The Polar Question and the Syntax and Semantics of the Verb in Biblical Hebrew: Genesis to Deuteronomy

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1. Introduction

1.1. The generative analysis of the verb in Biblical Hebrew (BH) proposed in DeCaen (1995, 1999) rests on two pillars: the basic syntax is verb-second (V2); and the finite verb form encodes temporal deixis (Tense) in opposition to the tenselessness of conventional wisdom. Complications arise when the verb is raised to the Complementizer (C) to mark various modal distinctions.

1.2. DeCaen (1995: §6.6, pp. 193-197) identifies three environments in which to test this theory of syntax and semantics against the entire biblical corpus: (a) in direct speech (p. 195); (b) in combination with temporal modifiers (p. 196), e.g., māḥār “tomorrow” and təmōl “yesterday”; (c) and in subordinate clauses (pp. 196f).

1.3. The environment of direct speech can be restricted further to all and only polar (yes/no) questions. In the environment of the polar question, the Reichenbachian moment of speech $S$ (Reichenbach 1947) is absolutely fixed at the exact time of the utterance of the question. Moreover, the mood defaults for realis. Thus all complicating factors of verb-movement and of semantics and pragmatics should be excluded, and the essential syntax and semantics of the verbal system should obtain.
1.4. The generative analysis of the syntax and semantics\(^4\) of the verb in Biblical Hebrew (BH) outlined in DeCaen (1995, 1999) is based on the clause structure in (1).

(1)

```
&P
&'
& CP
&
C'
C
TP
XP\(_i\)
T'
T
VP
...
```

The verb must rise to Tense (T); and some XP must rise to spec-TP under obligatory topicalization. The verb may then rise to C under certain conditions: typically to realize modal features, including—crucially—those involved in modal coordination (the so-called “consecutive” construction), but also in subordinate constructions. Spec-CP is a base-generated *casus pendens* with an obligatory coindexed pronoun appearing in VP.\(^5\) (Spec-&P plays a special role in modal coordination—the so-called “consecutive” phenomenon—and is of no interest in the present study).
1.5. In BH, the polar question is headed by the complementizerḥā (on the complex phonology of this particle, see the Appendix). DeCaen (1995, 1999) makes clear predictions regarding this environment of the polar question.

- Only two forms of the finite verb can appear: qaṭālāhû and the indicative yiğṭəlēnnû; the short modal yiğṭəlēhû is excluded.6
- Verb-second (V2) word order will always obtain in the main clause.
- Verb-first (V1) word order will always obtain where theḥā functions as a subordinating conjunction (“whether”).
- The qaṭālāhû form spells out the privative feature [past], ensuring that the translation is always Ved, did V, has Ven, etc.
- The true present is realized as the active participle qōṭəlô encoding the privative feature [progressive] (cf. Modern English), or else by a verbless clause.

1.6. At first blush, these predictions fail rather badly. Accordingly, we can either abandon the strong claims of DeCaen (1995, 1999) or pursue them with the expectation of learning something of value. Either we will discover that the data can and should be analyzed in a way consistent with the thesis, or we will have to revise that thesis considerably. In either case, we will learn something about BH. “Without a strong claim, we would have no particular reason to question, or examine more closely, an analysis which might be either wrong or very important ...” (Cowper 1992: 22).

1.6. Depending on how they are counted, there are more or less 750 tokens of polar ḥā in the Hebrew Bible. The scope of this study is limited to the tractable 115 tokens of the five books of Moses: Genesis to Deuteronomy.7 The problem of the compounding associated with ḥā is analyzed in §2 as a preliminary, and resumed in §4. The apparent contradictions in the semantics (§3) and the syntax (§4) are then analyzed in a way that is consistent with DeCaen (1995, 1999). We do in fact learn something interesting about BH (§5).
2. Morphology

2.1. The most common compound of ḥā is with the negative particle lō’: ḥālō’8 (“is it not the case?”; cf. Latin nonne) analyzed in (3). That this is in fact a compound is necessitated by the otherwise inexplicable distribution of the negative lō’.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C} \\
| \quad | \\
C \\
| \quad | \\
hā \\
lō’
\end{array}
\]

2.2. The distribution of ḥālō’ is not trivial. On average, the ratio of instances approaches one-quarter (26/115). Thus 1/4 cases of the progressive participle (25%) and 10/37 cases of verbless clauses (27%) are consistent with the average. However, ḥālō’ appears with qēṭālā́ḥū an unexpected 11/25 times (44%), yet only 2/31 (6%) with yiqṭəlénnū. This asymmetry in the scope of lō’ cries out for analysis, but such would go beyond the scope of the present study. Moreover, the count in subordination (0/11) also suggests we are missing a significant generalization.

