

The Valence of the Hebrew Verb

CAMERON SINCLAIR

Chapman Universtiy, Orange, CA

It is well known that many Hebrew verbs exhibit considerable variation in the number of object noun phrases with which they are constructed.¹ Certain verbs that usually appear as transitive occur elsewhere without any visible object. Others that take two objects in some occurrences also appear with one or none at all. Thus *yāda^c*, "to know," normally occurs with a single object in the *Qal* and frequently with two objects in the *Hiph^cil*.² Yet it also occurs with no explicit object in the *Qal* and with only one in the *Hiph^cil*.³ This apparent irregularity, typical of many other Hebrew verbs as well, invites the inference that the number of noun phrases that can be constructed with Hebrew verbs is variable and unpredictable.

Hebrew grammars and dictionaries have often dealt with aspects of this problem, recognizing certain verbs as intransitive, transitive or even doubly transitive. Notice is frequently taken of the fact that under certain circumstances intransitive verbs become transitive, for example in their causative forms, and at other times that direct objects of (presumably transitive) verbs may be omitted, for example, when these objects can be inferred from the context. Yet they are not really clear about how transitivity is defined or whether or not Hebrew verbs do possess a specific transitivity. Verbs are often listed in the dictionaries as *with* or *without* an (accusative) object, or alternatively as transitive in some cases and intransitive in others, implying that the same verb might occur rather freely as either one or the other but without explaining how this could be.

The grammar of Hebrew would be clarified considerably and a much more adequate classification of Hebrew verbs could be achieved if it could be shown that the apparent variation in their transitivity results from a number of regular grammatical processes which bring about a systematic and predictable change in the number of noun phrases with which they can be constructed. The term *valence*,⁴ as applied to verbs in this study, refers to the number of noun phrases

1. I am indebted to the editors of *JANES* for comments and provocative questions, which forced me to think more deeply on a number of important issues. Any confusion or inadequacies that remain are, of course, my own.

2. Examples in the *Qal* in the verb's most common meaning occur with a clausal object in Gen. 12:11; 20:6; 22:12; Exod. 4:14 and with a simple (non-clausal) object in Gen. 27:2; 30:26; Exod. 1:8; 3:7. Examples in the *Hiph^cil* with two objects occur in Exod. 33:13; 1 Sam. 6:2; 16:3; Ezek. 20:11; 22:2 and elsewhere.

3. See Jer. 15:15; 41:4; Ezek. 37:3 and Isa. 56:10 for the former and Num. 16:5; Exod. 18:16; Job 32:7; and Ps. 90:12 for the latter.

4. See D. J. Allerton, *Valency and the English Verb* (New York, 1982) and the references there for recent discussion.

that are normally constructed with a specific verb in its basic form excluding optional noun phrases such as adverbials which are not required by the verb. This term is used within a conception of grammar in which the verb is taken as basic to the syntax of its clause and its meaning and syntactic properties are assumed to determine the number of noun phrases with which it is constructed. It is assumed, therefore, that the valence of all well-attested Hebrew verbs can be determined with a high degree of confidence and that the variability exhibited in their use is systematic and predictable. The primary purpose of this study is to account for such variability in terms of regular syntactic processes operating on these verbs affecting thereby the number of noun phrases with which they are used in specific cases.⁵ I will also show that certain regular semantic changes, such as a verb's acquisition of the causative meaning, are systematically correlated with certain of these processes. No description of the semantics of a verb can be adequate without identifying and accounting for those aspects of its meaning systematically correlated with and resulting from the syntactic changes it undergoes. Finally, I will briefly discuss a number of biblical passages that serve to illustrate the potential usefulness of a better understanding of these systematic syntactic and semantic processes in the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

First, it can be readily observed that when verbs become causative, whether in the *Pi^cel* or the *Hiph^cil*,⁶ the verbs' valence normally increases by one with intransitive verbs becoming transitive and transitive verbs becoming doubly transitive. This fact is frequently noted or assumed in the grammars and lexica, but to my knowledge the reason for this increase in valence has not been specifically pointed out in any discussion of the grammar of biblical Hebrew. The causative forming process, however, not only involves a change in the *semantics* of the verb, reflecting the acquisition of the causative meaning, but also a *syntactic* change in which the subject of the verb in its non-causative form becomes a *new object* of the corresponding derived causative verb. The latter also acquires a *new subject* in the process thus increasing the verb's valence by one.⁷ If the corresponding non-causative verb was already transitive, its subject becomes a second

5. This will not include a discussion of the so-called adverbial-accusative, which is normally optional and thus not relevant to this discussion. Nor will it include prepositional verbs, those whose noun phrases are tied to them by means of a preposition. These are relevant to the discussion but are beyond the scope of this paper. Homonyms may each have a different valence, of course, because they are really different verbs.

6. The term "causative" refers here to both the "causative" and the "factitive" in traditional terminology without regard to whether the *Pi^cel* or the *Hiph^cil* is used since the process itself is exactly the same in both cases. The difference in meaning between the causative and the factitive is not due either to the stem or to the process employed but rather to the meaning of the verb itself. Thus *fientive* (action) verbs become causative in the derived stem, whether the *Pi^cel* or *Hiph^cil* is used, whereas (semantically) *stative* verbs become factitive in either stem. The causative forming process itself merely adds the "causing" meaning while bringing about the syntactic changes to be sketched below.

7. More precisely, the range of possible meanings a verb allows its subject in the non-causative is transferred to its new object in the corresponding causative construction, as illustrated in the following paragraph. But its new subject in the causative must normally be agentive, which is frequently a significant change in meaning from the non-causative.

object in the causative, or occasionally an oblique object introduced by the prepositions *lē*, *bē* or *min*. It has been pointed out that when prepositions are used to mark “demoted” subjects in causative constructions, there is a cross-linguistic tendency for the same prepositions to be used for this purpose as serve to identify the agent in passive sentences.⁸ These particular prepositions are used for both functions in Hebrew also although agents are seldom retained in Hebrew passives. Notice also that the new subject of the corresponding causative is prototypically *agentive*, the “doer” of the verb’s action, and thus is capable of bringing about the causative activity of the derived causative verb.⁹ This is frequently a significant change because many non-causative verbs do not even permit agentive subjects, as the following examples show.

Consider non-causative *yābēš*, “to be dry,” with its causative counterpart “to dry up (something).” Notice that the semantic type of subject that occurs with the non-causative *Qal*—water, vegetation, or topographical areas—is *non-agentive* and turns up as the new *object* in the verb’s causative counterpart while the verb also acquires a new *agentive* subject in the latter. For example, in 1 Kgs. 17:7 Elijah is sustained by water from a brook during the drought, but after some time *wayyibaš hannāhal*, “the brook dried up.” Compare this with Josh. 4:23, where stones are set up at Gilgal to remind future generations *ʔāšer hōbīš YHWH ʔēlō-hēkem ʔet-mē hayyardēn*, “that Yahweh your God dried up the waters of the Jordan.” See also *rāʿaš*, “to tremble, quake (from an earthquake),” contrasting Jer. 10:10 *miqqiṣpō tirʿaš hāʾāreš*, “From his wrath the earth trembles,” with Ps. 60:4, *hirʿaštāh ʾereš*, “you have made the earth tremble.” Other examples are easy to find, and they show that the valence of these verbs increases by one in the causative because the non-causative *Qal* subject becomes the causative’s new object while the causative also acquires a new agentive subject.

