Most of the papers in this volume originated as presentations at the conference Biblical Hebrew and Rabbinic Hebrew: New Perspectives in Philology and Linguistics, which was held at the University of Cambridge, 8–10th July, 2019. The aim of the conference was to build bridges between various strands of research in the field of Hebrew language studies that rarely meet, namely philologists working on Biblical Hebrew, philologists working on Rabbinic Hebrew and theoretical linguists.

The volume is the published outcome of this initiative. It contains peer-reviewed papers in the fields of Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew that advance the field by the philological investigation of primary sources and the application of cutting-edge linguistic theory. These include contributions by established scholars and by students and early career researchers.

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Cover image: Genizah fragment of the Hebrew Bible with Babylonian vocalisation (Num. 18.27-28, Cambridge University Library T-S A38.12; courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library). Genizah fragment of the Mishnah (Ḥ allah 1, Cambridge University Library MS Add.470.1; courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library). Linguistic analysis of Ps. 1.1 (Elizabeth Robar). Images selected by Estara Arrant.

Cover design: Anna Gatti
THE RISE OF WAYYIQṭOL

Elizabeth Robar

In the Festschrift in honour of George Klein, *The Unfolding of Your Words Gives Light* (Jones 2018), Holger Gzella writes magisterially of the wayyiqṭol form as the “Archimedean point for any comprehensive examination of the still controversial principles” of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system.

In semantic terms this form, to put it bluntly, is strongly marked for punctual, or complete, events in the past; hence it combines perfective aspect with past tense. This insight may be taken as an established and uncontested point of departure. (Gzella 2018, 21)

While many Western scholars have come to a similar conclusion from familiarity with the text, Gzella’s confidence in this semantic analysis is based on wayyiqṭol’s assumed historical development from the proto-Northwest Semitic short *yaqtul*, a prefixed

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1 I am deeply indebted to Joseph Habib for his help in revising an earlier draft of this paper.

2 I specify “Western” because I am also familiar with non-Western (and native South American) speakers who have come to different conclusions, undoubtedly influenced by their own languages.
preterite form itself descending from the proto-Semitic prefixed preterite represented by *iprus* in Akkadian.³

This view accounts for a vast number of the occurrences of *wayyiqtol* and thus provides a useful point of departure for a broader analysis. The purpose of the present essay is to provide an inventory, first, of early uses of *wayyiqtol*, to evaluate if they fit into a typology that would accord with the above statement; second, of some early expressions of past tense and perfective aspect; and, third, of unexpected uses of *wayyiqtol* in Job.⁴

³ See the history of scholarship as laid out in McFall (1982), Smith (1991, 1–15), and Cook (2012). Bara­nowski (2016) has recently provided evidence of a short prefixed preterite in Canaanite narrative, analogous to BH *wayyiqtol*. Waltke and O’Connor (1990) represent scholars who also take into account a discourse relationship with the preceding verb: *wayyiqtol* is a ‘waw-resultative’ form, in some way subordinate to the preceding clause.

⁴ Diachronic and typological reconstructions of *wayyiqtol*’s development are closely related, but by no means identical. This paper accepts the consensus that Archaic Biblical Hebrew (ABH) is early, but no other linguistic dating is assumed. The question under discussion is whether the distributional data (textual occurrences of *wayyiqtol*) accord with the typological argument (claiming early short *yiqtol* functions as a preterite and *qatal* as a non-preterite) suggested by the assumed historical reconstruction (*yaqtul > short *yiqtol*). See Table 1, in §1.3 below, for totals of *wayyiqtol* forms and a summary of the distributional data in recognised archaic texts.

Note that the dating of Job remains inscrutable, so no particular date is assumed here.
1.0. Archaic Biblical Hebrew

Any dating of Biblical Hebrew is fraught with debate, as linguistic features once thought archaic may now be considered dialectal or stylistic (e.g., Aramaisms). Even so, for most scholars, intuition prevails in considering there to be a body of ABH, including such texts as Psalm 68, the Blessing of Jacob (Gen. 49), Balaam’s Oracles (Num. 23–24), the Songs of the Sea (Exod. 15), of Moses (Deut. 32–33), and of Deborah (Judg. 5), and the Prayer of Hannah (1 Sam. 2). In most of these texts, wayyiqṭol is sparse, if present at all.

1.1. Wayyiqṭol Rare

Scholars have long been convinced of the archaic nature of Psalm 68, thanks to its mention of Sinai, defective spelling, syntax, phraseology, motifs, and vocabulary (including strong parallels between vv. 12–19 and the Song of Deborah). Of note here is

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5 See Mandell (2013) and the articles in Barmash (2017) for a discussion of ABH as a valid category. Particularly important works in the discussion remain Young et al. (2008) and Miller-Naudé and Zevit (2012). An exhaustive treatment of the history of scholarship and status quaestionis on the linguistic dating of Biblical Hebrew may be found in Rezetko and Young (2019).

6 Unbound short yiqtol occurs in this early Hebrew, but this paper is concerned only with short yiqtol within the bound form wayyiqṭol.

