

# Reconsidering Biblical Hebrew temporal expressions<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years a number of studies on BH narrative have been published.<sup>2</sup> In most of these studies *time*, alongside *event/plot*, *character and place*, is considered as one of the major building blocks of a narrative. However, apart from phenomena like narrative time, narration time, analepsis, prolepsis, gaps, blanks and repetition that are normally treated as if they are narrative universals, very little is said in most of these works about the linguistic and/or the conceptual repertoire<sup>3</sup> that BH speakers/narrators have at their disposal for the temporal anchoring of events and/or sequencing of events in a BH narrative.<sup>4</sup> This is so much so that it creates the impression that BH did not have any conventions in this regard that were unique to it and that could be used to express significant nuances in a BH narrative.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the latter impression is not necessarily correct and that we nevertheless know relatively little about the syntax, semantics and/or pragmatics of BH temporal expressions<sup>5</sup> – at least too little to make the

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Alter (1981), Berlin (1983), Sternberg (1985), Bar-Ephrat (1989), Ska (1990) and Brichto (1992).

<sup>3</sup> Even outside these works this topic is seldom discussed systematically and/or critically. Exceptions are De Vries (cf. in particular the bibliographical overview in 1975:31-39) and Bartelmus (1982). In the latter the views of Denz (1971) are scrutinised. Denz represents one of the few attempts to define clearly the content and implications of the aspectual system he believes the BH verbal system displays. These views have been adopted by Gross (1976), Richter (1980), Irsigler (1981), Bartelmus (1982), Seidl (1982), Vanoni (1982), Floss (1986) and Stipp (1987). Significant is the absence of these views of Denz in the otherwise comprehensive historical overviews of the BH verbal system by Mcfall (1982) and Waltke and O'Connor (1990) respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Ska (1990:9-12) may be regarded as an exception in this regard. He discusses five phenomena concerning "Order and time-sequence in Biblical narratives."

<sup>5</sup> The study of its verbal system has been one of the focal points of grammatical studies in the field of Semitics for the greater part of this century (cf. Mettinger 1973:64). Despite a number of innovative theories ranging from a comparative philological to a textlinguistic point of view, the debate, in particular in the field of BH, appears to be far from over (Van der Merwe 1994:23-29). There are still scholars who are convinced that BH has a temporal verbal system (e.g. Jøtun-Muraoka 1991) and those that regard its verbal system as an aspectual one (e.g. Waltke and

above-mentioned type of assumptions. This I intend to accomplish by compiling an inventory of BH temporal constructions on the basis of the descriptions of these constructions in BH linguistic publications and then illustrate the relatively large number of temporal constructions about which we do not know whether they are explainable in terms of the syntactic structure<sup>6</sup> of BH, its semantics<sup>7</sup>, or whether

O'Connor 1990), while others regard it as a mixture of the two (e.g. Niccacci 1995:125). If one takes the linguistics of their day into consideration, the fixation of many of the above-mentioned attempts on the *semantic meaning* of the BH verbal forms (including the *wayyiqtol*, *weqatal* and *weyiqtol* forms) in the sentence(s) in which they occur is understandable. More recently, a paradigm shift in general linguistics, which may be roughly described as a shift from the study of the syntax of theoretical sentences to the use of sentences by linguistic communities to communicate, has prompted attempts by BH scholars to address the problem of the BH verbal system from a so-called textlinguistic or discourse linguistic point of view. For an overview, cf. Bodine (1995:1-11). Granted the potential of the latter type of approach, scrutinising some of these attempts highlighted once again the complexity of understanding human communication beyond the level of the sentence. At this stage most BH linguists do not scrutinise the theoretical status of their particular discourse linguistic frameworks. They rather use them as heuristic instruments to solve problematic BH constructions that could not be solved by sentence grammatical approaches. Cf. Van der Merwe (1994:38-41) for some of the pitfalls. Cf. also the devastating criticism of Schweizer (1981 and 1991) by Disse (forthcoming). The maxim that any discourse analytical type of investigation involves more than a structuralistic description of the formal features and functions of linguistically encoded phenomena is well illustrated by the findings of two non-BH scholars: Couper-Kuhlen (1987:25) concludes in her study of English temporal clauses: "discourse cannot be treated as a string of sentences organized at some local level only, nor can temporal interpretation in texts be reduced to a reiterative application of syntax-driven semantic rules." Blass's (1993:109) answer to the question in the title of her article, "Are there logical relations in a text?" reads: "My conclusion is that if discourse analysis is to be sensitive to all the factors involved in communication and comprehension, then it is clearly wrong to pay attention only to what is linguistically encoded. Rather it is necessary to pay serious attention to contextual factors and inferential processes." (Blass argues from the perspective of Relevance Theory, cf. Sperber and Wilson 1986).

Defining, like Nicacci (1994:117-131), a main story line and secondary line of information *solely* by reference to the verbal forms of the sentences involved does not do justice, as Talstra (1995:174) correctly points out, to cases where main line verbal forms are used in a paragraph referring to background information. These views are shared by numerous non-BH linguists. Couper-Kuhlen (1989:13) remarks: "syntactic structure cannot be relied on blindly in determining the foreground." This view has been echoed by other linguists from various perspectives (e.g. Schleppegrel 1991:323-337 and Bakker 1991:233). The following remark of Bakker is of particular relevance here: "... instead of determining whether a subclause is backgrounded, we have to investigate in what sense it is backgrounded with respect to its main clause. Only when we have determined what a subclause actually 'does' in its context can we gauge the value of the subclauses with respect to the notions 'sequentiality' and 'foregrounding', or, for that purpose what it means for a subclause to lie within, or outside the narrative assertion." Some linguists have even abandoned the notions foreground and background. Van Kuppevelt (1995:809-833) talks of main structures and side structures.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. the fact that long constituents tend to occur at the end of BH sentences can be explained as part and parcel of the way in which BH sentences are *syntactically* structured. It has nothing to do with the meaning of the constituents.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. if a temporal expression referring to when an *event took place* stands as a rule at the end of a BH sentence and one that refers to when *reference was made to an event* tends to stand at the

