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Book review:

Hatav, Galia. *The Semantics of Aspect and Modality: Evidence from English and Biblical Hebrew*. Studies in Language Companion Series, 34. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1997.

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story to Naboth's vineyard. And so on. But so much of literary criticism is in the eye—or mind—of the beholder that I hesitate to pile up examples. The book is an interesting and entertaining read. But it also suggests that every scholarly generation should be exposed to the late Professor Samuel Sandmel's cautionary address, "Parallelomania."²

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Galia Hatav *The Semantics of Aspect and Modality: Evidence from English and Biblical Hebrew*. Studies in Language Companion Series 34. Amsterdam: John Benjamins 1997, 224 pp.

This revised Tel Aviv University dissertation provides a general semantic theory for the Tense Aspect-Modal verb system of English and Biblical Hebrew. As such, it seeks to account for the temporal nuances of English and Biblical Hebrew verbal systems by studying them within the context of truth-conditional semantics, a linguistic approach that has undergone considerable modification in recent years, and which is further modified in this work, albeit slightly. Although the results of this investigation enlighten our understanding of the English and Biblical Hebrew verbal systems, I shall limit my remarks to the contributions which this work offers Hebraists. Since the review necessarily entails linguistic terminology, I herewith beg the nonlinguist's indulgence.

Typically investigations of the Tense Aspect Model in Biblical Hebrew have followed the pragmatic approach. Thus, tense denotes "morphological markers of the verb which function to characterize the temporal relations between the situation and the utterance time" (p. 2), whereas aspect and modality are defined as denoting intention, attitude, and viewpoint. This study is premised upon the assumption that the Tense Aspect-Modal verb System "should be defined within truth conditional semantics, in terms of temporality, rather than within a pragmatic approach" (p. 195). Thus, Hatav investigates the tense and aspect of Biblical Hebrew first by separating temporality into S(peech)=time, i.e., the time in which the utterance takes place; E(vent)=Time, i.e., the time in which the event related takes place;

2. Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (March 1962): 1-13.

and R(eference)=time, the time referenced by the speaker.¹ Tense is seen as a function from the intervals of S-time and R-time to truth values. Since Biblical Hebrew verbs do not "encode the three-place distinction of past, present and future," Hatav classifies Biblical Hebrew as a tenseless language (p. 195). He defines aspect as a function from the intervals of R-time and E-time to truth values. Thus, "the crucial temporal relations in [Biblical Hebrew] are those holding between the situations and their R-times" (p. 6). This results in three aspects: sequentiality, progressive inclusion, and perfect.

As corpora for study Hatav selects sixty-two narrative-prose chapters. Excluded are poetic and prophetic texts as well as units containing Biblical Hebrew *wha:ya* and *wayhi* forms because they function not only as verbs, but as particles marking temporal segmentation. (Hatav does not adopt the idea that the *waw* constitutes an operator of sequentiality.)

The analysis carefully distinguishes between genre and chronological strata, and is meticulous throughout.

At the center of Hatav's interests is the problem of modality, i.e., how Biblical Hebrew expresses a speaker's attitude, intentions, and desires. For Hatav, a speaker's disposition "cannot explain many phenomena concerning the modal system in language" (p. 9), see, e.g., how in Biblical Hebrew the *yiqtol* and *wqatal* forms appear both for "future propositions as well as past habituals" (p. 9). Again, for Hatav, the answer lies in a truth-conditional semantic approach to the material. Thus, Hatav accounts for the nonmodal but volatile *yiqtol* and *wqatal* forms as follows:

According to the logical approach, a modal proposition has a necessity or possibility operator, analyzed as involving, respectively, universal and existential quantification over a set of possible worlds. I have applied this analysis to the different uses of *yiqtol* and *wqatal*, showing that they all exhibit modality of some kind. And vice versa, all modal functions recognized by the general account were shown to be expressed by one of these forms (which differ in their sequentiality). Since future and habitual statements were shown to be modal, it was predicted that they both would be expressed by *yiqtol* or *wqatal*. Now since [Biblical Hebrew] does not encode tenses, habituals in all time sphere [*sic*], including the past, were expected to be expressed by one of the forms, resolving the seeming problem of habituals in the past being expressed by the same forms as future statements.