7 Notarius (2013) excludes Psalm 68 from her study, presumably because she restricts herself to “those poetic passages incorporated into the prose books of the Torah and Former Prophets” (71).
simply the presence of a narrative recital with mostly *qatal* forms and a few *yiqtol* forms.⁸

Suggested archaic features include the nominative reflex (נ) of the Proto-Semitic relative pronoun (*ðū) in Ps. 68.28 and the genitive (נ in v. 9 (Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2013, 401). Holmstedt (2014) disputes the genitive use of נ and argues, persuasively, for a straightforward demonstrative use. His argument influenced the translation provided below.

Watson (2005, 46) assesses the relevant features, concluding that while the evidence for an early provenance should not be “overstated” and may reflect later redactional activity, nonetheless its “content and allusions, vocabulary, grammar, or use of divine names, seems to point to the conclusion that it is substantially very ancient, perhaps emanating from a period as early as that of the Judges or Saul.”

⁸The distribution of the qatal forms is consistent with Notarius’ (2013, 286–87) criterion for ABH, stipulating a limited use of qatal in narrative. Note, however, that, based on her discourse modes, she would not consider Ps. 68 narrative. Self-admittedly, she defines these circularly—as an “interpretative circle” (59)—and presumably they should therefore only be considered of self-fulfilling value rather than as additional evidence for her view.

In her conversational frameworks (whose subtype, ‘hymnal poetic speech’, she would presumably consider the label for Ps. 68, given its vocative אֱלֹהִים), she interprets qatal as able to mark simple past tense, as in Deut. 32.30 (Notarius 2013, 53, 91) and 2 Sam. 22.5 (2013, 167). She acknowledges difficulty in distinguishing resultant, simple past, and anteriority, which should caution the reader to the potential of less than robust argumentation. Similarly, she acknowledges a significant overlap between narrative and report [the third subtype of conversation] in terms of their discourse characteristics: both discourse modes are governed by dynamic bounded events and both reveal temporal text-progression.
The Rise of Wayyiqtol

She has in fact expressed the difference between a perfect/anterior (which does not update the reference time) and a perfective (which does update the reference time). Here we can see how the discourse modes are defined by verbal forms. Consequently, if narrative is defined as formed by preterites and report by anteriors, then it is logical, if not insightful, that narrative has an autonomous sequential time (the reference time being updated by the preterites) and report does not (the reference time remaining the same, not updated by the anteriors).

See also Isaksson (2014) for a similar approach to that of Notarius.

9 Translations are based on the JPS, modified only where deemed necessary.
All verbal forms may be considered past tense, either preterite (perfective) or past habitual (imperfective) in aspect.\textsuperscript{10} 

1.1.1. Consecutive \textit{qatal} Forms

In the oracles of Balaam, which purport to be non-Israelite and non-Judahite, indeed foreign altogether, there are no \textit{wayyiqtol} forms. This is true for all of the poetic material in Num. 23–24 (23.7–10, 18–24; 24.3–9, 15–24, excluding narrative frames).\textsuperscript{11}

For instance, whereas one might expect, in typical classical prose, to have a \textit{qatal}–\textit{wayyiqtol} sequence, such as כָּרַע וַיִּשְׁכַּב or even a \textit{wayyiqtol} sequence, e.g., וַיִּכְּרַע וַיִּשְׁכַּב, we instead read multiple consecutive \textit{qatal} forms, as in:

\begin{quote}

10 The justification for understanding the \textit{qatal} forms as simple pasts (preterite semantics), rather than anteriors (perfects), lies in the temporal ‘when... then’ backbone of the minimal narrative: two consecutive events narrated in succession: ‘When God went out, then the earth trembled.’ A report, which refers constantly to speech time, would obscure the inherent consecution: ‘God has gone out and the earth has trembled.’ A narrative embedded within the report would begin with speech time as reference and then shift to a reference time within the narrative: ‘God has gone out and then the earth trembled and the sky rained.’

The long \textit{yiqtol} forms, חֲרֵי and תָּנִיָּה, have past imperfective semantics here. The \textit{qatal} נוּסְפַּה seems to function here like an English simple past, in that it is past tense, but unmarked for aspect (thus capable of bearing habitual semantics). Possibly the \textit{weqatal} נַלְיָה is also to be considered unmarked for aspect here, or perhaps more likely it marks the imperfective aspect that the \textit{qatal} then inherits.

11 For an argument for a clearly archaic profile, see Morag (1981) and Pat-El and Wilson-Wright (2013) or, with less certainty, Notarius (2013, 227–28, 296).

\end{quote}
‘He crouched, he lay down like a lion, like a lioness; Who dares rouse him?’ (Num. 24.9)

Notarius (2008, 74–75; 2013, 218) understands these as resultative perfects, which presumably would be reflected by a translation such as ‘He has crouched [and] lain down like a lion, like a lioness [in victory over its prey]; who [therefore] dares rouse him?’ In other words, she does not read the text as a micro-narrative (with preterites) followed by a present tense comment, but rather she holds that the speech time remains the reference point for each verb (with resultatives/anteriors).\(^\text{12}\)

The context may be insufficient to determine which is likeliest for this isolated instance, but because this appears to be a culturally shared poetic trope, both syntactically and semantically,\(^\text{13}\) its other instances may therefore shed additional light.

