

Anteriority and Justification: Pragmatic Functions of the *W^ex-qatal* Form in Direct Speech in the Book of Genesis

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ABSTRACT

*Recognizing that scholarship has long struggled with the so-called "freeness" of Hebrew word order in direct speech, this study seeks to demonstrate that the primary pragmatic functions of the *w^ex-qatal* form within direct speech in classical biblical Hebrew are justification and anteriority. Examining the issues of word order and the syntactical opposition between the *wayyiqtol* and *w^ex-qatal*, the work concludes by presenting numerous examples of both functions in Genesis texts. The implications of the study are an improved understanding of clausal relationships within direct speech and improved translations and interpretations of these passages.*

Within the last three decades, the discipline of discourse analysis—or text linguistics—has altered the way biblical Hebrew grammarians approach sentence structure. By highlighting the significance of larger units of text, linguists have come to recognize language as a “multi-level hierarchical code,”¹ in which each level must be understood and examined in light of those above and below. This recognition has led grammarians to move beyond issues of morphology and grammar in order to begin focusing on the importance of syntax and narrative relationships within larger units of a text. As a result, many studies have been produced in recent years that examine the linguistic structures characteristic of biblical narrative.² However, much of this research

¹ Robert Dale Bergen, “Varieties and Functions of Hebrew Waw-Plus-Subject-Plus-Perfect Sentence Constructions in the Narrative Framework of the Pentateuch” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986), 243.

² Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983); Herbert Chanan Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics: Tales of the Prophets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975); David Allen Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (JSOTSup 177; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994); Robert Dale Bergen, ed., *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994); Walter R. Bodine, ed., *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992); Walter R. Bodine *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1995); Ellen van Wolde, ed., *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg*

has focused on the narrative genre with little being said about direct speech imbedded within the larger narratives. The present study seeks to offer a contribution to this often overlooked genre by examining the pragmatic function of the *w^ex-qatal* form in direct speech.³

In a recent work titled *Word Order in the Biblical Hebrew Finite Clause*, Adina Moshavi seeks to clarify the grammatical function of pre-verbal material in biblical Hebrew by examining such constructions in the book of Genesis. She argues that fronting, or preposing, can generally be understood as focusing and topicalization.⁴ However, she concludes that her analysis does not account for the numerous verb-second constructions encountered in direct speech:

The statistical analysis revealed significant differences between preposing patterns in direct speech and in narrative. The impression that word order in direct speech is "freer" than in narrative is due to two factors: first, direct speech has a significantly higher incidence of preposing than narrative, and second, direct speech has a higher

Conference 1996 (Biblical Interpretation 29; Leiden: Brill, 1997); Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York: Plenum, 1983); Mats Eskhult, *Studies in Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Studia Semitica Upsliensis 12; Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990); Tal Goldfajn, *Word Order and Time in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); Jean-Marc Heimerdigner, *Topic, Focus, and Foreground in Ancient Hebrew Narratives* (JSOTSup 295; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Roy L. Heller, *Narrative Structure and Discourse Constellations: An Analysis of Clause Function in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (HSS 55; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004); Alviero Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose* (trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson; JSOTSup 86; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); Alviero Niccacci, "Analysis of Biblical Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (ed. Robert Dale Bergen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 175-198.

³ The present study will treat the sample passages as *written texts* communicating verbal discourse. The relationship between the recorded discourse and the *ipsissima verba* of the speaker is not within the scope of this paper, though a worthy topic of research.

⁴ Moshavi defines these two terms in *Word Order* as follows: "Informational focus is the part of the proposition expressed by the sentence that is assumed by the speaker/writer to be new, rather than given," (90). And, topicalization, she posits "indicates a contextual relation between the preposed constituent and another element in the immediately preceding context," (101). See Adina Moshavi, *Word Order in the Biblical Hebrew Finite Clause* (Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 4; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010).

proportion of preposed clauses the pragmatic function of which is unclear.⁵

Unlike Moshavi's analysis which does not place any type of strictures on the verbal form or preposed material, the following study focuses specifically on the *w'x-qatal* form. The study will only examine those forms which occur in direct speech within the book of Genesis,⁶ with the hopes of providing more insight into the function of these preposed formations which occur in this genre. The goal and challenge of the present work then is to unite form and function.⁷