I know of no cases where a verb with two objects already in the *Qal* forms the causative in either the *Piʿel* or the *Hiphʿil*.¹⁰ However, with the exception of verbs such as *nātan*, which take direct and indirect objects (or, direct and source objects, such as *šāʿal*), all these doubly transitive verbs seem to express causative notions already in the *Qal*, for example: *ḥāgar*, “to gird (someone) with (something)”; *ʾūah*, “to coat (something) with (something)”; *rāgam*, “to stone (someone) with

Bear in mind that I will be using the *process* model for syntactic description, postulating certain forms as *basic* and others as *derived* from them by some process. While these may sometimes recapitulate certain historical developments, the description is intended to be synchronic. No special historical priority is necessarily claimed for *basic* forms as contrasted with *derived* forms.

8. B. Comrie, “Causative Verb Formation and Other Verb-defining Morphology,” in T. Shopen, ed., *Language Typology and Syntactic Descriptions: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon* (Cambridge, 1985), 335–39.

9. In the Hebrew Bible these are typically human or divine beings. But sometimes natural forces, such as wind or storms, events, situations or facts can stimulate causation. Since these are the exception rather than the rule, they are not crucial to the point at hand.

10. Comrie believes it unlikely in any language that a doubly transitive verb would occur in the causative with a third object although the “demoted subject” does occasionally appear as an oblique object in such cases; “Causative Verb Formation,” 340.

stones." A few express the factitive, for example: $\text{c}\bar{a}\text{s}\bar{a}$, "to make (something) into (something)"; $\text{b}\bar{a}\text{n}\bar{a}$, "build/fashion (something) into (something)."¹¹ It must be noted, however, that all these doubly transitive verbs, including those formed in the derived conjugations, frequently occur with one (occasionally both) of the expected objects missing. This is less common for verbs that take only a single object. This may be because the causative forming process, by adding a new object, tends to overload the sentence, especially if the verb would become doubly transitive as a result. Thus the author may simply omit objects providing information deemed superfluous in order to provide the sentence focus intended.¹² Object omissions of this kind are discussed more fully later in the paper.

Before leaving the discussion of causatives, I should point out that there are a few verbs which occur both as transitive and intransitive in the *Qal* in which the former is the causative reflex of the latter. Among these is $\text{r}\bar{a}\bar{a}$, "to graze, feed." This verb occurs in the *Qal* with *eating animals* as its subject in some occurrences. But it also occurs in the *Qal* with *eating animals* as its object in other occurrences, and in these it has a new *agentive* subject, namely the *feeder* of these animals. The verbs in the latter cases are clearly causative reflexes of those in the former. Compare Gen. 41:2 where seven cows emerge from the Nile and $\text{w}\bar{a}\text{t}\text{-t}\bar{r}\bar{c}\bar{e}\bar{n}\bar{a}\ \text{b}\bar{a}\bar{a}\bar{h}\bar{u}$, "they grazed on the reed grass" (other examples: Exod. 34:3; Isa. 11:7; Jon. 3:7, etc.) with Gen. 30:31 where Jacob pledges Laban $\text{er}\bar{c}\bar{e}\bar{h}\ \text{s}\bar{o}\bar{n}\bar{k}\bar{a}$, "I will feed your sheep." Other examples are: Gen. 4:2; 36:24; 37:12; Ezek. 34:14b, etc. Note the parallel with $\bar{a}\text{k}\bar{a}\text{l}$ in the *Qal* compared with its use in the *Hiph'il*. In

11. We should not be surprised to find causative verbs without corresponding non-causatives any more than to find non-causative verbs without corresponding causatives. The existence of both depends crucially on the concepts language users need to express. Notice that $\text{s}\bar{a}\text{lah}$, $\text{q}\bar{a}\text{tal}$, and $\text{h}\bar{a}\text{rag}$ are all causative in meaning. This can be seen by contrasting them with verbs such as $\text{h}\bar{a}\text{lak}$ and $\text{m}\bar{u}\text{t}$, which occupy semantic space approximately corresponding to what we would expect a non-causative of $\text{s}\bar{a}\text{lah}$ would mean if it existed on the one hand, and non-causatives of $\text{q}\bar{a}\text{tal}$ and $\text{h}\bar{a}\text{rag}$ would mean if they existed on the other. No doubt $\text{s}\bar{a}\text{lah}$, $\text{q}\bar{a}\text{tal}$, and $\text{h}\bar{a}\text{rag}$ all occur without any corresponding non-causative forms precisely because there was no need for them; $\text{h}\bar{a}\text{lak}$ and $\text{m}\bar{u}\text{t}$ could serve that function for them just as $\text{h}\bar{i}\text{s}\bar{q}\bar{a}$ serves as the causative of $\text{s}\bar{a}\text{t}\bar{a}$. Notice also that the difference in meaning between these verbs in the same semantic field depends in part on whether certain adverbial meanings are lexicalized in these verbs. Compare English causative verbs like "to poison" and "to hang (someone)," which have incorporated lexically the meaning corresponding to adverbials of manner, "to kill with poison," and "to kill by hanging."

12. Examples occur for many common verbs. The transitive verb $\text{r}\bar{a}\bar{a}$, "to see," normally requires an animate subject as well as an object in the *Qal*. Both of these normally appear as objects when this verb occurs in the *Hiph'il* as in Gen. 48:11b; Deut. 4:36; Jer. 24:1b. But in both Isa. 30:30 and Est. 1:4 the expected animate object is missing. In both cases the focus of attention appears to rest on the action of "showing" or "displaying." Potential "viewers" of what is shown appear to be irrelevant. Similarly the transitive verb $\text{l}\bar{a}\text{mad}$, "to learn," requires an animate subject and an object expressing something capable of being learned in the *Qal*. Both of these appear as objects in its causative occurrences in the *Pi'el* as in Deut. 4:5; Judg. 3:2; and Ps. 25:4b. But in Jer. 32:33, Ps. 25:5 and Song 8:2 the object specifying what is to be learned is missing and in 2 Chr. 17:7 both objects are missing. In all these cases the emphasis seems to be on the act of teaching itself. Cases such as these appear to me to be similar to the phenomenon discussed below under the rubric "transitive verbs used intransitively," only here we are dealing with doubly transitive verbs used as monotransitives or even as intransitives. This terminology is really inadequate here, since it is necessary also to keep track of which of the two objects has been omitted.

addition, *mālē*² occurs in the *Qal* with a noun phrase designating a *container* of some sort as subject: Isa. 1:15, *yēdēkem damīm mālē*²*û*, "your hands are full of blood." See also Judg. 16:27; Ps. 10:7; 26:10; 33:5 and Isa. 11:9.

In many other cases noun phrases with this type of meaning occur as the *object* and a new *agentive* noun phrase functions as the subject bringing about the causative action now expressed in the meaning of the verb. For example, Jer. 19:4 *ûmālē*²*û* ²*et-hammāqôm hazzeh dam nēqīyyim*, "and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent." See also Ezek. 8:17b; 30:1; Isa. 14:21 and 27:6. Note the parallel here between these causatives in the *Qal* and examples in the *Pi^cel*, which would clearly be recognized as causative. Similar examples can also be found under *pāraš*, *hālaq*, *nāṭā*, *pātaḥ* and several other verbs.¹³

Other syntactic processes merely *appear* to change the valence of certain verbs. These involve, first of all, constructions in which two or more transitive verbs are conjoined and govern a single object in the same clause. The impression may thus be created that the object for one of these verbs is missing. In Judg. 5:26 Jael strikes Sisera . . . *ûmāhšāšā wēhālēpā raqqāto*, "and she shattered and pierced *his temple*." Consider also Deut. 28:39 *kērāmîm tiṭṭa^c wē^cābādā*, "You shall plant and dress *vineyards*." This is sometimes rendered as though the object of the second verb had been ellipted, "You shall plant vineyards and dress (them)."¹⁴ In fact it is not always possible to determine which of the two constructions was intended since both are clearly attested in Hebrew. Notice also that the three verbs in Ezek. 22:20b appear to govern the pronoun object that follows the last one: *kēn* ²*eqbōš bē²appî ûbahāmāṭî wēhinnaḥṭî wēhittaktî* ²*etkem*, "just so, in my anger and wrath, I will gather up, cast in and melt *you*." In Hos. 6:1, the two semantically contrasting verbs in each of two contiguous sets seem clearly to govern the same pronominal suffix, attached as an object to the final verb in each set. "Come let us return to the Lord . . .," *kî hū² ṭārāp wēyirpā²ēnû yak wēyahbēšēnû*, "for he has torn and will heal *us*; he has stricken and will bind *us* up." Finally, in Isa. 41:20 we have four verbs in a single clause taking an embedded clause as their object: *lēma^can yir²û wēyēdē^cû wēyāšîmû wēyāskîlû yaḥdāw kî yad-yhwh* ^c*āsētā zō²t*, "that they may see and know and consider and comprehend together *that the hand of Yahweh has done this*."

