not easily translate to contemporary debates about the role of the Ten Commandments in public life. In a secular republic, even a “nonreligious,” “political” covenant with Yahweh is unthinkably religious.

Aaron’s contribution to biblical studies will be evaluated by experts in the field for years to come. As for the relevance of his study to American culture, this study puts in stark relief the foreignness of the biblical world and the process of biblical composition, of both of which modern advocates of the Decalogue’s public esteem will likely remain blissfully uninformed.


**Reviewed by John A. Cook, Asbury Theological Seminary.**

This book is a reproduction of Rolf Furuli’s dissertation, defended in 2005 at the University of Oslo. In the first three chapters he discusses the history of the study of the Hebrew verbal system, focusing on how the “waw consecutive” (i.e., wayyiqtol and weqatal) forms have been analyzed (chap. 1); he presents his theory of tense, aspect, and mood (chap. 2); and summarizes the historical-comparative evidence for the waw consecutive conjugations (chap. 3). He concludes that they are inventions of the Masoretes and do not differ semantically from their non-consecutive counterparts (i.e., wayyiqtol = yiqtol; weqatal = qatal). In the remaining chapters, Furuli treats each of the Hebrew verbal forms in turn, including infinitives and participle (chap. 4), yiqtol (chap. 5), wayyiqtol (chap. 6), and qatal (including weqatal) (chap. 7). He then concludes with a discussion of functional overlap among the verbal forms under the title “Linguistic Convention and the Use of Verbs” (chap. 8), and general concluding remarks (chap. 9).

In the preface, Furuli promises a “novel contribution” to the study of the Hebrew verb, but warns that “some arguments may seem to be rather complicated and difficult to grasp” (p. 2). He is correct on both counts! His analyses of numerous Hebrew examples are novel and unparalleled, but also unconvincing. Many of his linguistic arguments are intricate, but at the same time problematic. Space allows only a brief critique of Furuli’s linguistic arguments and a few illustrations of his analysis.

Furuli distinguishes his approach from earlier studies in two ways. First, he claims that previous theories all fail to distinguish systematically between past temporal reference and past tense, the latter understood as grammaticalized past temporal reference (pp. 19, 47). Without further explanation, this claim becomes his basis for dismissing the past tense identification of wayyiqtol. Although Furuli recognizes that wayyiqtol has past temporal reference in many clauses, he fails to explain adequately how this past temporal reference is effected, if not by tense marking, nor why this particular verb should so often coincide with past temporal reference if semantically it is not a past tense form. Second, Furuli claims that aspect in Hebrew is different from aspect in modern languages, particularly English. However, his only justification for this claim is “because aspect is a kind of viewpoint, it is not obvious that it has the same nature in the different aspectual languages of the world” (p. 49). With this claim that Hebrew aspect is sui generis, Furuli creates anew the Hebrew verbal system according to his own understanding. But he should therefore avoid applying the terms perfective and imperfective to the Hebrew verbal forms, because he apparently does not understand these categories in the conventional way.

Furuli adopts Olsen’s theory of tense and aspect (Mari Broman Olsen, *A Semantic and Pragmatic Model of Lexical and Grammatical Aspect* [New York: Garland, 1997]), but although Olsen offers some valuable insights into tense and aspect, her understanding of perfective in English is eccentric. Most linguists recognize both that English has no perfective-marked verbal form (though the simple past and past progressive contrast in an analogous way to perfective and imperfective) and that the universal categories of perfective and perfect are distinct from one another (the latter is expressed by the perfect form in English; see Robert I. Binnick, *Time and the Verb: A Guide to Tense and Aspect* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 372). Olsen, by contrast, claims that the English perfect forms express perfective aspect (1997, 172–76), and by embracing her theory, Furuli is misled in his
understanding of Hebrew aspect, which is mediated too much by his English translations of the Hebrew verbs (p. 417).

