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ANOTHER LOOK AT THE HEBREW TENSES

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THE prevalent theory of the Hebrew tenses, which is based on and has developed from the view that held that the Perfect and Imperfect express actions in past and future time respectively, is that the Perfect denotes completed action and the Imperfect incomplete action.¹ This is the so-called aspect theory. So according to this theory it is aspect (kind of action: *Aktionsart*) which determines the use of the two tenses.

After an exhaustive survey of the uses of the simple Imperfect and the Perfect with *waw* in past time and the simple Perfect in future time in the prose sections of the Old Testament, we have reached conclusions which are opposed to the aspect theory. It should be remembered that, although Hebrew has only two tenses within its possession, these tenses cannot without difficulty be mustered to perform the functions of the various tenses found in an Indo-European language such as, say, Greek.² It is to be noted, however, that Greek in spite of its preciseness, has a tense (the aorist) which expresses the action in an undefined or indefinite manner, i.e., without regard to the completeness or incompleteness of the action.

Further, the aorist is not confined to past time. The present and future can be viewed aoristically as well as the past. And we are of the opinion that this aoristic concept working every time area covers the usage of the Hebrew tenses, and that therefore a difference in aspect is not the determinative factor in the use of the two tenses. The idea conveyed by the aorist seems to be most conducive to the simplicity of usage exhibited in the Hebrew tenses. In short, we believe that there is no action performed by the two tenses in Hebrew which cannot be viewed in an aoristic sense.³

The situation in Akkadian suggests that in the proto-Semitic speech the preformative verb *yaqtul* denoted action and the affirmative verb *qatil* signified state, for in Akkadian the preterite-preformative tense *iqtul* denotes action and the permansive-affirmative *qatil* denotes state.⁴ According to our theory, the proto-Semitic *yaqtul* form might be termed the "active aorist" and the *qatil* form the "stative aorist," indicative of what appears to have been the original usage of the forms. But there came a time when the affirmative verb *qatil* (*qatal*) gathered active meaning, resulting in an obscuration of the original distinction between the tenses (apart from the preservation of the intransitive use of the Perfect in stative verbs).

¹ E.g., see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 32, 33.

² It appears that Semitists have tried to view the Hebrew language (and the other Semitic languages) in an Indo-European setting, with results that have been neither convincing nor conclusive. Nor was this problem impertinent long ago: "The obstacles that have opposed the elucidation of the uses of the tenses in Hebrew and its cognate dialects, seem mostly to have arisen from the notions derived by occidental scholars from the manner in which the various points

of time are indicated in the Indo-European languages, rather than from the nature of the subject itself." (I. Nordheimer, *A Critical Grammar of the Hebrew Language* (New York, 1841), II, 156.)

³ Of course sometimes a past-, present-, or future perfect (as the case may be) is required in translation, but this is merely the English signification.

⁴ See W. Von Soden, "Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik," *Analecta Orientalia*, No. 33 (1952), pp. 100 ff.

Probably originally both tenses were unrestricted with respect to time, i.e., they were timeless (*zeitlos*) or omnitemporal (*allzeitig*) predicative elements.⁵ Hence certain forms which meet us in the Hebrew Bible may be vestiges of the old timeless use, whereas others may be true tenses representing a later stratum in the development of the language. In the case of the older forms the time sphere may be indicated by particles or other elements outside the verb forms.⁶ But in the case of the later forms it may be the forms themselves which indicate the time sphere. At any rate, the Old Testament reveals the use of both tenses in all time spheres (past, present, and future). There seems to be no difference between the two tenses—form excepted—as they appear in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁷ So perhaps the Perfect should be designated the “afformative aorist” and the Imperfect the “preformative aorist,” instead of by the misleading terms “perfect” and “imperfect.”

In spite of certain indeterminate factors, a close examination of the Hebrew tenses reveals a number of things which apparently have been overlooked in previous treatments. In our survey of the prose sections, which represent the basic style of the language, we found that invariably the simple Imperfect in past time and the simple Perfect in future time are employed in a special type of construction. Evidently there is something outside the verbal form itself which influences its usage. Most notable are certain particles used with the verb.

Now we are aware of the pervasive use of particles and consequently have moved with caution in our study in this field, and yet it seems to be undeniable that particles have a definite role to play in the verbal picture. It is admitted in practically all quarters that the particles אֵן and טָרַם and of course the particle *waw* appear with the Imperfect as a preterite tense.⁸ This admission opens the door to further investigation.⁹ In this light, we may assume that yet other particles also occur with the Imperfect as a preterite tense. We realize that this presents a problem: the same particles which

⁵ See H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testaments* (Halle, 1922), I, 270; T. W. Thacker, *The Relationship of the Semitic and Egyptian Verbal Systems* (Oxford, 1954), p. 104.

