Analysis of Lexemes from a Conversational Prose Text: *hnh* as signal of a performative utterance in 1 Sam. 25:41

Ida Zatelli (Florence)

1 Sam. 25:40-41: 40) *wyb'w 'bdy dwd 'l-'bygyl hkrmlh wydbrw 'lyh l'mr dwd*
šlḥnw 'lyk lqḥtk lw l'šh

41) *wtqm wtštḥw 'pym 'rṣh wt'mr hnh 'mtk lšpḥh lrḥṣ rgly*
'bdy 'dny

40) When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, thus they spoke to her: "David sent us to you to take you as a wife for him".

41) Then she arose, and bowed herself with her face to the earth, and said: "Hereby your handmaid becomes a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord".

We shall analyze the values and functions of *hnh* in the chosen context.

1. Morphology

In this context *hinnē* is a particle with the function of an actualizer; it indicates the presence of a performative utterance (or at least of an act with a pronounced illocutionary force).

The existing literature hardly ever refers to this specific function of the particle[1]. The contributions which come closest to dealing with this core question are those of Niccacci[2], who believes that the particle has the function of rendering a fact present and meaningful in the moment of communication[3]. The remarks of Alonso-Schökel[4] are perceptive: "La partícula hebrea *hinnē* ejerce con énfasis una función deíctica; sitúa un objeto en un campo presente, y reclama sobre el objeto la atención del interlocutor. En la clasificación de Bühler entra plenamente en la segunda función, 'Auslösung', que se realiza en forma de llamada 'Anruf', y es ante todo señal." He also talks about the function of "comienzo solemne"[5]. Müller[6]

---

[1] This function has been mentioned by I. Zatelli, Pragmalinguistics and Speech-Act Theory as Applied to Classical Hebrew, ZAH 6, 1993, 60-74: 70.

[2] See A. Niccacci, The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose, Sheffield 1990, par. 67; id., Lettura sintattica della prosa ebraico-biblica, Jerusalem 1991, 123.

[3] See also ibidem, 147 and 207.

[4] L. Alonso-Schökel, Nota estilística sobre la partícula הִנֵּה, Biblica 37, 1956, 74-80: 74.

[5] Ibidem, 76.

[6] H.-P. Müller, Die Konstruktionen mit *hinnē* 'siehe' und ihr sprachgeschichtlicher Hintergrund, ZAH 2, 1989, 45-76, passim.

defines *hinnē* as a "Aufmerksamkeitserreger". Kogut[7] makes some interesting observations: he points to *hinnē* as a word which introduces direct speech and sees it as a word that serves to direct one's attention[8]. Referring to the book *Ma ᶜaseh Efod* by Profiat Duran, he notices that "... these words [הן, הנה] are used only in reference to a [content] clause."[9] Labuschagne[10] remarks: "The particle הן occurring a hundred times in the Old Testament and the more common, longer form הנה which occurs more than a thousand times, are first and foremost demonstrative particles". Muraoka writes[11]: "The primary function of these particles [*hinnē, hēn*] lies in indicating that the speaker ·or the writer wants to draw the special attention of the hearer or the reader respectively to a fact or object which can be said to be important, new, unexpected, etc. This can be best accounted for by assuming their origin as demonstrative or deictic elements." Blau[12] places *hinnē* among the "presentatives". *hnh* occurs 436 times in the Old Testament, *whnh* 343 times (according to Koehler – Baumgartner[13]). There are numerous occurrences with suffixes. According to Jenni – Westermann[14], who reproduce the figures of Mandelkern[15], in the Old Testament there is an aggregate frequency of 1057 of *hinnē* (*hinnē* 446 times; *wᵉhinnē* 360 times); it is widely used throughout, with a particular presence in Jer., Gen., Ez., 1 Sam., Is., Hos.-Mal., 1/2 Kings, 2 Sam., Jud., Ex., 2 Chr., hence most prominently in the prophets and the narrative literature.