Identical syntax and semantics\(^\text{14}\) are also found in:

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\(^{12}\) Were one to read these as statives, they could be either ‘he is crouched, he is lying down like a lion’ or ‘he was crouched, he was lying down like a lion.’ The reference point would be unspecified, since statives \textit{qua} adjectives can take their time reference from the context.


\(^{14}\) And nearly identical words, except \textit{שָכַב} in Numbers becomes \textit{רָבַץ} in Genesis.
Judah is a lion’s whelp;  
On prey, my son, have you grown.  
He crouched, he lay down like a lion, like the king of beasts;  
Who dares rouse him?’ (Gen. 49.9)

Were the repeated text fully incorporated into Gen. 49, an anterior interpretation would be easiest: ‘on prey have you grown; you have crouched; you have lain down....’ The lack of incorporation (i.e., the qatal forms remain third person rather than according with the second person of the first line) and the nearly verbatim agreement with Num. 24.9 may indicate that this is, indeed, a trope which can be embedded, and which therefore need not flow grammatically (in terms of tense and aspect) with its context.

Our third instance of כָּרַע, in Judg. 5.27, might further induce us to see a literary trope,\textsuperscript{15} in which Sisera crouched, but, unlike the lion who rises again, lay down and did not rise again.

If viewed as a trope within the Hebrew tradition, the lexical כָּרַע may shift to the more common יָּרַד by the time of Ezek. 32.21.

From the depths of Sheol the mightiest of warriors speak to him and his allies; the uncircumcised, the slain by the sword, have gone down and lie [there].’ (Ezek. 32.21)
‘At her feet he sank, he lay, outstretched,
At her feet he sank, lay still;
Where he sank, there he lay—destroyed.’ (Judg. 5.27)

Here in Judg. 5 the qatāl forms serve as narratival forms with clear preterite semantics. Given that this is the only context in which the sequence fits naturally—i.e., semantically and grammatically—the strongest argument is to give this context the dominant role in determining the grammatical semantics of the qatāl forms. If that is so, then even in the above cases (Num. 24.9 and Gen. 49.9), even if awkward in English, it may yet be more conservative to understand the qatāl forms as providing a micro-narrative, followed by a cry of despair (as in the English translations provided).

After Gen. 49.9, Deut. 32.15 does not seem so strange with its interruption of a series of wayyiqtol forms with a series of three

16 This may be a reported narrative, as in narrative explicitly within the poet’s mouth, but, pace Notarius (2013 129–30), it strains credulity to suggest this must be report, i.e., a series of anteriors that retain speech time as its reference time, e.g.,

‘He has asked for water, but she has given him milk;
in a bowl fit for nobles she has brought him curdled milk.
Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman’s hammer.
She has struck Sisera, she has crushed his head,
she has shattered and pierced his temple.
At her feet he has sunk....’

17 As Notarius (2013, 140) notes, qatāl forms can be simple past. If one defines the discourse mode here as narrative (even if embedded within report), these are easily considered simple past qatāl forms.
asynthetic second-person qatal forms. The effect is that of an ex-postulation in the midst of a narrative, in which the narrator speaks of the addressee in third person, but, given the topic at hand, cannot restrain the outburst, “You grew fat, gross, and coarse!!” in the midst of his song.

(5) והשמ וַיִשְמֶַ֤ן יְשֻרוּן וַיִבְעָ ט שָמַ נְתָ עָבִֵ֣יתָ כָשִֶ֑יתָ וַיִטּ ש אֱ֣לוֹהַ עָשָ הוּ וַיְנַבֵ ל צִ֥וּר יְשֻעָתֱֽוֹ׃

‘So Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—
You grew fat and gross and coarse!!—
He forsook the God who made him
And spurned the Rock of his support.’ (Deut. 32.15)

In semantic terms, these could be simple pasts, as above, or they might be stative perfects, ‘You are become fat, thick, gorged!’ (Notarius 2013, 81–82); both are plausible and defensible and thus must for the present be left as possibilities.

1.1.2. Lone Past Tense yiqtol Form

The absence of wayyiqtol forms does not coincide with an equal absence of short yiqtol forms with past time reference; Balaam opens his oracles with a prefixed verb with preterite semantics

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18 Even the series of third-person qatal forms like this is restricted to poetry, apart from זָקֵן בָא בַיָמִים ‘he became old, advanced in days’ and its variants (Gen. 18.11; 24.1; Josh. 13.1; 23.1–2; Judg. 19.16; 1 Sam. 17.12; 1 Kgs 1.1).

(the sole instance in his speeches; all other past tense verbs are qat'al).\textsuperscript{20} As an opening verb, it is possible it had a formulaic role.

