Notes, Comments, and Errata

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for

Learning Biblical Hebrew
A New Approach Using Discourse Analysis
by B. M. Rocine

MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR THIS COURSE (page viii)

The printed *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* is not required for this course. When we get to the Bible readings starting in lesson 15, I will recommend a Hebrew lexicon.

PRONOUNCING HEBREW

A brief history (page ix)
Definition of nikkud: Although the Masoretes are responsible for the vowel markings in the biblical text as well as the system of accent marks, the term *nikkud* refers *only* to the vowel marks.

The consonants
Consonants chart (page x)
א *aleph* sound: read *glottal stop* for *silent* (also in note 2). The glottal stop is
     represented by an apostrophe ['] in transcription.
י *yod*; one also hears the letter called *yud* (primarily modern Hebrew speakers)
כ For *khoph* read *kaph* (and throughout the text)
ע *ayin* sound: read *glottal stop* for *silent* (also in note 2). The glottal stop is
     represented by an apostrophe ['] in transcription.
צ *tsadeh*; one also hears the letter called *tsadi*
ק *koph*; more commonly spelled *qoph*; one also hears *quph* (primarily modern
     Hebrew speakers)

Note 2 (p. x).
Since the two letters *aleph* and *ayin* represent the glottal stop, they are not "silent in and of themselves." Although it is true that in modern Hebrew, the aleph may become silent (especially in colloquial speech), we will maintain a pronunciation of a glottal stop. See also the note below on the last paragaph in Open syllables (p. xiii).

The vowels (p. xii)
First paragraph. Read: The nikud, as you remember, are the vowel ~~and accent~~ markings added . . .

Vowel chart
For *hireq* read *ḥireq* (and throughout the text)
For *holem* read *ḥolem* (and throughout the text)
See note on Note no. 3 (p xiii) for *khataf ___*.

The vowels (p. xii) *and* Letter combinations (p. xvi).
See separate handout from the instructor.

The vowels (page xiii)
Note no. 3. The compound shewas (*khataf ___*) are also called (more usually) *"khatef ____."*

Open syllables (p. xiii)
Last paragraph. This paragraph shows the confusion that results if one considers א and ע silent. If these two are "silent in and of themselves," what differentiates this from having "zero pronunciation value"? For this paragraph, read the following:

The letters aleph [א] and ayin [ע] are glottal stops. Just as with any other consonant, the aleph and ayin with a vowel is pronounced consonant-vowel, in this case, a glottal stop followed by the indicated vowel. This is the case with any of the vowels shown in the vowel chart; these vowels will be either under the aleph or ayin, or above amd to the left. However, if the only vowel is under a preceding letter, or is the ḥolem dot above and to the *right* of the aleph or ayin (which is the /o/ vowel for a *preceding* consonant), the aleph (or ayin) is *quiescent*; there is no glottal stop heard in the word. The aleph or ayin simply disappears from pronunciation. The presence of the letter, however, helps to identify the word. Pronounce the following open syllables that have aleph and ayin incorporated into them:

Multi-syllable words (p. xiv)
Since Rocine did not include the mark (ˋ) in the assignments to show the accented syllable when it is not the last syllable in a word, all Hebrew words and phrases from the assignments are included in a separate document, with the accented syllable marked when it is not the final syllable. This will help you pronounce these words and phrases correctly.

Silent and vocal *shewa* (p. xv)
Second paragraph, last line: Read (adding the glottal stop in the pronunciation):

/'el/. Assembled, the entire word is pronounced /yis-ra-'EL/.

Lesson 1

Assignments 1.5a (p. 6).
See Handout showing words in order by the chapter in whcih they are introduced.

Lesson 2

Lesson verse. This is the first lesson verse that is a complete verse from the Bible. Rocine evidently forgot this lesson's verse when he called the verse for lesson 8 "your first entire Bible verse!"

Lesson 3

3.5b. Last line of first paragraph: read *kaph* for *koph*.

Lesson 4

4.3d. For *affixed* read *suffixed*. For *affix* read *suffix*. An affix is "an additional element placed at the beginning or end of a root, stem, or word, or in the body of a word, to modify its meaning." Thus, "affixed at the end" is a long way of saying "suffixed," and is completely accurate and definitive. However, to say "the subject pronoun of the qatal [is] the affix" is accurate, but not definitive, since the affix could be at the beginning, middle, or end of the verb. The only position of these three that is used for the qatal is the end. Accordingly, "the subject pronoun of the qatal is the *suffix*." Similar emendation is needed wherever Rocine uses "affix" instead of "suffix." when referring to the qatal form.