For the inscriptions see Jean – Hoftijzer[16] in which Lach. VI 5 is quoted and Davies who quotes five occurrences of *hnh*[17].

It can have additional functions other than that of actualizer; it can be an interjection, a conjunction, an adverb, it can have an asseverative value, etc. (Then it should be determined precisely how many times, in which contexts and functional languages it has the function of actualizer).

---

[7] S. Kogut, On the Meaning and Syntactical Status of הִנֵּה in Biblical Hebrew, Scripta Hierosolymitana 31, 1986, 133-154 (= M. Bar-Asher [ed.], Language Studies II-III, Jerusalem 1987, 245-258 [in Heb.]).

[8] Ibidem, 137, citing A. Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, Sheffield 1983.

[9] Kogut, op. cit., 153.

[10] See C.J. Labuschagne, The Particles הֵן and הִנֵּה, OTS 18, 1973, 1-14: 1.

[11] T. Muraoka, Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew, Jerusalem and Leiden 1985, 138.

[12] J. Blau, A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew, Wiesbaden 1976, 105.

[13] KBL³, 242

[14] THAT I, 505

[15] S. Mandelkern, Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae, Lipsiae 1926².

[16] C.-F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer, Dictionnaire des Inscriptions Sémitiques de l'Ouest, Leiden 1965.

[17] G.I. Davies, Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions. Corpus and Concordance, Cambridge 1991, 335: he cites Lachish letter VI 5.10, Lachish letter VIII 2, Tell Arad Ostracon XXIV 18 and Kenyon Ostracon I 2, No. 675b.

For further information about the morphology of *hnh* see also dictionaries such as GesB and KBL² and grammars such as W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, and A.E. Cowley, Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, Oxford 1976 (1910²), and T.O. Lambdin, Introduction to Biblical Hebrew, London 1971.

2. Root

hinnē is usually considered an amplified form of *hen*: see for example Koehler – Baumgartner[18]. But Joüon – Muraoka[19] propose: "The secondary form הִנֵּה, alongside הֵן is perhaps derived from הִנֵנִי." "Perhaps one said הִנֵנִי *here I am*, הִנֵּנּוּ *here we are* on the analogy of the impv. רְאֵנּוּ and רְאֵנִי."
Muraoka[20] formulates a resolute etymological marker: "No legitimate doubt can be raised as to the etymological relationship between the two particles [*hinnē, hēn*] and the corresponding Arabic *'inna*, which is usually used with weak emphatic force. Just as in the case of the Arabic parallel, the asseverative 'truly, verily' is hardly in place in the majority of the occurrences of *hinnē/hēn*, with a few possible exceptions."
Gesenius – Kautzsch – Cowley[21] place *hnh* among the interjections which, with a somewhat generic formula, "originally expressed independent ideas, and become interjections only by rapid pronunciation and by usage... הִנֵּה *behold!* (prop. *here*)".
Koehler – Baumgartner[22] expressly propose an association with the Akkadian *annuma*, "now". Gesenius – Buhl[23] also brings forward Assyrian *annû*, "dieser" (also written *ḥannû*)[24].

3. Formal Characteristics

Refer to the previous section 2. Root. The fact that *hinnē* may be considered as an amplified form of *hen* does not seem to have any relevance to the semantic values of the particle at issue.

4. Syntagmatics

hinnē appears very often with the prefixed conjunction *w*[e] and in this case it can hold the function of actualizer. It also appears with suffixed personal pronouns (or also followed by the pronoun as in *hnh-hw'*: for example Ru. 3:2): its most significant semantic value becomes then that of "being there", of presence (for these cases I refer to the specific relevant literature: see for example Lambdin[25]: *hnh* is a "predicator of existence... It emphasizes the immediacy, the here-and-now-ness of the situation. In this use inflected forms are common." It can also be followed by the particle נָא.
The most significant element semantically (and pragmatically) of the lexeme in this specific function is that it introduces a clause (nominal or verbal). As Koehler – Baumgartner[26] point out: "betont d. ganzen folgenden Satz...; es bewirkt Inversion (Subj. vor Präd.) הִ' אָנֹכִי יָצָתִי Nu. 22: 32... ."

