Introduction

1.1. The Problem

AT THE CORE OF THE PROBLEM with the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms lies the question of their temporal meanings. The problem is partly a very practical one, especially in poetry, as any comparison between different translations of, for instance, Psalm 18 will reveal. But beyond that, the theoretical problem is even more pervasive, since scholars often disagree on how to analyze the meaning of a form, even when the question of how to translate it into another language may not be an issue. This lack of consensus is visible already in the grammatical terminology used in the literature. Most commonly, the terms used for the forms signify some kind of tense, aspect, or modality (TAM). If we take the so-called *yiqtol*-form as an example,[1] excluding the variant that normally has a proclitic *wa-* appended, we find it described in the literature as "present-future,"[2] "future,"[3] "simultaneous,"[4] "modal-futural,"[5] "modal,"[6] "imperfective,"[7] both imperfective and future,[8] and "non-perfective."[9] Matters are further complicated

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1. Below, I shall refer to this form as "*yiqtol*-L"; see section 1.4.
2. Blau 1976 §20.1. Another way of referring to the same concept is to use the negative term "nonpast" (e.g., Hetzron 1987, 697).
3. Silverman (1973, 168) terms *yiqtol* "simple future" (as opposed to "*waw* future," i.e., *weqataltí*), but see also p. 175, where he states that this form "always refers to future or present time in its widest sense."
4. Kuryłowicz 1972, 84, §14. More exactly, Kuryłowicz speaks of "simultaneity" as the *value* of *yiqtol*.
5. See Zuber 1986, 16 (in German, the term is *modal-futurisch*).
6. Hatav 1997, 198; Joosten 2012, 39.
7. See, among others, Tropper 1998, 178; Gentry 1998, 15; Cook 2006, 32. The same notion is also referred to by various equivalent terms, such as the French "inaccompli" (M. Cohen 1924, 12) or the English "uncompleted" (Weingreen 1959, §29).
8. Andersen 2000, 50.
9. Waltke and O'Connor 1990, §§29.6e; 31.1.2a. As "nonperfective," the *yiqtol* is the unmarked counterpart of the perfective *qatal*, which is to say that the form becomes imperfective

by the existence of various grammatical terms that relate in unclear ways to the TAM categories. For example, in Diethelm Michel's nomenclature, *yiqtol* expresses "abhängige Handlung" ("dependent action"),[10] Péter Kustár through a similar notion calls the form "determiniert" ("determined"),[11] and Wolfgang Schneider (among others) says that its fundamental property is to indicate a certain *Sprechhaltung* ("linguistic attitude"), which characterizes the subtype of discourse that he calls "Besprechen" ("discussion").[12] Harald Baayen follows Schneider but employs the term "focal referential concern" for the same function.[13]

One of the challenges for semantic interpretation is to strike a balance between the descriptive and the explanatory aspects of the analysis. Many scholars would agree that the old classification of *yiqtol* as a future tense is of a rather descriptive kind and that the shift to the aspect-based approach that began to gain prominence in the nineteenth century was an attempt at establishing a terminology with more explanatory reach. Even if the success of this undertaking might be disputed, a reasonable goal for a study of verbal semantics should be to go deeper than to call the form by the same name as its most frequent equivalent in, for example, Greek, Latin, or English. Accordingly, with regard to the many suggested meaning-labels for *yiqtol*, we would like to know how each of them relates to the whole range of temporal meanings that the form is able to express. That is, if the *yiqtol* is an imperfective rather than a future form, does that mean that the imperfective meaning may give rise to the very common future meaning of the form by means of some inferential process? Or, if it is a future, how are the nonfuture meanings of the form to be accounted for? The same type of questions, of course, could be posed with regard to the other forms of the system. We should not accept the answer that the temporal meaning of the forms depends solely on contextual factors and has nothing to do with factors internal

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when contrasted with the perfective form, even though by itself it is neither perfective nor imperfective.

10. Michel (1960, 254) describes the semantic difference between *yiqtol* and the perfect, or *qatal*, as follows: "Das Perfectum wird zur Wiedergabe einer Handlung gewählt, wenn diese als selbstgewichtig, als absolute angesehen wird [. . .]. Das Imperfectum wird zur Wiedergabe einer Handlung gewählt wenn diese ihre Bedeutung von etwas ausserhalb der Handlung selbst liegendem bekommt, also relativ ist."

11. Kustár (1972, 44–46) claims that his concept "determiniert," as well as its counterpart "determinierend" (represented by *qatal*), are aspects. His definition of aspect is very far from mainstream, though, and it is difficult to see how it can be functionally related with the other categories in the TAM-complex.

12. The linguistic attitude characteristic of *Besprechen*, or discussion, is a tense and responsive state of mind. Thus Schneider (2001, §48.1): "Besprechende Rede **engagiert** ihn [i.e., the listener]: Sprecher und Hörer haben zu agieren und zu reagieren."

13. Baayen 1997, 247. Both Schneider and Baayen follow Weinrich (1977) in this regard. Other proponents of the same approach are Talstra and Niccacci (see 2.4).

to the forms, because they are, after all, used not randomly but in regular and fairly predictable ways.[14]

A complicating factor, however, is that even the meanings of the grammatical terms are disputed. This is particularly the case with aspect. To begin with, the classical aspect categories *completed* and *uncompleted* have been understood rather differently throughout their history—a fact that explains that the terms "perfect" and "perfective," both derived from the Latin *perfectum* ("completed"), mean different things in modern linguistics. Furthermore, many new aspect categories have been suggested, so that it is very difficult to get a clear idea of how many "aspects" there are, which they are, and how they relate to one another. To mention a few examples from Hebraistic studies, whereas Marcel Cohen works with the classical binary opposition of *accompli* and *inaccompli* (i.e., completed/uncompleted), Frithiof Rundgren counts three hierarchically arranged pairs—namely, *stative*:*fiens*, *cursive*:*constative*, and *punctual*:*neutral*—and Galia Hatav has the *progressive*, the *perfect*, and the *sequential*, and so forth.[15] More examples could be given. The word "aspect" as such is hardly sufficient to explain what linguistic phenomenon is being described in each of these proposed models. To this day, there is no authoritative and universally accepted definition of aspect. In some cases, this leads to confusion of aspect with other grammatical categories. For example, some would say that the typical perfect construction (like the English *I have done*) expresses perfect aspect; others would argue that it expresses the *relative tense* value of *anteriority*.