13. This phenomenon is treated more fully in my unpublished paper, "The Formation of the Causative in Hebrew." English has a few verbs that form the causative from non-causative forms morphologically like Hebrew: rise-raise, sit-set, lie-lay, fall-fell. There is a larger number of verbs, however, that form the causative syntactically just like the Hebrew examples above. Among these are the following: break, boil, open, bend, snap, bake, and several others. Contrast the following: "The window broke" vs. "John broke the window"; "The water boiled" vs. "John boiled the water," etc. The second of each pair is causative although unmarked morphologically. The change in the verb's meaning is signalled by the syntax instead. Occasionally verbs of this type have been called "ergative" after certain languages which use the same case form to mark both the subject and object noun phrases of verbs like "break." This is misleading, however, since in these languages it is the absolutive case that is used to mark both the subjects and objects of such verbs. The so-called "ergative" case is used to mark the subjects of transitive verbs contrasting with those similar to "break." See R. D. Van Valin, Jr., "Semantic Parameters of Split Intransitivity," *Language* 66 (1990), 221-22.

14. So the RSV for this passage.

Perhaps the major problem causing confusion about the valence of Hebrew verbs is that transitive and even doubly transitive verbs frequently occur with one or more of their objects missing through ellipsis. This phenomenon is also mentioned in the grammars, but their explanations tend to be very brief and often lack specificity. Thus under the heading of "Ellipsis," Williams simply reports "Pronouns are frequently omitted when they are clear from the context," specifying later "When object of a verb . . .," followed by examples.¹⁵ Gesenius informs us that "The pronominal object is very frequently omitted, when it can be easily supplied from the context; so especially the neuter accusative referring to something previously mentioned. . . ." ¹⁶ He attempts to associate this phenomenon with certain semantic classes of verbs, but it is clear they do not define the extent or character of this phenomenon. Brockelmann lists a few syntactic environments in which objects can be omitted. These may be summarized as follows: 1. most commonly after the second of two verbs closely tied together in the description of a single process; 2. even if the first object is in a subordinate clause; and 3. occasionally after the first of the two verbs. More commonly, he says, the second object is represented by a pronominal suffix.¹⁷ Many examples do occur in such contexts, but these observations do not define the extent of missing objects nor are they limited to pairs of contiguous clauses as he seems to suggest. More recently, Greenstein has argued¹⁸ that certain verbs in both Hebrew and Ugaritic may "delete" their objects when they are already implied in the meaning of the verbs themselves with the result that certain transitive verbs appear intransitive. A few of his examples are provided below. But the type of ellipsis he discusses is quite different from the more general kind referred to above.

This more general type of ellipsis, which we prefer to call *anaphoric object ellipsis*, must be distinguished from a different phenomenon, to be discussed below under the rubric *transitive verbs used intransitively*.¹⁹ It is the confusion created by the failure to distinguish between and explain both of these phenomena that is largely responsible for the impression that the valence of verbs is unpredictably variable. The clarification of these phenomena also yields significant new perspectives on the interpretation of many biblical passages where one or the other of these occurs.

We will turn our attention first to *anaphoric object ellipsis*, so called because criteria to be described below require some previously mentioned antecedent to be "understood" in situations where a pronoun object would normally be expected. Unfortunately, the standard grammars offer little help either in determining when a case occurs or in pointing out how the missing object is identified. If the valence of Hebrew verbs were unpredictably variable, it would be very difficult to say for any occurrence that a verb's object was really missing or to recognize that a case

15. R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1976), §§585–88; 99–100.

16. Gesenius, Kautzsch, Cowley, *Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1910), §117f.

17. C. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen, 1956), 136f.

18. E. L. Greenstein, "The Snaring of Sea in the Baal Epic," *Maarav* 3 (1982), at 208–16.

19. At least three other kinds of object omission (including the type observed by Greenstein) also occur. Only one of these is described in the standard grammars.

of object ellipsis had occurred, let alone to determine how the appropriate object might be identified from the context. Uncertainty about transitivity no doubt accounts for the substantial variation in supplying missing objects that can be seen both within and between different translations. Yet the original native speakers of the language must have had some way to determine what these missing objects were or confusion would surely have eliminated the practice of omitting them.²⁰ It should also be noted that omitting pronouns after transitive verbs and elsewhere is a common phenomenon in unrelated languages worldwide.²¹ Speakers of such languages normally know precisely where and what pronoun to supply cognitively in their interpretation of sentences with these omissions. There must, therefore, be regular cognitive processes—syntactic, semantic or pragmatic²²—that these speakers employ in order to identify the missing objects from the context and to interpret the sentence in exactly the same way despite the objects' absence.

At least three factors appear to be involved in this process. First, assuming for the moment that the valence of Hebrew verbs is not unsystematically variable, it will normally be clear whether or not a verb's object is missing in any given text. It should then be possible to find its antecedent in the preceding context.²³ Second, since verbs frequently require an object within a limited semantic

20. A striking example of the effect that the need for people to be understood has on the development of a language can be found in certain recent developments in the English pronominal system. In early modern English we had four second person pronouns in English: singular subject, *thou*; singular object: *thee*; plural subject: *ye*; and plural object: *you*. When the plural object form, *you*, replaced all three other forms, both *number* and *case* distinctions were lost. The loss of the number distinction has proved to be troublesome, especially when someone is speaking with a group of people and wants to make clear that the entire group is intended by "you," not just the nearest person or the one at whom the speaker happens to look momentarily. This ambiguity has given rise to several "informal" second person plural pronouns in various parts of the country: *you-all*, in the South, *you'uns* in some dialect areas, *youse*, in Northeastern dialects, and *you guys* and various other locutions virtually everywhere else. Like almost all recent grammatical innovations, these plural pronouns are not accepted in formal speech or writing, but they are very widely used in everyday speech. And for good reason—people want to be understood! But contrast the total absence of any parallel development for the loss of the *case* distinction in the same pronoun. The reason is obvious. We already know from word order that when "you" precedes the verb, it is the subject, and when it follows the verb, it is the object. Indeed, when the object forms are improperly used for the subject (as in "*Me* and *him* will do it"), we are not even momentarily confused. Our knowledge of the syntax instantaneously overrides the incorrect morphology and we recognize it as an error. To quote my former teacher, Dr. Moshe Held, of revered memory, "A language protects itself!"

21. Chinese, for example, which makes use of little agreement morphology and indicates syntax largely through word order, permits the omission not only of object pronouns but also of subject and most other pronouns. Yet its speakers rarely seem to experience difficulty in understanding each other on this account. See C. N. Li and S. A. Thompson, "Third-Person Pronouns and Zero-Anaphora in Chinese Discourse," in Talmy Givon, ed., *Syntax and Semantics: Discourse and Syntax* 12 (New York, 1979), 311–35.

