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Contents

Morphological Features

Syntactic Features

Lexical Features

Sociological and Dialectal Considerations

Text-Critical Considerations

Part 4: Comparative Semitic Perspectives on Diachrony

Part 5: Afterword

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Detecting Development in Biblical Hebrew Using Diachronic Typology

John A. Cook

1. Introduction

Studies of Biblical Hebrew have long operated with the familiar three-stage diachronic model of Archaic Biblical Hebrew, Standard Biblical Hebrew, and Late Biblical Hebrew (for example, Sáenz-Badillos 1993). In recent years, there has been growing criticism that this tripartite model is too facile to account for the language variation found in Biblical Hebrew. Scholars have argued that at least some of the language variation in the biblical text may admit other explanations, such as diglossia (for example, Rendsburg 1990), or regional dialects (for example, Rendsburg 1999; 2000), or language contact (for example, Young 1993: 60–63). These explanations, in contrast to the traditional tripartite analysis, share in common the view that the observed language variations are synchronic rather than diachronic in character.

Although there is no a priori reason why diachronic and synchronic sorts of explanations should be mutually exclusive, Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd (2008) have argued that scribal activity has left the biblical text in such a state of disarray as to render impossible the drawing of diachronic conclusions about Biblical Hebrew from the text. As Young succinctly puts it, "We [Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd] claim instead that the nature of the biblical texts is such that this chronology, however, is not visible in any way that makes linguistic dating of biblical texts possible" (Young 2010: 1). In this essay, I take the contrasting position that linguistics offers usable models and methods for discerning diachronic differences in the language of the biblical text. I begin with a clarification of these contrasting positions.

2. Misunderstandings and Differences of Opinion

Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd (2008) have performed an inestimable service to the study of Biblical Hebrew not only by prompting a reevaluation of entrenched positions but by pointing out some inherent weaknesses of these positions. In particular, they rightly make the criticism that, in general, studies of the language of the Bible have failed to grapple with the state of the text of

the Bible. This failure to take text criticism into account is evident in discussions that appear to treat individual biblical books as datable in toto, when in fact a critical analysis of the text demonstrates that there are various textual layers within the books (see Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd 2008: 2.1–71). We are indebted to them for pointing out these blind spots, as well as for bringing together a wealth of data and for summarizing previous studies.

However, at the same time the very character of the disagreement has been muddled through some basic misunderstandings. On the one hand, these misunderstandings are ours—we who have made it our task to study the language of the Bible. In particular, we have sometimes failed to distinguish clearly between the text itself and the language represented in the text, the latter of which is the proper object of linguistic study. Citing the conflation of these two as common among historical linguists generally, Hale (2007: 22) states the distinction and its importance trenchantly:

> If we are to keep this discussion coherent at all, we must carefully distinguish between the features of the text (established by philological methods) and features of the language of the text (which can be established by a *linguistic* analysis of the contents of the text). This is not an easy task, since . . . philological and linguistic analyses show a mutual interdependence and are frequently carried out by one and the same person. However, accepting that it is necessary to distinguish between the text itself and the linguistic structures hypothesized to be evidenced in that text, the linguistics/philology contrast seems to correlate with this distinction quite well.

On the other hand, there is a misunderstanding of this same distinction on the part of Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd that is a product of their coming to the discussion as text-critical scholars: they have stated multiple times their central argument—namely, that linguistics cannot be used to date biblical texts (Young 2005; 2010, cited above). In light of Hale's statement (above), this claim misses the real point of contention: linguistics is not tasked with dating biblical texts; this is one of the chores of philology. Linguistics is concerned with *language* and philology with *texts* (see Barr 1969; Gleason 1974; Bodine 1987; Miller 2004; Holmstedt 2006). Once this is clarified, it becomes evident that the claim about linguistics' being incapable of dating biblical texts is correct, though not for the reasons that Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd claim, because their claim is based on the nature of the biblical text and not the character of the linguistic versus philological enterprises.

