ויהי AS A DISCOURSE MARKER IN KINGS[1]

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Introduction

The distinction between ויהי as a verb and as a discourse marker was first proposed by E. König in 1897[2] and is now generally accepted. W. Richter called the latter a text deicticon.[3] Unlike regular verbs, the discourse markers ויהי and והיה need not agree in person, gender, or number with the subject of the clause to which they are attached.[4] Nevertheless, the exact discourse function of והיה/ויהי is still open to debate. The explanations cover a wide-ranging spectrum, including *inter alia*, a semantically empty temporal marker,[5] an emphasis of the temporal setting,[6] a marker of progress,[7] a connection that introduces an independent narrative or a new section,[8] the beginning of a new narrative or a turn of the plot in the narrative,[9] an interruption without a significant break,[10] and "continuity at an intra-scene level."[11] Others simply

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[1]This is an expanded and revised version of a paper presented at the NAPH session of the annual AAR/SBL meeting in Toronto, Canada, November 26, 2002.

[2]Cited in *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar: As Edited and Enlarged by the Late E. Kautzsch (GKC)*, 2d Eng. rev. ed. of the 28th German ed., trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), 327 n. 1.

[3]W. Richter, *Grundlagen einer althebräischen Grammatik. Band 3: Die Beschreibungsebenen. Der Satz (Satztheorie)* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1980), 206.

[4]G. Hatav, *The Semantics of Aspect and Modality: Evidence from English and Biblical Hebrew*, Studies in Language Companion Series 34 (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1997), 76. See also W. Groß, *Die Pendenskonstruktion im Biblischen Hebräisch*, ATS 27 (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987), 174-175.

[5]R. Bartelmus, *HYH. Bedeutung und Funktion eines hebräschen 'Allerweltswortes'—zugleich ein Beitrag zur Frage des hebräischen Tempussystems*, Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament 17 (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1982), 114, 208-225.

[6]Y. Endo, *The Verbal System of Classical Hebrew in the Joseph Story: An Approach from Discourse Analysis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996), 187.

[7]J. P. Floß, "Verbfunktionen der Basis HYY," *BN* 30 (1985): 89-90.

[8]*GKC*, 327.

[9]J. Junger, "Aspect and Cohesion in Biblical Hebrew Narratives," *Semitics* 10 (1989): 86-87.

[10]A. Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 48-61.

[11]C. H. J. van der Merwe, "The Elusive Biblical Hebrew Term ויהי: A Perspective

accept it as multifunctional.[12] A good summary and discussion of the previous studies concerning ויהי may be found in C. H. J. van der Merwe[13] and need not be repeated here, though I will interact with various views as necessary and relevant to this article. The present study compares selected sentence initial expressions with and without ויהי in a specific corpus, i.e., the book of Kings, and concludes that ויהי is a discourse particle that marks the beginning of a discourse segment. In what follows, I use the term "segment" to refer to any discrete unit of discourse and "segmentation" to the formal marking of segments in a discourse. Hence, ויהי is a discourse segmenting device.[14] Additionally, although it is commonly believed that ויהי is a temporal marker, I will argue that it is not temporal in nature.

As a discourse marker, ויהי does not occur with the same frequency in all periods of Biblical Hebrew, and may not even have the same functions in all periods. E. Jenni concludes that the use of והיה/ויהי in temporal clauses is more frequent in earlier Biblical Hebrew than in later Biblical Hebrew.[15] On the other hand, A. Schüle argues that ויהי is a latecomer into Hebrew and belongs to what he calls "Mittelhebräische,"[16] i.e., a stage of literary Hebrew that developed beyond the earlier Hebrew, but independently from the spoken language. Though I will not attempt to resolve the issue of whether the use of ויהי is early or late, it is clear that diachronic distinctions must be recognized. Furthermore, regardless of whether ויהי is early or late, diachronic changes take time, and one must still explain the difference in function between clauses with and without ויהי during the synchronic period when they are both in common use. Therefore, I have chosen the book of Kings as the corpus for this research. Although Kings is a compilation from various sources, some of which are named in the book itself, the present study is based on the book in its completed consonantal form, on the assumption that it must have made sense

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in Terms of Its Syntactical, Semantics, and Pragmatics in 1 Samuel," *Hebrew Studies* 40 (1999): 114.

[12]W. Schneider, *Grammatik des biblischen Hebräisch. Ein Lehrbuch*, 4th ed. (München: Claudius, 1980), 265-266. E. Talstra agrees with Schneider and adds that ויהי also distinguishes the main story from embedded stories ("Text Grammar and the Hebrew Bible 1: Elements of a Theory," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 35 [1978]: 173).

[13]Van der Merwe, 85-92 and 103-113; especially useful is van der Merwe's distinction between studies that deal with its syntactic functions from studies that deal with the macro-syntactic or discourse functions.

[14]Thus, I am adopting Hatav's, 70-83, terminology "segmentation particle," though she did not define it, but I will argue that the function of ויהי is not that of an obligatory particle (78), but rather an optional marker.

[15]E. Jenni, *Die hebräischen Präpositionen. Band 2: Die Präposition kaph* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), 149-150.

[16]A. Schüle, "Zur Bedeutung der Formel *wajjehi* im Übergang zum mittelhebräischen Tempussystem," in *Studien zur hebräischen Grammatik*, ed. A. Wagner, OBO 156 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 116, 122-125.

to the original readers. The results presented here apply to the specific diachronic period represented by the completion of the compilation of the book of Kings, but not necessarily to other periods of Biblical Hebrew.