‘From Aram Balak brought me.’ (Num. 23.7)

Apart from this one instance, however, Balaam exclusively uses qat'al (and weqat'al) for past tense.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} Grammarians disagree whether this is an imperfect, e.g., ‘he was bringing me by stages’ (GKC, §107b, d), or preterite, ‘he brought me’ (Bergsträsser 1962, II:§34h). Note that the latter is Bergsträsser’s update of the former.

Notarius argues that since “it is not narrative,” therefore “a real narrative tense is not to be expected here; nor is the simple past meaning marked in the passage,” even though “verse 7 pertains to an event anterior to the speech-time” (Notarius, 2008, 79; 2013, 222). She suggests that word order (non-initial position) indicates possible circumstantial function, effectively ‘when Balak brought me... then he said.’

Even were this to be understood circumstantially, it would not change the past tense value, nor the perfective aspect: only a pragmatic function of foregrounding versus backgrounding. Any equation of ‘circumstantial background function’ with an imperfective or a ‘kind of historical present’ (usually understood as vivid, the opposite of backgrounded) would appear to be a case of category confusion.

Indeed, the implied semantics of a past tense circumstantial would be either pluperfect, ‘when he had brought me’, or simultaneous, ‘while he was bringing me’. The former would be most curious for a short yiqtol (if this is a short yiqtol, which here is morphologically ambiguous) and the latter is illogical in the context.

\textsuperscript{21} Because the weqat'al forms continue the qat'al form רָאָשׁ, I understand them to have parallel (past tense) semantics: just as he has spoken, so he has promised and he has blessed.
God is not man to be capricious, or mortal to change His mind.

Has He spoken and will not act; has He promised and will he not fulfill?

I have received [the command] to bless: when He has blessed, I cannot reverse it.

He has not sighted harm for Jacob, He has not seen woe for Israel.

The LORD their God is with them, and their King’s acclaim in their midst.’ (Num. 23.19–21)

Although Balaam uses yiqtol for standard future tense, he uses qatal for the peculiar prophetic passage about the star to arise

22 I interpret all these words as Balaam’s. If the verbs of speaking in v. 19 are considered quotative frames (Miller 1996) for the Canaanite deity El, v. 20 can be considered a quotation of divine speech, in which El honours the legitimacy of Balaam whom he has ‘taken’ (Notarius 2013, 210–20). In this interpretation, Balaam legitimates himself by citing El, who vows that if Balaam blesses, El will not revoke it. Any persuasive value of such logic is not entirely clear, as the very authority structure of El legitimating Balaam would be turned on its head, with El deferring to Balaam. In any case, this would not change any past tense value of the qatal verbs.

Medieval commentators also treated these as past tense in Balaam’s mouth, e.g., Rashi (1040–1105), commenting: המ דברי"? כיברך ממון הברך אמונת. הברך ולא אשיב. וההוא ברך ויאלי לא אשיב
from Jacob. In this case, the past tense presumably refers to Balaam’s vision (recounting what happened in his vision or was revealed to him) and is not applicable to the events themselves.23

What I saw for them is not yet; what I beheld will not be soon:

A star rose from Jacob,
a scepter came forth from Israel;
It smashed the brow of Moab,
broke down all children of Seth.’ (Num. 24.17–18)

1.1.3. Wayyiqtol in Non-prophetic Dialogue

Though there are no wayyiqtol forms in Balaam’s prophetic monologues, there is one in his direct dialogue with God in ch. 23.

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23 Here in v. 17 Notarius (2013, 220) sees the prophetic perfect as a subset of the resultant perfect, with the weqatal forms marking temporal text-progression within future-time reference.
On the one hand, the striking syntactic sequence of object-\textit{qatal} followed by \textit{wayyiqtol}-object is nearly poetic, suggesting that it may hark back to an earlier poetic memory (toward archaic times). On the other hand, the absence of \textit{wayyiqtol} forms in the prophecies makes this form seem foreign in Balaam’s mouth and possibly from a different dialect or time period.

Psalm 68 and Balaam’s oracles thus provide little evidence for use of a prefixed preterite, whether alone or in the bound \textit{wayyiqtol} form: only one (possible) short prefixed preterite each.\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Qatal} largely bears the burden of preterite past tense.

1.1.4. Possibly Archaic \textit{wayyiqtol}

In the Song of the Sea we find a single \textit{wayyiqtol} form (זֵית), followed soon thereafter by two \textit{wayiqtol} forms (טַשְׁלֵג and אַנְוֵהוּ).

\begin{equation}
\text{נתֶּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּ
Psalms, raising two possibilities: either the latter texts are drawing on an earlier, archaic tradition (with the rare form הָּּּי) or the earlier text has been adapted to a later tradition (with a possibly anachronistic wayyiqtol form). (Or, of course, a combination of the two.) We have already seen, above in Gen. 49.9, portions of text that plausibly seem embedded tropes. The rare הָּּּי might indicate the same phenomenon here.

