



The Zalman Shamir
Department of Bible
Faculty of Jewish Studies
Bar-Ilan University



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Online Workshop: New discoveries in Late Biblical Hebrew Syntax and beyond

International Research Workshop of the Israel Science Foundation

June 13th - June 15th, 2022

PROGRAM

This workshop takes place as part of Prof. Nili Samet's research project:
Late Biblical Hebrew Syntax: A Comprehensive Typology and Analysis
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The schedule follows Jerusalem time (GMT+3)

Monday, June 13th, 2022

The Relationship between CBH and LBH: Typology, Methodology and Application

16:30–16:40 **Greetings**

16:40–17:40 **Session I - CBH-LBH Relations I: Early Features in Late Texts**

Chair: Emmanuel Mastey, Tel Aviv University

**Edward Cook, The Catholic University of America:
Pseudo-Classicisms and Pseudo-Pseudo-Classicisms**

The term "pseudo-classicism" in Hebrew has been applied to instances in Late Biblical Hebrew and in Qumran Hebrew where the meaning of a word or phrase seems to originate in a misunderstanding of the way the word or phrase was used in Classical Biblical Hebrew. This phenomenon is then leveraged to verify the supposition of two diachronic varieties of Hebrew. However, "pseudo-classicisms" come in two varieties: folk etymology and exegetical guesses. The second kind is based on a misunderstanding of an identifiable CBH text, while the first kind is a natural process in living languages. In LBH, only the first kind is found. This implies that there was a continuity between CBH and LBH, but a discontinuity between BH and QH. The first type should not be called a pseudo-classicism at all; the term should be reserved for the exegetically based guesses found in QH.

**Steven E. Fassberg, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem:
Competing Syntagms in the Book of Esther**

The Book of Esther is replete with Late Biblical Hebrew lexemes and syntagms. Yet, at the same time, one also finds features of Classical Biblical Hebrew. I will examine some competing syntactic features, e.g., appositional structures and verbal sequences, in order to see if there are conditioning factors to their occurrence and distribution.

17:40–18:00 **Recess**

18:00–19:00 **Session II – CBH-LBH Relations II: Late Features in Early Texts**

Chair: Chanan Ariel, Tel Aviv University

**Aaron D. Hornkohl, University of Cambridge:
Late Syntax in Classical Texts: Methodological Considerations**

The sporadic occurrence of characteristically late syntactic features in acknowledged classical biblical material is a well-known problem in the diachronic study of ancient Hebrew. The present paper surveys representative cases and considers various approaches to their treatment, such as attributing them to late composition or insertion, textual corruption, secondary development within the pronunciation tradition, and linguistic diversity within Classical Biblical Hebrew.

Nili Samet, Bar Ilan University:

LBH Phenomena as a Tool for Discerning Textual Strata in the Bible: Some Syntactic and Lexicographic Test Cases

For more than two centuries now, scholars have been successfully reconstructing the development of biblical texts using the various tools of textual criticism. Comparing ancient versions with one another and building on well-established models of scribal behavior, text critics have been able to trace scribal errors, additions and omissions to the biblical text. Only rarely, however, have the reconstructions suggested by text critics been cross-referenced with the knowledge gained by historical linguists regarding the diachrony of biblical Hebrew. The current paper treats three test cases in which the textual and linguistic data reinforce one another. In all three cases, the linguistic examination not only validates the conclusions reached at via textual tools, but also sets a chronological framework within which to locate the activity of biblical scribes and copyists. These test cases may serve as a model for future research integrating textual and linguistic tools to better understand the development of biblical texts.

Tuesday, June 14th, 2022

LBH Syntax and Beyond

16:00–17:30 Session III – LBH Syntax

Chair: Geoffrey Khan, University of Cambridge

Robert Holmstedt, University of Toronto:

What To Do? Movement out of Preposition-Infinitive Phrases in Biblical Hebrew

The highly dominant pattern in infinitive phrases that are themselves within a prepositional phrase is for all arguments of the infinitive to stay below the infinitive itself, illustrated by לָתֵת לְהָאֵת־הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת (Gen 15:17). Yet, a rare alternative, in which an argument of the infinitive raises higher than the infinitive and preposition, both exists and increases in later Biblical Hebrew. The example in Esth 2:9 provides a reasonable minimal contrast to the dominant example given previously: אֶת־תַּמְרוּקֶיהָ וְאֶת־מְנוּחֶהָ לָתֵת לָהּ. This paper will explore the phrase structure of the prepositional-infinitive phrase and discuss both the syntactic features of an argument raising higher than the infinitive and preposition and the implications for possible use in BH diachrony.

