

A tale of two clitics: Phonology in Biblical Hebrew morpho-syntax

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The talk will address two clitic families in Biblical Hebrew – the *h*-clitics and the *w*-clitics:

<i>h</i> -clitics		<i>w</i> -clitics		
<i>Definite</i>	<i>Interrogative</i>	<i>Conjunctive</i>	<i>Conversive</i>	
			Perf ⇒ Imperf	Imperf ⇒ Perf
hat ^ʕ טוֹב הטובה (Deut 4:22) ‘the good’	hă ^ʕ טוֹב הטובה (Num 13:19) ‘is it good?’	wə ʔomarti וְאָמַרְתִּי (Acc 9:16) ‘and I said’	wə ʔomartó וְאָמַרְתָּ (Gen 32:18) ‘and you will say’	waj jomár וַיֹּאמֶר (Gen 18:29) ‘and he said’

Historically, each clitic family has one ancestor, but synchronically they differ. Based on syntactic and functional properties, I will argue that the two *h*-clitic have different underlying representations, while all three *w*-clitics have one and the same underlying representation. In addition, I will provide an analysis of the morpho-phonological alternations in the clitics (Bat-El 1994,1995) within the moraic theory (Hyman 1985, Hayes 1989), accounting for alternations like those below:

<i>h</i> -clitics			<i>w</i> -clitics		
hă ^ʕ טוֹב	הטובה	‘is it good?’	wə ʕəʔdú	וְסָפְדוּ	‘and they will mourn’
hav רָצָה	הברכה	‘is it blessing?’	u vəθém	וּבְאָתֶם	‘and go’
			wi :ðastém	וַיִּדְעֶתֶם	‘and take possession’

Out of the two clitic families, the *w*-clitics are by far more intriguing, and their analysis leads to longstanding theoretical issues on the interaction between phonology and morpho-syntax, as well as on the nature of morphology – is it all about morphemes?

First, I will claim that the polarity rule ($V^{[\alpha \text{ Aspect}]} \Rightarrow w\text{-}V^{[-\alpha \text{ Aspect}]}$), which converts the verb’s aspect value, is underlyingly associated with the *w*-clitic. I will argue that the effect of the rule is found only in the conversive-*w*, and not in the conjunctive-*w*, due to the syntactic structure; the polarity rule is realized under the tense node but not under the conjunction node. In this context, I will allude to the debate know as Item-and-Arrangement vs. Item-and-process (Hockett 1954, Anderson 1992), to which the polarity rules in BH and elsewhere are most relevant – some morphemes are associated with a process and others are not a morpheme but just a process.

In addition to the polarity rule, there is a great deal of phonology associated with the conversive-*w*. When attached to a perfective verb, stress shifts to the end of the stem; and when attached to an imperfective verb, the clitic gains an additional mora. These two phonological rules apply when the *w*-clitic is under the tense node. However, even if we assume strata/phase, we need to add morphological information to the phonological rules since each rule is restricted to a particular aspect. That is, category-specific phonology (Anttila 2002, Ba-El 2008) is not only lexical but also phrasal, and the category is not only one of the four major lexical categories.

I will conclude by calling for further research on the interaction between phonology and morpho-syntax, with special attention to the limits of this interaction.