One of the strongest trends in the Hebraistics of the new millennium is the evolutionary, or grammaticalization approach (2.5). It sees the various meanings of the verbal forms as the result of an evolution that can be reconstructed, so that two or more meanings that can be expressed by the same form at a given time in the history of the language can be ordered in terms of their relative age. The conclusions about the relative age of the meanings are drawn on the basis of comparisons with the corresponding verbal forms in genetically related, and preferably older, languages, as well as comparisons with similar forms in languages of all families, ancient and modern (typological studies). Through such comparisons, a verbal form can be classified as an example of a certain cross-linguistic type, the development of which is known to be fairly predictable. Such

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14. Answers to this effect have been suggested; see Sperber 1966, 591–92; Hughes 1970, 13; Greenstein 1988, 14. As opposed to those who call *yiqtol* "nonperfective" or "nonpast," these authors do not reckon with stable meanings in other forms of the verbal system, whereby the meaning of *yiqtol* can be defined. See also Baayen (1997, 245) on the *qatal*-form. Zuber (1986, 27) claims that there are two semantically distinct subsystems of verbal forms in Biblical Hebrew. Within each subsystem there are no semantic distinctions; the choice of form is made on purely stylistic grounds.

15. M. Cohen 1924, v, 12; Rundgren 1961, 72; Hatav 1997, 6–8.

studies confirm, for instance, that the stative/resultative and intransitive meaning expressed by the *qatal*-form (e.g., *yāšaḇtî*, "I am seated") is older than the perfect transitive *qatal* with active meaning (*kāṯaḇtî*, "I have written"), which, in turn, is older than the preterite interpretation of the form (*kāṯaḇtî*, "I wrote"). Each of these meanings can be likened to stations on a diachronic pathway, along which the verbal forms travel throughout their history—with the important qualification that verbal forms may retain old meanings alongside the new ones (they do not have to leave one station to get to the next, as it were). For Biblical Hebrew, two major pathways leading from some kind of "aspectual" to temporal meanings can be reconstructed. The one is from *resultative* to *past*, the other from *progressive* to *future*.[16] The former track is occupied by *qatal* and *wayyiqtol* (below: *yiqtol*-S), the latter by *qotel* and *yiqtol* (below: *yiqtol*-L).[17]

This outline indicates that the temporal meanings of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms somehow derive from the aspectual ones. There are still many questions surrounding this development, especially from a theoretical point of view. How are the aspectual meanings of the forms to be defined? How does a certain aspectual meaning favor the development of a certain tense meaning? What is the semantic difference between the forms on the same diachronic pathway?

1.2. Aim

The aim of the present study is to increase the understanding of how the expression of temporal meanings in Biblical Hebrew relates to the semantics of the verbal forms. The overarching aim will be accomplished through a synthesis of the following elements:

1. a definition of aspect and an application of this definition on the progressive and the resultative verbal types
2. an account of how tense meanings are derived from aspectual meanings
3. an application of the general theory to the Biblical Hebrew verbal system
4. an analysis of the semantic difference between the forms that belong on the same diachronic pathway

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16. In section 3.4 we shall return to the question of what kind of aspect the progressive and the resultative are.

17. This description is very simplified, but it gives a general idea of the facts of main interest for this study. In reality, pathways intertwine so that a given source can have more than one endpoint and vice versa. For some examples of intertwined pathways, see Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994, 105, 240–41. See also the discussion in section 2.5 below.

A few comments on each of these four points is in order:

Point 1: A clear, general definition of aspect is necessary in view of the widely differing opinions about what the term refers to and which aspectual categories there are. The definition has to take its point of departure in the classical notion of (un)completedness, and the ways it has been and can be interpreted, especially under the designation of (im)perfectivity (see section 2.2). It is further necessary to find out how the modern grammatical categories progressive and resultative fit with the concept of aspect, as well as to address the question of the distinction between aspect and relative tense (2.1, 2.2.3). The latter question is especially relevant to the debate about the nature of the so-called perfects.

Point 2: Given the fact that originally resultative and progressive forms tend to favor opposite tense meanings, it is to be assumed that something in the semantics of those forms invites the inference of those particular tense meanings. If this is the case, the definition of aspect has to accommodate this circumstance (3.5, 3.6).

Point 3: The classification of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms in terms of their aspecto-temporal meanings is basically given by the typological scheme provided within the framework of grammaticalization studies, although there is some room for diverging opinions as to how to set up the inventory of Biblical Hebrew verbal forms. The choice made in the present study is dealt with in section 1.4.

Point 4: An important consideration with regard to the question of what constitutes the semantic difference between the forms on the same diachronic pathway is whether we should define that difference in terms of TAM or some other semantic category. An attempt to see the problem from a new angle is made in chapter 5 through a reinterpretation of Weinrich's notion of linguistic attitude (*Sprechhaltung*).

1.3. What "Meaning" Means

A study of the meaning of verbal forms may become a bewildering enterprise if there is no decision about what is meant by "meaning." First of all, the reader should know that the word "meaning" in itself is not used as some kind of technical term in this study; that is, it means no less and no more than it does in everyday language. If more precision is required, either the word will be qualified, or other terms will be used. The following subsection (1.3.1) will treat the concepts of "semantic" and "pragmatic" meaning. This discussion prepares the ground for the discussion in subsection 1.3.2 about how to establish the "basic" semantic meanings of verbal forms.

1.3.1. Semantics and Pragmatics

Language is a tool for communication, functioning within a communicative situation consisting of sender, receiver, and the things referred to. An important consequence of this, famously described by Karl Bühler in his *Sprachteorie*, is that the linguistic expression is many-sided and can only be fully understood in relation to each of these entities. For example, the cry "Wolf!" would, in Bühler's terminology, be interpreted at the same time as an *expression* (*Ausdruck*) of the mind, emotions, etc. of the sender, an *appeal* (*Appell*) to the attention, responsiveness, etc. of the receiver, and a *representation* (*Darstellung*) of the animal that is being denoted.[18] Even though these three functions always co-occur, any one of them may come more or less to the fore depending on what particular speech-act is being performed. For instance, if the utterance "Wolf!" is intended as a warning, the appeal is felt very strongly. The expressive function would be more palpable if the same word were exclaimed by a person with a very strong (positive or negative) sentiment toward the animal, who unexpectedly came across a track of it in the neighborhood. Finally, the same word can be used first and foremost for representation—we may think of a more educational situation, where it is used as an answer to the question "What animal left this track?"

There is a certain asymmetry in the above example, however. We observe that, even though the interpretation of the speech acts containing the word "wolf" varies as to the relative dominance of expressive, representative, and appeal functions, one factor remains stable all the way through—namely, the representation of a particular kind of animal. In a certain sense, then, nouns, like "wolf," conventionalize, or encode representational function. However, not only representation but also expression and appeal can be encoded to various degrees, as in the interjections *yippee* (expression) and *hello* (appeal). A good example of the whole spectrum of functions may be the moods in Latin. Thus, whereas appeal dominates in the imperative (*dice*, "say!"), the balance tips toward the expressive side in the optative subjunctive (*dicas*, "may you say"), and toward the representative function in the indicative (*dicis*, "you say").