Before proceeding, however, the subject of Hebrew word order must be addressed. In order to determine whether a clause is syntactically "marked" and pragmatically significant, a generic word order must be established as the syntactical norm.⁸ In a recent study Robert D. Holmstedt examines Hebrew word order in the book of Genesis.⁹ Holmstedt too was prompted by Moshavi's work, but the focus of his argument is the defense of his position that biblical Hebrew is a subject-verb (SV) language as opposed to the traditional understanding of verb-subject (VS). Holmstedt rightly points out the significance of the word order debate in dealing with matters of syntax: "Aside from simple accuracy in a description of the language's syntax, the implications for assessing the pragmatic structure of 'simple' SV and VS clauses—and thus being able to interpret such clauses in a contextually

⁵ Moshavi, *Word Order*, 168.

⁶ 77x – Gen 4:6; 14:24; 17:16, 20; 18:12, 13, 20; 20:5 (2x); 21:23, 26 (2x); 22:16; 24:7 (2x), 31, 35, 46, 56; 26:9, 27; 27:36, 37; 28:16; 29:25; 30:6, 29; 31:5, 6, 7 (2x), 16, 27, 28, 29, 30, 38 (2x); 32:11 (2x), 13; 35:12; 37:7 (2x); 38:22, 23; 39:8, 9; 40:10, 15; 41:13, 15, 21; 42:10, 21, 22; 43:14, 22, 23; 44:20 (2x), 28; 45:3, 8, 13, 19; 46:32; 47:1, 5, 6, 9 (2x); 48:6, 11, 22; 49:6, 7, 15 (poetic); 50:20.

⁷ "Perhaps the reason syntax has been, and continues to be, such a challenge to linguists is that it protrudes most obviously into the semantic dimension (to borrow Longacre's term, which he uses in a slightly different sense, the 'soft underbelly of language') and sits squarely on the hazy border between linguistic form and function. It may, for these reasons, prove to be the watershed in the development of a linguistic theory which will prove able to endure ongoing scrutiny." Walter R. Bodine, "How Linguists Study Syntax," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (ed. Walter R. Bodine; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 103.

⁸ "The word order with a broader contextual distribution is the unmarked or basic order. . . Because the unmarked order is pragmatically acceptable in all contexts, the use of the marked word order is always optional," Moshavi, *Word Order*, 8. See also Edwin L. Battistella, *The Logic of Markedness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁹ Robert D. Holmstedt, "The Typological Classification of the Hebrew of Genesis: Subject-Verb or Verb-Subject?" *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 11, Article 14 (2011): 1-39.

sensitive way—is at stake.”¹⁰ Holmstedt’s study carefully and systematically examines the various verb clauses in the book of Genesis. The detailed precision of Holmstedt’s work, along with his salient point concerning the lack of simple verb-first sentences, cannot be overlooked. However, further research needs to be carried out in order to overturn the general consensus that Hebrew is VS language.¹¹ Therefore, the present study will operate from the assumption that biblical Hebrew as a VS language.

A PRE-VERBAL CONSTITUENTS OF THE *W^eX-QATAL* FORM IN DIRECT SPEECH

Table 1 records the various pre-verbal constituents, along with their frequency, that are found with the *w^ex-qatal* forms used in direct speech in the book of Genesis.

Pre-verbal Constituent	# of Occurrences (%) ¹²
Noun/Noun Phrase (without pronouns) ¹³	29x (37.6%)
Negative particle נֹטַף ¹⁴	19x (24.6%) 6x with pronoun
Personal Pronoun ¹⁵	16x (20.8%)
Particle מִגְּדָל ¹⁶	8x (10.3%)
Temporal Adverb נִמְנַתְּ ¹⁷	5x (6.5%)
Relative Pronoun ¹⁸	4x (5.2%)

¹⁰ Holmstedt, “Typological Classification,” 27.

¹¹ See, Barry L. Bandstra, “Word Order and Emphasis in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: Syntactic Observations on Genesis 22 from a Discourse Perspective,” in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (ed. Walter R. Bodine; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 109-24; Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 129; Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 169; K. Jongeling, “On the VSO character of Hebrew,” in *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Syntax: Presented to Professor J. Hoftijzer on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday* (ed. Karel Jongeling et al; Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 17; Leiden: Brill, 1991), 103-11; Christo H. J. van der Merwe, “Explaining Fronting in Biblical Hebrew,” *JNSL* 25 (1999): 182.