Even if one concedes that the text is as skewed by scribal activities as Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd argue, it cannot follow that the text is bereft of any usable linguistic data, only that it is more difficult to obtain these data than has sometimes been realized or admitted. Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd (2008) concede this argument to a point: they themselves argue that there is language variation in the text and attribute it to scribal dialectal differences rather than

the traditional diachronic explanation. But this sort of blanket explanation falls under the same censure that they have leveled at the traditional diachronic model. One cannot a priori rule out certain explanations of language variation, as Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd have done with diachronic explanations; each case must be individually examined. Although Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd have done the field of biblical studies—especially Biblical Hebrew linguistics—a yeoman's service, it is not in the form of an alternative theory that explains the language variation in the biblical text, as the traditional chronological model tried to do; rather, they have given a clarion call to scrutinize the foundations and begin sifting through the data anew. If we are to proceed with such a reassessment of the data in good faith, we must not prejudge any language variation datum as precluding explanation by any of the possible accounts of language variation (and others) listed in the beginning of this essay—including diachronic models.

To make this point, I illustrate below that some sorts of language variation attested in the biblical text are best explained as a consequence of diachronic (or chronological) change and diffusion. Given the nature of the debate, there are two desiderata to make my case. First, I want to find the sort(s) of language variation that is/are not susceptible to "imitation" (for example, archaizing) by scribes in order to exclude intentional scribal change as an explanation for the variation. Such variation must be of a sort that affects an entire part of the grammar system, making it increasingly impossible, because of diffusion of the new structure, to avoid ambiguity or confusion by the employment of the earlier grammatical construction. For example, English second-person-singular pronouns *thee*/*thou*/*thy* fell out of use and were replaced by the originally plural "you" form, which now serves for both singular and plural. As a result, employment of the archaic informal *thee*/*thou*/*thy* forms nowadays is generally mistaken for archaic formal speech. Second, I want some external means of validating any claim that the variation in question is more likely a diachronic change than some variety of synchronic variation. Diachronic typology serves as just such a means of external validation in that it provides a wealth of data regarding typical diachronic changes in human language (see Heine and Kuteva 2002). In the following section, I discuss in more detail diachronic typology, somewhat anticipating its application to the case of ידע 'know' in Biblical Hebrew.

3. Diachronic Typology and Tense-Aspect-Mood (TAM) Systems

Linguistic typology classifies languages in terms of a given linguistic structure and then develops generalizations regarding patterns of linguistic structures across languages (Croft 2003: 1). For example, languages may be classified based on whether or not they have a perfective verb conjugation. Based on discernible patterns of perfective verbs in TAM (tense-aspect-mood)

systems across languages, linguists have made the following generalization: perfective verbs only develop in TAM systems that already have an imperfective verb, in opposition to which the new perfective stands (Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994: 92). Hence, in analyzing Biblical Hebrew, if we conclude that it has a perfective verb conjugation, such as the Perfect (*qatal*), then based on this generalization we might reasonably identify the Imperfect (*yiqtol*) as an imperfective verb.

Diachronic typology, to use Croft's (2003: 233) term, represents a "dynamicization" of typology, whereby synchronic language states are reanalyzed as stages in the process of language change. Thus, the typological tasks of classification and generalization become applied in diachronic typology to the developmental axis of language structures. In other words, based on the classification of a given linguistic structure at one stage of a language, generalizations are developed regarding preceding and following stages in the development of that particular linguistic structure. An oft-cited example is that resultative constructions frequently give rise to perfect forms, as illustrated by a comparison of the KJV and the NRSV translations of the verb in Deut 13:13: *are gone out* (resultative, KJV) versus *have gone out* (perfect, NRSV).

Several generalizations have emerged from a variety of studies over the past quarter century about tense-aspect-mood (TAM) systems that illustrate diachronic typology. One of the generalizations is described by Heine (2005: 594) as follows: "Verbal aspect categories give rise to tense categories, . . . while processes in the opposite direction are unlikely to happen." A more specific example, consistent with this generalization, is that imperfective and present verb conjugations develop from progressive constructions (Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994: 91; Heine 2005: 594).

