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Text and Time

A Functional Approach to the Biblical Hebrew Verbal System

Frank Matheus

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A Functional Approach to the Biblical Hebrew Verbal System

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To my daughters, Clara and Julia

I like to thank my colleague Dr. Jonathan Robker for the
careful revision of the manuscript

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0 Introduction

In the last few years the study of the Biblical Hebrew Verbal System (BHVS) has gained momentum. Besides my own unobtrusive approach to this complex, two lengthy and detailed studies have recently been published. As they date from the same year, they have been edited independently. John A. Cook has submitted his work “Time and the Biblical Hebrew Verb. The Expression of Tense, Aspect, and Modality in Biblical Hebrew” and Jan Joosten published his work “The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew. A new Synthesis Elaborated on the Basis of Classical Prose.”¹

Both studies are aligned to the widely accepted linguistic research field of TAM models (Tense, Aspect, and Mood), approaching

¹ See bibliography at the end of this paper for details. Notarius’ study focuses on poetry; owing to space constraints, this paper deals exclusively with non-poetic texts and will only occasionally refer to her work. The most recent article about research history (Penner 2013) does not discuss either of these works.

the development of cognate languages in their Northwest-Semitic setting and discourse resp. text linguistics and pragmatics. Their descriptions of these topics, including research history, are very profound and reflect the latest state of scholarship; thus, their results differ in some crucial points. Both are convinced that the BHVS has exactly one tense, namely the prefix conjugation with preceding *waw* and *dagesh* (*waw-PC*, *imperfectum consecutivum*, *wayyiqtol*) and that the remaining forms are best explained in a context of aspects (Cook) resp. modality (Joosten). Joosten provides the reader with an outline of his theses at the beginning of his book which he unfurls in the course of his analyses (see table 1)², while Cook devotes 200 pages to the theoretical foundations before he reveals his appraisal.

Table 1: The Hebrew Verbal System according to Joosten

Indicative		
Tensed	Non-tensed	
Past tense	Anterior	Contemp.
Wayyiqtol	Qatal	Pred. Part.
Modal		
Non-volitive	Volitive	
Yiqtol/Weqatal	Imp./Coh./Juss.	

² Joosten 2012, 40.

Regarding the suffix conjugation, Joosten claims this gram to be “a typical perfect, a verbal form expressing anteriority with regard to the point of reference ... The perfect may or may not be regarded as aspectual, but in any case needs to be kept well apart from the perfective.” (2012, 29) Cook would only partly agree in this as in his eyes the perfect is a viewpoint aspect (2012, 67) of minor significance in the qatal spectrum (212). The main task of the suffix conjugation however is to express the perfective viewpoint aspect in distinction to the prefix conjugation that incorporates the imperfective aspect (200); the *waw-PC* accounts for the past tense narrative (256).

I will not argue in detail with the enriching observations of these scholars, but put a finger on a couple of problematic points that evolve mainly from the underlying linguistic framework. As both are grounded in the basilar definitions of tense and aspect provided by Bernard Comrie, the deviating results originate in a different understanding of Comrie’s theses and some ambiguities associated with his delineations. As most researchers do, Joosten and Cook take Comrie’s widely accepted definitions as a starting point: “tense” is considered “as a grammaticalized location in

time”³, “aspect” as “the point of view from which a process is presented.”⁴

Comrie (1985, 122-30) builds his understanding of tense on Reichenbach⁵ and condenses his deliberations into a simple scheme indicating the tense relation between a speaker and his utterance:

E rel S.

In this scheme the event “E” can relate to the speaker “S” in all three stages of time; in Comrie’s eyes the speaker locates the event somewhere on the timeline by using simple tense forms like past or future tense. Often another event can be noted that might be connected to the first one; in such cases Comrie calls the structure “relative tenses”, e.g. past perfect. These situations result in the following graph, where “R” means the point of relation:

³ Cook 2012, 256. This definition is a direct quotation of Comrie 1985, 9; cf. Joosten 2012, 22: tense „designates the principle by which events are located in a given time frame such as the past, the present or the future.“

⁴ Joosten 2012, 28, following Comrie 1976, 3-4. Cook 2012, too, quotes this passage (26).

⁵ Reichenbach 1947.

E *rel* R *rel* S.

Regarding aspects, Cook and Joosten then agree with Comrie in the distinction of the principal domains, namely the dichotomy of *perfective* vs. *imperfective*. Unlike tense, which is clearly (but, as we will see, not sufficiently) defined, the explanations of “aspects” get rather metaphorical. While Joosten describes the *perfective aspect* as a view “from outside, without necessarily distinguishing any of the internal structure” and the *imperfective aspect* as a view from the inside, “crucially concerned with the internal structure” (2012, 28), Cook uses a different illustration, comparing the aspects with a zoom lens, imperfective situations being looked at through a telephoto lens, “which gives a close-up view ... while leaving the endpoints ... beyond its purview”, and perfective situations being looked at through a wide-angle lens, providing a broader view that includes “its endpoints in its scope but does not discern in detail the segments of time.” (2012, 27) Comrie’s original definitions are exemplified by the same inside-outside metaphor (1976, 4) and contain some additional information. Comrie (1976, 3) writes: “aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation”.⁶ Later he explains (1976, 5): “aspect is not concerned with relating the

⁶ Cook (2012, 75-76) takes up this view considering aspects “as presenting different views of the event structure”. Joosten 2012, 28 relates “the term aspect to the point of view from which a process is represented.”

time of the situation to any other time-point, but rather with the internal temporal constituency of the one situation”. Comparing these two definitions from Comrie, they say something quite different. The first one (1976, 3) requires a point exterior to the situation from which it is viewed with different angles. This I would not call aspect, but perspective. Furthermore, as the description of a situation is related to this external point, it is necessarily deictic⁷. The second one does not refer to any point or person outside of the situation itself, here aspect only deals “with situation-internal time” (1976, 5), which is clearly non-deictic. In the reception of Comrie’s theses, both conflicting definitions have been taken up with gradual stress. Both metaphors, the one of the zoom lens (Cook) as well as the inside-outside- comparison, favor the external viewpoint.

Moreover, Comrie differentiates between “aspect” and “time reference”, the latter term not being clearly defined but rather understood in its literal meaning. On the one hand, “time reference” is equated with “tense”, as Comrie elucidates: “A language

⁷ “Deixis” is defined as a cross-linguistic phenomenon that links an utterance “with its spatial-temporal and personal context.” Besides pronouns and other grammatical means, “tense is a deictic device”. Tanz 2009, 1. Comrie himself (see above) characterizes tense as the relation between the indicated event and the speaker, who by the speech act establishes the deictic center. A deictic community (i.e. people communicating face to face) is constituted of the elements *ego*, *tu*, *res* and *hic et nunc*. The last element does not necessarily apply to a DC that is separated in time and/or space from the recipient.

may have a grammatical category that expresses time reference, in which case we say that the language has tenses.” (1976, 6). As “tense” is a strictly deictic phenomenon, “time reference” in this sense is deictic, too. To Comrie’s mind, a lack of such a grammatical category lets a language express its time references by other means, e.g. temporal adverbs or even aspects as tense-substitutes (1976, 82). On the other hand, he treats “time reference” in the context of time relations other than deictic, i.e. relative tenses (1976, 2; 1985, 36), to conclude: “aspect is quite different from this.” (1976, 3) Joosten has taken this point, regarding the Biblical Hebrew suffix conjugation and the predicative participle neither as tense nor as aspect, but as expressing *temporal relations* “of some sort”, namely “between event time and reference time” (Joosten 2012, 25). For Cook this relation is clearly *aspectual*: “Viewpoint aspect is defined by the temporal relationship between the *reference frame* (RF) and the *event frame* (EF)” (Cook 2012, 65), which contravenes Comrie’s statement. Based on the very same definition, Cook and Joosten thus attain different appraisals of the verbal function. Furthermore, as the relation between RF and EF – whether it be called “aspect” or “time reference” – does not concern the speech act, it is non-deictic. This notion bears an inconsistency, because the text-internal time relations are analyzed by means of an external viewpoint – as the recipient can take different positions from the inside or outside

or scrutinize the situation from different angles.⁸ But the term “deictic” is associated with tense, not with aspect.

Moreover, the definition of tense as a “grammaticalization of location in time” leads both authors to the judgment that BH has only one tense, as the *waw-PC* seems to be the only gram that can clearly be perceived as expressing the past tense.⁹ This begs the question, why the suffix conjugation, though “mainly used to represent actions as having occurred before the moment of speaking”¹⁰ and so fulfilling the condition of locating the proposition in time, i.e. expressing the simple past¹¹, is not called a “tense”.

When applied to the BHVS, Comrie’s categories - adopted and developed by Cook and Joosten - encounter some problems. E.g. the sentence מֵה־תִּבְקֶשׁ (Gen 37:15, “what are you looking for?”) evaluates the event as a whole, there are no details visible,

⁸ Furuli 2006, 44, argues in a similar way; viewpoint aspects are related to the Deictic Center. He defines (66): „the imperfective aspect is a close-up view of progressive action with details visible, while the perfective aspect is a view from some distance with details not visible.“

⁹ With only a few exceptions. Cf. Joosten 2012, 161, 179. He takes the opposite standpoint to Waltke & O’Connor, 466, who claim the *waw-PC* to be sequential but not preterite.

¹⁰ Joosten 2012, 194. Cf. Cook 2012, 201, who observes a “predominate past temporal reference” regarding the SC; cf. 211.

¹¹ Cf. Cook’s graph (2012, 270).

no crucial concerns with the internal structure perceivable, and the activity is not ongoing at the time of speaking, as Joseph interrupts his search to talk to the unknown man. But the finite verb is *PC*, not *SC*.¹² On the other hand, the suffix conjugation can describe concomitant situations that both are ongoing at the time of reference, where neither perfect nor perfective allusions are graspable and no endpoints visible, e.g. וַיִּזְרַח־לּוֹ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָבַר אֶת־פְּנוּאֵל (Gen 32:31, “Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel”, NAS).

As the linguistic framework is indistinct to some extent and fairly metaphorical (and when applied to the BHVS soon becomes inaccurate and vapid), we have to reconsider the definitions of “tense” and “aspect” and the parameters used, primarily “perfective” and “imperfective”, before we dare to approach the biblical texts.

¹² This little sentence is discussed fiercely between Cook (2006) and Joosten (2002). Joosten (2012, 62) claims it to be modal, while Cook thinks it expresses present progressive (2012, 79).

1 The inventory of time analysis

1.1 Aspect

Let us apply Comrie's definitions to his own example sentence "John was reading when I entered". The continuous form is said to be "imperfective" as it makes "explicit reference to the internal temporal constituency of the situation." (Comrie 1976, 4) On the other hand, the preterite verb "presents the totality of the situation referred to" which "is presented as a single unanalysable whole", determining the "perfective aspect" (1976, 3). To my mind, the verbal forms are used only for grammatical reasons, as the temporal clause merely allows one continuous form; the sentence could not read "... when I was entering". Imagining the situation, exactly this is meant: Both (telic) accomplishments are happening at the same time, but we do not know the exact phase of either of the actions. Neither verb makes any statement about the progress or the ending points; the verb "entered" does not represent its coda but a time span from the beginning till shortly *before* the end (as it does not say "had entered"), and the time span "reading a book" overlaps the topicalized time (we assume that John was reading before): The situation we look at has not

yet come to an end.¹³ To call an ongoing event “perfective” for any reason is devoid of logic. The interpretation of the situation does not change when one takes a different perspective. Standing inside of the scene or outside does not make any difference for the analysis, and a spectator can zoom his lens hither and thither, noticing some close-ups of John turning a page or the Ego turning the door handle or gaining an overview with a wide-angle – no external viewpoint has any influence on the temporal relation between the depicted events. The verbs in this sentence are “analyzable” in quite the same way and represent the underlying propositions in their specific temporal relation, created by the text. Nor does one verb refer to the “internal constituency” more than the other, nor represents the other verb its proposition as a “single whole” differently than the first one. In fact, they say nothing at all about these things.