they are due to one or other pragmatic<sup>8</sup> consideration.<sup>9</sup> I will commence with an overview of BH temporal adverbs and so-called temporal sentences. I do not intend to compile an exhaustive taxonomy of each, but will rather try to show the type of, and way in which, information concerning BH temporal constructions are conveyed in the linguistic sources that interpreters of BH narrative texts have to rely on. In the second part of each section I will draw up a list of questions concerning BH temporal expressions that could, as far as I am concerned, not be addressed with the help of the information conveyed in the above-mentioned sources. Although I will not attempt to answer these questions here, I will suggest some possible ways these questions might be answered and/or the type of research programme that might be required to solve them. In this way I will in conclusion substantiate my initial claim that there is still a lot to learn about BH temporal expressions. Problematising them might reveal pragmatic conventions and nuances of BH that have not been noted yet – even at a stage when *pragmatics* in general is still experiencing its own teething problems.

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beginning of a BH sentence, one could say that the difference in the position of the temporal expressions is due to *semantic considerations*.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. if a temporal construction A occurs only at the beginning of new paragraphs and a construction B, with exactly the same meaning, at the beginning or inside paragraphs, the difference between the two constructions would be described being as of a *pragmatic nature*.

<sup>9</sup> It is with great caution that I refer to the notion “pragmatic considerations”. I do not regard pragmatics as the compilation of formal describable phenomena beyond the boundaries of the sentence in a strictly structuralistic fashion. This is the approach adopted by Schweizer (1981, 1991). Levinson defines pragmatics as “the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalised, or encoded in the structure of language.” Pragmatics then easily becomes another module of (a mentalistic view of) language alongside syntax, semantics, morphology and phonology. For convincing arguments against this view of pragmatics, cf. Mey (1993:42-47) and Sinclair (1995:509-539). I prefer (with Mey 1993) an approach to pragmatics that acknowledges the existence of the linguistic modules syntax, semantics, etc., but which views pragmatics as a *perspective* on the other modules of linguistics. In pragmatics ultimately not only the product of the communication process, that is language, is studied, but also the process of communication and the producers of the communication. Mey (1993:42) defines pragmatics as “the study of the conditions of human language uses as these are determined by the context of society.” However, the problem of such a view for BH linguists are twofold. Firstly, not all the parameters of this field of study have yet been established and, secondly, it confronts them with the full force of the nearly impossible task of reconstructing the “whole gamut of societal background information that is necessary to carry on a successful communication” (Mey 1993:49) of an ancient world of which only a handful of artifacts are left. They therefore may either give up all their efforts in despair, or may regard this as an opportunity for BH linguists to both contribute to and benefit from a main stream of 21st century linguistics. Without much of an option, I regard my project on the functioning of BH temporal constructions, of which this study represents an introduction, as a small step in the latter direction. Cf. also Revell (1996) and Disse (forthcoming), though from different angles, for similar cautious steps in this direction. Note that this view of pragmatics differs from the one I worked with earlier, e.g. in Van der Merwe (1991:167-87, 1992:181-199 and 1994:13-49).

## 2. Theoretical framework of this investigation

This section will be confined to the description of BH temporal adverbs and what traditionally are considered to be temporal sentences. This means that the verbal forms and verbal lexemes (e.g. the Hiphil of  $\square\aleph$  that often has the connotation of “starting *early*”) will not be treated here, nor will the description of any other lexemes with temporal connotations in BH lexica or theological lexica.<sup>10</sup> Nor will studies be examined that try to depict the BH speakers’ concept of time.<sup>11</sup> This does not mean that these studies are not regarded as relevant for a better understanding of BH temporal expressions. On the contrary, all these types of knowledge are part and parcel of, in Mey’s terms, the “whole gamut of societal background information that is necessary to carry on a successful communication” (1993:49). I am merely assuming that a weak functional approach<sup>12</sup> is at this stage of our study of BH the most appropriate for the study of BH (a language without native speakers to be consulted). For this reason, after clarifying some theoretical concepts, I will commence my investigation of BH temporal references with a study of those temporal expressions of which at least the (formal) syntactic features are identifiable.

At the outset of this section, clarification is necessary on the relationship between the concepts temporal adverbs, temporal adverbials, temporal adjuncts and temporal sentences that is assumed in this study. *Temporal adverb* refers to the word class to which a set of lexemes of the BH lexicon belongs.<sup>13</sup> *Temporal adverbials* are temporal **adverbs or phrases** that refer to a position in time (e.g. “in the morning”), duration (“for the entire day”) or frequency of an event or state of affairs. Hence, temporal adverbials are identified by mainly semantic criteria. *Temporal adjunct* refers to a **sentence constituent**. Like any other adjunct (in contrast to the *complements*, subject, object, etc.) it is a constituent that is not required (or selected) by the verb to constitute a grammatically full sentence. A temporal adverb (e.g. “He came *today*”), a temporal adverbial (e.g. “He came *on that day*”), two or more temporal adverbials (e.g. “He came *in the morning, on that very hot day*”), a temporal adverb plus a temporal adverbial (e.g. “He came *early in the morning*”), a temporal sentence (e.g. “He came *when we were about to leave*.”) may be the temporal adjunct of a sentence, i.e. in a paradigmatic relationship in a sentence. The theoretical status of the concept *temporal sentence* is **dubious**. If it refers to any sentence that refers to events or state of affairs that provide the position in time, duration or frequency of a second event or state of affairs, the temporal sentence may be a temporal adjunct (e.g. He came *when we were about to leave*). However, in the following sentence:

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g. the description of  $\aleph\aleph$  by Bergmann, Ringgren and Barth (1977:217-228).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. e.g. Jenni (1962:642-649) and Wolf (1974:83-92).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Lyons (1981:228) on the notion “weak functional approach.” A basic assumption of this approach is that before trying to determine the functional value of expressions one needs to be able to identify those constructions that should be attributed to the structure of the language involved and those constructions that might have semantic or pragmatic implications.

