HEBREW EXEGESIS I

STUDY NOTES

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

As readers of the Hebrew OT, we must approach the text as it has been preserved for us. Any alteration we might make in the text must be fully supported. Exegesis is the explication of what the text says, not what we wish the text to say. Every interpretation must be rooted and grounded in the Hebrew text. Ultimately, reading the text in translation is not a viable substitute.

> "One who made it his life's work to interpret French literature, but who could only read it in an English translation, would not be taken seriously; yet it is remarkable how many ministers of religion week by week expound a literature that they are unable to read save in translation!"
> — H. H. Rowley, *Expository Times* 74, no. 12 (Sept 1963): 383; cited in Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), 2–3

Exegesis starts with the text and views it within its syntactical, lexical, literary, historical, social/cultural, geographical, and theological contexts. Although the exegesis of the Hebrew text of the OT focuses upon the language, the linguistic factor is not the only factor to be considered. Everyday life differed greatly from our present day Western culture. In the OT, culture changed from one century to another, from one people to another, and from one environment to another—just as it changes within our own setting. Attention must be given to identify the separate context for each passage. So much is unfamiliar to the modern, Western reader: clothing, food, the medium of exchange, local customs, religious observances, and dialects. How did these factors affect the meaning for both writer and recipient? That is the exegete's challenge.

The temptation is to merely catalogue, collate, and arrange information. Exegesis, however, is more than the collection and filing of data—it is interpreting the information. Anyone with a photocopy machine, scissors, and rubber cement can copy, cut, arrange,

and paste quotations from sources and references in the form of a research paper. It takes an exegete to examine, evaluate, assimilate, and interact with the data in a coherent interpretative narrative employing only the most pertinent citations. The interpretative narrative should then be synthesized and applied theologically and pragmatically. When the seminarian's exegetical digests and papers reflect this approach, he has attained the goal of his education: he has become an exegete and an expositor of the Word of God.

It is reported that an old prospector summed up his life in the following words: "I spent five years looking for gold and twenty years looking for my burrow." Striking exegetical gold has about the same ratio. For every nugget the exegete finds, he can expect to spend four hours looking for it. Exegesis is not for the lazy or the quitter. It is a labor of love requiring commitment and perseverance.

Word studies alone will not suffice. Indeed, the over-occupation with word studies is a sign of the laziness and ignorance of the vast majority of what passes for biblical exposition in our times. It tends to be as inaccurate as translation solely by means of a dictionary.

> Just as a sentence is more revealing than a single word, so the examination of a writer's syntax and style is that much more important to a biblical commentator. It is not surprising that fewer books have been written on this subject than on vocabulary, because whereas students of vocabulary can quickly look up lists of words in concordances and indices, in the field of syntax the study is more circuitous. There is no help except in a few selective grammars and monographs, so that the worker really must work his way through all the texts in Greek.
> — Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*
> (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), 2–3

Having decried the over-emphasis on philology or etymology, we must recognize that the choice of individual words was significant to the writers of Scripture. It is legitimate for the exegete to ask, "Why did the writer choose this term as opposed to one of its synonyms?"

> Cicero somewhere has written of the *scientia iuris: res enim sunt parvae, prope in singulis litteris atque interpunctionibus verborum occupatae.** Delete the *prope* and you have a fair description of the matter of textual criticism. Whether Euripides wrote δεῖ or χρῆ in a given passage is hardly of metaphysical import. But we must assume that he made a choice between them. This is sufficient justification for concerning ourselves with the problem. It made a difference to the poet; it should make a difference to us. This planet, I do not doubt, shall never want for people to despise such problems and those who try to resolve them. Such contempt is founded upon the remarkable premise that one who manifests a concern for minutiae must of necessity be both indifferent to and unequal to profound problems. The Greeks, on the contrary, in their simplicity had contrived a word to express this reverence before even the smallest truth; and that word is φιλαλήθεια. The sacred writer speaks not idly when he reminds us that ὁ ἐξουθενῶν τὰ ὀλίγα κατὰ σμικρόν πεσεῖται.**
> — Robert Renehan, *Greek Textual Criticism: A Reader*
> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 134

* "knowledge of law: the matters are indeed small, mainly occupied with individual letters and also the punctuation of words" [WDB]

** "the one despising the little things shall fall because of the insignificant" [WDB]

EXEGETICAL PROCEDURE

Utilize the following steps as a guide in fulfilling both the weekly assignments and the final written assignment for this course. A simpler outline to keep in mind at all times contains three words: **Information, Relationship,** and **Emphasis.**

Dr. Thomas's steps are: (1) Lexical exegesis, (2) Syntactical exegesis, (3) Synthesis and Outline, (4) Resolving of Difficulties, and (5) Re-evaluation. Before these steps he suggests four stages of preparation or observation: (a) historical background, (b) the original language [Greek] text, (c) reviewing English translations, (d) original language [Greek] commentaries, and (e) English commentaries.

① TRANSLATE:
Perform a provisional or preliminary translation of the text.

② OBSERVE:
2.1   Read and reread the text until saturated with it.
2.2   Begin to ask questions about anything and everything in the text. What information does it give?—Who? When? Where? What? How? Why?
2.3   Pay attention to details—be a Sherlock Holmes!

③ IDENTIFY:
3.1   <u>Grammar and syntax</u>.
      3.11   To what is each word, phrase, clause, sentence, and paragraph related? In what way are they related? For what purpose are they related? Make a structural diagram of the contents of the passage in keeping with the relationships revealed in the Hebrew text.
      3.12   Where is the prominence or emphasis? Pay attention to word order and the employment of emphatic words.
3.2   <u>Expression</u>.
      3.21   What is the literary form (genre)? **Resources:** D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., eds., *Cracking Old Testament Codes* (Broadman & Holman, 1995) and Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd ed. (Zondervan, 1993).
      3.22   What literary devices are employed (chiasmus, repetition, inclusio, assonance, parallelism, paronomasia, etc.)? **Resources:** Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, 2nd ed., rev. JSOTSS 26 (Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) and Ethelbert W.

Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (reprint, Baker Books, 1977).

3.23 State the argument and/or the development of the theme in your own words. **Resources:** John Lawlor, "Theology and Art in the Narrative of the Ammonite War (2 Samuel 10–12)," *Grace Theological Journal* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 193–205, and Ernst Wendland, "'The Righteous Live by Their Faith' in a Holy God: Complementary Compositional Forces and Habakkuk's Dialogue with the Lord," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 4 (Dec 1999): 591–628.

3.24 Do a word study for each word crucial to the text. **Resource:** Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Zondervan, 1983), *TWOT*, and *NIDOTTE.*

3.25 What idioms are employed? **Resource:** Weston W. Fields, "The Translation of Biblical Live and Dead Metaphors and Similes and Other Idioms," *Grace Theological Journal* 2, no. 2 (1981): 191–204.

④ EXAMINE:

4.1 <u>The circles of context</u> to determine how the passage fits into each one (immediate context, remote context, and external setting). The external setting is in the ancient near eastern cultural, historical, geographical, political, economic, and spiritual milieu.

4.2 <u>Parallel passages</u> and identify both the similarities and dissimilarities in all areas (especially related to steps 2–7, above).

⑤ SOLVE:

5.1 List all potential solutions for the significant interpretative problems encountered.

5.2 Choose one as the preferred solution and compare its adequacy with all other potential solutions.

⑥ CONSULT:

Check the commentaries for their interpretation.

6.1 Watch for alternative interpretations.

6.2 Note any additional problems which you failed to note during your own study.

6.3 Utilize the commentaries as catalysts for thinking about the text, its teaching, and its application.

⑦ # EVALUATE:

7.1   Be willing to modify and/or refine your conclusions.

7.2   Acknowledge any uncertainties, ambiguities, lack of knowledge, and/or need for additional information. Outline a method of conducting further investigation.

Abbreviated Exegetical Procedure

A simple outline to keep in mind at all times contains three words:

Information
Relationship
Emphasis

NOTE: Prior to candidating for a pastorate, every seminary student should read John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2002), 73–79 (Ch. 11, "Brothers, Let Us Query the Text"), 81–88 (Ch. 12, "Brothers, Bitzer Was a Banker"), 97–104 (Ch. 14, "Brothers, Show Your People Why God Inspired Hard Texts").

TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

Perform a provisional or preliminary translation of the text.

Statements You Might Have Heard about Bible Translation(s)

- **"Reading the Bible in translation is like kissing your bride through a veil."** (Haim Nacham Bialik). This simile describes what normally passes for Bible reading and exposition. For the most part, modern preachers and the people in the pew have accepted their distance from the real text of Scripture.

- **"Traduttori traditori"** = **"Translators (are) traitors."**
  or **"Traduttore traditore"** = **"Translator, traitor."**

- **No translation is inerrant.** Only the original manuscripts themselves were perfect, free of error. They were produced under the direct superintendence of the Holy Spirit. No subsequent copy, edition, or translation has been perfect. Sinful men who are in no way perfect produced them all. John Eliot, a British missionary who worked among the American Indians from 1631 to 1690, involved himself in translating the Bible into one of the Indian languages. He found himself unable to translate the word *lattice* in Judges 5:28. Describing the object as best he could to some Indian friends, Eliot received what he thought was the appropriate translation. Years later Eliot discovered, to his great amusement and consternation, that his rendering of the verse read: "The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the *eel-pot*."

- **Using a translation is like watching a color film on a black and white TV set.** Some of the artistry still comes through, but not enough to be fully cognizant of every detail.

- **Translations are only as good as their textual base.** The text is important in the original languages.

- **Transferring the nuances of one language into another is a challenge containing risks.** The rewards of Bible translation, however, far outweigh the risks entailed.

The Masoretic Hebrew Accents in Translation and Interpretation

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The joints or seams of a text as revealed in the Hebrew must determine the units of thought in the translation.

This observation regarding the joints or seams of a text requires that translators pay close attention to the accents utilized in the Masoretic Text. For accuracy and faithfulness to the text it is very important that the translator and interpreter understand the major accents and that their translation and interpretation reflects the divisions of the text which the accents signal.[1] In the following pages I have listed (in order of importance) only the first five to seven (depending on the category) of the major accents. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*.[2] contains a complete listing of the Masoretic accents.

There are two major categories of Masoretic accents:
- the disjunctive accents and
- the conjunctive accents.

As their names indicate, the first creates disjunction or division and the second creates conjunction or connection. The disjunctive accents are dominant in the Masoretic Text because they are employed to show where the thought is broken or where a pause is taken in the reading. The following lists cover those most significant to the beginning translator of the Hebrew Bible. The reader should note that there is a slight variation in the accents when it comes to the poetic books of Psalms, Job, and Proverbs. With that in mind, I have divided the lists into two sections.

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[1] For a preliminary introduction, see Frederic Clarke Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert: A Student's Guide to the Syntax of Biblical Hebrew* (Ridley Park, PA: Stylus Publishing, 1996), 50–51 (§4).

[2] E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd English ed., trans. and rev. by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 59–62 (§15*e-i*).

ACCENTS IN THE NON-POETIC BOOKS

Disjunctive Accents

1. *Silluq*	2. *'Athnach*	3. *Segolta & Shalsheleth*	4. *Zaqeph*	5. *Tiphchah*	6. *Rebia'*
אֵ	אֵ	אֵ‎ ׀ אֵ	אֵ	אֵ	אֵ

1. *Silluq:* Marking the last tone-syllable of a verse (placed just ahead of the *soph pasuq*).
2. *'Athnach:* Marking the principal division of the verse—the logical mid-point.
3. *Segolta* (like an inverted *segol* above and following the word) and *Shalsheleth* (with *shalsheleth gadol* above the final syllable and the vertical stroke *legarmeh* following the word)*:* Marking a subordinate division before the *'athnach*.
4. *Zaqeph gadol* and *Zaqeph qaton:* The latter is stronger than the former and more frequently employed to indicate the subordinate divisions both before and after the *'athnach*.
5. *Tiphchah:* Marking the subordinate disjunctive just prior to *silluq* and *'athnach*. Sometimes it takes the place of *'athnach*.
6. *Rebia':* Most often this accent marks the quarter points of a verse. Sometimes it identifies a key word or topic for a verse or section of verse. At times it introduces a quotation in dialogue.

Conjunctive Accents

1. *Munach*	2. *Mehuppakh*	3. *Merkha*	4. *Darga*	5. *'Azla*
אֵ	אֵ	אֵ	אֵ	אֵ

1. *Munach:* The strongest conjunctive accent in the Masoretic Text. It is used fairly often in situations involving the construct state (genitive).
2. *Mehuppakh:* The second strongest conjunctive accent.
3. *Merkha* and Double *Merkha:* The third strongest conjunctive accent.
4. *Darga:* The fourth strongest conjunctive accent.
5. *'Azla:* The fifth strongest conjunctive accent.

Let's now examine an example of how these accents work together to provide the reader with a more accurate understanding of the relationships between the different parts of Genesis 3:24. **First**, the verse will be presented as a running text:

וַיְגָרֶשׁ אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיַּשְׁכֵּן מִקֶּדֶם לְגַן־עֵדֶן אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִים וְאֵת לַהַט
הַחֶרֶב הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת לִשְׁמֹר אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים: ס

Second, the verse is then arranged by its two major divisions indicated by the *'athnach*
(the two major accents have been artificially enlarged and enhanced for visibility):

('athnach)   וַיְגָרֶשׁ אֶת־הָאָדָם

וַיַּשְׁכֵּן מִקֶּדֶם לְגַן־עֵדֶן אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִים וְאֵת לַהַט הַחֶרֶב
הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת לִשְׁמֹר אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים:

(silluq)

Note that the first half of the verse is very short as compared to the second half of the
verse. This indicates that the first three words have the same weight as the last fifteen
words. This is consistent with the fact that both halves begin with a *wayyiqtol*. These are
two consecutive imperfects indicating two parts of a sequence of actions. There are no
minor or subordinate accents to be noted in the first half of the verse, so we will move on
to the **third** step: sub-divide the second half according to its major disjunctive accents:

(rebia')   וַיַּשְׁכֵּן מִקֶּדֶם לְגַן־עֵדֶן אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִים

(zaqeph qaton)   וְאֵת לַהַט הַחֶרֶב הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת

(silluq)   לִשְׁמֹר אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים:

Fourth, in a logical diagram the reader can visualize these relationships to show how
they might impact translation, interpretation, and exposition:

A. *wayyiqtol*   וַיְגָרֶשׁ אֶת־הָאָדָם

B. *wayyiqtol*   object #1   וַיַּשְׁכֵּן מִקֶּדֶם לְגַן־עֵדֶן אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִים

                   object #2   וְאֵת לַהַט הַחֶרֶב הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת

      adverbial modifier: **purpose**   לִשְׁמֹר אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים:

Diagram of Genesis 3:24 by Masoretic Accents

'athnach

zaqeph qaton

tiphcha

zaqeph gadol

rebia'

to guard   the way to the tree of life

pashta   *pashta*

He expelled   the man   He stationed east of   *geresh*

the garden of Eden   the cherubs   and the flaming sword   the whirling
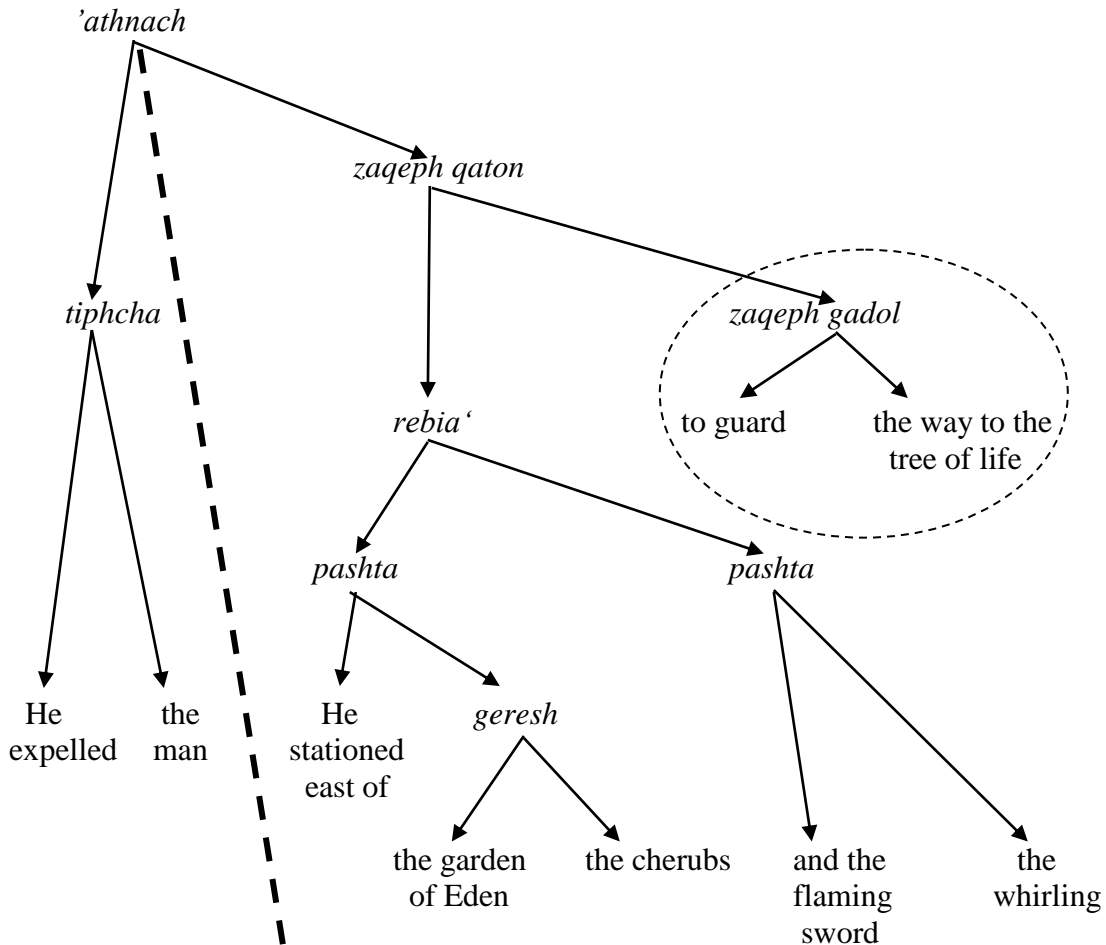
Notes:

- Divisions of the chart are determined by disjunctive accents.
- The two major divisions involve the two consecutive divine actions.
- The purpose clause is placed higher in the hierarchy of accents, making it emphatic and the focus of attention. What Adam had been assigned to do (cf. 2:15), God ended up doing. This is the key expository thought in 3:24.
- The sword is the least important of the elements even though it has a double description. Perhaps the point is that the more significant element (the cherubs) were wielding the sword.
- The writer tied "east" to "stationed" by a conjunctive accent (*telisha qetanna*). That is the key adverbial modifier of the verb—indicating location. The phrase "of [lit., to] the garden of Eden" is put on a par with the direct object ("cherubs") so that it is actually a dative (or, an accusative?) of specification or reference: "east *in regard to* the garden of Eden." Thereby, the direction is not "eastward *in* the garden of Eden," but rather "east *of* the garden of Eden."

Transformational Grammar Tree Diagram

The following diagram is an attempt to illustrate the relationships in the verse grammatically by utilizing a modified form of a transformational grammar tree.[3]
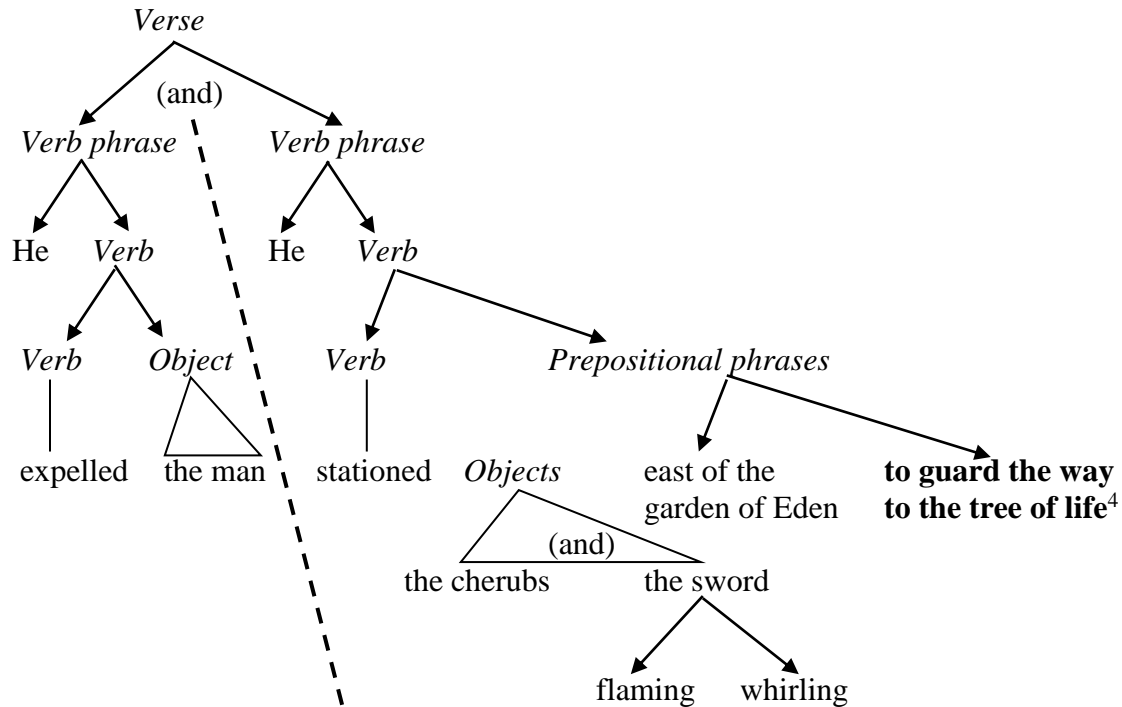
Notes:

- There are two halves to the verse that are co-equal grammatically: the two verb phrases.
- The prepositional phrases modify the second verb. One is a locative adverbial modifier and the other is a purpose clause.
- This English diagram does not reflect the word order and emphasis as well as the accent diagram (see previous page). However, it demonstrates the same logical relationships and grammatical hierarchy.
- The similarities of the transformational grammar diagram and the Hebrew accent diagram demonstrate an accurate understanding of the meaning and the accuracy of the Masoretic accents.