In his study, Cook tries to avoid such inconsistencies by clarifying the definitions of the main aspects. Referring to Klein and others, he builds upon a theoretical framework that comprises of “reference frames” and “event frames”, called RF and EF. An

¹³ Of course the situation has come to an end “now”. As we know about the event structures “reading a book” and “entering a room”, the latter must have been finished a few moments later. From the standpoint of the emitter and recipient, the scene lies in the past and is completed. What we see then, is the Ego standing in the room and John possibly still reading or, more likely, raising his eyes and setting the book down. But this happens *after* the events expressed by the text.

event might be subdivided into different phases (preparatory, nucleus and resultant phase; 2012, 63) and consists of intervals and moments. He then defines perfective “as $RF \supseteq EF$ – that is, the reference frame includes an interval of the event frame” (67), and imperfective “as $RF \subset EF$ – that is, the reference frame is included in an interval of the event frame.” (67). The special impetus in this view is that the perfective aspect is not necessarily connected to complete(d) events, as only one interval of an event might have come to an end within the topicalized time.¹⁴ But this claim does not solve the problems, as his own examples illustrate. Cook quotes a text taken from “Alice in Wonderland”:

(i-a) She was rambling on in this way when she reached the wood.

(i-b) She rambled on in this way when she reached the wood.

(i-a) is the original text – according to Cook the past continuous form expresses the imperfective and the simple past the perfective aspect (Cook 2012, 27, 67). I would consent to the latter, as “to reach the wood” is an achievement which comes to an end at the same moment as it happens. “To ramble” represents an activity, and after a while of this activity something else happens

¹⁴ Understood in this sense, the term “perfective” would best describe the scene of the above quoted verse Gen 37:15, as Joseph is still seeking his brothers, and only one phase has come to an end while he talks to the man on the field.

(Alice reaches the wood). From this description, the recipient does not know whether Alice is rambling on (as Cook suggests) or whether she stops. It might be that the rambling overlaps with the point of reaching the wood, formalized by $RF \subset EF$ (nucleus) (Cook 67). But in fact, she does stop, as the story continues: "... she stepped under the trees". So she is not rambling anymore: The realization of the achievement "to step under the trees" lets the preceding activity "to ramble" come to an abrupt end. To comprehend the specified temporal situation, we need the information provided by the next sentence.

In (i-b) Cook intends to express the perfective aspect by using the preterite "rambled" ($RF \supset EF$ (nucleus), 67). He is right in his observation that one now has the impression that the reaching of the wood is the starting point (28). But this insight falsifies his thesis that the past tense verb "rambled" is perfective. On the contrary, we are now at the onset (cf. Cook 2012, 63) of an imperfective activity. Alice will ramble now for a while, even though no continuous form is used.

In the English language, the preterite does not provide an inherent aspectual setting, i.e. it is not perfective by default.¹⁵ Of course, in a singularized sentence like "she rambled" we sense a

¹⁵ There is the question *by what means* a word like "ran" should not only be pointing to the past but also be perfective. And if the English "simple past" is considered to be able to express both tense and aspect, why could the same not be true for BH?

completed action, as we know about the event structure of the verb – one can only ramble for a limited duration and so we assume that it must have come to an end in the past.¹⁶ But the gram by itself does not send a signal of completion. Instead, it is aspectual neutral:

(ii) Yesterday I wrote a letter.

This sentence points to the past; the time referenced is “yesterday”, and the event with all its phases is incorporated within this topicalized time. It should be noted that no details are made visible and that from the standpoint of the Deictic Center the event is completed, with both endpoints embedded. Thus, the internal temporal constituency of the depicted situation is *imperfective*. Let us assume the interval “yesterday” is marked by the points a-b; the event E is settled within this segment: a-E-b. As it takes some time to write a letter, a portion of the stretch a-b is parallel to E – a part of “yesterday” and “writing a letter” happen at the same time. The temporal situation therefore is durative (resp. progressive) and concomitant, which are forms of imperfectivity¹⁷. This situation is entirely independent from any external or internal viewpoint. The construct a-E-b always provides this

¹⁶ Cook 2012, 266, draws attention to the fact “that perfective aspect and past tense are closely related“.

¹⁷ For definitions see below p. 22.

framework when an utterance places an event into a topic¹⁸, so we can consider the aspect imperfectivity as being a part of the phenomenon tense. Tense, being deictic, realizes a temporal situation of its own; once uttered, the text expresses time relations which are determined by the event structure of the proposition and its realization with respect to the topicalized time, but without regard for the emitter resp. recipient. We can put our time of evaluation (R) wherever we want: from some point of “yesterday” the event is pending, from some other it is completed. But the text leads our angle of view to the span of time when the letter was actually written. If the continuous form had been used, we would have expected a second event. In this case, the aspect would have been imperfective as well, but with the difference that only a short section, an interval of the event “writing a letter” would be the focus of attention, namely the time when the second event took place.

By itself, the text does not express any further aspects. The utterance could continue:

(ii-a) Yesterday I wrote a letter. Afterwards I went to a coffee-bar to meet some friends.

¹⁸ Excluded here are achievements, as they mark a point in time and not a time span.

In this sequence the event of the first sentence has clearly come to an end – it is *perfective* regarding the second one. This text now provides us with an evaluation time (R) which marks the base of analysis for the preceding clause but does not suspend the features characterized above.

(ii-b) Yesterday I wrote a letter. I took my stationary out of my desk, unscrewed my pen and filled it with black ink ...

In this sequence the sentence that points to the past has not already taken place within the topicalized time! Again, it is the second clause that lets us comprehend the temporal structure of the text, which is *prospective* here. It should be noted that now there are a lot of details made visible and the attention is crucially directed to the internal structure of the event. In fact, the sequence starting with “I took ...” describes individual phases of the proposition “to write a letter”. This observation can be generalized: *detail* is a feature of the prospective aspect, as in such a text the succession of events embodies the fulfillment of the ES of the prospective proposition.

The aspects of the three example texts (ii, ii-a, ii-b) are not denoted by the verbal forms, they are not “grammaticalized”, but nonetheless existent. To call them “time-reference” of some sort would not do them justice, as this term turns out to be rather insignificant. Applied to a finite verbal form, time reference can either be concerned with the relation between S and E, in which

case it is deictic, or with text-internal temporal relations, which makes it an aspect.¹⁹ There is no third option. Moreover, it is not a clearly defined grammatical category and hence unsatisfactory for describing temporal relations rendered by the verb.

The aspects imperfectivity, perfectivity, and prospectivity that are expressed by the sentences (ii, ii-a, ii-b) are not bound to the verbal forms used. To understand how they come into existence, we refer to the nomenclature of Wolfgang Klein.²⁰ He shaped the terms “topic time” and “situation time”. TT points to the time at issue, to the time being in focus of an utterance. TT or topicalized time should not be confused with the term “foreground” which is a text-pragmatical category of its own²¹ and used in discourse analysis. TT is the essential part of every speech act; if it does not come off, the communication fails. In our examples (ii, ii-a, ii-b) TT is created by the adverb “yesterday”. ST refers to the time the event actually takes place. The ST can be part of the

¹⁹ This insight falsifies Comrie’s opinion (1976, 5) that aspects do not relate events to other points in time. In my study (2011) the differentiating of *E rel S* on the one hand and *E rel R* on the other was a major point: the first relation expresses *tense*, the latter *aspect*. This view is now supported by John Hewson (2012, 508) who criticizes Comrie: “the term ‘absolute-relative tense’ is used for what is just a simple combination of tense and aspect.”

²⁰ Klein 1994, 21-24; *passim*.

²¹ On this see Joosten 2012, 363-70; Cook 2012, 295-298.

TT or refer to an occurrence outside of it.²² These terms are much more accurate than “event frame” and “reference frame” as they can be exactly specified, whereas “RF” is rather vague²³. Besides the time of utterance and reception, the knowledge of the *event structure* of a proposition plays an important role in the process of comprehending. ES is an alternative name for the so-called “situation aspect”.²⁴ Every verb and verbal phrase contains

²² ST and TT coincide if no specific TT is provided (e.g. “She rambled”); ST can overlap TT (“I am pregnant” with a TT: at this very moment), fill the TT exactly (“Friday I took a day off”) or be just a short part of TT (“Last week I lost my keys”).

²³ Cook 2012, 66-7 elucidates: “the perfective aspect has a distant reference frame, while the imperfective has a near reference frame.” This definition makes any evaluation arbitrary, as the assessment of “distance” is a sheer subjective impression.

²⁴ The terms “viewpoint aspect” and “situation aspect” are misleading. Taken literally, the viewpoint aspect is a grammaticalized aspect, expressed by the verbal form. The emitter creates the temporal orientation by using a specific word form that enfolds its force within the text. The situation aspect then is an aspect created by the time relations within the text, not bounded to the verbal form. This phenomenon is often called “time reference”. In linguistic research, the term “situation aspect” is used to describe the temporal structure of propositions, often named “Aktionsart”. To avoid confusion by using the established terms in a different way, I henceforth will call “situations aspects” or “Aktionsarten” *event structure* (ES) and “viewpoint aspects” and “time reference” simply *aspects*, not differentiating between grammaticalized and text-immanent time relations by name.

a time structure of which we know and which we have memorized as a semantic unit. Everyone knows what it means to “brush one’s teeth” or “cook a meal” or “read a book”. Every event comprises a couple of phases or separate actions which as a whole constitute the meaning of the proposition and its ES.

Uttering such a phrase means bringing its lexical sense to life in a communication – the semantic horizon of the proposition takes place in the world of the text. The evaluation of these three factors – the TT, ST, and ES – and their relation to one another lets us understand the temporal horizon of a text; their interconnection is responsible for time relations within the text, but also for the location in time.

A successful speech act, once uttered, produces a text whose internal temporal relations never change. In the example text “She was rambling on when she reached the wood” the relation between “rambling on” and “reaching the wood” will always be the same. Every time the text is perceived, this very same interrelation comes into existence.

These observations touch the insights of the early 20th century philosopher John McTaggart, whose famous A- and B-series corresponded to the linguistic categories of tense and aspect. McTaggart has been widely acknowledged, except for his main thesis that there is no time at all (but this puzzle is still discussed, cf. Falvey 2010). The A-series comprises of the three stages in time, i.e. past, present, future, and as it is dependent on external perception, it is changing permanently. The B-series on the other

hand consists of relations of events that always remain the same. McTaggart writes (1908, 459): If an event “N is ever earlier than 0 and later than M, it will always be, and has always been, earlier than 0 and later than M, since the relations of earlier and later are permanent.”²⁵

²⁵ For the discussion of McTaggart beyond his “worst argument” (the unreality of time) see Zimmerman 2005, Mellor 2012, 163-216, and Leininger 2014. There is a C-series as well which consists of sequences unrelated to time. Here we see a similitude to Klein’s 0-state propositions.