4. Stative Encoding and Aspect-Tense Shift

One well-known example of linguistic variation in Biblical Hebrew is the predicate "split-encoding" of stative adjectives, such as מלא, כבד, and זקן. When used predicatively, this small, closed class of adjectives may be encoded either as verbs or as nouns; in the latter case, they are copular complements (see Cook 2008). These alternatives are illustrated in (1).

(1) Stative encodings
   a. Verbal encoding

      אֲנִי זָקַנְתִּי בָּאתִי בַּיָּמִים

      I <u>am old/aged</u>, advanced in days. (Josh 23:2)

   b. Nominal encoding

      וְאַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה זְקֵנִים בָּאִים בַּיָּמִים

      Now Abraham and Sarah (were) <u>old</u>, advanced in days.
      (Gen 18:11)

My characterization of the stative as a small, closed class of adjectives is justified by a comparison of the number and frequency of stative pattern adjectives versus other adjectival patterns in Biblical Hebrew and from the pattern's lack of productivity in postbiblical Hebrew; that is, no new split-encoded stative-pattern adjectives appear in postbiblical Hebrew. However, the question is whether the decline of the stative adjective is diachronically significant. In order to answer this question, I first need to construct a larger diachronic-typological argument that will provide a framework within which to answer this question.

4.1. The Diachronic-Typological Argument

My diachronic-typological argument involves three interrelated generalizations. The first, which I mentioned above in illustrating diachronic typology (§3), is that TAM systems tend to develop from aspectual categories and oppositions toward tense systems rather than the reverse (Heine 2005: 594). The second generalization is that perfective and past conjugations are distinct in their interaction with stative predicates, so as to create a marked opposition (see Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994: 95): the unmarked member of the opposition is the perfective with stative predicates, which may express either present or past states; the marked member of the opposition is the past with stative predicates, which may only express past states. This opposition characterizes the Perfect (*qatal*) and Past Narrative (*wayyiqtol*) conjugations in Biblical Hebrew, as illustrated in (2).

(2) The stative with Perfect and Past Narrative

a. Qal Perfect + stative = present state

יְהוָה לֹא־גָבַהּ לִבִּי וְלֹא־רָמוּ עֵינָי

YHWH, my heart is not high / my eyes are not elevated. (Ps 131:1).

b. Qal Perfect + stative = past state

וְלֹא־כִגְמֹל עָלָיו הֵשִׁיב יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ כִּי גָבַהּ לִבּוֹ

But Hezekiah did not respond according to the benefit to him, because his heart was high. (2 Chr 32:25).

c. Qal Past Narrative + stative = past state

וַיִּתְיַצַּב בְּתוֹךְ הָעָם וַיִּגְבַּהּ מִכָּל־הָעָם

And he stood in the midst of the people and he was taller than all the people. (1 Sam 10:28)

The third generalization Stassen (1997: 347) terms the "tensedness universal of adjective encoding." In his study of intransitive predication, Stassen shows a correlation between the choice of encoding strategy for adjectival predicates and whether a language's TAM system is aspectual or tensed: languages that

have predominately aspectual categories tend to encode adjectival predicates according to their verbal strategy, whereas languages with predominately tense categories tend to encode adjectival predicates according to one or more of their nominal strategies (see Stassen 1997: 347–57).

These three generalizations are interrelated: as a language's TAM system shifts from aspect toward tense, which may happen according to the first generalization, its aspectual categories decline in productivity or may shift in meaning. For example, a perfective conjugation may become past tense; such a shift could be discerned by its pattern of interaction with statives as outlined in the second generalization. As the shift occurs, the strategies for expressing present states also shift, based on the tensedness parameter, given as the third generalization.