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[3] An excellent introduction to transformational grammar and the use of trees to represent grammatical relationships can be found online: http://encyclopediathefreedictionary.com/transformational%20grammar. Go to the "External links" near the bottom of the page and click on the link entitled "The Syntax of Natural Language," which is an online textbook on transformational grammar.

[4] The transformational grammar tree would be far more detailed for this purpose clause and its constituents. I have shortened the format in order to stay within he bounds of the page and to highlight the fact that the purpose clause is the final clause in the verse and is slightly emphasized by its closing position (thus the bold typeface).

ACCENTS IN THE POETIC BOOKS (תא״ם)[5]

A different set of accents is employed in Psalms, Job, and Proverbs.[6] Those accents are listed in the following two groupings:

Disjunctive Accents (תא״ם)

1. *Silluq*	2. *'Oleh weyored*	3. *'Athnach*	4. *Rebia' gadol*	5. *Rebia' mugrash*
אִ	אֹב	וְ	אֹ	אֹב

1. *Silluq:* Marking the last tone-syllable of a verse (placed just ahead of the *soph pasuq*).
2. *'Oleh weyored:* Marking the principal division of the verse—the logical mid-point.
3. *'Athnach:* Marking the principal division of the second half of a verse when following *'oleh weyored*. In shorter verses, the *'athnach* can be the major disjunctive in the absence of *'oleh weyored*.
4. *Rebia' gadol:* Most often this accent mark the quarter points of a verse. Sometimes it identifies a key word or topic for a verse or section of verse.
5. *Rebia' mugrash:* Marking the next major disjunction.

Conjunctive Accents (תא״ם)

1. *Merkha*	2. *Munach*	3. *'Illuy*	4. *Tarcha*	5. *Galgal*	6. *Mehuppakh*	7. *'Azla*
א	א	אֹ	וְ	א	א	אֹ

1. *Merkha* and Double *Merkha:* The strongest conjunctive accent in the Masoretic Text in Psalms, Job, and Proverbs.
2. *Munach:* The second strongest conjunctive accent.
3. *'Illuy* or *Munach* Superior*:* The third strongest conjunctive accent.
4. *Tarcha:* The fourth strongest conjunctive accent. It is distinguished from *tiphcha* by being under the tone-syllable.
5. *Galgal* or *Yerach:* The fifth strongest conjunctive accent.
6. *Mehuppakh:* The sixth strongest conjunctive accent.
7. *'Azla:* The seventh strongest conjunctive accent.

Now, examine Psalm 1:1 as an example of how the poetic accents work together to provide the reader with a more accurate understanding of grammatical relationships. **First**, present the verse as a running text:[7]

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[5] These are the first letters of the three major poetic books: ת = תהלים (Psalms), א = איוב (Job), and ם = משלי (Proverbs).

[6] Ibid., 61–62 (§15*h-i*).

[7] The Psalms scroll from Qumran's Cave 11 does not have the text arranged in poetic lines like modern editions of the Hebrew Bible, so the running text is an objective place to begin even in poetry.

אַשְׁרֵי־הָאִ֗ישׁ אֲשֶׁ֤ר ׀ לֹ֥א הָלַךְ֮ בַּעֲצַ֪ת רְשָׁ֫עִ֥ים וּבְדֶ֣רֶךְ חַ֭טָּאִים לֹ֥א עָמָ֑ד וּבְמוֹשַׁ֥ב לֵ֝צִ֗ים לֹ֣א יָשָֽׁב׃

Second, arrange the verse by its two major divisions indicated by the *'oleh weyored* (the two major accents have been artificially enlarged and enhanced for visibility):

(*'oleh weyored*)	אַשְׁרֵי־הָאִ֗ישׁ אֲשֶׁ֤ר ׀ לֹ֥א הָלַךְ֮ בַּעֲצַ֪ת רְשָׁ֫עִ֥ים
(*silluq*)	וּבְדֶ֣רֶךְ חַ֭טָּאִים לֹ֥א עָמָ֑ד וּבְמוֹשַׁ֥ב לֵ֝צִ֗ים לֹ֣א יָשָֽׁב׃

Third, arrange the verse by all of its major disjunctive accents:

(*rebia'*)	אַשְׁרֵי־הָאִ֗ישׁ
(*'oleh weyored*)	אֲשֶׁ֤ר ׀ לֹ֥א הָלַךְ֮ בַּעֲצַ֪ת רְשָׁ֫עִ֥ים
(*'athnach*)	וּבְדֶ֣רֶךְ חַ֭טָּאִים לֹ֥א עָמָ֑ד
(*silluq*)	וּבְמוֹשַׁ֥ב לֵ֝צִ֗ים לֹ֣א יָשָֽׁב׃

Fourth, produce a logical diagram based upon these divisions:

Topic or Theme		אַשְׁרֵי־הָאִ֗ישׁ
A. 1st negative	(relative clause)	אֲשֶׁ֤ר ׀ לֹ֥א הָלַךְ֮ בַּעֲצַ֪ת רְשָׁ֫עִ֥ים
B. 2nd negative	(inverse order)	וּבְדֶ֣רֶךְ חַ֭טָּאִים לֹ֥א עָמָ֑ד
3rd negative	(same order)	וּבְמוֹשַׁ֥ב לֵ֝צִ֗ים לֹ֣א יָשָֽׁב׃

Notes:
- The accents indicate that the first negative should remain by itself and be parallel to the other two as a group.
- This helps to explain why a chiastic (inverse) arrangement of phrases is followed in the second negative, but the third negative has the same order as the second. Thus, the indication is that the first negative is the general summary statement and then the next two negatives define it more specifically in two parts in accord with the Hebrew idiom referring to activities outside and inside—a merism.
- Therefore, exegetically and expositionally, the psalmist did not (at least in the opinion of the Masoretes) refer to three separate and equal actions.

Diagram of Psalm 1:1 by Masoretic Accents

‘oleh weyored

rebia‘

Blessed is
the man

tsinnor

’athnach

tiphcha

rebia‘ mugrash

who
does not walk

in the counsel
of the wicked

and in the way
of sinners

does not
stand

and in
the seat
of scorners

does not
sit
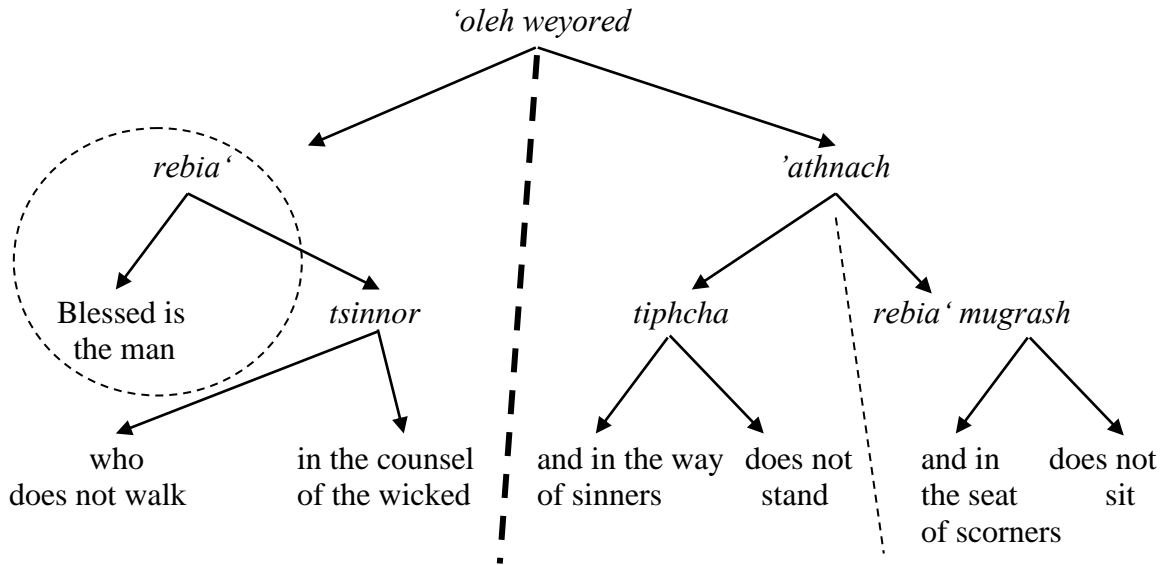
Questions:

- What observations can you make regarding the divisions of the verse based upon the hierarchy of the Masoretic accents?

- Which of these accents were not included in the lists of accents on the preceding pages? What does *Gesenius' Grammar* indicate about their degree of dominance?

- What impact do your observations have on translation, interpretation, and exposition?

Translation Principles

1. **Clear, understandable language ought to have priority over dialectal, literary, or technical language.**

2. **Natural expression ought to have priority over the form.**

3. **Give attention to how acceptable and smooth a public (oral) reading of the text would be.**

The following is from Bruce M. Metzger, "Persistent Problems Confronting Bible Translators," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150, no. 599 (July–Sept 1993): 273–84.

Since the Bible is a source of both information and inspiration, translations must be both accurate and esthetically felicitous. They should be suitable for rapid reading and for detailed study, as well as suitable for reading aloud to large and small groups. Ideally they should be intelligible and even inviting to readers of all ages, of all degrees of education, and of almost all levels of intelligence—all without sacrificing accuracy, in either matter or manner. Besides the several problems already considered as to text, meaning of words, punctuation, and the like, the following are illustrations of some of the more delicate stylistic problems that confront Bible translators.

1. Not only the choice of English words but also the order in which they are arranged often makes a difference in meaning. In the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper, the rendering in the King James Version, "Drink ye all of it" (Matt. 26:27), leaves it uncertain whether Jesus meant all who drink or all of the contents of the cup. Since the Greek text here uses the plural form of the word "all," the English translation should be something like, "Drink from it, all of you."

Although E. J. Goodspeed's translation of the New Testament (1923) usually employs American idioms, here and there one finds curious slips in sentence arrangement. Hebrews 10:1 reads, "The same sacrifices … cannot wholly free those who come to worship from their sins." In Hebrews 9, where Goodspeed uses "chest" and "agreement" in place of "ark" and "covenant," verse 4 reads, "the ark that contained the agreement, entirely covered with gold." The ark, not the covenant, was gold-covered.

The New Revised Standard Version corrects several misleading RSV renderings. Instead of Moses leaving "Pharaoh in hot anger" (Exod. 11:8), it now reads "in hot anger he left Pharaoh," and instead of "Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed in filthy garments" (Zech. 3:3), the NRSV reads, "Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes as he stood before the angel."

2. Translators must pay attention to what can be called the color or tone of their rendering. For example, though the verbs "to dwell" and "to live" are more or less

synonymous, translators need to be sensitive to the context in which one word is more appropriate than the other. Translators generally agree that "dwell" is to be preferred in contexts that speak of God in heaven, such as the traditional rendering of Isaiah 57:15 (which is retained in the **[281/282]** NRSV), "I dwell in the high and holy place." On the other hand the word "live" is certainly more appropriate in matter-of-fact statements, such as "Jabal … the ancestor of those who live in tents" (Gen. 4:20, NRSV), where earlier versions continued with the King James rendering "dwell."

3. Care must be taken in choosing words that are susceptible of being understood in the wrong way. Modern English versions avoid the King James rendering of Matthew 20:17, which says that Jesus "took the twelve apostles apart in the way." Though James Moffatt struck off many happy phrases in his translation, occasionally one finds an ambiguous rendering. The wording in his 1913 translation spoke of two men in one bed (Luke 17:34), but his 1934 revision reads "two men in bed" (i.e., not a double bed). The RSV in 1 Kings 19:21 says of Elisha, "Then he arose and went after Elijah"; this is modified in the NRSV to read, "Then he set out and followed Elijah." The earlier rendering of Psalm 50:9, "I will accept no bull from your house," is altered to read in the NRSV, "I will not accept a bull from your house."

Also under the category of words that can be misunderstood are homophones, that is, words that have the same sound but differ in spelling and meaning, such as "there" and "their." To prevent possible ambiguity during oral reading, the statement "because there God had revealed himself" (Gen. 35:7, RSV) was altered in the NRSV to "Because it was there that God had revealed himself." Another kind of oral ambiguity can arise when one hears Luke 22:35 read aloud: "Did you lack anything?' They said, "'Nothing.'" The NRSV renders the second sentence, "They said, 'No, not a thing'" to prevent hearers from thinking the sentence read, "They said nothing."

4. **Translate the exact meaning of the text while maintaining as much of the wording as possible—but, expand the translation where necessary to convey the exact meaning.**
   "Let their table become a snare before them: and *that which should have bene* for *their* welfare, *let it become* a trap" (Psalm 69:22, original KJV). The italicized words in the King James Version are not for emphasis (a common misunderstanding). The italics indicate that the translators found it necessary to add words in order to make the meaning clear. In this particular example a brief Hebrew text consisting of six words has been expanded into a very different form utilizing twenty-two words (nine of which are additions not found in the Hebrew forms).
   The practice of adding words to clarify meaning in a translation was used by the writer (most likely Mark himself) of the Greek Gospel of Mark in the New Testament: "And he tooke the damosell by the hand, and said vnto her, *Talitha cumi,* which is, being interpreted, Damosell (I say vnto thee) Arise" (Mark 5:41, original KJV). In this case the italicized words indicate, not an addition, but the

use of a foreign language. "*Talitha cumi*" is in Aramaic, the mother tongue of the Palestinians of Jesus's day. The Gospel writer provided his readers with a translation of the phrase into Greek so that non-Aramaic speakers would understand what Jesus had said to the young lady. In doing so, however, Mark added the words "I say unto you" in order to provide the information necessary to make the meaning clear to his readers. Those four English words (two words in the original Greek) were not in the Aramaic statement made by Jesus. The King James translators placed those words in parentheses to indicate that this was an addition in the Greek. Why was it necessary for Mark to add these words? The addition was necessary because the bare repetition of the form from Aramaic to Greek could not convey accurately and faithfully the meaning of the statement. By adding "I say unto you" in his translation, Mark was informing his readers that Jesus had not merely spoken, but had authoritatively commanded.

5. **Contextual consistency takes priority over verbal consistency.**

Who has not had the experience of receiving an indecipherable cable or telegram? If there is a way to foul up a telegram, someone will find a way for to do it—especially international telegrams. "Genevieve suspended for prank" was the original wording for a cable being sent to Russia. When the Russian translation was received and translated back into English, it read: "Genevieve hanged for juvenile delinquency." This is an example of what a dictionary translation can produce.

There is really no distinction between accuracy of meaning and faithfulness of translation. An inaccurate meaning in a translation is unfaithful to the text even though the same number of words and the same forms may have been employed. The study of how languages structure meaning is called semantics. Semantics is not a modern development. The ancient Roman grammarian, Varro, wrote a treatise in which he announced that he had discovered 228 distinct meanings for one Latin word for *good*. In some languages the term (or terms) for *good* would be impossible to use for all 228 of those meanings.

Each context in which a word is used determines its meaning. In Bible translation it is rarely possible to maintain one translation for all occurrences of the same Hebrew or Greek term. A perfect example of this fact is the variety of terms used by English Bibles to translate the Hebrew verb meaning *be holy* or *sanctify*. In the KJV this Hebrew verb is translated by eleven different English verbs. The New International Version (NIV) also uses eleven; the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and Revised Standard Version (RSV) each employ ten. If the meaning is to be accurately conveyed such semantic variety in translation is not optional, it is necessary.

It is well to keep in mind that one verse is not necessarily indicative of the kind of translation employed throughout an entire Bible translation. As a matter of fact, most translations exhibit a number of different types of translation in various passages. The Living Bible is not consistently a paraphrase nor is the KJV consistently literal. In isolated passages the Living Bible is literal and the KJV is paraphrastic. Whenever different individuals or different teams translate different passages, this phenomenon occurs more frequently.

6. **Details of culture (customs, vocations, clothing, foods, and ceremonies), geography (places and features, climate and weather elements), and history (nations, empires, and events) should be retained even if they are not within the audience's range of common knowledge.**

In Matthew 21:33 the householder planted a vineyard and built a tower. Among the Aguaruna Indians of Peru towers are built if they have enemies who are expected to attack. When the enemy approaches the Aguaruna flee from their houses to the protection of the tower which gives them a strategic advantage over the enemy during the ensuing battle.[8] The form is the same as the biblical tower, but the function is different. Translators involved in this kind of correspondence need to consider the viability of using a footnote or modifying by specifying the function: "a tower *for a watchman*" or "a *guard* tower."

The Chontal of Mexico make bread for special fiesta days only. The daily food is the tortilla. How should a translator treat Jesus' statement, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35)? To a Christian in the United States, "I am the tortilla of life" would seem about as serious as "I am the pizza of life." At first blush the form seems different even though the function is the same. The tortilla, however, may be nearer to the kind of bread used in ancient Palestine than the modern loaves of bread with which we are most familiar.

> The large pone or thick, light loaf of the West is unknown in the East. The common oriental cake or loaf is proverbially thin. . . . It is still significantly customary at a Syrian meal to take a piece of such bread and, with the ease and skill of long habit, to fold it over at the end held in the hand so as to make a sort of spoon of it, which then is eaten along with whatever is lifted by it out of the common dish (cf. Mt **26** 23).

In this particular case, therefore, what appears to be a cultural substitution is not. The western understanding is the cultural substitution.

Translators from western cultures must constantly fight against their own misunderstanding of what they read in Scripture. Translators must also be on guard against erroneous teachings which they have received from teachers who ignored or improperly interpreted the Scriptures. An oriental culture will have greater correspondence to biblical culture than western cultures. In Bangladesh the readers of the Bible have an advantage over readers in the United States because their culture has a greater affinity to the biblical cultures. Even in the West less advanced or third world cultures are closer in many respects to biblical cultures than the more advanced industrial cultures.

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[8] Mildred Larson, *A Manual for Problem Solving in Bible Translation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1975), 106. This example from Matt 21:33 and the examples in John 6:35 and 10:12 from Central and South American Indian languages are presented by Larson as problems to be solved by translators. The purpose of her translation manual is to provide an awareness of the types of problems to be encountered, not the solutions to those problems. The principles involved in finding solutions are contained in the companion volume: John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1974). Chapter 13 (191–211) contains an extensive discussion of the handling of lexical equivalence problems. A third volume in this set is Kathleen Callow, *Discourse Considerations in Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1974).

Translators must beware of the intrusion of anachronisms. Such errors can occur any time a post-biblical entity is identified with a biblical entity. Kerosene is not a viable equivalent of olive oil, for example. Such a correspondence does not maintain fidelity to the original historical and cultural setting.

In ancient Palestine the wolf was a peril to the sheep (cf. John 10:12). Tropical areas around the world may not have wolves. Tigers, leopards, and jackals are the forms of wildlife preying upon domesticated animals. Should the translator make a cultural substitution? If the form is necessary to the truth being taught, it is obvious that a cultural substitute should not be made. What if the form is not significant? What if the same meaning and the same truth can be maintained with another form? That is when the problem becomes more sticky. There is not only the problem of historical fidelity, but of symbolic fidelity in the total context of Scripture. **Words having symbolic value within the theological framework of the Bible (such as *the Lamb of God*, *blood*, and *cross*) should be retained.**

As D. A. Carson forcefully argues, one altered word not only violates the symbolic and prophetic consistency of Scripture and the historical context of the Scripture, it can also require a large number of attendant changes:

> Suppose, for instance, a tribe has a long tradition of sacrificing pigs, but has never so much as heard of sheep. Is it in that case justifiable to render John 1:29, "Look, the swine of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"? I would argue strongly in the negative, not only because of the importance of historical particularity . . . but because of the plethora of rich allusions preserved in Scripture across the sweep of salvation history. In what sense does Jesus "fulfill" the Old Testament sacrificial system if that system sacrificed lambs on the Day of Atonement and at Passover, whereas Jesus is portrayed as a swine? How then will John 1:29 relate to Isa. 52:13—53:12, the fourth servant song, or to images of the warrior lamb in the Apocalypse (e.g. Revelation 5:6)? Shall we change *all* such references to "pigs" ("All we like swine have gone astray …")? And if so, do we then make the biblical pig-references clean, and designate some other animal unclean? No; it is surely simpler to preserve "lamb" in the first instance. If this involves inventing a new word, so be it: a brief note could explain that the word refers to an animal frequently sacrificed by the people of the Bible, along with a succinct description of the animal's characteristics.

It would be a matter of misinformation if the translator were to replace Palestine's geographical realities (such as rocky cliffs, sandy deserts, and dry streambeds), climatic realities (such as snow), or vocational realities (such as potters, shepherds, and camel drivers) with another culture's geographical, climatic, or vocational realities. Bangladesh has no deserts and no snow, but it is not accurate translation to convert snow to rain and deserts to jungles. The Bible's cultural, geographical, and historical details must be left intact.