2.3. The unifying generalization is that all particles at the head of the clause conform to the compound schema set forth in (3). The schema embodies two strong claims to pursue: at most there can only be two such particles in a clause; and second, those particles must appear together in a left-headed compound complementizer.
2.4. The list of putative compound complementizers is as follows. (Notice in passing that hākî/kî hā is limited here to Genesis, and that ha’ap is further limited to Gen 18.)

- haʿim
  - Num 17:28,8
- haʿap
  - Gen 18:13,10; 18:23,4; 18:24,7
- hāṭèrem
  - Ex 10:7,18
- hāyeš
  - Gen 24:23,8; 43:7,11; 44:19,6; Ex 17:7,15; Num 13:20,7
- hākî
  - Gen 27:36,2; 29:15,4; N.B. kî hā Gen 50:19,7

3. Semantics

3.1. Regarding yiqṭəlé nnû, it is predicted that, as in Modern English, it will exclude the true present, which in turn will be realized as the progressive participle, again as in Modern English, or simply as a verbless clause. Of 33 tokens, 5 exceptions do not exclude the true present (15%). However, all 5 tokens happen to be instances of lexical statives.

- √ykl “to be able” Gen 41:38, Num 22:37, 22:38
- √qṣr “to be small” Num 11:23
- niphal-denominative of √p̄l “wonder”

It is not unreasonable to exempt the lexical statives in order to preserve the generalization.

3.2. Similarly, out of 28 tokens of qəṭālāḥû, 4 of the 5 exceptions that are not read as past tense belong to the class of lexical statives.

- √qr’ + šēm “to be called” Gen 27:36
- √yd` “to know” Gen 29:5, Gen 44:15
- niphal of √hšb “to regard”
Again, it is not unreasonable to exempt lexical statives here from the generalization. Furthermore, it is not a coincidence that the unaccusative niphal binyan appears in both lists.

3.3. The chink in the armour of the thesis, therefore, is lexical semantics (Aktionsart) and the way the lexical representation interacts with grammatical tense and aspect. The present study highlights the urgency of finding such an account. The framework of Travis (2010) and the theory of an articulated VP provides the generative basis on which to pursue this research programme.

3.4. To conclude, among the 61 tokens of the finite verb there is only one true exception: the form 'āmar (Num 23:19) is not read as past tense, but rather as a generic present in the poetic passage in (4). The conjoined dibber behaves in the same fashion. The generic present is forced not just by context, but specifically by the parallelism of the poetry. What is required is an activity composed of iterative achievements.

(4) lō’ ʾīš ʾēl wīkazzēb
not man God that-he-lies
God is not a man, that he should lie,

ūben ʾādām wāyitneḥām
nor-son-of man that-he-changes his mind
nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.

hahû’ ʾāmar wəlō’ yaʿāshēh
he? he-speaks and-not he-acts
Does he speak and then not act?

wədibber wəlō’ yəqīmennā
or-he-promises and-not he-fulfills-her
Does he promise and not fulfill?
3.5. It just so happens that the two qəṭālā́ hû forms are ambiguous in the consonantal text. In fact, they just happen to be identical in the 3ms with the ms participle in an unpointed text. Thus the simple expedient of repointing the forms as the participles ’ōmēr and dōbēr both saves the hypothesis and supplies the correct semantics at the same time: the participles represent activities. Accordingly, it is predicted that other apparent exceptions of qəṭālā́hû not read as past tense will always involve such ambiguous forms that can be repointed as participles.

