THE HEBREW PARTICIPLE AND STATIVE IN TYPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

The Biblical Hebrew participle and stative forms have long been recognized as “double-natured” or “intermediate” forms between the nominal and verbal systems (Andersen & Forbes 2007; Dyk 1994; Gordon 1982; Kahan 1889; Sellin 1889). Attention has been drawn to the relationship between these forms and the Hebrew verbal system by scholars who see the participle and the stative as integral parts of the finite tense-aspect-mood system in Biblical Hebrew (e.g., Hoftijzer 1991; Joosten 1989, 2002). I examine these forms in light of typological data on intransitive predication and adjectives and conclude that, while they have both nominal and verbal characteristics, they should be classified as adjectives. I conclude with implications for understanding the Biblical Hebrew verbal system.

1. PARTICIPLE, STATIVE, AND THE CLASS OF ADJECTIVE

The grammatical classification of the Biblical Hebrew participle and stative forms is made difficult by its perceived “double nature” (Doppelnatur), as it was termed in two late nineteenth-century studies (Kahan 1889; Sellin 1889). This label was meant to convey that the participle and stative forms in Biblical Hebrew at times act like nouns and in other instances like verbs. More recent studies have followed Gordon (1982) in describing the Biblical Hebrew participle and stative as “intermediate” forms, in contrast to Modern Hebrew, in which the participle is clearly either a noun or a verb. These recent studies have focused on semantic or syntactic means of distinguishing the various meanings or functions of this intermediate form. For example, Kedar-Kopfstein (1977:156) has argued that if viewed semantically, the “absolute polarity” of the “double-nature” description of the participle disappears, and instead there appears to be “gradations” of meaning between nominal and verbal. Dyk (1994:210–12) outlines the various meanings...
nominal and verbal characteristics of the BH participle, and then proposes that the participle may be “reanalyzed as the main verb of the proposition” when it is the predicate of a small clause and not nominally modified in any way (e.g., construct form, possessive suffix, article). Most recently, Andersen & Forbes (2007:209) have argued that the participle is “sometimes verbal, sometimes nominal, sometimes both at once, and sometimes indeterminate,” distinctions between which, to the degree that such are possible, they make by comparison with marked forms (e.g., Does a given participle function syntactically like the verbal forms of the root or the nominal ones?).

As an alternative to these approaches, I propose framing the problem of classifying the Hebrew participle and stative within the larger issue of the problematic status of the adjective class and bringing the findings of recent typological studies of this class to bear on the difficulties encountered in the Biblical Hebrew forms. Before proceeding to take up the typological data, however, I want to elaborate on the observed double nature or intermediate character of the participle and stative forms that have led to the approaches referred to above.

To begin with, both the participle and stative forms are adjectival, as described in the standard grammars (e.g., Kautzsch 1910:356). Their adjectival character is demonstrated by their gender-number agreement morphology and attributive syntactic function, as illustrated by the examples in (1). That is, adjectives are inflected to agree in gender with the noun they modify, whereas nouns are classified in the lexicon as either masculine and feminine.

(1) The Biblical Hebrew participle and stative functioning attributively:
   a. Deut 4:24

   For Yhwh your God is a consuming (f.) fire (f.)

2 Stassen (1997:255) classifies all participles as adjectival: “Participles are nonfinite verb forms which must be considered ADJECTIVAL in nature.”

3 Gai (1995:1-2) notes that the adjective’s gender-agreement inflection is the primary distinguishing feature between adjectives and nouns in Semitic (i.e., nouns have fixed gender whereas adjectives can be inflected for either gender for agreement purposes).
b. 1 Kgs 13:29

וַיָּבֵא אֶל הָעֵדָה הַגְּבֵּיָה

He came to the city of the old (m.) prophet (m.)

In addition, the participle and stative in Biblical Hebrew may be used substantivally as nouns, as illustrated in the examples in (2). The use of adjectives as nouns occurs in other languages, for example, Latin bona or Greek τὸ ἀγαθὸν τῶν '(the) goods' (see Allen et al. 1931:173; Smyth 1956: 273), thus supporting the adjectival analysis of the Biblical Hebrew participle and stative used substantivally.