⁶ Cf. Bauer and Leander, *loc. cit.*

⁷ A. Sperber, *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden, 1966), contends that the Perfect and the Imperfect are used interchangeably and suggests for the verb tenses “a neutral, timeless terminology, which is based solely on morphological characteristics and which does not explicitly indicate any definite time at all: suffix tense (instead of perfect) and prefix tense (for imperfect),” pp. 591, 592.

⁸ It appears that the so-called *waw* consecutive had originally a demonstrative force, as “then, so.” In this connection, V. Maag, “Morphologie des hebräischen Narrativs,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 65 (1953), 86–88, says that there are a number of deictic or demonstrative particles of the root “han,” and that the strong *waw* used with the Imperfect is formed from this root. When a simple shewa stands before the “h” in “han,” both elements (the shewa and the “h”) often disappear. Therefore *w^hanyiktob* becomes *wanyiktob*, and then by assimilation of the “n” becomes *wayyiktob*.

⁹ If one admits that the Imperfect is used as a

preterite tense in some cases (i.e., with certain particles), is there any formidable reason why it cannot be so used in other cases? It appears that one must make a choice: either one must entertain the possibility that all the Imperfects in past time are remnants of an archaic preterite tense, or one must retreat to the original position of the aspect theory, which held that all the Imperfects in past time denote incompleteness. (For a recent survey holding that all the Imperfects denote incompleteness see J. W. Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, 1964], pp. 55 ff.) As soon as the Imperfect with *waw* consecutive became recognized as a preterite tense, it became necessary to re-examine the usage of all the Imperfects in past time. And the re-examination has shown that one cannot stop with the Imperfect with *waw* consecutive, for immediately it was seen that the Imperfect with other particles, such as אֵן and טָרַם , is also a straight past tense. In other words, this started a chain reaction. When G. R. Driver says, in *Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Edinburgh, 1936), p. 142, that “it is not impossible that traces of this archaic preterite usage have survived also in the common speech” and F. R. Blake states, in *A Resurvey of Hebrew Tenses* (Roma, 1951), p. 10, that the Imperfect is used as a preterite “apparently in a number of other passages,” they seem to be admitting that one cannot stop halfway.

occur with the Imperfect in past time also appear with the Imperfect in future time, and with the Perfect. The same argument, however, may be advanced against the temporal particles which it is acknowledged do appear with the Imperfect when it has a preteritive meaning; for these temporal particles also occur with Imperfect forms in future time, and even with Perfect forms.

For the sake of consistency, it is suggested that either a wider range of particles be considered in an analysis of verbal usage, or that the possibility of their influencing this usage be disregarded *in toto*. We are not prepared to accept the latter alternative. Such idiomatic constructions as the Imperfect with *waw* consecutive and the Perfect with *waw* consecutive, along with other idioms such as *מִי יִתֵּן*, "would that," *כִּי* *אָמַר יְהוָה*, "thus says the LORD," as well as *פֶּן*, "lest," *לְמַעַן*, "in order that," *אָז*, "then," and *טָרַם*, "not yet," regularly employed with the Imperfect, are examples which seem to show beyond all doubt the validity of our contention that the particle cannot be ignored in a study of the verb. If this is true, the criterion for determining verbal usage is not to be found in the verbal form itself, but in the verb together with the element(s) in construction with it, i. e., in the entire idiomatic construction.¹⁰

Accordingly, it would appear that an Imperfect form occurs in past time not because it denotes the incompleteness or continuance of an action (as the aspectual theorists would have us believe), but is due to the kind of construction in which it is employed. It seems reasonable to assume that such a construction became stereotyped somewhere along the line in the historical development of the language and thus resisted change. If this analysis is correct, *all* the Imperfects in past time are vestiges of an old preterite tense of the preformative type (which was found in two forms: *yaqtulu* and *yaqtul*).¹¹ Although these vestigial forms are regularly employed in conjunction with the preterite forms of the affirmative type (the Perfect) in the prose narrative idiom of the Perfect-Imperfect with *waw* consecutive, the same forms without *waw*, and the Perfect with *waw* consecutive often found in connection with them, are straight past tenses, i. e., aoristic past tenses. Similarly, *all* the Perfects in future time are survivals from the period when the old affirmative verb *qatil* was employed in future situations. They occur in future time (as aoristic future tenses) due to the type of construction in which they are used, not because the action is viewed as completed.