4.2. The Data

The foregoing diachronic-typological argument points to the decline of the stative in Hebrew as diachronically significant. But while this decline is easily appreciated through a comparison of Biblical and postbiblical Hebrew, the question remains to what extent this diachronic shift is measurable *within* the Biblical Hebrew corpus. The obvious place to look would be the variation of the verbal and nominal encoding of stative predicates. Unfortunately, we face the obstacle of a dearth of data, which is compounded by having to exclude the ambiguous masculine-singular form (i.e., the masculine-singular nominal encoding and Qal third-person masculine-singular verbal encoding are morphologically identical—for example, כָּבֵד—and syntactically identical in the absence of an overt copula). Thus, among 60 of the most frequent stative verbs, there are only 12 that occur frequently enough to exhibit unambiguous split encoding. These 12 verbs provide 183 instances of unambiguous verbal encoding and 57 occurrences of unambiguous nominal-encoded predicates. The sparse data caution us against drawing hasty conclusions. However, the following observations are warranted with reference to the table in example (3) on p. 89.

First, 7 books (Amos, Obadiah, Haggai, Song of Songs, Esther, Daniel, and Ezra) offer no data, and another 8 show just one example—either nominal or verbal. It may reflect the general decline in the use of the stative adjective patterns that 11 of these 14 books are philologically datable to the exilic or postexilic periods (Jonah, Chronicles, Ruth, Nehemiah, Qoheleth, Song of Songs, Obadiah, Ezra, Haggai, Esther, and Daniel).[1] Second, and by contrast,

1. Young's (personal communication) complaint that analyses of Biblical Hebrew fail to distinguish textual layers in the books may have some validity, but the convention of referencing data by book, chapter, and verse, as well as the fact that the books have long been recognized as distinct compositions from one another, some with clear *termini post quem* based on their content (for example, postexilic Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles), make continued reference to data by book convenient, at least at this level of preliminary analysis. Note

Book	*Verbal*	*Nominal*
Psalms	24	2
Isa 1–39	18	0
Deut	18	2
Jer	17	4
Ezek	14	5
Job	12	1
Lev	11	7
Gen	9	1
Sam	8	3
Isa 40–66	7	1
Judg	6	0
Joel	4	0
Josh	4	1
Exod	4	3
Hab	3	0

Book	*Verbal*	*Nominal*
Zech	3	0
Mic	3	1
Kgs	3	8
Hos	2	0
Prov	2	0
Mal	2	0
Lam	2	2
Zeph	1	0
Jon	1	0
Chron	1	0
Ruth	1	0
Neh	1	0
Nah	1	0
Num	1	0
Qoh	0	1

(3) Verbal versus nominal encodings of 12 stative adjectives[2]

most of the books with a majority of verbal encoding contain material philologically datable to the preexilic period (14 of 21: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Isaiah 1–39, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, Habakkuk, Psalms, and Proverbs).

A strategy to increase the database is to examine the general decline of verbally encoded statives in the Qal Perfect between the "Standard Biblical Hebrew" corpus of Genesis through 2 Kings and the corpus traditionally classified as "Late Biblical Hebrew" (Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Esther, Daniel, and Qoheleth).[3] The frequency of 60 statives in

how my statements here illustrate the requisite give and take between linguistic analysis and philology in investigating these matters; neither discipline can nor should work in isolation.

2. The 12 statives are דלל, זקן, חדל, חפץ, טמא, יבש, ירא, כבד, מלא, קלל, קרב, שׂמח.

3. I have placed these terms (Standard and Late Biblical Hebrew) in quotation marks because of their centrality to the dispute over whether the language represented in these texts is datable. I am convinced, however, that we should interact with the previous consensus (albeit no longer naïvely) rather than rejecting it wholesale. The rejection strategy has led Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd (2008) to conclude that no diachronic observations about the text are possible. Certainly, if two texts differ chronologically on philological grounds, there is every possibility that differences in their language are diachronic. Here I do not intend to defend or validate the traditional diachronic scheme, but I am using it as a foil to demonstrate that the variations seen in the Hebrew stative occurrences and encodings are likely diachronic in character inasmuch as they do not entirely contradict conventional wisdom regarding the relative dating of these texts, as the graph in (6) below demonstrates.

