

THE FUNCTION  
OF THE IMPERFECT  
WITH WAW CONSECUTIVE

--A STUDY IN HEBREW SYNTAX--

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# I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

It may be appropriate to begin this discussion of the function of the imperfect with waw consecutive, by quoting from the dictionary:

"...The use in Heb. shews that orig. ׀ was not a merely copulative conj., but that it possessed a demonstrative force (cf. Dr. #122), which is often perceptible as such, though in other cases, from its being applied to denote mere juxtaposition or connexion....it is less palpable...

"...׀ is used very freely and widely in Heb., but also with much delicacy, to express relations and shades of meaning which Western languages would usu. indicate by distinct particles. But in Heb. particles such as ו, ׀, ׀, ׀, ׀, ׀, ׀, ׀, ׀, etc., were reserved for cases in which special emph. or distinctiveness was desired: their frequent use was felt instinctively to be inconsistent with the lightness and grace of movement which the Hebrew ear loved; and thus in AV, RV, words like or, then, but, notwithstanding, howbeit, so, thus, therefore, that, constantly appear, where the Heb. has simply ׀." (1)

So much then for the significance of the simple waw. It is well to keep these observations in mind when studying the even more interesting uses of the waw consecutive. Our lexicon begins its treatment of the latter form with the following statement:

"The ׀ consecutive (formerly called the Waw 'conversive');--a. with the impf. (׀ with foll. daghesh; before ׀, ׀) as וַיֵּאמֶר prop. and he proceeded to say, chiefly in contin. of a preceding perfect tense (so Moab.)...." (2)

With the manifold syntactical functions of this Hebrew form, we shall treat at length at another time. Before we proceed any further, however, there is one point to be cleared up concerning the proper name of the grammatical form which is the subject of this study. Even so recent a scholar as Davidson (3) finds himself unable to break away from the old name "waw-conversive".

This is a heritage from the medieval Jewish grammarians, who gave the name וַיֵּאמֶר to the letter which, to all intents and purposes--so far as their limited philological and syntactical knowledge ex-

tended--possessed the potency of converting tenses, changing an וַיְהִי to an וַיֵּלֶךְ and, vice versa, an וַיֵּלֶךְ to an וַיְהִי. Now that modern scholars have thoroughly remodeled the theory of tenses in Hebrew, the old appellation has been generally discarded as misleading. Hebrew scholars for the most part--with the possible exception of the ultra-orthodox and the conventional Bible translators--no longer doubt that the perfect and imperfect are more properly to be considered as modes than as tenses. They involve no intrinsic relation to actions as past or future, but rather--as the names imply--as complete or incomplete, without regard to tense as conceived by the European mind. As Driver remarks (4), the title waw consecutive, adopted by Ewald and most modern grammarians, was originally suggested by Boettcher in 1827, though Hitzig preferred the equally apt term vav relativum.

Ewald in one place proposes a most felicitous appellation for the construction of imperfect with waw consecutive. He calls it das bezueglich-fortschreitende imperfectum, which we may translate as "the relatively progressive imperfect". (5) In referring to this term of Ewald's, Driver explains that "the date of the new event expressed by the imperfect is determined by the conjunction connecting it with a particular point in the past, to which therefore it is relative." (6)

In this connection, the last-named scholar gives a clear idea of the theory underlying the imperfect with waw consecutive. Reminding us that the imperfect itself represents action as nascent, he reasons that--

"accordingly, when combined with a conjunction connecting the event introduced by it with a point already reached by the narrative, it represents it as the continuation or development of the past which came before it. וַיֵּלֶךְ is thus properly not and he said, but and he

proceeded-to-say. The pathach of the waw is probably to be explained as the fuller, more original form of the conjunction (in Arab. wā), which, for the sake of distinction, was preserved in this case, and prevented from being weakened to ʾ, by the dagesh in the following letter." (7)

We are now in a position to proceed one step farther in our investigation of the theory of the waw consecutive. With due allowance for his inveterate predilection towards the traditional nomenclature, let us see what Davidson has to say on this matter:

"The conversive tenses seem the result of two things: first, the feeling of the connexion of two actions, and that the second belongs to the sphere of the first, a connexion expressed by vav; and, second, that effort of the lively imagination already noticed under the simple tense-forms, by which an impf. is interjected among perfs., and conversely, a perf. among impfs. These lively transportations of the imagination, which appear only occasionally in the case of the simple tenses, have in this instance given rise to two distinct fixed tense-expressions, the vav conv. impf. and the vav conv. perf." (8)

In this connection, the same author makes some extremely interesting observations:

"The actual genesis of these two tense-forms belongs, however, to a period lying behind the present state of the language. They are now virtually simple forms, having the meaning of the preceding tenses, impf. or perf., and it is doubtful if it is legitimate to analyse them, and treat vav impf. for ex. as and with an impf. in any of the senses which it might have if standing alone." (9)

That the last sentence must be taken cum grano salis, will appear to us when we recall why modern scholars have rejected the old term waw "conversive". Driver's exclamation in another connection is not wholly inappropriate here--"...not, of course, that the imperfect ever 'stands for' the perfect, or assumes its meaning (!)," (10)

We come finally to a consideration of the origin of a most prevalent function of the imperfect with the waw consecutive. We refer here to its development into a fixed formula generally employed in historical narrative. This seems to be a natural outgrowth of what was perhaps the original signification of the imperfect, depicting action as incipient. We may cite as example Ex. 15:1, וַיִּשְׂרַח מֶסַח וַיֹּאמֶר,

"Whereupon Moses and the Israelites burst forth into song." This view is elucidated by Driver, who writes:

