

The Biblical Hebrew Particle ׀ From a Discourse Analysis Perspective

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The number of studies devoted to the particle ׀¹ documents the complexity of the problems raised by its interpretation. The general approach aims for the identification of its manifold functions according to the different contexts. The results of this kind of research is well summarized in Pedersen's definition of this particle as „the most comprehensive of all Hebrew particles“². Besides, the few attempts to include its many functions in a unitary system resulted in the identification of some connections among them, but failed to outline the situation completely.

In order to summarize the outcome of more than one century of research, I will mention only the main interpretative trend, pointing out those positions that deviate widely from it³, whenever I deem it necessary.

1 Status Quaestionis

As far as etymology is concerned⁴, only a few scholars question the widely accepted original deictic meaning of the particle ׀ and propose either the relative or the presentative meaning⁵.

The issue of the particle functions, instead, has raised a more complex interpretative system. In order to draw a clear outline of, the particle ׀ functions are gathered under the heads of the emphatic-asseverative particle⁶ and conjunction⁷. Each time a function is referred to, it will be exemplified with a Biblical passage.

¹ Aiming for a thorough examination of the studies devoted to the particle ׀, I set the starting point for my survey in Gesenius 1829-1832. The nature of the studies is various: it consists of dictionaries, grammatical and syntactic handbooks, monographs devoted to the general understanding of the particle or to some of its particular functions and studies that examine single Biblical passages where it is found. See bibliography for a thorough view.

² Pedersen 1926, page 118.

³ For further investigations, a thorough bibliography is provided at the end of the article.

⁴ Not all the studies devoted to the particle ׀ inquire into the etymological issue.

⁵ Blau 1976 (page 107, note 1), applies the definition „presentative“ to particles whose role is to introduce new or surprising elements in the text.

⁶ As far as this function is concerned, scholars use both the terms of particle and adverb.

⁷ The use of the terms particle and conjunction by some scholars does not seem related to a clear logic.

כִּי would perform the emphatic-asseverative function in oath sentences, in conditional sentences apodosis and in declaratory sentences.

- Oath Sentence: Jer 22:5:

ואם לא תשמעו את-הדרברים האלה בי נשבעתי נאמ־יהוה כִּי-לחרבה יהיה הבית הזה
If they don't listen to these words, I swear by myself - God's utterance - that this house will turn out a ruin.

- Conditional Sentence: Isa 7:9b:

אם לא תאמינו כי לא תאמנו
If you don't believe, you will not be established.

- Declaratory Sentence: Gen 18:20:

ויאמר יהוה וזעקת סדם ועמורה כִּרבה וחמאתם כי כבדה מאד
Yhwh said: „The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very heavy.“

A particular *iter* to explain the emphatic function, corresponding to the English „how“, was traced by Haupt⁸, Montgomery⁹ and Ginzberg¹⁰ who availed themselves of Assyrian and Ugaritic parallelisms.

With regard to כִּי as a conjunction, its most acknowledged function is the subordinative one¹¹. As subordinative conjunction, the particle כִּי would be introductory in direct speech, noun clauses, both subjective and objective, causal clauses¹², temporal clauses, conditional clauses, consecutive clauses, concessive clauses and adversative clauses.

- Direct Speech: Gen 4:23:

ויאמר למך לנשיו עדה וצלה שמען קולי נשי למך האזנה אמרתי כי איש הרגתי לפצעי וילד לחברתי

And Lamech said to his wives Adah and Zillah: „Hear my voice, wives of Lamech, listen to my speech: ‘I killed a man because of my wound and a child because of my hurt’“.

- Subjective Clause: Gen 37:26:

ויאמר יהודה אל-אחיו מה־בצע כי נהרג את-אחינו וכסינו את־דמו

⁸ Haupt 1925.

⁹ Montgomery 1942.

¹⁰ Ginzberg 1935.

¹¹ Some scholars point out a coordinative function as well. With regard to this, Andersen 1974, who works out his theory according to tagmemic principles, deserves mention.