22. Here we are concerned with pragmatics primarily as it relates to information the hearer or reader draws from the context or situation in which a sentence is produced in order to understand what is intended. I refer to this as "the logic of the text" below. For an introduction to some aspects of pragmatics as it has developed within linguistics, see S. C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge, 1983).

23. In literature, the "context" will normally be the *written* environment. But occasionally it may be the *situation* in which participants in a narrative, for example, find themselves. Such situational antecedents are common in ordinary conversation. For example, someone talking to a friend on a busy street

range,²⁴ certain noun phrases can be identified as semantically congruent with the verb while others will be ruled out as potential objects because they are not congruent. Pragmatic considerations may also play an important role. The grammars frequently refer to this when they emphasize the role of context in interpretation. Readers expect the text to make sense—to have an internal logic of its own. They also have some knowledge of the writers' world and of what was considered possible or impossible for them. All these factors constrain the possible choice of an antecedent and normally determine it unequivocally.

A theoretical foundation for these observations has recently been provided by the philosopher H. P. Grice in a number of papers concerning what he calls "conversational postulates."²⁵ He argues that in using language for communication, people operate with a set of assumptions about how they and others will behave in ordinary verbal interaction. These assumptions include such principles of cooperation as speaking sincerely, clearly, relevantly, and providing sufficient information to make themselves understood. Of course, people do not always follow these principles. Sometimes they lie, or they use sarcasm, saying the opposite to what they mean, or they use metaphors or other devices for special effect. But we have created terms to represent such concepts as "lying," "sarcasm," "metaphor," etc., because we recognize such uses of language as deviations from its *ordinary* use. Our expectation is that people will, in ordinary circumstances, be as cooperative, literal, and truthful as they can. And when they do not intend what they say to be taken literally, we expect them to provide clues to this effect, to follow certain conventions that will enable their hearers (or readers) to understand what they intend to communicate. Otherwise we perceive their use of language as hostile in some way, reflecting an attempt to deceive or some other ulterior motive. If such expectations of "cooperation" were not the norm, ordinary communication would simply be impossible. These principles of ordinary conversational interaction apply also in narration. If the ordinary rules do not apply, the narrator must signal

corner might suddenly say, "He's going to hit *her*!" where the first pronoun might refer to a driver speeding by, and the second, to a pedestrian on the street nearby. But such antecedents will naturally be rare in written texts, where the readers' knowledge will normally be limited to what the narrator has reported. While I know of no examples of situational antecedents in the Hebrew Bible, they are not impossible in principle. Certain stock situations, where the participants are a matter of common knowledge, may provide just such an occasion. For example, a worshiper approaching an altar might ask, "Will He accept my offering?" The same phenomenon accounts for the use of the definite article in some texts where there is no previous mention of the noun phrase. See, for example, Gen. 22:6b *wayy-iqqah bëyädô ʔet-häʔes wəʔet-hammäʔakelet*, "and he (Abraham) took in his hand *the* fire and *the* knife." Although neither fire nor knife had been mentioned previously in the text, the definite article is used with them because the reader could be expected to assume their presence from the well-known offering situation.

24. For example, excluding metaphor, *Hiph^cil* forms of *mût* and *ʔakal* require animate objects. The semantic restrictions many verbs impose on subjects, objects or both enable us to observe syntactic processes such as those exhibited in the formation of passives (where the object of the active becomes the subject of the passive) or of causatives (where subjects of non-causatives become objects of their corresponding causatives). See other examples in the discussion above.

25. See H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in P. Cole and J. R. Morgan, eds., *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts* (New York, 1975), 41–58; "Further Notes on Logic and Conversation," in P. Cole, ed., *Syntax and Semantics: Pragmatics* (New York, 1978), 113–28.

this in some way or run the risk of being misunderstood. It is for such reasons that we *expect* pronouns to be omitted only when their antecedents can be readily determined from the context.

We should also remember that even when a pronoun object *is* present in a Hebrew text, it provides only limited information about its antecedent, namely its gender and number. We still have to look to the context for the antecedent congruent with the verb's semantics and with the logic of the text. The fact that we seldom have problems identifying such objects should give us confidence in texts where the writer thought the intended object was so obvious, he did not even leave a pronoun to help identify it.

This phenomenon can be seen in 2 Kgs. 4:39–41 where one of Elisha's companions gathers wild gourds for the communal pot of stew: *wayǝpallaḥ ʔel-sîr han-nāzîd kî lōʔ yādāʕû wayyišqû laʔānāšîm leʔĕkōl . . . wǝlōʔ yākĕlû leʔĕkōl wayyōʔmer ûqĕḥû-qemaḥ wayyašlĕk ʔel-hassîr wayyōʔmer šaq lāʕām wǝyōʔkĕlû*. Identifying the various cases of anaphoric object ellipsis, we would incorporate these objects into the translation as follows: "And he cut (them) up into the pot of stew. But they did not know (this) and they poured (it) out for the men to eat . . . and they were not able to eat (it). Then he said, bring flour and throw (it) into the pot. Then he said pour (it) out for the people so they could eat (it)." Seven objects have been recognized in the translation of this short passage referring to four different antecedents. While the internal narrative logic, informed by our experience of such everyday activities as cutting up vegetables into a stew, pouring it out and eating it, supports the identification of the objects in this text,²⁶ a crucial first recognition, essential for

26. I do not mean to suggest that there are never any ambiguities about identifying the antecedent of the ellipped object. Such ambiguities occur even when pronoun objects are present! Of course, what might have seemed obvious to an ancient narrator might not be so obvious to us! The object, "(this)," supplied after *yādāʕû* at the end of verse 39 may be such an example. Most of the standard translations supply "what they were" as the object of this verb. But, assuming that nothing has fallen from the text, this rendering would require the reader to have knowledge of events not yet narrated. The "cooperative principle" would, therefore, rule out this possibility. Of course the author of the text could have set up expectations for the events immediately to be narrated by including such an object. But without it, there is no way to anticipate it just as there would be no way to anticipate such a turn of events as that recounted in verse 40. This, of course, is why antecedents normally *precede* their anaphors. For these reasons I believe the narrator had in mind the earlier events of verse 39, the gathering and cutting up into the pot of the gourds just narrated. The phenomenon called "backward pronominalization" may occur in Hebrew as it does in English (e.g., "After he dressed, John went to work," where "he" may refer to John as well as to someone else), but it if does, its occurrence is undoubtedly greatly constrained and would not apply to the object of *yādāʕû*. Such pronouns can occur in English only in clauses that are "subordinate" to the clause in which the antecedent appears. See J. D. McCawley, *The Syntactic Phenomena of English* (Chicago, 1988), 1:335ff. for a more exact definition of these constraints.

Notice additionally, that the *English* verb "know" sometimes permits anaphoric object ellipsis just like Hebrew, although there are restrictions on the circumstances under which this is permitted; e.g., "I asked John when he could go/ what he would do/ who to write to, but he didn't know" are all acceptable sentences. But *"We saw Mary but John didn't know (her)" is not. Thus, in verse 39, we could also translate our clause, "But they did not know." It is important to note that the real object here, whichever translation is used, is the referent of the antecedent itself—in my interpretation the events recounted in verse 39 preceding this clause. My rendering in English ("this" rather than "it" or something else) is an attempt to make the English clear.

understanding the text, was that because the verbs are transitive, objects are expected.²⁷ Since English does not normally allow anaphoric object ellipsis in such cases, a correct translation requires that the object antecedents be identified from the context and represented in translation by the appropriate English pronouns.²⁸ It is also important to emphasize that even in languages which allow anaphoric object ellipsis more freely, the *objects are no less present cognitively*. In every situation where ellipsis occurs, it is constrained by syntactic rules. It is precisely because the missing material is "understood," that is, *recoverable from the context in some systematic rule-governed and non-arbitrary way*, that it can be omitted at all. This, of course, is what is meant by ellipsis. Cases in which transitive verbs are merely "used as intransitive" (to be discussed below), with no object specified or identifiable from the context, must be clearly distinguished from cases of ellipsis, where the object is omitted but clearly identifiable.