<sup>13</sup> For a recent classification of BH lexemes in terms of explicitly defined criteria, cf. Richter (1994). Note that Richter does not distinguish temporal adverbs as a separate class of adverbs.



distinguish different types of adverbs in terms of syntactic criteria. Temporal adverbs are considered by them as *constituent adverbs*, i.e. adverbs that modify clauses, but which, in contrast to *clausal and item adverbs*, also “modify the predicate, that is, they specify the time, place, or manner of the predicated situation” (§ 39.3.1d). They therefore distinguish between adverbs of location, temporal adverbs, scalar and manner adverbs. They distinguish two semantic types of temporal adverbs, viz. *deictics* and *independent temporal adverbs* and list the following 16 BH temporal adverbs:<sup>18</sup>

עַתָּה	now	כְּכֵן	already
הַנִּינָה	now	יוֹמָם	by day
אָז / אַזְוִי	then	מָחָר / מִחֲרָת	tomorrow
שָׁם	then	אַחֲרָי	then, afterward
עַדְמָה	not yet	עוֹד <sup>19</sup>	still
אַתְמוֹל	previously	רַב־תֵּי	for a long time
שְׁלֵשׁוֹם	previously	עוֹלָם	for ever
עַדְנָה / עַדְן	previously	נֶצַח	for ever

According to them (§ 39.3.1h) *deictic adverbs* could be stative (“now, then”) or dynamic (“not yet, previously, already”). What they mean by stative and dynamic is, however, not clear. They point out that stative adverbs אָז / אַזְוִי and עַתָּה may also have a logical force, “but the temporal and logical uses are best kept distinct.” *Independent temporal adverbs* are those “that do not derive their reference from the situation of speaking” and “can be either local in sense (‘by day, tomorrow, afterward’) or extensive (‘always/still, for a long time, forever’).”

Although one could appreciate these pioneering efforts as far as distinguishing between different types of temporal adverbs is concerned, the fact that they restrict themselves to a description of the semantics of items that belong to the *word class* temporal adverbs,<sup>20</sup> renders their description very incomplete. The semantic features of only a small section of the items are considered that could occupy the slot of temporal adjuncts in a sentence. This is well demonstrated when one compares Waltke and O’Connor’s description of temporal adverbs with the semantic functions that are attributed to English *adjuncts of time* in Quirk et al. (1985:528), viz.

<sup>18</sup> In a footnote (number 38) they mention, with reference to Gross (1987a:43-77), that temporal adverbs, especially with prepositions, tend to occur at the beginning of a sentence. This inference from Gross (1987a), however, reveals a very superficial reading of the problems he addresses in his book, and in particular in the section they refer to.

<sup>19</sup> According to Richter (1994:182) עוֹד is primarily a substantive with the semantic features of temporality and duration. It functions only secondarily as a temporal adverb.

<sup>20</sup> This is one of the possible pitfalls of a reference grammar in which information is structured according to the distinction of word classes (parts of speech). However, using word classes for didactic purposes to distinguish the macro levels of a reference grammar does not necessarily imply that syntactic, semantic and pragmatic information beyond that of the scope of word classes could not be included in such a reference grammar; cf. Van der Merwe (1995:421-422).

(1)	time position	<i>on Monday</i>
(2)	forward span	<i>till Monday</i>
(3)	backward span	<i>since Monday</i>
(4)	duration	<i>for two hours</i>
(5)	frequency	<i>on Mondays</i>
(6)	relationships	<i>up to that time</i>

Recently Harkness (1987:71-110) too pointed out that a distinction must be made between temporal adverbials that describe the position of events on the time-line and those that characterise their temporal profile. If one compares the examples above, it is evident that (4) and (5) cannot position events on the time-line. Adverbials that anchor events on the time-line can, according to her, be divided into two main groups, viz. those that are dependent on another anchor and those that are independent. When one uses the adverbial "last year" one still needs another anchor, in order to know "which last year" is involved; hence "last year" is an *anchor dependent time adverbial*. In contrast, the adverbial "in 1978" needs no anchor and is therefore regarded as an *independent time adverbial*. The anchors of the dependent adverbs may differ, e.g. a distinction can be made between speech time<sup>21</sup> anchors, e.g. "some time ago" and non-speech time anchors, e.g. "some time before."

Although major English (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985) and German reference grammars (e.g. Eisenberg 1994) also distinguish between temporal adjuncts of frequency, duration and temporal position on the time line, the application of mainly semantic criteria to make the above-mentioned type of distinctions are criticized by others.<sup>22</sup> I will not enter the latter debate here. However, it prompts a number of questions as far as BH is concerned, e.g.

- Does a distinction between BH temporal adverbials referring to duration, frequency and time position correlate with a difference in the syntactic features that are displayed by each of these three groups?
- Do temporal positioning adverbs display any syntactic classes that correlate with the distinctions: (1) anchor independent versus anchor dependent, (2) speech time anchored versus non-speech time anchored, (3) specified versus non-specified adverbials?
- Are there any other factors that could influence the syntax of temporal adverbials, e.g. are there positions in BH sentences that are reserved for temporal adverbials that are the focus of the sentence?
- Is it by chance that אָז often has a logical connotation? If not, what implications does it have for the interpretation of אָז / אַז?<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Speech time* refers to the moment(s) in time that a sentence (or sentences) was uttered. *Event time* refers to the moment(s) in time that an event took place.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ungerer (1988:1-7).