Slightly over sixty per cent of the Imperfects and Perfects with *waw* in past time which we surveyed can readily be construed in an iterative or incomplete sense, but this means that almost forty per cent of the forms are not well-suited to this sense. If there were merely a few isolated forms that did not fit the aspectual theorists' view, one would have little reason to doubt the general validity of their theory; but when over one-third of the forms do not seem to fit the pattern, then one has the right to question its validity. Then too, if the sixty per cent can in general be construed in a sense other than iterative-durative, the argument against the aspect theory receives additional support.

¹⁰ Blake strikes a significant note when he states that (what he considers are) the variant meanings of the Imperfect "are due not to the verb form itself, but to the character of the construction" (*ibid.*, p. 9).

¹¹ See Z. S. Harris, "Conditioned Sound Change in Ras Shamra," *Journal of the American Oriental*

Society, 57 (1937), 152. Cf. Z. Harris, "Development of the Canaanite Dialects," *American Oriental Series*, 16 (1939), 46, 47. See also R. Meyer, "Das Hebräische Verbalsystem im Lichte der gegenwärtigen Forschung," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, VII (1960), 313, 315.

With these considerations in mind, we shall now examine a number of passages which we believe will show the fallacies of the aspectual view and at the same time support our position.

SIMPLE IMPERFECT AND PERFECT WITH WAW IN PAST TIME

A. VERB FORMS WITH THE PARTICLE וַיְ and ITS EQUIVALENTS

1. With וַיְ and an additional time-determination:

II Kings 8:22 // II Chron. 21:10, "Then (^ʿ*āz*) Libnah rebelled (*tipšaʿ*) at that time (*bāʿēl hahēʿ*)." ¹²

Here is a temporal phrase along with the temporal particle, וַיְ with identical meaning. With this in mind, we may examine forms of similar import:

(a) Josh. 9:27, "Then made them (*wayyitt^enēm*) Joshua in that day (*bayyôm hahûʿ*)." ¹³

(b) I Kings 13:3, "Then he gave (*w^enātan*) in that day (*bayyôm hahûʿ*)." ¹⁴

The Perfect with waw in (b) seems to be used exactly like the Imperfect with waw in (a), and both are used like the simple Imperfect with וַיְ in II Kings 8:22. Hence all are best viewed as straight (aoristic) past tenses.

2. With waw equivalent to וַיְ, followed by an additional time-determination:

Gen. 38:5, "And she bore a son and she called his name Shelah. Then he (i.e., Judah) was (*w^ehāyāh*) in Chezib when she bore (*b^eliḏtah*) him." ¹⁵

The expression "then he was in Chezib when she bore him" is similar to the expression "then Libnah rebelled at that time" in II Kings 8:22 above, where the simple Imperfect occurs with the particle וַיְ expressed. In Gen. 38:5 the words "she bore" are repeated. Therefore the verse may be paraphrased thus: "And she bore a son whose name she called Shelah. At that time Judah was in Chezib." ¹² The Perfect with waw equivalent to וַיְ is used in the same way as the Imperfect with וַיְ in II Kings 8:22. Both are straight past tenses.

3. With waw equivalent to וַיְ:

II Chron. 15:5,6, "And in those times there was no peace to him who went out and to him who came in, for great disturbances (were) upon all the inhabitants of the countries. Then (i.e., in those times) were dashed (*w^ekuttēʿû*) nation against nation and city against city, for God disquieted them (*h^amāmām*) with every adversity." ¹⁶

In these verses are expressed parallel ideas: "in those times there was no peace . . . for" and "then were dashed . . . for." It is clear then that the waw (with the Perfect) carries on the temporal idea, i.e., in those times . . . then." ¹⁷

¹² The LXX alters the Perfect into a feminine demonstrative pronoun (*αὐτῆς*) and thus makes it relate to Shuah instead of to Judah. But this is unwarranted.

The Perfect with waw expresses the action in the same manner as the verb in the following clause. Thus if the nations "were dashed" repeatedly, it was because God "disquieted" them repeatedly. But the verb in the following clause is a simple Perfect. Hence both forms are best viewed as straight past tenses.

4. With a temporal adverb equivalent to וְאַתְּמָן :

I Sam. 9:9, "For to the prophet today was given the name (*yiqqārē*) formerly (*l^epānīm*) the seer."

The expression might be paraphrased thus: "For to the prophet *now* was given the name *then* the seer." Therefore "today" and "formerly" = "now" (הַיּוֹם) and "then" (וְאַתְּמָן). Note in this connection Isa. 1:21: "(*Then*) righteousness lodged (*yālīn*) in it, and *now* murderers."

One need not construe these verbs in a frequentative sense: "used to be called" and "used to lodge." The temporal adverb equivalent to the particle וְאַתְּמָן in I Sam. 9:9 and the particle וְאַתְּמָן suppressed in Isa. 1:21 mark the verbs as vestiges of the old preterite tense of the preformative type.