Consider now the pericope about the jar of oil in verses 1–7 of the same chapter. When the widow who asked Elisha for assistance says she has nothing in her house except a jar of oil (verse 2), Elisha instructs her to borrow many vessels from the neighbors *wəyāšaqt ʿal kol-hakkēlīm*, "and pour (it) out into the vessels" (verses 4 and 5). Here again the crucial first step is the recognition that *yāšaqt* is transitive requiring an object. Then the previous mention of the "jar of oil" as all the widow had left, the collection of vessels from the neighbors and the fact that only certain materials like oil and stew can be "poured out" impel us to understand the missing object as *oil*, and this is confirmed in verses 6 and 7. Yet in these verses as well as 40–41 the RSV omits several of these ellipted objects.

In 1 Sam. 17:34–35 the youth David defends his ability to fight the Philistine Goliath by recounting his experience as a shepherd: "When a lion or a bear came, and carried off a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him," David reports, *wəhiššaltū mippīw*, "and snatched (it) out of his mouth." Again the first step is to recognize that the verb requires an object, then the narrative logic (in this case, that David is refuting the suggestion of his youthful inexperience) and our knowledge of David's world (that lions and bears were dangerous animals, who frequently carried off sheep, and that shepherds were supposed to protect them) leads us to recognize that it was the lamb (mentioned in verse 34) that David snatched from the mouth of the lion or the bear.

A final example is found in Deut. 32:15–19, where Israel's infidelity is described in verses 15–18. Then we are informed *wayyar³ yhw^h wayyin²āš*, "Yahweh saw (it) and rejected (them)." Here both objects of these transitive verbs are missing. But the syntactic information that *rā²ā* is transitive and the semantic information that *nā²aš* is used with a personal object identifying the person or per-

27. Unless the verb is "used as intransitive," which is discussed below.

28. As previously noted, a few English verbs do permit anaphoric object ellipsis under strictly limited circumstances, but this phenomenon is much less common and is much more restricted in English than in Hebrew. See P. H. Matthews, *Syntax* (Cambridge, 1981), 38–45; R. Huddleston, *Introduction to the Grammar of English* (Cambridge, 1984), 191–94. It is probable that this kind of ellipsis is also restricted in some ways in Hebrew as well. My impression is that it is much more common following some verbs than others, but I have not attempted to determine what these restrictions might be for Hebrew.

sons who are disdained or rejected, together with the logic of the discourse, indicate that what Yahweh saw was the situation described in verses 15–18 and that what He had rejected was Israel. The pronoun objects supplied reflect these antecedents. Although there is little at stake in the interpretation of any of these passages, they do illustrate how the verb's valence sets up our expectations, which are then satisfied by the identification of antecedents from the preceding context by means of their semantic compatibility with the verbs, while the internal logic of the discourse and what we know about the writer's world often play a significant role.

Three other kinds of object ellipsis, all non-anaphoric, should be mentioned. One of these involves the ellipsis of the object of the verb in certain familiar idioms such as *kārat* (*bērti*), "to cut (a covenant)," i.e., "make a covenant"; *šim* (*lēb*), "to set (the heart)," i.e., "to pay attention to"; *nāšā* (*qôl*), "to lift up (the voice)," i.e., "to cry out," etc. This phenomenon is treated in the standard grammars and dictionaries. Notice, however, that these expressions are idioms and that idiomatic meaning is derived from an expression *as a whole*, not from the syntactic combination of its parts as in non-idiomatic expressions. This kind of ellipsis, therefore, is not syntactic in nature. It merely appears to have syntactic implications for the verbs so used. In contexts where these familiar idioms would be expected, just the mention of the verb would be enough to recall the full expression.

A second type has been pointed out by Greenstein. He observes that the object of certain verbs may be omitted when they are implied in the very meaning of the verbs themselves. He provides a number of examples in Hebrew and makes similar observations in the syntax of Ugaritic as well. Thus the verb *šb^c*, "to swear (an oath)," occurs without an object expressed in Ps. 119:106 *nišba^cti wā^cāqayyēmā*, "I have taken-an-oath and I will uphold (the oath)." In this passage, Greenstein concludes, "the object of the second, transitive verb . . . is the unexpressed object ('oath') implied in the deep structure of the preceding verb *nšb*, 'take an oath.'"²⁹ Other examples can be found with *š^cnš*, "to fine," in Exod. 21:22 and with *šā³al*, "to ask," in Ps. 105:40. This type of object omission appears to be similar to the type just mentioned above. It is because we are able to supply the missing object from an occurrence of the verb itself that it can be omitted so readily.

Another kind of object ellipsis involves a few verbs which form reflexives in the *Qal* stem. These verbs are normally transitive with objects fully in place in the *Qal*, but when the objects are omitted, the action of these verbs is understood as referring to the subject just as in *Niph^cal* and *Hithpa^cel* reflexives. Both *rāḥaš*, "to wash," and *sūk*, "to anoint," are used with objects designating the one washed or anointed along with noun phrases introduced by the preposition *bē*, "in/with,"

29. See Greenstein, "Snaring of Sea," for a full discussion with several examples in both Hebrew and Ugaritic, although some of his examples may also be analyzed as instances of two conjoined verbs governing the same object. Similar phenomena occur in English. Consider, "John drinks and bets on horses." We know immediately that the objects of the two verbs are "alcoholic beverages" and "money," respectively. But the way we know this is different for each verb. For the verb "bets" the object "money" is inferred pragmatically. Something other than money would be quite unusual and would require specification. On the other hand, a very broad range of objects can occur with "drinks," virtually anything fluid. But when the verb's object is left unspecified, it always seems to imply an alcoholic beverage. This object must, therefore, be regarded as implied in the meaning of the verb itself in this usage.

followed by the materials (water and oil respectively) with which this was done. Thus in Ezek. 16:9 *wā²erḥāṣēk bammayim . . . wā²āsukēk baššāmen*, "I bathed you in water . . . and anointed you with oil." See also Lev. 14:9 and 2 Chr. 28:15. But contrast 2 Sam. 12:20. After the death of the child of his affair with Bathsheba, David arose, *wayyirḥaṣ wayyāsek*, "and he washed and anointed (himself). . . . See also Ruth 3:3; Isa. 1:16 and Dan. 10:3. The verb *šāpan*, "to hide," is transitive as in Exod. 2:2 *wattišpēnēhū šlōšā yērāḥīm*, "and she hid him three months." But it is also used without an object in its reflexive meaning in Prov. 1:18 *yisḥēnū lēnap-šōtām*, "they hide (themselves) against their own lives." See also Prov. 1:11, Ps. 56:7. These three types of non-anaphoric object ellipsis play a significant role in the Hebrew Bible, but all of the types of object ellipsis attested in the Hebrew Bible and described above, anaphoric object ellipsis is by far the most common.

In addition to anaphoric object ellipsis and the three types of non-anaphoric ellipsis just discussed, there are still other cases of normally transitive verbs occurring without objects. No antecedent can be identified for any of the latter in their contexts, nor are they examples of the non-anaphoric ellipsis just discussed. The meanings of these verbs remain the same as their normally transitive cohorts except for different nuances attributable to their lack of overt objects, to be discussed below. They also continue to imply *some* object even though no object is overtly present. Indeed, the very meaning of these verbs seems to require two (or more) noun phrases. Thus the *Hiph^cil* transitive of *mūt*, "to kill, put to death," implies both an *agent*, who carries out the action, and a *patient*,³⁰ the one affected by the action taken (i.e., the victim). In *Hiph^cil* occurrences of *mūt* both noun phrases are normally present. In the *Hoph^cal* passive of *mūt*, attention is focused on the victim of the action, which is moved into subject position, and the agent is usually left unspecified. Yet some agent seems clearly implied. (See the prescribed punishment for capital crimes such as those mentioned in Exod. 21:12, 15–17, where the agent of the execution is unspecified.) Similarly in the active, when attention is focused upon the agent of the action or the verb itself, the patient (the direct object) may be left unspecified.³¹ All we can know about the semantic content of the implied

30. Although this term is not entirely satisfactory because of its medical associations, it is now widely used in discussions of thematic relations, the semantic roles noun phrases play in relation to verbs with which they are constructed. See, for example, W. Wilkins, ed., *Syntax and Semantics: Thematic Relations* (San Diego, 1988).