1.11 Imperfectivity

Every situation is the result of a preceding process or event; every process or event ends in a situation. Processes and situations embed duration *a priori*; events might extend over a span of time, but possibly take no time at all. ES are categorized by their temporal properties²⁶. As these are lexical categories, they only come into contact with time when uttered in a text. Achievements never can express imperfectivity, as they only mark a point in time. Activities, accomplishments, and states are held to be imperfective when they are in any way part of the topicalized time, whether they be totally included, overlap with TT, or just touch the endpoints. Furthermore, imperfective situations originate when two or more ST happen at the same time: a segment of event A perceives a segment of event B as ongoing, and vice versa. Carlota Smith has coined the term “unbounded” to describe such time patterns²⁷. In the English language, imperfectivity can be created by using continuous forms but it also evolves in sentences like the above quoted verse Gen 31:31: “Now the sun rose upon him just as he passed by Penuel”. Though no continuous form is used, both events happen simultaneously within TT (“now”).

²⁶ Vendler 1957. His classes have been taken up and modified in manifold ways (on this see Rothstein 2004), but I prefer his original clarity.

²⁷ Smith 2008, 227-29.

1.12 Perfect and perfectivity

Often the perfect forms are distinguished from perfective aspect.²⁸ While perfectivity is an aspect that is not necessarily bound to a verbal form, the perfect is a gram that is able to express tense and aspect at the same time. This definition might be improved upon, but for our discussion here it is sufficient. The gram's aspectual orientation is perfective²⁹, the tense can relate to all three time stages, i.e. in English and German we find past perfect, present perfect, and future perfect.³⁰ "Perfective viewpoints make events visible as bounded, including endpoints"

²⁸ Dahl 1985, 138-39; Comrie 1976, 52.

²⁹ Higginbotham (2008, 173), for instance, argues "that the English Perfect is purely aspectual, serving to shift from a predicate of event *e* to a predicate of events that are results of *e*." He refers to Jespersen, whom he quotes: The Perfect shows „present results of past events."

³⁰ Comrie (1976, 52) illustrates the difference between Perfect and non-Perfect with the example of a lost key: "I lost my key" vs. "I have lost my key". The situation is the same: the key is gone, which is the resulting state of the preceding event. What makes the sentences different is not the location in time or the aspect, but the topicalized time. The Perfect highlights the *hic et nunc* of the speaker, emphasizing the result whereas the Preterite creates a TT in the past.

(Smith 2008, 229). This definition, which is – with some variations – very common in linguistic works³¹, implies that the depicted event has come to an end – it cannot be ongoing at the topicalized time. The perfective aspect represents a situation that locates the ST before TT. Some scholars decline the prominence of the term “completed” in the context of perfectivity.³² Cook regards this notion even as a delusion of mind and recommends *Gestaltpsychologie* as a remedy (2012, 66). By contrast, I hold the view that the perfective aspect always sends a signal of termination, but does not place particular emphasis on the beginning of an event:

(iii) Peter has taken his driving test.

In this sentence we do not see the starting point of Peter’s endeavors and we do not see anything of the process to prepare for or absolving the test – we are just to note the outcome. Every utterance with a perfective allusion refers to the resulting state, which is an essential element of perfective structures – and the result is always imperfective. The perfective pattern invariably

³¹ Cf. Andersen 2000, 2; Arnold/Choi 2003, 54, favor the term “complete” while Furuli 2006, 471, prefers “completedness“. Smith 1997, 3, defines: “Perfective viewpoints focus a situation in its entirety.”

³² Cf. Waltke/O’Connor, 1990, 480.

consists of such a semantic implicature³³ pointing to the effect of an action, and very often of pragmatic ones as well. The semantic implicature of (iii) is blatant: Peter has a driver's license now. There might be a pragmatic output as well: Keep off the streets! Note that the topicalized time is not the time when Peter took his test, but the present of the speaker. There is always a "perfective transformation" from the *ante* to the *nunc*. Sometimes the perfective utterance stands for the imperfective resultant state by itself, the implicature becoming the implicate: "Prices have improved".³⁴ A perfective utterance cannot be settled in the present of a speaker³⁵ or in any other topicalized time, but only its imperfective implicature.

As we have seen, words like "rambled", "wrote" etc. which are perceived by some linguists as bearing the perfective aspect, can be imperfective or prospective in specific texts. That is mainly because these verbal forms do not express the mentioned aspects, but rather tense. They have no text-immanent regulational func-

³³ Welke 2005, 189. 292. Cook 2012, 67-8, classifies such sentences under the category "perfect".

³⁴ Cook 2012, 66, remarks that the perfective aspect might not cover the entire event, but only an interval of it. An event is represented up to a certain point, from where it is evaluated. Our example sentence makes this clear: prices might increase further.

³⁵ Smith 2008, 234-5.

tions but only concern S and E. The aspects arise by interconnecting the realized ES with TT. Before we take a closer look at these time relations, we have to get a little further into the phenomenon “tense”.

1.2 Tense

Though the definition of the term “tense” seems to be clear to the majority of scholars, it entails a couple of problems. Comrie understands it as a deictic means of grammar, which points to a “location in time”³⁶ and is linked to the finite verb: using a specific form allocates the proposition to a specific time. On the other hand a recipient gathers the necessary information given by the verbal form to understand its location in time; a preterite verb points to the past, a present form to the time of the utterance. But in most spoken languages this view does not work out. The tense expressed by a verb reveals the time that the speaker wants to indicate in many cases, but very often it does not. This is not, as some scholars think, an “idiomatic tense mismatch”³⁷, but a common part of grammar.

Comrie himself concedes that in some cases the tense form does not point to the expected time sphere. He refers to conditional clauses that do not express past tense, but rather future: e.g. “If you did this I would be very happy.” (Comrie 1985, 19) Yet he refuses to accept this usage as an argument against his thesis:

³⁶ Comrie 1985, 9. Similar Xiao & McEnery 2004, 2: „tense is deictic in that it indicates the temporal location of a situation.” Cf. the definition of Wikipedia (March 2013): “Tense is a grammatical category that locates a situation in time.”

³⁷ Rogland 2003, 92.131.

“The existence of such counterexamples to the general characterisation of the English past as indicating past time reference does not invalidate this general characterisation (1985, 19-20). Instead, he explains this tense mismatch by implementing a “secondary meaning”: in addition to the “basic meaning” of pointing to the past, the tense form can exert further tasks (1985, 18-20). So he concludes, more generally, “that apparent exceptions to the meanings of tenses can often be accounted for in terms of the interaction with other factors.” (1985, 120) Though Comrie tries to marginalize the problem³⁸, we find counterexamples in nearly each utterance, as the mentioned “other factors” wield great influence in texts:³⁹

(iv)

(a) *When I have finished the book, I'll give it back to you.*

(b) *They are stopping by after they have had lunch.*

(c) *He has been working on his novel all day.*

(d) *The plane leaves at 5.00 a.m. tomorrow morning.*

(e) *The plane leaves at 5.00 a.m. every morning.*

³⁸ „This is a very specific piece of information about a narrowly restricted range of lexical items in English.” (1985, 121)

³⁹ Some of the English examples presented here are taken from the website www.englishgrammarssecrets.com. Sentence (iv-i) is a quotation from the book *To the Nines* by Janet Evanovich, St. Martin's Paperbacks 2003, New York, 85.

(f) *We are having a special dinner at a top restaurant for all the senior managers.*

(g) *We are having a special dinner at a top restaurant for all the senior managers. Can I call you back later?*

(h) *Are you dating someone?*

(i) *I heard you shot somebody.*

In examples (a) and (b) the used perfect forms are purely aspectual and do not express tense. In (a) the future reference is stated by the second finite verb, but the direction of time is almost instantly given by the introductory conjunction and the following perfect. The text (b) does not emit a time reference by the verbal forms used; the present continuous form does not point to the future by itself. Nevertheless, the phrase cannot be understood as referring to the present tense. The sentence (c) says that someone is still working on his novel; there is no perfective aspect or implicature noticeable although this gram is used. In many cases the present tense is used to express the future (d); changing the adverbial phrase makes the same verb habitual (e). In text (f), again, the continuous form points to the future without any adverbial phrase or other deictic hint to understand it this way. The same sentence transgresses from future to present without any changes just by adding another clause (g). Sentence (h), again, is realized with the present continuous form, but this time it points to the past, and given that the answer is “yes”, also to the future but not to the present. Moreover, it is iterative. Text (i) describes

two actions in the past, but the verbal forms do not tell us that the second event is earlier than the first one. In (a) to (e) there are strong periphrastic time references like “tomorrow” and “all day” that possibly overrule the basic time direction of the verb; but in (f) to (i) time relations develop solely based on context.

Taking Comrie’s observations seriously, we have to direct our attention to the “other factors” that let us comprehend the temporal structure of a situation. As a matter of fact, we cannot identify the temporal meaning of a verb just by perceiving this single gram. A word like “ran” or “went” does not tell us whether it is past tense or conditional by itself, so *without exception* we need the embedding text⁴⁰ to understand whether its “basic meaning” is intended or its “secondary meaning”.

According to Comrie, sentences like (iv-a) and (iv-b) postulate a vantage point (R) to understand the relations between the uttered propositions (E) and S. But very often texts do not supply recipients with such a point “R”, like sentence (iv-i)⁴¹; sometimes even the adverbial phrases do not reveal the relationship between the indicated events and the time of the speaker:

(v) *I’m reading a Stephanie Plum novel right now.*

⁴⁰ On text orientated grammar see van Dijk 1972. An overview of research history can be found in De Beaugrande 1997, 60-2.

⁴¹ On this problem see Klein 1994, 26.

This sentence might have been uttered in a coffee shop, some friends sitting together and telling each other what they are doing in their spare time. Clearly the speaker of this sentence *is not* reading a book, as he or she is sitting in a coffee bar, sipping some latte and chatting with friends. Nevertheless no one would call the speaker a liar. To understand both “reading a book” and “right now” as true, we have to analyse the three time components TT, ST, and ES in respect to the time of utterance and reception.

In our example (v) the time of realisation (ST) of the proposition seems to contradict the emphasized topic time which is clearly outlined by the adverbial phrase “right now” and coincides with the time of utterance and reception. We resolve this inconsistency by distributing parts of the event structure “reading a novel” to different time stages, i.e. the past and the future; some of the action that it takes to read a book must have been completed (they are perfective), some others are yet to come (they are prospective). This view is compelling; the situation cannot be understood in a different way.

The analysis of examples like this clarifies that only the interplay of the different temporal constituents of a text and not just the grammatical meaning of a single finite verb enables comprehension within a TAM system.

Building on the characterization of tense as a *deictic* means, as a medium of communication, we can refine the definition of this term based on our observations above and claim that Deixis does

not mean to express a location in time but a locution in a text. The primary function of a deictic finite verbal form is to denote the proposition with its event structure in a communicational process; it thereby may point to a sphere of time by itself, but this is not the precondition to name the verbal form “tense”. Or, to put it the other way round: a finite verbal form is called “tense” when it has deictic functions, and “aspect” when it expresses text-internal relations. The same gram may thereby have the capability to express “aspect” in one text (cf. iv-a) and “tense” in another (iv-c). This does not constrain the ability of a text to produce aspects by relating different events to one another, or non-tensed deictic structures by periphrastic means, like adverbs. As a matter of fact, this is what happens *in realiter*; every verbal communication creates texts⁴² as a medium of understanding. The text as a whole may or may not refer to a time outside of itself and can be deciphered by a recipient. So tense is only one part of a complex process of comprehension. Aspects, on the other hand, are a *non-deictic* means to describe the temporal connections of events *within* a text, i.e. the relation between ST and TT or between different STs⁴³. They are completely independent

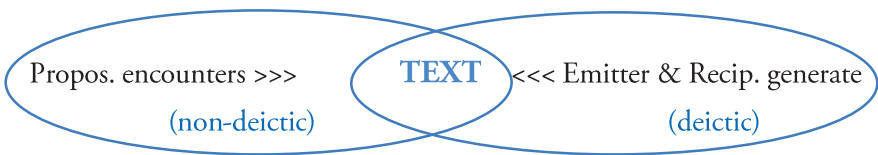
⁴² The term “text” here is understood as a communicational medium with the necessary condition of being emitted and received. It contains at least one word.

