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1. Introduction[1]

1.1. The problem

At the core of the problem with the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms lies the question of how to interpret their temporal meaning. The disagreement on this matter sometimes surface very clearly in translations. A collation of thirteen translations of Ps 18 in various languages showed a total agreement on the temporal interpretation of only 35 out of the 98 finite forms of the psalm.[2] Only two of the translations agree in all instances.[3] All the translators render the forms differently depending on context, but seem to a large extent to be guided by different principles (or intuitions) as to how this interaction between form and context works. In the cases of the two Swedish translations, for instance, the freestanding *yiqtol*s in verse 21 are rendered as present tense in KB 17 and past in Bibel 2000:

KB 1917: Herren **lönar** [PRES] mig efter min rättfärdighet.
The Lord **rewards** me according to my righteousness.

Bibel 2000: Herren **lönade** [PRET] min rättfärdighet.
The Lord **rewarded** my righteousness.

The same verbal form separates the translations again in verse 34, but this time KB 1917 chooses the preterite and Bibel 2000 the present tense:

KB 1917: … du som **gjorde**[PRET] mina fötter såsom hindens
… you who **made** my feet like the feet of the deer

SB: Han **gör**[PRES] mig snabbfotad som gasellen
He **makes** me swift-footed like the gazelle

[1] This paper has been reworked since the abstract was submitted on OTSEM's website. The main difference is that chapter 1.4. has been added. The abstract is therefore somewhat misleading as to the contents of chapter 1. For a better overview of this chapter, I refer the reader to the summary in 1.6.
[2] The translations are from Bibel 2000, EÜ, KB 1917, KJV, NJB, NRSV, TOB, Alter 1985, Dahood 1965, Kraus 1978, Michel 1960, and further the Septuagint and the Vulgate, although it cannot be proven that they are based on the same original text as the others. There is total agreement on the temporal interpretation of the finite forms in verses 8-17 and 26-30.
[3] Kraus 1978 and Michel 1960.

While only sporadically visible in the translations, the lack of consensus on the exact nature of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms leaves permanent imprints in grammatical terminology. Most commonly, the terms that are used for the forms signify some kind of tense, aspect, or modality, which means that they either signify (tense) or imply (aspect and modality) some temporal meaning.[4] If we once again exemplify with *yiqtol*, but now in a more restricted sense, excluding the variant which normally has a proclitic *wa-* appended, we find this form characterized in the literature as "present-future"[5], or simply "future"[6], "simultaneous"[7], "modal-futural"[8], or just "modal"[9], "imperfective"[10], both imperfective and future,[11] and "non-perfective".[12] It is sometimes even claimed that the form does not express any temporal value whatsoever.[13] Matters are further complicated by the existence of various grammatical terms that relate in unclear ways to the concepts of tense/aspect/modality. For example, in Diethelm Michel's nomenclature, *yiqtol* expresses "abhängige Handlung",[14] Péter Kustár by a similar notion calls the form "determiniert",[15] and Wolfgang Schneider says that its fundamental property is to indicate a certain "Sprechhaltung"

[4] As the reader may notice, when tense and aspect values are used for the forms, they are specified in terms of their subclasses (future, imperfective, etc.). In contrast, the term "modal" is used as such, without further qualification. On this matter, see section 2.1.3 below.

[5] Blau 1976 § 20.1. Another way of referring to the same concept is to use the negative term "non-past" (e.g. Hetzron 1987, 697).

[6] Silverman (1973, 168) terms *yiqtol* "simple future" (as opposed to "*waw* future" = *w^{e}qatalti*), but see also p. 175 where he states that this form "always refers to future or present time in its widest sense".

[7] Kuryłowicz 1972, 84, § 14. More exactly, Kuryłowicz speaks of "simultaneity" as the *value* of *yiqtol*.

[8] See Zuber 1986, 16 (German:"modal-futurisch").

[9] Hatav 1997, 198. Joosten (1997, 58), too, calls *yiqtol* a modal form, but he also speaks about it as a "future/modal" (67, 68, 70).

[10] See, among others, Tropper, 1988. 178; Gentry 1998, 15; Cook 2006, 32. The same notion is also referred to by various equivalent terms such as the French "inaccompli" (Cohen 1924, 12) or the English "incompleted" (Weingreen 1959, § 29).

[11] Andersen 2000, 50.

[12] Waltke & O'Connor 1990, §§ 29.6.e.; 31.1.2.a. As "non-perfective", the *yiqtol* is the unmarked counterpart of the perfective *qatal*, which is to say that the form becomes imperfective when contrasted with the perfective form, even though by itself it is neither perfective nor imperfective.

[13] Sperber 1966, 591-592; Hughes 1970, 13; Greenstein 1988, 14. As opposed to those who call *yiqtol* "non-perfective", or "non-past", these authors do not reckon with stable meanings in other forms of the verbal system, whereby the meaning of *yiqtol* can be defined.

[14] Michel (1960, 254) defines what is meant by his terms: "Das Perfectum wird zur Wiedergabe einer Handlung gewählt, wenn diese als selbstgewichtig, als absolute angesehen […] Das imperfectum wird zur Wiedergabe einer Handlung gewählt wenn diese ihre Bedeutung von etwas ausserhalb der Handlung selbst liegenden, also relative ist" (it is to be understood that Perfectum = *qatal* is "akzidentiell" and Imperfectum = *yiqtol* is "abhängig"). According to Michel (1960, 255), this description of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms conforms with the views of Köhler, Brockelmann, and Nyberg.

[15] Kustár (1971, 44-46) claims that his concept "determiniert", as well as its counterpart "determinierend" (represented by *qatal*), are aspects. His definition of aspect is very far from

("linguistic attitude"), which characterizes the subtype of discourse that he calls "Besprechen" ("discussion").[16] Harald Baayen follows Schneider but employs the term "focal referential concern" for the same function.[17] He also ties *yiqtol* to the function of establishing "tight linkage" with the preceding clause.[18] We will return to Schneider's and Baayen's theories later on.

Further disagreement arise in the discussions about the so-called "consecutive forms" *wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí*, which, in contrast with *yiqtol* and other forms, are often linked with the concept of *sequentiality*, i.e. (roughly) the phenomenon of temporal succession between events.[19] Two closely related problems with far-reaching consequences for the description of Biblical Hebrew verbal semantics are involved here. The first is whether sequentiality is a property that may be contained by verbal forms, just like tense, aspect, and modality. This seems to be the opinion of, e.g., Galia Hatav who defines sequentiality as an aspect that can be marked morphologically, and claims that this is the case with *wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí*.[20] John Cook, admits that verbal semantics contribute to the sequential interpretation of clauses, but considers the syntactical arrangement of the clauses to be the most crucial factor in this regard.[21] The second problem is whether *wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qatal* should count as verbal forms at all, rather than just *yiqtol* and *qatal* preceded by the proclitic *waw* (a conjunction corresponding to English "and"/"but"). In this matter, too, both opinions exist. What both these problems have in common is the more

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mainstream, though, and it is difficult to see how it can be functionally related with the other categories in the TAM-complex. See the description on pages 45-46 in his study: "Durch den gebrauch der qṭl- und jqṭl-Aspektkategorien unterscheidet der Sprechende die Handlungen danach, welche von ihnen in dem unmittelbaren Verhältnis der Handlungen zueinander als determinierend und welche als determiniert zu betrachten ist, d.h. welche Handlungen als Ausgangspunkt, Grund determinieren des Moment, Zweck, Ergebnis oder Schlusspunkt der anderen Handlung zu betrachten sind, und welches die Handlungen sind, auf deren Grund, Zweck, oder determinierendes Moment der Sprechende hinweisen will."

[16] The linguistic attitude characteristic of *Besprechen*, or discussion, is a tense and responsive state of mind. Thus Schneider (2001, § 48.1.): "Besprechende Rede **engagiert** ihn [i.e. den Hörer]: Sprecher und Hörer haben zu agieren und zu reagieren."

[17] Baayen 1997, 247. Both Schneider and Baayen follows Weinrich (1977) in this regard. Other proponents for the same approach are Talstra and Niccacci (see 2.2. below).

[18] Baayen 1997, 248. De Regt treats the same concept in terms of "cognitive proximity" (de Regt 2008, 82-87).