4.3e. The null symbol (∅) is the standaerd symbol used by linguists to denote the lack of something like a suffix.

Lesson 5

5.1a. I find the precise Israeli usage hard to pin down. At least some speakers use /u-le-'a-DAM/. We will use that pronunciation, since this clearly distinguishes the three parts in the word, the וּ + לְ + אָדָם, conjunction plus preposition plus noun.

Footnote 1 (p. 21): For *ul-e-a-DAM* read *u-le-'a-DAM*.

The significance of the qatal (5.2) *and* X-qatal (5.3) (p. 21–24).
If the following is too long tedious, or boring, see the "Executive Summary" below.

   We will deviate slightly from Rocine's suggested translation in these two sections, and follow "the road generally taken" instead of "the road less traveled" (Rocine's phrase in footnote 2, page 21).

   Before critiquing Rocine's presentation, one must give credit to Rocine for attempting to differentiate between the X-Qatal construction and the wayyiqtol construction. These are certainly two different verbal constructions, and so *might* therefore serve different discourse functions. Most translations make little or no distinction between these two constructions (other than giving emphasis to the fronted element), so any attempt to see if there is a difference between the two is welcome.

   I offer the following three critiques of Rocine's approach:

   (1) Just because there are two different verbal constsructions does not mean that they must serve different functions. There is no doubt *some* difference between the two, but one cannot say a priori that the functions are ddifferent. One must see how the verbal constructions are used, and then draw conclusions from their usage.

   (2) Rocine bases his understanding of the construction on its use at an earlier stage of the Hebrew language. However, we are reading biblical Hebrew, not early inscriptional Hebrew or archaic Hebrew. The use of the construction in an older stage of Hebrew is informative, but by no means forcces us to see that usage as biblical Hebrew usage. Even if the X-qatal construction can at times be translated as indicated by Rocine, making the minority translation value the only recognized one does not do justice to the language. No language allows pigeonholes to restrict its usage.

   (3) Even if it is correct to read the X-qatal construction in general as specifiying an attribute, this does not provent one from using a verbal construction. Using our lesson verse as an example, if God is a sayer, but does not say anything, what does the attribute of "sayer" mean? God must say something. The translation *in abstracto* is one thing, but in context, it is rather awkward: "And to Adam God was a sayer: 'Because you listened to the voice of your wife . . .'"

   (4) That rather awkward translation brings us to the final problem, which resides in Rocine's statement about translation versus understanding. He states (p. 22): "Fortunately, our main concern in this course is *understanding* Biblical Hebrew, not *translating* it. Therefore, we can 'talk our way to the concept.'" If one's *understanding* of the language is stated in such a way that the resulting English statement requires translation before one understands exactly what is being said,

then the original statement cannot be called either an understanding or a translation. (I had originally followed Rocine's advice to wait and see how the concept dveloped in the book until I got to section 27.3c , and found what I consider a particularly obtuse "understanding." Rocine calls the translation there "merely a tool to facilitate discussion," but if I have trouble understanding the statement, discussing it becomes difficult or impossible.)

Executive Summary

For the "road generally taken," I refer you to Matthew H. Patton and Frederic Clarke Putnam, *Basics of Hebrew Discourse: A Guide to Working with Hebrew Prose and Poetry*, edited by Miles V. Van Pelt, Zondervan Language Basics (Zondervan Academic, 2019). Patton writes that the X-qatal construction generally "continues the current discourse mode (foreground or background)" (p. 91). Thus, in our case, the construction continues the historical narrative mainline.

Of the several discourse functions the construction offers, two stand out: Contrast: The clause "predicates something that differs pointedly from a foregoing clause" (p. 91); and Addition: The clause "says that the predication in the previous clause also applies to another entity. A gloss of 'what is more' or 'moreover' often captures the transition" (p. 92). Both Eve and Adam received punishment for their sin, but not in the same way as the serpent ("cursed are you"). Or, what is more, both Eve and Adam received the consequences of their trespasses; not only was the deceiver-in-chief punished, but those who had been deceived were also punished.

Accordingly, we will reinterpret Rocine's translation rule on page 23: RULE: When we find X-V word order in a Biblical Hebrew clause use the following construction for translation:

(And) It was (Fronted "X" element) who (that) (Remainder of clause).