⁴³ Klein 1994, 119 explains: “aspects are definable in terms of temporal relations between time spans ... – the time of the situation and the topic

from speaker and recipient and do not have any communicational functions, as they are not related to the deictic center resp. the deictic community (DC). Both, aspects and tenses have their roles in texts, and their intersection is the topic time.

Table 2 “Time in text“

Proposition (Semantics)	Denotation (Syntax)	Locution (Pragmatics)
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Inherent temporal constitution “situation aspect” (lexical knowledge)	Relational temporal structure “viewpoint aspect” ST rel ST rel TT	Deictic temporal speech act (Speaker’s intention and attitude) TT rel Emitter rel Recipient
Event Structure	Aspect	Tense & Mood

time.” Smith 2008, 233, n18, is right when she criticizes Klein’s approach for not dealing with the relative tenses. But this lack can easily be compensated by including the relations between different events within or outside of TT, i.e. the relations between STs.

As we have outlined, tense in the English language (and, as we will see, in BH as well) is only understandable in a *text* and not by a singularized *gram*. This implies that time analysis is reliant on the corresponding linguistic tools, namely discourse analysis, text pragmatics, and speech act theory.⁴⁴

Each utterance is embedded in a (normally clear and distinctive) tangible pragmatic situation; any act of communication has rules of its own. All situations of communication can be described with the categories of the speech act theory⁴⁵, and they all have their own pragmatic and, in the end, grammatical schemes⁴⁶. The main distinction that is relevant for our question can be made regarding the deictic center: is it active or passive?⁴⁷ An active deictic center is part of a deictic community; in a group of communicating people, words like “tomorrow” or “at five

⁴⁴ Cf. Notarius 2013, 11.

⁴⁵ Cf. Searle 1979.

⁴⁶ Cf. Brinker, who applies Searle’s categories to text types.

⁴⁷ Cook 2012, 268, criticizes my approach of distinguishing between discourse and narration as he underlines that in both realms the same TAM system is valid. This I have never doubted, but it can be observed that each category develops its own linguistic strategy *within* the TAM system. Joosten 2012, 194, referring to Weinrich, remarks: “Direct discourse implies a speech attitude different from narration.” See also Notarius, 2013, 10. She states: “The division into narrative and conversation has become standard in discourse analysis” but with good reason claims “further criteria” for the classification of discourse modes.

o'clock" have the same meaning. This is not the case when a sentence like "I'm meeting you at five o'clock tomorrow" is written on a wall and a pedestrian accidentally reads it. It doesn't make any sense for him or her. A passive DC has to be aware that there is no further communication possible with a potential recipient; once expressed, a text takes on a life of its own.

2. Tense, aspect, and mood

in Biblical Hebrew – a functional approach

The following section will not ask for the typological or invariant use of the BHVS, but argues strictly analytical: what do the verbal forms accomplish in their text? What do they contribute to the understanding of their clauses? Do they regulate text-internal time relations or do they affect communication?

On the basis of this strategy we claim that in the texts of the Hebrew Bible the *waw-PC* (*wayyiqtol*) and the *waw-SC* (*w^εqatal*) are only found within a characterized situation, the topic time; they do not refer to the future or the past of the TT. As this structure concerns the relation between the participants of a communication (*S rel E*), these patterns express tense. The simple *SC* may refer to the past of a speaker (tense) or the past of a TT (perfective aspect). The simple *PC* may refer to all three time stages (tense) or to the future of a TT (prospective aspect). As they realize their ES, all finite verbal forms shape the aspect of durativity, insofar as the prototype a-E-b is expressed and the proposition is not punctual. Any other aspects, like continuity,

iterativity, simultaneity, in- or egressivity, etc. are not bound to the verbal forms (they are not grammaticalized⁴⁸), but gained periphrastically. Similar considerations apply regarding modality: besides the grammaticalized forms (Imperative, Jussive, and Cohortative), mood comes into existence through the interplay of ES, TT, and the DC. We will prove these theses by analysing some narrative and discursive texts.

⁴⁸ For some phasal aspectual use, see Cook 2012, 191-4.

2.1 Narration

In narration, the *waw-PC* has exactly *one* task: it denotes the proposition in a text. It does not say anything about its beginning or termination, and it does not constitute progression. As any story tells something about the past (of the speaker as well as of the recipient), every verbal form points to that time frame⁴⁹; one cannot tell a story that is happening at the moment of the utterance or in the future. The ST of the denoted proposition takes place within TT:

(i) 2 Sam 11:13

וַיִּקְרָא-לוֹ דָּוִד וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׁתֶּה לְפָנָיו וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיֵּצֵא בְּעָרְבַי לְשֹׁכְבֵי
בְּמִשְׁכְּבוֹ עִם-עַבְדָּי אֲדָנָיו וְאֶל-בֵּיתוֹ לֹא יָרַד:

Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord's servants, but he did not go down to his house.

⁴⁹ Cook 2012, 256 identifies the *waw-PC* as a grammaticalized form to express past tense, Joosten 2012, 161, calls the form an “indicative preterite” and recognizes “a deictic element” without a necessary “sequential interpretation” (163). They disagree in this with Waltke & O’Connor 1990, 547, who deem the form to be “successive and always subordinate to a preceding statement”. On research history and the character of the element ַ with subsequent *dagesh* see Cook 2012, 256-265.

This text (i) covers the time span from the invitation to a drinking bout to the end of the feast. Within this TT some events happen at the same time, some in succession. First David invites Uriah, and then he eats in front of him. This sequence contains a *perfective* aspect with an implicature. The invitation must have reached Uriah (completed action), it is in force (imperfective resultant state) and Uriah must have accepted the royal request – an action that the text does not describe, but nevertheless presupposes. The next three finite verbs reflect simultaneous actions, which represent the STs of the event structure of their propositions. While they are eating and drinking, David tries to get Uriah drunk. We do not know whether or to what extent he succeeds or if the verb just expresses the conative aspect. Even if Uriah becomes drunk, he is not drunk enough to do what David expects. The last verb implies that all the preceding actions have come to an end, as one cannot celebrate a debauchment and walk away at the same time. But we do not get any signal from the text that this is the case – the verb forms are all the same. These simple observations make clear that the narrative prefix conjugation has only one assignment: to locate its proposition in a text, which is a communicational process. Along with this comes the imperfective aspect, as all events take their time and occur within TT. The other aspects like concomitance, frequency, conativity, etc., emerge from the relation of the event structure of the propositions to each other and to the TT; the verbal forms by them-

selves do not express any of these features. It should be emphasized that the *waw-PC* does not generate a signal of completion; we do not know whether the denoted proposition has come to an end or not. We can evaluate the temporal progress only by the subsequent finite verbs. In the following example the *waw-PC* has not even happened within TT:

(ii) *Gen 1:22*

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱתָם אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הַמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים וְהָעוֹף
 יִרְבַּ בָּאָרֶץ:

And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth".

TT of this verse is the creation of the world and it is established by the very first sentence of the bible; it ends in Gen 2:4 with the words אֱלֹהֵי תוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בֵּהֲבָרָאָם. The expression “God blessed them” is clearly part of this TT: “blessing” and “creating” continue parallel for a while. Regarding the author and the reader, the action belongs to the past, but in TT it has not already taken place. Only when the blessing words of God are spoken does the proposition achieve its goal, which is the case

at the end of the verse. Although the word **וַיְבָרַךְ** is pointing to the past tense, its aspect within TT is prospective.⁵⁰

(iii) *Gen 25:11*

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם וַיְבָרַךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יִצְחָק בְּגֹוֹ וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק
 עַם-בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי:

And it came about after the death of Abraham that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.

This short text (iii) creates a TT of its own: it starts with the first sentence and comes to an end with the last. Although both phrases are nearly identical, they incorporate different aspects. In (ii) the blessing has not yet happened, but in (iii) it took already place. We cannot perceive this via the verbal form **וַיְבָרַךְ** but only from the subsequent information provided, i.e. that Isaac dwelled in Beer-Lahai. Because of this fact, the words of the blessing must have been spoken – and so the situation is perfective with the typical semantic effect that Isaac *is* blessed by the time the next event takes place, and this situation will not change in the future. The last verb **וַיֵּשֶׁב** reveals another interesting aspect: Hebrew telic roots are capable of expressing every phase of an occurrence, namely its beginning, the process, and the end, including the state after its accomplishment. The root **ישב**

⁵⁰ The same is true for most verbs that indicate direct speech, like **וַיֹּאמֶר**; only after the words are stated is the ES of the proposition fulfilled.

means “to take a seat, sit down, sit, stay, dwell, live”. We can read the form **וַיֵּשֶׁב** as marking the starting point (to settle) with the implication of the resulting state, or as the NAS does, describing the state (to live) and blocking out the preceding process. In any case the denotation unfolds a situation that lasts for a long time, and as there is no signal of termination, it might overlap the TT, reaching into its future.

(iv) *Gen 13:12*

אֲבְרָם וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ-כְּנָעַן וְלוֹט וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּעָרֵי הַכְּפָר וַיֵּאָהֵל עַד-סְדֹם:

Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.

In this verse (iv) NAS decides to describe the ingressive part of the event, but we do not note any semantic difference to (iii); the verbal realization here is the SC, without any aspectual difference either. The forms of **וַיֵּשֶׁב** are part of the TT; they clearly do not embody anteriority or perfectivity, but only concern the relation of S and E and thus express tense. They are not interconnected and there are no specific aspectual signals. We do not know whether the events happen at the same time (although we assume that) or in sequence or when they are finished. The last verb in *waw-PC* **וַיֵּאָהֵל** marks the execution of the preceding SC and refers to an iterative procedure. Lot does not move his tents to Sodom all at once, but by and by. Neither the root nor the verbal

form imply repetition, only the event structure “to tent” in its relation to the TT (which is established in 13:1 and comes here to an end) lets us sense repetition. When all parts of the proposition **וַיֵּאָהֵל** are fulfilled, i.e. all tents are pitched, ST and TT end. All verb forms have the same valence; there is no perceivable difference between the *SC* and *waw-PC*.

(v) *Jos 9:4*

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ גַם־הַמָּה בְּעֵרְמָה וַיִּלְכוּ וַיִּצְטִירוּ וַיִּקְחוּ שְׂקִים בָּלִים
לְחִמּוֹרֵיהֶם וְנֹאדוֹת יַיִן בָּלִים וּמְבֻקָּעִים וּמְצָרְרִים:

They also acted craftily and set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended...

