

## Prose and Poetry through Time

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# Prose and Poetry through Time

*Hebrew Verb Form Semantics in Zechariah*

*By*

Stephen L. Huebscher



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## Preface

This study of the verbal system of Biblical Hebrew addresses the question of the meaning of Biblical Hebrew verb forms in prose and poetry using primarily standard semantic categories, especially grammatical aspect, tense, and modality. In addition, it provides an analysis of each verb form as background. It treats the text of a prophetic book from the early Persian Period (Zechariah) rather than a pre-exilic text from Israel's First Commonwealth Period (Genesis—2 Kings). Thus, it touches on grammar and linguistics (especially semantics), literary theory (poetics), and history (diachronic matters).

The primary argument of this book holds that the verbal system in Zechariah is unified and consistent in three areas: semantic function, literary unity, and diachronic consistency. (1) Semantic function, in the sense that the verb forms maintain their semantic functions regardless of the genre. In application, this means that *qatal*, *yiqtol*, and other verb forms also retain their functions in poetry, although they may be subject to a broader spectrum of pragmatic and syntactic influences. This also supports an understanding that the respective morphological forms primarily encode semantic meaning rather than discourse-based functions. (2) Literary unity, so that the verbal system does not exhibit differences that correlate with the main divisions of Zechariah (i.e., Zech 1–8 and Zech 9–14). (3) Diachronic consistency: the verbal system demonstrates a character consistent with the early post-exilic period.

This book differs from the dissertation on which it is based primarily by drawing out the inherent significance of the data for the diachronic development of the Hebrew language in antiquity. Here, I add a discussion of historical-critical proposals for dating Zech 9–14, since that is germane for the date of the language and comparisons to Hebrew from various periods. Besides these, I added (with the help of my friends) statistical analyses of certain categories in an effort to provide a wholistic synthesis of the data. Smaller changes were made to clarify the treatment of the so-called *waw*-conversive forms, distinguishing between the short and long *yiqtol* verbs, and correcting other, smaller matters.

When it comes to method, I have tried to follow the advice I give to others: (1) follow the data, not the dogma, and (2) the questions you ask will determine the answers you get (so give careful thought to the questions you focus on).

In closing, I wish to thank several people for their contributions to my work. Pride of place belongs to Drs. Mark McGinniss (advisor), Wayne Slusser, and Ken Gardoski of Clarks Summit University, who served on my dissertation committee. The late Dr. Michael S. Heiser introduced me to Dr. Ken M. Penner of St.

Francis Xavier University, and was instrumental in getting me to switch to Dr. Penner's method when my initial method proved to be an intellectual cul-de-sac. Dr. Penner subsequently both served on my committee and also continued to support and guide me in bringing this book to fruition.

Several other scholars kindly took an interest in my project and provided significant help of one kind or another, sometimes repeatedly: Drs. Reinier de Blois, Mark Boda, Scott Callahan, John A. Cook, Egbert Fortuin, W. Randall Garr, Laura Hare, Galia Hatav, John Hilber, Aaron Hornkohl, John Huehnergard, Jaap Kamphuis, Frank Matheus, Na'ama Pat-El, Kurtis Peters, Max Rogland, and Al Wolters. I am indebted to them for their help, but my decisions should not be taken as a reflection of them, except in the very best sense. For the foreign language abstracts, Harvey N. Bock graciously provided a fresh translation in Modern Hebrew, Brenda C. Hansen corrected my German, and Viktor Wijnants improved my French. Elisa Perotti and Wendy Logeman at Brill and Marlou Meems who handled typesetting the final product were an absolute joy and encouragement to work with during the publication process. Many thanks to the two anonymous SSN peer reviewers for helping to improve the manuscript. My longtime friends Dr. Diane Strike and Mr. Dan Strike worked with my data and provided the statistical analyses for this study, for which I am most grateful.

The congregations of Grace Baptist Church (Stillwater, Minnesota) and Bonita Presbyterian Church (Bonita, California), offered prayer and support, as did many other colleagues and friends—I am only sorry that I could not list you all! My dear wife and kids have been unstinting in their love and enthusiasm, and I owe them a great debt. I am so proud of all of you! This work, along with any errors and infelicities, remains my own.

*Stephen L. Huebscher*

San Diego, California, and Stillwater, Minnesota, Christmas 2023

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# Abbreviations

AET	Abhandlungen zur evangelischen Theologie
ATSAT	Arbeiten zur Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
AYBRL	Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
BFC	<i>la Bible en français courant</i>
BiblThS	Biblich-Theologische Studien
BHHB	Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible
BHRG <sup>2</sup>	<i>Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar</i>
BRS	Biblical Resource Series
BZRP	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie
CTL	Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics
CSL	Cambridge Studies in Linguistics
GMD	Gesenius, Meyer, Donner. <i>Handwörterbuch</i>
HTIBS	Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Studies
HUB	Hebrew University Bible
JLSM	Janua Linguarum Series Minor
JM	Joüon/Muraoka. <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i>
JPS	<i>JPS Tanakh</i> . 1985.
LND	<i>La Sacra Bibbia (la Nuova Diodati)</i> . Rev. ed., 1994.
Luther	<i>Die Bibel</i> . Translated by Martin Luther. Rev. ed., 1984.
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible. Rev. ed., 1995.
NEG	<i>La sainte Bible: nouvelle édition de Genève</i> . Translated by L. Segond, 1979.
NETS	<i>New English Translation of the Septuagint</i>
OG	Old Greek. The non-Pentateuchal parts of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. LXX refers to the Pentateuch only.
Ogan	Orientalia Gandensia
PIAS	Publications of the Institute for Advanced Studies
Schlachter	<i>Die Bibel</i> . Rev. Ed., 2000.
SAIS	Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture
SBFA	Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta
SLCS	Studies in Language Companion Series
SLL	Synthese Language Library
SLP	Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy
SNLLT	Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory
SSLL	Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics
TAM	Tense, Aspect, and Modality
TLL	Topics in Language and Linguistics

TOB	<i>Traduction œcuménique de la Bible</i>
VOK	Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission
WSWWUM	Wissenschaftliche Schriften der wwU Münster
ZRP	<i>Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie</i>
Zürcher	<i>Die Zürcher Bibel</i> . Rev. ed., 2007.