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אשר and -ש in the Book of Ecclesiastes

by

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Preface

This project began as a paper delivered at the 16th World Congress of Jewish Studies, at the invitation of Adina Moshavi and Tania Notarius. Thereafter, it took on a life of its own. Many friends and colleagues have helped along the way. Tremper Longman, Cynthia Miller-Naudé, and especially Michael Fox provided comments on an earlier version of this essay. Robert Holmstedt, Grace Park, Yael Maschler, and Tamar Zewi kindly shared pre-publication copies of their work. Bernard Comrie, Steven Fassberg, Peter Gentry, Robert Harris, James Kugel, and Marianne Mithun offered helpful advice and assistance. Finally, Nili Samet's many contributions have improved this essay throughout. I thank them all.

This essay abides by a few standard conventions. (1) Following recent practice, "Ecclesiastes" refers to the biblical book whose stated author is "Qohelet." (2) The biblical text follows *BHL*, and the subdivision of verses follows traditional segmentation (for the rules, see Mordechai Breuer, טעמי המקרא בכ״א ספרים ובספרי אמ״ת [Jerusalem: Michlalah Yerushalyim / Ben-Zvi, 1982], 8–12). (3) Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine, and uncertain translations are presented in *italics*. In addition, the linguistic terminology adopted below reflects functionalist usage.

March, 2017

Abbreviations and Symbols

ABBREVIATIONS

1QH^{a}	“Thanksgiving Hymn,” manuscript A, from Qumran Cave 1 (presented in Eleazar Lipa Sukenik, אוצר המגלות הגנוזות שבידי האוניברסיטה העברית. Jerusalem: Bialik / Hebrew Univ., 1954)
1Q27	“Mysteries text” from Qumran Cave 1 (presented in *Qumran Cave 1*, ed. Dominique Barthélemy and J. T. Milik. DJD 1. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1955)
4Q390	“Apocryphon of *Jeremiah,” text E* (presented in *Qumran Cave 4, XXI, Parabiblical Texts, pt. 4: Pseudo-prophetic texts*, ed. Devorah Dimant and John Strugnell. DJD 30. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011)
AAL	*Afroasiatic Linguistics*
AB	The Anchor Bible
AJSL	*The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
ANES	*Ancient Near Eastern Studies*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testament
BDB	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHL	תורה נביאים וכתובים: *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia Prepared according to the Vocalization, Accents, and Masora of Aaron ben Moses ben Asher in the Leningrad Codex*, ed. Aron Dotan. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001
BI	*Biblical Interpretation*
Bibl	*Biblica*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
DCH	*The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, ed. David J. A. Clines. 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press / Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2016
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert

EHLL	*Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2013
EI	Eretz-Israel
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, rev. A. E. Cowley. 2nd English ed. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1910
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Study Edition)*, rev. W. Baumgartner and J. J. Stamm, with assistance from B. Hartmann, Z. Ben-Ḥayyim, E. Y. Kutscher, and P. Reymond, tr. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HeBAI	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*
Herm	Hermeneia
HS	*Hebrew Studies*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IJAL	*International Journal of American Linguistics*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JQR	*The Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSem	*Journal for Semitics*
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
Kenn.	Biblical manuscript indexed in *Vetus Testamentum hebraicum, cum variis lectionibus*, ed. Benjamin Kennicott. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1776–80
KHAT	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
KUSATU	*Kleine Untersuchungen zur Sprache des Alten Testaments und seiner Umwelt*
Lg	*Language*
LHB/OTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSAWS	Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic
LT	*Linguistic Typology*
LXX	Septuagint (as presented in *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs. 2 vols. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935)

MT	Masoretic Text (as presented in *BHL*)
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NJPS	*Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985
NRSV	*The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments: New Revised Standard Version*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OTL	The Old Testament Library
de Rossi	Biblical manuscript indexed in *Variae lectiones Veteris Testamenti ex immensa Mss. editorumq. codicum congerie haustae et ad Samar. textum, ad vetustiss. versiones, ad accuratiores sacrae criticae fontes ac leges examinatae*, ed. Johannis Bern. De-Rossi. 4 vols. Parma: Regio, 1784–88
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SLCS	Studies in Language Companion Series
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch (as presented in *The Pentateuch: The Samaritan Version and the Masoretic Version*, ed. Abraham Tal and Moshe Florentin. Tel Aviv: Haim Rubin Tel Aviv Univ. Press, 2010)
SSLL	Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
Tg. Qoh.	Targum Qohelet (as presented in מקראות גדולות הכתר: מהדורת יסוד חדשה, ed. Menachem Cohen. Vol. 13, ספר חמש מגילות. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan Univ., 2012)
TSL	Typological Studies in Language
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTS	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*
ZAH	*Zeitschrift für Althebraistik*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

SYMBOLS

~	alternating with; approximately (followed by a numeral)
<	derived from, traceable to
>	developing into

1. Introduction

"There is perhaps no other book in all of the Hebrew Bible where the language has received more attention of scholars than Ecclesiastes."[1] Among the many features examined, there is the notorious problem of the two relativizers deployed throughout the book:[2] אשר and -ש.[3] The former is a simple clitic and appears 89 times. The latter is a proclitic[4] and appears 70 times, including those in *ktiv*/*qre* doublets (Eccl 6:10, 10:3).[5] For all practical purposes, these relativizers look "interchangeable," are "used seemingly indiscriminately,"[6] and "lack . . . a clear pattern" of distribution.[7]

> יש צדיקים **אשר** מגיע אלהם כמעשה הרשעים ויש רשעים **ש**מגיע אלהם כמעשה הצדיקים There are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous (Eccl 8:14a [NRSV]).
>
> ושבח אני את המתים **ש**כבר מתו מן החיים **אשר** המה חיים עדנה And I thought the dead, who have already died, more fortunate than the living, who are still alive (Eccl 4:2 [NRSV]); see also

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[1] Choon-Leong Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 18C (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 11.

[2] For an attempt to reconstruct a third relativizer, אש, see N. H. Tur-Sinai, פשוטו של מקרא: פירוש לסתומות שבכתבי הקודש לפי סדר הכתובים במסורת (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1967–68), 4.2:166, on Eccl 7:5.

[3] See, e.g., Robert Holmstedt, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשׁר in Qoheleth," in *The Words of the Wise Are like Goads: Engaging Qohelet in the 21st Century*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Tremper Longman III, and Cristian G. Rata (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 283–307 (with ample bibliography).

[4] Note, however, Steven E. Fassberg, "The Orthography of the Relative Pronoun -שה in the Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 15 (1996): 248 n. 51; and the evidence from Qumran in n. 21, below.

[5] Its vocalization usually conforms to a special phonological rule governing proclitics (Joseph L. Malone, *Tiberian Hebrew Phonology* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993], 47–48; and, independently, Fassberg, "The Orthography of -שה," 244–45). The exceptions remain unexplained within Biblical Hebrew phonology but correlate with evidence from later Hebrew traditions (see, e.g., Shelomo Morag, "On the Historical Validity of the Vocalization of the Hebrew Bible," *JAOS* 94 [1974]: 308–9; or Moshe Bar-Asher, *Studies in Classical Hebrew*, ed. Aaron Koller, Studia Judaica 71 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014], 306).

[6] Bo Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth with Special Emphasis on the Verbal System*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Semitica Upsaliensia 10 (Uppsala: n.p., 1987), 161 and 149, respectively.

[7] See Holmstedt, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשׁר in Qoheleth," 290 (= idem, *The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew*, LSAWS 10 [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2016], 240). See also Diethelm Michel, *Untersuchungen zur Eigenart des Buches Qohelet*, BZAW 183 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 213, 221.

> **כאשר** יצא מבטן אמו ערום ישוב ללכת **כשבא** As they came from their mother's womb, so they shall go again, naked as they came (Eccl 5:14a [NRSV]).

Scholars have exerted great effort to account for this mysterious phenomenon, and much of it has led nowhere. From a synchronic perspective, some effectively affirm that אשר and -ש are unconditioned variants,[8] whether they call it "random variation"[9] or "free variation."[10] In a similar vein, the alternation is attributed to personal style,[11] even though style is nonrandom and subject to authorial choice.[12] Others find significance in the alternation and, especially, in the proclitic form. For instance, -ש is said to reflect a dialectal variant and legacy of a specifically northern speech pattern;[13] dubious from the outset,[14] this argument has ultimately been refuted.[15] Or, -ש may be a token of colloquialism[16] or idiolect.[17] But here too, neither hypothesis has proven productive. The same is true of the argument that the choice between אשר and -ש is determined by metrical or poetic rules.[18]

---

[8] A. Schoors, *The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words*, OLA 41, 143 (Louvain: Peeters, 1992–2004), 1:215; and Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, and Martin Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (London: Equinox, 2008), 1:177.

[9] Holmstedt, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשׁר in Qoheleth," 290 (= idem, *Relative Clause*, 240).

[10] E.g., T. Givón, "The Evolution of Dependent Clause Morpho-Syntax in Biblical Hebrew," in *Approaches to Grammaticalization*, ed. Elizabeth Closs Traugott and Bernd Heine, TSL 19.1–2 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1991), 2:279; and John Huehnergard, "On the Etymology of the Hebrew Relative *šɛ*-," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz, Publication of the Institute for Advanced Studies 1 (Jerusalem / Winona Lake, Ind.: Magnes / Eisenbrauns, 2006), 103.

[11] E.g., Yitzhak Shlesinger, "The Distribution of Relative Pronouns 'ש' and 'אשר' in the Book of Ecclesiastes," in *Studies in Ancient and Modern Hebrew in Honour of M. Z. Kaddari*, ed. Shimon Sharvit (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan Univ. Press, 1999), 106–8, 111 (in Hebrew); and, in this context, Abba Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1967–71), 1:77–79 (in Hebrew). Note especially Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*, 1:195, 227 and 2:91.

[12] See Holmstedt, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשׁר in Qoheleth," 288–91 (= idem, *Relative Clause*, 239–41); and, more broadly, Sandra A. Thompson and Anthony Mulac, "The Discourse Conditions for the Use of the Complementizer *that* in Conversational English," *Journal of Pragmatics* 15 (1991): 238.

[13] J. C. C. Nachtigal, "Ueber das Buch des A. T. mit der Ausschrift: Jonas," in *Allgemeine Bibliothek der biblischen Litteratur*, ed. Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1787–1800), 9:235, 235–36 n. i. See also, among others, Y. Peretz, *The Relative Clause* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1967), 130 (in Hebrew); Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 161; and Gary A. Rendsburg, "Northern Hebrew through Time: From the Song of Deborah to the Mishnah," in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé and Ziony Zevit, LSAWS 8 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 343–44.

[14] See Wilhelm Gesenius, *Geschichte der hebräischen Sprache und Schrift: Eine philologisch-historische Einleitung in die Sprachlehren und Wörterbücher der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1815), 55 n. 66; Gotthelf Bergsträsser, "Das hebräische Präfix ש," *ZAW* 29 (1909): 42–43; and Francesco Bianchi, "The Language of Qohelet: A Bibliographical Survey," *ZAW* 105 (1993): 221.

[15] David Talshir, "The Habitat and History of Hebrew during the Second Temple Period," in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology*, ed. Ian Young, JSOTS 369 (London: Clark, 2003), 270–71.

[16] E.g., Bergsträsser, "Das hebräische Präfix ש," 44; or, somewhat differently, Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, 1:77–79.

A more compelling theory focuses on the historical dimension—that the alternation between אשר and -ש reflects a moment in time when the use of אשר was on the decline and that of -ש on the upswing.[19] An increasing use of -ש generally agrees with the evidence from Ben Sira (early second century B.C.E.)[20] and, to a lesser extent, the Hebrew texts from Qumran.[21]

> הׄ[חכמה]תעזׂר ◦◦ [לחכם מעשרה שליטים] **ש**[היו] בעיר Wisdom helps a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city (4QQoh^{a} 7:19 [MT **אשר**]).

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[17] E.g., Mitchell J. Dahood, "Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth," *Bibl* 33 (1952): 45 (= idem, *Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth* [Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1952], 16). From a different perspective, see also Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd, cited in Holmstedt, "Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew," in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*, 117 (= idem, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשׁר in Qoheleth," 290 n. 36).

[18] E.g., H. W. Hertzberg, *Der Prediger (Qohelet)*, KAT 16.4 (Leipzig: Deichert / Scholl, 1932), 12–13 (= idem, *Der Prediger*, in Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg and Hans Bardtke, *Der Prediger / Das Buch Esther*, KAT 17.4–5 [Gütersloh: Mohn, 1963], 35).

[19] See, e.g., Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, tr. M. G. Easton, Clark's Foreign Theological Library 4.54 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1877), 195. For a radical version of this hypothesis, see Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, 1:77–79. Cf. Daniel C. Fredericks, *Qoheleth's Language: Re-evaluating Its Nature and Date*, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 3 (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1988), 102.

[20] Holmstedt, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשׁר in Qoheleth," 295 (= idem, *Relative Clause*, 241). For studies of אשר and -ש in Ben Sira, see W. Th. van Peursen, *The Verbal System in the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira*, SSLL 41 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 306–24; Fassberg, "On the Syntax of Dependent Clauses in Ben Sira," in *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira: Proceedings of a Symposium Held at Leiden University, 11–14 December 1995*, ed. T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde, STDJ 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 56–71; and Menaḥem Zevi Kaddari, "The Relative Clause in Ben-Sira's Language," in *Samaritan, Hebrew and Aramaic Studies Presented to Professor Abraham Tal*, ed. Moshe Bar-Asher and Moshe Florentin (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2005), 256–65 (in Hebrew).

[21] See J. T. Milik, "Le rouleau de cuivre provenant de la grotte 3Q (3Q15)," in M. Baillet, J. T. Milik, and R. de Vaux, *Les "petites grottes" de Qumran: Exploration de la falaise; Les grottes 2Q, 3Q, 5Q, 6Q, 7Q à 10Q; Le rouleau de cuivre*, DJD 3.1–2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 1:226.

There are different reflexes of ש* in Qumran Hebrew (Fassberg, "The Orthography of -שה," 248 with n. 51). For the most part, this relativizer appears as -ש (for its obligatory proclitic nature, see Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, *Miqṣat Ma'aśe ha-Torah*, DJD 10 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1994], 68 n. 8). Twice it takes the form שי (3QCopper Scroll ix 14, x 5). And five times, the form is שא, whether as a proclitic (4QMMT^{c} 1–2 i 3) or simple clitic (4QMMT^{a} 7 i 5.12.19, ii 14); the change -ש > שא suggests that the relativizer was in the process of attaining word status (see also Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 68 n. 19, 92 n. 79). For phonetic interpretations of the latter two forms, see Bar-Asher, *Studies in Classical Hebrew*, 401–2. For the dialectal significance of this relativizer within Qumran Hebrew, see Aaron Koller, "Four Dimensions of Linguistic Variation: Aramaic Dialects in and around Qumran," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Context: Integrating the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Study of Ancient Texts, Languages, and Cultures*, ed. Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov, and Matthias Weigold, VTS 140.1–2 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1:201.

> כ֯[י אדם אין צדיק בארץ] **ש֯**[יע]שה טוב ו֯[לא יחטא] For there’s no righteous man on earth who does good and does no wrong (4QQoh^{a} 7:20 [MT **אשר**]); cf.
>
> [ראיתי את כל המעשים] **אשר** נעשו תחת֯[השמש] [I’ve seen all the things] that occur under [the sun] (4QQoh^{b} 1:14 [MT **שנעשו**]).

Qohelet’s increased use of -*ש* may well be a token of Late Biblical Hebrew in transition to its later, Second Temple and post-Second Temple successors.[22]

Within this historical framework, greater precision should be possible. Genetti makes two relevant comments. On the historical front, she notes that variation between different relativizers in a language may reflect a grammatical change that is not yet complete.[23] The situation in Ecclesiastes seems to fit this notion well, at least superficially. On the grammatical front, she notes that different relativizers “constitute different ‘strategies’ of relativization.”[24] Comrie elaborates: “[I]t is often the case that a given language has more than one relative clause type. . . . It has been observed that, in such instances, the distribution of relative clauses is not arbitrary.”[25] Relativizers compete and may develop a complementary distribution.[26] “Two strategies in a given language tend to complement each other; as one advances, the other recedes.”[27] This study, then, seeks to discover whether this and other linguistic work can help account for the alternation between אשר and -ש in Ecclesiastes.

To accomplish these goals, this study will proceed analytically and abide by linguistic convention. That convention subsumes the relative clause under the broader category of the SUBORDINATE CLAUSE.[28] The first subset, and the largest in Ecclesiastes, is the RELATIVE CLAUSE (ch. 2). The second is the COMPLEMENT CLAUSE (ch. 3). The final subset is the ADVERBIAL CLAUSE (ch. 4). Each clause type will be defined, illustrated, and discussed in order.

---

[22] Another, unresolved historical issue involves a possible etymological relationship between אשר and -ש. For opposing views, see Holmstedt, “Relative Clause: Biblical Hebrew,” in *EHLL* 3:352a; and Huehnergard, “Relative Particles,” in *EHLL* 3:364a.

[23] Carol Genetti, “Semantic and Grammatical Categories of Relative Clause Morphology in the Languages of Nepal,” *Studies in Language* 16 (1992): 415.

[24] Ibid., 409.

[25] Bernard Comrie, *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), 163.

[26] See, reluctantly, Rachel Hendery, *Relative Clauses in Time and Space: A Case Study in the Methods of Diachronic Typology*, TSL 101 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2012), 158.

[27] Ibid., 134, quoting Dan Maxwell, “Implications of NP Accessibility for Diachronic Syntax,” *Folia Linguistica Historica* 3 (1982): 150. For a functional interpretation, see Hendery, *Relative Clauses in Time and Space*, 144, or Comrie, *Language Universals*, 163.

[28] Bernard Comrie and Kaoru Horie, “Complement Clauses Versus Relative Clauses: Some Khmer Evidence,” in *Discourse Grammar and Typology: Papers in Honor of John W. M. Verhaar*, ed. Werner Abraham, T. Givón, and Sandra A. Thompson, SLCS 27 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995), 65. See also Sandra A. Thompson, Robert E. Longacre, and Shin Ja J. Hwang, “Adverbial Clauses,” in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, ed. Timothy Shopen, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 2:237–38; or Hendery, *Relative Clauses in Time and Space*, 23.

2. The Relative Clause

As a form of subordination, relativization is a hierarchical phenomenon whereby one clause is processed as part of, and dependent on, an overriding independent (alt., main, matrix, superordinate) clause.[1] Syntactically nonobligatory, it is usually an adnominal relation; the typical relative clause “modifies a noun by specifying a state of affairs in which that noun participates.”[2] Further, that noun and its referent in the relative clause usually have a coreferential relation.[3] The relative clause usually cannot stand alone as a complete sentence, either.[4]

Scholars have developed a number of useful terms to categorize various aspects of the relative clause. As the following pairs illustrate, two such terms are formal.

> מה הדבר הזה ___ עשית לנו What is this thing you have done to us? (Judg 8:1aαb).
>
> מה הדבר הזה **אשר** אתה עשה לעם What is this thing that you are doing to the people? (Exod 18:14bα); see also
>
> והודעת להם את הדרך ___ ילכו בה ואת המעשה אשר יעשון You should let them know the way they should go and the things that they should do (Exod 18:20b).
>
> והודעת להם את הדרך **אשר** ילכו בה ואת המעשה אשר יעשון You should let them know the way by which they should go and the things that they should do (Exod 18:20b [SP]).

The terms reflect the presence or absence of a subordinator marking the relative clause. Without a marker, the dependent relation and its clause are paratactic (alt., asyndetic). With a marker, the relation and clause are hypotactic (alt., syndetic). Usually, the marker is anaphoric, pointing to an antecedent in the text or discourse.[5] Also, in a hypotactic clause the marker tends to fall at an inter-clausal boundary;[6] in Hebrew,[7] that boundary lies at the beginning of the relative clause.[8]

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[1] See Guy Deutscher, *Syntactic Change in Akkadian: The Evolution of Sentential Complementation* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 13; in conjunction with Christian Lehmann, “Towards a Typology of Clause Linkage,” in *Clause Combining in Grammar and Discourse*, ed. John Haiman and Sandra A. Thompson, TSL 18 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1988), 183. See also Tong Wu, “The Syntax of Prenominal Relative Clauses: A Typological Study,” *LT* 15 (2011): 570.

[2] Deutscher, “The Akkadian Relative Clauses in Cross-Linguistic Perspective,” *ZA* 92 (2002): 87. See also R. M. W. Dixon, “Complement Clauses and Complementation Strategies in Typological Perspective,” in *Complementation: A Cross-Linguistic Typology*, ed. R. M. W. Dixon and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, Explorations in Linguistic Typology 3 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 4.

[3] T. Givón, *Syntax: An Introduction*, rev. ed. (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2001), 2:176.

[4] Carmen Jany, “Clausal Nominalization as Relativization Strategy in Chimariko,” *IJAL* 77 (2011): 434.

[5] Knud Lambrecht, *Topic, Antitopic and Verb Agreement in Non-Standard French*, Pragmatics & Beyond 2.6 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1981), 29; and the reference in n. 3.

There is also an informational and/or structural correlate to this formal dichotomy. From a very broad perspective, the two constituents of the bipartite construction under consideration—the main clause and the subordinate relative clause—have relatively discrete informational loads. Again, in broad terms, the main clause is assertive and expresses "the bulk of the new information presented in the utterance." The relative clause, however, is nonassertive and "tend[s] to contain the older, presupposed, background information."[9] Still, the two types of relative clauses can exhibit a difference.

> בנימין זאב ___ יטרף Benjamin is a ravenous wolf (Gen 49:27aα [NRSV and NJPS]).

> וישאו אתו בניו ארצה כנען ויקברו אתו במערת שדה המכפלה **אשר** קנה אברהם את השדה לאחזת קבר מאת עפרן החתי על פני ממרא His sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, the field that Abraham had bought as a burial plot from Ephron the Hittite, near Mamre (Gen 50:13; see also 49:30).

A paratactic relative clause tends to be simple and short, with prepackaged, predictable, or low informational content, and a highly accessible head.[10] In Biblical Hebrew, parataxis is much more common in poetry. In Hebrew prose, where hypotaxis is the norm, parataxis is rare but associated with a small set of grammatical, lexical, discourse, and conceptual factors.[11]

> והודעת להם את הדרך ___ ילכו בה You should let them know the way they should go (Exod 18:20bα).

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[6] See Barbara A. Fox and Sandra A. Thompson, "Relative Clauses in English Conversation: Relativizers, Frequency, and the Notion of Construction," *Studies in Language* 31 (2007): 314; and Hendery, *Relative Clauses in Time and Space*, 165.

[7] Cf. Akkadian, on which see n. 27, below.

[8] See Hendery, *Relative Clauses in Time and Space*, 212.

[9] Givón, "On the Role of Perceptual Clues in Hebrew Relativization," *AAL* 2 (1975): 146. See also idem, *Syntax*, 2:176; and, in brief, Lambrecht, *Topic, Antitopic and Verb Agreement*, 60. Cf., however, Yael Maschler, "On the Emergence of Adverbial Connectives from Hebrew Relative Clause Constructions," in *Constructions: Emerging and Emergent*, ed. Peter Auer and Stefan Pfänder, Lingua & Litterae 6 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 304, on Israeli Hebrew.

[10] For this hypothesis, see Lehmann, "Towards a Typology of Clause Linkage," 211; Fox and Thompson, "Relative Clauses in English Conversation," 313–14; and Miri Ariel, "Cognitive Universals and Linguistic Conventions: The Case of Resumptive Pronouns," *Studies in Language* 23 (1999): 228, 232.

[11] Mayer Lambert, *Traité de grammaire hébraïque*, 2nd ed., Collection Massorah, Serié 3, Rééditions 1 (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1972), §§289–91; and Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §19.6. For a collection of paratactic clauses, see Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 305–24.

ויגד לנו יהוה אלהיך את הדרך **אשר** נלך בה May your God YHWH tell us the way that we should go (Jer 42:3a; see also Gen 35:3b, 42:38b; Deut 1:22b, etc.).

As a general rule, however, the longer and more complex a relative clause, the greater the likelihood of a marked, hypotactic structure.[12]

Within the category of the hypotactic relative clause, further subdivisions are relevant to the present study. One subdivision concerns the presence or absence of a HEAD that establishes the nominal domain. Without an explicit head in the main clause, the clause is a FREE (alt., independent) relative.[13]

רבים **אשר** מתו באבני הברד **מאשר** הרגו בני ישראל בחרב Those who died by hailstones were more numerous than those whom the Israelites killed by the sword (Josh 10:11b).

כי **אשר** לא סֻפר להם ראו **ואשר** לא שמעו התבוננו For they will see what has not been told them and understand what they did not hear (Isa 52:15b); see also the lexicalized expressions in

וישלח **אשר על הבית ואשר על העיר** . . . אל יהוא לאמר עבדיך אנחנו So the steward of the palace, and the governor of the city, . . . sent word to Jehu, “We are your servants” (2 Kgs 10:5aα [NRSV]).

When, however, the relative clause has an explicit head, that head may determine or influence the relativizer or other components of the relative clause.[14] In Arabic, for example, the presence or absence of the relativizer depends on the (in)definiteness of the head.

___ *rajal(un)* ___ *qad ḍarabanī* ‘a man who struck me’

al-rajul(u) allāḏī qad ḍarabanī ‘the man who struck me’.[15]

In American English, the relativizer depends on the (non)humanness of the head.

I saw the man who was crossing the street.

I saw the cat that was crossing the street.

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[12] See Fox and Thompson, “Relative Clauses in English Conversation,” 307; and Lars Hinrichs, Benedikt Szmerscanyi, and Axel Bohmann, “*Which*-Hunting and the Standard English Relative Clause,” *Lg* 91 (2015): 823, 826.

[13] E.g., Peter Bekins, *Transitivity and Object Marking in Biblical Hebrew: An Investigation of the Object Preposition* ʾet, HSS 64 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 100–101. See also Heinrich Ewald, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Bundes*, 8th ed. (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1870), §333a; August Müller, *Outlines of Hebrew Syntax*, tr. and ed. James Robertson, 3rd ed. (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1888), §158; and Peretz, *Relative Clause*, 1967, 141–42.

[14] Hendery, *Relative Clauses in Time and Space*, 136.