"That a series of past facts should ever have been regularly viewed in this light (a supposition without which the construction before us remains unaccountable), that in each term of such a series the salient feature seized upon by language should be not its character as past, but its character as nascent or progressive, may indeed appear singular: but the ultimate explanation of it must lie in the mode of thought peculiar to the people, and here reflected in their language. Only, inasmuch as the formula became one of the commonest and most constant occurrence, it is probable that a distinct recollection of the exact sense of its component parts was lost, or, at any rate, receded greatly into the background, and that the construction was used as a whole, without any thought of its original meaning, simply as a form to connect together a series of past events into a consecutive narrative." (11)

Before leaving this general introduction to our subject, in which we have attempted to set forward the various theories that seek to account for the origin and function of the imperfect with waw consecutive, we must not neglect to make reference to Gesenius-Kautzsch. In speaking of the relation of time between the imperfect consecutive and what precedes, the statement is made--

"Dass das Imperf. consec. alle die Nuancen von Tempus- und Modusverhältnissen darstellen kann, die sich nach #107a aus dem Begriff des Imperfekts ergeben." (12)

The paragraph here referred to, reads as follows in English translation:

"The Imperfect, as distinguished from the Perfect, expresses incomplete actions, events or states, whether present, past or future, whether considered as real, supposed or eventually to occur. An action, etc., is said to be uncompleted (a) when considered as nascent, or employed in reiterations, and so not finally accomplished; (b) when not yet begun (as in describing future events); (c) when its beginning is represented as subjective or desired and hence possible (modal use of Impf.)." (13)

## II. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

There still remain a few matters to be discussed briefly before we launch ourselves into the midst of our subject.

Mention should be made first of all, in passing, of the sparse and sporadic occurrence of the cohortative form with waw consecutive. Even Davidson (14) and Driver (15) record this fact with little comment and with practically no attempt at its explanation. The latter, quoting Boettcher and Stickel, remarks that the form occurs only at rare intervals except in ~~these~~ portions of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Altogether, some ninety instances of its use are cited.

It may not be amiss to direct attention to an error of omission and one of commission that apparently crept into the ostensibly complete list cited by Driver. (15) Twelve cases of cohortative with waw consecutive are referred to as occurring in the Psalter. Of these, 73:16 is in reality a case of simple waw, at least according to the Massoretic text--וַיִּשְׁכַּח. On the other hand, 69:21a, וַיִּשְׁכַּח, is seemingly overlooked.

We come next to the question of the vocalization of the waw consecutive with the imperfect. It need hardly be mentioned that this is ordinarily a pathach followed by a daghesch forte; yodh with shewa, however, receives no daghesch. In the case of the first person singular, however, which is prefixed by aleph, the waw consecutive is pointed with a kametz. Driver cites some ten exceptions, all in the Piel, where pathach appears instead of kametz. (16) In fact, a score or so of instances are cited, occurring especially in passages characterized by an elevated or poetic style, where simple waw is employed in place of which we should ordinarily expect. (17)

"There seems no doubt that according to the Massor. tradition," Davidson surmises, "the strong vav received in some instances a lighter pronunciation." (18) Nor is this the end of the matter. It has been justly remarked that there is a tendency in the later books of the Old Testament to use the perfect with simple waw, where the classical Hebrew would employ the imperfect with waw consecutive. (19) One need but recall, furthermore, that post-biblical Hebrew, be it Rabbinic, liturgical, or modern, is in total ignorance of this most colorful and versatile form. No use whatever is made of it, except in direct quotations from the Bible and "in books written in intentional imitation of the Biblical style, for instance, in the Hebrew version of the Book of Tobit, or in Josephus Gorionides. (20)"

These preliminary observations may be brought to a fitting close by quoting an extremely interesting note by Driver. It leads to the conclusion that the seemingly unique construction of imperfect with waw consecutive is not peculiar to the Hebrew of the Old Testament, as was formerly supposed, but was in familiar use in Moabite, a kindred Semitic dialect.

"On the Inscription of Mesha' (the 'Moabite Stone') we find not only וישב, ויהרג, etc., but even the same apocopated forms as in Hebrew, יאמר, יאבן, יאמס. The language of this inscription does not in fact differ from Hebrew except dialectically, the resemblances in idiom and general style being especially striking. . . (The impf. with ו occurs also, as might naturally be expected, on the ancient Hebrew Inscription found on the wall of the Pool of Siloam . . .)" (21)



### III. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE TENSE

As already alluded to above (22), the most obvious and frequent function of the imperfect waw consecutive is to express the relationship of simple chronological succession to what precedes. (23) Thus this form is largely employed as a historical tense, most commonly in the narrative portions of the Bible. In this sense the imperfect consecutive corresponds to the Greek Aorist and the Latin perfect historicum. As a rule, a narrative begins with the perfect, and is then followed by the imperfect waw consecutive. (24) As an example of this relationship we may cite Genesis 4:1,

It is chiefly to this use that Davidson refers to in his somewhat rash statement that "waw conversive imperfect follows a simple perfect in any of the senses of the perfect." (25)

The latter authority goes on to say, with greater truth, that "in usage, however, it has become a tense-form in these meanings of the perfect in narrative style, though no perfect immediately precedes." (26) Genesis 1:4 is a good example of this usage:

As a matter of fact, the continuation of a narrative in the imperfect consecutive may be carried on to an indefinite extent. Gesenius points out that there are no less than forty-nine consecutive imperfects in the first chapter of Genesis alone. (27) No sooner, however, does an interruption occur whereby the waw and its imperfects suffer separation through some insertion such as a negative or other word intervening, than the perfect becomes necessary instead. For instance Gen. 1:5,

We can understand, then, how the imperfect with waw consecutive even "comes to stand independently in the sense of the perfect." (28) As Kautzsch so succinctly puts it,--

\*Wie in gewissen Faellen das Perf. consec... hat hier das Imperf. consec. eine Art selbstaendigen Lebens gewonnen.\* (29)

Inasmuch as the imperfect with waw consecutive is used to express actions or states considered as the temporal or logical consequences of immediately preceding actions or states, the introduction of a complete narrative or of a new section of one by means of this form establishes a connection, however loose, with an earlier event. (30) In these cases there is frequent use of וַיְהִי by way of introduction; more will be said of this word at a later opportunity.