B. VERB FORMS WITH THE PARTICLE וְאַתְּמָן

Compare Gen. 2:10, "And thence (*ūmiššām*) it separated (*yippārēd*) and became (*w^ehāyāh*) into four heads,"¹³
 and Josh. 18:13, "And the boundary passed along (*w^eābar*) thence (*miššām*) towards Luz,"¹⁴
 and Josh. 19:34, "And it went out (*w^eyāsā*) thence (*miššām*) to Hukkok,"
 with Josh. 19:13, "And thence (*ūmiššām*) it passed along (*ābar*) towards the east."

The Imperfect and the Perfect with waw in Gen. 2:10 could be construed in a durative sense (if one has a vivid imagination). And the same would hold true for the Perfects with waw in Josh. 18:13 and 19:34. But it is to be noted that a simple Perfect occurs in Josh. 19:13 and that it is obviously employed in the same way as the Perfects with waw in Josh. 18:13 and 19:34. Consequently all the forms in Joshua are best viewed as preterites. Now if the Perfects with waw in Joshua are preterities, it would seem that the Perfect with waw in Gen. 2:10 is also a preterite; and if the Perfect with waw in Genesis is a preterite, so is the Imperfect preceding it. Therefore we may assume that all the forms are straight past tenses in construction with the local particle וְאַתְּמָן .

C. VERB FORMS WITH LOCAL PHRASES EQUIVALENT TO LOCAL PARTICLES

Judg. 2:1, "I brought you up (*ʿa^aleh*) from Egypt (*mimmišrayim*) and brought (*wāābī*) you into the land (*ʿel hāāreṣ*)." ¹³

¹³ It is interesting to note that an older grammarian, F. Böttcher, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1868), II, 150, viewed the Imperfect as a preterite when it is used with ingressive particles, such as וְאַתְּמָן , Gen. 2:10, "und von da trennte er sich." This use is equivalent to the Greek "ingressive aorist."

¹⁴ S. R. Driver gives the verb form "a frequentative force, descriptive of the course which the boundary used to take—used to take, namely . . . , whenever any one passed along it . . ." (*A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* [3d ed. rev.; Oxford, 1892], p. 145.) Such an explanation brings out in relief the untenability of the aspect theory.

Although a simple Imperfect is found in the first clause and an Imperfect with *waw* consecutive in the second clause, the clauses are parallel: "I brought you up from . . . and brought you into." Therefore, the usage of the two verb forms is identical. A lacuna is postulated by some, apparently as an endeavor to meet the exigencies of the aspect theory.

S. R. Driver sees the Imperfect as "setting forth the occurrence in bright relief,"¹⁵ in the sense of our historical present. But the "bringing in" would be as much in relief as the "bringing out." Driver's distinction appears to be superficial. Anything short of a straight past signification for both forms will hardly satisfy.

The simple Imperfect is followed by the local phrase "from Egypt"; the Imperfect with *waw* consecutive is followed by the local phrase "into the land." These phrases are equivalent to the "thence-thither" or "thence-hither" combination. So it may be advanced that local phrases influence verbal usage in the same way as local particles. That this is possible may be shown from a verse in the prophetic section: Hos. 12:5, "In Bethel (*bēṭ ʿēl*) he found Him (*yimšāʿennū*), and there (*wēšām*) He spoke (*yēdabbēr*) with us." If the local particle "there" influences the verb, so does the local phrase "in Bethel." Both verb forms are preterites of the preformative type in construction with locative elements.

D. VERB FORMS WITH THE RELATIVE אֲשֶׁר OR ITS EQUIVALENT¹⁶

1. With אֲשֶׁר:

II Kings 8:29, "And Joram the king returned to be healed in Jezreel from the wounds with which (*ʿašer*) the Syrians had wounded him (*yakkūhū*)." ¹⁷

One parallel verse, II Chron. 22:6, has the Perfect; another, II Kings 9:15, has the Imperfect. As respects the appearance of the Imperfect in II Kings 8:29, A. B. Davidson says: "The preceding *plur.* 'wounds' perhaps distributes the verb *wounded* . . ." ¹⁸ But the plural "wounds" is also used in II Chron. 22:6, and there it is followed by a Perfect. Hence a straight past significance appears alone to be suitable for all the forms, although the English idiom requires a pluperfect significance.

