NOTES AND STUDIES

A FRESH EXAMINATION OF THE CURRENT THEORY OF THE HEBREW TENSES.

In this discussion my object is to re-examine the usage of the Hebrew tenses in the light of the Babylonian, and to suggest certain modifications in the currently accepted theory. Looking at the usages of the Hebrew and Babylonian tenses in comparison with those of the other Semitic languages, we observe that each of the former exhibit, upon the current view, certain peculiarities in regard to which they seem to stand apart, both from one another and from the other cognate languages. In Hebrew we have the usage of *wāw* consecutive—a usage which so far has only been discovered, outside Biblical Hebrew, in the Moabitic inscription of Mesha and the Aramaic inscription of Zakir king of Hamath; in Babylonian we find the peculiarity that the ordinary historical tense is not, as in the other Semitic languages, the Perfect, but a form (usually called the Preterite) both etymologically and visibly identical with the Semitic Imperfect, the functions of this latter being performed by a similarly constructed but somewhat differently vocalized form (the so-called Present), while the usage of the tense which corresponds in form to the Semitic Perfect presents peculiarities which are roughly indicated by the title Permansive. My purpose is to argue that these peculiarities in the two languages are really connected; and that realization of this connexion should lead us to modify our theory of the Hebrew tenses in two respects: (1) in the use of the terms 'Perfect' and 'Imperfect', with the connotations which are attached to these terms, and (2) in our explanation of the usage of the tenses with *wāw* consecutive. In both of these questions it is with the Perfect rather than with the Imperfect that I am mainly concerned. (1) the term 'Perfect' seems to me ill-suited to express what I conceive to be the main underlying conception of the tense, and (2) the current explanation of the conception involved in the usage of the so-called 'Perfect' with *wāw* consecutive appears to me to be radically wrong—and that owing to the inaccurate conception which we have formed as to the tense itself.

Before dealing with the Babylonian tenses it is perhaps advisable to give the forms in full, as they occur in the Ḳal or simple stem. In the case of the Permansive, about which I have most to say, I give the

parallel Perfect forms of the other principal Semitic languages, using, for convenience sake, the conventional paradigm root קטל.[1]

Sing.	Bab.	Aram.	Heb.	Arab.	Ethiop.
3 m.	ḳaṭil	ḳeṭal	ḳāṭál	ḳátala	ḳatála
3 f.	ḳaṭlat	ḳitlat	ḳāṭelā́	ḳátalat	ḳatálat
2 m.	ḳaṭlât(a)	ḳeṭalt(a)	ḳāṭáltā	ḳátálta	ḳatálka
2 f.	ḳaṭlâti	ḳeṭalt(î)	ḳāṭált(î)[2]	ḳátálti	katalkî
1 c.	ḳaṭlâk(u)	ḳiṭlēt	ḳāṭáltî	ḳátáltu	ḳatálkû
Plur.					
3 m.	ḳaṭlû	ḳeṭalû	ḳāṭelū́	ḳátalû	ḳatálû
3 f.	ḳaṭlâ	ḳeṭalâ	(ḳāṭelā́)[3]	ḳatálna	ḳatálâ
2 m.	ḳaṭlâtunu	ḳeṭaltûn	ḳeṭaltém	ḳatáltum	ḳatalkémmû
2 f.		ḳeṭaltēn	ḳeṭaltén	ḳataltúnna	ḳatalkén
1 c.	ḳaṭlâni	ḳeṭalnā	kātálnû	ḳatálnâ	ḳatálna

The Babylonian Present and Preterite run as follows:—

Sing.	Present.	Preterite.
3 m.	iḳáṭ(ṭ)al	iḳṭul
3 f.	taḳaṭ(ṭ)al	taḳṭul
2 m.	taḳáṭ(ṭ)al	taḳṭul
2 f.	taḳáṭ(ṭ)alî	taḳṭulî
1 c.	aḳáṭ(ṭ)al	aḳṭul
Plur.		
3 m.	iḳáṭ(ṭ)alû(ni)	iḳṭulû(ni)
3 f.	iḳáṭ(ṭ)alâ(ni)	iḳṭulâ(ni)
2 m.	taḳáṭ(ṭ)alû	taḳṭulû
2 f.	taḳáṭ(ṭ)alâ	taḳṭulâ
1 c.	niḳáṭ(ṭ)al	niḳṭul

[1] The root is unknown in Babylonian, and occurs in Biblical Hebrew only as an Aramaism (Ps. cxxxix 19; Job xiii 15, xxiv 14). In Arabic and Ethiopic the middle consonant is ת and not ט.

[2] For instances of the form קטלתי cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch § 44 *h*.

[3] The survival of the 3rd fem. plur. in Hebrew is somewhat doubtful, but it seems natural so to explain forms ending in ה־ with fem. plur. subject. In many (though not in all) of these the Massoretes have substituted the termination ־ֶיהָ, which came regularly to be adopted in later times, owing probably to the identity of the 3rd fem. plur. form with that of the 3rd fem. sing. Cf. cases cited in Gesenius-Kautzsch § 44 *m*; and add Ps. xlv 10, redividing the stichoi in accordance with the rhythmical scheme (4 beats to the line)—

בנות מלכים ביקרותיך נצבה
שגל לימינך בכתם אופיר

'Daughters of kings mid thy favourites stand;
The queen is on thy right decked in gold of Ophir'.