The book of Kings may be thematically outlined as consisting of three major divisions, the reign of Solomon (1 Kgs 1–11), the history of the divided kingdom (1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 17), and the history of the kings of Judah until the captivity (2 Kgs 18–25). Each division contains several major narrative sections, and these in turn may contain subsections, which may, of course, be even further subdivided. Although there may be differences of opinion on the exact subdivisions of the book, one must begin with the assumption that, due to the nature of the book, the reign of a king or queen constitutes a major narrative section, unless there is evidence to the contrary. Thus, for example, the stories concerning the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18–20) constitute a major narrative section. However, other features may also determine the boundaries of narrative segments, and, where necessary, must be discussed on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, the various sources incorporated into the book of Kings may or may not coincide with narrative segments in the completed form of the book. Also, although the pre-Masoretic boundary markers *petuhah* and *setumah* attest to how later tradition may have partitioned the book, they are of limited value for the present study, because they, like chapter and verse divisions, were added after the compilation of the book was completed.[17]

An important phenomenon that helps us to understand the function of ויהי is the fact that narrative segments do not have to begin with an overt marker. For example, there is no segmentation marker at the beginning of the new thematic segment that begins in 1 Kgs 12.[18] Therefore, discourse segmenting devices, such as ויהי, are generally not obligatory markers, but are optional devices that help maintain discourse cohesion. According to M. A. K. Halliday, the components that make a text or discourse, as opposed to a group of unrelated sentences, include the structural features indicating thematic structure and focus, as well as the cohesive features of reference, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical cohesion.[19] Nevertheless, although a text as a whole must be cohesive, there are breaks or transitions in the thematic structure—and these may not always coincide with paragraph breaks, since paragraphs are phenomena belonging to the

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[17]However, all passages are cited with their respective *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* sigla, i.e., פ and ס, so these markers can be discussed where necessary.

[18]Instead, the formulaic language relating to Solomon's death at the end of chap. 11 is sufficient to alert the reader that the previous segment has come to an end. For another example, see 1 Kgs 17:1, the beginning of the Elijah pericope.

[19]M. A. K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 2d ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), 308-339. These are grouped under four categories in the analysis of the "texture" of the text: theme and focus, lexical cohesion and reference, ellipsis and substitution, and conjunction. It is also possible that temporal continuity, which Halliday, 324-327, subsumes under the category of conjunction, is an important enough feature of Biblical Hebrew narrative to deserve a separate category heading.

writing system, not the discourse. Hence, I would suggest that expressions that signal a thematic break or transition (e.g., certain sentence initial temporal expressions,[20] which Halliday categorizes as "conjunction") also promote discourse cohesion, since two completely unrelated stories do not need to be stitched together. Thus, I suspect that what has been described as ויהי marking "continuity" expresses not continuity, but discourse cohesion.[21] As a discourse marker, ויהי contributes to cohesion by marking transitions, i.e., the beginning of narrative segments.

Finally, the discourse function of והיה/ויהי is not a unique phenomenon, but simply the outgrowth of the normal function of the verb "to be." R. E. Longacre attributes the fact that ויהי "does not function on the storyline of a narrative" not to a peculiarity of ויהי itself, but to the "peculiarity of the verb *be* in many languages."[22] Similarly, van der Merwe's explanation of ויהי + nominal clauses assumes a distinction between the form with the notion "be" and the "normal verb," which has the notion "become" or "come to be."[23]

The Present Study

The present study consists of a comparison of four major types of expressions found in the book of Kings introduced by ויהי with corresponding expressions and without ויהי, i.e., sentence initial expressions containing date formulas (month and/or year), sentence initial expressions containing the word יום, sentence initial expressions containing the word עת, and the participial clauses *waw* + X + participle and ויהי + X + participle. For the sake of clarity, I have limited the comparison to only ויהי clauses and their counterparts that either begin with a simple *waw* or are asyndetic, though occasional reference is made to clauses introduced by other words, such as כי. These four expressions were chosen because there are a sufficient number of instances both with and without ויהי to allow for meaningful comparison.

The function of ב and כ + infinitive has already been surveyed, and there is no need to repeat the information here, except to point out that the presence or absence of ויהי does not alter the temporal reference or temporal referent of these expressions. Jenni observed that an event in a temporal sentence with כ

[20]As T. Goldfajn points out, Biblical Hebrew time adverbials set "the stage for subsequent events and reference times" (*Word Order and Time in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1998], 88).

[21]Van der Merwe, 114. This observation also applies to Niccacci's, 57, claim that ויהי does not mark off narrative units. Furthermore, although his distinction between an "interruption" and a "significant break" is valid, his, 59-60, claim that ויהי as a macro-syntactic sign never occurs at the absolute beginning of an independent narrative unit is dubious; e.g., Ruth 1:1.

[22]R. E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39–48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 66. Likewise for והיה (ibid., 109 and 134 n. 11).

[23]Van der Merwe, 99.

immediately precedes the event of the main sentence, whereas an event in the temporal sentence with ב is concurrent with that of the main sentence.[24] D. Gropp explains the distinction in function between the two syntagms as follows: כ + infinitive temporal clause could "be considered an infinitival transformation of a narrative clause," whereas ב + infinitive temporal clause "might be derived from a circumstantial clause."[25]

Sentence Initial Expressions Containing Date-Formulas

Of the expressions to be considered in this study, the most numerous are sentence initial expressions containing date-formulas (month and/or year). Since all instances occur with a preposition, the two basic types of syntagms consist of clauses with ויהי and those without ויהי. Sentence initial expressions containing words for month and/or year do occur without a preposition. However, they are not date-formulas. They express either duration (1 Kgs 5:28; 11:16; 2 Kgs 24:8) or frequency (1 Kgs 10:22) rather than temporal position.[26]

A comparison of occurrences of sentence initial date formulas introduced by ויהי with corresponding instances without ויהי shows that ויהי does not mark continuity as van der Merwe suggests. Instead, whereas the fronting of these temporal adjuncts can serve various functions and do not always stand at the beginning of new narrative segments, such adjuncts introduced by ויהי consistently stand at the beginning of narrative segments. Therefore, van der Merwe is correct that ויהי avoids ambiguity, but for a different reason. That is, the addition of ויהי functions as a marker of segmentation.

2 Kings 8:25

The most frequent way in which sentence initial date-formulas are introduced is with the preposition ב without ויהי. In most instances, it is the standard formula for dating the beginning of a king's reign.[27] Since this formula does not have to be sentence initial (e.g., 2 Kgs 15:13), its sentence initial position is discourse motivated. In at least twenty instances, the formula also is used to

[24]Jenni, 142.

[25]D. Gropp, "Progress and Cohesion in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: The Function of ke-/be- + the Infinitive Construct," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers*, ed. W. R. Bodine, *SBLSS* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 183.

[26]C. H. J. van der Merwe cites Harkness and others to distinguish temporal adverbials into groups that refer to duration, frequency, and time position ("Reconsidering Biblical Hebrew Temporal Expressions," *ZAH* 10 [1997]: 48). Temporal expressions that fall under the last category are better candidates for a discourse function because they can more easily update the reference time of subsequent sentences in a narrative, whereas a "temporal adjunct denoting *duration* cannot anchor an event on the time-line" (idem, "Elusive Biblical Hebrew Term ויהי," 96).