A seemingly harmless replacement of *recline at food* or *recline at table* with *sit down to eat* may produce confusion for the reader. "We are going to have a

tough job imagining how John managed to get his head on Jesus' breast. Preservation of descriptions of what is to us an alien custom, reclining at tables, makes it possible to understand a later action, John placing his head on Jesus' breast."

This problem of cultural, historical, geographical, and climatic elements in the translation of the Scriptures is the point at which the meaning of *idiomatic translation* sometimes takes a perverse turn. The common usage of *idiomatic translation* is often applied to free translation involving cultural substitution. An example would be the substitution of *pig* for *lamb* in a cultural setting where sheep are unknown but pigs are familiar.

As D. A. Carson so eloquently explained, that kind of translation produces some insuperable difficulties because of the intricate unity of Scripture. It could even result in an idiomatic theology freely altering biblical theology forms to fit a culture. Thus, in a society dominated by a particular sinful activity, one might reason that the Bible's condemnation of that sin was solely a cultural matter—perhaps the sinful activity was simply unacceptable to the majority at that time and place. Such reasoning would lead to the ordination of homosexuals to the ministry even though homosexuality is clearly condemned by Scripture. In the Bible there are certain transcultural or universal truths which must not be altered in either form or meaning. Theological integrity is as important to maintain as cultural integrity.

7. **Every effort should be made to reflect the different styles of language found in different parts of Scripture.**

William F. Buckley and his wife Pat had been blissfully married for years when their marital success became a topic in a journalist's interview. Bill waxed eloquent on the "psychic consummation of marriage." Pat, however, merely said, "I guess we just like each other." That is what is called plain speech—plain and simple. The language we speak is often adjusted to fit the situation or the individuals in a situation. The speaker can influence the language choice or even the person being addressed. Speakers adjust their speech in accordance with age, gender, education, socio-economic class, vocation, ethnic background, and many other factors. Technically, the language varieties utilized in different situations are called registers. Commonly, registers are referred to as styles.

Do not ignore the varieties of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek which are to be found in the Bible. This does not mean, however, that the recorded conversations of prostitutes and corrupt public officials should be handled in a vulgar style. **In general, the level of language should be neither too formal nor too casual or slangy.** Such a principle is in harmony with the general tone adopted by the original languages of Scripture. Even when an act of sin or blasphemy was recorded, it was recorded in a fashion proper to divine revelation instructing readers in godly living.

Sample Translations of Various Types:
Psalm 23

Comparing different translations can be a very instructive exercise. Consider the following translations of the familiar and beloved first line of Psalm 23:

Unmodified Literal Translation of the Hebrew
"Jehovah my-shepherding-one, not do-I-lack."

[The original Hebrew uses a mere *four* words: יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר

Literal English Translation
Jerusalem Bible: "Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing."
[*Seven* English words.]

Literal with Modified Divine Title
SBCL:
("*Shodaprobhu* [is] my shepherd, I have no lack.")
[This Bengali translation uses just *six* words.]

Moffatt: "The Eternal shepherds me, I lack for nothing."
Segond (French): "L'Éternel est mon berger: je ne manquerai de rien."
("The Eternal is my shepherd: I do not lack anything.")
Another possible translation: "God is my shepherd, I lack nothing."

Modified Literal (Divine Title and Verb Tense)
KJV: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."
[This standard of English translations uses *nine* words.]

NASB/RSV: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."
NIV: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want."
New English Bible: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall want nothing."
Old Bengali Bible:
("*Shodaprobhu* [is] my shepherd, my lack shall not be.")

Modified Literal (Divine Title, Participle as Verb, and Verb Tense)
Septuagint: Κύριος ποιμαίνει με, καὶ οὐδέν με ὑστερήσει.[9]

("[The] Lord shepherds me, and nothing shall be lacking [for] me.")
Syriac Peshitta: "Moriah tends me and nothing shall be lacking for me."

> Syriac is even more closely related to Aramaic than to Hebrew and is written in a script similar to Arabic. Transliterations of the Hebrew and Syriac texts of Psalm 23:1 demonstrate the similarities:

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[9] *Septuaginta: With morphology* (1979; reprint, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996), Ps 22:1.

Hebrew:	*yhwh*	*r'y*		*l'*	*'hsr*
Syriac:	*mry'*	*nr'yny*	*wmdm l'*	*nhsr*	*ly*

Another possible translation: "God is shepherding me; I will have no lack."

Modified Literal (Divine Title, Participle as Verb, Idiomatic Verb)
Latin from Greek: *Dominus reget*[10] *me et nihil mihi deerit.*
("The Lord will lead me and nothing is lost to me [*or,* I lack nothing].")
Latin from Hebrew: *Dominus pascit me nihil mihi deerit.*
("The Lord leads me to pasture [*or,* feeds me], nothing is lost to me [*or,* I lack nothing].")

Semi-literal with Negative Restructured as Positive
TEV/New Living Bible: "The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need."
Another possibility: "The LORD is my shepherd; there is sufficient supply for me."

Restructured Free Translation
Living Bible: "Because the Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need!"

Free Translation with Cultural Substitution
"God is my swineherd. He sees to it that I have all I need."
"My God is my caretaker. He provides all my needs."

Free Translation = Expanded Paraphrase
"Jehovah [or, Yahweh], the Covenant God of Israel, is continuously leading, feeding, and caring for me; there is not anything that I need which I do not have supplied to me by Him."

Free Translation = Shortened Paraphrase
"God provides everything I need."
"My God takes care of me."

Note on Divine Titles in Translation

Evidence from the Lachish Letters (586 B.C.) indicate that at least until that time the Tetragrammaton was fully pronounced with its own vowels. However, within three centuries the translators of the Greek OT (the Septuagint, circa 250 B.C.) came under the influence of a religious custom observed by the Jews of that time. The modern reader must understand that the Jews in Egypt in those days were not necessarily orthodox in their beliefs. Indeed, if anything, the Jews in Egypt were exceedingly syncretistic in their faith—mixing many pagan idolatrous concepts with the religion of the Old Testament.

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[10] Other manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate have *regit* (present tense) rather than *reget* (future tense). Of the two readings, the former generally is preferred. It is consistent with the Vaticanus Codex's Greek reading (ποιμαινει, present tense), as compared with the reading of Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Sinaiticus (both have ποιμανει, future tense). Also, it is consistent with Jerome's translation from Hebrew (*pascit* is present tense) and with his translation of the second verb in the verse (*deerit* is present tense—even though the Greek of the Septuagint is a future tense).

Yehezkel Kaufmann gave the following description of the beliefs of Jews living at Elephantine, an island in the Nile River, from about 525 B.C. onward:

> The religion of the Jewish garrison of Elephantine as reflected in the Elephantine papyri is an interesting phenomenon in its own right; it must not, however, be viewed as representative of the ancient popular religion of Israel. The garrison was founded before the Persian conquest of Egypt in 525; the Jews of Elephantine had spent over a century isolated in an alien environment by the time of the papyri. No Israelite writing was found among them, although the pagan Ahikar romance was. They had become assimilated linguistically and intermarried with their neighbors. Whatever "idolatry" they brought with them from their native land cannot but have been heightened in these circumstances. In contrast to the Babylonian colony of exiles they had no prophets among them, though they did have priests. Their religion can therefore be used only in a most qualified way to reconstruct the popular religion of Israel in Palestine.
>
> Despite the various pagan god names in the Jewish onomasticon none of the "gods of the nations" after whom biblical Israel strayed (Baal, Ashtoreth, Chemosh, etc.) are worshiped by the Elephantine Jews. The peculiar divine names found in the papyri (Herembethel, Anathbethel, Anathiahu, Ashambethel) are never found in these forms in the Bible. If they were originally Israelite divinities—and this is by no means certain—they can at most have been akin to the satyrs of the popular religion that had no recognized, public cult in Palestine. How they were conceived of in Elephantine we do not know. Only YHWH is described: he is the "Lord" or "God" of heaven. Only he has a temple and festivals. Ashambethel and Anathbethel have a treasury in the temple of YHWH, but only YHWH is represented as a universal God. The minor deities (if so they be) are given a place in his temple apparently as members of his entourage. It is noteworthy that these Jews feel a distinction between their priests, whom they term *kāhanayyā* and the pagan priests, whom they term, in biblical fashion, *kumrayyā*. But it is not only the subordination of the other divine beings in the YHWH temple that testifies to the unique character of YHWH; what is decisive is the complete absence of a mythological conception of him even at Elephantine.[11]

It would seem to be theologically dangerous to adopt the practices of Jews in Egypt with regard to the pronunciation of the divine name.

The Jews refused to pronounce the divine title *Yahweh* because of a misunderstanding of the Third Commandment (Exod 20:7). The custom at that time was to substitute the Hebrew word *Adonai* ("Lord") for *YHWH* (the four consonant letters יהוה in the Hebrew text for *Yahweh*). In the Greek translation *Kurios* ("Lord") was utilized. This departure

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[11] Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel from Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 148–49. This summary of the syncretism among Jews at Elephantine is seconded by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *A History of Israel from the Bronze Age through the Jewish Wars* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 452–53.

from the actual Hebrew text made the translation acceptable to the target audience (Jews in Alexandria, Egypt), to the heretical Jews at Elephantine, and to the polytheistic Egyptian culture in which they resided. However,

> The result seems really to have been a profanation of a different kind. Not to use the name of God seems to profane it just as the coarse use of the Name would have done. But the facts are plain. The ancient Hebrews, naturally, pronounced and wrote the name of God.[12]

Actually, this caused confusion since two different Hebrew names of God (*Yahweh* and *Adonai*) had been translated identically. Later the Syriac Peshitta and the Latin Vulgate followed suit. Readers of these three translations were unable to distinguish between these two significant names of God. English translations continued the practice with one helpful modification: "Lord" (the last three letters set in small capitals) represents *Yahweh* while "Lord" represents *Adonai*. In the public reading of the Scriptures, however, the listener is unable to distinguish between "Lord" and "Lord" since the pronunciations are identical. Modern Jews get around their problem of using *Adonai* for two names by reading *HaShem* ("the Name") for *Yahweh* when they come upon that name in the text of the OT.

Translations representing *Yahweh* by "Lord" are resorting to a cultural substitution. "Lord" could be termed a **dynamic equivalent** because it represents an attempt to produce in the reader an identical response to that of a third century B.C. Jewish reader. In this case the response is a reverential fear of speaking what is considered to be a holy name (*Yahweh*). The ultimate question should be: Did Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and other OT saints likewise refuse to pronounce the divine name of *Yahweh*? Perhaps the later Jews unnecessarily modified the biblical text by their translation.

> The true pronunciation of the name YHWH was never lost. Several early Greek writers of the Christian Church testify that the name was pronounced "Yahweh." This is confirmed, at least for the vowel of the first syllable of the name, by the shorter form Yah, which is sometimes used in poetry (e.g., Ex. 15:2) and the –*yahu* or –*yah* that serves as the final syllable in very many Hebrew names.[13]

The popular hybrid *Jehovah* is derived from a later Christian misunderstanding of the intended purpose of the Masoretic pointing. יְהוָֹה was to represent the vowels for אֲדֹנָי which was to be pronounced instead of יְהוָה. However, those Christians pronounced it *Y^ehowah*, supplying the missing *holem* over the first ה since they had heard it in the Jewish pronunciation, *'Adonai*.

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[12] R. Laird Harris, "The Pronunciation of the Tetragram," in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. by John H. Skilton ([Nutley, NJ]: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1974), 215.

[13] Louis F. Hartman, "God, Names of," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. by Cecil Roth (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), 7:680. For examples of the Christian writers to whom Hartman refers, see Harris, "Pronunciation," 223—they include Theodoret of Cyros and Clement of Alexandria.

The Integration of OT Theology with Bible Translation
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Biblically based theology has no choice but to be wedded to Bible translation. One's theology is heavily dependent upon one's understanding of Scripture in translation whether it is one's own or that of a published version. On the other side of the coin, Bible translation is inextricably linked with theology. As evangelicals we tend to guard ourselves with the dictate that the Scriptures in their original languages are the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. In reality, however, an OT theology teacher must communicate with his students via some form of translation. The students themselves will interact with theological teaching on the basis of the translations with which they are most familiar.

Translation of Scripture must aim for the elucidation of the whole truth and nothing but the truth of the ancient text for the modern reader. The array of translations for any particular text of the OT is like a smorgasbord. Quick-fix, calorie-heavy, junk food translations offering little in the way of exegetical nourishment can be found alongside protein rich translations that are hard to chew and practically impossible for the spiritually immature to digest. Each one contains its own dose of the text's truth. Even in the best of translations, unfortunately, it is rare to find a balanced diet containing the whole truth.

Bible translators are limited by the very nature of the daunting task to which they have committed themselves. They must immerse themselves as deeply as possible into each biblical text mindful that it was produced in a specific cultural and historical context in the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. The problems inherent in recreating these components can be staggering. The text was the product of authorial intentions quite alien to those of the present day. The linguistic features, literary traditions, and cultural contexts are vastly changed and either lacking current vitality or poorly understood—sometimes both.[14]

Bible translation cannot be discussed without touching upon the linguistic distance between the ancient and modern languages. Classical Hebrew is very different from modern American English, Mexican Spanish or Bangladeshi Bengali. That is vexing to the literalist tendencies we possess as evangelicals. In the attempt to close the gap between the ancient text and the present reader, some translations convert the modern receptor language into Hebraistic English or Hebraistic Spanish. However, that approach does not really resolve the distance problem. The resultant translation can end up misrepresenting the original author's meaning and tone. Why is it that, in the vast majority of OT translations into English, the entire OT sounds the same?—tends to be identical in style and manner of expression? It certainly should not be due to the single

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[14] *Pace* Burton Rafel, "Translating Medieval European Poetry," in *The Craft of Translation*, ed. by John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 28.

language factor—viz., that it was penned in classical Hebrew.[15] Just as there are significant differences in the English styles of Walter Kaiser, Eugene Merrill, and Edwin Yamauchi in their respective histories of the OT, there are obvious differences between the Hebrew narrative styles of, for example, Moses and the Chronicler. Such contrasts should be readily apparent to the reader of the Pentateuch and 1 and 2 Chronicles in translation.

On the one hand, an overly idiomatic translation might produce insuperable difficulties by disrupting the intricate unity of Scripture. Such translation could result in an equally idiomatic theology freely altering elements of biblical theology to fit a modern culture. Thus, in a society dominated by a particular sinful activity, one might reason that the Bible's condemnation of that sin was solely a cultural matter—perhaps the activity was simply unacceptable to the majority at that time and place. The converse would indicate that such activity might now be acceptable because of society's current acceptance. Does Scripture embody absolute truth (transcultural or universal truths) that ought to be preserved in either form or meaning? A translation must preserve such truths if it is to maintain theological as well as linguistic and cultural integrity.

On the other hand, an overly literal translation might tend to obscure the meaning to such an extent that the reader either does not understand what it says or comes away with an erroneous conception of what the text means. A simple example might illustrate this point: בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (*the sons of Israel*) in Genesis 42:5 has quite a different meaning than it does in 32:33. The first refers to literal sons (male offspring) while the second refers to a national or ethnic group. The older translations, by employing *the children of Israel*, add a third potential meaning: male and female offspring. The reader who is unfamiliar with the peculiarities of traditional biblical English might misunderstand some of the more vague references in a literal translation. Translating the national or ethnic references as *Israelites* would be much clearer as well as being more accurate with regard to the meaning intended by the Hebrew author.[16] Obviously, a single translation of the phrase is not adequate for the translator committed to accuracy of meaning as opposed to mere replication of form. As in the case of Aquila's Greek translation of the OT, replication of form might indicate more clearly the translation's base, but it would be of use only to those who have an extensive knowledge of classical Hebrew and significant exposure to the technicalities of textual criticism. It is more than foolish to foist such literalism upon the average reader, it smacks of both elitism as well as rebellion against the divine intent that the Scriptures be understood and obeyed (cf. Neh 8; Matt 13:18–23).

In a worst case scenario, a translation might even obscure the truth, thereby limiting or hindering the development of a consistent theology—consistent, that is, with the original text. An examination of various translations of select texts in the Book of

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[15] The author hastens to remind the reader that the OT was written in two languages: Hebrew and Aramaic. Unfortunately, the latter tends to be the ignored child in the biblical language curricula of Bible colleges and seminaries. Since Aramaic is seldom required, students graduate with M.Div. and Th.M. (or their equivalents) without any ability to read Dan 2:4–7:28 in the original language.

[16] The debate over gender-inclusive language in Bible translation is a recent theologically charged example involving the biblical employment of identical phraseology carrying vastly different intended meanings. Cf. D. A. Carson, *The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998); Wayne Grudem, *What's Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations?* (Libertyville, IL: Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 1997).

Genesis reveals the dynamic interaction of translation and theology. For the sake of convenience, the texts will be discussed in their canonical order.

Genesis 12:3

The Mosaic record of Yahweh's pronouncement of blessing through Abraham is a text whose translation has significant theological implications. Depending on the Bible translation one reads, this text might imply a kind of double predestination.[17] Again, its translation might be either a direct or an obscure reference to divinely bestowed blessing upon all peoples. Both issues can affect one's theological summary of the contents and implications of the Abrahamic Covenant. Patrick Miller declared that

> The critical theological place of Gen. xii 1–4a in the book of Genesis and more particularly in the Yahwistic form of the patriarchal narratives has understandably prompted a considerable amount of analysis and interpretation. Much attention has been given to explaining the syntax of the whole, especially the relation of vs. 3b to the preceding verses. The issues in understanding the syntax are not merely superficial, for the meaning of the text is to a large degree uncovered by a careful understanding of the relation of the clauses to each other.[18]

Consider the following translations of verse 3:

NJB: "I shall bless those who bless you, and shall curse those who curse you,
     and all clans on earth will bless themselves by you."

NJPS: "I will bless those who bless you
     And curse him that curses you;
     And all the families of the earth
     Shall bless themselves by you."

REB: "those who bless you, I shall bless;
     those who curse you, I shall curse.
     All the peoples on earth
     will wish to be blessed as you are blessed."

KJV: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and
     in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

NIV: "I will bless those who bless you,
     and whoever curses you I will curse;
     and all peoples on earth
     will be blessed through you."

NLT: "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the
     families of the earth will be blessed through you."

The same translation problem occurs again in Genesis 18:18 and 28:14 with all of

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[17] Double predestination teaches a dual election: an election to salvation and an election to damnation. "Calvin called this a 'horrible decree,' but nevertheless held it because he found it in the Bible. Others say that God actively chooses those who are to receive eternal life, and passes by all the others, leaving them in their self-chosen sins. The effect is the same in both cases, but the latter view assigns the lostness of the nonelect to their own choice of sin rather than to the active decision of God, or to God's choice by omission rather than commission" (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1995], 917–18). See, also, the discussion of reprobation in William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3 vols., Classic Reprint Edition (1888; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1971), 1:419.

[18] Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Syntax and Theology in Genesis XII 3a," *VT* 34, no. 4 (Oct 1984): 472.

the translations seeking to be consistent in all references. Thus, this example helps to illustrate the fact that a translation in one passage might affect the translation of related passages. In this case, it also might affect the translation of the NT quotation of Genesis 12:3 in Acts 3:25 and Galatians 3:8.

Hebrew word order, syntax, and vocabulary are central to the interpretation of the verse: וַאֲבָרֲכָה מְבָרֲכֶיךָ וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמֶה. The word order of the first half of the verse is a chiasm in which each word or phrase is mirrored by an equivalent word or phrase in reverse order:

> **A** *I will bless*
> > **B** *those blessing you*
> > **B'** *the one disdaining you*
> **A'** *I will curse*

The purpose of such a structure is to emphasize the central members. In this particular case the people blessing or cursing Abraham and his descendants are highlighted. That leads naturally into the last part of the verse whose emphasis is again on people: *all the families/clans of the earth*. It is noteworthy that the first **B** element is plural while the second one is singular. This difference in number could imply that "more people will bless Abraham than will maltreat him, and that God desires to bless many and curse few."[19] The chiastic structure might also be considered a convenient and natural means of breaking the chain of four cohortative verbs with *waw* (וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ, *and I will make you*; וַאֲבָרֲכָה, *and I will bless you*; וַאֲגַדְּלָה, *and I will magnify*; וַאֲבָרֲכָה, *and I will bless*) and one imperative with *waw* (וֶהְיֵה, *and let it be*) following the initial imperative (לֶךְ, *go*) of verse 1. The disjunctive clause (וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר, *and the one disdaining you I will curse*) serves to make this concept distinct "so that there can be no confusion between the form and the function of the clause … and the preceding clauses."[20] The result is that the curse is made to appear as though it were not a part of Yahweh's intention:

> God commands Abraham to go out in order to receive a blessing and bring about a stream of blessing in the world. But Yahweh does not command Abraham to go out in order to bring about curse.[21]

Miller applied this interpretation of the Hebrew syntax to a description of God's purpose in blessing Abraham and, through him, the nations: "When Yahweh sent Abram out, it was to bring about blessing, not curse. That is the good report which the Bible transmits to each generation."[22] Having thus related the text to a denial of the doctrine of double predestination, Miller then provides a suggested translation that would be conducive to the reader reaching the same conclusion:

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[19] Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Meaning of* BRK *"To Bless" in the Old Testament*, SBLDS 95 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 33. See, also, Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), 277.