Furuli’s study is most concerned with the consecutive forms (particularly wayyiqtol), about which he makes three claims. (1) Wayyiqtol is neither past tense nor perfective aspect, but is imperfective aspect and semantically indistinct from the other prefix conjugations; the wa(y)- prefix is a simple conjunction. (2) There is no historical-comparative evidence to distinguish the consecutive forms from their non-consecutive counterparts, and the “consecutive” forms are an invention of the Masoretes (p. 135). (3) The Masoretes at times “wrongly” applied their invention to the biblical text, based on their misunderstanding of the text’s temporal reference (p. 142). According to Furuli, the four-form view (qatal, wenqatal, yiqtol, wayyiqtol) of the Hebrew verbal system arose in the first part of the second millennium C.E. due to the widespread assumption that tense was a basic part of every language, and that therefore the Hebrew verbal forms could be distinguished on that basis (p. 23).

Furuli admits that 93.1 percent of wayyiqtol have past temporal reference. Nevertheless, he claims that no amount of data will prove the past tense claim for wayyiqtol, while any counter evidence will decisively debunk the theory (p. 73). Such an approach is prima facie problematic enough in light of Sapir’s dictum that grammars leak, and the recognition from diachronic typology that forms may develop secondary, context-induced meanings that are semantically discontinuous with their primary meanings (Bernd Heine, Claudi Ulrike, and Friederike Hünemanneyer, Grammaticalization: A Conceptual Framework [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], 71–72). However, taking such an approach to an ancient, composite text in which differences among forms were preserved through a long oral tradition before being preserved orthographically is absurdly unrealistic! On the one hand, if the consecutive forms were simply an invention of the Masoretes, how can one even speak meaningfully about their “wrongly” attributing it to the text? On the other hand, if the Masoretes preserved an ancient reading tradition (which preserved real, ancient semantic distinctions) but did so imperfectly, could they conceivably have committed enough errors to account for the 6.9 percent of Furuli’s counterexamples?

Instead of distinguishing semantics and pragmatics in his analyses of Hebrew examples, as promised, Furuli has conflated pragmatics, context, and realia, so that the verbal semantics retain little meaning at all. For example, Furuli argues that in order to ascertain correctly the semantic contribution of a verbal form, it is necessary to examine those instances in which the context does not influence the interpretation of the verb (p. 186). He illustrates with the wayyiqtol form ‘to build’ in 1 Kings 6:1, which he translates “in the 480th year he began to build the temple,” explaining that the ingressive meaning “is caused by the verb form alone, because the only other information apart from the verb form, that is needed, is a knowledge of the world (that it took more than one year to build the temple)” (p. 187). Clearly Furuli is treating neither semantics nor pragmatics here, but analyzing his perception of the realities of the event.

Other questionable analyses are easy to find. Here I give just a brief listing of problems from a single list of examples meant to illustrate the semantic range of imperfective wayyiqtol. (1) Furuli labels the form in Gen. 37:21 as conative, because Reuben tried unsuccessfully to deliver Joseph: “When Reuben heard this, he tried to deliver him out of their hands” (p. 60). In fact, Furuli has misunderstood the passage: the verse reports that Reuben successfully rescued Joseph from being immediately killed by his brothers, as they had intended. (2) Furuli misunderstands the relationship between verbal semantics and temporal adverbial phrases, interpreting the wayyiqtol of silh in 1 Sam. 16:13 as ingressive because of the adverbial phrase “from that day forward” (p. 64, n. 78). In fact, the opposite is the case: the wayyiqtol itself has no ingressive sense, but the ingressive meaning of the predicative derives from the adverbial phrase (see Carlota S. Smith, “Activities: States or Events?” Linguistics and Philosophy 22 [1999]: 479–508). (3) Similarly, the progressive sense in 2 Sam. 16:13 is not attributable to the wayyiqtol forms, as Furuli argues, but is due to the participle, adverbial infinitive, and irreal perfect forms interspersed among the wayyiqtol forms (p. 64). (4) Finally, Furuli claims the wayyiqtol of qrb ‘to approach’ in Gen. 47:29 has an ingressive sense, “Gradually the days approached for Israel to die” (p. 64, n. 79), presumably because the bestowal of Jacob’s blessings is yet to follow in the narrative.