[27]This formula is absent from the narrative section on Queen Athaliah (2 Kgs 11:1ff.). This may reflect the perspective of the book of Kings that she was an illegitimate usurper.

introduce a narrative section about a king's reign (1 Kgs 15:1, 9, 33; 16:8, 15, 23; 2 Kgs 8:16, 25; 13:1, 10; 14:1, 23; 15:1, 8, 17, 23, 27, 32; 16:1; 17:1).

בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתֵּים־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לְיוֹרָם בֶּן־אַחְאָב מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל
מָלַךְ אֲחַזְיָהוּ בֶן־יְהוֹרָם מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה:

In year twelve of Joram son of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziahu son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign.

2 Kings 9:29

Nevertheless, this typical formula for dating the beginning of a king's reign does not always introduce a new narrative segment. Thus 2 Kgs 9:29 initiates a parenthetic statement after the story of Jehu's killing of Ahaziah. Here the sentence initial date formula serves to signal a digression from the narrative rather than to introduce a new narrative segment (the section on Ahaziah's reign is found earlier in 8:25-29).

וּבִשְׁנַת אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לְיוֹרָם בֶּן־אַחְאָב
מָלַךְ אֲחַזְיָה עַל־יְהוּדָה:

(*And in year eleven of Joram son of Ahab,* Ahaziah began to reign over Judah.)

2 Kings 12:1-2

A potentially equivocal instance is found in 2 Kgs 12:2, where the formula for dating the beginning of Jehoash's reign occurs immediately after the statement of his age.

בֶּן־שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים יְהוֹאָשׁ בְּמָלְכוֹ: פ
בִּשְׁנַת־שֶׁבַע לְיֵהוּא
מָלַךְ יְהוֹאָשׁ וְאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה מָלַךְ בִּירוּשָׁלָ͏ִם

Jehoash was seven years old when he began to reign. *In year seven of Jehu,* Jehoash began to reign. And he reigned forty years in Jerusalem.

The statement of Jehoash's age when he ascended to the throne in v. 1 could be interpreted as either the end of the previous narrative section or the beginning of the section on Jehoash's reign (12:1-22), an ambiguity reflected in the difference between the chapter division of the Hebrew Bible[28] and the placement of the *petuhah* after v. 1, which favors the chapter division of the English Bible (i.e., Heb. 12:2 = Eng. 12:1). Since a statement of a king's age when he came to the throne is another common way of beginning a narrative section concerning that king's reign (cf., e.g., 2 Kgs 21:1, 19; 22:1), it is more likely that the narrative segment begins in v. 1, and that the sentence initial בּ + date-formula in v. 2 does not initiate the narrative segment.

2 Kings 18:13

Aside from its use to date, i.e., the beginning of a king's reign, there are eight other instances of the sentence initial בּ + date-formula. Six of these stand at the

[28]As well as the placement of the *setumah* at the end of chap. 11.

beginning of a new narrative event or subsection (1 Kgs 6:37; 2 Kgs 11:4; 17:6; 18:13; 25:3, 8).[29]

וּבְאַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּה
עָלָה סַנְחֵרִיב מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר עַל כָּל־עָרֵי יְהוּדָה הַבְּצֻרוֹת וַיִּתְפְּשֵׂם:

And in year fourteen of king Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and seized them.

1 Kings 6:37-38

The remaining two instances of sentence initial ב + date-formula do not initiate narrative segments (1 Kgs 6:38; 2 Kgs 19:29). Both are instances of fronting for topicalization—an organizational strategy to clarify the topic.[30] The first instance occurs within a summary or epitome, which consists of the beginning and ending dates for the construction of the temple (1 Kgs 6:38).

בַּשָּׁנָה הָרְבִיעִית יֻסַּד בֵּית יְהוָה בְּיֶרַח זִו:
וּבַשָּׁנָה הָאַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה בְּיֶרַח בּוּל
הוּא הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁמִינִי כָּלָה הַבַּיִת לְכָל־דְּבָרָיו וּלְכָל־מִשְׁפָּטוֹ וַיִּבְנֵהוּ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים:

In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month Ziv. *And in the year eleven, in the month Bul*, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts and according to all its specifications. And so he built it in seven years.

Although both sentence initial date-formulas in the above example involve topicalization—the topic of this narrative unit is clearly the length of time it took to build the temple, which in turn serves as a fitting conclusion to the larger narrative concerning the building of the temple (5:15-6:38)—, only the first one (v. 37) stands at the beginning of a narrative segment. The second date-formula (v. 38) does not initiate a narrative segment, but occurs within the segment initiated by the previous date-formula.

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[29]1 Kgs 6:37 initiates a summary or epitome. I consider an epitome a narrative subsection, although I acknowledge that this may be debatable. See further comments on 1 Kgs 6:37-38 below.

[30]I am not impling that segmentation and other discourse functions, such as focusing or topicalization, are mutually exclusive, but simply that these instances do not stand at the beginning of narrative segments. For the distinction between focusing and topicalization, see R. Buth, "Functional Grammar, Hebrew and Aramaic: An Integrated, Textlinguistic Approach to Syntax," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers*, ed. W. R. Bodine, *SBLSS* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 84-85. I provisionally adopt his definition of "topic" as a "contextualizing constituent," whose purpose is "to help the listener understand how and on what basis some sentences are grouped together." There is some difference of opinion on the nature of fronting for topicalization; e.g., C. H. J. van der Merwe, who initially used J. Jacobs's terminology "focus of topicalisation" ("The Function of Word Order in Old Hebrew—with Special Reference to Cases Where a Syntagmeme Precedes a Verb in Joshua," *JNSL* 17 [1991]: 138-140), now calls it fronting as a "topic-promoting device" ("Towards a Better Understanding of Biblical Hebrew Word Order," *JNSL* 25 [1999]: 294-295; see also "Explaining Fronting in Biblical Hebrew," *JNSL* 25 [1999]: 173-186).

