Virtually all scholars agree that the name of Isaiah’s son שאר-יפל (Is 7:3) is a key element of the remnant motif of Isaiah of Jerusalem. It has been suggested by L. G. Rignell that this symbolic name is the “key term” in chapter 7 of Is. O. Kaiser goes even beyond this by claiming that this name “certainly contains the programme of the entire Isaianic proclamation.” There is a continuing debate on how this symbolic name is to be translated. One of the most common translations is “A remnant shall return.” Some scholars place more stress upon the notion of conversion and translate “A remnant will repent.” Others understand the name as a

4 Here we mention the following: B. Duhm, Das Buch Jesaja (5th ed.; Göttingen, 1968), p. 71; G. Hölscher, Die Ursprünge der jüdischen
threat which emphasizes a solely ominous aspect without any hopeful notion and render it: "Only a remnant will return." 5 J. M. P. Smith emends בְּשָׂר to בְּשָׂר and thus arrives at the translation "A remnant will abide." 6 Other scholars propose "A remnant returns." 7 All of these translations, however, have one linguistic consideration in common, i.e., they consider this name as a verbal sentence name with the syntactical structure of subject in the first element and predicate in the second element. 8


6 J. M. P. Smith, "בְּשָׂר יָשָׁב," ZAW, XXXIV (1914), 220-227. Smith's textual emendation has not been accepted by scholars and must now be rejected in view of IQIs 8.


L. Köhler has challenged the supposition that שֶׁמֶר יְשֵׁר should be understood as a verbal sentence name with the syntactical sequence of subject-predicate. He argues that it is instead a “nackter Relativsatz” which should be translated “Der Rest, der umkehrt” (“the remnant that returns”). This suggestion has been adopted by G. Fohrer and G. Sauer. Köhler bases his argument upon the consideration that in Hebrew syntax the subject cannot be placed at will before or after the predicate in the independent simple clause. Therefore he assumes “that this rule of the sequence of words is also valid for names.” In support of his view he refers to the entries of the letter 요ט in the index of M. Noth’s basic investigation of Hebrew onomastica. J. Lindblom, on the other hand, rejects Köhler’s suggestion as too complicated a syntactical construction and regards בֵּית יְשֵׁר as a “composed nominal sentence” in which the first element is the subject and the second element is a verbal sentence forming the predicate. He translates davon.” All these translations are interpreting paraphrases which do not merit the quality of preserving the relative brevity and pointedness of the Hebrew name.


12 Köhler, VT, III (1953), 85.

13 M. Noth, Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung (Stuttgart, 1928). Noth outlined Semitic onomastica based on criteria of grammar and syntax and classified Semitic names into sentence names (verbal and nominal), genitive construct names, one-word names, and hypocoristic names.

"a remnant, it will return," which means paraphrased "there will be a remnant, and this remnant will return." Lindblom argues that both elements of this name are of equal significance regardless of their position. O. Kaiser has adopted Lindblom's suggestion.17

Having thus briefly outlined the major proposals for translating this symbolic name and their underlying linguistic arguments, the remainder of this paper will be devoted to investigating the validity of these varying translations with an attempt to bring to bear on them the linguistic evidence of West Semitic sentence names with corresponding syntactical structures, especially those of recently published studies on Amorite and Ugaritic personal names.

The present writer works on the assumption that the name of Isaiah's son belongs to the class of personal names that are designated as sentence names. As far as the present writer is aware, there is on this point universal agreement among scholars. For the sake of clarification it seems advisable to summarize the characteristic features of sentence names. Here we follow Noth's fundamental work on Semitic onomastica whose proposals with regard to classification of names have been generally adopted by later scholars, including Huffmon and Gröndahl.18 Customarily sentence names are divided into two types: (r) The first type is the nominal sentence name, which contains two elements, a subject and a nominal predicate, i.e., a predicate which is not an inflected verbal form. The sequence of the two elements in West Semitic nominal sentence names varies: in Amorite the usual sequence of