In this text (v) the first sentence creates a TT that covers the whole story up to V.15, where it reaches its first climax. The inhabitants of Gibeon use a trick to obtain a peace treaty from Joshua, and they succeed. All actions they take up to V.15 are part of the event structure of the proposition “to resort to a ruse”; the narration makes all the details visible, and their STs are part of the topic. The aspectual direction of the verb **וַיַּעֲשׂוּ** is prospective: it is realized over the course of the story⁵¹. When all single

⁵¹ One can generalize this observation: Prospective aspects in narrations make the details of the proposition visible, as every depicted incident is part of the ES of the phrase in question.

acts of the craft are done, the TT time ends. The word **וַיִּלְכוּ** occurs twice, once here in V.4, once in V.6. Within the topic, it has different meanings. In V.4 it has the connotation “to start a con”, as the Gibeonites prepare their procedure, and in V.6 it means “to carry out a plan”, as their preparations are complete. None of these aspects are bound to the verbal forms, they rather arise from the relation of the event structure of the propositions to the TT.

Prospectivity in narrations is not restricted to the *waw-PC*, it comes along with the *SC* as well, e.g. in the famous story of the temptation of Abraham (Gen 22:1), where the syntagma **וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה** opens a storyline and TT.

Aspects like frequency or semelfactivity are neither part of the grammatical realization nor of the ES itself, but they arise within texts by developing individual relations to TT and ST:

(vi) *Jdg 4:5*

וְהָיָא יוֹשֶׁבֶת תַּחַת־תְּמָר דְּבוֹרָה בֵּין הָרָמָה וּבֵין בֵּית־אֵל בְּהַר אֶפְרַיִם
וַיַּעֲלֶינָה אֵלֶיהָ בָּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפָּט:

And she used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment

(vii) *Jos 8:31*

וַיַּעֲלוּ עֲלוֹת לַיהוָה

...and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD.

(viii) *1 Sam 9:14*

וַיַּעֲלוּ הָעִיר הַגָּמָה בָּאִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר

So they went up to the city. As they came into the city...

The ES of the verbal phrase “to go up” resp. “to bring up” does not reveal any frequentness, but we clearly sense iterativity in (vi) and (vii). The same is true with the initial participle in (vi); the word “to sit” does not imply any habitual character by itself (cf. the same structure in Gen 18:1, where it is semelfactive), but is gained periphrastically. It is our lexical knowledge (which is a reflection, a virtual image of experienced reality) that a lot of people have legal problems to be solved all the time, and that altars are built not only to bring sacrifices on them once. But (viii) describes a single event, which comes to an end within TT – the following participle indicates its completion. Yet the form וַיַּעֲלוּ does not report any of these aspects, and neither does the English equivalent. It is a common misconception assuming the default setup of the verbal aspect, the ES, is semelfactive⁵². Both

⁵² Cf. Binnick 1991, 457. On semelfactivity and Vendler’s categories see Rothstein 2004, 183-95.

the ES and the syntactical realization in a text do not say anything about frequency; only after the relations between ES, ST, and TT are analyzed can this issue be evaluated. The same is true for the ingressive aspect. A sentence like וַיִּמְלֹךְ can mean „he was king“ (cf. Gen 36:32) as well as „he became king“ (cf. Gen 36:33). Unlike English, Hebrew telic verbs are equally capable of expressing the atelic result: someone who becomes king, reigns as king afterwards. We do not know to which phase of the event the utterance points to until we analyze the whole temporal structure. Based on these observations we can conclude that except duration (coming along with atelic ES within TT), no other aspects are genuinely connected to the *waw-PC*.⁵³

⁵³ At this point we have to contradict Andrason 2011. His argumentation constitutes an *ignoratio elenchi*, as he claims to prove the *qualities* of the Hebrew *waw-PC*, but what he really gives evidence of is the *compatibility* of the gram with different aspects and other debated temporal functions (p.24-8), which he himself admits: “When we say that the *wayyiqtol* functions as a given category or provides certain meanings, we mean that it is compatible with that particular value or function.” (2011, 25 n34) But it makes a great difference whether the *waw-PC* expresses a certain aspect by itself or can just be found in its context. To strengthen his point, Andrason explains: “The context simply makes evident a given part of the semantic potential of the gram”. (ibid) Yet this argument is synthetic, because a gram must in any case be able to appear in a particular realization, otherwise it would not. Besides, our observations make his thesis obsolete, that the *waw-PC* has gained its different abilities on its long way on certain trajectories, as they are all periphrastic and not properties of the conjugation.

As we can see, the *waw-PC* denotes its proposition in a text, and as it is the narrative form of this language, it refers to the past of the speaker and the recipient. The same is true for the *SC*, especially in its syntactical manifestation with a preceding element (*x-SC*):

(ix) *Jon 1:4*

וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם הַטֵּיִל רִיחַ-גְּדוֹלָה אֶל-הַיָּם וַיְהִי סַעַר-גְּדוֹל בַּיָּם וְהָאֲנִיָּה חֲשֹׁבָה
לְהִשָּׁבֵר׃

But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

In this text the ES of the phrase “to throw a storm” is part of the TT. Details of God’s action are not mentioned, we are just informed of the result: there is a big gale on the sea. This situation does not change, except that the storm grows bigger and bigger (V.11.13), until the seamen throw Jonah off the vessel. So the *SC* denotes the proposition in the text, where it is valid until another signal stops its power (V.15). There is absolutely no discernible difference from a realization with the *waw-PC*.⁵⁴ But in

⁵⁴ In sentences like this the *SC* has tense character; as a deictic instrument it points to the past of the DC. The assumption of an aspectual priority (boundedness) which indicates anteriority (Cook 2012, 211) amounts to the same thing: functionally, *x-SC* in main clauses is able to represent the preterite. This task is also emphasized by Joosten (2012, 193. 215) and so there is no reason not to call the gram a “tense”.

the following verse there is; the *SC* reveals a function that cannot commonly be found with the *waw-PC*:

(x) *Jon 1:5*

וַיִּירָאוּ הַמַּלְחִים וַיִּזְעֻקוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אֱלֹהֵי וַיִּטְלוּ אֶת-הַכֵּלִים אֲשֶׁר
 בָּאֶנְיָה אֶל-הַיָּם לְהַקֵּל מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּזְנֶה יָרֵד אֶל-יַרְכְּתֵי הַסְּפִינָה וַיִּשְׁכַּב
 וַיִּרְדָּם:

Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah had gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

Jonah is still on the run when God sends a great storm. All three *waw-PCs* of the first sentences take place within the TT; they happen more or less at the same time. While the first *PC* וַיִּירָאוּ represents an ingressive aspect with increasing force, the other two forms signify iterativity – aspects that cannot be perceived from the realization of the verbs, but from the circumstances they address. Unlike (ix) the *SC* in (x) is not part of the TT. The word יָרֵד indicates anteriority in relation to the TT, which the English translation clarifies by using the *past perfect*. The *SC* here embodies the *perfective aspect* with its typical signals *action completed* and *resulting state achieved* with respect to the TT. We do not see the beginning point of Jonah's action (we do not know when he started to go down and we do not see the process of his moves), we are just informed about the resulting state. Astonishingly enough, the verb does not signal its function by its form –

it looks just the same as any other *SC*. Again we have to analyze the *ST* with respect to the *TT* and the event-structure of the propositions: it is very unlikely that Jonah goes downstairs to take a nap while God brings up the storm and the ship is about to sink. So Jonah's activities must have taken place earlier. Temporal situations like these, where anteriority in relation to the *TT* is expressed, are a domain of the *SC* and can hardly be found with other verbal realizations⁵⁵. As a rule of thumb, one can say that the *SC* denotes *aspect* when past or present perfect has to be used in English, otherwise it is a matter of *tense*. The *SC* as an aspect is able to create a *TT* of its own, as in (x). The narrator directs our attention to a background topic, where we stay for a while – the next two sentences **וַיִּשְׁכַּב וַיִּרְדָּם** are part of it – before we return to the main frame in Jon 1:6. The *SC* on its own does not signal the perfective aspect; we always have to scrutinize the temporal constellation of *ST*, *TT*, and *ES*, as the same form may express *tense* as in

⁵⁵ The *waw-PC* in particular does not express anteriority – with only a few exceptions. Cf. Isa 39:1; Jos 2:4. In cases like these I assume a shift of *TT*, which Joosten 2012, 171-2 calls “backtracking”. Cook 2012, 259, quotes Isa 39:1 to show that the *waw-PC* does not always express succession (Cf. 289). This I have already pointed out in my study (Matheus 2011, 131-2).

(xi) Gen 19:6

וַיֵּצֵא אֱלֹהִים לֹט הַפֶּתַח וְהִדְלִיתָ סָגַר אַחֲרָיו:

But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him. (ST within TT)

or *aspect* as in

(xii) 1 Sam 1:5

וְלִחְנָה יָתַן מִנָּה אֶחַת אֶפְסִים כִּי אָתֶּחְנָה אֶהֱב וְיִהְיֶה סָגַר רַחֲמָה:

But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb. (ST before TT)⁵⁶.

Yet the perfective aspect is a common feature of the SC in subordinated clauses⁵⁷:

(xiii) Gen 1:31

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה־טוֹב מְאֹד

And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

⁵⁶ As the examples (xi) and (xii) show, one cannot conclude function from form: a verb realized in SC does not automatically point to the “background” of a story. Cf. Niccacci1994, 120ff.178.

⁵⁷ Joosten 2012, 219, avoids the term “perfective” and calls this role of the gram “retrospective” according to its “basic function of expressing anteriority.”

In this text ST clearly takes place before TT: God looks (TT) and appreciates what he had made earlier. We can also observe an interweaving between main- and sub-clause. The verb “to make” represents an *activity*, but by the connection with the pronoun כָּל־ and the root עשה it becomes telic: the event comes to an end, when “all” is done.

Clauses like (xiii) occur very regularly, but they do not always express *aspect*; occasionally they represent simple *tense* structures, as they are deictically connected to the communication partner and do not organize the time relations within the text, as in

(xiv) *Gen 1:21*

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַתַּיִמִּים הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֵת כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה | הַרְמֹשֶׁת
אֲשֶׁר שָׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם לְמִינֵיהֶם

And God created the great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind.

Here (xiv) God creates all kind of swarming animals, and after that they do what they are made for; ST of the SC is part of the TT, and as these beings continue to swarm to this very day, ST

is valid for a lot of TTs thereafter. As the verb represents an activity that lasts the whole TT⁵⁸, both time lines are parallel with the effect of *imperfectivity*: aE-bE.

A little trickier are time relations represented in clauses like these:

(xv) 1 Sam 26:5

וַיִּקָּם דָּוִד וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר חָנָה־שָׁם שָׁאוּל וַיֵּרָא דָּוִד אֶת־
הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר שָׁכַב־שָׁם שָׁאוּל

David then arose and came to the place where Saul had camped. And David saw the place where Saul lay.

This scene (xv) presents two verbs in the SC; the NAS translates one of them with pluperfect, the other with simple past. As the telic Hebrew verbs are able to cover the whole process of their semantic meaning from the beginning to the end plus the resulting ongoing situation, there are two readings, a *perfective* and an *imperfective* one: if the two verbs express tense (as in ix & xi), they are only related to the DC and denote their propositions in the text, alongside providing the imperfective aspect. In this particular case the finite verbal forms would represent the end point of the process (“camp”, “lie”) without any regard to its development. It takes some time to camp and to lie on one’s bed, and

⁵⁸ Joosten 2012, 219, regards stative verbs as the exception to the rule that the SC refers to the past of TT. But also telic verbs can occur contemporaneously. Cf. 2 Sam 20:12.

this time span is part of the topic and overlaps it (as Saul lies in his camp before David watches him and will do so afterwards). Understood in this way, we can use the simple past tense to describe the situation that David's eyes encounter. It is also possible to use the pluperfect for both verbal forms; we then describe the previous action (before TT), which has come to an end, and refer to the semantic implicature of the perfective aspect, the resulting state of Saul's approach (within TT): Saul has pitched his camp and has gone to bed, so within the focused time the camp is existent and Saul lies on his mat.