4. Syntax

4.1. There are 56 instances of the polar question with a finite verb form in the main clause. It is predicted that V2 syntax will obtain in 100% of these cases. But of the 56 tokens, V1 obtains in 19 cases: an alarming 34%. At first blush, this suggests there is something seriously wrong with the V2 hypothesis.

4.2. To save the hypothesis, there must be a phonologically null XP that is moving to spec-TP as the mandatory topic. In this light, we should recall that BH is a pro-drop language. Indeed, of the 19 apparent violations, a remarkable 16 do not have an overt subject: a significant generalization that begs for an explanation. Accordingly, the structure in (5) is posited as the explanation of those 16 tokens.
4.3. The prediction, then, is that where V1 is found in constructions such as the polar question, close to 100% of the instances will have a phonologically null subject (pro). The consequence is that many more surface-V1 strings should be analyzed elsewhere throughout the biblical corpus as V2 with topicalized pro. The research question then becomes: given that pro-drop can eliminate the distinction between V1 and V2, how is word order disambiguated? Surely the default is V2 (indicative); but then how is V1 (verb movement to C) identified where the morphology fails to disambiguate?

4.4. The crux is the three instances of true V1 (verb movement to C): Gen 18:14,1; Deut 4:33,1, 4:34,2. Ex hypothesi there must be some sort of modal feature that is driving Move-α. The expectation is that these three instances all involve the same sort of special reading; and that appears to be the case. The translation certainly suggests a hitherto unidentified sort of quantification with scope over TP. Moreover, the disjunction hā ... òhā ... instead of the expected hā ... ‘im ... strengthens the suspicion that something unique is going on here.
4.5. Accordingly, to save the hypothesis let us posit some head Q bearing the modal feature F as in (8), consistent with the generalized schema posited above in (3).

The exact specification of F becomes a research question; but the expectation is that it is not restricted to this one isolated use. This also predicts that any other particle is excluded from the clause in principle, since Q is already occupying the only available slot. It is no coincidence, on this view, that the ubiquitous hālō’ does not appear here; and it is predicted that nothing ever will.

4.6.1. DeCaen (1999) treats the verbless clause as a special case of (1): there happen to be no features at T requiring the dummy verb √hyy “to be” to realize them. There remains nevertheless the mandated topicalization to spec-TP. *Ex hypothesi* there
can only be one XP between C and the overt subject of a verbless clause. This is true in 41 out of 43 verbless clauses. The two failures occur at Gen 31:14,6 and 43:6,8 and both involve the adverb `ôd “still, yet” appearing between C and the topicalized PP (logical subject) that precedes the grammatical subject NP (9)-(10): a verbless V3, as it were.

(9) hā`ôd lānū ḥēleq ...
    still? to-us share ...
    Do we still have any share ... ? (Gen 31:14)

(10) hā`ôd lākem `āḥ
    another? to-you brother?
    [by telling the man] you had another brother? (Gen 43:6)

4.6.2. One way out is to reduce `ôd to a particle X instead of a full XP, and posit instead the additional compound complementizer in (11). Thus, the nature and distribution of `ôd becomes an interesting question. This solution has the added bonus of eliminating anomalies elsewhere. In (12) and (13), the subject is otherwise the topic in the otherwise expected verbless string NP AP; making `ôd a particle unifies word-order facts. In adopting the analysis in (11), we predict that the word order will always be hā + `ôd + Topic throughout the biblical corpus, and that no other pre-verbal material may appear.

(11)  

```
  C
 / \
C  X
 / \n hā `ôd
```
(12)  **hā’ôd**  `ābikem  ḥay  
still?   father-of-you alive  
Is your father still living? (Gen 43:7,8)

(13)  **hā’ôd**  `ābî  ḥāy  
still?  father-of-me alive  
Is my father still living? (Gen 45:3,7)

4.6.3. The particle `ôd can host a pronominal clitic (grammatical subject). The 3ms `ôdènnû is found at Gen 43:27,10; and the 3mpl `ôdâm is found at Ex 4:18,17.

