

THE PROGRESSIVE IN ARCHAIC BIBLICAL HEBREW AND THE ORIGIN OF THE HEBREW PARTICIPIAL PREDICATE¹

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(Received 11/10/2015; accepted 28/02/2016)

ABSTRACT

The article is a diachronic study of the Biblical Hebrew imperfect and active participle in predicate position in Archaic (ABH) and Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH). On the premise that the two forms developed along a progressive-imperfective diachronic path, the article looks for evidence of semantic change occurring between ABH and SBH. It is claimed that there is no evidence that the imperfect is the normal form for progressive meaning in ABH. Further, it is found that established models of diachronic pathways cannot explain all the uses of the participle, and that participial predicates probably stem from different source constructions. Whereas the progressive use has developed from attributive participles, some hymnic and proverbial uses may be based on substantivised forms. The substantivised constructions do not belong to the progressive-imperfective path, and can be old. The hymnic participial predicates in the Song of Hannah belong to this group.

INTRODUCTION

The meanings of grammatical forms change in similar ways across languages (Bybee et al. 1994:14–15; Heine and Kuteva 2007:57–114). On the basis of such similarities, it is possible to establish typologies of diachronic pathways, which can be used as tools for the diachronic study of individual languages.

Within the field of Hebrew studies, a possible application of diachronic typology is to examine to what extent it confirms the periodisation of Biblical Hebrew (henceforth BH) into different diachronic phases, such as Archaic, Standard, and Late

Author's note: This article was written as part of a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Hebrew at the University of the Free State.

Biblical Hebrew (henceforth ABH, SBH, and LBH, according to the terminology of Kutscher (1982:12).

One phenomenon that does confirm the periodisation as far as the distinction between SBH and LBH is concerned, is the increased use of the predicative active participle instead of the imperfect for general (non-specific) imperfective meaning in LBH as compared to SBH (Gordon 1982:11; Eskhult 2005:363; Joosten 2012:394–396; Cohen 2013:137–140; Bergström 2015:623–632).² This kind of shift in the division of labour is typical of forms evolving from progressive sources, as these forms have been said to do (Andersen 2000:45–50; Cook 2012:217–233).

A more difficult question is whether ABH reflects an earlier stage of the same development as compared with SBH. Evidence for that could be if ABH has more imperfects with prototypically progressive meaning than SBH. A problem in this regard is the lack of sufficient data, especially when it comes to the participle. It occurs very rarely as predicate in ABH texts, and most of the occurrences do not seem to reflect an early stage of the progressive path, but rather the opposite. The explanation for this fact may be that those participles do not reflect ABH usage, or else that the participial predicate does not fully conform to the diachronic typology of progressive verbal forms due to idiosyncrasies of the Hebrew language. Which of these explanations is correct is of some consequence for the understanding of ABH in general, and for the diachrony of the participial predicate in particular.

This article investigates whether there is evidence of a semantic evolution in the progressive subsystem from ABH to SBH from the point of view of diachronic typology, with special attention to the question of the origin of the participial predicate. The outline of the article is as follows: The section titled “The progressive-imperfective pathway” describes some general characteristics of the diachrony of progressives in relation to the use of the imperfect and the participle in SBH. The

² A note concerning terminology: the BH verbal forms have different names in different publications. Often, the model verb *qatal* is used. Here, I prefer the terms “participle” and “imperfect” (rather than *qotel* and *yiqtol*) since they are more informative from the point of view of linguistic typology. For consistency, I also use “perfect” for *qatal*, and so on. In some cases, where morphology is important, *yiqtol* etc. is used.

section “Pre-progressive stages and the origins of participial predicates” deals with differences that exist between different subtypes of progressives in the initial stage of the development due to the semantic and syntactic properties of the source construction. Theories of the origin of the participial predicates of Greek and Old English are presented. The section “From ABH to SBH” contains the investigation of the ABH data and the evaluation of the diachronic stage of the progressive subsystem in ABH as compared to SBH. Separate subsections are devoted to the imperfect and the participle. The subsection on the participle consists of three main parts: 1) the ABH data (“The use of the participial predicate in ABH”); 2) the standard account of the origin of the BH participial predicate (“The origins of the participial predicates — the equative source hypothesis”); and 3) an alternative account suggesting multiple origins for the construction (“Substantival sources — proverbial and hymnic participles” and “The attributive source”). The findings of the study are summarised in the last section of the article (“Conclusions”).

THE PROGRESSIVE-IMPERFECTIVE PATHWAY

The prototypical function of progressive forms is to represent a specific, dynamic, and transitory event as ongoing at a particular point in time, i.e., with imperfective aspect (Bybee et al. 1994:133, 136, 139; cf. the “focalised” progressive in Bertinetto et al. 2000:527, 533, 540). Over time, it develops into a general imperfective, which can refer to states as well as general non-specific events (e.g., habitual and generic meanings). Apart from that, it can also be used non-imperfectively as a narrative form (“historic present”), reportive present (e.g., in sports commentary), performative present, and a future/modal.³ If a new progressive develops within the same language, the old form may gradually lose its prototypical function and end up being used only in its newer functions. This has happened, for example, with the English simple present, which has ceded its original prototypical function to the present progressive,

³ Various aspects of the evolution of progressives are described in Bybee et al. (1994:147–148); Haspelmath (1998:49); Johanson (2000:92).

and retained the newer ones.

Similarly, in SBH the imperfect has by and large ceded the progressive function to the participial predicate, and is mainly used with future/modal or general meanings (see example (1a-b) below). Unlike the English simple present, it has preserved progressive meaning in some contexts, particularly in *wh*-questions (1c), exceptionally also in subordinate clauses (1d). On the other hand, it is only rarely used imperfectively with stative verbs (1e) outside negations (1f) and questions (1g). The performative use in (1h) is exceptional. A special use, which the imperfect shares with the English simple present, is kind of impressionistic, metaphoric kind of present which is neither an actual present nor a general present (1i). Thus:⁴

(1) a.

אֲנֹכִי אֵרֵד עִמָּךָ מִצְרָיִם

I **shall go** with you to Egypt. (Gen 46:4)

b.

אֵלִישָׁע הַנָּבִיא אֲשֶׁר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יַגִּיד לְמֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבֹר בְּהַחֲדָר מִשְׁכָּבְךָ

Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, **tells** the king of Israel the words you **speak** in your bedroom. (2 Kings 6:12)

c.

לָמָּה תִבְכִּי

Why **are** you **crying**? (1 Sam 1:8)

d.

לְכוּ אַחֲרַי וְאוֹלִיכָה אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּבְקְשׁוּן

Follow me and I shall lead you to the man you **are looking for**. (2 Kings 6:19)

⁴ For overviews of the use of the imperfect in BH, see e.g., Waltke & O'Connor (1990:§ 31.2–6.3); Joüon & Muraoka (2009:§ 113); Joosten (2012:265–287). The list in example (1) could be made much longer by including all the various subtypes of general and future/modal meanings. Some uses in the list are normally performed by means of other forms and are very rare with the imperfect, viz. (1d) (cf. Num 16:11; Judg 18:6; 1 Sam 11:15; Jer 6:4), (1e) (cf. Gen 41:27?; Gen 3:15), (1h) (cf. possibly Gen 29:35). Some of the usages in this example may theoretically not be imperfects, but “short *yiqtol*” forms (see note 15). As for the question of whether the imperfect can also have a narrative function, see the discussion following example 11.

e.

הִנֵּה תִרְאוּ אִישׁ מִשְׁתַּגֵּעַ

Look, you **see** that the man is mad. 1 Sam 21:14

f.

לֹא נוֹכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה

We **cannot** do this thing (Gen 34:14)

g.

הֲתִמְלִיךְ כִּי אָתָּה מְתַחַרֵּה בְּאַרְזֵי

Are you a **king** because you amass cedar? (Jer 22:15)

h.

אֲנֹכִי אֹשְׁבֵעַ

“I **swear**.” Gen 21:24

i.

