

The Paronomastic Infinitive Construction as a Modality-Focusing Device: Evidence from *Qatal* Verbs

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Modality and the *Qatal* Verb Conjugation

Tense, aspect, and modality are interrelated, notional, cross-linguistic categories.¹ Researchers classify the verbal systems of languages by identifying the dominant parameter among the three.² Accordingly, grammarians since G. H. Ewald and S. R. Driver have considered whether *qatal*, *yiqtol*, and the other verb conjugations of Biblical Hebrew differ from each other chiefly in tense or aspect.³ Therefore, until recently modality has played little role in analysis of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system.⁴

Traditional Hebrew grammars mainly refer to modal concepts through discussion of cohortatives, imperatives, and jussives.⁵ However, contemporary scholarship acknowledges that Biblical Hebrew also frequently employs the *yiqtol* and *weqatal* verb conjugations in modal contexts.⁶ Though grammatical studies have long addressed the “habitual” or “gnomic” use of *qatal* verbs⁷ and occasionally mention appearances of the *qatal* form in various modal contexts,⁸ such cases are rare.⁹ Normally the *qatal* verb conjugation is non-modal.

1 Lyons 1968: 316; Givón 1984–1990: 1:269.

2 See for example Bhat 1999.

3 McFall, 1982, 27.

4 For exceptions to this trend see Zuber 1986; Joosten 1989; idem 1992; idem 1999; idem 2002; Hendel 1996; Gropp 1994; Gentry 1998.

5 As morphologically-distinct verb forms that normally communicate a modal nuance, the Hebrew volitionals merit the designation “moods.” See Dahl 1985: 26.

6 In addition to the resources of note 4, see Warren 2005; Dallaire 2002; Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze 1999: 148–149, 169–170; Schneider 1993: 230; Waltke & O’Connor 1990: 506–10; Joüon & Muraoka 2000: 2:370–372, 403; Hatav 1997: 142–156; Gianto 1998: 188–191; Shulman 2000. In addition, researchers have noted that sentence-initial *yiqtol* verbs in prose are uniformly modal. See Talstra 1982: 31; idem 1997: 84, 101; Niccacci 1987: 7–9; Revell 1989: 17, 21, 32.

7 See for example Rogland 2003; Kautzsch 1910: 313; Waltke & O’Connor 1990: 492; Joüon & Muraoka 2000: 2:362; Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze 1999: 146.

8 Brockelmann 1956: 40; Cook 2002: 223–232; Gianto 1998: 194–195; Hatav 1997: 29, 198.

9 Note that Klein specifically excludes non-indicative verbs from consideration as “prophetic perfects.” See Klein 1990: 48.

The Paronomastic Infinitive Construction as a Modality-Focusing Device

The technical term “paronomastic infinitive construction” denotes the pairing of an infinitive absolute with a cognate finite verb. The paronomastic infinitive construction is a striking literary device, and like the cognate accusative it reinforces the significance of the repeated idea or applies some kind of stress.¹⁰ Since modern Indo-European languages such as English possess no analogous linguistic structure,¹¹ interpretation on a case-by-case basis traditionally determines the nature of the proposed stress.

The notion of “certainty” frequently appears in contemporary translations for familiar biblical phrases such as מוֹת יָמוּת: “he will surely die!” However, scattered comments in grammatical literature suggest that the typical function of the paronomastic infinitive construction is not just to strengthen the verbal idea itself, but also any modal coloring of the finite verb.¹² Indeed, Ernst Jenni writes even more forcefully that the infinitive contributes to the “Verstärkung des Modus der Aussage (*nicht* der Wortbedeutung als solcher).”¹³

Such a claim invites verification.¹⁴ If one of the core functions of paronomastic infinitives absolute is indeed to accent cognate verb modality, then they should appear in modal contexts at a frequency equal to or greater than that of their associated cognate verb conjugations. Thus one expects *yiqtol* paronomastic infinitive constructions to be highly modal just as *yiqtol* verbs are when they operate independently. In contrast, the baseline expectation for incidence of modal contexts among *qatal* paronomastic infinitive constructions is quite low since the *qatal* conjugation is essentially non-modal.

Objective

The present study investigates the degree to which *qatal* paronomastic infinitive constructions appear in modal contexts to facilitate the evaluation of this grammatical construction as a modality-focusing device. A necessary first step is to establish analytical categories, which requires a modal typology informed by modern cross-linguistic research. Next appears a brief description of the

10 Muraoka 1985: 86; Joüon & Muraoka 2000: 2:422.429; Eitan 1920–1921: 171; Reckendorf 1909: 104; Ewald 1879: 162.

11 This disparity between Biblical Hebrew and modern languages prompts Joel Hoffman to write that “... while there is some evidence to suggest that the doubling had emphatic force, we will do well to admit that we do not know its exact meaning.” Hoffman 2004: 153.