[19] Note that the term "sequentiality" (alt. "sequence") for temporal succession, which is common within Hebraistics, can be misleading, since the term also is used for a syntactic phenomenon, viz. the chaining of clauses with non-finite verb forms. This is pointed out by Cook (2004, 250; Cook, however, speaks about "underspecified" rather than "non-finite" forms). Peckham also sees it as a syntactical phenomenon (but he does not state that the verbal forms in the sequence must be non-finite. Cf. his definition: "Sequence is the syntactic relation of clauses of the same kind"; Peckham 1997: 164). Further down, I will abandon the term "sequentiality" in favour of "contingent (temporal) succession" [not in the present paper].

[20] Hatav 1997, 54-55.

[21] Cook 2004, ch. 2.1.; see esp. pp 253-254.

general question whether sequentiality in clauses with *wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí* is a discourse-pragmatic or a morpho-semantic phenomenon.

Moving up to a higher level of abstraction, we find that even the definitions of the grammatical terms themselves are disputed. Above all, "aspect" is the difficult one. In the classical theory of aspect, only two categories are recognized: *perfective* and *imperfective*. Perfective aspect thus means viewing an event as completed (cf. "I have done"), whereas imperfective aspect means viewing it as uncompleted, i.e. ongoing ("I am doing"). In modern linguistic theory, however, many new categories have been suggested, even though none has gained such a widespread acceptance as the original pair. As things stand, it is very difficult to get a clear idea of how many "aspects" there are, which they are, and how they relate to each other. This confusing state of affairs is certainly true also for Biblical Hebrew. For example, adherents of Comrie's aspectual model may accept his further subdivisions within the imperfective category, which include *habitual*, *continuous*, *non-progressive*, and *progressive*.[22] Completely different is Rundgren's system with its primary, secondary and tertiary aspectual oppositions *stative*:*fiens*, *cursive*:*constative* and *punctual*:*neutral*.[23] Ultimately, the proliferation of supposedly aspectual categories is probably due to the fact that the meta-category of aspect traditionally was defined only in terms of its own sub-categories perfective and imperfective. In other words, there was no general definition of aspect by means of which it would be possible to exclude the existence of other members of the class aside from perfective and imperfective. Still today, there is no authoritative and universally accepted definition of aspect.

1.2. Aim

The aim of the present study is to increase the understanding of the semantic properties that lie behind the temporal meanings of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms. To this end, special attention will be paid to the category of aspect. The investigation requires

1) a definition of aspect that a) is compatible with the traditional definitions of the aspectual sub-categories perfective and imperfective, and b) can be used to decide what other aspectual categories there are aside from perfective and imperfective;

[22] So Rogland 2001, 7. Cf. Comrie 1976, 25.
[23] Rundgren 1961, 72.

2) a plausible explanation of how the temporal meanings of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms in specific cases can be implied from context and given aspectual values.

The study will also deal with two of the notions that are most commonly associated with the forms of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system, namely linguistic attitude and sequentiality. The questions that need to be answered are:

3) What is linguistic attitude and sequentiality?

4) Do these notions affect the usage of the Biblical Hebrew forms, and if so, how do they interact with aspect?

1.3. Scope

Before moving to more substantial issues, it is appropriate to discuss certain factors having to do with the scope of the study: first, the body of data that will serve as witness to the language here called Biblical Hebrew ; and, after that, the two factors within this body of data that most often – though not in the present study – are allowed to delimit the scope of studies of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system: the diachronic diversity and the distinction between prose and poetry.

1.3.1. Source material

The linguistic data of this investigation is taken from the Hebrew Bible as it is preserved in the Massoretic tradition. A more comprehensive investigation would broaden the scope and consider manuscripts of other textual traditions as well as inscriptions and ostraca that belong to the same linguistic stage as the preserved text of the Hebrew Bible. However, these witnesses have been omitted for practical reasons.

Given that the Massoretic punctuation system for indicating vowels and geminated consonants was developed many centuries after the consonantal text was recorded, it is possible that the pronunciation of certain words have been corrupted. As far as the verbal system is concerned, it has been claimed in (at least) two recent studies that the *patach* (the vowel [a]) and the gemination of the *yod* in the "consecutive" imperfect, *wayyiqtol*, is a Massoretic invention.[24] Evidence for this is sought in the fact that this pronunciation is not reflected in the fragments of the Hebrew-Greek transliteration in the second column of Origen's *Hexapla*, or in the

[24] Furuli 2006, 147, Van de Sande 2008, 204.

Samaritan Pentateuch.[25] This explanation presupposes the somewhat unlikely scenario that the *wayy*-pronunciation was so valuable for the Massoretes as to impel them to meddle with their sacred tradition. The generally held opinion is that the Massoretes did not invent forms, but that some punctuations reflect pronunciations that may be late or dialectical.[26] The alternative and perhaps less far-fetched explanation is that the Samaritans (as well as Origen's source) had failed to preserve an old pronunciation, which since long had been out of use in non-Biblical Hebrew. But however that may be, it is not of crucial importance, for the meaning of linguistic forms depends not only on their phonological structure, but also on syntactical and pragmatic factors (see 1.4.2. below).

The present study is intended to be as broad as its subject ("Biblical Hebrew") suggests. Hence, in principle, the whole of the Massoretic text is of interest. However, this is not a complete survey of data; it is an attempt to apply new theory on data that have been gone through over and over again by generations of grammarians. In order to get the selection of data as representative as possible, a corpus has been established, which includes texts from the main diachronic stages, prose and poetry, and a broad spectrum of text-types. The corpus is presented in the chapter that lays out the principles for defining text-types.

1.3.2. Diachronic diversity

The texts of the Hebrew Bible may originate from a period of many centuries. It is common to distinguish between three diachronic stages within Biblical Hebrew: Archaic Biblical Hebrew (ABH), Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH), and Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH).[27] Should we not expect the verbal system to have changed enough over time as to warrant a study of diachronically conditioned usag*es* rather than one universal usage?

Indeed, some differences exist. Typical for ABH a high degree of free-standing *yiqtol* with the same function as the narrative *wayyiqtol*.[28] Special features in LBH includes *inter alia* a decrease of *yiqtol* and virtual disappearance of *w^{e}qataltí* for expressing habitual events in the past, and an increase of the periphrastic *hayah* (perfect of *hyh* = to be) *qotel* in the same function. However, except for the case of the past habitual *w^{e}qataltí*, these

[25] Ben-Hayyim 2000, 171. The texts of the Samaritan Pentateuch provide no evidence, though, since their indications for vowels and gemination are deficient. The conclusions have to be made from contemporary reading practice (see Ben-Hayyim 2000, 5-13, 29).
[26] See Sáens-Badillos 1996, 78-79; Tov 2001, 47-49.
[27] Kutscher 1982, 12; Sáenz-Badillos 1993, 52. There is also a bipartite division, expressed with different terminology, which draws the main line between SBH and LBH, thus conflating the earlier phases into one. For a brief overview, see Young 2002, 3-4. In discussing these matters, I do not take a stand as to whether it is possible to date Biblical texts chronologically on the basis of linguistic criteria.
[28] Sáenz-Badillos 1993, 58.

differences are only tendencies.[29] Even if they are likely to reflect a real development in the verbal usage, the conclusion of the research done in this field seems to be that there are no *fundamental* differences between the various linguistic stages.[30]

1.3.3. Prose and poetry

Another argument against a comprehensive description of the Biblical Hebrew verbal usage is the differences between prose and poetry. No doubt, most of the difficult usages occur in the poetic texts. Scholars often explain them as violations of grammar or poetic licence, or say that the grammar of poetry differs from that of prose.[31] Grammatical irregularities due to strict adherence to various poetic functions are found in all kinds of languages. Possible cases of poetic licence having to do with verbal usage are found for example in Medieval Romance verse. Harald Weinrich holds that especially the common and sometimes very abrupt switches between the *passé simple* (a preterite aorist) and *présent* (present tense) in the narration of past events is more likely motivated by the poetic demand for rhyme or assonance than by the narrator's wish to switch temporal perspective.[32] Others believe that the irregularities are due to metrical reasons.[33]

Rhyme or meter, if not non-existent, are certainly not enough constitutive for Biblical Hebrew poetry to force verbal forms to behave irregularly. The most characteristic feature of Biblical Hebrew poetry is parallelism, a kind

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[29] See Eskhult 2000; Joosten 2006, 141.

[30] Free-standing *yiqtol* with narrative function occur not rarely in later poetic texts (cf. for example Bloch 2009, 61-66 on Isa 41:1-5 and Ps 44), and is even found in the prose text of Daniel (Dan 8:12). *Hayah qotel* with habitual meaning is used also in SBH (Ehrensvärd 2003, 171, note 33). On past habitual *yiqtol* in LBH, see Eskhult 2000, 85. Some scholars even argue that there is an essential continuity in the verbal usage all the way down to Qumran Hebrew (QH). Thus, Holst (2008, 140) finds that the usage of *yiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí* in instructional and hortatory discourse is the same in QH (represented by the War Scroll) as in SBH. Furuli (2006, 85-88), who has investigated all available data concludes that there is no difference in the understanding of the conjugations in QH as compared to Biblical Hebrew.