יִחְלְקוּ בְּגָדֵי לָהֶם וְעַל-לְבוּשֵׁי יִפְּלוּ גֹרְלִי

They **divide** my garments among themselves and for my clothes they **cast** lot. (Ps 22:19)

The development of general meaning is of special interest for this study. When progressives begin to take on general meaning, they cannot immediately be used for all the different kinds of general meanings that exist. At first, they will probably be restricted to expressing habitual meaning with a connotation of transitoriness, such as the English progressive in Comrie’s example “We’re going to the opera a lot these days” (Comrie 1976:37).⁵ Of the general meanings, the genuinely habitual meaning, with or without the connotation of transitoriness, resembles the prototypical progressive meaning the most, because of its truth conditions. Just as with the progressive sentence, the truth of the habitual sentence depends on its actuality. That is, the habitual sentence requires that the event referred to by the verb actually occurs

⁵ Progressiveness are used for expressing transitoriness with lexically stative verbs as well as with habitual meaning in different languages, such as English (Comrie 1976:3), Romance (Squartini 1998:111), and Maltese (Ebert 2000a:765–766). In SBH, the participle is used with stative lexemes without being restricted to expressing transitoriness, for example with יָשַׁב “to live” (see, e.g., Gen 24:3; 24:37; Judg 4:2; 6:10; 10:1; 2 Kings 4:13), יָדַע “to know” (1 Sam 26:12; 2 Sam 17:10; 2 Kings 17:26; Joel 2:14), and אָהַב “to love” (Gen 25:28; 1 Sam 18:16; 2 Sam 13:4).


on a number of occasions, or else it is false (cf. Comrie's example). Further removed from the progressive prototype are other types of general predicates: the "quasi-habituals" and the generics. The latter are easily distinguished from the habituals by the fact that they have non-specific subject referents ("Lions roar"). Quasi-habitual predicates, on the other hand, are often just called habitual. But unlike the real habituals, their truth value depends on potentiality, not actuality. That is, in principle, they are true if the event may be repeated on a number of occasions. In this capacity, they designate properties or identities rather than habits, i.e., functions that are also often expressed with nominal predicates (cf. "John swims well" = "John is able to swim well"; "Anne designs clothes for a living" = "Anne is a designer").⁶

The development from specific to non-specific imperfective meanings via genuine habituals to quasi-habituals and generics can be understood as a shift from the expression of accidental conditions to the expression of more and more essential conditions; that is, from events that more or less "just happen" to states that "are" according to the nature of things.⁷ Accordingly, it is possible to get an indication of the diachronic stage of the language by looking at the imperfective forms to see what different meanings they express along a scale from accidentality to essentiality. Based on the general tendencies in how the imperfect and the participle are used in SBH, the situation can be summarised as per the following table:

⁶ The different truth conditions of different kinds of general meanings have been noted in several studies, e.g., Dahl (1975:106); Krifka et al. (1995:54); Bertinetto & Lenci (2012:871, 876).

⁷ My distinction between accidentality and essentiality resembles Calver's description of the distinction in meaning between the English progressive and simple present. According to Calver, the progressive indicates "mere occurrence" whereas the simple present says something about the "constitution of things" (Calver 1946:322–323). Unlike Calver, however, I apply my distinction only on imperfective uses. For a more detailed description of the diachronic shift from accidentality to essentiality in progressives, see Bergström (2015:608–617).

Table 1. The imperfectives from accidentality to essentiality in SBH

<p>a. <i>Specific progressive: the participle</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">את־אחי אֶנְכִי מִבְּקֹשׁ I am searching my brothers (Gen 37:16)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Accidental conditions</i></p> 
<p>b. <i>Habitual: the imperfect</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">הֲלוֹא זֶה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁתֶּה אֶדְנִי בּוֹ וְהוּא נֹחֵשׁ וְנֹחֵשׁ בּוֹ Is it not this [cup] that my master drinks from and also uses for divination? (Gen 44:5)</p>	
<p>c. <i>Quasi-habituals and generics: the imperfect</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">הֲלֹא אָחִירֶן אֶחִידָה הַלֹּוִי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־דַבֵּר יָדַבֵּר הוּא What about your brother Aron, the Levite? I know that he can speak. (Exod 4:14)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יִלֶק בְּלִשׁוֹנוֹ מִן־הַמַּיִם כַּאֲשֶׁר יִלֶק Everyone who laps the water with his tongue as dogs laps (Judg 7:5)</p>	

Summing up the argument of this section, both imperfects and participial predicates drifted historically from expressing accidental conditions to being used more and more for essential conditions. In SBH, essential conditions were expressed mainly by means of the imperfect, whereas the participle was the preferred form for accidental conditions. This means that, in any period preceding SBH, the chances of finding imperfects closer to the accidental pole of the scale should increase, whereas the chances of finding participles towards the essential pole should decrease. Apparent contradictions to this prediction are treated in the discussion around examples (14), (16)–(22) below.

PRE-PROGRESSIVE STAGES AND THE ORIGINS OF PARTICIPIAL PREDICATES

While the above description applies from the prototype stage and onwards, progressive constructions may also have a pre-history. Bertinetto et al., summarising the findings of the survey of European progressive forms undertaken within the Eurotyp-project, distinguish between the “focalised progressive” on the one hand, and the “durative progressive” on the other (Bertinetto et al. 2000:527). The former type is

a fully developed progressive, marked for the prototypical progressive function of representing an event as ongoing at a certain point in time (a “focalisation point”; Bertinetto et al. 2000:527). The latter is a kind of pre-progressive, which, in addition to the focalised meaning, is also often used with durative, habitual, and perfective meaning. According to Bertinetto et al. (2000:528–531), the great majority of progressive forms pass through a durative stage before becoming focalised progressives. Their main example of this kind of development is the Italian progressive *stare* + gerund- construction (Bertinetto et al. 2000:561–567). There is much historical evidence that the Italian construction has gone through a durative stage. Typologically, too, it makes sense, since the auxiliary *stare* is basically a postural verb with the meaning “to stand”, and it has been shown that this kind of construction is typically of the durative type (Ebert 2000b:625). However, the other evidence cited by Bertinetto et al. is less compelling. Thus, the Old English construction *be* + participle (*be* VERB-*ende*) and the corresponding Latin participial periphrasis were probably not durative progressives, as claimed by Bertinetto et al. (Killie 2014:373; Bentein 2013b:104), neither can they be considered as forerunners of focalised progressives. The development of a focalised English progressive construction is probably to a great extent a result of the rise of a prepositional-gerundial form (*be* + *in/at/on* VERB-*ing* [gerund]) which gradually blended with the participial periphrasis, and the Italian *stare* + gerund is clearly both syntactically and semantically different from the Latin participial periphrasis.⁸ Furthermore, Bertinetto et al. (2013:538–539) suggest that the prepositional-gerundial (*be* + *in/at/on* VERB-*ing* [gerund]) progressive type also goes through a durative stage before becoming focalised, but there seem to be little evidence to substantiate it. In fact, there are much stronger evidence that this kind of construction, which is by far the most common type of progressive, is focalised from the start.⁹

⁸ On the role of the prepositional-gerundial construction in the development of the English progressive form, see Killie (2014:380); Bybee et al. (1994:135–136). Others, however, maintain that the form should be derived from the Old English periphrastic participle (Ziegeler 2006:52).

⁹ This is confirmed by Ebert’s (2000b:614, 625) study of several modern Germanic

Thus, I concur with Bertinetto et al. concerning the possibility of “pre-progressive” stages, but I find it less likely that there is one pre-progressive stage common to all progressives. Normally, the various subtypes of a grammatical category are somewhat heterogeneous in the initial stage of grammaticalisation, due to the specific semantic and syntactic properties of the source constructions. Subsequently, as the forms develop more general grammatical meanings, there is a convergence (Bybee et al. 1994:15). For example, futures can have auxiliaries built on motion verbs (such as “be going to”) and deontic verbs (“shall”). The original meaning of the auxiliary affects the use of the respective construction, but this impact shifts from stronger to weaker during the transition from the pre-future to the future stage. The same should be the case with progressives.