[15] Wolfdietrich Fischer, *A Grammar of Classical Arabic*, tr. Jonathan Rodgers, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2002), §428 (reference courtesy of Dwight Reynolds).

It can also depend on the grammatical role of the head within its matrix and/or subordinate clause.

> I saw the boy who was going to school.
>
> I saw the boy whom John adopted.
>
> I saw the boy to whom John gave his pen.
>
> I saw the boy whose sister won that award.

Another subdivision concerns the positional relation (i) between the relative clause and its matrix sentence or (ii) between the relative clause and its head. The more familiar is the standard EMBEDDED RELATIVE CLAUSE. It is a constituent within the main clause that tends to be adjacent or close to its head;[16] in Biblical Hebrew, the embedded relative clause is usually postnominal.[17]

> ויאמר יוסף אל אביו בני הם **אשר** נתן לי אלהים בזה Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given to me here" (Gen 48:9a).
>
> ויאמר הנה דם הברית **אשר** כרת יהוה עמכם על כל הדברים האלה He said, "Here is the blood of the covenant that YHWH makes with you in accordance with all these words" (Exod 24:8b); see also
>
> ויאמר יתרו ברוך יהוה **אשר** הציל אתכם מיד מצרים ומיד פרעה **אשר** הציל את העם מתחת יד מצרים Jethro said, "Blessed be YHWH, who delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh, who delivered the people from under the control of the Egyptians" (Exod 18:10).

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[16] E.g., Lehmann, "Towards a Typology of Clause Linkage," 184–85; in conjunction with Givón, *Syntax*, 2:207.

[17] For the possible typological importance of postnominal position, see Ivano Caponigro, Harold Torrence, and Carlos Cisneros, "Free Relative Clauses in Two Mixtec Languages," *IJAL* 79 (2013): 70. A general exception applies to constructions like the following, in which the relative clause precedes its coreferential nominal (see Carl Gaenssle, "The Hebrew Particle אשׁר," *AJSL* 31 [1914]: 56–57 [= idem, *The Hebrew Particle* אשׁר (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1915), 60–62]):

> ומצרים מקברים **את אשר** הכה יהוה בהם כל בכור The Egyptians were burying those whom YHWH had struck down—every firstborn (Num 33:4a).
>
> ויותרו בבני ישראל **אשר** לא חלקו את נחלתם שבעה שבטים There remained among the Israelites those who did not receive their inheritance—seven tribes (Josh 18:2); see also
>
> **ככל אשר** אני מראה אותך את תבנית המשכן ואת תבנית כל כליו וכן תעשו Just as I show you—the model of the Tabernacle and the model of all its paraphernalia—so you shall make (it) (Exod 25:9 [after NJPS]).

Here, the postponed nominal (ANTITOPIC) comes after a clause boundary, disambiguates an unclear reference, and reestablishes information as a continuing or new topic. See Marianne Mithun, *The Languages of Native North American* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 196; and, in part, Lambrecht, *Topic, Antitopic and Verb Agreement*, 78, 80–86.

Yet when the relative clause is flanked by material from its superordinate matrix clause, it is a CENTER-EMBEDDED RELATIVE CLAUSE.[18]

> ויקרא אברהם את שם בנו הנולד לו **אשר** ילדה לו שרה יצחק Abraham named his newborn son, whom Sarah had borne for him, Isaac (Gen 21:3).
>
> ותדבר אליו כדברים האלה לאמר בא אלי העבד העברי **אשר** הבאת לנו לצחק בי She said similar things to him, “The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came to me to fool around with me” (Gen 39:17).
>
> ויאמר כלב **אשר** יכה את קרית ספר ולכדה ונתתי לו את עכסה בתי לאשה Caleb said, “Whoever will strike and capture Kiriath-sepher, I’ll give him my daughter Achsah as wife” (Josh 15:16); see also
>
> **אשר** יִמָּצֵא אתו מעבדיך ומת Whomever of your slaves it is found with, shall die (Gen 44:9a).

By contrast, an ADJOINED RELATIVE CLAUSE need not be adjacent to or nearby its head. Nor is it particularly well integrated into its main clause, especially when the head is unclear or a mental construct.

> יככה יהוה בשחין רע על הברכים ועל השקים **אשר** לא תוכל להרפא YHWH will strike you with awful boils at (your) knees and thighs, (from) which you cannot recover (Deut 28:35a; see also v. 27).
>
> ובנו במות התפת . . . לשרף את בניהם ואת בנתיהם באש **אשר** לא צויתי ולא עלתה על לבי They build Tophet shrines . . . to burn their sons and their daughters in fire, which I did not command and did not come to my mind (Jer 7:31; see also 19:5, 32:35).
>
> לך כנוס את כל היהודים הנמצאים בשושן וצומו עלי ואל תאכלו ואל תשתו שלשת ימים לילה ויום גם אני ונערתי אצום כן ובכן אבוא אל המלך **אשר** לא כדת וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי Go, assemble all the Jews in Susa, and fast for me. Don’t eat or drink for three days, night or day. I will likewise fast with my maidens. Then, I’ll go to the king, which is against the law. If I perish, I perish (Esth 4:16).

Marked as a relative clause, it appears at the end of the sentence and may serve no syntactic function in the main clause.[19] Lehmann notes another distinction. Embedded “postnominal RCs . . . help to form a nominal constituent in the main clause”; “adjoined RCs,” however, “are the most sentential.”[20]

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[18] E.g., Hendery, *Relative Clauses in Time and Space*, 19.

[19] In addition to the references in nn. 16 and 17, see Comrie, *Language Universals*, 144. See also Ariel, “Cognitive Universals and Linguistic Conventions,” 242; in conjunction with Ilse Depraetere, “Foregrounding in English Relative Clauses,” *Linguistics* 34 (1996): 723, on nonrestrictive relative clauses.

[20] Lehmann, “On the Typology of Relative Clauses,” *Linguistics* 24 (1986): 675, 674, respectively.

A final subdivision within the category of the hypotactic relative clause is semantic. Apart from Biblical Hebrew, a conventional distinction is drawn between relative clauses that identify, define, or limit the referent of the head, and those that do not. In English, this distinction can be conveyed with punctuation.

The French, who drink red wine, are quite healthy on the whole.

The French who drink red wine are quite healthy on the whole.

The relative clause in the first sentence refers to the entire French population; that clause is NONRESTRICTIVE. In the second sentence, the relative clause specifies a particular subset of the French population; its embedded clause is RESTRICTIVE. Biblical Hebrew, however, does not make an overt distinction between these two clause types.[21] Instead, the distinction is inferred.

> ולא אקח את כל הממלכה מידו כי נשיא אשתנו כל ימי חייו למען דוד עבדי **אשר** בחרתי אתו **אשר** שמר מצותי וחקתי I won't take the entire kingdom away from him; I'll let him be ruler his whole life for the sake of my servant David, whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my laws (1 Kgs 11:34; see also Isa 41:8) (nonrestrictive).

> כי ימָצא בקרבך באחד שעריך אשר יהוה אלהיך נֹתן לך איש או אשה **אשר** יעשה את הרע בעיני יהוה אלהיך לעבר בריתו If there is located among you, in one of your settlements that your God YHWH is giving to you, a man or woman who has wronged your God YHWH by violating his covenant . . . (Deut 17:2) (restrictive).

Many adjoined relative clauses, however, have a nonrestricted reading (e.g., Jer 7:31, above).

2.1. *Parataxis and Hypotaxis*. There are over one hundred relative clauses in Ecclesiastes. The minority are paratactic.

> יש רעה ___ ראיתי תחת השמש There's something wrong I've seen under the sun (Eccl 10:5a; see also 5:12a).

> הוא ענין רע ___ נתן אלהים לבני האדם לענות בו It's a bad business God gave humans to be occupied with (Eccl 1:13b).

An overt relativizer is therefore a nonobligatory feature of the relative clause in Ecclesiastes. In comparison, however, the great majority are hypotactic.[22]

> יש רעה **אשר** ראיתי תחת השמש There's something wrong that I've seen under the sun (Eccl 6:1a).

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[21] Holmstedt, "Relative Clause," 355b (= idem, *Relative Clause*, 206).

[22] For broader, historical contextualization, see Frank Polak, "Sociolinguistics: A Key to the Typology and the Social Background of Biblical Hebrew," *HS* 47 (2006): 115–62.

> ראיתי את הענין **אשר** נתן אלהים לבני האדם לענות בו I’ve seen the business that God gave humans to be occupied with (Eccl 3:10); see also
>
> ופניתי אני בכל מעשי **ש**עשו ידי ובעמל **ש**עמלתי לעשות Then I turned to all the things that I (lit., my hands) had done and to the hard-earned wealth that I had produced through hard work (Eccl 2:11a; see also 1:14a, 2:17a).
>
> את כל זה ראיתי ונתון את לבי לכל מעשה **אשר** נעשה תחת השמש I’ve seen all this, setting my mind to every thing that occurs under the sun (Eccl 8:9a; see also 3:11bβa, 4:3bβ, 8:17aβa).

Numerically, Ecclesiastes has 3 paratactic relative clauses.[23] Apart from relative clauses with a possible adverbial reading (ch. 4), Ecclesiastes also has ~70 hypotactic relative clauses marked with אשר, and ~40 relative clauses marked with -ש.[24] Statistically, of the relative clauses in the book ~3% are unmarked, ~62% begin with אשר, and ~35% begin with -ש.

2.2. *Nominalization*. Although אשר and -ש largely introduce relative clauses in Ecclesiastes, each serves a more basic, syntactic function in its sentence. אשר and -ש are each a constituent with a dual role—one pertaining to its matrix clause, and another pertaining to its subordinate clause. Each is a connective link shared by two clauses. As such, אשר and -ש are each an inter-clausal PIVOT.[25]

אשר and -ש serve a morphological function, too (see also §4.1).

> ביום טובה היה בטוב וביום רעה ראה גם את זה לעמת זה עשה האלהים **על דברת שלא ימצא** האדם אחריו מאומה On a good day, enjoy (yourself). On a bad day, observe. God has made one as well as the other; accordingly, no one cannot find out anything beyond him (Eccl 7:14); cf.
>
> אני פי מלך שמור **ועל דברת שבועת אלהים** *I*. Keep the king’s order and (do so) in accordance with God’s oath (Eccl 8:2; see also 3:18a).

> תרתי בלבי למשוך ביין את בשרי . . . **עד אשר אראה** אי זה טוב לבני האדם . . . With my mind, I explored (and sought) to move my body with wine . . . until I’d see what’s good for human beings . . . (Eccl 2:3); cf.

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[23] Other grammarians propose longer lists (e.g., Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 156; Shlesinger, “The Relative Pronouns ‘ש’ and ‘אשר’,” 109–10; and Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 82 n. 42). These lists, however, include a nominalized adjective (e.g., Eccl 7:26) and many adjectival participles (e.g., 2:1a, 6:11, 12:11a). For 1:18b, see GKC §159c. Eccl 5:9 is uncertain, since the interrogative pronoun itself may occasionally serve as a relative elsewhere in Biblical Hebrew (so, e.g., Ewald, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache*, §331b.2; or Schoors, *The Preacher*, 1:59; for a list of possible examples, see Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 78 n. 38. Cf. Müller, *Outlines of Hebrew Syntax*, §155, Rem. a).

[24] Cf. Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 149.

[25] Holmstedt, “The Relative Clause in Canaanite Epigraphic Texts,” *JNSL* 34.2 (2008): 2 (= idem, *Relative Clause*, 7).

> גם את העלם נתן בלבם מבלי אשר לא ימצא האדם את המעשה אשר עשה אלהים מראש **ועד סוף** He also put *eons* in their mind without someone ever finding out, from beginning to end, the thing that God did (Eccl 3:11b).

These two pairs illustrate a phenomenon known from other parts of the Bible.

> ויעשו **כִדבר משה** They acted according to Moses’s word (Lev 10:7b).

> ויעשו כן בני ישראל **כאשר צוה יהושע** The Israelites did so, as Joshua had ordered (Josh 4:8aα).

When a preposition or prepositional phrase governs a clause, rather than a nominal, a relativizer mediates the two parts. In this capacity, the relativizer “converts” a preposition or prepositional phrase into a “conjunction.”[26] More accurately, it nominalizes a subordinate or relative clause.[27] To quote Isaksson, “the use of . . . *ʾᵃšær* and *šæ-* as relative particles has developed from their function to introduce (or mark) a nominalized (substantival or adjectival) sentence.”[28] אשר and -ש are morphologically invariant nominalizers.[29]

Other evidence confirms this analysis.[30] Both relativizers can be quantified by כל.

> דברתי אני עם לבי לאמר אני הנה הגדלתי והוספתי חכמה על **כל אשר** היה לפני על ירושלם I said to myself, “Here I have done great things and amassed wisdom beyond *everyone* who preceded me over Jerusalem” (Eccl 1:16a).

> קניתי עבדים ושפחות ובני בית היה לי גם מקנה בקר וצאן הרבה היה לי מ**כל ש**היו לפני בירושלם I acquired male and female slaves. I had domestically-born (slaves). There was also livestock—cattle and flocks; I had much more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem (Eccl 2:7; see also v. 9a).

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[26] Ewald, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache*, §332c; in combination with BDB 83b (no. 8f).

[27] In Semitic, relative clause nominalization is particularly true of Akkadian. Therein, the left margin is marked with *ša*, of likely pronominal origin (Deutscher, “Akkadian Relative Clauses,” 102–3); and the right margin is marked with *-u* (~ *-ni*), of likely nominal origin (see Rebecca Hasselbach, “The Verbal Endings *-u* and *-a*: A Note on Their Functional Derivation,” in *Language and Nature: Papers Presented to John Huehnergard on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, ed. Rebecca Hasselbach and Naʿama Pat-El, SAOC 67 [Chicago: Oriental Institute, Univ. of Chicago, 2012], 133; and Grace J. Park, “Stand-Alone Nominalizations Formed with *ʾăšer* and *kî* in Biblical Hebrew,” *JSS* 61 [2016]: 61). For the possible significance of these markings, see Sonia Cristofaro, *Subordination*, Oxford Studies in Typology and Linguistic Theory (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), 264; in conjunction with Wu, “The Syntax of Prenominal Relative Clauses,” 596.

[28] Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 150. See also Holmstedt, “The Grammar of שׁ and אשר in Qoheleth,” 291; and idem, *Relative Clause*, 215.

[29] By extension, אשר and -ש are not pronouns (e.g., Ewald, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache*, §331d; and Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 62–63, 282–83 with n. 22).

[30] Michel, *Untersuchungen zur Qohelet*, 214; or Carl Martin Follingstad, *Deictic Viewpoint in Biblical Hebrew Text: A Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Analysis of the Particle* כי (kî) (Dallas: SIL, 2001), 471–72, on אשר; and Bergsträsser, “Das hebräische Präfix ש,” 46, on -ש.

-ש can be governed by a construct form.[31]

> כל הנחלים הלכים אל הים והים איננו מלא אל **מְקום ש**הנחלים הלכים שם הם שבים ללכת All streams flow to the sea, yet the sea isn’t full; where the streams flow, there they flow back (Eccl 1:7; see also 11:3b); see also
>
> וגם זה רעה חולה **כל עמַת ש**בא כן ילך This too is a grave wrong: just as he came, so he’ll go (Eccl 5:15a; see also 7:14bβ, above).

In Ecclesiastes, an אשר clause can be marked as a direct object.

> כאשר תדר נדר לאלהים אל תאחר לשלמו כי אין חפץ בכסילים **את אשר** תדר שלם When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for (he finds) no pleasure in fools. What you vow, fulfill (Eccl 5:3; see also 2:12bβ).
>
> ראה את מעשה האלהים כי מי יוכל לתקן **את אשר** עותו Look at what God does. For who can straighten what he has twisted? (Eccl 7:13).

Despite its frozen form, a free relative can prompt subject agreement on a verb—depending on the gender and number of its referent.

> והכסל ירבה דברים לא ידע האדם מה שיהיה **ואשר יהיה** מאחריו מי יגיד לו The fool produces a lot of words. No one knows what will be; and who can tell him what will be afterward (lit., after him)? (Eccl 10:14).
>
> אין זכרון לראשנים וגם לאחרנים שיהיו לא יהיה להם זכרון עם **שיהיו** לאחרנה There’s no memory of the earlier ones, nor will be there be (a) memory of those coming later along with those coming thereafter (Eccl 1:11).

A relative clause can also serve an attributive function much like an adjective.[32]

> כי גם לא ידע האדם את עתו כַדגים **שנאחזים** במצודה רעה וכצפרים האחזות בפח כהם יוקשים בני האדם לעת רעה כשתפול עליהם פתאם For no one even knows his time. Like fish caught in a bad net or like birds caught in a trap, so human beings are trapped at a bad time when it suddenly falls on them (Eccl 9:12).

The evidence, then, shows that Qohelet’s relativizers participate in a broad pattern.[33] They can each have noun-like referentiality, occupy noun-like syntactic positions, stimulate verbal agreement, take noun-like grammatical marking, and serve an attributive function. אשר and -ש nominalize their dependent clause.

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[31] E.g., Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 212 with n. 9. On Eccl 11:8, see §2.5, below.

[32] E.g., Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 150. See also Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 64; or, somewhat differently, Müller, *Outlines of Hebrew Syntax*, §155.

[33] For the following characterization, see Jany, “Clausal Nominalization,” 430. See also Avery D. Andrews, “Relative Clauses,” in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, 2:232.

2.3. *Free Relatives*. Clause nominalization, however, is a matter of degree.[34] Qohelet, for example, forms free relative clauses with both relativizers. Both types also seem to serve the same characteristic function: lacking a head, they constitute a nominal in themselves.[35] It remains to be determined whether any difference between these two types of nominalizations can be found.

Of the two relativizers, only a few free relative clauses begin with -ש.

> אין זכרון לראשנים וגם לאחרנים שיהיו לא יהיה להם זכרון עם **ש**יהיו לאחרנה There's no memory of the earlier ones, nor will there be (a) memory of those coming later along with those coming thereafter (Eccl 1:11).

> מה שהיה הוא **ש**יהיה ומה שנעשה הוא **ש**יעשה ואין כל חדש תחת השמש What has been, will be; and what has occurred, will occur. There's nothing new under the sun (Eccl 1:9).

In the first passage, the free relative clause refers to a plurality, but its referent is otherwise unidentifiable.[36] It signals an indefinite, nonspecific, and nonreferential mass. The *qre* of 6:10b conforms to a similar pattern.

> ולא יוכל לדין עם **ש**התקיף (ק' **ש**תקיף) ממנו No one can contend with someone stronger than he.[37]

In the second passage, the relative clauses are similar to that of 1:11, except that these relative clauses form the predicate of their respective sentences.[38] In Ecclesiastes, free relative clauses with -ש are grammatically indefinite and semantically nonindividuated and nonreferential.

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[34] See Lehmann, "On the Typology of Relative Clauses," 671–72.

[35] Martin Haspelmath, *Indefinite Pronouns*, Oxford Studies in Typology and Linguistic Theory (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 134 n. 4.

[36] See, e.g., Michael V. Fox, *Ecclesiastes: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, The JPS Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 7.

[37] Note Shlesinger, "The Relative Pronouns 'ש' and 'אשר'," 102. The *ktiv* is more difficult. Fassberg argues that it is an orthographic variant of the *qre*; the two forms would thus be semantically equivalent (Fassberg, "The Orthography of -שה," 242, 245; and, somewhat differently, Moshe Bar-Asher, *Studies in Classical Hebrew*, 402). Another argument starts with a comment such as Gordis's—that "[t]he reference [of שֶׁהתַּקִּיף] is obviously to God" (Robert Gordis, *Koheleth—The Man and His World: A Study of Ecclesiastes*, 3rd ed. [New York: Schocken, 1968], 263; see also Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 42; and Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, HCOT [Louvain: Peeters, 2013], 489). In this latter case, the *ktiv* represents a conflation of התקיף* and שתקיף* (with Gordis, *Koheleth*, 263). The latter form is preserved in the *qre*, whereas the former would have signified 'and no man can contend with Him who is stronger than he is' (see Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 42). Either explanation applies to the *ktiv*/*qre* doublet in Eccl 10:3.

[38] See Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 78; as interpreted by James D. McCawley, "The Syntax and Semantics of English Relative Clauses," *Lingua* 53 (1981): 124.

The interpretation of free relative clauses with אשר is different. As a grammatical direct object, such a relative clause can be marked with את and thus reflect a definite and individuated nominal.[39]

> **את אשר** תדר שלם What you vow, fulfill (Eccl 5:3b; see also 7:13b); see also, perhaps,

> ופניתי אני לראות חכמה והוללות וסכלות כי מה האדם שיבוא אחרי המלך **את אשר** כבר עשוהו I turned to see wisdom, madness, and folly. For what will a man who succeeds the king be (like)? People do what was long (done)[40] (Eccl 2:12).

These semantic traits also apply when the free relative clause is an unmarked object, as in the first few words of 5:17.[41]

> הנה **אשר** ראיתי אני Here's what I've seen: . . . (see also 10:14bβ).

In this instance, אשר is cataphoric and explicitly identified by the remainder the verse.[42] But such free relative clauses are not restricted to objects.

> הכל כאשר לכל מקרה אחד לַצדיק ולָרשע לַטוב ולַטהור ולַטמא ולַזבח **ולאשר** איננו זבח כַטוב כַחטא הנשבע **כאשר** שבועה ירא Everything's the same for everyone: a single fate for the righteous and the wicked, for the good and pure and impure, for the one who sacrifices and for the one who does not, good and wrongdoer alike, the one who takes an oath like the one who's afraid of an oath (Eccl 9:2).

They can occur in nominalized clauses following a preposition.[43] In each case, the semantic parameters of a free אשר relative clause involve a specific, limited, referential, and/or definite nominalization.

2.4. *The Head of the Relative Clause*. Since the distribution of each type of free relative clause is conditioned, there may be a corresponding preference for each relativizer to align with a particular type of nominal head. Indeed, this suspicion is justified. For when the head is a semantically empty, interrogative pronoun, the distribution of relativizers is complementary.

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[39] For some idiosyncrasies of object marking in Ecclesiastes, see Dahood, "Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth," 198 (= idem, *Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth*, 30).

[40] For a response to this difficult text, see H. L. Ginsberg, "The Quintessence of Koheleth," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann, Studies and Texts 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), 57; followed by Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 15.

[41] For more on this verse, see n. 93, below.

[42] On this function of the relative clause, see Givón, *Syntax*, 2:177–78.

[43] For the distinction between the definite generic designations here and the indefinite generic adjective in Eccl 6:10b, see Christopher Lyons, *Definiteness* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 183.

> **מה ש**היה כבר נקרא שמו Whatever was has long been identified by name (lit., its name was called long ago) (Eccl 6:10aα; see also 1:9aα.9aβ, 3:15, 7:24, and, differently, 3:22b).

> והכסל ירבה דברים לא ידע האדם **מה ש**יהיה The fool produces a lot of words. No one knows what will be (Eccl 10:14a-bα; see also 8:7a).

> כי **מי אשר** יבחר (ק׳ יחבר) אל כל החיים יש בטחון כי לכלב חי הוא טוב מן האריה המת (Yet I still maintain) that he who is among (lit., joined to) all the living (has) something to trust, for a living dog has it better than a dead lion (Eccl 9:4).

מה prompts the relativizer -ש eight times,[44] as opposed to one example where מי governs אשר.[45] This correlation is not insignificant. It coincides with the behavior of each interrogative when it serves as direct object of a transitive verb: מה is never introduced by the object marker את, whereas מי is. Stated differently, מה and מי differ in their degree of individuation: מה ranks lower, while מי ranks higher.[46] Each interrogative is semantically compatible with its preferred relativizer (see §2.3, above). For this reason, the combinations מה אשר and -מי ש do not occur.

The alternation between אשר and -ש aligns with similar features in nonpronominal heads. For example, only אשר has a referentially unique head in Ecclesiastes.

> וישב העפר על הארץ כשהיה והרוח תשוב אל **האלהים אשר** נתנה . . . (before) the dust returns to the earth as it was, and life (lit., the breath) returns to God, who provided it (Eccl 12:7; see also 11:5b).[47]

> כל אשר תמצא ידך לעשות בכחך עשה כי אין מעשה וחשבון ודעת וחכמה **בשאול אשר** אתה הלך שמה Everything that you are capable of doing with your strength, do. For there’s no activity, calculation, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol, where you are going (Eccl 9:10).[48]

A unique entity can also be characterized negatively.

> כי **אדם אין צדיק בארץ אשר** יעשה טוב ולא יחטא For there’s no righteous man on earth who does good and does no wrong (Eccl 7:20).

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[44] In this context, see also Eccl 2:12a-bα:

> ופניתי אני לראות חכמה והוללות וסכלות כי **מה** האדם **ש**יבוא אחרי המלך I turned to see wisdom, madness, and folly. For what will a man who succeeds the king be (like)? (see also 2:22 and, perhaps, 1:3).

[45] See John Huehnergard and Na’ama Pat-El, “Some Aspects of the Cleft in Semitic Languages,” in *Studies in Semitic and General Linguistics in Honor of Gideon Goldenberg*, ed. Tali Bar and Eran Cohen, AOAT 334 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007), 334 n. 42.

[46] See Bekins, *Transitivity and Object Marking*, 98–100. Compare Gordis, who notes the equivalence of Qohelet’s מי אשר with the classical construction כל אשר (*Koheleth*, 304); see also §2.5, below, on relative clauses headed by כל.

[47] See also §2.5, for more discussion.

[48] Schoors might add Eccl 8:10 (emended) to the list (*Ecclesiastes*, 625). For a different interpretation, see n. 81, below.

Here, the negation restricts an otherwise indefinite noun to a unique member within the head's domain: a single, nonexistent righteous man who 'does good and does no wrong' (cf. 4QQoh^{a} 7:20).[49] In like fashion, only **אשר** has a head that is delimited by an adjectival phrase.

> וטוב משניהם את אשר עדן לא היה אשר לא ראה את **המעשה הרע אשר** נעשה תחת השמש Yet better than both is he who does not yet exist, who has not seen the bad things that occur under the sun (Eccl 4:3).[50]
>
> ראיתי את כל החיים המהלכים תחת השמש עם **הילד השני אשר** יעמד תחתיו I saw all the living going about under the sun along with that lad next in line who will rise in his (i.e., the current king's) stead (Eccl 4:15); see also
>
> טוב ילד מסכן וחכם **ממלך זקן וכסיל אשר** לא ידע להזהר עוד A poor yet wise lad is better than an old yet foolish king, who still doesn't know how to take a warning (Eccl 4:13).