16 Ibid., p. 424.
elements is predicate-subject,\(^{19}\) which is contrary to normal Semitic word order of nominal sentences;\(^{20}\) Ugaritic nominal sentence names lack a preference either way,\(^{21}\) while for the rest of the West Semitic nominal sentence names the subject-predicate sequence seems to be the general rule.\(^{22}\)

(2) The second type is the verbal sentence name which also contains two elements, a subject and a predicate, the latter consisting of a finite verb usually in the perfect or imperfect.\(^{23}\) As regards the Amorite verbal sentence names, with the verb in the perfect, the sequence is perfect-substantive, except of elements with a stative verb.\(^{24}\) The evidence from Ugarit shows that the qtl-predicate has no preferred position.\(^{25}\) In Phoenician the substantive-perfect position is more common,\(^{26}\) while in South Arabic, which belongs to South Semitic, the contrary sequence is the more frequent one.\(^{27}\) The picture as regards the sequence of elements is different in verbal sentence names with an imperfect verb. In Amorite the yaqtul-predicate (as well as the other "imperfect" forms) is mostly in the first position.\(^{28}\) This is also true of the Ugaritic yqtl-predicate\(^ {29}\) and in South Arabic names.\(^ {30}\) The conclusion to be drawn from this

\(^{19}\) See the fundamental work of Amorite personal names by Huffmon, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 95.

\(^{20}\) C. Brockelmann, \textit{Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen} (Hildesheim, 1961), II, 92-95, No. 47.

\(^{21}\) See the basic study of Ugaritic personal names by Gröndahl, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 45, 47.

\(^{22}\) Noth, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 17-19.


\(^{25}\) Gröndahl, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 41.

\(^{26}\) Noth, \textit{Die israelitischen Personennamen}, p. 22.

\(^{27}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 25, 26.

\(^{28}\) Huffmon, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 63-87.

\(^{29}\) Gröndahl, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 41.

\(^{30}\) Noth, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 30; Brockelmann, \textit{op. cit.}, II, 171, No. 93.
survey of the sequence of elements in Amorite, Ugaritic, Phoenician, and South Arabic sentence names is the following: there is no fixed and rigid structural pattern of sequence for the position of the two elements of nominal and verbal sentence names in these West and South Semitic languages. There are certain preferred positions, but there is no definitive pattern.31

We must turn our attention next to the sequence of elements in Hebrew sentence names. Noth has shown that in Hebrew onomastica the more common sequence of elements in nominal sentence names is subject-predicate with a ratio of 2:1 over against the predicate-subject sequence. With regard to verbal sentence names there is also no fixed and rigid pattern. In names which have a perfect-predicate there is no change from a subject-perfect sequence during the time of the united and divided monarchy to a perfect-subject sequence in post-exilic times. It is noteworthy, however, that in names with an imperfect-predicate—to which ḫâyôn seems to correspond most closely—the more common word order is imperfect-subject. On the other hand, Noth lists a number of Hebrew names with the sequence of subject-imperfect: from the time of David ʿālôt ʿâyôn; the divided kingdom ṭōb ʿâlôt; the exile ṭōb ʿâlôt. The pattern of this group of names is the following: (1) The first element acts as subject and contains the name of a deity or a theophorous element, and (2) the second element contains the predicate in the form of an imperfect verb. The syntactical structure of ʿâlôt ḫâyôn corresponds to these Hebrew names. Examples of personal sentence names with the same syntactical structure are also

31 It has been suggested that the sequence of the two elements in sentences in Proto-Semitic may not have been fixed; see Brockelmann, op. cit., p. 170, No. 92; W. von Soden, Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik (Rome, 1952), No. 130b.

32 Noth, op. cit., pp. 18-21, 28; Lindblom, A Study on the Immanuel Section of Isaiah, p. 9, cites these names as examples for what he calls “composed nominal sentence” names. This is, however, misleading for the two-element nominal sentence names have a nominal predicate, which is not an inflected verb, while these names contain a predicate which consists of an inflected verb.
attested in Amorite, Ugaritic, and Phoenician texts.

