 468–500.

27. For a list of some passages involving supposed "confusions" between the two bases, see A. Sperber, *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1966) 63–65.

28. The Samaritan Pentateuch tends to add the particle along the lines of the traditional understanding; see Bruce K. Waltke, "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament," *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco, Texas: Word, 1970) 212–39, esp. 221. On the other hand, Paul E. Dion notes that the use of *ʔ* varies in the sectarian documents of the Second Temple period (it is much more common in the Damascus Document than in the Rule of the Community); the semantic range of *ʔ* in the Damascus Document seems to have been simplified over against Biblical Hebrew; "The Hebrew Particle *ʔ* in the Paraenetic Part of the 'Damascus Document,'" *Revue de Qumran* 9 (1977) 197–212. In Qumranic Hebrew, *ʔ* with suffixed pronouns is infrequent, continuing a trend apparent in Chronicles; see E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 75–77.

29. This is more or less the position of K. Albrecht, "*ʔ* vor dem Nominativ und beim Passiv," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 47 (1929) 274–83; J. Blau, "Zum angeblichen Gebrauch von *ʔ* vor dem Nominativ," *Vetus Testamentum* 4 (1954) 7–19; Blau, "Gibt es ein emphatisches *ʔ* im Bibelhebräisch?" *Vetus Testamentum* 6 (1956) 211–12; T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Magnes/Leiden: Brill, 1985) 146–58; cf. GKC § 117i / p. 365. Muraoka comments: "After having exhausted all the possibilities imaginable, there remain a considerable number of passages for which we have no alternative but to suggest emendation" (p. 157); but systematic emendation is never acceptable.

30. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 146. It is occasionally proposed that *ʔ* serves as a gloss-marker, for example, in [Hag 2:5](#) (where the opening clause as a whole would then be taken as a gloss on the preceding verse); see M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 48–51, cf. 193.

31. A. M. Wilson, "The Particle *ʔ* in Hebrew," *Hebraica* 6 (1889–90) 139–50, 212–24. There is an enclitic *t* (*ta* or *ti*) attested in Amorite and possibly in Hebrew; see C. R. Krahmalkov, "The Amorite Enclitic Particle TAI," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 14 (1969) 201–4; Krahmalkov, "The Enclitic Particle TAI in Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970) 218–19; cf. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 213.

32. This is more or less the position of Joüon § 125j / p. 370; N. Walker, "Concerning the Function of *ʔ*," *Vetus Testamentum* 5 (1955) 314–15; P. P. Saydon, "Meanings and Uses of the Particle *ʔ*," *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964) 192–210; John Macdonald, "The Particle *ʔ* in Classical Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964) 263–75; R. Meyer, "Bemerkungen zur syntaktischen Funktion der sogenannten Nota accusativi," *Wort und Geschichte: Festschrift für Kurt Elliger*, ed. H. Gese and H.-P. Rüger (Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1973) 137–42; J. Hoftijzer, "Remarks Concerning the Use of the Particle *ʔ* in Classical Hebrew," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 14 (1965) 1–99 (though Hoftijzer is dubious about notions of emphasis and prefers a historical explanation, he does recognize *ʔ* with the nominative and allows it a special role). Studies of the syntax of late Biblical Hebrew (especially Chronicles) recognize the emphatic use and its importance in later texts; see Arno Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik verglichen mit der seiner Quellen: Ein Beitrag zur historischen Syntax des Hebräischen (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 16)* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1909) 2–3, cf. 33–36; Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 32–37, cf. 28–31 on the decreased use of suffixed forms of *ʔ* in late texts.

John Macdonald observes that *ʔ* is used with the nominative in the Classical Hebrew text known as the Samaritan Chronicle II, a historical account intended to follow the (Samaritan) Pentateuch. Note, for example, in this text's version of [Josh 7:9](#): *wšm'w ʔ yšby 'rš kn'n wšbw bnw lhšmydnw mn h'rš*, 'The inhabitants of the land of Canaan will hear and will surround us in order to eradicate us from the land.' Macdonald remarks, "We now have absolute proof that, in the later form of Northern Israelite (Classical) Hebrew at least, *ʔ* did come in for a much wider range of usages than has hitherto been allowed by the great majority of commentators" (p. 275). The text Macdonald cites is now published by him as The Samaritan Chronicle No. II (or: Sepher Ha-Yamin) From Joshua to Nebuchadnezzar (*Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 107*; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969).

33. On the extensive Mishnaic usage, see M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 42, 202.

34. See Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976) 84–86. For related arguments for Hebrew see Francis I. Andersen, "Passive and Ergative in Hebrew," *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. H. Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1971) 1–15; and Khan, "Object Markers," 496–97. On comparable developments in the preterite of Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects spoken in the same region as Persian and related languages, see G. Krotkoff, *A Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Kurdistan (American Oriental Series 64; New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1982) 30–39, 52–55, 63; R. D. Hoberman, The Syntax and Semantics of Verb Morphology in Modern Aramaic: A Jewish Dialect of Iraqi Kurdistan (American Oriental Series 69; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1989) 95–105; cf. Daniel Boyarin's comments in his review of Yona Sabar's pešaṭ Wayehi Bešallah in *Maarav* 3 (1982) 99–114, esp. 103–6.*
35. Muraoka does refer to a "historical development" that is "manifest" between the two sections; *Emphatic Words*, 150–51.
36. Technically, the phrase with ʾt is in apposition to the genitive ʾyš.
37. This usage is more common in later books (where Aramaic influence may be suspected); see Kropat, *Syntax des Autors der Chronik*, 4–7, cf. 53–57; Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 64–69; contrast in part Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 120–21.
38. For *zkr* with an accusative direct object of person see, e.g., [Ps 9:13](#).
39. For *rpʾ* with an accusative direct object of person see, e.g., [Gen 20:17](#).
40. For *šht Piel* with an accusative direct object of a building see [Lam 2:5](#).
41. For *ksy Piel* with an accusative direct object of water (thwm) see [Ps 104:6](#).
42. Note that the usage is indefinite. There is no *l* in the parallel in [1 Kgs 9:8](#), suggesting that the Chronicles use is a "late" addition.
43. The construction is difficult; for a different analysis and some relevant examples, see Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and Topography of the Books of Samuel*, 323–24.
44. *UT* § 8.56.
45. There are other, phonological arguments against this explanation.
46. The Samaritan Pentateuch tends to drop the suffix, as if modernizing; see Waltke, "Samaritan Pentateuch," 217. For a thorough statement on the biblical use of the *he* suffix and the implications of its distribution, see J. Hoftijzer et al., *A Search for Method: A Study in the Syntactic Use of the H-Locale in Classical Hebrew* (Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 12; Leiden: Brill, 1981). The contribution of Hoftijzer's study depends on his careful discriminations among the blocks, strata, and genres of material investigated, allowing him to suggest, for example, that *he*-locale before a *rectum* is a later (more advanced) construction than a free-standing noun with *he*-locale.
47. For another example see [Judg 11:40](#).

11 Prepositions

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[11.2 Semantics of Simple Prepositions](#)

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[11.3 Compound and Complex Prepositions](#)

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11.1 Introduction

a

Prepositions are relational terms that stand before nouns and noun equivalents (including certain verb forms) and thereby form phrases (4.3b); prepositional phrases are used in a variety of ways. The class of prepositions is a closed class, that is, a more or less small and well-defined group of words, unlike, for example, the open class of verbs, which is both large and (in a living language) readily expanded.

11.1.1 "Nominal" Perspective

a

Hebrew prepositions can be considered in a variety of perspectives. Some prepositions are derived from nouns, and the behavior of prepositions can be seen in terms of nominal roles or functions. In this perspective prepositions are taken as nouns in the adverbial accusative, governing nouns in the genitive. At least some

Hebrew prepositions in their archaic forms ended with *a*, the historical case ending of the accusative, and were used in the construct state; the noun governed by them took the genitive case (see 9.3). Traces of such history can still be seen in construct forms like **אַחֲרַי** and the complex preposition **לְפָנַי** 'to the face of' > 'before' (see 11.3.1); the cognate languages also support this view.¹ The shortening of nominal construct forms is related to the unstressed status of many prepositions, written as prefixes or as proclitics (with *maqqeph*, e.g., **עַל־**). On this "nominal" view of prepositions, the close relationship of prepositional phrases and the verbs governing them is emphasized; like other accusative roles, the preposition is at base ad-verbial. Prepositions, nominal (and quasi-nominal) expressions of various origins, supplement the accusative case to make more precise the relationship between the verb and nouns it modifies (see 10.2, 11.4.1).² The "nominal" perspective on prepositions provides a limited view; a number of prepositions have no evident nominal base, and, more importantly, the prepositions as relational terms work differently than nouns (or any subclass of nouns).³

11.1.2 "Particle" Perspective

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a

On another perspective, Hebrew prepositions belong to the large class of particles. Some prepositions also do duty as adverbs or conjunctions, two other groups of particles. Like many particles, some Hebrew prepositions fall outside the root system. In fact, the morphological complexity of prepositions deserves a separate review. It has three features.

b

The first of these involves the opposition of the simple prepositions (e.g., **מִן** and **עַל**), the compound prepositions, which are composed of two (or more) simple prepositions (e.g., **מֵעַל** 11.3.3), and the complex prepositions, made up of a preposition + a noun (e.g., **בְּיַד** 'by, through' and **בְּתוֹךְ** 'in the midst of'; 11.3.1).⁴

c

The second feature of this word class's complexity is the diversity of structures associated with simple prepositions:

1. Cə, the prefixed (or monographic) prepositions **בְּ**, **כְּ**, **לְ**; these are written as prefixes to nouns they modify.
2. CVC, the proclitic prepositions **עַד־**, **עַל־**, **אֶל־**, **מִן־**; these are often joined to nouns they modify with a *maqqeph*.
3. CVC < CVyC, **בֵּין**.
4. CVCVC < CVCC, e.g., **תַּחַת, אֶצֶל**.
5. Other, e.g., **אַחֲרַי**.

d

The third feature of complexity is the use of variant forms, especially with suffixed pronouns. Prepositions that are derived from geminates show the expected doubling with a suffix (**עַם**, but **עִמִּי**, **אֶת־** but **אִתִּי**), and those which are in some way related to plural nouns take plural endings (**אֶל־** but **אֵלַי**; cf. masculine **עַד**, **עַל**, **תַּחַת**, **אַחֲרַי**; masculine **בֵּינִי** or feminine **בֵּינֹת** with plural suffixes). There is a further class of variant forms, an unpredictable group. The variants may be associated with enclitic *mem* (9.8), but the pattern of use of variants remains unexplained aside from the fact that the variants are mostly used in poetry, which is often archaic.⁵

regular	variant	variant	variant	variant with	regular form
---------	---------	---------	---------	--------------	--------------

form	form	used alone	used with suffix	suffix	with suffix
בְּ	בְּמוֹ	yes	no	--	בְּנִי, etc.
כְּ	כְּמוֹ	yes	yes	כְּמוֹהוּ 'like him'	כְּהֵם, etc.
לְ	לְמוֹ	yes	yes	לְמוֹ 'to him, them'	לְהֵם, לוֹ, etc.
מִן	(מִמֵּי?)	no	yes	מִמֵּהוּ 'from him, us'	מִהֵם, etc.
	מִמֵּי	yes	no	—	

Even the regularities in this table are misleading: long variants of כְּ and מִן are regularly used with suffixes, but the long form of לְ is found only in לְמוֹ, which is, however, used in

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two distinct senses, 'to him' (as if *ləmō* + pronoun *ō*) and 'to them' (as if *lə* + pronoun *hem/am*). The variant long form is used independently only in Job (four times).

11.1.3 "Semantic" Perspective

a

In the two perspectives on prepositions we have described, the words are seen, on the one hand, as essentially nouns in adverbial accusative roles and, on the other hand, as morphologically diverse particles. On a third perspective it is the semantics of prepositions that is emphasized. What is the meaning of the relation between the noun that the preposition governs and the clause in which the prepositional phrase occurs?⁶ The relation proceeds in two directions; consider this clause:

סֶמֶךְ מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל
אֶל-יְרוּשָׁלַיִם בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם
הַזֶּה:

The king of Babylon leans on Jerusalem on that day.

[Ezek 24:2](#)

To describe the prepositions' meanings, two subordinate sets of relations must be noted: (1a) *i*+ its object (a place) and (1b) *b* + its object (a time), as well as (2a) *smk i*^{sup7}/*sup7* and (2b) *smk b*. Unfortunately, greater attention has sometimes been paid to the first set of relations than to the second. For some prepositions the first set of relations may be more important, but that is hardly the case for all. The tendency to focus on the preposition only in relation to its object has been exacerbated by recent misuse of comparative data, especially from Ugaritic. Despite the fact that patterns of verb + preposition + object are not as fully attested in Hebrew as we might like, prepositions are not to be dealt with as philological "wild cards."⁸ It is "the task of a dictionary to set out their often very complex usage patterns, above all in connection with certain verbs,"⁹ but it remains the work of a grammar to provide a framework within which a dictionary can properly be used.

b

The bulk of this chapter is concerned with such a framework for the most important simple prepositions (11.2). After a discussion of compound and complex prepositions (11.3), some syntactic features of prepositions are presented (11.4).

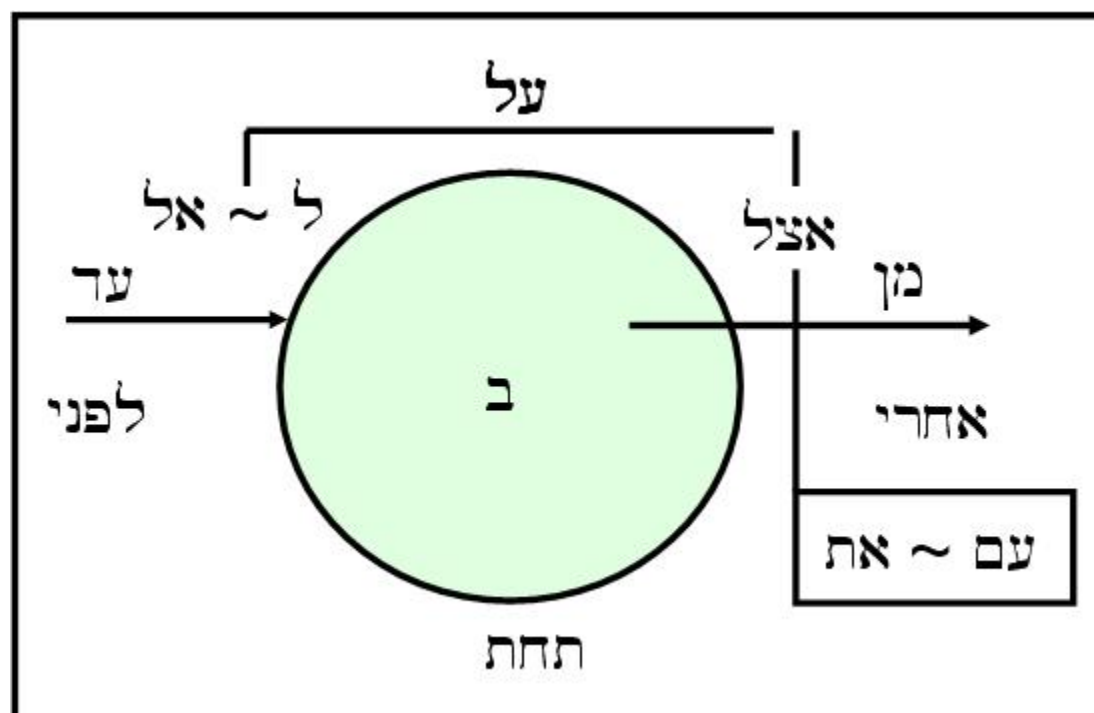
11.2 Semantics of Simple Prepositions

a

Prepositions are terms of relation, and their great interest is the remarkable economy with which they signify many different relations. The number of types of relation is quite large, though relations of place and time are of greatest importance, and the schemes of locational and temporal relations are the best developed. Other important relation types frequently signaled by prepositions include origin, instrument, agent, interest, cause, and goal.

b

Even an examination of the interrelations of only the spatial uses of Hebrew prepositions reveals the complexity of the system, the gaps and overlaps in the lexicon, and the various ways the relational terms are mapped onto the world. The spatial senses of the prepositions can refer either to position or movement. If we mark with arrows prepositions that chiefly describe movement and leave the others unmarked, we can map many of the spatial prepositions onto a simple diagram.¹⁰

**c**

The spatial sense or reference of a given preposition is not an absolute value, however; it is always governed by the verb (or predicate) of the clause and, more broadly, by the perspective from which an action is viewed.¹¹ Dennis G. Pardee illustrates the point:

'He took it from the table'= [in French] *il l'a pris sur la table* ... Are we to assume that *sur* in French is ambiguous, meaning both 'on' and 'from'? Such a claim is hardly viable, and no native speaker would accept the general interchangeability of *sur* with *de* [as in *de Paris* 'from Paris'] or *depuis* [as in *depuis le matin* 'from morning on, since morning']. The explanation lies in the perspective of the speaker: English expresses the separation caused by the act through the use of the preposition 'from', while French looks at the position of the object before the action took place.¹²

Similarly in Akkadian the preposition *ina* usually has the sense 'in,' but in the clause *ina našpakim ilteqe* 'he took (it) from the granary,' it has an ablative sense.¹³

d

Most prepositions have a spatial sense, which it is convenient to take as basic. From this notion other senses,

referring to temporal and logical relations, can be seen as having developed. The role of the spatial sense should be qualified: usage, not etymology, decides meaning. The prepositions have distinctive meanings; although their semantic fields overlap, no two exhibit complete interchangeability.¹⁴ Nonetheless, because of the overlapping meanings, it is possible that sometimes the choice among essentially similar verb-preposition combinations was chiefly stylistic.

e

Ideally, the meanings of prepositions should be classified according to their idiomatic combinations with specific verbs in order to safeguard against unwarranted extensions of a preposition's meaning.¹⁵ One must not assume that a Hebrew speaker would have categorized its meanings according to English equivalents. However, to a large degree the meaning of the preposition is consistent and capturable, even with the variations due to the meanings of the verbs used with it. A precise and exhaustive study of Hebrew verb-prepositions pairings belongs in a dictionary or advanced word book, as noted earlier; for the purposes of this grammar we give a basic overview of most of the simple prepositions and their meanings, without inventorying the verbs associated with each. The student should look on the glosses used in the following examples as guides and remain open to other possible interpretations of the verb-preposition combinations.

f

Of the fifteen simple prepositions discussed here, all but two (יַעַן, כִּי) have a spatial sense. The spatial and temporal senses are usually noted first, and the other relevant relations thereafter.¹⁶

11.2.1 אַחֲרֵי ~ אַחֲרֵי

a

This preposition is used in two forms, one apparently singular, the other, with the ending -ê, apparently plural. The singular form is also used as an adverb, the plural as a substantive. The preposition has the locational sense 'after, behind' (# 1) and a metaphorical locational sense '(to walk) after' > '(to behave) like, after the manner of, according to the norm of' (# 2). The temporal sense is 'after, afterward' (## 3–4),¹⁷ and the major logical sense refers to interest, advantage, or disadvantage ('after, for, against'; ## 5–6). There is a derived sense, arising from the basic geography of the body in

Hebrew: just as the 'right' side (יְמִין) of the body is 'south' (יְמִין), so the 'behind' side (אַחֲרֵי) is the far side or 'west' (# 7).¹⁸

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | הִנֵּה-זֶה עֹמֵד אַחֲרֵי כְּתָלֵנוּ | There he stands behind our wall.
Cant 2:9 |
| 2. | וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרֵי חַטָּאת יִרְבְּעָם | He went after (or, walked in the manner of) the sins of Jeroboam.
2 Kgs 13:2 |
| 3. | אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה | after these things
Gen 15:1 |
| 4. | אַחֲרֵי הַפָּרֶד-לוֹט מֵעִמּוֹ | after Lot's departing from him
Gen 13:14 |
| 5. | וְאַחֲרֵי כָּל-יֵרוֹק יִדְרוֹשׁ: | And after every green thing he searches.
Job 39:8 |
| 6. | אֶחָרֶיךָ רֹאשׁ הַנִּיעָה | She (Daughter Jerusalem) wags (her) head at you.
2 Kgs 19:21 |
| 7. | וַיִּנְהֵג אֶת-הַצֹּאן אַחֲרֵי | He drove the flock to the west (or, far) side of the steppe. |

הַמְדָּבָר

Exod 3:1

אל 11.2.2

The *maqqeph* is almost invariably present with this preposition. There is a long form אֵלַי, and it is from this that suffixed forms appear to derive: אֵלַיִנוּ, אֵלַיִךְ, etc. The contingent locative sense ('at, by, near'; # 1) is less important than the senses involving movement; אֵל marks a direction ('toward'; ## 2–3),¹⁹ a goal or termination ('into'; # 4), or a limit or degree ('as far as, up to'; # 5, metaphorical). One group of logical senses is "dative" (cf. 11.2.10d): אֵל marks a simple dative ('to' the recipient of a gift or an address; ## 6–7), an ethical dative of interest, advantage, or disadvantage ('for, against'; ## 8–11), and a normative dative ('in accord with'; # 12). Another group is comitative, the senses of accompaniment ('with'; # 13) and addition ('in addition to'; # 14); the personal comitative prepositions ('with someone') are אִתְּ and עִמָּ. The preposition אֵל can also be used with a specification ('concerning'; # 15).

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- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | וַיִּמְצְאוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל-מַיִם רַבִּים | They found him by the great waters.
Jer 41:12 |
| 2. | וַתָּשָׁב אֵלָיו אֶל-הַתֵּבָה | And it returned to him, to the ark.
Gen 8:9 |
| 3. | לְהִיּוֹת עֵינֶיךָ פְּתוּחוֹת
אֶל-הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה | that your eyes may be open toward this temple
1 Kgs 8:29 |
| 4. | בֹּא ... אֶל-הַתֵּבָה | Go ... into the ark.
Gen 7:1 |
| 5. | כִּי-נֹגַע אֶל-הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשְׁפָּטָהּ | Its judgment reaches up to the skies.
Jer 51:9 |
| 6. | וְנָתַן אֵלֶיךָ אוֹת אוֹ מוֹפֵת: | And he gives (to) you a sign or a wonder.
Deut 13:2 |
| 7. | וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-עֲבָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר
אֲלֵיהֶם | And he called (to) his servants and he said to them ...
2 Kgs 6:11 |
| 8. | וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל-נַפְשׁוֹ | And he fled for his life.
1 Kgs 19:3 |
| 9. | כִּי הִנְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם וּפָנִיתִי
אֲלֵיכֶם | I am concerned for you and will turn to you [with favor].
Ezek 36:9 |
| 10. | אֵין נַפְשִׁי אֶל-הָעָם הַזֶּה | I have no heart for this people.
Jer 15:1 |
| 11. | לְסַפּוֹת עוֹד עַל חֲרוֹן
אַף-יְהוָה אֶל-יִשְׂרָאֵל: | further adding to YHWH's anger against Israel
Num 32:14 |
| 12. | אֶל-פִּי יְהוָה לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ | according to the word of YHWH to Joshua |

13. **וְלֹא־תִחַטָּא לַיהוָה לֶאֱכֹל
אֶל־הַדָּם** [Josh 15:13](#)
Do not sin against YHWH by eating
[meat] with the blood.
14. **הוֹסַפְתָּ חֲכָמָה וְטוֹב
אֶל־הַשְּׁמוּעָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁמָעְתִּי:** [1 Sam 14:34](#)
You added wisdom-and-wealth in
addition to the report I had heard (i.e.,
You are wiser and wealthier than I had
heard).
15. **וַיִּנָּחַם יְהוָה אֶל־הָרָעָה** [1 Kgs 10:7](#)
YHWH was grieved concerning the
calamity.
- [2 Sam 24:16](#)

11.2.3 אֶצֶל

a

This preposition has the locational sense 'beside, next to' (## 1–2).²⁰

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1. **וְהַתּוֹקֵעַ בְּשׁוּפָר אֶצְלִי:** [Neh 4:12](#)
And the person who blew the trumpet is
beside me.
2. **וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ לְשֹׁכֵב
אֶצְלָהּ** [Gen 39:10](#)
And he refused to lie (lit., he did not listen
to her about lying) beside her.

11.2.4 אֵת

a

The base of this preposition in suffixed forms is יֵית- (e.g., **אֵתִי**, **אֵתָנוּ**), and thus it contrasts with the base of the particle **אֵת**, which has the forms יֵית- (e.g., **אֵתִי**, **אֵתָנוּ**) and יֵית- (e.g., **אֵתְכֶם**; see 10.3). The basic sense is comitative ('with'); it may mark accompaniment (companionship, fellowship; # 1), interest (accompaniment, literal or metaphorical, for the purpose of helping; ## 2–4), or the complement of verbs of dealing, speaking, and making (## 5–7).²¹ The object of יֵית may also be an addition ('beside, alongside of, in addition to'; # 8). The preposition has a spatial sense closely related to this last ('near'; # 9); compare English 'alongside of,' as in 'There is a temple alongside of the palace' and 'There is a priesthood alongside of the monarchy.' The possessive can be marked with יֵית ('have'; # 10).

1. **וְאֵתָהּ וּבְנֶיהָ אֵתְךָ** [Num 18:2](#)
you and your children with you
2. **מִי אֵתִי מִי** [2 Kgs 9:32](#)
Who is on my side? Who?
3. **וַיְהוֶה אֵתָנוּ** [Num 14:9](#)
YHWH is on our side.
4. **קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה:** [Gen 4:1](#)
I have gotten a man with the help of
YHWH.
5. **וְאֲנִי הִנְנִי מְקִים אֶת־בְּרִיתִי**
I am confirming my covenant with you.

אַתְּכֶם

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|
| 6. | דִּבֶּר ... אֶתָּנוּ קָשׁוֹת | He ... spoke harshly with us.
Gen 9:9 |
| 7. | יָאֵר פָּנָיו אֶתָּנוּ | May he make his face shine toward us.
Gen 42:30 |
| 8. | לֹא תַעֲשֶׂוּן אִתִּי | Do not make [any gods to set] alongside of me.
Ps 67:2 |
| 9. | בְּצִעַנַיִם אֲשֶׁר אֶת־קָדֶשׁ: | in Zaanaim, which is near Qadesh ²²
Exod 20:23 |
| 10. | מָה אֶתָּנוּ: | What have we (at hand)? ²³
Judg 4:11
1 Sam 9:7 |

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בְּ 11.2.5

a

This preposition, the second most common in Hebrew, occurs both in the simple form בְּ and in the extended form בְּמִן; the latter does not take suffixes. The diversity of the senses of בְּ is remarkable.

b

Spatial senses are basic. The preposition *b* marks location in or at a point (# 1), on a surface (# 2), within an area (# 3), and amid a domain (# 4). It marks, with verbs of movement, both goals ('in, into'; # 5) and areas moved through (# 6).

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | וַיֵּאָהֵב אִשָּׁה בְּנַחַל שֹׁרֵק | He loved a woman in Nahal Soreq.
Judg 16:4 |
| 2. | וַיַּזְבֵּחַ יַעֲקֹב זֶבַח בְּהָר | Jacob made a sacrifice on the mountain.
Gen 31:54 |
| 3. | וְאָכַלְתָּ בָשָׂר ...
בְּכָל־שַׁעְרֶיךָ | You shall eat the meat ... within all your gates. ²⁴
Deut 12:15 |
| 4. | אֲדַבֵּר בְּעַמִּים | I will chant you among the nations.
Ps 57:10 |
| 5. | הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּיָּם | those who went after them into the sea
Exod 14:28 |
| 6. | מִי־הָאִישׁ הַלֹּזֵה הַהוּלֵךְ
בַּשָּׂדֶה לִקְרָאתָנוּ | Who is that man coming through the field to meet us? ²⁵
Gen 24:65 |

c

Used temporally, *b* may mark an actual time in, at, or when (## 7–9). It may also mark an action simultaneous to that of the main verb; the simultaneous action is shown by an infinitive (36.2.2b) in a circumstantial clause.²⁶

7. בְּכָל־עֵת אָהֵב הָרֵעַ A friend is one who loves at all times.
[Prov 17:17](#)
8. בְּדֹר אַחֵר יִמָּח שְׁמֹם: In (the time of) a future generation may their name be effaced.
[Ps 109:13](#)
9. עֲזָרָה בְּצָרוֹת נִמְצָא מְאֹד: What a help he has been in (time of) trouble!
[Ps 46:2](#)

d

A variety of circumstances may be marked with *b*, both physical (*beth comitantiae*; ## 10–12) and mental (## 13–14); such phrases are often to be rendered in English with

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an adverb. Both instruments (non-animates; ## 15–16)²⁷ and agents (animates), simple (# 17; note the *Niphal*) and adversative (# 18), take *b*. The preposition can govern the material with which an act is performed (# 19) and the price (*beth pretii*) paid (# 20) or exchanged (# 21).²⁸ This last use may reflect the idiom *ntn b* 'to effect an exchange by means of'.²⁹

10. וַתָּבֹא יְרוּשָׁלַיִם בְּחֵיל כְּבֹד מְאֹד She entered Jerusalem with a very great caravan.
[1 Kgs 10:2](#)
11. נָתַן בְּקוֹלוֹ He thundered (lit., he gave [out] with his voice).
[Ps 46:7](#)
12. בָּכִים בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל weeping aloud (lit., weeping in a loud voice)
[Ezra 3:12](#)
13. וּשְׂאֲבָתֶם־מַיִם בְּשִׂשׂוֹן You shall draw water joyfully (lit., in joy).
[Isa 12:3](#)
14. בְּבִכּי יָבֹאוּ וּבִתְחִנּוּנִים אוֹבִילִם With weeping will they come, and in prayer I will bring them back.
[Jer 31:9](#)
15. בְּשִׁבְט יִכּוּ They smite with the rod.
[Mic 4:14](#)
16. וַתִּבָּקַע הָאָרֶץ בְּקוֹלָם: The earth was shaken by the sound of them.
[1 Kgs 1:40](#)
17. שֹׁפֵךְ דָּם הָאָדָם בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשָּׁפַךְ Whoever sheds a human's blood, by a human shall his blood be shed.
[Gen 9:6](#)
18. יָדוֹ בְּכָל יָד כָּל בּוֹ His hand (will be) against all and everyone's hand against him.
[Gen 16:12](#)
19. וַיִּצַּף אֶת־קִרְקַע הַבַּיִת בַּצִּלְעוֹת בְּרוֹשִׁים: He overlaid the floor of the temple with boards of cypress.³⁰
[1 Kgs 6:15](#)
20. וַתַּעֲלֶה וַתֵּצֵא מֵרֶכֶבָּה ... A chariot was imported (lit., went up and out) ... for six hundred (shegels of)

שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת כֶּסֶף

silver.

[1 Kgs 10:29](#)

21. הַדָּם הָאֲנָשִׁים הַהֹלְכִים
בְּפִשׁוֹתָם

Isn't (this) the blood of men who went at
the risk of their lives?

[2 Sam 23:17](#)

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e

Other circumstantial uses of *b* are common, too. The *beth* of specification serves to qualify the realm with regard to which the verbal action obtains (## 22–24).³¹ There are two closely related types: the *beth* of norm ('in the manner of'; # 25) and the estimative *beth*, specifying the range against which an opinion is held (cf. English 'The best little boy of all'; # 26).³² The *beth* of identity (*beth essentiæ*) marks the capacity in which an actor behaves ('as, serving as, in the capacity of'; ## 27–28).³³ Causal *beth* marks the reason or originating force of an action (# 29); it is sometimes hard to distinguish from simple circumstantial uses.³⁴

22. עַל־אַחַת מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה
הָאָדָם לַחֲטָא בְהֵנָּה:

in any one of all the things a person
might sin (lit., do for sinning) with regard
to these actions

[Lev 5:22](#)

23. וְשִׂמְחָתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב

You shall rejoice in all the good ...

[Deut 26:11](#)

24. וַיִּגָּרַע כָּל־בָּשָׂר ... בְּעוֹף
וּבְבִהֵמָה וּבְחַיָּה
וּבְכָל־הַשָּׂרִץ

All flesh expired ... that is, birds and
cattle and beasts and all swarmers.

[Gen 7:21](#)

25. עַל־כֵּן אֲבֹכָה בְּבִכֵּי יַעֲזָר

Thus I weep like Jazer (lit., in the
weeping of Jazer).

[Isa 16:9](#)

26. אֲרוֹם בְּגוֹיִם
: אֲרוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ

I am exalted among the nations, I am
exalted in the earth.

[Ps 46:11](#)

27. וַאֲרָא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם ... בְּאֵל
שַׁדַּי

I appeared to Abraham ... as El
Shaddai.

[Exod 6:3](#)

28. יְהוָה לִי בְּעֹזְרִי

YHWH is with me, (serving as) my
Helper.

[Ps 118:7](#)

29. הֲתַשְׁחִית בְּחִמּוֹשָׁה
אֶת־כָּל־הָעִיר

Will you destroy the whole city
because/on account of five?

[Gen 18:28](#)

f

A group of more strictly grammatical relations remain. In noun phrases, *b* can mark a distributive (# 30) or a partitive (# 31).³⁵ The preposition *b* marks the object of a

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variety of verbs (see 10.2.1); these include verbs of extending, touching; fastening (on; # 32), striking (at), reaching (to), filling (with); of exercising authority over (# 33); of sense perception (especially seeing; # 34) and of emotion (notably trust; # 35); and of speaking (# 36).

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------|--|
| 30. | יום ביום | day by day
2 Chr 30:21 |
| 31. | ובל-אלחם במנעמיהם: | And let me not eat (some) of their dainties. ³⁶
Ps 141:4 |
| 32. | ויד אל-תשלחו-בו | But you shall not lay a hand on him.
Gen 37:22 |
| 33. | משול תמשל בנו | Will you indeed rule over us?
Gen 37:8 |
| 34. | ראו בארון יהוה | They looked on the ark of YHWH.
1 Sam 6:19 |
| 35. | ב וכיאמינו | They will trust (in) you. ³⁷
Exod 19:9 |
| 36. | ודברת בם בשבתך בביתך | And talk about them when you sit at home ...
Deut 6:7 |

בין 11.2.6

a

This preposition is at base a noun meaning 'interval, space between,' though only one occurrence of the noun is certain. In the phrase **אִישׁ־הַבְּנִים** 'man of the two intervals' ([1 Sam 17:4, 23](#)), the 'space between' is that between the two armies; thus the phrase means 'champion.' Singular and plural suffixed pronouns are attached to *bên* and *bênê*- respectively; plural suffixes of the first and third persons may also be attached to the less common *bênêṭ*-, yielding the forms *benenu/benotenu* and *bênêhem* and *bênôtam*. The preposition is paired 126 times in the phrase *bên X ûbên Y* and 30 times in the phrase *bên X l«Y*.³⁸ It has either an inclusive sense (i.e., between or among a quantity of things considered as a group) or an exclusive sense (i.e., between or among two or more diverse things considered as over against one another).

b

As a one-term expression it has an inclusive sense either spatially (simple locative 'between,' # 1; manifold locative 'among, amid, within,' ## 2–3) or temporally (# 4). An exceptional distributive sense appears in one late text (# 5).

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|--|
| 1. | אשר עבר בין הגזרים
האלה: | which passed between those pieces ³⁹
Gen 15:17 |
| 2. | כי הוא בן אחים יפריא | He thrives among (his) brothers. ⁴⁰
Hos 13:15 |
| 3. | ארי בין הרחבות: | (There is) a lion within the streets!
Prov 26:13 |
| 4. | ושחטו אתו ... בין
הערבים: | They shall slaughter it ... between the two evenings. ⁴¹ |

5. **וּבֵין עֶשְׂרֵת יָמִים** [Exod 12:6](#)
every ten days
[Neh 5:18](#)

C

The exclusive sense is expressed by paired phrases. The phrase *bên X ləY* marks the expression both for distinction and for classes, except in certain late texts.⁴² Not surprisingly it occurs at least twenty-four times in priestly and legal texts (## 6–8).⁴³

6. **וְהִבְדַּלְתָּם בֵּין הַבְּהֵמָה
הַטְּהוֹרָה לַטְּמֵאָה** You will separate between the clean
and the unclean animals.
[Lev 20:25](#)
7. **הַחֻקִּים ... בֵּין אִישׁ לְאִשְׁתּוֹ** statutes valid ... between a man and
his wife
[Num 30:17](#)
8. **מִשְׁפָּט בֵּין-דָּם לְדָם** legal cases between blood and blood
(i.e., between one kind of homicide
and another)
[Deut 17:8](#)

James Barr classifies the uses of the common, unmarked phrase *bên X ûbên Y* as follows: (1) between places named with toponyms (# 9) and other physical locations (# 10); (2) motion, standing, or separation between persons and the like (# 11); (3) covenants and oaths (# 12) and war and peace (# 13) between persons and the like; (4) judgments (# 14); and (5) divisions (## 15–16). Only a few instances fall outside this scheme.⁴⁴

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9. **בֵּין בֵּית-אֵל וּבֵין הָעֵי:** between Bethel and Ai
[Gen 13:3](#)
10. **וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר
מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם
אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לָרָקִיעַ** And he divided between the waters
below the firmament and the waters
above the firmament.
[Gen 1:7](#)
11. **וְשָׂמַתִּי פֶדֶת בֵּין עַמִּי וּבֵין
עַמֶּךָ** I will put a distinction between my
people and your people.
[Exod 8:19](#)
12. **בְּרִית ... בֵּין אָבִי וּבֵין
אָבִיךָ** a treaty ... between my father and your
father
[1 Kgs 15:19](#)
13. **וַיְהִי שָׁלוֹם בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל
וּבֵין הָאֲמֹרִי:** And there was peace between Israel
and the Amorites.
[1 Sam 7:14](#)
14. **יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ:** May YHWH judge between me and
you.⁴⁵
[Gen 16:5](#) Sam
15. **לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַטְּמֵא וּבֵין
הַטְּהוֹר** distinguishing between the unclean and
the clean
[Lev 11:47](#)

16. וְהָעֵרִיד הַכֹּהֵן אֹתָהּ בֵּין
טוֹב וּבֵין רָע
- The priest will evaluate it for good and bad.

[Lev 27:12](#)

The common pairing, then, can also mark distinction between classes (cf. ## 15–16), as can the bēn X ləY pair; note especially ## 6 and 15.

d

The six suffixed bēnôt- forms occur only as one-term expressions with, as expected, an inclusive sense (## 17–18); the suffixed bēnê- forms occur either in one-term phrases or in paired phrases with definite objects (## 17, 19–20). The sense may be inclusive (# 19) or exclusive (## 17, 20).⁴⁶

17. תְּהִי נָא אֲלֵה בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ
בֵּינוֹנוּ וּבֵינָךְ
- There ought to be a sworn agreement between us—between us and you.
- [Gen 26:28](#)
18. עַל־שְׁבַעַת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר
בֵּינָתָם בֵּין דָּוִד וּבֵין
יְהוֹנָתָן
- because of the oath to YHWH between them, between David and Jonathan.
- [2 Sam 21:7](#)
19. הָיְתָה יְרוּשָׁלַּיִם לְנֹדָה
בֵּינֵיהֶם:
- Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them.
- [Lam 1:17](#)
20. וַיַּגְבֹּל נֹתָן־יְהוָה בֵּינוֹ
וּבֵינֵיכֶם ... אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן
- YHWH has made the Jordan a boundary ... between us and you.
- [Josh 22:25](#)

11.2.7 בָּעַד

a

This preposition forms suffixed phrases with both apparently singular and plural bases (e.g., בָּעַדְנוּ, בָּעַדְוּ, בָּעַדְתִּי); the form בָּעַדְנִי is used alongside בָּעַדְי. The locational

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sense can be simple ('behind'; # 1) or comprehensive, referring to wherever one turns one's back ('around, about'; # 2). With verbs of motion, b'd means 'away from, with the back toward,' though English perspective usually demands 'through' or 'over' (# 3).⁴⁷ The preposition also designates interest or advantage, arising from the idea of protection for ('for the benefit/sake of'; # 4). This last sense rarely entails an exchanged commodity (# 5).

1. וַיִּסְגְּרוּ בָּעַדָם
- And they shut (the door of the tower) behind them.
- [Judg 9:51](#)
2. הֲלֹא־אַתָּה שָׂכַתָּ בָּעַדוֹ
- Have you not put a hedge around him?
- [Job 1:10](#)
3. וַתּוֹרְדֵם בַּחֲבֵל בָּעַד
הַחֲלוֹן
- She let them down by a rope through the window.
- [Josh 2:15](#)

4. וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל בְּעֶדְךָ He will pray for you.
[Gen 20:7](#)
5. עוֹר בְּעַד-עוֹר וְכָל אֲשֶׁר
 לְאִישׁ יִתֵּן בְּעַד נַפְשׁוֹ: Skin for skin! A person will give up
 everything for his life!
[Job 2:4](#)

11.2.8 יַעַן

a

This word is more often used as a conjunction than as a preposition. As a preposition with the sense 'because of,' it governs an infinitive construct (36.2.2b)⁴⁸ more often than another nominal form (# 1).

1. יַעַן כָּל-תּוֹעֲבֹתֶיךָ: because of all your abominable acts
[Ezek 5:9](#)

11.2.9 כִּי

a

This preposition is the only extremely common particle of relation that has no basic spatial or temporal sense; it describes comparison and correspondence ('like, as, just as'). In most cases כִּי is used in ways comparable to other prepositions, but it is distinctive in two of its syntactic features: its capacity to head a noun phrase (e.g., כִּפְּשִׁיעַ '(a distance) like/the like of a footstep,' [1 Sam 20:3](#)) and its ability to "absorb" other prepositions (e.g., כִּיהָר 'as on the mountain,' [Isa 28:21](#)). It is because of these features that *k* is sometimes referred to as a substantive, 'the like of.' The variant form כִּמּוֹ occurs alone and with suffixes, cf. כִּהֲנָה and כִּמּוֹךְ. In combination with 'sr, *k* forms the most common temporal conjunction in Hebrew, כַּאֲשֶׁר.⁴⁹

b

There are three facets to the basic use of כִּי. (1) The preposition may denote agreement in quantity or measure, as in 'Moses is as tall as Joshua' (# 1). Related to this is the use of the preposition before approximations, as in 'Moses is about that tall' (# 2).

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(2) Agreement in kind is also marked with *k* (# 3), cf. 'Joshua is like Moses as a prophet.' In this English example, 'as a prophet' specifies the point of comparison or tertium quid, the "third thing" in terms of which the likeness is proposed. The "third thing" need not be specified—it is often evident from the discourse; in poetry the point of comparison may be left vague in order to allow an analogy to open up, inducing the reader to engage the analogy and find not one but many contacts between the things compared.⁵⁰ Agreement in manner or norm (cf. 'Joshua is a prophet in the manner of Moses') is akin to agreement in kind (## 4–7). (3) The logical outcome of comparison is correspondence or identity, cf. 'Moses loves Joshua as (he does) himself.' The agreement of the things compared is complete, insofar as the discourse is concerned (kaph veritatis; # 8). Identity constructions formed with *k* often involve a double use of *k*: in discourse about X, we find either kX kY or, more often, kY kX(## 9–10); both are used in legal materials. The second of these patterns has come into English: 'Like father, like son.'

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1. יְהוָה ... יִסַּף עֲלֵיכֶם כָּכֶם
 אֶלֶף פְּעָמִים May YHWH ... make you a thousand
 times as many as you are.
[Deut 1:11](#)

2. וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם כְּעֶשְׂרֵי שָׁנִים: They lived there about ten years.
[Ruth 1:4](#)
3. יִהְיִיתֶם כְּאֱלֹהִים יָדְעֵי טוֹב וָרָע: You will be like divine beings (in being) knowers of good and evil.⁵¹
[Gen 3:5](#)
4. נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ Let us make 'ādām in our image according to our likeness.
[Gen 1:26](#)
5. וַהֲנָה הַמֶּלֶךְ עֹמֵד עַל-הָעַמּוּד כַּמִּשְׁפָּט There was the king standing by the pillar, as the custom was.
[2 Kgs 11:14](#)
6. חַנּוּנִי אֱלֹהִים כְּחַסְדְּךָ Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your unfailing love.
[Ps 51:3](#)
7. כְּהַנִּיף שֹׁבֵט וְאֶת-מְרִימָיו like a rod's wielding him who lifts it up
[Isa 10:15](#)
8. כִּי-הוּא כָאִישׁ אֵמֶת For he is in every way an honest guy.⁵²
[Neh 7:2](#)
9. כְּקוֹנָה כְּמוֹכֵר [Things will be as bad for ... a master as for his manservant, for a mistress as for her maid,] for a debtor as for (his) creditor (qwnh).⁵³
[Isa 24:2](#)
10. מוֹת יוֹמֵת ... כְּנֵר כְּאֶזְרָח He shall be put to death ... native as well as sojourner.⁵⁴
[Lev 24:16](#)

C

Two phenomena related to these points deserve note. First, the use of *k* in making a comparison absorbs other prepositions, as noted above.⁵⁵ If we compare Y to X, we have X *k*Y; remarkably enough, if the comparison involves bY, 'l-Y, *mn*-Y, etc., we also have simply *k*Y (## 11–12). (The other relational term may be expressed, but that is less common.) Second, it is possible for the claim of identity to be vacuous, and *k* then serves as an emphatic particle (# 13); in practice it is difficult to be sure when *k* is strictly emphatic.

11. וְרָעוּ כְּבָשִׂים כְּדִבְרָם The sheep will graze as in their own pastures.
[Isa 5:17](#)
12. שֹׁבֵט הַנֶּגֶשׁ בּוֹ הִחָתֵת כִּיּוֹם מִדְיָן: The rod of his oppressor you shattered as on the day of Midian[*'s* defeat].⁵⁶
[Isa 9:3](#)
13. בְּהֵיוֹתָם מְתֵי מִסְפָּר כְּמַעַט וְגֵרִים בָּהֶם: When they were few, indeed sparse, and strangers there.⁵⁷
[Ps 105:12](#)

d

The use of *k* as a quasi-nominal phrasal head (## 14–15) was cited earlier;⁵⁸ the English use of 'like' as a noun is comparable ('the like(s) of him'). This substantival *k* has something in common with the approximative use, since it tends to be vague; in rhetorical terms it serves as a "hedge," protecting the truth value of a statement from

dismissal (cf. # 15). If in English we say, 'He was, like, a prophet,' we aim to protect the claim from misapplied definitions—if he was not precisely a prophet, then he was the like of a prophet.

14. הִנֵּהיָהּ כְּדָבָר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה
אוֹ הַנִּשְׁמָע כְּמִוְהוֹ:
Has there been anything like this great event? Has anything like it been heard of?
[Deut 4:32](#)
15. וְהָיָה עִמָּדִי לִנְגִידִי
כְּמִרְאָה־נָּבִיר:
There was standing before me something like an appearance of a male.
[Dan 8:15](#)

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The temporal use of *k* is related to its sense either as a marker of approximation ('about that time') or of correspondence ('at the (same) time'; # 16) and is found with the infinitive construct (# 17; 36.2.2b).

16. כַּעַת מָחָר אֶשְׁלַח אֵלֶיךָ
אִישׁ
At this time tomorrow I will send to you a (certain) man ...
[1 Sam 9:16](#)
17. וַיְהִי כְּבֹא אַבְרָם מִצְרִימָה
וַיֵּרְאוּ הַמִּצְרִיִּים
It happened when Abram entered Egypt that the Egyptians saw that ...
[Gen 12:14](#)

לְ

a

This preposition, like the other monographic prepositions כּ and בּ, is used in a great many ways (cf. 10.4). A variety of its senses are often rendered by English 'to' in its diverse meanings. Since a number of the senses of *l* are represented by the dative case in Latin or Greek or both, many grammars and dictionaries refer to, for example, the *lamed* of the ethical dative; such terminology is only acceptable if it be remembered that Hebrew (like English) has no distinct and interrelated set of datival functions. The long form of *l*, לָמוֹ, is used alone (but only in the Book of Job) and with third-person suffixes, both singular and plural (viz., לָמוֹ for either לָהֶם or לוֹ).

The negative particle לֹא may very occasionally be written without the *aleph* and thus be confused with the preposition, either in suffixed form or prefixed to another noun.⁵⁹ For *l* with the infinitive construct, see 36.2.3.

The basic senses of *l* are spatial. The preposition may mark location in or at a point (## 1–2). With verbs of motion *l* marks the object of the motion toward (allative; # 3) and of motion to (terminative; # 4).⁶⁰ Some phrases with *l* are used as allative adverbials: לְאַחֹר 'backward,' לְמַעַלָּה 'upward,' לְמִזְרַח 'eastward,' לְפָנִים 'forward.'

1. וַתֵּשֶׁב לְיְמִינוֹ:
She sat at his right hand.
[1 Kgs 2:19](#)
2. לְפֶתַח חֲטָאת רִבְעַן
Sin is a robes at the door.
[Gen 4:7](#)
3. אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנִינוּ
We have turned, each (of us), to their own way.
[Isa 53:6](#)
4. כִּי הַיּוֹם בָּא לָעִיר
Today he came to the city.
[1 Sam 9:12](#)

c

The temporal uses of / include a sense like the simple locational (in, at, or during a period of time; ## 5–7)⁶¹ and a sense like the terminative (to, by, until, or after a period of time, ## 8–11). The preposition is also used with temporal distributives (per or by a period of time; # 12; cf. 7.2.3b).⁶²

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 5. | מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּגֶן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם | walking in the garden at (the time of) the cool (lit., breeze) of the day
Gen 3:8 |
| 6. | וַתָּבֹא ... הַיּוֹנָה לַעֵת עֶרֶב | The dove came ... at the time of evening.
Gen 8:11 |
| 7. | לְיָמִים עוֹד שְׁבַעַה אָנֹכִי מִמָּטָר | For seven more days I will cause it to rain.
Gen 7:4 |
| 8. | וְהָיָה נָכוֹן לַבֹּקֶר | Be ready by morning.
Exod 34:2 |
| 9. | לְאַלְפֵי דוֹר | to/for/unto a thousand generations
Deut 7:9 |
| 10. | וַיְהִי לְשְׁנָתַיִם יָמִים | It happened after two years ...
2 Sam 13:23 |
| 11. | וְלֹא־יָלִין מִן־הַבֶּשֶׂר ... לַבֹּקֶר: | None of the flesh ... shall remain until morning.
Deut 16:4 |
| 12. | וְאֲנֹכִי אֶתֶן־לְךָ עֶשְׂרֵת כֶּסֶף לְיָמִים | I will give you ten (sheqels) of silver per year. ⁶³
Judg 17:10 |

d

Another set of relations denoted by / has a structure similar to the locational: allative spatial set. These relations are based on connections with regard to. The quasi-locational group includes possession (## 13–16),⁶⁴ authorship (*lamed auctoris*; # 17), specification (## 18–19),⁶⁵ manner (# 20; the sense is often best rendered with adverbs in English),⁶⁶ class and type (## 21–22),⁶⁷ and comparison (# 23). The quasi-allative relations involve the goal of an action and are largely of the type sometimes called datival. The so-called indirect object of verbs of giving and some verbs of speaking and listening takes / (## 24–27).

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|--|
| 13. | כֶּסֶףְךָ וְזָהָבְךָ לִי־הוּא | Your silver and your gold are mine (lit., to me).
1 Kgs 20:3 |
| 14. | דוֹדִי לִי וְאֲנִי לוֹ | My beloved is mine and I am his. ⁶⁸
Cant 2:16 |
| 15. | רָאִיתִי בֶן לְיִשָּׁי | I have seen a son of Jesse. ⁶⁹
1 Sam 16:18 |
| 16. | הַמֵּת לִירֵבְעָם בְּעִיר | anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city
1 Kgs 14:11 |
| 17. | לְעֶבֶד יְהוָה לְדָוִד אֲשֶׁר | [A psalm] by David, the servant of |

- דָּבָר YHWH, which he spoke ... [70](#)
- [Ps 18:1](#)
18. וְלִישְׁמַעֵאל שָׁמַעְתִּיךָ With regard to Ishmael, I have heard (what) you (said).
[Gen 17:20](#)
19. לֹא־רָאִיתִי כָהֵנָּה ... לְרַעִי I haven't seen anything like them ... for ugliness.
[Gen 41:19](#)
20. וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֶטַח Judah and Israel dwelt securely.
[1 Kgs 5:5](#)
21. הִתְיַצְּבוּ ... לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם Present yourselves ... according to your tribes.
[1 Sam 10:19](#)
22. עֵץ פְּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְרִי לְמִינוֹ fruit trees (each) producing fruit according to its type
[Gen 1:11](#)
23. עַד אֲשֶׁר־דָּק לְעָפָר until it was as fine as dust
[Deut 9:21](#)
24. תִּתֶּן־לוֹ: You shall give to him.
[Deut 15:14](#)
25. וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה לְאַבְרָם Pharaoh summoned (lit., called to) Abram.⁷¹
[Gen 12:18](#)
26. בָּרוּךְ הוּא לַיהוָה May he be pronounced blessed to YHWH.⁷²
[Ruth 2:20](#)
27. כִּי שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתְּךָ Because you listened to (or, heeded) the voice of your wife ...
[Gen 3:17](#)

The *lamed* of interest or (dis)advantage (*dativus commodi et incommodi*) marks the person for or against whom an action is directed (## 28–33); the term "benefactive dative" is sometimes used of this *l*.

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28. כִּי־נִכְסְךָ נִכְּסִפְתָּה לְבֵית אָבִיךָ You long for your father's house.
[Gen 31:30](#)
29. אַל־תִּבְכּוּ לַמֵּת Do not weep for the dead (one).
[Jer 22:10](#)
30. וַיִּהְיֶה לָהֶם לְאוֹיֵב He became their enemy (lit., he turned against them to [become] an enemy).⁷³
[Isa 63:10](#)
31. כִּי יוֹם לַיהוָה צִבְאוֹת There is a day [prepared] for YHWH of Hosts.
[Isa 2:12](#)
32. הֲלוֹא לָכֶם לְדַעַת אֶת־הַמִּשְׁפָּט: Isn't it your affair to know the customs?
[Mic 3:1](#)
33. לֹא־תִחְמַד כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב You shall not desire the silver and gold that is on them (abandoned idols) and

עֲלֵיהֶם וְלִקְחָתָּ לָךְ

you shall not take (the silver and the gold) for yourself.

[Deut 7:25](#)

A special variety of the *lamed* of interest is a use that some label *dativus ethicus* or "ethical dative."⁷⁴ T. Muraoka points out that this term means that a person other than the subject or object is concerned in the matter, but "the hallmark of the Semitic construction is the identity of grammatical person of the subject of the verb with that of the pronoun suffixed to the preposition."⁷⁵ Many scholars refer to this use as "reflexive": / marks the action as being of interest to the performer (# 32); the term "ingressive" is also used. Muraoka suggests the nomenclature "centripetal." He explains, "Basically it serves to convey the impression on the part of the speaker or author that the subject establishes his own identity, recovering or finding his own place by determinedly dissociating himself from his familiar surrounding."⁷⁶ Perhaps reflexive and centripetal notions should be separated; the former rendered by '-self,' and the latter, with its notions of isolation and seclusion and its use with imperatives and in negative contexts, left untranslated.⁷⁷ The centripetal use is found with verbs of motion (## 34–35) and in expressions denoting attitude of mind (## 36–37).

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34. וְלָכֹךְ לָכֶם לְאֹהֲלֵיכֶם Get (you) to your tents.⁷⁸
[Josh 22:4](#)
35. וְקוּם בְּרַח-לָךְ אֶל-לָבָן אָחִי Go flee to my brother, Laban.
[Gen 27:43](#)
36. אַל-תִּבְטְחוּ לָכֶם אֶל-דִּבְרֵי הַשֶּׁקֶר Do not trust in deceptive words.
[Jer 7:4](#)
37. רַבַּת שְׁכֵנָה נִפְשִׁי עִם שׂוֹנְאֵי שָׁלוֹם: Too long I have lived among those who hate peace.⁷⁹
[Ps 120:6](#)

The "indirect object" *lamed* marks the so-called datival goal, while another sort of goal is marked by the *lamed* of purpose. The goals here include a thing made (with 'sy, ntn, sym, etc.; ## 38–41) or used (# 42), or a person altered in status or even form (## 43–45, cf. # 38).

38. וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל I will make you (into) a great nation.
[Gen 12:2](#)
39. וְנָתַתִּי אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לְגִלְיָם I will make Jerusalem (into) a stone heap.
[Jer 9:10](#)
40. וְשָׂמַתִּי שָׁמְרוֹן לְעֵי הַשָּׂדֶה I will make Samaria (into) a ruin in the fields.
[Mic 1:6](#)
41. הֲוֵי הָאֲמָרִים לָרַע טוֹב ... שָׁמִים חָשֶׁךְ לְאוֹר ... שָׁמִים מֵר לְמֵתוֹק Woe to those who declare good evil ... who set (i.e., value?) darkness as light ... who set the bitter as sweet.
[Isa 5:20](#)
42. לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָה: It shall be yours as food.⁸⁰
[Gen 1:29](#)
43. יֵצֵא לְחֶפְשִׁי He shall go out as a free man.⁸¹
[Exod 21:2](#)
44. This Levite, as a priest, belongs to me.

כִּי הָיָה-לִי הַלְוִי לְכֹהֵן

[Judg 17:13](#)

45. תַּשִּׁיתָמוּ לְשָׂרִים You shall make them princes.

[Ps 45:17](#)

e

A great many uses of / remain to be elucidated, and their diversity is considerable.

f

Several notable classes of possessive phrases use /. An / phrase must be used if the phrase must unambiguously refer to an indefinite (## 46–47). Several relevant examples are cited earlier in connection with the lamed of specification and of authorship; these may be reviewed: *bēn yišai means 'the son of Jesse' while bēn ləyišai (# 15) means 'a son of Jesse'; note mizmôr lədawid 'a psalm of David' ([Ps 3:1](#); cf. # 17). In addition, an / phrase may be used (a) to avoid a three- (or more) term construct phrase (# 48), (b) where the possessor is a name (# 49), or (c) where the construct form would not be (sufficiently) distinctive (# 50).

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46. וּלְנַעֲמִי מוֹדַע לְאִישָׁה Naomi had a relative of her husband's.

[Ruth 2:1](#) Qere

47. כִּי אָהַב הָיָה חִירָם לְדָוִד כָּל-הַיָּמִים: Hiram had been a longtime ally of David's.

[1 Kgs 5:15](#)

48. אִישׁ רֹאשׁ לְבֵית-אֲבֹתָיו הוּא: each being the head of his fathers' house ⁸²

[Num 1:4](#)

49. בְּגָדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר לְאַהֲרֹן the holy garments of Aaron

[Exod 39:1](#)

50. וְאַרְבַּע כְּנָפִים לְאַחַת לָהֶם: Each one of them had four wings. ⁸³

[Ezek 1:6](#)

g

The preposition / is used to mark the topic of a verb of saying (## 51–54, cf. # 26), a use not far removed from the lamed of specification. It also denotes the agent of a passive verb, usually a *Niphal* (## 55–56); ⁸⁴ rarely, / governs the subject of a passive verb (# 57). With an active transitive verb, / can mark the object (## 58–60; see 10.4b) ⁸⁵ or, very rarely, the subject (# 61).

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51. אֲמַרְי-לִי אָחִי הוּא: Say of me, "He is my brother."

[Gen 20:13](#)

52. וְלַעֲתִים רְחוֹקוֹת הוּא נֹבֵא: He speaks prophecies about far distant times.

[Ezek 12:27](#)

53. אֲנִי מְדַבֵּר אֵתְךָ לְכָל-חֻקֹּת בֵּית-יְהוָה I am telling you of all the rules of YHWH's house.

[Ezek 44:5](#)

54. Sing of YHWH a new song. ⁸⁶

שִׁירוֹ לִיהוּה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ

[Ps 96:1, 98:1](#)

55. הֲלוֹא נִכְרִיּוֹת נִחְשְׁבָנוּ לוֹ Aren't we considered foreigners by him?

[Gen 31:15](#)

56. וְנִבְחַר מוֹת מֵחַיִּים לְכָל הַשְּׂאִרִית Death will be chosen over life by all the remnant.

[Jer 8:3](#)

57. וּבַחֲבֻרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ: Through his stripes we are healed.⁸⁷

[Isa 53:5](#)

58. יַצְדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדִּי לְרַבִּים The just one, my servant, shall adjudge (or, make) many righteous.

[Isa 53:11](#)

59. וְאַהֲבַתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ You shall love your neighbor as (you do) yourself.

[Lev 19:18](#)

60. לְשַׁחַת לְעִיר to destroy the city

[1 Sam 23:10](#)

61. פֶּן יִבְלַע לַמֶּלֶךְ lest the king be swallowed up ⁸⁸

[2 Sam 17:16](#)

h

An apposition can be marked with *l*, be it subject (# 62),⁸⁹ object (# 63), or prepositional object (# 64).

62. כָּל-בֶּן-נֹכַר עֶרְל לֵב וְעֶרְל בָּשָׂר לֹא יָבוֹא אֶל-מִקְדָּשִׁי לְכָל-בֶּן-נֹכַר אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: Not one foreigner, be he uncircumcised of heart or uncircumcised of flesh (that is, not one foreigner who is in the midst of the Israelites) shall enter my temple.

[Ezek 44:9](#)

63. אוּ כִי יִנֵּעַ בְּטִמְאֹת אָדָם לְכָל טִמְאָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִטְמָא בָּהּ וְנִעְלָם מִזִּמְנוֹ וְהוּא יָדַע וְאָשָׁם: Or if anyone touches a human uncleanness, that is, any uncleanness by which he might be rendered unclean, and he does so without knowing—when he learns, he is guilty.⁹⁰

[Lev 5:3](#)

64. וְאֲנִי הִנֵּה נֹתֵתִיךָ הַיּוֹם לְעִיר מְבֻצָּרָה ... עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ לְמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה לְשָׂרֶיהָ לְכֹהֲנֶיהָ וְלָעָם הָאָרֶץ: Today I am appointing you a fortified city ... over the whole land, that is, the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the ordinary people.⁹¹

[Jer 1:18](#)

i

In conclusion we turn to the so-called emphatic *lamed*.⁹² This particle must be distinguished first of all from the independent hypothetical particle *lu* (written לוֹ, לֹא, לוֹא), which introduces optative clauses ('Oh that ... !') and subordinate clauses of unreal and concessive force ('even if ...').⁹³ Further, it is strongly possible that the

emphatic or asseverative *lamed* is etymologically distinct from the preposition, though the Masoretes do not distinguish the two. Emphatic *lamed* stands (a) before a noun in a verbless clause (# 65),⁹⁴ (b) before a verb form in a verbal clause (# 66),⁹⁵ and (c) before vocatives (# 67).⁹⁶ A different emphatic use involves other prepositions: / may follow another

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preposition directly (לְ סָבִיב לְ) or as a complement (לְ ... בֵּין, Gen 1:6), and its use in such constructions can also be termed emphatic.

65. כִּי־לֶכְלֵב חַי הוּא טוֹב
מִן־הָאֲרִיָּה הַמֵּת: Indeed a live dog is better than a dead lion.
[Qoh 9:4](#)
66. יְהוָה לְהוֹשִׁיעֲנִי YHWH, do save me!
[Isa 38:20](#)
67. רִנְנוּ צַדִּיקִים בַּיהוָה
לְיֹשְׁרִים נְאֻה תְהַלֵּה: Rejoice, O you just, in YHWH; O you upright, praise is fitting.
[Ps 33:1](#)

מִן 11.2.11

a

This preposition shows its canonical form מִן before the article regularly and only irregularly otherwise; otherwise, the *nun* assimilates to the following consonant, and the forms -מִי or -מִי result. There are two long variants: מִינִי, without suffixes, and מִמִּנִּי, with suffixes (e.g., מִמִּנִּי). The relations that the preposition designates involve origins and causes.

b

The spatial senses of *mn* are both static and dynamic. The locational *mn* describes the place where a thing or person originated (# 1) or the direction where a thing is located (# 2). More basic is the ablative sense of *mn*, designating movement away from a specified beginning point (# 3); this sense underlies the designation of origin (cf. # 1). As with other prepositions, several distinct senses may be used together (# 4).

1. וַיִּשְׁפֹּט ... אֲבִצָן מִבֵּית
לָהֶם: Ibzan, who was from Bethlehem, ... judged.
[Judg 12:8](#)
2. וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ הָעָם
אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה אֲשֶׁר
מִצָּפוֹן לָעִיר וְאֶת־עֲקֻבוֹ
מִיָּם לָעִיר They positioned the army—the main force, which was to the north of the city, and its rear guard, which was to the west of the city.
[Josh 8:13](#)
3. לְהוֹצִיאֵם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם to bring them out of the land of Egypt
[Exod 12:42](#)
4. וַיַּעֲתֵק מִשָּׁם הַהָרָה מִקְדָּם
לְבֵית־אֵל And he decamped from there to the mountain which is to the east of Bethel.
[Gen 12:8](#)

c

Temporal uses of *mn* vary in relation to the beginning point, which may be included ('from, on, in'; # 5) or not ('after'; # 6). Temporal *mn* can also mark a block of time ('after'; # 7).⁹⁷

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5. אם-משנת היבל יקדיש שָׂדֵהוּ ... ואם-אחר היבל יקדיש שָׂדֵהוּ
If someone dedicates his field from Jubilee Year on ... ; if, in contrast, he dedicates his field after Jubilee Year ...
[Lev 27:17–18](#)
6. כחלום מהקיץ
as a dream after awaking
[Ps 73:20](#)
7. יחינו מימֵי ביום השלישי מימֵנו
He will revive us after two days (have passed, i.e., it will be) on the third day (that) he will raise us up.
[Hos 6:2](#)

d

The ablative and locational senses of *mn* are similar to another group of the preposition's senses: *mn* marks the material of which something is made (# 8) or the author or authority from whom a standard or truth originated (# 9). The cause or means of a situation is marked by *mn* (## 10–12), as is an agent (# 13; note the passives in ## 12–13). With verbs of fearing and the like, it is often difficult to distinguish cause and agent (## 14–15).

8. ויצר יהוה אֱלֹהִים מן-הָאֲדָמָה כָּל-חַיַּת-הַשָּׂדֶה
YHWH God formed all the animals of the field from the ground.
[Gen 2:19](#)
9. וידעו ... דְּבַר-מִי יָקוּם מִמֶּנִּי וּמֵהֶם:
They will know ... whose word shall stand, mine or theirs.
[Jer 44:28](#)
10. מרֵב עֲוֹנֶיךָ ... חָלַלְתָּ מִקְדָּשֶׁיךָ
Because of (or, By) the multitude of your iniquities ... you have profaned your shrines.
[Ezek 28:18](#)
11. כִּי לֹא הִיָּתָה מִהַמֶּלֶךְ
It was not (because of) the king's will ...
[2 Sam 3:37](#)
12. וְלֹא-יִכָּרֵת כָּל-בָּשָׂר עוֹד מִמֵּי הַמַּבּוּל
All flesh shall not again be cut off by the flood waters.
[Gen 9:11](#)
13. וְאִשָּׁה גְרוּשָׁה מֵאִישָׁה
a woman driven out by her husband
[Lev 21:7](#)
14. מִמִּי אֵירָא
Of whom am I afraid?
[Ps 27:1](#)
15. וַיִּירָאוּ מִגִּשְׁתֵּי אֱלֹהֵי:
They were afraid of drawing near to him.⁹⁸
[Exod 34:30](#)

e

The preposition has three further uses. (1) It is a partitive marker: the phrase with *mn* refers to part of the noun (or noun equivalent) after the preposition. The partition

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may be simple ('some of'; ## 16–17) or comparative/superlative ('the better/best of,' # 18; 'the worse/worst of,' etc.). In negative clauses the *mn* phrase refers to none of or not one of the prepositional object (## 19–20); such a negative sense can be found in oaths and other rhetorically charged speech (# 21).

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 16. | יֵצְאוּ מִן־הָעָם לְלֶקֶט | Some of the people went out to gather (it).
Exod 16:27 |
| 17. | וְהִזָּה מִדָּם הַחֹטֵאת
עַל־קִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ | He shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin-offering on the side of the altar.

Lev 5:9 |
| 18. | הַטּוֹב וְהַיָּשָׁר מִבְּנֵי אֲדֹנֵיכֶם | the best and brightest of your lord's children
2 Kgs 10:3 |
| 19. | וְלֹא־יֵלִין מִן־הַבֶּשֶׂר | None of the flesh shall remain overnight.
Deut 16:4 |
| 20. | וְלֹא נִכְרִית מִהֶבְהֵמָה: | We shall cut off not one of the cattle.
1 Kgs 18:5 |
| 21. | חֲלִילָה חַי־יְהוָה אִם־יִפֹּל
מִשְׁעַרְתּוֹ רֹאשׁוֹ אֶרְצָה | Oh desecration! As YHWH lives, if even a single hair of his head shall fall earthward ... !
1 Sam 14:45 |

(2) The preposition is a privative marker, that is, it marks what is missing⁹⁹ or unavailable¹⁰⁰ (## 22–23).

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 22. | בְּצֵל חֶשְׁבּוֹן עֲמָדוֹ מִכֹּחַ
נָסִים | In the shadow of Heshbon the fugitives stand without strength.

Jer 48:45 |
| 23. | בְּתֵיחֶם שָׁלוֹם מִפָּחַד | Their homes are safe (and) free from fear.
Job 21:9 |

(3) The preposition is a comparative marker, prefixed to a standard by which a quality is measured (and thus similar to some English superlatives; # 24) or to a group to which something is compared (and thus comparable to some English comparatives; # 25; 14.4d).

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|--|
| 24. | קִטְנֹתִי מִכָּל־חַסְדִּים | I am small in relation to (or, too small for) all the mercies.
Gen 32:11 |
| 25. | דּוֹדִי ... הַגּוֹל מִרַבָּבָה: | My beloved ... is more attractive than ten thousand (other people).
Cant 5:10 |

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עַד 11.2.12

a

This preposition, also used as a conjunction, may be related to the noun עַד, 'future', which occurs only in phrases

like **לְעֹלָם וָעֶד** (Exod 15:18) and **לְעֹלָם** (Ps 111:8), 'forever and ever.' Two forms of the preposition are used independently, **עַד** and the older **עַדִּי**, from which the suffixed forms are composed. The basic sense of the preposition is allative (movement toward)-terminative (movement up to).

b

Some spatial uses of the preposition are static (# 1), but the sense of movement up to is usually present (# 2).¹⁰¹ Temporal uses are more common and more diverse: 'd may mark the time before which an event takes place (# 3) or until which it takes place (# 4).¹⁰² Less often, the sense is durative, referring to the time during which an event takes place (# 5).

1. **עַד־צִוְאָר יִגִּיעַ** It (the Euphrates) will (reach up to and) touch the neck(s of the Judahites).¹⁰³
[Isa 8:8](#)
2. **וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־חֲרָן** They came as far as Haran.
[Gen 11:31](#)
3. **וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־פִּי עַד־בּוֹא אֵלַי בַּבֹּקֶר** He (God) opened my mouth before the coming to me [of the messenger] in the morning.
[Ezek 33:22](#)
4. **יֵזֵא אָדָם לַפֶּעֶלָּו ... עַד־יָעֶרֶב:** Man goes out to his work (and he stays at it) ... until evening.
[Ps 104:23](#)
5. **מָה הַשָּׁלוֹם עַד־זְנוּנֵי אִיזָבֵל ... הָרַבִּים:** How can there be peace as long as the prostitution of Jezebel ... abounds?
[2 Kgs 9:22](#)

c

The preposition also expresses measure or degree ('as much as, as far as, even to, even unto'; # 6), most often in the phrase **עַד־מְאֹד** 'a great deal.' With a negative the preposition may take on a privative sense (# 7).

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6. **וּמַה־בִּקְשָׁתְךָ עַד־חֲצִי הַמְּלָכוֹת יִתְעַשׂ:** What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom it shall be granted (lit., done).
[Esth 5:6](#)
7. **לֹא נִשְׁאַר עַד־אֶחָד:** There remained not even one.
[Judg 4:16](#)

d

A goal of an abstract sort may be governed by 'd (# 8), as may a focus or object of interest (# 9).

8. **וְעַד־הַשְּׁלֵשָׁה לֹא־בָא:** [Even though he was a very good soldier] he did not attain to (the level of the elite force) The Three.¹⁰⁴
[2 Sam 23:19](#)
9. **וְעַד־יָכֶם אֶתְבוֹנֵן** I gave my attention to you.
[Job 32:12](#)

על 11.2.13

a

This preposition, also used as a conjunction, may be related to the rare noun **עַל** 'height' (e.g. **הַגִּבֹּר הָקָם עַל** 'the man raised on a height,' [2 Sam 23:1](#)). The suffixed forms of the preposition are derived from the unattested **עַלִּי**, for example, **עָלַי**. The relation 'at or near the top' is basic for this preposition.

b

Of the spatial senses, most are locational: simple locational ('upon, on, over'; ## 1–2), contingent locational ('at, beside, by'; # 3), or comprehensive locational ('around, about,' often with verbs of covering and protecting; # 4). With some verbs of motion **עַל** has a terminative sense ('on, to, onto'; ## 5–6). (This sense is shared by **עַל** and **עָלַי**; from it other senses of the two prepositions come to overlap by analogy. Futile is the tendency to emend the MT in order to eliminate some or all of these senses, although there may be cases in which the prepositions have been confused in the development of the text.)

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- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | שָׁכַב עַל־מִשְׁכְּבֶךָ | Lie down on your bed.
2 Sam 13:5 |
| 2. | תָּנָה הוֹדֶךָ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם: | (You) set your glory upon the heavens. ¹⁰⁵
Ps 8:2 |
| 3. | וּשְׁנֵיהֶם עָמְדוּ עַל־הַיַּרְדֵּן: | And the two of them stopped at the Jordan. ¹⁰⁶
2 Kgs 2:7 |
| 4. | חוֹמָה הָיָה עָלֵינוּ | They were a wall about us.
1 Sam 25:16 |
| 5. | כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ | YHWH God had not (yet) made it rain upon the earth. ¹⁰⁷
Gen 2:5 |
| 6. | וְלֹא־תַעֲלֶה בְּמַעֲלֹת עַל־מִזְבְּחִי | You shall not go up to my altar via steps. ¹⁰⁸
Exod 20:26 |

c

Metaphorically **עַל** marks a burden or duty (# 7),¹⁰⁹ when the object feels an incumbency 'upon' herself or himself, as well as a rank (# 8). With psychological predicates (verbs of thinking, feeling, rejoicing, grieving, watching) **עַל** governs the object of interest ('upon, to, for, over'; ## 9–10). When the subject feels the pathos 'upon' himself or herself, the **עַל**-phrase is reflexive (# 11; cf. 11.2.10d). Advantage ('on behalf of, for the sake of') and disadvantage ('against') are also marked with **עַל** (## 12–14).

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 7. | וְעָלַי לָתֵת לָךְ עֶשְׂרֵה כֶּסֶף | I would have had to give (lit., upon me to give) you ten (sheqels) of silver.
2 Sam 18:11 |
| 8. | וַיֹּעֵב ... עַל־הַצָּבָא | Joab ... was over the army.
2 Sam 8:16 |
| 9. | יָמְתָה עָלַי רָחֵל | Rachel died to my sorrow (lit., upon me).
Gen 48:7 |
| 10. | יִשְׂשִׁי עָלֶיךָ | He will rejoice over you.
Zeph 3:17 |

11. וַתִּתְעַטֵּף עַל־י רוּחִי My spirit faints within me.
[Ps 143:4](#)
12. אֲנֹכִי אֶדְבֹּר עֲלֶיךָ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ: I will speak on your behalf to the king.
[1 Kgs 2:18](#)
13. וַיִּקְצֹף פַּרְעֹה עַל שְׁנֵי סָרִיסָיו Pharaoh was angry with his two officers.
[Gen 40:2](#)
14. עָלָיו אֵלֶּה שָׁלַמְנֶאֶזֶר Shalmanezzer came up against him.
[2 Kgs 17:3](#)

d

The preposition can mark an object of excess (cf. 'on top of that'), involving accompaniment ('with, along with, together with'; # 15), addition ('in addition to, to'; # 16),¹¹⁰ and even multiplication ('over, above'; # 17).

15. וַיָּבֹאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים עַל־הַנָּשִׁים Men together with women came.
[Exod 35:22](#)
16. כִּי־יִסָּפְנוּ עַל־כָּל־חַטֹּאתֵינוּ רָעָה For we have added wickedness to all our sins.
[1 Sam 12:19](#)
17. וְהָיָה מִשְׁנָה עַל אֲשֶׁר־יִלְקְטוּ יוֹמַ יוֹמִי: And it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.
[Exod 16:5](#)

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e

The preposition may introduce a norm (the basis on which an act is performed; according to; # 18), a cause (the reason why an act is performed; 'because of'; # 19), or a goal (the end for which an act is performed; 'for'; # 20). It is difficult to distinguish norms and causes in some situations, while in others causes and goals are similar.

18. עַל כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה: in accordance with all these words¹¹¹
[Exod 24:8](#)
19. הִנֵּךְ מוֹת עַל־הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־לָקַחְתָּ You are about to die because of the woman you have taken.
[Gen 20:3](#)
20. עַל מַה־שְּׂוֹא בְרָאתָ כָּל־בְּנֵי־אָדָם: For what futility have you created all people!
[Ps 89:48](#)

f

An oppositional sense is associated with ׀ ('over against'; # 21), from which a concessive sense may be derived ('although, despite, in spite of'; # 22). There may be a rare separative sense (# 23).

21. לֹא יִהְיֶה־לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל־פָּנָי: You shall not have other gods over against me.¹¹²

22. **עַל־מִשְׁפָּטִי אֶכְזֹב** [Exod 20:3](#)
Despite my (being) right, I am
considered a liar.
23. **בְּצֵאתוֹ עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם** [Job 34:6](#)
when he went out from the land of
Egypt [Ps 81:6](#)

g

Also associated with 'l are certain relations more frequently marked by l; 'l can mark a topic (often with verbs of speaking; 'about, concerning'; ## 24–25) or a circumstance ('regarding, in connection with'; # 26). In late Biblical Hebrew 'l sometimes governs an indirect object of the sort that would be governed by / earlier (# 27). ¹¹³

24. **וְאֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי עָלֶיךָ** I have heard it said of you ...
[Gen 41:15](#)
25. **וְעַל הַשְּׁנוֹת הַחֲלוֹם** Now, about the repeating of the
dream ...
[Gen 41:32](#)
26. **וְלֹא־תַעֲנֶה עַל־רֵב** Do not answer in connection with a
lawsuit.
[Exod 23:2](#)
27. **אִם־עֲלֵיכֶם טוֹב** If it seems good to you ...
[1 Chr 13:2](#)

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עם 11.2.14

a

This preposition has the base 'imm-, seen in suffixed forms, for example, **עִמָּנוּ**; the form **עִמָּדִי** (1 c.sg.) is of uncertain origin. It expresses a variety of comitative relations ('with').

b

The most common sense involves accompaniment (fellowship and companionship, person + person; 'with'; ## 1–3) or addition ('with, along with, and'; # 4); 'm often marks a personal complement after verbs ('with, to,' ## 5–7; adversative, 'against,' # 8). The locus of psychological interest can be marked with 'm ('with, in'; ## 9–10).

1. **וַיֹּאכְלוּ ... הוּא וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־עִמּוֹ** They ate ... , he and the men with him. ¹¹⁴
[Gen 24:54](#)
2. **כִּי לֹא יִירָשׁ בֶּן־הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת עִם־בְּנֵי עִם־יִצְחָק:** That slave woman's son will never share
in the inheritance with my son, with
Isaac.
[Gen 21:10](#)
3. **כִּיעִם־אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה** He succeeded with (the help of) God this
day.
[1 Sam 14:45](#)
4. **עִם־עָרֵיהֶם הִחָרִימָם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ:** And Joshua annihilated them along with
their cities.

12 Apposition

[12.1 Introduction](#)

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[12.4 Pronoun-Noun Appositional Phrases](#)

[12.5 Repetitive Apposition](#)

12.1 Introduction

a

The various syntactic slots associated with nouns can be filled not only by single nouns and pronouns, but also by other, more elaborate types of noun phrases. The most common types of noun phrases in Hebrew are construct phrases (9.1), adjectival phrases (14.1), coordinate phrases (e.g., **מוֹשֶׁה וַיִּתְּרוֹ**), and appositional phrases. This last group of phrases is distinctive in two ways: the various parts of each phrase are juxtaposed, and they have the same or similar referents.¹ In the phrase **וַיִּתְּרוֹ חֹתְנוֹ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן**, the three parts, each definite (13.2), stand side by side, and each refers to the same individual, 'Jethro, his (Moses') father-in-law, the priest of Midian' ([Exod 3:1](#)). An appositional phrase is thus a sequence of nouns (or noun phrases) with the same syntactic function and agreement and with comparable reference.² Sometimes the term apposition is used to refer to the whole of an appositional phrase; we, however, use it to describe the second (and later) terms. (Appositive has the same meaning.) The first term we will call the leadword or head. Thus, **וַיִּתְּרוֹ** is the leadword and **חֹתְנוֹ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן** the apposition (or appositive).

b

Appositional phrases are similar to both construct phrases and accusatives of specification; in all three phrase types one noun serves to determine another noun more precisely. Phrases which in English are appositional may correspond to Hebrew genitive phrases, for example, **בֵּת צִיּוֹן** 'daughter Zion' (cf. 9.5.3h). In Biblical Hebrew when an object is made of gold, a construct phrase is generally used: **זָהָב עֹטָרֶת** 'a crown of gold, a golden crown' ([Esth 8:15](#), cf. [Ps 21:4](#); 9.5.3d). But an appositional phrase may be used: **שְׁתֵּי הָעֲבֹתֹת הַזָּהָב** 'the two gold cords' ([Exod 39:17](#), cf. [2 Kgs 16:17](#)). When gold itself is measured, the construction is appositional: **זָהָב שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת** 'six hundred (units of) gold'

([1 Kgs 10:16](#)). When the raw material of gold is being made (‘sy) into something, an accusative of specification (10.2.2e) is used: **וַעֲשִׂיתָ שְׁנַיִם כְּרֻבִּים זָהָב**, 'You shall make two cherubs (of) gold' ([Exod 25:18](#)). Because of the similarity and partial overlap of these constructions, we shall be attentive to differences among them.

c

Like many constructions in Hebrew an appositional phrase has a head-first (*regens-rectum*) shape. It is differentiated from a construct phrase, and similar to an adjectival phrase, in that both parts of such a phrase remain completely distinct words and all its parts agree in definiteness and reference. Occasionally the parts of an appositional phrase agree in their suffixes and in their particles, for example, **עַמִּי בְּחִירִי** 'my people, my elect' (i.e., 'my chosen people'; [Isa 43:20](#)), **עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמִּי** 'over my people, over Israel' (i.e., 'over my people Israel'; [2 Sam 7:8](#)). This agreement is not always found; see, for example, **בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם הָעִיר** 'in Jerusalem, the city' (i.e., 'in the city of Jerusalem'; [2 Chr 12:13](#)), **וְאַתָּה בְּנֶךְךָ** 'your son, your firstborn' (i.e., 'your firstborn son'; [Exod 4:23](#); see also 12.3b). An appositional phrase is differentiated from an adjectival phrase in that substantives and adjectives have distinct sorts of reference. In an appositional phrase the parts have similar or

identical reference; as the 'gold' examples show, this differentiation can be problematic.³ Another differentiation is even more problematic: if two nouns juxtaposed in a phrase are indefinite, is the phrase appositional or an accusative of specification? Since accusatives of specification may disagree in definiteness, the indefinite phrase is usually best taken as appositional (10.2.2e).

d

Before we discuss the types of apposition found in Hebrew, we may consider the matter of contrasting linguistic resources and translation. Both English and Hebrew use the resource of apposition, but the two languages use it in different ways, and we need to be aware of the contrast as we go about both grammatical analysis and translation. Consider the ways in which English can join 'Egypt' and 'country': 'the country of Egypt,' 'the country called Egypt,' 'the country Egypt,' 'Egypt, the country.' Apposition, as the last two examples show, is normal in English with certain types of names. The same is true in Hebrew, and thus when such a name is involved in the apposition, the Hebrew text can be rendered word-for-word into English, as, for example, in the case of

יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא 'Isaiah the prophet' ([Isa 39:3](#)), אֲבִיתָר הַכֹּהֵן 'Abiathar the priest' ([1 Sam 23:9](#)), and הַנָּהָר הַזֶּה 'the river, (the) Euphrates' ([1 Chr 5:9](#)).

e

Hebrew, however, employs apposition more extensively than English. In English one does not normally juxtapose a substantival noun with a generic noun of material. Instead of this construction English prefers an attributive adjective that precedes the noun being qualified, for example, not 'the cords, the gold,' but 'the golden cords.' So also, instead of representing by apposition the complex of a substance noun 'tongue' and an abstract noun of quality 'deceitfulness,' as in לְשׁוֹן רְמִיָּה 'tongue, duplicity' ([Ps 120:2](#)), English convention requires 'the deceitful tongue,' and whereas Hebrew signifies the compound of 'famine' and 'seven years' by שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים רָעָב 'seven years, famine' ([2 Sam 24:13](#)), English represents it by 'seven years of famine.'

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f

The wide use of apposition in Hebrew and the Semitic languages generally conforms with the tendency elsewhere within that family of languages to rely on the juxtaposition of elements. It is common in Hebrew to use a verbless clause (or a clause with *hyy*) to join one substantive (as subject) with a generic noun of class or material (as predicate). In such a clause the relationship between subject and predicate is not made as explicit as in a comparable English clause.

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | וְיָהִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ שִׁפְהָ אֶחָת | All the earth was one tongue. (The earth had one language.)
Gen 11:1 |
| 2. | וְהָיָה כְנֹר ... מִשְׁתֵּיהֶם | Their feast is ... harp. (They have harps ... at their banquets.)
Isa 5:12 |
| 3. | מִרְ-וֶאֱהָלוֹת קְצִיעוֹת
כָּל-בְּגָדֶיךָ | All your garments are myrrh, aloes, and cassia. (All your garments are filled with the fragrance of myrrh, aloes, and cassia.)
Ps 45:9 |
| 4. | הַשְּׂעִרָה אָבִיב וְהַפֶּשֶׁתָּה
גִּבְעָלָהּ | The barley was ears of grain, and the flax was bud. (The barley had headed and the flax was in bloom.)
Exod 9:31 |
| 5. | הַדִּוּד אֶחָד תְּאֵנִים טֹבוֹת | One basket was (had) good figs.
Jer 24:2 |

Whereas Hebrew prefers to coordinate with the copula or in a verbless clause, English idiom prefers to use such verbs as 'consists of, contains, extends over, measures, weighs,' etc. Similarly, Hebrew, like other Semitic languages, tends to relate clauses by juxtaposition, the placing together of clauses, sentences, phrases without a

logically subordinating particle, instead of by subordinating clauses, sentences, phrases by a logical particle.⁴

g

Because of such differences in strategic use of grammatical structures, the Hebrew idiom ought not to be rendered word-for-word into English. At best such a translation would be awkward, and at worst it would actually misrepresent the Hebrew. Rendering ordinary Hebrew idiom with an abnormal English convention might suggest to an English-speaking audience that the Hebrew writer had sought to emphasize or intensify some unlikely aspect of thought. The abnormal English expression 'the ox, the bronze' for הַבָּקָר הַנְּחֹשֶׁת (2 Kgs 16:17) misrepresents the Hebrew, which is a simple apposition. Not infrequently a word-for-word translation, instead of faithfully representing the original text, actually distorts it.

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12.2 Apposition, Similarity, and Identity

a

The most difficult point about appositional constructions is the quality of the shared reference. In יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוּ 'Jethro, his father-in-law,' there is, if Moses has one wife and she has one father, complete identity between יִתְרוֹ and חֹתֵנוּ.⁵ In אֲבִי־אֶתָר הַכֹּהֵן 'Abiathar the priest,' there is a limited but clear overlap: the phrase means a certain Abiathar—no other—and it does not claim that he was the only priest. The shared reference in מֵאֹת זָהָב שֵׁשׁ is of a different sort: the unit ('six hundred') and the measured thing ('gold') jointly point to a certain quantity of gold.⁶

b

It is helpful to review three philosophical distinctions implicitly involved here, though we must not allow metaphysics to dictate grammar.⁷ First, Aristotle distinguishes between "matter" and "form." Every individual thing is said to consist both of matter and of the particular form imposed upon the physical matter that gives it its identity. Second, Aristotle also distinguishes between "substance" and "accidence"; substances are persons or things, of which accidental properties can be predicated. Names, as well as pronouns and phrases that identify a definite person or thing, are regarded as substantival; accidental properties involve quantity, quality, relation, action, place, state, etc. Thus, accidental properties qualify substantives. Third, on another view of ontology, we can say that particular terms are qualified by universal (or "generic" or "general") terms, that is, particular terms mark out particular persons or things. Terms for persons or things do not in themselves denote individuals; rather, they denote either a class of individuals or qualities, states, actions, etc. Some logicians further analyze universal terms into sortal and characterizing; sortals group persons or things into classes (e.g., 'man, woman'), while characterizing universals include abstract nouns, as well as verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Most appositional constructions involve the juxtaposition of nouns distinct in one of these ways. Let us return to the three examples we began with. First, in the phrase מֵאֹת זָהָב שֵׁשׁ the leadword is a term for form and the appositive זָהָב is a term for matter. Second, the name יִתְרוֹ can be taken as a substance and חֹתֵנוּ as an accident of that substance. Third, אֲבִי־אֶתָר is a particular and הַכֹּהֵן is a qualifying universal (or sortal). This approach to appositional phrases does provide a framework in which to examine the problems of shared reference.

12.3 Noun-Noun Appositional Phrases

a

Most appositional constructions involve nouns as both leadword (or first term) and apposition (or second term), although pronouns may occur as the leadword. In noun-noun appositional phrases, the second term identifies or qualifies the first. As a result some appositional phrases closely resemble the adjectival genitives (9.5.3).

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b

If the leadword is a common noun, the appositive often provides further information about the subclass to which the leadword belongs. The pattern may involve a sortal, that is, a broad class term followed by a somewhat narrower term, of the same type.

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. | זִבְחִים שְׁלָמִים | sacrifices, peace-offerings (sacrifices as peace-offerings)
Exod 24:5 |
| 2. | נַעֲרָה בְּתוּלָה | a young girl, a virgin (a young virgin, not a youthful virgin)
1 Kgs 1:2 |
| 3. | וְהַמְזִלָּג שְׁלֹש־הַשָּׁנִים | the fork, the three-prongs (the three-pronged fork)
1 Sam 2:13 |
| 4. | אֵת כָּל-הַצָּבָא הַגִּבֹּרִים: | all of the army, the mighty men of valor (the entire army of fighting men)
2 Sam 10:7 |
| 5. | נָעַר אִישׁ-הָאֱלֹהִים | a young man, a man of God
2 Kgs 8:4 |
| 6. | מַעֲשֵׂה מְקֻשָּׁה | product, hair-do (well-dressed hair)
Isa 3:24 |

Indeed, this pattern is found with the broadest possible generic terms for people, **אִישׁ** and **אִשָּׁה** (cf. 9.5.3b).

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 7. | אִישׁ כֹּהֵן | a man, a priest (a priest)
Lev 21:9 |
| 8. | אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה | a woman, a widow (a widow)
1 Kgs 7:14 |
| 9. | שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים זָנוֹת | two women, prostitutes (two prostitutes)
1 Kgs 3:16 |

c

The appositive term may refer to a different kind of categorization than the leadword. The appositive can refer to the quality or character of the leadword.

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|--|
| 10. | בְּשָׂמִים רִאשׁ | spices, first (fine spices)
Exod 30:23 |
| 11. | אֲמָרִים אֱמֶת | words, truth (truthful words)
Prov 22:21 |
| 12. | וַיָּבֹא לַחֵץ | water, distress (water as scanty as in drought)
1 Kgs 22:27 |
| 13. | יַיִן תְּרַעֲלָה | wine, reeling (wine that makes one stagger)
Ps 60:5 |

More commonly, the appositive, if it is semantically distinct from the leadword, refers to the material of the leadword; both appositives of quality and material tend to involve inanimates.

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 14. | הַבָּקָר הַנְּחֹשֶׁת | oxen, bronze (bronze oxen) |
|-----|----------------------|----------------------------|

15. אֲשֶׁרָה כָּל-עֵץ [2 Kgs 16:17](#)
Asherah, every wood (Asherahs made
of any kind of wood)
[Deut 16:21](#)
16. טֹרִים אֲבָן [Exod 28:17](#)
rows, stones (rows of stones)
17. וְכָל-הָעֵמֶק הַפְּגָרִים וְהַדָּשָׁן [Jer 31:40](#)
all the valley, the corpses and the ashes
(the whole valley where dead bodies
and ashes are thrown)

d

The appositive of measure juxtaposes as leadword a measure, weight, or number and as appositive the substance measured, weighed, or counted (## 18–20) or vice versa (## 21–22).⁸

18. סֵאֶה-סֵלֶת ... וְסֵאֲתִים
שְׂעִרִים [2 Kgs 7:1](#)
a seah of flour ... and two seahs of
barley⁹
19. שְׁלֹשָׁה בָּנִים [Gen 6:10](#)
three sons
20. שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים דָּבָר [2 Sam 24:13](#)
three days of pestilence
21. הוּא-הָכָה אֶת-אֶדְוֹם ...
עֶשְׂרֵת אֲלָפִים [2 Kgs 14:7](#)
he was the one who defeated (from)
Edom ... ten thousand (men)
22. וְעַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּלָה:
[2 Sam 2:9](#)
over Israel, all of it¹⁰

e

The appositive after a name (usually a personal name) serves to identify the bearer of the name, by office or relationship.

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23. יוֹרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ [2 Kgs 8:29](#)
Joram the king
24. שָׂרַי אִשְׁתֵּי אַבְרָם [Gen 16:1](#)
Sarai, Abram's wife

In cases in which the name and the identification are equally distinctive,¹¹ the name may be used as the apposition; in these examples, it is presupposed that there is only one king at a time and that the river of ancient southwestern Asia was the longest, the Euphrates.

25. וְהַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד [2 Sam 3:31](#)
the King, David (King David)
26. הַנָּהָר פָּרָת [1 Chr 5:9](#)
the River Euphrates

f

In cases in which the name is an apposition and the phrase takes a preposition or **את**, the particle is generally repeated on leadword and apposition.¹²

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|
| 27. | לְבִנִּי לְיִצְחָק | to my son, to Isaac (to my son Isaac)
Gen 24:4 |
| 28. | לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיַעֲקֹב | to your servant, to Jacob
Gen 32:19 |
| 29. | אֶת־אָחִיו אֶת־הָאֵל | his brother, Abel
Gen 4:2 |
| 30. | אֶת־הָעִיר הַזֹּאת אֶת־יֶרִיחוֹ | this city, Jericho
Josh 6:26 |

If the name is the leadword, the particle is generally not repeated.¹³

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|
| 31. | אֶל־הָאֵל אָחִיו | to Abel, his brother
Gen 4:8 |
| 32. | לְנָחוֹר אָחִיךָ: | to Nahor, your brother
Gen 22:20 |
| 33. | אֶת־הָגָר הַמִּצְרַיִת שְׂפָחָתָהּ | Hagar, the Egyptian, her handmaid
Gen 16:3 |
| 34. | אֵת אוּרִיָּה הַכֹּהֵן | Uriah the priest
Isa 8:2 |

12.4 Pronoun-Noun Appositional Phrases

a

A pronoun may be followed by a noun in apposition.¹⁴ In the case of an independent subject pronoun after a finite verb, it is usual to speak of an emphatic, rather than

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appositional, use; in # 1 the emphatic subject pronoun has its own following apposition, as increasing specificity balances narrative delay (cf. [Gen 22:2](#)).

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | וַיַּעֲשׂוּ גַם־הֵם חֲרָטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם
בְּלִהְטֵיהֶם כֹּן: | The Egyptian magicians, they too
performed (miracles) by their magical
arts.
Exod 7:11 |
|----|--|---|

More often the apposition to an independent pronoun amplifies the subject of the verb (# 2); here, the singular imperative verbs are extended to apply to a larger group—note that **אתה**, implicit in the imperatives, must be specified before it is amplified.

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 2. | קוּם עָבֵר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה
אַתָּה וְכָל־הָעָם הַזֶּה | Cross over this Jordan, you and all the
people.
Josh 1:2 |
|----|--|--|

Pronominal suffixes, be they possessive (# 3), objective (# 4–5), or prepositional (# 5), can also serve as leadwords to appositives; for pronoun-pronoun apposition, see 16.3.4a.

- | | | |
|----|------------------|--|
| 3. | בְּבָעוּ הָאִישׁ | when he, the man, went in (when the
man went in)
Ezek 10:3 |
|----|------------------|--|

4. וַתֵּרְאֶהוּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד And she saw him, the baby (saw the baby).
[Exod 2:6](#)
5. תִּשְׂרֹפֶנּוּ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־בוֹ הַנֶּגַע: You must burn it (the garment), that which is in it, the plague. (You must burn the plague in it.)
[Lev 13:57](#)

12.5 Repetitive Apposition

a

Direct repetition of a noun can serve a variety of purposes; the sense may be distributive (שָׁנָה שָׁנָה 'year by year,' [Deut 14:22](#)), diverse (אֶבֶן וְאֶבֶן 'two differing weights,' [Deut 25:13](#)), or emphatic (זָהָב זָהָב 'pure gold,' [2 Kgs 25:15](#)). Of these senses, discussed earlier (7.2.3, 7.4.1a), the last is closest to appositional use. The second term seems to qualify the leadword; comparable English repetitions, infrequent in writing but common in speech, include 'hot hot' (i.e., hot tasting rather than warm, of food) and 'long long' (i.e., almost unimaginably long).¹⁵

1. תִּדְבְּרוּ גְבוּהָה גְבוּהָה Do not ... talk so proudly.
[1 Sam 2:3](#)
2. יַעֲמֹק מִי יִמְצְאוּ: Deep, deep (i.e., very deep), who can discern it?
[Qoh 7:24](#)

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Apposition in the strict sense can also involve repetition: the appositive then repeats the leadword.

3. אֲנֹכִי הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ I am God, the god of your forebear.¹⁶
[Gen 46:3](#)
4. אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים the two great lights, the greater light ...
 אֶת־הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן and the lesser light
 וְאֶת־הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן
[Gen 1:16](#)

Footnotes:

1. In some construct phrases the first term shows no shortening or shift of stress, so the parts may also be said to be juxtaposed. On apposition in general see Richter, *GAHG* 2. 12–15.
2. The shared case of words in apposition is apparent in Arabic.
3. Grammarians of Arabic often do not distinguish appositional and adjectival phrases; see W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1898), 2.272–74.
4. For a discussion of this point, with good examples, see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 118.
5. For the sake of this argument, we assume that ḥōtēn means 'father-in-law' in every sense.
6. The English distinction between restrictive and nonrestrictive modifiers does not match any pattern in Hebrew usage.
7. See further John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 403–5, 424–28.
8. Similarly, if the leadword is price, the appositive is the thing valued. It may be that the leadword is to be understood in some rare instances, e.g., wyprš [prš] ... ʾrbʿ mʾwt ʾmh, 'He broke [a breaking] ... four hundred cubits' ([2 Kgs 14:13](#)).

9. Cf. [Ruth 2:17](#).

10. The Arabic cognate of *kol*, *kull* is "often placed after the definite noun which [it otherwise] might govern in the genitive, in which case a pronominal suffix is appended"; see Wright, *Arabic Language*, 2. 278. See also J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Syntax of כֻּל, כָּל, 'All,' in Aramaic Texts from Egypt and in Biblical Aramaic," *Biblica* 38 (1957) 170–84; rpt. in his *A Wandering Aramean* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979) 205–17.

11. Not unique. The relative degree of distinctiveness is a matter of context, not metaphysics.

12. There are exceptions, e.g., [Gen 24:12](#), [1 Sam 25:19](#), and the expressions 'my (ʿmk, etc.) yśr'l. See 12.1c.

13. On preposition override, see 11.4.2.

14. Carl Brockelmann argues that pronouns can occur in apposition to nouns. In fact, only one of his examples is compellingly so understood: štyṁ- ʿnḥnw 'the two (of) us' ([1 Kgs 3:18](#)); see *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 63.

15. The repetition of the *trisagion* (the seraphs' prayer in [Isa 6:3](#)) is similarly emphatic. On the suggestion that it means 'The Holy One, the Holy One, the Holy One is the Lord of Hosts,' see Baruch A. Levine, "The Language of Holiness: Perceptions of the Sacred in the Hebrew Bible," *Backgrounds for the Bible*, ed. M. O'Connor and D. N. Freedman (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 241–55, at 253.

16. Cf. [Exod 3:6](#).

13 Definiteness and Indefiniteness

[13.1 Deixis](#)

[13.2 Definiteness: Indefiniteness](#)

[13.3 Morphology of the Article](#)

[13.4 Definite Nouns](#)

[13.5 Common Nouns with the Article](#)

[5.1 Referential Features](#)

[5.2 Syntactic Features](#)

[13.6 Intrinsically Definite Nouns with the Article](#)

[13.7 Use and Nonuse of the Article](#)

[13.8 Indefinite Nouns](#)

13.1 Deixis

a

Many aspects of the way a clause refers to the world are handled by pointers. Using pointers, it is possible for speaker and hearer to situate an utterance without explicitly mentioning all characterizing features. The pointing words are mostly pronouns and various adverbial expressions; all such grammatical expressions compose a system of *deixis*, the Greek word for pointing. The personal pronouns are deictics: the first-person singular pronoun points to the speaker (the plural points to a group the speaker belongs to), the second-person singular points to the hearer, and third-person pronouns point to anything or anyone else. Most other pronouns are also deictics, be they demonstrative (e.g., 'this book'), interrogative (e.g., 'who are you?'), indefinite (e.g., 'whoever he sends, goes'), or relative (e.g., 'The book that/which I read is good'). Hebrew uses relatively few deictic adverbial expressions; **כֵּן** 'thus(ly)' is the most common. In the following chapters we deal with the pronominal system of Hebrew (Chaps. 16–19), as well as the closely related topics of adjectives and numerals (Chaps. 14–15); in this chapter we deal with one of the most basic features of deixis, the definiteness: indefiniteness opposition. With the pronouns this opposition is straightforward: the first- and second-person pronouns are always definite; the third-person pronouns must be specified to be definite. As we shall see, the opposition is frequently complex, and significant differences between Biblical Hebrew and English may be observed.

13.2 Definiteness : Indefiniteness

a

In English and other European languages the basic opposition of definite : indefinite is correlated with a pair of articles, English 'the : a, an,' French 'le/la : un/une,' German 'der/die/das : ein/eine.' Two features of the English pair are noteworthy. First, the definite article 'the' begins with a sound that is used initially only in other deictic and similar words: 'this, that, then, their,' etc. Second, the indefinite article is a reduced form of the word 'one'; the original -n is preserved before a vowel ('an eye'), otherwise dropped.¹ The articles are not always used in English to mark definites or indefinites. Nouns in some syntactic structures are inherently definite (e.g., 'I went home') or indefinite (e.g., 'Tigers are dangerous animals'). As the examples show, a definite noun or noun phrase may have a unique reference (## 1–2) or a particular reference (## 3–4); rather infrequently, an English definite may have a generic reference (# 5).

1. I saw Moses.
2. I saw the sun.
3. I saw the man I was looking for.
4. I saw the father of the prophet.
5. The tiger is a dangerous animal.

An indefinite noun or noun phrase is usually non-specific (# 6), but may be specific (# 7).

14 Adjectives

[14.1 Adjectives and Related Constructions](#)

[14.2 Agreement](#)

[14.3 Uses of the Adjective](#)

[3.1 Attributive Use](#)

[3.2 Predicate Use](#)

[3.3 Substantive Use](#)

[14.4 Comparative Degree](#)

[14.5 Superlative Degree](#)

14.1 Adjectives and Related Constructions

a

Nouns can be modified in a variety of ways (4.6.1), and one major form of adnominal modification involves adjectives. Words of this class describe or qualify nouns by describing their state or condition. Consider the following sentence.

יִשְׁמְעוּן אֶת־שִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל
וְאֶת־יָדְךָ הַחֲזָקָה וְזֶרְעֶךָ
הַנְּטוּיָה

They will hear of your great name and your strong hand and your outstretched arm.

[1 Kgs 8:42](#)

In both the Hebrew and English, there are three substantives, each qualified by an attributive adjective.

b

Hebrew differs from English and other European languages in that it uses adjectival modification much less frequently than they do; in Hebrew, noun phrases are often built up in other ways.¹ In the following examples, the English renderings use an adjectival format, while the Hebrew originals use a construct phrase (## 1–3), an accusative of specification (# 4), and an apposition (# 5).

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|--|
| 1. | זֶרַע הַמְּלֹכָה | the royal seed
2 Kgs 25:25 |
| 2. | כִּסֵּא הַמְּלֹכָה | the royal throne
1 Kgs 1:46 |
| 3. | בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ | the royal palace ²
2 Kgs 11:5 |
| 4. | מִחֲסִי־עִז | my strong refuge (my refuge as to strength)
Ps 71:7 |
| 5. | לָשׁוֹן רָמִיָּה | the deceitful tongue
Ps 120:2 |

c

Hebrew also differs from English in using adjectives as predicates (as in # 6) less often.

- | | | |
|----|---------------|-------------------|
| 6. | טוֹב הַדָּבָר | The word is good. |
|----|---------------|-------------------|

[1 Kgs 2:38](#)

Hebrew can use a noun alone (# 7) or in a prepositional phrase (# 8) where English relies on an adjectival predicate; most distinctively, Hebrew stative verbs (# 9) often correspond in English to predicate adjectival constructions (but see 27.1c).

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 7. | הַשָּׁלוֹם בְּאֶדְ | Is your visit peaceful?
1 Kgs 2:13 |
| 8. | כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ | because his mercy is eternal
Ps 136:1 |
| 9. | קָטַנְתִּי | I am small.
Gen 32:11 |

d

Thus, the reliance on adjectival constructions for attribution and predication is limited in Hebrew. Also limited is the morphological distinctiveness of the Hebrew adjective: both substantives and adjectives are formed from the same patterns, for the most part (5.1). Despite these two interrelated limitations, the adjective is an important part of the study of Hebrew syntax. Two classes of adjectives are not considered in this chapter: numerals (Chap. 15) and demonstratives (Chap. 17), both of which present special problems.

14.2 Agreement**a**

Adjectives are subordinate to the nouns they qualify in that they mostly agree with them in gender and number (## 1–4).

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- | | | |
|----|----------------------|---|
| 1. | שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ | pure olive oil
Exod 27:20 |
| 2. | חֲמָה עֲזָה | strong wrath
Prov 21:14 |
| 3. | מַיִם אֲדִירִים | mighty waters
Exod 15:10 |
| 4. | מְנוּחַת שְׁאֲנֻנוֹת | secure dwellings
Isa 32:18 |

An attributive adjective also agrees with the modified noun (or head) in definiteness (14.3.1).

b

Adjectives do not form the dual number; dual substantives take plural adjectives.

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|---|
| 5. | עֵינַיִם עִוְרוֹת | blind eyes
Isa 42:7 |
| 6. | בְּרָכָיִם כְּשָׁלוֹת | failing knees
Isa 35:3 |
| 7. | יָדַיִם רַפּוֹת | feeble hands
Job 4:3 |
| 8. | יָדַי מִזֶּשֶׁה כְּבִדִּים | The hands of Moses were heavy. ³
Exod 17:12 |

c

An adjective often agrees with its noun *ad sensum* (i.e., according to its inherent sense) rather than according to its grammatical form. With respect to number, an adjective may be plural with a singular collective noun (## 9–10) or singular with a plural of honorific distinction or intensification (## 11–12; 7.4.3).

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| 9. | צֹאן רַבּוֹת | large flocks
Gen 30:43 |
| 10. | הָעָם הַנִּמְצָאִים עִמּוֹ | the troop(s) present with him ⁴
1 Sam 13:15 |
| 11. | אֲדֹנִים קָשָׁה | a cruel master
Isa 19:4 |
| 12. | אֱלֹהִים צַדִּיק | O righteous God ⁵
Ps 7:10 |

With feminine nouns whose plurals are formed with a masculine plural suffix, the adjective agrees with the noun's intrinsic gender (## 13–16; 6.5.2).

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- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 13. | הַשָּׁנִים הַטּוֹבֹת הַבָּאִתָּה
הָאֵלֶּה | these good years that are coming
Gen 41:35 |
| 14. | גִּמְלִים מְנִיקוֹת | nursing camels
Gen 32:16 |
| 15. | בִּיצִים עֲזוּבוֹת | abandoned eggs
Isa 10:14 |
| 16. | נָשִׁים שֹׁאֲנָנוֹת | resting women
Isa 32:9 |

d

There is a priority of the masculine gender (6.5.3). When two adjectives follow a feminine substantive, sometimes only the one standing next to the substantive takes the feminine suffix.⁶

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|--|
| 17. | בְּאַרְצֵי-צָרָה וְעֵיף | in a dry and weary land
Ps 63:2 |
|-----|-------------------------|--|

When an attributive adjective qualifies several substantives of different genders, it agrees with the masculine.

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|
| 18. | טוֹבִים וּמִצְוֹת טוֹבִים | good statutes and commandments Neh 9:13 |
|-----|---------------------------|---|

e

An adjective normally cannot modify a name directly.

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|--|
| 19. | נִינְוָה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה | the great [city of] Nineveh
Jonah 1:2 |
|-----|-----------------------------|--|

f

There is no distinctive form of the adjective to express the comparative and superlative degrees (14.4-5).

14.3 Uses of the Adjective

a

An adjective may be found in one of three syntactic slots: (1) as an attributive modifier of a substantive, (2) as a predicate, and (3) as a substantive. In the last case, it is again apparent that the adjective subclass of nouns is not rigidly defined.

14.3.1 Attributive Use

a

An attributive adjective directly modifies a substantive in such a way that the combined phrase functions as a single syntactic unit in the clause (cf. 37.5b). In this use the adjective normally follows its noun in the order modified-modifier, like nouns in the genitive and in the accusative of specification. It is recognized (1) by its inflection (agreement with its head with respect to gender, number, and determination) and (2) by its position. In verbless clauses an attributive differs from a predicate adjective by its definiteness, if the head noun is definite, and usually by its position after the noun.

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- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | מִשְׁתֶּה גָדוֹל | a great feast
Gen 21:8 |
| 2. | הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת | this evil clan
Jer 8:3 |
| 3. | שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל | his great name
1 Sam 12:22 |
| 4. | בְּחֶרְבוֹ הַקָּשָׁה וְהַגָּדוֹלָה
וְהַחֲקִיקָה | with his fierce, great, and powerful sword
Isa 27:1 |
| 5. | אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים קָדוֹשׁ | a holy man of God
2 Kgs 4:9 |
| 6. | שְׁלֹשֶׁת בְּנֵי-יִשְׁי הַגְּדֹלִים | Jesse's three oldest sons
1 Sam 17:13 |

b

Sometimes an attributive adjective precedes its noun, notably in the case of the word רַב in the plural (in the sense of 'many' and not in the sense of 'great'). This use is probably due to a felt affinity with numerals, which may precede their noun (see Chap. 15). Another influence may be מְעַט 'little' and כָּל 'all,' which, being substantives involving quantity, also precede the noun.⁷

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 7. | לְדֹנָגִים רַבִּים ... לְרַבִּים
צִידִים | many fishermen ... many hunters
Jer 16:16 |
| 8. | רַבִּים חֲלָלִים הִפְלִיחַ | Many victims she has brought down.
Prov 7:26 |
| 9. | רַבֹּנוֹת עֹשׂוֹת חַיִּל | Many women do noble things.
Prov 31:29 |

With רַב in the masculine singular, it is difficult to decide whether it is an attributive adjective preceding its noun or a nominal use of the adjective.⁸

- | | | |
|-----|------------|-----------------|
| 10. | רַב-קָשָׁב | great attention |
|-----|------------|-----------------|

[Isa 21:7](#)**c**

Some attributive adjectives, such as the numerals, אַחֵר 'another,' and רַבִּים 'many,' are definite in themselves and may dispense with the article.

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- | | | |
|-----|---------------------|--|
| 11. | הָרֹאשׁ אֶחָד | one company
1 Sam 13:17 |
| 12. | אֶחֶיכֶם אֶחָד | one brother of yours ⁹
Gen 42:19 |
| 13. | הָעֲמֻדִים שְׁנַיִם | the two pillars
2 Kgs 25:16 |
| 14. | אֶחֶיכֶם אֶחָד | your other brother ¹⁰
Gen 43:14 |
| 15. | הַגּוֹיִם רַבִּים | many nations
Ezek 39:27 |

d

Sometimes the attributive adjective is definite and the noun indefinite, especially with numerals (## 16–19; see 15.2.6), with certain quasi-technical terms referring to architectural features (# 18–21; court, gate, entrance, way) and days (# 22), and with unique referents (## 23–24), all of which are definite in themselves.¹¹

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| 16. | שִׁבְעַת פָּרֹת טוֹת | the seven good cows
Gen 41:26 |
| 17. | שִׁבְעַת כְּבָשִׁיט הָאֵלֶּה | these seven lambs ¹²
Gen 21:29 |
| 18. | מְבוֹא הַשְּׁלִישִׁי | the Third Entrance
Jer 38:14 |
| 19. | מְקוֹם שַׁעַר הָרִאשׁוֹן | the site of the First Gate ¹³
Zech 14:10 |
| 20. | חֲצַר הַגְּדוֹלָה | the Great Courtyard ¹⁴
1 Kgs 7:12 |
| 21. | דֶּרֶךְ הַטּוֹבָה וְהַיֹּשֶׁרָה: | the good and upright way ¹⁵
1 Sam 12:23 |
| 22. | יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי | the seventh day ¹⁶
Exod 20:10 |
| 23. | רוּחַ הָרָעָה | the evil spirit
1 Sam 16:23 |
| 24. | קִנְיָה טוֹב | the sweet cane
Jer 6:20 |

14.3.2 Predicate Use**a**

A predicate adjective serves in a verbless clause to make an assertion about the subject of the clause. The predicate usually precedes the subject (## 1–3; but cf. 8.4.2 and ## 4–5) and is always indefinite; it otherwise agrees with the subject.¹⁷

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- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | צַדִּיק אַתָּה | You are righteous.
Jer 12:1 |
| 2. | וַיֵּשֶׁר מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ | Your laws are right
Ps 119:137 |
| 3. | רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם | The wickedness of people is great.
Gen 6:5 |
| 4. | וַיִּהְיֶה הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא טוֹב | Now the gold of that land is good.
Gen 2:12 |
| 5. | וַהֲעִירִים בְּצֻרוֹת גְּדֹלָת
מְאֹד | Now the cities are fortified, very large.
Num 13:20 |

b

We can sharpen our understanding of the opposition between the predicate adjective and the attributive adjective if we consider the classification of the adjective by various Greek scholars.¹⁸ Plato and Aristotle regard adjectives as a subclass of verbs, while the Alexandrians treat them as a subclass of nouns. The latter position is supported by the surface-structure inflection of an adjective like a noun with respect to gender and number, while the older position sees an adjective as a predication about a subject, as a verb is. By placing the anarthrous predicate adjective before the subject, the typical position of the verb, the Hebrew language adds an argument in favor of the position of Plato and Aristotle, who perceived the "predicate" adjective as functioning like a verb.

14.3.3 Substantive Use

a

Because the boundary between adjectives and substantives is not fixed or rigid, it is common to find nouns that are most often used as adjectives in substantive slots.

b

Adjectives may occur as constructs, usually with a superlative force (14.5).¹⁹

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|---|
| 1. | חֲכָמֵי יַעֲצֵי פַלְרֵעָה | the wisest of Pharaoh's counselors
Isa 19:11 |
| 2. | רָאִי גוֹיִם | the worst of the nations
Ezek 7:24 |
| 3. | קָטָן בְּנָיו | the youngest of his sons
2 Chr 21:17 |
| 4. | חֲמִשָּׁה חֲלָקִי-אֲבָנִים | five smooth stones
1 Sam 17:40 |

They may be used in the genitive function after a construct.

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- | | | |
|----|-------------|---------------|
| 5. | חֵיל כָּבֵד | a great force |
|----|-------------|---------------|

6. יין הטוב [2 Kgs 16:17](#)
the best wine
7. ציצת נבל [Cant 7:10](#)
withered flower²⁰
8. כל-בית גדול [Isa 28:4](#)
every great house
9. כל כלי הקטן [2 Kgs 25:9](#)
all the smallest vessels
10. מי המרים [Isa 22:24](#)
the bitter water
11. נאון עזים [Num 5:18](#)
a ferocious beast (lit., the pride of the strong ones)
- [Ezek 7:24](#)

c

Adjectives occur in other noun-noun constructions. An adjective used as a substantive in apposition stands before its appositive and can thus be distinguished from an attributive adjective.

12. עניה ענתות [Isa 10:30](#)
O poor one, Anathoth
13. המעשקה בתולת
בת-צידון [Isa 23:12](#)
O crushed one, Virgin Daughter Sidon
14. צדיק עבדי [Isa 53:11](#)
a righteous man, my servant
15. שבעים איש הזקנים [Num 11:25](#)
the seventy elders

An adjective may serve as an accusative of specification (10.2.2e).

16. הזרע בשלה [Num 6:19](#)
the shoulder when it is boiled
17. כים נגרש [Isa 57:20](#)
as the sea in raging
18. לחמם טמא [Ezek 4:13](#)
their bread in uncleanness
19. בבתיכם ספונים [Hag 1:4](#)
in your houses with paneling
20. דבת-הארץ רעה [Num 14:37](#)
a report of the land with reference to evil

d

There are some nouns which have a different sense depending on whether they are used as adjectives or substantives.

- 21a. עִרְמָסָהֶם They were naked.
[Gen 3:7](#)
- 21b. בְּעִירָם in nakedness
[Deut 28:48](#)
- 22a. מֵאֶרֶץ רְחוֹקָה from a distant land
[1 Kgs 8:41](#)
- 22b. רְחוֹק יִהְיֶה בֵּינֵיכֶם וּבֵינִי There shall be a space between you and it.
[Josh 3:4](#) Qere
- 23a. וְהָיָה תָּמִים and be blameless
[Gen 17:1](#)
- 23b. בְּתָמִים in blamelessness
[Judg 9:16](#)

More often, an adjective shows no such variation in sense, and expected accompanying nouns may be omitted, especially if they are broadly generic.

24. רַבִּים קָמִים עָלַי: Many [people] are rising up against me.
[Ps 3:2](#)

In some cases the adjective stands where no concrete noun could do duty.

25. אֲשֶׁר-לָבָן בּוֹ which had white [viz., stuff] on it
[Gen 30:35](#); cf. [30:37](#)

The usage may be poetic: in the figure of antimeria (a type of metonymy) an expected noun is replaced by an adjective describing some essential characteristic of the elided noun.

26. וַתִּחַפְּרָה הַלְבָנָה וּבּוֹשָׁה הַחֲמָה The white [moon] will be abashed, the heat [of the sun] ashamed.
[Isa 24:23](#)
27. עַל-קַל נִרְכָּב We will ride off on a swift (steed).
[Isa 30:16](#)

14.4 Comparative Degree

a

In English and other European languages the adjective forms three degrees by inflection:

degree	example
absolute	young
comparative	younger
superlative	youngest

There are also phrasal equivalents of the two higher degrees, for example, 'more young,' 'most young,' and occasionally there are equivalents with 'less' and 'least.' Hebrew has no inflectional scheme for the higher degrees of adjectives and uses instead a variety of syntactic resources.²¹

b

Uses of the comparative degree involve at least the entities being compared (e.g., 'Joshua is younger than Moses'). In some cases the sphere of the comparison must be made explicit (e.g., 'Moses is greater than Joshua

as a leader/in leadership, etc.');

the preposition מִן introduces the basis in Hebrew.

c

In a situational comparison, the logical structure is often left unspecified and needs to be inferred from the context. The clause מַה־טוֹב לָכֶם in isolation may be taken as meaning, 'What is good for you?', but if it is followed by a pair of alternatives, טוֹב may be said to have the meaning 'better.'

1. מַה־טוֹב לָכֶם הַמִּשְׁלַב בְּכֶם
שְׁבַעִים אִישׁ ...
אִם־מִשְׁלַבְכֶם אִישׁ אֶחָד

Which is better for you—seventy men ruling you ... or one man ruling you?

[Judg 9:2](#)

Similarly, בְּקוֹל־גָּדוֹל may be taken to mean 'in a loud voice,' but in a context of prolonged crying, a comparative sense may be discerned.

2. קְרָאִי בְּקוֹל־גָּדוֹל

Cry more loudly.

[1 Kgs 18:27](#); cf. v [26](#)

Stative verbs can also be used in situational comparisons.

3. לָרֵב תִּרְבֶּה נַחֲלָתוֹ וְלַמְעַט
תִּמְעַט נַחֲלָתוֹ

For the larger group you shall make its inheritance larger, and for the smaller group you shall make its inheritance smaller.

[Num 26:54](#)

d

When the noun on which the comparison is based is expressed, it is preceded by the preposition מִן, the so-called "comparative min" (11.2.1 le). This preposition denotes 'away from'; the comparison is viewed from the outside, from a distance. It may indicate a positive comparison, wherein both the subject and the thing compared possess the quality expressed by the adjective, with the subject possessing it to a greater degree.

4. וִירְשָׁתֶם גּוֹיִם גְּדֹלִים
וְעֲצָמִים מִכֶּם:
5. מַה־מֶּתוּק מִדְּבַשׁ וּמָה עֹז
מִאֲתִי

You will dispossess nations greater and more powerful than you.

[Deut 11:23](#)

What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?

[Judg 14:18](#)

Frequently, positive comparisons are framed with stative verbs.

6. אֶגְדֹּל מִמָּךְ:
7. וְגַם־הוּא יִגְדֹּל וְאוֹלָם אָחִיו
הַקָּטָן יִגְדֹּל מִמֶּנּוּ
8. וְיִשְׂרָאֵל אָהַב אֶת־יוֹסֵף
מִכָּל־בָּנָיו

I will be greater than you.

[Gen 41:40](#)

He too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he.

[Gen 48:19](#)

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children.

9. מְנַשְּׁרִים וְלֹא מְאַרְיוֹת גְּבִירוֹ: [Gen 37:3](#)
They were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions.
10. טוֹב לִי אַז מֵעַתָּה: [2 Sam 1:23](#)
It was better for me then than now.
11. הַנְּחֻמָּדִים מִזָּהָב וּמִפֶּז רַב וּמִתּוֹקִים מִדְּבַשׁ [Hos 2:9](#)
(They are) more precious than gold, than much fine gold; they are sweeter than honey.
- [Ps 19:11](#)

Sometimes the adjective on which כִּזֶּן logically depends is omitted and must be supplied from the context.²²

12. וּפְסִילֵיהֶם מִירוּשָׁלַיִם [Isa 10:10](#)
Their images were (more) than those of Jerusalem.
13. יֵשֶׁר מִמְּסוּכָה [Mic 7:4](#)
The most upright person (is worse) than a thorn hedge.
14. וּמִצְהָרִים יָקוּם חֵלֶד [Job 11:17](#)
Life will be (brighter) than noonday.

e

In a comparison of exclusion, the subject alone possesses the quality connoted by the adjective or stative verb, to the exclusion of the thing compared.

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15. צְדָקָה מִמֶּנִּי [Gen 38:26](#)
She is in the right, not I.
16. וַיֵּאָהֵב גַּם־אֶת־רָחֵל מִלֵּאָה [Gen 29:30](#)
He loved Rachel rather than Leah.
17. אֶהְבֶּתָּ רָע מִטוֹב שָׁקֶר מִדְּבַר צֶדֶק [Ps 52:5](#)
You love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking what is right.
18. כִּי ... חָפְצָתִי ... דַּעַת אֱלֹהִים מֵעֲלֹת: [Hos. 6:6](#)
For ... I desire ... acknowledgment of God, not ²³אל
19. וַתִּבְחַר מִחֲנֹק נַפְשִׁי מוֹת מֵעַצְמוֹתַי [Job 7:15](#)
So I choose strangling and death rather than these bones of mine.
20. טָפוֹב פֶּת חֲרָבָה וְשְׁלוֹה־בָהּ מִבֵּית מָלֵא זִבְחֵי־רִיב: [Prov 17:1](#)
A dry crust with peace and quiet is good rather than a house full with strife.

f

A third use of comparative min appears in those contexts in which the subject is compared with an object or goal to be attained, in which case the subject may be more than equal to the challenge or less than equal to it: such is the comparison of capability. In this use stative verbs are much more common than adjectives.

21. **וְאִם־יִמְעַט הַבֵּית מִהֵי־ת
מִשָּׁה** If any household be too small for a lamb ...
[Exod 12:4](#)
22. **גָּבְרוּ לִּי** They are too strong for me.
[Ps 65:4](#)
23. **יָרוּם מִלִּי** It is too high for me.
[Ps 61:3](#)
24. **הַקָּצוֹר קִצְרָה יָדִי מִפְּדוּת** Is my hand too short to perform redemption?
[Isa 50:2](#)
25. **הֲיִפְלֵא מִיְהוָה דָּבָר** Is anything too hard for YHWH?²⁴
[Gen 18:14](#)
26. **קִטְנִיתִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים** I am unworthy of all the love.
[Gen 32:11](#)

This use is frequent with infinitives.

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27. **גָּדוֹל עֲוֹנִי מִנִּשְׂאִי** My punishment is more than I can bear.
[Gen 4:13](#)
28. **הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רַב מְשֻׁבֵּת יַחְדָּו** Their possessions were too great for them to remain together.
[Gen 36:7](#)
29. **מִזְבֵּחַ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת ... קִטְנֵן מִהֲצִיל אֶת־הָעֹלָה** The bronze altar ... was too small to hold the 'olâ
[1 Kgs 8:64](#)
30. **רַב הָעָם ... מִתַּתִּי אֶת־מִדְיָן בְּיָדָם** The people are too many for me ... to give Midian into their hands.
[Judg 7:2](#)

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a positive comparison and a comparison of capability.

31. **עֲצָמָתָּ מְאֹנָנוּ מְאֹד** You are much too powerful for us. / You are much more powerful than us.
[Gen 26:16](#)
32. **מִרְ-לִי מְאֹד מִכָּם** I am much too bitter for you. / I have more bitterness than you.
[Ruth 1:13](#)

14.5 Superlative Degree

a

There are two kinds of superlatives, the comparative superlative and the absolute superlative. In the former some person or object is judged to surpass all others in its class with respect to some quality; in the latter some person or thing is judged to excel in some quality, state, or condition. We will analyze these two kinds of superlative and note the expressions employed for each.

b

The absolute superlative can be expressed with the anarthrous cognate genitive: a singular cognate noun stands

before the same noun in the plural, without an article. (A determined construct chain expresses a comparative superlative; see 9.5.3j and 14.5d.)

- | | | |
|----|------------------|---|
| 1. | הַבֵּל הַבָּלִים | futility of futilities, utter futility
Qoh 1:2 |
| 2. | עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים | a slave of slaves, an abject slave
Gen 9:25 |
| 3. | לְנֶצַח נְצָחִים | forever and ever
Isa 34:10 |
| 4. | צָבִי צְבָאוֹת | most beautiful
Jer 3:19 |
| 5. | סָרִי סוֹרְרִים | hardened rebels
Jer 6:28 |

Two nouns of related sense can be similarly used.

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- | | | |
|----|--------------------|--|
| 6. | חֹשֶׁךְ-אֲפֵלָה | a thick darkness
Exod 10:22 |
| 7. | מִהַרְרָה גָּאֻנוֹ | from his majestic splendor
Isa 2:10 |
| 8. | הַבִּלִּי-שׁוּא | vanities of nothingness, worthless vanities
Jonah 2:9 |
| 9. | שִׂמְחַת גִּילִי | the joy of my rejoicing, my surpassing joy
Ps 43:4 |

The term מְאֹד (or עַד-מְאֹד) can stand after an adjective used as an absolute superlative.²⁵

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|
| 10. | טוֹב מְאֹד | very good
Gen 1:31 |
| 11. | אִישׁ בָּרִיא מְאֹד: | a very fat man
Judg 3:17 |
| 12. | וַהֲנַעֲרָה יָפָה עַד-מְאֹד | The young woman was extremely beautiful.
1 Kgs 1:4 |
| 13. | וַהֲנַעֲרָה יָפָה עַד-מְאֹד | The battle was very fierce.
2 Sam 2:17 |
| 14. | עוֹן ... גָּדוֹל בְּמְאֹד מְאֹד | The sin ... is exceedingly great.
Ezek 9:9 |

Various divine names can be similarly used: "A kind of superlative sense," as A. B. Davidson noted, "is given to a word by connecting it with the divine name. Probably the idea was that God originated the thing ... or that it belonged to Him, and was therefore extraordinary. Sometimes the meaning appears to be 'in God's estimation.'"²⁶

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|---|
| 15. | נָשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים | a mighty prince
Gen 23:6 |
| 16. | חֲרָדַת אֱלֹהִים | a very great trembling
1 Sam 14:15 |

17. הַלְרִי־אֵל mighty mountains²⁷
[Ps 36:7](#)
18. גִּנְיָהוּהוּ a splendid garden
[Isa 51:3](#)
19. עִיר־גְּדוֹלָה לְאֱלֹהִים an exceedingly great city
[Jonah 3:3](#)

The same usage can be observed with terms referring to royalty.

20. בֵּית זָבֵל a mansion (lit., a prince's house)
[1 Kgs 8:13](#)

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Absolute superlatives with a negative sense can be formed with מוֹת 'dying,' מָוֶת 'death,' and שְׁאֵל 'Sheol'; compare English 'bored to death, deadly dull, devilishly clever.'²⁸

21. וַתִּקְצַר נַפְשׁוֹ לְמוֹת: His soul was vexed to death (i.e., He could stand it no longer).
[Judg 16:16](#)
22. חָרָה־לִּי עַד־מָוֶת: I am angered even to death (i.e., I couldn't be more angry).
[Jonah 4:9](#)
23. כִּי־עֲזָה כַּמָּוֶת אֲהָבָה Love is as strong as death (i.e., Love is exceedingly strong).
קָשָׁה כַּשְּׁאוֹל קִנְאָה Jealousy is as cruel as the grave (i.e., Jealousy is profoundly cruel).
[Cant 8:6](#)
24. חֲבָלֵי שְׁאֵל pains of Sheol (i.e., hellish pains)
[Ps 18:6](#)
25. וַתִּשְׁפֹּלִי אֶדְ־שְׁאוֹל: You debased yourself even to hell (i.e., You debased yourself to the lowest depths [with no precise locality in view]).
[Isa 57:9](#)

C

The comparative superlative refers to a group, though the group may be discrete and obvious (and thus be left unstated) or diffuse and hard-to-describe (and thus be unstatable). The simplest such superlative involves a definite adjective.²⁹

26. הַקָּטָן the youngest [son]
[Gen 42:13](#)
27. בְּתִי הַגְּדוֹלָה my oldest daughter
[1 Sam 18:17](#)
28. בְּתִי הַקְּרֹבָה the nearest city
[Deut 21:3](#)
29. זֵיתֵיכֶם הַטּוֹבִים your best olive trees
[1 Sam 8:14](#)
30. הֲלֹא אַחְתָּהּ הַקָּטָנָה טוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה Isn't her youngest/er sister better than she?
[Judg 15:2](#)

A comparative superlative can also be formed with an adjective made definite by a pronominal suffix (## 31–32) or as the first term of a definite construct chain (## 33–35).

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- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 31. | מִקְטָנָם וְעַד־גְּדֹלָם | from the least of them to the greatest
Jer 6:13 |
| 32. | מִגְּדֹלָם וְעַד־קְטָנָם: | from the greatest of them to the least
Jonah 3:5 |
| 33. | גְּדֹלֵי הָעִיר | the leading men of the city
2 Kgs 10:6 |
| 34. | קָטָן בָּנָיו | the youngest of his sons
2 Chr 21:17 |
| 35. | הֲלוֹא בֶן־יְמִינִי אָנֹכִי
מִקְטָנֵי שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל | Am I not a Benjaminite, from the
smallest of the tribes of Israel?
1 Sam 9:21 |

A similar phrasal type involves a definite adjective, with the group prefixed by ב.

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 36. | הַיָּפֹתָ בַּנָּשִׁים | the fairest among women
Cant 1:8, 5:9 |
| 37. | הָאִישׁ הָרַךְ בָּךְ | the most delicate man among you
Deut 28:54 |
| 38. | כְּשֵׁם הַגְּדֹלִים אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ: | like the name of the greatest (men) in
the land
2 Sam 7:9 |

d

The superlative genitive has a comparative sense if the plural noun, the genitive, is definite.

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|
| 39. | קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדָשִׁים | the most holy place
Exod 26:33 |
| 40. | שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים | the most excellent song
Cant 1:1 |
| 41. | נָשִׂיא נְשִׂאֵי הַלֵּוִי | the chief leader of the Levites
Num 3:32 |
| 42. | שָׁמַי הַשָּׁמַיִם | the highest heavens
1 Kgs 8:27 |

A construct phrase may also be used with מִכָּל standing before the genitive.

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- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 43. | וְהַנָּחַשׁ הָיָה עָרוֹם מִכָּל
חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה | Now the snake was the most cunning of
all the beasts.
Gen 3:1 |
| 44. | אָרוּר אַתָּה מִכָּל־הַבְּהֵמָה | Cursed be you above all the livestock.
Gen 3:14 |

45. וְהוּא נִכְבָּד מִכָּל בֵּית אָבִיו: He was the most honored of all his father's household.
[Gen 34:19](#)
46. שָׁכַל דָּוִד מִכָּל אֲבֵרֵי שָׁאוּל David met with more success than all the rest of Saul's officers.
[1 Sam 18:30](#)

Phrases with מִכָּל may also follow stative verbs.

47. עֵקֶב הַלֵּב מִכָּל The heart is most deceitful of all things.
[Jer 17:9](#)
48. וַיִּגְבַּהּ מִכָּל-הָעָם He was found to be the tallest of all the people.
[1 Sam 10:23](#)

e

Finally, a comparative superlative may use abstract terms of quality, with a suffix (# 49) or a definite genitive (## 50–53).

49. טוֹבָם כְּחֵדֶק The best of them is like a briar.
[Mic 7:4](#)
50. טוֹב אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם the best of the land of Egypt
[Gen 45:18](#)
51. מִבְּחַר שְׁלִשִּׁי his (Pharaoh's) picked officers
[Exod 15:4](#)
52. רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עִמְלֵק Amaleq is a foremost nation.³⁰
[Num 24:20](#)
53. רֵאשִׁית הַגּוֹיִם the foremost nation
[Amos 6:1](#)

Footnotes:

1. On the marginal character of the adjective in the Semitic languages generally, see G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 8.
2. The gloss 'the palace of the king' is unlikely, since queen Athaliah is in view; cf. [2 Kgs 11:19](#); so Joüon § 141a / p. 434.
3. Only here is *yā* masculine; cf. [Ezek 2:9](#). For the word order, see 8.4.2d.
4. But cf. *hā'am hannimšā' 'immām* in [1 Sam 13:16](#), where the LXX has a plural participle.
5. The plural is rarely used with appellatives for God, but cf. *ʾēlōhīm qədōšīm* 'holy God' in [Josh 24:19](#).
6. See also [1 Kgs 19:11](#), [Jer 20:9](#). The apparent clash of *hm't* (masc. noun with -ōt plural) *hgdlym* ([Gen 1:16](#)) is only formal (cf. ## 13–16).
7. So Joüon, who also alludes to possible Aramaic influence and to a parallel to appositional constructions; see § 141b / p. 435 n. 2.
8. The feminine singular construct is not ambiguous in this way; cf. *rabbat ḥel'atāh* 'the greatness of its rust, its thick rust,' [Ezek 24:12](#).
9. The same phrase with the article in an otherwise close repetition in [Gen 42:33](#).

10. The Samaritan Pentateuch, which tends to normalize Hebrew grammar, has the article on the adjective. See, too, n. 12.
11. The same apparent discrepancy in definiteness is more common in Mishnaic Hebrew, and all manner of articular "discrepancies" are found in Phoenician-Punic; see M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 182–83; and Z. S. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language* (New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1936) 66.
12. The Samaritan Pentateuch has the article.
13. Another gate in [Ezek 9:2](#).
14. Other courtyards in [2 Kgs 20:4](#) Qere; [Ezek 40:28](#), [31](#).
15. Another way in [Jer 6:16](#).
16. Other days in [Gen 1:31](#), etc.; [Exod 12:15](#).
17. As in the comparable construction in Classical Greek.
18. See R. H. Robins, *Ancient and Mediaeval Grammatical Theory in Europe* (London: Bell, 1951) 17–19, 40–41.
19. Other examples in [Ps 46:5](#), [Exod 15:16](#), [Ps 65:5](#). Example # 2 is inherently definite.
20. The use of a feminine construct with a masculine adjective is strange.
21. Arabic has the elative or 'aqtal form for both comparative and superlative constructions; compare ḥasan 'beautiful' and 'aḥsan 'more/most beautiful'; jalīl 'glorious' and 'ajall 'more/most glorious.' The few Hebrew adjectives in 'aqtal may be morphologically related, e.g., 'akzāb 'lying' (cf. 5.6e-f).
22. Other examples in [Isa 40:17](#), [41:24](#); [Ps 62:10](#). In # 13, perhaps read yšrm 'their most upright.'
23. This understanding of the verse has a broad base of support in the tradition but has been questioned by F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, who render, 'For I desire ... the knowledge of God rather than 'ōl'; see *Hosea* (Anchor Bible 24; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980) 426, 430–31.
24. Other examples with p^h in the *Piel* in [Deut 17:8](#); [Jer 32:17](#), [27](#).
25. The nominal character of m'd is apparent in the structure of the prepositional phrase 'd-m'd as well as in the two nominal uses of the word ('abundance, strength'). In the remaining three hundred or so uses, m'd serves as an intensifier; the English adverb 'very' (etymologically 'truly, truthfully') is not the sole apt rendering.
26. Quoted by D. Winton Thomas in his review of previous scholarly literature, "A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953) 209–24, at 219; cf. P. P. Saydon, "Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew and Maltese," *Vetus Testamentum* 4 (1954) 432–33; Thomas, "The Use of מְדֹ as a Superlative in Hebrew," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 (1956) 106–9; Thomas, "Some Further Remarks on Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968) 120–24.
27. So the Targum.
28. Thomas calls attention to a similar use in a Medieval Hebrew letter of Rabbi Ḥisdai ben Shafrut: "And when I heard this bad news, I was very angry (ḥrh ly 'd mwt, cf. [Jonah 4:9](#))," parallel to "and I was very distressed (wysr ly m'd)"; see "A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways," 221. The Greek phrase heōs thanatou is used in the Christian Gospels (e.g., [Matt 26:38](#)[Mark 14:34](#)).
29. See also [Gen 10:21](#), [29:16](#); [Judg 6:15](#).
30. The article is often omitted in verse (13.7), though it is probably omitted here because the poet seeks to classify Amaleq rather than to identify it (see 8.4.2). Note further that the article is used in the next example, also in verse. On rē'sīt, see M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel*. 1–20 (Anchor Bible 22; Garden City, New York: Doubleday 1983) 375, who cites for the senses 'best' and 'choice' [Exod 23:19](#) = [34:26](#); [Ezek 44:30](#), cf. [Num 18:12](#).

15 Numerals

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[15.3 Ordinals](#)

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15.1 Introduction

a

Numerals or number-words are the linguistic expressions of counting. Just as counting usually involves whole numbers, so the whole numerals are of the greatest interest in language. Similarly, just as counting more often involves small numbers, so the lower numerals show more linguistic complexities.

b

There are two major series of number-words. The more important series, the cardinals, express an amount, 'one, two, three'; in Hebrew these are usually substantives (15.2).¹ The ordinals express degree, quality, or position in a series, 'first, second, third'; in Hebrew these are adjectives (15.3). After reviewing the whole-number ordinals and

cardinals, we briefly treat multiplicatives ('double, sevenfold'; 15.4) and fractions ('a half, a third'; 15.5), as well as distributive expressions ('six per person'; 15.6).

c

Two important points outside our purview require attention. First, in Hebrew and the Semitic languages generally, numerals play almost no role at all in word formation, and the complexities associated with English number-prefixes (e.g., 'monolingual, unicycle; dichotomous, bicycle; tripod; multiracial, polysyllable') are avoided.² Second, in the Bible numerals are always spelled out in full. In biblical times, at least two systems of number-signs were in use: hieratic slash-and-punct signs ($// = 2$) and letter-number signs ($\beth = 2$); there are no traces of either system in the biblical text, however, and all editorial numbers are medieval in date.³ Students of the Bible are thus never in doubt about the linguistic form of the number, as students of other ancient texts often are.⁴

15.2 Cardinals

a

The lowest cardinals, 'one,' 'two,' are the most complex. The cardinals 'three-ten' are basically substantives, inflected for gender and used in both absolute and construct forms. The teen cardinals are compounds, and the decimal cardinals are usually plurals of lower numerals. The highest cardinals present a few complexities, but

they are basically regular compounds.⁵

15.2.1 Cardinal 'One,' 'Two'

a

'One' אֶחָד / אַחַת (construct אֶחָד / אַחַת) is the most adjectival of the cardinals, although it may be used as a substantive.⁶ When it is used as an attributive adjective, following the noun it modifies, it has a variety of senses. After an indefinite noun, the sense is most often specific indefinite (cf. 13.8).

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- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | שְׂפָה אַחַת | a certain (specific) language ⁷
Gen 11:1 |
| 2. | אִישׁ אֶחָד | a certain man
Judg 13:2, 18:19 |
| 3. | אִשָּׁה אַחַת | a certain woman
2 Kgs 4:1 |
| 4. | וַיִּקַּח שְׁמוּאֵל אֶבֶן אַחַת | And Samuel took a certain stone.
1 Sam 7:12 |
| 5. | לֹא-לְיוֹם אֶחָד וְלֹא לְשָׁנִים | not in one day or two
Ezra 10:13 |

Less often, an indefinite noun with אֶחָד may have an emphatic, counting force.

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 6. | בְּיוֹם אֶחָד יָמוּתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם: | On a single day, they will die—both of them!
1 Sam 2:34 |
| 7. | אַחֲרַי מִי יֵצֵא מִלֶּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל
... אַחֲרַי פֶּרַעַשׁ אֶחָד: | After whom does the king of Israel
sally forth ... against a single flea?
1 Sam 24:15 |

The indefinite noun plus אֶחָד has a definite sense in the opening chapter of Genesis: אֶחָד יוֹם 'the first day' ([Gen 1:5](#)); this pattern is found nowhere else—even the rest of the account uses indefinite nouns with ordinal numbers ([Gen 1:8, 13](#), etc.).

b

With a definite noun, אֶחָד serves (as an ordinal) to count the first of a small number of things (## 8–9). In this construction the noun may be elided after a recent mention (# 10), the article may be omitted from the adjective (# 11; 14.3.1c).

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|--|
| 8. | הַטּוֹר הָאֶחָד | the first row [out of four rows]
Exod 39:10 |
| 9. | הַנָּהָר הָאֶחָד | the first [river out of four rivers]
Gen 2:11 ; cf. vv 13, 14 |
| 10. | הָרֵאשׁ אֶחָד | the one detachment [out of three detachments]
1 Sam 13:17 |

c

As an attributive adjective it can also have the sense 'only' (# 11) and as a predicate adjective the sense 'alone' (#

12) or 'integral (i.e., having integrity)' (# 13).

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|
| 11. | נְצִיב אֶחָד אֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ: | the only governor in the land
1 Kgs 4:19 |
| 12. | יְהִיָּה יִהְיֶה אֶחָד | YHWH will be alone.
Zech 14:9 |
| 13. | יִהְיֶה ... אֶחָד: | YHWH ... is one.
Deut 6:4 |

d

The adjective **אֶחָד** forms a plural. Near a use of the singular form in a specific indefinite construction, the plural has a similar sense (# 14). Elsewhere the plural is used

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in an expression of time, יָמִים אֶחָדִים; the sense here, too, is specific indefinite, 'a few days, some little while' (# 15).⁸

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 14. | שִׁפְהָ אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים
אֶחָדִים: | a certain language and certain
vocabulary
Gen 11:1 |
| 15. | וַיִּהְיוּ בְּעֵינָיו כְּיָמִים
אֶחָדִים | They (the seven years) seemed like
only a few days to him.
Gen 29:20 |

e

Related to the attributive adjective use of **אֶחָת** is a small group of adverbial uses.

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|---|
| 16. | אֶחָת נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי | Once (and for all) I have sworn.
Ps 89:36 |
| 17. | לֹא אֶחָת לֹא שְׁתַּיִם: | on a number of occasions (lit., not once
or twice)
2 Kgs 6:10 |

f

The substantive uses of **אֶחָד** / **אֶחָת** chiefly involve construct phrases. The number-word may precede a plural noun (## 18–20) or be in the genitive (## 21–22).

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|--|
| 18. | אֶחָד הַהָרִים | One of the mountains
Gen 22:2 |
| 19. | בְּאֶחָד הַבְּרוֹת | in one of the pits
Gen 37:20 |
| 20. | כְּאֶחָת שְׂפָחָתֶיךָ | as one of your servants
Ruth 2:13 |
| 21. | מִשְׁפַּט אֶחָד | one judgment
Lev 24:22 |
| 22. | אֲרוֹן אֶחָד | a chest |

g

23. זֶאֵב וְטֹלָה יֵרְעוּ כְּאַחֵד The wolf and the lamb will feed as one.

h

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i

24. שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו his two servants

25. שְׁנֵי הָעֹמֶר two omers

26. שְׁנֵי-לֶחֶם two (pieces) of bread

27. שְׁתֵּי-אֵלֶּה both of these, these two (things)

28. שְׁנֵיהֶם two of them

29. **על־פי שְׁנַיִם עֵדִים** at the mouth of two witnesses

30. **פִּי שְׁנַיִם** two portions (of an inheritance)

The numeral is also substantive in the absolute use: שְׁנַיִם 'a pair' ([Gen 7:2](#)), שְׁתַּיִם 'on two occasions' ([Job 40:5](#)).

j

31. שְׁנַיִם חֳדָשִׁים two months

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32. שְׁנַיִם כְּרֻבִּים two cherubim
[Exod 25:18](#)
33. וְאֵילִם שְׁנַיִם תְּמִימִם: two pure rams
[Exod 29:1](#)
34. כְּבָשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה שְׁנַיִם two yearling lambs
[Exod 29:38](#)

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Less often the absolute numeral is used with a singular noun.

35. נָפֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם two persons
[Gen 46:27](#)

15.2.2 Cardinal 'Three-Ten'

a

The cardinal substantives 'three-ten' do not simply agree with the noun enumerated but, following a rule of opposition, have the morphological gender contrary to that noun. ¹⁰

	with masculine absolute	construct	with feminine absolute	construct
three	שְׁלֹשָׁה	שְׁלֹשֶׁת	שְׁלוֹשׁ	שְׁלוֹשׁ
four	אַרְבָּעָה	אַרְבַּעַת	אַרְבַּע	אַרְבַּע
five	חֲמִשָּׁה	חֲמִשֶּׁת	חֲמִשׁ	חֲמִשׁ
six	שֵׁשׁ	שֵׁשֶׁת	שֵׁשׁ	שֵׁשׁ
seven	שִׁבְעָה	שִׁבְעַת	שִׁבְעַ	שִׁבְעַ
eight	שְׁמוֹנָה	שְׁמוֹנֶת	שְׁמוֹנֶה	[שְׁמוֹנֶה]
nine	תִּשְׁעָה	תִּשְׁעַת	תִּשְׁעַ	תִּשְׁעַ
ten	עֲשָׂרָה	עֲשָׂרֶת	עֲשָׂרַ	עֲשָׂרַ

They often do not agree with the noun with respect to definiteness. They may be attached to the itemized thing in a variety of ways. ¹¹

b

These cardinals are used in the construct state before a definite noun.

1. עֲשָׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים the ten words
[Exod 34:28](#)
2. עֲשָׂרֶת הַשִּׁבְטִים the ten tribes
[1 Kgs 11:35](#); cf. v [31](#)
3. חֲמִשֶּׁת מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן the five kings of Midian
[Num 31:8](#)
4. שִׁבְעַת בָּנָיו his seven sons
[1 Sam 16:10](#)
5. חֲמִשׁ הַיְרִיעֹת five [of the ten] curtains

[Exod 26:3](#), [9](#); [36:10](#), [16](#)

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The construct also precedes numbered things taken as a block, notably higher cardinal numbers.

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|--|
| 6. | שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים | three days (i.e., a trio of days)
2 Sam 24:13 |
| 7. | שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה | three hundred years
Gen 5:22 |
| 8. | חֲמִשָּׁת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ | five thousand men
Josh 8:12 |
| 9. | חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת אֶתְּוֹנוֹת | five hundred she-donkeys
Job 1:3 |

These cardinals may appear in the absolute state before a plural indefinite noun (## 10–12), especially in lists (## 13–14), or before singular collective nouns (## 15–16). The unit words for commodities may be omitted (## 17–18). Finally, these cardinals may stand after a noun in the absolute state (## 19–21).¹²

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- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---|
| 10. | שְׁלֹשָׁה בָּנִים | three sons
Gen 29:34 |
| 11. | שְׁלוֹשׁ עָרִים | three cities ¹³
Deut 19:2 |
| 12. | חֲמִשָּׁה אַנְשִׁים | five men
2 Kgs 25:19 |
| 13. | שִׁבְעָה בָּנִים וְשְׁלוֹשׁ בָּנוֹת: | seven sons and three daughters
Job 1:2 |
| 14. | אַרְבָּעָה מְלָכִים
אֶת־חֲמִשָּׁה: | four kings against five
Gen 14:9 |
| 15. | חֲמִשָּׁה בָּקָר | five (head of) cattle
Exod 21:37 |
| 16. | שְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנָה | eight years
2 Kgs 8:17 Kethiv |
| 17. | עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב | ten (shekels of) gold
Gen 24:22 |
| 18. | שֵׁשֶׁשׁ עֲרִים | six (seahs of) barley
Ruth 3:15 |
| 19. | יָמִים שְׁלוֹשָׁה | three days
1 Chr 12:40 |
| 20. | בָּנוֹת שְׁלוֹשׁ | three daughters
1 Chr 25:5 |
| 21. | אֲמוֹת חֲמֵשׁ | five cubits
2 Chr 3:11 |

15.2.3 Cardinal 'Eleven-Nineteen'

a

The numerals 'eleven-nineteen' are normally formed by the juxtaposition of the units with the numeral in עשר. The combined unit-teen phrase usually precedes the enumerated noun, which is frequently plural, except in the case of the collectives, especially such words as יום, שנה, איש, נפש and שקל (## 3, 9, 10).¹⁴ The numeral עשר in the teens (in contrast to its use absolutely) agrees with its noun in gender, while the units follow their own laws of gender agreement (for 'one,' 'two') and gender opposition (for 'three-nine'). The numeral 'two' may be used as an absolute or a construct.

b

There are three morphological oddities about the teens. (1) The numeral עשר has different vocalisms in combination: עשר (versus עֶשֶׂר alone) and עֶשְׂרֵה (versus עֶשְׂרָה alone). (2) The unit used for 'eleven' may be either אחד / אחת or עֶשְׂתִּי the latter otherwise unused.¹⁵ (3) The unit used for 'twelve' is not a dual but a plural שְׁנַיִם / שְׁתֵּים.

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- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | עֶחָד עֶשֶׂר כּוֹכָבִים | eleven stars
Gen 37:9 |
| 2. | עֶחָד עֶשֶׂר יְלָדָיו | his eleven children
Gen 32:23 |
| 3. | אֶחָד עֶשֶׂר יוֹם | eleven days
Deut 1:2 |
| 4. | שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר עֲבָדָיְךָ | your twelve servants
Gen 42:13 |
| 5. | שְׁתֵּי-עֶשְׂרֵה אֲבָנִים | twelve stones ¹⁶
Josh 4:8 |
| 6. | שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה מִצְבֵּה לְשָׁנִים
עֶשֶׂר שְׁבָטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: | twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel
Exod 24:4 |
| 7. | שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה עֵינֹת מַיִם | twelve springs of water
Exod 15:27 |
| 8. | חֲמִשָּׁת עֶשֶׂר בָּנָיו | his fifteen sons
2 Sam 19:18 |
| 9. | שְׁמוֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה: | eighteen years
Judg 3:14 |
| 10. | תִּשְׁעָה-עֶשֶׂר אִישׁ | nineteen men
2 Sam 2:30 |

In rare cases, usually in lists, the head noun precedes the numeral.

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|---|
| 11. | עָרִים שֵׁשׁ-עֶשְׂרֵה וְחֲצָרֵיהֶן: | sixteen cities with their settlements
Josh 15:41 |
|-----|-------------------------------------|---|

15.2.4 Cardinal Decimals

a

The tens, formed on the basis of the units, are not inflected for gender but always add the masculine plural suffix **ים** 'twenty,' **שְׁלֹשִׁים** 'thirty,' etc.¹⁷ A unit may precede (## 1–2, 7) or follow (## 3–6, 9–10); the decimal units follow their own laws of gender agreement and opposition with the enumerated item. If the item follows the numeral, it may be singular (## 1–5) or plural (## 6–7). If the enumerated item is plural, it may precede the numeral (## 8–10); this construction is favored in lists (## 8–9).

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- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | שְׁתַּיִם וְשָׁנִים שָׁנָה | sixty-two years
Gen 5:20 |
| 2. | וַיְחִי נָחוֹר תִּשְׁעָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה | When Nahor had lived twenty-nine years ...
Gen 11:24 |
| 3. | אַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁתַּיִם עִיר: | forty-two cities
Num 35:6 |
| 4. | עֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אֶלֶף | twenty-two thousand
Judg 7:3 |
| 5. | וּשְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁנַיִם מֶלֶךְ אִתּוֹ | thirty-two kings with him
1 Kgs 20:1 |
| 6. | עֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה פָּרִים | twenty-four oxen
Num 7:88 |
| 7. | שְׁלוֹשׁ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים פְּעָמִים | thirty-three times ¹⁸
Ezek 41:6 |
| 8. | אַרְבָּעִים וּפָרִים עֶשְׂרָה | forty cows and ten bulls
Gen 32:16 |
| 9. | אַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה עָרִים | forty-eight cities
Josh 21:41 |
| 10. | הַשְּׁבַעִים שָׁנִים וּשְׁנַיִם | the sixty-two weeks
Dan 9:26 |

b

Ordinarily a decimal + unit numeral functions as a single entity, but in some instances the enumerated noun is repeated with each element of the compound numerical phrase.¹⁹

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 11. | חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁנִים וּשְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה | seventy-five years
Gen 12:4 |
| 12. | שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים | thirty-three days ²⁰
Lev 12:4 |

15.2.5 Higher Cardinals

a

The substantives for 'one hundred' and its multiples of ten are מֵאָה (fem.) 'one hundred,' אֶלֶף (masc.) 'one thousand,' and רִבּוֹא, רִבְבָּהּ, רִבְבָּהּ (fem.) 'ten thousand, a myriad.' With these and higher numerals the enumerated item may follow the numeral as a collective singular (## 1–4)²¹ or as a plural (## 5–6).

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|---|
| 1. | בֶּן-מֵאָה שָׁנָה | 100 years old
Gen 11:10 |
| 2. | מֵאָה-אֶלֶף רִגְלֵי | 100,000 infantry
1 Kgs 20:29 |
| 3. | בֶּן מֵאָה-שָׁנָה | 100 years old
Gen 17:17 |
| 4. | אֶלֶף אַמָּה | 1,000 cubits
Num 35:4 |
| 5. | מֵאָה נְבִיעִים | 100 prophets
1 Kgs 18:4 |
| 6. | אֶלֶף עִזִּים | 1,000 he-goats
1 Sam 25:2 |

The higher numerals are used in the plural as vague indicators of great magnitude; in this use, the numeral usually stands alone.

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- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 7. | לְאַלְפֵי רִבְבָּהּ | to thousands upon tens of thousands
Gen 24:60 |
| 8. | הִפִּיל רִבְאוֹת | He shall cast down myriads.
Dan 11:12 |
| 9. | הֵם רִבְבוֹת אֶפְרַיִם וְהֵם
אֶלְפֵי מְנַשֶּׁה: | Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
such are the thousands of Manasseh.
Deut 33:17 |

b

The numerals for 'two hundred' and 'two thousand' are dual forms, מֵאָתַיִם and אֲלָפַיִם. Enumerated items follow the numeral in the singular (## 10–11) or in the plural (## 12–13).

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|--|
| 10. | כֶּאֱלָפַיִם אִישׁ | about 2,000 men
Josh 7:3 |
| 11. | מֵאָתַיִם לֶחֶם | 200 (loaves of) bread
1 Sam 25:18 |
| 12. | מֵאָתַיִם שֶׁקֶלִים כֶּסֶף | 200 sheqels of silver
Josh 7:21 |
| 13. | אֲלָפַיִם סוּסִים | 2,000 horses
2 Kgs 18:23 |

c

In the higher cardinals, the units take their gender by opposition to the larger number: units three-ten with מֵאָה and רִבְבָּהּ, etc., have masculine form, while those units with אֶלֶף have feminine form. These numbers may

stand before a singular (## 14–15) or a plural noun (# 16).

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|
| 14. | אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת נְעָרָה בְּתוּלָה | 400 young women
Judg 21:12 |
| 15. | מֵשִׁתִּים-עֶשְׂרֵה רַבּוֹ אָדָם | 120,000 men
Jonah 4:11 |
| 16. | שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת שׁוּעָלִים | 300 foxes
Judg 15:4 |

Mixed coordinated constructions are found, with one noun in the singular, the other in the plural.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 17. | שְׁלֹשִׁים אֶלֶף רֶכֶב וְשֵׁשֶׁת
אַלְפִים פָּרָשִׁים | 30,000 chariots and 6,000 cavalry ²²
1 Sam 13:5 |
| 18. | אֶלֶף וּשְׁבַע-מֵאוֹת פָּרָשִׁים
וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף אִישׁ חַנְּנִי | 1,700 cavalry and 20,000 infantry
2 Sam 8:4 |

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d

In large counting expressions, the elements are often given in decreasing order: thousandshundredsdecimalsunits (## 19–22). The opposite, increasing order is rare (# 23).

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------------------------|
| 19. | שְׁלֹשָׁה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף
וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: | 53,400
Num 1:43 |
| 20. | אַלְפִים שְׁבַע מֵאוֹת
וַחֲמִשִּׁים: | 2,750
Num 4:36 |
| 21. | שֵׁשֶׁת אֲלָפִים וּמֵאוֹתָם: | 6,200
Num 3:34 |
| 22. | אַרְבַּע רְבּוּא אֲלָפִים
שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת שָׁשִׁים: | 42,360
Ezra 2:64 |
| 23. | חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁשִׁים וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת
וְאַלֶּף | 1,365
Num 3:50 |

A mixed order is attested also: myriadsthousandsunitsdecimalshundreds.

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 24. | כָּל-בְּכוֹר זָכָר ... שְׁנָיִם
וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף שְׁלֹשָׁה
וּשְׁבַעִים וּמֵאוֹתָם: | and all the first born males ... 22,273
Num 3:43 |
|-----|---|---|

15.2.6 Determination and Cardinals

a

The numerals are deemed to have a certain determination in themselves, and the article is used sparingly with them. When it is used, it has the meanings analyzed above (see 13.5, 14.3.1d). Apart from the numeral 'one,' the article is rarely used with both the numeral and the thing enumerated.²³ Generally it is found with the thing numbered, and, as noted earlier, the numeral may precede (## 1–4) or follow (## 5–6).