¹² With regard to כִּי as a particle introducing causal clauses, Claassen 1983 deserves a particular mention since he focused on a multi-level distinction of the causal relationship:

- first level, the כִּי clause expresses the cause of the event described in the main clause;

- second level, the כִּי clause expresses evidence and motivation relationships. The clause expressing evidence shows the motivation on which the speaker/narrator founds the statement made in the main clause; the clause expressing motivation provides the reason why a question has been made, explains the motivation of a previous statement by offering details about it and specifies why a particular word or name has been used in a certain context. On the basis of these remarks, Claassen rightly states that the particle כִּי points out the speaker's position *vis-à-vis* the listener's, traces the structure of an argumentation and marks the breaks in the narrative or in the argumentations.

- Judah said to his brothers: „What gain is it that we kill our father and conceal his blood?“
- Objective Clause: Gen 3:6:
וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמֹאכַל וְכִי תֹאמֶר הוּא לְעֵינַיִם וְנִחְמַד לְהִשְׁכִּיל
The woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes. And the tree was desirable to cause to have insight.
 - Causal Clause: Gen 3:14
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הַנָּחַשׁ כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת אַרְוֹר אַתָּה מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה
Yhwh said to the serpent: „Because you did this, cursed be you more than all the beasts and than every animal of the field“.
 - Temporal Clause: Gen 4:12:
כִּי תַעֲבֹד אֶת-הָאָדָמָה לֹא-תִסְפָּק תְּחִיכָהּ לָךְ נֶעַ וְנָד תְּהִיָּה בָאָרֶץ
When you till the ground, it will not give you anymore its strength. A vagabond and a wanderer you will be on the earth.
 - Conditional Clause Num 5:20:
וְאַתָּה כִּי שָׁמִית תַּחַת אִישׁךָ וְכִי נִשְׁמַאת וַיִּתֵּן אִישׁ בְּךָ אֶת-שִׁכְבְּתוֹ מִבְּלַעֲדֵי אִישׁךָ
And you, if you turned aside while married and you were defiled and a man gave to you his semen besides your husband...
 - Consecutive Clause: Gen 20:9:
וַיִּקְרָא אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ לְאַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַה-עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ וְמַה-חָטַאתָ לָךְ כִּי-הִבַּאתָ עָלַי וְעַל-מְמַלְכְּתִי חַטָּאת גְּדוֹלָה
Abimelech called Abraham and said to him: „What have you done to us, and wherein have I sinned against you that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?“
 - Concessive Clause: Isa 54:10:
כִּי הֵהָרִים יִמוּשׁוּ וְהַגְּבֻעוֹת תִּמוּשְׁנָה וְחֹסְדֵי מֹאחֶךָ לֹא-יִמוּשׁוּ וּבְרִית שְׁלוֹמִי לֹא תִמוּשׁ אָמַר מֶרְחַמְךָ יְהוָה
„Even if the mountains depart and hills are removed, my mercy will not depart from you and the covenant of my peace will not be removed“, Yhwh, who has pity on you, says.
 - Adversative Clause: Gen 18:15:
וַתִּחְכַּשׁ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר לֹא צִחַקְתִּי כִּי יִרְאֶה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא כִּי צִחַקְתָּ
Sarah deceived, saying: „I didn't laugh“ - for she was afraid. And he said: „No, but you did laugh“.

In order to provide a unitary interpretation of the functions, some scholars focus on relationships of derivation among them. Gesenius¹³ and Gesenius-Buhl¹⁴, derive from the relative meaning the causal meaning and link to the latter one the function of **כִּי** as an explicative conjunction and its use after *verba affectuum*. König¹⁵, instead, connects the casual function of **כִּי** to its declaratory meaning. Furthermore, Gesenius, König, Joüon¹⁶ and Brockelmann¹⁷ connect the adversative value of **כִּי** to the causal one, since the adversative clause is considered as a logical development of a causal clause, whose content contradicts the previously denied statement. Attempting to find an unitary explanation of the particle **כִּי** functions, Thorion¹⁸ goes even further, tracing back a common development of four kinds of **כִּי**-clauses,

¹³ Gesenius 1829-1842, 1839 (II), s.v. **כִּי**.

¹⁴ Gesenius-Buhl 1954, s.v. **כִּי**.

¹⁵ König 1897 (III), pages 537-538.

¹⁶ Joüon 1923, page 526 note 2.