12 Muraoka 1985: 86; Joüon & Muraoka 2000: 2:422; Kautzsch 1910: 342; Kahan 1889: 31.

13 Jenni 1981: 117. Jenni asserts that the function of the paronomastic infinitive absolute is “intensification of the mood of the assertion (*not* the verbal meaning as such).” Italics added for emphasis.

14 Two recent studies address the modal employment of paronomastic infinitive absolute constructions, each from different perspectives. See Callaham 2010; Kim 2009.

language-specific means by which Biblical Hebrew expresses modality in order to aid in the examination of the relevant texts. Lastly the study presents the texts, selected from prose passages and arranged according to modal category, and draws the necessary conclusions.

Modal Typology

F. R. Palmer's standard textbook on modality states that modality concerns a speaker's expressed attitude toward the factuality of a proposition (propositional modality) or the potentiality of events (event modality).¹⁵ Within propositional modality, the seminal category is "epistemic modality," which communicates speculations, assumptions, and deductions.¹⁶ These are terms of subjective belief, and linguists concede that an element of personal belief persists even in discussion of true-or-false statements in natural language.¹⁷ However, explicit markers communicating a literary actor's belief about the truth of a proposition fall within the realm of epistemic modality. In theory, the event described in an epistemic proposition may take place in the past, present, or future.¹⁸ John Lyons calls the epistemic proposition the "I-say-so" component of an utterance,¹⁹ but the speaker asserts the proposition weakly enough to grant the opportunity for a hearer to challenge it if necessary or desired.²⁰

Both epistemic and "evidential" modalities comment upon the factuality of a proposition. However, evidentials differ from epistemic modality in that the speaker employing evidentials need not personally evaluate, interpret, or commit to the proposition. Instead, he or she communicates that evidence supports the proposition.²¹ Therefore, the reported proposition may have the force of an assertion rather than an issue in some doubt.²² If a speaker employs an evidential modal expression with a hearer who already knows such an assertion to be true, then it may have an especially emphatic sense.²³

15 Palmer² 2001: 8. See also Kiefer 1987: 67; Chung & Timberlake 1985: 241.

16 Epistemic and deontic modalities derive their titles from Classical Greek. See Liddell & Scott⁹ 1996: s.v. "πίστις" and "δεῖ".

17 Nuyts, 2001: 28; Kiefer 1987: 69. For an opposing perspective see Papafragou 2000: 80.

18 Nuyts 1994: 9; idem 2001: 21.

19 Lyons 1977: 2:800.

20 Givón 1995: 114. See also Nuyts 2001: 224–227. Nuyts discusses the use of epistemic modality as a hedging device with which the speaker may deliberately avoid commitment to the truth of a proposition.

21 De Haan 1999: 85; idem 2001: 203; Nuyts 2001: 27; idem 1994: 11–12.

22 Bhat 1999: 70. Bhat and others call this the "realis" mood as opposed to the "irrealis" mood in which a given event or condition is in question to some degree. See also Givón 1982: 42.

23 Anderson 1986: 277.

“Interrogative” modality inherently communicates some degree of doubt. A question seeking information is non-assertive about the issue at hand.²⁴ Interrogative modality limits possible outcomes to those that serve as a viable answer to the question.²⁵ However, rhetorical questions pointedly challenge some idea or belief, and thus are only superficially a question.²⁶ Interestingly, interrogative paronomastic infinitive constructions almost exclusively appear in rhetorical questions rather than fact-seeking questions.²⁷

Discussion of “conditional” modality concerns “fulfillment conditions.” Speakers of modal utterances posit certain conditions that are necessary for the realization of a “possible world”: a future in which the modal proposition becomes true. The protasis of a conditional statement is thus a form of propositional modality.²⁸

While the modal categories mentioned to this point are primarily future-oriented, the final element of propositional modality deals with the past or present: an illustration of the multiple intersections between tense and modality. In fact, “habitual” modal statements also interact with aspect because they describe situations that take place over a period of time without necessarily asserting completion.²⁹ The modal character of habituais derives from the fact that they do not refer to a particular event that happened at a certain time,³⁰ but to a potential or tendency for the event to occur.³¹ Cross-linguistic study indicates that languages generally express habituais with either the simplest verb form (such as an infinitive) or an imperfective.³²

While the various categories of modality surveyed above concern the reality or factuality of a proposition in some way, the second major division of modal concepts focuses upon the conditioning factors surrounding an event. The foundational category of event modality is “deontic” modality. Biblical Hebrew does not employ paronomastic infinitive constructions with *qatal* in deontic modal contexts,³³ but it is necessary to introduce this category as the most common counterpoint to epistemic modality. Deontic modality imposes upon its subjects some kind of obligation to act.³⁴ Quite often, but not always, the

24 Palmer² 2001: 11.120.

25 Lappin 1982: 563.

26 Johnson 1993: 137–138; Hataf 1997: 141.147.

27 Kim 2009: 83–84.

28 Cook 2002: 188. Cook accounts for protasis-apodosis relationships under the rubric of “contingent modality.”

29 Comrie 1985: 40; idem 1976: 26–32; Bhat 1999: 177.

30 Givón 1995: 116.

31 Palmer² 2001: 179.

32 Dahl 1985: 102.

33 Deontic finite verbs in paronomastic infinitive constructions are overwhelmingly *yiqtol*: 136 of 139 examples in prose. The jussive appears instead in 1 Kgs 3:26, the imperative in Num 11:15, and the cohortative in Zech 8:21.