The study by Bertinetto et al. raises interesting questions concerning the origin of the BH participial predicate. This type of progressive construction is not thoroughly described in its own right in typological studies. Bybee et al. (1994:128) mentions a few examples of progressive constructions with participles, which they analyse as “locative” constructions together with prepositional-gerundial forms, and forms with postural verbs as auxiliaries. By contrast, Heine lists a periphrastic participle as a separate type in his typology of progressive source constructions. He describes this type in terms of an “equation schema” as follows:

Table 2. Heine’s equation schema (adapted from Heine 1994:269):

Type of proposition:	Gloss:
“X is a Y”	He is (an) eat-ing (one) ¹⁰

However, as part of this group Heine counts constructions with postural verbs as auxiliaries, such as the Italian progressive mentioned above (Heine 1994:269). From

languages with highly focalised prepositional progressives, which are at a very early stage in their process of grammaticalisation. According to Killie (2014:380), the English prepositional-gerundial progressive, too, was “clearly focalised” from the beginning.

¹⁰ The English *-ing* form, being a conflated gerund/participle, is not perfectly suited to gloss this function.

the point of view of their semantic properties, it is problematic to treat the postural verb auxiliaries as mere copulas corresponding to the English “is”. Closer typological parallels to the BH form, then, would be forms like the above-mentioned participial periphrases of Old English and Latin, as well as the Greek periphrasis, on which the Latin form may have been modelled (Killie 2014:373). The only formal difference between the BH participial predicate and Indo-European ones is the lack of a copula in the former. Semantically, the difference is that the Indo-European forms mostly died out without ever becoming real progressives, but there is at least one exception, namely the Tsakonian imperfective form, which developed from the ancient Greek periphrasis (Browning 1983:33; Giannaris 2011:206). Thus, there are reasons to assume that a comparison with the Indo-European periphrastic type can potentially throw some light on the history of the BH participial predicate.

In a study on the origin of the Greek periphrasis with the present participle, Bentein (2013b:91) argues that the form probably developed from two different source constructions, namely a “copulative” and an “appositive” construction. In most cases, according to Bentein, the uses associated with the copulative construction have a stative, adjectival meaning, whereas those associated with the appositive construction have a progressive meaning. I give an example of each source in (4):

- (4) a. Bentein’s “copulative” source construction (2013b:87)

humin de tois alloisi Kadmeiois, hosois / tad’ est’ areskonth’, hē te summakhos Dikē / khei pantes eu ksuneien

But to all you, the loyal Cadmeans for whom these things **are acceptable [PTCP, lit. “pleasing”]**, may justice, our ally, and all the gods be gracious always. (Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus, 273–275)

- b. Bentein’s “appositive” source construction (2013b:75)

ēdē hyper polios, hothi Hermaios lophos estin, /ēa kiōn, hote nēa thoēn idomēn katiouan/es limen’ hēmeteron

I **was** now above the city, where the Hermean hill is, as I **went** on my way [lit. “**going** on my way”], when I saw a swift ship putting into our

harbour. (Homer, *Odyssey* 16.471–473)

In example (4a), *eimi* is really a copulative auxiliary and the participle is a predicate, but it has a stative, adjectival, rather than progressive, meaning. Because of the adjectival function, Bentein glosses the construction “*eimi* + adj”. It can be added, however, that the participle in copulative constructions also may have noun-like character, a fact that Bentein states more emphatically in another study (Bentein 2013a:21; cf. 2013b:80–81). Thus:

- (5) *hēgoumenos esti*
He is a leader (i.e., a leading one).

In example (4b), the verb *eimi* (“to be”) is not an auxiliary, but a main verb with a prepositional adverbial (*huper polios* “above the city”) determining the location of the subject referent, and the participle is a conjunct participle, that is, basically attributive, but with an adverbial, circumstantial, function.¹¹ In other words, the participle is not a predicate, but it could potentially be taken as such through reanalysis of the main verb as an auxiliary. In that case, the construction would be interpreted as “I was now walking above the city”. This is also what eventually happened in Greek, according to Bentein (2013b:88). As the conjunct participle is reanalysed into a main verb, it, too, gives rise to a copulative construction, which leads to a syntactic fusion of the diachronic pathways.

Similarly, the Old English participial periphrasis, according to Ziegeler (2006:50; following a hypothesis originally put forward by Nickel 1966), stems from three different sources. The first is a predicative adjectival participle [PTCP] formed on analogy with the predicative adjective [ADJ]:

- (6) hie wæron **blissiende** hie wæron **bliefle**
They were **rejoicing** [PTCP] They were **glad** [ADJ]

The second source is a conjunct participle that became reanalysed as predicative:

¹¹ I prefer to describe it as a conjunct participle rather than an “appositive” one. Genuinely appositive participles are cited in examples (21) and (22) below.

- (7) þa he on temple **wæs lærende** his discipulas
 He **was** in the temple, **teaching** his disciples > He **was teaching** his
 disciples in the temple.

The third source is a predicative agent noun in *-end* (singular)/*-ende* (plural) which was confused with the participle ending in *-ende*. The confusion was facilitated by the fact that some verbs in Old English take the genitive, which makes them resemble agent nouns [N] with an objective genitive, as in (8):

- (8) hie **wæron ehtende** [N/PTCP] cristenra monna
 They **were persecutors** of Christian men / They **were persecuting**
 Christian men

If these explanations of the origins of the Greek and Old English participial predication are correct, it is to be expected that similar developments may have occurred in Biblical Hebrew.

An important point to make here is that the various source constructions of the participial predicate span a similar conceptual trajectory as finite forms on the progressive-imperfective path. As progressive, it represents accidental conditions, and as adjectivised or substantivised participle it can represent more essential conditions (cf. the section “The progressive-imperfective pathway”).

This means that participial predicates can obtain essential meaning in several different ways: on the one hand, it may arise through the formation of the participle as predicate in analogy with nominal predicates (substantivisation and adjectivisation). On the other hand, if the participle becomes a progressive verbal form, essential meanings may develop along the progressive-imperfective diachronic pathway (Table 1). This may complicate the assessment of the diachronic status of certain usages of the participle in BH, as we shall see in the case of example (13) below.

FROM ABH TO SBH

The investigation of the ABH data in this article is based on the corpus delineated by Notarius (2013:2) in her monograph on the ABH verbal system. The following passages are included: Gen 49:2–27, Exod 15:1–18; Num 23:7–10, 18–24; 24:3–9, 15–19; Deut 32:1–43; 33:2–29; Judg 5:2–30; 1 Sam 2:1–10; 2 Sam 22:3–51 (with its parallel, Ps 18).

For the investigation of the origin of the BH participial predicate, examples are taken from various parts of the Hebrew Bible.¹²

The imperfect

In my view, there is no solid evidence that the imperfect is markedly more similar to a prototypical progressive in ABH than in SBH, despite some claims to the contrary. Thus, according to Joosten and Notarius, the imperfect in ABH is used for attendant circumstance in the past. Both authors cite the following passage as an example (Joosten 2012:418; Notarius 2013:81; 94–95):

(9)

מִצְאָהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִדְבָּר וּבְתֵהוּ לֵיל יִשְׁמֹן יִסְכְּבֶנְהוּ יְבוֹנֵנְהוּ יִצְרֶנְהוּ כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינָיו

He found him in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste; he **shielded** him, **cared** for him, and **guarded** him as the apple of his eye. (Duet 32:10)

In Joosten’s and Notarius’ interpretation, the first prefixed form in this line (מִצְאָהוּ) “he found him”) is a free-standing preterite, comparable to a consecutive *wayyiqtol*, whereas the next three prefixed forms are imperfects representing the attendant circumstances of the event referred to by the first clause. If this is so, however, the events of shielding, caring, and guarding must be seen as ongoing when the event of finding took place. *Pace* Joosten and Notarius, I find this implausible. Rather, the three mentioned events make up the next step in the course of events that starts with

¹² The text consulted is the Masoretic text of *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, as reproduced in the computer software *Biblia Hebraica* with Westminster Hebrew Morphology 4, provided by Accordance Bible Software.

the finding. Actually, they are not three distinct events, but one and the same, only described with different words. The aspect is aoristic.