Suffice it to say at this point, with Gesenius-Kautzsch, that--

\*Wenn ganze Buecher (Lv, Nu, Jos, Richt, Sam, 2 Koen, Ez, Ruth, Esth, Neh, 2 Chr) mit Imperf, consec., andere (Ex, 1 Koen, Ezra) mit Waw copul. beginnen, so soll damit eben eine enge Verbindung mit den (jetzt oder urspruenglich) vorangehenden Geschichtsbuechern hergestellt werden; vgl. dagegen den selbstaendigen Anfang des Hiob und Dan.\* (31)

#### IV. THE PAST TENSE

In the ensuing few chapters we shall concern ourselves with the time-relations existing between the imperfect consecutive and its respective context. In other words, we are to consider the nature of the fresh action which is thus introduced. It goes without saying that "the closer specification of the time to which an imperfect consecutive belongs, is invariably to be determined from the nature of the foregoing tense (or its equivalent), to which it stands in more or less close relation as its temporal or logical sequence." (32)

Here we shall deal with cases in which the new action lies wholly in the past. We may state it as one of the functions of the imperfect with waw consecutive that it may describe past actions, states, or events, when connected with such tenses (or their equivalents) as refer to the past. (33)

Firstly, the imperfect with waw consecutive continues a perfect in the sense of the English past. In this sense it is most common in narrative, as a tempus historicum. Of the multitudinous examples of this construction, we may pick at random Lev.8:20,

It should be kept in mind, of course, that, as pointed out above (34) such construction is usual in this sense in narrative, although no perfect actually precedes. (35)

Secondly, the imperfect consecutive may continue a perfect praeteritum, following a Hebrew perfect in the sense of the English perfect with have. An example of this occurs in Deut. 4:33,

"Has a people heard the voice of God and lived?" (36)

Thirdly, we find cases of imperfect consecutive dependent upon a perfect in the sense of the pluperfect. A classical example of this relationship appears in Gen. 31:34a,

"Now Rachel had taken the Teraphim and put them in the camel's saddle, and had sat down (or: and was sitting down) upon them." (37)

In this connection it is of extreme interest to examine Driver's exhaustive note, which begins in this way:

"It is a moot and delicate question how far the imperfect with wa denotes a pluperfect. There is, of course, no doubt that it may express the continuation of a plupf....; but can the impf. with wa introduce it,?..." (38)

After a minute examination of the passages in which the pluperfect signification of the imperfect with waw consecutive has been assumed--whether by the medieval Jewish grammarians, or (through their influence) by the translators of the Authorized Version, or by certain modern scholars--he answers his question in the negative. Davidson finds himself in full agreement with these conclusions, and admits that the imperfect consecutive does not by itself have the sense of the pluperfect, as has been alleged. (39)

The imperfect with waw consecutive likewise continues a simple imperfect, referring to the past. Thus we have Deut. 2:12a,

"...But the children of Esau gradually displaced them, wreaking destruction upon them..." (40) Imperfects after such particles as wa, when referring to the past, are also followed by imperfect with waw consecutive. As example of this form we may cite 2 Kings 13:18,

This verse well illustrates another feature of the imperfect waw consecutive, viz., that it regularly continues another such form. This fact has already been dealt with above. (41)

While we are dealing with the use of the imperfect with waw consecutive as referring to the past, we may here mention another group of such relationships. One of its functions is to continue non-finite verbal forms, as infinitive or participle. (42) We are interested here in such cases where the past is referred to. But it may be well at the outset to take into account some general remarks made, first of all, by Gesenius-Kautzsch in the treatment of the syntax of the infinitive construct:

"Fast regelmaessig werden die...Konstruktionen des Infin. mit einer Praeposition im weiteren Verlauf der Rede durch das Verbum finitum (also durch einen selbstaendigen Satz, nicht durch einen koordinierten Infl n.) fortgesetzt. Fuer unsere Auffassung ist ein solches Verb. fin. unter der Rektion einer Konjunktion zu denken, welche der vor dem Inf. stehenden Praeposition entspricht." (43)

"The finite tense consecutive to the infinitive," adds Davidson in discussing the same matter, "will show the nuances of time, relation etc. in which the infinitive was used." (44) Gen.39:18 may serve as illustration:

"And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried out,..."

An analogous construction is met with in the case of participles. Here again we shall do well to quote Gesenius:

"Fast regelmaessig wird die einen Satz beginnende Partizipial-Konstruktion (wie nach #114r die Infinitiv-Konstruktionen) durch Verbum finitum mit oder ohne , fortgesetzt, vor welchem dann fuer unsere Konstruktionsweise das im Partic. liegende Relativepronomen suppliert werden muss." (45)

The following verse illustrates the function of the imperfect with waw consecutive in serving as one means of continuing a participial formation having the sense of the past:

"...he who had hunted venison and brought it to me..." (Gen.27:33)

## V. THE PRESENT TENSE

We come now to a consideration of those functions of the imperfect with waw consecutive which ordinarily are associated with the manifold uses of the English present tense. Before treating action which originates wholly in the present, we have to take account of action (or its results) that, while originating or developing in the past, continue into the present (terminating there or not). A good example of this construction is found in 1 Kings 19:10b,

"I alone am left, and they seek (have sought and continue seeking) to take my life." (46) But as we have just said, the action or state continuing from the past need not terminate in the present. Thus we read in 1 Chr. 23:25,

"For David said, The Lord, the God of Israel, hath given rest unto His people, and He dwelleth in Jerusalem forever."