(2) The Biblical Hebrew participle and stative functioning substantivally:

a. Deut 17:9

בְּכָתִית הַלֵּוִית הַלֵּוִית אֲלֵי-דִירָם

And you shall go to the Levitical priests and to the judge …

b. Exod 3:18

בְּכָתִית אַתָּה בֵּנוֹת לֵוִי אֲלֵי-דִירָם

And you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt

The present investigation, however, is focused on the participle and stative used in predicate constructions. When so used, these forms exhibit ambiguity with regard to their classification, because they share morphological and morphosyntactic features with both the verbal and the nominal systems. For instance, the stative exhibits a split paradigm, whereby it may be inflected with verbal person-gender-number affixes or declined with nominal suffixes, as illustrated in examples (3a–b). The stative’s formal ambiguity is therefore restricted to the zero-affix masculine-singular form, as illustrated in (3c): נָצִיר in this example may be

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4 Syntactically, the substantival use of adjectives might be analyzed in terms of a null modified head (cf. English in which the dummy noun one is generally required). In addition, the participle pattern qotel (<*qātil) is a nominalizer of agentive nouns (nomen agentis) in Biblical Hebrew, similar to the -er suffix in English (e.g., worker). However, the existence of some denominative agentive nouns (e.g., שָׁטִיר, 'gatekeeper') and other agentive nouns in this pattern that lack a Qal participle counterpart (e.g., כֵּן בּוֹק 'priest’) makes it unclear what the exact relationship is between the agentive qotel and the active participle (see Fox 2003:240-41).
alternatively analyzed as either a third-masculine-singular verbally inflected form or a masculine-singular nominally declined form.\(^5\)

(3) The stative in Biblical Hebrew:

a. Verbal inflection: Josh 23:2

אֲנִי קָנָהָי בּאַחַי בְּנֶעָם

I am old, advanced in days

b. Nominal inflection: Gen 18:11

וַיַּלְכֶה נָבָרָם וְשָׁרָה קָנָהָי בּאַחַי בְּנֶעָם

Now Abraham and Sarah (were) old, advanced in days

c. Formally ambiguous: Gen 24:1

וַיִּלְכֶה נָבָרָם וְקָנָהָי בּאַחַי בְּנֶעָם

Abraham was old/(was) old, advanced in days

The morphology of the participle is likewise mixed, exhibiting binyanim distinctions like verbs, but being consistently inflected with nominal suffixes, in contrast to the stative’s split-paradigm (verbal or nominal inflection) encoding. Ambiguity of the sort just described with respect to the stative also appears with the participle form of medial-weak roots, as illustrated by בּא in above example (3c). However, the difficulty in classifying the participle (as well as the zero-affix masculine-singular stative) ultimately stems from the fact that a zero-copula strategy for nominal and adjectival predicates predominates in Biblical Hebrew. Thus, the predicatively functioning participle appears “unsupported” (i.e., lacks an auxiliary or copular supportive item) just as the finite verbal forms are. This formal ambiguity between a nominal and verbal analysis of the participle is apparently responsible for such “mixed” constructions as the one in Jer 33:22, provided as example (4): the plural construct form of the participle מְשָׁרָהִי requires we treat it nominally, whereas the form of the possessor, with the direct object marker מִשְׁרָיִן, would appear to require that we treat the participle as a verb (Gordon 1982:14).\(^6\)

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5 This precise ambiguity is the focus of Andersen & Forbes’ (2007) recent essay, which treats only the third-masculine-singular form of מָתָן. Their conclusions, cited above, are therefore applicable to only a small number of occurrences of the stative forms.