In narrative texts we infrequently come upon syntactic realizations containing simple *PC* forms and *SC* verbs with preceding *waw*. Grammars often see special aspects in those forms⁵⁹, but in this paper the view is held that these phenomena only represent simple tense forms without any far-reaching aspectual functions:

(xvi) *1 Sam 1:10*

וְהָיָא מֵרַת גַּפֶּשׁ וְתַתְּפִלָּל עַל־יְהוָה וּבְכָה תְּבַכֶּה:

And she, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly.

TT of this text (xvi) is the prayer of Hannah which is created by the initial *waw-PC*. Hannah weeps. The information we get

⁵⁹ Cf. Waltke/O'Connor 496ff; 519ff. See also Pietsch, who discusses this problem detailed on the basis of the narration in 1 Kgs 23:4ff, and Weipert.

from the *PC*-verb is exactly this; no further signals about beginning, end, or duration can be sensed. The atelic activity of Hannah takes place within TT and it ends in V.18. The *PC* has exactly the same quality as the *SC*, which we might expect here as “standard form”, or *waw-PC*. The verse describes three overlapping actions (the events might not be exactly concomitant), and the *PC* does not, as Joosten (2012, 62-3, n50; 282) suggests, express “attending circumstances” or prospectivity. It is surely imperfective (Cf. Cook 2012, 218 n51), as Hanna weeps quite a while – but the nominal clause and the *waw-PC* represent the same aspect, so it is not specifically bound to that form. As we do not find a special signal how the *PC* is linked to the other events, the verb only relates E to S and cannot be understood other than conveying past tense. The *PC* here certainly does not reflect an iterative or habitual action.⁶⁰ There is no difference perceptible with realizations in the forms of the following verse:

(xvii) Gen 45:14

וַיִּפֹּל עַל-צַוְאֵרֵי בְנֵימִן-אָחִיו וַיִּבְדֹּךְ וּבְנֵימִן בָּכָה עַל-צַוְאֵרָיו:

Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept on his neck.

⁶⁰ According to Joosten (2012, 63), this is one of the main features of the *PC* “which is compatible with the idea that YIQTOL expresses modality”.

(xviii) Gen 2:10

וְנָהָר יֵצֵא מֵעֵדֶן לְהַשְׁקוֹת אֶת־הַגֶּן וּמִשָּׁם יִפְרָד וְהָיָה לְאַרְבָּעָה רְאשִׁים:

And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

This text (xviii) often is quoted as a proof for different aspects the verbal realizations represent.⁶¹ But a closer look refutes this interpretation: all three verbs express their semantic horizon within TT and overlap this span; they might still be valid at the time of utterance. They can be understood as *states*; states are events or processes that have come to an end and found their final condition: the river springs (it did this once) and therefore the water flows steadily, it divides (it did this once) and therefore it has become to four arms that are “now” in existence. Aspects like “mere duration” or “progressive duration” (whatever that means) are not expressed by the verbal forms, but by the ES of the propositions that have come to life in the text. If one senses change or movement, the verbs can be understood as *activities*,

⁶¹ Gesenius 315 notes: “Driver ... rightly lays stress upon the inherent distinction between the *participle* as expressing *mere* duration, and the *imperfect* as expressing *progressive* duration ... Thus the words וְנָהָר יֵצֵא... represent the river of Paradise as going out of Eden in a continuous, uninterrupted stream, but יִפְרָד, which immediately follows, describes how the parting of its waters is always taking place afresh.”

and both categories (state and activity) are *atelic*, which means all three verbal forms are imperfective regarding TT and time of realization (ST), as they all happen simultaneously.⁶² As they do not make any statement about internal time relations, they only represent their ES in the text and therefore tense. All three realizations could have been formulated in *waw-PC* or *x-SC* with no noticeable difference:

(xix) Gen 13:11

וַיִּבְחַר-לוֹ לֹט אֶת כָּל-כַּבְּר הַיַּרְדֵּי וַיֵּסַע לֹט מִקְדָּם וַיִּפְרְדּוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל
אָחִיו:

So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other.

(xx) Gen 10:5

מִמְּאֵלָה נִפְרְדּוּ אֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם בְּאֶרְצוֹתָם אִישׁ לְלִשְׁנֹו לְמִשְׁפָּחָתָם בְּגוֹיָהֶם:

From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

In (xix) the verb וַיִּפְרְדּוּ is part of the TT, the action takes place during the focused time; in (xx) it might well be the same, but this text could also be understood as representing a resulting

⁶² The form וַיְהִיָּה refers to the past of the emittent. Very often this realization indicates iterativity in narration, e.g. Gen 38:9; Num 21:9 etc.

state, with the event preceding (perfective aspect). But both sentences amount to the same state: within TT the outcome is a situation of separation⁶³ – just like in Gen 2:10.

(xxi) *Gen 28:6*

וַיֵּרָא עֵשָׂו כִּי־בָרַךְ יִצְחָק אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְשָׁלַח אֹתוֹ פָּדָנָה אֲרָם לְקַחַת לֹ מִשָּׁם אִשָּׁה בְּבָרְכוֹ אֹתוֹ וַיֵּצֵא עָלָיו לְאמֹר לֹא־תִקַּח אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת כְּנָעַן:

Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram, to take to himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he charged him, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan."

In (xxi) the *SC* כִּי־בָרַךְ is depicting an incident that happened before TT. Like in (x) it creates a TT of its own which is valid until the end of V.7, where we return to the main story line. In this side-focus the two finite verb forms וְשָׁלַח and וַיֵּצֵא clearly have the same task⁶⁴: they denote their proposition in the text without any perceptible difference, though their aspect differs due to the realization of their STs: the ST of וַיֵּצֵא is prospective, as the words are not yet spoken. The *waw-SC* could have easily been replaced by a *waw-PC* without any functional difference.

⁶³ In Gen 13:11 we know that the separation must have become a fact because of the first verbs of the next sentence (13:12): both men settle at different places.

⁶⁴ For a detailed discussion of the *SC* with preceding *waw*, see Matheus 2011, 204 et seqq.

Probably the author wanted to avoid a possible confusion; if he had chosen the *waw-PC*, Esau might have been taken as the subject of the sentence.

In subordinated clauses the simple *PC* can be used to express the future of or within the TT; it then has structural assignments within the text, it expresses *aspect*:

(xxii) Ex 2:4

וַיִּתְצַב אֶחָתוּ מֵרָחֵק לְדַעַת מַה־יַּעֲשֶׂה לּוֹ:

And his sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him.

This interesting text (xxii) is part of a TT created in V.1; it is the story of the birth and rescue of baby Moses which ends in V.9. Within this story a sub-topic is established, starting with the initial *waw-PC*; the sub-topic ends when Moses' sister Moses knows what happens to her brother, which is likewise the case in V.9. The situation the scene depicts can be analyzed with Comrie's aforementioned Reichenbach-based scheme: one event happens after another event, and, as the "other event" is – in addition to that – the starting point from which the next event will be validated, it functions as a relation point R. Here I fully agree

with Joosten, who claims that the *PC* “may be used as a prospective form, presenting a process as a future from the point of view of the past time frame defined ... in the context.”⁶⁵

Every time this text is generated (i.e. emitted and received), the temporal relation between either events is always the same and totally independent from the point of view of the speaker as well as of the recipient; it is non-deictic. Nor does it take a view from the “inside” of the situation to evaluate its temporal consistency. For Jan Joosten, the main feature of the *PC* in narrative and discourse is modality; he writes (2012, 281): “The modal meaning is almost always in evidence, particularly if one allows for the idea that iterativity and modality are closely connected. Cases where YIQTOL seems to function as an indicative preterite are rare and irregular in prose“. The last statement can easily be proved a misconception by the sheer number of *PC*-verbs in narration that, like (xviii), relate their proposition to a DC. Yet the question remains why these verb forms and not *x-SC* or *waw-PC* are being used. This we do not know. Throughout the course of history (and we are talking of about a thousand years of language

⁶⁵ Joosten 2012, 281. But Joosten oversteps the mark when he regards texts like Num 7:9 as modal forms. He claims that in such cases the *PC* “does not express that something happened in the past, but that it had not yet happened or that it would happen.” (282) However, habituais, iteratives, and prospectives are aspects, not moods. What they have in common is that they do not denote their proposition in a TT; their ST(s) are outside of the perception of the interlocutors (in the example Num 7:9, we do not know when or how often the sons carry the holy things).

evolution) there might have been a different attitude of a native speaker towards the use of the *PC* and *waw-SC*. But we cannot reconstruct what nuances she or he perceives by using these forms. Joosten might be right in his assumption, but we have no way to prove this thesis. We can only describe the functions of the verbal forms in narration, and there is no reason to believe that modality is the default setting of the simple *PC*. The case is somewhat different regarding prospectivity and iterativity. Here we can say that iterativity is not grammaticalized, i.e. it is not a feature of the verbal form. Iterative and habitual events occur within all verbal realizations, but prospectivity in sub-ordinated clauses (ST after TT) is linked solely to the *PC*. As every future is fraught with imponderables, this feature might be labelled as “modal” to clarify the attitude of the speaker towards the future of TT.

Our findings regarding the Hebrew conjugations in narrative texts can be subsumed in the following table:

Table 3: The verb in narration

Syntactical realization	Tense	Aspect	Modality
<i>waw-PC, ST within TT</i>	Past	-	-
<i>Simple PC, ST within TT</i>	Past	-	-
<i>Simple PC, ST outside of TT</i>	-	Prospectivity	+
<i>Simple SC, ST within TT</i>	Past	-	-
<i>Simple SC, ST outside of TT</i>	-	Anteriority	-
<i>waw-SC, ST within TT</i>	Past	-	-

2.2 Discourse

In discourse, the main difference to narrative texts is that the communicators are involved in the depicted events; quite often they are part of the texts themselves and therefore the temporal situations are far more complicated. But as in narration, some fundamental phenomena can be described: The structure *waw-PC* does not occur in discourse; instead the simple *SC* is used to express the past⁶⁶ and the resulting state, i.e. the *hic et nunc* of the speaker. The *waw-SC* only can be found within TT and refers to the future of the deictic community. The simple *PC* realizes its ST within or outside of TT and correlates to the present or the future of the DC. If the ST of a *PC-Verb* takes place outside of TT, it sometimes represents a prospective aspect.

In texts with an active DC the *waw-SC* and the *PC* often have the same function: they show the future of the speaker. Nevertheless there are differences: The *SC* is never found outside TT, and in a lot of cases its perfective force is visible. The *PC* on the other hand can regulate the aspects in subordinate clauses, but surprisingly seldom represents prospectivity in discourse.

⁶⁶ It can often be observed that a *waw-PC* follows an *SC-Verb*; in such cases the emitter changes to narration mode. Cf. e.g. Jdg 12:2.