Now, most ordinary people would no doubt agree that not only the statement accomplished by the indicative but also the command encoded in the imperative and the wish expressed by the subjunctive are meanings of those same forms. It is equally certain, however, that within the linguistic discipline devoted to

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18. Bühler 1965, 28–29. The example is mine. Note that the word "expression" is used here in two senses: when it occurs in the phrase "linguistic expression," it refers to the speech-product, whether in terms of a specific utterance or in terms of the linguistic forms that the utterance is consists of (morphemes, words, phrases); when it is used in isolation, it refers to the relation between the speaker and the linguistic expression.

the study of meaning in language—that is, *semantics*—representation is the function that has received by far the most attention. One may point to several reasons for this. First, representation is the dominant function in language.[19] Second, there has been intense activity among semanticists working within the field of truth-conditional semantics, a method that can only be applied to representation.[20] Finally, influential theoreticians have explicitly stated that semantics concerns only the relation between the linguistic expressions and the things they represent.[21] This has been done in an attempt to draw the line theoretically between semantics and the neighboring discipline of *pragmatics*. Thus, everything that concerns the relation between the linguistic utterance and the sender and receiver—that is, the *users* of the linguistic expression—has been assigned to pragmatics. Such a distinction excludes the study of expression and appeal (hence optative and imperative moods) from the province of semantics and confines it to the field of pragmatics.[22] However, according to another distinction very commonly drawn, semantics has to do with *conventional* meaning and pragmatics with *situational* meaning.[23] By conventional meaning is understood a meaning that is encoded, or inherent, in a morpheme, word, or phrase. We may, for convenience's sake, call it a *semantic unit*. Situational meaning is a meaning that is associated with a semantic unit due to conditions in (a) specific context(s). In this view, expression and appeal can and should be treated in semantic analysis, since these functions can be encoded by semantic units and therefore also decoded from such units irrespective of context.

Obviously, we are left here with two incompatible conceptions of semantics and pragmatics. The question is which of them to choose.[24] In my opinion,

19. This point is stressed by Bühler (1965, 30).

20. See Palmer 1981, 42–43; Davis 1991, 7.

21. For historical outlines, see Lyons 1977, 114–17; Recanati 2004, 443–44.

22. The first and one of the most influential scholars to distinguish in this way between semantics and pragmatics was Charles Morris. In his *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938), he stated that semantics is the study of "the relation of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable," and pragmatics is the study of "the relation of signs to interpreters ["interpreters" corresponds to "sender" and "receiver" above]" (Morris [1938] 1971a, 21–22). The popularity of this simple and catchy formulation seems to have overshadowed the fact that Morris later widened the scope of semantics. In *Signs, Language, and Behavior* he states that "other modes of signification than the designative must be dealt with in semantics." According to the reformulated definition "*semantics* deals with the signification of signs in all modes of signifying" (Morris [1946] 1971b, 302). This is to say that semantics includes other functions than representation (representation corresponds to Morris's "designative mode of signification").

23. Recanati 2004, 445; Trask 1999, 243.

24. Recanati writes about the theoretical impasse arising from these conflicting views: "Some linguistic forms (e.g., *goodbye*, or the imperative mood) have a 'pragmatic' rather than a 'semantic' meaning: they have use conditions but do not 'represent' anything and hence do not contribute to the utterance's truth conditions. Because there are such expressions—and arguably there are many of them and every sentence contains at least one—we have to choose: either semantics is defined as

to confine semantics to the representational function of the linguistic expression is untenable. For one thing, it is too much in conflict with the common understanding of the word "meaning" to exclude the expressive and appeal functions of linguistic expressions from a study of meaning in language. For another, the pioneer of semantic studies, Michel Bréal, included these functions on equal terms with the representative function in his work *Essaie de sémantique*, a book that was written long before the attempts to distinguish semantics from pragmatics.[25] From Bréal and onward, the quest for conventional meanings has really been the gist of "semantic" studies, even in periods when they have been restricted to the representational function of the semantic unit. The birth of pragmatic theories like Austin's speech-act theory and Grice's theory of conversational implicature, came very much as reactions to the neglect of contextual factors in the linguistic study of meaning. Consequently, the opinion that semantics deals with conventional meaning is more to the point than the view that it is the study of representation in language. Thus, when I henceforth use the term "semantic meaning," it refers to what I have here called conventional meaning, whereas "pragmatic meaning" corresponds to situational meaning. However, I shall take the term "conventional" in a very restricted sense and include as semantic only those meanings that are most intrinsic to the form, as I will explain in the following subsection.

1.3.2. Criteria for Explanatory Semantics

Even if the distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning is well motivated, it has to be admitted that an exact dividing line can be hard to draw. It is a well-known fact that semantic meanings develop from pragmatic meanings. What occasions this is probably that semantic units in given contexts can be ambiguous between a semantic meaning and a pragmatic meaning that is naturally inferred from it. If the inference is made often enough, it may happen that the unit starts to be used with its pragmatic meaning also in contexts where the same ambiguity with the semantic meaning does not exist. That is to say, the pragmatic meaning has become so intrinsic to the unit that it is no longer dependent on the original context. At that stage, the once pragmatic meaning has reached a status that is normally understood as semantic. An example of an English word that has gone through this development is *since*. Originally, it was an adverbial with the meaning "after that," but when it started to be used

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the study of conventional meaning, or it is defined as the study of words-world relations. We can't have it both ways" (Recanati 2004, 445).

  25. See Bréal's treatment of the "subjective element" in language (Bréal 1964, chapter 25). Note also that Bréal contrasted semantics not with pragmatics (or syntax) but with phonetics (Bréal 1964, chapter 1).

as a conjunction it often acquired a connotation of causality. This ultimately led to a semantic *reanalysis* whereby it became possible to express the causal meaning independently of the temporal meaning.[26] Three examples borrowed from Hopper and Traugott illustrate the development of the form in its function as a conjunction. In the first sentence, *since* has only temporal meaning, in the second sentence, it is ambiguous between a temporal and a causal meaning, and in the third, there is only a causal meaning:[27]

(1) a.   I have done quite a bit of writing since we last got together.
     b.   Since Susan left him, John has been very miserable.
     c.   Since I have a final exam tomorrow, I won't be able to go out
          tonight.

Exactly when a reanalysis is accomplished is impossible to tell, since it always must happen in contexts where there is room for ambiguity. Moreover, the use of a semantic unit may vary across generations, social groups, and even within individuals. Consequently, the answer to the question whether a certain meaning is semantic or pragmatic depends on whom you ask. In fact, we should not think that semantic meanings exist apart from the language users. A meaning is semantic because it is *thought of* as inherent in the unit. However, since language is a common good, semantic meaning cannot be entirely subjective. It has to be communicable, hence more or less stable, hence also definable, although it is also negotiable to a certain degree. Ultimately, semantic meaning will always depend on actual language use. Under these conditions, a meaning can be said to be semantic with some degree of objectivity if it is regularly used in contexts where it is not ambiguous with some other semantic meaning—a criterion that is met in the case of the causal meaning of *since* in example (1). Conversely, a meaning that only occurs in contexts where it is ambiguous with a semantic meaning must be defined as pragmatic. This applies, for instance, to the request function of *can*, as in *Can you give me some water*? (see further discussion in subsection 5.2.3).