¹⁷ Brockelmann 1956, page 132.

¹⁸ Thorion 1984, pages 2-37.

namely the conditional, causal, concessive and consecutive ones. These clauses, according to Thorion, would share the same basic structure of the double conditional sentence scheme and would differ only in the way their members are combined¹⁹. Finally, most scholars consider the direct speech introduced by כִּי as the object of the *verbum dicendi*.

Other interpretations of the particle כִּי are related to the alleged functions such as the vocative and interrogative particle²⁰, and as a particle introducing solemn divine statements or dramatic descriptions²¹ and motivation in legal codes²².

- vocative particle: Isa 30:19:

כִּי־עַם בְּצִיּוֹן יֹשֵׁב בִּירוּשָׁלַם בְּכּוֹ לֹא־תִבְכֶּה

O people dwelling in Zion, in Jerusalem you will not weep anymore.

- interrogative particle: Hos 13:9:

שֶׁחֶתֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־בִי בְעֹזְרֶךָ

Should I destroy you, Israel, who, please, will be your helper?

- divine statements: Ex 20:5c:

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קָנָא

... I, YHWH your God, am a jealous God ...

- motivation in legal codes: Deut 22:26:

וְלֹנֶעַר לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה דָבָר אֵין לִנְעָר חַטָּא מוֹת כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר יִקָּוּ אִישׁ עַל־רֵעֵהוּ וּרְצָחוּ נַפֶּשׁ
כֵּן הִרְבֵּר הַזֶּה

To the girl you will not do anything; the girl has no sin worth of death, for, as when a man rises against his neighbour and murders him, so is this matter.

Most scholars dwell upon the possible combinations of כִּי with other particles, as well. Here is a rough sketch of their outcome:

- כִּי נִם introduce concessive clauses;
- כִּי הֲלוֹ, הֲלוֹ כִּי introduce a question;
- כִּי אִם, כִּי אֲמַנִּם, כִּי הִנֵּה, אֲךָ כִּי emphasize the following statement;
- כִּי אִם can operate both as a phrase or as two independent particles. As a phrase, it can have an adversative, isolating or restrictive meaning, or it can focus on a single word in the clause. As independent particles, they introduce two different clauses.

- כִּי נִם: Isa 1:15:

וּבִפְרֹשְׁכֶם כַּפֵּיכֶם אֵעָלִים עֵינַי מִכֶּם גַּם כִּי־תִרְבּוּ חַפְלָה אֵינִי שֹׁמֵעַ יְדֵיכֶם דְּמוּיִם מִלֵּאֵי

And when you spread out your hands I will conceal my eyes from you, even though you multiply prayer I don't hear: your hands are full of blood.

¹⁹ The members of the double conditional sentence are: positive protasis - positive apodosis, negative protasis - negative apodosis. Interchanged members between the couples cause a loss of exactness and coherence. Conditional and causal sentences would be characterized by coherence, while concessive and consecutive ones would be characterized by unpredictability.

²⁰ Dahood 1973, 1979.

²¹ Muilenburg 1961.

²² Gemser 1953 and Muilenburg 1961.

- הכי: 2 Sam 9:1:
 ויאמר דוד הכי יש-עוד אשר נותר לבית שאול ואעשה עמו חסד בעבור יהונתן
 David said: „Is there any left to the house of Saul that I may use with him kindness because of Jonathan?“
- כי אף: Prov 15:11:
 שאול ואברון נגד יהוה אף כילבות בני-אדם
 Sheol and destruction are before Yhwh; even more the hearts of the human beings.
- אמנם כי: Job 12:2:
 אמנם כי אתם-עם ועמכם תמות חכמה
 Truly you are the people and wisdom will die with you.
- הנה כי: Isa 3:1:
 כי הנה הארון יהוה צבאות מסיר מירושלם ומיהודה משען ומשענה כל משען-לחם וכל משען-מים
 The Lord, Yhwh of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff.
- אך כי: 1 Sam 8:9:
 ועתה שמע בקולם אך כיהעוד תעיד בהם והגדת להם משפט המלך אשר ימלך עליהם
 Now then, hearken to their voice; you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.
- אם כי (as a phrase): Gen 15:4:
 והנה דבר-יהוה אליו לאמר לא יירשך זה כיהאם אשר יצא ממעיך הוא יירשך
 And behold, the word of God came to him: „This one will not be your heir, but he who will come out from your bowels will be your heir“.
- אם כי (as independent particles): Jer 26:15:
 אך ידע תדעו כי אם-ממתים אתם אתי כידם נקי אתם נתנים עליכם ואל-העיר הזאת ואל-ישביה
 But know for certain that, if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood on yourselves, on this city and on its inhabitants...