Each time, **אשר** is governed by an individuated, definite, or specific head nominal (see also 8:16aβ).

But when the head is nonspecific and nonreferential, Qohelet prefers the relativizer -**ש**.

> כל הנחלים הלכים אל הים והים איננו מלא אל **מְקום ש**הנחלים הלכים שם הם שבים ללכת All streams flow to the sea, yet the sea isn't full; where the streams flow, there they flow back (Eccl 1:7; see also 11:3b); see also
>
> כי **לְאדם שטוב** לפניו נתן חכמה ודעת ושמחה For to someone who's pleased him, he's given wisdom, knowledge, and enjoyment (Eccl 2:26a).

The head noun in the second text is a property generic. In the first text, the head has eroded by phonological attachment to the relative clause. It loses its concrete referent, too. Thus, in 1:7 'place of' is generalized to 'where' and, in the process, is followed by the relativizer -**ש**.[51]

A minimal pair extends these results further.

> וראיתי את כל מעשה אלהים כי לא יוכל האדם למצוא את **המעשה אשר** נעשה תחת השמש I have seen all God did (*and have seen*) that no one can figure out the thing that occurs under the sun (Eccl 8:17aα–βa).
>
> ושנאתי את החיים כי רע עלי **המעשה ש**נעשה תחת השמש I hated life because I think what occurs under the sun wrong (Eccl 2:17a).

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[49] See Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebraïschen Bibel: Textkritisches, sprachliches und sachliches* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908–14), 7:85.

[50] For further discussion of this verse, see §2.6, below.

[51] These phonological and semantic traits are not unique to Ecclesiastes. See P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd ed., Subsidia Biblica 27 (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011), §129q.

Despite identical heads, each triggers a different relativizer. Clearly, grammatical status does not explain the difference. But content may. In 8:17, the referent of המעשה אשר נעשה תחת השמש is arguably God's activity mentioned in the previous clause.[52] By contrast, in 2:17a the issue of המעשה שנעשה תחת השמש is strictly generic: "The problem for Qohelet is that everything has gone topsy-turvy in life and no order can be discerned by anyone."[53]

Finally, other nominal heads reflect the described pattern of אשר ~ -ש in Ecclesiastes.

> כי יש **אדם ש**עמלו בחכמה ובדעת ובכשרון ו**לאדם ש**לא עמל בו יתננו חלקו גם זה הבל ורעה רבה For there's someone whose hard-earned wealth (was produced) through wisdom, knowledge, and skill. Yet he'll give his portion to someone who did not work hard for it. This too is senseless and a great wrong (Eccl 2:21; see also v. 26a; cf. v. 18bβ); see also

> יש **דבר ש**יאמר ראה זה חדש הוא There's something (about which) someone says, "Look at this. It's new" (Eccl 1:10a [after Tg. Qoh.]).

A nonspecific, indefinite, and unidentifiable head takes a relative clause marked with -ש (see also 10:5b).[54] Plural heads follow suit.

> כי גם לא ידע האדם את עתו כַ**דגים שנאחזים** במצודה רעה וכצפרים האחזות בפח כהם . . . For no one even knows his time. Like fish caught in a bad net or like birds caught in a trap, so . . . (Eccl 9:12).

One minimal pair, in fact, supports such a conditioning factor.

> ופניתי אני **בכל מעשי ש**עשו ידי Then I turned to all the things that I (lit., my hands) had done (Eccl 2:11aα; see also 1:14a; cf. 4QQoh^b 1:14); cf.

> את כל זה ראיתי ונתון את לבי **לכל מעשה אשר** נעשה תחת השמש I've seen all this, setting my mind to every thing that occurs under the sun (Eccl 8:9a; see also 3:11bβb, 4:3bβ, 8:17aαa, 11:5b).

Qohelet's relativizer -ש prefers nonspecific, nonreferential, and/or generic heads (see also §2.3, on predicative heads). אשר prefers heads that are specific, individuated, and referring (cf. §2.6).

2.5. *The Content of the Relative Clause*. Just as the head of a relative clause may dictate or influence the choice of relativizer in Ecclesiastes, the complexity of the relative clause may do so, too.[55] For example, the alternation between מה ש- and מי אשר can be reconsidered from the perspective of the relative clause.

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[52] E.g., Christian D. Ginsburg, *Coheleth, Commonly Called the Book of Ecclesiastes: Translated from the Original Hebrew, with a Commentary, Historical and Critical* (1861; repr., New York: Ktav, 1970), 408a; and Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 7:91. Cf. Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 643–44.

[53] Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 155. Cf., in this context, Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 66; and, compatibly, Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 207.

[54] See Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 154. For two related cases of parataxis, see Eccl 5:12a, 10:5a.

> **מה שהיה** הוא שיהיה ו**מה שנעשה** הוא שיעשה ואין כל חדש תחת השמש What has been, will be; and what has occurred, will occur. There’s nothing new under the sun (Eccl 1:9).
>
> כי **מי אשר יבחר** (**ק׳ יחבר**) **אל כל החיים** יש בטחון כי לכלב חי הוא טוב מן האריה המת (Yet I still maintain) that he who is among (lit., joined to) all the living (has) something to trust, for a living dog has it better than a dead lion (Eccl 9:4).

On the one hand, the relative clauses introduced by ש- are brief and constitute with its head a (virtually) unitary concept:[56] a past occurrence. On the other hand, the relative clause introduced by אשר is detailed, elaborate, and complex.

Another way of describing this dichotomy focuses on the informational content of the relative clause. For instance, as Eccl 1:9 already illustrates, ש- is associated with a less-informative relative clause.

> אין זכרון לראשנים וגם לאחרנים **שיהיו** לא יהיה להם זכרון עם **שיהיו לאחרנה** There’s no memory of the earlier ones, nor will there be (a) memory of those coming later along with those coming thereafter (Eccl 1:11).
>
> ושנאתי אני את כל עמלי . . . שאניחנו לאדם **שיהיה אחרי** I hated all my hard-earned wealth . . . that I will leave to someone who will succeed me (Eccl 2:18).
>
> ויזכר את ימי החשך כי הרבה יהיו כל **שבא** הבל He should remember that the dark days will be very many. Everything to come is senseless (Eccl 11:8b).

The relative clauses may be temporal in content. Here, one relative clause is strictly redundant (1:11bα); the others carry more temporal information, whether with or without an appropriate temporal adverb or prepositional phrase. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, such a relative clause may carry a locative phrase.

> ה̊[חכמה]תעזׄר [לחכם מעשרה שליטים]**ש**[היו] בעיר Wisdom helps a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city (4QQoh^{a} 7:19 [MT **אשר**]).

In a kindred fashion, Qohelet’s *šɛ*-clause is linked to a mass noun to provide tautological information in combination with a low-level adverbial complement.

> מה יתרון לאדם בכל **עמלו שיעמל תחת השמש** What profit does someone have in all his hard work that he does under the sun? (Eccl 1:3; see also 2:18a.20b.22, 5:17; cf. 9:9b).

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[55] See the references in n. 12.

[56] Nili Samet makes the same point in her unpublished paper, “Philosophical Terms in the Book of *Qohelet*,” presented at the 16th World Congress of Jewish Studies, July 28, 2013 (in Hebrew).

> ופניתי אני בכל מעשי שעשו ידי ו**בֶעמל שעמלתי לעשות** Then I turned to all the things that I (lit., my hands) had done and to the hard-earned wealth that I had produced through hard work (Eccl 2:11a); see also
>
> ומי יודע החכם יהיה או סכל וישלט בכל **עמלי שעמלתי ושחכמתי תחת השמש** And who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? Still, he'll control all my hard-earned wealth for which I had wisely worked hard under the sun (Eccl 2:19a).

Such relative clauses provide rather predictable, presupposed information.[57] An **אשר** clause usually does not. One case involves the quantifier **כל**.[58]

> ונתתי את לבי לדרוש ולתור בחכמה על **כל אשר נעשה תחת השמש** I set my mind to investigate and explore with wisdom all (alt., everything) that occurs under the sun (Eccl 1:13a; see also 4:16a, 9:3a.6b).
>
> **וכל אשר שאלו עיני** לא אצלתי מהם Everything that my eyes asked for, I did not withhold from them (Eccl 2:10a; see also 8:3b, 9:10a).
>
> איש אשר יתן לו האלהים עשר ונכסים וכבוד ואיננו חסר לנפשו מ**כל אשר יתאוה** ולא ישליטנו האלהים לאכל ממנו . . . זה הבל וחלי רע הוא A man to whom God gives wealth, property, and riches, (who) lacks nothing that he may crave for himself, but (whom) God does not empower to consume any of it . . . , this is senseless and a bad sickness (Eccl 6:2).

The reason seems simple. Without a defining and restrictive relative clause, the head merely denotes a distribution, totality, or random choice. The other case holds greater theological interest and already appears in the initial clause of 6:2a just above.

> ושבחתי אני את השמחה אשר אין טוב לאדם תחת השמש כי אם לאכול ולשתות ולשמוח והוא ילונו בעמלו ימי חייו **אשר נתן לו האלהים תחת השמש** I *prefer* enjoyment[59]—that there's nothing better for someone under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy (oneself). That will accompany him in his hard work during the days of his life that God gave him under the sun (Eccl 8:15; see also 5:17aβb, 9:9aβ).
>
> גם לכל אדם **אשר נתן לו האלהים עשר ונכסים והשליטו לאכל ממנו ולשאת את חלקו ולשמח בעמלו** זֹה מתת אלהים היא Moreover, everyone to whom God has given

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[57] Note, in this context, Fox and Thompson, "Relative Clauses in English Conversation," 312. Cf. Shlesinger, "The Relative Pronouns 'ש' and 'אשר'," 100.

[58] For the case of Eccl 11:8, see above.

[59] For such a translation of שָׁבַח, see Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 219; in combination with James L. Kugel, "Qohelet and Money," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 44–45 (abbreviated in idem, *The Great Poems of the Bible: A Reader's Companion with New Translations* [New York: Free Press, 1999], 339–40). See also Elieser Ben Iehuda, *Thesaurus Totius Hebraitatis et Veteris et Recentioris* (1910–58; repr., New York: Yoseloff, 1960), 7:6830a (in Hebrew).

> wealth and property and empowered to consume some of it, to take his portion, and to enjoy (the product of) his hard work—this is a gift of God (Eccl 5:18); see also

> ידעתי כי כל **אשר יעשה האלהים** הוא יהיה I know that everything that God does (alt., causes to occur) will always be (Eccl 3:14aα; see also v. 11bβaβ).

Despite the variety of nominal heads, these relative clauses have a common subject: God (see also 3:10, 8:3b, 11:5b, 12:7b).[60] Like other אשר clauses, the grammar implies that God is a highly salient entity in the book of Ecclesiastes.[61]

2.6. *Discourse Prominence and Topicality*. But God is not the only salient entity to merit an אשר relative clause. Qohelet favors אשר when discussing other topical issues.

> ושבתי אני ואראה את כל העשקים **אשר** נעשים תחת השמש והנה דמעת העשקים ואין להם מנחם ומיד עשקיהם כח ואין להם מנחם In addition, I've seen all the oppression that occurs under the sun: the tears of those oppressed, though they have no one to provide consolation; or power (that) comes from their oppressors, though they have no one to provide consolation (Eccl 4:1).

Here, he introduces an abstract concept ('oppression') and then qualifies it with a relative clause. Despite its tautological contexts, the אשר relative clause also has a cataphoric function; it anticipates the two assertive yet illustrative scenarios of oppression following the presentative והנה. Other cases, however, are more complex.

> יש רעה **אשר** ראיתי תחת השמש ורבה היא על האדם: איש **אשר** יתן לו האלהים עשר ונכסים וכבוד ואיננו חסר לנפשו מכל אשר יתאוה ולא ישליטנו האלהים לאכל ממנו . . . זה הבל וחלי רע הוא There's something wrong that I've seen under the sun, and it's a great weight on humans: a man to whom God gives wealth, property, and riches, (who) lacks nothing that he may crave for himself, but (whom) God does not empower to consume any of it . . . , this is senseless and a bad sickness (Eccl 6:1–2).

> יש הבל **אשר** נעשה על הארץ אשר יש צדיקים **אשר** מגיע אלהם כמעשה הרשעים ויש רשעים **ש**מגיע אלהם כמעשה הצדיקים אמרתי שגם זה הבל There's something senseless that occurs on earth—that there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I say that this too is senseless (Eccl 8:14; see also vv. 10b–12a).

These texts begin like 4:1. An abstract topic is first introduced with the presentative יש and then qualified by an אשר relative clause. Further along, the topic is exemplified by one (6:2) or two (8:14) depictions of human behavior juxtaposed to a reward that reverses traditional expectations. Each time, the first pair-part consists of a noun and אשר relative clause; in 8:14, though, the predictable second pair-part has a noun followed by the relativizer -ש. In these texts, then, אשר is associated with both a topic and its principal example.[62] By contrast, the relative clause introduced with -ש is associated with a nominal of secondary discourse prominence.[63]

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[60] Within the masoretic tradition, see also the reading of Eccl 1:13 in Kenn. 129 and de Rossi 379, and, perhaps, that of 3:11 in Kenn. 18.

[61] Note, in this context, Carolyn J. Sharp, "Ironic Representation, Authorial Voice, and Meaning in Qohelet," *BI* 12 (2004): 62–63; as specified by Samet, "Religious Redaction in Qohelet in Light of Mesopotamian Vanity Literature," *VT* 66 (2016): 134–35.

Additional texts support the notion that the alternation between אשר and -ש responds to relative degrees of discourse prominence.

> גם לכל הדברים **אשר** ידברו אל תתן לבך אשר לא תשמע את עבדך מקללך: כי גם פעמים רבות ידע לבך אשר גם את (ק׳ אתה) קללת אחרים Furthermore, pay no mind to any of the things that they say—in that you shouldn't hear your slave *damning* you. For, bottom line, you (lit., your mind) know how very often you too *damned* others (Eccl 7:21–22).

On the one hand, the marking of the relative clause in 7:21a is counterintuitive; since the relative clause repeats information from its matrix clause, the expected relativizer is -ש (see §2.5). On the other hand, like 4:1 the relative clause is cataphoric and announces a topic for additional discussion and illustration:[64] derisive and disrespectful "babbling of the people in general,"[65] including one's slave and oneself. In this particular context, the אשר clause signals something important.[66] It also marks the standard of comparison against which a parallel, and somewhat predictable, statement is made (see 8:14, above).

> **כאשר**[67] יצא מבטן אמו ערום ישוב ללכת **כשבא** Just as someone came from his mother's womb, naked he'll go back as he came (Eccl 5:14a; see also 11:5 and, somewhat differently, 5:4).

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[62] For this phenomenon, see Hendery, *Relative Clauses in Time and Space*, 66.

[63] See also Eccl 12:3a:

> **בַיום שיזעו** שמרי הבית והתעותו אנשי החיל when the domestic slaves (lit., guards of the house) quiver, and the powerful men convulse. . . .

Despite the specificity of the reference (e.g., Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 322–23), Roland Murphy accounts for the choice of relativizer. "ביום . . . controls vv 3–5, and the whole is integrated, somewhat parenthetically, into v 2" (*Ecclesiastes*, WBC 23A [Dallas: Word, 1992], 118). The parenthetical nature of this clause befits the relativizer -ש.

[64] See Steven E. Runge, "Pragmatic Effects of Semantically Redundant Anchoring Expressions in Biblical Hebrew Narrative," *JNSL* 32.2 (2006): 92, 97, on overencoding.

[65] Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, 328.

[66] For similar analyses of the אשר relative clause in Eccl 12:1bβ, see ibid., 402; or, differently, Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 322; and Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 118.

[67] Cf. 4QQoh^{a} 5:14, reading כיא for MT כאשר: 'Because he came out from his mother's womb naked, he'll go back as he came.' For the wider significance of this variant, which aligns the verse with Gen 3:19, see Sharp, "Ironic Representation," 56–60. Cf. Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 23–25. Alternatively, this replacement may reflect a feature of Late Biblical Hebrew; see 1 Chr 19:2 vs. 2 Sam 10:2.

Again, **אשר** corresponds to the more prominent discourse member; -**ש** signals something supplementary or less prominent. A compatible formulation is possible when the following texts are taken into account.

> דברתי אני עם לבי לאמר אני הנה הגדלתי והוספתי חכמה על **כל אשר היה לפני על ירושלם** I said to myself, "Here I have done great things and amassed wisdom beyond *everyone* who preceded me over Jerusalem" (Eccl 1:16a).

> קניתי עבדים ושפחות ובני בית היה לי גם מקנה בקר וצאן הרבה היה לי מ**כל שהיו לפני בירושלם**: . . . וגדלתי והוספתי מ**כל שהיה לפני בירושלם** I acquired male and female slaves. I had domestically born (slaves). There was also livestock—cattle and flocks; I had much more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. . . . I was greater and amassed more than anyone who preceded me in Jerusalem (Eccl 2:7.9a).

Unless a textual problem underlies either of these verses from chapter 2,[68] the relationship between **כל אשר** and -**כל ש** reflects differential discourse status: **אשר** helps establish the comparison, whereas -**ש** sustains and echoes it. The informational load of **אשר** is heavier, while that of -**ש** is lighter.

Another way to view the different functions of **אשר** and -**ש** focuses on argument structure.[69] For present purposes, argument structure divides into two grammatical-syntactic categories. One category consists of the core participants in a situation that provide the minimal information necessary to make a predication complete.[70]

I laughed.

I saw John.

I gave the book to John (alt., I gave John the book).

Such participants are "core arguments." In contrast, noncore arguments are nonobligatory constituents that contain information without which the predication still makes sense.

I laughed at the joke.

I saw John from afar.

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[68] For example, several Kennicott and de Rossi manuscripts read כל אשר היה in Eccl 2:7. In 2:9, a smaller number read כל אשר היה. Two manuscripts share the two variants (Kenn. 147, 152). These readings correspond to the pattern discussed in §2.5. For a negative assessment of such comparisons, see M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts: Their History and Their Place in the HUBP Edition," *Bibl* 48 (1967): 250, 274–75 (reprinted in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text*, ed. Frank Moore Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975], 49, 73–74).

[69] See Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 151–53.

[70] See Joan Bresnan, cited in John W. Du Bois, "Argument Structure: Grammar in Use," in *Preferred Argument Structure: Grammar as Architecture for Function*, ed. John W. Du Bois, Lorraine E. Kumpf, and William J. Ashby, Studies in Discourse and Grammar 14 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2003), 18–19.

Yesterday, I gave the book to John (alt., Yesterday, I gave John the book).

Conventionally, these noncore items are “adjuncts.” As Polinsky notes, though, each category reflects a different degree of discourse prominence. Core arguments are inherently topical, whereas adjuncts are not. But when an adjunct has topical status, it needs to be marked in some way as a topic.[71]

Qohelet’s relative clauses abide by these distinctions. For example, several texts already cited show that the free relative אשר can serve as direct object (see, e.g., §2.2).

> **את אשר** תדר שלם What you vow, fulfill (Eccl 5:3b; see also 2:12bβ, 7:13b).

> הנה **אשר** ראיתי אני Here’s what I’ve seen (Eccl 5:17aα; see also 10:14bβ).

This free relative also serves as the subject.

> מה שהיה כבר הוא **ואשר** להיות כבר היה What has been, existed long ago. What is to be, existed long ago (Eccl 3:15a); see also

> יש דבר שיאמר ראה זה חדש הוא כבר היה לעלמים **אשר** היה מלפננו There’s something (about which) someone says, “Look at this. It’s new.” It existed ages ago—something that preceded us (Eccl 1:10).

A propos 3:15a, Isaksson makes a significant observation: “*’^{a}šær* may be used in exactly the same function as *maššæ-*.”[72] There is, however, an implicit difference. As a free relative, אשר can represent a core argument, whether subject or direct object. -ש does not.[73]

Lastly, אשר introduces a relative clause that expresses strong personal favoritism. In one case, it marks an explicit, reasoned preference of the author.

> וראיתי כי **אין טוב מאשר** ישמח האדם במעשיו כי הוא חלקו I saw that there’s nothing better than that someone enjoy what he’s done, for that’s his portion (Eccl 3:22a).

The other does, too, but in a more complicated core argument.

> וטוב משניהם **את אשר** עדן לא היה אשר לא ראה את המעשה הרע אשר נעשה תחת השמש Yet better than both is he who does not yet exist, who has not seen the bad things that occur under the sun (Eccl 4:3).

As the clitic את suggests, the relative clause is treated as a highly referential, patient nominal.[74] Yet it lacks a governing transitive or active predicate. By all accounts, its matrix predicate is stative: טוב.[75] As such, this construction is reminiscent of a group of stative or involuntary constructions whose definite or individuated argument is a marked patient—an entity affected by, and/or lacking control of, the situation expressed by the predicate.[76] Here, only stative predicates are relevant.

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[71] Maria Polinsky, “Variation in Complementation Constructions: Long-Distance Agreement in Tsez,” in *Complementation: Cognitive and Functional Perspectives*, ed. Kaoru Hori, Converging Evidence in Language and Communication Research 1 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000), 86.

[72] Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 155.

[73] Ibid., 151.

[74] In this context, see Givón, *Syntax*, 2:206.

[75] E.g., Gordis, *Koheleth*, 239; and Shlesinger, “The Relative Pronouns ‘ש’ and ‘אשר’,” 94.

> ויאמר דוד אל המלאך כה תאמר אל יואב **אל יֵרע** בעיניך **את הדבר הזה** כי כזה וכזה תאכל החרב David said to the messenger, "You should say the following to Joab, 'It mustn't trouble you, this thing, since the sword consumes *one way or the other*'" (2 Sam 11:25a).
>
> **המעט** לנו **את עון פעור** אשר לא הטהרנו ממנו עד היום הזה Doesn't it matter (lit., is it a little) to us, the willful sin at Peor from which we have not purified ourselves to this day? (Josh 22:17a; see also Neh 9:32a); see also
>
> **ויִפלו** מבנימן שמנה עשר אלף איש **את כל אלה אנשי חיל** Eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell, all these valorous men (Judg 20:44).

The number of such constructions is quite small,[77] yet they are sufficient to establish the correlation between a stative predicate and definite, patientive argument marked with את. Eccl 4:3a follows suit. It contains a free relative that identifies the most fortunate human class free of witnessing oppression: the unborn. Its core argument is, in essence, a marked, topical patient.

2.7. *End Position and the Adjoined Relative Clause*. In Ecclesiastes, a relative clause follows its nominal head. Its postnominal position can also combine with a cross-linguistic tendency to locate a relative clause according to a weight-based factor: the longer the relative clause, the greater the likelihood that it will appear at the end of the clause or sentence.[78] Biblical Hebrew reflects this tendency,[79] and Qohelet makes wide use of it, too.

> ושבח אני את המתים **ש**כבר מתו מן החיים **אשר** המה חיים עדנה And I *prefer* the dead, who have already died, over the living, who are still alive (Eccl 4:2).
>
> . . . יש צדיקים **אשר** מגיע אלהם כמעשה הרשעים ויש רשעים **ש**מגיע אלהם כמעשה הצדיקים There are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of

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[76] E.g., G. A. Khan, "Object Markers and Agreement Pronouns in Semitic Languages," *BSOAS* 47 (1984): 496–97. Cf. Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 7:69; and, differently, Hasselbach, *Case in Semitic: Roles, Relations, and Reconstruction*, Oxford Studies in Diachronic and Historical Linguistics 3 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 165.

[77] By one calculation, there are ~50 examples of this construction. I.e., these cases of patientive את involve less than .5% of the entire sample (Bekins, *Transitivity and Object Marking*, 33–34 n. 33).

[78] E.g., Thomas E. Payne, *Describing Morphosyntax: A Guide for Field Linguists* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 326; Givón, *Syntax*, 2:210; and Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 55–56. Alternative labels, such as EXTRAPOSED and RIGHT-DISLOCATED, do not affect this discussion.

[79] See Holmstedt, "Critical at the Margins: Edge Constituents in Biblical Hebrew," *KUSATU* 17 (2014): 134.

> the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous (Eccl 8:14a).

Occasionally, however, a relative clause is not contiguous to its head. In Ecclesiastes, the second of two stacked relative clauses is necessarily distant.

> ומי יודע החכם יהיה או סכל וישלט בכל **עמלי** **ש**עמלתי ו**ש**חכמתי תחת השמש And who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? Still, he’ll control all my hard-earned wealth for which I had wisely worked hard under the sun (Eccl 2:19a); see also

> ושנאתי את כל **עמלי** **ש**אני עמל תחת השמש **ש**אניחנו לאדם שיהיה אחרי I hated all my hard-earned wealth that I worked hard for under the sun, that I will leave to someone who will succeed me (Eccl 2:18).[80]

More interestingly, a relative clause can be adjoined.

> יש דבר שיאמר ראה **זה** חדש הוא כבר היה לעלמים **אשר** היה מלפננו There’s something (about which) someone says, “Look at this. It’s new.” It existed ages ago—something that preceded us (Eccl 1:10).

> כי אדם אין **צדיק** בארץ **אשר** יעשה טוב ולא יחטא For there’s no righteous man on earth who does good and does no wrong (Eccl 7:20).

While the relativizer serves its expected role as an anaphoric tracking device, the rest of the clause has a distinct profile. The relative clause defines or restates its antecedent.[81] It is sentential in nature. It is also introduced by אשר.

2.8. *Quantitative Analysis*. A quantitative analysis contributes another perspective to the findings discussed above. Here, the analysis is restricted to relative clauses whose interpretation is clear. Questionable cases as well as complement and adverbial clauses, even borderline cases, are excluded.