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. | בְּשָׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ | among the three hundred men
Judg 7:7 |
| 2. | שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת הַשּׁוֹפָרוֹת | the three hundred trumpets
Judg 7:22 |
| 3. | אֶלֶף-וּמֵאָה הַכֶּסֶף | the eleven hundred (sheqels of) silver
Judg 17:3 |
| 4. | אֶל-מֵאתָיִם הָאֲנָשִׁים | to the two hundred men
1 Sam 30:21 |
| 5. | הָעַמּוּדִים שְׁנַיִם | the two columns
2 Kgs 25:16 |
| 6. | הַשָּׁבָעִים שְׁשִׁים וּשְׁנַיִם | the sixty-two weeks
Dan 9:26 |

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15.3 Ordinals**a**

The numbering adjectives or ordinals are distinctive for the lower units only. The most common use of ordinals is in various dating expressions.²⁴

15.3.1 Patterns**a**

The ordinals 'first-tenth' have special forms. In addition to ראשון the common primary ordinal אֶחָד is often used with the sense 'first' (15.2.1b). The ordinals 'second-tenth' have the form of gentilic adjectives (5.7c).

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הָרִאשֹׁנָה | the first slaughter
1 Sam 14:14 |
| 2. | וְלֹא-הָיָה דְבָרִי רִאשׁוֹן | Was not my word first?
2 Sam 19:44 |
| 3. | בְּיוֹם הָרְבִיעִי | on the fourth day
Judg 19:5 |
| 4. | בַּשָּׁנָה הָרְבִיעִית | in the fourth year
2 Kgs 18:9 |
| 5. | בַּשָּׁנָה הָרְבִיעִית בְּחָדָשׁ
הַחֲמִישִׁי | in the fifth month of the fourth year
Jer 28:1 Qere |

For other ordinal uses, the cardinal numerals are used, standing before the enumerated noun; ordinarily neither numeral nor noun has the article.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|
| 6. | וּבַאַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה | in the fourteenth year
Gen 14:5 |
| 7. | בְּאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה | in the fortieth year
Deut 1:3 |
| 8. | בְּשָׁנִים עָשָׂר חֹדְשֵׁרְחֹדֶשׁ | in the twelfth month
2 Kgs 25:27 |

15.3.2 Dates

a

There are three components to a full date, each numerical. The two simpler elements, day and month, are reckoned absolutely (i.e., by a fixed calendar).²⁵ Year reckoning is usually by reign (e.g., [2 Kgs 25:1](#)) or by era, for example, of the Exile in Babylonia (e.g., [2 Kgs 25:27](#)). The day and year are usually indicated by cardinal numbers, the month by ordinals.

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b

If the day alone is mentioned, there are two common formulas.²⁶ The first is used for the ordinals 'first-tenth' and involves יוֹם with the article, followed by the ordinal with the article.

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|--|
| 1. | בְּיוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן | on the first day
Exod 12:16, Num 7:12 |
| 2. | בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי | on the seventh day
Exod 12:16, Num 7:48 |
| 3. | בְּיוֹם הָעֲשִׂירִי | on the tenth day
Num 7:66 |

For the higher numbered days, the formula is יוֹם + numeral + יוֹם; neither occurrence of יוֹם has the article.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---|
| 4. | בְּיוֹם עֲשָׂתִי עָשָׂר יוֹם | on the eleventh day
Num 7:72 |
| 5. | בְּיוֹם שְׁנִים עָשָׂר יוֹם | on the twelfth day
Num 7:78 |

If the month is mentioned, there is more variety.

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 6. | בְּעָשׂוֹ לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה | on the tenth (day) of this month
Exod 12:3 |
| 7. | אֲדָרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם
לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה | until the fourteenth day of this month
Exod 12:6 |
| 8. | בְּרִאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם
לַחֹדֶשׁ | in the first (month), on the fourteenth day of the month
Exod 12:18 |
| 9. | עַד יוֹם הָאַחַד וְעֶשְׂרִים
לַחֹדֶשׁ | until the twenty-first day of the month |

10. בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי
Exod 12:18 on the fifteenth day of the second month
11. בְּשָׁנִים עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ בְּעֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁבַע לַחֹדֶשׁ
Exod 16:1 in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh (day) of the month
- 2 Kgs 25:27

The month is most often specified with the day.

C

The formulas for the year alone are similar to those for the day alone: one is used with the lower numbers and another for all the rest. In both, שָׁנָה is used initially in the construct. For the lower numbers, the cardinal numeral follows שָׁנָה.

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12. בְּשָׁנָה שְׁתַּיִם
in the second year
1 Kgs 15:25, 2 Kgs 15:32
13. בְּשָׁנָה שְׁלֹשׁ
in the third year
1 Kgs 15:28
14. בְּשָׁנָה הַתְּשִׁיעִית
in the ninth year
2 Kgs 17:6

For high numbers, a framing construction is used: שָׁנָה + numeral + שָׁנָה.

15. בְּשָׁנָה שְׁתַּיִם-עֶשְׂרִי שָׁנָה
in the twelfth year
2 Kgs 8:25
16. בְּשָׁנָה שֵׁשׁ-מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה
in the six-hundredth year
Gen 7:11

In full dates, the elements occur in order of decreasing size: year-month-day.

17. בְּשָׁנָה שְׁתַּיִם לְדָרְיוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁשִׁי בְּיוֹם אֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ
in the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day
Hag 1:1

15.4 Multiplicatives

a

The multiplicative expressions are formed in a number of ways.²⁷ One group of expressions is based on the root for the numeral involved. For 'double' both the cardinal number (# 1) and a derived form, מִשְׁנֶה 'copy, double, second' (## 2–3), are used, both in the absolute. For 'quadruple,' 'septuple,' and perhaps 'ten thousand-fold,' feminine dual forms are used (## 4–6). Cardinal numbers, in the masculine generally, can also be used as multiplicatives; an elided noun, probably פַּעַם, should be understood (# 7).

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1. שְׁנַיִם יְשַׁלֵּם: He must pay back double.

2.	כֶּסֶף מִשְׁנָה	Exod 22:3 double the amount of silver
3.	מִשְׁנָה כֶּסֶף	Gen 43:12 double the amount of silver ²⁸
4.	אַרְבַּעַתַּיִם	Gen 43:15 four times 2 Sam 12:6
5.	שִׁבְעַתַּיִם	seven times, sevenfold Gen 4:15
6.	רַבְתַּיִם	ten thousand times (?) Ps 68:18
7.	שִׁבְעַ	seven times Lev 26:21, 24

b

The other set of multiplicatives involves a number plus another word conventionally rendered 'time.' Three of the four 'time' words refer to the limbs: פַּעַם (fem.) 'foot' (## 8–11), רֵגֶל (fem.) 'foot' (# 12), יָד (fem.) 'hand' (## 13–14); the fourth, מִנָּה, occurs only twice and its sense is obscure (# 15).²⁹

8.	פַּעַם אַחַת	one time Josh 6:3
9.	פַּעַמַיִם	two times Gen 27:36
10.	שְׁלוֹשׁ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים פַּעַמַיִם	thirty-three times Ezek 41:6
11.	מֵאָה פַּעַמַיִם	a hundred times 2 Sam 24:3
12.	שְׁלֹשׁ רֵגְלִים ... בַּשָּׁנָה:	three times ... a year ³⁰ Exod 23:14
13.	חֲמִשׁ יָדוֹת	five times Gen 43:34
14.	עֶשֶׂר יָדוֹת	ten times Dan 1:20
15.	עֶשְׂרֵת מִנִּים	ten times Gen 31:7, 41

15.5 Fractions

a

There are several patterns used to form fractions, as well as several distinctive words. The terms are usually used as constructs ([2 Sam 18:2](#) is an exception). The fractions 'one tenth' and greater are feminine ordinals for the corresponding unit: שְׁלִישִׁית 'a third' ([2 Sam 18:2](#)), רְבִיעִית (fem.) 'a fourth' ([Num 15:4, 5](#)), עֲשִׂירִית 'a tenth, a tithe' ([Num 28:5](#)). There is no such ordinal-based term for 'a half,' but only חֲצִי apparently from the root חִסַּי 'to divide.' There are terms for several other large fractions which fall outside the ordinal pattern: רִבְעִי and perhaps

רִבְעֵ 'a quarter,' חֲמִישׁ 'a fifth' (only in [Gen 47:26](#)), and מֵעֶשֶׂר (pl. מֵעֶשְׂרוֹת), עֶשְׂרֹן 'tenth, tithe.'

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1. חֲצִי הָעָם הָיָה אַחֲרֵי תִבְנִי Half the people supported Tibni.
[1 Kgs 16:21](#)
2. נִמְצָא בְיָדִי רִבְעֵ שֶׁקֶל נְמָצָא
כֶּסֶף There's a quarter shekel of silver in my hand.
[1 Sam 9:8](#)
3. מִנְחָה סֶלֶת עֶשְׂרֹן בָּלוּל מִנְחָה
בְּרִבְעֵית הַהֵין שֶׁמֶן: an offering (of) fine flour, a tenth (of an ephah), moistened with a quarter hin (of) oil
[Num 15:4](#); cf. [Exod 29:40](#)

The other pattern, used for fractions under a tenth, involves the cardinal number in construct before the enumerated thing with the article.

4. מֵאֵת הַכֶּסֶף a hundredth part of the money
[Neh 5:11](#)

15.6 Distributive Expressions

a

Phrases which associate entities pairwise—"One man, one vote," "One for all and all for one"—are called distributives.³¹ If the distributed entity is a verbal action, the distributive phrase is adverbial. The preposition בְּ may be used with a repeated noun indicating the distributed entity.

1. וְלֹא-הֵעֵלָה מִנְחָה ... כְּשָׁנָה
בְּשָׁנָה He did not send tribute ... as (he had) year by year.
[2 Kgs 17:4](#)

The preposition לְ may introduce the distributive range.

2. אַחַת לְשָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים תָּבוֹא It comes once every three years.
[1 Kgs 10:22](#)

b

If the distribution is of an entity to an entity, לְ again may introduce the range (## 3–6); the phrase for the distributed entity may be repeated (# 4) or the whole may be repeated (## 5–6).

3. אִישׁ אֶחָד לְשִׁבְטִי: one man to a tribe
[Deut 1:23](#)
4. אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטָּה one man for each tribe of his forebears
[Num 13:2](#)
5. אֶלֶף לְמִטָּה אֶלֶף לְמִטָּה one thousand to each tribe
[Num 31:4](#)
6. שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפִים שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפִים לְאֶחָד six wings to each
[Isa 6:2](#)

If the distribution is from an entity, the preposition **מִן** is used.

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7. מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה
תִּקַּח-לָךְ שְׁבָעָה שְׁבָעָה
שְׁבָעָה אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ
From the clean animals take seven by
seven, a male and its female.
[Gen 7:2](#)
8. מִן-הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה ...
שְׁנַיִם שְׁנַיִם בָּאוּ
From the clean animals ... pair by pair
they came.
[Gen 7:8–9](#)

C

Related to these numerical distributives are universal distributive expressions, meaning 'all who' or 'each.' One group of these expressions involves a plural referent (often a participle) with a singular predicate.

9. מִחֻלְלֵיהָ מוֹת יוֹמָת
Anyone who desecrates/all who
desecrate/each who desecrates it (the
Sabbath) shall be put to death.
[Exod 31:14](#)
10. תִּמְכִּיָּהּ מְאֻשָּׁר:
Any who seizes it (i.e., wisdom) is
blessed.
[Prov 3:18](#)

Another group of such expressions uses **כָּל** before an indefinite singular. (Before a definite singular **kōl** often signifies an aggregate or totality.)

11. בְּכָל-יוֹם
every day
[Ps 7:12](#)
12. סָגַר כָּל-בַּיִת מִבּוֹא:
Every house is barred from entering
(i.e., The entrance of each house is
barred).
[Isa 24:10](#)

Footnotes:

1. The distinctive qualities of cardinal numbers, from which other series of number-words usually derive, is explored by W. P. Schmid, *MPD* 86–88, 92–93. On the grounds of frequency alone, the Hebrew cardinals are more important than the ordinals; see nn. 5 and 24 below.

For a comparative perspective on the Semitic numerals, see, in addition to the papers cited in nn. 10 and 14, W. von Soden, "Ableitungen von Zahlwörtern im Semitischen," *Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner*, ed. F. Rochberg-Halton (New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1987) 403–14. On the structure of numeral phrases in Hebrew, see Richter, *GAHG* 2. 26–29.

2. The only exception in Hebrew is *šilšōm/šilšôm* (ʿ šalōš yôm) 'three days (ago), i.e., day before yesterday'; at least this is the apparent meaning of the term—in fact, it occurs only in asyndetic combination with ʿetmōl (ʿitmōl tēmōl) in a phrase meaning 'up to now, recently.'

3. The topic is proper to epigraphy; for convenient illustrations, see Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982) 85, 108, 119 (slashes in an Elephantine papyrus written in Aramaic, 408 B.C.E.; slashes in a Heshbon ostrakon written in Ammonite, late Iron Age II; letters used as numbers on an Alexander Jannaeus coin, text in Aramaic).

4. For example, most numbers used in Akkadian texts are written with signs rather than words; see W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Analecta Orientalia 33/47; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute,

1969) 90. Ugaritic is exceptional in preferring to write numerals in words; see *UT* § 7.1.

5. The common cardinals are, in order of use, these; the counts (after SA/THAT) include both gender forms, where relevant: ḥd 970 times, šnym 762, m'h 583, 'sr 511, 'lp 504, šš 426, šb' 401, ḥmš 346, 'rb' 318, 'srym 315, šš 216, ššym 172, ḥmšym 163, 'rb'ym 135, šmnh 109. The only common non-numeral counting terms are kol (ca. 5,400 times) and rab (474 times).

6. The feminine form 'aḥat reflects an original 'aḥadt ' -tt ' -t. The apocopated masculine form ḥad ([Ezek 33:30](#)) agrees with the Aramaic (Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961] § 63 / p. 31), though the context suggests the possibility of a scribal error.

7. The usual rendering, 'one single language,' would correspond with the sense discussed immediately below in the text.

8. See also [Gen 27:44](#).

9. Compare Arabic 'it nāni and Phoenician 'šnm, 'šn, suggesting ištáyim; but this form is dubious. "The feminine numeral 'two' has been a perennial problem of Biblical Hebrew orthography and phonology ... It ... must violate at least one of the ... principles ... generally assumed to govern the phonetic interpretation" of Hebrew dagesh and shewa; so Robert D. Hoberman, "Initial Consonant Clusters in Hebrew and Aramaic," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 48 (1989) 25–29, at 25.

10. This patterning has aroused a great deal of commentary, most of it useless. The general idea that the Semitic languages rely on certain patterns of polarity has been rejected by E. A. Speiser, who essays his own explanation for the cardinal number and gender problem; see "The Pitfalls of Polarity," *Language* 14 (1938) 187–202, reprinted in his *Oriental and Biblical Studies*, ed. J. J. Finkelstein and Moshe Greenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1967) 433–54. For a recent explanation using polarity, see Robert Hetzron, "Agaw Numerals and In congruence in Semitic," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 12 (1967) 169–97; he alleges that the plural of a masculine noun was feminine and vice versa.

11. A few morphological facts about these units may be helpful. In 'rb' 'four,' the ' is prothetic. The root šš 'six' is šdš (Ugaritic t dt), whence the doubling in šiššâ (but not šēšet), šiššim 'sixth,' šiššim 'sixty.' The doubling in some forms of ḥmš 'five,' e.g., ḥāmiššâ 'five,' ḥāmiššim 'fifty,' is secondary (i.e., not part of the root), perhaps on analogy to the -šš- of the 'six' forms.

12. This feature is associated with later Biblical Hebrew; see Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 58–60. The noun + numeral order is found at Qumran, though, as Elisha Qimron notes, the pattern interacts in complex ways with the factor of genre: lists, administrative documents, and texts drawing on them directly would probably have such an order, regardless of date; see *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 85–86. Aramaic evidence is also complex; see, e.g., J. A. Lund, "The Syntax of the Numeral 'One' as a Noun Modifier in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Amoraic Period," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986) 413–23; 108 (1988) 211–17.

13. 'āfīm is feminine.

14. Hetzron argues, on the basis of Akkadian, that the original Semitic order was teen + unit and that the unit + teen order is secondary, that is, that the basic order is one of decreasing magnitude; see "Innovations in the Semitic Numeral System," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 22 (1977) 167–201; for a dissent, see M. A. Powell, "Notes on Akkadian Numbers and Number Syntax," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 24 (1979) 13–18.

15. Ugaritic and some dialects of Aramaic have the same split between ḥd 'one' and 'št ('sr) 'eleven'. The 'šy form is cognate to Akkadian ištēn 'one' and Old South Arabic 'stn; Akkadian uses the ḥd root in the adjective (w)ēdu 'alone.'

16. 'ābānīm is feminine.

17. It is striking that 'eśfīm is a plural, not a dual.

18. Pə'amīm is feminine.

19. A well-known Arabic parallel is 'Alf Layla wa Layla 'A Thousand Nights and (One) Night, A Thousand and One Nights.'

20. Cf. [1 Chr 3:4](#).

21. It seems likely that these numerals are sometimes used to signify social units rather than groups of precisely so many (fighting) men, but this usage seems to have had no effect on the syntax of the terms; such usage is clearest in the case of 'elep 'thousand, company.' See George E. Mendenhall, "The Census Lists of [Numbers 1](#)

and [26](#), " *Journal of Biblical Literature* 77 (1958) 52–66; N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1979) 270–84; P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel* (Anchor Bible 8; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980) 107.

22. The use of *rkb* singular and *pršym* plural is usual; for the pair without numerals, see, e.g., [1 Kgs 1:5](#), [10:26](#); [2 Kgs 2:12](#), [13:14](#), [18:24](#); [Isa 22:6](#).

23. [Num 16:35](#), the one instance in which the numeral has the article and the following noun has no article, is textually suspect; the Samaritan Pentateuch lacks the article.

24. The common ordinals are *ršwn* 182 times, *šny* 156, *ššy* 107; *ḥr* 'another, second' (166 times) can function as a substitute ordinal

25. Days and months are both usually numbered. Day names are largely post-biblical. Month names follow two calendars, one old calendar (attested in the time of Solomon, [1 Kgs 6:1](#), [37–38](#); [8:2](#), and usually considered pre-exilic) and one more recent (attested in the Persian period, e.g., [Neh 2:1](#); [Esth 3:7](#), [8:9](#)); neither set of month names is fully attested in the Bible, although the later, so-called Babylonian calendar was and remains standard for later Jewish practice.

26. Although we are concerned here with dating formulas, we may say that it is rare for a numbered day to be mentioned outside a dating formula, notably, in [Deut 5:14](#), *yôm haššəbīʿ* is the subject of a sentence.

27. Both the multiplicatives and fractions are rather poorly attested in the Bible; cf. Rosenthal, *Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*, §§ 70–71 / p. 33.

28. Note that the MT points *mšnh* as absolute, not a construct, taking *ksp* as an appositive of measure (see 12.3d).

29. It is related to the verb *mānā* 'to count.'

30. The same phrase is used in [Num 22:28](#), [32](#), [33](#); these four are the only multiplicative uses of *régel*.

31. Cf. 7.2.3b. On the distributive in later Biblical Hebrew, see Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 47–51.

6. I'm looking for a tent, but I can't find one.
 7. I'm looking for a tent, but I can't find it.

In # 6, the pronoun 'one' is non-specific and shows that the phrase 'a tent' is also nonspecific; in # 7, 'it' must refer to a particular tent and so also must the phrase 'a tent.'

b

With these facts in mind, we may turn to the Hebrew system, which presents many similarities to the English, so many, in fact, that it is important for students to bear in mind the many differences between the languages.² The basic opposition of the categories definite: indefinite is similar: in Hebrew, as in English, the definite noun directs attention to the referent's identity, while the indefinite noun focuses on the class to which the referent belongs, its quality and character. In # 8 the use of an indefinite (or *anarthrous*) noun emphasizes the class to which the referent belongs, while in # 9 the definite (or *arthrous*) noun phrase highlights the particularity of the referent.³

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8. אַתָּה בָּא אֵלַי בְּחֶרֶב You come against me with a sword.

[1 Sam 17:45](#)

9. חֶרֶב גְּלִיתִּיפֶלֶלֶהָ הִנֵּה-הִיא The sword of Goliath ... is here.

[1 Sam 21:10](#)

The Hebrew system, like the English, includes under the heading of definites both intrinsically definite nouns and those with the article (13.4-6); Hebrew has no indefinite article, though the numeral אֶחָד / אַחַת 'one' is used to mark specific indefinite nouns (13.8). In sum, three categories are relevant to definiteness and indefiniteness as these phenomena are expressed in Hebrew: (1) precise identification ('the house'), (2) class identification ('(a) house'), and (3) specific indefinite identification ('a (certain) house').

13.3 Morphology of the Article

a

Before we consider the various syntactic features of definiteness, there are some morphological aspects of the article that need to be briefly reviewed.⁴ These include the basic consonantal shape of the article, its vocalism, the special form of certain words with the article, and the shortening of it after some prepositions.

b

The basic form of the article is *ha-* followed by doubling of the first consonant of the word to which the article is prefixed. The form is sometimes reconstructed as *han-*; the *n* of this form would account for the doubling, which would be analogous to the doubling of initial-*nun* verbs (e.g., יפֹּל, הפִּיל).⁵

c

The vowel of the article is usually *a*, as in הַמֶּלֶךְ 'the king,' but there are several variants. The vowel may be lengthened, *a* to *ā*, or it may be dissimilated, *a* to *e*. These changes usually occur if the word begins with a laryngeal or *r*, that is, a consonant that does not permit doubling. Before **א** and **ר**, the vowel of the article lengthens (הָ; ## 1–3). Before **ה**, the vowel is *a* (הַ; # 4), unless the first vowel of the word is *ā*; if that *ā* is stressed, the article has *ā* (הָ; # 5); if that *ā* is not stressed, the vowel of the article is dissimilated to *e* (הֶ; # 6). Before **ל**, the vowel is *a* (הַ; # 7), unless the first vowel is *ā*

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(## 8–9) or *ō* (hateph qameṣ; ## 10–11), in which case the article is הֹ, whether the *ā* is stressed (# 8) or not (# 9). Before **נ**, the article is generally הֶ (## 12–13), unless the first vowel is unstressed *ā*, in which case the article is הֹ (## 14–15).

- | | | |
|-----|-------------|----------------|
| 1. | הָאִישׁ | the man |
| 2. | הָרָשָׁע | the wicked man |
| 3. | הָרֶגֶל | the foot |
| 4. | הַחֵיכָל | the palace |
| 5. | הָהָר | the mountain |
| 6. | הַהָרִים | the mountains |
| 7. | הַחֹדֶשׁ | the month |
| 8. | הַחֹג | the festival |
| 9. | הַחֲכָם | the wise man |
| 10. | הַחֲדָשִׁים | the months |
| 11. | הַחֲרָבוֹת | the wastelands |
| 12. | הָעֵוִר | the blind man |
| 13. | הָעִין | the city |
| 14. | הָעוֹן | the iniquity |
| 15. | הָעָפָר | the dust |

In sum, the basic a of the article

- dissimilates to e before הָ, הַ, non-stressed ע, non-stressed הָ
- lengthens to ā before א, ר, most other ע, stressed הָ
- remains a elsewhere (i.e., before other הָ, other הַ)

d

The form of the article has another variation: words beginning with yə or mə often form the article without doubling; the word-initial *shewa* is silent (## 16–19).

- | | | |
|-----|---------------|---------------------------|
| 16. | הַיְלָדִים | the children (haylādīm) |
| 17. | הַיְסוֹד | the base (haysôd) |
| 18. | הַמְבַקְשִׁים | the searchers (hambaqšīm) |
| 19. | הַמְרַגְלִים | the spies (hamraggəlīm) |

If the consonant after yə is הָ or ע, this rule is not observed and the doubling is found (## 20–21); if the consonant after mə is הָ, ע, or ר, the doubling is also usually found (## 22–24).

- | | | |
|-----|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 20. | הַיְהוּדִים | the Judahites (hayyəhūdīm) |
| 21. | הַיְעִפִּים | the weary (hayyə‘ēpīm) |
| 22. | הַמְהוּמָה | the confusion (hamməhûmâ) |
| 23. | הַמְאָרָה | the cave (hammə‘ārâ) |
| 24. | בַּמְרַעִים | in the evildoers (bammərē‘īm) |

e

A few words have a special shape after the article (## 25–29).

25.	אֶרֶן	הָאֶרֶן
26.	אֶרֶץ	הָאֶרֶץ
27.	חֵג / חַג	הַחֵג
28.	עֵם / עַם	הָעֵם
29.	פֵּר / פֶּר	הַפֵּר

In some cases the form of these words with the *a* is found without the article, but in all cases the article requires the longer vowel.

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f

The article is generally shortened after a monographic preposition, *bə*, *kə*, *lə*; the *shewa* of the preposition and the *h* of the article are elided, so the preposition stands with the vowel of the article.

30.	לְאִישׁ	to the man
31.	בְּשָׁמַיִם	in the heavens

This elision is not strictly phonological, since it does not occur with *wə*, and there are various exceptions, most in later books (contrast ## 32–33).

32.	לְחָכְם	to the wise man
		Qoh 7:19
33.	כְּהַחְכָּם	like the wise man
		Qoh 8:1

13.4 Definite Nouns

a

A noun is definite if it (1) is intrinsically definite, (2) bears the article or a suffix, or (3) is in construct with a noun definite by (1) or (2). Intrinsically definite nouns tend to have unique referents, while nouns with the article may have particular or unique referents. In this section we deal with the first and third cases of definiteness; in the following two sections, the *arthrous* construction is treated.

b

The largest class of intrinsically definite nouns is names: divine names (# 1), human names (## 2–3), place names (## 4–6). A name as such has a unique referent.

1.	יְהוָה	YHWH
2.	מֹשֶׁה	Moses
3.	חַוָּה	Living One, Eve
4.	חֶרְמוֹן	Hermon
5.	צֹר	Tyre
6.	פְּרָת	Euphrates

Nearly all pronouns are also inherently definite, by virtue of their role as pointers to unique things or persons; definite pronouns may be personal (## 7–8), demonstrative (## 9–10), or interrogative (# 11).

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 7. | עִירָם אֲנֹכִי | I am naked.
Gen 3:10 |
| 8. | אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ | I am YHWH, your God.
Exod 20:2 |
| 9. | מִלֵּא שְׁבַע זֹאת | Complete the week of this one.
Gen 29:27 |
| 10. | שְׁלַח־נָא אֶת־זֹאת מֵעָלַי
הַחוּצָה | Send this one away from me to the
outside.
2 Sam 13:17 |
| 11. | מִי הִגִּיד לְךָ | Who told you ... ?
Gen 3:11 |

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Also inherently definite are unique appellatives, terms that refer to unique individuals or things and are used more or less as names. Terms for the God of Israel tend to be treated as unique appellatives, taking the article rarely (# 12; the anarthrous form is more common in the Pentateuch, while the article is used more often in the Former Prophets) or never (## 13–14).

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|----------------|
| 12. | אֱלֹהִים | God |
| 13. | אֵל עֶלְיוֹן | Most High God |
| 14. | אֵל שָׁדַי | Ruling (?) God |

Certain cosmological elements (## 15–17) and earthly institutions (# 18) are also treated in this way.

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|---------------------|
| 15. | תֵּבֵל | The World, Landmass |
| 16. | תְּהוֹם | The Abyss, Deep |
| 17. | שְׂאוֹל | The Grave |
| 18. | אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד | The Tent of Meeting |

Many earthly place names, for the same reason, lack the article, even if formed with common nouns (## 19–22).

- | | | |
|-----|----------------|---|
| 19. | שָׂדֵה כּוֹבֵס | Fuller's Field
Isa 7:3, 36:2 |
| 20. | שָׂדֵה צִפִּים | Watcher's Field
Num 23:14 |
| 21. | עֵין־גִּדִּי | Kid's Spring
1 Sam 24:1 |
| 22. | עֵין שֶׁמֶשׁ | Sun Spring
Josh 15:7 |

Often certain titles are taken as unique (## 23–24).

- | | | |
|-----|---------------|---|
| 23. | שָׂר־צָבָא | Chief of the Army ⁶
2 Sam 2:8, 19:14; 1 Kgs 16:16 |
| 24. | רֶב־טַבָּחִים | Captain of the Guard ⁷ |

[2 Kgs 25:8](#), [Jer 39:9](#)

c

The construct relation usually carries definiteness over from the genitive to the construct: thus, the construct is usually definite if the following genitive is definite as a name (# 25), a pronoun (# 26), a unique appellative (# 27), or because of the article (# 28–29).

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25.	אִישׁ נָעֲמִי	the husband of Naomi Ruth 1:3
26.	אִשָּׁהּ	her husband Gen 3:6
27.	פְּנֵי תְהוֹם	the face of the Abyss Gen 1:2
28.	פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם	the face of the water Gen 1:2
29.	מִפְּרֵי עֵץ־הַגָּן	from the fruit of the tree of the Garden Gen 3:2

There are exceptions, however, in which the construct phrase is indefinite with the following genitive definite as a name (## 30–31), a pronoun (# 32), a unique appellative (# 33), or because of the article (## 34–35; cf. 9.7a).

30.	וַאֲרָא בַשָּׁלָל אֶדְרֶת שְׁנַעַר אֶחָת טוֹבָה	I saw among the spoil a certain beautiful Babylonian garment. Josh 7:21 Qere
31.	בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל	a (certain) virgin of Israel Deut 22:19
32.	אָחִי הוּא	He is a brother of mine. Gen 20:5 ; cf. 8.4.2a
33.	רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים רָעָה	a (certain) evil spirit of God 1 Sam 18:10
34.	אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה	a farmer Gen 9:20
35.	בְּנִקְיַק הַסֵּלַע	in a (certain) cleft of the rock Jer 13:4

In most of these cases (## 30, 31, 33, 35), it is clear from context that the genitive is a specific indefinite, namely, 'a certain ...'; in # 30, the addition of 'aḥat makes this clear. The generic noun of class אִישׁ is used in # 34 with an article of class (cf. 9.5.3b).

13.5 Common Nouns with the Article

a

Common nouns—roughly, all nouns except names and unique appellatives—are made definite by the article. The conventions of the Hebrew language regularly call for the use of the article with common nouns in ways similar to the English usage of the article 'the' and in ways that differ noticeably from it. Since the uses of the article may differ in Hebrew and in English, it is necessary to note its normal uses in Hebrew in order to avoid distorting the meaning of the Hebrew; a word-for-word translation would often lead to abnormal English. It is vital to read Hebrew from the Hebrew speaker's point of view; it is also important to consider how that point of view can be represented in English by its normal conventions, without engaging in an extended commentary.

b

There are two major areas that need to be explored in considering Hebrew articular usage. One area involves the referential side: what does the article reveal about the functioning of the word it modifies? The other area is syntactic: how does the article + noun combination fit into the clause?

13.5.1 Referential Features**a**

The common noun with the article may have a unique, particular, or generic function. Generic usage is vastly more common in Hebrew than it is in English.

b

The common noun with an article may designate a unique referent. The uniqueness may be natural, for example, **הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ** 'the sun' in [Exod 17:12](#) or **לַיָּרֵחַ** 'to the moon' in [Deut 17:3](#); or theological, for example, **הָאֱלֹהִים** 'God' in [Gen 6:2](#); or situational, for example, **הַמֶּלֶךְ** 'the King' in [1 Sam 8:9](#) or **הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדֹל** 'the High Priest' in [Num 35:25](#). The usage conflicts to some extent with the intrinsic definiteness of unique appellatives (13.4b); on the whole, with theological terms and place names the article is rare.

c

Situational uniqueness arises because, for example, the culture allows only one king or high priest at a time. Closely related to this type of definiteness is the use of the noun + article to designate a well-known thing or person; the combination is close to constituting a name (cf. 13.6). Consider, for example, these English sentences: 'I'm going on holiday in the Rocky Mountains' versus 'I will meet you at the rocky hill.' In English we distinguish these two uses in writing by capitalizing the former and writing the latter in lower case. The distinctions involved are sometimes subjective and arbitrary.

1. **וַתִּקְבֹּר מִתַּחַת לְבֵית-אֵל
תַּחַת הָאֲלוֹן** And she was buried under the oak below
Bethel.
[Gen 35:8](#)
2. **לִפְנֵי הָרָעַשׁ:** before the earthquake
[Amos 1:1](#)

d

The article most often serves to give a noun a particular reference.

3. **לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ ...
אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֵרָאֶךְ:** Go from your land ... to the land that I will
show you.
[Gen 12:1](#)

Particular reference may be based on previous mention of the thing or person; such use is anaphoric.

4. **וַיִּקַּח בֶּן-בָּקָר ... וַיִּקַּח ...
בֶּן-הַבָּקָר** And he took a calf ... and he took ... the
calf.
[Gen 18:7–8](#)
5. **וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ ... וְשֵׁם הָאִישׁ
אֱלִימֶלֶךְ** And a man went out ... and the name of
that man was Elimelech.
[Ruth 1:1–2](#)
6. **וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהיאוֹר ...** And God said, "Let there be light." ... And

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאוֹר

God saw the light.

[Gen 1:3–4](#)

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This usage is weakly demonstrative. A close parallel to # 5 actually uses a demonstrative.

7. אִישׁ הָיָה בְּאֶרֶץ־עוּז ...
וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא תָם
וְיָשָׁר

There was a man in the land of Uz ... and
that man was pure and upright.

[Job 1:1](#)

Particular reference may also be cataphoric, that is, restricted by what follows; this usage is discussed in 13.5.2d.

e

The article may also mark nouns definite in the imagination, designating either a particular person or thing necessarily understood to be present or vividly portraying someone or something whose identity is not otherwise indicated. For a person or thing understood to be present, the English language often also uses the article.

8. וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ אֶת־הָאֵשׁ
וְאֶת־הַמַּאֲכָלָה
9. וַתַּעַר כַּדָּהּ אֶל־הַשֶּׁקֶת
10. וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמִּילָדָה

And he took in his hand the fire and the
knife.

[Gen 22:6](#)

And she emptied her jar into the trough.

[Gen 24:20](#)

And the midwife said to her ...

[Gen 35:17](#); cf. [38:28](#)

At other times English idiom prefers the personal pronoun.⁸

11. וְלָקַח דָּוִד אֶת־הַכִּנּוֹר
12. וַתִּקַּח הַצִּעִיף
13. וַתִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַגָּמֶל:

David would take his harp.

[1 Sam 16:23](#)

So she took her veil.

[Gen 24:65](#)

She alighted from her camel.

[Gen 24:64](#)

In some cases the proper English rendering is indefinite.⁹

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14. הַמְּלִיץ בֵּינָתָם:
15. וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הַנֶּעֶר
16. וַיָּבֹא הַפְּלִיט
17. וַיָּרֵץ הַנָּאֵר
18. וַיָּבֹא הַמְּגִיד

An interpreter was between them.

[Gen 42:23](#)

He gave (it) to a servant.

[Gen 18:7](#)

One who had escaped came.

[Gen 14:13](#)

A young man ran.

[Num 11:27](#)

A messenger came.

[2 Sam 15:13](#)

This use is also found in the expression **וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם**.

19. **וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיִּזְבַּח אֶלְקָנָה** One day Elkanah came to sacrifice.
[1 Sam 1:4](#)

The analogous English constructions should not mislead: all these occurrences, and others like them, are definite in Hebrew.

f

The use of the article to mark out the particular and unique, as well as the situationally pertinent, is balanced by the generic use.¹⁰ The article of class marks out not a particular single person or thing but a class of persons, things, or qualities that are unique and determined in themselves. Sometimes the class is regarded as a unity, while at other times an individual within the species is singled out to represent the genus. This use is much more extensive in Hebrew than in English. The generic article may be used with a collective singular (see 7.2.1b).

20. **הַבָּקָר** the cattle (or, the herd)
[Gen 18:7](#)
21. **אֶת־הַצְּדִיק וְאֶת־הָרָשָׁע** the righteous and the wicked
[Qoh 3:17](#)

This use is especially common with animals: an individual of a species may refer to the whole.

22. **אֲךָ אֶת־זֶה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ ... אֶת־הַנֶּמֶל ... וְאֶת־הַשָּׁפָן** But these you may not eat ... the camel, ... the coney ...
[Lev 11:4–5](#)
23. **שָׁקָר הוּא לַתְּשׁוּעָה** A horse is a vain hope for victory.
[Ps 33:17](#)

Moreover, it is especially common in comparisons, with (## 24–27) or without animals (## 28–30).

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24. **כָּלֵב הָאֲרִיָּה** like the heart of a lion
[2 Sam 17:10](#)
25. **כַּאֲשֶׁר יִלֵּק הַכָּלֵב** as a dog laps
[Judg 7:5](#)
26. **כַּאֲשֶׁר יִרְדֹּף הַקָּרָא** as one hunts a partridge
[1 Sam 26:20](#)
27. **כַּשֶּׁסֶּע הַנֶּדִי** as one rends a kid
[Judg 14:6](#)
28. **כַּקִּיטָר הַכִּבְשָׁן** like the smoke from a furnace
[Gen 19:28](#)
29. **כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחֲלֵם הָרָעֵב** as when someone dreams in a famine
[Isa 29:8](#)
30. **וְנִגְלְוּ כַסְפֵּר הַשָּׁמַיִם** And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll.
[Isa 34:4](#)

The generic article is also used with plurals.

31. **הַכּוֹכָבִים** the stars
[Gen 15:5](#); cf. [1:16](#)

32. הַגּוֹיִם the nations
[Gen 10:32](#)
33. לְבֹקְרִים all the mornings
[Isa 33:2](#), [Ps 73:14](#)
34. לֹא־כֵן הָרָשָׁעִים Not so the wicked.
[Ps 1:4](#)

Both singular and plural gentilics regularly take the article in referring to the entire group, for example, הַכְּנַעֲנִי 'the Canaanite(s)', הָעִבְרִים 'the Hebrews.' In gentilics derived from construct-chain names the second term of the chain takes the article, for example, הָעֶזְרִי אָבִי 'the Abiezrite' (< [11 Judg 6:11](#), [24](#)), בֵּית הַלְחֵמִי 'the Bethlehemite' (< [1 Sam 17:58](#); בֵּית לָחֶם). The group term פְּלִשְׁתִּים usually does not take the article; only eight times is הַ used and in only eighteen cases is a preceding preposition given the pointing of the article.

g

The generic article is found with items other than animals, for example, materials (## 35–39; note the comparisons in # 38).¹²

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35. בַּכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב: in livestock, in silver, and in gold
[Gen 13:2](#)
36. בָּאֵשׁ with fire
[Josh 11:9](#)
37. בַּחֲמֹר וּבִזְפֹת with tar and pitch¹³
[Exod 2:3](#)
38. אִם־יְהִיו חַטָּאֵיכֶם כַּשָּׁנִים
כַּשֶּׁלֶג יִלְבִּינוּ Though your sins be like crimson, they
shall become as white as snow.
[Isa 1:18](#)
39. רֶבֶד הַזָּהָב a chain of gold
[Gen 41:42](#)

Measurements and measured units are also so marked.

40. וְהָעֹמֶר עֶשְׂרִית הָאֵיפָה
הוּא: An omer is one tenth of an ephah.
[Exod 16:36](#)
41. צִרּוֹר הַמֹּר a bag of myrrh
[Cant 1:13](#)

Abstract terms, referring to attributes, qualities, or states, also take the generic article.

42. בְּסִנְיֹרִים with blindness
[Gen 19:11](#)
43. הַדָּבָר diseases¹⁴
[Deut 28:21](#)
44. בַּתְּמָהוֹן with panic¹⁵
[Zech 12:4](#)

45. **וְהָאֱמוּנָה אֲזֹר חֻצִּיו:** Faithfulness is the sash around his waist.
[Isa 11:5](#)
46. **וַיִּכּוֹן בַּצֶּדֶק כִּסְאוֹ:** His throne will be established through righteousness.
[Prov 25:5](#)

13.5.2 Syntactic Features

a

The article may be used as a demonstrative, as a vocative marker, and as a relative marker. In these uses the referent of the noun + article combination is particular.

b

Expressions of present time are used adverbially, and the article has a clear demonstrative force, though, as noted above, such force can be found elsewhere, too (17.5).

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|---|
| 1. | הַיּוֹם | this day/today ¹⁶
Gen 4:14 |
| 2. | הַלַּיְלָה | this night/tonight
Gen 19:5 |
| 3. | הַשָּׁנָה | this year
2 Kgs 19:29—Isa 37:30, Jer 28:16 |
| 4. | הַפֶּעַם | this time
Exod 9:27 |

With a preposition the article does not suffice; the demonstrative pronoun is also needed.

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- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---|
| 5. | בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה | in this day
Josh 7:25 |
| 6. | בַּפֶּעַם הַזֹּאת | at this time
Exod 8:28 |

c

The article is used to mark a definite addressee, pointing out a particular individual who is present to the speaker and who is addressed in the vocative. English does not use its definite article in this way. The article may be used when a common noun is in apposition to a definite noun.

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 7. | שְׁמַע־נָא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל | Listen, O high priest Joshua.

Zech 3:8 |
| 8. | וַיִּקְרָא עַדְרִי־שָׂאוֹל לֵאמֹר אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ | And he called to Saul, "My Lord, O King."

1 Sam 24:9 |

It is also found when the common noun is in apposition only to a second-person pronoun, implied or stated.

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|---|
| 9. | חַי־נַפְשְׁךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ | As surely as you live, O King.
1 Sam 17:55 |
|----|--------------------------------|---|

10. בְּנִי אַתָּה הַנָּעַר Whose son are you, young man?
[1 Sam 17:58](#)
11. דָּבַר לִיאֲלִיף הַשָּׂר I have an errand for you, O
Commander.
[2 Kgs 9:5](#)

Quite frequently the article is not used when the reference is to persons not present or who are more or less imaginary.¹⁷

12. שִׂמַּח בְּחֹר בִּילְדוּתֶיךָ Be happy, young man, when you are
young.
[Qoh 11:9](#)
13. לֵךְ-אֶל-נִמְלָה עֶצֶל Go to the ant, O sluggard.
[Prov 6:6](#)

d

Anaphoric use of the article is based on the previous mention of the thing referred to (13.5.1d); it is possible for the definiteness to be established in the same clause as the reference, and such use is called cataphoric. Here are two English examples.

anaphoric 'the': I saw a man. The man was tall.

cataphoric 'the': The man that I saw was tall.

As the English example suggests, cataphoric reference can be associated with relative clauses, and the comparable Hebrew use of הַ is often likened to the relative pronoun.

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This so-called relative use of the article (cf. 19.7) is most common with participles, whether used attributively (i.e., adjectivally; ## 14–16; see 37.5) or predicatively (## 17–20).¹⁸

14. לִיהוּהַ הַנִּרְאָה אֵלָיו: to YHWH, who had appeared to him
[Gen 12:7](#)
15. הַשֹּׁלֵחַ the one who sent (you)
[2 Kgs 22:18](#)
16. הַנִּחְמָדִים the ones to be desired
[Ps 19:11](#)
17. הוּא הַסֹּבֵב It is the one that circles around ...
[Gen 2:11](#)
18. פִּי הַמְדַּבֵּר אֵלֵיכֶם: It is my mouth that is speaking to you.
[Gen 45:12](#)
19. עֵינֶיךָ הָרְאֹת It is your eyes that have seen ...
[Deut 3:21](#)
20. אֲנִכִּי הָבָא מִן-הַמִּעֶרְכָּה I am the one who came back from the
battle.
[1 Sam 4:16](#)

Other predicates can also take the article; in a sense these predicates are adjectival, but it should be remembered that there is no distinct class of adjectives in Hebrew (14.3.2).

21. יְהוָה הַצָּדִיק וְאֲנִי וְעַמִּי יהוה is the one who is in the right and
I and my people are the ones who are in
the wrong.
[Exod 9:27](#)

A predicate adjective with an article often has a superlative sense.

22. יָדוּד הוּא הַקָּטָן Now it was David who was the youngest.
[1 Sam 17:14](#)
23. אַתֶּם הַרְבֵּימָּה You are the ones who are most numerous.
[1 Kgs 18:25](#)

In a few cases, the article is used with a finite verb to form a relative clause, either with an explicit antecedent (## 24–25)¹⁹ or without one (# 26).²⁰

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24. קָצִינֵי אֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה the army commanders who had come with him
הֵהָלְכוּ אִתּוֹ
[Josh 10:24](#)
25. עַמְּךָ הַנִּמְצָאֵהֶפֶה your people who are present here
[1 Chr 29:17](#)
26. וַיִּשְׂמַח ... עַל הַחֲסִידִים And he ... rejoiced at what God had done for the people.
הָאֱלֹהִים לָעַם
[2 Chr 29:36](#)

This construction may be compared to English cleft sentences ('It is the prophet that I was seeking') and pseudo-cleft sentences ('The prophet was who I sought'), as well as to French constructions in 'C'est ... celui qui ...' ('It is ... the one who ...').

13.6 Intrinsically Definite Nouns with the Article

a

The article is chiefly used with common nouns according to the patterns outlined in 13.5. Normally words that are definite in themselves do not take the article since the article would be redundant. But there is one major class of exceptions. Sometimes, through usage, the article not only points out a particular person or thing, but it also elevates it to such a position of uniqueness that the noun + article combination becomes the equivalent of a proper name (13.4b). Among English speakers, for example, in some communities 'the city' no longer designates one city out of many, but through usage denotes 'The City,' the only city in that area. In such constructions it is not that the article is added to a name; rather the article makes the combination a name. Such combinations make up toponyms.

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | הַגִּבְעָה | the hill | Gibeah |
| 2. | הַיָּאֵר | the stream (hay'or) | the Nile |
| 3. | הַכְּכָר | the circuit | the Jordan Circuit |
| 4. | הַלְּבָנוֹן | the white | (Mt.) Lebanon |
| 5. | הַנָּהָר | the river | the Euphrates |
| 6. | אֶבֶן הָעֵזֶר | the rock of help | Ebenezer |

They are also used to name individuals.

- | | | | |
|----|------------|---------------|-------|
| 7. | הָאֱלֹהִים | the god | God |
| 8. | הַבַּעַל | the lord | Baal |
| 9. | הַשָּׂטָן | the adversary | Satan |

b

In addition to this intermediate naming construction, there are other anomalous cases of an article on a noun with a suffix or in construct. In most cases these forms are the result of textual corruption.²¹ In [Josh 7:21](#) the form הָאֵהָלִי 'the/my tent' may be a blend of הָאֵהָל and אֵהָלִי. The phrase אֲשׁוּר הַמֶּלֶךְ occurs twice in [Isa 36:8, 16](#) but the proper anarthrous form is found in synoptic verses in 2 Kings ([18:23, 31](#)). In [Isa 24:2](#) the term כְּגִבְרֶתָהּ 'like her mistress' may have the pointing *ka* instead of *kə* because the syllable *ka* occurs eleven other times in the verse, creating a strong pattern of assonance. In at least one case the suffix on a form has lost its meaning:²² in addition to the word

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עֶרְךָ 'value,' Hebrew has a term עֶרְכָּךְ ('your value') 'value,' used with the article, הָעֶרְכָּךְ ([Lev 27:23](#)), and in construct, כְּעֶרְכָּךְ הַכֹּהֵן 'according to the value (set by) the priest' ([Lev 27:12](#)).

13.7 Use and Nonuse of the Article**a**

The article is not consistently used even according to the best established patterns. Most often it is "omitted," or not used where it would be expected, in poetry, and this pattern of nonuse is truer of older poetry, though the pattern is found in relatively late poetic passages and in prose.²³ In studying this pattern scholars have found that the Masoretes tended to regularize articular use where they could, that is, with the monographic prepositions; again, this is only a broad tendency, not a fixed rule.

b

Nouns with unique referents furnish some convenient examples. In [Gen 1:1](#) we find the articles in the phrase וְהָאָרֶץ וְהַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ, and in [2:1](#) we find וְהָאָרֶץ וְהַשָּׁמַיִם; in the archaic prayer of Melchisedeq, in contrast, the phrase קִנָּה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ lacks the articles ([Gen 14:19](#)). Turning back to [Genesis 2](#), we find fluctuation in two neighboring pieces of prose.

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם | These are the accounts of the cosmos
when it was created.

Gen 2:4a |
| 2. | בְּיוֹם עָשׂוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם: | When YHWH God made the cosmos ...

Gen 2:4b |

The omission is most common in verse.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|--|
| 3. | מֶלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ | [the] kings of [the] earth
Ps 2:2 |
| 4. | אֲפִסֵּי-אֶרֶץ | [the] ends of [the] earth
Ps 2:8 |
| 5. | לִפְנֵי-שֶׁמֶשׁ | before [the] sun
Ps 72:17 |

There is fluctuation, however, even in verse.

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|---|
| 6. | בְּשָׁלוֹם ... אֶשְׁכֶּבָה | I will lie down ... in peace.
Ps 4:9 ; cf. 55:19 |
|----|----------------------------|---|

7. יהוה יְבָרֶךְ ... בְּשָׁלוֹם: May YHWH bless ... with peace.
[Ps 29:11](#); cf. [Job 15:21](#)

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In the archaic invocation to the great lights in [Joshua 10](#), three of the four expected articles are omitted.²⁴

8. וַיֹּאמֶר לְעֵינֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 שָׁמֶשׁ בְּגִבְעוֹן דָּוָם
 וַיָּרֶחַ בְּאֵמֶק אֵי־לֹן:
 וַיָּדָם הַשָּׁמֶשׁ
 וַיָּרֶחַ עָמַד
 עַד־יָקָם גּוֹי אֹיְבָיו
 He (YHWH) said in sight of Israel,
 O sun, stand still over Gibeon.
 O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.
 Sun stood still,
 Moon stood fixed,
 Until he (YHWH) defeated his enemies' force.
[Josh 10:12–13](#)

13.8 Indefinite Nouns

a

Indefinite nouns are not as a rule marked in Hebrew, but on occasion specific indefinites may be, with אֶחָד / אַחַת 'one'.²⁵ As an adjective with a singular noun, it has the force of 'a certain'.²⁶

1. קַח צִנְצָנָת אַחַת Take a jar.
[Exod 16:33](#)
2. אֶבֶן אַחַת a single stone
[Judg 9:5](#)
3. אִשָּׁה אַחַת a certain woman
[Judg 9:53](#)
4. אִישׁ אֶחָד מִצֹּרָה a certain man of Zorah
[Judg 13:2](#)
5. אִישׁ אֶחָד מִן־הָרָמָתַיִם There was a certain man of Ramathaim.
[1 Sam 1:1](#)
6. וְנָבִיא אֶחָד זָקֵן יָשָׁב בְּבֵית־אֵל
 A certain old prophet was living in Bethel.
[1 Kgs 13:11](#)
7. וַיָּתֵן ... הַמֶּלֶךְ סָרִיס־אֶחָד The king assigned ... a certain official.
[2 Kgs 8:6](#)

As a noun in construct with a plural noun, it has the force of 'one of, a.'

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8. תַּחַת אֶחָד הַשִּׁיָּהִם: under one of the bushes (or, a bush)
[Gen 21:15](#)
9. עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר
 אָמַר אֵלַי: on a mountain I will tell you of
[Gen 22:2](#)

10. סִפְחֵנִי נָא אֶל-אַחַת הַכֹּהֲנֹת לֵאכֹל פֶּת-לֶחֶם: Appoint me to some priestly office so that I can have food to eat.
[1 Sam 2:36](#)
11. וְנָאֲנוּ אֵלָיו בְּאַחַת הַמְּקוֹמֹת אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא שָׁם Then we will attack him wherever he may be found.
[2 Sam 17:12](#)

This twist of style is particularly frequent in comparisons.

12. כְּאַחַד הַצִּבִּיִּים as one of the wild gazelles
[2 Sam 2:18](#)
13. כְּאַחַד הַנְּבָלִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל like a wicked fool in Israel
[2 Sam 13:13](#)

b

Indefinite personal nouns may also be marked with a generic noun of class, אִישׁ or an equivalent.

14. אִשָּׁה-אַלְמָנָה אָנִי I am a widow.
[2 Sam 14:5](#)
15. תְּבֹאנָה שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים זָנוֹת אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ Two prostitutes came to the king.
[1 Kgs 3:16](#)
16. וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אִישׁ נְבִיא אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל YHWH sent a prophet to the Israelites.
[Judg 6:8](#)

c

A predicate adjective has no article (4.5); it does not identify the subject but categorizes it as belonging to a class.

Footnotes:

- German, a close relative of English, uses an unreduced form of 'one,' 'ein,' as the indefinite article; Yiddish shows the same usage as English, 'a.'
- These similarities are an important basis for the claims of the Reformation translators that Hebrew "goes better" into English than into Latin. Compare Tyndale's famous remark, "The Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin [which has no article]. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin. The manner of speaking is both one; so that in a thousand places thou needest not but to translate into the English, word for word: when thou must seek a compass in the Latin." Quoted by S. L. Greenslade, "English Versions of the Bible, A.D. 1525–1611," *The Cambridge History of the Bible*. 3. *The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, ed. S. L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1963) 141–74, at 145. On the article in general grammatical theory, see W. P. Schmid, *MPD*. esp. 94–95; in Hebrew, see Richter. *GAHG*2.9–11.
- Greek grammarians used the term *arthron* 'joint' for 'connecting word,' particularly for the article. In modern usage, an *arthrous* noun has the article, an *anarthrous* noun lacks it.
- The article is a West Semitic feature and is only found in dialects attested after 1200 B.C.E. The earlier West Semitic languages and Akkadian do not regularly use a comparable definite: indefinite opposition (see also 9.8b). There are three West Semitic articles: (1) prefix *ha-* + doubling, found in Hebrew, Phoenician-Punic, Moabite, Ammonite, and some Old North Arabic dialects, (2) prefix *al-* (the *l* often assimilates to the following sound), found in Classical Arabic, and (3) postposed and fused *-a* in Aramaic, on which see Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of*

Biblical Aramaic (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961) §§ 41–43, 46 / pp. 23–24; and G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 88. Two useful sets of examples are Hebrew *hā-āreš*—Aramaic *ʾar-ā* Arabic *ʾal-ʾard* 'the earth'; and Hebrew *haz-zāhab*—Aramaic *dahābā* Arabic *ʾaḏ-ḏāhab* 'the gold.' On the background of all three articles, see T. O. Lambdin, "The Junctural Origin of the West Semitic Definite Article," *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of W. F. Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971) 315–33. For an attempt to consider a common origin for the Arabic and Hebrew articles, see Edward Ullendorff, "The Form of the Definite Article in Arabic and Other Semitic Languages," in his *Is Biblical Hebrew a Language? Studies in Semitic Languages and Civilizations* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977) 165–71.

For the phonological terminology used below, see, e.g., T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) xvi. The article occurs about 30,000 times (SA/THAT).

5. The form *hal-* is also sometimes reconstructed; it is close to the Arabic article *ʾal*, as well as to certain rare demonstratives in Hebrew, *hallāz*, *hallāzē*, *hallēzû*. The *ha* is at any rate a Semitic demonstrative element. Cf. 17.2a.

6. Cf. *šr-ʾhšbʾ* in [1 Sam 17:55](#), [Dan 8:11](#).

7. Cf. *šr ḥtḃhym* in [Gen 37:36](#), [39:1](#).

8. English usage, cited here for comparative purposes, is itself tremendously variable; cf., e.g., *hammittā* 'the/his bed' in [Gen 47:31](#), *hakkissē* 'the/ his throne' in [Judg 3:20](#).

9. And in some cases the English rendering is open to discussion: a fluent or slightly informal narrative style allows for more situationally understood definite articles.

10. Joüon uses the term "imperfect determination" for the generic use; § 137m / p. 425.

11. Abiezer is only attested as a personal name, not as a place name; the analysis of the name as a construct phrase, implicit in the gentilic form, is open to question. The name may in origin be a sentence name, 'My (divine) Father is Help'; cf. 8.2.

12. Other examples in [Gen 2:11](#), [11:3](#); [Amos 2:6](#); [2 Chr 2:13](#), [14](#).

13. For another medium, note *ktb bassēper* 'to write on a scroll' ([Exod 17:14](#), [1 Sam 10:25](#), [Jer 32:10](#); cf. *ntn bspr* in [Job 19:23](#)).

14. Other diseases in [Lev 13:12](#); [Amos 4:9](#); [Hag 2:17](#).

15. Another strong emotion in [2 Sam 1:9](#).

16. For an extensive discussion of *hayyôm*, see S. J. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 151–277.

17. Cf. [Isa 22:2](#), [Mic 1:2](#). But cf. *habhāʿal ʿaḵnēnū* 'O Baal, answer us,' [1 Kgs 18:26](#).

18. Note also [Qoh 7:26](#). Cf. M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 181.

19. Same construction in [Ezra 8:25](#), [10:17](#); with *ʾšr* in [Judg 5:27](#), [Ezra 10:14](#).

20. Same construction in [2 Chr 1:4](#). Note the relative frequency of these usages in Chronicles and Ezra.

21. And as such are better dealt with in a commentary than a grammar. In a few cases the MT is too arresting for simple dismissal, e.g., [Mic 2:12](#).

22. So also W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971) 283.

23. On the general pattern see Joüon § 187f / 421 n. 3; D. N. Freedman, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 2–4; for full details, both theoretical and statistical and counts by individual chapters, see F. I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, "'Prose Particle' Counts of the Hebrew Bible," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 165–83.

24. On this poem see Robert G. Boling, *Joshua* (Anchor Bible 6; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1982) 274, 283–85, who deals with the lexical difficulties of the final line, as well as with the wide range of explanations offered for what the poem describes.

25. See Joüon § 137u-v / p. 428.

26. Note also [1 Sam 7:9](#), [12](#). The use is infrequent enough that # 2 and # 3 play a role in the structure of [Judges](#)

[9.](#)

16 Personal Pronouns

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16.1 Pronouns in General

a

Pronouns are words that can stand for (Latin *pro*) a noun (*nomen*) or noun phrase; the major groups of pronouns are personal, demonstrative, interrogative, indefinite, and relative. A variety of expressions can perform the noun role in a clause, including nouns (e.g., 'a boy'), noun phrases ('a boy and a girl'), and clauses ('you know who'), as well as pronouns (see 4.4.1). Grammarians usually limit the word class of pronouns to the groups mentioned. This is in part due to the tradition of the "parts of speech" as first recognized by the Alexandrian grammarians.¹

b

The traditional segregation of pronouns has certain advantages. The pronoun class, like the deictic system it is part of (13.1),² is essentially a closed class (4.2), that is, limited in membership.³ The pronouns are "workhorses"—they are used frequently and play an important role in all grammatical functioning. The class of pronouns is morphologically diverse: usual categories of Hebrew inflection such as number and gender are manifest, but sometimes in unusual ways. Pronominal shapes are also unusual; the word elements are interlinked in complex ways (cf. 17.2, 19.2).

c

The four major pronominal groups are each distinct. Personal pronouns refer to speaker, to hearer, or to the topic under discussion; they are syntactically the least specialized group. Demonstratives single out a person or thing referred to (e.g., English 'This is the land'); they share some features of third-person pronouns (e.g., 'This/She is the queen') and are also adjectival in character. The interrogatives and indefinites compose a single correlative group, one part associated with questions (e.g., 'Who is the queen?') and the other with a particular sort of reference (e.g., 'Whoever the queen is, she must rule'). The indefinite pronouns are only one variety of indefinite usage, just as questions can be asked without interrogatives (40.3). Relative pronouns link up preceding and following elements (e.g., 'The queenwhorules well will prosper'; 'I visited the queenwhocalled for me').

d

One special feature of the Hebrew personal pronouns is the extent to which they refer to persons rather than objects, or, more strictly, to animates rather than inanimates. Only **מִי** 'who' is comparably restricted among the other pronouns. In the first- and second-person slots the limitation to animates is complete, and in the third-person slot it is nearly perfect.

e

The personal pronouns have been cited in numerous examples in the previous chapters, but they are the special concern of this chapter. In succeeding chapters the other pronominal groups will be treated (Chaps. 17–19).

16.2 Personal Pronouns

a

There are two classes of personal pronouns in Hebrew, and they are distinguished on both formal and functional grounds.⁴ The independent personal pronouns are both free-standing words and nominative in function, whereas the pronominal suffixes are never free standing and are in function genitive (with nouns and prepositions) or accusative (with verbs, **את**, and **הנה**). From a comparative perspective, this double patterning is remarkable.⁵

Ugaritic, for example, has independent third-person genitive-accusative pronouns,⁶ and some dialects of Akkadian have independent nominative, genitive-accusative, and dative forms.⁷ There are some complexities in the syntax of the independent personal pronouns, involving their use in apposition to nouns in an oblique function.⁸ Such complexities cannot distract from the overwhelmingly basic usage of the separate pronouns in nominative functions.⁹

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16.3 Independent Personal Pronouns

a

Before turning to the topic of the uses of the separate pronouns, we can make a few observations on their shapes.¹⁰

	singular	plural
first common	אֲנִי	אֲנַחְנִי
second masc.	אַתָּה	אַתֶּם
second fem.	אַתְּ	אַתֶּנָּה , אַתֶּן
third masc.	הוא	הֵם , הֵמָּה
third fem.	היא	הֵנָּה

There are two distinct subgroups. The first- and second-person forms are all formed from a base 'an with endings;¹¹ the *-n* assimilates to the *-t-* of the second-person endings, yielding *-tt-*. In contrast, the third-person forms are made up of elements also found in demonstratives and in the article **ha(n?)*- (13.3, 17.2). The first-person singular alone has two distinct forms, a short form (ʾānī) and a long form (ʾānōkī); there is no functional difference between them, though it is the long form that eventually disappears, leaving ʾānī only in late Biblical Hebrew, as well as in Mishnaic and later forms of the language.¹² The third-person singular forms¹³ seem to be simplified in the monosyllabic MT forms *hūʔ-kīʔ*; bisyllabic forms¹⁴ are implicit in the Qumran writings **הואה**, **היאה**.¹⁵ It is possible that mono- and bisyllabic forms alternated in Classical Hebrew (cf. English 'them' and 'em') and that the Masoretes have preferred consistency on this point. ¹⁶

16.3.1 Uses

a

The independent personal pronouns serve as surrogates for an antecedent or implicit noun, usually referring to a person; they may serve in a variety of linguistic contexts.

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Their use is, first of all, a feature of the language's economy (3.2.3). As simple surrogates they relieve the tedious monotony of the same noun being repeated again and again. Such is their normal function, for example, in these verbless clauses.

1. **וְהוּא בֶן-אִשָּׁה זוֹנָה** He was the son of a prostitute ['he' for 'Jephthah'].

[Judg 11:1](#)

2. וְהוּא נָעַר He was a young lad ['he' for 'Joseph'].

[Gen 37:2](#)

b

Sometimes, especially in apposition, personal pronouns signify a mild emphasis on some noun or pronoun in a statement, that is, use of a pronoun makes some difference in meaning in a statement.¹⁷ For example, the meaning of 'Did Mary bring this for me?' depends in part on whether one of the words is emphasized. If the emphasis is on Mary ('Did Mary bring this for me?'), the attention is on the fact that Mary was the one who brought the gift; if the emphasis is on one of the pronouns ('Did Mary bring this for me?' or 'Did Mary bring this for me?') attention falls on either the gift or the speaker. In oral/ aural communication we express such distinctions by stress and tone of voice, but in written expression other means are used. In modern texts these may be strictly typographical, but such devices were not available to ancient writers.¹⁸ They rather had to draw on the syntactic and morphological means in constant service in the spoken language, marshaling those resources carefully and often more systematically than we might at first suspect.

c

In the following sections we deal with the independent personal pronouns in both surrogate and emphatic patterns. First, the major classes of clauses, verbal and verbless, will be discussed (16.3.2–3); then the appositional use will be treated (16.3.4). Some minor patterns will be handled last (16.3.5).

16.3.2 Finite Verbal Clauses

a

A finite verb form in Hebrew is intrinsically marked for person, number, and, where relevant, gender: יֵצֵא is third person, plural, and masculine.¹⁹ If an independent pronoun were to be used with such a verb, its occurrence would need some explanation: either יֵצֵא or הֵם יֵצֵא seems to be more than is necessary. Two kinds of explanation are advanced for such grammatical structures, neither of them quite adequate. One set of explanations refers to pleonasm, literally, overgrowth; it is doubtful that any major linguistic element can truly be superfluous or redundant. The second set of explanations refers to emphasis: such explanations can be faulted as being overly vague, but they are susceptible of refinement and reconsideration.²⁰

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b

There are three reasons why an independent pronoun is used with a finite verb; in all three cases both possible word orders are found, pronoun + verb and verb + pronoun, although the former is much more common. The first reason involves a syntactic hole in the language—this is neither a pleonastic nor an emphatic use. The other two involve logical contrast and psychological focus—both of these may loosely be termed emphatic.

c

A hole in the syntactic system arises because the verb need not be fully marked for the subject.²¹ Here are two clauses.

1. וַיֹּאמֶר יִפְתָּח And Jephthah said ...
[Judg 11:7](#)
2. וַיֹּאמְרוּ זִקְנֵי גִלְעָד And the elders of Gilead said ...
[Judg 11:8](#)

In both cases the verb agrees with the subject. The following sentence is also possible, although not attested and thus marked with *.

3. וַיֹּאמֶר יִפְתָּח וְזִקְנֵי גִלְעָד * And Jephthah and the elders of Gilead said ...

The singular verb before a plural coordinate subject is commonplace. If the preceding discourse concerned the first part of this coordinate subject in such a way that it did not need to be named, we might expect the following clause.

4. וַיֹּאמֶר וְזִקְנֵי גִלְעָד ** And he and the elders of Gilead said ...

This clause type is impossible (and is thus marked with **): in such cases, the independent pronoun must be used to form the coordinate subject.

5. וַיֹּאמֶר הוּא וְזִקְנֵי גִלְעָד *And he and the elders of Gilead said ...

Here the pronoun is not pleonastic or emphatic; it serves merely to represent the referent of the pronoun as the chief actor among other actors.²²

6. בֹּא-אַתָּה וְכָל-בֵּיתְךָ אֶל-הַתֵּבָה Go, you and all your house, into the ark.

[Gen 7:1](#)

7. וּנְתַלַּךְ הִיא וְרֵעוּתֶיהָ She and her women friends went.

[Judg 11:38](#)

8. וַתָּשָׁב מִשְׂדֵּי מוֹאָב She (Naomi) and her daughters-in-law arose and returned from the fields of Moab.

[Ruth 1:6](#)

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When another grammatical element intervenes before a subject, it is necessary to add a resumptive personal pronoun.

9. וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם מִמִּצְרַיִם הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ And Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife.

[Gen 13:1](#)

An apposition, however, does not constitute such a separation.

10. וַיָּבֹאוּ יִתְרוֹ מֹשֶׁה וּבָנָיו And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, and his sons came.

[Exod 18:5](#)

d

A second group of uses of independent personal pronouns with finite verbs involves logical structure. The referent of the pronoun may be involved in an explicit antithesis with another person or group of persons.²³

11. דַּבֵּר-אַתָּה עִמָּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעָה וְאַל-יְדַבֵּר עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak.

[Exod 20:19](#)

12. כָּזָאת וְכָזָאת יַעַן אַחִיתֹפֶל אֲנִי ... וְכָזָאת וְכָזָאת יַעֲצֵתִי Ahithophel has advised ... to do such and such, but I advised them to do so and so.

[2 Sam 17:15](#)

13. אֲנִכִּי חָטָאתִי וְאֲנֹכִי הָעֹשִׂיתִי וְאֵלֶּה הַצֹּאֵן מָה I am the one who has sinned; I have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done?

עָשׂוּ

[2 Sam 24:17](#)

14. יִבְשׁוּ רֹדְפֵי וְאֶל-אַבְשָׁה אֲנִי
יִחַתּוּ הַמָּוֶה וְאֶל-אַחַתָּהּ אֲנִי
- Let my persecutors be put to shame,
but let me not be put to shame; let
them be terrified, but let me not be
terrified.

[Jer 17:18](#)

In some cases both parties to the antithesis are referred to with pronouns.

15. הוּא יִשׁוּפֵךְ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה
תִּשׁוּפֶנּוּ עֲקֵב:
- He will crush your head, but you will
crush his heel.

[Gen 3:15](#)

In other cases the antithesis is only implicit; the other, contrasting party is not mentioned.

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16. אֲנִי הַעֲשִׂיתִי אֶת-אַבְרָם:
- I [not YHWH] have made Abram rich.
[Gen 14:23](#)
17. אֲנִי הַעֲשִׂיתִי אֶת-אַבְרָם:
- She [not another] is the right one for
me.
[Judg 14:3](#)
18. שְׁלֹמֹה בְנִךְ יִמְלֹךְ אַחֲרָי
וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב עַל-כִּסְאִי:
- Solomon your son shall be king after
me, and he will sit on my throne [no one
else].
[1 Kgs 1:17](#)

e

The third group of cases relevant here involves psychological focus; most of these involve first- and second-person pronouns.²⁴ In connection with this group Takamitsu Muraoka alludes to "strong emotional heightening" and "focused attention or deep selfconsciousness."²⁵ Most instances involve the first person, in a state of rapturous elevation (# 19), or profound meditation (# 20), or in flashes of self-assertion (## 21–24).

19. אֲנִי לַיהוָה אֶזְבֹּחַ
- I will sing to YHWH.
[Judg 5:3](#)
20. דִּבַּרְתִּי אֲנִי עִם-לְבִי
- I thought to myself.
[Qoh 1:16](#); cf. [2:1](#)
21. אֲנִי נָתַתִּי שִׁפְחָתִי בְּחִיקְךָ
- I gave my maid to your embrace.
[Gen 16:5](#)
22. אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָּכֶם לְרֹאשׁ:
- I will really be your chief.
[Judg 11:9](#)
23. וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּתִּי מֶלֶךְ
- I installed my king.
[Ps 2:6](#)
24. וְאֲנִי בָנִיתִי בֵּית-זֶבֶל לָךְ
- I have built you an exalted house.
[2 Chr 6:2](#)

Self-assertion may be combined with antithesis.

25. אַתָּה עַתָּה תַעֲשֶׂה מְלוּכָה
... אֲנִי אֶתֵּן לָךְ אֶת-כֶּרֶם
נָבוֹת
- Are you in charge anymore? ... I will
give you the vineyard of Naboth.

Pragmatic antithesis arises in cases of answering questions and making promises.

- Gen 21:23–24

In the second-person cases, the pronoun indicates strongly focused attention; the speaker may be giving a command or leading up to a demand.

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- Gen 31:6

Judg 10:13

1 Sam 22:18

a

b

Gen 36:8

C

This construction has a "selective-exclusive" force, in Muraoka's term: the subject/ focus is singled out and contrasted with other possible or actual alternatives.²⁶ In some cases the passage is concerned with the uniqueness of the subject/focus.²⁷

2. יהוה הוא האֱלֹהִים אֵין
עוֹד מִלְבָּדוֹ: YHWH is God; there is none beside him.
[Deut 4:35](#)
3. יהוה הוא האֱלֹהִים יהוה
הוא האֱלֹהִים: YHWH is God. YHWH is God [in sharp
contrast to Baal].
[1 Kgs 18:39](#)
4. וַיהוה הוא הַהֹלֵךְ לְפָנַיךָ YHWH is the one who walks before
you.²⁸
[Deut 31:8](#)
5. הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר יְהוה
הוא הַקָּדוֹשׁ The man whom YHWH chooses, he is
the one who is holy.²⁹
[Num 16:7](#)

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In this focus construction the subject/focus can be a pronoun (first- or second-person).³⁰

6. אַתָּה־הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים You are God.
[2 Sam 7:28](#)
7. אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא מַחָה
פְּשָׁעֶיךָ I, I blot out your transgressions.
[Isa 43:25](#)
8. אַתָּה־הוּא מֶלֶכִּי You are my king.
[Ps 44:5](#)

The focus constructions can also be used when there is a change in the center of attention.

9. וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ... וַיּוֹסֶף
הוּא הַשְּׁלִיט עַל־הָאָרֶץ And the (other) sons of Israel went ...
but Joseph was the governor of the
land.
[Gen 42:5–6](#)
10. וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי־נֹחַ ... שֵׁם וְחָם
וַיִּפֹּת וְחָם הוּא אָבִי כְנָעַן: The sons of Noah were ... Shem, Ham,
and Japheth. Now Ham was the father
of Canaan.
[Gen 9:18](#)

d

In classifying clauses with independent personal pronouns, the pronoun follows the basic subject and predicate (8.4.2).

11. אִישׁ רֹאשׁ לְבֵית־אָבִתּוֹ
הוּא: Each man is head of his paternal house.
[Num 1:4](#)

Here again, under a *casus pendens* analysis, the grammatical mechanism is easier to grasp: the basic or underlying subject is a focus marker (here, אִישׁ), and the rest of the clause has the structure predicate-subject (here, רֹאשׁ ... הוּא).³¹ The focus/subject again has a "selective-exclusive" force.

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12. All the wealth ... is ours, as well as our

כָּל-הָעָשָׂר ... לָנוּ הוּא
וּלְבָנֵינוּ

children's.

[Gen 31:16](#)

13. מִקְנֵהֶם וְקִנְיָנָם
וְכָל-בְּהֶמְתָּם הֲלוֹא לָנוּ
הֵם

As for the livestock, their property, and all their other animals, won't they become ours?³²

[Gen 34:23](#)

14. וְהַלָּחַת מַאֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים
הַמָּה

The tablets—they were the work of God.

[Exod 32:16](#)

15. זֹכְרוֹ טָמֵא הוּא:

As for his discharge—it is unclean.

[Lev 15:2](#)

16. הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ
לְתוֹר אֶתָּה אֶרֶץ אֲכָלֶת
יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ הִיא

The land we explored—it devours those living in it.

[Num 13:32](#)

Classifying clauses may have the rare word order predicate-subject or, with a pronoun, predicate-pronoun-subject.³³

17. שְׁשִׁים הִמָּה מְלָכוֹת ...
אַחַת הִיא יוֹנִתִּי

Sixty queens there may be ... but my dove is unique.

[Cant 6:8–9](#)

18. צְדִיק הוּא יְהוָה

YHWH is righteous.³⁴

[Lam 1:18](#)

16.3.4 Apposition

a

When an independent personal pronoun stands in apposition to a suffixed pronoun, it serves an emphatic role.³⁵ The suffixed pronoun may be a genitive attached to a noun (## 1–4) or a preposition (## 5–8).

1. וּפְגִרֵיכֶם אֲתָם יִפְּלוּ
בַּמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה:

Your damned carcasses shall fall in this desert.

[Num 14:32](#)

2. אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְנוּ שְׁנֵינוּ אֲנִיחָנוּ

what the two of us have sworn, even we

[1 Sam 20:42](#)

3. מִי־יָתֵן מוֹתִי אֲנִי תַחֲתָיִךְ

If only I had died instead of you.

[2 Sam 19:1](#)

4. אָבֵד זְכָרָם הִמָּה:

The memory of them has perished.

[Ps 9:7](#)

5. לֹא אֶת-אַבְתָּינוּ כָּרַת יְהוָה
אֶת-הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת כִּי אֲתָנוּ
אֲנִיחָנוּ

Not with our forebears did YHWH make this covenant, but with us. [Deut 5:3](#)

6. בִּי־אֲנִי אֲדֹנִי הָעוֹן On me, my lord, is the guilt.
[1 Sam 25:24](#)
7. וְלִי אֲנִי־עֲבָדְךָ ... לֹא־קָרָא: But me, [me of all people] just me, your servant, ... he has not invited.³⁶
[1 Kgs 1:26](#)
8. הֲעַת לָכֶם אַתֶּם לְשֹׁבֵת Is it time for you to be living in your paneled houses while this house is desolate?
בְּבִתֵּיכֶם סְפוּנִים וְהַבַּיִת הַזֶּה חָרֵב:
[Hag 1:4](#)

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Less often, the suffixed pronoun with the apposition is a verbal suffix in an accusative function.³⁷

9. כִּי־צִמְתֶּם ... הַצּוֹם צִמְתֵּנִי אֲנִי: When you fasted, was it for me that you fasted? When you ate and when you drank, weren't you the eaters, weren't you the drinkers?
וְכִי תֹאכְלוּ וְכִי תִשְׁתּוּ הֲלוֹא אַתֶּם הָאֹכְלִים וְאַתֶּם הַשְׁתִּים:
[Zech 7:5–6](#)

An apparent obverse of this construction involves an independent pronoun as a *casus pendens* with the same referent as a suffixed pronoun.

10. אֲנִי יָדַי נְטוּ שָׁמַיִם I, my hands have stretched out the heavens.
[Isa 45:12](#)

16.3.5 Minor Uses

a

Under this general rubric are considered three quite distinct uses of the independent personal pronouns: with particles, as a neutrum referring to an unspecific antecedent, and as a prepositive marker of names. The last two of these uses involve only third-person forms.

b

The two particles of interest are הִנֵּה, usually 'behold' (and the related הִנּוּ), and גַּם, usually 'also' (and the similar אַף). The particles הִנּוּ and הִנֵּה can call special attention either to a certain statement as a whole or to a single word out of the statement.³⁸ They may stand before the independent pronouns to highlight the pronominal element.³⁹ A participle commonly follows הִנֵּה + pronoun (# 1; cf. 37.6f, 40.2.1d), sometimes with intervening elements (# 2); other forms may follow the combination of הִנֵּה + pronoun (# 3).

1. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הִנֵּה־הוּא נִחְבֵּא אֶל־הַכִּלִּים: YHWH said, "He has hidden himself in the baggage."
[1 Sam 10:22](#)
2. כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר־בִּנֵּיתִי אֲנִי הִרְסָה YHWH said this: "What I built, I'll tear down."
[Jer 45:4](#)

3. וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הֲגַה אַתָּה
זָקֵנָה They said to him, "You have gotten old!"
[1 Sam 8:5](#)

The particle is suffixed before an independent pronoun only in the combination [הֲנִי-אֲנִי](#).⁴⁰

4. הֲנִי-אֲנִי וְדֹרְשֵׁתִי אֶת-צֹאֲנִי I myself will search for my sheep.
[Ezek 34:11](#)

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In those instances in which the personal pronoun occurs after **גַּם** (or, less often, **אֲףִי**), if it is in apposition to a subject (# 5) or in a *casus pendens* construction (# 6), it has no special emphasis, and the particle means little more than 'also.' The force of the pronoun may be stronger if it stands in apposition to a prepositional object (# 7), a verbal object (# 8), or a possessive suffix (# 9); see 16.3.4a.⁴¹

5. וַצִּלָּה גַּם-הִיא יָלְדָה Zillah also gave birth.
[Gen 4:22](#)
6. אֲףִי-אֲנִי בַחֲלוֹמִי I, too, in my dream ...
[Gen 40:16](#)
7. וַתְּהִי אֵלָיו גַּם-הוּא רוּחַ
אֱלֹהִים The spirit of God also came upon him.
[1 Sam 19:23](#)
8. בְּרַכֵּנִי גַם-אֲנִי אָבִי: Bless me, me too, father.
[Gen 27:34](#)
9. אֶת-דָּמֶךָ גַּם-אַתָּה: your blood, yours also
[1 Kgs 21:19](#)

C

The third-person singular pronoun, masculine or feminine, may serve as a neutrum with respect to some vague action or circumstance (6.6). The feminine is usual.

10. הֲלֹא-הִיא כְּתוּבָה עַל-סֵפֶר
הַיֵּשֶׁר Is it not written in the Book of Yashar?
[Josh 10:13](#)
11. אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי
מִיָּהוּהָ הִיא His parents did not know that this was
from YHWH.
[Judg 14:4](#)

Other modes may be used to express the neutrum; note, in the following example, [זֹאת](#).⁴²

12. וַאֲחֻשְׁבָּה לָדַעַת זֶעַת עִמָּל
הוּא בְעֵינַי: When I tried to understand all this, it
was painful to me.⁴³
[Ps 73:16](#) Qere

Finally, **הוּא** precedes a personal name only in the post-exilic books and has the force of 'the same' without special emphasis.⁴⁴

13. the same Ezra [resumes subject lost]

הוא עֶזְרָא

track of after a long genealogy]

[Ezra 7:6](#)

14.

הוא שְׁלֹמֹת

the same Shelomoth [refers to previous verse and serves to introduce an explanatory parenthesis]

[1 Chr 26:26](#)

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16.4 Suffixed Personal Pronouns

a

The uses of the pronominal suffixes is our chief concern here, but a few words about their morphology may be useful to begin with.

	singular	plural
first common	נִי, ׀י	נוּ
second masc.	ךָ	כֶּם
second fem.	ךָ	כֶּן
third masc.	וּ, ׀ה, הוּ	הֵם, ׀ם
third fem.	הָ, ׀הָ	הֵן, ׀ן

The most striking feature of these suffixes is the fact that possessive and objective forms are the same, except in the first-person singular, where -î is possessive and -nî, objective.⁴⁵ The phonological development of many of the suffixes is complex, but one point is especially important. The MT form ׀- (-kā) is a blend of an unvoiced suffix -k (so the consonantal text) and a final long-vowel form -kā (so the vocalization). The long form of the suffix is attested regularly at Qumran in the writing כָּה- and sporadically in the MT (e.g., בָּאֲכָה 'your coming,' [Gen 10:30](#)). Similarly, ׀- is a blend of unvoiced -k and -ki the form expected on etymological grounds. Qumran regularly uses the suffix in the form כִּי -, and the MT rarely shows this form, too (e.g., רַעֲתֵכִי 'your miseries,' [Jer 11:15](#)).⁴⁶

b

The masculine pronoun is often used for a feminine antecedent (## 1–2; 6.5.3).

1. וּבְרִגְלֵיהֶם תַּעֲכֹסְנָה: with ornaments jingling on their (masc. for בְּנוֹת) ankles
[Isa 3:16](#)
2. וְכָל-הַבְּאֵרֹת ... סָתְמוּם: And as for all the wells (fem.) ... the Philistines stopped them (masc.) up and filled them (masc.) with earth.
[Gen 26:15](#)

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Singular suffixes can have a collective reference (# 3), and, conversely, plural suffixes may be used after collective singulars (# 4; 7.2.1b).

3. וַיְהִי כִּקְרֹא יְהוּדִי שְׁלֹשׁ דְּלָתוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יִקְרָעָה: Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns (pl.), (the king) cut them (sing.) off.
[Jer 36:23](#)
4. Your descendants (sing.) will be

גַּר יִהְיֶה זָרְעֶךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא
לָהֶם

strangers (sing.) in a land not their own
(pl.).

[Gen 15:13](#)

c

Attached to a noun or preposition the suffixes are in the genitive case, while attached to a verb, אָת, or הֵנָּה they are in the accusative function. We consider first the genitive usage, then the more complex range of the accusative, and finally the reflexive usages.

d

The genitive suffixes serve the same range of purposes as other genitives (9.5), although the adjectival purposes are rarely relevant. Subjective genitive suffixes are found, of agency (# 5), authorship (# 6), and relation (# 7; 9.5.1).

5. בְּיוֹם אֲכָלְכֶם מִמֶּנּוּ when you eat of it

[Gen 3:5](#)

6. בְּרִיתִי my covenant

[Gen 9:9](#)

7. אִשְׁתּוֹ his wife

[Gen 2:25](#)

Adverbial genitive suffixes may represent a direct (## 8–9) or a mediated object (## 10–12; 9.5.2).

8. אִישׁ הֲרַגְתִּי לְפָצְעִי I have killed a man for wounding me.

[Gen 4:23](#)

9. חֲמָסִי the wrong I am suffering, the wrong done to me

[Gen 16:5](#), [Jer 51:35](#)

10. אֲנִי אֶתֵּן אֶת־שְׂכָרְךָ I will pay you (lit., I will give your hire).

[Exod 2:9](#)

11. וַיֵּתֶן חֲנּוּ He granted him favor (lit., He gave his favor).

[Gen 39:21](#)

12. אָפֶס כִּי לֹא תִהְיֶה תַפְאֲרָתְךָ But the honor will not be yours (lit., But it will not be your honor).

[Judg 4:9](#)

The pronominal suffix varies with prepositional phrases in /, which also indicate possession. Rarely, a noun is marked for possession with both a suffix and a prepositional (# 13) or relative (## 14–15) phrase.

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13. אֹיְבֵי לִי my enemies

[Ps 27:2](#)

14. כַּרְמִי שְׁלִי my own vineyard

[Cant 1:6](#)

15. מִטָּתוֹ שְׁלֹשְׁלֹמֹה Solomon's own carriage

[Cant 3:7](#)

Other prepositional suffixes serve the same role as substantive objects of prepositions.

16. וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים And God said to them ...
[Gen 1:28](#)

e

Since nouns in a construct chain constitute a unified idea, a pronominal suffix attached to the last noun in a chain logically affects the whole construction.

17. הַר־קֹדֶשׁי my holy mountain
[Ps 2:6](#)
18. אֱלִילֵי כֶסֶף his silver idols
[Isa 2:20](#)
19. כְּלֵי מִלְחָמָתוֹ his weapons
[Deut 1:41](#)
20. יַד־יְמִינוֹ his right hand
[Judg 3:15](#)

When a pronominal suffix refers to a noun in a chain that cannot be suffixed, other constructions, such as apposition (## 21–22) or an accusative of specification (# 23), are used to accommodate the desired modifications.

21. כְּתָנָתוֹ אֶת־כְּתָנֶת הַפָּסִים his robe, the richly ornamented robe
[Gen 37:23](#)
22. גִּבְעִי גִבְעֵי הַכֶּסֶף my cup, the silver cup
[Gen 44:2](#)
23. מִדּוֹ בִד his garment in linen
[Lev 6:3](#)

f

Accusative suffixes are used as either direct (## 24–28) or "dative" objects (## 28–29; 10.2.1). In a double-accusative construction, one of the objects can be represented by a suffix (# 27).

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24. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים God blessed them.
[Gen 1:28](#)
25. סָבְבוּנִי They surround me.
[Ps 109:3](#)
26. תִּמְלֹאמוּ נַפְשִׁי I will gorge myself on them.
[Exod 15:9](#)
27. וַיַּעֲשֵׂהוּ כְּסֶל He made it into an image.
[Judg 17:4](#)
28. וְהִפְרֵתִי אֹתָךְ ... וְנָתַתִּיךְ And I will make you fruitful ... and I am going to give you ...
[Gen 17:6](#)
29. צִמַּתְנִי Did you fast for me?
[Zech 7:5](#)

The neutrum or vague referent can be marked with an object pronominal suffix, usually feminine. The action or state is ordinarily described in the preceding clause(s).

30. וַיֵּאֱמֶן בַּיהוָה וַיַּחשְׁבֶּה לּוֹ
צְדָקָה:
Now he trusted YHWH and he counted
it to him as righteousness.
[Gen 15:6](#)
31. בַּה אֶדַע
By this I will know.
[Gen 24:14](#)
32. לֹא זָכַרְתָּ אַחֲרֵיתָהּ:
You did not reflect on what might
happen.
[Isa 47:7](#)
33. עָלַי הָיוּ כָּלֵנָה:
Everything is against me.
[Gen 42:36](#)

g

In many languages there is a separate series of reflexive pronouns, for example, the English '-self' or French '-même' forms. Hebrew has no such series; rather, with a preposition (or **את**) a suffix may be used with a reflexive force. In some contexts it has an additional emphatic nuance, but this meaning is recognized more by logic than by formal indicators.

34. וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ אֶהוּד חֶרֶב
And Ehud made for himself a sword.
[Judg 3:16](#)
35. וַיָּבֵא אֶת־הַתֵּבָה
אֵלָיו
And he brought it (the dove) to himself
in the ark.
[Gen 8:9](#)
36. כִּי־גָמְלוּ לָהֶם רָעָה:
For they have brought evil upon
themselves.
[Isa 3:9](#)
37. הִסְלִיכוּ וּקְשְׁשׁוּ לָהֶם תִּבְנוֹ:
They must go and gather straw for
themselves.
[Exod 5:7](#)
38. וַיִּרְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֶת־בָּרֶעַ
The Israelite foremen saw themselves
in trouble.
[Exod 5:19](#)

Footnotes:

1. R. H. Robins, *Ancient and Mediaeval Grammatical Theory in Europe* (London: Bell, 1951) 39–40, 66; Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1967) 33–34, cf. 26, 28; John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 12.
2. The deictic quality of pronouns is highlighted in the late antique view of them as "substance (or being) without qualities." See Robins, *Short History of Linguistics*, 37, cf. 54, 57–58, 79–80.
3. There are some interesting marginal cases; in some instances kl 'each, all' is used as a pronoun, while 'bdk 'your servant' is a high-style, quasi-honorific substitute for a first-person pronoun. On 'bdk/h in Ugaritic, see *UT* § 6.15. See also P. Swiggers, *MPD* 60–61.
4. Note especially that Hebrew has no pronominal adjectives, such as are common in the European languages (English 'mine,' French 'mienne,' German 'mein'); on reflexive usage, see 16.4g.
5. It is occasionally contended that the appositional use of the independent personal pronouns shows that they are not strictly nominative, but that use is comparatively marginal. This is apparently the view of T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Magnes/Leiden: Brill, 1985); this volume is an important contribution, and its influence on our discussion has been central. On the double patterning, however, the traditional view has much to commend it.

6. *UT* § 6.4; in Hebrew the role of these pronouns is played by *ʾt* + suffixes.
 7. E.g., *anāku* 'I'; *jāti* 'me, my'; *jāsi* 'to me.' See Wolfram von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 41–42.
 8. See GKC §135d-h / p. 438 and below, 16.3.4.
 9. There are a very few instances of the independent pronoun in the oblique cases, apart from the appositional use; these are all either textually doubtful or to be explained by ellipsis; cf. [2 Kgs 9:18](#), [Isa 18:2](#), [Nah 2:9](#), etc. M. Dahood has suggested recognition of some other cases; see, e.g., his paper "The Independent Personal Pronoun in the Oblique Case in Hebrew," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970) 86–90.
 10. The most common pronouns in order of frequency (after SA/THAT) are *hūʾ* 1,390 times, *ʾanī* 870, *ʾattā* 743, *hem* and *hemmā* 551 (*hem* 269, *hemmā* 282), *hīʾ* 485, *ʾanōkī* 358, *ʾattēm* 282, *ʾanāhnū* 125.
 11. As in all the Semitic languages; see, e.g., G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 7; C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1908), 1.297-306.
 12. Ugaritic and Phoenician also have the two forms; *UT* § 6.2. Arabic has only the short form, *ʾanā*; Akkadian, only the long form, *anāku*.
- In Hebrew there are no occurrences of *ʾnky* in Haggai, [Zechariah 1–8](#), Canticles, Lamentations, Esther, Qoheleth, and Ezra; it is rare in Ezekiel, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. On these facts and the Mishnaic usage, see M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 39. For an argument that *ʾny* is the marked member of the pair and is non-predicative in use, while *ʾnky* is often predicative (viz., 'It is I who ...'), see H. B. Rosén, "*ʾnky* et *ʾny*," in his *East and West: Selected Writings in Linguistics. 2. Hebrew and Semitic Linguistics* (Munich: Fink, 1984) 262–81.
13. In the consonantal text of the Pentateuch, there is only one third-person singular form, *hwʾ*, pointed to agree with the rest of the MT; this may reflect a form of Hebrew in which *hūʾ* was epicene (cf. 6.5.2). There are many other explanations available; see, e.g., Joüon § 39c / p. 91.
 14. Cf. Arabic *hūwa*, *hiya* and probably Ugaritic *hw*, *hy*.
 15. See E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 57, who reports equal use of the long and short forms (*hwʾh* 45 times, *hwʾ* 65 times; *hyʾh* 19 times, *hyʾ* 21 times).
 16. Similarly, Qumran (and Samaritan) *ʾtmh* suggests that there was a trisyllabic as well as a bisyllabic form of the second-person masculine plural form, as there seems to have been of the rare corresponding feminine; see Qimron, *Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 58.
 17. Muraoka is right in complaining, "What annoys us here is that none of these grammarians [who use the concept of emphasis] gives us a precise and clear definition of their concept"; *Emphatic Words*, 47.
 18. "Modern" here refers to the period since the Renaissance and the propagation of printing; on this ancient/modern gap, see, e.g., M. O'Connor, "Writing Systems and Native Speaker Analyses," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 1986, ed. K. H. Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 536–43.
 19. On pronouns with non-finite verbs, see Chaps. 35–37.
 20. This is the burden of Muraoka's *Emphatic Words*.
 21. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 62–63.
 22. The construction under discussion is verb + subject (the latter including the pronoun); the superficially similar subject + pronoun + verb, where the subject is either coordinate (e.g., [Gen 14:24](#)) or complex (e.g., [Gen 15:4, 24:7](#)) is a nominative absolute construction of a distinct type (cf. 4.7, 8.4.1, and 16.3.3); contrast Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 55.
 23. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 54–56.
 24. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 58.
 25. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 50, 51.
 26. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 72–74 (quotation from p. 72).
 27. Compare the relative clause headed by *hūʾ* in [Gen 2:14](#).
 28. In the clause that immediately follows this one, *hūʾ* is the subject and is probably used because the underlying

subject *yhwh* and the verb form *yihyeh* used there are so similar.

29. Contrast the clauses cited here with other identifying clauses that have a predicate with a definite article and lack an independent pronoun, e.g., [Exod 9:27](#), [1 Kgs 3:22bis](#).

30. The demonstrative sense of *hû* is plain here; cf. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 69–70, especially on related patterns in Aramaic. On the interpretation of [Ps 44:5](#) as 'You are he—my king,' see pp. 67–69. Other examples of the construction in [Isa 37:16](#); [51:9](#), [10](#), [12](#); [52:6](#); [Jer 14:22](#), [29:23](#) *Qere*; the preponderance of Isaianic material is noteworthy.

31. Contrast Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 75–76.

32. The interrogative *he* appears in the clause proper, after the focus marker.

33. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 76–77.

34. The predicate is so positioned as to yield the initial *š* required for the acrostic.

35. In these cases, Muraoka alleges, "there was felt a need to bring out the personal element with greater force"; *Emphatic Words*, 61. The student will appreciate the difficulty of specifying the kind of emphasis involved in any given construction. Note also [Mic 7:3](#).

36. The quasi-pronominal sense of *ʿbdk* as *ʿny* is clear here; cf. n. 3.

37. Muraoka claims that # 9 is a unique case; see *Emphatic Words*, 61–62.

38. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 137–40. For more on the presentative particles, see 40.2.1.

39. In case the personal pronoun stands before *hnh*, it serves as a nominative absolute (see 4.7, 8.3a) to the clause after *hnh*. If *hnh* has no suffix, the clause is usually verbal (e.g., [Num 3:12](#) = [18:6](#)). If *hnh* is suffixed, the clause is participial (e.g., [Gen 6:17](#)). For a personal pronoun before unsuffixed *hnh* introducing a verbless clause, see 40.2.1c # 14.

40. All the examples are first person and in Ezekiel ([6:3](#); [34:11](#)—contrast v [10](#); [34:20](#)); Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 62. Compare [Ezek 6:3](#) and [Gen 6:17](#).

41. Contrast the treatment of Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 63–65, 141–46.

42. The usual understanding of [Judg 11:39](#) is that the verb *wattəhî* shows a neutrum usage, referring to the verbal action described in the next clause (viz., 'It became the custom in Israel that ...'). P. Tribble has proposed that the verb has a true antecedent, Jephthah's daughter herself (viz., 'She became a tradition in Israel'); see *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 106–7.

43. In this verse, both *zōʾt* and *hû* are neutrum pronouns.

44. Cf. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 65–66.

45. The final *yod* has a problematic feature. It is generally accepted that, because *waw* and *yod* are similar in several forms of square script, some confusions of first- and third-person singular suffixes may be found in the MT. (*Waw/yod* variation is the most common source of Kethiv-*Qere* variation; see J. Barr, "A New Look at Kethibh-*Qere*," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 [1981] 19–37, at 27–28, 33.) M. Dahood, basing himself not only on such possible confusions but also on comparative evidence, alleged that Biblical Hebrew actually had a third-person *i* suffix; see, e.g., *Psalms III* (*Anchor Bible* 17A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 375–76. There is no evidence for such a suffix that cannot more simply be explained on the basis of (a small number of) scribal errors. For a review, see Z. Zevit, "The Linguistic and Contextual Arguments in Support of a [Hebrew 3](#) m.s. Suffix -*y*," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 9 (1977) 315–28. As for the possessive/ objective distribution, it should be noted that the third person plural forms *-hem*, *-hen* are very rarely used on verbs.

46. On the long forms, see Qimron, *Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 58–59; he reports that the long form *-kh* is found approximately 900 times, the short form *-k* about 160 times. With regard to the feminine *-ky*, note that [Jer 11:15](#) is very difficult; see William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 348.

The MT pausal form *-āk*, sometimes attributed to specifically Aramaic influence, is rather to be seen as an example of apocope in pause found in both Semitic and non-Semitic languages; on analogy with *-hā* and *-āh* the *-āk* form was extended to general (i.e., non-pausal) use in post-biblical texts in the three major reading traditions of Hebrew-Tiberian, Babylonian, and Palestinian. See Richard Steiner, "From Proto-Hebrew to Mishnaic Hebrew:

The History of אִי־ , and אִי־ ," *Hebrew Annual Review* 3 (1979) 157–74.

17 Demonstratives

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17.1 Introduction

a

The demonstratives are independent deictic words that may be used as pronouns, taking the place of a noun, or as adjectives, qualifying or determining a noun. Deictic words point out or call attention to someone or something (13.1). Demonstratives fall into two series. The "near" or "immediate" demonstratives refer to someone or something that is relatively near the speaker or relatively present to the imagination. The "far" or "remote" demonstratives refer to someone or something relatively distant.¹ The near demonstrative in English is 'this,' and the far is 'that'; both are inflected for number, but not otherwise. Hebrew has one class of true demonstratives, those with the z element and אֵלֶּה, and uses the third-person pronouns as quasi-demonstratives; the z set has near reference (## 1, 3–4), and the personal pronouns far reference (# 2).² Both serve in adjectival roles (## 1–2); the z set also has strictly pronominal use (## 3–4).

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | בְּעַל הַחֲלָמוֹת הַזֶּה | this dreamer
Gen 37:19 |
| 2. | הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא | that land
Gen 2:12 |
| 3. | לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי
מֵאִישׁ לִקְחָהּ-זֹאת: | 'Woman' will be used to name this one
because this one was taken from man.
Gen 2:23 |
| 4. | הֵן-זֹאת לֹא-צִדִּיקָה | In this you are not right.
Job 33:12 |

17.2 Morphology

a

The two major series of demonstratives are conventionally set in parallel.

	near	far
sing. masc.	זֶה	הַהוּא
sing. fem.	זֹה, זוֹ, זֹאת ³	הַהִיא
pl. masc.	אֵלֶּה, אֵלֶּה	הֵהֶם, הֵהֶמָּה
pl. fem.		הֵהֶנָּה

As we argue in the next section, this near/far arrangement is not precise, as is hinted by the use of the article in

the far demonstrative set. The formative elements in the near demonstrative set are *z* and *l*.⁴ (The formative element *h* is used in the article and is thus associated with the deictic function of definiteness; see 13.1.) The variants of the feminine singular are rare;⁵ the archaic spelling זֹר, occurs twice, and the spelling זֹה occurs eleven times.⁶ The form אֵל is found nine times, usually with the article; it is possible that אֵל should be taken as a variant writing and vocalized אֵל.⁷ There is a series of expanded near demonstratives:⁸ הַלֵּז (masc., fem.; seven times, all but one use adjectival), הַלֵּזָה (masc.; only in [Gen 24:65, 37:19](#)), הַלֵּזָה (fem.; only in [Ezek 36:35](#)).⁹

b

There are several groups of related forms. The determinative pronoun זֶה (sometimes זֹה) is rare. The so-called demonstrative adverbs show the *h* and *l* formative elements (## 1–2), as well as *n* (## 3–4, 6, 8) and *k* (## 5–8).

- | | | | | | |
|----|---------|--------|----|-------|--------|
| 1. | הֵלֶם | hither | 5. | אֵךְ | indeed |
| 2. | הֵלֶאָה | hence | 6. | אֵכֵן | indeed |
| 3. | הִנֵּה | behold | 7. | כֹּה | here |
| 4. | הִנֵּהָ | hither | 8. | כֵּן | thus |

Other adverbs of demonstrative force are אָז 'then,' שָׁם 'there,' and שָׁמָּה 'thither.' The article (13.5.2b) and אֵת (10.3) are also deictic words that tend to be demonstrative.¹⁰

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17.3 True Demonstratives and Quasi-Demonstratives

a

Only the near demonstratives are true demonstratives; the determined personal pronouns (הֵהוּא and its equivalents) are quasi-demonstratives, which serve only in certain constructions in which the true demonstratives are used. A number of arguments support this distinction.¹¹

b

The first difference between the sets involves case diversity: זֶה¹² can be used in all functions, nominative (## 1–2), genitive (## 3–4), and accusative (## 5–6).

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה: | This is what YHWH commands.
Num 30:2 |
| 2. | זֶה־יִהְיֶה לָכֶם גְּבוּל יָם: | This will be your western border.
Num 34:6 |
| 3. | שָׁבַע זֹאת | the week of this one
Gen 29:27 |
| 4. | לְזֹאת יִקְרָא | It shall be called (to) this one.
Gen 2:23 |
| 5. | קְרָא נֹאֲזֶה | Read this.
Isa 29:11 |
| 6. | שְׁלַח־נָא אֶת־זֹאת | Send this person away.
2 Sam 13:17 |

הוּא, on the other hand, as a personal pronoun, occurs only in the nominative (see 16.2a), and הֵהוּא occurs only as an attributive adjective.

c

The second difference involves the functional load of the two sets of demonstratives; in all cases where languages with two sets of demonstratives use a contrasting pair (e.g., English 'We talked of this and that'), Hebrew uses only **זה**. Thus, **הוא** can have the true demonstrative pronoun as its antecedent (## 7–8), but it is never used in juxtaposition with it to express 'this one ... that one.'

7. וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-הַעֲבָד
מִי-הָאִישׁ הַלָּזֶה הַהֹלֵךְ
בַּשָּׂדֶה לִקְרָאתָנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר
הַעֲבָד הוּא אֲדֹנִי
- And she (Rebekah) asked the servant:
"Who is that man in the field coming to
meet us?" "He is my master," the servant
answered.

[Gen 24:65](#)

8. וְהָיָה אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלַיִךְ זֶה
יֵלֶךְ אִתָּךְ הוּא יֵלֶךְ וְכָל
אֲשֶׁר-אֹמַר אֵלַיִךְ זֶה
לֹא-יֵלֶךְ עִמָּךְ הוּא יֵלֶךְ:
- And it shall be the case that he of whom I
say to you, "This one shall go with you,"
he (or, that one) shall go with you; and all
those of whom I say to you, "That one
(or, This one) shall not go in your
company," he (or, that one) shall not go.

[Judg 7:4](#)

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By contrast, **זה** is used for both the "near" object and for the "far" object when a pair is juxtaposed.

9. זֹאת אֹמֶרֶת ... וְזֹאת אֹמֶרֶת
- This one said ... and that one said ...
10. עוֹד זֶה מְדַבֵּר וְזֶה בָּא
- This one was still speaking when that
one arrived.

[1 Kgs 3:23](#)

[Job 1:16](#)

זהוהו is never used in this way.

d

The third argument involves the direction of reference. The true demonstrative **זה** can be used for reference backward (anaphora; # 11) or forward (cataphora; # 12).

11. זֹאת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי
לְאַבְרָהָם
- This is the land I promised on oath to
Abraham.
12. אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי-אֶזֶר בְּלָחָן
- These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan ...

[Deut 34:4](#); cf. vv [1–3](#)

[Gen 36:27](#)

הוא and **ההוא**, on the other hand, refer only to what precedes them.

e

Even when **הזה** is bracketed as an attributive, it retains a stronger deictic force than **ההוא**. Contrast, for example, [Jer 25:13](#) **הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת** ('that land,' of which we have been speaking) and [v 9](#) **הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת** ('this land,' where Jeremiah is found).

17.4 True Demonstratives

17.4.1 Syntactic Properties

a

זֶה and its equivalents may be bracketed with other words in a sentence as a nominal equivalent, in any grammatical function, or as an attributive. We have already cited examples of the former construction (see 17.3b); we need only comment on the attributive use. As an attributive זֶה is used in three diverse ways. It may be used like an attributive adjective (i.e., with the article and after its head; ## 1–2) or like a predicate adjective (i.e., anarthrous and preceding its head; ## 3–5).

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. | בְּדֹרֹר הַזֶּה | in this generation
Gen 7:1 |
| 2. | הַגּוֹי הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה: | this great nation
Deut 4:6 |
| 3. | זֶה מֹשֶׁה | this Moses
Exod 32:1 |
| 4. | זֹאת קִוְּמָתְךָ | this stature of yours
Cant 7:8 |
| 5. | הֵן אֶרֶץ כַּשְׂדִּים זֶה הָעָם | Look at the land of the Babylonians, this people.
Isa 23:13 |

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The latter construction occurs usually, but not exclusively (# 5), with proper names (# 3) or with nouns bearing a pronominal suffix (# 4). Finally, with nouns determined by a pronominal suffix, the attributive demonstrative may show a mixture of these two constructions, appearing after its head word but without the article (## 6–8). It may be construed as an apposition in such cases.

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|
| 6. | אַתְּתִי אֵלֶּה | these (things), miraculous signs of mine
Exod 10:1 |
| 7. | מִשְׁבַּעְתִּי זֹאת | from this, my oath
Gen 24:8 |
| 8. | וְאִם־תִּגִּידִי אֶת־דְּבָרֵנוּ זֶה | If you tell this (thing, the) deed of ours ...
Josh 2:20 |

17.4.2 Simple Demonstrative Uses

a

זֶה can be used in any situation where an object is to be pointed out, whether in reality or imagination. This deictic force informs all its uses, though the relationship between the deixis and the context may vary.

b

A simple deictic force is evident in various expressions of time (cf. English 'Do it this minute').

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | לְמוֹעֵד הַזֶּה | by this time
Gen 17:21 |
| 2. | קוּם כִּי זֶה הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן
יְהוָה אֶת־סִסְרָא בְיָדְךָ | Go—this is the day YHWH has given
Sisera into your hands. |

3. זאת הפעם עצם מעצמי [Judg 4:14](#)
this time, bone of my bones
[Gen 2:23](#)

The phrase היום הזה is almost invariably adverbial.¹³ It specifies the time when an action occurs (# 4) and is thus equivalent to adverbial היום (13.5.2b).

4. היום הזה אֶחָל גְּדֹלָךְ Today I will begin to exalt you.
[Josh 3:7](#)

In dating events, היום הזה is usually used for past and future events, while היום הזה (or היום הזה) is reserved for present time;¹⁴ the near deictic can, however, be used to refer to far distant time (# 5).¹⁵

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5. בִּשְׁנַת שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה In the six-hundredth year of Noah's life ...
לְחַיֵּי־נֹחַ ... בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה on this day ...
[Gen 7:11](#)

This association with time is extended to circumstances where there is no immediacy or explicit dating: anarthrous זֶה (rarely זאת) occurs with numerals in expressions of time and appears to emphasize the time (cf. the English redundancies 'this here' and 'that there').

6. וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה הִחַיָּה יְהוָה Now then, YHWH has kept me alive, just
אוֹתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר זֶה as he promised, these forty-five years.
אַרְבָּעִים וְחָמֵשׁ שָׁנָה
[Josh 14:10](#)
7. וַיִּנְסּוּ אֹתִי זֶה עָשָׂר פְּעָמִים They tested me ten times.
[Num 14:22](#)
8. וְהָיִית כְּאִשָּׁה זֶה יָמִים Act like a woman who has spent many
רַבִּים מִתְאַבֵּלָת עַל־מֵת: days grieving for the dead.
[2 Sam 14:2](#)

c

The simple deictic may refer to persons, too; in such cases English idiom tends to use a personal pronoun.¹⁶

9. בִּי־קָרָא יְהוָה לְשְׁלֹשָׁת Has YHWH called us three kings
הַמְּלָכִים הָאֵלֶּה together ... ?
[2 Kgs 3:10](#)
10. הִנֵּה הַשּׁוֹנַמִּית הַלְזָה: There is our Shunammite.
[2 Kgs 4:25](#)

This may be weakened from truly deictic to characterizing.

11. זֶה דּוֹר דֹּרְשֵׁי Such is the generation of those who
seek him.
[Ps 24:6](#) Qere

d

Similar to the simple deictic role is the paired use of **זֶה ... זֶה** cited earlier (17.3c).

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 12. | וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל־זֶה | The one was calling to the other.
Isa 6:3 |
| 13. | וַיֹּאמֶר זֶה בְּכֹה וְזֶה אָמַר
בְּכֹה: | One suggested this and another that.
1 Kgs 22:20 |

e

In the flow of discourse **זֶה** may have a deictic relative force (17.3d), referring to nouns either preceding (anaphora; ## 14–15) or following (cataphora; ## 16–18).¹⁷

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- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 14. | וְהָיְתָה הַקֶּשֶׁת בְּעָנָן ... זֹאת
אוֹת־הַבְּרִית | Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds ... this is the sign of the covenant.
Gen 9:16–17 |
| 15. | וְהָיָה כִּי תִבְאֲנָה הָאֹתוֹת
הָאֵלֶּה | once these signs are fulfilled

1 Sam 10:7 <i>Qere</i> ; cf. vv 5–6 |
| 16. | זֶה פִּתְרָנָן שְׁלֹשֶׁת הַשָּׂרִיִּים | This is its interpretation: The three branches are ...
Gen 40:12 |
| 17. | וְעַתָּה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר
נַעֲשֶׂה לַגִּבְעָה נַעֲלֶה | But now this is what we'll do to Gibeah: we'll go up ...

Judg 20:9 LXX |
| 18. | וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה | And these are the generations of Aaron and Moses ... ¹⁸
Num 3:1 |

17.4.3 Other Uses

a

Three uses of **זֶה** fall outside the usual range of demonstratives: as a neutrum pronoun, for a vague antecedent; as an enclitic with exclamations; and as a relative pronoun.

b

Like the third-person pronouns, the true demonstratives can refer to an action or circumstance vaguely defined (6.6, 16.3.5c). This neutrum pronoun is usually feminine.

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | זֹאת עֲשׂוּ וְחִיּוּ | Do this and you will live.
Gen 42:18 |
| 2. | בְּזֹאת תִּבְחָנוּ | And this is how you will be tested.
Gen 42:15 |
| 3. | כְּזֹאת וְכְזֹאת יַעַץ אַחִיתָפֶל
אֶת־אַבְשָׁלָם ... וְכְזֹאת | Ahithophel has advised Absalom ... to do so and so and I advised them to do such and such. |

וְכִזְאֹת יַעֲצֹתַי אֲנִי:

[2 Sam 17:15](#)

4. וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ And this is how you will make it.

[Gen 6:15](#)

c

Enclitic **זֶה** is found with exclamatory questions and presentatives. **זֶה** (or, with the verb **עָשָׂה**, **זֹאת**) seems to emphasize the question and is best rendered by an emphatic adverb or phrase.

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5. מִה־זֶּה מָה־רַף לְמֵצָא בְּנִי How did you ever find it so quickly, my son?
[Gen 27:20](#)
6. מִה־זֶּה רוּחְךָ סָרָה Why in the world are you so sullen?
[1 Kgs 21:5](#)
7. וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעָם אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ The people asked each other: "What in the world happened to the son of Kish?"
מִה־זֶּה הָיָה לְבֶן־קִישׁ
[1 Sam 10:11](#)
8. מִה־זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָם: What in the world have you done?¹⁹
[Judg 2:2](#)
9. אִי־זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ נַעֲלֶה By whatever route shall we attack?
[2 Kgs 3:8](#)

The tautologous **זֶה** also occurs with **הִנֵּה**.

10. וְהִנֵּה־זֶה מַלְאָךְ נֹגֵעַ בוֹ Look [here], an angel touches him.
[1 Kgs 19:5](#)
11. הִנֵּה־זֹאת הָרָעָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה Look [here], the disaster is from YHWH.
[2 Kgs 6:33](#)

d

The pronoun **אֲשֶׁר** dominates all relative usage, but there are instances in which a relative clause is headed by **זֶה** (or the closely related **זֶי**; [20](#) 19.5). Most are poetic.

12. הַר־צִיּוֹן זֶה שְׁכֻנַּתְּ בּוֹ: Mount Zion, where you dwelt
[Ps 74:2](#)
13. כָּל־זֶה קָלַע each of whom was a slinger
[Judg 20:16](#)

17.5 Quasi-Demonstratives

a

The determined pronouns, **הַהוּא** and the like, share some of the syntactic duties of the true demonstratives. **הַהוּא** can have a simple deictic force.

1. אֵת כָּל־הַמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדוֹל that great and awesome wilderness

וְהַנּוֹרָא הַהוּא

[Deut 1:19](#)

It can also be used anaphorically, as a relative deictic.

2. וַהֲבֵאתִי עַל-הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא and I brought upon that land²¹

[Jer 25:13](#)

b

In expressions of time **הַהוּא** is frequent.²² In ordinary narrative, past-time **בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא** occasionally serves to incorporate "supplementary material" (# 3), frequently "functions as part of a concluding formula" (# 4), and in still other places "serves as part of a transition to a following episode within the pericope" (# 5).²³ Simon DeVries also refers

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to its use in an epitome, "a summarizing characterization concerning a particular day."²⁴ In a small number of passages the phrase serves to mark a synchronism in a recollection of "exhortation and warning concerning the ... recent past" (# 6).²⁵ In cultic or gnomic (proverbial) contexts it marks a synchronism (# 7).²⁶ Outside of the prophetic corpus, **הַהוּא בַּיּוֹם** referring to the future creates a synchronism (# 8), an epitome (# 9), or both (# 10). In 101 future-oriented occurrences in the prophetic corpus,²⁷ the phrase functions to include supplementary information (# 11),²⁸ mark transitions (# 12),²⁹ and in concluding formulas (## 13–14).³⁰

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 3. | וְלֹא-יָכְלוּ לַעֲשׂת־הַפֶּסַח
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא | But some of them could not
celebrate the passover on that day. |
| | | Num 9:6 |
| 4. | בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עָשָׂה יְהוָה ...
בְּרִית | On that day YHWH made ... a
covenant. |
| | | Gen 15:18 |
| 5. | וַיָּרֶץ אִישׁ-בְּנִימִן מִהַמְעָרָה
וַיָּבֹא שָׁלֹחַ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא | A Benjaminite ran from the battle
line and came to Shiloh on the
same day. |
| | | 1 Sam 4:12 |
| 6. | וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לַבְּנֵי-גַד וּלְבְנֵי
רְאוּבֵן ... וַיַּחֲרֹאף יְהוָה
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא | Moses said to the Gadites and
Reubenites, " ... YHWH's anger was
aroused that day." |
| | | Num 32:6, 10 |
| 7. | קְבוֹר תִּקְבְּרֵנוּ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא | Be sure to bury him the same day. |
| | | Deut 21:23 |
| 8. | וְהִפְלֵיתִי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא ... | I will set off in that day ... |
| | | Exod 8:18 ; see v 17 |
| 9. | וְעָנֹכִי הִסְתֵּיר אֶסְתִּיר פָּנַי
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא | I will certainly hide my face on that
day. |
| | | Deut 31:18 |
| 10. | וְזָעַקְתֶּם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא מִלְּפָנַי
מִלְּכֶכֶם | When that day comes you will cry
out for relief from your king. |
| | | 1 Sam 8:18 |
| | | On that day the Lord will put |

11.	בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יָסִיר אֶדְנִי	aside ... Isa 3:18
12.	יִשָּׂא בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא	But in that day he will cry out ... Isa 3:7
13.	תִּחְזִיקוּ ... בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא	They will seize ... on that day ... Isa 4:1
14.	וַיִּנָּהֵם עָלָיו בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא	In that day he will roar over it. Isa 5:30

Footnotes:

1. In English there is essentially only one set of forms in each series, but this restriction is not universal. Spanish has one near form ('este') and two far ('ese, aquel,' the latter sometimes rendered 'yonder'); Latin has one near ('hic') and three far ('is, ille, iste'); and Greek has two near ('houtos , hode ') and one far ('ekeinos').
2. This doubling of function is also found, e.g., in Akkadian and Syriac; see Sabatino Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964) § 13.32/ p. 112. The polysemy reflects the essentially demonstrative quality of the third-person pronouns.
3. The feminine may be used as a neutrum, cf. 17.4.3b, although it is misleading to speak of a neuter pronoun in Hebrew.
4. The z element is etymologically ḏ (ḏ or d_), as in Ugaritic and Arabic (cf. 19.2). The / is related to the Arabic article al-. The masculine near demonstrative *zeh* occurs 1,169 times, the feminine 605, and the plural 754 (SA/THAT).
5. A further feminine variant, hz'th, occurs only in [Jer 26:6 Kethiv](#).
6. Six of these occurrences are in Qoheleth, and z't is not used in that book.
7. For comparable points of uncertainty involving the personal pronouns, see 16.3.
8. These are used most often in reports of conversation; on related forms in Mishnaic Hebrew, see M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 41–42.
9. The *ha-* element is related to the Hebrew article, which has demonstrative uses (13.5.2). The hallāz(-) set is cognate to Arabic hallaḏī, hallatī, hallaḏīna 'that.'
10. On the determinative pronoun, see *UT* § 6.23; cf. below, 17.4.3d. The most common of the adverbs cited are (after SA/THAT) hinnēh (1,057 times), kēn (695), šām (691), kōh (581), 'ak (161), šāmmā (141), and 'āz (138).
11. For the following discussion, see Joüon § 143j-k / pp. 445–46. From another angle we can say that the true demonstratives make up the word class that can occur with the definite article but not with pronominal suffixes.
12. Henceforth, זֶה stands for the entire z set of demonstratives (including 'ēleh), and הַהוּא stands for the entire set of determined third-person pronouns.
13. S. J. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 139. There are exceptions: the phrase is nominative in [2 Kgs 7:9](#) and accusative in [Exod 12:17](#).
14. The last two phrases are differentiated in cultic descriptions; DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 151.
15. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 141.
16. As Joüon observes, modern usage allows a demonstrative sense for the first-person pronoun in phrases such as 'a leader for our time/the times,' 'the poetry for our children to study'; §143e / p. 444.
17. Classical Greek can in certain circumstances distinguish anaphora and cataphora, with *houtos* referring backward and *hode* referring forward, although *houtos* often has both roles.
18. This quasi-titling function of *zeh* is most common in genealogies but can be found in other titling positions. Cf. F. I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970) 40.
19. Cf. [Gen 3:13](#).

20. In, e.g., the archaic poem [Exod 15:13](#). Note also [Ps 104:8](#), 26. See J. M. Allegro, "Uses of the Semitic Demonstrative Element *z* in Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 5 (1955) 309–12.

21. In # 2 *h'rš hhy'* refers to Babylon, just mentioned. Cf. [Jer 25:9](#), 11 for Judah as *h'rš hz't*.

22. The anarthrous phrase *blylh hw'* 'in that night' ([Gen 19:33](#), [30:16](#), [32:23](#)) is both anomalous and textually suspect—the Samaritan Pentateuch read *hhw'* in each of the three cases.

23. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, 60–61.

24. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 136.

25. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 118, cf. 126, 283–84.

26. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 284–85.

27. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 295.

28. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 297–310.

29. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 310–14.

30. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 314–23.

18.4 Locative Particles and Related Forms

a

1. Did Moses travel?
2. Who crossed the steppe?
3. Where did Moses live for forty years?
4. What did Moses cross?
5. When did Moses leave Egypt?
6. Why did Moses leave Egypt?
7. How did Moses leave Egypt?
8. Did Moses or Aaron leave first?
9. How far Moses traveled!
10. Who is like Moses?

b

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- C**

17.

וּלְמָה יִרְעַ לְבַבְךָ

1 Sam 14:37

18. וְלִמָּה יָרַע לִבְבְּךָ Why is your heart sick?
[1 Sam 1:8](#)
19. הֲנֵלֵךְ אֶל־רָמוֹת גִּלְעָד Shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to (do)
לְמַלְחָמָה אִם־נִחְדָּל battle or shall we refrain?
[1 Kgs 22:15](#)
20. מִה־טֹּבוֹ אֵהְיֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב How good are your dwellings, Jacob!
[Num 24:5](#)
21. מִי־כְמוֹכָה בָּאֱלֹהִים יְהוָה Who is like you among the gods, O
YHWH?
[Exod 15:11](#)

As in English, questions of fact and alternative questions are formed similarly: in Hebrew, both types tend to use an interrogative particle **הֲ** (before a laryngeal, **הֵ**), less often **אִם**.¹ The other types of questions use interrogative words, **מִי**, **מַה**, **לִמָּה**, etc., a group roughly analogous to the *wh*-words of English. Like the *wh*-words, the Hebrew interrogatives are a diverse group: **מִי** and **מַה** are pronouns, while some of the other words are better termed adverbials or particles. Like the *wh*-words, too, the Hebrew interrogative pronouns can be used in non-interrogative contexts; in the Hebrew case, they serve as indefinite pronouns, 'whoever, whatever,' etc. The interrogative-indefinite pronouns and some interrogative particles are the topic of this chapter.

d

There are four major parts of the interrogative-indefinite vocabulary of Hebrew: (1) the animate pronoun, (2) the inanimate pronoun,² (3) the locative particles, and (4) the temporal particles.

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e

The animate pronoun is **מִי** ³ like **מַה**, **מִי** is invariable for gender and number. (Thus the usual masculine/feminine and singular/plural nominal variation in Hebrew is replaced in the interrogative-indefinite category by animate/inanimate variation.) **מִי** is found in all three case functions, nominative (# 22), genitive (## 23–24), and accusative, always with **אֵת** (# 25).

22. מִי הַגִּיד לְךָ Who told you?
[Gen 3:11](#)
23. בִּתְּמִי אֵת Whose daughter are you?
[Gen 24:23](#)
24. לְמִי־אַתָּה To whom do you belong?
[Gen 32:18](#)
25. אֶת־מִי אֶשְׁלַח Whom shall I send?
[Isa 6:8](#)

The inanimate pronoun is **מַה**; the vocalization varies. Essentially, the form is **מָה** before **א**, **ה**, and **ו**; **מֶה** before **ח** and **א**; and **מֵה** elsewhere, with doubling of the following consonant.⁴ Whatever the vocalization, **מַה** may take the *maqeph*.⁵ This pronoun is also found in the three case functions, nominative (# 26), genitive, rarely (## 27–28), and accusative (# 29), never with **אֵת**.

26. מַה־פְּשָׁעִי What is my crime?
[Gen 31:36](#)

27. בַּמָּה אֶדַע By what shall I know?
[Gen 15:8](#)
28. וְחִכְמַת־מָה לָּהֶם: Wisdom of what sort (i.e., What sort of wisdom) do they have?
[Jer 8:9](#)
29. מָה עָשִׂיתָ What have you done?
[Gen 4:10](#)

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מָה sometimes occurs with a noun which is formally separated from it but syntactically related to it as an accusative of specification (## 30–31).⁶

30. וּמָה־בְּיָדִי רָעָה: What (with respect to) evil is in my hand?
[1 Sam 26:18](#)
31. וּמָה־יֵשׁ־לִי עוֹד זָדָקָה What (with respect to) right do I yet have?
[2 Sam 19:29](#)

f

The locative adverbs אֵי 'where?' and its derivatives are used in a variety of ways; the adverb אֵן 'where?' is less important. The major temporal adverb is מָתַי 'when?', often in the combinations לְמָתַי 'when?' and עַד־מָתַי 'how long?'

g

The remainder of this chapter reviews the animate (18.2) and inanimate pronouns (18.3) and the locative adverbs (18.4).

18.2 The Animate Pronoun

a

One of the basic uses of the pronoun מִי is eliciting the identification or classification of persons (and rarely things) in questions, direct ('Who are you?') or indirect, governing another clause ('Who are you that you do these things?'), or embedded ('He asked me who you are'). Also basic is its use as an indefinite pronoun. מִי is also used in exclamatory and rhetorical questions, preceding a verbal predicate.

b

The interrogative use of מִי as a predicate in verbless clauses can serve to elicit an identification ('I am Moses') or a classification ('I am an Israelite').

1. מִי־אַתָּה Who are you (identification)?
[Ruth 3:9](#)
2. מִי־הָאִישׁ הַלֵּזֶה Who is that man (classification)?
[Gen 24:65](#)
3. מִי־אֵלֶּה כְּעָב תְּעוֹפִינָה Who are these that fly like a cloud?
[Isa 60:8](#)

The demonstrative זֶה is sometimes added after מִי (17.4.3c).

4. בֶּן-מִי־זֶה הַנֶּעַר Whose son (I wonder) is the lad?
[1 Sam 17:55](#)
5. מִי זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד Who is the king of glory!?!
[Ps 24:8](#)
6. וּמִי־זֶה רֹעֵה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמֹד לִפְנָי: Who (I wonder) is a shepherd who can stand before me?
[Jer 49:19](#)

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The pronoun may be repeated, perhaps for an emphatic purpose.⁸

7. מִי וּמִי הֵהָלֵכִים: Just who will be going?
[Exod 10:8](#)

The pronoun may be associated with various partitive constructions.

8. וּמִי בְכָל-עַבְדֶּיךָ Who of all your servants ... ?
[1 Sam 22:14](#)
9. מִי אֶחָד מִשְׁבְּטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל Which one of the tribes of Israel ... ?
[Judg 21:8](#)
10. מִי מִשְׁלָנוּ אֶל-מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל: ... who of us is for the king of Israel?
[2 Kgs 6:11](#)
11. מִי בְכָל-אֱלֹהֵי הָאָרְצוֹת הָאֵלֶּה Who among all the gods of these lands ... ?
[Isa 36:20](#)

C

Most of the clauses we have considered so far in this section are simple clauses. An interrogative clause with **מִי** can govern another clause (cf. # 3).

12. מִי אַתָּה קָרָאתָ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ: Who are you, that you call to the king?
[1 Sam 26:14](#)
13. מִי אֲנִכִּי כִי אֵלֶךְ אֶל-פַּרְעֹה Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?
[Exod 3:11](#)
14. כִּי־מִי כָל-בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר What mortal is there who can ... ?
[Deut 5:26](#)

An interrogative **מִי** clause can also be embedded in another clause; the embedded clause is an indirect question.

15. לֹא יָדַעְתִּי מִי עָשָׂה אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה I don't know who has done this.
[Gen 21:26](#)
16. שֶׂאֵל אַתָּה בֶּן-מִי־זֶה הָעָלָם: Find out whose son the young man is.

[1 Sam 17:56](#); cf. # 4

This use is sometimes called "the relative use" and presents a blending of a relative with an interrogative sense.

d

Most occurrences of **מִי** refer to persons in a straightforward way, but some are not so clear. When a thing is closely associated with the person or is pregnant with the idea of a person, or where persons are understood and implied, **מִי** may be used. For example, 'What is your name?' can be expressed by **מִי שְׁמוֹךְ**, because the name is conceived of as a

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surrogate for the person.⁹ Because the inquiry, however, is about some thing (## 17–19) or condition, etc. (## 20–21), English idiom requires other interrogatives: 'what (cf. # 14), how, where,' etc. ¹⁰

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 17. | מִי שְׁמוֹךְ | What is your name (identification)?
Judg 13:17 |
| 18. | כִּי מִי־גוֹי גָדוֹל | What (other) great nation ... ?
Deut 4:7 |
| 19. | מִי אֲנֹכִי ... וּמִי בֵּיתִי | Who am I ... and what is my family ... ?
2 Sam 7:18 |
| 20. | מִי־אַתָּה | Who are you (i.e., How did it go)?
Ruth 3:16 |
| 21. | מִי־פֶשַׁע יַעֲקֹב הָלֹוא שְׁמֵרוֹן | What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria?
Mic 1:5 |

In contrast **מַה** may be used when the circumstance rather than the person is in view.

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|
| 22. | מַה־שְׁמוֹךְ | What is your name? ¹¹
Gen 32:28 |
| 23. | מַה הָעִבְרִים הָאֵלֶּה | What about these Hebrews?
1 Sam 29:3 |

e

The indefinite uses of **מִי** are chiefly nominative: **מִי** is generally the subject of the main clause and head of a relative clause.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 24. | מִי־יִרָא | anyone who is afraid
Judg 7:3 |
| 25. | מִי לַיהוָה אֵלַי | Whoever is for YHWH, [come] to me.
Exod 32:26 |
| 26. | מִי־בָעַל דְּבָרִים יִגַּשׁ אֲלֵהֶם: | Whoever has a cause, let him approach them.
Exod 24:14 |
| 27. | מִי חָכָם וַיִּבֶן אֵלֶּה | Whoever is wise, let him understand these things.
Hos 14:10 |

The relative head **אשר** may follow **מי** (# 28) or even **מי האיש** (## 29–30).

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28. **מי אשר חטא־לי אֶמְחֶנּוּ מִסֵּפֶרִי:** Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. ¹²
[Exod 32:33](#)
29. **מי האיש אשר יחל להִלָּחֵם בְּבָנֵי עַמּוֹן יִהְיֶה לְרֹאשׁ:** Whoever will launch the attack against the Ammonites will be the head ...
[Judg 10:18](#)
30. **מי־האיש אשר בָּנָה בֵּית־הַחֹדֶשׁ ... יֵלֶךְ:** Whoever has built a new house ... let him go [home].
[Deut 20:5](#)

Indefinite **מי** can be used absolutely (with no relative clause following) and as a vocative.

31. **שְׁמְרוּ־מִי:** Take care, whoever [you may be].
[2 Sam 18:12](#)

Indefinite **מי** can be used in the accusative function.

32. **בְּחַרְוּ ... אֶת־מִי תַעֲבֹדוּן:** Choose ... whom you will serve.
[Josh 24:15](#)

f

Exclamatory and rhetorical questions in **מי** must be recognized from context, though there are patterns associated with each group. Exclamatory questions usually have a non-perfective verb, and the sense is desiderative: 'Who will act?' > 'Oh that someone would act!'

33. **מי יִשְׁקֶנִי מַיִם:** Oh that someone would give me water to drink!
[2 Sam 23:15](#)
34. **מִי־יֹאמַר:** Who would (dare to) say ... ?
[Job 9:12](#)
35. **מִי־יִשְׁמְנֵנִי שֶׁמֶט:** Oh that I were appointed šopet!
[2 Sam 15:4](#)

The fixed expressions **מי יתן** and **מי־יִוְרַע** convey wish (# 36) or doubt (# 37).¹³

36. **מִי־יִתֵּן עֶרֶב:** If only it were evening!
[Deut 28:67](#)
37. **מִי יִדַּע יִחַנְנִי יְהוָה:** Perhaps YHWH will be gracious to me.
[2 Sam 12:22](#)

Often, as in the last two examples, the outcome is unobtainable.

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g

Rhetorical questions aim not to gain information but to give information with passion. Properly speaking, this use should be considered in connection with figures of speech. The rhetorical use of the interrogative pronoun **מִי**, however, for self-abasement or for insult occurs within a consistent grammatical structure and is therefore considered here. According to George W. Coats, the two structural elements in this pattern are

... an introductory question constructed as a noun clause with interrogative particle **מִזֶּה** or **מִי** and pronoun, name, or noun, and a following assertion, introduced by **כִּי**, **אֲשֶׁר**, or a *waw* consecutive imperfect and constructed around a verbal form. The second element regularly picks up the object of the first element as the subject or object of the verb or the object of a preposition ... [The pattern] poses a question ... , then abases the noun or pronoun subject by an implied answer to the question. On the basis of the implied answer, the verb ... is negated.¹⁴

This pattern may involve, as noted, self-abasement (# 38; cf. # 13) or insult (## 39–41).

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 38. | מִי אֲנִכִּי ... כִּי־אֶהְיֶה חֹתֵן
לַמֶּלֶךְ: | Who am I ... that I should be the son-in-law of the king?

1 Sam 18:18 |
| 39. | מִי יִהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר־אֶשְׁמַע בְּקֹלוֹ | Who is YHWH that I should obey him?

Exod 5:2 |
| 40. | כִּי מִי הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הָעָרֵל הַזֶּה
כִּי חָרַף מַעַרְכוֹת אֱלֹהִים
חַיִּים: | Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?

1 Sam 17:26 |
| 41. | מִי דָוִד | Who is David [that I should help him]?

1 Sam 25:10 |

A generalized use of this pattern involves abasing all people, including the speaker, usually in implicit contrast to God.¹⁵

18.3 The Inanimate Pronoun

a

The range of uses of **מִזֶּה** is greater than of **מִי** because **מִזֶּה** is frequently combined with prepositions. The kinds of uses are, however, comparable: the interrogative and indefinite patterns are basic, while several exclamatory and rhetorical structures are worthy of note.

b

Interrogative **מִזֶּה** has a broad repertory of senses, even without prepositional complements. As noted earlier, **מִזֶּה** can fulfill any of the major case functions, but it is most common as the direct object of the verb.

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | מָה עָשִׂיתָ | What have you done?

Gen 4:10 |
| 2. | מָה אֶתֶּן־לָךְ | What shall I give you?

Gen 30:31 |
| 3. | מָה רָאִיתָ כִּי עָשִׂיתָ
אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: | What was your reason for doing this?

Gen 20:10 |

The use of **זֶה** may serve to add "vividness" (17.4.3c, 18.2b).

4. מַה־זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ What (I wonder) have you done?
[Gen 3:13](#)

The pronoun may be further specified by an accusative of specification (18.1e).¹⁶

5. וּמַה־בְּיָדֵי רָעָה: What (with reference to) evil is in my hands?
[1 Sam 26:18](#)
6. מַה־מָּצְאוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בִּי עוֹל What fault did your forebears find in me?
[Jer 2:5](#)

Interrogative **מַדָּה**, sometimes with **זֶה**, can mean 'why?'

7. מַה־תִּצְעַק אֵלַי Why are you crying out to me?
[Exod 14:15](#)
8. מַה אֲנַחֲנוּ יֹשְׁבִים פֹּה Why should we stay here?
[2 Kgs 7:3](#)
9. מַה־זֶּה רוּחְךָ סָרָה Why (in the world) is your spirit so sullen?
[1 Kgs 21:5](#)

In a verbless interrogative clause **מַדָּה** can be used with the *lamed* of interest (advantage or disadvantage); the question concerns the object of *l* in a loosely or elliptically defined way. The object is usually personal (## 10–15); double objects are found (## 15–16).

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10. מַה־לָּךְ הָגֵר What is to you, Hagar? (i.e., What troubles you, Hagar?)
[Gen 21:17](#)
11. מַה־לָּךְ: What (can I do) for you?
[Judg 1:14](#)
12. מַה־לָּעָם כִּי יִבְכוּ What is (wrong) with the people that they weep?
[1 Sam 11:5](#)
13. מַה־לָּךְ לְסַפֵּר חֻקֵּי What (right have) you to recite my laws?
[Ps 50:16](#)
14. מַה־לִּי וְלָךְ כִּי־בָאתָ What do I have to do with you that you have come?
[Judg 11:12](#)
15. מַה־וּלְשָׁלוֹם What do you have to do with peace?
[2 Kgs 9:18](#)
16. מַה־לְתֹּבֵן אֶת־הַבָּר What has straw to do with wheat?
[Jer 23:28](#)

Such a construction can be given past time reference with the verb *hyy* (# 17).

17. מַה־זֶּה הָיָה לְבֶן־קִישׁ What (in the world) happened to the son of Kish?
[1 Sam 10:11](#)

c

With prepositions interrogative **למה** takes on a variety of senses. The most common combination is **למה** 'why?', sometimes with **זה**.¹⁷

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 18. | לָמָּה חָהָ לְךָ | Why are you angry?
Gen 4:6 |
| 19. | לָמָּה תִּבְכִּי | Why are you crying?
1 Sam 1:8 |
| 20. | לָמָּה זֶה צִחֻקָּה שָׂרָה | Why (in the world) did Sarah laugh?
Gen 18:13 |
| 21. | וְעַתָּה מֵת לָמָּה זֶה אֲנִי צָם | Now that he is dead, why should I fast?
2 Sam 12:23 |

In some cases **למה** is used in a quasi-rhetorical way, introducing an undesirable alternative: 'Do something; **למה** ...' = 'why should something else happen?' > 'lest something else happen' or 'otherwise something else will happen.'

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--|
| 22. | שְׁלַחֲנִי לָמָּה אֲמִיד: | Send me out; why should I kill you? /
lest I kill you / otherwise I'll kill you.
1 Sam 19:17 |
| 23. | לָמָּה יִקְצֹף הָאֱלֹהִים | otherwise God will be angry
Qoh 5:5 |

In this use **למה**, may be preceded by a relative pronoun.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 24. | אֲשֶׁר לָמָּה יִרְאֶה
אֶת־פְּנֵיכֶם | Otherwise he will see you

Dan 1:10 |
| 25. | שְׁלָמָה אֶהְיֶה כְּעֵטִיָּה | otherwise I will be like the veiled women
Cant 1:7 |

d

The other monoliteral prepositions also combine with **מה**: **במה** means both 'in, on what?' (# 26) and 'how?' (# 27) and **כמה** both 'how many?' (# 28) and 'how much?'.

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- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|--|
| 26. | יִשְׁכַּב | On what shall he lie down?
Exod 22:26 |
| 27. | בְּמָה אֵדַע | How / By what shall I know?
Gen 15:8 |
| 28. | כַּמָּה יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֶּיךָ: | How old are you?
Gen 47:8 |

In combination with **עד**, the pronoun has the sense 'how long?' (## 29–30) and with **על** the sense 'on what basis, why?' (## 31–32).

29. בְּנֵי אִישׁ עַד־מָה כְּבוֹדִי
לְכַלְמָה How long, O high-born men, [will you
turn] my glory into shame?
[Ps 4:3](#)
30. עַד־מָה יִהְיֶה תֹאנָף לְנֶצַח How long, O YHWH? Will you be angry
forever?
[Ps 79:5](#)
31. עַל־מָה הִכִּיתָ אֶת־אֲתֹנֶךָ Why have you struck your donkey?
[Num 22:32](#)
32. עַל מָה תִּכּוּ עוֹד Why should you be beaten any more?
[Isa 1:5](#)

e

The indefinite use of מַה usually involves a clausal object.

33. מַה־תֹּאמַר נַפְשִׁי וְאֶעֱשֶׂה־לָּךְ: Whatever you say, I'll do for you.
[1 Sam 20:4](#)
34. מַה־יִּרְאֵנִי וְהִגִּדְתִּי לָךְ Whatever he reveals to me, I will tell
you.
[Num 23:3](#); cf. [1 Sam 19:3](#)
35. וְנִרְאָה מַה־יִּהְיֶה חֲלֻמָּתוֹ: Then we will see what comes of his
dreams.
[Gen 37:20](#)
36. הִגִּיד לָךְ אָדָם מַה־טוֹב He has shown you, O man, what is
good.
[Mic 6:8](#)

Sometimes the relative שֶׁ follows מַה in this usage.¹⁸

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The pronoun can have an indefinite sense in combination with a preposition.¹⁹

37. מַה־שֶּׁהָיָה כְּבָר הוּא Whatever is, has already been.
[Qoh 3:15](#)
38. וּרְאֵי בַמָּה כָּחוֹ גָדוֹל See wherein his great strength lies and
וּבַמָּה נוֹכַח לוֹ how we can overcome him.
[Judg 16:5](#)
39. כִּי אִם־יִהְיֶה לְבָעַר קִין You Kenites will be destroyed when
עַד־מָה אֲשׁוּר תִּשְׁבֶּךָ: Ashur takes you captive.
[Num 24:22](#)

f

The exclamatory questions with מַה may involve either an adjective (## 40–41) or a verb (## 42–46).

40. מַה־אַדִּיר how majestic
[Ps 8:2](#)
41. מַה־יָּקָר how priceless
[Ps 36:8](#)

42. וּמִה־נִצְטַדֵּק How can we justify ourselves!
[Gen 44:16](#)
43. מִה אֶתֵּן זֶה לִפְנֵי מֵאָה אִישׁ How can I ever set this before one hundred men!
[2 Kgs 4:43](#)
44. מִה־זֶּה מִה־רַתָּ לְמֵצָא How (in the world) did you ever find it so quickly!
[Gen 27:20](#)
45. מִה אֶקַּב לֹא קִבָּה אֵל How can I curse what God has not cursed!
[Num 23:8](#)
46. כַּמָּה יִמְרוּהוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר How much they rebelled against him in the steppe!
[Ps 78:40](#)

g

One of the rhetorical uses of מִה involves the kind of abasement or insult cited in connection with בִּי (18.2g).²⁰

47. כִּי מָה עֲבָדְךָ הַכֶּלֶב כִּי יַעֲשֶׂה הַדָּבָר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה What is your servant, the dog, that he should do this great thing?²¹
[2 Kgs 8:13](#)
48. מִה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ What is a human life that you keep it in mind?
[Ps 8:5](#)

Another such use involves rhetorical questions that expect a strongly negative answer.²²

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49. בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ מִה־הִיא What is that between you and me?
[Gen 23:15](#)
50. מִה־נִּשְׁתָּה: What are we to drink? (i.e., We have nothing to drink.)
[Exod 15:24](#)
51. מִה־לָּנוּ חֵלֶק בְּדָוִד What share do we have in David? (i.e., We have no share.)
[1 Kgs 12:16](#)

18.4 Locative Particles and Related Forms

a

An elaborate network of interrogative terms is organized around אֵי 'where?', including a variety of compounds (e.g., מִזֶּה אֵי) and related forms (e.g., אֵיפֹה).²³ One apparently related form, אֵין, is the source of אָן 'where?' and מֵאֵין 'whence?'.²⁴ Most of these terms are locative in reference and strictly interrogative in use, although they occur in both direct and indirect questions.

The core term of the network, אֵי, has two distinct uses. In the simple locative pattern, it can be used absolutely or with זֶה following.²⁵

1. אֵי הָבֵל אָחִיךָ Where is your brother Abel?
[Gen 4:9](#)

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|---|
| 2. | אֵי אֱלֹהֵימוֹ | Where is their god (rhetorical question)?
Deut 32:37 |
| 3. | אֵי־זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ הַלֵּךְ | Where is the road he went on? ²⁶
1 Kgs 13:12 |
| 4. | אֵי זֶה סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוֹת | Where (I wonder) is the bill of
divorcement?
Isa 50:1 |
| 5. | אֵי־זֶה דֶּרֶךְ הַטּוֹב | Where is the good way? ²⁷
Jer 6:16 |

אֵי can also be used with pronominal suffixes, sometimes anticipatory (# 8).

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|---|
| 6. | אֵיכָּה | Where are you?
Gen 3:9 |
| 7. | וְאֵי | Where is he?
Exod 2:20 |
| 8. | אֵי מֶלֶךְ־חַמָּת | Where is he, the king of Hamath?
2 Kgs 19:13 |

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A directional locative is אֵי מִזֶּה 'whence?'

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|---|
| 9. | וְאֵי מִזֶּה אָתָּה | Where are you from?
1 Sam 30:13 |
| 10. | וְאֵי־מִזֶּה עִם אָתָּה: | From which people are you?
Jonah 1:8 |
| 11. | אֵי־מִזֶּה בָּאת | Where have you come from?
Gen 16:8 |

In # 10 the adverb takes an adverbial accusative, עִם. An apparently analogous phrase אֵי לְזֹאת means not 'whither?' (which would perhaps be אֵי אֶל־זֶה) but 'on what basis, why?'; it is found only in [Jer 5:7](#).

C

Two forms related to אֵי also have the sense 'where?': אֵינִי and אֵיפֹה, the latter also related to פֹּה 'here.' The first and more common of these two is not used with verbs (## 12–13); אֵיפֹה may be used in either verbal (# 14) or verbless clauses (# 15).

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--|
| 12. | אֵינִי שָׂרָה אִשְׁתִּיךָ | Where is Sarah your wife?
Gen 18:9 |
| 13. | אֵינִי שֶׁקֶל | Where is the weigher?
Isa 33:18 |
| 14. | אֵיפֹה שְׁמוּאֵל וְדָוִד | Where are Samuel and David?
1 Sam 19:22 |
| 15. | אֵיפֹה לֹא שִׁנְלָתָ | Where have you not been ravished?
Jer 3:2 |

d

Another set of forms related to **אי** has the sense 'how?', used in both true questions of circumstance and in exclamatory questions; each of these involves a *k* element: **איך** is the most common, while **איכָה** and **איכָכָה** are rare.²⁸ The use in true questions involves all three forms.

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|
| 16. | איך אתם נועצים | How do you advise me?
1 Kgs 12:6 |
| 17. | ואיך אמרת אחתי היא | How could you say, "She is my sister"?
Gen 26:9 |
| 18. | איך ידעת כי-מת שאול ויהונתן | How do you know that Saul and Jonathan are dead?
2 Sam 1:5 |
| 19. | איכָה אשא לבדי | How can I bear you by myself?
Deut 1:12 |
| 20. | איכָכָה אלבשנה | How can I put it on?
Cant 5:3 |

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e

The exclamatory use involves **איכָה** more often than **אין**; the occurrence of **איכָה** as the first word of Lamentations (# 22) is the source of the Hebrew name of the book.

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|
| 21. | איך נפלו גבורים: | How the mighty have fallen!
2 Sam 1:19 |
| 22. | איכָה יִשְׁבָּה בָּדָר | How it dwells alone!
Lam 1:1 |
| 23. | איכָה הִיְתָה לְזוֹנָה | How it has become a whore!
Isa 1:21 |

f

The unattested form **אין** is probably the source of both **אן** 'where?' and **מֵאֵין** 'whence?'²⁹

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|--|
| 24. | אן הלכתם | Where did you go?
1 Sam 10:14 |
| 25. | מֵאֵין תבא | Whence have you come?
Job 1:7 |

There are two related forms which are nearly identical: **אָנָה**, apparently **אן** with the directional *h*, and **אָנָה**, apparently an extended form of **אן**; both forms usually mean 'whither, where?'

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|--|
| 26. | וְאָנָה תֵּלְכִי | Whither are you going?
Gen 16:8 |
| 27. | וְאָנָה עָשִׂית | Where did you work?
Ruth 2:19 |

28. אָנָּה אֲנַחְנוּ עֲלֵים Whither are we going up?
[Deut 1:28](#)
- The form אָנָּה is doubled in a phrase meaning 'here and there,' with no interrogative force.³⁰ The locative sense of אָנָּה is extended in the phrase עַד־אָנָּה 'how long?, till when?'
29. עַד־אָנָּה מֵאֲנַתֶּם How long will you refuse?
[Exod 16:28](#)
30. עַד־אָנָּה יִנְאַצְנִי הָעָם הַזֶּה How long will this people despise me?
[Num 14:11](#)

Footnotes:

1. Cf. 40.1. The interrogative particles are not necessary; a question of fact need not be specially marked. Its character as a question was presumably signaled in speech by a change in intonation. See Carl Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1913), 2. 192–93.
 2. The animate pronoun occurs 422 times and the inanimate 747 times (including prepositional phrases; SA/THAT). The animate: inanimate contrast is widely attested in Semitic, but the pronouns are usually animate *man*: inanimate *mā*. Other terms used as indefinites in Hebrew include animate *ʔi=sʔ*, *ʔa4da4m*, *nepeš* 'someone'; *lō ʔiš*, *lō ʔādām*, *lō nepeš* 'no one'; inanimate *dābār*, *məʔūmā* 'something,' as well as various phrases with *kōl*. The relative *ʔšr* is rarely used as an indefinite, 19.2 n. 13.
 3. The *y* in Hebrew is a vowel letter, but the Ugaritic form *my* suggests that it was bisyllabic.
 4. This account is taken from Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 83. For further discussion, see Paul Joüon, "Études de morphologie hébraïque," *Biblica* 1 (1920) 353–71, esp. 363–65. Particularly striking among many "irregular" pointings are the cases of *meh* before consonants other than *ḥeth* and *ʔayin* (note, e.g., [Judg 16:5bis](#), [6bis](#), [10](#), [13](#), [15](#)).
 5. The *h* is a vowel letter (but cf. Ugaritic *mh*) and is sporadically omitted in, e.g., *mhm*, [Ezek 8:6](#) Kethiv; the *Qere* restores the vowel letter; cf. [Isa 3:15](#) Kethiv. On the Ugaritic, see M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, "Das ugaritische Fragepronomen *mh* und seine Erweiterungen," *Studies in Bible and the Ancient Near East Presented to Samuel E. Loewenstamm*, ed. Y. Avishur and J. Blau (Jerusalem: Rubinstein, 1978) 19–21.
- The form *mān* 'what?' in [Exod 16:15](#) is unique, apparently a non-standard form reflecting a popular etymology and corresponding folktale for *mān* 'manna.' On *mn* 'what, who' in Ugaritic, see *UT* § 19.1504.
6. See also [1 Sam 20:10](#), [2 Sam 24:13](#), [1 Kgs 12:16](#), [Jer 2:5](#), [Qoh 11:2](#), [Esth 6:3](#).
 7. Strictly, a rhetorical question.
 8. The repetition may be related to indefinite usage. Akkadian contrasts *man*, *mannu* 'who?', with the compound (or reduplicating) form *mamman* (< *man-man*) 'who ever.' See Wolfram von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 49.
 9. Aramaic *man* 'who?' can be used the same way; cf. [Ezra 5:4](#), and Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961) § 38 / p. 22. On the Hebrew, see Joüon, "Études de morphologie hébraïque," 365.
 10. The sense of *mī yāqūm yaʔāqōb* in [Amos 7:2](#), 5 is not clear the usual rendering is 'How can Jacob stand?', but more apt may be 'Who is Jacob that he can stand?'
 11. A question asking for the meaning of the name. Cf. [Exod 3:13](#) perhaps.
 12. These passages illustrate the semantic transition from the interrogative sense to the indefinite sense: 'Who is the one that sinned against me? I will blot him out' > 'Who(ever) sinned against me, I will blot out.' Cf. the suggestions of Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, 2. 580.
 13. See J. L. Crenshaw, "The Expression *mī yōdēaʿ* in the Hebrew Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 36 (1986) 274–88.
 14. George W. Coats, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970) 14–26, at 26, cf. 14–15. *Parallels from Epigraphic Hebrew (Lachish Letters) and Western Akkadian (El-Amarna letters)* are

cited, pp. 15–16.

15. Coats, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," 24–26. Note the cases with mā in [Ps 8:5](#) and [Job 15:14](#), related formulas; cf. 18.3g.

16. Note also the "small clause," mah béša', 'What (is there with respect to) profit?', in [Gen 37:26](#) and [Ps 30:10](#).

17. The difference between Imh 'why (i.e., for what purpose)?' and the slightly less frequent maddûa' (< mā + yaddû) 'why (i.e., for what reason)?' is not entirely firm. For efforts to distinguish the two, see T. W. Nakarai, "LMH and MDU' in the Tanak," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982) 45–50; Richter, *GAHG* 3. 179–80.

18. In the accusative in [Qoh 8:7](#).

19. Negation in English triggers changes in indefinites: compare 'someone, anyone, no one.' In Hebrew such changes are unknown: yāde'ā mmā would mean 'She understands something,' and bal yāde'ā mma means 'She understands nothing,' [Prov 9:13](#), cf. [Neh 2:12](#).

20. Coats. "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," 17–19

21. The self-abasement is heightened by the use of *kib* for the speaker, as well as by the distancing pronominal substitute 'bdk. See Coates, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," 16–17; and Irene Lande, *Formelhafte Wendungen der Umgangssprache im Alten Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1949) 101–3

22. Arabic not only has interrogative-indefinite mā, but also a negative mā, used alone and in various combinations to negate verbs. It has been proposed that Hebrew also has negative *mh*; see M. Dahood, "The Emphatic Double Negative m'yn," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975) 458–59; W. Michel, "[Job 31:1](#)" *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982) 59–66, at 60, 64. The exclamatory mā noted above is also found in Arabic: mā afdal Zaydan, 'How excellent Zayd is, What an excellent man Zayd is!' See W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1896–98), 1. 98; 2. 43, 104–5. Compare with # 51 the variant form in [2 Sam 20:1](#).

23. On 'yn and 'ān, see Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, 1. 191.

24. Cf. Arabic 'ayy (fem. 'ayya) 'who?, whoever, what kind of,' alongside of man 'who?, whoever.'

25. The locution 'ê-zeh 'which (of two)?', is found only in indirect questions in [Qoh 2:3](#), [11:6](#).

26. Same idiom in [2 Kgs 3:8](#); [Job 38:19](#), [24](#); [2 Chr 18:23](#) (cf [1 Kgs 22:24](#)).

27. The question may represent indirect discourse; see William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 221.

28. In [Cant 1:7](#) bis, 'ekā is used for 'where?' The form 'ekōh 'where?' in [2 Kgs 6:13](#) may be a variant of 'ekā.

29. The form m'n in [2 Kgs 5:25](#) is difficult.

30. The doubled phrase 'āneh wā'ānā occurs in [1 Kgs 2:36](#), [42](#); [2 Kgs 5:25](#).

19 Relatives

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19.1 Introduction

a

Most of the clauses discussed so far are simple clauses, that is, clauses that make one predication, verbless or verbal.

1. וְשֵׁם אִמּוֹ יְדִידָהּ His mother's name is Jedidah.
[2 Kgs 22:1](#)
2. וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּכָל-דְּרָגָתוֹ דָּוִד And he followed all David's ways.
[2 Kgs 22:2](#)

It is often necessary to combine more than one predication; in such situations the main (or independent) clause contains one or more subordinate clauses. Relative clauses are a major variety of subordinate clause. The most widely used relative-clause marker is אשר.

3. וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-הַכֶּסֶף ... אֲשֶׁר
אִסְפוּ שְׁמָרֵי הַסֶּף So he can pour out the money ... which
the doorkeepers have collected.
[2 Kgs 22:4](#) LXXL

In this example הכסף is the object of the main verb ויתן, and it is the object of the verb אספו in the relative clause. Although relative clauses need not be marked, there are several relative-clause markers; some of them are used only in this way and are called relative pronouns, while others also serve other roles, notably the article.

b

Relative clauses are in many ways similar to attributive adjectives. They differ in conveying more complex information, that is, information that requires a predication of its own.

4. וַיִּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר
מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם
אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעַ וּבֵין
הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעַ
וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל
לָרָקִיעַ And he divided between the water which
was below the firmament and the water
which was above the firmament.
[Gen 1:7](#)

The two verbless relative clauses here allow the specification of the **רָקִיעַ** as a reference point, as the use of the adjectives **תַּחְתִּי** 'lower' and **עָלִי** 'upper' with **נִים** would not.

c

It is often said that there are two types of relative clauses in Hebrew, the dependent (or attributive) relative and the so-called "independent relative." The dependent relative, which has a close analog in English, contains a head word followed by a relative marker; all the examples so far considered are of this type. In # 4 the head word is **הַנִּים** for both clauses; the relative **אֲשֶׁר** follows this and introduces the attributive clause.

d

The "independent relative" is really a contradiction in terms because it is independent, that is, it is not relative to anything. In this construction the clause introduced by the "relative" marker functions as a principal part of the main verbal clause, as subject (# 5), object (# 6), or genitive (# 7), or in a verbless clause (# 8).

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 5. | וַיֵּרֶעַ בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה | What he did was wicked in YHWH's eyes. |
| | | Gen 38:10 |
| 6. | וְאֶנִּידָה לָּכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרַע אֶתְכֶם | I will tell you what will happen, to you. |
| | | Gen 49:1 |
| 7. | בְּיַד אֲשֶׁר שָׂנֵאת | into the hands of those whom you hate |
| | | Ezek 23:28 |
| 8. | רַבִּים אֲשֶׁר-מָתוּ בְּאֲבָנֵי הַבָּרָד מֵאֲשֶׁר הָרְגוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּחֶרֶב: | Those who died by the hailstones were more numerous than those whom the Israelites had killed by the sword. |
| | | Josh 10:11 |

The "relative" markers indicate in ## 5–8 that the clauses introduced by them are part of a larger sentence.

19.2 Types of Relative-Clause Markers

a

There are four classes of relative-clause markers: (1) **אֲשֶׁר**, (2) **שֶׁ**, (3) the z series, and (4) others. The first two are used only as relatives; the z series overlaps with the demonstratives, and those gathered under the last heading are grammatical elements used primarily in other ways. The members of the first three groups can be called relative pronouns.¹

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b

The most common relative pronoun, **אֲשֶׁר**, is etymologically a locative noun, 'a step, place,'² and may be considered a noun always used in the construct.³ There is no trace of the etymological sense,⁴ however, and the construct state is useful only in explaining the phonetic shape of the word. Broadly speaking, **אֲשֶׁר** is rare in poetry, rarer in older poetry than later,⁵ and the uses of **אֲשֶׁר** are more diverse in later prose than in earlier.

c

The relative **שֶׁ** is pointed in various ways: usually **שֶׁ** or **שֵׁ** with doubling of the following consonant; **שֶׁ** or **שֵׁ**, if

doubling is not allowed (or before *ō* or *a*), except for **וְ** before **הָ**. This pronoun presents a curious history: it is attested in the older layer of Biblical Hebrew (e.g., [Judg 5:7](#)) and in the later books, but rarely in between.⁶ Since most Semitic languages use an *s* form for the relative, including Phoenician and Ammonite, and since **וְ** is standard in Mishnaic Hebrew, we may suppose that the dominant dialect of Biblical Hebrew was distinctive among Hebrew and South Canaanite dialects in using **אֲשֶׁר** in preference to **שֶׁ**.⁷

d

The relative markers of the *z* series include the demonstrative **זֶה**, as well as the rare forms **זִי** and **זֹה** (זֹה).⁸ The diversity of this group of forms is discussed in connection with the demonstratives (17.4.3). The relative use of these forms is primarily poetic. The syntactic patterns of relative clause with **אֲשֶׁר** and *z* forms are similar.⁹

- 1a. **בְּרֶשֶׁת־זֹו טָמְנוּ** in the net which they have hidden
[Ps 9:16](#)
- 1b. **וְרֶשֶׁתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־טָמְנוּ** his net which he hid
[Ps 35:8](#)

Like *s*, *z* is a frequent element in Semitic relative markers outside Hebrew, and in the Hebrew demonstratives.

e

The final class includes the article, as well as **כִּי** and **כִּי־כֵן**. The latter uses are cited above (18.2-3); the article as relative is treated below (19.7; cf. 13.5.2d).

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f

Markers of the first three groups can be used in forming so-called independent relative clauses. There is a formal distinction between dependent and independent uses of the relatives: as dependent pronouns they are never bracketed with a preposition or **אֶת**, but as independent pronouns they may be so bracketed. The independent pronoun is best rendered by the English equivalents: 'he who, he whom, that which, of such a kind as,' etc.

g

The relative clause may be unmarked, especially in poetry, when the clause clearly functions as part of the sentence.

2. **בְּשִׁחַת עֲשׂוּ** into the pit (which) they have dug
[Ps 9:16](#)

19.3 Uses of אֲשֶׁר

a

The common relative pronoun is indeclinable.¹⁰ It can introduce dependent or attributive relative clauses, either alone or with a resumptive element, specifying the role of the relative pronoun in the subordinate clause. Strictly speaking, the structure of the clause varies, depending on whether the resumptive element is present; the differences are not, however, crucial to accounting for the use or non-use of the resumptive. In dependent relative clauses without resumption, the pronoun is usually in the nominative function (## 1–2), although it may be in the accusative (# 3).

1. **הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ־הַגֶּן** the tree which (NOMINATIVE) is in the middle of the garden
[Gen 3:3](#)
2. **אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ** I am YHWH, who (NOMINATIVE)

מֵאוּר כַּשְׁדִּים

brought you out from Ur of the Chaldees.

[Gen 15:7](#)

3. אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַעְתָּ

other gods whom (ACCUSATIVE) you have not known

[Deut 13:7](#)

b

The most common resumptive element is a pronoun, independent for the nominative function (# 4), suffixed otherwise (## 5–9). Note that the head word may be definite (## 4, 6–9) or indefinite (# 5).

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4. וּמִן־הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא טָהָרָה הִיא

from the animal which (NOMINATIVE) (it) is not pure

[Gen 7:2](#)

5. גּוֹי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִשְׁמַע לְשׁוֹנוֹ:

a nation whose (GENITIVE) (the) language (of it) you will not understand

[Deut 28:49](#)

6. הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה שׁוֹכֵב עָלֶיהָ

the land which (GENITIVE) YOU are lying on (it)

[Gen 28:13](#)

7. אֲנִי יוֹסֵף אֲחִיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרָיִמָּה:

I am your brother, Joseph, whom (ACCUSATIVE) you sold (me) into Egypt.