(11)

ָּּּי אֵַ֧ל יְשוּעָתִִ֛י אֶבְטַ ח וְל ֵ֣א אֶפְחֶָּ֑ד כֱִֽֽי־עָזִֶּ֤י וְזִמְרָת יֵָ֣הּ יְהוָ ה וֱַָֽֽֽיְהִי־לֱִי לֱישוּעֱֽה׃

‘Behold the God who gives me triumph! so I am confident, unafraid; For Yah the LORD is my strength and might, And He has become my deliverance.’ (Isa. 12.2)

(12)

עָזִֵּ֣י וְזִמְרֵָ֣ת יֶָּ֑הּ וֱַָֽֽֽיְהִי־לֱִי לֱישוּעֱֽה׃

‘Yah is my strength and might; He has become my deliverance.’ (Ps. 118.14)

If these are embedded tropes, then it becomes more difficult to identify the original context, so we must be cautious about adopting any conclusions. The wayyiqtol in Exod. 15 may not be original to its context.

1.1.5. Certainly Archaic wayyiqtol

We have a clear wayyiqtol in the Song of Deborah, but it is not a fully independent form introducing a clause detached from surrounding clauses. In Judg. 5.28 we have ellipsis of the subject (Sisera’s mother) in the first clause (with qatal), with the subject provided in the second clause (with wayyiqtol). The first clause is
thus semantically dependent on the second clause for providing the subject.  

(13) בְעַד הַחַלָּ֨וֹן נִשְקְפַָ֧ה וַתְיַבִֵ֛ב אִֵ֥ם סֱִֽיסְרָ א בְעֵַ֣ד הֱָֽאֶשְנֶָ֑ב מַדִ֗וּעַ ב שֵֶ֤ש רִכְבוֹ לָב וֹא מַדֵ֣וּעַ אֱֶֽחֱר וּ פַעֲמֵ י מַרְכְבוֹתֱָֽו׃

‘Through the window she peered, behind the lattice Sisera’s mother whined:

“Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why so late the clatter of his wheels?”’ (Judg. 5.28)

The wayyiqtol is not a common verb (בָּבֵב), and there is no indication that it might have been inserted later, as possibly is the case in Exod. 15.  

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25 This would the phenomenon David Tsumura (2019) refers to as ‘vertical grammar’, in which parallel poetic lines have dependencies that go beyond the usual constraints of word order. In this case, word order would normally require that the subject be contained within a clause, but here the noun phrase constituting the subject is in the following line, though still semantically a part of the first clause.

26 Notarius (2013, 143) argues that this is not a wayyiqtol form, because the historical report in Jdg 5 is not a narrative, and therefore the historical past tense is not necessarily expected in it; from a historical-linguistic point of view, the historical report in Jdg 5 reflects a language type in which the old preterite *yaqtul was decisively substituted by the new preterite *qatala, at least in the discourse mode of report.

In other words, if one pre-determines that it is not narrative, but report, then only non-narrative forms are permitted. If wayyiqtol is a narrative form, then it must not appear here (or, if we allow it, it would be ‘very rare’).
1.2. Wayyiqtol Becomes Common, but Not Standard

In Genesis 49\(^{27}\) and Habakkuk 3, wayyiqtol is more common, even if not a common, expected form. Jacob’s blessing on Issachar includes multiple wayyiqtol forms close together in v. 15.

(14) יששכר מֶלֶם גֵּרֵם לְבִּין הַמְשָפְתִים׃
וַיְרַא מְנֻחָה כִּי טוב אָחָיָיו כִּי נִנְעָה
וַיְטַעְשַח לְסָב לִי לַמְסֵעָב׃

‘Issachar is a strong-boned ass, Crouching among the sheepfolds.
Then he saw how good was security, And how pleasant was the country,
So he bent his shoulder to the burden, And he became a toiling serf.’ (Gen. 49.14–15)

Clearly, sequential past narration is expressed throughout the song with qatal forms, including cases of explicit consecution with הָיָה (Judg. 5.11, 13, 19, 22). As stated above, this text-progression within the text indicates a narrative discourse mode, not a report discourse mode. Or, perhaps put more helpfully, it indicates preterite semantics, rather than anterior semantics.

On grounds of narrative versus report, then, the wayyiqtol is at home with preterite semantics, which are present here in Judg. 5. One might surmise that a lone wayyiqtol is suspect, but that is only if one presupposes that wayyiqtol forms always occurred en masse. We must not reject Judg. 5.28 as evidence that wayyiqtol did not always occur en masse simply because we assume it impossible a priori.

\(^{27}\) In addition to traditional arguments for the archaic nature of Gen. 49, if one adheres to an evolutionary view of language with regard to thetical grammar, Korchin (2017) suggests that Gen. 49 is one of the least theetically diverse texts, which is possibly further evidence of an early date.
Wayyiqtol does not have a monopoly on consecutive past tense verbs, however, as is evident in the blessing on Reuben in v. 4, which, instead of wayyiqtol, has אָז with qatal.