34 Jespersen 1924: 320–321; Searle 1976: 10–14; idem 1983: 166.

authority who enjoins someone to act through deontic expressions is the speaker.³⁵ Since deontic modality addresses a subject who has not yet acted in some obligatory manner, deontic expressions are future-oriented.³⁶

“Dynamic” modality constitutes a type of event modality in which forces internal to the subject hinder or assist the performance of the event. “Abilitive” statements assert that a subject is able to do something, while “volitive” statements indicate that a subject is willing.³⁷ If the subject should attempt to perform the given action, dynamic modality assumes successful completion of the act unless outside factors intervene.³⁸ In effect, deontic modalities assume inner ability and willingness of the subject, and dynamic modalities presume the cooperative support of external permission or obligation. Each modal expression presupposes elements that the opposite modality stresses.³⁹

“Desiderative” modality expresses wishes and fears.⁴⁰ Desideratives are modal expressions when the event in question is not fully realized, or is potential or unreal in some way at the moment of utterance.

While linguists lack thoroughgoing consensus on such definitions and characterizations of modal phenomena as those above,⁴¹ the categories needed for the present study are relatively non-controversial.⁴² A presentation of the Palmer taxonomy customized for the present study appears in Table 1 below, which includes explanations and English examples for illustration.⁴³

Table 1
Palmer Modal Taxonomy

Propositional Modality

Epistemic	Speakers express their <i>judgments</i> about the factual status of a proposition .
speculative	[I have no warrant to say this, but ...] Kate may be at home now.
assumptive	[I know that Kate has the day off.] Kate will be at home now.
deductive	[I see Kate’s car in her driveway.] Kate must be at home now.

35 Palmer² 2001: 10; Lyons 1977: 2:843. Lyons calls the authority the “deontic source.”
 36 Givón 1995: 121; Lyons 1977: 2:817.
 37 Volitive modality is a separate concept from the grammatical category of Hebrew “volitionals” or “volitives”: jussives, imperatives, and cohortatives.
 38 Palmer² 2001: 76–7.
 39 Ibid., 70.
 40 Ibid., 131.
 41 Nuyts 2005: 4.
 42 Nevertheless, consideration of evidentiality as a subset of propositional modality does not meet with agreement among all linguists. Recent works on this question include Ifantidou 2001; Aikhenvald 2004. Ifantidou views evidentials through the lens of modality. Aikhenvald denies that evidentials are modal.
 43 This chart does not appear in Palmer’s work; it derives from a summary of basic categories on p. 22 and the structure of Palmer’s discussion throughout the book.

Propositional Modality, continued

Evidential sensory reported	Speakers indicate the <i>evidence</i> they have for the factual status of a proposition . I see that Kate is at home now. Someone told me that Kate is at home now.
Interrogative	Speakers <i>question</i> a proposition . How can Kate really still be at home?
Conditional	Speakers assign a <i>condition</i> to a proposition , therefore it is contingent. If Kate decides to wait for me, then she will be late getting home.
Habitual	Speakers assert that a proposition is <i>true in a general, non-specific way</i> . Kate would stay at home most weekends.

Event Modality

Deontic permissive obligative imperative jussive commissive	Conditioning factors surrounding the event are <i>external</i> to the subjects. John may come in now. John must come in now. John, come in! May John always come so quickly! John: "I shall come in."
Dynamic Abilitive Volitive	Conditioning factors surrounding the event are <i>internal</i> to the subjects. John can come in now. John is willing to come in now.
Desiderative	Conditioning factors surrounding the event are wishes or emotions. John wants to come soon.

Survey of the Expression of Modality in Biblical Hebrew

Biblical Hebrew communicates modality through four main means: verb forms, lexically-modal verbs, modal particles, and literary context.⁴⁴ To varying degrees, the three volitionals,⁴⁵ the *yiqtol*, the *weqatal*, the *weyiqtol*⁴⁶ and the independent infinitive absolute⁴⁷ impart modal nuances. Non-paronomastic infinitives absolute express modality as they substitute for modal finite verbs. Some verbs denote modal ideas within their respective semantic fields. A prime example is יכל, for one of its prominent meanings is to "be able to," or "be capable of": concepts of dynamic modality similar to the English modal auxiliary

44 Incidentally, two major studies on modality expression in Modern Hebrew find that modal usage in Biblical and Modern Hebrew is sufficiently different that they exclude biblical evidence from consideration. See Kopelovich 1982; Maschler 1966.