¹² 88 occurrences are listed instead of 80 due to cases of overlap among the constituents within a single verse.

¹³ Gen 14:24; 17:20; 18:12, 13, 20; 21:23; 24:35, 56; 27:37; 31:5, 7, 29, 38 (2x); 32:11; 35:12; 39:8; 42:10; 43:22, 23; 44:20 (2x); 45:13; 46:32; 47:1, 5, 9; 49:7, 15.

¹⁴ Gen 21:26 (2x); 22:16; 28:16; 31:7; 31:27, 28, 3 (2x); 38:23; 39:9; 40:15; 41:21; 42:21, 22; 44:28; 45:3; 45:8; 47:9.

¹⁵ Gen 20:5 (2x); 21:26 (2x); 24:31; 26:27; 28:16; 31:6; 32:13; 38:23; 41:15; 43:14; 45:8; 45:19; 48:22; 50:20.

¹⁶ Gen 17:16; 20:5; 21:26 (2x); 24:46; 30:6; 37:7; 38:22; 40:15.

¹⁷ Gen 27:36; 31:16, 30; 32:11; 45:8.

Interrogative particle ¹⁹	3x (3.9%)
Presentative Particle ²⁰ הַנָּה	2x (2.6%)
Protasis מִנְ	1x (1.3%)

*Table 1: Pre-verbal Constituent Occurrences in Direct Speech in Genesis***B “MARKEDNESS” AND HEBREW VERB FORMS**

Determining marked syntactic constructions is important for the interpreter because marked constructions “have pragmatic meaning, that is, they encode aspects of meaning which are not semantic but concern the relation of an utterance to its context.”²² Recognizing “markedness” requires the interpreter to have some understanding of the grammatical and syntactical options maintained by the author at the time of writing.²³ If the “normal” word order for a VS language such as biblical Hebrew is verb-subject, then it naturally follows that any constituent placed in the pre-verbal field should have syntactical significance. That is, the author appears to have made an intentional effort at changing the normal VS structure for some pragmatic reason. Robert Longacre has stated “that a N+*qatal* clause, like any NV clause in Biblical Hebrew, by its very highlighting of the noun presents an action as a participant-oriented action. The noun is highlighted and the verb is demoted.”²⁴ Longacre’s observation speaks specifically to preposed nouns, because the non-noun constituents included in Table 1 are necessarily clause initial, and thus have little syntactical value. When preposed, the negative אַל, independent pronouns, interrogatives, the focus particle מִנְ, and other discourse markers (e.g., הַנָּה and הַתָּה) all have *semantic* value but little syntactical significance because they almost always occupy the pre-verbal field.²⁵

¹⁸ Gen 24:7 (2x); 30:29; 48:6.

¹⁹ Gen 4:6; 26:9; 29:25.

²⁰ Gen 37:7; 48:11.

²¹ Gen 47:6.

²² Moshavi, *Word Order*, 1.

²³ “A distinction must be made between instances where a particular word order of constituents is obligatory (most due to syntactic considerations) and instances where speakers have a choice in their ordering of constituents.” See Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (vol. 3 of *Biblical Languages: Hebrew*; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 337.

²⁴ Robert E. Longacre, “*Weqatal* Forms in Biblical Hebrew Prose A Discourse-modular Approach,” in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (ed. Robert D. Bergen; Winona Lake, Ind.; Dallas, Tex.: Eisenbrauns; Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994), 67.