Closely related to the type just mentioned are those cases where imperfect consecutive is connected with perfecta praesentia or present perfects, otherwise referred to as the perfect of existing condition. Psalm 16:9 illustrates this very well:

"Therefore my heart is glad and my precious self rejoiceth." (47)

Another use of the Imperfect consecutive, also thought of as applying to the present tense--so far, at least, as English translation requires--is to express general truths or general experiences. This function is possible in connection with any preceding verbal form employed in such manner. Accordingly, we find examples of this type of Imperfect consecutive in continuation alike of perfects, imperfects, and participles of common truth or general experience.(48) The following examples will serve to illustrate each of these three types.

(a) After a perfect--Nah. 3:16b,

"The canker-worm spreadeth itself, and flieth away." (b) After an imperfect--Job 12:25 (reading, with Dr. Battenwieser, וַיִּטֶּן for וַיִּטֶּן)

"Then they grope in the dark without light, And stagger as if drunk."

(49) (c) After a participle--1Sam. 2:6,

"The Lord doth kill, and resurrect; He bringeth down to Sheol, and raiseth up." (d) Similarly after an infinitive--Ps. 92:8a,

"When the wicked spring up as the grass, And when all evil-doers flourish . . ."(50)

We come finally to the function of the imperfect with waw consecutive as continuation of a pure present. Naturally this use is most often associated with a preceding participial construction. A typical illustration is furnished by 2 Sam. 19:2b,

"Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom."(51)

Other cases of the employment of the imperfect consecutive in the sense of the present, for instance after such equivalents of the present as interrogatives, conditional clauses, nominal sentences, and other protases, will be dealt with later in their proper and respective places.

## VI. FUTURE TIME

"Future time," says Driver, "is never expressed by .ל, except where the prophetic perfect has preceded, or where the principle involved in it is really present." (52) In discussing the former case, Davidson remarks that "In such cases the future is almost necessary in English owing to our different way of thinking." (53) In discussing the latter case (where the imperfect consecutive is not preceded by a prophetic perfect) Driver has this to say:

"The .ל in such cases also represents the event, often very aptly, not merely with the certainty of the prophetic perfect, but as flowing naturally out of, being an immediate consequence of, the situation described in the preceding sentence. It is under circumstances like these, when the transition to the new standpoint in the future is made for the first time, not by a pf. but by the impf. with .ל, that we are most apt to find this tense translated by a future: but unless this be done solely for the sake of the English reader, who might be slow to realize the, to him, unwonted transition, it is a gross error, and implies an entire misapprehension of the Hebrew point of view." (54)

This is not the place to discuss the prophetic perfect as such; but one cannot help feeling that these authors are unduly exercised over the problem of how to translate this peculiar Hebrew form. Not a little of the hopeless confusion into which they are thrown is due to the fact that, with all their modern insight into the real significance of the perfect and imperfect in Hebrew, "the old Adam" still asserts himself; they cannot altogether free themselves from the traditional rendering of perfect as past and imperfect as future. Thus they impose upon themselves the illusory necessity of accounting for the alternation of prophetic perfects and imperfects, involving "sudden transitions" and "changes of standpoint" on the part of the Biblical writer. Scholars have created for themselves a similar stumbling block in the way of recognizing cases of precative perfect,



which is likewise interspersed with imperfects.

It may with justice be asked, For whom are English translations made, if not "for the sake of the English reader"? It is high time that translators of the Bible--and even writers of critical commentaries--awoke to this elementary principle. If, in a given text, they "translate" an imperfect with waw consecutive as "and . . .," but explain in the notes that this Waw consecutive is not really coordinate in sense, what is the good of such a literal mistranslation? Why not have the courage to convey the Hebrew idiom in corresponding English idiom, translating the waw into terms that will make clear the chronological or logical sequence, the temporal or modal nuances intended by the classical writer? Similarly, if in certain instances the Western mind requires that a prophetic perfect be rendered in the future, the Biblical scholar need make no apology for failing to mistranslate. It may be that other such cases can be made clear with equal vividness by using the English present tense. But, just as an imperfect alternating with a precative perfect has the same precative signification, so an imperfect (or an imperfect consecutive) alternating with a prophetic perfect is to be translated in the identical English tense, be it present or future, without clouding the entire thing by invoking alleged "sudden transitions" and "changes of the writer's standpoint". What has been said with regard to the prophetic perfect applies with equal force to cases with the perfect of certitude.

This excursus concluded, let us proceed to give illustrations. The first is a case of imperfects with waw consecutive following the prophetic perfect, while the second presents the same function of the imperfect consecutive when not immediately preceded by a prophetic

perfect. (a) Is. 9:5,

"For a child shall be born unto us, and a son be given unto us; and dominion shall rest on his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, God-like Hero, Ever-providing Father, Prince of Peace."

(b) Is. 5:15, 16--

"Mankind will be abased, man will be brought low, the haughty eyes will be humbled: (On that day) the Lord Sabaoth will be exalted by justice, and the Holy God will show Himself holy by righteousness."