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary not only to distinguish between semantic and pragmatic meanings but also to find out what meanings are more *basic* than others. In the case of *since*, I consider the temporal meaning to be more basic than the causal, because the temporal meaning explains the causal meaning, but the reverse is not the case.

I shall use two heuristic criteria for establishing basic semantic meanings. The first of these is the criterion of invariance. Semantic invariance means that

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26. *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, new rev. ed. (1994), s.v. "since."
27. Hopper and Traugott 2003, 80, 81.

the same meaning can be applied in different contexts and on different lexemes thanks to our ability for analogical reasoning. For instance, across contexts, the sense of an ongoing dynamic process in the English progressive form is present in both *I am running* and *I was running*, although in the former it is set in the present, and in the latter it is past. Similarly, across lexemes, a sense of dynamism is imparted to the predicate when the progressive is formed on an adjective (*You're being naughty*), even though the adjective, lexically speaking, has a stative quality.[28] Now, the criterion of invariance requires that the basic meaning of a linguistic form should be defined so as to accommodate the widest possible range of contexts and lexemes. Thus, in section 3.5 below, I show that my definition of "progressive aspect" applies to the English progressive forms not only in all contexts for which the conventional definition of "imperfective aspect" holds but also in contexts where the progressive forms have aorist meaning, which is incompatible with imperfective meaning. Hence, according to the criterion of invariance, my progressive meaning is more basic to the English progressive forms than imperfective meaning.

Second, following a criterion of cognitive precedence, I shall consider the basic meaning to be the one from which other meanings of the forms can be derived through reanalysis. Reanalysis, as described in the discussion of example (1) above, is a semantic "rule-change" that overturns the basic meaning and gives rise to a new semantic meaning in the form.[29] A common example of reanalysis of verbal forms is the future interpretation of the so-called prospective constructions, such as the English *to be about to*. Normally, this construction has present meaning, referring to the pre-stage of some event (*Right now, I'm about to take a nap*), but through reanalysis of the temporal structure of the phrase, it may be thought of as referring to the ensuing event, and the tense becomes future (*I'm about to take a nap in a few minutes*).[30]

It is necessary to bear in mind that different aspects of the meaning of a form can give rise to different forms of reanalysis, which means that a form can be invariant with regard to one of its meanings while it is reanalyzed with regard to another. For example, the English perfect is derived from a so-called resultative source by a reanalysis of diathesis from passive to active, but it is invariant in terms of its aspectual meaning (which motivates my use of the term "resultative" for perfects; see subsection 3.4.1). It may also be the case that more than one meaning is invariant across lexemes, as in the above-mentioned example *You're being naughty*, which expresses both the *Aktionsart* and the aspect of the

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28. Even in adjectives, however, there are shades of dynamicity; see further section 3.2.

29. Hopper and Traugott 2003, 50, 63–64, 71.

30. This kind of reanalysis, which is treated under the heading "temporalization" in section 3.6 below, is more common with the construction *to be going* to, which is another English form often said to be prospective.

prototypical progressive. In this study, I am interested in the temporal semantics of the verbal forms; hence the term "invariance" generally refers only to aspectual invariance. Aspectual invariance is dealt with below in sections 3.4, 3.5, 4.1.1, 4.2.1, 4.3.1, and 4.4.1. Reanalysis is discussed in sections 3.6, 4.1.2, 4.2.2, 4.3.2, and 4.4.2.

The approach to verbal morphosemantics taken in this study resembles the "principled polysemy" proposed by Andrea Tyler and Vyvyan Evans in their study of the meaning of English prepositions.[31] Their aim is to define various "distinct senses" of the prespositions and to identify a "primary sense" (cf. my "basic meaning") from which the other distinct senses can be derived.[32] Against this approach, it has been argued that "it may not be the case that a particular lexical form has a single primary sense from which language users perceive all other senses being derived."[33] This criticism raises several issues at once. Firstly, there may not be any original basic meaning (or "primary sense") from which to derive others, because the basic meaning may have gone out of use. If two semantic meanings (or "distinct senses") in such a form have developed from one and the same now lost meaning through different ways of reanalysis, neither of them is the basic meaning. The form has become a so-called doughnut gram with a "hole" in the place of the central node of the semantic network, where the unifying basic meaning once existed.[34] Second, it may be impossible to say with any reasonable certainty which meaning derives from the other without historical evidence from written sources.[35] And, third, even if this could be achieved through rigorous reasoning and/or comparative evidence, actual language users may not perceive the different meanings as related in that way.

There are different ways of dealing with these problems depending on whether the object of study is prepositions or verbal forms or some other category. As far as verbal forms are concerned, they tend to conform to well-known crosslinguistic types (e.g., resultatives and progressives), which makes the question of the diachronic relation between existing meanings relatively unproblematic. For the same reason, it is often possible to identify verbal doughnut grams (although this is not pertinent to the forms under scrutiny in the present study). As to the question of how language users perceive the relation between basic

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31. Tyler and Evans 2003, 37–38.

32. See Tyler and Evans 2003, 42 n. 5, according to which prepositions can acquire distinct senses by the change of the spatial configurations or by changing from spatial to altogether nonspatial meaning. On their view of the role of reanalysis in this process, see, e.g., 60–61, 79–106 in the same study.

33. Tyler and Evans 2003, 59.

34. On doughnut grams, see Dahl 2000b, 10. The term "gram" is a shorthand for "grammatical morpheme" (Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994, 2).

35. Tyler and Evans 2003, 46–47.

and derived meanings, it must at the very least be considered probable that such meanings are felt to be somehow semantically related; that is, there is a polysemy of related meanings within one form rather than a homonymy of distinct forms with unrelated meanings. The relatedness of basic and derived meanings can be very obvious when forms within the same semantic domain are compared. Thus, it has been noted that the original deontic and volitive meanings of the English verbs *shall* and *will* restrict their use even as future auxiliaries.[36] By contrast, the future meaning of the phrase *be going to* tends to be associated with intentionality, just as the nonfuture meaning from which it derives.[37]

It is worth pointing out at this stage that the parameter of frequency does not play a role in the kind of semantics that I am proposing in this study. In this regard, I differ from Tyler and Evans, who count frequency ("predominance") among the criteria for determining primary senses of prepositions.[38] The same can be said with regard to a study by Alexander Andrason and Christo van der Merwe, who in a similar fashion combine the factors of frequency and diachronic precedence to establish the "prototypical" (cf. "basic") meaning of the Biblical Hebrew *qatal*.[39] I do not see how this is helpful, given the above-mentioned fact that the oldest meaning of a form does not have to be the most frequent one.