---

[18] KBL³, 242.
[19] P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew, Roma 1991, 334 and n. 3.
[20] Op. cit., 137.
[21] Op. cit., 307.
[22] KBL², 238.
[23] GesB, 185.
[24] For further information on root derivations and etymological proposals see the dictionaries, lexicons, grammars mentioned above.
[25] Op. cit., 168.
[26] KBL³, 242; see also KBL², 239.

It also serves specifically to introduce direct discourse. Lambdin[27] points out: "Most *hinnēh*-clauses occur in direct speech (this excludes *wᵉhinnēh*...) and serve to introduce a fact upon which a following statement or command is based." Of much interest are the comments of Oberhuber[28]: "הנה projiziert in die unmittelbare Gegenwart und lenkt das Augenmerk zwingend auf die folgende Situation."

Certain characteristic constructions of *hnh* with the participle are in part pertinent to the function which the lexeme has in this context: see Bergsträsser[29] and Joüon – Muraoka[30]: "The future expressed by the particle is usually a near future, the nuance of proximity is often emphasized by הִנֵּה." I would be more explicit regarding the meaning of this emphasis in certain cases, e.g., Jer. 31:31: *hnh ymym bᵓym nᵓm-YHWH wkrty ᵓt-byt yśrᵓl wᵓt-byt yhwdh bryt ḥdš*, "Hereby (I solemnly declare [that]) the days shall come – the oracle of the Lord – when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah", where *hnh* introduces a commissive speech-act (the solemn declaration).

Müller[31] undertakes a detailed analysis of *hinnē* followed by the suffix of the first pers. singular with its distinctive morphological features which leads him to consider the more primitive structures of the language uniting "Geistes- und Naturwissenschaft."[32]

5. Versions

a) Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets translates *h ᵓ*.
b) The LXX has ἰδού.
c) The Vulgate has *ecce*.
d) The Syriac Peshiṭta version translates *h ᵓ*.

These are all very common and widespread translations of the particle in question. There has been little or no attempt to explore the function of actualizer of these lexemes. In general the deictic aspects or the function of calling attention are emphasized. Ἰδού, which appears in the LXX, derives from an aorist imperative of the verb ὁράω, "to see", but it has lost almost completely its semantic transparency and is commonly used as a particle of recall especially in the favoured expressions of direct discourse.

Eccĕ from the Vulgate contains the enclitic element *ce* which is the equivalent of *here* usually attached to the demonstrative *hic*: *hice*, "this here", "these here". *Eccĕ* in normal conversation is often united in one lexeme with the pronouns *is, ille, iste*: thus it presents considerable morphological analogies with *hnh*.

---

[27] Op. cit., 169.
[28] K. Oberhuber, Der einfache Nominalsatz und die sog. nominale Apposition, VT 3, 1953, 2-45: 10.
[29] G. Bergsträsser, Hebräisches Grammatik, in Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Bergsträsser, Hebräisches Grammatik, Hildesheim 1962, II, 72.
[30] Op. cit., II, 401.
[31] Op. cit.
[32] See P. Humbert, La formule hébraïque *hinneni* suivi d'un participe, RÉJ 97, 1934, 58-64 (more marginal, but just as perceptive). D.J. McCarthy, The Uses of *wᵉhinnēh* in Biblical Hebrew, Biblica 61, 1980, 330-342, discussing *wᵉhinne*, declares (342) that: "It has an affinity... for the actuality (no futures) of qatal."