In the Present the doubling of the middle radical, which may or may not occur, serves merely to mark the accentual stress, and is not formative.

In dealing with the Permansive it will be well to illustrate the usage of the tense before discussing its formation. The name 'Permansive' is due to the distinguished Assyriologist Edward Hincks, who divided the Babylonian verbal forms into two great classes, which he named respectively Permansive and Mutative. 'The former denotes continuance in the state which the verb signifies in that conjugation; the latter denotes change into that state.'[1] Characteristic usages of the Permansive may be classified as follows.

With stative verbs:

'*He is clad* (*la-biš*) with a garment' (Gilgameš-Epic, I ii 38).

'*I am afraid and* (*pal-ḫa-ku-ma*) do not approach him' (*id.* I iii 35).

'His body *was feeble* (*ul-lu-la*, Pi'el)' (*id.* I iv 26).

'*Thou art fair* ([*dam*]-*ka-ta*), Engidu, thou art like a god' (*id.* I iv 34).

'Her speech *is pleasing* (*ma-gir*)' (*id.* I iv 40).

'Who *rests not* (*la ṣa-li-lu*[2]) day nor night' (*id.* I v 19).

'*He was* too *strong* for me ([*d*]*a-an eli-ia*)' (*id.* I v 29).

'Thy proportions *are not changed* (*ul ša-na-a*), and *thou art not changed* (*at-ta ul ša-na-ta*)' (*id.* XI 3 f).

'That city *became old* (*la-bir*)' (*id.* XI 13).

'*It was moistened* (*raṭ-bat*, lit. 'was moist')' (*id.* XI 225).

'Gilgameš spied a well whose waters *were cold* (*ka-ṣu-u*)' (*id.* XI 302).

'Thou then *art honourable* (*kab-ta-ta*) among the mighty gods' (Creation-epic, IV 3).

'*They were terrible* (*ra-aš-ba*) in the attack' (*id.* IV 55).

'Towards the place of Tiamat, *who was enraged* (*ša aggat*), his face he set' (*id.* IV 60).

'In her lips, *which were swollen* (*ša lul-la-a*, Pi'el), she holds rebellious words' (*id.* IV 72).

Active verbs often occur as Permansives with a passive signification:

'*He is arranged* (*up-pu-uš*, Pi'el of *epêšu* 'to make') as to the long hair like a woman' (i.e. 'His long hair is arranged, &c.') (Gilgameš-epic, I ii 36).

'A feast *is set out* (*ša-kin*, from *šakânu* 'to set')' (*id.* I v 8).

'*Thou art lying* (*na-da-at*, from *na-dû* 'to cast') upon thy back' (*id.* XI 6).

'Šurippak . . . which *lies* (*šak-nu*[2]) [upon the bank] of the Euphrates' (*id.* XI 12).

'Their lips *were closed* (*kat-ma*, from *katâmu* 'to cover')' (*id.* XI 127).

[1] 'Specimen Chapters of an Assyrian Grammar', *JRAS.* n. s. ii (1866) p. 485.

[2] With *u* termination in a relative clause.

'Sound *was stilled* (*ša-kin*)' (*id.* XI 133).

'*It was cooked* (*ba-aš-lat*, from *bašâlu* 'to cook')' (*id.* XI 228).

'His mind *was overthrown* (*sa-pi-iḫ*, from *sapâḫu* 'to overthrow'), his action *was paralysed* (*si-ḫa-ti*, from *saḫû* 'to destroy')' (Creation-epic, IV 68).

'*They were surrounded* (*la-mu-u*, from *lamû* 'to surround')' (*id.* IV 110).

'Into the net *were they cast* (*na-du*, from *nadû* 'to cast')' (*id.* IV 112).

'*They were shut up* (*ka-lu-u*, from *kalû* 'to shut up') in prison' (*id.* IV 114).

With intransitive verbs used in an active sense:

'Against him *they assembled* (*paḫ-ru*)' (Gilgameš-epic, I vi 22).

'The gods like a dog *crouched down* (*kun-nu-nu*, Pi'el), upon the battlements *they lay* (*rab-ṣu*)' (*id.* XI 116).

'The gods of the Anunnaki *wept* (*ba-ku-u*) with her, the gods *cowered* (*aš-ru*), *they sat* (*aš-bi*[1]) a weeping' (*id.* XI 125 f).

'But when *he sat down* (*aš-bu-ma*) upon his haunches, sleep, like a blast, began to blow upon him' (*id.* XI 209 f).

'In my bedchamber *sitteth* (*a-šib*) death' (*id.* XI 246).

'*They drew near* (*ḳit-ru-bu*, Ipht^{e}al) to the fight' (Creation-epic, IV 3).

In comparatively few cases the Permansive is used with transitive verbs governing an accusative:

'O Lord, *he who trusts thee* (*ša tak-lu-ka*), spare his life' (Creation-epic, IV 17).

'Their teeth *carry venom* (*na-ša-a im-ta*)' (*id.* IV 53).

'*Overthrowing they had learned* (*sa-pa-na lam-du*)' (*id.* IV 54).