Andrason and van der Merwe actually promote frequency at the expense of diachrony in their semantic analysis, since they claim that frequency alone defines prototypicality. The most frequent sense, they write, constitutes the "conceptual nucleus of the map from which [most] other senses cognitively emerge."[40] If this is so, however, prototypicality must be a very complex concept; the implication of Andrason's and van der Merwe's statement is that, when a new sense becomes more frequent than the prototypical, older sense from which it emerged cognitively by analogy or reanalysis, suddenly the older sense somehow begins to emerge cognitively from the new sense, and the prototype becomes the derivative. Moreover, it is unclear exactly what cognitive processes are triggered in this way by frequency. While it seems plausible to assume that the most frequent meaning will be the one that people are most likely to think of when the form is mentioned in isolation, the question here is how, and indeed whether, the most frequent meaning affects how we interpret the form in various contexts of actual use. Whatever the answer to that question may be, it is

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36. Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994, 15–17. It may be debated whether *shall* and *will* still can express their original meanings apart from the derived future meanings, but that does not affect the argument.
      37. Langacker 2011, 85–88.
      38. Tyler and Evans 2003, 47.
      39. Andrason and van der Merwe 2015, 87.
      40. Andrason and van der Merwe 2015, 87.

highly implausible that an old meaning suddenly ceases to provide a cognitive basis for a new meaning only because it becomes a little less frequent. Consequently, the inferences whereby less frequent meanings "emerge" from frequent meanings, if they exist at all, must exist side by side with the inferences that work diachronically. This possibility should perhaps not be ruled out, but, in my opinion, the role of the most frequent meaning in the semantics of a form is still very hard to assess, and it is probably not quite as important as Andrason and Van der Merwe claim.

1.4. The Biblical Hebrew Verbal System

The verbal forms under consideration in this investigation are the active participle *qotel* in predicative position, the suffix conjugation *qatal*, and the prefix conjugation *yiqtol*. The *yiqtol* conjugation is further subdivided into a "long" and a "short" variant, the *yiqtol*-L and the *yiqtol*-S. These are the main forms used in declarative utterances in Biblical Hebrew, and each of them is associated with certain aspectual and temporal meanings. The following overview lists some particular TAM meanings that are especially characteristic of the form in question:

> *qotel*: progressive meaning regardless of tense, instant future;[41]
> *yiqtol*-L: generic/habitual meaning regardless of tense, future;
> *qatal*: perfect meaning regardless of tense, nonnarrative past;
> *yiqtol*-S: narrative past, volitive (jussive-prohibitive, cohortative).

The subdivision of *yiqtol* into *yiqtol*-L and *yiqtol*-S is to a large extent an artificial reconstruction based on two early West Semitic forms (*yaqtulu* and *yaqtul*), whose distinctive morphological features in Biblical Hebrew are reduced to mere vestiges in the shape of a group of "apocopated" forms in some third-person singular verbs.[42] However, by means of these apocopated forms and

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41. "Progressive" will be used in a wider sense below and "instant future" will at least partly be covered by the term "preparative" (see subsections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3).

42. On the derivation of the Hebrew prefix-conjugation from the West Semitic *yaqtul* and *yaqtulu*, see Bergsträsser 1929; Müller 1988, 164–66; Waltke and O'Connor 1990, §29.4f–j; Tropper 1998, 161–64. On the derivation of the Hebrew prefix-conjugation from the West Semitic *yaqtul* and *yaqtulu*, see Bergsträsser 1929; Müller 1988, 164–66; Waltke and O'Connor 1990, §29.4f–j; Tropper 1998, 161–64. The long and short variants that have been identified in the Canaanite elements of the Amarna letters are the closest genetic relatives (Moran 2003, 41–49). The morphological evidence for the existence of the short form in this source material is not entirely conclusive but can be corroborated through syntactic analysis (Baranowski 2016). Ugaritic has also been pointed out as a relatively closely related language where the distinction is preserved, although it is visible only to

comparative data from other Semitic languages, the descendants of the original long and short forms can mostly be identified even in Biblical Hebrew.[43] Furthermore, thanks to an idiosyncratic Hebrew development, the narrative past variant of the *yiqtol*-S is, in the vast majority of cases, recognizable through a special form of the proclitic conjunction *wə-* ("and"). When appended to the narrative *yiqtol*-S, it has an *a*-vowel and normally causes gemination of the first consonant of the prefix, or, alternatively, when this is prohibited for phonological reasons, the *a* is lengthened to an *ā*.[44] This variant of the *yiqtol*-S is conventionally glossed as *wayyiqtol* and is commonly treated as a verbal form in its own right. The volitive variants of the *yiqtol*-S are referred to as "jussive" and "cohortative."[45] Thus, at a maximum, the *yiqtol* is divided into no fewer than four individual verbal forms: the *wayyiqtol*, the jussive, the cohortative, and the imperfect. The last corresponds to *yiqtol*-L in the above list and is often simply called *yiqtol*.

My main reasons for using the term *yiqtol*-S for all the three subclasses mentioned are the following:

First, the *wayyiqtol* is not the sole representative of the narrative past *yiqtol*-S. There are also a number of free-standing *yiqtol*-S in the biblical corpus, which can be identified through analysis of their textual function and/or because

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a very limited degree in the consonantal script. The nature of the relationship between the Biblical Hebrew and the Ugaritic verbal systems depends very much on how the long and the short forms are used in past contexts in Ugaritic, which is a highly disputed question. An overview (in chronological order) of the various standpoints on the issue can be obtained from Gordon 1955, § 13:31–32; Greenstein 1988, 13–14; Smith 1994, 39–41; Tropper 2000, § 76.341–48; Greenstein 2006, 79–91; Bordreuil and Pardee 2009, 46; Tropper 2012, § 76.412; Hackett 2012.

43. See, however, the problem with the free-standing declarative *yiqtol*-S (4.4.3).

44. There have been various attempts to explain the *wa*C-(C)-pattern in the *wayyiqtol*. McFall (1982, 217–19) provides a list of fifteen different suggestions. A few scholars believe that the proclitic *wa-* has nothing to do with the conjunction *wə-*; some hold that it contains nothing but the conjunction and that the gemination/lengthening of the syllable arose due to stress patterns of the verb in a pre-Masoretic stage of the language (after McFall's work, this view has been proposed by, e.g., Blau 2010, 285–86); others suggest that it consists of the conjunction and some adverbial/ particle or auxiliary (for a later proposal, see Testen 1998, 190, 195–97); some have argued that it is an artificial invention of the Masoretes (see Furuli 2006, 147–48; Van de Sande 2008, 226–32). Wikander (2010, 265) understands the *wa-* as an original conjunction that has developed into a kind of augment marking past tense.