2 Kings 19:29

The other instance of a nonsegmenting sentence initial בֿ + date-formula occurs in direct speech with a series of expressions containing the word שׁנה in the same segment of the discourse (2 Kgs 19:29).

וְזֶה־לְּךָ הָאוֹת אָכוֹל הַשָּׁנָה֙ סָפִ֔יחַ
וּבַשָּׁנָ֥ה הַשֵּׁנִ֖ית סָחִ֑ישׁ
וּבַשָּׁנָ֣ה הַשְּׁלִישִׁ֗ית
זִרְע֧וּ וְקִצְר֛וּ וְנִטְע֥וּ כְרָמִ֖ים וְאִכְל֥וּ פִרְיָֽם׃

"And this will be your sign: Eat this year the after growth, and in the second year what grows of itself. *And in the third year*, sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit."

In the above example, the discourse segment consists entirely of v. 29, which presents the "sign," since v. 30 begins an explanation of the significance of the sign. The temporal expression ובשנה השׁלישׁית does not introduce a new narrative unit, but is fronted for topicalization (i.e., "this year . . . , and in the second year . . . , and in the third year"). In addition, it is possible that ובשנה השׁנית begins an elliptical sentence with the elision of the verb, in which case both ובשנה השׁנית and ובשנה השׁלישׁית could be considered examples of fronting for topicalization.

2 Kings 18:1

In contrast to sentence initial בֿ + date-formula without ויהי, which may or may not initiate narrative segments, sentence initial instances of the ויהי + בֿ + date-formula all stand at the beginning of narrative segments. There are ten instances of the ויהי + בֿ + date-formula. Of these, one instance serves as a formula for dating the beginning of a king's reign and introduces the narrative section about his reign (2 Kgs 18:1).

וַיְהִי֙ בִּשְׁנַ֣ת שָׁלֹ֔שׁ לְהוֹשֵׁ֥עַ בֶּן־אֵלָ֖ה מֶ֣לֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל
מָלַ֛ךְ חִזְקִיָּ֥ה בֶן־אָחָ֖ז מֶ֥לֶךְ יְהוּדָֽה׃

In year three of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.

2 Kings 18:9

The remaining nine instances of the ויהי + בֿ + date-formula also stand at the beginning of new narrative segments (1 Kgs 6:1; 14:25; 22:2; 2 Kgs 12:7; 18:9; 22:3; 25:1, 25, 27).

וַיְהִ֞י בַּשָּׁנָ֤ה הָֽרְבִיעִית֙ לַמֶּ֣לֶךְ חִזְקִיָּ֔הוּ
הִ֣יא הַשָּׁנָ֣ה הַשְּׁבִיעִ֗ית לְהוֹשֵׁ֥עַ בֶּן־אֵלָ֖ה מֶ֣לֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל עָלָ֞ה שַׁלְמַנְאֶ֧סֶר מֶֽלֶךְ־אַשּׁ֛וּר
עַל־שֹׁמְר֖וֹן וַיָּ֥צַר עָלֶֽיהָ׃

And in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it.

1 Kings 22:1-2

One of the instances of the ויהי + ב + date-formula listed above deserves special comment.

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים אֵין מִלְחָמָה בֵּין אֲרָם וּבֵין יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ
וַיְהִי בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁית
וַיֵּרֶד יְהוֹשָׁפָט מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה אֶל־מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And they lived three years without war between Aram and Israel. *And in the third
year*, Jehoshaphat king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

This narrative segment continues until the death of Ahab in v. 40. The story focuses on the alliance of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and "the king of Israel" against Aram. It is curious that Ahab is not mentioned by name until v. 39, which uses formulaic language for the end of a king's life, but Ahab is regularly mentioned by name in the previous chapter. This suggests that 22:1 belongs with the previous narrative segment since the verse mentions only Aram and Israel, but not Judah or specifically Jehoshaphat, who is more prominent in this chapter. Thus, although the chapter division reflects a contrary perspective, the placement of the *petuḥah* after v. 1 appears appropriate.[31] The ויהי + ב + date-formula in v. 2 is a transitional statement, involving a backreference[32] to the "three years without war" (v. 1) and initiating a new narrative segment, in which Jehoshaphat is more prominent.

Mention should be made of four other instances of ויהי + preposition + date-formula. Of these, three instances involve מקץ (1 Kgs 2:39) or מקצה (1 Kgs 9:10; 2 Kgs 8:3), and one instance involves ל (1 Kgs 20:26). All occur at the beginning of narrative subsections and involve some type of backreferencing. However, there are no exact matches without ויהי in the corpus to compare them with. The only instance of שנה + ל without ויהי occurs in an explanatory clause introduced by כי (1 Kgs 20:22).

Sentence Initial Expressions Containing the Word יום

Sentence initial expressions containing the word יום exhibit the greatest variety, i.e., they occur in at least three basic types of syntagms: preposition + יום, ויהי

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[31]Besides, the statement that there were three years of peace seems a fitting conclusion to the previous narrative segment (21:17–22:1) because it follows after the Lord's message to Elijah that, due to Ahab's humility, Ahab's penalty would be deferred until after his lifetime (21:28-29).

[32]"Backreferencing," also called "tail-head linkage," is a means of providing discourse cohesion between separate narrative segments. That is, "something mentioned in the last sentence of the preceding paragraph is referred to by means of back-reference in an adverbial clause in the following paragraph" (S. A. Thompson and R. E. Longacre, "Adverbial Clauses," in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Vol. 2: Complex Constructions*, ed. T. Shopen [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 209). Backreferencing is a common segmentation device.

+ יום, and ויהי + preposition + יום.[33] For reasons already mentioned above, sentence initial occurrences of יום other than in temporal adjuncts (e.g., 2 Kgs 19:3) are excluded from the study.

2 Kings 20:1

There are fourteen instances of sentence initial ב + יום. Of these, at least five instances stand at the beginning of new narrative events (2 Kgs 8:20; 10:32; 15:29; 20:1; 24:1).

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
חָלָה חִזְקִיָּהוּ לָמוּת וַיָּבֹא אֵלָיו יְשַׁעְיָהוּ בֶן־אָמוֹץ הַנָּבִיא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו

In those days Hezekiah became deathly sick. And the prophet Isaiah son of Amos came to him, and said to him, . . . [direct speech].