[31] Cf. for example Bergsträsser's (1929, § 6.i.) well known dictum that the verbal usage in Biblical Hebrew poetry has developed to "einer völligen Verwischung der Bedeutungsunterschiede der Tempora und einem Regellosen Promiscuegebrauch sämtlichen Tempusbezeichnungen". Nyberg (1952 § 86.mm-oo) hypothesizes that some "irregularities" in the verbal usages of the poetic texts may be due to the lack of knowledge as well as the dogmatic preferences of the Massoretes. Hatav (1997, 24) leaves out the poetic material from her thesis with the motivation that "[t]he verb forms forms function differently in prose as opposed to poetry." A similar expression is found in Fensham 1978, 10. Niccacci (1997, 77-18) counts "non-detectable versus detectable verbal system" among his "main characteristics of poetry versus prose" (in a more recent work he has abandoned this description; see Niccacci 2006, 247). The influence of poetic license on verbal usage is reckoned with by e.g. Michel (1960, 11-13), Gross (1976, 32 note 50), Hatav (1997, 24), Joosten (2002, 52), and Joüon/Muraoka 2008, § 11.a.

[32] Weinrich 1977, 252. Weinrich also says that the opposite opinion is common.

[33] For a survey of the research in the field, see Fleischman 1990, 67 ff.

of repetition of semantic or grammatical patterns in two or more adjacent lines. Wilfred G.E. Watson describes, in his work on classical Hebrew poetry, one characteristic of parallelism that is pertinent to verbal usage. Having first surveyed a number of repetitive verse patterns found in the poetry, he concludes that "the poets were well able to exploit repetition", and continues:

> Too much of the same word or phrase, though, can lead to monotony and therefore become boring.[34]

To prevent this monotony, Watson explains, there were some manoeuvres to ensure variation. For instance, the poets could alternate between *yiqtol* and *qatal* when verbs of the same root are used in two parallel bicola, as in Ps 38:12:

> oh^{a}bay w^{e}re^{ʿ}ay mimmænni nig^{ʿ}i ya^{ʿa}modu
> friends.my and.companions.my from.me sore.my stand.they[*yiqtol*]
>
> uq^{e}robay merāḥoq ^{ʿ}āmādu
> and.neighbours.my from.afar stand.they.[*qatal*]
>
> "My friends and my companions stand far from my sores,
> and my neighbours stay far away from me."

But this poetic device is perhaps at work not only in the case of parallelization of verbs of the same root. Adele Berlin may well be correct when saying that it lies behind other cases of conjugation-alternation as well, such as Job 6:15 (below). According to Berlin, the tense-shift here "occurs not for semantic reasons" but functions as "a kind of grammatical parallelism" (1985, 36):[35]

> aḥay bāg^{e}du k^{e}mo nāḥal
> brothers.my treacherous.they[*qatal*] as brook
>
> ka^{ʾa}piq n^{e}ḥālim ya^{ʿ}aboru[yiqtol]
> as.stream (of)brooks vanish.they
>
> "My brothers are treacherous as the brook, as the stream of the brooks they vanish."

This phenomenon is, to my knowledge, the only possible case where it has been demonstrated how the choice of verbal forms in Biblical Hebrew verse may have something to do with a well-defined kind of poetical feature. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that this does not entail that the

[34] Watson 1984, 279.
[35] See Berlin 1985, 36.

verse-lines in question are "ungrammatical". Berlin's claim that the semantics of the form has nothing to do with the choice of forms may be an overstatement. True, the shift of conjugations may appear to us as a kind of antithetical grammatical parallelism, but what stops it from also being regarded as an "antithetical semantic parallelism" by force of the opposite perspectives offered by the forms? In my opinion, to establish with reasonable certitude what counts as a real instance of poetic licence requires that the poetics and the grammar of the text are analysed separately. We can tell what is ungrammatical only by means of grammatical principles we know from other texts. On the other hand, we cannot explain every seeming anomaly as poetic licence just because it happens to occur in poetry. In other words, no valid argument in favour of a special grammatical treatment of poetic texts should be based on our *lack* of understanding – it has to be substantiated by positively formulated evidence. Given the scarcity of such evidence, the only viable attitude as far as the matter of verbal usage is concerned is to expect that poetry is as representative of "the grammar of Biblical Hebrew" as prose. Even more, we should not preclude that poetry can shed light on certain obscure verbal usages in prose, just as well as the other way around.

1.4. Theoretical considerations

A study of the meaning of verbal forms may become a bewildering enterprise without a clear conception of what is meant by "meaning" as well as "verbal forms". First of all, the reader should know that the word "meaning" is not used as a technical term in this study; i.e. it means no less and no more than it does in everyday language. If more precision is required, the word will either be qualified, or other terms will be used. The aspects of meaning that are most important for our purpose will be treated below in terms of "semantic" and "pragmatic meaning". That discussion prepares the ground for a description of verbal forms as meaning-bearing units whose meaning are defined by the linguistic system they belong to and the contexts in which they are used.

1.4.1. Semantics and pragmatics

Language is a tool for communication, functioning within a communicative situation consisting of sender, receiver, and the things referred to. An important consequence of this, famously described by Karl Bühler in his *Sprachteorie*, is that the linguistic expression is many-sided and can only be fully understood in relation to each of these entities. To illustrate, the cry "Wolf!" would, with Bühler's terminology, be interpreted at the same time as an *expression* (*Ausdruck*) of the mind and emotions etc. of the sender, an

appeal (*Appell*) to the attention and responsiveness etc. of the receiver, and a *representation* (*Darstellung*) of the certain species of animal that is being referred to.[36] Even though these three functions always co-occur, any one of them may come more or less to the fore depending on what particular speech-act is being performed. For instance, if the utterance "Wolf!" is intended as a warning, the appeal-function of the utterance is felt very strongly. The expressive function would be more palpable if the same word were exclaimed by a person with a very strong (positive or negative) sentiment towards the animal, who unexpectedly came across a track of it in the neighbourhood. Finally, the same word can be used first and foremost for representation – we may think of a more educational situation, where it is used as an answer to the question "What animal left this track?"

Of course, there are limits as to the functional flexibility of words. We notice in the examples above that, even though the interpretation of the word "wolf" varies with the *balance* among the expressive, representative, and appeal-functions of each utterance, one factor remains stable all the way through, namely the *representation per se* of the thing spoken of by means of the word. In other words, whereas the nature of the expression and the appeal are completely different in each utterance, the representation can be uniformly defined in all the three of them. In a certain sense, then, the word "wolf" encodes the representative function of language. However, not only representation, but also expression and appeal can be encoded. A good example of the whole spectrum of functions is offered by the moods of the verb, fully conjugated in a language like Latin. Thus, the imperative (*dice* = say!) encodes the appealing function of language, the subjunctive mood (*dicas* = may you say) the expressive, and the indicative (*dicis* = you say) the representative function.

Now, most ordinary people would no doubt agree that not only the statement accomplished by the indicative, but also the command encoded in the imperative, and the wish expressed by the subjunctive are *meanings* of those same forms. It is equally certain, however, that within the linguistic discipline devoted to the study of meaning in language, viz. *semantics*, representation is the function that has received by far most of the attention. One may point to several reasons for this: First, representation is the dominant function in language.[37] Second, there has been an intense activity among semanticists working within the field of truth conditional semantics, a method that is applicable only on representation.[38] Finally, influential

[36] Bühler 1965, 28-29. The example is mine. Notice that the word "expression" here is used in two senses: When it occurs in the phrase "linguistic expression" it refers to the speech-product, whether in terms of a specific utterance or in terms of the linguistic forms that the utterance is made of (morphemes, words, phrases); when it is used in isolation it refers to the relation between the speaker and the linguistic expression.
[37] This is stressed by Bühler 1965, 30.
[38] See Palmer 1981, 42-43; Davis 1991, 7.

theoreticians have explicitly stated that semantics concerns only the relation between the linguistic expressions and the things they represent.[39] This has been done in an attempt to draw the line theoretically between semantics and the neighbouring discipline of *pragmatics*. Thus, everything that concerns the relation between the linguistic utterance and the sender and receiver, i.e. the *users* of the linguistic expression, has been assigned to pragmatics. Such a distinction excepts the study of expression and appeal (hence subjunctive and imperative forms) from the province of semantics and confines it to the field of pragmatics.[40] However, according to another distinction very commonly drawn, semantics has to do with *conventional* meaning and pragmatics with *situational* meaning.[41] By conventional meaning is understood a meaning that is consistently associated with a particular linguistic form in all utterances. The form in question is then a specific structure on sub-clause level encoding, as it were, meaning (morpheme, word, or phrase). We may call such a form a *semantic unit*. Situational meaning is a meaning that is associated with a semantic unit in (a) particular utterance(s) by force of certain conditions in the utterance-situation. In this view, expression and appeal can and should be treated in semantic analysis, since these functions can be encoded by semantic units – for instance in imperatives and subjunctives – and thereby also decoded from such units regardless of the context of use.