4.7.1. Subordination induces V1 structures (verb-movement to Comp) *ex hypothesi*. There are 11 cases of presumed subordination, but only 5 have a finite verb. Of these 5, only 1 is not V1 (Gen 18:21,4). This lone V2 is the crux.

4.7.2. By way of background, it should be explained that BH subordinate CPs come in two varieties, object and complement; and this syntactic distinction correlates with semantic and phonological distinctions. The best example is the CP headed by the complementizer kî; the syntactic distinction is given in (14) versus (15). The CP in (15) is adverbial and kî is interpreted accordingly; and this difference is realized phonologically as a pausal form of the verb (DeCaen 2011a, b). (The uninterpretable feature in (14) may as well be case, given the accusative construction.)

(14)  V1

(15)  V2

```
(14)  V1
   VP
   |
   V'  CP
   |
   V
```

```
(15)  V2
   VP
   |
   V'  CP
   |
   V
```
4.7.3. Thus one way out of the difficulty is to posit a structure such as (14) for the V1 structure with hā, and something like (15) for the V2 structure. This might work for the crux Gen 18:21,4; but then apparently fails in Ex 16:4,19 and Deut 8:2,20 which ought to then be V2, but are V1.

4.7.4. The following observations provide a solution. In Gen 8:8,6 in (16) where the CP is unambiguously the object of the infinitive, there is an overt subject and the accentual phrasing fails to signal pause; cf. Gen 24:21,4. This must be true V1. However, in Deut 8:2,20 in (17), the infinitive clearly has an overt object, the CP is accordingly a complement of some sort, and the accentual phrasing suggests a minor pause; cf. Ex 16:4,19. In the latter case, V2 is enforced ex hypothesi. However, there is no overt subject in the Ex 16:4 or Deut 8:2; and thus the pro-drop V2 analysis is again available.

(16) InfP
     /\   \\
    /  \   /
   Inf  CP
     /\   \\
    /  \   /
   C    TP
     /\  \
    /  \  /
   hā  T'
     /\  \
    /  \  /
   NP_i T
     /\  \
    /  \  /
   T    VP
     /\  \
    /  \  /
   ti  V'
     /\  \
    /  \  /
   V'' PP
     /\  \
    /  \  /
   V
(17) InfP
  \[ Inf \quad CP \]
  \[ Inf \quad PP \quad C \quad TP \]
  \[ hā \quad pro₁ \quad T' \]
  \[ T \quad VP \]
  \[ t₁ \quad V' \quad V \quad NP \]

(Deut 8:2,20; cf. Ex 16:4,19)
4.7.5. On this account, the exceptional V2 clause at Gen 18:21,4 is not necessarily exceptional, but appears in a structure similar to (17). The proposed analysis is given in (18).

(18) — Structure of V2 clause at Gen 18:21,4

4.7.6. We come full circle to the parallel with $kî$. In the case of BH $kî$, the syntax is reflected in translation as it is with Greek ὅτι: V1 as the conjunction “that”; V2 as causal “because, for that” (the difference is that in BH, in addition to the causal, a temporal reading “when” is also available). The prediction is that with $hā$ there is also some sort of distinction. There are too few tokens here to identify the exact semantic nuance for $hā$: this is left for further investigation.
5. Conclusion

5.1. By pursuing the strong claims of DeCaen (1995, 1999)—basic V2 syntax, temporal deixis—we have learned some things of value about BH that open up potentially valuable research projects. We have learned some apparent facts about BH morphology, semantics and syntax, and also Tiberian phonology.

5.2. Morphology (§2). The nature of and constraints on the complex complementizer (3) proposed here have empirical consequences that are worth exploring.

5.3. Semantics (§3). The tense model, as in fact any model, is vulnerable to the problems posed by lexical semantics (Aktionsart) (§3.3). The urgency of a generative analysis of lexical semantics is highlighted here. It is proposed to pursue the topic within the framework set out in Travis (2010). In passing, we noted the possibility of repointing to save the hypothesis that is also an empirical question (§§3.4-3.5).

5.4. Syntax (§4). The pervasiveness of the expected V2 masquerading as V1 is attributed to BH pro-drop; and this suggests that the phenomenon is much more pervasive elsewhere (§§4.2-4.3). Moreover, a new type of quantification is identified that triggers V1, and it is expected that this semantic distinction will show up elsewhere (§§4.4-4.5).