2 Kings 23:28-29

Additionally, in a few instances, ב + יום could be analyzed either as initiating a very short narrative segment or a parenthetical digression. There is at least one instance of the former (2 Kgs 23:29) and three instances of the latter (discussed later below).

וְיֶתֶר דִּבְרֵי יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
הֲלֹא־הֵם כְּתוּבִים עַל־סֵפֶר דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה׃
בְּיָמָיו עָלָה פַּרְעֹה נְכֹה מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם עַל־מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר עַל־נְהַר־פְּרָת
וַיֵּלֶךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיְמִיתֵהוּ בִּמְגִדּוֹ כִּרְאֹתוֹ אֹתוֹ׃

As for the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? *In his days* Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt came up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. And King Josiah went to meet him. And he killed him in Megiddo when he saw him.

In this example, v. 28 contains formulaic language typically introducing the end of the narrative of a king's reign. Then the sentence initial ב + יום in v. 29 initiates a more detailed account of how King Josiah met his death (vv. 29-30).

1 Kings 21:29

In at least seven instances, sentence initial expressions of the type ב + יום do not stand at the beginning of a narrative segment. In two of these instances, the temporal expression is fronted for the sake of focusing, i.e., highlighting the contrast (1 Kgs 2:26; 21:29).[34]

הֲרָאִיתָ כִּי־נִכְנַע אַחְאָב מִלְּפָנָי יַעַן כִּי־נִכְנַע מִפָּנַי לֹא־אָבִי הָרָעָה בְּיָמָיו
בִּימֵי בְנוֹ
אָבִיא הָרָעָה עַל־בֵּיתוֹ׃

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[33]The only instance of יום without either ויהי or a preposition occurs in a protasis and is introduced by אם (1 Kgs 12:7). This cannot be analyzed for segmentation because it occurs at the beginning of a direct speech.

[34]Compare these to an occurrence of ב + יום introduced by אך (1 Kgs 11:12).

"Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has
humbled himself before me, I will not bring calamity in his days. *In the days
of his son* will I bring calamity upon his house."

2 Kings 20:5

In two instances, the sentence initial ב + יום consists of topicalization within the
same discourse segment (1 Kgs 8:66; 2 Kgs 20:5).

שׁוּב וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־חִזְקִיָּהוּ נְגִיד־עַמִּי כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי דָּוִד אָבִיךָ שָׁמַעְתִּי
אֶת־תְּפִלָּתֶךָ רָאִיתִי אֶת־דִּמְעָתֶךָ הִנְנִי רֹפֶא לָךְ
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי
תַּעֲלֶה בֵּית יְהוָה:

"Go back and say to Hezekiah the prince of my people, 'Thus says the LORD
the God of David your father, "I have heard your prayer. I have seen your
tears. Look, I am going to heal you. *On the third day* you will go up to the
house of the LORD."'"

2 Kings 15:36-38

In three instances, the sentence initial ב + יום initiates a parenthetical statement,
indicating a digression from the narrative, rather than a new narrative event (1
Kgs 8:64; 16:34; 2 Kgs 15:37).

וְיֶתֶר דִּבְרֵי יוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
הֲלֹא־הֵם כְּתוּבִים עַל־סֵפֶר דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה:
בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
הֵחֵל יְהוָה לְהַשְׁלִיחַ בִּיהוּדָה רְצִין מֶלֶךְ אֲרָם וְאֵת פֶּקַח בֶּן־רְמַלְיָהוּ:
וַיִּשְׁכַּב יוֹתָם עִם־אֲבֹתָיו וַיִּקָּבֵר עִם־אֲבֹתָיו בְּעִיר דָּוִד אָבִיו
וַיִּמְלֹךְ אָחָז בְּנוֹ תַּחְתָּיו: פ

The rest of the acts of Jotham which he did, are they not written in the book
of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? (*In those days*, the LORD began to
send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah.) And Jotham slept
with his fathers. And they buried him with his fathers in the city of David.
And Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

1 Kings 2:42 (beginning of quoted speech)

One instance of ב + יום occurs at the beginning of quoted speech and cannot be
analyzed for segmentation (1 Kgs 2:42). However, a comparison between it and
the speech from which it is quoted is enlightening, because the statement in the
original speech comes in the middle, rather than at the beginning, of the speech.

הֲלוֹא הִשְׁבַּעְתִּיךָ בַיהוָה וָאָעַד בְּךָ לֵאמֹר
בְּיוֹם צֵאתְךָ
וְהָלַכְתָּ אָנֶה וָאָנָה יָדֹעַ תֵּדַע כִּי מוֹת תָּמוּת

"Did I not adjure you by the LORD, and warn you saying, '*On the day that you
go out*, and go here or there, know for certain that you will surely die'?"

Since the quotation in v. 42 begins with this statement of the consequence,
there is no need for a transitional marker, and hence no need for ויהיה.

1 Kings 2:37 (middle of direct speech)

In the original statement (v. 37), ‏בְּ‎ + ‏יום‎ is introduced by ‏וְהָיָה‎, which marks a transition from the king's command (v. 36) to the statement of the consequence of transgressing the king's command.

‏וְהָיָה בְּיוֹם צֵאתְךָ‎
‏וְעָבַרְתָּ אֶת־נַחַל קִדְרוֹן יָדֹעַ תֵּדַע כִּי מוֹת מוֹת‎

"*And on the day that you go out*, and cross the brook Kidron, know for certain that you will surely die."

In passing, I mention instances of other sentence initial prepositions besides ‏בְּ‎ that occur with ‏יום‎ without ‏ויהי‎. There is one instance of ‏מן‎ + ‏יום‎ (1 Kgs 8:16), but it occurs at the beginning of quoted speech and cannot be analyzed for segmentation. There is also one instance of ‏יום‎ + ‏עד‎ (2 Kgs 17:34). It initiates an explanatory parenthesis (so also another instance introduced by ‏כי‎, 2 Kgs 18:4). There are no corresponding instances with ‏ויהי‎ in the corpus to give an exact comparison.

2 Kings 4:18

In contrast to the above expressions without ‏ויהי‎, which sometimes initiate narrative segments and sometimes not, instances with ‏ויהי‎ consistently appear to stand at the beginning of narrative segments. There are four instances of ‏ויהי‎ + ‏יום‎, all of which stand at the beginning of narrative segments, introducing new narrative events (1 Kgs 18:1; 2 Kgs 4:8,11,18).