Instead of using an *attribute* as the "remainder of clause," we will use a past tense verb (as a continuation of the historical narrative). In our case, we would have

And it was to Adam that he *said*.

or more simply

And to Adam he *said*.

instead of

And it was to Adam that he *was a sayer*.

The "And" could be (and normally *should be*) changed to "But" or "Morever" or any other word to convey the connection between the X-qatal construction and the preceding narrative.

Rocine noted in footnote 2 on p. 21 that "most grammarians hold that the qatal is the simple past tense of Biblical Hebrew, equal in meaning to a wayyiqtol." We have arrived at a translation with which most grammarians would agree. Our

translation of the qatal here as past tense parallels our translation of the qatal in a dependnt clause.

This change will affect every translation of the qatal and X-qatal that Rocine provides. Consider that this is the coase—I do not provide notes on any more translations of this type.

Lesson 6

6.3. "Topicalization" is indeed a function of the X-qatal construction, but it is incomplete. It does not say *how* the topic is to be considered. Is this (1) a completely new topic or scene, or (2) a focus on a specific person, time, or manner as the current narrative continues, or (3) a focus on background material that interrupts the narrative?

For the example of Abram and Lot in Gen. 13:12, Rocine notes that the X-qatals "elaborate on the preceding wayyiqtol about the separation of the men." That is precisely the function of the X-qatal here. "Expansion" is one of the possible discourse functions of the X-qatal: "An expansion provides more detail about the ideas expressed in the preceding clause" (*Basics of Hebrew Discourse*, 95). The two X-qatals expand on how the two separated themselves, one settling in Canaan and one in the cities of the plain (and these can certainly be seen as actions by the two men).

In the case of Gen. 22:1 (and Gen. 1:1), the X-qatals initiate a new episode (and thus, of course, interrupting the flow of any preceding wayyiqtols), with the "topicalization" stating the focus of the new episode.

6.4b. Note that Rocine has omitted a "כִּי" from the beginning of the lesson's verse—which changes your translation.

Lesson 8

Lesson verse. Although Rocine calls the verse "your first entire Bible verse," it weas actually the verse in lesson 2 that was the first entire Bible verse (see notation on lesson 2).

8.4b. The translation is not only a matter of what fits the context. The Masoretic "punctuation marks" (*te'amim*) show that they considered the two verbs connected ("they went and they did"), followed by the subject, in parallel with *both* verbs. The Masoretic marks thus coincide with the "preferable" translation.

We will begin learning about the *te'amim* in lesson 15, as we begin reading

actual preicopes from the Bible.

Lesson 10

10.3a. Wayyiqtol of hollow or second ‬י‪ ‬ו‪ ‬וֹ‪ verbs—for ‬י‪ read ‬יִ‪ (and also in the rule).

10.3a. Another designation of this group of verbs is "biconsonantal." This term notes the fact that there are only *two* consonants in the root; the middle consonant, the second root letter, is always a *vowel*. However, to be consistent with all the other verbs in the language, it is customary to give the root with the middle vowel, so that we still have three *letters* in the root.

10.4c. Based upon the description of the situation in the book, determine the best (or at least a possible) discourse function of this X-qatal clause.

10.4d. Rocine mentions here for the first time that the lexical form of most verbs is the third masculine singular qal qatal form. In connection with the note on 10.3a, biconsonantal roots are listed with the middle vowel. This form is the infinitive construct of the verb, a form we have yet to study.

Lesson 11

11.2a. There is no need to translate ‬וַיְהִי‪. Patton in *Basics of Hebrew Discourse* says, "Although older translations render ‬וַיְהִי‪ as something like 'and it came to pass,' it does not need to be translated. The phrase 'at that time' [the phrase is Gen. 38:1, the verse given as an illustration] can be made in English to directly modify the following clause, thus making one clause in English out of two clauses in Hebrew" (p. 71).

     In other words, when we start a new unit or indicate a shift in time, we ordinarily simply start the new unit, or indicate the change in time. English discourse does not usually need to mark that transition with a special word(s).