This evidence makes possible a reassessment of a number of linguistic and syntactical arguments which have been proposed with regard to the character of the syntactical structure of the name יְךֹּּּוֹizards and its translation. First, Köhler's assumption that the fixed rule of predicate-subject for the simple clause in Hebrew syntax applies also for the sequence of word order in names is shown to be erroneous both on account of Hebrew and of Amorite, Ugaritic, Phoenician, etc., sentence names. There are preferred positions of elements, but there is no fixed predicate-subject sequence. As regards Hebrew verbal sentence names we have indicated the development in the sequence of elements from the subject-predicate to the predicate-subject sequence, neither of which, however, is at any time exclusive and absolute. Thus Köhler's argument that the only possible syntactical structure of יְךֹּּּוֹizard is a "nackter Relativsatz" has lost its linguistic basis on account of Hebrew and other West Semitic onomastica. In addition, C. Brockelmann has pointed out that the normal sequence of verb-subject in the Hebrew sentence can be reversed for the sake of placing emphasis on the subject. Secondly, Lindblom's contention that יְךֹּּּוֹizard is a "composed nominal sentence" in which the first element is the subject and the second element a "verbal sentence forming the predicate" must be rejected as a too hypothetical construction. If Lindblom's hypothesis were correct, it would be without parallel as far as the present evidence is concerned. The difficulty of conceiving יְךֹּּּוֹizard as a "composed nominal sentence" name becomes even greater,

88 Huffmon, op. cit., pp. 63-86.
89 Gröndahl, op. cit., pp. 39, 40, 42.
91 Brockelmann, op. cit., II, 170-172, Nos. 92-97.
92 There are "one element nominal sentences" in Semitic languages according to Brockelmann, op. cit., II, 35-41, but they are not joined to a verbal sentence for they consist of weakened emotional expressions. If such expressions are joined with another element they are then "two element nominal sentences."
when one is reminded that the predicate in nominal sentence names is not an inflected verbal form. But this is exactly the case with בָּשָׁר, which is admittedly a Qal imperfect. The Hebrew examples cited by Lindblom in support of his hypothesis are the very names which Noth has correctly described as verbal sentence names. Thus these Hebrew names do not support but militate against Lindblom’s view. Thirdly, it has become apparent that there are no grammatical or syntactical reasons which militate against taking בָּשָׁר, רָשָׁפ as a verbal sentence name with the regular syntactical structure of its two normal elements—a noun and a verb—in the sequence of subject-imperfect. This conclusion is supported from the evidence of comparative Semitic names. Among the Amorite, Ugaritic, and Phoenician personal names there are verbal sentence names which have an identical syntactical structure.

Amorite and Ugaritic personal names may throw some additional light upon the semantic value of the Qal imperfect element בָּשָׁר. Huffmon points out that among Amorite verbal sentence names the West Semitic root תַּוּב is “very productive of name elements.” The Hebrew root שָׁב of which יָשֻׁב is the Qal imperfect derives from the Common Semitic root תַּוּב. There are seventeen verbal sentence names from Mari, four names from Alalakh VII, and two from Chagar Bazar, which have one element derived from the root ש (תַּוּב). According to Huffmon fifteen of these Amorite verbal sentence names contain the Yaqtul G imperfect form:

From Mari:  
Ya-šu-ba-an, Ya-šu-bi-im, Ya-šu-ub-a-šar, Ya-šu-ub-an, Ya-šu-ub-d1-pu-uh,

38 Supra, n. 32.  
39 Huffmon, op. cit., pp. 69, 70.  
42 Huffmon, op. cit., pp. 69, n. 40, 266.
Gröndahl has collected ten Ugaritic personal sentence names in which one element is a form of the Common Semitic root *twb.* Of these the Yaqtul G imperfect in the verbal sentence name *Yašub-ilu* is of importance because of its analogy to the second element of the Hebrew name under discussion. Two observations are in order: (1) The great majority of these Amorite and Ugaritic names have as their second element either the name of a divinity, a theophorous element, or a hypocoristic This is significant in view of the fact that the oldest written evidence at hand for the Common Semitic root *twb* (Hebrew šub) appears in these Amorite verbal sentence names and connects this root almost exclusively with an element of a theophorous nature. The same observation must be made with regard to those Ugaritic sentence names which contain a form of the root *twb* in one of the elements. Grammarians of comparative Semitics have observed that the semantic