Obviously, we are left here with two incompatible conceptions of semantics and pragmatics.[42] What should we make out of it? In my opinion, to confine semantics to the representational function of the linguistic expression is untenable. For one thing, it is too much in conflict with the common understanding of the word "meaning" to exclude the expressive and

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[39] For historical outlines, see Lyons 1977, 114-117; Recanati 2004, 443-444.

[40] The first, and one of the most influential, scholars to distinguish in this way between semantics and pragmatics was Charles Morris. In his *Foundations of the theory of signs* (1938) he stated that semantics is the study of "the relation of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable", and pragmatics is the study of "the relation of signs to interpreters ["interpreters" corresponds to "sender" and "receiver" above]" (Morris 1971 [1938], 21-22). The popularity of this simple and catchy formulation seems to have overshadowed the fact that Morris later widened the scope of semantics. In *Signs, language, and behavior* he states that "other modes of signification than the designative must be dealt with in semantics". According to the reformulated definition "*semantics* deals with the signification of signs in all modes of signifying" (Morris 1971 [1946], 302). This means that semantics includes other functions than representation (representation corresponds to Morris' "designative mode of signification").

[41] Recanati 2004, 445; cf. Trask 1999, 243.

[42] Recanati writes about the theoretical impasse arising from these conflicting views: "Some linguistic forms (e.g. *goodbye*, or the imperative mood) have a 'pragmatic' rather than a 'semantic' meaning: they have use conditions but do not 'represent' anything and hence do not contribute to the utterance's truth conditions. Because there are such expressions – and arguably there are many of them and every sentence contains at least one – we have to choose: either semantics is defined as the study of conventional meaning, or it is defined as the study of words-world relations. We can't have it both ways."

appeal-function of linguistic expressions from a scientific study of meaning in language. For another, it does not accord with the original understanding of semantics to do so. The pioneer in the field, Michel Bréal, included these functions on equal terms with the representative function in his work *Essaie de sémantique,* a book that was written long before the attempts to distinguish semantics from pragmatics.[43] More to the point is the statement that semantics deals with the conventional meaning of linguistic forms. The conventional meaning of linguistic forms has in practice been the object of "semantic" investigations from Bréal and onwards. Further, given that the usage of linguistic expressions are governed by special conventions, the study of their meaning must necessarily begin with exploring these conventions. Without knowing the conventions, we have no access to meaning.

In spite of this, there are a couple of thinkable objections against the view that semantics and pragmatics can be differentiated in terms of conventional versus situational meaning. The first is that "pragmatic" (hence allegedly situational) meanings are often more or less conventionalized.[44] For example, the cry "Wolf!" may be a conventional form for warning among shepherds. This objection can be countered by the argument that such a convention is valid only under special circumstances, so that it in reality the meaning is given by the linguistic form *plus situation*. The *representation* of a certain kind of animal, in contrast, is achieved entirely by means of the form "wolf", regardless of situation. That answer, however, will in turn evoke another objection: If semantic meaning is inherent in the form regardless of situation, why then do forms often seem to be used with another meaning than their alleged semantic meaning? For instance, how is it possible, as often in German, to give commands in the second person indicative? Consider the following example:

> Jetzt gehst du raus aus meinem Haus!
> Now go.PRES:IND. you out of my house
> "Now, get out of my house!"[45]

To this objection we may answer that the fact that semantic meaning is inherent in the forms does not entail that this meaning is overt in all utterances. In certain utterances, contextual conditions may indicate that the semantic meaning of a form is not communicated. Instead, certain aspects of the semantic meaning are used to imply another meaning. Thus, in the above

[43] See Bréal's treatment of the "subjective element" in language (Bréal 1924, ch. 25). Note also that Bréal contrasted semantics not with pragmatics (or syntax), but with phonetics (Bréal 1924, ch. 1).
[44] Hopper & Traugott 2003, 80-84.
[45] Retrieved August 11 2010 from http://w3.restena.lu/primaire/weiswampach/atremuth/00_01/tiere/Tiergedichte.html

example, the fact that the listener is not leaving the house at the moment of speech prevents the sentence from being interpreted as a declarative utterance, despite the indicative mood (this is so, because the listener supposes that the speaker is truthful). At the same time, the present tense affords a sense of instant relevance, or urgency, which lends itself well to the command function. The reason that we can recognize semantic meaning even if it is concealed in specific utterances is that semantic meaning is not defined primarily by the conditions of the utterance, but by the conditions of the language system of which it is part. This means that the semantic meaning of a form such as the present indicative appears against the background of our knowledge of the meaning-potential of the other forms of the system, rather than against the background of the speech situation[46]. Accordingly, we say that the command-function is not a part of the semantic meaning of the German present indicative, because another form, the imperative, by comparison is much more specialised for this function. In principle, then, semantic meaning of a certain form is best reached at by ways of apophatic reasoning: It is what the other forms available in the system do *not* mean when contrasted with it. Conversely, all meanings that are not typical of a form in comparison with the other members of the system will be pragmatic meanings. This is not to say that pragmatic meaning always differs from semantic meaning. Pragmatic meaning *confirms* the semantic meaning of a form if the context of an utterance does not imply a meaning that is more typically conveyed by another member of the system. That is what happens when an indicative is used for a statement and an imperative is used for a command. Semantic meanings are thus always unique (such as the command function of the German imperative), whereas pragmatic meanings *may* be shared by other linguistic expressions (e.g. the command-function of the German present indicative). The conventional nature of semantic meaning consists in the restrictions of the linguistic system that the individual has to accept in order to be able to communicate successfully.

At this stage I would like to emphasize that the idea of stable and system-dependent form-meaning relations does *not* require us to envisage language as some kind of closed system, a fixed and publicly accessible data-base that is stored in the mind of every speaker. Such a notion would fly in the face of the indisputable fact that the knowledge of existent forms and the opinions of form-meaning-relations varies across time and social contexts. I assume here that the semantic meanings of linguistic expressions do not reside in the linguistic data as such, but rather in how they are viewed by those who use them: The whole dichotomy between semantic and pragmatic meanings of forms hinges on the simple fact that they can be viewed from opposite

[46] Compare with the system-dependent concept of meaning developed by theoreticians such as Saussure (1922, 160) and Bühler (1965, 183ff).

perspectives. Semantic meaning is *thought of* as belonging to the form (not by arbitrariness, but due to the speaker's knowledge of the contents of the language-system and how it is generally being used). Therefore, semantics views forms in isolation, it is *analytical*, bent on decomposing all formal structures down to its smallest meaning-bearing parts, the morphemes. Pragmatic interpretation of forms is *holistic*, looking for what function the form gets in the larger picture, the context. By the context of a form we understand ultimately everything that is found to be coherent with it, that is, the surrounding parts of speech in which they occur, from single clauses up to entire conversations or monologues, but also the non-linguistic context such as the time and place for the discourse, and various factors connected with the participants of the communication, like worldviews, knowledge, focus of attention, intentions, etc. As already have been intimated above, semantic and pragmatic perspectives on the meanings can be combined in a unified analysis, in which pragmatic meanings are seen as implicatures of the semantic meanings. Hence, pragmatic meanings actually contains two meanings, namely semantic plus implied, pragmatic meaning.

1.4.2. Semantic units

The relevance of the previous section for our purpose is that the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms are a kind of semantic units. A few more words need to be said about this concept. Semantic units are produced by associating conventional meanings with linguistic expressions. Linguistic expressions come to us in the shape of acoustic patterns – *phonological structures*. Although the phonological structure is highly indicative for the meaning of a linguistic expression, there is no one-to-one correspondence between phonological structures and semantic meanings. This fact is evident e.g. in the phenomenon of word-inflection, where the same semantic unit may be represented by more than one phonological structure. Thus, verbal forms, like the Biblical Hebrew *qatal* appears in different phonological structure depending on person (*qāṭal*, *qāṭ͏ָ֫la* etc.) or stem (*qāṭal*, *hiqṭil* etc.). The other side of the coin is that the same phonological structure can be used for two, or more, semantic units in the same language. For instance, in English the phonological structure [bɪlː] may be used for referring to such unrelated things as 1) some male persons (Bill), 2) pieces of paper with notes on it (pay one's bill), or 3) a body-part of certain animals (the bill of the duck).