‏וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד‎
‏וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם‎
‏וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אָבִיו אֶל־הַקֹּצְרִים:‎

And the child grew. *And on a certain day*, he went out to his father to the reapers.

In the above example, the first clause ("And the child grew.") concludes the segment begun in v. 11, which narrates the miraculous gift of a son. Then the expression ‏ויהי‎ + ‏יום‎ in v. 18 initiates a narrative segment concerning the boy's death and subsequent healing by Elisha (2 Kgs 4:18b-37).

1 Kings 20:29-30

There are two instances of ‏ויהי‎ + ‏בְּ‎ + ‏יום‎. Both introduce narrative subsections (1 Kgs 3:18; 20:29).

‏וַיַּחֲנוּ אֵלֶּה נֹכַח אֵלֶּה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים‎
‏וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי‎
‏וַתִּקְרַב הַמִּלְחָמָה וַיַּכּוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־אֲרָם מֵאָה־אֶלֶף רַגְלִי בְּיוֹם אֶחָד:‎
‏וַיָּנֻסוּ הַנּוֹתָרִים אֲפֵקָה אֶל־הָעִיר‎
‏וַתִּפֹּל הַחוֹמָה עַל־עֶשְׂרִים וְשִׁבְעָה אֶלֶף אִישׁ הַנּוֹתָרִים‎
‏וּבֶן־הֲדַד נָס וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָעִיר חֶדֶר בְּחָדֶר: ס‎

And they encamped against each other seven days. *And on the seventh day*, the battle was joined. And the Israelites beat the Arameans, one hundred thousand foot soldiers in one day. And those who were left fled to Aphek, into the city. And the wall fell over twenty-seven thousand men of those who were left. Now Ben Hadad had fled. And he came into the city to an inner chamber.

This example is part of a larger narrative section, consisting of the entire chapter (20:1-43), which deals with Ben Hadad's battles against Ahab. Verse 26 introduces a new invasion by Ben Hadad, which begins with a ויהי clause, includes the prophecy of the man of God (v. 28), and ends with the first sentence of v. 29 (see above). The expression יום + ויהי (v. 29b) consists of a backreference to the "seven days," initiates the narrative segment of the battle (vv. 29-30a), followed by the plot by Ben Hadad's aides to save his life (vv. 30b-32).

There is also one instance of יום + מקץ + ויהי (1 Kgs 17:7), which introduces a narrative subsection. There are no instances of the same expression without ויהי in the corpus. There is also one instance of ב + והיה יום, which introduces a subsection of a direct speech (1 Kgs 2:37, cited above).

Sentence Initial Expressions Containing the Word עת

The third group of expressions to be considered consists of sentence initial expressions involving the use of the word עת. Since all instances contain a preposition, the two basic types of syntagms consist of clauses with ויהי and those without ויהי. Although the number of instances of sentence initial expressions with עת is relatively small, they fit the same pattern noticed in the previous two types of expressions. That is, whereas instances without ויהי may or may not stand at the beginning of a narrative segment, the addition of ויהי occurs only at the beginning of a narrative segment.

1 Kings 14:1

There are five instances of sentence initial עת + ב without ויהי. Of these, three stand at the beginning of narrative segments (1 Kgs 14:1; 2 Kgs 20:12; 24:10).

בָּעֵת הַהִיא
חָלָה אֲבִיָּה בֶן־יָרָבְעָם׃

At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick.

The above example occurs as part of the narratives concerning the reign of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:20–14:20). The temporal expression in 14:1 stands at the beginning of a narrative segment in which his son's sickness and his wife's visit to Ahijah provide the setting for the prophetic pronouncement of judgment on Jeroboam and his family (14:1-18).

2 Kings 18:15-16

In two instances, sentence initial עת + ב (without ויהי) do not stand at the beginning of narrative segments, but rather introduce parenthetical explanatory statements (2 Kgs 16:6; 18:16).

וַיִּתֵּן חִזְקִיָּה אֶת־כָּל־הַכֶּסֶף הַנִּמְצָא בֵית־יְהוָה וּבְאֹצְרוֹת בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ:
בָּעֵת הַהִיא
קִצַּץ חִזְקִיָּה אֶת־דַּלְתוֹת הֵיכַל יְהוָה וְאֶת־הָאֹמְנוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִפָּה חִזְקִיָּה מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה
וַיִּתְּנֵם לְמֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר: פ

And Hezekiah gave all the silver found in the house of the LORD and in the
treasuries of the house of the king. (*At that time*, Hezekiah cut off the doors
of the temple of the LORD and the pillars that Hezekiah king of Judah had
overlaid, and gave them to the king of Assyria.)

The narrative segment of the above example begins in v. 13, and is the account
of Sennacherib's invasion and Hezekiah's tribute. Here, the expression עת + ב
does not initiate a new event, but a parenthetical explanation placed at the end of
the narrative unit.

1 Kings 11:29

The sole instance of עת + ב + ויהי introduces a narrative subsection (1 Kgs
11:29).

וַיְהִי בָּעֵת הַהִיא
וְיָרָבְעָם יָצָא מִירוּשָׁלָםִ וַיִּמְצָא אֹתוֹ אֲחִיָּה הַשִּׁילֹנִי הַנָּבִיא בַּדֶּרֶךְ

And at that time, Jeroboam went out from Jerusalem. And Ahijah the Shilonite
the prophet found him on the way.

The above example begins the narrative segment in which the prophet Ahijah
predicts the division of the monarchy and Jeroboam's accession to the throne
of Israel (vv. 29-39).

Instances of עת also occur with the prepositions ל and כ, but there is not
an exact match for comparison. The only instance of עת + ל without ויהי,
which initiates a parenthetic statement (1 Kgs 15:23), is not useful for
comparison because it is introduced by רק. The sole corresponding instance
of עת + ל + ויהי is also problematic (1 Kgs 11:4) because its context shows
evidence of textual corruption.[35] There is one instance of a sentence initial
expression מועד + ל (followed by עת + כ) (2 Kgs 4:16) that stands at the
beginning of direct speech and thus cannot be analyzed for segmentation.
There is also one instance of a sentence initial עת + כ (2 Kgs 7:1) that occurs
at the beginning of direct speech and likewise cannot be analyzed for
segmentation.[36]

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[35]There is possibly an instance of dittography in 1 Kgs 11:3, due in part to the
repetition of לבב + נטה in vv. 2 and 4. Following the LXX arrangement of vv. 1-3, v.
4 clearly begins a narrative subsection. That is, after presenting the situation that
Solomon loved many foreign women in LXX vv. 1-3, vv. 4-8 narrate how they turned
his heart after other gods.