6. Parallels

a) *h⁾, hn, hl⁾, wᶜth; hywm, ky, r⁾h.*

b) For the use of *hl⁾* we can refer to Niccacci[33], according to whom two qatal performatives appear in the discourse of Deborah, the second introduced by *hl⁾* (equivalent to *hnh*) in v. 6 "... perché questo è il giorno che YHWH *con ciò stesso pone* Sisara nella tua mano. Non *esce* forse *con ciò stesso* YHWH davanti a te?" The author points out[34] that he usually uses this phraseology [con ciò, etc.] in order to indicate that the very words (of Deborah in this case) produce that which they express, according to the force of the performative, and he indicates in reference to this Jos. 5:9 where one finds *hywm* as an actualizer of a performative utterance: *wy⁾mr YHWH ⁾l-yhwšᶜ hywm glwty ⁾t-ḥrpt mṣrym mᶜlykm...*, "The Lord said to Joshua: 'Hereby I shall distance the infamy of Egypt from you'...".

Niccacci[35] also confronts the problem of the relationship between *hnh* and *r⁾h* (however in a marginal way with respect to the specific function of the lexeme here being considered). He notes that in 2 Sam. 7:2 "il discorso di David inizia con ראה 'vedi!', mentre in 1 Cron. [17:1] troviamo הנה 'ecco'. Entrambi presentano un'informazione importante per il momento della comunicazione." He adds that the "verb" *r⁾h* is related to *hnh* and often is connected with that particle. I would like to specify that often *hnh* is introduced by propositions in which one finds the verb *r⁾h* (Niccacci[36] cites the case of Jud. 3:24- 25; see also Jud. 18:9), but that *r⁾h* used in the place of or as the equivalent of *hnh* loses much of its semantic transparency and functions as a particle of recall (see the case of ἰδού in the LXX [section 5])[37].

I do not think that there exist oppositional parallels to *hnh* as an actualizer particle. One should bear in mind that an actualizer is essentially a clarifier; it distinguishes for example a performative utterance from a simple observation or assertion: "Hereby I promise you...", "I said that I promise you... ." It is probably necessary to

---

33 Lettura sintattica, 156.
34 Ibidem, 156, n. 191.
35 Ibidem, 235-236.
36 Ibidem, 236.
37 Kogut, op. cit., thinks that he can demonstrate that *hnh*, during the evolution of its use, absorbed the values and functions of the verb *r⁾h*, with which it is often joined. P. 147: "An examination of the uses of the verb ראה in the Bible reveals that when this verb is complemented by a single constituent, its meaning is 'to look at', 'to see'; however, when it is complemented by a content clause, its meaning is likely to be 'to perceive (that)...', where the act of perceiving is not necessarily visual. We may say, then, that because והנה introduces only an object content clause, it is likely to bring us to a more exact understanding of the verb ראה. Thus for example, we find:
    And the priest shall look at (וראה) *the raw flesh...* (object) (Lev. 13:15).
As against:
    Then the priest shall come, and perceive (וראה) והנה [that] *the disease has spread in the house* (object content clause) (Lev. 14:44)."
On p. 149 Kogut specifies: 1) The meaning of (ו)הנה is the same as that of the root ראה..., 2) Once (ו)הנה took on the meaning of וירא והנה, it invited the addition of an object content clause as its complement.
These assertions are very reductive and not very convincing.

elaborate a more sophisticated theory in this regard, but I do not believe that there exists a "deactualizer"; we can find phraseologies that help, in gradation, to "disambiguize" the utterance. It is a question of the degree of "disambiguation" of the utterance.

7. Exegetica

I think one could say that the specific use of *hnh* with performative verbs or verbs endowed with a powerful illocutionary force is in and of itself an exegetic assumption. I could quote particular cases, with reference to Jenni – Westermann[38], such as *hnh* followed by *ʾnky* (e.g. Am. 2:13) and *whnh* that introduce prophetic judgements in which the intervention of God is proclaimed. Nevertheless it should be noted that this use of the particle in oracular formulae or in the introductions to accounts of dreams is all part of the mosaic make-up of the *hnh* case study in its function of "solemn announcement or introduction" (of the performative utterance or illocutionary act). Even in our selected example of 1 Sam. 25:41 *hnh* emphasizes the ready, irrevocable decision with which the woman, asked for as bride by a powerful personage, gives her consent, she pronounces her "I do".