(xxiii) Gen 24:4

כִּי אֶל-אֶרְצִי וְאֶל-מוֹלְדֹתַי תֵּלְךָ וְלִקְחָתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי לִיִצְחָק:

But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

Both verb forms of (xxiii) point to the future of the DC; they do not differ in this regard. It is often said that the *SC* continues the grammatical meaning of the preceding form and this seems to be true with respect to the temporal and modal characteristics. But we have the impression that the *SC* generates a signal of completeness in view of the *preceding* event establishing an implicature, on which the following action builds: “You *shall* go to my land, and when you have done that, then you *will* take ...” This is especially plain in conditional clauses that belong to commissive and directive speech acts and by themselves point to the future (xxiv). The *PC* is the means to discuss the future, to consider different options, to ponder possibilities. In the communicational act an unmentioned decision is often to be perceived upon which the *SC* is then based to take the consequences resp. to show the certain future that emerges from the tacit accordance. In (xxv) Moses’ sister is expecting the approval of Pharaoh’s daughter (הַאֵלֶּיךָ). Taking this for granted, she can proceed and act on the basis of this unspoken consent (וְקִרְאָתִי). When all the fish in the Nile have died (xxvi), as a consequence the river certainly will stink (וּבִאֵשׁ). In English we don’t have the means to

portray a situation in such a differentiated way and simply use future tense for both assertions.

(xxiv) Ex 21:23

וְאִם־אָסוֹן יִהְיֶה וְנָתַתָּה נַפְשׁ נַפְשׁ תַּחַת נַפְשׁ:

But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life.

(xxv) Ex 2:7

וְתֹאמַר אַחַתּוֹ אֶל־בַּת־פְּרֹעֹה הַאֵלֶּה וְקִרְאתִי לָךְ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקַת מִן הָעִבְרִיּוֹת:

Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women ..."

(xxvi) Ex 7:18

וְהַדְּגָה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיָּאֵר תָּמוּת וּבַאֲשׁ הַיָּאֵר

And the fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul ...

In subordinate clauses of the active DC, the *PC* sometimes expresses the future of the TT:

(xxviii) Gen 15:8

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בְּמָה אֲדַע כִּי אִירְשָׁנָה:

Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?

TT of (xxviii) is a time in the future of the DC, the time when Abram receives the answer to his question. The second verb refers to the future of the TT and thereby expresses the prospective aspect, but it points to the future of the DC as well, so both verbal forms have text-situational functions by regulating the relation between the propositions as well as deictic tasks by revealing the direction of time to the recipient.

In most texts of an active DC however the verb forms of subordinate clauses do not express special aspects on their own:

(xxix) *Isa 39:7*

וּמִבְנֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאוּ מִמֶּנָּךְ אֲשֶׁר תּוֹלִידוֹ יִקְחוּ וְהִיוּ סְרִיסִים בְּהֵיכַל מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל:

And some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you shall beget, shall be taken away; and they shall become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.

In this text (xxix) a lot will happen in the future of the DC; the TT is established in the preceding verse (“days are coming”) and the events characterized here are part of this topic. Interestingly, *all* the verbs are linked to the DC and the forms do not express any aspects, i.e. a regulation of time relations between one another. Clearly the second *asher*-clause is prior to the first one, and Hezekiah has to have sexual intercourse *before* the proposi-

tion יקָחוּ can be realized. The correlations of the different propositions to each other result from an analysis of the event-structures in respect to their ST and TT. Visible aspects are not a result of the verb forms: the word תולִיד is iterative as well as יצָאוּ; Hezekiah has to sleep with his queen at least three times. The form יקָחוּ might be read as “one by one”, but could also mean “all at once”. The last *waw*-SC verb, where we can sense the perfective aspect again, as all previous actions must have come to an end, implies “for a long, long time”.

(xxx) Gen 17:21

וְאֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲקִים אֶת־יִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵד לְךָ שָׂרָה לְמוֹעֵד הַזֶּה בְּשָׁנָה
הָאַחֶרֶת:

But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.

The TT of (xxx) is created by the exact time designation בְּשָׁנָה הָאַחֶרֶת, the main clause אֲקִים marks the future of the TT. Before this event will happen, the subordinate clause אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵד must have come true. The second PC תֵּלֵד takes place *before* the first one (אֲקִים). The time relations between the two verbs are obviously not expressed by their forms, neither by their syntactical realizations; instead both are joined to the DC alone, whose future they denote.

Sometimes the *PC* reflects the past in subordinate clauses:

(xxxix) *Rut 3:5*

וְתֹאמַר אֵלֶיהָ כָּל אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאמְרֵי אֵלַי אֲעֵשֶׂה:

And she replied, "All that you say I will do."

Even if the word תֹּאמְרֵי in (xxxix) represents a habitual action, it refers to the past of the speaker, as Naomi has given good advice to her daughter-in-law in the preceding verse. Like the English translation which uses the present tense, the finite verb is deictic without pointing to a specific time sphere. Only after the analysis of ST with respect to TT (which is the *hic et nunc* of the DC), we attain the alluded time.

One of the main functions of the simple *SC* in subordinate clauses in active and passive DC is its ability to generate the perfective aspect:

(xxxix) *Gen 3:12*

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי הִוא נָתַתָּה-לִּי מִן-הָעֵץ וָאֲכַל:

The man said, "The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it."

In (xxxii) the verb **נִתְּתָהּ** refers to a situation which is the result of a preceding event. YHWH has given the woman to Adam, and this action makes up a *semantic* implicature, which refers to the current situation: *She is at his side*. There might be one or more *pragmatic* implicatures as well, because the *asher*-clause emphasizes God's action and is contextually redundant: *If you hadn't given her to me, I would not have failed – it's not my fault!* Again, we do not see any aspects expressed by the two *SC*-Verbs regarding their mutual relation.

As we could observe in narration (xv), *tense* and *resultant state* of a completed action can – not rarely – hardly be distinguished, as it amounts to the same situation:

(xxxiii) 1 Kgs 18:22

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֶלְהֵם אֲנִי **נִוְתַרְתִּי** נִבְיֵא לַיהוָה לְבַדִּי :

Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD"

In this text the *SC* can be read as pointing to an action which has been accomplished some time ago (ST before TT), but it can also be understood as expressing the time of the speaker (ST within TT) which is an unspoken “right now” – the present tense of the utterance. Both views sum up the same position in time, in which Elijah is solitarily, on his own.

The perfective aspect is likewise part of future events:

(xxxiv) *Gen 28:15b*

לֹא אֶעֱזְבֶךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם-עָשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּרְתִּי לְךָ:

I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

The first verb of (xxxiii) in *PC* marks an event in the future of the DC. The proposition will not happen until the second word עָשִׂיתִי has been fulfilled, which contains a couple of *STs* that all must have come to an end before אֶעֱזְבֶךָ can be realized. The *STs* of עָשִׂיתִי are dependent on the last *SC* דִּבַּרְתִּי which points to the past of the DC and determines the endurance and iterativity of עָשִׂיתִי. The word דִּבַּרְתִּי combines aspect and tense: it has a communicational function regarding the recipient and, as the DC is part of the text, it represents a completed event within the situational relations including the typical resultant state with its semantic implicature, namely that the promise is in force. There are pragmatic implicatures as well, as God has commissioned himself to act accordingly. The *TT* has its starting point in the *hic et nunc* of the DC and lasts until the perfective implicature of the word עָשִׂיתִי has come true.

Modality in this paper is understood as the emitter's attitude to his or her utterance.⁶⁷ In discourse, the main theme of any communication is the *hic et nunc* of the interlocutors and its effects for the time to come. By discussing future events, the speaker lets slip in his or her own position or estimation regarding the located event with different grades of intensity. In addition, an utterance always has pragmatic implications as well that can be more far-reaching than a simple assertion. In a face-to-face communication we have to receive all the subtle signals to understand our partner properly - and it frequently happens that such communication goes wrong. Therefore it is very difficult to adequately understand a communication that has been passed on to us as a written record and that is several thousand years old. The following verse is one of the easier examples:

(xxxv) Gen 42:37

וְאֲנִי אֲשִׁיבֶנּוּ אֵלֶיךָ

... and I will return him to you.

In this text Reuben utters these words to his father. They might be understood as a simple *assertive* about a fact in the future, but we sense the speaker's attitude towards his utterance and grasp it as a promise to bring his father's youngest son back safely. In the

⁶⁷ Cf. Joosten 2012, 31.

categories of the speech act theory, a promise is a *commissive* utterance; so Reuben commits himself to do everything to make his promise come true. There are *expressive* allusions as well – Reuben shows his feelings about the matter: he is self-confident and feels strong. At the same time he might ask his brothers for help, which makes the utterance a *directive*. Solely the last category is precluded; the sentence cannot be understood as a *declaration*. Regarding time relations, *declarations* and *expressives* point to the *hic et nunc* of the speaker by themselves, *commissives* and *directives* to the future. In contrast to narration, where *assertives* only represent the past, this category in discourse is open to all three stages of time.

A little more controversial are texts like this one:

(xxxvi) *Ex 20:13*

לֹא תִרְצַח:

You shall not murder.

Though all grammars specify the negation לֹא to express the indicative (in contrast to the modal form לֹא־), almost all translations consider the *PC* here to be modal (cf. Joosten 2012, 64). This is rather because of our own system of evaluating the speech act; we understand this utterance as a *directive*. But taking gram-

mar seriously, the text turns out to be an *assertive*, whose illocutionary point is to state the proposition as true and oblige the recipient to accept this truth content.⁶⁸ If the hearer accepts the proposition as true (cf. Ex 24:3 כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה (נַעֲשֶׂה)), the indirect speech act is not *directive* but *commissive*.

The next five texts feature the same word with different connotations:

(xxxvii) Ex 18:15

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְחַתָּנוֹ כִּי־יָבֵא אֵלַי הָעָם לְדַרְשׁ אֱלֹהִים:

And Moses said to his father-in-law: "Because the people come to me to inquire of God."

(xxxviii) Ex 18:23

אִם אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה תַּעֲשֶׂה וְצִוְּךָ אֱלֹהִים וַיְכַלֶּת עִמָּד וְגַם כָּל־הָעָם הַזֶּה עַל־מְקוֹמוֹ יָבֵא בְּשָׁלוֹם:

"If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace."

(xxxix) Jdg 13:8

וַיַּעֲתַר מְנוּחַ אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר בֵּי אָדוֹנָי אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּ יְבוֹא־נָא עוֹד אֵלֵינוּ וְיִזְרְנוּ מִהַנְּעִשָׂה לְנַעַר הַיּוֹלֵד:

⁶⁸ Cf. Rolf 1997, 141.

Then Manoah entreated the LORD and said, "O Lord, please let the man of God whom Thou hast sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born."

(xi) *Jdg 13:12*

וַיֹּאמֶר מְנוּחַ עִתָּהּ יָבֵא דְבָרֶיךָ מֵה־יְהוָה מְשַׁפֵּט־הַנְּעָר וּמַעֲשֵׂהוּ:

And Manoah said: "Now when your words come to pass, what shall be the boy's mode of life and his vocation?"

(xii) *1 Sam 2:34*

זֶה־לְךָ הָאֹת אֲשֶׁר יָבֵא אֶל־שְׁנֵי בָנֶיךָ אֶל־חֲפְנֵי וּפִינָחַס בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד יָמוּתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם:

And this will be the sign to you which shall come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them shall die.