(55) (56)

Gesenius-Kautzsch enumerates, among other future functions of the imperfect with waw consecutive, its use in dependence upon a participle futuri. It is doubtful, however, whether the illustrations cited in support of this assertion are at all convincing. To the contrary, those particular participles seem to have no future sense whatever. (57)

The following case deserves special mention, as representing what to Dr. Battenwieser constitutes an imperfect (with waw consecutive) of confident expectation, following a simple imperfect of reiterated action. Ps. 3:5,

"I cry aloud unto God; He will answer me from His holy mountain." (58)

In giving the second verb a future sense, Dr. Battenwieser parts company with other scholars. Gesenius translates the verse: "Zu Jahwe rufe ich, da erhoert er mich," (59) while Delitzsch renders it similarly: "Laut ergeht an Jahve mein Ruf, Und er erwidert mir von sein-

em heil'gen Berg."(60) Baethgen, in giving us an almost identical translation of this verse--"Laut rufe ich zu Jahve, Und er erhoert mich von seinem heiligen Berge"--offers the following commentary:

"Das Imperfect נקרא drueckt aus, was der Saenger regelmaessig thut; das Imperf. cons. יקרא die regelmaessige Folge davon, G-K lllt."(61)

## VII. CONSEQUENCE

Having concluded our treatment of the temporal and chronological functions of the imperfect with waw consecutive, we are now ready to give our attention to the even more versatile and colorful possibilities of that syntactical form when employed to express the various logical and modal nuances so characteristic of the classical Hebrew mind. We speak of modality advisedly, aware of what Driver says about its never being expressed by the imperfect consecutive;(62) but we shall deal with his objection presently.

We are concerned now with the uses of the imperfect with waw consecutive to indicate logical or natural sequence.to what precedes. This relationship is most commonly expressed by English so that, or and so. Gen. 20:12b illustrates this kind of simple consequence:

, "...and so she became my wife."(63) A more subtle type of consequence is found in Jer. 23:18(reading, with Dr. Bittenwieser, וְכִי־יִשְׁמַע for וְכִי־יִשְׁמַע in the second half of the verse)--

"For he who hath held converse with God, hath perceived and heard His word, he who hath hearkened to His word, must proclaim it."(64) Yet another such nuance occurs in Job 5:16 (following a simpler form of result clause in the preceding verse)--

15--

16--

15--"Thus from the weapon of their crafty mouths He delivereth the poor, And from the power of the mighty. 16--There is then hope for the poor--Iniquity will be quelled."(65)

The consequence or result may also be conditional in character(66).

At least so say Gesenius-Kautzsch. But neither of the two examples cited is to be translated in that manner. They are Jer. 20:17 (67) and Jer. 38:9 (68); the latter is a purpose clause, while the former continues a "would that..." exclamation, according to Dr. Büttenwieser.

The imperfect with waw consecutive expresses consequence in an interrogative sentence as well. For example, Ps. 144:3,

"O Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him!..." (69) Davidson, in discussing this verse, comments that "In the brief language of poetry, vav impf. sometimes expresses a dependence which usually is expressed by וְ," as in Ps. 8:5. (70)

From the examples that have been thus far adduced in this chapter, we are already in a position to refute Driver's assertion with regard to the imperfect with waw consecutive:

"Nor does it express modality: Ps. 8:6 וְיִתְּנָהּ does not follow וְיִתְּנָהּ, in dependence upon וְ, but introduces a fresh fact: cf, Ez. 13:19." (71)

We agree with Driver in his statement that וְיִתְּנָהּ does not follow וְיִתְּנָהּ, in dependence upon וְ; and thus does not express the same mood. But he admits, tacitly, that וְיִתְּנָהּ is modal; therefore its parallels in Ps. 144:3 must likewise possess modality; therefore we may conclude, in spite of Driver, that the imperfect with waw consecutive does express modality. It should furthermore be pointed out that the verse from Ezekiel he brings forward as proof of his contention is in no way analogous to the verb in Ps. 8:6, which is really adversative in meaning. Of adversatives we shall speak a little later.

"Sometimes,"--to use Driver's own language--"the consequence is also the climax; in other words a sentence summarizing the result of the events just before described is introduced by ו : the apparent tautology may then be avoided in English by rendering so or thus, as is often done in our Version." (72)

An example of this construction may be taken at random from Judges 4:23,

"So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the Israelites."

We come finally to a type of consequence with imperfect consecutive that might be called "negative sequence." We have reference to contrast-clauses, antithetical or adversative, which are as a rule translated by the English conjunctive phrase and yet. (73) The following example illustrates this construction in its two possible relations, after a verbal sentence and after a nominal sentence--

Mal. 1:2-3a,

"I love you (or: Though I love you), saith the Lord, yet ye say, Wherein dost Thou love us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob and hated Esau." Though the first contrast-clause is here based upon a perfect, it illustrates the identical function of the imperfect with waw consecutive after a verbal sentence, of which numerous examples exist.

Davidson, it is to be feared, is begging the question when he ventures the opinion that--

"The contrast in such passages as Gen. 32:31 רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים וְחַיִּיתִי 'I have seen God and (yet) my life is preserved' hardly lies in the vav, but is suggested by the two events. 2 Sam. 3:8." (74)

The question is, Are we going to "translate" this waw as all-inclusive and with apologetic yet protected by parentheses, or shall we shake off our timidity and boldly admit an adversative function? It is the old question of "literal mistranslation" over again. (75)

Surely--on the same grounds, and in view of what has been stated and illustrated in the course of this entire chapter,--we cannot agree with another hasty generalization made by the same author in this connection: "Neither is it probable that the vay expresses an inference."(76)

### VIII. SYNCHRONOUS SUBORDINATION

Gesenius-Kautzsch in one place makes a brief, hurried reference to a few examples of imperfect with waw consecutive which represent apparently an advance in the narrative, but are in reality only synchronous with, or explicative of, preceding events.(77) Such cases are described by Davidson as "what is only successive in the mind of the speaker." Amplifying this statement, the latter continues as follows:

"In the last case the event or fact expressed by waw impf. may really be identical with the preceding event, and a repetition of it, or synchronous with it, or even anterior to it; the speaker expresses them in the order in which they occur to him, so that the and is merely connective, though the form retains its conversive meaning."  
(78)

The finest and fullest exposition of this group of functions of the imperfect with waw consecutive, however, is furnished by Canon Driver. We cannot resist the temptation to quote him freely on this interesting subject.

