

Joint Israeli-Canadian Research Workshop

June 26-28 2018

The Second Workshop on Biblical Hebrew Linguistics and Philology

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

CONVENERS:

Edit Doron, Professor of Linguistics (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Robert D. Holmstedt, Professor of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations (U. of Toronto)

The aim of the Workshop was to advance the study of the grammar of Biblical Hebrew by combining current theoretical linguistics approaches with more traditional philological approaches, and in comparison with the grammar of Modern Hebrew. It has been assumed for decades that different methodologies are appropriate for Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew. Research into Biblical Hebrew was based on traditional philology and techniques for analysing small corpora, while a growing group of linguists working in the generative tradition focused on Modern Hebrew. Gradually, this almost complete divide has begun to break down, first in phonology, and then in syntax and semantics, and the fruitfulness of interactions between different paradigms has become apparent. The workshop aimed to encourage this kind of intellectual collaboration. We strive to develop methodologies for researching Biblical Hebrew and to incorporate relevant techniques from modern linguistics with classical philology in order to throw light on the relationship between Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew. This should permit us to study the cycle of historical change, and develop new research methodologies.

The talks were each 45 mins. length. These were some of the topics of the different lectures:

Hybrid Syntactic Constructions in Biblical Hebrew

Tamar Zewi, University of Haifa

Biblical Hebrew grammars usually treat extensively standard syntactic constructions, which are used on a regular basis and form the essence of Biblical Hebrew syntax, e.g. genitive phrases, nominal and verbal clauses and their word order, relative clauses, interrogative clauses, circumstantial clauses, various adverbial clauses, conditional sentences, etc. Prof. Zewi's talk highlighted Biblical Hebrew constructions which do not fully fit any of the conventional syntactic classifications and share some properties of more than one construction. Such constructions, which usually initially reflect syntactic fluctuation, may sometimes be subject to reanalysis and can occasionally emerge into new constructions which deserve their own independent treatment within the same language phase or in later phases.

A Unified Account of the Infinitive Absolute in Biblical Hebrew

Elizabeth Cowper and Vincent DeCaen, University of Toronto

Based on prior work (DeCaen 2014, Cowper & DeCaen 2017), and reporting on work in progress, the talk proposed a unified syntactic account for the Biblical Hebrew (BH) infinitive absolute (IA). Standard accounts (e.g. Waltke & O'Connor 1990) simply list the many IA constructions. The IA may reduplicate the root and/or the stem/binyan of the tensed verb. The IA a) may display a full argument structure, though the subject is never overt; b) enters into conjoined constructions with or without an overt conjunction; and c) may appear immediately before the verb, immediately after the verb, or in the backfield at the right periphery. Assuming the articulated clause structure in Cowper & DeCaen 2017, the talk proposed that the IA merges as a modifier of a verbal projection (VoiceP or lower), but that it can move, like other constituents in this and other V2 languages, to [Spec,TopicP].

Ordinals in Biblical Hebrew

Adina Moshavi and Susan Rothstein, Bar-Ilan University

Biblical Hebrew, like Modern Hebrew, has dedicated adjectives to express ordinal numbers from one to ten. However, the two stages of the language differ with respect to ordinals above ten. Modern Hebrew uses a cardinal as a post-nominal adjective to express ordinality. The adjective agrees with the noun it modifies in definiteness e.g. הכבש השישה-עשר. Biblical Hebrew uses a number of different constructions to express ordinality. The form which survived into Modern Hebrew is very rare in Biblical Hebrew, with few examples like וּבַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁמִינִית עָשְׂרָה (1 Kings: 6: 38). Ordinality involving numbers above ten is usually expressed through a numeral which precedes the modified noun, e.g. בְּאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה or post-nominally in one of two constructions, both of which exploit the construct in different ways: (a) a construct head with numeral annex as in בְּשָׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם עָשְׂרָה לְאַחַז מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה (2 Kings 7:1) (b) a construct head with phrasal annex as in בְּשָׁנַת שֵׁשׁ-מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה (Gen: 7:11). The talk described the uses of these various structures and their distribution in the text, and discussed a semantics for ordinals which explains how the various constructions express ordinality.