'*A herb of* (*magic?*) *he grasped* (*ša-mi-im ta- . . . -i ta-me-iḫ*) with his fingers' (*id.* IV 62).

'The regions *they filled with lamentation* (*ma-lu-u du-ma-mu*)' (*id.* IV 113).

'*His chastisement they bore* (*še-rit-su na-šu-u*)' (*id.* IV 114).

Lastly, the Permansive is frequently preceded by *lu*, and used in a precative sense:

'*Let* Uta-napištim *dwell* (*lu-u a-šib-ma*) afar off at the mouth of the rivers' (Gilgameš-epic, XI 204).

'Fair *let* his body *appear* (*lu ṣapu*[2]), *let* the turban of his head *be renewed* (*lu-u ud-du-uš*, Pi'el), with a robe *let him be clothed* (*lu-u la-biš*)' (*id.* XI 257 f).

'*Let* the utterance of thy mouth *be established* (*lu-u ki-na-at*[3])' (Creation-epic, IV 9).

[1] For *aš bu*.

[2] The normal form would be *lu ṣapi*.

[3] *Kînat* for *kênat*. The Permansive of *kânu* offers the two forms *kên* and *kân*.

'*Let* thy host *be harnessed* (*lu ṣa-an-da-at*[1]), *let* thy weapons *be girded on* (*lu rit-ku-su*, Ipht^{e}al)' (*id.* IV 85).[2]

In these illustrations of the usage of the Permansive I have confined myself to three sources, viz. Tablets I and XI of the Gilgameš-epic and Tablet IV of the Creation-epic, and from these I have collected practically all occurrences, only omitting some repetitions, a few instances of doubtful meaning, and cases in which the text is fragmentary and the precise reading in doubt. It is thus possible to gain an idea of the relative proportions of the different usages; and the great preponderance of the properly stative or permansive cases over those which are active—whether intransitive or transitive (especially over the latter)—is at once evident. It is also worthy of notice that in these three tablets together we have a total of 722 lines of poetry (Gilg.-epic I, 250 ll.; XI, 326 ll.; Creat.-epic IV, 146 ll.), with, on the whole, very few lacunae; and it thus appears that the use of the Permansive, as compared with other verbal forms, is somewhat infrequent. The tense which regularly describes historical developement is the Preterite, which, as we have already seen, corresponds in formation with the Imperfect of the other Semitic languages. In ordinary historical inscriptions, such as the annals of Assyrian kings, the use of the Permansive is rare,[3] historical sequence being described by a series of Preterites, and the inter-connexion of events, which we indicate by 'and', expressed by use of the enclitic particle *-ma*; e.g. *u-ma-'i-ra-ni-ma al-lik* 'he-sent-me-and I-went'.

We may now pass on to the formation of the Permansive. As is the case with the Perfect in other Semitic languages, it is clearly formed by addition of pronominal suffixes to a root-form which appears in the 3rd masc., the connective *â* before these suffixes reminding us of the *ô* which appears in the verb ע doubled in Hebrew, e.g. סַבּוֹתָ.[4] The suffixes are the same as in the other languages, but exhibit a more exact reproduction of the original pronominal elements than any of them. Sing. *ḳaṭlâ-ta*, *ḳaṭlâ-ti*, *ḳaṭlâ-ku*, Plur. *katlâ-tunu*, *katlâ-ni*, exhibit the pronominal elements of *at-ta*, *at-ti*, *ana-ku*, *at-tunu*, *ani-ni* unmodified in any respect. In the Perfect-suffixes of each of the other languages there is some modification which implies a stage somewhat further removed from the original formation. Thus, e.g., Ethiopic, which exhibits in the 1st sing. the primitive *-ku* of *anaku*, has in the

[1] *Ṣandat* for *ṣamdat* (צמד).

[2] In this list *lû ṣapu* (צפה 'look at'), *lû udduš*, *lû ṣandat*, *lû rithusu* offer additional instances of active verbs used passively in the Permansive.

[3] Cf. the statistics given by McCurdy, 'The Semitic Perfect in Assyrian', *Actes du 6^{e} Congrès International des Orientalistes*, 1883, ii 1 pp. 512 f (Leiden 1885).

[4] So Delitzsch *Assyrian Grammar* § 91.

2nd sing. modified *-ta* and *-ti* into *-ka* and *-ki* (as in the Semitic noun-suffixes); conversely, Arabic, which accurately preserves the *-ta* and *-ti* of the 2nd sing., has modified the *-ku* of the 1st sing. to *-tu*. The Hebrew forms are somewhat further modified, and the Aramaic forms still more so. We observe that the existence in Ethiopic of the 1st pers. pronom. element *-ku*,[1] modified to *-tu* in Arabic, bears witness to the primitive existence in the Semitic parent-language of the longer form of the 1st pers. pronoun, which survives in separate form only in Babylonian *anaku*, and with modified termination in Hebrew אנכי and Moabite and Phoenician אנך (the pronunciation of which is represented as *anech* in Plautus *Poenulus* ii 35); and this conclusion is further borne out by the occurrence of the form in languages in which a more remote connexion with the Semitic group is to be assumed, e. g. Old Egyptian *'nky*, Coptic *anok*, Libyan *nek*. It is with good reason, then, that we may expect the Babylonian Permansive to illustrate both the primitive tense-formation of the Semitic so-called Perfect, and the primitive meaning which the tense was intended to convey.