45 Even the jussive, imperative, and cohortative as special modal forms on occasion communicate an indicative sense. See Driver³ 1892: 55.212; Gianto 1998: 185.

46 Niccacci 1987: 7–9.

47 Callaham 2010: 214.229.

“can.” Unlike English, Biblical Hebrew possesses few modal auxiliary verbs.⁴⁸ Verbs that can convey desiderative ideas of “wanting,” “wishing,” “hoping” and “longing” include: אבה, ארה, חכה, חפץ, כסף, קוה, שאל, שאף, and שחר.⁴⁹ When a literary actor reports witnessing an event firsthand, he or she may use ראה or שמע, which signal evidential-sensory modality in such contexts.⁵⁰ Similarly, an actor may convey secondhand information through expressions of evidential-reported modality like אלי אמר or לי, הגד, “it was told to me.” Modal particles appear in prose conditional clauses according to the patterns of Table 2 below.⁵¹

Table 2
Modal Particles in the Protasis of Conditional Clauses

Protasis Condition is Hypothetical **Protasis Condition is Actual**

Invalid (has not occurred)		Potential (may have occurred)	Restricts in Time	Does not Restrict in Time
Factual Clause	Non-Factual Clause			
לולא / לולי	אלו / לוא / לו	אם	כי	other <i>or</i> none
“if he did not ... (because he did)”	“what if ...” <i>or</i> “if only ...”	“if ...”	casuistic “when ...”	—

A small number of modal particles also appear in other clause types. For example, there is the clearly epistemic אולי (“perhaps”).⁵² Desiderative clauses frequently collocate with מי יתן (lit. “who gives?”) – an idiom for “would that it may be so!”⁵³ Particles such as אך (“surely”) and אף (“really”) can contribute to the level of certainty a biblical author expresses in an epistemic clause. Finally, the interrogative ה and the precative particle נא consistently signal modal contexts.⁵⁴

A final note on the expression of modality in Biblical Hebrew is necessary prior to examination of textual examples. Modality extends beyond the borders of morphology, syntax, and semantics into the realm of the literary actor’s communicative intent and the social relationship of speaker and addressee. All

48 Givón 1984/1990: 1:299.

49 A similar list appear in Gianto 1998: 184 n. 3.

50 Gianto 2005: 133–153.

51 Revell 1991: 2:1289; Van Rooy 1986: 8–15; Hendel 1996: 172; Joñon & Muraoka 2000: 2:631.

52 Livnat 2003: 108. Livnat observes that אולי possesses an exclusively epistemic sense in Biblical Hebrew, while the same word in Modern Hebrew has both epistemic and deontic meanings. This alleged progression counters the observations of modern linguists that modality universally develops from deontic to epistemic senses through time. On the other hand, the status of Modern Hebrew as a genetic descendant of Biblical Hebrew is questionable due to the unique circumstances of its invention as a modern language. See Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 272.

53 Koehler & Baumgartner 2001: s.v. “נתן”; Brockelmann 1956: 7; Kautzsch 1910: 476.

54 Shulman 1999, 57–82; Kaufman 1991: 195–198.

evidence, including the employment of certain verb forms, modal verbs, and modal particles, contributes and submits to literary context for interpretation.

Texts

The following text analysis uses bold type for the verbal idea of *qatal* paronomastic infinitive constructions and italics for the distinguishing modality of the verb. This convention presents an alternative to the reflexive use of “surely” and “certainly” in translation.⁵⁵ Evaluative comments follow Hebrew Bible passages as needed.

I. PROPOSITIONAL MODALITY

A. Epistemic Modality

a. Assumptive

Judg 15:2

וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִיָּה אָמַר אִמְרָתִי כִּי־שָׂנֵא שְׂנֵאתָהּ וְאַתָּנָנָה לְמוֹרַעַךְ הֲלֹא אַחְתָּהּ הִקְטַמְתָּ
טוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה תְּהִינָא לָךְ תַּחְתֶּיהָ

Her father said, “I *thought that* you **hated** her, so I gave her to your friend. Isn’t her younger sister prettier than she is? Let her be for you instead.”⁵⁶

Samson’s father-in-law makes a judgment based upon a “fact” he assumed to be correct. Whenever the Hebrew Bible narrates a character’s thoughts, it presents the reader a rare opportunity to learn the character’s assumptions. A common means of expressing such inner knowledge is through use of the verb ידע (“know”) and the particle כי (in this case, “that”). A character may also speak to him- or herself with the verb אמר (“say”), and such introspective monologue is essentially thought. In the case of this passage, the *qatal* verb אִמְרָתִי contextually sets the epistemic-assumptive modal context, and the paronomastic infinitive construction with שְׂנֵאתָהּ appears within the subordinate clause headed by כי.