A unitary view of the particle **כי** functions has not yet been reached. One of the factors that prevented it, is to be ascribed to the lack of a real contextual analysis of the **כי**-clause. Consequently, the starting point for the present research is the narrowing of the analysis to a coherent text sample²³.

Leading clues for a new research come from Zorell²⁴, who, ascribing the particle **כי** in direct speech context to the words of the speaker, denies its recitative function in favour of the causal one, Claassen (see n.12), who points out manifold causality levels in Biblical Hebrew, Muraoka²⁵, who reappraises and bounds the notion of emphasis, and Bandstra, who links emphasis to topicalization devices²⁶.

²³ Bandstra already pointed to this necessity.

²⁴ Zorell 1957, s.v. **כי**, and 1933.

²⁵ Muraoka 1985, pages 158-164. According to the author, **כי** has a demonstrative value and from this value the occasional use of **כי** as an emphatic-demonstrative particle and its function as a particle introducing direct speech, is derived.

²⁶ Despite the new and interesting approach to the problem, the outcome of Bandstra 1982 does not offer a new contribution to the research. Bandstra follows Givón's theory about clause level ordering and applies it to sentence level. According to Givón 1977, the old information tends to be at the beginning of the clause whereas the new one tends to be at the end. Following Givón, Bandstra sorts out the traditionally accepted **כי**-clauses into two categories:

1) **כי**-clauses placed before the main clause. They convey old information and the introductory particle **כי** can have temporal, conditional and concessive meaning.

(foreground and background) and linguistic perspective (recovered information, main narrative level, advanced information).

The use of the verbal forms together with the presence of text deictics allows us to understand the articulation of the Biblical text.

In the last twenty years Weinrich's theory has been applied to Biblical Hebrew by Schneider³⁴, Niccacci³⁵ and Longacre³⁶. The results of their work have been a thorough description of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system, even though they are lacking in the prominent distinction between active and stative verbs and in its often substantial consequences³⁷.

Longacre singles out five narrative levels inside the narrative text:

- The storyline is developed by means of the imperfect with waw-consecutive. Inside this level it is possible to single out a secondary storyline characterized by the use of the perfect: the perfect is generally used when a noun is preposed in the clause, implying therefore topicalization and a break in the narration. The perfect, however, can also encode a preparatory or resultant action or a flashback.
- In the second narrative level background activities are placed. Continued background activities are expressed by the imperfect, while the durative³⁸ ones are expressed by the participle often in connection with הנהגה in a clausal initial position. According to Schneider³⁹, the imperfect has two other functions inside the narrative text: it can be used as *praesens historicum* in the climax of a narration (the narrator shifts from the narrative verbal form to the direct speech forms) and it can insert a narrator's remark inside the narration.
- The third narrative level provides the setting: the forms used here are היתה-clauses, nominal clauses and ו-cliches. These clauses offer relevant details for the understanding of the narration.
- The fourth level is the irrealis level, i.e. all the negative clauses expressed principally by the negation and the perfect.
- In the fifth level there are text cohesive elements such as temporal phrases or clauses, which offer general references belonging to the knowledge shared between the writer and the reader.

As far as direct speech is concerned, Longacre makes a distinction among predictive, procedural/instructional, hortatory, expository and juridical discourses. Only general remarks about direct speech will be taken into consideration here, without dwelling on each single kind of discourse.

³⁴ Schneider 1974.

³⁵ Niccacci 1986.

³⁶ Longacre 1992.

³⁷ During the examination of the Biblical text, I availed myself of this distinction whenever I deemed it necessary. Following it, I consider the *qatal* form as the neutral form of a stative verb since it develops from an original stative and the *iqtil* form as the neutral form of a process verb, since it develops from an original process form.