Similarly, Notarius (2013:41) takes the verb יִכְסִימוּ in the following example as representing an attendant circumstance. The passage is here quoted in Notarius' rendition, with the addition of the preceding lines within brackets for fuller context:

(10)

יְהוָה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ מִרְכַּבַּת פְּרָעָה וַחֵילוֹ יָרָה בָּיָם וּמִבְּחַר שְׁלִישֵׁי טַבָּעוֹ בְּיַם־סוּף
תְּהַלְמַת יִכְסִימוּ יָרְדוּ בַמְצוֹלַת כְּמוֹ־אֶבֶן

[The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea; the best of his officers were sunk in the Red Sea.] The floods **were covering** them; they went down into the depths like a stone. (Exod 15:4–5)

Notarius seems to take the verb כִּסָּה “to cover” in an atelic, stative sense. This is possible in BH just as in English, although the verb very often in the Hebrew Bible is telic and aoristic, especially when referring to past specific events.¹³ In other accounts of these events in the Hebrew Bible, the same verb undoubtedly has aoristic meaning, as, for example, in the preceding prose account, quoted in (11):

(11)

וַיָּשְׁבוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת־הָרֶכֶב וְאֶת־הַפָּרָשִׁים לְכָל חֵיל פְּרָעָה הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּיָּם

The waters returned and **covered** the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea. (Exod 14:28)

With respect to the narrow context, too, an aoristic translation, reading “The floods **covered** them” is better, as it creates an intralinear parallelism with the previous bicolon: A) “cast into the sea” / “were sunk into the sea”; B) “floods covered them” / “went down into the depths”. Considering the aesthetic ideals of BH poetry in general,

¹³ Most of the unequivocally atelic readings of the lexeme occur with infinitives (Exod 26:13; 28:42; Hos 2:11) or nominal participles (Exod 29:13; Lev 3:3, etc.). Otherwise, it is mostly ambiguous or clearly telic. An example of an unambiguous atelic finite verb could be the generic imperfects in Prov 10:6, 11. See also the participial predicate in Prov 11:13.

we can only expect the poetic narratives to abound in this kind of elaborative concatenations of synonymous clauses. In fact, the main reason to take the imperfect clause as circumstantial is probably that the SV word order makes it similar to the circumstantial general imperfect clauses found in BH narrative prose, but poetry is evidently so distinct that it must be understood on its own terms in this matter.

Even the identification of the form as a genuine imperfect can be questioned here. It is widely accepted that the imperfect, conventionally glossed *yiqtol*, derives from an earlier imperfective *yaqtulu*, whereas the *way*-prefixed *wayyiqtol*, which is often described as an aorist/perfective or a preterite, stems from the short variant *yaqtul* (Bergsträsser 1962: § 3d, g; Waltke & O'Connor 1990: § 31.1.1.; Tropper 1998:161–177). It is also understood in this reconstruction that clause-initial *yiqtol* of the type found in example (9) is a free-standing variant of *wayyyiqtol*, hence also reflecting the function of the old *yaqtul*. If this is indeed the case, there is no obvious reason why such forms should only appear clause-initially (see, for example, Held 1962:282–283; Robertson 1972:30; 32, 35–36; Cross/Freedman 1975:83; Gibson 1994, § 62; Joüon & Muraoka 2009: § 113h; Joosten 2012:431).¹⁴ Opinions differ as to which free-standing *yiqtol* forms to classify as “long” and “short” *yiqtol* (that is, which to derive from *yaqtulu* and which from *yaqtul*) especially when it comes to the non-initial ones. The issue cannot be settled only on the basis of whether the individual form has aoristic aspect or not, since both “preterite” and “imperfective” forms can in principle have this meaning in narrative texts. Since this distinction is less important in a study of imperfective uses, I classify all prefix forms interpretable as past aoristic as non-specified, dismissing the question of whether they derive from *yaqtul* or *yaqtulu*. More important is to establish that the free-standing *yiqtol*-forms in the case of (9) and (10) are not prototypically progressive, but rather aoristic. The ABH corpus contains many similar cases.¹⁵

¹⁴ Gross, who affirms the existence of non-initial preterite *yiqtol*, nevertheless thinks of it as a slight violation of the rules of grammar (“poetische Lizenz”; 1976:32, n. 50).

¹⁵ See Exod 15:5, 6, 7 (x3), 12, 14, 15; Num 23:7; Deut 32:10 (x4), 12, 13, 14, 16 (x2), 17, 18; 33:8, 9; Judg 5:8, 26, 29 (x2); 2 Sam 22:5, 7 (x2), 8, 14 (x2), 16, 17 (x3), 19, 20, 21 (x2), 34, 36, 37, 38 (x2), 39, 40, 42, 43 (x3), 44 (x2), 45 (x2), 46 (x2), 49 (x2) (cf. Ps 18).

As for present uses of the imperfect, Notarius mentions several candidates for “progressive meaning”, which, in her view, indicate that the ABH verbal system really is more “archaic” than SBH.¹⁶ It is to be noted, however, that Notarius works with a very broad conception of progressivity, and most of her examples do not match the definition of prototypical progressives as given above (see first paragraph in the section “The progressive-imperfective pathway”). The examples are given below with Notarius’ translations:

(12) a.

כי-מראש צרים אֶרְאֶנּוּ וּמִגְּבוּעוֹת אֲשׁוּרְנֵי הוּא-עַם לְבִדְדָה יִשְׁכֵן וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשֵּׁב

For from the top of the crags I **see** him, from the hills I **behold** him. Here is a people which **lives** alone, and does not **reckon** itself among the nations! (Num 23:9)

b.

הוּא-עַם כְּלָבִיא יִקוּם וְכֶאֱרִי יִתְנַשֵּׂא לֹא יִשְׁכַּב עַד-יֹאכַל טֶרֶף וְדָם-הִלְלִים יִשְׁתֶּה

Look, a people **rising** up like a lioness, and **rousing itself** like a lion! It does not lie down until it has eaten the prey and drunk the blood of the slain (Num 23:24)

c.

מִהֲלֵל אֶקְרָא יְהוָה וּמֵאֲבִי אֲנִשֵּׁעַ

I **call** upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I **am saved** from my enemies. (2 Sam 22:4)

Several possible cases are also found in Exod 15:16–17, but in view of the wider context they could refer to the future rather than the past (concerning this *crux interpretum*, see, e.g., Shreckhise 2008). Included in the count are predicates with a durative, even habitual meaning (e.g., Deut 33:14, 17, 18). They can be taken as aoristic, since they contribute to building up the narrative chain, representing the onset of habitual states. Some of the items are often interpreted as general presents, especially those from the latter half of 2 Sam 22/Ps 18.

¹⁶ For Notarius’ discussion of the below examples, see Notarius (2013:95, 141, 169, 221). Instead of SBH, Notarius uses the term CBH (Classical Biblical Hebrew).

d.

על-כן אִוְדֶה יְהוָה בְּגוֹיִם וְלִשְׁמֹךְ אֲזַמְרָה

For this I **extol** you, O Lord, among the nations, and **sing praises** to your name. (2 Sam 22:50)

e.

כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא הִבּו גְדֹל לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ

For I **am proclaiming** the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God! (Deut 32:3)

f.

כִּי-אֲשֶׁא אֶל-שָׁמַיִם יָדַי וְאֶמַּרְתִּי חַי אֲנִכִּי לְעֹלָם

For I **lift up** my hand to heaven, and swear: As I live forever ... (Deut 32:40)

g.