[Gen 45:4](#)

8. הַנָּבִיא אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַחַו יְהוָה

the prophet which (ACCUSATIVE) YHWH sent (him)

[Jer 28:9](#)

9. כַּמּוֹץ אֲשֶׁר־תִּדְפֹּנוּ רוּחַ:

like chaff which (ACCUSATIVE) the wind drives (it) away

[Ps 1:4](#)

After words of time there is usually no resumptive pronoun, so that אֲשֶׁר appears to be equivalent to 'when.' ¹¹

10. עַד־הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר־בָּא בְּשָׁלוֹם:

until the day when (in which) he came back in safety

[2 Sam 19:25](#)

11. וְעוֹד חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין־חֲרִישׁ וְקָצִיר:

(There are) still five years when there will be no plowing or reaping.

[Gen 45:6](#)

12. בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֲשֶׁר תָּבֹא

on the day when you go

[1 Kgs 22:25](#)

The resumptive element may also be a locative adverb.

13. עַד־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה שָׁם אֶהְלֶה

to the place where (which) his tent had been (there) ¹²

[Gen 13:3](#)

14. כָּל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָבוֹא

every place to which we shall come

שָׁמָּה

[Gen 20:13](#)

15. אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר לָקַח
מִשָּׁם:

[Gen 3:23](#)

C

A so-called "independent relative" clause may, as noted in 19.1d, serve in a verbal clause as either subject (# 16) or object (# 17), in a verbless clause (# 18), and in a genitive function, either as object of a preposition (## 19–20) or as a second term in a construct chain (# 21).¹³

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16. וַיֵּשְׁאָר אֶךְ־נֹחַ וְאֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ
בַּתֵּבָה:
17. כִּי יֵדַעְתִּי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־תְּבָרֵךְ
מִבָּרֵךְ:
18. רַבִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתָּנוּ מֵאֲשֶׁר
אִתָּם:
19. וַיֹּאמֶר לְאִשְׁרֵי עַל־בֵּיתוֹ
20. וּמֵאֲשֶׁר לְאֲבִינוּ
21. בְּיַד אֲשֶׁר שָׂנֵאת
- Only Noah and those with him in the ark were left.
- [Gen 7:23](#)
- I know as blessed the one whom you bless.
- [Num 22:6](#)
- More are they who are with us than they who are with them.
- [2 Kgs 6:16](#) manuscript *Kethiv*
- He said to him who was over his house ...
- [Gen 43:16](#)
- from what belonged to our father
- [Gen 31:1](#)
- into the hand of those you hate
- [Ezek 23:28](#)

19.4 Uses of שֶׁ

a

The שֶׁ relative pronoun has a range of uses similar to that of אֲשֶׁר.¹⁴ It can introduce dependent relative clauses without resumption, serving either in the nominative or, less often, in the accusative function in the relative clause.¹⁵

1. כַּחֲלוֹ שֶׁעַל־שִׁפְתֵי הַיָּם
2. יְהוָה שֶׁלֹא נִתְּנוּנוֹטְרָךְ לְשֵׁנֵי
הָעָם:
3. וּמִן־הַנְּתִינִים שֶׁנָּתַן דָּוִיד ...
לְעִבְדַת הַלְוִיִּם
- like the sand which (NOMINATIVE) is on the seashore¹⁶
- [Judg 7:12](#)
- YHWH, who (NOMINATIVE) has not made us prey to their teeth
- [Ps 124:6](#)
- and of the servitors whom (ACCUSATIVE) David appointed ... for service of the Levites
- [Ezra 8:20](#)

Resumptive elements occur less frequently after **ש**, but both pronouns and adverbs are so used.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|--|
| 4. | בַּיּוֹם שֶׁיִּדְבַּר-בָּהּ: | on the day on which she is spoken for
(on it)
Cant 8:8 |
| 5. | שָׁשִׁים עָלוּ שְׁבָטִים | to which the tribes mount up (there)
Ps 122:4 |

b

A so-called independent relative clause in **ש** may serve as the object (or part of the object) of a verbal main clause (# 6) or as a genitive, either as object of a preposition (## 7–8) or as the second term of a construct phrase (## 9–10).

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- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--|
| 6. | בִּקְשֵׁתִי אֶת שְׂאֵהָבָה נִפְשִׁי | I sought him whom I love.
Cant 3:1 |
| 7. | וְעַל שְׂבָכָרְמִים | and in charge of that which is in (i.e.,
the produce of) the vineyards
1 Chr 27:27 |
| 8. | עַד שִׁיחַנֵּנוּ: | until he shows us mercy
Ps 123:2 |
| 9. | אֲשֶׁרִי שִׁישְׁלָם-לָךְ | the joys of the one who pays you back
17
Ps 137:8 |
| 10. | אֲשֶׁרִי שָׂאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ | the joys of the one who (has) the God of
Jacob as his help 18
Ps 146:5 |

A **ש** clause can also be used as a vocative.

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|
| 11. | הַגִּידָה לִּי שְׂאֵהָבָה נִפְשִׁי | Tell me, (you) whom I love.
Cant 1:7 |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|

19.5 Uses of z Series Forms

a

The three forms of the z series relevant here are **זֶה**, **זוּ**, and **זֶה**; the forms are not common enough to make it possible to distinguish among them clearly. There are two patterns of use to be discussed: the relative uses are similar to those found with **אֲשֶׁר** and **ש**, while the quasi-relative or determinative uses are quite different. [19](#)

b

A z form may be used as a dependent relative pronoun, usually without a resumptive element.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. | שְׁמַע לְאָבִיךָ זֶה יִלְדֶּךָ | Listen to your father, who (NOMINATIVE)
begot you.
Prov 23:22 |
| 2. | מִפְּנֵי רָשָׁעִים זֶה שְׂדֵדוֹנִי | from the presence of the wicked who
(NOMINATIVE) assail me
Ps 17:9 |
| 3. | לְוִיתָן זֶה-יִצְרָתָהּ | the Leviathan, which (ACCUSATIVE) you
formed |

4. **וְעִדְתִּי זֶה אֶלְמָדָם** [Ps 104:26](#)
my statues which (ACCUSATIVE) I teach
to them
5. **אֶל-מָקוֹם זֶה יִסְדַּתְּ לָהֶם:** [Ps 132:12](#)
to the place which (GENITIVE) you
assigned for them ²⁰
[Ps 104:8](#)

Less often a resumptive pronoun is used.

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6. **הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ זֶה קִוִּינוּ לוֹ** Behold our God whom we have trusted
(him).
[Isa 25:9](#)
7. **הֲלוֹא יְהוָה זֶה חָטָאנוּלוֹ** Was it not YHWH whom we have sinned
against (him)?
[Isa 42:24](#)
8. **הַר-צִיּוֹן זֶה שָׁכַנְתָּ בוֹ:** Mount Zion which you dwell on (it)
[Ps 74:2](#)

A z form can also be used in a so-called independent relative clause.

9. **וְזֵה-אֲהַבְתִּי נִהְפְכוּ-בִי:** Those I love have turned against me.
[Job 19:19](#)
10. **וְזֵה-חִזִּיתִי וְאֶסְפְּרָה:** That which I have seen I will tell you.
[Job 15:17](#)

c

In considering the quasi-relative or determinative use of the z forms, we need to reconsider the basic sense of [זֶה](#) ²¹. From the use of [זֶה](#) and its equivalents as an attributive demonstrative (e.g., 'the person, this one'), there developed a substantive use: 'the person, the one of (something),' which is equivalent to 'the person who ...'. By definition z forms governing another substantive are not relative pronouns, but since they bracket a qualifying substantive with a preceding substantive they may be regarded in this use as quasi-relatives. In such constructions their deictic force and their basic appositive syntax can still be felt strongly. (It was out of this quasi-relative use that the relative uses treated above developed.)

d

The determinative may be used in dependent relative clauses. ²²

11. **מִפְנֵי יְהוָה זֶה סִינִי** before YHWH, the one of Sinai ²³
[Judg 5:5](#)
12. **מִן-הַדּוֹר זֶה לְעוֹלָם:** from the generation, the one of
everlasting (i.e., the everlasting
generation)
[Ps 12:8](#)

It also occurs in independent relative clauses, in true determinative usage, ²⁴ either as a predicate in a nominal clause (# 13) or as a construct (# 14).

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13. **וְהָיָה זֶה שָׁלוֹם** And he will be the one of peace. ²⁵
[Mic 5:4](#)
14. **זֶה עֲנִי קָרָא** The one of poverty cried (i.e., The poor
man cried). ²⁶

[Ps 34:7](#) emended

19.6 Asyndetic Relative Clauses

a

Many relative clauses bear no distinctive relative marker but are juxtaposed directly to the main clause; such unmarked or Ø-marked clauses are common in poetry, particularly as attributives (## 1–2) and after time words (## 3–4).

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | הַבֵּיטוּ אֶל-צוּר חֲצַבְתֶּם
וְאֶל-מִקְבֵּת בּוֹר נִקְרַתֶּם: | Look to the rock (from which) you were
hewn and to the quarry (from which) you
were carved.
Isa 51:1 |
| 2. | עֲצָמוֹת דָּכִיתָ | the bones (which) you broke
Ps 51:10 |
| 3. | עֲצָמוֹת עֲנִיתָנוּ | according to the days (when) you
afflicted us
Ps 90:15 |
| 4. | מֵעַתָּה דִגָּנָם וְתִירוֹשָׁם רַבּוּ: | at the time (when) their grain and new
wine abound
Ps 4:8 |

b

Asyndetic "independent relative" clauses occur as prepositional objects (## 5–6).

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---|
| 5. | אַחֲרֵי לֹא-יִוָּעֲלוּ הַלָּכוּ: | They followed (those who) cannot help.
Jer 2:8 |
| 6. | נִדְרַשְׁתִּי לְלוֹא שָׁאֵלוּ | I was sought by (those who) had not
asked.
Isa 65:1 |

19.7 Other Relative Markers

a

In addition to the relative pronouns **אֲשֶׁר**, **שֶׁ**, and **זֶה** and the like, there are other relative markers to be considered; the relative use of **מִי** and **מִזֶּה** is treated above (18.2-3), while the article remains to be discussed.

b

The article as relative marker must be considered in relation to the participle, to other constructions, and to ambiguous forms. Hebraists sometimes analyze the article with the participle as having a relative force or as investing the participle with this value. For example, Ronald J. Williams lists as one of the uses of the article its use as "equivalent to a relative pronoun ... with participles,"²⁷ while A. B. Davidson somewhat more accurately said: "When in apposition with a preceding definite subject the participle with

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article has the meaning very much of a relative clause ... This usage is very common."²⁸ But even this analysis is not cogent because the participle, as a verbal adjective, by itself can serve as a relative clause, 'one who ...', that which ... ' Thus a participle can form a subordinate clause even without the article.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---|
| 1. | סְעָרָה בָּאָה מִן-הַצָּפוֹן | a storm which was coming from the north
Ezek 1:4 |
|----|------------------------------|---|

Thus it is misleading to consider the article as a dependent relative marker with a participle.²⁹

C

The article with a perfective verb, however, does serve as a relative marker; this usage is found chiefly in the later books of the Bible, notably Ezra and Chronicles.³⁰

2. קָצִינֵי אֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה
הֶהָלְכוּ אִתּוֹ the army commanders who had come
with him³¹
[Josh 10:24](#)
3. וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בְּעָרֵינוּ הִהְשִׁיב
נָשִׁים נְכָרִיּוֹת everyone in our towns who has married a
foreign woman
[Ezra 10:14](#)
4. וְכָל הַהִקְדִּישׁ שְׁמוּאֵל and everything which Samuel had
dedicated
[1 Chr 26:28](#)

An "independent relative" clause formed with the article may stand after a preposition.

5. בַּהֲכִין לוֹ דָּוִד in the (place) David had prepared for it
[2 Chr 1:4](#)
6. עַל הַהֲכִין הָאֱלֹהִים at what God had brought about
[2 Chr 29:36](#)

d

Unfortunately, it is not always easy to distinguish participles and perfective verbs. There are forms in older books where the consonants could be read as participles but points or accents indicate perfectives, notably *Niphs* and hollow verb forms. However the pointing or accentuation in the Masorah is to be explained, such forms should probably be read as participles (## 7–8); the article with the perfective is unlikely in early texts.³²

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7. כָּלְתָהּ עִמָּהּ הַשָּׁבָה מִשָּׂרֵי
מוֹאָב her daughter-in-law with her, who had
returned from the plains of Moab
[Ruth 1:22](#)
8. בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹלָד-לוֹ his son, who was born to him
[Gen 21:3](#)

Footnotes:

1. Both ם and ם are quite often used as conjunctions, but such use is not considered in this chapter. Cf. nn. 10 and 14. On the development of ם as a conjunction, and the related problem of the position of the relative pronoun vis-a-vis its head, see M. H. [Goshen-]Gottstein, "Afterthought and the Syntax of Relative Clauses in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 68 (1949) 35–47.

A fuller account of the problem, set in the context of Mishnaic and Modern Hebrew, is given by T. Givón, "Verb Complements and Relative Clauses," *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 1/4 (1974); he argues in essence that relative clauses evolve from modifying a constituent to modifying a whole clause. There are about 5500 occurrences of ם and 138 of ם, 68 of them in Qoheleth (SA/THAT).

2. The noun is not attested as such in Hebrew, but cf. Akkadian asru 'place, site' and asar 'where, wherein'; the root ם/ט_r 'to go' is attested in Hebrew and Ugaritic. Only Hebrew and Moabite have ם; of the neighboring languages, both Ammonite and Phoenician-Punic have ם (as does the Canaanite language of the Deir Alla text; see J. A. Hackett, *The Balaam Textirom Deir Alla* [Chico: Scholars Press, 1984] 31, 114–15), and many other Semitic languages use ם forms for the relative. See F. Rundgren, *Über Bildungen mit (ם)- und n-t-Demonstrativen im Semitischen* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1955).

3. Cf. BL§ 32a/p.264.
4. Save perhaps in [Judg 5:27](#); [Ruth 1:17](#) is dubious.
5. Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, "'Prose Particle' Counts of the Hebrew Bible," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 165–83.
6. All instances of the relative in Canticles, except one (in the title of the book), involve §. In Qoheleth, § is used 68 times (often as a conjunction) and ʾšr 89 times. § is not, however, frequent in Ezra (only once) or Chronicles (only twice). See Joüon § 38 / p. 89–90.
7. M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 42–43.
8. It is strictly correct to say that zû; is primarily a relative and zeh is primarily a demonstrative, but the one is so rare and the other so relatively common that such a flat statement is potentially misleading.
9. Cf. J. M. Allegro, "Uses of the Semitic Demonstrative Element z in Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 5 (1955) 309–12, at 311. On the possibility that zeh and zû may be confused in the MT, see p. 309.
10. The conjunctive use of ʾšr is not considered here. This use is more common in late Biblical Hebrew; see Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 128. Joüon's apparent view that the conjunctive use is more basic than the pronominal use is ill founded, both on synchronic syntactic and historical grounds; see §145a / p. 447.
11. This pattern is close to being conjunctive. Joüon includes a greater variety of cases similar to these under the broader heading of prepositional phrases omitted after ʾšr; see § 158i-k / pp. 484–85.
12. The use of mqwm shows how completely the etymological sense of ʾšr had faded.
13. Rarely ʾšr is used as an indefinite pronoun, perhaps only in [Gen 31:32](#), [44:9](#), both times with mšʾ, in related passages. The phrase ʾšr ʿl (h)byt, found in # 19, is also attested in the Silwan or Royal Steward inscription; see H. J. Katzenstein, "The Royal Steward," *Israel Exploration Journal* 10 (1960) 149–54.
14. As with ʾšr, the conjunctive uses of § are not considered here; for examples, see [Judg 6:17](#), [Jonah 4:10](#); the uses of § in [Judg 5:7](#) bis are temporal conjunctions.
15. The lamed of possession with § combines to yield the word šel; cf. [2 Kgs 6:11](#); [Jonah 1:7](#), [12](#); and Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 38–40. The word is the standard marker of possession in post-biblical Hebrew.
16. Cf. [Judg 8:26](#).
17. Same construction in the following verse, [Ps 137:9](#).
18. The b is the beth of essence.
19. See Allegro, "Demonstrative Element z," 309. Cf Ugaritic clauses in d (ʾ ð).
20. Clauses in z, like those in §, can stand as the second term of a construct chain.
21. Allegro, "Demonstrative Element z," 311.
22. [Isa 23:13](#) may be another example, but cf. 17.4.1.
23. Cf. ʾlhym zh syny in [Ps 68:9](#). It may be that in origin the phrase zh syny was an independent clause, as is assumed by, e.g., F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973) 164; this would be in conformity with comparable usage in other Semitic languages.
24. The independent use is clearest in Arabic, in such Qurʾanic phrases as dū saʿatin 'he of wealth (i.e., a rich man),' dū ʿusrin 'he of poverty (i.e., a debtor),' dū mirratin 'he of wisdom (i.e., Muhammad),' dū ḥattin ʿazīmin 'he of great fortune,' dū l-ʾawṭād 'Lord of Stakes (i.e., Pharaoh),' and the divine titles, dū l-faḍlī l-ʿazīmī 'Lord of the Grace Unbounded,' dū l-qūwatī 'Lord of Power,' and dū l-ʿarṣī (l-majīd) 'Lord of the (Glorious) Throne.' The dependent use is more common in Aramaic with d(y), e.g., Syriac rwhʾ dqwḏšʾ 'the Spirit, the one of Holiness,' a term for the Holy Spirit. See Allegro, "Demonstrative Element z," 310; and Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961) §§ 35–36, 86 / pp. 21–22, 38.
25. Cf [Isa 9:5](#), šar-šālôm 'prince of peace.'
26. Read ʿōrī 'affliction' against the MT's ʿarī 'afflicted,' with Allegro, "Demonstrative Element z," 311.
27. See the brief treatment in R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976) 19.

28. A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* (3d ed; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901) 132–33, abbreviations expanded.

29. With Joüon § 145e / pp. 448–49.

30. The construal of *h* with a preposition in [1 Sam 9:24](#), though apparently intended by the Masoretes, is dubious; see P. Kyle McCarter, *I Samuel* (Anchor Bible 8; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980) 170, for a conservative solution to the difficult witnesses.

31. The ך in hhlkwך may be a dittograph (note the following ך) or an example of a double *mater lectionis* type of writing, found frequently at Qumran; for other biblical examples, see GKC § 23i / p. 81. On the writing, see M. O'Connor, "Writing Systems, Native Speaker Analyses, and the Earliest Stages of Northwest Semitic Orthography," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 439–65, at 450–51.

32. With Joüon § 145e / pp. 448–49; against BL § 32e / p. 265. The noun phrase in [Gen 18:21](#) is anomalous not only because of the modifier habbā'â 'elay but also because of the article + preposition + suffixed noun sequence, hkkəṣa'āqātāh 'the according-to-its-outcry that has reached me.'

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20 Introduction to the Verbal System

[20.1 Multifunctionality](#)

[20.2 Categories Relevant to Predication](#)

[20.3 The Hebrew Verbal System](#)

20.1 Multifunctionality

a

Language is a system that uses finite means for infinite expressiveness, and therefore many aspects of a language's working are called on to perform a variety of functions. We have seen this multifunctional quality exemplified over and over again in Biblical Hebrew grammar, but the greatest multifunctionality involves the verbal system. The verbal system is at the core of the expression of predication; while Hebrew uses non-verbal clauses (8.4) and interjections and exclamations are found intermittently (40.2), the central role in predication is played by the various verbal stems (*Qal*, *Piel*, etc.) and forms (perfective conjugation hv'['ñr', non-perfective conjugation rMez:a], imperative W[m.vi, etc.). Prior to treating the stems and forms, we outline the wide variety of categories relevant to predication in this chapter.

b

Before turning to these categories, however, let us consider again the notion of multifunctionality. In his analysis of the development of a child's language, M. A. K. Halliday notes that in the speech act of a very young child each utterance serves just one function, for example, 'I want my toy.'¹ In adult language, in contrast, speakers are able to objectify themselves in relation to their experiences and audiences, and each utterance is very complex, for example, 'There's my last duchess hanging on the wall.' Halliday refers to adult language as having three components: "ideational" (i.e., representing a thought or an experience), "interpersonal" (i.e., expressing the speaker's side of the utterance, the choice of roles for the addressee, the conveyance of judgments and predictions, etc.), and "textual" (i.e., filling "the requirement that language should be operationally relevant—that it should have a texture, in real contexts of situation."').² These three components or "macro-functions" are "highly abstract linguistic reflexes of the multiplicity of social uses of language."

Whereas with the child, in the first beginnings of the [grammatical] system, the functions remain unintegrated ... with one utterance having just one function, the linguistic units of the adult language serve all (macro-)functions at once. A clause in English is the simultaneous realization of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. But these components are not put together in discrete fashion such that we can point to one segment of the clause as expressing one type of meaning and another segment

as expressing another. The choice of a word may express one type of meaning, its morphology another and its position in sequence another; and any element is likely to have more than one structural role, like a chord in a polyphonic structure which participates simultaneously in a number of melodic lines.³

c

Given that an "element is likely to have more than one structural role," we may speak of the multifunctionality of the element: a grammatical form has many meanings at one and the same time.⁴ Of all the word classes the verb is the most multifunctional and thus the one most likely to determine a variety of macro-functions.⁵

d

Consider the form *h'WKñY:w:*, which would conventionally be glossed 'And they (the members of the tribe of Judah) smote it (the city of Jerusalem)' ([Judg 1:8](#)). The verb expresses:

1. the action of smiting (root *nky*)
2. the subject, here the actor (3 m.pl.)
3. the object, here the patient (3 f.s.)
4. voice (the subject is an actor and so the voice is active, not passive; the subject and object are different and so the voice is active, not reflexive; etc.)
5. case frame (the verb is transitive, not intransitive; it is singly transitive, i.e., has one object, rather than doubly transitive; etc.)
6. type of action (the verb is *Hiphil*, though the relevance of the stem is not obvious in this case; cf. English simple action, 'He raged against his audience,' versus causative action, 'He enraged his audience')
7. time of action relative to time of speaking (the smiting precedes the reference to it; contrast *hK'K,ñy*: 'he smites/will smite you,' in which the time of action does not precede the speaking)
8. the quality of action (the action, though cumulatively made up of smaller actions, has an endpoint, though not necessarily an endproduct)
9. mood or modality (the action is independent; though consequent on another predicate, the verb is not subordinate to it; further, the verb makes an assertion rather than, say, a request)

e

These notions and various others are all bound up in *h'WKñY:w:*. This form involves both a conjunction and a verb form; some of the features of the predicate arise from the combination of the two and are thus syntactic in character. Others involve the suffix *-hā*.

f

In the form *yakkû* (and in all finite verbs), we have four bound morphemes.

1. the verbal root, signifying the state or action being represented, here *nky*

2. the pronominal affix(es), signifying the person, gender, and number of the subject of the action, here *ya-û*
3. the prefix and/or lengthening of the root's medial consonant, signifying voice and causitivity, that is, the markers of the "verbal stem," here the *Hipihil*
4. the vocalic infix signifying tense/aspect and mood/modality, that is, the "verbal conjugation," here the prefixing form (as used after *waw*)

g

In fact, the conjunctive morpheme *waw* prefixed to a verbal form may show the relationship of the situation represented by the verbal form to other situations. It therefore plays a special role in verbal morphology. Although these four morphemes are in some sense discrete elements in the verbal form, they are bound together so that the shape of each depends on the shape of the others. The infix pattern of the verbal conjugation is affected by the presence of the affixes pertaining to the verbal stems, etc. These four morphemes are found in finite verbs. When the verbal root is stripped of the pronominal affixes indicating the person, gender, and number of the subject and the concomitant infix patterns of the verbal conjugations signifying tense/aspect and mood/modality, the resulting form is no longer a true verb but a hybrid. With no additional prefix or suffix it is a verbal noun, that is, an infinitive; Hebrew has two contrasting patterns, the so-called "infinitive construct" and "infinitive absolute."⁶ Another stripped-down form may add suffixes of the sort used with adjectives along with other affixes, in which case it is a verbal adjective, that is, a participle.

h

The difficult task in describing the Hebrew verbal system involves mapping. How do phenomena like the nine noted above map onto the elements of the verb? In some cases, we know things about the working of a verb form from its syntax, namely, the conjunctions preceding, the order of words in a clause, the verb form in the preceding (and to a lesser extent following) clauses, etc. In other cases, we know things from the lexicon, that is, the way a given root is regularly and distinctively used. It is a third group of cases that concerns us here: what does the derivational morphology actually tell us? This is not a matter of translational equivalence, but a prior matter of linguistic study. It is only after we understand how the Hebrew verbal system works that we can properly debate how to express that information in a fluent translation, using the verbal categories of a target language. In all this a real-world appreciation of how predicates work is useful, but appeals to common sense must not be allowed to replace careful study. Common sense has often been used to beat the Hebrew verbal system into a system like those of English, German, or Classical Greek.

20.2 Categories Relevant to Predication

a

Before we consider how the Hebrew verbal system works, we would do well to pause and consider some of the categories which are reflected in predicates in various languages. Our purpose is not to survey linguistic systems, but to have a glance at systems that have features which are relevant to Hebrew or which are not relevant but might seem to be.⁷ This survey is somewhat arbitrary, just as the above list of

nine connotations of *hwkyw* was arbitrary to some extent.

b

A number of relevant categories require little attention. The features of person, number, and gender are associated with the subject of the verb, be it an incorporated pronominal element (rm,aYŌñw: 'and he said') or an expressed subject (!A[d>GI rmayw 'and Gideon said'). If there is an object, the same features are relevant for it. These three features have certain distinctive aspects in Hebrew (cf. Chaps. 6, 7), but they present no major obstacles or keys to understanding the verb.

c

Categories demanding attention are tense, modality, voice, and the two types of aspect. The English word "aspect" refers to two entirely separate sets of grammatical categories, aspect as the contour of action (perfective, progressive, etc.; German *Aspekt*) and aspect as the type of action (causative, stative, etc.; German *Aktionsart*, literally 'type of action'). For example, in the predication 'He sang' the *Aspekt* is preterite (complete, past, definite) and the *Aktionsart* of the verb 'sin' is strongly iterative. Many languages of the world have complex systems for representing one or the other of these categories;⁸ the Semitic languages have well developed expressions of both systems, in that they formally distinguish *Aspekt* through the conjugations and *Aktionsart* by the stems. Thus the English reader must always be wary of the naked term "aspect" in connection with Semitic studies; further, many authors are idiosyncratic in their use of the terms (and, unavoidably, so are we). In this chapter we resort to the expedient of using the German terms wherever confusion might arise.

d

Tense refers to the category of morphological phenomena that locate a situation⁹ in the course of time. Tenses always refer to both the time of the action and the time of the utterance: 'He ran' uses a past-tense verb to refer to an action before the time of speaking. Tenses may also refer to the time of another action: 'Having run, he rested'

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uses two past-tense verbs to refer to situations prior to the utterance, and one of them ('having run') is anterior in time to the other. Tenses may be simple, using one form ('runs, ran'), or periphrastic, using two verbs, one an auxiliary ('will run').

e

Biblical Hebrew has no tenses in the strict sense; it uses a variety of other means to express time relations. This is not a rare situation. "Many languages lack tenses, i.e. do not have grammaticalised time reference, though probably all languages can lexicalise time reference, i.e. have temporal adverbials that locate situations in time."¹⁰ Hebrew uses adverbials to some extent, but much more important are various syntactic means. Because these means are so well known and because the pressure of real-world understanding is so great, we are tempted to say that, for example, *wayyiqtol* is a past tense. As we shall see, the grammar is more complex.¹¹

f

Modality refers to the category of morphological phenomena that locate a situation in the discourse; informally, we can say that they reflect the mood of the speaker. Some modal categories are directly involved in Hebrew morphology: a clause in the imperative mood may take an imperative verb; a cohortative clause may have a cohortative verb. Some categories that are modal in many languages have no morphological trace in Hebrew; interrogative clauses, for example, are only formed with syntactic or lexical devices in Hebrew (18.1; cf. 40.3). The mood of most Hebrew verbs is indicative (or declarative); the jussive may be distinct. There are traces of two other moods. It appears that stages immediately prior to Hebrew had a subjunctive; this mood is of great historical importance in explaining the extant verb system of Biblical Hebrew. Further, there are a variety of forms with *nun* either between the stem and suffix (the energetic forms) or after the stem (the forms with paragogic *nun*); these forms, too, reflect an earlier stage of the language. As in other languages the subjunctive, energetic, and paragogic forms are used in syntactically complex constructions, though the contrast with declarative verbs is now often obscure.

g

Aspect (Aspekt) refers to the category of morphological phenomena that describe the contour of a situation in time. In English there are two sets of aspectual markers, both fused to some extent with tense markers. The progressive aspect indicates that a situation is ongoing, and there are present progressive forms ('I am running'), past progressives ('I was running'), future progressives ('I will be running'), etc. The perfective aspect indicates that a situation is complete, whether in present time ('I love') or in past time ('I loved'). Perfective aspect needs to be distinguished from the English perfect tense, which combines perfective aspect and anterior time reference, again, whether in present time (present perfect 'I have run') or in past time (past perfect 'I had run'). As in English, tense and aspect systems are fused in the Romance languages (French, Spanish, etc.), but in many languages aspect is an independent category. The Slavic languages (e.g., Russian) use full imperfective and perfective verbal structures; the perfective is a marked structure (i.e., use of these forms asserts that a situation is complete or finished),

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while the imperfective is unmarked (i.e., use of these forms asserts nothing about the completeness).¹² Classical Greek uses a three-way aspectual system: the perfect asserts that the situation is complete as against the imperfect and aorist forms, while the imperfect asserts that the situation is not complete and the process is ongoing as against the aorist.¹³

h

Hebrew aspectual marking is similar to the Slavic imperfective/perfective system, but its operation is simpler because there is no system of forms marked for tense under the two aspectual rubrics. The deictic time reference of Hebrew verb forms is determined largely by syntax, though it is time reference that dictates whether the non-perfective conjugation signifies imperfective aspect (as with past or present time) or not (as with future time).

i

Other phenomena related to aspect (*Aspekt*) are of less importance than the progressive and perfective phenomena. They include iterativity or frequentativity (marking a verb as designating a repeated action) and the closely related category of habituality (marking a verb as designating a habitual action); cf. English 'I used to run.' These aspectual categories are in Hebrew closely tied to non-perfective expressions. Other aspectual categories refer to punctuality (or momentariness) and inception (or ingression or inchoation), that is, to verbs describing the entirety of a brief event and those describing the beginning of a situation ('I began to run'). These categories are relevant to some minor operations of the stem system.

j

Aspect (*Aktionsart*) refers to the category of morphological phenomena that describe the kind of situation a verb refers to. A well-known group of aspectual phenomena are the voices of the European languages. English recognizes two voices, active ('I ran') and passive ('I was beaten'). With an active verb the subject is an agent or actor, while with a passive verb the subject is a patient (one who undergoes or suffers the action). Other languages, for example, Classical Greek, recognize a third voice, called middle; the subject of a middle verb acts on itself or acts in a way concerning itself. (The reflexives of English and other European languages are analogous.) The voices may serve to sort out various grammatical features of Hebrew, as we shall see in the next chapter.

k

Another group of aspect (*Aktionsart*) phenomena involve fientivity and transitivity. The first of these terms refers to the type of movement or activity inherent in the verb.¹⁴ A verb may be stative (describe a state) or fientive (describe an activity). This differentiation is related to the age-old question of how closely adjectives are related to verbs.¹⁵ In

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languages with a progressive aspect, fientive verbs may be progressive (cf. 'He was learning Hebrew'), while statives cannot (cf. the unacceptability of '**He was knowing Hebrew'). Fientive verbs are sometimes called dynamic verbs, which is an acceptable term, or active verbs, which should not be used, for it is liable to confusion with the sense of active that refers to the subject's role.¹⁶

l

Transitivity refers to the contour of movement or activity inherent in the verb. An intransitive verb is one which customarily takes no object; all pure statives (cf. 30.5.3) and many fientives (cf. 'I ran') are intransitive. A transitive verb is one which takes object(s); a singly transitive verb takes one object (cf. 'Saul struck David'), while a doubly transitive verb takes two objects (cf. 'David gave Saul his armor'). Another way to describe these three groups is based on counting the number of nouns directly tied to the verb. Thus, an intransitive verb is a "one-place" verb (subject only); a singly transitive verb is a "two-place" verb (subject, object); a doubly transitive verb is a "three-place" verb (subject, object₁, object₂).

m

There are two major types of causation constructions. These may be conceived of as passive and active counterparts. In sentences like 'She makes me tired' and 'She makes me learned,' me, as the object of the

causation, is caused to be in an effected state; such a construction is called factitive (with adjectival stative verbs) or resultative (with fientive verbs). In contrast take these sentences: 'She tires me' and 'She makes me learn.' Here the object me is seen as active, and such a construction is called causative. The semantic contrast of these English examples is weak, precisely because the contrast is not especially important in English. Let us restate the difference from a morphological point of view. If a transitive verb, in which the object participates in the action, is formed from an intransitive fientive verb by the addition of a morphological element, the verb is called a causative. Most causation is expressed in English by distinct words or by various syntactic constructions (e.g., 'He made me run,' 'She caused me to go,' 'They had me write'). If a transitive verb is from an adjectival stative verb (e.g., dbK 'to be heavy') by the addition of a morphological element, the verb is called a factitive. English en is factitive as a suffix ('whiten, quicken, sadden, gladden') and causative as a prefix ('enable, enrich, enclose'; 'enlighten' is doubly marked). Closely related to factitive verbs is a class involving not a stative verb but an adjective proper; this class is variously declarative (cf. 'He declared me just'), estimative (cf. 'He thought it silly'), or putative (cf. 'He belittled the venture'). The relationship of causation constructions and voice is dealt with in 21.2.2.

n

Another set of aspectual determinants involves double-status actions. Reflexive constructions, as noted, involve the subject (singular or plural) acting on itself. Reciprocal constructions (plural) involve a variety of individual subjects performing actions on each other. Tolerative constructions (usually singular) involve an agent (usually human) allowing itself to undergo an action (cf. 'He let himself be chosen').

o

The parameters treated under the heading of aspect (Aktionsart) can be summarized in this list.

1. voice: active passive middle (20.2j)
2. type of movement/activity: fientive stative (20.2k)
3. contour of movement/activity: transitive intransitive (20.2l)
4. causation: causative resultative/factitive declarative (20.2m)
5. double-status action: reflexive reciprocal tolerative (20.2n)

We have not commented on the relevance to Hebrew of these sets of terms; each plays an important part in the stem system.

20.3 The Hebrew Verbal System

a

The verbal system of Hebrew is a system of derivational morphology that realizes many of the categories we have just surveyed. In the following chapters we set forth the grammatical subsystems of morphemes essential to the true verb. We arrange our material in order of rank, considering the more inclusive morpheme as having the higher rank. On this basis we begin with the verbal stems, because no

stem subsumes another but each one subsumes the verbal conjugations. We do not handle the pronominal affixes again, because for our purposes the grammatical subsystems to which they belong have been sufficiently set forth in the preceding chapters. Further, we do not deal with the differences between strong (triradical) verbs and weak verbs, except where a phenomenon historically obscured in the strong verbs is still apparent in the weak verbs.¹⁷ After analyzing the subsystems pertaining to the essential morphemes of the true verb, we address ourselves to its conjunctive prefixes and the special role of *waw* and stress in syntax. We treat the verbal hybrids last. The dense interactions of morphology both with individual roots and with basic syntactic phenomena concern us throughout. Despite the ties of verbal morphology to other parts of grammar, however, the morphology is in itself systematic, and, as with any linguistic system, the meaning of one element is relative to those of others.

Footnotes:

1. M. A. K. Halliday, *Explorations of the Functions of Language* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973) 42.
 2. Halliday, *Functions of Language*, 36.
 3. Halliday, *Functions of Language*, 42.
 4. Multifunctionality should be distinguished from *polysemy*, which designates the capacity of a lexeme or morpheme to have various distinct meanings, only one of which is used in an utterance (unless a pun is intended).
- Multifunctionality is a grammatical matter, polysemy a lexical one. See also 3.2.3.
5. This is true of virtually all languages with a distinct class of verbs and of Hebrew and its sibling Semitic languages in particular.
 6. This terminology is well established, but it is somewhat misleading in the implicit comparison to European languages. In fact, Modern Hebrew uses as a citation form an infinitive type drawn from the languages of Europe, incorporating a prepositional infinitive marker, e.g., *liktoḇ* 'to write.'
 7. Relevant surveys include John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968); Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976); Comrie, *Tense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985). See also Richter, *GAHG* 1. 139–48; R. Bartelmus, *HYH: Bedeutung und Funktion eines hebräischen "Allerweltswortes"* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1982), and D. Pardee's review, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 (1985) 107–10; S. Segert, "Verbal Categories of Some Northwest Semitic Languages," *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 2 (1975) 83–94; H. Rosén, "On the Uses of the Tenses in the Aramaic of Daniel," in his *East and West: Selected Writings in Linguistics. 2. Hebrew and Semitic Linguistics* (Munich: Fink, 1984) 286–305.
 8. Comrie's book *Aspect* deals exclusively with *Aspekt*. Both *Aspekt* and *Aktionsart* are treated in Ernest N. McCarus, "A Semantic Analysis of Arabic Verbs," *Michigan Oriental Studies in Honor of George G. Cameron*, ed. L. L. Orlin et al. (Ann Arbor: Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan, 1976) 3–28.
 9. A situation may be (1) a state, (2) an event (which is both dynamic and seen as a whole), or (3) a

process (which is both dynamic and seen as ongoing). If states are divided into two types, one refers to long-term or permanent qualities and the other to short-term or transitory qualities; the differentiation of these types of statives (see 22.3-4) is extremely vestigial in Hebrew.

10. Comrie, *Aspect*, 6.

11. Mishnaic and Modern Hebrew are much closer to being strictly tensed languages, as a result of a reanalysis of the conjugations and a shift in use of the participle. See M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 150–65.

12. "In discussing aspect it is important to grasp that the difference between perfectivity and imperfectivity is not necessarily an objective difference between situations"; Comrie, *Aspect*, 4.

13. The aorist is the verb form which is without a boundary (a-horos). The gnomic aorist is the use that corresponds most closely to the English generic present; both designate general rules or invariant patterns, often in proverbs (gnōmai).

14. Benno Landsberger coined the term fientive from the Latin *fiens* 'becoming.' Peter T. Daniels notes, "It came to be used, if at all, to designate both verbs that are non-stative in inherent meaning, and inflections of a verb that are not permansive (stative) in form"; see his notes to G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 10. We use the term in the first of these senses.

15. The earlier Greek philosophers tended to associate verbs and adjectives, as modern linguists incline to; Hellenistic grammarians tied adjectives to nouns; see the references in 4.2.2. From another perspective, verbal clauses can be seen as ultimately derived from nominal clauses and thus "verbs" can be taken as reinterpreted nouns; see C. T. Hodge, "The Nominal Sentence in Semitic," *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 2 (1975) 69–75. It can also be argued that there is no unitary class of verbs, i.e., that finite verbs do not belong to the same word class as infinitives, and so on; see W P. Schmid, *MPD* 90–97.

16. Compare S. Segert's remark: "The usual terms, 'active' and 'stative,' express the character of Semitic verbs better than 'transitive' and 'intransitive.' A slight inconvenience arises from the fact that the word 'active' is also used for the active voice, but it does not seem necessary to introduce any new term, such as 'verb of action,' 'progressive' or 'non-progressive'"; "Verbal Categories," 86.

17. There are several systems of terms for the weak verbs, more or less traditional. In one system a roman numeral is used to indicate the position in the root of the "weakness": I-*nun* (or Prima-*nun*) verbs are those with the first radical *nun*, II-weak or II-w/y those with medial *w* or *y* (also called Hollow), III-² those with a final radical ²aleph, and so on; in this system geminates are called II/III or II=III. In another system, the template verb *pʿl* 'to make' is used, and so we have Pe-*nun*, Ayin-*waw/yod*, Lamed-*aleph*, Ayin-Ayin (for geminates), and so on. For good surveys of weak-verb morphology, see A. Ungnad, *Hebräische Grammatik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1912) 130–85; and H. S. Nyberg, *Hebreisk Grammatik* (Uppsala: Geber, 1952) 64–65, 91–147.

21 The System of Verbal Stems

21.1 Terminology

21.2 The System

2.1 The Problem

2.2 Toward a Solution

2.3 Minor Features

21.1 Terminology

a

The central phenomenon of Hebrew verbal derivational morphology is the modification of the root¹ or consonantal skeleton by various vocalic and consonantal affixes. The latter include prefixed *n* and *h*, infixed *t*, and lengthening or doubling of the middle radical of the root. Grammarians label these patterns of affixation in various ways; the major patterns themselves are called *Qal*, *Niphal*, *Piel*, *Pual*, *Hithpael*, *Hiphil*, and *Hophal*. The early Hebrew grammarians called these verbal patterns **בנינים** *binyanim* 'formatives' (lit., 'buildings'), and in the earliest grammars presented with Hebrew and Latin en face the Latin term *conjugatio* appears opposite Hebrew *binyan*. The term "conjugation" for these patterns is still used.² However, misgivings have long been expressed about this term because it means something different in Latin-influenced grammars than "formative." Some modern scholars protest against this usage for the further reason that they wish to reserve "conjugation" for the suffixed and prefixed verbal forms.³ A large number of comparative/historical grammars group together the stems other than the *Qal* as "derived stems" (cf. the Hebrew term *Kabed* 'heavy');⁴ the term

may be misleading if it is allowed to obscure the relationship of the *Qal* to the system as a whole. Other scholars call the *binyanim* "verbal patterns," "modifications," "themes," or "stirpes" (Latin *stirps* 'stalk, stock'). We use the now common term "verbal stems," though even it, too, has the potential to be misleading.⁵

b

The traditional names for the verbal stems themselves derive from the oldest Jewish grammarians. They called the first stem *Qal* 'light' because it is unaugmented in comparison with the other stems. They named the remaining verbal stems after the verbal stem's third masculine singular form in the suffix conjugation, with the root **פִּעַל**, their paradigmatic verb; thus the terms **נִפְעַל** *Niphal*, **פִּעַל** *Piel*, etc.⁶ Later grammarians have retained these terms, though they rarely use **פִּעַל** as the paradigm verb because of its middle guttural, preferring instead **קָטַל** 'to kill' or **כָּתַב** 'to write'.⁷

c

After the advent of the comparative/historical method, scholars sought general names for the cognate verbal stems corresponding to one another in both form and function across the Semitic languages; these would ignore individual idiosyncracies within each language. The unaugmented stem corresponding to Hebrew *Qal* they called "G stem" (from German "Grundstamm") or "B stem" ("Base-stem") because it appears to be the verbal stem on which the others were built. The *Niphal* is called the "N stem" because of its characteristic *n* prefix in the cognate languages; the *Piel* is dubbed "D stem" from its characteristic doubling; etc. Most of the Semitic languages add a *-t-* to one or more of these verbal stems, which leads to the labels "Gt stem," "Dt stem," etc. Unfortunately, the cognates of Hebrew *Hiphil* vary tremendously (*š* [Akkadian], *h* [Hebrew], [Syriac, Arabic], etc.),⁸ and no term is universally accepted.⁹

21.2 The System

21.2.1 The Problem

a

Three unfortunate problems have marred discussions of the stem system. First, scholars have tended to describe the system as based formally on the *Qal* stem. Second,

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they have described the stems notionally in an atomistic way, that is, assigning a meaning or set of meanings to each stem independently. Third, they have neglected the very systemic character of the system. M. H. Goshen-Gottstein's complaint about Sabatino Moscati's *Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* is true of many other Semitistic works: "This description steers clear (consciously?) of any systematic presentation and presents the facts atomistically. In this it follows to some extent C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*." ¹⁰ Now obviously the scientific method requires the analysis and systematic classification of the uses of the individual verbal stems, but the atomistic approach often fails to take adequate note of the fact that the verbal stems constitute a system, a system of clearly differentiated morphemes, which, by definition, involves both form and function. ¹¹

b

Recently Goshen-Gottstein attempted to correct the atomistic approach to the Semitic verbal stems by constructing a diagram of the verbal stem system that would throw into relief the known facts about these verbal stems. ¹² His diagram concerns itself with forms rather than meanings. If, however, the individual verbal stems serve particular functions, and if they together constitute a system, then we may with good reason attempt to study the function of the system as a whole. In fact, such an abstraction can be of help in understanding the functions or meanings of the individual parts and of their relationships to one another.

c

All grammarians agree that the verbal stems in part denote voice, the relationship of the subject to the situation, discussed in 20.2j. The passive character of several of the stems was recognized in the Ma'aseh *Ephod* of Profiat Duran (ca. 1400 C.E.); in the treatment of the *binyanim* of the verb, the *Pual* and *Hophal* are called the stems whose agents are not mentioned. ¹³ Moshe Greenberg offers a model of the verbal stems, based on a "grid" or system of coordinates ("axes"), with one of the coordinates pertaining to voice. ¹⁴

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	I	II	III
Active	שָׁמַר	סָפַר	הִזְכִּיר
Passive	נִשְׁמַר	סָפַר	הִזְכָּר
Reflexive (Double-status) ¹⁵	נִשְׁמַר	הִתְאַפֵּק	-----

Greenberg's diagram helps to present the functions of the verbal system, but it also serves to highlight the difficulties of abstracting the features of the system. The vertical set of coordinates pertains to voice, but what about the horizontal axis? This axis is usually described in terms of the verbal action itself, that is, I = "simple," II = so-called "intensive," III = "causative." The second column, the "intensive" is, however, a problematic entry; the common morphological basis of *Piel*, *Pual*, and *Hithpael* is clear, but the semantic basis is much less certain. A reconsideration of these stems is crucial to understanding the relationship between the two axes and thus the system as a whole.

21.2.2 Toward a Solution

a

There are various approaches to elucidating the stem system; more traditional grammarians stress the *Qal*: *Piel* relation as key, while recently the *Piel* : *Hiphil* relation has been emphasized. The *Piel* is the key to the system, ¹⁶ and the first major step toward unlocking the system was taken by Albrecht Goetze in his survey of the Akkadian D stem; his work has been extended to West Semitic by Ernst Jenni and others. ¹⁷ To some extent, scholars prior to Goetze and Jenni failed to perceive the function of the Hebrew verbal stem system because they thought that the *Piel* signified primarily intensive action. Jenni's study of the Hebrew *Piel* demonstrates that it fundamentally

entails a notion related to the basic active : passive dichotomy of voice. This new insight offers an opportunity to see the system in its entirety, though we believe Jenni fails to catch the full significance of his thesis because he excludes the notion of causation from his understanding of the *Piel*.¹⁸

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b

The horizontal axis in the Greenberg diagram pertains to causation. Let us reconsider the role relations of constructions involving causation. The English sentence 'John cooked the cabbage' may have only slight causation nuance ("In your mind's eye picture John as he cooked the cabbage"); with a stronger causation nuance, it may mean either 'John made the cabbage cooked,' in which case the cabbage is presented as being in the "passive" state of being cooked, or 'John caused the cabbage to cook,' with the more "active" sense that the cabbage is somehow participating in the action. Bound up with the notion of causation, there can be various degrees of agency ("activeness") or patiency ("passiveness").

c

Causation is expressed in many of the European languages by constructions with two verbs. For example, German, French, and English use the auxiliary verbs 'lessen,' 'faire,' 'make/cause,' respectively. The English auxiliaries 'make' and 'cause' tend to introduce a suggestion of force or coercion, a notion not crucial to causation formations, and, along with that, the similarly foreign idea that some other agent besides the subject may be involved in the action. This is not generally so in German and French, which tend to use their broader causation constructions more extensively. An English verb which can be intrinsically causative, such as 'to cook,' avoids the extra baggage of the causation auxiliary construction. It thus comes closer to the morphological causation forms of Hebrew. Roughly stated, it is our proposal that the verb 'cooked' in the sentence 'John cooked the cabbage' in the sense 'John made the cabbage cooked' would be rendered in Hebrew by the *Piel*, and in the sense 'John caused the cabbage to cook' by the *Hiphil*. *Piel* tends to signify causation with a patiency nuance, and *Hiphil* causation notion with an agency nuance. The two types of causation forms differ from one another with reference to the status of the subject being acted upon by the main verb, that is, the voice associated with the undersubject or secondary subject.

John	cause
subject ₁	verb ₁

cabbage	cook
subject ₂	verb ₂

Roughly stated, the differences between *Qal*, *Niphal*, and *Hithpaal*, etc. (the vertical differences in Greenberg's diagram) refer to the voice of subject₁, the primary subject; the differences between *Qal*, *Piel*, and *Hiphil*, etc., refer to the voice of subject₂, where there is one.¹⁹ We use English sentences here to suggest the stems' differences in meaning; in the following chapters we illustrate them from Biblical Hebrew.

d

The example of English 'to cook' with its various senses is reminiscent of the complexities of Hebrew verbs used in various stems. Another English verb with similar diversity is 'to fly,' which may be used transitively or intransitively, in similar but varying contexts; an examination may be of heuristic value. In the following admittedly rather far-fetched examples we have indicated in parentheses the Hebrew verbal stem that would have been used in each instance. In most instances the English verb remains unchanged even as the Hebrew stem varies. We have already indicated one reason for this; in the comments that follow the sentences we will give others.

1. Sarah flies (*Qal*) the airplane.
2. Sarah flies (*Qal*) tonight. / Sarah flies (*Qal*) off into the sky.
3. Sarah flies (*Niphal*) to Egypt, when Abraham offers to fly her there.

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4. Sarah is being flown (*Niphal*) to Egypt.
5. Sarah flies (*Niphal*) to Egypt, instead of taking her mule.
6. Sarah is flying (*Niphal*) to Egypt in order to appeal her case to the Pharaoh.
7. Sarah is flying (*Piel*) the airplane in spite of the dust storm.

8. Sarah is flown (*Pual*) to Egypt, when the Pharaoh snaps his fingers.
9. Sarah flies (*Hithpael*) to Egypt.
10. Sarah flies the airplane higher (*Hiphil*) / causes it to fly (*Hiphil*) higher.
11. Sarah flew (*Hiphil*) higher in the airplane.
12. Sarah is made to fly (*Hophal*) the airplane higher.

e

Sentence 1 represents the active voice with a transitive verb. Sarah is the actor or agent, performing the action expressed by the verb. Sentence 2 also represents the active voice. Like (1), it answers the question "What is Sarah doing?", but unlike (1) the verb here is intransitive. These sentences illustrate that transitive and intransitive actions are not necessarily related to the function of voice. The Qal expresses both (1) and (2).

f

In sentence 3, Sarah is no longer the agent performing the action. Instead of answering the question "What is Sarah doing?", the first clause implicitly answers the question "What is happening to Sarah?" Here Sarah is implicitly the object of the syntactic equivalent "Abraham flies Sarah." The intransitive verb in (3) has as its grammatical subject the noun that would be the object of the corresponding transitive verb.²⁰ In the *Niphal* construction the subject is not the performer of the action but only a participator in it. English, lacking a construction indicating the syntactic relationship between the goalword of a transitive verb and the non-agent subject of an intransitive equivalent, does not formally distinguish between (1), if the object were omitted—as it can be and (3). Sentence 4 represents the simple passive voice. As in (3), Sarah is a non-agent, but unlike (3) she is viewed not as participating in the act but as in the state of "being acted upon" or "suffering the effects of the action." In this construction the agent may or may not be expressed. The *Niphal* is used in (3) and (4) because in both cases the subject is not the performer of the action but the undergoer of it, more (sentence 4) or less (sentence 3) explicitly.

g

In sentences 5 and 6 a reflexive notion is implicit. The full senses are: (5) 'Sarah flies herself ... ' and (6) 'Sarah flies in her own interests ... ²¹ Since the action affects the

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subject of the verb (sentence 5) or her interests (sentence 6), the *Niphal* would be used. In the English, the reflexive would often be redundant and is therefore left out.

h

In sentence 7 we have an example of a causation construction with a passive nuance. As in the case of 'John cooked the cabbage,' the English speaker would probably say 'Sarah flies the airplane ... ' rather than the long-winded, and potentially misleading, circumlocution 'Sarah gets the airplane flown.' The meaning in (7) is quite different from the one intended in (1) though the expressions are formally identical. In (1) the event, the happening of Sarah flying the airplane, is intended; in (7) the achieved state of the airplane flying is meant, that is, the plane was placed in the passive state of being flown. The same nuance could have been expressed by 'Sarah makes her airplane flown,' except that statement would normally mean 'She causes someone else to fly the airplane.' Here 'cause' implies coercion and another agent. With some verbs the causation notion is more readily indicated in English. Such is the case with 'shine.' The equivalent to (1) with 'shine' would be 'Sarah shines the airplane' and to (7) 'Sarah makes the plane shined-up [= shiny]' or more simply 'Sarah shines up the airplane.' (The equivalent is not 'Sarah makes the airplane shine'; that notion belongs to sentence 10.)

i

Sentence 8 is the syntactic equivalent to 'Abraham gets Sarah flown to Egypt,' without the agent necessarily in view; in very awkward English it means 'Sarah is made flown.' The English speaker uses in (8) a construction similar to that in (4) and allows the context to differentiate between 'Sarah is flown' as an accomplished state and 'Sarah is being flown' as a happening.

j

In sentence 9 Sarah makes herself flown to Egypt, perhaps in her own interests. (Here, too, the use of 'makes' would run the risk of introducing the notion of coercion.) The sense can scarcely be represented in English. The

reflexive sense in (5) or (6) involves a happening, but in (9) it denotes an achieved state. As (5) and (6) are the reflexive counterparts of (1), so (9) is the reflexive counterpart of (7).

k

In sentence 10 Sarah causes the airplane to participate in the act of flying. Here the object of the "causing" is the subject of the flying, as in (7), but unlike (7) the second subject has a more agential role. This notion of causing a (grammatical) object to participate as a subject in the action is represented by the *Hipihil*.

l

In sentence 11 both causative and reflexive notions are implicit. The full sense is 'Sarah caused herself to fly higher in the airplane.' Such an "internal" *Hipihil* would be distinguished from other *Hipihils* by being a one-place predicate.

m

In sentence 12 we have the passive counterpart of (10). One syntactical equivalent might be 'The hijackers made Sarah fly the plane higher.' In contrast to (8), where 'Sarah' undergoes both the "causing" and the verbal idea, here she is both passive and active—passive with reference to the "causing" ('is made') and active with reference to the verb ('she flies the plane higher'). *Hophal* conveys this passive counterpart to *Hipihil*.

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n

We can now return to the chart presented earlier and define both axes with reference to voice. The vertical axis represents the voice of the primary subject, the horizontal axis represents the voice of the secondary subject, the object of the "causing" predicate, if there is one. On the horizontal axis I represents the absence of a causation notion; II, causation with a passive state ('made flown'); III, causation with active participation ('made to fly'). The numbers in parentheses indicate the sentence that illustrates the basic relations.

		Voice of Undersubject		
Voice of Primary Subject		I. Ø	II. Passive	III. Active
	1. Active	<i>Qal</i> (1–2)	<i>Piel</i> (7)	<i>Hiphil</i> (10)
	II. Middle/Passive (Subject < object of transitive verb)	<i>Niphal</i> (3–4)	<i>Pual</i> (8)	<i>Hophal</i> (12)
	III. Reflexive (Double- status)	<i>Niphal</i> (5–6)	<i>Hithpael</i> (9)	<i>Hiphil</i> ("internal," 11)

o

Thus the Hebrew stem system functions to connote Aktionsarten (voice, causation, transitivity; 20.2). The various interrelated inflections serve to represent varying categories of relationships between the subject and the predicate(s). The system is far more complex than the one familiar to us in English. In Hebrew, unlike English, the inflected forms of the verb indicate whether a non-agential subject of an intransitive verb would be the object in an equivalent clause with a transitive verb; and whether causation, with either a passive or active role for the secondary subject, is meant.

p

The English verb system does not differentiate between underlying transitivity and intransitivity, so that (1) and (3) may assume the same verbal shape. Moreover, English tends to elide the reflexive when the subject acts in its own interest or for its own benefit, and so (5) and (6) along with (9) and (10) take on the same shape as (1) and (3). Also, the English auxiliaries 'make, cause,' etc., with many verbs make the claim that the subject is coercing someone else to perform the action, with the result that the corresponding noncoercive sentences (7) and (8)—we have already mentioned (9) and (11)—fall together with (1), (3), (5), (6). In sum, six or seven of the twelve sentences have similar English shapes though they mean different things. Further, while (10) brings out the causative force without ambiguity, it, too, can be expressed by 'Sarah flies ...' For the most part the English

speaker depends on the context in recognizing notions of agency, causativity, and reflexivity. Without context 'Sarah flies ...' is a very ambiguous statement in English; the same applies to 'Sarah is flown.'

q

One can sympathize with scholars who have expressed doubts about the view that each stem indicates a difference in meaning. Alexander Sperber claimed, "I am going to disprove this notion by demonstrating that the so-called verbal stems were interchangeably used in order to indicate one and the same meaning, without implying the slightest differentiation."²² His lists of forms from different stems used in similar contexts are of great interest, but ultimately his evidence carries no conviction because he fails to take

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note of the verb's full context in each passage. His argument amounts to little more than holding up sentences 1, 5, etc. and proclaiming: "See, there's no difference in meaning between the Hebrew verbal stems. They all mean 'Sarah flies' and can be used interchangeably."

r

Because English and other European-language verbal systems are impoverished in morphological treatments of transitivity, causativity, and reflexivity, most modern Hebrew lexicons also fail to show adequately the subtle differences in meaning among the verbal stems. The lexicographers are often forced to assign similar "meanings" of a verb to the different verbal stems. For example, William L. Holladay, in his fine lexicon, presents **קָם** as follows.²³

Qal: take revenge

Niphal: be avenged, take revenge, avenge oneself

Piel: avenge

Hophal: be avenged, suffer vengeance

Hithpael: take one's vengeance

No wonder certain aspects of the study of Hebrew seem hopeless or make the language seem nonsensical. English and similar languages can hardly begin to convey its shape. Many students will be tempted to endorse this candid comment by Sperber:

I must confess to utter ignorance of Hebrew; for these ... pages of verbal forms [in Hebrew grammars], which were allegedly "Hebrew" while the language of the Bible was a living tongue, are as many pages of mysteries and unsurmountable difficulties to me. How my forebears could have mastered them is to me a real miracle!²⁴

As we have seen, the real problem lies in the way other languages cover up the Hebrew structures.

s

Awareness of the ambiguities within the English verbal system when set vis-a-vis the subtle distinctions used in the Hebrew verbal stem system with regard to causation and voice, should warn the researcher against giving priority to the stem's apparent function over its manifest form in trying to decide its functions. Prejudged categories, dictated by the "cruder" English structures, are inadequate for interpreting the Hebrew categories; we must be guided by the Hebrew forms and usages rather than by those of English.

21.2.3 Minor Features

a

How many stems are there? The basic medieval tradition recognized seven stems, though there was discussion over whether to add or subtract one. David Qimhi in his influential *Mikhlol* opted for eight, adding *Poel*.²⁵ Although modern scholars disagree

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about the number of verbal stems represented by rare forms, they essentially agree that there are seven major stems, those based on triradical roots, and a dozen or so minor ones, most based on biradical roots.²⁶ The minor stems are, for the most part, morphemic variants of the major. Thus along with *Piel*, there are *pô'el*, *pi'el* and

pê'al'al, and pilpêl; *Pual* is complemented by pô'al, pu'al, and polpal; and *Hithpael* by hitpô'el, hitpa'el, hitpa'al, and hitpalpel.

b

Some rare and disputed forms may be mentioned.²⁷ (1) *Hithpael*, without the typical lengthening or doubling of the second radical characterizing the *Hithpael* and the lengthening of the a before a non-guttural, is found in [Judg 20:15](#), [17](#) and [21:9](#); it is interpreted by Paul Jouon as a variant byform of the *Hithpael*,²⁸ but by Carl Brockelmann as a reflexive of the *Qal*, comparable to a so-called Gt form found in the other Semitic languages.²⁹

c

(2) Hippael forms are controversial: the doubling of an initial *nun* or *kaph* with some roots³⁰ is treated by some as a sign of *Hithpael* forms in which the infixed -t- has been assimilated to the root's initial radical.³¹ Israel Eitan considers some of the forms as evidence of a נ-reflexive stem,³² and David Yellin has identified some of them as part of a heretofore unidentified Hippael stem.³³

d

(3) Hištaphe'l: The important word השתחוה, which occurs about 170 times, has been interpreted by most moderns, on the basis of the Ugaritic s form (comparable to the *Hiphil*), as an Št stem;³⁴ J. A. Emerton thinks there is evidence to tip the balance of

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probability in favor of the more or less traditional view that it is a *Hithpael* from the root שחח.³⁵ In any case the unusual shape of the word hints at its extraordinary cultural significance.

e

A statistical summary of the uses of the verb stems may be useful.³⁶

	Occurrences		Roots used ³⁷	
	N	%	N	%
Qal	49,180	68.8	1,115	71.2
Niphal	4,140	5.8	435	27.8
Piel	6,450	9.0	415	26.5
Pual	460	0.6	190	12.1
Hithpael	830	1.2	175	11.2
Hiphil	9,370	13.1	505	32.2
Hophal	400	0.6	100	6.4
Other	680	0.9	130	8.3
Total	71,510		1,565	

The statistics do not provide any direct clues to the stem system, but they do afford a rough overview of how it is used.

Footnotes:

1. In calling the consonantal skeleton of the verbs a root, we follow the practice of the early Jewish grammarians, who used the term šoreš. Many moderns prefer the term "stem" (e.g., GKC § 31 / p. 103).

2. E.g., GKC §§ 39–39 / pp. 114–16; Joüon §§ 51–59 / pp. 113–28; T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 175.

3. E.g., Frithiof Rundgren, "Des Verbalpräfix yu- im Semitischen und die Entstehung der factitiv-kausativen Bedeutung des D-Stammes," *Orientalia Suecana* 12 (1964) 99–114, at 104; cf. M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "The System of Verbal Stems in the Classical Semitic Languages," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Semitic Studies Held in Jerusalem, 19–23 July 1965* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities,

1969) 70–91, at 70 n. 1.

4. E.g., BL § 38 / pp. 279–94; *UT* § 9.32; Carl Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1908), 1.504–44; S. Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964) 122–31; I. M. Diakonoff, *Semito-Hamitic Languages: An Essay in Classification* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965) 97. It is correct to see a split between the *Qal* and the other stems, but there can be no doubt that all the stems are of the same order of phenomenon.

5. On the use of "stem" in other contexts, see, e.g., GKC § 30d / p. 100.

6. The paradigm verb *ʔl* was first used by the Arab grammarians.

7. For general Semitic studies the choice of a paradigm verb is problematic. The root *qtl* is not a possible root of Akkadian, so its use has been found objectionable. The root *ktb* shows Hebrew and Syriac spirantization, but it is not found in Akkadian. P. T. Daniels, in preparing the paradigms for G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), used the "non-existent root **pdk* ... in order to maximize comparability among the paradigms without prejudicing the data in the direction of any one language, and so that spirantization of stops may be fully displayed in Hebrew and Syriac" (p. 225). Rainer M. Voigt objects because the root **pdk* is not attested and is probably not a possible Semitic root; see his "Review of Bergsträsser-Daniels," *Welt des Orients* 14 (1983) 262–67, at 262.

8. See Voigt, "Review of Bergsträsser-Daniels," 263. It has been proposed that the earliest stages of Semitic had a sibilant-initial causative in *š* (a *šaphel*) and a laryngeal-initial causative in *h* (*Hipphil*, etc.; later in *ʔ* or *y*, thus Aramaic *Aphel*, Phoenician *Yiphil*). See C. Rabin, "The Origins of the Subdivisions of Semitic," *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver*, ed. D. W. Thomas and W. D. McHardy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963) 103–15. This problem is related to that of the third-person singular pronouns (cf. Akkadian *šū*, *ši*, Hebrew *hū*, *hī*). On Hebrew *Yiphils* and *šaphels*, see nn. 27 and 34.

9. The Arabic system of numerals is useful. The stems (Arabists prefer the term "forms") with Hebrew correspondents are:

<i>Qal</i> (G or B)	I
<i>Piel</i> / <i>Pual</i> (D)	II
<i>Hiphil</i> / <i>Hophal</i> (H)	IV
<i>Hithpael</i> (tD)	V
<i>Niphal</i> (N)	VII

10. Goshen-Gottstein, "System of Verbal Stems," 72 n. 8, cf. 79; he cites the Brockelmann passage referred to above in n. 4.

11. It should be noted that an atomistic approach is not particularly successful at dealing with the semantic anomalies and subpatterns that affect any study of the Hebrew verb. Some usages are unpredictable and thus a matter of the lexicon. A half-hearted or timid grammar is no better a complement to the lexicon than a serious one. For other approaches to the topic of the system, see Richter, *GAHG* 3. 94–142; S. Segert, "Verbal Categories of Some Northwest Semitic Languages," *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 2 (1975) 83–94. The system of verbal stems in Modern Hebrew, though vastly restricted, reveals some interesting patterns; see the studies of R. A. Berman, "Lexical Decomposition and Lexical Unity in the Expression of Derived Verbal Categories in Modern Hebrew," *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 6 (1979) 117–42; and S. Bolozky, "Semantic Productivity and Word Frequency in Modern Hebrew Verb Formation," *Hebrew Studies* 27 (1986) 38–46.

12. Goshen-Gottstein, "System of Verbal Stems," 83–91. Note also Diakonoff's comment that these morphologically distinct stems have their "own semantics, variously characterizing the action or state from the point of view of quality, quantity, or direction"; *Semito-Hamitic Languages*, 97.

13. David Tene, "Linguistic Literature, Hebrew," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 16. 1374.

14. After Moshe Greenberg, *Introduction to Hebrew* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 42; cf. August Dillmann, *Grammatik der äthiopischen Sprache* (Leipzig: Tauchitz, 1857; 2d ed. in 1899). For similar schemata for the other Semitic languages, see Goshen-Gottstein, "System of Verbal Stems," esp. 74–75, Bergsträsser/ Daniels, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*; and Voigt, "Review of Bergsträsser-Daniels."

15. Double-status situations include reflexive, reciprocal, and tolerative situations; see 20.2n.

16. "D is exceptional in its form/function problems"; M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "Problems of Semitic Verbal Stems," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 42 (1985) 278–83, at 283 n. 19.

17. A. Goetze, "The So-called Intensive of the Semitic Languages," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 62

(1942) 1–8; Ernst Jenni, *Das hebräische Piʿel* (Zürich: EVZ, 1968); Jenni, "Zur Funktion der reflexiv-passiven Stammformen im Biblisch-Hebräischen," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1973), 4. 61–70; Stuart A. Ryder II, *The D-Stem in Western Semitic* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974); F. Leembuis, *The D and H Stems in Koranic Arabic* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

18. For the purposes of this discussion, the term "causation (predicate)" refers to both causative and factitive/resultative aspects (Aktionsarten); see the preliminary exposition in 20.2m.

19. The examples here are fientives; we omit statives from this preliminary discussion.

20. In some languages of the world the subject of an intransitive verb and the object of a transitive verb take the same case, the "ergative"; the "absolutive" case is used for the subject of a transitive verb. Such languages are called ergative languages. See John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 351–52, 354–57. In other languages, some ergative features are combined with standard Indo-European-type inflection (called, in this respect, an "accusative" system); languages which are so mixed (e.g., Hindi-Urdu) are called split-ergative languages. There were ergative languages in the ancient Near East (Hurrian and its close relative Urartian; perhaps Sumerian), and it is not surprising to find some signs of split ergativity in the Semitic N stems, as we shall argue below. Ten years after our discussion was initially drafted, a parallel set of observations was made independently by Hans-Peter Müller, "Ergativelemente im akkadischen und althebräischen Verbalsystem," *Biblica* 66 (1985) 385–417. An earlier discussion of ergativity in Hebrew is provided by F. I. Andersen, "Passive and Ergative in Hebrew," *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. H. Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1971) 1–15, who focuses chiefly on the anomalous verb *yld* 'to bear, beget.'

21. Actions on oneself and in one's interest are both in the middle voice in Classical Greek.

22. Alexander Sperber, *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1966) 6, cf. 5–14, drawing on his "Hebrew Grammar: A New Approach," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 62 (1943) 137–262.

23. William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 245. We do not mean to suggest that there is any simple, straightforward, and practical alternative.

24. Sperber, *Historical Grammar*, 6.

25. Cf. Goshen-Gottstein, "System of Verbal Stems," 72; William Chomsky, *David Kimḥi's Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol)* (New York: Bloch, 1952) 54.

26. On some of the complexities of biradical roots, see F. I. Andersen, "Biconsonantal Byforms of Weak Hebrew Roots," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 82 (1970) 270–74; J. Blau, "Studies in Hebrew Verb Formation," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 42 (1971) 133–58.

27. Some of the rare and minor stems have close analogs in Arabic. It has been alleged that Hebrew has a Yipihil (as Phoenician does) alongside the *Hipihil*; see M. Dahood, "Hebrew Lexicography: A Review of W. Baumgartner's Lexikon, Volume II," *Orientalia* 45 (1976) 327–65, at 333, 342, 344; Dahood, "Yipihil Imperative yaṭṭi in [Isaiah 54:2](#)," *Orientalia* 46 (1977) 383–84; Dahood, "Two Yipihil Causatives in [Habakkuk 3:13a](#)," *Orientalia* 48 (1979) 258–59. The allegation is open to serious doubt. The nonassimilated-*nun* forms are problematic, e.g., *ninʿārī* [Ps 109:23](#) (cf. *ʿinnāʿēr* [Judg 16:20](#)) and *yinšórū* [Deut 33:9](#) (cf. *yīššārū* [Prov 20:28](#)).

28. Joüon § 53g / p. 120; cf. GKC § 541/ p. 151. The forms are *y/hiṭpaqadū*, *yitpaqēd*; note also a corresponding passive *hotpaqadū* ([Num 1:47](#), [2:33](#), [26:62](#); [1 Kgs 20:27](#)).

29. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, 1. 529–30, citing the Moabite Gt form *hiṭm* 'to wage war.'

30. The forms are, for *n*, (1) *hinnābēʾ*, [Ezek 37:9](#); (2) *hinnabḥʿī*, [Ezek 37:10](#); (3) *hinnabbēʾū*, [Jer 23:13](#); (4) *hinneḥāmī*, [Ezek 5:13](#); (5) *tinnaššēʾ*, [Num 24:7](#); (6) *yinnaššēʾ*, [2 Chr 32:23](#); (7) *yinnaššēʾū*, [Dan 11:14](#); and, for *k*, (8) *tikkōnēn*, [Num 21:27](#); (9) *tikkasseh*, [Prov 26:26](#). Of the nine forms, five (## 1, 2, 4, 6, 7) are in prose, four in verse.

31. GKC § 54c/ p. 149.

32. I. Eitan, "Light on the History of the Hebrew Verb," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 12 (1921–22) 25–32, referring to the *nsʾ* forms, ## 5–7 in n. 30.

33. David Yellin, "The Hipaʿel-Nifʿal Conjugation in Hebrew and Aramaic: The Assimilation of **נ** in the Hitpaʿel Conjugation," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 4 (1924) 85–106, esp. 89–97, referring to the *nbʾ* forms, ## 1–3 in n. 30.

34. E.g., *UT* § 19.847, identifying the root as **ḥwy* 'to strike,' *Št* 'to throw oneself down (striking the earth)'; others

refer to the root *hyy* 'to live,' *Št* 'to cause oneself to live (by worship).' Cf. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 254; J. A. Soggin, *Old Testament and Oriental Studies* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1975) 188–202 (on *š* causatives), esp. 190–92, 195, 203–9 (on *hwy*); G. I. Davies, "A Note on the Etymology of *hištaḥ'sup'a'sup'wāh*," *Vetus Testamentum* 29 (1979) 493–95 (a reply to Emerton's paper cited in n. 35). Actually, the etymology was originally made by Martin Hartmann in 1875 on the basis of other comparative evidence.

On the rarity of infixed-*t* forms in general, see J. Blau, "Über die *t*-form des Hif'il in Bibelhebräisch," *Vetus Testamentum* 7 (1957) 385–88; S. B. Wheeler, "The Infix -*t*- in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 3 (1970–71) 20–31. On *š* causatives, see, in addition to Soggin, L. Wächter, "Reste von *Šaf'el*-Bildungen im Hebräischen," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 83 (1971) 380–89.

35. J. A. Emerton, "The Etymology of *hištaḥawāh*," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 20 (1977) 41–55; cf. GKC § 75kk / p. 215. The existence of a root *šhy* 'to bow' is not in question; what is in question is whether it is primary (so Emerton) or secondary to *hšthwy*; for the verb see [Isa 51:23](#), [Prov 12:25](#).

36. From SA/THAT.

37. The number 1,565 represents the total number of verbal roots used in Biblical Hebrew; since many roots occur in more than one stem (though only a few occur in all seven stems), this number is substantially less than the sum of the roots used in each stem. The figures in the last column represent the percentage of all verbal roots (that is, of 1,565) used in each stem.

22 Qal Stem

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22.1 Introduction

a

The most commonly used verbal stem is the *Qal* or "light" stem, also known as the G (*Grundstamm*) or B (Basic) stem. The *Qal* stem is appropriately called "simple," in the sense that the root bears no consonantal affixes; it is simple semantically in that notions of causation are absent.

b



Before analyzing the stem's forms and meanings with respect to the basic division between fientive and stative verbs, we first rehearse its form and meaning as a whole. We then turn to explore the fundamental division of this stem into fientive and stative verbs with reference to meaning (22.2) and form (22.3). Having sketched the difference between the two kinds of *Qal* verbs, we go on to consider more particularly the classes within *Qal* statives (22.4). Next we consider the use of the *Qal* to mold denominatives (22.5). Finally we review the evidence for the existence of a *Qal* passive and its forms (22.6), and *Qal* impersonal constructions (22.7).

22.2 Semantics

a

In contrast to the other five major stems, the *Qal* and *Niphal* stems ordinarily have no element of causation in their predication. Aligning *Pual* and *Hithpael* with *Piel*, and *Hophal* with *Hiphil*, we posit a three-way *Qal* : *Piel* : *Hiphil* contrast. Consider these English examples: 'Moses split (cf. *Qal*) the rock,' 'Moses split up (cf. *Piel*) the rock,'

and 'Moses split (cf. *Hiphil*) the rock' (i.e., 'Moses caused the rock to split'). Consider further these Hebrew examples contrasting *Qal* and *Piel*.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1a. |  | He (God) split (<i>Qal</i>) the sea.
Ps 78:13 |
| 1b. |  | He (God) split up (<i>Piel</i>) rocks in the desert.
Ps 78:15 |

The first of these two utterances represents a situation with God as the agent and the sea as the object of the splitting action. The second utterance represents God as the agent and the rocks as having been caused to be put into the state of being split up.

b

The *Qal* and *Niphal* differ with respect to the role of the subject; the *Qal* subject is active, as can be seen by

comparing # 1a and # 2.

2. וַתִּבְקַע הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר
 תַּחְתֵּיהֶם:
The ground under them split open
(*Niphal*).
[Num 16:31](#)

The *Qal* example represents the subject as the agent, implicitly answering the question 'What is God doing?' The *Niphal* by contrast answers the question 'What happened to the ground?' It does not represent the subject as the actor or agent. It rather represents the subject as having been acted upon by an unstated agent; the subject is merely participating in the action.

22.2.1 Fientive and Stative Verbs

a

Verbs in the *Qal* stem (setting aside the rare passive forms) fall into two form/function groups. Grammarians have called them "voluntaria" (*freiwillig*) and "involuntaria" (*unfreiwillig*),¹ "active" and "neutral" (*neutrisch*),² and "active" and "stative."³ Since the term "active" is also used for voice, it is inappropriate to use in referring to type of action, so we use the term "fientive" (20.2k, 30.2.3).⁴

b

A fientive verb is one that designates a dynamic situation. With this kind of verb a clause answers the implicit question 'What does X do?', where X is a nominal expression and do is a fientive verb. A fientive verb may be either transitive or intransitive; a few, such as *b'r*, may be both.⁵

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- 1a. נִחֲלִים בָּעֵרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ:
Burning coals blazed (intransitive) out of
it (his mouth).
[Ps 18:9](#)
- 1b. כָּאֵשׁ תִּבְעַר-יָעַר
as fire consumes (transitive) the forest
[Ps 83:15](#)

With fientive verbs the subject may be described as an "actor."

c

A stative verb is one that describes a circumstance or state, whether external and physical, or psychological, or perceptual. Sentences with this kind of verb implicitly answer the question 'What is X's characteristic, quality, circumstance, state (physical or mental)?', where X is a nominal expression and the characterizing situation is a stative verb, for example, *zāqēn dāwīd* 'David was old.'

d

The difference between the two kinds of verbs can sometimes be tested in one of two ways. First, verbs may be tested for transitivity (20.21), since transitives tend to be fientives. Transitivity means that the effects of the action expressed by the verb pass over from the subject (the "agent" or "actor") to the object (or "goal").⁶

e

English offers a second convenient test for distinguishing stative and fientive verbs: stative verbs in English do not occur in progressive forms. For example, a fientive verb like 'read' freely forms the progressive, as in 'I am reading this book.' By contrast, one cannot freely say 'I am loving this book.' Since 'love' describes a stative situation (in this case, a psychological state), one freely says 'I love this book.' This test may be of use in considering difficult cases.

22.2.2 Stative Verbs and Adjectives

a

English does not discriminate between stative verbs and predicate adjective constructions, as Hebrew does, and this discrepancy is worth exploring. Hebrew uses the *Qal*, for example, in **חָכְמָתָּךְ** 'you are wise' ([Prov 9:12](#)), **שָׂכַלְתִּי** 'I am bereaved' ([Gen 43:14](#)), and **וַיִּכְבֹּד** 'it (Pharaoh's heart) was heavy' ([Exod 9:7](#)). In these instances English accurately renders the Hebrew by inserting a form of the "dummy verb" to be, marking the situation represented by the utterance with respect to those meanings carried by the macrofunctional verb (see 4.8, 20.2).

b

The ease with which Hebrew represents "adjectival states" by means of verbal forms reflects the relationship philosophers and grammarians have alleged to exist between adjectives and verbs. We may say that the Hebrew structures reveal the similarity of function between verb and adjective found in all languages.

c

Earlier Hebrew grammarians supposed that stative verbs had evolved from adjectives. Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, for example, contend that the vocalic patterns **qatil* and **qetul* were originally those of adjectives; the suffixes of the perfective conjugation were later affixed to them.⁷ Carl Brockelmann similarly speaks of statives as

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adjectives that developed into a verbal flexion.⁸ Despite the reasonableness of these views, most scholars now think that the forms of the inflected stative verbs, *qatila* and *qetula*, were already present in the earliest stages of Semitic.⁹

d

How do the stative constructions differ from the predicate-adjective constructions? The *Qal* stative constructions mark the situation represented with all the values of a verbal form (aspect, mood, Aktionsart), while the adjectival construction is unmarked for these values. English cannot render the latter representation; it must add the "dummy verb" to be, thereby making it appear as though there is no difference between the two Hebrew constructions.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1a. | וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים
אֶת־בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי טֹבֹת
הֵנָּה | The sons of <i>hā'ēlōhīm</i> saw that the daughters of <i>hā'ādām</i> were beautiful (adjective). |
| | | Gen 6:2 |
| 1b. | מִה־טֹבֹ אֵתְלִיךָ | How beautiful (verb) are your tents! |
| | | Num 24:5 |

In the first example, the sense of the second clause **טֹבֹתֵהֶנָּה** (in terms of aspect and time reference) is more determined by its syntactic context (as an embedded clause after a form of the verb *ry* with *ky*, 'to see that ...'), than is the sense of the second example, **מִה־טֹבֹ**. This discrepancy between the Hebrew and English idioms leads to English "covering up" the workings of two different Hebrew constructions.¹⁰

22.2.3 Fientive and Stative with the Same Root

a

Both English and Hebrew treat certain verbs sometimes as stative, sometimes as fientive, depending on the particular meaning they have in a sentence. Bernard Comrie illustrates the point by contrasting the verb 'be' in 'Fred is silly' and 'Fred is being silly.' In the first sentence Fred is in a state, but in the second 'he is acting silly,' a dynamic (i.e., fientive) situation.¹¹ Compare these sentence pairs.

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- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1a. | וַיִּחְכֶּם מִכָּל־הָאָדָם | And he (Solomon) was wiser (stative) than anyone. |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|

- 1b. בְּכָל-עֲמָלִי שָׁעַמְלָתִי
וּשְׁחָכְמָתִי [1 Kgs 5:11](#)
all my work, into which I have poured
my effort and skill (fientive)
- 2a. וַיְהִי־שֶׁעַ ... מִלֵּא רוּחַ
חֲכָמָה [Qoh 2:19](#)
Now Joshua ... was filled (stative) with
the spirit of wisdom.
- 2b. וּכְבוֹד יְהוָה מִלֵּא
אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן: [Deut 34:9](#)
And YHWH's glory filled (fientive) the
tabernacle.
- [Exod 40:34](#)

b

Some verbs, especially those denoting a mental perception or an emotional state, exhibit both stative and fientive characteristics at one and the same time. Often, as in the sentence **וָאֱהָב אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת־עֵשָׂו**

'I love Jacob but Esau I hate' ([Mal 1:2-3](#)), stative forms are used, and they are rendered by non-progressive forms in English. On the other hand, as in the above sentence, they may be bound with direct objects, coloring them with a fientive notion, and may even occur in the participle, which tends to have a progressive and thus fientive sense. For example:

- 3a. וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוּדָה אֲהָב
אֶת־דָּוִד [1 Sam 18:16](#)
And all Israel and Judah loved (lit., was
loving) David.
- 3b. וְהוּא לֹא־שָׂנֵא לוֹ מִתְּמוֹל
שְׁלֹשָׁם [Deut 4:42](#)
and he did not hate (lit., was not hating)
him previously

Strictly speaking, however, even though bound with an object, the verbs are not notionally transitive, for no action passes over from the agent to the goal word. In the clause **וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַאֲקָתָם**, 'and God heard their groaning' ([Exod 2:24](#)), though the syntactical relation between the subject and the object is the same as in **וַיַּךְ מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַמִּצְרִי**, 'and he (Moses) killed the Egyptian' ([Exod 2:12](#)), notionally no action passes over from the subject to the object. R. H. Robins observes:

The weakness of semantic definitions is well illustrated here: hit, in I hit you is syntactically a transitive verb ... ; but hear in I hear you is involved in exactly the same syntactic relations with the two pronouns, and is regarded as a transitive verb, though in this case, the "action," if any action is in fact referred to, is the other way around.¹²

Nevertheless, in spite of their stative forms and the semantic equivocation with these verbs of mental state when bound with a goal word, they are best construed as quasifientive when they occur either implicitly or explicitly with an object and as stative when they are free. The occurrence with an object, in contrast to other statives, suggests that they were felt as fientives. Compare these sentences:

- 4a. וָאִירָא [Gen 3:10](#)
I was afraid (stative).
- 4b. אַל־תִּירָאוּ אֶת־עַם הָאָרֶץ [Num 14:9](#)
Do not fear (quasi-fientive) the people
of the land.
- 5a. וַיִּחְזַק הָרָעָב [Num 14:9](#)
The famine became severe (stative).

- 5b. וְלֹא חֲזָקוֹ: Gen 41:56 He did not give him strength (fientive).
2 Chr 28:20

c

Some verbs have both a stative (qāṭal) and a fientive (qātal) form in the *Qal* stem.

- 6a. לְבַשׁ יְהוָה עֹז YHWH is clothed (stative) with might.
Ps 93:1
- 6b. אֲשֶׁר לְבַשׁ בְּבָאוֹ
אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ which he put on (fientive) when he
entered the sanctuary
Lev 16:23

More frequently, Hebrew formally contrasts comparable differences by using the verbal root in both *Qal* and either *Piel* or *Hiphil*.

d

Some verbs with differentiation appear to have lost one of the potential meanings. For example, קָרַב originally means 'to be near,' at least to judge from the alternate form קָרַב and Arabic cognates, but in Hebrew both forms have a fientive meaning.

- 7a. אֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ לֹא קָרְבָה: She does not draw near to God.
Zeph 3:2
- 7b. וְאַבִּימֶלֶךְ לֹא קָרַב אֵלֶיהָ Now Abimelek had not gone near to
her.
Gen 20:4

e

Some scholars think the stative forms of these pairs are older than fientive forms. For example, G. R. Driver proposed that in verbs where an intransitive suffix conjugation can take either i or a in the final syllable, the qāṭal form represents an older layer in the language than the qātal form (cf. 22.3fv).¹³ T. L. Fenton argues the opposite, contending that where both exist the *Qal* fientive is older than the *Qal* stative.¹⁴ It is clear, at any rate, that the number of *Qal* fientive/ stative pairs is small, and their differentiation is of only marginal synchronic importance.

22.3 Morphology

a

All the West Semitic languages provide evidence of a three-way split in the *Qal* suffix conjugation, a fact that suggests that this split is basic to the languages.¹⁵ The suffix pattern *C₁aC₂aC₃a (prefix *yaC₁C₂uC₃u) was used for fientives, *C₁aC₂iC₃a (prefix *yaC₁C₂aC₃u) for statives designating a temporary state, and *C₁aC₂uC₃a (prefix *yaC₁C₂u/aC₃u) for statives designating a lasting state. Thus we have these Arabic forms.¹⁶

nazara ~ yanzuru	to look at, see
salima ~ yaslamu	to be safe, well
ḥasuna ~ yaḥsunu	to be beautiful

The fientive (*a/u*) pattern is the most common in Arabic, while the temporary stative (*i/a*) and the permanent stative (*u/u*) patterns are less frequent. Similar distributions of comparable forms are found in Hebrew.

b

Hebrew *Qal* has six patterns, three like the Arabic and three others resulting from diverse minor patterns and

mergers.

(1)	qātal(<*qatala)	yaqtōl(<*ya/iqtulu)	
	כָּתַב	יָכַתַב	to write
(2)	qātēl(<*qatila)	yaqtal(<*ya/iqtala)	
	חָמַץ	יִחְמֹץ	to be sour, leavened
(3)	qātōl(<*qatula)	yaqtal(<*ya/iqta/u?lu)	
	קָטַנְתִּי	תִּקְטַן	to be small
(4)	qātal	yaqtal	
	לָמַד	יָלַמַד	to learn
(5)	qātal	yēqtēl(<*ya/iqtilu)	
	יָלַד	תִּילַד	to bear, beget
(6)	qātēl(<*qatila)	yaqtōl	
	נָבַל	יָבֹל	to droop

We will review these patterns in turn.

c

Pattern # 1: qātal/yaqtōl. The first pattern, by far the most common, is associated chiefly with fientives. The suffix-conjugation ā-a is also used for various classes of weak verbs; these are differentiated in the prefix conjugation, with some fientives showing a *yaqtol* (< **yaqtulu*) form and thus conforming to pattern # 1, for example, geminate סָבַב 'to turn,' Il-waw קָם 'to rise,' I-guttural עָמַד 'to stand.' (Statives and fientives of other weak verbs in qātal conform to patterns ## 4–5.)

d

Pattern # 2: qātēl/yaqtal. The stative patterns, ## 2–3, are much smaller than # 1, but # 2 is still used with a clearly defined class of verbs.¹⁷ Though most are intransitive (e.g., יָזָקן ~ זָקַן 'to be old,' יִרָא ~ יָרָא 'to be afraid,' כָּבֵד ~ יִכְבֵּד 'to be heavy,' מָלֵא ~ יִמְלֵא 'to be filled,' שָׁפַל ~ יִשְׁפַּל 'to be(come) low'), a few are transitives, involving psychological states (e.g., שָׂנֵא ~ יִשְׁנֵא 'to hate').

e

Pattern # 3: qātōl/yaqtal. The original permanent stative pattern is almost dead and survives with only a few verbs. These include יָקַטַן ~ קָטַן 'to be small,' יָגַר 'to fear,' יָקַשׁ 'to lay a bait,' and אָשַׁכַּל (cf. אֲשַׁכַּל) 'to be bereaved.' The two stative patterns (## 2–3) use the same prefix-conjugation forms. According to some, this pattern is also attested in

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some Il-waw verbs (אָרַח 'to be light,' בּוֹשׁ ~ יָבוֹשׁ 'to be ashamed,' etc.),¹⁸ but in general hollow verbs do not readily conform to the patterns discussed here.

f

Pattern # 4: qātal/yaqtal. The fourth pattern is composite in origin and its sources need to be analyzed further. The pattern seems to be mixed, with the suffix conjugation of # 1 (qātal) and the prefix conjugation of ## 2–3 (yaqtal).

g

(i) Fientive II- and III-gutturals. Almost all II- and III-gutturals belong to this pattern; some of them, at least to judge from their meaning as well as from the suffix-conjugation forms, are in fact fientive verbs (e.g., יִבְלַע ~ בָּלַע 'to swallow,' and פָּתַח ~ פָּתַח 'to open').

h

(ii) Stative II- and III-gutturals. In other verbs with II- and III-gutturals exhibiting pattern # 4 one can detect in suffix-conjugation pausal forms or the forms with suffixed pronouns (especially vocalic) an original (or alternative) stative form (qātēl). The dominance of the fientive pattern, qātal, may be due to three factors: (1) the guttural, (2) the analogical penetration of the fientive pattern, and (3) a partially fientive meaning.

1.	צָלַח	(צָלַחַה)	~	יִצְלַח	to prosper
2.	שָׂבַע	(שָׂבַעוּ)	~	יִשְׂבַּע	to be sated
3.	שָׂמַח	(שָׂמַחַה)	~	יִשְׂמַח	to be glad
4.	שָׂאַל	(שָׂאַלוּנֹה)	~	יִשְׂאַל	to ask
5.	שָׁכַח	(שָׁכַחוּנִי)	~	יִשְׁכַּח	to forget
6.	שָׁמַע	(שָׁמַעוּ)	~	יִשְׁמַע	to hear

i

(iii) Other fientive weak verbs. Pattern # 4 is common for fientive I-yod verbs.

7.	יָנַק	~(יָנַקוּ)	to suck
8.	יָעַץ	~(יָעַצוּ)	to advise
9.	יָקַץ	~(יָקַצוּ)	to awake
10.	יָרַשׁ	~(יָרַשׁוּ)	to inherit

j

(iv) Other stative weak verbs. A variety of weak verb classes use this pattern for statives: geminate תָּקַל ~ קָלַל 'to be light,' חָתַת ~ יָחַת 'to be shattered,' רָע ~ יָרַע 'to be evil,' I-guttural יָחַזק ~ חָזַק 'to be strong,' and perhaps some hollow verbs.

k

(v) Stative regular verbs. Aside from these weak verbs, pattern # 4 is used with regular verbs. Many of these betray an earlier stative form in the suffix conjugation by their pausal forms and forms with verbal suffixes, or by a parallel adjectival form of the type qātēl with the same root. With these verbs it appears as though the dominant fientive pattern is penetrating into the stative patterns, for if pattern # 3 is almost dead, pattern # 2 is dying. Verbs exhibiting an earlier stative suffix form in their pausal (and similar) forms include:

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11.	אָשַׁם	(אָשַׁמוּ)	~	יָאָשַׁם	to be guilty
12.	גָּבַר	(גָּבַרוּ)	~	יָגַבַּר	to be strong
13.	דָּבַק	(דָּבַקוּ)	~	יָדַבַּק	to cling
14.	לָבַשׁ	(לָבַשוּ)	~	יָלַבַּשׁ	to put on
15.	קָדַשׁ	(קָדַשוּ)	~	יָקַדַּשׁ	to be holy

A verb exhibiting an earlier stative form by its shape with verbal suffixes is **יָגִיד־לִּי (יָגִיד־לִּי)~יָגִיד־לִּי** 'to be(come) great.' Verbs exhibiting an earlier stative form by a parallel qāṭel form include:

- | | | | | | |
|-----|-------|---------|---|----------|-----------------------|
| 16. | אָבֵל | (אָבֵל) | ~ | תֵּאָבֵל | mourning, to mourn |
| 17. | חָרַד | (חָרַד) | ~ | יִחָרַד | trembling, to tremble |
| 18. | קָצַר | (קָצַר) | ~ | תִּקְצַר | short, to be short |

I

(vi) Other regular verbs. A few strong verbs with this pattern give no indication of an earlier stative form. In some instances, therefore, pattern # 4 may represent an original but rare pattern for fientive verbs. In other instances one may suspect that an original stative form was lost.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------|---|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| 19. | לָמַד | ~ | יִלְמַד | to learn |
| 20. | רָבַץ | ~ | יִרְבֹּץ | to lie stretched out, to lie down |
| 21. | רָצַב | ~ | יִרְצַב | to ride |
| 22. | שָׁכַב | ~ | יִשָּׁכַב | to lie down |

m

Pattern # 5: qāṭal/yēqṭel. The fifth pattern is found with I-yod verbs and nātan. Verbs with this pattern should be regarded as fientive; their form is to be contrasted with that of I-yod verbs that follow pattern # 4.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------|---|-----------|-----------------------|
| 23. | יָלַד | ~ | יִלְדֶּה | to bear |
| 24. | יָרַד | ~ | יִרְדֶּה | to descend |
| 25. | יָשַׁב | ~ | יִשְׁבֶּה | to dwell |
| 26. | נָתַן | ~ | יִתֵּן | to give ¹⁹ |

n

Pattern # 6: qāṭel/yiqṭol. The pattern, like # 4, seems to be mixed, with the suffix conjugation of # 2 (qāṭel) and the prefix conjugation of # 1 (yiqṭol). This mixture can be accounted for in one of two ways: either the dominant fientive pattern is penetrating into this pattern (cf. pattern # 4v) or phonological conditioning is at work. The latter explanation is based on the observation that of the sixty verb forms vocalized in this pattern, thirty-six of them have *b, p, m, h, g, k, q*, as the second or third consonant of the root, and these consonants could condition a shift from *a* to *u* (> o).²⁰ In any case the pattern is mixed.

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- | | | | | |
|-----|--------|---|-----------|----------------|
| 27. | חָפֵץ | ~ | יִחְפֹּץ | to delight in |
| 28. | נָבַל | ~ | יִבּוֹל | to droop |
| 29. | שָׁמַם | ~ | יִשָּׁמֵם | to be desolate |

o

In sum. Patterns ## 1 and 5 are fientive in form and meaning. Patterns ## 2 and 3 are stative in form and meaning, though pattern # 2 allows fientive notions. Patterns ## 4 and 6 mix fientive and stative features both in form and meaning. To judge from the cognate languages, and from the evidence of stative forms used for customary fientive forms when the verb is in pause or bound with a verbal suffix, it appears that the dominant # 1 is supplanting earlier stative forms. We do not need to establish in detail the historical development of these forms. We content ourselves with the realization that verbs displaying patterns ## 4 and 6 are mixed both in form and meaning, while verbs in pattern # 2 are unmixed as to form, but somewhat mixed as to meaning (i.e., they

can behave as notionally fientive verbs).

22.4 Verb Classes

a

Sometimes an attempt is made to classify the verbs used in the pal stem. For fientives, that attempt is for practical and theoretical reasons unimportant. Practically, fientive verbs with pattern # 1 are too numerous and varied, and theoretically, the study is more lexical than grammatical, for even so fundamental a division of fientive verbs into transitive and intransitive is not indicated by distinct forms. To reinforce this point, made earlier (see 22.2.1), contrast the verbs in this verse.

1. וְכִי־יִפְתַּח אִישׁ
בֹּרֶךְ לַלֵּהָוָה וְנָפַל־שָׁמָּה שׂוֹר If a man opens (transitive) a pit ... and an
ox falls (intransitive) into it ...

[Exod 21:33](#)

The *Qal* is used for both kinds of fientive verb, with no contrast.

b

The case of stative verbs is somewhat different; this smaller group can more profitably be analyzed. Formal and notional stative verbs are of three kinds: those that describe a characteristic, an external circumstance, or an emotional state. The distinction is helpful in understanding the meaning of stative verbs in general, particularly in connection with verbal conjugations. Some verbs, as already mentioned, are stative in form but fientive in meaning; the lines dividing these meanings are not sharp. Some examples will serve to indicate the three groups.

2. יַעֲרֹב עָלָיו שִׁיחִי Let my meditation be pleasing
(characteristic) to him.
[Ps 104:34](#)
3. לֹא נִחְסְרוּ They were not lacking (circumstance).
[Neh 9:21](#)
4. וְגַם אֶל־שֹׁפְטֵיהֶם לֹא שָׁמְעוּ But they did not listen (psychological
state) to their judges.
[Judg 2:17](#)

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c

Verbs that designate a characteristic may refer to an inherent quality (e.g., *qsr*),²¹ an achieved quality (e.g., *zqn*), or a temporary or contingent capacity (e.g., *ykl*).

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------|---|------------|------------------|
| 5. | זָקַן | ~ | יִזְקֶן | to be(come) old |
| 6. | חָזַק | ~ | יִחַזֵּק | to be firm |
| 7. | חָכַם | ~ | יִחַכֵּם | to be wise |
| 8. | חָמַץ | ~ | יִחַמֵּץ | to be sour |
| 9. | חָנַף | ~ | תִּחַנֵּף | to be polluted |
| 10. | חָרַב | ~ | יִחָרַב | to be dry |
| 11. | חָרַשׁ | ~ | יִחָרֵשׁ | to be silent |
| 12. | חָשַׁךְ | ~ | תִּחַשְׁךָ | to be(come) dark |
| 13. | יָבַשׁ | ~ | יִיבֹשׁ | to be dry |
| 14. | יָכַל | ~ | יִיכַל | to be able |
| 15. | כָּבֵד | ~ | יִכָּבֵד | to be heavy |

16.	כָּשַׁר	~	יִכְשַׁר	to be suitable
17.	נָעַם	~	יִנְעֵם	to be pleasant
18.	עָרַב	~	יַעְרִב	to be sweet
19.	צָדַק	~	יִצְדֵּק	to be just
20.	קָדַשׁ	~	יִקְדָּשׁ	to be holy
21.	קָטַן	~	יִקְטַן	to be small
22.	קָצַר	~	יִתְקַצֵּר	to be short
23.	שָׁפַל	~	יִשְׁפַּל	to be low

d

Statives can also be used to describe a circumstance or an accident (in the philosophical sense); the reference involves, to some extent, the transitory.

24.	הַבֹּקֶר אֹר	The morning grew light. Gen 44:3
25.	וַתֵּאָרְנָה עֵינָיו:	And his eyes brightened. 1 Sam 14:27 <i>Qere</i>
26.	וְטָמֵא עַד־הָאָרֶב וְטָהֵר:	and it will be unclean until evening and then it will be(come) clean Lev 11:32

Some circumstantial verbs (some of them not well attested) may be listed.

27.	אָפַס	to cease ²²
28.	בָּצַק	to swell
29.	חָסַר	~ יִחְסַר to be lacking
30.		יִקְדַּח to be kindled
31.		יִיקֵץ to awake
32.	יָשָׁן	~ יִישָׁן to sleep
33.	יָמָה	~ יָמוּת to die
34.	מָלָא	~ יִמָּלֵא to be filled
35.	צָלַח	~ יִצְלַח to prosper
36.	יָרָב	to rot
37.	שָׁכַב	~ יִשְׁכַּב to lie down
38.	שָׁלַם	~ יִשָּׁלֵם to be complete

Similar are verbs of temporary physical state.

39.	חָרַד	~ יִחָרַד to tremble
40.	יָעַף	~ יִיעֵף to be weary ²³
41.	צָמָא	~ יִצְמָא to be thirsty

- e

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- a**

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The statives signify being or becoming that which is expressed by the noun.²⁵

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3. בַּל-זָרְעוּ

[Isa 40:24](#)

Prefix forms are pointed as *Niphal* alongside *Pual* suffix forms for some roots, for example, ḥṣb, where both sets are plainly *Qal* passive.³¹

- 4a. הִבִּיטוּ אֶל-צוּר חֲצֵבֹתָם Look to the rock from which you were hewn.

[Isa 51:1](#)

- 4b. בָּצוּר יִחְצְבוּן: They were engraved in rock.

[Job 19:24](#)

A fourth group of roots show only *Qal*-passive prefix forms, pointed as *Hophal*.³²

5. מִי־יִתֵּן בְּסֵפֶר וַיִּחָקוּ: Oh that they were written on a scroll!

[Job 19:23](#)

6. כִּי שִׁבְעָתַיִם יִקָּם-קַיִן If Cain is avenged seven times ...

[Gen 4:24](#)³³

c

There are two *Qal* passive participles, *quttal* (pointed as if shortened from *Pual* məquttal)³⁴ and *qittōl* (apparently parsed by the Masoretes as an adjectival form).³⁵

7. וְהַסְנֶה אֵינָנוּ אֹכֵל: But the bush was not being burned up.³⁶

[Exod 3:2](#)

8. כָּל-הַבֵּן הַיֵּלֹד הַיֹּאֲרָה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ Every boy that is born you must throw into the river.³⁷

[Exod 1:22](#)

d

The finite forms of the *Qal* passive stem are treated by the Masoretes as follows. Where both suffix and prefix forms occur, the suffix forms are *Pual*; the prefix forms are either *Hophal* (in the case of two roots) or *Niphal* (in the case of nine roots). If only the

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suffix forms are used, they are pointed as *Pual* (for sixteen roots); if only the prefix forms are used, they are pointed as *Hophal* (for fifteen roots).

Qal passive		
Suffix	Prefix	
(= MT <i>Pual</i>)	(= MT <i>Hophal</i>)	(= MT <i>Niphal</i>)
לָקַח	יָקַח	----
יָלַד	----	----
שָׂרַף	----	יִשְׂרַף
----	יָתַן	----

Forty-two roots are involved (forty-five if we include the participles), and approximately 160 forms (nearly 200 with the participles).³⁸ The majority of the forms are found in verse.³⁹

22.7 Qal Impersonal Constructions

a

The vast majority of Hebrew verbs have personal subjects; they may be definite, as usual, or indefinite, as with the pseudo-passive use of the third-person masculine plural or, less often, singular (4.4.2). A small group of verbs is used impersonally, that is, with no topic in view other than the condition or action expressed by the predicate; nearly all are found in the *Qal*.⁴⁰ Such constructions are familiar from English environmental verbs, for example, 'It's raining,' 'It's hot out.' One category of Hebrew impersonal constructions is the environmentals (## 1–2).⁴¹

1. וְאִזְכֹּר לָכֶם וְלָכוּ: When it is light (enough) for you (to go),
go.
[1 Sam 29:10](#)
2. תִּשָּׁלֵג בְּצִלְמוֹן: It snows on (Mount) Zalmon.
[Ps 68:15](#)

b

A larger category of impersonals involves a range of emotions and experiences; in these constructions the undergoer of the emotion or experience is specified by a following prepositional phrase in *l*.⁴² The emotionals represent the emotion as coming to the undergoer from outside (## 3–4), but this point should not be exaggerated. The experientials describe a circumstance (## 5–6) or fate (# 7). The verb *twb* can be used as either an

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emotional or experiential, a fact that suggests that there is little difference between the groups.⁴³

3. וַיִּחַר לוֹ: And he was mad (lit., it was kindled to him).
[Jonah 4:1](#)
4. וַיִּרְוַח לְשָׁאוּל וְטוֹב לוֹ Saul was relieved (lit., it was broad to Saul) and felt good (lit., it was good to him).⁴⁴
[1 Sam 16:23](#)
5. יָצַר לוֹ He will be in distress (lit., it will be narrow to him).⁴⁵
[Job 20:22](#)
6. יִשְׁנֶה אֲנִי וְיָנוּחַ לִי: Now I would be asleep, at rest (lit., it would be at rest to me).
[Job 3:13](#)
7. וְלַמּוֹכִיחִים יֵנַעַם It will be well for those who reprove (the guilty).
[Prov 24:25](#)

Footnotes:

1. E.g., Paul Haupt, "Transitive and Intransitive Verbs in Semitic," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 16 (1894) ci-cii, cited in GKC §43a n. 1 / pp. 118–19; and Brockelmann (see next note).
2. E.g., Carl Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1908), 1. 505, where the "neutral" verb is said to describe states (*Zustände*); cf. GB 2. 75 (§ 14b).
3. E.g., Joüon § 41 / p. 95 ("verbes d'action," "verbes statifs"); S. Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964) 122; cf. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 93.
4. With, e.g., R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976) 27.
5. Others are *sāpā* 'to be snatched away (intransitive), snatch away (transitive)'; *rāʿā* 'to graze, pasture'; *šāpan* 'to hide (i.e., lie hidden), hide (something)'. Note also *pānā* 'to turn (intransitive), turn oneself (reRexive)'; and *rāḥaṣ* 'to wash (transitive), wash oneself (reflexive)'.
6. Cf. John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 350.

7. BL § 42a-c / pp. 307–8.

8. Carl Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 35.

9. W. L. Moran, *A Syntactical Study of the Dialect of Byblos as Reflected in the Amarna Tablets* (Johns Hopkins University Dissertation, 1950) 114; T. L. Fenton, "The Hebrew 'Tenses' in the Light of Ugaritic," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1973), 4. 31–39, at 35–36.

10. There are some cases where the Hebrew adjective and stative verb coincide and are undistinguishable, but this parsing problem is essentially minor.

11. Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976) 36.

12. R. H. Robins, *General Linguistics: An Introductory Survey* (London: Longmans, 1964) 266; cited in Lyons, *Theoretical Linguistics*, 350.

13. G. R. Driver, *Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936) 48.

14. Fenton, "Hebrew 'Tenses,'" 36.

15. Cf. n. 9; Brockelmann, *Grundriss*. 1. 504–8.

16. Classical Arabic sometimes uses one root in two classes; there is one (and only one) root attested for all three cases: *batana* 'to hide,' *batina* 'to be full,' *batuna* 'to be paunchy.' We owe this example to Ernest N. McCarus. On these matters, see Driver, *Hebrew Verbal System*, in general.

17. For fientive *qatila-yiqtal* verbs in Ugaritic, see J. Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) 132–33.

18. GB 2.75 (§ 14b).

19. Phoenician and Ugaritic use the root *ytn* for Hebrew *ntn*; *UT* § 9.48 n. 2. This may reflect a secondary formation based on the prefix form.

20. GB 2. 74 (§ 14a). Probably also part of pattern # 6 are the mixed inflections of *qsr* 'to be short' and *škn* 'to dwell.'

21. There are two roots 'to be good': suffix conjugation *twb* and prefix conjugation *ywb*.

22. Cf. also *pss*.

23. Cf. also *ygʿ*.

24. GB 2. 74 (§ 14a).

25. GB 2. 75 (§ 14a).

26. See Mayer Lambert, "L'emploi du *nifal* en hébreu," *Revue des études juives* 41 (1900) 196–214, esp. 200–206; H. L. Ginsberg, "Studies on the Biblical Hebrew Verb: Masoretically Misconstrued Internal Passives," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 46 (1929) 53–56; R. J. Williams, "The Passive *Qal* Theme in Hebrew," *Essays on the Ancient Semitic World*, ed. J. W. Wevers and D. B. Redford (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1970) 43–50; Joüon § 58 / pp. 125–27; BL § 381'-r' / pp. 285–88; Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 253; and especially GB 2.87–89 (§ 15), from which our lists are substantially drawn. The pioneering modern study was that of F. Böttcher in his *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Barth, 1866–68); on the widespread (though not universal) medieval recognition of *Qal* passive, see William Chomsky, David Kimḥi's *Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol)* (New York: Bloch, 1952) xvi, xvii–xix, 89, 103. Note also E. Y. Kutscher, "Contemporary Studies in North-western Semitic," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 10 (1965) 21–51, at 51.

27. The Arabic forms are *qatila/yaqtalu*.

28. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 253.

29. The root *lqh* shows an apparent *Pual* eight times and an apparent *Hophal* six times: the participle occurs in the cited instance, though some of the *Pual* finite forms could also be parsed as participles. The root *šdd* shows both *šuddad* ([Isa 15:1](#) bis; "*Pual*" twenty times total) and *yūššad* ([Hos 10:14](#); cf. [Isa 33:1](#) for another "*Hophal*").

30. Cf. cases for these roots: *zwr* 'to press out' (*zōrû*, [Isa 1:6](#)); *zny* (*zūnnâ*, [Ezek 16:34](#)); *zrq* (*zōraq*, [Num 19:13, 20](#)); *hpš* (*hupāšâ*, [Lev 19:20](#); no *Qal* active attested); *yld* (*yullad*, [Gen 4:26](#); twenty-six *Pual* suffix forms total: see below, nn. 34 and 37, on participles); *yšr* (*yuššārû*, [Ps 139:16](#)); *krt* (*korrat*, [Ezek 16:4](#); *korâtâ*, [Judg 6:28](#)); *mrq*

(mōraq, [Lev 6:21](#)); nph (nuppāh, [Job 20:26](#)); ‘bd (‘ubbad, [Deut 21:3](#), [Isa 14:3](#)); ‘zb (‘uzzāb, [Isa 32:14](#); ‘uzzəbā, [Jer 49:25](#)); ‘sy (‘uśśēfī, [Ps 139:15](#)); qr (qōrā, [Isa 48:8](#); five "Pual" suffix forms; cf. the true Pual participle məqōrāʾī, [Isa 48:12](#)); špk (šuppak, [Num 35:33](#); three Pual forms total; the *Hithpael* has a different sense).

31. Cf. cases for these roots: ʾsr (Pual ʾussərû, ʾussārû, both in [Isa 22:3](#); Niphal yēʾasēr, [Gen 42:19](#); tēʾasēr, [Judg 16:6](#), [10](#), [13](#)); dẖy (Pual dōhû, [Ps 36:13](#); Niphal yiddāheh, [Prov 14:32](#)); hrg (Pual hōrāg, [Isa 27:7](#); hōrgnû, [Ps 44:23](#); Niphal yēhāreg, [Lam 2:20](#); tēhāragnā, [Ezek 26:6](#), cf. v. [15](#)); trp (Pual ʾārōp ʾōrap, [Gen 37:33](#); ʾārōp ʾōrap, [Gen 44:28](#); Niphal ʾārōp yittārēp, [Exod 22:12](#); yittārēp, [Jer 5:6](#)); mṟt (Pual mōrttā, [Ezek 21:15](#), [16](#); cf. participles below, n. 34; Niphal yimmārēt, [Lev 13:40](#), [41](#)); šrp (Pual sōrāp, [Lev 10:16](#); Niphal yiśśārēp, [Josh 7:15](#); fourteen forms total); šgl (Pual šuggalt, [Jer 3:2](#) Kethiv; Niphal tiśśāgalnā, [Isa 13:16](#) Kethiv, [Zech 14:2](#) Kethiv); štp (Pual šuttap, [Lev 6:21](#); Niphal yiśśātēp, [Lev 15:12](#); yiśśātēpû, [Dan 11:22](#)).

32. Cf. cases for these roots: ʾrr (tāʾōr yûʾār, [Num 22:6](#)); dwš (yûdaš, [Isa 28:27](#)); hwl 'to writhe' (yûhal, [Isa 66:8](#)); hnn (yuhan, [Isa 26:10](#), [Prov 21:10](#)); ysr (yûsar, [Isa 54:17](#)); ktt (yûkkat, [Isa 24:12](#); yukkattû, [Mic 1:7](#), [Jer 46:5](#), [Job 4:20](#)); ntn (yuttan, [1 Kgs 2:21](#); eight forms total); ntš (yattas, [Lev 11:35](#)); ntš (tuttaš, [Ezek 19:12](#)); swk 'to pour' (yûssak?, [Exod 30:32](#) Sam); šym (yûsam, [Gen 24:33](#) Qere); šyr (yûšar, [Isa 26:1](#)); šyt (yûšat, [Exod 21:30](#)).

33. The "Hophal" of *nqm* is also found in [Gen 4:15](#), [Exod 21:21](#).

34. Note also cases for *yld* (yûllad, [Judg 13:8](#)), lqh (luqqāh, [2 Kgs 2:10](#)), and mṟt (mōrāt, [Isa 18:2](#), [7](#); cf. the true Pual məmōrāt, [1 Kgs 7:45](#)).

35. Note also cases for zr (zērûaʿ, perhaps for zērôaʿ, [Lev 11:37](#), [Isa 61:11](#)) and škr (šikkōr, [1 Sam 25:36](#); thirteen times total).

36. The Qal passive of ʾkl -occurs three times in suffix conjugation ([Nah 1:10](#); [Neh 2:3](#), [13](#)), and in the prefix conjugation in [Isa 1:20](#); the participle is found in [Exod 3:2](#). All are pointed as Pual.

37. The form yillôd (and plural) is used ten times; cf. n. 34.

38. The root ʾkl is excluded. There are disputed cases; Williams, for example, omits hpš and ktt and includes forms of hgw, hgy, hry, yqš, yšb, ntš, ʿmm, qbr, qrš, ṟy, and ṟʿ 'to break' for a total of fifty-two roots; see "Passive Qal," 46–47. Some of these show only Qal passive infinitives, a problematic form altogether; see BL § 38r / p. 288.

39. Cf. Williams, "Passive Qal," 50

40. Cf. GKC s 144b-g / pp. 459–60. Ruth Berman distinguishes seven classes of impersonal constructions in Modern Hebrew, all but the last two of them with close biblical analogs: (a) existential and possessive yēš and ʾēn, (b) what we have called the pseudo-passive (only the masculine plural is used in modern Hebrew), (c) experientials, (d) environmental, (e) various passive usages, (f) various modal predicates, and (g) true subjectless clauses (no agent, no auction). See "The Case of an (S)VO Language: Subjectless Constructions in Modern Hebrew," *Language* 56 (1980) 759–76

41. The impersonal use of šʾr 'to storm' is Niphal, the Qal in [Ps 58:10](#) being difficult. Although it rains more than it snows in the Levant, mṟt has no Qal, but only Niphal ('to be rained on') and Hiphil ('to send rain').

42. In [Esth 8:5](#) ʿal may be used in a phrase preceding ʾôb, but that form may be an adjective rather than a verb.

43. It could be argued that the same is true of šrr. Other verbs used in these constructions include ṟʿ 'to be evil,' mrr 'to be bitter,' ẖmm 'to be hot.'

44. The Qal impersonal of rwḥ is also used in [Job 32:20](#).

45. The masculine of šrr is more common as an impersonal but the feminine is used in [Judg 10:9](#) and [1 Sam 30:6](#).

23 *Niphal* Stem

[23.1 Form and Meaning](#)

[23.2 Basic Species of the *Niphal*](#)

[2.1 Middle](#)

[2.2 Passive](#)

[23.3 Adjectival Species of the *Niphal*](#)

[23.4 Double-Status Species of the *Niphal*](#)

[23.5 Isolated and Denominative *Niphals*](#)

[23.6 Mixed Forms](#)

[6.1 Mixture with *Qal*](#)

[6.2 Mixture with *Piel*](#)

[6.3 Mixture with *Hiphal*](#)

[6.4 Mixture with *Hithpael*](#)

23.1 Form and Meaning

a

The *Qal* and *Niphal* stems are distinguished from the other stems in that they essentially lack any element of causation (cf. 23.4h). The two are distinguished from each other in that the *Qal* or G stem is unmarked, while the *Niphal* or N stem is marked, both morphologically (with *n*) and semantically. The characteristic *n* augment of the stem functioning principally as the marked counterpart of the G stem is attested over the entire Semitic area with the exception of Aramaic.¹ In Hebrew the *nun* appears initially in the suffix conjugation *niqtal*, participle *niqtāl*, and one form of the infinitive absolute, *niqtōl*; it appears in an assimilated form with the first root consonant in the prefix conjugation *yiqqātēl* and related forms with a so-called protective *h*, for example, imperative *hiqqātēl*, infinitive construct *hiqqātēl*, and another form of the infinitive absolute, *hiqqātōl*.²

b

Concerning the origin of the *n* prefix nothing definite can be said. Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander suppose that the **na* and **ta* affixes in the *Niphal* and *Hithpael* stems respectively represent the original Proto-Semitic pronouns of the first-person plural

cf. Hebrew *ʾānāhnu*) and of the second person (cf. Hebrew *ʾattā*, etc.). They further suppose that these affixes originally indicated reflexives for just these persons and that they were generalized secondarily throughout the conjugations for the expression of the reflexive. They defend their suggestion by pointing to the Scandinavian and Slavic languages, where the third-person reflexive pronoun penetrated into the remaining persons in expressions of the passive.³

c

The suggestion that the **na* augment originated with the first-person plural pronoun is plausible, but the further suggestion that it was originally used to express a reflexive idea goes beyond the formal evidence. Of greater importance than the etymological problem is the actual usage of the *Niphal*.

d

Grammarians have sought to determine the *Niphal*'s meaning in three different ways: (1) by categorizing the stem's values, (2) by abstracting a meaning common to all its values in translation, and (3) by theorizing one original meaning from which others secondarily were developed. Gotthelf Bergsträsser essentially opted for the first approach:

The *Niphal* is related according to its meaning mostly to the *Qal*; it is (a) reflexive of the *Qal*—occasionally (b) in a reciprocal sense—still more frequently (c) passive. From the passive meaning is derived the sense of 'to allow something to be done to someone'.⁴

The task of categorizing is a necessary preliminary, but Bergsträsser's analysis neither exhausts the *Niphal*'s functions nor does it attempt to penetrate to the meaning of the stem in Semitic categories.

e

Thomas O. Lambdin went beyond basic efforts by abstracting a medio-passive meaning from what he considered to be the four categories of *Niphal* use: (1) incomplete passive, (2) middle, (3) reflexive, and (4) resultative: "These four categories have been defined on the basis of English. In Hebrew, however, they are one: the medio-passive as expressed by the *Niphal* form."⁵ Ernst Jenni also sought one essential meaning and found no equivalent category of thought in the Indo-European languages:

An exact equivalent to the *Niphal*'s category of meaning does not exist in our languages, so that we are compelled to take two different categories to help in the rendering of the uniform stem—namely, passive and reflexive, to which sometimes must be added a so-called tolerative use ...⁶

His conclusion is thus similar to Bergsträsser's.

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f

We shall attempt to follow the third approach, namely, we shall abstract as best we can a primary meaning from the stem's many uses and theorize the course of secondary developments. Since such an approach goes beyond the descriptive evidence, we need to justify it. We need to approximate the Hebrew structures (in contradistinction to those of English), and we need to establish the meaning of the grammatical category (in contradistinction to lexical meanings).

g

Our aim being to establish the meaning(s) of the *Niphal* stem in Hebrew, we may begin by classifying the species of the *Niphal*. We may consult the categories of thought known to us as English speakers, but the categories of English are not necessarily those of Hebrew. By abstracting an essential notion behind all these specific uses we may come closer to the Hebrew category. The stem's values differ according to a word's meaning in context. By abstracting the common notion behind these uses we may, however, come close to the grammatical form's significance apart from the lexical values. Some grammarians referred to the re.flexive idea as primary, but they do not adequately define this notion.⁷ If, when we attempt to trace the development of a primary meaning into its secondary uses, we find a plausible development, it will tend to corroborate our starting point.

h

The stem's specific meanings can be classified as (1) middle, (2) passive, (3) adjectival (simple adjectival, ingressive, gerundive), and (4) double-status (reflexive, benefactive, reciprocal, tolerative, causative-reflexive). There are some unclassified uses and some *Niphal* denominatives. We abstract from these specific meanings a medio-reflexive notion. In all the specific uses of the *Niphal*, we find the common notion(s) that the action or state expressed by the verb affects the subject (as in the middle voice) or its interests (as in the reflexive).⁸ Species 1, 2, and 3 can plausibly be associated with the middle notion, and the others with the reflexive. Even in the double-status uses, where the subject is both actor and patient of the action, the primary notion is that the subject is affected by the action.

i

The *Niphal* normally functions as a counterpart of the *Qal* rather than of any of the causation stems, but sometimes it becomes confused with values normally attributed to the *Qal* itself or serves as a medio-reflexive counterpart to a causation stem (23.6).

j

The *Niphal*'s functions depend on the verb's meaning and its context. Hebrew, as we shall see, groups together the three senses of 'move' in the sentences, 'Ruth moved,' 'Ruth was moved,' and 'Ruth moved herself.' All of these would be *Niphals*. Few English verbs, however, show the syntactic flexibility of 'move.' The verb 'cut,' for

instance, cannot be used intransitively (as in 'Ruth moved'); 'Ruth cut ...' demands an object, be it reflexive ('herself') or not ('the bread'). The English equivalents of Hebrew *Niphal* forms will therefore be diverse. Consider these sentences:

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- 1a. וּבְנִיָּא נִשְׁמָר: By a prophet it (Israel) was guarded.
[Hos 12:14](#)
- 1b. וַעֲמָשָׂא לֹא־נִשְׁמָר בַּחֶרֶב But Amasa did not guard himself
 against the sword.
[2 Sam 20:10](#)

The English diversity is a translational matter and should not be confused with the Hebrew diversity, the proper subject of our study.

23.2 Basic Species of the *Niphal*

a

The two most common categories of *Niphal* usage are the middle or quasi-ergative, and the passive, which developed from the middle. The middle is not necessarily the most common kind of *Niphal*; it is rather the most general, affording the common denominator of meaning, more abstract than the other varieties.

23.2.1 Middle

a

The basis of the systemic role of the *Niphal* stem is its contrast with the *Qal*. The elementary *Qal* : *Niphal* pair involves, we shall argue, a construction with a *Qal* transitive verb governed by an agentive subject and governing an object and a corresponding *Niphal* intransitive verb where the *Qal* object serves as the subject and the *Qal* agent is unexpressed. Contrast these two uses of בָּקַע 'to split open, burst.'

- 1a. וַיִּבָּקַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַמִּכְתֵּשׁ Then God split open (*Qal*) the hollow.
[Judg 15:19](#)
- 1b. וּבָקְעוּ כָּל־מַעֲיִנֹת תְּהוֹם And all the springs of the great abyss
 בָּרָבָה burst open (*Niphal*).
[Gen 7:11](#)

In the first sentence 'God' is the "actor" or "agent" and the verb is transitive with an "object" or "goal" word. In the second sentence, which means approximately 'God split open all the springs,' the construction requires that the water source is the subject and the verb is an intransitive, expressing no agency. Here is another pair of clauses with *bq*.

- 2a. כִּמּוֹ פֹלֵחַ וּבָקַע בְּאֶרֶץ as one who plows and breaks up (*Qal*)
 the earth
[Ps 141:7](#)
- 2b. וַתִּבָּקַע הָאֶרֶץ בְּקוֹלָם: and the earth split (*Niphal*) with their
 sound
[1 Kgs 1:40](#)

A similar pair can be found with שָׁבַר 'to break.'

- 3a. וַיִּשְׁבְּרוּ הַפָּדִים And they (Gideon's three hundred)
 broke (*Qal*) the jars.
[Judg 7:20](#)
- 3b. וְהָאֲנִיָּה חֲשָׁבָה לְהִשְׁבֵּר: And the ship threatened to break
 (*Niphal*).
[Jonah 1:4](#)

The *Niphal* is used in conjunction with intransitive *Qal* verbs.

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4. בְּנִפְלֹאֹת אֹיְבֶיךָ אַל-תִּשְׂמַח
וּבְכִשְׁלוֹ אֶל-יִגְלֶה לְבָבְךָ:
When your enemy falls (*Qal*) do not
gloat; when he stumbles (*Niphal*) do not
let your heart rejoice.
[Prov 24:17](#) *Qere*

In fact, כָּשַׁל normally occurs in *Qal* with the suffix conjugation and in *Niphal* with the prefix conjugation, so that the two stems mutually complement (or supplete) one another in the conjugation of that verb.⁹

b

One tool in understanding pairs like those cited for *bq* and *šbr* is the concept of ergativity. As noted earlier (21.2.2f n. 20), in many languages (e.g., Basque, the Eskimo languages, those of European Georgia) the subject of an intransitive verb is marked with the same case inflection as the object of an equivalent transitive verb. For example, in Eskimo the sentence 'Boaz moved Naomi,' which implicitly answers the question 'What did Boaz do?', becomes, in answer to the question 'What happened to Naomi?', 'Her moved,' not 'She moved.' this case function is called the ergative. The middle use of the *Niphal* has some similarities to the ergative patterning, the most striking involving אָת.

- 5a. וְאָכְלוּ אֶת-הַבָּשָׂר And they ate (*Qal*) the flesh.
[Exod 12:8](#)
- 5b. וְלֹא יֵאָכֵל אֶת-בָּשָׂרוֹ Its flesh shall not be eaten (*Niphal*).
[Exod 21:28](#)

Normally אָת marks the goal word after a transitive verb, but in the *Niphal* construction here it marks the subject. Strictly speaking this is not an ergative construction because *yê'ākēl* 'be eaten' is passive, assuming an agent, whereas an ergative construction refers to intransitive verbs, but the resemblance of the Hebrew *Niphal* is suggestive. An ergative system highlights the participant in the verbal situation that is most directly affected, the "object" of a transitive and the "subject" of an intransitive. The *Niphal* is the stem in Hebrew that performs a similar highlighting role; the middle sense of the *Niphal*, in fact, is based on "object/subject" mutuality. Similar to the "ergative *Niphal*" is the use of the *Niphal* with an internal accusative.¹⁰

6. וַיִּנְקְמוּ נֶקֶם בְּשָׂאֵט בְּנֶפֶשׁ They took vengeance with malice of heart.
[Ezek 25:15](#)

23.2.2 Passive

a

The passive sense of the *Niphal* is arguably the most common. By "passive" we mean that the subject is in the state of being acted upon or of suffering the effects of an action by an implicit or explicit agent. As with the middle, so also with the passive the

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Niphal subject would correspond to a *Qal* object. Thus, וַיִּקְבֹּר יוֹאָשׁ, 'And Joash was buried' ([2 Kgs 13:13](#)), is equivalent to וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֶת-יוֹאָשׁ 'And they buried Joash.' The middle differs from the passive in two ways: (1) it is more "process" oriented, whereas the passive is more "state" oriented, and (2) whereas the middle is non-agent oriented, the passive is agent oriented.

b

The middle readily merges with the passive in some verbs.

1. וַיֹּלֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת־הַיָּם ... וַיַּשֵּׁם אֶת־הַיָּם לְחֶרֶב וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם:
- And YHWH drove back the sea ... and turned the sea into dry land, and so the waters were divided.

[Exod 14:21](#)

Here we see juxtaposed the syntactic pattern agent ('YHWH') + transitive verb ('drove back') + goal word ('sea') with the pattern *Niphal* + goal word. The second pattern is incomplete (the agent is omitted). The form of *bqʿ* can be treated as a middle, namely, 'the waters divided,' but the agentive nuance of the third clause is so strongly present from the first two that it is best classified as passive. The same phenomenon can be observed with פתח 'to open.'

2. וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־פִּי ... וַיִּפְתַּח פִּי
- And he opened (*Qal*) my mouth ... and my mouth was opened (*Niphal*).

[Ezek 33:22](#)

Often no distinction is possible.

- 3a. חָפַךְ לִבָּם לְשׂוֹא עֲמֹו
- He (God) changed (*Qal*) their (the Egyptians') heart to hate his people.
- [Ps 105:25](#)
- 3b. וַיִּהְיֶה לִבֵּב פַּרְעֹה וְעִבְדָּיו אֶל־הָעָם
- And the heart of Pharaoh and his officials changed (or, was changed) (*Niphal*) toward the people.
- [Exod 14:5](#)

c

In historical terms, it was through the "merging" of the "non-agentive" nuance with the "agentive" that the *Niphal* took on the passive sense and in due course ousted the old *Qal* passive (22.6), even with an expressed agent. It is instructive to note that in Classical Arabic a comparable development was resisted: "It is a rule that in High Arabic a passive cannot be bound by a preposition with the corresponding active subject ... Therefore the 'rule' can be established, 'the passive construction in Arabic is only used where the actor is not mentioned.'" ¹¹ Even in Hebrew the agent with the *Niphal* is only rarely indicated by a prepositional phrase.

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d

In the Indo-European languages a similar merger of the non-agentive middle with the agentive passive occurred. Indeed, John Lyons notes, "this seems to have been the *point de départ* for the subsequent development of passive constructions in the Indo-European languages." ¹² So, for example, in Latin one finds (letting A stand for agent and B for object):

active	A movet B	'A moves B'
passive	B movetur	'B moves' or 'B is moved'

That is, the Latin passive has a middle sense. In Greek, "the opposition of voice ... is primarily one of active v. 'middle.' The passive was a later development." ¹³

e

Passive constructions in Hebrew may be incomplete or complete. In the incomplete passive the agent is not indicated.

4. וַאֲנָשֵׁי־חֶסֶד נֶאֱסָפִים
- Devout men are taken away. ¹⁴
- [Isa 57:1](#)
5. שַׁעְרֵי הַנְּהָרוֹת נִפְתָּחוּ
- The river gates are opened. ¹⁵

6. לְעוֹלָם נִשְׁמָרוּ Nah 2:7
Forever they will be protected.
7. וּמִרְאֵה הָעֶרֶב וְהַבֹּקֶר אֲשֶׁר נֶאֱמַר אֱמֶת הוּא Ps 37:28
The evening and morning vision which was told you is true.¹⁶
8. אִם-אֵין לוֹ וְנִמְכַּר בְּגִנְבָתוֹ: Dan 8:26
If he (the thief) has nothing, then he must be sold (to pay) for his theft.¹⁷
Exod 22:2

A special form of the incomplete passive involves the third-person singular form without an expressed subject. To reflect this kind of impersonal construction, with its pattern subject + verb, English usually demands the insertion of the "dummy" pronoun it.

9. לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה To this one it shall be called woman.
Gen 2:23
10. עַל-כֵּן יֵאמָר בְּסֵפֶר מִלְחֶמֶת יְהוָה Thus it is said in the Book of the Wars of YHWH.
Num 21:14
11. וּבַחֲבֻרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ: By his stripes we were healed (lit., it was healed to us).
Isa 53:5

As with other passive usages, the subject of a *Niphal* may be marked with אֵת.¹⁸

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12. וַיּוֹלֵד לְחֲנוּךְ אֶת-עִירָד Irad was born to Enoch.
Gen 4:18
13. כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵאָכַל אֶת-הַצִּבִּי וְאֶת-הָאֵיל as the gazelle and deer are eaten
Deut 12:22

f

In the complete passive, the agent may be indicated by a prepositional phrase in ב (## 14–16) or ל (## 17–19); the means or instrument may be given after ב (# 20) or מִן (# 21).¹⁹

14. עַם נוֹשָׁע בִּיהוָה a people saved by YHWH
Deut 33:29
15. שֹׁפֵךְ דָּם הָאָדָם בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשָּׁפַךְ Whoever sheds human blood, by a human shall his blood be shed.
Gen 9:6
16. כָּל-מְלָאכָה לֹא-יַעֲשֶׂה בָהֶם No work may be done by them.
Exod 12:16
17. הֲלוֹא נִכְרִיּוֹת נִחְשָׁבְנוּ לוֹ Are we not counted as strangers by him?
Gen 31:15

18. אֲשֶׁר יֹאכַל לְכָל-נֶפֶשׁ which is eaten by everyone
[Exod 12:16](#)
19. וְלֹא-נִפְקַד לָהֶם מְאוּמָּה And nothing has been missed by them.
[1 Sam 25:7](#)
20. כִּי בָאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי תֹאכַל Because the whole earth will be
כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: consumed by the fire of my zeal.²⁰
[Zeph 3:8](#)
21. וְלֹא-יִכָּרֵת כָּל-בָּשָׂר עוֹד All flesh shall not again be cut off by the
מִמִּי הַמַּבּוּל water of the flood.
[Gen 9:11](#)

23.3 Adjectival Species of the *Niphal*

a

The *Niphal* has several uses which may loosely be called adjectival: these include the simple adjectival (cf. 'The wall is broken'), the ingressive-stative (cf. 'Naomi grew sad') and the gerundive (cf. 'Jonathan is to be loved'). As the examples below suggest, the ingressive and gerundive are used with both personal and non-personal subjects, while the simple adjectival is found with non-personal subjects.

b

In the simple adjectival *Niphal*, the subject is in an adjectival state described by the verb; such a form is "essentially a stative verb." Lambdin contrasts comparable English passive and simple adjectival forms: "In the passive It was broken, was is an auxiliary

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verb in the unit was-broken," whereas in the adjectival, "It was broken, was is the verb to be followed by an adjective/participle."²¹

1. וְלֹא נִפְתַּח אֲזוּר חֲלָצָיו Not a belt is loose at his waist, not a
וְלֹא נִתַּק שְׂרוּד נִעְלָיו: sandal-thong is broken.
[Isa 5:27](#)
2. נִשְׁבְּרוּ בְּרִיחֶיהָ: The bars of its (Babylon's) gates are
broken.
[Jer 51:30](#)
3. שֶׁר ... יִהְיֶה סָגוּר ... יִפְתָּח The gate ... will be shut [for six days ... ,
then] will be open.
[Ezek 46:1](#)

c

The ingressive-stative *Niphal* describes the subject coming to be in a particular state.²² If the subject is non-personal, the *Niphal* also has a middle sense.

4. וְהָנָה-מַיִם בָּאִים מִדֶּרֶךְ There it was—water flowing from the
אֲדוֹם וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ Way of Edom, and the land became filled
אֶת-הַמַּיִם: with water.
[2 Kgs 3:20](#)

With a personal subject, the ingressive-stative also has a reflexive sense, for it refers to emotions and the like, which react upon the psyche.

And his compassion grew hot toward

5. כִּי־נִכְמְרוּ רַחֲמָיו אֶל־אָחִיו his brother.
[Gen 43:30](#)
6. כִּי נִבְהָלוּ מִפְּנֵיו: because they became terrified at his presence
[Gen 45:3](#)
7. וַיָּקָם יְהוֹנָתָן מֵעַם הַשֻּׁלְחָן בַּחֲרִי־אֵף ... כִּי נָעֹצֵב אֶל־דָּוִד Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger ... because he became grieved (or, hurt) for David.
[1 Sam 20:34](#)
8. נִלְאַתִּי הַנָּחַם: I have become too weary to be moved to pity.
[Jer 15:6](#)
9. נִלְאָה לַהֲשִׁיבָה אֶל־פִּיו: He (the sluggard) gets weary by returning it (his hand) to his mouth.
[Prov 26:15](#)
10. הִיא נֹאנְחָה It (Jerusalem) is groaning.
[Lam 1:8](#)

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d

By "gerundive" we mean verbs in the *Niphal* (often participles) signifying that the adjectival state is necessary, or proper, or possible.²³ In English the adjectival suffixes -able/-ible/-ful/-ly signify these notions.

11. לְבֵית הַנִּבְנָה לְשֵׁם־יְהוָה: the house that is to be built to the name of YHWH
[1 Chr 22:19](#)
12. כָּל־הַמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא all that vast and dreadful steppe
[Deut 1:19](#)
13. מֵאֶרֶץ נּוֹרָאָה: from a terrible land
[Isa 21:1](#)
14. עַד־בָּאֻם אֶל־אֶרֶץ נוֹשֶׁבֶת until they came to a land that was inhabitable
[Exod 16:35](#)
15. וַיַּכּוּם לְפִי־חֶרֶב ... כָּל־הַנִּמְצָא And they struck them with the sword ... all who were found.
[Judg 20:48](#)
16. אֵין אֶבֶן נִרְאָה: Not a stone was visible.
[1 Kgs 6:18](#)
17. וּבֵין הַחַיָּה הַהֹאכֵלֶת וּבֵין הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תֹאכֵל: between living creatures that are edible and those that are inedible
[Lev 11:47](#)
18. עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט נִבְחָר לִיהוָה מִזִּבְחַ: To do what is right and just is more acceptable to YHWH than sacrifice.
[Prov 21:3](#)
19. שְׂאוּל וַיְהוֹנָתָן הַנְּאֻהָבִים וְהַנְּעִימִם Saul and Jonathan were lovely and gracious.

[2 Sam 1:23](#)**23.4 Double-Status Species of the *Niphal*****a**

In the double-status uses of the *Niphal*, the subject (almost always personal) is at the same time agent and patient (or undergoer) of the verbal action. These correspond to reflexives and related constructions in the European languages, for example, English 'I wash myself,' French 'Je me brosse les dents,' German 'Ich setze mich.' As these examples suggest, reflexive actions are not a closed or fixed category: English does not use a reflexive for brushing the teeth, as French does, and ordinarily it does not do so for sitting down (but cf. 'Set yourself down'). The double-status categories other than reflexive arise from various kinds of semantic complexity.

b

A reflexive construction is one in which the subject and object of the verb refer to the same person or thing. *Niphal* reflexives in the singular work straightforwardly; in the

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plural the sense tends to be distributive (cf. English 'We washed ourselves,' 'We each washed ourselves,' 'Each of us washed herself'). Some *Niphals* are essentially reflexive; thus, נִשְׁמַר almost always signifies 'to guard oneself,' נִקֵּן 'to avenge oneself,' נִשְׁעַן 'to lean (oneself),' נִחַנֵּק 'to hang oneself.'²⁴

1. וְאֶנְקָמָה מֵאוֹיְבָי:
I will avenge myself on my enemies.
[Isa 1:24](#)
2. יִסְמֹךְ אִישׁ אֶלָּיו
If a man supports himself on it ...
[Isa 36:6](#)
3. וּבְכָל אֲשֶׁר־אָמַרְתִּי אֵלֵיכֶם
 תִּשְׁמְרוּ
And, with regard to everything I said to you, take care to yourselves.
[Exod 23:13](#)

In other cases the reflexive sense is found alongside others, for example, נִצַּל may signify 'to deliver oneself' or 'to be delivered.'

c

In many situations where other languages use reflexive constructions, Hebrew does not use the *Niphal*. Sometimes the reflexive relationship is expressed by means of the prepositions ל (11.2.10d), כּ, etc., with a personal pronoun or some circumlocution, such as נִפְשׁוֹ or לִבּוֹ.

4. וַיִּקַּח־לוֹ לְמֶדָּ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים
Then Lamech took for himself two wives.
[Gen 4:19](#)
5. וְאַהֲבַתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
[Lev 19:18](#)
6. כִּי־אַהֲבַת נַפְשׁוֹ אָהָבוֹ:
He loved him with the love (he had) for himself.
[1 Sam 20:17](#)
7. כִּי תֹאמַר בְּלִבְּךָ
If you say in the heart (i.e., to yourself) ...
[Deut 7:17](#)

A reflexive construction may also involve a *Niphal* along with a prepositional phrase, as in the frequent injunction

הִשָּׁמֶר לָךְ 'Guard yourself for yourself' ([Deut 4:9](#)).

d

In a benefactive construction the subject acts for its own benefit or interest; the verb is usually transitive. This construction, as noted above, also occurs with the Greek middle (e.g., *endysasthai khitōna* 'to put on [oneself] a tunic'). Compare French reflexive 'Je me lave' ('I am washing myself') and benefactive 'Je me lave une chemise' ('I am washing [myself] a shirt'). The *Niphal* benefactive is not common.

8. נִשְׂאֵל נִשְׂאֵל מִמֶּנִּי דָוִד
לְרוֹץ בֵּית-לָחֶם David earnestly asked (for himself) leave
of me to hurry to Bethlehem.
[1 Sam 20:6](#); cf. v [28](#)

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e

A reciprocal construction is a plural variety of reflexive, where the action is mutual. Sometimes the subjects act in relationship with one another, and at other times the subjects interact hostilely. The close relationship between the reflexive and reciprocal notions is sometimes evident, as in the *Niphal* of אָסַף.²⁵

9. הָאֲסָפוּ Then Jacob called his sons and said:
'Gather (yourselves) together ...
[Gen 49:1](#)

Action in concert can be self-contained (# 10) or directed outward (# 11).

10. הֵילְכוּ שְׁנַיִם יַחְדָּו בְּלִתִּי
אִם-נֹדְעֵדוּ: Do two walk together unless they
agree?
[Amos 3:3](#)
11. וַיִּלָּחֲמוּ עָלֶיהָ: And they waged war against it.
[Josh 10:5](#)

Hostile action may include single combat (## 12–13) or judicial procedure (# 14).

12. וְכִי-יִנָּצוּ אָנָשִׁים If men struggle with each other ...
[Exod 21:22](#)
13. תִּנְנוּ-לִי אִישׁ וְנִלָּחֲמָה יָחַד: Give me a man and let us fight together.
[1 Sam 17:10](#)
14. וְאִשְׁפָּטָה אִתְּכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה so that I may go to court with you before
YHWH.
[1 Sam 12:7](#)

In a transitive sentence the reciprocal merges with the benefactive.

15. וַיְיוֹעֵץ הַמֶּלֶךְ רְחֹבְעָם
אֶת-הַזְּקֵנִים Then King Rehoboam consulted the
elders.
[1 Kgs 12:6](#)

f

A tolerative construction is one which combines the reflexive notion with the notion of permission. The subject allows an implicit or explicit agent to effect upon him the action denoted by the verb: 'X (subject) allows himself to be Y (verb)'. If in a passive the subject is non-willing and in a reflexive the subject is willing, then in a tolerative the subject is half-willing. Hebrew often uses the *Niphal* for such constructions. A passive rendering of such *Niphals* is often possible; for example, בָּנִי הִזְהָר ([Qoh 12:12](#)) may be rendered 'Be warned, my son' or 'Allow/Suffer

yourself to be warned, my son.' Indeed, other languages use the passive and similar forms for tolerative constructions, for example, the Greek middle form in Anebē de kai lōsēph ... apograpsasthai, 'Joseph then went up ... to be registered (i.e., to allow himself to be registered)' ([Luke 2:4–5](#)).

g

The tolerative *Niphal* often involves the element of efficacy: what the subject allows to happen can indeed be carried through. Thus Paul Joüon glosses נִדְרַשׁ as "to let

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oneself be questioned,' and that efficaciously so that it practically means 'to answer' (when speaking of God); נִזְהָר, 'to let oneself be warned' and that efficaciously and so practically 'to bear in mind the warning'; נוֹסֵר, 'to let oneself be corrected, to be corrected'; נִעְתָּר, 'to let oneself be entreated (efficaciously), to grant.'²⁶ The tolerative is often used of the deity.

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|-----|---|--|
| 16. | וְנִעְתָּר לָהֶם | And he will respond to their pleas
(< allow himself to be entreated
by them).
Isa 19:22 |
| 17. | נִדְרַשְׁתִּי לְלוֹא שְׂאֵלוּ
נִמְצָאתִי לְלוֹ נִמְצָאתִי לְלוֹ
בְּקִשְׁנִי | I answered (< allowed myself to
be sought by) those who did not
ask (for me); I revealed myself to
(< allowed myself to be found by)
those who did not seek me.
Isa 65:1 |
| 18. | וַיַּעֲתֵר יִצְחָק לַיהוָה ...
וַיַּעֲתֵר לוֹ יְהוָה | And Isaac entreated (Qa/)
YHWH ... and YHWH answered
(< allowed himself to be
entreated by) him.
Gen 25:21 |
| 19. | וְאַנִּי אֶדְרֹשׁ לָכֶם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
חַי־אֲנִי ... אִם־אֶדְרֹשׁ לָכֶם: | Am I to let myself be inquired of
by you (or, answer you), O House
of Israel? As surely as I live, ... I
will not let myself be inquired of
by you (or, answer you).
Ezek 20:31 |

The notion of efficacy is not always present.

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| 20. | הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה הָעֵלּוּ
גְּלוּלֵיהֶם עַל־לִבָּם ...
הָאֶדְרֹשׁ אֶדְרֹשׁ לָהֶם | These men have mounted idols on their
hearts ... Should I really let myself be
consulted by them?
Ezek 14:3 |
|-----|---|--|

h

The causative-reflexive scheme in Hebrew is usually *Hithpael*, but in some cases the *Niphal* is used. In these verbs the subject causes the action to happen to himself: 'X (subject) gets himself to be Y (verbal notion).' Greek uses the middle for comparable senses, for example, *misthoumai* 'I get myself hired, I take a job, I sign on (as a mercenary soldier),' *didaskomai* 'I get myself taught.' Thus in Hebrew we have נִדְרַע 'to make oneself known.'

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- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---|
| 21. | אַל־תִּדְרְעֵי לְאִישׁ | But do not make yourself known to the
man.
Ruth 3:3 |
|-----|------------------------|---|

22. וְנִדְרַע יְהוָה לְמִצְרַיִם וַיֵּדְעוּ
מִצְרַיִם אֶת־יְהוָה
So YHWH will make himself known to
the Egyptians, and so the Egyptians will
know YHWH.
[Isa 19:21](#)
23. וַאֲרָא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם ... בְּאֵל
שְׁדֵי וְשִׁמִּי יְהוָה לֹא
נִדְרַעְתִּי לָהֶם:
I appeared (< made myself to be seen)
to Abraham ... as El Shaddai, but by my
name YHWH I did not make myself
known to them.
[Exod 6:3](#)

Since this function of the *Niphal* corresponds with the *Hithpael*'s primary function, the two stems may be used similarly with some verbs. In at least one case, the older *Niphal* is replaced by a later *Hithpael* (with a change in the preposition used).²⁷

- 24a. וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי עַמּוֹן כִּי נִבְאֲשׁוּ
בְדָוִד
[2 Sam 10:6](#)
The Ammonites realized that they had
made themselves foul-smelling to
David.
- 24b. וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי עַמּוֹן כִּי
הִתְבַּאֲשׁוּ עִם־דָּוִד
[1 Chr 19:6](#)

23.5 Isolated and Denominative *Niphals*

a

Two groups of *Niphals* break with the schemata we have elaborated. One group includes verb roots attested only in the *Niphal*; these isolates are left unclassified because the other verbal stems are lacking to serve as points of reference. Among these are אִבַּק 'to wrestle' (only in [Gen 32:25–26](#)), אָוַת 'to consent,' אָלַח 'to be corrupt.' The first two are apparently reciprocal, the third adjectival.²⁸

b

The rare denominative use of the *Niphal* is probably related to its ingressive-stative and causative-reflexive functions.

- אָחַז *Niphal*, 'to possess' < אֶחָזָה 'possession' (cf. [Josh 22:9](#))
יָאֵל *Niphal*, 'to become foolish' < אָוִיל 'fool' (cf. [Isa 19:13](#); cf. v. 11)
לָבַב *Niphal*, 'to get a heart' < לָבַב 'hears' (hapax in [Job 11:12](#))
נָבֵא *Niphal*, 'to prophesy' < נָבִיא 'prophet' (cf. [1 Sam 10:11](#))
צָמַד *Niphal*, 'to attach oneself' < צָמָד 'pair' (cf. [Num 25:3](#))
שָׁבַע *Niphal*, 'to swear'²⁹ < שֶׁבַע 'seven' (cf. [Gen 21:24](#))

23.6 Mixed Forms

a

The systematic character of the Hebrew stem system is occasionally compromised. Carl Brockelmann notes that, in contrast to Classical Arabic and Aramaic, the verbal stems in Hebrew tend to become confused: "The system of verbal stems ... purely preserved in Classical Arabic and Aramaic—is stifled with all kinds of cross-overs in several modern Arabic dialects, in Hebrew, but especially in Ethiopic and Akkadian."³⁰

Specifically, some verbs in the *Niphal* with its various functions become confused with *Qal*, *Piel*, *Hiphil*, and *Hithpael*.

23.6.1 Mixture with *Qal*

a

We have already noted the correspondence between the *Niphal*'s "middle" function and the use of some *Qal* intransitive verbs (23.2.1a). The ingressive-stative *Niphal* function is obviously similar to that of *Qal* statives. With some roots *Qal* and *Niphal* exhibit no noticeable difference in meaning; in the conjugation of some others the *Qal* and *Niphal* combine to form one paradigm. The *Niphal* also becomes mixed with the old *Qal* passive.

b

Where no difference in meaning is apparent, the stems seem interchangeable.³¹

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| 1a. | כִּי חָלִיתִי הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה: | because I became sick (<i>Qal</i>) three days ago
1 Sam 30:13 |
| 1b. | וְלֹא נָחְלוּ עַל-שָׁבֶר יוֹסֵף: | But they do not become sick (<i>Niphal</i>) over the ruin of Joseph.
Amos 6:6 |
| 2a. | וּבְמוֹט הָרִים בָּלַב יָמִים: | and when the mountains will totter (<i>Qal</i>) into the heart of the sea
Ps 46:3 |
| 2b. | בִּלְתִּמּוֹט | It will not totter (<i>Niphal</i>).
Ps 46:6 |

c

Some verbs build their suffix conjugation with *Niphal* and their prefix conjugation with *Qal*. Mayer Lambert explains this phenomenon:

In the case of rare verbs one could believe that it is an accident that one finds *Niphal* for one tense and *Qal* for another. But this explanation is not possible for other verbs, which are so used frequently. It is likely that both the *Niphal* and the *Qal* have their own special origin, but the difference in sense has been effaced and the analogy of sound led to the tenses which resemble one another in one or the other form being preferred, as נָגַשׁ and יִגַּשׁ.³²

This pattern is an example of suppletion.³³

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|-----|---|---|
| 3. | וְנִגַּשׁ מֹשֶׁה לְבַדּוֹ אֶל-יְהוָה
וְהֵם לֹא יִגָּשׁוּ | And Moses alone is to approach (<i>Niphal</i>) YHWH; the others must not approach (<i>Qal</i>).
Exod 24:2 |
| 4. | וְתִפּוּצִינָה מִבְּלִי רֹעֶה ...
נִפְצְצוּ צֹאנִי | They (my flock) scattered (<i>Qal</i>) because there was no shepherd ... My flock scattered (<i>Niphal</i>).
Ezek 34:5–6 |
| 5a. | הַנוֹגֵעַ בָּאָרֶץ וְתִמּוֹג | he who touches the earth and it melts (<i>Qal</i>)
Amos 9:5 |
| 5b. | וְכִי נִמְגּוּ כָל-יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ
מִפְּנֵיכֶם: | because all that live in the land melt (<i>Niphal</i>) before you
Josh 2:9 |

d

It is likely that sometimes the *Qal* passive and the *Niphal* were confounded by the Masoretes, as, for example, with the I-*nun* verbs in their prefix conjugation, where the old *Qal* passive would have a šureq instead of the

Niphal's hireq. Lambert reasons: "It is probable that in the case of l-*nun* where the *Niphal* is not encountered apart from the past [the suffix conjugation], the *Niphal* past, if it has the passive sense, might be considered as an ancient passive of the *Qal*."³⁴ Three examples he cites are ngś *Niphal* 'to be hard pressed,' נָגַשׁ (e.g., # 3; [1 Sam 13:6](#)); nt' *Niphal* 'to be planted,' only in נִטָּעַר ([Isa 40:24](#)); nsh *Niphal* 'to be torn away,' only in וְנִסְחָתָם ([Deut 28:63](#); cf. יִסְחֹר, probably *Qal* passive יִסְחֹר in [Prov 2:22](#) as in a Cairo Geniza text).

e

Lambert also alleges that the gradual substitution of the *Niphal* for the *Qal* passive can be seen with some verbs which show a *Qal* infinitive absolute before a *Niphal* prefix form, as, for example, יִסְקֹל יִסְקֹל, 'He will surely be stoned' ([Exod 19:13](#)) and יִשְׁקֹל יִשְׁקֹל, 'It will be weighed' ([Job 6:2](#)). He rightly acknowledges that one cannot be certain with which verbs this substitution took place (cf. 35.2.1d).³⁵

23.6.2 Mixture with Piel

a

Although *Niphal* normally stands in juxtaposition to *Qal*, with some verbs it serves as the middle-reflexive counterpart to *Piel*; the usual passive and reflexive stems are *Pual* and *Hithpael*, respectively. The mixture is clearest with verbs whose *Qal* is unattested; this is the case with all verbs paired here.³⁶

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|-----|---|---|
| 1a. | וְהִגַּדְנָא לִי מָה עָשִׂיתָ
אֶל-תִּכְחַד מִמֶּנִּי: | Tell me what you did. Do not hide (<i>Piel</i>) from me.

Josh 7:19 |
| 1b. | וְאֲשָׁמוּתִי מִמֶּךָ לֹא-נִכְחָדוּ: | And my sins were not hidden (<i>Niphal</i>) from you.

Ps 69:6 |
| 2a. | וּבְעֵתָתּוֹ רוּחַ-רָעָה מֵאֵת
יְהוָה: | And an evil spirit from YHWH terrified (<i>Piel</i>) him.

1 Sam 16:14 |
| 2b. | כִּי נִבְעַת מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב מִלֶּאךָ
יְהוָה: | because he was terrified (<i>Niphal</i>) by the presence of the Angel of YHWH's sword

1 Chr 21:30 |
| 3. | וּבֵת אִישׁ כָּהֵן כִּיתָחַל
לְזִנוּת אֶת-אָבִיהָ הִיא
מִחֻלָּלָה | If a priest's daughter defiles herself (<i>Niphal</i>) by playing the harlot, she defiles (<i>Piel</i>) her father.

Lev 21:9 |

23.6.3 Mixture with Hiphil

a

As with *Piel*: *Niphal* roots, the *Niphal* of some verbs stands closer to the *Hiphil* than to the *Qal*.³⁷

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|-----|-----------------|--|
| 1a. | וְהִכְחַדְתִּיו | And I will destroy (<i>Hiphil</i>) them.

Exod 23:23
Surely our foes are destroyed (<i>Niphal</i>). |
|-----|-----------------|--|

- 1b. אִם-לֹא נִכְחַד קִיָּמֻנֹו [Job 22:20](#)
 2a. וְאִין מוֹשִׁיעַ There was none to save (*Hiphil*) them. [2 Sam 22:42](#)
 2b. וַיִּמְאִיבִי אוֹשִׁיעַ: I am saved (*Niphal*) from my enemies. [2 Sam 22:4](#)
 3a. וַיִּכְנִיעֵם And he (David) subdued (*Hiphil*) them (the Philistines). [2 Sam 8:1](#)
 3b. וַיִּכְנְעוּ הַפְּלִשְׁתִּים So the Philistines were subdued (*Niphal*). [1 Sam 7:13](#)
 4a. בְּצֵל יָדוֹ הֶחְבִּיֵּאֲנִי In the shadow of his hand he hid (*Hiphil*) me. [Isa 49:2](#)
 4b. וַיִּזְתֶּר יוֹתָם ... כִּי נֶחְבֵּא: But Jotham escaped ... because he hid himself (*Niphal*). [Judg 9:5](#)
 5. וְאַתָּה כִּי הִזְהַרְתּוּ צַדִּיק לְבַלְתִּי חָטָא ... וְהוּא לֹא-חָטָא חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה כִּי נִזְהָר But if you warn (*Hiphil*) the righteous one not to sin ... , and he does not sin, he will surely live, because he allowed himself to be warned (*Niphal*). [Ezek 3:21](#)
 6. וְהִכִּנֵּיתִי אֶת-מַמְלַכְתּוֹ: ... וְכִנֵּנִתִּי אֶת-כִּסֵּא מַמְלַכְתּוֹ עַד-עוֹלָם: ... כִּסֵּאֲךָ יִהְיֶה נָכוֹן עַד-עוֹלָם: And I will establish (*Hiphil*) his kingdom ... and I will establish (Polel) the throne of his kingdom forever ... your throne will be established (*Niphal*) forever. [2 Sam 7:12, 13, 16](#)

23.6.4 Mixture with *Hithpael*

a

Since the *Hithpael* historically tends to take on the passive functions of the *Niphal* (26.1.3, 26.3), it is not surprising that the stems are occasionally confounded.

- 1a. וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְּזֶרְעֶךָ כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ And through your offspring all nations of the earth will be blessed (*Hithpael*). [Gen 22:18](#)
 1b. וְנִבְרַכְּוּ בָּךְ כָּל מְשֻׁפָּחַת הָאָדָמָה: And through you all peoples on earth will be blessed (*Niphal*). [Gen 12:3](#)

The passive import of both verbs is clear from the context: it is God who blesses ([Gen 12:3a](#), [22:17](#)), that is, who fills the potency for life, albeit through an agent.³⁸ With some verbs the *Niphal* suffix conjugation and the *Hithpael* prefix conjugation supplete or complement one another, forming one paradigm; the verbs are טָמֵא and יִצַּב.

2. אֶל-תִּטְמְאוּ בְכָל-אֱלֹהִי כִי
בְכָל-אֱלֹהִי נִטְמְאוּ הַגּוֹיִם
Do not defile yourselves (*Hithpael*) in any
of these ways because in all these ways
the nations defiled themselves (*Niphal*).
[Lev 18:24](#)

Footnotes:

1. S. Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964) 126–27; G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 84–85.
2. The secondary *h* in these forms presumably results from analogy with comparable forms in the inflection of the *Hiphil* stem.
3. BL § 38c / p. 280.
4. GB 2.89 (§ 16b); see the similar treatment of Mayer Lambert, "L'emploi du nifal en hébreu," *Revue des études juives* 41 (1900) 196–214. On the use of forms of the *Qal* and *Niphal* stems of the same root in neighboring lines of verse, see Moshe Held, "The Action-Result (Factitive-Passive) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965) 272–82.
5. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 177, cf. 175–78.
6. *LHS* 131.
7. Carl Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprache* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1908), 1. 536; Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 37; BL § 38b-e, s' / pp. 279–80, 288; Joüon § 51c / p. 115.
8. GKC § 51c / p. 137 mentions the similarity of the *Niphal* to the Greek middle, which has medio-passive sense.
9. Some common *Qal* intransitives have no *Niphal*, notably *hlk* 'to walk' (save perhaps in [Ps 109:23](#)), *npl* 'to fall,' 'md 'to stand,' and *qwm* 'to rise.'
10. David Toshio Tsumura, "Niphal with an Internal Object in [Habakkuk 3:9a](#)," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31 (1986) 11–16; cf. [Jer 14:17](#), [Isa 45:17](#), [Hab 3:9](#).
11. E. König, *Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897), 3. 34 (§ 100).
12. John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 375.
13. Lyons, *Theoretical Linguistics*, 373.
14. Cf. [1 Sam 14:19](#).
15. Cf. [Ps 78:23](#).
16. For the sense, cf. [Ezek 13:7](#).
17. Cf. [Gen 37:27](#).
18. Cf. wayyimaḥ in [Gen 7:23](#), where the proper form may be a *Niphal*. Note the use of *ʾt* with a *Hophal* in [Exod 10:8](#).
19. The preposition *b* is most common for agency. For other examples with *l*, see [Josh 17:16](#), [Jer 8:3](#), [Neh 6:1](#).
20. Cf. [Lev 6:3](#).
21. Lambdin groups together the simple adjective and gerundive *Niphals* as "resultative," a term we reserve for one use of the *Piel*. Note his English examples: passive 'to be opened' versus simple adjectival 'to be open'; passive 'It is being broken' versus simple adjectival 'It is broken.' See *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 177. English illustrations only suggest the relevant distinctions.
22. In Akkadian the N stem with stative verbs is predominantly ingressive, e.g., G stem *ibašši* 'he is' versus N stem *ibbašši* 'he becomes.' See Moscati et al., *Comparative Grammar*, 126–27; W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 118. Von Soden allows for an ingressive fientive, but such a form is at best rare in Akkadian.
23. The term gerundive is derived from Latin grammar; the future passive participle, which signifies comparable notions, corresponds in form with the gerund. Note agenda, Latin, 'those things that are to be done.' Lambdin refers in connection with these forms to "the nuance of potentiality"; *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 177.

24. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 177.

25. Joüon § 51c / p. 115.

26. Joüon § 51c / p. 115, comparing also שׁל *Hiphil*, with a sense similar to ʿtr *Niphal*. See also J. H. Eaton, "Some Misunderstood Hebrew Words for God's Self-Revelation," *Bible Translator* 25 (1974) 331–38.

27. The *Hithpael* of בָּשׁ is found only in the 1 Chronicles passage; for the *Niphal* see also, e.g., [2 Sam 16:21](#). Note, too, brk *Hithpael* in [Gen 22:18](#) and brk *Niphal* in [Gen 12:3](#); see 23.6.4. For *Niphal/Hithpael* similarities in later Hebrew, see, e.g., E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 49.

28. On isolated *Niphals*, see Lambert, "L'emploi du *nifal* en hébreu," 213–14.

29. The sense of שְׁבֹ is evidently 'to seven oneself, bind oneself by seven things'; this is the most common denominative *Niphal*.

30. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, 1. 540.