5.5. Subordination (§4.7). The analysis here emphasizes the many moving parts involved with subordinate CP. There is the syntactic complication of V2 masquerading as V1. There is the further syntactic distinction between object CP and complement CP, and the effects on verb-movement. The latter distinction presumably shows up in the phonology, as it does for the paradigmatic case of kì. How it is reflected in the semantics of hā is an open question.
5.6. Phonology (Appendix). A unique generative approach to the seemingly intractable morphophonological variation of hā raises new questions about gemination and vocalic phonemes with applications elsewhere in Tiberian phonology.
APPENDIX

The Morphophonology of Interrogative hă

A.1. Introduction. This note proposes a generative-phonological analysis to account for the variability and complexity of the phonological variants of the interrogative hă. The complexity is much greater than suggested by standard accounts (e.g., Gesenius 1910 [GKC]: §100i-n; Joüon 1923: §102i-o), which gloss over glaring exceptions to their overgeneralizations.

A.2. Problem. The problem in generative perspective can be stated as follows. The variants imply two different underlying forms: /CV/ and /CVC/. In the latter case—approximately 25% of tokens\textsuperscript{14}—the geminating behaviour is similar but not identical to that of the definite article haC /CVC/. In particular, the interrogative version lacks [round] reflexes associated with the definite article haC, the interrogative maC “what?”, and the conjunction waC of the so-called consecutive.

A.3. Solution. Accordingly, a generative analysis must explain (a) the apparent allomorphy and (b) the lack of expected [round] vowels. The contrast in (19) versus (20) constitutes one generative solution of the problem.

\begin{align*}
(19) \textbf{Definite article } hα & \quad (20) \textbf{Interrogative particle } hă \\
\begin{tikzpicture}
 \node (root) {$\sigma$};
 \node (cv) [below left of=root] {$C\ V\ C$};
 \node (h) [below left of=cv] {$h\ θ$};
 \node (a) [below right of=cv] {$h\ a\ n$};
 \node (c) [below of=cv, yshift=-1cm] {\textit{(C)}};
 \end{tikzpicture}
\end{align*}
A.4. Gemination. The source of gemination in Tiberian Hebrew (TH) is underdetermined: either the floating consonant as in (19), or the assimilation of /n/ to the following consonant in (20). Thus, the choice of /n/ here in (20) has no direct bearing on the facts of gemination; but it does have consequences.\(^\text{15}\)

A.5.1. Allomorphy. Specifically, the choice of /n/ to drive gemination provides an explanation of the allomorphy, signalled by the bracketed consonant in (20). The underlying /n/ explains the allomorphy in this way: we know that BH already exhibits a “moveable” /n/ in its verbal inflections, on par with the ancient Greek moveable /n/ and even the English indefinite article an versus a (DeCaen 2003a). Since the phenomenon is motivated independently elsewhere, it is not unreasonable to extend the “moveable n” phenomenon to the interrogative hâ.

A.5.2. Conditioning. On the basis of Greek, English, etc. and of the BH verbal nunation and similar phenomena, we expect that (a) the reduced variant /CV/ will be more frequent, and (b) the phonological conditioning of the full variant /CVC/ will be marked. The /CV/ allomorph does in fact appear 75% of the time, as expected. The /CVC/ allomorph appears “less frequently” (GKC §100l) before (a) a guttural and/or (b) a shwa-syllable. GKC characterizes the environment for /CV/ as preceding a “firm vowel” (§100k), and further notes that Lev 10:19,20 is indeed a true exception to this rule.

A.6.1. Underlying Vowels. There can be no doubt that a simple structuralist approach yields four phonemic low vowels in Tiberian Hebrew (DeCaen & Idsardi 1999), given in (21). This result follows from two principles: two words have different
vowels when (a) the vowels of the two words diverge in their realizations; and (b) such divergence in realizations cannot be explained by phonetic conditioning (§1.3).