Within these parameters, it is possible to correlate each relativizer with core arguments and/or adjuncts (see §2.6).[82] The longer relative, אשר, prefers core arguments: In ~53% of the cases, it represents a core argument of the matrix clause; in ~91% of the cases, it represents a core argument of the subordinate clause; and in ~72% of the cases, it represents a core argument of both matrix and subordinate clauses. The percentages drop, however, when the אשר relative clause represents an adjunct: ~47% of these relative clauses represent an adjunct of the matrix clause; ~9% represent an adjunct of the subordinate clause; and ~28% represent an adjunct of both matrix and subordinate clauses. The shorter relative, -ש, yields somewhat different numbers. It too has a preference for core arguments: In ~46% of the cases it represents a core argument of the matrix clause; and in ~64% of the cases it represents a core argument of the subordinate clause. Yet unlike אשר, -ש represents a core argument of both matrix and subordinate clauses in only ~57% of cases. When this relative clause represents an adjunct, the percentages are more even than with אשר: -ש or its head correlates with an adjunct of the matrix clause in ~41% of the cases; in ~28% of the cases, with an adjunct of the subordinate clause; and in ~27% of the cases, with an adjunct of both the matrix and subordinate clauses. Although these figures are rough, they point to tendencies of usage. In Ecclesiastes, an אשר clause favors core arguments and disfavors oblique arguments, sometimes precipitously. A -ש clause also prefers core arguments, but not to the same degree as אשר. A -ש clause, however, has a unique feature. It can be attached to a predicative head, as in Eccl 1:9.

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[80] Eccl 9:9a may be another example, if the second relative clause refers to אשה.

[81] For an argument to include Eccl 8:10a under this rubric, see Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, 345; and the lengthy discussion by Hans Debel, “What about the Wicked? A Survey of the Textual and Interpretational Problems in Qoh 8,10a,” in *Florilegium Lovaniense: Studies in Septuagint and Textual Criticism in Honour of Florentino García Martínez*, ed. H. Ausloos, B. Lemmelijn, and M. Vervenne, BETL 224 (Louvain: Peeters, 2008), 142–44. Cf. n. 48, above.

[82] See Comrie, *Language Universals*, 147, 155.

Another quantitative measure focuses on relative clauses and their heads, specifically the distance between them. In 96% of cases, -ש is adjacent to its nominal or phrasal head. Otherwise, -ש and its antecedent are separated only where the relative clause is the second of two stacked or conjoined relative clauses. אשר is also adjacent to its head in the great majority of cases (96%). But unlike -ש, it alone can head a nonadverbial, adjoined relative clause.

Just as clause length is a factor in determining the presence or absence of a marked relative clause (see pp. 6–7, above), so too it may be a factor distinguishing the two types of marked relative clauses in Ecclesiastes. Its אשר relative clause has a minimum of 2 words (e.g., 8:3) but can stretch to 7 (3:10), 14 (5:18), or over 20 (6:2). An אשר relative clause averages ~4.4 words. Ecclesiastes's -ש clause is shorter. It has a minimum of 1 word (e.g., 7:24); longer clauses include 2 words (e.g., 2:26), 3 (e.g., v. 20), 4 (e.g., 8:14), or 6 (5:17).[83] On the average, a -ש clause in Ecclesiastes has ~2.5 words. But in addition to the differential figures themselves, they have a natural correlation with the relative informational content of each relative clause. For, as was discussed earlier (see §2.5), Qohelet's אשר relative clause tends to be semantically more informative and structurally more complex. His -ש relative clause tends to be less informative and simpler. The different length of each relative clause is apiece with its particular function.

A final comparison between אשר and -ש relative clauses is syntactic. Only a small number of nonadverbial relative clauses are fronted.[84] -ש relative clauses has fewer cases.

> **כי לאדם שטוב לפניו** נתן חכמה ודעת ושמחה For to someone who's pleased him, he's given wisdom, knowledge, and enjoyment (Eccl 2:26a; see also v. 21b); see also

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[83] If the -ש clause includes the subsequent אשר relative clause, the word count is 13.

[84] For the present purposes, FRONTING subsumes LEFT-DISLOCATION and PREPOSING under a single rubric.

> ואם יפול עץ בדרום ואם בצפון **מקום שיפול העץ** שם יהוא Whether a tree falls in the south or in the north, where the tree falls is where it will be (Eccl 11:3aβ-b; see also 1:7).

To the extent that these examples are typical, a fronted -ש clause cannot be a free relative clause, either. But an אשר clause can.

> **את אשר תדר** שלם What you vow, fulfill (Eccl 5:3b; see also 2:10a.12bβ, 3:14a, 8:3b, 9:10a, 10:14bβ).
>
> גם **לכל הדברים אשר ידברו** אל תתן לבך Furthermore, pay no mind to any of the things that they say (Eccl 7:21a); see also
>
> **איש אשר יתן לו האלהים עשר ונכסים וכבוד ואיננו חסר לנפשו מכל אשר יתאוה ולא ישליטנו האלהים לאכל ממנו** . . . זה הבל וחלי רע הוא A man to whom God gives wealth, property, and riches, (who) lacks nothing that he may crave for himself, but (whom) God does not empower to consume any of it. . . , this is senseless and a bad sickness (Eccl 6:2; see also 5:18).

It also appears more often in the book of Ecclesiastes. Stated differently, an אשר relative clause is more likely to be topicalized or in focus.[85]

2.9. *Summary*. A number of factors affect the formal shape of relative clauses across languages.[86] One factor is the head of the relative clause, especially its semantic content and accessibility. Another factor is the relative clause itself, especially its structural and semantic complexity. A third factor focuses on interclausal relations, such as the distance between the relative clause and its head or the syntactic role of the relativizer (and its referent) in the matrix and/or subordinate clause.

Qohelet deploys paratactic and hypotactic relative clauses. The few paratactic relative clauses share a highly accessible (adjacent), indefinite, and abstract head. Twice, the relative clause is a recurrent tag line throughout the book (Eccl 5:12a, 10:5a). Once (1:13b), the relative clause follows a blunt assessment of divine responsibility that, later, will be restated more neutrally and fully as an אשר clause (3:10).[87] Indeed, all three paratactic relative clauses share a rhetorical feature; each expresses "a grievous fact."[88]

Qohelet's hypotactic clauses are of two types: those marked with אשר and those marked with -ש. Of the two, -ש relative clauses more closely resemble the linguistic parameters of paratactic clauses. The referent of -ש tends to be indefinite, nonspecific, generic, or plural. Also, a nonstacked -ש relative clause is always adjacent to its head. Qohelet's אשר relative clauses are different. This relativizer tends to be definite, specific, individuated, and referential. Only an אשר relative clause can be separated from its explicit head.

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[85] See Lehmann, "Towards a Typology of Clause Linkage," 187. See also Givón, *Syntax*, 2:209.

[86] For the following, see Fox and Thompson, "Relative Clauses in English Conversation," 294, 297; eaedem, "A Discourse Explanation of the Grammar of Relative Clauses in English Conversation," *Lg* 66 (1990): 299–302; Givón, *Syntax*, 2:217; and Holger Diessel and Michael Tomasello, "A New Look at the Acquisition of Relative Clauses," *Lg* 81 (2005): 882.

[87] Cf. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 171.

[88] James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 170, on Eccl 10:5.

There are further distinctions between the two types of relative clauses.[89] Introduced by -ש, the informational content of the relative clause tends to be low or practically nil, as befits its brief length. The discourse prominence of a -ש relative clause is corresponding low, too. From this viewpoint, Qohelet's -ש relative clause is well suited for conveying peripheral or background information. His אשר relative clause is the opposite. As a free relative, it can represent a core argument. The אשר relative clause can be identifying, defining, establishing, and topical—as befits its greater length. It alone appears in a nonadverbial adjoined clause, where it is largely nonrestrictive and sentential.

A complementary review of this evidence focuses on the differing degrees to which a relative clause in Ecclesiastes is integrated into its matrix clause.[90] At one end lie paratactic relative clauses in which the subordinate clause is completely integrated into the matrix.

> יש רעה ראיתי תחת השמש There's something wrong I've seen under the sun (Eccl 10:5a; see also 5:12a).

At the other end lie adjoined relative clauses and their greater sentential status. They are integrated into the matrix clause only by virtue of the relativizer אשר (see also §4.3.1, below).

> כי אדם אין **צדיק** בארץ **אשר** יעשה טוב ולא יחטא For there's no righteous man on earth who does good and does no wrong (Eccl 7:20).
>
> יש דבר שיאמר ראה **זה** חדש הוא כבר היה לעלמים **אשר** היה מלפננו There's something (about which) someone says, "Look at this. It's new." It existed ages ago—something that preceded us (Eccl 1:10).

The different degrees of integration can also be described as a continuum. At one end, paratactic relative clauses are monoclausal and therefore can convey at most one piece of new information. At the other end, adjoined אשר relative clauses are biclausal and therefore can convey two pieces of information. In between lie Qohelet's embedded hypotactic relative clauses, which vary according to their informational load and (non)sentential standing. Because of their lower informational load and mainly background status, -ש clauses favor a monoclausal interpretation. אשר clauses—with their greater semantic content and discourse prominence—veer toward biclausality.

The features separating the two relativizers intersect with yet another point of difference: each relativizer has its own phoric character. The semantically weaker member is -ש: except when functioning as a free relative, it is always anaphoric, does little anaphoric work, and requires little cognitive effort to process. The semantically stronger relativizer, **אשר**, is anaphoric as well as cataphoric. Its antecedent can be somewhat distant and thus may require cognitive effort to locate an antecedent.[91]

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[89] See Thompson, "Discourse Motivations for the Core-Oblique Distinction as a Language Universal," in *Directions in Functional Linguistics*, ed. Akio Kamio, SLCS 36 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997), 59–82.

[90] See Fox and Thompson, "Relative Clauses in English Conversation," 294–96.

While the preceding discussion may account for most hypotactic relative clauses in Ecclesiastes, it does not account for all. Two stark exceptions involve **אשר**.[92]

> ושבח אני את המתים שכבר מתו מן החיים **אשר** המה חיים עדנה And I *prefer* the dead, who have already died, over the living, who are still alive (Eccl 4:2).

> כי הוא חלקך בחיים ובעמלך **אשר** אתה עמל תחת השמש For that's your portion in life and in your hard work that you suffer through under the sun (Eccl 9:9b).

They are exceptional because each relative clause contains tautological information yet is not marked by -ש (see §2.5).[93] Perhaps **אשר** is prompted by its sentential content. Alternatively, **אשר** may represent a hypercorrection. More likely, examples like these reflect the nature of the alternation between **אשר** and -ש itself. It is not governed by "hard and fast rules" but, instead, semantic and pragmatic tendencies.[94] Some variability is to be expected.

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[91] Note Comrie, *Language Universals*, 163.

[92] For Eccl 8:12bβb, see §4.3.1.

[93] The case of Eccl 5:17aβ, particularly its sequence טוב אשר יפה, is more difficult. If the text is correct (cf. Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 7:78; followed by Ginsberg, *Koheleth* [Tel Aviv: Newman, 1961], 89 [in Hebrew]), טוב and יפה are parallel terms that govern the following string of complementary infinitives (see Prov 21:9 and Ben Sira 14:16 [MS A], respectively). Gaenssle adds further guidance: "The particle אשׁר quite frequently introduces a clause which serves to specialize or define a preceding idea stated indefinitely" (see also G. R. Driver, "Glosses in the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament," in *L'Ancien testament et l'Orient: Études présentées aux VI*^{es} *Journées Bibliques de Louvain [11–13 septembre 1954]*, Orientalia et Biblica Lovaniensia 1 [Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1957], 127; followed by *HALOT* 1:89a). It is an "epexegic use of אֲשֶׁר" that he finds elsewhere in Ecclesiastes, too (Gaenssle, "The Hebrew Particle אשׁר," 117 [= idem, *The Hebrew Particle* אשׁר, 95]; see also Michel, *Untersuchungen zur Qohelet*, 217). Such an אשר relative clause provides an improved reformulation to replace a previous expression (see Gordis, *Koheleth*, 255; and, generally, Rudy Loock, "Appositive Relative Clauses and their Functions in Discourse," *Journal of Pragmatics* 39 [2007]: 357).

> הנה אשר ראיתי אני **טוב אשר יפה** לאכול ולשתות ולראות טובה בכל עמלו שיעמל תחת השמש מספר ימי חיו (ק׳ חייו) אשר נתן לו האלהים כי הוא חלקו Here's what I've seen: it is good—*better*, fitting—to eat, drink, and experience pleasure in all one's hard-earned wealth that he works hard for under the sun the limited days of his life that God gives him. That's his portion (Eccl 5:17a).

For compatible interpretations, see Tg. Qoh.; and ספר השרשים לרבי דויד בן יוסף קמחי הספרדי *Rabbi Davidis Kimchi Radicum Liber sive Hebraeum Bibliorum Lexicon*, ed. J. H. R. Biesenthal and F. Lebrecht (1847; repr., Jerusalem: n.p., 5727 [1966–67]), 30a.

[94] See Loock, "Appositive Relative Clauses," 337, on the nonrestrictive relative clause; or Ariel, "Cognitive Universals and Linguistic Conventions," 239.

3. The Complement Clause

Stated broadly, "COMPLEMENTATION [i]s the grammatical state where a predication functions as an argument of a predicate."[1] In some ways, complementation mirrors relativization. It is hierarchical and bipartite. It is an embedding mechanism, setting one clause (the complement) within the frame of another (the matrix).[2] Each clause represents a state of affairs independent of the other clause[3] and has its own truth-value;[4] yet together they form a conflated and complex sentence.[5] In other ways, though, complementation and relativization are different. Complementation is not an adnominal relation. Thus, the complementizer is not anaphoric, cataphoric, or coreferential with a head.[6] The matrix and complement (alt., content)[7] clauses often constitute otherwise complete, autonomous sentences.[8] Their interrelationship is different, too. The complement clause functions as a core argument of the matrix, whether as subject or object.[9] Their functional role depends on the informational status of each part; either part can potentially express new or foreground information.[10] Finally, the matrix usually contains a COMPLEMENT-TAKING PREDICATE (hereafter CTP) that is selected from a limited set of candidates: cognitive (esp., epistemic), evidential, evaluative, or communicative.[11] Complementation, in this sense, has a number of identifying features.[12]

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[1] Michael Noonan, "Complementation," in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, 2:74 (emphasis added).

[2] E.g., Deutscher, *Syntactic Change in Akkadian*, 13; and Thompson, Longacre, and Hwang, "Adverbial Clauses," 238. See also Cristofaro, *Subordination*, 95 with n. 1.

[3] Cristofaro, *Subordination*, 118, 265; and Noonan, "Complementation," 113.

[4] Boban Arsenijević, "Clausal Complementation as Relativization," *Lingua* 119 (2009): 48.

[5] Hilary Chappell, "Variation in the Grammaticalization of Complementizers from *verba dicendi* in Sinitic Languages," *LT* 12 (2008): 50, 52–53.

[6] See Tamar Zewi, "Content Expressions in Biblical Hebrew," in *Egyptian, Semitic and General Grammar: Studies in Memory of H. J. Polotsky*, ed. Gideon Goldenberg and Ariel Shisha-Halevy (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2009), 302–3.

[7] The alternative label follows Jespersenian tradition (see ibid., 302).

[8] Payne, *Describing Morphosyntax*, 314.

[9] E.g., Noonan, "Complementation," 52, 92. See also Dixon, "Complement Clauses and Complementation Strategies," 15. Cf. Thompson, "'Object Complements' and Conversation: Towards a Realistic Account," *Studies in Language* 26 (2002): 128–30. Biblical Hebrew strongly favors object complements (see, e.g., Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §§157a-ca).

[10] Compare the opposing viewpoints presented by Shuanfan Huang, "Doubts about Complementation: A Functional Analysis," *Language and Linguistics* 4 (2003): 447–48.

[11] Thompson, "'Object Complements' and Conversation," 131, 137; in conjunction with Dixon, "Complement Clauses and Complementation Strategies," 10. See also Cristofaro, *Subordination*, 99.

[12] Cf. Thompson, "'Object Complements' and Conversation," 127; or, intemperately, Gideon Goldenberg, "On Direct Speech and the Hebrew Bible," in *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Syntax Presented to Professor J. Hoftijzer on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. K. Jongeling,

Like relativization, the complement relation may be unmarked or marked. In Biblical Hebrew, the unmarked paratactic relation is rare.

> ובל **יאמרו** ללבבם ___ כל רעתם זכרתי They do not think I've remembered all their wickedness (Hos 7:2a; see also 2 Sam 13:32 and, differently, Ps 50:21).
>
> **כי ידעתי** ___ בגוד תבגוד ופשע מבטן קרא לך For I know you completely broke faith[13] and they've called you a rebel from birth (Isa 48:8b; see also Ps 9:21 and, perhaps, Amos 5:12a).
>
> כה אמר יהוה צבאות בימים ההמה . . . והחזיקו בכנף איש יהודי לאמר נלכה עמכם כי **שמענו** ___ אלהים עמכם Thus said YHWH of Hosts, "In those days. . . , they'll grasp the hem of (every) Jew (and say), 'Let's go with you, since we've heard God is with you'" (Zech 8:23); see also
>
> **כי יראה** ___ חכמים ימותו יחד כסיל ובער יאבדו ועזבו לאחרים חילם For one sees wise men die, the fool and the ignorant perish together; they leave their wealth to others (Ps 49:11).

As a rule, though, hypotaxis prevails (compare 1QIsa^{a} 48:8 to the MT, above). In addition, the complementizer varies with the semantic nature of the complement clause. For example, **כי** introduces a nonmirative, declarative complement clause.[14]

> **וידעתם כי** אני יהוה אלהיכם Then you will know that I, YHWH, am your God (Exod 6:7bα, 16:12b; Joel 4:17aα; see also Joel 2:27a).
>
> והיה ביום צאתך ועברת את נחל קדרון **ידע תדע כי** מות תמות When you leave and cross the Wadi Kidron, you should know full well that you shall certainly die (1 Kgs 2:37a).
>
> ויאמרו אליו **הידע תדע כי** בעליס מלך בני עמון שלח את ישמעאל בן נתניה להכתך נפש They said to [Gedaliah], "Do you have any knowledge that Baalis, king of the Ammonites, has sent Ishmael b. Nethaniah to strike you dead?" (Jer 40:14).

H. L. Murre-Van den Berg, and L. van Rompay, SSLL 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 84 (= idem, *Studies in Semitic Linguistics: Selected Writings* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998], 202).

[13] For the translation of **בג״ד**, see Shalom M. Paul, "Exod. 21:10: A Threefold Maintenance Clause," *JNES* 28 (1969): 48 n. 6 (= idem, Divre Shalom: *Collected Studies of Shalom M. Paul on the Bible and the Ancient Near East, 1967–2005*, CHANE 23 [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 28 n. 6); and Edward L. Greenstein, "On the Use of Akkadian in Biblical Hebrew Philology," in *Looking at the Ancient Near East and the Bible through the Same Eyes:* Mincha LeAhron; *A Tribute to Aaron Skaist*, ed. Kathleen Abraham and Joseph Fleishman (Bethesda: CDL, 2012), 341–49.

[14] Cf. Kugel, "The Use of Adverbial *Kî Ṭôb*," *JBL* 99 (1980): 433–35. For suggested distinctions between the complementizers **כי** and **והנה**, see Follingstad, *Deictic Viewpoint*, 494; or, differently, Mats Eskhult, "Thoughts on Phrases and Clauses Expressing Circumstance in Biblical Hebrew Narration," in Ἐν πάσῃ γραμματικῇ καὶ σοφίᾳ: *Saggi di linguistica ebraica in onore di Alviero Niccacci, ofm*, ed. Gregor Geiger and Massimo Pazzini (Jerusalem / Milan: Franciscan Printing Press / Edizioni Terra Santa, 2011), 114.

Other complementizers identify different nondeclarative complements.

> ותאמר שבי בתי עד אשר **תדעין איך** יפל דבר She said, “My daughter, stay until you see how (this) thing turns out” (Ruth 3:18a).
>
> ומי **יודע אם** לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות Who knows whether you’ve attained royal status for a time like this (Esth 4:14b).
>
> כי מנסה יהוה אלהיכם אתכם ל**דעת הֲ**ישכם אהבים את יהוה אלהיכם בכל לבבכם ובכל נפשכם For YHWH your God is testing you to learn whether you do love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut 13:4b; see also Judg 3:4, 18:5b, etc.).
>
> אים אפוא חכמיך ויגידו נא לך **וידעו מה** יעץ יהוה צבאות על מצרים So where are they, your wise men? Please let them tell you and find out what YHWH of Hosts has planned against Egypt (Isa 19:12; see also 1 Sam 22:3b; Esth 4:5b, etc.).
>
> ויאמר אבימלך לא **ידעתי מי** עשה את הדבר הזה Abimelech said, “I don’t know who did this thing” (Gen 21:26a; see also Gen 43:22b; Deut 21:1b [*niphal*]; Ps 39:7b).

Each type of complement relation may carry significance. The paratactic construction represents a stronger semantic bond between matrix and complement;[15] syntactically integrated, it is virtually monoclausal.[16] The hypotactic construction, in contrast, is formally biclausal. Positioned at the head of the complement clause, the complementizer marks a syntactic boundary as well as a semantic division of clauses.[17] Again, the functional relationship between matrix and complement depends on the linguistic contribution of each part.

Not only are hypotactic constructions marked by different complementizers (see above), but a single subset may have alternative interpretations. To take one example, semantic and pragmatic values of a declarative complement clause can vary according to the CTP. One CTP, such as *remember*, may mark its complement clause as (re)established, background, or known information.[18] The same CTP may convey speaker uncertainty.[19] Another CTP, such as *realize* or *discover*, may express new and important information in the complement clause, despite its subordinate structure.[20] Likewise, its complement clause suggests commitment to the truth value of the dependent clause.[21] Or, to take another example, the complementizer may be a key semantic or pragmatic element. Noonan illustrates this phenomenon with Jakaltek (a Guatemalan Mayan language), where ‘say’ can govern two possible declarative complements: one complementizer denotes very credible information in the dependent clause; the other expresses speaker doubt, reservation, or disbelief.[22] In Korean, Horie notes an analogous distinction: one complementizer expresses a realis situation, while another expresses an irrealis situation.[23] Complementizers may convey meaning.[24]

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[15] See Fox and Thompson, “Relative Clauses in English Conversation, 295.

[16] E.g., Thompson and Mulac, “Discourse Conditions for the Use of the Complementizer *that*,” 241, 247–48. Cf. Cristofaro, *Subordination*, 40, on Lango, citing Noonan.

[17] Margaret Field, “The Role of Factive Predicates in the Indexicalization of Stance: A Discourse Perspective,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 27 (1997): 800 n. 2.

[18] See Noonan, “Complementation,” 108–9.

[19] See Huang, “Doubts about Complementation,” 448, on Chinese *jide*.

[20] See Noonan, “Complementation,” 129. For other views, see Cristofaro, *Subordination*, 36; or Daniel Dor, “Toward a Semantic Account of *that*-Deletion in English,” *Linguistics* 43 (2005): 376.

[21] E.g., Dor, “Toward a Semantic Account of *that*-Deletion,” 352.

3.1. *Parataxis and Hypotaxis*. Qohelet inherited several ways of treating finite complement clauses. One is unmarked and paratactic, of which the more transparent examples have אמר in the matrix.

> וגם בדרך כשהכסל (ק׳ כשסכל) הולך לבו חסר **ואמר** לכל ___ סכל הוא Furthermore, when a fool takes a trip, his mind falls short. He tells everyone he’s a fool (Eccl 10:3; see also 3:17a, 6:3b, etc.); see also
>
> ועוד **ראיתי** תחת השמש ___ מקום המשפט שמה הרשע ומקום הצדק שמה הרשע Moreover, I’ve seen under the sun wickedness located where there is (alt., should be) justice and wickedness located where there is (alt., should be) righteousness (Eccl 3:16; see also 7:15).

The remaining complement clauses are hypotactic. They are marked with the same complementizers found in earlier phrases of the language. For nonmirative, declarative complement clauses,[25] Qohelet adopts an old subordinator that, in other contexts, has lexical content: כי.[26]

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[22] See Noonan, “Complementation,” 58. See also Satoko Suzuki, “Is That a Fact? Reevaluation of the Relationship between Factivity and Complementizer Choice in Japanese,” in *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society: General Session Dedicated to the Contributions of Charles J. Fillmore*, ed. Susanne Gahl, Andy Dolbey, and Christopher Johnson (Berkeley: Berkeley Linguistics Society, 1994), 526, 528 (with a comparison to Kinyarwanda); and Suzuki, “Complexity of Complementizer Choice in Japanese: Reply to Ono,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 37 (2005): 2011, on Japanese.

[23] Kaoru Horie, “Complementation in Japanese and Korean: A Contrastive and Cognitive Linguistic Approach,” in *Complementation: Cognitive and Functional Perspectives*, 20.

[24] Noonan, “Complementation,” 101.

[25] Cf. mirative והנה (e.g., Eccl 1:14, 4:1) and different nonassertive markers (such as the interrogatives מה [e.g., 6:12a, 8:7a] and -ה [e.g., 2:19aα]). For the problem of 3:21, see Jan Joosten, “The Vocalization of the Form תָעָבְדֵם in the Ten Commandments,” in *Israel: Linguistic Studies in the Memory of Israel Yeivin*, ed. Rafael I. (Singer) Zer and Yosef Ofer, Publications of the Hebrew University Bible Project 6 (Jerusalem: Hebrew Univ. Bible Project, 2011), 338 (in Hebrew); or, in brief, GKC §100m.

[26] Note Givón, “Verb Complements and Relative Clauses: A Diachronic Case Study in Biblical Hebrew,” *AAL* 1.4 (1974): 21–22.

> אל תתן את פיך לחטיא את בשרך ואל **תאמר** לפני המלאך **כי** שגגה היא Don’t let your mouth lead you to sin (alt., harm you) and don’t say before his (lit., the) angel that it was a mistake (Eccl 5:5a).
>
> **ידעתי כי** כל אשר יעשה האלהים הוא יהיה לעולם I know that everything that God does (alt., causes to occur) will always be (Eccl 3:14aα; see also 3:12a, 11:9b).
>
> **וראיתי כי** אין טוב מאשר ישמח האדם במעשיו כי הוא חלקו I saw that there’s nothing better than that someone enjoy what he’s done, for that’s his portion (Eccl 3:22a; see also 2:24b, 9:11a).