31. Note also these pairs: mwt (*Qal* [Ps 60:4](#), *Niphal* [Ps 104:5](#)), qll 'to be insignificant' (*Qal* [Gen 16:4](#), *Niphal* [2 Sam 6:22](#)), šgb 'to be lofty' (*Qal* [Job 5:11](#), *Niphal* [Prov 18:10](#)); cf. GB 2. 90 (§ 16c) and cf. Lambert, "L'emploi du *nifal* in hébreu," 210–11.

32. Lambert, "L'emploi du *nifal* in hébreu," 212.

33. In addition to kšl mentioned above (23.2.1a), the following verbs have *Qal* prefix (and imperative) forms and *Niphal* suffix (and participial) forms (with examples): lpy 'to be weary' (*Qal* [Gen 9:11](#), *Niphal* [Jer 9:4](#)), ngš 'to approach' (*Qal* [Gen 27:22](#), *Niphal* [Deut 25:9](#)), ntk 'to be poured out' (*Qal* [Jer 44:6](#), *Niphal* [Jer 42:18](#)), pwš 'to be scattered' (*Qal* [1 Sam 11:11](#), *Niphal* [Gen 10:18](#)). This list follows GB 2. 90 (§ 16c).

34. Lambert, "L'emploi du *nifal* en hébreu," 203.

35. Lambert, "L'emploi du *nifal* en hébreu," 205. Just as the *Qal* passive shifts to the *Niphal*, so the *Niphal* shifts to the *Hithpael*.

36. Verbs showing *Piel*: *Niphal* forms with no *Qal* or only marginal usage include dbr (*Niphal* reciprocal), kbd (*Niphal* passive), ksy (*Niphal* passive), ml̄ (*Niphal* unclear), qdš (*Niphal* reflexive and passive).

37. Verbs showing *Hiphil*: *Niphal* stems with no *Qal* include zhr, ḥbʾ, yšʿ, kwn, knʿ, šmd; verbs showing *Piel* + *Hiphil*: *Niphal* include bhl, qdš; for bhl, note [Job 23:16](#) (*Hiphil*), 15 (*Niphal*).

38. For a careful analysis of the clause structures in [Gen 12:1–4](#) (and of their means of signifying), see P. D. Miller, Jr., "Syntax and Theology in Genesis XII 3a," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984) 472–76.

24 Piel Stem

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24.1 Form and Meaning

a

The classical Semitic languages have a stem characterized by the doubling (or lengthening) of the middle radical, whence the term D stem; the characterization of these stems in the various languages has proved to be difficult.¹ Before Albrecht Goetze's revolutionary study of the Akkadian D stem Hebraists commonly claimed that the *Piel* primarily signified an "intensification" of the root's meaning. In addition, it was thought, the *Piel* signified a "causative" (and on occasion "declarative" or "estimative") meaning with some roots; a denominative meaning was found with other roots. Among the verbs regularly cited in the grammars to display these uses were these.²

Root	<i>Qal</i> Meaning	<i>Piel</i> Meaning	Classification
שבר	to break	to shatter	intensive
למד	to learn	to teach	causative
צדק	to be right	to declare right	declarative
קדש	to be holy	to pronounce holy	estimative
כהן	priest (participle; no other <i>Qal</i> forms)	to fill a priest's office	denominative

b

Such a diversity of functions for a morphologically unified stem perplexed most grammarians.³ They tried either to abstract a common basis for all these meanings or to explain some of them as having developed secondarily from an original meaning. The Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley grammar opted for the first approach and regarded the notion of intensification as the basic meaning: "The fundamental idea of *pi'el*, to which all the various shades of meaning in this conjugation may be referred, is to busy oneself eagerly with the action indicated by the stem."⁴ As this formulation suggests, such an approach is awkward, and earlier grammarians reached no fundamental consensus regarding the stem's sense. Customarily, they awarded the vague notion of "intensification" first place because they saw a connection between form (the doubling of the root's middle radical) and sense (a supposed heightening of the root's meaning).⁵ But they could not advance a plausible explanation for the link between such notions as diverse as "intensive" and "causative." Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, for example, state resignedly: "The question as to how the Semitic intensive gained a causative meaning cannot be answered at present."⁶ Goetze similarly remarks: "The causative-factitive force of the form is customarily said to be an outgrowth of the intensive force. But nobody has ever been able to demonstrate in a satisfactory manner how this development

should have been possible."⁷

c

Goetze in 1942 labeled the semantic interpretation of the doubled middle radical a "romantic notion" and called for a study establishing the *Piel*'s meaning according to modern linguistic principles.⁸ Ernst Jenni accepted the challenge; instead of contenting himself with repeating the dozen or so verbs cited in the traditional grammars, he

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investigated all 415 Biblical Hebrew verbs attested in the *Piel*. He gives special attention to verbs which occur in *Qal* : *Piel* or *Piel* : *Hiphil* pairs, in similar contexts as much as possible; he is thus able to offer for the *Piel* stem a unified semantic description and to set it apart from the other stems.

d

Jenni begins his study by turning away from the venerable tradition behind Arabic and Hebrew grammars, looking instead to recent developments in Akkadian grammar, where Goetze established a close connection between the stative meaning of the G stem (~ Hebrew *Qal*) and the D stem. According to Goetze, the Akkadian D stem does not modify the verbal root, as is the case with the Akkadian *ṣ* and N stems (~ Hebrew *Hiphil* and *Niphal*). Rather, the D stem is to be associated with the adjectival use of the G stem. Among the finite forms of the Akkadian, five are important (the examples are from the root *parasu* 'to separate, cut'): present *iparras* 'he is cutting,' perfect *iptaras* 'he has cut,' preterite *iprus* 'he cut,' imperative *purus* 'cut!', and permansive or stative parts 'he is cut.'⁹ The last of these is relevant here; the Akkadian permansive or stative verb form should not be confused with the class of stative verbs, that is, verbs which refer to a state or quality (22.2.1). The Akkadian permansive form is used when the subject has a quality or has undergone an action associated with the root. (In the latter case the form is rendered as a passive.) Goetze's proposal associates the G stem permansive *arik fit is long*' with the D stem *urrukam* 'to make (to be) long.' Wolfram von Soden, in his standard grammar of Akkadian, follows Goetze in describing the stem: "The chief function of the D stem is factitive, that is, it expresses above all the bringing about of a situation which would be designated by the permansive of the G stem, ... (e.g., *damiq* 'he is good': *dummuqum* 'to make good'; *balit* 'he is alive': *bullutum* 'to make (to be) living, keep alive'; *salim* 'he is friendly': *sullumum* 'to make (to be) friendly, reconcile')."¹⁰ Thus, in von Soden's grammar, the "intensive" concept is not used to explain the D stem.

e

Jenni's argument about the sense of the Hebrew *Piel* is modeled on Goetze's treatment, though the shape of it is different for a number of reasons.¹¹ First, Hebrew has no finite verb form like the Akkadian permansive. Second, *Piel* forms are used with a greater variety of verbs than are D-stem forms in Akkadian; specifically more verbs which are fientive (usually transitive) in the G stem use the D stem. (For such groups, we shall use terms such as *Qal* fientive or *Qal* transitive.)

f

The *Piel*, according to Jenni, expresses the notion of effecting or causing a state corresponding to the basic meaning of the root; this state can be expressed in terms of an

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adjectival construction.¹² With *Qal* intransitive verbs (often stative) this meaning is labeled "factitive," and with *Qal* transitive verbs (usually fientive), "resultative." For example, the *Qal* intransitive verb גָּדַל 'to be great' becomes in the *Piel* 'to make great'; the *Qal* transitive שָׁבַר 'to break' becomes in the *Piel* 'to make (to be) broken.'

g

Stuart A. Ryder II also takes up Goetze's insight into the meanings of the Semitic D stems. Six years after the publication of Jenni's work, though independently of him, Ryder wrote: "Goetze gives us the means for discerning the nature of the associations which evolved, the means of introducing order into what is otherwise a scene of linguistic confusion ... The several functions which [the D stem] assumed [in the various West Semitic languages] are mutually consistent from the standpoint of the stem's denominative-factitive orientation."¹³ In contrast to Jenni, who tends to force all relevant roots into a model stipulating that the *Piel* transforms the notion defined by the *Qal*,

Ryder recognizes that not all roots need present a "correct" relationship to the verbal stems. Variations, he argues, are to be expected.¹⁴ Taking up the dubious view that the stems arose independently and then came to be associated and contrasted with one another, Ryder emphasizes the genuine overlap of the various stems, as well as the idiosyncratic side of the individual lexical items.

h

Though in the remainder of the chapter we follow Jenni quite closely, we shall depart from him at various points, and it is thus proper to offer his own summary of his work.¹⁵ He begins by insisting that each of the various stems in Hebrew is morphologically unified both in form and semantic function. Each functions in distinctive opposition to the other stems in the system. The meaning of the *Piel* stem is neither intensive nor causative (in the sense that it is practically equivalent in meaning to the *Hiphil*).

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Rather, it expresses the bringing about of a state. With *Qal* intransitive verbs the *Piel* is factitive: it designates without regard to the process the bringing about of the state depicted by an adjective. The object experiences this action as an "accident" (a philosophical term signifying that a quality or situation is not essential to the person or thing in question). The difference between a true factitive meaning and a declarative-estimative meaning consists in whether the effected state, described in terms of an adjective, is experienced externally (by the senses) or subjectively (in the mind). With *Qal* transitive verbs the *Piel* is resultative: it designates the bringing about of the outcome of the action designated by the base root, which action can be expressed in terms of an adjective, and without regard to the actual process of the event. The species of the resultative (metaphorical meaning, indirect action, summarizing successive action with plural objects, etc.) are to be understood in contrast to the actual action, which is presented by the base root. Denominative verbs in the *Piel* have either a factitive or resultative meaning. More specifically, the denominative expresses itself in terms of productive, or successive iterative, or privative verbal meanings, rather than in terms of an actual event or a causative meaning.¹⁶

i

The *Piel* is associated with causation: the *Piel* causes a state rather than an action (as the *Hiphil*, for which we reserve the term causative, does). Since the object of causation is in a state of suffering the effects of an action, it is inherently passive in part. Both these features, emphasized earlier (21.2.2), comport well with Jenni's analysis and continue that scholar's basic project of discovering the "living" unity of the stem system.¹⁷

24.2 Factitive

a

The class of verbs with the basic profile (*Qal* intransitive):: *Piel* factitive::(*Hiphil*causative) includes, according to Jenni, about a hundred verbs, which may be divided into four groups.¹⁸

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| I. <i>Qal-Piel-Hiphil</i> attested (ca. 45 verbs) | examples: צדק, כבד, גדל |
| II. <i>Qal-Piel</i> attested (ca. 25 verbs) | examples: ישן, טהר, דשן |
| III. <i>Piel-Hiphil</i> attested (ca. 8 verbs) | examples: פלא, מלט |
| IV. <i>Piel</i> attested (ca. 20 verbs) | examples: רמזה, טנף, חדרש |

The last two groups may be treated as *Qal* intransitive on the basis of evidence from cognate languages and semantic patterns.¹⁹ For example, Hebrew *glḥ Piel* 'to shave' has no corresponding *Qal*, but Arabic has the simple stem *jaliḥa* 'to be bald'.²⁰

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b

In the *Piel* of this class of verbs, the basic sense of the *Qal* is transformed: the *Piel* designates an effected state and governs an object. This class of verbs includes chiefly *Qal* intransitives (verbs that do not govern a direct object), most of them statives; but quasifientives (22.2.3) and a few transitives (of a historically different type) are also included (the case of לָמַד is discussed below). The verbs denote at base a condition, whether a general

condition (e.g., 'to be wealthy') or an attained one (e.g., 'to be worn out'). We exclude, in contrast to Jenni, *Qal* intransitives that refer to physical effort (e.g., נָתַר 'to leap'), vocal projection (e.g., צָעַק 'to cry out'), and expectation (e.g., קָוָה 'to wait for'); see 24.5 for these.

c

The difference between *Qal*, *Piel*, and *Hiphil* can be seen in connection with the verb לָמַד. Grammars often cite this verb as an example of the causative function of *Piel* since the *Qal* means 'to learn' (always transitive) and the *Piel* 'to teach (something to someone)', a use very much like the *Hiphil* double accusative. But לָמַד was originally intransitive, to judge from its thematic a vowel with the *Qal* prefix conjugation, and from Ethiopic, where it means 'to be accustomed.' The step between this intransitive sense and its transitive sense in Hebrew can be seen in Aramaic, where the verb means 'to be accustomed (to something).' The Hebrew *Piel* builds on the original intransitive meaning, and from this base the sense can be extrapolated to 'to make (someone) accustomed (to something), i.e., to teach (something to someone)', a meaning distinct from the sense of the *Hiphil*, as we shall see.

d

The factitive *Piel* can be the result of a sensory causation, a "real" result available to the physical senses, or of a psychological or linguistic causation, a mental change or a speech act that reflects a mental change.

e

A "real" factitive refers to an objective event, an event that can be seen or felt apart from the participants. The verb חָלָה is the only *Qal* intransitive attested in all seven stems,²¹ and it furnishes apt examples for the *Qal* : *Piel* contrast.²²

1a. חָלִיתִי הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה: I became sick (*Qal*) three days ago.

[1 Sam 30:13](#)

1b. אֲשֶׁר-חָלָה יְהוָה בָּהּ: (the sickness) with which YHWH will have made (the land) sick (*Piel*)

[Deut 29:21](#)

The *Qal* form is a stative, and the action of the *Piel* involves putting the object (here, the prepositional object of b) into the state described by the *Qal*. Consider this contrasting pair.

2a. וְקָדַשׁ הוּא וּבְגָדָיו: And he will be holy (*Qal*) along with his clothes.

[Exod 29:21](#)

2b. קִדַּשְׁתִּי כָל-בְּכוֹר: Consecrate (*Piel*) to me every first-born.

[Exod 13:2](#)

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The intransitive *Qal* 'to be holy' becomes in *Piel* 'to make to be holy = transfer to a state of holiness = consecrate,' which takes an object. The proper understanding of this example depends on an appreciation of "holiness" itself as a physical attribute and of "consecration" as the result of various gestures of touching and sprinkling.²³ Consider another pair involving a *Qal* intransitive.

3a. וְאַבִּימֶלֶךְ לֹא קָרַב אֵלֶיהָ: Now Abimelech had not gone near (*Qal*) her (Sarah).

[Gen 20:4](#)

3b. קָרַבְתִּי צְדָקָתִי: I am bringing my righteousness near (*Piel*).

[Isa 46:13](#)

The glosses may be misleading. The *Qal* form, though it may be glossed 'to go near, approach,' represents an ingressive stative event; the burden of the story is that Abimelech did not infringe on Sarah's protected status as a

married woman by becoming near her. In the passage with the *Piel* example the object *šdqty* enters the state of 'being near'. Finally, compare these verbs that are fientive in the *Qal* with their *Piel* counterparts.

- 4a. עַל-הָאָרֶץ יֵשְׁבוּ They will sit (*Qal*) on the ground.
[Ezek 26:16](#)
- 4b. וַיֵּשְׁבוּ טִירוֹתֵיהֶם They will set up (*Piel*) their camps.
[Ezek 25:4](#)
5. בְּטֶרֶם תָּבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ הַמִּלֶּדֶת וַיֵּלְדוּ: Before the midwife (*Piel*) (lit., one who makes brought forth) comes to them, they will have given birth (*Qal*).
[Exod 1:19](#).

f

A "psychological/linguistic" factitive refers to a subjective event. The salient feature of that event is open to discussion. Jenni refers to such verbs as declarative-estimative, by which he means that the state described is attained by a declaration (i.e., 'to declare someone to be in a state') or as a result of an estimation (i.e., 'to esteem someone as being in a state'). Delbert Hillers prefers to call the so-called declarative verbs "delocutive verbs."²⁴ He correctly notes that with some of these verbs the *Piel* usage is based on a locution rather than on an adjectival or even a verbal use. The verb קָלַל, for example, in the *Qal* means 'to be light, slight, trifling.'

- 6a. וּבְזֵי יִקְלְוּ: Those who despise me are trifling.
[1 Sam 2:30](#)

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The *Piel* usage is often glossed 'to curse,' but more strictly it means 'to declare to be trifling.'

- 6b. הֲתַחַת זֹאת לֹא יוֹמֵת שְׁמִיעִי כִּי קָלַל אֶת-מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה: Is it not the case that Shimei should be put to death for this: that he declared the anointed of YHWH to be trifling?
[2 Sam 19:22](#)

The offense in view is not cursing or even thinking poorly of someone; it is publicly declaring him of no importance. Shimei's crime, that is, is sedition (verging on *lèse majesté*), not nastiness. A clear example of a delocutive *Piel* is אָשַׁר 'to pronounce blessed'; it cannot be based on the verbal notion of אָשַׁר 'to march' but must be derived from the locution אֲשֶׁר־י 'blessed.' On the lexical level, if the simple verb is attested, it can occur in a locution. Since the delocutive use of the *Piel* is based on a statement, it can be grouped with the denominatives (24.4g); because of the experiential basis, which is physical, it can be grouped with the "real" factitives. In point of fact, however, the pronouncement depends on a prior subjective assessment, and some *Piels* are simply estimative; we ought not to insist too strongly on the difference between Hillers's "delocutive" and Jenni's "declarative."

g

The relationship between the "real" factitive and the delocutive-estimative *Piel* can be seen in these examples.

- 7a. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֶחָל גָּדְלֶךָ בְּעֵינֵי כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל YHWH said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to make you great (*Piel*) in the eyes of all Israel."
[Josh 3:7](#)
- 7b. גָּדְלוּ לַיהוָה אִתִּי Make YHWH great (or, Declare that YHWH is great) (*Piel*) along with me.
[Ps 34:4](#)

The first example is a "real" factitive because Israel is to experience physically YHWH's making Joshua great; in the second case the action is a declaration, specifically pronounced and based on a prior subjective judgment. Judgments about the status of a "psychological/linguistic" factitive are difficult, unless the speech act is clearly documented, as in the priestly laws.

8. וְטָהַר אֹתוֹ He will pronounce him (ritually) clean.
[Lev 13:34](#)

In some cases the verb refers primarily to the estimation reflected in the speech acts.²⁵

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- 9a. עַל־צִדְקוֹ נִפְשׁוּ מֵאֱלֹהִים: on account of his holding himself as being more righteous (*Piel*) than God
[Job 32:2](#)
- 9b. צִדְקָה נִפְשָׁה מִשְׁבָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבְּגֵדָה יְהוּדָה: Turncoat Israel has esteemed herself more righteous (*Piel*) than Treacherous Judah.²⁶
[Jer 3:1–1](#)
- 9c. וַתַּצְדִּקִי אֶת־אֲחֹתֶיךָ בְּכָל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂית: You have made your sister appear (or, have declared) more righteous (*Piel*) through all the abominations which you have committed.
[Ezek 16:51](#) Qere

h

Given that the factitive is associated with adjectival state, the comparative use is not surprising.²⁷ The examples given above of *sdq* are all comparative, the object of comparison governed by *mn* (## 9a-b) or unexpressed (# 9c). Such comparative use is found in simple estimative examples.

10. וַתִּכְבֹּר אֶת־בְּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי You have honored your sons more than me.
[1 Sam 2:29](#)

The comparative may involve a "real" factitive.

11. וַיַּגְדֵּל אֶת־כִּסְאוֹ מִכִּסֵּא אֲדֹנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד: And may he make his throne greater than the throne of my master, King David.
[1 Kgs 1:37](#)
12. וַתַּחַסְרֵהוּ מֵעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים You have made it (humanity) lack [only] a little of divine beings.
[Ps 8:6](#)

24.3 Resultative

a

The majority of the *Piel* verbs present a resultative profile, or more strictly (*Qal* transitive) :: *Piel* resultative :: (*Hiphil* causative). According to Jenni, about 180 verbs are attested in *Qal* : *Piel* (:: *Hiphil*), and 135 in *Piel* (:: *Hiphil*).²⁸ Jenni's category of *Qal* transitives is largely made up of fientives, and in fact it could better be so called, because Jenni extends the class of transitives to include verbs which "notionally" take an

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"imagined" object, for example, *hlk* 'to go, i.e., make a trip' and *sq* 'to cry, i.e., utter a cry.' this device seems to beg the issue. The approximately forty *Qal* intransitive fientive verbs are best treated separately (24.5).

b

The *Piel* stems of *Qal* transitive verbs signal the bringing about of a state corresponding to the verbal meaning of the *Qal* stem, a state that can be described in terms of an adjectival construction. In most instances this involves transforming the verb into a form that corresponds to the English past participle, for example, שָׁבַר *Qal* 'to break' becomes *Piel* 'to make broken' and זָרַח *Qal* 'to scatter' becomes *Piel* 'to make scattered.' Jenni calls this use of the *Piel* resultative. Ryder prefers the term "transformative" for the *Piel* of both stative and transitive verbs.

c

The distinction between *Qal* and *Piel* for transitive fientive verbs can scarcely be recognized in English; the "meaning" 'to make broken' is a "longwinded circumlocution" for the more simple 'to break.' this similarity is reflected in some patterns of occurrence, for example, the use of *Qal* and *Piel* in neighboring lines of verse with no noticeable difference in meaning. The distinction, Jenni reasons, must have been important in Hebrew because the two stems are distinct. More reasonably, Ryder concedes that

the distinction between "do something" and "have something done" is not clearcut ... Where the difference in meaning between [the *Qal*] and [the *Piel*] is scarcely noticeable, the choice between them may be determined by lexical classification ... or [it may be] a question of stylistic effectiveness on the part of an individual writer.²⁹

This view is notably apt for roots that display mixed forms (24.6), those that occur regularly in *Piel* and only rarely in *Qal* (and then as participles or infinitives), and those that are so rare in the *Piel* as to suggest that they may be ad hoc formations.

d

The *Qal*: *Piel* distinction can be seen with some English verbs through particle usage. For example, English contrasts 'break' and 'break up,' 'cut' and 'cut off' or 'cut down,' 'run' and 'run away,' 'fall' and 'fall down,' 'walk' and 'walk out,' 'bore' and 'bore through,' etc. In each case the simple form signifies the action itself and the form with the particle denotes the state achieved. Incidentally, this analogy may help to explain why the *Piel* is traditionally thought of as intensive, for the effected state put this way seems more intensive, though in fact the way of expressing it does not "mirror" the situation.³⁰ The term "resultative" refers to the state into which the verbal notion of the transitive is brought as an end state, a result. Jenni's terminology agrees with that of von Soden, who writes of Akkadian:

In transitive fientive verbs the D stem sometimes has a kind of resultative meaning (e.g., šabātum 'to grasp' : šubbutum 'to keep grasped'; paṭārum 'to discharge' : puṭṭurum 'to break up'; zāzum 'to divide' : zuṣūzu 'to distribute'; ṭarādum 'to send' : turrudum 'to send away').³¹

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In Jenni's view, the *Qal* stem of fientive verbs signifies the verbal idea as an act, an event. In contrast to the *Piel* stem, which has an achieved result in view, the *Qal* sees the action in its execution, in its course, "in actu." Jenni employs the term actualis. It is also possible to conceive of the *Qal* as the unmarked stem and the *Piel* as the marked (cf. 23.1).

24.3.1 Simple Resultative

a

The contrast of the *Qal* and simple resultative *Piel* can be illustrated by the case of שָׁבַר mentioned above or that of חָלַק *Qal* 'to apportion,' *Piel* 'to make apportioned.'

1a.

כִּן עָשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וַיַּחֲלֲקוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

So the Israelites did and they apportioned (*Qal*) the land.

[Josh 14:5](#)

1b.

וַיִּכְלּוּ מִחֲלָק אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

They completed apportioning (or, making apportioned) (*Piel*) the land.

The distinction is scarcely discernible in our language. Jenni notes that only the *Qa/* of; *hɪq* is negated, as might be expected of the form referring to the action. Contrast, for example, these cases.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1c. | אֲשֶׁר לֹא־חֶלְקוֹ אֶת־נַחֲלָתָם | who had not yet apportioned (<i>Qal</i>) their possession
Josh 18:2 |
| 1d. | וַיַּחֲלֶק־שָׁם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
אֶת־הָאָרֶץ | Joshua apportioned (<i>Piel</i>) there the land.
Josh 18:10 |

There is a similar case with **בֵּתֵר**.

2. וַיִּקַּח לֹו אֶת-כָּל-אֵלֶּה He took all these (heifer, goat, ram) and
וַיַּבְתֵּר אֹתָם בַּתֶּוֶךְ ... cut (*Piel*) them in two ... but the bird he did
וְאֶת-הַצֶּפֶר לֹא בָתַר: not cut (*Qal*).
- Gen 15:10

b

One type of simple resultative is associated with bodily movement: the *Qal* specifies the movement as an event (processual aspect/Aktionsart), and the *Piel* as at an end (terminal Aktionsart).

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|-----|---|---|
| 3a. | אִם ... פִּרְשֶׁתָּ אֵלָיו כַּפָּי: | If ... you stretch out (<i>Qal</i>) your hands to him ...
Job 11:13 |
| 3b. | כִּצְאתִי אֶת־הָאֵיר אֶפְרַשׁ
אֶת־כַּפֵּי אֱלֹהִים | When I have gone out of the city, I will spread (<i>Qal</i>) my hands to YHWH.

Exod 9:29 |
| 3c. | וּבִפְרֹשְׁכֶם כַּפֵּיכֶם אֲעֲלִים
אֵינִי מִכֶּם | When you spread out (<i>Piel</i>) your hands (in prayer), I will hide my eyes from you (i.e., because of the outstretched hands).

Isa 1:15 |
| 3d. | פִּרְשֶׁתִּי יָדַי כָּל־הַיּוֹם
אֶל־עַם סוֹרֵר | All day I hold my hands outstretched (<i>Piel</i>) to a rebellious folk.

Isa 65:2 |

The contrast is found with other verbs of spreading or stretching; both פִּשֵּׁק and שִׁטַּח are rare.

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|--|
| 4. | פֶּשֶׁק שִׁפְתָיו מִחֲתָה-לוֹ: | Whoever opens (<i>Qal</i>) wide his lips comes to ruin.
Prov 13:3 |
| 5. | שִׁטְחֹתִי אֵלַיִךְ כַּפִּי: | I hold my hands spread out (<i>Piel</i>) to you.
Ps 88:10 |

24.3.2 Irreal Resultative

a

Some verbs use a *Qal*: *Piel* contrast that is best summed up by the terms realis : irrealis. If the *Piel* describes an

irreal version of the action of the *Qal*, the *Piel* may be metaphorical or may signify indirect action.³² Thus if 'He built a bridge' were *Qal*, then 'He built a bridge between old enemies' would be metaphorical, and 'He built thousands of bridges' would be indirect (since others actually built the bridges). Let us consider first the metaphorical use and then the indirect.

b

It was Gotthelf Bergsträsser who observed that the *Qal* and *Piel* stems sometimes distinguish themselves in that the former has an actual or literal sense and the latter a metaphorical one: "One of the two forms is used in the more essential sense, the other in the more metaphorical sense."³³ Jenni reasons that the *Qal* focus on the event itself fits in with the natural sense, while the *Piel* focus on the end state comports better with the metaphorical. The argument is interesting but not compelling. Here are some examples.

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|-----|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1a. | וַיִּזְרַם עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם | He scattered (<i>Qal</i>) (the ground up calf) upon the water.
Exod 32:20 |
| 1b. | מִזְרָה רָשָׁעִים מִלֶּךְ חָכָם | A wise king is one who winnows (<i>Piel</i>) (lit., makes scattered) the wicked.
Prov 20:26 |
| 1c. | וְהִשְׁלַשְׁתָּ תִזְרָה לָרוּחַ | A third (of the hair) you shall scatter (<i>Qal</i>) to the winds.
Ezek 5:2 |
| 1d. | וְהִשְׁלַשְׁתָּ לְכָל-רוּחַ אֲזָרָה | A third (of the people) I will scatter (<i>Piel</i>) to every wind.
Ezek 5:12 |

In a similar way, the *Qal* with its concrete, actual meaning may be bracketed with earthly subjects, while the metaphorical *Piel*, which takes only the end state in view, may be bracketed with God.

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|--|
| 2a. | וַתִּדְלַגְנָה | And they (the daughters of Midian) drew (<i>Qal</i>) (water).
Exod 2:16 |
| 2b. | כִּי דִלִּיתָנִי | For you (YHWH) drew me out (<i>Piel</i>) (of the chaotic waters).
Ps 30:2 |

Regarding the use of the *Piel* with such anthropomorphisms, Jenni comments: "The *Piel* succeeds in leading the results back to YHWH without having to describe more exactly the course of events. Naturally, a strict rule cannot be derived from that."³⁴

d

Under the heading of direct-indirect action, as Jenni recognizes, the difference is not the kind of action so much as the way in which the subject is related to the action. In the *Qal*, he argues, the subject is directly involved in the action, while in the *Piel* the subject is only indirectly involved in the bringing about of the action. In this action the subject effects the resulting state through a person or instrument that may be named or only implied. Here are some examples.

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 3a. | רוּחַ הַקֶּדִים שָׁבַרְךָ | And the east wind broke (<i>Qal</i>) you.
Ezek 27:26 |
| 3b. | בְּרוּחַ קָדִים תִּשָּׁבֵר אֲנִיּוֹת תַּרְשִׁישׁ: | You broke (<i>Piel</i>) with an east wind the ships of Tarshish.
Ps 48:8 |
| 4a. | עַל-בִּקְעָם הָרוֹת | because they (the Ammonites) ripped open (<i>Qal</i>) pregnant women
Amos 1:13 |
| 4b. | וְהָרַתִּיהֶם תִּבְקַע: | And you (Hazeal) will rip open (<i>Piel</i>) |

their pregnant women.

[2 Kgs 8:12](#)

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Concerning the difference between # 4a and # 4b Jenni comments:

In connection with the complaint of Amos the Ammonites themselves are named as actors; the verb therefore stands in the *Qal*. On the other hand, Hazael will accomplish his predicted atrocities not with his own hands but indirectly through his soldiers; therefore the resultative verb in the *Piel*.³⁵

24.3.3 Other

a

Traditionally, the uses of the *Qal* and *Piel* (a) to transmit action to one object (*Qal*) versus numerous objects (*Piel*) or (b) for a single/simple movement (*Qal*) versus successive movements (*Piel*) or (c) for occasional (*Qal*) versus professional (*Piel*) activities were regarded as special nuances of the intensive notion of the *Piel*. Jenni contends rather that these plural patterns are in keeping with his thesis that the *Qal*: *Piel* difference for fientives is due to the opposition of actualis and resultative. He argues that with a single object or with a single movement, for example, the event is represented in actu, while in the case of many objects or many movements a series of successive events can be represented only as an achieved result.

b

We present Jenni's arguments but confess we do not find them compelling, for a plurality of actions, it seems to us, can be presented in actu.³⁶ It may be worth noting again that *Piels* of these types are similar to the English verbs bracketed with a particle. For example, contrast 'he cut the loaf' (a single act) and 'he cut up the loaf' (a multiplicity of acts leading to several pieces). Contrast again, 'he broke the stick' and 'he broke up the stick.' Both of these offer a contrast, comparable to the *Qal*: *Piel* contrast. This use of the *Piel* may represent an analogical extension of the frequentative from (a relatively few) intransitive verbs to transitive verbs (see 24.5). In any case, though scholars differ in their analyses and explanations, they agree that for a few roots the *Piel* is used in connection with multiple objects or actions.

c

The *Piel* of multiple objects can be illustrated with the verbs נָשַׁךְ (twice in *Piel*) and נִשְׁךְ (five times in *Piel*). For the first, consider these cases.

- 1a. יְהִי־דָן נָחֵשׁ עַל־דֶּרֶךְ ...
הַנֹּשֶׁךְ עֲקֵב־סוֹס וַיִּפֹּל
לְכֹבּוֹ אַחֲוֹר:
Dan is a serpent by the roadside ... that
bites (*Qal*) the horse's heels so that its
rider tumbles backward.

[Gen 49:17](#)

- 1b. הֲנִי מְשַׁלַּח בְּכֶם נָחָשִׁים
צָפְעָנִים ... וְנִשְׁכוּ אֶתְכֶם
I am sending venomous snakes among
you ... and they will bite (*Piel*) you.

[Jer 8:17](#)

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Here the *Qal* describes a single incident, with one (plural) object in view, while the *Piel* refers to a plurality of incidents and objects.³⁷ There is no sense that the *Piel* biting is more intense.³⁸ Here are two cases of נִשְׁךְ.

- 2a. אֶשְׁקֶךָ
I would kiss (*Qal*) you.

[Cant 8:1](#)

- 2b. וְלֹא נִשְׁתַּחֲוִי לְנִשְׁךְ לְבָנִי
וְלְבָנֹתִי
You (Jacob) would not let me (Laban)
kiss (*Piel*) my sons and daughters.

Gen 31:28

Jenni rightly argues that the difference in stems here cannot be due to any difference in the strength (either passionately or profusely) of the kissing!³⁹

24.4 Denominative

a

Since the *Piel* is the stem most commonly used to form denominatives in Hebrew, it is appropriate that we consider that class more broadly than we did in connection with denominative Qals (22.5) and *Niphals* (23.5). By "denominative" we mean those verbs which do not belong to an original verbal root, be it transitive or intransitive, but to another part of speech, especially a substantive, adjective, or numeral; in living languages, this relationship is recognized by the speakers of a language. From this definition it is apparent that one ascertains whether or not a verb is denominative on descriptive, semantic, and historical linguistic grounds: the nominal form is primary and the verbal secondarily derived from it. In practice this decision is not so easily made. In a living language verbs are constantly being developed from nouns (cf. English 'He wolfed down his food') and vice versa (cf. English 'The players went on strike'), so that the lexicographer and grammarian are sometimes uncertain whether the nominal or verbal form is primary.⁴⁰ Then too, they are uncertain which is primary because denominatives assume all kinds of meanings; for example, denominatives of the English noun 'boot' include the notions found in 'The prejudices of parents usually take root in their children,' 'We were rooted to the spot by surprise,' 'Good manners were rooted in him like second nature,' and 'The new district attorney rooted out the city's criminal element.' This kind of polysemy in Hebrew sometimes makes it difficult to distinguish denominatives from primary verbs. For our purposes we must be satisfied to explain and illustrate the denominative use of the *Piel* stem with those verbs that are regarded as such by the recent scholarly consensus. Jenni argues that the historical issue is not crucial from

a

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descriptive point of view because the *Piel* exhibits the same essential function with denominative verbs as it does with other roots. Ryder, in contrast, believes that the *Piel*'s transformative force is missing with nominal roots.⁴¹

b

Although the *Piel* stem expresses the essential notion of bringing about the adjectivally declared state corresponding to the base root, the denominative meaning can be shaped in many ways, depending on the root in question. For example, כֹּהֵן 'priest' becomes כִּהֵן *Piel* 'to serve as priest' (intransitive) but יָבַם 'levirate brother' becomes יָבַם *Piel* 'to perform for someone the duty of the levirate brother' (transitive). Jenni argues against overemphasizing this diversity: "The varying types of relationships between the denominative verbal meaning and the noun in question on the whole have only an indirect relationship to the function of the *Piel* stem as such."⁴² Jenni's thesis is supported by the fact that the *Piel* stem is not the only stem in which denominatives are formed. One finds denominatives in the *Qal* (e.g., בָּרַךְ *Qal* 'to kneel' from בֶּרֶךְ 'knee,' חָמַר *Qal* 'to pitch' from חֶמֶר 'asphalt,' שָׁבַר *Qal* 'to purchase (grain)' from שֶׁבֶר 'grain'); in the *Niphal* (e.g., אָחַז *Niphal* 'to be settled (in a possession)' from אֲחֻזָּה 'possession,' שָׁבַע *Niphal* 'to swear' from שֶׁבַע 'seven'); and in the *Hiphil* (e.g., יָמַן *Hiphil* 'to turn oneself to the right' from יָמִין 'right hand,' אָזַן *Hiphil* 'to hear' from אָז 'ear').⁴³

c

It is the *Piel* that is used in connection with many denominative verbs. Certainly the *Piel* stem, which expresses the effecting of an adjectival state, is most suited for making adjectives into verbs. Jenni defends his overall thesis by juxtaposing denominative verbs that occur in both *Qal* and *Piel* stems over against each other; the meaning gleaned from these juxtapositions he plausibly extends to those *Piel* denominatives that lack a *Qal* counterpart.

d

It is necessary to reckon with the fact that in some instances where denominatives occur in more than one stem the differences among them may no longer be apparent; the denominatives in one stem or the other may, in contrast, have been formed over an extended period of time during which the relevant root showed a variety of

meanings. This is the case, for example with **חטא** *Qal* 'to miss the mark; to sin,' *Hiphil* 'to cause to sin,' and *Piel* 'to recognize something as missed' (estimative, [Gen 31:39](#)), 'to purify from sin' (privative), and 'to present as a sin-offering' (productive). The root **עצם** offers yet another example of denominatives with varying meanings related to variety in the base words: **עצם** has an adjectival meaning 'strong' (cf. **עָצוּם** 'mighty') and becomes in the *Qal* 'to be strong, mighty,' and a nominal meaning 'bone' (cf. **עֶצֶם**) that becomes in *Piel* 'to gnaw bones' (privative).

e

The denominative *Piel* may be analyzed into several basic types. It may be resultative with the notion of either producing the mass designated by the noun or the taking away of it. The former we call "the productive *Piel*" and the latter "the privative *Piel*." Many denominative *Piels* connote the notion of producing something (cf. English 'to wall [in]'). Concerning this use Jenni explains: "This productivity, as one could call it,

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designates the producing of the thing from the designation of which the verbs are derived, not as an actual event but as a resultative, from the outcome of it."⁴⁴ This small group of verbs includes the following.

1.	בָּכַר	firstborn	יִבְכֵּר	It will bear early fruit. Ezek 47:12
2.	יָדַבֵּר	descendant ⁴⁵	יִדְבֵּר	He will leave behind descendants. Prov 21:28
3.	חָטָא	sin-offering	חָטָא	one who presents a sin offering Lev 6:19
4.	לָבַבָהּ	(heart-shaped) cake	וַתִּלְבֵּב	And she baked cakes. 2 Sam 13:6, 8
5.	עָנָן	cloud	בְּעָנִי עָנָן	when I form clouds Gen 9:14
6.	עָפָר	dust	וַעֲפָר בְּעָפָר	He threw dirt. 2 Sam 16:13

f

In contrast to the productive nuance, the denominative *Piel* can also denote the taking away of the mass designated by the noun (cf. English 'to skin, to behead, to root out, to uproot, to bone,' etc.). Concerning this use Jenni explains: "Here the *Piel* is very understandable if an abiding outcome is created by the taking away of a designated mass. Also here it is a matter, however, not of a special privative function but of the general factitive-resultative meaning of the *Piel*."⁴⁶ Among the many privative *Piel* verbs are these.⁴⁷

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7.	רָשָׁן	fat drippings ⁴⁸	לְרָשְׁנוּ	to clear/clean it (the altar) of fat Exod 27:3
8.	זָנַב	tail	וַיִּזְנַב	He cut off at the rear. Deut 25:18 ; cf. Josh 10:19
9.	חָטָא	sin	וַחֲטָאוּ	He (the clean person) shall de-sin him (the unclean). ⁴⁹ Num 19:19
10.	לָבַב	heart	לְבַבְתָּנִי	You (fem.) have taken away my heart. Cant 4:9
11.	סָעִיף	branch	מִסָּעִיף	one who cuts down branches Isa 10:33
12.	עָצָם	bone	עֲצָמוּ	He gnaws his bones. Jer 50:17
13.	שָׁרַשׁ	root	וַיִּשְׁרֹשֶׁשׁ	He will uproot you. Ps 52:7

g

With other nominal roots, the denominative *Piel* denotes effecting a state by acting on an object or quality that already exists (## 14–16). A denominative from an adjective describes the result of a process, usually the process of coming to be in the state denoted by the adjective; thus there are denominatives from עִוֵּר 'blind (or one-eyed?)' (# 17), מְהִיר 'skilled, dextrous,' (# 18), and יָדוּעַ 'expert' (# 19). A similar formation comes from the preposition קִדְּם 'in front of' (# 20). From an agentive noun a denominative means 'to act as' (## 21–22). With other nouns the *Piel* may be delocutive (# 23) or estimative (# 24).

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|-----|--|---|
| 14. | וּלְאַיִהֵל [וְיֹאחֵל]
שֵׁם עֶרְבִי | No Arab will pitch his tent there.

Isa 13:20 |
| 15. | וַיִּנְחֹשׁ | And he practiced sorcery (lit., he used a serpent).
2 Kgs 21:6 |
| 16. | כִּי־יִחַן קוֹלוֹ | Though he makes his voice (to be) charming ...
Prov 26:25 |
| 17. | הַשֹּׁחַד יַעֲוֶר פְּקָחִים | A bribe blinds those who see.
Exod 23:8 |
| 18. | וַיַּמְהֵר אַבְרָהָם הָאֵהָלָה | So Abraham hastened (lit., made [the going] quick) into the tent.
Gen 18:6 |
| 19. | יִדְעֶתָ הַשָּׁחַר מְקוֹמוֹ: | Have you ever guided the dawn to its place?
Job 38:12 <i>Qere</i> |
| 20. | לֹא־קָדְמוּ אִתְּכֶם | They did not come to meet you (lit., to effect a situation of being over against you).
Deut 23:5 |
| 21. | וְכָהֵן לִי: | He will serve me as a priest.
Exod 40:13 |
| 22. | וַיִּבֶם אֶתָּה | Fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law.
Gen 38:8 |
| 23. | כָּל־גּוֹיִם יִשְׁרְוּהוּ: | All nations will call him blessed.
Ps 72:17 |
| 24. | וְתִעַב תִּתְעַבְּנוּ | You shall utterly detest it (lit., regard it as an abomination).
Deut 7:26 |

h

In the numeral denominatives, the *Piel* seems to pertain to fractional numbers and the verbs behave as verbs of dividing or partitioning, for example, חָמֵשׁ *Piel* 'to take a fifth (as a tax)' ([Gen 41:34](#)), נָשַׁח *Piel* 'to divide into sixties' (perhaps in [Ezek 45:13](#)), שָׁלַח *Piel* 'to divide into thirds' ([Deut 19:3](#)). The last of these may also have the sense 'to do a third time' ([1 Kgs 18:34](#); cf. [1 Sam 20:19](#)).

i

To illustrate the frequentative aspect of *Piel* as over against *Qal* the case of עָשָׂר is useful.

He will take a tithe (*Qal*) of your grain

- 25a. וְזֶרְעֵיכֶם וְכִרְמֵיכֶם יֵעָשֶׂר and of your vintage.
[1 Sam 8:15](#); cf. v [17](#)
- 25b. אֶעֱשֶׂנָּה לְךָ: And of all that you give me, I will give a
 tenth (*Piel*) of it to you.
[Gen 28:22](#)

The difference in meaning here between the *Qal* and the *Piel* stems does not involve the contrast of 'to take a tithe' (*Qal*) and 'to give a tithe' (*Piel*), for that distinction cannot be carried through consistently. The *Piel* can also mean 'to take a tenth.'

- 25c. וְהֵם הַלְוִיִּם הַמְעֹשְׂרִים The Levites are the ones who collect
 בְּכָל עָרֵי עֲבֹדָתָנוּ: the tithe (*Piel*) in all the cities where we
 work.
[Neh 10:38](#)

Jenni explains the difference between the *Qal* and *Piel* as the difference between a single act (*Qal*) and multiple acts (*Piel*), that is, actualis versus resultative. In this case, such a view seems dubious.

24.5 Frequentative

a

There is a group of verbs that in the *Qal* are intransitive and denote physical movement or effort, voice projection, or expectation; the *Piel* of these denotes a frequentative aspect, either iterative over time or plural through space. Ryder finds about forty of these roots.⁵⁰ Whereas earlier grammarians wrongly built their theory of the stem's intensive meaning largely on the narrow base of this relatively small group, Jenni overreacts by minimizing the iterative meaning. He tries to explain these verbs in terms of the resultative *Piel*, either as a plural resultative (the *Piel* reflects a multiplicity of actions or objects; the corresponding *Qal* designates a single action or object) or as a definite

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resultative (the *Qal* designates an activity with no definite outcome or product; the *Piel* refers to a definite outcome or product). Jenni fails, however, to take adequate account of certain facts: these words are intransitive in the *Qal* and tend not to take an object in the *Piel*. Because of their distinctive lexical and syntactic features, we prefer with Goetze and Ryder to interpret them as denoting frequentative aspect in the *Piel*. If we suppose that the *Qal* is the unmarked form and the *Piel* the marked form, then we can say that the *Qal* means anything other than the frequentative.

b

One major group of these verbs includes verbs of movement or physical effort (## 1–2)

- 1a. וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו: And the two of them went (*Qal*)
 together.
[Gen 22:6](#)
- 1b. הָלְכוּ בְּלִי לְבוּשׁ They (the defrauded poor) go about
 (*Piel*) without clothes.⁵¹
[Job 24:10](#)
- 2a. כָּל-הַדּוֹלֵג עַל-הַמִּפְתָּן all who leap (*Qal*) over the threshold
[Zeph 1:9](#)
- 2b. הִנֵּה-זֶה בָּא מְדַלֵּג Here he comes leaping (*Piel*) over the
 עַל-הַהָרִים mountains.
[Cant 2:8](#)

Some verbs of vocal expression also present this profile.

- 3a. הֵן אֶצְעַק חָמָס Though I cry (*Qal*): "(I've been) wrong
 (ed) ... "
[Job 19:7](#)

- 3b. וְהוּא מִצַּעַק אָבִי אָבִי רֶכֶב
יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו
And he was crying out (*Piel*): "My father,
my father! The chariots and cavalry of
Israel!"
[2 Kgs 2:12](#)

With verbs of hoping and expecting the *Qal* expresses any kind of action other than the frequentative indicated by the *Piel*. Jenni explains ## 4a-b as involving a contrast of general hoping, without a goal (*Qal*) versus carrying the action forward to a definite goal (*Piel*); they might better be explained as frequentative action versus non-frequentative. Both stems are found in # 5.

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- 4a. וְקִוִּי יְהוָה
those who hope (*Qal*) in YHWH
[Isa 40:31](#)
- 4b. וַיִּקְוֶה לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲנָבִים
Then he looked for (*Piel*) it to produce
grapes.
[Isa 5:2](#)
5. וְלִכְן יִחַפֶּה יְהוָה לַחֲנֻנֶכֶם
וְלִכְן יִרְוֶם לְרַחֲמֵכֶם
כִּי־אֱלֹהֵי מִשְׁפָּט יְהוָה
אֲשֶׁר־י כָּל־חוֹכֵי לוֹ:
Therefore YHWH tarries (*Piel*) to be
gracious to you, and therefore he raises
himself that he might be merciful to you,
because YHWH is a God of justice.
Blessed are all who tarry (*Qal*) for him.
[Isa 30:18](#)

C

The *Piel* stem, especially its participle, is used with conspicuous frequency for designating professional activity and other actions practiced habitually.⁵² With אָרַב the *Qal* means 'to lie in wait,' while the *Piel* refers to a '(professional) ambusher, sniper.'⁵³

- 6a. וְעַתָּה קוּם לַיְלָה אַתָּה
וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה וְאַרְבֵּי
בְּשָׂדֵה:
Now then, during the night you and your
men come and lie in wait (*Qal*) in the
fields.
[Judg 9:32](#)
- 6b. וַיִּשְׁיִמּוּ לוֹ בַּעֲלֵי שָׂכָם
מֵאַרְבָּיִם עַל רִאשֵׁי הַהָרִים
In opposition to him the citizens of
Shechem set men on the hilltops as
ambushers (*Piel*).
[Judg 9:25](#)

Regarding נָאֵף 'to commit adultery,' Jenni comments: "The *Qal* (16 times) designates the individual, actual case of adultery ... In the *Piel* (15 times) a customary behavior with several different partners is almost always meant."⁵⁴ The *Qal* of כָּתַב means 'to write,' while the *Piel* describes the actions of a professional caste (## 7a-b).⁵⁵ The professional sense of the *Piel* is sometimes extended to roots which are transitive in the *Qal* (cf. ## 8a-b).

- 7a. וְאֲנִי כָתַב עַל־הַסֵּפֶר בְּדִי:
I wrote (*Qal*) on the scroll with ink.
[Jer 36:18](#)
- 7b. הוּא ... מְכַתְּבִים עֲמָל
כְּתָבוֹ:
Woe ... to the scribes (*Piel* participle)
who write out (decrees of) hard labor.
[Isa 10:1](#)
- 8a. וַיִּתְּפְרוּ עֲלֶיהָ תְּאֵנָה
They sewed (*Qal*) fig leaves.
[Gen 3:7](#)

- 8b. הוֹי לְמַתְפְּרוֹת כְּסָתוֹת Woe to the women who sew (*Piel*)
magic charms.
[Ezek 13:18](#)

24.6 Mixed Forms

a

The *Qal* and *Piel* can be confounded in various ways (24.3.1). *Pual* forms that lack *Piel* counterparts may well be *Qal* passive forms (22.6). Sometimes the *Piel* applies its factitive force to verbs attested not in the *Qal* but in the *Niphal*.

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- 1a. כְּפִיכֶם וְנִאֲלֹ בַדָּם Your hands are defiled (*Niphal*) with
blood.
[Isa 59:3](#)
- 1b. בְּמָה גִּאֲלֵנוּךְ How have we defiled (*Piel*) you?
[Mal 1:7](#)

Footnotes:

1. We have relied in this chapter on Ernst Jenni, *Das hebräische Piel: Syntaktisch-semasiologische Untersuchung einer Verbalform im Alten Testament* (Zurich: EVZ, 1968)—among major reviews of the book, note T. O. Lambdin, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (1969) 435–37; and J. F. A. Sawyer, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 14 (1969) 260–62—and on Stuart A. Ryder II, *The D-Stem in Western Semitic* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974). Other relevant papers by Jenni include "Factitiv [*Piel*] und Kausativ [*Hiphil*] von אָבַד 'zugrunde gehen,'" *Hebräische Wortforschung: Festschrift Walter Baumgartner* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967) 143–57; and the paper cited in n. 17.
2. See the general surveys given in GKC § 52f s / pp. 141–43; BL § 38d"-t" / pp. 290–93; Joüon § 52 / pp. 115–18; GB 2. 93–98 (§ 17); C. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 35–36; Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1908), 1. 508–10.
3. Moshe Greenberg makes a plausible virtue of necessity when he writes, "In the *piel*, the verbal idea of the *qal* is made more complex or given a special nuance"; *Introduction to Hebrew* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 43, cf. 58. Jacob Weingreen formulates the effect of the *Piel* on verbs of action or motion as "the active promotion of the state, condition or situation" or "being energetically or habitually engaged in the act" indicated by the *Qal*, and on stative verbs "the active promotion of the state, situation or condition" denoted by the *Qal*; see "The *Piel* in Biblical Hebrew: A Suggested New Concept," *Henoch* 5 (1980) 21–29.
4. GKC § 52f / p. 141.
5. Cf. V. Christian, "Die kausative Bedeutung des semitischen Steigerungstammes," *Miscellanea Orientalia dedicata Antonio Deimel* (*Analecta Orientalia* 12; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1935) 41–45. The Akkadian *iparras* form has also been cited as relevant to the medial lengthening; see 29.4d n. 67.
6. BL § 38t" / p. 293.
7. A Goetze, "The So-called Intensive of the Semitic Languages," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 62 (1942) 1–8, at 3.
8. The correlation of doubling and intensiveness is technically a matter of iconicity, in which the formal means is taken as an icon for or to stand for the semantic matter. There are iconic aspects to language, but they are not so straightforward as this correlation would be. See Roman Jakobson and Linda Waugh, *The Sound Shape of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1979); and M. O'Connor, "'Unanswerable the Knack of Tongues' The Linguistic Study of Verse," *Exceptional Language and Linguistics*, ed. L. K. Obler and L. Menn (New York: Academic Press, 1982) 143–68.
9. The first three of these forms are treated below (Chaps. 29–31); for the moment, it is sufficient to note that the labels attached to them are conventional and the glosses somewhat arbitrary.

10. W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 115. A factitive meaning for the Akkadian D stem is also recognized by (A. Ungnad) L. Matouš, *Grammatik des Akkadischen* (Munich: Beck, 1964) 74–75; K. K. Riemschneider, *Lehrbuch des Akkadischen* (Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopadie, 1969) 83; F. Rundgren, "Des Verbalpräfix *yu-* im Semitischen und die Entstehung der faktitiv-kausativen Bedeutung des D-Stammes," *Orientalia Suecana* 12 (1964) 99–114.

11. Jenni emphasizes the systematic character of the Hebrew stems; see 21.2.2q and contrast the views of Sperber cited there. Our hesitation in following Jenni entirely does not diminish our admiration of his goal.

12. Lambdin summarizes Jenni's philosophical argument in this way: "J[Jenni] begins by characterizing the difference between adjectival and verbal predication as adjectival: verbal:: subjective: objective:: synthetic: analytic. That is, in an adjectival predication, the adjective lexeme (or root) itself represents the subjective opinion of the speaker, while in the verbal predication the lexical substance is a *dalum* (objective) and only the modality of the verb reflects the speaker's role. Since ... the *piel* and *hiphil* are viewed respectively as the factitive/causative transforms of adjectival and verbal predication, and since, in regard to the subject, adjectival predication is accidental, while verbal predication is substantial or essential ... *piel* and *hiphil* verbs of the type under discussion should differ from one another by expressing accidental and substantial factivizations, respectively." Thus *Piel* > synthetic > accidental, while *Hiphil* > analytic > substantial. See *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (1969) 436.

13. Ryder, *D-Stem*, 97, 167.

14. Ryder, *D-Stem*, 97.

15. Some of Jenni's arguments are weak and speculative, but his is nonetheless a coherent and suggestive account. As Sawyer emphasizes, it is also a surprising account, for "until now we have been, to use Sapi's celebrated imagery, prisoners of our European language systems. We did not expect to find in Old Testament Hebrew grammar a set of fairly subtle distinctions, not available in our own language without the clumsy insertion of adverbial phrases." See *Journal of Semitic Studies* 14 (1969) 262. Similarly, T. N. D. Mettinger in an overview of studies on the verb evaluates Jenni's work as excellent, even if not convincing in every detail; see "The Hebrew Verb System," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 9 (1973) 68–84, at 69. F. Leemhuis supports Jenni's thesis in general and Ryder's investigation of the D stem in the Arabic of the Qur'an in particular: "On the whole [Ryder's] presentation ... appears as quite convincing"; *The D and H Stems in Koranic Arabic* (Publications of the Netherlands Institute of Archaeology and Arabic Studies in Cairo; Leiden: Brill, 1977) 7. Among the various dissenting voices are J. Blau, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976) 52, who quite pointedly retains the term intensive; W. T. Claassen, "On a Recent Proposal as to a Distinction between *Pi'el* and *Hiph'il*," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 1 (1971) 3–10, who focuses on Jenni's review of 'bd (see n. 1); and R. Degen, "Zur neueren hebräistischen Forschung," *Die Welt des Orients* 6 (1971) 47–79.

16. Paraphrased and in part translated from Jenni, *Pi'el*, 275.

17. Cf. Jenni's paper, "Zur Funktion der reflexiv-passiven Stammformen im Biblisch-Hebräischen," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1973), 4. 61–70.

18. Jenni, *Pi'el*, 20–21, gives the list. Ryder's comparable groups are *Piel* transformative:: *Qal* curative stative (39 verbs; e.g., *šālēm* 'to be whole,' *šillēm* 'to make whole') and *Piel* transformative:: *Qal* perfect stative (52 verbs; e.g., *lāmad* 'to learn,' *limmed* 'to teach'); see *D-Stem*, 94. 97–104.

19. Ryder, *D-Stem*, 107.

20. Ryder, *D-Stem*, 98.

21. See Jenni, "Funktion der reflexiv-passiven Stammformen." 66.

22. Note also *hyy Qal* 'to live, be alive' (e.g., [Deut 8:3](#)) and *Piel* 'to keep alive' (e.g., [Gen 12:12](#)).

23. See, e.g., Baruch A. Levine, "The Language of Holiness," *Backgrounds for the Bible*, ed. M. O'Connor and D. N. Freedman (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 241–55.

24. See D. R. Hillers, "Delocutive Verbs in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967) 320–24. For a *Qal*: *Hiphil* pair, see *šdq Qal* (e.g., [Job 10:15](#)) and delocutive *Hiphil* ([Deut 25:1](#), [Prov 17:15](#)).

25. Here are some further examples of *Piel* verbs which are est(imative), deloc(utive), and fact(itive), drawn from Jenni's lists: *gdI* mostly fact. 'to make greet,' rarefy deloc. 'to praise' and est. 'to esteem (as) great'; *dmy* deloc.-est. 'to liken, compare,' est. 'to hold as suitable, devise, imagine'; *dšn* deloc.-est. 'to consider (an offering) fat (enough, i.e., acceptable),' also fact. 'to make fat, anoint' and privative (see 24.4f) 'to clear of fat drippings': *thr* deloc. 'to declare purely,' rarely fact.; *tm* deloc. 'to declare impure' ([Lev 13:3–59](#), [20:25](#)), otherwise fact.; *kbd* est.

'to honor (i.e., regard as heavy),' rarefy fact.; nbl only est. 'to regard as contemptible'; nqy deloc.-est. 'to declare/regard as guiltless'; qdš deloc. 'to declare holy,' est. 'to hold as holy,' fact. 'to consecrate'; šdq usually deloc. 'to hold as right(eous)'; qll only deloc. 'to revile as trifling.' It is in connection with delocutive and estimative uses that the proposals of E. Rubinstein go astray; see "Adjectival Verbs in Biblical Hebrew," *Israel Oriental Studies* 9 (1979) 55–76.

26. On the epithets of Judah and Israel, see W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 59, 116.

27. Jenni, *Piel*, 72–74.

28. Jenni, *Piel*, 123–26. Ryder's somewhat different classification, allowing for comparative, evidence (*D-Stem*, 108–18), yields different counts. Some *Piel* verbs without *Qal* correspondents do find simple-stem cognates in Arabic, e.g., ʔzn *Piel* 'to weigh' ([Qoh 12:9](#)), cf. Arabic wazana 'to weigh'; and gšš *Piel* 'to touch' ([Isa 59:10](#)), cf. Arabic jassa 'to handle.' Cf. Ryder, *D-Stem*, 108, 110.

29. Jenni, *Piel*, 125; Ryder, *D-Stem*, 122.

30. This relationship would also be iconic; see n. 8. 116.

31. Von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*.

32. Jenni, *Piel*, 135–40.

33. GB 2.93 (§ 17a).

34. Jenni, *Piel*, 137. Note ʔzr 'to arm, gird,' *Qal* of humans (reflexive?, passive?) in [1 Sam 2:4](#), *Piel* of God in [Ps 18:33](#).

35. Jenni, *Piel*, 143. Contrast škh *Qal* in [Ps 44:25](#), where YHWH forgets, and škh *Piel* in [Lam 2:6](#), where it cannot be YHWH who forgets; so Ryder, *D-Stem*, 117.

36. It may be that the argument would be better reformulated to claim, e.g., that the *Piel* cannot represent isolated events. See 24.5.

37. For more biting, see [Num 21:6–9](#). Cf. Jenni, *Piel*, 148.

38. It is, however, possible that it is metaphorical; see Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 1. 292.

39. Jenni argues, too, for a definite resultative, his chief example being *dbr* (*Qal* 41 times, *Piel* 1,081 times); the *Qal*, he alleges, means 'to speak (in general)' and the *Piel* 'to say (something in particular).' Since *dbr Qal* is confined to the participle (39 times) and the infinitive (2 times), other factors seem to be involved. Other definite resultative verbs are those of hoping (see 24.5). See Jenni, *Piel*, 164–73.

40. English has tremendous flexibility in this respect, and this fact, combined with its simple morphology, makes comparison with Hebrew potentially misleading, especially in relation to the issue of productivity.

41. Jenni, *Piel*, 264–67; Ryder, *D-Stem*, 128–30.

42. Jenni, *Piel*, 265.

43. See both Jenni, *Piel*, 265, and the discussion of other denominative verbs here.

44. Jenni, *Piel*, 270.

45. For the evidence for this word, see Jenni, *Piel*, 270.

46. Jenni, *Piel*, 273.

47. No noun *sql* 'stone' is attested, but a privative *Piel* 'to clear of stonest' is found in [Isa 5:2](#).

48. Hebrew does not distinguish 'fat' and 'fat drippings' (the phrase 'fatty ashes,' used in handbooks, is hardly English); for the delocutive of *dšn*, see 24.2g n. 25.

49. The verb is only here used of persons; elsewhere it is used of things.

50. Ryder, *D-Stem*. 130–35.

51. See Jenni, *Piel*, 151–56, on *hlk* and related verbs.

52. Cf. 5.3b, 25.3d; Jenni, *Piel*, 156–64.

53. Jenni, *Piel*, 160.

54. Jenni, *Piel*, 161.

55. Some *Qa/* participles do have a (quasi-)professional sense, e.g., šōpēt, kōhēn. The latter is a common West Semitic term for priest.

25 Pual Stem

[25.1 Form and Meaning](#)

[25.2 Factitive](#)

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25.1 Form and Meaning

a

The *Piel* and *Pual* stems stand in active : passive opposition; essentially, the object of a *Piel* would serve as the subject of a corresponding *Pual*.¹ This straightforward relation is entirely distinct from the *Qal* : *Niphal* relation (23.1), but it is comparable to the *Qal* : passive *Qal* relation.

Qal : passive *Qal*
Piel : *Pual*

This analogy is obscured by the fact that many passive *Qal* forms are pointed in the MT as *Pual* (22.6). In this chapter we are concerned with the forms that properly belong to the *Pual* stem.

b

These forms as a whole present one striking contrast to the stems so far studied: the

Pual is a strongly participial stem. Ernst Jenni reviews the statistics.

The *Niphal* shows a remarkably high rate of participles in comparison to the *Qal*. Almost 20% of all *Niphal* forms are participles; infinitives make up 5%. The situation of the *Pual* is entirely different. Since the foregrounded interest is not in an event that happens to the subject but rather in a condition attained by it, the participle has a good chance of being used frequently. In the *Pual* the participle ("a thing or person for/in which a new condition has been attained") comprises no less than 40% of all *Pual* forms ... That this is no mere coincidence is shown by a crosscheck of the infinitive as *nomen actionis*. Because the infinitive would mean the act of "being put in

a condition" and because the *Pual* is not concerned with an act but an attained condition, the *Pual* infinitive is essentially a contradiction.²

This participial quality of the *Pual* reflects its structure as an essentially adjectival causation predicate (like the *Piel*) and as passive. This structure is apparent even in nonparticipial uses. *Qal* intransitive גָּדַל in the *Pual* גָּדַל means 'was made [causation]: to be great [adjective]' > 'was made grown (i.e., brought up)'; *Qal* transitive בָּקַשׁ in the *Pual* בָּקַשׁ means 'was made: to be sought' > 'was (made) sought.' The presentation of the *Pual* essentially follows the format of the *Piel* chapter. It is important to note that the *Piel* frequentative verbs (of physical motion, expectation, and vocal projection) are largely lacking, consistent with the character of the *Pual*.³ The frequent use of the *Piel* participle to form an agent noun is also lacking.

25.2 Factitive

a

Qal intransitive verbs form *Pual* factitives. Such a *Pual* may reflect a sensible causation and thus be a "real" factitive.⁴

1.

וּבִשַׁל מִבֶּשֶׁל בְּמֵי־

or boiled (meat) (adjective) boiled (*Pual*
 participle; lit., which was made to be
 boiled) in water

[Exod 12:9](#)

2. גַּם־אַתָּה חֲלִיתָ כְּמוֹנוֹ You have been made as weak as we are.

[Isa 14:10](#)**b**

A psychological or linguistic causation is at the base of an estimative or delocutive *Pual*.

3. אֶת־אֶרֶץ לֹא מֻטְהָרָה You are a land that has not been pronounced clean.⁵
[Ezek 22:24](#)
4. וְהַחֹטֵא בֶן־מֵאָה שָׁנָה יִקְלָל־: And he who fails to reach one hundred years will be declared (or, regarded as) cursed.
[Isa 65:20](#)

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25.3 Resultative**a**

The *Qal* transitive verbs are associated with resultative uses of the *Pual*.⁶ The simple resultative may be illustrated with חָלַק and other verbs.

1. וְאֶדְמָתְךָ בְּחֶבֶל תִּחְלַק And your land will be apportioned by the measuring line.
[Amos 7:17](#)
2. כִּי לֹא פָרַשׁ מִה־יַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ: What should be done to him had not been distinctly declared.
[Num 15:34](#)
3. שְׂמֵרִים מִזְקָקִים filtered wine
[Isa 25:6](#)
4. תִּמְנוּ חֶפֶשׁ מִחֶפֶשׁ We have devised a perfect (lit., searched out) plan.
[Ps 64:7](#)
5. יִזְרָה־עַל־נֹוֹהוּ גִפְרִית: Burning sulphur has been scattered over his dwelling.⁷
[Job 18:15](#)

b

The irreal resultative is also expressed with the *Pual*. In the *Pual* אָכַל is always used figuratively (# 6); the figurative use of בָּלַע is concentrated in the *Piel* and *Pual* (# 7). In the *Piel* נָקַר may be literal ([Judg 16:21](#)) or metaphorical ([Job 30:17](#)); its one occurrence in the *Pual* is figurative (# 8).

6. וְהִנֵּה הַסֵּנָה בָּעֵר בָּאֵשׁ וְהַסֵּנָה אֵינָנוּ אֹכֵל־: Though the bush was on fire, it was not consumed.
[Exod 3:2](#)
7. פֶּן יִבְלַע לַמֶּלֶךְ lest the king be destroyed (lit., lest it be made swallowed up with reference to the king)⁸
[2 Sam 17:16](#)
8. וְאֶל־מִקְבֵּת בּוֹר נִקְרְתָם: to the quarry from which you were hewn
[Isa 51:1](#)

If the implicit action is indirect ('He built a bridge' ~ 'He had a bridge built'), the *Pual* may be used.

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9. כְּהָרַג הָרַגְיו הָרַג: Has he been slain like the slaying of his people who were slain?
[Isa 27:7](#)
10. עַלְלֵיהֶם יִרְטָשׁוּ וְהָרִיזוּ יִבְקָעוּ: Their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open.
[Hos 14:1](#)
11. וְחֶלֶק שְׁלָלְךָ בְּקֶרְבְּךָ: And your plunder will be apportioned in your midst.
[Zech 14:1](#)

c

The plural resultative of *Qal* intransitive is, on Jenni's view, found in the *Pual* as well as the *Piel*: as with the *Piel*, the *Pual* of certain roots refers to a plurality of events, where the *Qal* refers to one such event. In the *Pual* such verbs have multiple subjects.⁹ In a few cases Jenni's examples are plausible; we discuss one other relevant verb as a frequentative (25.5a).

12. שָׁמָּה קָבַר אַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried.
[Gen 25:10](#)
13. בָּהֲנוֹת יָדֵיהֶם וּרְגְלֵיהֶם מִקְצָצִים: their thumbs and big toes hacked off
[Judg 1:7](#)
14. שִׁקְמִים גִּדְּעוּ: The fig trees have been felled.
[Isa 9:9](#)

d

The *Pual*, in contrast to the *Piel*, is not often used to designate professional activity (cf. 5.3b). But like its counterpart the *Pual* is used extensively with the technical vocabulary of building and crafts. Concerning this use of the *Piel* Jenni notes: "Also here the resultative is the starting point for the meaning which is transformed by professional activity, an activity which is performed successively and, for the most part, on numerous objects."¹⁰ Such words listed by Jenni as occurring frequently in the *Piel* occur with relatively high frequency in the *Pual* stem as well.

15. וְחֶבֶר: And it (the *ephod*) will be made fast.
[Exod 28:7](#)
16. כָּל-עֲמֻדֵי הַחֲצָר סָבִיב מִחֲשָׁקִים כָּסֶף: All the posts around the courtyard are to be bound with silver.
[Exod 27:17](#)
17. עַל-אַרְבַּעַ עֲמֻדֵי שִׁטִּים מִצָּפִים זָהָב: upon four posts of acacia wood which are overlaid with gold
[Exod 26:32](#)
18. כָּסֶף מְרַקָּע מִתַּרְשִׁישׁ יֹבֵא: Hammered (*Pual*) silver is brought up (*Hophal*) from Tarshish.
[Jer 10:9](#)

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25.4 Denominative

a

The denominative *Pual* verbs are of the same types as corresponding *Piels*. Substantives (e.g., יֶשֶׁן 'fat' and the unattested סָקֶל 'stone'), as well as adjectives (e.g., חָכָם 'skilled'), form "real" factitive Puals.

1. וַעֲפָרֶם מִחֶלֶב יִדְשֹׁן: And their dust will be saturated (lit., made fat) with fat.
[Isa 34:7](#)
2. סָקֶל נָבוֹת Naboth has been stoned.¹¹
[1 Kgs 21:14](#)
3. חוֹבֵר חֲבָרִים מִחֶכֶם: an expert (lit., one instructed) caster of spells
[Ps 58:6](#)

b

The productive *Pual* may point to a result (## 4–5) or to an "object" already in existence (זֶמֶן 'appointed time'; # 6). The *Pual* of בָּרַךְ (בְּרָכִים 'knees') may be processual (# 7) or delocutive (# 8; cf. # 9).¹²

4. לֹא גִשְׁמָה It has not been rained on.¹³
[Ezek 22:24](#) emended
5. וַעֲשִׂיתָ אֹתָהּ קְטֹרֶת ... מִמֶּלַח You shall make it as incense ... seasoned with salt.
[Exod 30:35](#)
6. לְעֵתִים מְזֻמָּנִים at the times which have been appointed
[Ezra 10:14](#)
7. וַעֲתָה הוּאֵל וּבָרַךְ אֶת־בֵּית עֲבָדְךָ ... וּמְבָרְכְךָ יְבָרַךְ בֵּית־עֲבָדְךָ לְעוֹלָם: Now be pleased to bless (*Piel*) the house of your servant ... and with your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed (*Pual*) forever.
[2 Sam 7:29](#)
8. יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבָרָךְ: Blessed be the name of YHWH.
[Job 1:21](#)
9. יֵאָשֵׁר בְּאֶרֶץ He will be called blessed in the land.
[Ps 41:3](#)

c

The numerical *Pual* is a specialized multiplicative in some uses from שָׁלַשׁ *Pual*, yielding the sense 'to be three years old.'

10. קָחָה לִי עֵגְלָה מְשֻׁלָּשֶׁת וְעִז מְשֻׁלָּשֶׁת וְאַיִל מְשֻׁלָּשׁ Fetch me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three (years old).
[Gen 15:9](#)

As the passive of the *Piel* 'to do three times,' the *Pual* means 'being done three times, having been done three times.'

11. החוט המשלש a three-fold cord
[Qoh 4:12](#)
12. משלשות הנה These are three-storied chambers.
[Ezek 42:6](#)

25.5 Frequentative and Mixed Forms

a

The only intransitive *Piel* with a *Pual* counterpart is רָנַן 'to give a ringing shout.' Consider this cento of examples.

- 1a. צִהְלִי וְרָנִי Cry aloud and give a shout of joy (*Qal*).
[Isa 12:6](#)
- 1b. הִקְיִצּוּ וְרָנְנוּ Wake up and give shouts of joy (*Piel*).
[Isa 26:19](#)
- 1c. לֹא־יִרְנֶן לֹא יִרְעֶן Shouts of joy shall not be given' (*Pual*),
no shouting (*Polar*).
[Isa 16:10](#)

b

There is one case of a *Pual* which seems to be reflexive rather than passive, from עָנָה, and so has apparently been confounded with *Hithpael*.¹⁴

2. כִּי כָל־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תַעֲנֶה anyone who does not afflict himself
[Lev 23:29](#)

Footnotes:

1. See, in addition to the references given above for the *Piel*, Klaus Beyer, *Althebräische Grammatik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1969) 56.
2. Ernst Jenni, "Zur Funktion der reflexiv-passiven Stammformen im Biblisch-Hebräischen," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1973), 4. 61–70, at 66. The only example Jenni allows of a *Pual* infinitive (construct) is in [Ps 132:1](#), which he regards as questionable; GKC § 52r / p. 143 adds one infinitive absolute, in [Gen 40:15](#).
3. See S. A. Ryder II, *The D-Stem in Western Semitic* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 130–33, for the list of *Piel* intransitives; the only verb on the list that is used in the passive is wrongly given there: נָפַח ([Job 20:26](#)).
4. Other examples include תִּמַּ' *Pual* 'to be defiled' ([Ezek 4:14](#), participle), יָשַׁר *Pual* 'to be evened out (in hammering)' ([1 Kgs 6:35](#), participle), כִּבֵּד *Pual* 'to be honored' ([Prov 13:18](#), [27:18](#); estimative in [Isa 58:13](#)), כִּלַּי *Pual* 'to be completed' ([Gen 2:1](#), [Ps 72:20](#)), לִמַּד *Pual* 'to be instructed' ([Jer 31:18](#), etc.), מִלַּ' *Pual* 'to be set with (of jewels)' ([Cant 5:14](#), participle), הִנְיָ *Pual* 'to be humbled' ([Isa 53:4](#), participle; for the apparent reflexive elsewhere, see 25.5b), פָּתַי *Pual* 'to be seduced (seducible)' ([Jer 20:10](#), etc.). Note also בִּרַּ' *Pual* in [Jer 36:22](#), where the subject is marked with יָ (cf. 23.2.2e).
5. The context suggests that the LXX reading brechomenē, from brechō 'to (get) wet, steep (in water),' reflecting a *Pual* of מָטַר, may be correct.
6. Note the context of the *Pual* forms of נָטַשׁ and קָרַת in [Judg 6:28](#)—the setting is clearly the morning after and the topic is the present state of the ravaged cultic equipment. Cf. Jenni, "Funktion der reflexiv-passiven Stammformen," 68.
7. Here זָרַי is not metaphorical, though the *Piel* is (e.g., [1 Kgs 14:15](#), [Ps 139:3](#)).
8. See 22.7 on the impersonal construction.

9. Jenni's notion of a definitive resultative is unlikely; his chief examples are *dbr* in [Ps 87:3](#) and [Cant 8:8](#).
10. E. Jenni, *Das hebräische Piʿel* (Zurich: EVZ, 1968) 163. The texts not surprisingly refer to religious architecture or commerce.
11. Contrast privative *Piel* of *sql* 'to clear of stones' ([Isa 5:2](#); 24.4f n. 47).
12. For an estimative case, see the conjectured *metoʿab* in [Isa 49:7](#).
13. Read so, against the MT, which has *gušmāh* (he with mappiq), as if 'its rain, rain for it' (< *gōšem?*, other wise unknown); on the first half of the verse, see n. 5. On the emendation here, see C. Rabin, "Lexical Emendation in Biblical Research," *Fucus: A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman*, ed. Y. L. Arbeitman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1988) 379–418, at 399; Rabin favors retention of the MT.
14. See n. 4. It may be that the construction is better taken (as C. John Collins suggests to us) in association with the *Piel* idiom *ʿinnā ʾet-hannépeš* 'to humble oneself (by fasting),' as in [Lev 16:29](#), [31](#).

26 Hithpael Stem

26.1 Form and Meaning

1.1 Morphological Diversity

1.2 Comparative Semitic Proposals

1.3 Distribution

26.2 Double-Status Use

26.3 Passive Use, Passive Forms

26.4 Denominative Use

26.1 Form and Meaning

26.1.1 Morphological Diversity

a

There is a large group of Semitic verbal stems using an infixed or prefixed *t*,¹ and this group is represented in Hebrew chiefly by the *Hithpael* or *tD* stem, which serves primarily as the double-status (reflexive-reciprocal) counterpart of the *Piel* and secondarily as a passive form. So many morphological and semantic complexities attend the *Hithpael* that some scholars have suggested that the stem is the result of the convergence of a number of minor stems. We argue that the stem exhibits a basic unity.

b

Certain features of the stem result from the prefixed *t*; these are not irregularities but merely the effects of some relatively rare rules of Hebrew phonology. If the root begins with a sibilant, the *t* and the sibilant metathesize (## 1–17).² If the sibilant

is emphatic (i.e., **צ**), the metathesis is accompanied by emphatic assimilation of the *t* (**צ**; ## 18–19). If the root begins with a dental stop, the prefix *t* assimilates to it (**ד**; **ד**; of course, **ד**; ## 20–25).³

	Root	Hithpael	
1.	סבל	יִסְתַּבֵּל	Qoh 12:5
2.	סלל	מִסְתַּלֵּל	Exod 9:17
3.	ספח	הִסְתַּפַּח	1 Sam 26:19
4.	סתר	מִסְתַּתֵּר	1 Sam 23:19 , etc.
5.	שכר	הִמְשַׁכֵּר	Hag 1:6 bis
6.	שרר	הִשְׁתַּרֵּר	Num 16:13 bis
7.	שבח	הִשְׁתַּבַּח	Ps 106:47 = 1 Chr 16:35
8.	שגע	מִשְׁתַּנֵּעַ	1 Sam 21:15 ; cf. v. 16
9.	שחח	תִּשְׁתַּחֲחִי	Ps 42:6 , etc.
10.	שכח	יִשְׁתַּכַּח	Qoh 8:10
11.	שכר	תִּשְׁתַּכְּרִין	1 Sam 1:14
12.	שלל	מִשְׁתַּלֵּל	Isa 59:15 , etc.

13.	שָׁמַם	יִשְׁתַּחֲמָם	Ps 143:4 , etc.
14.	שָׁמַר	אִשְׁתַּחֲמַר	2 Sam 22:24 = Ps 18:24 , etc.
15.	שָׁנָה	הִשְׁתַּנִּית	1 Kgs 14:2
16.	שָׁעָה	נִשְׁתַּעָּה	Isa 41:23 , etc.
17.	שָׁפַךְ	תִּשְׁתַּפֵּךְ	Job 30:16 , etc.
18.	צָדַק	נִצְטַדֵּק	Gen 44:16
19.	צִיד	הִצְטִידֵנוּ	Josh 9:12
20.	דִּבֶּר	מִדְּבַר	2 Sam 14:13 , etc.
21.	דָּדָה 4	אִדְדָה	Isa 38:15
22.	דָּמָה	אִדְמָה	Isa 14:14
23.	טָהַר	הִטְהַרְנוּ	Josh 22:17 , etc.
24.	טָמֵא	יִטְמָא	Lev 21:1 , etc.
25.	תָּמַם	תִּתְמָם	2 Sam 22:26 = Ps 18:26

C

The morphology of the *Hithpael* has certain complexities. Variant related stems include the rare Hithpāel without doubling (# 26) and the *Hippael* (## 27–28), both discussed in 21.2.3. The so-called Hippael forms are used alongside *Hithpael* forms (## 29–30) and may be considered examples of irregular assimilations, נִתְנַן (hardly surprising) and כִּתְכֹ. Only five roots are involved in the *Hippael*, three l-n and two l-k. There are two other apparent variant stems. The *Hithpoel* is found once (# 31); the *Hithpual* is frequent, usually in roots that either begin or end with a guttural (## 32–34, cf. ## 23, 35).⁵ Thus the *Hippael*, *Hithpoel*, and *Hithpoal* are unremarkable variants of the *Hithpael*, as are the *Hithpolel* and *Hithpalpel* of geminate roots (for *Hithpolel*, see ## 2, 9, 12, 13 above; for *Hithpalpel*, see ## 36–39).

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26.	פָּקַד	יִתְפַּקֵּד	Judg 21:9 , etc.
27.	נָבֵא	הִנְבִּיאָתִי	Ezek 37:10 , etc.
28.	כָּסָה	תִּכְסֶּה	Prov 26:26 , etc.
29.	נָבֵא	הִתְנַבִּיתָ	1 Sam 10:6 , etc.
30.	כָּסָה	יִתְכַּסֵּו	Isa 59:6 , etc.
31.	גָּעַשׁ	הִתְגַּעֲשׂוּ	Jer 25:16 , etc.
32.	אָפַק	הִתְאַפֵּק	Gen 43:31 , etc.
33.	אָנַף	הִתְאַנֵּף	Deut 1:37 , etc.
34.	חָכַם	תִּתְחַכֵּם	Qoh 7:16 , etc.
35.	פָּלָא	תִּתְפַּלֵּא	Job 10:16
36.	מָרַר	יִתְמַרְמַר	Dan 11:11 ; cf. 8:7
37.	שָׁעַע	אִשְׁתַּעֲשַׁע	Ps 119:16 ; cf. v. 47 ⁶
38.	שָׁקַק	יִשְׁתַּקְשֶׁקוּן	Nah 2:5

39. תעע מתעתעים 2 Chr 36:16

d

These variant guises of *Hithpael* are unremarkable,⁷ or they would be so except for further complexities. Although the *Hithpael* is associated with the *Piel*, some *Hithpael* forms have no counterpart in the *Piel* but do find one in the *Qal* or *Hiphil* stems: thus הִתְנַחֵם 'to present oneself voluntarily' matches נָחַם *Qal* 'to urge on,' הִתְאַבֵּל 'to observe mourning rites' matches אָבַל *Qal* 'to mourn,' etc. Second, some verbs in the *Hithpael* do not have a sense related to the primary reflexive meaning of the *Hithpael*. For example, הִתְוַדָּה 'to confess,' whose counterpart is attested only in the *Hiphil* יָדָה 'to acknowledge,' does not readily display itself as a reflexive counterpart to a *Piel* stem.⁸ The presence of passive *Hithpael*-like forms, the *Hothpael*, further compounds the problem (26.3b).

26.1.2 Comparative Semitic Proposals

a

Partially in response to this diversity and partially by reasoning analogically from the many *t*-prefixed and -infixes in the other Semitic languages, some scholars have come to regard the *Hithpael* stem not as an original morphological unity with one function in the stem system, but as a composite of heterogeneous stems which in the course of time fell together into one common stem. These earlier stems for the most part cannot be recognized formally but must be uncovered by their atypical meanings. E. A. Speiser argued this view:

The Hithpa'el ... combines several independent *t*-stems, their merger being due on the one hand to the successful competition on the part of the Nif'al and the Hof'al, and on the other hand to specific phonologic and morphologic circumstances ...

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[There is] a residue of Hebrew *t*-forms in which the function of the infix can hardly be reflexive, middle, or reciprocal. Most of these are immediately betrayed as atypical by the fact that the corresponding stems without a *t*-morpheme—in the *Qal* or the *Pi'el*, as the case may be—appear to perform the same duty as the *t*-forms.⁹

b

By comparing some of these atypical uses of the *Hithpael* stem with the *t*-prefixed stems in the cognate Semitic languages, especially Akkadian, Speiser (and Bruno Dombrowski independently)¹⁰ detects a curative-iterative *t* stem homonymous with the reflexive *t* stem. Such a stem is represented in Akkadian by a *tan* infix (Gtn, Dtn, etc.).¹¹ In Hebrew it would tend to merge with the "normal" *Hithpael* stem.¹² Speiser cites these illustrations with the shared root הָלַךְ /alāku 'to go' in its various meanings (the Akkadian forms are Gtn stems, and the Hebrew forms are *Hithpael*).¹³

(i) in the meaning 'to walk about'

Akk.: [Lord,] wanderer in the night (muttallik muši)

Heb.: [God] walking in the garden (mithallēk) toward the cool of the day ([Gen 3:8](#)) (ii) in the meaning 'to wander (aimlessly)'

Akk.: [chariots with their riderless horses] wandered to and fro (ittanallakā mithāriš utirra)

Heb.: [from roaming over the earth] and wandering on it to and fro (ūmēhithallēk bāh) ([Job 1:7](#), [2:2](#)) (iii) in the meaning 'to walk with, commune'

Akk.: [If he rejected sin,] his god will walk with him (ilšu ittišu ittanallak)

Heb.: And Enoch walked with God (wayyithallēk ḥānōk'et-hā'ēlōhīm) ([Gen 5:22](#), [24](#); cf. [Gen 6:9](#))

Speiser supports his theory with three arguments. First, the comparative argument that the other Semitic languages have more than one *t* form. Second, a morphological argument that the traditional vocalization still reflects vestiges of a *Qal t* stem in הִתְפַּקְדָּה ([Judg 20:15](#)). Third, a semantic argument that a group of Hebrew *Hithpael* forms has a

distinctive aspectual sense. Thus, Speiser argues, some *Hithpael* forms should be treated as if they were *tn* (or *tan*) forms.¹⁴ According to this view one should translate these forms as iterative or curative.

1. וַיִּתְנַעֲשׂוּ וְלֹא יוֹכֵלִין Although (its waves) batter continuously,
they cannot prevail.
[Jer 5:22](#)
2. וְהָאִישׁ מִשְׁתַּאֵה לָּהּ The man (Eliezer) gazed fixedly at her
(Rebekah).
[Gen 24:21](#)

Speiser assigned to his *tn* curative stem הָלַךְ 'to move about,' נָחַל 'to inherit,' עָלַל 'to act (often adversely),' עָטַף 'to grow/be weak, feint,' and שָׂאָה, and הָשַׁע 'to gaze,' because these verbs show "no trace of the ordinary uses of the [Hebrew] *t*-stems." Speiser implies that he disallows Goetze's notion of a frequentative use of the *Piel* (24.5) on the grounds that only *tD* stems like the *Hithpael* can show this meaning. In fact, the frequentative *Piel* could be taken as indirect support for Speiser's view, in that it allows for more diversity within a stem than, say, Ernst Jenni would (24.1h).

c

Not all of Speiser's nine roots need be construed as iterative. It is difficult to construct a grammar on the basis of apparent meaning, and the verbs assigned by Speiser to this stem may only seem not to fit the typical meaning of the *Hithpael*. Curiously, the "non-reflexive" use is presented, in one linguistically naive description, as the most frequent use of the stem—the typical use! A. F. Bean came to this erroneous conclusion by analyzing the functions of the stem in a purely "descriptive way," apparently unaware that he described his sample according to the structures of the English language; he draws the conclusion that most of the occurrences of the *Hithpael* have a "simple, non-specific meaning," by which he means that they behave like fientive verbs in the *Qal* or *Piel* stems.¹⁵ Bean includes in his lists of *Hithpael* verbs with "simple" senses פָּלַל 'pray' and נִבֵּא 'prophesy'.¹⁶ Speiser, however, excludes these from his list of "atypical" *Hithpael*s because he realizes that in Hebrew they describe reflexive actions: פָּלַל *Hithpael* means 'to seek a mediation for oneself' with a true reflexive force,¹⁷ and נִבֵּא *Hithpael* means 'to appear/conduct oneself as a prophet,' again a typical *Hithpael* reflexive notion. In short, although 'pray' and 'prophesy' from the English perspective do not seem to have a reflexive force, yet reflection discloses that they do.

d

On balance, the *Hithpael* probably denotes iterative or frequentative aspect with הָלַךְ, נָחַל, עָטַף, and שָׂאָה and הָשַׁע. These roots show no *t*-stem sense in the *Hithpael* and have *Qal* rather than *Piel* as a correspondent to the *Hithpael*. The verb הָלַךְ may be

judged to present special problems; it is even possible that the *Hithpael* of this root is an "Akkadianism" borrowed into Hebrew.¹⁸

26.1.3 Distribution

a

There are over 825 occurrences of the *Hithpael*, involving 175 roots, many of them used only once.¹⁹ Bean's study offers some observations on the sporadic use of the stem.²⁰ He shows that attempts at explaining this spotty use by geographical, form-critical, or semantic factors are nugatory.²¹

b

26.2 Double-Status Use

The *Hithpael* is used primarily as the double-status (reflexive/reciprocal) counterpart of the *Piel* stem. The object of causation in the *Piel* is the subject of the *Hithpael* and transforms itself/is transformed into the effected state signified by the root. Such meanings harmonize both with its form (t prefix + *Piel*) and its contextual use.

In the analysis given below we further refine the reflexive use into direct reflexive, indirect reflexive, benefactive reflexive, and estimative-declarative reflexive. In the illustrations given below for these varying usages it should be borne in mind that although we have rendered the verbs into idiomatic English, in fact, in addition to its reflexive (or reciprocal or passive) force, the *Hithpael* is usually either factitive or resultative. Thus, for example, the verb in # 1 means 'make yourselves girded.'

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In the direct reflexive, the subject is also the direct object of the verbal notion.

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. | הִתְאַוְרוּ | Gird yourselves (for battle).
Isa 8:9 |
| 2. | לֹא תִתְנַקֵּם נַפְשִׁי: | Should not my soul avenge itself?
Jer 5:9 |
| 3. | וַאֲדֹנִיָּה ... מִתְנַשֵּׂא | Now Adonijah ... exalted himself.
1 Kgs 1:5 |
| 4. | הֲלוֹא דָוִד מְסֻתֵּר עִמָּנוּ | Is not David hiding (himself) with us?
1 Sam 23:19 |

In the indirect reflexive use the subject is also the indirect object of the action; often a direct object is expressed.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| 5. | וַיִּתְּפְּרוּ כָּל-הָעָם אֶת-נִזְמֵי
הַזָּהָב | And all the people took off (from
themselves) their gold earrings. |
| Exod 32:3 | | |
| 6. | וַיִּתְּפֹשֶׁט יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת-הַמְּעִיל | And Jonathan stripped off (from himself)
the robe. |
| 1 Sam 18:4 | | |

The benefactive reflexive refers to an action done on one's own behalf.²³

7. **וְהִתְפַּלְּלוּ וְהִתְחַנְּנוּ אֵלַיִךְ** They pray and implore you for favor (lit., make a mediation [by asking you] for themselves).

8. וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל בְּעֶדְךָ
And he will pray for you (lit., he will cause a mediation [by seeking or asking] for himself on your behalf).
[1 Kgs 8:33](#)
9. עַל-שְׂרָשֵׁי רַגְלִי תִתְחַקֶּה:
You put slave markings (for yourself) on the soles of my feet.
[Gen 20:7](#)
10. זֶה לַחֲמִנֵנוּ חֶם הַצִּטִּידוֹ
אֲתוֹ
This is our bread—it was hot—we packed it as provisions (for ourselves).²⁴
[Job 13:27](#)
[Josh 9:12](#)

f

The estimative-declarative reflexive is the counterpart to the *Piel*'s use to esteem someone as in a state or to declare someone as existing in a state; the *Hithpael* may

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denote esteeming or presenting oneself in a state, sometimes without regard to the question of truthfulness (## 12–13, 15?).

11. וְהִתְגַּדַּלְתִּי וְהִתְקַדְשִׁיתִי
וְנִודַעְתִּי לְעֵינֵי גוֹיִם רַבִּים
And I will show my greatness and display my holiness, and I will make myself known before the eyes of many nations.
[Ezek 38:23](#)
12. שָׁכַב עַל-מִשְׁכָּבְךָ וְהִתְחַל
Lie down on your bed and act/pretend to be sick.
[2 Sam 13:5](#)
13. עִישׁ מִתְעַשֵּׂר וְאִין כֹּל
There is a man who pretends to be rich, yet has nothing.
[Prov 13:7](#)
14. וַיִּתְעַבֵּר
And he showed himself angry.²⁵
[Ps 78:21](#)
15. וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ
מִתִּיהָדִים
And many of the peoples of the land pretended to be Jews.²⁶
[Esth 8:17](#)

g

When two or more subjects act in relationship to each other according to the notion expressed by the verbal root, the action is reciprocal. Although the *Hithpael* is used to designate such action, it is rare.

16. לָמָּה תִתְרָאוּ:
Why do you look on one another?
[Gen 42:1](#)
17. וְלֹא יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ:
And they felt no shame before each other.
[Gen 2:25](#)
18. וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת-הַקוֹל מִדָּבָר
אֱלֹיוֹ
He heard the voice (of someone) conversing with him.
[Num 7:89](#)

26.3 Passive Use, Passive Forms

a

The passive uses of the *Hithpael* may express either (a) the notion that the subject is transformed into a state by an unexpressed agent or (b) the notion that the subject transforms itself into such a state. Thus, # 1 can be taken as either (a) 'she is made/caused to be praised' (cf. the *Pual*) or (b) 'she makes herself such as to be praised' (cf. the benefactive *Hithpael*). The second view finds theoretical support in that it maintains the differences among the various stems; the first view is supported by the growing popularity of the *Hithpael* during the history of Biblical Hebrew.

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- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | הִיא הִתְהַלֵּל: | She is praised.
Prov 31:30 |
| 2. | כָּלִיל הַתְּקֵדָשׁ־חַג | as on the night when a holy festival is celebrated
Isa 30:29 |
| 3. | כָּלֶם הַתִּיחֲשׁוּ בִימֵי יוֹתָם | All these were registered in the days of Jotham. ²⁷
1 Chr 5:17 |
| 4. | וַיָּשָׁב לְהִתְרַפֵּא | And he returned to be healed.
2 Chr 22:6 |
| 5. | וַיִּשְׁתָּכַחוּ | And they are forgotten.
Qoh 8:10 |

As examples ## 3–5 suggest, the passive sense tends to be found in later biblical literature.

b

In the earlier literature there are a few *Hohtpael* forms.²⁸

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 6. | וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אַחֲרֵי הַכֶּבֶס
אֶת־הַנֶּגַע ... וְהָיָה כְּהָה
הַנֶּגַע אַחֲרֵי הַכֶּבֶס אֹתוֹ | The priest shall look after the diseased thing has been washed ... and if the disease is dim after it has been washed ... ²⁹
Lev 13:55–56 |
| 7. | הַטְּמְאָה | She has been defiled.
Deut 24:4 |
| 8. | חֶרֶב ... הִדְשָׁנָה מִחֶלֶב | The sword is gorged with fat.
Isa 34:6 |

Since the stem is found only in verse and technical priestly writing, it is hard to believe that it was common.

26.4 Denominative Use**a**

The *Hithpael* pattern with one of its more specific meanings is sometimes imposed on a nominal form. For example, the estimative-declarative nuance is attached to נָבִיא 'prophet' and אָנָּה 'anger,' yielding הִתְנַבֵּא 'to appear as a prophet' and הִתְאַנָּה 'to show oneself angry.'³⁰ A benefactive reflexive value is attached to צִיד 'provision, food' and so becomes הִצְטִיד 'to supply oneself with provisions' ([Josh 9:12](#)).

Footnotes:

1. Aramaic has three *t* stems (*Ethpeel*, related to *Peal* ~ Hebrew *Qal*; *Ethpaal*, related to *Pael* ~ Hebrew *Piel*;

Ettaphal, related to *Aphel*~ Hebrew *Hiphil*), all passive. Arabic has four (VIII Form, related to I Form ~ Hebrew *Qal*; V Form, cognate to *Hithpa'el*; and two others), all basically reflexive. See G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 15. Ugaritic has at least two *t* stems, Gt and tD (the latter similar to the *Hithpa'el*), and perhaps also an *št*; see *UT* § 9.32-33, 39. Hebrew preserves one clear *Qal* infixed-*t* (Gt) form, *mašfīn* in the expression *mašfīn beqīr* 'male, one who pisses on a wall' ([1 Sam 25:22](#), [34](#), etc.; six times total). This is in line with the fact that taboo words often have anomalous shapes.

2. There are no clear cases of the *Hithpa'el* of a l-z root; note *hizzakkū* in [Isa 1:16](#) and the discussion in William Chomsky, *David Kimhī's Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol)* (New York: Bloch, 1952) 94, 106. If the metathesis rule would lead to a sequence of dental stop + vowel + dental stop, it is usually blocked; thus the exceptional form *hitzōtānā* ([Jer 49:3](#)); contrast ## 4, 18 below. The metathesis rule is not entirely operative in Qumran Hebrew; see E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 55–56. The *š* + *t* metathesis is attested in Ugaritic for a form of the root *šl* (not used in *Hithpa'el* in Hebrew); see John Huehnergard, "A Dt Stem in Ugaritic?" *Ugarit-Forschungen* 17 (1985) 402.

In the lists below all occurrences are given unless etc. is added after the references.

3. These rules also apply to minor stem forms, e.g., # 42, 9, 12, 13.

4. The root shape *ddy* (with the first two consonants identical) is anomalous.

5. Joüon § 52b / p. 119 refers rather to Aramaic influence; both factors may be relevant.

6. Forms ## 37–38 show metathesis.

7. So also Ernst Jenni, "Zur Funktion der reflexivpassiven Stammformen im Biblisch-Hebräischen," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1973), 4. 61–70, at 69.

8. On the "indistinct" *Hithpa'els* being older and more common in verse, see Paul Mazars, "Sens et usage de l'*hitpa'el* dans le Bible hébraïque," *Divinitas* 12 (1968) 35164, at 362–64 (on *hlk*, *hll*, *pll*, 358–60; others, 360–62).

9. E. A. Speiser, "The Durative *Hithpa'el*: A *tan* Form," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955) 118–21, rpt. in his *Oriental and Biblical Studies*, ed. J. J. Finkelstein and Moshe Greenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1967) 506–14, at 507, cited from the reprint.

10. Bruno W. W. Dombrowski, "Some Remarks on the Hebrew *Hithpa'el* and Inversative -*t*- in the Semitic Languages," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 21 (1962) 220–23. Dombrowski refers not to the Akkadian *tan* forms, but to the curative sense of *t* forms elsewhere in the Semitic languages. He argues that the *t* infix "defines what is radically different from thinking and speaking man what is other than himself" (p. 223); the import of this essentially undemonstrated view is unclear.

11. Akkadian regularly uses a G-Gt-Gtn and a D-DtDtn series, as well as an S-Stn and an N-Ntn series. "The basic function of the *tan* stems is that of an iterative to the relevant simple main stems (e.g., *aštanappar* 'I am continually writing'; ... *šitakkun* 'he is over and over supplied with'; ... *tuqtanattar* 'you are always perfumed' ... ; *uštanašbat* 'he is ever again causing to seize'; *ittanabriq* 'it continually flashes'). The meaning of the iterative stems is often habitual (e.g., ... *aktanarrabakkam* 'I am accustomed always to pray for you' ...)." See W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 119–20.

12. A certain amount of homonymy is found among the Akkadian verb forms; the G perfect (*iptaras*) corresponds to the Gt preterite (*imtaḥaš*), and the Gt present (*imtaḥaš*) to the Gtn preterite (*iptarras* < *iptanras*). See von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*, 12*–13*.

13. Speiser, "Durative *Hithpa'el*," 510–11; examples abridged and transliteration modified.

14. A similar view is taken by Samuel B. Wheeler, "The Infix -*t*- in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 3 (1970–71) 20–31; cf. A. M. L. Boyle, *Infix-t Forms in Biblical Hebrew* (Boston University Dissertation, 1969).

15. A. F. Bean, *A Phenomenological Study of the Hithpa'el Verbal Stem in the Hebrew Old Testament* (Louisville, Kentucky: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Dissertation, 1975) 139–47, 157–66, 172–73.

16. Bean, *Hithpa'el Verbal Stem*, 159.

17. E. A. Speiser, "The Stem PLL in Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82 (1963) 301–6.

18. Thomas O. Lambdin cites *hlk* as the only example of the iterative use of the *Hithpa'el*; see *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 250. For another explanation of *hlk Hithpa'el*, see S. A. Ryder II, *The D-Stem in Western Semitic* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 131. Note, too, that David Qimhi remarks that "the

reflexive sense ... is not always apparent, e.g., [הִתְהַלֵּךְ-נִי Gn 6:9](#) ... The sense being: he made himself worthy (by his good deeds) of walking with God." See Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, 93 and n. a. J. A. Soggin discusses *hlk Hithpael* in [1 Sam 23:13](#) in his *Old Testament and Oriental Studies* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1975) 235–36. An iterative sense may be proper to the root *šqq*, not cited by Speiser; compare the *Qal* in [Prov 28:15](#) and the *Hithpalpal* in [Nah 2:5](#). The other verbs cited by Speiser are probably doublestatus verbs: *ʾwh* and *nḥl* (benefactive), *ʾnp* (estimative declarative), *ʿll* (simple reflexive).

19. See SA/THAT. Bean, *Hithpaʿel Verbal Stem*, 29, 44–48, gives a slightly higher count.

20. Bean, *Hithpaʿel Verbal Stem*, 129.

21. Bean, *Hithpaʿel Verbal Stem*, 132.

22. Bean, *Hithpaʿel Verbal Stem*, 152. There are sixty three *Hithpael* forms in the Hebrew of Daniel; see Mazars, "Sens et usage de l'hitpael," 354.

23. See John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 374; and 1-1.2.10.

24. A denominative from *šáyid* 'provisions.'

25. This verb is a denominative from *ʿebrâ* 'arrogance, fury.'

26. This verb is a denominative from *yəhûdâ/yəhûdî*. Some scholars render the verb 'they converted to be Jews'; NJPS is appropriately ambiguous, 'And many of the people of the land professed to be Jews.'

27. A denominative from *yāḥaś* 'genealogical record.'

28. All the following forms show assimilation of the *t* prefix.

29. Note *ṯ* twice with the subject of a passive verb.

30. Cf. the examples from *ʿebrâ*, n. 25, and *yəhûdî*, n. 26. Cf. also n. 27.

27 Hiphil Stem

[27.1 Form and Meaning](#)

[27.2 Hiphils of Qal and Niphal Verbs Used Intransitively](#)

[27.3 Hiphils of Qal Verbs Used Transitively](#)

[27.4 Denominative and Isolated Hiphils](#)

[27.5 Modal Senses](#)

27.1 Form and Meaning

a

The stem system of the Hebrew verb works as a system, and the two major points of system stress and development involve the *Qal*: *Piel* contrast and the *Piel*: *Hiphil* contrast. These two contrasts are discussed in 21.2.2; we treat the relevant points more briefly here. Hebrew grammars traditionally represent the *Hiphil* stem as the causative of the *Qal* stem. Since they also teach that the *Piel* stem sometimes signifies this same notion, they cannot effectively distinguish the two stems; for some verbs at least they assert that there is no practical distinction. Thus, writes one grammar, "The meaning of Hiph'il is primarily, and even more frequently than in Pi'el, ... causative of *Qal* ... In some verbs, Pi'el and Hiph'il occur side by side in the same sense ..."¹ The use of both stems for the so-called "declarative sense" further exacerbates the confusion.

b

Ernst Jenni, beginning with the assumption that the two morphologically distinct stems have different semantic values, undertook an exhaustive study of the *Piel*, focusing on the *Piel* and *Hiphil* stems of the same verbal root in similar contexts. According to Jenni, the *Piel* signifies to bring about a state, and the *Hiphil*, to cause an event.² His distinction involves two contrasting ideas: state versus event, and to bring about versus to cause actively.³ According to Jenni, the differences between *Piel* and *Hiphil* can be understood by appealing to deep differences: the *Piel* is analogous to a nominal clause, the *Hiphil* to a verbal clause.

c

In our discussion of stative verbs we contrasted the Hebrew predicate-adjective construction with the stative construction (22.2.2). The former predicates a state or condition without any verb, that is, without marking for aspect, mood, Aktionsart. In the latter construction, by contrast, the root has all the markings of a verb. Thus, the predicate-adjective construction presents the subject's state or condition and the stative construction presents a situation involving a state or condition. Consider these pairs.

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| 1a. | גְּדֹלִים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה | Great (are) YHWH's works.
Ps 111:2 |
| 1b. | מִה־גְּדֹלָתוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יְהוָה | How great are your works, O YHWH!
Ps 92:6 |
| 2a. | יְאֹדְנִי חָכָם | My lord is wise.
2 Sam 14:20 |
| 2b. | לֹא חָכְמוּ | If they were wise ...
Deut 32:29 |

Jenni notes two fundamental differences between the nominal and verbal clauses:⁴

1. The nominal clauses [## 1a, 2a] represent a state, whereas the verbal clauses [## 1b, 2b] represent an event. The former is rigid, a non-activity; the latter an activity, a movement, a happening, a deed.
2. In the nominal clauses the speaker regards the predicate as a feature added to the subject (a synthetic

judgment); in the verbal sentences he regards the predicate as closely joined together with the subject and as established in one situation (an analytic judgment). The former expresses a subjective judgment about the subject; the latter an objective event.

English and most other European languages cannot formally distinguish the relevant notions because for both notions they must employ the verb 'to tee' (or the like) and allow contextual considerations to indicate whether 'tee' is a "dummy" verb with a predicate adjective or a true verb. Speakers of the English language can appreciate the difference between the notions of state and event by juxtaposing 'he is alive' with 'he lives,' though strictly speaking the former may usually be experienced as an event as well as the latter.

d

Though both stems involve causation, the factitive-resultative *Piel* generally has to do with the bringing about of a state or condition, and the causative *Hiphil* with the causing of an event. The *Piel* can often be translated by an adjectival construction: an adjective (with stative verbs), a passive past participle (with fientive verbs). Superficially considered, the relationship between subject and object in both *Piel* and *Hiphil* stems is often that of a transitive making or causing which proceeds from the subject to the object. The object, however, experiences this action quite differently in the two stems.

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With the *Piel*, the object is transposed passively into a new state or condition. Philosophers would refer to this transposition as "accidental" because the object makes no contribution to the verbal notion. With the *Hiphil*, however, the object participates in the event expressed by the verbal root. Let us illustrate the difference Jenni has plausibly established between the stems by juxtaposing cases of אָבַד, a root often used to support the view that the stems have the same sense.⁵

- 3a. וַתִּשְׁמַד אֶת כָּל-זֶרַע הַמִּמְלָכָה: She (Athaliah) made destroyed (*Piel*) the whole royal seed.
- 3b. וְהָאֲבִדְתִּי אֶת-הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַזֹּאת I (YHWH) will cause that soul to perish (*Hiphil*).
[2 Kgs 11:1](#)
[Lev 23:30](#)

Admittedly, for the sake of "good" English we would probably translate אָבַד in both instances 'destroy,' but in doing that we would gloss over a fundamental distinction in Hebrew. In the first example, the writer conceptualizes the object, the royal family, as "accidentally" transferred into the state of perdition, but in the second example, the lawgiver presents the object, that soul, as an actor in the event of perishing. Without the causative notion of the *Hiphil*, the sentence would read as a *Qal*, just as in:

- 3c. וְאֲבַדְתֶּם You will perish (*Qal*).
[Deut 11:17](#)

e

Whereas the *Piel* represents the subject as transposing an object into the state or condition corresponding to the notion expressed by the verbal root, the *Hiphil* represents the subject as causing an object to participate indirectly as a second subject in the notion expressed by the verbal root.⁶ In fact, this notion probably accounts for the *Hiphil*'s distinctive form. The *Hiphil* stem's characteristic *h* preformative, derived from a thirdperson personal pronoun, reflects a designation of a second subject's participation in the action.⁷ In E. A. Speiser's view the *Hiphil* originally signified: 'X (the subject) caused that Y (the second subject) be or do something.'⁸

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f

The fundamental causative notion of the *Hiphil* can be nuanced by consideration of the kind of verbal root to which it is affixed and by the modal relationship that exists between the subject and the object(s). We broadly distinguish between roots that are *Qal* or *Niphal* intransitive (27.2), *Qal* transitive (27.3), and denominative or

isolated (27.4).⁹ In 27.5 we discuss the modal relationships that may exist between the subject and the object.

27.2 Hiphils of Qal and Niphal Verbs Used Intransitively

a

Qal and *Niphal* fientive roots used intransitively are one-place predicates (involving only a subject; see 20.21); they tend to form transitive or two-place *Hiphils*, with a subject and an object. Less often, such roots form one-place or internal *Hiphils*.

b

In linking one-place *Qal* and *Niphal* intransitive fientives and *Hiphil* two-place transitives, we must be careful to maintain the distinction of the *Hiphil* from the *Piel*.¹⁰ For the difference between these two stems with this kind of root contrast these sentences.

- 1a. וַיַּעֲבֵר בְּרִתּוֹקוֹת זָהָב לִפְנֵי הַדְּבִיר
And he extended (*Piel*) (lit., made passed over) gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary.
[1 Kgs 6:21 Qere](#)

- 1b. וַיַּעֲבֵר אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ עַל-הָאָרֶץ
And God caused a wind to pass over (*Hiphil*) the earth.
[Gen 8:1](#)

In the *Piel* construction the verb of motion denotes an accomplished state, while in the *Hiphil* construction an event is described in which the object/second subject ('a wind') participates. In the first construction the effect is direct and immediate; in the second it is indirect and mediated. The same difference can be seen with שׁוּב.¹¹

- 2a. לְשׁוּבָב יַעֲקֹב אֵלָיו
to restore (*Polel* for *Piel*) (lit., make restored) Jacob to him
[Isa 49:5](#)
- 2b. וְהִשְׁבַּחְתִּיךָ אֱלֹהֵי-הָאָדָמָה הַזֹּאת
And I will bring you back (*Hiphil*) (lit., cause you to return) to this land.
[Gen 28:15](#)

A major group of *Qal* intransitive fientives is the verbs of motion, including these:¹²

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- | | | | |
|----|-------|----------|--|
| 3. | בָּא | הֵבִיא | to bring (take, lead, send) in, to, into |
| 4. | יָצָא | הוֹצִיא | to bring (take, lead, send) out |
| 5. | יָרַד | הוֹרִיד | to bring (take, lead, send) down |
| 6. | עָבַר | הֶעָבִיר | to bring (take, lead, send) across |
| 7. | עָלָה | הֶעָלָה | to bring (take, lead, send) up |
| 8. | שָׁב | הִשִּׁיב | to bring (take, lead, send) back |

As these verbs and the examples suggest, the *Hiphil* is often associated with personal or human objects, since humans are more readily able to serve as objects of verbal causation. The extent of the association should not be exaggerated: in example # 2a, a *Piel* has a human object (though it is metaphorical), while in # 1b, and # 9, the object of a *Hiphil* is non-personal.¹³

9. וְכָל-עֵץ טוֹב תִּפְּלוּ
You will cut down (lit., cause to fall) every good tree.
[2 Kgs 3:19](#)

c

Some intransitive verbs are attested in *Niphal* but not in *Qal*; the *Hiphil* of these follows the pattern of roots with *Qal* intransitive usage. Thus נָגַר, a one-place *Niphal*, 'to be poured,' forms a two-place *Hiphil*, 'to cause (something) to be poured, pour.'

10. וְהִנֵּיתִי לִי אֲבָנִיהַ I will pour (lit., cause to be poured) her
stones into the valley.
[Mic 1:6](#)

d

Qal stative verbs tend to form two-place *Hiphils* usually rendered as transitives. The sense is often ingressive, describing the object entering into a state. It can be difficult for the English speaker to distinguish a factitive (*Piel*) and a causative (*Hiphil*) that are derived from a stative, intransitive root. Contrast these clauses.

- 11a. גָּדוֹל כְּבוֹדוֹ His glory (is) great (predicate
adjective).
[Ps 21:6](#)
- 11b. גָּדֹלָתְךָ You are great (*Qal* stative).
[2 Sam 7:22](#)
- 11c. גָּדַל יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ YHWH made Joshua great (*Piel*).
[Josh 4:14](#)
- 11d. הִגְדַּלְתָּ ... אִמְרָתְךָ: You caused your word ... to be great
(*Hiphil*).
[Ps 138:2](#)

Above (27. 1c) we touched on the difference between # 11 a and # 11 b; given that the fundamental distinction between *Piel* and *Hiphil* is that the former signifies the bringing about of a state and the latter the causing of an event, we can plausibly suppose that # 11c is the factitive counterpart of # 11a and that # 11d is the causative counterpart of # 11b. Once

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again proper usage in English leads to blurring of a fundamental Hebrew distinction by leveling both constructions with the verb exalt: 'YHWH exalted Joshua' and 'You exalted your word.' again, contrast these pairs of sentences.

- 12a. וְלֵמָּה תִּכְבְּדוּ אֶת־לִבְבְּכֶם
כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּבְדוּ מִצְרַיִם
וּפְרַעָה אֶת־לִבָּם Why do you harden (*Piel*) your hearts
(lit., make your hearts to be hard) as
the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened
their hearts?
[1 Sam 6:6](#)
- 12b. וַהֲכִבֵּד אֶת־לִבּוֹ And he (Pharaoh) hardened (*Hiphil*)
his heart (lit., caused his heart to
become hard).
[Exod 8:11](#)
- 13a. בָּנוּ קִדְּשׁוֹ They consecrated (*Piel*) (lit., made
consecrated) his son.
[1 Sam 7:1](#)
- 13b. וְאִם מִשְׁדָּה אֶחָדוֹ יִקְדִּישׁ
אִישׁ לַיהוָה If someone consecrates (*Hiphil*) (lit.,
causes to become consecrated) to
YHWH part of his family land.
[Lev 27:16](#)

In these instances the English tends to blur the distinction between the *Piel*'s factitive notion and the *Hiphil*'s causative meaning. The *Piel* verbs here direct attention to the results of the situation apart from the event (the hearts' being hardened, the son's being consecrated), and the *Hiphil*'s refers to the process (the making hard of the hearts, the making holy of the land). The emphasis on event can be seen in this example.

14. אֲנִי יְהוָה הַשְׁפֹּלְתִי עֵץ I, YHWH, bring down the tall tree and

cause the low tree to grow tall.

Verbs that can be used in the *Qal* as either intransitive or transitive form two-place *Hiphils* with the former use.

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f

Qal intransitives, usually statives, can form intransitive *Hiphils*; these are called one-place or inwardly transitive or internal *Hiphils*. As illustrations of one- and two-place *Hiphils* from the same root contrast these.¹⁶

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- 19a. מַגְדִּיל שְׂוֵעוֹת מֶלְכוֹ
He magnifies (lit., causes to become great) his king's victories.
[Ps 18:51](#)
- 19b. יִלְבְּשׁוּ-בִשָּׁת וּכְלָמָה
הַמְגִדִּילִים עָלַי:
May all who magnify (themselves) over me be clothed with shame and disgrace.
[Ps 35:26](#)

In # 19a the subject causes someone else to be taken as great or proved great, but in # 19b the subject causes himself to be regarded as great (i.e., 'to talk big').¹⁷ Often in the one-place *Hiphil* the subject and the object are the same; the double-status subject causes itself to be or do something, and since the object is elided the verb is formally intransitive. Sometimes the elided object is not the subject itself but is closely connected with the subject, as in # 20b; these two examples are similar in sense.

- 20a. לְהַחְזִיק הַמְּמֻלָּכָה בְּיָדוֹ:
to strengthen in his hand (lit., cause his hand to be strengthened) on the kingdom
[2 Kgs 15:19](#)
- 20b. כִּי הֶחְזִיק עַד-לְמַעְלָה:
because he had become powerful (lit., had caused his hand to be strengthened) tremendously
[2 Chr 26:8](#)

In the internal *Hiphil* the subject works in connection with itself as the causer of the action, even when an object other than the subject is elided. In contrast to the *Piel* stem, to which is attached the reflexive *Hithpaël* stem, the *Hiphil* has no reflexive stem form. The double-status use of the *Niphal* is also germane to such *Hiphils*.

g

The difference between the two-place *Hiphil* as over against the internal *Hiphil* can be observed with other *Qal*-stative verbs as well.¹⁸

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- 21a. לְמַעַן הִרְחִיק אֶתְכֶם מֵעַל
אֲדַמְתְּכֶם
so as to remove you (lit., cause you to be far) from your land
[Jer 27:10](#)
- 21b. לֹא הִרְחִיקוּ
they had not gone far (lit., had not caused [themselves] to be far)
[Gen 44:4](#)
- 22a. וַיִּקְרַב אֶת-הַמִּנְחָה לְעֵגְלוֹן
He presented (lit., caused to be near) the tribute to Eglon.
[Judg 3:17](#)
- 22b. וַיִּפְרָעָה הַקְּרִיב
And Pharaoh approached (lit., caused [himself] to be near).
[Exod 14:10](#)

As the examples with גִּדֵּל reveal, the internal *Hiphil* can be metaphorical; the subjects here are non-personal.

23. גַּם-חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא-יִחְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּךָ
Even the darkness will not be (too) dark (lit., cause itself to be dark) for you.
[Ps 139:12](#)

24. וְהִבִּיתָ לְבֵנוֹת לַיהוָה
לְהַגְדִּיל
And the house to be built for YHWH
should be magnificent.
[1 Chr 22:5](#)

Lambdin remarks that these inwardly transitive usages constitute a translation problem since nearly all of the verbs have a transitive causative meaning as well.¹⁹ In fact, the senses are rarely confused with one another because the internal *Hiphil* is formally intransitive, whereas the transitive causative *Hiphil* generally has an expressed object clearly different from the subject.

27.3 *Hiphils* of *Qal* Verbs Used Transitively

a

Roots that are transitive in *Qal* (i.e., roots that take a direct object in that stem) in the *Hiphil* tend to be causative. Most often, such constructions are three-place predicates, with a subject and two accusatives, the object of the causing (usually a person) and the object of the basic or root verb.²⁰

1. וַיִּפְשְׁטוּ אֶת־יוֹסֵף
אֶת־כְּתָנָתוֹ
They stripped Joseph (lit., they caused
Joseph to put off) of his coat.
[Gen 37:23](#)

The object of causing here is יוֹסֵף, while the object of the stripping is כְּתָנָתוֹ.

b

Three-place *Hiphil* constructions vary in the way the two objects are introduced. Both may be marked by אֶת (## 1–2), or only the object of "causing" by אֶת (# 3), or only the object of the root verb by אֶת (# 4).²¹ The object of "causing" may be marked by a preposition (## 5, 7) and so can the object of the root verb (# 6; cf. # 7). The object of causing may be a relative אֲשֶׁר, with or without אֶת (## 8–9).²²

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2. כִּי אַתָּה תִּנְחִיל אֶת־הָעָם
הַזֶּה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
You shall cause this people to inherit the
land.
[Josh 1:6](#)
3. וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ בְּגָד־שֵׁשׁ
And he clothed him in (lit., caused him to
put on) vestures of fine linen.
[Gen 41:42](#)
4. הֲשִׁמְעֵנִי אֶת־קוֹלְךָ
Let me hear your voice.²³
[Cant 2:14](#)
5. וְהוֹרַעְתָּ לָהֶם אֶת־הַדֶּרֶךְ
You will show them the way.
[Exod 18:20](#)
6. וַתִּשְׁקְמוּ בְדִמְעוֹת שְׁלִישׁ:
You made them drink tears by the
bowlful.
[Ps 80:6](#)
7. מִמּוֹל שְׁלֵמָה אֲדָרְתָּ
תִּפְשְׁטוֹן מֵעֲבָרִים
You strip off the rich robe of those who
pass by.²⁴
[Mic 2:8](#) emended
8. לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנִי אֶת
אֲשֶׁר־תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי
But you did not let me know whom you
will send with me.²⁵
[Exod 33:12](#)

9. וְהוֹרִיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבֹּר: I will teach you what you shall say.
[Exod 4:12](#)

C

Just as a verb that is ordinarily transitive in the *Qal* may appear without an object, so a verb that is usually a three-place *Hiphil* may show only one object. With these two-place *Hiphils*, that object is usually a person.

10. הֲלֹא ... הִשְׁמַעְתִּיךָ Did I not inform you (lit., cause you to hear) ...
[Isa 44:8](#)
11. כַּאֲשֶׁר הִרְאָה אֹתְךָ בְּהָר just as he showed you (lit., caused you to see) on the mount
[Exod 27:8](#)
12. הוֹדַעְתִּיךָ הַיּוֹם I teach you (lit., cause you to know) today.
[Prov 22:19](#)

Such a construction may have a non-personal object, and in such cases the sense of the causing is a stative event. The objects of causation in these cases are either abstract nouns or speech acts.

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13. אֶזְכִּיר צְדָקָתְךָ לְבִדְדִי: I will make mention of your righteousness (lit., cause your righteousness to be remembered) alone.²⁶
[Ps 71:16](#)
14. הוֹדִיעַ יְהוָה יְשׁוּעָתוֹ YHWH has made known (lit., caused to be known) his salvation.
[Ps 98:2](#)
15. מִי הִשְׁמִיעַ זֹאת מִקֶּדֶם Who foretold this (lit., caused this to be heard) from of Old?
[Isa 45:21](#)
16. יְהוָה הִשְׁמִיעַ ... אָמְרוּ לְבֵת-צִיּוֹן YHWH has proclaimed (lit., caused to be heard) ... "Say to Daughter Zion ..."
[Isa 62:11](#)

27.4 Denominative and Isolated *Hiphils*

a

Like the *Niphal* (23.5) and the *Piel* (24.4), the *Hiphil* has a denominative function. The causative value is always present in this use but with a wide range of meanings, and extended meanings, depending on the root. One important group refers to generation (e.g., בְּכֹר 'firstborn'), growth (e.g., שָׁרֵשׁ 'root,' קֶרֶן 'horn(s),' פֶּרֶסָה 'hoof'), and the atmosphere (e.g., אֹר 'light,' מָטָר 'rain').²⁷

1. צָרָה כְּמִבְכִּירָה a groan as of one bearing her first child (lit., causing a first born to come forth)²⁸
[Jer 4:31](#)
2. יִשְׂרָשׁ יַעֲקֹב Jacob will take root (lit., cause a root to come forth).
[Isa 27:6](#)
3. פָּר מִקֶּרֶן מִפְּרִיס: a bull which has horns (and) hoofs
[Ps 69:32](#)
4. לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ to give light on the earth

5. **כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה
אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ** [Gen 1:15](#)
because YHWH God had not yet caused
it to rain upon the earth

[Gen 2:5](#)

Another group refers to the use of body parts (cf. English 'to make eyes').

6. **וְלֹא הִאָזִין אֲלֵיכֶם:** He turned a deaf ear to you (or, He did
not prick up his ears for you).
7. **אִם־אִשׁ לְהִמִּין וּלְהִשְׁמִיל
מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר־דָּבַר אֲדֹנִי
הַמֶּלֶךְ** [Deut 1:45](#)
No one can turn to the right (hand) or to
the left (hand) from anything my lord the
king says.

[2 Sam 14:19](#)

8. **אֶל־תִּלְשֹׁן עֶבֶד אֶל־אֲדֹנָיו** Do not slander (lit., use a tongue on) a
servant to his master.
[Prov 30:10 Qere](#)

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Sometimes a denominative from an abstract noun may denote execution of the root notion (e.g., **חָרַם** 'ban').

9. **אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָכְלוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְהַחֲרִימָם** upon whom the Israelites could not
execute the ban

[1 Kgs 9:21](#)

Most often, however, abstract denominatives in the *Hiphil* stem (often figurative) tend to behave like the inwardly transitive *Hiphil* (cf. 27.2g), that is, the subject causes itself to behave according to the nominal notion (e.g., perhaps, **שָׂכַל** 'insight,' and certainly **זָהַר** 'brightness' and **לָבָן** 'white'; cf. 27.2g ## 23–24).

10. **וְהַמְשִׁכְלִים יִזְהָרוּ כְּזֹהַר
הַרְקִיעַ** And they who are wise shall shine like
the brightness of the firmament.
11. **כַּשֶּׁלֶג יִלְבִּינוּ** [Dan 12:3](#)
They (your sins) shall become as white
as snow (lit., as snow causes [itself] to
be white).
[Isa 1:18](#)

A denominative *Qal* can also yield a *Hiphil*: **רָע** 'evil' yields both *Qal* **רָעָה** 'to be evil' and *Hiphil* 'to cause to be evil, to make (one's actions) evil, to act evilly.'

b

Constructions may develop due to figurative expressions in which the force of the basic term or grammatical form is no longer clearly visible. Thus **שֵׁכֶם** 'shoulder' developed the form **הִשְׁכִּים** 'to shoulder (i.e., to use the shoulder)' and with pack animals 'to load the backs'; since this happened early in the morning, by metonymy **הִשְׁכִּים** came to mean 'to break up camp early in the morning.'

12. **וְהִשְׁכַּמְתֶּם מָחָר לְדַרְכְּכֶם** And you can get up early tomorrow (and
go) on your way.
[Judg 19:9](#)

The opposite is **הִעָרִיב** 'to act in the evening,' from **עָרִיב** 'evening.'

13. יִנָּשׁ הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְהָעָרֶב The Philistine approached morning and evening.
[1 Sam 17:16](#)

Note also נָגַד *Hiphil* 'to act in front of, to declare,' a reflection of the basic stance of speaking to or reporting néged the addressee. Such lexicalizations are unpredictable isolated areas of the stem system where semantic specialization has overtaken systematic force.

C

The function of the *Hiphil* with some roots cannot be classified with certainty into any of the above types because the root is otherwise unknown. In these unclassified instances, however, the basic semantic value of the stem is usually evident, and one can often discern whether the form functions as a transitive or inwardly transitive, etc.

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14. יָרַח וְלֹא יֵאֱהִיל The moon is not bright (lit., the moon does not cause [itself] to be bright).²⁹
[Job 25:5](#)
15. וְהָאֲזִיחוּ נְהָרוֹת The canals will stink.³⁰
[Isa 19:6](#)

27.5 Modal Senses

a

The *Hiphil*'s causative notion can assume various nuances or functions not only because of the nature of the root but also because of the relationship that may exist between the principal subject and the subject of the caused action (the undersubject). Because the expression of such functions is associated with the non-indicative moods in languages that use them (e.g., Classical Greek, Latin), they are called modal functions. English expresses them with a small category of irregular verbs, called the modals (e.g., 'can, could, should, would, may, might,' etc.).

b

If, for example, the "causing" occasions an event unacceptable to the undersubject, the verb takes on the nuance of compulsion.

1. אָתָּה בָּתִּי הִכְרַעַתְנִי Alas, my daughter, you have brought me to my knees.
[Judg 11:35](#)
2. קוּמָה יְהוָה קִדְּמָה פָּנָיו
הִכְרִיעֵהוּ Arise, YHWH, confront him (the foe), make him bow.
[Ps 17:13](#)

If, on the other hand, the "causing" notion is right and welcome or agreeable to the participating subject, then the *Hiphil* may denote solicitude, 'to take care that.'

3. וְאִשְׁבַּע אוֹתָם And I took care to satisfy them.
[Jer 5:7](#)

Sometimes the action is welcome or agreeable to the object but is not regarded as a propriety. Here the *Hiphil* denotes permission.

4. אַחֲרֵי הוֹדִיעַ אֱלֹהִים אוֹתְךָ
אֶת-כָּל-זֹאת Since God let you know all this ...
[Gen 41:39](#)

A similar sense is found with non-personal objects.

5. אֶזְאֶשְׁקֵי מִימֵיהֶם
וְנָהָרוּתָם כַּשֶּׁמֶן אוֹלֵיךְ Then I will let her waters settle, and her
streams flow like oil.

[Ezek 32:14](#)

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C

If the caused activity is welcome to the undersubject but unacceptable or disagreeable to a third party, then the notion of toleration comes into view.

6. הַשְׂמֹחֶת כָּל-אוֹיְבָיו: You have allowed all his enemies to
rejoice.

[Ps 89:43](#)

In certain instances the caused activity is agreeable to both subject and undersubject and the undersubject becomes an indirect object of the "causing," in which case that notion becomes equivalent to bestowal.

7. הַצְלִיחוּ הָאֱלֹהִים: God gave him success.
8. וְלֹא תַצְלִיחֵי לָהֶם: You will not grant success to them.

[2 Chr 26:5](#)

[Jer 2:37](#)

Footnotes:

1. GKC § 53c / p. 144; cf. R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976) 28. Due to the complex morphology of the *Hiphil* the weak verbs are largely straightforward. The contrast of l-w and l-y verbs is best preserved in the *Hiphil*; the l-w group is much larger than the l-y group, of which only ytb is common. Cf. also n. 10.

2. Ernst Jenni, *Das hebräische Pi'el* (Zurich: EVZ, 1968) 20–52. Cf. W. T. Claassen, "On a Recent Proposal as to a Distinction between Pi'el and Hiph'il," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 1(1971) 3–10.

3. There are cases in which the sense of the *Hiphil* is lexicalized, i.e., distinctively specified for the root; see below, 27.4b, on škm.

4. Paraphrased from Jenni, *Pi'el*, 25–33.

5. Jenni, *Pi'el*, 65–67; GKC § 53c / p. 144.

6. Jenni emphasizes, too, that the *Piel* tends to be habitual, while the *Hiphil* tends to refer to occasional or onetime situations; this difference is especially relevant to the participles; *Pi'el*, 55–65.

7. "The Semitic personal pronouns for the third person exhibit virtually the same variations of initial sounds that we have found in the causative prefixes," i.e., š in, e.g., Akkadian ~ h in, e.g., Hebrew. See E. A. Speiser, "Studies in Semitic Formatives," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56 (1936) 22–46, esp. 23–33; rpt. in his *Oriental and Biblical Studies*, ed. J. J. Finkelstein and Moshe Greenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1967) 403–32, at 409, cited from the reprint. See 21.1c n. 8. There may be some old causatives in š in Biblical Hebrew (as there are š causatives in Aramaic, the result of loans from Akkadian; e.g., Biblical Aramaic šēzib 'to rescue'). On these forms, see J. A. Soggin's essay "Traces of Ancient Causatives in š- Realized as Autonomous Roots in Biblical Hebrew," in his *Old Testament and Oriental Studies* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1975) 188–202.

8. Speiser proposes: "The phrase 'A orders (wishes, etc) that B build a house' was actually construed as 'A orders, B builds the house.' In such asyndetic that-clauses particular emphasis was needed to make clear that a given action was to be performed by someone, or that a given quality was attributed to someone or something. The pronoun of the third person, a demonstrative in origin, was evidently the only available means of conveying this idea. It was unavoidable, therefore, that this pronoun should become associated with the that-clause in the linguistic consciousness of the speaker." See Speiser, "Studies in Semitic Formatives," 414. This type of shift,

from an analytic to a synthetic construction, is common in many languages.

9. For the various shapes of the *Hiphil* in Greek translation, see E. Tov, "The Representations of the Causative Aspects of the Hiph'il in the LXX: A Study in Translation Technique," *Biblica* 63 (1982) 417–24.

10. The morphological opposition of stative and fientive roots is confined almost entirely to the *Qal*, but there is a trace of it in the *Hiphil* inflection of geminate roots; stative geminates have the vowel *a* in the second syllable (*mrr* 'to be bitter, *hēmar*; *šrr* 'to be cramped,' *hēšar*; *qll* 'to be slight,' *hēqal*; *rkk* 'to be soft,' *hērak*), while fientive geminates have *ē* (*hll* *Hiphil* 'to begin,' *hēhēl*; *sbb* 'to go around,' *hēsēb*; *pr* *Hiphil* 'to break,' *hēpēr*). See P. Joüon, "Études de morphologie hébraïque," *Biblica* 1 (1920) 353–71, esp. 353–54.

11. Cf. also *nty Qal* (the donkey's turning aside) and *Hiphil* (the master's turning the donkey back) in [Num 22:23](#).

12. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 212.

13. Cf. [Ezek 17:24](#), # 14 below.

14. The delocutive *Hiphils* are based on locutions such as 'He is just'; see D. R. Hillers, "Delocutive Verbs in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967) 320–24. As noted in connection with *Piels* (24.2f), delocutives have an intermediate character; a *Hiphil* delocutive is in part causative and in part denominative. See also W. T. Claassen, "The Declarative-Estimative Hiph'il," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 2 (1972) 5–16.

15. For further uses, see *qll* in [2 Sam 19:44](#) (referring to esteem in the mind of the speaker) and [Isa 8:23](#) (with *kbd Hiphil*) and [23:9](#) (both referring to esteem in the mind of others).

16. Internal *Hiphils* (like the cognate Arabic verb stem *ʾafʾala*) are sometimes associated with the Arabic superlative or relative form *ʾafʾal*; see Speiser, "Studies in Semitic Formatives," 32.

17. For *gdl* in this sense, see [Jer 48:26](#), [42](#); [Ezek 35:13](#); [Zech 2:8](#), [10](#); [Ps 35:26](#), [38:17](#), [55:13](#); [Job 19:5](#); [Lam 1:9](#); [Dan 8:4](#), [8](#), [11](#), [25](#).

18. The internal *Hiphil* may have an inchoative or ingressive sense, referring to entering into a state, e.g., *hly* 'to become ill,' *zyd* 'to (come to a) boil.' The internal *Hiphil* also occurs with verbs for expressing or receiving a quality: *ʾhl*, *zhr*, *yp* 'to be clear, bright' versus *ʾḥk* 'to be dark,' *ʾmš* 'to be strong' versus *ʾp* 'to be weak'; see GKC § 53d / p. 145.

19. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 212.

20. In addition to the roots cited in the examples, note *ʾkl*, *byn*, *ynq*, *nhl*, *qny*, *rʾy*, *rwy*, *sb*, and *šk*. See the catalogue provided in Mordechai Ben-Asher, "Causative Hiph'il with Double Objects in Biblical Hebrew," *Hebrew Annual Review* 2 (1978) 11–19.

21. For a suffix and an unmarked object, see [Isa 48:6](#).

22. For a clause headed by *mh*, see [Zech 1:9](#).

23. Cf. [Exod 33:18](#), [Deut 4:10](#) With ## 4, 6, 8, cf. 27.5b.

24. Emend the pointing, taking the athnach with the following word; for MT *ʾdr* (perhaps taken as an accusative of material, 'richness(?)'), read *ʾdr* by haplography.

25. On the permissive sense of the *Hiphil*, see 27.5.

26. Cf. [2 Sam 18:18](#).

27. Note also *higšim* 'to rain' ([Jer 14:22](#)); *hizfīa* 'to form seed' ([Gen 1:11](#), etc.), 'to conceive' ([Lev 12:2](#)); *hišlig* 'to snow' ([Ps 68:15](#)). Participles and infinitives are notably common among productive *Hiphils*.

28. On the difficult form *šrh*, see W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 145.

29. The examples in the text are both hapaxes. There are a number of more common *Hiphil*-only roots which are apparently isolates: *ybl* *Hiphil* 'to conduct,' *ydy* *Hiphil* 'to praise' (probably not the same root as *ydy Qal*, *Piel* 'to throw'), *ykh* *Hiphil* 'to decide,' *šlk* *Hiphil* 'to throw,' perhaps *šqy* *Hiphil* 'to (give) water (to drink).'

30. The form is anomalous, perhaps from an elative variant root or perhaps a double causative (Hebrew *h* + Aramaizing *ʾ*). Cf. n. 16 above. A convenient example of double formative is Modern Hebrew *braksim* 'brakes.'

28 Hophal Stem

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28.1 Form and Meaning

a

Like the *Piel* and *Pual*, the *Hiphil* and *Hophal* stems stand in active: passive opposition.¹ The *Pual* and *Hophal* are the rarest of the seven major stems, and the *Hophal* is the rarer of the two. As with the *Pual*, certain *Qal* passive forms are pointed as *Hophal* (22.6).

b

Both the *Pual* and *Hophal* stems represent the subject as being caused to be acted upon or to suffer the effects of having been acted upon (usually by an unnamed agent). Whereas in *Pual* the subject is made into a state represented by the root, in *Hophal* it is caused, or suffers the effects of having been caused, to be in the event signified by the root. Compare and contrast, for example, these cases with יָלַד and כּוֹן (which has *Polel/Polal* instead of *Piel/Pual*).

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1a. | בִּילְדֶּכֶן אֶת־הָעִבְרִיּוֹת | When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth (<i>Piel</i>) (lit., when you make the Hebrew women to be delivered of child) ...
Exod 1:16 |
| 1b. | אָרוּר הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָלַדְתִּי
בּוֹ | Cursed be the day in which I was born (<i>Pual</i>) (lit., was made to be born [as a state]).
Jer 20:14 |
| 1c. | וַיּוֹלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: | He begat (<i>Hiphil</i>) sons and daughters (lit., caused sons and daughters to be born [as an event]).
Gen 5:4 |
| 1d. | יוֹם הַלֵּדַת אֶת־פַּרְעֹה | on Pharaoh's birthday (<i>Hophal</i>) (lit., on the day of Pharaoh's having been caused to be born [as an event]) ²
Gen 40:20 |
| 2a. | וְכִנֵּנְתִּי אֶת־כִּסֵּא מַמְלַכְתּוֹ | And I will establish (<i>Polel</i>) the throne of his kingdom (lit., I will make the throne of his kingdom established [as a state]).
2 Sam 7:13 |
| 2b. | מִיְהוָה מְצַעֲדֵי־גִבּוֹר כּוֹנְנֵנוּ | The steps of a man are made firm (<i>Polar</i>) (lit., are made to be firm [as a state]) by YHWH.
Ps 37:23 |
| 2c. | יְהוָה בִּשְׁמָיִם הֵכִין כִּסְאוֹ | YHWH established (<i>Hiphil</i>) his throne in the heavens (lit., caused his throne to be established [as an event]).
Ps 103:19 |

- 2d. יְהוֹכֵן בְּחֶסֶד כִּסֵּא In unfailing love a throne will be established (*Hophal*) (lit., will be caused to be established [as an event]).
[Isa 16:5](#)

These examples show that the *Hophal* represents the subject as the undergoer of a causative situation involving an event. The object of the active causative notion with the *Hiphil* stem becomes the subject with the *Hophal* stem; the agent, expressed in the *Hiphil*, is normally unexpressed in the *Hophal*. For example, 'throne' in # 2c is the object of the causative notion, with God as agent, but in # 2d 'throne' is the subject, and the agent is not mentioned.

c

The distinctiveness of the *Hophal* vis-à-vis the other passive stems can be seen in these illustrations using בָּקַע.

- 3a. וַתִּבָּקַע הָעִיר The city was breached (*Niphal*).
[2 Kgs 25:4](#)
- 3b. כַּמְבוּאֵי עִיר מִבָּקָעָה: like the entering of a city that is breached (*Pual*) (lit., was made to be breached)
[Ezek 26:10](#)
- 3c. הִבָּקָעָה הָעִיר: The city was breached (*Hophal*) (lit., was caused to be breached).
[Jer 39:2](#)

Each of these passives reflects a corresponding active form in which the city is the object of the breaching. In the passive stems, the city is the subject being acted upon or suffering the effects of the action; the agent is not mentioned. In # 3a the *Niphal* represents the

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simple action, without a causation notion. In # 3b and # 3c the *Pual* and *Hophal* signify causation; in the *Pual* the city is represented as being made into a state of being breached, while in the *Hophal* the city is represented as being caused to suffer the effects of the event of being breached.

28.2 Hophals of Qal and Niphal Verbs Used Intransitively

a

Since the *Hiphil* is much more widely used than the *Hophal*, virtually all roots which form *Hophals* also form *Hiphils*, and it is convenient to exhibit the two stems together.

b

Qal and *Niphal* intransitive fientive verbs and their corresponding *Hophals* are one-place predications; in the *Hophal* the agent of the *Hiphil* is not represented, and the subject is the patient or undergoer of the action.

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- 1a. וַיִּשְׁכַּב עַל-הַיָּלֹד And he lay (*Qal*) upon the boy.
[2 Kgs 4:34](#)
- 1b. וַתִּשְׁכַּבְהוּ And she laid (*Hiphil*) him down.
[2 Kgs 4:21](#)
- 1c. מִשְׁכָּב עַל-מִטָּתוֹ: who had been laid (*Hophal*) (lit., had been caused to lie) on his bed
[2 Kgs 4:32](#)
- 2a. וַיָּשָׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה And Moses returned (*Qal*) to YHWH.
[Exod 5:22](#)
- 2b. So he put back (*Hiphil*) his hand (lit.,

- וַיָּשֶׁב יָדוֹ אֶל-חִיקוֹ
 2c. וַיּוֹשֶׁב אֶת-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת-אַהֲרֹן
 אֶל-פָּרְעֹה
 3a. כַּמֵּיִם הַנִּגְרִים אֶרְחֶצָה
 3b. וַיִּגַּר
 3c. כַּמֵּיִם מִגְרִים בְּמוֹרָד:
 4a. וְנִשְׁמוּ דְרָכֵיכֶם:
 4b. וְהִשְׁמַתִּי אֲנִי אֶת-הָאָרֶץ
 4c. כָּל-יְמֵי הַשָּׁמָה
 5a. תִּדְבֹּק-לְשׁוֹנִי לְחִפִּי
 5b. וּלְשׁוֹנְךָ אֲדַבִּיק אֶל-חִפְךָ
 5c. וּלְשׁוֹנִי מִדְבָּק מִלְקוֹחִי
- caused his hand to return) into his bosom.
[Exod 4:7](#)
 And Moses and Aaron were brought back (*Hophal*) (lit., were caused to return) to Pharaoh.³
[Exod 10:8](#)
 as water poured (*Niphal*) on the ground
[2 Sam 14:14](#)
 He pours (it) out (*Hiphil*) (lit., causes [it] to be poured)
[Ps 75:9](#)
 as water poured (*Hophal*) (lit., caused to be poured) into a gorge
[Mic 1:4](#)
 Your roads will be laid waste (*Niphal*).
[Lev 26:22](#)
 And I will lay waste (*Hiphil*) your land (lit., will cause your land to be deserted).
[Lev 26:32](#)
 all the time that [it] lies desolate (*Hophal*) (lit., of [its] being caused to be deserted)⁴
[Lev 26:35](#)
 May my tongue stick (*Qal*) to the roof of my mouth.
[Ps 137:6](#)
 And I will make your tongue stick (*Hiphil*) to the roof of your mouth.
[Ezek 3:26](#)
 And my tongue sticks (*Hophal*) (lit., is caused to stick) to my palate.
[Ps 22:16](#)

c

Qal stative verbs rarely form passive causatives, none of the putative-delocutive type. None of the stative verbs cited in 22.4 occurs unambiguously with a stative meaning in the *Hophal* stem, though some appear in the *Hiphil*. In the case of verbs with both a *Qal* stative and *Qal* fientive force (e.g., שָׁמָּה 'to be desolate; to lay waste,' מוֹת 'to be dead; to die') it seems best to construe *Hophal* forms as fientives.

d

There is no *Hophal* analogue to the internal *Hiphil*. Even a verb that may be inwardly transitive in the *Hiphil* is passive in the *Hophal*, with an implied agent other than itself. This lack of use is easy to understand: the subject of the *Hophal* stem is normally an implied object of a causative notion other than the agent, but in the case of the internal *Hiphil* there is no such object. Contrast חָלָה *Qal*, *Hiphil*, and *Hophal*.

- וְחָלִיתִי
 6a. And I will be(come) weak (*Qal*).
[Judg 16:17](#)
 6b. הַחֲלוּ שָׂרִים חֲמַת מִיַּיִן
 The princes are inflamed (*Hiphil*) with wine (lit., cause themselves to be (come) sick with fever from wine).
[Hos 7:5](#)

- 6c. כִּי הִחֲלִיתִי: because I've been wounded (*Hophal*)
(lit., have been caused to be wounded)
[1 Kgs 22:34](#)

28.3 Hophals of Qal Verbs Used Transitively

a

The *Hophal* forms of roots that are transitive in *Qal* are passive causatives. In addition to the examples in 28.1, consider these.

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- 1a. וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל And they saw (*Qal*) the God of Israel.
[Exod 24:10](#)
- 1b. כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אָנִי מֵרָאָה according to all that I show you (*Hiphil*)
אוֹתָךְ (lit., cause you to see)
[Exod 25:9](#)
- 1c. אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה מֵרָאָה בָּהָר: which you were shown (*Hophal*) (lit.,
were caused to see) on the mount⁵
[Exod 25:40](#)
- 2a. וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת־שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה And you shall take the anointing oil and
וַיִּצְקֶתָ עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ pour (*Qal*) [it] on his head.
[Exod 29:7](#)
- 2b. וְהָיָה מוֹצֵקֶת: And she kept on pouring (*Hiphil*) [the oil]
(lit., causing [the oil] to be poured).
[2 Kgs 4:5](#) Qere
- 2c. אֲשֶׁר־יוֹצֵק עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ שֶׁמֶן upon whose head the anointing oil was
הַמִּשְׁחָה poured (*Hophal*) (lit., was caused to be
poured)
[Lev 21:10](#)

28.4 Denominative and Isolated Hophals

a

The denominative role of the *Hiphil* is also found with the *Hophal*. Consider these sets, from נִגְדָר 'before,' 'שָׁלוֹם' 'peace,' and מָלַח 'salt'; for the last, no *Hiphil* forms are attested.

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- 1a. וְהִגַּדְנָא לִי מָה עָשִׂיתָ Tell (*Hiphil*) me what you have done.
[Josh 7:19](#)
- 1b. הִגַּד הַגִּד לַעֲבָדֶיךָ Your servants were clearly told
(*Hophal*).
[Josh 9:24](#)
- 2a. וּשְׁלָם And be at peace (*Qal*).
[Job 22:21](#)
- 2b. וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁלָם עִמָּךְ And if it will not make peace (*Hiphil*)
with you (lit., will not cause to be at
peace with you [as an event]) ...
[Deut 20:12](#)
- 2c. וְחַיֵּית הַשָּׂדֶה תִּשְׁלָמָה־לָּךְ: And the wild animals will be caused to
be at peace (*Hophal*) with you.

- 3a. וְכָל-קֶרְבֵּן מִנְחָתְךָ בַּמֶּלַח
תִּמְלַח
[Job 5:23](#)
Season (*Qal*) all your grain offerings
with salt.
- 3b. וְהַמֶּלַח לֹא הִמְלַחְתָּ
[Lev 2:13](#)
To be sure, you were not rubbed with
salt (*Hophal*) (lit., were not caused to be
salted).
[Ezek 16:4](#)
- b**
- Isolated or unclassified *Hiphils* also form *Hophals*.
- 4a. וַיִּשְׁלֹכוּ אֶל-יֹאבָב
[2 Sam 20:22](#)
And they threw (*Hiphil*) (the head) to
Joab.
- 4b. רֹאשׁוֹ מִשְׁלַךְ אֵלֶיךָ
[2 Sam 20:21](#)
His head will be thrown (*Hophal*) to you.
- 5a. בְּצֵל יָדוֹ הִחְבִּיאֲנִי
[Isa 49:2](#)
In the shadow of his hand he hid
(*Hiphil*) me.
- 5b. וּבְבִתֵּי כְלָאִים הִחְבְּאוּ
[Isa 42:22](#)
And they were hidden (*Hophal*) in
prisons.
- 6a. וְהִטַּלְתִּי אֹתְךָ ... עַל הָאָרֶץ
אַחֲרָתָהּ
[Jer 22:26](#)
I will hurl (*Hiphil*) you ... into another
country.
- 6b. מִדּוּעַ הוּטְלוּ הוּא וְזַרְעוֹ
וְהִשְׁלָכוּ עַל-הָאָרֶץ
[Jer 22:28](#)
Why will he and his seed be hurled out
(*Hophal*) and be cast (*Hophal*) into a
land ... ?

28.5 Modal Senses

a

Just as the *Hiphil* can take on modal nuances when the will of the participants is felt to be involved, so also the *Hophal* can take on the same nuances when such an object becomes the passive subject of the causative notion. For example, one feels the nuance of compulsion in this command with the root שָׁכַב (see 27.5).

1. וְהִשְׁכַּבְהָ אֶת-עֲרֵלִים:
and be laid (lit., be caused [against your
will] to be laid) among the uncircumcised⁶
[Ezek 32:19](#)

Footnotes:

1. The original or basic first vowel of the *Qal* passive, *Pual*, and *Hophal* is *u*, but in the last stem *o* is more common; for the two vowels, note *wəhomlēaḥ lo' laḥat*, 'You were not rubbed with salt' ([Ezek 16:4](#)).
2. The *Hophal* infinitive construct is found only in this form and in several forms of *šmm*; *höššammâ* ([Lev 26:34](#)), *hoššammâ* ([Lev 26:35](#), [2 Chr 36:21](#)), (*bā*)*hšammâ* ([Lev 26:43](#)). The infinitive absolute in the second syllable has an *e* vowel against the *a* elsewhere, e.g., *hoḥtēl* ([Ezek 16:4](#)) as in the *Hiphil*.
3. For *ʾt* with the subject of a passive verb, see 10.3.2.
4. The LXX reads a suffix on the infinitive.

5. T. O. Lambdin uses the example *horʾâ hāʾîšʾet-hāʾôr*, 'The man was shown the light,' but such *Hophal* clauses are rare at best; see *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 244.

6. This form is a *Hophal* imperative, a semantic anomaly. *Pual* and *Hophal* imperatives do not essentially exist in the system of the language. This form may be considered a literary creation—note that *škb* occurs eight times in [Ezekiel 31–32](#). L. Boadt remarks that "*šakab* often refers euphemistically to dying"; see *Ezekiel's Oracles against Egypt: A Literary and Philological Study of Ezekiel 29–32* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1980) 164. This imperative may then be likened to the anomalous English passive imperative 'Drop dead.' For the only other *Hophal* imperative, see *hopnû* 'Be turned back!' in [Jer 49:8](#), also in a passage suggesting that the form is an *ad hoc* creation.

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29 Introduction to the Conjugations

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[29.6 A Further Conception](#)

29.1 The Variety of Verb Forms

a

There are three overlapping groups of verb forms in Hebrew, the conjugations, the modals, and the non-finites, and we discuss them in this grammar in that order. For the moment, let us review them in reverse order. The non-finite forms include the participle (# 1) and the two infinitives (or verbal nouns), the construct (# 2) and the absolute (# 3). The modal forms include the cohortative (first-person modal, # 4), the imperative (second-person modal, # 5), and the jussive (third-person modal, # 6). The conjugations may have some bearing on the modal forms, for all the models are related to or derived from one of the conjugations.¹

1. participle	עֹמֵד	עוֹלָה
2. infinitive construct	לְעֹמֵד	כְּעוֹלָה
3. infinitive absolute	עֹמֵד	טוֹלָה
4. cohortative	אֶזְמַרְהָ	אֶעֱלֶה
5. imperative	עֲמֹד	עֲלֵי
6. jussive	יִעֲמֹד	יִעֲלֶה

b

There are two major conjugations, the suffix(ing), perfective (perfect, *qatal*, *qtl*) and the prefix(ing), non-perfective (imperfect, *yiqtol*, *yqt*).² The variety of terms used for the

conjugations gives a hint of the controversy that has surrounded modern study of them. At the heart of the controversy is the fact that conjugations have a variety of syntactic roles, related in part to the use of the conjunction *waw*.³ Five major combinations are usually reckoned with. These include the perfective without *waw* (# 7) and with *waw* (# 8), that is, *qatal* and *w«qatal*; and the non-perfective without *waw* (*yiqtol*, # 9), with *waw* and doubling (*wayyiqtol*, # 10), and with simple *waw* (*w«yiqtol*, # 11).

7. qetal	עֲמַדְתִּי	עָלְתָה
8. w«qatal	וְעָמַדְתִּי	וְעָלְתָה
9. yiqtol	תֵּעֲמֹד	נִעְלֶה
10. wayyiqtol	וַיֵּעֲמֹד	וַיֵּעֲלֶה
11. w«yiqtol	וַיֵּעֲמֹד	וַיֵּעֲלֶה

These five combinations have been the basis of much study, for it is not obvious in what ways they are independent of each other. Other questions about the conjugations involve their relations with the non-finite forms (particularly the relation of the infinitives and the prefix conjugation), their time reference, and their relationship to "tense" and aspect systems in other languages.

c

The combinations are not equally common, as the following list of occurrences reveals.⁴

<i>qatal</i>	13,874	27%	20,252	40%
<i>w«qatal</i>	6,378	13%		
<i>yiqtol</i>	14,299	28%		
<i>wayyiqtol</i>	14,972 ⁵	29%	30,606	60%
<i>w«yiqtol</i>	1,335	3%		
	50,858			

The prefix forms are appreciably more common than the suffix forms. Although the most frequent combination is *wayyiqtol*, the forms without *waw* are altogether more common, 28,173 forms (55%), as opposed to those with *waw*, 22,685 forms (45%).⁶ Also noteworthy is the dominance of three of the combinations, *qatal*, *yiqtol*, and *wayyiqtol*, which account for 85% of the Hebrew conjugational forms of the Bible (43,145).

d

Hebraists are not agreed about the significance of the conjugations and their constructions with *waw*. Various theories, each with strengths and weaknesses, have been

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advanced. In their study of the conjugations Hebraists have been something like the proverbial five blind men examining an elephant. Each of them has described a portion of the beast accurately, but they differed in their conclusions because they tried to describe the whole by generalizing from a part. In order to avoid the reductionistic abstractions that have plagued this most difficult area of Hebrew grammar, it seems advisable to begin by surveying the theories; after we critically appraise them we shall be able to construct a provisional scaffold from which to pursue the investigation.

e

Leslie McFall has recently reviewed the literature on the subject from the earliest medieval Jewish grammarians to T. W. Thacker's study of 1954, concentrating on "solutions from Ewald to the present day."⁷ We follow McFall's review closely up to the introduction of the comparative-historical approach to the subject, around 1900. From that point on his work must be supplemented, because he neglected some significant studies (e.g., Brockelmann, Sperber, Hughes, and Michel).⁸

f

Some features of any modern view of the conjugations represent a break with the terms of the traditional debate. From the time of the Renaissance to the late nineteenth century, there was a consistent tendency to regard the Hebrew verbal system as intrinsically "primitive," Biblical Hebrew being an archaic tongue unable to approach the complexities of languages attested later.⁹ No modern solution could be based on such a suspicious and misleading notion of Hebrew as a language. Further, prior to the rise of modern linguistic thinking, the verbal system of Hebrew was measured against European languages, and it was the discrepancies that seemed to require explanation. A special form of this view is based on the concerns of translation, but no absolutely consistent equivalence system exists for rendering the Hebrew verbs into another language.¹⁰ Modern scholars seek to explain Hebrew as much as possible on its own terms.

g

Every phase of the modern study of comparative Semitics has stimulated new theories of the Biblical Hebrew verb, although some of these theories have been unacceptable as ideas about one language. As we shall see, comparative Semitic information can be used both to clarify and to create a major muddle in Hebrew grammar. It is impossible to explain Hebrew by alleging that it is a mongrel or monster among its Semitic cousins, for, although Hebrew is different from them, it is not different in kind.¹¹

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h

Two differences about Hebrew are relevant. The first involves what is in the Bible: because there are certain types of writing in Biblical Hebrew which are not well represented in extrabiblical Semitic, especially Northwest Semitic, texts, we must be careful about comparisons. The preponderance of continuous narrative prose in the Bible is unparalleled in the ancient Near East; even the Akkadian annals of the Neo-Assyrian kings present major differences. As we shall see, there are distinctive features of narrative prose as well as of prophetic speech, and these "genre effects" need to be borne in mind in evaluating the verb system.¹² A second difference involves the way in which Hebrew is preserved. Any notion of major distortion in the MT can play no serious role in explaining the verbs.¹³ This should be clear from the separation of **וַיִּקְטֹל** and **וַיִּקְטֹל** forms, cited earlier, and from the variation in accentuation of the *w«qatal* combination in certain persons (e.g., **וַיִּמְרֹתָ**, [Isa 14:4](#), but **וַיִּמְרֹתָ**, [Ezek 29:3](#); cf. **וַיִּמְרֹתָ**, [Deut 32:40](#)).¹⁴

i

The chief, indeed only, idea behind the earliest views on the Hebrew verb was tense (29.2); the nineteenth century added the idea (though not the vocabulary) of aspect (29.3). The decipherment of cuneiform and the recovery of other ancient Semitic monuments contributed funds of new data (29.4). The integration of this material is only part of the ongoing efforts at comprehension (29.5-6).

29.2 Theories Based on Tense

a

Time reference may be indicated in language in various ways. It may be lexicalized, that is, expressed with individual words (such as the English adverbs 'now, soon, formerly'), or it may be grammaticalized, that is, expressed morphologically as part of or in conjunction with verb forms. Grammaticalized time reference is called tense.¹⁵ English uses the category of tense, distinguishing present tense 'I run' from past tense 'I ran.' Biblical Hebrew has no such simple tense forms,¹⁶ but because Mishnaic Hebrew¹⁷ and most European languages do, for at least eight centuries, from ca. 1000 C.E. on, the medieval Jewish grammarians and Christian scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures thought that *qtl*, *qôtel*, *yqtl* signified past, present, and future times respectively.¹⁸ Such a system is basically that of Mishnaic (and later) Hebrew, which is thus a tense language. This view can hardly accommodate the facts of Biblical Hebrew, and a stratagem was needed to explain the "past" reference of *wayyqtl* and the "present/future" reference of *w«qtl*.

b

The earliest Jewish grammarians (2.2) thought that the conjugations signified tense and that a prefixed *waw* could "convert" the signification to its opposite. Japeth ha-Levi,

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the tenth-century Qaraite grammarian of Jerusalem, calls the *waw* with the suffix conjugation *waw* 'atîdî, 'waw of the future.' David Qimhî (1160–1235), in his *Mikhlol*, "the Gesenius grammar of his age," like his predecessors thought in terms of tenses. He calls the *waw* that "substitutes" the past for the future and vice versa the *waw* haššârût 'waw of service.'¹⁹ Elijah Levita (1468–1549) may have coined the term that became standard for this "type" of *waw*, *waw* hippûk, 'waw-conversive.' The ordinary *waw*, the simple conjunction, he called *waw* ḥibbûr, 'waw of joining.'

c

The medieval Jewish grammarians thus saw three tenses: *qtl* past, *qôtel* present, and *yqtl* future; the *waw* hippûk could convert the first and third. The earliest Christian Hebraists accepted the medieval Jewish view. They called *waw* ḥibbûr, conjunctivam, and *waw* hippûk, conversivam.

d

Until 1827 the traditional view prevailed in the Christian universities of Europe, but some began to refine, criticize, and modify it. Johannes Buxtorf's grammar (1653), for example, denied that the Hebrews had a present tense.²⁰ McFall cites, as typical of bewilderment over the tempora (Latin 'tenses') in Hebrew, C. Bayly's statement of 1782: "The Tenses are often used promiscuously especially in the poetic and prophetic books."²¹ Nevertheless, the tense and *waw*-conversive theory survived. W. Gesenius in his thirteen editions of his grammar (1813–1842) did

not abandon it.

e

The tense and *waw*-conversive theory represented such a venerable tradition that it would have seemed foolhardy to challenge it. Some statistics certainly support it. In 14,202 instances of *wayyqtl* (out of a total of 14,972) RSV translates with a past tense.²² Furthermore, a tense theory appeals to "common sense."²³ F. R. Blake argued, for example, that it seems a priori unlikely that a verb would be without tense.²⁴ Finally, the necessity of rendering the Hebrew verb into the tense structures of European languages abets the tense theory.

f

The theory has, however, tremendous weaknesses. While it may be true that *wayyqtl* most often designates past time, it does not always have this value (see 31.2). When we turn to other forms the statistical pattern is not elegant. According to McFall the RSV translators render *yqtl* as a past tense 774 times, a present tense 3,376 times, a future tense 5,451 times, a non-past modal 1,200 times, a past modal 423 times, an imperative 2,133 times, a jussive/cohortative 789 times, and non-verbally 153 times. With regard to *qtl*, RSV renders it in Job, a good source for comparison because of its non-historical character, as a past tense 252 times and as a present tense 244 times; in its bound form *wqtl* as a past 12 times, a present 23 times, and a future 14. Clearly, the RSV translators

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needed all three principal tenses of English to render the two conjugations with and without *waw*. How can forms each of which "represent" all three English major tenses have a primarily temporal value?

g

N. W. Schröder in 1766 offered an alternative explanation for the "promiscuous" use of the Hebrew verb forms by introducing the concept of relative time.²⁵ According to this theory the time of a situation is not located absolutely in relation to the present moment of the speaker's time; rather, it is related to the time of the preceding verb. In application this means that *wayyqtl* is future relative to a preceding past event represented by *qtl*. With this suggestion he replaced the "barbarism," as some had called it, that *waw* could "convert" tense forms into their opposites; he thereby laid the foundations for the later *waw*-consecutive theory. Schröder's theory did not solve the weaknesses of the tense theory pointed out above, and it introduced new problems. Could the Hebrews have had the mental agility constantly and easily to shift back and forth between the past and future? Why do the *qtl~wayyqtl* and *yqtl~wqtl* constructions occur under stringent syntactic conditions? Does not *wqtl* continue to convert the past into the future?

h

In 1818 Philip Gell, independently of Schröder, offered a similar solution, but instead of the term "relative future *waw*" he used "inductive *waw*." McFall summarizes his view:

Philip Gell suggested that every genre or category of literature was comprised of major and minor systems. A major system, for example, may be an historical narrative. It will commence with a governing verb that sets the narrative in its true historic period. This will be followed by subordinate verb forms which retain their own individual tense. The temporal power of the governing, or initial, verb is inducted, or passed on, to the subordinate verbs by means of the *waw* conjunctive.²⁶

In Gell's view the *waw* communicated the effect flowing from the whole to the part.

i

Gell's study is seminal for discourse study. His appreciation of the genre effect and distinction between major and minor literary systems offer valuable insights into the syntactic structure of Hebrew narrative (see 31.2). Furthermore, he opened the door to see the bound *waw* constructions as denoting consequence (see 32.2) and epexegetical situations (see 32.2.2). But we are still left with the problems inherent in any tense theory and with the problem of *wqtl*, for which Gell confessed his principle did not operate.

j

In 1827 Samuel Lee (1783–1852), Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge, tried to introduce a historical view into the debate. He analyzed the conjugated verbs as consisting of pronominal affixes and nominal roots. He

contended that *qtl*, formed on concrete nouns, represented the past tense, and that *yqtl*, formed on the abstract infinitive, signified the present tense.²⁷ Like Schröder he thought the *wayyqtl* signified relative time,

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but he defined it differently. For him the form worked like the historical present tense encountered in Greek and Latin, where the present tense is used to refer to a past situation.²⁸ A simple English example would be: 'I was sitting on the veranda when up comes John and says ...' This offers a more vivid narrative than 'I was sitting on the veranda when up came Kathy and said ...' A relative present in the *wayyqtl* construction fits his theory nicely, for he did not distinguish the meaning of *yqtl* in its free form from its bound one with *waw*-relative.

k

Lee's work must be judged revolutionary. He first moved scholarship away from the venerable tradition that *yqtl* signifies only the present-future tense. His morphological analysis of the conjugations into affixes and nominal roots is foundational for the later comparative-historical approach. In fact, some comparative Semitists still support his theory that the *yqtl* form is based on the infinitive.²⁹ His distinction between concrete and abstract actions looks forward to Diethelm Michel's distinction between accidental and substantial actions. Although he challenged the tradition, in fact he merely substituted one notion of tense for another, and no view based exclusively on tense is adequate. In a way this failure is surprising since Lee recognized that what he called Oriental thought differed from Occidental.