Although Furuli’s study of the Hebrew verb is novel, it is little more than a novelty. His theory rests
on a faulty linguistic understanding of tense-aspect-mood, he has conflated semantics, pragmatics, and contextual clues, and he misunderstands many of the Hebrew examples he cites.

Reviewed by Matthew Suriano, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Hallvard Hagelia's monograph on the Tel Dan Inscription covers over ten years of discussion, debate, and controversy published since the initial discovery of Fragment A in 1993. In addition to the well-known debates over the interpretation of byt dwd in line 9, other controversies surround the inscription as scholars continue to discuss the stele's reconstruction and its language. While the author himself has contributed to this academic discourse (see SEA 69 [2004]), his stated purpose for this monograph is to provide a survey of the various studies centered on the inscription, rather than to offer new insight into this important epigraphic source. Given the numerous publications devoted to this subject, this monograph certainly plays a valuable role in the field.

The monograph contains eleven chapters and a bibliography but no subject index. Following the introduction are two chapters devoted to the inscription's translation. The first (chap. 2, "Synopsis") reviews various translations of the inscription, and the second (chap. 3, "Establishing the Text") offers a line-by-line analysis that ultimately defends the reading found in the editio princeps (published in IEJ 45 [1995]). Chapters 4–6 discuss paleography and include a chapter that places the inscription's ductus within its Iron Age context (chap. 5, "Paleographical Comparison"), followed by a brief discussion of chronology (chap. 6, "Dating"). Chapters 7–9 survey the often-acrimonious debate regarding the inscription's language, with almost twenty pages devoted to the arguments over the wyqtl verbal forms (pp. 136–55 of chap. 7, "Grammar"). Chapter 8, "Glossary and Semantic Analysis," offers a description of the extant vocabulary of the text that includes several insightful excursuses examining the respective words in other Northwest Semitic epigraphic sources. Chapter 9, "Dialectographic Analysis," affirms that the language of the Tel Dan Inscription is a regional form of Old Aramaic. The final two chapters briefly describe contemporaneous epigraphic sources (chap. 10, "Comparison of Content") and provide a summation of the earlier discussions (chap. 11, "Epilogue").

Hagelia's work is actually the second book devoted to the Tel Dan Inscription, the first being George Athas's University of Sydney dissertation (published in JSOT Supplement Series 360 [Sheffield, 2003]), a work Hagelia himself has reviewed at length (SJOT 18 [2004]). The striking difference between these two volumes is that Hagelia's cautious and reserved approach to the text produces a conventional study that contrasts with Athas's radical rereading of the inscription. Hagelia's monograph began as a research component of a larger project that originally intended to translate Northwest Semitic inscriptions into Norwegian. As a result, the monograph has all of the advantages and disadvantages of a compilation. The author has successfully reviewed a wide range of studies devoted to the inscription (the bibliography is current up to 2004); however, the manner of approach inhibits him from offering any penetrating observations into the subject itself. For instance, the assessment of various reconstructions is at times lacking. Consequently, the collection of translations in chapter 2 seems excessive, as it contains reconstructions that are not addressed elsewhere in the monograph as well as translations. Even more problematic in this section is the inclusion of readings based on Fragment A (pp. 14–27), which consists of partial translations and reconstructions made before the discovery of Fragments B1+B2 (Brian and Naveh initially published A in 1993 [see IEJ 43]). The publication of the new fragments in 1995 rendered the earlier readings somewhat obsolete; thus the usefulness of reviewing pre-B1+B2 research is unclear and unstated in this book.

Despite the limitations that are inherent with a review work of this nature, Hagelia's ability to encapsulate previous studies produces a synthesis of research that scholars will find helpful. For example, in the chapters...