We next observe that in Babylonian or Assyrian we occasionally find predicative statements formed by suffixing pronominal elements on to nominal or adjectival forms precisely in the manner in which the Permansive is constructed. The stock illustration of this is found in Ašurnaṣirpal's Annals, i 32 f,[2] where the king in self-laudation strings together a number of such forms. Thus we find *šarrâku* = *šarru anaku* 'I am king', *bêlâku* = *bêlu anaku* 'I am lord', *ašaridâku* = *ašaridu anaku* 'I am pre-eminent', *ḳarradâku* = *ḳarradu anaku* 'I am valiant', &c., alongside of *šurruḫâku* 'I am powerful', which is a properly-formed Permansive Pi'el, and *kabtâku* 'I am honourable', which may be explained either as the Permansive Ḳal of *kabâtu*, or as the equivalent of *kabtu anaku*. As a matter of fact it is both, just as in Hebrew the stative verb כָּבַדְתִּי is the equivalent of כָּבֵד אָנֹכִי.

Here, then, we have the explanation of the Permansive. The normal form *ḳaṭil* (in place of which we occasionally find *ḳaṭul*) is an adjective denoting *state* or *condition*, and this, by the suffixing of pronominal elements, comes to form a predicative statement, i. e. it becomes a verb. A perfect analogy to this method of verb-building was long ago pointed out by G. C. Geldart,[3] who compared the Aramaean method of combining the participle and pronoun into a single word—קָטְלְנָא for

[1] This element seems to correspond to the Sumerian KU, which is given in a bilingual fragment (V. R. 20, No. 4) as the equivalent of *anaku*. Cf. Ball *Shumer and Shem* p. 29.

[2] Cf. Budge and King *Annals of the Kings of Assyria* i p. 265; *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek* i pp. 56 f.

[3] *Transactions of the Oriental Congress* (*London*), 1874, pp. 25 ff.

אֲנָא קָטֵל 'I (am) killing'. This was further emphasized by Sayce in an important article on the formation of the Assyrian verb,[1] in which he also pointed out that the Syriac ܐܢܐ ܡܠܟܐ 'I am king' in such a passage as John xix 21; ܐܢܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܗܘ is 'as perfect a representation of the Assyrian *šarrâku* as we can well have'. Sayce regards the 3rd sing. masc. of the Permansive as, 'so far as the form goes, simply the participle present stripped of its case-endings'; and the same view is taken by Haupt.[2] Since, however, the regular 3rd masc. sing. form of the Permansive is *ḳaṭil*, with the vowel of the first syllable (so far as we can judge) unprolonged, it is surely more correct to identify the form with the adjectival (or *stative* participial) form which appears in Hebrew as קָטֵל, e.g. כָּבֵד 'heavy', טָמֵא 'unclean', זָקֵן 'old', &c. Modifications of this original stative *ḳaṭil* or *ḳaṭul* were produced by lengthening the final vowel, as in the passive Participles קָטִיל (Aramaic קְטִיל) and קָטוּל; and by lengthening of the first vowel there resulted *ḳâṭil*, i. e. the active Participle Ḳal, denoting a continuous state or action of indefinite duration.

Barth[3] combats the view that the Babylonian Permansive is the original of the Semitic Perfect on the ground that resemblance is only to be found in the Ḳal, whereas 'the nominal substratum of the remaining Permansive forms has nothing whatever in common with the Perfect forms of the corresponding conjugations'. This may appear to be so, if we compare their vocalization with the corresponding *active* forms; but it should be noticed that the resemblance to the *passive* forms is striking. Thus the Pi'el *ḳuṭṭul* is like Hebrew קֻטַּל, and the Shaph'el *šuḳṭul* like Hebrew הֻקְטַל, just as the Niph'al *naḳṭul* is like Hebrew נְקְטַל (originally נִקְטַל). If exception be taken to the difference of the second vowels (in Bab. *u*, in Heb. *a*), we may remind ourselves of the fact that in the Arabic passive forms the second vowel is not *a* but *i*; yet no one doubts that Ar. *ḳuttila* = Heb. קֻטַּל, and that Ar. *'uḳtila* = Heb. הֻקְטַל, הָקְטַל. It would appear that this second vowel is formally non-significant, and so variable. It is worthy of note that, just as the Bab. Infinitive Ḳal *ḳaṭâlu* is the exact equivalent of the Heb. Infinitive Absolute קָטוֹל, and the Bab. Infinitive Niph'al *naḳṭulu* the exact equivalent of the Heb. Infinitive Absolute נָקְטֹל, so is the Bab. Infinitive Pi'el *ḳuṭṭulu* the exact equivalent, not of the Heb. Infinitive Absolute קַטֵּל or קַטֵּל, but of the Pu'al קֻטַּל. It thus appears that, though the passive modifications are as yet undeveloped in Babylonian, we can

[1] 'The Tenses of the Assyrian Verb', *JRAS.* ix n. s. (1877) pp. 22 ff.