²⁵ Alviero Niccacci, “Basic Facts and Theory of the Biblical Hebrew Verb System in Prose,” in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference*

Wayyiqtol and *w^eqatal* forms, by their use of the *waw*-consecutive, must also be clause initial. Scholars have generally accepted the theory that the *wayyiqtol* form grew out of the Canaanite **yaqtul*,²⁶ and consequently functions as the primary vehicle for perfective aspect in sequential clauses and is thus "the backbone of the narrative"²⁷ in biblical Hebrew. The *w^eqatal* has proved to be more problematic—or at least enigmatic.²⁸ Throughout classical biblical Hebrew, the *w^eqatal* form nearly always communicates an imperfect aspect (future or modal) following a *yiqtol* or volative form. However, a question of significance for the present study is whether or not classical biblical Hebrew differentiates between the *w^eqataltí* (*waw*-consecutive with an accented ultima) with an imperfective aspect and *w^eqatálti* (*waw*-conjunctive with an accented penult) with a perfective aspect, despite the identical consonant and vowel formation?²⁹

Axel van de Sande rightly questions the significance of this delineation according to the para-textual accent. He writes: "...the existence of a form (analogical) *weqataltí* different from *weqatálti* or a simple coordinated *qatal*, is seriously in doubt."³⁰ Van de Sande argues that whatever emphasis might have been detected by the Masoretes would have been one of "prosody" (i.e. rhythm, stress, or intonation) and that there was no real semantic distinction between the forms until later Jewish grammarians identified it as such.³¹ Van de Sande's proposal possesses significant explanatory power with regard to classical biblical Hebrew's strong aversion for using a *w^eqatal* form to communicate a perfect aspect.³² Following van de Sande's position, if there

1996 (ed. Ellen van Wolde; Biblical Interpretation 29; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 167; van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Reference Grammar*, 338.

²⁶ John A. Cook, "The Semantics of Verbal Pragmatics: Clarifying the Roles of *Wayyiqtol* and *Weqatal* in Biblical Hebrew Prose," *JSS* 49 (2004): 256.

²⁷ Cook, "Semantics of Verbal Pragmatics," 166.

²⁸ See Leslie McFall, *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982).

²⁹ For a helpful discussion of verbal aspect the Hebrew verb system, see John A. Cook, "The Finite Verbal Forms in Biblical Hebrew Do Express Aspect," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 30 (2006): 21-35.

³⁰ "L'existence d'une forme (analogique) *weqataltí*, différente de *weqatálti* ou simple *qatal* coordonné, est sérieusement mise en doute." Axel van de Sande, *Nouvelle perspective sur le système verbal de l'hébreu ancien: Les forms *qatala, *yaqtul et *yaqtulu* (Publications de l'institut orientaliste de Louvain 57; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 237.

³¹ Van de Sande, *Nouvelle perspective*, 238. Cf. Ziony Zevit, *The Anterior Construction in Classical Hebrew* (SBLMS 50; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1998), 51-65 for a phonemic argument with regard to verbal aspect.

³² "As a matter of fact, in the classical idiom, the forms *w-qatálti* and *I killed* and *w-yiqtol* and *he will kill* are generally avoided (apart from the pure juxtaposition, e.g. Jr 22.15 *אכל ושתה* *he ate and drank*). The reason for this is no doubt as follows: *w-qatal*

was not a clear grammatical or morphological way to indicate that a *qatal* form with a conjunction was to be perfective in aspect, did the author of Genesis make an intentional decision when using a *w^ex-qatal* form? Yes, but the decision was between using the *w^ex-qatal* form and the *wayyiqtol*, not the *w^eqatálti*.³³

C THE WAYYIQTOL AND *WeX-QATAL* FORMS

The *wayyiqtol* form is used frequently in Genesis in direct speech and occurs forty-nine times in the first person alone. Therefore, it is a viable alternative for communicating the perfective aspect within direct speech in classical biblical Hebrew. In a thorough evaluation of the x+verb structure in Genesis, Aaron Hornkohl adopts the continuity/discontinuity model of Randell Buth for explaining the relationship between the *wayyiqtol* and the *w^ex-qatal*.³⁴ Hornkohl offers up the following illustration to present this position:

	Past – Perfect – Realis	Non-Past/Future – Imperfective – Irrealis
Pragmatic Continuity	<i>wayyiqtol</i>	<i>Weqatal</i>
Pragmatic Discontinuity	<i>(we)X+qatal</i>	<i>(we)X+yiqtol</i>

Table 2: Relationship between Wayyiqtol and the W^ex-qatal forms

Moshavi criticizes Buth's model for maintaining inconsistencies, and it is true that lines between continuity and discontinuity are sometimes blurry.³⁵ However, this system fits well with the data from Genesis, and coheres with

is usually used as an inverted form (namely, *w-qataltí and I will kill*); since in many cases the stress cannot be shifted, considerable confusion would have arisen if *w-qatal* could also have been used as a non-inverted form (namely, *w-qatálti and I killed*)." See Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2nd ed; Rome: Gregorian Biblical Press, 2009), 585. Note that Gen 21:25 (הַנָּתַן) is an exception to this aversion.