<sup>23</sup> Mulder (1991:132-142) rejects the views of (Donner, Meyer and Rütterswörden 1987:29) that אָז could be used as a conjunction with an emphasising function, particularly in poetic texts. According to him אָז is primarily a temporal adverb and "In den wenigen Fällen, in denen אָז als Konjunktion oder auch als 'Aufmerksamkeitserreger' zu betrachten ist, ist dies vor allem Folge der Übertragung der Partikel in unsere modernen auf Hypotaxe eingestellten Sprachen." If the logical

More basic than the above-mentioned questions, however, are the following:

- Is there any difference in the syntax of non-temporal adjuncts and temporal adjuncts?
- Which BH constructions can function as temporal adjuncts?
- Apart from the above-mentioned semantic classes of temporal position, duration and frequency, are there other semantic classes or subclasses to be identified among temporal adjuncts?

A logical point of departure for research aimed at answering the above-mentioned types of questions would be the compilation of a taxonomy of BH temporal adjuncts. As a next step the hypothesis that they could all be classified either as temporal adjuncts of temporal position, duration or frequency should be investigated. If the latter hypothesis could be verified, the results of a 10-year project by Walter Gross at the University of Tübingen (to be published in 1997) on the function of the order of sentence constituents (syntagms) in BH narrative texts could be put to good use.<sup>24</sup> Although Gross does not distinguish between temporal constituents that refer to duration, frequency and temporal position, he does investigate with meticulous precision the syntactic behaviour of constituents in BH sentences. He tries to establish reasons why specific constituents occupy the preverbal position, as well as the factors that determine the order of post-verbal constituents. He, amongst others, has established that whenever a constituent has a deictic connotation (in his pre-theoretical use of the concept deixis), it influences the syntax of that constituent, e.g. those in the post-verbal field will tend to occur as close to the verb as possible. The same applies to any other constituent that is referred to by means of a proform. Knowing more about the syntax of non-adverbial constituents and factors that can influence the position of constituents in a BH sentence makes it possible for the first time to my opinion to advance to hypotheses concerning other variables that may influence the syntax of BH constituents, e.g. classes based on the semantic features of a particular type of constituent, in this case temporal adjuncts.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. Temporal sentences

In some traditional BH reference grammars comprising a section on syntax, temporal sentences (or clauses) are assumed to be (along with conditional, concessive, final, etc. sentences) a universal type of sentence that occurs in any

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and temporal connotation of  $\text{וְעַתָּה}$  is not fortuitous, and one could establish an antonymic relationship between  $\text{וְעַתָּה}$  and  $\text{וְאַתָּה}$ , it is possible that  $\text{וְאַתָּה}$  also relates texts with one another like  $\text{וְעַתָּה}$ ; hence  $\text{וְאַתָּה}$  may also have a so-called textdeictic function.

<sup>24</sup> Gross provided me with a prepublication manuscript of this work. Some of his research findings have been published elsewhere. (Cf. Gross 1987b, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1994.) An abridged version of Gross's views is contained in Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze (1996:274-283).

<sup>25</sup> These hypotheses illustrate the basic functional presuppositions of this investigation because it contradicts the assumption that the syntactic structure of a language is arbitrary as far as its semantics is concerned. However, this does not imply a denial of the possibility that more recent developments in the Chomskyan approach could not yield results that may help one to better understand temporal adjuncts.



language.<sup>26</sup> Others do not treat temporal sentences in this way.<sup>27</sup> In order to present the information in major BH grammars as succinctly as possible, I will use an outline that resembles that of Joüon-Muraoka § 166<sup>28</sup>, a grammar that contains the most elaborate discussion of BH temporal sentences.<sup>29</sup>

## A. SYNTACTIC INFORMATION

1. Temporal sentences where the main and temporal sentence are *juxtaposed*. The following syntactic patterns are distinguished:<sup>30</sup>

a. *Wayyiqtol* + *wayyiqtol*

(7)	וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁבַּח אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	<i>And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh (Gen 12:15).</i>
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<sup>26</sup> Cf. GKC § 148-166 and Joüon-Muraoka § 157-175.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. König § 356-416 and Brockelmann § 133-176.

<sup>28</sup> The outline and categories I use here are based on Joüon-Muraoka § 166. However, using their outline does not imply that I support Joüon-Muraoka's views or distinctions.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. also GKC § 164a-c, d-g and Jenni § 18.3.4 in which the information is similarly structured. Meyer § 121 summarises the information of GKC, but presents it in an unsystematic way. As stated above, König does not have (like GKC) a specific heading for sentence types where all aspects of temporal sentences are dealt with. He, however, provides a detailed account of the semantic nuances that could be expressed by temporal sentences that are introduced by conjunctions, § 387, and by prepositions + infinitives (as shortened subordinated sentences), § 401. The information in each of these sections is presented according to the semantic categories of anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority. He does not have a rubric on temporal sentences with  $\imath$ .

Brockelmann, Richter and Schneider (the latter, like Jenni's, is an elaborate introductory grammar rather than an exhaustive reference grammar) also do not have a separate category "temporal" sentences/clauses. Brockelmann makes only cursory remarks to "Zeitsätzen" in his syntax (cf. § 47, 145b, 163b and 176). It is understandable that a semantically based "syntactic category" temporal sentence does not get much attention in a structuralistic-oriented grammar like that of Richter (1980:198). According to Richter dependent adverbial sentences that are expressed by means of preposition + infinitive may express the function "Zeitsatz." For the semantic nuances of anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority he refers, among others, to the works of GKC and König mentioned above.

Waltke and O'Connor (in their introductory work on BH syntax) include in the chapter "Subordination" a rubric "temporal clauses" (§ 38.7). They refer to the fact that most dependent temporal clauses are formed with an infinitive introduced by a preposition (§ 36.2-2-3, 11.2.5, 9-11); they mention that there are a variety of other temporal clauses introduced by "other particles" and then illustrate how these can be classified according to the temporal relation of the "main clause situation and that of the subordinate clause." For this purpose they distinguish between contemporary, later and preceding situations. The particles associated with each situation are merely listed, or the reader is referred to another paragraph where the semantic meanings of these particles are discussed.