[20] Miller, "Syntax and Theology in Genesis XII 3a," 473.

[21] Ibid., 474.

[22] Ibid., 475.

1   And Yahweh said to Abram:
    "Go from your land, from your kindred, and from your father's house to the land which I will show you,
2   that I may make you a great nation, and bless you, and make your name great that you may effect blessing,
3   and that I may bless the ones blessing you—and should there be one who regards you with contempt I will curse him.
    So, then, all the families of the earth can gain a blessing in you."[23]

Another aspect of the text involves the use of two different Hebrew words for *curse* (translated in the chiasm diagram above as *disdaining* and *curse*). "Traditional English translations fail to bring out the difference between these words, usually translating both 'curse.'"[24] The point of the text seems to be that even if an individual treats Abraham lightly, treats him with contempt, or despises him, the judicial curse of God will be upon him.[25]

One element in the last half of verse 3 is responsible for the most serious variation in translation—the verb וְנִבְרְכוּ (also employed in 18:18 and 28:14). Its form is that of the Nifal stem which might be passive, reflexive, reciprocal, or middle in its grammatical voice. In all four the subject of the verb is also the object of the verb (the recipient of the verb's action). The passive implies an outside agent (*they will be blessed* [*by someone*]), the reflexive makes the subject the agent (*they will bless themselves*),[26] the reciprocal consists of a plural subject that normally participates in mutual action (*they will bless each other*), and the middle in which the subject is affected in some way by the action (*they will acquire blessing for themselves*). The middle voice is somewhat ambiguous because it might speak of either an outside agent (as in the passive) or the subject as agent (as in the reflexive). How can the translator know which usage is involved? Only the context can reveal the usage.

Frankly, this particular context is of little help in resolving the issue. Observing this impasse, translators normally fall back on their knowledge of the rest of Scripture as well as their own theological backgrounds.[27] Some appeal to the alternate form of the concept in 22:18 and 26:4. In these two verses a different form of the Hebrew verb is employed: וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ (Hithpael). The Hithpael is normally a reflexive, so the expected translation would be: *all the nations of the earth will bless themselves through your seed/offspring*. According to Waltke and O'Connor, the Hithpael "historically tends to

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[23] Ibid., 474.

[24] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 276. See, also, Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 264.

[25] In and of itself, this distinction between synonyms for "curse" is theologically significant. Cf. Miller, "Syntax and Theology in Genesis XII 3a," 472–76.

[26] This interpretation is followed by Chisholm in his recent volume on OT exegesis (Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998], 85). Cf., also, Josef Scharbert, "ברך," *TDOT*, 2:296–97.

[27] Cf. Daniel C. Arichea, Jr., "Taking Theology Seriously in the Translation Task," *BT* 33, no. 3 (July 1982): 309. Arichea cites the example of a missionary translator who rejected the reflexive solely on the basis that he believed that it would support the doctrine of universalism.

take on the passive functions"[28] of the Nifal. In other words, both forms may express the passive sense. However, both forms could also express the reflexive sense.[29] Mitchell offers strong arguments supporting the middle voice.[30] Ultimately, however, "grammatical arguments are not decisive."[31]

    Does it make any difference which voice is attributed to the verb in this case? According to Westermann, it makes no difference at all—the Abrahamic blessing still reaches all of earth's peoples.[32] On the other hand, Hamilton ("this is not a point of esoteric grammar"[33]), Speiser ("it is of great consequence theologically"[34]), and Kaiser[35] stress that the voice chosen is extremely significant theologically. As Michael Brown observes, "In point of fact, it is one thing to receive blessing through Abraham's seed (passive or middle sense); it is another thing to desire to be like Abraham's seed (based on the reflexive sense)."[36] Kaiser is quite clear in regard to the theological distinction between the reflexive and passive:

> It would not be a matter of the nations looking over the fence to see what Israel had done and then, in copy-cat fashion, blessing themselves. It would be only by grace, by a gift of God—not by works. This would be the basis for God's blessing humanity in personal salvation.[37]

The Samaritan Pentateuch, Aramaic Targums, Greek Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, Syriac Peshitta and the NT (cf. Acts 3:25 and Gal 3:8)[38] all employ what would be best identified as a passive/middle to translate the Hebrew verb in this passage.

    Why would the Hithpael be employed in Genesis 22:18 and 26:4? Does it possess any exegetical significance? When a reoccurring word or phrase is suddenly altered in any way, the interpreter or translator is obligated to seek a reason for the change.

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[28] Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 395 (§23.6.4a); hereinafter referred to as *IBHS*. Waltke and O'Connor declare that "it is not surprising that the stems are occasionally confounded" (ibid.). This study takes issue with that conclusion for the passages under discussion.

[29] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary*, trans. by John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 151–52.

[30] Mitchell, *The Meaning of* BRK, 31–36. Cf., also, C. A. Keller, "ברך," *TLOT*, 1:274: "Yet the usage of this conjugation—in contrast to the pu. and hitp.—probably emphasizes its specific meaning. It indicates an action completed on the subj., without viewing the subj. itself (hitp.) or another person (pu.) as the author of the action …. *brk* ni. means, then, 'to experience blessing, participate in blessing,' etc. … Gen 12:3b means, then, 'by you shall all the families of the earth gain blessing.'" Unfortunately, the problem is ignored completely by John N. Oswalt, "בָּרַךְ," *TWOT*, 1:132–33.

[31] Michael L. Brown, "ברך," *NIDOTTE*, 1:760.

[32] Ibid., 152. Also, Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 278.

[33] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 374.

[34] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, 2nd ed., AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 86.

[35] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 19–20.

[36] Brown, "ברך," 1:760.

[37] Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 20. The theological significance of the passive is clearly argued by Michael A. Grisanti in his doctoral dissertation: "The Relationship of Israel and the Nations in Isaiah 40–55" (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1993), 296–303.

[38] Cf. Brown, "ברך," 1:760; Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 19–20.

Although grammar alone may not determine which voice (passive, middle, reflexive, or reciprocal) is to be used in translating these five occurrences of ברך, grammar might very well provide an answer for the question regarding the variation between Nifal and Hithpael. In the Hebrew intensive stems (Piel, Pual, and Hithpael) there is the potential for an iterative or plurative meaning.[39] Roots like קבר (*bury*) in the simple stems (Qal and Nifal) maintain a non-iterative or non-plurative meaning especially with singular subjects (cf. קָבַ֤ר אַבְרָהָם֙ אֶת־שָׂרָ֣ה אִשְׁתּ֔וֹ, *Abraham buried his wife Sarah*, Gen 23:19[40]) while taking a plurative meaning in the intensive stems with a plural object (cf. קֻבַּ֣ר אַבְרָהָ֔ם וְשָׂרָ֖ה אִשְׁתּֽוֹ, *Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried*, 25:10).

Interestingly, the Nifal forms of ברך in 12:3, 18:18, and 28:14 are all modified by the preposition ב with a singular pronominal suffix (2ms in 12:3 and 28:14;[41] 3ms in 18:18). The Hithpael forms in 22:18 and 26:4, however, are modified by the preposition בְ with a collective noun (זַרְעֶ֔ךָ, *your seed/offspring*). It would appear that the plurative concept is a viable explanation for the variation in the verbs.[42] When the blessing emphasizes the agency of Abraham the verb is Nifal, but when the agents are the descendants of Abraham the verb is Hithpael—it implies the repetitive nature of the blessing generation after generation. This explanation would negate, to a certain degree, the argument claiming that the use of the Hithpael in 22:18 and 26:4 is driven by its reflexive meaning (which is then imposed upon the Nifal in 12:3, 18:18, and 28:14).[43]

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[39] Cf. Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 26 (Piel, §2.1.4b), 27 (Pual, §2.1.5b). The Hithpael is basically the reflexive of the Piel, thus partaking of the various usages of that stem, including the iterative (Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2 vols., trans. and rev. by T. Muraoka, Subsidia Biblica 14/I–II [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1996], 1:159 [§53*i*]). Cf. Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, 426–29 (§26.1.2), for a fuller discussion of the iterative meaning for Hithpael.

[40] The Qal stem for קבר is utilized throughout Gen 23.

[41] In 28:14 the object of a second ב-phrase is the collective זַרְעֶ֔ךָ (*your seed/offspring*). The second phrase is delayed in the sentence, coming after the object of the verb.

[42] Although this distinction in the patriarchal blessing formula is consistent within the Pentateuch (the Hithpael form of ברך in Deut 29:18 is not a use of this formula), the two occurrences of the formula outside the Pentateuch (Jer 4:2 and Ps 72:17) involve the Hithpael with a 3ms pronominal suffix on ב. These later adaptations of the patriarchal blessing include several significant variations of the earlier original formula (cf. Mitchell, *The Meaning of* BRK, 55–57, 72–73, 94, 103). Mitchell notes the distinctive employment of the Hithpael with בְזַרְעֶ֔ךָ (ibid., 55–56), but does not mention any association with an iterative or plurative meaning for the verb. John H. Sailhamer ("Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1990], 1:114), also concludes that the key is the iterative of the Hithpael employed with the nominal object (as compared to the pronominal object accompanying the Niphal): "the Hithpael [can be read] as iterative when the promise is envisioned with respect to the future 'seed'—the blessing will continue (iterative) to be offered to the nations through the seed of Abraham" (ibid.).

[43] *Contra* Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition*, 85; Scharbert, "ברך," *TDOT*, 2:296–97.

Proposed translation:
> I will bless those who bless you, [Abram]—
> But, should any treat you with contempt, I will curse him.
> [In conclusion,] all of earth's peoples will be blessed through you.

Genesis 15:15

The translation of a phrase in its first occurrence might set the tone for all subsequent occurrences of the phrase or phrases similar to it. Translators sometimes discover that the interpretation which guided them in the first occurrence does not hold up under scrutiny in other contexts. Yahweh's declaration to Abram in Genesis 15:15 consists of a parallelism that would seem to be synonymous:[44]

NASB: "And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age."

NJPS: "As for you,
  You shall go to your fathers in peace;
  You shall be buried at a ripe old age."

NRSV: "As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age."

REB: "You yourself will join your forefathers in peace and be buried at a ripe old age."

NLT: "But you will die in peace, at a ripe old age."

The concept (תָּבוֹא אֶל־אֲבֹתֶיךָ, *you shall go to your fathers*) is to be found also in the phrase *be gathered to his people* (וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל־עַמָּיו; cf. 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:29–33; Num 20:24, 26; 27:13; 31:2; Deut 31:16; 32:50). It is often treated as an idiom or a mere "euphemism for death without clear theological import."[45] There are three different views concerning these phrases: (1) they indicate a belief in immortality,[46] (2) they are mere

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[44] Cf., also, 2 Kgs 22:20/2 Chr 34:28.

[45] Charles L. Feinberg, "אָסַף," *TWOT*, 1:60.

[46] An impressive array of scholars (some of them not so evangelical) hold this position: Ronald B. Allen, "Numbers," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1990), 2:872–73; Robert G. Boling, *Judges: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, AB, 6A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 72; A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, International Theological Library (1904; reprint, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 500; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1978), 99; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3 vols., trans. by James Martin, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 1:263; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 150, 212; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 2 vols. (1942; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 1:485–86, 2:694–95; Gustav Friedrich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. by George E. Day (1883; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1978), 170; James Orr, "Immortality in the Old Testament," in *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1972), 255; Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, "1, 2 Kings," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1988), 4:284; Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 153; Kyle M. Yates, "Genesis," in *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed. by Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 30. In the Berkeley version the translation footnote to Num 20:24 reads, "An intimation of life after death." The Berkeley translation team included Gleason Archer, S. Lewis Johnson, William Sanford LaSor, J. Barton Payne, Samuel J. Schultz,

euphemisms,[47] and (3) they indicate the practice of multiple burial.[48]

Out of the translations quoted above, only NLT employs a rendering that would indicate a euphemistic interpretation (*you will die*). A number of arguments may be made for the immortality view: (1) Abraham had no *fathers* (Gen 15:15) in his grave—only his wife, Sarah (25:8–10).[49] (2) Jacob had no people in Egypt with whom to be buried and had no tomb, yet he *breathed his last, and was gathered to his people* (49:33; cf. v. 29). (3) Aaron was buried alone on Mount Hor near the Edomite border, yet Yahweh said, *Aaron shall be gathered to his people* (Num 20:24). (4) Yahweh also told Moses that he would *be gathered* to his people (Num 27:13), but he was buried in an unidentifiable grave site (Deut 34:6). His body was also a matter of dispute between Satan and Michael (Jude 9).[50] (5) The patriarchs did possess a concept of immortality and a belief that God could resurrect them from the dead (cf. Job 19:25–27; Heb 11:17–19). This was consistent with God referring to Himself as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (cf. Exod 3:6; Mark 12:18–27).[51]

Regardless of the interpretation of such phraseology taken by the Bible translator, it would be the better part of wisdom to avoid employing the NLT's reduction of the phrase. With so many evangelical scholars defending the literality of the phrase and the implications for the OT doctrine of life after death, it would be better to translate the text literally and leave the debate to the commentators and theologians. Perhaps this is one example to which Arichea's warning might apply:

> One should guard against some rather particularistic views, that is, views held only by one or two scholars. Often such views present the eccentricities of scholars rather than serious contributions to the interpretation of a text.[52]

Leaving the text as it is does no damage to any of the interpretive views. NLT's translation purposefully excludes other views, including the majority evangelical interpretation.

Merrill F. Unger, Leon J. Wood, and Martin J. Wyngaarden. While it is virtually certain that there may have been differences of opinion among the translators, the footnote remains.

[47] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., trans. by J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 2:213; Feinberg, "אָסַף," *TWOT*, 1:60; Judah J. Slotki, "Judges," in *Joshua-Judges*, ed. by A. Cohen, rev. by A. J. Rosenberg (London: Soncino, 1987), 170.

[48] John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 2nd ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 88; Eric M. Meyers, "Secondary Burials in Palestine," *Biblical Archaeologist* 33, no. 1 (Feb 1970): 2–29. Cf. I. Cornelius, Andrew E. Hill, and Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., "אסף," *NIDOTTE*, 1: 470; and, Slotki, *Judges*, 170.

[49] A counter-argument would be that there is no evidence that Abraham's "fathers" were believers (cf. Josh 24:2). However, such an argument is invalid since Luke 16:19–31 seems to teach that the unbelieving dead and the believing dead (among whom Abraham is specifically mentioned) were both in the realm of departed spirits, not a family tomb. They were in view of each other and could also communicate.

[50] Eichrodt's counter-argument that the terminology had already become generalized and euphemistic by the time of Abraham (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:213) is conjectural.

[51] Cf. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 99. For a taste of the debate involved with this OT quotation in the NT, see Richard T. Mead, "A Dissenting Opinion about Respect for Context in Old Testament Quotations," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. by G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 153–63 (esp., 160). It would be precarious theologically to explain away a patriarchal belief in immortality on the basis that Jesus employed midrashic interpretation allowing Him to quote the OT out of context or that the early church put these words in His mouth.

[52] Arichea, "Taking Theology Seriously in the Translation Task," 316.

Proposed translation:
> But as for you, you will go to your ancestors in peace; you will be buried at a ripe old age.

Genesis 19:24

Unfortunately, translation can obscure theological details. An example of that kind of problem is to be found in Genesis 19:24. The Hebrew text has וַיהוָה הִמְטִיר עַל־סְדֹם

וְעַל־עֲמֹרָה גָּפְרִית וָאֵשׁ מֵאֵת יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמָיִם: (*Then Yahweh rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah sulfurous fire from Yahweh, from the heavens*). By placing וַיהוָה at the head of the clause, the author emphasized *Yahweh*'s role in the event. As Ross puts it, "The text … simply emphasizes that, whatever means were used, it was the Lord who rained this judgment on them."53 While this is an accurate observation, it is only one part of the overall meaning of this clause. There is a second occurrence of יְהוָה later in the verse: מֵאֵת יְהוָה (*from Yahweh*). Is it a redundant expression in order to extend the emphasis of the first word, or is it the result of Moses' careful attention to a theological detail? Notice what some translations have done with this second reference to Yahweh:

> NJPS: "the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah sulfurous fire from the LORD out of heaven"
> NIV: "Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the LORD out of the heavens."
> KJV: "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven."
> REB: "and the LORD rained down fire and brimstone from the skies on Sodom and Gomorrah"
> NLT: "Then the LORD rained down fire and burning sulfur from the heavens on Sodom and Gomorrah."
> NJB: "Then Yahweh rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire of his own sending."

There are three variations among translations of this verse:

(1) *brimstone and fire / fire and brimstone / fire and burning sulfur / burning sulfur / sulfurous fire*
(2) *heavens / heaven / skies*
(3) *from the LORD out of heaven / from the heavens / of his own sending*

The first of these variations involves the possibility of a nominal hendiadys wherein the first noun of a pair "modifies the second, so that their translation often sounds like a noun with an adjective."54 KJV's and NJB's *brimstone and fire* is a very literal rendering. REB's *fire and brimstone* reorders the two terms to match the normal English idiom. NLT also reorders the terms, but avoids depicting chunks of sulfur falling from the skies by saying that it is *burning sulfur*. A similar concept is conveyed by NIV's use of only *burning sulfur* in an attempt to translate the two nouns as a nominal hendiadys. However, such a translation is not in accord with the principle of Hebrew

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53 Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 362.
54 Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 22 (§1.8.3a).

grammar by which the first term should describe the second, not the reverse. Therefore, the most faithful treatment of the two nouns as a hendiadys is the translation of NJPS: *sulfurous fire*.[55]

The second set of variations reveals the interpretive decision the translators made regarding the meaning of הַשָּׁמַיִם. NIV and NLT opted to translate the Hebrew form very literally and leave the actual meaning up to the readers to determine for themselves. *Heavens* could mean either the sky or the celestial abode of God. REB opted to specify that it was only the *skies* that were intended. Both NJPS and KJV decided to use *heaven* as a way of indicating their preference for the interpretation that Yahweh sent the judgment from His own residence.[56] NJB's translation would also imply that the reference is to the divine residence since it is taken as representative of the Lord Himself.

The third variation in this text is the one under examination. REB, NLT and NJB chose to eliminate the second reference to Yahweh as being a redundant expression. In his commentary on Genesis, Gordon Wenham opts for a similar conclusion but for different reasons. He believes that the "narrator stresses that 'it was from the LORD.'"[57] These translations have obscured the presence of two different persons of the Godhead. If the expression were an intentional redundancy, one would expect to see it used elsewhere in the OT. However, it does not occur elsewhere. This is a unique expression that is clarified by later revelation. The OT reveals that in a number of cases the *Angel* or *Messenger of the LORD* was the immediate agent of judgment (cf. 2 Sam 24:16–17; 2 Kgs 19:35; Ps 35:6–7).[58] Therefore, it is no surprise to the theologian that the same arrangement for judgment might apply in the matter of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Such a verse as Genesis 19:24 would hit at the heart of the aberrant theology of cultic groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses. This text speaks of two persons with the title of Yahweh/Jehovah: one in heaven above and one with a presence nearer to or upon the earth. This is the opinion of a number of theologians. Augustus Hopkins Strong places this text alongside Hosea 1:7 and 2 Timothy 1:18 as examples of passages in which "Jehovah distinguishes himself from Jehovah."[59] James Borland points to the same

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[55] Cf., also, Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 45, 47.

[56] Eichrodt appealed to passages like Gen 19:24 as proof of an early belief that God's dwelling-place is in heaven (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:190).

[57] Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, WBC 2 (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 59. Therefore, Wenham translates the verse as follows: "and the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah: it was from the LORD from the sky" (ibid., 35). This is a legitimate attempt to translate the text as it stands. It takes into account the Masoretic accents dividing the verse. However, the treatment of this final portion of the verse as a noun clause (viz., *it was*) lacks convincing grammatical evidence. Instead, it would be more natural grammatically to take these last two phrases as adverbial prepositional phrases modifying the main verb, *rained*.

[58] See also, Meredith G. Kline, "The Feast of Cover-Over," *JETS* 37, no. 4 (Dec 1994): 498.

[59] Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium Designed for the Use of Theological Students*, 3 vols. in 1 (1907; reprint, Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1967), 318.

distinction of persons in Genesis 19:24.[60] Victor Hamilton argues that the phraseology is not to be "dismissed as a doublet or a gloss."[61] However, in so doing he stops short of mentioning any distinction between divine persons in the passage.

Does this mean that the translators of REB, NLT and NJB are anti-trinitarian? Absolutely not. A theologically insensitive translation does not tell the reader anything about the theological position of the translators. All that the translation indicates is that that particular theological topic was not significantly clear to the translators in this one passage. When evaluating a particular Bible translation, it is irresponsible to stigmatize the translators with a particular theological error or heresy solely on the basis of a single passage's translation. For example, the RSV's translation of Isaiah 7:14 (*a young woman*) does not indicate that the translators took a theological position denying the virgin conception of Jesus Christ. Likewise, the ASV's *every scripture inspired of God* in 2 Timothy 3:16 is no proof that the translators held to a view claiming that only some of the Scriptures are inspired.

Do such translations weaken the evidence supporting a particular doctrine? Yes, but that is not the same as denial of that doctrine. Those doctrines to which we ought to adhere are usually supported in a number of passages throughout the Bible. Any doctrine that relies upon a single text of Scripture is probably not a cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. If that one text is problematic, it is unwise to base a doctrine or practice upon it (e.g., snake handling on the basis of the disputed final verses of the Gospel of Mark).