Qal Perfect as a percentage of all Qal Perfects in these books shows an almost equal amount between the two groups of books—about 22% of all perfects are stative verbs.[4] However, the data are skewed by the increase of היה, which jumps from 8% to 12.5% frequency in the data. Given the shift of the Hebrew TAM from aspectual categories toward tense, this increase is fully expected given that the copula is a main strategy for overtly signaling tense.[5] If we set aside this single stative verb, the data show a decline in frequency from 14% in the SBH corpus to 9% in LBH.[6]

Yet a third means of examining the data is to chart the decline of present state expression by statives verbs in the Qal Perfect conjugation. To do this, we must identify the "new" strategy or strategies employed for the expression of present states for each stative verb. Here I illustrate with ידע because of its relative frequency (over 300 occurrences), though I have found similar but less consistent results in analyses of other stative verbs.[7] The shift from present to past state is illustrated in (4a–b), while the examples in (4c–d) illustrate the main alternative strategies: an active participle encoding and an Imperfect verbal encoding.[8]

(4) Encoding strategies and the interpretation of ידע

a. Qal Perfect = present state

כִּי יָדַע עַבְדְּךָ כִּי אֲנִי חָטָאתִי

For your servant knows that I have sinned. (2 Sam 19:21; see also 2 Sam 14:22)

b. Qal Perfect = past state

כִּי־יָדְעוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים כִּי־מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה הוּא בֹרֵחַ

For the men knew that he was running away from YHWH. (Jonah 1:10)

c. Qal Active Participle = present state

כִּי יוֹדֵעַ אָנִי כִּי בְשֶׁלִּי הַסַּעַר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה עֲלֵיכֶם

For I know that on my account this storm has (come) upon you. (Jonah 1:12)

4. Verheij (1990: 32) has demonstrated that there is a general decline in the frequency of verbal predications between Samuel–Kings and Chronicles. Therefore, it is preferable to measure the data in terms of the frequency of the stative adjective in Qal Perfect as a percentage of all Qal Perfects in these books.

5. This rise is further confirmed by the frequency of היה in the post-BH literature: 83 times in Ben Sira, 945 times in Qumran, and 1,738 times in the Mishnah, based on the databases available in Accordance software.

6. This represents an actual decrease of 457 examples (564 versus 107 occurrences).

7. I have analyzed מלא, חפץ, אהב, and שׂנא with less-consistent results, probably due to the size of the data.

8. For simplicity's sake, I am excluding lexical alternatives, which are in any case much less frequent than the strategies examined here; for example, the Hiphil of בין (Job 28:23).

d. Qal Imperfect = present state

כִּי־פִשָּׁעַי אֲנִי אֵדָע וְחַטָּאתִי נֶגְדִּי תָמִיד

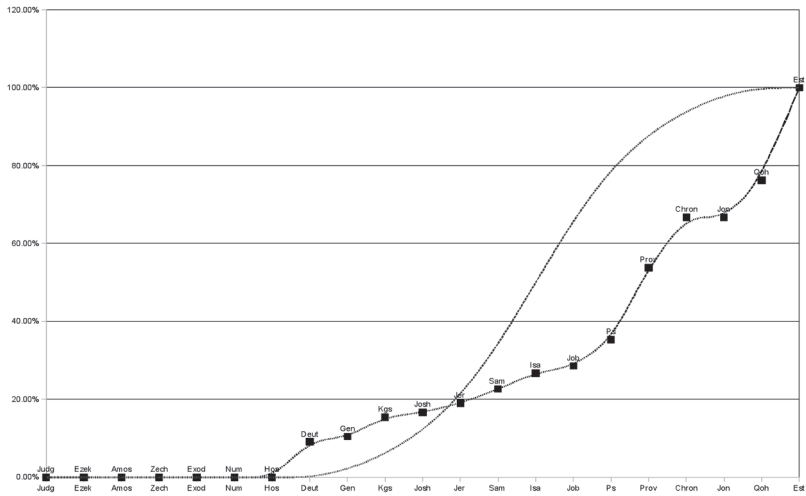
For I know my transgressions / and my sin is continually before me. (Ps 51:5)