6 Note the suggested explanations of this construction in Joüon (2006:§121k n. 2): (1) the text may be in error and should read מְשָׁרָהִי ‘my servants,’ as found in the previous verse (v. 21); (2) if the text is correct then the construction is analogous with instances of the construct participle before prepositions (see
(4) Jer 33:22

אֲרָבָה אָתָיוֹרְךָ עַבְּחֵי אֲתַרְתְּלָוֹמִי מָשָׁרְתִּי אֲתָהּ:

I will multiply the seed of David my servant and the Levites my servants/who serve me/the ones serving me

I submit that the ambiguities of the Biblical Hebrew participle and stative just described are representative of the sorts of ambiguities that characterize the word class of adjective in languages generally. The problematic status of the adjective with respect to the verbal and nominal domains was recognized already in ancient Greek grammar discussions. For example, Plato and Aristotle treated the adjective as a subcategory of the verb, but by contrast the Stoics classed the adjective with the noun. The Greeks also recognized that at the center of this issue of adjectival status stands the participle (Gk. μετοχή), so named because it was seen as “participating” in formal and distributional features of both verbs and nouns (see Lyons 1968:11-12).

The trifold classification of verb, noun, and adjective has long been based on notional and formal distinctions inadequate to the task. Notionally, nouns denote persons or things, verbs denote actions or states, and adjectives denote qualities. However, as Lyons (1968:324) has observed, “the difference between a ‘quality’ and a ‘state’ (if it is not entirely illusory) is less striking than the difference between an ‘action’ and a ‘state’.” Formal distinctions are of a morphological and syntactic character: on the one hand, nouns and adjectives can be inflected for case, whereas verbs are inflected for tense, person, and number; on the other hand, nouns can function as either subject or predicate, whereas verbs and adjectives function as predicates.7

Givón (1979:13) has therefore appropriately described the class of adjectives as “a notorious swing-category in languages.” The usual strategy for dealing with the ambiguities of the adjective class has been to distinguish three types of adjectival encodings: adjectives, adjectival nouns, and adjectival verbs. Wetzer (1996:5-6) explains, however, that this approach is problematic because although prototypical adjectives may, by this classification, be distinguishable from nouns and verbs, they

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Joüon 2006:§129m), especially given that the two particles (object marker and preposition רָאָת) are often confused in the book of Jeremiah.

7 The first of these distinctions is mentioned by Dionysius Thrax, the second by Plato (Lyons 1968:10-11, 319). Together they account for the disagreement among ancient grammarians as to whether the adjective should be classed with the verb or noun. See also Radford (1997:37-44).
are not sufficiently distinguishable from the two adjectivals, which are classified as subclasses of nouns and verbs, respectively. In other words, these categories appear to bleed into one another rather than having discrete boundaries. Recent studies in the typology of adjectives and the larger category of intransitive predications provide a way forward.

2. **A TYPOLOGY OF ADJECTIVAL ENCODING**

By way of introduction, linguistic typology may be described as encompassing two phases: in the descriptive or classification phase languages are organized in a cross-linguistic database as the basis for empirical investigation; in the explanatory or generalization phase hypotheses are proposed and tested to explain specific patterns observed in the data. Obviously we should not think of these phases as fully discrete or strictly ordered (see Croft 2003:1; Stassen 1997:3-4).

My treatment of the Hebrew participle and stative starts with Stassen’s (1997) typology of intransitive predication, in which he classifies the patterns of grammatical encoding for several categories of intransitive predication in about 400 languages. Stassen begins his investigation with the four semantic predicate categories illustrated by the English examples in (5), and examines the grammatical encoding strategies used cross-linguistically for each category.

(5) Predicate categories of intransitive predication (Stassen 1997:12):

a. John walks (event)  
   b. John is a carpenter (class)  
   c. John is in the kitchen (location)  
   d. John is tall (property)

Stassen’s findings confirm the ambiguities of the adjective class that I have already been describing. First, Stassen (1997:17-18) notes that the first three categories listed in (5) – event, class, and location – are “‘focal points’ in the overall topography” of intransitive predication. By contrast, properties or adjectives, represented by (5d), do not form a “homogeneous” category as the other three do. Rather, as Stassen explains, these predicate categories form a continuum on the “Time Stability Scale,”  

8 Stassen uses event to denote both actions/processes and states; an example of the latter type of event would be *John sleeps*.  
of location and event stand at one end of the continuum, while class stands at the other end, as relatively unstable and stable predicates, respectively; properties or adjectives, by contrast, lie in the intermediate, non-focal area between these two extremes.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unstable</th>
<th>Stable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location/Event</td>
<td>Property</td>
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Second, Stassen (1997:30) determines that the first three categories each have a “prototypical predicate encoding strategy” cross-linguistically, whereas the fourth, the adjective category, lacks a prototypical strategy, and instead uses one or more of the strategies from the other three categories.