45. The cohortative differs formally from the jussive by the ending *-â* (except in some weak verbs and in verbs with object suffixes), but comparative evidence shows that this ending is appended to the short variant of the prefix-conjugation (see Lipiński 1997, §§39.5–11). The forerunner of the Biblical Hebrew cohortative in Canaanite is for this reason called *erweiterte jussiv* by Tropper and Vita (2010, §4.2.4; cf. the *erweiterte Kurzform der Präfixkonjugation* in Ugaritic [Tropper 2012, §77.33]). See also Cook 2012, 238–41. Larcher (2012, §1.1.4) confirms the above-mentioned findings within the context of Arabic when he derives the so-called *énergique* (the Arabic morphological parallel to the Biblical Hebrew cohortative) from the *apocopé* (cf. *yiqtol*-S), but his classification of the *apocopé* as a variant of the *imparfait* (cf. *yiqtol*-L) is confusing.

they are apocopated (4.4.3). Most of them are found in poetic texts, but there are also a few cases in prose.

Second, the issue of this study is the semantics behind the temporal meanings of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms. I preclude the possibility that the volitive meaning of the *yiqtol*-S lies behind its past meaning and the traces of perfect/resultative meaning that are found in the material. If there is a common origin (which is practically certain), the development must have gone in the opposite direction.[46]

The *qatal*, too, is often divided into two different forms. Besides the ordinary *qatal*, often called the "perfect," there is the so-called perfect consecutive, which consists of the *qatal* preceded by the proclitic *wə*- ("and") and is primarily used for representing future or past habitual sequential events or for sequential events in commands. It is glossed as either *weqatal* or *weqataltí* in the literature. The latter variant is intended to distinguish the perfect consecutive from the past nonhabitual and nonsequential syndetic perfect, which also consists of the *wə*-plus *qatal*.[47] The -*tí* ending in *weqataltí* indicates that the perfect consecutive has the stress on the ultima in the first-person singular, a feature that distinguishes it from the ordinary *qatal*, which has the stress on the penultima (*qatálti*). The same shift of stress occurs also in the second-person masculine singular, but it is not obligatory in either of them, and in certain weak forms of the verb it never occurs.[48] It cannot serve as evidence that *qatal* and *wəqataltí* are morphologically distinct in Biblical Hebrew, and there is no comparative evidence that such a distinction ever existed in earlier stages of the language. Neither does the proclitic *wə* serve as a distinctive feature, since *wə* + *qatal*, as already said, may be a past nonconsecutive perfect as well. Moreover, there are undeniable cases of "consecutive *qatal*" without proclitic *wə* in Biblical Hebrew.[49] As for future meaning, it is well known to be expressed not only by *weqataltí* but also by nonconsecutive *qatal* (4.3.1). Consequently, there is little reason to treat *qatal*

46. On the existence of typological evidence in favor of this interpretation, see 4.4.4. There are indeed also examples of developments from volitive to past meanings, viz. the narrative imperative, which is found in a number of Balkan languages (Friedman 2012, 417–22). For several reasons, however, this phenomenon cannot be considered as a parallel to the Biblical Hebrew *yiqtol*-S: (1) It is an areal, *Sprachbund*-phenomenon, rather than a widespread, universal phenomenon that can be expected to occur independently in different languages (Friedman 2012, 417, 421); (2) the imperative, although volitive, does not correspond typologically to the jussive/cohortative; (3) the narrative imperative is a stylistic device, not a default narrative form; (4) a volitive source for the Biblical Hebrew narrative *yiqtol*-S cannot account for the resultative/perfect meanings of the form.

47. On the nonsequential *weqatal*, see Driver 1892, §132–33; Waltke and O'Connor 1990, §32.3; Gibson and Davidson 1994, §84. Joüon and Muraoka (2009, §43) call these cases "anomalous," but they are too numerous to be treated as such.

48. Joüon and Muraoka 2009, §43.

49. This highly significant but surprisingly overlooked fact is further discussed in subsection 4.3.1 below.

and *weqaltí* as two different forms with different meanings. Rather, the *weqaltí* is a *qatal* in a specific type of interclausal connection. Its largely divergent temporal and modal meanings must be assumed to be pragmatically, and not semantically, determined. Thus, when I use the gloss *weqaltí* in this study, it signifies not a verbal form but the syndetic *qatal* with consecutive function.

Completely outside the temporal system is the *imperative*. However, it will be used for contrastive studies in chapter 5 to illustrate the semantic feature of reduced appeal, which crosscuts the whole verbal system and may be relevant for the temporal interpretation of the other forms.

1.5. Scope

In this section, I shall comment on certain factors having to do with the scope of the study: first, the body of data that will serve as witness to the language here called Biblical Hebrew, and, after that, the two factors within this body of data that often (though not in the present study) are allowed to delimit the scope of studies of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system—namely, the diachronic diversity of the corpus and the distinction between prose and poetry.

1.5.1. Source Material

The linguistic data for this investigation are taken from the Hebrew Bible as it is preserved in the Masoretic tradition. A more comprehensive investigation would broaden the scope and consider manuscripts of other textual traditions as well as inscriptions and ostraca belonging to the same linguistic stage as the preserved text of the Hebrew Bible. However, these witnesses have been omitted for practical reasons.

The investigation of the data from the Hebrew Bible is adapted to the purpose of the investigation. This is foremost a synthetic study, attempting to apply new theory to verbal usages that have been studied by generations of grammarians. For the selection of examples, I have consulted Driver 1892; Waltke and O'Connor 1990; Gibson and Davidson 1994; Joüon and Muraoka 2009; and Joosten 2012. I have also worked with samples of continuous texts where all the verbal forms under consideration have been checked for their tense and aspect meanings. The samples were chosen so as to reflect the diachronic diversity of Biblical Hebrew (Exod 15; Judg 5; Ps 18; Gen 26–29; Neh 3:33–9:37). In addition to that, I have used various computer software for searching specific uses. The way of working has been designed to find verbal uses with relevance to the problem of verbal semantics and temporality in Biblical Hebrew, as well as to check and complement the established knowledge in the field. Hopefully, the

synthesis arrived at can provide a basis for more extensive corpus studies, but
that lies outside the scope of the present investigation.