[2] 'The oldest Semitic verb-form', *JRAS.* x n. s. (1878) pp. 244 ff.

[3] 'Das semitische Perfect im Assyrischen', *ZA.* ii (1887) pp. 375 ff.

trace their beginnings in the Permansive forms which (as we saw in our examination of occurrences) ordinarily bear a stative or passive signification. This may be taken as proof that the stative force is originally proper to the Permansive. After rejecting the view that the Babylonian Permansive is the equivalent of the Semitic Perfect, Barth [1] advances the rival theory that 'the Babylonian Present forms *i-kašad*, *u-kaššad*, *u-šakšad*, &c. are rather nothing else than the old Semitic Perfect كَسَدَ, كَسَّدَ, سَكْسَدَ. Just as in Assyrian the Semitic Imperfect has taken over the functions of the Perfect, so conversely the Semitic Imperfect in Assyrian has taken the place of the Perfect. Both tenses have simply exchanged their former functions'. Such a conclusion is no more scientific than the old Rabbinic explanation that '*wāw* conversive' (וְ הַפּוּךְ) had the effect of turning an Imperfect into a Perfect, and *vice-versâ*.

Concluding, then, that the original conception of the Permansive was that of a timeless *state*, and that this was represented by combination of an adjective of *ḳaṭil* (or, more rarely, *ḳaṭul*) form of stative meaning (or, an originally nominal form adapted to this norm) with pronominal elements, we next recall the fact that the tense also (though more rarely) exhibits an active usage, both intransitive and transitive. The origin of this developement is probably to be found in the fact that predicative statements descriptive of a *characteristic*, whether inherent—e. g. 'he is (*or* was) a hater', 'he is (*or* was) a lover'—or accidental—e. g. 'he is (*or* was) judge', 'he is (*or* was) king'—naturally tend to pass over into the application of the characteristic to particular circumstances which limit or define its sphere of action—'he hated, loved, judged' a specified person; 'he reigned' within a specified period. Instances of this active usage are not, as is ordinarily the stative usage, of timeless or indefinite duration, but their beginning and ending have come to be more or less sharply defined by the context, as is necessarily the case with verbs describing action. I need only refer to the passage from Tab. XI, ll. 114 ff of the Gilgameš-epic, which describes the alarm of the gods during the storm which produced the flood, where the Permansive forms which we have already noticed occur in the midst of a series of Preterites: 'The gods feared (*ip-la-ḫu*, Pret.) the flood and withdrew (*it-te-iḫ-su*, Pret.), they ascended (*i-te-lu-u*, Pret.) to the heaven of Anu. The gods like a dog crouched down (*kun-nu-nu*,

[1] *op. cit* p. 378. This view is adopted by Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleich. Gramm. der semit. Sprache* § 261, and by Hans Bauer, *Die Tempora im Semitischen* pp. 17, 18, 20. It is rejected by Haupt, 'Prolegomena to a Comparative Assyrian Grammar', *JAOS.* xiii (Proceedings at Baltimore, 1887) pp. ccxlix ff, and by Knudtzon, 'Zur assyrischen und allgemein semitischen Grammatik', *ZA.* vi (Feb. 1892) pp. 408 ff.

Permans.), upon the battlements they lay (*rab-ṣu*, Permans.).' Here the beginning of the actions denoted by the Permansives *kunnunu*, *rabṣu* is necessarily subsequent to the action described by the Preterite *itelû*, and their duration more vaguely limited by the duration of the cause of alarm. Such a limitation is, of course, also occasionally to be seen in cases which exhibit the stative meaning—cf. the account of the spell worked upon Gilgameš by Uta-napištim and his wife (XI, ll. 224 ff): 'First, his meal was ground (*ša-bu-šat*,[1] Permans.); secondly, it was hulled (*muš-šu-kat*,[1] Permans. Pi'el); thirdly, it was moistened (*rat-bat*, Permans.); fourthly, the mass of it became white (*ip-te-ṣi*, Pret.); fifthly, a scum it threw off (*it-ta-di*, Pret.); sixthly, it was cooked (*baš-lat*, Permans.); seventhly, on a sudden he touched him and (*il-pu-us-su-ma*, Pret.) the man awoke (*i-te-ḳil-ta-a*, Pret.).' Here the beginning and ending of each stage, whether described by Permansive or Preterite, is defined by the context as sharply as could be.

Thus we see in the Permansive something like the range of usage which is possessed by the Hebrew Perfect. And when we add such a transitive usage as is illustrated, e. g. by a passage from the Annals of Ašurbanipal[2] (the king's dream of the coming of Ištar of Arbela to his help), *tam-ḥa-at* (*iṣu*) *ḳašta i-na i-di-ša šal-pat nam-ṣa-ru zaḳ-tu ša e-piš ta-ḥa-zi* 'she held a bow at her side, she unsheathed the sharp sword of battle', where the verbal forms, and the whole sentence, are almost Hebrew as they stand (חָמְכָה קֶשֶׁת עַל־יְרֵכָהּ שָׁלְפָה חֶרֶב עֲשׂוֹת מִלְחָמָה הַחֲדָה), the question of the identity of the Babylonian Permansive with the Hebrew Perfect, in form as well as in usage, may be regarded as proved beyond question.