(15) פְַחַז כַּמַ יִם אַל־תוֹתַ רְכִּי עָלִיָּה׃ אַז חִלַּ לְתָיְצֻּעִי עָלְּה׃

‘Unstable as water, you shall excel no longer; For when you mounted your father’s bed, Then you brought disgrace—my couch he mounted!’ (Gen. 49.4)

In prose, the default sequence would have been עָלִיָּה וַתְׁחַלֵל (cf. Exod. 20.25). The two verbs refer to the same action, but the presentation of אָז with qatal separates the disgrace as a distinct idea (as indeed the third verb, עָלַל, again referring to the same action, is presented in third person as a linguistic distancing that parallels the distancing of Jacob from his firstborn-but-no-longer-heir).

Similarly, in v. 6 one might have expected a wayyiqtol followed by the prepositional phrase בִּרְצֹנָּם, but instead the prepositional phrase is fronted, followed by another qatal form.

(16) כִֶ֤י בְאַפָם הֵָ֣רְגוּ אִישָּׁוּ אֶרֶץ נָוָם עִקְּרוּ־שֹׁר׃

‘For in their anger they slew men and at their pleasure they hamstrung oxen.’ (Gen. 49.6)

The blessing on Judah in v. 9 is the most obvious opportunity for wayyiqtol forms (repeated from above).

(3) גוֹר אָרִיֵּה יְהוּדָּ הַמִּטֶּ רֶף בְּנִֵ֣י עָלִֶּ֑יתָ כְרַָ֙ע רָבַַ֧ץ כְאַרְיִֵ֛ה וּכְלָבִ יָאֵָֽה׃

‘Judah is a lion’s whelp; On prey, my son, have you grown.'
He crouched, he lay down like a lion, like the king of beasts; Who dares rouse him?’ (Gen. 49.9)

These cases demonstrate the availability of *wayyiqtol* for consecutive past tense, and the simultaneous availability of *qatal* to convey the same semantics (but with other poetic or pragmatic effect).

1.2.1. Not Yet Classical: Habakkuk 3.6

Habakkuk 3.6 demonstrates the familiar *qatal–wayyiqtol* pattern, e.g., רָאָה וַיְׁמַֹ֣דֶד, but then an unexpected (poetic) *wayyiqtol–qatal* sequence. This is not quite yet classical (prose) style.

(17)

‘When He stands, He makes the earth shake; When He glances, He makes nations tremble.

The age-old mountains are shattered, The primeval hills sink low.

His are the ancient routes.’ (Hab. 3.6)

1.2.2. Archaic Biblical Hebrew Together with *wayyiqtol*

In Deut. 32–33, Ps. 18, and 2 Sam. 22 the *wayyiqtol* form begins to function in more familiar fashion, but with no hegemony. First, there continue to be narrative recitals without *wayyiqtol*. Ps. 18 begins with *qatal–yiqtol* and *qatal–qatal* sequences in vv. 5–6.

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Immediately afterward, in v. 7, a series of *yiqtol* forms carries the narratival action.29

As if to display the variety of forms capable of carrying on a narrative recital, v. 8 gives an entirely different series: many sequential *wayyiqtol* forms (interspersed with a few *qatal* and *yiqtol*30 forms), describing a breath-taking storm theophany.

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29 Whereas above, in the Song of Deborah, *qatal* was the perfective past and *yiqtol* the imperfective circumstantial (Notarius 2013, 269), here it is the *qatal* forms that set the scene and *yiqtol* that furthers the main line of the plot. Only the last *yiqtol* is clearly long; the others are ambiguous.

30 These *yiqtol* forms are ambiguous as to whether they are short or long.
rocked by His indignation;smoke went up from His nostrils, from His mouth came devouring fire; live coals blazed forth from Him.
He bent the sky and came down, thick cloud beneath His feet.
He mounted a cherub and flew, gliding on the wings of the wind.’ (Ps 18:8–11)
The recital weaves in and out of the various forms, with another round of wayyiqtol forms in vv. 14–16, but returning to mostly yiqtol forms for the climax.

(21) 

‘He reached down from on high, He took me; He drew me out of the mighty waters;
He saved me from my fierce enemy, from foes too strong for me.
They confronted me on the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support.
He brought me out to freedom; He rescued me because He was pleased with me.
The LORD rewarded me according to my merit; He requited the cleanness of my hands.’ (Ps. 18.17–21)
The significance of these various means of fashioning a narrative recital indicates precisely that there was not one standard: there

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31 The final form,sherı̇, is clearly long. The others are ambiguous.
was no expectation that past sequences be encoded in *wayyiqtol* forms (or even short *yiqtol* with or without the *way-*)）。The translational semantics (English simple past) are the same for all these verbs, suggesting that simple tense and aspect are not the factors motivating the different verbal choice.³² As in Deut. 32.15, verbal form and even the person of the verb appear very much in the service of poetic effect, perhaps even to the obscuring of verbal semantics.³³ As the JPS translation of Hab. 3.6 suggests (presented here because it demonstrates well what I consider the best reading), past tense might not be inherent in the Hebrew verbal forms, which in some contexts might be better translated as English present forms.