> **Proposed translation:**
> Then Yahweh rained sulfurous fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah from Yahweh in heaven.
> **or,**
> Then Yahweh rained sulfurous fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah from Yahweh—from heaven itself.

Conclusion

Bible translators must approach every passage of Scripture with reverence and careful attention to detail. The text must not be made to say something that the original author did not intend for it to mean. Translators must not add meaning, nor must they subtract any of the meaning. The goal should be to accurately and fully translate the text into its receptor language. Since the Scriptures ought to be the sole source of theology, their translation is vitally wedded to theologizing. Translation affects theology just as much as

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[60] James A. Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 152. Others who note this same distinction in the text include: David L. Cooper, *The God of Israel*, rev. ed. (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1945), 23; Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 133. Oehler granted that some sort of distinction being made in Gen 19:24 but did not think that, in and of itself, it supported the view of identifying the one manifestation directly with the Logos, the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead.

[61] Hamilton, *Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 46. Westermann is representative of those who think that the repetitive reference to Yahweh is awkward and due to a merging of two different accounts (*Genesis 12–36*, 306).

theology can affect translation. The translator must be keenly aware of the interaction of the two disciplines.[62]

The example of Genesis 12:3 revealed how the Hebrew text's theological implications are not fully exposed by any translation. It is as though the various translators pursued their task unaware of the significance of the text. Some commentators, linguists, and theologians have recognized one or two of the issues, but none of them dealt with all of the issues. Translators dependent upon such commentaries are not helped in their difficult task by the absence of full discussion for such theologically laden passages. This text also demonstrated how important Hebrew syntax is to exegeting, theologizing, and translating the Hebrew. Bible translators need to pursue a high degree of facility in the biblical languages as well as a full study of theology (biblical, systematic, and historical).

The second text, Genesis 15:15, presented an opportunity to see the interaction of archaeology with interpretation—multiple burials in family tombs have caused some to turn an ancient phrase into an old euphemism. The matter is not so readily settled, however, when various contexts are taken into account and the NT testimony is also consulted. Perhaps the translator of such a debated text should avoid locking the translation into a minority viewpoint. No doctrine should be based upon a questionable text. Likewise, the translator of a debated text should not employ a questionable translation to push a minority theological agenda. On the other hand, there might be a time when such a general rule should be violated in order to protect the integrity of the biblical text and its teachings. Such a move, however, should not be made without much exegesis, thought, counsel, and prayer.

The final passage, Genesis 19:24, illustrated the way in which translations can obscure key theological details. It was also a useful springboard to discuss the pitfalls of appealing to what might be perceived as a translational error or indiscretion in order to impugn the theological position of the translators. One translational decision in one text does not make one a heretic.

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[62] Cf. Arichea, "Taking Theology Seriously in the Translation Task," 309–16; and, a brief response to Arichea's article: Michel Bulcke, "Note: The Translator's Theology," *BT* 35, no. 1 (Jan 1984): 134–35. Arichea discusses three factors: "(1) unjustified theologizing by the translator; (2) making translational decisions in the light of one's own theology, and (3) insufficient exegetical follow-through" (Arichea, ibid., 309).

SYNTACTICAL ANALYSIS

- *To what is each word, phrase, clause, sentence, and paragraph related?*
  In what way are they related?
  For what purpose are they related?

- *Make a structural diagram of the contents of the passage in keeping with the relationships revealed in the Hebrew text.*

- *Where is the prominence or emphasis?*
  Pay attention to word order and the employment of emphatic words.

Distinctions Between the Usage of the "Perfect" and "Imperfect"

One of the most misunderstood and debated areas of biblical (or, classical) Hebrew grammar involves the Hebrew verb system. The names "perfect" and "imperfect" are unfortunate. Many Hebraists prefer to refer to these two as simply *qatal* and *yiqtol* (transliterations of the basic ground forms) or as suffix conjugation and prefix conjugation.

Deciding what to call these two categories of verbs, however, is but a very small matter compared to defining their distinctive usages or meanings. In turn, how one defines the distinctions has a great deal to do with how these verbs affect one's translation and interpretation of the text of the Hebrew Bible.

Let's begin with a basic Hebrew grammar tool and progress through the more technical resources to discuss the nature of these two verb forms. First, Gary A. Long, in *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Hebrew*, provides the following description for the "perfective aspect" (= the suffix conjugation or *qatal*):

> The perfective aspect, or perfectivity, views *a situation from the <u>outside</u>, as whole and complete.*[63]

He goes on to further describe the perfective by explaining that it

> expresses the *totality* of the situation, without dividing up its internal temporal structure. The *whole* situation is presented as an undivided whole. The beginning, middle, and end are rolled up into one. . . . it makes no attempt to divide the situation into various phases.[64]

In contrast, consider Long's description of the "imperfective aspect" (= the prefix conjugation or *yiqtol*):

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[63] Gary A. Long, *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Hebrew: Learning Biblical Hebrew Grammatical Concepts through English Grammar* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 92 (all emphases are Long's own).

[64] Ibid., 93 (emphasis is Long's).

> The imperfective aspect, or imperfectivity, views *a situation from the inside. It considers the internal temporal structure of a situation*.[65]

Examples of what imperfectivity might involve in any given context include such things as repeated or habitual situations, situations in progress, and completed situations without a view to result.[66] In other words, in contrast to the suffix conjugation, the prefix conjugation does attempt to divide a situation into various phases (beginning, middle, or end), rather than looking at it as a totality.

Long's distinctions are in general agreement with the more technical discussions of Joüon and Muraoka. They indicate that one of the primary characteristics of the suffix conjugation is that its aspect refers to action that is "unique or instantaneous."[67] In fact, they remind us that "The *unity* of the action can, and sometimes must, be emphasised in our languages."[68] In other words, an accurate understanding of the suffix conjugation should affect the translation of the Hebrew into other languages (English, French, and Japanese being perhaps foremost in Muraoka's mind). It is instructive to consider some of their examples:

Judges 19:30, כָּזֹאת ... לֹא־נִהְיְתָה = "such a thing has *never (not even once)* been done"

Isaiah 66:8, מִי־שָׁמַע כָּזֹאת = "who has *ever* heard?"

In addition, Joüon and Muraoka point out that, by the employment of the suffix conjugation, "all the actions of a series or of a category can be considered in a global way …; thus one can explain the use of qatal in certain cases, especially for truths of experience: שָׁמְרוּ Jer 8.7 *they observe* (after יָדְעָה *it knows*); .."[69]

One must be aware, however, that Joüon and Muraoka point out a number of exceptions to this simplified view of the suffix conjugation.[70] As with any element of biblical Hebrew grammar, there is the potential for exceptions. In some cases, however, it becomes a matter of one's interpretation being imposed upon the grammar in order to find an exception. For example, Muraoka's note points to Job 4:3 (יִסַּרְתָּ רַבִּים *you have instructed many*) as an example of the suffix conjugation indicating multiple actions.[71] While that is a possible explanation, it seems to be more consistent to view it as a statement looking at the totality of the situation rather than looking at frequency.

For the *yiqtol* (prefix conjugation) Joüon and Muraoka state that the aspect may be "unique or repeated, instantaneous or durative."[72] It is in their discussion of stative verbs, however, that they come closest to the kind of values attributed to *qatal* and *yiqtol* that were observed by Long. The suffix conjugation stative verb appears to merit a translation

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[65] Ibid., 94 (emphases are Long's).

[66] Ibid., 95.

[67] Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2:361 (§112*d*).

[68] Ibid. (emphasis is Joüon and Muraoka's).

[69] Ibid.

[70] Joüon and Muraoka tend to categorize *qatal* as a past tense and *yiqtol* as a future tense (2:362, 363, 365 [§§112*f*, *h*, 113*a*]). This tense definition of the Hebrew verb forms is unconvincing and weak.

[71] Ibid., 2:361 (§112*d* note 3).

[72] Ibid., 2:366 (§113*b*).

employing a form of the verb *be* (the static stative) while Joüon and Muraoka present the prefix conjugation overwhelmingly with a translation employing a form of the verb *become* (the dynamic stative).[73] In other words, a stative verb represents a state of *being* (= static stative) in the suffix conjugation, but a state of *becoming* (= dynamic stative) in the prefix conjugation.

Waltke and O'Connor provide a very thorough discussion of the history of the treatment of Hebrew verbs.[74] They conclude that "the basic structure of the system, though it allows for time reference, is aspectual."[75] An interesting result of their detailed analysis is that they offer a view of the *yiqtol* that allows it to be universal in nature:

> it may signify more than a blending of tense and aspect or pure tense; it may also signify either real or unreal moods—the indicative as well as degrees of dubiety and volition. In short: a form that can signify any time, any mood, and imperfective aspect (but not perfective) is not imperfective but non-perfective, "a more than opposite" of the suffix conjugation. (The term "aorist," meaning without limits or boundaries, is not inappropriate.)[76]

For the suffix conjugation Waltke and O'Connor emphasize that "the perfective does not emphasize the completedness of a situation. Earlier researchers commonly erred in characterizing the suffix conjugation as indicating completed action, instead of indicating a *complete* situation."[77] It behooves the careful exegete to be equally distinct and accurate when it comes to the terms "completed" and "complete." They are not identical in meaning when discussing the grammar of Hebrew verbs.

Complexity comes to mind when one attempts to wrestle with a consistent definition for the *qatal* and *yiqtol* forms of the Hebrew verb. This shows up in Waltke and O'Connor's observation that

> The non-perfective prefix conjugation has two major values: to signify either an imperfective situation in past and present time, or a dependent situation. In the latter use, the situation may be dependent on the speaker, the subject, or another situation.[78]

Obviously, context is the 500-pound gorilla in the exegesis of the Hebrew text. Context will consistently be the defining and refining factor if the exegete is sufficiently careful and desirous of as objective an interpretation as possible. In each situation the exegete must first identify the grammar and then ask, "So what? What is the exegetical significance of this form in this passage?" The task of exegesis can easily fall victim to either the extreme of over-simplification or the extreme of over-complexification, but the exercise must be pursued nonetheless.

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[73] Ibid., 2:373 (§113*p*).
[74] Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, 458–78 (§§29.2–29.6).
[75] Ibid., 475 (§29.6a).
[76] Ibid., 476 (§29.6e).
[77] Ibid., 480 (§30.1d) (emphasis is theirs).
[78] Ibid., 502 (§31.1.2a).

How does all of this affect exegesis? Take Genesis 1:5 as an example:

וַיִּקְרָ֨א אֱלֹהִ֤ים ׀ לָאוֹר֙ י֔וֹם וְלַחֹ֖שֶׁךְ קָ֣רָא לָ֑יְלָה וַֽיְהִי־עֶ֥רֶב וַֽיְהִי־בֹ֖קֶר י֥וֹם אֶחָֽד׃

What is the difference between the *wayyiqtol* וַיִּקְרָא (which is still a prefix conjugation,

note the *yiqtol* in its name) and the suffix conjugation קָרָא? The prefix conjugation views the situation of naming as that which is either initiated, progressing, completed (without a view to the result), or some other factor internal to the action. "Then God named the light 'Day'" is an accurate enough translation. Interpretatively, however, the exegete must be aware of the fact that Moses was not making an overall descriptive statement viewing the totality of the situation. However, the latter verb, being a suffix conjugation, does look at the totality of the situation without regard to any internal progress of action.

What does this mean? How does it affect the exegete? The suffix conjugation is used in order to distinguish the action from the sequential narrative framework of *wayyiqtol* verbs. In order to interrupt the chain smoothly, the object (וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ) is placed

first (a non-emphatic use since it is merely interrupting the chain). By looking at the totality of the situation, the second act of naming of the darkness is not made a separate sequential act to the naming of the light. It is a common Hebrew way of making certain that the reader does not attempt to understand two sequential acts, but only one with two parts without regard to any sequence. It does not matter which was named first or even if the two were named separately. Therefore, any expositor attempting to make some preaching point of the order of the naming here is in direct conflict with the actual grammar of the text.

One more example (from Psalm 1:1–2) should help to make these points more lucid:

אַ֥שְֽׁרֵי־הָאִ֗ישׁ אֲשֶׁ֤ר ׀ לֹ֥א הָלַךְ֮ בַּעֲצַ֪ת רְשָׁ֫עִ֥ים וּבְדֶ֣רֶךְ חַ֭טָּאִים לֹ֣א עָמָ֑ד וּבְמוֹשַׁ֥ב
לֵ֝צִ֗ים לֹ֣א יָשָֽׁב׃ כִּ֤י אִ֥ם בְּתוֹרַ֥ת יְהֹוָ֗ה חֶ֫פְצ֥וֹ וּֽבְתוֹרָת֥וֹ יֶהְגֶּ֗ה יוֹמָ֥ם וָלָֽיְלָה׃

Why did the psalmist choose to employ the suffix conjugation for the three negated verbs in verse 1 while employing the prefix conjugation for the verb in verse 2? The suffix

conjugation verbs of verse 1 (לֹא הָלַךְ, לֹא עָמָד, and לֹא יָשָׁב) were intended to make

the reader view the situation as a totality without regard to any phases. This particular insight is consistent with and confirmed by the Masoretic accents.[79] On the other hand, the prefix conjugation verb in verse 2 does draw the reader's attention to the internal nature of the action rather than looking at it from the outside as a whole. Confirmation

comes in the adverbs that follow and modify יֶהְגֶּה. This action is viewed as either

habitual, repetitive, or continual: the godly individual will "habitually (*or* repeatedly *or* continually) meditate day and night." Note how the context is consistent with the identified usage. Biblical Hebrew writers and speakers selected their verb forms on the basis of the context in which each verb form was employed. To do otherwise would

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[79] See "Study Notes," 7–14.

create a dissonance for the reader or hearer. In some cases, such dissonance was purposefully utilized for emphasis or other literary effect.

Elements of Hebrew Grammar
That Are Exegetically and Expositionally Significant

The following list of exegetically and expositionally significant grammatical elements in the Hebrew Bible are those to which the exegete must give attention even in the most cursory approach to the text. These elements are most often the carriers of significant meaning. They must not be ignored. Neglecting their significance can result in misrepresentation of what the text says.

For each of these elements a brief description is presented and then a listing of the most beneficial resources dealing with that element. In some cases (e.g., the cognate infinitive absolute) major Hebraists disagree on the nature of the meaning represented by the grammatical element. However, such disagreement does not lessen the exegetical and expositional significance of that element's use. It merely means that the exegete must be more cautious and careful in how he supports the ultimate result. Remember, the ultimate factor is context. Context can diminish the normal impact of an element on meaning or it can enhance the impact. In a dialogue such matters may have turned on a gesture or vocal emphasis (tone). On the written page, however, such gestures and tones are rarely visible.

1. *Wayyiqtol* and *W^eqatal*

In biblical Hebrew these two forms are primarily found in narrative and prophetic literature, respectively. *Wayyiqtol*, whose dominance in narrative is undisputed, focuses on **sequence of action** and is thus best termed a **consecutive imperfect**. *W^eqatal*, whose domain is that of prophetic literature, focuses on the **logical relationship** of actions and concepts. It is better named as a **correlative perfect**.

Chisholm,[80] 94–103, 119–23, 128–33
GBHS,[81] §§3.5.1, 3.5.2, and 3.5.4
J-M,[82] §§118–120
HBI,[83] §§2.2.1a and 2.2.3
IBHS,[84] §§32–33
Gibson,[85] §§69–83

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[80] Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998).

[81] Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[82] Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2 vols., trans. and rev. by T. Muraoka, Subsidia Biblica 14/I–II (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1996).

[83] Frederic Clarke Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert: A Student's Guide to the Syntax of Biblical Hebrew* (Ridley Park, PA: Stylus Publishing, 1996).

[84] Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990).

[85] J. C. L. Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar—Syntax*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

GKC,[86] §§111–112
Long,[87] 162–76

2. Disjunctive Clause

Clauses or sentences commencing with the conjunction *waw* + non-verb are often called disjunctive clauses. Generally speaking, they can be divided into those that are adversative (expressing contrast, *but*) and those that are explanatory. The latter provide background information that is sometimes best treated as parenthetical material in the text.

Chisholm, 124–28
J-M, §172*a*
HBI, §3.2.2
IBHS, §39.2.3

3. Macrosyntactic וְהָיָה and וַיְהִי

When either of these two Hebrew verb forms initiates a context, they should be examined for macrosyntactic implications. In other words, they are markers introducing a specialized section of the discourse and sometimes will not even be translatable. In such cases, they point to a significant break in the discourse and enables the translator or interpreter to properly outline the text.

Chisholm, 120
J-M, §118*n*
HBI, §§2.2.3b and 3.2.1e
IBHS
GKC, §§111*f-h* and 112*y-z*

4. Modal Verbs (Imperative, Jussive, Cohortative)

Modal verbs are verbs expressing moods other than the indicative (mood of reality). The exegetical significance of such verbs is that they set the tone of a discourse with regard to reality-irreality or emotive qualities. Great care must be taken to allow the context to be the ultimate determining factor since many modal functions are unmarked by any specialized forms.

Chisholm, 103–12
GBHS, §3.3
J-M, §§114, 116, and 163
HBI, §2.2.4

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[86] E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd English ed., trans. and rev. by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910).

[87] Gary A. Long, *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Hebrew: Learning Biblical Hebrew Grammatical Concepts through English Grammar* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002).

IBHS, §§30.5.4, 31.4, 31.5, and 34
Gibson, §§86–87
GKC, §§108–110
Long, 99–115

5. Participle of the Imminent Future

This construction used to be called the *futurum instans*, or instantaneous/immediate future. When it occurs, it speaks of something "about to" happen—on the verge of happening. Its full form is normally הִנֵּה + pronoun (or pronominal suffix) + participle. It does not always occur in its full form, however, and sometimes can be identified only by the context.

Chisholm, 67–68
GBHS, §3.4.3b.3
J-M, §121*e*
HBI, §3.3.3b
IBHS, §37.6f
GKC, §116*p*

6. Participial Usage

Two very special functions of the participle are of great exegetical significance: continuous action and characteristic action. *That horse is eating hay* and *the horse eats hay* illustrate the difference in meaning between the two usages. As with many grammatical elements, the context alone confirms which usage/meaning was intended by the writer.

Chisholm, 67–70
GBHS, §3.4.3
J-M, §121
HBI, §2.2.5
IBHS, §37
Gibson, §§110–113
GKC, §116
Long, 73–79

7. Cognate Infinitive Absolute

This grammatical element is what I have often termed the "CIA twins": the prepositive intensive cognate infinitive absolute (PI CIA) and the postpositive continuative cognate infinitive absolute (PC CIA). "Prepositive" refers to the infinitive absolute coming before the finite form of the same verb root. "Postpositive" refers to the infinitive absolute following the finite form of the same verb root. The exact nature of these two constructions' meanings has been a topic of debate. However, there is much to the view that PI CIA is an emphatic or intensive

representation of the verbal action or state while PC CIA expresses a continual or repetitive action or state.

> Chisholm, 77
> *GBHS*, §3.4.2b
> J-M, §123*d–q*
> *HBI*, §2.2.7a
> *IBHS*, §35.3.1 (Absolute Complement)
> Gibson, §101
> GKC, §113*l-x*

8. Infinitive Construct

   So wide-ranging are the uses of this element of Hebrew grammar that a book could be written on it alone. Even though it is exceedingly complex and has extensive usage in the Hebrew Bible, the student of biblical Hebrew must seek to understand all he can about it. Misunderstanding can lead easily to mistranslation and misinterpretation resulting in misleading exposition. Part of the difficulty is that this form of the Hebrew verb can behave as noun, adjective, or verb and has varying meanings depending upon prepositions attached to it. One example is the highly frequent form לֵאמֹר, which should only rarely be translated.

   > Chisholm, 77–78
   > *GBHS*, §3.4.1
   > J-M, §124
   > *HBI*, §2.2.6
   > *IBHS*, §36
   > Gibson, §§104–109, 119–130
   > GKC, §114

9. Miscellaneous Macrosyntactical Particles (e.g. לָכֵן, כֹּה ,אִם ,וְעַתָּה ,הִנֵּה)

   Rarely does a grammar take the time to identify and discuss the usage of the many particles that have macrosyntactic functions. The student is left to look them up one by one in the lexicon or in the grammars' indexes. They ought not to be neglected, however. Without a proper understanding of these particles and their usage, it is as though the reader of the Hebrew Bible had been denied stereoscopic and color vision.

   > Chisholm, 133
   > *GBHS*, §§4.2, 4.3, and 4.5
   > *HBI*, §3.3
   > *IBHS*, §§39.3.1, 39.3.2, 39.3.4, and 39.3.5
   > Gibson, §§54, 115–116, and 144

10. Extraposition (Nominative Absolute)

Many students of biblical Hebrew have already taken courses of study in biblical Greek. Therefore, the terms "accusative absolute," "nominative absolute," and "genitive absolute" should already be familiar. These constructions consist of nouns that fit outside (thus *extra*position) the sentence, apparently having no effect on the sentence. Although the sentence would still say the same thing and have all of its grammatical elements intact if this word was removed, emphasis would be adversely affected.

> Chisholm, 61
> Gibson, §§149–151
> *GBHS*, §2.1.4
> J-M, §156
> *HBI*, §3.3
> GKC, §143*c*

11. The Accusative Marker אֶת

Biblical Hebrew's accusative marker is a silent marker since it is not a translatable particle. It is distinct from its homonym that acts as a preposition meaning "with." Just because it is untranslatable, however, does not mean that this marker is void of exegetical significance. It is used with exceptional finesse in the Hebrew text to indicate definiteness and focus.