Tamar Zewi, University of Haifa:

הן Meaning אם in Late Biblical Hebrew

The paper examines the scholarly dispute concerning the role of הן as a conditional particle in Late Biblical Hebrew. Based on the linguistic evidence and its analysis, it supports the interpretation of the role of הן in certain examples, as well as that of its cognates והנה and והנה, as introducing conditional clauses, in addition to their primary presentative or affirmative role. As this interpretation pertains to questions of language contact and to the meaning and use of a function word rather than a content word, it is more obscure and less easily discerned.

**Adina Moshavi, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem:
The Syntax of Calendrical Year Expressions in Late Biblical Hebrew**

While changes in the syntax of cardinal expressions in LBH have long been the subject of discussion in the scientific literature, the syntactic expression of ordinality in the late period has only recently become a focus of attention. The BH morphological ordinal paradigm only goes up to ten, and there is no mechanism for combining ordinal numerals to express higher ordinalities. In order to express the twentieth year of a particular king's reign, or the fifteenth day of the month, classical Biblical Hebrew employs several syntactic constructions featuring cardinal numbers; these constructions are almost exclusively used for temporal expressions, featuring years, months or days (Steiner 1997; Rothstein & Moshavi 2021). In a previous lecture I showed that the distribution of these constructions undergoes dramatic changes in the Second Temple period, changes largely reflected in the extra-biblical Hebrew corpora of this time period. In this talk I will take a more detailed look at semantically-ordinal year expressions in the late period, all of which are calendrical. Examining the Transitional and Late Biblical Hebrew corpora separately reveals the gradual nature of the diachronic changes that ultimately resulted in the almost-complete dominance of one of the constructions in year expressions. Both internal and external factors that appear to have contributed to this development will be explored.

17:30–18:00 Recess

18:00–19:00 Session IV – LBH Syntax and Beyond

Chair: Edward M. Cook, The Catholic University of America

**Geoffrey Khan, Cambridge University:
Innovations in the Vocalism of Verbal Forms in the Second Temple Period**

In this paper I shall discuss a variety of developments in the reading tradition of verbal forms that can be identified as innovations to the oral reading tradition in the Second Temple Period. Attention will be drawn to typological parallels to these innovations in the Samaritan oral tradition and in other Semitic languages. One case study relates to vocalic innovations in participles to express a semantic distinction between participles of a nominal character expressing time-stable properties and those that are of a verbal character expressing contingent properties. Another case study relates to innovations to the vocalism of short *yiqṭol*.

**Frank H. Polak, Tel Aviv University:
The Asyndetic Relative Clause in Second Temple Prose, and its Socio-Cultural Background**

The asyndetic relative clause (or rather, the adnominalized clause, *Ṣifa*), attached to the noun (often in bound form, *קִרְיַת חֲנָה דָּוִד*, Isa 29:1) is extremely frequent in Biblical poetry, with ca. 200 undisputable cases from Gen 49:27 until Lam 4:17; Mal 2:16 (see R. Holmstedt, *The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016, 305–24). In view of the frequent use of *Ṣifa* clauses in Arabic, Akkadian, and Ugaritic (and Ge'ez), the Hebrew construction is to be regarded as a residue of ancient common/proto-Semitic syntax (cf. the use of *zū/ze* as relative pronoun). This syntagm is rare in biblical prose narrative (e.g., Gen 39:4; Exod 4:13; 18:20; 2 Kings 3:8), although one encounters some clusters in cultic instructions (Lev 3:4, 9, 10, 15; 4:9; 7:9, 35; in Transitional BH: Jer 36:2). But it is relatively frequent in LBH prose (Ezra 1:5, 6; Neh 8:10), with twelve cases in 1-2 Chronicles (e.g., 1 Chron 12:24; 2 Chron 31:19; some possible cases in Qohelet remain problematic). This frequency is surprising, and demands explanation. In this paper I intend to consider various sociocultural/sociolinguistic hypotheses in order to elucidate the use of the *Ṣifa* in LBH prose. (1) Possibly the *Ṣifa* was still much in use in colloquial Hebrew in certain regions, and thus returned to written discourse. (2) Possibly, this syntagm was borrowed from the Ancient North Arabic dialect spoken by the Kedarite elements in the Southern region of Judaea that was annexed to Idumaea. (3) On the other hand, the frequency of the asyndetic construction could represent the adoption of poetic features, due to scribal learning. Contextual considerations may point the way to some partial solutions for these questions.