³³ "The opposition between the historical news with *wayyiqtol* and the oral report with *qatal* [in 2 Sam 12:26-27] concerning the same event is striking. As the analysis of the evidence shows, *qatal* can be [sic] first-place or second-place verb form (i.e. *qatal*, or *x-qatal*) with no difference, because in both cases it contrasts narrative *wayyiqtol* and therefore conveys mainline information." See Niccacci, "The Biblical Hebrew Verb System," 175.

³⁴ Aaron Hornkohl, "The Pragmatics of the X+verb Structure in the Hebrew of Genesis: The Linguistic Functions and Associated Effects and Meanings of Intra-clausal Fronted Constituents," *Ethnorêma* 1 (2005): 78. See also, Randall Buth, "Functional Grammar, Hebrew and Aramaic: An Integrated, Textlinguistic Approach to Syntax," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers* (ed. Walter R. Bodine; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1995), 77-102.

³⁵ Moshavi, *Word Order*, 40.

two of Moshavi's own proposals for pragmatic functions of the *w^ex-qatal* form in direct speech: anteriority and justification.

1 *W^ex-qatal* and Anteriority

Almost always translated as the perfect or pluperfect, the *w^ex-qatal* form indicates anteriority in nearly all of the preposed nouns examined in this study.³⁶ 30 out of 45 uses of the *w^ex-qatal* having a preposed noun phrase indicate a tense shift toward anteriority. Note the following brief examples:

אָכָן יִשְׁבָּה בָּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאָנֹכִי לֹא יִדּוֹתִי:

“Surely the Lord is in this place, but I did not know!” (Gen 28:16).

אָנֹכִי אַתְּפָנִי אָבִיכָן כִּי-אִינָנוּ אֶלְיָהוּ כַּתְמָל שְׁלָשָׁם וְאֱלֹהִי אָבִי הִיא עָמְדִי:

“But the God of my father has been with me,” (Gen 31:5).

כִּי בָמָקְלֵי עֲבֹרָתִי אַתְּ-הַיְרָדֵן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הִיְתִּי לְשָׁנִי מְחֻנּוֹתִים:

“... and now I have become two camps,” (Gen 32:11).

כִּי-יֹרָא אָנֹכִי אֲתָה פְּנֵי-בּוֹא וְהַכְנִי אֶם עַל-בְּנֵים: וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ...

“Yet you have said. . .” (Gen 32:12b-13a).

וְהַגְּדָתָם לְאָבִי אַתְּ-כָל-כְּבָודִי בְמִצְרָיִם וְאַתָּה כָּל-אֲשֶׁר רְאִיתָם...

“... and all that I have done. . .” (Gen 45:13).

This shift in tense appears to be the basic syntactical function in these forms, and consequently, the idea of temporal succession must be addressed when discussing the syntax of the *w^ex-qatal*.³⁷

Many have recognized the significant role the *w^ex-qatal* plays in communicating the pluperfect. Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka state: “Hebrew has no other way of expressing the value of the pluperfect than by avoiding *wayyiqtol* in this way.”³⁸ However, for the sake of clarity, it should be noted that the *wayyiqtol* form can be used to communicate the pluperfect at times (e.g., Gen 24:35 below), but primarily in a sequential position and not at the head of clause.

2 *W^ex-qatal* and Justification

Moshavi posits that when preposing follows a rhetorical question or a directive (i.e., an assertion indeed of support) in direct speech, that it likely marks “the

³⁶ Examples of simultaneity include Gen 18:12, 31:38, and 38:23. In each instance the *w^ex-qatal* is preceded by a *qatal* verb.

³⁷ Zevit rightly notes that aspect and tense are not mutually exclusive terms for describing verb system. See *The Anterior Construction*, 39-48.