> Chisholm, 76
> J-M, §125*e-j*
> *IBHS*, §10.3
> Gibson, §94
> GKC, §117*a-m*

12. Predicate Adjective

Predicate adjectives are actually ignored by some major Hebrew grammars. Their function appears to be simple and in no need of extensive explanation. However, they are therefore the subjects of much abuse in translation and interpretation. Improperly understood, the predicate adjective can be given too much emphasis or insufficient emphasis, depending on the direction and degree of misunderstanding.

> Chisholm, 67
> *GBHS*, §2.5.2
> *HBI*, §1.7.2
> *IBHS*, §14.3.2
> GKC, §145*r*
> Long, 64–65, 78

The twelve exegetically and expositionally significant grammatical elements given above have been chosen because of the lack of adequate treatment in some grammars and because of the failure of many Hebrew professors to convey their significance. The exegete must pay attention to their existence and their significance if he is to rightly understand the text of the Hebrew Bible.

Many other elements of biblical Hebrew are equally significant (e.g., the construct state, the definite article, apposition, and the factitive verb). However, even the most basic manuals for the student consider these elements in great detail (e.g., Putnam's *Hebrew Bible Insert* on all four of those examples). This section of the syllabus is intended to close part of the gap in the student's knowledge so that he is better prepared to perform accurate and adequate exegesis of the Hebrew text.

Recommended Resources for Hebrew Grammar and Syntax

Andersen, Francis I. *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*. 1974. Reprint, The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1980.

Arnold, Bill T., and John H. Choi. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Gibson, J. C. L. *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar—Syntax*. 4th edition. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994.

Joüon, Paul. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. 2 volumes. Translated and revised by T. Muraoka. Subsidia Biblica 14/I–II. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1996.

Kautzsch, E., ed. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. 2nd English edition. Translated and revised by A. E. Cowley. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.

Lambdin, Thomas O. *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1971.

Muraoka, T. *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985.

Price, James D. *The Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 27. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990.

Putnam, Frederic Clarke, comp. *A Cumulative Index to the Grammar and Syntax of Biblical Hebrew*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996.

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Sawyer, John F. A. *A Modern Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. Stocksfield, Northumberland, UK: Oriel Press, 1976.

Seow, C. L. *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Silzer, Peter James, and Thomas John Finley. *How Biblical Languages Work: A Student's Guide to Learning Hebrew and Greek*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004.

Waltke, Bruce K., and M. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.

Watts, J. Wash. *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1964.

Weingreen, J. *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939.

Williams, Ronald J. *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*. 2nd edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976.

SAMPLE[88] EXEGETICAL NOTES ON GENESIS 2:23–24
by
William D. Barrick

Introduction

This paper will explore the syntactical elements of Genesis 2:23–24 in order to

identify each element with accuracy and to explain each element's exegetical significance

in preparation for expounding the text. Discussion will be kept to a minimum, but not at

the expense of being clear about identifying exegetical significance. The text will be

handled by phrases rather than word-by-word.

Verse 23

וַיֹּאמֶר֮ הָֽאָדָם֒

Wayyiqtol Qal imperfect 3ms (אמר) followed by a definite article + noun ms

(אָדָם). The *wayyiqtol* indicates a sequence of actions in the narrative. This action

follows the preceding *wayyiqtol* (וַיְבִאֶהָ, v. 22). First God brought the woman to Adam

and then he spoke. The focus is on the sequence, not on any characteristic of the action

(such as whether it was continuous, repeated, past, present, ultimate, or initial). There is

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[88] Paper #1 (Syntactical Analysis) should be presented in the way this sample is arranged. Of course, in the context of this syllabus, the format will not be thesis format (e.g., double-spacing of text), so the student must be careful to follow the content of the sample while recognizing the difference in the formatting.

little of exegetical significance other than the sequential relationship within the structure of the narrative.

The noun is the subject of the preceding verb. The use of the article is most likely anaphoric, referring to the individual already introduced and spoken of in the preceding context.[89]

זֹאת הַפַּעַם

Demonstrative pronoun fs followed by a definite article + noun ms (פַּעַם). Without an article (anarthrous) the demonstrative pronoun is used as the subject[90] and points to the woman.

According to Holladay, the meaning of פַּעַם here is "at last."[91] The article is demonstrative (lit., "this time"),[92] which is consistent with the sense of "at last" or "finally." This word is not modified by זֹאת, because זֹאת lacks the article necessary to be attributive.[93]

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[89] Frederic Clarke Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert: A Student's Guide to the Syntax of Biblical Hebrew* (Ridley Park, PA: Stylus Publishing, 1996), 8 (§1.4.3a).

[90] Ibid., 11 (§1.5.2a).

[91] William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 295 (פַּעַם 5).

[92] Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 8 (§1.4.3d); J. C. L. Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar—Syntax*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 28 (§30 *Rem. 2*).

[93] Ibid., 11 (§1.5.2a). Therefore, the implied attributive use of זֹאת in Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 310 (§17.4.2b) is doubtful. Hereafter referred to as *IBHS*.

עֶצֶם מֵעֲצָמַי

Anarthrous noun ms (עֶצֶם) followed by preposition (מִן) + noun mp (עֶצֶם) + 1cs

pronominal suffix (יַ). מִן is employed as an indication of the material or source.[94] The

antecedent of the pronominal suffix is the speaker (הָאָדָם). The genitival relationship

between the noun and pronominal suffix is one of possession.[95]

וּבָשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי

Anarthrous noun ms (בָּשָׂר) followed by preposition (מִן) + noun ms (בָּשָׂר) + 1cs

pronominal suffix (יִ). מִן is employed as an indication of the material or source.[96] The

antecedent of the pronominal suffix is the speaker (הָאָדָם). The combination of these

two phrases (the previous one and this one) expresses the totality of being.[97] In other

words, Adam is identifying the totality of the woman's being with the totality of his

being—which might explain the logical consequence of "one flesh" in the following

verse.

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[94] Holladay, *Lexicon*, 200 (מִן 3).

[95] Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 17 (§1.8.1a(2)); Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, 145 (§9.5.1h).

[96] Holladay, *Lexicon*, 200 (מִן 3).

[97] Ibid., 280 (עֶצֶם).

לְזֹאת יִקָּרֵא

Preposition (לְ) + demonstrative pronoun fs followed by a Nifal imperfect 3ms

(קרא>). The preposition indicates the object of the verb קָרָא.[98] This use is sometimes

referred to as "quasi datival" since it indicates the potential indirect object of a verb of

speaking.[99] This is the second of three uses of זֹאת in Adam's statement.

The use of the Nifal is passive, avoiding the identification of any specific actor or

agent of the action.[100] Using a masculine verb instead of a feminine verb would be

consistent with an impersonal subject.[101] Holladay indicates that it is a naming

phraseology that could be translated "she shall be called" (or, "this one shall be named"),

although it is literally, "'woman' shall be called to her."[102] Therefore, the preposition

above is not translated.

אִשָּׁה

Anarthrous noun fs. As an anarthrous noun, אִשָּׁה is a name in this context as the

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[98] Ibid., 323 (I קָרָא Qal 2).

[99] Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 111–12 (§4.1.10*e*).

[100] Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 23 (§2.1.3a).

[101] Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, 119 (§95 *Rem. 2*); Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, 384 (§23.2.2e).

[102] Holladay, *Lexicon*, 323 (I קָרָא Nifal 3).

object of יִקְרֵא. Therefore, it still refers to a unique or particular person.[103] The reference,

by context, is to the woman God had made in verse 22.

כִּי מֵאִישׁ לֻקֳחָה־זֹּאת:

Causal clause (introduced by כִּי)[104] consisting of a prepositional phrase (מִן +

anarthrous noun ms) modifying a Qal or Pual perfect 3fs verb (<לקח) with a

demonstrative pronoun fs (זֹאת) as the subject of the passive verb. The main problem

with identifying the verb is the absence of the normal doubling-*dagesh* that is found in

intensive stems like Pual. Holladay classifies the form as ether a Pual or a Qal passive.[105]

Regardless of the identification (Qal or Pual), the passive is the primary factor and it

indicates the avoidance of specifying the agent like the Nifal.[106]

מִן is used in the adverbial phrase modifying the verb לֻקֳחָה to indicate the source

of the woman (vividly described in verse 22). אִישׁ is anarthrous like the previous אִשָּׁה,

perhaps to emphasize the conceptual reference involved in the naming. Such an

anarthrous noun could also be taken as a generic referring to male-kind in general without

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[103] Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 8 (§1.4.2b).
[104] Ibid., 47 (§3.3.5).
[105] Holladay, *Lexicon*, 179 (לקח Pual). See, also, Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, 373–76 (§22.6); and, Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 23 (§2.1.2).
[106] Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 23 (§2.1.3a).

intending to specify *the* man from who the woman had been taken. Some Hebrew nouns do not require an article because they are inherently definite.[107]

The suffix conjugation verb is employed here because the situation is being looked at as a whole or in its totality without regard to the progress of the action or any of its constituent parts.[108] In other words, Moses is not referring to the initiation, progress, or completion of the action, nor is he intending for the reader to visualize exactly how it was done with respect to any potential series of actions (surgical or otherwise).

The third and final use of the demonstrative pronoun זֹאת indicates its special place in Adam's declaration. Its triple use is an ascending crescendo of emphasis in Adam's enthusiastic and joyful declaration: "*Wow!* At last! This one—this one—yes, Lord, **this one!**"

Verse 24

עַל־כֵּן

Compound particle (preposition + adverb). This particle normally links two clauses with a causal link and introduces a statement of effect.[109] Exegetically, therefore, verse 23 is the cause and verse 24 is the effect or consequence. In the greater context of this passage, the clause thus introduced concludes an episode of the narrative.[110]

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[107] Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, 25 (§29).

[108] Gary A. Long, *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Hebrew: Learning Biblical Hebrew Grammatical Concepts through English Grammar* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 92–93.

[109] Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 136 (§4.2.10*b*) and 122 (§4.1.16*d*).

[110] Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 133.

יַעֲזָב־אִישׁ

Qal imperfect 3ms (עזב>) + anarthrous noun ms (אִישׁ). The prefix conjugation of

the verb looks at the situation internally with regard to things like frequentative, habitual,

continual, initial, progressive, or concluding action. By context, it appears that the

concept here is nearer to habitual or a characteristic present in the sense of stating the

normal rule.[111] This sense appears to be confirmed by the normal usage of the compound

particle עַל־כֵּן in a statement of effect or consequence. Therefore, this should not be

interpreted as a statement of obligation or command, but as a description of the typical

situation.

אִישׁ is the subject of the verb. It is anarthrous because it is truly indefinite,

referring to each individual male.[112]

אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ

Accusative marker + noun ms with 3ms pronominal suffix followed by the simple

conjunction + accusative marker + noun fs with 3ms pronominal suffix. This is the

compound direct object of the verb יַעֲזָב. The accusative markers normally indicate that

the object nouns are definite (even if the article or pronominal suffix is absent). In this

context it does not appear that the accusative markers have any special focusing or

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[111] Ibid., 91 (4).
[112] Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 7 (§1.4.1a).

specifying function.[113] Both nouns are definite due to the pronominal suffixes attached to

them.[114] The antecedent to the pronominal suffixes is אִישׁ. The genitival relationship

between the nouns and the pronominal suffixes is that of personal relationship or

kinship.[115]

וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ

W^eqatal Qal perfect 3ms (<דבק) followed by preposition (בְּ) + noun fs (אִשָּׁה) +

3ms pronominal suffix (וֹ). *W^eqatal* is a correlative perfect used objectively following a

characteristic *yiqtol* lead verb (יַעֲזָב). It conveys the same concept of a characteristic

present by context.[116] However, the distinction of the suffix conjugation is that the

"cleaving" is viewed by the writer as a complete situation without reference to any

differentiating of phases in the action described.[117] The opinion that there is a "secondary

idea of purpose, i.e. in order to cleave"[118] is not supported clearly by context nor

grammar.

The בְּ preposition normally follows דָּבַק,[119] modifying it adverbially to specify the

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[113] Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, 116 (§94).

[114] Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 10 (§1.5.1b(1)).

[115] Ibid., 18 (§1.8.1a(4)); Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, 145 (§9.5.1i).

[116] Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, 93 (§75); Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, 527 (§32.2.1d).

[117] Long, *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Hebrew*, 92–93.

[118] E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd English ed., trans. and rev. by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 332 (§112*m*). Hereafter referred to as GKC.

[119] Holladay, *Lexicon*, 66 (דבק Qal 1).

location or limitation of the action of cleaving: "to his wife." The antecedent of the

pronominal suffix is אִישׁ. The genitival relationship between the noun and the

pronominal suffix expresses personal relationship or kinship.[120]

וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד:

W^{e}qatal Qal perfect 3cp (<היה) followed by preposition (לְ) + anarthrous noun ms

(בָּשָׂר) + anarthrous adjective (אֶחָד). *W^{e}qatal* is a correlative perfect used objectively

following a preceding characteristic *w^{e}qatal* (וְדָבַק) and the lead verb יַעֲזָב (a *yiqtol*) and

conveys the same concept of a characteristic present by context. The distinction of the

suffix conjugation here is determined by the stative verb (היה) being followed by the לְ

preposition, which signals that it describes a state of *becoming*).[121] In Genesis 1:29 and

2:7 the same preposition follows היה with the meanings "serve as" and "become,"[122] but

both employ the prefix conjugation as a dynamic stative.

בָּשָׂר is anarthrous to indicate something generic rather than specific. The following

cardinal number is likewise anarthrous, indicating an attributive adjectival relationship to

the preceding noun.[123]

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[120] Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 18 (§1.8.1a(4)); Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, 145 (§9.5.1i).

[121] Holladay, *Lexicon*, 78–79 (היה Qal 7).

[122] Ibid.

[123] Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 15 (§1.6.1c) and 15–16 (§1.7.1).

Summary or Conclusion

      Hebrew poetry makes its appearance in verse 23 as a dramatic means for focusing

on Adam's declaration. The triple use of זֹאת is an ascending crescendo of emphasis in

Adam's enthusiastic and joyful declaration: "*Wow!* At last! This one—this one—yes,

Lord, **this one!**" In exposition, this exuberance must be highlighted, preserved, and

applied.

      Verse 24 presents the consequence of verse 23. This verse's verbs and their

constructions are vital to an accurate understanding of the leaving and the cleaving that

define the marital relationship at its first institution. The primary emphasis is on the

typical. God did not state it as an obligation or command. The verse focuses on what

characterizes biblical marriage as instituted by God.

27:3	– 2.1.4c	6:10	– 3.3.5d	13:2	– 1.3.2
29:46	– 2.1.7c	6:17	– 2.2.7a	16:23	– 2.1.3c
34:12	– 3.3.9	7:7	– 1.4.3i	17:4	– 1.1.2b
34:23	– 1.1.1c	10:9	– 3.1.1c	17:13	– 3.3.8
36:13	– 2.2.1a	13:3	– 2.2.4a	19:7	– 2.3.2
40:35	– 2.2.6c	17:16	– 1.2.7	19:28	– 2.2.3d

Leviticus

		20:5	– 2.2.4b	20:9	– 1.5.4a
2:1,3	– 1.4.3a	22:23	– 1.8.2b	20:18	– 2.1.1a
4:7	– 3.2.2c	23:10	– 2.1.3c	**Ruth**	
11:4	– 1.4.3h	25:9	– 2.3.1	1:1	– 1.4.1a
13:36	– 3.1.1b	27:6	– 2.4.2c		– 3.2.1e
13:59	– 2.1.4a	28:36	– 2.2.4b	1:2	– 3.1.1d
18:5	– 3.1.1a	28:54	– 1.7.4b	1:3–4,7	– 1.6.1d
20:4	– 2.2.6c	28:56	– 1.7.3	1:6	– 1.5.1a
24:22	– 1.6.1c	30:6	– 3.3.7	1:10	– 1.3.1
26:3	– 3.3.1	30:18	– 1.4.3d	1:12	– 3.3.5f

Numbers

		30:19	– 1.1.3c	1:14	– 3.2.2b
1:1	– 1.3.1	30:20	– 1.5.2d	1:17	– 3.3.5c
3:50	– 1.6.1b	33:6	– 2.2.4b	2:2	– 2.2.4a
5:18	– 2.2.2a	**Joshua**		2:3	– 2.2.3a
9:20	– 1.8.2e	1:1	– 1.8.1a		– 2.2.3d
10:11	– 1.6.2	2:10	– 2.2.6a	2:5	– 1.5.3a
11:5	– 2.2.1c		– 3.3.2a	2:6	– 2.1.3a
11:12	– 1.4.3h	3:7	– 1.5.1b		– 2.2.5a
11:33	– 2.4.2b		– 2.1.4a	2:13	– 1.6.1c
12:1–2	– 1.3.1a	3:12	– 1.8.2g	2:17	– 1.8.2d
14:31	– 1.1.1b	5:13	– 3.3.1a	3:3	– 2.1.3c
17:2	– 2.1.1b	7:1	– 2.2.3c		– 2.2.1a
20:11	– 1.1.2b	10:24	– 1.4.3g	3:6	– 2.4.2a
20:12	– 3.3.6	22:6	– 2.1.1a	3:8	– 3.3.3c
23:11	– 2.2.7a	22:34	– 3.1.1c	3:10	– 2.2.1d
23:17	– 1.5.3b	24:9	– 2.1.4a	3:16	– 1.5.3a
24:10	– 1.5.2e	24:15	– 1.5.3a	4:14	– 3.1.1b
27:14	– 3.3.4c	**Judges**		**1 Samuel**	
35:28	– 2.2.2b	1:27	– 2.2.6c	1:2	– 1.6.1c

Deuteronomy

		2:4	– 2.3.4		– 3.2.2b
1:3	– 1.6.2	2:20	– 3.3.6	2:3	– 2.3.2
1:15	– 1.5.1b	3:7	– 1.1.1c	2:34	– 1.6.1c
1:21	– 3.3.4a		– 2.1.1a	3:1–3	– 3.2.2a
2:22	– 1.4.3h	3:19	– 1.4.3f	3:6	– 1.5.1b
2:30	– 2.3.1	5:3	– 2.3.1		– 2.3.2
3:21	– 1.4.3g	6:36	– 3.3.1	3:7	– 3.2.2a
4:39	– 3.1.1c	7:5	– 1.4.3h	3:11	– 3.3.3b
4:41	– 1.6.1	9:5	– 1.4.3i	3:14	– 3.3.1b
5:5	– 2.2.6b	11:5	– 2.1.3c	3:19	– 3.2.2a
5:12	– 2.2.7b	11:9	– 1.5.1a	3:35	– 3.3.5c
6:2	– 2.2.6c	11:12	– 1.5.3b	6:18	– 1.8.1c

8:5	– 2.2.1c
	– 3.3.8
8:6	– 2.2.1b
10:4	– 2.1.1a
10:25	– 1.4.3b
12:2	– 1.1.3c
	– 2.3.1
12:8	– 3.3.4b
12:22	– 1.7.1
16:18	– 1.8.1
16:20	– 1.8.1c
16:23	– 1.4.3b
	– 1.71
17:58	– 1.4.3h
18:17	– 1.7.4b
19:6	– 3.3.1d
19:13	– 1.1.3d
20:5	– 2.1.3c
20:39	– 3.2.2a
20:42	– 3.3.2b
21:10	– 1.8.1a
23:19	– 2.1.6a
25:3	– 1.8.1c
25:19	– 3.3.3b

2 Samuel
2:5	– 1.5.4a
5:11	– 1.8.1c
6:23	– 3.2.2a
10:1	– 2.2.3b
11:20	– 3.3.2a
12:31	– 2.4.2a
14:21	– 1.1.1a
18:23	– 2.2.4c
19:1	– 1.5.3a
19:4	– 2.8.1c
20:6	– 3.3.8
20:12	– 2.1.7b

1 Kings
1:21	– 3.3.1c
2:21	– 2.1.2
2:38	– 1.7.2
3:16	– 2.2.2a
3:19	– 3.3.2b
5:7	– 2.2.2a
5:11	– 2.1.1b
8:6	– 1.4.1b
8:37	– 3.3.5e

11:15	– 2.1.4b
11:31a	– 2.4.1a
11:31b	– 2.4.1a
11:33	– 2.4.1b
12:34	– 2.1.1a
14:8	– 2.1.6c
16:24	– 1.8.2a
18:15	– 3.3.5c
18:17	– 1.5.2c
18:26	– 1.4.3f
18:35	– 3.3.5h
18:38	– 2.2.3a
18:39	– 3.1.1c
19:9,13	– 1.5.3b
21:13	– 1.8.2h

2 Kings
2:9	– 2.2.2a
4:1	– 1.6.1c
4:9	– 1.7.1
5:10	– 2.2.7b
5:12	– 2.2.2b
11:16	– 1.1.2a
16:17	– 1.8.2d
18:9	– 1.6.2
18:28	– 2.3.1
21:18	– 2.1.3
21:26	– 2.1.3
24:7	– 1.8.1c

1 Chronicles
12:40	– 1.6.1
29:17	– 1.4.3g
22:6	– 2.1.6b
26:18	– 2.1.5a
29:15	– 2.1.4a

Job
1:1	– 1.1.1a
1:5	– 2.2.2a
4:16	– 1.8.3a
11:5	– 1.5.3a
20:7	– 1.5.1b
24:10	– 2.1.4b
42:5	– 2.2.1e