³⁸ With regard to this distinction, Driver 1892, pages 27-49, states that the imperfect multiplies the action, while the participle prolongs it.

³⁹ Schneider 1974, chapter 48.

- The storyline is carried out by the waw consecutive plus the perfect (often in prophetic contexts or in conditional sentences), imperfect (often in connection with the preposition of a noun in the clause), volitive forms, imperatives and noun clauses. Niccacci⁴⁰ claims that the noun clauses are used also to express background elements, contemporary to the main action.
- The perfect can have either a past-perspective function (it presents introductory or explanatory elements) or a future-perspective function (in prophetic or promise contexts).
- In the direct speech context it is possible to find the waw consecutive plus the imperfect form: according to Schneider it would be used to develop a short narration inside direct speech⁴¹.

3 A Sample of the Particle כִּי Functions According to a Discourse Analysis Perspective

From the analysis of the Biblical books according to textual-linguistic principles, the particle כִּי appears to be a macrosyntactic sign, whose function is to mark a textual level-shift and a break in the text: the כִּי-clauses, moving from the main expression sequence and therefore belonging to a different level from the main clause - be it either in a narrative or in a discursive context -, would introduce information aimed at widening its contents.

Their level-shifting and their consequent casting into a different narrative / discursive level is generally confirmed by a shift in the verbal forms⁴².

From this perspective, two kinds of כִּי-clauses stand out: those that shed light on their context, giving explanations or details about it (from now on „explanatory כִּי-clauses“) and objective כִּי-clauses. The objective כִּי-clauses could be ascribed to the explanatory clauses as well, by virtue of their declaratory-explanatory function: the particle כִּי, marking a level shift inside the narration/discourse (and perhaps holding its original deictic meaning), would present the content of the declaratory sentence that is actually expressed in the clause following the particle.

However, the two categories will be kept distinct from one another and under the heading of „explanatory כִּי-clauses“ simple clauses and conditional clauses will be gathered, whereas under „objective כִּי-clauses“ simple objective clauses and objective clauses belonging to oath formulas will be listed.

Each kind of clause has been analysed within its narrative or discursive context, and a sketch of it is given for every example.

⁴⁰ Niccacci 1986, page 111.

⁴¹ Schneider 1974, chapter 48.

⁴² The lack of shift can be ascribed to the manifold functions of some verbal forms: this is the case of the imperfect in simple explanatory כִּי-clauses in a discursive context. See below.

3.1 Explanatory כִּי-Clauses

3.1.a Simple Explanatory כִּי-Clauses in a Narrative Context.

The perfect is the most common verbal form in this kind of clause. It has a retrospective value: through the perfect, previous events (i.e. previous to the chronological framing of the main sequence) are given. Though less frequent, the participle is another typical verbal form of this kind of clause: the explanation expressed by these clauses lies in habitual-continuous actions contemporary with the chronological framing of the narration. In the same context, it is also possible to find imperfect predicates and noun clauses: the first one expresses continuous past actions as motivation, while the noun clauses offer details belonging to the background of the narration.

1 Sam 2:17:

- (a) ותהי חטאת הנערים גדולה מאד את־פני יהוה
(b) כי נאצו האנשים את מנחת יהוה:

„The sin of the servants was very great in the sight of Yhwh: these men had treated Yhwh's offerings with contempt.“

After a digression (1 Sam 2:12; 2:16), the main narrative thread is resumed in 2:17a with the use of the consecutive imperfect. 2:17b, i.e. the כִּי-clause, expresses through the use of the perfect, the motivation of the previous statement.

3.1.b Explanatory Conditional כִּי-Clauses in a Narrative Context.

This kind of clause is very rare in a narrative context. The particle כִּי functions with regard to the entire conditional sentence: it is the entire conditional sentence that expresses the details or the explanation. Traditionally, either adversative, isolating or restrictive meaning is assigned to the nexus כִּי אִם in the first position in the clause; less frequently the two particles are considered independent, introducing each a different clause. Actually the two particles must be taken into consideration separately. כִּי, as a macrosyntactic sign, marks a level shift inside the narration, while אִם, as a conditional conjunction, introduces the protasis of a conditional sentence whose function is to express an explanation or a detail with regard to the context. In the two examples from the present corpus the apodosis have a perfect consecutive verbal form and a nominal predicate.