29.3 Elementary Aspect Theories

a

Given the defects of theories based on tense, it is not surprising that scholars looked to other explanatory factors, which may be grouped together under the heading of aspect. In addition to the strictly aspectual views of Heinrich Ewald and William Turner, we consider the "universal tense" theory as an aspectual theory by default.

b

The "universal tense" theory, which has surely been held briefly by every student of elementary Biblical Hebrew, alleges that the two conjugations cannot strictly be separated. The great German romantic critic Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) was one of the first modern appreciators of Hebrew literature. In his book *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* (*On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, 1783), he suggested that Hebrew had only one tense, or rather that the two tenses are essentially undefined tenses, both aorists, that is, unbounded tenses.³⁰ Herder's view is based on his attribution to the "primitive" and "serene and open" Hebrew mind the quality of immediacy: "All the Hebrew songs in praise of [creation] ... were ... formed, as it were, in the immediate view of those very scenes [described]."³¹ The desire to present vivid impressions at first hand led the Hebrews "like children" to rely on unbounded verb forms.³²

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c

Oddly, such views can be found in our own time, albeit with different rationales. Alexander Sperber (1897–1971), an erratic but diligent scholar, essentially agreed with Herder.³³ He argued that the two conjugations were used interchangeably on the basis of pentateuchal passages where he alleged such jumbling could be found (e.g., *הוֹסִיר* in [Lev 4:31](#), *יִסֵּר* in [4:35](#)). He also collected a number of verses where the perfect was continued by imperfect (e.g., [Num 9:15](#)), where the imperfect was continued by perfect (cf. [Lev 6:21](#)), etc. He therefore proposed:

Each of these tenses ... may indicate any and every time. Thus, they do not complement one another in order to form a complete verbal conjugation expressing past and future, respectively, but they run parallel to one another, representing two possibilities of expressing one and the same time.³⁴

For this reason he called for a new terminology, the suffix tense and the prefix tense. Why then are there two tense forms? Sperber explained the phenomenon by his comprehensive theory that Biblical Hebrew is not a unified language but a confluence of dialects: "The combined use of both tenses, which runs through our Biblical literature, is further evidence for our assertion that the language of our Bible is of a mixed type."³⁵

d

James Hughes reached a similar conclusion (without denying the text's unity): "There seems to be no difference between the two tenses—form excepted—as they appear in the Hebrew Scriptures."³⁶ Tense, according to Hughes, is indicated by the particles occurring with the "afformative aorist [i.e., *qtl*]" and the "preformative aorist [i.e., *yqtl*]."

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e

Sperber's and Hughes's studies have the salient values of describing the text and of correcting overgeneralizations. In the light of the lack of consensus regarding the meaning of the text, Sperber's appeal for a neutral, descriptive terminology based on form rather than meaning makes sense. Accordingly scholars have taken up the terms prefix conjugation and suffix conjugation. Moreover, "universal" is an apt term for describing the range of the prefix conjugation. But Sperber's profound skepticism regarding the trustworthiness of the Masoretic vocalization and of the language's essential unity is unjustified (see 1.6). The phenomenon on which he based his dissection of the text into dialects, namely, the mixture of the tenses in neighboring lines of poetry, also occurs in Ugaritic. Is Ugaritic, too, a "mixed language?" Furthermore, it is methodologically unsound to build a theory on isolated difficulties rather than on a comprehensive synchronic and diachronic study of the verbal system. The "universal tense" theories, whether defended by Herder or Sperber, offer no final solution to the problem of the verbal system.

f

Aspectual theory proper begins in the 1820s, contemporary with Samuel Lee's studies. Heinrich Ewald (1803–1875) in 1827 wrote of the two conjugations: "The first aorist [*qtl*] conveys a completed (*perfectam*) thing, whether present, preterite, or future. The second aorist [*yqtl*] conveys a non-completed (*imperfectam*) thing, whether present, preterite, or future."³⁷ Although he used the Latin terms *modi* 'moods' and *tempora* 'tenses (lit., times),' Ewald's conception is aspectual. It was in accord with Ewald's views that the Hebrew conjugations became known as the perfect and imperfect;³⁸ these, as he said, represent "the two grand and opposite aspects under which every conceivable action may be regarded." By the perfect Ewald meant that the speaker represents the action as finished and thus before him; the imperfect represents the action as unfinished and non-existent, but possibly becoming and coming. McFall summarizes Ewald's view of the perfect thus:

It is used of actions which the speaker from his present regards as actually past and therefore complete. [And] it is used of actions which are regarded as finished but which reach right into the present.³⁹

Regarding Ewald's view of the imperfect, McFall remarks:

From the basic idea of Incompleteness there arise two distinct meanings which are very widely different from one another. Firstly, what is stated absolutely to be incomplete refers to time and is therefore a mere time-form or tense. Secondly, what is stated to be dependent on something else is set forth as in a particular "kind of being, which hence becomes more a mood than a tense."⁴⁰

g

Now that Ewald had freed the study of the Hebrew verb from tense, the *waw*-conversive theory also came into question. In its place Ewald advanced the notion of *waw*-relative as understood by Lee. Ewald erroneously speculated that ׀ (i.e., way-) prefixed to the historical present *yqtl* was comprised of ׀ 'and' and ׀׃ 'then' and thought that it indicated more emphatically the consequence of an action.⁴¹ For this interpretation of the form Ewald (like most moderns) adopted F. Böttcher's term, *waw*-consecutive. Ewald further rightly proposed that *wqtl* functions as the antithesis of *wayyqtl*. Of great importance to later research based on the comparative-historical method was Ewald's observation that the *wayyqtl* form is based wherever possible on the jussive form. Here,

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however, he overgeneralized; McFall calls attention to instances where it is built on the so-called longer imperfect form.⁴²

h

Ewald's study considerably narrowed the gap between text and interpretation. In scientific thought a theory is created by imagination from the data being investigated, and the theory is then tested by logic against the data. Ewald's aspect theory, in the minds of many, better satisfied the data than any tense theory; in most grammars the terms "perfect" and "imperfect" replaced the temporal terms. Standard works on the other Semitic languages came to employ similar concepts and terms.⁴³ The term "aspect" has gradually been applied to these forms.⁴⁴

i

Ewald's views were in some respects deficient. Like many of his successors, he confused the concept of complete with that of completed. As a result he felt compelled to explain the prophets' use of the perfect for future events as the result of ecstatic experiences, in which they saw the future as completed. Qimhi had explained the same phenomenon similarly six centuries earlier: "The matter is as clear as though it had already passed."⁴⁵ Ewald substituted "finished" for "passed."

j

Moreover, Ewald is guilty of reductionism, for it is questionable whether the abstraction "imperfect aspect" can include future-time references and modal nuances. Thomas O. Lambdin rightly cautions, "It is not entirely accurate ... to describe such action [general, non-specific, habitual, potential, or to some degree probable] as incomplete or unfinished, as is often done."⁴⁶

k

Finally, in our appraisal of Ewald, we take note of Péter Kustár's allegations that *qtl* can designate action which is not completed, as in יַעֲצֵתִי (2 Sam 17:11), יִזְכֹּרְנִי (Num 11:5), and אָהַבְתָּ (Gen 22:2), and that *yqtl* can designate completed action as in אִילָּד (Job 3:3) and אֵעֲלֶה (Judg 2:1). The observations cannot be wholly sustained, as we shall see in the following chapters.⁴⁷

l

The reception and popularization of Ewald's theory by the influential British scholar S. R. Driver (1846–1914) represents a setback. Though both a great scholar in his own right and a major mediator of German scholarship, Driver made no considerable independent contribution to the study of the tenses.⁴⁸ Driver largely accepted Ewald's view, except that, as noted by Carl Brockelmann, he sought to explain the two conjugations in Hebrew by relating them to the aspects "perfect" and "imperfect" as interpreted by G. Curtius for Greek.⁴⁹ This led him to claim that the imperfect always signified nascent or incipient action, whereas Ewald had suggested such meanings as only one possibility. Driver wrote:

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It is ... of the utmost consequence to understand and bear constantly in mind the fundamental and primary facts ... : (1) that the Hebrew verb notifies the character without fixing the date of an action, and (2) that, of its two forms ... , one is calculated to describe an action as nascent and so as imperfect; the other to describe it as completed and so as perfect.⁵⁰

As might be anticipated from this citation, he accepted the concept of a "prophetic perfect."

[With] ease and rapidity [the speaker] changes his standpoint, at one moment speaking of a scene as though still in the remote future, at another moment describing it as though present to his gaze.⁵¹

Driver demonstrated that *qtl* in its bound form (*wqtl*) lost its individuality and passed under the sway of the verb to which it is connected.⁵² In Driver's view *wayyqtl* also represented a "becoming" and "incomplete" activity, but relatively rather than absolutely, namely, in relationship to the preceding verbal expression to which it subordinated itself. E. König referred to such a connection as an annexam (i.e., a "consequence").

m

Driver's views were widely accepted, but his theory cannot be endorsed.⁵³ He inherited the weakness of Ewald's reductionism and exacerbated it. Further, as McFall cogently argues, some complicated situations demand that we interpret the *yqtl* as describing completed action: "Nascent action is too narrow a view of an action for it to be a fit medium to describe a total event made up of a number of individually complete actions, e.g. 2 Chr. 28:15."⁵⁴ In fact, Driver is forced to abandon his theory of *yqtl* in connection with the combination *wayyqtl*: "The use of

[wayyqtl] in the historical books ... renders it inconceivable that it should have suggested anything except the idea of a fact done."⁵⁵ McFall also points out the same inconsistency in Ewald.⁵⁶ Driver, writing more than a century ago, did not have the advantage of ancient comparative Semitic materials in preparing his survey, and his reliance on Greek is perhaps understandable.

n

The response to Ewald by William Turner of Edinburgh was in the nature of a rebuttal, but his theory was at base aspectual and philosophical.⁵⁷ Turner sought to counter Ewald's theory with the view that *qtl* represents the act or state of the verb as an objective fact and that the *yqtl* describes the process. In his view *qtl* is objective fact, *yqtl*

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subjective representation; *qtl* focuses on the historical results, *yqtl* on the forging of history. Turner sees no essential difference between *qtl* with roots denoting a state versus an activity; neither one represents the subject as putting forth energy but rather both mark the subject with an attribution. He distinguished *qtl* from the participle (*qôtel*) by suggesting that the latter emphasizes the person and the former the fact. Both the free and bound forms of *yqtl* expressed the element of personal life and activity.

o

Turner presents us once again with an interesting but reductionistic view. He anticipates Michel's theories as well as modern views of aspect and the subjective representation of reality. Though Turner contrasted his views with aspectual theory, his analysis is not entirely different. Note Brockelmann's explanation that both conjugations represent aspect:

The tempora are to be explained as subjective aspects, as can be observed in many languages according to whether the speaker wishes simply to state that which happened as an event (perfect) or its progress (cursive) (imperfect)⁵⁸

Turner seems to observe the aspects out of focus.

p

Of the three groups of theories sketched here, it is Ewald's view which represents the most permanent contribution. The "universal tense" theory is not a serious view, and the English-speaking post-Ewaldians do not advance on their German master. As Ewald, S. R. Driver, and Turner were writing, fresh data was becoming available from ancient monuments. Such data inform most more recent studies.

29.4 Comparative-Historical Theories

a

By the opening decade of this century, the major features of Akkadian grammar were understood and could be brought to bear on the problems of Hebrew verbal conjugations.⁵⁹ Hans Bauer, in his 1910 dissertation, took up the new comparative-historical method.⁶⁰ He found S. R. Driver's interpretation artificial and returned to the concept that the two Semitic conjugations referred to periods of time. Even though all the cognate Semitic languages exhibit at least two conjugations, Bauer hypothesized that the Semites originally had only one verbal form, the prefix conjugation. This form was originally timeless, and therefore he named it "aorist." The suffix conjugation originated out of a nominal clause construction (see 8.4) involving the participle, and therefore he called it "nominal"; he believed this proto-form must be assigned the meaning of a verb, either that of a perfect (e.g., *qatal* 'he is a murderer,' which is equated with 'he murdered') or a present (e.g., *yoda'* 'he is skillful,' an equivalent of 'he knows'). The perfect meaning of the suffix conjugation prevailed in the West Semitic languages, with the

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result that there the prefix conjugation became restricted to the present and future periods. By contrast, in Akkadian the suffix conjugation underwent a metamorphosis to emerge as a prefix form (supposed *iparas*) and was used for the present tense, with the result that the old prefix form (*iprus*) became restricted to the past. Since the preterite meaning for *yqtl* is also found in Hebrew, Bauer was forced to allege that Hebrew in its *wayyqtl* form must preserve this Akkadian preterite conjugation; the *waw* of this form is thus the *waw*-conservative.

b

To explain the presence in Hebrew of both West Semitic and East Semitic prefix conjugations Bauer proposed that the wandering Hebrews brought with them the East Semitic conjugations and later mixed them with the West Semitic conjugations of the resident Canaanites. Hebrew is not strictly a West Semitic language, but a mixed language. In sum, Bauer, holding that Hebrew *qtl* = perfect tense, *yqtl* = present/future tense, *wayyqtl* = past tense, returned dramatically to the medieval Jewish view but for different reasons.

c

Bauer's theory was accepted without the hypothesis of language mixture by Gotthelf Bergsträsser.⁶¹ By contrast, G. R. Driver sought to defend precisely the assumption of language mixture.⁶² F. R. Blake also essentially followed Bauer.⁶³ Most recently J. F. A. Sawyer also has harked back to such a tense interpretation.⁶⁴

d

But Bauer's hypothesized development could not be maintained. The suffix conjugation is found in other Afroasiatic languages, which were in the earliest period connected with Proto-Semitic. Moreover, later research showed that the so-called present of Akkadian originally had a doubled middle radical and therefore could not be related to the West Semitic perfect,⁶⁵ but should be related to the similarly constructed imperfect indicative of the Ethiopic languages.⁶⁶ The Akkadian present (*iparras*) and the Ethiopic indicative imperfect (*yeparres*) express imperfective aspect; the form was eliminated in the other languages on account of its similarity to the D stem (i.e., *Piel*).⁶⁷

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e

Bauer's work, despite its defects, provides the crucial outline of a modern view of the Hebrew tenses. It is, first of all, a theory grounded in comparative data. Since we now have available vastly improved descriptions of Akkadian, as well as of Egyptian, and new material from various sites, notably Amarna and Ugarit, we have a much broader field of comparison against which to study Hebrew. Second, Bauer recognized that Hebrew *yqtl/wayyqtl* was at base a mixed lot, and most scholars accept his view that the Hebrew prefix conjugation is (or better, contains remnants of) two older prefix conjugations, one denoting the present/future tense (as Bauer would have it) or a cursive/curative aspect (as, e.g., Rudolf Meyer describes it), and the other a past narrative form. Unquestionably, the Proto-Semitic language had at least two prefix conjugations, including a "longer" (?) form signifying non-perfective aspect, future tense, etc., and a "shorter" (?) form for past narrative. Let us review some of the comparative data.⁶⁸

f

In Akkadian one finds a long prefix conjugation (the "present" *iparras*, *irappud*, *ikabbit*) to express incomplete or habitual action in past time, a historical present or actual present, and simple future, as well as modal nuances. As we shall see, this range of uses comports almost exactly with that of the Hebrew *yqtl* (historically **yaqtula*). Akkadian also has a short prefix conjugation (the "preterite"—*iprus*, *iplah*, *ikbit*) for either preterite action or the jussive mood.⁶⁹ The discovery of this form led philologists to see West Semitic *yaqtul* (i.e., Hebrew jussive and *wayyqtl*) as both preterite and jussive.

g

In Arabic one also finds a long prefix conjugation (*yaqtulu*), signifying imperfect aspect, circumstantial action, and (with the particle *sawfa*) future time. The short prefix conjugation (*yaqtul*) signifies either the jussive mood or (with the negative *lam*) preterite action.⁷⁰

h

As for the evidence from Early Northwest Semitic, Ugaritic is problematic because it is unvocalized. In the Amarna correspondence the long form (*yaqtulu*, pl. *yaqtuluna*)

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denotes imperfective aspect, unreal mood, or general present and future actions. The short form (*yaqtul*, pl. *yaqtulu*) denotes either jussive mood or preterite action.⁷¹

i

How does this evidence help us in understanding Hebrew? Ewald observed that in Hebrew verbs, where prefix forms vary, the *wayyqtl* form has the same shape as the jussive. It may be argued from the comparative Semitic evidence that these forms represent a historically short form in contrast to the regular *yqtl*. For example, in the *Hiphil* stem the "imperfect" is *yaqfil* (<**yaqtilu*) but the jussive/*waw*-relative form is *yaqtēl* (<**yaqtīl*). A similar distinction can be observed in the *Il-waw* (e.g., קִיֹּם) and geminate roots (e.g., סִבֵּב): *yāqūm* (<**yaqūmu*) versus *yāqōm* (C**yaqum*) and *yāsōb* (<**yasubbu*) versus *yāsob* (<**yasub*). An archaic short prefix conjugation thus may have survived in the *wayyqtl* form of narrative. Some think it also survived in a free form, especially in poetry (31.6)⁷²

j

In spite of the apparent correlation in form and meaning between the longer and shorter prefix conjugations in other Semitic languages and the Hebrew forms, the theory nevertheless has its own set of problems. The major problem is the alleged split between long and short forms. With most verbs one cannot distinguish between the two alleged prefix conjugations. This is explained by the fact that around 1100 B.C.E. the language lost all its final short vowels, causing most **yaqtulu* and **yaqtul* forms to fall together as homonyms. But can a language tolerate such a homonymy? Can a language tolerate over an extended period the same form representing opposing aspects or tenses? One could reply that Hebrew (as well as some other Semitic languages) uses a common prefix conjugation to express both the jussive and indicative moods. (The same confusion sometimes also overtakes the cohortative and indicative moods.) If the same form can signify opposite moods, can the same form not also express opposite aspects? The comparative Semitic evidence and the two distinct uses of the Hebrew prefix conjugation suggest that in fact *yaqtulu* and *yaqtul* have merged in Hebrew to form a (nearly) common conjugation.⁷³

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The syntactic consequences of the merger are not obvious. Studies of the text itself must be decisive in reviewing the results of the comparative evidence.

29.5 Philosophical Theories

a

Diethelm Michel in his 1960 study of the conjugations in the Psalter took a different tack.⁷⁴ He rejects the older aspectual theories as well as historical-comparative theories of the type pioneered by Bauer. A reconsideration based on a polar opposition between *qtl* and *yqtl* forms is necessary, he believes.

b

Michel begins his study by justifying the use of poetry rather than prose and in the process deals with the problem of genre effects. He rejects using prose narrative as the major source of data because the verb in such literature almost always refers to past tense or completed action. In addition, according to him, the available theories do not fit the data. He writes of standard theories of the working of poetry:

Suddenly in poetry there is an "archaic narrative imperfectum with past meaning"; in poetry one must accept a "prophetic perfectum" and apply psychology in order to explain its existence; in poetry there is in direct address a "perfectum of execution," also called "declarative perfectum," which accompanies an action and therefore designates an uncompleted, present action.⁷⁵

Michel then turns to the so-called consecutive tempora (conjugations):

It appears unexpected and odd, to say the least, that a *tempus* should be turned around into its opposite by the mere prefixing of ׀. And if one further considers that this same form ׀ plus perfectum is said to be used on one occasion as a "perfectum copulativum," like the customary perfectum, and on another occasion as "perfectum consecutivum," like the customary *imperfectum*, the questions become unbearably loud ⁷⁶

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He then takes up the discrepancy noted by all students when they turn from the grammars to the text.

We must test and discuss all the verb forms that occur. It makes no sense to cite as evidence only those passages which support our thesis and to conceal the others. Such an eclectic approach as the grammars must of necessity use by reason of space must rely on advanced work which has tested all the evidence, and this advanced work we will provide here by investigating the Psalms.⁷⁷

He also rejects the results of the comparative-historical school.

We do not take over ... the results of comparative linguistic studies concerning the meaning of the Semitic verb forms. Where one can end up, if he takes his starting point here, Brockelmann has now shown very beautifully with the help of Bauer's theories. Comparative linguistics is only possible if the languages to be compared are understood on their own.⁷⁸

c

This iconoclast launches his investigation with the "imperfectum consecutivum" (*wayyqtl*). Having studied its occurrences after "perfectum" (*qtl*), after "imperfectum" (*yqtl*), in a chain of "imperfecta consecutive," and after nominal sentences, participles, and infinitives, he draws the conclusion that it always denotes consequence or dependence, regardless of time (hence the term the *waw*-consequential theory):

It has been shown that the so-called imperfectum consecutivum gives a consequence, and in fact does so without regard to time. To be sure, the majority of passages have to be translated in the past, yet we also find a considerable group which cannot be categorized in any time period.⁷⁹

d

Next he studies the "perfectum" in various kinds of psalms and situations. Here he discovers that it can refer to perfect, present, and future actions, and that it can be used in constructions which append explanatory facts to something pictured earlier. From this study he draws the conclusion that the "perfectum" does not serve to refer to a period of time but rather "reports an event which stands in no dependent relationship but which is important in itself." He argues that this can be proved in three ways:

1. If a perfectum stands in isolation or at the beginning of a clause it expresses a fact ...
2. If a perfectum follows syndetically or asyndetically on an imperfectum or a participle, it does not advance them but rather sets an explicating fact alongside of them ...
3. If several perfecta stand unconnected alongside of one another, they do not advance the action, but itemize equally important facts ...

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By contrast, he notes, "Of the imperfectum it can be said right at the start that it does not do all this; it reports an action that stands in a relationship."⁸⁰

e

Michel then turns to the significance of the conjugations in view of the acting subject. After an in-depth examination of [Psalm 1](#) he provisionally advances his thesis in philosophical terms: the "perfectum" and "imperfectum" have an "accidental" and "substantial" character, respectively:

The typical actions expressed by the perfecta designate facts, which a person does but can also theoretically not do. The actions could be called typical to the extent that the person who does them manifests his belonging to a certain type of individual. If the person acted otherwise, he would exhibit himself as belonging to another type of individual. Accordingly, the actions are not reported under the point of view that they proceed from a definite kind of person, but that they make this kind of being first manifest. In short: the actions designated by the perfectum with regard to the acting person have an accidental character.

On the other hand, the kind of tree in [\[Ps 1:3\]](#) is established from what precedes: it is a matter of a tree planted by streams of water. That this tree brings fruit in its season, that its leaves do not wither are not actions which it can or cannot do; rather they result with necessity from the character [*Wesen*] of the tree. In short: the actions designated by the imperfectum with regard to the acting subject have a substantial character.⁸¹

Michel attempts to validate this provisional distinction through a comprehensive study of the Psalter. He summarizes his conclusions thus: "The criteria for the choice of the *tempus* do not lie in the action itself (period of

time, Aktionsart, or the like), but in the relationship which the speaker wishes to see expressed."⁸²

f

Michel now studies *yqtl* forms in isolation. He commences his research with the view that if *qtl* designates an independent fact, then *yqtl* must designate dependent actions. He validates his view by examining *yqtl* forms with respect to (1) negative consequences, the so-called poetic aorist, (2) corresponding occurrences—"where a second action interprets the first," (3) the modal use, (4) iterative use, (5) expressions of request, and (6) conjunctions. Some of his results deserve mention. In connection with "the so-called poetic aorist" he denies, against Stade, Bauer, Bergsträsser, Gunkel, and others, that an ancient use of *yqtl* for past actions has survived in the Psalter. For Michel no significant difference exists between the *yqtl* and *wayyqtl*—both express a consequence:

Between the imperfectum [*yqtl*] and imperfectum consecutivum [*wayyqtl*] no distinction exists with regard to their meaning ... The two tempora are distinguished only by the fact that with the so-called imperfectum consecutivum a closer connection is effected by the prefixed *וּ.⁸³

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With regard to modal use he argues that if an action occurs as a consequence of the essence of the acting person or from the givenness of the situation, *yqtl* designates a modal notion and in effect is "substantial." "The expression 'he does this' is independently important, but the expressions 'he can, wants to, may, ...' are meaningful only in relation to another given."⁸⁴ He reasons that *yqtl* is understandably used for repeated actions since with an action that repeats itself an ever-new happening is being reported rather than a fact. The "substantial" theory, he argues, also works with the use of *yqtl* for requests and commands because an action which is either demanded or forbidden is not important in itself but has its significance through its connection with the person making the command. It is therefore "substantial."

g

Unquestionably, Michel has advanced and enriched considerably this central, and yet most difficult and debated, area of Hebrew grammar with his comprehensive study of a selected portion of the text. Future scholarship stands in his debt, and we draw on his work in the following chapters. He has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the *waw*-relative construction (*wayyqtl*) can signify consequence or dependence. But if "event" refers to dynamic situations in contrast to static ones, then his statement is inadequate for stative verbs.⁸⁵ His view of the suffix conjugation strongly resembles that of Turner (whom he does not cite), and our criticism of Turner (29.3) applies here as well. Michel, like Turner, seems to be out of focus, seeing nuances that accompany the conjugations while missing their aspectual features.

h

His work contains flaws in its account of prefix forms. It is not true that the conjugations present a philosophical contrast between situations that are accidental and factual and those that are substantial and less factual (contrast *mr yqtl* in [Isa 40:1](#) and *mr qtl* in [Ps 83:5](#): is the first quotation less "factual" than the second?) Many actions represented by the *wayyqtl* construction signify self-important, independent acts (cf. the creation narrative, [Gen 1:3ff.](#)). Although the prefix conjugation sometimes represents "substantial" acts, acts which of necessity proceed from the subject, it does not always do so. Consider # 1.

1. יָבֵשׁ חִצִּיר נָבֵל צִיץ כִּי רִיחַ יְהוָה נִשְׁבָּה בּוֹ
The grass withers and the flowers fade
because YHWH's wind blows on them.

[Isa 40:7](#)

According to Michel's theory we should have expected the prefix conjugation with the first two verbs, for, if the tree planted by streams of water of necessity bears fruit ([Ps 1:3](#)), so grass withers and the flowers wilt of necessity before the divine wind.

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i

In general terms, too, Michel's work can be faulted. The focus on poetry, often elevated and idiosyncratic, ignores

one set of (possible) genre effects to avoid being misled by another set, those of narrative prose. Further, while Bauer's theories proved far too speculative, and important features could not stand further inquiry, to dismiss the whole historical-comparative method for this reason seems unwarranted. Michel, in introducing his method, says that he wishes to avoid a priori assumptions, and yet he fails on just that score when he alleges that the prefix conjugation must be the precise opposite of the suffix conjugation. An unmarked grammatical form is not necessarily the (logical) opposite of a marked form. We will argue, in fact, that the prefix conjugation represents everything non-perfective.⁸⁶ Michel has also fallen into the same trap as researchers before him, the trap of reductionism through abstraction. A form does not necessarily have just one meaning; it may cover several meanings which speaker and audience distinguish by context.

j

A few specific points can be noted. It appears forced to say that repeated acts are lacking in factuality. Consider # 2.

2. וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה בְּאֵר בַּשָּׂדֶה
וְהִנֵּה-שָׁם שְׁלֹשָׁה עֲדָרֵי-צֹאן
רֹבְצִים עָלֶיהָ כִּי מִן-הַבְּאֵר
הַהִיא יִשְׁקוּ הָעֲדָרִים
- There he saw a well in the field with three flocks of sheep by it, because from that well they watered the flocks.

[Gen 29:2](#)

The prefix conjugation form יִשְׁקוּ is not necessary here because of the dependent causal clause (cf. סָגַר in [1 Sam 1:5](#)). Rather, the storyteller by means of the prefix form is giving the audience necessary facts, as also happens with the suffix conjugation. It is far more probable that the prefix conjugation denotes here, as it does in other Semitic languages, imperfective aspect and that factuality is not the issue. Remarkably, Michel's study lacks a consideration of *wqtl*, which is the apparent opposite of *wayyqtl*, and therefore might help in clarifying the latter form's functions. It seems unlikely, in light of the strict syntax that governs the use of the free and bound forms in prose, that *yqtl* and *wayyqtl* differ not in kind but only in degree, while *wqtl* and *wayyqtl* are utterly distinct.

k

A variant of Michel's thesis is worth noting. Péter Kustár proposes conclusions similar to Michel's.⁸⁷ But whereas Michel refers to *qtl* and *yqtl* as representing independent and dependent actions respectively, Kustár refers to them as representing determining and determined aspects. He writes:

The basic law of the use of the aspect categories is the following: the speaker, through the use of *qtl* and *yqtl* aspect categories, distinguishes the actions, according to which some are to be considered in the immediate relationship of the actions to one another as determining and some as determined, that is, the speaker wants to point to some actions as the originating point, the basis, the determining moment, the purpose, result, or concluding point of the other actions, and to other actions as having their

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basis, purpose, or moment determined. The determining actions are designated through the *qtl* forms, the determined actions by *yqtl* forms.⁸⁸

His thesis falls under many of the same censures as Michel's, notably the insistence on a polar opposition of the *qtl* and *yqtl* forms.

29.6 A Further Conception

a

All of the theories outlined here represent informed and considered efforts to come to grips with the use of the Hebrew conjugations.⁸⁹ If it seems that the number of factors and systems too grotesquely outstrips the complexity of the usages, it may be worth recalling that some subparts of the English tense system are obscure. The operation of the sequence of tenses, for example, and the relationship of the perfect and pluperfect tenses are the subject of much controversy in a language that is not only living and widely spoken but also quite intensively studied.⁹⁰ Thus, a little patience is needed for work on the Hebrew conjugations. The studies considered so far suggest that the basic structure of the system, though it allows for time reference, is aspectual;⁹¹ let us review that structure.

b

With the advocates of the aspectual theory we base our study of the suffix conjugation on the hypothesis that it designates perfective aspect (*Aspekt*).⁹² Bernard Comrie defines aspects as "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation."⁹³ Consider the sentence: 'John was reading when I entered.' Comrie explains:

The first verb presents the background to some event, while that event itself is introduced by the second verb. The second verb presents the totality of the situation referred to (here, my entry) without reference to its internal temporal constituency: the whole of the situation is presented as a single unanalysable whole, with beginning, middle, and end rolled into one; no attempt is made to divide this situation up into the various individual phases that make up the action of entry. Verbal forms with this meaning will be said to have perfective meaning, and where the language in question

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has special verbal forms to indicate this, we shall say that it has perfective aspect. The other forms, i.e. those referring to the situation of John's reading, do not present the situation in this way, but rather make explicit reference to the internal temporal constituency of the situation. In these examples, in particular, reference is made to an internal portion of John's reading, while there is no explicit reference to the beginning or to the end of his reading. This is why the sentences are interpreted as meaning that my entry is an event that occurred during the period that John was reading, i.e. John's reading both preceded and followed my entry. Another way of explaining the difference between perfective and imperfective meaning is to say that the perfective looks at the situation from outside, without necessarily distinguishing any of the internal structure of the situation, whereas the imperfective looks at the situation from inside, and as such is crucially concerned with the internal structure of the situation, since it can both look backwards towards the start of the situation, and look forwards to the end of the situation, and indeed is equally appropriate if the situation is one that lasts through all time, without any beginning and without any end.⁹⁴

Several points in this passage need to be noted in the light of the study of the Hebrew conjugations. Crucially, Comrie does not define perfective as completed (perfect) action.

There is an important semantic distinction which turns out to be crucial in discussing aspect. The perfective does indeed denote a complete situation, with beginning, middle, and end. The use of "completed", however, puts too much emphasis on the termination of the situation, whereas the use of the perfective puts no more emphasis, necessarily, on the end of the situation than on any other part of the situation.⁹⁵

c

Significantly, Comrie speaks not of an action but of a situation, which may be either stative or dynamic. If perfective aspect is defined in terms of a complete situation, the term is applicable to both stative and fientive verbs.

d

The second verb in the example above, 'entered,' is conventionally called simple past, while the first, 'was reading,' is a past progressive. The asymmetry of these terms suggests that the perfective and progressive aspects in English are not polar opposites, even though their meanings are distinct. The search for polar opposition, we argue, led Michel astray, and in Hebrew we have found that masculine and feminine genders are not simple opposites (6.3-5). These lessons will be useful in considering the *yqtl* form, in relation to perfective *qtl*.⁹⁶

e

The (historically long) prefix conjugation (*yaqtulu*) cannot be described solely in the terms of imperfective aspect. In this form the notions of aspect and time both blend (imperfective aspect in past and present time) and separate (aorist in future time).

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Sperber and Hughes are partially right in describing it as a universal tense. And it may signify more than a blending of tense and aspect or pure tense; it may also signify either real or unreal moods—the indicative as well as degrees of dubiety and volition. In short: a form that can signify any time, any mood, and imperfective aspect (but not perfective), is not imperfective but non-perfective, "a more than opposite" of the suffix conjugation. (The

term "aorist," meaning without limits or boundaries, is not inappropriate.)

f

The *wayyqtl* (from historically short *yaqtul*) and *wqtl*, traditionally named *waw*-consecutive forms, are better named *waw*-resultative forms, though not in the sense that Schröder, Lee, or Ewald attached to that term.⁹⁷ These *waw* constructions principally occur in relationship to a preceding verb and signify two notions at one and the same time: the bound prefix form has the values of the suffix conjugation and the bound suffix form has the values of the non-perfective conjugation and both bound forms represent a situation subordinate to that of the preceding clause, either as a (con)sequence or explanation of it. The terms *waw*-conversive and *waw*-consecutive are too restrictive. The term *waw*-relative, by contrast, suggests the relationship with the preceding verb and leaves open the possibilities of subordinate meaning. As we have already noted, the origin of this system may lie with the *yqtl*~*wayyqtl* forms, the first derived from a long prefix form with non-perfective sense and the second from a short prefix form used as a narrative preterite. But whatever the origin of the system, there has eventuated in Hebrew a quite different system of *yqtl* with relative *waw* used as a perfective. As we shall argue, this new system (32.1.2b) was developed at first in opposition to the *w«qtl* combination used to introduce the apodosis after a conditional protasis (e.g., 'If this be so, *w«qtl* = then so is/will be this') and later led, by analogy, to the development of the *w«qtl* combination used as a non-perfective. Our view of the relative *waw* combines and enriches the old notion of *waw* hippûk and Ewald's consequential *waw*.

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g

We set forth our views provisionally, leaning heavily on prior critical studies, to provide a framework within which to study the forms. The framework, however, must not be so heavy that it imposes itself on reluctant texts. Rather, it must be tested, refined, and filled in by the text.

Footnotes:

1. The *yqtl* form; see, e.g., Leslie McFall, *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System: Solutions from Ewald to the Present Day* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982) 105–6; some earlier scholars associate the imperative with the *qtl* form.
2. Other, older names include *qtl* = Latin *preteritum* = Arabic *al-māḍi* = Hebrew *‘abar*; *yqtl* = Latin *futurum* = Arabic *al-mustaqbal* = Hebrew *‘afid*. Joüon uses perfect and future, "terms vulgar and unmatched, for want of anything better; they at least have the advantages of being short and of usually matching the reality"; Joüon § 111b/ p. 290. For simplicity's sake, we omit the diacritics from the terms *qatal*, etc.
3. Hans Bauer remarked that the Hebrew verbal system is one "which reasoning men would never have thought of ... since it came about through the blind force of linguistic laws" (quoted in McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 104). The same is true of all linguistic systems, and all the various parts of linguistic systems, but the observation does have a certain edge.
4. The list is based on McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 186–88, cf. 150. The last three lines of the list include cohortative and jussive forms. For slightly different counts and a further breakdown, see Bo Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt mit vorangehendem w^e* (Lund: Gleerup, 1979).
5. According to SA/THAT, the ca. 15,000 cases of *waw* with *wayyqtl* account for 30% of the 50,000 cases of *waw* in the Hebrew Bible.
6. These occurrences of *waw* constitute about 45% of all cases; see previous note.
7. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*.
8. See references in nn. 29, 33, 36, 49, 74. McFall claims that "no fundamentally new solution to the [Hebrew verbal system] has appeared since 1954 that has received significant support from Hebraists and Semitists" (*Hebrew Verbal System*, 27, cf. 185), but this is unjust to the work of several scholars. Michel is cited in passing, p. 225.
9. On the "primitive" character of Hebrew, see, e.g., McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 41, 45, 50, 55, 85, 146, 177.
10. See McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 17–21, 53.
11. See 29.4 on Hans Bauer and G. R. Driver.

12. On genre effects, see, e.g., McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 58, 72, 82–83, 125, 185, 193, 201. On the peculiarities of narrative in general, see Bernard Comrie, *Tense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985) 61–62, 67, 104. Note that the opposition of discursive and narrative use found in W. Schneider is not generic—the two patterns are intertwined in various genres (cf. Gell's views); see E. Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible. I. Elements of a Theory," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 35 (1978) 169–74. For a further reference to Schneider's work, see n. 91.
13. See 1.6 and McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 125–26.
14. Cf. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 145–46, 189–210.
15. Comrie, *Tense*, 1, 9–13.
16. This does not mean, as we shall see, that the verbs do not convey information about time or that the Hebrews had no concept of time; contrast the passage from Herder cited in 29.3b and Comrie, *Tense*, 3–4.
17. On the virtual loss of the special *waw* combinations, as well as the cohortative and jussive forms, see M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 72–73; on Mishnaic Hebrew as a tense language, see pp. 150, 155–56. The situation in Qumranic Hebrew is not clear; see, e.g., E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 45–46, but the participle is shifting toward more strictly verbal use (p. 70). Note also the discussion of Qumranic Hebrew in Beat Zuber, *Das Tempussystem des biblischen Hebräisch* (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 164; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986) 147–52. The *waw* combinations are found in Biblical Aramaic (Zuber, *Tempussystem*, 69–71), in a few cases in Moabite, and perhaps in Phoenician-Punic.
18. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 2–20. No grammatical analysis of the Classical Hebrew verbal system has a native-speaker basis; cf. McFall, p. 16.
19. William Chomsky, *David Kimhi's Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol)* (New York: Bloch, 1952) 62, 78. Chomsky's modernization of grammatical terminology means his translation must be used with caution.
20. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 12.
21. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 15.
22. The counts here and below are from McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 186–88. For some lively argumentation based on translations, ancient and modern, see Zuber, *Tempussystem*, 5–33 (modern), 34–58, 72–77, 169–70, 17983 (LXX and Vulgate).
23. The common sense, that is, of speakers of languages with tense systems. There are some truly senseless languages; see McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 220, citing West African examples (Yoruba, Igbo); and Comrie, *Tense*, 40, 45, 49–52, 126, citing an Australian example (Dyirbal).
24. F. R. Blake, *A Resurvey of Hebrew Tenses* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1951) 2.
25. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 21–24. A recent advocate of a similar scheme is O. L. Barnes, *A New Approach to the Problem of the Hebrew Tenses* (Oxford: Thornton, 1965).
26. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 15–16, cf. 24–26.
27. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 28–37.
28. Latin "perfectum historicum"; cf. GKC § 111a / p. 326. See Zevit's paper cited in n. 73 for a similar view.
29. His idea that the *qtl* form is based on concrete nouns must be seen in light of the Akkadian permansive or stative form; cf. W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 100–101; G. R. Driver, *Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936) 11, 17, 20, 22, 26; C. Brockelmann, "Die 'Tempora' des Semitischen," *Zeitschrift für Phonetik und allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft* 5 (1951) 133–54, esp. 140–44; G. Buccellati, "An Interpretation of the Akkadian Stative as a Nominal Sentence," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 27 (1968) 1–14. See also 30.1.
30. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 14.
31. See the passage given in Burton Feldman and R. D. Richardson, eds., *The Rise of Modern Mythology* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1972) 236–40, quotation at 238.
32. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 14.
33. Sperber's views on the conjugations were first published in a long essay in 1943 ("Hebrew Grammar: A New Approach," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 62: 137–262), substantially reprinted in his *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1966); see esp. pp. 591–92.

34. Sperber, *Historical Grammar*, 592; examples from pp. 587–88.
35. Sperber, *Historical Grammar*, 592.
36. James A. Hughes, "Another Look at the Hebrew Tenses," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29 (1970) 12–24, at 13; the essay is based on his Glasgow dissertation. Hughes does map out some syntactic patterns in the use of the conjugations and offers some useful observations on common particles. Note the summary of J. Hoftijzer's somewhat similar views in F. Charles Fensham, "The Use of the Suffix Conjugation and the Prefix Conjugation in a Few Old Hebrew Poems," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 6 (1978) 9–18, at 12; and see n. 88 below.
37. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 44; on Ewald generally, pp. 43–57
38. E. Rödiger took over the task of updating Gesenius's grammar with the 14th edition and "immediately adopted Ewald's grammatical terms, Perfect and Imperfect"; McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 15.
39. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 45.
40. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 46.
41. The idea that *way(yiqtol)* conceals some (other) morphological element has persisted into our own day but has never done much explanatory duty, as noted by E. J. Revell, "Stress and the *Waw* 'Consecutive' in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 (1984) 437–44, at 443; for recent efforts to accord special status to the element, see, e.g., J. F. X. Sheehan, "Egypto-Semitic Elucidation of the *Waw* Conversive," *Biblica* 52 (1971) 39–43; C. H. Gordon, "Eblaitica," *Eblaitica*, ed. C. H. Gordon, G. A. Rendsburg, and N. H. Winter (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 1. 19–28, at 21–22. Cf. 33.1.2.
42. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 54–55.
43. Some scholars use, instead of "imperfect(um/live)," either *fiens* (Latin 'acting, i.e., ongoing') or *infectum* (Latin 'un-done, i.e., unfinished').
44. E.g., S. Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964) 131.
45. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 8.
46. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 100.
47. Péter Kustár, *Aspekt im Hebräischen* (Baser: Reinhardt, 1972).
48. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 60–77: Fensham ("Suffix Conjugation," 11) incorrectly attributes the introduction of aspectual theory to S. R. Driver.
49. Brockeimann, "'Tempora' des Semitischen," 135–36; Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 38.
50. S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1892) 5. Note the acknowledgment of Ewald: "By his originality and penetration [he] was the founder of a new era in the study of Hebrew grammar" (p. 8).
51. S. R. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 5.
52. S. R. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 114–57.
53. Brockelmann ("Tempora' des Semitischen," 136–37) cites as accepting S. R. Driver's views Johannes Pedersen, Marcel Cohen, and, in part, Henri Fleisch. (*Cohen's Le Système verbal sémitique et l'expression du temps* [Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1924] remains especially valuable for its survey of Semitic compound tenses.) The approach of S. R. Driver is carried to an extreme in J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964).
54. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 71.
55. S. R. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 94, cf. p. 95.
56. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 53.
57. See McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 77–86, on Turner (McFall confuses this scholar with the London-born American William Wadden Turner, p. 57, as D. P. Aiken points out to us); McFall, like Turner himself, does not regard Turner as an aspectualist. The views of Bo Johnson are similar to those of Turner; see *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt*.
58. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax*, 39.
59. Certain features of Akkadian grammar only came into focus with the studies of Benno Landsberger in the

1920s, but earlier scholars were well advanced. J. A. Knudtzon's theory of the Hebrew verb (McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 87–93) is the earliest to reflect the impact of Akkadian grammar; unfortunately he studied the Hebrew verbal system before his work on the Amarna letters (see references to the Amarna verb studies, all crucially indebted to Knudtzon, in n. 71).

60. Hans Bauer, "Die Tempora im Semitischen," *Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* 81 (1910) 153; cf. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax*, 3839; McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 93–115.

61. GB 2. 9–14 (§ 3).

62. G. R. Driver, *Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936); the son of S. R. Driver, G. R. Driver begins his study by confessing "a hereditary interest" in the subject, p.v; he summarizes his views in a note to J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961) 252–53. Although he did important work on Ugaritic and other early Northwest Semitic materials, Driver's study antedates that work. See in general McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 116–51; on Driver's use of Akkadian, see David Marcus, "The Stative and the Waw-Consecutive," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 2 (1969) 37–40.

63. Blake, *Hebrew Tenses*.

64. J. F. A. Sawyer, *A Modern Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (Stocksfield: Oriel, 1976) 82; Sawyer's attempt to use ideas of tense, aspect, and mood as comparable factors is too great an oversimplification to be useful. Cf. M. H. Silverman, "Syntactic Notes on the Waw Consecutive," *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. H. A. Hoffner (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 22; Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973) 167–75. Both Brockelmann and S. Segert see an originally aspectual system shifting to an essentially tensed system; Brockelmann, "'Tempora' des Semitischen," looks to Aramaic influence. See Segert, "Verbal Categories of Some Northwest Semitic Languages," *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 2 (1975) 83–94, at 90–92.

65. As assumed by J. Barth, "Des semitische Perfect im Assyrischen," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 2 (1887) 375–86.

66. As Paul Haupt had argued in "The Oldest Semitic Verb-Form," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 10 (1878) 244–52; cited in McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 108.

67. So, e.g., Brockelmann, "'Tempora' des Semitischen"; and T. W. Thacker, *The Relationship of the Semitic and Egyptian Verbal System* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1954) 189.

Otto Rössler and Rudolf Meyer have argued that Hebrew had a *yeqattel* durative form, evidenced by remnants like *ynšrw* (MT *ynšōrū*, [Deut 33:9](#)), for *yenaššerū* or the like, and by some Qumranic forms. See Rössler, "Eine bisher unbekannte Tempusform im Althebräischen," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 111 (1961) 445–51; and "Die Präfixkonjugation *Qal* der Verbae I^{ae} Nūn im Althebräischen und das Problem der sogenannten Tempora," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1962) 125–41; and the following works by Meyer: *Hebräische Grammatik* (3d ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), 2. 134–35; "Probleme der hebräischen Grammatik," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 63 (1951) 221–35, at 224–25; "Zur Geschichte des hebräischen Verbums," *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953) 225–35, at 229; "Des hebräische Verbalsystem im Lichte der gegenwärtigen Forschung," *Congress Volume: Oxford 1959* (Vetus Testamentum Supplement 7; Leiden: Brill, 1960) 309–17, at 311–12; "Aspekt und Tempus im althebräischen Verbalsystem," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 59 (1964) 117–26; "Zur Geschichte des hebräischen Verbums," *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 40 (1966) 241–43. Although T. N. D. Mettinger is sympathetic to this view ("The Hebrew Verb System," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 9 [1973] 64–84, at 69–73), most scholars are not; see A. Bloch, "Zur Nachweisbarkeit einer hebräischen Entsprechung der akkadischen Form *iparras*," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 113 (1963) 41–50; T. L. Fenton, "The Absence of a Verbal Formation **yaqattal* from Ugaritic and North-west Semitic," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 15 (1970) 31–41; Revell, "Stress and Waw 'Consecutive,'" 442.

68. See N. Waldman, "The Hebrew Tradition," *Current Trends in Linguistics. 13. Historiography of Linguistics*, ed. T. A. Sebeok et al. (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) 1285–1330, at 1285–87.

69. Von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*, 102–3.

70. W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1898), 2. 1822; W. Fisher, *Grammatik des klassischen Arabisch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972) 96.

71. *UT* § 9.10 and n. 73 below. The most intensively studied part of the Amarna correspondence is the body of letters from Byblos (background in P. Swiggers, "Byblos dans les lettres d'el Amarna," *Studia Phoenicia. 3. Phoenicia and Its Neighbors*, ed. E. Lipinski [Leuven: Peeters, 1985] 45–58). See in general on the language W. L. Moran, "The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. E. Wright (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961; rpt.

Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1979) 54–66, esp. 63–66; and, on the Byblian letters, Moran, "Early Canaanite *yaqtula*," *Orientalia* 29 (1960) 1–19, esp. 7–8. Moran's full study has never been published: *A Syntactical Study of the Dialect of Byblos as Reflected in the Amarna Tablets* (Johns Hopkins University Dissertation, 1950); see there esp. pp. 43–51. See also A. F. Rainey, "Morphology and the Prefix-Tenses of West Semitized El Amarna Tablets," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 7 (1975) 395–426

72. See, e.g., Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik* (1972), 3. 39–44; Hughes, "Another Look at the Hebrew Tenses," 13.

73. Cf., e.g., Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik*. 3. 39–44: Meyer, "Des hebräische Verbalsystem," 313–15. Note that the formulation in the text does not require that the survival be directly reflected in the morphology, especially the accentuation, of the two types of prefix form (see Richter, *GAHG* 1. 99–101). The arguments against such a survival are presented by Revell, "Stress and Waw 'Consecutive.'" For another view on stress survival. see R. Hetlron, "The Evidence for Perfect **y'aqtul* [= *yáqtul*] and Jussive **yaqt'ul* [= *yaqtúl*] in Proto-Semitic," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 14 (1969) 1–21. On the historical/synchronic problem, note the formulations of H. B. Rosén, "The Comparative Assignment of Certain Hebrew Tense Forms," *East and West: Selected Writings in Linguistics*. 2. *Hebrew and Semitic Languages* (Munich: Fink, 1984) 229–51; A. F. Rainey, "The Ancient Prefix Conjugations in the Light of Amarnah Canaanite," *Hebrew Studies* 27 (1986) 4–19; and several related papers: E. L. Greenstein, "On the Prefixed Preterite in Biblical Hebrew," *Hebrew Studies* 29 (1988) 7–17 (note esp., on the Ugaritic situation, 12–14); J. Huehnergard, "The Early Hebrew Prefix-Conjugations," *Hebrew Studies* 29 (1988) 19–23; Z. Zevit, "Solving a Problem of the *Yaqtúl* Past Tense," *Hebrew Studies* 29 (1988) 25–33; A. F. Rainey, "Further Remarks on the Hebrew Verbal System," *Hebrew Studies* 29 (1988) 35–42 (on Ugaritic, 37–38). On the necessary separation between the history of the system (the etymology, as it were) and the working of the system, note Greenstein's formula: "Sense is determined not on the basis of forms [alone] but on the basis of the contrast or opposition of forms" ("Prefixed Preterite," 14); and Zevit's: "Etymological explanations that purport to describe the origins of the Hebrew verbal system are inadequate as descriptions of how this system works in fact" ("*Yaqtúl* Past Tense," 27).

74. Diethelm Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung in den Psalmen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1960); see Mettinger, "Hebrew Verb System," 77–78, for a summary.

75. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 11. For other studies of poetic texts, see Fensham, "Suffix Conjugation," 14–18, on [Pss 29, 82](#), and [93](#); and W. Gross, *Verbform und Funktion: Wayyiqtol für die Gegenwart?* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1976). Michel neglects the use of the *qtl* and *yqtl* of the same root in neighboring lines; on the phenomenon, see Moshe Held, "The YQTL-QTL (QTL- YQTL) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and in Ugaritic," *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman*, ed. M. Ben-Horin (Leiden: Brill, 1962) 281–90.

76. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 12.

77. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 13.

78. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 14; the last sentence has an attractive ring, but it is not true in a straight-forward way, especially of ancient written languages, especially those with no continuous tradition.

79. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 41.

80. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 98–99.

81. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 110.

82. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 127.

83. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 132.

84. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 143.

85. Cf. 20.2k and Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976) 13.

86. A statement of principle may be quoted on this point: "When a linguist investigates two morphological categories in mutual opposition, he often starts from the assumption that both categories should be of equal value, and that each of them should possess a positive meaning of its own ... In reality, the general meanings of correlative categories are distributed in a different way: if Category I announces the existence of A, then Category II does not announce the existence of A, i.e., it does not state whether A is present or not"; Roman Jakobson, *Russian and Slavic Grammar: Studies. 1931–1981*, ed. Linda R. Waugh and Morris Halle (Berlin: Mouton, 1984) 1. The diversity of opposition is crucial to the Prague school.

87. Kustár, *Aspekt im Hebräischen*.

88. Kustár, *Aspekt im Hebräischen*, 55. Cf. Fensham, "Suffix Conjugation," 12–13. Another polar-opposition

theory is Hoftijzer's conception based on dependent/independent functions; see Fensham, p. 13.

89. G. R. Driver was perhaps ungenerous in his comment, "The problem of the Semitic tenses is complicated, though not so complicated as some of the solutions of it which have been propounded"; *Hebrew Verbal System*, 1.

90. Comrie, *Tense*, 104–21.

91. Most current textbooks are aspectualist; see, e.g., Weingreen, *Classical Hebrew*, 56; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976) 29–34; Moshe Greenberg, *Introduction to Hebrew* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 45, allowing for *yaqtul/yaqtulu* coalescence. G. S. Ogden alleges that all Hebrew verbs are inflected for aspect, except *hyy*, which is tensed; see "Time, and the Verb הוּי in O. T. Prose," *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971) 451–69. For a recent extension of an aspectual approach in the framework of W. Schneider's text linguistics (3.3.4d and this chapter, n. 12), see A. Niccacci, *Sintassi del verbo ebraico nella prosa biblica classica* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1986).

92. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 180–82.

93. Comrie, *Aspect*, 3; *Tense*, 6; on tense-aspect fusion, see *Tense*, 7. Classical Arabic has "two verb tense-aspects, conventionally called imperfect and perfect [the convention being that established by Ewald's work]. In addition to aspectual values, the imperfect has the time reference meaning component of relative non-past, while the perfect has the time reference meaning component of relative past"; Comrie, *Tense*, 63, cf. 21–22 (on Maltese), 76–77. Biblical Hebrew differs from Arabic in having only marginal time reference meaning components to its aspects. Cf. also J. Kurylowicz, "Verbal Aspect in Semitic." *Orientalia* 42 (1973) 114–20.

94. Comrie, *Aspect*, 3–4.

95. Comrie, *Aspect*, 18. A perfective verb "encodes an event globally"; time reference is "not part of the meaning of the perfective"; *Tense*, 28.

96. This point, the core of Jakobsonian theory, is well appreciated by F. Rundgren, *Das althebräische Verbum: Abriss der Aspektlehre* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1961) 101; his aspectual opposition is based on *qtl* stative (*qām*) versus unmarked, neutral *yqtl* (*yaqum/yaqom*). For a summary of Rundgren's view, see Mettinger, "Hebrew Verb System," 74–77; and Meyer, "Aspekt und Tempus im althebräischen Verbalsystem." T. J. Finley misrepresents Rundgren when he summarizes his view by saying that "since the perfective has both a negative and a neutral value with respect to the imperfective, it is the unmarked member of the opposition whereas the imperfective is marked"; see "The Waw-Consecutive with 'Imperfect' in Biblical Hebrew: Theoretical Studies and Its Use in Amos," *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. J. S. Feinberg and P. D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981) 241–62, at 251. In fact, Rundgren says p 101), "Das althebräische Verbalsystem hat somit als Achse die aspektuelle privative Opposition *Stativ/Fiens*, wobei der Stativ als der mekmalhafte [sic] Term der Opp. zu gelten hat ... Als merkmalloser Term hat dann das *Fiens* zwei Werte: non-stativisch (negativer Wert) und weder stativisch noch kursiv (neutraler Wert)." ("The Old Hebrew verb system thus has as its axis the aspectual privative opposition *stative/fiens* [cf. n. 43], in which the stative is valued as the marked term of the opposition ... As the unmarked term the *fiens* thus has two values: nonstative [the negative value] and again stative-yet-cursive [the neutral value].") Another, implicitly markedness-based approach is that of R. Bartelmus: *qatal* (previous time reference, perfect aspect) opposed to the subsequent-time-reference forms, *yiqtol* and *w«qatal* (imperfect aspect) and *wayyiqtol* (perfect aspect); see *HYH: Bedeutung und Funktion eines hebräischen "Allerweltswortes"* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1982). A. Loprieno reconstructs a primary aspectual system for Afroasiatic as a whole in *Das Verbalsystem im Ägyptischen und im Semitischen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986).

97. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 50, 57. Joüon refers to the energ(et)ic *waw*, comparing Arabic *fa* 'and then'; Joüon § 115b / p. 313, but cf. § 117a / p. 319 for other suggestions.

30 Suffix (Perfective) Conjugation

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[5.1 Fientive Verbs](#)

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30.1 Form and Meaning

a

The Hebrew conjugations *qtl* and *yqtl* are opposed as perfective (pfv.) and nonperfective (non-pfv.). The morphological marking of this aspectual opposition is complex. Many languages mark only one of a given pair of aspects, with a prefix (mi- for Persian imperfective [impfv.]; pro-, na-, etc., for Russian pfv.) or a suffix (-zhe for Chinese progressive). English usually uses a simple verb form for perfective (e.g., 'she read') and a compound form for progressive (e.g., 'she was reading').¹ The Hebrew opposition is marked in several ways. The morphological distinction between perfective and nonperfective is shown by (1) distinct infix patterns (e.g., *qatal*- versus *-qtöl*-), (2) distinct sets of affixes indicating person (first, second, third), number (singular, plural), and gender (masculine, feminine), and (3) the use of suffixing (pfv.) versus affixing (both suffixing and prefixing for non-pfv.). Thus: *qatal-tä* versus *ti-qtöl*, *ti-qtel-û*. The perfective also differs from the non-perfective, which is closely related to the various modal and volitional forms (Chap. 34), in not being closely associated with other parts of the verb system.

b

As the names suggest, the perfective conjugation is more specialized in meaning than the non-perfective conjugation. The suffix form of the verb announces that a certain category (perfectivity) is relevant, while the prefix form does not invoke this category. Perfectivity involves viewing a situation as a whole, viewing it globally (29.6). If the verb is fientive, the perfective form refers to an event.

c

The perfective and non-perfective conjugations are complementary parts of the verb system. There is an opposite to perfective verb aspect, imperfective; many but not all uses of the Hebrew non-perfective conjugation show imperfective aspect. If a verb is fientive, an imperfective view of it describes a process (rather than an event). Imperfectivity directs attention to the internal distinctions of various separate phases making up the situation.²

d

Two negative points about perfectivity are important. First, perfectivity does not pertain to the duration of the situation. The situation represented by the perfective form may last a moment or years. This can be made clear by showing both the perfective and non-perfective conjugations being employed in reference to the same extended duration.

1. וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָכְלוּ אֶת־הַמָּן
אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה The Israelites ate (pfv.) manna for forty years.
[Exod 16:35](#)
2. אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה אָקוּט בְּדוֹר For forty years I loathed (non-pfv.; or, was loathing) (that) generation.
[Ps 95:10](#)

When the perfective form gathers together an extended internal situation, we refer to it as a constative perfect.³ Second, the perfective does not emphasize the completedness of a situation. Earlier researchers commonly erred in characterizing the suffix conjugation as indicating completed action, instead of indicating a complete situation. Expressed in that erroneous way, the theory that the suffix conjugation indicates perfective aspect is open to objection. In # 3 the suffix form does not represent a completed action.

3. בְּשָׁנָה שְׁתִּים־עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה
לְיוֹרָם ... מֶלֶךְ אַחֲזִיָּהוּ In the twelfth year of Joram ... Ahaziah became king.
[2 Kgs 8:25](#)

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We discuss such examples as this one below. The faulty completedness definition also necessitated inventing an abnormal prophetic psychology to explain the prophets' use of the suffix conjugation for future events. Perfective aspect may occur in reference to any time period.⁴

30.2 Varieties of Perfective Aspect

a

A number of factors, such as the inherent meaning of the verb, adverbial and adjectival modification, and the stative or fientive character of a verb, modify the perfective aspect. The variations caused by these factors may be hidden by the Hebrew conjugation but find overt expression in the richer and more complex English verbal system.

30.2.1 Lexical Variation

a

The inherent meaning of a word in the larger context of discourse may single out either the beginning, or the extension, or the end of the internal structure of the situation represented as a single event.

b

Sometimes the inherent value of a word and the context in which the single situation is set entail that the perfective form is ingressive; that is, it refers to the beginning of the situation.

- 1a. מֶלֶךְ דָּוִד עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל
אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה David reigned (constative) over Israel forty years.
[1 Kgs 2:11](#)
- 1b. בְּשָׁנָה שְׁתִּים־עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה
לְיוֹרָם ... מֶלֶךְ אַחֲזִיָּהוּ In the twelfth year of Joram ... Ahaziah became king (ingressive).
[2 Kgs 8:25](#)

The perfective form in # 1a is constative, that in # 1b ingressive. Stative verbs, inherently implying duration, when they are used in a perfective situation, often have an ingressive force.

2. וַיֵּלֶךְ הַלּוֹךְ וְגִדֵּל עַד
כִּי־גִדֵּל מְאֹד: And he kept on becoming wealthier until he became very rich.

3. **וְאִם-טָהְרָה מִזִּבְחָהּ** [Gen 26:13](#) when she has become cleansed from her discharge
[Lev 15:28](#)

c

A constative meaning, as noted above, may be shown by external modifiers that extend the internal structure of the perfective situation; in other cases the word's inherent meaning extends the internal temporal structure of a single situation.

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4. **וַיְהִיו כָּל-יְמֵי אָדָם
אֲשֶׁר-חִי תִשַׁע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה
וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה** Altogether, Adam's life comprised 930 years.
[Gen 5:5](#)
5. **אֲבָרָם יֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ-כְּנָעַן** Abram dwelt in Canaan.
[Gen 13:12](#)

d

Other verbs have built into them a telos or terminal point (e.g., 'kill' is telic).

6. **כִּי אִישׁ הִרְגֵנִי לְפָעֵעִי** I kill a man for wounding me.
[Gen 4:23](#)

A telic meaning can be found if the inherent meaning of the word entails that the perfective form represents the end of the internal situation to which the action is pointing. For example, there is an important difference between 'he was reigning' and 'he was being made king' with regard to the internal structure of the situation. In the second case, there eventually comes a point at which the subject enters the state described by 'being made king' (cf. [Dan 9:1](#)). One can inspect the first situation at any point and find the same action occurring, but inspecting the second at selected intervals before the terminal point would reveal different actions in progress. The first situation ('was reigning'), in contrast to the second, has no goal in view. Situations like 'was reigning' are named atelic, those like 'being made king,' telic. Bernard Comrie comments, "A telic situation is one that involves a process [within a perfective situation] that leads up to a well-defined terminal point, beyond which the process cannot continue."⁵ The perfective form may signify the attainment of the terminal point of the telic situation.

7. **וָאֲנִי-בָאתִי בְּדְבָרֶיךָ:** And I came in response to your words.
[Dan 10:12](#)

30.2.2 Syntactic Variation

a

The perfective form, representing a situation as a single whole, cannot by itself represent internal structuring; however, by means of modifiers a single event can be unfolded into parts.

1. **וְלֹא-קָרַב זֶה אֶל-זֶה
כָּל-הַלַּיְלָה:** And the one did not approach the other all night long.
[Exod 14:20](#)

The single situation in which the pillar of cloud stood between the two opposing armies of Israel and Egypt is broken up in space by **זֶה ... זֶה**, and in time by **כָּל-הַלַּיְלָה**. Similarly, **בְּבֹקֶר בְּבֹקֶר**. In the next example extends the action in view.

2. **וְהֵם הֵבִיאוּ אֵלָיו עוֹד** And they continued to bring to him

freewill offerings every morning.

Exod 36:3

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b

Since the notion of a point seems to preclude internal complexity, a more helpful metaphor would perhaps be to say that the perfective reduces a situation to a blob, rather than to a point: a blob is a three-dimensional object, and can therefore have internal complexity, although it is nonetheless a single object with clearly circumscribed limits.⁶

30.2.3 Stative versus Fientive

a

b

30.3 Perfective Aspect and the Perfect State

a

Gen 1:2

Gen 3:22

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b

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perfect nuance, with its double focus on past event and present state, seems at first glance to differ significantly from the other uses of the perfective conjugation, it may seem incredible to speakers of English, which may formally distinguish the perfect notion, that speakers of Hebrew tolerated such diversity to be wrapped up in one conjugation. How can the same form represent such divergent situations as are found in, for example, ## 1–2? Perhaps we can dispel our incredulity by noting that in both Greek and English perfect forms come very close to other, tensed verb forms in actual usage. Indeed, in Modern Greek the perfect and the aorist of the classical language have practically blended, and in English the use of the perfect is often optional. Compare, for example, two translations of the clause **וַיָּמָוֵת שְׁמוּאֵל** (1 Sam 28:3): 'Now Samuel had died' (RSV), and 'Now Samuel was dead' (NIV, AV). In this example RSV gives overt expression to the perfect notion, whereas AV and NIV allow the reader to infer it. Similarly, when the perfect sense is relevant Hebrew employs the perfective form and allows other contextual considerations to indicate that a resulting state attended the situation. The more time-oriented English language, in contrast to Hebrew, may distinguish between past perfect, present perfect, and future perfect states. Contrast, for example, these cases.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>3. וַהֲגִדִי לָקְחוּ נַחֲלָתָם אֲשֶׁר
נָתַן לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה</p> | <p>The Gadites took the inheritance Moses
had given them.</p> <p>Josh 13:8</p> |
| <p>4. וְלָמָּה נָפְלוּ פָנֶיךָ:</p> | <p>Why has your countenance fallen?</p> <p>Gen 4:6</p> |
| <p>5. וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר
נָתַן־לָךְ:</p> | <p>And you will bless YHWH your God in the
good land he will have given you.</p> <p>Deut 8:10</p> |
| <p>6. וַאֲדֹנָי יְהוָה יַעֲזֹר־לִי ...
עַל־כֵּן שָׁמַתִּי פָנַי כַּחַלְמִישׁ</p> | <p>My Master YHWH will help me, ...
therefore, I have set my face like flint.</p> <p>Isa 50:7</p> |

Here we see the same Hebrew conjugation rendered by the three perfect tenses of English. Speakers of English, in a less formal register, tend to replace the past and future perfects with the simple past and future tenses, and, like Hebrew, allow listeners to infer the more precise perfect notion from the context. We could just as well render # 3 by '... Moses gave them' and # 5 by '... the good land he will give you.' Perfectivity is a part of the Hebrew verb system; the perfect notion is one that can be explicit in English and one that is relevant to actions described in Hebrew. Thus if we talk about a perfect

tive verb having a perfect meaning, we are talking about interpretation or about translation, a special form of interpretation.⁸

30.4 Perfective Aspect and Time Reference

a

The time frame in which a perfective situation occurs influences the significance of the form. Referring to past time the perfective form signifies completed events. Clear temporal modifiers can characterize Hebrew narrative of past events.

b

Sometimes the perfective conjugation is used for present-time situations. This combination creates notional tensions because the form entails a single aspect, but present time tends to entail imperfective aspect. We gain insight into this use of the Hebrew perfective from the Bulgarian form which overtly expresses both perfective aspect and present tense. The form in question may be used with habitual meaning in the sense that a single instance exemplifies a recurrent situation. Comrie illustrates this use and explains it:

The Present Tense is used to express a habitual situation by presenting one instance to exemplify the recurrent situation, as in: *spoglednat* (Pfv. Present) *se*, *pousmixnat* (Pfv. Present) *devojk*i, *ponadevat* (Pfv.

Present) *zarumeni lica* ... 'the girls look at one another, smile at one another, incline their reddened faces ... ' The sense is not, however, that this is what they are doing at the present moment, but rather that this is what happens whenever a certain set of circumstances holds (and, indeed, it is quite likely that this particular set of circumstances does not hold precisely at the present moment).⁹

Hebrew may use its perfective form with the same, present/habitual significance ("the gnomic perfective").

1. וְתֹרֶם
וְעֹבְרִי
אֶת־עֵת
בְּאֵנָה The dove ... and the bulbul observe the
time of their migration.¹⁰
[Jer 8:7](#)

Hebrew also uses its perfective form for a present situation in which a speaker resolves on a future action (hence, "perfective of resolve"). The Bulgarian perfective present has a use somewhat similar to this one: *iskam da kupja* (perfective present) *kniga*, 'I-want that I-buy book.'

c

We have already noted that in other languages which are aspectually oriented the perfective aspect may be associated with future situations. The same holds for Hebrew. Temporal indicators mark the future time in which the temporal situation occurs.¹¹

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2. עַד־מָתִי
מֵאֲנִתָּ לְעֵנֹת
מִפְּנֵי How long will you refuse to humble
yourself before me?
[Exod 10:3](#)

d

Both the suffix and prefix conjugations may be used in connection with absolute future time. How do they differ? The suffix conjugation marks the situation as complete: the prefix conjugation does not do so, but rather marks the situation as dependent. Representing a future action or situation as complete and independent leads to a certain dramatic quality of representation.

30.5 Species of Perfective Usage

a

The rich English verbal system often overtly expresses nuances associated with factors analyzed above. In this section we attempt to relate to the English verbal system various nuances potentially proper to the Hebrew perfective form. We also expose other nuances not formally represented in English. (We often allow the illustrations themselves to suggest the ways in which the perfective situation might be rendered in English.)

30.5.1 Fientive Verbs

a

Perfective forms of fientive verbs may refer to any block of time, past, present, or future.

b

Past-time reference is shown either by particles such as *waw*-relative (combined with other verbs in the context) or by adverbial modifiers. The perfective sense may be definite ("preterite"; ## 1–2), ingressive (# 3), constative (# 4), complex (# 5), or telic (# 6).

1. וְלֹחֶשֶׁךְ
קָרָא לַיְלָה He called the darkness "Night."
[Gen 1:5](#)
2. וְתַכַּחֵשׁ
שָׂרָה לְאֹמֶר לֹא
צָחַקְתִּי Sarah lied and said, "I did not laugh."
[Gen 18:15](#)

3. מִן־הַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּ^א
אֶת־לִבְךָ לָהֶבִין from the first day that you set your heart
to understand
[Dan 10:12](#)
4. שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה עָבְדוּ^א
אֶת־כְּדֹרְלָאוֹמֶר For twelve years they served
Chedorlaomer.
[Gen 14:4](#)
5. וַיְהִי מִדִּי צֵאתָם שָׁכַל דָּוִד^א
מִכָּל עַבְדֵי שָׁאוּל As often as they came out, David met
with more success than all the (other)
servants of Saul.
[1 Sam 18:30](#)
6. אֲשֶׁר־מָכַרְתָּם אֹתִי^א
מִצְרָיִמָּה the one whom you sold (me) into Egypt
[Gen 45:4](#)

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When the perfective form represents a situation that occurred in the recent past, English idiom often requires the use of the auxiliary 'has/have'.¹² Though the form appears to be perfect, the idea is simple past ("recent perfective").

7. וַיֹּאמֶר מָה עָשִׂיתָ^א And he said, "What have you done?"
[Gen 4:10](#)
8. הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה רָאִינוּ^א Today we have seen ...
[Deut 5:21](#)
9. אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדָּתִיךָ^א Today I have begotten you.
[Ps 2:7](#)

The perfective form may represent a past situation which the speaker is either unwilling or unable to specify precisely ("indefinite perfective"). For this use, too, English idiom normally adds the auxiliary 'has/have'.¹³

10. תָּאוֹת לָבוּ נָתַתָּה לוֹ^א You have given him his heart's desire.
[Ps 21:3](#)
11. רָאִיתִי רָשָׁע עָרִיץ^א I have seen a ruthless wicked person.
[Ps 37:35](#)

The context may suggest an emphasis on the uniqueness of an act in the indefinite past. In this case, the translation may be assisted by adding an English adverb, 'ever' or 'never.'

12. אֶת־שׁוֹר מִי לָקַחְתִּי^א Whose ox have I ever taken?
[1 Sam 12:3](#)
13. מִי־שָׁמַע כְּזֹאת^א Who has ever heard such a thing?
[Isa 66:8](#)
14. לֹא־נִהְיָתָה וְלֹא־נִרְאָתָה^א
כְּזֹאת Such a thing has never been seen or
done
[Judg 19:30](#)
15. קִשְׁתִּי יִהְיֶנָּה לֹא נָשׁוּבָה^א
אֲחֹרֶי The bow of Jonathan never turned
back.
[2 Sam 1:22](#)

c

A number of Hebrew perfective uses can be correlated with present-time reference as it is understood in English; it should be borne in mind that the English simple present tense is rarely used to refer to present time. In the persistent (present) perfective, the suffix conjugation represents a single situation that started in the past but continues (persists) into the present. English often uses its perfect form here but in fact the form does not juxtapose a past situation with a present state.

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16. לִי לֹא נָתַתָּה זָרַע You have not given me children.
[Gen 15:3](#)
17. וְאֵנֹכִי לֹא־חָטָאתִי לָךְ I have not wronged you [from the past
 right up to now].
[Judg 11:27](#)
18. לְטוֹבָה כָּל אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי for all the good which I have done
[Neh 5:19](#)

The gnomic or proverbial perfective in Hebrew often corresponds to present-tense forms in English.¹⁴

19. כָּלָה עָנָן (as) a cloud vanishes
[Job 7:9](#)
20. יֵבֶשׁ חֲצִיר נָבֵל צִיץ Grass withers, flowers fade.
[Isa 40:7](#)

d

An instantaneous perfective represents a situation occurring at the very instant the expression is being uttered. This use appears chiefly with verba dicendi ('verbs of speaking,' swearing, declaring, advising, etc.) or gestures associated with speaking.

21. הִנָּדַתִּי הַיּוֹם I declare today ...
[Deut 26:3](#)
22. כִּי יַעֲצֶתִי I advise you ...
[2 Sam 17:11](#)
23. אֶמְרָתִי אַתָּה וְצִיבָא
 תַּחֲלִקוּ אֶת־הַשָּׂדֶה: I order that you and Ziba divide up the
 land.
[2 Sam 19:30](#)
24. הִרִמֹּתִי יָדִי אֶל־יְהוָה I lift my hand to YHWH.
[Gen 14:22](#)
25. פָּרַשְׁתִּי יָדַי אֵלֶיךָ I spread out my hands to you.
[Ps 143:6](#)

This use of the perfective form also occurs with other kinds of words.

26. כִּי קִנִּיתִי I acquire (here and now).¹⁵
[Ruth 4:9](#)
27. הִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתִי I humbly bow.
[2 Sam 16:4](#)
28. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲרֻנָּה ... הַכֹּל נָתַן
 אֲרֻנָּה ... לַמֶּלֶךְ Araunah said, ... "Araunah gives all ... to
 the king."

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29a.	שְׁלַחְתִּי לָךְ שֶׁחַד	I am sending you a gift. 1 Kgs 15:19
29b.	שְׁלַחְתִּי אִישׁ־חָכָם	I am sending a craftsman. 2 Chr 2:12

30.	מְכַרָּה נַעֲמִי Naomi is going to sell ... Ruth 4:3
31.	וַיַּעַן עֶפְרוֹן הַחִתִּי אֶת־אַבְרָהָם ... הַשָּׂדֶה נָתַתִּי לָךְ ... וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל־עֶפְרוֹן ... נָתַתִּי כֶסֶף הַשָּׂדֶה And Ephron the Hittite replied to Abraham ... , "I will give you the field ... " And he (Abraham) said to Ephron ... , "I will pay the price of the field." Gen 23:10–11, 13
32.	פִּתְחֹתַיִךְ הַיּוֹם מִן־הָאֲזָקִים I will release you from your chains today. Jer 40:4

e

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33. עַד־מָתַי מֵאֲנִתָּ לַעֲנֹת מוֹפְנִי Until when will you refuse to humble yourself before me?
Exod 10:3

34.	וְלִישְׁמַעֵאל ... הִנֵּה בִרְכָתִי אֹתוֹ	And concerning Ishmael ... I will bless him.
		Gen 17:20
35.	אִשְׁרוּנִי בָנוֹת	Women will call me happy.
		Gen 30:13
36.	הֵן גּוֹעֵנוּ אֲבָדְנוּ כָּלֵנוּ אֲבָדְנוּ:	We will die. We are lost, we are all lost.
		Num 17:27

This use is especially frequent in prophetic address (hence it is also called the "prophetic perfect" or "perfective of confidence").

37. אֶרְאֶנּוּ וְלֹא עֲתָה אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ
וְלֹא קָרוֹב דֶּרֶךְ כּוֹכֵב
מִיַּעֲקֹב
I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob.

[Num 24:17](#)

38. כָּעֵת הֶרְאִשׁוּן הַקָּל ...
וְהָאֲחֵרֹן הַכָּבִיד ... הָעַם
הַהֹלְכִים בַּחֹשֶׁךְ רְאוּ אֹר
גָּדוֹל
In the past he humbled ... in the future he will honor ... The people walking in darkness will see a great light.

[Isa 8:23–9:1](#)

30.5.2 Fientive Verbs, Perfect State

a

The various uses of the perfective form in connection with the perfect state are revealed clearly by the time-oriented character of the English verbal system.

b

The past perfect (pluperfect) signifies a resulting state in time that is past relative to the speaker. This use is frequent in (1) relative, causal, or temporal clauses, when the main clause pertains to a past situation (## 1–2) and (2) after a *waw*-disjunctive introducing parenthetical material (# 3).

1. וַיִּשָּׁב יִצְחָק וַיַּחְפֹּר
אֶת־בְּאֵרֵת הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר
חָפְרוּ בִּימֵי אַבְרָהָם
Isaac reopened the wells which had been dug in the time of Abraham.
2. וְלֹא־יָדַע יַעֲקֹב כִּי רָחֵל
גָּנְבָתָם:
Gen 26:18
Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.
3. וְשָׁמוּאֵל מָתָּה ... וְשָׁאוּל
הִסִּיר הָאֲבוֹת
Gen 31:32
Now Samuel had died ... and Saul had put away those that had a familiar spirit.

[1 Sam 28:3](#)

The present perfect signifies a resulting perfect state in present time relative to the speaker.

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4. אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ שָׁכַח אֱלֹ
הַסִּתִּיר פָּנָיו
He says to himself, "God has forgotten; he has covered his face."

[Ps 10:11](#)

5. אֱלֹהִים זָנַחְתָּנוּ
God, you have rejected us.

[Ps 60:3](#)

The future perfect signifies a resulting perfect state in future time relative to the speaker. In Hebrew, this use of the perfective form is especially frequent with עָד and compounds with it (e.g., עָד אֲשֶׁר אָם, עָד אָם).

6. **כִּי לֹא אֶעֱזֹבְךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר
אִם-עָשִׂיתִי אֵת
אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ:** I will not leave you until I shall have done
what I promised you.
[Gen 28:1–5](#)
7. **וְהִצְלִיחַ עַד-כָּלָה זַעַם** He will be successful until (the time of)
wrath is completed.
[Dan 11:36](#)
8. **וַיִּבְחָר מוֹת ... בְּכָל-הַמְּקוֹמוֹת ... אֲשֶׁר
הִדְחִיתִים שָׁם** They will prefer death ... in all the
places ... I shall have driven them.
[Jer 8:3](#)

30.5.3 Stative Verbs

a

The perfective form of stative verbs can signify most of the uses suggested for fientive verbs, but statives present a special set of problems in the perfective form. A stative inherently denotes a situation with an extended internal structure, while a perfective form conceptualizes a situation from without, as a single whole. In this section we are concerned only with those points of grammar unique to statives. Before turning to the suffix conjugation's more precise nuances in stative situations, we should note first that translation in these situations depends on the nature of the verb. Statives can be analyzed into three kinds: (1) those that denote an adjectival quality without taking an object, which often take a copula verb plus adjective in English (e.g., 'I am unworthy [קִטְנִיתִי] of any love,' [Gen 32:11](#)); (2) those that denote a quality and take a complementary object (10.2.1), which are often translated like those without an object (e.g., 'your hands are full [מָלְאָן] of blood,' [Isa 1:15](#)); and (3) quasi-fientives (22.2.3), those that exhibit both stative and fientive characteristics; these denote a mental or psychological state and take an object (e.g., 'Israel loved [אָהַב] Joseph,' [Gen 37:3](#)). The relationship between these three kinds of statives can be seen in the English trio: 'she is afraid,' 'she is afraid of him,' 'she fears him.'

b

The uses of the suffix forms of statives are similar to those of fientives. In past time a stative situation may be telic (## 1–3), ingressive (## 4–6), or constative (## 7–8). These situations take on a somewhat dynamic quality because the reference is to an event; the dynamic quality increases when the verb is transitive (viz., quasi-fientive; # 7).

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1. **כָּלָה הַבַּיִת** The temple was finished.
[1 Kgs 6:38](#)
2. **כָּלוּ בְעָשָׁן כָּלוּ:** They vanish, in smoke, they vanish.
[Ps 37:20](#)
3. **כִּי-כָלְתָה הָרָעָה מֵעַמּוֹ:** (An) evil (fate) has been determined by
him.
[1 Sam 20:7](#)
4. **וַאֲבִרָהָם זָקֵן** Abraham had become old.
[Gen 24:1](#)
5. **וַעֲיִי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּבִדּוֹ מִזָּקֵן** Israel's eyes became heavy because of
old age.
[Gen 48:10](#)
6. **וַיִּסְרַעַב וַיְאִין כָּח** He got hungry and had no strength.

7. וְלֹא זָכְרוּ ... אֶת־יְהוָה
They did not remember ... YHWH.
[Isa 44:12](#)
8. וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי:
I was not aware (of it).
[Judg 8:34](#)
[Gen 28:16](#)

C

In a present-time frame, stative situations may be similar to those encountered in dynamic situations. The situation, for example, may be gnomic (## 9–10; # 10 is also ingressive).

9. חָכֵם יִרָא וְסָר מֵרָע
The wise man fears (YHWH) and shuns evil.
[Prov 14:16](#)
10. כְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ וְרָעִיבוּ
The lions grow weak and hungry.
[Ps 34:11](#)

In the adjectival present perfective, the use of the verb form directs attention to the subject's involvement more than would a comparable construction with an adjective (27.1c).

11. מַה־יָּפִית
How lovely you are!
[Cant 7:7](#)
12. וַיֵּלֶד זָקֵנִים קָטָן
The son born to him in his old age is young.
[Gen 44:20](#)

Stative verbs denoting an effected state in the perfective may be ingressive in past time (# 4) or may signify a present state that implicitly came about through an earlier situation (## 13–15). In this use it approximates the perfect state, which refers to the preceding situation as bringing about the effected state. We can argue indirectly that stative verbs in the suffix conjugation may signify a present (effected) state by noting the historical connection in many languages between the perfective tense and the passive voice, and between the passive voice and stative forms. Comrie has shown that the perfect state and passive voice frequently go together because both refer to such an effected state. He also

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notes that "the older forms of the passive in many languages are likewise stative." ¹⁹ This historical connection displayed in many languages suggests that stative verbs in the perfective represent a present state and not a perfect event.

13. לְבָשׁוּ כָרִים הֶצֹאן
The meadows are covered with flocks.
[Ps 65:14](#)
14. יְדֵיכֶם דָּמִים מָלְאוּ:
Your hands are full of blood.
[Isa 1:15](#)
15. זָקֵנְתִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי:
I am old (or, have become old) and do not know the day of my death (i.e., I may die any day now).
[Gen 27:2](#)

The curative stative perfective is found with quasi-fientive verbs, indicating an ongoing emotional response.

16. כַּאֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֵּתִי
such as I love
[Gen 27:4](#)
17. דְּבַר־הַתֵּעֶבֶה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר שָׂנְאתִי:
this detestable thing I hate
[Jer 44:4](#)

30.5.4 Irreal Mood

a

The perfective form does not denote mood, either real (i.e., indicative in Greek and Latin) or irreal (i.e., subjunctive, optative, or imperative in the classical languages). These notions are communicated in Hebrew by particles or other features in the context, but perfective verbs are often used in such contexts.

b

Hypothetical ('if') clauses use the perfective in (1) contrary-to-fact sentences (## 1–3), (2) clauses of hypothetical assertion (# 4), and (3) expressions of a wish that is not expected to be realized (# 5). In contrary-to-fact sentences, the second ('then') clause also uses a perfective. We may presume that the suffix conjugation in a conditional clause has a perfective value even though that value is not obvious. Thomas O. Lambdin is dubious about such a view:

It is always possible to justify the use of the perfect in the protasis ['if-clause] as representing a completed action of accomplished state in the mind of the speaker. It is difficult within Hebrew itself to predict the choice between the perfect and the imperfect in the construction with the same meaning. Whatever the original distinction was, it has become obscured in Hebrew of the biblical period, so that both verbs will have, in general, the same range of translational values.²⁰

It seems unlikely that the conjugations, otherwise distinct, became confused in this one class of sentences, though that is possible.

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- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | כִּי לֹא הִתְמַהֲמַהֲנוּ
כִּי־עָתָה שָׁבְנוּ זֶה פַּעַמַּיִם: | If we had not delayed, we could have
[gone and] returned twice. |
| | | Gen 43:10 |
| 2. | לֹא הָחִיתָם אוֹתָם לֹא
הִרְגִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם: | If you had spared their lives, I would not
kill you. |
| | | Judg 8:19 |
| 3. | לֹא חָפֵץ יְהוָה לְהַמִּיתָנוּ
לֹא־לָקַח מִיָּדֵנוּ עֹלָה | If YHWH had meant to kill us, he would
not have accepted from our hands a
burnt offering. |
| | | Judg 13:23 |
| 4. | כְּמַעַט שָׁכַב אֶחָד הָעָם
אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ | One of the people easily might have slept
with your wife. |
| | | Gen 26:10 |
| 5. | לֹא־מָתְנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם | If only we had died in Egypt! |
| | | Num 14:2 |

c

A distinctive use of the irreal perfective is the precative perfective or perfective of prayer. In contrast to the use of the perfective form for situations which the speaker expresses as a wish without expectation of fulfillment, the perfective can be used with reference to situations the speaker prays for and expects to be realized. This use of the perfective form can be recognized by the presence of other unambiguous forms in the context signifying a volitional mood.²¹ As Moses Bittenwieser has noted, this use of the perfective was recognized over a century ago by Heinrich Ewald and F. Böttcher. Such a use is known in several of the cognate Semitic languages: in Aramaic, Arabic, and Ugaritic.²² According to H. L. Ginsberg, "one of the original functions of the perfect was that of an optative and precative."²³ S. R. Driver cautioned against basing the case for this Hebrew use on the Arabic evidence because in Arabic the form in question all but universally stands first in the sentence; for this reason he ruled out the possibility that the suffix conjugation could be used in Hebrew as a precative.²⁴ But far more

significant than the Arabic word order is the fact that Arabic uses the form in connection with the volitional mood.

d

The precative perfective can be recognized contextually; Buittenwieser set forth the conditions: "The precative perfect proper ... is invariably found alternating with the imperfect or the imperative; it is by this outward sign that the precative perfect may unfailingly be identified."²⁵ Unfortunately several modern translations and editions of the Bible ignore this point or waffle on it.²⁶ Once this use is admitted, it would be far

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better to follow Buittenwieser's observations. Some exegetes, too, force some other uses of the perfective form on the text. No reason exists to deny this use of the suffix conjugation when all recognize that it is used in connection with hypothetical conditions. Why should it be strange that the perfective is used in prayers? This use occurs about twenty times, in the Psalms.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>6. בְּקִרְאִי עֲנֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי צַדִּיק
 בְּצָר הִרְחַבְתָּ לִּי חֲנּוּנִי
 וּשְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתִי:</p> | <p>When I cry out, answer me, O my
 righteous God. In my distress, bring me
 relief. Be gracious to me and hear my
 prayer.²⁷</p> <p>Ps 4:2</p> |
| <p>7. הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִפִּי אַרְיֵה וּמִקַּרְנֵי
 רִמִּים עֲנִיתָנִי:</p> | <p>Rescue me from the mouth of the lions,
 save me from the horns of the wild oxen.</p> <p>Ps 22:22</p> |
| <p>8. תוֹצִיאֵנִי מִרֶשֶׁת זֶה טָמְנוּ לִי
 ... גְּדִיתָה אוֹתִי יְהוָה אֵל
 אֱמֶת:</p> | <p>Free me from the trap that is set for
 me ... Redeem me, O YHWH, the God of
 truth.</p> <p>Ps 31:5–6</p> |

Footnotes:

1. Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976) 88–94.

2. Comrie, *Aspect*, 16. F. Rundgren (cf. 29.6d n. 96) takes a similar view: he designates the suffix conjugation as the marked member, arguing that the prefix conjugation has both a negative value (i.e., imperfective) and a neutral value; see *Das althebräische Verbum: Abriss der Aspektlehre* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1961) 84–104.

It is generally recognized that the perfective form developed in the West Semitic languages, including Hebrew, from a form cognate to the one known in Akkadian as the permansive (or stative); see G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. Peter T. Daniels (Winona lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 20–23; H. Y. Priebsch, "Der Weg des semitischen Perfekts" *Ugarit Forschungen* 10 (1978) 337–47. The interpretation of the Akkadian form is, however, so controverted that it can shed little light on the working of the Hebrew system. See J. Huehnergard, "'Stative,' Predicative Form, Pseudo-Verb," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46 (1987) 215–32; and G. Buccellati, "The State of the 'Stative,'" *Fucus: A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman*, ed. Y. L. Arbeitman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1988) 153–89. On the Amarna evidence for the use of the ENWS suffix form, see (in addition to the references at 29.4j n. 71), W. L. Moran, "The Death of 'Abdi-Aširta," *Eretz-Israel* 9 (1969) 94–99.

3. GB 2. 25 (§ 16b).

4. As patterns of verb usage in the Slavonic (or Slavic) languages show; note that "in the East and West Slavonic languages (including Russian, Polish, Czech, but not Bulgarian or Serbo-Croatian), and also in Georgian ... the Perfective non-Past is primarily a future tense"; Comrie, *Aspect*, 66–67.

5. Comrie, *Aspect*, 45.

6. Comrie, *Aspect*, 18.

7. See Comrie, *Aspect*, 48–51; F. R. Blake, "The So-called Intransitive Verbal Forms in Hebrew," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 24 (1903) 145–204. For another approach to the material, see T. L. Fenton, "The Hebrew 'tenses' in the Light of Ugaritic," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1973), 4. 31–39.
8. The matter of mood is similar. A speaker may have in mind an irreal perfective situation. The suffix conjugation indicates the perfective sense, while other markers in the context signify the mood. In English, by contrast, the form of the verb itself signifies the mood.
9. Comrie, *Aspect*, 69–70.
10. For the birds, see W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 280.
11. J. A. Hughes would argue that it is the particle 'd-mty in # 2 that signifies the tense; "Another Look at the Hebrew Tenses," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29 (1970) 12–24; cf. 1. HS 265.
12. On this and the next several points, see both Joüon § 112c-e / pp. 296–97 and S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1892) 14–16.
13. Comrie refers to the "experiential perfect," which indicates "that a given situation has held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present"; *Aspect*, 58.
14. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 17.
15. Cf. [Ruth 4:4](#); Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 17.
16. See Dennis Pardee, "The 'Epistolary Perfect' in Hebrew Letters," *Biblische Notizen* 22 (1983) 34–40; Pardee and R. M. Whiting, "Aspects of Epistolary Verbal Usage in Ugaritic and Akkadian," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50 (1987) 1–31; cf *LHS* 265.
17. A test for performativity in English is provided by 'hereby'; contrast 'I hereby renounce title to the estates' and 'I renounce title to the estates by marrying the woman I love.' On performativity, see Pardee and Whiting, "Epistolary Verbal Usage," 23–31; E. Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible. II. Syntax and Semantics," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 39 (1982) 26–38. D. R. Hillers, in "Some Performative Utterances in Biblical Hebrew" (unpublished), has a fairly full list, including the following examples from roots that are not entirely obvious candidates for performativity: 'hb 'to love, declare allegiance to' ([Exod 21:5](#)), bhr 'to choose' ([Hag 2:23](#)), hrp 'to defy' ([1 Sam 17:10](#)), nsk 'to appoint' ([Ps 2:6](#)), 'br *Hiphil* ([Zech 3:4](#)), and pqd *Hiphil* ([Jer 1:10](#)). Many of the instantaneous perfectives noted here may be taken as performatives.
18. Cf. Joüon § 112g-i / pp. 298–300; *LHS* 265. The role of what B. Zuber calls the "uncertainty at first blush" of the sense of certain forms would be worth exploring; see *Das Tempussystem des biblischen Hebräisch* (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 164; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985) 140–41.
19. Comrie, *Aspect*, 86.
20. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 277.
21. This discussion follows Moses Buttenwieser, *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated with a New Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1938) 18–25.
22. See Buttenwieser, *Psalms*, 21–23; *UT* § 13.28. In Inscriptional Hebrew, note the precative perfective in M. O'Connor, "The Poetic Inscription from Khirbet el-Qôm," *Vetus Testamentum* 37 (1987) 224–30.
23. H. L. Ginsberg, "The Rebellion and Death of Ba'lu," *Orientalia* 5 (1936) 161–98, at 177.
24. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 25–26; so also GKC § 106n n.2/ p.312.
25. Buttenwieser, *Psalms*, 21.
26. In some obvious passages, e.g., the 1978 edition of the NIV concedes its use, but unless the context absolutely demands a precative sense, it translates the perfective as a past; compare [Ps 3:8](#) and [4:2](#). (The inconsistency was corrected in 1984.) In [Ps 7:7](#), the MT has hinnāsē, and *BHS* considers wəhinnāsē.
27. RSV renders, following the usual sense of the perfective, against the sense of the passage, 'Answer me ... Thou hast given me room ... Be gracious to me, and hear ...' *BHS* proposes two emendations of hirḥābtā. In fact, the verb is precative, as, e.g., M. Dahood notes in [Psalms 1:1–50](#) (*Anchor Bible* 16; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966) 23.

31 Prefix (Non-Perfective) Conjugation

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31.1 Form and Meaning

a

The non-perfective conjugation has a broader range of meaning than the perfective. It is also historically a more complex form, both in itself and in relation to the jussive and cohortative moods. Some of the history of the verbal system is outlined in Chapter 29; we must, however, take up the topic again before proposing a working view of the Biblical Hebrew non-perfective.¹

31.1.1 A Historical View

a

The Amarna letters from Byblos, from the fourteenth century B.C.E., provide what is often judged a reliable guide to a verbal system like the one possessed by Biblical Hebrew's ancestor (29.4). Byblian Canaanite has at least three prefix conjugations, including *yaqtulu* and *yaqtul*, the forms of interest here, and subjunctive *yaqtula*, the antecedent to the Hebrew cohortative. (Amarna Canaanite and other forms of ENWS show traces of an energetic pattern, too, related to the Arabic heavy energetic *yaqtulanna*

and the light energetic *yaqtulan*.)² These forms help to explain the background of various Biblical Hebrew forms.

b

On the usual understanding, an understanding based on comparative Semitic grammar, the longer form, *yaqtulu*, signifies (1) the present-future and (2) the iterative past in main clauses, and (3) is used in subordinate or circumstantial clauses. The shorter form, *yaqtul*, signifies usually jussive mood or preterite action, commonly when bound with *waw*-relative and rarely when free. These two forms would have largely fallen together when *yaqtulu* lost its final short vowel, *u*. It has been argued that formal vestiges of the distinction between two such prefix conjugations survive in the *Hiphil* stem of the regular verb: *yaqtîl* (signifying the non-perfective values associated with *yaqtulu*) versus *yāqtēl* (signifying the jussive value of *yaqtul* in its free form and the preterite value of *yaqtul* when bound with *waw*-relative). Similar distinctions occur in the *Qal* stem with III-*he* verbs (*yibnēh* [corresponding to *yaqtulu*] versus *yiben* [corresponding to *yaqtul*]); with hollow verbs (i.e., II-*waw*/*yodh*; *yaqūm* [non-perfective] versus *yaqom* [jussive/preterite with relative *waw*]); and with geminate verbs (*yāsōb* [non-perfective] versus *yāsōb* [jussive/preterite with relative *waw*]).³

c

If this historical reconstruction of the "proto-Hebrew" prefix conjugations be correct, then the jussive value of the historical short form *yaqtul* was associated with the later morphologically unified conjugation. As we explained in 29.4, the correctness of this reconstruction and its relevance to Biblical Hebrew have been doubted. To the question, Did the preterite value of *yaqtul* become a part of the later, largely morphologically unified prefix conjugation of Hebrew, Hans Bauer, Gotthelf Bergsträsser, and others have answered affirmatively. But Carl Brockelmann, Diethelm Michel, and others have denied that the prefix conjugation, whether in its free form or bound with relative *waw*, signifies a preterite notion (i.e., serves as a past perfective form).

d

The following arguments, based on Hebrew usage, favor the view that (some part of) the prefix conjugation may denote preterite action. (1) If we accept the view that the jussive value of *yaqtul* was incorporated into the prefix conjugation, then we might expect that the preterite value of *yaqtul* was also part of the conjugation. (2) The prefix conjugation bound with *waw*-relative, the form that most clearly shows its probable historical origin in *yaqtul*, most frequently seems to refer to preterite action. (3) In Ugaritic (ca. 1400 B.C.E.), another Early Northwest Semitic dialect, the prefix conjugation may have referred to past tense as well as had the meanings we normally associate

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with the non-perfective. In both Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry one finds the alternation of *qtl/yqtl* or *yqtl/qtl* of the same verb in associated lines. Moshe Held explained both as preterites, supposing the poet exchanged the forms for stylistic reasons.⁴ (4) In some prose texts it seems that some prefix forms without *waw* must be taken as preterites.⁵

1. אֶעֱלֶה אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם I brought you up from Egypt.
[Judg 2:1](#)

(5) After the adverbials **אִז**, **טֵרַם** and **בְּטֵרַם** it seems that some prefix forms must be taken as preterites.⁶ This is a conditioned use, however, as will be seen. (6) In poetic texts recounting history the unbound prefix conjugation seems sometimes to signify preterite situations. David Robertson argues that in such poetic texts (e.g., [Exodus 15](#), [Amos 2:9–12](#)) unbound *yqtl* is used of the past where no habitual or frequentative notion is relevant.⁷ Walter Gross finds a similar pattern in such material; he also finds that short *yqtl* (< *yaqtul*) forms tend to occur clause initially (e.g., *yšb* in [Deut 32:8](#)) and long *yqtl* (< *yaqtulu*) forms tend to occur clause internally (e.g., *tšth* in [Deut 32:14](#)). The clause-initial forms Gross associates with *wayyiqtol*, a form with perfective meaning; the non-clause-initial forms he assigns a "historical imperfect aspect."⁸ (7) A comparison of the synoptic psalms [Psalm 18](#) and [2 Samuel 22](#) reveals that the remains of the historically short prefix conjugation apparently alternate between the free and bound forms. If the bound form of *yqtl* signifies preterite action, then we have strong evidence that the free form can also signify preterite action. Compare, for example:

- 2a. וַיַּשֶּׂת חֹשֶׁךְ ... סִכּוֹת And he made(?) darkness ... his covering.
[2 Sam 22:12](#)
- 2b. יָשֶׁת חֹשֶׁךְ ... סִכָּתוֹ He made(?) darkness ... his covering.
[Ps 18:12](#)

The same phenomenon occurs in vv [7](#), [39](#), [44](#), and the opposite is found in v [14](#). This is an impressive range of arguments from morphological development and from usage that the Hebrew prefix conjugation contains at least two paradigms, the long (< *yaqtulu*) signifying imperfective and dependent situations and the short (< *yaqtul*) signifying a jussive when unbound and a preterite, especially when bound with relative *waw*.

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e

On the other side of the ledger, however, the following arguments (which we present with some critical appraisal) convince some scholars that an alleged preterite value of *yaqtul* did not come over into the prefix conjugation or at least the unbound form of it.⁹ (1) The jussive value of the historical *yaqtul* could readily be merged with the values of the non-perfective *yaqtulu* conjugation. As we shall see, the non-perfective form often signifies volitional or

contingent situations, both notions also entailed by the jussive mood. By contrast, the preterite value hardly comports with the range of the nonperfective's senses. (2) Correlatively, one would not suppose that the (preterite paradigm of the) prefix conjugation could have a value also associated with the suffix conjugation. Michel argues:

It must be accepted that every verb form must have had its own meaning. A language does not develop varying verb forms if they do not serve to express varying meanings. And if a language develops only two verb forms, it has to be accepted that these two express basic differences, perhaps even contrasts ... Should one really accept that a language in which obviously only two points of view were decisive in connection with actions, later mixed these up to such an extent that it uses the same verb form for the two points of view?¹⁰

On the other hand, in Byblian Canaanite, both *qatala* and *yaqtul* are preterite. Further, we may wonder whether the morphological and syntactic factors distinguishing the offspring of *yaqtulu* and *yaqtul* do not drastically reduce the number of prefix forms actually "competing" with suffix forms. (The diversity of these two factors does not, it should be noted, militate against their working together.) (3) *Wayyqtl* in even the most ancient poetry does not always represent a preterite, and this fact suggests that it does not preserve the alleged preterite notion of *yaqtul*. For example, in [Psalm 29](#), an ancient poem, we find the following.

3. קול יהוה שִׁבַּר אֲרָזִים
יִשְׁבֵּר יְהוה אֶת־אֲרָזֵי
הַלְבָּנוֹן:
The voice of YHWH breaks (participle)
the cedars; YHWH breaks up (*wayyqtl*)
the cedars of Lebanon.
[Ps 29:5](#)
4. קול יהוה יְחַלֵּל אֵילֹת
וַיַּחַשְׁף־יַעֲרֹת
וּבְהִיכָלוֹ כָּלֹ אָמַר כְּבוֹד:
The voice of YHWH twists (*yqtl*) the oaks
and strips (*wayyqtl*) the forest bare, and
in his temple all cry (participle), "Glory!"
[Ps 29:9](#)

F. C. Fensham thinks that the *wayyqtl* forms in this psalm are later innovations of the Masoretes.¹¹ We do not think so, but, be that as it may, the text we have in hand—the

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object of our study—does not seem to treat them as preterites, or even as having past time reference. (4) Unquestionably the prefix conjugation both in ENWS and in Biblical Hebrew could represent past situations in narrative, but that does not necessarily mean that it functioned as a preterite. As we shall see, the prefix conjugation can signify imperfective past action. So also in Hebrew poetry the prefix conjugation in parallel with the suffix conjugation may signify one of its non-perfective past meanings. For example, perhaps we should find an ingressive and a telic sense in these lines.

5. תְּהִמָּת יַבַּיִם
יָרְדוּ בְּמִצּוֹלֹת כְּמוֹ־אֶבֶן:
The deep waters began to cover them;
they sank to the depths like a stone.
[Exod 15:5](#)

On a historical view, however, the prefix conjugation form here would be associated not with *yaqtul* but with *yaqtulu*. (5) The same event can be described either as a perfective or as a non-perfective situation, depending solely on the subjective view of the speaker. This is not so in the case of a tense system, for notions of absolute time stand apart from the speaker's views: an event either took place prior to the time of speaking or not. There is much more to the Hebrew system than time: the speaker enjoys the latitude of representing the same event by both the prefix and suffix conjugations. Because they are often used subjectively to represent a situation, it is possible for a poet to juxtapose complementary uses of the conjugations over against one another. We can demonstrate the complementary use of the conjugations with reference to present-time uses. For example, the poet may set a gnomic perfective over against a habitual non-perfective, as in # 6.

6. בְּמוֹת אָדָם רָשָׁע תֵּאָבֵד
תִּקְוָה וְתוֹחֶלֶת אוֹנִים
אָבֵדָה:
When a wicked person dies, his hope
perishes; all he expected from his power
perishes.

[Prov 11:7](#)

Or, the poet may juxtapose the instantaneous perfective with the incipient-progressive non-perfective, as in # 7.

7. כִּי־אֲשָׂא אֶל־שָׁמַיִם יָדִי For I lift up my hand to heaven, and I
וְאָמַרְתִּי say ...

[Deut 32:40](#)

If the two conjugations can refer in juxtaposition to present time, we should expect the same phenomenon with reference to past time. For this reason it seems unlikely that when the two conjugations are nearby they both represent a perfective state in past time. Again, however, the historical view contends that this is true, but that these cases reflect the historical *yaqtulu* and thus do not disprove that historical *yaqtul* with its preterite value was preserved in other cases.

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f

(6) The prose passages in which the unbound prefix form signifies a preterite are not without difficulties. The form in # 1 is the long form, not the short form the theory predicts. Such passages may, however, be conditioned in some non-obvious way or may simply be exceptional.¹² The few passages with an unexpected prefix conjugation in prose cannot override the overwhelming evidence in the opposite direction. S. R. Driver thought that some of them were frequentative and Bergsträsser that some were used as a historical present for vivid description of the event.¹³ Leslie McFall rightly calls for an examination of the 775 simple *yqtl* forms used of past events.¹⁴ (7) The use of the long prefix forms of weak verbs with a preterite value after אַז, אַזְרָם and אַזְרָם is syntactically conditioned and cannot be used as evidence for the same use in other situations. (8) McFall notes that the short prefix form is not consistently used with relative *waw* and that both the long and short form may have the same sense. He cites as an example a partially duplicated phrase in Jeremiah, וַיַּעֲלֶה נִשְׁאִים (10:13) and לְנִשְׁאִים (51:16), 'and he makes the mist rise,' as showing that the "shortening is not due to the prefixed וַ, but to style, or variety, or some other such reason."¹⁵ To be sure, the long form of a weak verb can be used as a jussive (e.g., תִּרְחַח in [Gen 1:9](#); cf. Chap. 34.4), yet no one denies that the jussive and the non-perfective can be distinguished.

g

Whether or not the prefix conjugation (as a whole, apart from the *yaqtul/yaqtulu* distinction) can serve as a preterite, especially in its unbound form in Hebrew poetry, cannot be decided beyond reasonable doubt at present. Two factors complicate the discussion and prevent us from coming to a decisive answer. First, since the Hebrew conjugations do not simply represent absolute time but the speaker's subjective representation of a state or an event, the interpretation of the forms is also subjective. It is instructive to note, for example, that whereas Held thinks the two forms of differing conjugations in [Ps 93:3](#) both signify preterite action, Fensham thinks that both signify habitual activity.¹⁶ Second, etymology and usage are related in complex ways. While the comparative-historical evidence favors the view that earlier *yaqtul*, which signified preterite action, survived in Hebrew *wayyqtl*, in actual usage the bound form seems to have taken on the values of the suffix conjugation, including those involving other time periods. In short, it lost its original value in the bound form to take on new values, and we may suppose that the same may have happened in the case of the unbound form.

h

On balance the comparative-historical evidence seems to demand some respect, and we believe that vestiges of historical *yaqtul* survive in the prefix conjugation beyond the jussive. In prose the *waw*-relative is normally bound with the offspring of preterite *yaqtul*, a form not consistently differentiated from the descendants of *yaqtulu*. The basically similar situation in poetry is complicated by stylistic and idiosyncratic usage as well as by variation. Poetry, especially early poetry, occasionally preserves a *yaqtul* preterite in unbound form, as an archaic or archaizing usage (1.4.1).

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31.1.2 A Working View

a

In Chapter 29 we noted that most grammarians have erred in trying to abstract one meaning from the several uses of the prefix conjugation, and we suggested that the only possible generalization had to be expressed negatively: the non-perfective conjugation stands over against the perfective conjugation. The non-perfective prefix conjugation has two major values: to signify either an imperfective situation in past and present time, or a dependent situation. In the latter use, the situation may be dependent on the speaker, the subject, or another situation.

b

We analyze the use of the prefix conjugation first according to time: past time (31.2) and present time (31.3). We group its uses to represent dependent situations into those involving the speaker or the subject, and those dependent on another situation. We divide the first group into those situations where speakers do not impose their will on the subject (the modal uses, 31.4) and those in which they do (the volitional uses, 31.5). Finally, we discuss other contingent uses, including its use in the less frequent past-time frame with certain particles (31.6), and some morphological relics (31.7).

31.2 Non-Perfective and Past Time

a

A clear demonstration of non-perfective and past-time relations is provided by an Arabic example.

wā ttabaʿū (pfv.,tbʿ) mā tatlū (impfv., tly) š-šayāʿīnu ʿalā mulki sulaymān¹⁷

And they followed that which the demons used to recite (or, follow) in Solomon's reign.

The time reference of the prefix conjugation tatlū 'they used to recite' is past and absolute because it occurred in a time prior to the event of speaking; the aspect is imperfective, more specifically customary (iterative), because explicit reference is made to the internal temporal structure of the situation, viewing the situation from within, in contrast to ʿittabaʿu 'they followed,' whereby explicit reference is made to the situation as a single whole, viewing the situation from without. The same combination of time reference and aspect occurs in Hebrew, in several patterns.

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b

In the customary non-perfective the internal structure of a situation is conceived of as extended over an indefinite period in the time prior to the act of speaking. Bernard Comrie remarks that the view may be "so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period."¹⁸ The past customary non-perfective, in contrast to what we call the present non-perfective, implies that the situation described no longer holds at the time of the utterance. With active situations the customary non-perfective is essentially a statement of iterativity (i.e., 'he used to do X'; ## 1–4). This usage is less frequent with stative situations, in which it represents the situation as existing without interruption (## 5–6; note that the verbs in question are not stative).¹⁹

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | וַאֲדַ יַעֲלֶה מִן־הָאָרֶץ | Streams(?) would come up from the ground.
Gen 2:6 |
| 2. | כָּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה אִיּוֹב
כָּל־הַיָּמִים: | Thus Job would always do.
Job 1:5 |
| 3. | וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה | And so he used to do annually.
1 Sam 1:7 |
| 4. | אֲשֶׁר יַחֲדּוּ נַמְתִּיק סוּד | ... with whom we used to enjoy fellowship; we used to walk together in |

בְּבֵית אֱלֹהִים נִהְלַךְ בְּרָגֶשׁ:

the throng into the house of God.²⁰

[Ps 55:15](#)

5. וּבִלְוֵלִים יַעֲלוּ עַל-הַתִּיכְנָה

A stairway led up to the middle level.

[1 Kgs 6:8](#)

6. כָּל-יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׁן הָעֶנָן
עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן יִחַנו:

All the days the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they would camp.

[Num 9:18](#)

c

In the incipient past non-perfective the speaker has in view the initial and continuing phases within the internal temporal structure of a past situation. In contrast to the participle, which represents a situation as continuing without interruption or progressing but does not focus on the inception of the situation, the prefix conjugation in this use combines the notions of commencement and continuation. Like the participle, this use lends itself to circumstantial clauses. Brockelmann seems to have had this use in mind when he wrote: "The imperfect can designate past events with a lively sympathy ... In poetry the imperfect can also vividly visualize unique actions of the past."²¹ Driver, though mistakenly viewing this function as the one essential meaning of the prefix conjugation, described it more precisely:

The imperfect does not imply mere continuance as such (which is the function of the participle), though, inasmuch as it emphasizes the process introducing and leading to completion, it expresses what may be termed progressive continuance; by thus seizing

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upon an action while nascent, and representing it under its most striking and impressive aspect (for it is just when a fresh object first appears upon a scene that it exhibits greater energy, and is, so to speak, more aggressive, than either while it simply continues or after it has been completed), it can present it in the liveliest manner possible.²²

7. וַיָּבֹא חוּשַׁי ... הָעִיר
וַאֲבִשָׁלָם יָבֹא יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

And Hushai ... came into the city while Absalom entered (began entering) Jerusalem.

[2 Sam 15:37](#)

8. וַיִּנָּעוּ אֲמוֹת הַסָּפִים ...
וְהַבַּיִת יִמָּלֵא עָשָׁן:

The doorposts shook ... and the temple filled (began filling) with smoke.

[Isa 6:4](#)

9. וַיַּעֲלוּ אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹאֵקָם
וַיָּךְ בַּפִּלְשְׁתִּים ... וְהָעָם
יָשְׁבוּ אַחֲרָיו אֲדָ-לְפָשֵׁט:

And the men of Israel retreated. He (Eleazar) stood his ground and struck the Philistines ... and the troops returned (began returning) after him but only to strip the dead.

[2 Sam 23:9–10](#)

10. וַתִּתְפַּלֵּל עַל-יְהוָה וּבְכָה
תְּבָכָה:

She prayed to YHWH and began weeping bitterly.

[1 Sam 1:10](#)

31.3 Non-Perfective and Present Time

a

Under the heading of present time we consider the range of uses associated with English present tenses, including certain habitual or gnomic patterns.

b

By progressive non-perfective we mean a pattern similar to the customary nonperfective, but in a present-time

frame with reference to the act of speaking. Here the non-perfective, instead of implying that a specific situation has ceased, represents it as ongoing. This pattern is more common with dynamic situations. Contrast, for example, **בָּאתָ אֵי-מִזֶּה**, 'Where have you come from?', with **וְאָנָה תֵּלְכִי**, 'Where are you going?', in [Gen 16:8](#). Regarding pairs like these William Turner surprisingly confessed:

It is, at the same time, to be freely granted that there are many instances in which in our apprehension, there exists no apparent reason why the one form rather than the other should be employed, as e.g ... **מֵאֵין תָּבוֹא**, and ... **מֵאֵין בָּאתָ**.²³

McFall, however, nicely explains the difference.

The verb forms have been determined by the actual situation then prevailing, for in [Gen. 16:8](#) Hagar was resting when the angel asked her, 'Whence camest thou?' (**אֵי-מִזֶּה בָּאתָ**). It would have been inappropriate to have used the *yqtl* form since that would have implied that she was going somewhere at that moment; though it is possible that Hagar could have been viewed as on a journey, and her present situation ignored.

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Joseph uses the *qtl* form in [Gen. 42:7](#), 'Whence came ye?' (**מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם**), because at that precise moment it was obvious they were not on a journey, but had arrived. Notice, however, the difference in [Jos. 9:8](#), 'Who are you? And where do you come from?' (**וּמֵאֵיב תִּבְאוּ**). It is obvious to Joshua that these men are on a journey, that is their present activity. Joshua's question is: From where did you start out on your journey? He does not know yet that he is the goal of their journey; but this comes out in the choice of verb form they use: 'From a very far country your servants have come, **בָּאוּ** ...', implying that they had finished their journey and had reached their destination.²⁴

Progressive non-perfective forms in poetry can be used in association with similar forms (## 1–2) or with a persistent (present) perfective form (# 3; 30.5.1c).

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | יִפְרָצֵנִי פָּרֵץ עַל-פְּנֵי-פָּרֵץ
יִרָץ עָלַי כְּגִבּוֹר: | Again and again he bursts upon me; he
rushes at me like a warrior.

Job 16:14 |
| 2. | יוֹם לַיּוֹם יִבִּיעַ אֲמַר
וְלַיְלָה לְלַיְלָה יַחְזִיגֵה-דַּעַת: | Day after day they (the heavens) pour
forth speech; night after night they
display knowledge.

Ps 19:3 |
| 3. | אֱלֹהִים נֹצֵב בְּעֶדְת־אֵל
בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט: | God presides (pfv.) in the great
assembly; he gives judgment (non-pfv.)
among the divine beings.

Ps 82:1 |

c

A stative non-perfective represents the internal temporal structure of a stative (non-changing) present situation. This use differs from the participle in that the latter occurs in dynamic situations.

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---|
| 4. | בְּצוּר־יְרוֹם מְנִי תִנְחֵנִי: | Lead me to a rock that is higher than I.

Ps 61:3 |
|----|---------------------------------|---|

This use forms a fitting complement for stative situations represented by the perfective conjugation (30.5.3c).

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|--|
| 5. | לֹא יָדְעוּ וְלֹא יִבְיִנוּ | They do not know (pfv.) and do not
understand.

Ps 82:5 |
|----|-----------------------------|--|

d

In the incipient present non-perfective the internal temporal structure of a situation is conceived of as beginning and continuing in the non-past (## 6–8). It is like the incipient past non-perfective, except that the situation exists not prior to the time of speaking but at the same time. In verse, this type of non-perfective can be associated with an instantaneous perfective (# 9; 30.5.1d).

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- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 6. | הַקְשִׁיבָה לְקוֹל שׁוֹעִי ...
כִּי־אֵלֶיךָ אֶתְפַּלֵּל: | Pay attention to my cry for help, ...
because to you I pray (begin praying). |
| | | Ps 5:3 |
| 7. | שְׁמַע־יְהוָה קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא | Hear, YHWH, as I call (begin calling)
aloud. |
| | | Ps 27:7 |
| 8. | נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי יֹאמַר
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: | "Comfort, comfort my people," your
God begins to say. |
| | | Isa 40:1 |
| 9. | אָמְרוּ לָכוּ וְנִכְחִידֵם מִגּוֹי...
כִּי נִזְעְצְעוּ לֵב יַחְדָּו
עָלֶיךָ בְּרִית יִכְרְתוּ | They say (pfv.), "Come, let us efface
them from (being) a nation ...
They plot together (pfv.) with one mind,
they form (non-pfv.) an alliance against
you. |
| | | Ps 83:5–6 |

e

By habitual non-perfective we mean the representation of a repeated general, nonspecific situation. Rarely in prose, but rather frequently in poetry and proverbial expressions, the non-perfective is used to denote habitual activity with no specific tense value. It forms a fitting parallel with the gnomic perfective (30.5.1c).²⁵ Whereas the gnomic perfective conceives of a universal state or event as a single event, the habitual non-perfective represents the internal temporal phases of the general situation as occurring over and over again, including the time present to the act of speaking.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 10. | כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יִלֵּק בְּלִשׁוֹנוֹ ...
כַּאֲשֶׁר יִלֵּק הַכָּלָב | whoever laps with his tongue ... as a
dog laps |
| | | Judg 7:5 |
| 11. | עַל־כֵּן לֹא־יֹאכְלוּ
בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַזֶּה אֶת־גִּיד
הַנֶּשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר עַל־כֶּף | Therefore to this day the Israelites do
not eat the tendon attached to the
socket of the hip. |
| | | Gen 32:33 |
| 12. | הַשֹּׁחַד יַעֲוִר פְּקָחִים | A bribe blinds officials. |
| | | Exod 23:8 |
| 13. | בֶּן חָכָם יִשְׂמַח־אָב | A wise son makes his father glad. |
| | | Prov 10:1 |

31.4 Modal Uses of the Non-Perfective

a

Whereas tense (Latin *tempus*) refers to the absolute temporal relationship of the situation to the speaker, mood refers to a subjective judgment about the factuality of the situation. It may be regarded as real (i.e., indicative in the classical languages) or other than real (irreal or unreal mood, i.e., subjunctive and optative in the classical languages). A situation may be regarded as irreal for one of two reasons: (1) because the speaker is uncertain

about the reality of the situation itself, or (2) because the speaker is uncertain

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about the reality existing between the subject and its predicate in the situation. That is, the situation may be contingent on the relationship (1) of the speaker to the statement or (2) of the subject of the statement to that predicated of it. For example, the speaker, wishing the subject to sing, may say, 'Tubal-Cain should start singing now,' but the situation proposed is not real, for it depends on the subject's willingness to accede to the speaker's will. On the other hand, the speaker, uncertain about the subject's wish to sing may say, 'Tubal-Cain may sing when he sees Jubal.' In either case the mood is unreal.

b

In the Germanic languages (including English) the nature of the unreality is often expressed by adding models such as 'can, should, must, may,' etc., to the infinitive of the verb in question.²⁶ In Hebrew, while a construction involving a finite verb²⁷ with an infinitive may be used, more often the simple prefix conjugation suffices, allowing other indications in the context to decide its precise value.

c

The non-perfective of capability denotes the subject's capability to perform the action expressed by the root. This use often overlaps with "consequential situations."

1. אֵיכָּהָ אֲשָׂא לְבִדִּי טַרְחָכֶם How can I bear your problems all by myself?
[Deut 1:12](#)

The expression לֹא-אוֹכֵל לְבִדִּי שְׂאֵת

אַתְּכֶם in [Deut 1:9](#) shows that this value is relevant for the prefix conjugation in # 1.

2. וְחֶרֶשׁ לֹא יִמָּצֵא Not a blacksmith could be found.
[1 Sam 13:19](#)
3. וְאַתָּה קַח-לְךָ מִכָּל-מֵאֲכָל אֲשֶׁר־יֵאֱכָל You, take every kind of food that is edible.
[Gen 6:21](#)
4. וְאִם בְּאֶבֶן יָד אֲשֶׁר־יָמוּת בָּהּ הַכָּהוּ If he struck him with a hand stone which could kill ...
[Num 35:17](#)
5. וְלֹא יָקוּמוּן They could not rise.²⁸
[2 Sam 22:39](#)
6. וְאֲנִי כְחֶרֶשׁ לֹא אֲשָׁמַע I am like a deaf person, who cannot hear.
[Ps 38:14](#)

RSV renders # 6 as 'I am like a man who does not hear,' thereby showing the close connection between the modal nuance and consequential results; the relative clause in either case depends on the situation in the primary clause.

d

The non-perfective of permission denotes the speaker's permission for the subject to perform an action.

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7. אַתְּ־שִׁנִּי בְנֵי תָמוּת You may kill my two sons.
[Gen 42:37](#)
8. תִּגְשׁ You may require payment from a

foreigner.

[Deut 15:3](#)

9. יהוה מִי־יגור בְּאֶהֱלִי
מִי־ישכן בְּהַר קֹדֶשׁ:
YHWH, who may dwell in your tent? Who
may live on your holy hill?

[Ps 15:1](#)

e

The non-perfective of possibility denotes the possibility that the subject may perform an action.

10. כָּל־מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּדְרֹךְ
כַּף־רַגְלְכֶם בּוֹ
every place where you may set your
foot

[Josh 1:3](#)

This use is common in the protasis of conditional clauses (see 38.6).

f

The non-perfective of deliberation denotes the speaker's or subject's deliberation as to whether a situation should take place. This use normally involves questions of doubt and thus resembles the Greek subjunctive in questions. Strictly speaking, deliberative questions ask not about the factuality of the action but about the desirability or necessity of it.

11. וְלֹשְׁנָיִי יִהְיֶה תֹאֲהָבָה
Should you love the enemies of YHWH?
[29](#)
[2 Chr 19:2](#)
12. לָמָּה אֶשְׁכַּל גַּם־שְׁנֵיכֶם
Why should I lose both of you?
[Gen 27:45](#)
13. הֲכִזֹּנָה יַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־אֲחֹתִנוּ:
Should he have treated our sister like a
prostitute?
[Gen 34:3–1](#)
14. כִּי־נָתַן לַצָּבָאָךְ לֶחֶם:
... that we should give bread to your
troops?
[Judg 8:6](#)

g

The non-perfective of obligation refers to either what the speaker considers to be the subject's obligatory or necessary conduct or what the subject considers to be an obligation. This use is similar to the one above, but instead of occurring in an interrogatory clause it occurs in a declarative statement. This use is closely related to both the use of the prefix conjugation to express volition and to its use for consequential results.

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15. בָּרַב עֶזְדְּךָ יִכְחָשׁוּ לָךְ
אִי־בִידְךָ:
So great is your power that your
enemies (must) cringe before you.
[Ps 66:3](#)
16. וְהוֹרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר
תַּעֲשׂוּן
I will teach you what you should do.
[Exod 4:15](#)
17. אֲחֻטָּנָה מִיָּדִי תִבְקָשָׁנָה
I would have to bear the loss of it
myself.
[Gen 31:39](#)
18. מַעֲשִׂים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יַעֲשׂוּ
You have done things to me that should
not be done.

עֲשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי:

[Gen 20:9](#)

h

The non-perfective of desire denotes a desire or wish of the subject.

19. הֲתֵלֵכִי עִם־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה Will you (i.e., do you wish to) go with this man?
[Gen 24:58](#)
20. אִם־אַתָּה תִּקַּח־לָךְ קָח If you want to take it, do so.
[1 Sam 21:10](#)
21. וְלֹא יִשְׁמְרֵנוּ בְּעָלָיו yet the owner would not keep it penned up
[Exod 21:36](#)

31.5 Volitional Uses of the Non-Perfective

a

Closely related to the modal nuances of the non-perfective, which express a situation wherein the action of the subject is contingent on the will of the speaker, is its use in situations wherein the speaker imposes an obligation on the subject addressed. In this use it approximates the imperative mood and is, in fact, frequently found in conjunction with an imperative form. The force with which the speaker is able to make the imposition depends on the social distance between speaker and addressee. If an inferior addresses a superior the obligation takes the force of a request, but if the communication proceeds from a superior to an inferior it has the force of a command. The volitional nonperfective is closely related both morphologically and semantically to the volitional paradigms (Chap. 34), including the cohortative and the jussive as well as the imperative. These forms emphasize the will of the speaker, whereas the non-perfectives to be treated here emphasize the action enjoined or forbidden.

b

A non-perfective of injunction expresses the speaker's will in a positive request or command.

1. תְּחַטְּאֵנִי בְּאִזּוֹב וְאֶטְהַר Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.³⁰
[Ps 51:9](#)
2. וְתִרְאֶה הַיֵּבֶשֶׁה Let the dry ground appear.
[Gen 1:9](#)
3. הִטְ אָזְנוֹךָ וּשְׁמַע דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים וּלְבָבְךָ תִּשְׁמַח לְדַעְתִּי: Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise; pay attention to my knowledge.
[Prov 22:17](#)

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c

A non-perfective of instruction expresses the speaker's will in a context of legislation or teaching.

4. מִפְּנֵי שִׁיבָה תָקוּם (you shall) rise in the presence of the aged.
[Lev 19:32](#)
5. אָדָם כִּי־יָקִירִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַיהוָה מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה When any of you bring a qorban-offering to YHWH, you shall bring your qorban-offering from cattle, be it from

מִן־הַבָּקָר וּמִן־הַצֹּאן
תִּקְרִיבוּ אֶת־קִרְבָּנְכֶם:

herd or flock.

[Lev 1:2](#)

6. דַּבְּרוּ אֶל־כָּל־עֵדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל
לֵאמֹר ... וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם אִישׁ
שֶׁה

Speak to all the congregation of Israel,
saying, " ... they shall take for
themselves, each one, a lamb."

[Exod 12:3](#)

d

A non-perfective of prohibition expresses negative instruction in legal literature. The use of לֹא with the non-perfective is common in legislative contexts.

7. וְלֹא־תוֹתִירוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר Do not leave any of it till morning.

[Exod 12:10](#)

8. לֹא תִרְצַח: You shall not murder.

[Exod 20:1–3](#)

31.6 Further Contingent Uses of the Non-Perfective

a

Three uses of the non-perfective verb form may be gathered under the heading of other uses based on contingency. Two of the three are related to the irreal senses, and two of the three are associated with particles.

31.6.1 With Particles Expressing Contingency

a

Related to the use of the unmarked prefix conjugation with irreal modal nuances (31.4) is its use with particles expressing uncertainty or contingency. These may be divided into conditional particles introducing the protasis (the 'if' clause in an 'if-then' sentence) and telic particles introducing the apodosis (the 'thee' clause).

b

The most common of the conditional particles is אִם 'if.' The conjunction כִּי can be similarly used. The counterfactual conditional particle is לוֹ 'if only (... but it is not so).³¹

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1. אִם־אֶצְדָּק If I were innocent ...
[Job 9:20](#)
2. אִם־אֶמְצָא ... חֲמִשִּׁים
צְדִיקִים If I find ... fifty righteous people ...
[Gen 18:26](#)
3. כִּי יִפְגֹּשֶׁךָ עֵשָׂו אָחִי When my brother Esau meets you ...
[Gen 32:1–8](#)
4. לוֹ שָׁקוֹל יִשְׁקָל כְּעֵשִׂי If only my anguish could be weighed!
[Job 6:2](#)

c

The telic particles may be positive (לְמַעַן, בְּעֵבוּר, 'so that'; אֲשֶׁר is also so used) or negative (לְבַלְתִּי, פֶּן, 'so that not = lest').³² In Latin, telic particles are used not with the indicative mood, the mood of certainty, but with the subjunctive, the mood of contingency.

5. לְמַעַן יִיטַב־לִי ... so that I will be treated well.
[Gen 12:13](#)
6. וּבְעֵבוּר תִּהְיֶה יִרְאָתוֹ
עַל־פְּנֵיכֶם ... so that the fear of him (God) will be
with you.
[Exod 20:20](#)
7. פֶּן־תָּמּוּתוֹן ... lest you (will) die.
[Gen 3:3](#)
8. לְבַלְתִּי תַחֲטְאוּ: ... lest you (will) sin.
[Exod 20:20](#)

31.6.2 Future Time

a

The prefix conjugation is used to represent a real situation which arises as a consequence of some other situation. Whereas the suffix conjugation may dramatically represent a future situation as an accidental event, the prefix conjugation represents it as a logical consequence of some expressed or unexpressed situation. Though Michel overextends the concept of dependency to all uses of the prefix conjugation, he has plausibly suggested that substantiality in contrast to accidentence is one of the differences between the conjugations.

The imperfectum ... must designate an action which is not important in itself, but which stands in relationship to something else, and in this relationship has its meaning. In brief: it is dependent.³³

This use overlaps with some of the modal nuances, which also involve dependency, especially those of capability, of obligation, and of deliberation.

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1. כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכָלָךְ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת
תָּמוּת: ... because when you eat of it you shall
surely die.
[Gen 2:17](#)
2. עֲשֵׂה־אֵלֶּה לֹא יִמוּט
לְעוֹלָם: He who does these things will (or, can)
never be shaken.
[Ps 15:5](#)
3. וְלֹא נִשְׁבַּע לְמַרְמָה:
יִשָּׂא בִרְכָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה Who does not swear by what is false,³⁴
he will (must) receive blessing from
YHWH.
[Ps 24:4-5](#)
4. גַּם כָּל־קִנְיֶיךָ לֹא יִבָּשׁוּ
יִבָּשׁוּ הַבּוֹגְדִים רִיקָם: All who hope in you will (can) not be put
to shame; they will (must) be put to
shame who are vainly treacherous.
[Ps 25:3](#)
5. יְהוָה אֹרִי וַיִּשְׁעֵי מוֹצִי
אֵיךְָ YHWH is my light and my salvation;
whom shall (should) I fear?
[Ps 27:1](#)

b

These examples and many more suggest that the prefix conjugation may represent a future situation as dependent or contingent on some other expressed or unexpressed situation. With reference to the time of speaking, the situation may be future or past. If the action is in the future, the sense is of a specific future.

6. כָּלֶם נִקְבְּצוּ בְּאוֹלָךְ ... כִּי
כָּלֶם כְּעֵדִי תִלְבָּשִׁי
All of them (your sons) gather and come to you ... you will wear them all as ornaments.
[Isa 49:18](#)
7. בַּחֲשֹׁכָה יִתְהַלְּכוּ יְמוֹטוֹ
כָּל-מוֹסְדֵי אָרֶץ:
They walk about in darkness (so that) the foundation of the earth shakes (will shake).
[Ps 82:5](#)
8. הַמַּשְׂבִּיעַ בְּטוֹב עֲדוֹךְ
תַּתְּחַדֵּשׁ כְּנֶשֶׁר נְעוּרָיו:
He who satisfies your desires with good things, (so that) your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
[Ps 103:5](#)

This use can be fittingly associated with the suffix conjugation used for future events.

9. לָכֵן כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁבֹתִי
לִירוּשָׁלַיִם בְּרַחֲמִים בֵּיתִי
יִבְנֶה בָּהּ
Therefore, this is what YHWH says, "I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and in it my house will be built."
[Zech 1:16](#)

A negated form can be used with a corresponding sense.

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10. וּבִיהוָה בָּטַחְתִּי לֹא אֶמְעָד:
In YHWH I trusted (pl.) (so that) I will (do) not waver.
[Ps 26:1](#)
11. יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחָסֵר:
YHWH is my shepherd, I will (do) not lack (anything).
[Ps 23:1](#)

c

The consequent situation may in fact be past with reference to the absolute time of the speaker but future to some other situation. This use is found only in dependent clauses.³⁵

12. וַיָּבֵא אֶל-הָאָדָם לִרְאוֹת
מֶה-יִקְרָא-לוֹ
And he brought (them) to Adam to see what he would name them.
[Gen 2:19](#)
13. וּבֵיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-יֵשֵׁב שָׁם
and the house in which he was to live
[1 Kgs 7:8](#)

31.6.3 Past Time with Particles

a

The non-perfective verb form regularly (but not always) has a past time reference after **אז**, **טָרַם**, and **בְּטָרַם**.³⁶ David Qimḥi appeals to Arabic to explain this unexpected use.

And with the particle **אז** 'then', a future usually comes in the place of a past, as **אָחַד יִשִּׁיר מִנְשָׁה** [[Exod. 15:1](#) 'then sang Moses'] ... And the sage Rabbi Abraham Aben Ezra wrote that this is the custom in the language of Ishmael [i.e., Arabic].³⁷

Arabic *yaqtulu* may function as a verbal complement to *qatala* (suffix conjugation). In this construction *yaqtulu* retains the force of the perfective conjugation, for example, *jalasa* (pfv.) *nnaṣu yaṣrabūna* (impfv.) *lhamra*, 'The men sat, drinking wine.'

b

In Hebrew these particles are sometimes used with the prefix conjugation to denote a past situation. Most common of them is **אז**.

1. **אז יָשִׁיר-מֹשֶׁה** Then Moses sang.
[Exod 15:1](#)
2. **אז תָּבֹאֲנָה שְׂתִים נָשִׁים** Now two prostitutes came to the king.
זָנוּת אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
[1 Kgs 3:1–6](#)

Isaac Rabinowitz agrees with traditional grammarians that *ʾāz* followed by a nonperfective verb form may express a future-temporal or logical consequence, while with the perfective *ʾāz* "marks a consecution in an uninterrupted narration of past actions or events: first so-and-so did such-and-such, then *ʾāz* so-and-so did (perfect) such-and-such." He further notes that in fifteen instances when it refers to the past, the non-perfective with *ʾāz* indicates that the context of narrated past events is "approximately the time when, the time or circumstances in the course of which, or the occasion

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upon which the action designated by the imperfect verb-form went forward: this was when (*ʾāz* ...) so-and-so did (imperfect) such-and-such." The action introduced by **אז** is to be thought of as having taken place before the completion of the preceding action and in this sense the non-perfective describes relative action.³⁸

3. **אז יִחַלֵּק הָעָם יִשְׂרָאֵל** This was when the army-host, Israel,
לִחְצִי became divided.³⁹
[1 Kgs 16:21](#)

c

The particle **טָרָם**, most often preceded by **ב**, is usually used in temporal clauses.⁴⁰

4. **וַיֵּלְנוּ שָׁם טָרָם יַעֲבֹרוּ:** They stayed the night there before they crossed over.
[Josh 3:1](#)
5. **וַיֵּשֶׂא הָעָם אֶת-בֶּצֶקוֹ טָרָם** The people took their dough before it was
יִחְמֹץ leavened.
[Exod 12:34](#)
6. **וָאָכַל מִכָּל בֶּטָרָם תָּבוֹא** I ate it all just before you came.⁴¹
[Gen 27:33](#)
7. **וּבִטָרָם יִקְרַב אֲלֵיהֶם** before he reached them ...
[Gen 37:18](#)

Brockelmann has suggested on the basis of the occurrences of this construction that it is dying out in Biblical Hebrew.⁴² Compare these cases.

- 8a. **אז יִבְנֶה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ מִזְבֵּחַ** Then Joshua built an altar for YHWH.
לַיהוָה
[Josh 8:30](#)

1 Kgs 9:24

Some non-perfective forms in Biblical Hebrew bear an atypical *nun*.⁴⁴ As with other non-perfective forms, it is easier to figure out where these might have come from than

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how they work in Hebrew. One set of them, the paragogics, is related to the *yaqtulu/yaqtul* problem treated in 29.4 and 31. I. 1; the other set, the energies, is probably related to a set of non-perfective energetic forms found in Amarna Canaanite and Ugaritic. The etymology of the Hebrew forms can be grasped if we review some features of the Arabic non-perfective paradigm.⁴⁵

	indicative	jussive	heavy energetic	lightenergetic
2 m.s.	taqtulu	taqtul	taqtulanna	taqtulan
2 f.s.	taqtulīna	taqtulī	taqtulinna	taqtulin
3 m.s.	yaqtulu	yaqtul	yaqtulanna	yaqtulan
2 m.pl.	taqtulūna	taqtulū	taqtulunna	taqtulun
3 m.pl.	yaqtulūna	yaqtulū	yaqtulunna	yaqtulun

The feminine singular and masculine plural indicative and jussive forms differ in that the -na ending is not found in the jussive. Recalling that the earlier *yaqtul* and *yaqtulu* (and subjunctive *yaqtula*) forms largely merged with the loss of final short vowels in Hebrew, we might wonder about the fate of comparable forms in -na. In fact, there are some Hebrew cases that preserve the final *n* of earlier forms, the final short a having disappeared; these cases attest to the complex origins of the Hebrew prefix paradigm(s) from a different angle than the yāqōm/yāqūm contrast and the syntactic uses. These morphological relics present a somewhat different profile than the factors discussed earlier, and so we present them here. The final *n* in Hebrew is called paragodic (Greek '[word-] extending'), and the forms themselves may loosely be called paragogics.⁴⁶

b

The Arabic paradigm also shows two series of energetic forms, a heavy form in -anna, etc., and a light form in -an, etc.⁴⁷ These energetic forms also have analogs in Hebrew, revealing (as do Amarna and Ugaritic materials) that the dialects ancestral to Hebrew used the energetic endings. Curiously, however, these endings survive with Hebrew prefix forms only if a suffix follows. Such forms are said to have an energetic ending; it is not clear that there were (as there are in Arabic) two different endings in question.

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31.7.1 Paragogic Non-Perfective Forms

a

There are three classes of Hebrew forms with the *nun* paragogicum. The second-person masculine plural (# 1)⁴⁸ and the feminine singular (# 2) are rare, while the third-person masculine plural form (# 3) is much more common.⁴⁹

- | | | |
|-----|---------------|----------------------------|
| 1a. | תִּצְוֹן | Exod 34:13 |
| 1b. | תִּשְׁבְּרוֹן | Exod 34:13 |
| 1c. | תִּכְרֹתוֹן | Exod 34:13 |
| 1d. | תִּשְׁמְעוֹן | Deut 1:17 |

1e.	תִּקְרְבוּן	Deut 1:17
1f.	וּתִקְרְבוּן	Deut 1:22, 4:11
1g.	וּתַעֲמִדוּן	Deut 4:11
1h.	וּתְשִׁימוּן	Ezek 44:8
1i.	תִּאָּהֲבוּן	Ps 4:3
2a.	תִּשְׁתַּכְּרִין	1 Sam 1:14
2b.	תְּחִילִין	Isa 45:10
2c.	תִּתְחַמְּקִין	Jer 31:22 ⁵⁰
2d.	תִּדְבֹּקִין	Ruth 2:8, 21 ⁵¹
3a.	יִרְגְּזוּן	Exod 15:14
3b.	יִרְיִבִּן	Exod 21:18 ⁵²
3c.	יִאֲחִזּוּן	Isa 13:0
3d.	יִחִלְלוּן	Isa 13:8
3e.	וַיִּאֲתִיוּן	Isa 41:5
3f.	וּתִדְכָּאוּנִי	Job 19:2 ⁵³

According to J. Hoftijzer's counts, there are 6,900 cases of forms that could show the ending, 23% of the 30,606 non-perfective forms in Biblical Hebrew; of these 6,900, about 300 do show the *nun* (4% of the forms that could bear it; 1% of the non-perfective forms).⁵⁴ The paragogics tend to occur in pause.⁵⁵ Hoftijzer believes that there is in prose a difference between יִכְתְּבוּ and יִכְתְּבוּן, with the longer form marking contrast;⁵⁶ other scholars treat the longer form as curative. In line with its origin as long-form non-perfective, the paragogic form is never found after אֵל (which governs the jussive) and rarely after *w* (in either *w«yiqtol* or *wayyiqtol* shape; but note ## 1f-h, 3e-f).⁵⁷ The forms are more common in earlier texts; thus, for the synoptic passages, paragogics in Kings are not found in Chronicles (# 4),⁵⁸ and Qoheleth and the Hebrew of Daniel have no paragogics.⁵⁹

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4a.	לְמַעַן יִדְעוּן כָּל-עַמִּי הָאָרֶץ אֶת-שִׁמְךָ	so that all the peoples of the earth know your name 1 Kgs 8:43
4b.	לְמַעַן יִדְעוּ כָל-עַמִּי הָאָרֶץ אֶת-שִׁמְךָ	so that all the peoples of the earth know your name 2 Chr 6:33

b

Certain features of Hoftijzer's study of the paragogics deserve note.⁶⁰ He is clear that while the paragogics may mark "contrastivity," their absence does not signal the absence of the feature; rather, it leaves the matter open. The substance of contrastivity involves "exceptions to normal practice, contradictions, deviations from normal expectation, ... [and] statements ... which are contrary to the wishes ... of other people."⁶¹ The pattern of contrastivity that he discerns in prose texts is generally less clear in verse, prophetic or not.⁶² In poetry the paragogics mark, among other things, contrastivity or certainty; and they also mark that a volitional sense is excluded. Though Hoftijzer does not discuss the matter, it is reasonable to suppose that poetic syntactic patterns make a feature such as contrastivity difficult to recognize.

31.7.2 Energetic Non-Perfective Forms

a

The non-perfective forms that show an energetic -an- ending before a suffix are slightly more common than paragogic forms; about 450 forms show such a suffix, in one of a variety of forms.⁶³ There is a further small group of other forms that have an energetic ending.⁶⁴ The endings occur on non-perfective forms with singular suffixes,⁶⁵ first (# 1),

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second (# 2), or third person (## 3–4). The *n* may be unassimilated (## 1a, 2a, 3a) or assimilated (# 1b, *n*+*n*>*nn*;# 2b, *n*+*k*>*kk*;## 3b–4, *n*+*h*>*nn*).⁶⁶

unassimilated		assimilated	
1a. יִכְבְּדֵנִי	Ps 50:23	1b. תִּבְעֲתָנִי	Job 7:14
2a. אֲתִקְנֶךָ	Jer 22:24 ⁶⁷	2b. יִשְׁנֹאךָ	Job 36:18
		יִשְׁנֹאךָ	Prov 9:8
		יִכְכֶּה	Isa 10:24
3a. יִסְבְּבֵנָהוּ	Deut 32:10	3b. יִשְׁמְרֵנָהוּ	Exod 21:29
יִבְרַכֵּנָהוּ	Ps 72:15	אֲרִיִּצֵנָהוּ	Jer 49:19
		תִּזְכְּרֵנָהוּ	Ps 8:5
		יִסֹּבְבֵנָהוּ	Ps 32:10
4.		וְנַעֲשֶׂהנָה	Deut 30:12
		יִשְׁאֲנָה	Prov 18:14

b

The energetic forms are found with past- (# 5) and present-time reference (# 6) and in expressions of wishes, positive (# 7) and negative (# 8). The variety of uses leads many to contend that no special sense attaches to the non-perfective energetic forms.⁶⁸

5.	יִצְרְנֵהוּ כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינָיו:	He guarded it (Israel) like the apple of his eye. ⁶⁹
		Deut 32:10
6.	אֲרֹאֵנִי וְלֹא עָתָה אֲשׁוּרֵנִי וְלֹא קָרוֹב	I see him but not yet, I spy him but not nearby.
		Num 24:17
7.	כָּל־הַיּוֹם יִבְרַכֵּנָהוּ:	May he bless him all day.
		Ps 72:15
8.	וְאַמְתּוֹ אֶל־תִּבְעֲתָנִי:	O that his terror did not frighten me!
		Job 9:34

Footnotes:

1. For bibliography, see the notes to 29.4 and 29.6.

2. The Amarna and Ugaritic materials also raise the question of sporadic cases of a *t*- prefix third-person masculine plural prefix verb in Hebrew (e.g., *tqrwn* in [Deut 5:23](#), *t'mrw* in [Deut 5:24](#), *tqrw* in [Ezek 37:7](#)), a possibility recently rejected by R. Ratner, "Does a *t*- Preformative Third Person Masculine Plural Verbal Form Exist in Hebrew?" *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988) 80–88. The *t* prefix (rather than *y*) is standard in Ugaritic; see D. L. Dobrusin, "The Third Masculine Plural of the Prefixed Form of the Verb in Ugaritic," *Journal of the Ancient Near*

Eastern Society 13 (1981) 5–14. The occurrence of a *t* prefix in the singular in Hebrew (e.g., perhaps *tšym* in [Isa 53:10](#)) is more problematic; see W. L. Moran, "'*Taqtul*—Third Masculine Singular?" *Biblica* 45 (1964) 80–82, rejecting the form in Amarna Canaanite; and H. van Dijk, "Does Third Masculine Singular **Taqtul* Exist in Hebrew?" *Vetus Testamentum* 19 (1969) 440–47.

3. H. J. Polotsky established semantic categories for Egyptian by considering the variant forms apparent only in weak verbs, as noted by A. F. Rainey, "The Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation in Light of Amarnah Canaanite," *Hebrew Studies* 27 (1986) 4–19, at 5.

4. Moshe Held, "The YQTL-QTL (QTL-YQTL) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and in Ugaritic," *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman*, ed. M. Ben-Horin et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1962) 281–90; note these examples: [Ps 29:10](#), [38:12](#); [Prov 11:7](#); [Amos 7:4](#).

5. This case is discussed by Péter Kustár, *Aspekt im Hebräischen* (Baser: Reinhardt, 1972) 7. S. R. Driver cites some other examples, e.g., [1 Kgs 7:8](#) (y'sh), [21:6](#) (ʾdbr); [2 Kgs 8:29](#) (ythw); see *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1892) 32–33.

6. R. Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972), 3. 43–44.

7. D. A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 3; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972) 17–55; he does not distinguish long and short *yqtl* forms.

8. W. Gross, *Verkform und Funktion: Wayyiqtol für die Gegenwart?* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1976) 143–46. Another morphological pattern may be relevant: M. Lambert argued that the energetic suffixes occur on non-perfective forms (e.g., *lō' yišmārēnnū* 'he has not been keeping it in,' [Exod 21:29](#)), while suffixes without *nun* are attached to jussive/ preterite forms (e.g., *ʾōhābēhū* 'loved it,' [Hos 11:1](#)). See further 31.7.2; M. Lambert, "De l'emploi des suffixes pronominaux avec noun et sans noun," *Revue des études juives* 46 (1903) 178–83, cited by Rainey, "Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation," 10–12.

9. We leave out of account the phonological and morphological objections.

10. D. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung in den Psalmen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1960) 12. Michel's objection seems to treat "preterite" and "perfective" as synonyms, but they are not: preterite refers to an event or state exclusively in past time; perfective refers to a complete situation irrespective of time.

11. F. C. Fensham, "The Use of the Suffix Conjugation and the Prefix Conjugation in a Few Old Hebrew Poems," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 6 (1978) 9–18, at 15.

12. C. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 44.

13. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 31; GB 2. 39 (§ 9a).

14. L. McFall, *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982) 54–55.

15. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 55.

16. Fensham, "Suffix Conjugation," 16. Such disparate views are not infrequent.

17. The first verb is an VIIIth Form (ʾiqṭatala), with the initial ʾi- elided after the conjunction *wa*. The sentence is discussed by W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1898), 2. 21; and by B. Comrie, *Aspect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976) 80 (where the transliteration of the first verb should be corrected). The sense of the sentence can be paraphrased in Hebrew: ʾet-ʾāšer yedabberū haggillūlīm bīmīlōk šelōmōh (cf. ʾet kol-ʾāšer taʾāšūn, [Deut 29:8](#); cf. [Exod 4:15](#)).

18. Comrie, *Aspect*, 28.

19. Cf. Joüon § 113f / p. 303; contrast Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 27–28.

20. Cf. [Ps 42:5](#) for a conceptually and grammatically similar passage.

21. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax*, 43–44.

22. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 27.

23. Quoted in McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 84.

24. McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 84–85.

25. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 39.

26. The verb *ykl* 'to be able' is perhaps most similar to a Germanic modal. See discussion of ## 1, 5.

27. See 36.2.31. Cf. GB 2. 35–36 (§ 7i); Joüon § 1131-n / pp. 304–6.

28. The synoptic parallel in [Ps 18:39](#) reads wəlōʾ-yukəlû qûm.
29. Cf. ʾāšer-ʾāhābtā 'whom you love,' in [Gen 22:2](#).
30. Note the imperatives in [Ps 51:11–14](#).
31. The particle ʾm occurs 1,060 times (SA/THAT); lû (in various spellings) occurs about 22 times. Note that ʾm is gapped over four clauses in [Ps 139:8–9](#).
32. Cf. GKC § 107q / p. 318; lmʿn occurs 270 times (SA/THAT) and pn 133 times (SA/ THAT); lbty is found 85 times and bʾb(w)r about 50 times.
33. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 128.
34. The phrase nšbʿlmmh can be glossed 'swear falsely or by what is false or by Falsehood/the False One.'
35. Cf. GB 2.30(§7a).
36. Joüon § 113i-j / p. 304.
37. Quoted in McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 8. The construction is one type of circumstantial (hāl) clause.
38. Isaac Rabinowitz, "ʾaz Followed by Imperfect Verb-Form in Preterite Contexts: A Redactional Device in Biblical Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984) 53–62, quotations at 54. The sense in # 1 is that the song was sung when Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore and therefore came to trust YHWH (cf. [Exod 14:30–31](#)); the sense in # 2 is that the women came while the king was still at Gibeon ([1 Kgs 3:5](#)), before he went to Jerusalem. Cf. E. L. Greenstein, "On the Prefixed Preterite in Biblical Hebrew," *Hebrew Studies* 29 (1988) 7–17, at 8, 11 n. 13.
39. That is—before the entire army made Omri king, it had been divided between Tibni and Omri.
40. Contrast GB 2. 31 (§ 7b).
41. The sense of *mkl* is uncertain.
42. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax*, 42.
43. Arno Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 16; Giessen: Topelmann, 1909) 17.
44. R. J. Williams groups all these forms together under the headings of energies; we follow standard practice in separating them into two groups, though Williams's view is plausible (and it is certainly hard to insist that the two groups are absolutely inseparable; relic forms are rarely so well behaved). See "Energic Verbal Forms in Hebrew," *Studies on the Ancient Palestinian World Presented to F. V. Winnett*, ed. J. W. Wevers and D. B. Redford (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1972) 75–85. The forms are also dealt with in Rainey, "Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation."
45. Wright, *Grammar of the Arabic Language*, 1. 60–61, 298.
46. The term paragodic is occasionally used of other morphological elements in Hebrew.
47. There are also energic imperative forms in Arabic. Aramaic dialects, like Hebrew, use the energic ending before suffixes; it is sufficiently standard that. e.g., F. Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961) 54–55, does not use the term. Both in Arabic and Ugaritic the energies are frequent in verse (see, e.g., *UT* § 9.11).
48. Some forms are ambiguous between second-person plural and third-person plural with prefix *t* (see n. 2), e.g., the form in [Deut 5:23](#) is taken as second person by AV, RSV, NJPS, NAB, and J. Hoftijzer, *The Function and Use of the Imperfect Forms with Nun Paragodicum in Classical Hebrew* (Assert: Van Gorcum, 1985) 4, and as third person by NIV; [Amos 6:3](#), pace most current translations, may be third person.
49. There are three perfective forms in -ûn, presumably the result of analogy to the non-perfectives: yādəʿûn ([Deut 8:3](#), [16](#); the Samaritan in both places lacks the n), šaqûn ([Isa 26:16](#)); see GKC § 441 / p. 121.
50. Examples ## 2a-c all occur in questions, # 2a and # 2c after ʿd-mty and # 2b after *mh*; cf. Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragodicum*, 5–6.
51. The cases not listed here are also in Ruth ([3:4](#), [18](#)); all the cases in Ruth are used in dialogue. On *kh* in [Ruth 2:8](#), see Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragodicum*, 18–19, 99. On the seven cases total, see GKC § 470 / p. 129.
52. Defective spellings of the ending are rare.
53. Forms with a suffix are rare; GKC § 60e / p. 161.

54. Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragogicum*, 2.
 55. Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragogicum*, 98 n. 27.
 56. Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragogicum*, 55–56; for other views, see pp. 96–97 n. 10.
 57. Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragogicum*, 2–3, 97 n. 17.
 58. GKC § 47m / pp. 128–29; cf. Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragogicum*, 43–44, etc.
 59. Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragogicum*, 21, 89; they are rare in P material, p. 23; cf. *LHS* 99.
 60. Of Hoftijzer's important monographs (including those on the *he*-locale and on the nominal clause), *Nun Paragogicum* may be the most accessible.
 61. Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragogicum*, 55–56. For example, in [Num 11:19](#) "the possibility that the people will have meat to eat for one or two days is contrasted with the possibility that they will have meat for a month" (p. 10). Note also the use of paragogics in independent clauses, in questions (never rhetorical) associated with anger or frustration (e.g., [Exod 17:3](#), [Ps 4:2](#)); prescriptions (e.g., [Judg 2:2](#), [Deut 1:17](#)); interdictions (e.g., [1 Kgs 12:24](#)); consequences ([Deut 17:13](#)); and in dependent clauses stating consequences (positive with *Im'n*, e.g., [Exod 20:12](#); negative with *pn*, e.g., [Gen 3:3](#)).
 62. Hoftijzer, *Nun Paragogicum*, 94.
 63. The count is from Williams, "Energic Verbal Forms," 82; see also CKC § 58i-l/pp. 157–58. The connection of the Hebrew energies with the Arabic (and other) energies has been affirmed most recently by John Huehnergard, "The Early Hebrew Prefix-Conjugation," *Hebrew Studies* 29 (1988) 19–23, at 22–23; and (apparently) denied by Rainey, "Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation."
- The suggestion that energetic endings appear not on forms analogous to *yaqtulanna* but rather on *yaqtulu* (and thus not on *yaqtul*) forms, which originated in the nineteenth century, has recently been revived by Rainey, "Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation," 14–15; see also Greenstein, "Prefixed Preterite," 9–11.
- There are some cases of a *nā* ending on third feminine singular forms ([Judg 5:26](#), [Job 17:16](#)) and one on a second masculine plural form ([Obad 13](#), identical to the [Judg 5:26](#) form), perhaps energies. It has been suggested that the *nā* precativ particle (40.2.5c) is related to the energetic. Williams, "Energic Verbal Forms," 85, is dubious about both proposals. On *nā* as etymologically related to the energetic, see recently H. Gottlieb, "The Hebrew Particle -*nā*," *Acta Orientalia* 33 (1971) 47–54; and T. O. Lambdin, "The Junctural Origin of the West Semitic Definite Article," *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1971) 315–33.
64. There are energetic imperatives, e.g., [1 Sam 16:11](#), [20:21](#) (forms of *lqh*), [21:20](#) (*ntn*); for a list, see Williams, "Energic Verbal Forms," 83. There are also energetic infinitives construct (pp. 83–84) and participles (p. 84), and, as a result of analogy, perfectives ([Gen 30:6](#), [Deut 24:13](#), [Ps 118:18](#); cf. GKC § 59f/p. 160).
 65. On possible first-person plural examples, see GKC § 58k / p. 158; cf. § 100o / pp. 296–97.
 66. The unassimilated third feminine form is not attested; the unassimilated forms are rare in general; cf. n. 67.
 67. This unassimilated second-person form is unique; see W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 606, for a possible explanation.
 68. GKC § 581/ p. 158 refers to emphasis; cf. Williams, "Energic Verbal Forms," 84–85; and *LHS* 146, 148.
 69. See Rainey, "Ancient Prefix Conjugation," 16.

32 Waw + Suffix Conjugation

32.1 Form and Meaning

1.1 Diversity

1.2 Comparative Evidence 5.

1.3 Meaning

32.2 Relative Waw + Suffix Conjugation

2.1 After Prefix-Conjugation Forms

2.2 After Volitional Forms

2.3 After Suffix-Conjugation (and *wayyqtl*) Forms

2.4 After Nominal Clauses

2.5 With Non-Finite Verb Forms

2.6 Two Further Points

32.3 Copulative Waw + Suffix Conjugation

32.1 Form and Meaning

32.1.1 Diversity

a

The suffix conjugation preceded by *waw* is associated with two semantically distinct constructions, one with relative force and the other with coordinate force. Contrast these sentences.

- 1a. וְהָיָה כִּקְרַבְכֶּם
אֶל-הַמִּלְחָמָה וְנִגַּשׁ הַכֹּהֵן
וְדִבֶּר אֶל-הָעָם:
It will be that when you are about to go into battle, the priest will come forward and will speak to the army.

[Deut 20:2](#)

- 1b. הֲוֹאֵה אָמַר וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה
וְדִבֶּר וְלֹא יִקְיִמְנָה:
Does he (God) promise and not act?
And does he speak and not fulfill it?

[Num 23:19](#)

In # 1a the priest's speaking is relative and future to the preceding situation, in which he steps forward. In # 1b God's speaking is not relative to the preceding situation, in which he made a promise; rather, the same situation is expressed in another way. We call the first construction *waw*-relative and the second *waw*-copulative. (Traditionally the former

has been called either *waw*-conversive or *waw*-consecutive.) These two semantically distinct constructions are similar in form in that the conjunction *waw* is inseparably prefixed to the suffix conjugation, and this bound form begins the clause. Are the two constructions formally distinguished in any way? David Qimhi thought they could be distinguished by the preceding verb. According to him, if the preceding verb was in the suffix conjugation, then *wqtl* would be copulative; otherwise, it would be relative. He wrote:

The [*waw*-relative] prefixed to a verb in the Perfect indicates action in the future, e.g. וְשָׁמַר [Dt 7:12](#), etc.

When preceded by a verb in the Perfect the *Waw* with Perfect has merely copulative force, e.g. לַעֲשֶׂה

אָכַל וְשָׁתָה [Is 41:4](#), וְשָׁתָה [Jr 22:15](#).¹

Although Qimhi's distinction holds in his examples, it does not obtain for all relevant cases.

b

Rather, the two constructions are formally distinguished by accentuation, though only in some forms: *waw*-relative in first-person singular and second-person masculine singular throws the accent forward to the final syllable as much as possible (# 2b), whereas *waw*-copulative does not (# 2a).

- 2a. וְהִצַּלְתִּי מִפִּי And I rescued (the sheep) from its mouth.
[1 Sam 17:35](#)
- 2b. וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבָדְתָם And I will rescue you from being slaves to them.
[Exod 6:6](#)

S. R. Driver compared this contrast through stress with similar phenomena in English and German.

Exactly, therefore, as in English and German, we do not stultify ourselves by reading con'vict, inva'lid, pre'sent, geb'et (give!), where the context demands convict', in'valid', present', ge'bet' (prayer), so in Hebrew we must beware of saying wəqatáлта when grammar and logic call for w'sup'e'/sup'qátaltá.²

Many forms of the suffix conjugation, however, always bear the accent on the last syllable (i.e., milra'): for example, קָטְלוּ, אָמְרָתֶם, רָעוּ (from רעה), שָׁתָה, etc., and with such, no change is possible.

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c

Even with the remaining forms (1 c.s. and 2 m.s.) there are many exceptions. The source of variation is semantic rather than strictly syntactic. "It is," as E. J. Revell notes, "often not possible to provide a precise, objective description of the conditioning of the variations." For the most part these exceptions can be grouped into three categories. The stress is usually not thrown forward with *waw*-relative when (1) the suffix conjugation is followed immediately by a stressed syllable in the succeeding word (this phenomenon is known as *nesiga* or *nasog ʿaḥor*), (2) the penult is an open syllable, or (3) the word is in pause.³ We can illustrate the first two points.