31. The notion of "killing" can be expressed without using a transitive verb, of course, although this is clearly the norm for Hebrew; e.g., Exod. 16:3 *mūtēnū bēyad-yhwh*, "(would that) we had died by the hand of Yahweh." But here also both the "patient," the subject of *mūt* in the *Qal*, and the "agent," the "genitive" of *yad*, are still present. See also Josh. 20:9 and Jer. 11:21. Alternatively, instead of an "agent," the "instrument" of killing (usually the sword) may be specified; Jer. 34:4; Amos 7:11; or instead, the "cause" may be specified: a plague, Jer. 21:6; thirst, Judg. 15:18; 2 Chr. 32:11; or both "instrument" and "cause"—Jer. 42:17, "they shall die by sword, by famine and by plague."

Notice also that ordinary intransitive verbs such as *mūt*, "to die," *ḥāyā*, "to live," and *yāṣēn*, "to sleep," which do not normally imply any object at all, may still be used as transitive under certain prescribed circumstances. These circumstances normally require that the object be a cognate accusative and have a modifier. By this device the nature of the "death" or "sleep" implied in the verb can be described. Thus in Num. 23:10 Balaam asks, *tāmōt napšī mōt yēšārīm*, "Let my soul die the death of the righteous." See also Ezek. 28:10; and in Jer. 51:39c it is said of the Babylonians *wēyāsēnū šēnat-ōlām*, "that they may sleep an endless sleep"; see also 51:57.

object, however, is what is indicated by the semantic restrictions the verb's meaning ordinarily imposes on its object.³² Since these verbs are clearly derived from transitive verbs and continue to imply objects even though the latter are left unspecified, they are best identified as *transitive verbs used as intransitive*.³³

There appear to be at least three different reasons for the omission of the object in these situations corresponding to the three major constituents of sentences with transitive verbs: the object, the verb itself, and the subject. In many cases, the overt specification of an object is superfluous where its general semantic content is already obvious from the meaning of the verb and greater specificity is simply irrelevant.³⁴ Several examples can be found under ²*ākal*, "to eat," as in Hos. 4:10, *wē²ākēlū wēlō² yišbā^cū*, "They will eat but not be satisfied." In 1 Sam. 9:19 Samuel tells Saul to go up before him to the high place, *wa²ākaltē^c immī hayyôm*, "for you will eat with me today."³⁵ Additional examples can be found in Exod. 23:11; Deut. 6:11b; 11:15; 12:7; Ezek. 18:6, 11, 15; Joel 2:26; Ps. 22:30; etc. No apparent difference in meaning can be detected between such examples and cases where a very general term, largely devoid of semantic content, such as ²*ōkel*, "food," or *leḥem*, "bread,"³⁶ is used as the object. See Gen. 37:25, *wayyēšēbū le²ēkol-leḥem*, "and they sat down to eat bread." Other examples can be found under Gen. 43:32; Jer. 52:33; 1 Kgs. 21:4; 1 Sam. 28:20; Deut. 9:9, 18; Exod. 34:28. The near identity of meaning between these two constructions suggests that the omission of the object may reflect nothing more than the normal drive toward efficient language use.³⁷ Notice, however, that both of these constructions used with ²*ākal* imply that a meal was eaten. Neither could be used for eating a single item of food.³⁸ A failure to recognize that the missing objects following the two occurrences of ²*ākal* in Gen. 3:6 are anaphoric, referring to the antecedent *piryô*, "its fruit," has led to a subtle mistranslation here in some versions.

32. In Exod. 23:11 "in the seventh year you shall let [the land] . . . lie fallow," *wē²ākēlū^c ebyōnē ammekā*, "that the needy of your people may eat." The semantics of the verb imply an object such as ²*ōkel*, "food," or *leḥem*, "bread." In Jer. 4:11, "The way of the daughter of my people is like a scorching wind from the bare heights in the desert . . . *lō² lizrôt wēlō² lēhābar*, "not to winnow and not to cleanse." Here the implied object is some kind of grain. In Gen. 37:16, ". . . please tell me," *ēpōh hēm rō^cim*, "where they are shepherding," only sheep or flocks can be the implied object here. See also, e.g., 2 Kgs. 19:29; Gen. 17:17.

33. For a discussion of similar phenomena in English, see Matthews, *Syntax*, and Huddleston, *Introduction* (see n. 28).

34. See previous comments on verbs with and without two objects above.

35. In both of these examples one can infer something about the object (the kind of food to be eaten) from the larger context, but this does not play any role in the omission of the object.

36. Used in such cases by metonymy for the entire meal because it was the staple of most meals.

37. Languages frequently use devices to reduce verbage, especially where some information is redundant. Consider the following examples in English: *John doesn't work on Sunday but Bob does* (work on Sunday); *John said that Bob was brilliant, but he didn't convince us* (that Bob was brilliant). Comparisons and gapping work on the same basis; see n. 39 below. It is also possible that there is a rhetorical difference between some of the examples above with and without objects specified—perhaps to give greater emphasis to the whole expression. But it is not always clear in their contexts why the author might want to do this. In other cases the object may have been included for stylistic purposes—to parallel a following verb and its object; see Deut. 29:5. Other cases appear to retain the object so it can be qualified in some way; see Dan. 10:3 and Lev. 26:5.

38. Compare the similar distinctions in English: "John ate it" vs. "John ate."

Sometimes transitive verbs are used as intransitive to focus attention on the action or condition expressed in the verb itself rather than on its action with respect to an object. An example occurs in Joel 3:1, "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh . . .," *wēnibbē²û bēnêkem ûbnôtêkem*, "and your sons and your daughters will prophecy." The specific content of the prophecy is irrelevant here because attention is focused on the action of the verb itself. So also in Prov. 23:32 on the effects of too much wine—*ʔahārītô kēnāhāš yiššāk ûkēšip^cōnī yapriš*, "In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder,"³⁹ the action of the two verbs is emphasized and the objects we would normally expect are left unspecified.⁴⁰

Occasionally transitive verbs are used as intransitive to call attention to a general property of the subject. This seems particularly clear in Deut. 32:39, where the speaker is God. "See now, that I, even I am He, and there is no god beside me . . .," *ʔānī ʔāmīt waʔāḥayyeh māḥaštī waʔānī ʔerpā² wēʔēn mīyyādī maššīl*, "I kill, and I bring to life, I wound and I heal, and there is no one delivering out of my hand."

This construction is no doubt determined pragmatically requiring that we look to the context in every case to see why it was used. The major point to be made here, however, is that transitive verbs used intransitively must be clearly distinguished from transitive verbs whose objects have been ellipted. By definition, anaphoric ellipted objects can always be identified from antecedents indicated in the context. There are no antecedents, however, in the contexts of verbs merely *used* as intransitive. There may well be texts where either interpretation is possible. In such cases the interpreter must make his case for one or the other. It is even possible for the author to play on the possible ambiguity between the two. Again the interpreter must present evidence to support this view. My point here is that the two situations are distinct in principle. If one concludes it is anaphoric ellipsis, it is not a transitive verb used intransitively and vice versa.