If, then, the Babylonian Permansive is the proper equivalent of the Hebrew Perfect, how is it that in historical narrative the Preterite—in form identical with the Hebrew Imperfect—ordinarily takes its place, and what in Hebrew is the proper equivalent of this Preterite? I will illustrate this by quotation of the passage which first set me on the track of this investigation—the opening lines of Tablet I of the Creation-epic:

'When, on high, heaven was not named (*la na-bu-u*, Permans.),
Beneath, the earth a name was not called (*la zak-rat*, (Permans.),
Then primeval Apsû, their progenitor,
And Mummu, Tiâmat, who was to bear them all,—
Their waters together were mingled (*i-ḫi-ḳu-u-ma*, Pret.).

[1] The meaning of *šabušat*, *mušširukat* is doubtful. In rendering the latter verb we infer the existence of a verb *mašâku* 'to skin' from the existence of the substantive *mašku* 'skin'.

[2] *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek* ii p. 250.

No field was embanked (*la ki-iṣ-ṣu-ra*, Permans.), no reed-bed was seen (*la še-'a*, Permans.).
When none of the gods had been called into being (*la šu-pu-u*, (Permans.),
No name was named (*la zuk-ku-ru*, Permans.), no destinies were fixed (*la* [*ši-ma*], Permans.).
Then were created (*ib-ba-nu-u-ma*, Pret.) the gods in the midst of heaven,
Laḫmu and Laḫamu were called into being (*uš-ta-pu-u*, Pret.),
Ages increased (*ir-bu-u*, Pret.).'

Here we have a timeless condition of being—or rather of not-being—expressed by a series of Permansives, which forms a background. Out of this background events begin to emerge into time, and this emergence is in every case expressed by use of the Preterite—'were mingled', 'then were created', &c. This is precisely the mode of thought which we associate with the use of the Imperfect with *wāw* consecutive in Hebrew; and it seems therefore reasonable to conclude that the Babylonian Preterite, like the Hebrew Imperfect, properly denotes the *emergence* of an event into being out of a preceding condition of affairs explicit or implicit in the narrative.

The reason for the great prevalence of the Preterite over the Permansive in the description of past events is that events involving *action* are naturally pictured as coming into being out of a fixed point in time; whereas the Permansive, preserving generally its prime significance of a timeless *state*, is not normally required in narrative with frequency. We have seen, however, that the Permansive exhibits instances of the developement of an active usage, which may be judged to be a secondary developement, both from its comparative infrequency alongside of the stative usage, and also because nearly all Permansive forms, whether stative or active in meaning, go back normally to the stative formation *ḳaṭil*. This active usage has reached a much wider vogue in Hebrew than in Babylonian, and hence arises the comparatively greater frequency of the so-called Perfect; but, even so, in good Hebrew prose the use of the Imperfect with *wāw* consecutive largely preponderates over that of the Perfect alone.

If objection be taken to this equation of the Babylonian usage of the Preterite with the Hebrew usage of the Imperfect with *wāw* consecutive on the ground that the latter is inseparably dependent upon the connexion afforded by the *wāw*, and that the breaking of this involves a lapse into the Perfect, whereas in Babylonian the Preterite occurs regularly in historical narration without any equivalent to *wāw* consecutive, it may be replied that the essential idea involved in the use of the Imperfect with *wāw* consecutive in Hebrew—that of nascency out of

a situation fixed by the preceding narrative—is inherent in the tense itself, not in any mystic power of transformation possessed by the *wāw*. It is noticeable that in Hebrew poetry, which may be expected to preserve ancient usages, the absence of the connective particle before the verbal form in narrative of past events does not by any means always involve a lapse into the Perfect. Imperfects alone are freely used, side by side with other Imperfects with *wāw* consecutive, without any apparent distinction in the conception involved; for it is surely absurd to say that all the asyndeta are pictorial and should be rendered by the historic Present, while all the cases which happen to be connected by 'and', and so are preceded by *wāw* consecutive, are less pictorial and may be rendered by a Past tense. Good instances of the use of the Imperfect alone in historical description, alternating with the Imperfect with *wāw* consecutive, may be seen in Deut. xxxii 8 יַצֵּב; *v.* 10 יְמְצָאֵהוּ, יְסֹבְבֶנְהוּ, יְבוֹנְנֵהוּ, יִצְּרֶנְהוּ; *v.* 12 יַנְחֶנּוּ; *v.* 13 יַרְכִּבֵהוּ; *v.* 14 תְּשֻׁתָּה; *v.* 16 יַקְנִאֻהוּ, יַכְעִיסֻהוּ; *v.* 17 יִזְבְּחוּ; *v.* 18 תֶּשִׁי; Ps. xviii 7 אֶקְרָא, אֲשַׁוַּע, יִשְׁמַע, תָּבוֹא; *v.* 8 יִרְגְּזוּ; *v.* 9 תֹּאכַל; *v.* 12 יָשֶׁת; *v.* 14 יִתֵּן; *v.* 17 יִשְׁלַח, יִקָּחֵנִי, יַמְשֵׁנִי; *v.* 18 יְצִילֵנִי; *v.* 19 יְקַדְּמוּנִי; *v.* 20 יְחַלְּצֵנִי; *v.* 21 יִשְׁלַח, יְגָמְלֵנִי, יָשִׁיב; Ps. lxxviii 15 יַבְקַע; *v.* 20 יִשְׁטֹפוּ; *v.* 26 יַסַּע; *v.* 29 יָבֵא; *v.* 45 יְשַׁלַּח; *v.* 47 יַהֲרֹג; *v.* 49 יְשַׁלַּח; *v.* 50 יֵפֶלֶם; *v.* 58 יְקַנִּאוּהוּ; *v.* 64 תִּבְכֶּינָה; *v.* 72 יִנְחֵם. Moreover, it is open to question whether Babylonian *is* altogether without the equivalent of *wāw* consecutive. The enclitic *-ma* which, as we have already remarked, is suffixed with great frequency to Preterites in the developement of historical prose-narrative to indicate the 'and' which connects with the verb following, is of far less frequency in poetry, where the tendency is to adopt an asyndeton construction precisely like that which we have just noticed in Hebrew narrative-poetry. It is likely that *-ma* may have been pronounced much like the Hebrew *wa* (the interchange of *m* and *w* in the two languages is a common phenomenon); and it thus seems not impossible that there may be philological connexion between Bab. *-ma* and Heb. *wāw* consecutive, the Bab. enclitic suffix from the first of two verbs describing a sequence having come in Hebrew to be joined to the second of the two as a prefix.