<sup>30</sup> It is assumed that in each case where a *qatal* form is involved, a *yiqtol* form can also occur, where a *wayyiqtol* form occurs, a *weqatal* may also be used, and vice versa – of course, with the subsequent semantic implications. Note that we distinguish between *weqatal* and *weqatalti*. The latter represents the opposite of a *wayyiqtol*. The former refers to a *wāw* copulative + *qatal*.

b. subject *qatal* + *we* subject *qatal*

(8) הָמָּהּ בָּאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ צוּפִי  
וְשָׂאוּל אָמַר ...

*When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant ... (1Sam 9:5).*

c. subject participle + *we* subject participle

(9) הֵם מְנִישִׁים אֵלֶיהָ וְהִיא מוֹצֵצֶתָה

*They brought the vessels to her while she was pouring (1Sam 9:11).*

d. subject participle + *we* subject *qatal*

(10) הִיא מוֹצֵצֶתָה  
וְהִיא שְׁלָחָה אֶל־חַמְיָהּ ...

*As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law ... (Gen 38:25).*

e. *wayyiqtol* + subject participle

(11) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֹלְנֵי מַמְרֵא  
וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הַאֹהֶל

*And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent (Gen 18:1).*

Because we above regarded (with Gross 1987a) הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה as a sentence, the following construction need to be listed here too:

f. הַיּוֹם + וַיְהִי + *wayyiqtol*

(12) וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיָּבֹא שָׁמָּה ...

*One day, when he went there (2Ki 4:11)*

2. Temporal sentences where “*particles other than Wāw*” are involved (cf. Joüon-Muraoka § 166a).

a. Temporal sentences where the temporal clauses are subordinated by means of a subordinating conjunction.

(13) וְהָיָה כִּי־יִרְאוּ אֹתְךָ הַמִּצְרִיִּם  
וְאָמְרוּ אִשְׁתּוֹ זֹאת וְהָרְגוּ

*And when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; then they will kill me, (Gen 12:12).*

(14) וַיָּשָׁב יוֹסֵף מִצְרָיִם ...  
אַחֲרֵי קָבְרוֹ אֶת־אָבִיו:

*And Joseph returned to Egypt ... after he had buried his father (Gen 50:14).*

b. Temporal sentences where the temporal sentences are subordinated by means of a preposition plus infinitive.

(15) וַיְהִי כִּבּוֹא אַבְרָם מִצְרָיִם  
וַיִּרְאוּ הַמִּצְרִיִּם אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה  
כִּי־יָפָה הִוא מְאֹד:

*When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful (Gen 12:14).*

c. Temporal sentences where the temporal sentences are introduced by an adverb.

(10) עוֹד נֹגַע אֶחָד אֲבִיא עַל־פְּרַעֲה  
אַחֲרֵי־כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְּכֶם מִזֶּה

*Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh ...; afterwards he will let you go hence (Ex 11:1).*

## B. SEMANTIC INFORMATION

According to Joüon-Muraoka § 167a the “time relationship between two clauses can be expressed A) lightly and elegantly by means of the simple *Wāw*, or B) more precisely through other particles.” In each case succession (or posteriority), simultaneity and anteriority can be expressed, e.g.

## I. Succession

1. In the case of juxtaposition a *wayyiqtol*+*wayyiqtol* sequence<sup>31</sup> occurs frequently.<sup>32</sup>

(7) וְהִכֵּל לְהַשְׁקִיתוֹ וְהִיאָמְרָה  
And she finished giving him a drink, and (then) she said (Gen 24:19).

2. In the cases where other particles are involved אַחֲרַי (=conj.), אַחֲרַי (=prep) and אַחֲרַי (=adverb) are relatively frequent.<sup>33</sup>

(14) וַיָּשָׁב יוֹסֵף מִצִּיפְרַיִם אַחֲרַי קָבְרוּ אֶת־אָבִיו: ...  
And Joseph returned to Egypt ... after he had buried his father (Gen 50:14).

## II. Simultaneity

1. In the case of juxtaposition: a general principle applying to the syntactic constructions used in these cases is that *wayyiqtol* and *weqatal* sequences are avoided. Since any of two events, i.e. the one in the main sentence and the one in the temporal sentence can be either durative or instantaneous, four possible combinations for expressing simultaneity are possible (according to Joüon-Muraoka § 166c):

## a. Two instantaneous actions

(8) הָבֹא בְּאֶרֶץ צוּר וְשֹׁאֵל אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ  
When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant ... (1Sam 9:5).

<sup>31</sup> GKC § 164b list four other types of constructions that may also be used to express succession, viz. (1) *weqatal* + *weqatal* (e.g. Gen 44:4), (2) sentence with participle as predicate + (*wāw*) verbal sentence (e.g. Gen 38:25), (3) *x qatal* + *w x qatal* (e.g. Gen 19:23) – according to GKC in these cases a “secondary idea of rapid succession” is involved – and (4) *adverb*=אִם-*yiqtol* + *wāw* of apodosis (e.g. Gen 24:15). Joüon-Muraoka’s list (§ 166b) differs significantly from that of GKC. It too lists an example of the type (2) of GKC, viz. 1Ki 20:36. However, it regards GKC’s example (i.e. Gen 38:25) as expressing simultaneity (§ 166f). Furthermore, it omits type (2) and type (4). The latter type had indeed been identified by Kuhr (1929:32) as a “temporalen Vordersatzes.” However, according to Jenni (§ 6.3.1.6 and 18.3.4.1), these types of constructions express simultaneity and not succession, as GKC claim.