With regard to the linguistic quality of the Masoretic Text, it is relevant to
know that the Masoretic punctuation system for indicating vowels and gemi-
nated consonants was developed many centuries after the consonantal text was
recorded. It cannot be excluded that the pronunciation of certain words has
been corrupted. As far as the verbal system is concerned, it has been claimed
in (at least) two recent studies that the *wa*C-(C)-pronunciation in the "con-
secutive" imperfect, *wayyiqtol*, is a Masoretic innovation. Evidence for this is
sought in the fact that this pronunciation is not reflected in the fragments of the
Hebrew-Greek transliteration in the second column of Origen's *Hexapla*. Rolf
Furuli hypothesizes that the pronunciation arose spontaneously in the synagogal
reading of narrative prose texts.[50] The Masoretes associated the reading with
past meaning and made an attempt to distinguish systematically between past
wayyiqtol and nonpast *wə + yiqtol*. For consistency's sake, they carried out the
distinction even in nonnarrative texts, although the synagogal reading tradition,
according to Furuli, did not use the *wa*C-(C)-pronunciation there. Moreover,
the Masoretes allegedly had problems with the temporal interpretation of the
construction in the prophetic and poetic books, which explains the unexpected
appearances of *wayyiqtol* forms in those texts.

Axel Van de Sande has another explanation.[51] He suggests that the
*wa*C-(C)-pronunciation was deliberately invented by the Masoretes in order to
make it similar to the *ha*C-(C)-pronunciation of the definite article. The argument
is as follows: (1) Arab grammarians called the Arabic variant of the prefix conju-
gation *al-muḍârî* ("the one that is similar") because it has certain formal proper-
ties in common with the noun. (2) Past meaning is, according to Van de Sande,
similar to the definite meaning of the noun, whereas future meaning is similar to
the indefinite meaning. (3) Influenced by the Arabic grammatical tradition and
its analogy between the prefix conjugation and the noun, the Masoretes created
the *wa*C-(C)-pronunciation for the syndetic preterite *yiqtol*, as if it contained the
definite article (*ha-*) of the noun, while keeping the *wə*-(C)-pronunciation for
syndetic future *yiqtol* on analogy with the *wə*-(C)-pronunciation of the syndetic
indefinite noun. Like Furuli, Van de Sande supposes that many *wayyiqtol*-forms
in poetry result from the misinterpretation of the Masoretes.

The main argument against these hypotheses may simply be that the assump-
tions they make about the grammatical thinking of the Masoretes are too specu-
lative. In addition to that, they presuppose the somewhat unlikely scenario that
the *wa*C-(C)-pronunciation was so important for the Masoretes as to impel them

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50. See Furuli 2006, 139–41, 147–48.
51. See Van de Sande 2008, 226–32.

to meddle with their sacred tradition.[52] The generally held opinion is that the Masoretes did not invent forms, even though some punctuations reflect pronunciations that may be late or dialectal.[53] An alternative and perhaps less far-fetched explanation is that either Origen's source failed to reproduce the distinct pronunciation of *wayyiqtol*—a construction that had been out of use for a long time in non-Biblical Hebrew—or Origen himself did not recognize it.

Another possible source of error in the Masoretic Text is the indication of stress. Some of the apocopated variants of *yiqtol*-S have the stress on the prefix instead of on the stem, which is the rule in other *yiqtol*-forms. According to some scholars, this is a residue from an earlier stage when all *yiqtol*-S could be distinguished from *yiqtol*-L by the position of the stress in the word. Possibly, the distinction was still made in biblical times but was lost in the subsequent textual transmission.[54] This hypothesis is interesting but has no great consequences for the study of the verb in Biblical Hebrew as preserved in any of the extant sources. Even if there once was such a distinction, it is no longer available. Our only possible point of departure is the Masoretic Text.

1.5.2. Diachronic Diversity

The texts of the Hebrew Bible may originate from a period of many centuries. It is common to distinguish between three diachronic stages within Biblical Hebrew: Archaic Biblical Hebrew, Standard Biblical Hebrew, and Late Biblical Hebrew.[55] This provokes the question of whether we should not expect the verbal system to have changed so much over time as to justify a study of diachronically conditioned uses rather than one universal use.

Indeed, some differences do exist. Typical of Archaic Biblical Hebrew is, for example, a high number of free-standing *yiqtol* with the same function as the narrative *wayyiqtol*. *Qotel* in predicate position is also rare, especially with progressive meaning.[56] This could perhaps indicate that a significant change in the verbal system took place in the transition from Archaic to Standard Biblical Hebrew, but it may also be due to the limitations of the corpus.[57] Special fea-

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52. Furuli (2006, 147–48) says that the Masoretes would not make deliberate changes in the texts. However, it is somewhat unclear from his account how that statement complies with the fact that *wayyiqtol* occurs in poetry, since Furuli assumes that the *wayyiqtol*-pronunciation belonged to prose.

53. Sáenz-Badillos 1996, 78–79; Tov 2001, 47–49. See also Blau 2010, §3.3.2.2.7.

54. So Zevit 1988, 28. See also Bloch 2009, 42 (citing Qimron), and Blau 2010, §3.5.12.14–15.

55. Kutscher 1982, §17; Sáenz-Badillos 1996, 52. There is also a bipartite division, expressed with different terminology, which draws the main line between Standard and Late Biblical Hebrew, thus conflating the earlier phases into one. For a brief overview, see Young 2003, 3–4.

56. Sáenz-Badillos 1996, 58; Notarius 2010, 245; Bergström 2016, 217–26.

57. See 4.1.1 n. 277.

tures in Late Biblical Hebrew are, inter alia, a decrease of *yiqtol* and the virtual disappearance of *weqataltí* for expressing habitual events in the past, and a corresponding increase of the periphrastic *hayah* (perfect of *hyh*, "to be") *qotel* in the same function. However, except for the case of the past habitual *weqataltí*, most of the differences between Late and Standard Biblical Hebrew may be only tendencies.[58] Even if they are likely to reflect a real development in the verbal usage, there is a fundamental continuity in central functions, such as the ones exemplified in section 1.4.[59] The shift to the more tense-oriented system found in Rabbinic Hebrew has not yet occurred.[60]

1.5.3. Prose and Poetry

Another argument against a comprehensive description of the Biblical Hebrew verbal usage is the differences between prose and poetry. No doubt, most of the difficult uses occur in the poetic texts. Scholars have often explained them as violations of grammar or instances of poetic license, or claimed that the grammar of poetry differs from that of prose.[61] Grammatical irregularities due to strict adherence to various poetic functions are found in all kinds of languages. Possible cases of poetic license having to do with verbal uses are found, for example, in Medieval Romance verse. Harald Weinrich holds that especially

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58. See Eskhult 2000; Joosten 2006, 141; 2012, 407.

59. Free-standing *yiqtol* with narrative function occurs also in later poetic texts (see, e.g., Bloch 2009, 61–66 on Isa 41:1–5 and Ps 44) and is even found in the prose text of Daniel (Dan 8:12). *Hayah qotel* with habitual meaning is used also in Standard Biblical Hebrew (Ehrensvärd 2003, 171 n. 33). On past habitual *yiqtol* in Late Biblical Hebrew, see Eskhult 2000, 85; Bergström 2015. Some scholars even argue that there is an essential continuity in the verbal usage all the way up to Qumran Hebrew. Thus, Holst (2008, 140) finds that the usage of *yiqtol* and *weqataltí* in instructional and hortatory discourse is the same in Qumran Hebrew (represented by the War Scroll) as in Standard Biblical Hebrew. Furuli (2006, 85–88), who claims to have investigated all available data, concludes that there is no difference in the understanding of the conjugations in Qumran as compared to Biblical Hebrew. While this may be correct for the central functions of the forms, there are enough minor differences to distinguish between Standard Biblical Hebrew and the later linguistic stages on the basis of verb usage. For surveys of this issue, see Eskhult 2000; Joosten 2012, 377–409.