The first verse (xxxvii) is clearly habitual: Moses administers the law all the time. The attested verb form does not incorporate frequency; as we imagine that the people do not come to Moses all at once but by and by, we distribute the ST to different time spans that, every time they come to existence, constitute the TT. A special attitude towards his utterance is not noticeable; he just states the fact to explain his behavior. Therefore the *PC* verb does not express modality or mood. But in (xxxviii) it does: Jethro forms a conditional clause with the *PC* as apodosis: people may/should/can go home satisfied. Again, we do not receive these data from the verbal form but by the analysis of the time-

factors (TT, ST, and ES) pertaining to the DC. In (xxxix) there is a very firm modal note detectable. That the speaker has a strong desire is not indicated by the *PC* verb. The intensifier **אֵינִי** and other periphrastic means (like the adverb **עוֹד**) lead us in this direction. As a speech act, the sentence expresses a *directive* and points to the future. Whereas there are no specific grammatical indicators, in (xl) the verb stands in the protasis of a conditional clause; there is no particular noticeable attitude of the speaker. Though the adverb **עַתָּה** points to the time of speaking, TT is the future. In (xli) the *PC* is just future tense and semelfactive, without any signs of mood or modality. To summarize: beyond the grammaticalized verb forms Jussive, Cohortative, and Imperative, the TAM-element “mood” is the result of periphrastical means and not bound to the verbal realization. The comprehension of complex communicational processes is achieved by classifying the speech act and evaluating the attitude of the speaker. The interaction of the deictic community, through using different semantic and pragmatic means in their locutionary act (grounding on the interrelation of ES, ST, and TT), determine the modal and the temporal orientation of the denotation in a text.

Our observations in the world of discourse can be summarized in the following table:

Table 4: The verb in discourse

Syntactical realization	Tense	Aspect	Modality
<i>waw-SC, ST within TT</i>	(certain) Future	(Perfectivity)	(+)
<i>Simple PC, ST within TT</i>	Present, Future	-	+
<i>Simple PC, ST outside of TT</i>	-	Prospectivity	+
<i>Simple SC, ST within TT</i>	Past	Perfective implicature	(+)
<i>Simple SC, ST outside of TT</i>	-	Anteriority	(+)

3. The Predicative Participle

For Jan Joosten “the role of the participle is pivotal in the Hebrew verbal system. As an expression of contemporaneity it stands opposed to, on the one hand, QATAL and WAY-YIQTOL which express anterior or past situations, and thus temporal distance, and, on the other hand, the modal forms which present situations as non-real.” (Joosten 2012, 230) Though he notices a “measure of overlap between the functions of the participle and those of the finite tenses” (ibid, n6), Joosten claims that the participle “could not substitute QATAL or YIQTOL ... without seriously altering the temporal-aspectual meaning.” (ibid) While this appraisal seems to be a suitable description of the gram’s function, it does not strike the core of the matter precisely.⁶⁹ As the participle almost always encounters within TT, ubiquitousness is a necessary component of any of its realizations. But this applies equally to the other verb forms as far as they are part of TT. The difference lies in the focus: the participle concentrates on the fact that the denotation of the proposition is true for the situation described by the utterance,

⁶⁹ For a research history on this topic cf. Cook 2012, 223-233. In his eyes the main task of the participle is to express the progressive aspect, which puts it in line with the *PC* semantically (232-3).

but it does not make any statement about its borders, i.e. beginning or end, and its location in time.

The participle encounters in all time stages and all kind of speech acts with the same function: it couples the event structure of its proposition to the actant or situation without giving any hint of the time of realization by itself. Again the recipient has to analyze the relation of the indicators to fathom the direction or stage of time.

(xlii) *Gen 1:2*

וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

... and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

(xliii) *Gen 15:12*

וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לָבוֹא וְתַרְדֵּמָה נָפְלָה עַל-אַבְרָם וְהִנֵּה אֵימָה חֲשֹׁכָה
גְּדֹלָה נִפְלְתָ עָלָיו:

Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.

These examples are part of narrative texts; in (xlii) the participle expresses a state that comes to an end in the course of events, and in (xliii) it conveys an accomplishment resp. achievement containing a perfective implicature. Both texts could have used different verb forms without noticeable difference regarding tense or aspect; the form **נִפְלְתָ** is equivalent to the earlier used *SC*

נִפְלָה; this gram could render the assertion מְרַחֶפֶת in Gen 1:2 as well as a *PC* form (cf. Deut 32:11 יִרְחֹף). Things are different in respect of the *waw-PC*; sometimes this grammatical structure can be used promiscuously (as in Gen 15:2), sometimes (as in Gen 1:2) it cannot:

(xliv) Gen 18:1

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֵלֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל בְּחֹם הַיּוֹם:

Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

(xlv) Gen 18:10

וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוּב אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעֵת חַיִּיהָ וְהִנֵּה־בֵן לְשָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ וְשָׂרָה שֹׁמְעֶת פֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וְהוּא אַחֲרָיו:

And he said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him.

In these texts (xliv and xlv) we get the impression that the predicative participle covers the whole TT; in Gen 18:1 Abraham most certainly is sitting at the tent door before YHWH appears to him, and in V.10 Sarah is eavesdropping on her husband during the complete conversation. If the *waw-PC* had been used here, Abraham just had entered the scene (V.1) and Sarah only had heard what YHWH said in this verse (V.10).

Thus, the predicative participle is regularly part of narration, as in

(*xlvi*) 2 Sam 19:41

וְהִגָּה כָּל-אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֵימִים אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ

And behold, all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king ...

and (*xlvii*) 2 Kgs 2:12

וְאֵלִישָׁע רָאָה וְהוּא מְצַעֵק אָבִי | אָבִי רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו וְלֹא רָאָהוּ
עוֹד וַיִּחְזַק בְּבִגְדָיו וַיִּקְרַעֵם לְשָׁנַיִם קָרְעִים:

And Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

In narrative texts the participle often has the same task as the *waw-PC* and *x-SC* like in the examples above: the nominal forms denote their proposition in a text and thereby have a communicational function without revealing any aspectual or modal nuances, except emphasis. In these cases they are a stylistic device to express vivacity and buoyancy.

In discursive texts the gram is able to distribute the parts of its event structure to different time stages like in

(xlvi) Jdg 19:18

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו עֲבָרִים אֲנִיחֲנוּ מִבֵּית־לָחֶם יְהוּדָה עַד־יִרְכָּתִי הַר־אֶפְרַיִם
 מִשָּׁם אֲנִי וְאֵלֶּךְ עַד־בֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוָה אֲנִי הַלֵּךְ וְאִין
 אִישׁ מֵאִסֵּף אוֹתִי הַבַּיְתָה:

And he said to him, "We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote part of the hill country of Ephraim, for I am from there, and I went to Bethlehem in Judah. But I am now going to my house, and no man will take me into his house."

This face-to-face communication (xlvi) of an old man and a Levite reflects an ongoing action that has come to a disruption during the dialog: some parts of the ES of the propositions "to pass" and "to go" are already completed, some others are pending; their ST lie outside of TT, which is the time of the communication.

Even in discourse the participle can express iterative actions in the past:

(xlix) Neh 5:9

וְאֹמַר לֹא־טוֹב הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם עֹשִׂים הֲלוֹא בִּירְאַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ תֵּלְכוּ
 מִחֲרַפַּת הַגּוֹיִם אוֹיְבֵינוּ:

Again I said, "The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?"

Though in English the present continuous is used, the proposition refers to the past, and Nehemiah wants it to be stopped in the future.

Frequently, however, the participle in direct speech acts and other discursive texts points to the future:

(l) *Jer 31:31*

הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְכָרַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־בְּרִית יְהוּדָה
בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה:

'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah'.

By no means does the participle by itself express futurity. Only the following syntagma which is realized in *waw-SC* points to this direction of time and lets the recipient discern the temporal situation. Very often there are no further textual references with the result that the participle has to be analyzed in relation to the speech situation:

(li) *Gen 6:13*

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְנֹחַ קֵץ כָּל־בָּשָׂר בָּא לְפָנַי כִּי־מְלֹאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס
מִפְּנֵיהֶם וְהִנְנִי מְשַׁחֲתָם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth."

In this text (li) the first participle⁷⁰ points to the past, the second one to the future of the time of utterance. How do we know this? The recipient (Noah) as well as a posterior reader has to make a “reality check” according to the time of the communication, which constitutes the TT as the *hic et nunc* of the actants (וְהַנְּגִי, implying “right now”). On condition that the statement “I am a destroyer” is true, the ST of the proposition with all phases of its ES must lie in the (immediate) future, as one can see clearly that it has not yet been realized in the past and present.

Note that the TT of the participle is very often the time of the dialog and that only the ST lies in the future, as in

(lii) 1 Kgs 11:31

וַיֹּאמֶר לְיִרְבְּעָם קַח-לָךְ עֲשָׂרָה קֶרֶעִים כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנְּגִי קֶרַע אֶת-הַמְּמֶלֶכָה מִיַּד שְׁלֹמֹה וְנָתַתִּי לָךְ אֵת עֲשָׂרָה
 הַשְּׁבָטִים:

And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes

But sometimes the whole scene, TT including its ST, is located in the future:

⁷⁰ According to Bible Works this form is a participle, but it might be a finite SC form as well – without any functional difference.

(lii) 1 Sam 10:8

וַיֵּרְדָּתָּ לְפָנַי הַגִּלְגָּל וְהִנֵּה אָנֹכִי יֹרֵד אֵלַיךָ לְהַעֲלוֹת עֹלוֹת לְזִבְחַ זְבָחִי
שְׁלָמִים

And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings.

All examples show that not contemporaneousness or progression are the main features of the predicative participle but to sprig the ES of a proposition to a person or a situation. The recipient has to evaluate the relation of the relevant factors as ES, time of utterance, direction of speech, and TT to realize the actual morphogenesis of the proposition, i.e. its ST(s).

4. Final notes

Biblical Hebrew, as any other language, is a very flexible instrument that can express the same proposition in different ways. But its means are not arbitrary, which this paper could only outline to some extent. The *PC* is, like the English present, an unmarked tense that does not refer to a specific time-sphere by itself. The communication partners must be aware of what kind of speech act the utterance signifies; only in clearly outlined situations can the temporal and modal direction of the used verbal form be discerned. The *PC* then can be part of texts that point to the past, the present, or the future of the DC, and it occasionally marks the prospective aspect of TT; in the shape of *waw-PC*, it is the tense of narration. The *SC* is able to express the perfective aspect that signals completed actions prior to TT and refers to the imperfective resultant state. It is endowed with semantic and, as the circumstances require, pragmatic implicatures. As a tense it refers to the past and sometimes to the present, but only as *waw-SC* to the future. Other aspects besides the perfective and prospective that may occur within or outside of a TT are not represented by the verbal form, but signaled periphrastically. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to modality. The predicative participle then binds the proposition to its subject; the time relations come to light only contextually.

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All Biblical quotations have been taken from the software *BibleWorks 8*.

6. Abbreviations

BH	Biblical Hebrew
BHVS	Biblical Hebrew Verbal System
DC	Deictic center, resp. deictic community
E	Event
ES	Event structure (situation aspect)
NAS	New American Standard Bible translation
PC	Prefix conjugation (yiqtol, imperfect)
R	Point of reference
<i>rel</i>	relates to, relative
S	Speaker, time of utterance
SC	Suffix conjugation (qatal, perfect)
ST	Situation time: the time a proposition takes place
TT	Topic time: the time at issue

Text and Time

Frank Matheus

This essay deals with the latest developments concerning the research of the Biblical Hebrew Verbal System. As the results of recent studies diverge widely, this paper asks for the sustainability of the applied methods and the underlying linguistic framework. The alternative concept presented in this book is strictly functional, based on the redefinition of the most discussed categories of time analysis, i.e. tense and aspect. The third member of TAM systems, mood, is also included in this treatment.

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