³⁸ Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar*, 362.

justification for the preceding utterance."³⁹ Justification, then, should be understood as a specific function within the broader category of anteriority. The following examples confirm this proposal:

2a Justification with a Fronted Personal Pronoun

ויאמר יהוה אל-אברהם למה זה צחקה שרה לאמר **האָף אָמַנָּם אֶלְדָּן וְאַנְתִּי זָקְנָתִי**:
 "Shall I indeed bear a child *for* I have become old?"
 "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" (Gen 18:13, NRSV).

ויאמר אָבִימֶלֶךְ לֹא יִדְעָתִי מַי עֲשָׂה אַתְּ הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְגַם-אַתָּה לֹא
הָגַדְתָּ לִי וְגַם אַנְכִּי לֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּלִתְיַהוּם:⁴⁰

"I do not know who has done this thing, *for* you have not told me, and I have not heard until this day."

"I do not know who has done this; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today," (Gen 21:26, NRSV).

ויאמר בָּוָא בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה לִמְהַתֵּן מִדְבָּר בְּהַזְּבָחָת וְאַנְכִּי פְנִיתִי הַבַּיִת ...

"Why do you stand outside, *for* I have cleaned up the house..."
 "Why do you stand outside when I have prepared the house..." (Gen 24:31, NRSV).

ויאמר אֲלָהֶם יִצְחָק מִדּוֹעַ בְּאַתֶּם אָלִי וְאַתֶּם שְׁנָאתֶם אֶתִּי ...

"Why have you come to me? *For* you have hated me..."
 "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me..." (Gen 26:27).

וְשַׁלֵּחַ לְכֶם אֶת-אֶחָיכֶם אֶחָד וְאֶת בְּנֵימִין וְאַנְתִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר שְׁכַלְתִּי שְׁכַלְתִּי:

"And may he send back your other brother and Benjamin, *for* as I have been bereaved, I am bereaved."

"So that he may send back your other brother and Benjamin. As for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved," (Gen 43:14, NRSV).

וְהַשֵּׁב אֶתֶּכֶם אֶל-אֶרֶץ אֲבֹתֶיכֶם: וְאַנְתִּי נְתַחֵת לְךָ שְׁכָם אֶחָד ...

"And may he bring you back to the land of your fathers. *For* I have given you a shoulder/ridge..."

"And [he] will bring you again to the land of your ancestors. I now give to you one portion..." (Gen 48:21-22, NRSV).

2b Justification with a Fronted Subject

ויאמר עֲבָד אֶבְרָהָם אַנְכִּי: וַיֹּהֵה בָּרָךְ אֶת-אָדָנִי מֵאָד וַיַּגְדֵּל וַיַּתְנַלֵּז צָאן וּבָקָר וּכְסָף ...

"I am the servant of Abraham. *For* YHWH has greatly blessed..."

³⁹ Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar*, 116.

⁴⁰ While supporting the basic feature of justification, the double use of **גַם** does seem to set this verse apart as a special case.

"I am Abraham's servant. The LORD has greatly blessed..." (Gen 24:34-35, NRSV).

ויאמר אלהם אל-תאחרו אתי ויהוה הצליח דרכי...

"Do not delay me, *for* YHWH has prospered my way..."

"Do not delay, since the LORD has made my journey successful..." (Gen 24:56, NRSV).

ויאמרו אליו לא אדני ועבדיך באו לשבר-אכל:

"No my lord, *for* your servants have come to buy food."

"No, my lord; your servants have come to buy food," (Gen 42:10, NRSV).

ויאמר שלום לכם אל-תיראו אלהיכם ואלהי אביכם נתן לכם מטמון באמתתיכם...

"Do not fear, *for* your God and the God of your fathers has placed treasure in your bags..."

"Do not be afraid; your God and the God of your father must have put treasure in your sacks for you..." (Gen 43:23, NRSV).

ונאמר אל-אדני ישְׁלַנוּ אָב זָקָן וַיַּלְד זָקְנִים קָטָן וְאַחֲיו מַת...

"We have a father who is an old man and the child of his old age—the youngest, *for* his brother has died..."

"We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead..." (Gen 44:20, NRSV).

2c Justification with a Fronted Direct Object

ויען יצחק ויאמר לעשו הַן גָּבֵר שְׁמַתְיוּ לְךָ וְאֶת-כָּל-אֶחָיו נְתַתִּי לְעָבָדים...