הֲלֹא יִמְצְאוּ יְחֻלְקוּ שָׁלָל

Surely they **are finding** and **dividing** the spoil. (Judg 5:30)

The first two verbs in example (12a) have actual present meaning, but as perception verbs with the meaning “see” and “behold”, they are not prototypically progressive. The two following imperfects in the passage (יִשְׁכֵּן “lives”, and יִתְחַשֵּׁב “reckons”) can be interpreted as general presents, a normal function of the imperfect in all forms of Biblical Hebrew. In the case of (12b), the wider context depicts the subject referent, the Israelites, as encamped, and there is nothing to indicate that the people is actually viewed as “rising up” and “rousing itself” at the time of speech. The two imperfects in (12c) may be habitual, but hardly progressive, representing real present events. In (12d), too, the adverbial phrase “among the nations” makes it very implausible to take the event as actually ongoing. The verb אֶקְרָא in example (12e) is a performative present, and אֲשֶׁא in (12f) looks like a reportive present accompanying a performative perfect.¹⁷ In view of the later development, all actual present uses of the imperfect are

¹⁷ There is a similar problem with the performative and the reportive “imperfects” as with the

probably relatively early, but similar uses do occur also in SBH (see example (1)).¹⁸ If they are relatively more common in ABH than SBH, the reason could be that ABH is the more ancient system, but the ABH data are in any case so limited that no firm conclusions can be drawn.¹⁹ Moreover, in terms of diachronic typology, the uses in (12a–f) do not prove that the imperfect was the default progressive in ABH. The same can probably be said for example (12g). This is formally the equivalent of a yes- or no-question, although it is better rendered as an asseverative clause, as Notarius (2013:141) maintains. While it is very close to being a prototypical progressive, it cannot be considered fully as an actual present, since the asseverative meaning of the clause (cf. “surely”) implies that the actuality of the event is not proven and, hence, can be questioned. Still, this is, to the best of my knowledge, the only example anywhere in the Hebrew Bible of a dynamic verb in the imperfect preceded by an asseverative particle.

past aoristic ones: they may actually be short *yiqtol* forms rather than long forms (thus Tropper 1998:172; van de Sande 2008:251). As is well known, the normal form for the performative function in BH is the perfect, and since the short *yiqtol* is probably the predecessor of the perfect on the resultative-perfect path in Hebrew (Cook 2012:269; Andrason 2011:31–32), it is possible that it was used in this function before the perfect took over. Cross-linguistically, performative uses do not only develop from progressives; they also occur in resultative/perfect forms (Kozinceva 1988:465; Nedjalkov 1988:415–416; Volodin 1988:473). Performative and reportive functions are also attested in “perfective” forms (thus Dahl 1985:72, 81; although he does not give any specific reference to performative uses). Another category that may hypothetically be short *yiqtol* is the (non-future) *yiqtol* with some stative lexemes, as ידע, and יכל (cf. example (1h)), which also often take the perfect in BH. Also in other languages, this kind of verb often uses resultative-perfect forms to express present meaning (Bybee et al. 1994:74–78). As for the interpretation of the *verbum dicendi* אָמַר as a performative perfect, see Waltke & O’Connor (1990: § 30.5.1d); Dobbs-Allsopp (2004–2007:40, 44). The fact that the perfect in example (12f) is preceded by a copula does not necessarily make it a perfect consecutive (see, e.g., Driver 1892: § 130–134; Waltke & O’Connor 1990: § 32.3).

¹⁸ In Rabbinic Hebrew, the imperfect becomes more confined to future/modal uses. It also retains the generic meaning in proverbial settings (Pérez Fernández 1999:123–127; Cook 2012:222).

¹⁹ I have not systematically gone through the whole SBH corpus in search of these kinds of uses of the imperfect. The examples in (12) have been found by consulting grammars and by performing more limited searches.

The participle

Of course, the lack of progressive imperfects in ABH does not in itself prove that the ABH progressive subsystem is at the same stage as that of SBH, although it is entirely possible that this is the case. The problem is that there are hardly any progressives at all in ABH. As for the use of the participial predicate, the data are at the same time too few and too diverse to be readily explained as a reflection of any particular stage of the progressive-imperfective pathway. In this subsection, the data are viewed against the background of a new reconstruction of the early history of the participial predicate.

Ideally, diachronic studies are founded on comparisons of datable texts from different periods. However, it is possible to hypothesise about the development of a language on the basis of the linguistic variation in a text, regardless of the date(s) of its composition, since the language at any stage will contain a mixture of old and new uses. Innovations do not necessarily — and certainly not immediately — replace older usages, but coexist with them (Bybee et al. 1994:15–17; Hopper & Traugott 1993:87–93). Hence, none of the examples below entails anything in itself about the age of the text to which it belongs.

The use of the participial predicate in ABH

Among the marginal group of participial predicates in her corpus, Notarius finds one possible example with progressive meaning. It is found in one of the oracles of Balaam, and has the somewhat unusual function of expressing attendant circumstance in the future.

(13)

דָּרָךְ כּוֹכֵב מִיַּעֲקֹב וְגַם שֵׁבֶט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וּמַחֲזֵן פְּאֵתַי מוֹאָב וְקִרְקֹר כָּל־בְּנֵי־שֵׁת וְהָיָה אֲדוֹם
וְרִשָּׁה וְהָיָה רִשָּׁה שְׂעִיר אֲבִיו וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֹשֶׂה חַיִּל

A star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel. He shall crush the foreheads of Moab and tear down the sons of Seth. And Edom will be a possession; Seir, his enemy, will be conquered, while Israel **is doing** valiantly. (Num 24:17–18)

This is not a very typical example of an imperfective circumstantial clause. It is unclear how Israel's "doing valiantly" is the attendant circumstances of the conquering of Edom/Seir in the previous conjoined clauses, since Israel is apparently the agent behind those events as well, and one could imagine that all the clauses refer to the same events from two perspectives. Alternatively, the participial clause is an independent, coordinated future clause. However, the appearance of an independent participial clause in a series of perfect consecutive clauses referring to distant future events (cf. v. 17 "not now"/"not near") is rather unexpected of a form otherwise used as an instant future (Joüon & Muraoka 2009: § 121.e). Perhaps a circumstantial interpretation of the clause, after all, is as acceptable in BH as it is in English when rendered as such. The passage lends some weight to the assumption that the participle was the default progressive in ABH, but as an isolated example it hardly suffices to settle the issue, especially considering the imperfect in Judges 5:30 (example (12g)).

The remaining examples of participial predicates in the corpus are all found in one and the same passage in the Song of Hannah in 2 Sam 2:6–8. The participles in this sequence are very far from being progressive:

(14)

יְהוָה מְמִית וּמְחַיֶּה מוֹרִיד וְשׂוֹלֵם וְיַעֲלֶה יְהוָה מוֹרִישׁ וּמַעֲשִׂיר מְשַׁפֵּיל אֶת־מְרוֹמֵם מְקִיִּם
מַעֲפֵר דָּל מְאַשְׁפֵּת גֵּרִים אֶבְיוֹן לְהוֹשִׁיב עִם־נְדִיבִים וְכֹסֵף כְּבוֹד וְנִחְלָם

The Lord **kills** and **makes alive**; he **brings down** to Sheol and raises up. The Lord **makes poor** and **makes rich**; he **humbles** and he **exalts**. He **raises up** the poor from the dust; from the ash heap he exalts the needy to let them sit with princes, and he makes them inherit a throne of honour. (2 Sam 2:6–8)

With their timeless, general meaning, describing actions by which God is characterised and identified, these clauses have a more essential quality than both progressive and habitual clauses (cf. Table 1). If they belong to a progressive-imperfective diachronic path, they reflect a very late stage; so late, in fact, that it does not seem to tally even with the situation in SBH, where the imperfect still holds the

ground as the main form for all kinds of general meanings. In other words, if this use of the participle is a development from a progressive source, it cannot be “archaic” Biblical Hebrew.²⁰ As we can gather from the Greek and Old English examples, however, it is by no means necessary to assume a progressive source here. This brings us to the question of the origin of the participial predicate in Hebrew. First, some comments on the prevalent hypothesis.

The origins of the participial predicate — the equative source hypothesis

In previous research, the BH participial predicate has often been described as the result of a process of verbalisation, in which the participle changed its alleged “nominal” character and gradually became a real verb (Gordon 1982:5; Waltke & O’Connor 1990: § 37.6c; Dyk 1994:155, 162; Smith 1999:329–330). In concrete terms, this idea boils down to something very similar to Bentein’s “copulative source”, or Heine’s “equation schema” (Table 2 above); that is, a source construction consisting of an equative clause with a substantivised participle as predicate. Accordingly, the clause אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ in example (15) below would originally have been understood as “I am a going one”. Only later was it reanalysed as “I am going”.²¹

(15)

אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ

“I am (a) **going** (one)” I **am going** (Gen 24:42)

According to some, such as Waltke & O’Connor (1990), the transition from substantival to verbal interpretation of the form did not occur until the Post-Biblical stage (Waltke & O’Connor 1990: § 37.6c). However, it is very unlikely that the default progressive form of a language can be understood as a noun. Typologically, the BH participial predicate is parallel to highly grammaticalised progressive forms in many other languages, such as the English progressive construction (see the section

²⁰ This is one of the reasons why Notarius (2013:263) does not consider that this passage reflects ABH.