11.2b, ‬היה‪ should not be classified as a triply weak verb. The first letter is a guttural, making this a I-Guttural verb (which we have yet to study). The first guttural letter can affect the vowels in the stem, but the letter itself will always remain; it does not disappear as often happens with a letter in other weak verbs. The middle letter of ‬היה‪, ‬י‪, is a *consonant*, not a vowel (as it would be in a biconsonantal [hollow] root, which we introduced in the last lesson). In almost every form of the verb the ‬י‪ appears with its *consonantal* value, not morphing into an [i]

vowel. (The exception is in the shortened yiqtol, seen here in the wayyiqtol, but also seen in the jussive, where the dropping of the final ה leaves the י as the final character; since biblical Hebrew does not have "y" as a final letter, the letter becomes a vowel. However, these anomalous forms do not make היה a biconsonantal root.) Accordingly, the verb is only doubly weak, in the first and third root letters.

11.2c, last paragraph. The use of וַיְהִי in Genesis 1:3 is *not* the same as וַיְהִי as a discourse marker. In the latter case, it is usually follwed by a temporal phrase that inidicates the time for the new unit, or the shift in time of the current unit (see *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* for the use with a noun, in which case it can indicate result). In Genesis 1:3, וַיְהִי is used with the noun אוֹר (light). This is a *normal wayyiqtol*: "And then there was light." (See also summary chart of discourse analysis.)

11.3b.
Note that Rocine (following Longacre in the work cited in the footnote) is using the term *irrealis* in a completely different way than it is used in linguistics. In linguistics, the irrealis moods are those grammatical moods that express doubt, uncertainty, hopefulness, or any other in which the speaker does not know whether or not what he expresses has actually happened or will happen (examples of these moods: subjunctive, jussive, imperative, and optative). *Realis* moods, on the other hand, express a statement of fact; the chief realis mood is the indicative. From this linguistic perspective, stating that something is not true is stating what is known. If the narrator did not know whether or not Isaiah had gone out (he thought that the had, he hoped that he had, he wished that he had, he doubted that the had, etc.), then one would have an irrealis mood. Simply adding the negative adverb to an indicative verb does not make it irrealis—it remains indicative, that is, with the realis mood.

 That Rocine is using the term *irrealis* with this nonstandard meaning can be confirmed in the next section, "Discourse Profile of the Historical Narrative," where he gives as the last level in his profile (just before 11:4b) "**Irrealis scene setting**: Negation of any verb by לֹא." Rocine does not introduce any (linguistic) *irrealis* verb forms until lesson 24, when he introduces the imperative, jussive, and cohortative (which he does not, of course, call *irrealis*, since he has already used that term for another purpose).

 The **Rule** should then be restated as "The conversion of any verb to *its negative*, that is, . . . "

11.4a. One should not not consider any of these categories as pigeonholes into which the specific construction *must* go. In Joshua 2, there are several wayyiqtols that give

background information, interrupting the forward mostion of the mainline. Accordingly, even though they are wayyiqtols, we would have to put this into Rocine's category 3 or 5. Similarly, some X-qatal constructions move the maninline forward, so we should put those into Rocine's category 1.

11.4a. With the note above on 11.3b, we should rename category 6 as "Negative scene setting: Negation . . ."

     Do note give this section much consideration. We will return to it in the next lesson, as Rocine provides the final discourse profile for module one.

11.5b. As noted above in 8.4b, the *te'amim* give some indication of how to "chunk" the words in a verse. These *te'amim* do not, however, provide a perfect solution to the problem. Knowledge of Rocine's process to group words is also necessary.

11.5c. The combination of a discourse marker, designation of time, and what then happened is quite common—but not with the verbal forms in this verse. Typically, following the וַיְהִי is a statement of the time (we are reading the וַיְהִי with the discourse function of "shift in time (but the same unit)." In such a case, the time marker is something like "at that time" or "when David came to Mahanaim," with a preposition כְּ or בְּ. This is then followed with a wayyiqtol, giving the even that happened at that time. (For examples, see translation exercises 11.6b, numbers 2 and 5; or numbers 3 and 4, where only the "when" clause is given.) Here, *neither* of the standard formulations appear.

     We have, nevertheless, an indication of time, followed by the event. The time is not stated with a "when," so we have to supply it: "When Isaiah had not gone out." The context indicates that Isaiah is leaving the king, so we need to supply a "yet": "When Isaiah had not (yet) gone out." Once we get that far, the rest falls into line: "the Word of Yahweh came to him." Altogether, we have "When Isaiah had not yet gone out, the Word of Ywhweh came to him." Alternatively, one can translate as the *ESV* has it; "Before Isaiah had gone out, . . ."