It will have appeared from this discussion that my theory as to the underlying conception of the Hebrew Imperfect, and of that tense as used with *wāw* consecutive, does not differ in any essential from that which is commonly received, and which has been set forth with especial fullness and cogency by Driver in his *Hebrew Tenses*. It is only the construction with *wāw* consecutive which calls for some amount of thinking into by the western mind; and, when this has been done, the conclusion that the conception is that of an event in process of *becoming*,

springing out of the preceding circumstances indicated by the context, is one which is unassailable, fortified as it is especially by the idiomatic use of the construction after a time-determination, and of the plain Imperfect after the temporal particle אָז 'then', which as it were takes the place of the *wāw* consecutive and all that it indicates. My quarrel is with the current explanation of the so-called Perfect as implying the *completion* of the event described, in contrast to the idea of incompletion contained in the Imperfect; and if my discussion of the usage of the Babylonian Permansive, and the attempt to prove that it is the analogue of the Hebrew so-called Perfect, have been at all clear, the inference should have followed that I find the ground-conception of the latter, like the former, in *the mere existence of a state* in the first place, *then*, by developement, *of an action, apart from all idea of time-definition or limitation.* It may perhaps be argued that this objection to the ordinary explanation is a mere quibble—if a state or action is thought of as *existing*, it may be described as *complete*, and designated as Perfect. This is questionable, as has been pointed out by Knudtzon.[1] I will now proceed to illustrate the defect of the theory as seen in the current explanation of the construction of the Perfect with *wāw* consecutive.

The terms 'Perfect' and 'Imperfect' were first employed by Ewald in his *Arabic Grammar* of 1839 as a substitute for the unsuitable names 'Preterite' and 'Future'[2]; and it is to Ewald that we must trace the origin of the current explanation of the usage of the Perfect with *wāw* consecutive, which he termed 'the relatively-progressive Perfect'. According to this scholar, just as, in the construction of the Imperfect with *wāw* consecutive, 'the flowing sequence of time or thought causes that which has been realized, and exists, to be regarded as passing over into new realization; so, in the present case, it has the effect of at once representing that which is advancing towards realization, as entering into full and complete existence. Hence, each of the plain tenses gracefully intersects the other, by interchanging with its opposite.'[3] A similar explanation of the construction is given by Olshausen[4] and Böttcher,[5] the former scholar remarking that the usage 'rests originally upon a play of the imagination, in virtue of which the apparently necessary *consequence* of an action already mentioned or circumstance already indicated was viewed as a *completed* one'. This

[1] 'Vom sogenannten Perfekt und Imperfekt im Hebräischen', *Actes du 8e Congrès International des Orientalistes tenu en 1889 à Stockholm et à Christiania, Section Sémitique B* (1891) pp. 73 ff.

[2] Cf. *Hebrew Syntax* § 134 b, note 1 (Eng. Trans. p. 3).

[3] Cf. *op. cit.* pp. 22 f. [4] *Lehrbuch der hebr. Sprache* i (1861) § 229 a.

[5] *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebr. Sprache* (1866) § 975 d.

is accepted by Driver,[1] with the proviso that 'the consciousness of this relation is to be conceived as essentially dependent upon *union* with *waw*, of which union the change of tone (where not hindered from taking place by external or accidental causes) is the inseparable criterion and accompaniment: dissolve this union, and the sense of any special relationship immediately vanishes. In fact, the *waw* possesses really in this connexion a demonstrative significance, being equivalent to *then* or *so*: in this capacity, by a pointed reference to some preceding verb, it *limits* the possible realization of the action introduced by it to those instances in which it can be treated as a direct consequence of the event thus referred to . . . An action described by this construction is regarded, it is true, as completed, but *only with reference to the preceding verb*, only so far as the preceding action necessitates or permits'.