1 Sam 20:3

וַיֹּשְׁבֶעַ עוֹד רוּד וַיֹּאמֶר יָדַע יָדַע אֲבִיךָ כִּי־מִצְאָתִי חָן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־יָדַע־זֹאת
הַיּוֹנְתָן פְּרִיעֶצֶב וְאוֹלָם חִי־יְהוּהוּ וְחִי נַפְשְׁךָ כִּי כִפְשַׁע בֵּינִי וּבֵין הַמּוֹת

55 Similarly, Friedman advocates the use of italics to represent the emphasis in paronomastic infinitive constructions. Friedman 2003; idem 1998: 64 n. 10.
56 All translations in the present study derive from its author.

Then David swore further, “Your father *knows that* I have found favor in your eyes. He thinks ‘Jonathan must not know this, lest he be grieved.’ Yet indeed, as Yahweh lives and as you live, there is one step between me and death.”

Here David uses *כי ... ידע* to propose a perception in Saul’s mind, thereby stating one of Saul’s assumptions to Jonathan.

1 Sam 27:12

ויאמן אכיש ברוד לאמר הבאש הבאיש בעמו בישראל והיה לי לעבד עולם

Achish trusted David and *thought*, “He has **become hated** among his people in Israel, so he will be my servant forever.”

A contextual reading of the infinitive construct *לאמר* indicates that Achish is not speaking to anyone, but reaches an assumption based upon David’s representation of his military achievements.⁵⁷ The *qatal* verb *הבאיש* appears within the thought narrative. As with each of the other examples of epistemic-assumptive modality above, the paronomastic infinitive construction describes a virtual state of affairs rather than an objective reality.

b. Deductive

Gen 37:33

ויכירה ויאמר כתנת בני חיה רעה אכלתהו שרף שרף יוסף

He recognized it and said, “It is my son’s robe! A wild animal has eaten him! Joseph *must be torn* to pieces!”

and in later recollection:

Gen 44:28

ויצא האחד מאתי ואמר אך שרף שרף ולא ראיתיו עד-הנה

“... but one went away from me, and I said, ‘Surely he *must be torn* to pieces!’ I have not seen him since then.”

Speakers may not know that a given proposition is true, but deduce it as the only possible conclusion. Often the basis for the deduction is circumstantial visual

57 Jenni discusses the use of *ל* + infinitive construct as a modal device in Proverbs. See Jenni 2005: 36–47.

evidence.⁵⁸ A clear example of this is Jacob's belief upon seeing Joseph's bloody coat that an animal has killed Joseph. Jacob does not state an evidential basis for his belief; he leaps to what appears to be the only possible conclusion given the state of the coat.

2 Kgs 3:23

ויאמרו דם זה החרב נחרבו המלכים ויכו איש את-רעהו ועתה לשלל מואב

They said, "This is blood! The kings *must have attacked* and killed each other. Now, to the spoil, Moab!"

Like Jacob, the Moabites believe that what they see before them leads to one necessary conclusion. Both of these episodes incorporating the infinitive absolute, a *qatal* verb, and epistemic-deductive modality in the Hebrew Bible depict the speakers making inaccurate judgments.⁵⁹

B. Evidential Modality

a. Sensory

Gen 26:28

ויאמרו ראו ראינו כידהיה יהוה עמך ונאמר תהי נא אלה בינותינו בינינו וביןך ונכרתה ברית עמך

Then they said, "We *see* that Yahweh is with you. We say, 'Let there be an oath between us – between us and you.' Let us make a covenant with you."

Evidential-sensory modality provides specific information on the means of firsthand knowledge. Abimelech's entourage cite visual evidence in substantiation of their claim that Yahweh is "with" Isaac.

Exod 3:7

ויאמר יהוה ראה ראיתי את-עני עמי אשר במצרים ואת-צעקתם שמעתי מפני נגשיו כי ידעתי את-מכאביו

Then Yahweh said, "I *have seen* the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their outcry from before their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sorrows."

58 Palmer² 2001: 30.

59 In contrast, a verbless sentence in Exod 2:6 relates an accurate deduction following the discovery of visual evidence. Pharaoh's daughter sees a child within the basket drawn from the river and exclaims מילרי העברים זה ("This must be one of the Hebrews' children!").

Yahweh uses the *qatal* of ראה to state that his understanding of Israel's suffering derives from his own sight. One could argue that both Gen 26:28 and Exod 3:7 communicate a recurring event (as does habitual modality) and thus question the identification of these passages as evidential-sensory in nature. However, the lexical meaning of ראה in ראינו ראו and ראיתי ראה takes priority. The presence of secondary modal ideas in these passages is an indication of the pervasiveness of modality in language.

1 Sam 23:10

וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמַע שָׁמַע עַבְדְּךָ כִּי־מִבְקֶשׁ שָׂאוּל לְבוֹא אֶל־קַעִילָה לְשַׁחַת לְעִיר בְּעִבְרֹי

Then David said, “Yahweh, God of Israel, your servant has *heard* that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city because of me.”