Because of the insufficient correspondence between phonological structures and semantic meanings we need additional criteria to identify semantic units, viz. *syntactic* and *pragmatic* criteria. The syntactic criteria depend on language-specific conventions that require semantic units to occur in a certain order in utterances. Various types of semantic units, like nouns, verbs, adjectives etc. have their typical positions in the order. Consequently, it is possible to infer the semantic identity of ambiguous phonological

structures from their syntactical position.[47] The English present and infinitive are distinguished in this way:

> Because I **live** [predicate position: PRES], you also will **live** [main verb: INF].[48]

Since both the phonological structures and the syntax is part of the conventions of specific languages, both phonological and syntactic criteria indicate semantic meaning.

When ambiguous phonological structures are deemed syntactically equivalent, so that no differentiation is possible based on position, users have to rely on contextual cues, i.e. pragmatic criteria, to decide their meaning. Thus, the structure [bɪlː] will mostly be associated with the meaning 2) above if uttered at a restaurant table and with the meaning 3) at a lecture on ornithology. Semantically ambiguous words like the ones mentioned in the examples above are often called *homonyms*. A narrower definition states that true, or absolute, homonymy only exists when the semantic units are syntactically equivalent (such as [bɪlː] 2 and 3 above).[49]

We should endeavour to distinguish between homonymy and *polysemy*. Whereas homonymy occurs where there is ambiguity as to semantic meaning, polysemy can be described as ambiguity as to pragmatic meaning. The latter case of ambiguity exists when one and the same semantic meaning of a phonological structure is found to be applicable within two or more distinct kinds of situations. For instance, an interpreter may abstract the meaning "paper with notes on it" from *bill* 2) above and find it applicable both to a situation when such a paper puts somebody under obligation to pay something (pay the bill [2a]) and when it enables him to do it (pay with a bill [2b]).

The difficulty in practice to tell homonyms from polysemes is underscored in every handbook of semantics, yet it is necessary and inevitable to try it.[50] Here, the distinction has been treated in theoretical terms as a matter of semantic versus pragmatic interpretation. In the framework of the present study this discussion leads to the question how to define the forms of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system. Which semantic units can be found in it? For example, should *yiqtol* be regarded as one form, or two (long and short *yiqtol*; see ch. 1.5. below), or perhaps even three (long *yiqtol*, short *yiqtol* preterite, and short *yiqtol* jussive)? The working hypothesis here is that it consists of two forms, as I will explain below.

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[47] See Lyons 1977, 555-556, on syntactical equivalence.
[48] Joh 14:19 (KJV).
[49] Lyons 1977, 560.
[50] See Lyons 1977, 550-555; Palmer 1981, 101-102, Hurford & Heasley, 1983, 124; Saeed 2003, 64-65.

1.4.3. Pragmatic units

In the previous section we saw that the production of linguistic meaning may be conceived of as a process in which both phonological structures, syntax, and contexts are brought to bear on the interpretation of the linguistic expression. Semantic units were defined as meaning-bearing entities characterized by conventional, language-specific phonological structures and syntactic positions. Analogously, we may speak of *pragmatic units* as the universes that contain the semantic units and condition the meaning they convey in specific utterances. Now, given that a proper understanding of semantic units depends largely on where to draw the line between semantic and pragmatic meanings, a comprehensive account of the meaning of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms should ideally identify not only the relevant semantic units, but also the pragmatic units they occur in.

The importance of bringing contextual factors to bear to the analysis of the function of the verbal forms is stressed within text linguistics. One of the most influential proponents for this approach is Robert E Longacre. He has developed a general typology for describing various types of discourse (=text-types), such as narrative, hortatory, and procedural discourse, etc., which he also has applied rather extensively to Biblical Hebrew.[51] The basis for his classification of texts is the intent, or performative function of the text as a whole. Longacre calls this function the "notional structure" of the text. The simplest way to characterize the text types is to describe their notional structure in terms of performative verbs. Thus, Longacre writes:

> In terms of such … verbs, narration in its notional structure employs *I recount*; procedural discourse in its notional structure employs *I prescribe*; expository discourse, *I explain*; and hortatory discourse, *I propose*; i.e. *suggest*, *urge*, *command*.[52]

For each text-type, certain clause types, hence also certain verbal forms, typically contribute more than others to promoting these fundamental intentions, or speech acts. Forms that are crucial in this regard are used for building up the "mainline", or "backbone" of the text; non-crucial forms are used for "supportive", or "backgrounded" material.[53] For instance, the typical mainline form in a narrative of past events in English would be the preterite, and in a hortatory text it would be the imperative. One could say, then, that these forms *mark* past narrative and hortatory discourse in English.[54] However, the marked pattern can be set aside for various reasons. Longacre notes, for example, that a text at a certain stage in its development may

[51] See Longacre 1989; 1992; 1995.
[52] Longacre 1996, 15.
[53] See Longacre 1996, 21; 1992, 178. Cf. also Dawson 1994, 102.
[54] Or, perhaps it is more to the point to put it the other way around, and say that narrative and hortatory discourse confirms the semantic meaning of those same forms.

contain information that is more central to the understanding of the whole than other parts of the text, such as the climax of the plot in a narrative. Such focal parts of the text are often characterized by extraordinary phenomena, such as sudden changes of vantage point, tense, syntactic patterns, etc.[55] The historic present is but one well-known device employed to enhance the vividness of climactic passages in narrative texts. In these special cases the marked pattern of the text-type is set aside.

Longacre's theory of texts will be presented in more detail in a later chapter. The important thing at this stage is to recognize how it serves our purpose: Founded ultimately in an appreciation of texts as speech acts, this approach *provides the holistic perspective* we need to catch sight of all kinds of pragmatic meanings of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms. A complete description of text-types built on this foundation would amount to nothing less than a comprehensive survey of the various pragmatic units that are relevant for the understanding of the meanings of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms (a "pragmatic verbal paradigm" for Biblical Hebrew, if you like).

Regrettably, no such investigation of the various text-types of Biblical Hebrew has been made, and it certainly lies outside the scope of the present study to undertake that task. To the extent that the relevant contexts of the verbal forms are being described in this study, it is done heuristically, by means of a somewhat modified version of Longacre's text typology.

1.5. Preliminaries on the Biblical Hebrew verbal system

The verbal forms that this study centers on are those whose temporal functions are most disputed, i.e. those typically used in declarative utterances: the prefix conjugation *yiqtol* (long and short variants; see below), the suffix conjugation *qatal* and the participle *qotel* in predicative position. However, the object of this study is not any particular group of forms in the verbal system, but certain functions operating within it. Other forms, as the imperative *q^{e}tol*, will be brought into the discussion insofar as their usages reflect these functions.

The "consecutive" constructions *wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí* are often referred to as "verbal forms" and treated as such, on equal footing with the free-standing *yiqtol* and *qatal*. This is quite remarkable considering that these constructions according to the standard grammatical analysis are nothing but the ordinary (short) *yiqtol* and *qatal* forms plus a conjunction, corresponding to the English "and"(/"but") – a conjunction that is always proclitic in Biblical Hebrew, regardless of whether the following word is a verb or not. Now, since the variant *wa-* occurs exclusively in the *wayyiqtol*-construction, it has sometimes been suggested that it contains a remnant of

[55] Longacre 1996; ch. 3; see esp. p. 40-41 about tense.

some morpheme with a past tense meaning aside from the conjunction. If so, it might be considered as a kind of augment on the verb. But this hypothesis creates more problems than it solves: First of all, it seems to ignore the many apparently non-past *wayyiqtol*s that are found in poetry.[56] Further it is rather odd that the conjunction should be obligatory with the augment. Finally, even if these difficulties were resolved, it remains to explain why the *w^{e}* of the *w^{e}qataltí*, which is only the conjunction without augment, should be analogous with the *wa-* of *wayyiqtol*[57], and why both constructions should be linked with the phenomenon of sequentiality. In a more recent variant of the augment-hypothesis proposed by Ola Wikander, it is assumed that the *wa-* really is the conjunction and nothing more, but that it took on temporal meaning at a certain juncture in the linguistic development in order to distinguish preterite *yiqtol* from non-preterite *yiqtol*.[58] Even this version of the hypothesis does not address the problem with the non-preterite *wayyiqtol*s in poetry, nor the question of how it relates to *w^{e}qataltí* and the phenomenon of sequentiality. In fact, the strength of the augment-hypothesis depends largely in the fact that *wayyiqtol* is used as narrative form analogously with the augmented aorists of some Indo-European languages. But, as Wikander himself seems to hint in a small but significant disclaimer, being a narrative form is not the same thing as being a preterite tense.[59]

In my opinion, in order to understand properly the meanings of the Biblical Hebrew verbs, it is necessary not to confuse the syntactic function of the proclitic conjunction of *wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí* with the semantics of the verbal form. From a semantic point of view, these constructions are more naturally treated under the same heading as the free-standing (short) *yiqtol* and *qatal*.[60]

On the other hand, there are very strong arguments in favour of treating the prefix conjugation *yiqtol*, not as one form, but two. It is practically uncontested that the multitude of meanings of this form in Biblical Hebrew

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[56] Several examples of this usages can be found in Prov 31 and Isa 44:12-20.