This theory must surely be deemed highly forced and unnatural. In the unfolding of a series of events introduced by the Imperfect—let us say, of a series of future events, this being by far the commonest conception denoted by the tense—the first of which is from its very nature contingent merely and not certain of accomplishment, can it have been thought that the realization of this first event must necessarily lead to the due succession of later developements in the chain so surely that they could be pictured as already complete, supposing that the antecedent link in the chain be realized? An event which is dependent upon a future contingency is naturally pictured as more and not less contingent than its antecedent, inasmuch as the chances against its realization are inevitably increased; and the longer the chain of events, the less is the likelihood that each successive event will be realized as it is pictured. If, however, we eliminate the idea of *completion* from the so-called Perfect tense, and substitute that of mere *existence*, the difficulty seems to be solved. Take such a sentence as תֵּלֵךְ וְעָמַדְתָּ וְקָרָאתָ 'Thou shalt go, and shalt stand, and shalt cry', and you have no ground for asserting that the *standing* and the *crying* must necessarily follow supposing that the hypothetical *going* takes place. But if וְעָמַדְתָּ וְקָרָאתָ imply no more in their original conception than 'and thou standing, and thou crying', then that which is predicated is wholly vague, as we naturally expect it to be. The conception, in fact, is not much more definite than that which would be implied by the use of the Infinitive Absolute וְעָמוֹד וְקָרוֹא 'and standing and crying', the only difference being that it gains a little more definiteness through specification of the actor.

If, then, we reject the name 'Perfect' as unsuitable to express the underlying conception of the tense, the question arises as to what name

[1] *Hebrew Tenses* § 108.

we can substitute as better expressing the dominant idea. The name 'Permansive', though suitable enough for the tense as we find it in Babylonian, is hardly comprehensive enough to include the further developements which we find in Hebrew and other Semitic languages. Knudtzon speaks of the tense as 'Vorliegendes', and offers somewhat tentatively the name 'Factum'.[1] Without having recourse to so vague a Latin title, we may conclude that the natural designation of a tense which merely predicates the existence of a state or action apart from all idea of time-limitation or definition is *Aorist*, and there seems no reason why this designation should not be adopted. The name has actually been offered in a very brief discussion of the Hebrew Tenses by Prof. W. G. Ballantine which appeared in *Hebraica* ii, Oct. 1885, pp. 53–55—a discussion which, though it seems to have been ignored by later writers, yet appears to me to get to the root of the question in a surprisingly clear-headed manner, and that without recourse to comparison of the Babylonian usage. According to this scholar, there are in Hebrew two tenses, the *Aorist* and the *Subsequent*, answering respectively to the Perfect and Imperfect as commonly defined. 'The Aorist Tense expresses the mere predication of a fact. It asserts the occurrence of the action signified by the verb, without connotation of the time of that occurrence.' 'The Subsequent Tense connotes the act predicated as following upon or arising out of a known act or situation of affairs.' In my opinion this summary description of the functions of the two tenses could hardly be bettered.

The reason for the prevalence of Perfects of the form middle *a* (*ḳaṭal*) in all Semitic languages except Babylonian is naturally to be associated with the growth of the active significance in the usage of this tense. The vowels *i* and *u* denoting, primarily, *state* in the Permansive, the form with *a* was adopted to differentiate the active idea, when that came to be developed. The *a* form *ḳaṭal* as employed with this significance was not, however, a new creation. It is the form which was already in use in the Present *iḳáṭal* (we may grant this much to the theory of Barth), and (with lengthened vowel) in the Infinitive *ḳaṭálu*.

As for the two forms *iḳáṭal* and *iḳṭul*, which we know respectively as the Present and Preterite in Babylonian, it can hardly be doubted that they were originally one. The Ethiopic Indicative *yĕḳáṭĕl*, Subjunctive *yĕḳṭĕl*, have often been compared. The identity of Ethiopic *yĕḳáṭĕl* (which stands probably for an original *yĕḳatal*, the *ă* being dulled to *ĕ* in the toneless syllable) with Babylonian *iḳáṭal* can hardly be an accidental phenomenon, but must rather be taken as evidence for the antiquity of this form as belonging to the Semitic parent-language.[2] Now in Ethiopic *yĕḳṭĕl* is clearly a contraction of *yĕḳáṭĕl*, which has

[1] *op. cit.* p. 74.

[2] Cf. Haupt *op. cit. JRAS.* p. 246.

been made in order to mark a modification in usage; and similarly in Babylonian it may be assumed that *iḳaṭal* was the original form employed in order to describe an event in process of coming into being, and that this was later on contracted into *iḳṭal* in order to mark a *time-differentiation*, the fuller form being allocated to the Present-Future theme, the contracted to the Preterite theme. Why *iḳṭal* should normally have become *iḳṭul* is not clear. That the Preterite form is, however, really a contraction of the Present form is supported by the fact that a very numerous class has *i* as vowel of the final syllable in both forms: e. g. *imálik*, *imlik*; *ipáḳid*, *ipḳid*. In favour of such a contraction Delitzsch[1] cites the analogy of the Permansive form of the Ipht^{e}'al, where *kitašud* becomes *kitšud*, the two forms continuing in use side by side.

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[1] *Assyrian Grammar* § 87.