David's prayer mentions his hearing rather than sight. Also unlike the previous two examples of evidential-sensory modality, the knowledge in 1 Sam 23:10 derives from a discrete occurrence. David learned of the situation in the previous verse, reported with a *wayyiqtol* verb.

Jer 31:18

שָׁמוֹעַ שָׁמַעְתִּי אִפְרַיִם מִתְנַוֶּדֶד יִסְרֹתֵנִי וְאוֹסֵר כַּעֲגֹל לֹא לָמַד הִשִּׁיבֵנִי וְאִשׁוּבָה כִּי אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי

I *heard* Ephraim pitying himself: “You disciplined me and I learned, like an untrained calf. Bring me back; let me return. For you are Yahweh my God.”

b. Reported

Josh 9:24

וַיַּעֲנוּ אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיֹּאמְרוּ כִּי הִגַּד הַגִּד לְעַבְדֶּיךָ אֶת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־מֹשֶׁה לְכֹל אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְלֹהֵשְׁמִיד אֶת־כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְנִירָא מְאֹד לְנַפְשֵׁינוּ עָבְדוּ לַחַת מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְנַעֲשָׂה אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה

They answered Joshua and said, “For it was *told* to your servants that Yahweh your God commanded Moses his servant to give you all the land and to exterminate all the inhabitants of the land before you. So we were very afraid for our lives, and we did this thing.”

Explaining their deception, the Gibeonites employ a paronomastic infinitive construction to declare that they learned of impending genocide from others. In

the course of their initial contact with the Israelites, in verse 9 they had used the cognate accusative construction שמענו שמענו to cue evidential modality.

Ruth 2:11

ויען בעז ויאמר לה הגד הגד לי כל אשר-עשית את-חמותך אחרי מות אישך ותעזבי אביך ואמך וארץ מולדתך ותלכי אל-עם אשר לא-ידעת תמול שלשום

Boaz answered and said to her, “Everything that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been *told* to me. You left your father, your mother, and the land of your birth and came to a people that you did not previously know.”

Since Ruth already knows what she did, Boaz’s use of an evidential during his exchange with Ruth about her service to Naomi may be particularly significant to the unfolding story.⁶⁰

1 Sam 10:16

ויאמר שאול אל-דודו הגד הגיד לנו כי נמצאו האתנות ואת-דבר המלוכה לא-הגיד לו אשר אמר שמואל

Saul said to his uncle, “He *told* us that the donkeys had been found,” but on the subject of the kingdom, he did not tell him what Samuel had said.

C. Interrogative Modality

Num 22:37

ויאמר בלק אל-בלעם הלא שלח שלחתי אליך לקרא-לך למה לא-הלכת אלי האמנם לא אוכל כבודך

Balak said to Balaam, “*Did I not send* for you in order to meet you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not truly able to honor you?”

As mentioned previously, rhetorical questions are actually assertions in disguise. In the case of Num 22:37, the interrogative ה and negative לא signal Balak’s affirmation that he sent for Balaam.⁶¹

60 Anderson 1986: 277; Nielsen 1997: 59. From a literary-critical perspective, Nielsen writes that Boaz’s reply in verses 11 and 12 constitutes the climax of the chapter.

61 Armed with comparative Semitic evidence, Brown asserts that some uses of הלא / הלו actually merit translation as affirmations instead of “Is it not?” See Brown 1987: 215.

Josh 7:7

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֵלֶּהָ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה לָמָּה הֵעֵבֵרְתָּ הָעָבְרִים אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לְתַתֵּי אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לְתַתֵּי
אֶתְנוּ בְיַד הָאֱמֹרִיתִים לְהַאֲבִידֵנוּ וְלוֹ הוּאֲלָנוּ וְנִשְׁבַּע בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן

Joshua said, “Oh, Lord Yahweh! *Why* did you **bring** this people **across** the Jordan to give us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had decided to dwell on the other side of the Jordan!”

The question word *למה* introduces the rhetorical question in Josh 7:7. Joshua’s emotional outburst also contains the desiderative particle *לו* / *לוא*.

Judg 11:25

וַעֲתָה הַטּוֹב טוֹב אֶתָּה מִבַּלַּק בֶּן־צִפּוֹר מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב הַרּוֹב רַב עַם־יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם־נִלְחָמָם
נִלְחָמָם בָּם

Now are you better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab? *Did* he **start a conflict** with Israel or **wage war** against them?

Three paronomastic infinitive constructions appear in Judg 11:25. Since the verse begins with *ועתה*, the expression *טוב טוב* most likely contains a participle rather than a *qatal* verb. The interrogative particle *ה* introduces the rhetorical question, and this particle appears in the remaining examples of interrogative modality.