3. אֶרֶץ כִּי תַחַטָּא-לִי ... If a country sins against me ... and I
וְנָטִיתִי יָדִי ... וְשִׁבַּרְתִּי לָהּ stretch out my hand ... and I break its
מִטַּה-לָּהֶם ... וְהִכַּרְתִּי food supply ... and I cut off from it ...
מִמֶּנָּה
- [Ezek 14:13](#)

Note that the stress shifts forward with וְכִהְרַתִּי but not with וְנָטִיתִי and וְשִׁבַּרְתִּי because the penult is open in the former and the latter is followed immediately by a stressed syllable in the following word. In addition to these groups of exceptions, the form fluctuates in both the *Qal* and *Niphal* of geminate verbs and in forms from hollow (II-*waw*) roots that end in ו or ה. Thus distinguishing between the two constructions involves not only formal distinctions but also contextual considerations.

d

The *w«qt/* combination (in all forms) occurs 6,378 times (13% of the conjugation forms; cf. 29.1c). It is most frequent in Leviticus, Amos, Zechariah, Deuteronomy, and Ezekiel.⁴ Leviticus exhibits a high number because it contains many prescriptions. The combination is frequent in the first two sections of the canon, namely, the legal and prophetic books, and less frequent in the Writings, though it is common in Daniel and Qoheleth. The combination occurs much more frequently in the so-called Deuteronomistic work (Deuteronomy through 2 Kings) as over against the works of the so-called Chronicler (Chronicles through Ezra). This suggests that *w«qt/* (like *wyyqt/*) is dying.

32.1.2 Comparative Evidence

a

Two bodies of comparative data are useful in considering the constructions in *w«* + suffix form, one from the Amarna texts, the other from Arabic.

b

The relative *waw* with suffix conjugation may be the descendant of a construction found in Byblian Canaanite. The apodosis *waw* introduces a consequential independent clause (apodosis) after a conditional dependent clause (protasis). W. L. Moran writes, "In the Byblos letters there are thirty-three cases where the [Akkadian] perfect [reflecting the Canaanite usage] is used with reference to the future. Of these, twenty-four are

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preceded by the conjunction *u*, 'and,' and are comparable, therefore, to the [*waw*-conversive with the perfect] of Hebrew."⁵ Most of these twenty-four instances occur in sentences which are either explicitly or implicitly conditional: "the apparent inversion of the tenses is chiefly confined to the apodosis of conditional sentences and imperative sentences."⁶ For example:

(a) with a stative verb (after an imperative that is implicitly conditional): *dūkūmi eṭlakunu u ibaššātunu kīma yatinu u pašātunu*, 'Kill your lord, and then you will be like us and have peace'

(b) with a fientive verb: *allu paṭārima awīlūt hupši u šabtū GAZ āla*, 'Behold! if the serfs desert, then the Hapiru will seize the city'

Because the force of *u*-relative with the suffix conjugation in Byblos is clearly 'end then,' Moran labeled it the "and of succession."

In conditional sentences the force of the conjunction is clearly 'end then,' like Arabic *fa*. When used before a perfect with future meaning, its force, we believe, is the same, emphasizing that the following perfect is successive to the previous action.⁷

However, not all the Byblian cases of *u* + perfect signify succession; *u* in some cases simply marks coordination.

We have ... very many examples of a perfect preceded by *u* where there is clearly no inversion of tenses. Thus *u palhātō anāku* "and I am afraid" ... ; *u laqū ālānišu*, "and they have taken his cities."⁸

In sum, we find both relative and copulative *wqt* in a Canaanite dialect shortly before the emergence of Hebrew. Moran has proposed that the relative *waw* in Biblical Hebrew developed its many diversified uses from an original function of introducing the apodosis after a conditional clause. In these uses the *wa* never lost its notion of succession 'then, and so' (temporal or logical).

c

Classical Arabic expresses two different notions of 'end' in a way which may help us to understand Hebrew. Arabic has two forms, *wa* and *fa*.⁹ *Wa* is employed for "simple" (i.e., copulative) 'and,' *fa* for the "energetic" (i.e., succession, result, purpose) 'and.' For the 'and' of succession, *fa* (rarely *wa*) is used with the indicative; for the purpose-consecutive 'and,' *fa* is used with the subjunctive.¹⁰

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d

Hebrew lacks this differentiation. The "simple" and "energetic" 'and' are both expressed with *ו*. With the suffix conjugation the two senses are sometimes distinguished by stress. But even with the shift of stress no distinction is made between indicative (chronological) and subjunctive (logical) succession. And apart from the spotty stress shifts, we can only distinguish the different meanings through careful study.

32.1.3 Meaning

a

Scholars are agreed that the *w«* in the *w«qatalī* construction usually (though not always) signifies succession (temporal or logical), but they are not agreed about the meaning of the suffix conjugation in this construction. Diethelm Michel, Bo Johnson, and others think that it retains the same significance as in its unbound form,¹¹ while S.R. Driver, Paul Joüon, Gotthelf Bergsträsser, Thomas O. Lambdin, Ernst Jenni, and others think its value

comes under the sway of the preceding verb to which it is appended.¹² The second view reflects a modern understanding of the medieval notion that prefixed *waw* "converts" the conjugations.

b

A. O. Schulz laid the foundation for the view that relative *waw* does not alter the function of the conjugations.¹³ Johnson has recently restated it.

In narrative the pure perfect is used in most instances as a "Tempus of the past." A perfect with a prefixed *waw*- is not used in these instances, since *wa* + imperfect already dominated in this sphere. Bobzin here draws the conclusion that *waw* + perfect seen diachronically, cannot be derived from the meaning of the perfect but is rather totally dependent on its position in the system. But are these two alternatives incompatible? The pure perfect has a greater sphere than the *waw* + perfect. The *waw* + perfect is confined to the areas where *wa* + imperfect could not be used, for example, with 'and' and events which stand in a final or consecutive relation to the preceding. That does not mean, however, that the perfect here would have assumed a new final or consecutive meaning—this meaning lies in the whole construction with 'and' + the perfect and at the same time naturally also in the fact that *wa* + imperfect exists in the system. Both the *waw* + perfect and the perfect have the character of completed, concluded action, an action which is seen from without as something whole. At first glance that does not comport well with the final or consecutive function of the perfect, where a *waw* + perfect emphasizes the non-independence of the action and its dependence on the preceding. But even here the character of the perfect comes to the surface: the final or consecutive action in question is seen from without as a whole. The whole event is already there at one moment. With 'and' + perfect the following happening is seen as

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a finished, complete whole. One does not enter into the following action in order to picture the initiative or intention of the acting subject, but one sees the happening as a finished moment, which is pointed out from without in its connections.¹⁴

c

Driver expressed the second view, which is closer to the traditional view.

Whatever ... be the shade of meaning borne by the first or "dominant" verb, the perfect following, inasmuch as the action it denotes is conceived to take place under the same conditions, assumes it too: be the dominant verb a jussive, frequentative, or subjunctive, the perfect is virtually the same. To all intents and purposes the perfect, when attached to a preceding verb by means of this *waw* consecutive, loses its individuality: no longer maintaining an independent position, it passes under the sway of the verb to which it is connected.¹⁵

As we shall see, Driver has overstated the situation; there are occasions, such as when *waw* *qatalí* succeeds a perfective form (see 32.2.3), in which it does not take on a value of the dominant verb but rather of the non-perfective. More recently Jenni also represented the more traditional view.

The *waw*-perfectum, like the *waw*-imperfectum, is a sequential *tempus*: through the *perfectum consecutivum* an action or an event is expressed which follows temporally or logically an imperfectum or imperative (or a nominal form with an equivalent value). ... If the imperfectum designates repeated or enduring actions and events in the present or past time ... , then the *waw*-perfectum also has this meaning.¹⁶

Two arguments favor this more traditional view. First, when a negative or other word comes between the *waw* and the perfective, the discourse returns to the non-perfective.

אִם תִּהְיוּ כָּמוֹנוּ ... וְנָתַנוּ	If you become like us ...
אֶת־בָּנֵינוּ לָכֶם	then we will give you our
וְאֶת־בָּנֵיכֶם נִקְחָלָנוּ	daughters and take yours
וְיִשְׁבְּנוּ אִתְּכֶם וְהָיוּ לָעָם	to ourselves. We will dwell
אֶחָד:	with you and become one
וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ אֵלַינוּ	people (with you). But if
... וְלָקַחְנוּ אֶת־בָּתְּנוּ וְהָלַכְנוּ:	you will not listen to us ... ,
	we will take our daughter
	and depart.

[Gen 34:15–17](#)

Though it is true that *qtl* can refer to the future, does it not seem strange that the supposed switch of viewpoint from non-perfective to perfective occurs only with the relative-*waw* construction and that even the smallest insertion separating the *waw* from the verb form effects a switch such that the action is no longer looked at from without as complete but from within as incomplete? Further, as we shall see, the *w«qatalti* construction not infrequently carries on the imperfective aspect of a preceding verb. Though the suffix conjugation can denote a gnomic notion (see 30.5.1c), it never by itself signifies customary activity in past time; that meaning is signified by the prefix conjugation.

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Johnson, with his working hypothesis that the suffix conjugation has the same value both with and without relative *waw*, cites many examples where *wegatalti* had an iterative meaning in past time.¹⁷ The unbound suffix conjugation, however, does not have this value.

d

We are defending the traditional use both in terms of future time reference and in terms of imperfective aspect in past and present time. The perfective/non-perfective opposition remains functional. Further, Driver and Jenni overgeneralize the matter when they contend without qualification that relative *waw* always comes under the sway of the dominant verb. Elsewhere Driver remarks: "If, for instance, the principal verb involve will, would, or let ... , the subordinate verbs connected with it by *ʔ* consecutive must be understood in the same tense or mood."¹⁸

Driver's comment is apt if *yqtl* precede *w«qatalti*, for after *yqtl*, *w«qatalti* takes on the specific value of *yqtl*. But his statement is not accurate if a *qtl* form with preterite value, for example, precedes the *waw*-relative. As Driver himself notes elsewhere, *w«qatalti* in that connection may also signify the same non-perfective values as in its connection with *yqtl*.¹⁹

e

Relative *wqtl* is subordinate to a primary verb (or equivalent) and in that connection it represents either an epexegetical situation with imperfective aspect (only in past or present time) or a consequential (logical and/or temporal) situation. Since imperfective aspect and future-time reference are primary associations of the non-perfective conjugation, relative *waw* can be thought of as a "*waw*-conversive," though that label does not do justice to its subordinating function. The term "*waw*-consecutive" also does not do justice to all uses of the form in question. As we shall see, after the perfective conjugation, for example, *waw*-relative does not represent a chronologically successive situation but rather explicates the one represented as a single whole. In sum, *w«qatalti* has the values of the prefix conjugation and represents a situation relative (that is subordinate) to the leading verb (or equivalent).

32.2 Relative Waw + Suffix Conjugation

a

The proposed original function of the *w«qatalti* construction to signify the apodosis of a conditional clause shines through almost all of its uses in Biblical Hebrew. In most instances we in this construction is equivalent to English 'then.' This primary function becomes more apparent if we accept Lambdin's broad definition of a conditional sentence: "Any two clauses, the first of which states a real or hypothetical condition, and the second of which states a real or hypothetical consequence thereof, may be taken as a conditional sentence."²⁰ Conditional sentences represent one situation as logically contingent on another and entail a temporal sequence as well. Sometimes, in fact, the notion of logical succession gives way to chronological succession, though often the line of distinction between the two ideas is blurred, just as with the English 'then.' Furthermore, the notion of logical contingency may also develop into expressing a final or consecutive idea.

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Because these ideas cannot always be sharply demarcated from one another, Johnson groups together under one heading uses with "future, final or consecutive meaning."²¹

b

As Johnson also notes, in many instances the distinct meanings can be more exactly differentiated.²² Here we

aim to analyze the uses more strictly, but it should be remembered that the essential meaning involves clausal subordination. When the connection with what precedes is not focal, the construction is dropped and the non-perfective conjugation reappears. *W«qatalî* in a chain either takes on the value of a preceding *w«qatalî* form or functions as an apodosis *waw*.²³

32.2.1 After Prefix-Conjugation Forms

a

We have already analyzed the meanings and values that characterize the prefix conjugation (Chap. 31). Here we present the common uses of that form as they affect the construction under investigation.

b

If the protasis of a conditional clause has a non-perfective form with a contingent-future sense (after **כִּי, אִם** etc.),²⁴ the apodosis is introduced by *w«qatalî*; the *waw* has the apparently archaic role of the "apodosis *waw*" (## 1–4).

1. **אִם־יְהִיָּה אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי ...
וְהָיָה יְהוָה לִי לֵאלֹהִים:** If God will be with me ... then YHWH will be my God.
[Gen 28:20–21](#)
2. **אִם־יַעֲבֹרוּ ... אִתְּכֶם ...
וְנָתַתֶּם לָהֶם** If they cross over ... with you, ... you shall give them ...
[Num 32:29](#)
3. **וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ ...
בְּקִלִּי ... וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סִגְלָה** And now if you obey me fully ... , then you will be my segullâ.
[Exod 19:5](#)
4. **כִּי־יְהִיָּה לָהֶם דָּבָר בָּא
אֵלַי וְשִׁפְטֹתַי ... וְהוֹדַעְתִּי
אֶת־חֲקֵי הָאֱלֹהִים** Whenever they have a matter that comes to me, I judge ... and make known the statutes of God.
[Exod 18:16](#)

c

Often *waw*-relative with the suffix conjugation represents a situation as a simple (con)sequence, whether logical, temporal, or both, of a preceding situation represented by the non-perfective conjugation. This simple (con) sequential *w«qatalî* can be illustrated (# 5; cf. # 1).

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5. **אִם־יְהִיָּה אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי
וְשָׁמְרָנִי בְּדַרְךְ הַזֶּה ...
וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבִגְד
לְלִבָּשׁ:
וְשָׁבְתִי בְּשָׁלוֹם ... וְהָיָה
יְהוָה לִי לֵאלֹהִים:** If God will be with me and will watch over me on this way ... and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely ... , then YHWH will be my God.
[Gen 28:20–21](#)

In this example, **וְשָׁמְרָנִי** and **וְנָתַן** represent chronologically (and logically) successive situations; **וְשָׁבְתִי** is a situation logically successive to all three preceding situations; and **וְהָיָה** expresses the apodosis to this extended

protasis. In # 6 (cf. # 3) the protasis is also expanded by a (con) sequential *wqtl*.

6. וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ
בְּקִלִּי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי
וְהָיִיתֶם If you obey me fully and keep my
covenant, then you will be ...

[Exod 19:5](#)

On the other hand, (con)sequential *wqtl* expands the apodosis in # 7 (cf. # 4).

7. וְשִׁפְטִי בֵין אִישׁ וּבֵין
רָעָהוּ וְהוֹדַעְתִּי ... then I judge between the parties and
make known to them ...

[Exod 18:16](#)

d

The (con)sequential *wqtl* usually takes on the sense of the preceding non-perfective, which may be imperfective (## 8–13), modal (## 14–16), legislative (## 17–18), volitional (# 19), future (## 20–25), or telic (## 26–29).

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8. וְאֵד יַעֲלֶה מִן־הָאָרֶץ
וְהִשְׁקָה Streams would come up from the earth
and would water ...

[Gen 2:6](#)

9. כִּי מִן־הַבְּאֵר הָיָא יִשְׁקוּ
... וְנֹאֲסִפּוּ־שָׂמָה
כָּל־הָעֶדְרִים וְנִלְלוּ
אֶת־הָאֶבֶן ... וְהִשְׁקוּ
אֶת־הַצֹּאן וְהִשְׁיבוּ
אֶת־הָאֶבֶן From that well they (people) would
water ... and all the flocks would gather
there, and they would roll away the
stone ... , and they would water the
sheep; and they would return the stone.

[Gen 29:2–3](#)

10. עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו
וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ Therefore a man leaves his father and
mother and clings to his wife.

[Gen 2:24](#)

11. אֶף־יִשְׂקֵי וְאָפָה לֶחֶם He kindles a fire and bakes bread.

[Isa 44:15](#)

12. תִּרְאֵנִי וּבְחַנֵּת לִבִּי You see me and test my heart.

[Jer 12:3](#)

13. כָּל־ם יִחַמוּ כְּתִנּוֹר וְאָכְלוּ
אֶת־שְׂפִטֵיהֶם All of them are as hot as an oven and
they devour their judges.

[Hos 7:7](#)

14. אִם־יָבוֹא עֲשׂוֹ אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה
הָאֶחָת וְהִכָּהוּ וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה
הַנִּשְׁאָר לְפָלִיטָה: If Esau comes (i.e., should come) to
one camp and smites it, then the
remaining camp will be a fugitive.²⁵

[Gen 32:9](#)

15. וּבִמָּה נוֹכַל לוֹ וְאַסְרֵנָהוּ How can we prevail over him and tie

- לַעֲנֹתוֹ
him up to subdue him?
- [Judg 16:5](#)
We must go a three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to YHWH our God.
- [Exod 8:23](#)
At the entrance of the Tent of Meeting he will offer it ... and he will lay his hand ...
- [Lev 1:3-4](#)
Six days you shall labor and do all your work.
- [Exod 20:9](#)
To my land you shall go and take a wife ...
- [Gen 24:4](#)
Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall be ...
- [Gen 27:12](#)
... or his day will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish.
- [1 Sam 26:10](#)
I will be with you, and you will strike down ...
- [Judg 6:16](#)
Your servant will go and fight.
- [1 Sam 17:32](#)
How could I do this great evil and sin against God?
- [Gen 39:9](#)
The mountain of YHWH's temple will be established as the highest mountain; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many will come and say ...
- [Isa 2:2-3](#)
... so that you may tell ... and know that I am YHWH.
- [Exod 10:2](#)
... so that they will hear reports about you and tremble.
- [Deut 2:25](#)
... so that it may go well with me ... and my life will be spared for your sake.
16. דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים נֵלֶךְ
בַּמִּדְבָּר וְזָבַחְנוּ לַיהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ
17. אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
יִקְרִיב אֹתוֹ ... וְסָמַךְ יָדוֹ
18. שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ
כָּל־מְלֹאכֶתְךָ
19. כִּי אֶל־אֶרֶצִי ... תֵּלֶךְ
וְלָקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה
20. אוֹלִי יִמָּשְׁנִי אָבִי וְהָיִיתִי
21. אוֹיּוֹמוֹ יָבֹוא וְמָת אוֹ
בַּמִּלְחָמָה יֵרֵד וְנִסְפָּה:
22. אֲהִיָּה עִמָּךְ וְהָכִיתִי
23. עֲבָדְךָ יֵלֶךְ וְנִלָּחֵם
24. וְאֵיךְ אֶעֱשֶׂה הָרָעָה הַגְּדֹלָה
הַזֹּאת וְחָטָאתִי לֵאלֹהִים:
25. נִכּוֹן יִהְיֶה הָר בֵּית־יְהוָה
בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָרִים וְנִשָּׂא
מִגְבְּעוֹת וְנִהָרוּ אֵלָיו
כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וְהֵלְכוּ עִמָּם
רַבִּים וְאָמְרוּ
26. וְלִמְעַן תִּסְפֹּר ... וִידַעְתֶּם
כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:
27. אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמָעוֹן שְׁמַעְךָ וְרָגְזוּ
28. לִמְעַן יֵיטֵב־לִי ... וְחִיתָה

נִפְשִׁי בְּגִלְלָדִי:

[Gen 12:13](#)

29.

פֶּן־יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וְלָקַח ...
וְאָכַל... lest he reach out his hand and take ...
and eat ...[Gen 3:22](#)

e

Sometimes the non-perfective is used in anticipatory (*casus pendens*) clauses (4.7) and *w«qatalti* functions as a main clause (## 30–33), often with a resumptive pronoun (## 30, 32).²⁶ The *casus pendens* resembles a conditional clause.

30.

אֲשֶׁר־יִכָּה אֶת־קִרְיַת־סֶפֶר
וְלָכְדָּהּ וְנָתַתִּי לוֹ אֶת־עַכְסָה
בְּתִי לְאִשָּׁה:

As for him who smites Qiryath-sepher and seizes it, I shall give him my daughter Aksah in marriage.

[Judg 1:12](#)

31.

וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא צָדָה ... וְשָׁמַתִּי
לְךָ מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָנוּס שָׁמָּה:As for him who did not lie in wait ...
, I shall provide you a place whither
he may flee.[Exod 21:13](#)

32.

וְטַפְכֶּם אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם לְבִז
יְהִיָּה וְהִבִּיאֹתִי אֹתָםAs for your little ones whom you
thought would become prey, I shall
cause them to enter ...[Num 14:31](#)

33.

מִה־יִּרְאֵנִי וְהִגַּדְתִּי לָךְ

Whatever he reveals to me, I will
tell you.[Num 23:3](#)

32.2.2 After Volitional Forms

a

W«qatalti may express a consequent (logical and/or chronological) situation to a situation represented by a volitional form (cohortative, imperative, jussive; # 1 b). By contrast, a construction involving *w«* bound to an imperative after another imperative does not signify a directly consequent situation (# 1a; cf. 34.6a).

1a.

הִתְיַצְּבוּ וּרְאוּ אֶת־יְשׁוּעַת
יְהוָהStand firm and see (imperative)
YHWH's deliverance.[Exod 14:13](#)

1b.

עָלוּ זֶה בְּנֶגֶב ... וּרְאִיתֶם
אֶת־הָאָרֶץ מִה־הִיאGo up through the Negev ... and (so)
see (*wqtl*) what the land is like.[Num 13:17–18](#)

Succession as in # 1a may be implied by lexical considerations, but it is not grammatically indicated, as in # 1b. For example, in English, 'divide and conquer' signifies a consecutive relationship between the two imperatives, but that is not so with the command 'eat and drink.' These two statements are grammatically similar, but they represent different relationships for lexical reasons; the same is true in Hebrew.

b

The most important of the volitional forms is the imperative (## 2–33, and, as Driver notes, *w«qatalti* is "by far the most common construction after an imperative: sometimes, however, a succession of imperatives is preferred,

and sometimes the perfect and imperative alternate."²⁷ It is also found after cohortatives (## 4–6) and jussives (## 7–8).

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 2. | לֵךְ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־עַבְדִּי | Go and tell my servant.
2 Sam 7:5 |
| 3. | עֲשֵׂה לָךְ תֵּבַת עֵצִי־גֹפֶר ...
וְכִפַּרְתָּ אֹתָהּ | Make yourself a gopherwood ark ... and pitch it.
Gen 6:14 |
| 4. | וְאֶבְרַכְהָ מְבָרְכֶיךָ ...
וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כָּל מְשֻׁפָּחֹת
הָאָדָמָה: | I will bless the ones blessing you ... and (so) all the clans of the earth will be blessed in you. ²⁸
Gen 12:3 |
| 5. | אֶלְקָטָהּ־נָא וְאֶסְפָּתִי | Let me glean and (so) gather.
Ruth 2:7 |
| 6. | וְנִקְרְבָה בְּאַחַד הַמְּקוֹמוֹת
וְלִנּוּ | Let us approach one of these places and spend the night ...
Judg 19:13 |
| 7. | יְהִי מְאֹרֶת ... וְהָיוּ | Let there be lights ... and let them be for ...
Gen 1:14 |
| 8. | וְנוֹעַ יִנּוּעוּ בָנָיו וְשָׁאֲלוּ | Let his children wander about and beg.
Ps 109:10 |

32.2.3 After Suffix-Conjugation (and wayyqtl) Forms

a

Waw-relative suffix forms used after a suffix form do not take on that conjugation's perfective aspect. Rather, in that connection *w«qatalí* signifies either a consequent (logical and/or chronological) situation (without aspect, in future time) to the one represented by *qtl* or an exegetical situation (with an imperfective aspect in past or present time). The consequent meaning attaches to *w«qatalí* when it functions in an apodosis after a conditional clause, or when the situation represented by *qtl* constitutes the basis for the one envisioned by relative *w«qatalí*, which may thus be volitional. The clause with *qtl* may be a conditional clause, which may be unmarked or introduced by a particle such as **אִם**. Relative *wqtl* normally signifies an exegetical situation with imperfective aspect after *qtl* forms (or *wayyqtl*) representing a past situation. In this connection it unpacks

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the situation represented as a single event, thereby specifying the perfective situation as constative (30.1d).

b

In the apodosis-*waw* construction the suffix conjugation preceding the apodosis *waw* has a value which characterizes that conjugation (30.5.4). The protasis may be marked with a particle (## 1–3) or not (## 4–6); a stative verb may be used in the protasis (# 2).

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | אִם־גִּלְחֹתִי וְסָר מִמָּנִי כְחִי
וְחִלִּיתִי וְהָיִיתִי
כְּכָל־הָאָדָם: | If I were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become weak and become like any other man. ²⁹
Judg 16:17 |
| 2. | אִם־חָפֵץ בָּנוּ יְהוָה־הֵבִיא | If YHWH is pleased with us, he will lead |

אֲתָנוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת

us into this land.

[Num 14:8](#)

3. אִם עֲבַרְתָּ אִתִּי וְהִיְתָ עָלַי
לְמִשָּׂא:

If you go with me, you will be a burden to me.

[2 Sam 15:33](#)

4. וַיִּדְפְּקוּם יוֹם אֶחָד וּמָתוּ
כָּל־הַצֹּאן:

If they drive them hard for just one day, all the flock will die.

[Gen 33:13](#)

5. וְעִזָּב אֶת־אָבִיו וּמָת:

And if he left his father, he (his father) would die.

[Gen 44:22](#)

6. וְשָׁמַע שָׁאוּל וַהֲרֹגֵנִי

And if Saul heard (about it), he would kill me.

[1 Sam 16:2](#)

C

In a simple (con)sequential situation, the independent clause represented by *qtl* also constitutes the logical basis or cause for the situation expressed by relative *wqtl* (see 32.2.1). This pattern can involve any use of the perfective, with past-time reference (## 7–8), or the recent past or present perfect situation (## 9–12); the *qtl* form may be a stative (# 13), an epistolary perfective (# 14), a perfective of resolve (# 15), or an accidental future perfective (## 16–17).

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7. גַּם אֶת־הָאֲרִי גַם־הַדּוֹב
הָכָה עֲבָדְךָ וְהָיָה הַפִּלִּשְׁתִּי
... כְּאֶחָד מֵהֶם

Your servant smote both the lion and the bear and the Philistine will be ... like one of them.

[1 Sam 17:36](#)

8. כְּמַעַט שָׁכַב אֶחָד ...
אֶת־אִשְׁתְּךָ וְהֵבֵאתָ עָלֵינוּ
אִשָּׁם:

Someone ... might have slept ... with your wife and you would have brought trouble on us.³⁰

[Gen 26:10](#)

9. וּפְרִינוּ בָאָרֶץ:

Now YHWH has given us room and we will flourish in the land.

[Gen 26:22](#)

10. יְהוָה אֶת־מַמְלָכוֹת ...
מֵעַלְיָךְ הַיּוֹם וְנָתַנָּה

YHWH has rent the kingdom ... from you today and he will give it ...

[1 Sam 15:28](#)

11. הִנֵּה נָגַע זֶה עַל־שִׁפְתֶיךָ
וְסָר עֲוֹנְךָ וְחַטָּאתְךָ תִּכָּפֵר:

This has touched your lips and so your guilt shall depart and your sin will be atoned for.

[Isa 6:7](#)

12. אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי:

I YHWH have spoken and will do (it).

[Ezek 17:24](#), [22:14](#), etc.

13. נֶקַל ... וְנִתְתִּיד

It is too small a thing ... I will make you ...

[Isa 49:6](#)

14. הִנֵּה שְׁלַחְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ

I am sending Naaman to you ... so that

- את־נַעֲמֹן ... וְאִסְפָּתוּ
you might cure him.
[2 Kgs 5:6](#)
15. חַי־יְהוָה כִּי־אֶסְרָצְתִּי
אֲחִירָיו וְלִקְחָתִי מֵאִתּוֹ
מֵאוֹמֶה:
As YHWH lives: I will run after him and
get something from him.
[2 Kgs 5:20](#)
16. הִנֵּה בִרְכָתִי אִתּוֹ וְהִפְרִיתִי
אִתּוֹ
I will bless him and make him fruitful.
[Gen 17:20](#)
17. שְׁלַחְתִּי בְבִלָּה וְהוֹרְדָתִי
בְּרִיחִים כָּלָם
I will send to Babylon and bring them all
down as fugitives.
[Isa 43:14](#)

d

In some contexts, especially in legal literature, relative *wqtl* with a consecutive notion takes on a subordinate volitional force. This force may also characterize the nonperfective conjugation, the non-subordinate equivalent of *w«qatalti*(31.5).

18. רַק בְּאַבְתָּיִךְ חָשׂוּ יְהוָה
לְאַהֲבָה אוֹתָם וַיִּבְחַר ...
כִּיּוֹם הַזֶּה:
וּמִלֶּתָם אֶת עֶרְלַת לִבְבָּכֶם
וְעִרְפָּכֶם לֹא תִקְשׂוּ עוֹד:
Yet on your forebears YHWH set his
affections and he chose ... as it is today.
So circumcise the foreskins of your
hearts, and do not be stiff-necked any
longer.
[Deut 10:15–16](#)

According to the theology of Deuteronomy, Israel should offer God future obedience on the basis of past gracious acts to them, and here as elsewhere *w«qatalti* represents the entreaty form (וּמִלֶּתָם), and *qtl* + *wayyqtl* the past acts (חָשׂוּ ... וַיִּבְחַר)³¹

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19. רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ ... וָאוֹלָךְ ...
וְשִׁמְרָתֶם
Your eyes have seen ... and I led you ...
so carefully follow ...
[Deut 29:2, 4, 8](#)
20. הַחַיִּים וְהַמָּוֶת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ
... וּבְחִרְתָּ בַחַיִּים
Life and death I set before you ... so
choose life.
[Deut 30:19](#)

This use is not confined to Deuteronomy.

21. כִּי אִם־זָכַרְתָּנִי אַתָּה ...
וְעָשִׂיתָ־נָא עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד
וְהִזְכַּרְתָּנִי
But if you remember me ... then show
mercy to me ... and remember me.³²
[Gen 40:14](#)
22. עָתָה שָׁבְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ וְהִלַכְתָּ
עִמָּנוּ
Now we have turned to you. So come
with us.

[Judg 11:8](#)

e

After *qtl* (or *wayyqtl*) representing a situation in past time, subordinate *wqtl* represents an imperfective situation within the single event, the epexegetical *w«qatalti* construction (cf. 33.2.2; see also 32.2.1d # 9).

23. וַיִּבְחַר מֹשֶׁה אֲנָשִׁי־חַיִּל ...
וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם רָאשִׁים ...
וַשְׁפֹּטוּ ... אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַקָּשֶׁה
יְבִיאוּן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה
וְכָל־הַדְּבָר הַקָּטָן יִשְׁפּוּטוּ
הֵם:

[Exod 18:25–26](#)

We prefer to interpret the *wqtl* construction as epexegetical with an imperfective meaning rather than as copulative with perfective value for two reasons.³³ First, epexegetical *w«qatalti* may signify a (future) consequence, a primary meaning of the non-perfective conjugation, after *qtl*. We see no reason for denying the possibility that it might also express imperfective aspect, the other primary value of the non-perfective conjugation, in the same syntactical construction. Second, when the chain is broken the text reverts to *yqtl*, which signifies imperfective aspect in past time (see, e.g., # 23). In this connection the situation represented by *w«qatalti* does not chronologically follow that expressed by the suffix conjugation, but rather explains the leading situation. The aspectual value of epexegetical *w«qatalti* after *qtl* can be seen by contrasting that construction with *wayyqtl* after 715. Lambdin contrasts the two constructions with these examples.³⁴

- | | |
|--|--|
| הָיָה רָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ וִיֶּרֶד
מִצְרַיִם | There was a famine in the land
and he used to go down to
Egypt (customary). |
| הָיָה רָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ וִיֶּרֶד
מִצְרַיִם | There was a famine in the land
and he went down to Egypt
(specific, punctual). |

By this contrast Lambdin rightly aims to show the difference in aspect between the two sentences. The first is imperfective, more specifically customary, the second perfective, more specifically preterite. But the sentences also differ with respect to temporal sequence.

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The verb וִיֶּרֶד is contemporary with the primary situation, while וַיֵּרֶד is probably chronologically successive to the first. Lambdin confines the contemporary/sequential differentiation to sentences with הָיָה in the main clause. In any narrative sequence, however, relative *w«qatalti* signifies a past situation that is subordinate or epexegetical to a situation represented by *wayyqtl* or *qtl* in the leading clause.

24. וַיִּשְׁפֹּט שָׁמוּאֵל אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְהָלַךְ ...
[1 Sam 7:15–16](#)
25. וַיְהִי נֶקֶד וְהָשִׁיב
כָּרִים ...
[2 Kgs 3:4](#)
26. וַהֲפֹשְׁבִים הַפָּרִיד יַעֲקֹב ...
וְהָיָה
[Gen 30:40–41](#)

27. וְגַם אֲנֹכִי מִנְעֵתִי מִכֶּם
אֶת־הַגֶּשֶׁם ... וְהַמָּטָרִיתִי
עַל־עִיר אַחַת וְעַל־עִיר
אַחַת לֹא אֲמַטִּיר חֶלְקָהּ
אַחַת תִּמְטֵר וְחֶלְקָהּ
אֲשֶׁר־לֹא־תִמְטֵר עָלֶיהָ
תִּיבֹשׁ:
וְנָעוּ שָׂתִים שְׁלֹשׁ עָרִים
אֶל־עִיר אַחַת

I also withheld rain from you ... I would send rain on one city, but would withhold it from another. One field would have rain; another, which would have none, would dry up. People of two or three cities would stagger to one city ...

[Amos 4:7–8](#)

32.2.4 After Nominal Clauses

a

The w«qatalti form after nominal clauses shows the same range of meanings as after affix-conjugation forms: it is found in the apodosis after a conditional clause (# 1); in a consequent situation (## 2–9), which may be volitional (# 9); or with an imperfective sense (# 10–11).

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1. וְאִם־אֵין מוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתָּנוּ
וַיִּצְאָנוּ אֵלֶיךָ:
If there is none to save us, we will surrender to you.
[1 Sam 11:3](#)
2. הָעוֹד־לִי בָנִים בְּמִעִי וְהִיוּ
לָכֶם לְאֻנָּשִׁים:
Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become husbands for you?
[Ruth 1:11](#)
3. הֲכִי־אֲחִי אֶתָּה וְעַבְדְּתָנִי
חֲנָם
Because you are a relative of mine, should you serve me for nothing?
[Gen 29:15](#)
4. אֲנִי יְהוָה וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם
I am YHWH, and I will bring you out ...
[Exod 6:6](#)
5. אֵין־יִרְאָת אֱלֹהִים ...
וְהָרְגוּנִי
There is no fear of God ... and they will kill me.
[Gen 20:1–1](#)
6. הִנֵּה־נָא אֶת־עַקְרָה וְלֹא
יִלְדָּת וְהָרִית וַיִּלְדָּת בֶּן:
You are sterile and have not borne a child, but you will become pregnant and bear a son.
[Judg 13:3](#)
7. וּמִי בֶן־יֵשִׁי ... וְלָקַחְתִּי ...
וְנָתַתִּי
Who is this son of Jesse ... that I should take ... and give ...
[1 Sam 25:10–11](#)
8. מָחָר חֹדֶשׁ וְנִפְקְדָתָּ
Tomorrow is New Moon, and you will be missed.
[1 Sam 20:18](#)
9. זֹאת עֲבַדַּת בְּנֵי־קָהָת ...
This is the work of the Kohathites ...

וּבֹא אֶהְרֵן וּבָנָיו

Aaron and his sons will enter ... ³⁵

[Num 4:4–5](#)

10.

וַאֲכָלוּ אֶת־חֶקֶם

... because the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh and would eat from their allotment.

[Gen 47:22](#)

11.

אִשָּׁת כְּסִילוֹת הַמִּיָּה ...
וַיֵּשְׁבָה לַפֶּתַח בֵּיתָהּ

The woman Folly is loud ... and sits at the entrance of her house.

[Prov 9:13–14](#)

32.2.5 With Non-Finite Verb Forms

a

W«qatalî forms can be used with all three types of non-finite verb forms. After a participle used in a conditional clause, relative w«qtl can serve in the apodosis (# 1). The participle used as a *casus pendens* (## 2–4) is similar to a conditional clause. The w«qtl form can be used to describe a consequent situation, whether temporal (# 5) or logical (## 6–7; # 6 with a volitional force), or an imperfective situation (cf. # 12). Both wayyqtl and relative w«qtl may follow a participle. How do the two constructions differ? Driver rightly noted that the latter construction occurs in connection with indefinite situations whereas the former occurs with concrete ones:

Wherever the [participle] or [infinitive] asserts something indefinite or undetermined—wherever, therefore, it may be resolved into whoever, whenever, if ever etc ... —we find the perfect with הִי consecutive employed: where, on the contrary, the [participle] or [infinitive] asserts an actual concrete event, we find the following verbs connected with it by the imperfect and הִי ³⁶

This contrast between wayyqtl and w«qatalî after the participle is consistent with the theory that qtl inverts its value with waw-relative and that wayyqtl preserves a preterite value.

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1.

הַנֹּגֵעַ בָּמֶת ... וְטָמֵא

Whoever touches one who has died ... will be unclean.

[Num 19:11](#)

2.

כִּי כָל־אֹכֵל חֶמֶץ וְנִכְרְתָה
הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִיא

As for anyone who eats leavened bread (i.e., if anyone eats leavened bread), that soul will be cut off ...

[Exod 12:15](#)

3.

הַמְדַּבֵּר אֵלַיךְ וְהִבֵּאתוֹ
אֵלַי

As for the one who speaks to you (i.e., if anyone speaks to you), bring him to me.

[2 Sam 14:10](#)

4.

אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִרְקַח כְּמוֹהוּ ...
וְנִכְרְתַת מֵעַמּוֹ:

As for a man who makes perfume like it ... he will be cut off from his people.

[Exod 30:33](#)

5.

הִנֵּה הָעֲלֻמָּה הָרָה וַיִּלְדֶּת
בֶּן וְקָרְאת

The 'almâ will be pregnant and will bear a son and will call ...

[Isa 7:14](#)

6.

כִּי יִהְיֶה ... הוּא אֱלֹהִי
הָאֱלֹהִים ... וְאַהֲבָה גֵר ...
וְאַהֲבָתָם אֶת־הַגֵּר

Because YHWH ... is God of gods ... and one who loves the sojourner ... so you are to love the sojourner.

[Deut 10:17–19](#)

7. הִנְנִי מְפֹרֵךְ וְהִרְבִּיתִּךָ I will make you fruitful and numerous.
[Gen 48:4](#)

b

Unlike the use of relative w«qatalí in the above constructions, where it retains in varying degrees its apodosis force, with a substantival participle the situation represented by w«qatalí may represent a simple chronologically subsequent situation (## 8-li).³⁷ w«qatalí after a predicate participle in past time represents an explanatory, imperfective situation (# 12). For a consequential situation in future time, see 37.7.2a.

8. וְהִיּוֹצֵא וְנָפַל The one who goes out and surrenders ...
[Jer 21:9](#)
9. מִכֹּה אִישׁ וְנָתַת מוֹת יוֹמָת: Whoever strikes a man, and he dies, will be put to death.
[Exod 21:12](#)
10. וְגִנֵּב אִישׁ וּמָכְרוּ ... מוֹת יוֹמָת: Whoever kidnaps a man and sells him ... will be put to death.
[Exod 21:16](#)
11. הָאֹמְרִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה וַיְהוּה לֹא שְׁלָחָם וַיַּחֲלוּ לְקִים דְּבָרָם: Those who say: "Thus says YHWH," but YHWH has not sent them, and they expect to establish [their] word ...
[Ezek 13:6](#)
12. וַיְהוֹנָתָן וַאֲחִימָעִץ עֲמָדִים ... וַהֲלָכָה הַשְׁפָּחָה וְהַנִּיָּדָה לָהֶם Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying ... and a servant girl would go and inform them.
[2 Sam 17:17](#)

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c

The w«qatalí construction after an infinitive construct functions in ways similar to those we have observed in connection with other leading verbs. The line between an apodosis and a consequent situation is often fuzzy in the construction (## 13–18). The examples can be taken as conditional sentences; for example, # 14 can readily be taken as 'when the wrath of your brother subsides, then ...' In some cases, the w«qtí relative form is consequential (## 16, 19–21),³⁸ in others imperfective (cf. # 17), or, subordinate to an adverbial expression of time (# 22).

13. כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכָלְכֶם מִמֶּנּוּ וְנִפְקְחוּ אֵינֵיכֶם When you eat from it, your eyes will be opened.
[Gen 3:5](#)
14. עַד־שׁוּב אַף־אַחֶיךָ ... וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי וְלִקְחָתִיךָ until the wrath of your brother subsides ... then I will send for you
[Gen 27:45](#)
15. לְהַמִּית צַדִּיק עִם־רָשָׁע וְהָיָה כַצַּדִּיק כְּרָשָׁע to kill the righteous with the wicked and so the righteous become as the wicked
[Gen 18:25](#)
16. בְּעִבְרֶכֶם אֶת־בְּרִית יְהוָה If you violate the covenant of YHWH ... and go and serve other

... וְהִלַּכְתֶּם וְעִבְדֶּתֶם
אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים ... וְחָרָה
אֶף־יְהוָה בְּכֶם

gods ... , then YHWH's anger will
burn against you.

[Josh 23:16](#)

17. עַל־רַדְפוֹ ... וְשָׁחַת רַחֲמָיו

because he pursued ... and
[repeatedly] ruined mercy

[Amos 1:11](#)

18. בְּשִׁבְרֵי לֶכֶם מִטֶּה־לֶּחֶם
וְאָפוּ עֶשֶׂר נָשִׁים ... בְּתֵנוּר
אֶחָד

When I cut off your supply of bread,
ten women will bake ... in one oven.

[Lev 26:26](#)

19. עַד־בּוֹאִי אֵלֶיךָ וְהוֹדַעְתִּי
לְךָ

until I come to you and tell you ...

[1 Sam 10:8](#)

20. כְּטוֹב לֵב־אֲמֹנוֹן ... וְאָמַרְתִּי
אֵלֵיכֶם

when Amnon's heart becomes
merry ... and I tell you ...

[2 Sam 13:28](#)

21. וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם צֹאתְךָ וְעִבְרָתְךָ
... יָדַע תִּדַּע כִּי מוֹת תָּמוּת

On the day you go forth and cross
over ... , know that you will die.

[1 Kgs 2:37](#)

22. וּבַיּוֹם פָּקַדְתִּי וּפָקַדְתִּי
עֲלֵיהֶם חַטָּאתָם:

When I punish, then I will punish
them for their sin.

[Exod 32:34](#)

d

After an infinitive absolute the relative *waw* + suffix conjugation construction denotes, as in its other grammatical connections, either a consequent or an explanatory imperfective situation. It may have the former notion when the infinitive absolute functions as a surrogate for a finite verb; the latter notion adheres to it when it functions

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adverbially in the postpositive position. As we shall see, the infinitive absolute can function as a finite verb for various reasons (see 35.5.2). Not surprisingly, the *w«qatal»* construction can represent a situation consequent to that envisioned by the infinitive absolute (## 23–24). These sentences could also be classified as apodoses because the leading situation usually implies the condition for the subsequent situation. We shall also see that a postpositive infinitive absolute which is concordant with the finite verb denotes action either simultaneous or quasi-simultaneous with the finite verb (see 35.4). In this way the internal structure of the finite verb is unpacked in its progress even if it be presented as a single whole by the finite verb. The *w«qatal»* construction, with its potential to represent an imperfective and exegetical situation, may occur with an infinitive absolute concordant with the finite verb to represent a situation subordinate to the situation represented by the finite verb (## 25).

23. הָסֵר מְשׁוֹכָתוֹ וְהָיָה לְבָעַר
פָּרִץ גִּדְּרוֹ וְהָיָה לְמִרְמָס:

I will remove its hedge, and it will be
consumed; I will break down its wall,
and it will become trampled ground.

[Isa 5:5](#)

24. וְחִזְקוּ יְדֵי מְרָעִים

They commit adultery and walk in a lie
and they strengthen the hands of
evildoers.

[Jer 23:14](#)

25. וַתֵּלֶךְ הַלּוֹךְ וְזָעָקָה: And she kept on going and crying out.
[2 Sam 13:19](#)

32.2.6 Two Further Points

a

Relative waw with a suffix form occurs chiefly in the environments noted above, but two adjunct matters require comment.

b

We noted the temporal expression formed with infinitives (32.2.5c ## 21–22). Not surprisingly, the dependent notion of (con)sequence can be subordinated to adverbial expressions of time (## 1–4). Sometimes the future time is emphasized by the addition of הֵיחָד (# 5; for הֵיחָד see 33.2.4).

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1. עֶרֶב וַיֵּדְעֶתֶם ... וּבֹקֶר וַיִּרְאִיתֶם
 In the evening you will know ... and in the morning you will see ...
[Exod 16:6–7](#)
2. בְּצָר לָךְ וּמִצָּאוֹךְ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
 (When) in your distress all these things will have happened ...
[Deut 4:30](#)
3. בְּשָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים ... וְנִקְלָה כְּבוֹד מוֹאָב
 Within three years ... Moab's splendor will bedespised.
[Isa 16:14](#)
4. עַד־אֹר הַבֹּקֶר וַהֲרַגְנָהוּ:
 At dawn's light we will kill him.
[Judg 16:2](#)
5. אִם לֹא תִגִּידוּ ... וְהָיָה בְּתִתִּיהוּהָ לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וַעֲשִׂינוּ עִמָּךְ חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה:
 If you do not tell ... then it will be that when YHWH gives us the land we will treat you justly and honestly.
[Josh 2:14](#)

c

The second point is also associated with the existential verb. Sometimes הֵיחָד functions either to introduce a discourse or to advance it by introducing a situation that is only more or less loosely connected with the preceding situation. Gottfried Vanoni has studied the two most common existential verb forms. He alleges that וְהָיָה does not ordinarily introduce an independent temporal sentence in itself but is rather synchronic with what follows, while וְהָיָה usually has a deictic temporal function.³⁹ In this use the time is often specified by a temporal adverbial construction and followed by another w«qatalí or by yqtí. In this construction w«qatalí signifies either future time (## 6–9) or, in past time, imperfective aspect (## 10–12).

6. הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר חָזָה יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ ... וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים נִכּוֹן יְהִיָּה הָר בֵּית־יְהוּהוּ
 The word which Isaiah saw ... : It will be in the last days that the mountain of YHWH's temple will be established.
[Isa 2:1–2](#)
7. וְהָיָה בְּעַנְנֵי עָנָן עַל־הָאָרֶץ
 It will be whenever I bring clouds over

וְנִרְאָתָהּ הַקֶּשֶׁת בְּעָנָן:
וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי

the earth and a rainbow appears in the clouds, that I will remember my covenant ...

[Gen 9:14–15](#)

8. וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהוָה לְךָ
וְנִשְׂאָתָהּ הַמָּשָׁל הַזֶּה ...

It will be when YHWH gives you relief ... that you will take up this taunt.

[Isa 14:3–4](#)

9. הִנֵּה אֲנִכִּי נֹצֵב עַל־עֵין
הַמַּיִם וְהָיָה הָעֹלָמָה
הַיִּצְאָה

I am standing by a spring of water; and it will be that the 'almâ who comes out ...

[Gen 24:43](#)

10. וַיָּדַע אֹנָן כִּי לֹא לוֹ יְהִיָּה
הַזֶּרַע וְהָיָה אִם־בָּא
אֶל־אִשְׁתּוֹ אָחִיו וְשָׂחַת

But Onan knew the offspring would not be his. So it would be that when (i.e., whenever) he went to his brother's wife, he would destroy ...

[Gen 38:9](#)

11. וְהָיָה כִּצְאָת מֹשֶׁה
אֶל־הָאֹהֶל יִקְוּמוּ כָּל־הָעָם

And it would be that when (i.e., whenever) Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise.

[Exod 33:8](#)

12. וְהָיָה אִם־זָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְעָלָה מִדְיָן

And whenever Israel planted their crops, Midian would attack.

[Judg 6:3](#)

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32.3 Copulative Waw + Suffix Conjugation

a

Whereas relative *w«qtl* represents one situation as subordinate to another, copulative *w«qtl* represents two situations as coordinate with one another. The two constructions are distinguished by stress (in first singular and second masculine singular) and by semantics. Two rather restricted sets of circumstances where *wqtl* has the value of *qtl* with simple *waw* have been established by Revell; these are:

(a) As the second of a pair or longer series of perfect forms acting as a semantic unit, that is, representing different aspects of the same event, not different actions in a sequence of events, as *bānīm giddālfi werômāmfi* ("Children have I reared and raised", [Isa 1:2](#)).

(b) Where verbs semantically related in the same way occur in a series of short parallel clauses, as *hôbāšfi 'ēš lāh wehiprāhfi 'ēš yāēš* ("I have dried up the fresh tree, and cause the dried tree to sprout", [Ezek 17:24](#))⁴⁰

Thus, if semantic pertinence demands that the situation represented by *w«qtl* is perfective in aspect and not subordinate to the preceding situation, then the construction should be construed as a *waw*-copulative. Contrariwise, if the same factor demands that *w«qtl* represents a subordinate situation, be it (con)sequential and/or imperfective aspect, then it should be interpreted as a *waw*-relative construction. Copulative *wqtl* is used in at least four different ways.

b

The copulative construction sometimes serves in a *hendiadys*, to represent two aspects of a complex situation (cf. Revell's first set).

1. וָאֲנִי זָקֵנְתִּי וְרֹשְׁבִתִּי I am old and gray.
[1 Sam 12:2](#)

2. הֲהוּא אָמַר ... וְדָבַר Does he speak ... ? Does he promise ... ?
[Num 23:19](#)
3. הִתֵּל בִּי וְהִחֲלֵף אֶת־מִשְׁכָּרְתִּי He has cheated me by changing my wages.
[Gen 31:7](#)
4. כִּי־הִקְשָׁה יְהוָה ... אֶת־רוּחוֹ וְאָמִץ אֶת־לִבּוֹ YHWH ... made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate.
[Deut 2:30](#)
5. וְהִשִּׁיבוּ אֶל־לִבָּם ... וְשָׁבוּ וְהִתְחַנְּנוּ And if they have a change of heart ... and repent and plead ...
[1 Kgs 8:47](#)

c

On other occasions the *qtl w«qtl* forms function in juxtaposition, contrasting two situations rather than presenting two sides of the same one (cf. Revell's second set).

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6. וְהִנֵּה נָטַשׁ אָבִיד אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הָאֲתָנוֹת וְדָאָג לְכַכֶּם Your father has stopped thinking about the donkeys and has become worried about you.
[1 Sam 10:2](#)
7. וְלֹא־שָׁאֲלָתָּ ... וְשָׁאֲלָתָּ You have not asked for ... but you have asked for ...
[1 Kgs 3:11](#)
8. אִם־חָכְמָתָּ ... וְלֹצָתָּ If you are wise ... , but if you are a mocker ...
[Prov 9:12](#)

d

The copulative may simply serve in coordination to link two points in the discourse.

9. הוּא־הִכָּה אֶת־אֲדוֹם ... וְתָפַשׁ אֶת־הַסֵּלַע בַּמִּלְחָמָה He smote Edom ... and captured Sela in the battle.
[2 Kgs 14:7](#)
10. וַיִּבֶן אֶת־הַבָּמוֹת ... וּבָנָה מִזְבְּחַת בְּבֵית יְהוָה He built the high places ... and built altars in the House of YHWH.
[2 Kgs 21:3–4](#)
11. וַיִּשְׂרֹפֵם מִחוּץ לְיְרוּשָׁלַּיִם ... וְנָשָׂא אֶת־עֲפָרָם בֵּית־אֵל: He burned them outside of Jerusalem ... and took their ashes to Bethel.
[2 Kgs 23:4](#)

This use tends to replace the common *wayyqtl* in the later books, in part as the language comes more and more under the influence of Aramaic, which lacks the *wayyqtl* form.

12. עָשִׂיתִי לִי־גִנּוֹת וּפְרָדִיסִים וְנִטְעֵתִי בָּהֶם עֵץ כָּל־פְּרִי: And I made for myself gardens and parks and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

13. וַנִּדְלֹתִי וְהוֹסַפְתִּי מִכֹּל [Qoh 2:5](#)
 ... And I became greater by far than ...
[41](#)
[Qoh 2:9](#)

e

The *wəqatal̄fi* form may indicate a disjunction, signaling a situation out of chronological sequence (39.2.3). As Johnson notes, "In several instances a parenthetical remark—a parenthetically inserted particular or preliminary remark—is designated by *w«* + perfect. If this occurs in a narration of past time, *w«* + perfect corresponds ordinarily to our pluperfect."⁴²

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14. וַיֵּרָא עֵשָׂו כִּי־בֵרַךְ יִצְחָק
 אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְשָׁלַח אֹתוֹ פָּדָן־
 אַרָם
 And Esau saw that Isaac had blessed
 Jacob and had sent him to Paddan-
 Aram.
[Gen 28:6](#)
15. וַיְמַהֵר שִׁמְעִי ... וַיֵּרֶד
 עִם־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה ... וְאֵלָף
 אִישׁ עִמּוֹ מִבְּנֵימִן ... וַצִּלְחוּ
 הַיַּרְדֵּן לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
 And Shimei ... hurried and went down
 with the men of Judah ... Now there
 were with him one thousand
 Benjaminites ... and they had rushed to
 the Jordan before the king.
[2 Sam 19:17–18](#)
16. וַיִּתְאַנֶּף יְהוָה בְּשִׁלֹמֹה
 כִּי־נָטָה לִבּוֹ ... וַצָּוָה
 אֵלָיו
 And YHWH became angry with
 Solomon because his heart had
 turned ... and (YHWH) had
 commanded him ...
[1 Kgs 11:9–10](#)

Footnotes:

1. William Chomsky, *David Kimhi's Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol)* (New York: Bloch, 1952) 62. For verb sequencing elsewhere in Afroasiatic, see A. Loprieno, "The Sequential Forms in Late Egyptian and Biblical Hebrew," *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 7 (1980) 143–62.
2. S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1892) 115–16. The consonantal forms of (a) *w* + infinitive absolute and (b) *w* + third-person masculine singular perfective may be identical, and there may be cases in which the forms have been confused in the MT (b read as a, the less frequent combination, is likely to be more common). See J. Huesman, "The Infinitive Absolute and the *Waw* + Perfect Problem," *Biblica* 37 (1956) 410–34.
3. See Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 122–23, for a fuller account; cf. E. J. Revell, "Stress and the *Waw* 'Consecutive' in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 (1984) 437–44, esp. 439–40; and especially Revell, "The Conditioning of Stress Position in *Waw* Consecutive Perfect Forms in Biblical Hebrew," *Hebrew Annual Review* 9 (1985) 277–300, quotation at 280. Revell proposes that "stress position in perfect forms with *waw* consecutive is ... conditioned by the intonation patterns characteristic of the speech units" (p. 299). Qoheleth is exceptional for the *wqtl* form: there, even when the stress shifts in the *w«qatal̄fi* forms, the value is simple (copulative) *waw* with perfective aspect. On the first category above, see Revell, "Stress Position in *Waw* Consecutive," 279.
4. For this and the following statistics, see the tables in Bo Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt mit vorangehendem we* (Lund: Gleerup, 1979) 24–29.
5. W. L. Moran, "The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. E. Wright (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961; rpt. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1979) 54–72, at 64; cf. W. F. Albright and W. L. Moran, "A

Reinterpretation of an Amarna Letter from Byblos (EA 82)," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 2 (1948) 239–48.

6. Cf. Moran, "Hebrew Language," 64–65.

7. Cf. Moran, "Hebrew Language," 65.

8. Cf. Moran, "Hebrew Language," 65.

9. Arabic *fa* has a cognate in the rare Northwest Semitic conjunction *p* 'and (then),' attested in Ugaritic (*UT* § 12.1), in a variety of Aramaic dialects (C.-F. Jean and Jacob Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'ouest* [Leiden: Brill, 1965] 225), and perhaps in *Biblical Hebrew*; on the last, see 39.2.6c.

10. Joüon § 115 / pp. 312–14.

11. D. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung in den Psalmen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1960); Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt*. Scholars occasionally try to use the problematic status of *w«qtl* forms as an entry into other, not strictly related spheres of research; see, e.g., R. Bartelmus, "Ez 37, 1–14, die Verbform *w«qatal* und die Anfänge der Auferstehungshoffnung," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 97 (1985) 366–89.

12. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 116–18; Joüon § 115 / pp. 312–14; GB 2.39–45 (§ 9); T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 108–9; *LHS* 96–98, 264.

13. A. O. Schulz, *Über das Imperfekt und Perfekt mit -וּ (ו) im Hebräischen* (Königsberg Inaugural Dissertation, 1900).

14. Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt*, 32.

15. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 118.

16. *LHS* 106–7.

17. Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt*, 38–41.

18. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 123–24.

19. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 139–40.

20. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 276; cf. Joüon § 167/ pp. 512–18 on temporal and conditional clausal connections.

21. Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt*, 35–38.

22. Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt*, 35.

23. For the survey that follows, cf. GB 2.40 (§ 9b-d). On the apodosis *waw*, see Joüon § 176 / pp. 529–32.

24. For a catalog of the particles involved, see Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 129–36. The protasis usually has a non-perfective form in Biblical Hebrew, but in Qumranic Hebrew "*qtl* in the protasis is much more common"; see E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 84. Rodney K. Duke has recently contended that after such a protasis, the *w«qatalî* form can serve to continue the protasis and need not represent the apodosis; even if we admit that [Deut 18:6–8](#) is problematic, the other passages he cites in Deuteronomy (notably [17:14–15](#)) hardly constitute compelling counterexamples to the pattern described above; see "The Portion of the Levite," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987) 193–201, at 196.

25. Note the two distinct uses of *w«qtl* in this chain.

26. Phoenician-Punic furnishes examples of this sentence type. See C. R. Krahmalkov, "The *Qatal* with Future Tense Reference in Phoenician," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31 (1986) 5–10. Since the *w* is not always present in the Punic examples, Krahmalkov contends "that the presence of the conjunction is purely stylistic, serving the sole function of co-ordinating the clauses. That is, there is no inherent syntactic force in *w-* that 'converts' a perfect (past) into an imperfect (future). The *qatal* is, in other words, unmarked for tense, its future tense reference a factor of the syntactic structure in which it is embedded" (p. 10). We would propose that historically *w* was necessary for this construction and only came to be omitted at a relatively advanced stage in development.

27. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 125.

28. On the grammar of this difficult verse, see P. D. Miller, Jr., "Syntax and Theology in Genesis XII 3a," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984) 472–76.

29. Note the two different uses of *wqtl* in this chain.

30. Note the implicit condition.

31. Sometimes it is not clear whether an imperative sense is intended; consider *hwšy' ... wyd't* in [Deut 7:8–9](#): is it

'He brought you ... so that you might know' or ' ... (so) know!'"?

32. Note the particle of entreaty *nāʾ/nnāʾ*, usually used with modal forms (40.2.5c).

33. With Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 117–18.

34. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 279.

35. Cf. [Deut 18:3](#).

36. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 137.

37. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 276–77.

38. Note *lemáʿan* with an infinitive in [1 Kgs 8:60–61](#).

39. Gottfried Vanoni, "Ist die Fügung *HY* + Circumstant der Zeit im Althebräischen ein Satz?" *Biblische Notizen* 17 (1982) 73–86. On these forms in Chronicles, see R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 56–58.

40. Revell, "Stress Position in *Waw* Consecutive," 279.

41. Note the *hendiadys*. On *Qoheleth*, see n. 3.

42. Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt*, 41. In ## 14–15, the *w«qtl* could be seen as simply consecutive.

33 Waw + Prefix Conjugation

33.1 Waw-Relative + Short Prefix Conjugation

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33.3 Waw-Relative: Aspectual Matters

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3.3 After Prefix-Conjugation Forms

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3.5 With Non-finite Verb Forms

33.4 Simple Waw + Prefix Conjugation

33.1 Waw-Relative + Short Prefix Conjugation

33.1.1 Form

a

Waw-relative with the short prefix conjugation (*wayyqtl*), the most frequent conjugational form in Hebrew narrative, exhibits five formal characteristics: (1) the *waw* is vocalized with pathah and the prefix consonant is doubled (וַ); (2) the *waw* is normally prefixed to the short prefix-conjugation form, where available (e.g., וַיִּבְכֶּה and not וּבִכָּה); (3) the stress is thrown back toward the *waw* as much as possible (e.g., וַיִּקָּם and not וַיִּקָּם); (4) the construction normally begins its clause; and (5) it does not take an energetic ending (31.1.1d, 31.7.2). The relationship between the *wayyqtl* and the jussive forms is clear in [Gen 1:3](#): וַיְהִי ... וַיִּבְרָא, 'Let there be ... and there was ...' In contrast to *waw*-relative as used with the suffix conjugation (*w«qtl*), *waw*-relative in the bound form *wayyqtl* is always pointed differently from the *waw*-copulative that occurs with the nonperfective conjugation. The phonologically conditioned variants of וַ —for example, וַ with אַ —do not disguise this fact.

b

Two prefix-conjugation forms, long and short, are distinguished in the cases of (1) the *Hiphil* of all verbs; (2) every verbal stem of III-*he* verbs except *Pual* and *Hophal*;

(3) the *Qal* of geminates, hollow roots (II-*waw/yodh*), I-*aleph* verbs, and I-*waw/yodh* verbs. As Leslie McFall rightly points out, *waw*-relative with the prefix conjugation does not always occur with the short form: וַתִּבְכֶּה and she wept occurs alongside וַתִּבְכֶּה alongside וַיִּבְכֶּה alongside וַיִּשְׁתָּה alongside וַיִּשְׁתָּה and וַיַּעַל and וַיַּעֲנֶה and וַיַּעַל and וַיַּעֲנֶה, etc.¹ If there were originally two sets of prefix conjugations and these are reflected in the long and short forms of Biblical Hebrew, it may be that the accentuation of the biblical short form reflects the accentuation of the form from which it is descended. The rare long forms used after *wa(y)-* would represent secondary, analogical developments, as the two prefix forms came

to be seen as variants of one form.

c

The frequency of the *wayyiqtol* form hardly requires comment: 29 of the finite verbs in the Hebrew Bible show this form (14,972 cases; cf. 29.1c). In about ninety cases the *waw*-relative occurs with the pseudo-cohortative, principally in the parts of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah where the narrative is in the first person, and rarely elsewhere (34.5).² This is not necessarily a late feature of the language: it is not used by the postexilic writer of Chronicles, but it is used by the earlier Deuteronomist (cf. [1 Chr 17:8](#) with [2 Sam 7:9](#)). Moreover, it is not found in [Zechariah 1–8](#) or Esther, both of which are post-exilic.

33.1.2 Origins and Meanings

a

The understanding of the origin of the *wayyqtl* form may influence the interpretation of its meaning. Scholars have not reached a consensus regarding the origin of either the *wa(y)*- or of the *yqtl* portions of the compound form, though the weight of scholarly opinion is tipped in favor of recognizing a distinctive source for the short prefix form.

b

The history of speculation about the origin of *wa(y)*- is colorful; here is Petér Kustár's summary.

Storr (1779) perceived in the fixed dagesh forte of the *wa* the remains of the *he*-interrogativum. Schultens (1737), the founder of Hebrew linguistic research in Holland, sought to explain the dagesh forte of the *wa* by a *he-demonstrativum* that dropped out. Other grammarians believed they could recognize in the *wa* with pathah and the following dagesh forte a syncope either from *whyh* or from *hyh* (*hwh*) and correspondingly in the imperfect with *wa* an analogy to Arabic *kāna yaqtulu*. Scholze first proposed this hypothesis (1735); he found numerous followers ...

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Gesenius himself adopted the view (1817) ... [but] gave it up entirely in the 12th edition of the grammar (1839). Ewald (1863) supposed that *we* and *ʾaz* had merged in the *wa*, while Grimme (1896) sought in the permanent dagesh after *wa* a *le* which assimilated to the prefixes. From this historical survey we can see that already at that time every conceivable, fantastic hypothesis existed, instead of an adequate understanding of the phenomenon. A quite necessary and also noteworthy reaction, therefore, can be seen in the opinion of Jahn, who ascribed the diverse punctuations of the forms with *waw* to a "subtle ingenuity" of the punctuator.

The latest research, by contrast, can be characterized as an attempt for objectivity. Scholars have tried to understand the function of the *waw* on the basis of the form with *waw* itself. To achieve this they often took parallel phenomena of the other Semitic languages to help clarify it. From such a linguistic relationship the *wa* was explained as the modification of the *wē*-copula. S. R. Driver (1881) explained it in this way; he thought the *waw*-copula had a demonstrative character. Accordingly he designated the *waw*-copula as signifying "a direct consequence of the event thus referred to." To render the viewpoint of König (1897), the following may be cited: the *waw* "most probably is en 'end' that became solemn, which connects the consequence that depends on a preceding event; the consequence therefore was something which had not happened in relationship to that past moment." And Bauer (1910) thinks "there must exist in these connections with *waw* an archaic style." The imperfect with *waw* "is timeless just like the Proto-Semitic *yaqtul* and can therefore include any temporal moment which can be conceived of in any way with a verb connected with 'and'; therefore, present, past, future as the connection in question demands it ... If the relationship to the past predominates, then that is due to the fact that in the narration of past events the series with 'and' is preferred." Essentially G. R. Driver (1936) says nothing more than this. He sought the origin of the *wa* in the Akkadian connective *ma* or in the Assyrian *uma* and showed that in Assyrian, for example, *m* can change into *w*. G. Douglas Young (1953) sees the origin of the imperfect with *waw* in the merging of the Egyptian connective *iw* and of *n*, the sign of the past tense (*wan/wanyiqtol* = *wayyiqtol*).³

Similar views can be found. V. Maag, for example, has suggested that the form originated with the deictic or demonstrative particle *han*. According to him, when a simple *shewa* stands before *h* both syncopate (thus, **w<hanyiqtol* > **wanyiqtol* > *wayyiqtol*).⁴ The fact that no theory based on a special origin for *wa(y)*- has gained acceptance suggests that the meaning of the compound construction cannot be decided on this basis. All agree,

however, that the *wa(y)-* element is related to the conjunction **וַ**, and connects one situation with another.

c

The origin of the *(way)yiqtol* element is similarly problematic, but at least here there is more data to work with. We noted earlier that Hebraists differ in their evaluation of the comparative Semitic data (see 29.4). The issue is important here because the

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meaning of *wayyqtl* is partially determined by the approach to this data. Researchers who hold that Hebrew preserves only one prefix conjugation, which signifies non-perfective notions, tend to minimize this data. Diethelm Michel, for example, writes: "Regarding the relationship of the imperfectum and imperfectum consecutivum it can be stated that no distinction exists between the two 'tempora' with respect to meaning ... The imperfectum consecutivum only expresses a closer connection with the preceding verbal form."⁵ In contrast, researchers who allow for the preservation of two prefix forms relate the construction to the short prefix conjugation, that is, to the historical short form *yaqtul*, which signifies either preterite action or jussive mood; thus *wayyqtl* may well express a notion contrary to the prefix conjugation not bound with the *waw*-relative, that is, with the descendant of the historical long form *yaqtulu*. Comparative Semitic grammar, the form itself, and use recognize the truth of the second view. As noted in the earlier discussions, various Semitic languages had at least two prefix conjugations, the shorter of which indicated both the jussive and preterite notions. Furthermore, as also noted earlier, *wayyqtl* seems to share essentially the jussive form, just as in the cognate languages. Recall, too, that the unbound short-prefix form may be used as a preterite in some early texts; compare, for example, **וַיַּשֶׂה** ('he made' (Ps 18:12) and **וַיַּשֶׂה** 'and he made' in a synoptic text (2 Sam 22:12). Finally, the form with *waw*-relative does not generally signify the distinctive uses of the non-perfective conjugation, namely, dependent modal nuances or customary action in past time. Rather, it signifies perfective aspect, as both W. Gross (arguing from a range of poetic texts) and T. J. Finley (basing himself on Amos) have recently contended.⁶

d

These two studies rightly suggest that *wayyqtl* signifies other notions than that of a preterite. In addition to occurring after the suffix conjugation, *wayyqtl* also occurs with the prefix conjugation, participles, nominal clauses, and infinitives; in all of these connections it may refer to either present or future time as well as past.

e

Whether *wayyqtl* originated in the short prefix conjugation, *yaqtul*, it shows in Hebrew meanings equivalent to those of the suffix conjugation. Like that conjugation it tends to represent concrete and specific situations according to the perfective aspect. As we shall see, it may signify a past constative situation, a perfect state, or a present state with stative verbs, a persistent or gnomic perfective, etc. When a chain of *waw*-relatives is broken, the verb reverts to the suffix conjugation, a phenomenon strongly suggesting that the two forms are equivalent, apart from the value of the *waw*-relative bound to it.

1. **וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם** And God called the light day, and the
וַלְחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה darkness he called night.

[Gen 1:5](#)

The apparent equivalency of *wayyqtl* with *qtl* with respect to aspect finds an analogy in the equivalency of relative *wqtl* with the prefix conjugation. In fact, relative *wqtl* may

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have influenced the development of *wayyqtl* as an "alternative" suffix conjugation, to be used when the situation is conceived of as dependent on a prior one.

f

This evidence strongly favors interpreting those instances of *wayyqtl* which must be taken as referring to the present or future according to the meaning and uses of the suffix notation rather than according to those of the prefix conjugation; that is, instead of regarding a form as representing a customary situation or a dependent future

situation, etc., we prefer to interpret it as denoting a gnomic perfective or specific future, etc. It should be underscored that such a gnomic perfective interpretation, for example, does not derive solely from a descriptive analysis of the passages in question, but also from the other evidence that *wayyqtl* functions as an equivalent of the suffix conjugation.

g

In sum, *wayyqtl* subjectively represents a situation according to the perfective aspect and subordinates it to a preceding statement. Since these two features, subordination and perfective aspect, are distinct and yet always present, we analyze separately the diverse kinds of subordinate connection (33.2) and the diverse functions of the perfective aspect (33.3). Since the perfective conjugation was studied in depth in Chapter 30, we do not aim here to be exhaustive but only to comment on a sufficient number of cases to justify, explain, and illustrate our interpretation of the most frequent verbal form in the Hebrew Scriptures.

33.2 Waw-Relative: Varieties of Connection

a

Relative *waw* with a prefix form represents a situation that is usually successive and always subordinate to a preceding statement. The succession may be either absolute or subjective, and often the distinction between them is blurred. Temporal sequence depends on objective fact outside the control of the speaker; logical sequence, by contrast, subjectively exists in the way a speaker sees the relationship between situations. Sometimes with *wayyqtl* a situation is represented as a logical entailment from (a) preceding one(s) or a logical contrast with it/them or as a summarizing statement of it/them. If the explanatory situation in fact occurred prior to the leading one, it may be necessary to translate *wayyqtl* by a pluperfect. *Wayyqtl* may be used after any clause which provides a starting point for development, as happens when *wayyqtl* is used epexegetically, after a circumstantial clause or phrase.

33.2.1 Succession

a

Situations described with *wayyqtl* are mostly temporally or logically succeeding. "The most obvious and frequent relation is," as S. R. Driver notes, "that of simple chronological succession [# 1] ... but of this there is no need to give ... examples, as they abound throughout the historical portions of the Old Testament."⁷ *Wayyqtl* signifies logical succession where a logical entailment from (a) preceding situation(s) (## 2–4) is expressed.

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- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת־חַוָּה ...
וַתֵּהֵר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־קַיִן | Adam knew Eve ... and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.

Gen 4:1 |
| 2. וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי
אִישׁ מְצַלִּיחַ | YHWH was with Joseph and so he was prosperous.

Gen 39:2 |
| 3. יָעַן מָאַסְתָּ אֶת־דְּבַר יְהוָה
וַיִּמְאַסְךָ מִמְּלָכָהּ: | Because you have rejected the word of YHWH, he has rejected you as king.

1 Sam 15:23 |
| 4. לֹא־מִוִּתְתֵנִי מִרְחֶם וַתְּהִי־לִי
אִמִּי קִבְרִי | He did not kill me in the womb, so that my mother would have become my tomb.

Jer 20:1–7 |

One may question whether the notion of succession is signified by the grammatical form or by the associations of the words. That the form and not the words signifies succession becomes clearer in those instances where a chain is broken (# 5) and where several perfectives are followed by *wayyqtl* (cf. # 6).

I waited for YHWH;

5. קוֹה קָנִיָּהּ יְהוָה
 וַיֵּט אֵלַי then he turned to me
 וַיִּשְׁמַע שְׁוַעֲתִי: and heard my cry.
 ... Then he lifted me out of the pit ...
 וַיַּעֲלֵנִי מִבּוֹר שְׁאוֹן
 וַיָּקֶם עַל-סֹלֶעַ רַגְלִי and set my feet upon a rock.
 כּוֹנֵן אֲשֶׁרִי: He made my steps firm.
 וַיִּתֵּן בְּפִי שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ Then he put a new song in my mouth.
 [Ps 40:2–4](#)

Concerning the waw-relative constructions in this passage Michel has this comment.

The imperfecta consecutiva picture a chain of actions arising the one out of the other ('he turned to me,' 'heard my cry,' 'lifted me out of the pit ...', 'set my feet upon a rock' 'put a new song in my mouth ...'), which are as a whole the consequence of the cry for help. Highly exceptional, then, is the perfect כּוֹנֵן in the midst of this chain. This change certainly cannot be explained as due to a varying period of time because the action 'he made my steps firm' is as past as 'he set my feet upon a rock.' If one considers these two sentences closely, one must say that in essence they are expressing the same thing; one cannot assert that there is an advance in the development of the thanksgiving. Here, in our opinion, lies the basis for the varying use of the tempora; we cannot see any other possibility.

Summarizing [40:2–4](#) we can therefore say: the chain of the imperfecta consecutive arising one out of another expresses an advance in action; it designates actions that arise consecutively out of one another. The perfectum is not a member of this consecutive action; it explicates the preceding imperfecta consecutive and so introduces to a certain extent a retarding moment in the action.⁸

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b

Michel's explanation is confirmed by many similar passages in the Hebrew Bible. We content ourselves with but one more example.

6. כִּי רָדַף אוֹיֵב נַפְשִׁי The enemy pursues me,
 דָּכָא לְאַרְצִי חִיָּתִי he crushes me to the ground;
 הוֹשִׁיבֵנִי בְּמַחְשָׁכִים ... he makes me dwell in darkness ...
 וַתִּתְעַטֵּף עָלַי רוּחִי So my spirit grows faint within me;
 בְּתוֹכִי יִשְׁתּוּמֵם לִבִּי: my heart within me is dismayed.
 [Ps 143:3–4](#)

Here, too, Michel offers an apt comment:

[Psalm 143](#) is an individual lament; vv [3–4](#) picture the happenings that lead the psalmist to his complaint. The defeats by the enemy have naturally already taken place, but they have not ended since otherwise the lament would be baseless. The perfecta in v [3](#) are therefore best translated as presents. The same is true, however, also of the distress and despair ... in v [4](#). One can hardly explain the differentiation of the tempora by varying periods of time.

But also one cannot derive from this passage the idea that a description begun in the perfectum is advanced by an imperfectum consecutivum. If that were so, it would not be clear why an imperfectum consecutivum could not and would not have to stand also already in connection with the second and third action of v [3](#).

Possibly one could establish that a description begun in the perfectum can be advanced by an imperfectum consecutivum, but it is unnecessary ...

The actions of v 3 are similar to one another; they constitute a certain kind of enumeration; they are placed as facts alongside of one another, without being connected logically or temporally. Verse 4 [beginning with ותתעמך], by contrast, does not advance the enumeration, but turns the gaze to the psalmist. Obviously the description here pertains to the action effected by the enemy; there lies, therefore, between v 3 and v 4 the relationship of cause and effect, ground and consequence. I cannot see any other difference between the actions of v 3 and v 4a. That leads to the conclusion, that here the imperfectum consecutivum is used in order to express a consequence.⁹

c

Most noteworthy in narrative is the way *wayyqtl* traces the thread of discourse (see also 39.2).

7. וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים
סֹדְמָה בָּעֶרֶב וְלוֹט יֹשֵׁב
בְּשַׁעַר-סֹדֶם וַיֵּרָא-לוֹט
וַיָּקָם לִקְרֹאתָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ
אֲפָיִם אֶרְצָה:
- And the two angels entered (*wayyqtl*) Sodom in the evening, while Lot was sitting (participle) in the gateway to Sodom. And Lot saw (*wayyqtl*) them and got up (*wayyqtl*) to greet them and bowed down (*wayyqtl*) with his face to the ground.

[Gen 19:1](#)

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Often a minor sequence developed with *wqtl* (in # 8 after the imperative) operates within the major narrative sequence indicated by *wayyqtl*.

8. וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה נָא-אֲדֹנִי סוּרוּ
נָא אֶל-בֵּית עַבְדְּכֶם וְלִינוּ
וְרַחְצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁכַּמְתֶּם
וְהִלַּכְתֶּם לְדַרְכְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ
לֹא
- And he said (*wayyqtl*), "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night (*wqtl*) and wash (*wqtl*) your feet and then go (*wqtl*) early (*wqtl*) on your way." And they said (*wayyqtl*), "No."

[Gen 19:2](#)

The development of the major chain often relies heavily on the minor one (cf. 32.2.3e for *wqtl* here).

9. וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד ... וּשְׁמוֹ
אֶלְקָנָה ... וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם
וַיִּזְבַּח ... וַיִּתֵּן לְפָנֶיהָ אֲשֶׁתוֹ
וְלִכְל-בָּנֶיהָ וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ מִנוֹת:
וּלְחָנָה יָתֵן מְנָה אַחַת
אֲפָיִם ... וְתִבְכָּה וְלֹא
תֹאכַל:
וַיֹּאמֶר
- There was a certain man ... and his name was Elqanah ... One day he offered a sacrifice (*wayyqtl*). ... He would give (*wqtl*) portions (of the meat) to his wife Peninah and to all her sons and daughters but to Hannah he would give (*yqtl*) a double portion ... And [on that particular day] she wept (*wayyqtl*) and could not eat (*yqtl*). And he said (*wayyqtl*).

[1 Sam 1:1, 4-5, 7-8](#)

d

Under the heading of logical relation we can consider a number of more or less distinct links. Sometimes the situation represented as a logical consequence occurred in absolute time prior to the first situation (# 10). The two situations may be logically contrasted (w has the sense 'and yet'; ## 11-12).¹⁰ The *wayyqtl* statement can be a summary remark (## 13-15).

10. כִּי־זֶה שְׁנַתִּים הָרָעָב בְּקָרֵב
הָאָרֶץ וְעוֹד חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים
אֲשֶׁר אֵין־חֲרִישׁ וְקָצִיר:
וַיִּשְׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵיכֶם
- For two years now there has been
famine in the land, and for the next five
years there will not be plowing and
reaping. So God sent me ahead of
you ...
- [Gen 45:6–7](#)
11. כִּי־רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים פָּנִים
אֶל־פָּנִים וַתִּנָּצַל נַפְשִׁי:
- I have seen God face to face and yet
my soul is delivered.
- [Gen 32:31](#)
12. וַיֹּאֲלֵהֶם הָאֱמֹרִי לְשָׁבֶת
בְּהַר־חֶרֶס ... וַתִּכְבַּד יָד
בֵּית־יוֹסֵף
- The Amorites were determined to dwell
in the hills of Heres(?) ... and yet the
power of the House of Joseph
increased.
- [Judg 1:35](#)
13. וַיִּכְלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ
- Thus the heavens and the earth were
completed.
- [Gen 2:1](#)
14. וַיֵּקֶם הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַמְעָרָה
אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ לְאַבְרָהָם
- So the field and the cave in it were
confirmed for Abraham.
- [Gen 23:20](#)
15. וַיִּקְרָאֲשֶׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַמָּקוֹם
הַהוּא גִלְגָּל עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:
- So that place has been called Gilgal to
this day.
- [Josh 5:9](#)

33.2.2 Epexegetis

a

Sometimes the situation represented by **וַ** does not succeed the prior one either in time or as a logical consequence; rather it explains the former situation (cf. 33.2.3e). In a sense, this epexegetical use of *wayyqtl* is the opposite of the summarizing use. The major fact or situation is stated first, and then the particulars or details, component or concomitant situations are filled in.¹¹

1. אֲבָל אִשָּׁה־אַלְמָנָה אָנִי
וַיָּמָת אִישִׁי:
- I am, alas, a widow; my husband died.
- [2 Sam 14:5](#)
2. וַתִּלְקֹט בַּשָּׂדֶה ... וַיִּקֶּר
מִקְרָהָ חֶלֶקֶת הַשָּׂדֶה לְבָעֹז
- She gleaned in the field ... and it turned
out to be a portion of the field of Boaz.
- [Ruth 2:3](#)

b

This use is common after **וַיִּהְיֶה** in the leading clause. If a narrative sequence begins with a clause containing the verb **וַיִּהְיֶה** the following relative-waw clause explains the overall situation represented by it. Whereas relative *wqtl* may signify customary event(s) within the situation (32.2.1d), relative *wayyqtl* represents specific, concrete events (## 34). The same phenomenon occurs in connection with other grammatical forms (# 5; the *wayyqtl* form is perhaps a pluperfect) and is especially common with verbs of speaking (## 6–7) and doing (## 8–10), in which relation the subordinate situation is often simultaneous with the leading situation.

3. וְאֵלֶּה הָיוּ בְּנֵי אֹהֶל־בָּמָה
וְתָלַד לְעֵשָׂו ...
These were the sons of Oholibamah ... ;
she bore to Esau ... [12](#)
4. אִישׁ הָיָה ... וַיִּוָּלְדוּ לוֹ:
There was a man ... and there was born
to him ...
[Job 1:1–2](#)
5. הָלֹא אִם־קָטָן אַתָּה
בְּעֵינֶיךָ רֹאשׁ שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
אַתָּה וַיִּמְשַׁחךָ יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ
עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:
Although you were small in your own
eyes, were you not the head of the
tribes of Israel?—YHWH anointed you
king over Israel.
[1 Sam 15:17](#)
6. וְסָרְנִי פִלְשְׁתִּים נֹאסְפֹו
לְזִבְחַ זֶבַח־גָּדוֹל לְדָגוֹן ...
וַיֹּאמְרוּ
Now the rulers of the Philistines
assembled to offer a great sacrifice to
Dagon ... , saying ...
[Judg 16:23](#)
7. וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה וַתֹּאמֶר
כִּי מִן־הַמַּיִם מָשִׁיתִהוּ:
She called his name Moses, saying, "I
drew him out of the water."
[Exod 2:10](#)
8. מָה עָשִׂיתָ וַתִּגְנֹב אֶת־לִבִּי
What have you done? You have
deceived me?
[Gen 31:26](#)
9. כְּכֹל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ
מִיּוֹם הֵעֲלֵתִי אֹתָם
מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
וַיַּעֲזֹבֵנִי וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים
אַחֲרָיִם כִּן הָמָּה עֹשִׂים
גַּם־לָךְ:
As they have done from the day I
brought them up out of Egypt until this
day, they forsook me and served other
gods. So they are doing to you.
[1 Sam 8:8](#)
10. וְגַם אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ אֵת
אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לִי יוֹאָב ...
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְשֵׁנֵי־שָׁרֵי
צְבָאוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל ... וַיַּהַרְגֵם
וַיִּשֶׁם דָּמִי־מִלְחָמָה בַּשָּׁלָם
You know what Joab ... did to me—what
he did to the two commanders of
Israel's armies ... He killed them and so
shed the blood of battle in times of
peace.
[1 Kgs 2:5](#)

33.2.3 Pluperfect

a

The use of *wayyqtl* to represent pluperfect situations can be seen as a subvariety of epexegetical use, but it has been controversial. Driver denied such use apart from instances occurring at the beginning of a narrative or paragraph. He tried to explain the exceptions to this rule as due to a redactor who joined originally distinct literary units together without regard to formal unity. But W. J. Martin and D. W. Baker have argued otherwise. Driver

seems inconsistent here, since he allows for the epexegetical use of *waw*-relative, which may entail a pluperfect situation.¹³ Moreover, *wayyqtl* in the received text, the object of our grammatical investigation, must be understood to represent the pluperfect. David Qimḥi in the early period of Hebrew studies already pointed out this use.¹⁴

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1. וְהַלְוִיִּם לְמִשֶּׁה אֲבֹתָם לֹא:
הִתְפַּקְדּוּ בְּתוֹכָם
וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה
לֵאמֹר:
אֲךָ אֶת־מִשֶּׁה לֹּוי לֹא
תִּפְקֹד
The families of the tribe of Levi, however, were not counted along with the others. YHWH had said to Moses: "You must not count the tribe of Levi."
2. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו מִי שֵׁם
כֹּה לְאָדָם ... וְעַתָּה לֵךְ
וְאָנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה אִם־פִּיךָ
וְהוֹרִיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבֹּר:
וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיָּשָׁב אֶל־יִתְרוֹ
חֹתֵנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵלֶכָה נָא
וְאָשׁוּבָה אֶל־אֲחֵי
אֲשֶׁר־בְּמִצְרַיִם ... וַיֹּאמֶר
יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְיָן לֵךְ
שֹׁב מִצְרַיִם כִּי־מָתוּ
כָּל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הַמְּבַקְשִׁים
אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ:
[Num 1:47–49](#)
YHWH said to him, "Who gave people mouths? ... Now go; I will help you speak ... " Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me go back to my own people in Egypt ... " YHWH had said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead."
3. וַיְדַבֵּר אֲלֵהֶם אֲבִיהֶם
אֵיזָה הַדֶּרֶךְ הַלֵּךְ וַיֵּרְאוּ
בָנָיו אֶת־הַדֶּרֶךְ
Their father asked them, "Which way did he go?" His sons had seen the way ...
[Exod 4:11–12, 18\[Sam\]–19](#)
[1 Kgs 13:12](#)

33.2.4 After Circumstantial Phrases and Clauses

a

Even as relative *wqtl* can represent a dependent (con)sequential situation in future time after adverbial expressions (32.2.6), so also *wayyqtl* can express a dependent (con)sequential situation in past time. The function of *wayyqtl* after non-finite verbal constructions is similar to its use after הִיָּה in the leading clause (33.2.2b). The preceding expression provides "a starting-point for a development" and represents the circumstance in which the narrative unfolds.¹⁵ In most cases the expression is temporal (## 1–5), but other phrases, used in *casus pendens*, are found (## 6–8; 33.3.4).

1. בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַיֵּשָׂא
אֲבֹרָהֶם אֶת־עֵינָיו
On the third day Abraham looked up.

[Gen 22:4](#)

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 2. | בשנת־מות המלך עזִּיָּהוּ
וַאֲרָאָה אֶת־אֲדֹנָי | In the year King Uzziah died I saw the Lord.

Isa 6:1 |
| 3. | וכעת מוֹתָהּ וּתְדַבְּרָנָה
הַנִּצְבּוֹת עָלֶיהָ | As she was dying, the women by her said ...

1 Sam 4:20 |
| 4. | כִּינֶעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וָאֶהֱבָהוּ | When Israel was a child I loved him.

Hos 11:1 |
| 5. | בְּיוֹם קָרָאתִי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי | When I called, you answered me.

Ps 138:3 |
| 6. | וּפִילָגְשׁוֹ ... וַתֵּלֶד | As for his concubine ... , she also bore ...

Gen 22:24 |
| 7. | וְגַם אֶת־מַעֲכָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּסְרָהּ | And also Maacah his grandmother—he deposed her.

1 Kgs 15:13 |
| 8. | וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ... וַיִּמְלֹךְ
עֲלֵיהֶם רְחֹבָעַם: | But as for the Israelites ... Rehoboam ruled over them.

1 Kgs 12:17 |

b

A circumstantial clause introduced by וַיְהִי may be followed by a *wayyqtl* form.¹⁶

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- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 9. | וַיְהִי־אִישׁ מִהַר־אֶפְרַיִם ...
וַיֹּאמֶר | Now a man from the hill country of Ephraim ... said ...

Judg 17:1–2 |
| 10. | וַיְהִי־אִישׁ מִבֶּן־יִמִּין ...
וַתֵּאבְדֶּנָּה הָאֲתָנוֹת | There was a Benjaminite ... The she-donkeys were lost.

1 Sam 9:1 , 3 Kethiv |
| 11. | וַיְהִי בִימֵי שָׁפֶט הַשְּׁפֹטִים
וַיְהִי רָעַב בָּאָרֶץ | In the days when the šopetim ruled, there was a famine in the land.

Ruth 1:1 |
| 12. | וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
וַיֵּגֶד | Sometime later he was told ...

Gen 22:20 |

Thomas O. Lambdin analyzed this frequent construction with temporal clauses and phrases:

Within a narrative sequence temporal modifiers are very frequently placed before the clause they modify and are introduced by *waw*-conversive + a form of the verb וַיְהִי. In the past tense narrative this is uniformly וַיְהִי ... The temporal [form] is then followed by the expected sequential form of the main narrative.¹⁷

This construction introduces the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, Ezekiel, Ruth (# 11 above), Esther, and Nehemiah.¹⁸ *Wayyqtl* apart from וַיְהִי introduces the books of Leviticus, Numbers, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles, but these are best regarded as secondary beginnings; that is, the books have a connection with the

ones that precede them. This use of *wayyqtl* after וַיְהִי stands in polarity over against relative *wqtl* after וַהֲיָה (cf. 32.2.6b).

33.3 Waw-Relative: Aspectual Matters

a

An inductive study of *wayyqtl*'s uses confirms the presumption that *wayyqtl* represents a situation subjectively as perfective. We cite uses with forms of the suffix and the prefix conjugations and verbless clauses, participles, and infinitives. Lacking an adequate understanding of aspect, A. B. Davidson, for example, taught the common error that the "conversive tenses" have "the meaning of the preceding tenses."¹⁹ In fact, however, *wayyqtl* after the non-perfective conjugation does not have the meaning of that conjugation; rather it signifies perfective aspect in addition to the subordinate values analyzed above. When *wayyqtl* follows a prefix conjugation it possesses a complementary perfective value, even as a suffix conjugation can complement a prefix conjugation in a pair of poetic lines. Significantly, there are no instances of *wayyqtl* after a prefix conjugation denoting either customary aspect in past time or a dependent modal situation. After the other grammatical forms *wayyqtl* also signifies notions associated with the suffix conjugation.

33.3.1 After Suffix-Conjugation Forms

a

Wayyqtl, after a suffix form, usually expresses a perfective value. If the time reference is to the past, the *wayyqtl* form may be a definite ("preterite"; # 1, cf. # 9), ingressive (# 2), constative (# 3), complex (## 4–5), telic (## 6–7), indefinite perfective (# 8), or unique definite past (# 9).

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- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | הַנָּחָשׁ הַשִּׂיאֲנִי וְאָכַל: | The serpent deceived me, and so I ate.
Gen 3:13 |
| 2. | לֹא שָׁעָה וַיַּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד | He (God) did not respect (his offering),
and Cain became very angry.
Gen 4:5 |
| 3. | עַם-לָבָן גָּרָתִי וְאַחֲרֵי
עַד-עַתָּה: | I have been staying with Laban and have
remained until now.
Gen 32:5 |
| 4. | וַהֲמִים גָּבְרוּ מְאֹד מְאֹד
עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיִּכְסּוּ
כָּל-הַהָרִים הַגְּבוּהִים | The waters rose exceedingly greatly on
the earth and covered all the high
mountains.
Gen 7:19 |
| 5. | וַשְׁחַת רַחֲמָיו וַיִּטְרֹף לְעַד
אַפּוֹ | He destroyed all his fellow feeling and his
anger raged continually.
Amos 1:11 |
| 6. | וְלֹא-מָצְאָה הַיּוֹנָה מְנוּחַ ...
וַתָּשָׁב אֵלָיו | But the dove did not find a resting
place ... and so returned to him.
Gen 8:9 |
| 7. | לֹא-מָצְאוּ מַעֲנָה וַיִּרְשָׁעוּ
אֶת-אִיּוֹב: | They did not find an answer and yet they
condemned Job.
Job 32:3 |
| 8. | הֲשָׁמַע עַם קוֹל אֱלֹהִים ... | Has a people ever heard the voice of
God ... and lived? |

וַיַּחֲיֶה:

[Deut 4:33](#)

9.

רָאִיתִי אֶת־אֲדֹנָי נֹצֵב
עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיֹּאמֶרI saw the Lord standing by the altar, and
he said ...[Amos 9:1](#)**b**

If the time reference is present, *wayyqtl* may take on the range of meanings associated with the perfective conjugation with the same time reference (30.5.1). These include notably persistent present (# 10–11) and gnomic (## 12–14) perfectives, as well as present statives (## 15–16). These usages may be found together, for example, persistent fientives with present *qtl* statives (## 16–17).

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10.

וְאֲנִי בְּתַמִּי תִמְכֹּת בִּי
וְתַצִּיבֵנִי לְפָנֶיךָ לְעֹלָם:In my integrity you uphold me and set
me in your presence forever.[Ps 41:13](#)

11.

יִלֶּק פֶּשֶׁט וַיַּעֲף:

[Like] locusts they have stripped (the
land) and flown away.[Nah 3:16](#)

12.

וְגַם־נִשְׁף בָּהֶם וַיִּבָּשׂוּ

He blows upon them and they wither.

[Isa 40:24](#)

13.

כָּלָה עָנָן וַיִּלָּךְ

The cloud wastes away and vanishes.

[Job 7:9](#)

14.

בֹּא־זָרוֹן וַיָּבֹא קָלוֹן

When pride comes, so does disgrace.

[Prov 11:2](#)

15.

אַהֲבַת צְדָק וַתִּשְׁנֶא רָשָׁע

You love righteousness and so hate
wickedness.[Ps 45:8](#)

16.

כִּי מְלֵאוּ מִקְדָּם ... וַתִּמְלֵא
אֶרֶצוֹ כֶּסֶף וְזָהָבThey are full of (things) from the east
[superstitions]; ... their (lit., its) land is
full of silver and gold.[Isa 2:6–7](#)

17.

שָׁמַתִּי פָנַי כַּחֲלָמִישׁ וְאָדַע
כִּי־לֹא אִבּוֹשׁ:I have set my face like a flint for I know
that I will not be put to shame.[Isa 50:7](#)

18.

יַעַן כִּי גִבְהוּ בָנוֹת צִיּוֹן
וַתִּלְכְּנָהBecause the women of Zion are
haughty and walk ...[Isa 3:16](#)

19.

לְכֵן שִׂמַּח לִבִּי וַיִּגַּל כְּבוֹדִי

Therefore my heart is glad and my glory
rejoices.[Ps 16:9](#)**c**

Wayyqtl forms can signify a perfect state after suffix forms with that meaning. For example, the time structures may be present perfect (## 20–22) or pluperfect (past perfect; ## 23–24). Here, too, the perfect state may complement other meanings of the suffix conjugation, for example, after past-tense references (## 25–26) or present-time references (# 27).

20. יֵעַן מָאַסְכֶּם בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה
וַתִּבְטְחוּ בְעֶשֶׂק
Because you have rejected this word
and have relied on oppression ...
[Isa 30:12](#)
21. הִקְשַׁבְתִּי וָאִשְׁמַע
I have listened and heard.
[Jer 8:6](#)
22. כִּי־יִתְּרִי פָתַח וַיַּעֲנֵנִי
He (God) has unstrung my bow and
afflicted me.
[Job 30:11](#) Qere
23. וְרָחֵל לָקְחָה אֶת־הַתֵּרָפִים
וַתִּשֶּׂם בְּכַר הַגָּמֶל וַתֵּשֶׁב
עֲלֵיהֶם
Now Rachel had taken the teraphim,
and put them in the camel's saddle, and
sat upon them.
[Gen 31:34](#)
24. כִּי־עָזַב בְּגָדוֹ ... וַיָּנֶס
He had left his garment ... and had fled.
[Gen 39:1–3](#)
25. כּוֹנֵנֶת אֶרֶץ וַתַּעֲמֹד:
You established the earth and it stands.
[Ps 119:90](#)
26. וַיִּשָּׂא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עֶשְׂרֵה אֲבָנִים הַקֵּים
וַיִּהְיוּ שָׁם עַד
הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:
Joshua set up twelve stones ... , and
they are there until this day.
[Josh 4:9](#)
27. וְלֹא־נִפְקַד מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ:
וַנִּקְרַב אֶת־קָרְבַּן יְהוָה
Not one of them is missing, so we have
brought an offering to YHWH.
[Num 31:49–50](#)

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d

Whereas a suffix-conjugation form can represent an objective future situation as a single, accidental event, a following wayyqt/ represents the situation according to the uses of relative waw, but nevertheless as a single, perfective whole (## 28–32).

28. כִּי־יֵלֵד יֶלֶד־לָנוּ ... וַתְּהִי
הַמִּשְׁרָה עַל־שִׁכְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא
שְׁמוֹ
For to us a child will be born ... and the
government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called ...
[Isa 9:5](#)

In this case the first relative waw signifies a (con)sequential event and the second, with a verb of speaking, an explanatory one. Often, chronological succession is in view.

29. פָּרְצוּ וַיֵּעֲבְרוּ
They will break through and go out.
[Mic 2:1–3](#)
30. חַתָּם בְּצִרוֹר פִּשְׁעִי וַתִּטְפֹּל
עַל־עוֹנִי:
My offense will be sealed up in a bag,
and (so) you will cover over my sin.
[Job 14:17](#)
31. אָכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ
כָל־דְּשֵׁי־אֶרֶץ
All the wealthy of the earth will eat and
worship.

32. קָמוּ וַיִּבְשּׁוּ (When) they attack, they will be put to shame.
[Ps 22:30](#)
[Ps 109:28](#)

e

Wayyqtl is also used after a suffix form that is a hypothetical or conditional perfective (## 33–35).

33. כִּי לוֹלִי מְהֵרָה וְתָבֹאת If you had not made haste and come ...
[1 Sam 25:34 Qere](#)
34. אִם־נִטְמָאָה וְתִמְעַל מֵעַל If she has defiled herself and been unfaithful ...
[Num 5:27](#)
35. אִם־קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי If I summoned (him) and he responded ...
[Job 9:16](#)

f

It is very rare that *wayyqtl* refers to a time other than that of the preceding suffix conjugation, apart from its use as pluperfect or to indicate the perfect state in present time. Excluding these groups of exceptions we are left with only one instance from Gotthelf Bergsträsser's list of alleged examples of instances where *wayyqtl* has no connection with a preceding perfective conjugation of a different time period.²⁰

36. וְגַם־אֶמְנָה אַחֲתִי ... הִיא ... וְתִהְיֶה־לִּי לְאִשָּׁה: She really is my sister ... and she became my wife.
[Gen 20:12](#)

Another example of a perfective conjugation in a time period different from that of the leading verb is the following.

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37. אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־הִשְׁלִיכוּ ... in that they have thrown him into the cistern and he will die.
אֶל־הַבּוֹר וַיָּמָת
[Jer 38:9](#)

Both of these apparently epexegetical uses are exceptional.

33.3.2 After Short Prefix-Conjugation Forms

a

After a short prefix form, *wayyqtl* expresses a situation that is subordinate, logically, temporally, or epexegetically, and has a perfective value that is the same as or complementary to that of the leading verb. Note, for example, preterite (## 1–2) and gnomic (# 3) values.

1. יִרְכַּבְהוּ עַל־בְּמוֹתַי אֲרָץ He made him ride on the heights of the land
וַיֵּאֱכֹלֵהוּ תְּנוּבַת שְׂדֵי and fed him with the fruit of the field
וַיִּנְקֵהוּ דְּבַשׁ מִסֵּלַע and he nourished him with honey from the crag.
[Deut 32:13](#) Kethiv/Sam
2. צוּר יִלְדָּךְ תָּשִׂי You deserted the Rock, who fathered you,
וְתִשְׁכַּח אֵל מְחַלְלֶךָ: and forgot the God who gave you birth,
וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה וַיִּנְאֹץ and YHWH saw this and rejected them.

[Deut 32:18–19](#)

3. תִּשָּׁב אֲנֹשׁ עַד־דָּפָא
וְתֹאמַר
- You turn men back to the dust, saying ...

[Ps 90:3](#)

33.3.3 After Prefix-Conjugation Forms

a

Wayyqtl after a prefix-conjugation (non-perfective) form may signify either a (con) sequential or an explanatory situation, in accord with the uses of perfective aspect forms after prefix-conjugation forms.

b

After a prefix conjugation signifying a past situation, *wayyqtl* signifies a (con)sequent or explanatory situation in the past time, according to one of the specific uses of the suffix conjugation in that time frame, normally definite perfective; this arrangement is found after 'āz (## 1–2), stative situations (# 3), and incipient progressive imperfective situations (# 4).

1. אֲזַיְבֵנָה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ מִזֶּבֶחַ ...
וַיַּעֲלֵה

Then Joshua built an altar ... and they offered up ...

[Josh 8:30–31](#)

2. אֲזַיְדַּבֵּר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ ... וַיֹּאמֶר

Then Joshua spoke ... and said ...

[Josh 10:12](#)

3. אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה אָקוּט ...
וָאֹמַר

For forty years I was angry ... so I said ...

[Ps 95:10](#)

4. תִּגְרֹשׁ גּוֹיִם וְתַטְטֵעָהּ:

You drove out the nations and planted it.

[Ps 80:9](#)

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c

Likewise, after regular *yqtl* referring to a present-time situation, *wayyqtl* represents a (con)sequential or explanatory situation in the same time frame according to a perfective aspect. Presuming that the prefix forms (excluding unbound short forms) set the structure of the verb sequence, we find that frequently *wayyqtl*, after a present progressive *yqtl*, has the sense of a persistent present perfective (## 5–9). After a habitual *yqtl* imperfective, *wayyqtl* may have the value of a gnomic perfective (# 10).

5. וַיִּשְׁתַּמְרֵם חֲקוֹת עֹמְרִי ...
וְתִלְכוּ בְּמַעֲצוֹתֵם

You observe the statutes of Omri, ... and so you follow their (the Ahabites') traditions.

[Mic 6:16](#)

6. לָמָּה תִּבְעָטוּ בְּזִבְחִי ...
וְתִכְבֹּד אֶת־בְּנֵיךָ מִמֶּנִּי

Why do you scorn my sacrifice ... and honor your sons more than me?

[1 Sam 2:29](#)

7. אֲלֹמְנָה וְגֵר יִהְרָגוּ ...
וַיֹּאמְרוּ

They slay widow and alien ... , saying ...

[Ps 94:6–7](#)

8. קוֹלִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֶקְרָא

I cry aloud to YHWH, and he answers me ...

וַיַּעֲנֵנִי

9. זָבְחֵי הַבְּהֵבִי יִזְבְּחוּ בָשָׂר
וַיֹּאכְלוּ [Ps 3:5](#)
They offer sacrifices given(?) to me and eat the meat.
10. חֶרֶשׁ בְּרִזְל מַעֲצָד וּפַעַל
בִּפְחָם וּבִמְקַבּוֹת יִצְרֶהוּ
וַיַּפְעֵלֵהוּ בְּזִרְעֵ כַחַח [Hos 8:13](#)
The blacksmith (with) an iron tool(?)—
he works (with it) in the coals; he
shapes it with hammers, and forges it
with the strength of his arm ...
- [Isa 44:12](#)

Suffix and prefix forms with the same time reference probably complement one another (31.3c). In # 11 a progressive imperfective is associated with a persistent present perfective, and *wayyqtl* continues the persistent perfective; in # 12–13 a *wayyqtl* form continues a progressive imperfective and in # 12 precedes a persistent present perfective.

11. אֲהֵבִי ... מִנְגִּיד נָנְעִי יַעֲמֹדוּ
וּקְרוּבֵי מִרְחָק עָמְדוּ:
וַיִּנְקְשׁוּ מִבִּקְשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי [Ps 38:12–13](#)
My friends ... stand apart (from me) for
my disease, my neighbors stand far
away, (so) those who seek my life set
traps.
12. כִּי לֹא שָׁלוֹם יִדְבְּרוּ ...
וַיִּרְחִיבוּ עָלַי פִּיהֶם אָמְרוּ
הָאֵחַ הָאֵחַ [Ps 35:20–21](#)
They do not speak peaceably ... and
they open wide their mouths against
me; they say, "Alas! Alas!"
13. יְגֹדְדוּ עַל-נַפְשִׁי צָדִיק ...
וַיְהִי יְהוָה לִי לְמִשְׁגָּב [Ps 94:21–22](#)
They band together against the
righteous ... SO YHWH has become my
fortress.

So also *wayyqtl* may have a persistent perfective meaning (## 14–15) or a present-time stative meaning (## 16–17) after an incipient imperfective.

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14. יִקְרָא אֶל-הַשָּׁמַיִם ... וַיִּגִּידוּ
שָׁמַיִם צִדְקָתוֹ [Ps 50:4, 6](#)
He summons the heavens ... and the
heavens proclaim his righteousness.
15. וַתִּכְסֵּנִי פֶלַצוֹת:
[Ps 55:6](#)
Fear and trembling came upon me, and
horror overwhelms me.
16. כִּי עָתָה תָּבוֹא אֵלַיךָ וַתֵּלֶא
[Job 4:5](#)
But now it (trouble) comes to you, and
you are discouraged.
17. תִּרְאוּ חֲתָת וַתִּירָאוּ:
[Job 6:21](#)
You see a horror and are afraid.

33.3.4 After Nominal Clauses

a

The use of *wayyqtl* after circumstantial nominal clauses is discussed earlier (33.2.4), but other features of nominal clause + *wayyqtl* verb require attention.

b

After a nominal clause with past-time reference, *wayyqtl* tends to represent a definite perfective situation in past time, a use in harmony with its perfective aspect.

1. וְלוֹ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים ... וַיְהִי
לְפִנְנָה יְלָדִים He had two wives; ... Peninnah had children.
[1 Sam 1:2](#)
2. וַהֲנִה רֶכֶב-אֵשׁ וְסוּסֵי אֵשׁ
וַיִּפְרְדּוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם Suddenly (there were) a chariot and horses of fire and the two of them separated.
[2 Kgs 2:1–1](#)
3. וּבִתּוֹ שְׁעָרָה וַתִּבְנֶן His daughter was Sheerah; she built ...
[1 Chr 7:24](#)

c

If the time frame of the nominal clause corresponds to that of the English present tenses, the *wayyqtl* form may be present persistent (# 4), gnomic (## 5–7), or stative present (# 8).

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4. יְהוָה אֲדָנִי חִילִי וַיִּשֶׁם
רַגְלִי כְּאַיִלּוֹת The Lord YHWH is my strength and so he makes my feet like a hind's.
[Hab 3:19](#)
5. אֵל יְהוָה
וַיִּאָּר לָנוּ YHWH is God
and so he makes his light shine on us.
[Ps 118:27](#)
6. יְהוָה מִה-אָדָם וַתִּדְעֵהוּ
לְחֶמֶם O YHWH, what is a person that you care for him?
[Ps 144:3](#)
7. הַנְּמָלִים עִם לֹא-עֹז וַיִּכְּנוּ
לְחֶמֶם: Ants are creatures of no strength, yet they store up ... their food.
[Prov 30:25](#)
8. מִי־אַתָּה וַתִּירָאִי Who are you that you fear?
[Isa 51:12](#)

33.3.5 With Non-finite Verb Forms**a**

The *wayyqtl* form is more common after participles than infinitives.

b

Wayyqtl after a relative participle (usually with הַ 'the one who ...'; 13.5.2d) represents a situation that complements the participle. Thus, if the participle refers to the past, *wayyqtl* may represent a subordinate preterite situation (## 1–4), in contrast to a *wqtl* form, which, after a relative participle, represents an indefinite situation (32.2.5b). *Wayyqtl* may represent a logical consequence persisting into the present (# 5). Subordinate to a relative participle denoting a perfect state, *wayyqtl* may represent a perfect state or some nuance of perfective aspect in present time, such as persistent perfective (# 6). Subordinate to a relative participle referring to present time, *wayyqtl* also represents a perfective situation, be it persistent (# 7) or gnomic (# 8) perfective.

1. מִי־אֶפֹּא הוּא הִצֹּד־צִיד וַיָּבֵא לִי
Who was it that hunted game and brought it to me?
[Gen 27:33](#)
2. לְאֵל הָעֲנָה אֹתִי בְיוֹם צָרָתִי וַיְהִי עִמָּדִי בַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הִלְכְּתִי:
to God who answered me in the day of my distress and was with me on the road I (just) traveled
[Gen 35:3](#)
3. וְהַנִּשְׁבָּרֹת וְתַעֲמֻדָּנָה אַרְבַּע תַּחֲתֶיהָ
and the broken (horn) and the four (horns) that arose in its place
[Dan 8:22](#)
4. הִקְרָא לְמִי־הַיָּם וַיִּשְׁפֹּכֵם עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ
He who summoned the waters of the sea and then poured them out over the earth ²¹
[Amos 9:6](#)
5. מְשֻׁבֵּיחַ שְׁאוֹן יָמִים ... וַיִּירָאוּ יֹשְׁבֵי קְצוֹת
who stilled the roaring of the seas ... so that those dwelling far away fear
[Ps 65:7–9](#)
6. הִנֵּה הָעָם הַיֵּצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיִּכֹּס אֶת־עֵין הָאָרֶץ
Look, a people that has come out of Egypt (and) covers the land.
[Num 22:1–1](#)
7. הָאֵל הַמְּאֹזְרֵנִי חֵיל וַיְתֵן תָּמִים דְּרָכָי:
The God who arms with strength and so makes my way perfect.
[Ps 18:33](#)
8. גּוֹעֵר בַּיָּם וַיַּבֹּשֶׁהוּ
He who rebukes the sea and so dries it up.
[Nah 1:4](#)

C

After a participle used as a predicate in present time, subordinate *wayyqtl* may have a stative present sense (# 9) or a persistent perfective sense (## 10–12).²²

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9. הִנֵּה הַמֶּלֶךְ בֹּכֶה וַיִּתְאַבֵּל
The king is weeping and mourns.
[2 Sam 19:2](#)
10. נֹצְרִים בָּאִים ... וַיִּתְּנוּ ... קוֹלָם:
Blockaders are coming ... raising ... their voice.
[Jer 4:16](#)
11. כָּלּוּ עֲשֵׂה שָׁקֶר: וַיִּרְפְּאוּ אֶת־שִׁבְרַ עַמִּי
All practice deceit and so dress the wound of my people.
[Jer 6:13–14](#)
12. חָנָה מִלְאֲךָ־יְהוָה ... וַיַּחֲלֵצֵם:
The angel of YHWH encamps ... and so delivers them.
[Ps 34:8](#)

d

After an infinitive representing a situation in the past, *wayyqtl* tends to represent a definite perfective situation in past time.

13. בִּבְרַכּוֹ אֹתוֹ וַיִּצַּו עָלָיו
לֵאמֹר when he blessed him and commanded him, saying ...
[Gen 28:6](#)
14. בִּקְרַבְתֶּם לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה וַיָּמָתוּ
וַיָּמָתוּ: when they approached YHWH and died
[Lev 16:1](#)
15. בְּעַלְתִּי הָהָרָה ... וָאֵשֵׁב
בָּהָר When I went up on the mountain ... I stayed on the mountain.
[Deut 9:9](#)

In present-time reference, the *wayyqtl* can have a variety of senses, including complex (# 16) and gnomic (## 17–18).

16. מִה־לֵּךְ לְסִפֵּר חֻקֵּי וְתִשָּׂא
בְּרִיתִי עָלֶיךָ: What right have you to recite my statutes and so take my covenant on your mouth?
[Ps 50:16](#)
17. לְקוֹל תִּתּוֹ ... וַיַּעֲלֶה
נִשְׁאִים When he thunders ... he makes clouds rise.
[Jer 10:13](#)
18. בְּפֶרֶחַ רְשָׁעִים ... וַיִּצְיָצוּ
כָּל־פְּעָלֵי אָוֶן When the wicked spring up ... and evil doers flourish ...
[Ps 92:8](#)

33.4 Simple Waw + Prefix Conjugation**a**

W«yqtl differs from *wayyqtl* with reference to both elements of the compound, the conjunction and the verb form. In 39.2 the coordinator is discussed; here we note only some salient features of the use of *w«yqtl*.

b

The conjunction does not mark *w«yqtl* as successive or subordinate; it is rather an unmarked connector, though it may introduce (for lexical rather than grammatical

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reasons) a clause that is logically or temporally subordinate to its predecessor (# 1). In post-exilic Hebrew *w«yqtl* tends to replace sequential *w«qtl* (# 2). After a volitional (cohortative, imperative, jussive) form *w«yqtl* has a consequential force (# 3; cf. 39.2.2). The prefix conjugation in this combination is usually imperfective, for example, in a habitual usage (# 4).

1. תַּעֲתִיר אֵלָיו וְיִשְׁמָעֶךָ You will pray to him, and he will hear you.
[Job 22:27](#)
2. וְנִזְעַק אֵלֶיךָ מִצָּרָתֵנוּ
וְתִשְׁמָע וְתוֹשִׁיעַ: And we will cry out to you in our distress and you will hear (us) and save (us).
[2 Chr 20:9](#)

3. שְׁמַעוּ אֵלַי בְּעִלֵּי שֶׁכֶם
וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֲלֵיכֶם אֱלֹהִים: Listen to me, citizens of Shechem, so
that God may listen to you.
[Judg 9:7](#)
4. כִּי הַשָּׂחַד יַעֲוֶה פִּקְחָהִים
וַיִּסְלַף דְּבָרֵי צַדִּיקִים: A gift blinds those who see, and twists
the words of the righteous.
[Exod 23:8](#)

Footnotes:

1. Leslie McFall, *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982) 54–55, accentuation modified. See also F. R. Blake, *A Resurvey of Hebrew Tenses* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1951) 46; and E. Qimron, "Consecutive and Conjunctive Imperfect: The Form of the Imperfect with *Waw* in Biblical Hebrew," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 77 (1986–87) 149–61, arguing that the *waw* tends to trigger use of the short form.
2. "It seems ... likely that the use of the [-ah] affixed form with *waw* consecutive reflects the fact that this form was perceived [in later Biblical Hebrew] as the equivalent, in the 1st person, of the short imperfect form in the 2nd and 3rd person"; so E. J. Revell, "First Person Imperfect Forms with *Waw* Consecutive," *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988) 419–26, at 422. Cf. S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1892) 74–75; T. J. Finley, "The *Waw*-Consecutive with 'Imperfect' in Biblical Hebrew: Theoretical Studies and Its Use in Amos," *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. J. S. Feinberg and P. D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981) 241–62, at 260.
3. Péter Kustár, *Aspekt im Hebräischen* (Baser: Reinhardt, 1972) 28–29, silently abridged by omission of references.
4. V. Maag, "Morphologie des hebräischen Narrativs," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 65 (1953) 86–88.
5. D. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung in den Psalmen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1960) 51.
6. W. Gross, *Verbform und Funktion: Wayyiqtol für die Gegenwart?* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1976); Finley, "Waw-Consecutive with 'Imperfect.'" Related studies are discussed in Chap. 29.
7. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 80.
8. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 17–18.
9. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, 15–16.
10. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 80.
11. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 82–83. Epexegetical *wqtl* represents a customary situation; epexegetical *wayyqtl* serves as a preterite.
12. Cf. [Gen 36:31–32](#).
13. See Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 84–85; A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* (3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901) 72–73; and, for the alternative view, W. J. Martin, "'Dischronologized' Narrative in the Old Testament," *Congress Volume: Rome 1968 (Vetus Testamentum Supplement 17; Leiden: Brill, 1969)* 179–86; D. W. Baker, *The Consecutive Nonperfective as Pluperfect in the Historical Books of the Hebrew Old Testament* (Regent College Thesis, 1973).
14. Cited by McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 8–9.
15. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, 74.
16. This usage is rare in late Biblical Hebrew, a development reflecting a variety of other shifts in later texts; see R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 56.
17. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 123.
18. Cf. GB 2. 37 (§ 8a*).
19. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, 70.
20. GB 2. 37 (§ 8a*).

21. [Amos 5:8](#) has a nearly identical reference to the Noahic flood; see Finley, "Waw-Consecutive with 'Imperfect,'" 256.

22. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, 73.

34 Jussive, Imperative, Cohortative

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[34.6 Jussive and Cohortative after Imperative](#)

[34.7 The Particle ׀](#)

34.1 Volitional Forms

a

The largest class of clauses is the declarative, that is, those that make an assertion or claim (e.g., 'Baruch wrote the scroll'), but other simple clauses are also found, and the most important group of these is the volitional. In the classical languages, Greek and Latin, volitional forms are associated with verbal moods such as the imperative, subjunctive, and optative. English has a distinct grammatical form for the imperative (the second-person volitional), but other volitional forms are composed of auxiliaries (e.g., 'let, shall, may') with simple verb forms. In Hebrew there is a set of volitional forms, the cohortative, imperative, and jussive. These do not make up a mood, however, since they are morphologically independent; in antecedent forms of the language, the jussive (< *yaqtul*) and cohortative (< *yaqtula*) formed distinct conjugations in all persons. The Hebrew volitionals rather form a functional class.¹

b

Because the jussive (chiefly third person), imperative (second person), and cohortative (first person) forms do not overlap extensively in their uses, the three forms together comprise one unified system for the expression of the speaker's will. The once separate forms now work together to form a volitional class.

first person		cohortative
second person	positive	imperative/ non-perfective
	negative	׀ + jussive/!+ non-perfective
third person		jussive

The forms do overlap to a limited degree, most notably in the use of the jussive form for the negative imperative role. Further, the uses overlap because of surrogates for the personal pronouns, for example, words for 'soul,' 'heart,' etc. Constructions that differ in grammar on the surface level of the language (e.g., 'May I ...', 'first person; 'O my soul, may you ...', 'second person; 'May my soul ...', 'third person) are at a deeper level semantically equivalent.

c

The terms imperative and jussive refer etymologically to absolute expressions of will (Latin *impero* 'to command,' *jubeo* 'to order'). In fact, these forms may express varying degrees of volition (Latin *volo* 'to wish'), as do comparable constructions in other languages. Through the volitional forms a speaker aims to impose his or her will on some other person (or, in figurative language, thing). The force with which that will is exerted depends on

various factors, including the speaker's social standing vis-à-vis the addressee, the social context of the discourse, and the meaning of the verb. For these reasons the precise nuances of the volitional forms may range from command, advice, and permission to request, wish, etc.

d

The class of volitional forms is the basis for the syntactic study of volitional expressions, but it is only the basis.² Some descriptions of commands or exhortations involve the perfective conjugation (30.5.4) and others the non-perfective conjugation (31.5). The jussive form is not always morphologically distinct from other prefix forms (33.1). The cohortative is hardly ever marked for final-*he* verbs, rarely for final-*aleph* verbs, and is indistinguishable before suffixes.³ An *ʔtl* form may be taken to denote volition (i.e., may be taken as cohortative) in an environment where a cohortative would occur, for example, after **אֵל** or **נָא** or after an imperative (34.6-7). Sometimes the imperative is replaced by an infinitive absolute (35.5.1). Because of these and related complexities, we discuss the morphology of the volitional forms before treating usage.

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34.2 Morphological Background

34.2.1 Jussive

a

The Canaanite dialects antecedent to Hebrew distinguished prefix forms *yaqtulu* and *yaqtul*, as we have noted (29.4, 31.1.1, 33.1.2). The Hebrew jussive in some sense derived from the short *yaqtul* form. Whatever the historical facts, there are two groups of *yiqtol* forms in Biblical Hebrew, the long and short, for certain verbal stems and roots. In cases where the differentiation is found, the short form is the jussive (as well as the *wayyqtl* form).⁴

long form	jussive
יְכַרֵּית	יְכַרֵּת
יְגַלֶּה	יְגַלֶּה
יְרַאֶה	יְרֵא, יֵרֵא
יַחַרֶּה	יַחַר
יָקֻם	יָקֻם
יָקֻם	יָקֻם

The differentiation is not common, however, and there is no morphological distinction between jussive and nonjussive forms with most roots. For example, in the Aaronide blessing, only two of the six verbs are formally jussives, yet all have the same volitional sense.

יְבָרֶכֶךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶכָּ:	YHWH bless you and keep you.
יֵאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנֶּךָ:	YHWH make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם:	YHWH turn his face to you. And give you peace.

[Num 6:24–26](#)

In such a situation all the verbs are to be taken as jussives.⁵ In some instances the distinctive form of the jussive is not used even when it could appear (cf. [1 Sam 25:25](#), **יְשִׁים אֵל-נָא**), a phenomenon we already observed with *wayyqtl* (see 33.1.1b). The longer form is more common before a pausal form or in pause (e.g., **וַתִּרְאֶה**, [Gen 1:9](#); and **וַיִּרְאֶה**, [2 Kgs 6:17](#)). This sporadic split between form and meaning advises us to distinguish

between jussive form and jussive sense; it is the latter we are chiefly concerned with. Because of the widespread polysemy of *yqtI* forms the interpreter must in most instances judge on the basis of semantic pertinence whether the form is jussive or non-perfective (see 3.2.3).

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b

In earlier stages of Northwest Semitic the short prefix conjugation could be used with all three persons, but in Biblical Hebrew it is mostly restricted to the third person (in either positive or negative clauses) and to the second person (chiefly in negative clauses). With both second- and third-person jussive forms, the negative particle is usually **לֹא** rather than **אַל**.⁶ The combination of **אַל** with the second-person jussive constitutes the negative imperative; the imperative form itself cannot be preceded by a negative particle. A nonperfective form with **לֹא** can have a similar sense. The construction with **אַל** tends to reflect urgency and that with **לֹא** legislation. With a third-person jussive **אַל** marks a negative jussive.

c

Rarely, a jussive form occurs where we would expect a non-perfective conjugation form (cf. [Ps 25:9](#), [47:4](#), [90:3](#), [107:29](#); [Isa 12:1](#); [Joel 2:2](#), etc.). These unexpected jussive forms may be due to the confusion between the form groups or to textual corruptions; or they may represent vestiges of an earlier verbal system. Some grammarians explain them on rhythmical grounds.⁷ Because of this minor formal confounding, it is best in problem passages of this nature to be governed by sense rather than by form. A similar approach is warranted in the few passages where the vocalization that characterizes the jussive occurs with the first person (cf. [Isa 42:6](#)).⁸

d

Similarly, although the negative particle with the jussive form in a jussive clause is normally **אַל**, sometimes **לֹא** is found (cf. [1 Kgs 2:6](#), [Ezek 48:14](#)). These examples further suggest that the forms are, to a slight degree, confounded within the Masoretic tradition.

e

The particle **אַל**, like **לֹא**, regularly stands immediately before the verb, but occasionally it occurs before a strongly emphasized member of the sentence other than the verb (cf. [Isa 64:8](#); [Jer 10:24](#), [15:15](#); [Ps 6:2](#), [38:2](#)).

34.2.2 Imperative and Cohortative

a

All the Semitic languages express the imperative, the form denoting volitional mood for second person, by a form similar to that of the second person of the prefix conjugation.⁹ This is clearest in Hebrew in the *Piel*: contrast **הִצִּיבֵר** and **הִצִּבֵּר**. The apparent

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"dropping" of the 'you' prefix is not unlike the English imperative, which also normally deletes the pronoun, for example, 'Go!', not 'You [will] go!' In the *Niphal*, *Hiphil*, and *Hithpaal* stems a prothetic he is added to "protect" the characteristic infix patterns of these stems, for example, **הִתְחַזַּק**, **הוֹשִׁיעַ**, **הִשְׁמֵר**, etc. The *Pual* and *Hophal* do not regularly form imperatives. The situation in the *Qal* is somewhat complex. As with other non-perfective forms (22.3), *Qal* fientive and stative verbs are distinguished: **קָטַל** fientive versus **קָטַל** stative. The feminine plural form **קָטַלְנָה** uses the same base as the masculine singular, while the feminine singular and masculine plural forms (those with endings involving a vowel) use a number of other bases (**קָטַלְיָהּ**, **קָטַלְיָהּ**, **קָטַלְיָהּ**, pausal **קָטַלְיָהּ**), which also are found with forms bearing pronominal suffixes. A long form of the imperative, with final **הִ-**, is found

with the masculine singular.¹⁰ The -a morpheme is related to the -a of the cohortative. Prohibition in the second person is expressed by a negative particle with the jussive (34.2.1b), rather than with the imperative form.¹¹

b

The cohortative, like the alternative *Qal* imperative with הִי- suffix, is derived from an earlier Canaanite *yaqtula* volitional conjugation.¹² In Hebrew, the form is found almost exclusively in the first-person singular and plural.

34.3 Uses of the Jussive

a

Third-person expressions of volition are found in a variety of discourse settings. If the jussive is used with its ordinary pragmatic force, it may be directed from a superior to an inferior or vice versa. A special case of the former situation is presented by divine jussives; these have the force of a command. A jussive directed to the divine realm (explicitly or implicitly) may be a benediction or a malediction. The jussive may also be used rhetorically, conveying a distinctive pragmatic force.

b

The sense of a jussive in simple discourse usually follows from the status relations of the speaker and addressee. When a superior uses the jussive with reference to an inferior the volitional force may be command (human, # 1; divine, # 2), exhortation (# 3), counsel (# 4), or invitation or permission (# 5). Sometimes the jussive qualifies or circumscribes an imperative (# 6). A second-person jussive may have the sense of an order (# 7). When an inferior uses the jussive with reference to a superior, it may denote an urgent request (# 8), prayer (# 9), or request for permission (## 10–11). Frequently it is followed by ?] (## 4, 8, 10; see 34.7).

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | אֵךְ אִישׁ אֶל־רֵבּוֹאֵל־יֹכַח | Let none contend and none reprove.
Hos 4:4 |
| 2. | יְהִי אֹרֶךְ | Let there be light.
Gen 1:3 |
| 3. | יֵלֶךְ וְיָשָׁב לְבֵיתוֹ | Let him go home (lit., Let him go and return to his house).
Deut 20:5 |
| 4. | תְּהִי־נָא לָךְ תַּחֲתִיָּה: | Have her (the younger sister) instead of her (Samson's wife).
Judg 15:2 |
| 5. | אֲתִי יַעֲבֹר כְּמָהֶם | Let Kimham cross over with me.
2 Sam 19:39 |
| 6. | אֶל־יֶרֶע בְּעֵינֶיךָ ... שְׁמַע בְּקִלָּהּ | Let it not be evil in your eyes ... listen to her.
Gen 21:12 |
| 7. | וְיִהְיֶה בְּשִׁמְעֶךָ אֶת־קוֹל צְעָדָהּ בְּרָאשֵׁי הַבְּכָאִים אֲזַן תַּחֲרֹץ | And let it be that as soon as you hear the sound marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move ...
2 Sam 5:24 |
| 8. | יַעֲבֹר־נָא אֲדֹנִי | Let my lord go on ahead.
Gen 33:14 |
| 9. | אֶל־יִתֵּן לְמוֹט רַגְלֶךָ | May he not permit your foot to slip.
Ps 121:3 |
| 10. | יֵלֶךְ־נָא אֲדֹנִי בְּקִרְבָּנוּ | Let the Lord go with us. |

11. יִסֵּף יְהוָה לִי בֶן אֲחֵר: [Exod 34:9](#)
May YHWH add to me another son.
[Gen 30:24](#)

c

A benediction (## 12–15) or malediction (## 16–18) can take the form of a jussive clause.

12. יַחֲיֵה הַמֶּלֶךְ: Long live the king!
[1 Sam 10:24](#); cf. [1 Kgs 1:25](#), etc.
13. כֹּה תְבַרְכוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
אָמֹר לָהֶם:
... יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ
[Num 6:23, 25](#)
14. וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים עִמָּךְ May God be with you.¹³
[Exod 18:19](#)
15. יַחֲיֵה רְאוּבֵן וְאֶל־יָמָת May Reuben live and not die.
[Deut 33:6](#)
16. וַיְהִי כְנָעַן עֶבֶד לָמוֹ: May Canaan be his (Shem's) slave.
[Gen 9:26](#)
17. תִּגַּל עֲרוֹתְךָ Let your nakedness be exposed.
[Isa 47:3](#)
18. יוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִלְדָתְנִי אִמִּי
אֶל־יְהִי בָרוּךְ: May the day my mother bore me not be
blessed.
[Jer 20:14](#)

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d

The jussive's usual pragmatic force may be lost in poetic contexts or in literary prose. In some cases this loss arises from projecting feelings onto nature, as S. R. Driver notes.¹⁴

To the poet, whatever be his language or country, the world is animated by a life, vibrating in harmony with his own, which the prosaic eye is unable to discern: for him, not merely the animal world, but inanimate nature as well, is throbbing with human emotions, and keenly susceptible to every impression from without (e.g. [Ps. 65:14, 104:19, 114:3–6; Isa. 35:1f.](#)); he addresses boldly persons and objects not actually present (e.g. [Isa. 13:2, 23:1f., 4; 40:9](#) etc.; [Ps. 98:7f., 114:7f.](#)), or peoples a scene with invisible beings, the creations of his own fancy ([Isa. 40:3, 57:14, 62:10](#)); he feels, and expresses, a vivid sympathy with the characters and transactions with which he has to deal. The result is that instead of describing an occurrence in the language of bare fact, a poet often loves to represent it under the form of a command proceeding from himself.¹⁵

The specific literary devices involved are personification (## 19–20) and metonymy (## 21–22); in the latter cases a place stands for the people who live in it (note the plural in # 22). The jussive is also used to vary verb sequences and literary texture, creating oratio variata (## 23–24). One form of such oratio is based on apostrophe, direct address to a person, after a passage talking about that person (# 25).

19. יִרְעֵם הַיָּם וּמִלְאוּ: Let the sea resound, and all that is in it.
[Ps 96:11](#)
20. נְהַרֹת יִמְחָאוּ־כָף Let the rivers clap (their) hands.
[Ps 98:8](#)
21. תִּגַּל הָאָרֶץ יִשְׂמְחוּ אֲיִים Let the earth be glad; let the many

- רָבִים: shores rejoice.
[Ps 97:1](#)
22. יִירָאוּ מִיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ Let all the earth fear YHWH.
[Ps 33:8](#)
23. אֲשֶׁרִי מִשְׁכִּיל אֶל-דָּל ... Blessed is he who has regard for the
וְאֵל תִּתְּנֵהוּ בְנֶפֶשׁ אִיבֵיוֹ: weak ... and may he not surrender him
to the desire of his foe.
[Ps 41:2–3](#)
24. מִצִּיּוֹן ... אֱלֹהִים הוֹפִיעַ: From Zion ... God shines forth. May our
יָבֹא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֶל-יִחְרַשׁ God come and not be silent.
[Ps 50:2–3](#)
25. יֹאכְלוּ עֲנִוִּים וְיִשְׂבְּעוּ The poor will eat and be satisfied; they
יִהְלְלוּ יְהוָה דֹּרְשׁוֹ יְחִי who seek him will praise YHWH—may
לְבַבְכֶּם לְעֹד: your hearts live forever!
[Ps 22:27](#)

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34.4 Uses of the Imperative

a

Second-person expressions of volition are formed with the imperative or nonperfective, if positive; if negative, the jussive with **אַל** or the non-perfective with **אַל** is used. The positive imperative differs from the regulative or legislative non-perfective in being more urgent or in demanding immediate, specific action on the part of the addressee (## 1–2); the differentiation is not precise.¹⁶ No differentiation is possible between the regular and long (ִּתְּ-) forms of the imperative, since they occur in similar contexts (## 3–4).¹⁷ With some verbs the longer form has become the fixed imperative form, for example, הָרַגְתָּ 'hasten,' עֲוֹרָה 'awake,' הַגִּי־שָׁמָּה 'bring near,' הִשָּׁבַעְתָּ 'swear,' הִקְשִׁיבָה 'listen.'¹⁸

1. וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בְּעֵז לֵעַת At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come
הָאֵכֶל גִּשִּׁי הַלֵּם over here."
[Ruth 2:1–4](#)
2. וְכַאֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה עֲשֵׂה And treat your servants in accordance
עִם-עֲבָדֶיךָ: with what you see.
[Dan 1:13](#)
3. וַיֹּאמְרוּ לַזֵּית מֶלֶכָה עָלֵינוּ: They said to the olive tree, "Be our king."
[Judg 9:8 Qere](#)
4. וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל-הָעֵצִים All the trees said to the thornbush,
אֶל-הָאֵשׁ לֵךְ אַתָּה "Come, be our king."
מֶלֶךְ-עָלֵינוּ:
[Judg 9:14](#)

b

The dominant use of the imperative, as suggested, involves direct commands (## 57). An imperative can also grant permission (## 8–10) or convey a request (## 11–13) or a wish (## 14–15). Imperatives may be used sarcastically (## 16–17).

5. הִפָּרַד נָא מֵעָלַי Separate yourself from me.
[Gen 13:9](#)
6. שִׁים־נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יְרֵכִי Put your hand under my thigh.
[Gen 24:2](#)
7. שִׁפְטוּ־דָל Defend the cause of the weak.
[Ps 82:3](#)
8. וַיְהִי־מָה אָרוּץ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ רוּץ (Ahimaaz said:) "Come what may, I want to run. So he (Joab) said: "Run."
[2 Sam 18:23](#)
9. וַיִּפְצְרוּ־בּו עַד־בֶּשׂ וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחוּ But they persisted until he was too ashamed to refuse. So he said: "Send (them)."
[2 Kgs 2:17](#)
10. עֲלֵה וּקְבֹר אֶת־אָבִיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר הִשְׁבִּיעַךָ Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear (to do).
[Gen 50:6](#)
11. וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה שִׁפְטוּ־נָא בֵּינִי וּבֵין כְּרָמִי People of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.
[Isa 5:3](#)
12. תִּנְהַנֵּא לָהֶם כֶּכֶר־כֶּסֶף Give them a talent of silver.
[2 Kgs 5:22](#)
13. קוּמָה אֱלֹהִים שִׁפְטָה הָרֶץ Arise, O God, judge the earth.
[Ps 82:8](#)
14. וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־רֵבֶקָה ... אֵת הָיִי לְאַלְפֵי רַבָּבָה And they blessed Rebekah ... , "May you increase to vast multitudes."
[Gen 24:60](#)
15. הִנְקִי מִמֵּי הַמָּרִים הַמְאַרְרִים הָאֵלֶּה May this bitter water that brings a curse leave (you) innocent.
[Num 5:19](#)
16. הוּא אָחִי הַגָּדוֹל מִמֶּנִּי Request the kingdom for him (Adonijah)—after all, he is my older brother!
[1 Kgs 2:22](#)
17. בָּאוּ בֵּית־אֵל וּפָשְׁעוּ Go to Bethel and sin!
[Amos 4:4](#)

C

The imperative, like the jussive, has uses in which its ordinary force is lost. The figure of heterosis involves the exchange of one grammatical form for another; with the imperative, heterosis creates a promise or prediction to be fulfilled in the future, made more emphatic and vivid than would be the case were the prefix conjugation used (## 18–20).

18. אֲכֹל הַשָּׁנָה סָפִיחַ וּבִשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִית סָחִישׁ וּבִשָּׁנָה This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and

הַשְׁלִישִׁית זָרְעוּ וְקָצְרוּ
וְנָטְעוּ כְרָמִים וְאָכְלוּ
פְּרִיָם:

reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

[2 Kgs 19:29](#)

19. מִטֶּה-עֶזְדָּךְ יִשְׁלַח יְהוָה
מִצִּיּוֹן רִדְהָ בְּקֶרֶב אִי־בָיִד:

YHWH will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; rule in the midst of your enemies.

[Ps 110:2](#)

20. בְּצִדְקָה תִּכְוֶנֶנִי רַחֲמֵי
מִעֶשֶׂק

In righteousness you will be established; be far from tyranny.

[Isa 54:14](#)

Apostrophe with the imperative is usually directed to unspecified or indefinite persons (## 21–22); the personifying jussive is comparable (34.3d).

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21. עַל־הַר־נִשְׁפָּה שְׂאוּ־נֵס
הַרְיֵמוּ קוֹל לָהֶם

Raise a banner on the bare hilltop, shout to them.

[Isa 13:2](#)

22. הַכִּינוּ לְבָנָיו מִטְבַּח

Prepare a place to slaughter his sons.

[Isa 14:21](#)

34.5 Uses of the Cohortative

a

The first-person volitional form presents many more complexities than the jussive or the imperative. In his work on the Byblian dialect of Late Bronze Age Canaanite, W. L. Moran isolates two uses of *yaqtula* as primary, accounting for about two-thirds of the examples: (a) the "direct volitive," to express a wish, request, or command, and (b) the "indirect volitive," in clauses of purpose or intended result. Both of these have analogs among the uses of the Hebrew cohortative.¹⁹ Byblian *yaqtula* is also found in conditional sentences, in protasis or apodosis.²⁰ The Hebrew -â forms (cf. 34.1d) can be distinguished according to their occurrence in independent or dependent clauses.

34.5.1 Cohortative in Independent Clauses

A

The cohortative expresses the will or strong desire of the speaker. In cases where the speaker has the ability to carry out an inclination it takes on the coloring of resolve ('I will ...'; ## 1–4). In other cases, where the speaker cannot effect a desire without the consent of the one addressed, it connotes request ('May I ...'; ## 5–7). The sense is optative when the speaker's will involves dubiety, an indefinite potentiality ('I might/ can ...'; ## 8–9). Finally, in first-person plural, the speakers usually seek to instigate or encourage each other to some action ('Let us ...'; ## 10–12). By etymology the term "cohortative" is applicable only to this last use (Latin cohortor 'to encourage'), but the term has been expanded to cover the other uses mentioned here. The negative particle with the cohortative is אַל (# 2).

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1. אֵלְכָה וְאֶרְאֶנּוּ

I will go and see him.

[Gen 45:28](#)

2. אֶל־אֶרְאֶה בְּמוֹת הַיָּלֵד

I will not watch the boy die.

[Gen 21:16](#)

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 3. | וְאֶזְמְרָה שֵׁם־יְהוָה עַלְיוֹן: | I will praise YHWH Elyon.
Ps 7:10 |
| 4. | וְאֲנִי וְהַנָּעַר נֵלְכָה עַד־כֹּה וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה | As for me and the boy, we will go there and worship.

Gen 22:5 |
| 5. | וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲכָלָה בָּשָׂר | And you will say, "I would like to eat meat."
Deut 12:20 |
| 6. | בְּרַגְלִי אַעֲבֹרָה: | Let me pass through on foot.
Num 20:19 |
| 7. | נִפְלֵה־נָא בְיַד־יְהוָה ...
וּבְיַד־אָדָם אַל־אִפְלָה: | Let us fall into the hands of YHWH ... but let me not fall into the hands of men.

2 Sam 24:14 |
| 8. | עַל־מִי אֲדַבֵּרָה וְאֶעִידָה | Against whom can I speak and give a warning?
Jer 6:10 |
| 9. | אוּלִי אֲכַפֵּרָה בְּעֵד
חַטֹּאתֵכֶם: | Perhaps I can make atonement for you (lit., atonement for your sin). ²¹
Exod 32:30 |
| 10. | נֵלְכָה דֹתָיִנָּה | Let's go to Dothan.
Gen 37:17 |
| 11. | נֵלְכָה אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים
אַחֲרִים | Let us follow other gods.

Deut 13:3 |
| 12. | נִנְתְּקָה אֶת־מוֹסְרוֹתֵינוּ | Let us break their chains.
Ps 2:3 |

The effect of the plural cohortative is frequently heightened by a verb of motion in the imperative, which functions as an auxiliary or interjection. The verbs used include *hlk* (## 1316), *bw* (# 17), and *qwm* (## 18–20); the verb *yhb* 'to give' occurs only in the imperative, sometimes in this role (# 21). Such an imperative may be linked to the cohortative with a *waw* (## 13–15, 18–20) or it may be juxtaposed asyndetically (## 16–17, 21).

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|-----|--|--|
| 13. | לָכֶה וְנִקְרָבָה בְּאַחַד
הַמְּקוֹמוֹת | Come, let's try to reach one of these places.

Judg 19:13 <i>Qere</i> ; cf. v 11 |
| 14. | לָכוּ וְנֵלְכָה עַד־הָרֹאֶה | Come, let's go to the seer.
1 Sam 9:9 |
| 15. | לְכוּ־נָא וְנִזְכָּחָה | Come now, let's reason together.
Isa 1:18 |
| 16. | לָכוּ נִרְנְנָה לַיהוָה | Come, let us sing to YHWH.
Ps 95:1 |
| 17. | בָּאוּ נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְנִכְרָעָה | Come, let us bow down in worship.
Ps 95:6 |
| 18. | קוּמָה וְנָשָׁבָה | Get up, let's go back. |

19. קוּמִי וְנִלְכֶּה [Jer 46:16](#)
Get up, let's go.
20. קוּמוּ וְנִבְרָחָה [Judg 19:28](#)
Get up, let's flee.
21. הָבֵה נִרְדֶּה [2 Sam 15:14](#)
Come, let us go down.²²
[Gen 11:7](#)

34.5.2 Cohortative in Dependent Clauses

a

In sentences made up of more than one clause, the cohortative may be found in dependent purpose clauses and in the protasis ('if') or apodosis ('then') clauses of conditional sentences. These uses are closely related to its role in independent clauses to express self-inclination with the mood of dubiety.

b

With the nuance of purpose or intended result the cohortative form often occurs after another volitional form (## 1–3; cf. 34.6) and sometimes after a question (## 4–6).

1. וְהָבִיאתָ לִי וְאָכַלָּה [Gen 27:4](#)
And bring it to me so that I may eat.
2. חַנּוּנִי ... לְמַעַן אֲסַפְּרָה
כָּל-תְּהִלָּתֶיךָ [Ps 9:14–15](#)
Have mercy on me ... that I may recite all
your praises.
3. אַל-נָא יֵחַר לֵאדֹנִי
וְאִדְבָּרָה [Gen 18:30](#); cf. v [32](#)
Let not my Lord be angry, that I may
speak.²³
4. הֲאִין פֹּה נָבִיא לַיהוָה ...
וְנִדְרָשָׁה מֵאוֹתוֹ: [1 Kgs 22:7](#)
Is there not a prophet of YHWH here ...
that we might inquire of him?
5. מִי-הִגִּיד מֵרֵאשִׁית וְנִדְעָה [Isa 41:26](#)
Who told of this from the beginning, so
we could hear?
6. מַתִּי יַעֲבֹר הַחֹדֶשׁ וְנִשְׁבְּרָה
שֶׁבֶר [Amos 8:5](#)
When will the New Moon be over that we
may sell grain?

In conditional sentences, the cohortative can be used in either the protasis (## 7–9)²⁴ or the apodosis (## 10–12).

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7. אִם ... וְאַצְיֵעָה שְׂאוּל הַנֶּזֶךְ: [Ps 139:8](#)
If ... I make my bed in Sheol, you are
there.
8. אִם-אֲדַבֵּרָה לֹא-יִחַשֵׁךְ
כְּאָבִי [Job 16:6](#)
If I speak, my pain is not relieved.
9. אֲקוּמָה וַיִּדְבְּרוּ-בִי: [Job 16:6](#)
When I appear, they ridicule me.

10. מִי־יִתְּנִי שְׁמִירָשִׁית
בַּמִּלְחָמָה אֶפְשָׁעָה בָּהּ
[Job 19:18](#)
If only there were briars and thorns
confronting me I would march against
them in battle.²⁵
11. מִי־יִתְּנִי בַּמִּדְבָּר מָלוֹן
אֲרָחִים וְאֶעֱזְבָה אֶת־עַמִּי
[Isa 27:4](#)
Oh that I had in the desert a lodging
place for travelers, then I would leave
my people.
[Jer 9:1](#)
12. אוֹלִי יִפְתָּה וְנוֹכְלָה לוֹ
וְנִקְחָה נִקְמָתָנוּ מִמֶּנּוּ:
Perhaps he will be deceived; then we
will prevail over him and take our
retribution on him.
[Jer 20:10](#)

34.5.3 Pseudo-Cohortative

a

The cohortative form is sometimes used where an appropriate sense is lacking. The use of a single form to denote both the volitional and indicative moods cannot be readily explained. Similar divergent patterns of *yaqtula* are attested in the Amarna letters from Byblos; Moran cautiously offers this explanation: "We can only suggest that in clauses of intended result the idea of actual accomplishment has begun to supersede that of intention, not completely however, and thus (*u* ['and']) *yaqtula*, still felt as indicating a willed result, expresses actual result only after a clause in the first person."²⁶ This use in early Canaanite rules out the suggestion of some earlier Hebraists that in certain passages the cohortative does not denote internal impulse but external compulsion and should be rendered by 'must.' (Driver had earlier ruled out this suggestion as both unnecessary and unlikely.)²⁷

b

The pseudo-cohortative (as we may call this form) can be used to refer to past time, without *waw*-relative (## 1–3) or with it (## 4–6).²⁸ The latter combination is relatively common (about ninety occurrences) and has an erratic distribution in the Bible. The presence of this construction in a text cannot be used to date it because, on the one hand, *yaqtula* is used in Byblian Canaanite for past tense, and, on the other hand, the combination is used extensively in the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁹ The combination also occurs in some pre-exilic texts but not in some post-exilic books (and is even lacking in post-exilic texts synoptic with pre-exilic texts evincing the form).³⁰ The combination is also used in gnomic situations (rendered with an English present tense; ## 7–8) and with future-time reference (# 9).

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1. נִשְׂאתִי אֲמִיד אֶפְוִנָּה:
I have borne your terrors (and) I am in
despair.
[Ps 88:16](#)
2. הָפַךְ יָם לִיבִשָּׁה ... שָׁם
נִשְׂמַחְה־בוֹ:
He turned the sea into dry land, ... there
we rejoiced in him.
[Ps 66:6](#)
3. וְאָרָא בַּפְתָּאִים אֲבִינָה
בַּבָּנִים
I saw among the simple, I noticed
among the young men ...
[Prov 7:7](#)
4. וְאַצֵּל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם
... וְאֶתַּנָּה לָכֶם אֶת־אֲרָצָם:
וְאֶמְרָה
And I snatched you from the power of
Egypt ... and I gave you their land, and I
said ...
[Judg 6:9–10](#)
At the place where we stopped for the

5. וַיְהִי כִּי-בָּאנוּ אֶל-הַמָּלֹךְ
וַנִּפְתָּחָה אֶת-אֲמֻתַּחֲתֵינוּ
[Gen 43:21](#)
night, we opened our sacks.
6. וַאֲשַׁבְּרָה מִתְּלָעוֹת עוֹלָם
[Job 29:17](#)
I broke the fangs of the wicked.
7. נִגְשָׁשָׁה כְּעוֹרִים קִיר וְכֵאֵין
עֵינַיִם נִגְשָׁשָׁה
[Isa 59:10](#)
Like the blind we grope along the wall,
we grope like those without eyes.
8. נִפְשִׁי בְּתוֹךְ לְבָאִם אֲשַׁכְּבָה
[Ps 57:5](#)
I lie among lions.
9. עַת־מָתִי אֲרֹאֶה-נֶס עֹשֶׁמְעָה
קוֹל שׁוֹפָר:
[Jer 4:21](#)
How long will I see the battle standard
and hear the sound of the trumpet?

34.6 Jussive and Cohortative after Imperative

a

After an imperative a verbal form not preceded by its subject or a negative particle is normally either a jussive (## 1–2) or a cohortative (## 3–5; cf. 34.5.2b).³¹ Where a prefix-conjugation form is not morphologically marked in such a context, it may be taken as having jussive (# 6) or cohortative (# 7) force (34.1d n. 3). The second volitional form signifies purpose or result, in contrast to the sequence imperative + imperative (cf. ## 3, 10).³² A chain of jussives or cohortatives can follow an imperative. When the verb after an imperative is preceded by its own subject (## 8–9) or by a negative particle (# 10), it is usually a non-perfective form, with a volitional sense.³³

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1. הַעֲתִירוּ אֶל-יְהוָה וַיִּסֶּר
הַצַּפְרָדַּעִים מִמֶּנִּי וּמֵעַמִּי
[Exod 8:4](#)
Pray to YHWH that he take the frogs
away from me and my people.
2. הוֹצֵא אֶת-בִּנְךָ וַיָּמָת
[Judg 6:30](#)
Bring out your son that he might die.
3. הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה תָּמִים:
וְאִתָּנָה בְּרִיתִי
[Gen 17:1–2](#)
Walk before me and be perfect and I will
confirm my covenant.
4. הָבָה נִלְבְּנָה לְבָנִים
וְנִשְׂרָפָה לְשֹׂרֶפֶת
[Gen 11:3](#)
Come, let's make bricks and bake them
thoroughly.
5. קַח מִמֶּנִּי וְאִקְבְּרָה אֶת-מָתִי
[Gen 23:13](#)
Accept (it) from me so that I can bury
my dead.
6. הַשְׁבֵּהוּ אִתְּךָ ... וַיֹּאכֵל
לֶחֶם וַיִּשְׂתַּ מַּיִם
[1 Kgs 13:18](#)
Bring him back with you ... so that he
might eat bread and drink water.
7. לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶצְךָ ... וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ
לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאִבְרַכְךָ
Leave your country ... and I will make
you a great nation and bless you and
magnify your name.

וְאֶגְדֶּלָה שְׁמִי

[Gen 12:1–2](#)

8. וְהָיָה-לִּי לְאָב וּלְכֹהֵן
וְאֶנְכִּי אֶתֶּן-לָךְ
Be a father-priest to me and I will give you ...

[Judg 17:10](#)

9. לֵךְ וַיְהוּה יִהְיֶה עִמָּךְ:
Go and may YHWH be with you.

[1 Sam 17:37](#)

10. רְדוּ-שָׁמָּה וּשְׁבְרוּ-לָנוּ מִשָּׁם
וְנַחֲיָה וְלֹא נָמוּת:
Go down there, buy us (some grain)
there, so that we might live and not die.

[Gen 42:2](#)

34.7 The Particle נָא

a

The particle נָא, frequently associated with volitional forms, is generally known as a precative particle and translated into English by 'please.'³⁴ Thomas O. Lambdin has argued that it is a logical rather than a precative particle and is better left untranslated: "The particle seems ... to denote that the command in question is a logical consequence, either of an immediately preceding statement or of the general situation in which it is uttered."³⁵ He bases his insight on its use with הִנֵּה, which he argues is also often a logical particle in direct speech and as such is used to introduce a fact on which a following statement or command is based. His understanding finds further support in the use of נָא with the logical particles אִם and עַתָּה, and in its use with the cohortative of resolve in passages where a precative use is unlikely.

b

The particle is found with a volitional form and הִנֵּה (## 1–2), אִם (# 3), and עַתָּה (# 4); -nā' is attached to the logical particle for הִנֵּה and אִם and to the verb for עַתָּה (and often also for הִנֵּה; ## 1–2). It may also be attached to the negative אַל (# 3). The combination הִנֵּה-נָא is found in non-volitional contexts (## S-6). The cohortative of resolve is followed by נָא (## 7–8). In commands that are preceded or followed by a reason (## 911), נָא is also found. The *n* is sometimes doubled after a syllable ending in a vowel (## 7–8, contrast ## 9, 11).

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1. הִנֵּה-נָא דְּבָרֵי הַנְּבִיאִים
פֶּה-אַחֵד טוֹב אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
יְהִי-נָא דְּבָרְךָ כְּדָבַר אַחֵד
מֵהֶם
Since the words of the (other) prophets
are uniformly good for the king, let your
words agree with theirs.
[1 Kgs 22:13](#) Kethiv
2. הִנֵּה-נָא עֲצָרְנִי יְהוּה מְלָכָה
בֹּא-נָא אֶל-שִׁפְחָתִי
Because YHWH has kept me from
having children, go to my handmaid.
3. אִם-נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ
עַל-נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עֲבָדְךָ:
[Gen 16:2](#)
4. נָא הַעֲזֵב הַיָּרֵךְ ... וְנֵלֵךְ!
[Gen 18:3](#)
Now get the spear ... and let's go!

וְעַתָּה קַח־נָא אֶת־הַחַנִּית ...
וְנָלֶכְהָ לָנוּ:

[1 Sam 26:11](#)

5. הִנֵּה־נָא מָצָא עַבְדְּךָ חֵן
בְּעֵינֶיךָ ... וְאֵנֹכִי לֹא אוֹכֵל
לְהַמְלִיט

Even though your servant has found
favor ... I can't flee.

[Gen 19:19](#)

6. הִנֵּה־נָא מוֹשֵׁב הָעִיר טוֹב
... וְהַמַּיִם רָעִים

Even though the city site is good ... the
waters are bad.

[2 Kgs 2:19](#)

7. אֲרִדָּה־נָא וְאֶרְאֶה

I will go down and see.

[Gen 18:21](#)

8. אֶסְרֶה־נָא וְאֶרְאֶה
אֶת־הַמֶּרְאֶה הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה

I will go over and see this strange sight.

[Exod 3:3](#)

9. הֲלֹא אַחֲתָהּ הַקְטָנָה טוֹבָה
מִמֶּנָּה תַּהֲיֶינָא לָךְ תַּחֲתֶיהָ:

Isn't her younger sister more attractive
than she? Marry her instead of her (the
older sister).

[Judg 15:2](#)

10. הֲלֹא כָל־הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֶיךָ
הִפָּרֵד נָא מֵעָלַי

Is not all the land before you? Separate
yourself from me.

[Gen 13:9](#)

11. אֲמַר־יֵנָּא אַחֲתִי אַתָּ לְמַעַן
יֵיטֵב־לִי בְּעַבְדוֹךָ

Say you are my sister that I may be well
treated for your sake.

[Gen 12:13](#)

Footnotes:

1. See Joüon § 114/ pp. 307–12; W. L. Moran, "Early Canaanite *Yaqtula*," *Orientalia* 29 (1960) 1–19, at 12; and A. Niccacci, *Sintassi del verbo ebraico nella prosa biblica classica* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1986) 55–59, all of whom take the forms together as a group. For a more broadly based approach to modality, see E. Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible. II. Syntax and Semantics," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 39 (1982) 26–38, esp. 30–35.

2. Joüon § 114b / p. 307 suggests that it is necessary to distinguish cohortative mood (i.e., sense or syntactic role) from cohortative form because, on the one hand, the prefix conjugation may connote notions that we associate with the cohortative mood, and, on the other, the cohortative form is used for the indicative mood. On this point, see also P. D. Miller, "Syntax and Theology in Genesis XII 3a," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984) 472–76, at 475–76; and 34.5.3.

3. On final-*he* verbs, see E. J. Revell, "First Person Imperfect Forms with *Waw* Consecutive," *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988) 419–26, at 419–20 (cf. 424–25 on the phonology in general); GKC § 751/ p. 210, § 108a n. 2 / p. 319. For final-*aleph* verbs, note *emša'-hen* 'let me find favor' ([Gen 33:15](#), [34:11](#), etc.); *niqrā* 'let's call' ([Gen 24:57](#)); *al-nā* 'eśśā 'let me not rift' ([Job 32:21](#)); *wə'erāpe* 'that I may be healed' ([Jer 17:14](#), with *wə'iwwāšē* 'that I may be saved'); *eśśā* '(if) I rise' ([Ps 139:9](#), followed by *eškanā* 'if I dwell'); *wənēšē* 'let us go' ([1 Kgs 20:31](#)); *abō* 'I would go' ([Gen 38:16](#)); but note *wə'ešə* 'that I may go out' ([2 Chr 1:10](#), before *wə'abō* 'and that I may go'). Suffixed forms are also not marked as cohortative, e.g., *lākī ʾāšək nā* 'ešā 'Come now, let me advise you' ([1 Kgs 1:12](#)). See also Miller, "Syntax and Theology," 475–76.

4. For the development of the jussive (versus "indicative") in West Semitic, the Aramaic dialects are more

revealing than Hebrew; see A. M. R. Aristar, "The Semitic Jussive and the Implications for Aramaic," *Maarav* 4 (1987) 157–89; J. Huehnergard, "The Feminine Plural Jussive in Old Aramaic," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 137 (1987) 266–77.

5. The contrary position, that all the forms are indicatives, is argued by H. Jagersma, "Some Remarks on the Jussive in [Numbers 6, 24–26](#)," *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift ... J. P. M. van der Ploeg*, ed. W. C. Delsman et al. (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 211; Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker/ Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982) 131–36.

6. The combination י + jussive is sometimes called the vetitive (Latin veto 'to not permit'); e.g., R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976) 35. The relationship between the vetitive and the י yqtl syntagm (sometimes called the prohibitive, Latin *prohibeo* 'to forbid') is disputed (see, e.g., Joüon § 114i / p. 310, who is agnostic; GKC § 107o-p / p. 317 refers to the prohibitive as more emphatic, cf. § 109d / p. 322); the role of the genre cannot be discounted. The contrast of the two syntagms is most vivid in [1 Kgs 3:25–26](#), as Anson F. Rainey has pointed out to us. The rare negative particle teal (found 68 times, chiefly in verse) can be used as equivalent to either י yqtl (as in [Ps 10:18](#)) or י yqtl ([Ps 93:1](#)); see N. J. Tromp, "The Hebrew Particle לֹא־," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 (1981) 277–87.

7. E.g., GKC § 109k / p. 323.

8. On these forms, see GKC § 48g n. 1 / p. 131; Moran, "Early Canaanite *Yaqtula*," 12.

9. Sabatino Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964) 136. Scholars debate whether the imperative stem (*qtul/qutul*) is primary, with personal affixes added later to form the prefix conjugation, or whether the prefix conjugation is primary, with the affixes later dropped to form the imperative. The latter view is dominant (see, e.g., M. M. Bravmann, *Studies in Semitic Philology* [Leiden: Brill, 1977] 195–99), but Hans Bauer (among others) held the former; see Leslie McFall, *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982) 106–7, cf. 131, 172. Mishnaic (and, infrequently, Biblical) Hebrew and Aramaic form a compound imperative with the verb 'to be' (Hebrew *hyy*) and the participle; see M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 157; J. C. Greenfield, "The 'Periphrastic Imperative' in Aramaic and Hebrew," *Israel Exploration Journal* 19 (1969) 199–210.

10. This *h* is sometimes called paragogic ('extending') *he*.

11. GKC § 48ij / pp. 131–32. On the "third-person cohortatives," see GKC § 48d / p. 130.

12. Moran, "Early Canaanite *Yaqtula*." See also J. Blau, "Studies in Hebrew Verb Formation," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 42 (1971) 133–58, at 133–44.

13. Cf. [1 Sam 20:13](#).

14. Driver's contemporary John Ruskin dubbed such projection the "pathetic fallacy." For a discussion with biblical examples, see the selections from *Modern Painters III* (1856) in *The Literary Criticism of John Ruskin*, ed. H. Bloom (New York: Norton, 1971) 62–78.

15. S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of Tenses in Hebrew* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1892) 59–60.

16. For Ugaritic commands in *qtul* versus imperatives, see T. L. Fenton, "Command and Fulfillment in Ugaritic—'TQTL:YQTL' and 'QTL:QTL,'" *Journal of Semitic Studies* 14 (1969) 34–38.

17. Joüon §48d / pp. 108–9, § 114m / p. 311; T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 114.

18. The short form *hasqšēb* occurs in [Job 33:31](#).

19. See in general Moran, "Early Canaanite *Yaqtula*"; more briefly, Moran, "The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. E. Wright (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961; reprinted, Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1979) 54–72, at 64.

20. Arabic contrasts indicative *yaktubu* and subjunctive *yaktuba*; the subjunctive "occurs only in subordinate clauses. It indicates an act which is dependent upon that mentioned in the previous clause, and future to it in point of time"; see W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1898), 2. 24, cf. 2.34–35. For a Palestinian Aramaic contrast of first-person indicative *ʾeqtol* and (again, confined to subordinate clauses) subjunctive *neqtol*, see J. W. Wesseliuss, "A Subjunctive in the Aramaic of the Palestinian Targum," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35 (1984) 196–99.