1. There are, of course, additional subcategories of each of the temporal situations, as Hatav illustrates (pp. 2-6).

Applying a truth-conditional semantics theory, argues Hatav, is more helpful, since “unlike tense and aspect, [the theory] does not follow from R-time relations. Instead it involves the notion of *possible worlds* (or *branching options*)” (pp. 9–10).² Hence, unlike previous writers on the topic, Hatav characterizes the Biblical Hebrew *yiqtol* and *wqatal* forms as semantically related modal propositions (along with conditionals and habituais). Similar for Hatav are the directives (i.e., jussive, cohortative, and imperative), which also constitute modal forms.

Indeed, as Hatav demonstrates, a truth-conditional semantics approach does reveal subtleties in Biblical Hebrew. For example, “the modal forms *wqatal* and *yiqtol* cannot be used when the modality interacts with the perfect or inclusive aspects” (p. 156). Instead, the *qotel* form indicates inclusiveness in modal clauses, and “modal clauses which bear the perfect aspect have verbs in *qatal*” (p. 156). Nevertheless, Hatav does note that “the function of *qatal* as a perfect aspect is not limited to modal situations” (p. 157).

Moreover, he demonstrates that “the *qotel* denotes not just that a situation is simultaneous with another situation in the discourse, but more specifically that it includes it, as it has to contain an R-time” (p. 104). Thus, *qotel* clauses denote inclusive situations. Hatav concludes, therefore, that “what has been traditionally treated as modals are not the only clauses which appear with modal forms,” but that “there is an interaction between aspect and modality” (p. 161).

Hatav also discusses the perfect aspect, including simultaneity, anteriority, and backgrounding, demonstrating that the *qatal* form’s various uses (e.g., temporal) are due to its “‘parasitic’ nature as the perfect aspect” in Biblical Hebrew (p. 163). By “parasitic,” Hatav means that it functions to report situations which include their R-time; the perfect is also parasitic according to Hatav, and serves to express the relation of anteriority, “where the situation is claimed to precede” the R-time (p. 197). Hatav shows how the *qatal* is the perfect in Biblical Hebrew for denoting a simultaneous situation that cannot provide its own R-time, and for marking the transition from the main time-line to the subnarrative (Hatav also treats direct discourse as a type of subnarrative). In this treatment, Hatav’s approach differs from many previous analyses “that claim that *qatal* clauses indicate not only that an event occurred (in the past), but furthermore that it resulted in a state-of-affairs which holds at a current R-time, like the aorist in Greek” (p. 177). Hatav

2. Emphasis added.

demonstrates this by showing how the *qatal* form appears to mark a transition from the main to subordinate discourse; “where the time does *not* start at the opening of the direct speech text its first clause is in *wayyiqtol*” (p. 181).³ Thus, according to Hatav’s analysis, Biblical Hebrew uses the *Wayyiqtol* for clauses on the time-line and the *wqatal* for modal sequential clauses.

Hatav also concludes that “*wayyiqtol* and *wqatal* verbs may appear, indeed, only in a sequence” (p. 83); whereas the “non-sequential forms *qatal* and *yiqtol* may appear in sequence only at the beginning of a subnarrative and in direct speech where it functions to mark the transition from the main to the subordinate discourse” (p. 83). According to Hatav, “by definition *wayyiqtol* may appear only in non-modal sequential clauses, but by elimination it can appear only in clauses which report past time situations” (p. 85).

While the “linguist-ese” in which this study is written may seem taxing to the nonlinguist, the analyses often shed light on biblical passages. Consider the case of Gen 4:1, “The man knew (וַיֵּדַע) his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain,” a line containing the *qatal* form וַיֵּדַע. Here we find what appears to be a subnarrative, by Hatav’s definition, even though the event has not been related before. According to Hatav’s analysis (and interestingly in agreement with Rashi and Ibn Ezra, as Hatav also notes), the *qatal* form suggests that “the sexual act took place *before* the exile from the Garden of Eden, which is reported in the last clause of the preceding chapter” (p. 187).

As Hatav shows, the truth-conditional semantic approach also could influence how we understand the relationship between biblical pericopes. For example, the parallel accounts of how Joseph was brought to Egypt (Gen 37:28, 39:1) have been explained both as evidence for different sources and as a literary retelling. Hatav’s study appears to vindicate the literary unity of the text by revealing how the *qatal* form in 39:1 serves as a subnarrative to recall the information given earlier.