[36]Two other instances of עת + כ are introduced by conjunctions other than *waw*
(כי in 1 Kgs 19:2 and כי אם in 1 Kgs 20:6), neither of which begin a narrative segment,
but are rather instances of sentence initial focusing.

A Comparison of ויהי + X + Participial Clauses and Waw + X + Participial Clauses

Since narratives presuppose a temporal framework, it is tempting to interpret all forms of segmentation as temporal.[37] However, not all segmentation markers are temporal in nature. According to J. E. Grimes, a discourse may be partitioned on the basis of setting, including temporal and spatial setting, theme, uniformity of the cast of characters, participant orientation, and even switching between different levels of organization.[38] In what follows, I would like to show that Biblical Hebrew participial clauses, with or without ויהי, may introduce the setting or circumstances for a narrative segment without explicit reference to time. The clause *waw* + X + participle without ויהי may constitute an unmarked beginning of a narrative segment, whereas the clause ויהי + X + participle constitutes a marked segmentation.

As in the foregoing comparisons, I include here only participial clauses introduced by either ויהי or the conjunction *waw* (i.e., clauses introduced by, e.g., אשר, הנה were not considered). Needless to say, participles with a nominal function are irrelevant for this study (e.g., 2 Kgs 11:3). Also excluded are instances of two or more (*waw*) + X + participial clauses occurring in a series describing a series of simultaneous events (e.g., 1 Kgs 3:23; 6:27; 10:24-25; 22:10; 2 Kgs 2:12; 4:5; 6:32), even though some of these may also stand at the beginning of narrative segments. That is because, besides the fact that no corresponding series of clauses containing ויהי are attested in the corpus, a clause in such a series cannot be said to function as a temporal or circumstantial protasis to the other clause(s). Likewise, the only instances of ויהי + X + participle included are those where ויהי functions as a discourse marker. That is, I have excluded instances where ויהי is an auxiliary verb (e.g., 1 Kgs 5:24; 2 Kgs 18:4), or where ויהי is simply the verb "to be" (e.g., 2 Kgs 11:3).

1 Kings 8:14

According to G. Hatav, participles express the progressive aspect in Biblical Hebrew, which means that the Reference time[39] is included, and must be expressed either before or after the participial clause. Whereas the Reference time of *waw* + X + participial clauses is normally that of a preceding clause, the Reference time of ויהי + X + participial clauses is that of the following clause.[40]

[37]See, e.g., Longacre, 70.

[38]J. E. Grimes, *The Thread of Discourse*, Janua Linguarum, Series Minor, 207 (New York: Mouton, 1975), 102-107.

[39]Hatav follows Reichenbach, who distinguishes three different times in discourse: (S) speech time, (E) event time, and (R) reference time. The Reference time is the vantage point from which specific narrative events are viewed. It may either coincide with the S-time, or the E-time, or consist of another point in time specified (explicitly or implicitly) in the context.

[40]Hatav, 104. She admits to some exceptions, such as "futurate" instances that

Most instances of *waw* + X + participial clauses describe circumstances relating to a preceding clause (i.e., the Reference time is that of the preceding clause), just as Hatav claims (1 Kgs 1:15, 40; 3:22, 26; 8:14; 13:1, 24, 25, 28; 15:27; 19:19; 20:12, 16; 22:3, 20; 2 Kgs 2:18; 5:18; 7:9; 17:31; 24:11).

וַיַּסֵּב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־פָּנָיו וַיְבָרֶךְ אֵת כָּל־קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְכָל־קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹמֵד׃

And the king turned his face, and blessed all the congregation of Israel, *as all the congregation of Israel was standing.*

2 Kings 22:14

Nevertheless, there are some instances where it is not clear whether the *waw* + X + participial clause states circumstances relating to the preceding or to the following clause (e.g., 1 Kgs 16:15; 22:12; 2 Kgs 8:7). Indeed, some participial clauses function as independent sentences, such as in parenthetical statements (1 Kgs 11:29; 2 Kgs 6:30; 8:4; 22:14), or as part of a descriptive context (1 Kgs 10:20; 21:5), or when the participle has a habitual function (1 Kgs 17:6). For the purpose of this article, it suffices to simply give an example of a *waw* + X + participial clause in a parenthetical statement.

וַיֵּלֶךְ חִלְקִיָּהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וַאֲחִיקָם וְעַכְבּוֹר וְשָׁפָן וַעֲשָׂיָה
אֶל־חֻלְדָּה הַנְּבִיאָה אֵשֶׁת שַׁלֻּם בֶּן־תִּקְוָה בֶּן־חַרְחַס שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים
וְהִיא יֹשֶׁבֶת בִּירוּשָׁלַם בַּמִּשְׁנֶה
וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵלֶיהָ׃

And Hilkiah the priest and Ahikam and Achbor and Shaphan and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah son of Harhas keeper of the wardrobe. (*Now she was living in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.*) And they spoke to her.

1 Kings 13:11

Aside from instances where a *waw* + X + participle stands at the beginning of direct speech or immediately after a formula of direct address, which cannot be analyzed for segmentation (e.g., 1 Kgs 2:20; 3:17; 2 Kgs 4:13), there are at least nine instances in the book of Kings where these clauses indicate circumstances relating to the following clause(s). I would, therefore, argue that the Reference time of this group of participles is specified in the following rather than the preceding clause. Of these, there are six instances of *waw* + X + participial clauses that provide the setting for a new narrative segment (1 Kgs 1:5; 8:62; 10:1; 13:11; 2 Kgs 2:23; 9:17). They function in a way that resembles ויהי + X + participial clauses, but are not marked with ויהי.

וְנָבִיא אֶחָד זָקֵן יֹשֵׁב בְּבֵית־אֵל
וַיָּבוֹא בְנוֹ וַיְסַפֶּר־לוֹ אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשֶׂה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים הַיּוֹם בְּבֵית־אֵל

"denote future events" (109-110), those that involve perception (110-112), and habituals (112-113).