Stassen’s three prototypical encoding strategies may be described briefly as follows. First, the prototypical event predicate or verbal strategy is unsupported; that is, there is no copula or auxiliary required. In addition, if the language has person-agreement features, the event predicate strategy will have person-agreement marking (Stassen 1997:50, 120). Examples of this strategy in English and Biblical Hebrew are given in (7).

(7) Prototypical verbal (or event) encoding strategy:

a. *John walks* (from [4a] above)
b. Gen 22:6

The two of them walked on together

Second, the cross-linguistically prototypical class-membership or nominal strategy, in contrast to the verbal strategy, is supported by a non-verbal or zero copula. That is, either the predicate is introduced by an overt copula that does not have the characteristics of a verb, such as a pronoun or particle, or the predicate is juxtaposed with the subject and the copula merely implied (Stassen 1997:120-21). The varieties of the nominal strategy are illustrated in (8).

(8) Prototypical nominal (class) encoding strategies:

a. Zero copula:

*Moskva gorod* (Russian)

Moscow (is) a city (Stassen 1997:62)
Josh 22:34

Yhwh (is) God

b. Pronominal copula:¹⁰

The clock is a gift (Glinert 1989:189)

2 Kgs 19:15

You are God

c. Particle copula:

Rmt pw mhw (Egyptian)

Mahu is a man (Stassen 1997:79)

Judg 6:13

Yhwh is with us

Third, the cross-linguistically prototypical locative encoding strategy features a verbal support element; that is, the copula can be marked for typical verbal categories of tense, aspect, and modality and, most significantly, person agreement (Stassen 1997:55, 120). The locative strategy is illustrated in (9).

(9) Prototypical locative encoding strategies:

a. John is in the kitchen (from [4a] above)

¹⁰ The pronominal copular analysis in Biblical Hebrew is debated. A majority of scholars argue that examples such as יִהְיוּ הַגָּדוֹל is should be analyzed as cases of extrapositioning (traditionally labeled *casus pendens*). That is, they consist of an extraposed noun (והוא הגלות), a resumptive pronoun (הוא), and predicate noun (Yhwh, he is God) (e.g., Geller 1991; Muraoka 1999b; Zewi 1996; Khan 2006 presents the minority pronominal copula position). However, in the above example from 2 Kgs 19:15, the lack of person agreement between the fronted element (והוא) and the resumptive pronoun (הוא) argues in favor of a pronominal copula interpretation. As further support, Li & Thompson (1977) have argued that extrapositional equative clauses (as are those mentioned here) are an important source for the development of pronominal copulas cross-linguistically.
b. Gen 6:4

The Nephalim were in the land

3. INTRANSITIVE PREDICATION AND THE CLASS OF ADJECTIVE IN BIBLICAL HEBREW

By illustrating the different encoding strategies for intransitive predication with Biblical Hebrew examples, I have already anticipated to some extent my treatment of the Biblical Hebrew data. The following general points summarize the classification of intransitive predication in Biblical Hebrew. First, since Hebrew has person agreement marking, following Stassen’s argument, we can identify encoding that includes person-agreement markings as verbal. Not surprisingly then, the verbal strategy in Biblical Hebrew is used to encode event predicates, as illustrated by example (7b). Second, locative encoding with the verbal copula הוהי is relatively less frequent in Biblical Hebrew (9), compared with nominal encoding, which is the predominant strategy for both nominal and locative predicates. Third, of the nominal strategies illustrated by the examples in (8), the most frequent is zero-copula encoding, in which the subject and predicate are juxtaposed and the copula is implied. The pronominal copula analysis is debated in Biblical Hebrew (see note 10 above); however, the outcome of this debate in no way affects the argument I am making here.

And so we reach the central question of this investigation: What sort of encoding strategy or strategies are used for predicate adjectives, and are the stative and participle adjectives encoded in the same way as prototypical adjectives in Biblical Hebrew? To begin with, property predicates or adjectives are encoded in Biblical Hebrew exactly as class or nominal predicates. That is, they appear in zero-copula, pronominal-copula, particle-copula, and verbal-copula predicates, as illustrated in (10).