It would not be out of place to cite two examples—from the prophetic and poetic sections—of an Imperfect in construction with the relative pronoun understood, where the iterative-durative idea is out of the question:

- (a) Isa. 51:2, "Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah (who) bore you (*tēhōlelēkem*)."
 (b) Ps. 7:16, "And he has fallen into the pit (which) he made (*yipʿāl*)." ¹⁹

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁶ The relative may have been originally a demonstrative and not a mere *nota relationis*. See W. Gesenius, *Hebräische Grammatik*, edited by E. Kautzsch (27th ed.; Leipzig, 1902), p. 451. Note also C. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen Kreis Moers, 1956), p. 145. For an extensive discussion see E. König, *Historisch-Kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1895), 2d half, Part I, pp. 323 ff.

¹⁷ Blake (*op. cit.*, p. 10) places this Imperfect among

the preteritive examples of the Imperfect forms, and he views it in construction with אֲשֶׁר.

¹⁸ *Hebrew Syntax* (3d ed.; Edinburgh, 1901), p. 67.

¹⁹ B. Kienast, "Das Punktalthema *yaprus und seine Modi," *Orientalia*, 29 (1960), 155, contends that relative clauses were at one time used without the introductory pronoun, and that remnants of such employment are seen, for example, in the Akkadian relative clause *bū ipušu*. This speaks for an old usage of the Hebrew forms.

S. R. Driver takes the verb in the first example in the sense of our historical present, whereas in the second example it is given a force equivalent to that expressed by the Greek imperfect. The latter usage is described thus: "and falleth into the pit: **יַפְעֵל**: *he is or was making*." Then he says in a footnote: "Not, as A.V., *made*; the impf. shows that the writer thought of the process as not completed—while *engaged upon carrying out* his design, the destruction overtakes him."²⁰ The Berkeley Version gives the same idea: "and has fallen into the hole even while making it."

G. R. Driver, refuting the theory of "emergent or nascent action," construes the verb in Isa. 51:2 preteritively: "The theory becomes a *reductio ad absurdum* as applied to the preterite use of *yiqṭōl* in poetry: for example, it is hopelessly forced to explain . . . 'S. (who) travailed with you' as meaning properly 'S. (who) went on to travail with you'."²¹ Certainly a preterite use is the only one unattended with artificiality.

2. With waw equivalent to **וַאֲשֶׁר**:

Compare I Sam. 17:38, "And Saul clothed David with his garments, who he put (*w^enāṭan*) a helmet of bronze upon his head and clothed (*wayyal-bēš*) him with a coat of mail."

i.e., upon whose head he put . . . and whom he clothed.

with II Sam. 12:3, "One little ewe lamb which (*ʿašer*) he bought (*qānāh*) and nurtured it (*way^ehayyehā*),"

i.e., which he bought and nurtured.

The Perfect with waw in I Sam. 17 is an equivalent of the Perfect with **וַאֲשֶׁר** in II Sam. 12. Thus the waw here = **וַאֲשֶׁר**, and the Perfects themselves are equated. Further, they are equivalent in usage to the Imperfects with waw consecutive. The Perfect with waw therefore is in straight past time.

3. With **וַאֲשֶׁר** in compounds:

Compare I Sam. 2:22, "And Eli was very old and he heard all that (*kol ʿašer*) his sons did (*ya^ašūn*) to all Israel and the fact that (*w^eʿēl ʿašer*) they lay (*yisk^ebūn*),"

with I Kings 18:13, "Was it not declared to my lord that which (*ʿēl ʿašer*) I did (*ʿāšiti*) when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, the fact that I hid (*wāʾahbi*) some of the prophets."

There are parallel clauses: "all that his sons did" (I Samuel) is parallel to "that which I did" (I Kings); "the fact that they lay" (I Samuel) is parallel to "the fact that I hid" (I Kings). Eli's sons' actions were doubtless repetitive, but not Obadiah's action. Is this why there are two simple Imperfects in the former case and a simple Perfect and an Imperfect with waw consecutive in the latter case? At first glance this might seem to be the reason for the different forms. But this would be difficult to defend for the following reason: if in I Kings 18:13 the waw (with the Imperfect) means "the fact that," this waw is equivalent to **וַאֲשֶׁר**, and the Imperfect in construction with it is equivalent to the second Imperfect in I Sam. 2:22. Now if they are equated, the idea that one denotes repetitious action and the other does not cannot be entertained. It is obvious then that aspectual distinctions do not come under consideration. Both forms

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 87.

are in straight past time, and in this light so is the first Imperfect in I Samuel (note also that this Imperfect is with אָשַׁר in a compound, in a construction parallel to that in which a simple Perfect occurs).