Personal and Impersonal Prohibitives in Biblical Hebrew

Elizabeth Ritter, University of Calgary

The talk argued that simple prohibitive clauses contain a speech act layer, which is the locus of אַל, אַלְּ, and the topical addressee. In contrast, emphatic commands are best treated as IMPERSONAL PROHIBITIVES. Extending the treatment of impersonals developed in Ritter & Wiltschko (2016), the talk proposed that they are structurally defective in that they lack the speech act layer of clause structure. Consequently they lack particles that are Merged here, including אַל and אַלְּ. Since the addressee is structurally represented in the speech act layer, it is proposed that their structural defectiveness also determines the fact that the latter is not directed to a particular addressee, and hence is not interpreted as an immediate instruction to refrain from doing some action.

The Anticausative Alternation in Hiphil

Kevin Grasso, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The talk investigated the anticausative alternation in the Hiphil binyan in Biblical Hebrew. It built on previous work done on the binyanim by Doron (2003) and Arad (2005). In particular, it suggested that Hiphil attaches a causative element below voice and directly to the root, and this is why unaccusatives can be found in the binyan (cf. Pylkkänen 2008 for an explanation along these lines). Following Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou, and Schaefer (2015), unaccusativity is considered to be a Voice head, which allows for it to combine with a verb in Hiphil later in the derivation. This creates a possibility for the anticausative alternation: the causative verb in Hiphil may be used with an active or an unaccusative voice head, creating the alternation. After presenting the roots in Hiphil with unaccusative voice heads, the talk briefly compared and contrasted the (anti-)causative alternation in Hiphil with the similar alternation in the binyans Niphal and Qal.

Prosodic Dependency in Tiberian Hebrew: Morphosyntax vs. Accentuation

Vincent Decaen and B. Elan Dresher, University of Toronto

The talk examined the two related notions of prosodic dependency in Tiberian Hebrew: free/absolute versus bound/construct (morphosyntax) and accented versus unaccented (musical interpretation of prosody).

Ellipsis in Biblical Hebrew

Robert D. Holmstedt, University of Toronto

Verb-gapping has long figured prominently in the study of Biblical Hebrew poetry (see Miller 2013 for an overview). And in the last 15 years, Cynthia Miller has explored various features of BH ellipsis, including its use in comparative constructions, the role of negatives, and constraints on the linear position of the elided constituent in a poetic line. The talk provided an overview of the types of ellipsis that occur in Biblical Hebrew and, building on Doron 1999 and similar investigations (e.g., Goldberg 2005), explored what locality effects are indicated by the biblical data.

Pausal vs. Context Allomorphy in Biblical Hebrew

Roman Himmelreich and Outi Bat-El, Tel-Aviv University

According to the Tiberian script, Biblical Hebrew exhibits positional allomorphy between pausal (phrase final) and context forms (phrase medial). The talk presented a synchronic analysis of this allomorphy within the framework of Optimality Theory (Prince and Smolensky 1993/2004, McCarthy and Prince 1993), drawing on earlier studies, such as Revell (1980, 2012), Qimron (2008), Goerwitz (1993). First, data was presented supporting Qimron's (2008) claim that the context forms are derived from the pausal forms, where the derivation involves *vowel reduction*. Two issues were additionally addressed: the nature of reduction and its position.

The Biblical Hebrew Infinitive

Edit Doron, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Biblical Hebrew infinitive raises a host of theoretical issues that have not yet been tackled. Being a verbal form which governs the accusative case of its direct object, one issue is whether the infinitive heads its own clause, including not only the object but also the subject (the talk mostly discussed the main variant, the so-called *Infinitive Construct*). The talk argued that it does, and that the subject is expressed according to one of two options. The first option, which is common cross-linguistically, involves an implicit subject, the null anaphoric pronoun PRO, typically controlled by another argument within the linguistic context. According to the second option, the subject is overt and is expressed as a possessor, i.e. in the genitive case, raising additional theoretical issues.

Light Verb Constructions in Biblical Hebrew

Todd Snider, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Pentateuch contains many verses where two verbs are used to describe a single event. In this paper, Dr. Snider examined whether these constructions behave as auxiliary verb constructions, light verb constructions, or serial verb constructions. He argued that they are in fact light verb constructions (as described in Butt 2003) which contribute aspectual information, on the basis of syntactic and semantic evidence.

Secondary Predicates in Biblical Hebrew

Jacques Boulet, University of Toronto

The talk proposed general description of secondary predicates (SPs) in BH that may be used to explain the syntax of some nouns used as SPs. The talk identified three kinds of SP in BH: depictives, resultatives, and what is provisionally called 'as-SPs' (cf. Frauke and Cuyckens 2017). Basing the study upon the biblical books of Genesis through Deuteronomy, the talk demonstrated what sorts of phrases may be employed in BH as SPs, and presented a syntactic analysis of BH SPs.