In summary, we may contrast the two major constructions in which verbs appear with missing objects in Hebrew as follows. While anaphoric object ellipsis, like the use of pronouns, functions to avoid the repetition of noun phrases, the function of the intransitive use of transitive verbs in the cases we have examined appears to be simple efficiency, to refocus attention from the objects to the verbs themselves, or to some property of the subject. While the antecedents of anaphorically

39. Note that the two verbs are also "understood" specifically in this passage in both the Hebrew and the English translation, "like a serpent (bites) . . . like an adder (stings). . . . The *ellipsis of comparisons* is recognized in the grammars, of course. The reason such material can be omitted is that the parallel structures allow it to be recovered cognitively. This ellipsis is, therefore, syntactic and anaphoric in nature. *Gapping*, a phenomenon especially common in Hebrew poetry, where parallel structures are abundant, works on a similar basis and thus is also syntactic and anaphoric in nature. See Ps. 114:4 "The mountains danced (*rāqad*) like rams (dance) and hills (danced) like sheep (dance)," where both gapping and comparative ellipsis occurs. The frequency of such phenomena makes it all the more strange that *anaphoric object ellipsis*, which operates on the same general principle, should be overlooked so often. In verse 3 of this psalm, it is overlooked in both the *RSV* and the *NEB* (when Israel went forth from Egypt . . .) "the sea saw (them) and fled. . . ."

40. Numerous additional examples of this type occur in Hebrew. A number can be found in the classic text of Eccl. 3:1-8.

ellipted objects are specified in principle in the context and can, therefore, be recovered specifically, the meaning of the implied objects of transitive verbs used intransitively is only indicated in the most general terms by the meaning of the verb.

In the preceding discussion, we have pointed out a number of constructions that either affect the valence of a verb directly or create the illusion that the valence of certain Hebrew verbs is variable. An example of the former is the process for forming causatives whereby the subject of the non-causative verb becomes the object (or the second object) of its causative counterpart. We observed that certain verbs undergo this process in the *Qal* without any morphological change, thus creating intransitive and transitive pairs of the same verb, which are correlated with non-causative and causative meanings, respectively. Constructions in which two verbs are conjoined in a single clause governing a single object create the impression that one of them lacks an object but this does not affect the verb's valence. Nor does the anaphoric ellipsis of a verb's object affect the valence of the verb since the object of the verb is cognitively present and fully recoverable. But the intransitive use of transitive verbs does reduce the verb's valence by one although these verbs are derived from their corresponding transitives systematically by leaving their objects unspecified. Finally, anaphoric object ellipsis has no effect on the meaning of the sentence in which it occurs, but, as seen above, the intransitive use of transitive verbs may affect the focus in sentences in which it occurs. These "intransitive" verbs should be represented as derived from their corresponding transitive forms in the same way as causatives are derived systematically from their corresponding non-causative forms. Within this framework it is possible to ascertain the valence of most well-attested Hebrew verbs with a reasonably high degree of certainty, taking note of those that increase or decrease their valence *via* the syntactic processes just outlined.

A further implication of this study concerns the way we understand and translate Hebrew. Anaphoric object ellipsis and the use of transitive verbs as intransitive are both quite common in Hebrew. But while the latter is matched by similar usage in English, anaphoric object ellipsis is quite rare in English and limited to a very few verbs. This means that if a transitive verb occurs without an object in Hebrew and is translated in English *literally*, with its object omitted, it will likely be read as an intransitive use of a transitive verb, not as anaphoric object ellipsis. In the standard English translations, cases of anaphoric object ellipsis in Hebrew are usually recognized and the object supplied in narrative prose because of the unnaturalness of sentences where the verb's object is omitted⁴¹ and the intransitive use is an improbable reading.⁴² But in poetry, where the boundaries of ordinary syntax are frequently stretched, the strangeness resulting from the omission of these objects does not seem so unnatural. It may be assumed to result from the poetic character of the text. Failure to identify omission of an object as anaphoric ellipsis is more likely to occur therefore in poetry than in prose. Such misreadings

41. The English equivalents of transitive verbs in Hebrew are also frequently transitive.

42. That is, there is no apparent reason in the context to suggest that the intent is to specify a property of the referent of the subject or to make the verb itself the focus of the sentence or to justify the intransitive use of the verb in some other way.

may also occur because of a reluctance of scholars to supply objects where they are not overtly present, even though anaphoric object ellipsis is acknowledged in principle elsewhere and other types of anaphoric ellipsis like gapping and comparative ellipsis are recognized. One might prefer not to supply an object if a meaning can be obtained from the text without doing so. Such a meaning may indeed be obtained, but it will be obtained erroneously if the author intended anaphoric object ellipsis. For this reason I have stressed that anaphoric object ellipsis is a common phenomenon not only in Hebrew but in many other languages as well. In all these cases omitted objects are always *cognitively* present as surely as if they were overtly present in the text.

When one encounters a transitive verb without an object present, there should be no preference *a priori* for the intransitive use just because the object is not overtly present. One must adopt a neutral stance between the two alternatives, the anaphoric object ellipsis and the intransitive use of a transitive verb, until one can determine to which the evidence in the context points. Nor are we at liberty to assume the intransitive use yet search for some appropriate object in the context at the same time. Either the verb will be used as intransitive and its object unspecified, or the object will have been ellipted and its antecedent will be available in the context in which the verb occurs.

Some examples might help clarify these observations. In Mic. 5:7b the Hebrew text presents us with a sequence of three verbs all of which are normally transitive but none of which has an object overtly present: ^ʔāšer ^ʔim-^ᶜābar wē^{rā}-mas wē^ʔārāp wē^ʔēn maššîl. Neither the RSV nor the JPSV recognize these as cases of anaphoric object ellipsis. The former renders the passage, "which, when it goes through, treads down, and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver." But there is no reason that the verbs here should be taken as intransitive. If we examine the preceding context, the antecedents for the missing objects are obvious. In Mic. 5:7a we have, "the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples," ^{kē}ʔaryēh ^{bē}bahāmôt ^{ya}ʕar ^{kikē}pîr ^{bē}ᶜedrê-šōʔn, "like a lion among the beasts of the forests, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep." Clearly ^{bahāmôt} ^{ya}ʕar, "the beasts of the forests," and ^ᶜedrê-šōʔn, "the flocks of sheep," are the intended antecedents of the ellipted objects. With the proper pronoun objects supplied in English, the strangeness in the translation vanishes, "which, when it goes through *them*, it treads *them* down and tears *them* in pieces and no one can deliver *them*."

Consider also the similar passage in Hos. 5:14: "For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah," continuing with ^ʔānî ^ʔānî ^ʔetrōp wē^ʔelēk ^ʔeššāʔ wē^ʔēn maššîl, which the RSV and others render, "I, even I, will rend and go away, I will carry off, and none shall rescue." But it is clear from the context that the intended objects are "Ephraim" and "the house of Judah." Failure to supply the anaphorically ellipted objects in translation implies that they are *not* found in the context, that the verbs are used intransitively with attention focused on the action of the verb or descriptive of the subject. Surely this is not the intent.