The data appear in (5) arranged in ascending frequency of new constructions as a percentage of all occurrences in the data. The list excludes the nine books that offer no relevant data.[9]

(5) Old forms and new forms of **ידע** expressing a present state (see p. 92)

A source of widespread confusion in discussions of linguistic data and dating of biblical texts is the difference between linguistic change and linguistic diffusion. Responding to this confusion in historical linguistics generally, Hale (2007: 33) explains that change is strictly intergenerational, "when transmission is flawed with respect to some features." Diffusion is the spread of change among speakers and is not instantaneous but exhibits a distinct pattern that has been described as an S-curve: the diffusion of the new construction is gradual in the beginning, accelerates in the middle stage, and slows again as it gains ascendancy at the close of the process (Pintzuk 2005: 512). Thus, we fully expect to find old and new constructions side-by-side in the data, but we also expect to find an increasing frequency of the new form in the shape of an S-curve. The graph in (6) charts the data from (5) against the plot of an ideal S-curve. I have excluded from this chart the six books that offer just one example as statistically less significant (i.e., it is difficult to draw any conclusions from these).

(6) Frequency of new construction expressing a present state for **ידע**



9. Leviticus (including 5 irrealis *qatal* forms of **ידע**), Obadiah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Malachi, Ruth, Lamentations, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

Book	*Perf.*[a]	*Partic.*[b]	*Impf.*[c]	*Freq. %*
Song	1	0	0	0%
Mic	1	0	0	0%
Dan	1	0	0	0%
Judg	3	0	0	0%
Ezek	3	0	0	0%
Amos	3	0	0	0%
Zech	3	0	0	0%
Hos	4	0	0	0%
Num	4	0	0	0%
Exod	11	0	0	0%
Deut	10	0	1	9.1%
Gen	17	2	0	10.5%
Kgs	22	1	3	15.4%
Josh	5	1	0	16.7%

Book	*Perf.*	*Partic.*	*Impf.*	*Freq. %*
Jer	17	1	3	19.0%
Sam	17	3	2	22.7%
Isa	11	1	3	26.7%
Job	20	0	8	28.6%
Ps	22	6	6	35.3%
Prov	6	3	4	53.8%
Chron	2	1	3	66.7%
Jon	1	2	0	66.7%
Qoh	5	12	4	76.2%
Est	0	2	0	100.0%
Nah	0	1	0	100.0%
Joel	0	1	0	100.0%
Zeph	0	1	0	100.0%
Total	189	38	37	28.41%

a. Gen 4:9; 12:11; 18:19; 20:6; 21:26; 22:12; 27:2; 29:5; 30:26, 29; 31:6; 39:8; 43:22; 44:15, 27; 47:6; 48:19; Exod 3:7, 19; 4:14; 5:2; 9:30; 18:11; 23:9; 32:1, 22–23; 33:12; Num 10:31; 11:16; 20:14; 22:6; Deut 1:39; 3:19; 7:15; 9:2; 22:2; 28:33; 29:15; 31:21, 27; 34:6; Josh 2:4–5, 9; 14:6; 22:31; Judg 15:11; 17:13; 18:14; 1 Sam 17:28; 20:3, 30; 22:15; 24:21; 25:11; 28:9; 29:9; 2 Sam 1:5; 2:26; 3:25; 7:20; 14:22; 17:8; 19:7, 21, 23; 1 Kgs 1:11, 18; 2:5, 15, 44; 5:17, 20; 8:39; 17:24; 22:3; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5; 4:1, 9; 5:15; 7:12; 8:12; 9:11; 17:26; 19:27; Isa 1:3; 29:12; 37:28; 42:16; 44:18; 56:10–11; 59:8, 12; 63:16; Jer 1:6; 4:22; 5:4–5; 9:2; 10:23, 25; 11:19; 12:3; 14:18, 20; 15:15; 17:16; 18:23; 29:11; 33:3; 48:30; Ezek 11:5; 17:12; 37:3; Hos 5:3–4; 7:9; 8:2; Amos 3:2, 10; 5:12; Jonah 4:11; Mic 4:12; Zech 4:5, 13; 7:14; Ps 14:4; 20:7; 31:8; 35:11; 40:10; 41:12; 50:11; 53:5; 56:10; 69:6, 20; 71:15; 73:11; 79:6; 82:5; 91:14; 119:75; 135:5; 139:2, 4; 140:13; 142:4; Job 9:2, 28; 10:13; 12:9; 13:2, 18; 15:9; 19:25; 20:4; 21:27; 22:13; 23:10; 30:23; 32:22; 34:33; 35:15; 38:21, 33; 39:1; 42:2; Prov 4:19; 7:23; 9:13, 18; 23:35; 30:18; Song 6:12; Qoh 3:12, 14; 4:13; 7:22; 10:15; Dan 10:20; 2 Chr 2:7; 25:16 (two others from Chronicles are excluded since they are paralleled in the Samuel–Kings source text).