21. A similar idiom occurs in [Gen 32:21](#).

22. The combination *hbh* with the cohortative is used in [Gen 11:3, 4](#) by the conspirators at Babel and here by God.
23. The sequence in [Judg 6:39](#) is nearly identical.
24. Blau, "Hebrew Verb Formation," 134, says that there are no further examples.
25. For the idiom in this and the following example, see B. Jongeling, "L'Expression *my ytn* dans l'Ancien Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974) 32–40.
26. Moran, "Early Canaanite *Yaqtula*," 18.
27. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 55–56; see W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 161–62, for a defense of the earlier view.
28. Note also *ʿerdepā* in [2 Sam 22:38](#) and *ʿerdōp* in [Ps 18:38](#).
29. For biblical occurrences, see McFall, *Hebrew Verbal System*, 211–14; for Qumran, see E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 44, cf. 45–46. S. Morag has recently argued that the *wqtlh* forms in Qumranic Hebrew are to be taken not as archaisms but as reflections of a later stage of Hebrew, "a continuation ... not necessarily ... literary"; see "Qumran Hebrew: Some Typological Observations," *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988) 148–64, at 163, cf. 154–55. Similarly Revell, "First Person Imperfect Forms," 423, argues that the biblical cases are not archaizing. See also E. Qimron, "Consecutive and Conjunctive Imperfect: The Form of the Imperfect with *Waw* in Biblical Hebrew," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 77 (1986–87) 149–61, esp. 161.
30. See R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 54–55. Cf. Qimron, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 44.
31. H. M. Orlinsky, "On the Cohortative and Jussive after an Imperative or Interjection in Biblical Hebrew," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 31 (1940–41) 371–82; 32 (1941–42) 191–205, 273–77.
32. Cf. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 119.
33. Orlinsky, "Cohortative and Jussive," 32:273–77.
34. The particle occurs, in the forms *-nāʾ* and *-nnāʾ*, 405 times (SA/THAT). The origin of the particle is a matter distinct from its usage: it may well have arisen from reanalysis of the underused energetic forms of earlier stages of the older language (compare the heavy energetic *yaqtulanna* and the light energetic *yaqtulan* of Arabic); see 31.7.
35. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 170.

35 Infinitive Absolute

[35.1 Non-finite Verb Forms](#)

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[2.1 Form](#)

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35.1 Non-finite Verb Forms

a

The Semitic languages generally distinguish two categories of non-finite verb forms, the infinitive, which designates the action or situation of the verb, and the participle, which refers to the actor or patient of the verb.¹ Neither infinitives nor participles are inflected for aspect (*Aspekt*). Number and gender inflections refer to the noun-like features of the form; participles are regularly marked for number and gender, while infinitives rarely are so marked, usually with possessive affixes. Hebrew (along with a few closely related languages)² is distinctive in having not one but two infinitive types. The

simpler infinitive type is the infinitive construct, used as infinitives and gerunds are used in Latin and modern European languages. The infinitive absolute is, as Gotthelf Bergsträsser remarks, "a peculiarly Hebrew hybrid of verbal noun and verbal interjection of imperative character."³

b

The terms infinitive absolute and infinitive construct are open to objection.⁴ They should not be construed to mean that the "absolute" is reduced in certain linguistic environments to the "construct," as happens in the case of a noun standing before another noun in the genitive case (see 9.2). Rather, to judge from their historically distinctive nominal patterns, from their functions in Biblical Hebrew, and from similar uses of the infinitive in other Semitic languages, these two forms are historically distinct and unrelated. In earlier Semitic the nominal pattern that developed in Hebrew into the *Qal* infinitive absolute qātōl/qātōl was *qatāl, and the nominal pattern that developed into the infinitive construct qetōl was either *qtul or *qutul.⁵

c

The Masoretic vocalization clearly distinguishes two types of infinitives, and much external evidence supports the distinction.⁶ The correctness of the Masoretic vocalization is supported indirectly by the recognition of the different functions of the infinitives in Biblical Hebrew. For these reasons E. Hammershaimb rightly objects to the rejection of the Masoretic vocalization, saying: "Only a partisan judgement on Hebrew alone combined with profound scepticism as to the Masoretic vocalization can lead to a repudiation of the functional difference between the two infinitives."⁷

35.2 Form and Meaning

35.2.1 Form

a

Among its many uses in Biblical Hebrew the infinitive absolute may intensify a finite verb, serve as a word of command, or function as a finite verb.⁸ Related forms in Akkadian, Arabic, and Ugaritic similarly serve to intensify a finite verb or as a word of command; and in the Northwest Semitic languages (Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Amarna Canaanite) such forms may function as finite verbs.⁹

b

The pattern of the *Qal* infinitive absolute, qātōl, is carried over to some other stems, for example, *Niphal* nilhōm 'to fight' and *Piel* yassōr 'to set right'.¹⁰ Elsewhere in the

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so-called derived stems, perhaps reflecting the use of the *Qal* infinitive absolute as a word of command, infinitives absolute are identical to the imperatives, for example, *Niphal* himmāšē', *Piel* bārēk, *Hiphil* haškēl, *Hithpael* hitnaššē'.¹¹ The *Niphal* and *Piel* are the only stems with variant infinitive-absolute patterns.

c

As we shall see (35.3.1), the infinitive absolute usually occurs paronomastically with a finite verb. Used in this way, it usually shares the stem of the finite verb, for example, *Qal* ([Gen 2:16](#)), *Niphal* ([Exod 22:3](#)), *Piel* ([Gen 22:17](#)), *Pual* ([Gen 40:15](#)), *Hithpael* ([Num 16:13](#)), *Hiphil* ([Gen 3:16](#)), and *Hophal* ([Ezek 16:4](#)).

d

Sometimes the *Qal* infinitive absolute is so used with a form of a different stem. This is common with the *Niphal* ([Exod 19:13](#); [21:20](#), [22](#), [28](#); [22:11](#), [12](#); [2 Sam 23:7](#); [Isa 40:30](#); [Jer 10:5](#); [34:3](#); [49:12](#); ¹² [Mic 2:4](#); [Nah 3:13](#); [Zech 12:3](#); [Job 6:2](#)); note the *Hophal* in the usual expression מוֹת יוֹמָת ([Exod 19:12](#), etc.). The *Qal* infinitive absolute is also bracketed with other stems, for example, with the *Piel* ([2 Sam 20:18](#)), *Hiphil* ([Gen 46:4](#), [1 Sam 23:22](#), [Isa 31:5](#)), and *Hithpoel* ([Isa 24:19](#)).¹³

e

Apart from this mixture of *Qal* infinitives absolute with other stems, an infinitive absolute is rarely used with a finite verb in a stem different from itself; exceptions occur, for example, *Hophal* with *Niphal* ([2 Kgs 3:23](#)), *Hophal* with *Pual* ([Ezek 16:4](#)), *Piel* with *Hiphil* ([1 Sam 2:16](#)), and *Pilpel* with *Hithpael* ([Jer 51:58](#)).

35.2.2 Meaning

a

Infinitives, in contrast to finite verb forms, do not require affixes that limit the situation denoted by the root with regard to the agent or circumstances under which the action takes place. Rather, they denote the bare verbal action or state in the abstract.¹⁴ Since the Hebrew infinitives occur in verbal stems, they are restricted with respect to stem-defining Aktionsart, though as we have seen the infinitive absolute of the *Qal* is used with other stems.

b

Infinitives are hybrids, verbal nouns, and as such are bracketed with the other words in settings where we would expect either a verb or a noun. Sometimes they are bracketed as both at one and the same time. Consider this example:

1.

מוֹת יוֹמָת הָאִישׁ כָּל־הָעָם אֹתוֹ

This man must die—the whole assembly stoning him.

בְּאַבְנִים כָּל־הָעֵרָה

Num 15:35

c

The infinitive absolute רָגַם is bracketed with the main verb יָנַת as an adverbial accusative, qualifying how the action will be performed, and at the same time it is bracketed with both its own subject and object.

d

The infinitive absolute and infinitive construct are distinguished in part by their syntax. Although both are used in ways associated with both verbs and nouns, they differ in the following respects.

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- Only the infinitive absolute regularly takes the place of a finite verb.
- Only the infinitive construct is regularly used with a preposition.
- Only the infinitive construct can take a pronominal suffix.
- If the subject of the verbal action expressed by the infinitive absolute is stated, it is always an independent noun; with the infinitive construct it may be a pronominal suffix.
- The infinitive absolute is used much less rarely than the infinitive construct in the most frequent uses of the noun, namely, as a subject in the nominative function, as a genitive, or in the accusative function.

The infinitive absolute also takes the place of other parts of speech in a clause besides those of the noun and verb; notably it serves as an adverb.¹⁵ It can be used as a word of command and even functions where we expect an infinitive construct. We broadly classify the uses of the infinitive absolute by these parts of speech:¹⁶

- as a noun, especially as an absolute or adverbial complement (35.3)
- as a frozen adverb (35.4)
- as a word of command (35.5.1)
- as a finite verb (35.5.2)
- as a participle (35.5.3) f. as an infinitive construct (35.5.4)

Within these broad classifications according to word classes we can specify its more precise values.

e

Before turning to these species, we need to note further that the infinitive absolute is not normally negated; a negative particle, where needed, is normally placed before the finite verb.

2. יִנָּקָה לֹא יִנָּקָה פֶּקֶד עֵוֹן Yet he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.

Exod 34:7

3. וּמָכַר לֹא־תִמְכְּרָנָה You must not sell her.

Deut 21:14

35.3 Nominal Uses

a

The infinitive absolute is used most often as a noun in two distinctive roles: as an absolute complement to a clause (in the nominative function; 35.3.1)¹⁷ and as an adverbial

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complement, that is, a complement to the verb (35.3.2). The infinitive absolute may occur syntactically where a noun is expected, namely, as a subject in the nominative case, or as a genitive, or in an accusative role (35.3.3).

35.3.1 Absolute Complement

a

The earlier grammarians did not have any doubt that when the infinitive absolute intensifies a verb it is used as a kind of internal accusative. As recently as 1978 Ernst Jenni still referred to such a form as an inner object.¹⁸ In Ugaritic, however, where case can be formally identified in forms from final-*aleph* roots, which indicate the final vowel, this use of the infinitive absolute occurs with the nominative case; for example, g8m'u g8m'it (to be vocalized *g8amā'u, infinitive absolute with nominative u, g8ami'ti), 'you (fem.) are certainly thirsty'.¹⁹ In this light Rudolf Meyer appropriately treats the corresponding Hebrew use of the infinitive absolute as "a verbal-nominal apposition, which stands in the isolated nominative."²⁰ For this reason the construction can be analyzed as an absolute in the nominative function.

b

Because in this use the infinitive absolute shares the verbal root and (usually) stem of the accompanying finite verb, the use is said to be paronomastic, that is, based in word play, or to exhibit the schema etymologicum.²¹ By bracketing the paronomastic infinitive with the verb, the verbal idea is intensified. The effect of the infinitive refers to the entire clause, whence comes the term absolute complement. The infinitive usually emphasizes not the meaning denoted by the verb's root but the force of the verb in context. When the verb makes an assertion, whatever its aspect, the notion of certainty is reinforced by the infinitive (e.g., with affirmation, contrast, concession, or climax). By contrast, if the verb in context is unreal, the sense of irrealty (e.g., dubiety, supposition, modality, or volition) becomes more forceful. Both verbal conjugations may express either assertion or irrealty. Usually the intensifying infinitive with the perfective conjugation forcefully presents the certainty of a completed event,²² as in טָרַף טָרַף, 'Without a shadow of a doubt he has been torn to pieces' ([Gen 37:33](#)). With the non-perfective conjugation the infinitive absolute often emphasizes that a situation was, or is, or will take place. Since the non-perfective is used for irrealty and volition, the infinitive absolute can intensify the sense of irrealty in connection with that conjugation. There is, however, no precise match between the infinitive's force and the finite verb's conjugation. Both conjugations may represent a situation as real or unreal and therefore the infinitive may emphasize either sense with either conjugation. We refer to this use of the infinitive as the intensifying infinitive.

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c

Scholars debate whether the infinitive absolute can ever intensify the verbal root. Jenni denies it, while Paul Joüon and S. Rieker affirm it.²³ We agree with the latter scholars, though noting that such use is rare.

d

The earlier grammarians divide the uses of the absolute or intensifying infinitive into two categories, prepositive (that is, before the other verb) and postpositive (that is, after the other verb), while allowing that the difference in meaning between them is slight. Many of them also allege that the paronomastic infinitive more frequently signifies intensification in the more common prepositive position and continuation or repetition in the postpositive position. Rieker, however, rightly demurs on the basis of a close study of the intensifying infinitive in Genesis: "The author is convinced that we have here an artificial distinction between the prepositive and postpositive inf [initive] and that the latter is incorrectly credited with this aspect of expressing duration."²⁴ Over a half century earlier, Joüon had also called the distinction into question.²⁵ In our opinion the paronomastic infinitive is always an intensifying infinitive, and so we do not recognize this traditional distinction. Nevertheless, where we can identify a specific use of the intensifying infinitive in only one or the other of these positions, we note that fact in our analysis; otherwise we exemplify under a single heading a species of the intensifying infinitive which shows both positions. The intensifying infinitive almost always occurs postpositively with *wayyqtl*, the imperative, and the participle.

e

The precise nuance of intensification must be discovered from the broader context; it can usually be rendered into English by an intensifying adverb appropriate to the clause (e.g., 'certainly, really'). The potential species of emphasis are too diverse to classify; it is more important to grasp the contextual meaning of the infinitive absolute.²⁶ Rieker makes the point well: "Although the emphasis on the verb is brought about 'in various ways' ... , it is not different kinds of uses. It is rather a differentiation caused by being used in a richly diversified field of contextual situations."²⁷

f

Affirmation is the most straightforward role for an infinitive absolute (## 1–5); sometimes the particle **אִם** is added for emphasis (# 6); the infinitive generally stands in prepositive position. The affirmation may form a strong contrast to what precedes (## 7–8)²⁸

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or follows (# 9), or infinitives may be used in both members of a pair (# 10).²⁹ The contrast may involve a concession qualifying what follows (## 11–12) or precedes (# 13).

1. מוֹת תָּמוּת: You will surely die.
[Gen 2:17](#)
2. שׁוּב אָשׁוּב אֵלַיךְ I will surely return to you.
[Gen 18:10](#)
3. כִּי־בִרַךְ אֲבָרְכֶךָ I will surely bless you.
[Gen 22:17](#)
4. כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יֹדֹבֵר בּוֹא יִבּוֹא All that he says will surely happen.
[1 Sam 9:6](#)
5. וְהִמָּלַח לֹא הִמָּלַחַת
וְהִחָתַל לֹא חִתָּלַת: To be sure, you were not rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloth (*Pual* perf. + *Hophal* inf. abs.).
[Ezek 16:4](#)
6. אֵךְ נִגְוֶה נִגְוֶה הוּא לְפָנֵינוּ Surely he is fleeing before us.
[Judg 20:39](#)
7. לֹא כִי־קִנּוּ אֶקְנֶה מֵאֲתָךְ No, I insist on paying you (for it).
[2 Sam 24:24](#) manuscripts
8. לֵקֵב אִיבִי לְקַחֲתֶיךָ וְהִנֵּה
בִּרְכָתְךָ בִּרְכָתָם: I brought you to curse my enemies but you have done nothing but bless them.
[Num 23:1–1](#)
9. שְׁמָעוּ שְׁמָעוּ וְאַל־תִּבְיִנוּ Hear indeed, but do not comprehend!
[Isa 6:9](#)
10. כִּי־אָסַר נֶאֱסַרְךָ ... וְהָמַת
לֹא נִמְיָתְךָ We will only tie you up ... ; we will not kill you.
[Judg 15:13](#)
11. וְתֹאמַר הִלֵּךְ אֵלַיךְ עִמָּךְ
אָפֶס כִּי "Very well," she said, "I will go with you. But ... "
[Judg 4:9](#)
12. אָמַרְתִּי אֲמַרְתִּי בֵיתְךָ ...
יְתֵהֱלָכוּ לְפָנַי עַד־עוֹלָם
וְעַתָּה indeed I had promised that your family would forever minister before me. But now ...
[1 Sam 2:30](#)
13. אֲנֹכִי אֶרֶד עִמָּךְ מִצְרַיִמָּה
וְאֲנֹכִי אֶעֱלֶךָ גַּם־עַלָּה I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will surely bring you up (again).
[Gen 46:4](#)

The climax of a series of situations may be marked with the postpositive infinitive absolute, preceded by **גַּם** (## 14–15).³⁰

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 14. | וַיֹּאכַל גַּם־אֶכּוֹל
אֶת־כֶּסֶּפֵּנוּ: | He has even used up the money paid
(to him) for us.

Gen 31:15 |
| 15. | כִּי־תִשְׁתָּרֵר עָלֵינוּ
גַּם־הִשְׁתָּרֵר: | Now you even want to set yourself up
as ruler over us!

Num 16:13 |

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g

The intensifying effect of the infinitive absolute is found in a variety of non-affirming contexts. In impassioned questions the prepositive infinitive shows doubt or the improbability of an affirmative answer (## 16–18). A preposed infinitive may also be used in a conditional clause (## 19–21) or a counterfactual expression ('O that ... , if only ... ' ; ## 22–23). Various modal nuances are also associated with preposed infinitives absolute (## 24–25).³¹

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 16. | הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ
אִם־מִשׁוֹל תִּמְשֹׁל בָּנוּ | Will you actually reign over us and rule
us?

Gen 37:8 |
| 17. | הָאֶכּוֹל אֶכְלָנוּ מִן־הַמֶּלֶךְ
אִם־נִשְׂאֵת נִשָּׂא לָנוּ: | Have we eaten anything from the king('s
holdings) or has he ever lifted away (tax
obligations) for us?

2 Sam 19:43 |
| 18. | הַקְּצוֹר קְצוֹר קְצוֹרָה יָדִי
מִפְדּוֹת | Really, is my arm too short to be
redeemed?

Isa 50:2 |
| 19. | וְאָבִיהָ יָרַק יָרַק בְּפָנֶיהָ | If her father had happened to spit in her
face ...

Num 12:14 |
| 20. | אִם־הִפָּקֵד יִפָּקֵד | If he should happen to be missing ...

1 Kgs 20:39 |
| 21. | אִם־אֹמַר אֹמַר | If I say ...

1 Sam 20:21 |
| 22. | אִם־כִּי לֹא אָכַל אָכַל
הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה | If only the troops had eaten today ...

1 Sam 14:30 |
| 23. | לֹא שָׁקוֹל יִשְׁקַל כְּעֵשִׂי | If only my anguish could be weighed
(<i>Qal</i> inf. abs. + <i>Niphal</i> non-perf.) ...

Job 6:2 |
| 24. | הֵידוּעַ נִדַּע כִּי | How could we possibly have known
that ... ? ³²

Gen 43:7 |
| 25. | מִי־יִתֵּן הַחֶרֶשׁ תַּחֲרִישׁוֹן | Would to God you would be silent!

Job 13:5 |

h

Related to both the affirmative and volitional uses of the infinitive is its use with orders and admonitions; as we shall see below, the infinitive may stand alone as a word of command. With other orders, the infinitive is generally prepositive with prefix forms (## 26–29) and postpositive with imperatives (# 30; cf. # 9).

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26. וַיִּצַו אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם
לֵאמֹר הַנִּגַּע בְּאִישׁ הַזֶּה
וּבְאִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת יוֹמָת:
So Abimelech gave orders to all the
people, "Whoever molests this man or
his wife shall surely be put to death (*Qal*
inf. abs. + *Hophal* non-perf.)."
[Gen 26:11](#)
27. הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת־עֲמִיתְךָ
וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֲטָא:
Be sure to rebuke your neighbor frankly
so you will not share in his guilt.
[Lev 19:17](#)
28. סָקוּל יִסָּקֵל הַשּׁוֹר
The bull must be stoned (*Qal* inf. abs. +
Niphal non-perf.).
[Exod 21:28](#)
29. שְׁמֹר תִּשְׁמְרוּן אֶת־מִצְוֹת
Be sure to keep the commands ...
[Deut 6:17](#)
30. שְׁמָעוּ שְׁמָעוּ אֵלַי
וְאָכְלוּ־טוֹב
Listen, listen to me and eat what is
good.
[Isa 55:2](#)

i

In some cases it is difficult to focus on the force of the infinitive absolute. Occasionally it seems to intensify the root situation (usually postpositive, ## 31–32; prepositive, # 33).³³ Elsewhere the effect is to stress a negation (# 34) or a relevant time boundary (## 35–36).

31. בָּכוּ בָּכוּ לַהֲלֹךְ
Weep bitterly for him who goes (into
exile).
[Jer 22:10](#)
32. וַיִּשְׁטְחוּ לָהֶם שְׁטוֹחַ
סְבִיבוֹת הַמַּחֲנֶה:
They spread them (the quail) out for
themselves all over around the camp.
[Num 11:32](#)
33. כִּי־נִכְסַף נִכְסַפְתָּה לְבֵית
אָבִיךָ
You yearned intensely (to return) to
your father's house.
[Gen 31:30](#)
34. וְסוּף לֹא־סָכַכְתִּי
I used no lotions at all.
[Dan 10:3](#)
35. וַיְהִי אַךְ יָצָא יִצְחָק יַעֲקֹב
מֵאֵת פְּנֵי יִצְחָק ... וַעֲשׂוּ ...
בָּא
It was just after Jacob left Isaac's
presence that ... Esau ... came in!
[Gen 27:30](#)
36. אַךְ הָקָם הַקִּימוּ
אֶת־הַשְּׁמָרִים
They had just then installed the guards.
[Judg 7:19](#)

35.3.2 Adverbial Complement

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a

When a non-paronomastic infinitive absolute is bracketed with a verb, the infinitive qualifies the verb in ways other than by intensifying it. In this use the infinitive may be an adverbial accusative (see 10.2.2) and is then referred to as the adverbial infinitive or complement. An adverbial infinitive adds a qualification to the situation represented by the finite verb. More specifically, it describes the manner or the attendant circumstance of that situation; it is not joined by a copula to the finite verb (## 1–5). The main verb may be active (## 1–3) or passive (## 4–5) in sense. The final example here (# 5) is noteworthy in that the infinitive has its own subject and governs a prepositional phrase.

1. וּסְבַתֶּם אֶת־הָעִיר כָּל־אֲנָשִׁי
הַמְּלַחֲמָה הַקִּיף אֶת־הָעִיר
פַּעַם אַחַת March around the city with all the
warriors, circling it one time.
[Josh 6:3](#)
2. אֲקִים ... אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר
דִּבַּרְתִּי ... הַחֵל וְכֵלָה: I will accomplish ... all that I have said ...
from the beginning to the end.
[1 Sam 3:12](#)
3. וַיִּמְדָּרֵם בְּחֶבֶל הַשָּׁבָב
אוֹתָם He measured them off with a length of
cord by making them lie down.
[2 Sam 8:2](#)
4. קְבוּרַת חֲמֹר יִקָּבֵר סָחוּב
וְהִשְׁלָךְ He will have the burial of a donkey—
dragged off and thrown away.
[Jer 22:19](#)
5. מוֹת יוֹמָת הָאִישׁ רָגוּם אֹתוֹ
בְּאֲבָנִים כָּל־הָעֵדָה This man must die—the whole assembly
stoning him.
[Num 15:35](#)

b

A finite verb may be bracketed with a paronomastic infinitive absolute which is coordinated with another, non-paronomastic infinitive absolute (## 6–15).³⁴ Hebraists are not agreed about the meaning of the two infinitives in this kind of construction. Some think the compound invariably expresses continuance, continuous action, or repetition of action denoted by the main verb,³⁵ while others suggest simply that the nonparonomastic infinitive expresses some other qualification to the action.³⁶ Joüon suggests that the infinitives represent actions simultaneous or quasi-simultaneous with the main verb.³⁷ In this construction we can see the coordination of an intensifying infinitive (the paronomastic member)³⁸ and an adverbial infinitive (the non-paronomastic member).

c

Most cases involve main verbs of motion, and with these the intensifying infinitive does signify repetition or continuance. One of the infinitives is often *hālōk*, and, where the main verb is *hlk*, it serves as the intensifying infinitive (## 6–10).³⁹ The infinitives are both usually postpositive, but one (# 10) or both (# 9) can be prepositive. With other verbs of motion the adverbial complement can be *hālōk* (## 11–12) or, indicating repetition, *sôb* (# 13, cf. # 11) or *haskēm* (## 14–15).

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6. וַיֵּלֶךְ הַלֹּךְ וְאָכַל He ate as he went along.

7. **בְּמַסְלָה אַחַת הָלְכוּ הָלֶךְ וְנָעוּ**
[Judg 14:9](#)
They kept on the road, lowing all the way.
8. **וַיִּלָּךְ דָּוִד הָלֹךְ וְגָדוֹל**
[1 Sam 6:12](#)
And David grew stronger and stronger.
9. **הָלֹךְ וְטָפַף תִּלְכָּנָה**
[2 Sam 5:10](#)
They trip along with mincing steps.
10. **הָלֹךְ יֵלֵךְ וּבָכָה**
[Isa 3:16](#)
He who (regularly) goes out weeping ...
[40](#)
11. **וַיִּשְׁבוּ הַמַּיִם ... הָלֹךְ וְשׁוֹב**
[Ps 126:6](#)
The water receded steadily.
12. **וַיִּסַּע אַבְרָם הָלֹךְ וְנִסּוּעַ הַנֶּגֶבָה:**
[Gen 8:3](#)
Abram kept on moving toward the Negev.
13. **וַיֵּצֵא יָצֹא וְשׁוֹב**
[Gen 12:9](#)
And it kept flying back and forth.
14. **וַאֲדַבֵּר אֵלֵיכֶם הַשָּׁמַיִם וְדַבֵּר**
[Gen 8:7](#)
I spoke to you already for a long period (lit., rising up early and speaking).⁴¹
15. **הַנְּבִיאִים אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִי שָׁלַח אֵלֵיכֶם וְהַשָּׁמַיִם וְשָׁלַח**
[Jer 7:13](#)
the prophets whom I sent to you again and again ...
[Jer 26:5](#)

d

A smaller group of double infinitives absolute involve an intensifying paronomastic infinitive and an adverbial infinitive in a combination which serves to qualify the goal or character of the principal verb (## 16–18).⁴²

16. **וַיִּכֹּהוּ הָאִישׁ הַכֹּהֵן וּפָצַע:**
So the man struck him (the prophet) in such a way as to wound him.
[1 Kgs 20:37](#)
17. **וְנִתְשַׁתִּי אֶת־הַגּוֹי הַהוּא נָחוֹשׁ וְאַבֵּד**
I will uproot that nation in such a way as to destroy it.
[Jer 12:17](#)
18. **וְנָגַף יְהוָה אֶת־מִצְרַיִם נָגַף וְרָפָא**
YHWH will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them.
[Isa 19:22](#)

The broader narrative of # 16 shows clearly that the prophet intended the man to strike him in such a way that he would not be recognized. In the context of # 17 two kinds of uprootings are in view: an uprooting that is not beyond recovery (vv [14–17](#)) and an

uprooting beyond recovery (v [17](#)). The threat to strike Egypt in # 18 is expressed in a context that promises the restoration of Egypt. The thought might be better expressed in English by a negative: 'I will not strike Egypt beyond recovery.' Nothing in these contexts suggests that the paronomastic infinitive signifies continuous or

iterative action. The identification of the paronomastic infinitive as the intensifying infinitive that gives prominence to the verbal idea, which is then qualified by the coordinate adverbial construction, is apposite in each context.

35.3.3 Other Nominal Uses

a

The infinitive absolute is only rarely used in grammatical roles other than the complements. In a nominative frame, it is found as subject of a verbal clause (## 1–2) or subject (## 3–4) or predicate (# 5; cf. **וַיִּזְרֹם** in # 13) of a verbless clause.⁴³ An infinitive can be the object of a preposition (## 6–7) or the genitive in a construct phrase (## 8–10).⁴⁴

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | וְגַם־הַרְבֵּה נָפַל מִן־הָעָם | Many of the people fell.
2 Sam 1:4 |
| 2. | וּמִה־יּוֹכִיחַ הוֹכַח מִכֶּם: | What does reproving from you reprove?
Job 6:25 |
| 3. | אֲכַל רֹבֶשׂ הַרְבּוֹת לֹא־טוֹב | To eat too much honey is not good.
Prov 25:27 |
| 4. | כִּי חַטֹּאת־קָסָם מְרִי וְאָוֶן
וּתְרָפִים הַפְּצָר | For rebellion is (like) the sin of divination
and arrogance (like) the evil of idolatry.
1 Sam 15:23 |
| 5. | וְעִבְדַּת הַצְדָּקָה הַשְׁקֵט
וּבִטָּח | The work of righteousness is quiet and
security.
Isa 32:17 |
| 6. | וְהַכִּיתָ אֶת־אַרְם בְּאַפֶּךָ
עַד־כִּלְהָ: | You will completely (lit., unto
completion) destroy the Arameans at
Aphek. ⁴⁵
2 Kgs 13:17 |
| 7. | וְאַחֲרֵי שָׁתָה | and after drinking
1 Sam 1:9 |
| 8. | בַּמַּטְאֵטָא הַשְׁמֹד | with the broom of destruction
Isa 14:23 |
| 9. | לְקַחַת מוֹסֵר הַשִּׁכָּל | to acquire the discipline of being
prudent
Prov 1:3 |
| 10. | מִדֶּרֶךְ הַשִּׁכָּל | from the path of understanding
Prov 21:16 |

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b

An infinitive absolute can be used in a variety of accusative roles: direct object (## 11–13), adverbial accusative of state (# 14) or specification (# 15), and in a double accusative construction (# 16). Such adverbial accusative uses differ from those discussed above (35.3.2) in that there the infinitive describes the attendant circumstances of the verb.

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|
| 11. | לְמַדּוֹ הַיָּטֵב | Learn to do good.
Isa 1:17 |
| 12. | נָתַן לָהֶם הָאֱלֹהִים מוֹדָע | God gave them knowledge and
understanding. |

וְהִשְׁכֵּל

13. הֲלוֹא זֶה צוֹם אֲבָחֶרְהוּ
פֶתַח חֲלָרְצָבוֹת רָשָׁע
[Dan 1:17](#) Is this not the (kind of) fasting I have
chosen: to loose the chains of
injustice ...
[Isa 58:6](#)
14. וְמִה־יִּהְיֶה דֹרֶשׁ מִמֶּנִּי ...
וְהִצַּנֵּעַ לָכֶת
What does YHWH require of you? ... to
walk prudently ...
[Mic 6:8](#)
15. וְעֹנֵתֵינוּ יִדְעֻנוּם:
פֶּשַׁע וְכַחַשׁ
And as for our iniquities, we know them:
rebellion and treachery ...
[Isa 59:12–13](#)
16. סָחִי וּמָאוֹס תְּשִׁימֵנִי
You made us scum and refuse.
[Lam 3:45](#)

35.4 Adverbial Uses

a

Some infinitives absolute (mostly *Hiphils*) have become adverbs; these are similar to adverbial complements such as הֵיטֵב (35.3.2), differing in that they can occur with a variety of verb types. Such infinitives include הֵיטֵב 'well, thoroughly' (## 1–2), הרבה 'much' (often with מְאֹד; # 3),⁴⁶ הֶרְחַק 'at a distance' (# 4), הַשְׁכֵּם 'early' (# 5),⁴⁷ and מְהֵרָה 'quickly' (# 6). An adverbial infinitive can modify an adverbial-complement infinitive (# 2)

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1. וְשָׁאַלְתָּ הֵיטֵב
You shall investigate thoroughly.
[Deut 13:15](#)
2. וְאַכַּת אֹתוֹ טָחֹן הֵיטֵב
Then I crushed it, grinding it thoroughly.
[Deut 9:21](#)
3. וְאַשְׁגָּה הֶרְבֵּה מְאֹד:
I have erred greatly.
[1 Sam 26:21](#)
4. קָמֹו נִדְ-אַחַד הֶרְחַק מְאֹד
It piled up in a heap a great distance
away.
[Josh 3:16](#)
5. מְבָרֵךְ רָעָהוּ בְקוֹל גָּדוֹל
בְּבֹקֶר הַשָּׁכִים
(A man) loudly blessing his neighbor
when he rises early in the morning ...
[Prov 27:14](#)
6. סָרוּ מִהֵר מִן-הַדֶּרֶךְ
They have turned aside quickly from the
road.
[Exod 32:8](#)

35.5 Verbal Uses

a

The infinitive absolute can be used to "stand for" a variety of other verb forms; such replacement use is a function of the non-finite character of the form.⁴⁸ It can "replace" command forms, finite verbs, participles, or infinitives construct.

35.5.1 As a Command Form

a

The infinitive absolute used as a word of command or as an interjection is asyndetic and begins its clause. The use of the form as a volitional is extremely old, to judge from comparable usages in other Semitic languages.⁴⁹ In later Hebrew it disappeared, as shown by its absence in the Chronicler (in contrast to the Deuteronomist) and from the Samaritan Pentateuch.⁵⁰ In this use it predominantly expresses divine and/or prophetic commands: legislative commands (## 1–2), divine commands (## 3–6), or legislative jussive (# 7).⁵¹

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1. וַאֲצֹוֹה אֶת־שְׁפִטֵיכֶם בְּעֵת
הֵהִיָּא לֵאמֹר שְׁמוּעַ
בֵּין־אֲחֵיכֶם וּשְׁפִטָתֶם צָדִק
And I commanded your šopetim at that
time, "Hear the disputes between your
kinfolk and judge fairly."
[Deut 1:16](#)
2. זְכוֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת
Remember the Sabbath day.⁵²
[Exod 20:8](#)
3. נָשֹׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי קָהָת
Take a census of the Kohathites.
[Num 4:2](#)
4. הֵלֹךְ וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֶל־דָּוִד
Go and say to David ...⁵³
[2 Sam 24:12](#)
5. עֲשֵׂה הַנַּחַל הַזֶּה גְּבִים
גְּבִים:
Make this valley full of ditches.
[2 Kgs 3:16](#)
6. הִילִילִי שַׁעַר זַעֲקֵי־עִיר
נִמּוּג פִּלְשֶׁת כָּל־ךְ
Wail, O Gate! Howl, O City! Melt away,
all you Philistines.
[Isa 14:31](#)
7. הַמּוֹל לוֹ כָּל־זָכָר
Let every male of his be circumcised.
[Exod 12:48](#)

35.5.2 As a Finite Verb

a

The role of the infinitive absolute as a finite verb varies, depending on the use of *waw*.⁵⁴ Without the conjunction the infinitive has no formal or clear conceptual connection with the preceding statement. It can be used for the cohortative (## 1–2), jussive (# 3), perfective (# 4), and non-perfective (# 5), and in proverbial sayings (## 6–8, cf. ## 2–3). All the narrative examples cited here (## 1, 4–5) occur in direct speech.

1. וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל ...
הִתְחַפֵּשׂ וּבֹשׂ וּבֹא בַמִּלְחָמָה
And the king of Israel said ... , "I will
disguise myself and enter into the battle."
[1 Kgs 22:30](#) = [2 Chr 18:29](#)
2. אֲכֹל וְשָׂתוּ כִּי מָחָר נָמוּת:
Let us eat and drink because tomorrow
we die.
[Isa 22:13](#)
3. פָּגוּשׁ דֵּב שִׁכּוּל בְּאִישׁ
Let a bear robbed of its whelps meet a
man.
[Prov 17:12](#)

4. וַיֹּאמֶר מִהֲחֵל הַתְּרוּמָה
לָבִיא בֵּית־יְהוָה אָכֹל
וְשָׂבוּעַ
And he said, "Since the contributions
began to come(?) into YHWH's house,
we have eaten and been satisfied."
[2 Chr 31:10](#)
5. כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֲכַל
וְהוֹתֵר:
This is what YHWH says, "They will eat
and have some left over."
[2 Kgs 4:43](#)
6. הָרָה עֲמַל וְיָלַד אָוֶן
They conceive trouble and give birth to
wickedness.
[Job 15:35](#)
7. הַפֶּר מַחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּאֵין סוֹד
Plans fail for lack of counsel.
[Prov 15:22](#)
8. פָּקוּחַ אָזְנוֹיִם וְלֹא יִשְׁמָע:
He opens his ears but hears nothing.
[Isa 42:20](#)

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Sometimes such infinitives seem to function as interjections, that is, as bare roots in hurried and animated speech exclaiming a point. The infinitive absolute without *waw* may serve in place of a finite verb in making emphatic expressions and indignant questions (## 9–11).⁵⁵ When the infinitive absolute is used as an interjection the reader must supply the appropriate person and aspect on the basis of semantic pertinence. The distinction between the use of the infinitive as interjection or as an adverbial is somewhat blurred and subjective. For example, in # 11, the infinitives could be rendered as below (or as 'You rely ... You conceive ... '), or they could be interpreted as qualifying adverbials and rendered, 'No one calls for justice ... , relying on empty argument and speaking lies, conceiving trouble and giving birth to evil!'

9. הִנָּנֹב רָצַח וְנָאֵף ... וְהִלָּךְ
אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים
Will you steal, murder, and commit
adultery ... and follow after other gods?
[Jer 7:9](#)
10. פָּנָה אֶל-הַרְבֵּה וְהָנָה
לְמַעַט
You expected much, but see, it turned
out to be little.
[Hag 1:9](#)
11. אֵין-קָרָא בְצֶדֶק וְאֵין נִשְׁפָּט
בְּאִמּוּנָה בְטוֹחַ עַל-תְּהוֹ
וְדִבֶּר-שׁוֹא הָרוּ עֲמַל
וְהוֹלִיד אָוֶן:
No one calls for justice, no one pleads
his case with integrity. They rely on
empty argument and speak lies! They
conceive trouble and give birth to evil!
[Isa 59:4](#)

b

According to A. Rubinstein the infinitive absolute with the conjunction at the beginning of its clause continues a preceding finite verb in about forty-five passages.⁵⁶ This usage belongs to a later stage of the language, to judge from the relatively greater frequency of this construction in Jeremiah (ten times), Zechariah (three times), Esther (nine times), and Nehemiah (four times) and from the rarity of this construction in the Pentateuch (twice) and in the earlier prophets.

c

The purpose served by this construction can just as well be served by other constructions;⁵⁷ its use has been explained as an expression of a desire for stylistic variation, but this explanation does not account for its

predominance in late Biblical Hebrew. Rubinstein suggests that it is the result of the disappearance of *waw*-consecutive forms in late Hebrew: "It is at least significant that in the preponderant majority of our instances the inf. abs. occurs precisely at the point where one would expect a transition to the appropriate consecutive form of the verb."⁵⁸ His further thesis that the substitution belongs not to the original text but to the work of scribes and copyists lacks convincing evidence.⁵⁹

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d

This use of the infinitive absolute, bound with *waw* and functioning in place of a finite verb, closely approximates its use as an adverbial complement, for in both constructions the infinitive qualifies a leading verb. The constructions are distinguished by the presence or absence of a conjunctive *waw*. Without *waw* the infinitive is adverbial, qualifying the same situation as the verb; with *waw* the infinitive is used as a finite verb and represents a situation subordinate to the leading verb. In [Jer 22:19](#) (35.3.2 # 4), for example, the adverbial infinitives [וְהִשָּׁל](#) 'dragged off and thrown away,' though coordinate with one another, are not coordinated with the verb and thus directly qualify the situation [וְיִקָּבֵר](#) 'will be buried.' In the present construction the infinitive is coordinated with the main verb and represents a situation distinct from though subordinate to it; the infinitive absolute with *waw* introduces a separate situation from that represented by the finite verb, though that verb specifies the person and aspect of the infinitive.⁶⁰ The infinitive can be found in sequence with a perfective form (## 12–13), a non-perfective form (## 14–15), a jussive (# 16), a *w«qtl* form (# 17), a *wayyqtl* form (# 18), a participle (35.5.3), or an infinitive construct (35.5.4).

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- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 12. | הִנֵּגְלָהּ נִגְלִיתִי אֶל-בֵּית
אָבִיךָ ... וּבָחַר אֹתוֹ | Did I reveal myself to your father's
house ... and choose it ...

1 Sam 2:27–28 |
| 13. | כִּי-צָמְתָם וְסָפְדוּ | when you fasted and mourned

Zech 7:5 |
| 14. | וְכִי-תִמְכְּרוּ ... אוֹ קָנָה | If you sell ... or buy ...

Lev 25:14 |
| 15. | אִישׁ כִּי-יִדָּר נָדָר ...
אוֹ-הִשָּׁבַע שְׁבָעָה | When someone makes a vow ... or
takes an oath ...

Num 30:3 |
| 16. | וּבִקְשׁוּ ... וַיִּפְקֹד הַמֶּלֶךְ | Let a search be made ... and let the king
appoint ...

Esth 2:2–3 |
| 17. | וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי ... וְסָפְדוּ ...
וְהָמָר | They will look on me ... and mourn ...
and grieve ...

Zech 12:10 |
| 18. | וַיֵּרָא פַרְעֹה כִּי ... וְהִכְבִּיד
אֶת-לִבּוֹ | Pharaoh saw that ... and he hardened
his heart.

Exod 8:1–1 |

35.5.3 As a Participle

a

The infinitive absolute may stand as a participle, although this use is difficult to distinguish from an adverbial-accusative use. The distinctive cases involve either a verbless clause (# 1) or a mixture of infinitives and

participles together (## 2–3).

1. וְהַחַיּוֹת רָצוּא וּשׁוּבִים And the living creatures were running and returning.
[Ezek 1:14](#)
2. כָּתַב אֲשֶׁר־נִכְתָּב בְּשֵׁם־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִחְתָּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ the writing which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring
[Esth 8:8](#)
3. הַבָּנִים מְלַקְטִים עֵצִים וְהָאֲבוֹת מְבַעְרִים אֶת־הָאֵשׁ וְהַנָּשִׁים לְשׁוֹת בָּצֶק ... וְהִסִּיד נִסְכִּים The children are gathering wood and the fathers are lighting the fire and the women knead the dough ... and they pour out offerings.
[Jer 7:18](#)

35.5.4 As an Infinitive Construct

a

The precise nuance of the infinitive absolute when it is used in lieu of an infinitive construct depends in part on the presence or absence of *waw*. When not bound with the conjunction the infinitive absolute may show the infinitive construct's use as a verbal complement (# 1),⁶¹ while bound with *waw* it has the same use as a preceding infinitive construct (## 2–3).

1. וְלֹא־אָבוּ בְּדַרְכֵּי הַלֹּךְ They were not willing to walk in his ways.
[Isa 42:24](#)
2. וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל וּשְׁתּוֹ And the people sat down to eat and drink.
[Exod 32:6](#)
3. בַּתְּתָּךְ לוֹלֶחֶם וְחֶרֶב וַשָּׂאוֹל לוֹ בְּאֱלֹהִים when you gave him food and a sword and inquired of God for him⁶²
[1 Sam 22:13](#)

b

In addition to אָבָה (# 1), the unbound infinitive absolute may function as a verbal complement with חָפֵץ 'to desire' ([Job 13:3](#)), אָהַב 'to love' ([Prov 15:12](#)), נָסָה 'to try' ([Deut 28:56](#)), חָדַל 'to stop' ([Isa 1:16](#)).⁶³

Footnotes:

1. See in general J. M. Solá-Solé, *L'Infinitif sémitique* (Paris: Champion, 1961). The term "verbal noun" is properly restricted to the infinitives or, better, the infinitive construct; in Arabic the form corresponding to the infinitive construct is called the verbal noun, the Arabic term being *maṣdar* 'source.' In Hebrew, the infinitive absolute can be defined as a nominal with no inflectional properties; the infinitive construct as a nominal that can occur with a genitive noun or a pronominal suffix.

2. Notably Phoenician and Ammonite; see Z. S. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1936) 41; K. P. Jackson, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983) 10; and n. 9. The infinitive absolute is rare in Qumranic Hebrew and largely absent from Mishnaic Hebrew; see R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 44; E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 47–48; and, allowing for greater frequency of the form at Qumran, J. Carmignac, "L'Infinitif absolu chez Ben Sira et à

Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* 12 (1986) 251–61.

3. G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 56.

4. Thus we have the alternative terms "(usual) infinitive" (for infinitive construct) and "fixed infinitive" (for infinitive absolute) used by BL §36b/p. 277.

5. C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1913), 1. 399, 345–46.

6. Note the Latin and Greek vocalizations of infinitive forms given by A. Sperber, *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1966) 184–85, 190.

7. E. Hammershaimb, "On the So-called Infinitivus Absolutus in Hebrew," *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver*, ed. D. W. Thomas and W. D. McHardy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963) 85–94, at 86.

8. There are about 500 cases of the intensifying infinitive (35.3.1) and about 300 others, according to Burton L. Goddard, *The Origin of the Hebrew Infinitive Absolute in the Light of the Infinitive Uses in the Related Languages and Its Use in the Old Testament* (Harvard Dissertation, 1943) v, cf. 125–42.

9. See J. Huesman, "Finite Uses of the Infinitive Absolute," *Biblica* 37 (1956) 271–95, at 281–83; Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, 1. 168.

10. The *Qal* infinitives absolute and construct occasionally merge in form, yielding, e.g., inf. abs. qōb, [Num 23:25](#) (inf. cstr. lāqōb, [Num 23:11](#)); inf. abs. (rōb, the usual form for medial-waw verbs but also) rīb, [Jer 50:34](#) (inf. cstr. rīb, [Isa 3:13](#)).

11. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, 1. 346.

12. For nqy *Niphal* finite form + *Niphal* infinitive absolute, see [Jer 25:29](#).

13. The use of the *Qal* infinitive absolute with a finite form of a different stem suggests to Bergsträsser that the infinitives absolute of the other stems derive from a later stage in the language; see GB 2. 64 (§ 12f).

14. Hammershaimb, "*Infinitivus Absolutus*," 86.

15. The distinction between an independent adverb (cf. 39.3) and an "ad-verbial" use is most nearly obscured with the infinitive.

16. Bergsträsser cites some instances where the influence of the infinitive absolute on the meaning of the sentence can perhaps no longer be perceived (GB 2.63 [012f]). While it is true that the nuance of the form is sometimes slight (and difficult to translate, but that is another matter), the instances cited by him can be understood along the lines sketched out here.

17. Thus, e.g., 40 of the 51 infinitives absolute in Genesis are absolute complements, according to S. J. P. K. Rieken, "The Struct [sic] Patterns of the Paronomastic and Co-ordinated Infinitives Absolute in Genesis," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 7 (1979) 69–83, at 69. This use is virtually unknown in late Biblical Hebrew; see, e.g., Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 43.

18. *LHS* 117–18.

19. *UT* §9.27.

20. R. Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972), 3. 63, 75; contrast the approach of Hammershaimb, "*Infinitivus Absolutus*," 89.

21. The cases in which the stems differ are noted below (cf. 35.2.1c-e). For further examples as well as the latter term, see GKC §113m / p. 342, §117q-r / p. 367. T. Muraoka usefully insists that it is misleading to call the infinitive absolute as such emphatic; it is the doubling up in the paronomastic construction that is emphatic; see *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1985) 86, 92.

22. Goddard reckons with 81 cases of the intensifying infinitive with the perfective; see *Hebrew Infinitive Absolute*, 31.

23. Jenni remarks, "The determination consists in a strengthening of the modus of the expression (not of the root's meaning as such) and can only be decided upon from context"; *LHS* 117; contrast Joüon § 123j / p. 351 and Riekert, "Infinitives Absolute in Genesis," 71.

24. Riekert, "Infinitives Absolute in Genesis," 77.

25. Joüon § 123d / pp. 348–49. As he notes, the *Hithpael* infinitive is always postpositive. The intensifying infinitive precedes the finite verb in Amarna Canaanite, Ugaritic (with one exception), and Old Aramaic. Such

infinitives following the verb are found notably in the Mari texts, with the verb *raṭāpu ito* continue (doing something)' (perhaps under Amorite—rather than Canaanite, pace Hammershaimb—influence); see Hammershaimb, "Infinitivus Absolutus," 87–88. Goddard, *Hebrew Infinitive Absolute*, 125–42, takes a similar view; further, he counts in his class of single uses of the intensifying infinitive absolute (468 cases), only about 30 in which the infinitive follows the verb or participle it refers to. Muraoka, too, is dubious (*Emphatic Words*, 89); he notes also that the prepositive infinitive + verb syntagm can only be interrupted by a negative (§§ 5, 10, 36), while the reverse allows for other insertions (see §§ 13–15, 34).

26. Contrast, e.g., GKC § 113 / pp. 339–47, and Joüon § 123 / pp. 347–58 and cf. A. Reider, *Die Verbindung des Infinitivus Absolutus mit dem Verbum Finitum des selbes Stammes im Hebräischen* (Leipzig: Metzger und Wittig, 1872).

27. Riekert, "Infinitives Absolute in Genesis," 76.

28. Note also [1 Sam 6:3](#).

29. Cf, too, [Ps 126:6](#).

30. The particle *gm* is also used in # 13.

31. The sense of 'ākōl tō'kēl ([Gen 2:16](#)) may be 'You may eat.' Cf. 31.4d.

32. Contrast yādōa' tēda'kī, 'It is absolutely necessary that you know that ...' ([Gen 15:13](#)).

33. Other alleged prepositive cases include [Gen 43:3](#), [1 Sam 20:6](#) (s)l), [Joel 1:7](#), [Prov 27:23](#).

34. There are about thirty cases involved; see Goddard, *Hebrew Infinitive Absolute*, 41. More than a third of these, especially with *haškēm*, occur in Jeremiah; see S. J. P. K. Riekert, "The Co-ordinated Structs [sic] of the Infinitive Absolute in Jeremiah and Their Bearing on the Stylistics and Authenticity of the Jeremianic Corpus," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 13 (1987) 98–106.

35. BL § 36e' / p. 277; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976) 38; F. R. Blake, *A Resurvey of Hebrew Tenses* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1951) 23.

36. GKC § 113s / p. 343; Ewald as cited by Riekert, "Infinitives Absolute in Genesis," 81; C. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 82

37. Joüon § 123m / p. 352; cf. Goddard, *Hebrew Infinitive Absolute*, 27–28.

38. Following the formulation of Riekert, "Infinitives Absolute in Genesis," 81.

39. There are a few related minor patterns: (a) two infinitives with a verbless clause ([2 Kgs 2:11](#)); with a finite verb (b) an infinitive absolute followed by a verbal adjective ([Gen 26:13](#)) and (c) an infinitive absolute followed by a participle ([2 Sam 18:25](#)).

40. Note that the adjacent line b'ybw'brnh also begins with an infinitive absolute.

41. Cf. [Jer 35:15](#). See Riekert, "Jeremiah," 98.

42. See again Joüon § 123m / p. 352.

43. There are about eight nominative cases all told, and the predicate nominative case here is unique, according to Goddard, *Hebrew Infinitive Absolute*, 50, 71–72.

44. The infinitive is called absolute because it cannot be the construct term in a construct phrase (see, e.g., GB 2. 61 [§ 12a*]); but cf. Joüon § 49a n. 1 / p. 110.

45. The phrase 'ad-kallēh is also used in [2 Kgs 13:19](#) and [Ezra 9:14](#) and may be a frozen phrase.

46. Goddard, *Hebrew Infinitive Absolute*, 50, 67, proposes to distinguish from the adverbial uses a set of adjectival uses of *hrbh*, e.g., [2 Sam 12:2](#), [Neh 4:13](#), [2 Chr 25:9](#).

47. Note also the pair *haškēm weha'ārēb* in [1 Sam 17:16](#).

48. This point is stressed by Amikam Gai, "The Reduction of the Tense (and Other Categories) of the Consequent Verb in North-west Semitic," *Orientalia* 51 (1982) 254–56; but Gai exaggerates the unmarked character of the infinitive absolute and does not account for the relative rarity of its use for a finite verb; he cites some interesting Indo-European parallels from Paul Kiparsky, "Tense and Mood in Indo-European Syntax," *Foundations of Language* 4 (1968) 30–55.

49. See Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, 1. 345; Huesman, "Infinitive Absolute," 281; W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1896), 1. 62.

50. See Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 43; A. Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik verglichen mit der seiner*

Quellen (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaften 16; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1909) 23; B. K. Waltke, "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament." *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Payne (Waco, Texas: Word, 1970) 212–39, at 215–16.

51. J. D. W. Watts argues that the infinitive absolute serves "as an imperative" only if there is an adjacent imperative; he thus denies that sense to [Exod 20:8](#); see "Infinitive Absolute as Imperative and the Interpretation of [Exodus 20:8](#)," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1962) 141–47.

52. The MT of [Deut 5:12](#) has šāmôr ʾt-ywm hšbt and the Samaritan Pentateuch of [Exod 20:8](#) has šmwr. It may be that it is "in legal texts of rather general, not immediate application" that this usage is found—so alleges Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 85. The further suggestion that there are distinct grammatical structures for positive and negative commands is less clear, though his proposed scheme works in some texts, notably the second Decalogue: positive commands have the infinitive absolute ([Deut 5:12](#), [16](#)) and negative commands have the non-perfective with lōʾ ([Deut 5:17–21](#)).

53. The parallel text in [1 Chr 21:10](#) has lēk wəḏibbartā.

54. This use, too, is rare in later texts; see Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 44–45.

55. Cf. also [Isa 5:5](#), [Ps 17:5](#), [Job 40:2](#). On the origin of this usage, see Goddard, *Hebrew Infinitive Absolute*, 87.

56. A. Rubinstein, "A Finite Verb Continued by an Infinitive Absolute in Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 2 (1952) 362–67; cf. Hammershaimb, "*Infinitivus Absolutus*," 90; cf. also Sperber, *Historical Grammar*, 73–75; Huesman, "Infinitive Absolute."

57. Note the variety attested in these cases: həkḇēd in [Exod 8:11](#) MT and wykḇd in [Exod 8:11](#) Sam; wenātōn in [Isa 37:19](#) and wenatenū in [2 Kgs 19:18](#); wehassēk in [Jer 19:13](#) and wehissikū in [Jer 32:29](#); šāḇfī werāʾōh in [Qoh 9:11](#) and wešāḇfī ʾānī wēʾereh in [Qoh 4:1](#), [7](#). Further, Qumran biblical manuscripts often shift infinitive absolute forms to finite forms; see, e.g., Rubinstein, "Finite Verb," 365–67; Hammershaimb, "*Infinitivus Absolutus*," 91.

58. Rubinstein, "Finite Verb," 365.

59. So also, for example, Hammershaimb, "*Infinitivus Absolutus*," 91.

60. But cf. # 16. There is a systematic exception to this pattern: in a few passages a pronoun follows the infinitive absolute and qualifies it, e.g., wəšāḇbeaḥ ʾānī praised' ([Qoh 4:2](#)), wənahāpōk hū' 'it has been charged' ([Esth 9:1](#), cf. [3:13](#); [Exod 36:7](#); [1 Chr 5:20](#); [Esth 2:3](#)). This is called the qatālī anāku construction and is most common in the first person; it is found in Hebrew, Phoenician, and Amarna Canaanite. See W. L. Moran, "'Does Amarna Bear on Karatepe?'—An Answer," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 6 (1952) 76–80; Moran, "The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. E. Wright (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961; reprinted, Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1979) 5472, at 61–62. Despite the clear examples in prose, this construction has been controversial; see G. R. Driver, "Some Uses of qtl in the Semitic Languages," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Semitic Studies Held in Jerusalem, 19–23 July 1965* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1969) 49–64 (all Hebrew examples are "really" perfectives); Hammershaimb, "*Infinitivus Absolutus*," 91–93; David Marcus, "Studies in Ugaritic Grammar 1," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 1/2 (1968) 55–61; Samuel Loewenstamm, "Remarks upon the Infinitive Absolute in Ugaritic and Phoenician," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 2 (1969) 53. On occurrences of the infinitive absolute used as a finite verb in verse, see Moran, "Hebrew Language," 62; M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 170, 181, 210, 227, 289. The unusual construction šās (perfective) ʾānōkī, [Ps 119:162](#), is distinct, as Philip C. Schmitz observes to us, since the infinitive absolute would be šās (cf. the form used in [Isa 61:10](#)).

61. Compare the adverbial complement use treated in 35.3.2.

62. Cf. [1 Sam 25:26](#).

63. Perhaps also ykl in [Isa 57:20](#) = [Jer 49:23](#); ydʿ in [Isa 7:15](#), [16](#).

36 Infinitive Construct

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36.1 Form and Meaning

36.1.1 Form

a

The ordinary Hebrew infinitive, called the infinitive construct,¹ is a verbal noun used in the ways that English uses its infinitive ('to go') and its gerund ('going'). It is typically presented as the "real" infinitive of Biblical Hebrew, in contradistinction to the infinitive absolute (35.1). Like the infinitive absolute, but to an even greater degree, it is not unbounded, despite the etymology of "infinitive" (Latin 'non-limited'). Rather, it can be suffixed, used as the first term of a construct phrase, and governed by a preposition.

b

The infinitive construct is not consistently morphologically distinct from the imperative (in some stems) or the infinitive absolute (in the so-called derived stems). Thus, for example, the form *hitqattel* serves as both infinitives and the imperative of the *Hithpael* stem. In the *Hiphil* the infinitive construct generally has an *ī*, written plene (הִקְטִיל), while the absolute usually has an *ē*- and is written defectively (הִקְטַל). In some cases a form with an *ē* and plene spelling is used in both roles (הִשְׁכִּיל in [Job 34:35](#), infinitive construct; in [Jer 3:15](#), infinitive absolute). A form with *ē* written defectively is found as an infinitive construct (e.g., [Deut 32:8](#), [Jer 44:19](#)). Such homophonous forms must be distinguished on the basis of semantic pertinence and syntax.

c

The infinitive construct of the *Qal* is morphologically more complex than that of other stems; a number of base forms are used. These may be derived from an earlier **qutul* form,² though **qtul* has also been proposed by scholars.³ There are a number of Hebrew variants of the infinitive. One group of variants is essentially graphic: קָטַל is free-standing (and קָטוּל is a rare alternant of that) while קָטַל־ occurs before *maqeph*. Another group involves the base: the base קָטַל is used independently and with consonantal suffixes (־ךָ, -ךָם, -כֶּן), for example, כְּתַבְךָ k«t'ob'k'a, while the base קָטַל־ is used with vocalic suffixes, for example, כְּתַבִּי kotbī (with *shewa* medium).

d

For some roots the independent form reflects a **qtul* base, while suffixed forms show a **qetl/qitl* base, for

example, **בְּשִׁחָטֶם / לְשַׁחֵט, בְּלָעִי / לְבַלֵּעַ, בְּבִגְדֶי / לְבַגֵּד**.⁴ Occasionally, two forms are found for the suffixed infinitive of the same root, for example, **נָפְלָם / נָפְלוּ**.⁵ The feminine forms of the infinitive take the shapes **קָטְלָה, קָטְלָה, קָטְלָת**, for example, **יִרְאָה, דִּבְקָה, לָכֶת**; less frequent forms include those that have, instead of *o* in the first syllable, *a*, *e*, and *u* (e.g., **חִמְלָה, חִמְלָת, אֶהְבֵּה**). All CVCCa infinitives can be identified as independent nouns rather than infinitives, and the dictionaries vary on this point; many of the roots with such infinitives are statives.⁶ The *segholate* infinitives are chiefly from *l-yod* and *l-nun* roots, though these roots may form other infinitives.⁷ Another source of variation involves the prepositions; the forms **בְּכָתַב** and **כְּכָתַב** have *shewa* medium, while the most common combination, **לְכָתַב**, has a silent *shewa*.⁸ Note, too, the contrast of **לֵאמֹר** and **בְּאֹמַר**.

e

Only with the first-person singular and second masculine singular suffixes is there a distinction between the possessive suffix (genitive) and the verbal suffix (accusative).

First-person singular		
Possessive	עַד-בֹּאִי	until I come (2 Kgs 18:32)
Verbal	לְרַמּוֹתַי	to betray me (1 Chr 12:18)
	לְעֻזָּרַי	to help me (1 Chr 12:18)
Second-person masculine singular		
Possessive	זַעֲקוֹךְ	your crying for help (= you cry for help) (Isa 30:19)
Verbal	גִּדְּלֶךָ	to exalt you (Josh 3:7)

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Elsewhere the forms of the possessive suffixes are used, and contextual considerations must decide whether a subjective or objective genitive is intended (see 9.4).⁹

- עַל-רֹדְפוֹפֶלֶלֶהָאֲחִיו** because of his pursuing his brother (< he pursued)
[Amos 1:11](#)
- וַיָּטֵל שֵׁאוֹל אֶת-הַחֲנִית עָלָיו לְהַכּוֹתוֹ** But Saul hurled his spear at him for the smiting of him (i.e., to smite him).
[1 Sam 20:33](#)

Sometimes ambiguity is avoided by using **אֵת** after the infinitive, for example, **לָדַעַת אֵתִי** 'to know me' ([Jer 24:7](#)). Sometimes, for the objective role, a long verbal suffix (-ēhû rather than -ô) is used for the third-person masculine and an energetic verbal suffix for the second-person masculine (-*kka* < -*nka*; cf. 31.7.2).¹⁰

- לְהוֹצִיאָהוּ** to take him out
[Jer 39:14](#)
- לְיִסְרָךָ** to discipline you
[Deut 4:36](#)

36.1.2 Meaning

a

The infinitive construct is a true infinitive, a verb and a noun, and thus a form without necessary restriction as to

agency. As a verbal noun the infinitive may function where a nominal constituent might be expected or as a verbal predicator; it may function in both ways at the same time. It is best construed nominally (36.2) if it is used (1) absolutely, or (2) in the construct state, or (3) with a pronominal suffix without an additional object or prepositional phrase. On the other hand, it is best construed as a verbal predicator (36.3) if it governs an object or prepositional phrase. The infinitive occurs often in the genitive with prepositions, and with the preposition ל an extensive range of uses has developed. Rarely it seems to take the place of a finite verb, notably after ל.

36.2 Nominal Uses

36.2.1 Syntactic Features

a

The basic syntactic features of nouns are relevant to the infinitive construct when it is positioned as a noun, as it usually is, and so are some verbal features, such as negation.¹¹ We begin with the nominal categories of case frame and definiteness.

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b

The infinitive construct can represent every nominal part of a clause. In a nominative frame, it is usually found in a verbless clause, as subject (## 1–4)¹² or predicate (# 5). The predicate is masculine even if the infinitive subject has a feminine form (## 1–2). It is appropriate to translate an infinitive construct with an English gerund in rare cases, such as these.

1. לֹא־טוֹב הַיּוֹת הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ
The being of the man alone is not good
(i.e., It is not good for hā'ādām to be alone).
[Gen 2:18](#)
2. רַב־לָכֶם שָׁבַת בְּהָר הַזֶּה:
Too much for you (is the) staying at this mountain (i.e., You have stayed at this mountain too long).
[Deut 1:6](#)
3. וְלָנוּ הַסְגִּירוֹ בְּיַד הַמֶּלֶךְ:
To us will be the turning him over into the king's hand (i.e., It will be our responsibility to hand him over to the king).
[1 Sam 23:20](#)
4. מִה־טוֹב לָכֶם הַמִּשָּׁל בְּכֶם שְׁבַעִים אִישׁ
What is good for you—that (the) ruling over you be seventy men (i.e., that seventy men rule over you) ...
[Judg 9:2](#)
5. וְזֶה הַחֵלֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת
And this is the beginning of them to do (i.e., And this is what they have begun to do).
[Gen 11:6](#)

c

The infinitive occurs as a genitive after a preposition or a noun in the construct state; we consider its use with prepositions separately (36.2.2). After a noun in the construct state (## 6–9) it is also often best translated not by a gerund but by some other construction. In ## 8–9 the infinitives govern direct objects.

6. בֶּן הַכּוֹת הָרָשָׁע
a son of being smitten is the guilty man
(i.e., the guilty man deserves to be smitten)
[Deut 25:2](#)
a woman of childbearing (i.e., a woman

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|--|
| 7. | אִשָּׁת לִדָּה | in labor)
Jer 13:21 |
| 8. | עֵת הָאֲסֹף הַמִּקְנֶה | time for the gathering of the cattle (i.e.,
time for the cattle to be gathered)
Gen 29:7 |
| 9. | יוֹם הֵלָדָת אֶת־פַּרְעֹה | the day of the being born the Pharaoh
(i.e., on Pharaoh's birthday)
Gen 40:20 |

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d

In an accusative frame, infinitives construct are common as objects or as adverbial accusatives. The infinitive may occur as a goal word with a verb; this construction is customarily called a verbal complement because the infinitive is an obligatory constituent to "complete" the situation of the verb (## 10–12).

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------|--|
| 10. | לֹא־תִסָּף תִּת־כֹּחָהּ לָךְ | It will not add giving of its strength to
you (i.e., will no longer give its strength).
Gen 4:12 |
| 11. | לֹא נוֹכַל דַּבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ | We are unable to speak to you.
Gen 24:50 |
| 12. | אֶחָל תִּת פַּחַדְךָ | I will begin to put terror of you ...
Deut 2:25 |

Other verbs that govern verbal complements include אָבָה 'to be willing' ([Deut 2:30](#), [10:10](#)), בִּקֵּשׁ *Piel* 'to seek' ([Exod 4:24](#)), יָדַע "to know (how)" ([1 Kgs 3:7](#)), מָאן 'to refuse' ([Num 20:21](#)), נָתַן 'to allow, cause' ([Num 20:21](#)).¹³ When the infinitive construct occurs with verbs which have a distinctly adverbial force (denoting place, time, manner, etc.),¹⁴ it is best construed as an adverbial accusative (## 13–15); the construction is usually to be translated by rendering the infinitive as a finite verb and the finite verb or participle by an adverb.¹⁵

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| 13. | עָתָה הִסְפַּלְתָּ עֲשׂוֹ: | Now you have played a fool with
respect to doing (it) (i.e., you have done
foolishly).
Gen 31:28 |
| 14. | מִדּוּעַ מִהֲרָתָן בֹּא הַיּוֹם: | Why did you hasten with respect to
coming today (i.e., why did you come so
quickly today)?
Exod 2:1–8 |
| 15. | וַיִּמָּטֵב נִגְן | one who does well with respect to
playing (i.e., one who plays well)
Ezek 33:32 |

e

As a substantive the infinitive construct may be definite, occurring not only with suffixes but also with the article, כָּל (notably in late Biblical Hebrew), etc.

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--|
| 16. | כָּל־כְּלֵי הַשָּׁרֵת | all the articles (used) for (the)
ministering ¹⁶
Num 4:12 |
| 17. | כָּל־הַתְּנִדָּב: | all (of) the freewill offering(s)
Ezra 1:6 |
| 18. | עֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע: | the tree of the knowing of good and evil
Gen 2:9 |

f

The substantival quality of the infinitive construct varies. Some infinitives function entirely as substantives: דַּעַת 'knowledge,' שְׂחֹק 'laughter,' הַתִּיחֵשׁ 'enrollment.'¹⁷ Other infinitives, closer to their origins in the verbal system, are used as unmarked forms in striking ways. Active infinitives may have a passive sense (## 19–20), and the personal reference of some forms may be surprising (## 21–22).

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 19. | וַיְהִי הַשַּׁעַר לִסְגּוֹר | The gate was about to be shut.
Josh 2:5 |
| 20. | נִמְכַּרְנוּ ... לְהַשְׁמִיד | For we have been sold ... to be destroyed.
Esth 7:4 |
| 21. | לֹא-יַעֲשֶׂה כֵן בְּמִקְוֵמֵנוּ
לָתֵת | It is not done in our land to give (i.e., that we give) ...
Gen 29:26 |
| 22. | הִרְאֵתְךָ אֶת-כֹּחִי | to show you (i.e., that I might show you) my strength
Exod 9:16 |

g

The negative with the infinitive construct is mostly לֹא בְּלִי (rarely בְּלִי), a nominal form with the archaic genitive ending ִ (# 23).¹⁸ בְּלֹא is used, essentially with the meaning 'without' (# 24). In late Hebrew one finds וְלֹא,¹⁹ אֵין,²⁰ and אֵין.²¹

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 23. | אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לְבָלִי
אֲכָל-מִמֶּנּוּ | of which I have commanded you not to eat
Gen 3:11 |
| 24. | בְּלֹא רְעוּת | without seeing (him)
Num 35:23 |

36.2.2 With Prepositions

a

"The most important use of the infinitive construct," as Ernst Jenni notes, "is its use after prepositions in place of a subordinate clause (with conjunction and finite verb)." He compares the following examples.²²

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|--|
| 1a. | עַד-בּוֹא אֲדֹנָיו אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ: | until the coming of his lord into his house (i.e., until his lord comes home)
Gen 39:16 |
| 1b. | עַד אֲשֶׁר-אָבֵא אֶל-אֲדֹנִי | until I come to my lord
Gen 33:14 |

These temporal clauses are equivalent in sense, and, since the gerund construction is awkward in English, the first construction is best translated like the second, employing a subordinate clause construction.

b

The preposition used most commonly with infinitives is ל, and for this reason, we discuss it separately (36.2.3). The construction occurs with every preposition, but most frequently with ב and כ, especially with a temporal sense. With the infinitive construct, ב denotes in general the temporal proximity of one event to another, כ more specifically the more immediately preceding time.²³

2. בֶּן־שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה הָיָה דָּוִד כִּשְׁמֹלְכֹו David was thirty years old when he became king.
[2 Sam 5:4](#)
3. וַיְהִי כִשְׁמֹלְכֹו הָפָה אֶת־כָּל־בֵּית יִרְבֹּעַם Right when he (Baasha) became king he killed off the whole house of Jeroboam.
[1 Kgs 15:29](#)
4. כַּאֲשֶׁר־בָּא אֶל־בֶּת־שֶׁבַע: כִּשְׁמֹלְכֹו הָיָה נָתָן הַנָּבִיא when the prophet Nathan came to him right after he had gone into Bathsheba
[Ps 51:2](#)

The most common infinitive clauses are, as noted, temporal, involving ב (## 2, 4, 5), כ (## 3, 6, 7), עַד (## 1a, 8), אַחֵר and עַחֲרֵי (# 9), and מִן (# 10).²⁴ Another group of clauses denotes logical relations, specifying a cause or a goal. Causal clauses are governed by ב (# 11), מִן (# 12), יַעַן (# 13), and עַל (# 14). Final or result clauses are governed by לְמַעַן (# 15). There are two negative clause types, separative in מִן (# 16) and concessive ('although') in עַל (# 17). Thus, ב may be temporal (## 2, 4, 5) or causal (# 11); עַל may be causal (# 14) or concessive (# 17); and מִן may be temporal (# 10), causal (# 12), or separative (# 16);²⁵ the rest of the prepositions have only one major role in infinitive clauses.

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5. וַיְהִי בְהִיּוֹתָם בַּשָּׂדֶה and while they were in the field
[Gen 4:8](#)
6. וַיְהִי כִרְאֹת אֶת־הַחֲנֹם ... וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָאִישׁ When he had seen the ring ... he went out to the man.
[Gen 24:30](#)
7. כִּבּוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ when the sun sets
[Deut 16:6](#)
8. עַד־בֹּאְכֶם עַד־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה: until you reached this place
[Deut 1:31](#)
9. אַחֲרֵי הַכְּתוּאת סִיחֹן after he had defeated Sihon
[Deut 1:4](#)
10. מִהַחֵל חֲרֹמֶשׁ בַּקָּמָה from the time you begin to put sickle to harvest
[Deut 16:9](#)
11. בְּשִׂנְאֵת יְהוָה אֹתָנוּ because YHWH hates us
[Deut 1:27](#)
12. כִּי מֵאַהֲבַת יְהוָה אֹתְכֶם because YHWH loved you
[Deut 7:8](#)

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| 13. | יֵעַן מֵאַסְכֶּם | because you refused
Isa 30:12 |
| 14. | עַל־אִמְרֶךָ | because you say
Jer 2:35 |
| 15. | לְמַעַן תִּתְּנוּ בְיָדְךָ | so as to hand him over to you
Deut 2:30 |
| 16. | מִתֵּת לְאַחֵר מֵהֶם | so that he will not give to one of them
Deut 28:55 |
| 17. | עַל־דַּעְתְּךָ | although you know
Job 10:7 |

36.2.3 With the Preposition ל

a

The combination of / + infinitive construct is common in a variety of uses.²⁶ Some are similar to those of the infinitive without preposition, while others are specialized along the lines of infinitive clauses with ב, כ, and other prepositions. The special role of this combination is indicated by the non-rapine status of the opening of the second syllable, lik_tob_ not lik_t_ob_.

b

The combination can be found in any nominal role in a clause.²⁷ In a nominative frame, it is usually used as a subject, in verbless clauses (## 1–2) or in clauses with הִידֵּה (## 3–4).

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- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | טוֹב לְהַדוֹת לַיהוָה | To praise YHWH is good.
Ps 92:2 |
| 2. | וְאִם רָע בְּעֵינֶיכֶם לַעֲבֹד
אֶת־יְהוָה | If it is evil in your eyes to worship
YHWH ...
Josh 24:1–5 |
| 3. | כִּי מֵאֵת יְהוָה הָיְתָה לְחִזּוֹק
אֶת־לִבָּם | Because from YHWH was the hardening
(of) their heart (i.e., because YHWH
hardened) ...
Josh 11:20 |
| 4. | כִּי לֹא הָיְתָה מִהַמֶּלֶךְ
לְהַמִּית אֶת־אֲבִנֵּר | the killing (of) Abner was not from the
king
2 Sam 3:37 |

Infinitives with / can also serve as verbal complements, supplying a verb to "complete" the main finite verb (## 5–9). Some finite verbs generally govern complements in ל (e.g., יִרָא, # 5), while others can govern infinitives with or without ל (e.g., מֵאֵן, # 6; cf. 36.2.1d). Rarely an infinitive with ל serves as an adverbial after a noun (## 10–11).²⁸

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---|
| 5. | יִרָא לְשָׁבֶת בְּצוּעַר | He was afraid to stay in Zoar.
Gen 19:30 |
| 6. | וַיִּמָּאֵן לְהִתְנַחֵם | He refused to be comforted.
Gen 37:35 |

7. ואם־לא יִחַפֵּץ הָאִישׁ
לְקַחַת אֶת־יְבִמָּתוֹ
If a man does not want to marry his
brother's widow ...
[Deut 25:7](#)
8. יוֹדֵעַ לַעֲשׂוֹת בַּזָּהָב־וּבַכֶּסֶף
one who knows [how] to work in gold
and silver
[2 Chr 2:13](#)
9. הִפְגְּעוּ בַּמֶּלֶךְ לְבַלְתִּי שָׂרֵף
אֶת־הַמְּגִלָּה
They urged the king not to burn the
scroll.
[Jer 36:25](#)
10. גַּם־מָקוֹם לָלֵנוּ:
as well as room to spend the night
[Gen 24:25](#)
11. כִּי הוּא הַנֹּתֵן לָךְ כֹּחַ
לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל
For it is he who gives you the strength
to produce wealth.
[Deut 8:18](#)

c

Infinitive clauses with ל are of various types. Some of these types are analogous to those formed with other prepositions, that is, purpose, result, and temporal clauses. Others reflect the distinctiveness of the / combination, that is, gerundive, modal, and immanent clauses.

d

Purpose, result, and temporal clauses or phrases can be seen as serving the role of verbal complements, though with complements of a type that can also be specified by a subordinate clause with a finite verb. Infinitive purpose or final clauses (# 12a) are similar to purpose clauses with finite verbs (# 12b).²⁹

- 12a. לְשִׁמְעַת אֶת חִכְמַת שְׁלֹמֹה
in order to listen to the wisdom of
Solomon
[1 Kgs 5:14](#)
- 12b. לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ כָּל־עַדְת בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל:
in order that the whole Israelite
community will listen (to him)
[Num 27:20](#)

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The line of demarcation between the purpose infinitive clause and the complementary infinitive is somewhat blurred (# 13). (With verbs of commanding, the infinitive is best taken as an object accusative.)

- 13a. וּלְבֹן הַלֶּךְ לְגִזּוֹ אֶת־צֹאֲנוֹ
Laban went to shear his sheep.
[Gen 31:19](#)
- 13b. וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה לִרְאוֹת
אֶת־הָעִיר
YHWH went down to see the city.
[Gen 11:5](#)

The subject of the infinitive may be subject of the main verb (## 12a, 13a, 14) or a noun not involved in that clause (# 15).

14. וַיֵּצֵא הָאֱמֹרִי ... לְקִרְאָתְךָ
The Amorite came out ... to confront
you.
[Deut 1:44](#)
15. שִׁים־לָךְ שְׁנַיִם דְּרָכִים
So now, mark out two roads for the

לְבוֹא חֶרֶב

sword ... to come.

[Ezek 21:24](#)

Result clauses express a consequence of the main verb ('and so; so that'; ## 16–19).

16. לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
לְהַכְעִיסוֹ: by doing evil in YHWH's eyes and so provoking him
[Deut 9:18](#)
17. וְאֲדֹנִי חָכָם ... לָדַעַת
אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ: My lord is wise ... so that he knows everything in the world.
[2 Sam 14:20](#)
18. לָמָּה אַתֶּם עֹשִׂים רָעָה
גְּדוֹלָה אֶל-נַפְשְׁכֶם ...
לְבַלְתִּי הוֹתִיר לָכֶם
שְׂאֵרִית: Why do you bring great disaster on yourselves ... and so leave yourselves without a remnant?
[Jer 44:7](#)
19. מִדּוּעַ מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ
לְהַכִּירָנִי: Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me?
[Ruth 2:10](#)

Temporal clauses in ל can mark a point in time or an extent in time. Signaling a point is chiefly associated with the verb pny 'to turn,' yielding the expressions בְּקֶר לַפִּנּוֹת 'at the turning of (the) day' (## 20–21) and רַב לַפִּנּוֹת 'at the turning of evening' (## 22). Extent in time can be marked with ל (# 23), and, with עַד, this pattern can also be used with spatial reference (## 24–25).³⁰

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20. וַיָּשֶׁב הַיָּם לַפִּנּוֹת בֹּקֶר
לְאִיתָנוּ: The sea went back to its flow at daybreak.
[Exod 14:27](#)
21. וַתָּבֹא הָאִשָּׁה לַפִּנּוֹת הַבֹּקֶר
וַתִּפֹּל פָּתַח ... עַד-הָאוֹר: The woman came in at daybreak and collapsed at the door ... (remaining there) until (it was) light.
[Judg 19:26](#)
22. וַיֵּצֵא ... בַּשָּׂדֶה לַפִּנּוֹת עָרֶב
וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ עַד לַעֲלוֹת
הַמִּנְחָה: He went out ... to the field at evening time.
[Gen 24:63](#)
23. וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ עַד לַעֲלוֹת
הַמִּנְחָה: They prophesied until (the time of) the offering of the sacrifice.
[1 Kgs 18:29](#)
24. עַד לְבוֹא חֲמַת: up to the entering of Hamath
[Josh 13:5](#)
25. וְלִמְזֻרָה יָשָׁב עַד-לְבוֹא
מִדְבָּרָה: To the east he occupied the land up to the entering of the steppe.
[1 Chr 5:9](#)

Temporal phrases or clauses can complement verbs that denote a period of time drawing near (קָרַב; # 26)³¹ or being completed (כָּלָה; ## 27–28).

26. וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת The time drew near for Israel to die.
[Gen 47:29](#)
27. וּכְכֹלֹת לְהַעֲלוֹת קָרְעוּ Having completed (the time of) sacrifice, they knelt.
[2 Chr 29:29](#)
28. וּכְלָתוּ ... לָלֶת the (time of) delivering being completed
[1 Sam 4:19](#)

e

As a gerundive, explanatory or epexegetical, the construction ל + infinitive often explains the circumstances or nature of a preceding action. In developing the thought of a finite verb it resembles the Latin gerundive (e.g., *faciendo* 'doing'), the English "in [do]ing something." The construction is found frequently in the Qumranic Hebrew;³² there and in Biblical Hebrew³³ it is used in oratorical phrasing. Under this heading may be included the very frequent לֵאמֹר, used to introduce direct discourse after verbs of saying and of mental activity (thinking, praying, etc.).

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29. שָׁמֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקֹדְשׁוֹ Keep the Sabbath day by sanctifying it.
[Deut 5:12](#)
30. כִּי תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה ... לְשָׁמֹר אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתָיו ... לַעֲשׂוֹת הַיָּשָׁר If you obey YHWH ... by keeping all his commandments ... by doing what is right ...
[Deut 13:19](#)
31. הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאַחַד נַפְּלֹו לִדְעַת־טוֹב וְרָע Hā'ādām has become as one of us in knowing good and evil.
[Gen 3:22](#)
32. בְּמָה יִזְכֶּה־נָּעַר אֶת־אֲרָחוֹ לְשָׁמֹר כְּדִבְרֵךָ: How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.
[Ps 119:9](#)

f

The modal senses of / clauses are found in verbless clauses or clauses with יֵשׁ or אֵין.³⁴ Usually a prepositional phrase is also used, generally with / (to indicate possibility or permission; ## 33–38) or ל (to indicate obligation or permission; ## 39–40), though other prepositions are found, too (## 41–43). Modal clauses with no prepositional phrase tend to be used in poetry (## 44–45).

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33. מָה לַעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ הַיֵּשׁ לְדַבֵּר־לָךְ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ What can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king?
[2 Kgs 4:13](#)
34. What right have you to recite my

- מה-לך לספר חקי
- statutes?
- [Ps 50:16](#)
35. לא לכם להלחם בזאת
- You are not to fight in this (battle).
- [2 Chr 20:17](#)
36. לא-לך עזיהו להקטיר
- It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense.
- [2 Chr 26:18](#)
37. יש ליהוה לתת לך הרבה מזה:
- YHWH can give you much more than that.
- [2 Chr 25:9](#)
38. ואין-לנו איש להמית בישראל
- None of us has a right to kill an Israelite citizen.
- [2 Sam 21:4](#)
39. ועלי לתת לך עשרה כסף
- Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver.
- [2 Sam 18:11](#)
40. עליו אין להוסיף וממנו אין לגרע
- Nothing can be added to it and nothing can be taken from it.
- [Qoh 3:14](#)
41. אם-יש את-נפשכם לקבר את-מתי
- If you are ready to bury my dead ...
- [Gen 23:8](#)
42. ואין עמך להתיצב:
- And no one can stand against you.
- [2 Chr 20:6](#)
43. כי אין זולתך לגאול
- And none has the right to redeem (it) except you.
- [Ruth 4:4](#)
44. מה-לעשות עוד לכרמי
- What more could I do for my vineyard?
- [Isa 5:4](#)
45. הם כי לא להזכיר בשם
- Hush, we must not mention the name.
- [Amos 6:10](#)

9

The immanent sense of the infinitive with / describes a non-perfective event, usually one "about to" happen (*tempus instans*); the clause may be verbless (## 46–48) or governed by a form of הִיהַ, if the reference is to the past (# 49).³⁵

46. יהוה להושיעני
- YHWH will save me.
- [Isa 38:20](#)
47. גם-בבל לנפל
- Babylon will fall.
- [Jer 51:49](#)
48. שמר תבונה למצא-טוב:
- He who cherishes understanding will find what is good.
- [Prov 19:8](#)
49. ויהי השמש לבוא
- The sun was about to set.
- [Gen 15:12](#)

36.3 Verbal Uses

36.3.1 Syntactic Features

a

An infinitive construct can manifest its verbal character in various ways.³⁶ It may be associated with its subject only (## 1–2) or its object only (## 3–5) or a preposition only (## 6–7). Less often both subject and object follow the infinitive; the object may be unmarked (# 8) or signaled by **את** (# 9) or a prepositional phrase may be used (# 10; cf. 10.2.1c-d)³⁷

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- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | לִנְסֹף שָׁמָּה הָרֹצֵחַ | so that the killer can flee there
Num 35:6 |
| 2. | לָמוּת שָׁם אֲנַחְנוּ וּבְעִירָנוּ: | so that we and our cattle might die there
Num 20:4 |
| 3. | לִיסְרָה אֶתְכֶם | to punish you ³⁸
Lev 26:18 |
| 4. | לִירְאָה אֹתִי | to fear me
Deut 4:10 |
| 5. | לְהַמִּית אֶת־דָּוִד | to kill David
1 Sam 19:1 |
| 6. | לְנִשֵּׁק לְבָנַי וּלְבָנֹתַי | to kiss my sons and daughters
Gen 31:28 |
| 7. | מִה־טוֹב לָכֶם הַמִּשְׁלַל בְּכֶם | What is better for you—that the ruling over you ... ?
Judg 9:2 |
| 8. | בְּיוֹם עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
אֶרֶץ וּשְׁמַיִם: | when YHWH God made earth and heaven
Gen 2:4 |
| 9. | בְּשָׁמְעוֹ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה | when he heard these words
1 Sam 11:6 |
| 10. | בְּפָגַעוֹ-בּוֹ | when he meets him
Num 35:19 |

36.3.2 As a Finite Form

a

Sometimes in poetic speech or in late Hebrew the infinitive construct after **וְ** is used as an equivalent of a finite verb (or of a nominal construction) to represent a situation successive to that represented by a finite verb (# 1) or participle (# 2).³⁹

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | וְאָרַח לַחֲבֵרָה עִם־פְּעָלִי
אֹן וּלְלַכֵּת עִם־אֲנָשֵׁי־רָשָׁע: | He keeps company with evildoers; he
associates with wicked men.
Job 34:8 |
| 2. | וְרַבִּים מִהַפְּתָנִים ... בָּכִים | Many of the priests ... were weeping ... |

... וְרַבִּים ... לְהַרִּים קוֹלִי: and many ... were shouting.

[Ezra 3:12](#)

In many of its uses the infinitive construct is continued by a finite verb.

3. ... עַל־עֶזְבָּם אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי because they have forsaken my law ...
וְלֹא־שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי and have not obeyed my voice

[Jer 9:12](#)

Footnotes:

1. See 35.1b on the term "infinitive construct" and for references.
2. GKC § 45b / p. 123; BL § 43b / p. 316; C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1908), 1. 18, 338, 579; GB 2. 83 (§ 14p); Joüon § 49a / pp. 109–10; S. Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964) 147.
3. R. Meyer, "Zur Geschichte des hebräischen Verbums," *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953) 225–35, at 230–32; cf. *UT* § 9.20, 26. In any case, the *o* vowels of the two infinitives have distinct origins, as the infinitive absolute is from *qatal and the construct from *q(u)tu.
4. On the morphological tangles, see the sure guide of H. M. Orlinsky, "The *Qal* Infinitive Construct and the Verbal Noun in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 67 (1947) 107–26. On the mixed pattern of the verb škb, see his "The Hebrew Root šKB," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 (1944) 19–44, at 42–44.
5. Orlinsky argues that the *qitl forms are *segholate* nouns rather than infinitive nouns; see "Qal Infinitive Construct," / 19–20.
6. Orlinsky, "Qal Infinitive Construct," 117; for other supposed *Qal* infinitives, see pp. 118–19.
7. A number of roots, especially weak roots, use a variety of infinitives construct, possibly with some semantic specialization; see again Orlinsky, "Hebrew Root šKB."
8. On this pointing, see W. Weinberg, "'Before' and 'After' in the Teaching of Hebrew Grammar," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982) 127–44, at 129–31; S. Levin, "Defects, Alleged or Real, in the Tiberias Pointing," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982) 67–84, at 72–76. In Mishnaic and later Hebrew, only the infinitive construct with *l* is used; see M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 165–66; and W. J. Van Bakkum, "The Origins of the Infinitive in Rabbinical Hebrew," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 28 (1983) 247–72.
9. Thus kotēnī 'writing to me' versus kotbī 'my writing,' but kotbō 'writing to him, his writing.' See *LHS* 118. Mishnaic Hebrew eliminates this source of ambiguity: "The pronominal suffixes ... are ... always of an objective force"; Segal, *Mishnaic Hebrew*, 166.
10. For other examples of -kkā, see [Deut 23:5](#), [Job 33:32](#) (all three are pausal).
11. Other verbal features are treated in 36.3.1.
12. For other examples, see [Ps 17:3](#); [Prov 16:19](#), [17:26](#); for the infinitive in a construct phrase, see [Isa 7:13](#); for a quasi-adverbial example, see [2 Sam 15:20](#) (təmōl bō'ēkā, 'Your coming was yesterday, i.e., you came yesterday').
13. See GB 2. 54–55 (§ 14d*) for other relevant verbs.
14. Often denominatives in *Piel* or *Hiphil*.
15. For other relevant verbs, see GB 2. 54–55 (§ 14d*).
16. The phrase occurs without the article in [2 Chr 24:14](#).
17. See GB 2.55 (§ 14e).
18. See Joüon § 124e / p. 360. The form bilfī occurs 112 times (SA/THAT).
19. For examples, see [1 Chr 5:1](#), [2 Chr 12:12](#).
20. For an example, see [2 Chr 5:11](#).
21. For an example, see [2 Chr 20:25](#); for ʾyn with ʿôd 'no longer,' see [Mal 2:13](#).

22. *LHS* 119. The infinitive construct with *b* and *k* is rarer in late Biblical Hebrew, while that with *l* is more common; see R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 45–46, 60–61.
23. *LHS* 119.
24. On the prevalence of infinitives construct in Deuteronomy and thus in the examples here, see C. H. Miller, "The Infinitive Construct in the Lawbooks of the Old Testament," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970) 222–26. On temporal clauses with 'm in Qumranic Hebrew, see E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 73–74.
25. In [Gen 4:13](#) (36.2.1 # 18) it is not clear whether the sense is separative or comparative: gādōl 'āōrī minnēšō', 'My guilt is (too) great for bearing' or '... is too great to bear.'
26. See I. Soisalon-Soininen, "Der Infinitivus constructus mit לָּ im Hebräischen," *Vetus Testamentum* 22 (1972) 82–90; cf. n. 22 on late Biblical Hebrew.
27. Except in a genitive role.
28. This use may be blurred with the epexegetical use.
29. *LHS* 119–20. On hinnēh with infinitive purpose clauses, see D. J. McCarthy, "The Uses of wehinnēh in Biblical Hebrew," *Biblica* 61 (1980) 330–42, at 339–40.
30. The spatial extension of meaning reflects the language of tours and so is ultimately temporal; cf. the language of English tours such as 'You walk until you see a big tree, then you turn. ...' See M. O'Connor, "The Grammar of Finding Your Way in Palmyrene Aramaic," *Fucus: A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman*, ed. Y. L. Arbeitman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1988) 353–69. Thus the sense in # 24 (and similar phrases) is 'up to the point where you (or one) enters (the area of) Hamath.'
31. Note a comparable verbless clause in [Isa 56:1](#).
32. R. Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), 2. 130; cf. Qimron, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 72–73.
33. Joüon § 1240 / pp. 363–64.
34. A precativ use of / + infinitive is common at Qumran; see Qimron, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 70–72.
35. If the reference is to the future, the clause is either descriptive (e.g., [Ezek 30:16](#)) or jussive (e.g., [Ps 109:13](#)). C. R. Krahmalkov alleges that in this use "the infinitive expresses neither purpose nor obligation but is ... a true periphrasis of the imperfect," citing # 48, [Hos 9:13](#), and [Qoh 3:15](#); see "The Periphrastic Future Tense in Hebrew and Phoenician," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 61 (1987) 73–80, at 73.
36. Many of the examples cited above are relevant here and may be consulted. In Biblical Hebrew, the nouns governed by an infinitive follow it, while in Aramaic and in Qumranic Hebrew the opposite order is attested for objects; see Qimron, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 74.
37. For an infinitive with two objects, note har'otekā 'et-kōhī 'that (1) make you see my strength' ([Exod 9:16](#)). The object of an infinitive may itself be an infinitive governing an object with 't, e.g., ham'aṭ qaṭtek 'et-ʾišī, 'Isn't it enough that you took my husband?' ([Gen 30:15](#)).
38. The shape of the feminine endings here and in # 4 reinforces the Masoretic conviction that such forms are not construct.
39. Joüon § 124p / p. 364.

7.2 In Association with Finite Verbs

1. Abraham was walking from Ur.
2. Walking from Ur was pleasant.
3. He had closed up his house.
4. He was persuaded to leave.
5. Running camels are dangerous.
6. I watched the camels running from Ur.
7. Running camels is dangerous.
8. I watched the camels' running from Ur.

10. וְנָתַתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לֵב שֹׁמֵעַ So give your servant a hearing heart.
[1 Kgs 3:9](#)
11. לֹא־הָיָה דְבַר נֶעְלָם מִן־הַמֶּלֶךְ Nothing was hidden from the king.
[1 Kgs 10:3](#)
12. עַל־הָרָעִים הָרָעִים אֶת־עַמִּי against the shepherds who tend my people
[Jer 23:2](#)
13. אֵינָהּ אֹתָהּ הֹלֶךְ Where are you going?
[Zech 2:6](#)

d

Does one "meaning" attach to all these functions? A. B. Davidson, representing a traditional view, claims that the participle denotes linear aspect: "The [participle] or *nomen agentis* ... presents the person or subj[ect] in the continuous exercise or exhibition of the action or condition denoted by the verb."⁵ Along the same lines, S. R. Driver carefully distinguishes this linear aspect from the broken, repetitive aspect of the nonperfective conjugation: "Mere continuance in the sense of duration without progress is never expressed by the imp[erfect]. ... The participle is the form which indicates continued action. ... Thus while the imp[erfect] multiplies an action, the participle prolongs."⁶

e

This presentation needs qualifying. One can scarcely speak of the purely substantival participle (*nomen agentis*) in terms of action (see 37.2); in this use the qōtēl form points not so much to an action as to a person. Further, the stative participle functions as an adjective, connoting a fixed and permanent quality; as M. Greenberg states: "Stative

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participles are pure adjectives."⁷ E. Kautzsch claims that the language is "fully conscious of the difference between a state implying action" and one not implying it, for quasifientive roots, that is, roots with transitive stative participles (e.g., שָׂנֵא 'to hate') in contrast to intransitive stative roots (e.g., כָּבֵד 'to be heavy'; see 22.2.3), may form a participle not after the stative but after the fientive pattern; only with this form can such roots denote continued activity.⁸ Further, progressive aspect is not crucial in the participle's use as a relative. T. O. Lambdin notes that in this use the participle connotes "completed action": "In English, therefore, a relative clause with a perfect or preterite verb is often required in translation" (37.5).⁹ The passive participle, too, tends to describe a situation not implying progressive activity but resulting from some earlier action.¹⁰ Finally, the participle is sometimes used where one would expect a finite form. This is especially true in the post-exilic books: "The participle is sometimes used—especially in the later books ... —where we should expect the action to be divided up into its several parts, and consequently should expect the finite verb."¹¹

f

Thus the characterization of the participle as denoting unbroken aspect is true only in the case of the participle's almost purely verbal use as predicative.¹² We cannot abstract from the participle's four functions one basic meaning. If, however, we leave the substantival use aside, we can say that as a verbal adjective the participle tends to describe a state of affairs rather than to present a bare event.

37.2 Substantival Use

a

Some words with the qōtēl pattern (5.2) are used only as nouns, while others are sometimes used as nouns or participles. B. Kedar-Kopfstein has suggested that syntactic, etymological, and semantic considerations are relevant in deciding both when a participle is used substantively (as a *nomen agentis* or actor noun) and the extent of its substantive quality.¹³ The parts-of-speech classification of words describes their distribution, that is, their potential for occurring in a clause relative to the occurrence of other words in the same clause (4.2.2). When

a participle is related to the other words in a clause in a way which we associate with nouns, it often functions as a *nomen agentis*. Consider this example.

1. שְׁפֹטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן-לָּךְ You shall appoint šopetim and officials.
[Deut 16:18](#)

The two qōtēl nouns could readily be replaced by other nominal forms but not so readily by other verbal forms. On the other hand, in # 2, another verb, in contrast to some other parts of speech, could readily be substituted for שְׁפֹט.

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2. וְהִגַּדְתִּי לוֹ כִּי-שֹׁפֵט אֲנִי אֶת-בֵּיתוֹ עַד-עוֹלָם And I told him that I would judge his family forever.
[1 Sam 3:13](#)

Syntax, the distribution of words in a clause or sentence, is decisive in describing the use of a participle.

b

The relationship of the qōtēl pattern and the class of active fientive participles is problematic. "Isolated" qōtēl forms (i.e., forms from verbal roots that exist in the Qa/ only in the qōtēl form) are best taken as substantives; for example, כֹּהֵן 'priest,' רוֹן 'ruler,' שֹׁטֵר 'officer,' נֹקֵד 'sheep-breeder,' etc. Some scholars cite these purely nominal forms in connection with participles.¹⁴ Kedar-Kopfstein argues that the participial character adheres more clearly to forms like שֹׁפֵט 'judge' and יָצַר 'potter' because corresponding finite forms are attested.¹⁵ E. König has said that an overgrowth of the more frequent qōtēl pattern should be recognized in the case of adjectives like נָסִים 'sick (person),' זוּלָּל 'rubbish,' קָדָר 'squalid,' etc.¹⁶ A third class of qōtēl forms that do not properly belong among the participles is made up of denominatives; words like בּוֹקֵר 'cowpoke' (from בָּקָר 'cattle'),¹⁷ כֹּרֵם 'vinedresser' (from כָּרֵם 'vineyard'), יֹנֵב 'farmer' (from יָנֵב 'field'), שׁוֹעֵר 'gatekeeper' (from שַׁעַר 'gate') possess a clear substantival character.¹⁸ Kedar Kopfstein points up the distinction between a qōtēl form lacking a clear verbal origin from one with a verbal base by contrasting שׁוֹנֵא with אוֹיֵב.

With אוֹיֵב the importance lies in the person, therefore it is a substantive in the fullest sense; the signified sense belongs to it uninterruptedly. With שׁוֹנֵא it is a matter of the deportment and action which characterize a person, perhaps temporarily.¹⁹

c

Another group of words can be judged on semantic rather than etymological grounds to be distinct from the qōtēl participles.²⁰ These are terms for professions, for example, יוֹצֵר 'etymologically 'fashioner' becomes the professional 'potter'; צוֹרֵף 'smelter' becomes 'goldsmith'; רֹפֵא 'hearer' becomes 'doctor.' Other activities, however, are of a more transitory nature, for example, שׁוֹטֵף 'flooding,' צוֹעֵק 'crying out,' נִבֵּל 'fading.' The profession terms are more substantival than these participial terms for passing phenomena.

37.3 Participial Syntax: Accusative and Genitive

a

The participle displays its dual participation in verbal and nominal (specifically, adjectival) characteristics in constructions with modifying words. We have seen that nouns are modified by the genitive case and verbs by the accusative case or by a prepositional phrase (see 9.2, 10.2, 11.1). The participle can occur with modifying words in either case frame; it also occurs with both possessive and verbal pronominal suffixes.

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b

The participle in the absolute state can govern an accusative object, an adverbial accusative, or a prepositional phrase; such a participle may be an active fientive participle (with objects: ## 1–2; with prepositional phrases: ## 3–4), a quasi-fientive stative participle (## 5–6), a stative participle (or verbal adjective; with adverbial accusative, ## 7–8), or a passive participle (with adverbial accusative, ## 9–11).

1. כָּל־הַקִּרְתָּ אֹתָם all that (i.e., the events that) befell them
[Gen 42:29](#)
2. וַהֲנֵה בָרַק רֹדֵף אֶת־סִיסְרָא Barak was pursuing Sisera.
[Judg 4:22](#)
3. יְהוָה הַדֹּבֵר אֵלֶיהָ YHWH who spoke to her
[Gen 16:13](#)
4. נִלְחָמִים עִם־פְּלִשְׁתִּיָּם fighting with the Philistines
[1 Sam 17:19](#)
5. וְרִבְקָה אֲהָבָתָהּ תִּיעֶקֶבֶבֹּ: But Rebekah (was one who) loved Jacob.
[Gen 25:28](#)
6. כִּי־יִרָא אֶנְכִּי אֹתוֹ I fear him.
[Gen 32:12](#)
7. וּשְׂמֵחִים שִׂמְחָה גְדוֹלָה rejoicing with great joy
[1 Kgs 1:40](#)
8. חָפֵץ רָשָׁע that has pleasure in wickedness
[Ps 5:5](#)
9. חֲנוּר כָּלִי מִלְחָמָה: armed with weapons for battle²¹
[Judg 18:11](#)
10. קָרוֹעַ כְּתָנָתוֹ rent as regards his coat
[2 Sam 15:32](#)
11. לְבָשׁ בְּדִים clothed in linen²²
[Ezek 9:2](#)

c

In the construct state, a participle governs an object or some other specification in the genitive (9.5). The active fientive participle chiefly governs adverbial genitives, for example, objects (## 12–13)²³ and, with verbs of motion, genitives of location (## 14–15), where an accusative (10.2) might be expected. In poetry the genitive may refer to "other specifications (especially of space) which otherwise [viz., in prose] can only be made to depend on the verb in question by means of a preposition" (## 16–18).²⁴ A quasi-fientive stative participle can govern a genitive (# 19), as can a passive participle. With a passive, the genitive may be of agency (# 20) or instrument (## 21–23). T. O. Lambdin notes,

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"The addition of a prepositional phrase to express an agent, as in 'the man who was slain by his enemies,' is virtually unknown in Hebrew, but like any adjective it [the passive participle] may be in construct with a following qualifying noun."²⁵ Other kinds of genitives, especially the epexegetical (9.5.3c), may also follow the passive participle (## 24–26; cf. ## 10–11).

12. נָתַנִּי לַחֲמִי וּמִיָּמִי who give (me) my bread and my water
[Hos 2:7](#)
13. those who turn back the battle at the

	מְשִׁיבֵי מַלְחָמָה שְׁעָרָה:	gate Isa 28:6
14.	בָּאִי שְׁעַר-עִירוֹ	who had come to the gate of his town Gen 23:10
15.	יֹצְאֵי הַתְּבָה	that departed from the ark Gen 9:10
16.	יֹרְדֵי-בֹר	they that go down into the pit Isa 38:18
17.	שֹׁכְבֵי קֶבֶר	that lie in the grave Ps 88:6
18.	כְּאֵלֶּה נֹבֶלֶת עָלֶּה	like an oak fading in its leaf Isa 1:30
19.	יִרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים	one who fears God ²⁶ Gen 22:12
20.	מִכֵּה אֱלֹהִים	smitten by God Isa 53:4
21.	וְשֹׂרֹפֶת קָרִים	scorched by the east wind Gen 41:6
22.	עָרֵיכֶם שְׂרָפוֹת אֵשׁ	your cities burnt with fire Isa 1:7
23.	מִפְתְּעֵנִי חֶרֶב	those pierced by the sword Isa 14:19
24.	קָרְעֵי בְגָדִים:	rent in respect of clothes 2 Sam 13:31
25.	וְהִנֵּה הָאִישׁ לְבָשׁ הַבְּדִים	the man clothed with linen Ezek 9:11
26.	נְשׁוּי-פֶשַׁע	forgiven in respect of sin Ps 32:1

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d

Just as a participle may be followed by an object in the accusative (the participle being absolute) or by a genitive (the participle being construct), so suffixes to the participle may be genitive or accusative.²⁷ The possessive and the accusative suffixes exhibit different forms only in the first-person singular, -ī possessive, -[ē]nī objective.

27.	אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵי עֹשִׂי	Where is God my Maker? ²⁸ Job 35:10
28.	הֲלֹא-בִבְטֶן עֹשִׂנִי עֹשֶׂהוּ	Did not he who made me in the womb make him? Job 31:15
29.	אֵין רֹאֵנִי	There is none who sees me. Isa 47:10

But even here caution is needed: "In fact, this distinction is erased, inasmuch as the possessive suffix -ī, according to the analogy of the remaining suffixes, can also assume an objective meaning."²⁹ This leveling is

apparent in the following examples (## 30–32, objective -ēnī expected).

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|--|
| 30. | לֹא־תִשׁוּרֵנִי עֵינִי־אֵי | The eye that (now) sees me will see me no longer.
Job 7:8 |
| 31. | כָּל־מֹצְאִי | all who find me
Gen 4:14 |
| 32. | קָמִי | those that rise up against me ³⁰
Ps 18:40 |

Although the -ī suffix is more common, a similar confusion may occur with the accusative first-person suffix used as a possessive (contrast עֵשְׂנִי in [Job 32:22](#) with # 27). The objective use of the suffixes is common (## 33–35); rarely, a participle with a suffix governs another, independent object (## 36–37).

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- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--|
| 33. | מְבָרְכֶיךָ | those that bless you
Gen 12:3 |
| 34. | יָדְעִי | those who knew him
Job 42:11 |
| 35. | הַמַּעֲלִים | who brought them up
Isa 63:11 |
| 36. | הִנְנִי מַאֲכִילֶם פִּלְלֵהֶלְעָנָה | I will make them eat ... wormwood.
Jer 9:14 |
| 37. | הַמַּלְבִּשְׁכֶּם שָׁנִי | who clothed you with scarlet
2 Sam 1:24 |

e

Is there a difference between participles with accusative regimens and those with genitive regimens? Grammarians are divided. For example, Kedar-Kopfstein has argued that no distinction exists.³¹ In contrast, E. Sellin has claimed that the genitive-governing participles pertain to more enduring situations while accusative- or preposition-governing forms refer to more transitory states.

By an exhaustive examination of the statistics, Sellin ... shows that the participle when construed as a verb expresses a single and comparatively transitory act, or relates to particular cases, historical facts, and the like, while the participle construed as a noun ... indicates repeated, enduring, or commonly occurring acts, occupations, and thoughts.³²

In fact, this differentiation is not so straightforward. There are cases in which Sellin's view seems clear (contrast, e.g., ## 1–4, 6–7, but not # 5 or # 8, with ## 12–13, 19, but not # 14 or # 24). A variety of other factors seems to be involved, for example, definiteness (contrast # 11 and # 25), so further study seems warranted.

37.4 Adjectival Use

a

By adjectival is meant the use of a participle in a clause where it could be replaced by an adjective, either attributive or predicate, rather than by some other part of speech. Since the passive participle has some distinctive features in this function, we analyze the active and passive participles separately.

b

The modifying active participle is usually used as a relative (see 37.5). In some instances, however, it occurs where an attributive adjective would be found (# 1).

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | כִּי יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵשׁ | As for YHWH your God, he is a |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|

אֹכֵלֶה הוּא consuming fire.³³
[Deut 4:24](#)

c

The passive participle can be used as either an attributive (# 2)³⁴ or predicate adjective (## 3–5).

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2. וּבִיד חֲזָקָה וּבִזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm
[Deut 4:34](#)
3. עֲזֹבוֹת עָרֵי עָרֶעַר The cities of Aroer are deserted.
[Isa 17:2](#)
4. וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ הָיָה לְבָשׁ Now Joshua was dressed ...
[Zech 3:3](#)
5. גְּדֻלִּים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה דְּרוֹשִׁים לְכָל-חֹפְצֵיהֶם: The works of YHWH are great, pondered by all who delight in them.
[Ps 111:2](#)

d

The participles of the reflexive or passive stems, especially the *Niphal*, correspond occasionally to an English -ible/-able term or a Latin gerundive (23.3d; ## 6–8), for example, נֹרָא 'metuendus, to be feared, terrible,' נִחְמָד 'desiderandus, desirable,' נִחְשָׁב 'aestimandus, estimable,' מְהֻלָּל 'laudandus, to be praised.' (See 25.1 for such uses of the *Pual*.)³⁵ The gerundive meaning is also attested with the relative (# 9) and predicate participles.

6. בַּת-בָּבֶל הַשְׁדּוּדָה O Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction
[Ps 137:8](#)
7. לְעָם נוֹלָד to a people to be born
[Ps 22:32](#)
8. הַחִיָּה הַנֹּאכֶלֶת the edible game
[Lev 11:47](#)
9. אֶת-כָּל-הַכֶּסֶף הַנִּמְצָא בְּאֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם all the money which was to be found in Egypt
[Gen 47:14](#)

e

The closely related forms qātûl and qāfil, according to König, can be distinguished.³⁶ The passive participle qātûl has an inchoative sense, that is, it focuses on the coming of the subject into a modified state, in contrast to qāfil, which refers to the state proper. For example, אָסוּר draws attention to the moment of being taken to prison, while אֶסִּיר abstracts from each moment and looks to the circumstance dating from it.

- 10a. מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יוֹסֵף אָסוּר the place where Joseph had (recently) been imprisoned
 שָׁם:
[Gen 40:3](#)
- 10b. אֵת כָּל-הָאֶסִּירִים אֲשֶׁר all the prisoners who were in the
 בְּבֵית הַסֵּהָר prison

- 10c. **אֶל-בֵּית הַסֵּהַר מְקוֹם**
אֲשֶׁר-אִסְרִי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲסוּרִים
 to the prison, the place where the
 prisoners of the king were imprisoned
[Gen 39:22](#)
[Gen 39:20](#) Qere

Only rarely, according to König, does qatûl designate the abstract quality originating in the modification, for example, **יָדָעִים** 'experienced, respected' ([Deut 1:13](#))³⁷ and **סוּר** 'rejected'(cf. [Isa 49:21](#)).

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37.5 Relative Use

a

The participle can be used as the equivalent of relative clauses (cf. English 'hearer, one who hears'). A relative clause can be either independent or dependent (19.1c-d). An independent relative clause with a participle can occur in any part of a main clause, for example, as subject (# 1), *casus pendens* (# 2), predicate nominative in a verbless clause (## 3–4), or object (## 5–7). As a dependent relative, such a participle can serve as an attributive to a word in any function, for example, in a prepositional phrase (# 8).

1. **וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְדַּבֵּר**
אֵלָיו
 And the king said, "Whoever speaks to
 you ... "
[2 Sam 14:10](#)
2. **שֶׁפֶךְ דָּם הָאָדָם בָּאָדָם**
דָּמוֹ יִשְׁפָּךְ
 As for him who sheds human blood, his
 blood will be shed by a human.
[Gen 9:6](#)
3. **מִי הָאִמֵּר שָׂאוּל יִמְלֹךְ**
עָלֵינוּ
 Who is he who said, "Saul shall reign
 over us"?
[1 Sam 11:12](#)
4. **עֵינֶיךָ הָרְאִית אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר**
עָשָׂה
 Your eyes are the ones that saw all he
 did.
[Deut 3:21](#)
5. **וָאֲשָׁמַע אֶת מְדַבֵּר אֵלַי:**
 I heard one speaking to me.
[Ezek 2:2](#)
6. **וַיִּגִּדּוּ לוֹ אֶת כָּל-הַקְּרֹת**
אֲתָם
 And they told him all that had happened
 to them.
[Gen 42:29](#)
7. **שָׁמַעְתִּי אֹמְרִים גִּלְכָּה**
דֹּתָיִנָּה
 I heard (them) say, "Let's go to Dothan."
[Gen 37:17](#)
8. **כַּמֵּים הַנִּגָּרִים אֶרְצָה**
 like water spilled on the ground
[2 Sam 14:14](#)

b

The relative participle, unlike the predicative, often has the article (19.6). Like an adjective, the attributive relative (which functions as a dependent relative clause) agrees with its noun in definiteness (definite: ## 9–11; indefinite: # 12), though in later style exceptions occur (## 13–14). Because of this agreement, it is possible for the relative participle to be separated from its antecedent (## 11, 15).³⁸

9. **עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַבְּנוּי:** upon the altar which had been built
[Judg 6:28](#)
10. **לִיהוָה הַנִּרְאָה אֵלָיו:** YHWH, who had appeared to him
[Gen 12:7](#)
11. **מִשְׁפָּטֵי־יְהוָה אֱמֶת צֶדֶקוֹ יִחָדּוּ:** The statutes of YHWH are true,
altogether righteous, that are more
desirable than gold.
הַנֶּחְמָדִים מִזָּהָב
[Ps 19:10–11](#)
12. **רוּחַ סִעָרָה בָּאָה מִן־הַצָּפוֹן** a stormy wind that was coming from the
north
[Ezek 1:4](#)
13. **לָוִים** through the envoys who have come to
Jerusalem
[Jer 27:3](#)
14. **עַם נָגִיד הַבָּא** (the) people of (the) ruler who will come
[Dan 9:26](#)
15. **כָּל־הַנֶּפֶשׁ לְבֵית־יַעֲקֹב הַבָּאָה מִצְרַיִמָּה** all the folk of the house of Jacob, who
came into Egypt
[Gen 46:27](#)

When relative participial clauses are used in succession, the first may have the article and the other(s) not (## 16–17), though sometimes all have the article (# 18).³⁹

16. **הוּא הָאֹמְרִים לָרַע טוֹב ... שְׁמִים חֹשֶׁךְ לְאוֹר** Woe to those who call evil good ... who
put darkness for light ...
[Isa 5:20](#)
17. **הַשֹּׁכְבִים עַל־מִטּוֹת שֵׁן ... וְאֹכְלִים כָּרִים מִצֹּאן** those who lie on beds inlaid with ivory,
who dine on choice lambs
[Amos 6:4](#)
18. **הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל־חֹג הָאָרֶץ ... הַנוֹטֶה כְּדֹק שָׁמַיִם ... הַנוֹתֵן רוּזִנִּים לְאֵין** the one who sits enthroned above the
earth's circle ... who stretches out the
heavens as a canopy ... who brings
rulers to nothing
[Isa 40:22–23](#)

C

The participial relative with the article can take on a generic indefinite sense (cf. 'whoever hears'). This sense is similar to the use of a substantival participle with the article to refer to a class of agents, for example, 'the hewer (of trees)' ([Isa 14:8](#)), namely, 'all those who hew down (trees), woodsman.' As a relative, the definite participle refers to a transitory quality (## 19–20).

19. **הַנֹּגֵעַ בְּאִישׁ הַזֶּה** whoever touches this man
[Gen 26:11](#)
20. **הַמֵּאֲמִין לֹא יִחְיֶשׁ:** Whoever trusts will not be put to shame.
[Isa 28:16](#)

d

When the relative participle as predicate receives the article, it identifies the subject (8.4.1); this construction corresponds to the French 'C'est ... celui qui' (## 21–22; cf. # 20).

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21. הוּא הַסָּבֵב אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ
הַחַוִּילָה
It is the one that goes around the land
of Havilah.
[Gen 2:11](#)
22. כִּי־פִי הַמְדַּבֵּר אֵלֵיכֶם:
[Gen 45:12](#)

e

The relative participle is a non-finite form and thus, as Paul Joüon remarks, "it expresses by itself neither time nor even aspect; ... thus הָאִישׁ הַבָּא can signify, according to context, the man who comes, who will come, who has come, and these once or often, in an instantaneous or durative fashion."⁴⁰ The relative participle occurs predominantly in connection with time contemporary with the main verb (# 23), or overlapping with it (# 24) and less often for action completed in the past (## 25–26).

23. וְהָיָה הָעֹלָמָה הַיֹּצֵאת
לְשֶׁאֵב
Let it be that the 'almâ who comes out to
draw water ...
[Gen 24:43](#)
24. כִּי יְהוֹה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מְבִיאֲךָ
אֶל-אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה ... עֵינַת
וְתַהֲנוֹת יִצְאִים בְּבִקְעָה
וּבְהָרִ:
For YHWH your God is bringing you into
a good land ... with springs and pools
that flow in the valleys and the hills.
[Deut 8:7](#)
25. הַכֶּסֶף הַשֵּׁב בְּאַמְתַּחֲתֵינוּ
בְּתַחֲלָה
the silver that had been put back into
our sacks the first time
[Gen 43:18](#)
26. וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוֹה
הַנִּרְאָה אֵלָיו:
He built there an altar to YHWH, who
had appeared to him.
[Gen 12:7](#)

f

The relative participle is negated either by the clausal adverb אֵין, a predicator of non-existence (# 27), even as וְ is used with it as a predicator of existence (# 28; 39.3.2a), or by the item adverb לֹא (# 29).

27. אֵין יוֹצֵא וְאֵין בָּ אֶ:
There was none who went out or came
in.
[Josh 6:1](#)
28. יֵשׁ מַפְזֵר
There is one who scatters.
[Prov 11:24](#)
29. בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא זְרוּעָה
in a land not sown
[Jer 2:2](#)

37.6 Predicate Use

a

A participle is often used as the predicate of a verbless clause. The subject is usually expressed, often as an independent pronoun (## 1–2) or as a suffix with **יש** or **אין** (## 3–4).

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Rarely the subject is not expressed, notably after **הנה** (## 5–6) or if the referent has just been mentioned (# 7).⁴¹

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | הֹמָה עֲלִים | They were going up.
1 Sam 9:11 |
| 2. | מָחָר אַתָּה מוֹמָת: | Tomorrow you will be killed.
1 Sam 19:11 |
| 3. | אִם־יִשָּׁךְ מוֹשִׁיעַ | If you will save ...
Judg 6:36 |
| 4. | וְאִם־אֵינְךָ מִשְׁלַח | If you will not send ...
Gen 43:5 |
| 5. | וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָאִישׁ וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד | He came to the man, and, behold, [he was] standing.
Gen 24:30 |
| 6. | וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ אִישׁ וְהִנֵּה תֹעָה
בַּשָּׂדֶה | A man found him, and behold, [he was] wandering in the field.
Gen 37:15 |
| 7. | כִּי יֹאמְרוּ נָסִים לְפָנֵינוּ | They will say, "[They are] fleeing before us."
Josh 8:6 |

b

Although the usual syntactic structure for a participial predicate is a verbless clause, the verbal character of the participle is not thereby effaced, as the examples above show. In its workings, the predicate participle approximates the prefix conjugation (cf. 37.7.2a), but distinguishes itself by emphasizing a curative circumstance and thus by not representing modal/temporal or volitional action, though the ongoing state of affairs may involve repeated action. The participle exhibits its adjectival origin in its essential use to express circumstances, states of affairs, facts, etc., rather than events. In circumstantial clauses it focuses on the figures moving in the background, contemporaneous with the main action; it is frequent in causal clauses (## 8–9).⁴²

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|--|
| 8. | כִּי יֹדַע אֱלֹהִים כִּי | because God (is one who) knows that ...
Gen 3:5 |
| 9. | כִּי אַתָּה אַתָּם מְבַקְשִׁים | because you have been asking for it
Exod 10:11 |

c

The participle does not function in Biblical Hebrew as a finite verb with a distinct time reference,⁴³ though such use is regular in Mishnaic and later Hebrew; thus the

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words **יֹדַע אֲנִי** would in Biblical Hebrew have the sense 'I am one who knows,' while in Mishnaic they mean simply 'I know.'⁴⁴

d

With reference to a past state of affairs, a participle may describe the circumstances accompanying a principal event (## 10–12). Sometimes, the adverb עֹד is used with the participle to emphasize the simultaneity (# 13). More often, the participle describes an ongoing state of affairs, involving repeated (## 14–15) or continuous (## 16–17) action.

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 10. | וַיְהֻנְתָּן וַאֲחִימָעַץ עֹמְדִים
בְּעֵין־רֹגֵל וְהַלְכָה הַשִּׁפְחָה | While Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En Rogel, a servant girl would go ...
2 Sam 17:17 |
| 11. | הִיא בָּעָה בְּסָף־הַבַּיִת
וְהַנֶּעַר מָת: | As she crossed the threshold of the house, the child died.

1 Kgs 14:17 |
| 12. | הִיא מוֹצֵאת וְהִיא שְׁלָחָה | As she was being brought forth, she sent (word).
Gen 38:25 |
| 13. | עוֹת זֶה מְדַבֵּר וְזֶה בָּא | While this one was still speaking, another came.
Job 1:16 |
| 14. | וּמִלְכַּת־שֶׁבָּא שֹׁמְעַת
אֶת־שִׁמְעֵ שְׁלֹמֹה ... וַתָּבֹא | Now the Queen of Sheba was hearing of Solomon's fame ... and so she came.

1 Kgs 10:1 |
| 15. | רַק הָעָם מִזְבְּחִים בִּבְמוֹת | Only, the people were sacrificing at the high places.
1 Kgs 3:2 |
| 16. | וְנָהָר יֵצֵא מֵעֵדֶן | Now, a river was flowing from Eden.
Gen 2:10 |
| 17. | הִנֵּה חֲמוּץ עֹלָה תִמְנָתָה
לְגֹז צֹאנוֹ: | Your father-in-law is going up to Timnath to shear his sheep.

Gen 38:13 |

Two varieties of this pattern require notice. With הִנֵּה the participial clause usually describes immediate circumstances (## 18–20; cf. # 17); because these generally require observation the translation 'behold' has established itself in English.⁴⁵ A clause with הֹלֵךְ indicates a long-term state of affairs (# 21).

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- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 18. | וְהִנֵּה אֵינָנוּ פֹתְחִים דְּלָתוֹת
הָעֲלִיָּה וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־הַמִּפתָח | And behold, he was not opening the doors of the upper room, so they took the key.
Judg 3:25 |
| 19. | וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה
שְׁלֹשָׁה הָאֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים
עָלָיו | He looked up and saw, and behold three men were standing by him.

Gen 18:2 |
| 20. | וַיִּישָׁן וַיַּחְלֵם ... וְהִנֵּה שֶׁבַע
שִׁבְלִים וְדָלֹת | He slept and dreamt ... and behold, seven heads of grain were coming up.

Gen 41:5 |

21. וְדָוִד הָלַךְ וַחֲזָק וּבֵית
שָׁאוּל הִלְכִים וַחֲלָשׁ׃
David grew stronger and stronger, while
the House of Saul grew weaker and
weaker.
[2 Sam 3:1](#)

e

In reference to present time the participle also approximates the prefix conjugation but distinguishes itself by denoting a continuing state of affairs (rather than iterative aspect) without any modal or volitional meaning (## 22–25), sometimes in a purely circumstantial (relative) expression (## 26–27), and sometimes in a curative circumstance involving repeated actions (## 28–29).⁴⁶ Such a state of affairs is rarely introduced by הִנֵּה (# 30).

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22. קוֹל דָּמִי אֲחִיד צִעֲקִים
אֵלַי
Your brother's blood is crying out to
me.⁴⁷
[Gen 4:10](#)
23. אֲנֹכִי בִרְחָת׃
I am fleeing.
[Gen 16:8](#)
24. כִּי יִהְיֶה נִלְחָם לָהֶם
YHWH is fighting for them.
[Exod 14:25](#)
25. וְהָאָרֶץ לְעוֹלָם עֹמָדָת׃
The earth endures forever.
[Qoh 1:4](#)
26. מִבָּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי
יוֹשֵׁב בְּקִרְבּוֹ׃
from the daughters of the Canaanites
among whom I am dwelling
[Gen 24:3](#)
27. כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה
עוֹמֵד עָלָיו
the place where you are standing
[Exod 3:5](#)
28. תָּבֵן אֵין נָתַן לַעֲבָדֶיךָ ...
אֹמְרִים
Straw is not being given to your
servants ... , yet they say ...
[Exod 5:16](#)
29. עַל־כֵּן אֲנִי זֹבֵחַ לַיהוָה
כָּל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם הַזְּכָרִים
Therefore I am sacrificing to YHWH
every first male offspring ...
[Exod 13:15](#)
30. הִנֵּה פְּלִשְׁתִּים נִלְחָמִים
בְּקַעִילָה וְהִמָּה שָׁסִים
אֶת־הַגִּרְנוֹת׃
Look, the Philistines are fighting against
Keilah and are looting the threshing
floors.
[1 Sam 23:1](#)

f

With reference to situations which are in fact future, the participle may denote merely a circumstance accompanying a future event (# 31). Usually, however, it denotes the full range of ideas connoted by English 'I am going to ...', namely, certainty, often with immanency—the so-called *futurum instans* participle (## 32–37). In this function it also occurs in a main clause with some logical connection to other clauses (## 38–41) or in a temporal/conditional clause in connection with a future event (## 42–44). הִנֵּה often occurs with all these constructions because that particle calls attention to a situation either for vividness (## 31–33, 35) or for its logical

connection with some other event (## 38, 40, 44).

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- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 31. | לֶךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה בַּבֹּקֶר הַזֶּה
יֵצֵא הַמַּיִמָּה | Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes to the river. ⁴⁸
Exod 7:15 |
| 32. | וְאֲנִי הֹנֵנִי מִבֵּיא
אֶת־הַמַּבּוּל | I am going to send a flood.

Gen 6:17 |
| 33. | הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי עֹשֶׂה דָבָר
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל | I am going to do something in Israel.

1 Sam 3:11 |
| 34. | מֶלֶךְ אַרָם עֹלָה עָלֶיךָ: | The king of Aram is going to attack you.
1 Kgs 20:22 |
| 35. | הִנֵּכָה רֹאֶה בְּעֵינֶיךָ | You are going to see (it) with your own eyes.
2 Kgs 7:2 |
| 36. | אֵת אֲשֶׁר הָאֱלֹהִים עֹשֶׂה
הַגִּיד לַפַּרְעֹה: | God has told Pharaoh what he is going to do.

Gen 41:25 |
| 37. | צֹאנְךָ נִתְּנוֹת לְאֹיְבֶיךָ | Your flock will be given to your enemies.
Deut 28:31 |
| 38. | עוֹדֶךָ מִסְתוֹלֵל בְּעַמִּי ...
הֹנֵנִי מִמָּטִיר | You still set yourself against my people.
... Therefore, I am going to send rain ...

Exod 9:17–18 |
| 39. | הַיֶּלֶד אֵינָנוּ וְאֲנִי אָנֹכִי
אֲנִי־בָא: | The boy isn't there, so as for me, where am I going to go?

Gen 37:30 |
| 40. | הִנֵּךְ מֵת עַל־הָאִשָּׁה ...
וְהִיא בְּעֹלֶת בָּעַל: | You are going to die on account of this woman ... she is a married woman. ⁴⁹

Gen 20:3 |
| 41. | וְגַם אֶת־הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ
דָן אֲנֹכִי | The nation whom they serve I am going to judge.

Gen 15:14 |
| 42. | אֲנִי נֶאֱסָף אֶל־עַמִּי קְבֹרוֹ
אֲתִי | I am about to be gathered to my people, (so) bury me ...

Gen 49:29 |
| 43. | אֲנֹכִי הֹלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ
כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְחִזְקָה | I am about to go in the way of all the earth, so be strong ...

1 Kgs 2:2 |
| 44. | הִנֵּה יִהְיֶה עֹשֶׂה אֲרָבוֹת
בַּשָּׁמַיִם הִיְהִיָּה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה | If YHWH opens up the windows of heaven, could this happen? |

[2 Kgs 7:2](#)**37.7 Use with Finite Verbs****37.7.1 With הִיָּה****a**

The verb הִיָּה serves as an independent verb with participles used as substantives (# 1) or adjectives (# 2), including all passive participles (## 3–4).⁵⁰

1. וַיְהִי-לוֹ נָשָׂא כֶּלִים: And he became his armor bearer.
[1 Sam 16:21](#)
2. וְהָיוּ נֹכְנִים לַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי And be ready on the third day.
[Exod 19:11](#)
3. כִּי-מִלִּים הָיוּ כָּל-הָעָם For all the people had been circumcised.
[Josh 5:5](#)
4. יְהִי מְכִירְךָ בְּרוּךְ May the one who took note of you be blessed.
[Ruth 2:19](#)

b

By connecting a finite form of הִיָּה with a following predicate participle, an aspectual and/or modal index is assigned to the participle, yielding forms that are past progressive (## 5–7), perfect progressive (## 8–10), future progressive (# 11), or jussive progressive (# 12).⁵¹

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5. וְאֶשְׁמַע מִדְּבַר אֵלַי ... ואִישׁ הָיָה עֹמֵד אֵצֶלַי: And I heard someone speaking to me ... while the man was standing beside me.
[Ezek 43:6](#)
6. וְאַבְנֵר הָיָה מְתַחַזֵּק בְּבֵית שָׁאוּל: Now Abner was (or, had been?) strengthening himself in the House of Saul.
[2 Sam 3:6](#)
7. וַיְהִיו יָמִים שְׁלוֹשָׁה בְּזָזִים And so three days they were plundering.
[2 Chr 20:25](#)
8. כִּי עַד-הַיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה הָיוּ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקַטְרִים לוֹ For up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it.
[2 Kgs 18:4](#)
9. וַיְהִיו מְכַעֲסִים אֹתִי מִן-הַיּוֹם And they have been provoking me from the day ...
[2 Kgs 21:15](#)
10. מִבְּקָשִׁים אֶת-דָּוִד לְמֶלֶךְ For some time you have been seeking to make David king.
[2 Sam 3:17](#)
11. וְהָיִיתָ מִמַּשֵּׁשׁ בַּצֹּהָרִים You will be groping at midday.
[Deut 28:29](#)

12. יְהִי רָקִיעַ ... וַיְהִי מַבְדִּיל
בֵּין מַיִם לַמַּיִם: Let there be a firmament ... (let it be)
dividing water from water.

[Gen 1:6](#)

Sometimes the temporal notion seems to be more precisely 'at just that time ...' (## 1314); the aspectual notion may be inchoative ('begin to ...'; # 15).

13. יוֹסֵף בֶּן-שֶׁבַע-עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה
הָיָה רֹעֶה ... וַיָּבֵא Joseph, a young man of seventeen,
was at one time tending the flocks ...
and he brought ...

[Gen 37:2](#)

14. וַיִּמְלֹךְ אֲרָם הָיָה נִלְחָם
בִּישְׂרָאֵל וַיִּנְעֵץ אֶל-עַבְדָּיו The king of Aram being then at war with
Israel, he took counsel with his staff.

[2 Kgs 6:8](#)

15. וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶלְקָנָה הַרְמָתָה
עַל-בֵּיתוֹ וַהֲנִיעַר הָיָה מִשְׁרֵת אֶת־יְהוָה Elqanah went home to Ramah, and the
lad began to minister to YHWH.

[1 Sam 2:11](#)

C

In later Biblical Hebrew, the combination הָיָה + participle substitutes for a perfective verb form; this "periphrastic construction" is probably the result of Aramaic influence, as Joüon notes.

In the later language one finds the periphrastic הָיָה קָטַל construction with the sense of a pure perfect he killed. ... This free use (or abuse), which is usual in post-biblical Hebrew, is due to the influence of Aramaic. In that language the periphrastic construction, which asserts itself for a curative or frequentative action (cf. [Dan 5:19](#)) is also employed, very freely, for an instantaneous or unique act.⁵²

Lacking firm formal criteria to distinguish the full range of roles noted here, we must sometimes hesitate over identifying precise nuances.

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16. וַשֵּׁם הָיוּ לְפָנִים נְתֻנִים
אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה And they had formerly stored the grain
offerings there.
[Neh 13:5](#)
17. וַיִּהְיוּ נִקְרָאִים And they (the chronicles) were read.⁵³
[Esth 6:1](#)
18. וַאֲמַרְתָּ לְלֵוִיִּם אֲשֶׁר יְהִיוּ
מִטְהַרִּים וּבָאִים Then I commanded the Levites to purify
themselves and come ...
[Neh 13:22](#)

37.7.2 In Association with Finite Verbs

a

When a perfective or non-perfective verb is used to describe an action, a closely related action with the same actor is generally described with the same type of verb. Participles often break such patterns. A participial predicate can be followed by a prefix form, with similar sense (# 1), or can be used where a prefix form would be expected (compare ## 2a-b), or can be followed by waw-relative and a suffix form with either an epexegetical notion in past time (cf. 37.6d) or a (con)sequential situation in future time (## 3–4; cf. 32.2.5b).

1. אֲנִי זֹבֵחַ לַיהוָה כָּל־פֶּטֶר
רַחֵם הַזִּכְרִים וְכָל־בְּכוֹר
בְּנֵי אִפְדָּה:
[Exod 13:15](#)
I sacrifice to YHWH the first male
offspring of every womb and redeem
each of my firstborn sons.
- 2a. וְאַרְאֶךָ אֶת־הָאִישׁ
אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה מִבְקֵשׁ
[Judg 4:22](#)
I will show you the man you are looking
for.
- 2b. וְאוֹלִיכָה אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאִישׁ
אֲשֶׁר תִּבְקֹשׁוּן
[2 Kgs 6:19](#)
I will lead you to the man you are
looking for.
3. כִּי לַיָּמִים עוֹד שִׁבְעָה
אֲנֹכִי מִמָּטִיר ... וּמַחֲיִיתִי
[Gen 7:4](#)
Seven days from now I will send rain ...
and I will blot out ...
4. שָׂרָה ... יֵלֶדֶת לָךְ בֶּן
וְקָרָאתָ אֶת־שְׁמוֹ
[Gen 17:19](#)
Sarah ... will bear you a son and you
will call his name.

Similarly, a relative participle may be continued by a non-perfective form (# 5), a *waw*-relative with short prefix form (## 6–7), or a suffix form (## 8–9).

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5. הוּא מְגִיעֵי בַּיִת בְּבַיִת שָׂדֶה
בְּשָׂדֶה יִקְרִיבוּ
[Isa 5:8](#)
Woe to those who join house to house
and lay field to field.⁵⁴
6. מִי־אִפּוֹא הוּא הַצֹּדֶד־צִיד
וַיָּבֵא לִי
[Gen 27:33](#)
Who then was it that hunted game and
brought (it) to me?
7. הָעֲנָה אֹתִי בְיוֹם צָרָתִי
וַיְהִי עִמָּדִי
[Gen 35:3](#)
the one who answered me in the day of
distress and has been with me
8. הוּא בִנָּה עִיר בְּדָמִים וְכוֹנֵן
קָרְיָה בְּעוֹלָה:
[Hab 2:12](#)
Woe to him who builds a city with
bloodshed and establishes a town by
crime!
9. הַנִּשְׁבָּעִים ... וְאָמְרוּ
[Amos 8:14](#)
those who swear ... and say⁵⁵

Footnotes:

1. R. H. Robins, P. Swiggers, and A. Martinet in *MPD* 21, 26–27, 41, 44, 50, 59, 81.
2. R. Quirk et al., *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1972) 135.
3. The stative active qatēl form (e.g., *kabed*) is often called a verbal adjective; see, e.g., GKC § 116b / p. 356. For passive quttal forms, note, e.g., *'ukkāl* 'consumed' ([Exod 3:2](#)), for passive qittōl, e.g., *yillōd* 'born' ([Exod 1:22](#)).
4. *LHS* 93.

5. A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* (3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901) 130.
6. S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1892) 35–36.
7. Moshe Greenberg, *Introduction to Hebrew* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 55.
8. GKC § 116b / p. 356.
9. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 158.
10. BL§361' / p.278.
11. GKC§116c/p.356.
12. GKC § 116b / p. 356.
13. B. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Die Stammbildung qōṭel als Übersetzungsproblem," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 (1981) 254–79, at 256; cf also his "Semantic Aspects of the Pattern Qōṭel," *Hebrew Annual Review* 1 (1977) 155–76.
14. So GKC § 84aS / p. 232.
15. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Stammbildung qōṭel," 259.
16. E. König, *Historisch-comparative Syntax der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897) 128.
17. Only in [Amos 7:14](#) and questioned there.
18. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Stammbildung qōṭel," 259.
19. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Stammbildung qōṭel," 259.
20. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Stammbildung qōṭel," 259.
21. Compare similar phrases in [Judg 18:16](#), [17](#).
22. Note also hā'īš hallābuš habbaḏīm ([Ezek 9:3](#)); and M. O'Connor, "The Grammar of Getting Blessed in Tyrian-Sidonian Phoenician," *Rivista di studi fenici* 5 (1977) 5–11, at 10–11.
23. For an example in a longer construct phrase, note ʿéreš zābat ḥalāb ūdbāš ([Exod 3:8](#)); cf [1 Kgs 18:19](#).
24. GKC § 116h / p. 358.
25. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 158.
26. The phrase occurs in the plural in [Exod 18:21](#).
27. Note that the MT has mō'īš ʾōtām in [Deut 18:12](#), while the Samaritan has mwryšm, as does the Qumran Temple Scroll in a synoptic passage. In Qumranic Hebrew, singular participles can govern either an object or possessive suffix, but plural participles can govern only possessive suffixes. See E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 76.
28. The use of participial titles for God is especially important in the old poetry of the Pentateuch (e.g., [Deut 32:39](#)) and Former Prophets (e.g., [1 Sam 2:6–8](#)) and in some of the prophets (e.g., [Amos 4:13](#), [5:8–9](#), [9:5–6](#); [Isa 43:1](#); [44:2](#), [24](#); [44:7](#), [9](#), [11](#), [18](#)) and in Job (e.g., [5:9](#), [9:9–10](#), [25:2](#)).
29. BL § 48y/p. 343.
30. Ordinarily qūm 'to arise (with hostility against)' governs an object with 'al or another preposition, but in verse the plural participle ('those who arise against') takes a suffix.
31. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Stammbildung qōṭel," 256.
32. GKC § 116f / p. 357, after Sellin.
33. Cf. [Deut 9:3](#).
34. The attribute is negated by lōʾ, cf., e.g., [Jer 2:2](#).
35. See GKC § 116g / p. 357. The participle nōšā' in [Zech 9:9](#), conventionally rendered 'victorious,' is difficult; it may have the sense 'saveable, (worthy) of being saved.'
36. König, *Historisch-comparative Syntax*, 129. The *Qere/Kethiv* variation in # 10c puts this view in doubt.
37. Cf. also [Isa 53:3](#).
38. On the definiteness disagreements, see Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, 133; on the separation, note also [Ps](#)

[19:8–11](#) and [137:7](#), pointed out to us by Paul Mosca; cf. [Ps 70:4](#).

39. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, 133.

40. Joüon § 121i / p. 341.

41. With # 7, cf. [Neh 9:3](#). On the particle *hnh*, see D. J. McCarthy, "The Uses of w^{sup}eʿ/sup^hinnēh in Biblical Hebrew," *Biblica* 61 (1950) 330–42. Examples ## 5–6 fit McCarthy's category of "excited perception," pp. 332–33.

42. Cf. Carl Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 46.

43. Contrast, e.g., König, *Historisch-comparative Syntax*, 129; and Davidson. *Hebrew Syntax*. 134.

44. See M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 156. In Modern Hebrew, the participle is clearly either nominal or verbal in any given context. In the tense system of Modern Hebrew, the pronoun + participle serves as the present tense. The participial construction involves the word order subject-verb-object (SVO), and it has contributed to the dominance of that word order. See A. Gordon, "The Development of the Participle in Biblical, Mishnaic, and Modern Hebrew," *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 8 (1982) 121–79; Gordon's survey of Biblical Hebrew usage is somewhat skewed by his use of verse and prose materials as strictly comparable.

45. Again, compare McCarthy's "excited perception," in "Uses of w^{sup}eʿ/sup^hinnēh," 332–33.

46. Cf. also [1 Kgs 3:3](#) (cf. # 15), [4:20](#).

47. The subject *qôl* is singular; the participle is plural by attraction to *dēmê* (cf. 7.4.1 b).

48. Cf. [Exod 8:16](#).

49. On this verse, see C. H. J. van der Merwe, "Hebrew Grammar, Exegesis and Commentaries," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 11 (1983) 143–46, at 145–46.

50. In 37.7 we follow closely GB 2. 72–74 (§ 13i-1).

51. Contrast GKC §116r / p. 360. Usually when the participle precedes *hyy*, it is either an adjective ([Deut 9:22](#), [Ps 122:2](#)) or a substantive ([Deut 9:7](#) = [9:24](#) = [31:27](#)).

52. Joüon § 121g / pp. 340–41; cf. G. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. and sup. P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 84.

53. Cf. [Esth 9:21](#), [27](#).

54. Cf. [Ps 147:14–15](#).

55. Cf. [Mic 3:5](#).

38 Subordination

[38.1 Textual Organization](#)

[38.2 Conditional Clauses](#)

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[38.5 Comparative Clauses](#)

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[38.8 Constituent Noun Clauses](#)

38.1 Textual Organization

a

The principal subjects of this grammar are the internal organization of phrases and clauses; we have considered these in the larger context of the biblical discourse but without close attention to the ways in which that discourse works (3.3.4). The basis for larger textual organization is furnished by various classes of markers, notably particles, including conjunctions such as **וְ** and **אֲשֶׁר** and exclamations such as **הִנֵּה** and by various verb and noun forms such as **וַיְהִי** and **אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה**. It is with these and similar markers that the three final chapters are concerned. In this chapter we discuss some aspects of subordination, namely, the grammatical control of one clause by another clause, that is, by a main clause; in the next chapter we discuss some features of coordination, that is, the grammatical association of two or more clauses; and in Chapter 40 we discuss exclamations and interrogative clauses.

b

Much of the Masoretic system is focused on textual organization, and a few of the relevant features may be mentioned.¹ Modern grammarians of Biblical Hebrew have, until recently, tended to slight the study of the Masorah, viewing that mass of observations and notes as the result of study undertaken long after the biblical text was recorded. It has become increasingly clear that the Masoretes were first of all recorders and preservers of tradition and only then scholars interested in reconstructing the shape of that tradition (cf. 1.6.3g-m).²

c

The Masoretes supplied the preserved text with four features which assist the exegete in analyzing both the discourse's units of thought and the relationships among clauses and words. To stay within the scope of this grammar we limit ourselves to a simple presentation. (1) Paragraphs (based on content) called *pisqot* or *parashiyot*, are marked by spaces in the text. The *pisqot* seem to have been marked in early (Jewish) manuscripts of the Greek translation, showing that they were a feature of the text before the turn of the era.³ (2) The division into verses was formalized later than that into *pisqot*. Nevertheless, it seems that the Bible was divided into verses in talmudic times, since there are *halakot* (legal findings) which depend on this feature.⁴ (3) Column and line divisions are also useful. "In a synagogue scroll, care is taken to begin every column with some word beginning with *waw*, with the exception of six columns which must begin with particular words," including notably **בְּרֵאשִׁית** ([Gen 1:1](#)).⁵ The "songs" in the Torah are written in a distinctive format, described in the Talmud. The manner in which the other biblical poems and lists are written is less rigidly fixed.⁶ (4) The accents constitute the most complex of these features. Whereas the first three contribute to understanding a variety of linguistic facts, the accentuation system is most important for understanding the relationship of words and clauses within a given verse. Such understanding, however, is not strictly the first goal of the accents. Rather, as Israel Yeivin notes, they supplement the text.

Their primary function ... is to represent the musical motifs to which the Biblical text was chanted in the

public reading. This chant enhanced the beauty and solemnity of the reading, but because the purpose of the reading was to present the text clearly and intelligibly to the hearers, the chant is dependent on the text, and emphasizes the logical relationships of the words. Consequently the second function of the accents is to indicate the interrelationship of the words in the text. The accents are thus a good guide to the syntax of the text; but ... accentuation marks semantic units, which are not always identical with syntactic units.⁷

d

The medieval rabbinical interpreters and the ancient versions generally understood the text in a way consistent with the accents. To make this point, Yeivin cites Abraham ibn Ezra: "You should not listen to, or agree with, any interpretation which is not consistent with the accentuation."⁸ The complex accentual systems added to the text by the Masoretes represent an important understanding of the text, one that complements the study of Hebrew grammar but one that needs to be taken up independently.⁹

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e

If we seek to systematize our understanding of textual organization, we need to introduce the notion of different levels and types of organization. Not every verse, for example, works in the same way in itself and in relation to the verses around it. We may recognize a class of major textual markers or macrosyntactic signs, by which we mean conjunctions and other expressions that bind together the sentences constituting a larger span of text. Wolfgang Schneider defines macrosyntactic signs, the basis of his discourse analysis, as follows:

Macrosyntactic signs are words, particles, and expressions which serve ... to mark out the major divisions of a text. ... The speaker inserts such macrosyntactic signs in order to highlight for the hearer the beginning, transitions, climaxes, and conclusions of his address. ... Even if the spoken (colloquial) language is the essential sphere of such macrosyntactic signs, nevertheless its influence can be also observed in the literary, fixed linguistic forms, such as we encounter in the Bible, especially in contexts involving dialogue.¹⁰

Schneider lists the following macrosyntactic signs as introductory and transitional signals in dialogue: הִנֵּה, הִנֵּה, וְהִנֵּה, and וְעַתָּה. He cites the following as signals for breaking up narrative: וַיְהִי as introductory and transitional and וְהִנֵּה as transitional. As Schneider cautions, his study is only an initial step in identifying and systematizing macrosyntactic signs. Like the Masoretic accent system, this method of analyzing textual organization requires independent study (cf. 3.3.4).

f

A simpler approach may be offered. Sometimes a sign may serve on more than one level. Consider, for example, וְ in these two sentences:

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1a. | הַבָּאֵשׁ הַבָּאֵשׁ
הַבָּאֵשׁ פִּלְלֵהוּ הִיא לִי
לְעֶבֶד | He has made himself so odious
[elsewhere] ... that he will be my
servant. |
| | | 1 Sam 27:12 |
| 1b. | וְהָיָה בְּעַנְיִי עָנָן עַל־הָאָרֶץ | And it will be, whenever I bring clouds
over the earth ... |
| | | Gen 9:14 |

In the first sentence וְ is an interclausal conjunction, introducing a logically dependent clause within a sentence; in the second it adds another, separate provision to the Noahic covenant, and joins it to what precedes, on a macrosyntactic or intersentential level.¹¹ Strictly speaking, relative waw with the short prefix conjugation is a macrosyntactic conjunction, binding together sentences within a larger span of discourse, whereas relative

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waw with the suffix conjugation is often a interclausal conjunction, binding together clauses within a sentence.¹² A rough distinction between the intersentential and interclausal conjunctions enables us to discuss the latter more

discretely.

g

Even if we limit our focus to interclausal connections, complexities abound. Two types of conjunctions bind clauses together: the coordinating conjunction *waw* 'and' and the subordinating conjunctions.¹³ The latter class includes **אשר** and the *š* and *z* elements, various other subordinating words, and prepositions. The important clausal signal **אשר**, along with other signals of relative clauses, is treated in Chapter 19. This conjunction and the other relatives may also subordinate to a main clause conditional clauses, final clauses, consequence clauses, causal clauses, comparative clauses, temporal clauses, and noun clauses.

h

The system expressed in the text may skew the unexpressed semantic system; for example, the conjunction **ו** and the deictic particle **הנה** may conceal the logically subordinate relationship of the clauses which they introduce.¹⁴ With regard to the former, compare, for example, these two synoptic sentences.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 2a. | עֲלֵה וְנָתַתִּים בְּיָדָי: | Go up, and [i.e., because] I will hand them over to you.
1 Chr 14:10 |
| 2b. | עֲלֵה כִּי־נָתַתִּי אֹתָם
אֶת־הַפְּלִשְׁתִּים בְּיָדָי: | Go up, because I will hand the Philistines over to you.
2 Sam 5:19 |

The discourse system in # 2b expresses the logical connection between the clauses, which is veiled by the **ו** in #

2a. We discuss the words **ו** and **הנה** in part in order to uncover the skewing between the text's syntax and its semantic system (39.2, 40.2.1). Asyndetic constructions, those without conjunctions, omit any linking word or expression, depending totally on the semantic system operating behind the text to establish the interpositional relationships.

i

In this chapter we survey some of the major types of subordinate clauses and conjunctions, leaving aside relative clauses (Chap. 19) and infinitive clauses (Chap. 36).¹⁵

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Most conjunctions have both a cohesive function (they tie the text together) and a subordinating function (they signal the hierarchical relationships of the units within the text). In Chapter 39 we survey the use of **ו** and related adverbial usage; in Chapter 40 the workings of **הנה** and similar exclamatory terms, as well as of interrogative **ה**, are treated.

38.2 Conditional Clauses

a

One of the most common types of logical relation between clauses is the conditional. "Any two clauses, the first of which states a real or hypothetical condition, and the second of which states a real or hypothetical consequence thereof, may be taken as a conditional sentence," T. O. Lambdin states.¹⁶ Note the following alignment of relevant terms.

situation	condition	consequence
logic	protasis	apodosis
clause	subordinate	main
English	'If	then'

b

In our discussion of the waw-*qatal* construction (32.2.1) we noted that the waw-relative in that construction often serves as an apodosis waw, introducing the consequential independent clause (the apodosis) after the conditional dependent clause (the protasis). Many of the uses of waw-*qatal* discussed there satisfy the definition of a conditional sentence. We will not review all of those constructions here. Moreover, in that chapter we also noted the various constructions that occur in the protasis.¹⁷

c

There are two classes of conditionals, depending on whether the condition is real (whether fulfilled in the past or still capable of being fulfilled) or unreal (whether contrary to the facts of a previous situation or incapable of fulfillment).¹⁸

d

The protasis of a real conditional is usually introduced by אם (## 1–2)¹⁹ or, in the negative, לא אם (## 1, 3); the verb of the protasis may be non-perfective (# 1) or perfective (## 2–3).

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- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. אם תהיו כָּמוֹנוּ
וְנָתַנוּ אֶת־בָּנֵינוּ לָכֶם
וְאֶת־בָּנֹתֵיכֶם נִקְחָלָנוּ
וְיִשְׁבּוּ אִתְּכֶם
וְהָיִינוּ לְעָם אֶחָד:
וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ אֲלֵינוּ...
וְלָקַחְנוּ אֶת־בָּתְּנוּ
וְהָלַכְנוּ</p> | <p>If you become like us ... ,
then we will give you our daughters
and take your daughters;
and we will dwell with you
and become one people.
But if you do not listen to us ...
we will take our daughter
and go.
Gen 34:15–17</p> |
| <p>2. וְאִם־יִשְׁבּוּ פֹה וְנָמַתּוּ</p> | <p>And if we stay here, we shall die.
2 Kgs 7:4</p> |
| <p>3. וְהָיָה אִם־לֹא חָפְצָת בָּהּ
וְשִׁלַּחְתָּהּ</p> | <p>And if you are not pleased with her, you
can send her away.
Deut 21:14</p> |

The particle כִּי can introduce a protasis, too, standing either first (# 4) or directly after the subject (# 5), which may thus be taken as a *casus pendens*.²⁰

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>4. כִּי־תִמְצָא אִישׁ לֹא תִבְרַכְנוּ
וְכִי־יְבָרַכְךָ אִישׁ לֹא תַעֲנֶנּוּ</p> | <p>If you encounter someone, do not greet
him, and if anyone greets you, do not
answer.
2 Kgs 4:29</p> |
| <p>5. אָדָם כִּי־יָקִירִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן
... מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה מִן־הַבָּקָר
וּמִן־הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ</p> | <p>When any one of you brings an
offering ... , bring your offering from the
beasts or the herd or the flock ...
Lev 1:2</p> |

A protasis can also be introduced by אשר (# 6, note the negative in אִם־לֹא), הֵן (# 7), or asyndetically (# 8). Conditional sentences may consist of two waw-relative clauses in juxtaposition (32.2.3).

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>6. רֵאָה אֲנִכִּי נָתַן לְפָנֶיכֶם</p> | <p>Look: I am giving you a choice today,</p> |
|---|--|

blessing or curse—the blessing (will obtain) if you listen ... and the curse (will obtain) if you do not listen ...

And if you say, "What shall we eat ... if we may not sow ... ?", [you should realize that] I will command my blessing for you.

(When/if) you give it to them, they gather it up.²¹

The protasis of an irreal conditional may be introduced by לִּי (## 9–11) or, in the negative, לֹא לִי (לֹא + לִי: # 12).²² The particle לִּי may introduce a free-standing

protasis, one without an apodosis (# 13); the sense is then 'oh (I wish) that, would that.'²³ The particle ׀ can also introduce an irreal conditional (# 14).

If there were a sword in my hand, I would surely now kill you.

If they were wise, they would understand this.

If YHWH had wanted to kill us, he would not have taken ... the offering ...

If the God of my father ... had not been on my side, you would have sent me away empty-handed.

Would that we had been content to dwell on the other side of the Jordan!

Even if I were walking in the valley of death's shadow, I would not fear (anything) evil.

In Hebrew (as in many languages) expressions of purpose and consequence are not always readily distinguished; the precise sense of the relevant constructions and particles must be determined from context.²⁴ The main clause expresses a situation, and the subordinate clause either a purpose (final or telic clause) or a consequence (result

clause). We have already considered the common use of / + the infinitive to form a purpose clause (36.2.2–3). Here we take up other markers of final and result clauses, positive and negative.

b

The relative conjunction **אֲשֶׁר** is common in a variety of final and result clauses. In positive clauses **אֲשֶׁר** alone can introduce either a final (# 1) or a result clause (# 2). Final clauses are introduced by **לְמַעַן**,²⁵ with or without **אֲשֶׁר** (## 3–6), or by **בְּעֶבֶר**, with or without **אֲשֶׁר** (## 7–8); **לְמַעַן** can govern a finite verb (## 3–4) or an infinitive construct

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(## 5–6). A result clause can be introduced by **כִּי** (## 9–11), notably after a question (## 9–10).

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | וַאֲשַׁמְעֵם אֶת־דְּבָרִי אֲשֶׁר
לְלַמְּדוֹן לִירְאָה אֹתִי | I will make them hear my words, so that
(i.e., with the goal that) they may learn
to fear me.
Deut 4:10 |
| 2. | וַיִּקְרָא ... שְׁם־הַמָּקוֹם
הַהוּא ... אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַיּוֹם | He called ... the the place ... so that
(i.e., with the result that) to this day it is
said ...
Gen 22:14 |
| 3. | לְמַעַן יֵאֱמִינוּ כִּי | so that they might believe that ...
Exod 4:5 |
| 4. | לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יַצְוֶה אֶת־בָּנָיו | so that he will direct his children
Gen 18:19 |
| 5. | לְמַעַן זָבַח לַיהוָה | so that they (the people) might sacrifice
to YHWH
1 Sam 15:15 |
| 6. | לְמַעַן הִדִּיחִי אֹתְכֶם | so that I will banish you
Jer 27:15 |
| 7. | בְּעֶבֶר יִשְׁמְרוּ חֻקָּיו | so that they might keep his precepts
Ps 105:45 |
| 8. | בְּעֶבֶר אֲשֶׁר יְבָרֵךְךָ | so that he may bless you
Gen 27:10 |
| 9. | מָה־אָנוּשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ | What is man that you think of him?
Ps 8:5 |
| 10. | הֲאֵלֹהִים אֲנִי ... כִּי־זֶה
שִׁלַּח אֵלַי | Am I God ... that this person sends to
me ... ?
2 Kgs 5:7 |
| 11. | לֹא־עָשִׂיתִי מְאוֹמָה כִּי־שָׂמוּ
אֹתִי בְּבוֹר: | I have done nothing that they should
have put me in the pit.
Gen 40:15 |

c

Negative final and result clauses also use **אֲשֶׁר**, with **לֹא** (# 12, final; # 13, result). Negative final clauses may be introduced by **פֶּן** (# 14), **לְבִלְתִּי** (# 15), and **לֹא לְמַעַן** (# 16).²⁶ Negative result clauses may be infinitive

clauses after **כִּי** (# 17).

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- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 12. | אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שֶׁפֶת רֵעֵהוּ: | so that they will not understand each other

Gen 11:7 |
| 13. | אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יֹאמְרוּ זֹאת אִיזָבֵל: | so that no one will be able to say, "This is Jezebel"

2 Kgs 9:37 |
| 14. | שְׁלַף חֶרֶבְךָ וּמֹתֵתֵנִי פֶן־יֹאמְרוּ לִי אִשָּׁה הִרְגָתָהוּ | Unsheath your sword and slay me, lest (people) say of me, "A woman slaughtered him."

Judg 9:54 |
| 15. | בָּא הָאֱלֹהִים ... לְבַלְתִּי תִחַטָּאוּ: | God has come ... in order that you might not sin.

Exod 20:20 |
| 16. | לְמַעַן לֹא אֶחַטָּא־לָךְ: | in order that I might not sin against you

Ps 119:11 |
| 17. | כִּי־שַׁלַּחְנוּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִעֲבָדֵנוּ: | that we have let the Israelites go with the result that they will no longer serve us

Exod 14:5 |

38.4 Causal Clauses

a

If one situation constitutes the basis for another, that first or causal situation can be described with an infinitive clause (36.2.2–3), a clause with relative *waw* and suffix form (32.2.3), or by a clause introduced by one of a number of particles. The most common are **כִּי** (## 1–2) and **אֲשֶׁר** (# 3). Both of these can be used with **יַעַן** (11.2.8), which can also be used alone (## 4–7); **יַעַן** can govern a finite form (## 4–6) or an infinitive construct (# 7).²⁷ Like **יַעַן**, **יַעַן** is derived from the root of the verb **עָנָה** 'to answer.'

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | כִּי־מַיִם עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָעֶרֶץ | because there was water over all the surface of the earth

Gen 8:9 |
| 2. | כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת אָרוּר אַתָּה | Because you did this, may you be cursed.

Gen 3:14 |
| 3. | אֲשֶׁר שָׁכְבָה עָלָיו: | because she lay on top of him

1 Kgs 3:19 |
| 4. | יַעַן כִּי־מָאַסְתֶּם אֶת־דְּבַר יְהוָה | because you have rejected the word of YHWH

1 Sam 15:23 |
| 5. | יַעַן כִּי־מָאַסְתֶּם אֶת־יְהוָה | because you have rejected YHWH

Num 11:20 |
| 6. | כִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ | because you did this thing |

אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה

[Gen 22:16](#)

7. יֵעַן אֲמַרְכֶם אֶת־הַדָּבָר
הַזֶּה because you use this word

[Jer 23:38](#)

Less frequent combinations are numerous. The preposition **עַל** (11.2.13) can introduce causal clauses with other particles, yielding **עַל אֲשֶׁר** (# 8), **עַל־כִּי**, and **עַל־דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר** 'through the fact that.' The preposition **בְּזֶן** (11.2.11) is also so used, in **מֵאֲשֶׁר** (# 9) or

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קָב **אֲשֶׁר**, as are **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר** (11.2.15), in **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר** (# 10) and **כִּי תַחַת**, and **בִּי**, in **בֵּאֲשֶׁר** (# 11). The term **קָב** 'consequence,' related to **עָקַב** 'heel,' is also combined with **אֲשֶׁר** to introduce causes (# 12).

8. **עַל אֲשֶׁר הָמִית
אֶת־עֲשָׂהאֵל** because he had killed Asahel
[2 Sam 3:30](#)
9. **מֵאֲשֶׁר יִקְרָתָּ בְּעֵינַי** because you are precious in my eyes
[Isa 43:4](#)
10. **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר־לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ
אֶל־דְּבָרַי** because they have not hearkened to my words
[Jer 29:19](#)
11. **בֵּאֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אִתּוֹ** because YHWH was with him
[Gen 39:23](#)
12. **עָקַב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעַתָּ בְּקוֹלִי:** because you obeyed me
[Gen 22:18](#)

38.5 Comparative Clauses

a

Clauses comparing one situation with another often use particles to introduce both the situation compared (in the subordinate clause or protasis) and the present situation (in the main clause or apodosis). The most common pairing is **כַּאֲשֶׁר** + protasis—**כֵּן** + apodosis (## 1–4), usually in that order, although the reverse may be found (# 4). The protasis may be introduced by **כִּי** before either an infinitive (# 5) or a verbless clause (# 6), with **כֵּן** in the apodosis.²⁸ (For comparative **עַם**, see 11.2.14.)

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1. **וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר פָּתַר־לָנוּ כֵּן
הָיָה** And it was the case that as he interpreted for us, so it was.
[Gen 41:13](#)
2. **וְכַאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנֶה אֹתוֹ כֵּן יִרְבֶּה
יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפְרֹץ** The more they (the Egyptians) oppressed them (the Israelites), the more they multiplied and burst forth.
[Exod 1:12](#)
As a lion ... growls over its prey (and) ...

3. כַּאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָאָרֶץ ...
עַל־טָרְפוֹ ... לֹא יִחַת ...
כֵּן יֵרֶד יְהוָה ...
עַל־הַר־צִיּוֹן
- is not frightened off ... , so YHWH ... will
come down on Mount Zion.
- [Isa 31:4](#)
4. כֵּן תַּעֲשֶׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:
- So do, according to what you say.
- [Gen 18:5](#)
5. כָּרְבָם כֵּן חָטְאוּ־לִי
- As [the more] they multiplied, so [the
more] they sinned against me.
- [Hos 4:7](#)
6. הִנֵּה כְּעֵינֵי עֲבָדִים אֶל־יָד
אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם ... כֵּן עֵינֵינוּ
אֶל־יְהוָה
- As the eyes of slaves (look) to the hand
of their master ... so our eyes (look) to
YHWH.
- [Ps 123:2](#)

The particle כֵּן can be used with two compared things, the effect being that the situation of one of them is likened to that of the other. The present situation (i.e., the situation under discussion) is usually given first (## 7–8), though the reverse is found (## 9–10).²⁹

7. וְהָיָה כַּצְדִּיק כַּרָּשָׁע
- And the (state of the) righteous would
be like the (state) of the wicked.
- [Gen 18:25](#)
8. כִּי כַּמֶּלֶךְ כְּפָרְעֹה:
- Indeed, you are like Pharaoh.
- [Gen 44:18](#)
9. כַּחֲטָאת כַּאֲשֶׁם תּוֹרָה אַחַת
לָהֶם
- The guilt offering (ʿšm) is like the sin
offering (ḥṭt): there is one set of rules
for (both of) them.
- [Lev 7:7](#)
10. כַּכֶּם כִּגֹּר יִהְיֶה לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה:
- As you are, so shall the sojourner be
before YHWH.
- [Num 15:15](#)

38.6 Exeptive Clauses

a

There is a small class of dependent clauses which presents exceptions to the situation described in the corresponding main clauses. Exeptive dependent clauses are similar in function to restrictive independent clauses, marked by such sentential adverbs as כִּי (39.3.5); the clauses differ in that the independent clauses refer to a longer stretch of preceding text, while the dependent clauses refer only to the immediately preceding main clause.³⁰

b

The particle אם is frequent in exeptive clauses, with בְּלִתִּי (# 1) or כִּי (## 2–4); בְּלִתִּי is found without אם (# 5).