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46 Exceptions among the Amorite names are the defective *Yašu-ub-[b-]*, the second element of which is unknown, and *Šub-na-lu-u* which has the precative -na- and -lu-u of uncertain meaning, Huffmon, *op. cit.*, pp. 224, 266. Among the Ugaritic names there are three names which have unexplained elements, Gröndahl, *op. cit.*, pp. 110, 153, 200.
48 Huffmon, *op. cit.*, p. 210, considers *yaḥad = "(the) unique (one)"* as a theophorous or appellative element and *rapi = "healer"* as a "theophorous? element," p. 264. A hypocoristic suffix is present in *Yašu-ba-an* and with mimation in *Yašu-bi-im,* pp. 136, 132.
category to which the root _twb_ belongs “describes a change of condition or transition from one situation to the opposite one.” 49 The meaning of the root _twb_ is thus commonly given as “turn, return.” 50 The close connection of the forms of the root _twb_ and the theophorous character of the other element in these earliest personal verbal sentence names gives additional support to the conclusion reached by W. L. Holladay that the appearances of the root _šub_ in the Amorite personal names—now the Ugaritic personal names may be added—“are involved with ‘religious’ return....” 51 This may throw light upon the semantic value of _yāšūb_ in the name of Isaiah’s son. It gives additional support to the argument that a return to Yahweh, _i.e._, a religious return rather than a physical return from exile, is indicated. One difference, of course, is that in the Amorite and Ugaritic names a divinity is to return to man, while in the name of Isaiah’s son a return on the part of a remnant is envisioned. (2) The sequence of elements in all the Amorite and Ugaritic names with a verbal form of _twb_ is predicate-subject; the name _bēš, šēr_ exhibits the subject-predicate sequence of elements. This does not need to present difficulties, because as noted above not only Hebrew but also Amorite, Ugaritic, and Phoenician verbal sentence names appear with either sequence of elements. This being the case, one should be careful not to conclude on the basis of the observation that since the subject is contained in the first element the term “remnant” must therefore be understood as an ominous threat. 52 On the other hand, it would be equally wrong to say that both elements are of equal significance. 53 The position of elements, _i.e._, the sequence of subject-verb,

50 Huffmon, _op. cit._, p. 266; Gröndahl, _op. cit._, p. 200.
51 Holladay, _op. cit._, p. 9.
52 For those who follow this line of reasoning, see supra, n. 5.
53 Lindblom, _op. cit._, p. 242: “... both terms are equally significant.”
has importance, because it places emphasis on the subject.⁵⁴

This study has attempted to reassess the linguistic arguments that have been brought to bear on our understanding of the syntactical structure of the name בֵּיתָןָה and its translation with the aid of all applicable evidence of Semitic onomastics, especially the West Semitic evidence of the recently published Amorite and Ugaritic personal names. It has become apparent that the syntactical structure of the name of Isaiah's oldest son is neither a "nackter Relativsatz" nor a "composed nominal sentence." It has also been shown that there is no linguistic and syntactical basis for the contention that the first element, i.e., the term "remnant," must be understood as a mere ominous threat without any hopeful content. The similarities and parallels of the syntactical structure of the name בֵּיתָןָה with the syntactical structure of the sentence names of Hebrew, Amorite, and Ugaritic onomastics led to the conclusion that this name is a *verbal sentence name* with a subject-predicate sequence of elements. This conclusion, based on linguistic and syntactical considerations,⁵⁵ strongly supports the translation of בֵּיתָןָה with "A-Remnant- SHALL Return," placing emphasis on the italicized "remnant."

⁵⁴ Supra, n. 36.