He also uses both relativizers for this purpose.[27]

> **טוב אשר** לא תדר משתדור ולא תשלם It’s better that you not vow than that you vow and not fulfill (what you’ve vowed) (Eccl 5:4; see also 7:18).
>
> כי גם פעמים רבות **ידע** לבך **אשר** גם את (ק׳ אתה) קללת אחרים For bottom line, you (lit., your mind) know how very often you too *damned* others (Eccl 7:22; see also 8:12bα-βa); see also
>
> כי את כל זה נתתי אל לבי ו**לבור** את כל זה **אשר** הצדיקים והחכמים ועבדיהם ביד אלהים For all this I set to mind and (*I set my mind*) to determine all this—that the righteous, the wise, and their works are in God’s control (Eccl 9:1a).
>
> **אמרתי ש**גם זה הבל I say that this too is senseless (Eccl 8:14b; see also 2:15b).
>
> החכם עיניו בראשו והכסיל בחשך הולך **וידעתי** גם אני **ש**מקרה אחד יקרה את כלם The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool goes in darkness. Still, I know that a single fate will affect them both (Eccl 2:14; see also 1:17b, 9:5a).
>
> **וראיתי** אני **ש**יש יתרון לחכמה מן הכסלות כיתרון האור מן החשך I saw that there’s more gain to wisdom than folly, like the greater gain of light over darkness (Eccl 2:13; see also 3:18b).

Neither represents an innovation by Qohelet. But their frequency may. Whereas אשר rarely functions as a complementizer in Biblical Hebrew generally (.008% of attestations),[28] in Ecclesiastes it is far more common (~10%); this percentage is comparable to that of another late book, Nehemiah (~11.5–13.5%).[29] In Ecclesiastes, too, -ש functions as a complementizer ~10% of the time. These values are very high.

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[27] For the logic behind this selection, see, e.g., Jeffrey Heath, “Typology of Clausal Boundary Marking Devices,” *LT* 14 (2010): 135; and Hendery, *Relative Clauses in Time and Space*, 108–9. See also Givón, “Verb Complements and Relative Clauses,” 2–3; and idem, “The Evolution of Dependent Clause Morpho-Syntax,” 296–97.

[28] This figure is based on Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 231.

[29] See Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (HSM 12; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 128.

Contemporary and subsequent extrabiblical Hebrew texts provide additional contextualization. Ben Sira, for instance, deploys the same three complementizers that occur in Ecclesiastes.[30] His preferred complementizer is כי, which is introduced by cognitive (זכר), epistemic (ידע), and evidential (ראה) CTPs. -ש appears twice and is coupled both times to the CTP ידע. אשר is restricted, too. Even though "[r]elative clauses with אשר considerably outnumber those with -ש,"[31] this complementizer also appears twice and is governed only by the communicative CTP העתיר 'pray'. It may or may not be significant that העתיר doubles as a desiderative verb in context. Among the nonbiblical Dead Sea Scrolls, the same three complementizers are found.[32] Here too the preferred complementizer is כי(א).[33] It is governed by more than a dozen different and semantically diverse CTPs. Other complementizers trail in comparison. אשר seems the more widespread and, in a few texts, alternates with כי (1QH^a, 1Q27, and 4Q390). -ש is restricted to one group of texts (4QMMT) and, therein, does not complete with כי or אשר. Lastly, in the mishnaic corpus, the overwhelmingly dominant complementizer is -ש. For Qohelet, these observations are suggestive. They suggest that the numerical balance among Qohelet's complementizers is unique among ancient Hebrew traditions; and that, ultimately, the clitic relativizer will win the competition. The marking of Qohelet's hypotactic complement clauses, then, is truly transitional.[34]

3.2. כי and -ש. It is difficult to know what conditions, if any, govern the alternation between these two complementizers in Ecclesiastes. One pattern, though, stands out.

> וראיתי אני את כל עמל ואת כל כשרון המעשה כי היא קנאת איש מרעהו I've seen that all hard work and all successful activity represent one man's jealousy of another (Eccl 4:4a).

When the matrix clause includes a CTP and direct object, the complement clause prefers כי (see also 8:17a, 11:8b);[35] with the possible exception of Song 1:6,[36] this structure is never attested with -ש. Otherwise, the marking of complement clauses is balanced in number: כי has seven attestations (Eccl 2:24b, 3:12a.14a.22a, 5:5a, 9:11a, 11:9a),[37] as does -ש (1:17a, 2:13a.14b.15b, 3:18b, 8:14b, 9:5a).[38]

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[30] See Van Peursen, *The Verbal System of Ben Sira*, 301–2.

[31] Fassberg, "Dependent Clauses in Ben Sira," 61.

[32] See Zewi, "Content Clauses in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Hebrew in the Second Temple Period: The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and of Other Contemporary Sources: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature . . . 29–31 December 2008*, ed. Steven E. Fassberg, Moshe Bar-Asher, and Ruth A. Clements, STDJ 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 292–98.

[33] Cf. ibid., 298, whose count includes the matrix nominal פשר(ו).

[34] See n. 50, below.

[35] For Eccl 8:17a, cf. Dominic Rudman, "The Translation and Interpretation of Eccl 8:17a," *JNSL* 23.1 (1997): 109–16. Eccl 5:19a may be a related example if, as Ginsburg and others claim, כי heads a fronted complement clause (*Coheleth*, 356a; cf. Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 454). Eccl 2:17a, however, is unrelated because its כי clause is explanatory.

[36] E.g., Givón, "Verb Complements and Relative Clauses," 17; and, differently, Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 7:3. Yair Zakovitch, however, correctly compares this verse with Prov 23:31 (*Das Hohelied*, tr. Dafna Mach [HThKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2004], 118). For Eccl 2:18, see §4.3.2, below.

Unfortunately, the CTPs do not help, either. Both complementizers follow the epistemic verb ידע : כי in Eccl 3:12a.14a, 11:9a; -ש in 1:17a, 2:14b, 9:5a. Both complementizers follow the evidential verb ראה : כי in 2:24b, 3:22a, 9:11a; -ש in 2:13a, 3:18b. Both complementizers also depend on a verb of communication: כי in 5:5a (CTP אמר); -ש in 2:15b (CTP דבר [בלבב]) and 8:14b (CTP אמר). The CTP suggests no obvious distinction between כי and -ש.

Schwarzschild, however, finds a semantic distinction. “A -ש clause can potentially refer to any noun phrase referent including a person or a thing. A clause introduced by כי will always refer to a proposition, fact, or event.”[39] Both roles tally with other functions of these complementizers. The propositional or event marker, כי, accords with its basic function marking an explanatory clause. The more thing-like complementizer, -ש, agrees with its nominalizing function in relative clauses.[40] Nevertheless, this finding is difficult to accept or even apply.

> ואל **תאמר** לפני המלאך **כי** שגגה היא . . . and don’t say before his (lit., the) angel that it was a mistake (Eccl 5:5aβ).

> **אמרתי** **ש**גם זה הבל I say that this too is senseless (Eccl 8:14b; see also 2:15b).

For instance, what is the interpretive advantage of analyzing the complement clause of the second passage “at some level” as more thing-like?[41]

Nevertheless, a complementizer may correlate with the content of its dependent clause. For example, the content of a complement clause headed by -ש is narrow. One time, it expresses a brief generality or truism which, by definition, no one would deny.

> כי החיים **יודעים** **ש**ימתו והמתים אינם יודעים מאומה For the living know that they’ll die, but the dead know nothing (Eccl 9:5a-bαa).

Gordis captures other features of this text. “Consciousness on any terms is preferable to nonexistence, and knowledge, however limited and melancholy in content, is better than ignorance. Here speaks Koheleth, the lover of life and the devotee of wisdom.”[42] In other words, the statement is personal, and the content of the complement clause is not particularly salient.

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[37] Ginsburg effectively adds Eccl 9:11b to the list (*Coheleth*, 418).

[38] See Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 64 n. 8.

[39] Roger Schwarzschild, “The Syntax of אשר in Biblical Hebrew with Special Reference to Qoheleth,” *HS* 31 (1990): 24–25. See also Follingstad, *Deictic Viewpoint*, 482, on כי.

[40] See also Holmstedt, “The Grammar of ש and אשר in Qoheleth,” 292 with n. 45.

[41] Cf. Schwarzschild, “The Syntax of אשר,” 25.

[42] Gordis, *Koheleth*, 305.

The other -ש complement clauses intersect with this description. They are consistently evaluative.

> ואתנה לבי לדעת חכמה ודעת הוללות ושכלות **ידעתי ש**גם זה הוא רעיון רוח I set my mind to understand wisdom and understand madness and folly. I understood that this too is futile (lit., a pursuit of wind) (Eccl 1:17).
>
> ואמרתי אני בלבי כמקרה הכסיל גם אני יקרני ולמה חכמתי אני אז יותר **ודברתי** בלבי **ש**גם זה הבל I thought, "Something like the fate of the fool will affect me, too. Why, then, have I been so wise?" So I said to myself that this too was senseless (Eccl 2:15; see also 8:14b).

Here, they reiterate an abstract, prepackaged, negative conclusion reached by the author. Elsewhere, they involve comparative assessments bound to the author's worldview.

> **וראיתי אני ש**יש יתרון לחכמה מן הכסלות כיתרון האור מן החשך I saw that there's more gain to wisdom than folly, like the greater gain of light over darkness (Eccl 2:13).
>
> החכם עיניו בראשו והכסיל בחשך הולך **וידעתי** גם אני **ש**מקרה אחד יקרה את כלם The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool goes in darkness. Still, I know that a single fate will affect them both (Eccl 2:14).
>
> אמרתי אני בלבי על דברת בני האדם לברם האלהים ו**לראות ש**הם בהמה המה להם Regarding human beings, I thought to *separate them from* the divine and see that they are animals[43] (Eccl 3:18).

These complement clauses are highly personal, idiosyncratic, and axiomatic.

By contrast, a כי complement clause is more heterogeneous in Ecclesiastes. It can introduce new evidence into an argument.

> אל תתן את פיך לחטיא את בשרך **ואל תאמר** לפני המלאך **כי** שגגה היא למה יקצף האלהים על קולך וחבל את מעשה ידיך Don't let your mouth lead you to sin (alt., harm you) and don't say before his (lit., the) angel that it was a mistake. Why should God be furious at what you said and destroy what you've (lit., your hands have) done? (Eccl 5:5).
>
> שבתי **וראה** תחת השמש **כי** לא לקלים המרוץ ולא לגבורים המלחמה וגם לא לחכמים לחם וגם לא לנבנים עשר וגם לא לידעים חן כי עת ופגע יקרה את כלם In addition, I saw under the sun that the race does not belong to the speedy, nor the battle to the powerful, nor food to the wise, nor wealth to the intelligent, nor favor to the expert. Unfortunate times affect everyone (Eccl 9:11).

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[43] In most other contexts, בהמה is a more specific taxon. See Richard Whitekettle, "All Creatures Great and Small: Intermediate Level Taxa in Israelite Zoological Thought," *SJOT* 16 (2002): 163–83; and idem, "Oxen Can Plow, But Women Can Ruminate: Animal Classification and the Helper in Genesis 2,18–24," *SJOT* 23 (2009): 243–56.

Both times, the complement clause functions as a premise that justifies a basic conclusion. Otherwise, this type of complement clause gravitates to two topics. One pertains to doctrinal statements about God.

> **ידעתי כי** כל אשר יעשה האלהים הוא יהיה לעולם עליו אין להוסיף וממנו אין לגרע I know that everything that God does (alt., causes to occur) will always be. One can't add to it, and one can't take away from it (Eccl 3:14a; see also 11:9b).

The other pertains to enjoyment and pleasure.

> **וראיתי כי** אין טוב מאשר ישמח האדם במעשיו כי הוא חלקו I saw that there's nothing better than that someone enjoy what he's done, for that's his portion (Eccl 3:22a).

Not coincidentally, the two topics are related in Ecclesiastes (e.g., 2:24, 3:12–13).[44] Of the three complementizers appearing in this book, **כי** seems to be the least marked.

3.3. **אשר**. Most scholars accept the notion that **אשר** can function as a complementizer.[45] Isaksson cites four examples from Ecclesiastes (7:22.29, 8:12bβa, 9:1).[46] Holmstedt has cited as many as eleven,[47] although his most recent count is nine (5:4.17,[48] 6:10, 7:18.22.29, 8:12.14, 9:1).[49] Givón further claims that **אשר** is a free variant of the other declarative complementizers in the book.[50]

Ecclesiastes is not the only biblical book to deploy **אשר** in this way. Examples are limited but diffuse and sufficient. **אשר** complement clauses are also governed by a variety of CTPs.[51] Here, however, only nonmanipulative and nondesiderative CTPs are considered since they are the only ones to occur in Ecclesiastes.

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[44] E.g., Stephan de Jong, "God in the Book of Qohelet: A Reappraisal of Qohelet's Place in Old Testament Theology," *VT* 47 (1997): 157 with n. 17, 163; and Schoors, "The Ambiguity of Enjoyment in Qoheleth," in *The Ancient Near East, A Life! Festschrift Karel Van Lerberghe*, ed. Tom Boiy, Joachim Bretschneider, Anne Goddeeris, Hendrik Hameeuw, Greta Jans, and Jan Tavernier, OLA 220 (Louvain: Peeters, 2012), 543–56.

[45] E.g., Carl Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1956), §160b; J. C. L. Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar ~ Syntax*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1994), §90a; and Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §157c. For Holmstedt, this function is "indisputable" ("The Story of Ancient Hebrew *ʾăšer*," *ANES* 43 [2006]: 14) and "uncontroversial" (*Relative Clause*, 220).

[46] Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 152.

[47] Holmstedt, "Headlessness and Extraposition: Another Look at the Syntax of אשר," *JNSL* 27.1 (2001): 5 n. 9. For a short list, see idem, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשר in Qoheleth," 292 with n. 46.

[48] For Eccl 5:17aβ, see p. 30 n. 93.

[49] Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 63 n. 7, 231. Note, however, his definition in 63 n. 6.

[50] Givón, "Verb Complements and Relative Clauses," 14. See also, among others, Shlesinger, "The Relative Pronouns 'שׁ' and 'אשר'," 109; and Zewi, "Content Clauses," in *EHLL* 1:603a (by implication). For a historical perspective, see Mark F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel*, JSOTS 90 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 111–12; and Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*, 1:133 n. 50.

> **ואמרתם** להם **אשר** נכרתו מימי הירדן מפני ארון ברית יהוה בעברו בירדן נכרתו מי הירדן You shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off in front of the ark of the covenant of YHWH. When it crossed through the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off (Josh 4:7a; see also 2 Sam 1:4b; Zech 8:23).

> כל עבדי המלך ועם מדינות המלך **יודעים אשר** כל איש ואשה אשר יבוא אל המלך אל החצר הפנימית אשר לא יקָרא אחת דתו להמית All the king’s courtiers and the people of the king’s provinces know that should any man or woman go to the king, entering the inner court without being summoned, the law is unequivocal (lit., one)—to put that person to death (Esth 4:11aα; see also Exod 11:7b; Ezek 20:26).

> יהוה אלהיכם . . . הוא ילחם לכם ככל אשר עשה אתכם במצרים לעיניכם: ובמדבר אשר **ראיתָ אשר** נשאך יהוה אלהיך Your God YHWH . . . will fight for you just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness where you saw how your God YHWH carried you (Deut 1:30–31aα); see also

> **זכר** אדני . . . **אשר** חרפו אויביך יהוה **אשר** חרפו עקבות משיחך Lord, remember . . . how your enemies mocked, YHWH, how they mocked every movement of your anointed (Ps 89:51–52).

More importantly, they share content. They assert a fact known to be true.[52] That fact may be based on historical knowledge (e.g., Josh 4:7). It may be based on an experience shared by the conversational partners (e.g., Deut 1:31a). It may be based on imperial law (Esth 4:11a). In other words, the complement clause asserts presupposed information that is pragmatically certain[53] and presumably unchallengeable. In these contexts, the complementizer **אשר** denotes factivity. Whether translated ‘that’ or ‘how’, it often has the sense of ‘the fact that’.

This interpretation is supported by two comparisons with its alternant, **כי**. Rooker offers one.[54]

> ועתה צוה ויכרתו לי ארזים מן הלבנון ועבדי יהיו עם עבדיך ושכר עבדיך אתן לך ככל אשר תאמר כי אתה **ידעת כי** אין בנו איש ידע לכרת עצים כצדנים Now order them to

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[51] See, e.g., the texts listed in *DCH* 1:431–32; or Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §§157a, c.

[52] Follingstad, *Deictic Viewpoint*, 454. Cf. Zewi, “Content Expressions in Biblical Hebrew,” 308 n. 31.

[53] Gaenssle, “The Hebrew Particle אשר,” 98 (= idem, *The Hebrew Particle* אשר, 76), in a different context. For an application to 1 Sam 15:2, see *Sepher Haschoraschim: Wurzelwörterbuch der hebräischen Sprache von Abulwalîd Merwân ibn Ĝanâh (R. Jona)*, tr. Yehuda ibn Tibbon, ed. Wilhelm Bacher (1896; repr., Jerusalem: n.p., 5726 [1965–66]), 49 (in Hebrew); and Park, “אשר from Light Noun to Nominalizer: Toward a Broader Typology of Clausal Nominalization in Biblical Hebrew,” *HS* 56 (2015): 46–47 (= eadem, “Stand-Alone Nominalizations, 60 n. 60).

[54] See the reference in n. 50.

> cut cedar for me from Lebanon. My servants will accompany yours, and I’ll pay your servants’ wages to you as per whatever you say. For you know that none of us knows how to cut wood like the Sidonians (1 Kgs 5:20).
>
> ושלח לי עצי ארזים ברושים ואלגומים מהלבנון כי אני **ידעתי אשר** עבדיך יודעים לכרות עצי לבנון והנה עבדי עם עבדיך Send me cedar, cypress, and algum wood from Lebanon. For I know that your servants know how to cut Lebanon wood. My servants will accompany yours (2 Chr 2:7).

The difference, he concludes, reflects a Late Biblical Hebrew replacement of the old complementizer by **אשר**. Japhet, however, intimates something more. She notes rhetorical differences between the two reports of Solomon’s communication to Hiram (1 Kgs 5:17–20; 2 Chr 2:2–9). In Kings, the report “has an apologetic tone” with two “allusions by Solomon to some shortcoming or failure on the Israelite side” (1 Kgs 5:17.20). But in Chronicles, “[n]one of this apologetic is found.”[55] In fact, in 2 Chr 2:7 “the tone is assertive”[56] and consistent with a first-person affirmation of common knowledge. **אשר** reflects its conversational context. Follingstad cites another alternation between **אשר** and **כי**.[57]

> **וירא** דוד **כי** עבדיו מתלחשים David saw that his servants were whispering (2 Sam 12:19aα).
>
> **וירא** שאול **אשר** הוא משכיל מאד Saul saw that [David] was very successful (1 Sam 18:15a).[58]

These texts are also different from one another.[59] The passage from 2 Sam 12 describes two distinct events—visual perception and whispering—that occur simultaneously and are presented from an external, narrative perspective. The passage from 1 Sam 18, however, describes one event. Its finite verb has an evidential character, expressing Saul’s realization and the way he came to that realization. The complement clause is noneventive, too. It is an evaluation of David that, moreover, was already established by the narrator (vv. 5.14). The complement clause and its marking reflect a fact that is now commonly shared by Saul, the narrator, and the reader.[60]

Qohelet continues the tradition of a factive **אשר** complement clause. Some cases involve an epistemic/evidential CTP, of which two are particularly instructive.

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[55] Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster / Knox, 1993), 539, on 2 Chr 2:2.

[56] Ibid., 542.

[57] Follingstad, *Deictic Viewpoint*, 451–52.

[58] For a discussion of David’s “success” here, see Tova Forti and David A. Glatt-Gilad, “The Function of the Root *śkl* in Shaping the Ideal Figure of David in 1 Samuel 18,” *VT* 65 (2015): 390–400.

[59] See Zewi, “On רָאָה כִּי and רָאָה וְהִנֵּה in Biblical Hebrew,” in Ἐν πάσῃ γραμματικῇ καὶ σοφίᾳ, 410, 411.

[60] See Follingstad, *Deictic Viewpoint*, 495.

> כי גם פעמים רבות **ידע** לבך **אשר** גם את (ק׳ אתה) קללת אחרים For bottom line, you (lit., your mind) know how very often you too *damned* others (Eccl 7:22).
>
> כי גם **יודע** אני **אשר** יהיה טוב ליראי האלהים For I also know how well it will be for the God-fearing (Eccl 8:12bα).

They are also atypical in comparison with earlier complement clauses marked with **אשר**. In 7:22, Qohelet asserts neither personal nor common, empirical knowledge. Rather, he adopts the perspective of the addressee and describes a past event from that participant's viewpoint. From the perspective of this shifted reality, the **אשר** complement clause expresses an unchallengeable and presupposed fact.[61] Eccl 8:12b would appear to be similar. Qohelet affirms "awareness of the orthodox claim concerning retribution, that all will be well with those who fear God." But he does not accept this belief. "[H]e sees no evidence for it, and indeed he points to contrary evidence in v 14."[62] One fact collides with another.[63]

The other examples of an **אשר** complement clause following an epistemic or evidential CTP are less clear.[64]

> לבד ראה זה **מצאתי אשר** עשה האלהים את האדם ישר והמה בקשו חשבנות רבים Only, look, I've found this, that God made humans *uncomplicated* (lit., straight) but they pursue great calculations (Eccl 7:29).
>
> כי את כל זה נתתי אל לבי ול**בור** את כל זה **אשר** הצדיקים והחכמים ועבדיהם ביד אלהים For all this I set to mind and (*I set my mind*) to determine all this—that the righteous, the wise, and their works are in God's control (Eccl 9:1a).

The problem lies in the status of the **אשר** clause. On one analysis, it is an adjoined relative clause that explicates a semantically empty demonstrative head.[65] On another analysis, it is a complement clause.[66] The latter seems the more productive. Eccl 9:1a follows the pattern of 8:12b: traditional doctrine is affirmed only to be disputed by counterevidence that Qohelet offers (vv. 2–3). Eccl 7:29 is also bipartite but more conservative. The complement clause contains a proposition asserted as fact which then provides the basis for a mitigating comment.

Whereas Qohelet selects among three complementizers when the CTP is cognitive, he is restricted when the matrix is evaluative. Only **אשר** is attested. One group is headed by a complement-taking noun.[67]

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[61] See Field, "The Role of Factive Predicates," 810–11.

[62] Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 85, on Eccl 8:12–13. See also Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 59, on Eccl 8:14.

[63] For additional discussion of this passage, see §4.3.1, below.

[64] The case of Eccl 6:10aβ has defied explanation and is thus not considered here. For one opinion, see Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 7:80–81.

[65] E.g., Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, 354; and Zewi, "Content Expressions in Biblical Hebrew," 310 with n. 37.

[66] Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 231. Cf. idem, "The Grammar of **ש** and **אשר** in Qoheleth," 307.

[67] Another such noun is **אות** 'sign': **אות כי** (e.g., Exod 3:12), **אות ש-** (Judg 6:17), and **אות אשר** (Isa 38:7).

> גם זה **הבל**: **אשר** אין נעשה פתגם מעשה הרעה מהרה על כן מלא לב בני האדם בהם לעשות רע: **אשר** חטא עשה רע מאת ומאריך לו This too is senseless: that a *verdict* (judging) a bad act does not occur quickly, which is why human beings dare to do wrong; that a sinner does wrong a hundred times yet lives on (Eccl 8:10b-12a).

> יש **הבל** אשר נעשה על הארץ **אשר** יש צדיקים אשר מגיע אלהם כמעשה הרשעים ויש רשעים שמגיע אלהם כמעשה הצדיקים אמרתי שגם זה הבל There's something senseless that occurs on earth—that there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I say that this too is senseless (Eccl 8:14).

Here, the information expressed by the complement clauses is new to the discourse. But the nature of that information is commonplace. And, following an evaluative CTP, that information is processed as evidence that justifies the conclusion reached in the matrix clause. Stated differently, the matrix imposes a particular reading on the complement—that the situation portrayed is real and factual.[68] Each of these complement clauses is presumed to be true.[69]

Dependent clauses are also considered true following the CTP **טוב**.

> **טוב אשר** לא תדר משתדור ולא תשלם It's better that you not vow than that you vow and not fulfill (what you've vowed) (Eccl 5:4).

> **טוב אשר** תאחז בזה וגם מזה אל תנח את ידך כי ירא אלהים יצא את כלם It's good that you grab hold of one. Also, don't let go of (lit., let your hand lie from) the other. For the one fearful of God can do (lit., fulfill, discharge) them both (Eccl 7:18); see also

> תרתי בלבי למשוך ביין את בשרי . . . עד אשר אראה אי זה טוב לבני האדם **אשר** יעשו תחת השמים מספר ימי חייהם With my mind, I explored (and sought) to move my body with wine . . . until I'd see what's good for human beings to do under heaven the limited days of their life (Eccl 2:3).

For example, the complement clause in Eccl 5:4 invokes its source in Deut 23:22–24. More locally, it is a logical extrapolation of a recommendation begun in Eccl 5:3. Its content, then, is part of the common ground and presupposed to be true. Likewise, 7:18a continues the combined advice of vv. 16–17,[70] and its complement clause expresses retrieved and presupposed information on which the CTP comments. The complement is a discourse-dependent fact. Finally, 2:3 conforms to a similar pattern. Behind the interrogative lies the presumption that there is something good that people can do in life.[71] It is also a topic that Qohelet develops further in some detail.

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[68] See, e.g., Noonan, "Complementation," 128; in conjunction with Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 285.

[69] Alternative analyses of אשר reach the same result. See, e.g., Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, 349; and Gordis, *Koheleth*, 296–97; or, differently, Gaenssle, "The Hebrew Particle אשר," 117 (= idem, *The Hebrew Particle* אשר, 95); and Michel, *Untersuchungen zur Qohelet*, 224.

[70] Ginsburg, *Coheleth*, 381a.

3.4. *Summary*. In the book of Ecclesiastes, complement clauses can be paratactic or hypotactic. Marking is not an obligatory feature of this clause type (§3.1). When marking is absent, the relation between the matrix and its complement clause is a matter of context-specific interpretation; in Ecclesiastes, a paratactic complement clause is declarative (e.g., 10:3) and monoclausal. Further, the preferred CTP is אמר, principally in the first person singular, in its literal and nonliteral capacities.

Structurally, the hypotactic construction is compound and, at least potentially, biclausal. Of the three nonmirative, declarative complementizers in Ecclesiastes, the unmarked term is כי (§3.2). It is often dependent on the same CTPs that introduce a -ש complement clause. But the content of the clause is varied. It can present new information on which a subsequent judgment is based. Elsewhere in the Bible, כי is the preferred, unmarked, declarative complementizer.