Esth 2:14:

- (a) בערב היא באה
(b) ובבקר היא שבה אל־בית הנשים שני אל־יד שעשנו סרים המלך
שמר הפילגשים
(c) לא־תבוא עוד אל־המלך
(d) כי אִם־חפץ בה המלך
(e) ונקראה בשם:

„In the evening she was used to going and in the morning she was used to going back to a second harem under guard of Shaashgaz, king's eunuch, guard of the concubines. She would have not gone back to the king: indeed if the king desired her, she would be called by name.“

2:14 belongs to a description starting in 2:12. In 2:14a and b the predicate is a participle that expresses a habitual action in the past. In 2:14c the predicate is an imperfect: it describes a future action with regard to the time of the narration. In 2:14d and e, i.e. the כִּי sentence, are the protasis (אם) and the apodosis (consecutive perfect) of a conditional sentence. The conditional sentence gives details with regard to the previous statement (2:14c).

3.1.c Simple explanatory כִּי-clauses in a discursive context.

The most typical verbal form of this kind of clause is the perfect. This form never has a primary role within direct discourse. Its normal function is retrospective. The participle is quite a rare verbal form in this context: it expresses a continuous action contemporary to the moment of uttering. The imperfect is rather frequent in this kind of clause, despite its primary role inside the main level of the direct speech: in this environment it can have the value of atemporal or gnomic present or future or modal. Finally, the explanatory כִּי-clauses can also be a nominal clause.

Jdg 5:23:

(a) אורו מרוז

(b) אמר מלאך יהוה

(c) ארו אורו ישביה

(d) כי לא-באו לעזרת יהוה לעזרת יהוה בגבורים:

„Curse Meroz - the angel of God said - curse for ever her inhabitants: they did not come to the rescue of God, to the rescue of God with the strong men.“

The verb of the כִּי clause (5:23d) is a perfect. The כִּי-clause is within the direct speech and it has a perfect as predicate. This clause gives the motivation for the curse expressed in the previous clauses (5:23a and c) on the first level of the direct speech. The motivation lies in something which happened in the past.

Job 3:10:

(a) כי לא סגר דלחי בטני

(b) ויסתר עמל מעיני

„Since he did not close my womb's doors (the womb where I came from) to conceal trouble from my eyes.“

The כִּי-clause breaks a sequence of modal clauses with the imperfect and introduces the explanation of the previous wishes (Job 3:9: „Its twilight stars be darkened, let it seek light in vain, nor see the eyes of dawn“) with the perfect (3:10a). The following clause (3:10b) expresses a consequence with a consecutive imperfect.

Ps 25:16

(a) פנה-אלי

(b) ורחני

(c) כי-יחיד ועני אני:

„Turn toward me and be gracious toward me: I am desolate and afflicted.“

The כִּי-clause (25:16c) is a nominal clause whose function is to give the motivation for the previous requests expressed by the imperative (main discursive level: 25:16a and b). The motivation lies in a condition contemporary with the moment of the utterance.

3.1.d Explanatory Conditional כִּי-Clauses in a Discursive Context.

This kind of clause is more frequent in the discursive context than in the narrative one. The general remarks regarding the same kind of clause in a narrative context, also apply here. Very often these conditional sentences are contracted in only one clause, according to either one or the other of these patterns:

- אִם + כִּי + protasis;
- אִם + כִּי + apodosis.

The missing elements are generally inferable from the previous clause.

Complete conditional sentences are less frequent in this context: among them there are also the ones whose apodosis is represented by אִף.

Esth 5:12:

(a) ויאמר המן

(b) אף לא הביאה אסתר המלכה עם-המלך אל-המשתה

(c) אשר-עשתה

(d) כי אס-אותי

(e) וגם-למחר אני קרוא-לה עם-המלך:

Aman said: „Indeed queen Esther did not invite with the king to the feast she made, anybody but me, and also tomorrow I am invited at her place with the king.“

In 5:12b the direct speech begins with a retrospective perfect. The כִּי-string (5:12d) contains a contracted conditional sentence used by the speaker to state his previous sentence (5:12b-c) more precisely. The *nota accusativi* with the 1st person pronoun is the object of the apodosis, while the only element belonging to the protasis is the conjunction אִם: all the other elements are inferable from the previous sentence. I suggest the following reconstruction and its translation:

* אִם הביאה אסתר המלכה עם-המלך אל-המשתה הביאה אותי

„If queen Esther invited (somebody) with the king at the feast she made, she invited me“.