²¹ A similar analysis has been proposed for the corresponding participial predicate in Aramaic (Sasse 2008:661).

“The progressive imperfective pathway”, above). Hence, there should be no doubt that the clause in (15) equals “I am going”.

From a diachronic point of view, the main problem with the equative source hypothesis is that it is not sufficiently clear how the reanalysis came about. Reanalysis happens in language when there is some ambiguity between the original meaning of a construction and some other meaning that can be inferred from the context (Hopper & Traugott 1993:41). Out of context, there is hardly any ambiguity between the equative “I am a going one”, and the verbal “I am going”; the first clause defines the identity of the subject referent, and the second refers to a contingent event. The question is: how could an equative predicate end up as a progressive one, given the dissimilarity between these clause-types? As I shall argue in the next section, substantivised participles may be the source of some participial predicates in BH, but the progressive use of the participle should probably be traced primarily to attributive source constructions.

Substantival sources — proverbial and hymnic participles

In BH, even substantivised participles can be very “verbal”, in the sense that they can take objects (16a), and even be continued by finite verbs (16b):²²

(16) a.

הוֹי בְּנֵה בֵּיתוֹ בְּלֹא-צֶדֶק

Woe to **those who build** [lit. “**those building**”] their house on what is not justice (Jer 22:13)

b.

מִכָּה אִישׁ נִמַּת מוֹת יוֹמָת

Anyone who strikes [lit. “(a) **striking (one)**”] a man so that he dies, shall be put to death. (Exod 21:12)

²² In example (16), the word אִישׁ “man” is not formally an object, but rather an objective genitive, since the participle stands in the construct state. Thus, the most literal translation of מִכָּה אִישׁ would be “[a] man’s striking [one]”. However, the verbal quality of the participle is most clearly emphasised by the fact that it is continued by a finite verb (נִמַּת).

Here, the substantivised participle is the subject of the main clause while at the same time performing the function of both subject (“Anyone who”) and predicate (“strikes”) of an embedded clause (“Anyone who strikes a man”)—a good example of the fact that the participle is both a verb and a noun. It is also a good example of an efficient employment of the form, where several sentence functions are located to one and the same syntactic slot. Since the predicate slot does not offer the same possibility for combining sentence functions, putting a participle there is not only to employ it inefficiently; it also entails a higher processing cost than if a less semantically complex, finite form is used in the same position. As long as the participle is really processed as a semantically complex unit, using it as predicate will require some extra motivation.

An example of where this manoeuvre seems to be worth the while is in proverbial expressions with non-definite participles in both subject and predicate position:

(17)

אהב פשע אהב מצה מגביה פתחו מבקש שבר

One who loves [lit. **(one) loving**] transgression **loves** [(is **one**) **loving**] strife; **one who makes** [lit. **(one) making high**] his gate high **looks for** [(is **one**) **looking for**] destruction. (Prov 17:19)

This line can be interpreted as a couple of equative clauses with substantivised participles as predicates. The motivation for using participles as predicates instead of finite verbs may be the artistic effects of the morphosyntactic repetition, which is especially striking when there is also lexical repetition, as in the first bicolon in the example. The demand for variation may have motivated the spread of this use to predications where the subject referent is not a participle. In the following example, the first clause has a participle only as predicate, whereas the parallel bicolon has a participle as subject, but not as predicate.

(18)

רָשָׁע עֲשֵׂה פְעֻלַּת-שֹׁקֵר וְזָרַע צְדָקָה שֹׁקֵר אֶמֶת

The wicked **earns** [(is **one**) **earning**] deceptive wages, but **the one who sows** [(the **one**) **sowing**] righteousness (earns) a sure reward. (Prov 11:18)

Thus, the participles may break away from their supposedly original source contexts and be used more or less interchangeably with finite verbal clauses.²³ Even so, however, they probably retain a nominal character. This is evident in at least one case, where the participle is manifestly in construct state:²⁴

(19)

מִלֵּוּהַ יְהוָה הוֹבִיב דָּל

Whoever shows kindness to the poor **lends** to the Lord (lit. “is the Lord’s lender/**lending one**”). (Prov 19:17)

Even if the proverbial participles are not read as nouns, they are not at all similar to progressive verbal forms. By virtue of their general and timeless meaning they are closer to the use found in the example from the Song of Hannah (13). As a rule, the proverbial participial clauses have non-specific subject referents, but, in principle, any specific referent with a timeless archetypal character, like יְהוָה “the Lord”, can also be a subject. A few possible instances occur in Proverbs, but it is quite possible that יְהוָה actually is the predicate and the participle the subject in these clauses.²⁵ To illustrate:

(20)

כָּל-דִּרְכֵי-אִישׁ זָךְ בְּעֵינָיו וְתִכְוֵן רוּחֹת יְהוָה

All one’s ways are pure in one’s own eyes, but the Lord **weighs** [(is the **one**) **weighing**] the spirits (alt. “the **one weighing** the spirits is the Lord”). (Prov 16:2)

²³ For examples of proverbial participles, see, e.g., Prov 10:4, 17, 18; 11:18, 11:30; 12:1, 10, 15, 16, 23; 13:3, 4, 12, 24, 25; 14:2, 16, 25, 29, 31, 32; 15:20, 27, 32; 16:2, 17, 27, 28; 17:3, 4, 9, 18, 19, 27; 19:8, 16, 17; 20:1, 8, 19, 26; 21:2, 12, 17, 23, 24; 22:2 (as with example (20), it is not always entirely clear what is the predicate and what is the subject).

²⁴ Cf. Prov 22:2, but here the participle is perhaps the subject.

²⁵ See Prov 16:2; 17:3; 21:2; 22:2; 29:13.

The proverbial equative participial predicate could be a source for the use of the participles in the Song of Hannah, in spite of the uncertainty concerning the predicate-argument structure of the יהיה-clauses. But influences may come from more than one direction, and for reasons of genre and style, a perhaps even closer parallel is the kind of epithetic, appositive construction known as the “hymnic participle”.²⁶ This participle often has a general meaning, even though it also may refer to singular events in the past. Like other substantivised participles in BH, it can take objects and be continued by finite verbs. Many such epithetic participles can be conjoined in appositive chains and form very elaborate pieces of embedded discourse, as in the following example:

(21)

וְאֵלֹהֵי יְהוָה הַצְּבָאוֹת הַבּוֹנֵה בָּאָרֶץ וְתַמּוּג וְאָבְלוּ כְּלֵי־יֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ וְעָלְתָה כְּיָאֵר כְּלֵה וְשָׁקְעָה
כְּיָאֵר מִצְרַיִם הַבּוֹנֵה בְּשָׁמַיִם מַעְלוֹתָיו וְאֶגְדָּתוֹ עַל־אָרֶץ יְסֻדָּה הַקָּרָא לְמִי־הַיָּם וַיִּשְׁפֹּכֶם עַל־פְּנֵי
הָאָרֶץ יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ

The Lord, God of hosts, he **who touches** [the (one) **touching**] the earth and it melts, and all its dwellers mourn, and all of it rises like the Nile, and sinks like the Nile of Egypt; **who builds** [the (one) **building**] his lofty chambers in the heavens, and founds its vault on the earth; **who calls** [the (one) **calling**] for the waters of the sea, and pours them out over the surface of the earth — the Lord is his name. (Amos 9:5–6)

In this passage, the appositive function of the participles is rather evident, despite the finite clauses following them. In the next example, most of the participles lack a definite article, and there is no closure like that in (20) (יהוה שמו) “the Lord is his