The complementizer -ש also appears elsewhere in the Bible. But it is very rare outside of Ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiastes (§3.2), it strongly prefers evaluative statements of the kind that characterize the book: e.g., that life is a senseless pursuit (1:17, 2:15, 8:14b); that, whether wise or foolish, human or animal, there is one final fate (2:14, 3:18–19); that there is a profit to wisdom (2:13). It does not introduce new information.

The third complementizer, אשר, is functionally specific, too (§3.3). It is the only complementizer to be governed by an evaluative matrix. It may assert an unchallengeable fact. The complementizer may also introduce discourse that is presupposed and true. Qohelet applies this construction to uphold Yahwistic orthodoxy, before disputing it. Or, he uses this construction when he shifts his stance to an addressee and assumes that new persona. Whether overtly or covertly, an אשר complement clause is factive.

Each of these complementizers, of course, serves another and more common function elsewhere in Ecclesiastes. אשר and -ש are relativizers. Moreover, their two roles are not unrelated.[72] -ש is associated with relative clauses that are less informative, less prominent in discourse, presupposed, and nonassertive. Except for stacked clauses, -ש is always adjacent to its head. אשר is the stronger relativizer. Its clause is more informative and topical. It can also be assertive. The אשר complement clause adds another feature to the list. אשר can be distant from its matrix. In which case, it can shift or realign discourse.

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[71] Cf. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 128.

[72] For traits shared by the explanatory and complementizing כי, see, e.g., Givón, "The Evolution of Dependent Clause Morpho-Syntax," 273–74. See also Deutscher, *Syntactic Change in Akkadian*, 47–48, on Akkadian.

4. The Adverbial Clause

In addition to their role in relative and complement clauses, Qohelet uses the relativizers אשר and -ש in a third and final subordinate structure: the adverbial clause. “Adverbial clauses are those that serve an ‘adverbial’ function . . . modify[ing] a verb phrase or a whole clause” and supplying “the same kinds of information expressed by adverbs, e.g., time, place, manner, purpose, reason, condition, etc.”[1] In terms of argument structure, they usually have a predictable role. “[Adverbial clauses] are not an argument of the clause. . . . [They] attach to constructions that are already complete propositions, . . . simply add[ing] some information to the proposition.”[2] As a nonobligatory stretch of discourse, the typical adverbial clause is best classified as an adjunct.[3]

Biblical Hebrew adverbial clauses are no different. Some are lexically transparent and marked with a simple, dedicated adverb. For example, אם signals a conditional clause, טרם a type of irrealis temporal clause, and כי often a reason or explanatory clause. Other clauses are marked in one of two ways: either with or without a relativizer. To illustrate, למען or למען אשר denotes a purpose clause, whereas עקב or עקב אשר denotes a consequence clause. Still other adverbial clauses require the relativizer. Among the more popular cases are באשר for a locative clause, כאשר for a temporal clause, and ככל אשר for exact manner. With the notorious exception of כי, the semantic identity of the dependent clause is relatively clear.

The relationship between clauses is not always transparent. An extreme case involves the ubiquitous *waw*. Syntactically, it coordinates.[4] Its context-specific interpretation, however, can be fluid.[5]

> ונח בן שש מאות **ו**המבול היה מים על הארץ Noah was six hundred years old when the flood occurred (consisting of) water on the earth (Gen 7:6).

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[1] Payne, *Describing Morphosyntax*, 316–17.

[2] Ibid., 317.

[3] See Tania Notarius, “Argument,” in *EHLL* 1:174a; in conjunction with Adina Moshavi, *Word Order in the Biblical Hebrew Finite Clause*, LSAWS 4 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 62. See also Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 7.

[4] Note Cynthia L. Miller, “The Pragmatics of *waw* as a Discourse Marker in Biblical Hebrew Dialogue,” *ZAH* 12 (1999): 165–91.

[5] See Richard C. Steiner, “Does the Biblical Hebrew Conjunction -ו Have Many Meanings, One Meaning, or No Meaning At All?” *JBL* 119 (2000): 249–67; and Augustin R. Müller, “Die Freiheit, ein *Und* zu gebrauchen: Zur hebräischen Konjunktion *w*,” in *Sachverhalt und Zeitbezug: Semitische und alttestamentlische Studien; Adolf Denz zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Rüdiger Bartelmus and Norbert Nebes, Jenaer Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 4 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 85–105.

> ואמרתי אני טובה חכמה מגבורה **ו**חכמת המסכן בזויה ודבריו אינם נשמעים I said, “Wisdom is better than strength,”[6] but a poor man’s wisdom is despised and his words are ignored (Eccl 9:16).

> ויאמר אברם אדני יהוה מה תתן לי **ו**אנכי הולך ערירי Abram said, “My Lord YHWH, what can you give me seeing that I go on bereft (lit., disgraced)?”[7] (Gen 15:2a).

> ויקח שם ויפת את השמלה וישימו על שכם שניהם וילכו אחרנית ויכסו את ערות אביהם **ו**פניהם אחרנית **ו**ערות אביהם לא ראו Shem and Japheth took a cloak, placed it on both their shoulders, walked backward, and covered their father’s genitals; their heads (lit., faces) faced back, and they did not see their father’s genitals (Gen 9:23).

> ויאמר לו פרעה כי מה אתה חסר עמי **ו**הנך מבקש ללכת אל ארצך But Pharaoh said to [Hadad], “What don’t you have here (lit., with me) since you want to go to your country?” (1 Kgs 11:22a).

These texts are typical; aside from linguistic devices that suggest subordination, interclausal semantics impose an interpretation of the coordinated clause marked with *waw*. One is temporal (Gen 7:6); another is adversative (Eccl 9:16); the third is circumstantial (Gen 15:2a); the fourth is simultaneous (9:23); and the fifth is causal (1 Kgs 11:22a). In the absence of lexical transparency, the interclausal relationship (‘and’) must be inferred along pragmatic lines.

The same pragmatic effort applies to relative clauses.

> ותאמר לאה נתן אלהים שכרי **אשר** נתתי שפחתי לאישי Leah said, “God has given (me) my reward because I gave my slave to my husband” (Gen 30:18a).

> ויאמרו איש אל אחיו אבל אשמים אנחנו על אחינו **אשר** ראינו צרת נפשו בהתחננו אלינו ולא שמענו על כן באה אלינו הצרה הזאת They said to one another, “Well.[8] We are being punished for our brother, since we saw his mortal distress when he pleaded with us yet didn’t listen. That’s why this distress has come to us” (Gen 42:21).

> ויאמר פינחס בן אלעזר הכהן אל בני ראובן ואל בני גד ואל בני מנשה היום ידענו כי בתוכנו יהוה **אשר** לא מעלתם ביהוה המעל הזה Phineas b. Eleazar the priest said to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the Manassites, “Today we know YHWH is in our midst, since you didn’t commit this violation against YHWH” (Josh 22:31a).

> וגם את מעכה אמו ויסִרה מגבירה **אשר** עשתה מפלצת לאשרה [Asa] also deposed his mother Maacah from (the rank of) queen mother, because she had made a horrid thing for Asherah (1 Kgs 15:13a; see also 2 Chr 15:16a).

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[6] The quotation may extend to the end of the verse.

[7] For this translation of ערירי, see Greenstein, “The Language of Job and Its Poetic Function,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 655.

[8] For this translation, see Garr, “אבל in Biblical Hebrew and Beyond: Part I,” in *Memoriae Igor M. Diakonoff*, ed. L. Kogan, N. Koslova, S. Loesov, and S. Tishchenko, Bibel und Babel 2 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns / Russian State Univ. for the Humanities, 2005), 265–90.

Grammatically, **אשר** marks its clause as subordinate. And as a relative clause, the clause serves the semantic role of supplying additional information about an antecedent—whether that antecedent be pronominal (e.g., Gen 30:18), nominal (e.g., 42:21 [one reading]), or sentential (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:13a [one reading]). On a pragmatic level, though, each relative clause can be easily processed as the reason for the preceding discourse: Leah is rewarded for offering Zilpah to Jacob (Gen 30:18); Joseph's brothers express guilt for failing to respond to his plea (42:21); an intertribal war is averted because the seemingly transgressive tribes actually built a Yahwistic altar (Josh 22:31); and Asa demoted his mother's status because of a shocking cultic offence (1 Kgs 15:13). The cognitive effort to understand the interclausal relationship (see §4.4, below) leads the reader/audience to interpret each subordinate clause as an adverbial clause of reason.[9]

Although the causal reading is perhaps the most recognized in Biblical Hebrew, other interpretations are, or can be, associated with the marked relative clause.[10]

> **ועתה הנה החיה יהוה אותי כאשר דבר זה ארבעים וחמש שנה מאז דבר יהוה את הדבר הזה אל משה אשר הלך ישראל במדבר** Now, here YHWH has kept me alive, as he had said. It's now forty-five years since YHWH spoke this thing to Moses when Israel was going through the wilderness (Josh 14:10a).

> **ויחל שלמה לבנות את בית יהוה בירושלם בהר המוריה אשר נראה לדויד אביהו** Solomon began to build the house of YHWH in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah where he appeared to his father David (2 Chr 3:1a).

> **את חג המצות תשמר שבעת ימים תאכל מצות אשר צויתך למועד חדש האביב כי בחדש האביב יצאת ממצרים** You should observe the Festival of *Maṣṣot*: you should eat *maṣṣot* for seven days, as I've commanded you, at the set time in the month of Abib. For in the month of Abib you left Egypt (Exod 34:18; see SP).

> **ושמרת את חקיו ואת מצותיו אשר אנכי מצוך היום אשר ייטב לך ולבניך אחריך ולמען תאריך ימים על האדמה אשר יהוה אלהיך נֹתן לך כל הימים** You should observe his laws and commandments that I command you today, that it will go well for you and your children after you, and so that you live on in the land that YHWH your God is giving to you for all time (Deut 4:40).

> **ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה: את הברכה אשר תשמעו אל מצות יהוה אלהיכם . . . : והקללה אם לא תשמעו אל מצות יהוה אלהיכם** Look, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing should you obey the commandments of YHWH your God . . . ; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of YHWH your God (Deut 11:26–28aα).

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[9] E.g., BDB 83b (s.v. 8c); and Zewi, "Content Expressions in Biblical Hebrew," 309.

[10] In addition to the references in the previous note, see Theodor Seidl, "*ʾăšr* als Konjunktion: Überblick und Versuch einer Klassifikation der Belege in Gen—2 Kön," in *Text, Methode und Grammatik: Wolfgang Richter zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Walter Gross, Hubert Irsigler, and Theodor Seidl (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1991), 461–62; and Park, "אשר from Light Noun to Nominalizer," 42–46. For an explicit example of such an interpretation, see 2 Chr 6:24 vs. 1 Kgs 8:33.

> כי הנה היום בא בער כתנור והיו כל זדים וכל עשה רשעה קש ולהט אתם היום הבא אמר יהוה צבאות **אשר** לא יעזב להם שרש וענף For now the day is coming, burning like an oven. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be straw; the day that is coming will burn them all up—says YHWH of Hosts—without leaving them root or branch (Mal 3:19); see also

> **אשר** לא יסָפר צבא השמים ולא ימד חול הים כן ארבה את זרע דוד עבדי ואת הלוים משרתי אתי As the host of heaven cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of my servant David and the Levites who attend to me (Jer 33:22).

The relative clause can serve a variety of adverbial roles. It can provide ancillary, temporal information (Josh 14:10a). It can connote location (2 Chr 3:1a). In these examples, it can also be read as a clause of manner (Exod 34:18), purpose (Deut 4:40), condition (11:26–28), result (Mal 3:19), or even comparison (Jer 33:22). In other texts, other readings are possible, too. The point, however, is the same: a Biblical Hebrew relative clause can supply information that a reader can infer to be adverbial, befitting the particular context.

4.1. *Complementary Combinations*. Qohelet forms some adverbial clauses by combining אשר or -ש with another grammatical element. Sometimes, that element is a preposition.

> וזכר את בוראיך בימי בחורתיך **עד אשר** לא יבאו ימי הרעה . . . ׃ **עד אשר** לא תחשך השמש והאור והירח והכוכבים Remember your creator (alt., strength)[11] when you are young (lit., in the days of your youth), before bad times come . . . before the sun, light, moon, and stars get dark (Eccl 12:1–2a; see also 12:6a and 2:3).

> וראיתי את כל מעשה אלהים כי לא יוכל האדם למצוא את המעשה אשר נעשה תחת השמש **בשל אשר** יעמל האדם לבקש ולא ימצא I have seen all God did (*and have seen*) that no one can figure out the thing that occurs under the sun. However hard someone looks, he won’t find (it) (alt., figure [it] out) (Eccl 8:17a);[12] see also

> גם את העלם נתן בלבם **מבלי אשר** לא ימצא האדם את המעשה אשר עשה אלהים מראש ועד סוף He also put *eons* in their mind without someone ever finding out, from beginning to end, the thing that God did (Eccl 3:11b).

In other cases, it is a noun.

> וגם זה רעה חולה **כל עמת שבא** כן ילך This too is a grave wrong: just as he came, so he’ll go (Eccl 5:15a).

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[11] For this alternative interpretation of בוראיך, see Ginsberg, *Koheleth*, 129.

[12] Cf. S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 11th ed., International Theological Library (New York: Scribner’s, 1905), 475 n. *; and Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 25–26 with n. 5.

ביום טובה היה בטוב וביום רעה ראה גם את זה לעמת זה עשה האלהים **על דברת שלא** ימצא האדם אחריו מאומה On a good day, enjoy (yourself). On a bad day, observe. God has made one as well as the other; accordingly, no one can find out anything beyond him (Eccl 7:14).

כל הנחלים הלכים אל הים והים איננו מלא אל **מקום ש**הנחלים הלכים שם הם שבים ללכת All streams flow to the sea, yet the sea isn't full; where the streams flow, there they flow back (Eccl 1:7; see also 11:3b).

As this list shows, the choice of relativizer is sensitive to the preceding grammatical element. **אשר** follows a (negated) preposition, whereas **-ש** follows nouns. In such adverbial clauses, the distribution of relativizers is complementary. Their grammatical function is otherwise identical, nominalizing the following clause.

4.2. *Preposition + Relativizer*. Despite this complementarity, there is well-known variation within one category. Qohelet constructs adverbial clauses by attaching **אשר** and **-ש** to three prepositions. Moreover, both forms can appear in a single verse (Eccl 5:14).

4.2.1. **כאשר** ~ **-כש**. That verse, however, suggests at least two factors governing the alternation of relativizers within this category (see §2.6, above).

כאשר יצא מבטן אמו ערום ישוב ללכת **כשבא** Just as someone came from his mother's womb, naked he'll go back as he came (Eccl 5:14a); see also

כאשר אינך יודע מה דרך הרוח כעצמים בבטן המלאה **ככה** לא תדע את מעשה האלהים אשר יעשה את הכל Just as you don't know how life comes about (lit., what is the way of the breath), *such as* a fetus (lit., bones) in a pregnant woman's womb, so you cannot know the activity of God who causes everything to occur (Eccl 11:5).

The two parts of the verse stand in a correlative relationship. The first part establishes the basis of comparison and the type of adverbial clause (manner). The second part is an echoing tag. In addition, the adverbial clauses appear in predictable positions in the sentence. The first part, which sets the topic, appears at the head. The second, anaphoric part is postponed to the end. **כאשר** introduces the principal clause, whereas **-כש** introduces the adjunct.[13]

Each of these adverbial forms serves related functions elsewhere in Ecclesiastes. The long form (**כאשר**) has greater discourse weight.

כי איננו ידע מה שיהיה כי **כאשר** יהיה מי יגיד לו For he doesn't know what will be, for who can tell him when it will be? (Eccl 8:7).

שמר רגליך (ק׳ רגלך) **כאשר** תלך אל בית האלהים וקרוב לשמע מתת הכסילים זבח כי אינם יודעים לעשות רע Watch your step (lit., foot) when you go to the house of God. Obedience is preferable to fools presenting a sacrifice, since they do not know *they are doing* wrong (Eccl 4:17; see also 5:3a).

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[13] See Shlesinger, "The Relative Pronouns '**ש**' and '**אשר**'," 98.

> **כאשר** נתתי את לבי לדעת חכמה ולראות את הענין אשר נעשה על הארץ When I set my mind to know wisdom and to observe the business that occurs on earth . . . (Eccl 8:16a).

Its adverbial clause may act as a core argument (8:7), new topic (4:17), or reestablished topic (8:16a).[14] Unlike 5:14a and 11:5, these clauses are temporal.[15] By contrast, the proclitic, short form (-כש) heads true adjuncts whose constituents provide peripheral information.

> כי גם לא ידע האדם את עתו כדגים שנאחזים במצודה רעה וכצפרים האחזות בפח כהם יוקשים בני האדם לעת רעה **כש**תפול עליהם פתאם For no one even knows his time. Like fish caught in a bad net or like birds caught in a trap, so human beings are trapped at a bad time when it suddenly falls on them (Eccl 9:12).
>
> וגם בדרך **כש**הכסל (ק׳ **כש**סכל) הלך לבו חסר Furthermore, when a fool takes a trip, his mind falls short (Eccl 10:3a).
>
> וישב העפר על הארץ **כש**היה והרוח תשוב אל האלהים אשר נתנה . . . (before) the dust returns to the earth as it was, and life (lit., the breath) returns to God who provided it (Eccl 12:7).

These latter adverbial clauses are both temporal (9:12, 10:3a) and comparative (12:7; see also 5:14a). כאשר and -כש are semantically alike but differ in terms of discourse and functional roles.

4.2.2. מאשר ~ -מש. The alternation between מאשר and -מש abides by the same principles.

> וראיתי כי אין טוב **מאשר** ישמח האדם במעשיו כי הוא חלקו I saw that there's nothing better than that someone enjoy what he's done, for that's his portion (Eccl 3:22a).

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[14] Eccl 9:2aαa remains difficult.

> הכל כאשר לכל Everything's the same for everyone.

For relevant discussions, see Ginsburg, *Coheleth*, 410b; Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, 356; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 89 n. 2.a, 91; or Thomas Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary*, tr. O. C. Dean, Jr., Herm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 166 n. 2.a, 169. Cf. Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 61; on which cf. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 299. For a partial parallel, see Eccl 3:18b.

[15] See also Eccl 5:3a, where כאשר represents a modernization of a Deuteronomic כי clause (< Deut 23:22a) (Bernard M. Levinson, "'Better That You Should Not Vow than That You Vow and Not Fulfill': Qoheleth's Use of Textual Allusion and the Transformation of Deuteronomy's Law of Vows," in *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually*, ed. Katharine Dell and Will Kynes, LHB/OTS 587 [London: Clark, 2014], 32; see also Michel, *Untersuchungen zur Qohelet*, 256). The replacement is appropriate because Qohelet otherwise uses כי to form a complement clause or adverbial clause of explanation or reason. It is also appropriate in the larger context of Late Biblical Hebrew (see, e.g., 1 Chr 17:1 vs. 2 Sam 7:1) (Joosten, "Linguistic Clues as to the Date of the Book of Job: A Mediating Position," in *Interested Readers: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David J. A. Clines*, ed. James K. Aitken, Jeremy M. S. Clines, and Christl M. Maier [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013], 354). Cf. Schoors, for whom this "variant . . . has no great importance" (*Ecclesiastes*, 389).

> טוב אשר לא תדר **מש**תדור ולא תשלם That you not vow is better than that you vow and not fulfill (what you’ve vowed) (Eccl 5:4).

Of the two adverbs, מאשר presents the essential information of the sentence. Its clause expresses speaker preference (see §2.6) as well as a topic which Qohelet develops, affirms, and ultimately urges (see §4.3.3, below). -מש is the antithesis of מאשר. Its clause expresses a distinct dispreference of Qohelet’s without which the verse still makes sense. מאשר is foregrounding;[16] -מש is backgrounding.[17]

4.2.3. באשר ~ -בש. In the last set of alternants, several variables seem to affect the choice of relativizer. The long form, באשר, has two usages.

> מה יתרון העושה **באשר** הוא עמל What gain does a worker have in what he *gets through* hard work? (Eccl 3:9).

> אל תבהל מפניו תלך אל תעמד בדבר רע כי כל אשר יחפץ יעשה: **באשר** דבר מלך שלטון ומי יאמר לו מה תעשה Don’t hurry to leave him (i.e., the king); don’t stay in a bad situation. For he can do everything that he pleases. Inasmuch as the king’s word denotes authority, who can say to him, “What are you doing?” (Eccl 8:3–4); see also

> טוב ללכת אל בית אבל מלכת אל בית משתה **באשר** הוא סוף כל האדם והחי יתן אל לבו It is better to go to a place of mourning than to go to a banquet hall. Since that’s the end of everyone, the living should keep it in mind (Eccl 7:2).

Once it expresses the source of a worker’s would-be ‘advantage’ (3:9; see also 1:3).[18] Once it provides the unnegotiable reason why the king’s will cannot be contested (8:4).[19] And once it likely refers to the inescapable end of human life (7:2).[20] באשר, then, is referential or factual. -בש is not.

> כי אין זכרון לחכם עם הכסיל לעולם **בש**כבר הימים הבאים הכל נשכח For there’s no permanent memory of the wise man along with the fool, in that already all is (alt., both are) forgotten in the coming days (Eccl 2:16a-bα); see also

> וראיתי את כל מעשה אלהים כי לא יוכל האדם למצוא את המעשה אשר נעשה תחת השמש **בשל** אשר יעמל האדם לבקש ולא ימצא I have seen all God did (*and have seen*) that

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[16] In this context, see Detlef Dieckmann, *«Worte von Weisen sind wie Stacheln» (Koh 12,11): Eine rezeptionsorientierte Studie zu Koh 1–2 und zum Lexem* דבר *im Buch Kohelet*, ATANT 103 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2012), 184.

[17] For a discussion of an emendation suggested in Eccl 2:24, see §4.3.3, below.

[18] See Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, 258; in conjunction with Schwarzschild, “The Syntax of אשר,” 32 with n. 18.

[19] E.g., Ginsburg, *Coheleth*, 393–94; in conjunction with Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 83.

[20] E.g., Ginsburg, *Coheleth*, 370a. See also Gaenssle, “The Hebrew Particle אשר,” 141–42 (= idem, *The Hebrew Particle* אשר, 119–20). Cf. Tg. Qoh. and שלשה ספרים של רב יהודה בן בלעם, ed. Shraga Abramson (Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sepher, 1975), 104.

> no can figure out the thing that occurs under the sun. However hard someone looks, he won’t find (it) (alt., figure [it] out) (Eccl 8:17a).[21]

Both times, the combination -בש is nonreferential and nonanaphoric; it has no literal content. Both times, -בש introduces a restatement of the preceding thought. Both times, too, the subordinate clause expresses opinion that, by its nature and scope, cannot be verified. Unlike באשר,[22] -בש is idiomatic and heads a speculative adverbial clause of reason (2:16) or concession (8:17).[23]

4.3. *Semantically Underspecified Adverbial Clauses.* Grammarians and commentators regularly assign adverbial values to each of the two bare relativizers in Ecclesiastes. Within the philological literature, the studies of Isaksson and Shlesinger are good representatives; both provide sufficient examples to defend this analysis.[24] For instance, they agree that אשר heads an adverbial clause of reason or cause. Isaksson counts at least eight cases.[25]

> טובים השנים מן האחד **אשר** יש להם שכר טוב בעמלם Two are better than one—in that they get better return for their hard work (Eccl 4:9 [after NRSV and NJPS]).
>
> כי מי יודע מה טוב לאדם בחיים מספר ימי חיי הבלו ויעשם כצל **אשר** מי יגיד לאדם מה יהיה אחריו תחת השמש For who knows what is good for someone in life, the limited days of his senseless (alt., brief) life, that he spends like a shadow? For who can tell someone what will be afterward (lit., after him) under the sun? (Eccl 6:12 [after NRSV and NJPS]).
>
> ומוצא אני מר ממות את האשה **אשר** היא מצודים וחרמים לבה אסורים ידיה I find womankind something more bitter than death, for she’s all traps, and her heart’s (alt., mind’s) a mighty net, her hands are restraints (Eccl 7:26a [after Gordis]).
>
> **אשר** אין נעשה פתגם מעשה הרעה מהרה על כן מלא לב בני האדם בהם לעשות רע: **אשר** חטא עשה רע מאת ומאריך לו Because a *verdict* (judging) a bad act does not occur quickly, human beings dare to do wrong, for a sinner does wrong a hundred times yet lives on (Eccl 8:11–12a [after Gordis]).
>
> כי גם יודע אני אשר יהיה טוב ליראי האלהים **אשר** ייראו מלפניו: וטוב לא יהיה לרשע ולא יאריך ימים כצל **אשר** איננו ירא מלפני אלהים For I also know how well it will be for the God-fearing, because they fear him. But it will not be well for the wicked;

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[21] For the reconstruction of בשל אשר in Eccl 6:12, 8:13, see Tur-Sinai, in Ben Iehuda, *Thesaurus*, 8:7114b n. 1.

[22] Cf., e.g., Gordis, *Koheleth*, 222; and Schoors, *The Preacher*, 1:144.

[23] Cf. Ginsburg, *Coheleth*, 408b; or Shlesinger, “The Relative Pronouns ‘ש’ and ‘אשר’,” 94, on 8:17.

[24] Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 152; and Shlesinger, “The Relative Pronouns ‘ש’ and ‘אשר’,” 97–99.

[25] For a comparable list, see also Zewi, “Content Expressions in Biblical Hebrew,” 311.

> nor will he live on like a shadow, because he does not fear God (Eccl 8:12b-13 [after NRSV and NJPS]).

> ושבחתי אני את השמחה **אשר** אין טוב לאדם תחת השמש כי אם לאכול ולשתות ולשמוח I *endorse* enjoyment, for there's nothing better for someone under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy (oneself) (Eccl 8:15a [after NRSV and NJPS]); see also, perhaps,

> עמל הכסילים תיגענו **אשר** לא ידע ללכת אל עיר Fool's hard work, it exhausts him, for he doesn't know how to go to the city (Eccl 10:15 [after NRSV and NJPS]).

Shlesinger lists five: 4:9, 8:11.12bβb.15, and 10:15. They also agree that אשר introduces a purpose clause in 7:21b.

> גם לכל הדברים אשר ידברו אל תתן לבך **אשר** לא תשמע את עבדך מקללך Furthermore, pay no mind to any of the things that they say, so that you won't hear your slave *damning* you (Eccl 7:21 [after NJPS]).