E. VERB FORMS WITH DEMONSTRATIVE ELEMENTS

1. With a repeated noun:

Compare I Sam. 1:1,3, "And there was a certain man . . . and his name (was) Elkanah. . . . And *that man* went up (*w^eālāh*) from his city from year to year"

[Cf. Job 1:1, "A man was in the land of Uz, Job (was) his name; and *that man* was (*w^ehāyāh*) of integrity and upright"],

and I Kings 4:7,5:7, "And to Solomon (were) twelve officers over all Israel. . . . And *those officers* supplied (*w^ekilk^elū*),"

with I Kings 5:27, "And the king Solomon raised a levy from all Israel, and the (= *that*) *levy* was (*way^ehī*) thirty thousand men."

The perfect with waw in I Sam. 1:3 and I Kings 5:7 could readily be construed in an iterative sense; the Perfect with waw in Job 1:1 cannot be so construed, but it could express the durative idea, when viewed with its complements: "he was of integrity . . . he was upright." In I Kings 5:27, however, the verb used in construction with the demonstrative element is an Imperfect with waw consecutive. It is doubtless a straight past tense. Since the other verb forms are also in construction with a demonstrative element, it seems obvious that they are in straight past time.

In the case of I Sam. 1:3, the verb form is followed not only by the demonstrative phrase but also by a temporal phrase "from year to year." From the aspectual viewpoint, such a temporal phrase can hardly be an influential element in verbal usage. We may cite some examples in which similar phrases occur to show the validity of our contention:

(a) I Sam. 1:7, "And thus it continued (*ya^aśeh*) year by year,"

(b) Exod. 16:15, 21, "When the sons of Israel saw (it), then they said one to another: Manna (is) it. . . . And they gathered (*wayyilq^etū*) it morning by morning."

(c) II Chron. 24:11, "Thus they did (*āsū*) day by day."

From these examples it is difficult to see how the temporal phrase can influence verbal usage, as viewed by the aspectual theorists. Of course they would have no problem in I Sam. 1:7, in which occurs the simple Imperfect followed by the temporal phrase "year by year." But the other two examples could not concur with their theory. Of all places where one would expect a simple Imperfect, if the aspect theory is correct, these are they; but instead there occur an Imperfect with waw consecutive and a simple Perfect.

For the sake of consistency, it would seem that either all three forms denote iteration or that they are all used in straight past time. The fact that a simple Imperfect, an Imperfect with waw consecutive, and a simple Perfect are used instead of three simple Imperfects points away from the idea of iteration and therefore away from the idea of aspectual distinctions. A straight past significance, without thought of aspect, for all the forms is much easier to suppose.

2. With a separate personal pronoun:²²

- Compare Deut. 2:10, 11, "The Emim formerly dwelt in it, a people great and many and tall as the Anakim; Rephaim they were accounted (*yēhāšēbū*) also *they* as the Anakim,"
- and Deut. 2:19, 20, "For I will not give from the land of the sons of Ammon to you for a possession, because to the sons of Lot I have given it a possession. A land of Rephaim it was accounted (*tēhāšēb*) also *it*,"
- with Judg. 6:35, "And the messengers he sent into all Manasseh, and it was assembled (*wayyizzāēq*) also *it* after him."

In these examples the separate personal pronoun has a demonstrative force, i.e., "they" (= these Emim), "it" (= this land) and "it" (= this tribe). The fact that the Imperfect with waw consecutive is used in the same type of construction as the simple Imperfects stamps all the verb forms as vestiges of the old preterite tense.

F. VERB WITH WAW EQUIVALENT TO THE PARTICLE כִּי²³

- II Sam. 20:12, "And the man saw that (*kī*) he stopped (*āmād*), every one of the people; and he transferred Amasa from the highway to the field; and he threw a covering over him, because he saw every one who came by him that he stopped (*wēāmād*)."

There are parallel expressions: (12a) "the man saw *that he stopped*" is parallel to (12b) "he saw . . . *that he stopped*." Hence it is clear that וַיַּמְד (12b) = כִּי־עָמַד (12a). So the Perfect with waw can be nothing other than a straight past tense.

G. VERB FORMS WITH THE PARTICLE כִּן IN A COMPOUND (עַל-כֵּן)²⁴

- Compare Gen. 32:33, "Therefore (*al kēn*) the sons of Israel have not eaten (*yōkēlū*) the sinew of the thigh-nerve . . . until this day,"
- and I Sam. 5:5, "Therefore (*al kēn*) the priests of Dagon have not trod (*yidrēkū*) . . . upon the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod until this day,"
- with Josh. 5:9, "And the LORD said to Joshua: Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from upon you. Therefore the name of that place one has called (*wayyiqrā*) Gilgal until this day."