60. See Kutscher 1982, §218; Geiger 2012, 492–93.

61. Thus, for example, Bergsträsser (1929, §6.i.) complains that the verbal usage in Biblical Hebrew poetry has developed to "einer völligen Verwischung der Bedeutungsunterschiede der Tempora und einem Regellosen Promiscuegebrauch sämtlichen Tempusbezeichnungen." Nyberg (1952, §86mm–oo) hypothesizes that some "irregularities" in the verbal usages of the poetic texts may be due to the dogmatic preferences of the Masoretes. Hatav (1997, 24) leaves out the poetic material from her thesis with the motivation that "the verb forms function differently in prose as opposed to poetry." A similar expression is found in Fensham 1978, 10. Niccacci (1997, 77–78) counts "non-detectable versus detectable verbal system" among his "main characteristics of poetry versus prose" (in a more recent work, however, he has rejected this description; see Niccacci 2006, 247). The influence of poetic license on verbal usage is considered by, e.g., Michel (1960, 11–13); Gross (1976, 32 n. 50); Hatav (1997, 24); Joosten (2002, 52); and Joüon and Muraoka (2009, §11 a).

the common and sometimes very abrupt switches between the *passé simple* (a preterite aorist) and *présent* (present tense) in the narration of past events are more likely motivated by the poetic demand for rhyme or assonance than by the narrators' wish to switch temporal perspective.[62] Others believe that the irregularities are due to metrical constraints.[63]

Rhyme or meter, if not nonexistent, is certainly not sufficiently constitutive for Biblical Hebrew poetry to force verbal forms to behave irregularly. The most characteristic feature of Biblical Hebrew poetry is parallelism, a kind of repetition of semantic or grammatical patterns in two or more adjacent lines. Wilfred G.E. Watson, in his work on classical Hebrew poetry, describes one characteristic of parallelism that is pertinent to verbal usage. Having first surveyed a number of repetitive verse patterns found in the poetry, he concludes that "the poets were well able to exploit repetition," and continues: "Too much of the same word or phrase, though, can lead to monotony and therefore become boring."[64] To prevent this monotony, Watson explains, there were some manoeuvers to ensure variation. For instance, the poets could alternate between *yiqtol* and *qatal* when verbs from the same root are used in two parallel half-lines, as in Ps 38:12:

> (2) ʾōhăḇay wəreʿay minnæḡæḏ niḡʾî yaʿămōḏû
>   ûqərôḇay merāḥōq ʿāmāḏû
>   My friends and my companions stay (*yiqtol*) away from the presence of my sores,
>   and my neighbors stay (*qatal*) far away from me.

According to Adele Berlin, the tense-shift does not occur "for semantic reasons" but functions as "a kind of grammatical parallelism."[65] This phenomenon is, to my knowledge, the only possible case where it has been demonstrated how the choice of verbal forms in Biblical Hebrew verse may have something to do with a well-defined kind of poetical feature. Nevertheless, this does not entail that the verse-lines in question are "ungrammatical." Berlin does not say that Ps 38:12 is an example of poetic license, but even her claim that the semantics plays no part in the shift of tenses may be an overstatement. True, the shift of conjugations may appear to us as a kind of antithetical grammatical parallelism, but it may at the same time be an "antithetical *semantic* parallelism." For an adequate description of the grammar of poetry one has to carry

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62. Weinrich 1977, 252. Weinrich also says that the opposite opinion is common.
63. For a survey of the research in the field, see Fleischman 1990, 67.
64. Watson 1994, 279.
65. See Berlin 1985, 36.

out poetical and grammatical analyses separately. In particular, one should be careful not to speak of poetic license or similar to describe phenomena that are just not sufficiently understood. This only perpetuates the idea that everything in poetry that does not conform to the standards of prose is aberrant or at least more artificial or archaic and less representative of "the grammar of Biblical Hebrew"—an attitude that overlooks that the language of literary prose is also to some degree artificial, or at least stylistically and grammatically restricted, and that some facts of the Biblical Hebrew grammar might be better attested in poetic texts. As far as verbal grammar is concerned, it is possible that a too rigid distinction between the grammars of poetry and prose has led to a slight underestimation of the role of free-standing past narrative *yiqtol*-S in the prose texts (see 4.4.3).

That being said, however, the prose texts constitute the natural starting point for a study of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system, since they generally have clearer contextual indications of the temporality of the clauses. Therefore, most of the conclusions drawn in this study will be based on prose texts.

1.6. Summary

The aim of the present study is to provide a semantic description of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms that explains their temporal meanings. Section 1.1 gave a background to the problem by exemplifying the abundance of diverging suggestions of what grammatical terms to use for a specific form. As a major factor in the controversy, I pointed to the lack of a common theoretical basis, especially regarding the central notion of aspect. An important contribution toward a solution was found to be provided within the so-called grammaticalization approach, according to which it is possible to classify the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms into cross-linguistic verbal types and reconstruct how their various meanings have developed along two main diachronic pathways in accordance with universal principles. The two specific pathways that have been found to be relevant for Biblical Hebrew run from progressive to future and from resultative to past; that is, from what I called "aspectual" to temporal meanings. *Qotel* and *yiqtol*-L belong to the progressive pathway, whereas *qatal* and *yiqtol*-S belong to the resultative.

In section 1.2, I stated that the overarching aim of the study will be accomplished by several steps. First, I shall develop a theory of aspect and tense that explains how tense meanings can develop from the resultative and progressive aspects. I shall then apply the theory to the Hebrew data to see to what extent the various uses of the forms express or can be derived from an original progressive and resultative meaning. Finally, the semantic difference between the forms on the same pathway needs to be investigated.

In section 1.3, some fundamental theoretical issues concerning the study of meaning in language were treated. The first part of the section (1.3.1) defined the notions of semantics and pragmatics. The second part (1.3.2), discussed how to distinguish between pragmatic and semantic meanings as well as between basic and nonbasic meanings.

Section 1.4 described the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms of interest for this study.

Section 1.5 defined the scope of the investigation and reflected on some problems that arise due to the nature of the source material. These problems concerned the linguistic accuracy of the Masoretic Text, differences between prose and poetry, and diachronic development. The conclusion to be drawn is that, in spite of some factors of uncertainty, a comprehensive analysis of the meaning of the Biblical Hebrew verbal forms is possible.