"But chronological sequence",--as this scholar prefers to characterize the subject-matter of our preceding chapter--"though the most usual, is not the sole principle by which the use of .ו is regulated. Where, for example, a transaction consists of two parts closely connected, a Hebrew narrator will often state the principal fact first, appending the concomitant occurrence by help of .ו .(79)

An instance of this use is found in Jud. 16:23,

"Then the Phillistine nobles assembled to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: saying, Our god hath delivered Samson into our power."

"Or again,"--he continues--"in describing a series of transactions, he will hasten at once to state briefly the issue of the whole, and afterwards, as though forgetting that he had anticipated, proceed to annex the particulars by the same means."(80)

This is well illustrated by Gen. 37:5, 6 (v. 5b being anticipatory),



"Once Joseph had a dream, and told it to his brothers--but they continued to hate him still more. And he said to them, Listen to this dream I had."

Referring to these two functions of the imperfect with waw consecutive, Driver remarks:

"In neither of these cases is it implied that the event introduced by .1 is subsequent to that denoted by the previous verb; in reality the two are parallel, the longer and the shorter account alike being attached by .1 to the narrative preceding them both." (81)

He now proceeds to another large group of similar functions:

"In the instances just mentioned, the disregard of chronological sequence is only apparent: but others occur in which no temporal relation is implied at all, and association in thought is the principle guiding the writer rather than association in time. Thus .1 may be used to introduce a statement immediately suggested by a preceding word or phrase; it is even, occasionally, joined to a substantive standing alone, in order to expand its meaning or to express some circumstance or attribute attaching to it." (82)

An example of such epexegetical construction is met with in Josh. 22:17,

"Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us--from which we are not yet purified to this very day--when there was the plague in the congregation?"

Imperfect with waw consecutive is used a number of times in the rôle of an explicative and definitive to a preceding now. For example, 2 Chr. 2:2b,

"As thou didst deal with David my father, sending him cedars to build himself a house in which to dwell." (83)

"Or, secondly,"--Driver continues--"a fresh circumstance is mentioned, in the order in which it naturally presents itself for mention at the stage which the narrative has reached." (84)

This is illustrated by Ruth 2:23,

"So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest, and dwelt with her mother-in-law."

Driver then comes to his third and last point in this second group, and says:

"Or a new account commences, amplifying the preceding narrative regarded as a whole, and not meant merely to be the continuation, chronologically, of its concluding stage." (85)

For an example of this usage, see 1 Sam. 18:6, which starts the preceding account off on a new tangent.

Before bringing this chapter to a close, there is another type of subordination, somewhat analogous to the forms we have been treating, to consider among the manifold functions of the imperfect with vav consecutive. Even in Ewald's time it occupied some prominence in the study of Hebrew syntax. (86) Davidson describes it thus:

"Vav impf. express the ingress or entrance upon realization of the second action in connection with the first. But the second is confined to the sphere of the first, and has not independent duration, as an unconnected impf. might have. Thus אמר ויהי he said, and it was, is all bounded by one circle, so that and it was becomes in usage the expression of a finished fact, taking on the quality of the preceding perf. Hence vav impf. comes to stand independently in the sense of the perf." (87)

The sentence אמר ויהי is really to be considered as comprising a protasis and apodosis, which could be rendered colloquially as:

"No sooner said than done."

Our lexicographers develop this subject a little farther:

"... consec. (esp. with the impf.) freq. couples two verbs in such a manner that the first, indicating the general character of the action, receives its closer definition in the second: in such cases, the first may often be represented in Engl. by an adv., as Gen. 26:18 וַיִּפְּחַק וַיִּדְּג 'and he turned and dug,' i.e., 'and he dug again'; so often; and similarly with וַיִּחַד Gen. 25:1, וַיִּחַד Gen. 24:18, וַיִּחַד Josh. 7:7, etc." (88)

In this connection it may be appropriate to ~~to~~ conclude by referring to Ps. 3:6, which has been so universally mistranslated.

(89) It remained for Dr. Battenwieser to interpret this verse a-right. Thus he translates Ps. 3:6a--

as follows: "When I lie down to sleep, I shall awake," and explains that--

"ואשנה is not coordinate with ושבתי, but dependent on it, being a purpose clause formed with the imperfect with waw consecutivum." (90)

## IX. IN PROTASIS

We have had occasion more than once in the preceding chapters to cite examples of imperfect with waw consecutive which incidentally served at the same time to introduce or constitute the protasis or the apodosis of a sentence. It is our object in this chapter and the next, however, to deal more explicitly with these particular functions.

The book of Job is abounding in especially fine examples of the use of imperfect with waw consecutive in various types of protases. In a conditional clause of a hypothetical character, Job 31:26,27,

"If my heart was ever mysteriously enticed, And my hand touched my lips to waft a kiss When I saw the sunlight shining brightly, Or the moon growing luminous--"(91) Similarly in Ps. 139:11, וְאֵלֹהִים  
--following a number of simple hypothetical imperfects in preceding verses--"If I should say ..."(92)

In a conditional clause of a concessive nature--Job 2:3b,

"He still clingeth to his piety, Although thou didst incite me to ruin him without cause."