1. הֲיִתֵּן כִּפּוּר קוּלוֹ ... בְּלִתִּי
אִם־לְכָד:
- Does a lion roar ... unless it has
vanquished (its prey)?³¹

2. **לֹא אֶשְׁלַחְךָ כִּי
אִם־בֵּרַכְתָּנִי:** [Amos 3:4](#)
I won't release you unless you bless me.
3. **כִּי לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה
דְּבַר כִּי אִם־גָּלָה סוּדוֹ
אֶל־עַבְדָּיו הַנְּבִיאִים:** [Gen 32:27](#)
The Lord YHWH does nothing unless he
has revealed his plan to his servants, the
prophets.³²
4. **וְלֹא יֹאכַל מִן־הַקֹּדְשִׁים כִּי
אִם־רָחַץ בַּשָּׁרוֹ בַּמַּיִם:** [Amos 3:7](#)
He shall not eat of the holy things unless
he washes himself in water.
5. **לֹא־תִרְאוּ פָנַי בְּלֹתִי
אֲחִיכֶם אִתְּכֶם:** [Lev 22:6](#)
You will not see my face unless your
brother is with you.
- [Gen 43:3](#)

38.7 Temporal Clauses

a

The majority of dependent temporal clauses are formed with an infinitive introduced by a preposition (36.2.2–3; 11.2.5, 9–11). There are a variety of other temporal clause types, however, introduced by other particles. These may be classified according to the temporal relation of the main clause situation and that of the subordinate clause. If the situations are contemporary, the conjunction is usually **כַּאֲשֶׁר** (# 1) or **כִּי** (# 2); **אִם** is rarely used in this way (# 3).³³ If the subordinate clause refers to a later situation, the conjunction is most commonly **עַד** (11.2.12), alone (# 4) or in combination, **עַד אֲשֶׁר** (# 5), **אִם, עַד אִם**, or **כִּי, עַד**; **טַרְם**, alone (# 6) or with **ב** (# 7), is also used (cf. 31.6.3 on the use of prefix forms). For a preceding situation, the conjunction is most often **אַחֵר** or **אַחֲרֵי** (# 8; 11.2.1), either of which can be used with **אֲשֶׁר** (# 9); **מֵאָז** is also used (# 10).

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1. **וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה לְהַקְרִיב
אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה וַיִּשְׁלַח
אֶת־הָעָם** [Judg 3:18](#)
When he (Ehud) had presented the
tribute, he sent the people away.
2. **כִּי־אֶרְאֶה שָׁמַיִךְ** [Ps 8:4](#)
When/as often as I see your heavens ...
3. **וְהָיָה אִם־זָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְעָלָה מִדְיָן** [Judg 6:3](#)
Whenever the Israelites had planted
their crops, the Midianites attacked.
4. **תָּמִים אָתָּה ... עַד־נִמְצָא
עוֹלָתְךָ בְּךָ:** [Ezek 28:15](#)
You were blameless ... until iniquity was
found in you.
5. **וְלֹא־הֵאֱמַנְתִּי לְדְבָרִים עַד
אֲשֶׁר־בָּאתִי וַתִּרְאֵינִה עֵינִי** [1 Kgs 10:7](#)
I did not believe (such) things until I
came and saw (them) with my own
eyes.

6. וַיִּלְנוּ שָׁם טָרֵם יַעֲבְרוּ: They camped there before they crossed over.
[Josh 3:1](#)
7. בְּטָרֵם יָבֹא הַמַּלְאָךְ אֵלָיו
וְהוּא אָמַר Before the messenger came to him, he had said ...
[2 Kgs 6:32](#)
8. וְאִם-יָשׁוּב הַנֶּגַע וּפָרַח
בְּבֵית אַחֵר חֲלִין
אֶת-הָאֲבָנִים וְאַחֲרֵי הַקְצוֹת
אֶת-הַבֵּית וְאַחֲרֵי הַטּוֹחַ:
וּבֹא הַכֹּהֵן וּרְאֵה If the infection returns and again breaks out in the house, after he has pulled out the stones and after scraping(?) the house and after plastering, the priest shall go inspect.
[Lev 14:43–44](#)
9. בְּאַרְבַּע עָשָׂר שָׁנָה אַחֵר
אֲשֶׁר הִכְתָּה הָעִיר in the fortieth year after the city was captured
[Ezek 40:1](#)
10. וַיְהִי מֵאִזְּהָ הַפְּקִיד אֹתוֹ
בְּבֵיתוֹ ... וַיְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה
אֶת-בֵּית הַמִּצְרִי And from the time that he (the master) had set him (Joseph) over his house ... , YHWH blessed the Egyptian's house.
[Gen 39:5](#)

38.8 Constituent Noun Clauses

a

It is common for a clause to stand in a case frame usually occupied by a noun; such a dependent clause is called a noun clause or a constituent noun clause.³⁴ (A verbless clause, also called a nominal clause, is an independent clause with subject and predicate; see 8.4.) A noun clause is often prefaced by **כִּי**, **אֲשֶׁר**, or (in the accusative case frame) **אֵת**; those clauses preceded by **כִּי** or **אֲשֶׁר** are often called "that clauses" (since the particle involved is often translated 'that'), while many noun clauses are called "object clauses."

b

In a nominative case frame, a clause can serve as the subject of a main clause (## 1, 3–4) or as a predicate nominative (# 2). The noun clause can be an infinitive construct (often with **לֵ**; # 1), an **אֲשֶׁר** clause (## 2–3), or a **כִּי** clause (# 4); a clause in apposition is usually asyndetic (# 5). The noun clause may be masculine (## 2–5) or feminine (# 1).

1. כִּי מֵאֵת יְהוָה הָיְתָה לְחֻזֵּק
אֶת-לִבָּם From YHWH was the hardening (of) their heart.
[Josh 11:20](#)
2. זֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ This is how you are to build it.
[Gen 6:15](#)
3. טוֹב אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִדָּר Better that you do not vow than ... (lit., it is better that you do not vow than ...).
[Qoh 5:4](#)
4. וְלִשְׁאוּל הַגִּיד כִּי-נִמְלֹט That David had left Keilah was told to Saul (lit., it was told Saul that David ...).

דִּוּר מִקְעִילָה

[1 Sam 23:13](#)

5. וְהִנֵּה אִמֶּת נָכוֹן הַדָּבָר
נַעֲשֶׂתָה הַתּוֹעֵבָה הַזֹּאת
- If the matter is established as true that
this detestable thing was done ... ³⁵

[Deut 13:15](#)

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c

A noun clause may occur after a noun in the construct, that is, in a genitive frame. The clause may be introduced by **אֲשֶׁר** (## 6–7) or it may be asyndetic (## 8–9).³⁶ Similarly, a noun clause can follow a preposition, with **אֲשֶׁר** (# 10) or without it (## 11–12).

6. אֶל-בֵּית הַסֵּהַר מְקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר-אֲסִירֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲסוּרִים
- to the prison, the place where the king's
prisoners were confined
- [Gen 39:20](#) Qere
7. כָּל-יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר הִנָּע בּוֹ
יִטְמָא טָמֵא הוּא
- All the time he has the infection he is
unclean.
- [Lev 13:46](#)
8. כָּל-יְמֵי הַתְּהַלֵּכְנוּ אִתָּם
- all the days we went about with them
- [1 Sam 25:15](#)
9. תַּחֲלַת דְּבַר-יְהוָה בְּהוֹשֵׁעַ
- When YHWH began to speak through
Hosea ...
- [Hos 1:2](#)
10. אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר-הֵנִיחַ יְהוָה
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל
- after YHWH had given Israel rest
- [Josh 23:1](#)
11. וַיִּגְדֹּל יַעֲקֹב אֶת-לֵב לָבֹן ...
עַל-בְּלֵי הַגִּיד לוֹ כִּי בָרַח
הוּא:
- Jacob deceived Laban ... by not telling
him that he was fleeing.
- [Gen 31:20](#)
12. עַל לֹא-חָמָס בְּכַפִּי
- though there is no violence in my hands
- [Job 16:17](#)

d

In an accusative frame, a clause may stand as an object of a verb or as an adverbial accusative. As an object, a constituent noun clause is frequent after verbs of perceiving (often with **כִּי**, ## 13, 18; less often with **אֲשֶׁר**, # 14; or asyndetic, # 15) and saying (generally asyndetic, # 16; sometimes with **אֲשֶׁר**, # 17).³⁷ The logical subject of the subordinate noun clause may be raised out of that clause and appear as the object of the main clause (# 18; cf. # 15). An adverbial-accusative noun clause may be juxtaposed to the main clause it depends on (# 19).

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13. וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת
הָאָדָם
- YHWH saw that human wickedness
was great.
- [Gen 6:5](#)

14. וַיֵּרָא שָׁאוּל אֲשֶׁר-הוּא מִשְׁכִּיל
Saul saw that he was successful (how successful he was).³⁸
[1 Sam 18:15](#)
15. מָה רָאִיתָם עֲשִׂיתִי מִהֲרוּ עֲשׂוּ כַּמוֹנִי:
What you have seen that I do, hasten to do like me.
[Judg 9:48](#)
16. כִּי אָמַר אִיּוֹב אוֹלֵי חַטָּאוֹ בְּנֵי
Job said, "Perhaps my children have sinned."
[Job 1:5](#)
17. וַיְהִי הוּא מֹסְפֵר לַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת אֲשֶׁר-הֶחְיָה אֶת-הַמֵּת
He (Gehazi) was telling the king that he (Elisha) revived the dead.³⁹
[2 Kgs 8:5](#)
18. וַיֵּרָא מִנְחָה כִּי טוֹב וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ כִּי נְעִמָּה
He saw that rest was good and the land was sweet.
[Gen 49:15](#)
19. וַיָּבֹא אֲלֵיהֶם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ פְּתָאֵם כָּל-הַלַּיְלָה עָלָה מִן-הַגִּלְגָּל:
Joshua came upon them suddenly (after) he had gone up from Gilgal throughout the night.
[Josh 10:9](#)

Footnotes:

1. We rely here on Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, ed. and trans. E. J. Revell (Masoretic Studies 5; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1980).
2. Two groups of materials are relevant: Qumranic texts that witness to the antiquity of certain aspects of the Masorah, and modern grammatical studies that show that the complexities of Masoretic study could not be the result of later reconstruction; for this latter group, see the various studies of phonology cited in the Bibliography (§ 1d-e), especially those of J. L. Malone and E. J. Revell.
3. Yeivin, *Tiberian Masorah*, 42.
4. Yeivin, *Tiberian Masorah*, 42.
5. Yeivin, *Tiberian Masorah*, 43.
6. Yeivin, *Tiberian Masorah*, 43.
7. Yeivin, *Tiberian Masorah*, 158.
8. Yeivin, *Tiberian Masorah*, 218.
9. For a preliminary analysis of the Masoretic accent system as a native-speaker grammatical analysis, see M. Aronoff, "Orthography and Linguistic Theory: The Syntactic Basis of Masoretic Hebrew Punctuation," *Language* 61 (1985) 28–72. For more on the concept of nativespeaker analyses, see M. O'Connor, "Writing Systems, Native Speaker Analyses, and the Earliest Stages of Northwest Semitic Orthography," *The Word Of The Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 439–65; O'Connor, "Writing Systems and Native Speaker Analyses," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 1986*, ed. K. H. Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 536–43.
10. Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammatik des biblischen Hebräisch* (Munich: Claudius, 1974) 261. The terms discourse analysis (North America) and text-linguistics and text-grammar (Europe) are more or less interchangeable. See Egon Werlich, *Typologie der Texte* (Heidelberg: Pöhlke und Meyer, 1975); as well as several papers by E. Talstra, on Schneider's work, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 35 (1978) 169–74, 39 (1982) 26–38; and on clause types, "Towards a Distributional Definition of Clauses in Classical

Hebrew: A Computer-Assisted Description of Clauses and Clause-Types in [Deut 4](#), 3–8, " *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 63 (1987) 95–105.

11. The combination *wəhayā* is the most common particle or particle combination found on both the interclausal and macrosyntactic levels, but others are also so used, e.g., *raq*.

12. We must assume that authors or editors of biblical books, though they may have used sources with differing macrosyntactic features, created a final text that was intelligible to their audiences. Contrast the views expressed in the influential study of W. Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Richterbuch* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1963), early, we add, in the astonishing range of that scholar's work.

13. Two common particles found in the clauses discussed here (and found elsewhere) are *ky* (used 4,470 times) and *gm* (767 times; SA/THAT). On *ky* in general, see A. Schoors, "The Particle ׀," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 (1981) 240–76.

Unlike many languages, Hebrew does not use a different word order for main and subordinate clauses; the general preference for verb-subject-object obtains in both groups, with many exceptions.

14. Traditional grammars, though not clearly expressing the point, have defined syntactic units by function and not solely by form, and we follow that practice, with appropriate caution. On the relationship between ׀*sr* as a pronoun and as a conjunction, see the study of M. H. [Goshen-]Gottstein, "Afterthought and the Syntax of Relative Clauses in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 68 (1949) 35–47.

15. In addition to the grammars, e.g., Richter, *GAHG* 3. 190–202, see J. Hoftijzer, *The Function and Use of the Imperfect Forms with Nun Paragogicum in Classical Hebrew* (Assert: Van Gorcum, 1985) 25–57, for another classification of subordinate clauses. Cf. also A. Niccacci, *Sintassi del verbo ebraico nella prosa biblica classica* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1986) 83–100.

16. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 276.

17. On the use of both *yqtl* and *qtl* forms in the protases of conditional sentences, see Joüon § 167/ pp. 512–18; note also the variation in the Ugaritic hippiatric texts—see D. Pardee, *Les Textes hippiatiques* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1985) 17–18, 41–42.

18. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 276–77. Some scholars distinguish from real conditionals a class of concessive clauses (anglice 'though, even though, even if'); see, e.g., R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto 1976) 88.

19. On this particle, see C. van Leeuwen, "Die Partikel ׀," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 18 (1973) 15–48; on conditional clauses, see pp. 16–27. There are 1,060 occurrences of ׀*m* (SA/THAT). On the Ugaritic particles ׀*im* (prose only) and *hm* (verse and prose), see Kjell Aartun, *Die Partikeln des Ugaritischen. 2. Präpositionen, Konjunktionen* (Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978) 95–97.

20. In case law, *ky* can introduce the major circumstance and ׀*m* the minor circumstances, e.g., [Exod 21:28](#) (*ky*)-[29](#) (*m*); cf. *LHS* 184, citing the sequence of [Exod 21:37](#) (*ky*), [22:1](#) (*m*), [22:2](#) (*m*).

21. Note, too, the second half of the verse.

22. There are a few cases in which *lûlê*(?) is not counterfactual; note the verse example in [Judg 14:18](#). On *lû*, see J. Huehnergard, "Asseverative **la* and Hypothetical **lu*/law in Semitic," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983) 569–93, esp. 570–71; with the phonological addendum of R. C. Steiner, "Lulav versus **lu*/law," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987) 121–22.

23. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 279. On the relation of the conditional sense and the other, which he calls optative, see Huehnergard, "Asseverative **la*," # 573–74; he suggests that at base the particle marks that "a statement [is] hypothetical, that a proposition [is] deemed by the speaker to be contrary to known fact or to reasonable expectation" (p. 574).

24. Similarly Joüon § 168a / p. 518, § 169i / p. 521. On *ky* in such clauses, see W. T. Claassen, "Speaker-Oriented Functions of *kî* in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 11 (1983) 29–46.

25. See H. A. Brongers, "Die Partikel ׀ in der biblisch-hebräischen Sprache," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 18 (1973) 84–96. Brongers suggests that *lmⁿ* introduces a result clause in a few cases ([Lev 20:3](#), [2 Kgs 22:17](#), [Amos 2:7](#); p. 89); he also notes that sometimes the particle is elliptical in sense and a paraphrase is necessary: "the consequence of which will be." The form *lmⁿ* occurs 270 times (SA/THAT).

26. In [Ezek 19:9](#) *lmⁿ Lⁿ* introduces a result clause (contrast the final clauses in [14:11](#), [25:10](#), [26:20](#)). The particle

pn occurs 133 times (SA/THAT).

27. See M. J. Mulder, "Die Partikel ׀", *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 18 (1973) 49–83, esp. pp. 56–80, on other causal conjunctions, see pp. 80–82.

28. Apparently the protasis in [Jer 3:20](#) has no introductory particle, but 'aken there is suspect; perhaps read 'akkə, with W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 60–61. See also Joüon § 174e / p. 528.

29. See also [Lev 24:16](#), kaggēr kā'ezrāḥ. The two k-phrases may together be seen as a type of "small clause," the rule of thumb.

30. Compare the treatment of Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 92–94, who keeps such clauses together; see also van Leeuwen, "Die Partikel ׀", 42–47, esp. 46–47.

31. Note also *bly* 'm in [Amos 3:3](#) and *ky* 'm in [3:7](#).

32. The occurrences of *bly* 'm in [Amos 3:3–4](#) are both governed by the interrogative particle; this otherwise similar clause with *ky* 'm is declarative.

33. See van Leeuwen, "Die Partikel ׀", 47–48.

34. See Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 80–82; M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 314–15.

35. The subject is *hdbr* and the clause *n'sth htw'bh hz't* is in apposition to it. Cf. also [Ps 99:4](#), also a verbless main clause, with the dependent clause *mšpt 'hb*, 'He loves justice.' Note also *zmt y'br py*, 'I have resolved: my mouth will not transgress' ([Ps 17:3](#)).

36. Note also 'm *hyšr hwk* 'with he who behaves uprightly' ([Mic 2:7](#)), where *hyšr* is an adverbial accusative governed by the participle *hwk*. The doubts expressed by L. H. Glinert about this use of clauses after a construct are overstated see "The Preposition in Biblical and Modern Hebrew," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982) 115–25, at 120.

37. This is not to sidestep the enormous problems of direct discourse in the Bible; see provisionally, K. R. Crim. "Hebrew Direct Discourse as a Translation Problem," *Bible Translator* 24 (1973) 311–16; O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 409–20.

38. Cf. [1 Sam 24:11](#).

39. The rendering of # 16 as direct discourse and of # 17 as indirect discourse should not be taken to suggest that Hebrew distinguishes these two formats in the way English (along with other European languages) does.

39 Coordination and Clausal Adverbs

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[39.3 Clausal Adverbs](#)

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39.1 Textual Organization

a

The continuity of Hebrew discourse, especially narrative, is the result of two factors. The first is the dominance of a single clausal coordinating conjunction over all others. So pervasive is *w* that the discourse is largely organized around this single particle, which, it should be noted, has other roles to play, notably as the particle joining nouns in sequence. The duty of clausal coordination is shared only with the rare *ʔδ* 'or' and possibly the extremely rare *p* 'and so.' The second factor responsible for discourse continuity is the class of clausal adverbs, particles that modify an entire clause, either in itself (notably the negative particles) or in relation to the surrounding discourse (the emphatic and restrictive particles).

b

In this chapter these two factors are considered. First, we take up the coordinators, filling in gaps in our earlier considerations of *waw* and discussing briefly *ʔδ* and *p*. The amorphous category of adverbs is then discussed, before we discuss the various types of clausal adverb.¹

39.2 Coordination

a

The three coordinating particles, *w*, *ʔδ*, and *p*, form a closely united phonological class, but in terms of use, only one is of major importance. Insofar as *ʔδ* and (if it occurs in Hebrew) *p* have defined roles, they can apparently everywhere be replaced by *w*.²

39.2.1 Basic Functions of *Waw*

a

The conjunction *w* has two basic roles to play in Hebrew: it conjoins nouns on the phrasal level and it conjoins clauses. That these are different roles is suggested by a variety of languages that distinguish them; that they are similar is shown by the greater number of languages (including English) that combine them.

b

Phrasal *w* is usually found on each item in a series (# 1) but sometimes only on the last of a series (# 2); it is rarely distributed irregularly through the series (# 3) and still more rarely omitted (# 4).

1. הַדָּגָן וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיֵּצֶהָר the grain and the must and the oil
[Hos 2:10](#)
2. חֲגֵה חַדְשָׁהּ וְשַׁבָּתָהּ her festival, her new-moon (feast), and
her sabbath³
[Hos 2:13](#)
3. נָתַנִּי לַחֲמִי וּמִימִי צִמְרִי those who give my bread and my water,
וּפִשְׁתִּי שְׁמִנִי וְשִׁקְוִי: my wool and my flax, my oil and my
drink⁴
[Hos 2:7](#)
4. בְּיָמֵי עֻזִּיָּהּ יוֹתָם אָחָז in the time of Uzziah-Jotham-Ahaz-
יְחִזְקִיָּה מֶלֶכִּי יְהוּדָה Hezekiah, kings of Judah
[Hos 1:1](#)

After a clausal negative, *waw* with a noun often has an alternative force (# 5); as with the operation of simple conjoining, the operation of specifying alternatives can be either phrasal or clausal. The sense of # 5 is 'I will not save by the bow and (I will) not (save) by the sword,' etc. Normally a noun phrase specifying or glossing another noun phrase stands juxtaposed to it in apposition (12.1), but sometimes *waw* intervenes (# 6). In some

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cases this explicative *waw* occurs on a non-appositional part of a clause; in such cases it may be called emphatic *waw* (# 7).⁵ Phrasal *waw* pointed as *wā* indicates a close bond between the parts of the phrase (# 8).⁶

5. וְלֹא אוֹשִׁיעֵם בְּקֶשֶׁת וּבַחֶרֶב וּבַמִּלְחָמָה בְּסוּסִים I will not save them by bow or by sword
וּבַפָּרָשִׁים: or by battle, by horses or charioteers.
[Hos 1:7](#)
6. וַיִּשֶׂם אֹתָם בְּכֵלֵי הָרָעִים He put them in the shepherds' vessel he
אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וּבִילְקוּט had, that is, in the pouch.
[1 Sam 17:40](#)
7. וְאֶעֱלֶה בְּאֵשׁ מִחֲנִיכֶם I will make the stench of your camp
וּבְאַפְכֶם ascend even into your nostrils.
[Amos 4:10](#)
8. וְנִין וְנָכֹד and offspring and descendant (or, *kith*
and kin)
[Isa 14:22](#)

c

Clausal *waw* is a simple conjunction, that is, it places propositions or clauses one after another, without indicating the hierarchical relation between them. Biblical Hebrew frequently joins logically subordinate clauses to a main clause either asyndetically or, more often, syndetically with this conjunction. G. B. Caird justly censures philologists who have inferred from this feature of the language that the Hebrews were intellectually naïve.

Yet there are eminent philologists who have drawn strangely faulty inferences from it. "The Semitic sentence is a succession of short sentences linked together by simple co-ordinate conjunctions. The principal mark, therefore, of Hebrew and especially of classical Hebrew style is that it is what the Greeks called *lexis eiromenê* 'speech strung together' like a row of beads. ... It will, therefore, be readily understood that philosophical reasoning and sustained argument were beyond the grasp of the Hebrew intellect or, at any

rate, beyond its power of expression" [G. R. Driver].

Driver is on sounder ground when he describes this as a feature of Hebrew style than when he attempts to deduce from it the limitations of Hebrew thought. Hebrew possesses words for 'if', 'because' and 'therefore'; and any language which has such words is capable of being used for logical thought.⁷

Although Hebrew relies heavily on *waw*, other indicators in the text's surface grammar sometimes mark out more precise logical values. Moreover, the patterns of the use of *waw* allow for precision.

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d

We have already considered *waw*-relative clauses (Chaps. 32, 33); here we primarily treat other types of clauses joined by *w«* (וַ). A starting point is provided by T. O. Lambdin, who analyzes clauses joined by *w«* into two types.

(1) conjunctive-sequential, in which the second clause is temporally or logically posterior or consequent to the first, and

(2) disjunctive, in which the second clause may be in various relations, all nonsequential, with the first.

The major device in Hebrew for signalling the difference between conjunctive and disjunctive clauses is the type of word which stands immediately after the *w«*:-

w«- (or *wa*-) + verb is conjunctive [-sequential]

w«- + non-verb is disjunctive.⁸

We have already seen that *waw* + the suffix conjugation can be purely conjunctive (32.3)⁹ and that relative *waw* with the verb can be epexegetical (32.2.3e, 33.2.2). To the two uses of *w«*/*wa* joining clauses cited by Lambdin, we accordingly add epexegetical and conjunctive.¹⁰

39.2.2 Conjunctive-sequential Waw

a

Most conjunctive-sequential uses of *waw* have been discussed in connection with *waw*-relative constructions with the suffix and prefix conjugations; there is no need to rehearse or sample that material here. We may recall one important construction: volitional form (i.e., cohortative, imperative, or jussive) + *w«* + prefix conjugation (## 1–2). In this use the second clause expresses a purpose or result ('so that'; 34.6).¹¹ It is often difficult to distinguish examples of this construction from cases with two volitional forms in a row (39.2.5).

1. אֶלְכָּה נָא וְאָכַח
אֶת־יִשְׁמָעֵאל Let me go so that I can kill Ishmael.
[Jer 40:15](#)
2. יָשֻׁב־נָא עִבְדְּךָ וְאָמַת
בְּעִירִי Let your servant return, so that I can die
in my own city.
[2 Sam 19:38](#)

39.2.3 Disjunctive Waw

a

Interclausal *waw* before a non-verb constituent has a disjunctive role. There are two common types of disjunction. One type involves a continuity of scene and participants, but a change of action, while the other is used where the scene or participants shift.

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b

If the disjunctive *waw* is used in a situation with continuity of setting, the clause it introduces may contrast with the preceding (## 1–2),¹² specify contemporary circumstances (usually verbless clauses; ## 3–5) or causes (## 6–7), or provide a comparison (## 8–9)

1. וַיָּשֶׁב אֶת־שָׂר הַמִּשְׁקִים
עַל־מִשְׁקָהוּ ... וְאֵת שָׂר
הָאֲפִים תָּלָה
He returned the chief butler to his
butlership, ... but he hanged the chief
baker.
[Gen 40:21–22](#)
2. וַיְהִי רָעָב בְּכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת
וּבְכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם
הָיָה בָלֶהֶם:
There was famine in all the (other) lands,
but throughout Egypt there was food.
[Gen 41:54](#)
3. נִבְנֶה־לָּנוּ עִיר וּמִגְדָּל
וְרֹאשׁוֹ בַּשָּׁמַיִם
Let us build a city and a tower, with its
top reaching into the sky.
[Gen 11:4](#)
4. וְהִנֵּה רִבְקָה יֹצֵאת ...
וְכִדָּה עַל־שִׁכְמָהּ:
Rebekah was coming out ... with her
pitcher on her shoulder.
[Gen 24:15](#)
5. וַיָּבֹא הַבֵּיתָה לַעֲשׂוֹת
מְלָאכְתּוֹ וְאִין אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי
הַבַּיִת שָׁם בְּבֵית:
And he came into the house to do his
work while none of the household staff
were there in the house.
[Gen 39:11](#)
6. אַל־תִּתְּאוּרוּ אֹתִי וַיְהוֶה
הַצָּלִיחַ דְּרָכִי
Do not detain me since YHWH has made
my journey successful.
[Gen 24:56](#)
7. וְגֵר לֹא תִלְחָץ וְאַתֶּם
יֹדְעֵתֶם אֶת־נֶפֶשׁ הַגֵּר
You shall not oppress a stranger
because you yourselves know the
feelings of a stranger.
[Exod 23:9](#)
8. מַיִם קָרִים עַל־נֶפֶשׁ עֵיפָה
וּשְׂמוּעָה טוֹבָה מֵאֶרֶץ
מִרְחָק:
[Like] cold water to a weary soul, so is
good news from a far land.¹³
[Prov 25:25](#)
9. הַדֶּלֶת תִּסּוּב עַל־צִירָהּ
וְעָצֹל עַל־מִטָּתוֹ:
[As] the door turns on its hinges, so a
 sluggard on his bed.
[Prov 26:14](#)

C

A disjunctive-*waw* clause may also shift the scene or refer to new participants; the disjunction may come at the beginning or end of a larger episode or it may "interrupt" one. The "interruptive" use, better called explanatory or parenthetical, "break[s] into the main narrative to supply information relevant to or necessary for the narrative" (# 10).¹⁴ The disjunction may also indicate "either the completion of one episode or the beginning

of another."¹⁵ At the beginning of a story episode, new, characters are often first mentioned (# 11); at the conclusion, further developments are briefly sketched or the narrated episode is put in context (# 12).

10. וַיֹּאמֶר הַגֹּאֵל ... גְּאֹל־לָךְ
אֶתְּךָ אֶת־גְּאֹלְתִּי ... וְזֹאת
לְפָנַי ... עַל־הַלְגָּאוֹלָה ...
לְקַיֵּם כָּל־דְּבַר שְׁלָךְ אִישׁ
נַעֲלוּ ... וַיֹּאמֶר הַגֹּאֵל
לְבַעַז קְנֵה־לָּךְ וַיִּשְׁלַף
נַעֲלוֹ:
The redeemer said, " ... Redeem my redemption for yourself ... " Now in the past this was ... (the procedure) for redemption ... : to establish any matter a man would draw off his sandal. ... So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Acquire (it) for yourself," he drew off his sandal.
[Ruth 4:6–8](#)
11. וּלְנַעֲמִי מוֹדַע לְאִשָּׁה ...
וּשְׁמוֹ בְּעִז:
Now, Naomi had a relative on her husband's side ... named Boaz.
[Ruth 2:1](#) Qere
12. וְאַלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת פֶּרֶץ ...
וּשְׁלֹמוֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־בְּעִז
הוֹלִיד אֶת־עוֹבֵד:
וַיְשִׁי הוֹלִיד אֶת־דָּוִד
Now, these are the generations of Perez. ... Salmon begot Boaz and Boaz begot Obed ... and Jesse begot David.
[Ruth 4:18, 21–22](#)

39.2.4 Epexegetical Waw

a

Waw may stand before clauses which serve to clarify or specify the sense of the preceding clause; the common use of the epexegetical waw, in prose, as the waw-relative has been discussed (e.g., 32.2.3, 33.2.2).

b

In verse the epexegetical waw is more problematic. H. A. Brongers has pointed out that where neighboring lines have nearly identical sense, the waw cannot be copulative but probably functions to intensify the poetry (## 1–2).¹⁶ He further suggests that in some cases it compensates for gapping of the initial verb (# 3)¹⁷ or as an emphatic waw ('yea') (# 4). When it intensifies the poetic expression, it is often best left untranslated in English. These three usages should be considered together because the distinction between them is subjective.

1. הִנֵּה שְׂכָרוֹ אִתּוֹ וּפְעֻלָּתוֹ
לְפָנָיו:
See, his reward is with him, his recompense [goes] before him.
[Isa 40:10](#)
2. יַעֲבֹדוּךָ עַמִּים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָךְ
לְאֵמִים
May nations serve you, peoples bow down to you.
[Gen 27:29](#) Qere
3. וְעַתָּה שְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב עַבְדִּי
וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל בַּחֲרָתִּי בּוֹ:
But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, [listen,] Israel, whom I have chosen.
[Isa 44:1](#)
4. אֵין־קְדוֹשׁ כִּיהוָה ... וְאֵין
There is no one holy like YHWH ... yea, there is no Rock like our God.

צור פאלהינו:

[1 Sam 2:2](#)

c

The epexegetical *waw* on the clausal level may serve the goal of introducing a clause restating or paraphrasing the previous clause;¹⁸ it may be found in either prose (## 5–6) or verse (## 7–8). The precise nuance of *waw* in these and similar cases is often hard to pin down.

5. וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר
יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע:
They said, "All that YHWH has said, we
will do, that is, we will obey."
[Exod 24:7](#)
6. אֲבָל אִשָּׁה-אֶלְמָנָה אָנִי
וַיָּמָת אִישִׁי:
Alas, I am a widow, that is, my husband
has died.
[2 Sam 14:5](#)
7. כִּי-גוֹי אֲבָר עֲצוֹת הֵמָּה
וְאֵין בָּהֶם תְּבוּנָה:
They are a nation without sense, that is,
there is no discernment in them.
[Deut 32:28](#)
8. נַפְתָּלִי שָׁבַע רָצוֹן וּמָלָא
בְּרַכַּת יְהוָה
Naphtali is abounding with favor, that is,
full of YHWH's blessing.
[Deut 33:23](#)

39.2.5 Conjunctive *Waw*

a

Conjunctive *waw* serves to join two clauses which describe interrelated or overlapping situations not otherwise logically related. Pairs of such clauses may form a *hendiadys*. There is a tendency, both in translation and commentary, to assign to the conjunctive *waw* a more logically distinct value where possible; this tendency may obscure the distinctive shape of Hebrew narrative.¹⁹ We have already discussed the use of conjunctive (or copulative) *waw* before suffix forms (32.3) and prefix forms (33.4); here we treat conjunctive *waw* before volitionals and some non-volitional prefix forms.

b

Conjunctive *waw* can connect volitional-forms: imperatives (## 1–2), jussives (# 3), or cohortatives (# 4), or various combinations (cohortative + jussive, # 5; imperative + cohortative, # 6; 34.6). It can also join a clause beginning with a prefix form to a preceding clause (## 7–9).

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1. עֲלֶה אֱכַל וּשְׁתֵּה
Go, eat and drink.
[1 Kgs 18:41](#)
2. וְדַעִי וּרְאִי כִי-רָע וָמָר
Know and see that it is evil and bitter.
[Jer 2:19](#)
3. יִפְתַּח אֱלֹהִים לְיִפְתַּח וַיִּשְׁכֶּן
בְּאֶהֱלֵי-שֵׁם וַיְהִי כְנַעַן עֶבֶד
לָמוֹ:
May God extend the territory of Japheth;
may Japheth live in the tents of Shem;
and may Canaan be his slave.
[Gen 9:27](#)
4. וְאַתָּנָה בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינָךְ
I will make my covenant between me and
you and will greatly increase you.

וְאַרְבֵּה אוֹתָךְ בְּמֵאֹד מְאֹד:

5. נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ
כְּדִמוֹתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ

[Gen 17:2](#)

Let us make humans in our image ... and let them rule.

6. לָכוּ וְנַעֲלֶה אֶל-הַר-יְהוָה

[Gen 1:26](#)

Go and let us ascend YHWH's mountain.

7. אֶפְנֹה בְּדֶבֶר וְאוֹרְשָׁנִי

[Isa 2:3](#) = [Mic 4:2](#)

I will strike them down with the plague and destroy them.

8. וְכָל-הָעָם יִשְׁמְעוּ וְיִרְאוּ

[Num 14:12](#)

All the people will hear and be afraid.

9. הֵן יִבְשׁוּ וְיִכְלֹמוּ כָל
הַנִּחְרִים בָּךְ

[Deut 17:13](#); cf. [19:20](#), [21:21](#)

All who rage against you will be ashamed and disgraced.

[Isa 41:11](#)

39.2.6 Other Coordinating Conjunctions

a

Other than *waw*, the only coordinating conjunction established in Hebrew is **או** 'or,' used to join alternatives. It is alleged that *p* 'and then' is to be found in Hebrew.

b

The coordinator **או** is found separating alternatives in main clauses ([## 1–2](#))²⁰ and, more often, in subordinate clauses ([## 3–4](#));²¹ subordinate clauses are common in legal materials where the precision of **או** is desired.²² As a coordinator, **או** works by reducing identical material associated with two conjoined clauses, leaving only what is different; thus the basic structure of # 1 is ... תִּשָּׁב ... יָמִים אוֹ תִשָּׁב ...
עֲשׂוֹר, 'Let the girl stay with us a few days or let the girl stay with us ten days.'²³

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1. תִּשָּׁב הַנְּעָרָה אֶתָּנוּ יָמִים
אוֹ עֲשׂוֹר

Let the girl stay with us a few days or ten.

[Gen 24:55](#) *Qere*

2. נָטָה לְךָ עַל-יְמִינְךָ אוֹ
עַל-שְׂמְאֲלֶךָ

Turn yourself to your right or your left.

[2 Sam 2:21](#)

3. וְכִי-יִגַּח שׁוֹר אֶת-אִישׁ אוֹ
אֶת-אִשָּׁה וָמָת

If an ox gores (either) a man or a woman who (later) dies ...

[Exod 21:28](#)

4. אוֹ-בֶן יִגַּח אוֹ-בַת יִגַּח

(If) it gores either a son or a daughter ...
²⁴

[Exod 21:31](#)

c

The conjunction *p* 'and so (then)' is attested commonly in Arabic (fa) and in a variety of Northwest Semitic dialects.²⁵ It has been alleged that it occurs in the Bible, its use neglected by the Masoretes.²⁶ Consider these verses.

5. יָדַעְתִּי כָּל-עוֹף הָרִים וְזִיז
שָׂרִי עֹמְדִי:
כִּי-לִי כָּל-חֵית-וַיֶּעֶר
בְּהֵמוֹת בְּהַר־אֵלֶּף

All the forest creatures are mine, the
beasts on hills. ... I know every mountain
bird, and all that shakes(?) the fields is at
home with me.

[Ps 50:10–11](#)

The phrase **הַרְרֵי-אֵלֶּף** is problematic; the Masoretes read **אֵלֶּף** 'a thousand,' while the Greek has *ktenē en tois oresin kai boes* 'herds on the mountains and cattle,' reflecting **בְּהֵמוֹת בְּהַר(ר) וְאֵלֶּף** (the Peshitta is similar). Neither of these senses of **אֵלֶּף**, 'thousand' or 'cattle,' seems apposite. A phrase in [Ps 36:7](#), **כְּהַרְרֵי-אֵל** 'mighty hills,'²⁷ suggests that the last word of [Ps 50:10](#) is **אֵל**, while **כִּי** is the conjunction; the sense would be, 'the animals are mine and so I know them all.' there is a small number of difficult passages for which similar arguments have been offered.²⁸ The question of Biblical Hebrew *p* is not settled.

39.3 Clausal Adverbs

39.3.1 Adverbs in General

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a

The class of adverbs includes words that modify other words or clauses. In any grammar the class presents numerous problems: "The adverb class is the least satisfactory of the traditional parts of speech; [it is an] especially mixed [class], ... having small and fairly well-defined groups of closed-system items [cf. English 'very, well, yet'] alongside the indefinitely large open-class items [cf. English 'briefly, largely, frankly, timewise']"²⁹ Further, the items called adverbs often fit into other part-of-speech categories, for example, English 'round' is not only an adverb, but also a noun, an adjective, and a verb.³⁰ All of these problems are especially acute for Hebrew (and the other Semitic languages); the class of adverbs is extremely small, extremely heterogeneous, and its members are often used in other ways. Many grammars of Hebrew in fact pass over the adverbs, treating some important subclasses in detail while neglecting the class as a whole.³¹

b

The adverbial functions of various European languages afford no guide to Hebrew adverbial use, for in Hebrew other syntactic approaches are taken to those functions.³² The two most important are the "adverbial" accusative (10.2.2) and the "adverbial use" of the infinitive absolute (35.4); both these terms bear the imprint of European grammarians and reflect an alien approach to Hebrew. Nonetheless, the patterns of use are clear, and it is useful to retain such terminology in a grammar for English speakers. Another syntactic approach is based on the use of two Hebrew verbs in sequence, corresponding to a verb + adverb construction in other languages; the two Hebrew verbs may have the same form or they may differ in form. (Occasionally, the verb that is similar to an English adverb is called by grammarians an auxiliary or quasi-auxiliary; this terminology is rather dubiously relevant.) Examples of such usage are furnished by verbs such as **שׁוּב** and **יִסֵּף**, which are often rendered with adverbs such as 'again, further, continually,' etc. This syntactic approach to what European languages take as an adverbial function is properly a matter for the Hebrew lexicon; once the pattern is appreciated as an integral part of Hebrew, it requires little grammatical notice.³³

c

Setting aside constructions that can be called adverbial from an external viewpoint, we are still left with a class of Hebrew adverbs.³⁴ It is a class that overlaps with other word groups in the language, and one that reveals only modest regularities, but one that demands a brief review before we turn to the subject at hand, the subclass of

clausal adverbs.

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d

There are three subgroups of adverbs in Hebrew: clausal adverbs, item adverbs, and constituent adverbs; the first two groups include largely particles, while the third is more heterogeneous, including nouns and verbs as well as particles.³⁵ Clausal and item adverbs modify, respectively, clauses and individual words in a way related to the discourse, that is, they negate, emphasize, or restrict what they modify in relation to some other grammatical feature.³⁶ Constituent adverbs modify clauses (and, rarely, individual words) but, in contrast to clausal and item adverbs, they modify the predicate, that is, they specify the time, place, or manner of the predicated situation. Consider this pair of clauses.

<p>קָרָא שְׁמָהּ לֹא רַחֲמָה כִּי לֹא אוֹסִיף עוֹד אֲרַחֵם אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל</p>	<p>Call her name Not-Pitied, for indeed I will not continue any longer to have pity on the House of Israel.³⁷</p>
---	--

[Hos 1:6](#)

The form עוֹד is a constituent adverb, qualifying the time extent of the predicate, while לֹא (אוֹסִיף) is a clausal adverb, negating the entire clause. The particle כִּי is another clausal adverb, this one emphasizing the clause it introduces. Traditionally כִּי is considered a conjunction (cf. 'for'), but we consider it rather to be an emphatic adverb (cf. 'indeed'). The question is not primarily one of translation (though the standard translation 'for' is sometimes illogical and often tedious), but rather of aligning כִּי with other forms that work similarly. The fourth adverb, לֹא (רַחֲמָה), is an item adverb, negating only the adjective that immediately follows.

e

In terms of frequency, clausal and constituent adverbs are common, while item adverbs are rare. In terms of grammatical difficulty, clausal and item adverbs are of considerable interest, while constituent adverbs require less attention.

f

A listing of constituent adverbs should enable the student to grasp the character of the class and prepare to observe its workings. There are four types of constituent adverbs, each with internal dynamics and with significant overlapping with other word groups.³⁸

g

Adverbs of location are of two semantic types. The most common are deictics, those which point to a place relative to the situation of the speaking; the senses are 'here' and 'there' (static) and 'hither' and 'hither' (dynamic).³⁹ The other type of locational adverb has independent reference, that is, reference independent of the situation in which the clause is spoken; relevant markers include 'above'—'below,' 'inside'—'outside,' 'around,' and 'behind.'

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- | | | |
|----|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | הֵלֵם | hither |
| 2. | הֵנָּה | hither |
| 3. | כֹּה | here |
| 4. | פֹּה | here |
| 5. | שָׁמָּה / שָׁמָּה | there, thither ⁴⁰ |
| 6. | מֵעַל | above |

7.	מִטָּה	below
8.	פְּנִימָה	inside
9.	חוּץ	outside
10.	מִסָּב	around
11.	סָבִיב	around
12.	אַחֲרֵי	behind

Some of these are derived from roots (## 6–12, all the independents), while others are composed of elements found in other grammatical words (## 1–5, all the deictics).⁴¹ The independent adverbs are also used as prepositions (## 6, 12) or as nouns, often with prepositions (## 8–12). Most of these adverbs have only locational senses, though several also have a rare temporal sense (## 2, 5), and כֹּה is also found as a clausal adverb.

h

Temporal adverbs are similarly of two semantic types. Deictics, referring to the situation of speaking, may be stative ('now, then') or dynamic ('not yet, previously, already'). The stative temporal deictics עַתָּה and אַז share with the English counterparts 'now' and 'then' a logical force ('Now we can see ... , then we can say ... '), but the temporal and logical uses are best kept distinct. The dynamic deictics are rare. Independent temporal adverbs, those that do not derive their reference from the situation of speaking, can be either local in sense ('by day, tomorrow, afterward') or extensive ('always/still, for a long time, forever'). The frequent phrase יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה day and by night'(e.g., [Ps 1:2](#)) is a good illustration of an adverb and an adverbial accusative being used together.

13.	עַתָּה	now ⁴²
14.	הֵנָּה	now (cf. # 2)
15.	אָז / אַזִּי	then ⁴³
16.	שָׁם	then (cf. # 5)
17.	טֹרֵם	not yet
18.	אֶתְמוּל שֶׁל־שׁוּם	previously ⁴⁴
19.	עַדְנָה / עַדְן	previously ⁴⁵
20.	כְּבָר	already ⁴⁶
21.	יוֹמָם	by day
22.	מָחָר / מִחָרָת	tomorrow
23.	אַחֲרֵי	then, afterward (cf. # 12)
24.	עוֹד	still ⁴⁷
25.	רַב־ת	for a long time
26.	עוֹלָם	forever
27.	נֶצַח	forever

The etymological diversity noted for the locational adverbs is evident here, too. Only one of these forms (# 23) is used as a preposition, but the last three are used as nouns; רַב־ת (# 24) is the feminine of רַב 'much.' Another form of derivation can be seen in יוֹמָם and

שְׁלִשׁוֹם; though the -ām "adverbial" ending is no longer productive in Biblical Hebrew, it has yielded several important forms (5.7e).⁴⁸

i

Scalar adverbs make up a more diverse group than either locational or temporal adverbs. One group of scalars refers to grades of degree, on a scale from 'much, very, extremely, abundantly' (amplifiers) down to 'a little, almost' (diminishers). Another group of scalars refers to grades of identity of action; a situation may be repeated ('again') or uninterrupted ('continually').

28.	מְאֹד	very ⁴⁹
29.	הַרְבֵּה	very ⁵⁰
30.	יֹתֵר	extremely ⁵¹
31.	רַבֹּת	abundantly (cf. # 25)
32.	מְעַט	a little, almost
33.	עוֹד	again, continually (cf. # 24)
34.	תָּמִיד	continually

All but one of these (# 32) is used as a noun (including הַרְבֵּה!). Although מְעַט is common (it occurs ca. 100 times), the relative rarity of diminishers is striking.

j

The manner adverbs are the most diverse group of constituent adverbs: they can *j* describe the manner of an action with regard to (a) action ('quickly, suddenly'), (b) the actors ('together, secretly'), (c) their motives ('falsely'), or (d) the results ('vainly').

35.	מְהֵרָה	quickly
36.	פְּתָאִם	suddenly, abruptly ⁵²
37.	פְּתָע	suddenly
38.	רָגַע	suddenly
39.	יַחְדָּו / יַחְדָּ	together
40.	חֲרֵשׁ	secretly
41.	שֶׁואַ	falsely
42.	תָּנָם	in vain, gratis ⁵³
43.	רִיקָם	vainly ⁵⁴

Except for the three forms with adverbial -ā/ōm ending (## 36, 42, 43), all these adverbs are also used as nouns, and it should be plain that there is no strict line separating these manner adverbs from a variety of other adverbial accusative uses of nouns.

39.3.2 Clausal and Item Adverbs

a

The two groups of clausal adverbs and item adverbs overlap to a large extent, but the overlap is largely the result of another fact: item adverbs are rare in Hebrew. The grammatical tasks of negation, emphasis, and restriction are usually associated with the entire clause, rather than an item within it. This relationship is most easily

recognized with negation: the common, clausal type is shown in ## 1–2, rare, item types in ## 3–4.

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- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת
לֹא־יִרְאֶה עוֹד: | And this land he shall no more see /
see no more.

Jer 22:12 |
| 2. | וְרָעָה לֹא רָאִינוּ: | And evil we did not see / we saw no
evil.

Jer 44:17 |
| 3. | עֲרֹף וְלֹא־פָנִים אֲרַאם | I will show them (my) neck and not
(my) face.

Jer 18:17 Oriental manuscripts⁵⁵ |
| 4. | מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה
תִּקַּח־לָךְ שְׁבָעָה שְׁבָעָה אִישׁ
וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּמִן־הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר
לֹא טָהָרָה הִיא שְׁנַיִם אִישׁ
וְאִשְׁתּוֹ: | Take with you seven male-female
pairs of every kind of clean animal
and a male-female pair of every
kind of not clean animal.

Gen 7:2 |

In the first two examples the negative **לֹא** stands before the verb, though in the first the negated element is the adverb **עוֹד** and in the second the negated element is the object **רָעָה**. In ## 3–4, the item negative **לֹא** stands before the specific item negated.⁵⁶ The preference for emphasis and restriction on the clausal level, rather than on the item level, is similar to the treatment of negation. Indeed Hebrew has only one important item adverb that is not principally a clausal adverb and more commonly used as such, **מְאֹד** (## 5–6).⁵⁷

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 5. | וַיְנִיחֵנִי אֶל־הַר גָּבֹהַּ מְאֹד | He led me to a very high mountain.

Ezek 40:2 |
| 6. | וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ ... חֵיל גָּדוֹל
מְאֹד־מְאֹד: | They stood up ... a very, very great troop.

Ezek 37:10 |

A variety of clausal adverbs can be used as item adverbs, usually in a heightened sense and often in poetry; some of these uses are mentioned below.

b

There are three groups of clausal adverbs. The negatives are best considered in connection with the constructions they occur in, and we provide only a brief summary here. The emphatic and restrictive adverbs, both often treated as types of conjunctions, require more discussion here.

39.3.3 Negative Adverbs

a

There are five principal negative adverbs; each is specialized in function, though some crossover is found with all but the rarest.⁵⁸ Independent verbal clauses are negated with **לֹא** (# 1), unless the verb is a negative imperative, which requires **אַל** before the jussive (# 2).⁵⁹

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- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | לֹא־יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל־גּוֹי חֶרֶב | No nation shall lift a sword against a
(nother) nation. |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|

2. וְאַל-תִּשָּׂא לָהֶם: [Isa 2:4](#)
Do not forgive them!
[Isa 2:9](#)

Dependent verbal clauses may be negated with **פֶּן** for a finite purpose clause (# 3), and **לֹבֵלְתִי** or **מִן** for an infinitive clause (# 4);⁶⁰ otherwise **לֹא** is used (# 5).

3. וְעֵינָיו הִשֵּׁה פֶן-יִרְאֶה
בְּעֵינָיו [Isa 6:10](#)
Seal its eyes lest it see with its eyes.
4. וְאַתֶּם הִרְעַתֶּם לַעֲשׂוֹת
מֵאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם ... לְבִלְתִּי שָׁמַע
אֵלַי: [Jer 16:12](#)
You have been more evil in your
behavior than your forebears ... in that
you did not listen to me.
5. אִם לֹא תִאֱמָינוּ כִּי לֹא
תִאֱמָנוּ: [Isa 7:9](#)
If you do not remain faithful, you will
indeed not remain standing.

b

Verbless clauses are negated with **אֵין** (in the construct; ## 6–7) or rarely **אִין** (in the absolute; # 8).⁶¹ Two frequent negative verbless clause types are **אֵין** followed by a participle (# 9) and **אֵין** with a possessive suffix denoting the subject (## 10–11). Various negative types may occur together (# 12).

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6. אַל-תַּעֲלוּ כִּי אֵין יְהוָה
בְּקִרְבְּכֶם [Num 14:42](#)
Don't attack! YHWH is not in your midst!
7. אֵין-בוֹ מָתֵם [Isa 1:6](#)
There's no health in it!
8. וְכַח אֵין לִלְדָה: [Isa 37:3](#)
There's no strength to give birth!
9. וּשְׁכַבְתֶּם וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד [Lev 26:6](#)
You shall lie down and there will be no
one to terrorize (you).
10. אֵינֶנִּי נֹתֵן לָכֶם תֶּבֶן: [Exod 5:10](#)
I am not giving you straw.
11. בְּעַמִּל אָנוּשׁ אֵינָמוּ [Ps 73:5](#)
They are not (involved) in human pain.
12. אֵין-עֵיף וְאֵין-כּוֹשֵׁל בּוֹ
לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן [Isa 5:27](#)
There is no one who is weary, no one
who stumbles in it (the road?),
no one dozes, no one slumbers.

39.3.4 Emphatic Adverbs

a

The category of emphatic clausal adverbs includes adverbs that modify the clause in itself (as negatives do), those that modify the clause in relation to preceding or following clauses (dependent or independent), and those that modify the clause in relation to the whole discourse. In traditional Hebrew grammars, some of these are called particles and others adverbs;⁶² some are associated with clause types, while others are relegated to the lexicon.⁶³ The group is not itself a strict unity, but these adverbs are best considered together.

b

The disjuncts are those adverbs which modify a clause in relation to the act of speaking.⁶⁴ Hebrew has few disjuncts, all rare. English has a great many disjuncts, in contrast, and they are used frequently and imprecisely in rendering Hebrew; for this reason, the category deserves some extra attention. English disjunct adverbs convey the speaker's attitude toward the form of the utterance ('truly, truthfully, roughly') or its content ('definitely, indeed, surely, plainly, actually, really'). Both types are regularly used to render the whole range of Hebrew emphatic adverbs, especially when a given form has no other English correspondent. It is important to note this disparity between English and Hebrew, so that translational practice does not obscure grammatical fact. The two Hebrew disjuncts referring to form are אֲמֵנָה, and אֲמֵנָם ⁶⁵ אֲמֵנָם in polar questions with הֲ, ⁶⁶ 'verily, truly' (## 1–3). The two that refer to content are אִילַי 'perhaps' (## 4–5) and מְעַט 'a little, somewhat' (# 6).⁶⁷

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|----|---|---|
| 1. | אֲמֵנָה אֲנֹכִי חָטָאתִי | In truth (I tell you that) I have sinned.
Josh 7:20 |
| 2. | אֲמֵנָם יְהוָה הִרְיִבוּ מַלְכֵי
אֲשׁוּר אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרָצוֹת | Of a truth, (I tell you,) YHWH, (that) the
Assyrian kings have wasted all the
lands. ⁶⁸
Isa 37:18 |
| 3. | כִּי־אֲמַנָּם לֹא־שָׁקַר מִלִּי | Truly (I claim that) my words are not lies.
Job 36:4 |
| 4. | בֹּא־נָא אֶל־שַׁפְּחֹתִי אִילַי
אֲבִנָּה מִמֶּנָּה | Go to my maid. Perhaps I shall be built
up from her.
Gen 16:2 |
| 5. | עֲמִיד־נָא בַּחֲבֻרָיִךְ ... אִילַי
תּוֹכְלִי הוֹעִיל | Stand fast in your spells. ... Perhaps
you'll be able to benefit.
Isa 47:12 |
| 6. | וַאֲהִי לָהֶם לְמִקְדָּשׁ מְעַט | I have been to some extent a sanctuary
for them.
Ezek 11:16 |

The role of disjuncts can be performed by non-adverbs, for example, the prepositional phrase בִּאֱמֻנָה 'in truth'.⁶⁹

c

The adverbs that modify a clause in relation to what follows or, less often, precedes fall into three categories: particles recognized as coordinators (אֵף, גַּם), a series of particles in כִּי usually taken as logical markers (כִּי, כֵּן, כֹּה, כַּכָּה, כֵּן), and the common temporal adverbs (אֲזַי, עַתָּה).⁷⁰ Hebrew grammars tend to assign well-defined roles to these words, but as the lexicons usually recognize, such assignments do not describe the usages adequately. All these terms have quite broad emphatic uses as well as the specific senses to be discussed. The notion that the broad or hard-to-define use grew out of the narrow or easy-to-define use is attractive, but probably misleading.

d

Of the two major coordinators, **אֲף** is the simpler and closer to **ו**, sometimes scarcely distinct from it (# 7); **אֲף** can also serve as a correlative, lining up the situation of its clause with that of the previous clause.⁷¹ The clauses in such correlation are independent (# 8), and thus such a pair is distinct from the **כִּי** protasis + **כֵּן** apodosis combination (38.5). Followed by **כִּי**, **אֲף** can have emphatic role (## 8–9)⁷² The second major coordinator **גַּם**, though it is used as an item adverb,⁷³ generally has more distinctly logical force than **אֲף**, though it can be used as an emphatic (## 10–11), often with a pronoun following. It can signal a final climax in an exposition (## 12–13) and is the only Hebrew adverb that marks a discourse ending—all others mark beginnings or middles.⁷⁴ The particle can serve as a correlative, in an apodosis after **יַעַן** (## 14–15) or after an independent clause (# 16).

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| 7. | אֶמְצִיךָ אֶף־עֲזָרְתִּיךָ | I will strengthen you and help you.
Isa 41:10 |
| 8. | הִנֵּה בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ תָּמִים לֹא
יַעֲשֶׂה לְמִלְאכָהּ אֶף כִּי־אֵשׁ
אֵכָלְתָּהּ ... וְנַעֲשֶׂה עוֹד
לְמִלְאכָהּ: | When it (such wood, the wood of the vine) is whole, it is not used for anything. How much less, when fire has consumed it ... , is it ever used for anything?
Ezek 15:5 |
| 9. | אֶף כִּי־אַרְבַּעַת שְׁפָטֵי
הָרָעִים ... שְׁלַחְתִּי | How much more when I send my four evil judgments ... ⁷⁵
Ezek 14:21 |
| 10. | כָּל־הֵם יַעֲנוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיךָ
גַּם־אַתָּה חֲלִיתָ כְּמוֹנוּ
אֵלֵינוּ נִמְשַׁלְתָּ: | All of them will speak (lit., answer) and say to you, "You are indeed as sick as we are—you are like us!" ⁷⁶
Isa 14:10 |
| 11. | שׁוֹחֵט הַשּׁוֹר מִכֶּה־אִישׁ
זֹבֵחַ הַשֶּׁה עֵרֶף כָּלֵב ...
גַּם־הֵמָּה בָּחָרוּ בְּדַרְכֵיהֶם | He who slaughters an ox is a manslayer. He who sacrifices a sheep is a dog killer ... They have plainly chosen their paths. ⁷⁷
Isa 66:3 |
| 12. | נָחָה שְׁקֵטָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ
פָּצְחוּ רִנָּה:
גַּם־בְּרוֹשִׁים שָׂמְחוּ לָךְ | It rests, is peaceful, all the earth. Then they (the inhabitants of the earth) break out in shouts. Even the cypresses exult over you.
Isa 14:7–8 |
| 13. | בְּחִלְקֵי־נַחַל חִלְקָךְ הֵם הֵם
גּוֹרְלֶךְ גַּם־לָהֶם שְׁפָכְתָּ נֶסֶךְ
הָעֵלִית מִנְחָה | Your inheritance is among the wadi's rocks. They, they are your portion. To them you even pour out libations; you offer up grain gifts.
Isa 57:6 |
| 14. | יַעַן אֶת־מִקְדָּשִׁי טִמְאַת ...
וְגַם־אֲנִי אֶגְרַע | Since you defiled my sanctuary ... I will in recompense diminish (you). ⁷⁸
Ezek 5:11 |
| 15. | יַעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־זָכַרְתִּי | Since you have not kept in mind your youth ... in recompense I will certainly |

אֶת־יָמֵי נְעוּרָיְךָ ... וְגַם־אֲנִי
הָאֵל הָרַבֵּךְ בְּרֹאשׁ נִתְּתִי

put (the burden of) your ways on your head.⁷⁹

[Ezek 16:43](#)

16.

שִׁמְעוּ מִטָּה ... אֲשֶׁר
עֲשִׂיתִיהָ מִלֵּאז חָמָס
וַיִּשְׁבִּיהָ דְּבָרוֹ־שֶׁקֶר וּלְשׁוֹנָם
רָמִיָּה בְּפִיהֶם:
וְגַם־אֲנִי הִחֲלִיתִי הַכּוֹתָךְ

Listen, tribe ... whose rich men are full of violence and whose inhabitants speak lies and their tongues are deceitful in their mouths! I will in recompense make your wound worse (lit., make sore your smiting).

[Mic 6:9, 12–13](#)

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e

The four important adverbs in *k* are usually treated as logical markers, rendered 'for, thus, therefore,' etc., but such an approach can be misleading. Each of the three most common is associated with a specific point in the discourse—*כִּה* is initial, while *כִּי* and *כֵּן* are medial; only *כִּכֵּה* can occupy either position.⁸⁰ This consistency does not mean that a rigid logical or translational understanding is desirable. The most problematic of these four particles is *כִּי*, used not only as a clausal adverb but also as a conjunction introducing various types of subordinate clauses (37.2-4, 7–8).⁸¹ There are two clause adverbial uses of *כִּי* the emphatic (## 17–18) and the logical (twice in # 19). The second of these overshadows the first through the dominance of the translation 'for' in "Biblical English." This translation is often used where it, and the understanding behind it, are simply wrong, that is, where there is no evident logical link of the clause to what precedes. Further, 'for' suggests that *כִּי* is a subordinating conjunction, which it often is not when used in the logical sense. The two clausal uses, which can occur in adjacent clauses (# 20, first logical, then emphatic), should not be too strictly separated.

17.

צִיּוֹן בְּמִשְׁפָּט תִּפְדָּה ... כִּי
יִבְשׁוּ מֵאִילִים ... כִּי תִהְיוּ
כְּאֵלֶּה

Zion shall be redeemed justly. ...
They (its inhabitants) shall indeed be
ashamed of oaks. ... You shall
indeed be like an oak.

[Isa 1:27, 29–30](#)

18.

קוּמָה יְהוָה
הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי
בֵּית־הַכִּית אֶת־כָּל־אֹיְבֵי לִחֵי

Arise, YHWH,
Deliver me, O my God.
Indeed, strike all my enemies on the
cheek.

[Ps 3:8](#)

19.

אַל־תִּשְׂמַחִי פִלִּשְׁתַּ כָּל־ךְ כִּי
נִשְׁבַּר שֶׁבֶט מִכָּךְ
כִּי־מִשְׁרָשׁ נֶחֱשׁ יֵצֵא צִפֹּעַ

Do not rejoice, all of you, Philistia
(over the fact) that the rod of your
smiting is broken—
(because of the fact) that an adder
will emerge from the serpent root.

[Isa 14:29](#)

20.

הֲשִׁיבֵנִי וְאֲשׁוּבָה

Bring me back so I can come back,
because you are YHWH my God.
Indeed after I turned away I
repented.

[Jer 31:18–19](#)

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The particle **כֵּן** is regularly used in the apodosis of a comparative sentence ('thus'; 38.5); when it stands in a clause that is not a comparative apodosis, it has a general comparative sense with no specific referent (## 21–22); the referent is usually clear from context. Adverbial **כֵּן** is common in the two combinations **לִכְּנָן** and **לִכְּנָן**.⁸² The first of these usually introduces a proposed or anticipated response after a statement of certain conditions ('the foregoing being the case, therefore'; ## 23 twice, 24). In contrast, **עַל־כֵּן** usually introduces a statement of later effects (# 25), notably the adoption of a name or a custom (# 26).

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 21. | כֵּן יֵאָבְדוּ כָּל־אֹיְבֵי־יְהוָה | Thus perish all your enemies, O YHWH.
Judg 5:31 |
| 22. | כֵּן אָהָבוּ לָנוּעַ | Thus have they loved to wander.
Jer 14:10 |
| 23. | וְאֵת פְּעֻלַּת יְהוָה לֹא יִבְטְחוּ
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו לֹא רָאוּ:
לָכֵן גָּלָה עַמִּי מִבְּלִי־דַעַת
וּכְבוֹדוֹ מִתִּי רָעַב וַהֲמוֹנוֹ
צָחָה צִמָּא:
לָכֵן הִרְחִיבָה שְׂאוֹל נַפְשָׁהּ | YHWH's actions they do not look at.
The work of his hands they do not see.
(That being so,) therefore my people go
into exile lacking knowledge. Its glory is
starving men and its crowd is dry with
thirst. (That being so,) therefore Sheol
has widened its gullet.
Isa 5:12–14 |
| 24. | מֵתִים בְּלִי־חַיּוֹ ... לָכֵן
פָּקַדְתָּ וַתִּשְׁמִידֵם | (Being) dead, they (other gods) cannot
live ... that being so, you have visited
them with destruction.
Isa 26:14 |
| 25. | כִּי מַעֲלָה הִלְוִיחִית בְּבָכִי
יִהְיֶה־בוֹ כִּי דָרָךְ חוֹרָנִים
זַעֲקַת־שָׁבֶר יַעֲרֹו:
... כִּי־יִבֹּשׁ חֲצִיר ... עַל־כֵּן
יִתְרָה עָשָׂה ... יִשְׁאוּם: | Item: Luhith Ascent—they mount it in
tears. Item: Horonaim Road—they
raise ⁸³ a cry of destruction. ... Item: the
grass is parched. ... As a result, the
surplus they made ... they bear off.
Isa 15:5–7 |
| 26. | כִּי אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂר בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
נָתַתִּי לְלוֹוִיִּם לְנַחֲלָה
עַל־כֵּן אֶמְרָתִי לָהֶם ... לֹא
יִנְחָלוּ נַחֲלָה: | Indeed the Israelites' tithe ... I give to
the Levites as an inheritance. As a
result, I ordered of them ... that they
inherit no (other) inheritance.
Num 10:24 |

In addition to serving as a constituent adverb of place ('here'), **כֹּה** is used to introduce speech (especially with **אָמַר**) and action (especially with **עָשָׂה**); it thus initiates a section of discourse (# 27; cf. # 28). The closely related particle **כַּכֵּה** can introduce speech which points back to what precedes (# 28) or it can summarize preceding material (# 29).⁸⁴

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 27. | כֹּה תְּבָרְכוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
אָמַר לָהֶם: | In the following way will you bless the
Israelites, by saying to them, "May
YHWH bless you ... " |
|-----|---|--|

יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה

[Num 6:23–24](#)

28. וְשִׁבַּרְתָּ הַבִּקְבֵּק ... וְאָמַרְתָּ
... כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
כֹּכָה אֲשַׁבֵּר אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה

You shall break the flask. ... You shall say ... , "In the following way (kh) speaks YHWH Šb·wt: 'In the foregoing way (kkh) I will break this people ... '"

[Jer 19:10–11](#)

29. זֹאת אֲשֶׁר לְלוֹוִיִּם מִבֶּן
חֲמֵשׁ וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה
יָבוֹא ... כֹּכָה תַעֲשֶׂה
לְלוֹוִיִּם בְּמִשְׁמֹרֹתָם:

This is what concerns the Levites: from age twenty-five on (each of them) shall go in. ... In the foregoing way you shall handle the Levites in their duties.

[Num 8:24, 26](#)

f

The temporal adverbs עַתָּה and אִזֵּי/אָז have, in addition to their temporal use, a logical or emphatic use; these two uses merge in translation and commentary, because many languages assign logical value (cf. English 'now ... , then ... ') or even emphatic value (cf. English 'Now then ... ') to time words. The sets of uses are, however, best distinguished, in order to avoid misunderstanding the overall sense of a passage. The logical force of עַתָּה is usually confined to the combination וְעַתָּה, introducing a shift in argumentative tack with a continuity in subject and reference (# 30 twice). In the example, וְעַתָּה separates three stages of discussion of a single topic.⁸⁵ The particle אִזֵּי is more diverse. It can mark a logical turn (## 31–32) or, in verse, serve an emphatic role (# 33). The emphatic role is problematic because almost any pair of clauses in (grammatical) sequence can be understood as being in temporal sequence. Both אִזֵּי and אָז can introduce the apodosis of a conditional sentence (# 34).

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30. כָּרַם הָיָה לְדִידִי ...
וַיַּעֲזָקְהוּ ... וַיִּטְעֵהוּ שָׂרֵק ...
וַיִּקֶּן לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲנָבִים וַיַּעַשׂ
בְּאֲשִׁים:
וְעַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַיִם ...
שִׁפְטוּ-נָא בֵּינִי וּבֵין כְּרָמִי:
מִה-לַּעֲשׂוֹת עוֹד לְכָרְמִי
וְלֹא עָשִׂיתִי בּוֹ ... וְעַתָּה
אוֹדִיעָה-נָא אֶתְכֶם אֵת
אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה לְכָרְמִי

My lover had a vineyard. ... He weeded it ... and he planted it with vines. ... And he expected (it) to yield grapes and it made weeds. And now (that you know these basic facts), Jerusalemites, render judgment between my vineyard and me: What more was there to do for my vineyard that I did not do ... ? And now (that you have formed a judgment), I will reveal to you what I am going to do with my vineyard.

[Isa 5:1–5](#)

31. הַיּוֹם יָדָעְנוּ כִּי-בָתוֹכָנוּ
יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא-מַעֲלָתָם
בִּיהוָה הִמָּעַל הָיָה אִזֵּי
הַצִּלָּתָם אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִיַּד יְהוָה:

Today we know that YHWH is in our midst in that you did not act arrogantly against YHWH. (As a result we can conclude), now, (that) you saved the Israelites from YHWH's power.

[Josh 22:31](#)

32. לָמָּה לֹא מָרַחֵם אֲמוֹת ...
כִּי־עָתָה שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאִשְׁקוּט
יִשְׁנִיתִי תִי אִזּוּ יִנוּחַ לִי:
Why did I not die just out of the womb?
⁸⁶ ... Had that been the case ((th), I
would have lain down and been quiet, I
would have slept (and) as a result
everything would have been fine with
me.⁸⁷
[Job 3:11, 13](#)
33. יִגְשׁוּ אִזּוּ יְדַבְּרוּ
They approach and then they speak.
[Isa 41:1](#)
34. לוֹלִי יִהְיֶה שְׁהִיָּה לָנוּ
בְּקוֹם עָלֵינוּ אָדָם:
אִזִּי חַיִּים בְּלָעוֹנוּ
Had YHWH not been for us when
people rose against us, then they
would have swallowed us alive.⁸⁸
[Ps 124:2–3](#)

g

The intensifying adverb **מְאֹד** is more frequent as an item adverb than as a clausal adverb, but since in that capacity it almost always modifies stative verbs (## 35–37), there is no need to separate the uses too strictly. With forms of **כָּבֵד**, for example, we find the adjective **כָּבֵד** used with **מְאֹד** for 'extremely wealthy' (Abraham, [Gen 13:2](#)) or 'oppressively severe' (famine, [Gen 41:31](#)), and we also find **כָּבֵדָה** with **מְאֹד** for 'egregiously serious' (sin, [Gen 18:20](#)).

35. וַיִּבְטְחוּ ... וְעַל פָּרָשִׁים
כִּי־עֲצָמוּ מְאֹד
They trust in ... cavalry—they are very
numerous.
[Isa 31:1](#)
36. עַל־זֶקֶן הַכְּבֹדֶת עֲלָךְ
מְאֹד:
On the elderly you have made your
yoke exceedingly heavy.
[Isa 47:6](#)
37. יָרוֹם וְנִשָּׂא וְנִגְבָּה מְאֹד:
He is high and lifted up and extremely
exalted.
[Isa 52:13](#)

39.3.5 Restrictive Adverbs

a

The category of restrictive clausal adverbs includes a range of particles said to function as restrictive, exceptive, adversative, or limitative entities.⁸⁹ These adverbs are intermediate in sense between negative and emphatic adverbs: they are often essentially negators of continuity between clauses, and they highlight the special status of the clause they occur in. Indeed, it could well be argued that these constitute a special class of the emphatic adverbs; they certainly show a greater unity than the emphatic class as a whole. Further, as we shall see, these adverbs often have strictly emphatic functions.

b

The position of the restrictive adverbs is always, in some sense, medial to the discourse. Let us say that there are two situations, A and B. Clause B with a restrictive adverb describes situation B. The three uses of restrictive adverbs are these: (1) Situation A is described in the immediately preceding clause (= clause A); the adverb (e.g., *raq*) follows, and it has the sense 'only, except.' (2) Situation A is described in the preceding group of clauses; the adverb follows, with the sense 'however, nevertheless, only.' (3) Situation A is not described but may be inferred from context; the adverb follows, with the sense 'I thought/It seemed to be otherwise but now I realize/it is obvious

that ... ' This diverse set of relationships between the anterior or restricted situation and the restricting clause accounts for the usual polar glosses for, for example, 'ābāl 'of a truth' and 'but.' Of these two glosses, the second is more basic; the 'surely' senses of these adverbs are secondary.⁹⁰

C

The full range of uses is evident with רק, which with אֲנִי is the most common of these adverbs.⁹¹ The immediate restrictive sense of רק is found when it stands initially (## 1–2) or medially (# 3) in its clause; the standard English glosses reflect the polarity of the preceding clause: after a positive clause, 'only,' end after a negative, 'but, except.' The general restrictive sense is found in two settings: raq may introduce a summary (often with instructions; # 4) or a clarification (## 5–6) of what precedes.⁹² The unspecified restrictive sense (i.e., where the situation to be qualified is not described) has with רק, as with other adverbs of this group, an emphatic effect (# 7).

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1. וְסָרוּ הַצְפֹּרְדָּעִים מִמֶּנִּי ...
רק בַּיָּאֵר תִּשָּׁאֲרֶנָּה:
The frogs will depart from you. ... Only they shall remain in the Nile.
[Exod 8:7](#)
2. וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶן כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם
רק לְאִנָּשִׁים הָאֵל
אֶל-תַּעֲשׂוּ דָבָר
Do what you like to these (women). Only do nothing to these men.
[Gen 19:8](#)
3. פְּרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ ... יֵאָכֵל עִם
אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַעְתָּ וְהָיִיתָ רָק
עָשׂוּק וְרָצוּץ כָּל-הַיָּמִים:
A people you don't know will consume your land's fruit. ... You shall be nothing but squeezed and crushed forever.
[Deut 28:33](#)
4. וַעֲתָה יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמַע
אֶל-הַחֻקִּים ... לַעֲשׂוֹת
לְמַעַן תַּחְיוּ ... לֹא תִסָּפּוּ
עַל-הַדָּבָר ... וְאַתֶּם
הַדְּבָקִים בַּיהוָה ... רק
הַשְׁמַר לָךְ
Now, Israel, hearken to the statutes ... by carrying them out, so that you can live. ... Do not add to the message. ... You are those who have clung to YHWH. ... Only [the most important thing is/the upshot is], take heed.
[Deut 4:1–2, 4, 9](#)
5. הַשְׁמַר לָךְ פֶּן-תַּעֲלֶה
עַל-תֵּיךְ בְּכָל-מָקוֹם ... רק
בְּכָל-אוֹת נִפְשֶׁךָ תִּזְבַּח
וְאָכַלְתָּ בָשָׂר ...
בְּכָל-שַׁעְרֶיךָ
Take heed lest you offer 'ōlōt offerings in every site. ... However [only 'ōlōt offerings are so restricted—]whenever your soul desires you can slaughter and eat meat ... in any city gate.
[Deut 12:13, 15](#)
6. וַיֵּאָהֵב שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת-יְהוָה
לָלֶכֶת בְּחֻקֹּת דָּוִד אָבִיו
רק בְּבִמּוֹת הוּא מִזְבֵּחַ
וּמִקְטִיר:
Solomon loved YHWH (and showed it) by following the practices of his father David. However [this devotion was not perfect—] he offered sacrifices and incense on the high places.

[1 Kgs 3:3](#)

7. וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם ... כִּי הִיא
חֻמֹּתֵיכֶם ... לְעֵינֵי הָעַמִּים
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְעוּן אֶת
כָּל-הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמְרוּ
רַק עַם-חָכָם וְנָבוֹן הַגּוֹי
הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה:

Observe them ... for such will be your wisdom ... in the eyes of the peoples, who will hear (of) all these statutes and will say, "[On the face of it we might have thought otherwise] but this great nation is a wise and discerning people."

[Deut 4:6](#)**d**

As with the emphatic adverbs, there is a series of restrictive adverbs in k: אֵךְ and אַכֵּן; some uses of כִּי also deserve notice here. The most common of the restrictive adverbs, אֵךְ, is used as an item adverb⁹³ and a clausal adverb restricting what precedes generally, offering clarification (# 8) or instruction (## 9–10),⁹⁴ or highlighting an unexpected conclusion (# 11).⁹⁵ The two uses can be found together in a single passage (# 12). Unlike אֵךְ, אַכֵּן reverses or restricts what immediately precedes (## 13–14),⁹⁶ like אֵךְ, אַכֵּן has a general emphatic sense (# 15),⁹⁷ indicating "a sudden recognition in contrast to what was theretofore assumed."⁹⁸

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8. כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא-חַי
לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ ...
אֶךְ-בֶּשֶׂר בְּנַפְשׁוֹ דָּמוֹ לֹא
תֹאכְלוּ:

Every moving thing with life in it is yours for food. ... Nevertheless [this is on the understanding that] you shall not eat flesh with its life force (i.e.), its blood (still in it).

[Gen 9:3–4](#)

9. עָלַי קִלְלָתְךָ בְּנִי אֵךְ שָׁמַע
בְּקִלִּי

Your curse be on me, my son, [and that being understood], just obey me.

[Gen 27:13](#)

10. בָּאִי עֲשֵׂי כְדַבְּרֶךָ אֵךְ
עֲשֵׂי-לִי ... עֲנֵה קִטְנָה
בְּרֹאשָׁנָה

Go, do as you say, but first make me ... a little pancake.

[1 Kgs 17:13](#)

11. וַיֵּרָא אֶת-אֱלִיאָב וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵךְ נִגַּד יְהוָה מִשִּׁיחוֹ:

And he looked at Eliab and said, "[Before I didn't know who I was looking for, but here he is—]surely, YHWH's messiah is before him."⁹⁹

[1 Sam 16:6](#)

12. חֲזָקוּ פְּנֵיהֶם מִסָּלֵעַ מֵאֲנֹ
לְשׁוֹב:
וְאֲנִי אֶמְרָתִי אֶךְ-בָּלִים הֵם
נוֹאֲלוּ כִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ דֶּרֶךְ
יְהוָה ... אֶלְכָּה-לִּי
אֶל-הַגְּדֹלִים ... כִּי הִמָּה
יָדְעוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה ... אֵךְ

They had hardened their faces harder than rock, refused to repent. I said, "But [I was wrong to look there—] there are the poor, who are foolish. They clearly don't know YHWH's path. ... I'll go to the great. ... They surely will know YHWH's path ... " But surely [that was misguided of me—] they all together [poor and rich] have broken the yoke.

הָמָּה יַחְדָּוֹשְׁבֵּרוּ עַל

[Jer 5:3–5](#)

13. וַאֲנִי אֶמְרָתִי לְרִיק יִגְעֵתִי
... אֲכֵן מִשְׁפָּטִי אֶת־יְהוָה

I said, "I've labored in vain" ... but [I was wrong to say that, because] my judgment is with YHWH.

[Isa 49:4](#)

14. וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנָהּ:
אֲכֵן חֲלִינֹהּ הוּא נָשָׂא

We did not esteem him, but [we were wrong because] he carried our weakness.

[Isa 53:3–4](#)

15. אֲנֹכִי עָשִׂיתִי אֶרֶץ ... אֲכֵן
אֶתָּה אֵל מִסְתָּתֵר

"I made the earth," [says YHWH and it might be thought that YHWH would therefore be visible,] ... but [that is not so—]you are a god who hides himself.

[Isa 45:12, 15](#)

Related to the uses of **אֲכֵן** to restrict the immediately preceding clause is the restrictive use of **כִּי** (# 16)¹⁰⁰ and **כִּי אִם** (# 17) in a clause after a negative clause; the combination **כִּי אִם** can be used to restrict generally preceding material (# 18).¹⁰¹

16. שָׂרִי אֲשֶׁתְּךָ לֹא־תִקְרָא
אֶת־שְׁמָהּ שָׂרִי כִּי שָׂרָה
שְׁמָהּ:

As for your wife Sarai—you shall not call her Sarai. Rather, her name is Sarah.¹⁰²

[Gen 17:15](#)

17. וְלֹא תִתְחַתֵּן בָּם ...
כִּי־אִם־כֹּה תַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם

You shall not intermarry with them. ... Rather, you shall treat them in the following way.

[Deut 7:3, 5](#)

18. וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִּי אִם־מֶלֶךְ
יְהִיָּה עָלֵינוּ:

They said, "No! Rather, let there be a king over us.

[1 Sam 8:19](#)

e

Of the remaining, less frequent restrictive adverbs, only **אֲבָל** exhibits the three patterns seen earlier: it can restrict an immediately preceding clause (# 19) or generally

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preceding materials (## 20–21), and it can mark a reversal in expectations or beliefs (# 22).¹⁰³ This last, emphatic use is missing from **אֲבָל** and **אִלֵּם**.¹⁰⁴ Both **אֲבָל** and **כִּי אִם** restrict general preceding material, offering clarifications (## 23–25), and the latter combination can also restrict the immediately preceding clause (# 26). The particle **אֲבָל** serves only to restrict a clause in relation to a preceding clause (## 27–28).¹⁰⁵

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19. וּרְאִיתִי ... לְבַתִּי
אֶת־הַמֶּרְאָה וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר
הָיוּ עִמִּי לֹא רָאוּ
אֶת־הַמֶּרְאָה אֲבָל חֲרָדָה

I alone ... saw the vision. The men who had been with me did not see the vision. Rather, great terror fell on them, and they fled into hiding.

גְּדֹלָה נִפְלָא עֲלֵיהֶם
וַיִּבְרְחוּ בַּהֲחָבָא:

20. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֲבֹל שָׂרָה
אֲשֶׁתְּךָ יֵלְדֶת לְךָ בֵּן

[Dan 10:7](#)

God said, "[Don't focus your hopes on Ishmael—] rather, your (primary) wife Sarah will bear you a son."

21. וַיֹּאמֶר הִידְעָתָ לְמָה־בָּאתִי
אֵלַיךָ וְעַתָּה אָשׁוּב לְהִלָּחֵם
עִם־שָׂר פָּרֶס ... אֶל אֲנִיד
לְךָ אֶת־הַרְשׁוּם

[Gen 17:19](#)

And he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? I must return now to fight with the Persian prince. ... Nevertheless, I will tell you what is written down."

22. וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו אֲבֹל
אֲשָׁמִים אֲנַחְנוּ עַל־אָחִינוּ

[Dan 10:20–21](#)

Each said to his brother, "[We believed wrongly that we had gotten away with disposing of our brother] but we are (now) found to be at fault in the matter of our brother."

23. גְּמִיּוּהוּ הָעֵבִיר חֲטָאתְךָ
לֹא תָמוּת:
אָפֶס כִּי־נֵאֵץ נֶאֱצָתָ אֵת
[וְ]בֵר יְהוָה בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה גַּם
הַבֵּן הַיֵּלֹד לְךָ מוֹת יָמוּת:

[Gen 42:21](#)

Indeed YHWH [on his part] has transferred your sin. You shall not die. Nevertheless, since you profaned YHWH's word in this matter, the son to be born to you will die. [106](#)

24. בָּאֲנוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ ... אָפֶס
כִּי־עַתָּה הָעָם

[2 Sam 12:13–14](#) 4QSama

We entered the land. ... Nevertheless, the people are strong.

25. הֲלֹךְ אִלַּךְ עִמָּךְ אָפֶס כִּי
לֹא תִהְיֶה תִפְאָרְתְּךָ

[Num 13:27–28](#)

I will go with you, but [contrary to your expectations] there will be no glory for you.

26. וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֹתָהּ ... אָפֶס כִּי
לֹא הִשְׁמִיד עֲשָׂמִיד
אֶת־בֵּית יַאֲקֹב

[Judg 4:9](#)

I will destroy it (the errant kingdom). ... Nevertheless, I won't [in the process] destroy the House of Jacob.

27. וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שֵׁם־הַמָּקוֹם
הַהוּא בֵּית־אֵל וְאוּלָם לוֹז
שֵׁם־הָעִיר לְרֵאשִׁנָּה:

[Amos 9:8](#)

He called that place Bethel. In the past, however, the name of the city was Luz.

28. וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לְאִישׁ יִתֵּן בְּעַד
נַפְשׁוֹ:
אוּלָם שְׁלַח־נָא יָדְךָ וְגַע
אֶל־עֲצָמוֹ

[Gen 28:19](#)

All that a person has he will give for his life. Extend your hand, however, and touch his bones ... [107](#)

[Job 2:4–5](#)**Footnotes:**

1. For a survey of much comparable Ugaritic material, see Kjell Aartun, *Die Partikeln des Ugaritischen*. 1. *Adverbien, Verneinungspartikeln, Bekräftigungspartikeln, Hervorhebungspartikeln*; 2. *Präpositionen, Konjunktionen* (Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974–78); supplemented by Aartun's "Die Belegten Partikelformen in den ugaritischen Texten aus Ras Ibn Hani," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 12 (1980) 1–6. The topic of parenthetical expressions, not treated here, is discussed by M. H. [Goshen-]Gottstein, "Afterthought and the Syntax of Relative Clauses in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 68 (1949) 35–47.
2. The *waw* occurs about 50,000 times and *ʾô* occurs 319 times (of which 136, 43%, are found in Leviticus; SA/THAT). On the form *waw* + enclitic *mem*, originally recognized by F. I. Andersen, see the several essays by C. H. Gordon, Constance Wallace, and G. A. Rendsburg in *Eblaitica*, ed. C. H. Gordon, G. A. Rendsburg, and N. H. Winter (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 1. 29–41; examples include [Ruth 4:5](#) and [Neh 5:11](#) (both have *wmʾt*, with *ʾt* the sign of the direct object), as well as [Ps 147:3](#). Aartun takes as the class of Ugaritic coordinating conjunctions the set *w*, *p*, *ʾp*, and *u* (*Partikeln*, 2. 63–91). For *ʾp* here, see 39.3.4d.
3. The omission of *w* here may be called a conjunction override; see 9.3b on construct override (see # 3 here, too) and 11.4.2 on preposition override.
4. This passage is in verse, and the genitive nouns are in pairs, though these facts do not in themselves explain the patterning of *w*.
5. See D. W. Baker, "Further Examples of the *Waw* Explicativum," *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980) 129–36. Note the conjoint *hendiadys* *gēr wəʾôšāb* '(resident alien or temporary alien =) alien' and the juxtaposed *hendiadys* *gēr ʾôšāb* 'alien' (bosh in [Lev 25:47](#); the first also occurs in [Gen 23:4](#), [Lev 23:35](#)).
6. Usually but not always nouns; see E. J. Revell, "Nesiga and the History of the Masorah," *Estudios masoreticos ... dedicados a Harry M. Orlinsky*, ed. E. Fernández Tejero (Madrid: Instituto "Arias Montano," 1983) 37–48, at 38.
7. G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 1–17.
8. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 162.
9. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 165.
10. For analyses of extended prose passages, carefully surveying syntactic patterns and alternations, see Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 281–82; and E. J. Revell, "The Battle with Benjamin (Judges xx 29–48) and Hebrew Narrative Techniques," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985) 417–33, which deals with the entire book of Judges.
11. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 119.
12. Note also [Gen 2:17](#); cf. v [16](#).
13. Cf. [Prov 25:3](#).
14. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 164, citing [1 Sam 1:9](#), [Gen 29:16](#); note also [Gen 13:7](#).
15. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 164, citing [Gen 3:1](#), [4:1](#), [16:1](#), and [21:1](#).
16. H. A. Brongers, "Alternative Interpretationen des sogenannten *Waw* copulativum," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90 (1978) 273–77.
17. Brongers, "Waw copulativum," 275–76. On verb gapping in Hebrew verse, see M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 122–27. On emphatic seconding, see James Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University, 1981) 51.
18. See further Baker, "Waw Explicativum."
19. See T. J. Meek, "The Syntax of the Sentence in Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 64 (1945) 1–13; or the passage from Driver cited by Caird (see n. 7).
20. Joüon § 175/ pp. 528–29. Compare *w* in main clauses (e.g., [2 Sam 2:19](#); cf. # 2) and with alternatives within a construct phrase (e.g., [Exod 21:17](#)).
21. Compare *w* in subordinate clauses (e.g., [Exod 21:16](#), [Deut 24:7](#)); note also *ʾm* ... *ʾm* in [Ezek 2:5](#). See R. J.

Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976) 71.

22. See M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 170–72, 211–12.

23. There is no conjunction reduction in # 4.

24. Cf. also [Exod 21:32](#), [Lev 5:1](#).

25. For the Arabic, see W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1896), 1.290–91; for the other languages, see the references in the next note.

26. The particle has been most often discussed by M. Dahood, in, e.g., *Psalms 1:1–50* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966) 293, 307–8, where the example given below is treated (pp. 307–8); all the alleged examples are rejected by K. Aartun in his review, "Textüberlieferung und Vermeintliche Belege der Konjunktion *pV* im Alten Testament," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 10 (1978) 1–13 (this example at pp. 5–7).

27. Noted by P. Craigie, [Psalms 1–50](#) (Waco, Texas: Word, 1983) 363.

28. Notably in [Job 9:20](#); see the firm discussion of M. H. Pope, *Job* (3d ed.; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1973) 72–73.

29. R. Quirk et al., *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (Harrow, Essex: Longman, 1972) 267, 47.

30. Quirk et al., *Contemporary English*, 271.

31. For some treatments, see Joüon § 102 / pp. 267–73; K. Beyer, *Althebräische Grammatik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1969) 67–85; H. S. Nyberg, *Hebreisk Grammatik* (Uppsala: Geber, 1952) 53–55. A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* (3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901) 87, is minimal, while on the Ugaritic side, Aartun, *Partikeln I* is full. The best review of basic issues, though brisk, is provided by J. Blau, *An Adverbial Construction in Hebrew and Arabic* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1977) 1–18; note that he distinguishes, as we do, "between 'adverbs', being a part of speech, and the syntactic [or functional] notion 'adverbial'" (p.2n-3)

32. Thus Joüon's class of "adverbs of suppletion" (including, e.g., *mar* 'bitterly,' *l*«*bad* 'apart, *hêṭeb* 'well') is too mixed a bag to be useful; but our own classification is not proof against the same criticism; see Joüon § 102c g / pp. 268–70. The grammar of GKC (§ 100b f / pp. 294–95) draws together adverbs and "forms of other parts of speech, which are used adverbially": the latter group is another mixed bag and includes prepositional phrases, substantives in the accusative (10.2.2), adjectives (notably feminines, 6.4.2; note, e.g., *rabbâ* 'mightily' in [Ps 89:8](#)), infinitives absolute (35.4), etc.

33. Contrast Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, 100, 113–16.

34. Note Davidson's desperate phrase "real adverbs," *Hebrew Syntax*, 100.

35. In the discussion that follows we concentrate on individual adverbs, slighting all but the most common compound adverbs. Joüon includes all interrogatives, §102i/p. 271. For expository purposes, we leave out here interrogative pronouns and phrases (18.1) and the polar particle *h* (40.3); the last is certainly a clausal adverb, and it may be that some of the other interrogatives (e.g., *mdw*^c) are also.

36. Aartun, *Partikeln I*, uses a related principle of classification, referring to "forms for intensification (Bekräftigung)/emphasis (Hervorhebung) of individual words or complete sentences" versus "forms for the intensification of complete sentences (only)" and "forms for the negation (Verneinung) of complete sentences" versus "forms for the negation of individual words and complete sentences."

37. There is a sense in which *ʾôšip* might be said to function adverbially or as an auxiliary to *ʾārahēm*, but that sense is not an important one; see 39.3.1b.

38. There is no clear rule about the placement of constituent adverbs, though temporal adverbs (and adverbial phrases, especially with prepositions) tend to occur initially; for some discussion, see W. Gross, *Die Pendenskonstruktion im biblischen Hebräisch* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987) 43–77 (on temporals), 78–87 (on locatives).

39. Nyberg groups *ph* and *šm* with *kh* as demonstrative adverbs; see *Hebreisk Grammatik*, 53.

40. The forms *šm* and *šmh* are found 691 and 141 times, respectively, in all senses (SA/THAT; in what follows, we supply the count for the most common words from this source; the most common words are those that occur more than one hundred times).

41. Aartun similarly contrasts "adverbs derived from deictic elements" and "adverbs derived from roots."

42. Occurs 433 times (SA/THAT).

43. ʾāz occurs 138 times (SA/THAT).
44. The phrase never has the supposed "literal sense" 'yesterday (tmwl) or the day before (šlšwm, lit., the third day ago [counting today]).'
45. Only in [Qoh 4:2](#) (ʿdnh), [4:3](#) (ʿdn), derived from ʿad, suggesting a basic sense 'until now.'
46. Only in Qoheleth, where it occurs nine times.
47. Occurs 490 times (SA/THAT).
48. This -ām/ōm element may be (related to) the enclitic *mem* (9.8); cf., e.g., Aartun, Partikeln, 1. 51–61.
49. More frequently an item adverb. For its unique use as a noun in [Deut 6:5](#), see S. D. McBride, "The Yoke of the Kingdom," *Interpretation* 27 (1973) 273–306, at 304. Mʾd occurs 300 times (SA/THAT).
50. Strictly, an infinitive absolute. See 35.4.
51. Only in Qoheleth and Esther as an adverb.
52. It is common to derive ptʾm from ptʾ (e.g., Joüon § 102b / p. 268), but the weakening of ʿayin to ʾaleph is rare.
53. From ḥēn with adverbial -ām; compare Latin *gratia* and *gratis* (Joüon # 102b / p. 268).
54. From rēq 'empty,' with adverbial -ām.
55. MT has the *Qal*, ʾerʾēm.
56. Compare # 3 with [Jer 2:27](#).
57. Note that postposed hūʾ and hīʾ are also used as item adverbs ('precisely').
58. See Joüon § 160/ pp. 488–95. The other negative particles are largely confined to verse: teal is a clausal negative used as lōʾ is, while bʿli is used largely as ʾēn is; bilʿi is usually an item adverb ('except'). On the positive force of bal, see C. F. Whitley, "The Positive Force of the Hebrew Particle בל," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84 (1972) 213–19; the best example is probably [Isa 44:8](#). All Whitley's examples are doubted by T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1985) 125–27.
59. Lōʾ occurs 5,200 times and ʾal 730 times (SA/ THAT). For lōʾ as an item adverb, note (a) compounds, e.g., lōʾ-ʾēl 'no god' ([Deut 32:21](#)), lōʾ-ḥākām 'non- (or anti-)wise' ([Deut 32:6](#); cf. further GKC § 152a / p. 478), as well as (b) simple adverbial use (e.g., [Jer 18:17](#) [39.3.2 # 3], [Gen 32:29](#), [Job 13:16](#)). For ʾal as an item adverb, note (a) compounds, e.g., ʾal-māwet 'no death' ([Prov 12:28](#)), and (b) simple use (e.g., [Jer 10:24](#)). The variation between lʾ and lw is an important source of *Kethiv-Qere* variation; see J. Barr, "A New Look at *Kethivh-Qere*," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 (1981) 19–37, at 31. Both lōʾ and ʾal are used alone, as the equivalent of reduced verbal clauses, with the sense 'no!' (lōʾ in [Gen 42:10](#) and so read for lō in [1 Sam 10:19](#); ʾal in [Gen 33:10](#)). See Ziony Zevit, "Expressing Denial in Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew, and in Amos," *Vetus Testamentum* 29 (1979) 505–9. On the semantics of negation, see G. E. Whitney, "Lōʾ ('Not') as 'Not Yet' in the Hebrew Bible," *Hebrew Studies* 29 (1988) 43–48.
60. The preposition *mn* is used to form negative infinitive (notably result) clauses (e.g., [Isa 5:6](#)); cf the examples cited in 38.3c.
61. ʾáyin/ʾēn occurs 789 times; its conventional antonym yēš occurs 140 times (SA/THAT). The latter is often considered an adverb (e.g., GKC §100o / pp. 296–97). For ʾēn as an item adverb, note compounds such as ʾēn-qēs 'endless' ([Isa 9:6](#)), ʾēn qēšeh 'endless' ([Isa 2:7bis](#)), ʾēn mispār 'innumerable' ([Jer 2:32](#), [1 Chr 22:4](#)), ʾēn mišqāl 'beyond weighing' ([1 Chr 22:3](#)). Note the discussion of J. Carmignac, "L'emploi de la négation יֵּן dans la Bible et á Qumrân," *Revue de Qumran* 8 (1974) 407–13, who emphasizes the increase in item-adverbial use at Qumran.
62. See Joüon § 164 / pp. 502–3.
63. And the lexicons usually do a wonderful job with them. We leave out of account here a variety of emphatics much discussed in recent scholarly literature. On the emphatic *l*, see Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 113–23, whose findings are largely negative. Contrast, e.g., J. A. Soggin, *Old Testament and Oriental Studies* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1975) 219–24.
64. The term is from Quirk et al., *Contemporary English*, 507. They could also be called "metapositional" adverbs in that they comment on how the proposition is to be understood. Blau refers to "sentence adverbials denoting judgement on the rest of the sentence," which "may be considered logical predicates"; see *Adverbial Construction*, 15.

65. Again, we have the -ām adverbial ending. On ʾomnām kī, see Blau, *Adverbial Construction*, 26.
66. In, e.g., [Gen 18:13](#).
67. Blau (*Adverbial Construction*, 30) notes also kimʿaṭ še- 'hardly' in [Cant 3:4](#). The understanding of these disjunct adverbs depends in part on the understanding of the associated action, in particular whether, say, 'worship is a scalar phenomenon.
68. Cf. the synoptic verse, [2 Kgs 19:17](#).
69. Thus, bʾmt serves an adverbial role but is not an adverb; cf. n. 31.
70. We omit interrogatives here; see n. 35.
71. Occurs 134 times (SA/THAT).
72. The related particle ʾēpō is an enclitic used after interrogatives, ʾim, and imperatives (for an example of the last, see [Job 19:6](#)); cf. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 137.
73. In, e.g., [Isa 49:25](#); [Jer 2:33](#), [25:14](#); see in general Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 143–46; and C. J. Labuschagne, "The Emphasizing Particle GAM and Its Connotations," *Studia Biblica et Semitica: Theodoro Christiano Vriezen ... Dedicata*, ed. W. C. van Unnik (Wageningen: Veenman en Zonen, 1966) 193–203.
74. Though it is hardly a strict marker, rather a rhythmic indicator.
75. The clausal structures in Ezekiel are always complex; see here the context.
76. The English adverb appears to be a disjunct of content rather than an emphatic coordinator.
77. Cf. RSV, 'These have chosen their own ways.'
78. Four oath and exclamatory formulas precede this.
79. The interjection hēʾ is otherwise found only in [Gen 47:23](#).
80. Ky occurs 4,470 times, kn 695 times, kh 581 times (SA/THAT), and kkh 37 times.
81. It is used as an item adverb in, e.g., [Hos 8:6](#); cf. Joūn § 164b / p. 503. The classic studies of ky by James Muilenburg are available in his *Hearing and Speaking the Word*, ed. T. F. Best (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984) 208–33, 27–44, esp. 39–40; J. L. Kugel, "The Adverbial Use of kī tōb," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980) 433–35, claims that the cited phrase is adverbial, 'greatly, how great'; G. Janzen offers a rebuttal in the same journal, "Kugel's Adverbial kī tōb: An Assessment," 102 (1983) 99–106. Closely related to ky is emphatic k (pointed as if identical to the preposition, perhaps correctly); see the basic review of cases by R. Gordis, "The Asseverative Kaph in Ugaritic and Hebrew," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 63 (1943) 176–78, reprinted in his *The Word and the Book* (New York: Ktav, 1976) 211–13. For a cautious approach to emphatic uses, see A. Schoors, "The Particle כִּי," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 (1981) 240–76, at 243–53; he also surveys the subordinating uses, pp. 252–73.
82. On kn, see the articles of M. J. Mulder, "Die Partikel כִּי im Alten Testament," and E. Talstra, "The Use of כִּי in Biblical Hebrew," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 (1981) 201–27, 228–39. The combinations are discussed here because of their frequency: lkn occurs 188 times and ʿl-kn 145 times. See also H. Lenhard, "Über den Unterscheid zwischen לִכְּן und עַל-כֵּן," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 95 (1983) 269–72; B. Jongeling, "Lākēn dans l'Ancien Testament," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 (1981) 190–200.
83. The root and stem of yʿrw are obscure.
84. On kkh, see L. Glinert, "The Preposition in Biblical and Modern Hebrew," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982) 115–25, at 121–22.
85. See H. A. Brongers, "Bemerkungen zum Gebrauch des adverbialen wʾsupʿeʾ/supʿattāh im Alten Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965) 289–99.
86. Negative lōʾ is here an item adverb.
87. On the structure of the entire chapter, see M. O'Connor, "The Pseudosorites: A Type of Paradox in Hebrew Verse," *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. E. R. Follis (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987) 161–72.
88. The whole sentence spans vv 1b–5, with three occurrences of ʾzy.
89. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 92–94.

90. The relationship among the various functions is recognized by Muraoka for ʾak (*Emphatic Words*, 129–30) and *raq* (pp. 130–32), but only with two stipulations: that the emphatic force of ʾak is "original" and the "restrictiveadversative use" is a secondary development with "a slight residue of the original force ... still preserved originally" (p. 130) and that the reverse (from restrictive to emphatic) is true for *raq*. The developments are not historical, however, but semantic, and no one sense has an assignable priority.
91. The adverb *raq* is found 109 times, and ʾak 161 times (SA/THAT). On the former, see B. Jongeling, "La particule ִרָק," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 18 (1973) 97–107; his account overemphasizes the importance of position. Rare in verse, *raq* is also used as an item adverb (e.g., [Gen 6:5](#), [41:40](#)). For *rq* and ʾk together, see [Num 1–2:2](#).
92. See also [1 Kgs 8:9](#).
93. In the senses 'even, only, surely'; see, e.g., [Gen 18:32](#), [Isa 34:14–15](#); see Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 65.
94. See also [1 Sam 18:17](#).
95. See also [Gen 44:28](#). For the sense 'on the contrary,' see N. H. Snaith, "The Meaning of the Hebrew ִנָּס," *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964) 221–25. On ʾk 'however' in exegesis, see Fishbane, *Biblical interpretation*, 184–85, 197–99.
96. See also [Ps 66:19](#), [Job 32:7–8](#).
97. See also [Gen 28:16](#), [1 Kgs 11:2](#), [Isa 40:7](#).
98. So W. Holladay on [Jer 3:23](#), a difficult text; see *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 124. Holladay's treatment of ʾkn agrees with ours, as does, for the most part, that of Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 132–33; note also F. J. Goldbaum, "Two Hebrew Quasi-Adverbs: ִלְכֹן and ִאֲכֹן," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 23 (1964) 132–35.
99. It is irrelevant that the speaker is wrong; the force of ʾkn derives from his beliefs.
100. Cf. [Amos 7:14](#).
101. Cf. [Ps 1:2](#).
102. The accompanying and parallel name change for Abraham in [Gen 17:5](#) has *w*.
103. The standard view (see, e.g., Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 128–29) that ʾbl has an "early" meaning (in Genesis) and a distinct "late" meaning (in Daniel, cf. [2 Chr 1:4](#)) is dubious; cf. n. 90. The particle *bilfi* is apparently an item restrictive adverb in [Num 11:6](#) and a clausal restrictive adverb in [Isa 10:4](#).
104. The adverbial ending -ām is found on ʾwlm.
105. With ʾwlm, contrast the related particle ʾwly 'perhaps' (39.3.4b). For ʾwlm, see also the cases in [Gen 48:19](#), [Exod 9:16](#).
106. Note that the construction may be haplologic (two identical neighboring items are reduced to one): ʾepes kī kī > ʾepes kī. On the Qumran reading, see P. K. McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1984) 296; McCarter himself reads nʾst ʾt yhw with versional support.
107. See also [Job 1:11](#).

40 Exclamations and Polar Questions

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[2.1 Presentative Exclamations](#)

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[40.3 Polar Questions](#)

40.1 Introduction

a

A standard feature of syntactic study is the functional classification of clauses and sentences. Any such sorting-out is problematic. One traditional scheme distinguishes statements or assertions ('It is good'), commands ('Be good'), questions ('How good is it?', 'Is it good?'), and exclamations ('How good it is!', 'Good!'). In terms of the basic structures of Hebrew, statements, commands, and most questions draw on comparable resources, and these have been treated throughout. One class of questions, polar or 'yes-no' questions, remains to be treated, as does the broad class of exclamations. The considerable overlap among the four functional classes, notably of interrogative clauses and exclamations, is not our special concern here.¹ Evaluation of difficult cases is a matter of more specialized study.

40.2 Exclamations

a

Under the rubric of exclamations we include a variety of utterances.² Four groups require attention because of the syntactic complexities associated with them: presentative exclamations (e.g., those with הִנֵּה), wish and oath formulas (e.g., those with וְאֵי), nominal exclamations (e.g., those with אֲשֶׁר־), and woe cries (e.g., those with הוֹי). Other types of exclamation can be treated more briefly.³

40.2.1 Presentative Exclamations

a

The presentative exclamations are those that begin with the presentative particles, הִנֵּה and הִנֵּן.⁴ the two particles do not differ in their use.⁵ Both introduce exclamations of immediacy and fuller exclamations of perception, cause, circumstance, etc.

b

In exclamations of immediacy, הִנֵּה is frequently inflected with a pronoun (# 1),⁶ often in answer to a summons (# 2). With or without the pronoun it "emphasizes the immediacy, the here-and-now-ness, of the situation,"⁷ either in direct discourse (## 1–2) or in narrative (# 3).

1. הִנֵּנּוּ אֲתָנוּ לָךְ Here we are. We come to you.

[Jer 3:22](#)

2. וְאָמַר הִנְנִי שְׁלָחְנִי: And I said, "Here I am. Send me."

3. וַיִּגְדַּר לַמֶּלֶךְ ... כִּי נָס יוֹאָב
אֶל-אֹהֶל יְהוָה וְהָיָה אֵצֶל
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
- [Isa 6:8](#)
The king ... was told that Joab had fled to YHWH's tent and there he was, next to the altar.

[1 Kgs 2:29](#)

Presentative הנה has this nuance of vivid immediacy often in clauses with participles (## 4–5), sometimes quite elaborate (# 6), as well as in verbal clauses (# 7).

4. הִנֵּה חָמִיד עֹלָה תִּמְנָתָהּ
Your father-in-law is now on his way up to Timnah.
[Gen 38:13](#)
5. הִנֵּה אָבִיד חֵלָה
Your father is now sick.
[Gen 48:1](#)
6. כִּי הִנֵּה הָאָדוֹן יְהוָה
צָבָאוֹת מְסִיר מִירוּשָׁלַיִם ...
מִשְׁעָן וּמִשְׁעָנָה
The Lord, YHWH Šb'wt, is now taking from Jerusalem ... support and staff ... ⁸
7. הִנֵּה אֲנָשִׁים בָּאוּ הַנָּה
הַלַּיְלָה
Some men came here just tonight.
[Isa 3:1](#)

[Josh 2:2](#)

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Related to this sense of immediacy is the use of והנה as a bridge to introduce with emotion a noun clause (38.8) or perception, either after a verb of perception (# 8) or after a new situation of perception is described (## 9–10).⁹ In the latter cases the verb is usually said to be omitted for the sake of "vividness." In such uses והנה is often best left untranslated.

8. וְלֹא-הֵאֱמַנְתִּי לְדִבְרֵים עַד
אֲשֶׁר-בָּאתִי וְתִרְאִינָה עֵינִי
וְהָיָה לֹא-הִגַּדְתִּי לִי חֶצְיִי
I didn't believe the reports until I came and my own eyes saw [to my astonishment] that I hadn't been told half the truth.¹⁰
[1 Kgs 10:7](#)
9. וַיָּבֹא דָוִד וְאֲנָשָׁיו אֶל-הָעִיר
וְהָיָה שְׂרוּפָה בָּאֵשׁ
David and his men came to the city and (saw [to their indignation] that) it was burned down.
[1 Sam 30:3](#)
10. וָאָקַם בַּבֹּקֶר לְהִינִיחַ
אֶת-בְּנֵי וְהָנָה-מֵת
I got up in the morning to nurse my son and (saw [to my horror] that) he was dead.
[1 Kgs 3:21](#)

C

Presentatives introducing longer or fuller exclamations serve to ground and define the material that follows them. The distinction between exclamations of immediacy and exposition may be blurred (as in # 10). D. J. McCarthy in his discussion of והנה offers some English examples for comparison.

Take the sentences: "Look! Uncle Joe is coming. We'll go!". This can reassure, say, a child anxious to be off, and so be equivalent to "When Uncle Joe comes etc." without the force of the colloquial original. It can imply doubt: "If Uncle Joe etc.". ... It can even express a purpose: perhaps Uncle Joe is not a favorite so that

it implies: "To avoid Uncle Joe we'll go away!". And so on. ... In all this the expression remains exclamatory with an emotional note and we miss the language-user's full meaning if we simply equate the sentences with the suggested temporal or conditional or causal or purpose clauses. We get the meaning but not the feeling, and the two must be grasped to get the full force of the language.¹¹

The presentative **הנה** is common in direct speech, while the combination **והנה** is frequent in narrative. With or without **ו**, **הנה** serves "to introduce a fact upon which a following statement or command is based."¹² Thus it can stand before either a verbless clause (# 11) or a verbal clause (## 12–13). With reference to future time, **הנה** clauses can stand before a clause with a volitional form (## 11–12; sometimes with **ועתה**, # 13), or before a suffix conjugation form with relative *waw* (# 14). For past time *waw*-relative with the short prefix conjugation is found (# 15). This use is also often best left untranslated.

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- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 11. | הנה־נא דְּבָרֵי הַנְּבִיאִים
פֶּה־אַחֶר טוֹב אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ
יְהִי־נא דְּבָרְךָ כְּדִבְרֵי אֶחָד
מֵהֵם וְדִבַּרְתָּ טוֹב: | Okay, now: the findings of the (other) prophets are uniformly favorable to the king. Let your finding be like one of those, so that you can speak favorably. |
| | | 1 Kgs 22:13 <i>Qere</i> |
| 12. | הנה־נא שְׁמַעְנוּ כִּי מַלְכֵי
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־מַלְכֵי חֶסֶד
הֵם נְשִׁימָה נָא שָׁקִים
בְּמַתְנֵינוּ | [Since] we've heard, regarding Israelite kings, that they are merciful kings—let's put sackcloth round our middles ... |
| | | 1 Kgs 20:31 |
| 13. | הנה בָּעַל הַחֲלָמוֹת הֵלֵךְ
בָּא:
וְעַתָּה לָכוּ וְנַהַרְגֵהוּ | [Since] that dreaming lord is here—come on, now, let's kill him. |
| | | Gen 37:19–20 |
| 14. | וְהֵנָּה בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ וְהָיִיתִי
לְאָב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם: | My covenant is with you and (or, as for me, because my covenant is with you) you shall become father of a throng of nations. |
| | | Gen 17:4 |
| 15. | וְהֵנָּה אֵין־יוֹסֵף בַּבּוֹר
וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־בְּגָדָיו: | Because Joseph was not in the pit, he rent his clothes. |
| | | Gen 37:29 |

d

Similar to these causal connections, the presentative forms **הנה** and **והנה** also introduce clauses expressing a temporal connection (# 16) or the occasion or condition (## 17/18) for the ensuing clause, using either a verbless construction (## 16–17) or a verbal (# 18). Other semantic functions include adversative (# 19) and concessive notions (# 20).

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 16. | וְהֵנָּה־הוא וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ
יִצְאִים אִלֶּיךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ לוֹ
כְּאֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ: | When he and the people who are with him attack you, do to them whatever your hands find to do. |
| | | Judg 9:33 |

17. הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים וְגִדַּעְתִּי
אֶת־זִרְעֶךָ
There will come a time when I will put a
stop to your strength (or, when in the
future ...).
[1 Sam 2:31](#)
18. וְהִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי בָּא ... וְהָיָה
כְּאֲשֶׁר־אֲעֲשֶׂה כֵּן תַּעֲשֶׂוּן:
When I arrive ... let it be that whatever I
do, you do.
[Judg 7:17](#)
19. הִנֵּה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וְאִיהָ
הֵשֶׁה לְעֹלָה:
Here are the fire and the wood, but
where is the lamb for the 'olâ?
[Gen 22:7](#)
20. וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה אֲרָבוֹת
בְּשָׁמַיִם הִיְהִיָּה כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה
Even if YHWH opened the floodgates of
heaven, could this happen?
[2 Kgs 7:19](#)

e

In addition to serving as a bridge to introduce a noun clause of perception, הִנֵּה can also function as a bridge for a logical connection between a preceding clause and the clause it introduces, whether verbal (## 21, 27, 28, 31)¹³ or participial (## 22–24, 26,

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29–30) or verbless (# 25).¹⁴ This bridging role may involve a causal relation (# 21), a condition (# 22)¹⁵ or circumstance (## 23–24), a reversal of expectations (# 25),¹⁶ the apodosis to a dependent temporal clause (## 26–27), a result (## 28–30)¹⁷, or a concession (# 31).

21. וַיָּרֻץ ... וְהִנֵּה הֵחָל הַנֶּגֶף
בָּעָם
And he ran ... because the plague had
already begun (to spread) among the
people.
[Num 17:12](#)
22. וַעֲמֹדָתָּ ... וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה עֹבֵר
וְעֹמֵד
Stand still ... because YHWH is about to
pass by.
[1 Kgs 19:11](#)
23. וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָאִישׁ וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד
עַל־הַגִּמְלִים
He came to the man while he was
standing by the camels.
[Gen 24:30](#)
24. עוֹד שָׂאֵר הַקָּטָן וְהִנֵּה רֹעֶה
בְּצֹאֵן
There remains yet the youngest,
tending the sheep.
[1 Sam 16:11](#)
25. וַיִּקְרָא אֲדֹנָי ... לְבָכִי ...
וְהִנֵּה שִׂשׂוֹן
My lord ... called for weeping ... and (or,
but) there was rejoicing.
[Isa 22:12–13](#)
26. וַיְהִי־הוּא טָרָם כִּלָּה לְדַבֵּר
וְהִנֵּה רִבְקָה יֹצֵאת
Before he had finished speaking,
Rebecca emerged.
[Gen 24:15](#)
27. וַיְהִי כִּכְלָתוֹ לְהַעֲלוֹת
הָעֹלָה וְהִנֵּה שְׁמוּאֵל בָּא
When he had finished offering the 'olâ,
Samuel arrived.

28. וַיִּכּוּ הָאֶחָד אֶת־הָאֶחָד
וַיָּקָמָה אֹתוֹ:
וַהֲנִה קָמָה כָּל־הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה
29. הֵן לִי לֹא נָתַתָּה זָרַע וַהֲנִה
בֶּן־בֵּיתִי יוֹרֵשׁ אֹתִי:
30. תָּבֵן אֵין נָתַן לַעֲבָדֶיךָ ...
וַהֲנִה עֲבָדֶיךָ מִכִּים
31. וּבָזָה אֱלֹה לְהַפֵּר בְּרִית
וַהֲנִה נָתַן יָדוֹ
- [1 Sam 13:10](#)
The one struck the other and killed him.
So now the whole clan has risen up ...
- [2 Sam 14:6–7](#)
You have given me no children; so a
house-born servant will be my heir.
- [Gen 15:3](#)
Your servants are given no straw ... and
so your servants are being beaten.
- [Exod 5:16](#)
He has reviled an oath in breaking the
covenant even though he had given his
hand to it.
- [Ezek 17:18](#)

40.2.2 Oath and Wish Exclamations

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a

The expression of wishes and oaths does not require the use of any sort of exclamation, but a diverse set of exclamations are used, some protases without apodoses and some phrases headed up by substantives. The particles **אם** and **לא** are involved in a number of these exclamations, not always in a comprehensible way. While Paul Joüon argues that the unpredictable usages are the result of contamination among the various patterns, it may be better to confess that the calculus of the particles is beyond our specification. ¹⁸

b

An oath need not be introduced by an exclamation. ¹⁹ It may have no introduction or it may be preceded only by the particles **כִּי** ('certainly,' 39.3.4e; positive, # 1), **אם** (negative; # 2), **אם לא** (positive; # 3), or **כִּי אם** (positive; # 4); with the particles only, the oath has the form of a protasis with no apodosis. An oath can also be preceded by the term **חַי** + a name (or some powerful or sacred substitute); the term is sometimes pointed **חַיִּי** (perhaps a verb ²¹ but probably a noun ²²), and sometimes **חַיִּי** (< **חַיִּים**). ²³ The **חַי** + name combination is followed by a clause with **כִּי** (positive; # 5), **אם** (negative; # 6), **אם לא** (positive; # 7), or **כִּי אם** (positive; # 8); the two items are grammatically independent (note # 9), despite the standard translation of the **חַי** phrase as a protasis and of the **וּמ** clause as its apodosis ('As Yahweh lives, may ... ').

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1. נִשְׁבַּע אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה בְּקָדְשׁוֹ
כִּי הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים
2. הֲנִי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בִשְׁמִי הַגָּדוֹל
אֲמַר יְהוָה אִם־יִהְיֶה עוֹד
שְׁמִי נִקְרָא בְּפִי כָּל־אִישׁ
יְהוּדָה אֲמַר חַי־אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה
- The Lord YHWH swears by his holiness:
"Surely, the time will come ... "
- [Amos 4:2](#)
"I hereby swear by my great name," says
YHWH—"my name shall no more be
invoked in the mouth of every Judahite in
the land of Egypt who says'(By) the Lord
YHWH's life.

בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

3. נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת לֵאמֹר
אִם-לֹא כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּמְיִיתִי בֵּן
הַיָּתָה

[Jer 44:26](#)

YHWH Šbwt swears, "As I have surely intended it, so shall it be."

4. נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת בְּנַפְשׁוֹ
כִּי אִם-מְלֵאֲתִיךָ אָדָם

[Isa 14:24](#)

YHWH Šbwt swears by himself: "I will surely fill you with people."

5. חַי־יְהוָה כִּי בֶן-מָוֶת הָאִישׁ
הַעֲשֶׂה זֹאת:

[Jer 51:14](#)

YHWH's life! Surely the man who did this is a dead man.

6. וַיִּשָּׁבַע שָׁאוּל חַי־יְהוָה
אִם-יוּמָת:

[2 Sam 12:5](#)

Saul swore, "YHWH's life! He shall not die!"

7. חַי־אֲנִי אִם-לֹא אֶלְתִּי אֲשֶׁר
בָּזָה ... וְנִתְּתִיו בְּרֹאשׁוֹ:

[1 Sam 19:6](#)

My (YHWH's) life! I will surely bring down on his head my oath that he despised ...

8. וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד חַי־יְהוָה כִּי
אִם-יִהְיֶה יִנָּפְנוּ אוֹ-וָמוֹ
יָבוֹא וָמָת

[Ezek 17:19](#)

David said, "YHWH's life! YHWH will surely strike him or his day will come and he'll die."

9. וְנִשְׁבַּעְתָּ חַי־יְהוָה בְּאֵמֶת
בְּמִשְׁפָּט וּבִצְדָקָה

[1 Sam 26:10](#)

You shall swear "YHWH's life!" truly, justly, and rightly.

[Jer 4:2](#)

c

A negative oath may be introduced by the phrase חַלִּילָה לִי, conventionally 'far be it from me,'²⁴ followed by a dependent clause specifying the undesired outcome; this clause begins with בֵּין (# 10) followed by an infinitive or אִם (# 11) followed by a prefix form.

10. חַלִּילָה לִי מַעֲשׂוֹת זֹאת

Far be it from me to do that!

[Gen 44:17](#)

11. חַלִּילָה לִי מִיְהוָה
אִם-אֲעֲשֶׂה אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה

YHWH forbid me to do that thing!

[1 Sam 24:7](#)

d

Wishes may be expressed in complete independent clauses (e.g., with יִתֵּן מִי or אֶחָלִי with a prefix form)²⁵ or in protases lacking apodoses, introduced by אִם (# 12) or, more often לִי (## 13–15).²⁶

12. יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם-תִּשְׁמַע-לִי:

O Israel, would that you would hear me!

13. לֹא הִקְשַׁבְתָּ לְמִצְוֹתַי [Ps 81:9](#)
Would that you had heard my
commandments!
14. לוֹ שָׁקוֹל יִשְׁקַל כְּעָשִׂי [Isa 48:18](#)
Oh that my anguish could be measured!
[Job 6:2](#)
15. לוֹ-מָתָנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם [Num 14:2](#)
Would that we had died in Egypt!

40.2.3 Nominal Exclamations

a

There are three groups of nominal exclamations.²⁷ One group consists of ad-hoc creations, that is, nouns or noun phrases used according to need (# 1).²⁸

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1. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אָבִיו רֹאשִׁי
רֹאשִׁי [2 Kgs 4:19](#)
And he said to his father, "My head! my
head!"

Another consists of nouns or noun phrases used independently of their grammatical context; a number of these are important: (a) נָאִם 'declaration(?) of YHWH,' almost always used as a closing formula in the prophets;²⁹ (b) אָמֵן 'amen!';³⁰ (c) בִּי 'pardon me,' perhaps with the sense 'on me be any guilt arising from what I say/do,' always followed by אֲדַנִּי or אֲדַנִּי in conversation;³¹ and perhaps (d) סֶלָה, a word of unknown sense found only in the Psalter and in the psalm of [Habakkuk 3](#) and apparently some sort of exclamation. These two groups of exclamations involve contained units.

b

A third group of nominal exclamations is more complex: the nouns in this group introduce phrases of some complexity. Among these are אֲשֶׁרִי 'O the blessings of, enviable the situation of,' a petrified plural noun found only in construct phrases (# 2–3) or with suffixes (# 4), and קוֹל 'O the voice of, hark!' a noun ('voice') widely used elsewhere but capable of heading an independent phrase (# 5).³² Other nouns that form nominal exclamations are חֲלִילָה and, if it is a noun, חִי (40.2.2).

2. אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ
בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים [Ps 1:1](#)
To be envied is the person who does not
walk in the evil doers' counsel!
3. אֲשֶׁרִי אֲנָשֶׁיךָ אֲשֶׁרִי עֲבָדֶיךָ
אֵלֶּה הָעֹמְדִים לְפָנֶיךָ
תָּמִיד [1 Kgs 10:8](#)
The joys of your men, the joys of these
your aides who stand before you always!
4. אֲשֶׁרִיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל [Deut 33:29](#)
You are to be envied, Israel.
5. אֲנִי יִשְׁנָה וְלִבִּי עָר קוֹל
דֹּדִי דוֹפֵק [Cant 5:2](#)
I slept while my heart stirred. Hark! My
beloved knocks!

40.2.4 Woe Cries

a

There are half-a-dozen cries that are conventionally associated with woe. Only two are common, **הוי** (about fifty times, always in the prophets) and **אוי** (about twenty-five

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times). The **הוי** cry can be followed by a vocative (# 1)³³ or a topic (# 2); in either case the following noun is juxtaposed to **הוי**. In a number of cases the particle has no woe sense at all; it is merely a summons, conventionally rendered 'ho'! (# 3).³⁴ Sometimes the cry introduces further speech, without the personal focus of the cry being specified (# 4). Though it is usually uttered, the cry may be quoted (# 1).

1. **לֹא־יִסְפְּדוּ לוֹ הוּי אָחִי
וְהוּי אָחוֹת לֹא־יִסְפְּדוּ לוֹ
הוּי אֲדוֹן וְהוּי הַדָּה:**
They shall not lament for him, "Alas, my brother," and "Alas, my sister." They shall not lament for him, "Alas, Lord," and "Alas, His Majesty."
[Jer 22:18](#)
2. **הוּי עֲטָרַת גִּאוֹת שְׂכָרִי
אֶפְרַיִם**
Woe to the crown of the pride of the drunks in Ephraim!
[Isa 28:1](#)
3. **הוּי כָּל־צִמָּא לָבוּ לַמַּיִם**
Ho! All you who are thirsty, come to the water!
[Isa 55:1](#)
4. **הוּי אַשּׁוּר שֶׁבֶט אַפִּי
וּמִטָּה־הוּא בְיָדָם זַעֲמִי:**
Woe! Assyria is the rod of my anger! My fury is a staff in their hand.
[Isa 10:5](#)

The **אוי** cry³⁵ is usually followed by a topic; if the topic is a pronoun, it takes **ל** (# 5),³⁶ but if it is a noun phrase, it is simply juxtaposed (# 6). It, too, is usually uttered, but may be quoted (# 7, the only occurrence of **אָבוֹי**, another woe cry).

5. **אוי לָךְ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לֹא
תִטְהָרִי**
Woe to you, O Jerusalem! You are not clean!
[Jer 13:27](#)
6. **אוי עִיר הַדָּמִים**
Woe to the bloody city!
[Ezek 24:6, 9](#)
7. **לְמִי אוֹי לְמִי אָבוֹי לְמִי
מִדְּוָנִים לְמִי שִׁיחַ**
Whose is "Woe!"? Whose is "Oy!"? Whose are quarrels? Whose is angst?
[Prov 23:29](#)

b

The remaining cries are rare. The form **אֱלֵלִי** ([Mic 7:1](#)) / **אֱלֵלִי** ([Job 10:15](#)) is always followed **לִי**; once it is uttered ([Mic 7:1](#)) and once quoted. In Qoheleth **אֵי** is used in the forms **אֵילֹ** ([4:10](#), followed by an apposition, followed by a relative clause) and **אֵי־לָךְ** ([10:16](#), followed by a vocative, followed by a relative clause). The cry

אָהֹה can stand

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alone (e.g., [Judg 11:35](#)) or before a vocative (e.g., [Ezek 4:14](#)); once it is followed by לַיּוֹם ([Joel 1:15](#)).

40.2.5 Other Exclamations

a

The exclamations that remain, most of them interjections, are not a homogeneous group: a few have straightforward etymologies, while most are phonologically marginal.³⁷ In the case of the forms that seem to represent odd sounds—אָה, הָאָה, הָס, אָנָּא-נָּא, הָאָה—it is important to bear in mind that the shape of the word is likely to be a convention. Exclamations, that is, tend to use sounds not ordinarily part of a language's sound system, as in the sounds written in English as 'whew, tch, tut-tut, tisk-tisk, ugh, argh.'³⁸ This group of Hebrew exclamations is semantically hard to pin down, because most of the items are rare.

b

Three of these exclamations may be classed as cries or impolite utterances. אָה is a cry of pain or grief (uttered in [Ezek 21:20](#); quoted in [Ezek 6:11](#)).³⁹ A cry associated with a horse going into battle (# 1), הָאָה is apparently a human cry of joy (sometimes mean spirited). It is always preceded by אָמַר and may stand with nothing following (e.g., [Ps 40:16](#)) or be followed by a phrase ([Ps 35:25](#)) or a clause (# 2). A *Niphal* participle of יָאֵשׁ 'to despair,' the form נוֹאֵשׁ is used as a cry of despair (# 3).⁴⁰

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. הִתְתֵּן לְסוֹס גְּבוּרָה ... בְּרִי
שֹׁפֵר יֹאמֵר הָאָה וּמִרְחֹק
יִרִית מִלְחָמָה רָעַם שָׁרִים
וְתִרְוֵעָה:</p> | <p>Did you give the horse strength ... ? As often as the trumpet sounds, he says "he'ah" and from afar smells battle, officers' thunder and taratantara.⁴¹</p> <p>Job 39:19, 25</p> |
| <p>2. וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָה חֲמוּתִי רָאִיתִי
אֹר:</p> | <p>He says, "Aha! I am warm! I can see the fire!"</p> <p>Isa 44:16</p> |
| <p>3. אוֹתָא מְרִי נוֹאֵשׁ לֹא
כִּי־אֶהְבֵּתִי זָרִים וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם
אֵלַי:</p> | <p>You said, "I quit! No! I've loved strangers and I'll follow them."⁴²</p> <p>Jer 2:25</p> |

c

Several exclamations are polite, more like promptings than cries. The need for silence is marked by הָס (e.g., [Amos 6:10](#)); apparently at base an exclamation, this word came to be treated as a verb (only twice: *Qal* in [Neh 8:11](#), *Hiphil* in [Num 13:30](#)). The opposite process is illustrated by a hortatory term הָב (e.g., [Exod 1:10](#)): the root יָהַב 'to give,' common in Aramaic, is rare in Hebrew, occurring only in the imperative (e.g.,

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[Gen 29:21](#)), from which the hortatory use ('Come on, ... ') developed. The enclitic particle אָנֹכִי is often used after

imperatives and other volitional forms (e.g., [Isa 1:18](#), [5:5](#)), as well as after **הִנֵּה** and other exclamations and adverbs. As Lambdin observes, "the particle seems ... to denote that the command [or the like] in question is a logical consequence, either of an immediately preceding statement or of the general situation in which it is uttered."⁴³ A related term, **אֲנִי/אָנִי**, is used before imperatives (e.g., [Gen 50:17](#)) and in similar contexts.

d

The sense of the exclamation **אֵי** is unknown; its context is different in both its occurrences ([Gen 47:23](#), [Ezek 16:43](#)).⁴⁴

40.3 Polar Questions

a

There are two types of questions in Hebrew. The words used for question-word questions have been discussed (18.1): **מִי**, **מָה**, **מָתַי**, **מָדוּעַ** form one group ('who, what, when, why?'), and **אֵי**, **אֵיכָה**, **אֵיפֹה**, **אֵינִי**, **אֵיךְ** ('where?') and **אֵיכָה**, **אֵיךְ** ('how?') form another. Polar questions, known in English as 'yes-no' questions, differ from question-word questions in that the entire proposition is questioned rather than just one feature of it.

b

Polar questions may be unmarked as questions or marked with the interrogative **הֲ** (the first question in # 1 is unmarked; the second has **הֲ**).⁴⁵ The same question is found with and without the **הֲ** (# 2).⁴⁶ As with other questions, polar questions with **הֲ** can have an exclamatory sense (# 3).⁴⁷ In double or triple questions, the first question has **הֲ** and the others **אִם** (# 4), **וְאִם**, **הֲ**, or **אִו**. Questions in verse are often rhetorical, requiring assent rather than reply (# 5).⁴⁸

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|-----|---|---|
| 1. | חֶסֶר מְשֻׁנָּעִים אָנִי
כִּי־הִבֵּאתָם אֶת־זֶה
לְהִשְׁתַּנֵּעַ עָלַי הַזֶּה יָבוֹא
אֶל־בֵּיתִי: | Am I short on lunatics that you bring
that one to throw fits at me? Should
such a person enter my house? |
| | | 1 Sam 21:16 |
| 2a. | הַשָּׁלוֹם לַנָּעַר לְאַבְשָׁלוֹם | Is the young man Absalom all right? |
| | | 2 Sam 18:32 |
| 2b. | שָׁלוֹם לַנָּעַר לְאַבְשָׁלוֹם | Is the young man Absalom all right? |
| | | 2 Sam 18:29 |
| 3. | הַזִּבְחִים וּמִנְחָה הִנֵּשְׁתַּם־לִי
בַּמִּדְבָּר אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בֵּית
יִשְׂרָאֵל: | O Israel, you brought me sacrifices and
offerings for forty years in the
wilderness?! |
| | | Amos 5:25 |
| 4. | הֲלָנוּ אַתָּה אִם־לְצָרֵינוּ: | Are you for us or for our enemies? |
| | | Josh 5:13 |
| 5. | הָלֹא תָדְעוּ הָלֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ
הָלֹא הִגַּד מֶרֶאֱשׁ לָכֶם
הָלֹא הִבִּינְתֶּם מוֹסְדוֹת | Didn't you know? Haven't you heard?
Weren't you told from the start? Haven't
you understood since the earth's
foundations? |

הִנֵּה

[Isa 40:21](#)**Footnotes:**

1. Joüon § 162a / pp. 499–500.
2. J. Blau discusses a number of what are here called exclamations under the heading "minor clauses"; his approach may prove fruitful for further study; see *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976) 82–83.
3. We leave out of account here greeting formulas and "block language" (titles and headings)
4. The form *hnh* occurs 1,057 times (SA/THAT), about a third of the time preceded by *w*; *hn* occurs 100 times and is frequent in Job and [Isaiah 40–66](#). The term presentative is Blau's; see *Biblical Hebrew*, 105–6, and *An Adverbial Construction in Hebrew and Arabic* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1977) 18–22. On *hnh* and *whnh*, see L. Alonso-Schökel, "Nota estilística sobre la partícula הִנֵּה," *Biblica* 37 (1956) 74–80; D. J. McCarthy, "The Uses of *w^{sup}e*/*sup*hinnēh in Biblical Hebrew," *Biblica* 61 (1980) 330–42; A. Niccacci, *Sintassi del verbo ebraico nella prosa biblica classica* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1986) 59–64; Richter, *GAHG* 1. 193–94, 3. 203–5 (*hnh* as *Satz-Deitikon* 'sentential deictic'); note also James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *Journal on Biblical Literature* 88 (1969) 1–18, esp. 14–15, rpt. in *Hearing and Speaking the Word*, ed. T. F. Best (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984) 27–44, at 40–41. The presentative *rəēh* 'look!' is rare in the Bible (e.g., [Deut 4:5](#)); the other presentatives, *hn* and *hnh*, though they are conventionally rendered with visual predicates like 'behold!,' do not have any essential reference to vision. The phrase *lāhēn* is an emphatic adverb, usually 'therefore.'
5. C. J. Labuschagne, "The Particles הִנֵּה and הִנֵּה," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 18 (1973) 1–14.
6. On the suffix pronoun versus independent pronoun after *hnh*, see T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1985) 138–40.
7. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 168.
8. A total of sixteen objects follow the participle.
9. See also [Judg 3:25](#); cf. [Jer 26:14](#).
10. Cf. [Judg 18:9](#).
11. McCarthy, "Uses of *wehinnēh*," 331.
12. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 169.
13. See also [2 Sam 19:21](#).
14. See also [Deut 17:4–5](#).
15. Note also [Lev 13:3–5](#), [1 Sam 9:7](#).
16. Note also [Zech 11:6](#).
17. McCarthy's examples of purpose clauses ([2 Sam 15:32](#), [16:1](#); [1 Kgs 18:7](#)) are such because of their infinitives rather than other features of their syntax.
18. Joüon § 165a-j / pp. 503–5 implicates in the contamination the forms treated here and the self-curse (or imprecation) formula (e.g., *kōh-ya'āseh-lī 'ēlōhīm wəkōh yōsīp 'im ya'āmōd rōš 'ēliša' ... 'alāyw*, 'Thus [with a gesture?] may God do to me and thus may he continue (to do) if Elisha's head ... stands on his shoulders,' [2 Kgs 6:31](#)).
19. Joüon § 165b / p. 504.
20. The oath exemplifies what it forbids.
21. Joüon § 79s / p. 164.
22. M. Greenberg, "The Hebrew Oath Particle *hay/hē*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76 (1957) 34–39; cf. W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1. 128.

23. Joüon § 165e / p. 504.
24. Joüon § 105f / p. 288, § 165k / p. 505.
25. Joüon § 163d / p. 502; B. Jongeling, "L'Expression *my ytn* dans l'Ancien Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974) 32–40.
26. Cf. 38.2e. The apparently similar particle ʾābī is used in [Job 34:36](#) and not clearly elsewhere.
27. See also 39.3.4.
28. Joüon § 162c / p. 500. Note also ləʾōholēka yisrāʾel 'to your tents, O Israel' ([1 Kgs 12–16](#)); cf. W. J. Martin, "Some Notes on the Imperative in the Semitic Languages," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 32 (1957) 315–19, at 316–17. A famously difficult example may be found in [Qoh 8:2](#): ʾārī pī-mélek šəmôr, in which the initial pronoun and the final imperative seem to float freely of each other. C. Rabin has suggested that the pronoun may be a topic marker and thus that "the MT phrase could possibly be translated 'As far as I am concerned, it [the rule of conduct] is "watch the king's mouth!"'." See "Lexical Emendation in Biblical Research," *Fucus: A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman*, ed. Y. L. Arbeitman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1988) 379–418, at 391–92.
29. The term nʾm is used 376 times (SA/THAT), almost always with *yhwh*. The closure may be slight.
30. Joüon § 105f / p. 288. Used repeatedly in [Deut 27:15–26](#) and elsewhere; as a noun in [Isa 65:16bis](#).
31. Joüon § 105c / p. 287.
32. The ʾsry phrase is followed by a statement containing the basis for the pronouncement; cf. W. Janzen, "ʾasrê in the Old Testament," *Harvard Theological Review* 58 (1965) 213–26. On *qwl*, see Joüon § 162e / p. 500. M. H. Pope contends that *qôl* "does not mean 'voice,' but 'noise' or 'sound' and is often used as an exclamation, as in [Isa 40:3](#) ... 'Hark! one cries: "In the wilderness etc." See *Song of Songs* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977) 512, cf. 389. On some other, unusual uses of *qwl*, see A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* (3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901) 154–55; GKC § 1441- m / p. 461; Rabin. "Lexical Emendation," 391–92.
33. See D. R. Hillers, "Hôy and Hôy-Oracles: A Neglected Syntactic Aspect," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 185–88; and Hillers, *Micah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 16; on the meaning of *hōy*, see Waltke in D. W. Baker, T. D. Alexander, and B. K. Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity, 1988) 156–57.
34. See the discussion in R. J. Clifford, "[Isaiah 55](#): Invitation to a Feast," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 27–35.
35. The long form ʾôyâ is found only in [Ps 120:5](#).
36. For a first-person example, see [Isa 6:5](#).
37. They are also, like most of the elements treated in this chapter, syntactically marginal. As W. Richter remarks, "The vocative and the interjection are syntactically bound only to a slight degree; they enter into no phrases. Further, they often have no regular role in a syntagma or sentence, can frequently be entirely isolated, and belong among the extremely rare entities that can stand without a sentence or sentence-substitute" (*GAHG* 3. 158).
38. R. Quirk et al., *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (Harrow, Essex: Longman, 1972) 413. These spellings, though they can be pronounced, actually correspond to quite different grunts and groans.
39. The apparent occurrence in [Ezek 18:10](#) is dubious.
40. See Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 1. 53–54, 102, 517.
41. Does the trumpet also "say" "heʾah"? The metaphorical use of ʾmr for the horse is related to the synesthesia in the rest of the verse, viz., the smelling of noise.
42. See Holladay (cited in n. 40) further on this verse.
43. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 170. For the possible etymology of -nāʾ in the energetic form, see 31.7.2 n. 63; note that the particle occurs in a variety of positions but almost never after a suffix form (GKC § 105b / p. 308).
44. The Mishnaic analog apparently means 'behold'; see M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927) 148.

45. The interrogative *h* is used 746 times (SA/THAT). On its initial position, see W. Gross, *Die Pendenskonstruktion im biblischen Hebräisch* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987) 180. On unmarked questions, see Joüon § 161a / p. 495; A. Sperber, *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1966) 622—note also Sperber's treatment of the vocalization of *h*, pp. 623–25.
46. Note also (hă)tišlāḥ 'will it thrive?' in [Ezek 17:9–10](#).
47. Joüon § 161b / pp. 495–96.
48. Moshe Held, "Rhetorical Questions in Ugaritic and Biblical Hebrew," *Eretz-Israel* 9 (1969) 71–79. The combination *hālōʿ* is often likened to the Latin particle *nonne*, a double negative used to indicate that an affirmative answer is expected; in English such an expectation is shown by a tag question, e.g., 'isn't that so?' Most cases of *hālōʿ* fit that description, but there are cases that do not; see H. A. Brongers, "Some Remarks on the Biblical Particle *hālōʿ*," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 (1981) 177–89, who attributes to the form a politeness usage, assigning it sometimes the force of 'as you know' (p. 177, citing [Deut 11:30](#)) and sometimes 'please' (pp. 187–88, citing [1 Sam 26:14](#)). He also discusses presentative and emphatic uses. M. L. Brown, reviewing some difficult cases, has proposed that Hebrew (like Ugaritic and Aramaic) has a particle **hālûʿ* 'surely' in, e.g., [Ezek 38:14](#); see "'Is It Not?' or 'Indeed!': HL in Northwest Semitic," *Maarav* 4 (1987) 201–19.

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Glossary

ablative	direction or movement away from
accidence	see inflection
accident	(philosophical sense) that which is present but nonessential; a quality not crucial to an understand of a thing or being; see <i>also</i> substance
accusative	see case (function)
active	see voice; <i>elsewhere</i> used for fientive
adjunct	an optional or less important element in a grammatical construction, notable groups of adjuncts being adverbs and some prepositional phrases
affix	a form attached to another form (root or base), before (prefix), after (suffix), or internally (infix)
agent	a from identifying who is responsible for a situation, usually an action
agreement	the condition of grammatical elements sharing a corresponding inflectional category, e.g., number or gender; <i>also called</i> concord or congruence
Aktionsart	(German 'type of action') the way in which the structure of a situation is understood in relation to causation, voice, transitivity, reflexivity, repetition, and similar factors; see <i>also</i> and <i>Aspekt</i>
allative	direction or movement to or toward
ambiguous	unclear with a small number of variant interpretations possible; see <i>also</i> vague
analogy	a type of linguistic change in which a larger class of forms influences or even overtakes a smaller class
anaphora	reference of a grammatical element to something mentioned earlier, e.g., in 'Moses fled and Jethro helped <i>him</i> ,' <i>him</i> is an anaphoric pronoun; see <i>also</i> cataphora
anaptyxis	the intrusion of a vowel between two consonants, in Hebrew, often a <i>seghol</i>
anarthrous	lacking the article
aorist	(Greek 'without + boundaries') a verb form indicating a situation without regard to absolute time; the actual use of the aorist form in, e.g., Greek involves a variety of factors
apocope	the shortening of a form at the end and the resulting changes in syllable structure
apodosis	the 'then' clause of an 'if-then' or conditional sentence, a term used <i>here</i> in the broadest sense; see <i>also</i> protasis
apposition	juxtaposition of a noun (or noun phrase) to another noun (or noun phrase) with the same reference and in the same grammatical slot
archaic	marked by characteristics of an earlier time
archaizing	a process by which the characteristics of an earlier time are imitated
argument	a noun (or noun phrase) slot in a sentence, i.e., subject, object, etc.
aspect	the marking of a verb form to indicate chiefly the structure over time of the situation described; see <i>Aspekt</i> and <i>Aktionsart</i>
Aspekt	(German) the way in which the internal structure of a situation is understood in relation to time, as either complete or not; see <i>also</i> <i>Aktionsart</i> and aspect.
asyndetic	lacking a(n excepted) conjunction or other connector
attributive adjective	an adjective that posits an attribute of the substantive it modifies, e.g., <i>hammā'ôr haggādōl</i> 'the <i>great</i> light'; see <i>also</i> predicate

	adjective
base	<i>here</i> a form of a root intermediate in specification between the root and a word, e.g., <i>qtl</i> is a root, <i>-qtāl-</i> is the prefix conjugation base, and <i>yiqṭāl</i> is a word
biconsonantal root	a root composed of two consonants, e.g., <i>bn</i> , the root of <i>bên</i> 'between' and <i>bn(y)</i> , the source of <i>bny</i> 'to build'
binyan	(Hebrew 'building') stem
case (function)	<i>here</i> a group of semantic and syntactic phenomena that can plausibly be grouped together, on the basis of both internal and comparative data; <i>elsewhere</i> an inflection of a noun or pronoun reflecting various semantic and syntactic phenomena; the Semitic cases include the nominative (the case of subject, vocative, predicate in verbless clauses), accusative (the case of nouns modifying the verb, notably of direct object), and genitive (the case of nouns modifying other nouns, notably of possessor, and of prepositional object), as well as, marginally, the dative (case of indirect object, usually a recipient)
casus pendens	(Latin 'hanging case') see nominative absolute
cataphora	reference of a grammatical element to something mentioned later, e.g., in 'When <i>he</i> fled, Moses was afraid,' <i>he</i> is a cataphoric pronoun; see also anaphora
causative	see factitive
citation form	the form of a word given in isolated citation, as in a lexicon; <i>also</i> dictionary form
cognate forms	words that are ultimately derived from the same source, e.g., Hebrew <i>&scaron;ēm</i> , Akkadian <i>šumu</i> , and Arabic <i>ism</i> are cognates
colon	see line
complement	an element in a grammatical construction that completes the predicate, notable types being objects and some adverbials
complex sentence	a sentence made up of a main clause and one or more dependent clauses; <i>see also</i> compound sentence
compound sentence	a sentence made up of several coordinate clauses; <i>see also</i> complex sentence
concord	see agreement
congruence	see agreement
conjugation	a major inflectional category of verbs, the principal Hebrew conjugations being the <i>qatal</i> (or perfective or suffix) conjugation and the <i>yiqtol</i> (or non-perfective or prefix) conjugation
constative	referring to remaining or persisting in a state
construct chain	a phrase involving a construct (<i>regens</i>) term followed by a genitive or absolute (<i>rectum</i>) term, often of a possessed-possessor type, e.g., <i>bêt hammélek</i> 'the king's house'
contrastive analysis	identification of difference between two languages or families of languages, such differences being seen as points of potential difficulty in learning and understanding
copula	(Latin 'rope, thong') a verb that joins the subject and predicate of an equational verb clause, e.g., 'She <i>is</i> tall'; or a pronoun that joins the subject and predicate of a verbless clause, e.g., 'Miriam, <i>she</i> (is) tall'
customary	see habitual
dative	see case (function)
declarative	see indicative (Greek 'pointing') the system of words that shift their reference

deixis	depending on the speech situation (especially personal, temporal, and locational features), including prominently pronouns; e.g., the reference of <i>I</i> depends on who is speaking, that of <i>there</i> depends on where one is pointing (directing attentions)
delocutive	a verb form referring to a speech act; <i>see also</i> performative utterance
denominative	a verb derived from a noun
dictionary form	<i>see</i> citation form
double-status action	an action involving a person in two different roles, i.e., subject and (direct or prepositional or implicit) object
dummy	a grammatical element that is semantically empty and is used chiefly to fill a needed syntactic slot, e.g., <i>it</i> in ' <i>It's</i> raining' is a dummy pronoun, with no true antecedent; <i>also</i> pleonasm
enclitic	(Greek 'leaning on') a word or element that carries no stress of its own and depends on the preceding word; in Hebrew, an element written together with the preceding word
epexegetis	(Greek 'in addition + explanation') the function of glossing or clarifying immediately preceding material
epigraphy	the study of ancient written remains on durable, hard materials (as opposed to manuscripts, on papyrus, cloth, wood, parchment, or paper)
ergative system	a case-marking system in which the object of a transitive verb and the subject of an intransitive verb govern the same case (the absolutive) and the subject of a transitive verb governs a different case (the ergative); some languages are predominantly ergative (e.g., Basque), some are partially so (e.g., split-ergative languages like Hindi), and others display traces of ergativity
etymology	the origins or sources of the elements of a word or phrase as well as the study of the developments of its shape and meaning; an origin or source is called an etymon (pl. etyma)
factitive	a construction in which a cause produces a state, e.g., if <i>kill</i> meant 'cause to be dead,' it would be factitive; factitive is contrasted with causative, a construction in which a cause produces an event, e.g., if <i>kill</i> meant 'causes to die,' it would be causative
fientive	a verb describing motion or change of state; <i>see also</i> stative
finite	a verb form that can stand as a predicate in an independent clause and is inflected for aspect and mood; non-finite forms can stand as a predicate in dependent clauses and are not inflected for aspect or mood
focus marker	<i>see</i> nominative absolute
function	<i>see</i> case (function)
gapping	the omission of an item in the second of two adjacent clauses of similar structure
generic statement	a statement referring to a class of entities or events; <i>see also</i> gnomic
genitive	<i>see</i> case (function)
genre	a category of compositions with common qualities, e.g., prayer, parable, letter
gnomic	having the character of a rule, proverb, or byword; <i>see also</i> generic statement
habitual	characteristic of an extended period of time extending up to or into the present, as of a verb form used to describe regular repetition of an action; a verb form used to describe such an action in the past is called customary

<i>hapax legomenon</i>	(Greek 'once read'; pl. <i>hapax legomena</i> or, less formally, hapaxes) a word, form, or combination of words found only once in a given body of literature
head	the main element in a phrase
hemistich	see line
hendiadys	(Greek 'one through two') a single expression of two apparently separate parts, e.g., 'kith and kin'
homonyms	words of the same shape (pronunciation and spelling) but different meanings; homophones are words of the same pronunciation but different meanings; in languages with complex spelling traditions, e.g. English, homophone is used for words with different spellings and homonym for words with identical spelling
homophones	see homonyms
imperfective	an aspect (<i>Aspekt</i>) in which a situation is understood as ongoing, whatever its temporal relation to the time of speaking; see <i>also</i> non-perfective <i>and</i> perfective
impersonal	an active construction with no specified agent
inceptive	referring to the beginning of a situation; <i>also</i> inchoative
inchoative	see inceptive
indicative	the mood of a simple statement or assertion; <i>also</i> declarative
indirect action	an action in which the subject is the originating or motivating force but not the agent, i.e., not the immediate mover or actor; indirect action may be mediated by an animate or inanimate intermediary (e.g., by a servant or a tool)
infix	see affix
inflection	a systematic morphological marking signaling a grammatical relationship; <i>also</i> accident
ingressive	referring to entering into a state; <i>compare</i> inceptive
intransitive verb	a verb that (usually) does not govern an object; stative verbs are generally intransitive; see <i>also</i> transitive verb
irreal	other than real or actual, e.g., hypothetical, dubious; see <i>also</i> mood
line	the basic unit of Hebrew verse; <i>also</i> colon, hemistich, verset
<i>maqqeph</i>	(Hebrew 'binder') the Masoretic equivalent of a dash, often also serving as a sign that one of the two or three elements joined has no independent stress
markedness analysis	an analysis based on the presence or absence of a particular linguistic feature
metathesis	a change in the sequence of sounds or syllables, reflecting a slip of the tongue, phonological change, or copyist error
<i>mater lectionis</i>	(Latin 'mother of reading'; pl. <i>matres lectionis</i>) a letter used in a consonantal script to indicate a vowel
middle	see voice
mimation	the ending <i>m</i> added after the case endings of many nouns in older dialects of Akkadian (Old Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Old Assyrian)
<i>mišqal</i>	(Hebrew 'weight') noun pattern, e.g., CéCeC is the <i>mišqal</i> of <i>kéleb</i> and <i>mélek</i>
modernizing	a process by which older or archaic characteristics are replaced by corresponding newer ones
mood	a major inflectional category of the verb marking orientation to fact, either real (indicative mood) or irreal (the volitional moods,

	cohortative, impertative, jussive)
neutrum	a grammatical element of vague or broad reference, often in Hebrew a feminine pronoun; analogous to vague "neuter" of 'Don't do <i>it</i> ' or 'This is a mess'
nominal clause	see verbless clause
nominative	see case (function)
nominative absolute	a grammatical element isolated outside a clause, usually at the start of the clause; <i>also</i> known as focus marker, <i>casus pendens</i> , topic
non-finite	see finite
non-perfective	an aspect (<i>Aspekt</i>) in which the structure of a situation over time is not specified, i.e., in which a situation is not specified as to perfectivity; relevant situations often include those set in future time or displaying irreal mood; <i>see also</i> imperfective <i>and</i> perfective
non-perfective conjugation	see prefix conjugation
noun	(Latin <i>nomen</i> 'name') the class of naming words, including substantives (names of things or beings) and adjectives, as well as participles in some uses
noun clause	a dependent clause that is the object of a verb of speaking or perception, e.g., 'He saw <i>that he was alone</i> '
orthography	the study of the way in which words and word elements are spelled
paradigm	a set of inflectional forms of a word; <i>or</i> a class of words that can perform similar syntactic functions
paragogic	(Greek 'leading past') an element that is added at the end of a word
paronomasia	(Greek 'word play, play involving similar sounding words') a figure of speech involving punning or playing on different senses of the same word or of similar-sounding words; the related term <i>schema etymologicum</i> refers to word play involving etymologically related words; both terms are sometimes applied to the use of the infinitive absolute with a corresponding finite verb in Biblical Hebrew
particle	a class of words that connects and subjoins nouns and verbs (including prepositions, some adverbs, the article, etc.) or exits on the margins of utterances (e.g., exclamations and interjections)
partitive	a construction indicating some or a part of a larger entity
passive	see voice
patient	a form identifying who undergoes an action
pause	the break in Masoretic verse division associated with the end of a verse (marked with <i>silluq</i> and <i>sop pasuq</i>) or the middle of a verse (usually marked with <i>athnach</i>); a form in pause may show various phonological shifts, in accentuation or vocalization or both
perfect	a verb form indicating a past situation with present relevance; <i>see also</i> preterite
perfective	an aspect (<i>Aspekt</i>) in which a situation is understood as complete (rather than completed), as a whole; <i>see also</i> imperfective <i>and</i> non-perfective
perfective conjugation	see suffix conjugation
performative utterance	an utterance that performs the act it describes, e.g., 'I now pronounce you husband and wife'; <i>see also</i> delocutive
phrase	words that stand in agreement with one another; <i>or</i> words that form a single grammatical unit

pleonasm	(Greek 'redundancy') <i>see</i> dummy
polarity	a positive : negative contrast, positing total, exclusive contrast, as of <i>A</i> and <i>not-A</i>
polar question	a question demanding a yes or no response
polysemous	showing several distinct meanings
postpositive	occurring after a specified position; <i>see</i> prepositive
predicate adjective	an adjective that predicates an attribute of a substantive in a clause, e.g., <i>gād'l k∂b'd'</i> 'great is his glory'; <i>see also</i> attribute adjective
prefix	<i>see</i> affix
prefix conjugation	the conjugation characterized by prefixing, e.g., <i>yi-qtōl</i> (and suffixing, e.g., <i>yi-qtāl-ū</i>), and <i>here</i> associated with non-perfective aspect; <i>also</i> non-perfective conjugation and <i>yiqtol</i> conjugation; <i>see also</i> suffix conjugation
prepositive	occurring before a specified position; <i>see</i> postpositive
preterite	a form describing a simple past situation; <i>see also</i> perfect
privative	a verb indicating removal of something, e.g., 'to skin, poll'
proclitic	(Greek 'leaning forward') a word or element that carries no stress of its own and depends on the following word; in Hebrew an element written together with the following word or attached to it by a <i>maqquph</i>
progressive	a common term for tenses marked for imperfective aspect, e.g., the English present progressive 'I <i>am running</i> '
prose	language without the numerical regulation of verse
prosthesis	<i>see</i> prothesis
protasis	the 'if' clause of an 'if-then' sentence; <i>see also</i> apodosis
prothesis	(Greek 'placing before') the addition of an initial syllable before a word; prothetic ʔ in Hebrew appears to be used to break up an initial consonant cluster; <i>sometimes</i> the term prosthesis (Greek 'placing with, adding') is so used
qatal conjugation	<i>see</i> suffix conjugation
rectum	(Latin 'governed') the modifying or defining term in a phrase or less often a clause; <i>see also</i> <i>regens</i> and construct chain
reference	any aspect of meaning associated with the external world; in contrast to sense, any aspect of meaning arising from the lexical and grammatical relations of language
regens	(Latin 'governing') the modified or defined word in a phrase or less often a clause; <i>see also</i> <i>rectum</i> and construct chain
regens-rectum	a structure of the modified-modifier type, as in construct-absolute, noun-attribute adjective, possessed-possessor; verb-object; particle (i.e., preposition)-object
relative clause	a dependent clause that modifies a noun phrase in the main clause and may be introduced by a relative pronoun ('the king <i>that</i> I saw') or left unintroduced ('the king I saw')
resumptive	a grammatical element connecting a clause to a preceding nominative absolute, e.g., <i>him</i> in 'As for Moses, I saw <i>him</i> ' (resumptive pronoun) or <i>there</i> in 'As for Midian, he left <i>there</i> ' (resumptive adverb)
rhetorical question	a question to which no answer is expected

root	<i>here</i> the consonantal skeleton of a word, e.g., <i>mlk</i> is the root of <i>mélek</i> and <i>yimlök</i>; <i>elsewhere</i> the base form of a word, from which the word and cognates are derived, e.g., <i>move</i> is the root of <i>move</i> , <i>movement</i> , <i>immovable</i> , <i>mobile</i> ; or the historical base form of a word, e.g., Latin <i>moveo</i> is the root of English <i>move</i>
sense	see reference
short prefix form	a prefix conjugation form displaying, where possible, stress shift and syncope, and associated with jussive and preterite senses
sibilant	a hissing or hushing fricative sound; Hebrew <i>s</i> , <i>š</i> , <i>z</i> , <i>ṣ</i> , & <i>sacate</i> ;
significant	(French) that which signifies; the word as a sound; see <i>also</i> <i>signifié</i>
signifié	(French) that which is signified; the word as an element of meaning and grammar; see <i>also</i> <i>signifiant</i>
situation	an action, event, state, or process described by a verb
substance	(philosophical sense) a thing or being that is distinct in itself; that which is essential and in which accidents inhere; see <i>also</i> <i>accident</i>
smoothing	an effort to remove deviant (archaic, dialectal, geographical, etc.) characteristics
stative	a verb or verb form describing a state or quality; see <i>also</i> <i>fientive</i>
stem	<i>here</i> a major inflectional category of the verb marking <i>Aktionsart</i> , e.g., <i>himlik</i> is a <i>Hipihil</i> stem form; <i>elsewhere</i> a form of the root intermediate in specification between the root and a word, e.g., <i>malk-</i> is the stem of <i>mélek</i> , <i>malkî</i> , <i>malkâ</i> ; or a form of a root to which affixes are attached, e.g., <i>-mov-</i> is the stem of <i>im-mov-able</i>
substance	(philosophical sense) a thing or being that is distinct in itself; that which is essential and in which accidents inhere; see <i>also</i> <i>accident</i>
substantive	see noun
suffix	see affix
suffix conjugation	the conjugation characterized by suffixing, e.g., <i>qātal</i>- <i>tî</i> , and associated with perfective aspect; <i>also</i> perfective conjugation and <i>qatal</i> conjugation; see <i>also</i> prefix conjugation
syncope	shortening a word from the end
synoptic text	a text preserved in two (or more) versions, thus Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22 are synoptic texts, and sections of Kings are synoptic with sections of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Chronicles
syntagm	a series of different elements forming a syntactic unit
telic	possessing a goal or endpoint
tempus	(Latin 'time') tense
tense	the marking of a verb from to indicate chiefly the time of the situation described relative to the time of speaking
topic-comment	<i>here</i> a particular construction involving a topic (cf. nominative absolute) followed by a comment; <i>elsewhere</i> an analytic approach to an informational unit (e.g., a clause) distinguishing old or given information (topic, theme) and new information (comment, rheme)
transitive verb	a verb that (usually) governs a (direct) object (one-place or singly transitive) or, less often, two objects (two-place or doubly transitive); see <i>also</i> intransitive verb
triconsonantal root	a root composed of three consonants; usually excluded as biconsonantal are medial and final weak roots, among others
vague	unclear as a result of restricted or unspecified information, capable of an unspecifiable range of variant interpretations; see <i>also</i> <i>ambiguous</i>
	the number of links a grammatical element, especially a verb, has

valency	other elements
verbal noun	an infinitive, in Hebrew, of either type
verbless clause	a clause that connects a subject and predicate with no verb, used for classification or identification; <i>also</i> nominal clause
verse	numerically regulated language; verse may be regulated in terms of the sound material of language (as in English) or in terms of the syntactic material (as in Hebrew); the numerical regulation always involves small numbers (an iambic foot in English includes two syllables; a pentameter line includes five feet, etc.)
verset	see line
vetitive	a form expressing negative prohibition
vocative	a form used in address, e.g., <i>hammélek</i> 'O king'
voice	an inflectional category of the verb referring to the relationship of the agent (actor) and patient (undergoer): in active voice the agent is the subject and the patient is the object; in passive voice the patient is the subject; in middle voice the agent is both subject and object
word order	patterns of meaningful arrangement of words in a given language; a VSO language tends to use clauses with the elements verb-subject-object in that order
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The *Index of Hebrew Words*, including words cited in both square characters and transliteration, gives the root only of verbal forms where this suffices. The various uses of ׀ and ׀ are listed in the *Index of Topics* (under *he* and *waw*), as are standard (especially Latinate) grammatical terms that include a word or letter name (e.g., *beth essentiae*). A dagger following an entry in the word index indicates that not only is the indexed form discussed but so also are closely related forms (e.g., of a different gender or of multiple stems). Glosses are used sparingly; the form אֵת אֵת (part.) is marked (*part.*) and אֵת אֵת is glossed *with*. Minor variations in spellings are ignored for the sake of saving space: a form cited plene may be indexed in defective spelling or vice versa.

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