²⁶ Gerstenberger (2001:521) describes the hymnic participle as “[a] descriptive phrase that gives honor to the great and salvific deeds of Yahwe in creation and history, found within the body of many ... hymns of praise.” The following list of passages with hymnic participles is (with a few additions) based on Gerstenberger (2001:222, 521): 1 Sam 2:6–8(!); Isa 40:22–23, 28–29; 42:5; 43:15–17; 44:24–28; 45:3, 7, 18–19; 51:13, 15; Jer 10:12; Amos 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6; Zech 12:1; Ps 18:33–35; 33:5, 7, 15; 65:7–8; 103:3–6; 104:2–4, 10, 13–14, 32; 144:1–2; 145:14–16; 146:6–9; Ps 147:2–9, 11, 14–17; Job 5:9–13; 9:5–10; 12:17–24; 26:7–9.

name”). Hence, the appositive structure is less clear, and the sense of embedment is almost lost.²⁷

(22)

כִּי מִי אֱלֹהִים מִבְּלִעְדֵי יְהוָה וּמִי צוּר זִוְלָתִי אֶלֶּהֵינוּ הָאֵל הַמְאַזְרֵנִי הָיִל וַיְתֵן תְּמִים דְּרָכַי מִשְׁנֵה
רַגְלֵי כְּאֵלוֹת וְעַל כַּמְתִּי יַעֲמִידֵנִי מִלְּמַד יָדַי לְמִלְחָמָה וְנִחַתָּה קִשְׁת־נְחוּשָׁה זְרוּעֹתַי

For who is God besides the Lord, and who is the rock except our God — God who **girded** [(the one) **girding**] me with strength [הָאֵל הַמְאַזְרֵנִי הָיִל]²⁸ and made my way safe; who **made** [(the one) **making**] my feet like the feet of a deer and set me on the heights; who **trained** [(the one) **training**] my hands for battle, so that my arms could bend the bow of bronze. (Ps 18:32–35)

In my translation of example (22) the syntactic structure of the Hebrew — as I understand it — is kept intact. Bible translations often choose to render the appositive participial phrases as main clauses.²⁹ The reason may be stylistic; perhaps the appositive syntactic structure is found to be cumbersome in the target language. Anyhow, some translations seem to be based on an alternative analysis of the syntactic structure of the source text. Thus, in the NIV’s interpretation, the construction הָאֵל הַמְאַזְרֵנִי הָיִל appears not to be understood as an apposition but a kind of emphatic equative clause, “It is God who arms me” (i.e., “God is the one arming me”).

If the participles in (22) are understood as predicates, they become very similar to the participles in the Song of Hannah (example 13). Both passages have a series of participial clauses where the subject is explicit only in the first clause, and the

²⁷ The definite article is often omitted in hymnic participles, even if the participles are determined. This is more clearly seen, for example, in Amos 4:13.

²⁸ The parallel passage in 2 Sam 22:33 reads הָאֵל מְעוּזִי הָיִל “God, my strong refuge”/“God is my strong refuge” in the Masoretic text, but the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Lucianic recension of the Septuagint, the Peshitta, and the Vulgate attest הָאֵל הַמְאַזְרֵנִי הָיִל in 2 Sam 22:33 as well as in Ps 18:33 (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* 1977: apparatus).

²⁹ *The Holy Bible: new international version containing the Old Testament and the New Testament* (1979); *Die Bibel: Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift, Altes und Neues Testament* (1980); *Bibel 2000 med noter, parallellhänvisningar och tillägg: Gamla testamentet, Apokryferna, Nya testamentet* (2001); *La Nouvelle Bible Segond* (2002); *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible* (2010).

participle gets the initial position in the following clauses. The difference, of course, is that in the Song of Hannah there is no syntactic ambiguity, and the participles can only be interpreted as predicates.

Even if this analysis of the passage from Ps 18 is not accepted, but all the participles are taken as appositions, their ambiguous nature can be recognised.³⁰ What makes the passage from Ps 18 particularly similar to a clausal construction is the fact that the head of the apposition (אלהים “God”) recurs anaphorically (as יהוה) in the following appositive phrase, which means that the latter can be taken for a clause with the anaphoric element as the subject. Quite plausibly, this kind of structure is a source for independent hymnic participial predicates such as those in the Song of Hannah. The fact that the participles in Ps 18 in my translation refer to past events does not preclude that conclusion, because the syntactic structure of the hymnic participle is the same whether it has a past or general present reference. It is interesting in this regard to note that the participles in the Song of Hannah are counted as hymnic participles by Gerstenberger (see note 27), and that Dyk (1982:8) and Joosten (2012:424) especially emphasise their nominal nature.

In conclusion, substantivised participles may be the source of participial predicates in both proverbial and hymnic contexts. Exactly how much more “verbal” they become in this position is difficult to assess. Even when the participles freed themselves more from their supposedly original source contexts and became more similar to ordinary finite verbal clauses, it is quite possible that the substantival source constructions still were felt to be prototypical, and, hence, that they maintained a substantival quality. If so, an equative rendering of the proverbial and hymnic participle (viz. “the evil one is one doing ...” “God is a lifegiving one”) captures something real. In this reading, the participle offers a somewhat extravagant and conspicuous means of expressing roughly the same thing as a corresponding finite form (imperfect or perfect). Thus, the participial clauses in 2 Sam 2:6 can be

³⁰ Another ambiguous construction of the same kind is found in Ps 146:7–9, where the recurrent יהוה “the Lord” can either be taken as a subject or an anaphoric appositional head. However, as compared to the structure in Ps 18, this one more resembles a clausal structure.

compared with the more “straightforward” imperfect-clauses in Deut 32:39:

(23)

רָאוּ עַתָּה כִּי אֲנִי אֶנִּי הוּא וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי אֲנִי אֶמִית וְאַחֲרַיָּה

See now that I, I am the one, and there is no god beside me. I **kill** [IPF] and I **make alive** [IPF]... (Deut 32:39)

It is to be noted, however, that these constructions do not have progressive meaning. Hence, we are entitled to look elsewhere for the origin of the progressive participle.

The attributive source

Given the general and timeless character of the substantivised participles, the progressive participle is more likely to have arisen through syntactic reanalysis of attributive constructions. A possible context for this kind of reanalysis is the הִנֵּה-clause. The word הִנֵּה, traditionally translated as “behold” or similar, is not really a verb, but a deictic adverbial. It is used in a wide range of contexts, and its basic function, in the definition of van der Merwe, is “to point to an entity or entities x in the immediate proximity of an observing entity or entities y” (van der Merwe 2007:138). Two types are of special interest here, viz. הִנֵּה-clauses referring to entities and הִנֵּה-clauses referring to states of affairs or events (cf. Miller-Naudé & van der Merwe 2011:3.1.1, 3.1.3).

When the particle הִנֵּה refers to an entity, it creates a presentative-existential clause, as illustrated in example (20a–d) below.³¹ The referent may be unqualified, (20a–b), or

³¹ Both presentative and existential הִנֵּה-clauses are here included in one and the same “presentative-existential” category. In presentative clauses, the particle הִנֵּה has a deictic function and the referent is present in the speech-situation, as in examples (24a, c, d). In existential clauses, הִנֵּה is non-deictic, marking only the existence of the referent, as in (24b) (cf. Bloch 1991:61, 115). The existential function of הִנֵּה is overlooked but undeniable (see, e.g., Is 5:7(x2), 30; 22:13; Jer 4:23; 8:15; 14:18, 19; Ezek 8:2, 7, 8, 10; 37:7; 40:3, 17; 24; Amos 8:1; Zech 2:5; 4:2; Song 3:7) Historically, the existential use probably developed out of the presentative one (Bloch 1991:115). By using the term presentative-existential, I indicate that the distinction between the two is not important for my reconstruction of the development of the participial predicate. See further comments in note 33.

have attributes (20c–d):

(24) a.

הִנֵּה הַחֲנִית הַמֶּלֶךְ

Here is the spear, O king! (1 Sam 26:22)

b.

לַעֲתָ עָרֵב וְהִנֵּה בַלְהָה

At evening time, there is terror! (Is 17:14)

c.

הִנֵּה בְתִי הַגְּדוּלָה מֵרַב

Here is my elder daughter, Merab. (1 Sam 18:17)

d.