In a temporal clause of a concessive nature; Job 10:22 (reading with Dr. Battenwieser)

"The land of gloom and chaos, where, even when it groweth light, Is the gloom of the shadow of death."(93)

According to Gesenius-Kautzsch, the use of two "coordinate" imperfects consecutive is frequent, the first being in sense (as an equivalent of a temporal clause) subordinate to the second.(94) An

illustration of this construction is found in Gen. 37:21a

"When Reuben heard this, he undertook to release Joseph from their power."

A common method of forming a temporal clause to serve as protasis is, of course, by the employment of וַיְהִי, "and it happened" or "came to pass." This is met with profusely in prose narrative. An example may be taken at random from Gen. 22:1,

"It came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham."

An example that is not so evident to those who insist upon making some of these temporal protases coordinate in significance, is Job 1:6-7a,

"Now one day when the heavenly beings had come to present themselves to Yahweh for service, and among them had come also the Satan, Yahweh said unto the Satan, 'Whence comest thou?'" (95)

The books on syntax all enumerate and illustrate the different secutions, i.e., apodoses possible in association with a וַיְהִי protasis. The apodosis is most frequently formed with an imperfect consecutive; other secutions are: simple imperfect, simple perfect, perfect with (but separated from) waw, or by וַיְהִי introducing a participial or nominal sentence. (96)

Before leaving the subject of the functions of the imperfect with waw consecutive in protasis, we shall touch upon a related construction, viz., its use in circumstantial clauses. It would require many examples to illustrate every possible nuance expressed by this facile and colorful form. Only a few must here suffice.

Again we feel impelled to draw upon the book of Job, as virtually re-discovered by Dr. Battenwieser.

Job 3:26, (97)

"I have no peace, no rest, no respite, Agony cometh ever afresh."

Job 7:9, (98)

"As the cloud that passeth by vanisheth, So he that goeth down to Sheol ascendeth no more."

Job 9:4, (99)

"Howsoever wise and courageous, Who could defy Him and escape unscathed?"

Job 30:11, (100)

"Since He hath loosened my bowstring And brought afflictions upon me, They have cast off all restraint in my presence."

## X. IN APODOSIS

We had occasion in the previous chapter (101) to point out and illustrate the fact that after a temporal clause with וַיְהִי the apodosis may be introduced by an imperfect with waw consecutive. This fresh function as apodosis or predicate, it goes without saying, occurs as well without a foregoing וַיְהִי in the protasis. (102)

The following examples have been chosen to demonstrate its use in an apodosis following a temporal clause:

Hos. 11:1,

"When Israel was young I loved him, and from Egypt I called him as my son." (103)

Is. 48:21,

"They will not suffer thirst when he leads them through deserts:

He will cause the water to flow out of the rock for them;

He will cleave the rock, and the water will pour forth."

In explaining this translation, Dr. Battenwieser says:

"The perfects and imperfects with waw consecutive in v. 21 have not the force of past tenses: the verse is a compound temporal sentence, וְכִי יִזְכֹּר וְכִי יִשְׁמַח being the protasis of both וְכִי יִזְכֹּר and וְכִי יִשְׁמַח and also וְכִי יִזְכֹּר and וְכִי יִשְׁמַח. As often in conditional and temporal sentences, the perfect is used in both the protasis and the apodosis; in the last two clauses of the apodosis the imperfect with waw consecutive is used instead." (104)

The function of the waw consecutive in the apodosis of a conditional sentence is well illustrated by Job 31:34, which constitutes the apodosis to a series of conditional or hypothetical protases extending throughout the whole of the preceding verses of the chapter:

"Truly I should have to dread the great crowd, The contempt of the people would terrify me, I should have to be silent, I could not venture out of doors." (105)

An apodosis with imperfect consecutive may follow a clause or substantive serving as casus pendens. With subject prefixed, Gen. 30:30,

"For the little that thou hadst before I came, hath increased ..."

With object prefixed, Jer. 6:19b,

"For they do not hearken unto My words, and My law they reject."

There are numerous cases where an apodosis with imperfect consecutive follows protases introduced by a particle or conjunction. These are found to occur: אֲשֶׁר, as; כִּי, because; כִּי, in order that, for the sake of; אִם, if; כִּי, for, because, when; etc.: by temporal particles or prepositions, בְּ, כִּי, בְּ, כִּי, כִּי, כִּי, כִּי, כִּי. (106)

Let us bring this study to a close by venturing, in true Rabbinic fashion, into the mysteries of Ma'ase Bereshith. Prof. J. M. Powis Smith, at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society held April, 1927 in Cincinnati, presented an interesting paper entitled "The Syntax and Significance of Genesis 1:1-3". We quote from the proof-sheet of his abstract:

"This paper presents a new interpretation of Genesis 1:1-3 based upon a more accurate understanding of its syntax than has heretofore been recognized. The outcome of it is to the effect that the creative work of the Hebrew God was with previously existing materials and not a creatio ex nihilo. The treatment involves taking verse two as composed of circumstantial clauses and regarding the first word of verse one as in the construct relationship with the clause following." (and regarding verse 3a as apodosis of the temporal clause beginning with verse 1.)

v. 1.

v. 2.

v. 3.



The resulting translation, as taken down by the present writer from Prof. Smith's manuscript at the time, is as follows:

"In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth," (i.e., "In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth,"), the earth having been a desolate waste, while darkness was on the surface of the abyss and a mighty wind was beating upon the surface of the waters, then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."