Psalms
| 2:2 | – 1.4.3j |
| 121:2 | – 1.3.2 |

Proverbs
| 1:1 | – 1.1.1c |

3:31	– 2.2.2b
11:22	– 3.4
12:1	– 1.4.1c
13:7	– 2.1.6a
13:18	– 2.1.5a
14:2	– 1.5.5a
14:16	– 2.2.1c
14:35	– 2.1.7d
15:3	– 1.7.3
15:16	– 3.1.3a
15:23	– 1.5.3b
16:23	– 2.2.2a
16:32	– 1.7.4a
20:2	– 1.8.1b
21:9	– 2.2.6d
21:13	– 2.2.5c
22:21	– 1.8.2c
29:19	– 2.1.3c
31:1	– 1.8.1a
31:29	– 1.7.1

Ecclesiastes
1:2	– 1.8.1c
1:3	– 1.5.3b
4:1	– 1.5.1b
7:24	– 1.8.2f
8:10	– 2.1.6b

Song of Songs
| 1:1 | – 1.8.1c |

Isaiah
5:13	– 1.3.1c
6:2	– 1.1.2a
7:4	– 2.1.7c
9:1	– 1.8.1d
9:8	– 1.3.1c
10:15	– 2.1.6a
12:1	– 2.2.4b
13:1	– 1.8.1c
22:13	– 2.2.7b
29:23	– 2.1.7c
37:22	– 1.2.3b
37:30	– 1.4.3d
38:18	– 1.8.1b
40:2	– 1.2.3b
40:6	– 3.1.1d
40:7	– 3.1.1d
42:23	– 1.5.2a
53:4	– 1.8.1a

53:5	– 1.8.1b	5:17	– 1.5.2b	Jonah	
55:8	– 1.8.1a	Hosea		1:3	– 3.2.1a
Jeremiah		2:18	– 3.2.1e	1:5	– 1.1.1d
1:2	– 1.8.1a	9:14	– 1.2.3a	1:11	– 2.3.2
1:12	– 2.2.6c	12:1	– 1.1.3d	4:9	– 1.7.4b
5:21	– 1.5.1b	Ezekiel		4:10	– 1.5.4b
7:4	– 1.8.1a	14:8	– 2.1.7b	Micah	
11:18	– 2.1.7c	33:22	– 2.1.3a	2:12	– 1.8.2h
12:3	– 1.8.1c	42:13	– 1.7.2	7:4	– 1.5.1b
14:10	– 2.4.1a	45:13	– 1.5.2a	7:6	– 2.1.4a
16:7	– 1.8.1b	Joel		Habakkuk	
18:2	– 2.1.7c	2:11	– 2.1.3b	2:20	– 1.8.1c
19:14	– 1.5.4b	Amos		3:7	– 1.1.3b
22:24	– 3.3.5c	1:1	– 1.1.2b	Zechariah	
26:21	– 2.3.4		– 1.4.3c	1:12	– 1.5.2e
27:3	– 2.2.5a	1:11	– 1.5.1b	7:5	– 1.5.1b
30:2	– 2.2.4c	Obadiah		9:9	– 1.1.3f
38:14	– 1.4.2b	4	– 2.1.7c		
Lamentations		10	– 1.8.1b		

DIAGRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HEBREW TEXT

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LOGICAL/BLOCK DIAGRAMMING RULES

1. **Adjectives:** Do not subordinate adjectives to the nouns they modify (1 Sam 16:14):

<div dir="rtl">

וּבִעֲתַתּוּ רוּחַ־רָעָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה

</div>

Note: If מֵאֵת יְהוָה is understood as being adverbial rather than adjectival,
it would be subordinated to וּבִעֲתַתּוּ as in #2, below.

Exception: Note that the following set of adjectival phrases deserve
separate diagrammatical representation (1 Sam 16:12):

<div dir="rtl">

וְהוּא אַדְמוֹנִי

עִם־יְפֵה עֵינַיִם

וְטוֹב רֹאִי

</div>

2. **Adverbial phrases:** Prepositional phrases should be subordinated to the verbs they modify as adverbial phrases (1 Sam 16:1):

<div dir="rtl">

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה

אֶל־שְׁמוּאֵל

</div>

3. **Apposition:** Watch for appositional words or phrases. Use ↔ to indicate apposition (Gen 37:2):

<div dir="rtl">

אֶת־בְּנֵי בִלְהָה

וְאֶת־בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה

נְשֵׁי אָבִיו ↔

</div>

Note: In this case a vertical line is utilized in an attempt to visualize that the apposition is to both בִלְהָה and זִלְפָּה. Technically, the governing nouns (בְּנֵי) of the two construct chains are the grammatical focus ("with the **sons** of"), but the appositional phrase ("his father's wives") is clearly descriptive of the proper names ("Bilhah" and "Zilpah") governed by the construct nouns.

4. **Chiasm:** Visualize chiasm (Isa 5:7):

A	כִּי כֶרֶם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
B	בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
B ′	וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה
A ′	נְטַע שַׁעֲשׁוּעָיו

5. **Construct chains:** Do not divide construct chains (1 Sam 16:4):

וַיֶּחֶרְדוּ זִקְנֵי הָעִיר

6. **Direct discourse:** Separate direct speech so that their structure is not confused with or included in the narrative structure. It will be best to utilize a box or separate columns or color coding (Gen 37:8):

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו

> הֲ מָלֹךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ
> אִם־מָשׁוֹל תִּמְשֹׁל בָּנוּ

וַיּוֹסִפוּ עוֹד שְׂנֹא אֹתוֹ
עַל־חֲלֹמֹתָיו
וְעַל־דְּבָרָיו׃

Note: The interrogative-ה is separated from the infinitive construct only to visualize the parallelism it has with אִם and to allow for the visual juxtaposition of the prepositive intensive cognate infinitive absolutes (PI CIA) in each of the two lines.

7. **Direct objects:** Do not subordinate direct objects (1 Sam 16:9; 16:3, respectively):

וַיַּעֲבֵר יִשַׁי שַׁמָּה

וְאָנֹכִי אוֹדִיעֲךָ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־תַּעֲשֶׂה

8. **Macrosyntactical markers:** Watch for macrosyntactical markers that commence new sections (1 Sam 16:6):

וַיְהִי בְּבוֹאָם וַיַּרְא

9. **Plays on word:** Attempt to represent visually significant plays on words (Isa 5:7):

$$\text{וַיְקַו} \quad \text{לְמִשְׁפָּט}$$
$$\text{וְהִנֵּה} \quad \text{מִשְׂפָּח}$$
$$[\text{וַיְקַו}]$$
$$\text{לִצְדָקָה}$$
$$\text{וְהִנֵּה} \quad \text{צְעָקָה:}$$

10. **Repetition:** Watch for repetition – especially of key words or phrases (Ps 121:3–5):

$$\text{אַל־יִתֵּן}$$
$$\text{לַמּוֹט רַגְלֶךָ}$$
$$\text{אַל־} \quad \text{יָנוּם} \quad \textbf{שֹׁמְרֶךָ:}$$
$$\text{הִנֵּה לֹא־} \quad \text{יָנוּם}$$
$$\text{וְלֹא} \quad \text{יִישָׁן}$$
$$\textbf{שׁוֹמֵר} \text{ יִשְׂרָאֵל:}$$
$$\text{יְהוָה} \quad \textbf{שֹׁמְרֶךָ}$$
$$\text{יְהוָה} \quad \text{צִלְּךָ}$$
$$\text{עַל־יַד יְמִינֶךָ:}$$

Note: An outline font style was used to highlight the repetition of the key word of the psalm: **שמר**. Note, also, that the four negatives (one pair of each) are kept in vertical alignment for visual effect. The verbs associated with the negatives are arranged in a kind of chiasm (see #4, above) based upon identical middle terms and assonant outer terms.

11. **Subordinate clauses:** Causal, result and purpose clauses should be subordinated to the verb they modify as adverbial clauses (Isa 5:5):

(I will) remove its hedge	הָסֵר מְשׂוּכָּתוֹ
so that it might be grazed	וְהָיָה לְבָעֵר
(I will) break through its wall	פָּרֹץ גְּדֵרוֹ
so that it might be trampled	וְהָיָה לְמִרְמָס:

12. ***Wayyiqtol* verbs:** Be certain to subordinate *wayyiqtol* verbs to their lead verb (1 Sam 16:14–19):

<div dir="rtl" align="right">

וּבְעֶתַתּוּ …

וַיֹּאמְרוּ …

וַיֹּאמֶר …

וַיַּעַן … וַיֹּאמֶר …

וַיִּשְׁלַח …

</div>

Note: In Hebrew the use of וַיַּעַן … וַיֹּאמֶר should usually be considered a verbal hendiadys in which the use of וַיֹּאמֶר is superfluous and should not be translated ("then he answered" – **not** "then he answered and said"). Therefore, in structural or logical diagramming it does not form another element of the *wayyiqtol* chain.

LOGICAL/BLOCK DIAGRAMMING BY THE NUMBERS

EXODUS 15:26

Step 1: Arrange according to major disjunctive accents. See pp. 47–54 in these course notes for additional help regarding the Masoretic Hebrew accents.

וַיֹּאמֶר֩ אִם־שָׁמ֨וֹעַ תִּשְׁמַ֜ע לְק֣וֹל ׀ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֗יךָ

וְהַיָּשָׁ֤ר בְּעֵינָיו֙ תַּעֲשֶׂ֔ה

וְהַֽאֲזַנְתָּ֙ לְמִצְוֺתָ֔יו

וְשָׁמַרְתָּ֖ כָּל־חֻקָּ֑יו

כָּֽל־הַמַּֽחֲלָ֞ה אֲשֶׁר־שַׂ֤מְתִּי בְמִצְרַ֙יִם֙ לֹא־אָשִׂ֣ים עָלֶ֔יךָ

כִּ֛י אֲנִ֥י יְהוָ֖ה רֹפְאֶֽךָ׃

Step 2: Arrange according to major syntactical and structural elements.

וַיֹּאמֶר֩

protasis	אִם־שָׁמ֨וֹעַ תִּשְׁמַ֜ע לְק֣וֹל ׀ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֗יךָ
	וְהַיָּשָׁ֤ר בְּעֵינָיו֙ תַּעֲשֶׂ֔ה
	וְהַֽאֲזַנְתָּ֙ לְמִצְוֺתָ֔יו
	וְשָׁמַרְתָּ֖ כָּל־חֻקָּ֑יו
apodosis	כָּֽל־הַמַּֽחֲלָ֞ה
	אֲשֶׁר־שַׂ֤מְתִּי בְמִצְרַ֙יִם֙
	לֹא־אָשִׂ֣ים עָלֶ֔יךָ
	כִּ֛י אֲנִ֥י יְהוָ֖ה רֹפְאֶֽךָ׃
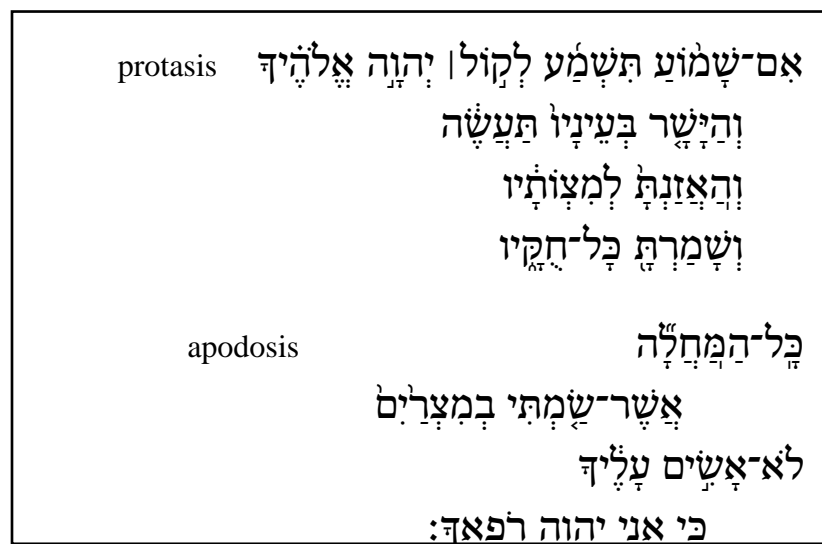
Step 3: Arrange according to major syntactical and structural elements.

וַיֹּאמֶר

protasis A	אִם־שָׁמֹועַ תִּשְׁמַע לְקֹול׀ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
B	‖ וְהַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינָיו תַּעֲשֶׂה
A'	‖ וְהַאֲזַנְתָּ לְמִצְוֹתָיו
B'	‖ וְשָׁמַרְתָּ כָּל־חֻקָּיו
apodosis	כָּל־הַמַּחֲלָה
	אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי בְמִצְרַיִם
	לֹא־אָשִׂים עָלֶיךָ
	כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפְאֶךָ׃

Step 4: Highlight emphases.

וַיֹּאמֶר

protasis A	אִם־שָׁמֹועַ תִּשְׁמַע לְקֹול׀ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
B	‖ **וְהַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינָיו** תַּעֲשֶׂה
A'	‖ וְהַאֲזַנְתָּ לְמִצְוֹתָיו
B'	‖ וְשָׁמַרְתָּ כָּל־חֻקָּיו
apodosis	**כָּל־הַמַּחֲלָה**
	אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי בְמִצְרַיִם
	לֹא־אָשִׂים עָלֶיךָ
	כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפְאֶךָ׃

Step 5: Refine.

וַיֹּאמֶר֮

אִם־

| protasis A | שָׁמ֨וֹעַ תִּשְׁמַ֜ע לְק֣וֹל׀ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֗יךָ |
| B | וְהַיָּשָׁ֤ר בְּעֵינָיו֙ תַּעֲשֶׂ֔ה |

| A' | וְהַאֲזַנְתָּ֙ לְמִצְוֺתָ֔יו |
| B' | וְשָׁמַרְתָּ֖ כָּל־חֻקָּ֑יו |

apodosis **כָּל־הַמַּֽחֲלָ֞ה**

אֲשֶׁר־שַׂ֤מְתִּי בְמִצְרַ֙יִם֙

לֹא־אָשִׂ֣ים עָלֶ֔יךָ

כִּ֛י אֲנִ֥י יְהוָ֖ה רֹפְאֶֽךָ׃

LOGICAL/BLOCK DIAGRAMMING WITH HOMILETICAL OUTLINE
Psalm 15: The Godly Man

1 מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

I. The Question (v. 1) יְהֹוָה

מִי־יָגוּר

בְּאָהֳלֶךָ

מִי־יִשְׁכֹּן

בְּהַר קָדְשֶׁךָ:

II. The Answer (vv. 2–5b) הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים **2**

   A. His Character (v. 2) וּפֹעֵל צֶדֶק

וְדֹבֵר אֱמֶת בִּלְבָבוֹ:

   B. His Relationships (vv. 3–4b) לֹא־רָגַל ׀ עַל־לְשֹׁנוֹ **3**

לֹא־עָשָׂה

לְרֵעֵהוּ

רָעָה

וְחֶרְפָּה

לֹא־נָשָׂא

עַל־קְרֹבוֹ:

נִבְזֶה ׀ בְּעֵינָיו **4**

נִמְאָס

וְאֶת־יִרְאֵי יְהֹוָה

יְכַבֵּד

   C. His Selflessness (vv. 4c–5b) נִשְׁבַּע לְהָרַע

וְלֹא יָמִר:

כַּסְפּוֹ ׀ **5**

לֹא־נָתַן

בְּנֶשֶׁךְ

וְשֹׁחַד

עַל־נָקִי

לֹא לָקָח

III. The Promise (v. 5c) עֹשֵׂה־אֵלֶּה לֹא יִמּוֹט

לְעוֹלָם:

TEXT CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Text Critical Sigla[124]

In *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* the "Prolegomena" includes a list of "*Sigla et Compendia Apparatuum*"[125] ("Images and Abbreviations of the Apparatus"). The student should become familiar with that list even though all definitions are given in Latin. One thing to keep in mind is that many English words are derived from Latin (e.g., edition, fragment, lection, manuscript, margin, original, recension, script, text) and that many Latin proper nouns are quite close to the English, for example:

Arabica	= Arabic
Cairensi	= Cairo
edition	= edition
excepto	= except
Graecus	= Greek
Hebraici	= Hebrew
Latinus	= Latin
litteratura	= literature
marginalis	= of/in the margin
Origenis	= Origen
Pentateuchi	= of the Pentateuch
prophetarum	= of the Prophets
Samaritanum	= Samaritan
textus	= text
versio	= version

The following Latin terms should be of some help in utilizing the list.[126]

apud Occidentales = in the western tradition
apud Orientales = in the eastern tradition
codex = book
codex manuscriptus Hebraicus = book of Hebrew manuscript
codices majuscules scripti = books in capital letters

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[124] "Sigla" is an English term borrowed from the Latin. Its Latin origin is perhaps as a contraction of *sigilla* (plural of *sigillum*, "figure, image, mark, letter, initial"). The English word was first employed in a publication in 1706. It is a natural plural. See "Sigla" in *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 2:2820.

[125] K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 4th rev. ed., ed. by H. P. Rüger (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977), XLIV–L. In some editions the pagination varies by a page or two.

[126] See, also, the Latin lists with English translations in William R. Scott, *A Simplified Guide to BHS: Critical Apparatus, Masora, Accents, Unusual Letters & Other Markings*, 3rd ed. (N. Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1995), 61–86. Although it isn't always helpful because of the different context of OT textual criticism, the online Latin dictionary at http://www.nd.edu/~archives/latgramm.htm can prove useful.

codices minuscules scripti = books in lowercase letters
ex recensione = of the recension (or, revision)
fragmentum codicis = a fragment of a writing
Hieronymus = Jerome
interpretum = translation
iuxta = close to, according to
laudati = of a quote
lectio = reading
loci = passage
multi = many
nonnulli = some (or, several)
originalis = original (or, source)
pauci = few
partim = partial (literally, "partly," "some")
permulti = very many
plus quam = more than
prima manus = first hand (or, first scribe or copyist)
primus = first
quae dicitur = which is (or, which is to say)
rescriptus = rewritten (or, palimpsest)
secundum = according to
secundus = second
tertius = third
versio = version, translation
vetus = old
vide = see

Identification of various notations is a must for students of the Hebrew Bible. Reading the Hebrew Bible's text critical apparatus is not the only reason for learning them. Many are also employed in the notes and body of many of the exegetical commentaries (e.g., International Critical Commentary [ICC], Hermeneia, Word Biblical Commentary [WBC], and New International Commentary on the Old Testament [NICOT]).

In the following list the Gothic symbols are reproduced utilizing the SIL Apparatus font (and also the Syriac "s" for the Samaritan Pentateuch), the Greek symbols are reproduced using the Symbol font, and for the asterisk of Origen's *Hexapla* the Graeca font was employed.

α′ = Aquila's Greek translation of the Old Testament
ε′ = *Quinta* or Origen's Greek translation of the Old Testament (which is found in the fifth column of Origen's *Hexapla*, thus *Quinta* [= "fifth"])
θ′ = Theodotion's Greek translation of the Old Testament
σ′ = Symmachus' Greek translation of the Old Testament

𝔄 = Arabic Version [Gothic "A" for "Arabic"]
𝔄̈ = Ethiopic Version [Gothic "Ä" for "Ethiopic" (from "Aethiopic"]

𝕮   = Cairo Geniza fragment(s) [Gothic "C" for "Cairo"]

𝕲   = Septuagint [Gothic "G" for "Greek"]

𝕲*   = original text of the Septuagint [sometimes indicates the text as opposed to different scribal additions in a manuscript]

𝕲ᴸ   = Lucianic recension of the Septuagint

𝕲ᴹˢˢ = various manuscripts of the Septuagint

𝕲ˢ   = Codex Sinaiticus of the Septuagint

𝕷   = Old Latin manuscripts [Gothic "L" for "Latin"]

𝕸   = Masoretic Text [Gothic "M" for "Masoretic"]

𝕼   = Qumran manuscripts [Gothic "Q" for "Qumran"]

𝕼ᵃ   = 1QIsᵃ [see p. 114]

𝕾   = Syriac Peshitta [Gothic "S" for "Syriac"]

𝕿   = Targum [Gothic "T" for "Targum"—compare 𝕮 (Do you see the difference?)]