הִנֵּה זִבְחָ וְצַלְמֻנָּע אֲשֶׁר תִּרְפָּתֶם אוֹתִי לֵאמֹר

Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you have taunted me, saying

[...] (Judg 8:15)

More often, הִנֵּה refers to the content of a full clause consisting of subject and predicate. I shall here call this kind of הִנֵּה the “sentential הִנֵּה”, to distinguish it from the “presentative-existential הִנֵּה”, which we just have looked at. In examples 6a and b, one verbal and one nominal clause with a sentential הִנֵּה are quoted:

(25) a.

וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה עֹלָה קִיטֹר הָאָרֶץ כְּקִיטֹר הַכִּבְשָׁן

And he looked, and behold, the smoke of the land was going up like the smoke of a furnace. (Gen 19:28)

b.

הִנֵּה אִשְׁפֹּתֶיךָ בְּיָדֶיךָ עֲשֵׂי־לָהּ הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ

Look, your maiden is in your hands; do with her as you please. (Gen 16:6)

When there is a participle involved, the distinction between sentential and

presentative-existential הִנֵּה gets blurred (cf. van der Merwe 2007:115). Example (26) shows a rather clear case of a presentative-existential הִנֵּה with a noun and an attributive participle:

(26)

וַיֵּרָא הַצִּפֹּה אִישׁ־אַחֵר רָץ וַיִּקְרָא הַצִּפֹּה אֶל־הַשַּׁעֲרָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־אִישׁ רָץ לְבַדּוֹ

The sentinel saw another man **running**, and the sentinel called to the gatekeeper and said, “Behold, a man **running** alone!” (2 Sam 18:26)

(?The sentinel saw another man running, and the sentinel called to the gatekeeper and said, “Behold, a man is running alone!”)

In this example, the event represented by the participle in the הִנֵּה-clause is merely a circumstantial detail both in the הִנֵּה-clause and the preceding verbal clause; the all-important thing is the fact that the sentinel observes a running man. Reading the participle as predicative would result in something of a non-sequitur, as illustrated by the translation within parenthesis.

The case is perhaps somewhat less clear in examples (27a–b), although an attributive reading of the participle is highly plausible, given their circumstantial character:

(27) a.

וַיָּבֹא אֶל־פֶּתַח הָעִיר וְהִנֵּה־שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה מִקְשָׁשׁוֹת עֲצִים

He came to the gate of the town, and behold, a widowed woman was there **gathering** wood. (... a widow **was gathering** wood there) (1 Kings 17:10)

b.

וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־כַּרְמֵי תִמְנָה וְהִנֵּה כִפִּיר אַרְיוֹת שֹׁאֵג לְקִרְאָתוֹ

He came to the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion [came] **roaring** against him. (... and behold, a young lion **roared** against him.) (Judg 14:5)

Then again, there are many participial הִנֵּה-clauses that are very naturally translated as ordinary verbal clauses. But, seen in the context of the examples that we just have been looking at, it becomes evident that very often they, too, are ambiguous, and could be taken as a kind of presentative-existential clauses with attributive participles. This is especially the case when the subject is indefinite; less so when it is definite. Thus, in example 28a, which has an indefinite subject, the alternative presentative-existential interpretation within parenthesis is more acceptable than in example 28b with a definite subject.³²

(28) a.

וַיֵּרָא־גָעַל אֶת־הָעַם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־זִבְלֵי הַהַר־עַם יֵרֵד מִרְאֲשֵׁי הַהָרִים

Gaal saw the troops, and he said to Zebul, “Look, troops **are coming down** from the tops of the mountains!” (Judg 9:36) (There are troops **coming down** ...)

b.

וּלְכָל־הָעַם הַגִּידוּ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב בַּשַּׁעַר

All the troops were told: “Behold, the king **is sitting** in the gate.” (2 Sam 19:8)

(? Behold the king, sitting in the gate ...)

Even though the participle in the second example is unambiguously predicative, the combined data indicate that it nonetheless may have developed from the same source as the other examples, due to a process whereby the originally attributive participle of the presentative-existential הִנֵּה-clause was reanalysed as the predicate of its head.³³

³² Although I have spoken of a “presentative-existential” meaning as a possible interpretation of the הִנֵּה-clauses in examples (26) through (28a), they are all better taken as existential rather than presentative (on the difference, see note 32). However, this does not exclude the possibility that presentative הִנֵּה-clauses, too, can give rise to sentential interpretations of הִנֵּה. See, for example, the presentative הִנֵּה-clause in 1 Kings 1:23 (הִנֵּה נָתָן הַנָּבִיא) “Here is the prophet Nathan”), a type that could lie behind sentential הִנֵּה like the one in Esth 6:5 (הִנֵּה הָמָן עֹמֵד עַל־הַיְצִר) “Behold, Haman is standing on the courtyard” [derived from “Here is Haman, standing on the courtyard”). At this stage, I have no opinion as to whether the existential or the presentative clause is the oldest source of sentential הִנֵּה.

³³ The idea that Hebrew הִנֵּה underwent reanalysis from presentative-existential into sentential

Other, indirect evidence supporting this hypothesis is found in embedded participial clauses where the subject is a suffix on הַגִּידָה, (29a), or the negation אֵין, (29b):

(29) a.

בְּחֵלְמִי הִנְנִי עֹמֵד עַל־שְׂפַת הַיָּאֵר

In my dream, behold, I **was standing** [lit. behold me, **standing**] on the banks of the Nile. (Gen 41:17)

b.

אֵינְנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם תְּבַר

I **am** not **giving** you a straw [lit. “There is none of me **giving** you”]. (Exod 5:10)

These clauses are formally marked as presentative and existential clauses with attributive participles, but functionally they are verbal clauses with predicative participles. As such, they bear witness of a general tendency of Biblical Hebrew to blur the distinction between attributes and predicates in connection with participles.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of this investigation, it is not possible to detect a semantic evolution from ABH to SBH in the forms belonging to the progressive-imperfective path. There is no example of a prototypically progressive imperfective in the ABH-corpus here investigated, and, hence, no evidence that the imperfect is the default progressive form in ABH. On the other hand, there is a lack of progressive participles as well, with the possible exception of the one in Num 24:18. All in all, the evidence is too flimsy to allow any firm conclusions regarding the division of labour between the imperfect and the participle in ABH.

The participles in the Song of Hannah pose a special problem, since they could be

meaning is proposed (albeit with a different terminology) by Bloch (1991:56–59, 69–70, 131) on the basis of comparison with corresponding Arabic participles. I came across his study too late to make extensive use of his findings in this article.

taken to represent a very late stage of the progressive-imperfective path. If they do, the passage is either an interpolation or the whole poem is not ABH. However, internal BH evidence as well as comparative data from similar constructions in Greek and Old English suggest that the BH participial predicate has developed from different sources, including stative, substantivised constructions. The use of the participles in the Song of Hannah probably does not stem from a progressive source construction, but has developed through syntactic reanalysis of substantivised appositive so-called “hymnic” participles with general meaning (“A, [the] one VERB-ing” > “A is [the] one VERB-ing”). Apart from the hymnic participle, a substantival source construction may lie behind some generic proverbial participles. This use may have started in clauses with a substantivised participle as subject, and spread to other clauses by analogy (“one VERB-ing A is one VERB-ing B” > “C is one VERB-ing D”). A possible source of the progressive participle is a dynamic, attributive participle with a circumstantial function, which was reanalysed as the predicate of its head, for example in connection with presentative-existential הִנֵּן -clauses (“Behold A, doing” > “Behold, A is doing”).

This reconstruction is not intended to be comprehensive, but it does suggest that the development of the BH participial predicate is a complex process, which only partly proceeds from a progressive source. The stative hymnic and proverbial variants may have developed before, or in parallel with the progressive variant. Several questions concerning the later developments are left unanswered here. Were the substantivised participial predicates ever reanalysed as verbs? Did they at some point blend into the progressive pathway or did they remain an isolated phenomenon within the high, poetic register where they are found in the Hebrew Bible? For the purpose of this study, it is enough to conclude that, in ABH, the different variants may have existed side by side.

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