1 Sam 2:27

וַיָּבֹא אִישׁ־אֱלֹהִים אֶל־עֲלִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הִנְגַּלָּה נְגִלְתִּי אֶל־בֵּית אָבִיךָ
בְּהִיטָם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְבֵית פַּרְעֹה

A man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Yahweh has said this: ‘*Didn’t* I **reveal myself** to your father’s house when they were in Egypt in the house of Pharaoh?’”

2 Sam 19:43

וַיַּעַן כָּל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה עַל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־קָרֹב מֶלֶךְ אֵלָי וְלָמָּה זֶה חָרָה לְךָ
עַל־הַדַּבָּר הַזֶּה הָאֶכּוֹל אֶכְלֵנוּ מִן־הַמֶּלֶךְ אִם־נִשְׂאָת נִשְׂאָ לָנוּ

All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, “Because the king is our relative! Why does this thing anger you? Have we **eaten** at the king’s expense or **taken** anything for ourselves?”

2 Kgs 18:33

ההצל הצילו אלהי הגוים איש את-ארצו מיד מלך אשור

Has any of the gods of the nations **delivered** his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

Two parallel passages render the rhetorical question by different means. One parallel account in Isa 36:18 omits the infinitive absolute הצל of 2 Kgs 18:33. The other passage is 2 Chr 32:13, into which the author chooses to introduce dynamic modality. See the section with this dynamic modality text below.

Jer 26:19

ההמת המתהו חזקיהו מלך-יהודה וכל-יהודה הלא ירא את-יהוה ויחל את-פני יהוה וינחם יהוה אלה-הרעה אשר-דבר עליהם ואנחנו עשים רעה גדולה על-נפשותינו

Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all of Judah **execute** him? Did he not fear Yahweh and seek Yahweh's face, so that Yahweh relented from the calamity that he had spoken upon them? But we are bringing a great disaster upon ourselves!

Zech 7:5

אמר אל-כל-עם הארץ ואל-הכהנים לאמר כי-צמתם וספור בחמישי ובשביעי וזה שבעים שנה הצום צמתני אני

Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, "When you fasted and lamented in the fifth and seventh month these seventy years, was it *really* for me that you **fasted**?"

D. Conditional Modality

Lev 19:20

ואיש כרישכב את-אשה שכבת-זרע והוא שפחה נחרפת לאיש והפדה לא נפדתה או הפשה לא נתן-לה בקרת תהיה לא יומתו כי-לא הפשה

When a man lies with a woman, and she is a slave-girl designated for another man, and she has not **been ransomed** or she has not been given her freedom, then there will be an obligation to compensate. They must not be put to death, for she had not been freed.

Introducing the protasis is a casuistic "when ..." clause with **כי**, the sole use of **כי** and a paronomastic infinitive construction in the Hebrew Bible.

Num 12:14

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֵבִיָּה יֶרֶק יֶרֶק בְּפָנָיָהּ הֲלֹא תְכַלֵּם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תִּסְגֵּר שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְאַחַר תֹּאסֹף

Then Yahweh said to Moses, “If her father **had spit** upon her face, wouldn’t she be humiliated for seven days? Let her be shut outside the camp for seven days and afterwards be brought in.”

No explicitly conditional particle introduces the protasis in Num 12:14, but both protasis and apodosis are unreal propositions. A conditional sense is contextually necessary.

2 Sam 12:14

אֲפֹס כִּי-נֵאָוֶן נֹאצַת אֶת-אִיבֵי יְהוָה בְּדַבָּר הַזֶּה גַם הֵבֵן הַיְלִיד לְךָ מוֹת יָמוֹת

Nevertheless, *because* you **caused** the enemies of Yahweh **to scorn** him in this thing, the son born to you will die.

Unlike Num 12:14 above, 2 Sam 12:14 presents a real condition in its protasis. Residing within the apodosis is a *yiqtol* paronomastic infinitive construction.

E. Habitual Modality

Exod 3:16

לֵךְ וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת-זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם נִרְאָה אֵלַי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר פֶּקֶד פֶּקְדָתִי אִתְּכֶם וְאַתֶּם-עֹשִׂים בְּמִצְוֹתַי

Go and gather the elders of Israel and say to them, “Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, appeared to me – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – and said, ‘I have **paid attention** to you and to what is being done to you in Egypt.’”

The modal sense in Exod 3:16 is habitual due to the passive participle עֹשִׂים specifically. More generally, Exodus reports divine observation of the Israelites’ plight in previous narrative and discourse.⁶²

Num 22:30

וַחֲאָמַר הָאֲתוֹן אֶל-בַּלְעָם הֲלוֹא אֲנִי אֲתָנְךָ אֲשֶׁר-רָכַבְתָּ עָלַי מֵעוֹרֵךְ עַד-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הֲהִסְכֵּן הִסְכַּנְתִּי לַעֲשׂוֹת לְךָ כֵּה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא

⁶² Exod 2:24–25, 3:7.