<sup>32</sup> In nearly 50% of the 178 occurrences of “when” in the RSV’s translation of the book of Genesis, a *wayyiqtol* (=temporal sentence) + *wayyiqtol* (=main sentence) sequence is involved. This calculation does not include cases where the temporal sentence is introduced by וְיָדָי.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Joüon-Muraoka § 166k. אַחֲרַי may also be used here, either as preposition (Gen 39:5) or as conjunction (Is. 14:8). Cf. also König § 386a-d and Jenni § 18.3.4.2. If אַחֲרַי had indeed been a temporal adverb as Mulder (1991:142) claims, one should add it to this list. For a different interpretation of אַחֲרַי, cf. Rabinowitz (1984:53-62).

## b. Two durative actions

- (9) הָם מְגִישִׁים אֵלֶיהָ וְהִיא מוֹצֵקֶת  
They brought the vessels to her  
*while she was pouring* (1Sam 9:11).

c. The first action is durative<sup>34</sup> and the second instantaneous

- (10) הִוא מוֹצֵאתָ וְהִיא שְׁלָחָה אֶל-חָמִיהָ ...  
*As she was being brought out,*  
*she sent word to her father-in-law ...* (Gen 38:25).

## d. The first action is instantaneous and the second durative

- (11) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֵלֹנֵי מַמְרֵה וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח-הָאֹהֶל  
And the Lord appeared to him  
by the oaks of Mamre, *as he sat at the door of his tent* (Gen 18:1).

## 2. In the cases where other particles are involved. The following types of constructions are possible:

## a. ׀ infinitive sentence + main sentence

- (17) וַיְהִי כִּבְאוֹ אֶל-דָּוִד וַיִּפֹּל אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ  
*And when he came to David,*  
*he fell to the ground and did obeisance* (2Sam 1:2).

## b. ׀ infinitive sentence + main sentence, e.g.

- (18) וַיְהִי כִּכְלוֹת מֹשֶׁה לְכַתֵּב ... וַיִּצַּו מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַלְוִיִּם  
*When Moses had finished writing ...,*  
*Moses commanded the Levites* (Deut 31:24).

The semantic difference between cases with ׀ and ׀ is explained as follows by Joüon-Muraoka § 1661: “׀ indicates, properly speaking, the inclusion of an action in the time of another; ׀ indicates, strictly speaking, the correspondence of two actions in time: the time of one is like the time of the other.” The latter is therefore exclusively used in cases where instantaneous action is involved. Jenni (1994:142)<sup>35</sup> describes the difference between temporal sentences with ׀ and ׀ more accurately. According to him with ׀ the momentary contact (“zeitliche Berührung”) between the event in the temporal and that in the main sentence is expressed. The event in the temporal sentence with ׀ *immediately* precedes the one in the main sentence. With ׀ the two events are synchronised. The event in the main sentence is equated with the one in the sentence with ׀. The latter then provides the temporal frame within which that in the main sentence took place.<sup>36</sup>

## c. כִּאֲשֶׁר sentence with finite verb + main sentence

- (19) וַיְהִי כִּאֲשֶׁר כָּלוּ הַגְּמָלִים לְשִׁתּוֹת וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ נָזָם זָהָב  
*When the camels had done drinking,*  
*the man took a gold ring* (Gen 24:22).

<sup>34</sup> Joüon-Muraoka § 166g points to the fact that the first member may also be a state, expressed by a nominal sentence (e.g. Gen 7:6). Even two nominal sentences may replace the participle and *qatal* (e.g. 1Ki 18:7).

<sup>35</sup> Jenni (1992:38) acknowledges the observation of Schult (1974:18-31).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. 2Ki 3:20 where ׀+inf. narrows down the temporal frame provided by ׀+noun. Note that the term “frame” is used in a non-technical sense.

d.  $\text{כִּי}$  sentence with finite verb + main sentence<sup>37</sup>

- (20)  $\text{וַיְהִי כִּי־בָא יְרוּשָׁלַם לְקִרְאת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ}$  *And when he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him (2Sam 19:26).*

## III. Anteriority

## 1. In the case of juxtaposition

Avoiding the *wayyiqtol* form of the verb in a narrative sequence, in other words, using a x *qatal* construction, e.g.

- (21)  $\text{וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַצָּרָה וְאֶת־הַמְּגִלָּה הַפְּקֻדִי בְלִשְׁכַּת אֱלִישָׁמַע הַסֹּפֵר וַיַּגִּידוּ בְּאָזְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים׃$  *So they went into the court to the king, having put the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the secretary, and they reported all the words to the king (Jer 36:20).*

## 2. In the cases where other particles are involved

a. main sentence + לפני (as prep.) infinitive sentence

- (22)  $\text{וַיִּשָׂא־לוֹט אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת־כָּל־כַּפְּר הַיַּרְדֵּן כִּי כָלָה מִשְׁקָה לִפְנֵי שַׁחַת יְהוָה אֶת־סֹדֶם וְאֶת־עֲמֹרָה$  *And Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw that the Jordan valley was well watered everywhere ... this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 13:10).*

b. main sentence + בטרם (as conjunction) finite form of the verb

- (23)  $\text{וְאָכַל מִכָּל־בְּטָרָם תְּבוֹא}$  *And I ate of it before you came (Gen 27:33).*

On the basis of the above-mentioned examples it might be claimed that the BH grammars at our disposal have closely observed and described the linguistic phenomena associated with simultaneous and successive events (or state of affairs) in BH narratives. If one adds the valuable work of Gross (1987a), Jenni (1992) and (1994), a taxonomy of these constructions (occurring in the Old Testament/Tenach) approaches comprehensiveness. However, while most of the formal features of the constructions are observed and described, descriptions of the functional aspects of the temporal constructions are restricted to the identification of the different constructions associated with the expression of anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority. Normally absent in BH grammars is information that could help one to answer questions like the following:

- Does the distribution of temporal adjuncts that are expressed by means of prepositions + infinitive sentences correlate in all aspects with that of temporal adjuncts that are expressed by means of adverbials? For example, could a

<sup>37</sup> Jolton-Muraoka § 166p lists a few examples where  $\text{כִּי}$  is replaced by  $\text{כִּנְיָן}$ .

preposition + infinitive sentence occupy the same slots in the preverbal<sup>38</sup> or main field of a BH sentence as an adverb or adverbial? For example, would one expect them to occupy the final position rather than any other position in the sentence due to their length; could they be topicalised (i.e. occur in the preverbal field) or are they as a rule separated from their main sentence by means of *wāw*?