It seems to be clear from these examples that the simple Imperfects are used exactly like the Imperfect with waw consecutive. Even if the waw prefixed to the Imperfect in Joshua 5 were translated differently, the verb forms would still be used alike: "they

²² It is interesting to note that this idiom occurs seven times in five verses in I Sam. chap. 19 (vss. 20-24), and in each case with the Imperfect with waw consecutive. In this connection, it is to be noted that the archaic Nūn ending is also found in clusters (see, for example, I Sam. 2:22, 23). This ancient termination, called *Nūn paragomicum*, is preserved in classical Arabic (*yaqtulāna*); see W. Wright, *Lectures on the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Cambridge, 1890), p. 184.

²³ This was probably originally a demonstrative or deictic particle; see Koehler-Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden, 1958), p. 431.

²⁴ This particle is probably from the same demonstrative root as כִּי; see Brown-Driver-Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1952), p. 485.

have not eaten until this day" . . . "they have not trod until this day" . . . "one has called until this day." The only difference lies in the conjunctions used: **עַל-כֵּן** is used with the Imperfect in Genesis and Samuel, and **וַאֲ** with the Imperfect in Joshua. It can hardly be contended that the former conjunction gives the Imperfect a repetitive force and the latter does not, and conversely that the latter conjunction is used with the Imperfect as an aoristic tense (with a present perfect sense in the English idiom) and the former is not. Clearly the kind of action expressed by the verbs is the same.

H. VERB FORMS IN A TEMPORAL SENTENCE (IN THE PROTASIS)

Compare II Sam. 16:5, "When the king David came (*ûbā*) as far as Bahurim, then behold, thence a man came out,"
 with II Sam. 16:16, "When (*ka^ašer*) Hushai came (*bā*) . . . to Absalom, then Hushai said."

The particle **וַאֲ** prefixed to the Perfect in verse 5 is used like the particle **כִּאֲשֶׁר** with the same form in verse 16. Hence **וַאֲבָא = כִּאֲשֶׁר-בָּא**. So the Perfect with **וַאֲ** is obviously nothing other than a straight past tense.

SIMPLE PERFECT IN FUTURE TIME

A. VERB FORMS WITH THE PARTICLE הִנֵּה

Gen. 17:20, "And concerning Ishmael I have heard you; behold (*hinnēh*), I will bless (*bēraktî*) him and make him fruitful (*w^ehiprētî*) and multiply (*w^ehīrbētî*) him."

It is to be noted that although Ishmael's birth is recorded in chap. 16 verse 15, there is no previous mention of a blessing for him. Also it should be noted that the pronominal object **אֹתוֹ** follows each verb. And the particle **הִנֵּה** is used in construction with each verb: "behold I will bless . . . make fruitful . . . multiply." *Ergo* the **וַאֲ** prefix with the second and third Perfect forms is a connective. Hence to construe the first Perfect in past time would destroy the grammatical connection. Further, the simple Perfect can hardly be construed as a Perfect of certainty unless one is also prepared to construe the Perfects with **וַאֲ** in the same way. Thus it seems best to regard all the forms as straight (aoristic) future tenses.

B. VERB FORMS WITH THE PARTICLE כִּי

1. With **כִּי** alone:

Compare Josh. 10:19, "And you, do not stand still, pursue after your enemies . . . ; for (*kî*) the LORD your God will give them (*n^etānām*) into your hand,"
 with Josh. 8:7, "And you, you shall arise from the ambush and take possession of the city; for the LORD your God will give it (*ûn^etānāh*) into your hand."

In these examples the simple Perfect and the Perfect with waw are evidently used in the same way. If the simple Perfect is a Perfect of certainty, so is the Perfect with waw. The only difference lies in the particles in construction with the verb forms: in the former the particle is כִּי; in the latter the particle waw is prefixed to the verb form. But if the particle waw is an equivalent of the particle כִּי, as we have rendered it, then וַיִּזְכֹּר is equivalent to כִּי יִזְכֹּר. Hence both verbs are equated in use and so are best regarded as straight or aoristic future tenses.

2. With the compound particle כִּי אִם:

Gen. 40:14, "But (*kī ʿim*) remember me (*z^ekartani*) with you, when it is well for you, and do I pray (*w^eāšittā nāʿ*) with me kindness."

Here the Perfect has a precative force,²⁵ as does the Perfect with waw which follows: "But remember . . . and do." The enclitic particle ׀ emphasizes the precative idea. If the Perfect and the Perfect with waw are identical in use, then the precative use of the simple Perfect is to be expected; for the Perfect with waw has this use.²⁶ This usage corresponds to the Greek aorist optative and the aorist imperative in entreaties and petitions.

An example or two in the Psalms may be adduced in support of the precative use of the Perfect:

- (a) Ps. 4:2, "When I call answer me (*ʿanēni*), O God of my righteousness. In the distress make wide (*hirḥabtā*) for me. Be gracious to me (*honnēni*), and hear (*ūšemaʿ*) my prayer."