Hatav concludes the book by providing an excellent summary of the various approaches that have been applied to the semantics of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system and by offering a theoretical analysis of temporality in language. He also suggests other ways in which the truth-conditional semantic approach could be applied to Biblical Hebrew, including studies of different Biblical Hebrew genres, chronological strata, infinitival forms, counterfactuals, and the pragmatics of modal forms in Biblical Hebrew.

Hatav’s attention to detail and the subtlety of Biblical Hebrew is refreshing,

3. Emphasis added.

and one would like to see the methodology of this work applied to the areas that Hataav suggests are worthy of study. In addition, Hataav's analysis takes us through the history of scholarship on the subject, making the book a useful resource. While the linguistic terminology that dominates the book can be dense in places, the insights provided by Hataav's approach are important and worthy of recognition. Moreover, the organization of the book, its abundant use of English and Hebrew prooftexts, and its helpful use of bold and italic typeface facilitate its reading.

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Albert I. Baumgarten. *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation*. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, vol. 55. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997. xx, 240 pp.

In this humane, well-informed, thought-provoking, and frustrating book, Albert Baumgarten attempts to explain why sectarianism flourished, as he believes, in Jewish Palestine of the Maccabean period. His approach is comparative. In particular, Baumgarten has done a tremendous amount of reading about the religious history of England in the seventeenth century, and he is also strongly influenced by Anglo-American structural-functionalist social theory, in which he is impressively knowledgeable. The comparative material occasionally misleads Baumgarten (see below), but it does not confine him. Indeed, one of the pleasures of the book is the eclecticism of its approach; its structural-functionalism is more an ethos, a self-conscious mark of its author's sympathy with the *Past & Present* school, than raw material for the construction of still another reductive, oversimple model, generated from partial and undigested reading in a narrowly construed and reified social science. Baumgarten never forgets that he is writing about a society of humans.

First, though, the problems. The chief of these is that, as Baumgarten himself notes in passing, almost nothing is known about the social aspects of sectarianism in the Maccabean period. Only for the first century C.E. is there anything like satisfactory, if still limited, information. Baumgarten deals with this problem by pretending that first-century evidence can be used unproblematically to reconstruct conditions of the second century B.C.E. This

is his avowed method in the long and wide-ranging first chapter, subtitled "a social description of ancient Jewish sectarianism." In the briefer third and fourth chapters, he argues that the rise of sectarianism in the second century B.C.E. was in part a result, as in early modern England, of urbanization and the consequent extension of literacy. This argument is in any case problematic, an instance where Baumgarten's parallels have led him astray. Certainly at no time in ancient Palestine was there anything remotely comparable in scale to the galloping urbanization of seventeenth-century Europe (by the end of the century the population of London reached one million—a figure no Western city had attained since the third century), or the geometric growth in literacy rates generated not only by bourgeoisification, but also by the Protestant Reformation and the invention of movable type. But to the extent that ancient Palestine did undergo a series of social changes meaningfully correlatable to the spread of sectarianism, it was only in the first century that their effects were palpable. In other words, Baumgarten was mistaken to conflate evidence from the first century with that from earlier periods, for reasons I will now briefly explore.

Let us begin, as Baumgarten does, with the question of numbers. Josephus asserted that in the days of Herod there were six thousand Pharisees, and that (in his own day? but Philo reports the same number) the Essenes numbered four thousand. The Sadducees were certainly less numerous. Baumgarten, in common with many scholars, emphasizes that if these numbers are true, then the sectarians constituted only a small percentage of the Jewish population of Palestine as a whole in the first century, most responsibly estimated, following M. Broshi, at five hundred thousand.¹

But a more nuanced consideration of the numbers leads to very different conclusions. The sectarians were mainly concentrated in the district of Judea, though they were not entirely unknown in other districts of Palestine. Judea's population can scarcely have exceeded two hundred thousand, and was probably much smaller. If we suppose that the sectarians were adult males, as Baumgarten plausibly does, and further suppose, following most historical demographers, that adult males constituted about 30 percent of the population in premodern societies, then we come to the astonishing conclusion that in Judea in the late first century B.C.E. and/or the first century C.E., sectarians

1. "The Population of Western Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine Period," *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 236 (1979): 1-10