11 For example, מוהב occurs with the participle only 124 times, according to the Classical Hebrew Dictionary, s.v. מוהב.

12 The correctness of this analysis of the zero copula as “implying” a copula is supported by contrastive examples such as 2 Sam 7:16 (והב) versus 1 Chron 17:24 (zero), in which the copula with the adjectival participle, in this instance, is shown to be optional and without effect on the semantic interpretation of the constructions, and no certain conclusions of a diachronic or dialectic contrast can be drawn from these and similar contrastive examples.
(10) Encoding strategies for adjectival (property) predicates: 13

a. Zero copula: Gen 29:31

רחל א溯源

But Rachel (was) barren

b. Pronominal copula: Lam 1:18 14

צדק הוא הוה

Righteous is Yhwh

c. Verbal copula: Gen 11:30

והי כשיר עונרה

Sarai was barren (cf. Gen 29:31)

The relative frequency with which these varieties of nominal and locative encoding appear with adjectives also parallels their frequency patterns with class and location predicates.

In contrast to these nominal and locative encodings for prototypical adjectives, the stative adjective in Biblical Hebrew presents a split-strategy between verbal and nominal encodings, as illustrated by the examples in (11): that is, the stative may be verbally encoded with verbal affixes, including person marking, as in (11a); or it may be encoded with nominal morphology and either nominal or locative predicate encoding, as in (11b and c).

13 I have not found any clear examples of an adjective with a particle copula. In the few possible instances, the particle seems to function as an existential predicator, equivalent to English *there is*, rather than a copula. For example, the particle שָׁיָה in שָׁיָה רֹבֶךָ (Gen 33:9) might be analyzed as a copula (i.e., ‘Plenty is to me’), but more likely it is to be understood as expressing the existence of plenty: ‘There is plenty (that belongs) to me’ (cf. examples such as Eccl 6:1 שָׁיָה יִשָּׂרָאֵל, where the relative יִשָּׂרָאֵל makes it clear that שָׁיָה is not a copula). The case is similar for examples with negative פָּנָי and adjectives, such as Gen 39:9: פָּנָי רֹבֶךָ כְּבִי הָאָדָם ‘There is no one greater in this house.’

14 The pronominal copula analysis of this example is less certain than that with the lack of person agreement cited in (8); however, I am citing this example here since a pronominal copula analysis is possible, though whether it proves to be *correct* or not has no bearing on my larger argument (see n. 9).
(11) Encoding strategies for stative adjectives in Biblical Hebrew:  

a. Verbal strategy: Gen 48:10

העיניים של ישראל בחרז קמקו

The eyes of Israel were heavy from old age

b. Zero copula: Exod 17:12

והידי משכה כבדים

The hands of Moses (were) heavy

c. Verbal copula: Gen 50:9

והי החמאנה כבד קרפא

The camp was very great (lit., ‘heavy’)

Finally, the encoding of the participle adjective in Biblical Hebrew follows the pattern of prototypical adjectives, as opposed to the split-pattern encoding of the stative adjective. The varieties of nominal and locative encodings for the participle are illustrated in (12).

(12) Encoding strategies for participial adjectives:

a. Zero copula: 1 Kgs 13:1

וירבעם עמד על הпрофессиона

Now Jeroboam (was) standing beside the altar

b. Pronominal copula: Deut 31:3

יונשנהهو עברה לעונה

Joshua is going to be crossing over before you

c. Particle copula: Gen 43:4  

אם ישלך משלך ואתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאתאת앗

If you are going to send our brother with us . . .

d. Verbal copula: 2 Kgs 9:14

ויורם והיה שמיר ברמה גלאם

... and Joram had been keeping guard at Ramoth-gilead

However, the participle adjective differs from both prototypical adjectives and the stative adjective in that it is not limited to encoding properties or

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15 I have been unable to find an example of stative with either a pronominal or particle copula.