![Diagram of vowels](/diagram.png)

(21)

A.6.2. Contrasting Low Vowels *e versus *a. DeCaen & Idsardi (1999) argue for phonemic splits of Semitic *e and *a. The distinction is subtle but real in Tiberian Hebrew. The contrast is observed in major pause: *e [a:] versus the [back] and [round] *a [ɔ:] respectively (see further Qimron 2006 on “pausal pataḥ”). The same rounding of *a is observed elsewhere, especially in an open syllable. The absence of [round] reflexes for the interrogative hā simply follows, then, from the different underlying TH vowel: /a/ versus /ɔ/.16

A.6.3. Reflex [ɛ:]. There is nothing in this account to rule out the reflex [ɛ:] of /a/ (18 times) where /ɔ/ is so realized. Rather it is expected (DeCaen & Idsardi 1999: esp. (14)).

A.7. Degemination. It is a commonplace that BH gemination is subject to late TH degemination in many environments. Thus a basic introduction to BH includes observations such as, “When a word begins with the syllables yə- and mə-, the definite article is usually ֵה ha- without doubling” (Lamdin 1971: §21). The degemination of interrogative hā is no different: whatever explanation works for the definite article will in principle work for the interrogative particle as well. (No doubt, the TH sonority scale (DeCaen 2003b) plays the determining role: a conjecture for further research.)
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BHL Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia
BHS Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
GKC Gesenius (1910)

ENDNOTES

1 Acknowledgements ...

2 Randall Buth on maxar!

3 The proposal in DeCaen (1995, 1999) is that [irrealis] is the marked privative feature at C; and that realis is the default interpretation in the absence of this privative feature.

4 For consistency and convenience only, glosses and translations are taken from The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament, edited by John R. Kohlenberger III (1987).

5 There are two instances of casus pendens in the database of 115.

\[
\text{wə'ım šārā, hābat tiš'ım šānā tēlēd pro,?}
\]

and-if Sarah daughther-of? ninety year she-will-bear

Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety? (Gen 17:17)

\[
\text{[wə'ākāltî haṭṭā't hayyôm], hay pro, yiṭab bə`ênê YHWH}
\]

if-I-ate sin-offering the day would-he-be pleased? in-eyes-of Yahweh

Would the LORD have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today? (Lev 10:19)

GKC §100n adds Job 34:31, Nehemiah 13:27, and Jeremiah 22:15, “where one or more words are prefixed for emphasis”.

6 The convention is to supply the 3ms form of the verb for neutral identification. Here the 3ms object suffix is added to distinguish the two so-called prefix forms. The same distinction can be drawn elsewhere, e.g., with certain classes of verbal roots such as final-weak, e.g., the root ūhyy: hāyâ versus the two prefix forms yihyeh (long indicative) versus yēhî ~ yəhî (short modal).

7 Genesis 3:11,8; 4:7,1; 4:9,11; 8:8,6; 13:9,1; 16:13,11; 17:17,8; 17:17,14; 18:13,10; 18:14,1; 18:17,3; 18:21,4; 18:23,4; 18:24,7; 18:25,15; 18:28,6; 19:20,13; 20:4,7; 20:5,1; 24:5,13; 24:21,6; 24:23,8; 24:58,5; 27:21,9; 27:36,2; 27:36,17; 27:38,5; 29:5,3; 29:6,3; 29:15,4; 29:25,13; 30:2,6,1; 30:15,3; 31:14,6; 31:15,1; 34:23,5; 34:31,2; 37:8,4; 37:10,16; 37:13,5; 37:32,13; 40:8,11; 41:38,5; 42:16,11; 42:22,5; 43:6,8; 43:7,8; 43:7,11; 43:7,20; 43:27,5; 43:27,10; 44:5,1; 44:15,9; 44:19,6; 45:3,7; 50:19,7;

Exodus 2:7,6; 2:14,8; 4:11,18; 4:14,6; 4:18,17; 10:7,18; 14:11,4; 14:12,1; 16:4,19; 17:7,15; 33:16,10,1;

Leviticus 10:19,20;


Deuteronomy 3:11,13; 4:32,22; 4:32,27; 4:33,1; 4:34,2; 8:2,20; 11:30,1; 13:4,18; 20:19,24; 31:17,19; 32:6,1; 32:6,9; 32:34,1.