### 1.3. Compared to Classical Biblical Hebrew

The texts most commonly classified as ABH are listed below (Table 1), with the number of *wayyiqtol* forms present in each (and sorted accordingly). Although the very classification of ABH is a matter for debate (based on diachrony? dialect? theology of Yhwh from the east? Yhwh at Sinai?), the persisting consensus on these texts has an empirical basis, which the following table helps to clarify.

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³² In a previous work I have touched on discourse and information structure as possible motivation for the change in verbal choice (Robar 2014).

³³ Discourse functions trumping verbal semantics have been well documented in other cultures’ poetry; see, for instance, Fleischman (1985; 1990).
Table 1: Texts traditionally considered Archaic Biblical Hebrew, with totals of wayyiqtol forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archaic Biblical Hebrew texts</th>
<th>Wayyiqtol forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psalm 68</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers 23–24 (Oracles of Balaam)</td>
<td>0(^{34})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges 5 (Song of Deborah)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus 15.1–18 (Song of Moses)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Samuel 2.1–10 (Prayer of Hannah)(^{35})</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 49 (Jacob’s blessing)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habakkuk 3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy 32–33 (Prayer and Blessing of Moses)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalm 18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Samuel 22</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within this corpus of ABH, we can readily arrange the texts in order of wayyiqtol frequency. There are many past perfective verbs other than wayyiqtol (notably qatal and a few yiqtol forms). When wayyiqtol does appear, it is often past perfective, but the verbal semantics are subordinated to poetic function. In 1 Sam. 2.6, for instance, the wayyiqtol form is only with some contortion past perfective; it depicts action characteristic of Yhwh, continuing the semantics of the participles earlier in the verse.\(^{36}\)

\(^{34}\) One instance, if Balaam’s direct address of God (outside the actual oracles) is included.

\(^{35}\) These texts were not analysed, simply for want of space.

‘The LORD deals death and gives life, 
Casts down into Sheol and raises up.’ (1 Sam. 2.6)

The above tabulation does not pretend to be a chronological ordering of the texts, but it may have significance for a typological ordering of the texts, if the distribution of wayyiqtol is to be correlated with its evolution within Biblical Hebrew.37

2.0. Job

Having established that ABH (if we have properly identified it) is not homogeneous in its use of wayyiqtol, we now turn to Job, whose book and language remain mysterious in many ways and thus represent a different stream of Biblical Hebrew.38 In contrast to the situation in ABH texts, the use of wayyiqtol is highly developed in the poetry of Job. Below are various examples of uses atypical within Classical Biblical Hebrew.

2.1. Wayyiqtol Not Independent

In Job 3.10, the negative לא can apply to both its own clause and the following wayyiqtol clause.

37 If wayyiqtol evolved at different rates in different dialects or registers of Biblical Hebrew, evolutionary states may not correlate with dating. A ‘more evolved’ form in one dialect might coincide with a ‘less evolved’ form in another dialect.

38 No particular date is assumed here for Job. An exilic or post-exilic date has been suggested on the basis of the language of the prose tales (Hurvitz 1974). Cf. Young, 2009; Joosten, 2013.
‘Because it did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb, nor hide trouble from my eyes.’ (Job 3.10)

This is the inverse of Judg. 5.28, in ex. (13) above, in which the qaṭal clause depended on the wayyiqtol clause. Ellipsis of the לא means that wayyiqtol is semantically dependent on the previous (qaṭal) clause for its negation. (Cf. Job 7.21, with the same phenomenon involving yiqtol and weyiqtol.)

2.2. The Chained ‘Paragraph’

The reason wayyiqtol does not function as an independent verb may be, simply put, that it is not an independent verb. Rather than introducing an independent clause with past tense and perfective aspect, it may function to ‘chain’ clauses together into a paragraph quite apart from verbal semantics. Oakes (2018, 178) describes a crosslinguistic form of clause chaining, which he also perceives within Biblical Hebrew:39

A chain of clauses that are neither coordinated nor subordinated, but are governed in a different way by a controlling (head) clause either at the beginning or the end of the paragraph (or larger unit). This head verb is fully inflected, while the other verbs of the paragraph lack inflection in some significant way. That is, these other verbs that make up the bulk of the paragraph rely on the head verb for their tense, aspect, or mood, and often for their subject. Linguists refer to these dependent verbs as medial verbs, and

39 This is the same phenomenon I attempted to describe in Robar (2014).
to the languages that use them as (verb- or clause-) chaining languages.\textsuperscript{40}

In other words, if wayyiqtol is understood as a medial verb, its function is to bind together a paragraph whose basic verbal semantics (e.g., tense, aspect, mood) are often determined by a head verb or clause (or, in other languages, a tail verb or clause).