16 The negative counterpart construction appears in the following verse, Gen 43:5: ‘if you will not send (him) . . .’
states, but can encode non-stative event predicates. It is with just this characteristic that confusion arises over the classification of the participle, so that it has been argued that the participle must be treated as a verb whenever it governs an object (e.g., Andersen & Forbes 2007; see examples 4 and 12c above). However, in light of Stassen’s typology we can better explain this mixed character of the predicative participle as a case of verb switching or nominal takeover, whereby event predicates in Biblical Hebrew are encoded not only with the prototypical verbal strategy (i.e., with a finite verbal conjugation), but may also be encoded nominally or locatively in the participle form as the complement of a supporting copula. Stassen notes that all such cases of verb-switching take the form of a contrast between an unsupported verbal strategy and a supported or periphrastic nominal or locative encoding. The passage in (13) illustrates this contrast in the *yiqtol* versus participle encoding of the event (activity) predicate 'seek.'

(13) Verbal versus nominal (with participle) encoding of event predicates:
Gen 37:15b-16a

The man asked him, “What are you seeking.” And he said, “I (am) seeking my brothers.”

What I am proposing then is that the stative and participle in Biblical Hebrew be classified consistently as adjectives, over and against those who would argue that they are sometimes nouns and sometimes verbs, or that they are intermediate or hybrid forms. If one wants to retain the idea of these adjectives as intermediate forms, then this must be understood in the restricted sense that the stative adjective may be encoded either verbally or nominally, and that the participle, unlike prototypical adjectives, may be used to nominally or locatively encode event predicates in a supported or periphrastic construction. In any case, we can understand the character of these two adjective forms as being the result

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17 On the range of lexical semantics that may be encoded with *qotel* pattern, see Kedar-Kopfstein (1981).
18 Waltke & O’Connor (1990:615) write, “Syntax, the distribution of words in a clause or sentence, is decisive in describing the use of a participle.”
19 Stassen (1997:242) writes that, “All cases of V-switching take the form of a contrast between SIMPLE VERB FORMS and PERIPHRASTIC (or COMPLEX) verb forms.”
of nominal and locative takeovers of event predications involving each of these forms.

4. **IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM ADJECTIVAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE STATIVE AND PARTICIPLE**

The implications for this analysis are not simply linguistic elegance, though it does offer us that. Rather, based on Stassen’s typological study, we can take these results and in turn say something about the verbal system in Hebrew and Semitic. Stassen (following Wetzer) posits the “Tensedness Parameter” as a partial explanation for the pattern of adjectival encoding seen in his database. Simply stated, there is a correlation between the choice of encoding strategy for property or adjectival predicates in languages and whether their verbal system is tense or aspect prominent (i.e., predominately has tense or aspect marking on verbs): languages that are aspect prominent tend to encode adjectival predicates according to their verbal strategy, whereas tense-prominent languages tend to encode adjectival predicates according to one or more of their nominal strategies. These correlations are mutually implicating, so that one can, in reverse, posit that if a language uses verbal encoding for its adjectives it is likely aspect-prominent, and if it uses nominal encodings for its adjectives it is likely a tense-prominent language (see Stassen 1997:347-57).

Unfortunately, these correlations expressed by the tensedness parameter do not neatly apply to Biblical Hebrew, in which we have a verbal-nominal split-encoded stative adjective alongside the nominally and locatively encoded participle and prototypical adjectives. However, the explanatory usefulness of the tensedness parameter can be appreciated if we widen the scope of our investigation to encompass adjectival predication over a longer time period in Semitic, looking from the early East Semitic origin of the stative form to Modern Hebrew’s encoding of present tense with the participle. From this perspective we can discern the following developments, summarized in (14).
At the early period there was a “nominal takeover” of adjectival predication in the stative adjective, which has its likely origins in a juxtaposed adjective-pronoun construction (Huehnergard 1992:156; Stassen 1997:494). This nominal encoding shifted to verbal encoding when the subject pronouns were grammaticalized as suffixed person-gender-number agreement markers.21 In West Semitic this verbal encoding became the productive perfect conjugation, but in Biblical Hebrew the stative has already become a closed class of adjective. The non-productive status of the stative adjective class in Biblical Hebrew may in large part be due to the productive, nominally encoded participle, which represents a nominal takeover of event predication. Although uneven, there is an observable shift in the encoding of the participle in Hebrew, from a mostly nominal encoding in Biblical Hebrew eventually to the nominal-locative split encoding beginning already in Mishnaic Hebrew and appearing regularly in Modern Hebrew.22 The latter nominal-
locative split encoding is conditioned by what Stassen (1997:314) terms the “present parameter;” that is, the verbal copula healer is used with the participle in past (and future) expressions, while the zero-copula nominal strategy is maintained for present temporal expressions. Thus, the least we can say based on these and other data and the tensedness parameter is that over the course of the history of at least West Semitic, there is a shift from aspect-prominent verbal systems toward tense-prominent ones and not the reverse.