[57] For surveys, see Kustár 1972, 28-29, Gross 1976, 16-17, note 5. Cf. also Waltke & O'Connor 1990, § 33.1.2.b., who comment on Kustár. For a criticism of Ewald's augment-hypothesis, see McFall 1982, 51-54.

[58] Wikander 2010, 263.

[59] See Wikander 2010, 264: "In contrast to the classical use of the simple prefix and suffix forms, it [viz. *wayyiqtol*] seems to have real temporal (or at least "narrative") value."

[60] This principle is witheld e.g. by Brockelmann 1951, Michel 1960, Rundgren 1961, Kuryłowicz 1972, Kustár 1972, Johnson 1979, Isaksson 1987, Gibson 1994, Furuli 2006, van de Sande 2009. The opposite principle, as I said, is ubiquitous. For an explicit argument in favour of treating the consecutives as forms, see Bartelmus 1982, 66-67. Sometimes, presentations of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system can be somewhat ambiguous as to the grammatical status of *wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí*. For example, Rogland (2001), while counting them as "primary members" (p. 9, note 49) of the Biblical verbal system, nevertheless also writes: "As far as the parameters of tense and aspect are concerned, the inverted forms *wayyiqtol* […] and *weqataltí* are treated as syntactic variants for *qatal* and *yiqtol*, respectively" (p. 11).

can be partly explained by assuming that it has a double origin. A long and a short variant of the corresponding form occur in several other Semitic languages, notably in the closely related old Northwest Semitic dialects which are known from the Amarna-letters and from the tablets of Ugarit.[61] The short forms have typically a double jussive/preterite meaning, while the long forms express for instance present and future tense, past progressive and general/habitual meaning.[62]

It is generally assumed that there are some remnants of a similar morphological distinction in Biblical Hebrew , appearing as a quantitative difference in the syllable following the second root consonant of the verb, most consistently in the *hif'il*-stem, but also in the 3rd singular masculine person in the *qal* stem of *verba tertiae he*, *mediae geminatae* and *infirmae*. In this regard, the Hebrew long and short forms are constructed differently as compared to their corresponding forms in e.g. the West Semitic languages and Akkadian, but the functional similarity, especially the characteristic jussive/preterite-split of the short variants, proves beyond doubt at least the typological affinity.[63]

In the light of these diachronic and typological evidence, a reasonable hypothesis for a *synchronic* grammatical analysis is that the prefix conjugation in Biblical Hebrew contains distinct meanings, and that, for the users of that language, context alone was sufficient to tell which of them applied in a given case.[64] In the present study, when referring specifically to either of these hypothetic semantic units, I use the terms (long) *yiqtol* and (short) *yiqtol*, respectively.

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[61] Müller 1988, 164-166; Waltke & O'Connor 1990, §29.4f-j. As for the different functions by the long and short variants in the Canaanite dialects reflected in the Amarna letters, see Moran 2003 [1950], 41-49. In Ugaritic the form/function correspondence is not as easy to prove, since the morphological differences between the forms are mostly not reflected in the consonantal script which is used in the documents. According to Gordon (1955, §13:.32) there are some indications that the long form at times is used as a narrative form. Greenstein (1988, 13-14), on the other hand, has questioned that the short form is used at all as a preterite in Ugaritic. His view is refuted by Smith (1991), 65-67.

[62] The future meaning of the long forms is likely to be the result of an extended usage in which the imperfect meaning of the form is neutralized. Such usages of imperfectives are very comon cross-linguistically; cf. Bybee *et al* 1994, 277.

[63] It is unclear exactly how the Hebrew long and short variants of the prefix conjugation are *morphogically* related to the corresponding variants in the other Semitic languages. According to Müller (1988, 165-166), it is only in the case of the *hif'il* stem of the strong and the geminated verbs that the Biblical Hebrew short from stems directly from an original West Semitic *yaqtul*. In the other cases, he claims, the forms with a short second syllable have developed from the form with long second syllable.

[64] Of course, we have to admit the possibility that there may have been some difference that was overlooked by the Massoretic scribal tradition, for instance a difference in stress, as have been argued by Zevit (1988, 28) and Bloch (2009, 42).

1.6. Summary

The main difficulty with the understanding of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms is to explain their temporal meanings. This study will deal with that problem by exploring the concepts of aspect, linguistic attitude and sequentiality. Explanations that are valid for as much of the Hebrew Bible as possible will be looked for. A distinction is made between semantic (conventional) and pragmatic (situational) meaning. Semantic meanings are contained in semantic units, such as verbal forms, and are extracted from those units through comparison with the usages of the other (syntactically equivalent) units that are contained in the same linguistic system. Pragmatic meanings are meanings that arise by implication from semantic meanings in various contexts. They may confirm or differ from the semantic meanings. The contexts that condition these implications may be called pragmatic units. Pragmatic units can be classified as text-types such as narrative, hortatory discourse, etc. *Wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí* are not treated in this study as semantic units of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system. *Yiqtol* is assumed to be a homonym for the semantic units (short) *yiqtol* and (long) *yiqtol* respectively (insofar the phonological structures are indistinguishable).

2. Comments on the state of research

2.1. Tense, aspect, and modality

Tense values are of course expressed semantically in language by verbal tense forms, but they are also pragmatically implied by forms marked for aspect or modality. Due to their functional overlap, these concepts are often referred to by means of an acronym, most commonly TAM. Opinions differ as to how the TAM-complex is encoded the Biblical Hebrew verbal system. In the following sections I present some proposals for what may be called the tense- (absolute or relative), aspect-, and modal approaches.

2.1.1 Tense

Tense locates events in time in an absolute or a relative sense. In absolute tense the event is located either before (past), simultaneously with (present), or after (future) the moment of speech. In relative tense, events are located in a corresponding manner to a point in time before or after the moment of speech, for example as a future in the past:

> She was about to leave.

The Biblical Hebrew verbal forms were first described as absolute tenses by the Jewish grammarians of the Middle Ages. According to them, the *qatal* was a past tense form and the *yiqtol* a future. The ubiquitous future use of *w^{e}qataltí* and past use of *wayyiqtol* was explained as due to the proclitic *waw*, which allegedly had the function of converting the tense of the form to its opposite – hence the term "*waw* conversive" (Heb. *waw-hahippuq*). The system was complete by featuring the predicative participle *qotel* as a present tense.[65]

With the provision of the conversive *waw*-thesis, the grammarians managed roughly to square the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms with a classical tense system. Nevertheless, for a sceptic it was an easy task to find counterexamples enough to refute the alleged tense values of the forms. Not

[65] McFall 1982, 128.

least the very common use of *yiqtol* with present meaning speaks against its designation as a future.[66] New theories were bound to emerge.

N.W. Schroeder was the first to propose a solution basesd on relative tense. He claimed that there was no conversion of tenses involved in the case of the *waw*-prefigated conjugations, but rather a transposition of perspectives. Thus, the future use of *w^{e}qataltí* meant that the speaker transposed himself mentally to a future vantage point and regarded the event as if they were already past, albeit still future in relation to the time of speech. Conversely, the speaker may also transpose himself to the past and predict an event by means of *wayyiqtol*. The predicted event thereby became future relative to what preceded – hence the designation "futurum relativum".[67] We should notice that this is not what is normally meant by "relative tense". A real future in the past, such as the one in the example, is not future primarily to a preceding event, but to a reference point.[68] Further, a real future in the past does not imply that the event referred to is completed at speech time, which is the case with narrative *wayyiqtol*. That would require a second transposition, by which the speaker and listener returned mentally to the here and now of the speech situation, so that they could view the event as past relative to the time of speech, after first having viewed it as future relative to a past reference point.