"Behold, I have set him as lord over you, *for* I have given all of his brothers to him as servants..."

"I have already made him your lord, and I have given him all his brothers as servants..." (Gen 27:37, NRSV).

...ומלכים מחלץך יצאו: ואותה הארץ אשר נתתי לאברהם ול יצחק לך אתנה:

"And kings shall come forth from your loins. *For* the land which I have given to Abraham and to Isaac I will give to you."

"And kings shall spring from you. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you" (Gen 35:11-12, NRSV).

ויאמר אל-אשת אדני הַן אָדָנִי לְאִידְעָ אֲתִי מִה-בְּבִית וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׁלֹו נְתַנִּ בְּיַדְךָ:

"My master does not worry with me about what is in the house, *for* all that there is in it he has placed in my hand."

"My master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand," (Gen 39:8, NRSV).

In the above examples, the justification always antedates the statement. That is, the speaker always draws from previous knowledge, action, or

information in justifying the statement.⁴¹ It therefore follows, that the function of justification would overlap considerably with anteriority when observing the *w^ex-qatal* form in direct speech. While many older grammars have recognized this form as a circumstantial clause, this designation does not accurately communicate the central feature of tense shift in these constructions.⁴²

Justification—as a particular form of anteriority—is indeed a demonstrable pragmatic function for the *w^ex-qatal* form in direct speech, and that this function needs to be recognized in rendering more accurate translations of the texts. In each of the above examples, the *w^ex-qatal* form is preceded by a statement or a question with an underlying statement. The statement is then justified by the information provided in the following clause introduced with the *w^ex-qatal*. Justification as a pragmatic function also fits within Hornkohl's illustration by giving explanation to the proposed pragmatic discontinuity expected with the *w^ex-qatal* form. Using the foreground/background model, one might say that the speaker's statement is the foreground and the justification, introduced with the *w^ex-qatal* form is the background.

D CONCLUSION

Within direct speech in Genesis, anteriority is the most prominent feature of the *w^ex-qatal* form. The discontinuity of the form (often labeled a "disjunctive") has more to do with a shift in temporal success than with the idea of contrast. This is supported by instances where the *w^ex-qatal* form denotes anteriority but within a "consecutive" framework (e.g., Gen 45:13; 46:32; 47:1). Within this larger field of pragmatic function, justification serves a more nuanced use of anteriority within direct speech. Whereas in narrative, it has been argued that the *w^ex-qatal* form frequently denotes the idea of parenthesis or resumption,⁴³ in direct speech it nearly always communicates anterior information (background), and at times uses this information as a justification or grounds for a previous assertion (foreground).

⁴¹ "Recognizing the dedicated nature of the anterior construction enables the comprehension of compositional subtlety in many biblical passages and engenders appreciation for one of the ways in which the ancient authors solved a problem that hindered them in their representation of reality," Zevit, *The Anterior Construction*, 16.

⁴² Describing noun clauses that begin with the *waw* + predicate or *waw* + subject construction, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* states that these forms are "also to be regarded as circumstantial clauses, in so far as they describe a *state* which is simultaneous with the principal actions" (italics original), GKC 2nd ed., 489.

⁴³ Tamar Zewi, *Parenthesis in Biblical Hebrew* (Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 50; Leiden: Brill, 2007).

After examining the issues of word order and the syntactical opposition between the *wayyiqtol* and *w^ex-qatal*, this study has sought to explain that two of the primary pragmatic functions of the *w^ex-qatal* form within direct speech in classical biblical Hebrew are anteriority and justification. Both functions cohere with and make sense of the continuity/discontinuity model adopted by Buth and Hornkohl, as well as incorporating the concepts of background/foreground and temporal succession. Moshavi's proposal for the function of justification, perhaps doubted by some in the field, seems to be truer than she realized. Approximately 33% of the *w^ex-qatal* forms studied with a noun constituent indicate a justification made by the speaker. Recognizing the prominence of the pragmatic functions of justification and anteriority when encountering the *w^ex-qatal* in direct speech will provide Bible interpreters and translators with a clearer understanding of the syntactical dynamics of the passage. How prominent these functions are in direct speech in the rest of the Pentateuch is a question that remains to be answered.

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