16:00–17:30 **Session V - LBH Syntax and Morphology in Their Broader Semitic Context**

Chair: Steven E. Fassberg, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Benjamin D. Suchard, Leiden University:

The Biblical Aramaic Tense-Aspect-Mood System: A New Synthesis

Many syntactic features of Late Biblical Hebrew are due to Aramaic influence. This includes the use of the various tenses. Understanding the Late Biblical Hebrew verbal system thus hinges on our understanding of the Aramaic verbal system with which it was in contact.

The Biblical Aramaic of Ezra and Daniel provides us with a corpus of Aramaic from roughly the same time and place as much of the Late Biblical Hebrew literature. Its verbal system is the subject of fairly recent studies by Gzella (2004), Shepherd (2008), Li (2009), Carver (2019, 2021), and Andrason et al. (2020, 2021). In this talk, I will review these studies as well as the data themselves and propose a new analysis, taking into account the textual history of the corpus and the difference between the languages of the consonantal text and the reading tradition. Special attention will be paid to the many different uses of the Imperfect and the active Participle.

Tania Notarius, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem:

Passive Voice in Ugaritic and Biblical Hebrew in the Historical-Linguistic Perspective

Passive voice in Ugaritic and Biblical Hebrew is expressed by three morphological categories: Qal passive, Niphal, and Qal passive participle. The distribution and functions of these categories is not proportional at different stages of the development of these languages. In the language of Ugaritic poetry Qal passive is the prevailing category; in the language of Ugaritic prose both Qal passive and Nifal are extensively used to express passivity. Apparently in the languages of Classical Biblical Hebrew prose one finds examples of Qal passive and Nifal in the passive function as well, but actually, the situation is essentially different from Ugaritic: there is much more overlap between these stems, Nifal appears in impersonal passive constructions. In Late Biblical Hebrew Qal passive is practically out of use, while Nifal and passive participle Qal (also in periphrastic constructions) widen their functional scope. In Qumran Hebrew Qal passive is sporadically attested, apparently as an archaizing retention.

Ohad Cohen, University of Haifa:

The Alteration *m/n* in 2nd and 3rd Feminine Pronouns and the Historical Framework of LBH

One of the well-known morph-syntactic phenomena characterizing the LBH is the replacement of the 2nd and 3rd feminine pronouns by the masculine, such as:

וַתֹּאמֶר נְעָמִי לְשִׁתִּי בְלִתְיָהּ לְכֹנֶה שְׂבִנָּה אִשָּׁה לְבֵית אִמָּה יַעֲשֶׂה (יעש) יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם חֶסֶד (רות א, 8)
הַיְחִיז אֶת-הָאֲבָנִים מֵעֵרְמוֹת הָעֶפְרָ וְהָמָה שְׂרוּפוֹת (נחמיה ג, 34)

This phenomenon, which had occurred sporadically already in the CBH, became much more prevalent during the second temple period. According to the common view, this alternation cannot be an external influence on the LBH since none of the cognate languages (i.e. Aramaic, Rabbinical Hebrew) represents a similar tendency. Therefore, most scholars consider it as an inner LBH morph-syntactic development. In this talk I would like to reconsider the definition of this so-called "inner development". I would assert that Biblical Hebrew texts, which have been composed in Persian Judea, were shaped by a multi-glottic situation, which included a mixture of living languages (i.e. Canaanite melting pot). This situation of language in contact had a profound effect on the grammatical system. Adding the impact of colloquial Phoenician (e.g. *מספרת*... כתבת... Inscriptions (**feminine**)... their number(-*m*) to our argumentation modifies the LBH historical framework and provides a perspective that hitherto has not been sufficiently established.

17:30–18:00 **Recess**

18:00–19:30 **Session VI – Various Viewpoints on Dating Biblical Texts: Conversation of Biblicists and Linguists**

Moderator: Nili Samet, Bar Ilan University

Panelists:

Ronald Hendel, University of California, Berkley

Noam Mizrahi, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Alexander Rofé, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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