There is a parallelism: "When I call answer me (Impv.);" and "When I am distressed make wide (Perf.) for me."

- (b) Ps. 22:22, "Deliver me (*hōšīʿēni*) from the mouth of the lion, and from the horns of the wild oxen answer me (*ʿanittāni*)."

The order is chiasmic. There is a parallelism: "Deliver me (Impv.) from the mouth of the lion" and "answer me (Perf.) from the horns of the wild oxen."

C. VERB FORMS WITH THE COMPOUND PARTICLE עַד-מָה

Compare Exod. 10:3, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: Until when (*ʿad māṭay*) will you refuse (*mēʿantā*) to humble yourself from before Me,"

with Exod. 10:7, "And the servants of Pharaoh said to him: Until when (*ʿad māṭay*) will this one be (*yihyeh*) to us for a snare."

The constructions in which the Perfect and the Imperfect are employed are identical; hence the verbs themselves would seem to be identified in usage. In fact, G. R. Driver says that in questions such as that found in Exod. 10:3 in which the Perfect occurs

²⁵ For the optative usage of the Perfect in Arabic see W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (2d ed. rev.; London, 1875), II, 3. H. L. Ginsberg contends that "one of the original functions of the per-

fect was that of an optative and precative." ("The Rebellion and Death of Baʿlu," *Orientalia*, 5 [1936], 177).

²⁶ S. R. Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

“the imperfect tense would be expected.” He says further that the Imperfect “is occasionally found” in such questions and “without any difference of meaning.”²⁷

D. VERB FORMS WITH THE PARTICLE ׀

II Sam. 20:6, “Take the servants of your lord and pursue after him, lest (*pen*) he find (*māšā*) for himself fortified cities and take away (*w^ehiššil*) our eye.”

If one admits that the simple Perfect is used exactly like the Perfect with *waw* which follows (both in construction with the particle ׀), there is no problem; but if one tries to distinguish the use of the two forms, the problem becomes perplexing indeed. Some have tried to fight the battle, but apparently without success. F. R. Blake, for example, explains it thus: “The converted perfect (an equivalent of the imperfect) is really the verb dependent on the conjunction. . . . The translation is ‘lest having found for himself fortified cities, then he will escape our eye’.”²⁸

E. VERB FORMS WITH THE PARTICLE ׀

Compare Gen. 43:9, “I myself will become surety for him; from my hand you shall exact him. If (*im*) I do not bring him (*h^abⁱ’ōtūw*) to you and set him (*w^ehiššagtūw*) before you,”

with Gen. 42:37, “And Reuben said to his father, saying: My two sons you shall put to death, if (*im*) I do not bring him (*’^abⁱ’ennū*) to you.”

No one would doubt that the Perfect with *waw* in 43:9 and the Imperfect in 42:37 are used in the same way. And further it can hardly be doubted that the simple Perfect and the Perfect with *waw* in 43:9 are employed in the same manner, i.e., in construction with the conditional particle ׀: “If I do not bring . . . and set.”³⁰ It would be arbitrary to distinguish the usage of the two verbs, both of which are in the protasis. Now if the simple Perfect and the Perfect with *waw* are used identically, then it follows that the simple Perfect and the Imperfect are also to be identified in use. In fact, the constructions in which they occur are identical. We believe that examples like these clearly place an onus on the aspect theory.

In the light of this survey, it is seen that we have viewed the verb form not as an isolated factor but as a component part of an idiomatic construction (notably a construction in which occurs a demonstrative element, or at least an element of deictic origin). We believe that the aspect theory has failed to give due consideration to the influence of particles and other elements on verbal usage and that therefore it has been plagued with difficulties.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 87, 88.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 64.

²⁹ This seems to be basically a demonstrative particle; see Koehler-Baumgartner, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 58.

³⁰ In Arabic the Perfect is used in future time after the conditional particle ﺃﺍ ; see Wright, *Arabic Grammar*, II, 13.

An Imperfect occurs in past time not to denote the incompleteness or continuance of an action but because it is in construction with a particle and/or other elements. The particle and the verb constitute a stereotyped syntactical construction. The preteritive (aoristic) use of the imperfect is not restricted to instances with *waw* consecutive and other particles such as וְ and $\text{וַ$: additional particles are also used with the Imperfect as a preterite tense. Similarly, a Perfect occurs in future time not because the action is viewed as completed but because the verb is in a stereotyped syntactical construction. The futuristic use of the Perfect is not limited to cases with *waw* consecutive: other particles are also used with the Perfect as a straight (aoristic) future tense.