𝕿ᴶ   = Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

𝖁   = Latin Vulgate [Gothic "V" for "Vulgate"]

𝖂   = Samaritan Pentateuch [Syriac "S" for "Samaritan"]

𝖂ᴹˢˢ   = various manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch

※   = asterisk (*asteriscus*) of Origen's Hexapla marking material not found in Septuagint but present in Hebrew

cit (citt)   =   Medieval rabbinic citation(s)

Ed (Edd) =   modern edition(s) of the Hebrew Bible

Hier   = Jerome

K   = *Kethiv* (Aramaic כְּתִיב for "that which is written," referring to the wording in the body of the Masoretic Text)

L   = Codex Leningrad B19A (the foundational manuscript for *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*)

Mm   = *masorah magna* (or, "the greater *masorah*")

Mp   = *masorah parva* (or, "the lesser *masorah*")

Ms   = Medieval Hebrew manuscript (plural: Mss = Medieval Hebrew manuscripts)

     pc Mss   =   a few (3–10) Medieval Hebrew manuscripts [but, 3–6 in 1 and 2 Samuel]

     nonn Mss   =   some (11–20) Medieval Hebrew manuscripts [but, 7–15 in 1 and 2 Samuel]

     mlt Mss   =   many (more than 20) Medieval Hebrew manuscripts [but, 16–60 in 1 and 2 Samuel]

     permlt Mss   =   very many (more than 60) Medieval Hebrew manuscripts in 1 and 2 Samuel

Q = *Qere'* (Aramaic קְרֵא for "read" or "to be read," referring to the margin's reading in the Masoretic Hebrew text)

Tiq soph = *tiqqun sopherim* ("corrections of the scribes"), consisting of 11 texts which are traditionally held to have been corrected by ancient scribes because the text was apparently considered irreverent (Num 11:15; 12:12; 1 Sam 3:13; 1 Kgs 12:16; Jer 2:11; Ezek 8:17; Hab 1:12; Zech 2:12; Mal 1:13; Ps 106:20; Job 7:20)

Vrs = all or a plurality of the ancient versions

Another set of abbreviations to be mastered are those identifying the various Dead Sea manuscripts.[127] Note how these abbreviations are formed:

Cave #	Location	Book	Classifier	Abbreviation
1	Q	Is	a	1QIs[a]
1	Q	pHb		1QpHb
4	Q	XII	-A	4QXII-A
11	Q	Pss		11QPss
8	Hev	XII	Gr	8HevXIIgr
	Mur	XII		MurXII
	Mas	Ps	b	MasPs[b]

1QIs[a]	= first Isaiah scroll to be found in Qumran Cave 1
1QpHb	= Habakkuk commentary (*pesher*) from Qumran Cave 1
4QXII-A	= first Minor Prophets scroll found in Qumran Cave 4
11QPss	= Psalms scroll from Qumran Cave 11
8HevXIIgr	= Greek Minor Prophets scroll found in Nahal Hever Cave 8
MurXII	= Minor Prophets scroll found at Muraba'at
MasPs[b]	= second Psalms scroll found at Masada

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[127] For a fuller listing, see Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 557–62.

Procedure for Text Critical Analysis

1.   Check textual apparatus in BHS.

2.   Write out variants from notes in the textual apparatus.

3.   Check with *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* and record any notes.

4.   Check with commentaries that give attention to textual variants:

- *ICC* = The International Critical Commentary (T & T Clark)
- *Hermeneia*
- *AB* = The Anchor Bible
- *NICOT* = The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
- *OTL* = The Old Testament Library (Westminster Press)

5.   Perform additional firsthand research as necessary—if you are able to do so.

6.   Verbalize your conclusions and questions.

Recommended Reading for OT Textual Criticism

Barr, James. *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987.

Barrick, William D. "Ancient Manuscripts and Biblical Exposition." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 25–38.

———. "Current Trends and Tensions in Old Testament Textual Criticism." *Bible Translator* 35, no. 3 (July 1984): 301–8.

Brotzman, Ellis R. *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.

Gordis, Robert. *The Biblical Text in the Making: A Study of the Kethib-Qere*. Augmented edition. N.p.: KTAV Publishing House, 1971.

Goshen-Gottstein, M. H. "The Aleppo Codex and the Rise of the Massoretic Bible Text." *Biblical Archeologist* 42 (1979): 145–63.

———. "Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts: Their History and Their Place in the HUBP Edition." *Biblica* 48 (1967): 243–90.

Jobes, Karen H., and Moisés Silva. *Invitation to the Septuagint*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000.

Tov, Emanuel. *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*. Jerusalem: Simor Ltd., 1981.

———. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 2nd revised edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

Waltke, Bruce K. "Old Testament Textual Criticism." In *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: A Complete Library of Tools and Resources*. Edited by David S. Dockery, Kenneth A. Mathews, and Robert B. Sloan, 156–86. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.

———. "Textual Criticism of the Old Testament and Its Relation to Exegesis and Theology." In *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 5 volumes. Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, 1:51–67. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1997.

———. "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament." In *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*. Edited by J. Barton Payne, 212–39. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1970.

———. "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament." In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. 12 volumes. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein et al., 1:211–28. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979.

Wegner, Paul D. *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006.

Wolters, Al. "The Text of the Old Testament." In *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. Edited by David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, 19–37. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.

Masorah Parva for Genesis 3:16–17

Vs.	Text	Mp	Meaning
3:16	אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה	ל ר״יפ	This phrase is found only once in the OT at the beginning of a verse.
3:16	הַרְבָּה אַרְבֶּה	גׄ	This phrase is found 3 times in the OT.
3:16	וְאֶל־אִישֵׁךְ	לׄ	This phrase is found only once in the OT.
3:16	תְּשׁוּקָתֵךְ	גׄ מל ול בליש	This word is found 3 times in the OT spelled fully (וֹ) but only once in this exact form.
3:17	וּלְאָדָם	גׄ	This phrase is found 3 times in the OT.
3:17	שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל	יזׄ שמיעה לקול	17 times in the OT there are references to someone "hearing a voice."[128]
3:17	צִוִּיתִיךָ	בׄ מל בתור	This word is found 2 times fully written (*hireq-yod*) in the Pentateuch.
3:17	בְּעִצָּבוֹן	לׄ	This phrase is found only once in the OT.
3:17	תֹּאכֲלֶנָּה	בׄ	This phrase is found 2 times in the OT.

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[128] Page H. Kelley, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 185–86.

Text Critical Apparatus for Genesis 3:16

Vs.	Text	TCA	Meaning
3:16ᵃ	אֶל	L c ﹰﬡ𝕾𝕺 וְאֶל	Read וְאֶל [*and unto*] with the Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate.
3:16ᵇ	וְהֵרֹנֵךְ	frt l c ﹰﬡ וְהֶרְיוֹנֵךְ; 𝕲 καὶ τὸν στεναγμόν σου = וְהֶגְיֹנֵךְ	Perhaps read וְהֶרְיוֹנֵךְ [a commoner spelling¹²⁹] with the Samaritan Pentateuch; LXX has καὶ τὸν στεναγμόν σου [*and your groaning*] which is the same as וְהֶגְיֹנֵךְ [*and your groaning*].
3:16ᶜ	בְּעֶצֶב	ﹰﬡ בעצבון	The Samaritan Pentateuch has בעצבון [spelling variant].
3:16ᵈ⁻ᵈ	וְאֶל־אִישֵׁךְ תְּשׁוּקָתֵךְ וְהוּא יִמְשָׁל־בָּךְ	cf 4,7ᵇ⁻ᵇ	See Genesis 4:7's text critical note ᵇ⁻ᵇ.
3:17ᵃ	וּלְאָדָם	L וְלֹא'	Read וּלְאָדָם.
3:17ᵇ	תֹּאכֲלֶנָּה	L תַּעַבְדֶנָּה.	Read תַּעַבְדֶנָּה.

Please note: The verses to be included in this paper will sometimes be different than the verses chosen by the student for exposition. In order to insure that everyone has adequate exposure to the *masorah parva* and the text critical apparatus, the professor will assign the verses to be included when he returns the request form for the chosen text.

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¹²⁹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), 48.

LEXICAL ANALYSIS

• Fallacies Prominent in Many Popular Word Studies •

1. **Every meaning tied to the root.**

   In the lexicon's listing of the range of meaning for a particular root there may not be a single unifying common theme or point meaning. Cf. all three homonymous roots of חמר (Holladay, *Lexicon*). The existence of potential homonyms makes unity of meaning and origin unlikely in many cases. Cf. Barr's studies of דבר and קהל in *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. Also, note Cotterel's discussion of קרץ (*NIDOTTE*, 1:149–50).

2. **Semantic anachronism.**

   This area is sometimes interrelated with other considerations of context. Walton (*NIDOTTE*, 1:165) gives the example of the later meaning of "buy" for לקח. This and the following are related to the matter of **semantic change** (cf. Silva, *Biblical Words & Their Meaning*, 52–97).

3. **Semantic obsolescence.**

   This fallacy is the reverse of #2. It involves earlier meanings being applied to later usage. Cf. "gay" in English. Cf. δίλογος in the NT ("insincere") whereas it previously had the meaning of "repeating"—and other new meanings of NT words as compared to usage in classical and/or LXX Greek.

4. **Unknown or insupportable meanings.**

   One of the primary word studies related to this fallacy is that of the artificial distinctions drawn by many preachers between ἀγαπάω and φιλέω whereby the former is taken as divine love and the latter has mere human love. However,. John 5:20 (the Father loves the Son) and 16:21 (the Father loves the disciples) makes this distinction unlikely. The distinction between the two terms rests elsewhere. A similar problem surrounds the use of ברא when commentators or preachers invest it with the extended meaning of "creation *ex nihilo*."

5. **Misuse of background materials.**

The field of OT lexical studies has suffered from pan-Arabism, pan-Akkadianism, pan-Ugaritism, and now from pan-Eblaism. Cognate languages provide useful information but are not applicable to OT Hebrew unless the context permits. Some of the discussions of נֶפֶשׁ = "throat" fall into this category of fallacy. See, also, Psalm 22:6's use of "worm" as compared to the use of "worm" in Amharic to connote "strong, powerful."

6. **Parallelomania.**

Parallelomania applies to internal parallelism (within the Bible) as well as external parallelism (extrabiblical texts). Cf. Judges 5:5, "The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel" as compared to Psalm 68:8 "the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel." Note the *athnach*s in these two verses:

Judges 5:5—
    The mountainsmelted before the LORD;
    this Sinai   before the LORD, the God of Israel
Psalm 68:8—
    the earth shook,
    the heavens poured down rain,
                              before God,   the One of Sinai,
                              before God,   the God of Israel.

It is inaccurate exegesis to utilize Psalm 68:8 as a reason to force "Sinai" in Judges 5:5 to be a reference to "this One of Sinai."

7. **Social and psychological language theories.**

All the uninformed declarations that Greek was more capable than Hebrew of describing the intricacies of Christian theological concepts belong in this fallacy. Accusations of Hebrew chauvinism being rooted in the language also come under this fallacy. Note how Gesenius equated the feminine gender in Hebrew with subservience, subordination, and weakness, but the masculine gender with mastery and domination (GKC §122*m-n*, *u*). Gender is not so cut and dried in Hebrew. Note the feminine form in the plural of "fathers" (אָבוֹת) and the feminine participle employed for "preacher" (קֹהֶלֶת). Do these diminish authority to subservience because of the feminine gender? Absolutely not. Consider, also, the masculine plural of "women" (נָשִׁים). Does this gender marker indicate that the women are dominant? No. Gender is used primarily to mark concord (agreement) between elements of a sentence so that the referents are clear rather than muddled. Any semantic value, as demonstrated by E. A. Speiser (see *IBHS*, §3.2f), is in the use of the feminine

to form an abstract (from an adjective, numeral, or verb), a collective (from a participle), a singulative (from a collective), or a diminutive.

8.   **Inadequate analysis of synonyms.**

The various conclusions and illustrations drawn from the various Hebrew words for "man" usually demonstrate a lack of adequate analysis of the synonyms. Comparing Psalm 8:5 with Psalm 144:3 reveals a reversal of terms in a way that indicates they are synonyms. The varied uses of אֲדָמָה and אֶרֶץ are also good illustrations of the weaknesses inherent in this fallacy.

9.   **Neglect of literary genre.**

The meanings of various Hebrew words is quite dependent upon the literary genre in which they are used—part of the matter of context. A perfect example is יכח which means "argue" or "arbitrate" in legal contexts (cf. Isaiah 1:18), but means "reprove" or "correct" or "admonish" in wisdom contexts (cf. Prov 9:7; Job 32:12).

10.   **Erroneous boundaries for semantic field.**

See the chart for the semantic field of אמר (separate class handout).

11.   **Prejudicial treatment of evidence.**

Theological prejudice and questionable interpretive practices plague the treatment of שְׁאוֹל by R. Laird Harris in *TWOT* #2303. Harris does not allow for any meaning other than "grave." The treatment of the same Hebrew word by Eugene H. Merrill in *NIDOTTE* #8619 is far more acceptable.

12.   **Unrealistic expectations.**

The study of the words alone will not present us with a consistent OT theology. This is one of the misleading aspects of theological dictionaries/wordbooks. We will learn far more about obedience/disobedience or sacrifice and sin from the full statement of a passage like 1 Samuel 15:22–23 than we will from word studies of זבח, שמע, חטא, and מאס—all of which are found in that passage.

Cf. Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words & Their Meaning*, 28: "We learn much more about the doctrine of sin by John's statement, 'Sin is the transgression of the law,' than by a word-study of ἁμαρτία; similarly, tracing the history of the word ἅγιος is relatively unimportant for the doctrine of sanctification once we have examined Romans 6–8 and related passages."

"But as important as word studies are, it is very doubtful if profound understanding of any text or of any theme is really possible by word studies alone."
— D. A. Carson

Lexical Analysis Procedure

1. After syntactical analysis, identify key words.

2. Observe the immediate context.

   - Grammatical construction
     - Construct state
     - Apposition
     - Other
   - Contextual antithesis or contrast
   - Poetic parallelism
   - Literary style
   - Rhetorical devices
   - Figures of speech
   - Idiomatic expressions
   - Presence of dialectal distinctions

3. Lexicon Research

   - Compare lexicons: Holladay, BDB, KBL[3] (*HALOT*), Clines (*DCH*), Jastrow
   - Read complete article
   - Note correct grammatical information
   - Note collocations
   - Note sources (if any)

4. Concordance Research

   - Compare concordances: Even-Shoshan, Lisowsky, Mandelkern
   - Note all usage statistics including identical forms and distribution
   - Note parallel passages

5. Theological Dictionary Research

   - Compare dictionaries: *TDOT, TWOT, TLOT, NIDOTTE*
   - Note sources
   - Note synonyms and antonyms
   - Evaluate coverage—including treatment of problem passages

6. Commentary Research

  ➤ Compare commentaries
  ➤ Note sources
  ➤ Note application of word studies to solving exegetical problems in the passage

7. Follow up on significant sources gleaned from lexicons, theological dictionaries, and commentaries.

8. Map semantic relationships

Idioms in Biblical Hebrew

Hebrew	Literal Translation	Meaning
בֶּן־שְׁבַע־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה Genesis 37:2	a son of seventeen year	seventeen years old
הִנֵּנִי׃ Genesis 37:13	behold me	I'm ready
בַּעַל הַחֲלֹמוֹת Genesis 37:19	lord/master of the dreams	Dreamer
קְשֵׁה־עֹרֶף Deuteronomy 9:6	hard of neck	stubborn, obstinate
לְהָסֵךְ אֶת־רַגְלָיו 1 Samuel 24:4	to cover his feet	to defecate
בְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים 1 Kings 20:35	the sons of the prophets	the group of prophets (*or,* the prophets)
בְּקֶרֶן בֶּן־שָׁמֶן׃ Isaiah 5:1	on a horn of a son of oil	on a fertile hill
קִצְרֵי־יָד Isaiah 37:27	short of hand	weak (short of strength)
שְׂדֵי מוֹאָב Ruth 1:1	the fields of Moab	the country of Moab
וַיִּשְׂאוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים Ruth 1:4	they took for themselves women/wives	they married
לֶחֶם Ruth 1:6 (cf. Gen 37:25)	Bread	food
וַתִּשֶּׂאנָה קוֹלָן וַתִּבְכֶּינָה׃ Ruth 1:9	they lifted their voice and wept	they wept loudly
הֱיוֹת לְאִישׁ … הָיִיתִי … לְאִישׁ Ruth 1:12	being for a man/husband … I will be for a man/husband	to have a husband … I were married
וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִם־אֲבֹתָיו 2 Chronicles 33:20	he laid down (*or,* slept) with his fathers	he died

Cf. Babut, Jean-Marc. *Idiomatic Expressions of the Hebrew Bible: Their Meaning and Translation through Componential Analysis.* Translated by Sarah E. Lind. North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1999.

Word Studies: Suggestions and Cautions
by
Michael A. Grisanti, Ph.D.

**See course notes above, for fallacies to avoid and a procedure to follow

Key sources:

Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
Cotterell, Peter. "Linguistics, Meaning, Semantics, and Discourse Analysis." In *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegeis*. 5 volumes. Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, 1:134–60. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
Walton, John H. "Principles for Productive Word Study." In *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegeis*. 5 volumes. Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, 1:161–71. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

I. Try to understand an author's word choices.

1. Consider the "form" or genre in which you are working.

E.g., poetry (meter) or alliteration (acrostic)—Psalm 119:105–112 begins with a Hebrew noun for "lamp" that begins with *nun*: נֵר

**Be careful that you don't give to much emphasis to the author's choice of that word for "lamp."

2. Consider whether the word or expression is a poetic expression.

Psalm 114:4—"the mountains skipped like rams"

3. Is the word part of conventional combination or a word pair?

Genesis 1:2—"formless and void"

II. Watch out for the following:

A. Generally avoid dividing up a word into its parts in order to determine its meaning.

E.g., "understand" ≠ under + stand

B. Be careful about equating words that come from the same verbal root.

E.g., "bread" (לֶחֶם) and "to fight" (לָחַם)

"angel" (מַלְאָךְ) and "work, occupation" (מְלָאכָה)

C. Do not misuse the history of a word.

"Etymology" = a word's origin

    E.g., "sinister" originally referred to being left-handed.   So what?

Diachronic—the study of the historical development of a word (over time).

Synchronic—the study of the current usage in all its possible contexts (at the same time).

> "The diachronic study of a word may help the interpreter to understand by what route a word came to mean what it does mean. A synchronic study of a word will help the interpreter know what the word means to the person who has just used it" (Walton, 1:163).

Walton (1:163) goes on to say:

> "Though etymology or other diachronic approaches can at times provide information concerning meaning, the problem is that one cannot rely on them to do so. Since we are aware of so many cases where meaning has shifted over time, we should be uncomfortable establishing the meaning of a word on the basis of our knowledge of its history (diachronic) rather than on its usage (synchronic). An author will choose his word based on his presupposition about what his audience will understand when they hear or read that word."

> E.g., Proverbs 22:6—the verb "to be old" (יִזְקִין) has a derived noun for "beard" (זָקָן).

Walton (1:164) offers three summary principles:

> "Given these observations concerning related words, parts of a word, and the history of a word, we can recognize that as interpreters we need to understand words in the light of what choices authors are making when they use their words. The principles that emerge are:

> - A word should be understood in recognition of other related words that were not selected by the author.

> - A word should not necessarily be broken down into its constituent parts or analyzed in light of its root unless it can be established independently that a relationship of meaning exists.

> - Synchronic methods are to be preferred over diachronic methods."

III. How does one go about figuring out a word's "semantic range" (range of possible meanings)?

A. Pay attention to the way biblical writers/authors use words.

Different authors may use the same word different ways.
Different authors may use the same word the same way.
One author may use the same word in different ways.

B. Pay attention to the genre in which you are working.

E.g., "offering" (מִנְחָה) in legal literature (Lev 9:4, 17) or in non-ritual contexts (1 Sam 10:27; 2 Kgs 8:8)

C. Do not equate the meaning of different parts of speech.

D. Watch the time period in which a word occurs. Be careful of importing "late" meaning into an "early" passage.

E.g., the verb לקח means "to buy" in later literature but not in the Pentateuch generally.

E. Try to understand if a word or expression is a technical expression or an idiomatic statement.

E.g., "in a minute"—Does minute always equal 60 seconds?

"know" (ידע)—Does it always mean sexual intimacy?

IV. What do you do if you have a word that does not occur many times in the OT?

Consider the etymology of the word, but be *cautious* and be *tentative* in your conclusions. Don't build any major doctrinal affirmations on a rare and obscure word!!

V. Concluding statements

Here are two points of clarification that Walton (1:170–71) offers toward the end of his helpful entry:

"2. *Individual occurrences of a word generally do not carry all of the different elements found in the semantic range*. Just as we are not free to choose the one meaning that appeals to us most, we are not free to assume that multiple meanings can be associated with the choice of a word. In Hebrew the word רוּחַ (H8120) has both wind and spirit in its semantic range. It would not be acceptable to try to

incorporate two distinct concepts of wind and spirit into a context using this noun. At a more sophisticated level, however, one could also question whether a cultural difference might be revealed in this lexical information. Is it possible that the use of רוּחַ for both wind and spirit suggests that in the Hebrew mind the two were more closely associated and perhaps less distinguishable than we are inclined to consider them? These are the sorts of issues that emerge from thoughtful and careful word study.

3. *We must distinguish carefully between the lexical sense and the contextual sense*. The lexical sense refers to those elements of meaning that the word will automatically carry into any of the contexts in which it is used. If there is even one occurrence (in the same category of the semantic range) that does not carry that element of meaning, then that element must be excluded from the lexical sense. So, for instance, one could not include "creation out of nothing" in the lexical sense of בָּרָא (H1343) because there are a number of occurrences that clearly do not involve creation out of nothing (e.g., Gen 5:1–2). On the other hand, there is no reason why this verb could not express creation out of nothing, but it is up to the context to establish that nuance. Such a restricted meaning could be part of the contextual sense of the verb, but it is not a meaning inherent in the very nature of the word."

Notice how Walton (1:171) concludes his entry:

"Word study is a step in the process of exegesis; it does not comprise the whole of the process. The authority of the Scriptures is not found in the words, though each word has an important role to play; rather, the authority is embodied in the message—that tapestry for which words serve but as threads that derive their significance from being viewed within the tapestry rather than being explored on the skein."

D.A. Carson (*Exegetical Fallacies* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984], 66) adds:

"But the heart of the issue is that semantics, meaning, is more than the meaning of words. It involves phrases, sentences, discourse, genre, style; it demands a feel for not only syntagmatic word studies (those that relate words to other words) but also paradigmatic word studies (those that ponder why *this* word is used instead of *that* word)."

He also writes (p. 66): "But as important as word studies are, it is very doubtful if profound understanding of any text or of any theme is really possible by word studies alone."