If wayyiqtol is thus understood, it becomes simple to see how it can continue even participial function, as above in 1 Sam. 2.6 or with the nominal participle המהילים (passing over the nominal clause וְיֵלֶעְנוּ) in Job 3.21:

(24) המהילים לֵמעת אֱלֹהִים

יְהוּדָּה מֵקֶסֶם׃

‘To those who wait for death but it does not come, Who search for it more than for treasure.’ (Job 3.21)

Similarly, wayyiqtol can continue a relative clause with its resumptive pronoun:

\textsuperscript{40} Note that Oakes applies this discussion to the function of weqatal, though in a footnote he considers wayyiqtol to be a chaining verb for past tense narrative. Given its applicability to the language of Job, the notion could be expanded to a chaining verb in both narrative and poetry, whether past, present or future. The existence of two chaining verbs in Hebrew is worth noting. The answer may lie in linguistic development (weqatal as contingent modality re-analysed as chaining), in sociological happenstance (with the scribal institution of the monarchy) or some other reason.
Two verses later, the wayyiqṭol resumes a relative clause semantically, but transforms the object of the relative clause (the fear that was feared) into a subject (the fear that came upon him). This is indeed neither co-ordination nor subordination, but nonetheless involves connected clauses.

Alternatively, one might translate this as ‘For a fear I feared comes upon me; what I dread befalls me.’ Whether both the wayyiqṭol and yiqṭol are understood as past or as general present, they would seem to share tense and aspect here. What is relevant for this argument is that the wayyiqṭol continues the semantics of the preceding qaṭal.

2.3. Yiqṭol–wayyiqṭol Sequences

As in several cases above in ABH, so in Job, wayyiqṭol is used with unexpected senses. At least, Eliphaz seems to have been under no constraints regarding its syntax or semantics. (Nor was he instructed that clause-initial yiqṭol is reserved for jussive semantics.) In both Job 4.5 and 12 we have yiqṭol as the head for wayyiqṭol clauses (including one clearly long yiqṭol).
New Perspectives in Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew

(27) כִ֥י עַתָּ֖ה תָּ֣בֹא אֵלֵֽיךָ וְ֜תֵֽלֶא תִּגְּעָֽ֖ה עָֽדֶּֽיךָ וַתִּבָּֽהֵ ל׃

‘But now it comes to you, and you are impatient; it touches you, and you are dismayed.’ (Job 4.5)

(28) וְּ֭אֵלַי דָּ֣בְר יְגֻנֶּ֜ב וַּתִּקִּ֣ח אֱֵֽזְנִּ֑י שֵּ֣מֶץ מֱנְהֻֽו׃

‘A word came to me in stealth; My ear caught a whisper of it.’ (Job 4.12)

2.4. Semantic Freedom

The syntactic freedom of wayyiqtol extends equally to the semantic domain. Just as when continuing a participle syntactically it also continued the general present semantics, so also in Job 7.9 it continues a general present qatal with the same semantics.\(^{41}\)

(29) כָּלֵּ֣ה עְָנָ֑ן וַיֵלֶַּּּ֖ךָ כִּ֣ן יָ֤וֹרִיד שְָאִֽוֹל לֵ֣א יַעֲלֶֽה׃

‘As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up.’ (Job 7.9)

Immediately afterward we have the statement that a tree cut down may yet have hope in its stump, for with the scent of water it might yet sprout anew. As for man, however:

(30) וְגֵֹ֣בֶר יְָמוּת וְ֜יִחְלֶּשֶׁ֣ש וַיִגְוַע אָדָּמְּ֑יָּו׃

‘But mortals languish and die; Man expires; where is he?’ (Job 14.10)

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\(^{41}\) Its semantic breadth has been noted before (Michel 1960), even if largely ignored in the literature.
Much more can be said about the syntax, semantics, and discourse functions of wayyiqtol in Job, but these examples should be sufficient to demonstrate that neither in ABH, nor in Job, have we fully understood the function of wayyiqtol if we restrict it to past tense and perfective aspect. It behaves with far more freedom than some of our scholarly pronouncements permit.

3.0. Conclusion

In much ABH, there are few wayyiqtol forms or none at all (rare in the Songs of Deborah and Moses, Prayer of Hannah; none in Ps. 68 and Num. 23–24). In some, wayyiqtol is common in form, but with varying function. If this aligns with their typological development (which has not been argued, but is considered plausible), this could reflect the development of a new form, possibly prompted by its close connection between two actions (the opposite of the distancing seen with נָ + qatal in Gen. 49 in ex. (15) above).

In Job, we have another linguistic stream, in which wayyiqtol is common as a freely chaining verb, that is, following other verbs (even participles) and taking up their prominent tense, mood, and aspect. It seems to behave more as a medial verb in a

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42 Gzella’s response to this distribution is to consider wayyiqtol as a bound form to be an innovation which spread during the ninth century B.C.E., but only in Southern Canaan and Transjordan (i.e., in Hebrew and Moabite), rather than an earlier Northwest Semitic form (Gzella 2018). According to Kantor’s (2020, 124–26) recent work, we must not assume that the wayyiqtol was phonologically disambiguated from wayiqtol before the Second Temple Period.
clause-chaining language, rather than an independent form with a morphologically encoded tense and aspect.

If so, describing wayyiqtol as combining perfective aspect with past tense does not reflect its first appearances within Biblical Hebrew. This essay provides evidence pointing in a different direction: perhaps syntax, rather than semantics, would be a more helpful motivation to explain the rise of wayyiqtol.

4.0. References