8 The variant plene spelling hālô`i is of some interest. The masora magna lists twelve occurrences (Mm 27) that seem to come in rashes:

- Gen 4:7; 31:15; 34:23,5; 37:13,5; 40:8,11; 42:22,5; 44:15,9;
- Ex 33:16,10; Num 14:3,14; 22:30,5;
- Deut 32:6,9; 32:34,1.

Of interest here is that the Mm is contra textum at Deut 32:34,1, where the masora parva indicates that there is a “difference of opinion” regarding the correct spelling. I prefer the plene spelling for the sake of consistency in the poem of Deut 32.
Also of interest is the bizarre spelling †loh at Deut 3:11,13. On the one hand, it appears to be a phonetic spelling, expected in texts of later provenance or texts characterized by similar transmission errors; but on the other, it appears to an archaic spelling of ō#, though not motivated by an origin in *ēhû#.

The inverted order is somewhat unexpected, but it still conforms to the generalized schema in (3).

The problem of the de-adjectival verb √qṣr alternating with the adjective qāṣēr “short” raises the problem of lexical semantics from a different angle: what is the verb doing that the verbless clause cannot do? Notice that this problem is almost identical to the problem raised in DeCaen (1999): the alternation of the otherwise unmotivated prefix form of √ḥyy “to be” (yiḥeh) with the verbless clause. A unified analysis is preferable. “It is not clear whether morphological, syntactic, semantic, or pragmatically-discourse factors or, even more likely, some combination thereof, are responsible. Though a major issue, admittedly, it does not detract in any way from the explanatory power of a unified morphosyntactic and semantic model of Standard Biblical Hebrew” (p. 131).

In this regard, it is worth drawing two analogies. First, this problematic behaviour is well attested in many languages, including many non-standard dialects and creoles of English. Whatever analysis works for such languages presumably works here mutatis mutandis. Second, there does seem to be some interpretable feature in cases where the verb surfaces, and it is analogous to what is encoded in English by the modal auxiliaries. In this light it would not be unreasonable to add some feature [aux] to the bundle at the Tense head, accounting for the distinction.

The frequencies are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hā</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ha</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hə</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hā'ā</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 750

hā: 1K 20:13,13; Job 38:12,1; 39:20,1. BHS mltt Mss Edd [including Aleppo]; BHL corrects.

hā = definite article: Num 16:22,10 hāʾīš; BHS Samaritan reads היה יִשׂ; l sic vel ‘א יִשׂ;
Deut 20:19,24 hāʾādām: BHS notes Greek μὴ ἄνθρωπος = הָאָדָם (ני interrocativum).

GKC notes two further cases of the hā interrogative appearing as the definite article, Ecclesiastes 3:21 bis; and he adds that “the article is a correction due to doctrinal considerations” (§100m).

BHS cf. Vrs.

The proposal here of an additional sonorant triggering gemination is hardly original. As GKC notes, “This Hē interrogativum is perhaps shortened from הָле, which is still used in Arabic, and, according to the view of a certain school of Masoretes, occurs also in Hebrew in Dt 32.6”. Deut 32:6,1 חֲלִי לָהָיִשׁ vel חֲלִי לָהָיִשׁ. However, hl/ is preferred over lh/ in light of biblical gemination and deletion.

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<ask Khan: what “certain school of Masoretics”?>
Joüon (1923) explicitly argues for *hā and against gemination—despite admitting that “On trouve toutefois quelques exemples de consonne redoublée” (§102|$l$)—based on the absence of ā [ɔː] as a reflex before gutturals. “Devant une gutturale, s’il n’y a aucun redoublement, la voyelle est ā, qu’on n’a jamais avec le ṭ interrogatif” (§102|$o$). Therefore, there is no gemination with hā. Rather, “Ces mêmes voyelles brèves se trouvent également avec le ṭ interrogatif, mais pour une autre cause, à savoir le ralentissement de la prononciation” (ibid). It is left as a mystery how this new pausal phonology might work. It appears to be an ad hoc explanation for just this one particle.