Theoretical linguistics and Biblical Hebrew— Edit Doron's vision

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This is the first of two thematic issues (the second of which will appear as BAALL 13:1) guest-edited by the late Edit Doron and by Tania Notarius, with the contribution of Nora Boneh, dedicated to the theoretical linguistic study of Biblical Hebrew. They exemplify one of the fruits of Edit Doron's endeavors to establish firm research ties between theoretical formal linguistics and the philological study of Biblical Hebrew. Edit's untimely death interrupted this and many other of her projects; it is the goal of this introductory essay to point out some of the milestones of her contribution to the field.

The interaction between Biblical Hebrew studies, on the one hand, and theoretical linguistics, on the other, is not novel and spans dozens of years of scholarship.¹ In most of these works, the main focus is on the study of the Hebrew language of the Bible by applying tools provided by linguistic theory—be it formal or cognitive—with the purpose of improving the description of the data and proposing analyses to particular linguistic phenomena. Edit's aspiration of bringing the two worlds of study closer together was however different: it was about the belief that linguistic theory can, in turn, benefit from the study of an ancient language, such as Biblical Hebrew.

1 We do not intend for this preface to mention all the relevant movements and individuals of this enterprise; see the contributions on Biblical Hebrew in the *Encyclopaedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Khan 2013), or the research overviews suggested in (Moshavi and Notarius 2017).

Edit's vision in this respect explicitly materialized in 2017, when, she initiated the *Biblical Hebrew Linguistics and Philology Network* (BHLaP) together with the late Prof. Susan Rothstein (Bar-Ilan University) and Prof. Outi Bat-El (Tel Aviv University), both contributors to the present edition. The purpose of this network was to create opportunities for scholars—linguists and philologists—to increase collaboration between these fields of study in the context of the study of Biblical Hebrew. Such interaction is made possible in annual workshops the network organizes as a platform to share ideas and learn from one another.

Interest in the linguistic analysis of Biblical Hebrew goes back a long way in Edit Doron's research. Many of her influential analyses, formulated on the basis of Modern Hebrew and other languages, were extended and enriched by means of biblical material. She succeeded in demonstrating that data from the Biblical Hebrew corpus allowed for significant insights into the typological properties of relevant phenomena.

Already in 2005, within a collection titled *Universal Grammar in the Reconstruction of Dead Languages*, edited by Katalin É. Kiss (Berlin: Mouton), Edit compared features of clause structure in Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew. The former presented challenges to the typology of clauses predicted by generative syntactic theory, due to grammatical agreement of the verb with the leftmost conjunct of the postverbal subject. In this paper, Edit identified that the condition for this to hold is the absence of a constituent to the left of the verb, and casted the analysis in terms of the contemporary minimalist theory, this way adding Biblical Hebrew to the typology of languages considered in this respect.

In 2006, Doron took issue with the constitution of the Modern Hebrew verbal system, paying particular attention to the sole periphrastic construction in it, comprised of the verb *h.y.y* 'to be' in the past tense and the participle (*benoni* form) (Doron 2006). In this paper, Doron shows, assuming a Reichenbachian approach to tense (Reichenbach 1947), that the Modern Hebrew form somewhat surprisingly preserves the properties of the Biblical Hebrew one, and not those of Mishnaic Hebrew, contrary to a previous suggestion by Haiim B. Rosén (Rosén 1956). Indeed, Modern Hebrew has in many respects readopted the syntax and semantics of Biblical Hebrew, rather than being a development of the Mishnaic stage, as demonstrated in the analysis of such syntactic structures as conditional and unconditional clauses, clausal complements of aspectual and modal auxiliaries, and gerundive clauses (Doron 2019). Importantly, these analyses laid the groundwork for what became Edit's last major research project—The Emergence of Modern Hebrew (www.emodhebrew.com). This ERC-funded project documents the development of the grammar of Modern

Hebrew, within the unique historical context of its 'revival', presumably fraught by discontinuity.