This, if anything, is mental acrobatics. Even if it is possible to think it, it is not likely that any language would develop such complicated strategies to express something as simple as past tense. Nevertheless, the introduction of relative points of reference paved the way for a less rigid thinking about how temporal relations could be expressed by Biblical Hebrew verbal forms. Moreover, since comparative Semitic studies made it possible to treat the *wa*-prefigated *yiqtol* as a preterite rather than a future, the approach has become much less far-fetched. Thus, while the advocates of absolute tense today are few and tend to be moderate as to what they claim, several ambitious relative tense-theories have emerged in recent studies.[69]

According to Rüdiger Bartelmus, the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms present a complete relative tense system. The function of the forms is to express *Vorzeit*, *Gleichzeit*, or *Nachzeit* primarily in relation to speech time, secondarily in relation to a past or future point of reference. Interestingly, the place of the future in the past in his model is occupied by *wayyiqtol*, and

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[66] McFall (1982, 20) summarizes his findings from the translation of *yiqtol* in various languages (including English, French and Latin): "There are over 700 examples of it translated by the Past tense; over 3,300 examples as a Present against 5,400 example as a Future."

[67] McFall 1982, 22.

[68] Schroeders theory is perhaps most aptly described as a mixture of a relative tense and a consecutive-theory.

[69] For a moderate proposal for absolute tense, see Blau 1976 § 20.1, who describes *qatal* as "roughly corresponding to the 'past'" and *yiqtol* as "roughly corresponding to the 'future'".

understood in terms of temporal succession, which creates basically the same problem as in Schroeder's model.[70]

Jerzy Kuryłowicz's system is simpler.[71] He holds, that only two values are marked in the Biblical Hebrew verbal system, *viz*. *anteriority* and *simultaneity*. Other functions pertaining to temporality, such as aspect, are only implied (context-conditioned). Further down, I will argue that Kuryłowicz's notions anteriority and simultaneity are implied by the aspectual pair perfective/imperfective rather than the other way around.

Some scholars prefer to see tense in Biblical Hebrew as a discourse level function. Alviero Niccacci relates tense functions to the hierarchical structure of texts (mainline vs. off-line):

> [V]erb forms have *fixed temporal reference* when they are verbal sentences [verb-initial] and/or indicate the mainline of communication On the other hand they have a *relative temporal reference* when they are nominal clauses [verbless or noun-initial] and indicate a subsidiary line of communication.[72]

Recently, Sven-Olof Dahlgren has made use of Niccacci's principle to prove that the Hebrew verbal forms express relative tense.[73] Another discourse-oriented approach to tense is taken by Tal Goldfajn. Her thesis is that tense in classical Biblical Hebrew prose is built up around two temporal "perspectives" (or "set-ups") – one default perspective in which the time of reference is simultaneous with speech time, and another contextually specified perspective with the reference time prior to speech time.[74] As this contains a concept of shifting perspectives from different perspectives, it may be called a relative tense-approach.

It is obvious that relative tense theories give a more precise understanding of how temporality is expressed by the Biblical Hebrew verbs than the *waw*-conversive theory does. But to say that relative tense is what the forms mean is a mistake. Tense, whether "absolute" or "relative", is always relative to a reference point. Hence, to distinguish between relative and absolute tense forms is meaningless unless the relative tense forms imply *another* reference point than the moment of speech. Such is the case in the periphrastic phrase *was about to do* in the above example. Since Biblical Hebrew verbal forms can have *both* the moment of speech and another moment as their reference point, all depending on the context, their own meaning is *neither* absolute nor relative tense.[75] To put it another way, relative tense may be a pragmatic meaning of the forms, but not a semantic. That is also exactly what the

[70] Bartelmus 1982, 71.
[71] See Kuryłowicz 1972; 1973.
[72] Niccacci 1994, 129.
[73] Dahlgren 2008.
[74] Goldfajn 1998, 114.
[75] Cf. Comrie 1985, 58: "Relative tenses thus have the present moment as one of their possible reference points, but this is a problem of interpretation rather than of meaning."

tense-based analyses of Biblical Hebrew prove when they posit tense as a text-level phenomenon.

2.1.2. Aspect

2.1.3. Modality

The temporal implications of modality are often productive in the grammaticalization of various temporal functions. For example, future tense in English may be expressed by auxiliary verbs with dynamic as well as a deontic modal meaning:[76]

> I will finish my dinner.
>
> I shall finish my dinner.

Past habitual or generic events are also commonly expressed by modal phrases in many languages, including English:

> I would finish my dinner.

Such facts have led Beat Zuber to suggest that there is a modal function encoded in the Biblical Hebrew *yiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí*, which puts them in contrast with the indicative forms *qatal* and *wayyiqtol*.[77] In later studies by Joosten and Hatav, the other finite forms plus the predicative participle have been included in the opposition, so that we get an indicative subsystem consisting of *qatal*, *wayyiqtol* and *qotel* versus a modal, which, aside from *yiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí*, also includes the imperative, the jussive, and the cohortative.[78]

The major problem with applying the term modal to *yiqtol* and *w^{e}qatal* is, in my opinion, that it becomes too vague to have any real explanatory power. As for the modal properties of the volitive forms (imperative, jussive, cohortative), they are well defined and always used in their natural function of commands or wishes. But what specific modality is able to generate all the various functions of *yiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí*: directive modalities (instructions and commands), generic statements of all tenses, future, present and past negations (*yiqtol*), questions (*yiqtol*), etc? We must keep in mind that "modality" is only a meta-term, just like "tense"; it needs to be further specified in order to be applicable to linguistic data. In order to prove that a

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[76] "Dynamic" modality expresses the will and other subject-internal factors in an event, "deontic" modality stands for subject-external factors such as obligation or permission. On this terminology, see Palmer 2001, 9.
[77] Zuber 1986, 7-15.
[78] Joosten 1997, 57-58; 2002, 67; Hatav 1997, ch. 4.

future or a past habitual is modal, one has to be able to state the specific kind of modality and to show how the implicatures can be made. This is possible with the above-mentioned English phrases indicating future and past habitual meaning, but it has not been done with *yiqtol* and *w^{e}qatalti*.[79]

2.2. Linguistic attitude (”Sprechhaltung”)

Harald Weinrich is a linguist whose influence within Hebraistics has been considerable. Significant for his theory of the verb is the refusal to credit any of the categories tense, aspect or modality to be primary functions of the verbal forms.[80] Their basic function, he claims, is rather to signal by which attitude (“Haltung”) the listener should receive the utterances in which they occur. The attitudes can be either one of *tension* (“Gespanntheit”) or *relaxation* (“Entspanntheit”).[81] Weinrich links these attitudes to two basic modes of communication: Relaxation characterizes all kinds of *narration* (“Erzählung”), whereas tension accompanies *discussion* (“Besprechen”). The latter is a wide concept that perhaps is most easily described simply as everything that is not narration. When counting the verbal forms that appear in narration and discussion in many languages, Weinrich finds that all verbal forms tend to be used predominantly in either the one or the other text-type. Based on these distributional patterns he divides verbal systems into two groups: *tense group one* for the forms belonging to discussion, and *tense group two* for narrative forms.[82] The division of texts into these two fundamental types forms the basis for Weinrich’s text linguistic method. When scholars such as Schneider, Talstra, Niccacci, and Baayen have applied Weinrich’s text linguistics on Biblical Hebrew, they have taken over the theory of linguistic attitudes without modifications or critical discussion.[83]

In my opinion, the essential point in Weinrich’s thesis is very plausible: Utterances are received with either an attitude of tension or relaxation, and the verbal forms have something to do with it. This is evident in the following list of sentences (plausible contexts are supplied within brackets):

The elephants *are escaping* (right now).

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[79] Hatav (1997, ch. 4) derives all the functions of the forms from *two* sets of mutually exclusive modalities: epistemic vs. deontic and possibiblity vs. necessity.
[80] Weinrich develops ideas from, among others, Benveniste 1959, (see esp. p. 70)., which he makes explicit in the first edition of his *Tempus* (1964, 40).
[81] Weinrich 1977, 33.
[82] Weinrich 1977, 18.
[83] Schneider 2001, Niccacci 1990, Talstra, 1997. Baayen 1997 elaborates on Weinrichs notion linguistic attitude (Baayen’s “focal referential concern”) without applying other parts of Weinrich’s text-linguistic apparatus.

The elephants *have escaped* (right now).