- Is there any difference in the *pragmatic function* of a coordinated and subordinated temporal sentence? For example, what is the difference between the following two temporal sentences that apparently have the same semantic meaning, or at least the same translation value?

(7) וַיִּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שְׂרֵי פַרְעֹה  
וַיְהִלְלוּ אֶל אֹתָהּ אֶל פַּרְעֹה  
*And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh (Gen 12:15).*

(24) וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת מֶלֶךְ-הָעִיר  
וַיִּמְהָרוּ וַיֵּשְׁכִימוּ  
וַיֵּצְאוּ אֲנָשֵׁי-הָעִיר  
לִקְרַאת יִשְׂרָאֵל  
*And when the king of Ai saw this ..., the men of the city, made haste and went out early to the descent toward the Arabah to meet Israel (Jos 8:14).*

- What is the difference between cases where the subordinated temporal sentence precede and that where it follows its main sentence, i.e. the difference between (24) and (25)?

(25) וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ-יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֶל-אֵלִישָׁע כִּרְאוֹתוֹ אוֹתָם  
הֲאֶכָּה אֶכָּה אָבִי  
*And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? (2Ki 6:21).*

- Does the use of a finite instead of infinite verb in a temporal adjunct imply any difference in the semantic nuance involved? For example, what, if any, is the difference between *כַּאֲשֶׁר* finite verb + main sentence and *כִּי* infinitive sentence + main sentence?

(26) וַיְהִי כִּכְלֹת מֹשֶׁה לְכַתֵּב ...  
וַיִּצַו מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַלְוִיִּם  
*When Moses had finished writing ..., Moses commanded the Levites (Deut 31:24).*

(27) וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלוּ הַגַּמְלִים  
לְשִׁתּוֹת וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ נֶזֶם זָהָב  
*When the camels had done drinking, the man took a gold ring (Gen 24:22).*

- Is it possible to identify different types of simultaneity/succession/anteriority in BH? In other words, does the lexical, syntactic and semantic means that a BH speaker had at his/her disposal reveal anything about the choices he/she could make in building the plot of a BH narrative? For example, what is the difference between the simultaneity/succession that is expressed by the *x qatal + we x qatal* constructions (cf. example 8) and those where *כִּי* or *כַּאֲשֶׁר* is used (cf. examples 17 and 18 respectively).

<sup>38</sup> The preverbal field (“Vorfeld”) is that section of a sentence that precedes the verb. The main field is the section that follows the verb (“Hauptfeld”). Cf. Gross (forthcoming) for the theoretical foundations of these concepts.

- Why are many temporal sentences that precede the main sentence, and for that matter other temporal references as well, divided from the rest of the sentence by a *wāw*? And why are some not divided by a *wāw*?<sup>39</sup> Cf. the difference between, on the one hand, (28) and, on the other hand, (24) and (29).

(28) וּכְרֹאוֹת שְׂאוּל אֶת־דָּוִד יָצָא  
 לְקִרְאוֹת הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי  
 אָמַר אֶל־אַבְנֵר שֶׁר הַצָּבָא  
 בֶּן־מִיזָה הַנְּעַר אַבְנֵר  
 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְנֵר

*When Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I cannot tell" (1Sam 17:55).*

(24) וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת מֶלֶךְ־הָעִיר  
 וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ וַיִּמְהָרוּ  
 וַיֵּצְאוּ אֲנָשֵׁי־הָעִיר לְקִרְאוֹת־יִשְׂרָאֵל

*And when the king of Ai saw this, the men of the city made haste and went out early, ... to meet Israel (Jos 8:14).*

(29) וַיְהִי כִּפְהִיּוֹם הַהוּא  
 וַיָּבֵא הַבַּיִת הַלְּעֹשׂוֹת מְלֹאכְתּוֹ  
 וְאִין אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַבַּיִת שָׁם בַּבַּיִת

*But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house (Gen 39:11).*

This *wāw* is called a "*Wāw* of apodosis by Joüon-Muraoka § 176."<sup>40</sup> Gross (1987a:43-62) describes this type of temporal reference<sup>41</sup>, where the temporal reference precedes a sentence that begins with a *wāw*, as a "pendierende Zeitangabe."<sup>42</sup> He also gives an exhaustive account of its syntax based on examination of all its occurrences in the Old Testament. As far as its function is concerned, he does not recognise any emphasising tone. Due to the fact that it often stands (asyndetic) at the beginning of a text or a speech he suggests "dass ihnen auch innerhalb eines längeren Textes oft gliedernde Funktion zukommt" (1987a:63). He concedes that this explanation does not explain this construction in cases where the pendens item consists of only one or two lexical units, e.g.

<sup>39</sup> Joüon-Muraoka § 176f mentions the fact that the *wāw apodoseos* is often absent in the later books. Kropat § 32, however, points to the fact that this phenomenon occurred only in cases where a verb introduces the "Nachsatz."

<sup>40</sup> In a recent study by Müller (1994:162-163) of the "nicht-junktiver Gebrauch" of *wāw*, the *wāw* of apodosis is dealt with. Müller, however, does not relate the above-mentioned type of *wāw* in any way with the *wāw* of apodosis.

<sup>41</sup> Gross (1987a:48) concedes that there might be a diachronical link between the *wāw* of apodosis of a conditional construction and this type of temporal sentence + *wāw* main sentence. He nevertheless does not find any good reason not to classify the latter construction as a pendens construction, alongside the other types he identifies. Cf. Gross (1987a:184-193) for a summary in this regard. It should also be noted that Gross's taxonomy excludes cases where the "pendensed item" is preceded by וַיְהִי.