Tracing the emergence of the quantifier *kol* 'all/every/each' (Doron to appear), Doron showed how the Modern Hebrew universal quantifier *kol* emerged from the Biblical Hebrew nominal cognate. She traced the semantic shift from *kol* as a degree noun denoting the *entirety* of the measure function applying to nouns in a nominal system altogether lacking the category determiner D (Doron and Meir 2013), and showed how the collective reading of *kol* + NP arises, when first it is akin to a universal quantifier, albeit without being one. Doron then continued to show how the particular semantic properties of the *kol* + NP constituent allowed it to reanalyze into a free choice item. Then, only with the emergence of the category D, *kol* was recast into a full-fledged universal quantifier allowing also the distributive meaning. This path of change reaffirms and elaborates on paths identified by Haspelmath (1995) and more recently discussed from a strictly formal perspective by Beck (2017). Doron's paper exemplifies how the formal tools and the body of knowledge accumulated in formal semantics can be employed to decorticate the anatomy of modified nominal constructions, allowing one to pinpoint when a quantificational interpretation indeed arises from a quantifier, as opposed to being merely the product of a combination of interpretative and pragmatic properties that can be attested in an unquantified nominal construction. At the outset, this case study forcefully demonstrates how Biblical Hebrew helps to substantiate existing semantic analyses by showing what is the impact of the presence or absence of a grammatical category on interpretation. In the case at hand, it seems that the category-shift into a quantifier came with the distributive reading, and that other readings tied to universal quantification (e.g., the collective reading) may be obtained non-quantificationally. The investigation of the morpho-semantic properties of Biblical Hebrew *kol*, relying on characterizations provided by formal semanticists of modern languages, mainly English, enable one to pinpoint the formation of a full-fledged universal quantifier and to highlight the centrality of the category D in the path of change. This would not have been possible to trace were it not for the particular properties of Biblical Hebrew.

In the same vein, a co-authored paper with Keren Dubnov studies the lexical semantic properties of locative verbs and their accompanying prepositions by observing how the locative alternation is manifested in Biblical Hebrew (Doron and Dubnov 2017). The proposed syntactic analysis reflects the lexical semantic symmetry between *location* and *locatum*, mediated by an identical preposition, and compares the peculiarity of Biblical Hebrew to Modern Hebrew. The main descriptive claim is that Biblical Hebrew is a verb-framed language, meaning that locative verbs involving change of location encode directionality in the

verb and not via the accompanying prepositions (see Talmy 1985). Uncovering the lexical semantic and syntactic properties of the alternating constructions provides an explanation for the typologically under-studied phenomenon of preposition identity in the locative alternation. The rare property of preposition identity in Biblical Hebrew locative alternations allows for a syntactic analysis and a clear lexical semantic characterization of Biblical Hebrew alternating verbs and the distribution of labour between the verb and preposition in change of location constructions in Biblical Hebrew.

Lastly, in her work on the infinitive in Biblical Hebrew, Doron claims that the Biblical Hebrew infinitival forms often dubbed the *infinitive absolute* and the *construct infinitive* are both clausal, rather than nominal, and result from different combinations of functional categories combined in the clausal spine. In various works (Doron 2020, Doron 2021, present issue), the author presents syntactic and interpretative correlates to three infinitival constructions in Biblical Hebrew, relying mainly on the possibility of combining subject and object clitics for each. These works reaffirm the validity and productivity of hypotheses in formal syntax regarding clausal architecture.

In all of these papers, Doron shows how the study of Biblical Hebrew touches on central issues in theoretical linguistics, including the universality of linguistic categories in syntax, lexical semantics and formal semantics. No doubt, this endeavor not only contributed to particular linguistic theories, but also to a better understanding of the properties of the Biblical Hebrew grammar, with extremely fruitful results for Biblical Hebrew linguistics.

The ten papers included in these two thematic issues present a rich array of topics from all sub-domains of linguistic analysis and further exemplify the cross-fertilization between the philological research of Biblical Hebrew and theoretical linguistics, contributing to realize Edit Doron's vision. Part 1, collected in the present issue, groups papers on phonological and syntactic issues: the contributions by Geoffrey Khan "Remarks on Syllable Structure and Metrical Structure in Biblical Hebrew," Hadas Yeverechyahu and Outi Bat-El "Biblical Hebrew Segolates: Universal and Language Specific Effects," and Aviv Schoenfeld "Abishai, Daniel and Hezekiah: Lexical Secreted Affixation in Biblical Hebrew Personal Names," concentrate on the study of phonetic and phonological phenomena, highlighting the masoretic tradition of pronunciation in the light of theoretical approach to phonology; the work of Robert Holmstedt "Parenthesis in Biblical Hebrew as Noncoordinative Nonsubordination," and that of Edit Doron herself "Biblical Hebrew Infinitive" investigate issues of clause structure within syntactic theory. Part 2, to appear in BAALL 13.1, is dedicated to morphology and semantics. The papers of Jan Joosten "The Participle as a Component of the Verbal System in Biblical Hebrew," Tania Notar-

ius “The Imperative-Hortative Paradigm in Biblical Hebrew in Typological and Diachronic View,” and Nora Boneh “Stability and change in the Hebrew verbal system: the case of *qatal* and *qotel*” focus on elements of the verbal system and their functional properties; Richard Benton “Semantic category and situation aspect in the Biblical Hebrew Niphal and Hitpaal,” and Susan Rothstein and Adina Moshavi “Numeral construct phrases in Biblical Hebrew: a theoretical perspective” contribute to the semantic investigation of the language.

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