The elephants *escaped* (last year).

The elephants *were escaping* (last year).

In Weinrich's terminology, the forms in the first two utterances belong to tense group one, indicating the tense mode of communication. The third and the fourth indicate a relaxed mode by means of tenses of the second group.

But what about the following:

The elephants *escape* (every year)?

According to Weinrich, the English present belongs to tense group one. But is this utterance likely to evoke the same alarm as the two first ones? Doesn't it rather align with the third and the fourth utterance, in that it allows the listener to remain quite relaxed?

Here it is appropriate to point at some weaknesses in Weinrich's line of arguments. To begin with, he supports the claim that verbal forms do not mark tense by referring to certain special verbal usages often employed in fiction. Thus, authors may narrate a futuristic science fiction story with the past tense forms, or tell about past events by means of present tense forms, etc.[84] However, these phenomena are easily explained within ordinary tense theory as mental transpositions of the deictic centre of the utterances – the temporal relations holding between the (imagined) events and the (imagined) point of reference remain the same as in the normal usages of the tenses.

Further, Weinrich's theses about the linguistic attitudes are debatable, especially at two points. First, it seems questionable to found the claim that the verbal forms mark linguistic attitude on mere statistics – and moreover, statistics that do not substantiate the claim to a hundred percent (cf. above). Second, the same statistics tells us that not only utterances with habitual meaning like the one above, but also texts such as "das Wissenschaftliche Referat" and "der Philosophische Essay" are dominated by tense group one, which forces Weinrich to state that these genres evoke an attitude of tension by listener and speaker. It is hard to see how these kinds of written utterances, being totally detached from the here and now of the speech situation, can fit the characterization of tense communication as Weinrich formulates it:

> In Äußerungen dieser Art ist der Sprecher gespannt und seine Rede geschärft, weil es für ihn um Dinge geht, die ihn unmittelbar betreffen und die daher auch der Hörer im Modus der Betroffenheit aufnehmen soll. Sprecher und Hörer sind engagiert; sie haben zu agieren und zu reagieren.[85]

[84] Weinrich 1977, 45-47.
[85] Weinrich 1977, 36.

I believe our objections to these theses are strong enough as to justify the conclusion that there is no significant correlation between Weinrich's tense groups and the linguistic attitudes tension and relaxation. Even though there is a connection between tense group two and the relaxed attitude, the same goes for some forms belonging to tense group one, such as the English *present tense*. The pragmatic conditions of the here and now of the speech situation and the semantics of the verbal forms seem more pertinent to the phenomenon than the text-types of narration and discussion as defined by Weinrich. However, this does not invalidate the hypothesis that linguistic attitude can be directly signalled by verbal forms.

2.3. Sequentiality

The term "*waw*-conversive" that was used for the proclitic *waw* on the constructions *wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qatalti* was largely abandoned in favour of "*waw*-consecutive" during the nineteenth century. The shift reflects an effort to explain the function of the particle in terms of interclausal relations rather than temporal semantics. The contrast was now between the idea of sequentiality, expressed by the waw-prefigated forms, and the lack thereof in connection with *qatal* and *yiqtol*. The sequential relation was recognized primarily as one of temporal succession, sometimes also implying causality. To illustrate, we borrow some examples from the grammar of Paul Joüon (quoted here in Muraoka's translation). He illustrates the idea of temporal succession with a couple of clauses from Gen. 14:5-7:

> And in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer came [*qatal*] .. and they beat [*wayyiqtol*] the Rephaim .., and they returned [*wayyiqtol*] .. etc.[86]

As for "logical consecution", Joüon provides the following example:

> Why did you say that she was your sister, with the result that I took her [*wayyiqtol*] for my wife?[87]

However, Joüon is also aware of the great many cases where no sequential relation exists, e.g. when a *wayyiqtol* is used to recapitulate a course of events just narrated:

> Thus is it that the field passed into Abraham's possession.[88]

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[86] Joüon/Muraoka 2008, § 118.c.
[87] Gen 12:19. See Joüon/Muraoka 2008, § 118.h.
[88] Heb.: wayyāqom[*wayyiqtol*] haśśādæ l^{e}abrāhām, "The field passed to Abraham". Gen 23:20. Joüon/Muraoka 2008, § 118.i.

It is due to the abundance of examples like these that Joüon is careful not to overstate the case:

> The Waw of the wayyiqtol and the weqataltí expresses a slight idea of **succession**; it is an exaggeration to translate it always by *and then*.[89]

In the face of all the counterexamples, no one could have blamed him if he had stated his reservation against the consecutive theory even clearer. As already mentioned, the *waw* is probably only an ordinary coordinating conjunction, and as for the verbal forms, it has probably never been suggested that there is any "and then"-element inherent in their meaning. Hence, it would not be altogether incorrect to say that, if the *waw*-consecutive theory ever proved anything as regards the semantic meaning of the *waw*-consecutive construction, it would be that it is *not* sequentiality. Nevertheless, Hebraists have stuck with the label "consecutive" as a conventional defining notion, although they often tie it not only to the conjunction but also to the following verb, so that the whole construction is called a consecutive "tense" or "form".

The ideas of the *waw*-consecutive theory have recurred in various guises in several more recent studies. Hatav and Goldfajn, who both employ discourse representation theory (DRT) interpret the idea of temporal sequence in terms of the advancement of "reference time".[90] In a study by Talmy Givón concerned with the effect of *wayyiqtol* and *qatal* on what is called the "flow" of narration, the same concept feature as "continuity".[91] His description is more or less restated by Yoshinobu Endo.[92] In all of the mentioned studies except Givón's, sequentiality is described as marked by the *waw*-prefigated forms.[93] Givón treats sequentiality wholly as a text-level phenomenon and contents himself with stating that there is a strong statistical correlation with *wayyiqtol*.[94]

It should not be denied that the association of *wayyiqtol* and *w^{e}qataltí* with the concept of sequentiality can serve practical purposes, provided that the exceptions to the rule are kept in mind. But from a theoretical point of view, it is inadequate to ascribe the interclausal function of sequentiality either to the *waw*, or to the verbal form, as long as it is not proven that the conjunction in question marks temporal or causal meaning, or that verbs can signify interclausal relations. In the chapters about *continuity*, *conceptual*

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[89] Joüon/Muraoka § 117.d.
[90] Hatav 1997, 56; Goldfajn 1998, 145.
[91] Givón actually posits the opposition *continuity*:*anteriority* (1977, 198), but in his example 32 (p. 201-202) "anteriority" is evidently a too narrow concept and he resorts instead to the more general "non-continuity".
[92] Endo 1996, 28-29, 68, 321.
[93] Whereas Hatav and Goldfajn seem to ascribe the sequence function to the whole construction, Endo ties it specifically to the verbal element (Endo 1996, 67).
[94] Givón 1977, 204.

distance, and *connectivity* [not in this paper] I will make separate analyses of the meanings of the *waw* and the verbal form, and try to explain how they favour sequential clause relations.

Abbreviations

ABH	Archaic Biblical Hebrew
DO	direct object
Heb.	Hebrew
IND	indicative
INF	infinitive
LBH	Late Biblical Hebrew
PRES	present tense
PRET	preterite
SBH	Standard Biblical Hebrew
TAM	tense/aspect/modality

Modern translations of the bible

Bibel 2000	*Bibel 2000: Texterna: Gamla Testamentet, Tillägg Till Gamla Testamentet - De Apokryfa Eller Deuterokano niska Skrifterna, Nya Testamentet: Bibelkommissionens Översättning 1999*. Pocket. Stockholm: Verbum, 1999.
EÜ	*Die Bibel: Stuttgarter Bibel Der Buchmalerei: Die Einheitsübersetzung Mit Meisterwerken Mittelalterlicher Buchkunst*. Stuttgart: Belser, 1996.
KB 17	*Bibeln: Den Heliga Skrift: Gamla Och Nya Testamentets Kanoniska Böcker I Överensstämmelse Med Den Av Konungen År 1917 Gillade Och Stadfästa Översättning en*. Stockholm: Norman, 1977.
KJV	*The Bible: Authorized King James Version: [with Apoc rypha]*. The world's classics. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997.
NRSV	*The Cambridge Annotated Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version: Notes and References*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993.
NJB	*The New Jerusalem Bible*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985.
TOB	*Traduction Œcuménique De La Bible: Comprenant l'Ancien Et Le Nouveau Testament: Traduits Sur Les Textes Originaux Hébreu Et Grec; Avec Introductions, Notes Essentielles Glossaire*. Nouvelle édition revue. Paris: Alliance Biblique Universelle, 1990.

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