Now a certain old prophet was dwelling in Bethel. And his son came in, and told him all the work that the man of God had done that day in Bethel.

The example above occurs within a larger narrative concerning the man of God who prophesied against Jeroboam (13:1-34). After the man of God began his journey back home by a different way from which he came, the *waw* + X + participial clause in v. 11 begins a narrative subsection which introduces an old prophet who convinced the man of God to come and eat with him (vv. 11-19).

2 Kings 4:38

The remaining three instances of *waw* + X + participial clauses that are circumstantial to a following main clause do not initiate new narrative segments (1 Kgs 14:17; 16:9; 2 Kgs 4:38).

וֶאֱלִישָׁע שָׁב הַגִּלְגָּלָה וְהָרָעָב בָּאָרֶץ
וּבְנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים יֹשְׁבִים לְפָנָיו
וַיֹּאמֶר לְנַעֲרוֹ

Elisha had returned to Gilgal, as there was a famine in the land. *And as the sons of the prophets were sitting before him*, he said to his servant, . . . [direct speech].

In the above example, the participial clause does not initiate a narrative segment, but is part of a series of clauses that provide the setting for the ensuing story.

2 Kings 2:11

In contrast to the *waw* + X + participial clauses, which only occasionally stand at the beginning of narrative segments, the ten instances of ויהי + X + participial clauses attested in the book of Kings all stand at the beginning of narrative subsections (1 Kgs 13:20; 20:39, 40; 2 Kgs 2:11; 6:5, 26; 8:5, 21; 13:21; 19:37).

וַיְהִי הֵמָּה הֹלְכִים הָלוֹךְ וְדַבֵּר
וְהִנֵּה רֶכֶב־אֵשׁ וְסוּסֵי אֵשׁ וַיַּפְרִדוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיַּעַל אֵלִיָּהוּ בַּסְעָרָה הַשָּׁמָיִם׃

And as they continued walking and talking, look, there was a chariot of fire and horses of fire. And they separated the two of them. And Elijah went up in a windstorm to heaven.

2 Kings 8:3-5

It is interesting to observe the function of the *waw* + X + participle and the ויהי + X + participial clauses when they occur in the same context (2 Kgs 8:4-5).

וַיְהִי מִקְצֵה שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים
וַתָּשָׁב הָאִשָּׁה מֵאֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַתֵּצֵא לִצְעֹק אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־בֵּיתָהּ וְאֶל־שָׂדָהּ׃
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ מְדַבֵּר אֶל־גֵּחֲזִי נַעַר אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר
סַפְּרָה־נָּא לִי אֵת כָּל־הַגְּדֹלוֹת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה אֱלִישָׁע׃
וַיְהִי הוּא מְסַפֵּר לַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־הֶחֱיָה אֶת־הַמֵּת
וְהִנֵּה הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־הֶחֱיָה אֶת־בְּנָהּ צֹעֶקֶת אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־בֵּיתָהּ וְעַל־שָׂדָהּ וַיֹּאמֶר גֵּחֲזִי

At the end of seven years, the woman returned from the land of the Philistines, and went forth to plead with the king for her house and for her land. (*Now the king was speaking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God saying*, "Please tell me all the great things that Elisha has done.") *And as he was telling the king how he had raised the dead to life*, look, the woman whose son he had raised to life was pleading before the king concerning her house and concerning her land. And Gehazi said, . . . [direct speech].

In the above example, the episode of the woman's return from the land of the Philistines is initiated with a ויהי + date-formula clause (v. 3). Nevertheless, although the woman "went forth to plead with the king" in v. 3, her "pleading" does not occur until v. 5. The *waw* + X + participial clause in v. 4 initiates a parenthetic digression from the woman's story in order to introduce the king into the story. Then the ויהי + X + participial clause in v. 5 resumes the story line and initiates the episode of the woman's plea before the king (vv. 5-6).

The occurrence of ויהי with circumstantial participial clauses demonstrates that ויהי is temporally neutral. That is, ויהי is not in essence a temporal marker. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that, as remarked earlier in this article, ויהי does not alter the temporal reference or the referent of the temporal clauses to which it is attached. The function of ויהי as a temporally neutral segmentation marker explains its use in those instances where there is no apparent reference to time (e.g., 1 Kgs 16:31).

Conclusions

The conclusions from the above study may be summarized as follows. First, the use of ויהי as a discourse marker is not obligatory.[41] That is, ויהי is an optional particle that can be attached to some temporal and circumstantial clauses. In fact, some of these clauses occur more frequently without ויהי. On the other hand, the fact that ויהי is an optional particle does not preclude some types of clauses from occurring more frequently with ויהי than others.[42]

Second, the function of ויהי as an optional discourse marker can be illustrated by comparing clauses introduced by ויהי with corresponding clauses without ויהי. Although sentence initial temporal and participial expressions without ויהי often coincide with the beginning of narrative segments, there are many instances that do not begin narrative segments, but have other discourse functions. In contrast, these same expressions introduced by ויהי consistently occur at the beginning of narrative segments. Therefore, the addition of ויהי

[41]The optional nature of ויהי in certain types of constructions was already noted by Groß, 64-77. See also Schüle, 120-121.

[42]For example, ויהי/יהי occur more frequently before כ + temporal sentence than before ב + temporal sentence (van der Merwe, "Reconsidering Biblical Hebrew Temporal Expressions," 57).

marks temporal and circumstantial expressions for segmentation.[43] And segmentation, in turn, is one of the strategies by which discourse cohesion is achieved!

Finally, ויהי is a temporally neutral discourse marker. This can be demonstrated in at least two ways. First, the presence of ויהי does not change the referent or the temporal reference of a temporal clause. Second, ויהי can occur with clauses other than temporal clauses, such as participial clauses. Thus its primary function is to segment the narrative, not to indicate whether the segmentation entails a change in time or a change in setting.

These conclusions apply to the period of Biblical Hebrew represented by the completion of the compilation of the book of Kings. Further research could show to what extent they are or are not applicable to other periods of Biblical Hebrew or even to Biblical Hebrew in general.

[43]Thus van der Merwe is correct that the use of ויהי avoids ambiguity, but not for the reason he claims.