LESSON 12

12.2a. Since both the ḥolem and the ḥolem dot are pronounced [o], the rule can also be stated, "The sign of the participle in the Qal stem is an [o] vowel after the first root letter."

12.2b.
Rocine here refers to participles as verbal nouns (without using that terminology).

In 12.2d, Rocine notes that a participle can function as a verb, noun, *or* adjective. Thus, it might also be considered a verbal adjective. Most grammarians prefer to consider the participle as a verbal adjective. The infinitive (introduced in 16.4a) can be translated as a verb or a noun, but never as an adjective. Therefore, grammarians usually refer to the infinitive as a verbal noun. You may prefer to call the participle a "verbal adjective" instead of a "verbal noun," in order to keep the distinction between participles and infinitives clear in your mind.

12.2d. See note above on 12.2b.

12.2d. The participle in the phrase אִישׁ יוֹצֵא can be interpreted as a verb, giving "a man was going out." It could *also* be translated as an adjuective, giving "a man who was going out" or "a man going out." Context alone will tell you which is correct. (Here we see the participle not quite knowing whether it is a verb or an adjective.)

12.2f. The footnote to the rule at the bottom of page 58, which calls the rule "somewhat of an oversimpliciation," would seem to be corroborated by the lesson's Bible verse itself, where the action of the partciple seems to be an integral part of the mainline.

12.3.
With this chart, expanded from the one in lessson 11, we have to ask whether syntax alone can determine how a clause is used in biblical Hebrew. This chart would seem to indicate that, if you know only the form of a clause, you can identify its function. That is simply not the case (fGary A. Long, *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Hebrew,* 2nd ed.[Baker Academic, 2013], 177):

> When working with discourse, you must realize that the functions of syntax, linguistic semantics, and pragmatics merge together in written representation. Truly grasping the conveyance of meaning comes by understanding the interrelation of these functions for a particular language.

We must pay attention to more than syntax (word order, what forms of words are used). We must also understand the semantics (what the words mean), as well as pragmatics (how the words are used).

I will first illustrate this with an English example, then move to Hebrew. When Dr. Gieschen says at commencement, "The candidates for the degree of Master of Arts in Deaconess Studies will please present themselves," he is (1) not telling the audience what is about to happen (syntax, future tense, a statement about the future) or (2) not drawing attention to the students presenting themselves (semantics, what the words mean). Instead, he is (3) making a polite request to the students to stand up and line up (pragmatics, the actual *purpose* of the statement).

We can certainly understand some of these concepts in Hebrew that show that syntax alone can determine where a clause falls in this scenario. For example, even given that a participle can give backgrounded information, the participle in our lesson verse is modifying a noun that is the direct object of a verb. It is not a separate thought from the first part of the sentence, but completes the mainline verb that has introduced the verse. We cannot simply consider the syntax, citing "form, particple, thus backgrounded information."

The presence of a wayyiqtol cannot, in and of itself, determine the mainline historical narrative. In Joshua 2, there are several wayyiqtols that give background information, interrupting the forward mostion of the mainline. If one did not read these wayyiqtols as referring to events in the past, one would have the ludicrous story of Rahab hearing the order from the king, then hiding the men, then teelling the king's messenger that she had seen them but they went away, then she brought the men to the roof and hid them under stalks of flax. The *semantics* of these verbs do not allow us to see all the wayyiqtols as "and then" clauses.

There are also some logical problems with the scheme. According to the scheme, negative scene setting stops the forward motion dead, but a wayyiqtol keeps it moving forward. Accordingly, "he offered him something to drink, but he would not take it" stops the story dead, but "he offered him something to drink, but he refused" keeps it moving forward. How can this be? Semantically, we have very similar statements.

In summary: the chart is a nice attempt to systematize our understanding of Hebrew discourse so that we aren't left with personal ideas ("well, in my opinion, this shows …"). Ultimately, however, the profile is too simplistic (in my opinion, but also Gary Long's statement above) to be of any help in understanding Hebrew narrative discourse. Use your understanding of Hebrew grammar and syntax, semantics of words, and what people are trying to do in a given situtation to determine how the discourse flows. Distinguish foreground from background, but otherwise let the text itself speak to telll you how to connect clauses and how to translate the words.

12.4a. Do not be too concerned about this section. Some of these are impossible to determine without more context (in my opinion).