b. Gen 3:5; 33:13; Josh 22:22; 1 Sam 23:17; 2 Sam 12:22; 17:10; 2 Kgs 17:26; Isa 29:15; Jer 29:23; Joel 2:14; Jonah 1:12; 3:9; Nah 1:7; Zeph 3:5; Ps 1:6; 37:18; 44:22; 90:11; 94:11; 139:14; Prov 12:10; 14:10; 24:22; Qoh 2:19; 3:21; 4:17; 6:12; 8:1, 7, 12; 9:1, 5; 11:5–6; Esth 4:11, 14; 2 Chr 2:7.

c. Deut 20:20; 1 Sam 20:9; 2 Sam 3:38; 1 Kgs 3:7; 8:39; 18:12; Isa 40:21; 55:5; 58:3; Jer 5:15; 13:12; 40:14; Ps 35:8; 39:7; 51:5; 73:22; 92:7; 138:6; Job 8:9; 11:8; 15:9; 36:26; 37:5, 15–16; 38:5; Prov 24:12; 27:1; 28:22; 30:3; Qoh 9:12; 10:14; 11:2, 5; 2 Chr 6:30; 20:12; 32:13.

Notice that the frequency of new and old constructions in the books that exhibit both is fairly consistent with the philological dating of the various books: at the low end are, notably, a majority of the books from the Primary History (Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Samuel, and Kings) along with the prophetic books of Hosea, Jeremiah, and Isaiah; at the midpoint, we

find the mixed poetic material of Job, Psalms, and Proverbs; and at the high end, we find Chronicles, Jonah, and Qoheleth. This analysis should, of course, be further refined by distinguishing among blocks of material within the different books and by including postiblical Hebrew data.[10] However, it is a promising beginning: promising inasmuch as it does not depart radically from the received wisdom of philological dating of these books; a beginning in that we need to begin to move forward with the data, plotting each individual phenomenon in a similar manner in order cautiously and securely to build up a picture of the diachronic development of BH.[11]

5. Conclusion

No one will deny that the linguistic data of BH are difficult. For this reason, not only must we be cautious in drawing diachronic conclusions from them, but at the same time we should not quickly give up the enterprise, as has been suggested. Other possibilities may present themselves for drawing meaningful conclusions from the data. Among these possibilities, I have examined how diachronic typology serves to set up expectations of the data that make the observed variations more meaningful.

10. Some general statistics on ידע in the postbiblical materials are as follows: Ben Sira has 3 Perfects (present) versus 5 Participles and 5 Imperfects; the Qumran data are large enough to require separate treatment (122 Perfects; 72 Participles; 71 Imperfects); the Mishnah shows a clear preference for Participle (112 times) versus 51 Perfects and 16 Imperfects.

11. With regard to absolute dating, one would want to rely on the relatively more-fixed dates of the epigraphic texts. Unfortunately, they provide little help with regard to the stative, which is almost wholly lacking in the preexilic texts. It is only somewhat confirmatory that there are three instances in the preexilic epigraphic texts of ידע conjugated (unambiguously) in the Perfect (Arad 40:9; Lachish 2:6; 3:8), two of which clearly express present states (Lachish 2:6; 3:8).

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