But the donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey, whom you have ridden upon from the beginning until today? Have I *made a habit* of doing this to you?” Then he said, “No.”

The paronomastic infinitive construction of Num 22:30 demands a habitual-modal reading because of its literal reference to habitual activity.

Dan 10:3

לחם חמדות לא אכלתי ובשר ויין לא־בא אל־פי וסוך לא־סכתי עד־מלאַת שלשת שבועים ימים

I ate no tasty food, and neither meat nor wine came into my mouth. I did not **anoint** myself until three weeks were complete.

This paronomastic infinitive construction appears among a list of habitual actions from which Daniel reports restraining himself during a specified period.

II. EVENT MODALITY

A. Dynamic Modality

2 Chr 32:13

הלא תדעו מה עשיתי אני ואבותי לכל עמי הארצות היכול יכלו אלהי גוי הארצות להציל את־ארצם מירי

Do you not know what I and my ancestors did to all the peoples of the lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands *able* to deliver their lands from my hand?

The Chronicler introduces the verb יכל into the reported discourse and chooses to highlight it within a paronomastic infinitive construction rather than נצל as in 2 Kgs 18:33.

B. Desiderative Modality

Gen 31:30

ועתה הלך הלכת כי־נכסף נכספתה לבית אביך למה גנבת את־אלהי

Now you went away hastily because you *longed for* your father’s house. Yet why did you steal my gods?

Once again, multiple paronomastic infinitive constructions appear in a single passage. While the finite verb in הלך הלכת is indeed *qatal*, it imparts no modality to its clause; it is indicative. On the other hand, the verb כסף in the second construction is lexically desiderative.

1 Sam 14:30

אף כי לוא אכל אכל היום העם משלל איביו אשר מצא כי עתה לא־רבתה מכה
בפלשתים

Indeed, *if only* the people **had eaten** what they had found from the spoils of their enemies! Now the defeat of the Philistines has not been great.

Finally, the desiderative particle לו / לוא introduces a wished-for, unreal event. The proposed action of eating appears in a desiderative modal context.

Conclusion

To review, modality is a cross-linguistic analytical category. Thus notional typologies such as Palmer's system are appropriate for studying any language, including Biblical Hebrew. Modality concerns a speaker's expressed attitude toward the factuality of a proposition (propositional modality) or the potentiality of events (event modality). The present study addresses the likelihood that the paronomastic infinitive construction is a modality-focusing device by examining appearances of *qatal* verbs within such constructions.

Relatively few modal *qatal* paronomastic infinitive constructions should theoretically exist in the Hebrew Bible because the *qatal* verb conjugation only rarely expresses modal concepts or appears in modal contexts. On the contrary, in Biblical Hebrew prose texts 48.5% (33 of 68) of *qatal* paronomastic infinitive constructions are indeed modal.⁶³ Comparison with statistics on independent *qatal* verb employment raises the significance of this finding into stark relief; only about 2.3% of all *qatal* verbs in prose are modal.⁶⁴ The present study draws

63 The percentage of modal *qatal* paronomastic infinitive constructions rises slightly to 49.1% (28 of 57) if one excludes prose passages outside the Torah and Former Prophets as in the Hatav study. Indicative *qatal* paronomastic infinitive constructions appear in Gen 20:18, 27:30, 30:16, 31:30(1st), 40:15, 43:3, 43:7, 43:20; Exod 2:19, 5:23, 13:19; Lev 5:19, 10:16; Num 23:11, 24:10; Josh 17:13; Judg 1:28, 7:19, 11:35, 17:3; 1 Sam 2:30, 14:28, 14:43, 20:6, 20:28; 2 Sam 1:6; 1 Kgs 19:10, 19:14; 2 Kgs 14:10; 1 Chr 21:17; Jer 4:10, 11:7; Ezek 1:3, 16:4(2x).

64 Hatav 1997: 142. Hatav counts two examples of "performative" *qatal* verbs as modal, which is not in accordance with the Palmer system. The *qatal* paronomastic infinitive construction in Judg 17:3 is performative, in that Micah's mother employs the construction to consecrate silver for the production of an idol. Including Judg 17:3 among passages with modal *qatal* verbs for the present study would only increase the disparity between observed modality in *qatal*

attention to the statistically significant collocation of paronomastic infinitives absolute with modal *qatal* verbs, which strongly implies that one of the primary functions of the infinitive in such constructions is to accent the modality of its cognate finite verb.

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Abstract:

In grammatical literature one encounters speculation that paronomastic infinitive constructions not only strengthen the expression of a verbal idea, but also accent any modality present in the finite verb. The present study provides evidence for confirming this suggestion by studying the modal contexts of infinitives absolute paired with *qatal* finite verbs. A remarkably high percentage of *qatal* paronomastic infinitive constructions function modally, even though *qatal* is essentially a non-modal verb conjugation.

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