8. Summary

In this context *hnh* is an actualizer that signals the presence of a performative utterance. As such it may also signal acts with a pronounced illocutionary force.
It introduces a speech-act.
It emphasizes the solemnity of an announcement or decision.
It recalls the interlocutor's or the reader's attention to the act that it introduces.

9. Additions

As we said in section 6. Parallels, for *hnh* there occur the following terms in positive polar opposition (presupposing that there do not exist perfect synonyms): *hʾ, hn, hlʾ, wᶜth, hywm, ky, rʾh*. We do not have negative polar oppositions to *hnh* in the function of actualizer.
I would opt for *hnh* as an archlexeme of the lexical field.
Translation value: hereby.

10. A Few Provisional Considerations

This study in its original formulation was to include also an analysis of the lexemes *ʾmtk, lᵉ, šphh, ᶜbdy* in 1 Sam. 25:41. Due to limited time (and space) I have dealt only with the analysis of a single lexeme. I have dwelt upon *hnh* (1 Sam. 25:41) for the peculiar value which the said particle assumes in a prose text-conversation like this one.
The analysis of *ʾmtk, šphh* and *ᶜbdy* would have permitted me to bring to light the distinctive features of lexemes belonging to the same lexical field. At this point I would like to mention an interesting etymological note of Joüon[39], which retraces

---

38 THAT I, 506.
39 P. Joüon, Etymologie de שִׁפְחָה, Mélanges de l'Université S. Joseph 10, 1925, 45-46.

the meaning of *šphh* to *šph* "to pour", "to spill", "to shed" (water, blood, etc.). "Dans cette phrase typique [1 Sam. 25:41], où שפחה s'oppose à אמה, il semblerait en vérité qu'Abigaïl caractérise la 'ש par l'action de donner à laver, de verser l'eau. A cette époque lointaine le sens de *verser* pouvait encore être senti dans la racine שפה; Abigaïl se trouverait ainsi nous avoir donné l'explication étymologique de שִׁפְחָה[40]". In particular I should then have examined the phraseological value of *ʾmtk* and *šphh*, which have here become actual terms of courtesy, the expression of the courteous humility of a high-ranked woman symmetrically opposed to the very brief, abrupt and almost imperative request of matrimony from a man more powerful than her. The very use of the third person in her answer expresses the illocutionary force of this act of submission. And still this perspicacious woman, who so cleverly knows how to "use" her words – one could say, in a very perlocutionary way – is speaking to emissaries, but as if David himself were present. It would appear that *hnh* with *ʾny* expressed occurs only with the performative discourse or indicating a solemn decision related to the divine or taken by very powerful personages: see Gen. 17:4: *ʾny hnh bryty ʾtk...* (God addresses Abraham) and 2 Chr. 2:3: *hnh ʾny bwnh-byt...* (it is king Solomon who speaks). For the use of *hnh* with *ʾnky* in similar contexts see section 7. Exegetica.

Abstract:

This paper deals with the particle *hnh* in its function as actualizer that signals the presence of a performative utterance. The analysis is based on 1 Sam. 25:40-41, a Biblical conversational prose text, and it is structured as an entry in a dictionary. The paper highlights some aspects of the morphology of the particle, its root, syntagmatics, versions, parallels, exegetica. The more relevant bibliographical information on the issue is included.

Address of the author:
Prof. I. Zatelli, Dipartimento di Linguistica, Università di Firenze, Piazza Brunelleschi, 4, I-50121 Firenze, Italia

---

[40] For further information on the roles of *ʾmh* and *šphh* see also A. Jepsen, Amah und Schiphchah, VT 8, 1958, 293-297; 425; Ch. Cohen, Studies in Extra-Biblical Hebrew Inscriptions 1 – The Semantic Range and Usage of the Terms 'אמה and 'שפחה, Shnaton 5-6, 1978-9, xxv-lxiv.