1 Sam 23:3:

(a) ויאמרו אנשי דוד אליו

(b) הנה אנחנו פה ביהודה יראים

(c) ואף כי-נלך קעלה אל-מערכות פלשתים:

„The men of David told him: ‘Behold, we are scared here in Judah: how much more if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines’“.

The כִּי-clause (23:3c) is placed inside the direct discourse and must be considered in connection with the previous clause (23:3b), which describes through a participle a contemporary fact to the moment of the uttering. The כִּי-string, a conditional sentence whose apodosis is וַאֲפִי and whose protasis has no introductory conjunction⁴³, widens the previous statement pointing out a possible future analogous situation.

3.2 Objective כִּי-Clauses

3.2.a Simple Objective כִּי-Clauses in a Narrative Context.

The most common verbal form of this kind of clause is the perfect: the events described in the objective clause are previous to the chronological framing of the main clause. The participle is another kind of predicate: it describes events which are contemporary or in progress with regard to the main clause. Nominal clauses can also be found in this context: elements belonging to the background of the narration are presented here as objects of the main clause.

1 Sam 3:20:

(a) וידע כל-ישראל מן ועד-באר שבע

(b) כי נאמן שמואל לנביא ליהוה:

„From Dan to Beersheba, all Israel knew that Samuel had been confirmed as a prophet by Yhwh.“

The כִּי-clause belongs to the narration. In the previous clause (3:20a) the main narrative level is developed (imperfect consecutive), while the כִּי-clause (3:20b), whose syntactical function is objective, breaks the main narrative string and presents an event belonging to the past through the perfect.

3.2.b Simple objective כִּי-clauses in a discursive context

Here the perfect is the most frequent verbal form: the content of these clauses is previous to the main clause. Nominal clauses are rather frequent in this context: they express elements belonging to the background. Participles and imperfects are less

⁴³ As it is stated in Joüon 1923, pages 512-513, a conditional sentence can be formulated through the juxtaposition of the two clauses without the introductory conjunctions.

frequent: the first express contemporary or action in progress, whereas the second can have both the values of the future and gnomic present.

Job 10:9:

זכרנא (a)
 כִּי־כחמר עשיתני (b)
 ואל־עפר תשיבני: (c)

„Remember that you made me like mud. And back to dust will you re-
 turn me?“

The content of the כִּי clause (10:9b), whose predicate is a perfect, is previous to the chronological setting of the main clause, whose predicate is an imperative.

3.2.c Objective כִּי-Clauses Belonging to Oath Formulas

These objective כִּי-clauses are only in a discursive context. Before considering their role within the oath formula, a few remarks about the oath sentences must be provided. According to Thorion⁴⁴, oath sentences are made up of three parts, statement (שבע), formula (כה יסף / כה יעשה אלהים וכה יסף), and content. The כִּי-conjunction, alone or in manifold combinations with אִם and אֲשֶׁר, would introduce the content of the oath: many of the combinations with אִם would have a conversive value⁴⁵. From a quick survey of the oath sentences taken into consideration by Thorion, the relation of אִם to the presence of a condition on which the very oath content depends, stands out. Therefore, כִּי and אִם within oath sentences work separately: כִּי introduces the content of the oath (corresponding to an apodosis), whereas אִם introduces the condition (protasis). The particle כִּי is functional to the introduction of the oath content as depending on the oath statement: these כִּי-clauses are objective clauses. As it has already been noticed with regard to explanatory conditional sentences, they can be lacking in some of their elements with the consequent juxtaposition of the introductory particles (e.g.: כִּי אִם). It is now possible to trace four components of the complete oath sentence: 1) Statement; 2) Formula; 3) Condition (=protasis); 4) Content (=apodosis and object of the statement). Their presence is haphazard, but one of them alone is enough to characterize the sentence as an oath sentence: the most steady element is the formula. When the oath condition lacks, the content clause is a simple objective clause (without any connotation as apodosis). As far as the oath content is concerned, Thorion sorts out two kinds of contents: vow or promise and exactness of

⁴⁴ Thorion 1984, page 39.