They agree less on the role of -ש. Isaksson finds only one adverbial clause in 3:14 (purpose).

> ידעתי כי כל אשר יעשה האלהים הוא יהיה לעולם עליו אין להוסיף וממנו אין לגרע והאלהים עשה **ש**יראו מלפניו I know that everything that God does (lit., causes to occur) will always be. One can't add to it, and one can't take away from it. God has acted (alt., made things happen) that people (lit., they) fear him (Eccl 3:14 [after NRSV and NJPS]).

Shlesinger finds at least two:[26] 6:3 (comparison) and 12:9 (comparison).[27]

> אם יוליד איש מאה ושנים רבות יחיה ורב **ש**יהיו ימי שניו ונפשו לא תשבע מן הטובה . . . אמרתי טוב ממנו הנפל If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years—many as the days of his years may be—if his appetite is not satisfied with (his) goods. . . , I say a stillborn is better (off) than he (Eccl 6:3).

> ויתר **ש**היה קהלת חכם עוד למד דעת את העם ואזן וחקר תקן משלים הרבה More than having been a wise man, Qohelet *constantly* taught the people knowledge. He auditioned, investigated, and *edited* very many sayings (Eccl 12:9).

Details aside, Holmstedt counters with a broad response: "analyses of this sort are flawed."[28] A review of the evidence may tell.

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[26] Shlesinger notes the possibility of an additional example in Eccl 2:24. He recognizes the adverbial analysis of -ש proposed by Ben Yehuda (see n. 59, below) yet classifies the clitic as a complementizer ("The Relative Pronouns 'ש' and 'אשר'," 99).

[27] The following heuristic translations do not represent the scholarly consensus.

[28] Holmstedt, "The Grammar of ש and אשר in Qoheleth," 300.

4.3.1. **אשר**. It is first necessary to evaluate whether the adverbial analysis of an אשר clause is necessary, unavoidable, or preferable to an alternative. In such a case, the relativizer should not be anaphoric. Its clause should be processed as subordinate and subsidiary to an independent main clause. Its clause should also contain relatively low-level, peripheral information, without which the sentence still makes sense. The clause should be an adjunct.

The proposed tokens of an adverbial אשר clause do not meet these criteria. For example, אשר can have a retrievable antecedent.

> גם לכל הדברים אשר ידברו אל תתן לבך **אשר** לא תשמע את עבדך מקללך Furthermore, pay no mind to any of the things that they say, so that you won't hear your slave *damning* you (Eccl 7:21).

Here, that antecedent is the addressee (אל **תתן** לבך). But אשר does not introduce a typical relative clause that modifies, restricts, identifies, or characterizes its head. Nor does the clause supply presupposed or background information. Pragmatically, the clause gives a compelling reason to follow the advice of v. 21a (see LXX), supported in turn by a reminder of the addressee's own behavior (v. 22). אשר, then, is an anaphoric link to the preceding advisory clause, while its own clause expresses an undesirable outcome of ignoring that advice.[29]

A similar interpretation applies to another text (see Tg. Qoh.).

> עמל הכסילים תיגענו **אשר** לא ידע ללכת אל עיר Fools' hard work, it exhausts him, for he doesn't know how to go to the city (Eccl 10:15).

It is also difficult from both textual and interpretive perspectives.[30] Fox, however, offers a clue. "The fool reveals his folly and exhausts himself because he cannot even figure out how to get to town, the best-known place in the region."[31] Accordingly, אשר refers to the objective suffix of **תיגענו** which, in all probability, ultimately refers to the 'fool' of vv. 2–3. Further, the relative clause explains why the statement in v. 15a is true. The fool's "conduct . . . is as futile as his words . . . [and] avails nothing; he . . . tires from it all."[32]

Among the adverbial clauses mentioned by Isaksson and Shlesinger, one has an explicit nominal antecedent.

> ומוצא אני מר ממות את האשה **אשר** היא מצודים וחרמים לבה אסורים ידיה I find womankind something more bitter than death, for she's all traps, and her heart's (alt., mind's) a mighty net, her hands are restraints (Eccl 7:26a).

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[29] Cf. idem, *Relative Clause*, 29 n. 11, 368.

[30] For the textual problems, see Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 307–8; or Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 740–42.

[31] Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 70. See also idem, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 308.

[32] Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 103.

As such, אשר introduces a relative clause. But the content of that clause suggests that it also refers to, and depends on, the negative value judgment of women's bitterness.[33] In fact, it is a lengthy and sentential commentary on that judgment. From that perspective, the אשר clause is not an adverbial adjunct but an adjoined, nonrestrictive, and assertive relative clause.[34]

Whereas אשר has a nominal or pronominal antecedent in the three texts above, an explicit antecedent may be absent.

> טובים השנים מן האחד **אשר** יש להם שכר טוב בעמלם Two are better than one—in that they get better return for their hard work (Eccl 4:9).

> כי מי יודע מה טוב לאדם בחיים מספר ימי חיי הבלו ויעשם כצל **אשר** מי יגיד לאדם מה יהיה אחריו תחת השמש For who knows what is good for someone in life, the limited days of his senseless (alt., brief) life, that he spends like a shadow? For who can tell someone what will be afterward (lit., after him) under the sun? (Eccl 6:12).

In 4:9, Schoors notes that "the second half of the verse gives the reason for the idea expressed in the first half."[35] V. 9b justifies the maxim. It also constitutes a separate informational unit.[36] In 6:12, the role of the relative clause is clear enough. Vv. 12a and 12b represent parallel illustrations of senseless speech (v. 11) under the guise of rhetorical questions; the first pertains to the unknowable present, while the second extends the thought to the future. אשר refers back to the reason clause in v. 12a,[37] while the content of its clause augments the earlier example. Like 4:9, the relative clause and its antecedent are sentential as well.

All these factors—a sentential antecedent and a sentential אשר relative clause serving a causal or justifying role—recur in another text.

> ושבחתי אני את השמחה **אשר** אין טוב לאדם תחת השמש כי אם לאכול ולשתות ולשמוח I *endorse* enjoyment, for there's nothing better for someone under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy (oneself) (Eccl 8:15a).

In addition, the antecedent seems to be the author's personal evaluation (see §3.3) of a topic central to the entire book (see §4.3.3, below). Indeed, without the relativizer, the ensuing discourse is a full-throated assertion. What, then, is the role of the relativizer? It serves to connect two intrinsically related clauses or sentences and signal that the second part depends on, or completes, the first. Its semantic value must be inferred from context.

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[33] See Klaus Baltzer, "Woman and War in Qoheleth 7:23–8:1a," *HTR* 80 (1987): 128; and, differently, Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 269.

[34] See Loock, "Appositive Relative Clauses," 353, in conjunction with 357.

[35] Schoors, *The Preacher*, 140 (= idem, *Ecclesiastes*, 345). Cf. Holmstedt, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשר in Qoheleth," 303, on Eccl 4:9 (= idem, *Relative Clause*, 378–79).

[36] See Depraetere, "Foregrounding in English Relative Clauses," 727.

[37] See Ginsburg, *Coheleth*, 368b.

The tally of adverbial אשר clauses proposed by Isaksson and Shlesinger includes four more cases. They lie in successive passages.

> **אשר** אין נעשה פתגם מעשה הרעה מהרה על כן מלא לב בני האדם בהם לעשות רע: **אשר** חטא עשה רע מאת ומאריך לו Because a *verdict* (judging) a bad act does not occur quickly, human beings dare to do wrong, for a sinner does wrong a hundred times yet lives on (Eccl 8:11–12a).

> כי גם יודע אני אשר יהיה טוב ליראי האלהים **אשר** ייראו מלפניו: וטוב לא יהיה לרשע ולא יאריך ימים כצל **אשר** איננו ירא מלפני אלהים For I also know how well it will be for the God-fearing, because they fear him. But it will not be well for the wicked; nor will he live on like a shadow, because he does not fear God (Eccl 8:12b-13).

This interpretation of the first pair, however, is unlikely.[38] In Ecclesiastes, an אשר clause has a retrievable or inferred antecedent; the only exception arises when אשר functions as a free relative (see §2.9). Even when אשר is cataphoric, it is anchored by a preceding head (§2.6). אשר, then, does not subordinate its clause to subsequent discourse. According to the analysis presented in §3.3, these two attestations of אשר mark complement clauses of the evaluative matrix הבל in Eccl 8:10b. The interpretation of the second pair of אשר clauses, though, is more positive. Vv. 12b-13 begin with an assertive epistemic CTP, followed by two antithetical complement clauses that themselves assert "with traditional wisdom" that the devout and sinner are due to receive the retribution appropriate to each.[39] From this vantage point, the parallel relative clauses reinforce that traditional wisdom with conservative, self-evident, and explanatory "facts."[40] The circularity of the explanations is probably part of the point, too,[41] for it makes the subsequent counterevidence all the more poignant. These relative clauses, then, are part of the argument and, as such, hardly peripheral adjuncts.

Finally, scholars often allege that אשר figures in an adverbial clause yet, unlike the foregoing examples, in postpositive position.[42]

> את כל זה ראיתי ונתון את לבי לכל מעשה אשר נעשה תחת השמש **עת** אשר שלט האדם באדם לרע לו I've seen all this, setting my mind to every thing that occurs under the sun, while one person controlled another to his detriment (Eccl 8:9 [after NRSV and NJPS]).

If so, the relativizer would function like -ש in the temporal clause of 12:3a (**ביום ש-**). But a number of features set the example in 8:9b apart. Its temporal clause closes a section on appropriate conduct before a person of limitless power (vv. 1b-8) who, himself, is not secure for long (vv. 6.8b). It also asserts Qohelet's conviction that interpersonal oppression continues and destroys. Rashi and Ibn Ezra add that the matrix clause of v. 9a applies equally to v. 9b; i.e., v. 9b expresses an assertion parallel or subsequent to v. 9a.[43] Altogether, then, 8:9b is not a discourse-peripheral adjunct like ביום ש- in 12:3a. Rather, it is a (nearly) sentential adjoined statement of observed fact. In translation, it reads ‘It was a time when one person controlled another to his detriment’.[44]

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[38] Cf. Tg. Qoh. 8:11.

[39] Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 295.

[40] See Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 7:90; or Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 632–33.

[41] In this context, see Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, 350.

[42] E.g., Ginsberg, *Koheleth*, 108; and Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 153.

4.3.2. -ש. Even though “שֶׁ־ is used in Ecclesiastes in a variety of ways,”[45] it rarely heads an unambiguous adverbial clause.[46]

> ידעתי כי כל אשר יעשה האלהים הוא יהיה לעולם עליו אין להוסיף וממנו אין לגרע והאלהים עשה **ש**יראו מלפניו I know that everything that God does (lit., causes to occur) will always be. One can’t add to it, and one can’t take away from it. God has acted (alt., made things happen) that people (lit., they) fear him (Eccl 3:14).

Eccl 3:14 is the classic proof text.[47] Lacking a clear antecedent, the relativizer does not head a clear relative clause. Absent a CTP, it cannot serve as a complementizer. Instead, it heads a clause expressing a state of affairs subsequent to God’s activity.[48] But the sentence also makes a “deterministic assertion” which “climaxes [Qohelet’s] reflection on the immutable decrees of God.”[49] The latter interpretation suggests that -ש introduces an adverbial clause of purpose (see LXX).

It is also likely that Qohelet uses -ש to mark an adverbial clause in the sequence -ש . . . מה.

> וגם זה רעה חולה כל עמת שבא כן ילך ומה יתרון לו **ש**יעמל לרוח This too is a grave wrong: just as he came, so he’ll go. So what gain does he have, working hard for naught (lit., for the wind)? (Eccl 5:15).

> אל תאמר מה היה **ש**הימים הראשנים היו טובים מאלה כי לא מחכמה שאלת על זה Don’t say, “How was it that earlier (times) were better than these?” For you did not ask about this out of wisdom (Eccl 7:10).

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[43] Further, if v. 9b also opens the next section delineating acts of senseless injustice (see, e.g., Ginsburg, *Coheleth*, 398a; and, differently, Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 84–85), it has a cohesive function (on which, see Thompson, Longacre, and Hwang, “Adverbial Clauses,” 273, 288–89).

[44] See Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 618–19.

[45] Seow, “Linguistic Evidence and the Dating of Qohelet,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 661 (= idem, *Ecclesiastes*, 17).

[46] Cf. *DCH* 8:203 (3c-f).

[47] See, e.g., Ewald, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache*, §337b; and Bergsträsser, “Das hebräische Präfix ש,” 50. For discussion, see Holmstedt, “The Grammar of ש and אשר in Qoheleth,” 302–3 (abbreviated in idem, *Relative Clause*, 378).

[48] See J. Blau, “Notes on Relative Clauses in Biblical Hebrew,” *Shnaton* 2 (1977): 52 (in Hebrew) (= idem, *Studies in Hebrew Linguistics* [Jerusalem: Magnes, Hebrew Univ., 1996], 164 [in Hebrew]); and, more broadly, Loock, “Appositive Relative Clauses,” 339–44.

[49] Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 730, on Ezek 26:27. See also Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, 264; and, differently, Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 212–13.

Although these examples are usually interpreted as relative clauses, there is reason to doubt that interpretation. In an earlier stage of the language, the same construction includes an overt adverbial subordinator: כי.[50]

> מה אנוש **כי** תזכרנו ובן אדם **כי** תפקדנו What is man that you call him to mind, a human being that you should take note of him? (Ps 8:5; see also Job 7:17, 15:14).
>
> ויחר ליעקב וירב בלבן ויען יעקב ויאמר ללבן מה פשעי מה חטאתי **כי** דלקת אחרי Jacob got angry and argued with Laban. Jacob spoke up and said to Laban, "What is my crime, what did I do wrong that you've chased after me?" (Gen 31:36).

There, כי marks a subordinate clause whose content is presupposed and believed or known to be true. The relationship forged through כי is explicit enough. In Ecclesiastes, the corresponding clause has the same grammatical and semantic features. The interclausal relationship, however, must be inferred. In this specific instance, Qohelet's -ש replaces adverbial כי.

There are two cases where -ש occurs in postpositive position but may be part of an adverbial clause.

> ויתר **ש**היה קהלת חכם עוד למד דעת את העם ואזן וחקר תקן משלים הרבה Something else.[51] Since Qohelet was a wise man, he *constantly* taught the people knowledge. He auditioned, investigated, and *edited* very many sayings (Eccl 12:9).
>
> אם יוליד איש מאה ושנים רבות יחיה ורב **ש**יהיו ימי שניו ונפשו לא תשבע מן הטובה . . . אמרתי טוב ממנו הנפל If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years—and though the days of his years will be many[52]—if his appetite is not satisfied with (his) goods. . . , I say a stillborn is better (off) than he (Eccl 6:3).

In 12:9a, scholars agree on two important items. First, ויתר marks an addition—whether to the preceding section or much of the preceding book. Second, the clause contains information long known about Qohelet—that he embodied wisdom (e.g., 1:16, 2:15; see also 7:23) and attempted to live by wisdom (e.g., 1:13, 2:9). Together they suggest the translation above, in which the -ש clause reestablishes unchallengeable information as a background adverbial clause.[53] Eccl 6:3 can be viewed in a similar fashion. ורב שיהיו ימי שניו repeats the gist of the preceding clause, not as a continuation of the introductory condition but as an augmenting known factor; i.e., a concession.[54]

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[50] See Gordis, *Koheleth*, 221, on Eccl 2:12.

[51] Cf. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 350.

[52] The unusual grammar of this clause is comparable to the inalienable possession constructions discussed in Garr, "The Grammar and Interpretation of Exodus 6:3," *JBL* 111 (1992): 389–91. Cf. Bergsträsser, "Das hebräische Präfix ש," 47; or, differently, Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 211.

[53] For more argumentation to this effect, see Fox, "Frame-Narrative Composition in the Book of Qohelet," *HUCA* 68 (1977): 97, 100 n. 38.

[54] Gordis, *Koheleth*, 258; followed by Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 465. Murphy, however, finds the concessive element in the clause-initial coordinator (*Ecclesiastes*, 48 n. 3.b).

In a number of texts, a -ש clause is semantically ambiguous. The clause may be interpreted as adverbial. But the presence of an antecedent allows the clause to be processed as a relative clause.

> ושנאתי אני את כל עמלי שאני עמל תחת השמש **ש**אניחנו לאדם שיהיה אחרי I hated all my hard-earned wealth that I worked hard for under the sun, that I will leave to someone who will succeed me (Eccl 2:18).

> כאשר יצא מבטן אמו ערום ישוב ללכת כשבא ומאומה לא ישא בעמלו **ש**יֹלך בידו Just as someone came from his mother's womb, naked he'll go back as he came. He'll carry away nothing of his hard-earned wealth that he'd hope to keep (lit., bring) in his possession (Eccl 5:14).

These passages are a case in point. Both contain a -ש clause as well as the antecedent עמל. The antecedent warrants reading each clause as an adnominal relative clause.[55] But linguistic intuition also offers a second option. In 2:18, the relative clause provides the imagined reason why Qohelet hates life.[56] In 5:14, it expresses an unrealized result. These relative clauses have an adverbial reading particular to their individual context.

The ambiguity between relative clause and adverbial clause affects three additional texts.

> כי אם יפלו האחד יקים את חברו ואילו האחד **ש**יפול ואין שני להקימו For if they fall, one can help the other up. But woe to the unaccompanied (lit., one), should he fall and there's no one to help him up (Eccl 4:10).

> אי לך ארץ **ש**מלכך נער ושריך בבקר יאכלו: אשריך ארץ **ש**מלכך בן חורים ושריך בעת יאכלו בגבורה ולא בשתי Woe to you, land, whose king is a slave (alt., kid) and whose officials eat in the morning. Fortunate are you, land, whose king is a noble and whose officials eat at the (appropriate) time—with gusto and but not with abandon (lit., drink) (Eccl 10:16–17).

Each passage has an evaluative matrix, a head nominal, and a description of that nominal in a subordinate -ש clause. Yet unlike the passages discussed in §3.3, each matrix here is not a CTP, and each dependent clause does not describe a factual situation. In 4:10, the dependent clause depicts a hypothetical circumstance in which an unaccompanied individual has a mishap.[57] In 10:16–17, each clause is imaginary yet sufficient to characterize fitness (v. 17) or unfitness (v. 16) for leadership. By inference, each -ש clause in these two verses serves as an adverbial clause of reason.[58]

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[55] So, e.g., Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 292, 293.

[56] E.g., Gordis, *Koheleth*, 223; and Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 87. Cf. Friedrich Ellermeier, *Qohelet* (Herzberg am Harz: Jungfer, 1967–69), 1:278–81. A comparable example with אשר may appear in Eccl 4:3bα.

[57] E.g., Ellermeier, *Qohelet*, 1:173. Cf. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 182.

[58] See Ben Iehuda, *Thesaurus*, 7:6780–81. Cf. Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §158l.

4.3.3. *Eccl 2:24*. One other text should be considered in this context, given below with a popular, standard translation.

> אין טוב באדם **ש**יאכל ושתה והראה את נפשו טוב בעמלו גם זה ראיתי אני כי מיד האלהים היא There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God (Eccl 2:24 [NRSV; see also NJPS]).

Ben Yehuda notes that -ש here may mark an adverbial clause of purpose or result.[59] It is a rare opinion among modern scholars. Other minority opinions hold that -ש marks a complement clause whose matrix has the predicate טוב,[60] or that -ש marks a subject relative clause.[61] But the majority "assume an error of haplography." In light of "the fact that אין טוב is always followed by כי אם (3:12; 8:15)[62] or by מן (3:22)," scholars prefer to "read אין טוב באדם מִשֶּׁיֹּאכַל on the analogy of 3:22."[63] For Delitzsch, the emendation is "above all doubt."[64]

Each of these interpretations is problematic. To read the -ש clause as an adverbial clause of purpose or result is to contradict Qohelet's comment in v. 24b. If -ש introduces a complement clause/subject relative clause, the same contradiction arises. As for the emendation, the difficulty lies in the assumed form of the comparative marker. In Ecclesiastes, the one token of -מש signals a comparative dispreference. The preferred counterpart, reflecting the sentiment of v. 24, is מאשר (§4.2.2). The emendation yields the wrong form.

An answer may lie in the development of Qohelet's thought about this signature topic throughout the book. As Lee and Wright argue, it is of "increasing intensity."[65] After this initial foray in Eccl 2:24, Qohelet makes a clearer statement using a transparent exceptive adverbial clause and echoing text in 3:12.

> ידעתי כי אין טוב בם **כי אם** לשמוח ולעשות טוב בחייו I know that there's nothing good in them except to enjoy (themselves) and do what's good in one's life (Eccl 3:12).

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[59] Ben Iehuda, *Thesaurus*, 7:6781.

[60] See Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 24 n. 24.a (rejected).

[61] Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 160, mollified in 152 n. 34.

[62] For a reconstruction based on this feature, see Tur-Sinai, in Ben Iehuda, *Thesaurus*, 7:6781a n. 4.

[63] Gordis, *Koheleth*, 225–26. See already Gesenius, *Ausführliches grammatisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache mit Vergleichung der verwandten Dialekte* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1817), §227.1c; and Ginsburg, *Coheleth*, 300b. This passage, however, is not listed in Friedrich Delitzsch, *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament nebst den dem Schrifttexte einverleibten Randnoten klassifiziert: Ein Hilfsbuch für Lexikon und Grammatik, Exegese und Lektüre* (Berlin: Vereinigung Wissenschaftlicher Verleger [De Gruyter], 1920), §7a (מ).

[64] Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, 251. See also Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, 189.

[65] Eunny P. Lee, *The Vitality of Enjoyment in Qohelet's Theological Rhetoric*, BZAW 353 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005); and Addison G. Wright, "Ecclesiastes 9:1–12: An Emphatic Statement of Themes," *CBQ* 77 (2015): 250–62, esp. 251 for the quote.

Next, he states an explicit preference.

> וראיתי כי אין טוב **מאשר** ישמח האדם במעשיו כי הוא חלקו I saw that there’s nothing better than that someone enjoy what he’s done, for that’s his portion (Eccl 3:22a).

In the following move, his matrix clause turns from a negative to a positive note.

> הנה אשר ראיתי אני **טוב אשר יפה** לאכול ולשתות ולראות טובה בכל עמלו שיעמל תחת השמש מספר ימי חיו (ק׳ חייו) אשר נתן לו האלהים כי הוא חלקו Here’s what I’ve seen: it is good—*better*, fitting—to eat, drink, and experience pleasure in all one’s hard-earned wealth that he works hard for under the sun the limited days of his life that God gives him. That’s his portion (Eccl 5:17).

Thereafter, he offers an endorsement and, in the next chapter, two bald directives.

> **ושבחתי** אני את השמחה אשר אין טוב לאדם תחת השמש **כי אם** לאכול ולשתות ולשמוח I *endorse* enjoyment, for there’s nothing better for someone under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy (oneself) (Eccl 8:15a).

> **לך אכל בשמחה לחמך** ושתה בלב טוב יינך כי כבר רצה האלהים את מעשיך . . . **ראה חיים** עם אשה אשר אהבת כל ימי חיי הבלך אשר נתן לך תחת השמש כל ימי הבלך כי הוא חלקך בחיים ובעמלך אשר אתה עמל תחת השמש Go, eat your bread with enjoyment and drink your wine with a happy heart; for God has long been pleased with (alt., desired) what you’ve done. . . . Enjoy life with a woman whom you love all the days of your senseless (alt., brief) life whom (alt., which) God gave you under the sun all the days of your senseless (alt., brief) life. For that’s your portion in life and in your hard work that you work hard for under the sun (Eccl 9:7.9).

Finally, he summarizes his advice.

> כי אם שנים הרבה יחיה האדם **בכלם ישמח** ויזכר את ימי החשך כי הרבה יהיו כל שבא הבל: **שמח** בחור בילדותיך **ויטיבך לבך** בימי בחורותיך והלך בדרכי לבך ובמראי עיניך ודע כי על כל אלה יביאך האלהים במשפט For if someone lives many years, he should enjoy (himself) in them all and remember that the dark days will be many. Everything to come is senseless. Young man, enjoy (yourself) during your prime. May your heart (alt., mind) keep you happy in the days of your youth. Go where your heart (alt., mind) takes you and where your eyes take you. Yet know that God will bring you into judgment for all these things (Eccl 11:8–9).

For Qohelet, one should ultimately enjoy oneself throughout life.

In comparison with these pronouncements, the statement in Eccl 2:24 indeed seems underspecified.[66] In fact, at the head of a series that becomes increasingly specific and intense, that underspecification may not represent a textual error. It may reflect a type of adverbial clause that fits the context, lacks semantic precision, but allows Qohelet to develop and spell out his thought throughout the book.[67] That development will include replacing this equivocal adverbial clause with an unequivocal exceptive construction in 3:12 and 8:15.[68] A likely interpretation of this underspecified adverbial clause is consistent with that later correction.[69]

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[66] Note, however, the pivotal character of this verse (Hertzberg, *Der Prediger*, in Hertzberg and Bardtke, *Der Prediger / Das Buch Esther*, 93; and Peter Machinist, “Ecclesiastes,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014], 1605a).

> אין טוב באדם **ש**יאכל ושתה והראה את נפשו טוב בעמלו גם זה ראיתי אני כי מיד האלהים היא There's nothing good in a person besides eating, drinking, and letting himself experience (alt., showing himself) pleasure in his hard work. This too, I saw that it is from God's hand (Eccl 2:24 [following Tg. Qoh.]); see also
>
> וגם כל האדם **ש**יאכל ושתה וראה טוב בכל עמלו מתת אלהים היא Moreover, should anyone eat, drink, and experience enjoyment in all his hard work, that's a gift of God (Eccl 3:13).

Even without the emendation, the translation remains "in line with the many resigned conclusions found in the [book]."[70] Grammatically and contextually, the -ש clause in 2:24 is a subordinated, adverbial adjunct.

4.4. *Summary*. Qohelet uses both relativizers to form adverbial clauses. In a lexically marked construction, each relativizer participates in a general, complementary distribution: אשר connects a preposition to a dependent clause, whereas -ש connects a nominal to a dependent clause (§4.1). The possible exception to this pattern in Eccl 8:9 (עת אשר) does not introduce an adjunct but, instead, a (nearly) sentential statement of fact (§4.3.1).