Or consider Jer. 1:10: "and the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth,'" ^{rē}ʔēh ^{hip}qadîkā ^{hayyôm} ^{hazzeḥ} ^ᶜal-haggôyim wē^ᶜal-hammam-

lākôt linṭōš wēlīntōš ūlēha²abīd wēlahārōs libnôt wēlīntōa^c, “See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up, and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” Here we have six normally transitive verbs, and none of them has an object overtly present. Is the author using these verbs as intransitives, as all the major translations would seem to have it, or are the objects of these verbs specified with clear antecedents in the context? If the former, the focus is upon the mighty acts that will be performed by Jeremiah as the spokesman for God’s programs. If the latter, the focus is upon what will be done to the nations and kingdoms over which Jeremiah has been set by God. One cannot have it both ways, however, unless one claims that the author is playing on the ambiguity between the two constructions. But both here and in its parallel in Jer. 31:28, where all the objects are omitted in Hebrew as well as in the standard translations, there are obvious antecedents in the context for the missing objects. The author is without doubt referring to the nations and kingdoms in 1:10 or to the house of Israel and the house of Judah in 31:28. In Jer. 18:7, 9, where these same verbs are similarly used in an obviously related text, the *RSV* and the *NEB* supply the missing objects while the *JPSV* renders the verbs as passives with the underlying objects serving as subjects. And in the also related Jer. 24:6, where positive verbs are paired with their negative counterparts, the pronouns are actually present in Hebrew with the positive verbs but omitted with their negative counterparts. If in all these cases we know who the intended objects are, the verbs are not being used as intransitives nor are the objects really unspecified. These are cases of anaphoric object ellipsis.

The ambiguous treatment given this phenomenon is clearly evident in the standard translations of Isa. 46:4—*wē^cad-šēbâ ʔānī ʔesbōl ʔānī ʕāšīṭī wēʔānī ʔesšā² wēʔānī ʔesbōl waʔāmallēṭ*—which I have rendered with pronouns representing anaphorically ellipted objects as follows: “and when you turn grey, I will carry (you); I have made (you) and I will bear (you) up; I will carry (you) and save (you).” The *RSV* supplies the pronoun object only for the first of these five verbs while the *JPSV* supplies the objects in brackets for the last two verbs, omits it for the first and renders the second and third as though they were participles—“I was the Maker; I will be the Bearer.” But the contrast in the passage is between the Babylonian gods Bel and Nebo, who had to be carried by their servants, and the God of Jacob. The latter reminds His people that He had borne them since their birth and promises now in verse 4 to bear them and preserve them even until old age, emphasizing His commitment by the repetition of *ʔānī*, “I,” four times. There can be no doubt that the object of these four verbs is “you-Israel,” addressed in verse 3. If this is the author’s intention, the verbs should not be treated as intransitive and the objects understood should be represented in translation.

Finally, I would argue that a similar understanding of Isa. 1:3 is a more probably interpretation of the text than the customary translation, which is as follows (*RSV*): “Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand.” Verse 3b runs: *yisrāʔel lō² yāda^c ʕammī lō² hitbōnān*, which I would render: “Israel does not know (me); my people do not turn their attention to (me).” Since both verbs are normally transitive, either the missing

objects have been anaphorically ellipted and must be recognized in translation, or the verbs are used intransitively. The latter is unlikely since “the knowledge of God” in the dynamic experiential sense is more commonly the biblical view than the more intellectual kind of knowing suggested by the treatment of the verbs as intransitive (see Hos. 13:4; Deut. 11:28; Jer. 19:4). The rendering that treats the objects as anaphorically ellipted is also supported by the internal logic of the text. Yahweh contrasts the response of His people to His benevolence with that of domestic animals, who *do* recognize their benefactors and the source of their sustenance. The rendering which treats the objects as anaphorically ellipted expresses this contrast most vividly and symmetrically. The one whom the ox and the ass know (in the sense of German “kennen”), God’s people, Israel, do not know (“kennen”)—namely the one who owns them and is the source of their sustenance. In the usual translation where these verbs are treated as intransitive, however, the contrast is asymmetrical and therefore less pointed. In this case the contrast would be between the one whom the animals know (“kennen”) on the one hand, and the knowledge which Israel does not know (in the sense of German “wissen”) on the other.⁴³ On this basis the anaphoric elliptical interpretation seems preferable.

43. In all the examples of anaphoric object ellipsis, the antecedent was present, usually as a noun phrase in the preceding context. But in this example the antecedent is present in the first person verb morphology and the pronominal suffix of “my people.” It is worth noting that there are similar cases where the standard translations recognize antecedents represented in morphology, e.g., Jer. 14:20–21, where the antecedent of an ellipted anaphoric object is an affix in a preceding verb. Both the *RSV* and the *JPSV* supply the pronoun in this passage.

Readers may wonder how we can know that the missing object is “me” rather than “its owner” or “what the ox knows.” First, “what the ox knows” would exhibit the same asymmetry that the traditional translation does. More crucially, however, it is precluded by the parallel between the first line and the third, which requires God, Israel’s owner, to be the *antecedent* of the ellipted object we have postulated. Since the speaker is God, “me” meets this requirement. Recall that throughout this discussion we have insisted that for every case of anaphoric object ellipsis there must be an antecedent in the context *referring to the same entity* as the ellipted object. The expression “its owner” *in line one* cannot refer to God because there it refers to the owner of the ox. I have also argued that anaphoric object ellipsis is used optionally where otherwise a pronoun would occur. I take this to be the intent of all earlier discussions of this kind of ellipsis, however incomplete they may have been. When there is evidence that a pronoun has been ellipted in the text, all we can do is supply it in translation so the correct meaning is conveyed in English. We are not at liberty to make an analogy in the text explicit by inserting the analogue in the pronoun’s place no matter how clearly the analogy is indicated. Only the author can do that.

Perhaps the suggestion that the ellipted object should be derived from “its owner” in the first line is based upon the notion of the “identity of sense” between the ellipted object and its antecedent rather than “identity of reference” as I have assumed. The distinction between “sense” and “reference” was pointed out by the philosopher, G. Frege, “Über Sinn und Bedeutung,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100:25–50; English translation in P. T. Geach and M. Black, *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (Oxford, 1952), 56–78. While the “referent” of any noun phrase is the entity to which it refers in the real world, the “sense” of a noun phrase, as Frege used this term, is the ordinary meaning of the words without regard to what the “referent” of the noun phrase may be. In a sentence such as “*My partner is lazy; the bum never does his part!*” the two noun phrases have the same referent though their meaning as noun phrases (their “sense” in Frege’s terms) is completely different. This is “identity of reference” without “identity of sense,” and it is a quite common phenomenon. “Identity of sense” without “identity of reference” does occur, but only in contrived, highly restricted sentences, of interest only to linguists and philosophers. An example in English is

These few examples illustrate the potential value for our understanding of the Hebrew text that greater precision in our description and use of syntax can provide. With the clarification of syntactic processes which obscure the valence of verbs, it should be possible to establish it for most, if not all, well-attested verbs in Hebrew. This in turn enables us to identify object ellipsis with greater precision and to determine more adequately how it works and how it can be distinguished with greater certainty from the use of transitive verbs intransitively. Since these processes occur frequently throughout the Hebrew text, the potential for refining our understanding of it in many places is thus considerably enhanced.

"The man who gave *his paycheck* to his wife was wiser than the man who gave *it* to his girlfriend" (McCawley's example, *Syntactic Phenomena*, 333). Here the referent of "it" is clearly different from the referent of its antecedent, "his paycheck." The only other constructions that might allow examples like "its owner" to serve as an ellipted object, are cases of *zero anaphora*, which are "sense" anaphora, e.g., "John hasn't divorced his wife but Bill has (divorced his wife)." Here the zero anaphor and its antecedent have the same sense, but the objects have different referents. But in English this requires contiguous clauses and an anaphor *including the verb*. Converting our text in Isaiah in this manner, we would get, "The ox knows its owner but Israel does not (know its owner)." This does allow for the different referents of "its owner" that are intended in our text, but it is not the text as we actually have it in Isaiah. It seems most unlikely, therefore, that evidence could be found in Hebrew for syntax allowing us to understand the anaphor following "but Israel does not know" as "its owner" referring to Israel in the text as we have it. See McCawley, *Syntactic Phenomena*, 319–35 for discussion.