In view of the tensedness parameter and the development of adjectival encoding illustrated in (14), the mixture of intransitive encodings of

23 For examples and discussion of the compound tense in Modern Hebrew, see Shlonsky (1997:25, 30-31) and Glinert (1989:125-26, 332), who also both analyze healer as an auxiliary in these constructions. Kuteva (2001:13) discusses the difficulties involved in identifying auxiliaries, noting that there is a good degree of variation with regard to how many features of “canonical auxiliary constructions” a given auxiliary has. These include: (1) change of semantics of the main verb; (2) variation as to whether or not the construction is used with all verbs in the language; (3) integration of the structure into the system of paradigmatic distinctions of the language; (4) possibility/impossibility of using adverbials between the auxiliary and main verb; (5) particular facts about gender/number agreement between subject and object and the components of the auxiliary structure, etc. Points (2) and (3), and possibly (4), argue in favor of an auxiliary analysis of healer in compound tenses in Modern Hebrew. Dyk & Talstra (1999:165) attempt to nuance the case in Biblical Hebrew by arguing that “a difference should be maintained between stating that the formal syntax allows for a participle to be interpreted as being the main verbal predication and stating that in a particular instance it actually was intended as the main verbal predication.” However, it is unclear what they mean by “actually was intended,” nor does their comment seem to follow that, “Obviously, something would be missed if one were to treat the participle merely as a nominal form in examples such as Jeremiah 7:17.”

24 See Stassen’s (1997:495-99) data on Hebrew, Arabic, and Amharic, and his comment (p. 497) that “in all modern West Central Semitic languages, stative interpretation of all property-concept words requires a nominal encoding strategy.” Cf. Revel’s (1989:3) statement: “The Hebrew of post-biblical times certainly used a tense system, and the same is widely assumed for the ancestor of the biblical language, as vestigially represented by the ‘preterite’ (or waw consecutive) use of the imperfect form. It seems likely, a priori, that the system of the intervening period would also have been one of tense.”
adjectives in Biblical Hebrew parallels, not coincidentally, the mixed character of its verbal system with respect to tense and aspect. The Biblical Hebrew verbal system contains a past-narrative tensed conjugation in *wayyiqtol*, but it also has a perfective-imperfective aspectual opposition in *qatal-yiqtol*, and employs a nominally encoded participle to express progressive aspect. This analysis of the verbal conjugations in Biblical Hebrew is strengthened by other typological arguments that I have discussed elsewhere (see Cook 2001:127-31; 2006:32-33) regarding the patterned interaction of past tense and perfective verb forms with stative predicates, the connection between existing imperfective verbs and the rise of new perfective forms, and the overlap of form and function resulting from such grammaticalizations. Thus, typological arguments regarding the encoding of adjectival predicates and regarding the tense-aspect split of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system are mutually confirming.

5. **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

In summary, I am arguing for a unified analysis of the participle and stative as adjectives in Biblical Hebrew, in opposition to claims that these forms are either nouns and verbs or some intermediate or hybrid form. The behavior of these forms that have led to such characterizations I have explained as stemming from the character of the class of adjectives as a “swing category,” to use Givón’s term once again, and as the direct result of nominal and locative takeovers of event predicates. The implications arising from this analysis serve to bolster the case I have made elsewhere that the Biblical Hebrew verbal system has a central aspectual opposition, but is in transition toward a tense-prominent system, which appears in Mishnaic Hebrew and onward.

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