<sup>42</sup> He rejects the views put forward in Brockelmann § 123f. There they are treated as similar to other so-called "dominierende Vorstellungen" where the pendensed item is resumed in the pendens sentence. This is indeed not the case with this type of temporal sentence.

- (30) כִּי בַעֲלוֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם  
וַיֵּלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר עַד-יַם-סוּף  
וַיָּבֹא קַדְשָׁה:  
*but when they came up from  
Egypt, Israel went through the  
wilderness to the Red Sea and  
came to Kadesh (Jdg 11:16).*
- (31) אֲדָּךְ  
בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי  
בְּאֶסְפְּכֶם אֶת-תְּבוּאֹת הָאָרֶץ  
תִּחְגְּוּ אֶת-חַג-יְהוָה  
*However, on the fifteenth day  
of the seventh month, when  
you have gathered in the  
produce of the land, you shall  
keep the feast of the Lord (Lev  
23:39).*

- Why do *וַיְהִי* and *וַהֲיָה*, constructions that are relatively often associated with temporal constructions, sometimes precede and sometimes not precede temporal constructions?<sup>43</sup> For example, why do they occur relatively speaking more frequently before *כִּי* + temporal sentence than before *אֲדָּךְ* + temporal sentence?<sup>44</sup>

Identifying ways to address the above-mentioned types of questions is much more elusive than was the case with temporal adverbs. Of course, one has to assume that some of the questions concerning the temporal adverbs had been answered. Because we already have a relatively exhaustive list of constructions that could be categorised on the basis of their syntactic features, trying to answer the above-mentioned questions could commence with the compilation of examples of these types from a particular corpus of texts. Finding examples that differ from these types would require supplementing and/or refining these existing syntactic categories. With a taxonomy of BH temporal sentences at hand, and assuming that we were successful in gaining more insight into the syntactic behaviour of BH temporal adverbs and adverbials, one could start investigating the role played by the following factors:

- the type of events or states of affairs that are involved in the main and temporal sentences respectively. For example, succession and immediate succession between two events imply two instantaneous actions. Furthermore, one may argue that when acts of speaking are involved in a temporal sentence, it is often ambiguous whether the event in the main sentence took place at the beginning, at a point in the course of, or at the termination of the act of speaking. The only way to prevent this ambiguity would be to use a more clearly marked type of expression, e.g. a perfect instead of infinitive form of the verb, *כִּי* instead of *אֲדָּךְ*, *כִּי* + inf. instead of a *wayyiqtol* form of the verb, or a more elaborate lexical expression denoting termination (*כִּלְהַ* + verbal lexeme). In other words, some

<sup>43</sup> Jenni is an exception in this regard. He explains the absence of *וַיְהִי* before *כִּי* in some cases by means of contextual factors (e.g. 1Sam 6:6b, 12:8 and 12:21 and 20:13). In other cases he ascribes it to the fact that a poetic text is involved (e.g. Is 23:5, Hos 7:12, 9:13) (1994:143). Reasons why *וַיְהִי* (and *וַהֲיָה*) is omitted before *כִּי* + infinitive temporal sentences are also discussed in detail by Jenni (1994:149-150). Notable is the number of cases where the absence of *וַיְהִי* (and *וַהֲיָה*) could be accounted for in terms of the diachronic stage of BH involved, viz. Late BH.

<sup>44</sup> This tendency may well be related to the fact that *כִּי* + infinitive temporal sentences could in the words of Gropp (1995:183), “be considered an infinitival transformation of a narrative clause”, while *אֲדָּךְ* + infinitive temporal sentences “might be derived from a circumstantial clause.”



types of events in the temporal and main sentence respectively may require more explicit marking than others when a particular relationship needs to be signalled.

- whether speech anchored time (*speech time*), the time of the event itself (*event time*), or the vantage point from which an event or series of events are viewed (*reference time*) is referred to by the temporal sentence (or temporal adjunct) under consideration. Many grammarians of English regard the latter concept as indispensable for explaining temporal relationships in English.<sup>45</sup> The fact that reference time may refer to the temporal perspective of a series of events justifies an investigation into whether this does not explain why some temporal expressions in BH are divided by a *wāw* from the rest of their subsequent (supposedly) main sentence(s). Temporal expressions referring to event time, i.e. with a more limited scope, one would expect to be more integrated into the structure of their main sentences.
- the type of and place in a communicative situation where a temporal expression is used. Jenni's treatment (1994:149-150) of the few cases where  $\text{וְיָ$  is omitted before  $\text{וַיִּשְׁׁרַח}$  finite verb and  $\text{וַיִּשְׁׁרַח}$  infinitive temporal sentences illustrates clearly the value of considering these variables.<sup>46</sup>

## 5. Concluding remarks

In the light of the prospects provided by recent advances in the study of BH word order and the study of the use of temporal constructions in modern languages (like English), it was not hard to illustrate the shortcomings of the information conveyed in most BH publications. The questions listed in this study do not necessarily constitute everything we do not know about BH temporal expressions. However, they amply illustrate that there are many aspects about such temporal construction that we do not yet fully understand, but which are not necessarily beyond our reach. Though the pragmatic aspects of temporal expressions certainly open up new variables to consider, this study has shown that there is also still much to be investigated concerning the syntax and semantics of BH temporal expressions. Hence this attempt to kindle some interest in a much neglected field of study.

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*Abstract:*

Although time is one of the building blocks of any narrative, the fact that we know very little about BH temporal expressions is seldom acknowledged. In this study an attempt is made to kindle some interest in this neglected field of study of BH. The shortcomings of the information conveyed in BH publications are illustrated by means of listing an array of questions that cannot be answered by existing sources. Ways in which these questions could be addressed are then described in the light of the prospects provided by recent advances in the study of BH word order, the study of the temporal adverbials and the study of the use of temporal constructions in modern languages (like English).

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