⁴⁵ Van Leeuwen 1973, page 34 and following, states that oath clauses introduced by אִם are conditional sentences without apodosis. According to him the apodosis would be the self-curse formula כה יעשה אלהים וכה יסף (...) (traceable only in some oath sentences in 1-2 Sam, 1-2 Kings and Ruth) and from it he would derive the conversive value of אִם. He exemplifies the meaning inversion in 2 Kgs 6:31. „May God make this to me ... Elisha’s head surely will not stay attached to him“ would derive from: „May God make this to me ... (אִם) if today Elisha’s head stays attached“.

the statement. The first one is addressed to the future, the second one to the past or to the present.

The occurrence of the perfect consecutive (i.e. the most typical verbal form in the apodosis) in some of the content clauses could add further proof for their interpretation as apodosis clauses.

1 Sam 26:10:

- (a) ויאמר דוד
- (b) חייהוה
- (c) כי אם-ייהוה ינפנו
- (d) אריומו יבוא
- (e) ומת
- (f) או במלחמה ירד
- (g) ונספה:

„David said: ‘As God lives. If God strikes him and his day comes, he will die, or if he goes to the battle, he will be swept away.’“

In 26:10b there is the oath formula. The oath statement is lacking. The particle כִּי in 26:10c is in the proleptic position and must be related to the two content clauses (26:10e and g). In 26:10c the first of the two conditions of the oath is expressed: the second one is in 26:10d. The verbal form of the condition clauses is the imperfect with a future value, while the verbal form of the content-apodosis clause (26:10e) is the perfect consecutive. The same verbal pattern is repeated in 26:10f and g: 26:10f is another condition (without אם), whereas 26:10g is another content-apodosis clause. This oath sentence belongs to the vow or promise oath category.

1 Sam 26:16:

- (a) לא-טוב הדבר הזה
- (b) אשר עשית
- (c) חייהוה
- (d) כי בני-מות אתם
- (e) אשר לא-שמרתם על-ארניכם על-משיח יהוה
- (f) ועתה ראה אי-הנית המלך ואת-צפחת המים
- (g) אשר מראשתו:

„What you did is not good. As God lives: You are dead men, you who did not watch over your Lord, over the anointed of God. Now look: where is the king’s spear and the jar of water that was near his head?.“

The oath sentence (26:16c-e) lacks in the oath statement and of the condition clause. The כִּי nominal clause (26:16) is the oath content and refers to the present. This is an oath of the exactness of the statement.

Finally, a few remarks must be made with regard to all the possible combinations of the particle כִּי with other particles and to the etymology issue. Following what I have already stated about כִּי אם and according to the interpretation I gave to כִּי ואף in 1 Sam 23:3 as well, I think that the particles of every other possible combination must be considered separately. Therefore כִּי must be considered as a macrosyntactic sign -

according to the framework outlined so far - and its own function must be ascribed to the other particle.

With regard to the etymology, I agree with the widespread opinion of its original deictic value. In the light of the results of the present research, this etymology could be very productive if one believes that etymology can be operating in the spoken language. In my opinion two kinds of problems must be born in mind when one ventures into this field: the first one relates to the rather unlikely consciousness of the speaker about the original meaning of the words he uses (modern languages testify semantic reappraisal and shifts), the second one is the huge distance in time that does not allow us to guess the degree of linguistic competence of the writer.

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Abstract:

This study rises from the need to shed light on the acknowledged manifold functions of the Biblical Hebrew particle ׀ and avails itself of the outcomes of discourse analysis and textual-linguistics research as applied to Biblical Hebrew.

The study has been carried out throughout the prose texts of I Samuel and Esther and the poetic texts of Job and Deborah's Song.

From this study the particle ׀ appears to be a macrosyntactic sign whose role is to mark textual level-shifts and breaks in the text, whether it has an explanatory function or introduces objective clauses.

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