One of these grammatical categories shows variation, too. For Qohelet forms some adverbial clauses by attaching either relativizer to each of three proclitic prepositions: -ב, -כ, and -מ (מן). But even this variation abides by linguistic factors. In this circumstance, the variant with אשר connotes foreground and essential information, preference, topicality, and referentiality. The alternant with -ש connotes background and peripheral information, dispreference, nonreferentiality, and even speculation. For example, -בש and -בשל have no semantic components, function as a single semantic unit, and are strictly idiomatic. Clauses headed by a preposition + -ש tend to be true, nonobligatory, adjunct adverbial clauses (§4.2).

Ecclesiastes has another kind of adverbial clause as well. It has minimal marking and conforms to three general conditions:

(i) the clause is marked in some way as being subordinate;

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[67] See Longman, *Ecclesiastes*, 107; and, somewhat differently, Wright, "Ecclesiastes 9:1–12," 251.

[68] See Krüger, *Qoheleth*, 88.

[69] See Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 139. See also, among others, ספר הרקמה (כתאב אללֻמַע) לר׳ יונה אבן ג׳נאח, tr. Yehuda ibn Tibbon, ed. Michael Wilensky, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 5724 [1963–64]), 1:רפד; and Ibn Ezra. Cf. Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 208–9.

[70] Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 26.

(ii) there is no explicit signal of the relationship between the main and subordinate clause; thus

(iii) the interpretation of this relationship is inferred from the pragmatic and linguistic context.[71]

In Ecclesiastes, this type of clause may be marked with **אשר** or -**ש**. But they function differently.

If an adverbial clause is defined as a nonobligatory adjunct, its semantically underspecified marker is -**ש** (§§4.3.2–3). It may introduce new information, or it may retrieve something established earlier in the discourse. When an antecedent is absent, its clause serves an adverbial function. Most of the time, though, an antecedent can be recovered, yet -**ש** does not introduce a typical, adnominal relative clause. Rather, in context it introduces a variety of adverbial clauses: purposive, concessive, hypothetical, and exceptive. Marked with -**ש**, each clause is subordinate and nonassertive. With the possible exception of Eccl 2:24, each clause also constitutes a semantically peripheral adjunct.

אשר, however, does not introduce adverbial clauses in the narrow sense (§4.3.1).[72] It has an overt or inferred antecedent, and it marks its clause as subordinate. But its content is not peripheral or backgrounded. Like an adjoined, nonrestrictive relative clause, that content is asserted. The clause is a separate informational unit.[73] Its interpretation as an adverbial clause is a practical and translational solution that makes sense out of a particular interclausal relationship.

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[71] Thompson, Longacre, and Hwang, "Adverbial Clauses," 264, on the absolutive clause.

[72] See M. H. Gottstein, "Afterthought and the Syntax of Relative Clauses in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 68 (1949): 42 n. 20.

[73] See McCawley, "The Syntax and Semantics of English Relative Clauses," 119.

5. Conclusion

In large measure, GKC codifies conventional grammatical opinion on the relationship between relativizers in Ecclesiastes.

> [B]etween שׁ . . . and אֲשֶׁר there is syntactically no primary difference,[1] but only a secondary distinction which arose in the course of the development of the language, namely that אֲשֶׁר is preferred in combinations which are customary in the old literary language, and שׁ in those which are derived from the popular language or from Aramaic.[2]

A century later, Holmstedt essentially reaffirms this judgment.[3] In addition, he states that "[t]he variation occurs indiscriminately, sometimes in the same verse and in adjacent and parallel clauses."[4] His list of over a dozen illustrative passages would seem to put the matter to rest.

Other considerations reopen the issue. First, Qohelet's productive use of two relativizers raises the possibility, suggested by Genetti, that a grammatical change is afoot but not yet complete (see p. 4). Holmstedt alludes to this possibility as an interrogative.

> With significant grammatical overlap with אשׁר, the use and distribution of שׁ in the Hebrew Bible . . . raise a host of questions. For example, was שׁ an item native to the grammar of the authors of Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Ben Sira . . . as well as the Mishnah, but not for most biblical authors? If so, why did it not displace אשׁר entirely in Ecclesiastes and Ben Sira?[5]

The answer may be that, like language use generally, Qohelet's grammar captures a (transitional) moment in time rather than a *fait accompli*.[6] Second, the alternation between אשר and -ש may reflect (i) distinct strategies or types of relativization or (ii) distinct strategies for treating the different subcategories of subordination. Both factors bear on the alternation between אשר and -ש.

Although both relativizers nominalize their dependent clause, they do so in contrastive ways. In the relative clause, each has its own functional domain. אשר is the stronger nominalizer. As a free relative, it is referential and definite. As an anaphoric relative, it prefers unique or highly individuated heads. Its relative clause is more complex, informative, and discourse-prominent; accordingly, its clause tends to be longer than its proclitic alternant. As a free relative, אשר can serve as a core argument or (part of) a topical expression. It can form adjoined relative clauses and be (practically) sentential. It is also the more likely relativizer to be (part of) a fronted expression. In comparison, -ש is the weaker nominalizer. As a free relative, it is nonreferential and indefinite; it also introduces a predicate. As an anaphoric relative, it prefers heads that are non- or de-referential, generic, and nonspecific. Its relative clause is simpler, less informative, and has less discourse salience. In a correlative or comparative structure, its relative clause can echo an antecedent. Its relative clause is nontopical and favors adjunct rank. This and other features suggest that a -ש relative clause shares a good deal with a monoclausal, paratactic construction. An אשר relative clause is more biclausal or sentential.

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[1] Cf. Pat-El, "The Syntax of *ʾăšer* and *še*C Yet Again," in *Papers Presented to John Huehnergard*, 323, 326, referring to eadem, "On Periphrastic Genitive Constructions in Biblical Hebrew," *HS* 51 (2010): 43–48. For a sufficient response, see Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 97–98.

[2] GKC 485 n. 1, drawing upon Bergsträsser, "Das hebräische Präfix ש," 40–56, esp. 51.

[3] Holmstedt, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשׁר in Qoheleth," 294–95.

[4] Idem, *Relative Clause*, 240 n. 37. See also the discussion in ch. 1.

[5] Ibid., 228.

[6] See Holmstedt, "The Grammar of שׁ and אשׁר in Qoheleth," 295.

The differentiation between אשר and -ש persists in declarative complement clauses. Both relativizers are used but not in the same way. -ש does not inject new information. Its clause presents known and backgrounded information as well as opinion that reflects the author's view of the world. אשר is the more informative complementizer. Its clause tends to be factive and assertive, even when subject to challenge. Introduced by an evaluative matrix, its content is presented as real and true.

Adverbial clauses similarly divide into two camps. Along one axis, there is a complementary pattern to adverbial clause formation: אשר combines with a preceding clitic preposition, whereas -ש combines with a preceding noun. Along another axis, there is alternation within one grammatical combination that yields adverbial clauses: proclitic preposition + relativizer. Here, the choice of relativizer reflects its function in context. The combination of proclitic preposition + אשר can be referential, foregrounded, and connote preference or fact. The same combination with -ש is never referential. It is idiomatic and of adjunct or background status. In one case, proclitic preposition + אשר reflects a statement of authorial preference, whereas proclitic preposition + -ש signals a dispreference. All these adverbial clauses are marked.

Among unmarked clauses, the division between אשר and -ש is clear, too. Strictly speaking, only -ש introduces an adverbial clause. Its clause is a backgrounded and nonassertive adjunct. Within that parameter, the simple relativizer can be interpreted widely as suits the context. אשר is another story. When its clause supplies information that generally qualifies as adverbial, the clause is not an adjunct. It forms an assertive and separate informational unit. In this way, such an אשר clause better fits the category of an adjoined, nonrestrictive relative clause. It is part of the foreground.

Overall, Qohelet's two relativizers serve different roles and functions. The more restricted and marked form is אשר. It appears in relative clauses and, therein, a limited subset. It introduces a particular type of complement and "adverbial" clause whose discourse or informational standing is congruent with אשר relative clauses. It is the more nominal, referential, informational, and salient relativizer. It also accommodates assertive discourse. -ש has a limited profile, too, but largely complementary to that of אשר. It is the weaker nominalizer, less prominent, and nonreferential (i.e., more idiomatic) term. It heads an adjunct of presupposed or background information. The competition between relativizers in Ecclesiastes is therefore meaningful.

The outcome of this competition is also meaningful and makes intuitive sense. The competition already began in an early phase of the language (see §A.1) and, with one likely exception (§A.2), continued through to Late Biblical Hebrew.[7] The competition between אשר and -ש is especially interesting in the book of Jonah (§A.3). Ultimately, however, the competition is resolved in favor of -ש, at least according to the extant evidence. Ecclesiastes suggests why. In addition to its numerical parity with אשר, -ש is the less restricted subordinator. Its clause supplies background information and peripheral information appropriate to a subordinate structure. Its clause is also (predominantly) nonassertive.[8] The characteristics of a -ש clause match its general adjunct status.

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[7] Fredericks, *Qoheleth's Language*, 148.

[8] See, e.g., Cristofaro, *Subordination*, 34.

Appendix: אשר and -ש Outside of Ecclesiastes

The alternation between אשר and -ש runs through the history of Biblical Hebrew as well as the biblical canon.[1] Further, whenever -ש is present in a text, אשר is present, too. In the following section, three such texts that figure in the discussion of אשר ~ -ש are studied to learn how each compares with Ecclesiastes.

A.1. *Judges 5*. The first text is the oldest.[2] The examples are famous. They are also sparse. אשר appears once (v. 27), and -ש appears twice (v. 7.7).

> בין רגליה כרע נפל שכב בין רגליה כרע נפל **באשר** כרע שם נפל שדוד He knelt at her feet; he fell flat. He knelt at her feet; he fell. (At the place) where he knelt, there he fell destroyed (Judg 5:27).

> חדלו פרזון בישראל חדלו עד **ש**קמתי דבורה **ש**קמתי אם בישראל Unwalled settlements disappeared, they disappeared in Israel until you arose, Deborah, (until) you arose, mother, in Israel (Judg 5:7).

Two issues have complicated the analysis of these forms. First, the antiquity and genre of the text lead some scholars to interpret אשר in v. 27 as a locative noun.[3] Second, the poem's northern setting, as seen through the catalogue of participants in vv. 14–18, may suggest that -ש reflects a northern dialectal feature.[4] Neither interpretation is necessary or compelling. אשר need not be a locative noun since, as a relativizer, it can have a long-recognized locative referent (e.g., Exod 32:34; 1 Sam 23:13; 1 Kgs 18:12).[5] In Biblical Hebrew, אשר never has nongrammaticalized status.[6] -ש presents a different problem. The dialectal interpretation presumes that, except for different points of origin or speech communities, -ש and אשר are semantically, syntactically, and/or functionally identical. But in Judges 5 they are not.

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[1] Givón, in fact, notes the possible underrepresentation of -ש in early biblical texts ("The Evolution of Dependent Clause Morpho-Syntax," 304). Cf. Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*, 1:227 with n. 16.

[2] Cf. Karl Budde, *Das Buch der Richter*, KHAT 7 (Freiburg i. B.: Mohr [Siebeck], 1897), 42, on Judg 5:7b; and, differently, Israel Knohl, "The Original Version of Deborah's Song, and its Numerical Structure," *VT* 66 (2016): 47–48, on v. 7.

[3] E.g., Na'ama Pat-El and Aren Wilson-Wright, "Features of Archaic Biblical Hebrew and the Linguistic Dating Debate," *HS* 54 (2013): 402.

[4] In addition to the references in p. 2 n. 13, see the discussion in William Schniedewind and Daniel Sivan, "The Elijah-Elisha Narratives: A Test Case for the Northern Dialect of Hebrew," *JQR* 87 (1997): 328–30.

[5] See BDB 82b (4bγ); and Peretz, *Relative Clause*, 171. See also Lambert, *Traité de grammaire hébraïque*, §288.

[6] E.g., W. C. van Wyk, "The Syntax of אשר in Biblical Hebrew Investigated Anew," *JSem* 4 (1992): 207; and Holmstedt, "The Etymologies of Hebrew *ʾăšer* and *šeC-*," *JNES* 66 (2007): 181.

The two relativizers are different. In Judg 5:27, אשר is a free relative. It is also referential and specific, referring to the place where Sisera fell.[7] The same usage appears in Eccl 7:2 (see §4.2.3). -ש, however, is not a free relative in this text. Nor is it referential or specifying. It is a nominalizer that connects a preposition and its dependent clause to form a temporal adverbial clause. This particular construction recurs in the Song of Songs but not in Ecclesiastes. Qohelet's equivalent is עד אשר.

A.2. *The Song of Songs*. Though אשר and -ש both appear in the Song, they are hardly balanced in number. It has one token of אשר (1:1). It also has 32 tokens of -ש, more than any other text outside of Ecclesiastes (1:6aα.6aβ.6b.7a.7b.12; 2:7.17, 3:1.2.3.4aα.4aβa. 4aβb.4b.5.7.11, 4:1.2a.2b.6, 5:2.8.9, 6:5a.5b.6a.6b, 8:4.8.12).

The use of -ש is largely consistent with its counterpart in Ecclesiastes.[8] It heads relative clauses (e.g., Song 3:11, 4:1). It marks complement clauses (5:8; see also 1:6aα.6aβ). It also appears in a variety of adverbial clauses. Among those which are lexically transparent, -ש acts as a nominalizer and connects a bleached nominal to a dependent clause: ביום ש- 'when' (8:8) and כמעט ש- 'scarcely' (3:4). Among underspecified adverbial clauses, the interpretation of -ש is subject to pragmatic inference; it is safe to suggest, though, that -ש can introduce adverbial clauses of reason (1:6aα.6aβ, 6:5a). As in Ecclesiastes, so too in the Song, מה . . . ש- probably replaces the older sequence מה . . . כי (5:9).

In other ways, though, the Song and Ecclesiastes are different. One difference lies in the idiomatic possessive compound -ש + -ל + nominal; appositive to a possessive pronominal suffix, it can be semantically redundant (Song 1:6b, 8:12) or identifying (3:7). This construction is absent from Ecclesiastes. The other differences, however, are more contrastive. The author of the Song combines עד and -ש to form a temporal clause (e.g., 1:12, 2:7, 8:4); cf. עד אשר in Eccl 12:2.6. The author of the Song also uses the relativizer -ש to reference a concrete, individuated entity (e.g., Song 1:7a), even one tagged with the object marker את (3:1.2.3.4aβb); in Ecclesiastes, -ש is generic and nonreferential. These formal differences suggest that the dialects registered in the Song and Ecclesiastes are different.

The lone appearance of אשר (לשלמה) in Song 1:1 has tended to undermine the authenticity of the Song's superscription.[9] Within a canonical context, however, the ascription is crucial and integrative.[10] It identifies the book's author with the royal character who appears in the book itself (1:5, 3:7.9.11, 8:11.12). It echoes part of Deuteronomistic tradition (1 Kgs 5:12). In its final form, the ascription also tallies with kindred notices in Proverbs

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[7] See Holmstedt, "The Etymologies of Hebrew *ʾăšer* and *šeC-*," 178 n. 4.

[8] For good summaries of the evidence from the Song, see Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, 157–58; and Murphy, *The Song of Songs: A Commentary on the Book of Canticles or The Song of Songs*, Herm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 74–75.

[9] Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 7C (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 295.

[10] Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 121–22.

(1:1, 10:1, 25:1) and, less definitively, Ecclesiastes (1:1.12; see also 12:9). Taken together, then, the ascription is a canonical linchpin. It is tantamount to a preemptive, argumentative assertion that the Song is Bible-worthy. In comparison to its proclitic alternant elsewhere in the book, אשר is a marked form suitable to the newsworthiness of its phrase.[11]

A.3. *Jonah*. The alternation between אשר and -ש also occurs in the book of Jonah.[12] The statistically dominant form is אשר; it appears twelve times (1:5.8.9.14, 3:2.8.10, 4:5.10.11.11), including one attestation in the anthological poem that may have been added to the original book (2:10). The minority form, -ש, appears three times in the MT (1:7.12, 4:10). As expected, each character that uses the minority form uses the majority form, too: the sailors, Jonah, and God.[13]

The patterns of אשר are largely familiar. It can act as a free relative (Jonah 2:10; compare Eccl 5:3b). Usually, it heads a relative clause whose nominal head is definite (e.g., Jonah 4:11bαa) or otherwise known from context (v. 11bαb). אשר can constitute (2:10) or depend on a core argument (e.g., 3:2); yet its head can also be in a nonobligatory, oblique phrase (e.g., v. 8). The informational content of its relative clause varies from predictable and trivial (1:5) to substantial and significant (e.g., 4:10).

The more substantial אשר relative clauses have familiar characteristics, too.

> ויאמר אליהם עברי אנכי ואת יהוה אלהי השמים אני ירא **אשר** עשה את הים ואת היבשה [Jonah] said to [the sailors], "I am a Hebrew. (It is) YHWH, God of heaven, I fear—who made the sea and the dry land" (Jonah 1:9).

> ואני לא אחוס על נינוה העיר הגדולה **אשר** יש בה הרבה משתים עשרה רבו אדם **אשר** לא ידע בין ימינו לשמאלו ובהמה רבה Yet I, I shouldn't care for (alt., spare) Nineveh, the great city, in which there are (many) more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know (how to distinguish) between their right and left hand, not to mention (lit., and) many animals?[14] (Jonah 4:11).

In 1:9, the relative clause is displaced and adjoined. It identifies the nature of Jonah's God that is relevant to its discourse context. It is also a doctrinal statement that, without the relativizer, would be fully sentential. It effectively informs the sailors that the resolution of their predicament—whether by drowning or rescue—lies with God who created those options (see also v. 10b). In 4:11, the relative clauses serve a similar role. They provide reasons for not destroying Nineveh: the first is quantitative, while second is qualitative. Each of these אשר relative clauses is highly argumentative.

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[11] Cf. Givón, "Biblical Hebrew as a Diachronic Continuum," in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*, 53 n. 9.

[12] See, recently, Muraoka, "A Case of Diglossia in the Book of Jonah?" *VT* 62 (2012): 129–31; and Robert D. Holmstedt and Alexander T. Kirk, "Subversive Boundary Drawing in Jonah: The Variation of אשׁר and שׁ as Literary Code-Switching," *VT* 66 (2016): 542–55.

[13] Holmstedt and Kirk, "Subversive Boundary Drawing in Jonah," 543. Compare Holmstedt, "Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew," in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*, 118 n. 28.

[14] See p. 38 n. 43, above.

אשר also combines with prepositions to form adverbial clauses.

> ויקראו אל יהוה ויאמרו אנה יהוה אל נא נאבדה בנפש האיש הזה ואל תתן עלינו דם נקיא כי אתה יהוה **כאשר** חפצת עשית They called to YHWH and said, “Please, YHWH. Please, we don’t want to perish because of this man’s life. Don’t impose unjust bloodshed on us. For you, YHWH (alt., are YHWH), you do as you please” (Jonah 1:14).

> ויצא יונה מן העיר וישב מקדם לעיר ויעש לו שם סכה וישב תחתיה בצל **עד אשר** יראה מה יהיה בעיר Jonah left the city. He stayed east of the city and made a hut for himself there. He stayed (alt., sat) under it in the shade until he’d see what would happen in the city (Jonah 4:5).

In the first text, it combines with the approximative preposition -כ to create a manner clause of conformity (compare Eccl 5:14). In the second text, it combines with עד to form a temporal clause that, by pragmatic inference, may function as a quasi-purpose clause.[15] Both times, אשר nominalizes its dependent clause, and the resulting semantic outcomes are well attested in Biblical Hebrew.

The distinct nature of *-ש* emerges by contrast with אשר. In one episode, that contrast is pronounced.

> ויאמר אלהים אל יונה ההיטב חרה לך על הקיקיון ויאמר היטב חרה לי עד מות: ויאמר יהוה אתה חסת על הקיקיון **אשר** לא עמלת בו ולא גדלתו **שבן** לילה היה ובן לילה אבד: ואני לא אחוס על נינוה העיר הגדולה **אשר** יש בה הרבה משתים עשרה רבו אדם **אשר** לא ידע בין ימינו לשמאלו ובהמה רבה God said to Jonah, “Are you justifiably angry about the plant?” He said, “Yes I am, to the point of death.” YHWH said, “You cared for the plant that you didn’t work hard for and didn’t grow, that appeared at night and perished at night. Yet I, I shouldn’t care for (alt., spare) Nineveh, the great city, in which there are (many) more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know (how to distinguish) between their right and left hand, not to mention (lit., and) many animals?” (Jonah 4:9–11).

This episode involves one contrast between Jonah and God, and another between the plant and Nineveh. Jonah showed neither commitment nor investment in the plant, whereas God was sufficiently invested in Nineveh to issue an ambiguous oracle (3:4b), recognize their immediate submission and reversal, and annul the threat of destruction (v. 10). The plant was a single, vegetal entity, whereas Nineveh was a massive urban domain with many animals and a population of many thousands whose salient trait could be interpreted as innocence, ignorance, moronity, or evil (4:11). Further, God created the plant for Jonah (v. 6), but Nineveh arguably had a special relationship to him (3:3b). In effect, this episode gives ample justification for God’s behavior and, by contrast, justification for scolding Jonah. From this perspective, the three אשר clauses are the backbone of God’s argument. The one *-ש* clause, in contrast, is a predicable counterpart to the previous relative clause.

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[15] Uriel Simon, *Jonah: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, tr. Lenn J. Schramm, The JPS Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999), 40.

It adds no new information but gives Jonah time for, and an alternative way of, processing God's reprimand. The -ש clause is a backgrounded aside.

The final cases of אשר ~ -ש recall an instance in Ecclesiastes where the proclitic relativizer is surrounded by prepositions: בשל (8:17). In Jonah, however, both relativizers appear in this particular configuration, followed by a pronoun.

> ויאמרו איש אל רעהו לכו ונפילה גורלות ונדעה **בשלמי** הרעה הזאת לנו ויפלו גורלות ויפל הגורל על יונה: ויאמרו אליו הגידה נא לנו **באשר למי** הרעה הזאת לנו . . . ויאמר אליהם שאוני והטילני אל הים וישתק הים מעליכם כי יודע אני כי **בשלי** הסער הגדול הזה עליכם The men said to one another, "Come on. Let's cast lots and figure out on whose account we have this crisis." They cast lots, and the lot fell to Jonah. They said to him, "Please tell us on whose account we have this crisis?" . . . He said to them, "Lift me up and throw me to the sea; the sea should quiet down around you. For I know that on my account this great storm is upon you" (Jonah 1:7–8a.12).

Stated generally, it is true that "there are no differences in the grammatical use of אשר and שׁ in Jonah."[16] It is also true that these two alternants "undoubtedly have the same meaning" in Jonah.[17] But outside of Jonah, they do not. Most often, באשר introduces a locative clause (e.g., Gen 21:17; Judg 5:27, 17:8.9; 1 Sam 23:13; 2 Kgs 8:1; Job 39:30; Ruth 1:16.17; Eccl 7:2). The relativizer is referential (e.g., Isa 47:12; Eccl 3:9), including three times as the core argument of a verb (Isa 56:4, 65:12, 66:4). It seems to be referential and anaphoric in two other, difficult cases.[18]

> איננו גדול בבית ממני ולא חשך ממני מאומה כי אם אותך **באשר** את אשתו In this house he is no greater than I. He has kept nothing from me except you, inasmuch as you are his wife (Gen 39:9a).

> אין שר בית הסהר ראה את כל מאומה בידו **באשר** יהוה אתו ואשר הוא עשה יהוה מצליח The jail keeper looked after nothing at all in [Joseph's] charge, inasmuch as YHWH was with him; whatever he did, YHWH brought success (Gen 39:23).

In Gen 39:9, the antecedent is Potiphar's wife, and the relative clause expresses commonly known, factual information. In v. 23, the antecedent is sentential, and the relative clause again expresses known information (v. 21a; see also vv. 2–3.5.9b). Outside of Jonah 1:8, then, באשר does not form an idiomatic expression.[19] -בש, by contrast, is very different. In Gen 6:3, the combination is certainly idiomatic.[20]

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[16] Holmstedt and Kirk, "Subversive Boundary Drawing in Jonah," 546.

[17] Muraoka, "Diglossia in the Book of Jonah?" 129.

[18] See Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, tr. Sophia Taylor, 5th ed., Clark's Foreign Theological Library n.s. 36–37 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1899), 2:279.

[19] Cf. BDB 84a (c); and *HALOT* 1:107b.

[20] Cf. B. A. Levine, "The Pronoun 'ש' in Biblical Hebrew in the Light of Ancient Epigraphy," in *Nahman Avigad Volume*, ed. Yigael Yadin and Benjamin Mazar, EI 18 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society / Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1985), 148a (in Hebrew); or Holmstedt, "Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew," 118–19 n. 29. For a response, see John Day, "The

> ויאמר יהוה לא ידון רוחי באדם לעלם **בשגם** הוא בשר והיו ימיו מאה ועשרים שנה Yhwh said, “My breath will not *abide* in humans forever, since they too are flesh. Their lifespan (lit., days) will be one hundred and twenty years” (Gen 6:3 [J]).

It heads an explanatory clause (‘in that’). In Ecclesiastes, it also heads an adverbial clause of reason (Eccl 2:16 [‘in that’]) as well as concession (8:17 [‘however’]). In Jonah, both tokens of **-בש** are likewise nonreferential and idiomatic: **בשלמי** ‘on whose account?’ (1:7) and **בשלי** ‘on my account’ (v. 12). From this wider perspective, the sailors use the wrong expression in v. 8—**באשר למי**—to capture the idiom. But the Qumran version of this text does not have this incongruity.[21]

> [וי]אמרו֯ אׄליו הגדׄ נׄא לנו **בשלמי** הר֯[עה הזא]ת לנו מה מלאכתך ומאין תבוא מׄהׄ ארצך[(4QXII^{a} Jonah 1:8; cf. MurXII Jonah 1:8).

With this text, the idiom is restored.[22] As in Ecclesiastes, so too in Jonah the alternating relativizers reflect a complementary pattern.

Sons of God and Daughters of Men and the Giants: Disputed Points in the Interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4,” *HeBAI* 1 (2012): 440–41.

[21] I thank Noam Mizrahi for this reference.

[22] In which case, the form in the MT is difficult to explain. Perhaps it is erroneous. Alternatively, it may be a hypercorrection by the author (denoting foreigners speaking under mortal threat) or an editor. Cf. the references in n. 12.

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