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## XII. NOTES

(Only the following abbreviations require elucidation: BDB--Brown-Driver-Briggs, Lexicon. G-K--German edition of Gesenius-Kautzsch. GKMP--English translation by Mitchell and Price. Ewald--Lehrbuch. Butt.--Dr. Bittenwieser.)

- (1) BDB, pp. 251f.
- (2) op. cit., pp. 253f.
- (3) Davidson, p. 70, etc.
- (4) Driver, p. 72.
- (5) Ewald, pp. 513f. Or: "the imperfect of relative progression."
- (6) Driver, p. 71.
- (7) op. cit., pp. 71f. Cf. supra, p. 1, paragraph 2.
- (8) Davidson, p. 70.
- (9) ibid.
- (10) Driver, p. 98.
- (11) op. cit., p. 73.
- (12) G-K, #111n.
- (13) op. cit., #107a; GKMP, pp. 271f.
- (14) Davidson, p. 78.
- (15) Driver, p. 74.
- (16) op. cit., p. 70. Among these exceptionally vocalized cohortatives is Ps. 73:16, referred to supra, p. 5.
- (17) Op. cit., pp. 96ff.
- (18) Davidson pp. 77f.
- (19) BDB, pp. 253f.
- (20) Driver, p. 71.
- (21) ibid.

- (22) pp. 2-4.
- (23) Driver, p. 80; Davidson, p. 71.
- (24) G-K, #111a.
- (25) Davidson, p. 70.
- (26) ibid.
- (27) G-K, #111c.
- (28) Davidson, p. 76.
- (29) G-K, #111h.
- (30) op. cit., #111a,f; GKMP, pp. 286f.
- (31) G-K, #49b.
- (32) op. cit., #111o; GKMP, p. 289.
- (33) G-K, #111p.
- (34) p. 7.
- (35) G-K, #111q; Davidson, p. 71.
- (36) op. cit., pp. 71ff; G-K, #111q.
- (37) ibid.; Davidson, p. 72.
- (38) Driver, pp. 84-89.
- (39) Davidson, pp. 72f.
- (40) op. cit., p. 74.
- (41) p. 7.
- (42) Davidson, p. 74.
- (43) G-K, #114r.
- (44) Davidson, p. 128.
- (45) G-K, #116x.
- (46) Driver, pp. 89ff.
- (47) G-K, #111r. Cf. similarly: Baethgen, p. 43; Delitzsch, p. 163.
- (48) G-K, #111s,t; Davidson, p. 73; Driver, pp. 91f.
- (49) Butt., Job, pp. 110, 308.

- (50) G-K, #111v, #114r; Driver, p. 92.
- (51) *ibid.*; G-K, #111u.
- (52) Driver, p. 89.
- (53) Davidson, p. 73.
- (54) Driver, pp. 93f.
- (55) Butt., P. of I., pp. 270, 326.
- (56) *vide* Driver, pp. 89, 92-95; Davidson, p. 73; G-K, #111w.
- (57) *ibid.*
- (58) Butt., HUC Jub. Vol., p. 99.
- (59) G-K, #111t.
- (60) Delitzsch, p. 81.
- (61) Baethgen, p. 8.
- (62) Driver, p. 89.
- (63) *op. cit.*, pp. 80f; Davidson, p. 71; G-K, #111-l.
- (64) Butt., P. of I., p. 145.
- (65) Butt., Job, pp. 97, 169.
- (66) G-K, #111-l.
- (67) *vide* Butt., P. of I., p. 127, for translation.
- (68) *vide op. cit.*, p. 54, for translation.
- (69) G-K, #111m,t.
- (70) Davidson, pp. 75f.
- (71) Driver, p. 89.
- (72) *op. cit.*, p. 81. Cf. Davidson, p. 71; G-K, #111k.
- (73) *op. cit.*, #111e; Driver, pp. 80f.
- (74) Davidson, p. 72.
- (75) *vide supra*, pp. 14f.
- (76) Davidson, p. 72.
- (77) G-K, #111d.

- (78) Davidson, p. 71.
- (79) Driver, p. 81.
- (80) op. cit., pp. 81f.
- (81) op. cit., p. 81.
- (82) op. cit., pp. 82f.
- (83) op. cit., p. 83; Davidson, p. 71.
- (84) Driver, pp. 82f.
- (85) *ibid.*
- (86) Ewald, pp. 623, 727.
- (87) Davidson, p. 76.
- (88) BDB, pp. 253f.
- (89) *vide* Driver, p. 79, quoting Delitzsch, Stickel.
- (90) Butt., Jub. Vol. HUC, p. 99.
- (91) Butt., Job, pp. 136, 264, 325.
- (92) G-K, #111x; Davidson, p. 72; Baethgen, p. 406.
- (93) Butt., Job, Pp. 107, 187, 306.
- (94) G-K, #111d; GKMP, p. 287.
- (95) Butt., Job, pp. 89, 156.
- (96) *vide* G-K, #111f,g; Davidson, pp. 74f; Driver, pp. 89f.
- (97) Butt. Job, pp. 94, 160f.
- (98) op. cit., pp. 100, 177.
- (99) op. cit., pp. 103, 181.
- (100) op. cit., pp. 118, 215.
- (101) *supra*, p. 27.
- (102) G-K, #111h.
- (103) Butt., P. of I., p. 237.
- (104) Butt., Jour. Bib. Lit., vol. 38, pp. 96f.

(105) Butt., Job, pp. 137, 264, 325.

(106) vide, for the entire chapter: G-K, #111b,g,h,t; Davidson,  
p. 74; Driver, pp. 155f; BDB, p. 254.



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